

Sweet Texas Reckoning

By

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CAST:

ELLIE WOLCOTT: A true Southern Baptist from Sealy Texas in her mid to late 60's.

ALAN JOHN: A ruggedly handsome Texas man in his mid to late 40's.

KATE WOLCOTT: A simple beauty with the slim body of a dancer in her mid to late 40's.

SAMANTHA: A stunning dark-skinned beauty in her mid-to-late 30's.

SET:

The home of ELLIE WOLCOTT in Sealy, Texas.

TIME:

The Present.

SYNOPSIS:

Ellie Wolcott, a Southern Baptist woman fearing a tepid and lonely old age, attempts to reunite her daughter, Kate, with long time paramour Alan John in order to salvage her remaining years with some semblance of dignity. When Kate shows up with an unexpected "guest", Ellie is forced to confront many demons including her ideas about race, biology, bigotry, and sexuality.

ACT ONE
The Home of Ellie Wolcott – Sealy, Texas – DAY

The LIVING AREA is immaculate, though a bit over crowded with collections of SOUTHERN MEMORABILIA including colorful FIESTA WARE, decorative HAND MADE QUILTS, and a SHELF over a SIDE TABLE with a dozen or so pairs of VINTAGE COWBOY BOOTS. The KITCHEN upstage, which is open to the LIVING AREA, has a cluster of COLLECTIBLE SALT AND PEPPER SHAKERS including not so politically correct BLACK “MAMMIES” and “SAMBOS”. There is a HALLWAY off of the living area leading to the bedrooms with a decorative MIRROR hanging to the left of it, and a SCREENED BACK DOOR leading to what may be an outdoor porch. The back door is ajar.

ELLIE WOLCOTT enters from the hallway carrying a medium sized cardboard BOX. She is a very attractive woman in her mid-sixties wearing just the right amount of makeup to compliment her casual, upscale look. She sets the box on the floor next to the side table and sighs, looking around the room, checking her watch, and finally allowing her gaze to land on the boot collection sitting atop the shelf just above the side table. She reaches for one of the vintage boots, but stops when she notices the opened back door. She crosses to the door, closes it, and heads back to the shelf where she again reaches for the boot and pulls from it a fifth of JACK DANIELS. After a long, satisfying swig from the bottle, she replaces it within the boot, and sets the boot back upon the shelf.

She then begins taking FRAMED FAMILY PHOTOGRAPHS, POEMS, EMBROIDERED SAMPLERS and such from the box, carefully setting them upon the side table. After arranging the frames, she steps back to admire her work and reaches for the boot, taking another long swig.

The SOUND of footsteps is heard on the back porch and ELLIE quickly replaces the bottle into the boot and exits into the hallway leading to the bedrooms. The back door flies open as ALAN JOHN, a ruggedly handsome man in his late forties enters the room. His pressed jeans are accented with expensive-looking western boots and a matching western belt. His starched button-down shirt is partially un-tucked forming a “balloon” just above his belt buckle.

ALAN JOHN
(looking around room)
Hello The House! (beat) Ellie? Ellie, it's Me. AJ. She here?

ELLIE enters from the HALLWAY stopping briefly to check her hair in the MIRROR.

ELLIE
Alan John, you ever knock? Shut that door, will you!

ALAN JOHN

She here yet?

ELLIE

Do you see her? Shut the damned door. You're lettin' in the heat.

ALAN JOHN makes sure the BACK DOOR is shut, then turns to ELLIE.

ALAN JOHN

How do I look?

ELLIE

Tuck your shirt in.

ALAN JOHN

The gal at Walmart says this shirt won't ever wrinkle. Ever.

ELLIE

(commanding)

Tuck!

ELLIE exits into the hallway. ALAN JOHN wanders into the LIVING AREA, carefully tucking his shirt into his jeans and noticing the newly laid frames upon the table below. He picks one of them up and studies it carefully.

ALAN JOHN

(reading words from the framed photo)

"Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray Thee Lord my soul"—

(calling to ELLIE) What is all this stuff? Never seen 'em before.

ELLIE

(from offstage)

There's a photo or two of the both of you in there.

ALAN JOHN

There is? I don't see...

ELLIE

(offstage)

Look in the back. Behind the Christmas sweater one.

ALAN JOHN bends to have a closer look at the photographs and accidentally drops the FRAMED PRAYER.

ALAN JOHN
(under his breath)

Jesus H. Christ!

ALAN JOHN retrieves the frame from the floor, fumbles with it once more, and replaces it onto the table as ELLIE re-enters and heads for the KITCHEN AREA where she checks a POT on the STOVE.

ELLIE
Their plane landed in Houston a little over two hours ago. That shoulda put them into Sealy already.

ALAN JOHN
They? She bringin' someone?

ELLIE
Don't fret, AJ. Probably just one of her dancer friends.

ALAN JOHN
Male...or female?

ELLIE
What difference does that make? Either way, doubt you could tell. Them dancer boys, they're all a little light in the slippers.

ALAN JOHN
"Loafers". It's "light in the loafers".

ELLIE covers the POT, gets an empty COFFEE MUG from the cupboard, and crosses into the LIVING AREA where she again reaches for the BOTTLE from within the BOOT.

ELLIE
(uncapping and pouring)
All I'm sayin' is she's bringin' someone's all.

ALAN JOHN
Is Katie still dancin'? She was so damned beautiful when she danced. Looked like a floatin' snowflake. A little floatin' snowflake.

ELLIE
Thing 'bout snowflakes is they melt, AJ. That business? Women over forty may as well be dead.

ELLIE takes a hearty gulp from the MUG.

ALAN JOHN

She surely was a beauty. When she danced.

ELLIE caps the BOTTLE and hands it to ALAN JOHN.

ELLIE

Do me a favor and put that Jack Daniels back in the boot where it belongs.

ALAN JOHN puts the BOTTLE back into the boot and sits on the SOFA. Ellie sets the mug onto the COFFEE TABLE and sits in her CHAIR.

ALAN JOHN

She's been divorced now for what? Two years?

ELLIE

Goin' on two—

ALAN JOHN

Goin' on two years, and I been patient. Ain't I? Ain't I been a patient man, Momma?

ELLIE

'Bout as patient as they come. (pause) And don't go callin' me "Momma" just yet.

ALAN JOHN

'Bout as patient as a man can get, I reckon.

ELLIE

You can call me "Momma" when this is all wrapped up. Don't go jinx'en it!

ALAN JOHN

She's had some time to simmer down and think about things. I think the timing's just about right.

ELLIE

I'm sure you've been roamin' around her mind, AJ. I've no doubt.

ALAN JOHN

Well she sure been roamin' round mine. Just as like to put up a fence to pen her in.

ELLIE

She was a damned fool to have picked him over you.

ALAN JOHN

We all make mistakes.

ELLIE

Look at you! You haven't aged a bit. Got your looks...and you make a damned fine livin'! Katie was a fool runnin' off to New York...

ALAN JOHN

Gets God-awful cold up there. (pause) Colder than a witches' tit.

ELLIE reaches again for the MUG, taking a swig as she studies him.

ALAN JOHN

(cont.)

What?

ELLIE

Stand up.

ALAN JOHN obeys and stands in front of the sofa. ELLIE rises, sets the mug on the table and begins checking his shirt.

ALAN JOHN

(looking down at shirt)

What??

ELLIE

(tucking his shirt)

It's hangin' all out the back! (she tucks) Maybe you shouldn't sit 'till she gets here.

ALAN JOHN

What?

ELLIE

Don't sit down. Don't sit 'till she gets here.

ALAN JOHN

Yes, ma'am.

ELLIE

Just...stand.

ALAN JOHN

Yes, ma'am.

ELLIE crosses, picks up the empty box, and EXITS into the hallway leaving ALAN JOHN standing in the living room, not quite knowing what to do with himself.

ELLIE
(offstage)

And, I don't want to see you followin' her 'round like a puppy dog, you hear me?

ALAN JOHN

No, ma'am...

ELLIE
(peeking her head in)

No, ma'am?

ALAN JOHN

I mean yes, ma'am.

ELLIE
(retreating back into the hallway)

You spent your whole life doin' that! Let her come after you for a change, you hear me, Alan John? You are the object of desire, you understand?

ALAN JOHN

I guess.

ELLIE
(offstage)

There's no guessin', Alan John Corbin. You either understand or you don't. And right now, I'm thinkin'—

ALAN JOHN

I understand. (beat. repeating her) I am the object of desire.

ELLIE
(offstage)

You bet your ass you are. Let her see what she left behind!

ELLIE re-enters the living room. She eyes him, patting his shoulders. ELLIE then reaches for the MUG and accidently spills the entire contents onto the carpet in front of the sofa.

ELLIE
(alarmed)

Shit! Shit! Shit! Well, don't just stand there! Get me a towel! Quick! From the kitchen!

ALAN JOHN

Yes, ma'am!

ALAN JOHN rushes to the kitchen.

ELLIE

And that spray stuff, too! (to herself) Holy crap in hell.

ALAN JOHN looks frantically around the kitchen where there is no towel in sight.

ALAN JOHN

Where're you keepin' the dish-towels?

ELLIE

That's gonna smell to high heaven!

ALAN JOHN

Where the hell'd they disappear to?

ELLIE

Get a move on, AJ! I heard a car door slam!

ALAN JOHN, not knowing what else to do, quickly unbuttons his shirt, takes it off, and kneels down in front of the sofa to wipe up the mess as FOOTSTEPS are heard on the BACK PORCH.

ELLIE

(cont.)

Jesus Lord in Heaven. She's here! She is - - Shitshitshitshit. Hurry up, will ya?

ALAN JOHN

(still kneeling, wiping)

I'm wipin' as fast as I can, Ellie!

ELLIE rushes to the kitchen, sets the MUG onto the countertop, turns quickly to the mirror making certain her hair is in place, and disappears momentarily into the hallway as KATE WOLCOTT, an attractive woman in her late forties with the slim body of a dancer, enters through the back door holding nothing but a SMALL GIFT BOX.

KATE

(looking around the room)

Hello. Hello the house? I'm home. Momma?

ALAN JOHN remains unseen by KATE as he continues, bare-chested, wiping the floor. ELLIE makes a grand entrance from the HALLWAY, greeting her daughter.

ELLIE

(sounding more Southern than ever)

Katie? That my Katie? Well...if it isn't my girl, Katie! All the way from New York City!

KATE walks to ELLIE and attempts to give her a genuine hug.

KATE

Hello.

ELLIE

Katie...let me have a look at you. My, my. Fit as a fiddle. Where are the rest of your things, baby? I can't imagine you'll be wearin' that the entire time you're here!

KATE

I brought—

ELLIE

'Less you're plannin' on attending a few memorial services.

KATE

Momma—

ELLIE

Or funerals. There's so many colors out there to choose from! I mean, I understand. You're an Artiste, right. I just wonder why you don't ever change your palate, that's all. Expand your color horizons. But, I suppose that is your choice, now isn't it.

KATE

I suppose it is. (regarding the GIFT BOX) I, I brought you a little—

ELLIE

For me? Oh, now there's no need for gift givin'!

KATE

It's not Tiffany's. (pause) It's just a little—

ELLIE takes the SMALL GIFT BOX and absently tucks it away into the cupboard as KATE watches this "routine" in silence.

KATE
(continuing her thought)

--something.

ALAN JOHN, bare-chested, pops up from the floor holding his wadded up shirt.

ALAN JOHN
Hello, Katie.

KATE
AJ---

ALAN JOHN, embarrassed, makes an attempt to cover himself with the wadded shirt.

ALAN JOHN
Heard you were comin' down. Thought I'd say "howdy". (Beat) Well.
(Beat) "Howdy!"

KATE
What the hell—

There is a BRIEF SILENCE as both ELLIE and KATE take note of ALAN JOHN'S shirtless physique.

ELLIE
For heaven's sake, Alan John. Put your shirt back on.

ALAN JOHN
I oughta have a fresh one hangin' in the truck.

ALAN JOHN tosses the liquor soaked shirt onto the kitchen counter and starts out the door as SAMANTHA, a stunningly beautiful dark-skinned woman in her late thirties enters with a ROLL-ON SUITCASE. The shirtless ALAN JOHN attempts to cover himself with one hand as he holds the door for her with the other. SAMANTHA squeezes past.

ALAN JOHN
Howdy.

SAMANTHA
(taking note of the bare-chested AJ)
"Howdy" yourself.

ALAN JOHN exits, closing the door.

SAMANTHA

(cont.)

I swear, Kate, that town-car driver would not shut up. He gave me his card telling me to “call him anytime, day or night!”

KATE

(taking the suitcase)

I’ll bet he did.

SAMANTHA

Bad enough he didn’t know the way. But then to hit on me? Sorta like insult to injury.

KATE

(to ELLIE)

Momma, this is Samantha. (to SAMANTHA) Sam, this is my mother.

SAMANTHA

I am so sorry. (extending hand) Mrs. Wolcott. It’s so nice to meet you.

ELLIE, partially frozen because of the combination of beauty and “blackness” that SAMANTHA possesses, slowly extends her hand.

KATE

You can call her “Ellie”. She can call you “Ellie”, right Momma?

ELLIE

(reluctantly shaking SAMANTHA’S hand)

Pleasure.

SAMANTHA

(with slight urgency)

Hey Kate, where’s the “little girl’s room”? I gotta tinkle. Been holding it in since we passed George Bush Park. That ride—

ELLIE

(too accommodating)

It’s right through the door just off the hallway.

SAMANTHA

(pained)

Thank you. I peed at the airport, but—(rushing off) Thank you!

ALAN JOHN re-enters buttoning up a fresh shirt. He notices the wadded up, liquor-soaked shirt on the kitchen counter, and grabs it before ELLIE can get to it.

ELLIE

(panicked)

AJ, gimme that shirt. I'll toss it in the—

ALAN JOHN

Katie Ann Wolcott! Well, look at you! Just look at you! Beautiful as ever!
C'mere.

SAMANTHA

(from off-stage, relieved)

Thank. You. Jesus.

ALAN JOHN, liquor-soaked shirt in hand, crosses to KATE giving her a bear hug and lifting her two feet off the floor causing the roll-on suitcase to tip over.

KATE

(slightly annoyed)

AJ.

ALAN JOHN begins to twirl her around as ELLIE makes a frantic attempt at grabbing the shirt from ALAN JOHN'S hand.

ELLIE

Gimme the damn—

KATE

(annoyed)

Let me down, AJ!

He drops KATE to the floor as ELLIE swipes the shirt from ALAN JOHN'S hand and quickly hides it in a cupboard.

ALAN JOHN

(sizing her up)

Let me look at ya'! You're just beautiful.

KATE

Please.

ALAN JOHN

As beautiful as ever! Spin round. Let me get a gander!

SAMANTHA enters from the HALLWAY.

SAMANTHA

Oh my goodness, that felt good. Ellie, that is a lovely powder-room. I can see Where Kate gets her sense of style. (noticing ALAN JOHN as if for the first time) Well. Hello. Again. I'm Samantha.

ALAN JOHN

Pleasure's mine. I'm Alan John. Friends call me AJ.

SAMANTHA

So nice to meet you, AJ! I see you found a shirt.

ALAN JOHN

Heh. They never wrinkle.

There is an awkward PAUSE broken by ELLIE motioning toward the living room. ALAN JOHN does not take his eyes off of KATE.

ELLIE

Well now, take a load off! Have a seat! Anybody want some iced tea? I'd offer you something stronger, but that's the strongest I've got in this house!

KATE

Iced tea sounds good, Momma. (to SAMANTHA) You want? (She nods) And for Sam, too. (beat) I forget how hot it gets here in August.

ALAN JOHN

Yes, ma'am! You could fry up a batch of catfish and hushpuppies right there on the back porch without takin' a match to the Coleman!

SAMANTHA

(with a laugh)

Iced tea would be wonderful. Thank you.

ELLIE

(overly enthusiastic about the tea)

A round of iced tea comin' right up!

ELLIE goes to the cupboard for glasses and gets the ICED TEA PITCHER from the REFRIGERATOR. KATE wanders over to the side table, taking a brief look at the framed photos as SAMANTHA sits on the sofa. ALAN JOHN watches to see where KATE will sit and, when she sits on the sofa next to SAMANTHA, ALAN JOHN plops down right next to KATE, dangling his arm just above her shoulders, making the small sofa a bit over crowded.

SAMANTHA

So. Kate tells me that the two of you—

KATE
(overlapping)

Grew up together. We grew up—

ALAN JOHN
(overlapping, with a wink)

HA! We sure did “grew up” together. Yes Ma’am! Did a whole lotta growin’ up, if you know what I mean! Ain’t that right, Katie?

Unseen by the others, ELLIE takes a FLASK from a CUPBOARD and pours a generous splash into her iced tea glass. She brings all FOUR GLASSES to the living room and hands them out, making sure to set her own “iced tea” in front of her on the coffee table.

ELLIE
Katie and Alan John were practic’ly hitched.

ALAN JOHN
Now, Momma.

SAMANTHA shoots a quizzical look to KATE.

SAMANTHA
“Momma”?

KATE
No, Momma. AJ and I were not practically hitched.

ELLIE grabs her “spiked” glass of iced tea and plops into her chair.

ELLIE
Oh, yes you were. (to SAMANTHA) Had the bridesmaid’s dresses all picked out.

KATE
You had the dresses picked out—

ELLIE
(overlapping)
Pretty, light-peach chiffon dresses—

KATE
I had no dress picked out.

ELLIE

(overlapping)

And they were to be married in the Baptist church that she was—

KATE

We were not going to be married, Momma. Sam—

ELLIE

--that she was baptized in!

ALAN JOHN

That's right! First Baptist Church. Right down the road a piece.

KATE

(sotto voice, to SAMANTHA)

I was not gonna marry that Moron.

There is a LONG PAUSE as everyone sips iced tea, including ELLIE who takes a gulp of her "tea" and sets it on the table dangerously close to SAMANTHA's glass.

SAMANTHA

Well now, this is refreshing! (sips) Is it always this sweltering in Texas?

ELLIE

Like walkin' behind a city bus all the livin' day. (pause) But it's home, right Katie? It's the only place I'll ever want to live, that's for damn sure. Like my Granddaddy used to say. "You're either a Texan, or you're not."

ALAN JOHN

Damn right! You're either a proud Texan, or you're wishin' you were one!

KATE

I'm sorry, AJ. I didn't mean—

ALAN JOHN

Nothin' wrong with bein' proud of where you come from, Katie.

KATE

That's not what I was saying—

ALAN JOHN

(overlapping)

An' like it or not, you're from Texas too, Katie! Nothin' wrong with that!

KATE

(overlapping)

--- I didn't say there was anything wrong with that, AJ.

ELLIE

(interrupting)

Now, where are your...*people* from, Samantha?

KATE

Her "people"?

SAMANTHA

My entire family is originally from Boston, but we moved to New York when I was pretty young.

ELLIE

Boston? Hmm. Isn't Boston mostly—(she sips)—I didn't realize there were—

KATE

Mother.

SAMANTHA

Didn't realize what?

ELLIE

I was just wonderin' if there were—

KATE

Mother, please.

SAMANTHA

Wondering what?

Ellie

Just—I didn't think there were—Are there—are there a lot of "blacks" up there? I knew there were lots of Asians, 'specially in New York—blacks too but—

KATE

(turning to SAMANTHA)

Sam—

ELLIE

What?

SAMANTHA

It's okay, Kate. (to ELLIE) Yes, Ellie, there are "blacks" in Massachusetts. It's just like New York. And, Caucasians, and Asians and—

ALAN JOHN

And homosexuals! There's an entire town, a HOMO town in Cape Cod.

SAMANTHA

Provincetown.

ALAN JOHN

That's it! Dedicated to queers! Provincetown.

ELLIE takes a swig of her "tea". KATE slumps, putting her face in her hands.

ELLIE

Well, now. That's nice. It's nice they have a town of their own.

ALAN JOHN

Yup. A whole town of queers.

SAMANTHA

Ellie, would you mind. I'm afraid I'm going to have to scoot off to the bathroom again. It's...it's been a long trip.

ELLIE

You know where it is.

SAMANTHA rises, sets her glass on the coffee table, and EXITS into the HALLWAY. There is a SILENCE as ELLIE watches her go.

ELLIE

(cont.)

They have pills now for that.

KATE

For what?

ELLIE

Overactive bladder.

ALAN JOHN

Had a whole infomercial on one of 'em right before the Superbowl this year. (to KATE) Oxy-but-ynin. (pause) I remember, 'cause it has the word "butt" in the middle. (pause) Damned commercial was so long, I just about pissed myself right then and there. That would have been so—waiting for it to be

ALAN JOHN

(cont.)

over? Hell, I wanted to toss my Long Neck right at the damn flatscreen!
Woulda' been a sorry ass waste of beer.

ELLIE

'Less it's just a...you know, a cultural thing.

ALAN JOHN

A cultural thing?

ELLIE

Could be.

ELLIE sips her "tea" as she ponders this with ALAN JOHN. After a moment, KATE slowly raises her head, staring at them both.

KATE

Do the two of you have any idea how you sound?

ELLIE

What?

ALAN JOHN

What are you talkin' about, Katie?

KATE

How offensive—I mean, you sound like...like a couple of racist hicks!

ALAN JOHN

Hey! Hey! I ain't no hick.

KATE

Jesus!

ELLIE

Watch your mouth, young lady.

ALAN JOHN

--and I got a couple of blacks workin' for me down at the plant.

KATE

I rest my case.

ELLIE

Don't be silly, Katie.

ALAN JOHN

--damned good workers, too!

ELLIE

You're bein' overly sensitive, Katie.

KATE

(overlapping)

I am not overly sensitive, Momma. I'm—

ELLIE

(overlapping to ALAN JOHN)

You remember how sensitive Katie was as a little girl, AJ?

KATE

(abruptly, halting them)

Stop it! Stop. It's "Kate". My name is "Kate".

ELLIE

Now, when did you go and start callin' yourself "Kate"?

KATE

About twenty-five years ago.

ALAN JOHN

That ain't true. I've been callin' you "Katie" all my life.

KATE

Yes, you have.

ELLIE

Maybe that's just what they do up in New York City. Take their birth name, their god-given Christian name, and mangle it all to hell.

KATE

My birth name is "Katherine". You're the one who shortened it to "Katie".

ALAN JOHN

I've always liked "Katie".

KATE

And, no more talk about any wedding, Alan John. Momma. Not one more word, you hear me? There was no—there never was a wedding. It was a non-wedding. It wasn't ever gonna be possible because—

ALAN JOHN

The timin' wasn't right.

KATE

And, Sam—

ELLIE

See? Manglin'! Mangle. Mangle. I thought her name was Samantha. It's how she introduced herself as: "Samantha". Now, why would—

KATE

Well, I'm sure I don't know, *Eleanor*.

ALAN JOHN

The timin' just wasn't right.

KATE

No! Stop. That's it, okay? No more wedding. Got it? (pause) Not another word from either one of you.

ALAN JOHN

Timing.

KATE

AJ!

ELLIE

I think I'll call her "Sammie". Has a more feminine ring to it than "Sam".

ALAN JOHN

Think I'm gonna call her Sexy Mama.

KATE

You gotta be—

ALAN JOHN

Well, she is.

ELLIE

She is quite pretty, I'll give her that. (pause) Though, she really oughta look into that overactive bladder. (sipping) The girl's not been here fifteen minutes and she's set up camp in my powder room.

KATE
(abruptly)

She's pregnant, okay? (pause) She's pregnant. Remember "pregnant", Momma? No. You probably don't. Just drank your way—(reconsidering) We don't need to go digging up the past. (pause, looking at ELLIE) But, while we're on the topic—

ELLIE
We're on a topic?

KATE
I smell booze.

ELLIE
There's not a drop of liquor in this entire house! Maybe a bottle of rubbing alcohol in the guest bathroom, but—

KATE
I smell it.

SAMANTHA enters from the HALLWAY.

SAMANTHA
Well, I think I've finally cooled off! It must be a hundred degrees out there!

ELLIE
Sooo, you're pregnant, huh?

ALAN JOHN
Got up to a hundred n' six yesterday. In the shade.

ELLIE watches as SAMANTHA heads toward the SOFA.

ELLIE
Ya' don't look pregnant to me—

ALAN JOHN
(offering his seat)
Please—

ELLIE
--But, I suppose "congratulations" are in order.

ALAN JOHN
Yes, ma'am! Congratulations! How far along are you?

SAMANTHA shoots a look to KATE as she takes ALAN JOHN's seat on the SOFA.

SAMANTHA

Yes. Right. Just about eleven weeks. I was going to wait to tell—

ELLIE

Your first?

SAMANTHA

Umm, yep. Far as I know!

ELLIE

Your husband must just be beside himself with joy!

SAMANTHA

Well—

ELLIE

Or, maybe it wasn't planned—

KATE

Sam doesn't have a husband, Momma.

ELLIE

Huh? (pause) Well, do you...do you know who the father is?

SAMANTHA

Yes, Ellie. I know who the father is.

ELLIE

Well, there ya' go! See? Was that so hard? And, that's some comfort, right? That's gotta comfort ya' some right, Sammie? Can I call you "Sammie"?

KATE

Momma, her name is—

SAMANTHA

(overlapping)

That's alright, Kate. She can call me "Sammie". (pause) It's kind of sweet.

ELLIE shoots a glance to SAMANTHA, not knowing quite how to respond. She rises, crosses to kitchen and checks the POT ROAST in the OVEN. She then begins taking PLATES and SILVER from a drawer, setting them on the kitchen counter.

SAMANTHA

(cont.)

Is there anything in the kitchen I can help you with?

ELLIE

Oh, for god's sake, no! In your condition? No. I just threw together a little pot roast. Be ready in a bit.

SAMANTHA

My favorite. (slight laugh) But I've never stopped cutting the end off.

ELLIE

Cutting the end off?

SAMANTHA

I...I cut the end off of the roast before I cook it.

ELLIE

Now, what on earth would make you go and do a thing like that?

SAMANTHA

Well...it's a little embarrassing—

ELLIE

I'm all "ears"—

SAMANTHA

---Makes me look like something of an idiot—

ELLIE

Oh, now I wouldn't say that—

ALAN JOHN

Heh! Not to your face!

ELLIE

Try me.

SAMANTHA

Okay...(pause)...Well, my Grandmother used to do a big pot roast every Sunday. And, when I was growing up, I'd watch her. (pause) She'd—before she put the roast into the pot, she'd put it on a carving board, slice off one end, and throw the larger piece into the pot with all the vegetables and stuff.

ELLIE
(interrupting)

Store-bought?

SAMANTHA

Pardon?

ELLIE
The vegetables. Were they store-bought?

SAMANTHA
Umm...I don't....I don't think—

ELLIE
'Cause, it's a sin to cheat a good pot roast out of home-grown vegetables.

SAMANTHA
I'm...I'm not sure.

ELLIE
Pure sin.

ALAN JOHN
Hush up, Ellie. I wanna hear this.

ELLIE
(sipping)
Just sayin'.

ALAN JOHN
(to SAMANTHA)
Go 'head.

SAMANTHA
Right. (pause) So...one year, when I'd come home from college, I was given the honor. It was my turn to make the pot roast. (pause) So, there we are in the kitchen while I'm getting ready to cook. And, I take the meat, put it onto the carving board, cut off one end—

ELLIE
(overlapping)
Shameful—

SAMANTHA
(overlapping)
--put the larger piece into the pot, and shove it into the oven.

ELLIE

(shaking her head)

With store-bought vegetables.

ALAN JOHN

Hush it, Ellie!

SAMANTHA

My...my Grandmother is watching all of this. And so, she turns to me and says to me, "Samantha, why on earth did you cut the end off of that pot roast?" And I, I say to her, "What do you mean, Nana? You always used to cut the end off of your pot roast when you cooked it! (slight laugh) And, then she just starts laughing. And—laughing. She can't—she can't stop laughing. And when she finally does, she says—she says to me, "Samantha, honey. I cut the end off of my pot roast because, back then, my pot was too small!"

ALAN JOHN lets out a loud and genuine laugh. KATE smiles at SAMANTHA, who is also laughing.

ALAN JOHN

(tears of laughter)

The pot was too danged small!

ELLIE

Funny how some things just get passed down from generation to generation without givin' it a second thought.

ALAN JOHN

(attempting to gather himself, can't stop laughing)

Just too danged small!!

ELLIE

(annoyed)

Alright, AJ. Alright. I need you to run on down to the store and get me some butter and dinner rolls. (to SAMANTHA) I'd meant to make some from *scratch* but—

ALAN JOHN

(gathering himself)

Sorry. Heh. Be happy to. (rising, leaning into ELLIE) Do you want me to pick up some—

ELLIE

(cutting him off)

Dinner rolls and butter, AJ.

ALAN JOHN
(to SAMANTHA)

Now, don't go tellin' any more of your stories while I'm gone, pretty lady!
Save 'em for when I get back!

SAMANTHA

I'll do that, AJ. I'll save my stories.

ALAN JOHN exits out the BACK DOOR, tucking his shirt. ELLIE, with her back to them, checks the roast once again as SAMANTHA mistakenly picks up ELLIE's "tea" from the table. She brings it to her lips, gets a good strong "whiff", and sets it back onto the table just in front of her without taking a sip.

KATE
(rising from sofa)

Need help setting the table, Momma?

KATE crosses to the KITCHEN, opening a cupboard.

ELLIE

Not just yet.

KATE

Do you still have all the antique Fiesta Ware?

ELLIE crosses into the LIVING AREA, plops down in her chair, and takes a long swig of her "tea". When she realizes there is no alcohol in it because she now has SAMANTHA's glass, there is a brief look of panic in her eyes. KATE continues rummaging through a cupboard, pulling out a colorful stack of FIESTA WARE plates, unaware of the following exchange between ELLIE and SAMANTHA.

SAMANTHA
(rescuing her by deliberately switching glasses)

I don't take sugar in mine.

ELLIE and SAMANTHA lock eyes, as ELLIE reaches for her original glass.

ELLIE

Yes. I still have the Fiesta. It's your inheritance.

KATE
(carrying stack to table)

I'll be careful not to drop them.

ELLIE

Come sit yourself down. I think it's time you and me had a little talk.

KATE

Me too.

ELLIE

And, I suppose it's okay if your friend here, Sammie, is in on it.

SAMANTHA

I think I'll set the table. Should I set the table?

ELLIE

--Maybe she can talk some sense into you, bein' your friend and all. Lord knows, someone's gotta.

SAMANTHA

(rising from sofa)

I think I'll set the table.

ELLIE

Alan John's a good man, Katie. (takes a swig) He's hard working. Head of the entire plant now, you know that? Making a darned good livin'. Darned good. And, regardless of what you liberals think, oil is still king, Katie. It may not be popular to say in New York or Boston, but it's the truth! Alan John's gonna have one helluva retirement package!

KATE

What on earth are you talking about, Momma?

ELLIE

I'm talkin' about YOU. It's high time you moved back here and settled down. You're not gettin' any younger, and—

KATE

--What?

ELLIE

(overlapping)

--Am I wrong? Sammie, am I wrong? I mean, frankly, a divorced woman of your age traipsing around like some gypsy, tryin' to be a dancer—

KATE

(overlapping)

Choreographer.

ELLIE

Whatever. Same difference. A woman of your—

KATE

It is NOT the same. I have a company. We are a well-respected DANCE company, Momma. Sam's the one still dancing.

ELLIE

Pregnant? A pregnant dancer? (beat) Well, I nev—Now that's a whole other can of worms! Who ever heard of a pregnant dancer? Can't be good for the baby!

KATE

(heated)

I haven't danced professionally in over ten years—

SAMANTHA

(overlapping)

Kate—

KATE

(overlapping)

But then, you wouldn't know that. You don't have the slightest—

KATE rises, crossing to the table with the frames.

KATE

(cont.)

I mean, look at this! My God. It's like some fake shrine!

KATE picks up the embroidered prayer.

KATE

(continuing, reading from framed prayer)

"Now I lay me down to—"

ELLIE

You embroidered that when you were six.

KATE

I hate embroidery. And, I didn't even know what that prayer meant, Momma. (rummaging through photos) Wow. There are no photographs of the two of us together. Not one.

ELLIE

What? What're you—

KATE

There's Daddy and me. Baxter. Baxter and me. (pause) Nope. Not one single photo of the two of us.

ELLIE

I don't—There's gotta be at least one. (sipping her "tea" as she crosses to photo table) Let me just—(rummaging through photos) There's just gotta—Well, look at this here. Look at this one! Beautiful! It's you and AJ down at the lake! Look. You see? You see, Katie? (looking at the photo) My, you and Alan John made such a beautiful couple! Sammie, have a look at this! Didn't they? (sips) Ya know, good fortune doesn't come knockin' at your door every day. Certainly not for someone of your age—and a divorcee. No, ma'am! And, as your mother, it is my responsibility—my duty. It is my duty to point out the stroke of luck that is standin' right smack dab in front of you! And, it's initials are Alan John Corbin!

KATE

Momma—

ELLIE

What? That boy's waited. Forever. And, he is a fine man, Katie. Alan John'll take care of you as you run into old age. And, believe me, Katie—it goes quickly! It may feel like it's crawlin', but the years come along as fast as hell to clobber you and, before you know what's hit ya', you're an old lady. (sips) An old lady without a man! (pause) You do not want to suffer that alone, Katie, believe you me. (pause) And, we both know you didn't come down here just to see your Momma.

KATE

(incredulous)

What?

ELLIE

(plopping onto sofa)

I understand. You're hittin' middle age—feelin' your years, and maybe—just maybe you've finally come to your senses about the man who has always loved you. (pause) Like no other man has.

KATE

I am *SO* not here to get Alan John back!

ELLIE

(to SAMANTHA)

Honey, would you be a doll and—

KATE
She's why I'm here, Momma.

ELLIE
What?

KATE
Sam is why we're here. The trip was her idea.

ELLIE
I'm sorry, I don't—Sammie—

KATE
Samantha—Sam—is my *partner*, Momma.

ELLIE
Your partner?

KATE
Yes.

ELLIE
Oh. (beat) Ok. I see. Right. (pause) Well, I'm sure you can work out some arrangement—her bein' pregnant and all. I'm sure you gals can work somethin' out. She can run the company, and you can keep your eye on it from here. Or—or she could buy you out or somethin'.

KATE
No—no—

ELLIE
I understand. She's your partner so—

KATE
(overlapping)
We're a couple.

SAMANTHA
(rising from sofa)
I think I'll set the table.

There is a long SILENCE as SAMANTHA crosses into the dining area where she begins to slowly set it for supper. KATE crosses to the sofa and sits, carefully watching ELLIE.

ELLIE
Katie?

KATE
I'm gay, Mother.

BEAT.

ELLIE lets out a huge laugh.

BEAT.

ELLIE
(bewildered, slightly drunk)
Nooooooooo. You were—you were going to marry AJ. You were all set to—

KATE
I never had any intention of marrying Alan John.

ELLIE
You were married before—to that guy in New York—

KATE
That was so he could get his green card, Momma. He was a friend.

ELLIE
Wait—wait! (pause) You—you married an *illegal*?

KATE
I married a *friend*. For legal reasons to help him out. (pause) And, now I'm married...for *love*.

SAMANTHA nervously drops some silverware to the floor causing an abrupt clatter.

ELLIE
What're you talkin' about?

SAMANTHA
We're married, Ellie. Katie—Kate and I were married in Manhattan.

There is an excruciatingly LONG PAUSE as ELLIE allows this to sink in.

ELLIE
Oh, Jesus. Oh, Lord Jesus!

KATE

Momma—

ELLIE

So, your tellin' me—You're sayin' first you, you married an *illegal alien*—

KATE

A *friend*—

ELLIE

--And then you went and married a *WOMAN*? What in Christ's?—Oh, Lord God!

SAMANTHA

(explaining)

So, now we have the same rights—

ELLIE

(overlapping)

Rights? *Rights*? What in God's name?! Your rights! No-one's got *rights*! You got duties and obligations! Just like—Just the same as the rest of us!

SAMANTHA

Yes, we do.

ELLIE

And, that means women marry men, and white people marry white people, and Americans marry Americans!

KATE

(to SAMANTHA)

Glad you came?

ELLIE

Marriage is between a man and a woman. It says so in the Bible.

KATE

The "Bible", Momma, allows a man to basically "own" a woman. Or two. She was considered his "property"—

SAMANTHA

(correcting her)

Well, that's not exactly true. In the Old Testament—

ELLIE

I Don't Give A Shit! (pause) You are NOT—No daughter of mine is GAY!
No daughter of mine is gonna be married to a woman!

KATE

You're right. We're not GONNA be married—we ARE married.

ELLIE

Don't you be sarcastic with me, Katie! Don't you dare—(pause) I thank Jesus, I thank the Lord your father isn't—Thank God Morgan is dead and gone, that the Good Lord saw fit to take him when he did, because this woulda' killed him. This woulda' done him in all over again.

KATE

I don't think Daddy would have had a problem with this, Mother.

ELLIE

My husband was a God-Fearing Christian who never missed a Sunday church service. My husband—

KATE

(overlapping)

Your husband went to church every Sunday and sang with the choir because he believed—

ELLIE

(overlapping)

You're damn right, Katie. Your father believed in those messages. INCLUDING the one that says marriage is between a man and a woman!

KATE

That's not a message from Jesus, Momma. It's a rule of the church. There's a diff—

ELLIE

It's in the Bible! It is in the Bible! It's the law!

KATE

I guess that's open to interpretation.

ELLIE

THERE IS NO GODDAMN INTERPRETATION. HERE IN TEXAS, IT'S THE GODDAMN LAW.

KATE

Like Stoning? Or Slavery? Or denying women the right to vote?

ELLIE

Don't go bein' all uppity and Northern, tryin' to be all smart like bein' intelligent with me, missy.

KATE

Well, don't you go being all stupid-white-southern-redneck-backward-racist-bigot on me!

ELLIE

What did you say?

SAMANTHA

(crossing toward sofa)

Ellie—

ELLIE

(correcting her)

Mrs. Wolcott. (to KATE) What did you just say to me?

SAMANTHA

(corrected)

Mrs. Wolcott—Our coming down here was my idea. It had nothing at all to do with Kate and Alan John. It was —It was an attempt—

ELLIE

(overlapping)

To what? Hmm? An attempt to what?

SAMANTHA

I don't know. To connect—reconnect. Maybe. Especially now. (pause) I thought—

ELLIE

What? What did you think? 'Cause y'all thought wrong. Y'all so high and mighty, rules don't apply to you? No? The rest of society, the bedrock of this country—they can all just go to hell. Right? What must it feel like to presume you have the right to destroy what people like your father, Katie, men like your father spilled their blood and guts for?

KATE

Blood and guts?

ELLIE

I follow the rules. I believe in those rules. I do not thumb my nose at the very people I owe my freedom and comfort to. I do not slam my Bible shut just 'cause the word of God didn't "suit" me. But, YOU? No consideration for

ELLIE

(cont.)

society, the normal portion of this country. Damn Hollywood. Makin' it seem like bein' gay is now suddenly—That's not NORMAL. The scriptures state clearly—CLEARLY that bein' gay is a sin! It just is.

SAMANTHA

Mrs. Wolcott—

ELLIE

(overlapping)

And, look at you. I don't mean to offend you, bein' a guest and all in my home, but—Well, I suppose y'all just figure it's alright to go 'an get knocked up, right? That's what y'all do up there. Make babies 'an all. (beat) Don't look at me. Don't you look at me. I read. I read about unwed mothers givin' birth to crack babies 'an all. And, so now I suppose you'll be lookin' to Katie to take care of your child. Supportin' that little baby. Oh, yes. I see what's happenin' here.

KATE

The baby was planned.

ELLIE

Planned? (cackling) What—Did you get her pregnant, Katie?

SAMANTHA

It was I.V.F..

ELLIE

What in hell's an I.V.F.?

SAMANTHA

In-Vitro-Fertilization. (pause) They combine the sperm and egg in a lab and then it's placed into the uterus.

ELLIE

Ohhh, the wonders of modern science! Whose sperm? Hmmm? Was it black sperm? Some black man's sperm? Or—or maybe you got some white guy's sperm. So y'all can pretend the baby's really yours. Some poor redneck—

KATE

Momma—

ELLIE

The doctor playin' God's unnatural's what it is. Makin' a child in a lab. He's gonna bring that baby into this world with two Mammias? To be raised by

ELLIE

(cont.)

two women? (pause) Does she know about AJ? The extent of your relationship with him? That you spent an entire weekend alone with him when you were here for Thanksgivin' a few years back?

KATE

Jesus Christ, Momma.

ELLIE

Don't you curse in this house. (pause) I didn't see hide nor hair of either one of you the entire time you were here. And, when I finally did see Alan John the day after you left, he had a shit-eatin' grin on his face you couldn't wipe off with a can of Ajax. (pause) He was "thankful" for somethin' alright.

KATE

This is why I don't come down here. This is what she does. This is—

ELLIE

(overlapping to SAMANTHA)

--The *truth*. (pause) There's a garment bag in the guest room closet. Neiman Marcus garment bag. Got her wedding gown in it. (pause) Might wanna have a peek. It sure is a stunner.

KATE

That wasn't me. Ever. It was you. You were in love with the idea of us together. You did everything you could to delude yourself into—

ELLIE

Him foldin' you on that sofa was no delusion.

SAMANTHA shoots a look to KATE who is fuming at ELLIE.

KATE

Nothing happened that Thanksgiving.

ELLIE

Seems more like a whole lotta somethin'.

There is a SILENCE as ELLIE contentedly sips her "tea".

SAMANTHA

(carefully)

Mrs. Wolcott, I know what you're trying to do.

ELLIE
(calmly)

Oh, you do? What a relief! I'm so glad you know. 'Cause, your Katie? AJ and her shared some pretty heated "sessions" of a sexual nature in this house, pardon my expression. Under my very own roof! (pause) Yes, ma'am. And, I know for a fact that it wasn't just here that they—

KATE
That was a very long time ago, Momma. A lifetime ago.

ELLIE
There is no time when it comes to matters of the heart.

The BACK DOOR opens and ALAN JOHN ambles in with a LARGE SACK OF GROCERIES in one hand, and TWO BOTTLES of CHAMPAGNE in the other.

ALAN JOHN
Hello the house! Woulda' been back sooner, but I had a hankering for some champagne! 'Cause, we got somethin' to celebrate, right?

ELLIE
Somethin' to celebrate, alright.

ALAN JOHN sets the items on the kitchen counter and begins searching for glasses.

ALAN JOHN
(oblivious, opening bottle)
You got champagne glasses, Momma? (looking) Hey, did y'all see that land for sale down by the railroad track? You see that, Ellie? Pretty nice piece of property. Probably a little over twenty acres. I'm gonna call Trevor. Bet I could get the zoning rights for a house as well as the stables!

ALAN JOHN pops the cork and turns to KATE.

ALAN JOHN
(cont.)
You still ride, Katie? 'Cause I've acquired three more horses since you were here last. And, the mare? A real beauty! Just like you! Actually, she's the color of dark brown sugar, more like Miss Samantha here.

ALAN JOHN, laughing at his little joke, gets a glare from KATE, a smirk from ELLIE, and a nice laugh from SAMANTHA.

ALAN JOHN

(cont.)

Oh, come on Katie. What? It's not like we don't see that Samantha here's a shade or two darker than we are. Jeeze. Lighten up! (about to pour for SAMANTHA) Oops. Pardon. I assume you'll be abstainin'! (to KATE) Katie?

KATE gives a slight nod. ALAN JOHN pours.

ELLIE

I'll just stick with my tea, thank you.

ALAN JOHN

Suit yourself.

OVEN BUZZER goes off.

ALAN JOHN

(cont.)

Was that the roast? Want me to take—

ELLIE

(gulping "tea")

Turn the oven off, AJ. Let it rest. Have yourself a seat.

ALAN JOHN turns the oven off, grabs the TWO WINE GLASSES and a GLASS OF WATER heading toward the living area where he hands the water to SAMANTHA, and the WINE GLASS to KATE. He then sits next to KATE, putting his arm around her, glass in hand.

ALAN JOHN

Wasn't expectin' to say anything. To be honest, wasn't expectin' anyone to be expectin'! So then, it seems to me that it's pretty darn clear what should be gettin' the first toast. If I may? (silence) I'll take that as a "yes". Thank you. Here's to Samantha and the little miracle inside her. May God bless this baby that she's carryin', keep it safe from harm, showing it all the love that this world has to offer. And, may God provide Samantha with a good man, an understandin' man, to help raise this precious child as his own. AMEN, and bottoms up. (he drinks) Wait! Wait. And, thank you God, for leading those who have wandered for so long back home to us. May he continue to lead them all the way back. Puttin' us back together where we belong. (to KATE) 'Cause, time don't matter when it comes to affairs of the heart.

ALAN JOHN leans in to kiss KATE on the cheek. She pushes him away.

ALAN JOHN

(cont.)

Just leanin' in to give you a little "peck".

ELLIE

It ain't your peck she's wantin'.

KATE

Stop it, Momma.

ELLIE

Cat's gotta crawl outta the bag soon enough.

ALAN JOHN

What's she talkin' bout, Katie?

There is a SILENCE.

KATE

(thoughtfully)

Shit. AJ. (beat) Alan John. I owe you an apology.

ALAN JOHN

For what?

KATE

AJ, you are a great guy. A perfect—the perfect man. (pause) You were simply not the right man for me. You couldn't possibly be. As much as I love you, and I do, as a dear, dear—

SAMANTHA

--"friend".

ALAN JOHN

I have no idea what you're talkin' bout, Katie Anne Wolcott. And, I don't care. I don't. Don't matter you been married before. Don't matter you been away. Nothin' matters but that you're home. And, hell, I can do better than this, if that's what you're sayin'. Heck, I'd come up north if you want me to. Come on up to New York for a spell to test out the waters. To see if you can take the "cowboy" outta Texas. I love you, Katie and that's no lie. I'll do whatever it takes. And, this time? I ain't lettin' you go this time.

KATE

You didn't let me go, AJ. I was never yours.

ALAN JOHN

What? 'Course you were—

KATE

AJ—

ELLIE

Oh My Lord In Heaven. She's GAY. Gay. (beat) She's a LESBIAN! (quietly hits her) My own, my own daughter.

There is a VERY LONG PAUSE.

ALAN JOHN

I know what this is about. I ain't a newly laid egg in the hen house. That son of a gun. That shady son of a gun. That son of a—he got me! That son of a gun got me, alright!

ELLIE

AJ, you don't—

ALAN JOHN

Ooohhhh. And, you ladies. You got me! You did! You had me goin'! All y'all. How'd he even—Damn, I'm gonna get him good.

KATE

Get who? There's no one to get. You don't—

ALAN JOHN

That brother of yours! That lyin', cheatin', son-of-a-bitch, sorry ass brother of yours! That Baxter! Oh, that was a GOOD one. Damn. When he said he'd get me back the other night after getting' his butt whipped in that poker game, I knew he'd try somethin' on. But this?? Woo Boy! How'd he get ya'll to go along with this one?

KATE

We didn't—We're not going along with anything, AJ.

ELLIE

AJ, you gotta—

ALAN JOHN

(smiling to KATE)

Well, sure you are! Holy rat shit! Gotta give him credit. YOU? KATIE ANNE WOLCOTT. "GAY"! Like you could be—no ma'am. But, that Baxter. He has done outdone himself. Hell, this prank's better than that time at the turkey shoot when he switched out the birds with them human cadavers!

SAMANTHA

It's not a prank, Alan John.

BEAT.

KATE

I'm gay.

BEAT.

ALAN JOHN

But, we went "steady" in high school. You were—you were a cheerleader.

KATE

There are a lot of gay cheerleaders, Alan John.

ALAN JOHN

What? No, there ain't. You and me, we had somethin' special. We had—

KATE

I never meant to lead you on.

ALAN JOHN

"Lead me on?" Lead me--? That's what you call it? You didn't LEAD me. You had me. Hook, line, and sinker.

KATE

I know, Alan John. It wasn't fair. I tried to...

BEAT.

ALAN JOHN

How long?

KATE

Forever.

ALAN JOHN

Wow. Well, I'll be. I mean—you had me fooled, that's for damn sure. That surely does put a whole mess of things into perspective. Does your brother know? Does—does Baxter know this? 'Cause, I was just with him fishin' down in Freeport last weekend, talkin' mostly 'bout you, like the entire time. (pause) Does he know?

KATE

Yes. He knows.

ALAN JOHN

You're tellin' me that your brother knew you were a *gay lesbian* this whole--? Oh, God. I am a fool. I am a goddamned fool! Baxter must think I'm the—Jesus. He must have been crackin' up, the things I said. What an idiot.

KATE

I am so sorry. I asked Baxter not to tell you, AJ. That was my doing.

ALAN JOHN

You were right, what you said earlier. I am a complete idiot moron. Jesus H. Christ. All these years. All these thoughts. (pause) I mean, I know we'd go through long periods of time without seein' each other. And, I realize we both sometimes had other things goin' on. Other—other people. But I—I always figured we'd end up together somehow. (pause) Kinda' figured you felt the same way, you know? That deep down, it's what you wanted too. I—Oh God.

KATE

It's just as much my fault as it is yours, Alan John. We've both done some foolish things.

ALAN JOHN

Who's talkin' 'bout *fault*? How is it *my* fault? What' the hell's *my* fault here? How the---For the love of Pete, YOU MARRIED ANOTHER GUY. What did I misunderstand? Gay people, gay ladies don't marry GUYS. Katie, you threw me over for another guy and I even—I even understood you gettin' married. Marryin' that guy in New York. 'Cause I knew, I knew in my heart it wouldn't work out. Hell, everybody gets lonely. I understood.

KATE

That's not—Oh, AJ. I am so sorry.

ALAN JOHN

I'm supposin' you knew this, Samantha. Bein' her friend and all. Awful nice a' you all pregnant and all. Comin' down here to support your buddy in all a' this—

PAUSE.

ALAN JOHN

Oh. Shit.

BEAT.

ELLIE

And, there ya' have it.

ALAN JOHN

I see. (beat) Right. I—I shoulda' seen it. I shoulda' seen somethin'. You. You had me goin'. Goin' down the wrong track.

KATE

I hid it, AJ. From everyone. Even myself. There was no way—

ALAN JOHN

Can ya'll please give me a second?

ALAN JOHN exits out the BACK DOOR to the PORCH.

ALAN JOHN

(cont. from off-stage)

JESUS H.—GODDAMN—HOLY HELL—CHRIST—SHIT.

ALAN JOHN re-enters.

ALAN JOHN

(cont.)

How the hell'd this happen? Huh? How the—What, did ya'll meet up at one of them Rainbow Bars, or whatever the hell they're called?

SAMANTHA

We didn't meet at a bar, Alan John. That's not how it happened.

ALAN JOHN

Well, I reckon I'd like to know. Yes, I would. The whole kit-n-kaboodle.

SAMANTHA

It was a—We met at a dance audition for Kate's company.

ELLIE

(tipsy)

Our girl Katie here's a *chore—oggg—rapher!*

KATE

Mother...

SAMANTHA

You may not realize it, but this company is the "*shit*". I mean—sorry. But, it was a big deal to even get an audition.

ELLIE

Musta' been love at first sight.

ALAN JOHN

Hush up, Ellie. (pause) I wanna hear this.

SAMANTHA looks at KATE, who motions her on.

SAMANTHA

More like love at first “fight”. (pause) She dismissed me after the first round. I mean, like some regal “wave of the hand” kind of thing. “Next”. Right?

KATE

I wouldn’t use the term “regal”—It was just—

SAMANTHA

Oh, it was “regal”, alright. (pause) So, I grab my bag and start heading for the door. It was—It was humiliating in front of the other dancers. Just so—humiliating. I was furious. And then she—she say’s “Make sure you close the door. I can hear the piano down the hall.” And *that*—that just pissed me off.

ELLIE

(tanked)

You go, girl.

SAMANTHA

So, I stop. I turn around and I say—I say to her, “You know what? Screw this. You barely gave me two minutes on the floor. No warm-up, and *two* minutes. What the hell is that? You don’t know what I can do. You—you don’t want dancers. You want two-minute posers!”

ALAN JOHN

What the hell’s a “poser”?

SAMANTHA

So, I turn back and start out. I’m at the door. Have my hand on the knob. “Wait”, she says. “Hold on. Okay. Your feet? I’ve seen better feet on a Longhorn. But, if you think you can do better than that high school Bob Fosse wannabe bullshit, I might be interested.” So, now I want to kill her! Strangle her with my bare hands.

ELLIE

Know the feelin’ well.

SAMANTHA

But, I say—“Yes. I can do better. I can dance better than that.” And, she says “Five minutes, darlin’. And, don’t waste my time.” (pause) And, I danced my ass off for her. (pause) Your Katie? She’s pushy, demanding, and she will only accept perfection. (pause) But, Kate—your Katie forced me to find

SAMANTHA

(cont.)

myself. And, I fell in love with her. Right then and there.

SILENCE.

ALAN JOHN

I'm havin' a—havin' a hard time hangin' my hat on this one. (pause) I'm just—Katie, the... the "gay" part's not what's botherin' me. I don't care if you're—

ELLIE

An abomination? Really? You don't care?

ALAN JOHN

You. Shut. Your. Mouth. (beat) I may be stupid, but I ain't mean. (beat) You hurt me, Katie. You hurt me 'cause you didn't think you could *tell* me. An' *that*—that's what hurts so bad. (pause) You didn't think enough of me just to—to be able to tell me. (pause) You thought I'd stop...lovin' you or somethin'?

ELLIE

Oh, for cryin' out loud.

KATE

Our world didn't—still *doesn't* work that way.

ALAN JOHN

I ain't the world, Katie. I'm me. And you didn't trust me. You thought I was just some dumb moron. Ignorant, and too stupid to understand.

KATE

I'm so sorry—

ALAN JOHN

You could tell Baxter, right? But, you couldn't...you couldn't *trust* me with it. 'Cause, deep down, you didn't—(pause. then to SAMANTHA) He know about the two of you? That you're expectin'?

SAMANTHA

He's the...he's the "donor".

ELLIE

Beg your pardon?

ALAN JOHN

The what???

SAMANTHA

Baxter is the father of the baby.

ELLIE

The Hell He Is!

ALAN JOHN

Well, if that ain't the—

ELLIE

Lord. Jesus. God. (pause) Oh, Lord God. You mean to tell me—Are you tellin' me that my son is the baby daddy of that bastard child you're carryin'?

BEAT.

ELLIE

(cont.)

Then, I'm it's blood grandma.

SAMANTHA

Yes, you are.

ELLIE

Holy shit.

A SILENCE as this all sinks in. After a moment of resignation, ELLIE takes the BOTTLE from within the BOOT, lets the boot fall to the floor, and slowly un-caps the bottle taking a long, hearty swig.

BEAT.

ELLIE takes another long swig as the THREE of them look on.

ELLIE

(cont.)

So, my only daughter is a lesbian.

SAMANTHA

Mrs. Wolcott—

ELLIE

And, my only *son's* the father of your child. (swigs) Oh, Sammie. Sammie. Where did we go wrong?

SAMANTHA

We?

ELLIE

We. You. Me. Where the hell did we go wrong?

KATE

Mother, don't go off.

ELLIE

"Go off"? (cackles) Don't go off? You wrangle your brother--my son, into your twisted, lesbian baby-makin' plan and you tell *me* not to go off? You got no idea—Hell, that's practically incest, is what it is.

ALAN JOHN

Ellie—

ELLIE

Alan John here wasn't good enough? Hell, you coulda' used him the old-fashioned way. He'd a done it. He could have been your M.V.P.

SAMANTHA

(correcting her)

I.V.F.

ELLIE

I'm sure it must cost a fortune. Coulda' used AJ here for free! Or—or Sammie, you coulda' used one of his "blacks" down at the plant! I'm sure one of 'em woulda' been your stud! 'Specially as pretty as you—

KATE

Mother, that is enough—

ELLIE

How did this get past you, AJ? How dumb could you possibly be? There musta' been some clues. A red flag or *twelve!*

ALAN JOHN

Same way it got past you, Ellie. Katie always was a free spirit—always runnin' around. (pause) I was just waitin'. Waitin' for her to "land".

ELLIE

Oh, she landed alright. And, surprise, surprise—The dynamic lesbian duo didn't bother askin' you, AJ.

ALAN JOHN

I reckon that's none of my business, Ellie.

ELLIE

None o' your---? Up to 'bout ten minutes ago, Katie was all the business you ever wanted. Now you're just a good ol' boy who wasn't asked to the "donor dance".

KATE

Baxter offered to be the donor, Mother. He—

ELLIE

Ohhh. Mighty “white” of him.

KATE

He already knew—and already had his children. I didn’t think it would be fair to put Alan John in a position to have to make a decision that could affect his future with someone else.

ELLIE

Oh, so now you’re thinkin’ bout AJ’s future? Really? ‘Cause, far as I know AJ thought his future was with you. Ain’t that right, Alan John?

KATE

And, you wonder why I wasn’t comfortable opening up to you. (pause) Why I had to fake my way through my life. You. Where I grew up, and the things that were expected of me. I just...it wouldn’t be fair to do that. To either of us. To me, or to you.

ALAN JOHN

You don’t have to protect me, Katie.

KATE

It wouldn’t have been right.

ELLIE

None of this is RIGHT. No. No. (swigs) And, now? Now it looks like I’m not gonna have a single grandchild that isn’t “mixed”. Not a single one that’s not “mixed”!

SAMANTHA

It’s “bi-racial”.

ELLIE

Oh, Jesus, Mary and Joseph. You carryin’ my blood thinks that gives you the right to correct me in my own home? (stands) I gotta pee.

ELLIE now standing, takes the last hearty swig from the BOTTLE of JACK DANIELS, drops the bottle to the floor next to the boot and stumbles off into the HALLWAY.

SAMANTHA

That went well.

KATE

We're getting out of here.

SAMANTHA

Kate, you promised me.

KATE

I promised I'd try! I promised I'd show up! I didn't promise I'd stay.

SAMANTHA

Well, you can't leave now. Not like this.

KATE crosses to the kitchen and grabs her CELL PHONE.

KATE

The hell I can't. It's probably too late to get a flight out.

ELLIE

(from offstage)

WHERE'S THE BOOT?

SAMANTHA

Kate—

ELLIE

(from offstage)

WHERE'S THE GODDAMNED BOOT?

ALAN JOHN

Don't leave me here alone with her!

KATE

(punching numbers into phone)

It may not be too late. Get the next—

SAMANTHA

Kate, I'm not leaving—

ELLIE

(from offstage)

DID I BRING THE BOOT IN HERE?

ALAN JOHN

Please, Katie. Just stay the night.

SAMANTHA crosses to KATE and takes the phone from her hand.

SAMANTHA

We're staying, Kate.

ELLIE

(from offstage)

WHERE IN CHRIST'S NAME DID I PUT THAT BOOT???

BEAT. KATE sits.

ALAN JOHN

Much appreciated, Sam. (pause) Katie. Much appreciated.

ELLIE

(from offstage)

NOT A SINGLE WHITE CHILD IN THE ENTIRE MIX! NOT A SINGLE ONE!

BEAT.

ALAN JOHN

I don't think she's finished just yet.

ELLIE

(from offstage)

I HAD IT IN MY HAND! HAD THE BOOT IN MY HAND!

ALAN JOHN

And, if history repeats? She won't remember much. (pause) She's in what they call an "alcoholic blackout".

SAMANTHA

A what?

ALAN JOHN

Oh, she's walkin'—and she's talkin'—but she doesn't have a clue what's happenin' around her.

KATE looks out the screen on the BACK DOOR.

KATE

Momma's drunk and the sun's about to set. Just like old times, huh AJ?

ALAN JOHN

Near as like—

ELLIE stumbles into the LIVING AREA. She is hammered.

ELLIE
HAS ANYONE SEEN MY GODDAMNED BOOT??

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO
The Following MORNING

ALAN JOHN is asleep on the SOFA in his now wrinkled WALMART SHIRT. The EMPTY BOTTLE of JACK DANIELS lies on the floor and BOOTS are strewn all over the room hinting at the chaos of the previous evening. KATE and SAMANTHA enter wearing sleepwear, slowly taking stock of the messy room.

SAMANTHA

Jesus...

ALAN JOHN lets out a series of LOUD SNORES, startling both KATE and SAMANTHA.

SAMANTHA

(cont.)

Guess he decided to sleep over.

KATE

After she clocked him with that Fiesta bowl, doubt he felt like driving.

ALAN JOHN belches out another LOUD SNORE. KATE goes to the KITCHEN to retrieve her CELL PHONE as SAMANTHA begins picking BOOTS from the floor and placing them back onto the SHELF. After a moment, SAMANTHA turns to watch KATE as she presses an ICON on her CELL PHONE and records a few of ALAN JOHN's priceless SNORES.

SAMANTHA

What the---?

KATE

(holding the PHONE to ALAN JOHN's ear)

Watch.

KATE plays back the RECORDING, sending ALAN JOHN tumbling onto the floor.

ALAN JOHN

(automatically and abruptly sitting up)

Hello The House!

KATE crosses around the SOFA chuckling as ALAN JOHN attempts to wake up.

KATE

Man, do you snore!

ALAN JOHN

(unaware of SAMANTHA's presence)

Well, you oughta know, girlie. You sure oughta---(noticing SAMANTHA)
Awww, shit—that's not what—that didn't come out right. Shit.

SAMANTHA places the LAST BOOT back upon the SHELF, turning toward them.

SAMANTHA

I'm going to look in on her again. The last time I took a peek at around 2AM she was having an argument with a rocking chair. (she begins exiting toward HALLWAY.) I'm pretty sure the chair won.

SAMANTHA exits into the HALLWAY as KATE heads to KITCHEN plugging in her phone.

KATE

Want some coffee?

ALAN JOHN

I reckon I'd better get on home and get myself a shower. (pause) Hell of a night.

KATE

Hell of a night.

KATE crosses and sits next to ALAN JOHN on the floor in front of the SOFA as ALAN JOHN looks down at his horribly wrinkled SHIRT.

ALAN JOHN

Guess the gal at Walmart was wrong.

There is a SILENCE as KATE places her hand on ALAN JOHN's knee.

KATE

Wanna talk? We really didn't have much of a chance to—

ALAN JOHN

(overlapping)

Hurricane Ellie made any sane talkin' pretty much impossible.

ALAN JOHN takes KATE'S HAND, and slowly raises his head, locking eyes.

ALAN JOHN

(cont.)

You—are you—happy, Katie? (pause) With Sam, I mean? Are you—

KATE

Yes. (pause) Very.

ALAN JOHN

'Cause I'm pretty torn up about all this. I'm pretty—

KATE

I know—

ALAN JOHN

(overlapping)

I'm just about as torn up as I can get 'bout all of this—

KATE

I know you are.

ALAN JOHN

(dropping her hand and standing)

No, ma'am. I don't think you do. I don't. I love you, Katie. Hell, I've loved you all my life! I loved you so much it hurt sometimes. I thought we had—

KATE

(overlapping)

AJ—

ALAN JOHN

(overlapping)

I though we had what you read about in storybooks. Maybe a couple of chapters missin', but I never had a doubt—not one single doubt that you and me would end up together. I mean, better late than never, but I thought—

ALAN JOHN stands with his back to KATE, as she rises from the floor.

KATE

AJ.

ALAN JOHN

I ain't cryin'.

KATE crosses to him.

KATE

Yes, you are.

ALAN JOHN

Hell yes, I am.

KATE takes ALAN JOHN by the shoulders, turns him toward her, and embraces him.

ALAN JOHN

(cont.)

Don't think I ever told you this—told you just about everything else but—
(pause) When my Grand-Momma passed away, my Granddaddy got on an
airplane to Illinois and married his grade-school girl, Emma. (pause) He
was seventy-eight years old and they'd both been married and raised
families. (pause) I asked him why he did that—Why'd he do that so darn
fast after Grand-Momma passed. An' he told me—(pause)—said he'd been
waitin' all his life for her. (pause) For Emma.

KATE

No, you never told me—

ALAN JOHN

(overlapping)

Those moments we had. Those nights together. Were they real, Katie? Did
they—did they have any meanin' for you?

KATE

Of course, they did—I just...(pause) I do love you, Alan John—just—

ALAN JOHN

Not enough, I reckon.

They stand facing each other.

KATE

Not the way you wanted.

ALAN JOHN

Joke's on me, huh. (pause) Seems everybody knew. Everybody—

KATE

Not everybody knew. Momma didn't know—

ALAN JOHN

(collecting himself)

Well, you may be gay, but you ain't crazy. 'Course you couldn't tell your
Momma. (pause) I'm just a—a walkin' joke's what I am.

KATE takes him by the shoulders once again.

KATE

You. Are. No. Joke. Alan John. (pause) You're the best man I have ever known. You're the best friend a person could wish for. Ever. (pause) I just didn't have the—the guts to come clean with you. I was afraid. (pause) But you, Alan John Corbin, are the best man any woman could ever want.

ALAN JOHN

Any *straight* woman.

KATE

Fair enough.

ALAN JOHN

An' you left somethin' out.

KATE

What's that?

ALAN JOHN

You left out "best kisser".

KATE

(smiling)

Yes. You always were an amazing kisser.

ALAN JOHN

(sheepish)

Don't suppose we could have one last—

KATE

Let's just—remember it the way it was.

ALAN JOHN slowly sits on the SOFA as KATE quietly follows.

ALAN JOHN

You know, I once thought I was "gay" for someone.

KATE

Get outta' town.

ALAN JOHN

I think everyone has a little "gay" in 'em.

KATE

There's not one gay bone in your body, AJ Corbin

ALAN JOHN

Now, how do you know that? (pause) I did have a little—

KATE

(overlapping)

Not a one.

ALAN JOHN

(overlapping)

Had myself a little crush on Kyle Mayberry in high school.

KATE

HA! You had a crush on that cherry-red Chevy he drove. Not on Kyle.

ALAN JOHN

True that. (pause) Hell. I woulda' tucked myself in with that Corvette, if it a' fit in my bunk bed.

KATE

Always was a little jealous of that car.

ALAN JOHN takes her hand.

ALAN JOHN

One thing. One thing I can tell you, Katie. You never, ever had anything or anyone to be jealous of. My heart—was full a you.

KATE reaches out, giving ALAN JOHN a soft, innocent kiss on the mouth.

ALAN JOHN

(cont.)

You sure you're happy?

KATE nods.

ALAN JOHN

(cont.)

That's all that matters to me. (pause) Now, I reckon I'd better go get myself some "happy". After a good shower and shave.

SAMANTHA enters from the HALLWAY having changed into comfortable summer-wear.

SAMANTHA

She definitely lost with the rocking chair, but I think she gave her hairbrush a run for it's money. Looks like she slammed it into her closet door.

ALAN JOHN
(rubbing his head from the “Fiesta” throw)
Got one hell of an arm. (pause) She sleepin’?

SAMANTHA
Probably will be most of the day.

ALAN JOHN heads for the DOOR.

SAMANTHA
(cont.)
Where are you going?

ALAN JOHN
Headin’ over to Walmart to return this nasty ass shirt.

SAMANTHA
I thought—

ALAN JOHN
(overlapping)
I’ll be back in a bit! A promise is a promise!

ALAN JOHN exits out the BACK DOOR. SAMANTHA heads toward the KITCHEN taking note of the condition of the DINING TABLE.

SAMANTHA
Didn’t even get around to eating last night.

KATE crosses into KITCHEN.

KATE
Lost my appetite for her a long time ago.

We see that very little was eaten for dinner the previous night. KATE covers the large portion of remaining POT ROAST, putting it into the REFRIGERATOR. She then crosses to the LIVING AREA to retrieve the EMPTY BOTTLE of JACK DANIELS. Bottle in hand, KATE walks back into the KITCHEN where SAMANTHA begins putting unused dishes into the CUPBOARD. As she does so, she finds the small un-opened GIFT BOX that ELLIE tucked away the day before. She takes it out and sets it onto the counter.

SAMANTHA
Guess she forgot to open this.

KATE tosses the EMPTY BOTTLE into the trash and picks up the GIFT BOX. She begins to unwrap it as SAMANTHA stops to watch her.

SAMANTHA

(cont.)

You're not going to leave it for her?

KATE finishes unwrapping, opens the SMALL BOX, and removes a SNOW GLOBE with a FIGURE of some sort in the middle of the globe. She takes it to the SIDE TABLE, arranging it among the PHOTOS.

KATE

Car picks us up at 2PM. Earliest flight I could get leaves at five.

SAMANTHA

Cars can be cancelled. (pause) We leave tomorrow morning either way.

KATE

No. She's got—She has demons, Sam. (pause) Honey. I appreciate your "mission". And, I am in *awe* of your patience. But, I can't handle any more of this—this war. I just won't do it anymore.

SAMANTHA

We all have demons, Kate. (pause) Every last one of us.

KATE

Sam. Please. Some things aren't—"fixable". You're not gonna "save" this one.

SAMANTHA

Parents aren't disposable, Kate. Even broken ones.

KATE

Neither are children.

SAMANTHA

Exactly! So don't be.

KATE

Why are you—??

SAMANTHA

(overlapping)

She's your Mother, Kate. (pause) And, she may have done a lot of "wrong" in her days. (pause) But, I'm looking right now—I'm looking at something...at *someone...she did very "right*

KATE

She had *nothing* to do with me. *Nothing at all.*

SAMANTHA

(overlapping)

You know—I don't get this "load" you're carrying. I only know that it's not going to work. And—(pointing to belly) if you want *our* family to work—if that's what you *want*—and, that's why we're here, right? That's why you came here. To—to pull off this "bandaid" that you've been wearing all these years. Then, you'd better get this "off your plate".

KATE

I can't do this, Sam. I won't.

SAMANTHA

(overlapping)

You know what? Nobody died. The heavens didn't collapse on us. (pause) We're all still here. We're all...*still here*. (pause) I don't "run", Kate. Never have. (pause) And you—you've got to *stop*, baby.

KATE

Can't make that promise.

SAMANTHA

Do *this one* for me. (pause) Please.

SAMANTHA wraps her arms around KATE, kissing her gently on the neck, sharing a very private and intimate moment. ELLIE, in her now rumpled clothing from the previous evening, enters from the HALLWAY, stopping short when she sees them. She remains unseen as she quietly watches KATE and SAMANTHA's intimacy for a silent moment. She then quietly retreats into the HALLWAY.

KATE

(releasing embrace)

Listen, about Alan John. Whatever may have happened—

SAMANTHA

(overlapping)

What? You think I don't have a history? You think you're so special? (teasing) You bein' a white lesbian from Texas, and all? Honey Chil', you got no idea. *This here?* You be lookin' at a book you do not want to crack! Can I get an "Amen"?

KATE

I love you.

SAMANTHA

(kissing her tenderly)

And, I love you. So, so much. (pause) Now, weren't you going to try to get an early run in this morning?

KATE

Yep. (pause) It'll do me good before we fly out. Need time to think.

SAMANTHA

You'd better go before it gets too hot.

KATE

Hope she didn't "toss" my running shoes. (heads toward HALLWAY)
Car is coming at Two.

SAMANTHA

AJ's taking me to see a Texas Longhorn!

KATE

(turning toward her)

Aaahhh. So that's what the "promise" was about.

SAMANTHA

He thought maybe you and your Mom—

KATE

(overlapping)

What did AJ think?

SAMANTHA

(quietly)

That you might like to talk.

KATE

I have nothing to say to her. Hopefully she'll remain comatose until after we leave.

SILENCE

SAMANTHA

Tell me about these Longhorns. What are they like?

KATE

A little like Texas. (pause) Big, graceful, and magnificent.

KATE exits into the HALLWAY. SAMANTHA crosses to the KITCHEN and resumes the “clean up”, putting the unused SILVER into a DRAWER. After a moment, ELLIE enters from the HALLWAY and heads directly to the sofa, which she slumps into like a lifeless ragdoll.

SAMANTHA

Morning. (pause) How do you feel?

ELLIE

‘Bout what?

SAMANTHA

I just thought—since you drank—

ELLIE

I don’t know. I been sleepin’. Since I drank, drank, drank--*drank, drank.*

ELLIE raises her head from her hands, looking over her shoulder to SAMANTHA.

ELLIE

(cont.)

Finished the whole bottle?

SAMANTHA nods. There is a BRIEF SILENCE.

SAMANTHA

That’s why I was asking how you feel.

ELLIE

No need to yell, young lady. I may be hung over, but I’m not deaf.

SAMANTHA

Kate told me—I thought Kate had said you’d quit drinking.

ELLIE

Well, as we have discovered, Katie has been known to use the occasional prevarication. The rumors ‘bout my untimely sobriety have been greatly exaggerated.

There is a BRIEF SILENCE as ELLIE sizes her up.

ELLIE

(cont.)

You switched glasses with me yesterday.

SAMANTHA

I did.

ELLIE

What on earth made you do that? (pause) Hell, all the proof you needed to convict me was in that iced tea glass.

SAMANTHA

As Alan John would say, "I reckon that's none of my business". (pause) Be your own judge.

KATE enters from the HALLWAY wearing LIGHT BLUE RUNNING WEAR and sneakers. She stops short when she sees ELLIE on the SOFA.

ELLIE

Katie—

KATE

(overlapping)

Don't! (then to SAMANTHA) I won't be too long.

ELLIE

Where the hell are you going?

SAMANTHA

She's going out for her "run".

KATE grabs a BOTTLE of WATER from the REFRIGERATOR.

ELLIE

You're gonna run in this heat? You gotta be crazier than a bedbug to be—

KATE

(overlapping, sharply to ELLIE)

YOU'RE calling *ME* "crazy? You're—

SAMANTHA

Kate—

KATE

(overlapping)

You've got some nerve—

SAMANTHA

(overlapping)

Kate, just go for your—

ELLIE
(overlapping)

I was just sayin'—

KATE
You're lucky I'm even conversing with you at this point. (pause) Frankly,
you're lucky *anyone* is.

KATE heads out for her run, slamming the SCREEN DOOR behind her.

There is a SILENCE between ELLIE and SAMANTHA.

ELLIE
I do vaguely remember crawling into bed last night. (pause) I'm sure—I'm
sure I must've said some things.

SAMANTHA
You did.

ELLIE
Rancid things.

SAMANTHA
Unpleasant. Though, you seemed to have mastered the word "lesbian".

ELLIE
Well, my daughter is one. So—just conquering my fears.

SAMANTHA
You must be very proud.

ELLIE
Beside myself. (beat) Hope you don't mind me sayin' this, but you don't look
gay.

SAMANTHA
What exactly does "gay" look like?

ELLIE
I usually can spot 'em. 'Specially the *Homo Boys*. And, I don't usually take a
likin' to 'em.

SAMANTHA
Does that mean you took a "likin" to me?

ELLIE

I did not say that. (picking up EMPTY BOOT) All gone?

SAMANTHA

Not a drop. (beat) Want me to make you some breakfast? Scrambled eggs?

ELLIE

Scrambled eggs make me cry.

SAMANTHA

Sorry to...hear that. (pause) Mrs. Wolcott—

ELLIE

You know, much as I hate to admit this fact, we are practically related. "Mrs. Wolcott" just don't seem right.

SAMANTHA

I agree. (rises) Coffee?

ELLIE

I 'spose I could give that a try.

SAMANTHA crosses to KITCHEN and pours a CUP of COFFEE.

SAMANTHA

So, what should I call you? (pause) "Momma"?

ELLIE

NO. No. Definitely can *NOT* handle that. That's what AJ called me, and look what happened there.

SAMANTHA

True, that.

ELLIE

True that.

SAMANTHA

Well, my brother calls his wife's mother "Mother-In-Law".

ELLIE

Well now, that just rolls off the tongue, don't it? Why don't you just call me "Ellie".

SAMANTHA

Okay. Ellie—

ELLIE

'Till my grandbaby comes. Then you can all call me "Grandma". Or, "Granny". Or—no, "Grandma". (softly) That's what—Baxter's kids used to call me.

SAMANTHA crosses into LIVING AREA with coffee.

SAMANTHA

(handing coffee to ELLIE)

Then "Ellie" it is. For now. (pause) Listen, I've—I've dealt with tougher birds than you. (pause) So don't take me for a "lightweight". That'd be a big mistake.

ELLIE

I don't make mistakes—(rethinks this) I don't—And, I don't deal with lightweights.

SAMANTHA

Okay—

ELLIE

(overlapping)

But, Clearly I do deal with damn fools. (beat) The two of you think about what you're doin'? What you've allowed to happen even for—

SAMANTHA

(overlapping)

You know, I'm trying real hard here to think better of you.

ELLIE

I don't give a hoot what you think of me! Or what *she* thinks about me, for that matter!

SAMANTHA

Oh, I think you do. (pause) Something tells me you care very much what people think of you.

ELLIE

Well that "somethin'" is a damned fool. How *dare* you—

SAMANTHA

(overlapping)

I'm your daughter's spouse, Ellie. You can "like" that or not, but it's a fact. And, it's possible—it is possible that you may want to be a part of this for the long haul. (pause) And, if that is true—if *THAT* is true, and I hope that it is, you might be overlooking a few things. (pause) I came down here for Kate. To share this with you. (pause) And, she cares deeply what you think.

ELLIE

She's got one sure damn hell of a way of showin' *THAT!*

SAMANTHA

(overlapping)

I saw your performance last night. And, I'm still here.

There is a SILENCE as ELLIE takes this in.

SAMANTHA

(cont.)

You know, I lost both of my parents the day before my seventh birthday. (pause) And—if I could have—if I could have just *one hour* with either one of them, I'd give up—(pause) To hear my Father's laugh. To watch my Mother in the garden, planting each flower as if it were the most important thing in the world. And, looking at *me* as if *I* were—I wouldn't even have to speak. (pause) An hour just watching them would be enough.

BEAT

ELLIE

What happened to your folks?

SAMANTHA

A fire. (pause) Somebody torched the little shop they both worked in.

ELLIE

Ever find out who did it?

SAMANTHA

Don't think they looked very hard. (she rises, crossing to KITCHEN) How about some toast? Want me to make you some toast?

ELLIE

With a side of "Jack". We'll call it "breakfast".

SAMANTHA, ignoring her comment, pops a SLICE of BREAD into the TOASTER. She then gets a KNIFE from a drawer, and a butter dish from the refrigerator. The BUTTER DISH is a LITTLE BLACK SAMBO "collectible" that matches the SALT and PEPPER SHAKERS on the counter. SAMANTHA takes note of this, smiling.

SAMANTHA

A Little Black Sambo butter dish. How...quaint.

ELLIE

You know, I used to collect those—the “Sambos”—but you can’t *find* them anymore. (ponders this) Can’t find ‘em to save your life.

SAMANTHA

You don’t say.

There is a BRIEF SILENCE as SAMANTHA waits for the TOAST.

ELLIE

Hmmm. You know, that’s funny!

SAMANTHA

What’s funny?

ELLIE

I nicknamed you “Sammie”. (pause) “Sammie”—“*Sambo*”.

SAMANTHA

You did.

ELLIE

(overlapping)

It’s funny, right? Not like “Ha Ha”, but sort of inter—

SAMANTHA

(overlapping)

Hilarious.

The TOAST pops up. SAMANTHA butters it, plates it and takes it to ELLIE. She sits.

ELLIE

So, you two gals got—(can’t bring herself to say the word)

SAMANTHA

(finishing her sentence)

Married.

ELLIE

--in Gotham City, huh? How—what’s the word?—“progressive”. (pause) You both get fitted for your pretty white gowns at the same salon? That musta been a hoot.

SAMANTHA

We both wore black. (pause) Knowing you'd be in mourning over our decision.

ELLIE

That's sure as hell what I woulda' worn. If you'd a invited me. Which you *did not*. (pause) Not that I woulda' come. (pause) So—a divorced white woman marryin' a black gal. (pause) Preacher McAbee would'a shit himself. (BEAT) You love her, huh?

SAMANTHA

Very much. (pause) I love her very much, Ellie.

ELLIE

(quietly)

Well, I 'spose there's somethin' to be said for that.

SAMANTHA

I suppose there is.

ELLIE

(quietly)

Can't fault him for tryin'. He sure did try. (pause) I had myself convinced that I was *not* in love. (pause) For nearly thirty-seven years.

SAMANTHA

I don't—I don't follow.

ELLIE attempts to take a small bite from the TOAST, but is caught by her own emotion. Her throat, filled with regret as she holds back tears.

SAMANTHA

(cont.)

Ellie?

ELLIE

Guess I'm not a breakfast person.

BEAT

ELLIE

(cont.)

Caught a glimpse of the two of you in the kitchen this mornin'. (pause) You didn't know I was there. (pause) I took the liberty of watchin' you for a bit.

SAMANTHA

(rising, crossing to KITCHEN)

Think I'll have some of that coffee.

SAMANTHA pours herself a cup of COFFEE.

ELLIE

In all my years with Morgan, I can't remember ever havin' even *one* moment like that. (pause) Not a one. (pause) And, worse? The worst part—lookin' back—I do believe it was entirely my fault. (pause) 'Cause he tried. Bless his soul. He sure did try, I'll give him that.

SAMANTHA returns, sitting on the SOFA with her COFFEE.

SAMANTHA

What—what happened?

ELLIE

Thought I was in love with another man. Name was Roy. (pause) Went off to Tennessee and didn't bother comin' back. No letter. Nothin'. (pause) So, I did what any self-respectin' eighteen-year old woulda' done. I went and slept with the first man I could get my hands on. And that man was Katie's father. Morgan. (pause) Morgan Hunter Wolcott. (pause) Helluva' name, huh? I did like the sound of his name.

SAMANTHA

(softly)

It's a good name. A strong name.

ELLIE

Morgan was strong, alright. (pause) Got pregnant right off the bat and was so angry about it that I proceeded to abuse him for the duration of our marriage. (pause) Before you know it, we had her brother, Baxter. (pause) And, my fate was sealed. Embedded in concrete is what it felt like. Stuck in a life. (pause) Someone else's life.

SAMANTHA

I'm sorry, Ellie.

ELLIE

Oh, I made that "bed" all by myself. (pause) Funny thing was, Katie's father loved me. And I didn't think I was—I *never thought*—for so many years. All of our years. (pause) It does come back to haunt you.

There is a SILENCE.

ELLIE

(cont.)

Died in his sleep. Morgan. (pause) I woke up, and there he was. Colder than an icebox. (pause) So at peace. It was as if it was okay that his time had come because he'd had the most lovin'—most fulfillin' life. (pause) Son of a bitch. How dare he—look so—happy. (pause) So at peace, when I'd spent so many years—so much energy tryin' to drag him down into my—

ELLIE becomes silent. SAMANTHA moves closer to ELLIE, carefully wrapping her arms around her in comfort. They sit together in SILENCE. After a moment, ELLIE, slightly uncomfortable with the “embrace”, sits up straightening her hair.

SAMANTHA

Ellie. I know what happened between you and Baxter.

ELLIE

What did you say?

SAMANTHA

I'm saying—

ELLIE

(overlapping)

I know what you're sayin'!

SAMANTHA

I'm sorry. It's just that Kate doesn't like to talk about—

ELLIE

(overlapping)

Leave it.

ALAN JOHN

(calling from OFFSTAGE)

Hello The House!

ALAN JOHN enters through the BACK DOOR, shaven and showered, carrying a SMALL HAND-MADE OAK ROCKING CRADLE.

ALAN JOHN

(cont.)

Hello, hello, hello! Sam. Momma. (moves plates and mugs aside) Look. See this? See this? (setting cradle on table) Know what this is?

ELLIE

It's a cradle.

ALAN JOHN

No, ma'am. I mean, *yes ma'am* it is! But not just ANY cradle, no sir! This little work of art is *my baby cradle*. My Daddy made it from one of the old oak trees on our property the day Momma told him she was pregnant. And, let me tell you, in this? I slept like a—well—like a goddam baby is what!

SAMANTHA

It's beautiful, AJ.

ELLIE

What the hell's it for?

ALAN JOHN

What do you *think* it's for? (beat) Guess. (beat) It's for Sam and Kate's baby!

ELLIE

"Sam" and "Kate"?

SAMANTHA

It's—it's just beautiful.

SAMANTHA hugs ALAN JOHN as he crosses to KITCHEN and fills a glass with water.

ALAN JOHN

It's a doozie out there. (gulps water) I think it's gonna be hotter today than it was yesterday. (gulps, then to SAMANTHA) Is Kate out for her run?

SAMANTHA

Never misses a day.

ALAN JOHN

Always been dedicated—Gotta admire that.

ALAN JOHN refills his glass, and crosses to sit on the SOFA. ELLIE, curious, takes note of ALAN JOHN and SAMANTHA's relaxed demeanor with one another.

ELLIE

Wanna fill in the blanks here? I know I left the "party" last night but—

ALAN JOHN

(interrupting)

You know, Ellie—there's this song. S' got a line or two in it that goes—um—
Wait, wait. (thinking) Right, right. Pardon my singin' voice. More a talker

ALAN JOHN

(cont.)

than a singer, but here goes: “You got to know when to hold ‘em. Know when to fold ‘em. Know when to walk away. Know when to run.” (pause) Hell, if I could stand the pain of havin’ that tattooed on my ass, I’d do it.

ELLIE

Who *ARE* you?

ALAN JOHN

A new man, Momma. A man whose been blessed. I’ve finally been released. (pause) It—it wasn’t meant to be. That’s all. (pause, firmly) *That’s all.*

SAMANTHA

Alan John, I—this is a beautiful cradle. We’ll take it as a loaner, in case you need it back someday.

ELLIE absently rocks the CRADLE on the table with one hand. ALAN JOHN rises, turning to SAMANTHA.

ALAN JOHN

So, Pretty Lady—ready to see a Texas Longhorn? They’re probably grazing in the Southeast corner of the property right about now. We’d better catch ‘em ‘fore they wander off to far, ‘an it gets too hot for you to be outdoors.

SAMANTHA

Let’s do it!

ALAN JOHN

Grab yourself a hat and some water, girlie. You’re gonna need both.

SAMANTHA

I don’t think I brought a hat.

ELLIE

Check the shelf in the guest room closet. There’s bound to be one or two of ‘em up there somewhere.

ALAN JOHN

An’ ya might wanna visit the “little girl’s” room ‘fore we head out. There’s nothin’ but open fields out there. Not an outhouse in sight.

SAMANTHA

I was just gonna ask.

SAMANTHA exits into the HALLWAY as ALAN JOHN goes to the refrigerator and grabs TWO BOTTLES of water. ELLIE watches him with disdain.

ELLIE

Whats goin' on here, AJ?

ALAN JOHN

Don't catch your meanin', Ellie.

ELLIE

(voice rising)

What the hell's happenin' here? You've been pinin' away for Katie for as long as I've known you—

ALAN JOHN

(interrupting)

You keep your voice down, you hear? Hell, you've stirred up enough hornet's nests in the last twenty-four hours.

ELLIE

I mean—*me*—I gotta accept it. But *you--??* I thought you wanted—

ALAN JOHN

This ain't about me, Ellie. (pause) I gotta accept *that!* I gotta be a man about it. An' a *real* man don't cry just 'cause he can't get what he wants. (pause) A *real man*—he accepts it for what it is. (pause) I love her. I *love* her—an' I got a choice to make about that. An' I choose to stay in Kate's life. Any way she'll have me. (pause) Hell, I ain't gonna abandon her just 'cause she went gay an' stuff and fell in love with another lady—a very *nice* lady, by the way. (pause) She's happy, Ellie. And that means more—that's gotta mean more than—well, *anything else*, if you truly love her. (pause) Seein' her happy—makes *me* happy. You understand?

ELLIE

'Fraid ya' lost me—

ALAN JOHN

(abruptly, overlapping)

This is about your daughter, Ellie. (pause) About Kate. (pause) This has more to it than some—some dream you had for her—that we were *both* lettin' lead us 'round by the nose. Avoidin' all that was true and real and right in front of those damn noses. (pause) You been given a lotta room, here, Ellie. (pause) But, you're runnin' outa real-estate.

SAMANTHA
(from OFFSTAGE)

I found one!

SAMANTHA enters from the HALLWAY wearing a BASEBALL CAP with a tacky “Texas” logo that is two sizes too big and looks like it might be worn by a trucker.

SAMANTHA
(cont.)

What do you think?

ALAN JOHN
(joking about trucker cap)

Lemme pull the *Semi* ‘round.

SAMANTHA
(turning cap sideways)

I could wear it like this—or is that too “street”?

ALAN JOHN
Give that to me! (fixes the back) Jesus. You’re gonna wear it the way it was meant to be worn. Here. (hands it back) Now it’ll keep the sun off your beautiful face. (pause) You ready?

SAMANTHA straightens the CAP and walks to the table where she lightly rocks the CRADLE.

ELLIE
(under her breath)

Makin’ such a fuss. S’not like her face can burn.

SAMANTHA
I just have to tell you again—this is really so—so special, Alan John.

ALAN JOHN
Y’ know, my Momma tells me that when I was a baby, we had a dog who would rock me in that cradle. Stand on it’s hind legs rockin’ and rockin’ with one paw. Not stoppin’ till he was sure I was asleep.

SAMANTHA
No way!

ALAN JOHN
I kid you not!

SAMANTHA and ALAN JOHN head for the BACK DOOR.

SAMANTHA

That may just be the sweetest thing I've ever heard.

ALAN JOHN holds the DOOR for SAMANTHA as they both EXIT.

ELLIE

Shut That Door!

After a moment, ELLIE rises, crossing to the KITCHEN. She opens a CUPBOARD and, finding a hidden FLASK, uncaps it and enjoys a long swig. Hearing FOOTSTEPS on the BACK PORCH, she quickly caps it and replaces it within the CUPBOARD. KATE enters from the BACK DOOR glinting with perspiration and slightly out of breath. She moves past ELLIE, grabs a GLASS from a CUPBOARD and fills it with cold water. ELLIE, still standing in the KITCHEN, watches as KATE quenches her thirst. After a beat, ELLIE breaks the silence.

ELLIE

Blue is your color. Brightens your whole "look".

KATE finishes the glass of water and sets it on the KITCHEN COUNTER. She takes a breath, and begins a gentle search.

KATE

Where are they?

ELLIE

Oh, they headed on down to the Southeast corner of the property.

KATE

The bottles. Where are the rest of the *bottles*?

ELLIE

Well now—that is *some greetin'*—you—

KATE

Just tell me where they are.

ELLIE

I don't know what bottles you're referrin' to.

KATE reaches into the GARBAGE BIN, extracts the empty JACK DANIELS BOTTLE, and holds it up in front of ELLIE.

KATE

The little friends of this one.

ELLIE

Oh. *That*. (pause) Well—there it is! There was only the one.

KATE heads toward the BOOT SHELF and begins looking through them all, letting some drop again to the floor as she searches for a missing bottle or two.

KATE

I don't know, Momma. Bottles are kinda like cockroaches. If there's *one*, you can bet there's a whole *mess* of 'em hiding somewhere nearby.

ELLIE rushes into the LIVING AREA toward KATE.

ELLIE

There's just the one. I been cuttin' back, Katie. I have.

KATE heads back into the KITCHEN where she continues her search with the CUPBOARDS.

KATE

You were supposed to *quit*. That was the deal, Momma. You were supposed to—Do you—Do you remember *anything* about last night? (pause) Do you?

ELLIE

I'm sorry, Katie. I'm truly sorry if I said or did anything to upset you.

KATE

"Said or did" anything? For *real*?

ELLIE

Whatever I said—whatever I may have done, Katie—I would hope that you'd give me a chance to make it up to you.

KATE

Starting when?

KATE finds the liquor filled FLASK in one of the CUPBOARDS. She holds it at eye level, showing ELLIE her "find". She uncaps it and pours the contents into the kitchen sink. ELLIE, defeated, approaches KATE from behind, putting her hands on KATE's shoulders in an attempt to reconcile.

ELLIE

Katie. Katie, just—

KATE turns, abruptly brushing ELLIE's hands aside.

KATE

Don't, Momma.

ELLIE grabs KATE hard by the wrists. The two women stand facing each other.

KATE

(cont.)

Let go of me.

ELLIE

I just want to—

KATE

I said let go!

KATE pulls her wrists free.

ELLIE

How can I *reach* you, if I can't even touch you? (pause) Don't do this, Katie.

KATE

Don't do what?

ELLIE

Don't go makin' a big mess outa this.

KATE

This mess has been made, Momma.

ELLIE

I just needed to take the edge off, Katie. Lord knows, yesterday was just full of "edges". I *do* know—I realize there are some things that need to be addressed.

KATE

Like your bigoted rants? The drinking?

ELLIE

Katie, please.

KATE

It's just like Baxter—his wife—as if being "Mexican" was some kind of disease. And, in front of his kids—

ELLIE

(overlapping)

I don't want to talk about—

KATE

(overlapping)

Of course you don't! Of course you don't want to talk about it!

ELLIE

(overlapping)

Katie, please—

KATE

(overlapping)

You are so *small*. *Small*. (PAUSE) Did it occur to you last night through your Jack Daniels haze that this may be your last shot at really being a Grandmother? Maybe even at being a *Mother*? Did that permeate the brain?

ELLIE

It wasn't meant to hurt anyone, Katie! I—I grew up in East Texas in a different time. That's just the way things were—the way people talked! I'm a good Christian, Katie. I'd never want to hurt anyone on purpose. (pause) And, I do—I do want to be a part of this poor child's life.

KATE

(incredulous)

What did you just say?

ELLIE

This—this “bi-racial” child that Sammie's carryin'. Two “*Mommies*”, Katie? It's a—a recipe for disaster.

KATE

At least *this* child is wanted, Mother.

ELLIE

They'll be complications, you know. (pause) It's bound to be complicated, Katie. This—sort of thing may not be a problem in places like New York where “anything goes” and the very nature of the sin is overlooked—

KATE

(overlapping)

The “the nature of the sin”—

ELLIE

--'Cause you're not gonna be the biological parent! And, that's a whole other can of worms, Katie. It just is! (pause) Rearin' children—even children of your *own*—

KATE

(overlapping)

This child is mine, Mother.

ELLIE

(overlapping)

--They'll suck the very marrow from your bones, if you let 'em! They'll just—they'll run you ragged, Katie! Are you ready for that? I speak from experience. I lost a good portion of my life raisin' you kids.

KATE

Wow.

ELLIE

(overlapping)

And—though I know I made some mistakes and I realize it's possible I may have—have failed you at times, in some ways—I know, Katie, as sure as I'm standin' here that I am prepared to help you with this baby!

KATE

Momma, you're not "prepared" for making *soup*. You're lost. You're—

ELLIE quickly crosses to the LIVING AREA pointing out the CRADLE sitting on the TABLE.

ELLIE

(overlapping)

Look here! Did you see this? It's Alan John's baby cradle! It's a—

KATE

(overlapping)

Don't change the subject—

ELLIE

(overlapping)

A gift for you and Sammie! His old baby cradle for you and—

KATE

(overlapping)

Always trying to "sway" the "room"—Always trying to—

ELLIE

(overlapping)

You see, Katie? Even after what you did to him, he wants to pitch in too! We *both* want to help care for this baby.

KATE

I don't need YOUR kind of "help", Momma!

ELLIE

(overlapping)

I mean, can you imagine AJ ever fittin' into this cradle?!

KATE

(abruptly)

STOP IT! JUST—

ELLIE

(overlapping)

He's so darned big!

BEAT

KATE

You just can't help it, can you? (pause) Do you ever *hear* yourself? Do you? (pause) Back and forth. I've been wrestling with this *back and forth* with Sam. Trying to decide if I had the "fight" in me to come down here and deal with you. Deal with your pathetic "drama".

ELLIE

I'm this child's *blood*, Katie! I deserve a chance to help out with this baby!

KATE

You don't *deserve* anything, Momma! You've earned *NOTHING!*

ELLIE

I'm this baby's *blood*—

KATE

(overlapping)

Biology doesn't make a parent, Mother! Love. Affection. All those little traits you seem to be missing—that's what makes—

ELLIE

(overlapping)

Katie, I *do love you!* I loved you *all!* Baxter, and—

KATE

(quickly, overlapping)

Oh, and Baxter's just furious with me for giving *you* the "time of day", he's—

ELLIE

(overlapping)

Your Father—I loved your Father, Katie!

KATE

YOU TORTURED THAT MAN! Like you tortured us all!

ELLIE

I never meant to—

KATE

(overlapping)

All I wanted was to be your little girl. But, you just couldn't *handle* that. You had to *punish* us for wanting your love, you had to—

ELLIE

(softly, overlapping)

I never meant to punish anyone, Katie. I never—

KATE

But you *did*. You did. I saw it first-hand. (pause) it's Daddy who should be here. (pause) Daddy. Who carried me to bed at night. Tucked me in after you'd passed out. It's Daddy who should be in this child's life.

ELLIE

Morgan's gone, Katie. (pause) But, I'm still here—I can be there for you now. I can—

KATE

(overlapping)

Like you were "there" for Baxter? The way you've been, he won't even let you *anywhere near* Randall and Sarah—

SAMANTHA and ALAN JOHN enter as the overlapping conversation continues. It is evident that SAMANTHA is in discomfort and in need of a BATHROOM.

ELLIE

(overlapping)

Please Don't, Katie!

KATE
(heated, almost in tears)
Is that how you'll *be there* for me, Momma?

ELLIE
(overlapping)
I LEFT THAT PARKING BREAK ON, KATIE! It wasn't MY fault!

KATE
(overlapping, in tears)
Twenty-Eight stitches across that boy's face!

ELLIE
I went to the store to get cheese! Randall wanted cheese on his scrambled eggs!

KATE
(overlapping)
You "peeked" your head in to say "hello" to your bartender pal, and got "sucked in"! That's what *happened*---That's what—

SAMANTHA
(getting KATE and ELLIE's attention)
Sorry, I—I—

SAMANTHA scurries off to the BATHROOM.

ALAN JOHN
She couldn't hold it in. (pause) I told her I'd turn my back, but—(pause)
Tell Sam I'll be waitin' in the truck.

KATE
(commanding)
What did Curtis Henshaw tell you that day, Alan John?

ALAN JOHN
(heading for the door)
Think I'm gonna—

KATE
(overlapping)
What did Curtis tell you, AJ?

ALAN JOHN, almost out the DOOR, slowly turns facing ELLIE.

ALAN JOHN

(quietly)

Curt—Curt told me—Said he saw you stumblin' out the bar at the "Rusty Nail".

ELLIE

That's not—That's not *true!* I—

KATE

(deliberate, berating)

You were left in charge of your own *grandchildren*. Left in charge—and you couldn't—(heated) *COULDN'T HELP LETTING THE "MONSTER" IN—*

ALAN JOHN

(overlapping)

Katie! Kate! There's no need to—

KATE

(overlapping)

Left them *alone* in the car! Letting it *roll* down the hill! *Slamming right into the telephone pole—*

ALAN JOHN

(moving toward KATE, putting his hand on her shoulder)

Katie, take this down a notch—

KATE

(pushing him aside)

Leave me be, AJ! She knows the truth! She knows what she's done!

ELLIE

I wasn't gone that long! It was just a few minutes—

KATE

(cont.)

How Sarah managed to stay in her car seat, is beyond me!

SAMANTHA enters from the HALLWAY, stopping dead in her tracks.

KATE

(cont.)

And—then my brother—when Baxter shows up at the scene—When they're loading Randall—loading your *grandson* into the ambulance—

SAMANTHA
(overlapping)

Babe. Please—

KATE
(overlapping)

You're so drunk, you turn to the paramedic---to the cops and say: "What" happened to that little "spic"? Is the boy gonna be okay?

ELLIE
(quietly)

I couldn't have—I'd never of said that about my own grandson—

KATE
(overlapping)

Baxter was standing right there, Momma! He was right there!

ELLIE
(pleading)

I didn't—I was walkin to—I saw the police lights down the hill. I didn't—
Didn't know they were his kids! Didn't know they were Baxter's—

KATE
So the term "spic" would have been "okay" if they'd belonged to someone else?

SILENCE as ELLIE is at a loss for words.

ELLIE
(silently shaking her her head "No")
'Course not. No. (pause) I was—I was confused. I didn't—

SAMANTHA crosses, putting her hand on KATE's shoulder.

KATE
The scar will never go away. It's a reminder. Every single day, Momma.
And, to think—I was supposed to *be here* that weekend. I should have...

ELLIE
(softly pleading to ALAN JOHN)
Alan John—AJ—

ALAN JOHN
'Fraid I can't help you with this one, Ellie. Can't go crawlin' into this ant-bed.

KATE

Baxter's asked his buddies down at the station not to tell folks what really happened. That, left in charge of her very own grandchildren—children you couldn't even *recognize*—

SAMANTHA

Kate. Baby, you've made your point—

KATE

(overlapping)

Oh, I don't think this'll ever sink in. (pause, then to ELLIE) Do you have *any idea* what that must have been like for my brother? *His little boy?*

ELLIE

(overcome)

Katie..I would do anything in this world to take that back. (pause) I'd give my life to take away that boy's pain.

KATE

But, you can't. See? That's the thing. You can't. Any more than you can explain the truth of us. (pause) Jesus. (motioning to the PHOTOS) Pictures on the "mantle". (pause) I get it. I get why you keep crawling back into that boot—

SAMANTHA

(overlapping)

We talked about this, Kate. Remember what we talked about last night?

KATE

And, Sam—my dear *wife* here is convinced that there must be *something*. Some compelling reason to allow you into our child's life. (pause) And, for the life of me, I'm still not "seeing" it.

ELLIE

Sammie. Sam...we talked earlier. We—you know how I grew up! I don't—I'm sorry about your folks. About the fire. I'm sure it was because of color, I'm sure it was. But I—

SAMANTHA

Oh, Ellie—

ELLIE

(overlapping)

I grew up in a time—in a world where things were different. Where—when it was "right" to separate folks. It was—it was right to—

KATE

(heated, overlapping)

"Right"? Momma, you're what's *wrong* with this Country! With this *world!*
You're what's WRONG!

ELLIE

(pleading to SAMANTHA)

Sam. Sam, don't you think there's a way we can *both* be right? Having our—
our different experiences, don't you think—

SAMANTHA

(overlapping)

Do you need to be "right", Ellie? Or, do you want your daughter?

SILENCE

ELLIE

(softly)

My—my daughter. (pause) I want my daughter back. I do.

KATE

You've got your work cut out for you, Momma. You've been railing away at
the Universe your entire life. Like it did you "wrong", or something.

ELLIE

I didn't have it easy, Katie.

KATE

(incredulous)

Easy?? You didn't have it "easy"? Momma, your life is a cake-walk. It's a
cake-walk! (pause) And you've made sure everyone else's isn't!

ALAN JOHN

(thoughtful)

'Cept for the fact she's a woman. They're still gettin' paid sixty-seven cents
to a man's dollar. I could be wrong about that fact, but—

KATE

(ignoring him, overlapping)

When I think of the years I've spent "hidden". The moments of shame.
Changing pronouns when talking about my relationships to co-workers and
family. (pause) Do you think that was "easy"? Can you imagine, even just a
little, how painful that was? And *YOU*—my own Mother—disengaged and
harmful! Destructive is what you've been, Momma. Just plain destructive.

ELLIE rushes to the table with the FRAMED PHOTOS.

ELLIE

How? How have I been—(looking through FRAMED PHOTOS) There's a photo—There's gotta be a photo here somewhere of me standing next to you on your brand new bike! (she grows frantic trying to find PHOTO) Or the one—the one of me swinging you on that dirty old tire we hung out back!

KATE

That was Daddy, Momma.

ELLIE

(wounded)

I distinctly remember pushing you on that swing! I do! I remember you used to scream your little head off thinkin' you were gonna fly up—fly way up into Heaven!

ELLIE continues her search of a PHOTO of the TWO of THEM, when she spots the SNOW GLOBE.

ELLIE

(cont., as she picks up SNOW GLOBE)

What—What's this? Where'd this come from?

SAMANTHA

It's a—a snow globe. I made it. (pause) Made it for you.

ELLIE

You made this? It's a dancer. Surrounded by little floatin' snowflakes. It's—It's Katie! (to SAMANTHA) You made her—perfectly. Looks just like her when she was little. When she was my little ballerina. My little—

ELLIE accidentally drops the SNOW GLOBE, watching it tumble onto the floor.

ELLIE

(cont., horrified)

Oh, my—I—*Oh, No!*

ALAN JOHN picks up the SNOW GLOBE gently setting it on the KITCHEN COUNTER. He wipes his hand on his JEANS because of the WATER that is now slowly dripping from the cracked SNOW GLOBE.

ELLIE

(cont.)

Did I—*Tell me I didn't—*

ALAN JOHN

It's cracked. (pause) Just a little crack.

KATE

How appropriate. Just like us.

KATE starts to walk away.

ELLIE

(pleading)

I didn't mean to—Katie! Katie, please don't walk away! I can't—I just can't—stand...

KATE

(turning to face ELLIE)

What, Momma? What is it you can't stand?

ELLIE

My self. (pause) I can't stand—*myself.* (pause) I can't—I just can't be alone. It—It terrifies me! I just—

The THREE stand in SILENCE. Watching ELLIE.

ELLIE

(cont.)

I can't be left to die here alone. (pause) Can't love myself. Sure as hell couldn't love anyone else the way I shoulda'. (pause) You're right about the drinkin', Katie. It makes it easier to be with *me*. Makes me less—hateful to myself. (pause) Takes away my loneliness. Makes me feel less alone.

SILENCE. ALAN JOHN heads for the DOOR.

ALAN JOHN

I'd best get out and feed the horses.

SAMANTHA

Want some company?

ALAN JOHN nods, holding the DOOR for SAMANTHA.

ELLIE

I—am—so—*sorry about the*—It was so—What you made, Samantha—It was so...beautiful. (pause) *Truly beautiful.*

SAMANTHA

Oh, I think we can repair it. (pause) Right, Kate?

KATE

Remains to be seen.

ALAN JOHN and SAMANTHA EXIT. ELLIE studies the broken SNOW GLOBE.

ELLIE

I was at your dance recitals, Katie. I was there for those. I even attempted sewin' a few of your costumes.

KATE

(softly)

Yes. (pause) Yes, you did. (pause) I'd like to—I'd like to be able to love you, Momma. I'd like to be able to *feel something* for you. (pause) I just—I *don't know how to anymore*.

SILENCE. ELLIE puts the broken SNOW GLOBE on the TABLE.

KATE

(cont.)

I'm going to find Sam. She shouldn't be out in this heat.

KATE heads for the DOOR.

ELLIE

You know, Katie..."Morgan" is a good name. (pause) For a boy *or* a girl.

KATE

(quietly)

It is.

KATE EXITS. ELLIE remains frozen for a moment. She then slowly walks into the KITCHEN, opens one of the LOWER CUPBOARDS, reaches far into the back and pulls out a PINT SIZED BOTTLE OF LIQUOR. She begins to un-cap the BOTTLE, but her gaze is drawn to the CRADLE sitting on the TABLE. She slowly walks toward the TABLE, sits on the SOFA, and begins gently rocking the CRADLE, BOTTLE in hand.

ELLIE

(softly)

Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray thee Lord my soul to keep. If I should live for other days, I pray thee Lord to guide my ways.

END OF PLAY

