

Gibson & Sons

By Kristen Da Silva

kristenddasilva@gmail.com

Copyright © 2015 by Kristen Da Silva

Characters

Harry Gibson	28 years old. Short of stature.
Declan Gibson	In his fifties/sixties
Luke Gibson	35 years old
Becca Rollins	28 years old
Jo Hagman	In her fifties/sixties
Katya Aristov	In her twenties/early thirties. Speaks with a Russian accent.
Eva Aristov	In her thirties/early forties. Speaks with a Russian accent.

Where Russian appears in the script, the words are written in Russian with the phonetic spelling included in brackets (along with the rough English translation).

ACT ONE SCENE 1

Time: The present. Late summer.

Place: A small-town funeral home owned and operated by Declan Gibson and his son, Harry. It is a stately Victorian house with a later addition built onto the back, which forms part of the family's private quarters. The main playing space is a den. There is a door to outside (the side door of the house) leading to a patch of garden with a bench. There is door to the kitchen and a hall leading to other areas of the home. A window overlooks the yard. The furnishings include a desk and chair, a sofa, an old recliner and a card table holding a jigsaw puzzle. A hook by the door holds an umbrella. A portrait of an older woman (the late Marjorie Gibson) hangs on one of the walls.

Lights up. Harry is alone. He's wearing a suit. He paces, preparing for a conversation with his family. He alternates between addressing the portrait on the wall and the room – imagining his family there.

Harry: *(To the portrait.)* You're right. You're right. I just have to come out with it. They're my family. They only want me to be happy. And, it's not that unusual, right? It's not like I'm announcing something totally crazy. It's not totally crazy, is it? *(He turns away from the portrait, addressing the room.)* Hey guys. Uh, thanks for gathering. Aunt Jo, I like that scarf. *(To the portrait.)* She might not be wearing a scarf. I'll only say that if she's wearing a scarf. Obviously. *(To the room.)* Hey Dad, Luke. Is one of you wearing cologne? Because you sure smell great. *(To himself.)* Don't talk about how they smell! What is wrong with you? *(To the portrait)* God, I wish you were here. I could really use you today. They're going to be onto me the second I open my mouth. *(As his family.)* "Harry's acting weird. Must be about to tell us about his mail-order bride from Russia." So, on that subject, this is Katya. *(He mimes ushering her forward from behind him.)* She's my.... Well, she's...She's my fiancée. *(To himself.)* Ten second pause here for gasping. *(He pauses, counting silently.)* We're going to get married. And she's not mail-order. That's offensive...and inaccurate, because there was virtually no mail involved. I met her through an agency, which isn't as seedy as it sounds. And none of that makes this any less real than any other courtship. Katya is here because we have feelings for each other. Love feelings. And, now she's come all the way across the world to marry me. *(He smiles at the portrait.)* I'm getting married, Mom. Who would have ever thought? You're really going to like her. She's very sweet, and she's funny....I think. A lot gets lost in

translation. *(As if to an interrupting voice.)* Yes, you're right, Luke: we've only met in person once. Thanks for pointing that out. But, we've been exchanging emails for months. And we don't want to email anymore. We want to be together. I know you'll have questions because you're my family and you care about me, and what Kayta and I are doing is a little unconventional. But, in time you'll see that this is good for me. It's great for me, actually. More than I ever hoped for. And I hope you'll soon come to think of her as a part of the family and welcome her with the warmth and hospitality we're known for-

(There's a slamming door.)

Declan: *(Offstage.)* God dammit!

Harry: Dad?

Declan: *(Offstage.)* God dammit! Harry!

(Declan enters from the hall. He's also wearing a suit. He holds a stack of folded funeral programs. He crosses to Harry and holds the programs an inch from his face.)

Harry: What's up, Dad?

Declan: These you?

Harry: I don't know. I can't see this close. I'm far-sighted.

Declan: They're the programs for the Brian Madder service.

Harry: Then, yes. I did those.

Declan: Were you wearing your glasses when you did them?

Harry: Of course.

Declan: Can you explain, then, why they say "In Loving Memory of Brain Madder"?

Harry: Brain? No. Brian. His name is Brian.

Declan: Well, you typed Brain. B-R-A-I-N. Brain.

Harry: I couldn't have! No way! *(Harry takes out his reading glasses and puts them on. He examines one of the programs.)* Oh my God, no! Brain Madder....Brain matter. Oh God-

Declan: It gets better. Keep reading.

Harry: I don't think I want to.

Declan: Keep reading.

Harry: (*Reading.*) "A celebration of the life of a beloved father, husband and grandfather. Remembered by his brothers in Pipefitters Union Local 32. Forever loved by his children, Sam and Barbara." (*He looks up.*) This is good. What's wrong with this?

Declan: Oh, you'll find it. Read on.

Harry: (*He skims.*) "Known for his gardens" and so on. "Great friend to many". (*Skimming.*) Da-da-da-da-da. What's the problem?

Declan: Get to the part about his wife.

Harry: Wife. Wife. Oh, here. "Never forgotten by his loving wife...Tuna-" Ahh!

Declan: And, there it is.

Harry: Not Tuna! Tina! Loving wife Tina! Oh my God! What are we going to do?

Declan: It's a fine kettle of fish.

Harry: Really, Dad? Right now? (*Beat.*) Maybe no one will notice.

Declan: No one will notice. Lovely local couple, Tuna and Brain Madder.

Harry: We're done. We'll never live it down.

Declan: I'm pulling all the programs. We'll reprint them.

Harry: I hate to point out that I'm an embalmer and I shouldn't be typing up programs in the first place.

Declan: Well, if you embalm like you type, I guess I should make sure the body isn't up walking around. Turning my funeral home into The Night of the Living Dead.

Harry: We have to hire a secretary, I've been saying so for months.

Declan: A secretary. What do you think this is, Wall Street?

Harry: Beverly and Sons have a secretary.

Declan: I don't want to hear about Beverly and Sons. With their fancy new

building and their secretary. I was here a long time before Beverly and Sons.

Harry: They're over there with a full staff, and we're trying to do it all ourselves. We can't keep up, Dad. We need help.

Declan: That's why we hired Becca.

Harry: Oh, Becca. Don't even get me started on her.

Declan: She's a good kid.

Harry: Who knows nothing about funerals!

Declan: Well, she's about to learn.

(Declan crosses to the hall.)

Harry: Don't call her-

Declan: *(Hollering)* Becca!

Harry: We should have used that money to bring in an intern from an accredited funeral services program.

Declan: Your mother always liked Becca.

Harry: Mom always liked cats, too, but we didn't hire one of those.

(Becca Rollins enters. She is dressed in functional khaki and a big plastic apron. Her hair is pinned up.)

Hi, Becca.

Becca: Hi, Harry...I mean, Mr. Gibson. I'm sorry. I'll remember one of these days.

Harry: You don't have to call me Mr. Gibson.

Becca: It's just that, in high school, everyone only called you Harry. Or Harry-Harry-Pretty-Scary.

Harry: Thanks for the reminder.

Becca: Wasn't high school great?

Harry: I was a short kid with glasses whose Dad picked him up in a hearse. High school was not great.

Becca: Well, me and the other girls in the AV club thought you were pretty cool.

Harry: What an endorsement.

Becca: *(To Declan.)* You needed something, other Mr. Gibson? A sandwich? Some crudités?

Declan: I need the programs for the Madder service reprinted. You think you can handle that? It has to be done a-sap.

Becca: Is this a promotion? Am I getting a promotion? Can I do the makeup on the bodies?

Harry: Oh my God-

Declan: No, Becca. Not yet.

Becca: Because I've been watching a lot of makeover shows on the Oprah network.

Declan: Funerals aren't really the place for a big "Before and After" reveal. How about you just help out with these programs? You think you can do that?

Becca: I can do that. I can do the heck out of that. When I'm done with them, those programs are going to be so amazing, people will be lining up to have their funeral here.

Declan: Let's not get carried away. I just want you to find and correct Harry's spelling errors without making any new ones. This isn't a time for creativity. Don't add clip-art or anything.

Becca: Yes, I remember. "Clip-art is not appropriate for a funeral home".

Declan: Right.

Becca: You had me write it on my hand.

(Becca holds up her hand. The phrase is scrawled there in ink.)

Declan: Alright, then. Glad you're here to clean this up.

(Declan exits.)

Becca: Wow. A lot of excitement this morning, huh? Gets my blood pumping.

(Becca fans herself with the papers. She makes exaggerated sensual movements, removes the clip from her hair, tossing it, running her hands

through it. Harry stares.)

Whoo! It's steamy in here!

Harry: What are you doing? You look like you're in a Pantene commercial.

Becca: Is this apron hot? Or is it just me?

Harry: Well, it's made of plastic. Plastic doesn't breathe.

Becca: Is that it? Do you think that's why I'm so hot?

(She pulls the collar of her shirt out, fanning it for air flow.)

Harry: I don't know. Probably. If you're too warm, take it off.

(Harry crosses to the desk and starts rifling through papers. Becca deflates. Harry finds what he's looking for and checks his watch.)

Becca: Late for something?

Harry: What?

Becca: You were looking at your watch.

Harry: Oh. No.

(Harry tucks the paper into the pocket of his jacket. He organizes some papers on the desk. Becca crosses to the desk and squeezes in front of him to sit in the chair, opening the laptop.)

Becca: Excuse me. I'll just squeeze right in.

Harry: Do you have to do that here?

Becca: Well, yeah. Your dad, uh, other Mr. Gibson, said to do it a-sap. A-S-A-P. As soon as possible.

Harry: I know what A-S-A-P stands for. Can't you use the computer in the office?

Becca: Well, that wouldn't be as soon as possible, Harry. If I take the time to walk down the hall to the office, it won't be done as soon as possible. As soon as possible would be doing it right here. This is the soonest place I could possibly do it.

Harry: But you're in the way here!

Becca: I'll be done in a two shakes of a lamb's tail. I'm the fastest typist in my class! *(She hunts and pecks away at the keyboard.)*

Harry: You take culinary arts!

(He watches her type at a painfully slow speed.)

A calligrapher would do this faster!

(Harry moves away from the desk. Declan enters with a large framed photo of an elderly man. He crosses to Harry.)

What? What's wrong now? Why are you carrying around Mr. Madder's picture?

Declan: This isn't Mr. Madder.

Harry: Yes it is. I set it up next to his casket myself.

Declan: Yeah? Well, his wife just saw it and assured me, very loudly, that it bears no resemblance to him. So, my question is, who is it?

Harry: If it's not Mr. Madder, I have no idea-

Declan: Where did it come from?

Harry: From the same photo place we always use. That's not him? She's sure?

Declan: They were married forty-three years and he's been dead seventy-two hours. I'm sure she hasn't forgotten what he looks like, Harry.

Harry: I'm 100% sure this is the guy I embalmed!

Declan: Well, then I hope the man in that photo is also dead. *(Beat.)* What am I going to tell Mrs. Madder? She's fit to be tied. You know what she said? She said she should have gone to Beverly and Sons.

Harry: Oh no. I'm sorry, Dad. Do you want me to go talk to her?

Declan: No. I'm already partially deaf. I'll go. But, Harry?

Harry: Yeah?

Declan: It'd be great if you could get your head out of your ass.

(As Declan passes it, he glances through the window and sighs.)

Look at them over there. Cars lined up like gas is below a dollar. How do

they do it?

Harry: They hired a marketing consultant.

Declan: A what? A marketing consultant! When did people start marketing funerals? Well, it's a slap in the face, I'll tell you that. We've been serving this community for decades. Why do people always think new is better? We didn't need any marketing back then, did we? No. You had two choices: Gibson's, or be buried in the backyard next to your golden retriever.

(Declan turns to exit. Jo – dressed in sombre business attire - enters from the hall, carrying a flower arrangement. She and Declan nearly collide.)

Jo: Oh!

Becca: *(About the programs.)* Done! *(To Harry.)* Did you time me? I was fast, right?

Harry: No, I didn't time you.

Jo: *(To Declan.)* Now, what's that face for? Don't go out there like that, there are mourners out there. You look like someone died.

Declan: That joke never gets old, Jo. *(To Becca.)* Come on, Becca. Send those to the printer and let's get them out there.

(Becca finishes her work at the computer. She and Declan exit to the hall.)

Jo: *(Looking at Harry.)* What's with you two? You know, I'd never have agreed to work in a funeral home if I knew it would be so grim all the time. What happened now?

Harry: I misspelled the name of the deceased.

Jo: I think the deceased probably has bigger problems.

Harry: And, somehow I picked up the wrong photo from the photo shop. I don't know who this is.

Jo: Looks like Winston Churchill.

Harry: It's supposed to be Brian Madder.

Jo: Details.

Harry: Those details are important, Aunt Jo. Those are the details my Mom

always made sure were spotless. That's what made Gibson's great. Now look at us! Misspelling names and...*(He notices the flowers.)* what do you have there?

Jo: Lilies. Aren't they beautiful? Could you run them over to Helen Steadman's house? She's on bed rest with a broken hip. I meant to send flowers.

Harry: Oh. Yes, those are lovely. Good choice. *(Beat.)* Wait, are those from Mr. Madder's casket?

Jo: No! Don't be silly. I don't do that...

(Jo tries to remove the "In Memory" sash from the flowers.)

Harry: Aunt Jo?

Jo: There must be five dozen arrangements in there! I never saw such a popular pipefitter! They'll never miss this one!

Harry: Absolutely not! You find a way to put those back!

Jo: But Helen Steadman-

Harry: Would not want stolen flowers!

Jo: Are you kidding? She shoplifts like a fiend! I once saw her smuggle a spiral ham out of the Price Chopper under a big hat.

(Harry stares her down.)

I'll put them back.

(Jo moves to exit.)

Harry: Hey, Aunt Jo? Wait.

Jo: Yes?

Harry: You mind if I ask you a question about...something to do with being a woman?

Jo: Pardon?

Harry: Well, you're a woman.

Jo: Taxonomically speaking, yes.

Harry: What could a man do to really impress you?

Jo: At my age? Make it all the way through a movie without falling asleep.

Harry: No. I'm serious.

Jo: Why are you asking, Harry?

Harry: Well, I...Nah. Nevermind. It's okay.

Jo: Harry?

Harry: I better go. I'm picking someone up at the airport.

Jo: Oh. A dead body?

Harry: A friend.

Jo: Oh, I'm so sorry, Harry.

Harry: No. Not a dead friend! A live friend.

Jo: I didn't know you had any live friends.

Harry: What? I have friends.

Jo: I meant, you don't get out much.

Harry: I get out!

Jo: Okay. Sure, honey. And who is he? This living, breathing friend?

Harry: It's not a he.

Jo: It's a woman?!

Harry: I would appreciate you phrasing that with less incredulity. I know women!

Jo: Yeah. Me. And old klepto Helen Steadman. (*Beat.*) Okay. A woman. Is this woman someone you're romantically involved with? Is that why you were asking me about impressing someone? Are you dating her?

Harry: Well, yes. You could say that.

Jo: Would she say that?

Harry: Yes!

Jo: Wow, Harry! Way to go! Well, off with you, then! You don't want to keep

her waiting at the Arrivals gate. Are you bringing her back here?

Harry: That was the plan, yeah.

Jo: This isn't your first date, is it? Because, I'd recommend something with less coffins. (*Beat.*) Like mini putt.

Harry: It's not our first date.

Jo: Oh, Harry! I'm so thrilled for you! And for us! I'll have to make sure the camera is charged!

Harry: No! No. No. No pictures! Please don't make a big fuss, Aunt Jo. I don't want to make her uncomfortable.

Jo: Harry, it's your first ever girlfriend! Of course we'll have pictures! I have pictures of your brother and his first girlfriend.

Harry: Well, they were in the sixth grade.

Jo: So you're a late bloomer. Your mother would be so excited. And wait until I tell your father. He said the closest thing you were ever going to get to a girlfriend is that Bionic Woman poster in your bedroom.

Harry: Well, thank you for that. (*Beat.*) But, don't say anything to Dad. I want to tell him.

Jo: Yes, right, you should tell him. My lips are sealed. But, Harry, if he tries to give you romance advice, don't listen to him. On his first anniversary with your mother, he bought her a tackle box.

Harry: Noted.

Jo: On their second anniversary, he bought her a mounted bass.

Harry: I'm picking up on a theme.

Jo: Alright. Off with you! Don't be late! (*She checks her watch.*) Ugh. We've got to get rid of those Madders. I've got things to do today! How long are they going to mourn?

Harry: Maybe you could flash the lights.

Jo: Will that work?

Harry: They do it in the theatre.

Jo: They get away with everything in the theatre.

(Jo exits to the hall.)

Harry: *(To the imaginary Katya.)* And those are your new in-laws.

(The lights in the hall flash. He bolts towards it.)

Aunt Jo, I was kidding about flashing the lights!

(End of Scene.)

ACT ONE SCENE 2

Time: A little later.

Place: The arrivals area of an airport. There is a bench, trash can and a welcome sign featuring a smiling beaver in a Mountie costume.

Lights up. Katya, a beautiful young woman dressed to the nines, is struggling with her luggage. Her sister, Eva, follows her, berating her in Russian.

Eva: Самолет опаздывает! (*Phonetic: samolet opazdjivaet*) (*Translation: The plane is late!*)

Мужчина за мной наблевал мне на платье! (*Phonetic: muzhchina za mnoi nableval мне на platje*) (*Translation: The man behind me vomited all down my dress!*)

Уезжай из России, Уезжай из России, (*Phonetic: uezhai iz rossii. uezhai iz rossii.*) (*Translation: Leave Russia, leave Russia.*)

Katya: In English, Eva. In English!

Eva: English! (*She blows a raspberry.*)

Katya: If you will stop yelling at me for ten minutes, I will give you candy bar.

Eva: Give me candy bar.

Katya: I will give you. You stop yelling. And you speak English only.

Eva: Give me the one with the finger butters.

Katya: I have only the Mr. Big Man left. You eat all the Finger Butters on the plane.

(Katya takes a Mr. Big candy bar from her bag.)

Eva: Ты все съела!!! (*Phonetic: ti vse sjela*) (*Translation: You ate them!*)

Katya: (*Dangling the candy bar.*) English!

Eva: Please to give me the Mr. Big Man. (*Katya gives Eva the candy bar.*)
Where is your Harry, hm? I do not see him. He forgot you?

Katya: He would not forget me. He is coming to airport to pick me up. And you, too, if I do not decide to leave you with the lost baggage.

Eva: Please, leave me.

(Eva stops to say a prayer. Katya listens.)

Katya: What are you praying for?

Eva: Nothing.

Katya: I hear you. You pray for me to be happy.

Eva: No, I don't.

Katya: Yes, you do! I hear you! You say "God, let Katya be happy."

Eva: You hear wrong! I say "God, let Katya not be so stupid."

Katya: You are terrible at lies. Besides, how can you say I am stupid? Look where I am, Eva. Canada! Do you see how stupid I am?

Eva: Pfft. Canada. A great place if you like water rat.

Katya: What is water rat?

Eva: *(Pointing to the sign with the beaver.)* Water rat!

Katya: I don't care! All I know is that is good place for me. is good place for you, and is good place for Dmitri.

(Beat.)

Eva: Well...Dmitri would like water rat in funny costume.

Katya: *(With a gleam in her eye, looking out.)* Eva, we have landed in best place on earth.. Here, they are known for democracy and hockey! Here, Dmitri will have the opportunity to make something of his life, and to eat all the donuts he wants. This is the place for fresh air, freedom, and double double! Where all people are polite and apologetic. This is the place for good life! I read every book in Russia about Canada. It is a land of greatness, where men and women come since long, long ago to find their dream. And, here I am. Katya Marina Aristov. The next to find glory in this beautiful land. And now: you tell me how stupid I am.

Eva: You are still stupid.

Katya: Bah! You look gifted horse down in the mouth. Sit down. We wait here for Harry.

(Eva and Katya wait by the bench. Katya pulls out an English dictionary and gives it to Eva.)

Here. Read a book.

(Eva flips the dictionary open to H. She has looked this up in advance.)

Eva: Ah, yes, I like this book. It is full of words. For example, do you know what “Harry” means? It means “covered in fur”. When he takes off his clothes on your wedding night, you are going to find out he is a werewolf!

Katya: He is not a werewolf! He is an embalmer!

Eva: And what is that?

Katya: It is a man who makes the bombs.

(Harry enters on the opposite side of the stage.)

Harry: Katya?

Katya: Harry!

(Harry and Katya close the distance between them and attempt a hug. It is the most unnatural hug in the world.)

Harry: You’re finally here.

Katya: I am here.

Harry: Did you... have a safe flight? You obviously did, because you arrived. So, you’re not in the Andes somewhere, eating a flight attendant. I’m sorry. That was in poor taste. *(Beat.)* No. I didn’t mean because presumably a flight attendant would taste bad. I meant I shouldn’t have made the cannibal joke. I don’t know your family history, really. You could have lost a loved one to cannibalism...Probably not, though. It’s not that common... *(He trails off, realizing he’s babbling horribly.)* So, good flight? No turbulence?

Katya: Yes. Flight is fine.

Harry: Good.

Katya: Come. I want you to meet my sister.

Harry: Your sister?

Kayta: Yes. This is my sister, Eva.

Harry: Oh. *(To Eva.)* Hi. Pleased to meet you. *(To Katya.)* I didn't know you were bringing a sister-

Katya: Yes. I bring. She and I very close. I hope she will come to Canada, too.

Harry: Oh! Uh...okay...great, I mean, that's great! The more the merrier, why not? My family will love that. Uh...welcome to the airport. *(Beat.)* This- this isn't the best part of our city. I'm going to show you nicer parts... Like the lake! There's a lake, and a big marina...They found a dead hitchhiker there last year. No! No. That's not a highlight. Uh...they have fireworks there sometimes.

Katya: Firework?

Harry: Yeah. Fireworks. *(He makes hand gestures and explosion sounds.)* Pow pow!

Katya: *(To Eva, knowingly.)* Ah. The bomb.

Harry: Could I take your luggage?

Katya: Yes, please.

Harry: *(Noticing Eva's candy bar.)* Oh, you like Mr. Big, huh?

Eva: The Mr. Big Man is okay, but Finger Butters better.

Harry: Huh? Finger Butters...Oh, Butterfinger? You like Butterfinger?

Eva: You have?

Harry: Well...no. But, I could get some.

Eva: How much costs the Finger Butters?

Harry: I don't know, exactly...Like a buck? A buck-fifty?

Eva: A buck?

Harry: Dollar. Maybe a dollar and fifty cents. *(Harry pulls out his wallet and hands Eva a five-dollar bill.)* Here. That should cover it.

Eva: Why you give me a picture of this man?

Harry: That's for the chocolate bar.

Eva: This man has the Finger Butters? He is friend of yours?

Harry: Wilfred Laurier? No, he's not a friend of mine.

Eva: He is handsome. I can meet him?

Harry: Only if you have a time machine.

Katya: This is Canadian money, Eva!

Eva: Canadian money have such handsome men! Give me more.

Harry: That's all I've got. (*Beat.*) Well, Katya, Eva... Welcome to Canada!

(End of Scene.)

ACT ONE SCENE 3

Time: A little later.

Place: The funeral home.

Lights up. Jo is at the desk with a calculator. Becca is behind her, holding a stack of bills.

Jo: Okay, next one. How much?

Becca: \$174.88.

(Jo enters the figure into the calculator.)

Jo: Shit. *(She rubs her face.)* Is that the last of them? Tell me that's the last of them.

Becca: Sorry, Mrs. Hagman. There's three more. Maybe we could pretend we didn't get them?

Jo: That only works so many months in a row.

(Luke enters from outside with a suitcase.)

Luke: Knock knock.

Jo: Luke!

Luke: Hi, Aunt Jo.

Jo: *(To Becca.)* Keep adding up those bills. *(Jo stands to greet Luke.)* Aren't you a sight for sore eyes!

Luke: Lots of cars outside. Business must be booming.

Jo: Oh, it is. For Beverly and Sons.

Luke: Beverly and Sons?

Jo: Yeah. See that beautiful building with the new stucco?

Luke: A new funeral home moved in?

Becca: They have gorgeous gardens. *(Beat.)* If you like that sort of thing. Which I sure don't! Blech, flowers. Right?

Luke: Wow. I guess the town's growing. Are they giving you a run for your

money?

Jo: Yeah. You could say that.

(Declan enters. He walks right past Luke to the recliner and sits.)

Declan: Boy, do I need a break.

(He tries to use the footstool, but the recliner sticks. He jiggles the handle.)

Now this is broken? Well, how do you like that? It's brand new.

Jo: It's twenty years old, Declan.

Declan: I don't care how old it is. I paid \$200 for it. It should outlive me!

Luke: Hi, Dad.

Declan: *(Looking at the jigsaw puzzle.)* Hi, Harry.

Luke: It's Luke, Dad.

Declan: *(He looks up.)* Ah, the prodigal son. Where's Audrey?

Luke: She couldn't make it. *(Long beat.)* Is that it?

Declan: What?

Luke: You're not going to hug me or anything?

Declan: When have I ever hugged you?

Luke: Seems to me there was a time I walked into this house and got a hug.

Declan: Yeah, from your mother.

Luke: A son should get a hug when he comes home.

Declan: You've come home from Toronto, not the war.

(Becca crosses to Luke. She wraps her arms around him.)

Becca: I'll hug you.

Luke: Oh...thank you. Uh...who are you?

Becca: I'm Becca.

Luke: I meant, who are you to me?

Jo: She works here.

Luke: You have staff now? *(To Becca.)* Thank you. That's good. That's enough.

Becca: You're welcome. I like your fabric softener.

Declan: How else can we run the place? Your mother took care of a lot of things around here.

Jo: He means everything-

Declan: I was the brain, she was the heart.

Jo: And the hands. And the feet.

Declan: To be truthful, we'd probably need ten employees to do the work your mother was doing. But all we can afford is Becca.

Luke: And you, Aunt Jo? Are you staying on?

Jo: Not for much longer. I've got a business of my own to get back to. Your cousin Ricky has been running the restaurant in my absence. But, let's face it, he isn't the brightest crayon in the box.

Luke: Now, don't say that, Aunt Jo.

Jo: He's my son. I can say it. Last week he called me to ask me which cupboard he should put the meat in. If I don't get back there, he's gonna give someone worms.

Declan: *(To Luke.)* You want to come home and work for us? We could sure use you.

Luke: Oh...I'd love to, Dad-

Declan: *(Standing.)* Yeah? It'd be great! We could change the name of the place. "Gibson and Sons".

Luke: Oh-

Declan: No? Gibson Brothers? Gibson, Gibson and Gibson?

Luke: I mean, when I said I'd love to, that was sort of a...figure of speech-

Declan: A figure of speech.

- Luke: Yeah, you know, to mean “I want to be polite but this is literally the last thing on earth I want to do”.
- Declan: Well, how do you like that?
- Luke: Dad, I’m sorry. You know this isn’t for me.
- Declan: It should be in your blood. Every Gibson man for a century has been in the funeral business.
- Luke: Well, it skipped me! I guess you could say I’ve never been a fan of the dead.
- Jo: I was a fan of the Dead. What a band.
- Luke: I mean the actual dead. The corpses, or...bodies, or whatever you call them.
- Becca: Oh, we call them by their names. The families don’t like it when you call them corpses. (*She holds up her right hand, pointing to where this has been written in ink.*) If you think you’ll have a hard time remembering that, you should write it down. You can borrow my pen.
- Luke: I’m good.
- Declan: Well, it’s a disappointment. A Gibson man doing...whatever it is you do.
- Luke: I’m an orthodontist!
- Declan: So, we both deal in suffering.
- Luke: You run an admirable business, Dad. If it were in dry-walling or longshore fishing, I’d join you.
- Declan: I’ll let you know if I ever decide to diversify. (*He sits.*)
- Luke: You don’t want me anyway. I’d probably faint any time they brought someone in.
- Jo: You get used to it.
- Declan: Used to it? He grew up with it! We used to take the display caskets up the hill in the backyard and use them as toboggans.
- Luke: We never did that.
- Declan: Well, we should have.

Luke: I'm sorry. I'm sorry I don't have the constitution to join the family business. I wish I did.

(Declan tries to get the recliner to work again.)

Declan: You want to make it up to me? You can fix my chair.

Luke: How about I get you a new one?

Declan: This one is new!

(Declan focuses on the jigsaw puzzle. After a moment, he begins talking to the portrait of Marjorie.)

You think that piece goes there? I don't know, kid, I'm pretty sure that's the wrong shape. *(He tries the piece.)* Hey! You're right.

Luke: Dad?

Jo: *(Quietly.)* He does that now.

Luke: Talks to the photos?

Jo: Just that one.

(Declan tries to shove a piece where it doesn't belong.)

Declan: *(To the portrait.)* Yes, it does. Yes. It fits. It's the same colour. Look. That's her hand. *(Beat.)* Jo, you should go check on Harry. Make sure he doesn't need any help with the Madders.

Jo: What? Harry's not here. He went out.

Declan: What do you mean "out"?

Jo: He left about an hour ago.

Declan: So, no one's out there? You're letting me sit here and do a jigsaw puzzle while we've got a service running and no one on the floor?!

(Declan gets up and crosses in a hurry. He exits to the hall.)

Jo: Oops. I better go too. Luke, you can put your bag in the spare room.

Luke: Oh. *(Looking towards the hall.)* Down there?

Jo: Is something wrong?

- Luke: I don't know...it's just...it feels weird being here now. I know I'm not a kid anymore and I shouldn't need my mom...
- Jo: You never outgrow needing your mom.
- Luke: Yeah. *(Beat.)* Remember when we were little and she made us those superhero capes to wear whenever something made us afraid?
- Jo: I remember. She ran out of fabric for Harry's and had to make it out of the kitchen curtains.
- Luke: So that's why it was covered in hens. He got mad because I kept calling him "Super Chicken". I wonder what happened to those.
- Jo: They're probably still here somewhere. Lord knows your dad never throws anything out. If you want to wear it, I won't laugh, but it might be a bit small.
- Luke: My cape of invincibility.
- Jo: You know it wasn't the cape, right? That made you feel safe?
- Luke: I know. *(Beat.)* The cape was cool, though.
- Jo: She's still here, Luke.
- Luke: Not you, too-
- Jo: Call me crazy if you want, but I know she is. It was only her body that couldn't hang on anymore.
- Luke: Are you trying to tell me you believe in ghosts?
- Jo: No. I'm trying to tell you I believe there's nothing in the universe that would keep a mother from her children. You think she'd really leave all of you to your own devices? When she was alive, she wouldn't even let Harry use the microwave, and he's almost thirty. Believe me, she's watching your every move. That's why she asked me to come stay. Mainly to help Declan and Harry. I mean, you have Audrey and your life in the city, so I think your mom worried about you less.
- Luke: Right. Well, that must have comforted her. Knowing you'd be here to help get them back on their feet.
- Jo: Thing is, Luke, I think I've failed. I just keep waiting to see a sign they're going to be okay. You know, so I can go back to my regular life with a

guilt-free conscience.

Luke: They're not okay?

Jo: They're not as okay as Marjorie would have wanted. The only thing she cared about in life was that you were all happy. *(She clears her throat.)* Well, look at me getting gloomy. That's not going to help anyone is it? I should get back to work. Becca, we should get the sandwiches out to the Madder service. Nothing like salmon salad on soggy bread when you're deep in grief.

Becca: Sure thing, Mrs. Hagman.

Jo: *(To Luke.)* You get settled in, okay honey? There are clean linens on the bed. You let me know if you need anything else.

Luke: Thanks, Aunt Jo. *(Beat.)* Aunt Jo? *(Motioning to the hall.)* There are no bodies back there, are there?

Jo: We don't keep them in the spare room, Luke.

Becca: We definitely do not keep them in the spare room. It is nowhere near cold enough. *(Becca pulls up her sleeve to point to another reminder written in ink.)*

(End of scene.)

ACT ONE SCENE 4

Time: A little later.

Place: The funeral home.

As the lights rise, Luke is sitting on the garden bench, reading The National Post. Jo and Declan enter the den from the hall. Becca trails after, taking notes on a notepad.

Declan: That bottom stair is loose again. Remind me to look at that tomorrow. And my recliner. Remind me to look at that too. And to call the store to complain. \$200! You think the thing wouldn't just up and stop reclining. That's its main feature! *(Becca scribbles this on the notepad.)* And we need more paper towels for the restroom. Where do we get those from, anyway? They've never run out before-

Jo: Marjorie ordered them.

Declan: She did?

Jo: Did you think you had paper towel fairies?

Declan: I don't know. Some things always just happened. *(Beat.)* How did the rest of the Madder service go? No more mishaps, were there?

Becca: No. Smooth sailing.

Declan: Well, thank God for that. *(He crosses to the recliner and sits.)*

Becca: Except...Did you know Mrs. Madder has a lethal egg allergy? I sure didn't.

Declan: What?

Becca: It's true. One smear of egg salad can take her out like a sniper's rifle!

Declan: Oh my God.

Becca: Good thing her son is a paramedic.

Jo: Glad he's not a lawyer.

Declan: Holy shit.

Jo: It's fine, Declan. I dealt with it. I told them, if she doesn't make it through the night, we'll give them a buy-one-get-one on the funeral.

Declan: Jo-

Jo: I'm kidding! She didn't even eat the egg salad.

Becca: No. We caught it in time. I offered her tuna instead, but that made her burst into tears. Do you think she's a vegan?

Declan: Oh my God. *(To heaven.)* Take me now. *(Beat.)* What am I doing, Jo? Maybe I need to throw in the towel.

Jo: You're going to be fine, Declan. You just need to find your rhythm.

Declan: I've been finding my rhythm for over a year now. It's pretty clear I don't have any.

Jo: What can we do to help?

Declan: For one thing, we can stop messing up. We used to be known as the gold standard of service. Now we're a bunch of yahoos barely delivering the basics. Spelling errors, photo mix ups-

Jo: Harry has been distracted.

Declan: What's he so distracted with? Did he get a new model plane kit I don't know about?

Jo: Something like that.

Declan: I'll have a talk with him. I mean it. We need to pull up our socks. We've got competition now. Every time we mess up, Beverly and Sons gets a new customer.

Becca: Oh, speaking of Beverly and Sons - and only because you brought it up, because I know you don't like talking about Beverly and Sons - I meant to show you this.

(Becca takes a glossy brochure from her pocket.)

Declan: What is it?

Becca: It's one of the new Beverly and Sons brochures.

Declan: Brochures? They have brochures? Are they a funeral home or a travel agency?

Becca: They paid extra for the glossy paper.
(Becca reads from the brochure.)
“Each casket comes with a luxurious satin pillow.” *(Beat.)* Ooh, I need a new pillow.

Declan: *(Taking the brochure.)* Let me see this thing.

Becca: Isn’t it beautiful? They’ve got a quote there from Chicken Soup for the Soul.

Declan: I’m going to be sick.
(Luke enters from outside.)

Jo: It’s been a long day. Put it out of your mind for now.

Declan: When you see Harry, tell him I want to have a word.

Jo: Sure. Becca, let’s go lock up. *(Jo and Becca exit to the hall.)*

Luke: Everything alright?

Declan: Everything is about as far from alright as it gets.

Luke: I’m sorry, Dad. Anything I can do?

Declan: Can you bring your mother back? It seems like she was the only one who knew how to keep this all going. *(Beat.)* Is that the paper?

Luke: Yeah, you want it?

Declan: Just the obituaries.

Luke: There are no obituaries in the National Post, Dad.

Declan: National Post? I thought you said it was the paper.

Luke: It is the paper.

Declan: I meant our paper. The Beaver.

Luke: The Beaver is “the paper” now? That’s what you refer to as “the paper”?

Declan: Yes, it’s the paper. It’s the only paper I’ve ever read. Where is it?
(Declan rises to find The Beaver.)

- Luke: Here, Dad. *(Luke crosses to the desk and finds The Beaver. He brings it to Declan. Reading from the front page.)* They're opening a new waffle house on Lakeshore. That's front page news.
- Declan: I don't read the front page. Just give me the obituaries. *(Luke separates the paper and gives Declan the obituaries. Luke takes the rest of the paper to the couch.)*
- Luke: Wow. They're considering painting the library. I don't know how that didn't make the National Post.
- Declan: *(Reading.)* Frank O'Malley, 91, Beverly and Sons. John Hammerstein, 57, Beverly and Sons. Rose Whittaker, 85, Beverly and Sons. Goddamn Beverly and his Goddamn sons!
- Luke: Friend of yours?
- Declan: He's the snake next door. I preferred when it was a jerk chicken place. Now instead of me eating their lunch, they're eating mine.
- Luke: Would it cheer you up to hear the Bantam girls took silver?
- Declan: *(Reading.)* Oh my God. This is horrible.
- Luke: What?
- Declan: Les Tompkins died. I've known him since I was a boy.
- Luke: Oh, Dad, I'm sorry.
- Declan: It gets worse. They're having his funeral at Beverly and Sons! I don't believe it! We've handled the funeral for every Tompkins since 1945.
- Luke: What's so great about this Beverly and Sons?
- Declan: Newer facility. Bigger. Air conditioning, if that matters to you. *(Beat. He looks up to the portrait on the wall.)* We need to do something, kid. *(He looks out the window. Something catches his attention.)* Goddamn scavenging son of a bitch!
- (Jo and Becca enter from the hall. Becca is removing and folding her apron.)*
- Becca: All squared away out there.
- Declan: I don't think so, you little lawn rodent! Not on my watch!

(Declan leaps up from the chair and storms towards the door to outside. He grabs an umbrella from the hook.)

Luke: Dad?

Becca: Mr. Gibson?

Jo: It's that damn squirrel again!

Luke: What?

Jo: He's obsessed with that squirrel. It's his Moby Dick. *(Declan exits to the outside.)* Declan! Don't get squirrel on my umbrella! That's my best one!

Luke: What on earth?

Jo: The squirrel eats the bird seed.

Luke: I didn't know he cared about birds.

Jo: He doesn't. It was your mother's bird feeder.

Luke: I don't think Mom would begrudge a squirrel a few bird seeds.

Jo: Well, your father does. He acts like that squirrel was responsible for her death. He's out there every morning filling up that bird feeder, glaring at it. I swear I've heard him growl.

Luke: The squirrel?

Jo: Your father!

Becca: *(Looking out the window.)* Oh no! Run, squirrel, run! Mr. Gibson, please don't! It's a living thing!

(Becca rushes to the door. She exits to outside.)

Luke: *(Watching at the window.)* Should we be worried about him? He's talking to pictures and chasing a squirrel around the yard.

Jo: Don't worry. He never catches it.

Luke: Aunt Jo, I'm serious.

Jo: He's always been a funny man.

Luke: This is starting to go beyond funny.

Jo: He's lonely, Luke. I don't think he knows what to do with that. God knows he'd never talk to anyone about it.

Luke: If Mom were here, she'd get him talking.

Jo: If your mom were here, he wouldn't miss her. She thrived on all this madness. Even your kook of a father. She loved him like he was the only man on earth.

Luke: They were great together.

Jo: They sure were. Marriages like that don't come around every day.

Luke: No. They certainly don't.

Jo: Luke, where's Audrey?

Luke: Oh.

Jo: Seems like every time you turn up lately, she's not with you.

Luke: Well, she's busy.

Jo: Doing what?

Luke: Living. You know. Working. Her hobbies...

Jo: What are her hobbies?

Luke: These days, mainly a 25 year old karate instructor.

Jo: What?

Luke: Sensei Nathan.

Jo: She's taking karate?

Luke: No. She was a Big Sister. You know that program for disadvantaged youth? Her little sister was taking karate. Then Audrey started taking Sensei Nathan.

Jo: What are you saying?

Luke: I'm saying she's probably licking something off his six-pack as we speak.

Jo: Oh my God! Audrey's having an affair?

Luke: She wouldn't word it that way. She thinks she's in love with him. I'd kick

his ass, but he's a fourth degree black belt.

Jo: Honey, that's terrible! Why didn't you tell us?

Luke: I don't know. Embarrassment? Shame? A desire to protect you from my burdens?

Jo: Are you divorced?

Luke: Separated.

Jo: Does she still live with you in the condo?

Luke: No. We took it literally.

Jo: So, where is she?

Luke: Renting a loft apartment with Sensei Nathan.

Jo: I can't believe this. How long ago did this happen?

Luke: Right after Mom died.

Jo: My God, you've been shouldering this alone all that time?

Luke: Everyone had enough on their minds. *(Beat.)* Don't say anything to my dad, okay? I'm worried about him. I don't want to be the thing that finally sends him over the deep end.

Jo: You should tell him, Luke. I'm sure he'd want to talk about it.

Luke: Dad?

Jo: No. What am I saying? *(Beat.)* Come here. *(Jo hugs Luke.)*

Luke: So that's what it takes to get a hug.

(The door bangs open. Becca comes running in holding something bundled up in a towel. Declan enters behind her, his hand wrapped in a bloody rag.)

Jo: Declan?

Luke: Dad?

Becca: Call 9-11!

Luke: Oh my God. Did you have a physical altercation with a squirrel?

Declan: It's just a scratch.

Jo: You're bleeding!

Luke: What the hell, Dad?

Becca: Where's the phone? Where's the phone?

Jo: What happened?

Declan/Becca: It bit me!/ He bit it!

Luke/Jo: What?!

Declan: It just grazed me.

Jo: The squirrel?!

Becca: *(About the squirrel.)* It's bleeding!

Jo: *(To Declan.)* Oh my God, let me look at that wound!

Declan: It's nothing. A scratch! *(Declan tries to push Jo away.)*

Luke: Dad!

Jo: Jesus, Declan! That squirrel could be carrying anything! It probably has rabies!

Declan: I got it better than it got me!
(Becca lies the bundle on the desk and bends over it.)

Becca: I don't know if it's breathing!

Jo: What is that?

Luke: Is that the squirrel?

Jo: Good grief, Becca!

Becca: How do you do mouth-to-mouth?

Luke: You don't! It's a squirrel! *(Luke crosses to the desk.)* Take it outside before it bites someone else!

Becca: It's hurt!

Declan: You're damn right it's hurt. That'll teach it to steal from the birds!

Jo: Stop moving! I'm trying to examine your wound!

Declan: Get off me, woman!

Jo: We need to get this cleaned. What if it infected you? You could start foaming at the mouth!

Luke: I think we'll have some warning before we need to have him put down, Aunt Jo.

Becca: Come on, little buddy! Come on!

Luke: Oh my God. Becca. It's Becca, right? I'm sorry, but this squirrel is going back outside! *(Luke reaches for the squirrel. Becca turns.)*

Becca: Don't touch him!

Luke: Whoa!

(Jo is fussing over Declan.)

Declan: I said, I'm fine!

(The door opens, Harry stands in it, back to the room, pointing out the gardens to Katya and Eva. He is momentarily oblivious to the chaos inside.)

Harry: That's the wishing well my dad built for my mom when my brother Luke was born. Lots of pennies and wishes in that well-

Jo: Is your tetanus shot up to date?

Jo/Becca: I'm taking you to the hospital./I'm taking it to the hospital!

Declan/Luke: Don't be ridiculous!

Luke: Dad, let Aunt Jo clean the wound! Becca, let me take the squirrel outside!

Declan: I cleaned it myself, under the garden hose.

Jo: Oh my God. How did you make it to sixty?

Luke: How did you even get close enough to it for it to bite you?

Jo: I'm calling the Centre for Disease Control!

(Jo exits to find the phone.)

Luke: Alright, let's just calm down. He was bitten by a neighbourhood squirrel, not Cujo.

Harry: Hello? What is going on in here?

Eva: Mad house.

Luke: Harry.

Declan: *(About Katya and Eva.)* Who the hell are you?

Harry: Dad? What happened?

Becca: *(Becca turns. She has the squirrel bundled back up.)* Harry?

Harry: Hi, Luke. You're here.

Luke: Hi. *(To Katya.)* Hi.

Katya: Hello.

Harry: *(To Becca)* What is that? Is that a squirrel? *(To Declan.)* What happened to your hand? *(To Luke.)* What happened to his hand?

Declan: Nothing.

Luke: I can't begin to explain-

Declan: Who the hell are these women?

Becca: Yes. Who are these women?

Declan: Did someone order entertainment?

Harry: No. This is Katya. She's with me. Why do you have a squirrel in the house?

Becca: With you? What do you mean "with you"?

(Becca accidentally squeezes the squirrel. It lets out a loud squeal and starts to thrash violently. Becca screams.)

Luke: Jesus! *(Luke grabs the bundled up squirrel from Becca, fighting to keep from dropping it. He dashes for the door to outside. He crosses across the flagstone path and exits to the yard. The squirrel squeals loudly again.)*

Declan: Don't let it go! I'm going to drive it out into the country!

Eva: We are hunting this squirrel? I don't bring my gun.
(Eva exits to watch "the hunt".)

Becca: It needs medical attention!
((Becca exits.))

Katya: I am so confused-

Harry: So am I. Dad, what the heck is going on?
(Jo enters, talking on the portable phone.)

Jo: Just a second. *(To Declan.)* Where did it bite you?

Declan: *(Pointing.)* Over there, just under that tree.

Jo: Where on your body!

Declan: The part that's bleeding!

Harry: It bit you? How did that happen?

Jo: *(Into the phone.)* How does he look? Furry, beady eyes... Oh, the bite victim! He looks the same as usual. ..Furry, beady eyes. *(Jo notices Harry is back. She sees Katya and momentarily lowers the phone.)* Hello.

Katya: Hello.

Jo: Harry, who is this?

Harry: This is Katya. The woman I told you about.

Jo: Are you serious? *(Back into the phone.)* Hello? Sorry! Fever? *(To Declan.)* Do you have a fever?

Declan: No, I don't have a fever.

Katya: *(To Declan.)* Your hand is bleeding.

Declan: Just a scratch. Are you from the singing telegram place?

Katya/Harry: My sister can fix./She's my fiancée.

Jo/Declan: What?

Harry: She's my-

Declan: She's your what?

Jo: Did you say fiancée? *(Into the phone.)* I'm going to have to call you back.
(Jo hangs up the phone.)

Declan: I think that squirrel did give me rabies. I'm having delusions.

Jo: Harry??

Harry: Katya's my fiancée. *(Beat.)* Surprise.

Katya: *(To Harry.)* You don't tell your family?

Harry: Uh. Well, my family's a little...uh... I meant to tell them beforehand, Katya! I wanted to tell them-

Jo: I'm sorry. Hang on one second here-

Declan: *(To Katya.)* Did he just say you're marrying him?

Katya: Yes. I marry Harry.

Jo: *(Confused.)* Are there no men where you live?

Harry: Hey!

Jo: Where did you meet?

Katya: We meet in Russia.

Declan: *(To Harry.)* When the hell were you in Russia?

Harry: If you could just stop talking for a second, I will-

Declan: Are you playing some kind of practical joke?

Harry: It's not a joke-

Jo: Harry, come on! Where did you get her? An agency?

Harry: What?! No!

Declan: *(To Katya.)* If you're going to sing, can you do that one by Madonna?

Harry: Dad!

Declan: You know... "na na na na lucky star...na na na"-

Harry: She's not here to sing!

- Katya: Why you not tell your family, Harry?
- Harry: I...I thought I would tell them when you got here-
- Jo: Tell us what?
- Harry: That Katya and I are getting married!
- Declan: Come on.
- Jo: Enough, Harry.
- Harry: Is it really that hard to believe? *(Beat.)* Can you really not imagine someone like Katya might want to marry someone like me?
- (They stare at him for a long beat.)*
- Wow. That's great. Thank you.
- (Luke enters from outside. Eva and Becca follow him.)*
- Luke: Harry, this woman claims her sister is here to marry you. Does she mean a different Harry?
- Eva: I don't lie!
- Harry: She means me! She's marrying me! *(Declan, Jo, Luke and Becca stop and stare, mouths agape. Harry takes a deep breath and then launches into an angry version of his prepared speech.)* I guess this is as good a time as any! Thanks for gathering, everyone. Aunt Jo, I like your scarf. Dad, you're bleeding on the carpet. Katya is my mail order bride. This is her sister, Eva, and all I know about her is that she likes Butterfingers and I'm pretty sure she was swearing at me in Russian on the way here. I expected you to be concerned hearing I was marrying a virtual stranger from another continent, but it appears you're more shocked that someone who looks like Katya would want someone like me. So, forgive me while I take a minute. I'm sorry, Katya. I'll be downstairs embalming a body.
- (Katya gasps. Harry exits to the hall.)*
- (A beat.)*
- Eva: *(To Luke.)* You have the Finger Butters?
- (End of Scene.)*

ACT ONE SCENE 5

Time: The same day, early evening.

Place: The funeral home.

Lights up. Declan and Jo sit in silence. Declan stares at his jigsaw puzzle. Jo flips through a book, on the sofa. Luke enters, from the hall.

Luke: I got them settled in. Nice girls, and extremely inquisitive. The older one is deeply interested in Sir Wilfred Laurier.

Jo: You're sure you don't mind sleeping on the sofa?

Luke: Of course not. Harry still hasn't come up?

(Declan and Jo shake their heads.)

Well, we sure screwed that up.

Declan: The kid surprised the hell out of us. Showing up with two hot Russian sisters.

Jo: Hot? Declan, you're old enough to be their father.

Declan: Well, I'm not their father. I assume their father is Russian.

Luke: I don't even understand how this happened. When was Harry in Russia?

Jo: He must have gone over in May, when we thought he was at the embalmers conference.

Declan: Why keep it such a secret?

Jo: Because you would have made fun of him?

Declan: I would have gone with him!

Jo: Oh, Declan!

Declan: To translate! I did a little Russian in school. *(Beat.)* Did a little Italian too, until her brother chased me off with a baseball bat.

Jo: Oh, for God's sake. That's your contribution at a time like this? Your son needs help, Declan!

Declan: He looked like he was doing alright to me. I should be asking him for help.

Luke: What are we going to do?

Jo: We have to talk to him. He has to know something about this isn't right.

Declan: Isn't it a little too soon to judge?

Jo: If it looks like a duck, walks like a duck, quacks like a duck, it's probably a duck. And, in this case, the duck is a pretty young blonde marrying Harry to get citizenship.

Declan: I don't know. Maybe it's not. She seems like a real sweet girl.

Luke: Very sweet. Very pretty.

Jo: Too pretty. No one that pretty is going to marry Harry.

Luke: Aunt Jo!

Jo: We were all thinking it! You know I love Harry, but the girls aren't exactly beating down the door.

Luke: Poor Harry.

Declan: Well, Luke got all the looks...Harry got all the...
(Jo and Luke wait for him to finish.)

Jo: Are you going to finish that sentence?

Declan: I'm trying to.

Luke: He's patient! He's kind. He's compassionate. Those are things women want.

Jo: Yes! They do...They just want them in a better body.

Luke: Aunt Jo!

Jo: I'm sorry!

Declan: She has a point. You know I love Harry like a son-

Luke: He is your son.

Declan: But, he hasn't ever been popular. I blame the fact that his two biggest interests are collecting action figures and carving wooden spoons-

Luke: Maybe she likes those things, too.

Jo: Come on, Luke! It all seems pretty unlikely. That woman and our little Harry?

Luke: Well-

Jo: Would you want to see his heart get broken?

Luke: No. Hell no.

Declan: Harry's not resilient. He's still getting over them cancelling Battlestar Galactica.

Jo: Then someone needs to talk to him and make sure he's going into this with his eyes open.

(*Beat.*)

Luke: I guess so.

Declan: Alright. (*Beat.*) Luke, talk to your brother.

Luke: Me? What about you?

Declan: That's not my thing.

Luke: We know. But don't you think, once in a while, a talk is called for?

Declan: No one does it like they used to. Used to be, if a man was about to do something stupid with his life, you'd sit him down, pour him a beer, and say "hey jackass, don't do that".

Luke: And then what?

Declan: That was it.

Luke: That was it? You call that a talk?

Declan: Yeah, I call that a talk.

Luke: And he'd listen?

Declan: He would or he wouldn't. But you said your piece and then you shut up and you drank your beer.

Luke: This isn't one of your fishing buddies, Dad. This is your son. Don't you want to dispense some fatherly wisdom?

Declan: I already gave him all the fatherly wisdom I have. The same thing my

father gave me. Get into the funeral business, you'll never be out of customers. *(Beat.)* Unfortunately, that hasn't helped him with the ladies.

Luke: No.

Jo: *(Hearing Harry approaching.)* Shhh!

(Harry enters from the hall. He goes straight to the desk and opens the laptop.)

Declan: *(To Luke, sotto.)* Here he is. You're up.

Jo: I'll be in the kitchen. I have a big pan to clean.

Declan: Wait up, Jo. That sounds like a two-man job.

(Declan claps Luke on the shoulder as he passes. Jo and Declan exit to the kitchen.)

Luke: Thanks a lot.

(Luke crosses to the desk.)

Hey, buddy.

Harry: Yeah?

Luke: You busy?

Harry: Well, I'm doing up these invoices, so-

Luke: *(Looking at the screen.)* You're just typing "this sucks" repeatedly into a Word document.

(Harry snaps the laptop screen shut. He moves to the couch. The kitchen door cracks open. Two cans of beer are slid through. Luke retrieves them and follows Harry to the couch. He hands Harry one of the cans.)

Okay, so you're mad.

Harry: Yep.

Luke: Justified. We were jerks, and I'm sorry, Harry. But, in our defense, you caught us a little off guard.

Harry: Because I have a girlfriend?

Luke: Harry, the last living thing you brought home was a sparrow that fell out

of a tree. The sudden fiancée was a bit of a shock.

Harry: Katya.

Luke: Right. Katya. I was hoping we could talk about that. I know we've never been big on heart-to-hearts in this family, especially not about this kind of thing...

Harry: That's an understatement. Dad's version of the talk was leaving the encyclopedia on my bed open to the page about reproduction.

Luke: I got a pamphlet from the Planned Parenthood clinic.

Harry: Oh. Well, that's not so bad. At least it probably had a phone number you could call if you had questions-

Luke: It was called "Understanding your Menstrual Cycle".

Harry: That must have been confusing.

Luke: Yeah. Anyway, maybe I should have played the big brother role better...taken you under my wing. To be honest, I never really thought of you that way, as being...interested in women.

Harry: You thought I was gay?

Luke: No. I guess I thought of you as sort of...asexual.

Harry: Like an amoeba?

Luke: Well, you're obviously not. You're clearly interested in women.

Harry: I'm very interested in them. They're just not usually all that interested in me. I'm sure that's a foreign concept to a guy like you.

Luke: Maybe in my glory days. God. You know what's equally unfair? No one tells you you're in your glory days at the time. You don't realize it until you're looking back. "Those were my freaking glory days".

Harry: I'd have done anything to trade places with you.

Luke: Really?

Harry: Sure. Captain of the slow pitch team. Runner-up prom king. Heck.

Luke: You were on the football team.

Harry: I was the secretary.

Luke: Well, you got a jersey.

Harry: Which they had to borrow from the junior high.

Luke: Well, good things come in small packages. You really sprouted up, though.

Harry: Yeah. Sure did.

Luke: High school. Well, those days are gone. And, I swear to you, I never realized how fast thirty-five would get here. And how I'd still feel seventeen, mentally. Every time I look in a mirror, I'm confused.

Harry: I know what you mean.

Luke: No you don't. You're a baby.

Harry: I'm not a baby! Besides, people age faster in small towns. Every guy I went to school with is married, with three kids and a Volvo.

Luke: You want that?

Harry: Sure. (*Beat.*) Well, not the Volvo. Look at me, I'm not manly enough to pull off a car that sounds like a lady's private bits.

Luke: If you want to know my opinion: you've got lots of time. You're a young man, Harry.

Harry: I just want what you have.

Luke: And what do I have?

Harry: A loving wife...a happy home?

Luke: Well, here's the thing about that, Harry. Things aren't always as they appear. A marriage can look a certain way to the people outside of it, but be a whole different thing inside. Hell, it can even look totally different to each of the people in it.

Harry: I don't follow.

Luke: Marriage isn't easy, Harry. And it's long (*Beat.*) Well, mine's not going to be-

Harry: I know marriage is hard. What do you mean yours-?

Luke: No, you don't. I know you've heard that statement before: "Marriage is hard." But you don't know it for real until you've tried it. (*Beat.*) That's when you realize that marriage isn't hard, it's goddamn near impossible.

Harry: Mom and Dad made it look effortless.

Luke: Yeah. They really set us up for a life of disappointment, didn't they?

Harry: Are you unhappy with Audrey?

Luke: That's a story for another day. (*Beat.*) Tell me, Harry. Why do you want to marry Katya?

Harry: You saw her. Wouldn't you want to marry her?

Luke: Um. Me? Well. Hell. I mean-

Harry: She's beautiful.

Luke: Yeah...If you like that tall, leggy, blonde thing-

Harry: I do!

Luke: Right. But, you know, that's just...appearance. You don't choose a wife based on appearance alone.

Harry: No.

Luke: So, tell me what you love about her.

Harry: Love about her? Well...everything, I guess...I mean...she's lovely...she's cheerful. She likes kittens a whole lot. Especially kittens in baskets. She sends me a picture of kittens in a basket at least once a week-

Luke: Okay...yeah. This is good. Kittens in baskets. What else?

Harry: Sometimes puppies in baskets.

Luke: Anything that doesn't have to do with baskets?

Harry: Well, yeah. I mean...obviously you can't build a marriage on that.

Luke: Obviously not.

Harry: No.

Luke: That would be absurd.

Harry: Of course it would.

Luke: So, then there are other things...Other reasons...

Harry: There would have to be.

Luke: Right. What are they? *(Harry stares. A long pause.)* Right. Harry-

Harry: How do you know? What is it that lets you know?

Luke: That you want to marry someone?

Harry: Yeah.

Luke: Well. I guess you...just feel better when they're around. Stronger. More...invincible.

Harry: Invincible.

Luke: Yeah. Like nothing could hurt you.

Harry: And you and Audrey have that?

Luke: Me and Audrey...me and Audrey...Audrey and me. *(Beat.)* No. We don't have it. *(He rubs his face.)* Truth is, Harry, Audrey left me. She's making someone else feel invincible now. Or, he might actually be invincible. I don't know. He's got the body of a God.

Harry: Audrey left you? *(Beat.)* Shit.

Luke: Shit, indeed.

(They both take a drink of beer. Harry gags, spraying beer.)

Harry: Ugh! This is awful!

Luke: Is that your first beer?

Harry: It's nothing like root beer! Why do they contain the same word?!

Luke: You've never had an actual beer?

Harry: I don't know why anyone would have this. It tastes like puddle water!

Luke: You haven't had a beer but you've had puddle water?

Harry: Not in a while. *(Beat.)* I can't believe about you and Audrey. I'm sorry. I thought she was a good person.

Luke: That's the thing, Harry. She is a good person. That's the trick about marriage. It isn't like baking – throw the right ingredients together and you get a beautiful cake. Sometimes you throw the right ingredients together and you get...a steaming pile of poop.

Harry: Gross.

Luke: Audrey and I seemed to make sense. We're both good people, I thought we wanted the same things.

Harry: You didn't?

Luke: Well, I didn't want Sensei Nathan, and Audrey seemed to want him very much.

Harry: Who?

Luke: Never mind. Just, trust me...you want to have more than just two good people. There's a... third element. Call it the baking powder. That's what makes it all work. And no one really knows how. But a pinch of that makes all the difference.

Harry: Baking powder?

Luke: Yeah.

Harry: How do you know if you have that?

Luke: I don't know, Harry. For that, you're going to have to ask the only guy I ever met that really had it.

Harry: Please say you're referring to some friend of yours.

Luke: Dad.

Harry: That's what I was afraid of. (*Beat.*) Have you ever had a talk like this with him? I mean, a serious talk?

Luke: With Dad? Hell no. Mom was the talker.

Harry: I still talk to her sometimes.

Luke: You too?

Harry: Is that weird?

Luke: Well, yeah. It's pretty weird. (*Beat.*) But, at least you're talking to

somebody, I guess. *(Beat.)* Well, ask her about marriage. Maybe she'll have an answer.

Harry: Oh, she doesn't answer back.

Luke: Thank God for that.

Harry: I mean, not out loud. Don't laugh...but sometimes it's like...I feel a response. Like, all of the sudden, I have... a feeling of peace, and then I know what to do.

Luke: Really?

Harry: Really.

(Beat.)

Luke: Well, that's some trippy shit right there.

Harry: Yeah.

Luke: You know the other person you need to talk to? Katya. You need to find out how she feels. Because you can feel all the magic in the world but, if she doesn't feel it in return...the thing isn't going to rise.

Harry: The marriage cake.

Luke: Right. You'll get a marriage crepe. And probably, later, a divorce.

(The brothers sit in silence for a moment.)

Harry: Thanks, Luke.

Luke: Don't mention it. But, hey, I'm curious. How did you even find out about this whole Russian bride thing?

Harry: I got a promotional email. Apparently they used their marketing algorithm on my internet searches and came to the conclusion I needed companionship.

Luke: Were you looking up pornography?

Harry: No! I was on a spoon carving forum.

(Beat.)

Luke: You do need companionship.

(Becca enters from the hall with her jacket and purse.)

Harry: Hey, Becca.

Becca: Hi.

Harry: You're here late.

Becca: My ride is coming. I'll just wait outside.

Harry: You okay? You look a little strange.

Becca: Yeah. That's me. Strange.

(Becca exits to outside. She sits on the bench. Harry shrugs.)

Harry: I'm going to go change out of this monkey suit. What should I wear? I've never really had to think about it before.

Luke: I don't know. What do you have?

Harry: Uh...a bunch of t-shirts with comic book characters on them...Oh - some cool cargo pants I got at Sears.

Luke: Cargo pants? You want her to think you're a carpenter? No. Come with me.

(Luke and Harry exit to the hall. A moment later, Eva enters from the hall. She has a pack of cigarettes. She crosses and exits to the garden. As she takes a cigarette out, she notices Becca.)

Eva: Oh. Hello, weird girl.

Becca: Hello.

Eva: Why you are out here alone?

Becca: I'm just waiting for my ride.

Eva: Why you are sad?

Becca: What? I'm not sad.

Eva: I know sad when I see sad. And there are only two reasons people are sad. Love and gambling debt. *(Beat.)* So, which one is it?

Becca: I don't gamble.

Eva: Then love.

Becca: I guess.

Eva: (*Sitting with her.*) What happened? Did your man get killed by the mob?

Becca: No.

Eva: Killed by assassins?

Becca: No.

Eva: Killed by the police?

Becca: No.

Eva: Then why do you cry?

Becca: I don't have a man.

Eva: Ah! You cry for a man you don't have!

Becca: One I don't have, but want...One who doesn't even see me.

Eva: He is blind?

Becca: Yes. (*Beat.*) Well, no. Not literally blind. I mean, he's far sighted.

Eva: And he cannot see you? Maybe you need to stand farther away.

Becca: No. I mean, he doesn't see me in that way...as a woman.

Eva: Oh. He ignore you. Well, then, you must a find way to get his attention.

Becca: I've tried that. I've rearranged my whole life to get his attention. But it's not working.

Eva: If not working, you are not doing it right.

Becca: Then what do I do?

Eva: Woman is complicated. Man is simple. Man loves what he needs. So, you must show him that he needs you. That you...solve his problems.

Becca: Solve his problems?

Eva: Yes. Then he will see you, weird girl.

Becca: It's Becca.

- Eva: And I am Eva. *(Beat.)* You mind if I smoke?
(Becca shakes her head. Eva offers a cigarette to her.)
- Becca: No, thank you. You shouldn't smoke. It'll kill you.
- Eva: I know. But so will being hit by subway train.
(They sit in silence a moment.)
- Becca: Is your sister marrying Harry?
- Eva: Katya. Mm. I think so, yes. She want very much to marry him and come here for living.
- Becca: Oh. Well, I don't blame her.
- Eva: Yes? You think Canada is best place on earth?
- Becca: I think this is the best place on earth right here. Gibson's.
- Eva: I hope you are right.
(Becca and Eva sit in silence a moment longer. A car horn is heard.)
- Becca: That's my ride. *(Beat.)* Thanks for listening. And for the advice. Um...Auf Wiedersehen.
(Becca exits off into the yard. Eva shrugs. She takes a photograph out of her pocket and looks at it. Declan enters the den from the kitchen with a pair of wire cutters in his mouth. He tries to wrap his hand in a bandage as he walks. He exits out to the garden, fumbling with the bandage.)
- Declan: God dammit.
- Eva: Hello.
- Declan: *(He takes the tool from his mouth.)* Oh. Hello. Anna, was it?
- Eva: Eva.
- Declan: Eva. Beautiful name.
- Eva: Thank you. Duck Man?
- Declan: Declan.
- Eva: Declan. Is okay I smoke here?

Declan: Doesn't bother me.

Eva: What happened to your hand?

Declan: Oh. This? That squirrel got me.

Eva: Why you hunt this animal? Is so small and bony. Why not you hunt the dog...or that big one with the horns. *(She mimes moose antlers.)*

Declan: Moose?

Eva: Yes. Moose. *(Beat.)* Why does moose have such big body on long, skinny legs? How does it not fall over?

Declan: I'm not sure. *(He moves his hand and winces.)* Ah! Dammit.

Eva: Let me see.

Declan: Aw, it's nothing.

Eva: Men always say is nothing. My father once come in the house carrying his own toe. He say "is nothing".

Declan: We don't want the fuss.

Eva: You do want the fuss. We fuss. You say "no, no, don't fuss." But then you moan and you wince and you groan and you bleed. So, we come back to you and we say "Let me look" and you say "no, no. Don't fuss." Repeat, repeat, repeat. If you really did not want the fuss, you would go bleed somewhere quietly in private.

Declan: Alright.

(Declan holds his hand out. As Eva takes his hand, they share a moment of eye contact.)

Eva: Is get infected. Not cleaned properly.

Declan: Can you fix it?

Eva: Yes, but will hurt.

Declan: Bah. Little pain don't bother- *(Eva presses on the wound. Declan shouts.)*
Ow!

Eva: I tell you. Is infected.

Declan: That damn squirrel.

Eva: You have steak?

Declan: Steak?

Eva: Steak.

Declan: What do you mean steak?

Eva: Steak. Steak. (*She mimes.*) Skinny wood thing... from tree.

Declan: Oh, a stick.

Eva: Yes. A steak

Declan: Why do we need a steak?

Eva: For biting.

Declan: You want me to bite down on a stick?

Eva: Is better. Or else you bite your tongue in half. That is not as good.

Declan: Oh, Jesus. How bad is this going to hurt?

Eva: Hand is very infected. Also, small tooth inside.

Declan: There's a tooth in there? From the squirrel?

Eva: I would guess yes. Unless you have another reason there might be small tooth inside your hand.

Declan: Little bastard!

Eva: So. (*Pronouncing it carefully*) stick?

Declan: Yes, out back, lots of sticks.

Eva: And do you have vodka?

Declan: Vodka? Yeah. We have some in the kitchen. To clean the wound?

Eva: No, for me. I like vodka.

Declan: Oh. Well, sure. I'll get you some vodka. (*Beat. Declan notices the photo which has fallen.*) You dropped your photo. (*He picks it up.*) Cute kid. He's yours?

- Eva: That is Dmitri.
- Declan: Let me guess. About nine?
- Eva: He is eight years old. Very tall for age.
- Declan: And his father?
- Eva: Yes. He is tall too.
- Declan: I mean, he's around? You're married?
- Eva: Oh, no. No. We never marry. He is...what is English word? In Russia we say "kozel" (*kai-zohl*) (*Translation: an insult.*)
- Declan: I'm not sure...
- Eva: Like a...my English is not always good...It is the poop...the butt...the...oh! "Asshole"! (*Beat.*) That is what you say, yes?
- Declan: Asshole. Yes. We say that.
- Eva: Means hole in butt, right?
- Declan: Yeah. That's what it means alright.
- Eva: Yes. That's him.
- Declan: I understand.
- Eva: But, Dmitri does not take after him. Dmitri is good boy. Very nice and very strong. He comes up to here on me. (*She holds her hand to her chin.*) And he knows so many things. Reads so many books. He is smart boy. Much smarter than me. I try to teach him to be a good man. Not to drink, or to get into trouble with the law...like his father, the asshole. Is hard, you know, without a father around for the...model role. So I show him American television programs and I say "be like this, Dmitri." You be just like the Fresh Prince, Bel Air. Then you will be a success. And I know he will. He will grow to be such a good man, because he is smartest and kindest boy with best heart- (*She notices him grinning at her.*) What? You are staring at me. I have something on my face?
- Declan: There's nothing more lovely than a mother's pride for her son. (*He rakes his hand through his hair, forgetting it's injured.*) Ow. Damn it.
- Eva: Let's go find the stick, and I will fix your hand. It will be like brand new, I

promise.

Declan: Thank you.

Eva: And, if not, you can get one of those hooks. Is very useful.

Declan: Well, I guess that's a solid plan B.

Eva: So, why you want so badly this squirrel? Is delicacy in Canada?

(Declan and Eva exit off into the yard. Luke enters the den from the hall. He sees he's alone and crosses to the portrait. He stands looking up at it. After a moment:)

Luke: Hello? Can you hear me? *(He stares a moment.)* It's me, Luke. I guess, if you're there...or there *(He looks up to the heavens)* you know who it is, huh? Oh God. Am I really doing this? *(Pause.)* I miss you, Mom. I wish you were still here. Truth is, I'm having a rough go. Audrey left me. You probably saw that coming. I'm about to become a statistic. 35 and divorced. And, Dad. Well, I'm worried about Dad. I'm worried about Harry, too. See what happens when you leave us to our own devices? It all goes to hell. Sorry. Heck. It'd sure be great if you could shine some light on all of this. Some kind of guardian angel action. Maybe send us some fairy dust or heaven sprinkles or whatever it is you've got up there. I could sure use it. A sign. An arrow. "Go this way". "This is the right way to go". Whatever you can swing. *(Beat.)* Jesus. I'm talking to a photograph.

(He turns away. There is a frantic scream from the hall, startling him. He screams. Katya enters in a rush.)

Katya: Where is Eva?

Luke: Katya? What happened?! Why are you screaming?

Katya: *(Calling.)* Eva!

Luke: Are you okay?

Katya: No. I am not okay! There is *dead* man in basement! Get out of my way! I am taking my sister and getting out of this hole of hell!

(End of Act One.)