

**UPROOTED**  
**A Dark Comedy**

By Evan Grey Caldwell

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## **THE SETTING**

A golf course in Coconut Grove, Florida. End of August.

A tall, thin palm tree extends upward from the center of the stage.

The play takes place the week before school starts. It is hot and humid.

## **THE CHARACTERS**

### **~THE BOYS~**

OWEN is seventeen-years-old and starting his senior year of high school.

JONATHAN is also seventeen-years-old and starting his senior year of private school.

### **~THE MOMS~**

GLORIA is Owen's mom. She's trying her best. 40s.

MARISSA is another mom. Bubbly and calculating. 40s or 50s.

ERIKA is yet another mom. Serious and aloof. 40s or 50s.

LADY is also another mom. Stupid but loving it. 40s or 50s.

### **~THE DEAD ANIMALS~**

PETER PARKER is a parakeet. Pampered.

GEORGINA GLOOP is a rat. Rough around the edges.

JILL is a raccoon. Blunt and jaded.

The Moms (excluding Gloria) double as the Dead Animals.

Doubling is as follows:

Marissa/Peter Parker

Erika/Georgina Gloop

Lady/Jill

**SCENE ONE**  
**Monday Morning**

*(MARISSA, ERIKA, and LADY hold mimosas on a golf course looking excruciatingly nice. GLORIA is also there but she doesn't look as nice.)*

*(They all down their full mimosas, except Gloria, who takes a couple sips. MARISSA refills the glasses from a pitcher.)*

MARISSA

Alright, ladies. Rose/Bud/Thorn. You know the drill. It's very simple, Gloria, I'm sure you can pick it up. Okay. I'll go first. My rose is that my son got accepted to Texas A&M!

LADY

Already?

ERIKA

How could he know? It's so early.

MARISSA

It's one of *those* schools with rolling admissions.

*(ERIKA and LADY are shocked.)*

I know, I know, but at least now he has a safety school. I'd also like to remind everyone that I am holding the speaking decorative bird pendant so please do not interrupt me while I am speaking. My bud is that I finally started that birdhouse project that I've been stalling on forever. And finally, my thorn is that our boat is stuck in the Bahamas.

LADY

Oh, not again.

MARISSA

Yeah, it's whatever. Sip!

*(They all take a sip of their mimosas and pass the pendant.)*

Your turn, Erika.

ERIKA

Alright. My rose is that Rob and I built a new luxury doghouse in the backyard, which is great because the schnauzers no longer have to share a room. My bud is that Cosmo, our great dane, is doing really well in doggy school and is poised to be valedictorian. So. That's pretty great. And I guess my thorn is that we thought we had a French poodle, great breed, terrific performances, but turns out our poodle isn't French. It's Welsh. And the Welsh poodles are not such a great breed, not such terrific performances. But we're not giving up on him.

*(Sip and pass.)*

LADY

Okay. Wow. My Turn. Uh. Okay. Should I switch it up? Should I switch up the order? I'm going to switch it up. Wow. Okay.

Ummmm. So my thorn is that—okay so remember a few weeks ago when I closed my favorite finger in my favorite set of French doors? So it's been hurting again and I think it's a ghost injury and there are like afterquakes of like what happened and so now my finger just randomly hurts. Umm and my rose is that—you'll never believe it—the attic finally broke. FINALLY. Thank god.

GLORIA

Uhhh what does that mean? The attic broke? And why are we happy about it?

MARISSA

Please don't interrupt Lady while she's talking. She has the speaking decorative bird pendant.

LADY

And in conclusion, my bud is that my blender broke, and so I have to buy a new blender. And I love blender shopping. So I'm excited.

*(Sip. The pendant is passed to GLORIA.)*

MARISSA

Alright, Gloria, your turn! Rose/bud/thorn.

GLORIA

Uh Okay. I guess... my rose is that I finished unpacking last night. It was a lot of work but it's nice to feel like I'm actually *home* now, you know? And my bud is that... well, I guess it's you all! Thank you for welcoming me into the neighborhood. Uh. And my thorn is actually kind of weird. I don't know. Um. There's a pool in our backyard. It's empty. I didn't know the property came with a pool. I don't really know what to do about it.

ERIKA

Have you tried filling the pool?

GLORIA

Oh, I mean, yeah, I don't want a pool is the thing though. Owen is allergic to chlorine.

MARISSA

Oh? A chlorinated pool? I'm sorry, did you just say a chlorinated pool? Oh, hunny, no. A chlorinated pool? In the Grove? Oh no. Salt water. Salt water pools. That's how we do it.

ERIKA

Yeah, salt water is terrific for your skin.

LADY

I drink salt water only.

GLORIA

Owen did a science project in fifth grade about freezing rates of salt water versus fresh water so at one point the fridge was full of just these frozen chunks of salt water. It was pretty crazy.

*(Beat. No one reacts.)*

Hahahahaha.

MARISSA

Soooo that was rose/bud/thorn! Cheers, ladies. Drink up, ladies.

*(They finish their drinks and the pendant returns to MARISSA.)*

GLORIA

So, um, are you all from Coconut Grove, or...?

ERIKA

Excuse me?

MARISSA

Forgive her, she doesn't know The Progression.

GLORIA

The progression?

LADY

The Miami Progression.

MARISSA

We spent our twenties in South Beach, our thirties in Coral Gables, and when we turned forty we moved to Coconut Grove and here we are!

GLORIA

And what comes after that?

MARISSA

Only the dead know.

*(Beat.)*

Alright, ladies, refills!

*(They refill their mimosas.)*

LADY

Gloria—you have no idea how refreshing it is to have fresh blood in the neighborhood. We all know each other so well. *Too* well. It's nice to have change.

GLORIA

Thanks! I'm uh... It's sort of culture shock. I've never been on a golf course before honestly. Also, why are we on a golf course?

*(LADY and ERIKA snicker at her ignorance.)*

LADY

Marissa's husband owns this golf course, duh.

ERIKA

He's in the property business.

MARISSA

Yes. William owns the property. Well, his father owns the property. But he's incontinent. He pisses when he wakes up, he pisses when he goes to sleep. Upon the moment of his death, he will piss himself. But today is not about roses, or buds, or thorns, or pissing, today is about saying goodbye. To a tree. To this tree. To the last palm tree on the golf course. You were a magnificent tree, but as is the nature of life, the past isn't always the future. In a week's time this tree will be cut down to make way for a new hole. I loved this tree, but sometimes you have to make tough choices and so I chose golf. Trees may die but golf is forever.

GLORIA

That's such a shame you have to cut it down! I love palm trees.

MARISSA

I'm sorry, I know this all must be shocking to you. Gloria is from Tampa. They have all sorts of exciting things in Tampa. Like vegan pizza and uh the Gulf of Mexico. She told me all about it while we were at that blackout aromatherapy spin class I told you about?

ERIKA

Oh, I've always wanted to try that. How was it?

GLORIA

It was dark and loud.

LADY

That sounds spectacular.

GLORIA

The first session is free so I thought I might as well try it. It was freeing, in a weird way. I felt really really free.

MARISSA

Like a bird on a telephone wire.

ERIKA

Like a rat in a sewer.

LADY

Like a raccoon in a dumpster. But like, a really big dumpster. A spacious dumpster.

GLORIA

Um. No. Just like a person in a blackout aromatherapy spin class

ERIKA

Gloria, I really have to admire you for making a move at a time like this. One week before school starts, not knowing anybody. And that house? Owh.

GLORIA

What about the house?

MARISSA

Don't scare her. Living across the street from the golf course poses certain challenges. The golf course turf sucks up all the groundwater so that grass in the front yard is always dying. Plus, all those golf balls flying.

ERIKA

White, tiny-pored asteroids.

LADY

Like what killed the dinosaurs.

GLORIA

Oh.

MARISSA

That house has always been a tricky sell. Probably why you got it so cheap.

ERIKA

Don't throw that word around, I'm sure Gloria could afford much better.

LADY

A beautiful woman like you must have a rich husband raking in the dough!

MARISSA

Oh, Gloria's divorced. Recently divorced. Oh! Whoops! Oh! I'm sorry, I didn't mean to spill the beans.

GLORIA

It's okay. I am divorced. Recently divorced. So I wanted a change of scene and here we are.

ERIKA

And how's your son adjusting?

GLORIA

He's uh. Well. It's so hard at that age. Right on the cusp of adulthood but not quite there. And senior year! College applications. Making all new friends. A lot of stuff swirling in his little head. Plus his rat is sick, so. That's tough.

MARISSA

I'm sorry, a rat? Did you just say...

GLORIA

Yeah. He has a pet rat. I just couldn't say no when he asked me. What are you gonna do? Boys will be boys.

ERIKA

Boys will be doctors and athletes and wear suits to work, not raise rats.

GLORIA

I guess a rat is an odd choice for a pet.

LADY

I would invite a rat into my home to secretly poison it, but definitely not to raise it.

MARISSA

Look, Gloria, I don't want to be rude. But I wouldn't go around telling everyone your son has a pet rat. It's just sort of, I don't know, off-putting. Just saying.

GLORIA

No yeah thank you! I appreciate it. I want to make a good impression here. A good start.

ERIKA

Shall we head in to the cafe?

MARISSA

Lovely idea.

GLORIA

There's a cafe, too? Wow!

*(LADY and ERIKA walk away, giggling to each other.)*

LADY

That dress? She looks like a picnic table.

ERIKA

Definitely Ross Dress for Less.

*(MARISSA comes up to GLORIA.)*

MARISSA

Hey. I know it's tough and this can all be really intimidating but serious, if you ever need anything, I'm right around the corner. You'll recognize my house. It's the one that always has Christmas lights wrapped around every tree and the stone lions at the gate. Also it was on HGTV if you watched Color Splash: Miami Season 2 Episode 4. So. I say all this to say: I'm here for you. *We're* here for you. I'll show you the ropes, the lay of the land, WHO and WHAT you need to know to make it in Coconut Grove and for god's sake, Gloria - iron your fucking dress.

*(MARISSA gives her the speaking decorative bird pendant like it's the first tool on a magical quest and walks away. GLORIA downs the rest of her mimosa.)*

**SCENE TWO**  
**Tuesday Night**

*(OWEN stands beneath the palm tree holding a shovel. A shoebox is nearby. OWEN is about to break ground when JONATHAN enters, also holding a shoebox. They stare at each other. It is so awkward.)*

JONATHAN

What are you doing?

OWEN

I don't have an answer. What are you doing?

JONATHAN

You'll think I'm really silly if I tell you.

OWEN

I promise I won't.

JONATHAN

Ok. I don't know you so, fuck it. My pet parakeet, Peter Parker, died, and there aren't any parks or anything around here except the golf course so this is stupid but I came here thinking I'd bury her.

OWEN

It's not stupid because I came to bury my pet rat, Georgina Gloop.

JONATHAN

A pet rat? That's pretty dope.

OWEN

Thanks.

JONATHAN

How did she die?

OWEN

She choked on a food pellet.

JONATHAN

Peter Parker died cause she was fucking old.

OWEN

I'm sorry.

JONATHAN

It's ok.

*(Beat.)*

Do you mind if I sit here with you.

OWEN

Go ahead.

*(JONATHAN sits with his shoebox.)*

JONATHAN

Why'd you choose this tree?

OWEN

Uhhhh well, the golf turf sucks all the water away from my front yard so nothing grows there. This is the nearest tree. How bout you?

JONATHAN

I buried an animal here once before. A raccoon. It got hit by a car and it was still alive but in pain so my dad and I put it to sleep and we buried it under this tree.

OWEN

Whoa. That's so crazy because, ok, so I felt like a weird attraction to this tree, like THIS TREE is where I needed to bury Georgina Gloop.

JONATHAN

Palm trees are spiritual beacons. Coconuts are calling cards for the dead.

OWEN

I don't think I understand that. Who are you?

JONATHAN

I'm Jonathan Walker Roth. I'm seventeen years old and I go to private school and my favorite color is cobalt blue.

OWEN

I'm Owen Flores. I am also seventeen but I don't go to private school and I don't have a favorite color.

JONATHAN

That is so wild. My favorite color is cobalt blue because that's the color of the tiles in my favorite swimming pool.

OWEN

Oh, I can't do swimming pools. I'm allergic to chlorine.

JONATHAN

We have a salt-water swimming pool.

OWEN

That's a thing?

JONATHAN

Yeah.

OWEN

Sick.

JONATHAN

This is kind of wild. I don't often get the chance to talk to someone like you.

OWEN

What does that mean, "someone like me"?

JONATHAN

I don't know, like you live on a golf course basically and you have a pet rat and you don't have a saltwater pool and I'm sure you don't play an instrument. All of my friends play bass. Every single one.

OWEN

I used to play cello. But I stopped because my cello teacher moved to Colorado.

JONATHAN

That's so cool.

OWEN

I've never been to Colorado.

JONATHAN

I've been to Aspen. It's aight. I don't like places where winter comes. I like Miami, where it's always humid and the trees don't lose their leaves and water doesn't freeze.

OWEN

I don't know how I feel about it yet.

JONATHAN

You'll get used to the traffic. I mean, you won't, but it's a fun lie to tell. I almost got turned into roadkill downtown cause I was jaywalking.

OWEN

Yikes.

*(Long pause.)*

Uhhhh soooo should we have a service for Georgina and Peter maybe?

JONATHAN

A service?

OWEN

I don't know like should we sing a song or say a few words.

JONATHAN

That would be pretty stupid.

OWEN

Ok well I've never been to a funeral or anything before so I don't really know what to do.

JONATHAN

I think we could maybe send their bodies out on the pond. The alligator will probably eat them but, hey, that's the circle of life, right? Nature always takes care of itself.

OWEN

I kind of really want to bury Georgina under a tree. I want the roots to cradle her.

JONATHAN

That's also pretty stupid and as someone who has lost a raccoon and two dogs and six fish I think I know more about animal funerals than you do.

OWEN

Uh didn't you literally come here to bury your pet?

JONATHAN

Okay yeah maybe but there's a big difference between thinking something and actually doing it. Everything's easier in your head.

*(Beat.)*

I just really loved Peter Parker. It's rough to lose her.

OWEN

I really loved Georgina. And I'm also sorry, I wasn't expecting company. I'm really bad at talking and things like... talking.

JONATHAN

I think Peter Parker was magical.

OWEN

Oh.

JONATHAN

One time she bit - uh pecked? - my friend and then the next week my friend betrayed me.

OWEN

Whoa.

JONATHAN

She knew. How did she know? How *could* she know Harrison was going to betray me? She WARNED me. And for that I am always grateful. Peter Parker was my guardian angel and now I have no guardian angel.

OWEN

I'm sorry.

JONATHAN

It's okay. I'll just go to the pet store sometime and buy another parakeet. I want to name the next one Starscream.

OWEN

One time Georgina threw up on my favorite pair of tennis shoes. I don't know what it meant but. Maybe she was also my guardian angel. Because I ended up having to buy a new pair of tennis shoes, and then those became my new favorite pair of tennis shoes. So it's kind of like the past has to die for the future to happen, and we need to lose something to get something new that we need.

JONATHAN

Whoa.

OWEN

I pulled that out of my ass.

JONATHAN

No. It was beautiful. I love that. That's like one of those inspirational quotes my middle school history teacher shares on Facebook.

OWEN

I'm not on Facebook so I don't know what you're talking about.

JONATHAN

You don't know a lot.

OWEN

I just moved here from Tampa.

JONATHAN

That's it.

OWEN

And I also uh I don't really have lots of friends my own age, especially not other guys, so like I don't really know what to say. I don't know anything about sports, for example. I was supposed to go to a Super Bowl party but then I got strep and I missed it and I still feel guilty.

JONATHAN

Have you ever had whooping cough? I've had whooping cough. It is NOT fun. It's so much worse than strep. And sports don't mean anything to me. I mean I play soccer and lacrosse but really, I like to immerse myself in intellectual pursuits. I was supposed to go to Berlin this summer but then my parents filed for divorce.

OWEN

My parents are divorced, too! But that didn't ruin my trip to Berlin cause I didn't have one planned.

JONATHAN

My youth group might go to Berlin next year. Maybe you should see if you can come.

OWEN

Nah, I'm scared of Europe.

*(JONATHAN laughs really hard at this. OWEN laughs really hard because JONATHAN is laughing really hard. JONATHAN gets a text. He stares at it really hard.)*

JONATHAN

I should probably get going. Some friends and I are hanging at the marina, if you wanna come.

OWEN

What about our pets?

JONATHAN

Oh, um. I don't know. There's a dumpster behind the cafe. Every Friday they take it to an incinerator.

OWEN

I think they deserve better than that, don't you?

JONATHAN

Of course I do. But this tree isn't going to be here for much longer anyway, so I don't know what you want me to do.

OWEN

Wait what?

JONATHAN

The tree's getting cut down to make space for another hole. You know, for golf balls?

OWEN

They're cutting down a whole palm tree for that?

JONATHAN

They'll put a little flag by the hole with a palm tree on it, that's kind of the logo. Look, are you coming or not because my bike has a flat so I need to walk all the way there.

OWEN

You go ahead. There's something I have to do.

*(JOHNATHAN exits, leaving OWEN with the shoeboxes.)*

### **SCENE THREE**

#### **Wednesday Sunset**

*(OWEN sits at the base of the palm tree. GLORIA stands above him.)*

GLORIA

Don't be mad at me. Not now.

OWEN

Why do you think I'm mad at you?

GLORIA

You skipped dinner last night, you skipped breakfast, you skipped lunch, and you skipped dinner again tonight. You won't look at me and you've barely spoken to me. What's wrong?

*(OWEN doesn't respond.)*

Come inside, Owen. I made cornflake chicken for dinner. I know it's your favorite.

OWEN

I can't.

GLORIA

You can't? I'm sorry, what?

OWEN

I can't come inside.

GLORIA

Are you serious right now.

OWEN

I am so serious.

GEORGIA

What do you want from me, Owen? An apology? Is that all? Yeah, I'm sorry I couldn't make it work for YOU. I'm sorry we couldn't move to ORLANDO or someplace cooler.

OWEN

I don't want a fake apology for fake things. Besides, this isn't about you.

GLORIA

Huh. And what is *this*?

OWEN

It's a stakeout.

GLORIA

Excuse me?

OWEN

I know they're planning to cut down this tree. I don't want that to happen.

GLORIA

I think the phrase you mean is "sit-in" not "stakeout." A stakeout is a police thing.

OWEN

Whatever. I am doing this. I've decided.

GLORIA

Why?

OWEN

This tree is a burial site. This tree is special.

GLORIA

What are you talking about? A burial site for who?

OWEN

Georgina Gloop, and Peter Parker, and the roadkill raccoon who I have named Jill for convenience.

GLORIA

I am so confused.

OWEN

I buried Georgina Gloop here.

GLORIA

I'm sorry you did WHAT

OWEN

I buried Georgi-

GLORIA

You buried your rat on the golf course! Owen! That's- That's- I can't even begin to describe what that is. That is INSANE. I can't believe you. You're impossible.

OWEN

Maybe you're impossible, you ever think-

GLORIA

No! I am completely possible! Maybe you should try being possible sometime. Why, of all trees, did you choose this one? In the middle of the golf course! Why can't you be a normal teenage boy and play Grand Theft whatever or skateboard in the park or drink ginger ale?

OWEN

You refused to buy me GTA last Christmas and the park is full of asbestos - it closed yesterday - and ginger ale upsets my stomach, you know that.

GLORIA

Oh, well, can't you do something with someone somewhere!

OWEN

Yeah, I am doing a stakeout, with you, right here.

GLORIA

I am not doing this with you.

*(OWEN is actually really hurt by this.)*

OWEN

What?

GLORIA

Did you think I would actually do this with you?

OWEN

I don't know. I thought...

GLORIA

Look. I know this is hard, it's been tough on me too-

OWEN

Oh, has it?

GLORIA

IT HAS. But we've barely been here a week. Don't ruin this for us. What do you think is going to happen anyway, Owen? You think Marissa—yeah, I know the owner—is going to change her mind just cause you did a hunger strike or whatever?

OWEN

Wait so these people are who you've been hanging out with?

GLORIA

“These people” are my friends, Owen.

OWEN

“These people” are going to desecrate a grave site.

GLORIA

This is not a grave site.

OWEN

I bet you don't even really know anything about them.

GLORIA

Uh. Yeah. I definitely do. I know that Marissa was on HGTV, and Erika does dog shows, and Lady does uh well Lady does all sorts of things, for example she likes blenders.

OWEN

Those are such vague facts. How are they your friends if you don't even like know their favorite colors or where they bury their dead?

GLORIA

Owen. Come inside. I won't ask you again.

OWEN

You just don't want me to embarrass you in front of your fancy new friends-

GLORIA

Yeah, that's exactly it, actually. You're embarrassing me.

OWEN

You hate me.

GLORIA

I don't hate you. You just want me to hate you.

OWEN

No, I don't.

GLORIA

You do. You wish I did so bad, and it breaks my heart.

OWEN

Does your heart hate me?

GLORIA

No. How could it?

OWEN

You just said I was embarrassing you.

GLORIA

Can we not do this now? Can we not do this in the middle of the golf course? Everyone's going to see us. They already think you're a little weird, Owen, and more power to you if you embrace that but I don't want you to get bullied or something because you're the neighborhood freak camping out in front of a palm tree where you buried your dead rat and Peter Parker and God knows who else.

OWEN

Is that what I am to you? Is that what I am to your friends?

GLORIA

At least I'm making friends. You could try it.

OWEN

I am trying. I had friends in Tampa. And then we came here and I only had one friend, my rat friend, and now she's DEAD. Tampa was home and Coconut Grove is not home.

GLORIA

I did so much of this for YOU. We stayed in Florida for YOU.

OWEN

This isn't the same. Everything is rotated 45 degrees to the left. The ocean is on the wrong side. It's so humid and HOT ALL THE TIME. There are golf courses instead of convention centers. Tampa was-

GLORIA

FORGET TAMPA. Why don't you ever shut up about Tampa!

OWEN

Because TAMPA IS HOME.

GLORIA

Tampa is Tampa. This is HOME. HOME IS HOME. COCONUT GROVE IS HOME. WILL YOU STOP BEING SO FUCKING EMBARRASSING?

*(Beat.)*

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to, um... Come inside, Owen. Eat your favorite dinner.

OWEN

I am doing this, with or without you.

*(A stand-off.)*

GLORIA

When this tree comes down on Sunday morning, don't come to me for comfort.

OWEN

Why would I?

*(GLORIA has left. OWEN is alone.)*

**SCENE FOUR**  
**Wednesday Night**

*(OWEN, alone, in front of the palm tree, with a crumpled piece of paper that he reads from. As the monologue goes on, a figure appears. It is GEORGINA GLOOP, the dead rat.)*

OWEN

Dear Georgina,

I'm sorry I didn't have this letter ready for your burial because I waited until I could make it perfect. It is still not perfect but I hope it makes you smile a little rat smile.

I can't find the words to say how I feel. Maybe that's because I don't know how I feel. I couldn't even cry. I know that's typical of me but this time it feels dirty. Dirty is also not the right word, it's a replacement word for a word that I don't know yet. I wonder if I'll ever know the word.

I won't bore you with recalling how we met and what you meant to me, because you know both already because you were there. But now you're not there. And that's hard but it's mostly just lonely. You were always on my side and now nobody's really on my side.

Things haven't felt possible in a while, and you made things feel possible. You still do. I'm trying to save your tree and I'm trying to not think about failing but I think if I just stick to it I can accomplish something. I can accomplish something for your memory.

Here are several things I'll miss about you: your coarse rat fur, the way you looked at me like I was the silliest thing in the whole world but it was so delightful, the way your tail twitched when you

slept, the way you watch me... Well, maybe that list is just a few things and not several. My brain is tired and so am I and so is my heart.

My mom doesn't understand about the tree, but I know she loves you, too. I think she misses you as much as I do.

Love - Sincerely - Safe travels - Goodbye - Rest in peace - I'll miss you, Owen.

P.S. I'll put this letter in a coconut, and plant it, and this letter will grow into a new palm tree just for you.

## **SCENE FIVE**

### **Nighttime**

*(GEORGINA GLOOP and PETER PARKER and JILL in an eerie world. The Palm Tree glows.)*

GEORGINA

So this is it.

JILL

Pretty much.

PETER

Yeah.

*(Long pause. The sound of crickets, but distant and warped. The sound of the ocean, but close and clear. The sound of traffic, but somewhere in between.)*

GEORGINA

Is it... Is it like this all the time?

JILL

What do you mean?

GEORGINA

Like does it change at all, or...?

JILL

Nope, this is pretty much it. It changes slightly, but...

GEORGINA

Okay.

PETER

That's terrifying.

JILL

Well, that's life. Or death, I guess.

*(Trying to make small talk)*

Speaking of, uh, how did it happen to you?

GEORGINA

Tried to swallow a pellet. May have been too big for me. Went down the wrong pipe. Choked to death. I've never been a glutton but I may have been a bit overzealous in that one moment.

JILL

Damn, that sucks.

GEORGINA

Meh. I guess my time was coming. No control over that. How bout you?

JILL

Road kill.

GEORGINA

Classic.

JILL

How bout you, bird brains?

PETER

I don't know, man, I just got too fuckin' old.

*(They find this hysterical. Their laughter quiets down and it's silent again. PETER is struggling to be content.)*

GEORGINA

So this really is it, huh? Heaven is a golf course.

JILL

What makes you think we're in Heaven?

GEORGINA

Hell is a golf course.

PETER

I don't think I subscribe to those dichotomies, but I understand how that could bring you comfort.

GEORGINA

You shut up.

JILL

This is just what comes after. What comes after is a golf course.

GEORGINA

Who'd a-thunk.

JILL

Or maybe this, whatever it is, it's not a single place. It's different for all of us and sometimes maybe there's overlap? It was just me for a while, you know. Very lonely. Personally, I think it's where you belong that you go.

PETER

I belong on a golf course? No, I belong in a plush cage, hanging in the living room, a small child sneaking Cheerios to me.

JILL

You were buried here, weren't you? So this must be where you belong.

PETER

I don't think it is. It can't be. It shouldn't be. This isn't home. I want to go home.

JILL

Maybe this is home now. But what do I know, I ate literal trash, only garbage comes out of my mouth.

GEORGINA

Good one.

JILL

Thanks. I've been working on being funny. It was lonely so I figured why not pursue a hobby.

GEORGINA

Maybe I should take up a hobby. I could try some stuff out.

JILL

No harm in trying. You have eternity.

GEORGINA

I could do all sorts of things. The world is my oyster! Or... the afterlife is my oyster? This world, this... uh. What comes after is my oyster...?

*(PETER is obviously down in the dumps.)*

JILL

What's up, feathers?

PETER

My name is Peter Parker! That's my name that he gave me. You talk about this, about whatever this is, the afterlife, and you talk about the future, if we can call it that, but I can't stop thinking about the boy, my boy, in the past. I can't stop thinking about his giant eyes or his giant mouth or his giant hands or the way his eyebrows went up and down when he talked or that one time he fell off his bike and I saw him get bandaged up and the blood you guys, all the blood. I'd never seen anything bleed before. I think about him missing me and being alone and feeling sad. I don't want to think about him being sad but I think he is. I think I am a loss, I think he feels my loss.

GEORGINA

That feeling is a shitty feeling. No one deserves that. Look, I'll tell it to you straight, I hated being a rat. I hated the cage. I hated my matted hair. I hated the shitty food. But I couldn't hate him. I just couldn't.

PETER

I hate thinking about his hurt. I hate thinking about him waking up to feed me that one day and finding...

GEORGINA

I wonder if he blames himself. I wonder if he has nightmares where he gives me the pellet that's too big, or the roles are reversed. I wish I could reach through dimensions and slap him with my itchy rat hand and tell him not to.

JILL

You both are so melodramatic. There's nothing romantic or magical about life and death and life after death. Death is dirty and gross. Life is dirty and gross. When I was born I was squelched into a pile of muddy grass during a hurricane. My mom got mauled by a Rottweiler two weeks after I was born. I saw my siblings get dragged off into darkness by snakes over the next month. And just when I thought I was finally on the up, I died. I died on the Fourth of July with my intestines scrawled across the pavement like sidewalk chalk for everyone to see. I'm not trying to be mean, I'm just saying: This pain is not new. This loss is not new. Loss is nothing new to the animals. It's in our bones.

*(Beat)*

It's *deep* in our bones.

## SCENE SIX

### Thursday Night

*(OWEN is in front of the palm tree. JONATHAN enters holding a hoodie.)*

JONATHAN

Knock knock.

OWEN

Who is it.

JONATHAN

I got your text. I brought a hoodie.

*(OWEN puts on the hoodie. It's awkwardly tight but he's too nice to say anything.)*

OWEN

Thanks. It's so randomly cold. Is this what the weather's always like down here?

JONATHAN

I think it's cause that storm is rolling in. It always gets cold before a storm.

OWEN

*(trying to be cool)*

Oh, word?

JONATHAN

Uh. Yeah. Word.

OWEN

I didn't know there was a storm coming.

JONATHAN

I only know cause my sister's training to be a weather girl so the weather channel is always on. Also—check out what I swiped.

*(JONATHAN whips out two cans of beer.)*

OWEN

*(trying to be spicy because he doesn't know what they are)*

Ooooooh two canned liquids yeahhh

JONATHAN

Dude. It's beer. I stole them from my dad.

OWEN

Oh, I don't know if I should drink beer. Carbonated things make my stomach feel like it's eating itself.

JONATHAN

Yeah. Same.

*(JONATHAN cracks open the beer and takes a sip.)*

OWEN

Then why are you drinking it?

JONATHAN

*(a song he made up)*

Because I hate myself  
I hate myself  
I like to inconvenience myself  
I hate myself  
YEAH I hate myself  
And I like to make my life a little bit more difficult

*(JONATHAN takes another sip like nothing happened.)*

OWEN

Whaaaaat.

JONATHAN

I don't know. I just made that up.

OWEN

Do you like do music?

JONATHAN

Nah, I just play bass like everyone else.

OWEN

Right.

*(JONATHAN offers the other beer. OWEN takes it and cracks it open and sips it.)*

OWEN

I love this.

*(He hates this.)*

JONATHAN

My friends and I do this all the time during the school year. Golf course beers. We usually do it at the end of each grading period just cause it's so nice to just catch a fucking break, man. The summer is usually super humid and gross, but when a cold front comes it's nice to come out here and listen to the crickets and feel the nighttime breezes and look up at the stars. It makes me feel really small but also really significant.

*(They listen to the crickets and feel the breeze and look at the stars and feel small and significant.)*

OWEN

We can't see the stars in Tampa. The streetlights wash them out. We lived in a duplex downtown.

JONATHAN

That's so bizarre. That's so fucking cool. Duplex.

OWEN

Uh. Yeah.

JONATHAN

*A duplex.*

OWEN

*(like this is the coolest thing in the world)*

There were a lot of stray cats around.

JONATHAN

Okay so when my parents told me they were going to get divorced, I got really mad at them and quit golf lessons as revenge. What did you do when your parents got divorced?

OWEN

Nothing.

JONATHAN

Really?

OWEN

Was I supposed to do something? I just kind of got sad and lonely.

JONATHAN

That's pretty good revenge.

OWEN

When they split up, my dad was, um... I figured I'd lose the life I'd

known whoever I chose to go with so I chose to come here because it was still Florida. But now I'm kind of stuck. Like I just feel... stuck.

JONATHAN

How so?

OWEN

I don't know actually. I didn't expect to say that.

JONATHAN

You look like you're really in it, huh?

OWEN

What's that mean?

JONATHAN

You just seem overwhelmed.

OWEN

Oh. I guess I am. Can we talk about something else?

JONATHAN

Uh sure. Ummmm.

*(They can't think of anything to talk about so they sip their beers and listen to the crickets and the breeze.*

*JONATHAN gets a text. He stares at it really hard.)*

OWEN

What's up?

JONATHAN

Just my mom.

OWEN

Oh.

JONATHAN

She's just a total helicopter parent. Wondering where I am. It fucking sucks. She cares way too much. But she's cool, I guess. She bought me a new bike yesterday, so. That was pretty sweet. How's your mom?

OWEN

My mom's kind of... I don't know things are rough right now.

JONATHAN

That stinks.

OWEN

Yeah it's pretty stinky. I mean I love her but sometimes I wish she was on my side more often. Or that my sides were compatible with her sides.

JONATHAN

Yo, do you wanna do something crazy?

OWEN

Like what?

JONATHAN

I've always wanted to drive one of the golf karts around and I don't know about you but I feel like tonight is a good night for it. "The calm before the storm," you know?

OWEN

That could be fun, yeah!

JONATHAN

The golf karts on the other side of the course but we should totally drive it to the lake and see if we can find any gators. You wanna actually do it?

OWEN

Oh, I wish. But I can't leave the tree.

JONATHAN

Huh?

OWEN

I'm doing a stakeout... or a sit-in I guess, I'm not sure what to call it.

JONATHAN

What are you talking about?

OWEN

I'm trying to save the tree. They're going to cut down the tree and I don't want that to happen.

JONATHAN

Wait, so... Okay so I thought you just came here at night to hang with me but it seems like what you're saying is that you're just here all the time? That's fucking insane.

OWEN

But these people are trying to destroy the last palm tree on the golf course, and-

JONATHAN

Oh no don't say "these people." I hate when people say "these people" about my family.

OWEN

Your family...?

JONATHAN

People hate us because we own properties and have a salt-water pool but really people hate us because they hate themselves and that they're not us.

OWEN

Oh my god. You're one of them.

JONATHAN

I trust my mom's judgment. Moms are never wrong! That's like science.

OWEN

But what if they are? What if they are wrong about this?

JONATHAN

That's impossible.

OWEN

No, it's completely possible. It really is. And even if they are right, even if trying to save the tree is silly and pointless and I am a freak, isn't it worth it to just try? If you never stand up for yourself, not even once, everyone will bulldoze over you and I don't want to be the shy kid who never stood up for himself!

JONATHAN

Yeah, I agree, stand up, but not for stupid shit like this.

OWEN

Stupid?

JONATHAN

Yeah. I'm sorry. I just think this is idiotic.

OWEN

Do you think I'm an idiot.

JONATHAN

I didn't say that and you know I didn't but you know what, yeah, this is kind of an idiot thing to do and I wished you trusted me about this.

OWEN

But I keep trusting people and they keep betraying me and it's so embarrassing. I hate this feeling. I feel like this ALL THE TIME.

JONATHAN

Maybe if you didn't do embarrassing shit all the time you wouldn't be so fucking embarrassed, dumbass.

*(Beat.)*

I'm sorry, that was... That was so mean. I might be a bad person.

OWEN

Maybe you are.

JONATHAN

I can't be. I do all the things a good person does. When a cashier asks me if I want to round up to the nearest dollar for charity I always say yes. I don't step on earthworms after it rains. I always turn off the lights when I leave a room. And when I visit New York City and I ride the subway I always give money to the singing homeless people. I am a good person and I am right and I don't know why I feel so bad right now. Stop making me feel bad.

OWEN

You should feel bad. This tree is important. This is sacred dirt. This tree is a grave.

JONATHAN

Ha, for who?

OWEN

Georgina Gloop, and Peter Parker, and Jill the roadkill raccoon, and whoever else is down here.

*(A pause as JONATHAN realizes what this means.)*

JONATHAN

No. You didn't.

OWEN

I told you I was going to.

JONATHAN

I didn't think you actually- FUCK. This can't be real.

OWEN

This is so real. Roots, dirt, coconuts, corpses—THOSE ARE REAL THINGS.

JOHNATHAN

No, those are fake things that a crazy person thinks are real. You know what's real? Beer cans. Community. Gates. Golf carts, golf balls, holes-in-one, things that don't decompose underground because they are too strong for that.

OWEN

Don't you feel any sense of duty toward Peter Parker? At all? We have to do this, they need us to do this.

JONATHAN

They really don't. And this isn't even just weird anymore this is beyond that this is like obsessive and scary.

OWEN

So you're not going to stay here with me?

JONATHAN

Stay here with...? Of course absolutely no.

OWEN

But I thought— I thought we were friends...

JONATHAN

I mean maybe we could've been but.... I've only known you for like three days, and I don't really know you. I'm sorry but I... I don't know you. I'm sorry.

OWEN

Please.

JONATHAN

I won't tell anyone about this, just... Don't text me anymore, okay?

*(He starts to leave but stops.)*

I should've buried Peter Parker. You took that away from me.

*(Beat.)*

Good luck with the tree.

*(JONATHAN leaves.)*

**SCENE SEVEN**  
**Friday Night**

*(OWEN stands by the tree. GLORIA stands away from him. It's raining. We hear the thunder of a coming storm.)*

GLORIA

Owen. Come inside. Please.

*(OWEN doesn't respond.)*

Owen I have lost so much sleep over you. I've stayed up with you every night this week. I haven't slept in days. I lost my appetite. You are destroying me, Owen. And I hate that. And no, I don't hate you, I just hate how you're acting. But I am tired. I am exhausted. I just want to curl up into a little ball like an armadillo and sleep myself into oblivion.

*(OWEN doesn't respond.)*

That storm is coming in. I can't sleep knowing you're out here. You'll die out here. Don't die, Owen. It's not worth it.

*(OWEN doesn't respond.)*

Look, I'll do whatever you want. I'll buy you a bike. I'll buy you Grand Theft Auto! I'll make cornflake chicken every night for an entire year, we'll eat nothing but cornflake chicken, I promise. Just... Can't you... Please? For me?

OWEN

This isn't about you.

GLORIA

Then who's it about? Georgina Gloop? She's dead, Owen, so let her rest.

OWEN

No, this is about ME.

*(Maybe OWEN didn't realize this before.)*

GLORIA

That sounds selfish.

OWEN

Okay? And maybe it is. So what? All my life has been about other people. I've never had something for *me*, you know? I want something for me. The ONE TIME I find something for me, everybody important to me wants to discourage me. I am so sick of feeling hopeless.

GLORIA

This tree can't give you hope. It doesn't mean anything.

OWEN

Fuck you.

GLORIA

EXCUSE ME. You can NOT say that to me, I am your MOTHER-

OWEN

I SHOULD'VE CHOSEN DAD.

*(GLORIA slaps him. They are both shocked.)*

GLORIA

Owen...

*(OWEN shakes his head no. GLORIA leaves him.)*

**SCENE EIGHT**

## Saturday Morning

*(MARISSA, ERIKA, and LADY hold glasses of sangria on the golf course. They all look really nice. GLORIA is also there. She's completely worn out and distant.)*

*(They down their drinks, and get refills, except GLORIA who has no drink at all. The Palm Tree is gone, only a stump is left behind.)*

MARISSA

Alright ladies. Happy Sangria Saturday!! You know the drill. Rose/Bud/Thorn of the past week. And what a week it's been! I think Erika should go first because she has some delightful news, correct?

*(MARISSA gives ERIKA the speaking decorative bird pendant.)*

ERIKA

Oh, yes, I do. I'll start with my thorn and say that Cosmo didn't actually get valedictorian—so tragic!—but he did impregnate another poodle so we have some award-winners on the way! That is also my bud. And my rose is that I was just recently named Regional County Vice Chair of the Miami-Dade County Junior Dog Show!

MARISSA

That's fantastic.

LADY

Congratulations.

*(Sip and pass.)*

Can I do mine now?

ERIKA

Sure thing.

LADY

Okay ummm wow so super exciting my rose is that I bought a NEW BLENDER!!! Yayyy. And my thorn, then, is that I immediately broke the new blender. So my bud is that now I get to buy a NEW new blender. Lesson learned, there is such a thing as too many bananas. And that's all I got.

*(Sip and pass.)*

MARISSA

I'll go next then unless Gloria would like to go?

*(GLORIA doesn't respond.)*

Okay then I'll go. My rose is a special one because it seems like Mother Nature was on my side this weekend. That storm that rolled through knocked down the palm tree! Now we just have to handle that stump, and rip it out by the roots. So thank you, Mother Nature, for always taking care of yourself. My bud is that I am officially going to Berlin next summer to chaperone Jonathan's youth group trip! Exciting!! So that's something to look forward to. And my thorn is, well, I was a little spooked by this kid who was doing a sit-in on our golf course.

LADY

I drove by on Wednesday night and he almost gave me a heart attack. I was shocked. I've never seen anything like that.

MARISSA

I find it quite frightening that people like that are roaming freely in our neighborhood. And I wouldn't mind if he was with friends or

something, boys will be boys, but he was just sitting there alone like a freak.

ERIKA

Truthfully, I find it hilarious. How embarrassing to have nothing better to do with your time than hang out on a golf course! What a lowlife.

LADY

At least a coconut didn't fall on his head, or you'd have a lawsuit on yours.

MARISSA

Oh, could you imagine? That little creep in a courtroom, whoever he is—

ERIKA

I heard that Gina saw him trying to set up a tent one night. Do you think he'd bring the tent? Give his testimony from inside the tent?

*(They cackle with laughter.)*

LADY

“A tent?”—I'm dead, I'm literally dead! I've been murdered in cold blood!!!

GLORIA

That was my son. Actually.

MARISSA

What?

ERIKA

What are you talking about?

*(GLORIA grabs the pendant.)*

GLORIA

That's Owen. Owen did the tree sit-in. That's MY SON you're laughing at. And it's so easy to laugh at him. He's weird and kind of crazy and he does things sometimes that I don't understand and I try to understand, I try so hard, but I just can't do it. Things like the tree. It's so odd but he does it anyway. Because he believes it is right and when he believes something he fixes his mind on it and that's all he's got space for. Like when he decided he wanted a rat. He fixed his mind on it and that was all he could talk about for three months and finally I gave in. I love my son. But sometimes the things he does seem like attacks on me. Like he's trying to embarrass me or destroy me or get revenge on me. But I know he isn't, I promise I do, and I know I should know that more deeply or whatever because I'm his mom but I'm sorry, it's hard. It is so hard and I'm trying. I am trying to understand him and support him but it is not easy because what he wants and what I want don't always line up. It's so easy to stand there on the outside and laugh at him and say that he's a little terror but really I have done awful things to him. I have so many regrets about the ways I've hurt him. I found his cat dead on the side of the road twelve years ago and I told him it ran away and I've never told him the truth. When we went to Disney World I lost him for a solid half hour and I was too embarrassed to ask for help so I found him on my own. On his seventh birthday I tickled him so hard that he peed himself and he had begged me to stop and I didn't because I thought it would be funny but he BEGGED and I IGNORED HIM. And the worst one is that he used to have this giant Lego spaceship - Star Wars or Star Trek or something, something with space - and he loved it and one time I was so mad at him that I threw it on the ground and it shattered. And I never said sorry. I never apologized to him. He

never rebuilt it. And you may think I'm being melodramatic but all those things are why I think I am sometimes so selfish because I abandoned him in his time of need like I ALWAYS DO. And what did I abandon him for this time? Some golf-course-sangria and salt-water-swimming-pools and Dance Mom incarnates who don't spend any time with their kids who are off playing sports they don't like to get your attention! I've wanted to BE YOU for so long. I wanted to have stone lions and be on HGTV. I wanted prize-winning dogs. I wanted to be able to afford a blender whenever I fucking want a blender. And then I grew up and I realized that those aren't actually real things. Those aren't happy-making. And I grew back down because I wanted to fit in. But I'm just not one of you. I never can be, because at heart I am always going to be the weird kid with the rat and the tree and the science experiments about frozen salt water. And you can't change me. I will not be you.

*(A hefty pause.)*

MARISSA

So what? Do you want a ribbon or something? "Someone give this bitch an Oscar for best supporting actress!" Give me a break, Gloria. You can't shame us. You're right.

GLORIA

What?

MARISSA

You're absolutely right. We're terrible people. I hit a stray cat in the road two Mondays ago and I didn't even feel anything.

ERIKA

I started a fake cancer charity and embezzled the money to pay for a prize-winning French poodle straight from Lyon.

LADY

And frankly I am just dangerously stupid.

MARISSA

Say what you want about us but we've faced our demons. When are you going to face yours?

**SCENE NINE**

**Saturday Sunset**

*(OWEN sits on the golf course. He is lonely for a sad, solitary moment. GLORIA enters and watches him.)*

GLORIA

Can I sit here with you?

*(OWEN quietly nods so she sits. A long pause.)*

OWEN

I saw you fight those women earlier.

GLORIA

I didn't fight. I just rambled like an idiot.

OWEN

I watched from the window. It was pretty badass.

GLORIA

Thanks.

*(Long pause.)*

There was one good thing I learned from those ladies. I learned this neat activity called rose/bud/thorn. It's supposed to help you let go of

the past and focus on the future. Rose is something good that happened, bud is something that's beginning or in the making, and thorn is something bad that happened. I can go first. Um. My thorn is that I burned a lot of bridges in this neighborhood that I maybe shouldn't have burned. My rose is that I got a bunch of free drinks and also I stole some jewelry from Marissa.

*(GLORIA flashes the speaking decorative bird pendant.)*

OWEN

You know, Marissa is also divorced.

GLORIA

Don't gossip, Owen, it's not polite. But thanks.

*(beat)*

Anyway my bud is that I will be spending more time with my family from now on and you are my family and I like spending time with you.

OWEN

I'll start with thorn. My thorn is that my tree got knocked down and also that my pet rat died and also that I thought I was making a friend but he kind of betrayed me so I never want to see him again. But my rose is that I feel a little bit more grown up now. In a weird way. My bud is that... Um I can't really think of a bud.

GLORIA

That's okay.

*(Long pause.)*

I'm really sorry about your tree.

OWEN

I don't know if it was ever really about the tree, it's just... in school all my teachers are always saying that *the youth are important*, that *we can make a difference*. You know? If we believe in something and we stand up for it, it can work out. But this week, I did that, and I didn't change anything. I didn't change any minds because nobody was listening.

GLORIA

I'm sorry I didn't listen to you, Owen. I am so sorry.

OWEN

It's okay. I didn't listen to you. And I guess it was all pretty stupid anyway. I was being really stupid.

GLORIA

You are not stupid.

OWEN

Okay.

*(Long pause.)*

All I get is a stump. And even that's getting ripped out.

GLORIA

Losing stinks, Owen. Losing is really hard. But at the end of the day, our losses are part of who we are. Loss is in our bones.

*(Beat.)*

OWEN

That is so cheesy.

GLORIA

It's cheesy because it's true, okay. Loss can blow your whole life open

and you just have to keep going. And you can hide it away, you can close your eyes, but it's still there. You can bury it deep inside you, but even buried things get remembered.

OWEN

Like Georgina Gloop. I remember the first night after we took her home I was letting her crawl around the room and she crawled up on my chest and she lay her head on my sternum and stared at me and it was like she was saying "This is it." Like I was hers and she was mine. There was a connection. I felt that connection with the tree, too, sometimes. — Oh God. I think I probably sound really ridiculous.

GLORIA

You sound perfectly normal amount ridiculous. Did you know I did something like this when I was a kid?

OWEN

No way.

GLORIA

Yeah, but it was with a trampoline when I was ten. I did a sit-in - a sit-*on* I guess - because my parents wanted to sell it and I was NOT having it. Not as ambitious as yours, but...

OWEN

I mean. Mine was pretty lame. I guess. Did your parents sell the trampoline?

GLORIA

Yeah.

*(Long pause.)*

What a way to set up your senior year, huh? And your last first day of grade school, wow. I remember your first day of kindergarten. You

cried and cried. You did not want to go. But I threw you on that bus and when you came home you were so happy. And I have to be honest, it made me sad. I was sad for two reasons. I was sad because you were just a tiny kid but there you were, you were already growing up. I was losing you already. And the second reason I was sad was because you reminded me of me. And I...

*(A very long pause.)*

I don't know.

*(A very long pause. OWEN lays his head on GLORIA's shoulder. GLORIA lays her head on OWEN's head.)*

OWEN

A year ago everything felt so possible.

GLORIA

And how does it feel now?

*(JILL, PETER PARKER, and GEORGINA GLOOP appear and stare at the Palm Tree Stump. They do not see GLORIA and OWEN.)*

PETER

Huh.

JILL

I told you it changes slightly.

GEORGINA

That's not a slight change, the whole tree is gone!

JILL

It's not gone, it's just... moved.

PETER

Where did it go?

JILL

I don't know! Where it belongs, I guess. I don't know the rules, okay?  
I don't even know if they are any rules.

GEORGINA

Could we bring it back?

JILL

How?

PETER

Magic! Spooky magic!

JILL

There's no such thing as magic. There's only death. And golf courses.  
And God— maybe.

GEORGINA

Wait. So. If the tree was here and then it wasn't here, that means the  
tree changed. So things here are capable of change. So WE can  
change. Right?

JILL

I don't know...

*(During the following, the DEAD ANIMALS notice a  
coconut inside the palm tree stump. GEORGINA GLOOP  
pulls it out and studies it.)*

OWEN

I feel like I have spent so long trying to figure out how to be a good person, a conscientious person, a serious, grown-up person, a person who cares about things and the way things are, and I feel like I've become so wrapped up in trying to be a good person that I forgot to actually be one. I think I might be a bad person.

GLORIA

There's no such thing as good people or bad people. I think we're all just here, trying our best. Bad people can do good things, and good people can do really bad things. But at the end of the day we're all just here. Until we're not.

OWEN

But what happens when we're not here? What comes after that?

GLORIA

Only the dead know.

*(Beat.)*

OWEN

A year ago, everything felt so possible.

GLORIA

And how does it feel now?

*(Lights fade. END OF PLAY.)*