

(She exits into the bathroom. The buzzer sounds. He looks off, then decides to answer himself.)

LEO. Hello?

BEC. *(through the intercom)* It's Bec.

(After a moment of uncertainty, he buzzes her in. He looks at himself, sorta freaks out, takes off his jacket, starts to unbutton his pants.)

LEO. Fuck it.

(He puts his jacket back on. He tousles his own hair. He tries to look casual. A knock at the door.)

It's open.

(BEC enters. She is wearing bike shorts and a long-sleeved jersey. She is carrying her helmet.)

BEC. Hey.

LEO. ...hey.

BEC. Nice suit.

LEO. Thanks. Nice jersey.

BEC. Thanks.

(pause)

LEO. Uh...

BEC. So this is really stupid, I should've called, I thought you might want to go on a bike ride, but you're obviously busy.

LEO. Yeah. Yeah, I am kind of busy.

BEC. Okay, so. Sorry. Never mind.

(She goes to leave.)

LEO. Uh. I would say we could go tomorrow, but I'm heading out.

BEC. Where?

LEO. Back to St. Paul for a couple days, face up to the family. Then to Colorado.

BEC. What's in Colorado?

LEO. Got a job.

BEC. Congratulations.

LEO. Yeah, I think it's gonna be cool. Clarifying. Mountain air and all that.

BEC. That's great, I'm really happy for you.

LEO. Thanks. Yeah.

If you could wait maybe a couple hours – ?

BEC. I have class.

LEO. Right. Class.

(pause)

BEC. It's just, I thought maybe you'd want to dip your front tire.

LEO. Ah.

BEC. Because you asked me to go with you that night you showed up at my apartment, and I was not in a frame of mind to...but you've probably already done it by now.

LEO. No, it's been kinda crazy around here, my grandma's needed me a lot. Her neighbor died. That's where we're –

BEC. I'm so sorry.

LEO. Not your fault.

BEC. I know.

Well. You probably won't have time, but, I printed a couple maps. Depending on where you want to do it. I know open ocean is ideal but around here I think you're gonna have to settle for bay.

LEO. I think as long as it's salty it counts.

BEC. I'm actually, one of the classes I'm taking, it's an anthropology class about ritual? Like in societies all over the world, and how it, on like a psychological and even neurological basis, it...well we're not that far into the class yet, but basically every culture has them and that's because they work. I don't know, I think if you can fit it in, you should do it.

(She hands him the maps.)

LEO. Thanks.

(The sound of a toilet flushing. VERA enters, putting pearls over her head. She sees BEC.)

VERA. Oh.

BEC. Hi.

VERA. Hello.

(VERA looks to LEO, who doesn't explain.)

LEO. You ready?

VERA. Just about.

LEO. I'm just gonna grab the notes for my speech.

(He exits. VERA is thoroughly mystified.)

VERA. You're coming, is that it?

BEC. No. I was just...no.

I'm sorry about your neighbor.

VERA. You know Leo was the one who brought her to the hospital. He took care of everything, he stayed with her until they brought her into the, whadayacallit. He was really...he was very much a man. Oh I'm sorry, you don't like it when I put it that way.

BEC. No, I'm actually glad to hear it.

VERA. He's leaving tomorrow, I guess he told you. Which does not make me very happy.

BEC. I'm sorry.

VERA. You'd think at my age I'd know better than to get used to anything.

(off BEC's stricken look)

Oh don't look at me like that, I'll be all right, I've always been all right.

BEC. I know, I wasn't...*pitying* you, or –

VERA. Well you were, but never mind.

BEC. I wasn't, please don't think that.

VERA. All right, I always manage to upset you, let's forget I said anything.

BEC. You didn't upset me, I mean it's not you, I'm just irretrievably sad right now, and I know it's gonna pass, I know that, but it's very *convincing*, while it lasts, you know? It just feels very very real.

VERA. Well, it is real. That's why. But you're right. It'll pass.

(LEO reenters, unaware of what he is interrupting.)

LEO. Okay!

What?

(*pause*)

BEC. Bye, Leo.

(*brief pause*)

LEO. Bye.

(*They hug deeply. VERA averts her eyes.*)

BEC. Bye Vera.

VERA. Take care of yourself.

(*BEC exits. A long pause.*)

VERA. What's this about a speech?

LEO. I wasn't sure if they were gonna open it up to people in the audience. But just in case.

You said she doesn't have a lot of people.

VERA. But did you ever meet her? I mean, before - ?

LEO. No. You're right, it's probably not a good idea.

VERA. I think it's a lovely idea, I'm just surprised. Do you want to practice? We have a few minutes.

LEO. Uh...

(*He looks at the paper.*)

Nah.

VERA. You should always practice before public speaking. Joe would've told you that.

LEO. Okay, um...

I feel weird. Um. (*He refers occasionally to his notes over the following.*) Ginny was my grandmother's across / the hall

VERA. Loudly, please.

(brief pause)

LEO. Ginny was my grandmother's across the hall neighbor, and they used to call each other every night to check in. Which I know gave my mom and my uncles a lot of solace, that there was someone my grandma talked to every day. But I don't want to make it sound like that was Ginny's only purpose in life, because actually a google search revealed a varied and fascinating past. Ginny was an actress a long time ago, and she understudied for a play on Broadway called "Mary Had a Little."

(to VERA)

You didn't tell me that.

(VERA nods.)

After that she started working for the William Morris Agency, as a secretary. So I guess she decided if she wasn't making it as an actor she wanted to help other actors make it, which I think is a pretty productive way of dealing with that kind of disappointment.

Also she was married to a man who was killed in the Korean War. And after that I think she didn't get married again...?

(He looks to VERA, who nods.)

So I don't know, but I bet that was really terrible, and I know she was a peace activist, like my grandma, so I guess she came at that from a pretty personal angle.

That's all I could find on the internet but she was eighty-one years old so there was a lot of other stuff, too.

(pause)

I guess that's not such a good ending.

VERA. It needs maybe one more.../ whaddayacallit.

LEO. Yeah.

(They think, for kind of a long time.)

VERA. It's hard, because the truth is she was a pain in the ass.

(pause)

I guess you could say...you could say something about all her plants.

LEO. Oh yeah, I saw, in her apartment, there was like a / forest.

VERA. She would get a, whaddayacallit, that green slimy thing from California, with a stone / in it –

LEO. An avocado?

VERA. She would get an avocado at the supermarket, and put the stone in some water with those, uh, toothpicks, and next thing you know it's a tree.

What is that expression?

(She thinks.)

Green thumb.

(She is relieved to have thought of this.)

She was a pain in the ass, but god, she was like a magician. That woman could make anything grow.

(LEO listens, and then writes. Lights fade.)

End of Play