

Rooftop

11th Grade

07/27/2000

CAST OF CHARACTERS

JOANNA, 30s, widowed, simple with streaks of sadness underneath

DYLAN, Joanna's friend, 40s, divorced, world-weary

SETTING

The rooftop of a building. The present, nighttime.

(JOANNA opens the roof door, leading DYLAN onto the rooftop.)

DYLAN

So this is where you wanted to come?

JOANNA

Mm-hmm. Just look at the view... Isn't it wonderful?

DYLAN

It's... alright.

JOANNA

You don't enjoy much, do you?

DYLAN

I guess not.

(JOANNA wanders around the roof separately, taking everything in. DYLAN is visibly not as enchanted as she is. JOANNA sits down on a platform.)

JOANNA

Jeff would sit me down at this very spot and teach me Spanish. It was to prepare for our trip to Columbia... He thought that the roof was a nice learning environment.

DYLAN

(joining her on the platform)

Tell me something in Spanish.

JOANNA

Oh, I think I forgot most of it...

(thinking)

Yeah, I don't know.

DYLAN

What about 'I don't know'?

JOANNA

Oh! Yo no sé.

DYLAN

Ooh, impressive.

(beat)

I didn't even know Jeff knew Spanish.

JOANNA

Yeah, I was surprised too when he told me... It's amazing the things we learn about our loved ones. And that's sort of the best and worst part of marriage: getting to know your partner.

(Brief pause. JOANNA looks out at the skyline, which is out at the audience.)

JOANNA(CONT'D)

I miss him.

(Another brief pause, this time more somber. She turns to DYLAN.)

JOANNA(CONT'D)

Have I ever told you the ice cube story?

DYLAN

Um, I don't think so.

JOANNA

This'll be short. Just bare with me.

DYLAN

Sure.

JOANNA

So, it was Thanksgiving and my mom wanted to impress the family in some way. So she told us that she could juggle ice cubes.

DYLAN

Ice cubes?

JOANNA

That's what we said. So she gathers the family and brings, like, 4 ice cubes, right? And she starts juggling, and it's goin' pretty well at first. But after a couple of seconds, the ice gets too slippery for her hands a--and ice cubes are just flying all over the place.

(DYLAN chuckles.)

JOANNA(CONT'D)

(beat)

That's pretty much how I feel about life. Just when you think you've got a hold of something, it slips away.

(Brief pause.)

DYLAN

Y'know... consider yourself lucky. I--I mean, in order for something to slip away, you have to have *something*. If you have nothing precious then you can't truly lose anything.

JOANNA

I guess... Weren't you sad when Diane slipped away?

DYLAN

Divorce doesn't really count.

JOANNA

It doesn't?

DYLAN

Well, I wouldn't say "slip away." More like... "escaped."

JOANNA

You didn't at least try to make it work?

DYLAN

I don't know. We tried, I guess. But sometimes even that's not enough. You get that?

JOANNA

Kind of.

DYLAN

It's like when they say "if you have lemons, make lemonade." Well, that's not necessarily true. You can't just make lemonade with lemons. You need sugar and water, all that other stuff... Me and Diane's marriage didn't really have that other stuff. Our marriage was just this disgusting lemon juice.

JOANNA

Well, no marriage *really* has lemonade.

DYLAN

I thought yours did.

JOANNA

No, no. I mean, maybe at first we thought we knew what we were doing... Like, we thought that marriage would make us these cool, different people. Sorta like a unit... a unit that would gain strength from each other a--and grow old together... But that's where we struggled.

DYLAN

What do you mean?

JOANNA

Well, it's hard. How do you become different people without going in different directions? Or grow old without your love growing just as old...

(She pauses to herself, reflecting and growing sadder.)

DYLAN

We don't have to talk about--

JOANNA

And sometimes it can feel like a game... A game of who can hold their breath the longest, waiting 'til one of us would stop suffocating each other and just... back out...

(She looks out at the skyline as a tear rolls down her cheek so subtly. She gets up, meandering a bit, lost in her own thoughts. DYLAN watches her, uncomfortable and curious. As she stops, he gets up and joins her. Brief pause.)

DYLAN

You okay?

JOANNA

Yeah, I'm fine.

DYLAN

(pauses)

So... do you still think about him?

(JOANNA looks at DYLAN, then stares back at the ground. DYLAN is confused.)

DYLAN(CONT'D)

What? Did I-- you okay?

JOANNA

No, it's nothing.

DYLAN

If something's wrong then--

JOANNA

I'm just gonna pretend you didn't say that.

DYLAN

(beat)

Wait, the question--

JOANNA

(a hint of testiness)

Yes. That question.

DYLAN

You said the stuff about suffocating and I just thought...

(beat)

Look, I was just trying to help.

JOANNA

(understanding, cooled off)

It's alright. I get it.

DYLAN

I didn't realize it would upset you a--and I--

JOANNA

Don't worry about it. People like you ask those questions all the time.

(DYLAN pauses, confused.)

DYLAN

People like me?

JOANNA

Well... you know what I mean.

DYLAN

I really don't.

JOANNA

I wasn't... it's not like I was--

DYLAN

What type of people?

JOANNA

Well... people who have yet to find love.

DYLAN

What?

JOANNA

I'm just saying that people who haven't found love won't know how--

DYLAN

(ruffled)

Look, you don't know me.

JOANNA

I've heard enough.

DYLAN

I don't need you to act like you know everything about love because your husband died.

JOANNA

Excuse me?

DYLAN

I just don't enjoy someone who thinks they're Einstein a--and can analyze my entire lovelife.

JOANNA

I don't need to be Einstein to know that you're too much of a misanthrope to sustain a relationship.

DYLAN

Really?

JOANNA

It's true.

(Brief pause. Now they're both irritated.)

DYLAN

Y'know, marriage is hard. Alright? It's *hard*. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. Okay, so you didn't back out. You got lucky. But that doesn't give you the right to dissect mine.

(JOANNA rolls her eyes. DYLAN is almost perplexed.)

DYLAN(CONT'D)

Look, you think your husband died and you're so special? There are millions of widows. Get used to people trying to help you out.

JOANNA

You asked me if I still *think of him*. I saw him *buried*. Lowered into the

ground and surrounded by dirt. The ground was still warm from his corpse when I first met you. So when you see your beloved buried, I'll ask you if you still think about her.

DYLAN

Y'know, I--I only tried to help you. Give you some comfort over your dead husband. How the hell can you even have the goddamn nerve to chastise me?

(beat)

I quit. I give up. Can't do this.

JOANNA

Is that what you told to your wife?

(DYLAN just stares at her in disbelief.)

DYLAN

You know what? *Fuck your shitty husband.*

(beat)

Or is that too misanthropic?

JOANNA

God, I feel bad for you. Trying to find happiness when you're not even capable of experiencing pleasure.

DYLAN

Why does it have to mean I'm incapable of experiencing pleasure? Maybe everything else just sucks!

JOANNA

And that's probably why your wife left you.

DYLAN

Oh, that's why? You got it all figured out--

JOANNA

That's *exactly* why. *Everything* has a problem to you. You don't know how to enjoy things--

DYLAN

Wow! You got me! You spent a couple hours with me and now you know everything about me.

JOANNA

Y'know, it's *true*. And that's probably why you hate it up here.

DYLAN

Really?

Really.

JOANNA

You know why I hate it up here?

DYLAN

You can't stand something that brings any kind of peace or joy. Something that can--

JOANNA

Because it would be so easy.

DYLAN

(pauses)

What?

JOANNA

I could take six steps...

DYLAN

(motions to ledge of building)
 ... *that way.* And--and everything? *Gone.* N--no debt. No job. No ex. I mean, it's like *magic.* You know, I *wish* I could finally bring myself to walk right off this building. It would be so easy. Almost *too easy.* Alright? *Fuck your roof.*

(A long silence. They both stand, out of things to say. DYLAN walks to the platform and sits down. JOANNA still stands in the moment, uncomfortable. After a beat, she begins to walk, joining DYLAN on the platform as they both cool down. There's a pause.)

What stops you?

JOANNA

(pauses)

I don't know... maybe things will get better.

DYLAN

Really?

JOANNA

I mean... Our lives are so susceptible to misery. But we're just as vulnerable to hope... Why end it when things can get better?

DYLAN

(beat)

Maybe things will get better.

JOANNA

(Medium pause. Now they've both completely cooled down.)

DYLAN

I'm sorry for that husband stuff.

JOANNA

Oh, stop it. Don't do that--

DYLAN

No, but really. *Really*... I'm just a screw-up.

JOANNA

We're all screw-ups.

DYLAN

I hope so.

JOANNA

I--I mean, my husband's last image of me was probably me yelling at him for not taking out the trash.

DYLAN

What's your image of him?

JOANNA

(beat)

Not taking out the trash.

(Brief pause, then DYLAN lets out a quiet laugh. JOANNA smiles with him. They both turn to each other briefly, then look out at the skyline.)

DYLAN

The city looks kinda nice today.

JOANNA

Yeah, you're right... It usually looks pretty awful.

DYLAN

Well, that's what loneliness does.

JOANNA

(beat)

Would you really ever jump off?

DYLAN

(pauses)

Yo no sé.

*(Brief pause, then JOANNA rests her head on DYLAN's shoulder. Fade to black.
End of scene)*