

ABBY /

~~BENJAMIN~~ BENJAMIN

ABBY. To me?
BENJAMIN. Well to get a call out of the blue like that.
ABBY. Yes, I know those calls, Benjamin. They're scary, aren't they.
(Beat.)
BENJAMIN. She said you wanted to see me.
ABBY. She was lying. (Beat.)
BENJAMIN. Oh. (The bathroom door bangs and we hear grunts from inside.)
MARILYN. (Inside the bathroom.) Almost there. A little closer.
SCOTTY. (Inside the bathroom.) Oh god . . .
MARILYN. (Inside the bathroom.) Right there! That's it!
BENJAMIN. Are people having sex in there?
ABBY. Yes. This is a filthy place where people have sex in the bathrooms. It's a shame you had to find me here. (The bathroom door is thrown open. Marilyn and Scotty stagger out, winded and sweaty.)
MARILYN. God, that was more than I bargained for.
SCOTTY. I was starting to worry I couldn't get you off. (Beat — Marilyn notices Benjamin.)
MARILYN. Oh, hello.
BENJAMIN. Hi.
MARILYN. Wait, are you him? Oh my gosh, you must be him! I'm Marilyn! (To Scotty.) That's Benjamin. Abby's son!
SCOTTY. Oh.
MARILYN. It wasn't easy tracking him down. I had to go through Miss Larusso's files while she was at lunch. Were you surprised, Abby?
BENJAMIN. You said she wanted to see me.
MARILYN. I did. I did say that, yes. And I'm pretty sure she does.
ABBY. No, I don't.
MARILYN. She'll come around though. It just takes her a while to warm up. But you probably already know that.
BENJAMIN. I should go.
MARILYN. No, don't do that. You haven't seen each other in five years. Isn't that what you said on the phone? Five years is too long.
SCOTTY. Marilyn.
MARILYN. I'm sure this is bringing up a lot of emotions for / both of you —
ABBY. Oh, for godsakes.
MARILYN. — which can be really scary, I / know.
ABBY. Nobody's scared. Why would I be scared of my own son?
SCOTTY. We should go.

ABBY. Is this my punishment? For those arrest reports?
MARILYN. It's not punishment, Abby. He's your family, and / I thought —
SCOTTY. (Firmly.) Let's go, Marilyn. (Beat.)
MARILYN. Scotty's right, we should let you two talk. (To Benjamin.) I'm glad you're here. Stay awhile. (They exit. Benjamin and Abby are silent for a few beats.)
BENJAMIN. I didn't realize she was sick.
ABBY. In the head, you mean? Oh, she's not sick. She's diabolical.
BENJAMIN. She seems so sweet.
ABBY. That's what makes her so diabolical. (After a moment, Benjamin looks around.)
BENJAMIN. So this is nice. It's a nice place. I would've come to visit sooner, but I had no idea where you were.
ABBY. Well, I wanted to leave a forwarding address, but you were otherwise engaged. (Beat.)
BENJAMIN. You look good.
ABBY. I am good.
BENJAMIN. Me too. Much better than I was. And I'm working. Odd jobs mostly. Drywalling and things like that. Nothing big, but it pays the rent. I think you'd be proud.
ABBY. Where are you living?
BENJAMIN. In Freehold. With Zoe.
ABBY. I don't know who that is.
BENJAMIN. No, I know. She's, uh . . . pretty great actually. You'd like her.
ABBY. Well I hope it sticks, because if it doesn't work out in Freehold you can't live here. Too many people in this room as it is.
BENJAMIN. I know, Mom.
ABBY. I wanted a private room but there wasn't enough money for that. Actually I wanted to stay in my own house, but it was hard to make those payments with an empty bank / account.
BENJAMIN. Okay, you don't need / to —
ABBY. Are you clean, Benjamin? (Beat.)
BENJAMIN. Yeah. Almost two years now.
ABBY. Well that's good. If you are in fact / clean.
BENJAMIN. I am, Mom.
ABBY. Good. That's good. But you'll forgive me for not patting you on the back. If that's what you came for, then you're out / of luck.
BENJAMIN. That's not what I came for.

ABBY. No? "I think you'd be proud."
BENJAMIN. Are you not?
ABBY. I *was* proud, Benny. The first time you got clean. And the second time and the tenth, and after twenty years of you saying you're clean, it gets a little hard to muster an "Atta boy, kiddo."
BENJAMIN. I bet.
ABBY. But congrats, you're not sticking needles in your arm. Neither am I. Neither is anyone else in this building, except maybe the diabetics. And yet nobody's proud of us. Not for being clean. Because, guess what? You *should* be clean. You *should* be.
BENJAMIN. You're right.
ABBY. I know I am. (*Pause.*) But you're doing better.
BENJAMIN. Yes. Much.
ABBY. So you'll be able to pay me back then? (*No response.*) So not *that* much better. Can I safely assume you didn't meet this Zoe woman on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange then?
BENJAMIN. No, I didn't meet her on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange.
ABBY. But on *some* kind of floor, I bet.
BENJAMIN. (*Chuckles.*) You just let me know when you're finished getting in your punches.
ABBY. Oh it's gonna be a while I think.
BENJAMIN. Then I should probably sit down.
ABBY. What do you want here, Benny?
BENJAMIN. I don't want anything. Your friend / called *me*.
ABBY. She's not my friend.
BENJAMIN. Well, regardless, I'm here. We might as well catch up.
ABBY. Right. I remember how this scene goes now. You come to catch up, and the next day I notice that things are missing.
BENJAMIN. I'm not gonna / take anything.
ABBY. Jewelry, radios, the *change jar*.
BENJAMIN. Jesus. When did you get so mean?
ABBY. Oh it just happened, in dribs and drabs.
BENJAMIN. Because of me?
ABBY. I didn't say that.
BENJAMIN. It's what you think though. All the bad stuff that / happened —
ABBY. Don't tell me what / I think.
BENJAMIN. Daddy, and the house, and you getting fired. It was all my fault.

ABBY. No, that's not what I think. Maybe that's what *you* think, but it's not what I think. The bad stuff wasn't all your fault. (*Beat.*) Just *mostly*. (*Beat.*)
BENJAMIN. That's fair. (*Silence. A momentary truce.*)
ABBY. Marilyn and I have a bet, by the way. That's why you're here. If she scares me, she gets the bed by the window. So she broke into an office, stole my file, and dragged you here hoping I'd flinch. (*Beat.*)
BENJAMIN. That's kinda nuts.
ABBY. You have no idea. (*A nice moment between them. But then ...*) I think you should probably go. (*Beat.*)
BENJAMIN. I don't wanna go.
ABBY. Why not?
BENJAMIN. I just ... wanna spend a little time with you. Is that crazy?
ABBY. No, not crazy at all. We all *want* things. I certainly did. I wanted to stay in my house, I wanted a healthy son —
BENJAMIN. Would you stop?
ABBY. I wanted holidays and neighbors and barbecues and a garden —
BENJAMIN. You had that. Don't pretend you never had that.
ABBY. Well I wanted *more* of it. I wanted it to keep going. It does for most people / after all.
BENJAMIN. I know. I know / it does.
ABBY. I wanted to get old with Daddy, and take trips to Hawaii, and go to your wedding, and *grandchildren* that I could *squeeze*, and *spoil*. I wanted a *lot of things*, Benny. So no, it's not crazy to *want* to spend time with me. I spent years *wishing* you would want that. But you seemed to want other things more. And now it's too late.
BENJAMIN. Don't say that.
ABBY. Why not?
BENJAMIN. Because I'm here.
ABBY. For now. But you'll go away again. You always do.
BENJAMIN. I won't / this time.
ABBY. Which is what you always say. And I know you *mean* it when you say it. But then you slip, you can't help it.
BENJAMIN. Well I'd love to give you a *guarantee* / but I can't.
ABBY. That's my point, you *can't*. And I'm too tired to be disappointed again. It hurts too much when it doesn't work out. And it seems to never work out.

BENJAMIN. *(Pause.)* So you're done then. The store's closed. You're gonna spend the rest of your life in this room stewing about / all the things —

ABBY. *Stewing?* I'll have you know, I have a very active and satisfying life here. There are activities and trips and walking groups — And I jumped out of a plane last week! Well maybe *jumped* isn't the right word, but / still.

BENJAMIN. What are you talking about?

ABBY. It doesn't matter, the point is, don't wag your finger at me and tell me that I'm done. I'm *not* done.

BENJAMIN. You're just done with *me*.

ABBY. Don't. I have put in my time with you. I have done more than my fair share of parental duty. I don't owe you any more. *(Beat.)* I'd like you to go now.

BENJAMIN. *(Beat.)* Alright. *(Benjamin pulls a photo from his pocket. Abby doesn't look at him.)* Can I give you something before I do?

ABBY. I prefer you didn't.

BENJAMIN. Mom —

ABBY. Benny, please. Just ... leave. *(This is more effortful than cold. Abby, whether we see it or not, is trying to hold it together.)*

BENJAMIN. Okay. *(Puts the photo back in his pocket.)* Your friend has the number at Zoe's if you wanna reach me.

ABBY. She's not my friend.

BENJAMIN. No, I know. *(Benjamin regards his mother, then exits. After he goes, Abby takes a few moments to collect herself. After a while, Marilyn reenters.)*

MARILYN. He didn't stay long. *(No response.)* Is he coming back?

ABBY. No, I don't think he is. *(Silence.)*

MARILYN. Look, Abby, I didn't mean to make trouble.

ABBY. Right.

MARILYN. I knew you might be upset, but I like to think that I was also doing something *nice* for you. He's your only child after all / and —

ABBY. Is there something wrong with you?

MARILYN. I'm sorry?

ABBY. I knew you were odd, but now I realize there might actually be something *wrong* with you.

MARILYN. You're mad at me.

ABBY. To pull *family* into this — ?

MARILYN. Now wait a second, *you* did that first. You pulled family

into it *first*. The police records, and calling up pretending to be my / daughter —

ABBY. *Pretended!* I didn't actually *bring* your family here!

MARILYN. But they came!

ABBY. Because you *told* them to! You asked for their help! You drugged me and got / them to —

MARILYN. Only because you started it! You made it personal the minute you ridiculed Caleb's painting.

ABBY. You tracked down my *estranged son!*

MARILYN. I thought it would make you happy. I thought if you saw how well he was / doing —

ABBY. Then *what*, Marilyn?! I'd see the light, and my heart would grow three sizes today?

MARILYN. I think one size would've been plenty.

ABBY. Don't do that. I'm not the mean one here, *you* are, so don't try to flip this around and pretend that you were trying to do me a *favor*.

MARILYN. I was!

ABBY. You might have everyone else fooled, but I see who you are. Flitting around here, rubbing my face in your happiness. Bragging about your children when you know damn well it's a sore spot / for me.

MARILYN. I did *not* know that! How could I? You refused to tell me anything about your family!

ABBY. How lucky, your kids visit and take you to lunch, and paint pictures! *(Grabs Caleb's painting.)*

MARILYN. *(Re: the painting.)* Be careful with that.

ABBY. *(Holds it up.)* This? *(Pretends to bobble it.)* Whooa-ohhh.

MARILYN. Gimme that painting, Abby.

ABBY. *(Moves away from her.)* No, I don't think I will.

MARILYN. You're obviously mad that I won, but you don't need to lash / out at —

ABBY. You didn't win. I was surprised to see him, but I wasn't scared.

MARILYN. Yes, you were.

ABBY. Of Benjamin?

MARILYN. I could see it on your face!

ABBY. I think someone's finally getting angry.

MARILYN. BECAUSE YOU'RE A CHEATER!

ABBY. *(Chuckles.)* Look at you.

MARILYN. ADMIT YOU WERE SCARED!