

JIM. I can see that.

RUSS. Worked up over things. Minor things.

JIM. Things like?

RUSS. Oh, you know.

JIM. Not calling yourself a *minor thing*, are you?

RUSS (*beat, slightly irritated*). No, I didn't – I meant things like –

JIM (*chuckles*). Do you consider yourself a *minor thing*?

RUSS. Jim, I didn't – Well, actually, in the grand scheme of things I don't think any one of us is, uh... particularly – did Bev ask you to come over?

JIM. Nope.

RUSS. I mean, good to see you. Great to see you.

JIM. I mean, we *ran into* each other coupla days ago. Got to talking.

RUSS. Uh-huh.

JIM. Little about you. Since she cares about you.

RUSS. Right. Right.

Pause. RUSS looks for BEV.

The heck's she doing in there?



JIM. Everybody cares about you, Russ.

RUSS. Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Yup. Well. Tell ya what I think. And I'm not a psychiatrist or anything but I do think a lotta people today have this tendency, tendency to *brood* about stuff, which, if you ask me, is, is, is – well, short answer, it's *not productive*. And what I'd say to these people, were I to have a degree in psychiatry, I think my advice would be maybe, get up offa your rear end and *do* something.

JIM. Huh.

RUSS. Be my solution.

JIM. Uh-huh.

RUSS. Of course, what do I know?

JIM. I think you know plenty.

Pause. RUSS turns.

RUSS (*calling*). Hey, Bev?

JIM. Like, I think you know your son was a good man, no matter what. Hero to his country. Nothing changes that.

RUSS. Yup yup yup.

JIM. And I also think you know that sometimes talking about things that happen, painful things, maybe –

RUSS. Uh, you don't happen to have a degree in psychiatry *either*, do you, Jim?

JIM *stares*.

No? Just checking.

JIM. We all suffer, you know. Not like you and Bev, maybe, but –

RUSS. But, see, since what *I'm* doing here is, see, since I'm just minding *my own* business – (*Continues.*)

JIM (*overlapping*). But it doesn't hurt –

RUSS. – sorta seems to *me* you might save yourself the effort worrying about things you don't need to *concern* yourself with and furthermore – (*Continues.*)

JIM (*overlapping*). He's in a better place, Russ.

RUSS. – if you *do* keep going on about those things, Jim, well, I hate to have to put it this way, but what I think I might have to do is... uh... politely ask you to uh... (*Clears his throat.*) well, to go fuck yourself.

Pause.

JIM. Not sure there's a polite way to ask that.

RUSS *risés to exit*.

RUSS (*embarrassed*). Okay? So.

JIM. I just can't believe Kenneth would've wanted his own father to –

LINDSEY (*hand to her heart*). Oh my g – ! So so so wait, so – ?

STEVE. Whoa.

STEVE (*clarifying*). This *exact house*.

LINDSEY (*'how weird'*). So, like, you've... *been in this room?*

LENA. I used to climb a tree in the backyard.

LINDSEY. Oh my God.

STEVE. Whoa.

LENA. A crepe myrtle tree?

KATHY. Well, that is just bizarre.

↓

KEVIN. Any rate, her great-aunt – and she had to save a long time to be able to afford a house like this.

LENA. She was a domestic worker.

LINDSEY and KATHY *make quiet expressions of sympathy*.

KEVIN. And, a house isn't cheap –

LENA. Not *here*, anyway.

KEVIN. Here at *that* time.

LENA. At *that* time – Well, when *I* was growing up I really don't remember seeing a single white face in the neighbourhood for pretty much my entire –

KEVIN. Well, one, you said.

LENA. Who?

KEVIN. What's his name?

LENA. Mr Wheeler?

KEVIN. Mr Wheeler.

LENA (*to the others*). I don't think anybody knew his first name.

KEVIN. He was a... what?

LENA (*to LINDSEY*). At the grocery store.

KEVIN. Bagged the groceries.

LENA. At the Sup'r – Well, back then it was Gelman's but they tore down Gelman's.

KEVIN. And that became Sup'r Sav'r?

LENA. Well, then they tore down Sup'r Sav'r, so –

KEVIN. You know where the Whole Foods is?

STEVE (*with a laugh*). And what happened to Mr Wheeler?

KEVIN. Dead, probably.

LENA. He was, you know... (*Touches her head.*) developmentally...?

LINDSEY.

Ohhhh. That's
so sad.

STEVE.

Huh. Wow.
Depressing.

KATHY.

Ohhhh... you
know why that
upsets me? I
have a niece
with Asperger's
Syndrome.

LENA. But, given the make-up of the neighbourhood at that time and the price of a home like this one, the question naturally arises as to whether it was the thing that happened here in the house – whether that in some way –

KEVIN. Played a factor.

LENA. – in making a place like this affordable. For a person of her income.

All stare. Pause.

STEVE. The *thing*.

LENA. The sad – you know.

LINDSEY. I don't.

LENA. The tragic –

KEVIN. Thing that happened.

STEVE *jumps up to shut the kitchen door.*

Sorry. (*Prompting, continuing LENA's last line.*) The neighbourhood where – ?

LENA. And some of our concerns have to do with a particular period in history and the things that people experienced here in this community *during* that period – (*Continues.*)

STEVE *returns to the circle, sits.*

STEVE (*whispering to LENA*). Sorry.

LENA. – both good and bad, and on a personal level? I just have a lot of *respect* for the people who went through those experiences and still managed to carve out a life for themselves and create a community despite a whole lot of obstacles?

LINDSEY. As well you should.

LENA. Some of which still exist. That's just a part of my *history* and my *parents'* history – and honouring the *connection* to that history – and, *no one*, myself included, likes having to dictate what you can or can't do with your own home, but there's just a lot of *pride*, and a lot of *memories* in these houses, and for some of us, that connection still has *value*, if that makes any sense?

LINDSEY. Total sense.

LENA. For those of us who have remained.

LINDSEY. Absolutely.

LENA. And *respecting* that memory: that has value, too. At least, that's what *I* believe. And that's what I've been wanting to say.

All nod solemnly for several seconds at LENA's noble speech.

STEVE. Um. Can I ask a – ?

LINDSEY (*to STEVE*).
Let her finish.

STEVE (*to LENA*).
Sorry.

LENA. I was finished.

BEV. Like the Wheeler boy.

RUSS. Right. The one who –

BEV. Bags the groceries.

RUSS. Right.

Beat, then:

BEV. But that's nice, isn't it, in a way? To know we all have our place.

RUSS. There but for the grace of God.

BEV. Exactly.

Pause. RUSS breaks it with:



RUSS (*pronouncing grandly, with a sweep of his hand*). Ulan Bator!

BEV. What?

RUSS (*an exact repeat*). Ulan Bator!

BEV. What are you doing?

RUSS (*once again*). Ulan – !

BEV. Stop it. Tell me what you're doing.

RUSS. Capital of Mongolia.

BEV. Well, why would I know that?

RUSS (*shrugs*). *National Geographic*.

BEV. Oh oh. Did you change the address like I asked you?

RUSS. What do you mean?

BEV. For the *National Geographic*.

RUSS. The address?

BEV. Oh, *Russ*!

RUSS. Me?

BEV. I *asked* you.

RUSS. You did?

BEV. I asked you *fifteen* times.

RUSS. When?

BEV. I said don't forget the change of address for the magazine and you promised me that you would, you promised me *specifically* – (Continues.)

RUSS (overlapping). I did it last week.

BEV. – that you would see to it so I – Oh.

RUSS. Pulling your leg.

BEV. I see.

RUSS (a gentle imitation). Oh *Russ*!!

BEV. Maybe people don't *like* having their leg pulled.

RUSS. I was just – I was – Okay.

Pause.

BEV. And are you going to bring that trunk down from upstairs?

RUSS. Yup.

BEV. Thought you said after lunch.

RUSS. Sort of a two-person job.

BEV. And you really want to wear those clothes all day?

RUSS. Hadn't really thought about it.

A silence passes between them. RUSS scratches his elbow.

BEV. But you know, you *are* a funny person. I was telling Francine – I ran into Barbara Buckley at Lewis and Coker's and Barbara said that Newland told her a funny joke that you told at Rotary last year.

RUSS. That *I* told?

BEV. About a man with a talking dog?

RUSS (shakes his head). Thinking of Don Lassiter.

BEV. No, it was you.

RUSS. Don's the one with the jokes.

BEV. You know jokes. You tell jokes.

RUSS. A talking *dog*?

BEV. And Barbara said does Russ not go to Rotary any more?
Apparently they all keep saying where's Russ? (*A beat, then.*) Not that I care one way or the other but it does seem that you used to enjoy going and I don't see why that, of all things, should have to change –

RUSS *shifts in his chair.*

(*Quickly.*) – and please don't say *what's the point*, Russ. I hate it when you say that. Because for that matter –
(*Continues.*)

RUSS (*overlapping*). I wasn't going to say –

BEV. – what's the point of *anything* enjoyable, really? –

Phone rings. FRANCINE enters.

Why not just sit in a chair all day and wait for the end of the world but *I* don't intend to live the remainder of my life like that and I think you could take notice of the fact that talking that way *frightens* me.

FRANCINE (*answering phone*). Stoller residence?

RUSS (*quietly, to BEV*). Not trying to frighten you.

FRANCINE (*on phone*). Who may I say is calling, please?

RUSS (*to BEV, quietly*). Ulan Bator.

FRANCINE. Excuse me, Miz Stoller?

BEV. Who is it?

FRANCINE. Mr Lindner wanting to talk to you.

RUSS (*with a groan*). Ohh for the love of –

BEV (*to FRANCINE*). Tell him I'll call him back.

RUSS. Not one thing it's another.

FRANCINE (<i>on phone</i>). Mr	BEV (<i>to RUSS</i>). I only mean
Linder, she wonders if she	that people are concerned
can call you back?	about you – (<i>Continues.</i>)

RUSS (*overlapping*). Well, what's the *nature* of the concern?

LINDSEY. Well, Steven,
you're free to live wherever
you want, but the
baby and I will be here if
you ever feel like visiting.

need to constantly
ingratiate ourselves with
everybody.

KEVIN. Well, maybe that's
because some of us
aren't *paranoid* and
delusional.

KEVIN and LENA exit. *By this point, DAN has succeeded
in opening the trunk.*

STEVE (to LINDSEY, continuous from above). Fine by me.

LINDSEY. Do you have the keys?

STEVE. I mean, God forbid my needs should ever come before
the *baby's*.

LINDSEY. You really want me to choose between you and the
baby?

STEVE. Oh, I'm secondary.

LINDSEY. Cuz that's an *easy* one.

STEVE. Correction: *tertiary*.

*As LINDSEY and STEVE continue to argue, a bespectacled
young man in a military uniform descends the stairs, unno-
ticed and oddly out of place. This is KENNETH, played by
the actor who played TOM. He carries a yellow legal pad
and a transistor radio. Oblivious to the scene around him, he
takes a seat by a window near the front door, as DAN
removes a yellowed envelope from the trunk. LINDSEY and
STEVE prepare to leave as their bickering continues.*

LINDSEY. Or maybe you don't want the baby.

STEVE. Oh! That's funny. I didn't know I had a *choice*.

LINDSEY. Oh, you had a choice.

STEVE. If only I'd *known*.

LINDSEY. And you *chose*.

STEVE. And what were the options, again? Oh that's right. A)
Let's have a baby.

LINDSEY. Which you chose.

STEVE. Or B) *I'm divorcing you.*

LINDSEY. But you chose A.

STEVE. A for Arm-twisting.

LINDSEY (*going outside*). Do you have the keys?

STEVE. B for *Blackmail*.

LINDSEY (*from outside*). Do you have them or don't - ?

STEVE (*from the door*). YES! YES I HAVE THE GODDAMN -
What, you think someone's gonna rob this place?

DAN *turns to see them exit.*

Help yourselves. Fuckin' shithole.

STEVE *slams the door*. DAN *looks around with no acknowledgment of KENNETH.*

DAN (*to the empty house*). Hello? Hello?

He sits on the trunk, opens the letter.

(*Reading to himself.*) Dear Mom and Dad.

Lights change. Music begins to play from KENNETH's transistor radio, not unlike the very beginning of the play. It is early morning, 1957. Dim light filters through the window, barely illuminating KENNETH. He bends over his legal pad, writing, as BEV slowly descends the stairs, dressed in her robe and slippers. She stops near the bottom.

BEV (*bleary-eyed, confused*). Kenneth?

KENNETH *turns down the volume on the radio.*

KENNETH. Hmm?

BEV. What are you doing down here?

KENNETH. Writing a letter.