

**Keep Me Company**

A play

By

Sally Seitz

## CHARACTERS

**EMILY**, *female, white, twenty-seven*

**ELENA**, *female, Latina, twenty-eight*

**BECCA**, *female, twenty-nine*

**JOHN**, *late 40s, more a silhouette than a character*

## NOTES

1. A slash (/) means the character with the next line of dialogue begins her speech.
2. A dash in between text indicates a verbal stumble, usually around a filler word.
3. *Italicized* text indicates emphasis.
4. ALL CAPS indicates shouting.
5. A “Pause” is enough time for a full breath.
6. A “Beat” is enough time for the dust to settle.
7. **The dialogue should absolutely fly unless there is a pause or beat. The characters speak at the speed of almost-interruption, a pace that is sometimes rude, but born out of intimacy instead of disrespect.** The play’s run time lands around 58 minutes.
8. There is the option to recite “The Magnificat” prayer in Spanish. See last page for text.

## TIME

*The present. Evening approaching night unless otherwise indicated.*

*Often the play calls for “A shift further into night.” The shifts should be indicated, at minimum, by simple, clean choreography. For example, changes in body position and/or the addition of more beers. The amount of time for each shift is up to the director, and each shift does not need to be the same amount of time.*

## SETTING

*The back porch of a small, old house in central Austin, Texas.*

*The house, built in the late 1920s, has been renovated and somewhat maintained, but only to ensure it is livable. There are noticeable flaws that many would consider aesthetically unpleasing: chipping paint, missing window screens, old wood, etc. When real estate agents show this house, they describe it as “having character” to mask these flaws. It sits within both a neighborhood and a city that’s ever changing, but it itself remains constant. To some, its consistency provides its charm.*

*The back porch upholds the same aesthetic – a run-down but intimate space. There is privacy to the area, the feeling of almost-seclusion that is still achieved in the neighborhoods of mid-sized cities. There are just enough trees surrounding the porch to make its inhabitants feel as if they*

*are alone, while simultaneously there are lingering elements that remind them of the city's presence – street lamps, neighbors' fences, telephone wires, etc. This uncovered space should feel caught between the two settings.*

*Most importantly, the porch is draped in shadows from the large tree limbs, never cut back, that hang over the area.*

*There is a single back door from the house's kitchen onto the back porch. Two large windows provide a view into the house. One window allows the audience to see into the small kitchen, the other lets the audience view the small living room.*

*A side gate allows for entry to the back porch and surrounding area without needing to enter the house.*

*On the porch itself, there is a simple set of patio furniture that includes a table and chairs.*

### **AT RISE**

*There is a brief moment of stillness on the porch. A moment in which all that is heard are the surrounding sounds of the night: rustling leaves, cars driving by in the distance, crickets, etc.*

*Then, very distinctly, a Barn Owl calls. Not a distress call, though it may sound so, but the call used by the bird when announcing its territory.*

*The sound of a woman whistling three long notes.*

*Pause. Then -*

*A chorus of songbirds, all types that are geographically correct (blue jay, cardinal, mourning dove, mockingbird, chickadee) crescendo in song. They sing as if it was morning, but it is evening approaching night.*

*The chorus of songbirds goes silent in unison.*

*The sound of a woman whistling three long notes again.*

*On the third whistle, the back porch lights illuminate to reveal EMILY, ELENA, and BECCA in the midst of their Friday night ritual on the porch. They drink beer.*

**EMILY**

So, you have a new job? *His* job?

**ELENA**

Technically?

**EMILY**

Well, is she giving you his title?

**BECCA**

Is she giving you his *pay*?

**ELENA**

In Thursday's meeting, she just said, "Daniel is gone. You can direct all questions you had for him to Elena." She didn't say anything else.

**EMILY**

And he just quit? Didn't tell you or -

**ELENA**

I'm telling you, literally just walked out and left.

**BECCA**

Was he upset?

**ELENA**

Oh yeah, Course, he said nothing to me, but that's normal at this point. He never talked to me directly. *Ever*. Unless he had a question, and even then, he would just - like - call it out while still looking at his computer screen. He would just - like - like phrase it in this way where if you heard the question while passing by, you couldn't even tell for sure if he was speaking to me.

**EMILY**

Wait, what?

**ELENA**

Okay, okay - like, for example, he'd be looking at his screen and instead of looking up and politely saying, "Hey Elena, when you have a minute, can you *please* send me the twitter password?" Instead, he would just call out, "What's the twitter account password?" Never a "Hey" or even the bare minimum effort to - like - shift his gaze towards me. You know, address the question actually *to me*. Sometimes he would just state stuff. Out of the blue. Like he would just announce, randomly, "I don't have the smartsheet password." Or "This email from Marketing doesn't make sense." Or "It's hot in this room." Always, *always*, expecting me to fix it. No pause, you know, no consideration for whether or not I'm deep in my own thoughts, doing my *own* job. Never. Ever.

**EMILY**

Dammit Daniel, write down your dang passwords!

**BECCA**

Did you ask if you're getting his salary?

**ELENA**

Yes, yeah, eventually. When the dust settles and once I can-

**BECCA**

*Elena.*

**ELENA**

Yes! I will. I will! Okay, but listen, so that morning, he comes into work, sits down, and starts working away. No hello but that's all normal, but this morning he is - like - *furiously* typing away. Like - angry typing. You know?

**BECCA**

Yes.

**EMILY**

Oh yeah.

**ELENA**

Yes, okay so he is - like *angry typing*. Crazy fast. Then, he just shuts his laptop, stands up, gathers up like - a frame, and his *millions* of unwashed Yetis, and this like - stupid stress ball in the shape of a cow and when you squeeze it its udders pop out-

**BECCA**

What?

**ELENA**

Yeah, it's gross.

**BECCA**

What adult male owns something like that?

**ELENA**

Exactly/ yes!

**EMILY**

I have one of those.

**ELENA**

Anyways, so he gathers up his precious little trinkets, and walks out our office door. And I'm like, cool, Daniel, super early lunch, but whatever. But then, I hear him go down the hall saying nothing to anyone. Then, he gets to the front desk and he just says, "My keys." And then he *WALKS OUT THE DOOR NEVER TO COME BACK BECAUSE HE HAS QUIT. THAT IS HIM QUITTING!* No two weeks notice, no "Goodbye, Elena. It's been real!"

**EMILY**

Damn, that's kinda impressive.

**BECCA**

Is it that bad now? Working there?

**ELENA**

This week was hell.

**EMILY**

Yeah, but every week you have some new disaster story.

**ELENA**

I mean, it's stressful like always, but still. Keep it together. He was making literally double what I make, and *I* keep it together!

**EMILY**

Why didn't he just give his two weeks and coast. That's what I would do.

**ELENA**

Neither of us were doing a single person's job. But it's a nonprofit. IN THE ARTS! That's how they *all are!* Like take your measly 'media arts degree', and be just glad you're not waiting tables.

**BECCA**

So, what'd your boss do?

**ELENA**

Okay, yes, so anyways, my boss, she reads his email that says he has quit -

**BECCA**

That's what he was angry typing?

**ELENA**

Exactly and obviously she is...unhappy. So she calls me to her office, and she is looking at me weird. *So weird.* I'm like - is there something in my teeth? Like what? Like why are you looking at me like that? But she can be/...hard to read. We know this-

**EMILY**

A total bitch.

**BECCA**

Yes, we've heard/

**ELENA**

Yes, and so I'm thinking this angry email has to be about how he needed more support staff, the lack of HR, I don't know *something* about the *hundreds* of organizational issues in this place-

**BECCA**

That week no one got paychecks.

**ELENA**

Yes! Exactly! But come to find out, the email is ALL. ABOUT. ME. How I didn't help him with anything, how I'm a terrible team player, how I had no interest in supporting him-

**EMILY**

Well, that's bullshit.

**BECCA**

Which is untrue.

**ELENA**

Yes, it is *bullshit*. I spent *HOURS* trying to show him parts of *his job* that definitely weren't *my problem*, but that I had learned just in case.

**BECCA**

So all this time you'd been training your supervisor?

**ELENA**

Yes.

**BECCA**

While he receives bigger checks than you?

**ELENA**

Yes. And then I got blamed for his departure.

**EMILY**

You should just quit too.

**ELENA**

I wish.

**BECCA**

So what's the plan now?

**ELENA**

Well, so it's me. I'm the department head. That's the plan, I guess. At least for now. I'm sure its - like a trial run.

**EMILY**

Congrats! ...Right?

**BECCA**

Hey, that's a huge deal!

**ELENA**

I guess.

**BECCA**

You know you deserve it, right?

**EMILY**

Yeah, I don't know anyone who works as hard as you.

**ELENA**

Thanks. I just wish my boss would act like I deserve it. Maybe then it would feel more like an accomplishment than a trap. She's not announcing it. That would physically pain her to publically announce that she is letting another woman run something. When I was walking out, she said, "Lets try not to scare off anymore co-workers, okay?" She totally thinks it's my fault.

**BECCA**

It should have been you in the first place. She knows that. She just won't say it.

**EMILY**

Wait, so you're like a big deal over there now?

**ELENA**

Big deal just means you go to more meetings.

**EMILY**

Damn, everybody's got a big-girl job but me.

**ELENA**

Yeah, but Becca's the only one whose got big-girl pay.

**BECCA**

Yeah, but I sold out.

**ELENA**

You didn't sell out.

**BECCA**

I produce commercials. That's quite-literally selling out.

**ELENA**

No, it's not. Come on.

**BECCA**

Remember when we were gonna be filmmakers?

**ELENA**

They're very good commercials.



**BECCA**

Well, it helps when you have fifteen thousand for every fifteen seconds.

**EMILY**

I could just never do that.

*Pause. The air tightens.*

**EMILY (Cont.)**

I mean, I get it. It works for you/ obviously-

**BECCA**

Yeah, no/ I get what you're saying-

**EMILY**

Just not for me. If I'm gonna put all that effort into making something, I want to at least *say something*, you know? I would need a sense of purpose -

**ELENA**

I think the purpose is payment.

**BECCA**

Right. It pays for this house.

**EMILY**

I mean, yes but-

**BECCA**

My shitty, little house where you come to drink every Friday night.

**ELENA**

There are no shitty houses. Just shitty apartments.

**EMILY**

I don't know, something, where I'm not saying anything./ I just – I just couldn't do that-

**BECCA**

Did you write/ this week?

**EMILY**

But it obviously works for you.

**BECCA**

Yeah, you said that. Did you write this week?

**EMILY**

Uh...yeah. Of course.

**BECCA**

Anything you want us to read?

**EMILY**

Well, I - I researched this week. Which is basically writing. It's what you do, *before* you start writing, so, you know, it's progress. A lot of progress.

*(BECCA and ELENA share a look. EMILY catches them)*

I have to be *really sure* about the idea before I commit to it. I'm like – mapping it all out. It's a long process.

*(Pause. The air tightens.)*

But yeah, a lot of progress. I'm just making sure, *totally* sure I have the right idea. Eggs all in one basket kinda deal.

**BECCA**

What about your last idea?

**EMILY**

What?

**ELENA**

The one you were excited about last Friday?

**BECCA**

The late-shift, Waffle House play. Where all the characters are called whatever they order.

**ELENA**

Grand-slam and over-easy...

**EMILY**

Yeah, that's not gonna work.

**BECCA**

So you're researching now for something else?

**EMILY**

I have tons of ideas. That's not the problem. Just thinking through them all.

**BECCA**

Would it help if I made you a mock schedule or something? That's kinda what I do now. Put creatives on a schedule.

**EMILY**

Look, it's Friday. Let's not talk about work! I've been swimming in my mind-palace all week!

**ELENA**

Mind-palace?

**BECCA**

We're just worried-

**EMILY**

Don't be/ *worried-*

**ELENA**

*Excited. We're excited-*

**BECCA**

Yeah, we're *excited* to see what you come up with next. It's been a minute since you finished anything. Don't want you to lose your momentum. That's all.

**EMILY**

I'm not. I'm not.

*(Pause.)*

I promise I'm not.

*Beat. They each take a large swig, allowing themselves to think in different directions.*

**ELENA**

You know, I'm the only department head that's a woman. And it's by fucking default.

**BECCA**

Some women hate women.

*A shift further into night.*

**EMILY**

No, let's play the game! Come on! We love the game!

**BECCA**

Truly anything but that.

**EMILY**

We didn't even play last week! Who's first? Elena? Okay, Elena-

**ELENA**

Fine. But no one we know. It's more fun that way.

**EMILY**

Okay, cool. Marry, Fuck, Kill Celebrity edition! I can do that!

*(She thinks. Then, Matthew McConaughey voice-)*

All right, All right, All right...

**BECCA**

You always start with  
Matthew McConaughey.

**EMILY**

Marry, Fuck, Kill...  
Matthew McConaughey.

**EMILY**

No, I don't! Okay fine. Marry, Fuck, Kill-

**ELENA**

Can we play with women? It's almost easier.

**EMILY**

Oh my God. Any more requests?

**BECCA**

We have to be the oldest people in the world still playing this game.

**EMILY**

All right. Fine. You want women?

**BECCA**

She wants female celebrities.

**EMILY**

Right, okay, umm...

*(Pause. Thinking again.)*

The three girls from *FRIENDS*.

**BECCA**

So Phoebe, Monica, Rachel? Or Aniston, Lisa Kudrow and-

**ELENA**

Courteney...?

**BECCA**

Courteney Cox.

**EMILY**

I don't know. The characters? Who cares? The game isn't so technical.

**BECCA**

Phoebe's bisexual. Just for the record.

**ELENA**

She was?

**BECCA**

They just hint at it.

**EMILY**

I can't stand Phoebe.

**BECCA**

That's because you're like her.

**EMILY**

What? No, I'm not. How?

**BECCA**

Disorganized.

**ELENA**

The whole free-spirit thing.

**BECCA**

It's fine! Phoebe's the least-toxic one.

**ELENA**

Agreed. When I grow up, I want to be like Phoebe.

**EMILY**

Grow up?/ They're as old as we are!

**BECCA**

They're our age in the show./ Younger I think.

**ELENA**

What? No, they're – like thirty.

**EMILY**

Not at the start.

**BECCA**

*(Gesturing.)*

*We're 'like-thirty.'* I think we're actually older than most of them now.

**ELENA**

Really? They seem so much more...

**BECCA**

Ridiculous?

**ELENA**

*(Amused.)*

I was gonna say happy.

**EMILY**

The game! The game!

**ELENA**

Okay, okay, I have to think.

**EMILY**

Becca, you go in the meantime.

**BECCA**

Whatcha got?

**EMILY**

I'm gonna stay on this theme. Classic, nineties celebrities.

**BECCA**

Fine. Sure.

**EMILY**

Okay, Marry, Fuck, Kill, both Affleck brothers-

**ELENA**

That's horrible! They're both horrible!

**EMILY**

Yeah, and Matt Damon.

**ELENA**

*ALL. AWFUL.*

**BECCA**

Really?

**EMILY**

Yeah, they've all – like - fucked the babysitter. Or something.

**ELENA**

They've done much worse than fuck the babysitter.

**BECCA**

*(To EMILY.)*

Then, why did you give me these?!

*BECCA gets a text. She becomes engrossed in her phone.*

**EMILY**

The game is not supposed to be easy! It's supposed to be *interesting*. It is supposed to be interesting who you decide to marry, who you decide to kill, and who you decide to fuck. For fun! They're interesting scenarios to make up for our boring sex lives. Well, mine's not that boring.

*(Pause.)*

It's all relative.

*(Back to BECCA.)*

Plus, these three are old school.

*(To ELENA.)*

Becca likes 'em old.

**ELENA**

*(To BECCA.)*

Not old. *Older* maybe. Becca likes a... silver fox.

*BECCA remains focused on her phone.*

**EMILY**

Becca. Hello!

*(BECCA doesn't respond. She is crafting a lengthy text.)*

Earth to Becca!

**BECCA**

One second. Just one...second...

*BECCA finishes texting and puts the phone away.*

**BECCA**

Okay, okay.

*(Pause. Decidedly-)*

Marry Casey –

**ELENA**

Seriously?! He's the worst one!

**EMILY**

I knew you were gonna say that.

Please explain!

**ELENA**

**BECCA**

That scene/ in uh-

**EMILY**

*Manchester by the Sea.*

**BECCA**

Yeah, yeah - where he can't find the car, in the letterman jacket, and he gets all ... frustrated. I don't know. Just really does it for me.

**ELENA**

*How? How* does that do it for you?!

**BECCA**

The accent. I'm attracted to the Boston accent.

**EMILY**

You're attracted to anger.

**BECCA**

All right. Easy there.

**EMILY**

What? You are.

**BECCA**

You can't be attracted to anger.

**EMILY**

You like to alpha an alpha. That's your thing.

**BECCA**

What does that even mean?

**EMILY**

Whatever. Moving on. Back to Elena.

*(Pause.)*

Elena?

*(Pause.)*

E?

*(Pause.)*

Don't overthink it-

**ELENA**

I haven't had sex in four years.

*Pause. The air tightens.*

**EMILY**

Well, you work all the time /so it not like .... you know...

**BECCA**

Yeah four years really isn't -



**ELENA**

No. Don't make it sound normal.

*BECCA and EMILY take big sips.*

*Pause.*

*A shift further into night.*

*No one is speaking. They are drinking, thinking, and listening to the sounds of the night.*

*Beat.*

**BECCA**

Would we ever want to drink something besides beer? I could/get us-

**EMILY**  
Nah.

**ELENA**  
No.

*A shift further into night.*

*In the distance, the Barn Owl calls.*

**BECCA**

I mean I've thought about it. *Eventually.*

**EMILY**

What? You're buying another house?

**BECCA**

Maybe. Sell this one. Upgrade to more space. Within two years, a year. I don't know. I got some stuff to figure out.

**EMILY**

What? No! This is your house! This is where we come! For Fridays. *All Fridays.* You do not need another house!

**BECCA**

Not *another*/house-

**EMILY**

This is / your house.

**BECCA**

A *different* house.

**EMILY**

Why would you need a different house? This is a perfectly good house!

**ELENA**

It's not like she's selling tomorrow. Calm down.

**EMILY**

Are you like - actively looking? At other houses?

**ELENA**

Jeez, you make it sound like cheating.

**EMILY**

Well-

*ELENA shoots EMILY a look.*

**BECCA**

Or that I'm moving away to some faraway place. Which is *not* the plan.

**EMILY**

Well – well, do you have one of those...house-show-er-ladies?

**ELENA**

A real-estate agent?

**BECCA**

I've talked to one.

**EMILY**

Well it would just be a big change! A *huge* change.

**BECCA**

Yes, I am aware. But like Elena said, this isn't happening tomorrow-

**EMILY**

Well what about us?

**BECCA**

I'm sorry, but it is *my house* we are talking about.

**EMILY**

Yeah, it's your house but it's – like- *our porch.*/ You know – we come here. Right here always, *always* here to talk and like figure our shit out and–

**BECCA**

Sure but-

**EMILY**

You aren't thinking it through! I know you aren't! It's – it's totally irrational, honestly.

*ELENA moves EMILY's current beer further away from her.*

**EMILY**

Are you even taking into consideration things like – how far is it from this house? And Elena's office? Huh? And what is the porch like? And how could it ever accommodate better than this our forever, Friday-night ritual?

**ELENA**

You are comforted by the idea of forever in a way I am not.

**EMILY**

*(To BECCA.)*

How are you so far ahead?

**BECCA**

What are you talking about?

**EMILY**

Both of you, really. It's weird. It's kinda fucked up, actually.

**BECCA**

You are having a freak out right now.

**EMILY**

Eventually, I'm not even going to relate to you two anymore.

*(ELENA and BECCA visually communicate, working together to decipher EMILY.)*

How have you already – like- bought a house and are out looking for the next one?

**ELENA**

Emily, why are you getting so worked up?

**BECCA**

That was kinda always the plan. With John. Be here, in this house until his divorce...ya know finishes up, and then he stays here while we find a bigger place. For both of us.

**EMILY**

Well, John isn't in the picture anymore.

*ELENA takes a big sip.*

**BECCA**

Right but - you know, eventually, I want a house for – I want a starter family home.

**EMILY**

A what?!

**BECCA**

To - you know/ start a family.

**EMILY**

Where the fuck is that coming from?

**ELENA**

Emily.

**EMILY**

Start a family with who?! You don't need to go buying some "starter family home", until you have *a family!* *TO START!* Also, who the fuck calls it that?! People don't say that anymore. You can start families anywhere! Like in an apartment, or *this* house, or a ditch even! ANYWHERE! You could start a perfectly good family in a ditch!

**ELENA**

It just means there's a spare room.

**EMILY**

For *a baby?*!

**ELENA**

A baby...an office. Whatever. Who needs some water?

**BECCA**

*(To EMILY.)*

You're being insane.

**EMILY**

*You're insane!* Who the fuck are you trying to start a family with. Honestly, your best bet is me. Or Elena. Should we – like - group-it? Get on Amazon and order us a baby just because WE'RE STARING AT 30. Clock is ticking, ladies! Time to make some rash decisions!

**BECCA**

Come off it.

**EMILY**

I'm not stupid. It's fucking obvious.

*(Pause. Then explodes-)*

WHO THE FUCK ARE YOU TRYING TO START A FAMILY WITH?

**ELENA**

Let's leave it alone for tonight.

*BECCA AND ELENA share a small, but poorly timed, visual exchange.*

**EMILY**

YOU'RE STILL WAITING ON HIM?!

**ELENA**

*(Checking her phone.)*

It's late.

**EMILY**

Good God! He can get away with anything!

**ELENA**

Very, very, late. Emily, I'll drop you off.

*ELENA starts to clean up the table.*

**EMILY**

I love that you tell her and not me.

**BECCA**

She doesn't react like this.

**ELENA**

Hand me those.

**BECCA**

*(To ELENA.)*

You good?

**ELENA**

I'm basically sober. I'll throw these away. We'll go.

*ELENA exits into the kitchen with bottles and trash. Through the window she tidies up, then takes a moment to herself.*

*Beat.*

**BECCA**

They're together for his son.

**EMILY**

Don't.

**BECCA**

Who leaves for college in two weeks. And then-

**EMILY**

Doesn't the waiting infuriate you?

*(Pause.)*

**EMILY (Cont.)**

Because it would fucking infuriate me.

*EMILY turns away from BECCA. The porch is cast deeper in shadow.*

*ELENA exits the house onto the porch.*

**ELENA**

Em, you ready? I'm ready.

*Heard, not seen, the Barn Owl calls. Louder, closer than before.*

**ELENA**

The hell is that?

**BECCA**

An owl. It lives here. Or comes here.

**ELENA**

Okay, let's go.

**BECCA**

I've never seen it. Just hear it. It starts up at night.

**ELENA**

Nope. Nope. If it's calling like that - loud like that – Emily, let's go.

*ELENA exits through the side gate.*

*EMILY starts to say something to BECCA, but decides not to. EMILY follows ELENA and exits.*

*BECCA sits on the porch, still cast in shadows.*

*The shadows grow darker.*

*The Barn Owl continues to call, a screech, increasing volume and intensity.*

*BECCA lets it carry on, until she can't stand it.*

**BECCA**

ALL RIGHT, ENOUGH!

*The Barn Owl stops. She calms.*

**BECCA**

That's enough.

*BECCA sits in the loud silence surrounded by sounds of the night.*

*Her own thoughts grow loud. She closes her eyes.*

*She shakes her head.*

*Pause. She takes a breath.*

*She opens her eyes.*

*She drinks her beer.*

*Beat.*

*Taking her beer, she exits into the house.*

*Once inside, she turns the porch lights off.*

*End of Scene One.*

**Scene Two. Not Friday.**

*Muffled music plays from inside the house. Something fun, something irreverent. Hank Williams or Merle Haggard for example. People who sing, ironically, about being unable to settle down and make homes.*

*Through the window into the kitchen, BECCA is cooking. Her attention is split between following the recipe and letting herself fully enjoy the music. She chops taking frequent breaks to sway and sing along.*

*She is happy.*

*JOHN enters the kitchen lingering in the doorway. He watches her warmly.*

*After a moment, BECCA allows herself to acknowledge him watching her.*

*He approaches her and holds her.*

*They dance.*

*They kiss.*

*End of Scene Two.*

**Scene Three. The Porch. Early Friday evening.**

*The sound of a woman whistling two long notes.*

*The Barn Owl calls in the distance.*

*The sound of a woman whistling two long notes again.*

*At the end of the second whistle the porch lights illuminate to reveal ELENA and BECCA on the porch.*

*A pack of mostly unopened beers sits on the porch's table. They are early into their ritual.*

*ELENA stands tracing the porch's border with salt.*



It's salt.

**ELENA**  
*(While tracing.)*

Yes, I see that but why are you-

**BECCA**

I'm deterring.

**ELENA**

You're 'detering'?

**BECCA**

Right, warding off evil.

**ELENA**

Because I'm back with John?

**BECCA**

No, because of the owl.

**ELENA**  
*(She stops.)*

Do we need to ward off John?

**BECCA**

No. But can you "deter" Emily?

*ELENA resumes lining porch.*

She on her way?

**ELENA**

She said she's just finishing something up.

**BECCA**  
*(Pause.)*

I don't think your salt is gonna keep the owl away.

**ELENA**

It will if it's a witch.

**BECCA**

You think the owl's a witch?

**ELENA**

Just a precaution.

**BECCA**

Fine by me. It's getting more and more comfortable getting close to the house.

**ELENA**

Do you ever hear it whistle?/ Like a human?

**BECCA**

No, you heard it. It makes like a - like a - it doesn't go "Who, Who." It's a screech. Almost a hiss. Or a shriek. I swear, the other night it perched outside my window and did that all night long.

**ELENA**

Well, did you go look at it?

**BECCA**

I mean, I hit on the window/trying to get it to stop-

**ELENA**

Was it giant?/ Like a giant owl-

**BECCA**

But I didn't see it.

**ELENA**

Was it a giant bird with the face of an old woman?

**BECCA**

*(Belittling.)*

No. I did not see a giant bird with the face of an old woman.

**ELENA**

Well don't ever look directly at it.

**BECCA**

Then how will I ever know if it has the face of an old woman?

**ELENA**

Check its shadow. If it changes from owl to woman, that's a pretty good sign.

**BECCA**

You're too logical to buy into that crap.

**ELENA**

How close is close?

**BECCA**

Oh good God. It's not a witch. It's an owl. A very vocal owl. Course, the only nights it doesn't do that is when John's over, so he thinks I'm making the whole thing up. Like it's all in my head.

**ELENA**

Maybe she's trying to warn you.

**BECCA**

About?

**ELENA**

About... him.

**BECCA**

Well, that's convenient/ right?

**ELENA**

Like an omen.

**BECCA**

For the owl to also hate John.

*(Pause.)*

He sits out here and smokes. It probably doesn't like that.

**ELENA**

Don't come out here when you're alone. Especially when she's doing that./ I'm serious. Just don't mess-

**BECCA**

Because...?

**ELENA**

Because you never know!

**BECCA**

That's its normal call. It's a normal owl.

*(Pause.)*

It's here because I had rats.

**ELENA**

Ew. Like a lot of rats? / Or one recurring rat?

**BECCA**

*Had. Had rats.* They're not in the house anymore. But I'm sure they're... around.

*ELENA returns to the table. Opens a beer.*

**ELENA**

Well, salt's not gonna deter rats.

**BECCA**

Well, good thing I have an owl.

**ELENA**

If either one gets too close, I'm out.

*They both sip.*

*Beat.*

**BECCA**

I need a favor.

**ELENA**

All right.

**BECCA**

I need you to back me up. With Emily.

**ELENA**

Okay. Well-

**BECCA**

I'm going to this dinner. With John.

**ELENA**

She isn't going to like him until you give her a reason to.

**BECCA**

It's next Friday.

**ELENA**

No.

**BECCA**

The dinner.

**ELENA**

Are you kidding me?

**BECCA**

So obviously, I can't host.

She's going to lose her shit.

**ELENA**

We've missed Fridays before.

**BECCA**

Not in a long time.

**ELENA**

Your sister's rehearsal dinner.

**BECCA**

We've never missed one for him.

**ELENA**

Please, please just back me up.

**BECCA**

I am so tired of being the peacekeeper.

**ELENA**

Please, just help me calm her down.

**BECCA**

You can't go to dinner Thursday night?

**ELENA**

No, it's an event. A formal event. For everyone who was promoted. Including him. I have to wear heels and shit.

**BECCA**

So it's unmovable.

**ELENA**

Yeah.

**BECCA**

Perfect. Great.

**ELENA**

And it's the first time I've been at an event with him. In public. Not hiding. So it's -  
(Pause.)  
It'll be nice to feel less like a secret.

**BECCA**

**ELENA**

So he's taking you and not his wife?

**BECCA**

Soon to be ex-wife.

*ELENA nods.*

**BECCA**

What?

*(Pause.)*

*What?*

**ELENA**

How soon?

**BECCA**

I don't have an exact timeline.

**ELENA**

Well, she's been that for a while now. The 'soon-to-be-ex-wife.'

**BECCA**

Their son leaves for school next week-

**ELENA**

Okay but-

**BECCA**

And there's a lot less pressure to stay together once he's out of the picture.

*ELENA takes a big sip.*

**BECCA**

Well?

**ELENA**

Yes?

**BECCA**

What are you thinking?

**ELENA**

How much fun it's going to be to tell Emily.

Why can't we take one Friday off?  
**BECCA**

It's not about taking a Friday off-  
**ELENA**

Yes, it is. She's obsessed/-  
**BECCA**

It's the fact that you keep going back to him.  
**ELENA**

We've worked a lot out-  
**BECCA**

I want to believe you but-  
**ELENA**

Because his son-  
**BECCA**

You keep saying that but what has *he* done, John-  
**ELENA**

This dinner is a good sign, isn't it?  
**BECCA**

I really hope so.  
**ELENA**

*ELENA sips.*

Y'all absolutely hate him.  
**BECCA**

I hate anyone that brings you to tears.  
**ELENA**

It's not just - there's good stuff too.  
**BECCA**

We don't ever hear about it.  
**ELENA**

**BECCA**  
You guys want to go to brunch and hear all the lovey-mushy stuff? No. Come on. We aren't like that./ We don't talk about that stuff.

**ELENA**

Right, but there's a cycle-

**BECCA**

I know it isn't optimal/ I mean, Jesus, I am aware.

**ELENA**

Sure, but there is a cycle-

**BECCA**

There isn't a cycle!

**ELENA**

I'm trying to really talk to you about this. Calmly. Not like Emily does. So you could at least try to listen.

*BECCA subsides.*

**ELENA**

You always forgive him. Every time. For everything. No matter what he says. Or doesn't say. It's like you forget. And you start to get so into him that you can't think about anything else. Everything revolves around him. If he messages you, out of the blue - if he, all of a sudden, has even the *slightest* window for you, you leave. Drop everything and-

**BECCA**

That's not true. I never leave on Fridays.

**ELENA**

Fine. But even when you don't leave, and he texts you, you aren't here anymore. You can't think about anything else. And every time you put him at the center of your universe, you eventually are crushed because he's gone back to loving his wife, or worse, there's some other girl in the rotation. And he always, *always* makes you believe that's your fault because *you* expected too much. And you're wrecked. Absolutely *wrecked*. So as one of the two people that *always*, *always* puts you back together, I'm just... racking my brain. What could be – what person could be worth all that?

*(Pause.)*

So, if you want me to defend you, I gotta know what's different this time. Not the convenient timing of the son. What is it about *his actions* that make you think this time will be so different?

**BECCA**

Because he promised. That it'll be me. *Just me.*

**ELENA**

And you believe him?



**BECCA**

I think I have to! Otherwise, I've wasted so much time and...

*(Pause.)*

Look, it's...

*(Pause.)*

They don't build houses for one person. You aren't supposed to...

*(Pause.)*

It's good when he's here.

*(She thinks. Then, decides.)*

I believe him. I do.

*Beat. They drink.*

*A shift further into night.*

**BECCA**

Y'all could go to a bar.

**ELENA**

Me and Emily?

**BECCA**

Yeah, or have her over. To your apartment.

**ELENA**

Might be good just to take the night off.

**BECCA**

Which is fair. Totally fair. And normal, I might add.

**ELENA**

It's not that I don't want to. I'm just still getting slammed at work.

**BECCA**

What's abnormal is this having to meet up no matter what business.

**ELENA**

Well, it used to be easier.

**BECCA**

We're not gonna be doing this forever. Stuff is gonna keep coming up.

**ELENA**

Well, I know that.

**BECCA**

Yeah, you're not who I'm worried about.

**EMILY**

*(From off, calling.)*

ALL RIGHT, BITCHES...

**BECCA**

Back me up. Please.

*EMILY enters through the side gate and approaches the porch. She carries a six-pack and two stacks of printed papers.*

**EMILY**

What's with the salt?

**BECCA**

Elena brought it. It's for the owl.

**EMILY**

Oh, because it's a witch?

**BECCA**

Jesus Christ.

**EMILY**

You've never heard that? It's either a witch or it's controlled by a witch. One of her imps.

**BECCA**

Y'all don't actually believe that.

**EMILY**

Or it could just be an owl. But I've heard the stories.

**ELENA**

And why would a story stick around if it's not somewhat true?

**BECCA**

Please tell me what could be somewhat true about a giant, half-bird, half-elderly woman?

**EMILY**

Okay, well, I haven't heard all that.

**ELENA**

It's an old, old story. People actually believe in her. She causes actual fear.

**EMILY**

Yeah, Becca. Don't be insensitive.

**BECCA**

How am I being insensitive?!

**ELENA**

La Lechuza. That's what she's called. Google that shit.

**BECCA**

I'm sorry, what?

**ELENA**

Google, 'La Lechuza, scary story.'

*EMILY takes out her phone.*

**BECCA**

No, I don't want to get into all this.

**EMILY**

L-A-C-H?

**ELENA**

L-E-C-H-U-Z-A. La Lechuza.

**BECCA**

What's with the paper?

**EMILY**

We'll get to that.

*(Scrolling.)*

Oh my God.

*(Showing the phone to ELENA.)*

Is that what she looks like?

**ELENA**

Yes. Show Becca.

*EMILY holds the phone's image out to BECCA.*

**BECCA**

*(Looking away.)*

Uh-Uh. No. I don't want to see it. I don't need the image in my head.

**EMILY**

*(Reading.)*

“La Lechuza: half owl, half woman, full demon of the night.”

*(Laughing.)*

Who writes this shit?

**ELENA**

Just read it.

**BECCA**

Can we not?

**EMILY**

We gotta know what we're dealing with here.

*(Reading.)*

“La Lechuza, the Spanish word for owl, or more specifically the Barn Owl, also refers to a popular tale in Mexican folklore, of a woman, or witch, with magical powers who can shape shift into a giant owl at night.”

**BECCA**

This isn't Mexico.

**ELENA**

It's Tejas.

**EMILY**

Which is just northern Mexico.

**ELENA**

*Exactly.*

**EMILY**

Yeah, I mean, if this thing's a witch, it's this kind of witch.

**BECCA**

We are so far from Mexico right now.

**EMILY**

Wouldn't be that far for an owl.

**ELENA**

Or a witch...

**EMILY**

They both fly...

**ELENA**

Keep going.

**EMILY**

“While her origins are often debated, most myths describe La Lechuza as a wronged woman who sold her soul to the Devil so that she may practice witchcraft - seeking revenge and striking in the dead of the night.”

**BECCA**

Key word “myth.”

**EMILY**

“How she was wronged, and who she is after tends to vary. Many believe her child was killed by a drunk driver. As a result, La Lechuza swoops down, blocking intoxicated drivers from seeing the road, causing them to swerve and meet an untimely death. Other stories state, La Lechuza was hurt by an unfaithful husband, so she seeks revenge on all men who commit acts of infidelity. Strategically luring men outside of the house with strange noises such as an infant’s cry or a woman’s whistle, La Lechuza waits until the cheater is absolutely alone before emitting a terrifying shriek and clawing the man to death with her terrible talons.”

*(Looking up from reading.)*

Oh, so she’s here for John. That settles that.

*BECCA shoots EMILY a look.*

**BECCA**

It hasn’t attacked anyone.

**EMILY**

She.

**ELENA**

Not yet.

**EMILY**

“Others believe La Lechuza is simply a warning that danger is to come. Her presence has been known to predict hurricanes, tornadoes, and even family deaths.”

**BECCA**

That’s quite a range.

**EMILY**

“Known to control electricity, she can cause cars to break down or even start strange thunderstorms out of the blue – storms with big strikes of lightning and enormous cracks of thunder without any trace of rain.”

**BECCA**

Also called heat lightning. A completely normal weather phenomenon.

**EMILY**

“Should you hear any of these signs – a whistle, a baby’s cry, or a storm without rain, take heed to stay indoors, for even looking at La Lechuza can result in instant death, especially for men. Chances are if a man encounters La Lechuza, it’s lights out.” That’s good! ‘Lights out.’ Get it? Because she controls electricity.

**BECCA**

And if you’re not a man?

**EMILY**

It’s getting there.

*(She continues.)*

“Almost all known survivors of a La Lechuza sighting are female as it’s believed the creature does not wish to harm women. Similar to her forewarnings of danger, if La Lechuza reveals herself to a woman late at night and does not attack, it is to alert her of the hate growing in her heart. A vile, swelling hatred, that is becoming so all-consuming, it is keeping the woman from what she truly wants.”

*(Pause.)*

Okay, okay then it’s not a witch./ It’s an owl.

**ELENA**

Yeah that’s not/ really us, that hate in the heart thing.

**BECCA**

We’re good. Right? We’re totally good.

*They each take a big sip.*

*A shift further into night.*

**BECCA**

You can’t bring us pages and then not let us read them.

**EMILY**

Well now I’m second-guessing.

**ELENA**

Why?!

**EMILY**

It's just a start. It's not even structured yet. It's just - like a - stream of creative thoughts.

**ELENA**

We don't care!

**BECCA**

We get that. It's a process. Once upon a time, we used to make creative stuff too. Let's see 'em.

**EMILY**

Okay, okay.

*EMILY hands BECCA and ELENA each a stack of printed pages. They assess the stacks and start to read.*

*A shift further into night.*

*BECCA and ELENA are almost finished reading the pages.*

**EMILY**

Well?

*BECCA looks to ELENA who shows no sign of commenting.*

**BECCA**

I'm really proud of you for starting.

**EMILY**

No, we can cut all that. The writer actually wrote. Great, hooray, but what do you think about it? Like what do you think about her? Like - is she believable?

**BECCA**

Well, I think so. Yes, definitely.

**EMILY**

Elena?

**ELENA**

What is this?

**EMILY**

I don't know, maybe, like - a short story,/essay-thing-

**ELENA**

No, why did you want me to read this?

**EMILY**

If you're still processing, it's totally cool. You can give me feedback later, whenever-

*ELENA interrupts by reading -*

**ELENA**

“Ellen does a final look at herself in the mirror hanging over her closet door. She always does this before leaving. A quick glance, a once-over, then turns the overhead light off, phone to pocket, and snags her keys and sunglasses from the kitchen counter before heading out the door. But today, she stops. Lingers just a millisecond longer, looking just long enough to become unnerved. She undresses, unconcerned by the fact that this action, undressing, then redressing, paired with her commute will undoubtedly make her late. Typically punctual, but today she doesn't care. She removes everything and stares. She looks at herself, mesmerized by the realization of just how much of what she sees in the mirror, she does not think of as her own.

Her arms, her legs, her midsection, her whole body merely a support system for her head. A transportation device whose only purpose has become to get her thoughts from one location to another. Day in and day out, thinking, sorting, managing, bettering, handling, working. All day, she sits and she thinks. Most of the day in one room, in one chair, before coming home and feeding a body that's only imitating hunger because it's done nothing but sit and support the head. Yet she feeds it before selecting another spot to sit and think some more. Nothing she's looking at feels like her own. When she pictures herself, this is not the body she sees. That's how seldom she really looks.

Then, all at once, the guilt rushes in. Remembering how, unfortunately, this is supposed to be the prime of her life. Her body, supposedly at its most beautiful, but no one sees it. A waste. She knows. That she never offers it to anyone else to enjoy. That she does not enjoy it herself, only neglects. And so, intimacy is not an option. In fact, it's feared. Better, she thinks, to keep her mind always occupied, unaware of the toll it takes on her to just stay distracted.”

*(Looking up.)*

What is all this?

**EMILY**

It's a young woman who's obviously struggling with her-

**ELENA**

I didn't tell you that so you go off and write about me.

**EMILY**

It's not you.

*(ELENA scoffs.)*

It's not. I promise.



**ELENA**

Her name is *Ellen*.

**EMILY**

I'm not...seeing the connection.

**ELENA**

That is the fucking white version of my name! It's the SAME NAME for god's sake!

**EMILY**

Okay, I can always change the name -

**ELENA**

How exactly did you think this was gonna go over? Me under a microscope like this?

**EMILY**

Elena, I'm sorry. I-

**ELENA**

Aren't writers supposed to write what they know?

**EMILY**

I was *imagining*-

**ELENA**

Well, you can't imagine./ You honestly, have no idea-

**EMILY**

It wasn't supposed to be an attack!

**ELENA**

Because you live absolutely and entirely on your own schedule. In your own world.

**EMILY**

I wasn't-

**ELENA**

Stop. Just stop. You don't even-

*(Pause. The Air tightens.)*

From the day we graduated, I've been working. Had things like a boss and responsibilities in a way that you have not. And in a way that you do not understand. So this me-not-having-sex-thing, which I utterly regret sharing with you, is not some interesting characteristic for you to explore. It is a side effect from me drowning. From seven straight years of living paycheck to paycheck and growing up with no safety net, and working my *ass off* just to one day to achieve a sliver of the security you have been given with exactly zero effort. So, yes, you are right. I am disconnected from my body. Because it is so tired. I have this crazy job, which I need, but wears

me out beyond belief. And then, once I finally survive to Friday, we come here, and I get to sit here and pretend that what *I* do in a day and what *you* do in a day, amount to the same thing. That they are the same version of being an adult.

**EMILY**

Okay. I'm sorry.

**ELENA**

I mean, hell, that's your story. A girl who spends her brief break from work listening to her friends make the same, *stupid* mistakes *over* and *over* again!

**BECCA**

All right, she said sorry. Twice.

**ELENA**

No, seriously! It is *fascinating* the problems the two of you have selected for yourself. Things that are *so, so fixable*.

*(To EMILY.)*

Write your fucking stories, preferably not about me.

*(To BECCA.)*

And leave your cheating boyfriend. Who is married.

*(To both.)*

Right? Right? Not exactly rocket science.

**BECCA**

You have to stop blaming everything on work. The whole world is working.

**ELENA**

Emily's not.

**BECCA**

Yes she is.

*EMILY squirms.*

**ELENA**

There are no deadlines. She answers to no one. That isn't working.

**BECCA**

*(To EMILY.)*

Aren't you tutoring?

**EMILY**

*(Small.)*

I um – I quit that.

**ELENA**

I think it's *great* we're taking a break next Friday.

**EMILY**

What's going on next Friday?

*ELENA makes a gesture inviting BECCA to explain.  
BECCA does not, so ELENA proceeds.*

**ELENA**

Becca's going to a work event with John. She doesn't want you to think of it as her choosing him over us, well, over you. And she knows you certainly won't like that, so she wants *me* to calm *you* down. Consider yourself calmed.

**BECCA**

Thank you. Great support.

**EMILY**

So we're not coming here next Friday?

**ELENA**

Nope. Anyways, I'll let you two squabble it out.

*ELENA stands.*

**EMILY**

Don't just leave. You're obviously upset.

**ELENA**

Yes, I am. I'm over this.

**EMILY**

Leaving's not gonna fix anything.

**ELENA**

Should I do what you do? Freak out until everyone gives me what I want.

**BECCA**

Goddamn, Elena. Don't you think you've beaten her up enough?

**ELENA**

Right, right. We always gotta look out for Emily.

**EMILY**

I can look out for myself.

**BECCA**  
No, you can't.

**ELENA**  
That's rich.

**EMILY**  
Wow, didn't know I was such a burden.

**BECCA**  
Stop, just stop.

**ELENA**  
I can't with that right now.

**EMILY**  
What?/ I'm not some child.

**BECCA**  
That's like your whole thing. Being a burden.

**EMILY**  
And what's your whole thing? Having an affair with a married man?

**BECCA**  
His Kid. Is leaving. Next week.

**ELENA**  
My God.

**EMILY**  
Yeah and then what?

**BECCA**  
HE'S GETTING A DIVORCE!

**ELENA**  
SO HE SAYS!

**EMILY**  
AND THEN WHAT'S THE PLAN? Y'ALL START OVER? YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE A  
BABY WITH THIS CHEATING MAN WHO NEVER, EVER, SHOWS UP FOR YOU?

**BECCA**  
He's shown up the last six weeks!

**ELENA**  
Yeah, and how does it feel when he leaves?

**EMILY**

You aren't supposed to fucking procreate with someone that rips you to shreds! That makes you cry every other date!

**BECCA**

We're past that!

**ELENA**

He's kicked you out of his house before!

**EMILY**

And this kid, he's not going to college on Mars-

**ELENA**

Yes, this is my point!

**EMILY**

Like - he's not dead! He is going to come back from college! And then, what then!? Oh that's right, you have this sudden, *bonkers urge* to start a family! You and him, and the kid, and your baby eighteen years younger, and whoever else John decides to fuck when he's bored of you! Y'all just gonna be here, playing house, one fucked-up happy family? I WOULD LOVE TO SEE THAT CHRISTMAS CARD!

**BECCA**

You two just know everything! I should *definitely* take my relationship advice from y'all!

*(To ELENA.)*

Celibate and-

**ELENA**

I'm going.

**BECCA**

*(To EMILY.)*

And has never committed to anyone. Ever.

**EMILY**

I'VE COMMITTED TO YOU! TO BOTH OF YOU!

*(Pause.)*

*Good. God.*

*(Pause.)*

I would choose y'all over anyone else.

*(Pause. Tearful.)*

So fuck you.

*(Pause.)*

Why is this coming apart?

*The Barn Owl calls. Loudly.*

**ELENA**

I'm going. I can't stand that fucking thing.

**EMILY**

Just stay, Elena. I'm sorry about the pages.

**BECCA**

This is beyond the fucking pages.

**ELENA**

It's not supposed to be this difficult to be friends.

**EMILY**

It's not. Stop, just sit. Please.

**ELENA**

*(To EMILY.)*

Can you get yourself home?

**EMILY**

Stop, please stay!

*ELENA heads towards the side gate.*

**ELENA**

See y'all when I see ya.

**EMILY**

Becca, tell her to stay. We won't fight.

**BECCA**

I want Elena to do whatever Elena wants to do.

*ELENA leaves.*

**EMILY**

You never tear into her like you do with me.

*(Pause.)*

Shit.

*(Pause.)*

Dammit.

*Beat.*

*BECCA and EMILY sit in silence.*

**EMILY**

Do you want me to leave too?

**BECCA**

No.

*BECCA takes a big sip.*

*Beat.*

**BECCA**

*(Gently.)*

What's the plan Emily? The whole world couples up, has children, takes jobs, moves away, does shit, whatever it is, *grows up*, and we'll three just be here sitting on the porch?

**EMILY**

Doesn't sound so bad to me.

*Beat.*

**EMILY**

I want you to get everything you want. I do. You and Elena.

*(Pause.)*

I just know I'm gonna get left behind.

*Beat. BECCA sips.*

**BECCA**

Your pages were good.

**EMILY**

They sure went over well.

**BECCA**

Your pages are always good.

**EMILY**

Thanks.

*Pause.*

**BECCA**

You got to stop standing in your own way. Keep going. Keep...writing and...working through it.

*EMILY nods.*

And pick a different name.

**BECCA**

*EMILY nods.*

*Neither speaks.*

*They drink as the shadows of the night grow darker and the sounds of the night grow louder.*

End of Scene Three.

**Scene Four. Friday.**

*Through the windows, the lights inside the house are on. Muffled, upbeat music plays.*

*After a moment, BECCA comes into view, rushing through the living room into the kitchen. She wears a formal dress. She is frantically completing last minute tasks before walking out the door.*

*She places a water glass in the kitchen, grabs her purse, then rushes out of the kitchen, through the living room back to her unseen bedroom.*

*After a few seconds, she returns to the living room. She places a small gift inside her purse, then stands while struggling to put on a pair of heels.*

*With both shoes on, she heads towards the front door visible through the window looking into the living room.*

*She remembers.*

*She heads back to the kitchen to turn on the outside porch lights.*

*She heads back into the living room. She turns off the lights inside the house.*

*She exits out of the front door.*

*When the front door shuts, the music stops.*

*Beat.*



*Then, into...*

**Scene Five. The Porch. Moments Later.**

*The sound of a woman whistling one long note.*

*The Barn Owl calls.*

*The sound of a woman whistling one long note again.*

*Beat.*

*EMILY enters from side gate carrying a beer and her notebook.*

*From the porch, she approaches the house, peering inside the dark windows, holding her eyes right up to the glass.*

*She determines no one is home.*

*She sits at the porch's table facing away from the house.*

*She opens the beer. She opens her notebook.*

*She neither sips nor writes.*

*She listens.*

*Beat.*

*Eventually, she performs the act of writing – moving the pen but not really engaged.*

*She loses steam. She stops pretending.*

*She listens again.*

*The longer she listens, the more overwhelmed she becomes.*

*It builds. Slowly.*

*She starts to cry.*

*She grows more upset, now frustrated with herself because she is crying. As a result of the frustration, she cries even more, embarrassed even though no one is around.*

*Her tears grow in intensity.*

*Eventually, they become unmanageable.*

*She makes ugly, but not humorous, audible sounds.*

*Her thoughts are so overwhelming, they become audible.*

*She speaks, almost shouting into the night. Still crying-*

**EMILY**

I'm trying. I am *trying*.

*(She cries.)*

But what am I supposed to do?

*(Through sobs.)*

When it's only me?

*(Breathing hard. Calming.)*

And all this fucking silence.

*EMILY gets up to pace along the porch.*

*Suddenly, she stops. The corner of her eye catches movement off stage.*

*A large shadow emerges.*

*While EMILY can see the being in its entirety, the audience merely sees a misshapen shadow.*

*Its shape clarifies taking the form of A Barn Owl.*

*The Barn Owl's shadow grows larger.*

*EMILY looks at it for a long time, finding its presence calming, not distressing.*

*After a while, she addresses the Owl.*

**EMILY**

*(Unrushed.)*

They aren't here. It's just me.  
Sorry to disappoint.

*(Pause.)*

Depends on who you ask, but at least for one of them it's my fault.

*(The shadow moves.)*

No, no I promise. Nothing to do with you. Not really.  
Elena? She spooks easily.  
And she wants to rest on Friday nights.  
This isn't restful, for her. She's been looking to get out of it for a long time.  
But me, I- um - I love having you here.  
You're here for the same reasons I am.  
You like the company.  
And you can't stand to be alone with your own thoughts.  
You get it.  
It's supposed to be a gift. Not a burden.  
Bird-den. Hah.  
Sorry.  
Do you come a long way?  
Or do you live here? Around here?  
Where are the others?  
Where are your children?  
Where's your fucking boyfriend?  
I don't have one either.  
Who else do you go see at night?

*(The shadow shifts.)*

You should stay here.  
Really. Please.  
I'm actually sort of asking as a favor.

*(Pause.)*

Because Elena and I...  
We're going to go away. Eventually.  
Away. But not far.  
Well, Maybe.  
But not here.  
But Becca's going to stay. She'll be here for a good while.  
And the house is going to fill with two more people.  
And for the most part, she'll be okay.  
Except for the nights when she comes out here and sits very still.  
All alone.  
It would be nice for you to watch over her then.  
Okay?  
No matter how many nights she has to come out here and sit.  
Like you, she's comforted by the sounds of the night.

*(Pause.)*

And sometime, after all those nights,  
I'll be back, okay?  
To say thank you.  
And then, you can go.  
And I'll put Becca back together.

*(The shadow is still.)*

But – um, tonight. Do you think you could just stay with me?

I'm just gonna sit here.  
Just for a little while longer.  
We can both go, in just a little bit.

*(The shadow moves slightly.)*

In just a little bit.

*EMILY sits back down in one of the chairs, keeping her eyes on the Owl the whole time.*

*Beat. Beat. Beat.*

***A shift further into night.***

*Seen through the window, the front door flies open and BECCA storms through it. She turns on the lights inside the house, slamming the front door behind her.*

**EMILY**

Shit.

*EMILY tries to move out of the porch's direct light.*

*The Barn Owl's shadow vanishes.*

*EMILY gathers her items, planning her escape through the side gate.*

*BECCA, from inside the house, walks into the kitchen and lets out an enormous scream.*

*EMILY, having made it to the gate, freezes. She contemplates leaving or staying. She decides to try to check on BECCA without being noticed and creeps towards the porch's windows.*

*BECCA stomps into the bedroom.*

*After a moment, she reappears in the living room with a sweatshirt over her dress. Heels off.*

*She stomps into the kitchen. She throws open the fridge. Grabs a beer. Then she heads towards the porch.*

*Noticing BECCA coming, EMILY tries to run and re-exit through the side gate but does not succeed.*

*BECCA, beer in hand, enters onto the porch.*

**BECCA**  
*(Startled.)*

What the hell?!

**EMILY**

It's me. It's just me.

**BECCA**

Jesus.

**EMILY**

Sorry.

*Emily heads to the side gate.*

**BECCA**

Wait.

*EMILY stops. BECCA goes back into the kitchen. EMILY re-approaches the edge of the porch.*

*BECCA reappears on the porch with another beer. She extends it to EMILY.*

*Before EMILY can take the beer, BECCA jerks the beer back slightly.*

**BECCA**

I don't want to talk about it.

**EMILY**

Fine.

*BECCA hands EMILY the beer. They sit.*

**EMILY**

I saw the owl.

*(BECCA nods.)*

And I lived to tell the tale.

*(Pause.)*

You okay?

I will be. **BECCA**

*(Beat.)*

I want to be old already.

**EMILY**

No, you don't.

**BECCA**

Not all the way old, but too old to make any changes.

*EMILY's face shows she does not understand.*

**BECCA**

You wake up, and you're just like – this is my life. This is how it all plays out. Too late to pivot.

*Pause.*

**EMILY**

That is a terrifying thought.

*ELENA enters from the side gate with a six-pack of beer. She places the beer on the table, opens one, and sits.*

**ELENA**

I had sex.

**BECCA**

What?

**EMILY**

Tonight?

**ELENA**

Yep, like an hour ago.

**EMILY**

Congrats. How was it?

**ELENA**

I made a to-do list.

**EMILY**

Like while it was happening?

**ELENA**

Yes!

**BECCA**

I've done that before.

**EMILY**

Hate that.

**ELENA**

I don't know what's wrong with me, but I'm like - laying there trying to enjoy it, but I keep thinking things like- how I don't have dish soap, or limes, or any more frozen pizzas. And I keep telling myself, "Stop. Stop making this list. You are capable of experiencing joy." So I at least try to think about something else. And I think about our fight. Then, the sex is over. And it goes on my to-do list to say sorry. And now I'm here.

*(Pause.)*

So...sorry.

**EMILY**

Same.

**BECCA**

Same.

*Pause.*

**ELENA**

How long y'all been here?

**BECCA**

Emily's been out here talking to the owl all night.

**ELENA**

Good, you scared it off.

**EMILY**

I didn't scare it off. Becca scared it off coming in and slamming the door.

**ELENA**

So how was the dinner?

**BECCA**

Real shitty.

**ELENA**

How shitty?

**BECCA**

She was there too.

She who? **EMILY**

**BECCA**  
The wife.

**ELENA**  
The wife.

What? **EMILY**

Yep. Fuck me. **BECCA**

Did you talk to her? **EMILY**

Oh no, I was at a separate table. Way in the back. Not with him at all. **BECCA**

What? **EMILY**

Yep. **BECCA**

Did he tell you at all that she was gonna be there? **EMILY**

I should have known when he texted and said he couldn't pick me up. **BECCA**

Stop blaming yourself for his shit. **EMILY**

I mean - at the thing, he came up to me, to the table where I'm sitting and he was like, "You're good, here, right? Looks like a fun group!" **BECCA**

Oh hell no. **ELENA**

Well what did you say to that? **EMILY**

I looked up and smiled./And he went back to his table. **BECCA**



**EMILY**

Why?! Why did you let him just-

**BECCA**

Because I'm playing it through in my head. Okay, maybe she found out about the dinner last minute, and what's he gonna do? Not invite her? Tell her he's already got a date?

**EMILY**

But you didn't confront him. You just-

**BECCA**

I did! I tried! It's harder than you think in the moment to-

**EMILY**

That's so fucking *weak*, Becca./I'm fucking sick of this.

**BECCA**

What am I supposed to do when I can *literally* see them together, laughing and having a grand old time!

**ELENA**

You should have just left.

**BECCA**

I did. Eventually I-

**EMILY**

I'm fucking done with this. You didn't say anything/ to stand up for yourself-

**BECCA**

I did!

**EMILY**

A smile is not standing up for yourself! You used to be better than this shit.

**BECCA**

You aren't listening/ to me!

**EMILY**

You know, I'm done. I don't need to listen. You just lay down and take it./I'm done.

**ELENA**

Emily!

**EMILY**

I'm serious. I'm done letting you become this like – shell of a person. You either keep hanging out with him. Or you're friends with me. Not both.

**BECCA**

Oh, I'm getting an ultimatum now? What happened to 'I'm committed to you, I choose you.'

**EMILY**

I can't be friends with someone this spineless.

**BECCA**

I was trying! /I am trying-

**EMILY**

No, you're not! You're hoping it will get better! / And it won't!

**BECCA**

You don't listen!

**EMILY**

I've heard plenty!

**BECCA**

I had this gift! This stupid gift! For the kid, for graduation, or whatever. It's a flask. A nice one, but it can fit in my purse. And I see him, John, walk by my table out these back doors. And I know where he's going. He's going to smoke. And she doesn't like that, so I know she's not following him. So I go out there, with this little...fucking package, and I'm like 'Hey.' And immediately, he's just like 'What's that? What *is* that?' And I'm like 'It's for Tyler. For graduation. It's small. Nothing big.' And he yells at me, immediately, *so fucking loud*. 'HOW THE HELL AM I SUPPOSED TO GIVE THIS TO HIM?!' I mean he is *yelling* in this alleyway, 'WHO THE FUCK AM I SUPPOSED TO TELL HIM THIS IS FROM?' And I want to lunge at him, like lunge at his throat. But I'm – I'm frozen. Because of his yelling and it's so loud, so damn loud, and I can't think of anything strong, or smart, or even anything at all to say! He is just shrieking, 'YOU AREN'T HIS MOM. YOU'LL NEVER BE HIS MOM. THIS IS SOMETHING I HAVE TO FIGURE OUT. I – I HAVE TO FIGURE THIS OUT.'

*(Growing increasingly distressed.)*

And I'm trying – But I can't-/ I can't say anything!

**ELENA**

Whoa, Becca/ Becca-

**EMILY**

Okay, okay-

**BECCA**

I can't come up with *anything* to say! And he is just going on and on about how if 'I don't know my place in all this, then I should just move on!' All while I'm holding this stupid, tiny little gift with this tiny red bow! I look RIDICULOUS!

*The Barn Owl calls. Loud.*

**ELENA**

Shit, it's back.

*The night grows darker. It starts to storm – thunder and lightning.*

**EMILY**

*(Focused on BECCA.)*

Hey, hey-

**BECCA**

BECAUSE I *AM* RIDICULOUS! BECAUSE I AM WAITING ON THIS THING THAT'S *NEVER* GOING TO HAPPEN!

*The Barn Owl's calls slowly increase in frequency and volume.*

*It thunders again, loud. The porch lights flicker.*

**ELENA**

Storm with no rain.

**BECCA**

*(Competing with the thunder.)*

BUT HE TOLD ME! I'm NOT CRAZY! HE TOLD ME IT'S MY TURN!

*It thunders again.*

*Still calling, the Barn Owl gets closer, its shadow draping the porch. BECCA remains unaware.*

**ELENA**

*(Standing.)*

It's right over us.

**EMILY**

It's okay! It's okay, Becca. Hey, just calm down, both of you.

*ELENA moves closer to the Owl's shadow. Quietly, but urgently, she recites the prayer 'The Magnificat' not stopping no matter how loud BECCA, the owl, or the storm becomes – her prayer providing a consistent undercurrent as the scene crescendos. She repeats the prayer as many times as needed.*

**ELENA**

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,  
My spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
For he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.

**BECCA**

AND I DON'T KNOW WHY I'M IN LOVE WITH HIM. BUT I AM. AND I'M A MONSTER BECAUSE I SAW THEM. I FUCKING SAW THEM. AND SHE LOVES HIM AND THEY HAVE A KID TOGETHER. AND SHE'S FUCKING HAPPY. I SAW HER.

**ELENA**

From this day all generations will call me blessed:  
the Almighty has done great things for me,  
and holy is his Name.

**BECCA**

WHAT THE FUCK IS WRONG WITH ME? WHAT THE FUCK KIND OF MONSTER GETS IN THE WAY OF THAT? I AM ONE OF THOSE - I AM A WOMAN WHO HATES WOMEN. ALL THIS FUCKING HATE IN MY HEART!

**ELENA**

He has mercy on those who fear him  
in every generation.

*The Barn Owl calls the loudest it ever has before.*

**EMILY**

Fuck.

**ELENA**

He has shown the strength of his arm,  
he has scattered the proud in their conceit.

*Owl. Thunder.*

*EMILY goes to BECCA, but she moves away.*

**BECCA**

*(To the owl)*

IT'S PROBABLY HERE TO GET ME! COME AND FUCKING GET ME! I KNOW THAT'S WHY IT'S HERE!

**ELENA**

He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,  
and has lifted up the lowly.

**BECCA**

BECAUSE OF WHAT I'M DOING TO THIS WOMAN! COME AND FUCKING GET ME  
AND ALL THIS FUCKING HATE IN MY HEART! COME AND FUCKING KILL ME  
PLEASE!

**EMILY**

Hey, hey, just sit down/ Becca, it's okay! Stop!

**ELENA**

He has filled the hungry with good things,  
and the rich he has sent away empty.

**BECCA**

I DON'T WANT TO BE IN LOVE WITH HIM, BUT I AM, SO WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO  
DO?

*(Shrieking at the owl.)*

YOU WANT ME TO BE ALL ALONE LIKE YOU? SO LONELY YOU SCREAM!

**EMILY**

Becca, stop! Stop!

**BECCA**

*(Breaking down.)*

I need help!

**ELENA**

He has come to the help of his servant Israel  
for he has remembered his promise of mercy,  
the promise he made to our fathers,  
to Abraham and his children forever

*The Barn Owl shrieks loud in tandem with a huge crack of  
thunder.*

**BECCA**

*(Exploding.)*

I NEED HELP! I NEED HELP!

**EMILY**

We will help you! *I will help you!*

*Thunder. Owl.*

**BECCA**

*(Turning back to EMILY.)*

HE HAS THIS HOLD ON ME. I CAN'T- HE ALWAYS – HE ALWAYS COMES AROUND!

*Thunder.*

**ELENA**

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,  
as it was in the beginning, is now.

**BECCA**

*(To EMILY.)*

DON'T LEAVE ME! I NEED HELP!

*Emily holds Becca. It's loving but firm.*

**EMILY**

*(Embracing BECCA.)*

I won't! I won't!

**ELENA**

And will be forever. Amen.

*BECCA releases a final wail.*

*ELENA, the owl, and the storm all subside.*

*BECCA quietly cries.*

*Beat. Beat. Beat.*

**ELENA**

Holy shit.

**EMILY**

*(To BECCA.)*

Hey, look at me.

*BECCA looks.*

**EMILY**

We'll figure it the fuck out. Okay? Okay? We always do.

*(Pause.)*

Okay?

*BECCA nods.*

*The Barn Owl's shadow dissipates.*

*BECCA's sobs slowly turn into laughs. Gradually, EMILY and ELENA laugh as well. They grow hysterical.*

**ELENA**

*(Through laughs.)*

Fuck.

**EMILY**

*(Laughing.)*

Shit.

**BECCA**

*(Laughing.)*

Jesus Christ.

*They laugh so hard it hurts. They start to catch their breath, speaking through broken laughter.*

**EMILY**

Elena's a witch!

**ELENA**

Maybe I am!

*They all laugh again. It's side-splitting laughter.*

**BECCA**

*(Still laughing.)*

Don't put me in your stories. It's too embarrassing.

**ELENA**

Yeah, don't write about us.

**EMILY**

I can't!

*(Starting to get a hold on her laughter.)*

We just sit on this porch!

*(Pause. Gathering herself.)*

All we're ever gonna do is get old and sit here on this fucking porch.

**ELENA**

Yep.

**BECCA**

Doesn't sound so bad to me.

**EMILY**

And nobody wants to hear about that.

**ELENA**

Nope.

**BECCA**

Sure don't.

*Calming down, they each take a few big sips.*

*The air releases.*

*They listen, swaddled by the sounds of the night until-*

**EMILY**

Let's play the game.

**BECCA**  
NO.

**ELENA**  
NO.

***A final shift further into night.***

*There is a brief moment of stillness on the porch. A moment in which all that is heard are the surrounding sounds of the night – rustling leaves, cars driving by in the distance, crickets, etc.*

*Then, very distinctly, a Barn Owl calls. Not a distress call, though it may sound so, but the call used by the bird when announcing its territory.*

*The sound of a woman whistling three long notes.*

*Pause. Then -*



*A chorus of songbirds, all types that are geographically correct (blue jay, cardinal, mourning dove, mockingbird, chickadee) crescendo in song. They sing as if it was morning, but it is evening approaching night.*

*In this crescendo, the Barn Owl's shadow reappears.*

*As the birds sing out, the Barn Owl's shadow shifts to reveal, maybe, and just maybe, the shadow of an old woman.*

*The chorus of songbirds goes silent in unison.*

*The sound of a woman whistling three long notes again.*

*On the third whistle, it all, including the back porch lights, goes to black.*

**End of Play.**

**The Magnificat Prayer (Spanish)**

*Proclama mi alma la grandeza del Señor,  
y se alegra mi espíritu en Dios, mi Salvador;  
porque ha mirado la humillación de su esclava.  
Desde ahora me felicitarán todas las generaciones,  
porque el Poderoso ha hecho obras grandes en mí:  
su nombre es santo,  
y su misericordia llega a sus fieles  
de generación en generación.  
Él hace proezas con su brazo:  
dispersa a los soberbios de corazón,  
derriba del trono a los poderosos  
y enaltece a los humildes,  
a los hambrientos los colma de bienes  
y a los ricos los despide vacíos.  
Auxilia a Israel, su siervo,  
acordándose de la misericordia  
como lo había prometido a nuestros padres  
en favor de Abrahán y su descendencia por siempre.  
Amén.*