

Weeds of Sloth

By

Mark Bowen

Copyright ©2015

1566 Pine Ave. # 205A
Long Beach, CA 90813

(562) 335-6024

co97Bruin@gmail.com

Cast of Characters

Jennifer: An Amnesia Victim; 18-20

Sandra: Her Sister, a Doctor; Late 20s

Dave: A waiter at her favorite restaurant; 20-40

Johnny: A mysterious apparition from her past; 20s

Deborah: His mother; 50s

I envy not in any moods
The Captive void of Noble Rage,
The linnet born within the cage,
That never knew the summer woods:

I envy not the beast that takes
His license in the field of time;
Unfetter'd by the sense of crime,
To whom a conscience never wakes;

Nor what may count itself as blest,
The heart that never plighted troth
But stagnates in the weeds of sloth;
Nor any want-begotten rest.

I hold it true, whate'er befall;
I feel it when I trouble most;
'Tis better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all.

In Memoriam, Canto 27

- Alfred, Lord Tennyson

Note:

Overlapping dialogue shall be denoted with a double slash (//) to indicate the point at which the next character starts to interrupt.

ACT IScene 1

A Restaurant. SANDRA and JENNIFER are just finishing their dinner

SANDRA

So, anyway, her father is understandably upset that it ended up getting this bad.

JENNIFER

I don't understand why you didn't catch it sooner.

SANDRA

Well, that's what I'm saying. It's the nature of her condition... It's just what prevents anybody from seeing it until it got to this point.

JENNIFER

So just how bad is it?

SANDRA

Well, actually... let me show you...

(She fumbles around looking for an envelope)

JENNIFER

Do I want to see this while I'm eating?

SANDRA

I thought you were finished.

JENNIFER

I was thinking about dessert.

SANDRA

It's getting kind of late...

JENNIFER

I got you a cake.

SANDRA

Oh, honey, you really didn't have to... damn, where is that...

(She continues looking around for the envelope while the waiter, JOHNNY, approaches)

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY

So how was everything this evening, ladies?

SANDRA

Fine, thank you.

JOHNNY

So can I get you anything else... maybe some more iced tea or something....?

SANDRA

No thanks, just the-

JENNIFER

Um, yes that would be nice.

(The bogus "Service with a smile" act disappears in an almost slapstic manner at this unexpected response)

JOHNNY

(recovering)

And for you, ma'am?

SANDRA

Ok, sure, I guess.... // I mean...

DAVE

// You want-

SANDRA

Yes! Please...

(They stare at each other in silence as he clears off their old glasses and continue to do so for a few moments after he goes. Finally, they both laugh.)

SANDRA

Thank you. For a minute I thought it was just me.

JENNIFER

Just you? I practically had my back to him and I could still see those shoulders drop!

SANDRA

You're not gonna...?

JENNIFER
Gonna what?

SANDRA
Ask to speak to the manager.

JENNIFER
Oh please.

SANDRA
Hey, we've been going through this for years...

JENNIFER
Yeah, and it's always-

SANDRA
... and it's not just when you're looking to get them in trouble. All those other times... //

JENNIFER
(overlapping)
// I'm sorry I embarrass you...

SANDRA
(continuous, overlapping)
// ... when you just have to go on and on complimenting them to their boss.

JENNIFER
Whatever...

SANDRA
(after a pause)
Plus, it's usually pretty obvious it wasn't really about how great you thought his service was, but about how cute you thought his ass was.

JENNIFER
Hey, don't get me started...

SANDRA
Get you started?

JENNIFER
Well, if you don't want me to embarrass you with it, then let's not encourage me to start thinking of that other little thing I tend to notice at restaurants... especially with this guy...

SANDRA
What are you talking about?

JENNIFER

Well....

(giving her an evil grin)

You know....

SANDRA

(now understanding but clearly not agreeing)

Ummmm.... ok.

(pause)

Oh, and speaking of things you love to do to embarrass me, you didn't...?

JENNIFER

Didn't what?

SANDRA

You didn't tell anyone here that it was...

JENNIFER

Oh, come on... would I do that to you?

SANDRA

No, I mean it, you'd better not have told them to come out here and-

JENNIFER

I didn't.

SANDRA

Good, you'd better not have. I am not in the mood to be sung to by a bunch of-

(A different waiter, DAVE, comes to the table with two new glasses of iced tea.)

DAVE

Here you go.

SANDRA

Thanks.

JENNIFER

Thank you.

(He sets the check down on the table.)

DAVE

Whenever you're ready.

(He goes off)

SANDRA
Could you be any less subtle?

JENNIFER
Yeah.

SANDRA
I guess he didn't change much after his first attempt.

JENNIFER
What?

SANDRA
You know... to get us out of here.

(Jennifer, having seen that it was a
different waiter, doesn't understand.)

JENNIFER
What do you mean?

SANDRA
He recovered nicely the first time but... well you
know.... oh, never mind.

JENNIFER
Well yeah, just like the other guy....

SANDRA
What other guy?
(sees she's not paying attention,
looking around for Johnny)
Jenn?

JENNIFER
Oh, sorry... what?

SANDRA
Never mind.

JENNIFER
So what were you telling me about the girl?

SANDRA
The girl?

JENNIFER
That little girl... patient of yours. Something about her
x-rays?

SANDRA

Oh yes...

(She finds the envelope she'd been looking for earlier. While her eyes are averted, pulling out the pictures and x-rays, Jennifer pulls a flask out of her purse and pours some into her tea.)

SANDRA

It really is interesting, this condition.

JENNIFER

What did you say it was called?

SANDRA

Congenital analgesia.... patient is completely incapable of feeling any pain.

JENNIFER

Sounds like a gift.

SANDRA

Oh it can be. But we've got to monitor her, stay on top of it for the rest of her life. Her father always says how important it is that she have a normal life. Doesn't want to tell her she can't play soccer and do all the other stuff she loves. But if we don't constantly check up on her to see to it she hasn't sustained any injuries that she can't feel, something like this ends up happening.

(She hands her sister a picture.)

JENNIFER

Damn, hurts just looking at it.

SANDRA

Six weeks she walked around on that ankle, completely unaware that anything was wrong while the bone grew in like that....

JENNIFER

So she can't feel anything at all?

SANDRA

No, that's just the thing, she can. Just not pain. I went over all that with her father. Showed him as I tickled her, made her giggle. Ran my fingers up and down her arm...
(imitates doing it, making the little baby talk sounds associated with the action.)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SANDRA (cont'd)

"Can you feel that?" She said, "yes, yes, yes" between her little giggles. And then I asked, "now suppose I were to take this instrument and hit you as hard as I could across your arm, and break it?"... "nope, I wouldn't feel it!"

JENNIFER

Amazing.

(noticing Sandra hasn't touched her tea)

Are you going to...?

SANDRA

What...? Oh no, go ahead.

(Jennifer takes her sister's tea and starts to spike it like before, while Sandra is distracted looking at the pictures)

SANDRA

So, anyway, the whole thing has given me a lot to think about before they come in next week. Lotsa things I'd like to run by her father about-

(seeing what her sister is doing)

Have you been doing that all night?

JENNIFER

Doing what?

SANDRA

That! Is that the only reason you've been able to talk to me and get out of your... how much have you had already, anyway?

JENNIFER

Oh come on, what's the matter with you?

SANDRA

Nothing's the matter with me, I just thought that maybe at some point-

JENNIFER

At some point what? That I'd start to enjoy myself?

SANDRA

Jenn, I think you're starting to enjoy yourself a little bit too much this evening.

JENNIFER

Or is it you? Afraid that maybe at some point I might succeed in pulling the stick out of your ass and-

(CONTINUED)

SANDRA

Jennifer, I think I know how to enjoy myself without-

JENNIFER

It's your birthday for crying out loud!

SANDRA

Yes, I know that! When did I ever say I didn't want to-

JENNIFER

Oh, please. You didn't even want to let me take you out in the first place.

SANDRA

No, I didn't...

JENNIFER

That's right.

SANDRA

... generally, when somebody "takes someone else out" they...

JENNIFER

They what?

SANDRA

Forget it.

JENNIFER

Just say it. Come on... alright fine, here.
(passes the tea back to her)
You drink it.

SANDRA

I don't want it now.

JENNIFER

I know you don't want it. That's why, as the sister that loves you, its my duty to let you know you need it.

SANDRA

What the hell's that supposed to mean?

JENNIFER

I think you know what it means. After this, we're gonna go-

SANDRA

No, listen to me. We're not going anywhere after this.
(taking the check)

We're gonna pay- I'm gonna pay the check and then I'm gonna take you home. I'll call you in the morning and make sure that everything's-

(CONTINUED)

JENNIFER

No! It's only nine, and there's plenty of time to hit the clubs. But first-

(shouts across the restaurant)

Hey Johnny! Yo! More drinks!

SANDRA

Stop that!

JENNIFER

What's wrong with you?

(Sandra starts to respond)

Johnny!!!!

SANDRA

Dave

JENNIFER

What?

SANDRA

Waiter's name is Dave.

JENNIFER

(shouting across the restaurant)

Dave! Come on over here!

SANDRA

Thanks for keeping your promise not to embarrass me on my birthday.

(Dave returns to the table)

DAVE

Can I get you ladies something else?

SANDRA

(picking up the check)

No, we're fine.

JENNIFER

(grabs the other end of the check)

No, we're not. We need some drinks. Something a lot stronger than this tea... maybe some tequila.

(Both sisters continue to hold onto the check, pulling it back and forth)

DAVE

Tequila?

No. SANDRA

Yes. JENNIFER

Hold on, let me get my card. SANDRA

Not for me. For her. JENNIFER

I don't want any- SANDRA

I can come back- DAVE

No, stay here. JENNIFER

Yes, stay so we can pay the- SANDRA

(shouts)
Let go of the freakin' check!!! JENNIFER

(She does and there is a long pause)

Uhhhh... next Saturday. We got UFC on pay per view in the bar. DAVE

What?? SANDRA

Sounds like a blast. But right now my sister needs a drink. It's her birthday. JENNIFER

It's your birthday? DAVE

(Sandra is still too embarrassed and angry to speak, so her sister answers for her.)

Yes. JENNIFER

DAVE
Heeyyyyy... well, happy birthday!

SANDRA
(slowly)
Thank you.

DAVE
What can I get for you? Anything you want. On the house.

SANDRA
(sighs)
I'll have a martini.

DAVE
A martini...

SANDRA
One!! And then we're out of here.

DAVE
(starting to go)
You got it.

JENNIFER
Hey, uh.... Dave. The other guy on his break?

DAVE
(not understanding)
The other dude...?

JENNIFER
Guy that was waiting on us all night.

SANDRA
This is the-

JENNIFER
No, I mean the other...

SANDRA
Jenn, this is-

JENNIFER
No, before that....
(aside to her sister)
You know, the cute one?

(She was drunk enough to think only her sister could hear that, but Sandra doesn't need to see him react- in good humor- before getting embarrassed)

SANDRA

I'm so sorry. I just don't know what...

DAVE

Hey, don't mention it. Ma always said I got the brains.

(He goes off.)

SANDRA

I just don't believe you...

JENNIFER

Oh, stop it... you're just incapable of having a good time, that's all.

SANDRA

I was having a perfectly good time until it became obvious that you can't-

JENNIFER

Oh, tell me once that you showed any-

SANDRA

Hey, I laughed with you about Dave's little iced tea offer, didn't I?

JENNIFER

Oh, please...

SANDRA

Didn't I?

JENNIFER

Yes, so then maybe-

SANDRA

Then maybe I don't need to make a fool of myself every time I show my face in public in order to show you that I'm having a good time. In case you missed it, I was until-

JENNIFER

What do you mean about Dave's iced tea offer?

SANDRA

Don't tell me you've had so much to drink you can't even remember...

JENNIFER

Of course I remember... but not Dave, the other guy... guy that got all butt hurt about me taking him up on his own offer.

(CONTINUED)

SANDRA

Listen, honey. I don't know just how just much you've had to drink tonight, but you're just further illustrating what I've been trying to tell you. Nobody went on a break. That's the same guy.

JENNIFER

The same guy...?

SANDRA

Been waiting on us all night... maybe when you sober up-

JENNIFER

Oh, don't give me that. I hadn't taken one sip yet when we sat down. When he took our order. The cute one... teased you about your... you know? His name was Johnny.

SANDRA

(shocked)

Johnny?

JENNIFER

You do remember!

SANDRA

No! I don't I'm just...

JENNIFER

What?

SANDRA

Nothing.

(There is another long silence as she tries to absorb the increased shock of how vivid her sister's apparent "hallucination" is.)

JENNIFER

Listen, I really did want to treat you tonight. Show you a good time. Why don't you let me pick up the check when he comes back?

SANDRA

Because you know I can't let you do that when you can't even-

(pause)

Sorry.

JENNIFER

Forget it.

(CONTINUED)

SANDRA

But you did know I'd never let you do that... didn't you? That was just another... "iced tea offer" of your own, wasn't it?

JENNIFER

Whatever you say.

SANDRA

Wasn't it?

JENNIFER

(slowly)

Yes.

(Both waiters, one with the martini and the other with a cake, come back in, singing "Happy Birthday". Sandra stares, embarrassed and angry as they continue singing and the lights fade.)

TRANSITION:

(In the darkness, the other actors go offstage, but Johnny, talking on his cell phone, steps forward into the apron area as a small point of light comes up on him.)

JOHNNY

No, mom, it was bad... Yes, I saw her. I saw her and it didn't go well.... No it wasn't that, not at all. Actually, I think she did recognize me.... yeah, she did, but there was something else. Something just not right. I don't know what it was. I just don't know... Yeah, I know what you mean, it's just like you always told me, "never give up". I'll keep trying.... Yes, I will. I promise.

BLACKOUT

Scene 2

Sandra's living room. The next morning. Jennifer is on the couch, sleeping off her hangover as Sandra walks in, on the phone.

SANDRA

No, I don't think it would be a good idea if she came back to live with you... Yes, I'm checking up on her regularly.... Yes, everyday.... Yes, I said, I call her

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SANDRA (cont'd)

every day, she's doing fine, last night was just kind of a, a.... yeah, well whatever you wanna call it, she's fine... Mom.... Mom.... Mom, look she ended up sleeping here last night, but I made sure she got up, and got to work.... yes, Mom, that's just what's so important... she needs to work, feel like everything is normal... yes, I did... I got it, Mom. It was very nice, thank you... no, its just the right size... yes, I'll wear it when you see me at Christmas... alright... alright... I love you too.

(Jennifer has been stirring during the conversation, and she sits up on the couch as Sandra hangs up)

JENNIFER

Why shouldn't everything be normal?

SANDRA

What?

JENNIFER

You told mom-

SANDRA

Yeah, I also told her you made it in to work this morning.

JENNIFER

What did you mean-

SANDRA

I can't keep covering for you like this all the time.

JENNIFER

Covering for me?

SANDRA

Paul's not the only one, Jenn. He can't keep dealing with this either.

JENNIFER

I'll talk to him.

SANDRA

I already did.

JENNIFER

You didn't have to.

SANDRA

Yes, I did. When you didn't pick up he called me to see what was going on. I tried lying to him...

(CONTINUED)

JENNIFER

You didn't have to do that. I'll call him.

SANDRA

No, you won't.

JENNIFER

Yes, I will. I'll tell him the truth... tell him it was a special occasion, that it won't happen again.

SANDRA

No, it won't...

JENNIFER

You don't believe me? I can handle my own-

SANDRA

About that, no I don't believe you. But if there's one thing I can believe you on, it's that it won't happen again with Paul. He made that perfectly clear when I spoke to him an hour ago.

JENNIFER

It's fine... I'll find another job.

SANDRA

Where, Jenn? That's what I was trying to say. There's only so many strings I can keep pulling for you...

JENNIFER

Yeah, I know that! What are you so worried about?

SANDRA

Just that sooner or later you're gonna have to interview with...

JENNIFER

What? With someone that hasn't seen my sister naked before?

SANDRA

Alright, I'm out of here.

(She picks up her keys and purse and goes for the door.)

JENNIFER

Sandy!

SANDRA

I've already had to call and cancel my nine o'clock. I'm not missing any more on account of this crap.

(She walks upstage to the front door.)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SANDRA (cont'd)
I'll be home by six. I want you gone when I get home.

JENNIFER
(calling after her, desperately)
Sandy!

SANDRA
(turning back)
What?

JENNIFER
Please... I'm sorry, don't go.

SANDRA
I have patients.

JENNIFER
You have time... please, come sit down a minute.

SANDRA
(walking back and sitting beside her)
What's going on with you, Jennifer?

JENNIFER
I don't know, I don't know. Just... please don't throw me out. Not now.

SANDRA
Is that all you're worried about? A place to sleep for a few nights?

JENNIFER
No!

SANDRA
Already gotten yourself evicted there, too?

JENNIFER
No, no. I just... I don't know. I just don't like it over there.

SANDRA
How do you expect to pay your rent, now? It's due weekly over there, you know.

JENNIFER
I know.

SANDRA
There's no leases at those places, so I misspoke. It's not an "eviction" which involves a long legal procedure... You don't pay the day it's due, they lock you out and keep any of your stuff you've left in there.

JENNIFER

Well, that'd be fine. I don't have any stuff.

SANDRA

No, you don't.

JENNIFER

(after a pause)

Look, I just missed spending time with you. It gets so lonely over there at the hotel. Ever since the... you know... I don't see any of my old friends. But last night, it was just like old times, you and me. We had so much fun...

SANDRA

Yeah, that's an interesting way to put it...

JENNIFER

Well, it was.

SANDRA

That's what it takes for you to have fun now?

JENNIFER

No, that's not what I meant.

SANDRA

To create more and more places where I can never show my face again?

JENNIFER

I'm sorry I embarrassed you again.

SANDRA

Forget it.

JENNIFER

Hey, at least I didn't ask to see the manager.

SANDRA

Yeah, that makes things a lot better.

JENNIFER

I'm sorry I asked about the hot guy...

SANDRA

Yeah, I was thinking more along the lines of everything that happened after that.

JENNIFER

There was loud music in the bar, and there were other people dancing, you know.

(CONTINUED)

SANDRA

Yeah, well not all of them were knocking over tables and breaking dishes.

JENNIFER

Sorry...

SANDRA

None of them saw the need to dance topless on top of the bar.

JENNIFER

Oh, god.

SANDRA

Starting to remember, now?

JENNIFER

It won't happen again.

SANDRA

What ever happened to your shirt anyway?

JENNIFER

I don't know, you were holding it when we left.

SANDRA

Uh, yeah, holding it over you on our way out after we were asked to leave, so you wouldn't get arrested on the walk to the car.

JENNIFER

There for me again, as always...

SANDRA

(noting the stained T-shirt Jennifer is wearing)

I see you found a new one. Already got myself a new roommate helping herself to all my things... raiding my refrigerator...

JENNIFER

I haven't eaten anything.

SANDRA

(rubbing her hand over the stain)

Uh, you obviously have. What did you spill, anyway?

JENNIFER

I don't know.

(CONTINUED)

SANDRA

Well, you had something.... what is it all over the shirt?

JENNIFER

I dunno... I think its probably throw-up.

(Sandra recoils and goes offstage to the bathroom, brushing off her hands.)

JENNIFER

(calling after her)

Oh come on, you're a doctor for crying out loud. Is that what you do when you examine patient's hemmeroids? Is that what you did to everyone at the VA hospital when you worked summers there during college, changing their bed pans? Look, I'm sorry. Just let me stay here for a little while.

SANDRA

(offstage)

It's fine. It's fine. I'll come back here to pick you up after work, and then we'll stop by the hotel to pick up your stuff.

JENNIFER

What little there is... fine. Thanks, Sandy.

SANDRA

(offstage)

I've still got lots of Danny's crap here, so what are a few more things?

JENNIFER

Oh... you're sure I won't be in the way? I mean if Danny wants to-

SANDRA

(coming back from the bathroom)

I don't think that'll be a problem.

JENNIFER

You're not gonna-

SANDRA

No. Given the fact he wouldn't-
(checking her cell phone, which she feels vibrating)

Well, speak of the devil, there he is...
(puts the phone back in her purse)

... and there he can stay.

(CONTINUED)

JENNIFER

I'm sorry... you're not seeing anyone else?

SANDRA

No.

(pause)

Look, its fine if you want to stay here. With work, and everything, we probably won't even notice each other.

JENNIFER

I was hoping we would. I mean you, you should-

SANDRA

Look, I don't need you to... I'm fine, ok?

JENNIFER

Sure.

SANDRA

These past couple of months it's been kinda nice to be free of all the usual...

(pause)

And no, Paul and I did NOT used to sleep together.

JENNIFER

I knew that.

SANDRA

What the hell's that supposed to mean?

(no answer)

I have to get going.

(she starts to go, again)

JENNIFER

Do it for me.

SANDRA

What?

JENNIFER

Do it for me.

SANDRA

Do what for you?

JENNIFER

Spend more time with me. I don't want to barely notice each other, that's just the thing. I understand, you don't wanna see anyone, that's fine. But you can't just decide not to have a sister.

(CONTINUED)

SANDRA

Jennifer...

JENNIFER

All that stuff about last night, about having fun together. I meant that. I wasn't talking about all the other stuff that.... you know. Before that. We were sharing old stories, laughing at the waiter. It was like... we were sisters again.

SANDRA

I didn't think that came with an expiration date.

JENNIFER

Seemed like there was. Like it had passed years ago...

(pause)

And then all of a sudden, there was last night... I hadn't seen you laugh in a long time.

SANDRA

Maybe you just weren't there to see it.

JENNIFER

Maybe you just weren't wanting to show it to me.

SANDRA

(sighs)

I have to go. You know I was just busting your chops about raiding the refrigerator... help yourself to anything you want. I don't keep any liquor in the house, so with your car miles away at the hotel, you should be fine until I return.

JENNIFER

Sandra, I told you it won't happen again. I'm not like that, really. Last night was special, and so I wanted to have a little fun, that's all. I told you.

SANDRA

Yes, you did. And we both know that isn't true.

JENNIFER

(after a long pause)

I don't know what's wrong with me. I just don't know.

SANDRA

There's no reason why you should still be in pain // like this...

JENNIFER

(overlapping)

// I'm not.

(CONTINUED)

SANDRA

... at least none that Dr. Bradford could find...

(pause)

What do you mean, you're not?

JENNIFER

I don't know why that Dr. Bradford of yours has to operate under the assumption that there must be some kind of... "hurt".

SANDRA

What then?

JENNIFER

I don't know. There's just a... an emptiness.

SANDRA

(obviously hiding something)

We'll find it for you, Jenn... Whatever it is that'll...

JENNIFER

I feel like I already have found it... and yet it's still not there.

(pause)

Why? Should it be simpler than that? Should I be hurting?

SANDRA

What the hell's that supposed to mean?

JENNIFER

What happened the month before my... before the...?

(Sandra just stares at her for a moment before being "saved by the bell" by her phone ringing again. She looks down to check the caller ID.)

SANDRA

Oh, for God's sake.

JENNIFER

(getting up)

Taaaaaalk to him.... Jesus, quit being such a baby.

(she starts toward the bathroom)

I'm gonna take a shower... if that's allowed.

SANDRA

Be my guest... you're the big girl here.

JENNIFER

I won't use the wrong towels this time, don't worry.

(CONTINUED)

SANDRA

Use them all...

(quietly)

... mop up the whole bathroom floor with them again.

JENNIFER

(offstage)

I heard that... Are you still rationing the guests' share of the hot water, too?

(From offstage, the puked on shirt gets tossed back into the living room.)

SANDRA

Use it all... those of us with jobs showered over an hour ago.

(Door slams offstage.)

SANDRA

Not that a cold shower wouldn't do you a lot of good.

(She gets out her phone and re-dials.)

You called me, that's what... no, is that how you answer the phone, "yeah, what?"... yeah, "only for the..." yeah, well "the bitch" is returning your call, dickhead, what do you want...? Danny, you can come by and pick up your crap anytime you want, you know that... No, not when I'm not here, why do you think I changed the locks...? Then get a court order... Well, I guess that's your problem then, isn't it? Sooner or later if you want to go through everything here and find out what's yours, you're gonna have to come look at she who you wouldn't piss on if she was on fire... I don't care if your whore is over there alone right now, I'm not going through all the stuff, finding out what is and is not yours, and driving my happy ass over there to deliver it to her.

(Seeing the puked on shirt, and picking it up)

You know actually, I did come across your Hard Rock Cafe T-shirt this morning.... yeah, the one you liked so much. Your place actually is on the way to work. I'll bring it right by... Yeah, right now.

(Lights fade.)

TRANSITION:

(Dave, on his phone, steps forward into the spotlight in the apron area that

(CONTINUED)

Johnny stood in during the last
transiton)

DAVE

Hey, look I don't know what to tell you, man. That's the number they gave me. If she ain't picking up, then there's nothing I can do.... Well, look bro, whaddya want me to say? Not like this is the first time some chick has ditched you.... Okay, I'm sorry dude, I didn't mean that.... No, really, man. Just keep trying.... Yeah, just like we always said...

BLACKOUT

Scene 3

Sandra's office. Three months later. Sandra is there with Johnny, who's doubling as her patient's father and going over an x-ray with her

SANDRA

Well, everything is looking normal.

JOHNNY

Bone's growing back in like it's supposed to?

SANDRA

Yes, but make sure she doesn't put any weight on it, that she stays on her crutches until she sees me next week.

JOHNNY

But after that, you think she'll be ready to... you know?

SANDRA

Well, we'll have to take one last look at her to be sure, but I don't see any reason why not.

JOHNNY

Oh, she's going to be so excited!

SANDRA

Yeah I know... she'll be back in action soon, don't worry.

JOHNNY

That's great! So is there anything else I need to know about-

(A knock at the door.)

(CONTINUED)

SANDRA

Come in.

(Jennifer enters)

JOHNNY

Oh, sorry. Didn't realize I was keeping your next patient waiting.

SANDRA

No, no. It's just my sister.

JENNIFER

(mocking)

Yeah, just your sister, don't mind me.

SANDRA

My lunch date. No, everything else is fine.

JOHNNY

Can I keep these?

SANDRA

Yes, those are your copies.

JOHNNY

(taking the x-rays)

Ok, see you next week.

SANDRA

Say hi to Vicky for me.

JOHNNY

I will.

(He starts to go, but Jennifer is in his way and staring at him, lovestruck.)

JOHNNY

Oh, excuse me.

JENNIFER

(dreamily)

Hi.

JOHNNY

(uncomfortable)

Uh, hello.

(walks past her to the door, then turns back.)

Have a good lunch, ladies.

(CONTINUED)

(Jennifer stares after him as he goes)

SANDRA

I thought you were gonna meet me at the restaurant.

JENNIFER

Why didn't you tell me he was your patient?

SANDRA

Don't see why its any of your concern, but no... his daughter.

JENNIFER

His daughter?

SANDRA

My patient. She's the girl I was telling you about with the analgesia

JENNIFER

Analgesia?

SANDRA

The ankle she broke at the soccer game. And she can't... you remember.

JENNIFER

Yeah, I do.

SANDRA

You two know each other?

JENNIFER

Well, no. Just remember him from your birthday a couple months ago.

SANDRA

My birthday?

JENNIFER

Yeah, the guy who... never mind.

SANDRA

Yeah, let's not go there again.

JENNIFER

Probably a good idea.

SANDRA

I'm serious. Do you have to keep telling everyone about it?

(CONTINUED)

JENNIFER

I don't tell everyone...

SANDRA

Jenn, I'm on the phone with Mom the other day... I suggest that if she's not feeling any better soon, then maybe I can take a few days off, come out and help her with some of the stuff around the house... and she says, "honey, are you sure that wasn't just an iced tea offer"?

JENNIFER

Well...

SANDRA

I wonder who she might have learned that from... You know, it really wasn't that funny, and given everything that followed I'd just as soon forget about-

JENNIFER

Well, it was, wasn't it?

SANDRA

No, it really wasn't. I just thought that it-

JENNIFER

It was just an iced tea offer, wasn't it?

SANDRA

(after a pause)

Well, I'd have had to have been completely out of my mind if it wasn't.

(She lets it sink in for a moment, and then they both laugh.)

SANDRA

But seriously, let's please not talk any more about everything that went on that night.... especially with how well things have been going for you since then.

JENNIFER

What do you mean?

SANDRA

I mean... these past couple months since then, you've been doing so much better. Dr. Bradford tells me how well the therapy's been going, how much you've improved.

JENNIFER

Yeah.

(CONTINUED)

SANDRA

And look at you. I can see it myself.

JENNIFER

That's actually one of the things I wanted to talk to you about.

SANDRA

I'm serious. The new job, and how well you're fitting in... I'm just really proud of you.

JENNIFER

Yeah, that's fine, thanks. But it's some of the stuff I talked with Bradford about at yesterday's session that I wanted to talk to you about.

SANDRA

We can talk about it-

JENNIFER

Here, not at the restaurant.

SANDRA

Honey, you don't have anything to be ashamed of.

JENNIFER

I understand you have some of Bradford's old files from some of our early-

SANDRA

Have you given any thought to putting in those applications?

JENNIFER

What?

SANDRA

The college applications. I mean, with your acceptance at-

JENNIFER

Yeah, they rescinded that after the whole... incident. You know that.

SANDRA

But that's the whole point. You're doing so much better now... When they see your transcripts they're sure to see the same things-

JENNIFER

What happened to how proud you were of me about being able to hold down the new job?

(CONTINUED)

SANDRA

I am. But that's just the first step. Now that you've shown you're competent to-

JENNIFER

That's not what I came down here to talk about. We can talk about that // later.

SANDRA

(overlapping)

// Every time I try to bring it up you only change the // subject.

JENNIFER

// Yeah, doesn't that tell you something?

SANDRA

Yeah, it tells me that you need to-

JENNIFER

(a mild outburst)

Where am I gonna live?

SANDRA

Live?

JENNIFER

Yes, my living arrangement. You know I can't continue to have this kind of nine to five job and still be a full time student. Who am I going to live- No, sorry, what was it? Who am I gonna "mooch off of" for the next four years?

SANDRA

I'm sure Mom would be happy to-

JENNIFER

I'd rather live on the street.

SANDRA

I told you you could stay with me as long as you-

JENNIFER

I'll live with Mom first.

SANDRA

Thanks.

JENNIFER

You're welcome.

(sees she's hurt her)

I'm sorry, I didn't mean that. You know there's no place else I would have rather been during those months when I was sick. Mom would have done her best to keep me that way.

(CONTINUED)

SANDRA

That is her specialty.

(They both chuckle.)

JENNIFER

But I still need to know about those three months when-

SANDRA

I've told you, it's not-

JENNIFER

I know what you've told me, but now I'm telling you-

SANDRA

It's the future you need to be thinking about... Look, I know you don't want to burn your bridges to something that's clearly been so helpful in getting your life back on track again, but you have potential to go so much farther than that, and sooner or later you're gonna regret not being able to do something more than just-

JENNIFER

Please!! Will you just listen to me without trying to give me a diagnosis for a change?

SANDRA

(after a long pause)

I'm listening.

JENNIFER

God...

SANDRA

What is it, Jennifer?

JENNIFER

I've been seeing another therapist.

SANDRA

You what?

JENNIFER

Seeing another therapist. I'm making my own money now, I didn't think I needed your permission.

SANDRA

But I've told you-

JENNIFER

Yes, I know... Mom. You made the decision about what was best for me... need to have a look at the prom dress I've picked out?

(CONTINUED)

SANDRA
That's not funny.

JENNIFER
No, it's not.

SANDRA
What's his name?

JENNIFER
I'd rather not say.

SANDRA
(incredulous, almost mocking)
You'd rather not say?

JENNIFER
Yes, he's been very helpful, with or without your intervention, and I respect his judgment. So I don't think it would be fair to subject him to the background check from the Department of Homeland Security you're sure to order.

SANDRA
What has he been telling you that's so helpful?

JENNIFER
Pretty much the opposite of everything you and Bradford had been telling me. Says that I need to "confront my demons" from the past so I can deal with them.

SANDRA
Yes, that is true for a lot of things. But there are others that aren't healthy to dwell on.

JENNIFER
Nobody is "dwelling" on anything. But to not even know... to have no recollection...

SANDRA
Honey, you had a nervous breakdown, for those three months we could barely get a word out of you. You barely recognized anybody. Not me, not Mom... not anybody. It's perfectly normal for somebody in that situation to experience memory loss.

JENNIFER
But it's not just afterwards. It's the days leading up to it... something happened.

SANDRA
I told you what happened

JENNIFER

No, you didn't.

SANDRA

If there were anything to remember, then it's probably for a good reason that you've blocked it out.

JENNIFER

(after a long pause)

Yesterday... it was Dr. Bradford that I saw then. I told him I knew my rights, and demanded to see his files on me from the time of my... "memory loss", as Doctor... as my new therapist told me I should. You know, the ones that "aren't healthy" for me to look at.

SANDRA

Jennifer, you don't want to do this.

JENNIFER

He tells me you have them.

SANDRA

That's why you came here instead of meeting me at the restaurant like we'd planned?

JENNIFER

Yes.

SANDRA

(thinking, trying to buy time)

They're not here.

JENNIFER

At the house?

SANDRA

No.

JENNIFER

Where?

SANDRA

I'll tell you about it at lunch.

(checks the clock, and sighs)

I don't know how we're gonna have time now.

JENNIFER

What's the matter, we've got plenty of time. I thought doctors took a two hour lunch.

SANDRA

Well not this one. And at lunch hour we won't be seated for at least half an hour.

(CONTINUED)

JENNIFER

We don't have to go there. There's the steakhouse only a couple miles down the road, and you never have to wait there.

(She starts for the door.)

SANDRA

The steakhouse?

JENNIFER

You know, the-

SANDRA

Are you insane? Are we talking about the place where you got us banned for life?

JENNIFER

Well, given the fact that I ate there last week, that might just be putting it a little strongly.

(starting to go)

Are you coming?

SANDRA

(rolling her eyes)

Yeah... can hardly wait.

(Jennifer exits and Sandra goes to the wall and picks up the phone on the intercom)

SANDRA

Hey, Marcia? Listen, I think I'm going to have to be gone a while longer than I expected for lunch. Can you talk to Dr. Mitchell about taking my- Oh, I don't know. You know, why don't you just cancel all my appointments for the rest of the day. I'm not feeling well.... Yes, I'm sorry.... No, I'll be fine. I'll be in in the morning, just cover for me for the rest of the day, okay....? Thanks.

Scene 4

Lights crossfade back to the restaurant. About 15 minutes later. Jennifer is sitting at the table talking to Dave.

DAVE

Well, you see, here's the thing. The way I always seen it, is when somebody don't want you to know something, it usually is for your own good. See, life is like one big... Hot Dog Eating Contest.

(CONTINUED)

JENNIFER

Hot dog eating contest...?

DAVE

Yeah. You see, kinda un-American not to like hot dogs. Oh, sorry. You ain't one of them vegetarian gals, no?

JENNIFER

No... and because I love my Uncle Sam, I've eaten my share of hot dogs in my day...

DAVE

Oh boy, thanks be to God there's still some... You know, I once went out with one of them vegan chicks that used to-

JENNIFER

Uh, Dave?

DAVE

Oh yeah, sorry. So anyways, the rules of that contest. Eat as many of them hot dogs and buns as you can in ten minutes, and immediate disqualification for any, uh, "reversal of fortune". You know what that means, don't you?

JENNIFER

Yes, I think so.

DAVE

Yeah... you hurl! Oh, sorry I know you and your sister is about to eat. But anyways, you know what they say about hot dogs, the all American food. Food of the gods! But if you ever saw them things getting made, you knew what really went into 'em... you wouldn't never eat em, not ever again... Or at the very least you'd have a reversal of fortune before that first one ever touched your lips. So anyways, what I'm tryin' to say is that- Oh wait a minute hold on...

(He stops a moment, to look up- above the audience- at the television in the bar. We hear rowdy noise of the drunks watching a sporting event, as Dave joins them in rooting on one of the players, and then it culminates in a huge raucous cheer, of which Dave's is the loudest.)

DAVE

Oh, man. That was a work of art. A freakin' work of art.
(pause)

So, anyways, you see what I'm sayin'? I'm sure the folks at the weiner companies... they gets some files that I ain't never been invited to look into, you know? And you know something? Ignorance is bliss!

(CONTINUED)

(During the last part of this, Sandra has returned from the bathroom, and she sits back down as Dave finishes.)

SANDRA

Hello.

DAVE

Heeeeyyyy... how's it goin', Doc?

SANDRA

Fine. So, did I miss anything?

JENNIFER

Yes, you could say that. A rather interesting take on the meaning of life.

DAVE

Hey, that's what they pay me the big bucks for!

SANDRA

Did you order for both of us?

JENNIFER

Yes.

DAVE

Yep.

(checking what he wrote)

Cobb Salad, dressing on the side... Iced tea, no lemon?

SANDRA

Yes, thank you.

DAVE

I'll get right to it... and you ladies just lemme know if either of you is in...

(He goes off.)

SANDRA

If either one of us is in?

JENNIFER

He's got a spare ticket to the comedy club for this Friday night.

SANDRA

Comedy Club?

(CONTINUED)

JENNIFER

Yeah, that one down on 1st and Main downtown. Weekly open-mic night.

SANDRA

(sarcastic)

Yeah, sounds like a blast.

JENNIFER

I told him I would probably be busy...

SANDRA

I would certainly hope so, for your sake.

JENNIFER

... but I gave him your number.

SANDRA

Oh, well thanks a lot.

JENNIFER

You're very welcome.

SANDRA

You know, even if everything you've been doing for the past couple months were asked for, you might just want to consider that I do at least have... some standards.

JENNIFER

I think you'll find you have a lot more in common than you'd think.

SANDRA

What?

JENNIFER

The files...

SANDRA

Jennifer, I told you in the car. I'll talk to Dr. Bradford about what he's done with the old files. I don't know why he would have told you that I had them.

JENNIFER

Okay, fine.

SANDRA

(after a pause)

I can only imagine what passes for entertainment in those places. Punch lines that find something inherently funny about body parts, or guys burping the alphabet... but I'll bet the real highlight of the evening is when they-

(CONTINUED)

JENNIFER

Did you used to tell Danny not to talk about anything that went on at work when he got home?

SANDRA

What??

JENNIFER

When Danny used to come home after a bad day at work. When he wanted to-

SANDRA

Okay!! I'm caught up now.

JENNIFER

Well...?

SANDRA

Well, what?

JENNIFER

Is that what you used to tell him?

SANDRA

When did you talk to him?

JENNIFER

He stopped by my work last week to drop off some of your old stuff...

SANDRA

.... so he could do it without having to look at me. Same child he's always been.

JENNIFER

We had lunch afterwards. Had a long talk.

SANDRA

I didn't leave any of my things with him.

JENNIFER

Well, he says they're yours...

SANDRA

Is that why you wanted to meet for lunch today? To relay everything he poured his heart out about regarding what your evil bitch of a sister did to him?

JENNIFER

No, I told you the main thing I wanted to talk to you about.

(CONTINUED)

SANDRA

And I've told you... I'll talk to Dr. Bradford.

JENNIFER

Fine, I believe you. But I thought as long as we're here we could at least-

SANDRA

It's not the 50s for Christ's sake! Maybe it's not still our "job" anymore to make sure that everything is about them 24/7, to listen to them bitch about their problems every second of our spare time!

JENNIFER

How about any second?

SANDRA

What the hell's that supposed to mean?

JENNIFER

You never talked to him about your problems...

SANDRA

What's my crime, Jennifer? What am I being accused of here?

JENNIFER

Nothing, I'm sorry I mentioned it. I just thought now would also be a good time to give you some of the stuff he brought back.

SANDRA

Whatever he gave you is not mine.

JENNIFER

Okay, but he insisted they're not his either. If you don't want them you can set them on fire, I'm sure he won't care.

SANDRA

No, I'm sure he won't.

(Jennifer pulls a brown paper bag out of her purse. Sandra reacts strangely to this sight.)

JENNIFER

Just a few of the things that were in that box you had me run over to his place during the two weeks I was living over at your place. Looks like just some old knick knacks and such. They were probably Grandma and Grandpa's or something. Like this... some kind of paper weight or something...

(CONTINUED)

(She pulls it out of the bag and places it on the table. The "paper weight" has been made out of a crushed leaf that has been preserved in a clear resin. Sandra reacts in shock.)

SANDRA

Oh my god....

JENNIFER

What, "oh my god"?

SANDRA

Nothing.

JENNIFER

No, why did you say that?
(no answer)
This.... "leaf"... what-

SANDRA

Jennifer...

JENNIFER

What does it mean to you that it doesn't to me?

SANDRA

What else did he give you?

(She tries to take the bag, but Jennifer pulls it away.)

JENNIFER

What else are you afraid might be in here that you don't want me to see...?

(pulling out a letter)

Who's this from?

SANDRA

(desperate)

Give me that!

JENNIFER

Uh, no I'm sorry. It's addressed to me. Who is...
(reading the name on the return address)
... Deborah Hodgkins?

SANDRA

How would I know, if it's addressed to you?

(CONTINUED)

JENNIFER

And I think we both know why I don't know.

(pause)

But I'm obviously not the only one here that should know, am I?

SANDRA

(slowly and gravely)

Don't open this file, Jennifer. For my sake... and especially for your own. Don't.

JENNIFER

Well, that's fine. I'll just have to go over to-

(reading the envelope)

316 Oakwood myself to find out.

(She gets up to leave.)

SANDRA

Jennifer you can't-

JENNIFER

Why don't you try and stop me?

SANDRA

We came in my car, Jennifer. Yours is back at the office.

JENNIFER

I'll take the bus.

(She goes off. As soon as she's gone Sandra frantically pulls out her cell phone and dials.)

SANDRA

Yes, Janine...? I need to speak with Dr. Bradford.... this is Dr. Hanson, I need to speak with him right away.... no, I don't care if he's in a session, this is an emergency, I need you to page him, or... thanks Janine.

(she waits for the call to transfer)

Vincent? It's Sandra... Yes, I'm fine- no, no I'm not... it's Jennifer.... yes, she's not gonna let up on this and she may be coming over there right now.... well, no there's somewhere else that I think she's more determined to go first, but I don't know what she's going to do when she's like this. Either way, at best there's no way it's going to be very long before she shows up there demanding you show them to her.... No, that's not going to work anymore, she's asked me, I've tried to stall her, and she knows I don't have them.... Look, you remember what we talked about...? Yes, we are at that point now. It's time.... Yes, Vincent, I know what I'm asking you to do... do it!

Scene 5

Lights crossfade to the home of DEBORAH, Johnny's mother. It is later that evening. Johnny stands upstage, in his Army uniform, watching from the kitchen as she sets the table, downstage, with an antique tea set.

JOHNNY

Can I help you with those, Mom?

(She doesn't acknowledge but just continues setting the table.)

JOHNNY

You know I hate to see you continuing to do that every night. I mean, I always have. I didn't have the heart to tell you that, because I always knew just how important it was to you. But it's always bothered me. And now more than ever.

(She has finished setting the table, and pouring tea for three people.)

DEBORAH

Johnny, your tea's on the table!

JOHNNY

Mom, do we have to do this?

DEBORAH

The same as always... "Mom, do we have to do this?"

JOHNNY

Yes, mom. That's what I'd always say. I always felt you'd be more at peace with yourself... and with Dad, if you finally put a stop to all this. But now I think I can understand. I know you think it helps, the extra place you'd always set for him. It may help you... But for me, it's just plain torture. And now I see that it must be for Dad as well. Must have always been.

DEBORAH

(staring out the window at the sky)

It was on a night just like this, that your father invited me to that midnight picnic in the park. Moon was a tiny crescent, just like tonight. Part of me has always regretted that it wasn't full, wasn't exactly ideal for a moonlit picnic. Would have been if he'd set the date for

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DEBORAH (cont'd)

just a couple weeks later. He told me afterwards that it was better if nature's light was poor.... too much of it would kill the candlelight. But I prefer to think that he just couldn't wait those few weeks to ask me what he'd brought me there to ask me. And in the end, I didn't care... because I couldn't wait to say yes.

(She finishes her tea, gets up, walks over to the recliner.)

JOHNNY

Mom, please...

(She sits, and takes a book off of the end table next to the recliner.)

DEBORAH

In the years since he's passed, I've always taken solace in the words of Alfred, Lord Tennyson.

JOHNNY

Oh, Mom, please not this...

DEBORAH

I don't think I ever mentioned this to you before...

JOHNNY

You have.

DEBORAH

... but at least once a week, in the years since then, I've always taken the time, right after our tea, after I'd sent you to bed, to read this. Just as Queen Victoria used to always say, about what best helped her to cope, for the nearly 50 years she reigned a widow after the death of her beloved Prince Albert. What she always used to say about that poem....

(they both say this together)

"Next to the Bible, *In Memoriam* is my comfort"

(pause)

I know how you always hated this, Johnny. I knew that if I'd forced you to sit through all that afterwards.... but now I wish that at least once, no matter how much you hated me for it, that I had sat you down, and read you those words...

JOHNNY

You didn't have to, Mom.

(CONTINUED)

DEBORAH

(reading)

I envy not in any moods
 The Captive void of Noble Rage,
 The linnet born within the cage,
 That never knew the summer woods:

JOHNNY

(taking over, as Deborah just reads
 silently)

I envy not the beast that takes
 His license in the field of time,
 Unfettered by the sense of crime,
 To whom a conscience never wakes;
 Nor, what may count itself as blest,
 The heart that never plighted troth
 But stagnates in the weeds of sloth;
 Nor any want-begotten rest.

DEBORAH

(resuming speaking the words as Johnny
 stops)

I hold it true, whate'er befall;
 I feel it when I sorrow most
 'Tis better to have-

(She is just about to finish the famous,
 final lines of Canto 27 when she is
 interrupted by the doorbell ringing.)

DEBORAH

Oh dear... rather late for company.

(She gets up and starts to walk upstage,
 past Johnny, to the door.)

JOHNNY

Mom, don't!

(CONTINUED)

Coming!
DEBORAH

(She opens the door, and Jennifer is standing there.)

DEBORAH
(shocked)
Jennifer! You-

(She realizes she'd better shut up, and there is a long silence.)

JENNIFER
You know me.

DEBORAH
I... you... I don't know what you could possibly mean by that...

JENNIFER
You don't know? I'm as much a stranger to you as you are to me?

DEBORAH
I...

JENNIFER
And my name was just... a lucky guess?

(Lights fade, and romantic music is played in the darkness while the next scene is being set)

Scene 6

A park, at midnight... about a year earlier. The lights (dim moonlight) comes up on Johnny and Jennifer, sitting on a blanket kissing. A picnic basket is at their side, and some unlit candles and matches lie in front of them.

When the kiss finally ends, the music starts to fade and she holds out her hand to stare excitedly at the engagement ring.

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY

I'm sorry I couldn't do better.

JENNIFER

Johnny, its fine. It's everything I could have ever dreamed of. You're everything I could have ever dreamed of. You're making all my dreams come true.

JOHNNY

I just wish I hadn't let the matches get wet.

JENNIFER

Baby, we don't need the candlelight. The moon is full, it's beautiful, its'... it's perfect. It's very romantic.

JOHNNY

I know but...

JENNIFER

But you wanted to do this right, same as your dad...

JOHNNY

I told you about that?

JENNIFER

(laughs)

No, your mother.

JOHNNY

I can't believe she told you that story... How much time have you two spent together already?

JENNIFER

Just that one evening... just after dinner, when you were getting the car. Talked to me about the way they needed the candlelight, the moon was a tiny crescent, and how it didn't matter because-

JOHNNY

(imitating his mother with the story
he's heard a million times)

-"it was better if nature's light was poor.... too much of it would kill the candlelight. But I prefer to think that he just couldn't wait those few weeks to ask me what he'd brought me there to ask me. And in the end, I didn't care... because I couldn't wait to say yes."

(They both laugh.)

JENNIFER

But tonight the moon is full.

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY

Yes... and we've got our own reasons for why we couldn't wait a few weeks for it to be perfect.

JENNIFER

Baby, it is perfect. It's like you said... we don't need to follow in the footsteps of their memories. We agreed we were going to create our own.

JOHNNY

More and more every day.

(They kiss.)

JOHNNY

I can't believe mom would have told you all that.

JENNIFER

Hey, you took forever getting back with the car.

JOHNNY

No, not that. I mean, she'd just met you about an hour earlier.

JENNIFER

Yes, that's what I told her. She said it didn't matter what she did or did not know about me. It was all about you.

JOHNNY

With Mom it always was.

JENNIFER

And she knew what made you happy, and that if you wanted to marry this girl you'd known for only a week then God forbid she do anything to stand in the way. Besides, nothing she could think to try-

JOHNNY

(impersonating his mother again)

... "ever would, because when my Johnny makes up his mind to do something, then by God, he's going to do it!"

(They laugh)

JOHNNY

But, the thing is... and maybe I shouldn't be telling you this... I hadn't made up my mind. About that or about a lot of other things. I had never mentioned anything about marriage to her at the time. I still haven't.

(CONTINUED)

JENNIFER

I know. You didn't have to. I think she knew what you were going to do tonight before you did.

JOHNNY

I'm sure she did.

JENNIFER

Said the moment we sat down she knew it. That this girl is "the one".

JOHNNY

She obviously saw the same thing in you that I did.

JENNIFER

No, she didn't.

JOHNNY

Oh, come on. Of course she saw it.

JENNIFER

No. It wasn't anything she saw in me. She couldn't. It was in you, always in you. That look, that thing she said she could always see in your eyes. Said it was just like that Little League championship game, the look she saw in your eyes when you stepped into-

JOHNNY

"... into that batter's box. Honey, you might not have known it yourself, but the moment I looked into those eyes I just knew you were gonna get that hit to win the game... and you did!"

JENNIFER

(laughing)

You do that again, I'm gonna hurt you!

JOHNNY

Just don't say no. That's the only way you can.

JENNIFER

What?

JOHNNY

That's the only way-

JENNIFER

Yeah, I got that. But when did I say no?

JOHNNY

Well... you never explicitly said yes, now did you?

(CONTINUED)

JENNIFER

What do you mean, I- Oh, come here, you!
(forcefully kisses him)
There, I just said it again! Happy now?

JOHNNY

Quite. So, what is your family gonna think about it...
about us rushing into it like this?

JENNIFER

Well, they're just going to have to deal with it, now aren't
they? Believe me, if I concerned myself with making sure I
didn't do anything that would displease them I'd keep myself
locked in the closet all day.

JOHNNY

No, not your mother, I knew that. But what about that
sister of yours?

JENNIFER

What about her? She's gonna have to deal with it as well.

JOHNNY

Well, I knew you wouldn't care what your mother had to say
about something like this, but your sister... just the
impression I got about you and her... that it was different
there.

JENNIFER

Oh, it is, believe me. There's nothing we wouldn't tell
each other. It's just that there are some things... just
some things that even she's going to need time to get used
to...

JOHNNY

Why don't you give her a call, tell her the news? Might be
a good idea for us all to have lunch together tomorrow and
talk it over, before I have to go. Give her some time to
ease into the idea while I'm away.

JENNIFER

No, believe me, now would not be a good time to go over and
see her.

JOHNNY

Why not?

JENNIFER

You know...

JOHNNY

Oh, yeah... she and what's his name having another fight?

(CONTINUED)

JENNIFER

Well... not exactly.

JOHNNY

Not exactly? That's sure how it sounded from your side of the phone conversation!

JENNIFER

She just threw all of his clothes out onto the porch...

JOHNNY

That sure sounds like-

JENNIFER

Yeah, I know. But you asked if they were having another fight...

JOHNNY

Yeah...

JENNIFER

See, "another" tends to imply that the one we were treated to a week ago ever came to an end.

JOHNNY

You're not gonna let what you've witnessed between them influence...?

JENNIFER

Baby, she's the last person I'd let influence me on a thing like this.

JOHNNY

But you two seem so...

JENNIFER

Oh, believe me, we are. She's always been the only one I could ever truly pour my heart out to, and I love her to death. Probably because of how much Mom put her through that she never minded that she was the one I'd always come to with everything... But there are some things- and this is one of them- where she wouldn't be any different... if I'd run away from home to live with her, which I'd threatened to do so many times, I'm sure my new mom would have tried to pick out my prom dress for me, and not seen the irony.

JOHNNY

Your prom dress?

JENNIFER

Yeah... I've told you that story, haven't I?

JOHNNY

No.

JENNIFER

Oh, don't worry, you'll have plenty of time to hear it- and then to interrupt to mimic her every time she starts in.

(pause)

Every time she shows you the prom pictures in her yearbook.... Or looks at the ones in your yearbook, or anyone else's...

JOHNNY

I see...

JENNIFER

... or gets into any conversation involving a dress for the rest of her life!

JOHNNY

Pretty bad, huh?

JENNIFER

Well, let's just say that was the only time in my life I ever heard Sandy call my mom a bitch...

JOHNNY

Okay, okay, I don't wanna hear anymore... come on, that's the worst thing you could have told me about-

JENNIFER

Hey, for all the times that I said it...

JOHNNY

I stand corrected.

JENNIFER

(laughs)

I think the fact that she usually didn't say it, that she usually just... it's why she carries so much of it around with her still. I think it's always bothered her that I don't.

(long pause)

She's going to tell us that we should take it slow... probably even suggest that we live together for a while to try it out, see if it works. Anything like what you and I have she just... I don't know.

JOHNNY

She doesn't think it can develop so quickly?

JENNIFER

No, it's not that. It's that... what we've got, she just...

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY

What?

JENNIFER

... I don't think she believes it exists.

JOHNNY

What do you think?

JENNIFER

Just kiss me, and prove it does...

(He does.)

I wish you didn't have to go.

JOHNNY

I know, I know. But hey, that reminds me. I've got something else for you.

(goes toward the picnic basket)

Something that can help you remember me every day that I'm away.

JENNIFER

Oh, Johnny!

JOHNNY

Ok now, close your eyes.

(pulling a gift out of the basket)

Now, don't get too excited, its nothing big. Just a little something to help you remember me while I'm overseas. And, in the eventuality that something happens...

JENNIFER

Oh, baby, don't say that!

JOHNNY

Okay, I'm just saying... Okay, open your eyes.

JENNIFER

What is it?

JOHNNY

(speaking while she unwraps)

Just a little something I had made for you.

(She finishes unwrapping. It is the preserved leaf "paper weight".)

JENNIFER

Oh my god! This is the leaf that...?

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY

Yes.

JENNIFER

This is really the same one?

JOHNNY

That's the one.

JENNIFER

And you...

JOHNNY

... had it preserved in resin. Look, I know it's stupid. It's just something I thought would-

(She stops his mouth with a passionate kiss.)

JENNIFER

This is the sweetest thing anybody has ever given me... don't you ever let me hear you say that it's stupid. I don't want to forget this moment, not ever. I don't want this night to ever end.

(Lights slowly fade on them in their embrace.)

CURTAIN

ACT IIScene 1

Deborah's house. Jennifer and Deborah are standing at the door. Continued from where we left off at the end of Act I, Scene 5, but Johnny is gone...

DEBORAH

Jennifer, I don't know what you could possibly mean by that.

JENNIFER

Well...? Do we know each other?

DEBORAH

Don't be silly. I... I just don't know what to say. I certainly wasn't expecting you. Not now, not ever again.

JENNIFER

That's what I figured. May I come in?

DEBORAH

Look, I don't think it would be a very good-
(sighs)

Oh, what am I saying? Please, come in and have a seat. Would you like some tea, dear?

JENNIFER

(seeing the table setting)

I'm sorry, were you expecting someone?

DEBORAH

Oh, no. It's just... I know it's strange, but I'm sure he's told you all about it.

JENNIFER

Who has told me all about what?

DEBORAH

Jennifer, would you like some tea?

JENNIFER

No, thank you. How do we know each other, Ms. Hodgkins?

DEBORAH

(correcting)

"Deborah", please...

JENNIFER

Deborah... I can see you and I were close.

(CONTINUED)

DEBORAH

Honey, don't be silly, we are. Always will be. Which is why I just couldn't understand why you would want this. I'm so glad you re-considered.

JENNIFER

Why I would want this?

DEBORAH

Well, yes.

JENNIFER

Want what?

DEBORAH

To be... you know, like what you said a minute ago. To be strangers.

JENNIFER

Ma'am we are strangers!

DEBORAH

Jennifer, please. I know sometimes it's hard to face the past, but the thought of just letting it all go is simply terrifying.

(Jennifer finds a picture on the end table, and stares in shock at the face she's been seeing everywhere while Deborah goes on)

DEBORAH

Oh, I can just see the look on his face if he could see this right now. That's really the only reason why I... I really didn't want to say no, I was so glad to see you. You're the last person in the world I'd ever want to make feel unwelcome, its just that I was hoping you wouldn't have to see this. Not that I don't know my own son, that I don't know that he's obviously told you that about me a thousand times. But I had kind of hoped that, never having seen it, you would always imagine it was just one of his silly old stories... never see it yourself...

JENNIFER

See what myself?

DEBORAH

This!

JENNIFER

What?

(CONTINUED)

DEBORAH

Oh, just the whole business with my husband's tea set.

JENNIFER

Your husband's...? Mrs. Hodgkins, I don't-

DEBORAH

Deborah!

JENNIFER

Deborah, look. I really can't understand...

DEBORAH

Oh my. I guess he never did tell you that story. I just can't believe Johnny wouldn't have...

JENNIFER

(holding the picture out)

Johnny.

DEBORAH

He looks so handsome in that picture, doesn't he? Just like his father. Everybody always used to tell me, but I never really did see the resemblance truly until he put on that uniform for the first time. Just like what you told me about it when you first showed me that. Johnny was already overseas-

JENNIFER

What did I tell you, Deborah? When and where was this picture taken?

DEBORAH

Oh my god, it's true.... you really don't remember.

JENNIFER

No.

DEBORAH

Tell me, dear... just how much of it have you lost? How much can you still remember?

JENNIFER

Ms. Hodgkins,- Deborah, that's what I've been trying to tell you. I don't remember anything!

DEBORAH

Nothing at all?

JENNIFER

No, nothing.

(pause)

Well, nothing except for maybe...

(CONTINUED)

DEBORAH
What, dear?

JENNIFER
Except for this.

DEBORAH
For what?

JENNIFER
(indicating the picture)
This. I don't know what it is, but I just can't... This image, I just can't get it out of my head. But I have no idea what it means.

DEBORAH
That's the two of you the day before he was deployed.

JENNIFER
Your son... he was my.....

DEBORAH
No. But soon. Your sister and I were in charge of the arrangements. Had the church reserved for the 16th. Two weeks after he was set to return.

JENNIFER
(beginning to understand)
But he didn't...

DEBORAH
(after a long pause)
No.
(pause)
Are you sure you wouldn't like to talk about it over some tea?

JENNIFER
I'd love to.

Scene 2

Lights crossfade to the park from Act I, Scene 6. It is another dark night, a few weeks earlier than that. Another dim spotlight of "moonlight" illuminates Johnny, holding a giant teddy bear. Sounds of a carnival are heard in the distance.

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY
 (looking around)
 Hello? Hello? Jennifer....? Where are you?
 (sighs)
 Damn....

Scene 3

Light's crossfade back to Deborah's house. She and Jennifer are at the table, finishing their tea. About 15 minutes have passed. Jennifer is showing her the preserved leaf.

DEBORAH
 No, I'm afraid I wouldn't be able to help you there, honey.

JENNIFER
 You really don't have any idea?

DEBORAH
 No, but I'm sure it must have meant something to my son... and to you too, or else you wouldn't have been keeping it with my letters.

JENNIFER
 Something to do with him... and me?

DEBORAH
 Most likely.

JENNIFER
 So then it's probably for the best that I just forget about the whole thing... because remembering would only...?

DEBORAH
 Well, I'm sure that must have been what you were feeling when you decided that... But, // you know...

JENNIFER
 // When I decided what? //

DEBORAH
 (continuous, overlapping)
 ... that's certainly not the way I would have wanted it. Everybody thought I was always crazy about this, especially my son. Oh, he never said so, would never dare, but I knew. A mother knows...

JENNIFER
 You knew what?

DEBORAH

Oh, about how he really felt about all this...

JENNIFER

All of what?

DEBORAH

(indicating the tea set)

This. My holding on to it all these years. Getting it out all the time. I guess I was wrong, he didn't tell you about- Oh, what am I saying? I'm sure he must have, but you wouldn't remember. Oh well, I can just hear my son, commenting on how lucky you are not to have been bored to tears by my story about the tea set... so I suppose I can just spare you for all time.

JENNIFER

No. I don't want to be spared. Tell me. Bore me.

DEBORAH

(laughs)

Oh well. This was a gift from my husband. Our first anniversary. What always made it so special to me was not how close it was to my grandmother's, not even the knowledge of how much effort he went to to find out, from my mother, just what that one was like, and all the effort a man who hates to shop- don't they all- all the effort he went to to find the closest possible thing. It was, more than anything else, just the fact that he remembered.

JENNIFER

Remembered?

DEBORAH

Oh, I must have mentioned it once in passing. He said it was during our first date. Some moment that apparently even I couldn't remember.

JENNIFER

So what happened?

DEBORAH

Well, like I said, as far as that particular moment goes, even I didn't remember when I might have told him that story about my sister, so I wouldn't really be able to tell you.

JENNIFER

Something about your sister... and your grandmother's tea set?

DEBORAH

I suppose you could say that. Oh well, a story like that...
(chuckles)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DEBORAH (cont'd)

... even if he'd chosen to just tune me out, hit the mute button the moment the conversation wasn't about himself, I wouldn't have minded. I'm sure most anybody in his position would prefer not to listen to all the drama involving their date's manipulative older sister.

JENNIFER

I don't know. I think you might be surprised.

DEBORAH

Long story short- big fight over that when grandma died. "An antique, not something the children could be trusted to take proper care of". So then to keep your sister's hands off it, you leave it to gather dust up in your attic until the day your kid comes up on that ladder to spy on his Christmas presents... knocks it down from the rafters and shatters it into a million pieces.

JENNIFER

You're kidding.

DEBORAH

Oh, I wish I was.

JENNIFER

So this was the closest Mr. Hodgkins could come to replacing it for you.

DEBORAH

And it's amazing how close he actually came. But, like I said, that didn't matter. It could have been the cheapest imitation imaginable, it wouldn't have mattered. The fact that he was listening, really paying attention to something so silly, so petty from my past... conscious of my feelings, even when those feelings could be just so damn pathetic.

(pause)

When I unwrapped this and saw what it was, I just fell so in love with my husband- Oh, what am I saying? It's just... it's like I fell in love with him all over again.

(pause)

I'm sure you don't have any idea what the hell I'm talking about, do you honey?

JENNIFER

No. But I'm sure I would have figured it out rather quickly if things had been different.

DEBORAH

Yes, I understand. I'm sorry, I didn't mean to...

(CONTINUED)

JENNIFER

It's alright, Deborah.

DEBORAH

It's not just the passage of time, but what I just told you that makes it all the more funny... the way my nephew still feels the need to apologize about that old tea set every time he sees me, in light of how much more this one has come to mean to me. I know it's silly, but every time I hold one of these cups in my hands, I can see my husband's face staring at me from the other side of the table.

JENNIFER

It's not silly at all, Deborah. Everybody with a story like that would feel that way.

DEBORAH

No, no. It's not that at all. Most people would have those feelings, I know. But not everybody would go to such lengths to... Most people would consider it very unhealthy, psychologically, for me to work so hard at it, you know?

JENNIFER

I don't see what's so unhealthy about it.

DEBORAH

Well, Johnny did. Like I was telling you, he never dared to say so all the times I'd get these out, and ask him to sit down with me to tea. He always tried to act like he enjoyed the experience. And I played along too, because even though I hated torturing him with it it was just such a fine opportunity to get some quality time with my son. But I could tell how he really felt about it. A mother knows.

JENNIFER

I really am surprised that he would have discouraged you from trying to hold on to a piece of his father that way. I don't know, maybe its just because I can now understand this better than just about anybody else... just how important it is to hold on, no matter how painful it may be.

(indicating the leaf)

I only wish I could feel the same way about...

DEBORAH

Yes, dear. I knew you would feel that way. That's how you always were... and that's why it was just so hard for me to understand why you, of all people, would want this...

JENNIFER

Why I would want what? Deborah, what is it you keep referring to that I...?

(CONTINUED)

DEBORAH

Oh, yes of course... if you can't remember anything, I guess it makes sense that you also wouldn't remember the reasons you didn't want to...

JENNIFER

That I didn't want to remember?

DEBORAH

Believe me, I really didn't think it was possible when you and your sister told me about what you were planning on doing, that that could really work... that's why I was so surprised at first. Couldn't believe you really didn't remember me or anything else. These past few months I'd been thinking that was just something you were saying... that you wanted to pretend I was a stranger, pretend there's nothing painful in the past to be remembered, and that that's why you were avoiding me. Then all of a sudden, you show up here, and you really don't remember.

JENNIFER

I wanted to not remember?

DEBORAH

Well, you were in such bad shape those first couple of weeks, that might have had something to do with it. I knew you weren't yourself. But still, considering the fact that you've always been the only one that's seemed to understand my... you know, my clinging to the past... that's why it was such a shock when you told me and your sister...

JENNIFER

Told you...?

DEBORAH

About how it was just too painful to be around anything that reminded you of my son...

JENNIFER

I told you that?

DEBORAH

Well yes, I mean...

JENNIFER

You mean what? Did I tell you that or not? Yes or no?

DEBORAH

That is what you said.

JENNIFER

But not to you, directly, did I? Who told you that I said that?

(CONTINUED)

(A long silence. With her silence, Deborah has answered the question.)

JENNIFER

(standing)

I need to go. Thank you so much for everything. Can we do this again sometime?

DEBORAH

Yes, please anytime. I think we both need to...

JENNIFER

Yes, I know. I'll see you soon.

DEBORAH

Call me.

JENNIFER

I will.

(She heads to the door while Deborah walks away from the table over to the recliner and sees a flashing light on her answering machine.)

DEBORAH

Oh dear, never seem to remember to check my messages here anymore.

(She hits the button and listens to the message while Jennifer is still standing at the door, listening....)

SANDRA'S VOICE

Deborah, it's me Sandra. Look, Jennifer may be on her way over there right now. Well, she says she's heading over there, but I don't know what to think about her anymore. She's very confused right now, wants to start making a big fuss about.... Look, if she does show up, don't let her in. Actually, I don't know what she's liable to do right now when she's like this. If you see her, call the police.

(Lights fade, and knocking is heard in the darkness.)

Scene 4

Sandra's living room. Later that night. The knocking continues as the lights come up on the scene. After a few seconds, Sandra emerges from the bedroom in pajamas.

SANDRA
Alright, alright!!! I'm coming...
(arriving at the front door)
Who is it?

JENNIFER
(offstage)
Who do you think?

SANDRA
Do you have any idea what time it is?

JENNIFER
About twelve hours since your last lie about Bradford's files. Let me in.

SANDRA
This is not a good time.

JENNIFER
Why not? In twenty years have you ever been known to go to bed before-

SANDRA
No, but-

JENNIFER
Of course, I couldn't vouch for your nighttime habits during the years you were away at college, but if everything Bonnie tells me is true, this is right about the hour when all the fun was just just starting.

SANDRA
Jennifer, the neighbors-

JENNIFER
Well, let me in and we won't have to shout so they can hear us.

SANDRA
Jennifer, you're not well. Have you been drinking again?

(CONTINUED)

JENNIFER

Are those really your tits on the right?

SANDRA

What??

JENNIFER

You know, I've really always meant to ask you about that picture online. It really would be a shame if we had to drag the neighbors into that conversation.

SANDRA

Stop it!

JENNIFER

I mean it's pretty easy to identify Bonnie on the left, as she apparently didn't feel the need to pull her shirt all the way up over her face in order to flash the guys at the-

SANDRA

(opening the door quickly and dragging Jennifer in)

GET in here!!

JENNIFER

(crossing to the sofa)

Oh good, that was easier than I thought it was going to have to be. If need be, I was prepared for a much longer-

SANDRA

How far are we going to go, Jennifer?

JENNIFER

What?

SANDRA

How far are you willing to take this?

JENNIFER

(sitting)

As far as it requires. My mother in law already told me everything.

SANDRA

Deborah let you in?

JENNIFER

Yes. Now all I need is-

SANDRA

And this couldn't wait 'til morning?

(CONTINUED)

JENNIFER

Well, given the fact that I'm a fugitive on the run from the law, no. I thought it was important that we had this talk before your friends in the police department caught up to me.

SANDRA

Jenn, I didn't mean...

JENNIFER

They must be hot on my trail by now, so we've probably only got a few minutes before they burst in the door and slap the cuffs on me.

SANDRA

You know that was not my intention.

JENNIFER

What difference does it make, Sandra? What do you think it says that you would call my mother in law and tell her-

SANDRA

I'm sorry!

(pauses, then sits next to her)

I'm sorry. I really don't know what I was thinking. I was just trying to protect you.

JENNIFER

You always are.

SANDRA

And I knew it wasn't in your interest to find out whatever it is that she told you, and I was trying to stop it. I obviously didn't choose my words very well.

JENNIFER

But you still knew exactly what was and was not in my best interest...

SANDRA

Jennifer...

JENNIFER

... that I needed all my medical decisions to be-

SANDRA

What exactly did Deborah tell you?

JENNIFER

Everything.

SANDRA
So you know about...?

JENNIFER
Yes.

SANDRA
(after a pause)
You know, in spite of what I told you when you first showed me the ring, I always did think that he was... I'm sorry.

JENNIFER
What did you tell me?

SANDRA
You told me that Deborah told you everything.

JENNIFER
Well, obviously not that everything...

SANDRA
(puzzled)
But you know about Johnny.

JENNIFER
Yes, of course. But not everything that was ever said by, to, or about him.

SANDRA
You wouldn't forget a thing like that... at least, now that you remember him.

JENNIFER
I don't remember him!

SANDRA
You told me-

JENNIFER
I told you she told me about him, not that she made me remember him.

SANDRA
Oh my god.

JENNIFER
What's wrong now?

SANDRA
Nothing, it's just that... right now there isn't any reason you shouldn't remember everything.

JENNIFER

Why would I remember now, after everything that was done?

SANDRA

Because its not supposed to be- I mean, when something is blocked out, whether or not its voluntary...

JENNIFER

What?

SANDRA

Well, once you see that... that one thing, there's always that one thing... the trigger that'll help jog your memory. You see it, and then it all comes back to you, just like that.

JENNIFER

What do I need to see?

SANDRA

Honey, whatever reason there is that it still isn't coming back to you, we should be grateful.

JENNIFER

We should be grateful?

SANDRA

Yes. I mean, if Deborah's told you all this then obviously you know why I didn't want her to. Whatever you found out could have been that spark that brings back those memories which you've worked so hard to forget...

JENNIFER

I don't want to forget.

SANDRA

Jenn, you don't know what you're saying. Only pain can come from-

JENNIFER

I want to remember.

SANDRA

Jennifer...

JENNIFER

I'm having tea again with my mother in law in a couple days. What should I look for over there? What kinds of things in her house might be the type of thing that would provide that... "trigger" as you call it?

SANDRA

You don't want to do this...

JENNIFER

What should I look for!!??

SANDRA

(sighs)

I don't know, usually its just about anything connected to the person. Or about your connection to that person. Did Deborah show you any pictures of him that might...?

JENNIFER

Yes, of course I saw the picture. What else?

SANDRA

I really don't know. I can't think of anything more evocative that would bring it all back. Usually the sight of the person's face is all that it should take.

JENNIFER

I do remember his face. That's the only thing that-

(pause)

His face... that's the one thing that throughout all this I never did forget. Not even for a little while.

SANDRA

Would you like something to drink?

JENNIFER

No.

SANDRA

If the picture didn't work, then I don't know what else there is to suggest. I'm sorry I can't help you here.

JENNIFER

No, you're not.

SANDRA

What the hell's that supposed-

JENNIFER

It means what it means!

SANDRA

Is that what you came here in the middle of the night to ask me about?

JENNIFER

Well, that and Bradford's files.

(CONTINUED)

SANDRA

Jennifer, why can't you just leave this alone and get on with your life? I mean, you know everything now.

JENNIFER

Yes, I know. But I don't remember.

SANDRA

What difference does it make?

JENNIFER

I want to remember! And I want to know just how Bradford did this, know what he knows. Or maybe you could just tell me.... I know its not your field, but I'm sure you know enough about...

(thinking of the term Deborah told her)
"post hypnotic suggestion" that you can enlighten me.

SANDRA

What do you want to know?

JENNIFER

Is it possible to be hypnotized to forget something?

SANDRA

Well, obviously it is, or you wouldn't-

JENNIFER

Oh, don't give me that! I looked it up after I left Deborah's house. Everything I've read on the subject says that it can be used to implant ideas, create memories of things that didn't actually happen, but that it's very unlikely it can ever be used to erase memories of things that did.

SANDRA

Vincent is good.

JENNIFER

Whose idea was it?

SANDRA

What?

JENNIFER

Whose idea was it to use it on me?

SANDRA

Jennifer...

JENNIFER

See, Deborah says that it was my idea.

(CONTINUED)

SANDRA

Okay, well there you-

JENNIFER

No. All she said was that I was unable to take the pain...

SANDRA

You were.

JENNIFER

... and that I asked to have the memories erased because they were too painful.

SANDRA

Yes.

JENNIFER

But when I asked her if she heard me say that, in so many words...

SANDRA

(pleading)

Jennifer...

JENNIFER

My mother in law couldn't believe I would-

SANDRA

(rising)

Look, will you stop calling her that for Christ's sake? Deborah is not your mother in law. She was never a part of our family, and now she's never-

(falls back down on the couch, in tears)

I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

(She tries to hug her)

JENNIFER

Stop it.

SANDRA

Jenn, please...

(Jennifer gives in, and they hug)

SANDRA

I never meant to hurt you.

JENNIFER

I know.

(after a pause, still hugging Sandra)

I still want to know.

(CONTINUED)

SANDRA

(pulling away)

What else can I tell you?

JENNIFER

Did I, or did I not, want to have this done to me?

SANDRA

In the weeks following the funeral you didn't know what you wanted.

JENNIFER

That's not what I asked you.

SANDRA

No, it's not what you asked, but it is the correct answer. You weren't in any state to-

JENNIFER

And that was your expert medical judgment, that I was not competent to make-

SANDRA

No!! You were able to communicate, but in the condition you were in, you just weren't exactly in a state to eliminate any ambiguity in your expressed desires. It was up to your doctors to interpret them...

JENNIFER

What did I say to you, Sandra? Tell me the exact words!

SANDRA

You said you couldn't take the pain. Pled with me to do whatever it took to make it stop.

JENNIFER

And you interpreted that to mean...?

SANDRA

Yes.

JENNIFER

(after a long pause)

And I'm sure you regularly withhold necessary medications from patients who don't like to-

SANDRA

That is different!

JENNIFER

How is it different?

(CONTINUED)

SANDRA
It just is! Now can we just-

(Dave, in his underwear, enters from the
bedroom)

DAVE
Yo, so did you get it yet or what?
(sees Jennifer)
Heeyyyyyy.... how's it goin', sis?
(No answer)
That good, huh? Well, if the pizza dude don't show up in
the next-

SANDRA
Do you mind?

DAVE
Oh yeah, no prob. Well hey, no sense waiting. You know do
we got any more of that, whatcha call it, the...

SANDRA
I don't know! Why don't you go look!

DAVE
Yo! Don't gotta bite my head off or nothin'...

(The sisters stare at each other in
silence for a few moments after he's
gone off to the kitchen)

SANDRA
It's not what it looks like.

JENNIFER
Oh really? That's funny, cuz I could have sworn there was
a-

SANDRA
Okay! It is what it looks like!

JENNIFER
Glad to see it.

SANDRA
What the hell's that supposed to mean?

JENNIFER
It's good to see you still have your standards.

SANDRA
Oh, give it a rest, why don't you just-

JENNIFER
(rising)
Don't worry, I'm going.

SANDRA
No, wait!

JENNIFER
For what?

SANDRA
Just sit down... don't go.

JENNIFER
You want me to stay?

SANDRA
I don't know why, but yes.

JENNIFER
You don't know why?

SANDRA
Just... stay here a couple days, we'll try to sort it out.

JENNIFER
Sort it out?

SANDRA
Find out whatever it is that you need to see that will be that trigger you need to...

JENNIFER
You already said it can't be done.

SANDRA
We don't know that.... we can try.

JENNIFER
I don't think that's such a good idea.

DAVE
(reemerging from the kitchen, with a bucket of fried chicken, talking with his mouth full)
Well, it don't look like you got no more of the... hey!
(gestures to Jennifer with a drumstick)
Your sister's gonna take the extra one off my hands, but if you'd like to come along, I'm sure Larry can get us one more ticket.

JENNIFER

I think I'll take a rain check.

(gets up again)

I was just leaving. I'll let you get back to-

SANDRA

No! Sit down.

(to Dave)

I think maybe you should leave.

DAVE

What did I say...?

Scene 5

Lights crossfade to the park, a few seconds after the conclusion of Scene 2. Johnny still stands there, holding the bear.

JOHNNY

(still looking around for Jennifer)

Hello? Are you out here?

(he sighs and takes out his phone and dials)

Hey Bob, where you at?... Yeah, I know you're still at the carnival, but where?... Alright, I'll see you back there in a few minutes.... Yeah, I know I left with the girl but its... look, I don't wanna talk about it... I mean... Look, I think she ditched me okay...? Yeah, I'll see you in a minute.

(Towards the end of this, Jennifer has emerged, and is sneaking up on him. As he hangs up, she grabs him playfully from behind.)

JOHNNY

Why you...

(He drops the bear and chases after her)

JENNIFER

Come on, come on!!! What are you gonna do?

JOHNNY

This!

(He catches up to her and they wrestle playfully to the ground.)

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY

I thought you ditched me.

JENNIFER

(getting up as he lets her go)

Oh, I did.

(going to pick up the bear)

But you didn't think I was gonna let you get away with Barry, did you?

JOHNNY

Barry?

JENNIFER

Well, you won him for me, didn't you?

JOHNNY

Barry?

JENNIFER

Hey, let my sister give me crap about that. She'll tell you all about the cat I named Kitty.

JOHNNY

Where do you suppose she and her fella wandered off to?

JENNIFER

Oh, there's no supposing, trust me. I know exactly where they are. Same place they are this time every year.

JOHNNY

And that would be...?

JENNIFER

Underneath the bleachers...

JOHNNY

Get outa here! Are they really...?

JENNIFER

Oh yes, as we speak, I'm sure...

JOHNNY

That just seems so unlike her.

JENNIFER

What are you talking about? You just met her.

JOHNNY

Well, I just met you and yet you agreed to meet me out here.

(CONTINUED)

JENNIFER

What?

JOHNNY

You didn't think I wanted to...?

JENNIFER

No.

JOHNNY

I mean, I coulda been some kinda...

JENNIFER

Yes, I know that.

JOHNNY

So then how did you know that I wasn't?

JENNIFER

I don't know... I just knew.

(They both chuckle)

JOHNNY

Still... from what I do know of your sister it does just seem so unlike her. I'd never expect that out of her.

JENNIFER

Well, no. Not out of the girl you just met.

JOHNNY

What?

JENNIFER

The girl she was ten years ago, well that's another story. What she- what they try to re-capture every year here.

JOHNNY

Sort of a little ritual, huh?

JENNIFER

Pretty much... this is where they met... more than ten years ago.

JOHNNY

She knows that you know?

JENNIFER

Oh yeah. You wouldn't understand. We're sisters, we tell each other everything. I mean, when she first sneaked away with Danny, she was sixteen... sneaking away from me and Mom.

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY

Was doing that behind her mother's back, huh?

JENNIFER

Yes. And of the little sister who was waaaayyy too young to understand what was going on back there... but she did.

(pause)

Oh well. I'll hear all about it later this evening, I'm sure. About how somehow it just isn't the same anymore.

JOHNNY

I guess if they're looking for a little "danger" to add to the fun of it...

JENNIFER

Yeah, that's pretty much the idea. Which is why it always seems to puzzle her why it just isn't the same anymore.

(pause)

But I guess that's kinda what happens to the couple that tries so carefully to... "plan their spontaneity".

JOHNNY

Well, then I guess it's a good thing that the sister who's half of that unimaginative couple isn't the one that I'm here with...

JENNIFER

Is the unimaginative girl who would name a bear "Barry" any better?

JOHNNY

We'll work on it.

JENNIFER

Good.

JOHNNY

We'll show that we can do better than that. How about we agree that from now on, you and I aren't going to try to re-live old memories, we're gonna create new ones of our own?

JENNIFER

It's a deal.

JOHNNY

What do you say we start right now?

JENNIFER

I'd like that.

(CONTINUED)

(They start kissing, and as they are doing so, she steps backwards, and we hear the sound of a leaf crunching underneath her foot. She pulls away and looks down at it)

JENNIFER

Oh my god. This is so...

JOHNNY

What? What did I do?

JENNIFER

Nothing, nothing. It's just...

(kneeling to pick up the crushed leaf)

This is so perfect. It's just like....

JOHNNY

Like what?

JENNIFER

Oh, never mind, it's stupid.

JOHNNY

No, tell me.

JENNIFER

About leaves... It's just a stupid story from the past that this reminds me of...

JOHNNY

Come on. I want to hear...

JENNIFER

Alright...

(She looks nostalgically at the leaf, for a moment and begins to speak. Then, all of a sudden, a confused look appears on her face. A slight change in the lighting is also suggested to indicate the sudden transition from the playback of this flashback to Jennifer's present insertion into this flashback which she can no longer remember.)

JENNIFER

It's... It's...

JOHNNY

Jennifer? What's wrong?

JENNIFER

I don't know. I don't know. All of a sudden I can't seem to remember.

JOHNNY

It's alright. It's late. I'm sure you can tell me about it later.

JENNIFER

No, I can't... I can't do this...

JOHNNY

Jennifer?

(She turns to him, and suddenly she has no idea who he is)

JENNIFER

Who... who are you?

JOHNNY

Jennifer, are you okay?

JENNIFER

No, I'm not. Where am I? Who the hell are you?

JOHNNY

(tries to hug her)

Jennifer, please...

JENNIFER

(pushes him away)

No! Don't touch me! Don't you touch me!

JOHNNY

What is the matter with you?

JENNIFER

Nothing is the matter with me. Get out of here! Get away from me!

(Lights go out on Johnny and all of the stage except one point of light illuminating Jennifer)

JENNIFER

Get away from me, get away from me! I don't know you, I don't know this place! I don't know where I am. I don't

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JENNIFER (cont'd)
 know what you want from me. Tell me, what is this? Tell me, please, please....

(She falls to her knees, hysterical)

BLACKOUT

Scene 6

Back at the restaurant. A few weeks following the conclusion of Scene 4. Sandra sits at the table, alone.

SANDRA

(answering her phone)

Hi, Mom... No she must have turned it off during her session this afternoon and not turned it back on.... yes, she still sees him once a week... yes, even on her-.... ok, well I'll tell her you called, she's on her way over here right now... to the steakhouse.... yes, the same place, that's where she wanted to go...

(sees Dave approaching the table, and dismissively waves him away)

She really likes to torture me bringing me back here. I think-

(checks to make sure Dave is gone)

I think she even arranges it so we always get the same waiter... no, nothing's wrong with that, except- oh, never mind. Look I'll tell her you called, make sure she turns her phone back on, and you can call her in hour or so after dinner.... alright, Mom. I love you too.

(She sits there a moment, texting something as Jennifer approaches)

JENNIFER

What did we all do before my operation?

SANDRA

(looking up)

What? Jenn!

(stands and hugs her)

Happy birthday, honey!

JENNIFER

Thanks

(CONTINUED)

(They both sit)

SANDRA

Mom says so too. Tried to call you. You never turned your phone back on after your session with Dr. Robertson.

JENNIFER

I saw Dr. Bradford.

SANDRA

(shocked)

What?

JENNIFER

I had to know... had to know what was in the file you didn't want me to see... You know, the one you tried to get him to destroy?

SANDRA

Jennifer, you have to understand-

JENNIFER

Oh, I understand. I understand perfectly. I understand that my sister-

DAVE

(approaching)

So, ladies...

JENNIFER

Not now!

DAVE

Make it simple? Just bring you the usual?

JENNIFER

Yes, fine.

SANDRA

The usual for her, and a menu for me... please.

DAVE

Gotcha.

(He goes off)

JENNIFER

(trying to re-focus)

What did we all do before the operation?

(CONTINUED)

SANDRA

What?

JENNIFER

Before my operation. You, me, and Mom... we all did something.

SANDRA

It wasn't an "operation". That's not how post-hypnotic suggestion // works.

JENNIFER

// I know how it works, believe me. I'm not talking about that, I'm talking about my appendix.

SANDRA

Your appendix? Jenn, you were fourteen years old!

JENNIFER

Yes, I know that. That's what I want to hear about.

SANDRA

Why do you need me to tell you about that?

JENNIFER

I don't know, you tell me. Why should that be something I can't remember?

SANDRA

I have no idea.

JENNIFER

Because it's in some way connected to Johnny, isn't it?

SANDRA

I don't know... I'm sure it must be.

JENNIFER

Something to do with leaves?

SANDRA

(slowly and painfully)

Yes.

JENNIFER

What is my... what did Bradford call it, my "fascination with leaves"?

SANDRA

There's no way you can't remember all the times you used to tell me, used to tell everybody, about what you thought about the sound of leaves...

(CONTINUED)

JENNIFER

The sound of leaves?

SANDRA

About the sound they make... crunching underneath your feet.

JENNIFER

Well I don't.... and I don't remember ever thinking that.

(Sandra shakes her head as Dave approaches with a menu)

DAVE

Here you go...

SANDRA

No, never mind.

DAVE

Want me to come back?

SANDRA

No, get it started.

DAVE

Get what started?

SANDRA

Just...

DAVE

The usual...?

SANDRA

I don't know... surprise me.

(he starts to go)

And don't forget about...

(motions to Jennifer)

DAVE

You got it.

(He goes off, and there is a long silence)

JENNIFER

In my session... the one you tried to erase from existence, we had talked about the leaf. The thing about which you said, if anything would bring back my memory, it would be that. His notes show that I discussed the story surrounding it, and how it connected to some other story about my

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JENNIFER (cont'd)

appendix, but at the time I obviously didn't feel the need to fill in whatever details would help me to.... remind myself of two of my most vivid memories...

SANDRA

I can fill you in on the one... if you really want to know.

JENNIFER

I do.

SANDRA

Are you sure?

JENNIFER

Yes. Isn't that probably the "trigger" you've talked about, that will help me remember the rest of it?

SANDRA

Probably. That's why, before I tell you, I need to know that you're absolutely-

JENNIFER

I'm sure! I want to hear it. Tell me.

SANDRA

(sighs)

Well, I think I've already told you most of it... about how you always used to say that you liked the sound of leaves crunching beneath your feet. I never fully understood why it was that, of all things... but I knew it was just one of those things that made you feel like you were alive, in touch with nature. I suppose everybody's got one of those. For most people its something like watching the sunrise.... one of the first things a man who's just spent the past twenty years in prison wants to witness immediately upon his release. Or something he wants to see one last time before...

JENNIFER

What does all this have to do with my appendix?

SANDRA

I'm getting there. Anyway, when Mom called me, suggested flying home to be at your bedside for a couple days, even if it meant missing some of my classes... told me how important to you it was that you saw me one last time before... I mean, I knew how silly it was to think-

JENNIFER

Yeah, yeah... let's get to the point...

(CONTINUED)

SANDRA

Well, that was you, you know? The girl who faints at the sight of blood... who, only a few years earlier had slapped the syringe out of the nurse's hand...

JENNIFER

Okay, okay...

SANDRA

Didn't block that one out, did you?

JENNIFER

No.

SANDRA

Well, anyway... I knew you wanted to see me. And there was no way I could say no to that, no matter how ridiculous I knew it was.

JENNIFER

Yeah, I get it... my fears were ridiculous...

SANDRA

Jenn...

JENNIFER

Go on...

SANDRA

But then I saw you and it all changed. First thing you said when you saw me... about how the doctors wouldn't let you go outside just once before they had to operate. Said you just wanted to walk around in the grass and listen to the leaves crunching beneath your feet once more before you went under the knife.

(pause)

And that's where it suddenly hit me. I don't know why, but I just started bawling my eyes out. I mean, I knew just how insane it was to think I wouldn't ever... But when you said that to me, after all the years I'd heard you tell me about the leaves... all of a sudden it just seemed so real to me.

JENNIFER

That's it?

SANDRA

No, and then...

JENNIFER

Then what?

(CONTINUED)

SANDRA

It's so stupid...

JENNIFER

Tell me.

SANDRA

What I did next... I took the plastic bag mom and I had packed up all your things in to bring to the hospital, took it outside and gathered up all the newly fallen autumn leaves out on the grass. Brought them back in, closed the curtain so they wouldn't get on us about the mess we were making, and spread them all over the tile floor.

JENNIFER

And let me step in them...

SANDRA

And me... and Mom. All of us acting out the condemned girl's final request...

(They stare at each other in silence for a moment. Jennifer, with no memory stirred, is unmoved, but Sandra is wiping away tears)

JENNIFER

I was seven years old, you know.

SANDRA

No, you were fourteen.

JENNIFER

I was seven during the whole... syringe incident.

SANDRA

That wasn't my point in bringing it // up.

JENNIFER

// Well maybe it was mine! Did you ever think about that?

SANDRA

Jenn, what is the matter with you? I tell you what you wanted to hear, a story about something that actually-

JENNIFER

Well maybe in light of all that's happened, that isn't exactly the one I just heard.

SANDRA

What did you hear Jennifer?

(CONTINUED)

JENNIFER

Funny how all I seem to have heard is the story of how "stupid" everything is that your sister wants.

SANDRA

Jennifer, this is-

JENNIFER

How long am I gonna be judged by the way I acted when I was seven?

(pause for an answer she doesn't get)

I guess it should have been pretty obvious how unfit the girl who couldn't handle needles would have been to go through the pains of bearing Johnny's children.

SANDRA

I never meant to imply that...

(letting what was just said sink in)

You know?

JENNIFER

Never meant what?

(thinks for a moment while Sandra just stares at her)

You mean about commenting on my supposed unfitness to be a mother?

(silence)

You did say that... or something just like it to me, when I told you about Johnny... didn't you?

(A long pause as her silence answers that question... then finally:)

SANDRA

I'm sorry you had to remember this way.

JENNIFER

What?

SANDRA

That something like that... You know I didn't mean it the way it came out... that something like that would be your trigger.

JENNIFER

It wasn't.

SANDRA

But you just remembered what I said to you about...

(CONTINUED)

JENNIFER

I didn't.

(pause)

But why is it that I didn't have to actually remember something like that in order to... just know?

(A long silence... then finally:)

SANDRA

I guess Vincent was better than even I thought.

JENNIFER

So why'd you do it?

SANDRA

I didn't want you to get // hurt.

JENNIFER

// Yeah, I've heard that one before. I meant why did you try to destroy whatever last piece of the puzzle might actually help at the same time your were telling me you were going to help me find it?

SANDRA

Jennifer...

JENNIFER

Why did you send...

(looking around for Dave)

... loverboy... //

SANDRA

// oh, please //

JENNIFER

(continuous, overlapping)

... away the other night after I showed up?

(pause)

SANDRA

Listen, it's your birthday. Why don't we just try to enjoy the rest of-

JENNIFER

Why did you ask me to stay if you had no intention of helping me?

SANDRA

(slowly)

I don't know

(CONTINUED)

JENNIFER

Just another iced tea offer...?

SANDRA

I just wanted your company, okay? Is that so wrong?

JENNIFER

No, there's nothing wrong with it.

(pause)

I guess things have gotten rather lonely around your place since-

SANDRA

Stop!! I don't need your pity.

JENNIFER

No, you don't. Why should you?

SANDRA

I don't need you to tell me about everything that... Let's just...

JENNIFER

Deborah tells me we first met at the carnival. Same one where-

SANDRA

Stop it! I already told you, we're not going there, okay?

JENNIFER

For ten years, you've never seemed to mind "going there" every time-

SANDRA

Okay, well maybe I'm over it now, maybe it's time that I move on. Time has a way of changing things. Time, and over ten years of the most excruciating crap that's ever been dished out by... I didn't need it then, and I sure as hell don't need it now! If only I had been fortunate enough to have someone who cared enough to erase it all for me!

JENNIFER

Erase it... "all"?

SANDRA

Everything!

JENNIFER

Including the night at-

SANDRA

Including the night at the carnival!

(CONTINUED)

JENNIFER

Every time that you used to talk to me about...

SANDRA

That was a long time ago, okay?

JENNIFER

Last time, I recall, was... last night at dinner.

(long pause)

But I'm sorry I never... "cared enough" to destroy it for you.

SANDRA

You know, part of being a grown up is recognizing that not every unhealthy addiction deserves a monument when it means-

JENNIFER

(building tension)

- Or maybe part of being a grown up is knowing how to take the bad with the good, to accept people as they are, not as you'd like them to be. Maybe I wanted to just-

SANDRA

(exploding)

You didn't know what you wanted! You never did! Not before, not now, and certainly not right after Johnny died!

(That did it! There is a long silence, and then finally:)

JENNIFER

(slow but firm)

Just like Deborah doesn't know, and probably never will, I'm sure. But maybe not everybody considers her attachment to her husband's tea set so... what was it? "Pathetic".... Maybe I'd have liked to have spent the rest of my life being "pathetic" myself over Johnny... I'd try to explain to you "what the hell's that supposed to mean?", but that would be wasting my breath.

(She takes the preserved leaf out of her purse and tosses it onto the table)

Here, you can have this.

SANDRA

I don't want your-

JENNIFER

Keep it! It's yours. It means nothing to me now.

SANDRA

What have I done that is so wrong...?

(CONTINUED)

(Dave comes out, probably also accompanied by Johnny, doubling as another waiter again. They are both carrying a cake and/or a special "birthday drink" and singing. They finish, present it/them to Jennifer, at which point she stands, takes the cake and hits Sandra in the face with it- or throws the drink in her face if the former is too difficult to stage...)

DAVE

(after a pause in which Johnny goes off)
Dude! What the hell was that for?

JENNIFER

(slowly)
Killing my husband.

(She exits, slowly. Dave just stares at Sandra for a few moments, and then finally:)

DAVE

(offering her a towel)
Here.

SANDRA

Thanks.

DAVE

(starting to go)
Lemme get you some more-

SANDRA

(wiping herself off)
No, it's fine... I'm fine.

DAVE

Hey, I know it probably don't make a lotta sense to ask you something like this right now, but this Saturday I got an extra ticket for the ball game, front row...

SANDRA

Sounds like a blast...

DAVE

You know, you don't gotta- What?

(CONTINUED)

SANDRA

That's great... I wouldn't miss it for the world.

THE END