

AFTER GAMES

A play by
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Dedicated to those who come close.

CHARACTERS

ROGER (RAJAH) RAIN

Pitcher. What? A professional baseball pitcher, mostly in the minor leagues but he made it to the majors for one game. He turned 31 in August—we know because we checked his baseball reference web page.

GABRIELA (GABI) DELGADO

The rare times she smiles we'd guess she's no more than 30, but grief makes her appear older.

EZRA (T) TEBEAU

Bursts of vitality make him seem ageless, but when his energy wanes we calculate he could be pushing 80.

VOICES

Sports announcer, news, reporter, female actor, male actor.

SETTING

RAJAH's house in San Diego, with side trips to a baseball diamond, a press conference room, and a nursing home.

TIME

Some summer.

Scene 1: Final game

RAJAH upstage. Surrounding him, and the audience, is the hubbub of a lopsided minor league baseball game at the end of the season.

ANNOUNCER VOICE

Not much drama in this final game of the minor league season with the score bad guys nine, good guys nada.

During the above RAJAH fires a pitch. Pop of the catcher's mitt offstage.

And therrre's-uh strike one.

Ball thrown back.

Generous move by the manager to allow Roger Rain to try to record this final out in what could be the end of his career. Yep, likely last call for Rajah, the stadium lights dimmin' and goin' dark on a career.

RAJAH rubs up the baseball and peers in for the catcher's sign.

This broadcast made possible, as always, by our friends at First Commerce, because we're with you ahlllll the way to the bank.

Another pitch. Pop of the catcher's mitt.

Aannnd-uh strike *two*!

Ball thrown back. RAJAH takes in the crowd, the sky—savoring this moment.

And by Rizzo's Pizza, home of the four cheese GRAND SLAM. Drop by one of their three city locations or grab a frozen GRAND SLAM at the store nearest you.

RAJAH fires a pitch.

Strike three, folks, the ballgame, as Rain finishes off the season in style.

Ball lobbed back to RAJAH as a souvenir.

And so it's sayonara to another season—which allows us to step aside for quick messages [*fade*] from more of the good people who make this broadcast possible....

RAJAH walks downstage into the harsh lights of the post-game press conference.

Scene 2: The presser

RAJAH at the required press conference.

Silence during the questions asked; we see only his physical reactions. Sample questions added so the actor can gauge timing and reactions.

Don't have much for you today, just that it felt great to be back on the mound after years rehabbing the shoulder, elbow, and all the, you know—everybody knows the stupid mistakes I made. Just saying felt great to be out there again. Kay, questions.

He listens to a question that takes seven seconds to get out: “Had to be feeling lot of emotion when skip had you come in for that final out, how special was that and just describe your feelings, him giving you that opportunity.”

Yeah, getting the final out last game of the season—that was special. You just, I don't know, it's just you think—and then, and then getting that strikeout, knowing even with the pain you can still do it. Good feeling, yeah.

Another question, six seconds: “With all your injuries and off-field stuff, there are reports the team is going to release you now that the season's over. Comments?”

Team hasn't said anything about releasing me, but no doubt gotta be realistic. After all the surgeries and then the mistakes I made—not gonna lie, I'm an idiot—this could be it for me. Still got the desire to pitch but not my decision I guess.

Four seconds: “The general manager was quoted as saying you're not in their plans for next year.”

Then I don't know what to say. They'll do what they need to do. It's a business, so whatever.

Three seconds: "If they do release you what are you going to do?"

Jeez, *retire* I guess. Don't wanna think about it. Something *else*, guys, come on.

Two seconds: "Rajah, biggest thrill."

Biggest thrill in my career—*great* question. Getting to pitch in that one game in the majors last year. Highlight of my life even though I didn't get a single batter out. Still. You're a kid playing ball all day long and then high school, college, you're good enough to get drafted, you put in your time in the minors and then you're out there on the mound in a major league game—can't, can't even, no way to describe it. Just. I don't know, just.... It'll always be in here [*taps his chest*], ya know? — Yeah, last question over there....

Three seconds: "But just say this *is* the end, what are you going to do next?"

What'll I do after baseball? No [*garbles the profanity humorously in an undertone because it's a public forum*] fuckin idea. [*Shares a laugh with the reporters.*] No, seriously, before that last pitch I was, I was thinking, "Now what?" Guess I'll find out. Okay, that's it, guys, gotta ice the arm.

Scene 3: Rajah home

A broom is propped near the door, a large garbage can and a neglected potted plant nearby, and everywhere are empty liquor bottles. The only furniture is a table with framed photographs of a happy couple.

RAJAH enters pushing an armchair through the door. On the chair are a overfull gear bag and a video camera. He bangs his shoulder on the doorframe.

RAJAH

Fucking goddamn of *course* it's the shoulder! Idiot!

Slugging from a water bottle he takes a few pain pills.

As needed they said....

He tosses the pictures in the direction of the broom.

Strike one, darling.... Strike two.... Aaaand ... that's *three!* Game over!

During the destruction, GABI enters lugging an enormous shoulder bag.

Hi?

GABI

Je-sus! Scared me!

RAJAH

The sign on the door said come on in.... What's wrong with your house?

GABI

Didn't I say seven?

RAJAH

I was parked on the street and saw someone drive up, so thought I'd— Anyway, the sign said....

GABI

Yeah, no, it's cool. Wife put up the sign for movers came earlier today.

RAJAH

You're moving out?

GABI

What makes you say that?

RAJAH

So your wife...?

GABI

RAJAH

Ex. Haven't gotten the hang of calling her that—the Ex. I'll skip it and instead call her "some woman I knew." Some woman I knew cheated on me. If you're embarrassed for me that she fucked another man, don't be. Just some woman I knew. A relief really. I'm happy for her. Really. The new guy hits massive homeruns and makes a hundred times more than I ever made.

GABI

What do you do?

RAJAH

Me? Nothing.

GABI

I charge by the hour. Anything less costs you the full hour.

RAJAH

Don't worry, I got money. Smile.

He swoops the video camera toward her.

GABI

Don't do that.

RAJAH

Camera shy?

GABI

Turn it off.

RAJAH

No problem, just getting used to the equipment. Guy I know's making a documentary of former athletes in their seventies, eighties talking about their lives in the game—tennis, boxing, lacrosse, you name it. I got the baseball players. Plenty of them in retirement homes around here cuz the warm weather. Volunteer only but gives me a skill. Do you maybe have credentials to show me? I mean, you're in my home. Just the chair but still: gotta be careful.

GABI

Tell me you're joking.

RAJAH

Nah, you look legitimate. Wanna sit?

While he collects bottles to toss into the
garbage can, she wriggles into the chair.

GABI

Ooo ... noohh ... ohhh ...

RAJAH

Some woman I knew musta thrown a moving-out party. These bottles everywhere?
Not mine.

GABI

This *chair!*

RAJAH

And just to stone me left behind photos of her and me the year we were happy.
Thanks a lot, bitch.

GABI

I *dream* about chairs like this. You could sleep in it.

RAJAH

Want that chair, you can have it. Truth is I won't need chairs much longer.

GABI

Everybody needs chairs unless they're dead. You planning on being dead? Is that
what this is, you're dying?! It's cancer, isn't it?

RAJAH

Not cancer, no.

GABI

Then what disease is it? Cuz I'm serious that freaks me out.

RAJAH

Pretty sure I'm not dying.

GABI

You don't work, you aren't dying, and yet you live in this great house with nothing
in it. I don't get it.

RAJAH

Long story.

GABI

I hate long stories. Can't you make it short?

RAJAH

Pitcher.

GABI

Sorry?

RAJAH

Pitcher.

GABI

Don't understand.

RAJAH

Professional baseball. Throw the ball past the batter, try to make him swing and miss and look foolish? Cruel, really, and the baseball gods punished me for it: two long scars on my shoulder, another circling my elbow, and the ligaments loaned by corpses forever inside me. The one skill I had gone. And so the team released me today. Which means I'm retired, which means I'm starting life over at thirty-one, which means I gotta sell this house, which means a tiny apartment, which means already regret buying that chair. Short enough?

GABI

But you're rich. Baseball players are.

RAJAH

I made a major league salary for one game. My minor league salary this year was twenty-one thousand. Last real money I made was signing a two million dollar bonus out of college.

GABI

Two million?!

RAJAH

I know.

GABI

Two *million*?!

RAJAH

But you buy a house, you like cars, you like to get high, you're stupid—the money goes quickly. Some woman I know's boyfriend just signed for thirty million over four years. The two of them could buy a house like this every other month.

GABI

I don't feel sorry for you, if that's what you're after.

RAJAH

But I had fantastic medical coverage. Which reminds me.

He takes more pills.

RAJAH

As needed, they said.

GABI

I keep careful track of the time. Up to you how we use the hour.

RAJAH

Nice to have someone to talk to.

GABI

Oh I can talk if that's all you want. You see that video of the terrorist the cops killed in Idaho?

RAJAH

Nope. Don't own a computer, TV, nothing.

GABI

Is that like an ethical thing, like not eating meat?

RAJAH

I'd watch baseball and couldn't take that.

GABI

Everyone's talking about the white separatists and their compound in Idaho the FBI blew up. Didn't hear about that?

RAJAH

Nope.

GABI
Do you live in the real world?

RAJAH
Not yet.

GABI
Four of those assholes got away and yesterday the cops cornered one of them at a gas station in a town in Idaho and shot him. I was in a restaurant and saw it on ten giant TVs. Look this way, it's there. Turn this way, it's there. Look right, look left, it's there. Can't escape it, so I watch it. Someone captured the shooting with his phone, and over and over last night a man went from living to stone dead right in front of you, blown away and blood, the guy with the phone not fifty feet from the action and zooming in like it's a reality show—"Show us the emotion, dead guy." One of the cops starts harassing the guy with the phone, knocking him down with his stick. Okay, something's weird about this. And I realize it's because that *too* is on video. Someone else with a phone is videoing the guy videoing the shooting getting the crap beat out of him. How far does that string of cameras go? Who's the Last Cameraman? Don't you think about things like that?

RAJAH
I do now. Wanna beer?

GABI
Would never say no.

He takes a can of beer from the gear bag and opens it.

RAJAH
Love that sound.

He hands it to her.

GABI
You're not having one?

RAJAH
Go ahead.

He admires her drinking.

RAJAH

I've always liked watching a woman drink beer. Don't know why.

GABI

I'm not dainty.

RAJAH

A ballgame and a beer. Used to be the best way to spend a dying summer evening.

He opens another can for the sound then pours
the beer into the plant.

RAJAH

No problem finding the house?

GABI

Nope.

RAJAH

Long drive for ya?

GABI

Sorta kinda.

RAJAH

Where do you live?

GABI

Eight minutes. If this is what you want to do, that's cool with me. I live in a great big house on the leafy side of town, lawn so big I hire a dozen Mexicans to mow it, maids clean my crap, couple cool cars. What else you want to know about me?

RAJAH

But you're right: honestly? comes down to it?—I wonder if I really care about anybody. During all the months rehabbing they tell me to focus solely on this body. Like total of four years spent rehabbing, tuning everything else out except what body parts are working and what aren't. You get pretty self-centered to the point that now I'm probably an asshole.

GABI

A full hour, no matter what. It's a strict policy. A person says they want an hour but might not last fifteen minutes and then they argue and whine and no one's happy.

RAJAH

Pay you now?

GABI

Cuz if you claim you couldn't get to the bank or some lame excuse, I'm leaving. I know that trick.

RAJAH

No, I got your money. Look away.

GABI

In this empty house there's a hiding place?!

RAJAH

What are you doing?

GABI

Helping you look.

RAJAH

I *know* where I hid the money. Point is I don't want strangers to know.

GABI

Hey: *stranger?* That hurts. You don't know anything about me, so how can you know if I'm a stranger or not? I might be your best friend, you can't know one way or the other after nine minutes.

RAJAH

It's safe now, you can look. I'd like to have you come by as often as you can.

GABI

If you want you can pre-pay for a dozen sessions.

RAJAH

Sure, let's do that. But if I pay you now for a dozen sessions then I'm *paying*, not *pre-paying*. Everything's becoming pre. Pre-order, pre-board, pre-schedule. Now no longer exists.

GABI

NOW!

RAJAH

Je-sus!

Scared me too.

GABI

There's nine hundred and sixty dollars. Count it. Have you noticed that, though? Pre-everything. I got a theory about that. You like theories?

RAJAH

She hands back a couple twenties.

GABI

By pre-paying, you get a discount.

RAJAH

My theory—

GABI

Is it long?

RAJAH

—is that we're so scared of living, which means dying, that we pretend we're only preparing all the time and that life comes later. That eases the fear of dying cuz we tell ourselves we haven't started playing yet. Need another beer?

GABI

No thanks, I'm ready to get started.

RAJAH

Man, that music.

He pours the beer out.

GABI

I guess that means you have a problem.

RAJAH

Doesn't everyone?

GABI

I admire your willpower.

RAJAH

(positioning the video camera)

Let me set this up where it'll see us. Video's for when you're not here.

GABI

Absolutely not. Uh-unh. People put those things online. Where's OFF!

RAJAH

Careful.

GABI

This button here? I want it off. Creeps me out.

RAJAH

I'll do it....

GABI

Turn it off.

RAJAH

I am!

GABI

I swear.

RAJAH

It is, it's off.

GABI

Let's just do this. Where do you want me?

RAJAH

Floor's fine.

They get on the floor.

GABI

...

RAJAH

...

GABI

Hola. Como estas? We'll start out with phrases of greeting as if we're meeting on the street.

From her bag, she digs out a language book to hand him.

GABI

Pretend we're friends, so we'll use the familiar. I'll say a phrase and you repeat. Later we'll break down the phrases into components and meaning. But for now let's just talk and repeat, talk and repeat. Hola, Señor Rain. Como estas?

RAJAH

Pretend we're friends you said. Friends call me Rajah.

GABI

Hola, Rajah. Como estas?

RAJAH

Hola.... Sorry I ...

GABI

Gabriela. Gabi.

RAJAH

Hola, Gabi. Como estas?

GABI

Or you could use the vernacular and say, ¿Qué tal? Okay, so you asked me how I am, and I reply, Muy bien, muchas gracias. ¿Y tu?

RAJAH

Um....

GABI

What's your level?

RAJAH

No level.

GABI

You have to have a level, even if it's beginner.

RAJAH

Pre-beginner. How long's it going to take before I can claim to have a level?

She checks her schedule.

GABI

Let's see, mmmm, next week: Monday works ... Tuesday does ... looks like Wednesday's good ... Thursday's still open.... How about every day?

RAJAH

Love it.

GABI

You're my only client. I thought I'd get horny gringos who wanted to learn Spanish because their girlfriend or boyfriend was from Mexico or Puerto Rico or wherever. That was going to be my specialty: Spanish for cross cultural love. No suerte. Okay, we've said hello and are asking how we are. So again. You say...

RAJAH

Como estas?

GABI

And I say, Muy bien, muchas gracias. Y tu?

RAJAH

Hold it. I wanna do this backwards and start with goodbye.

GABI

Adiós.

RAJAH

But is there another word to use when saying goodbye to your former life? The familiar or whatever.

GABI

Just adiós.

RAJAH

But that sounds so sing-y and happy.

GABI

I love that you're this way. You can learn to make adiós sound sad, of course you can.

RAJAH

Like this? Hey, career, hey life till now: ahh dee *ohhhs!*

GABI

That's one way. With me you'll get better at sounding sad.

Scene 4: Place you don't want to be

A common area in an institutional home.

EZRA watches TV, a cardboard box in his lap.

NEWS VOICE

—for reasons of insanity. On Wall Street, stocks fell sharply for the ninth consecutive day. Trading was halted briefly when a suspicious bag—

He switches channels.

FEMALE ACTOR

Oh Bobby I—

Switches channels.

NEWS VOICE

Next a TV Six Special Report: “Terror at Home: Uprising in the Northwest.” Robert Quick has our report. Bob.

REPORTER VOICE

This small town in Idaho is like most small towns in America. There's a one room library—

Switches channels.

MALE ACTOR

—too. *So* much. But Betty I—

Switches channels. RAJAH enters.

REPORTER VOICE

and even a dogcatcher, who still makes the rounds in this sputtering white van to catch our stray friends and transport them to the safety of the local animal shelter [*woof woof.*] Something else exists in this average small town and it too has become normal in America: Fear.

From the television come sounds of explosions, screams and shouting police and bystanders.

RAJAH

(overlapping the chaos on the television)

I'm looking for Ken Davis? Supposed to be in one-oh-six-A but no one's there.

REPORTER VOICE

Until this morning, the smoking rubble behind me was the fortified compound of a radical group of—

Switches channels.

FEMALE ACTOR

But Bobby she'll *never* love you like I—

EZRA turns off the TV.

EZRA

One-oh-six-A. My god, the reduction: Life becomes a room number.

RAJAH

Know him? Ken Davis?

EZRA

You obviously don't, so why you here?

RAJAH

To interview him. I'm helping a guy doing a documentary capturing the lives of our seniors.

EZRA

Two hundred beds in this place—they captured enough of us already.

RAJAH

You Ken maybe?

EZRA

You staff?

RAJAH

This badge gets me around the place but I don't think that makes me staff.

EZRA

Loan me five dollars.

RAJAH

....

EZRA

....

RAJAH

Sure, maybe I got five dollars....

EZRA

What a *fistful*.

RAJAH

Yeah, no, here you go: five dollars, no problem.

EZRA

There's a filling station down the street. Buy me a pack of cigs? Here's five dollars. I'd go myself but look at this leg. Should get one of those titanium knee replacements, but the cost. Whoo-ee. You think *Medicaid*? Forget it. I'm stuck with original worn out body parts.

RAJAH

Yeah, helping a guy with a documentary about former ballplayers, getting their stories before they're lost. I got baseball.

EZRA

Just thought, cuz my bad leg and all, thought a young, fit guy like you'd do an old man a kindness.

RAJAH

And looking for Ken Davis. That you?

EZRA

If it is what do I win?

RAJAH

Each of you has a story. This documentary gives you a chance to tell it to the world. It's called *PersonStories*.

EZRA

Prison stories?

RAJAH

PersonStories. I know you heard me right. Keep talking, need to get something from my bag.

EZRA

Wasn't saying anything.

RAJAH

Coupla pill bottles—should be on top.

He slugs the pills with water.

EZRA

What'd they do to you?

RAJAH

Lots of surgeries. Last one a year ago but still a fire in there. One extra to make sure. That usually does the trick.

EZRA

Those pills are what exactly?

RAJAH

It's okay, I know what I'm doing.

EZRA

Uh-huh. What'd you do before making movies?

RAJAH

Pitcher.

EZRA

Sorry, didn't catch.

RAJAH

Pitcher.

EZRA

Son, I don't understand what you're saying.

RAJAH

Let's get started. Smile. Anyone can shoot video, we used to video each other during games. The trick's in the editing. I'm a baby at it but learning. Pitcher. I was a pitcher.

EZRA

What does that even mean?

RAJAH

Smile.

EZRA

You keep *saying* that. Am I supposed to be happy?

RAJAH

Baseball. I was a pitcher in the majors.

EZRA

You?

RAJAH

What I said.

EZRA

Baseball.

RAJAH

Right. But this is about you, your career.

EZRA

The major leagues.

RAJAH

Yep.

EZRA

Bullshit.

RAJAH

Seems like it.

EZRA

A millionaire spoiled prima donna wasting time with an old man in a nursing home?

RAJAH

People think you make tons of money but I was in the minors nine years. That's poverty level.

EZRA

Everybody comes in here lying to me. Major leagues. You trying to *impress* somebody?

RAJAH

Anyway.

EZRA

If I'd been a liar like you I'd have had more sex. A *pitcher*, baby doll, that's me, let's find someplace dark. You get a kick out of bullshitting to an old man because you think I won't remember any of this thirty minutes from now?

RAJAH

Don't care you believe me or not.

EZRA

Even though I *won't* remember this thirty minutes from now, why you selling me this story? Those people online have lists of every player who ever played the game. You saying I'd find you there?

RAJAH

I'm there.

EZRA

What's your name?

RAJAH

Roger Rain.

From the cardboard box, EZRA removes a postcard for RAJAH to write on.

EZRA

You think I'm going to remember that? Write it down.

RAJAH

"Dear Ken—big aloha from Honolulu! Lotsa hugs and kisses you know where! Love, Darlene."

That's private mail, buddy.

EZRA

You just handed it to me.

RAJAH

Never heard of Roger.... What name did you say?

EZRA

I'm writing it.

RAJAH

Print. Big letters. Do it again in big letters.

EZRA

RAJAH hands back the postcard.

And if I look up Roger Rain, it'll be there online?

EZRA

Appeared in only one game. Give up a home run, a double, two walks, another double and they yanked me. My career ERA is infinity. That drunken eight, fallen on its ass. Time and space go on forever and so do the batters smacking the ball all over the place offa me.

RAJAH

You're smart, with your machine thing. Help me with this. My granddaughter gave it to me. Said it would help me keep track of my schedule.

EZRA

What help do you need?

RAJAH

Oh I can light it up. You hit this thing here.

EZRA

Magic.

RAJAH

But then what? My granddaughter said I could store all my friends in here. I think she means their addresses and phone numbers and such. I'll put you in first you show me how.

EZRA

RAJAH

You want me in your list of contacts?

EZRA

Show me how.

RAJAH

You tap around a few times and ... see? There's a place for address, phone, email.

EZRA

Go ahead, add your information. Address and so on.

RAJAH

So. Roger Rain. See? Then my address. Pop into this other place and I can add personal information about myself. Like what?

EZRA

I'd say the baseball guy but we both know that's BS.

RAJAH

Might as well be.

EZRA

The *PrisonStory* guy. Put that.

RAJAH

Video guy.

RAJAH hands the device back to EZRA.

EZRA

Huge probably, your house. I picture you overwhelmingly happy in your huge house, with your gigantic gorgeous wife, and two or three enormous kids.

RAJAH

My wife left me.

EZRA

Killing me with reality? What's the point of that? Makes me happy imagining you out in the wild living a huge heroic life.

RAJAH
And no kids.

EZRA
I'm ignoring you. In my mind you got it made. Perfect life.

RAJAH
Ready to do this?

EZRA
Sure. Do what?

RAJAH
The interview.

EZRA
How did I get picked anyway?

RAJAH
You were a ballplayer.

EZRA
Must have been. Yeah, turn that thing on, let's go.

RAJAH
It's on.

EZRA
My *PrisonStory*'ll have them weeping: Each spring is precious beyond words and every fall breaks my heart and the dead in my chest wake me every night and you know how many springs and falls I got in here? Old is your ribs cracking with memories of all the springs and falls that are gone. Is that thing on?

RAJAH
It's on.

EZRA
I read that with genetic surgery and artificial hearts and nanoblood, life expectancy for those gigantic children of yours—take away one or two getting killed in wars and terrorist attacks and good old-fashioned car crashes—will reach a hundred and fifty years, easy. Longer lives, more time for sex. Those children of yours will set records for the amount of sex they have. But! But will that make sex *better*? I'm not so sure. They'll get jaded.

RAJAH

Let's stick to your life as a ballplayer. Who'd you play for, what was your greatest game kinda thing.

EZRA

Consider the sex-to-death ratio for every one of us.

RAJAH

Give it a rest, man.

EZRA

Gonna die once, sure, but goddamn those magic nights you get. The soft hair. The reactive movement. The skin. The moans. And hair. I love hair.

RAJAH

If you want to be serious about this, start with your name. Into the camera.

EZRA

E. S. Tebeau. E for Ezra, S for Sterling, T for short.

RAJAH

You're not Ken Davis.

EZRA

Even he's no longer Ken Davis. His *PrisonStory* ended this morning when they moved him to the Rainbow Units. For those who need what they call special care. Your badge would get you over there but try interviewing those people. Forget it. Their stories are lost forever. At least if you want a first person account. Now Ken's just meat, breathing. He'd want to die if he were capable of wanting.

RAJAH

Talk about a bullshitter. So long.

EZRA

Don't go.

RAJAH

This may be a joke to you, but I need this. And according to you I got a hundred and twenty years staring me in the face, and I'm sorry you're old and stuck in this place and aren't getting any ass but I only wish I were three-quarters dead like you so's didn't have figure out what the hell I'm gonna do with my life.

EZRA

I apologize. I am, I'm sorry. Sincerely. I'm a cranky old asshole, but please don't leave. I'm no ballplayer but I got a story for your camera. Is it on?

RAJAH

One sec. It's on.

EZRA

Let me tell you about Ken. Yes Ken, yes my pal. These things in this box are his. His watch—doesn't work. These birthday cards and Christmas cards from his daughter and grandkids—they never visit. Wedding ring. And that postcard some lover sent fifty years ago. He did say he played baseball, but I never thought it was true. Good for him. And you too. A former ballplayer. A pitcher. That makes you special. The rest of us have to be content with the huge cheering section all our lives. I was nothing special. Went to ballgames, went to movies. Sat there. Let others live for me. Why the hell wasn't I a hero like you? Instead I did what everybody did. Had an okay job making okay money. Had an okay house. Had a wife, a kid, both okay. And now I'm here and those mediocrities are fossils inside me. Dying's not the worst thing that happens. Memories are. Tell me again what you do with my *PrisonStory*.

RAJAH

Send it to a guy.

EZRA

What's the guy do with it?

RAJAH

Depends on how good a job I do with the editing. Got this great software but gotta develop the skill for how the bits go together. Even though you're not a former ballplayer, the guy might look at it if your story's interesting.

EZRA

I'm a killer.

RAJAH

Not *that* interesting. We need to believe it.

EZRA

In here we all devise an exit strategy. Know what I'm talking about?

RAJAH

I think so.

EZRA

But of course you wait too long. Just one more day, you say to yourself, until it's too late and you're in the Rainbow Units. Seen it enough times. But if you have a friend you trust, you make a pact. That was me and Ken. At least one of you won't have to endure the indignity of being around too long. Looks like I got the short end of the stick. Let me have that badge of yours. Tell em you lost it. I could use those pretty pills too.

RAJAH

You're nuts. Imagine they found out I helped you kill that poor guy?

EZRA

Not some poor guy—my friend Ken. Who's counting on me.

RAJAH

Forget it.

EZRA

People are, they're cowards.

RAJAH

Calling me a coward?

EZRA

No heroes anymore.

RAJAH

See ya.

EZRA

Think they'll arrest me when they see my confession?

RAJAH

How do I put this? My guy doing the documentary sees this video of you talking about killing your friend Ken, who abruptly dies? Then, yes, I think the cops'll be knocking on your door.

RAJAH exits.

EZRA

And I'm not three-quarters dead, I'm ninety-nine one hundredths dead! But still breathing, still dangerous!

Scene 5: Taste it

RAJAH's house. RAJAH is in the chair adding voiceover to his video.

EZRA

(recorded)

E. S. Tebeau. E for Ezra, S for Sterling, T for short.

RAJAH

You lived a long time, T, wanna take a stab at the meaning of life? [*Not happy with that; again:*] T, in your many *many* years on this earth..... [*Again*] You're old, T. Two strikes and an unhittable fastball heading your way. Tell us the lessons you've learned.

EZRA

(recorded)

Consider the sex-to-death ratio for every one of us. Gonna die once, sure, but goddamn those magic nights you get.

RAJAH

And what plans do you have?

EZRA

(recorded)

Devise an exit strategy.

GABI arrives.

RAJAH

Tell us what exactly you mean by exit strategy.

RAJAH waves GABI over to the chair, which he relinquishes. She sits.

EZRA

(recorded)

If you have a friend you trust, you make a pact.

RAJAH

(starting another voiceover)

Let's be sure we—

Oooohh, this chair is like sex. GABI

Will ya? RAJAH

Did I mess you up? Sorry.... GABI

Voiceovers. RAJAH

Sorry, it's just. This *chair*. GABI

Satisfied? RAJAH

Oh, yes. GABI

Enjoy yourself, but quietly. RAJAH

Kay. GABI

(recording voiceover) RAJAH

Let's make sure we got this straight, T, you're going to help your friend *die*?

(recorded) EZRA

I'm a killer.

Huh?! Great story, or what?! RAJAH

[*Impressed*] Wow. [*But not really because:*] I have no idea what that was about. GABI

Here's an old guy still battling, still trying to do the right thing, and I got him confessing plans to put another inmate or whatever they're called out of his misery. RAJAH

GABI

If he hasn't killed anyone yet then it's a *pre*-confession.

RAJAH

Good one. Wanna beer? Right back.

He exits briefly.

GABI

Love you, chair. [*Calling out*] You seem happy!

He returns with a six pack, hands her a can.

RAJAH

It's great to have a project. He won't do it, of course, but what if he did, *killed* his friend? My video story makes the old guy immortal.

GABI

I don't need this, don't want to tempt you or anything.

RAJAH

You'd be doing me a favor.

She opens it.

RAJAH

Love that hiss, that crunch.

He can't resist opening a can too.

RAJAH

Ahhh....

GABI

...

RAJAH

...

GABI

Aren't you gonna pour yours out?

Sure.

RAJAH

As he pours his beer into the plant, she takes a gulp of hers then pours it out in solidarity. She removes a book from her giant bag.

GABI

My niece wants this back.

RAJAH

You brought it! The children's book! Hace mucho anos, en una pequena ciudad vivia /

GABI

wait

RAJAH

un joven sastre muy /

GABI

stop

RAJAH

trabajador y simpatico.

She thinks he's done.

GABI

Thank you! Hurts my brain.

But he's just taking a breath.

RAJAH

El sastre, convencido—

GABI

No more! Stop! Seriously. The pain.

RAJAH

Not good?

GABI

First, *very important*, pronounce the *eñe* whenever you see it.

RAJAH

The squiggly thing?

GABI

“Hace muchos *años*.” *Anos*—no *eñe*—means asses. The children’s story doesn’t start out “Many *asses* ago.”

RAJAH

Ah getting ass ... happy times. Makes me wanna to crack open a beer.

He does.

RAJAH

That *sound*. Yeah we did all right in the minors, but the millionaires in the majors? they’re the ones getting muy mucho anos.

GABI

How sweet, but better not make mistakes like that.

RAJAH

I’ll be careful.

GABI

You’re making me nervous opening all those beers.

RAJAH

You take it. Maybe actually drink this one?

GABI

No, thanks.

RAJAH

No, *gracias*.

GABI

I don’t really like beer.

RAJAH

I see what you’re doing, and that’s nice of you and everything, but I’m all right, just don’t think that sound has gotta disappear from my life too.

He pours out the beer.

GABI

Bueno, think you can translate what you just read.

RAJAH

I'll give it a shot. Many years ago—easy—in a *pequena*—

GABI

Pequeña. The *eñe*!

RAJAH

Right right, *pequenyuh* ... but what's it mean?

GABI

Small.

RAJAH

Damn, I *knew* that. Small city there lived a young *sastre* ... hmmm.

GABI

Tailor.

RAJAH

Young *tailor*. *Mucho*: very—everyone knows that. *Trabajador*: work-something....

GABI

Want me to tell you?

RAJAH

No help, shhh, let me work it out. *Y*: and. *Simpatico*: sympathetic. Many years ago ... in a small city ... there lived a young tailor ... who very worked a lot and was sympathetic.

GABI

Who was a very hard worker and likable.

RAJAH

I can read a sentence and understand it! Tell your niece thank you, *gracias*, and that I'll be careful with her book.

GABI

She won't miss it. She's beyond this level.

RAJAH

How old is she?

GABI

Six. Started first grade this month.

RAJAH

So I'm at *kindergarten* level?... Already?!

He yanks her from the chair for a hug.

GABI

That's okay.... Yes, all right....

RAJAH

Gracias, muchas muy grande gracias!

GABI

De nada. Why Spanish, anyway? You never said.

RAJAH

I'm moving to Venezuela.

GABI

What?!

RAJAH

Have a chance to catch on with a team down there for winter ball, maybe put off retirement a few months. My agent got me a tryout with the...

He looks into the gear bag for the info the team provided.

Care-ebees day anzoa-tea-guwee.

GABI

Caribes de Anzoátegui.

RAJAH

The way you say it. We'll see if the arm holds up and I make the team. Hope so cuz once the game spits you out for good you gotta get serious.

GABI

No, verdad, estoy enojada contigo porque tu puedes escapar.

RAJAH

Whoa, what was that?

GABI

Forget it. It's beyond you kindergartners.

RAJAH

Say it again, slowly.

GABI

Estoy enojada contigo—

RAJAH

Stop! Estoy is I am, so: you are. Enojada is ... I have no idea. What was the next word?

GABI

I said I'm angry that you get to escape!

RAJAH

Shit, Gabi, give me time. I'd have gotten it eventually.

GABI

No you wouldn't have! And I don't want to waste my life while you pretend you know my language. When you get to Venezuela, just do what you gringos always do: speak *louder!*

RAJAH

Wanna pour out another beer?!

GABI

No!

Nonetheless he opens another.

RAJAH

Painful music. Love it. Just a sip is all.

GABI

Tell me if you expect me to stop you.

RAJAH

It's just beer and just a sip. Love that explosion of bubbles in the mouth.

GABI

Because I'll do it. Once. I'll say stop—once—but I'm not playing the game where you scare me while I beg you to stop killing yourself. But I will do it once: Stop, Rajah. Pour that out and throw the rest of the beers away.

RAJAH

To save me is not why you're here. And really, I'm all right. I'm happy!

GABI

Are you moving to Venezuela for good?

RAJAH

The season's only October through January, but that should be long enough.

GABI

For what exactly?

RAJAH

See if this makes sense. I need to without words I'm used to cuz those words make me ache. I'm a fuckup and wanna go to another country and catch a cab, order a meal, complain when it gets loud outside my room, flirt, crash a party and say hello to everyone, say, Yes, please, Great weather, No thank you. But in Spanish, with words that to me are babies. The words in my head are about baseball and failure and they hurt. I want to wash the hurt out of my head so baseball is a game again. Turn two, Hit the cutoff man, Strike the sumbitch out!—whatever those are in Spanish, that's what I want to hear myself saying. Last year my minor league team played an exhibition game in Mexico and sitting in the dugout I'm hearing all this noise around me, like music because it doesn't mean anything to me, just is sound, and I'm closing my eyes to the sun and listening to this music and I'm thinking, "This is being a kid again."

He notices that he finished the beer. He opens another can.

RAJAH

First beer I wasn't paying attention and forgot to taste it. Might as well *taste* it, right? Just a sip this time.

GABI

What do you call them, the videos you make about ballplayers?

RAJAH

PersonStories, they're called *PersonStories*.

GABI

Interview me!

RAJAH

All right, for fun. Don't be nervous, I ask easy questions. Ready?

GABI

Yes.

RAJAH

Your name?

GABI

...

RAJAH

Look at me, not the camera. Relax.

GABI

Hi.

RAJAH

Good. So let's pretend we know your name. We're here to learn the stories of ancient former ballplayers like you. About baseball, but also about life. We ask that you lay bare your soul, reveal your deepest secrets. And if you plan to kill someone, we invite you to pre-confess that here. So have you?

GABI

Killed someone?

RAJAH

If that's what you think I was asking.

GABI
You call these questions easy?

RAJAH
Now that I look at you more closely I can tell you're not ancient.

GABI
Nope.

RAJAH
Were you a baseball player?

GABI
Unh-uh.

RAJAH
We're intrigued. Not old. Not a former baseball player. So why do we want your life story?

GABI
I don't live where I said I live.

RAJAH
We're well aware you don't live in a mansion with servants.

GABI
Who's this "we"?

RAJAH
Your audience, your friends. So you don't live where you said you live—go on.

GABI
It's a long story.

RAJAH
We hate long stories.

GABI
Tough. The job I told you I had? In that insurance office? Why we couldn't do lessons during the day? I lost that job before I even met you. The boss was. He started. It's such an old story. *Touching* me.

RAJAH

(breaking his interviewer persona)

Are you being serious?

GABI

He said he felt sorry for me.

RAJAH

Why?

GABI

I haven't got to that yet.

He tosses aside the empty, opens another.

RAJAH

So the fucker started touching you.

GABI

So I'm out of a job, my lease runs out, I couldn't afford to stay where I was, so now every morning I wake up in the backseat of my car.

RAJAH

Your car?! This whole time I've known you?!

GABI

Don't feel sorry for me, I hate that.

RAJAH

Come on, Gabi, you're homeless!

GABI

Not *homeless*. Well, *kinda* homeless. But every morning I drive to a different restaurant, order coffee and use the restroom to bathe. Sometimes I wash my hair. This giant bag of mine? I carry soap, shampoo, washcloth and a towel everywhere I go. I wear a baseball cap to hide my wet hair. That's why it never dries right. I've got juices and carbo bars—want one? Got razors and tampons and deodorant. Afterwards I drive to a park and drape the towels on the bumpers to dry. In the trunk I got books and an idiotic video game my niece let me borrow. And because it's still summer and stays light late I read after our lessons. Then I listen to the radio, but not too much because of the battery. And you pre-paid for lessons, so I'm able to eat and put gas in my car. I'm lucky.

RAJAH

Money for an apartment, that's all you need. I got money.

GABI

Come back. I haven't finished.

RAJAH

Look away.

GABI

Oh my god, your hiding place again?

RAJAH

Let me see what kind of cash I got left.

GABI

I don't want your money!

RAJAH

I understand, it's a pride thing—keep looking away—but this is a gift, no strings.

GABI

Listen to me!

RAJAH

It's safe, you can look. I got eleven hundred left. I already have my ticket to Puerto La Cruz, and once I'm there the team will take care of me—place to stay, meal money—so take it. No take it, we'll figure it out later.

GABI

Look away.

RAJAH

What are you doing?

GABI

Look *away*.

He does. She puts the money back where he got it from.

GABI

If I want your money I know where to look. We haven't finished my interview.

Okay, then....

RAJAH

....

GABI

We're waiting.

RAJAH

GABI

My fiancé was one of the agents in that FBI raid in Idaho. Not this last one where they blew the place up, but the one in July that turned out so badly. I'm sure you saw the video. Everyone did. They killed one agent and wounded my fiancé and dragged him to the bridge and strung him up by his ankles, fucking skinheads spitting on my baby.

RAJAH

I'll turn this off.

GABI

Keep it on!

RAJAH

You don't need ta....

GABI

Is it on?

RAJAH

It's on.

GABI

And then everyone in the compound, children even, took target practice on him. And it's on video. Forever. My fiancé dying afraid and alone forever.

RAJAH

You sure you want ta...?

GABI

That's when my boss. He said he was *comforting* me. His hand. We're all so sorry for your loss, you shouldn't be alone at a time like this, let me— *Fuck you, pervert!* And I don't care. About anything. Never again.

She looks into the camera and feels her face.

GABI

I can't see. Am I crying?

RAJAH

They're tears.

GABI

People interviewed on TV are always crying, everybody wants you to feel sorry for them. I hate that. Stop it, stop crying.

RAJAH

It's best to get it out.

GABI

What do you know about it? Let me have one of your pills.

RAJAH

They're *pain* pills.

GABI

I'm in pain.

RAJAH

Sure, okay, one won't hurt.

He shakes out a pill for her.

GABI

Come on.

He gives her another.

GABI

Give me lots.

RAJAH

Jeez, Gabi, what are you after?

GABI

Nothing. Nothing's what I'm after.

Fucking scaring me. RAJAH

She opens a beer and washes down the pills.

What happens? GABI

You might feel tingly and numb is all. RAJAH

Numb's what I want. Gunfire and a rusty bridge and people screaming and spitting and he's helpless and dying and it's on video and so I know his suffering never dies. Would you give me the bottle if I asked? GABI

Fuck, no. RAJAH

An ending would be a relief. GABI

Jesus, Gabi. RAJAH

All those and it's done. GABI

Why you scare me like this? RAJAH

Who else can I scare? GABI

Not giving you any more pills, just forget it. RAJAH

They aren't working anyway. GABI

You just took them. RAJAH

I need them to deaden the craving.

GABI

What craving?

RAJAH

To die.

GABI

Oh. Right. That craving.

RAJAH

I knew you'd know. Is it still on?

GABI

It's on.

RAJAH

Good. It's safer with it on. Everybody fakes it a little for the camera.

GABI

He pops open another beer.

RAJAH

Gotta remember to *taste* it this time.

Scene 6: Visitor

RAJAH's house a week later. A folding chair sits near the big chair. A dozen or more empty cans of beer litter the stage. RAJAH holds a six-pack in rings, pitching the unopened cans into the large garbage can across the stage. A second six is at his feet.

RAJAH

The crowd is on its feet. One out to go.... Strike one! Some of the best hitters in the Caribbean league totally overpowered, no chance tonight against THE RAIN. This is a guy had major shoulder and elbow surgery! To come back and be so dominant is astounding. Ass-town-DING!... Rain looks in for his sign.

GABI enters.

RAJAH

Kicks and fires.... Strike two! ¡Estupendo! The Rainman is making these hitters look silly. And strike three! Side retired, game over, Rain wins, Rain wins, Rain *ganar!*

GABI

So glad. I thought for sure the other team would win.

RAJAH

Want to toss one? Don't worry, in this house you can't break anything.

She tosses the can in any direction.

RAJAH

Excellent throw.

GABI

I don't know how to aim, so I never hit my target, so I never try.

RAJAH

Targets are everywhere. You're bound to hit something.

GABI

I'll toss the rest of these out. Can't leave temptation around.

RAJAH

I guess these go away too.

From various hiding places he pulls out bottles of prescription pills. She takes them to the garbage while he inspects his plant.

RAJAH

Gone a week and it dies?

GABI

Looks okay to me.

RAJAH

You kidding? This thing's dead.

GABI

Maybe if we hadn't poured a gallon of beer into it?

RAJAH

You could be on to something. Hey, did ya see the new chair!

GABI

Nice.

RAJAH

Now we both have a place to sit.

He's about to reclaim the original comfy chair
but she beats him to it.

GABI

oooohh....

RAJAH

Yeah, no, sure, you take that one. This one's fine.

GABI

An entire *week* without my chair.

RAJAH

Shit, I shoulda given you my keys! You coulda stayed here the whole time I been gone. Front door key, take it. Stay here from now on.

GABI

But you're back now.

RAJAH

Big empty house, plenty of room to avoid each other in.

GABI

Nope, not a good idea, not with you back.

RAJAH

It's not like we're gonna fall in love.

GABI

I don't want to mess with our safe situation. Teacher ... client.

RAJAH

Seriously, take the key.

GABI

I'm happy the way it is. For the first time I feel totally safe sleeping in my car.

RAJAH

Just because you now park in my driveway doesn't make me feel better about this.

GABI

Tell me about this past week.

RAJAH

A tune-up on The Farm and all's good.

She picks up a brochure.

GABI

"Where people find the strength for everyday living." Was it really a farm?

RAJAH

One of the buildings was definitely a barn at one time.

GABI

"Our unique holistic addiction recovery program combines individualized physical exercise, one-on-one inquiry discussions, controlled group dynamics, and alternative approaches to help the individual achieve a maximum level of recovery for a return to a real-life environment."

RAJAH

Yeah, it was a riot.

GABI

What do you do all day on The Farm?

RAJAH

They keep us busy. Craft classes. A speaker series of famous drunks and addicts from the business and entertainment worlds. And they bring in bands twice a week. Their strategy is to ramp us up to party mode where normally we'd start guzzling or popping or snorting. It's emotional seeing people dancing happily, no cares, then looking lost when grasping for bottles that aren't there, big or small, booze or pills. We cry a lot. Friday afternoon they show the car crash films. They have endings, so we love those.

GABI

I wish I was an addict.

Say what?!

RAJAH

Life's easier for you.

GABI

That's insane.

RAJAH

GABI

You have an explanation. A chemical thing, they say. That means you can be helped and so people fuss over you. Me they just avoid because what can be done? He's dead.

RAJAH

....

GABI

....

RAJAH

Ready for batting practice?!

GABI

Do we really?

He pulls a bat and baseball from the gear bag.

RAJAH

I promised.

GABI

You were drunk.

RAJAH

I'm jazzed about being home: up. But bummed about the plant: down. Too many emotions bouncing up and down inside me, need ta calm it down with a little bit of the only thing I do well.

GABI

What am I supposed to do?

I'll toss em and you whack em. RAJAH

How you supposed to hold this thing? GABI

Like this. RAJAH

He adjusts her grip. That intimate posture of coach and student.

Got it. GABI

Got it? RAJAH

I said. GABI

Hey, everybody: *she's got it!* RAJAH

Now what? GABI

Practice swinging— RAJAH

She swings before he can get out of the way.

I nearly killed you. GABI

Missed me by at least an inch. Keep swinging just like that. Only this time?—wait till I throw the ball. RAJAH

He trots downstage and stands with his back to the audience. He holds up the ball.

See dee ball, hit dee ball. RAJAH

He pitches. She takes a mighty cut but misses by a mile.

Works better if you keep your eyes open. RAJAH

What if I actually hit it? GABI

In this house who cares? RAJAH

Where'd it go? GABI

Where do you think? Behind you. RAJAH

She retrieves it and experiments with how to throw a baseball.

Anytime. RAJAH

She gives up and rolls it to him.

Yep, routine. Both of us need that. Every day batting practice, then Spanish lessons. That'll settle us down, give us reasons. RAJAH

Reasons for what? GABI

Exactly. RAJAH

He holds up the ball.

Strike one. Ready? RAJAH

I guess. GABI

Are you ready? RAJAH

I'm ready! GABI

Sure? RAJAH

Throw it! GABI

Rain into his windup ... RAJAH

He does so in slow motion.

Come on! GABI

Rain delivers nice and sloooow... RAJAH

She misses by a mile.

Better, I think. GABI

Roll it back to me. RAJAH

That's enough. Let's start your lesson. GABI

That's only two strikes. You get another. RAJAH

Not interested in humiliating myself. GABI

Kay, then, lessons.

RAJAH

He heads for the comfy chair but she beats him to it.

RAJAH

Forgot, that chair's yours. This little one's mine. Cool.

She gets the Spanish book out of her bag. He has his book.

GABI

Lesson ten. *De viaje*. The trip. Ready?

RAJAH

Yep.

GABI

Julio and Julia are planning their trip.

RAJAH

I love those two.

GABI

Let's go over objects they find in the hotel. I'll name the object in English and you say it in Spanish. Listo? Bed. The Spanish for bed.

RAJAH

Cama.

GABI

La cama.

RAJAH

La cama.

GABI

Bathroom.

RAJAH

El bano.

GABI
El baño.

RAJAH
El baño.

GABI
When's your flight to Venezuela?

RAJAH
Been meaning to tell you....

GABI
So do.

RAJAH
Kinda sad about it cuz it means we have to say goodbye.

GABI
I'm not, I won't fall apart or anything.

RAJAH
Report to the team on the 10th. So leave in five days.

GABI
Shower. The Spanish for shower.

RAJAH
La ducha. I'm crushing these. I took the book with me to The Farm and practiced vocab all week.

GABI
Good for you that you're leaving. Escape, no problem. [*Long pause as she works to get the following out in a light, carefree manner:*] I'll kinda really miss you.

EZRA taps on the door, sticks his head in.

RAJAH
What the hell?

EZRA
Cab driver's impressed that I live here. By the way, I'm a little short. Could you?

Ezra?

RAJAH

EZRA enters, carrying a black garbage bag containing his things.

Roger.

EZRA

What are you doing here?

RAJAH

EZRA

Your address is in this startlingly bright thing my daughter gave me so I wouldn't lose track of my friends. And I didn't need your badge after all, so you can stop feeling bad you didn't help me escape. Easier than I thought—just start walking. The cab? I didn't realize how much it would cost.

No, sure, I'll take care of it.

RAJAH

RAJAH exits.

EZRA

(calling after)

I told him you were my son! So if he asks!... —Hi. I like you.

Hello.

GABI

EZRA

Call me T. He told me you left him. Are you back or are you a different wife?

GABI

I'm his teacher.

EZRA

I always wanted a teacher like you. Yeah, like I said, the cab driver was impressed with the neighborhood, the house. So am I. I knew it would be perfect. At least the outside looks like I imagined it. Inside?—not so much. Two chairs and dust. Can I sit down? My leg's killing me.

GABI

Take this chair.

EZRA

Oh, my, yes. Very nice. Like a bear hug.

GABI

I think it's like a lover taking you from behind.

EZRA

Ah, that hadn't occurred to me.... Yes, you two are lucky to have each other. You and Rajah, I mean, not the chair.

GABI

We're not a couple.

EZRA

I'm not old fashioned. Sex and not married?—s'okay with me.

RAJAH enters.

RAJAH

Guy wanted a lot of money for one cab ride.

EZRA

Had so much to see. The new owners cut down the silver maple had been in the yard even before my wife and me moved in fifty years ago. But it was great to see our house again. Thought I'd cry but, nope, completely dry-eyed.

RAJAH

Didn't he wonder?

EZRA

Who?

RAJAH

The cabbie. He musta wondered.

EZRA

That I'm wearing slippers? What does he care?

RAJAH

You can't stay here. How about your daughter? Should we maybe call her?

EZRA

She's the one put me in that place. My wife dies and the day after the funeral I'm sleeping in room one-oh-five-B. I was just telling your girlfriend that I'm glad a nice couple lives here. I was afraid it'd be just you and me. That woulda been depressing.

GABI

We're not a couple. I'm his teacher.

EZRA

Understood.

RAJAH

This is the guy. The non-baseball player on the video. His name's Ezra Tebeau.

EZRA

She's calls me T.

RAJAH

You understand what his being here means?

GABI

He killed his friend.

EZRA

She's direct.

GABI

They'll be searching for you.

EZRA

Only because it makes them look bad if I die in out here in the wild where people notice. They gotta make sure they stay certified. Otherwise they wouldn't care. They'll talk to my daughter but that gets them nowhere. She doesn't know all my friends.

GABI

How'd you do it? It can't be easy to kill someone.

EZRA

Thank you! Thank you for taking me seriously. I like you! So this was my morning: come awake to the usual irritating sounds, hobble stiffly to the can and ask

myself for the millionth time if I got the guts to keep my promise to Ken. Today the answer was yes. So I'm standing by his bed and his body's there, its eyes open, breathing loud. Ahhh-whooh, ahhh-whooh. Like that. And it hits me: Ken's not here. The eyes follow you around the room warily cuz it has no idea who you are. I'm going to say something, and it's awful. A cat. It's like being in a room with a cat. It follows you with its eyes and you're certain it's thinking about you but you read any science article and you know it's just a buzzing of instinct in the brain. And you're a mere shape catching its eye. A cat. Go ahead, laugh.

RAJAH

No one's laughing.

EZRA

At the end of his life Ken's a cat. And I'm a shape.

GABI

Did you actually kill him?

EZRA

You don't know me as well as Rajah does, so naturally you're suspicious.

RAJAH

I mean I only met you once—

GABI

But I want to know how you get to the point you decide, yes, I'm going to do this, it's for the best.

EZRA

Let me ask you a question. Why are we kinder to dogs and cats than our fellow humans? You've got a sick animal in your house. Life's never going to get better for the poor thing. You call the vet, have the animal euthanized. You can bet if my daughter's dog was suffering she'd have him put down, no question. But she doesn't even come see me and it's just fine with her if I live endlessly in the state-controlled waiting room. Ya need someone who'll pull the plug. You'll find when you're old that's very important insurance. Ken had no one either. *But* we had each other. Shake. A deal. His mind went before mine and he's trundled off to the Rainbow Units. We knew when we made the deal only one of us would win—him, turns out. Tough break for me. Last man standing. I don't feel guilty what I did. It's a kindness. Leaving the room I hit the call button. When the ambulance crew hustled in to claim yet another whose *PersonStory* came to a state-sanctioned end, I shuffled out the other way. Got anything to drink?

RAJAH

What do we do when they show up?

EZRA

I assure you they won't find me. I took two cabs. The first one down to the Gaslamp Quarter, then another out here.

GABI

We won't tell them you're here.

EZRA

You're wonderful.

RAJAH

Yes we will. T, you can't stay here.

GABI

Big empty house. Plenty of room, you always say.

EZRA

Darling woman. I'm in love with you already. Do you two have children? No? Children will come. You're young. Got time. My daughter must be almost fifty and yet she has a seven-year-old. They both talk very loud their one visit each year. Did you say if you had anything to drink?

RAJAH

T, we can't take care of you. What about your meds?

EZRA

I'm happy just sitting here. Go on doing what you were doing. What were you doing?

GABI

His Spanish lessons. He's moving to Venezuela.

EZRA

Don't let me interrupt. I'll be quiet. Just want to sit here.

GABI

Let's keep going.

RAJAH

This is nuts.

Double bed. GABI

I used to love summer. EZRA

Cama doble. RAJAH

La cama doble. GABI

Whatever. RAJAH

Long summer nights. EZRA

Key. GABI

EZRA
Yeah, on the way over I had the window down and asked the second cab driver to take me past the restaurant where my wife and me had the biggest argument ever in the history of marriage. We hated each other for weeks. I don't believe people love each other constantly, forever. Do you? I don't. That's just silly. Nope, love comes and goes.

Key, the Spanish for key. GABI

La-vay. RAJAH

EZRA
Llave. The double el sound: yuh. She and I went to Mexico once. The keys they gave us were big as your hand. And heavy. Amazing what you remember.

Llave. RAJAH

GABI
La llave.

RAJAH
 Got it. Keep going.

EZRA
 Course my life was never as interesting as our friend's here. The baseball player, the I'm-a-pitcher bit—did he tell you that story?

GABI
 Yes.

EZRA
 And you believe him?

GABI
 Yes.

EZRA
 Oh, how wonderful you are. Just think, we probably saw him on TV.

GABI
 I don't watch baseball. Swimming pool.

EZRA
 Neither do I. Point is, we *could* have seen him on TV. Call me lowbrow, but my opinion is you make it on TV then you're life's validated. A daiquiri? Would love an icy daiquiri.

GABI
 Swimming pool.

EZRA
 How many years were you married, Rajah?

RAJAH
 Enough.

EZRA
 Good answer. Did she live here in this house?

RAJAH
 We're trying to do our lesson.

So do. I'm not bothering anyone.

EZRA

Swimming pool.

GABI

Piss something.

RAJAH

Piscina. Did you love each other, you and your wife? Of course you did. Most of the time, anyway. I'm glad.

EZRA

Forget vocab. I'm ready to move on to the conversations. Those pages where Julio and Julia arrive and ask questions about the hotel.

RAJAH

I'll say the phrase in Spanish and you translate. Quieres ir una habitación? Si, queremos una habitación.

GABI

Do you want a room? Yes, we want a room. Did I tell you she and I went to Mexico?

EZRA

You told us.

RAJAH

On her rare visits my daughter.... Did I tell you I have a daughter?

EZRA

Yes, you told us.

RAJAH

Thought so. When she visits she *loves* to point out when I forget things. She thinks it vindicates her for dumping me in that place.

EZRA

Tienen ustedes una reservación? Si, tenemos una reservación.

GABI

EZRA

Do you have a reservation? Yes, we have a reservation. These are easy. Why do you want to learn Spanish anyway? Learn Chinese, it's the future.

GABI

Maybe we should stop for now.

EZRA

Good, I'm hungry.

RAJAH

T.

EZRA

Can we order takeout?

RAJAH

T.

EZRA

Lend me thirty bucks and I'll treat.

RAJAH

T!

EZRA

Rajah?

RAJAH

We have to talk.

EZRA

So talk. I'm supposed to rub cream on my knee before bedtime. I brought it with me in this bag. Is it close to bedtime?

RAJAH

You can't stay here. I can't take care of you.

EZRA

Isn't there a tradition that you have to care for strangers once they're in your house?

GABI

In this country you shoot strangers if they're in your house.

EZRA

Must have been another country I read about. I like to read. Come to think of it, it was ancient Persia or some such long-gone place. I guess things changed in the meantime.

RAJAH

T, gotta ask, I mean, you show up here, you show up here like a, like a *spy*, taking two cabs to throw off the enemy, and they *are* looking for you because you killed your friend, which, okay, is not necessarily a bad thing if his dementia makes him no better off than a cat, your word, but then, *then* you come here and you sit there like you bought the place, like you're never going to leave.

EZRA

Is there a question?

RAJAH

Yes, T, yes there is: What the fuck?!

EZRA

Put another way, you wonder why I'm here.

RAJAH

Bingo.

EZRA

Because this is a nice house with nice people and my wife and I were nice people and had a nice house. She died. The day they moved me out of my nice house I noticed the faded path in the rug from our chairs in front of the TV to the kitchen. Fifty years in that house together. How many days is that? Twenty thousand? And all that time spent shuffling from living room to kitchen and back. This *is* a nice chair. If I could have gone to those people living in our house and begged them, Let me rent the place for one day! I'll put you in my will, leave you enough to pay for your family vacation this year, just let me back in for one day. If I thought *that* insane scheme would have worked, I wouldn't have bothered you. But I'm sure you agree there's no way a nice young couple answering the door and seeing a strange—and that's the key—old man in slippers is going to let that strange—note—old man into their house. Right? Right. So I settled instead on *this* insane scheme.

RAJAH

You think you can move in?

EZRA

Yes, please.

GABI
Do, let him stay. What's the harm?

RAJAH
Are you kidding?

GABI
Give him the key you were going to give me.

RAJAH
Will ya? Gabi, he killed somebody. Jesus, T, you *killed* somebody.

EZRA
And that means your guy'll use me in his documentary and you get credit for discovering the best story among all the doddering mumbling old folks you interview.

GABI
At least let him stay tonight.

RAJAH
Both of you *just*....

EZRA
One night. Let me stay one night.

RAJAH
One night then, but first thing tomorrow I'm going to Greenbriar to explain.

EZRA
The police you mean.

RAJAH
I guess. I guess they'll have to notify the police.

EZRA
They couldn't care less about me, it's just their certification they worry about. Best for them if I die without disturbing anyone.

RAJAH
Still. Yes, yes tomorrow we let them know.

EZRA

If one night is all I get then one night is all I get.

RAJAH

There's only one bed, so you'll have to sleep in that chair.

EZRA

Chair's perfect—except that, according to her, it'll sodomize me in the middle of the night.

RAJAH

I'll see if I have sheets and blankets.

RAJAH exits.

GABI

One night is all you need, right?

EZRA

You know then.

GABI

I think so.

EZRA

Can't go back. Not after what I've done. Wish I could because I'll be a hero to the others there, the ones who still understand what's going on around them.

GABI

Do you have what you need in that bag?

EZRA

I'm counting on my friend, Rajah. He takes pills by the handful, so I know he can help me out.

GABI

Don't tell him your plan. He gets all moralistic, life is precious kinda thing.

She presents him with a bottle of RAJAH's pills she kept.

EZRA

Yes, oh, yes, you dear sweet wonderful woman.

GABI

I support you either way you choose.

EZRA

Tonight I just want to sleep like this is my home. But tomorrow? Maybe you make a phone call so you and he don't get into trouble. Nine-one-one but only once it's too late.

RAJAH returns.

RAJAH

You'll have to make do with beach towels. I don't have extra blankets or sheets. Some woman I knew got all of that kind of stuff.

EZRA

And you got the emptiness? You won that deal. Stuff is overrated. You must have been happy here.

RAJAH

Sure, once.

EZRA

Good memories?

RAJAH

Some.

EZRA

Memories make a home, and a home makes it easier.

RAJAH

Makes what easier?

EZRA

In a hundred years no one'll die unless they're careless, every disease cured with artificial organs or reprogramed nanoblood, and every brain its signature chip: me!

RAJAH

What's he talking about? Makes what easier?

GABI

I'm leaving.

RAJAH

I told you you can stay here! Take the bed!

GABI

Good night, you two.

EZRA

Night. I like you.

She exits.

RAJAH

Fuck are you doing, T?

EZRA

Don't mind me, gonna go to sleep now. Need to practice being dead.

Scene 7: Night

RAJAH's house. EZRA is sleeping. RAJAH is tearing through EZRA's garbage bag.

GABI enters.

GABI

The light woke me. What time is it, what's going on?

RAJAH

He's going to kill himself, isn't he?

GABI

It's his choice to make.

RAJAH

Nope.

GABI

It's what he wants.

RAJAH

Nothing in this bag can kill him. Clothes. Photos. A few rocks?

GABI
You don't have to be involved.

RAJAH
Because it's not happening here.

GABI
You're not turning him in. Not really. Say you're not.

RAJAH
If he wants to kill himself, do it there. Best place for it. Death every day.

GABI
Only care about yourself, don't you? Don't see any of the rest of us.

RAJAH
We don't even know the guy. Fucking wake up, old man! Why here, T?! Why my house?!

EZRA
Need to yell?

GABI
He knows what you're planning.

RAJAH
Well?

EZRA
What was the question?

RAJAH
I'm having Greenbriar take you back in the morning, or else I'm calling your daughter. You choose.

EZRA
Ah.

RAJAH
And?

EZRA
Sorry, what's the question again?

RAJAH

Fucking bothering old man! Don't need this shit!

GABI

Stop it!

EZRA

I don't want my dying to be a problem in efficiency, how to make the body disappear so no one's upset. I'm answering what I think was your question. I want to die in a home where people *are* bothered, where somebody cries sincere tears.

RAJAH

Who's gonna cry?

GABI

Leave him alone.

RAJAH

You? Are you going to cry?

GABI

Being such a shit.

RAJAH

Only knowing him one day? —We're not your friends. This is not your home.

GABI

This is *nobody's* home! Just your selfishness in the middle of all the emptiness!

EZRA

Hate seeing you two angry with each other. I know I'm responsible for that. You claim you're not married but for my sake can't you act like it? It'd help me remember what I lost. Not a married-for-ten-years married couple but not newlyweds either. My heart couldn't take that. Say you've been married two years and still have sex most nights but are more calm about it. Remember you die once but oh those nights of love.

GABI

We're not a couple, T.

EZRA

I'm not asking you to actually have sex. But a kiss?

RAJAH
She's teaching me Spanish is all.

EZRA
I gathered that. Why Spanish?

GABI
So he can escape to Venezuela and strut around as an irritating ignorant gringo hoping to get a little anos from the women hanging around the ball field. His teacher, that's it, that's all.

RAJAH
She doesn't even like me.

GABI
Because all you are is emptiness. I'm going back to bed.

She heads for the front door.

EZRA
Where are you going? Where's she going?

RAJAH
She sleeps in her car.

EZRA
That's terrible. Stay here. You can have my chair.

RAJAH
I've tried, T. I can't talk her out of it either.

EZRA
But it's dangerous sleeping in a car.

RAJAH
Not as dangerous as you think. She's parked in my driveway.

GABI
You make it sound stupid.

RAJAH
Isn't it?

EZRA

Stay.

GABI

I prefer it this way. First thing in the morning I'll drive somewhere and bring back coffee and breakfast things. I'm up early anyway cuz the sun hits the windshield like a scream.

RAJAH

I told you to back in.

GABI

See, he makes it sound ridiculous. Anything in particular you want?

RAJAH

Whatever's edible.

GABI

I'm asking him. T, what would you like to eat before you're dragged away?

EZRA

Last meal, huh? Some sort of sweet cinnamon bun sugary thing. And as many of those pats of butter you can fit into your hand without them noticing.

GABI

I'll see what they have. Good night, T.

EZRA

See you tomorrow.

She exits.

EZRA

That's one nice looking woman.

RAJAH

Called me selfish. Well of *course* I'm selfish! You gotta be. Those guys coming up after you'll trounce on your dream, saying fuck you while they're at it. They don't give a shit.

EZRA

Yeah, that's rough. Got a blender?

RAJAH

Wanna know why Spanish? Kid in a crib, dad tosses him a baseball. Momma, dada, *baythball*. You're gonna be a star pitcher, son. *Pisher*. No idea what that means, but daddy says it's the dream. And fucksake the dream comes *true*. So of *course* you're selfish. Only way you hang onto it. You realize the *drive* you have to have, the blinders you have to put on? A pitcher. *Me*. I made it. Now I'm washed up with fuck knows how many years left to live and every time I remember the dream it cuts me wide open. Pitcher, home plate, umpire, strike three—nothing but pain.

EZRA

Do ya? a blender?

RAJAH

But I get to Venezuela I'm safe. There the term for pitcher is el lanzador. Starting over. Kid in a crib. Hola means hello and adios means goodbye and nothing more. Spanish clears my head of hope with words meaning only what the dictionary tells me they mean.

EZRA

Well, son, blender means blender. Got one? Thought maybe we could make daiquiris.

RAJAH

You hearing me, old man?

EZRA

Sure. Everybody's got problems.

RAJAH

If there is a blender around here, which I doubt, there's no liquor in the house. That I know for sure.

EZRA

Well *hell*. Obviously no sex for me anymore but savoring a daiquiri is something I could have managed.

Scene 8: Is there such a thing as future?

RAJAH's house. The next day. EZRA finishes dressing in his best clothes, pulled one by one from the garbage bag. GABI trains the video camera on him.

EZRA

All but a button near the belly. Not bad. My heart's squeezing like I'm in love. Little more of this coffee, mmm, and couple more pills....

GABI

Think I'm doing this right, pretty sure it's recording. Say something again.

EZRA

How do I look? If you say like a clown, that's all right with me.

GABI

You look like a clown. Yes, the lights go crazy when we talk.

She sets the camera on the smaller chair.

This video will make people love you, T.

EZRA

Promise?

GABI

Everyone'll see how brave you are.

EZRA

At last, I'm not just a spectator. My life's ended but I get to play the part forever of a brave old man exiting. Our tenth anniversary I wore these. The most expensive restaurant we ever walked into. My hands shook paying the bill and she had this horrified look on her face. We laughed about it ... but not till twenty years later.

GABI

Not so much directly into the camera. More normal. Just talk to me.

EZRA

Everything's wrinkled, of course. Being in that bag.... Goddamnit, you think he has an iron?

GABI

Doubt it.

EZRA

So they're wrinkled, so I'm a clown, so my clothes are forty years out of date.

GABI

Anything else in the bag you want to show me?

EZRA

Clothes mostly. Hate for them to go to waste. Do you think Rajah could use these?

He pulls out a sampling of his underwear.

GABI

No.

EZRA

They're clean.

GABI

No.

EZRA

Of course you're right. You're wonderful. Perfect sensibility. Back in the bag. Little more coffee. You people out there might not understand why I'm doing this. Thing is, I did something bad, but good. Killed my friend. You young people out there won't get this, but my friend was desperate to die because he lived too long. Me too, but I have a friend who's helping me like I helped my friend. You won't see her face but that's her talking in the background.

GABI

Ruins it if you pay too much attention to the camera.

EZRA

Sorry, a ham. My one big moment, sorry. I'll do better at pretending it's not there. La la la.

GABI

T, it's just you and me. Focus on that. Anything else in the bag besides underwear?

EZRA

Rocks. Yeah, this one's sixty-five million years old. Badlands of South Dakota when it was an ancient river bed. And this one is from Mexico. Most gorgeous beach you've ever seen. Stood ankle-deep in the surf and plucked that beauty from among the seashells.

GABI

And those photos?

Look at them without me, please.

EZRA

Is that your wife?

GABI

Must be. I can't look. Must be. Are we smiling?

EZRA

Big smiles. Happy couple.

GABI

Nope, don't want to see, don't want to remember. Never was nostalgic but I get real sad thinking of the future I'll miss. That outstanding thunderstorm that'll crash into this house next year and the look of the world map a thousand years from now. Nostalgic for the future—is there's a word for that. Prostagic or something? Do you think I'm prostalgic?

EZRA

Probably.

GABI

I used to panic myself to hyperventilation thinking how much I'll miss because I'll be dead *forever*, until I heard an astronomer say that infinity goes backwards as well as forwards. Know what that means?

EZRA

Not sure.

GABI

Means alive once you can never be dead forever. Your little blip of a life negates infinity. Kind of a consolation. Not much, but kinda. All we have, anyway.

EZRA

Can I tell you something?

GABI

Not if I have to think too hard.

EZRA

GABI

Until I met you I've been afraid of old people. Grandparents, great aunts and uncles—I kept my distance. Always wondered how they could stand it, knowing when you got into bed that you might not wake up.

EZRA

Life's ultimate thrill. Nothing quite like it.

GABI

No way, uh-unh, just decided, you're my witness: I'm not getting old. I'm scared enough as it is, I don't want to be scared *all* the time. Sixty maybe. I'll do that much but that's it, no more.

EZRA

Then what?

GABI

Well, what you're doing.

EZRA

When you forget the resolution you just made and find yourself old and scared, take naps. But, T, you're saying, that's stupid, naps eat into the little time that's left. It's a paradox I know, but you'd be surprised, naps help.

GABI

Are you enjoying this conversation?

EZRA

Not especially.

GABI

Neither am I.

EZRA

Why does a young woman like you think so much about death?

GABI

Kinda have to be blind not to. People dying all the time.

EZRA

How much time you think?

GABI

I mapped the route to Greenbriar. Twenty minutes there, twenty back. Maybe talking to them another ten. So: soon.

EZRA

Then another two pills, another couple sips of coffee. Do *not* want to end up back there.

He takes pills.

EZRA

Gonna miss coffee. She and I on summer mornings in our breakfast nook looking at the birds. But it's time to clean the slate for the next person. Pay attention everyone. This is what you do if you live too long.

GABI

I had a friend who did it.

EZRA

What happens?

GABI

Basically you suffocate. [*Quickly*] But you don't know it's happening.

EZRA

I hope you're right.

GABI

I can call nine-one-one anytime, say it was accidental.

EZRA

Just that being eaten by a shark was my first choice. An environmental death. Adheres to the rule of survival of the fittest, but not easy to accomplish when you're as old as I am and don't get outside much. Think I might be getting sleepy.

GABI

I want you to know you did the strong thing for your friend and now you need a friend to help you.

EZRA

The world used to be full of people like you. At least that's how I remember it. Everything used to be better. Better beds, better dreams, better sex, better food, better memories, better reasons.

GABI

No more pain, no more fear. I envy you.

EZRA

It's an accident that we even met so just think of me as that old man in the video you see on your phone one day. His story makes you sad but there's nothing to be done about it. It's already the past. You drink your coffee, you look at a different video, you forget. Goodbye, that's all it is. We say goodbye thousands of times, right? We're used to it. This is just once more. Goodbye, Gabi.

GABI

Bye, T....

EZRA

....

GABI

....

EZRA

Not yet, I guess....

GABI

....

EZRA

....

GABI

....

EZRA

This part is boring.

GABI

....

EZRA

Definitely a little sleepy. Funny feeling in my stomach too, like when I eat seafood.

RAJAH enters with the six-pack they threw out. During the following he opens each can, which remain fixed by the plastic rings.

EZRA

They coming to get me?

RAJAH

Have you stared at your hand lately? Do. [*First can.*] It's amazing. No seriously, do it. [*Second can.*] Electrical high-tension power lines wired into the back. Bones, muscles, tendons, blood vessels—like yards and yards of it packed in there the doctors tell me. All that goes into cranking open a beer. [*Third can.*] Ahhh.... From your fingers to your ear—total satisfaction. [*Fourth can.*] Used to go into spinning a curveball but that ability's over.

GABI

Does that mean you're not going to Venezuela?

RAJAH

Isn't it a blast being alive? But eventually? [*fifth can*] you're done, somebody else's hand takes over. And on and on, constant addition, but you never again. That's why [*sixth and last can*] each beer is precious beyond belief. [*Answering T:*] Thought you wanted to hang out here with me, make daiquiris, bullshit each other. [*Then Gabi:*] And, yeah, Venezuela's done.

GABI

When did that happen?

RAJAH

Thirty minutes ago. Yep, almost exactly thirty minutes ago I finally felt it again. The craving to fuck up my life.

EZRA

Will they be here soon? I don't feel real good.

RAJAH

They're not coming. What's the matter with you? Now you *want* to go back?

EZRA

Just that I feel sick. Probably someone should help me.

GABI

Have you changed your mind, do you want me to get someone?

EZRA

I wanted to make you happy but I really don't feel well.

GABI

It's not about me! You need to decide: Do you want me to call an ambulance?

RAJAH

Ambulance?

EZRA

Maybe just wait for Greenbriar to pick me up. Will they be here soon?

GABI

They're not coming! He just said that!

RAJAH

He wants to go back I'll call him a couple cabs to sneak him back to Greenbriar, like a spy. Get up, let's get you some cabs. For the best.

EZRA

I think maybe just wait till they get here, don't want to move....

RAJAH notices the camera is recording.

RAJAH

You're joking—you're recording this? Is that so T can tell about what a hero he is? [*To the camera*] I'm a killer. How 'bout it, T? Can we both be killers, or is that too crazy a coincidence?

GABI shuts off the recording.

GABI

It'll be trouble if they see us with him.

RAJAH

The big hero.

EZRA

I made a mistake. I shouldn't be here. My stomach....

GABI

T, you're with friends. We love you. You have to tell me what you want me to do. It's not too late.

EZRA

Don't feel so good. Maybe I'll stay here.

GABI

What's that *mean*?! I don't know what you want me to do!

RAJAH

Tell us again all about you killing your friend, Ken.

EZRA

Maybe it didn't happen the way I might have said.

RAJAH

Yeah, about that. Gabi, you'll love this. So I get to Greenbriar, gonna tell them I got your fugitive, come get the bastard. But before I can say anything, it's, Oh, yes, Mr. Rain, we remember you. So nice to have you visit again. Are you here to see our ballplayer, Ken Davis? *Say what?! We're so proud of our sweet, quiet Mr. Davis. Clip on this badge and follow the purple elephants to the Rainbow Units.*

GABI

He's not dead?

RAJAH

And there I am, in the room with Ken Davis, ex-ballplayer, alive and well. Not looking too great if I'm honest about it, but alive.

GABI

I'm stopping this, calling an ambulance.

RAJAH

He isn't breathing right.

EZRA

....

RAJAH

He's choking.

GABI

Help me get him turned around on the floor.

RAJAH

Fuck is happening?

GABI

Face down. I'll hold him. Try to make him throw up.

RAJAH

You killed him?

GABI

Use your finger.

RAJAH

I am.

GABI

Make him throw up.

She calls 911.

RAJAH

I am. Fuck. Fucking.... Oh, fuck, it's a mess.

GABI

An accident, our friend, we think our friend may have accidentally taken too many pills....

RAJAH

Accident hell!

EZRA

No no oh no no....

GABI

Fifteen-sixteen Mattis Court.... [*To RAJAH*] He's cold. Something. A blanket, something. [*Into phone*] That's where we are right now, yes....

RAJAH pulls a jacket from his gear bag.

RAJAH

Put this on.

GABI

He's breathing, yes. [*To RAJAH*] Help him. [*Into phone*] We got him to throw up so he may be out of danger, but please send someone quickly, he's old....

EZRA

Everyone hates me.

RAJAH

Jesus, what you two did was—

GABI

Help him!

RAJAH

I am! Raise your arms, you gotta raise your arms....

GABI

Gabi Delgado.... Yes, I'll stay on the line....

RAJAH gets the jacket situated somewhat correctly on EZRA.

RAJAH

There. *Happy?!*

EZRA

I think so.

RAJAH

Stupid! what you two did was stupid!

EZRA

This is a *nice* jacket. Can I keep it?

RAJAH

T, you little fuck, you want anything else?! A daiquiri?! No? You're good? I'm happy for you. How'd you get pills anyway? How'd he get the pills, Gabi?

GABI

[*Into phone*] I'm here, yes.... Okay, thank you. [*Disconnects.*] The EMT is on its way. Five minutes.

RAJAH

So tell me.

GABI

I gave them to him. They're yours. I thought he killed someone and he'd be better off.

EZRA

I'd like to go home now.

GABI

Goddamn you, T, you lied to me!

EZRA

When I stood by his bed it was just this animal breathing. The man I made the promise to was gone. Can't be a hero when there's no point to what you're doing.

RAJAH

That's not the way I figured it. No, way I figured it was he'd been promised.

RAJAH sits in front of the camera. He drinks from one of the open cans.

RAJAH

Feel better if I'm doing something. Just happens to be destructive. Anyone else? No? All for me then. Lord I love that sizzle in the throat.

GABI

I'll pour those out.

RAJAH

Nope, these beers help me figure it out. Meaning I remembered that the drunk me has a conscience, knows about shame and guilt and can tell you what is wrong. Less certain about what's right, but *wrong* the drunk me knows. At The Farm they tell me I can say goodbye to my destructive self, be a better person without the booze. But why I wanna do that? Goodbyes are sad. Why not a constant *hello* to destruction?

He drinks.

RAJAH

They tell me I'm supposed to be honest about it. You two are witnesses to me being honest.

He drinks.

RAJAH

Ken Davis is dead.

EZRA

What's he saying?

RAJAH

Told ya, chum, I'm a killer.

GABI

You didn't even know him.

RAJAH

One big family.

GABI

Don't do this, give me the camera.

RAJAH

The drunk me knows it wasn't murder. Helped a brother out's all. I looked up his stats. Played three years in the fifties, hit eighteen homers first year—not bad—but then faded and after three years was out of baseball. And then sixty-some years of obscurity, his life now nothing but numbers on the Baseball Reference page.

EZRA

How'd you do it? I mean....

RAJAH

As you know, Ken was a mellow sort. Using a pillow was no sweat. He didn't fight much.

EZRA

Thank you.

GABI

They might have to report it as a suspicious death. The police look into those.

RAJAH

Sure, they'll wanna talk to me.

GABI

Deny it and erase that video. Don't throw away your future.

Growl of gears and exhale of brake exhaust as
the EMT vehicle arrives.

RAJAH

We got *futures*?

Scene 9: The Farm

The Farm. GABI is videoing.

RAJAH

The end.

GABI

Say your name. For the camera.

RAJAH

Roger Rain, room four-nineteen. Life's a room number.

She turns off the video.

GABI

I visited him before coming here.

RAJAH

And?

GABI

Not good. Won't get out of bed. Having trouble with his eyes. Knew who I was but
didn't talk much. Breaks my heart that he was *eager* to go back there. Everything
else was just stories.

RAJAH

Lies, you mean.

GABI

....

.....

RAJAH

Kay.... I guess....

GABI

Busy, huh.

RAJAH

Three more students started this week.

GABI

Fantastic!

RAJAH

She holds out his house key.

GABI

Your key.

RAJAH

No. What? No, keep it. Gonna be a while. House is yours in the meantime. Use it for lessons, whatever. If it feels strange in the house, at least use the driveway.

GABI

I have news.

RAJAH

Oh, shit, you met someone, you're getting married!

GABI

Normal news. For most people anyway, but pretty outstanding for me. I got an apartment!

RAJAH

Hey!

GABI

Paid first and last month rent using that money in your hiding place. I'll be able to pay you back because of the new students.

RAJAH

Then I guess....

He takes the key.

GABI

Would that have mattered to you? Me meeting someone?

RAJAH

Gotta admit....

GABI

Yeah, it crossed my mind too....

RAJAH

Exactly. *Exactly*. So I'm thinking, thinking maybe we should make sure to see each other after whatever happens to me happens and I'm back home from here or jail or wherever.

GABI

You and me?

RAJAH

Thought maybe.

GABI

But we'll both be very different.

RAJAH

You're right. Of course. No, you are. Stupid to think so far ahead.

GABI

Let's not plan anything.

RAJAH

Yeah, see how it goes.

RAJAH

You'll send it to the guy? You claim to be a drunk and a killer the audience won't be bored. That's gotta get me in the documentary.

GABI

You sure it's what you want? The people at Greenbriar seemed happy to not question Ken's death.

RAJAH

Yeah, *they're* happy, but selfish bastard that I am—

GABI

I should *never* have said that.

RAJAH

I gotta think about *me*. The doctor here at The Farm says nothing about me, the real me, causes my problem. Just another case of my body letting me down, she says. Just a milligram of a chemical disorder of the brain making me the guy in the bar needing that drink, not just wanting it. Fix my D2 receptors, whatever those are, and I'm cured. They're developing a pill for that, she says. Tells me there'll be a vaccine for children of alcoholics so they don't become alcoholics as adults. Soon you won't be able to claim responsibility for anything. Yes, it's what I want. I'm a killer.

GABI

They'll arrest you.

RAJAH

Good. I need the ending. Time to get serious. Running away to Venezuela just to play more baseball was nuts.

GABI

I laughed every time I imagined you walking into a hotel and asking for a room.

RAJAH

¿Por favor, señora, cuanto cuesta la habitación?

GABI

Wow, not bad.

RAJAH

Got a lot of time on my hands.

GABI

....

RAJAH

....

GABI

Okay, so....

RAJAH

Yep, I gotta go too. We have the car crash film in five minutes. Adiós, Gabi.

GABI

Try again.

RAJAH

Adiós?

GABI

A question. You learned to make it sad.

END OF PLAY