

# Lineage

**Cast:**

Narrator

Roger: man in his mid 40's

Jess: woman in her mid 30's, energetic

Greta: woman in her 40's, polished and refined

Lila: Greta's Aunt, regal bearing

Floyd: Bartender, mid 60's

Wallace: Greta's first husband

Umberto: Greta's third husband

## **SCENE 1**

NARRATOR:

Our story opens in a coffee shop. There is a long ordering counter opposite the main entrance and a variety of tables, couches, and even single chairs arranged throughout the space with large potted plants strategically placed to provide patrons with some privacy. The coffee shop is sparsely occupied, with only a few patrons seated at some of the tables or lounging on the couches.

The main door opens and Jess enters enthusiastically, slowing to a stop as she brushes snow from her coat. Roger follows her more slowly, with a reluctant expression on his face as he pauses just inside the door while Jess scans the room, looking for the perfect spot.

JESS:

Something in a corner would be best.

NARRATOR:

Jess moves slowly through the room, pausing to size up one of the tables. After a moment, she pulls a large potted fern closer to her chosen table and motions Roger over.

JESS:

Does this work for you?

ROGER:

To be clear, I don't think anywhere will work. I feel a big suck coming.

JESS:

Lighten up. I am here to help you and be entertained. Put your coat on the chair.

NARRATOR:

Roger places his coat on the chair and then turns to go to the counter while Jess places her coat on the other chair.

JESS:

Where are you going?

ROGER:

I'm going to get coffee.

JESS:

You can't order coffee before she gets here. That's rude. I'm getting coffee. Why don't you study her profile.

NARRATOR:

Jess heads to the counter while Roger halfheartedly glances at his phone until she returns.

ROGER:

Which one am I meeting today?

JESS:

Hopefully, someone who gets you out of your house. Greta is first.

ROGER:

I wonder if Hansel is coming.

JESS:

(giggling) That's Gretel, jerk. Greta looks very pretty and interesting. You need to be on your game. Ten minutes to showtime.

ROGER:

Well, it's not going to be a long game, I need to get back home and walk Walter.

JESS:

Can you not focus on that dog for one afternoon? Your new goal is to have people friends and join the human race.

ROGER:

There's nothing wrong with my lifestyle. I get zero negative feedback and Walter and I come and go as we please.

(pause)

Why are we doing this again?

JESS:

You mean why are *you* doing this? I believe you told me you were bored and needed to shake things up. It sounded like a plea.

ROGER:

I vaguely remember that.

JESS:

As your amazing friend, I wrote your dating profile, found pictures and made you seem interesting. I left out your general dislike of people and chronic grouchiness.

ROGER:

Maybe you should be the one dating.

JESS:

Not yet. They recommend not dating in your first year of recovery.

ROGER:

You'll get there. It's good to have you back.

JESS:

Thanks. For now I'll date through you.

ROGER:

(detached) Did I tell you my church just opened a memorial courtyard with granite walls? They have twelve by twelve boxes where you put ashes in the wall.

JESS:

Don't use that as an opener with Greta.

ROGER:

Anyway, I got a twelve by twelve cardboard box to see if all of my pet urns fit. They do and there's room for Walter.

JESS:

(surprised) You have a collection of dead dog urns?

ROGER:

One cat.

JESS:

Why are we talking about this now?

ROGER:

I saw decorative tins on the counter and it reminded me of my pet urns.

JESS:

(groaning) Oh god. When Greta is here, try not to look at the counter. You'll sit in my seat facing the door.

ROGER:

The only issue I see with the burial box is whether I will fit with my pets. But I think I have a good option.

JESS:

I'm excited to hear your option and then this conversation ends.

ROGER:

(upbeat) It's simple. I will split myself up. Some of my ash will be spread in a few spots around the world and the leftovers will go into a tin that fits in the wall with my pets.

JESS:

Pure genius and end of topic.

NARRATOR:

Jess deliberately moves her coat to an adjacent chair obscured by the recently relocated plant.

ROGER:

Why did you do that?

JESS:

I'm staying to watch. It might be a crime against humanity for me to leave her alone with you.

ROGER:

Thanks.

JESS:

Please remember that she may have lots of things to do. Don't waste her time.

ROGER:

She liked me first.

JESS:

It may have been a carpet bombing of outreach to see what stuck. You are new blood.

ROGER:

So we may not get married?

JESS:

You may not last ten minutes. What's her name?

ROGER:

Gretel.

JESS:

Where is she from?

ROGER:

Greenwich, and I think she really is from Greenwich.

JESS:

I think you're right. I dated a guy briefly who said he was from Greenwich. I don't even think he knew how to get there. Greta looks Greenwich.

ROGER:

It says she has three kids. Should I say I have kids?



JESS:

You don't have kids.

ROGER:

Maybe I just mention it today and if we go out again, I'll just say she must have misunderstood me.

JESS:

What are their names? Ages? Are they smart or stupid? I'm not sure lying is a good start.

ROGER:

I at least want her to know I have fruit in my loins.

JESS:

She doesn't want fruit. She has three kids. What are her hobbies?

(pause)

Roger, don't look at your phone.

ROGER:

I'm guessing the usual. Hiking, yoga, helping others. One woman put hot yoga sex as a hobby. It was funny, but a little scary. Didn't seem clean.

JESS:

Time to set up. You take my chair and I'm going to move to the lounge chair behind the plant.

NARRATOR:

Jess walks over to her chair and pushes it further behind the plant behind where Greta will sit.

JESS:

Can you see me?

ROGER:

No. And I like that.

NARRATOR:

As Roger watched, a hand appears from behind the plant.

JESS:

Can you see this?

ROGER:

Unfortunately, yes.

JESS:

Great. This is perfect. I'm sure she won't be able to see me.

ROGER:

There is absolutely nothing else you could be doing right now?

JESS:

No. This is my destiny. Here are the hand signals.

NARRATOR:

Jess proceeds to demonstrate a series of hand signals. A thumbs up to indicate that Roger is doing well and should keep going, a thumbs down to say that the date is going nowhere and that he should prepare his exit, a slow downward motion of the hand to say slow down and relax, and a frantic side to side motion of the hand to indicate that he is heading over a cliff and should pump the brakes hard.

ROGER:

What if I don't look at your hand?

JESS:

You will. Everyone likes feedback.

NARRATOR:

The front door opens, and an attractive blond woman enters, presumably Greta, capturing Roger's attention.

ROGER:

Time for the hand to go back in the plant. I think that's her. Goodbye.

JESS:

Stand up and greet her.

ROGER:

Goodbye.

NARRATOR:

Roger stands and motions to get the newcomer's attention. She sees him and walks over, extending her hand in greeting.

GRETA:

Roger?

ROGER:

Roger that.

GRETA:

(puzzled)

You're Roger?

ROGER:

Roger.

(pause)

Roger.

NARRATOR:

Roger laughs uncomfortably and Greta shakes her head slightly. Jess' hand briefly emerges with the calming motion and then disappears.

GRETA:

I'm Greta.

ROGER:

Yes, you are.

NARRATOR:

They sit down at the table and Roger deliberately averts his eyes from the plant.

GRETA:

This is a cute place. Can't remember the last time I came to Port Chester. Probably a few years. Do you come here often?

ROGER:

Only to meet my parole officer.

(pause)

I'm obviously kidding.

GRETA:

I'm not sure it's that obvious. Do we go to the counter to order?

ROGER:

I think so. I waited to order until you arrived.

GRETA:

Thank you. Where are you from again?

ROGER:

Stamford, the Shippan Point area.

GRETA:

Shippan Point or the area?

ROGER:

More like the area, but it all goes together.

GRETA:

(dismissive) I'm sure it does.

Double espresso, please. Roger?

ROGER:

I'll have some mango juice.

GRETA:

No caffeine?

ROGER:

Try to avoid it. My dad died at 56.

GRETA:

From caffeine?

ROGER:

No.

(pause)

Blood pressure, heart issues.

NARRATOR:

Roger and Greta receive their drinks and head back to the table. After they sit down, the hand appears with a thumbs up and then disappears again. For a few moments, the two just sit quietly together, sipping at their espresso and mango juice respectively.

GRETA:

I noticed that you don't have kids. Is that why?

ROGER:

No. I was only married for a few years and we never got to that.

GRETA:

I get it. I was married for a few years.

(pause)

Three times. Had a kid with each husband.

NARRATOR:

There is a brief spitting sound from behind the plant, and Greta turns with a puzzled look on her face. Touching the back of her neck, she turns back to contemplate a fidgeting Roger.

ROGER:

(laughs) Well, if you're going for a record, I can definitely have kids.

NARRATOR:

The hand suddenly shoots out from the plant and moves rapidly from side to side as Greta looks at Roger.

GRETA:

I don't view it as a contest.

ROGER:

I'm sorry.

GRETA:

Where are you in the dating process?

ROGER:

I'm really not in the process. This is my first face to face date in a few years.

GRETA:

I kind of guessed. Why don't I tell a little about myself and then you can go. I was born in Greenwich, went to Choate and Bucknell, lived in the city for two years and moved back to Greenwich. First husband was a college boyfriend, second husband was an investor and third husband was a polo player. I have three boys.

ROGER:

Thank you. It was nice to meet you.

GRETA:

Where are you going?

ROGER:

You told me about yourself and now I am going like you suggested.

GRETA:

(laughing) Am I that intimidating? I meant, it would be your turn to go and tell me about yourself.

ROGER:

Well, I was born in a farm town in Ohio and went to a small college for a few years and then decided to come to New York to try and do something creative. I wound up at a publishing house, got married and moved to Stamford. I have a dog Walter that is really cool. I have pictures.

NARRATOR:

The hand appears quickly, but then freezes as Roger scrolls through his phone and hands it to Greta who slowly swipes through the pictures, smiling.

GRETA:

He's really cute. I love animals.

(pause)

That's a nice connection.

ROGER:

Thanks. Sorry about the start. I'm nervous and can be a little quirky.



GRETA:

It's all good. A little quirky is fine, a lot of quirky can be weird.

By the way, do you think they sell those beautiful tins up there on the counter? I collect exotic shells. They would be perfect containers.

NARRATOR:

Greta looks past Roger towards the counter, and Roger turns around, following her gaze. His attention is so focused on Greta and the tins that he completely misses the hand moving so frantically from side to side that the plant shakes.

## **SCENE 2**

**NARRATOR:**

Our story resumes on a warm spring afternoon in a small courtyard with a fountain at the center in front of a black granite wall. It is a lovely space, with an entryway on one end, and window like openings to the outside on the other, framed by leafy vines. Roger enters with Greta following him slowly as she studies their surroundings. Roger sweeps his arm to encompass the space as he turns to her.

**ROGER:**

This is what I've been telling you about.

**GRETA:**

When did you say this church was built? I feel like I should be wearing wooden shoes and a bonnet.

**ROGER:**

First one was built in 1720, but the British burned it down in the Revolutionary War.

**GRETA:**

Bastards.

**NARRATOR:**

Greta walks around, going from opening to opening and looking out at the view beyond, turning back towards Roger as he responds.

**ROGER:**

In fairness, the colonists were attacking them.

**GRETA:**

Are you a Tory?

ROGER:

Just accurate history. This version of the church was built in 1794. Same structure stands today, untouched.

GRETA:

They had great foresight to put in air-conditioning and the alarm system.

ROGER:

That was added.

GRETA:

Are you sure?

ROGER:

Positive.

GRETA:

You are an interesting man, Roger.

ROGER:

Do you not want to be here?

GRETA:

I'm not sure. My dates often consist of dinner or a movie. I feel like we're skipping the fun and heading to a final destination.

NARRATOR:

Greta walks slowly over and sits on one of the window ledges, wiping her forehead. Roger studies her with some concern.

ROGER:

Are you ok?

GRETA:

Of course. Why wouldn't I be?

ROGER:

Don't worry. You're not getting married again.

(pause)

I'm sorry. That wasn't funny.

GRETA:

Whatever. It's fair.

ROGER:

I suppose it's fair for me, too. I mean I've been married before.

(pause)

Just once, though.

GRETA:

I'm picking up on your point that I've had multiple marriages.

ROGER:

It's actually kind of a compliment. I mean you got picked three times.

GRETA:

That's an odd compliment.

ROGER:

Some people are still waiting to be picked.

GRETA:

Sure. Like the last kid at kickball.

ROGER:

Exactly. It's better to be picked.

GRETA:

You make it sound so transactional.

ROGER:

Were you in love?

GRETA:

I think so. I mean I don't know exactly what the threshold is. Were you?

ROGER:

Was I what?

GRETA:

Were you in love?

ROGER:

She was nice and smart and funny.

GRETA:

So you were buddies.

ROGER:

She kept asking me if I really loved her and I didn't know what she meant. I thought things were fine, but she didn't think I loved her enough.

GRETA:

Sounds like my marriage to Phipps.

ROGER:

Your college boyfriend?

GRETA:

Number two. The investment guy.

I thought you were an expert on my marriages.

ROGER:

I'll try harder.

GRETA:

Anyway, I was kind of freaked out after my divorce from Wallace, my college boyfriend. I met Phipps, he was nice looking, successful, great squash player. It fit. I remember dancing at my wedding thinking I could make it work.

ROGER:

I guess not.

GRETA:

That is correct.

ROGER:

I really think God just wants us to love something more than ourselves. I chose dogs. And one cat.

GRETA:

So, not people? Do you have family?

ROGER:

Just my mother in Ohio.

GRETA:

Brothers or sisters?

ROGER:

Nope. Not even sure my parents meant to have me. They didn't seem all in for the experience.

GRETA:

Do you speak with your mother often? I have strong radar for avoiding people with bad family dynamics.

ROGER:

I speak with my mother. I really like her. She knows that we are dating.

GRETA:

(bemused) Dating? I think we are just having conversations. Our last one ended with cremation as the topic and today we are starting at the morgue.

ROGER:

We had coffee.

GRETA:

True. We drank briefly before the darkness descended.

ROGER:

I don't think any of this is dark, just revealing.

GRETA:

I really need us to start trending towards life.

ROGER:

Well. This isn't a morgue. It's a memorial.

GRETA:

They're still dead.

ROGER:

I think it's beautiful.

GRETA:

It is rather beautiful and peaceful. Is this why you wanted me to come to the church?

ROGER:

I wanted you to know a little more about me. I love this church and this is where I will be buried.

GRETA:

So coffee and cremation last week and burial this week.

(pause)

With no coffee.

ROGER:

I just thought it would be helpful to get to know each other.



GRETA:

Look, you are very different and interesting, but I feel like you are about to exit quirky and go into weird.

ROGER:

I just don't want to waste time with surprises.

GRETA:

(after a pause) I guess it would be bad if we dated for a few years and then I came into the kitchen and found you dividing up ashes.

NARRATOR:

Greta stands slowly and studies the names on the granite wall.

ROGER:

We'll be up in the top corner.

GRETA:

(taken aback) You and me?

ROGER:

No. Of course not. Me and my dogs. And cat.

GRETA:

Part of me thinks you want me to buy a box.

NARRATOR:

They stare silently at the wall for a while. Greta eventually turns to Roger, her expression thoughtful, as if she is carefully considering something.

GRETA:

Are you doing anything on Friday night?

ROGER:

I'm not sure if Walter has anything planned.

GRETA:

Assuming Walter doesn't have anything planned, do you have a sport coat?

ROGER:

Pretty sure I do. Where do you want to go?

GRETA:

Cocktail party with lots of obnoxious people.

ROGER:

Thank you for thinking of me. So you want to see me again?

GRETA:

I don't know. You are a long way from the polo fields of Greenwich.

(pause)

Maybe that's good.

ROGER:

But you are asking me on a date. To meet your friends.

GRETA:

Not really. I just don't like any man at the club thinking door number four is open. You will be the perfect buffer.

ROGER:

But you like me a little.

GRETA:

Maybe I'm afraid if I don't set up our next encounter we'll wind up at a funeral. What kind of car do you drive?

ROGER:

Buick. 2013.

GRETA:

Meet me at the Greenwich Library. I'll drive us to the club. Thank you for whatever this was.

### **SCENE 3**

NARRATOR:

Roger and Greta enter a large vestibule, shaking out umbrellas. Beyond the vestibule is an open doorway through which they can see a large, dark room with a wooden bar at the far end. Between the door and the bar are several tables elegantly arranged, with groups of people drinking and mingling.

ROGER:

I'm a little worried about parking at the library.

GRETA:

The street gangs in Greenwich are very well mannered.

ROGER:

Funny. The parking is only for two hours.

GRETA:

They want you to visit the library, not live there. It will be a bad look if you leave to feed the meter.

ROGER:

I could have just parked here at your club.

(pause)

Right. That would have been a bad look. My Buick wouldn't have any friends here.

GRETA:

Showtime. Wait a few minutes before you talk about cremation. Read the room.

(pause)

You look nice.

ROGER:

Are you flirting?

GRETA:

No.

(pause)

Let's go in.

NARRATOR:

Greta and Roger enter the room and move through the crowd with Greta nodding and saying hello to various people. Roger follows suit until they arrive at the bar.

ROGER:

Thank you for introducing me.

GRETA:

I'm saving you for big intros. Those were just people I know from golf or paddle. I'm not very social. I don't like talking with many people.

ROGER:

Do you have a sheet for the hierarchy? Something I could study? Wouldn't want to unnecessarily speak with someone.

GRETA:

You'll figure it out. If I nod and don't break stride, that is a negative. If I say hello and don't break stride, that is friendly, but not interested. If I stop to talk, bingo. You speak.

ROGER:

Would you prefer to just hypnotize me?

GRETA:

Yes. I would. Would you like a drink? All of the alcohol here is caffeine free.

ROGER:

That is my favorite kind.

Let me get this. What would you like?

NARRATOR:

Roger holds up his hand, prepared to pay for their drinks, but Greta laughs softly.

GRETA:

Floyd wouldn't know what to do if you gave him money.

ROGER:

I can give him a card.

GRETA:

There is no currency here. Floyd just keeps a general track of the drinking activity and assigns charges to our accounts. He's been here forever and can predict what and how much everyone will drink.

ROGER:

What if someone contests the charges?

GRETA:

That's considered vulgar. If you can't pay it, you probably don't belong.

ROGER:

Interesting definition of vulgar.

GRETA:

I need to go to the ladies room. I'll have a vodka. Just tell Floyd account seven if he asks.

ROGER:

Does that mean you're lucky?

GRETA

(laughs) Ha. It just means we've belonged here forever.

NARRATOR:

As Greta walks away, presumably to the ladies room, Roger stands near the bar, pondering for a few moments. A moment later, an older woman carrying a martini walks toward him from behind. As she reaches him, she peers around to look at him. Roger turns around to face her, slightly startled, when she addresses him.

LILA:

Are you with Greta?

ROGER:

I'm sorry. I was lost in thought.

LILA:

Greta. Are you with Greta?

ROGER:

Yes. I am.

(pause)

I think.

LILA:

I came in and saw you talking with her, but I didn't know the duration or meaning. What is your name?

ROGER:

Roger.

LILA:

Roger?

ROGER:

Yes. Roger.

LILA:

Delighted to meet you Roger. I am Greta's Aunt Lila. May I ask how you know her?

ROGER:

To tell you the truth, we met on a dating site.

LILA:

Dear god. Why would she do that?

ROGER:

It's pretty common.

LILA:

But she's not common. I don't understand.

ROGER:

I've met some nice people.



LILA:

I'm sure you have. Why doesn't she just find someone here at the club? She did meet three husbands here.

ROGER:

Yes she did.

LILA:

Umberto didn't actually belong, but he was associated with members through the polo. And what about you? Where are you from?

ROGER:

I live just over in the Shippan Point area.

LILA:

I see. Do you live on Shippan Point or just in the area?

ROGER:

More the area.

LILA:

I see. I actually meant where are you from in the broader sense of the question.

ROGER:

Ohio.

LILA:

How long have you been here?

ROGER:

About 25 years. Came out when I was 20.

LILA:

(frustrated) America. How long have you been in America?

ROGER:

(baffled) I don't know. Why?

LILA:

Do you see that woman over there? The tall blond with the beret?

ROGER:

Yes.

LILA:

That's Kellen Standish. Her family goes all the way back to the Mayflower.

ROGER:

That's great. Good for her.

LILA:

Did you ever hear of a ship called the Fortune?

ROGER:

Is it at the marina? Sometimes when I walk by, I study the names on the sides.

LILA:

Those are boats. I was asking about ships.

ROGER:

It's funny. One is called the Elise, which was my ex-wife's name.

LILA:

Is she your only ex-wife?

ROGER:

So far. I spend most of my time with Walter.

LILA:

(pauses)

What is your relation to Walter?

ROGER:

My dog.

LILA:

(relieved) I see. So you haven't heard of The Fortune?

ROGER:

I don't think so.

LILA:

It was the second boat to Plymouth, a month after the Mayflower. My family was on it.

ROGER:

(amused) It's crazy to think that was four hundred years ago.

LILA:

But it's still important to know. I can even be traced to Mary Queen of Scots in 1322.

ROGER:

You can really trace back that far?

LILA:

I mean some of it is just inference, but I think for certain people their lineage is projectable.

(pause)

I've been told I look like someone with lineage.

ROGER:

Have you always lived in Greenwich?

LILA:

We actually stayed in Plymouth and Boston for several generations. Thomas Carter was the first minister ordained in the colonies, my mother was a direct descendant. In the mid 1700's, we-

ROGER:

(cutting off Lila)

You, Aunt Lila. I meant have you always lived in Greenwich?

LILA:

(puzzled) Of course. Of course I have. I went to Barnard for four years, but otherwise always here. I wouldn't know how to live anywhere else.

NARRATOR:

Roger looks up and notices that Greta is talking with a small group of people across the room.

ROGER:

Looks like Greta found some people.

LILA:

They are family of Wallace, husband number one. I think it is his father's birthday. Wallace must be here.

ROGER:

Greta's ex-husband is here?

LILA:

You dear boy. He is two husbands removed and engaged to be married to a secretary in his office.

(pause)

His family is embarrassed.

ROGER:

I'm sure she's very nice.

LILA:

Phipps, husband two, mostly just golfs and isn't very social here. Umberto is seasonal with the polo, he may be back now.

ROGER:

They all hang out here?

LILA:

Where else would they go?

(pause)

You may want to get a drink. My number is seven.

NARRATOR:

Lila walks away and Roger scans the room, considering his options. Eventually he takes a seat at the bar. The bartender, Floyd, approaches and Roger looks up to meet his eyes.

ROGER:

Hi. Can I get a beer?

FLOYD:

(softly) Not really a beer place, but I have Amstel and Heineken.

ROGER:

Heineken is fine. Number seven is the account.

FLOYD:

Already had you. I saw you talking to Ms. Cummings and Greta.

ROGER:

She's quite interesting. Ms. Cummings.

FLOYD:

I suppose.

ROGER:

You don't think she's interesting?

FLOYD:

I've been here for forty years and a big part of my job is to not be too interested. Does that make sense?

ROGER:

Sure. I get it. No problem.

FLOYD:

The Cummings are a fine family. Known Greta since she was a little girl.

ROGER:

What was she like as a little girl?

FLOYD:

She was a little quiet, but fun. Would come running through here wet from the pool. Water all over the floor.

ROGER:

Did she get in trouble a lot?

FLOYD:

No. She was a good kid. I think I'll get her vodka ready.

ROGER:

Are her kids like her?

FLOYD:

(startled) I don't believe she has kids.

(quietly) Maybe you just misunderstood her.

NARRATOR:

As Floyd finishes speaking, a man approaches the bar and plops forcefully down next to Roger, putting a hand on his shoulder. Roger turns in surprise, but Floyd smiles as he addresses the newcomer.

FLOYD:

Good evening, Mr. Wilkins. Happy Birthday to your father.

WALLACE:

Thank you, Floyd. Party is about to start. Is that vodka for me?

FLOYD:

It certainly can be. I had prepared it for Greta.

WALLACE:

Perfect. I'll take it to her. She's joining us for dinner.

ROGER:

Greta?

NARRATOR:

Wallace turns to Roger and extends his other hand as Floyd turns back to the bar.

WALLACE:

I'm Wallace. Husband one. You're the cremator, right?

ROGER:

Not by profession.

(pause)

Greta is having dinner with you?

WALLACE:

Yes, and she sent me over to see if you want to join the party. She did say that you like to cremate things or something like that.



ROGER:

I don't like to cremate things in general. Just my dogs. And one cat.

WALLACE:

Do you think that hurts?

ROGER:

Do I think what hurts?

WALLACE:

Cremation.

ROGER:

They're already dead.

(pause)

Do you have kids?

WALLACE:

(puzzled) I'm not sure what you mean.

ROGER:

Do you have younger descendants?

WALLACE:

Oh. My fiancé has a little girl.

(laughing) I mean she isn't really a descendant.

ROGER:

So, none that you made?

WALLACE:

None that I made. Why do you ask?

ROGER:

Just curious.

WALLACE:

Do you have children?

ROGER:

No. I was hoping to always be immature on my own. My ex wanted them but didn't think there was enough joy in our house.

WALLACE:

For me, I just saw how hard it was for my friends to get to the club when they had children. Always a birthday party or some game they had to go to.

ROGER:

When are you getting married?

WALLACE:

Probably next year. Really not that excited about having people in my house.

ROGER:

You mean like your fiancé?

WALLACE:

Are you thinking of joining the club?

ROGER:

Here? No. Don't want to spread myself too thin.

WALLACE:

So you belong to other clubs?

ROGER:

No.

(pause)

Just not a believer.

WALLACE:

(thoughtfully) Greta said you were here to look around.

ROGER:

I was starting to wonder why I'm here.

WALLACE:

You sound upset.

(pause)

I never knew what Greta was thinking. Still don't.

ROGER:

Guess I don't know either.

NARRATOR:

Wallace grabs the glass of vodka and gets up to leave.

WALLACE:

If you decide to join us for dinner, we are gathering down the hall in the St. Andrews room. My dad is a sweetheart of a guy.

ROGER:

Thank you, I should get home to walk Walter.

WALLACE:

It was nice meeting you.

NARRATOR:

As Wallace walks away, Floyd returns and stands by Roger, nodding in the direction of the retreating man.

FLOYD:

He is a nice man.

ROGER:

He seemed fine.

FLOYD:

I meant his father is a nice man.

ROGER:

How would I get a ride from here to the library? Rather not walk in the rain.

FLOYD:

I heard Mr. Wilkins invite you to his father's party. Perhaps you should go.

(pause)

I understand. This is a tough place to be if you don't belong.

ROGER:

I'm not trying to belong, Floyd.

FLOYD:

I understand sir. Would you like to tell Greta you're leaving?

ROGER:

Not really. I'll catch up with her later.

FLOYD:

Just go to the front lobby and someone will set you up with a car.

ROGER:

Thank you for your help tonight.

FLOYD:

You are welcome. I enjoyed our conversation.

NARRATOR:

Roger begins to walk away, and Floyd calls after him from the bar.

FLOYD:

She means well. This is a tough time for her.

(pause) Greta. She means well.

NARRATOR:

Roger nods to acknowledge the comment and heads out of the room towards the vestibule. He pauses, pondering his next move when a handsome man with dark hair and a deep tan walks towards him. Roger doesn't pay much attention to him at first, but then the man stops a few feet away, as if waiting for something, and eventually Roger notices and turns towards him.

UMBERTO:

(with a soft accent) Are you here with Greta?

ROGER:

Sorry?

UMBERTO:

Are you here tonight with Greta? I saw you come earlier.

ROGER:

I did arrive with her, however, I am no longer in her orbit. Who are you?

UMBERTO:

I am Umberto.

ROGER:

Polo player. Husband three.

UMBERTO:

You are hearing of me. I am hoping only the good things.

ROGER:

I just know your name and number.

UMBERTO:

Are you serious with Greta? Do you wish to marry with her?

ROGER:

I wish to marry with no one. I just met Greta a few weeks ago.

UMBERTO:

You will see her again?

ROGER:

Do I need to decide right now?

UMBERTO:

If you have a minute, may I ask for a favor?

ROGER:

Walk with me. I need to get a ride.

UMBERTO:

Where are you going?

ROGER:

Just to the library. I left my car there.

UMBERTO:

I will drive you. I have a car tonight.

ROGER:

Just for tonight?

UMBERTO:

It is not mine. I borrowed it from someone.

ROGER:

I assume my ride is in exchange for the favor?

UMBERTO:

The ride is because I am a nice guy.

ROGER:

Thank you for being nice.

UMBERTO:

I also wish for you to remind Greta I am a nice guy.

ROGER:

I'm not sure if my opinion is that important to her.

UMBERTO:

I also need for you to help me get a polo horse from her.

ROGER:

(amused) That's two favors. I might be able to do the first one.

UMBERTO:

I must have Manor Lord.

ROGER:

I'm not stealing a horse for you. If I'd known you for more than five minutes, perhaps.

UMBERTO:

But Manor Lord is my favorite. I was a horrible player in matches this year without him.

ROGER:

Why don't you just ask her for the horse?



UMBERTO:

What do you mean?

ROGER:

I mean just ask her for the horse. You said it's your horse.

UMBERTO:

(exasperated) Nothing is truly mine. That is the problem.

ROGER:

Got it.

UMBERTO:

There is one other little problem.

ROGER:

And that is?

UMBERTO:

Greta's cousin.

ROGER:

She owns the horse?

UMBERTO:

No. I made love to her when I was married with Greta. (agitated) But it was not my fault. I did not know she was Greta's cousin.

ROGER:

So Greta is holding the horse out of vengeance.

UMBERTO:

Yes. That is not good for anyone.

ROGER:

Particularly not you. Do you mind if we get going? I need to get back to Walter.

UMBERTO:

(puzzled) Who is this Walter?

ROGER:

My dog.

UMBERTO:

(relieved) Oooh. Yes. We will speak more in the car.

ROGER:

I actually have a few questions for you.

NARRATOR:

Roger grabs his umbrella and the two men leave together.

#### **SCENE 4**

NARRATOR:

Greta has returned to the coffee shop where she first met Roger. She is seated comfortably at a table when the door opens and Roger enters. He slowly scans the room until he sees her, and she raises her hand slightly in greeting. He walks over, pulls back the chair opposite from her and sits down to join her.

GRETA:

Thank you for coming on short notice. I'm sorry we didn't get to spend more time together the other night.

ROGER:

At least we drove to the party together. Will you be leaving for another table shortly?

GRETA:

Why are you being so fresh? Wallace invited you to join us for dinner.

ROGER:

I rarely dine with the ex-husband of my date.

GRETA:

I hadn't declared it a date.

(thoughtful pause)

Do you like me? I mean really like me?

ROGER:

How are your children?

GRETA:

I'm not sure what you mean.

ROGER:

Are they eating well? Are they healthy? School going ok?

GRETA:

Why do you ask?

ROGER:

I have it on reliable sources that they haven't been born yet.

GRETA:

Did you bring the plant woman?

ROGER:

What plant woman?

GRETA:

The little one with the purple hair and busy hands.

(pause)

We should probably order coffee and something caffeine free for you.

NARRATOR:

Roger remains silent and Greta stands up and walks to the counter to order. She touches the decorative tins on the counter thoughtfully, looking back at Roger who is facing away, deep in thought. Slowly, she slides a bright blue one over to the register and motions for it to be added to her bill. When the drinks are ready she returns to the table, hands Roger his drink and sits down.

ROGER:

Thank you.

GRETA:

(calmly) Because I feel like an aimless human being when I say I've been married three times and don't have a child.

ROGER:

What?

GRETA:

I answered your next question. You wanted to ask why I told you I had children.

ROGER:

You could just say you don't have children.

(pause)

Why three?

GRETA:

Three?

ROGER:

Yes. You told me you had three kids.

GRETA:

(after a long pause) I've had three miscarriages, Roger. Feels so much happier when I say I have three children.

ROGER:

I'm very sorry.

GRETA:

Thank you. (pause) They were all with Wallace.

ROGER:

Did you try again?

GRETA:

No. Phipps can't have kids and Umberto is a kid.

ROGER:

So, you did have three husbands?

GRETA:

That is confirmed.

(pause) Did you try and have kids?

ROGER:

I don't think so.

GRETA:

Can you be more vague?

ROGER:

We didn't have a plan.

(pause)

I suppose we would have kept it if she got pregnant.

GRETA:

I'm not sure 'it' is the proper reference.

ROGER:

I guess I was always trying to get used to being married and she was married for a reason.

(pause)

She has a few little kids now.

GRETA:

Maybe it worked out. Wallace really wanted an heir.

ROGER:

He's going to have one now.

GRETA:

That's an heiress. Step-heiress.

ROGER:

Did you guys think of adoption? You could get an heir.

GRETA:

The club frowns on adoption. I'm not sure Lila would have fully invested.

ROGER:

Invested?

GRETA:

Supported.

ROGER:

Why did you need her support? You could work.

GRETA:

I work on being nice to Lila. She controls my trust.

ROGER:

(considering) I hadn't seen you having any restrictions to your life.

GRETA:

It's really just one big one. When my parents died, I was young and Lila replaced my father as head of the family trusts.

ROGER:

I didn't realize your parents were dead.

GRETA:

Plane crash coming into Boston from Paris. A week before my 6th birthday.

ROGER:

I'm sorry.

(pause)

I'm sure that was rough for you.

GRETA:

I persevered. Long time ago. So what's the deal with your little purple friend?

ROGER:

The deal?

GRETA:

What kind of friend is she? A special friend?



ROGER:

We worked together for a few years and stayed in touch.

GRETA:

Were you CIA? She's quite an undercover agent.

ROGER:

Jess just reappeared in my life a few months ago. She had been in rehab for quite awhile.

GRETA:

Good for her. They could start a rehab at the club.

ROGER:

She's much better. I guess they encourage them to be of service to others and she decided that I needed to date.

GRETA:

That does sound like service.

ROGER:

She also did a lot of therapy and thinks she's bisexual and really wants to have a baby.

GRETA:

I think she can do both. I actually fooled around with a girl at Bucknell.

(laughs)

I can't believe I'm telling you that. I've saved it for my therapists.

ROGER:

You didn't tell your husbands? Didn't they ask?

GRETA:

No. Why?

ROGER:

I always asked my girlfriends. One of my first questions when we slept together.

GRETA:

(giggling) You are very different, Roger. Not in a bad way.

ROGER:

I think that's a compliment.

GRETA:

It is. I don't usually say real things to anyone.

(pause)

I got you a present.

NARRATOR:

Greta reaches into her purse and pulls out the blue decorative tin. She hands it to Roger, who holds it carefully, studying it. He is still looking at the tin as he responds.

ROGER:

Thank you.

GRETA:

I know you like to keep them handy.

ROGER:

Haha.

GRETA:

Why don't you bring Jess the next time we come here? She sounds kind of interesting, not like someone I would meet at the club.

NARRATOR:

Roger stops studying the tin and looks up at Greta, uncertain about this new development.

ROGER:

Ok.

(pause)

I guess.

GRETA:

I'm curious about her new life and the baby thing.

(pause)

We don't have to, just thought it might be fun.

ROGER:

(pensively) I'll see.

GRETA:

I have to run. Thank you again for coming. I love talking to you.

NARRATOR:

When they stand up, Greta gives Roger a hug before turning to walk quickly to the door. Roger just stands there, expressionless, watching her leave.

## **SCENE 5**

**NARRATOR:**

A few weeks after meeting at the coffee shop, Roger and Greta visit Jess at the recovery house where she is living. It is an older home, with a large living room filled with worn sofas and chairs and lamps arranged on small end tables, with a kitchen visible through an open doorway to one side and a staircase leading up the second floor. Roger and Greta are deep in conversation as they enter the building.

**GRETA:**

(dismissively) Of course I'm not going to ask personal questions. It's a getting to know each other talk.

**ROGER:**

Just keep in mind this is a recovery house. She's been through a lot.

**GRETA:**

The house doesn't look awful.

**ROGER:**

Damn. I don't think I changed Walter's water.

**GRETA:**

Speaking of which, did Umberto ask you about getting a horse from me?

**ROGER:**

He might have. Looks like the door is open.

**GRETA:**

What did you say?

ROGER:

I told her we would be here around 10:30. She feels a little weird that you want to meet her. I'll text her that we're here.

GRETA:

About the horse. What did you say?

ROGER:

I told him I would check.

GRETA:

Really?

ROGER:

Not really. Can he have the horse?

GRETA:

No. Please don't negotiate my animals. Maybe you can give him Walter.

ROGER:

He said it was his favorite polo horse.

GRETA:

Did he mention he has a favorite cousin of mine?

ROGER:

He said he didn't know it was your cousin. So no on the horse?

NARRATOR:

Jess appears at the top of the stairs while Roger is talking. Her orange tinted dark hair is tousled and she is dressed very casually in slippers, a t-shirt, and sweatpants. She nods to Roger and Greta as she slowly descends the stairs.

ROGER:

Hey Jess.

JESS:

Hi. I took a nap.

GRETA:

Hi Jess. I'm Greta.

JESS:

Roger said you know me from the plants.

GRETA:

I do. I like your hair. How do you pick the colors?

JESS:

No plan, it was time for orange. I could use coffee. You guys want some?

ROGER:

Sure. Greta?

GRETA:

Something with caffeine. Thanks.

JESS:

We have that. Go ahead and sit on the couch in the corner. Can you help me, Roger?

NARRATOR:

Roger and Jess go into the kitchen to make coffee, speaking quietly once they are alone.

ROGER:

The place looks good. Better, actually.

JESS:

I'm getting used to it.

ROGER:

You still sharing a room?

JESS:

No. Thank god. Tracy left last week, but I do think she'll be back some day.

ROGER:

That stinks.

JESS:

I can do a few more months here and then I want out. Will you be a reference when I start my job search?

ROGER:

Sure.

JESS:

I'm assuming you can't get my job back at AFG, right?

ROGER:

Not this time, maybe down the road.

JESS:

Probably a good idea. Bad memories.

(pause)

The best thing about the place was working with you.

ROGER:

Thanks. You'll get going again.

NARRATOR:

Roger and Jess return to the living room with the coffee and head to the sofa where Greta has taken seat. Roger hands Greta one of the cups and sits on the arm of an adjacent chair while Jess sits down next to her.

GRETA:

Thank you. Jess, I really love this room. Very grand.

JESS:

I don't really think too much about the house. They keep us active.

GRETA:

(excitedly) The moldings are exquisite.

JESS:

When I first arrived we had group therapy in here and this woman was sharing for a long time and she was very sad and crying and the person next to me nudged me and whispered that the moldings were awesome. (pause)

And they are.



GRETA:

The house just feels warm.

JESS:

I pictured myself living in a house like this, just not with ten recovering addicts.

GRETA:

What do you do here?

JESS:

Meetings, counseling, house jobs...plus I also have to run Roger's dating site.

(catching herself) I mean, I used to run his site.

GRETA:

We're just having conversations.

JESS:

So what do you do, Greta?

GRETA:

What do I do?

JESS:

Exactly. What do you do?

GRETA:

This. I guess.

NARRATOR:

Roger looks towards the bookshelves next to the couch and then wanders over, picking up a small, ornate box and examining it while he sips his coffee.

JESS:

Real estate?

GRETA:

I socialize.

JESS:

I think your profile said self-employed, so I guess that does mean socialize. I know socializing is a painful job for me.

GRETA:

Roger said you are thinking of becoming bisexual.

NARRATOR:

Jess looks at Greta as Roger spits coffee and quickly covers his mouth, then stares at the moldings as the two women continue their conversation.

JESS:

He said what?

GRETA:

Maybe I misunderstood...

JESS:

(snidely)

Yea. It's on my project list. I have a spreadsheet and I'm looking at my best options.

ROGER:

I'm sorry Jess. I shouldn't have said anything,

JESS:

No problem. Does Greta know about your eczema and IBS?

NARRATOR:

At this point, Roger is doing a poor job of hiding his embarrassment and Greta is visibly struggling to cover her laughter.

GRETA:

Roger did say you are feisty. Full disclosure, I fooled around with a girl at Bucknell after a party.

JESS:

Look at you. I think that's called being drunk and horny.

GRETA:

What are your plans after you leave here?

JESS:

That's a more appropriate starter question.

GRETA:

Do you know where you'll live?

JESS:

Not where I used to live. I'm a tiny bit in arrears at the old place.

ROGER:

We're going to start a job search first.

GRETA:

Roger said you are an artist.

JESS:

He's being kind. I am professionally a graphic artist. I sculpt as a side gig.

ROGER:

She's amazing. Exhibited in the city.

JESS:

I got it from my parents and my aunt. My parents were artists and traveled the country on the art show circuit. I lived with my aunt and she was an accomplished sculptor.

GRETA:

Oh wow! I lived with my aunt, too. She was accomplished at socializing, so I guess that's where I got it.

JESS:

Your three marriages should also count as socializing.

GRETA:

(laughing) You guys really like to wear that out.

JESS:

Roger also told me the real story about the miscarriages. I'm sorry.

ROGER:

(flatly) Sorry, Greta.

GRETA:

You're right. I shouldn't have claimed children in my profile. It just seemed more appealing.

JESS:

I meant that I'm sorry about what happened.

GRETA:

(surprised) Thank you. That's very kind.

(quietly) I'm pretty sure I like children.

JESS:

I never played well with others, only child. Did you have brothers and sisters?

GRETA:

No. My parents died in a plane crash when I was young and my Aunt Lila didn't have kids. Her husband died in the crash with my parents.

JESS:

Roger said you lost your parents. I'm sorry.

ROGER:

I told Greta that you were thinking of having a baby.

JESS:

(slightly exasperated) What else did you tell her that might be personal?

GRETA:

I think that is really great.

JESS:

Thanks. It's on my list after housing, job and sexuality.

GRETA:

Do you know how you would do it?

JESS:

I suppose just egg and sperm unless Roger heard my plans differently. I'm still just thinking about it.

GRETA:

Aunt Lila says I can make babies, I just can't bake babies.

JESS:

That seems a little mean.

GRETA:

She's not mean, just direct. She and I talked about it a lot when I miscarried.

JESS:

I was thinking that I would want to give birth. It's funny, the thing I feel the most is that I want to be pregnant.

ROGER:

I'm going to call and see if the neighbor will change Walter's water.

NARRATOR:

Roger leaves the room to make his call, leaving the women alone. Once he's gone, Greta turns to Jess, taking advantage of their relative privacy.

GRETA:

I still want to have a baby.

JESS:

(surprised) Did you tell Roger? My experience is that guys don't like to hear that.

GRETA:

No. I don't mean like an organized baby. I can't deliver a baby and I don't want to get married. Again.

JESS:

So you'll adopt.

GRETA:

No. I want the baby to be me. And my parents. And my aunt.

JESS:

(puzzled) Ok.

GRETA:

(intensely) Right now, everything ends with me. I know that sounds odd.

JESS:

Mixed with some ego.

GRETA:

I know, but lineage is very important to my family.

JESS:

Probably after sexuality on my list.

GRETA:

And you want to carry a baby. I could arrange financing.

JESS:

Huh?

GRETA:

(excitedly) We could all help with the baby. Take turns.

JESS:

You mean like a baby time share?

GRETA:

(a little hurt) Never mind. It is a bad idea.

JESS:

I didn't say no.

(pause)

Are you really asking me to carry...

GRETA:

(anxiously) We're just having conversations.



## **SCENE 6**

### **NARRATOR:**

A month later, Greta and Lila are in a private room at the country club. The décor is elegant, with large windows nearly filling one wall, and formal portraits of white men hung on the remaining walls.

The two women are seated at a cluster of chairs and couches surrounding a low table holding a teapot and several teacups. Greta is sitting stretched out on one of the couches. She looks too thin, drawn and tired, and her demeanor is quiet and subdued. Lila sits beside her in a chair that nearly touches the couch, gently stroking Greta's hair with one hand.

### **GRETA:**

They didn't think it would happen like this.

### **LILA:**

(swallows) I'm sorry.

### **GRETA:**

I feel like everything is going so fast.

### **LILA:**

Do your guests know?

### **GRETA:**

Not yet. I keep hoping I won't have to tell them.

### **LILA:**

Do you really want to do this? It might be a lot right now.

### **GRETA:**

I do. It helps me focus on the positive. Jess and Roger want to do it.

LILA:

Are you sure about them?

GRETA:

What do you mean?

LILA:

Just that one is a little odd and the other is a struggler.

GRETA:

Struggler?

LILA:

She struggles.

GRETA:

Jess had a stumble.

LILA:

Into rehab.

GRETA:

So did Whitney Percival, Aunt Lila. You still like her.

LILA:

Yes, but Whitney was able to start drinking again.

GRETA:

Not sure about able. They found her passed out in a sand trap last week.

LILA:

(dismissively) Whatever. I won't judge Jessica until I meet her, however, I do believe Roger is odd.

GRETA:

Roger is a kind and generous person.

LILA:

How well do you really know him?

GRETA:

Quite well. It's hard to believe I've only known him for a few months. He talks to me and he actually listens to me.

LILA:

Really?

GRETA:

Yes. I don't think I've had a closer friend.

NARRATOR:

Lila looks hurt, and Greta reflexively reaches out to touch her hand in reassurance.

GRETA:

Of course, you are the exception.

LILA:

One would hope.

GRETA:

I even know where Roger will be buried.

LILA:

(defensively) You know where I'll be buried.

GRETA:

It's not a contest, Aunt Lila.

(pause) I want to freshen up a little before they come.

NARRATOR:

Greta stands slowly and brushes herself off, seeming to gather her strength. Then she picks up her purse and walks very slowly and deliberately across the room. She stops and spins around when her Aunt speaks.

LILA:

I asked Umberto to join us.

GRETA:

(agitated) Umberto? This has nothing to do with Umberto.

LILA:

It's just that he keeps bothering me about Manor Lord and I thought it might be a nice time to discuss.

GRETA:

This meeting has nothing to do with Umberto or the horse.

NARRATOR:

Lila stands quietly and Greta studies her with growing awareness. She stiffens and points accusatorily at Lila.

GRETA:

There is no way that Umberto is going to be the father.

LILA:

(firmly) He is very handsome and has a solid pedigree.

GRETA:

No! I'm not swapping a horse for a baby.

NARRATOR:

Greta turns and leaves the room, upset, but holding herself together. After she leaves, Lila runs her hand over the back of the couch and then turns towards the portraits. She approaches one near the middle of the wall and brushes the bottom of the frame, quietly studying the picture. After a few moments, she holds her fingers to her mouth and then touches the picture.

Smiling, she turns back to the seating area when there is a soft knock at the door. Lila opens it to find Roger and Jess standing in the hall. An awkward silence stretches between them until Roger extends his hand, but Lila seems fixated on Jess, looking at her even as she and Roger exchange pleasantries.

ROGER:

I'm Roger. We met at the party.

LILA:

That was hardly a party.

(pause)

You must be Jessica.

JESS:

Yes. You can call me Jess.

LILA:

Perhaps some day. I prefer Jessica for now. Come in. Greta is freshening up.

NARRATOR:

Lila leads them over to the sitting area and points to a couch. As they walk, Jess looks in awe at the surroundings.

LILA:

Why don't you two sit over there. Umberto can sit in the chair.

ROGER:

(confused) You mean Umberto from the party?

LILA:

(impatient) It wasn't a party, but yes. That Umberto.

ROGER:

Why is he coming? Is he still after Lord Manor?

LILA:

(exasperated) Manor Lord. And yes.

NARRATOR:

Roger picks up a small decorative container on the side table and studies it while Jess attempts to make small talk with Lila.

JESS:

Who's Umberto?

LILA:

Greta's ex-husband number three.

JESS:

Oh. I haven't heard much about him.

LILA:

He was more of a rental.

JESS:

I heard about ex-one and ex-two.

(pause)

By the way, this place is beautiful. Great mouldings.

LILA:

Thank you. I should spend more time considering the moldings.

JESS:

How long have you been a member here?

LILA:

A long time, dear.

JESS:

Can anyone join?

LILA:

Certainly. Anyone who is qualified.

NARRATOR:

Greta returns while they are talking and joins the group. Roger puts the container down and he and Jess both stand up and hug her when she reaches them, after which she sits on the couch opposite them.

ROGER:

Umberto's coming to the meeting.

GRETA:

I just heard.

ROGER:

Is he getting the horse?

GRETA:

Not that I'm aware of.

(pause)

He's not getting the egg, either.

ROGER:

What does that mean?

GRETA:

It means Aunt Lila thinks he should be the fertilizer.

ROGER:

(puzzled) Oh.

(pause)

I thought –

LILA:

(interrupting) --I just think it makes sense given his background.



ROGER:

Because he plays polo?

LILA:

(sighing) Among other things. What do you do for a living, Roger? Greta said she wasn't sure exactly.

ROGER:

I'm a consultant.

LILA:

I see. Do you consult on anything in particular?

ROGER:

Marketing stuff.

LILA:

I see.

And how are you, Jessica?

JESS:

I'm a little tired. Was up too late.

LILA:

It was a broader question. In the bigger picture, how are you doing?

GRETA:

(angrily) That's enough, Aunt Lila.

NARRATOR:

Before Lila can respond, the door bursts open and Umberto walks quickly over to the seating area, twirling his polo mallet. As he approaches, he sees Jess and stands directly in front of her, extending his hand towards her.

UMBERTO:

This must be the mother, yes?

LILA:

Oh, wonderful of you to come, Umberto. Yes, this is Jessica.

JESS:

(slowly) You can call me Jess.

NARRATOR:

Jess appears to be a bit mesmerized by Umberto, and when she reaches out to shake his hand, he takes it and kisses it dramatically. Jess giggles in response. Greta stand abruptly, her temper clearly rising.

GRETA:

Aunt Lila! May I speak to you in the hall?

NARRATOR:

Lila pretends to be surprised, but she nods and stands, following Greta toward the door when Umberto calls after them.

UMBERTO:

I must be on the field in one hour and my bad horse is not warmed up.

NARRATOR:

Umberto directs his next words to Roger.

UMBERTO:

I am still not having Manor Lord.

ROGER:

I'm sorry. I asked Greta about it.

UMBERTO:

Not to worry. It is appearing that we have a solution.

(pause)

You want to have a baby.

ROGER:

It's a little more complicated than that.

UMBERTO:

I am only know that I will make a baby.

ROGER:

(tensely) Actually, I think I am going to be the donor.

UMBERTO:

(surprised) You?

ROGER:

Yes. Me.

UMBERTO:

I am not thinking so. Aunt Lila asked if I would do the baby and then get Manor Lord.

NARRATOR:

Umberto then smiles at Jess who smiles back, while squirming a bit in her seat.

UMBERTO:

You are very pretty.

ROGER:

It's not like that. You don't understand.

UMBERTO:

I am sorry Greta has not chosen you, but I am sure you are understanding.

JESS:

I'm sure Greta has plenty of eggs for everyone.

ROGER:

You're not getting the horse.

UMBERTO:

Then Greta will not be getting little Umbertos.

ROGER:

(firmly) She doesn't want little Umbertos.

UMBERTO:

I must return to the polo field, but perhaps we will meet again.

NARRATOR:

Umberto bows to Jess, who nods in return, and then he quickly leaves the room. Roger sits back down besides Jess and they sit quietly until Greta and Lila return a few moments later. Greta appears tired, and Lila pauses to look around the room, clearly puzzled.

LILA:

Where's Umberto?

ROGER:

He had to get back to the polo field.

LILA:

I understand it is an important chukker today.

JESS:

(giggling) Did you say chukker?

GRETA:

It's a fancy name for polo match.

NARRATOR:

Greta looks pointedly at Lila and nods slightly, conveying some unspoken message. Lila seems to understand as she then turns to Jess and Roger.

LILA:

(softly) I would like to apologize for the interruption. It was unkind of me to involve Umberto.

(pause) I'm sure you understand that Greta means everything to me and I have always protected her. This is very hard. And sad.

JESS:

Why is this sad? We're just talking about having a baby. People do this all the time.

NARRATOR:

Jess stands up, reaching out to take Lila's hand in her own, as if to offer reassurance. After a moment, Lila gently touches Jess' face while Greta just stands there quietly, looking away toward the window. Concerned, and a little confused, Jess turns her attention to Greta and touches her shoulder from behind, offering wordless comfort for a sorrow she doesn't fully understand.

## **SCENE 7**

### **NARRATOR:**

A few weeks later, Greta visits Jess in her new apartment, where she is still clearly in the process of unpacking, with several partially emptied boxes scattered around. It's a modest space, but cozy, The living room is furnished with a green sectional couch, a low round table and a television perched on a cabinet that appears to be just a bit too small. Afternoon light spills through two windows set into the west facing wall, and an open doorway leads to a small but serviceable kitchen.

Greta enters the apartment holding a large bag. She looks tired, and far too thin, wearing shorts and a loose sweatshirt, but she smiles warmly as Jess greets her.

### **JESS:**

Welcome to the first apartment of the rest of my life.

### **GRETA:**

Oh my. This is really cozy. I like it.

### **JESS:**

Cozy is a good word. Better than saying small as hell. I would take you on a tour, but this is pretty much it.

### **GRETA:**

Well, I hope there is a kitchen if we are going to cook dinner.

### **JESS:**

There is. Follow me.

(pause)

Just put the bag on the table.

GRETA:

Do you want me to help you unpack?

JESS:

No. I'm pretty much done.

GRETA:

(laughing) Yep. You are pretty much done. Are the cabinets clean to put stuff in?

JESS:

Seriously, I don't want you doing anything.

GRETA:

I just thought it might be easier to cook if we had counters.

JESS:

It actually might be easier. If you don't mind grabbing the cleaner and wiping out the lower cabinets, I can put pots down there.

GRETA:

I don't mind at all.

JESS:

(laughing) What if someone at the club hears that you did this? Will you be kicked out?

GRETA:

I might have to sit by myself. But that might not be a bad thing.

JESS:

Do you really like that club?



GRETA:

What do you mean?

JESS:

I mean, do you enjoy it? It felt like a weird place.

GRETA:

It's my home. My family has always been there. I met my ex- husbands there.

JESS:

But you can't wear sweatpants or clean cupboards.

GRETA:

And you can only wear white on the tennis courts.

JESS and GRETA together:

(giggles)

GRETA:

That's really weird, isn't it?

JESS:

Maybe they just do it to match the people.

GRETA:

(defensively) It's not all white.

JESS:

Whatever.

GRETA:

Hey, I brought you a little gift.

NARRATOR:

Greta rises from where the two of them have been cleaning cupboards and goes to the table where she reaches into her bag and pulls out a wrapped gift. She walks back to Jess and holds it out. Jess takes the gift and unwraps it, revealing a small picture in an antique frame.

JESS:

(laughing) Oh. Wow. This is really cool. Little Bo Peep. Perfect for a thirty-five year old single woman.

GRETA:

(disappointed) I know we're not doing the baby right now, but I still wanted to give it to you.

JESS:

(apologetically) I'm sorry. It is really neat. Thank you.

GRETA:

(wistfully) It was mine as a little girl. It was my mother's before me.

JESS:

Why are you giving it to me?

GRETA:

You may have a baby someday.

JESS:

You mean we may have a baby someday.

GRETA:

No.

(pause)

I do mean you.

JESS:

Did you get bad news at your appointment?

NARRATOR:

Greta doesn't answer. Instead, she returns to the floor and resumes cleaning the cupboards. Jess watches her, thoughtfully.

GRETA:

Did you meet any neighbors yet?

JESS:

Just an older woman down the hall. She asked me if I had a boyfriend, because she knows some nice single men.

GRETA:

That's very sweet.

JESS:

I didn't tell her that I was an unemployed recovering addict. (pause) It was nice to have someone see potential in me.

GRETA:

It's not just potential. You're pretty good now. Are you having any luck on the other stuff?

JESS:

Other stuff?

GRETA:

You know what I mean. The other stuff. With women.

JESS:

Oh. The bisexual stuff.

GRETA:

You had it as a priority.

JESS:

I'm not sure it's still on the list. They discourage trying new things in your first year of recovery.

GRETA:

But a baby was ok?

(pause)

It's pretty crazy that we were going to have a baby. I don't know what I was thinking.

JESS:

Why did you want to have a baby?

NARRATOR:

Greta stops scrubbing and sits up, giving Jess her full attention.

GRETA:

I think when I found out I was sick, I kind of freaked out. I realized if I died, I was invisible. No legacy.

JESS:

What legacy did you want?

GRETA:

I don't know, just something for people to remember me if I died.

JESS:

I saw your name on a trophy at the club.

GRETA:

That was for a junior tennis doubles championship. Not sure that is the most important memory I want to leave.

JESS:

You have friends and family. They have memories.

GRETA:

I think every description of me includes 'married three times.' I thought a baby could get in front of that.

JESS:

Do you like children?

GRETA:

I think so.

(laughs)

I did create three children for my dating profile.

(pause)

Why did you want to have a baby?

JESS:

I made a vision list in rehab and 'have a baby' was on it.

GRETA:

Vision list?

JESS:

It's a list of dream things that help you focus on believing life can get better. A baby seemed like a positive thing.

GRETA:

Did you have get married on the list? Were you going to adopt?

JESS:

I don't detail my dreams. When I envision a real path, it means there are things I can actually do to achieve them. It's more comfortable if I leave them vague.

GRETA:

Kind of keeps you away from your dreams.

JESS:

Or protects me from them. What else is in the bag?

NARRATOR:

Jess goes over to the table and looks in the bag. She retrieves a bag of coffee and studies it quizzically.

JESS:

This coffee is whole bean.

GRETA:

I couldn't find the ground coffee.

JESS:

I can't use whole bean coffee in my coffee maker.

NARRATOR:

It is Greta's turn to get up and walk to the table. Reaching into the bag, she triumphantly pulls out a box.

GRETA:

Now you can. I bought you a coffee grinder.

JESS:

Why didn't you just try another store for ground coffee?

GRETA:

I don't know. Seemed easier to get a grinder.

NARRATOR:

Jess shakes her head and starts laughing as she gives Greta a hug. After a moment, she pulls back and looks closely at Greta.

JESS:

You never answered my question about your appointment.

GRETA:

There are always new things to try. My doctor said we still have lots of options.

JESS:

I'm sure you do.

(pause)

Greta?

GRETA:

Yes?

JESS:

I really like you.

GRETA:

Thanks. I really like you, too.



## **SCENE 8**

NARRATOR:

Greta is sitting on a bale of hay inside an elegant horse stable, fiddling with a horse's bridle when there is a knock at the door. Before she can respond, Roger opens the door and enters. Greta stays seated, looking tired as Roger wipes his forehead and studies the interior of the barn.

ROGER:

Very impressive.

GRETA:

Thank you.

ROGER:

All of this is yours?

GRETA:

It's my family estate.

ROGER:

But isn't that just Lila and you?

GRETA:

There are other relatives that share a little.

NARRATOR:

Roger walks over to Greta and touches her shoulder gently, his face full of concern.

ROGER:

How are you doing?

GRETA:

I'm ok.

ROGER:

Jess said you have more treatment options.

GRETA:

Sure.

ROGER:

Where's the big guy?

GRETA:

The one with the ML logo.

ROGER:

Can I look in?

GRETA:

(chuckling) You'll have to ask him.

NARRATOR:

Roger turns around and very cautiously approaches the stall Greta pointed out and leans over to look in from several feet away.

ROGER:

He's just standing there.

GRETA:

You thought he'd be practicing polo?

ROGER:

He's huge. He must knock the other horses around on the field.

NARRATOR:

Greta puts the bridle down and brushes her forearm across the side of her face.

GRETA:

He has generations of polo instincts. His entire breeding line has been in our family for over one hundred years.

ROGER:

Oh. You breed horses?

GRETA:

Not here. There are breeding farms where they couple.

ROGER:

They meet other horses online and then go to the farm?

GRETA:

(laughs, then coughs for several moments, eventually subsiding)

ROGER:

Are you okay?

GRETA:

(pause)

Aunt Lila used to tease me that I should try a breeding farm.

ROGER:

That is kind of mean.

GRETA:

It was before we understood that I wouldn't be able to carry a baby. It was a little strange sometimes to see the mares go away and then come back with their colts or fillies. It looked so easy.

ROGER:

Are his parents here?

GRETA:

You mean his sire and dam?

ROGER:

I prefer parents.

GRETA:

His mother is Lady of the Manor and she is three stalls down.

ROGER:

What about his dad?

GRETA:

His father is Lord Downsby and he is stabled in another part of the estate.

ROGER:

I think it's wonderful that he still spends time with his parents. They must be very proud of him.

GRETA:

I'm not sure it's truly quality time.

ROGER:

I've always thought it was sad that none of my pets met their parents.

GRETA:

I think it's highly likely they met their mother.

ROGER:

Do you think Manor Lord misses playing polo?

GRETA:

He still plays in practice matches, he just doesn't play with Umberto.

(pause)

But it's time he got back in the real game.

(catching her breath)

ROGER:

What do you mean?

GRETA:

I'm granting Umberto permission to always have access to Manor Lord for matches.

ROGER:

(surprised) He'll be thrilled.

GRETA:

It's best for everyone, including Manor Lord.

ROGER:

And you feel better about it?

GRETA:

I do. It's weird that the biggest thing I have to decide is what to do with Manor Lord.

ROGER:

Do you really need to decide everything right now?

GRETA:

It's actually kind of a relief.

ROGER:

You should do whatever is best for you.

GRETA:

I think I've made another decision that I'll need your help with.

ROGER:

I'll help in any way I can.

(pause)

May I ask you a question?

GRETA:

You can ask and then I'll decide whether I'll answer.

ROGER:

Why did you marry Umberto?

GRETA:

(taking a deep breath) I was bored and thought I would try again.

ROGER:

I guess those are reasons.

GRETA:

I wasn't looking for mister right, as always I was just looking for something.

ROGER:

He is definitely something.

GRETA:

Your marriage wasn't exactly a love story.

ROGER:

I won't challenge that. But I stopped at one.

GRETA:

Roger?

ROGER:

Roger.

GRETA:

I want to tell you something.

ROGER:

Sure.

GRETA:

Please come over here and sit.

ROGER:

This is actually quite nice to sit on. What do you want to tell me?

GRETA:

I'm sorry about the whole baby thing.

ROGER:

Don't apologize. It was nice to see you and Jess excited. (pause)

I was just the sire.

GRETA:

I never would have suggested it if I had known.

ROGER:

I understand.

GRETA:

It was supposedly contained and then they found it had spread quickly.

NARRATOR:

Greta leans on Roger's shoulder and they sit quietly on the hay bale together for several moments, taking comfort in each other's company.



GRETA:

You know who might be good for you?

ROGER:

I believe at one point I thought you might be good for me, but with this latest information it appears you were just bored.

GRETA:

That's not true. You seemed interesting and quirky...

ROGER:

...in a good way.

GRETA:

Jess.

ROGER:

What about Jess?

GRETA:

She might be good for you.

ROGER:

Jess? I don't think so. She is just getting her life back together.

GRETA:

I don't mean today, I just mean you should keep your feelings open. You guys have unique chemistry.

ROGER:

She worked for me. Actually, that would be another complication since we had a reporting relationship.

GRETA:

Right, you should definitely run it by HR.

ROGER:

So, you and I aren't getting married?

GRETA:

Would you help me up? I'm feeling tired.

NARRATOR:

Greta puts her arm around Roger and he braces her to help her as she pulls herself up.

GRETA:

Thank you.

NARRATOR:

Roger keeps his arm around Greta, gently giving her support as they leave the stables together. Greta looks up at him as they exit.

GRETA:

I hope you'll think about the Jess thing.

## **SCENE 9**

### **NARRATOR:**

In the church courtyard where Roger took Greta for the second date, a handyman dressed in a winter jacket and gloves works at one of the square facings that mark the memorial niches. The afternoon sky is overcast, and a few snow flurries blow around in the light breeze. After a few moments, the handyman successfully removes the plate to reveal a metal housing with a key slot and then leaves, taking the plate with him.

A few minutes later, Roger and Jess, also dressed in warm coats and gloves against the winter chill, enter the courtyard, dead leaves rustling at their feet. Roger holds a large cardboard box in his hands, and they approach the open niche in the wall.

### **JESS:**

I really wish we had a nicer day to do this.

### **ROGER:**

Looks like they have the slot opened.

### **JESS:**

Did you ask the minister to come?

### **ROGER:**

I just let her know we would be around in the afternoon. She has a busy schedule today.

### **NARRATOR:**

Jes leans back to stretch and winces, touching her stomach gingerly, and Roger quickly sets the box down on a nearby bench and reaches for her.

### **ROGER:**

You should really sit down.

JESS:

Might be better if I stand. I'm never sure what will be more comfortable.

ROGER:

Well, hopefully Aunt Lila will be here soon.

JESS:

I don't think this cold is going to be good for her.

ROGER:

It was important to her that she came today.

JESS:

I guess I should sit.

NARRATOR:

Jess studies a bench quizzically, considering if sitting on the cold hard surface is really a good idea. After a moment, Roger removes his coat and brushes it clean before laying it down on the bench to make a cushion for her.

ROGER:

Here. I'm sure the bench is freezing.

JESS:

But you're going to freeze.

ROGER:

I'll be moving around.

NARRATOR:

Roger reaches into his pants pocket and removes a single key on a chain. Turning it over in his hands, he approaches the open square and places the key in the lock. Jess watches him as he opens the door, peering inside.

JESS:

The tomb is empty, I hope.

ROGER:

Very empty.

JESS:

I guess Jesus boogied off.

ROGER:

Funny.

JESS:

Should we wait for Lila to come?

ROGER:

I can get started. She's not coming for this.

NARRATOR:

Roger turns his attention to the cardboard box, opening it and staring in at the contents.

JESS:

Do you want to see if the minister is around?

(pause)

For a blessing.

NARRATOR:

Roger doesn't respond right away as he reaches into the box and moves things around as if searching for something. Eventually he pulls out a small pink tin with a flowery design, and then answers her.

ROGER:

It's ok. I took each one of them to the annual blessing of the animals.

NARRATOR:

The sound of a door creaking nearby, followed by irregular footsteps and a slow scraping catches their attention and they both turn towards the arched doorway moments before Lila appears, holding onto a walker, with a man dressed formally in a suit at her side.

Roger approaches them with his right hand extended, still holding the tin his left. Jess stands and Lila smiles and shuffles forward. The man in the suit remains just inside the doorway.

LILA:

Hello, Roger.

(pause)

You look lovely, Jess.

JESS:

Thank you. It is nice to see you.

NARRATOR:

Lila studies her surroundings, taking in all the details. Slowly, her eyes settle on the wall and its many covered niches.

LILA:

Why is that one open?

ROGER:

My dog Walter died this week.

LILA:

(confused) I'm not following.

ROGER;

I'm placing him in the wall, along with my other pets.

LILA:

I see. Is that proper?

ROGER:

I would have preferred to have the minister here, but she is busy.

LILA:

You remain interesting Roger.

(quizzically) And Walker liked pink?

ROGER:

Walter? No, this is Tallulah. She died twenty years ago.

NARRATOR:

Lila shakes her head and turns to Jess.

LILA:

How are you feeling dear?

JESS:

Ok, I guess. I'll get there.

LILA:

How much longer?

JESS:

Four months. Hopefully less.

LILA:

I obviously don't have experience myself, but I am confident you will be a great mother.

NARRATOR:

While the two women speak, Roger carefully places the tin with Tallulah's remains inside the open niche and then returns to the box.

JESS:

Thank you.

LILA:

Roger, will you direct me again to Greta?

NARRATOR:

Roger looks up, now holding a bright blue tin in his hand. He walks over to a plaque several feet to the left of the one where he is interring his pets and gestures to it.

ROGER:

Here.

NARRATOR:

Lila slowly shuffles over and pauses in front of the wall, trembling slightly.



LILA:

Greta Cabot Von Waggoner. Such a pretty name for a pretty girl.

Roger?

ROGER:

Yes?

LILA:

Thank you for doing this for Greta. After she met you here that afternoon, she remarked about how peaceful she felt at this place. It is beautiful.

ROGER:

She was a beautiful person.

LILA:

I had just assumed that she would be buried with our family at St. Marks. With her parents. The reality for her though was that she had only known them for a few years a long time ago.

(pause)

I had even hoped perhaps that she would want to be buried with me. Most of the club is also buried at St. Marks. In the last weeks we talked, though, I truly understood that she had always felt alone and it didn't bother her to be by herself.

NARRATOR:

Jess stands up and walks over to Lila, pulling the older woman into a gentle, but warm hug.

JESS:

She won't be alone here.

NARRATOR:

Lila pats her arm and smiles before taking a final look and touching Greta's name. She turns toward the arch, takes a few steps and pauses near Roger.

LILA:

Roger?

ROGER:

Yes, Lila.

LILA:

May I trouble you?

NARRATOR:

Curious, Roger walks over to Lila, still holding the blue tin in his hand. Lila motions to the tin.

LILA:

Do you have more?

ROGER:

More?

LILA:

Yes. More of the tins.

ROGER:

I have four more. Three dogs and one cat.

LILA:

Greta preferred dogs.

(pause)

Would you do that?

NARRATOR:

Roger says nothing, but nods solemnly.

LILA:

Thank you.

NARRATOR:

Lila motions to the man who is still standing silently by the arch. He reaches into his coat and pulls out a small envelope which he walks over and gives to Lila. She turns to face Roger and Jess and hands Jess the envelope.

LILA:

I wish you both the greatest of happiness with your baby.

JESS:

Wow. Thank you so much.

ROGER:

Yes. Thank you.

NARRATOR:

Lila then turns back to the man and he hands her a second, larger envelope. This one she hands to Roger. Shifting the tin he still holds in one hand, he opens it, studying the papers inside for several moments before looking at Lila with surprise.

LILA:

Greta and I talked a great deal toward the end and we both wanted you to have something else.

ROGER:

Are you sure? This is the estate.

LILA:

(warmly) We are quite sure. After I'm gone of course.

(pause)

Take a look. You may want to have your estate person review them. My people will be in touch.

ROGER:

(still a bit shocked) Ok. I'm not sure how to thank you.

LILA:

Perhaps send me a notice and some pictures when the baby is born.

JESS:

Absolutely. Where should we send them?

NARRATOR:

Lila reaches out and gently touches Jess' face, her expression wistful.

LILA:

Just send them to the club.