

BANSHEES

by Daniel Kessler

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SPACETIME

The Middle of Nowhere, Maine, on the shores of a fictional lake called Wabanaki.

Along these shores live fifty-two parents and children, a police force of three, and a gas station attendant.

No one quite knows whether the lake has been here all along, or if long ago, somebody dug a hole and left it for the nearby river to fill.

CHARACTERS

MELON
DIEGO
KENZIE

who saw the rainbow, having no words to describe it
who dug a hole and leaned in
who learned to dance, but never quite walked

SCENE

*In the urban landscape, this yard would house birds from tens of miles around.
But here on the lakeshore, it's just your ordinary backyard.
Although this past weekend, the yard did gain some assorted boxes,
which have taken new forms, like "pantry" or "bed," or "kitchen table" and so on.
Perhaps lying around are things that could go Boom or Bang—but never do.
There's also a cooler filled with booch. And a myriad of buckets for who-knows-what.
All-in-all, this yard is something of a living room.*

NOTATIONS

<i>/</i>	the next line starts, overlaps
<i>beat</i>	a moment of any kind
<i>pause</i>	a moment of stillness
<i>silence</i>	a moment of breath

ORDINARY MAMMALS

The Lakeshore, early evening

*It's fireflies and grasshoppers and turkey vulture season, and the air is
abuzz with the nonsense of the living world.*

*Miles away kids hit trees with dry logs, having learned in a documentary that Bigfoot
communicate that way.*

*Four blocks away, a gas station attendant reads a magazine that he stole from the other
gas station.*

*Maybe two blocks away, the commuter rail is passing by on its first
evening round—and the distant tracks shriek.*

*Or the neighbor's kid is practicing his guitar in rock 'n roll mode,
and the amp overloads into a high-pitched scream.*

*Present are two twenty-somethings in hot black formalwear, hiked up at
every possible sleeve and slouch.*

*A third twenty-something wears a mostly dried-off wetsuit, with oversized
headphones covering most of her face. She shuffles through some of the
many boxes, organizing and cataloguing. She has a notebook of sorts.
And a check system of her own design.*

*Melon sits statuesque with two metal buckets, transferring river clams
from one to the other. When she finds one unworthy, she tosses it to the
water—or to some bush or other—before inspecting another.*

*While the galaxies move at an unknown pace, Diego reclines on a make-
shift lounge—some crates and some pillows, or other found objects—and
wiggles his naked toes.*

*He is a child on the playground of the unknown, and can't look away.
Pretty soon, neither can Melon.*

*Eventually, Diego realizes that he won't be discovering the secrets of the
universe. At least not this go around. So he starts picking sock threads
from beneath his toenails. Until this too is lost in the nonsense.*

*Maybe he's distracted by a bird or a bee. Or a feeling that he can't quite
shake.*

He almost removes his jacket, but thinks better of it.

A solemn, hopeful anticipation:

DIEGO

This summer, I'm gonna smoke dope and watch the sun rise. I'm gonna cover myself in dirt. And I'm gonna howl at the moon. *(He considers howling at the moon.)* Come on. "This summer I'm gonna bake a cake. This summer I'm gonna fly a kite."

Long pause.

MELON

This summer, I'm taking everything I hate. And I'm putting it in a box.

DIEGO

This summer I'm gonna ride the bus. Have you ridden the bus?

MELON

There is no bus.

DIEGO

There's a bus on Patterson.

MELON

Where does it go?

DIEGO

It's been there twenty years.

MELON

Probably goes nowhere.

DIEGO

This summer, I'm going Nowhere. And I'm doing nothing at all...

Long beat.

DIEGO

People who pop their gum. People who only go out on weekends. People whose favorite color is blue. Come on. Tell me everything you hate.

MELON

What. Now?

DIEGO

Open the box.

Long pause.

MELON

You know what Dingus says?

DIEGO

Dingus says the cashier at 7-11 is the reincarnation of Steve Jobs. And that tacos, in every case, taste better on Tuesdays... Which in retrospect might be true.

MELON

He says the lake goes deeper than the San Andreas Fault.

DIEGO

Don't take the open ones.

MELON

I know which ones to take.

Beat.

DIEGO

You ever know someone who actually touched the bottom?

MELON

Dad did.

DIEGO

Well sure. Obviously. He was a scuba instructor. I imagine most scuba instructors can touch the bottom of most American lakes.

*As MacKenzie continues shuffling through objects, and making anonymous piles of sheer categorical significance—Melon sees something that catches her eye—a glossy-covered book—and she pilfers it.
Then life continues.*

DIEGO

This summer, I'm gonna meet a girl from Mars. I won't be able to pronounce her name. Not without her laughing... But in cute kind of way. Like a Martian kind of way...

MELON

I bet all the crunches have given Kenzie a six-pack.

DIEGO

She'll have big Martian buck teeth. And big purple lips.

MACKENZIE

I'm getting hard just thinking about it.

DIEGO

We'll get married right here.

MELON

In my back yard?

DIEGO

On the lake. Like either of us can afford a church. Martians don't use currency.

Diego considers this fact deeply.

MELON

Monsoons.

DIEGO

Maine doesn't get monsoons.

Beat.

DIEGO

Okay. Why monsoons.

MELON

They sweep everything away. Then Oxfam comes in and they round up what's left. And they give everybody Easy Mac and space blankets.... Then just like that... Poof... No more Easy Mac. No more space blankets.

Silence.

DIEGO

People from Jersey.

Pause.

DIEGO

I don't like them. I never have.

Pause.

To the almost-dark-enough-to-be-starry night:

DIEGO

I hate monsoons...

MELON

Shut up.

Melon takes a swig of hooch. She offers to Diego, who shakes it away.

Silence.

MELON

You know they make DVD's now. For the ones who couldn't be there. Next-day delivery.

DIEGO

Where's the camera go?

MELON

They probably put it in a tree.

DIEGO

They cut down the trees.

MELON

Did not.

DIEGO

There was a fungal infection.

MELON

So who all was there?

DIEGO

The gas station guys. The pharmacy guys. The tree guys came, but Ted's got a cold.

MELON

I like Ted. He always had this... lumbering kindness.

DIEGO

I like him too... Remember when... No, I don't think you were there...

Pause.

MELON

Well that's about the whole town.

DIEGO

Yup.

MELON

What'd you say?

DIEGO

To Kenzie?

MELON

When you got up there. You did speak.

DIEGO

Don't you want to watch the DVD? They say the camera makes you gain ten pounds.

MELON

It's not funny.

DIEGO

You seemed to think so. I looked like an idiot, standing up there by myself. I'm not his son.

MELON

So did you talk to her?

DIEGO

No.

MELON

You know she hasn't said a word since you got here.

DIEGO

And here I was thinking she'd lost her voice in the war.

MELON

No story there?

DIEGO

Nope.

MELON

What'd you say?

DIEGO

Nothing.

MELON

What do you mean. Like, she said something nasty?

DIEGO

Nothing like that. At the funeral, she just said Hey.

MELON

And you said—

DIEGO

I didn't have anything to say.

MELON

So... She's giving you the silence treatment... Because you gave *her* the silent treatment.

DIEGO

Probably.

MELON

You know how juvenile that sounds. I mean... This is a complete waste of our adult time.

*MacKenzie senses that she's being spoken about.
So she turns and sees Diego looking her way.
Diego gives Mackenzie a thumbs up.
MacKenzie looks to Melon, who gives her a thumbs up.
Kenzie gives a thumbs up to Melon and smiles awkwardly.
Melon does a "Rosie the Riveter."
Kenzie smiles and goes about her important work.*

DIEGO

So the point is... People showed up. He was the pope. You live in a place so long and people start to notice. *(Pause)* There was this one kid...

MELON

Tell me.

DIEGO

This one kid. He kept popping his gum. I think he was in Dad's class.

MELON

It was nice of him to show up.

DIEGO

You could tell he didn't want to be there.

MELON

Shitty kids and shitty parents. What'd Aunt Jenna wear?

DIEGO

I don't remember.

MELON

I bet it was something skimpy. I bet it wasn't even black.

DIEGO

Oh. And the Father couldn't be there.

MELON

What do you mean... the Father couldn't be there...

DIEGO

He was sick last minute. He got what the tree guys got. They got Edward to do it.

Beat.

Melon goes ever so slowly up to Diego, nudges her head into him.

MELON

I thought you wanted me to watch the DVD.

Pause.

Not even caring anymore, Melon chucks away another clam.

DIEGO

You keep throwing them away we won't have any left for dinner.

MELON

You know we have to slow roast these right?

DIEGO

So what are we having for dinner?

MELON

I dunno. Ask Kenzie.

Beat.

DIEGO

Hey. Forget the clams. Let's go over to the diner and tell ghost stories to middle school kids.

MELON

Why would we do that?

DIEGO

Tradition.

MELON

We don't have that tradition.

DIEGO

We don't have any traditions...

MELON

How about the lake. I bet Dingus was right. I bet it does go deeper than the San Andreas Trench.

DIEGO

Gas station attendants aren't known for their book smarts.

MELON

It's not like there's a plethora of places to work... "Lake Wabanaki: step away from your sweaty-smelly days cutting down trees and digging holes in the dirt. Come see our illustrious public library, formerly an outhouse. And come fish in our pristine waters, where there's a

catch limit of six pounds a year, and half the time you just pull up old braces covered in who-knows-that.”

Beat.

MELON

Wouldn't it be funny if it turned out he was the only one who saw things how they are?

DIEGO

I would shoot myself in the mouth.

MELON

There's a tradition I can get behind.

DIEGO

A tradition's something you do all the time. Or on special occasions. Like something you repeat. That's like calling a back yard a tradition. Just cause it's there when you're doing all that stuff, the stuff you do every day... This summer, I'm start start a tradition. You can be a part of it, too. If you want.

Long pause.

MELON

Bet you couldn't touch the bottom if you tried.

DIEGO

Bet I couldn't.

Beat.

DIEGO

What.

MELON

You've never said that before. You always say... well I don't know... I guess we didn't always communicate with words.

DIEGO

You're talking about when we were six. And I had ask Siri to translate my Spanish into Spanglish.

MELON

Siri wasn't around back then.

DIEGO

Siri always was and always will be.

Beat.

DIEGO

I bet you couldn't touch the bottom if you were wearing full scuba.

Melon smiles, just a little.

MELON

Bet you couldn't do it if you were being chased by a bear.

DIEGO

That doesn't make any sense.

MELON

Bears are excellent swimmers.

They chuckle, each in their seemingly anonymous ways.

DIEGO

She could use some help sorting through that crap.

MELON

It's not mine to go through. Better to have an impartial party. *(Pause)* What story would you tell them? The middle school kids.

DIEGO

I'd tell them about the lake

Beat.

MELON

Once upon a time, a little girl in France dropped a fish bowl in a river. And from that river the fish bowl floated until it deposited its contents into this very lake. Then next thing you know, people are pulling up goldfish the size of tricycles. Then next thing you know, they're gone, just like that. All the fish. And the mosquitoes. The birds are gone and next thing you know, the people you love are gone. One by one. Winter by winter. Until there's nothing left but us.

DIEGO

Well don't tell them *that...*

MELON

Come on. Tell me a story. Pretend I'm a middle school kid.

DIEGO

Well long ago... It was an evening like this. The whole lake was lit up with fireflies and shit. It was beautiful.

MELON

That's how you describe something beautiful?

DIEGO

Yeah.

MELON

No, no, you gotta say, “the lake was pristine. The fireflies had this aura.” You use words like *aura* and *pristine*. You don't just say it was all lit up and shit, and cause of that it was a beautiful night.

DIEGO

I apologize for my misstep.

MELON

It's okay.

DIEGO

Just don't do it again.

MELON

Please.

DIEGO

Well legend tells that on a night like that. Or like this. A great tragedy occurred. And it left behind a darkness that to this day lingers.

Pause.

MELON

Dude.

DIEGO

Okay. How far should I back up.

MELON

YOU START AT THE BEGINNING.

DIEGO

I was getting to that part.

MELON

Did you really ace your final exams?

DIEGO

Not all of them.

MELON

Dingus... (Beat) So. Once upon a time. Many generations ago. There was a civilization here, along the shores of this very lake. Libraries and tapestries. And heartbreaking music... They invented corn dogs. And popcorn. They were the first true Americans. Then over the years some other folks came. The French from Quebec. The Puritans from...wherever... And with sheer numbers they pushed the people deeper and deeper. Into the woods. And one by one, winter by winter, they stepped into the lake and made it their home.

*MacKenzie has by this point removed her headphones,
and continues where Melon left off.*

MACKENZIE

And to this day they live there. Awake in the dark. Waiting for their time to rise again... And sometimes... On nights like this... You hear them calling on the lake... Warning you of a coming darkness. *Portending* it... Or beckoning you toward your death.

*From the distance, the sound that started off the play.
Maybe the shriek from the local train tracks.
Or the scream of a high school kid's overloaded guitar amplifier.
But for whatever reason, Diego and MacKenzie remain unphased.
While Melon, for whatever reason, completely freaks out, recoils.
Before silently, in the background, gaining courage to face the Unknown.*

DIEGO

That's sirens. Banshees warn you about what's about to happen. People who are about to die. Or people who just did. It's a war-time thing. Or a tragedy thing. Like in Shakespeare.

MACKENZIE

There are different kinds.

DIEGO

Hey Melon, did you know Kenzie's a witch now?

MACKENZIE

It's called wicca.

MELON

Well this summer, I'm gonna steal a sub. Like one of those little one-person ones they use at the university... I'm gonna put it in a big white truck. Unmarked. And I'm gonna drive it right down here... And I'm gonna meet those banshees on the bottom of the lake... And I'm gonna become their fucking queen.

Silence.

MELON

Give me a beer.

DIEGO

Yes, my Queen.

*He uncaps one and hands it over. She drinks.
MacKenzie watches.*

DIEGO

You want one?

MACKENZIE

No, thank you.

Long beat.

MACKENZIE

This summer... I'm gonna take a nap so long I wake up on the other side.

DIEGO

I bet dead people are funny as shit.

MELON

They must see so much. Forwards and backwards... We probably look ridiculous.

DIEGO

Speak for yourself.

MELON

It's like how you're always wanting to take a step back from your life. So you can see it for what it is. I bet that's what it's like.

DIEGO

If it was me, and I was gonna off myself, I wouldn't leave a note. I'd do what he did. Take off one winter night. I'd hop in my dingy and no one would ever hear from me again.

MELON

Where'd you go?

Diego considers it, does not answer.

MACKENZIE

I'd go somewhere nobody would know me.

Long beat.

MACKENZIE

I never want to see Mrs. Studebaker again.

DIEGO

Why's that?

MELON

There was this bugger in her nose. It was... hanging... I don't know. It seemed uncouth...

Long beat.

MELON

Well... with a name like Studebaker...

DIEGO

Did you watch from the parking lot?

MELON

What makes you say that?

DIEGO

Eh, I'm waiting for the DVD. I can't wait. Mumble mumble mumble. Everybody's crazy but me.

MELON

You just want me to buy a house.

DIEGO

You should buy a house. For you. Somewhere far away where they serve margaritas out of coconut shells with little umbrellas in them.

MACKENZIE

Gross.

DIEGO

You have no class. Either of you.

MELON

I have a house.

DIEGO

It's the house you grew up in. It doesn't count.

MELON

Well I've already been to Europe.

MACKENZIE

I've been to Europe, too.

DIEGO

Like Europe's the first thing people do when they get their inheritance.

MELON

Probably most people.

DIEGO

When are you gonna be done?

MELON

Gimme a hand, it'd be faster.

DIEGO

The main thing now is to stay conscious. Because if I slip into unconsciousness on an empty stomach... Who knows what I'll be when I wake up?

MELON

You should have filled up at the after-party.

DIEGO

It was all vegetarian.

MACKENZIE

Poor Diegs and his empty carnivorous tummy... You know we're like... surrounded by pantry items, right?

MELON

The pizza place closes at seven.

DIEGO

Fine then. Chinese... What's in the boxes?

MELON

You were the one doing the packing.

MACKENZIE

And by the way. Pretty terrible job.

MacKenzie holds up a loofa in one hand, a chisel in the other.

MACKENZIE

Same box.

DIEGO

So sue me. I've never had to pack up a dead guy's things before.

MACKENZIE

Okay, Dad. Mom. I'm going back to my important work...

MacKenzie throws on her headphones, dissolves to the world.

Melon tosses another one back.

Diego almost rebuts—but once again, he is too late.

Beat.

MELON
Everybody thinks he killed himself.

Pause.

DIEGO
Not everybody thinks that.

MELON
You think it.

DIEGO
They classified it as an accident.

MELON
And how does Diego classify it?

DIEGO
Look, you've had a long day. And I'm ten miles away from accomplishing my summer goal of doing absolutely nothing.

MELON
“Think of the insurance money, Melon. Think of the pretty house.”

DIEGO
You should. You should sell this house and take the money and get as far away from this place as you can.

MELON
Because I don't belong.

DIEGO
Because you belong in a lab coat halfway to the bottom of the sea. You belong in San Diego, or in Sydney, or in China, I don't know.

MELON
So what do you think happened?

DIEGO
You don't want to know what I think.

MELON
Yes, I do... Please. I promise not to be mad.

Long beat.

DIEGO

I believe your Dad was disturbed, and he was sad. And yes, I believe he did. I believe the reason no one can prove it is that he didn't want anybody to prove it. Because you're right. He's not stupid. But most of all he's not the kind of guy to go showing off his corpse to his next-of-kin, and he's not the kind of guy to make you live with what *he* did.

Pause.

DIEGO

If you go out there—if you go out there—you better be prepared to find exactly what you're looking for. Because knowing you... you will.

Beat.

DIEGO

What do you want me to say?

MELON

You're a coward.

DIEGO

I'm trying to help you.

MELON

How could you believe them. That man was a father to you.

DIEGO

You said you weren't going to be mad.

MacKenzie sees that some shit is going down. And once again, to her own beguilement, she removes her headphones.

MELON

When Daddy Diegs got thrown in some Salvadorian prison and Mama Diegs was on her knees cleaning some guy's golden-rimmed toilet for ten cents an hour, Baby Diegs was here, in this house, in that room right over there.

DIEGO

I know how the story goes... And you're telling it wrong, by the way.

MELON

Because one man, one loving and extremely good person, took him in and gave him clothes to wear. Gave him food to eat. And a childhood. The kind with museums. And Disney Lands. And baseball cards and Halloweens and cotton candy—

DIEGO

Yeah and without him I bet I'd be a real fuck-up, huh. Drink myself to death like my old man. And who knows. Maybe like my old ma, too.

MELON

I never—

DIEGO

You implied it.

MELON

I said that he gave you everything he possibly could. And here you are in a position to give something back and you spit right in his face.

DIEGO

He spit on everything he was given and here I am trying to give him a SHRED of dignity, and not unearth what will quickly become a public affair.

MELON

It's already a public affair.

DIEGO

It's a town of fifty-two people, Melon. Everything, and I mean everything, could be considered a public affair.

MELON

Fifty-two, that's right, not fifty-one, or fifty, or ninety-nine, and you're proving my point.

*Diego shakes his head, confused, at her mention of "ninety-nine."
Melon then realizes, too, that it didn't make any sense.
But Whatever, they say to themselves.
The moment is gone.
Beat.*

MELON

You know there's one every year, right? Somebody goes missing, and they don't come back. Nobody talks about it.

DIEGO

The only reason people are talking about it is cause you put in an ad for a private detective.

MELON

Seems like a logical thing to do when someone goes missing.

DIEGO

It's the local paper. You know we don't have detectives in Wabanaki.

MELON

MacKenzie's kind of a detective.

MACKENZIE

Sherlock Holmes is my favorite book.

DIEGO

You know it's multiple books right?

*Melon takes a chug. Diego holds out his hand for a pass-off.
So she drinks every last drop.*

DIEGO

Well that's it then.

MELON

Just like that.

DIEGO

It's not just like that.

MELON

HE IS OUT THERE, ALONE, WITH NOBODY TO TURN TO.

DIEGO

And how do you know that? Can you prove it?

MELON

Of course I can.

DIEGO

How.

MELON

Well not now... Obviously...

DIEGO

You know you sound crazy.

MELON

I shouldn't sound crazy to you... I can sound crazy to the whole wide world. I can look like a fucking loon dancing in the rainwaters of the god damn apocalypse, and you should believe me because that's what family does. And we're family whether you like it or not. And so is he.

Silence.

MACKENZIE

I believe you.

DIEGO

What?

MACKENZIE

What you said. About how it happened. I believe you... And if Diego doesn't help you, I will.

DIEGO

You are both insane.

MACKENZIE

Why don't you ask me. Ask me why I believe her.

DIEGO

Why do you believe her?

Beat.

MACKENZIE

Melon, did I ever tell you the story of Jimmy Tae? It was the sixth grade. We were in the same homeroom.

MELON

I don't think so.

DIEGO

Oh... Here we go...

MACKENZIE

Well there was this boy, named Jimmy Tae. He got really sick.

DIEGO

You were in love with an Asian kid?

MACKENZIE

Love does not discriminate.

MELON

Cruel mistress that she is.

MACKENZIE

So in the sixth grade there was Jimmy. And Jimmy had these blue eyes like a lake of ice. And when he looked at you, you felt ten miles colder.

DIEGO

Doesn't make sense.

MACKENZIE

He was the best at math. But not because he was Asian. It was because his father was a rocket scientist. And his mother was a surgeon. Together, they were like the two coolest parents ever. And they were destined to be.

DIEGO

This is where it gets a little funky.

MACKENZIE

One day, Jimmy Tae didn't show up for school. I knew because I sat behind him in pre-algebra. His hair was so slick and black. I wanted to fuck it.

DIEGO

Told you.

MACKENZIE

But the kids were talking. All they were saying was, "Jimmy's dead. Jimmy's dead." But I didn't believe them. I couldn't believe their lies. So at lunch I got on the bus and I went to the hospital.

DIEGO

Knowing of course which hospital he'd be at.

MACKENZIE

And which floor, and which room. Jimmy and I had a connection that surpassed space.

DIEGO

And apparently time.

MACKENZIE

It was a gray door with nothing on the front. It had no number and there was no clipboard hanging on it, so I went inside, knowing he'd be there. You never mark the drawers containing your most prized of jewels. That's how things get stolen.

Jimmy had tubes down his throat, and he was drenched in sweat. His eyes were closed and he was shaking. He looked like a dog you just picked up from the side of the road. I could hear his voice in my head. Telling me to reach out to him. I knew he could hear me, too.

Just then I felt it. A presence. Divine intervention. Time stopped, all wars and epidemics and sick days and football games. Taco Tuesdays and the clothes you forgot to take out of the dryer. To Hell with designer jeans... I held my hands over him. I touched his little white-blue gown. Just over the heart... And just then a light poured out. An incredible, burning light. And it was the most pain I ever felt... The kind that makes you want to give up living... Suffering. Divine suffering.

And there I was, screaming. I could feel my hair burning, my whole body. Everything was falling off. My nose. My tongue. My lips. And there with no eyes, I could see nothing... And just when I was almost completely liquid, I sensed him.

Reaching. Pulling me back. And not with my hand, but with some presence, I reached back to him. And he pulled me from the darkness and into the light.

DIEGO

I don't remember that part...

MACKENZIE

And then there, in the hospital room... We had this incredible sex.

DIEGO

This part I remember.

MACKENZIE

It was meant to be.

MELON

What happened to him? What happened to Jimmy?

MACKENZIE

Jimmy? ... Oh, he died. Not from that, of course. Years later he was hit by a truck.

MELON

Trucks do not discriminate.

MACKENZIE

I could heal you too, Diegs.

MELON

Yeah, come on Diegs. Let her heal you.

DIEGO

And her arrival heralded a new dawn. A dawn of peace and acceptance. Of humanity coming into its own after those awkward teenage years...

MACKENZIE

So as I was saying...

DIEGO

I know a guy from the Bible who performs miracles.

MACKENZIE

I don't even know why I try. He doesn't want to have a conversation. He doesn't—

MELON

I know... I know... He's very / immature—

DIEGO

You know I'm right here...

MACKENZIE

So as I was saying. It was a miracle. The miracle of friendship... I'm your friend, Melon. Diego is too. In his unique way. Whatever you need. However I can help you... I'm here for you.

They embrace, in something of a fearful glance backwards at their lives.

DIEGO

You make these plans for how you want your life to go. You practice. And you prepare. You buy nice things so when nice things happen to you, you can put them on and go outside. And people will see how nice you feel. And wish they felt the same... Then one day something happens that makes it completely and irrefutably impossible for you to achieve your dream. And you say Fuck the Dream. Fuck the Plan. You find a new Dream. You make a new Plan. And you know what else? ... You look at it long enough and you realize that's what life is. Relentlessly, again and again. You plan and you plan. And then your plans change. But people don't change. People will never change. (Pause.) Melon I have always been your friend. And I will always be your friend. And if there's one thing I want you to know right now. Beyond any doubt. Is that I will always act in your best interest. And when I tell you something and it sounds like I'm just trying to shoot you down. It's not that at all. I just want you to be happy. And I think sometimes that means being honest with people you love.

MACKENZIE

You're not always honest with the people you love?

DIEGO

No. Obviously not.

Beat.

MELON

My dad was always telling me how great I was. He was always saying how he liked my hair like that. Or he heard me singing in the shower, and he thought I should join the church choir... I wish those things were true.

DIEGO

Were they?

MELON

You tell me.

DIEGO

Well not if he was talking about your hair in a bun. It looks really ugly in a bun.

Quietly, methodically, Melon leaves.

DIEGO

Wait—hey... MELON. I'M KIDDING. *(Pause)* Could you get one with pepperoni?

Beat.

MACKENZIE

It's called being a friend, asshole.

DIEGO

You're getting her excited over nothing. She didn't even go to his FUNERAL, Kenzie. She really believes he's out there. Doing what? What's so important that he would disappear for an entire year and not a single word.

Silence.

MACKENZIE

It doesn't matter if she's right or wrong. You're her best friend and you're supposed to be helping her.

DIEGO

Helping her get herself killed?

MACKENZIE

IF THAT'S WHAT SHE WANTS, THEN YES.

DIEGO

Bullshit, like you believe that.

MACKENZIE

Sometimes the truth doesn't matter as much as you think it does, Diego.

DIEGO

The truth is literally the only thing that does matter. *(Beat)* Hey, what do you mean that the truth doesn't matter?

MACKENZIE

(She can't even look at him)

Sometimes, I literally cannot believe how stupid you are.

DIEGO

He's not out there.

MACKENZIE

And how would you know, sitting up on your high horse with a great nice view of the whole world wide and far.

Long beat. MacKenzie sees something.

MACKENZIE

Holy shit... *(Beat.)* You know something. *(Beat.)* You have to tell me.

DIEGO

You wanna know what he told me? He told me, "Every years, there's one. Just one."

Beat. Diego looks over the water.

DIEGO

One is all it takes.

MACKENZIE

Where do they go?

DIEGO

You think I asked him?

MACKENZIE

Why didn't you?

DIEGO

And what if *he* didn't know?... Besides, I don't wanna know. I don't wanna know where they go. Or who takes them. Or why. I wanna get the heck outta here. And I feel blessed knowing that wherever he went, this year, it's *him*. *He's* the One for this twelve-month block of time that I happen to be spending here on my back porch. This year it's not me. And this year it's not you, either.

Pause.

MACKENZIE

You have to tell Melon.

DIEGO

If I tell Melon, she'll think it's all part of the conspiracy.

MACKENZIE

Well isn't it?

DIEGO

And what if it was just his way of saying that he was gonna check out? What if he'd had enough and he trying to chock it up to some local legend.

MACKENZIE

Well I've never heard of it.

DIEGO

What if he was depressed because work wasn't going well? What if he was embarrassed because he couldn't find that stupid fish he's been spending a millennia looking for?

Pause.

DIEGO

What.

Pause.

MACKENZIE

The truth catches up with you, Diego... You're her *friend*.

DIEGO

I made a promise.

A long, cold, silent night of a pause.

MACKENZIE

You know where he is.

DIEGO

Of course I don't.

MACKENZIE

Is he alive?

DIEGO

How would I know that?

MACKENZIE

You know something. What do you know?

He doesn't budge a muscle. Not a blink. Not a single sweat of response.

MACKENZIE

Diego, I swear to God. You think you got it bad before. I will fucking end you.

Beat.

She almost breaks.

MACKENZIE

Who are you...

DIEGO

I'm the guy you left behind two years ago on your search for personal enlightenment. I'm the doorstep.

Long beat.

DIEGO

Melon was out.

MacKenzie stops, turns.

DIEGO

He was drinking. I was drinking. We were out by the water... We were talking about politics.

MACKENZIE

You don't know anything about politics.

DIEGO

I know, but listen.

MACKENZIE

What were you really talking about?

DIEGO

Please, I swear to God, we were talking about politics. And yes, you're right, I know nothing about it. It doesn't mean I can't talk about it.

MACKENZIE

Who's the vice president.

DIEGO

Some white guy with enormous, brilliantly white teeth who makes off-hand jokes and is lauded for the comedic relief he provides to an otherwise war-torn nation.

MACKENZIE

Woah.

DIEGO

Right?

MACKENZIE

The sheer detail of it.

DIEGO

It was Dad. Melon's Dad... I just sort of went along with it.

MACKENZIE

I bet you did.

DIEGO

You know to me he was just Jerry.

MACKENZIE

So you were two sitting out here.

DIEGO

Right. And he... he took off his watch. He never takes off his watch. He showers with it on. He sleeps with it on...

MACKENZIE

And then?...

DIEGO

And then he doesn't give it to me.

MACKENZIE

That's the story? He has this special thing, it's oh so special and... he doesn't give it to you?

DIEGO

Right.

MACKENZIE

WHAT KIND OF STORY IS THAT.

DIEGO

No. So he... He put it on the rock. Right there. And he told me...One day, I'd know when. I should give it to Melon. Cause it belongs to her.

MACKENZIE

What did he mean by that?

DIEGO

Cause it was his Dad's. Or... Melon's... Dad's... Dad's...

MACKENZIE

That's not what I mean.

DIEGO

You know her grandpa's like a chief, right? But they can still have, like, normal American family heirlooms.

MACKENZIE

DIEGO.

DIEGO

I mean just cause he's, like, Native American, it doesn't mean that whatever heirlooms he leaves his kids are gonna be, like, bird feathers or charms carved out of wood in the shape of bears and stuff.

MACKENZIE

Woah.

DIEGO

I feel kinda bad about that one... Yeah... I feel really bad about that one.

MACKENZIE

Yeah... I don't really think that cuts it in this case.

DIEGO

Every bit counts. As long as it's in search of something Right... You look back through history. At what defines a generation. You see how societies change, but how the secrets we keep, they stay the same. Not all of them, sure. But the ones we keep for us. Like wishes.

Long silence.

DIEGO

Change has always been. A long... Long... Process..... You can't blame people for trying what they know.

MACKENZIE

I hate war.

She falls back on some makeshift "something."

DIEGO

I know you do.

He drinks.

DIEGO

I mean when one side wins, and the other side loses. They both change. Like. Overnight, they change. Some people get bread. Some people get empty baskets... I mean what do you do with an empty bread basket?

MACKENZIE

You could wear it like a hat.

She falls back into something and lays there.

MACKENZIE

Or you could keep other things in it. Like vegetables. Or berries... Like Little Red Riding Hood.

DIEGO

This summer, I am going to kill you both.

MACKENZIE

I'm going to fucking eat you alive.

DIEGO

You first.

MACKENZIE

Why don't you get me a drink.

DIEGO

No.

MACKENZIE

Excuse me?

DIEGO

I'm trying not to encourage.

MacKenzie gets her own beer.

MACKENZIE

So 90% of the people adapt... And 10% of them don't... Let's talk... Mexican-American war.

MELON

Well are those the right percentages?

MACKENZIE

I don't think so. But let's talk 10%. That last 10%. Those are the ones who become radicals. And it's hard to kill radicals.

MELON

Radicals bleed just like everybody else. Look at John Lennon.

MACKENZIE

John Lennon wasn't a radical. John Lennon was a Beetle.

Melon does something. She starts playing with something. Needlessly. Tediously.

MACKENZIE

Radicals believe. If you believe enough, you can do anything. The problem with the 90% thinking they're right all the time is there's nothing for them to fight against. Except the other 10%. And they'll never be a threat. So why bother trying? ...

Beat.

DIEGO

You know what happened the first time a guy was tramping through the jungle and he found a guy who looked nothing like him?

MACKENZIE

(Entranced) Tell me.

DIEGO

He introduced himself... However he knew how. And the other did the same... And one of them, he brings the other guy home. He introduces him to his family, and he feeds him dinner. Then in the middle of the night he clubs him on the back of the head and he puts a rope around his neck... Now thousands of years later we're arguing about whether it's good enough that somebody *tries* to do different than what he was taught. Because he *sees* that it's wrong, and he knows that's what he was told. It's just gonna hurt people worse... And right now in this second, there's tens of thousand of people out there wearing ropes around their necks. Playing it cool in front of their kids, pretending they're necklaces or some crap. To make their kids feel good about themselves... And you tell me change happens fast. You make me sick.

He drinks.

DIEGO

When you see a problem, all you see is possibilities. I admire that about you. It's what makes you strong... But sometimes there is nothing you can do. And sometimes the best thing is to admit that to yourself so you don't end up wasting your life away searching for a rainbow that's never gonna rise... I want... You want... We all want—

MAKENZIE

Iced cream.

MELON

I could go for Double Dutch.

MACKENZIE

What is this, summer camp?

DIEGO

Am I wearing my pony tail?

MELON

I always thought pig tails were kinda slutty.

MACKENZIE

Yeah?

DIEGO

See. Like right now. I have no fucking clue.

MACKENZIE

You'd look good in pig tails. Wouldn't he look good in pig tails?

MELON

I think it'd make him look fat.

DIEGO

You know Melon's a quarter Abnaki.

MACKENZIE

I didn't know.

DIEGO

Her grandpa was a Chief. Isn't that right, Melon? (*To MacKenzie*) Means he's a real hard-ass.

MELON

I wouldn't know. Abnaki don't punish their children.

MACKENZIE

So how do they learn right and wrong?

MELON

They tell them stories. They believe stories have a life of their own. That they're aware of when you tell them, and how... There's this one story about a raccoon with so much pride that he challenges a waterfall to a shouting contest. When it doesn't reply, the raccoon dives into it, to shout at it from inside. I don't know what he's thinking. But the water carries him away... I guess that's supposed to say something about pride.

MACKENZIE

So you're Abnaki.

Beat.

MELON

No.

MACKENZIE

What was your Dad?

MELON

He is Abnaki.

MACKENZIE

So that makes you half.

MELON

My mother wasn't Abnaki. There are different tribes. Different rules. We had different languages.

MACKENZIE

So which kind are you?

MELON

I'm not any kind.

MACKENZIE

But your Dad was.

MELON

Your mother has to be.

MACKENZIE

But your Dad didn't believe that.

MELON

Of course he didn't. But he wasn't the chief.

MACKENZIE

He could have been. His dad was.

MELON

It doesn't work like that.

Beat.

MACKENZIE

That's really confusing.

MELON

You're Salvadorian. MacKenzie, she's a white girl. It's what you are and it's what she is. But me? What am I?

DIEGO

You're Asian.

MELON

Korean. And I'm only half.

DIEGO

And you're half Abnaki.

MELON

I am half Korean and I am half nothing at all. It sounds confusing. It's not.

Beat.

MACKENZIE

You notice how every year. It's usually at the start of the summer... Somebody goes missing.

DIEGO

No.

MACKENZIE

Yes, you did. We all knew it. We know it now. Where do you think they go?

DIEGO

They move away.

MACKENZIE

No one moves away. No one ever moves. If you move away you change your name.

DIEGO

Molly Heidelbergman moved away.

MACKENZIE

Okay, so one person.

DIEGO

Jillian Terrence. Mike Bethesda. Amy Richardson. Terry Redman.

MACKENZIE

OKAY, so a *few* people. But every year, someone goes *missing*, right? There are signs up in storefronts. And why does no one pay attention to it?

DIEGO

Enlighten me, Swami.

MACKENZIE

Because they're never *children*... Every time, it's... some librarian no one ever really had a conversation with, or... or a store clerk who everybody, and I mean *everybody*, disliked. Or one time, it was actually someone I really liked, it was... It was Rachel. You remember Rachel?

DIEGO

How could I forget.

MACKENZIE

She taught second grade.

DIEGO

You banged her.

MACKENZIE

Yeah, but not—not when she was my teacher, or anything.

DIEGO

EEW.

MACKENZIE

But, but she went missing. You remember.

DIEGO

... Yeah. I remember.

MACKENZIE

And no one knows where she went. They don't pick up their phones. They don't answer their emails. They don't... show up for work. And the last person to have seen them is Nobody... No one. No one's seen them. It's like they're wiped off the face of the earth. No broken door handles. No wireless bills. Everyone that was supposed to see them, they just... didn't.

DIEGO

Okay, I get it. Nobody sees them.

MACKENZIE

And eventually, somebody realizes that their gone. Like, for *good*. So they declare them dead. Or missing. But in the end they're always dead.

DIEGO

So where are the bodies.

Beat.

MACKENZIE

Excuse me?

DIEGO

If every year, somebody goes missing. And they're being... I don't know. Chopped up by a serial killer. Or maimed in a Satanic ritual. (*She puts up her hands in an "ubbbb"*) Where's the bodies?

Long beat.

MACKENZIE

You know what I heard?

Pause.

DIEGO

What did you hear.

MACKENZIE

I heard you weren't even supposed to be here this summer. I heard you got a scholarship. Full ride. Then I heard you stole the family jeep to take a girl out. And when she decided she didn't want her hand down your pants you took her home like the gentleman that you are, and when you got back to your place, alone and emotionally disfigures, you hit the pedal so hard that the headlights ended up on the other side of the garage door.

DIEGO

It didn't happen like that.

MACKENZIE

I heard your parents called the cops cause they didn't know how else to handle it. Or you. And they carded you for drunk driving. And here you are.

DIEGO

So you read the news, huh.

MACKENZIE

Don't really care for it.

Beat.

MACKENZIE

You know what else I don't care for.

Silence.

DIEGO

What.

MACKENZIE

I hate carburetors. Stop signs. I hate flutes. I hate all the wind instruments. But most of all Diego I hate you. I hate you every second for what you turned me into. For what you made me want, and for the things I had to do to get away from the sight of you.

And she gets up and leaves.

Long beat.

In the absence, Melon arrives with two cups of coffee.

She hands one to Diego.

And sits.

DIEGO

You still haven't told me what you're going to be doing this summer.

MELON

I haven't? Huh.

DIEGO

So...?

MELON

I'm going on an adventure.

DIEGO

Neat. Where to?

MELON

Wherever I end up, I guess.

DIEGO

Why do I get the feeling you're doing to do something stupid that you don't want me to know about.

MELON

Maybe you're a mindreader. Maybe that's exactly what's gonna happen.

DIEGO

Is it?

MELON

Is what?

DIEGO

Is that what's gonna happen.

MELON

'Course not.

DIEGO

So tell me where you're going then.

Pause.

MELON

Okay. Well...

She takes out a book.

MELON

This is Dad's field journal.

DIEGO

I can see that.

MELON

It has every single day in it. From spring to summer, to fall... winter... There are some things. In here...

Pause. She looks down and holds out the book for him to take.

DIEGO

What am I looking for.

Just flip through it. MELON

No. MELON, I don't like this. DIEGO

Just trust me. Turn to July seventeenth. MELON

That's the day he went missing. DIEGO

Pause. He flips through. In the meantime, he finds leafs that have been pressed between pages—and which he puts aside.

Okay. I'm here. July seventeenth. DIEGO

*Now MELON has become one with herself.
There is no flicker of doubt.
There is no flicker of shame or self-derision.*

Now keep flipping. MELON

*Diego looks up.
He does not.*

MELON. DIEGO

KEEP. FLIPPING. MELON

*Silence.
Diego turns the page.
Silence.*

It goes another day. DIEGO

Keep going. MELON

*Silence.
He puts the book down.
Diego stands up and backs up.*

DIEGO

It must be a different year.

MELON

It's the right year.

DIEGO

Well maybe—

MELON

Thirteen days. It goes on for thirteen days.

DIEGO

And what does it say...

Beat.

DIEGO

They looked everywhere. The whole town. I was out looking. MacKenzie was looking. You were there too... But every one of us was out there with you. Dogs and flashlights and we didn't find him... There is no boat anymore... I don't know what happened. But there is no closure. It's just a tragedy. And there's nothing you can do about tragedies.

MELON

If he was dead, he'd have floated to the top.

DIEGO

What if his pants caught on a log. Friends don't let friends believe shit that isn't true. And I'm not saying he's gone. But I am saying that he is NOT in that lake.

MELON

There were footprints.

DIEGO

Fuck footprints. You make footprints. I made footprints. You know what I bet? I bet there is no bottom. I bet it goes straight through the earth and there's a lake on the other side and he's selling cars in Thailand.

MELON

They don't have roads in Thailand.

DIEGO

Of course they have roads in Thailand. Jesus Christ.

MELON

When your body decays, all the gasses fill your lungs. He'd have floated to the top.

DIEGO

And what if the current took him under?

MELON

There hasn't been a current in over ten thousand years.

DIEGO

Says the girl who invented goldfish from bad French movies.

MELON

I liked *Amelie*.

DIEGO

So did everybody else. Until she grew up and she drove everybody crazy with her cockamamie scheming all the time. *(Pause)* You know, I bet your dad is dead. I bet there are worms eating his eyes from the inside out. I bet if you found him, he'd smell so bad you couldn't eat for a month. I bet you couldn't sleep for a year.

Beat.

MELON

Have the summer of your dreams, Diego. I don't care. Just don't do it here.

*Diego finally removed his hot black jacket,
and places it on this box, or on that box.*

DIEGO

I borrowed it.

Beat.

Diego exits.

Silence as Melon waits for him to go completely.

From her pocket she pulls a small remote control.

She fondles it strangely, and turns it about, this way and that.

And finally comes to rest her gaze

Before pressing a button that is anonymous among all others.

*From the distance, a roiling and toiling and boiling sound,
which rises and rises.*

Slowly, from the lake in the backdrop,

rises the top of what we can only assume to be a one-person submersible.

Melon removes her jammies so reveal a scuba suit.

She puts on the headphones

And just like that, disappears into the machine, closing the submarine hatch.

Then the sound again of a roiling and toiling and boiling.

And just like that, she's gone.

End of scene.

LOVE: A SAMURAI SWORD

*O.S., Diego shovels sand.
MacKenzie watches from the box lounge.*

MACKENZIE

You know you're never gonna finish.

DIEGO

You close your eyes. Open them again and maybe I'll be done.

*MacKenzie grabs a beer from the cooler and nearly undoes the cap.
But instead, she decided to examine the bottle's qualities.*

MACKENZIE

Ten years old I came up here. It's so different in the city. The construction never ends. So you're always late. It doesn't matter where you're going. So the people walk fast. You hit somebody's car and you know what they call it? They call it a Love Tap... My Aunt Judy baked pies. She read books that no one told her to read. And she never got any mail, I think because she never got a credit card... Ten years old I came up here, and I thought my Aunt Judy was a wackjob.

DIEGO

(O.S.) And now?

MACKENZIE

Now she smells like rosemary. Her eyesight's gone and she plays bingo in the church basement on Tuesday nights. Sometimes she brings a friend back and they fall asleep on the couch. She's surrounded by people who think she's great. So I guess... her life is pretty great.

Beat.

MACKENZIE

What are you shoveling for?

*Diego emerges from one of our blind spots, covered in dirt.
Not quite defeated, but not quite hopeful:*

DIEGO

I'll tell you when I find it.

Beat. He goes back to shoveling.

MACKENZIE

You know some people just listen to jazz. They get massages. Foot rubs... I could light you some incense.

DIEGO

(O.S.)
Shut up.

MacKenzie shapes her hand around the bottlecap. Two big, heaving motions, as though she were putting her entire weight into opening it. But she's just playing with the idea of it.

MACKENZIE

First thing she did when I got in... She kissed me on the cheek and she smudged the lipstick around. Like blush, on both cheeks... I was like a doll in her doll house... She had a big pecan pie. She told me to have a slice. But I wouldn't eat... She tried to get me talking, but what was I going to say? ... Hey Auntie, remember me? I'm the one you told one day she could be an astronaut... Then I went and squashed a guy in the head so hard his brains fell out his ears.

DIEGO

Pass me one?

*Diego walks in ever so slowly.
She passes him the beer and he immediately places it, on this surface or other.
And holds her.
Kind of, sort of, in a paternal headlock.*

MACKENZIE

You smell like sweat... And dirt... Like something that just got born out of the earth, and now it's making its way up... You know that kinda smell.

He pulls away a beat.

MACKENZIE

I don't like it when you look at me like that.

DIEGO

I'm not looking at you any way I wouldn't look at anybody else.

*Silence.
MacKenzie gently pushes him away.
Beat.*

DIEGO

Okay. So you know when you're watching a British TV show and someone asks if you want tea? ... Like how do they know what kind of tea you want? Do they ever ask you? What if you're expecting thai or like, pineapple—

MACKENZIE

Is this what you wonder about?

DIEGO

I wonder about other stuff... Look of all the nations I could have been born into. Of all the places I could have ended up. I was born into the United States of America. The most powerful nation on the face of the planet. We are they who know no bounds. Whose people have running water and medicine and iPhones. I'm lucky as shit.

MACKENZIE

Sometimes I wonder about that.

DIEGO

I wonder about it all the time... But recently I've been thinking there's something more.

MACKENZIE

Let me see your hands.

DIEGO

You wanna hold my hands?

MACKENZIE

Just let me see.

She takes his hands, inspects them, finds them unworthy.

DIEGO

Do I have sausage fingers?

MACKENZIE

You bite your nails.

DIEGO

I use my hands a lot. They're sanded down. Tree bark and car engines and, and crowbars...

He gets lost looking at her.

Beat.

DIEGO

Well I'm not gonna spend all summer doing this...

MACKENZIE

You only do it on your left hand... But you're a lefty.

DIEGO

How do you know that?

MACKENZIE

I remember... And you can tell.

DIEGO

So you read palms now?

MACKENZIE

Yeah... I read palms now...

She gets up. He holds her back.

DIEGO

Wait... What does it say?

MACKENZIE

It says I want a beer...

DIEGO

I know. But don't.

Pause. She looks up at him and he breaks.

MACKENZIE

What do you want from me?

DIEGO

Nothing.

He lets go.

MACKENZIE

Then what do you want.

Pause.

DIEGO

I want to save the world... And then when I'm old and accomplished at everything I ever wanted to do... I want lots of pretty girls to look me up in the phonebook cause they heard I was such a great guy, and did such great things... I want lots of money. I want to feel the wind in my hair when I drive down the street... I want a dog. And a swimming pool. I don't want kids. And don't say it, yeah, I know. Nobody uses phonebooks anymore.

MACKENZIE

Only selfish people don't have kids. It's one of god's commandments you know. Be fruitful.

DIEGO

Maybe I'm selfish... What about you? What do you want.

Pause.

MACKENZIE

I have a dream.

DIEGO

Sing it.

MACKENZIE

I have a dream of bacon and walnuts. And coffee and basmati rice. Saffron needles and chocolate bars and tea the flavor of golden orgasm. Aged three months so it has a hint of bitterness.

DIEGO

You should take over the diner. Turn it into a restaurant worth going to.

MACKENZIE

Don't think I haven't thought about it.

Beat.

MACKENZIE

And why should I believe anything you say.

DIEGO

Because I...

Beat.

DIEGO

Innocent until proven guilty.

*For some unknown reason, this drives MacKenzie completely bonkers.
Diego tries to make his way inside, for this thing or that.
But MacKenzie gets in his way.
He tries to push past her.
She blocks.*

MACKENZIE

There are two kinds of people in this world, Diego.

DIEGO

Get out of my way.

MACKENZIE

THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF PEOPLE. People who when presented with a problem say, "Yes. Take me. I am nothing in the face of you..." Then there's people who when presented with a problem say, "NO. NO, Problem. You will NOT get the better of me. You will not tell me what to do and you WILL not tell me how you somehow understand ANYTHING that I am going through. You are inhibited, Problem. That is your nature. (*She gets up in his face*) YOU are weak. With your FUCKING BASE IMPULSES and your NEGATIVITY all the time.

DIEGO

I am not negative.

MACKENZIE

Who are you?

DIEGO

You know who I am.

MACKENZIE

Which person are you? You small, insignificant little thing that you say Yes, come, take me, I'M YOURS.

DIEGO

How small am I?

MACKENZIE

YEAH.

DIEGO

I'LL SHOW YOU HOW SMALL I AM.

MACKENZIE

SHOW ME.

He starts taking off his belt.

DIEGO

YEAH? YOU WANNA SEE?

MACKENZIE

YOU DON'T HAVE THE BALLS.

DIEGO

OH YEAH?

MACKENZIE

BRING IT ON.

Just then, Melon enters, wearing a wet suit and holding two metal buckets.

MELON

SERIOUSLY. GUYS.

DIEGO

THIS IS NOT WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE.

MELON

You couldn't crank one out in the HOUR I've been gone? You wait until the SECOND I get back?!

DIEGO

THIS IS NOT WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE.

MACKENZIE

(Completely cold-faced)

Melon, This is exactly what it looks like. I'm so sorry you had to find out this way. Diego and I are really sorry. Aren't we, Honey.

DIEGO

Shut up. You're making it worse.

MELON

Whatever. You guys are weird. I've got shit to do.

What's in the buckets? DIEGO

Nothing. MELON

Hey... Hey, weren't we gonna... DIEGO

I liberated them. MELON

You... DIEGO

MELON
EACH AND EVERY ONE A LITTLE LIFE, DIEGO. IN THE MORNING THEY PUT ON THEIR SHOES AND THEY GO TO WORK. AND THEY HAVE LITTLE CLAM FAMILIES JUST LIKE YOU AND ME. AND DREAMS AND THINGS THEY HATE AND SUMMER PLANS. AND I WILL NOT HEAR ANOTHER WORD ABOUT IT.

She starts off, but doesn't exit.

MACKENZIE
Wanna sit with us? Diego here was just about to tell me why it is he's such a jerk all the time.

MELON
I'd like to hear that... No, thanks. I'm a little busy.

What with? DIEGO

I got a package. MELON

Who whom. DIEGO

MACKENZIE
From—whom, Diego. Whom.

DIEGO
You think I don't know that?

MELON
It was from Dad.

Everyone falls silent.

DIEGO

Like... *(Silence)* It came in the *mail*?

MELON

See you guys. Oh, and Diego? Tick-Tock.

*Melon disappears into the house.
Diego starts to follow, but comes to a realization,
Before starting again.*

DIEGO

Melon?

MACKENZIE

Diego?

DIEGO

MELON?

*As Diego ruffles through the house, there is the sound of a nearby "splash."
Diego emerges—having lost Melon completely.
Beat as the two stand there in curiosity.*

DIEGO

I feel like I'm having a flashback to the Little Mermaid...

MACKENZIE

Which scene?

DIEGO

The one where Ariel grows feet and starts causing havoc in the human world.

MACKENZIE

So like...

DIEGO

In this case it would be the exact opposite. Yes.

Pause.

MACKENZIE

What were you digging for. Earlier.

Pause.

DIEGO

His watch.

Silence as they stare over the water.

MACKENZIE

You think she's ever coming back?

Beat.

DIEGO

Only one way to find out.

*Long silence as they wait.
End of scene.*

3

**THE LAST ROCKABILLY SONG
TO BE PERFORMED IN THE STATE OF MAINE**

*It's night, and Diego is alone on the box-couch.
Maybe he hasn't slept from the night before.
Maybe now the boxes are all opened, and things have flooded everywhere.
Kenzie storms in and throws off her army jacket.*

MACKENZIE

Give me a beer.

DIEGO

No way.

MACKENZIE

GIVE ME A BEER OR I SWEAR TO GOD I WILL END YOUR LIFE IN THE MOST TERRIBLE WAY YOU COULD IMAGINE. HAVE YOU IMAGINED IT YET? HAVE YOU BECAUSE I SWEAR ON YOUR GRAVE.

Diego simply can't move. He reaches for the beer, with ever such grace and supplication. Mac bites off and spits the metal cap into the trees.

DIEGO

Did you just...

MACKENZIE

WHAT.

He motions towards his hands. His teeth. But he can't express.

DIEGO

It doesn't matter.

MACKENZIE

YOU KNOW WHAT MATTERS?

*Diego shakes his head.
She chugs the beer in one go and throwing-knifes it into a tree—offhandedly—with incredible accuracy.
We do not need to see the bottle break. Or the tree, for that matter.*

MACKENZIE

Love matters.

She grabs another beer. Diego freaks out when she lifts it, thinking she's going to bite it off. She twists off the cap. Beat.

MACKENZIE

It's a twist-off.

She drinks. Diego leans in.

DIEGO

So I take it you haven't had the finest evening.

MACKENZIE

Who we are matters. It matters how hard we worked. It matters how many times we thought the end was near. And how many times he turned back and we said *(Jumping to her feet and shouting at the moon)* FUCK YOU, END... *(She sits down)* How we treat each other matters.

DIEGO

I agree.

MACKENZIE

How we love each other matters.

Pause.

DIEGO

I agree.

MACKENZIE

How do we love each other when we're always fighting each other? How do we love when all we do is get in the way of each other's happiness all the time? You. You, Diego. You get in the way of my happiness.

She drinks.

DIEGO

I guess it's a good thing you left.

MacKenzie chuckles.

MACKENZIE

That's a laugh.

Pause.

DIEGO

Why'd you do it?

MACKENZIE

I believe in what the military is doing.

DIEGO

Nobody believes in what the military is doing.

MACKENZIE

Well excuse me, King of the World.

DIEGO

You went to war. War is bad, I think we learned that in, like, Mrs. Applebee's second grade history class... God... Her last name was Applebee...

MACKENZIE

I went to *Pennsylvania*. The war ended there in 1865.

DIEGO

The military kills people.

MACKENZIE

So fewer people have to die. It's called doing the necessary thing.

DIEGO

It's not pretty, is it?

MACKENZIE

Pennsylvania? No.

DIEGO

But Amazon still has two-day delivery?

MACKENZIE

And that's all that really matters. And if it weren't for thousands of people putting their asses on the line every day of your God forsaken life, you'd have a lot more to worry about than that.

DIEGO

I know.

Beat. They look at each other, tip-toeing around some potential for peace.

DIEGO

Just think of all the plumbing problems we'd have.

Beat.

MACKENZIE

Hardworking men and women. Like you and me. We'd have to fix our own toilets.

DIEGO

We'd have to mow our own lawns.

Beat.

DIEGO

You look good by the way.

MACKENZIE

It's all the warring. It does wonders for your abs.

Diego drinks. Beat.

MACKENZIE

Except I didn't go to war.

DIEGO

You've been gone for over two years.

MACKENZIE

I was in Pennsylvania.

That's where your boot camp was.

DIEGO

Yeah.

MACKENZIE

Yeah what?

DIEGO

You wouldn't understand.

MACKENZIE

Where were you?

DIEGO

Pause.

You know we weren't all born perfect like you.

MACKENZIE

I've been called a lot of things. Perfect is not one of them.

DIEGO

I was in rehab.

MACKENZIE

Silence.
Diego laughs.

No.

DIEGO

I had a problem.

MACKENZIE

You were in rehab?

DIEGO

Yes.

MACKENZIE

YOU WERE IN REHAB.

DIEGO

I THINK WE'VE ESTABLISHED THAT, DIEGO.

MACKENZIE

DIEGO

Dios mio.

MACKENZIE

Oh don't get all soap opera on me.

DIEGO

You never joined the army.

MACKENZIE

Of course I did.

DIEGO

What? Were you pregnant or something.

MACKENZIE

YOU DON'T GO TO REHAB FOR BEING PREGNANT, DIEGO. THAT'S NOT HOW SOCIETY WORKS.

DIEGO

Well I don't know how they do it in the military! They just... shoot it, right?

MACKENZIE

DIOS MIO. WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOU.

DIEGO

ME? WHAT'S WRONG WITH—

She slaps him hard in the face.

DIEGO

YOU SLAPPED ME.

MACKENZIE

THERE'S A LOT MORE WHERE THAT CAME FROM.

Long beat.

DIEGO

Why didn't you tell me?

MACKENZIE

You know how it is.

DIEGO

No, I don't.

Pause.

MACKENZIE

You know. Your dad. Everything.

DIEGO

And my mom.

MACKENZIE

Yeah.

DIEGO

And me.

MACKENZIE

I didn't say that.

DIEGO

Are you saying I drink too much?

MACKENZIE

HOW IS THIS ABOUT YOU? HOW DO YOU MAKE EVERYTHING ABOUT YOU?

DIEGO

Everything is about me. In my view, the world revolves around me.

MACKENZIE

Well in my view, the world is three-dimensional, and we're all walking along its surface because it DEIGNS to allow us to. And YOU are a stuck-up asshole.

DIEGO

Hey.

MACKENZIE

Get out of my face.

DIEGO

You're looking good.

MACKENZIE

JESUS ARE YOU HITTING ON ME RIGHT NOW.

DIEGO

You think I'd want to sleep with someone who just got out of rehab?

Diego drinks.

And Matter-of-factly,

MacKenzie puts Diego in a behind-the-back armlock.

(Equally as matter-of-factly)
Ow. Ow. Ow.

DIEGO

Yeah?

MACKENZIE

OW.

DIEGO

Yeah? That hurt?

MACKENZIE

Yes...

DIEGO

WHAT'S THAT? I COULDN'T HEAR YOU.

MACKENZIE

YES.

DIEGO

YES, MA'AM.

MACKENZIE

MA'AM, YES MA'AM.

DIEGO

She turns him around and slaps him in the face.

Put... Be a fucking man.

MACKENZIE

That's incredibly hetero-normative, wouldn't you say.

DIEGO

Well you think I wanted to do that?

MACKENZIE

It looked like you wanted to do it.

DIEGO

Beat.

I'm sorry. Did it really hurt?

MACKENZIE

DIEGO

OF COURSE IT HURTS.

MACKENZIE

It *still* hurts?

DIEGO

YES.

MACKENZIE

Oh. Huh... I guess I didn't do it right...

DIEGO

YOU DON'T SAY.

Long beat.

MACKENZIE

What do you do when you hit a wall?

DIEGO

You climb over it.

MACKENZIE

Is there a door in the wall?

DIEGO

What if it's one of those walls they practice with in the army. You know the ones.

MACKENZIE

Well in that case, you just walk around it.

Pause.

DIEGO

So is that why you started all the Wicca stuff?

MACKENZIE

Rehab? No. *(Pause)* It was probably Jimmy Tae. I guess I spent a lot of time thinking about it... You know. While I was busy puking in buckets and being held down by guys in egg-shell jackets.

DIEGO

Is that like a metaphor?

MACKENZIE

It's a color you idiot... Studies show it's very soothing.

Pause.

So I guess we can thank Jimmy Tae for your mystical return.

MACKENZIE

You ever read Tank Girl.

DIEGO

Is that that movie where Laura Petti plays a dank super hero?

MACKENZIE

It started out as a comic book. And she's not technically a super hero. In a way that's what makes her super. She's just an ordinary person, and one day, her family is taken from her. And she's taken captive by these bad guys. They run the world now. It's a dystopian future thing.

DIEGO

Of course.

MACKENZIE

And one day, she sees the opportunity to escape. And on her way out, she happens to steal a tank, and with her side-kick—her sidekick has a fighter jet—and they go around freeing people, and looking for their families.

DIEGO

I don't like where this is going.

Beat.

MACKENZIE

We could be heroes, too.

Long beat.

DIEGO

I've just been craving chocolate milk.

Silence.

MACKENZIE

I guess I have, too.

Beat.

DIEGO

It's just this... yearning.

MACKENZIE

This undying, incomplete...

DIEGO

Distant...

MACKENZIE

Distant, peculiar...

DIEGO

Erroneous sensation.

MACKENZIE

This completion.

DIEGO

Fulfillment.

MACKENZIE

All I want is to be fulfilled... But whenever I get that feeling... just as soon...

DIEGO

The feeling goes away.

MACKENZIE

And what do you do then?

Beat.

DIEGO

I guess you start wanting something else.

Long beat.

DIEGO

We gotta find Melon.

End of Scene.

During the transition:

THE VOICE OF MELON

I hate newspapers. I hate wars. Who doesn't. I hate scabies. And rocket ships. And I hate winter. God, I hate winter so much... And I hate sleds and sled races. And I hate family gatherings. I hate my dad. Even more I hate his. Sometimes I hate you. Not most the time. But sometimes... Most the times I hate myself... I hate bugs. All bugs. Especially mosquitos and bugs that bite. I hate town clerks. And zippers... I hate people who go to work in the mornings. I hate order and reason. But I hate randomness, too... I hate poetry. And people who say how sorry they are for things they didn't do. People who give you flowers in winter. People who wear fake eyelashes. They're just slutty... Old people. The way they walk. The way their knuckles prune... I'm never going to grow old...

*Diego continues playing the tape.
It's white noise, but you can tell she never hit "Stop."
Maybe it even takes on a sort-of "under water" sound to it.
And on and on the recording goes.
Until we are in the next scene.*

4

THE DAY DIEGO DIED

*The following evening, the same time as always.
Diego and MacKenzie have divided themselves into two camps.*

*MacKenzie collects and categorizes a variety of objects,
sticking them in Zip-Lock bags and labeling them with Sharpie.*

These objects may be called Exhibit A, B, C, and so on.

*Diego reads through a variety of Melon's notebooks.
He places tack on a map of the nearby geography—now hoisted up.
Occasionally he places another tack—which are of course color-coded,
based on this factor or that factor—pertaining to the book.*

Occasionally, he also grabs baby carrots from a small bag, and "munches."

DIEGO

You ever wonder how they get them so small?

MACKENZIE

Never did.

DIEGO

I mean you got yourself an entire bag here. It's like a pound. And look how many little carrots.

MACKENZIE

They just grow them like that.

Beat.
Diego offers her the bag.
She takes one, and munches.

DIEGO

Anything, Sherlock?

MACKENZIE

You know my methods, Watson.

DIEGO

When you have eliminated the impossible...

MACKENZIE

Whatever remains...

DIEGO

However improbably...

Beat.

MACKENZIE

We could call the police.

DIEGO

And tell them what?

MACKENZIE

Good point.

As they were.

MACKENZIE

What about you.

He shakes his head.
Beat.

Hey. Hey, do you hear that? DIEGO

Beat.

MELON? DIEGO

What is it? MACKENZIE

You don't hear that? DIEGO

She actively does not.

Beat.

Diego disappears into the distance.

MACKENZIE
HEY. HEY. YOU KNOW YOU'RE A SHITTY SWIMMER, RIGHT?

Beat.

Then from the house, Melon arrives.

Woah. What is all *this*? MELON

MacKenzie launches herself toward Melon.

MELON. MACKENZIE

Hey, hey... What's up? MELON

Melon, we looked everywhere. MACKENZIE

What do you mean? I was—*(Melon sees it all in greater detail now)*—oh... MELON

Sweetie, where were you? MACKENZIE

Well... promise you won't tell Diego. MELON

MACKENZIE

Hope to die.

Long beat.

MELON

I was at the Motel Six.

MacKenzie falls back into the couch.

Beat.

MACKENZIE

Did you get tested for bed bugs...

MELON

I'm pretty sure I got them. There was a mattress outside. But not in the—*We're refurbishing one of the rooms*—kind of way.

MACKENZIE

Seriously?

MELON

Na. Nothing exciting like that... *(Pause)* Where's Diego?

MACKENZIE

He went that way... I guess he heard something.

MELON

Dingus... I guess it's the intention that counts.

MACKENZIE

(To the lake) DIEGO. COME ON, I HAVE A SURPRISE FOR YOU.

Silence.

MACKENZIE

DIEGO. DIE—

Beat.

MACKENZIE

MELON. PICK UP THE PHONE.

MELON

Wha—OH MY—

Melon dials 9-1-1.

MELON

OH COME ON GET OFF YOUR LUNCH BREAK.

*MacKenzie drags in Diego and lays him down.
He's soaking wet, and now so is she.
MacKenzie begins pressing on his chest.*

MACKENZIE

COME ON DIEGO. YOU WILL NOT DO THIS TO ME AGAIN, OH HO HO. YOU ARE IN **BIG** TROUBLE PAL.

*MacKenzie slams once maybe a little bit too hard on Diego's chest.
Nothing.*

MACKENZIE

(At Diego) WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOUR **STUPID HEART**.

MELON

GIVE HIM MOUTH-TO-MOUTH.

MACKENZIE

WHAT?!

MELON

WELL I DON'T KNOW.

MacKenzie starts to give Diego mouth-to-mouth. She breathes into him, then counts quietly. One...Two...Three...Four...Five... Again she breathes into him... Six...Seven...Eight...Nine...Ten...

MELON

WHAT IS THIS, VERIZON?

*MacKenzie repeats her breathe and count.
And all of a sudden.
Once all is surely lost.
Diego pushes some water out of his mouth.
And he takes a long, labored breath.
At the end of it, MacKenzie has absolutely no clue.
None.
And then a moment later—she is dancing in the Unknown.
And he opens his eyes.
Just enough.
To see hers.*

DIEGO

Hey...

MacKenzie can't say it. She mouths it: "Hey."

DIEGO

Was I dead or something?

MACKENZIE

You're gonna be.

He turns and sees Melon.

DIEGO

Hey... I found Melon...

MACKENZIE

Na. Turns out she was at the Motel Six.

MELON

(Beneath her breath) Traitor...

DIEGO

So did you fall for it... Did I scare you...

MACKENZIE

I'm just happy.

Beat.

DIEGO

That's twice now... I guess this time I owe you dinner.

MACKENZIE

As long as it's not pizza or Chinese.

DIEGO

You know... I didn't like it as much the first time...

Beat.

MACKENZIE

And now...

Beat.

DIEGO

Now you smell like lavender...

*The 9-1-1 hotline finally picks up.
Melon has forgotten all about the phone.*

MELON

Hello?... HELLO. Sorry, no, no emergency. Just... some really sick kids...

Melon bangs up.

*By now, Diego and MacKenzie are neck-deep in each other's faces.
Or face-deep in each other's necks.*

MELON

Woah.

Diego pulls out of it for a beat.

DIEGO

I know, right?

*Immediately, MacKenzie pulls him back in.
Long beat, as Melon approaches the lake.*

*For a moment, Melon is: Affirmation. Sublimation. Epiphany. Suicide.
She can't tear her eyes away.*

MELON

Diego...

*Diego & MacKenzie pry each other from the other's grasp.
Slowly, they rise, and approach Melon.*

MACKENZIE

It's a boat.

DIEGO

It's a dingy... *(Pause)* There's no one in it.

MACKENZIE

I don't recognize it.

MELON

I do.

MACKENZIE

Who's is it?

Long pause.

MELON

It's mine.

Complete and utter silence.

Guys... I know where my dad is.

MELON

Beat.

Who's coming with me?

MELON

Fade-out.

End of play.