

ELEPHANT

A full-length play

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Characters:

MICHELLE is a seventeen-year-old girl.
ELLEN is in her twenties.
JAY is in his twenties.
HENRY is in his early sixties.
KATHLEEN is in her late fifties.
BLAISE is a German Shepard, heard but not seen.

TOLLBOOTH GAL is played by the actress playing Michelle.
DAISY is played by the actress playing Ellen.
BARBARA is played by the actress playing Kathleen.

Place:

SOUND VIEW INSTITUTE (Tarrytown, NY) in a car.
Henry and Jay are in a car driving cross-country.
Ellen is in her art studio in New Jersey.
Kathleen is at her home in New Jersey.

Time:

August 1998, with periodic flashbacks from the previous year.
Note: Except for Kathleen, once the characters have entered the world of the play, they remain on stage in their respective worlds. Ellen's progress with her painting parallels the emotional landscape of the space, and her canvas should be visible to the audience at all times. The two cars and the art studio are the only permanent set pieces; to allow the scenes to flow seamlessly, we should only partially realize all other locations.

GOODBYE

Ellen is in her studio, staring at a blank canvas.
Jay and Henry are seated in a car stage left.

Michelle enters and addresses the audience.

MICHELLE

I hate you. I hate you. I hope I never grow up to be like you. You have no idea what I am going through. Mom, don't do this to me. Don't. Please don't make me go.
Daddy? Don't. What are you going to tell people?
I don't know why I did it. I am just sad, and I don't know how to...
Forget it. Fuck you.
Shotgun.

BLAISE

Michelle gets into the passenger seat of a car stage right. She will return here after each scene.

Henry, a man in his mid-sixties, is driving with his German shepherd, Blaise. Jay, a young man in his twenties, is in the passenger seat. They are driving cross-country.

Jay is not confined to the car. He moves freely around the stage. Henry does not acknowledge his movement.

HENRY

I have to call my wife every few hours. She hates highways with their trucks and buses. I want to stop at the Grand Canyon. Then make my way down to Tucson. We can get to Arizona on time if we drive 14 hours daily.
Where do you want to get off?
I can't remember when I told Barbara I would be arriving. I said around 4 PM on Thursday. I have to fly back on Friday morning. Blaise likes you. I am surprised! Are you hungry? There are snacks in the backseat. I'll take a twizzler.

We hear Blaise howl and whine. Jay imitates and provokes him to continue.

HENRY

If we keep him in the car, he'll be okay. I can't wait to tell Kathleen. Blaise likes you. I don't want to be doing this...

He's too kind to be a police dog and too ferocious to give away to another family.

He only bit one person, but a police report was filed, and you know...

They convinced Kathleen he'll bite anyone who crossed his path. I don't know. I am going to miss Blaise. She'll be relieved that I have a copilot. She wanted to come with me in her heart, but she's impossible to drive with. I am used to it after all these years, but this is a long journey, and she hates the road. There are too many eighteen-wheelers and buses. She just...

JAY

My wife gets spooked easily, too.

PROPOSAL

Ellen goes behind her canvas. Jay crosses to Ellen's art studio.

A flashback. Ellen is blocked from Jay's sight by her canvas. She is screaming her lines to Jay as if he is in another room; he is not. Both have been drinking, but Jay is not as drunk.

ELLEN

Jay! Jay! Come on. I am ready. Jay. God dammit. Why do shirts have buttons? I HATE BUTTONS! Where are you? I told you I have something to show you. Come here!

JAY

Oh boy. I thought you wanted to show me your work. She reveals herself to him and strikes a pose; most of her shirt is off.

ELLEN

ME! I wanted to show you me! What do you think?

(noticing the canvas)

You're right. It's white. Weird. Why white? White why? White why, why white why...

Jay gets down on one knee, then both knees, and then he puts one up. Ellen is baffled by how he is positioning himself. He takes her hands. She goes to join him on her knees.

JAY

No. Don't come down here. Stop. Wait.

Ellen almost falls as she tries to stand.

JAY

You stand. Okay. I'm going to kneel.

ELLEN

You are kneeling. Okay. I'll stand. Fun.

Ellen leans over Jay and tries to kiss him.

JAY

Wait. You're going to want to listen.

(Pause)

I love you. You make me a better person, more alive, more thoughtful, but most of all, more interested... in everything! I laugh... I feel more, and I talk more. Hell, I write "Thank you" cards now because of you.

Thank you for all the time you've shared with me.

I want to ask you... to share every day that follows with me as well.

Ellen, you are charming, strong, beautiful, and now half-naked. I need you in my life.

Will you marry me?

ELLEN

You love me. Do you love me?

JAY

Yes. Will you marry me?

ELLEN

You've only known me for two weeks?

JAY

I know, but... I feel. How do you feel?

JAY

Ellen?

ELLEN

I love you.

I do. Oh my god! Holy shit!

JAY

Marry me?

Ellen jumps up and down and spins in ecstasy.
Jay jumps with her.

ELLEN

You've got to be kidding me. I can't believe it. I am in love! I didn't even realize it. And you! You just knew. Amazing!

(Undressing him)

I love you. I love you. I love you.

JAY

Will you marry me?

ELLEN

Don't kill this moment. I am so excited that I feel it. Come here, my love. My love, I like that.

She caresses his face.

Jay returns to the car. Ellen remains in her studio and begins sketching a giant elephant.

FORREST

Sound View Institute, Tarrytown, NY.

Michelle is in a group therapy session. She treats the audience as her group. She applies lipstick as she speaks. She is challenging but with ease.

MICHELLE

Hi. My name is Michelle.

She makes a crazy gesture and noise that somehow mocks suicide.

Just kidding.

No, I am thrilled to be here. What do you want to know? What do you want me to say? Oh wait, that's right. This is not a conversation- it's a session. This is my time to share, with strangers, how I feel.

Well, I feel like talking about trees.

How do you feel about them?

Wait. Don't speak.

Let me. My fascination *stems* from this one tree.

She silently mouths "stems" again to emphasize the irony.

Rough crowd.

Well, it's gigantic and right outside my bedroom window.

Some nights I feel like it wants in. Wants into my perfect pink and white striped room.

My room is perfect, not because it's everything I want. It's just perfectly planned, the pillows, the balloon shades, the pictures, the bed, the window seat, and my stuffed animals. I have even more animals under my bed.

I have guilt about suffocating them... I feel. It doesn't matter.

They don't match.

(Pause)

They don't. Well, it can't fall now because I just predicted it. What you think is going to happen- never does. It's a relief. You can't know it all.

I feel like in my movie, that's what will happen.

There will be a massive thunderstorm with lightning, my tree will explode, and I'll be crushed. I can see myself split in half.

I don't want to be surrounded by all those people who would need to be there if I got crushed. I am over groups.

No offense.

Michelle returns to the car downstage right.

RIDE ON

Jay and Henry are driving.

JAY

There's this spot in Arizona where the cacti begin to grow. The landscape is blank, and then, after a curve, the first one appears. It looks like a man saying hello or goodbye... depending on which way you're traveling. I am trying to remember the actual name... it's round and tall. Why do they grow in that one spot and not five feet from it?

HENRY

Mystical almost.

JAY

I want to pay the tolls or at least for the gas. I have money. I'm just hitchhiking because my Jeep broke down.

HENRY

No. Save your money. I like the company.

THE GIFT

Ellen and Michelle join one another. Jay crosses to them and hugs Ellen. Michelle gags.

A flashback. Jay, Michelle, and Ellen are playing their version of Balderdash and cracking up.

MICHELLE

What's the title? Tell me the title. I will. Chill out.

Michelle looks over his shoulder.

JAY

The movie title is The Gift. Easy.

ELLEN

So, what do I do?

JAY

Make up a story.

MICHELLE

No, you make up the premise. First, you create the film's synopsis. Then Jay'll read the real one alongside the fake ones. Then we all guess which one we think is the real one. Of course, we get points if you guess ours, but since Jay knows the real one, he'll have to make us believe that the real one is a fake.

ELLEN

Okay. How long do we have?

MICHELLE

It's not an essay.

JAY

Easy killer.

MICHELLE

(To Ellen)

It's a sentence.

JAY

Take as long as you need. Okay, are we all clear?

I am.

MICHELLE

Yes.

ELLEN

Jay passes out the paper. They write.

Michelle tries to wait patiently but can't take the silence.

ELLEN

Ellen, are you ready?

JAY

Do you understand?

ELLEN

I just have to get the phrasing right.

JAY

I don't mind explaining it again. Don't worry... it's hard playing with only three people.
(pause)

Hey, I'll write a fake one too. Then whoever reads them aloud can get double points.
We'll rotate.

ELLEN

I do not know what you are talking about, but keep going, and I'll catch up. Now do I read this?

MICHELLE

No!

JAY

I do.

Ellen hands Jay her paper.

MICHELLE

Jay does because he already knows the actual pitch line.

ELLEN

Okay. Just take it. Mine is so obviously mine.

MICHELLE

Now he will read them all in the same tone and announce the title before each--

JAY

Why, thank you, Michelle. Here we go!

The gift- is a coming-of-age story about a young man and his dog as they journey through the Sahara.

The gift- an old-fashioned drama about the cruel sinking of what they called a...?

Come on. Who wrote this one?

MICHELLE

Shut up. You're not allowed to talk while you read. Start over.

JAY

I don't have to start over. Okay, I'll start over.

The gift- is a coming-of-age story about a young man and his dog as they journey through the Sahara.

The gift is an old-fashioned drama about the cruel sinking of what they called an unsinkable ship.

The gift-A 55-year-old bank worker takes early retirement after a night with an expensive hooker.

The gift- a documentary short about a man with...

Jay breaks into hysterical laughter and can't complete the sentence.

JAY

A documentary short about... I can't.

MICHELLE

Come on, finish it. Finish the sentence.

ELLEN

What is it? I want to know.

JAY

Is this yours?

Ellen grabs it from him.

ELLEN

You know I didn't write that.

Ellen tries to read it out loud but can't stop laughing.

MICHELLE

You guys don't know how to play. Forget it.

JAY

Michelle, come on, I didn't want to laugh. I'll read it.
The gift: A documentary short about a man with two...

He laughs again. Michelle grabs it.

MICHELLE

The gift- a documentary short about a man with two penises.
I didn't write that.

JAY

I know. I did.

MICHELLE

Then why are you laughing?

JAY

I don't know. It just hit me as funny. You be quiet. You didn't take this round seriously either; you wrote the synopsis of The Titanic.

ELLEN

No. She didn't. I did. I thought it would be funny. Sorry.

Ellen and Jay cuddle and kiss.

MICHELLE

Do you guys even want to play?

ELLEN

For real. Jay will be good.

JAY

Sorry, Lil'shit, let's do a word now, not a movie. Movies are hard to bluff.

MICHELLE

Ellen, which one did you think was the actual premise, the banker or the boy going through the Sahara?

Jay tries to show her which one was Michelle's.

ELLEN

The banker, I mean the boy, and his dog.

MICHELLE

See, I am good. That was mine.

JAY

Okay- you get the point. Now let's do a word. Michelle, you be the reader. Pick a word from the dictionary.

MICHELLE

I don't need a dictionary. The word is pyrosis. P-Y-R-O-S-I-S.

She hands out paper, and they all begin writing.

ELLEN

I am done.

JAY

So am I.

MICHELLE

Pyrosis- a skin disease usually caused by old age.

Pyrosis- Heartburn.

Pyrosis- An affliction that is usually caused by indigestion.

Pyrosis- "To ignite one's sister."

ELLEN

What did you say?

MICHELLE

That was mean. Merry Christmas.

JAY

I was kidding. I knew the word. It means heartburn. Michelle, have a sense of humor.

Michelle exits and goes back to the car.

ELLEN

Come on. Stay. He'll stop. Jay!

ELLEN

"Pyrosis-To ignite one's sister?" Nice-well, that was fun. Now your family loves me and hates you.

They kiss.

Kathleen is revealed on her home phone listening to someone else talk. Ellen and Jay return to their respective worlds.

BITE

Kathleen uses very grandiose hand gestures and is very upbeat despite the subject matter.

KATHLEEN

"Nein! Nein! Nein!" We were screaming, but the puppy was having none of it. We trained him in German. I thought of every phrase possible to get him to stop- to no avail. He only bit Kyle once. Then his tail fell between his legs, and he ran back into the garage.

German shepherds can anticipate.

That's why they're working dogs. They heard sheep.

Lead the blind.

We should've given him a job, but it's too late. The damage was done, but it could have been worse. His teeth are filed sharper than most knives.

He is from Arizona, and all they have there is volcanic rock. So he carries this one rock in his mouth wherever he goes.

It wasn't his fault.

Kyle is my nephew.

He is only ten. He was in an accident.

My sister didn't mean to have another.

Kyle is ten years younger than her eldest son.

I am telling you this because he requires a lot of attention.

I make up all these activities for him. Give him little rewards. Try to keep him active. I bet the sugar was to blame. It made him raucous.

It was July 4th. Our first family function since the funeral. All of us were trying to put on a cheerful face.

When can I speak to Michelle? Well, I'd like to talk to my daughter.

No. Mr. [] I'm sorry, I forgot your name.

Well, Tad, I know you are her counselor, but I am her Mother.

I taught her how to speak and have been speaking with her every day... Fine. Explain your verbal deprivation method to me again! One more time.

Tad, I have lost two sons... losing Michelle over the last few months is killing me.

I am not trying to be difficult. I am trying to be a mother.

(pause)

We were entertaining our guests. It's hard to babysit when you're hosting. We gathered all the adults on the porch, and Kyle, out of our site, took to jabbing Blaise with a stick through the gate.

I believe Kyle enjoyed hearing him bark. He talks. He makes these noises.

(demonstrating a howl)

I don't know why Michelle opened the door and let Blaise out.

My sister called the cops and the rest, you know.

The weeks that followed were miserable.

As if life wasn't already rough enough, my daughter won't look me in the eye or talk to me in complete sentences.

She shut down...

I feared she would...

She may have even tried.

She was screaming "Nein," too. Does that make a difference?

She let Blaise out, but it devastated her when she saw what was happening. We were all screaming, "Nein, Nein, Sitz, Nein, Sitz!"

Kathleen exits. Dog whining is heard.

Michelle crosses to Jay and Henry's car as a Tollbooth girl.

TOLLBOOTH

Henry and Jay are stopped at the toll booth.

TOLLBOOTH ATTENDANT

Well, that's a beautiful dog!

Ferocious barking begins.

TOLLBOOTH ATTENDANT

Oh my god!

HENRY

Nein! Nein! It'll be fine.

(to tollbooth attendant)

Nein. Sorry, he's very protective. Have a delightful night.

Michelle crosses back to her car.

JAY

That was insane. I've seen nothing like that.

HENRY

He's very protective of his family.

JAY

I guess so. Cool.

HENRY

He's just a pup. He has a loud bark, but he does it out of fear.

JAY

That lady was so freaked. "Beautiful dog" is right! That was amazing! Now, look at him, tongue hanging out. Calm.

HENRY

Are you stationed in Arizona? I noticed your bag.

JAY

No. I used to be. Now, I live in Jersey with my wife. I am going to Arizona to finish getting my pilot's license. When you start something like that somewhere, you want to finish it there. So you can drop me off in Prescott. We'll pass it on our way to Tucson. It doesn't matter. Anywhere in Arizona is close enough.
So, are you Army or Marine? Marine, of course.

HENRY

"Semper Fi." My son was a Marine. He always said there was a significant distinction, but I was never in the military.

JAY

Army means- Aren't Ready for Marines Yet.

HENRY

That is spoken like a true Marine. Were you on Parris Island?

JAY

Yes Sir.

HENRY

I took the tour—what a challenge.

JAY

We couldn't call out, but we got letters. My mom wrote every day.

HENRY

My wife sent my son with a stack of envelopes already stamped and self-addressed to her.

JAY

What's his rank?

HENRY

He was a Lance Corporal.

FRIENDLY VOICE

Henry's cell phone rings. Kathleen enters, talking on her cordless phone. She is speaking to him over his lines to Jay.

KATHLEEN

Hello? It's me, Kathleen.

HENRY

I know. Hi, Honey.

HENRY

(To Jay.)

It'll just be a minute. On second thought, I don't think I should tell Kathleen about you. She won't respond well to me picking up a hitchhiker.

KATHLEEN

I spoke to Michelle's therapist.

(pause)

Honey, are you there? He said I could only speak to Michelle if he were listening in. 17. But she got my letter. Can they do that? We brought her to them, but she's still my daughter. Henry, are you there?

HENRY

(into phone)

I'm sorry, honey, I'm driving, so I can't talk.

KATHLEEN

Okay, but you can listen.

(long pause)

I went to the dentist again. Today. All by myself. I couldn't stop crying. It was so embarrassing. It wasn't about my fear of the dentist...

anymore, but I couldn't explain that to him. I was crying because Michelle wasn't there to hold my hand. They just thought I was childish.

HENRY

I am sure they didn't think that.

KATHLEEN

Well, they gave me a teddy bear to hold. Seems pretty childish to me.

HENRY

What did you do?

KATHLEEN

I took it. They wanted to call you. But I told them you were out of the country.

HENRY

Why did you tell them that?

KATHLEEN

Well, it feels like you are. You can't tell me what to say now. They humiliated me enough today.

HENRY

Humiliated? Come on, honey.

KATHLEEN

I didn't want you to know. So that's why they didn't call you.

HENRY

Well, I couldn't do anything on the road.

KATHLEEN

That's why I told them you were busy.

HENRY

Out of the country?

KATHLEEN

Henry, stop it! Be nice. I had a hard day. How are you doing?

HENRY

We are doing well. We're making great time.

KATHLEEN

Are you sleeping? Are you still coming back Friday? Are you lonely?

HENRY

I sleep.

(pause)

Did you say you spoke with Michelle?

KATHLEEN

He wouldn't let me.

HENRY

We'll see her on Friday.

KATHLEEN

Look, call me when you stop. I want to keep you focused during your driving.

HENRY

I'm proud of you.

KATHLEEN

I know. Thank you.

Kathleen exits.

MASCARA

A flashback. Michelle crosses over to the driver's door. Ellen walks up to the car.

ELLEN

Are you sure you can drive?

MICHELLE

Get in. You can't. You're pregnant.

Ellen sits in the passenger seat.

ELLEN

Two months. I can still drive.

MICHELLE

I can drive.

Michelle turns on the radio.

ELLEN

Hey, no radio. Focus.

MICHELLE

This was your idea. You be silent. I need to fill my head with something besides chitter-chatter. If one more person says: *You're in our prayers, he's in a better place, or take care of your parents.* I'm going to die.

ELLEN

It's a wake.

Michelle does a silent scream.

MICHELLE

Where are we going? What did you tell them?

ELLEN

I said I needed mascara.

MICHELLE

Mascara? You're kidding.

ELLEN

That's what I said.

MICHELLE

Why the hell do you need mascara?

ELLEN

This morning your mom and I were putting on makeup and crying, so I suggested we get waterproof mascara. It stayed with me.

MICHELLE

We need to pull out of the driveway.

ELLEN

Pull out.

MICHELLE

Should we get mascara?

ELLEN

Just go. Anywhere.

Michelle sniffs her armpit.

MICHELLE

I smell. I thought it was everyone else, but its clearly me. I could use some deodorant. Let's go to the drugstore.

(pause)

No, wait. I can't see people. We can go to the duck pond. It's around the corner.

They pull out of the driveway. Ellen turns on the radio. It's in the middle of "I Never Promised You a Rose Garden." They listen for as long as dramatically possible.

HOME

"I Never Promised You a Rose Garden"
crossfades to the radio in Jay/Henry's car.

Ellen returns to her studio and adds bright colors to her elephant.

HENRY

So, what does your wife do?

JAY

She's an artist. She paints.

HENRY

Mine too. Well, she was before we had kids. I would like her to paint more, but time keeps us busy.

JAY

She can't paint in front of me. She does it whenever I leave.

HENRY

Funny.

JAY

I want to know what she's thinking. She says she's not. That's the trick.

HENRY

Women go on impulse. Men chart. It took me a month to plan this trip. She wanted me to leave the day Blaise bit our nephew.

JAY

Is he all right?

HENRY

Kyle? He's fine. Blaise barely broke the skin. But the act sent shockwaves through our neighborhood. It's a shame. We had to put him in a kennel. My daughter didn't speak to me for days.

JAY

How long have you had him?

Henry turns off the radio.

HENRY

We got him after...

(pause)

He's my son's dog. He trained him in German to be a guard dog. He wanted to make sure no one could make him attack in English. I thought it was a good idea.

JAY

He must be very—

HENRY

He's dead. My son. He died... was killed in a car accident. Six months ago. Blaise hasn't been himself since. I took him in, hoping we could help him adapt. Make him feel at home without—

JAY

There's no way to tell a dog—

HENRY

He doesn't know what happened or what's happening. I wish this weren't happening.

JAY

He's a beautiful dog.

GAME OVER

Michelle is in a group therapy session.

MICHELLE

He died twenty minutes from our house.
Don't bother leaning in, Tad.
That's about all you're going to get. Stay tuned.

I know this girl... Danielle. Her best friend Cheryl was killed last year. They weren't family. They choose to spend the years together, and that's cool. I didn't know Cheryl well. We weren't friendly. She sat in front of me in Social Studies. But after she died, Danielle looked different. I looked at her differently... everyone did. Kind of like the way you're all looking at me now. You feel sorry for me. You can't help it. I get it.

But when Danielle came to my brother's wake, I was excited. Excited that finally, there was someone in the fucking room who had been broken, too.

And it gave me hope.

HOPE.

Hope that someday I'll walk into a room and the sign on my forehead reading lost, broken, and angry will be gone.

I am tired of selling my life stories to people I don't know.

The good news is that he can't die twice.

Once you're dead... you're finished!

Game over. You go to rest knowing you'll never be sad again.

You'll never be told "no."

You will never have someone you know die.

You'll never be sent to an institution and forced to take someone named Tad seriously.

Sounds like heaven to me. Sign me up!

Now let's recap- my brother's dead. My family can't start over.

I'm here. My life sucks.

Next.

Michelle returns to her car. Jay crosses and stands outside Ellen's art studio.

ELEPHANT

A flashback. Ellen is singing loudly to music. The elephant she has been painting is full-figured, and she is taking her time detailing it. Jay startles her when he enters.

JAY

I am going. Sorry to interrupt you and your zoo. I just checked on the puppy. He seems restful. Be aware he's here.

ELLEN

I am.

JAY

I didn't mean it like you wouldn't... you know what I meant. I have to be at the base by Friday, 0600. 6 AM.

ELLEN

I know. Why are you leaving tonight?

JAY

The weather might act up. I should get an early start.

Jay exits. Jay re-enters. Ellen screams.

ELLEN

You have got to be kidding me. What? I know. Go.

JAY

Do you want me to stay? I thought you painted better when I was out.

ELLEN

My work is not about you being out.

JAY

Would you rather I leave in the morning?

ELLEN

Wouldn't you rather leave tonight?

JAY

Ellen.

ELLEN

Jay.

JAY

Ellen...

ELLEN

Go.

JAY

I love you. Please smile. I'm going to go.

Bye. ELLEN

Ellen. I'm not going. JAY

Yes, you are! Come in here. ELLEN

You hate me. Do you hate me? JAY

You're a romantic. ELLEN

He leaves. He calls Ellen from outside the room.

You hate me because I'm a romantic? JAY

You got me a dog. A dog you no doubt I will remember. Even though he is living in the same house as me? ELLEN

I didn't mean it like that. JAY

Jay. You said, "Be aware he is here." Look at me... I'm a Mom. Do you see a Mom? ELLEN
 Because I am not like your mom. She is a Mom!
 I have been fat, emotional, selfish, and mean for the past few weeks.
 I can't smile. It's tough for me to smile.
 I thought love would fuel me, not suck me dry. Instead, I am perpetually in shock. Ever since- you entered my studio. You...you!
 Soft, sweet, smiling you... and every time you leave...
 I think, good! Go!
 I could use some time alone.
 But then you go... and you are just gone, and I wish you were here.
 I'm pregnant, and we live in Jersey.

I know. JAY

I was nicer when we lived in Arizona. ELLEN

JAY

No. No, you weren't.

ELLEN

Jay, please stop it. Don't make me laugh. Nothing is funny.

I am carrying our...

You can't even trust me with a dog. How can you trust me with a child?

JAY

Okay. Marry me.

Jay starts jumping up and down.

ELLEN

I'm pregnant, and we aren't even married! Please don't say it. I know what you are going to say-

JAY

You wanted to wait!

ELLEN

Well, congrats! You win. I lose. I'd only known you for two weeks. Two weeks! I didn't want to ruin it.

JAY

Let's ruin it and get married now. Marry me.

ELLEN

I'm having a child, and my life is over. Over! We met, and you have been great ever since. You are great! Your entire family is great. I am not great. I don't know what I am. I suck.

JAY

I suck.

ELLEN

No. I suck.

JAY

No. I suck.

ELLEN

Stop it, Jay. I suck.

JAY

No, honey. I suck.

ELLEN

Okay. Game over. I love you. I know nothing. You can go.

JAY

I know.

ELLEN

You're fired. Now go. You can go. If you are worried about the weather, you should-

JAY

I'll take my chances. Good.

Jay kisses her and then hands her a brush. She takes it and goes back to work.

Ellen continues painting. Jay returns to the car.

ROCKY ROAD

Jay and Henry drive.

JAY

How long have you been married?

HENRY

Twenty-seven years.

JAY

Wow. Do you ever get annoyed with your wife? I don't mean I do. I just... think I annoy her.

HENRY

I don't think about it that way. She is just my Kathleen.

JAY

How did you know?

HENRY

Know what?

JAY

She was your Kathleen.

HENRY

It hit me when I picked her up. She was walking to work. She was a hitchhiker too. Well, not really. She was walking from the bus stop. She and I worked in the same building. She recognized me when I pulled up, so she got in. I liked the way she walked. Women have that way, or she does of whooshing from side to side. She still walks like that. She was beautiful—younger than me by a few years and very innocent. But none of that's why I married her. She was chatting in the car, and this feeling rushed over me. It wasn't about her looks or what she said; it was how she made me feel. I wanted to keep feeling it. So, I asked her to marry me.

JAY

How?

HENRY

I said, "I love you. Will you marry me?"

JAY

What did she say?

HENRY

She said, "Yes."

JAY

Well, my wife says she saw me first. I like that she believes that, but I asked her out first or tried to. She said no. She didn't mean to. I misunderstood her response and left. She was too flustered to speak up. So, I just watched her from afar for a few months. Then the week before I graduated, she came up and asked me for coffee. So, we went and got tea.

They drive for a bit in silence.

HENRY

Do you have any sisters? They usually help.

JAY

Yeah, she's younger and a little intense. She's vegan.

Jay and Michelle cross to the center.

THE POOL

A flashback. Michelle and Jay are poolside at a resort.

MICHELLE

I'm going to go. What are you doing?

JAY

Where are you going?

MICHELLE

Mom and Dad are out...so Jib is alone. I'm going to go back to the condo. Do you wanna stay?

JAY

Let him sleep.

MICHELLE

I don't want to leave him alone for too long. I wish they'd allow dogs by the pool.

JAY

We should bring him anyway.

MICHELLE

Yeah, I'll go get him and say, "Excuse me, I don't care about your rules. My dog is dying. He could be dead right now." Oh, wait... that wouldn't work. They wouldn't want the responsibility. Do you want me to stay?

JAY

Why? We could sue if he dies here.

MICHELLE

Are you hungry? I could go see Jib and get some food for us. Should I go? Are you going to stay?

JAY

How's the water? Is it heated? I hate when pools are heated. We should have gone to the shore. Dogs are allowed on the beach.

MICHELLE

But they have a spa here.

JAY

Yeah, but what does Jib get? No air or stairs. Our condo is three stories! He's almost blind, and now he has to walk upstairs!

MICHELLE

I know. It's awful. He wasn't blind yesterday. Can I have a smoke?

JAY

I thought you said Mom and Dad were coming back.

MICHELLE

They are but... so? I can see the parking lot. I don't care... they know. How can they not know? I can't believe you started smoking. So, she doesn't know.

JAY

I don't smoke.

MICHELLE

I get it.

He hands her a smoke. Michelle holds it but doesn't light it.

JAY

I can quit. When I was at Parris Island... that's when I started. You buy cigarettes to trade with... I need them when I play poker and shit.

MICHELLE

You had money at boot camp?

JAY

They pay us, you know? Marines get paid.

MICHELLE

I knew that. I mean, I guess I knew that. You should quit. Hell, are dog is dying of cancer. We should both quit... for Jib!

JAY

Maybe he died from your secondhand smoke. (Pause.) You smoke when you walk him. Maybe you killed him.

MICHELLE

Shut up. He's not dead...so don't say that. Are you going with them tomorrow? I can't.

JAY

I can't. No way. I'd shoot the doctor for killing my dog.

MICHELLE

Have you ever shot anyone...you know...as a Marine?

JAY

Yeah, totally. I killed a private in my platoon for... No, what, are you retarded? We haven't been sent out. I don't know... I don't know if I could. If they make me a sniper, I'll have to.

Michelle pulls out her journal.

JAY

What are you doing? Writing about me killing a fellow Marine.

MICHELLE

No. It's a poem... about Jib. Do you want to hear it?

JAY nods.

MICHELLE

A dog is a dream made of love you can hold: my family's first loss, first illness, the first death. Little is left and even less to show.

Oh please, I can't let Jib go!

He is so simple and so true. He won't let himself die. I won't make him stay.

I can't hear him cry.

I know it's cheesy. I just wrote it fast. It's true, however... It's cheesy.

JAY

Cool. Are you going to smoke that?

MICHELLE

So, where's your lady?

The sound of a car pulling into the parking lot is heard. Michelle panics and shoves the unlit cigarette into her pocket. They both realize it's not their parents. Jay laughs at Michelle's paranoia.

JAY

She's at her parent's. Do you want to know a secret?

MICHELLE

Yes!

JAY

I got her a gift.

MICHELLE

Oh my god! I fucking knew it. I knew it. You are too young. You can't marry her. I like Her, but Jesus. Jay! Mom is going to flip. Does she even like me? That should matter. If I am going to spend the rest of my life in a family with her... If she's going to be my sister, she needs to like me. I matter.

JAY

You are insane and even knowing that... she likes you. But we are not getting married. Not yet. That's not a surprise. I already asked Ellen, but she put me on hold. So, who knows?

MICHELLE

On hold? What is that supposed to mean?

JAY

Michelle, don't worry about it. She loves me. She just-

MICHELLE

She is more intelligent than you. You've only been--

JAY

Dad proposed to mom after one date.

MICHELLE

They were older. Weren't they? Plus, Dad is older than Mom by like a lot!

JAY

Michelle, I love Ellen. I am going to marry her. I am going to grow old with her. That's not my secret. I got her a puppy.

MICHELLE

A what?

JAY

A German shepherd puppy.

MICHELLE

(Ecstatic.) A puppy? Oh my god. A puppy! I am so jealous. Can I borrow him? What are you going to name him?

JAY

Blaise.

MICHELLE

Blaise? Blaise. Okay. Blaise!

They separate and return to their cars.

FANG

Jay and Henry are on the road.

JAY

That's such a great name. Blaise. I always tease my wife and say I will name our kids Cougar, Sergeant, Wolf, and Fang. However, if we have girls, that would be unfortunate for them. She doesn't get my sense of humor. She used to, but we've had some obstacles over the past few months... she's pregnant. I feel bad that I left, but she needed a break.

HENRY

Did you need a break?

JAY

I had already planned this trip... I love her. I love that we're having a baby, but she doesn't like surprises.

HENRY

Well, my wife doesn't like kidding.

JAY

What does that mean?

HENRY

People do it all the time. They insult or tease you and follow it by saying, "Just kidding." She believes if you say it, you mean it.

JAY

Whoa.

HENRY

I know.

JAY

She's right.

HENRY

I know.

JAY

That's true. She's right.

HENRY

Don't tell her I said this, but... she's always right—women's intuition.

Michelle walks toward the audience, waving an envelope. Ellen crosses behind her canvas.

TIME

Sound View Institute, Tarrytown, NY

Michelle is in a therapy session.

MICHELLE

I am not going to read this. I was doing well without her.

She opens it and stares at the letter.

Fine.

Dear Michelle,

The life span of a butterfly is two weeks after it cocoons. We lost our first son, Henry, at six weeks. We were newlyweds, and I was just in the other room when he stopped breathing. We had been married only a year. Your Father... just kept trying to breathe... into him. The police arrived first. We got in the backseat, and Henry kept trying to breathe... into him. We were so helpless. I felt pain drowning the house, the last year, his face, even the trees.

(looks up)

Why are you making me read this in the group? Whatever... I don't care. I already know the story. It's not about me.

(looks down)

We were so helpless. I felt pain drowning the house, the last year, his face, and even the trees. Everything went into watercolor. I couldn't make out the faces or voices of family and friends. I was beneath it all, washing myself of the half-hour.

After the half-hour, I left him to nap in the nursery. The nursery we painted was like a magical Forrest. I went to chat, vacuum, cook, plant... to answer the phone. I don't know where I went. I was out of his room and then his life in a half-hour. He was gone. I have loved your Father for 27 years, but I can't even remember how we found one another after that day, but we drifted together. I don't mean we held on, but we rode the water side by side to have two other beautiful children. You are what carried us. Jay gave us an activity. You gave us heart. You are why I got up for fifty-three years. You are why I said yes to marrying a man I barely knew on our first date. Right now, you are too young to have faith. Faith that these lonely days will someday be building blocks for a few great ones.

You can hate me. I don't care. I hate myself for many things, but I don't feel sorry for you. I am not mad at you. I am glad you are confused. Once you find your way through this, it will be yours: your fight, your memory, your life. Today may feel like another stupid day, but it is a triumph. My funny, sweet, courageous daughter is here, breathing, wearing too much makeup, and looking me in the eye. You may wish I were dead, and one day I will be but not today. Today is about you. What do you want to do?

(Michelle puts the letter away.)

I miss... I miss my brother.

Michelle goes back to the passenger seat of her car stage right. Ellen, as Daisy is now seven months pregnant. She crosses to Jay and Henry's car.

DAISY

Henry and Jay are stopped at a drive-thru window. Daisy, an aggressive waitress, talking in a very loud southern accent, is by the car.

DAISY

Can I help you?

JAY

I ordered a chicken sandwich, not a burger. She's not listening.

HENRY

We ordered a chicken filet, not a hamburger.

DAISY

I order what I hear. Sir, would you like cream for your coffee?

HENRY
No. Thank you.

DAISY
Here you go. Can I get you anything else?

JAY
I'm sorry...

HENRY
Yes.

DAISY
What would you like?

JAY
I ordered a chicken cutlet, and you gave me a burger.

HENRY
A chicken sandwich, please.

DAISY
Would you like that with cheese?

JAY
What do you mean... is it chicken? I am ordering the chicken sandwich, not the...

DAISY
How would you like that cooked?

HENRY
She's teasing.

DAISY
Spicy or traditional?

HENRY
It doesn't matter.

JAY
Traditional.

DAISY
That'll be \$2.50.

HENRY

Right- O.

JAY

What? In addition... forget it.

HENRY

Forget it. We're happy with the burger. Thank you.

They drive off.

Ellen returns to her art studio and sits on a stool to take in her elephant painting.

JAY

My god! Am I crazy, or was her voice ear-piercing?

HENRY

She was having a hard night.

JAY

No kidding. So was I.

HENRY

Did you get what you wanted?

JAY

I think so. Why was she talking so loud? I was so in shock that I forgot what I ordered. Now I'm not even hungry.

HENRY

You meet a lot of interesting people on the road.

JAY

I've noticed. I'm not used to being in the passenger seat. The last time I was driven around... I was a kid. Every Sunday, my Mother would suggest we take a drive. She would preface it by saying there was this restaurant she read about we should go and check out. Food was always the reward for our endless travel. I just wished the radio could have been my reward.

HENRY

Do you want me to turn the radio on?

JAY

No, it wasn't a hint. My favorite trips were to the city. My sister and Mom would go shopping. Dad and I would go to The Intrepid. Then we'd all meet up in the village for Mexican food. It was a reward to have Mexican because in Jersey, well, there is none... anywhere. It's odd. My sister was obsessed with fried ice cream. I like that other dessert...

He struggles for a moment to remember and then turns to Henry.

HENRY

Flan.

JAY

Yeah, I love flan. I remember this one day- I can't believe I did this... I was young. Never mind.

Ellen begins to cover her vibrantly colored painting with white paint. She is seven months pregnant.

HENRY

I won't tell on you. I was young once too.

JAY

No, I know. But I've kept it to myself for so long... I forgot I did it. If I say it out loud, it'll become real.

HENRY

I'm intrigued.

JAY

I got lost.

HENRY

Oh well... I know how hard that can be for a man to admit.

JAY

No, that's not why it's hard to admit. I lost myself. I let them keep walking. I started walking slower. I wanted to see if they'd noticed. I can't believe I did this... I was looking in a window of a store. A liquor store. I saw their reflection across the street and let them go on... without me. My Dad grabbed my Mom's arm, and she panicked and started screaming my name. I stood still. Frozen.

I had begun something I didn't know how to get out of.
 So, I hid in the liquor store. I fucking hid and watched them through the glass.
 I saw my Dad pass the store, and I started to cry.
 I was being erased.
 I was scared to walk out and have them see me.
 What would be my excuse?
 A store clerk who knew I was too young to buy anything prompted my exit. As I crossed
 the street, I screamed, "Mom!"
 I just kept yelling, Mom. Mom! Mom!
 It was now their fault.
 They let me go. How could they?
 I was pissed.
 Crazy, right?
 My folks felt terrible, but my sister... my sister, knew. She knew I was lying.
 I hated her that day for seeing through me.
 But today, I hate myself for disappearing.

Silence.

HENRY

I am going to pull off at the next exit.

Kathleen enters Ellen's studio.

MOMMY TOO

KATHLEEN

I'm sorry. I know I'm early.

ELLEN

No. It's okay.

KATHLEEN

Are you okay?

ELLEN

Yes. I'm fine. How are you?

KATHLEEN

Good.

ELLEN

Good. (Pause.) How's Henry?

Ellen has most of the elephant painting covered in white and continues covering the painting throughout the following dialogue.

KATHLEEN

Oh, he's doing fine. Making good time. To my surprise, the puppy hasn't bitten anyone.

ELLEN

If I had kept Blaise here, he never would have...

KATHLEEN

He was a lot to handle, even for the three of us.
Ellen, we don't have to do this, be cordial...ever again. I'm not good and look at you.
You're seven months pregnant, you obviously can't paint, and your husband's dead.

ELLEN

He wasn't my husband.

KATHLEEN

Yes, he was.

ELLEN

No. He wasn't. We acted like we were married but never got to have the shotgun wedding of our dreams.

KATHLEEN

I thought you didn't want one?

ELLEN

I'm being sarcastic.

KATHLEEN

I thought you were waiting so the baby could be there.

ELLEN

I wanted the baby to think we had a choice. We were waiting for me.
It's true. Now, look at us. Alone. No choice.

KATHLEEN

You have a choice.

ELLEN

Then I choose Jay.

KATHLEEN

Ellen, what's going on?

ELLEN

I don't want to go to the doctor with you.
 I don't want to name my baby Fang, but I will.
 I don't want to be here. I want to get drunk.
 I want my boyfriend to ask me to marry him after only knowing me for two weeks, and
 this time I want to say, "yes!"
 I want to say it immediately.

KATHLEEN

Two weeks?

ELLEN

Yes.

KATHLEEN

Good for him. You said, "No?"

ELLEN

I knew he was going to be my life. I wanted to wait, get pregnant, and then take him for
 granted. I'm a child. How can I have one? I can't do this on my own.

KATHLEEN

You have us. We are your family, with or without a certificate.

ELLEN

I don't want you. I want Jay.

KATHLEEN

I don't want you. I want Jay.
 We should get going. Ellen? Do you hear me?

Ellen stops painting.

ELLEN

I knew this would happen. There is always an exchange rate for happiness; maybe I
 knew... he was going to die, so I pushed him away.
 He would be safe right now...
 If we hadn't fought that night.
 If I had walked the dog that morning.
 If I had carried his bag to the car.

If I had called his name while he was pulling out of the driveway. If I drank coffee instead of tea.
He would be here.

KATHLEEN

He loved you.

ELLEN

What did I do? What did I do to lose him?
My love, my sweet guy. All by himself. What was he thinking?
Did he know? Was he scared? Did it hurt?
I can't stand it!
I hear him calling my name. I close my eyes and hear him, but when I open them, all I see is the crash. I know he was thinking of me. Thinking I better not die, or she'll be pissed. And I am. I am pissed.
I hate him. I hate for him being everything.
I hate myself for not knowing, but I hate him more because he was the good part.
I have nothing to share.
He was my only good part.
I am not going to the doctor today. I am unable.

KATHLEEN

Yes. Yes, you are. Would you like to hear a funny story?

ELLEN

No.

KATHLEEN

It's about Michelle.

ELLEN

Have I heard it before?

KATHLEEN

They're letting her come home on Friday. I don't know how she is. I am not allowed to call. She and her therapist call me once a week. We are putting on a show.
I guess... I'm the one putting on the show. I was driving Michelle to school one morning, and I was so upset.
I had cracked my tooth and didn't want anyone to know. I was trying to keep the humiliation and fear to myself. I didn't even tell Henry. But... it was Michelle who made me calm down. I can't tell you how hard it was to let my seventeen-year-old daughter take my hand because I was scared. But I did. I did and now look at me.
I have a beautiful smile, and my daughter hates me. So, cheer up, and let's go.

ELLEN

Kathleen, you are only one of the reasons she's in there.

Both smile.

KATHLEEN

I can see why he fell in love with you.

ELLEN

He was looking for a mother figure. Kidding.

KATHLEEN

Get in the car.

Ellen goes behind her canvas. Kathleen crosses to Michelle's car downstage.

MOM'S TRIP

A flashback. Kathleen remains on stage, calling Michelle, who is already seated in the car.

KATHLEEN

Michelle! Michelle? I can't be late.

Kathleen gets in the car and sees Michelle waiting for her.

KATHLEEN

Why can't you get up when your Father wakes you?

MICHELLE

I do.

KATHLEEN

Maybe he needs to wake you earlier.

MICHELLE

Mom. No. It is 7:30 AM. School is at 8 o'clock, and we're half a block away. Chill. Whatever.

KATHLEEN

Now, what does that mean?

MICHELLE

Nothing. Mom! Just watch the road.

They drive in silence. Michelle leans down to get her bag and sees the D section of the Yellow Pages is ripped out.

MICHELLE

Hey, look, someone went to town on the D's.

KATHLEEN

Michelle, don't distract me, you may not be late, but I will be. Okay, we're here. Put those down and get out of the car.

MICHELLE

What's your problem? These aren't sacred. They're the yellow pages.

KATHLEEN

I know Michelle, please...go!

MICHELLE

Well, I hope no one needs a dentist.

KATHLEEN

Me too. Now go.

MICHELLE

Mom, do you need a dentist?

KATHLEEN

I don't know. No! Leave those pages alone. Go to school.

MICHELLE

If you need a dentist, call Dad.

KATHLEEN

Don't you dare tell your Father?

MICHELLE

What are you doing? What's wrong with you?

KATHLEEN

Nothing. I'm fine. My tooth is cracked, that's all.

Okay. Okay. Relax.

KATHLEEN

It's cracked! I don't know what to do. I look so awful and old.

MICHELLE

Why are you crying? No, you don't. You can't even tell. Smile.

KATHLEEN

No, Michelle, I will not smile.

Kathleen tries to smile.

MICHELLE

Why aren't you telling Dad? And more importantly, why did you rip out the D section of the phonebook?

KATHLEEN

I wanted to do it on my own. Your Father has been nagging me for years about going to the dentist. And everything was fine until today.

MICHELLE

You're having a meltdown. I'm sorry, but you have to... Turn the car around. We're going home. I'll call Dad at the office, and we'll work it out. I'll say... who cares. Just turn the car around.

KATHLEEN

No.

MICHELLE

Yes.

KATHLEEN

No.

MICHELLE

Yes.

KATHLEEN

Okay. What about school?

MICHELLE

What about it? Let me go with you. I'll call Dad and find out about the insurance. Mom, let me help, please. Look at yourself.

KATHLEEN

I'm just scared. I don't know why? I hate dentists. Please don't ever marry one.

MICHELLE

I won't. You'll be fine.

KATHLEEN

Don't tell anyone, please.

MICHELLE

MOM, who would I tell? No one likes the dentist, but few make it into a covert operation. You will survive.

KATHLEEN

I love you.

MICHELLE

Don't. Just drive.

Kathleen exits the car.

CANYON

Jay and Henry get out of their car and stand on a ledge. The sun has set.

HENRY

The Grand Canyon.

JAY

We made it. Amazing.

HENRY

Amazing is right.

JAY

It is a sight to see.

HENRY

When you can see it.

JAY

I know. We tried.

HENRY

We did. I hoped...

JAY

I take it you've been here before?

HENRY

Once, with my son on a family trip. They aren't all bad. You'll want to take them when you're a father. He'd scare the hell out of me by walking to the tip of every ledge. You see that tree? He walked out beyond it. Reaching his arms out like a bird and smiled. I knew it was dangerous, but I trusted him. Jay pushed boundaries, but he always calculated his risks. I envied him. He was a breath away from everything... Everything he could be.

JAY

I don't know what I am doing.
You're already doing it. You're either working your way in or out. You decide.
Do you want to go out there?

**Ellen re-enters her art studio, not pregnant,
and stares at the blank canvas.**

HENRY

You should go. I am too old. It's too dark.

JAY

You can do it. To see how it feels. It's as safe as it will ever be.

Henry starts to go. Jay watches. Henry walks to the tip of the ledge, reaches his arms out, looks back at Jay, and smiles. Then turns towards the sun setting.

Jay crosses and stands outside of Ellen's art studio. Henry remains on the ledge throughout the next scene.

ART STUDIO

A flashback. Ellen's drawing of an elephant is apparent and full-figured by the end of this monologue. She is wearing headphones.

ELLEN

Oh, Mister Elephant... here we go. How are you? Who are you? You are out in the blue waiting to be found.

Jay enters unnoticed by Ellen.

ELLEN

I see the texture of your heart. You have great space. So here is the space. Fill it. Feel it. You are not done. Your colors could change. You can change. Go ahead. Be a dog or a butterfly. I see no limits to your growth. You can be an elephant who morphs with love into the lightest creature. Universe, I ask you to give him the gift of flight with bright colors and wings so light... he feels weightless. Go. Be free!
(Quietly.) I want an elephant, a real elephant.

She makes an elephant sound. She begins to sing to herself. She sings badly and with abandon. She turns and sees Jay. She screams.

JAY

I should've knocked. There's no door. Well, you're right. So...
I'm Jay. Hi.

ELLEN

I know. I didn't know your name was Jay, but I know you. I don't know you, but I know what you look like. I know your face, not your name. I've seen you before. (Pause.)
On-campus! But never in the art department. Surprise! I am sure you've seen me, maybe you haven't. We live in the same dorm. You run by me every morning... doing drills with those guys. What I mean is... I know who you are or what you look like.

A moment passes.

JAY

Hi. I'm Jay

ELLEN

Nice to meet you, Jay.

JAY

We're Marines. That's why we do drills.

ELLEN

Oh, of course. A Marine that paints. Cool! JAY

JAY

Yeah, I don't paint. Would you like to get some coffee... with me?

ELLEN

I don't drink coffee.

Awkward silence. Jay exits.

ELLEN

(Mortified.)

Hi. I'm Ellen. I drink tea.

Ellen goes back to drawing. Henry and Jay return to the car.

DAYLIGHT

Henry and Jay are parked at Barbara, the breeder's house.

JAY

Here we are.

HENRY

I guess so.

JAY

Are you okay?

HENRY

I'm fine. Thank you for coming with me.

JAY

What if he attacks this woman... Barbara, like he did the tollbooth gal?

HENRY

I don't know. I'm here now. So, we will just have to see.

JAY

Why didn't you fly him into Arizona?

HENRY

You can't fly pets to Arizona this time of year. It's too hot in the cargo part of the plane. They'd overheat.

JAY

I hope I didn't waste your time with my problems.

HENRY

No. You have been...
Do you want to come in with me?

JAY

No, I should stay here. Take your time.

Kathleen enters as Barbara and crosses to the car.

BARBARA

Hey, troops, you must be... Henry. Barbara, nice to meet you.

Henry sees her and smiles but chooses to stay in the car. Barbara has a peaceful spirit and is excited to see them.

HENRY

(referencing Jay)

This is a friend who has made most of the trip with me.

BARBARA

Oh, you don't have to introduce him to me. I'd know that face anywhere.

(Opening the car door.)

Come here, Blaise!

Jay bounds out of the car and stands by her side.
Henry remains seated.

BARBARA

Do you want to come in? I insist. Come inside. Would you like some iced tea?

HENRY

I have a plane to catch. It's been a long drive.
(looking at Jay)

This is... difficult. Thank you. I'm very grateful you offered to take him in.
(to Jay)

If I stay.....

BARBARA

I want to take a picture of you with Blaise.

She reveals a Polaroid camera. Henry slowly gets out of the car.

HENRY

I shouldn't have come alone.

BARBARA

Okay, get with Blaise.

Henry crosses and stands with Jay. Barbara takes the photo and hands it to him. It reveals Henry with a German Shepard.

HENRY

I have to pick Michelle up once I get to the--
I should go. You may have to retrain him. Jay spoke commands to him in German, but he's been his own boss for months now.

BARBARA

We'll be fine.

She hits her side. Jay goes and stands close to Barbara.

Good boy. You have to be forceful. Act like the alpha male. You keep control by acting like you have it. I'll send pictures as time goes by. I'll let you know how he is adapting.

HENRY

Would it be all right...

Henry and Jay come together. Barbara backs away.

HENRY

I have to catch a plane. So I'm picking up Michelle--
I don't know what to say. I never did. I can't....

Henry no longer acknowledges Jay's voice.

JAY

It's hello or goodbye, depending on which way you're traveling.

BARBARA

Thank you for bringing Blaise home. I'll talk to you soon.

JAY

Goodbye.

Jay follows Barbara off stage.

HELLO

Michelle and Henry turn toward each other.
Henry takes a moment to look at Michelle.

MICHELLE

What?

HENRY

Just... looking.

MICHELLE

Hi, Dad.

HENRY

Are you ready?

MICHELLE

What is that supposed to mean?

HENRY

Do you have your clothes and belongings?

MICHELLE

Yeah, you're funny.

HENRY

Am I? I didn't know that.

MICHELLE

You're so direct.

HENRY

Is that good?

MICHELLE

It just is. How's the breeder, lady? Does she love Blaise the way we do? Is she going to keep him?

HENRY

She was a sweet woman. Different from what I expected. He has a great setup there with a big yard. And some of his brothers and sisters are still living there.

MICHELLE

That's great. I am happy for him.

Michelle caves a bit emotionally and quickly forces herself to recuperate.

HENRY

What's wrong? What did I say?

MICHELLE

I am jealous of Blaise. I am nuts.

HENRY

I was jealous too.

MICHELLE

You were? Good.

HENRY

Michelle, I couldn't have kept him in the kennel. It wasn't right.

MICHELLE

I just wanted Blaise to be free from Kyle. I didn't think... I didn't think he would bite him.

HENRY

Michelle, we need you. Your Mother went to the dentist last week by herself.

MICHELLE

Did she cry?

HENRY

I think so.

MICHELLE

Good. She can cry whenever she fucking wants to. Shit that she gets up in the morning is a fucking miracle. She should never apologize for her tears. Fuck it!

HENRY

Michelle...

MICHELLE

No one should lose two sons in a lifetime.

HENRY

Do they encourage that language here?

MICHELLE

It's my way of adding a youthful emphasis to my opinions. Imperfections are windows for rebirth. I hope.

HENRY

I've missed you.

MICHELLE

Well, I think you and Mom are fucking superheroes.

HENRY

Well... fuck.

They hug.

END OF PLAY

TIMELINE

*Indicates scenes in the play.

MAY 1997

Jay asks Ellen out. Ellen asks Jay out.

JUNE 1997

They graduate and begin dating.

*PROPOSAL

Jay buys Ellen a German Shepard puppy named Blaise.

*THE POOL

DECEMBER 1997

*THE GIFT

JANUARY 1998

Ellen and Jay get pregnant. The baby is due in October. It's a girl!

FEBRUARY 1998

Ellen and Jay move from Arizona to New Jersey to be closer to his family.

MARCH 1998

Jay died on March 22nd. March 24th is Jay's wake.

*ELEPHANT

*MASCARA

MAY 1998

Ellen gives Blaise to Jay's family.

*MOM'S TRIP

JULY 1998

Blaise bites Kyle on the 4th of July.

AUGUST 1998

All cross-country scenes take place in the last week of August. Henry travels 2400 miles over three days.

*GOODBYE

*FORREST

AUGUST 27TH

(NJ, Penn, W.Virginia, Ohio)

*BLAISE

*RIDE ON

*BITE

*BLAISE TOO

AUGUST 28TH

(Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Oklahoma)

*FRIENDLY VOICE

*ROCKY ROAD

AUGUST 29TH

(Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona)

*DAISY

*MOMMY TOO

*CANYON

*TIME

AUGUST 30TH

*DAYLIGHT

*HELLO