

ADAM THEN

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A play by Terry Milner

Contact:  
Terry Milner  
Phone 971-678-2146  
[terrymilner@gmail.com](mailto:terrymilner@gmail.com)

## ADAM THEN

### CHARACTERS:

BEN COMFORT, early 40's, American. A writer, born and educated in the American South.

SIMON COLLINS, mid-late 30's, British. Ben's husband; boyish, intense, the image of a successful young Londoner.

ADAM LARSEN, late 30's, American. He appears on stage in two guises, played by two different actors. The version we see of Adam in the "present" relative to the other characters is wasted, disabled and prematurely aging. Adam speaks, sometimes for comic effect, with the Minnesota twang he grew up with.

ADAM THEN, early 30's. This is the younger, healthier version of Adam as he exists in the memories of the other characters: extraordinarily strong, fit and beautiful.

PENELOPE FALLOWES, early 40's, British. A nurse practitioner living and working in Malawi.

GAVIN FALLOWES, late 30's, British. Average in every way, Gavin is Penelope's husband and Ben and Simon's friend from University.

ISADORA (IZZIE) COMFORT, late 20's, American, very Southern, not a slave to the gender binary. Ben's younger sister.

### SETTING:

The terraced back garden of Ben and Simon's 19th Century French farmhouse, high in the hills of Provence. An outdoor dining table and chairs stands beneath a vine-draped pergola. Part of the back of the house is visible, inside rooms are visible through double doors on the ground floor, a double kitchen window, and an upstairs bedroom window. Attached to one corner of the house is a wooden privacy fence with a gate leading to the offstage driveway. A stone retaining wall runs from the opposite corner of the house, supporting a terraced patio and a small horizon pool, three or four feet above the rest of the garden, reached by stone steps. Beyond the stonework upstage is a steep drop-off and the silver-green tops of olive trees.

The time is the present.

### PLEASE NOTE:

A forward slash (/) in a line of dialogue indicates the point at which the next speech begins.

Hard returns within speeches *suggest* micro-beats or short pauses.

## ADAM THEN

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The hot midday sun shines down on the terraced back garden of a restored stone and stucco farmhouse high in the hills of Provence. Part of the back of the house is visible, with double doors on the ground floor, a double kitchen window, and an upstairs bedroom window, all shuttered and locked. Attached to one corner of the house is a wooden privacy fence with a gate leading to the offstage driveway.

A stone retaining wall runs from the opposite corner of the house, supporting a terraced patio and a small horizon pool, three or four feet above the rest of the garden, reached by stone steps. Beyond the stonework upstage is a steep drop-off, where the silver-green tops of olive trees are silhouetted against a deep blue sky.

### SCENE 1

A long silence – the house is empty and shuttered.

Then, the SOUND of rustling in the underbrush beyond the back garden, followed by the vaguely porcine sounds of animals snorting and snuffling in the deepening darkness.

After a long quiet moment, the sound of a RIFLE SHOT echoes through the valley, followed by the TERRIFIED SQUEALS of WILD PIGS. ANOTHER SHOT, and the squealing stops.

After another quiet moment, the sound of a CAR pulling into a gravel drive beyond the wooden gate. The engine stops, car doors open, things beep, people get out.

An offstage side door into the house is opened. Lights come on inside the house, visible through cracks in the shutters.

VOICES OFFSTAGE:

ADAM

Could you take this off my...?

SIMON

Yeah. Hang on.

ADAM

No, I can lift myself I just need you to...

SIMON

Like this?

ADAM

Yeah. Perfect.

Inside the house, the sound of a clothes dryer door opening, then slamming.

BEN

*(inside the house)*

God damn it.

ADAM

What what is it what's happening?

BEN

The renters left wet towels in the dryer. Ugh that stinks.

BEN COMFORT comes out of the house through the double doors. A golden light spills onto the dim patio. He unlocks the side gate and holds it open.

SIMON COLLINS enters through the gate carrying several very full supermarket bags.

ADAM LARSEN enters behind Simon, walking slowly. Though his face retains a noble, classic beauty, his body is pale and wasted. He uses a cane, and carries an aluminum grab bar, the kind found in handicapped toilets.

ADAM

Well this place has gone to complete shit.

Simon sets the bags on the table under the pergola, then immediately starts checking his phone.

SIMON

*(futzing with his phone)*

Fucking hell.

BEN

If you give me a / second I can—

ADAM

What the heck happened to the roses?

SIMON

This is gonna be a short fucking holiday if I can't get online.

BEN

Usually if we just reset / the router.

SIMON

There's usually Four G out here at least.

He moves away to find a signal.

ADAM

What were you yelling about?

BEN

The dryer's busted again.

ADAM

God, this fucking house.

BEN

Yes, this fucking house in fucking Provence.

ADAM

What a shithole.

BEN

Absolutely squalid.

SIMON

Right, then. Back in the car.

Ben takes the grab bar from Adam, kisses him on the cheek.

ADAM

I could probably go without that.

BEN

Don't want you getting stuck.

*(to Simon)*

Honey, could you maybe unload some more stuff from the car while I do this?

SIMON

Yeah, sure.

BEN

Are you really? Or are you just gonna be on your / phone until...

SIMON

Okay, okay, Jesus fucking Christ.

Simon shoves his phone into his pocket and exits through the gate. Ben takes the grab bar and goes inside.

Inside the house, the sound of a washing machine being turned on, filling with water. Simon can be seen passing back and forth inside the house, carrying things in from the car through an offstage side door.

Adam slowly and with effort makes his way over to the retaining wall steps. He sits, staring at the water.

After a beat, ADAM THEN emerges from under the water and comes face to face with Adam. He is naked, the mirror image of Adam as he once was, a young man in peak physical condition, at his most beautiful. *It must be as clear as possible to the audience – if not here then soon – that they are two versions of the same person.*

The sound of an electric drill comes suddenly and loudly from inside the house. Adam stops where he is, but Adam Then has no reaction to the noise. Simon stops at the doorway and looks out at Adam.

SIMON

Okay, mate?

No response.

SIMON

Adam?

ADAM

What? Yeah, sure, fine.

SIMON

Tonight I'll turn on the fairy lights.

ADAM

The ones I put up?

SIMON

No. We had to replace those last summer. Still they lasted four years.

ADAM

Five.

SIMON

You did an amazing job with this place.

ADAM

I know.

SIMON

Just... wanted to say that.

Ben comes back outside.

BEN

All set in there, babe.

ADAM

Thank goodness, now I can poo in safety.

Adam makes his way into the house.

SIMON

Hey.

Don't call him "babe."

BEN

Did I?

SIMON

Yeah, just then. Did you not even realize?  
I'm not trying to be... like I just think it sets up a false sense that...

BEN

That what?

SIMON

That we're going back to something we're not going back to.  
I just think we need to be / careful we don't–

BEN

Right, I get it, and we're not.  
*(beat)*  
What would you rather I call him?

ADAM

*(from inside)*

Gag me, it stinks in here.

BEN

Would you prefer I not talk to him at all?

SIMON

That's not what I'm saying / and you know it.

BEN

Is there a list of acceptable terms of endearment I can use that won't threaten you?

SIMON

For fuck's sake. You two have all summer here. I get five days and even so I have calls scheduled every day, plus I have to fly back to London for that fucking meeting on Thursday...

BEN

/ I know that...

SIMON

... which is basically me leaving my holiday just so I can be publicly humiliated.

BEN

Is this something we need to talk about?

SIMON

You don't want me talking about work while we're on holiday.



BEN

Yeah, but when you start talking about humiliation / I get...

SIMON

Don't. Everything's fine. Or it would be if goddamn Penelope and Gavin weren't coming on the only days I have here.

BEN

What was I supposed to say?

SIMON

There's this word we have in English, short little word, just two letters that despite your twenty-odd years of education you can't seem to learn.

*(Ben looks toward the house)*

Jesus. If you can't help yourself, fine, go in there and wipe his ass if he needs it but I told you I need a break.

BEN

I don't think he needs me to do that.

SIMON

What happens when he does?

BEN

Then I will wipe his ass.

SIMON

That was never the plan. You / said that if—

BEN

What? What wasn't the plan? That we'd spend summers here with our friends, that we'd all retire here together as a family? That's the plan I remember us making.

SIMON

Things have changed. I'm talking about the current plan.

BEN

I don't know what the fucking plan is anymore.

SIMON

If Izzie agrees to take care of him, he can stay here. And I mean here, not in London, and only if she agrees.

BEN

They don't even speak French. If the Big Breakup comes we'll have to sell this place.

SIMON

We may have to do that anyway, babe.

BEN

I don't even know if she'll show up.

SIMON

Then he goes back to his family.

BEN

We are his family.

SIMON

Not anymore.

Hey... he left us, remember? Nobody asked him to move out.

BEN

You know it's more complicated than that.

SIMON

All I know for sure is for the last three months, since he's come back, you've done nothing but wait on him hand and / foot while—

BEN

That is so unfair—

SIMON

—while you've ignored me entirely. Three months it's been since we've had a private conversation, let alone anything else private.

BEN

What do you need from me that I haven't given you? When was the last time you needed me for anything? I can't even get you off the phone for a blow job and I give great blow jobs.

SIMON

It was a really important call!

Adam Then slips back into the water and disappears.

SIMON

I'm serious. Either Izzie agrees to take care of him or—

BEN

Shh!

Faintly, in the distance, another porcine, low-pitched SQUEAL. Ben runs up the steps to the terrace and looks down into the trees below.

A LOUDER squeal, and rustling.

SIMON

Oh shit—

BEN

Listen.

Simon climbs the steps to the terrace, listens alongside Ben. Sound of squealing and rustling in the underbrush.

SIMON

Sounds like a whole bloody pack.

BEN

They don't move in packs.

SIMON

Should I get the—?

BEN

Quiet, you'll scare them off.

Silence.

SIMON

Is that one?

BEN

Where?

Simon grabs Ben from behind, nuzzles his neck and makes piggy noises. Ben gives into his playfulness for a moment, until the mood is broken by another GUNSHOT in the distance.

BEN

God damn it!

SIMON

Christ!

★

Ben shouts down the mountainside into the darkening trees.

BEN

Arrêtez! Regardez! Chasseurs, regardez-vous! Nous sommes ici! C'est ma maison! / C'est ma maison, non?

SIMON

Ben, get the / fuck down.

BEN

This is my house! Do you not see us here?!

SIMON

It won't matter if they shoot you now stop it!

Offstage, the SOUND of an engine, like a motorcycle or all-terrain vehicle, starting and speeding off down the mountain.

BEN

It's not even hunting season yet.

SIMON

They started early this year. Something about culling the surplus population. Southern France is apparently overrun with them now.

BEN

They're just trying to survive. The population wouldn't need culling if it weren't for human beings fucking everything up they touch.

*(shouting down the hillside again)*

If I wanted to get shot I'd go back to America!

Simon pulls out his phone.

SIMON

*(answering phone)*

Simon Collins...

Hang... yeah, hang on, let me get to the office.

Simon goes inside and into the kitchen, passing Adam who comes back outside with a laptop under his arm.

ADAM

Were those gunshots?

BEN

Yeah, the hunters got a little close just now.

ADAM

Well, don't let 'em shoot me. At least not yet.

BEN

Everything go okay in there?

ADAM

Yep, perfect. A perfect turd. Two in fact. It's the little things...

Adam sits at the table and pops open his laptop.

BEN

Does the place feel different to you?

ADAM

Everything feels different to me now.

BEN

No. I mean... this is gonna sound... I don't know...

ADAM

Oh my god, what?

BEN

When you grow up with nothing but violence and just... ugliness all around, every day, you constantly dream of escaping to a place where those things don't exist. Guys with guns shooting animals in the woods did not figure into my fantasies of Provence.

SIMON

*(in the kitchen, on phone)*

I've heard some chatter about the data center project...

Yeah, I heard. Do you know why I wasn't on that call...?

Well... yes, well because it was my fucking initiative, Ian.

Ben starts opening the shutters, picking up yard debris.

ADAM

*(on his laptop)*

Hey, did you see this? Turns out climate change is real after all.

BEN

No way.

SIMON

That's what I told him.

ADAM

Yeah, except now this preacher says it's God's will. Punishment for our / sins, apparently.

SIMON

All I'm trying to do is shrink our carbon footprint and still show a decent ROI.

BEN

I thought that was AIDS.

SIMON

Because that's not what he does...

BEN

I thought AIDS was God's punishment.

ADAM

Not anymore. Not enough people dying from it.

BEN

Not enough white gay men dying from it.

ADAM

Nope. God's apparently lost that battle.

BEN

Maybe he's getting tired. Just, you know, old and tired of being God.

Simon comes outside, lights a cigarette and goes up on the terrace.

ADAM

No, he's not. I know, see, because my niece in Minnesota has this tee shirt that says "My God is a Mighty God!"

BEN

Well that is compelling evidence.

ADAM

It's conclusive evidence.

SIMON

Yeah, with a three hundred million valuation...

ADAM

Also he's doing a pretty good job kicking my ass right now.

BEN

When Penny gets here she can tell us all about whose ass God is kicking these days.

ADAM

Are they still in Zambia?

SIMON

She's in Hong Kong.

BEN

Malawi, I think. They moved. Or their grant / ran out, maybe.

SIMON

Anyway she doesn't have / nearly the experience...

ADAM

At least I knew it was Africa.

BEN

You have to say the country.

SIMON

No, they were all on the fucking call.

BEN

Gavin looks like shit.

ADAM

How are you gonna get the stinky outta those towels?

BEN

Bleach.

ADAM

Oh. I was just thinking if we had some of that lavender spray stuff we used to get at Williams-Sonoma... the stuff that was supposed to make your sheets and towels / smell like France?

BEN

Smell like France? Yeah...

ADAM

What was it called? Like French Laundry or French Linen or something?

SIMON

Tell him I said he's Islamophobic.

ADAM

You used to spray the bedsheets with it.

SIMON

Seriously, you should hear some of the things. He's gotten a bit freer with his bigotry lately, they all have.

BEN

My entire concept of France, before I'd ever been here, was in that spray bottle.

SIMON

Not Asia and the Middle East, not if he hates Muslims.

BEN

The day I stood in the Galleria Mall in Atlanta and smelled that stuff for the first time...

SIMON

I'm there like five times a year, I've never had anyone so much as raise an eyebrow...

BEN

I was sixteen, and I thought, this is what France must be like. Or at least smell like.

ADAM

It kinda does.

SIMON

I will not be shut out of this because he thinks they can't handle my—  
No, that's what I'm saying.

BEN

That's what started my lifelong fascination. A sample bottle of French Linen in the Galleria Mall. I took it home and sprayed it all over. And I thought if I ever get out of here...

SIMON

I'm uncomfortable with this whole subject, mate.



ADAM

If we had some of that stuff here we could spray it on the towels. That way, instead of smelling like actual, normal towels hanging in the sunshine in the south of France, they'd smell like our idea of what towels drying in the sunshine in the South of France ought to smell like.

BEN

And that's all we want, really.

ADAM

Yep. That's all we really want.

Ben sits and starts making a list.

ADAM

You still have some, don't you?

BEN

I'm sure I don't know what you mean. What do we want for dinner?

ADAM

You used to keep it under the sink. In the downstairs toilet in London.

BEN

It might still be there...?

ADAM

I knew it. Do you like, go down there and sniff it / sometimes?

BEN

No, I don't sniff it. I don't even use it anymore.

ADAM

The bed sure used to smell nice when you sprayed that stuff on.  
That's what it reminds me of.

SIMON

I could really ruin their day with this.

ADAM

Maybe I'll make us some.

BEN

No way.

ADAM

How hard can it be? God knows we've got the lavender.  
I'm gonna do it.

BEN

You know they probably sell the same stuff down in the village.

ADAM

I know but...

BEN

I can go down and buy / whatever you-

ADAM

Stop. I'm tired of being so goddamn useless. I just want to make this, myself, and I want to smell it on my towels and sheets.

Adam starts researching on his laptop.

SIMON

We'll see what happens at this meeting I guess. At least I'm invited to that.

Yeah, cheers. Talk soon. Bye.

*(Simon ends the call, takes off his earbuds. To himself:)*

Everything's fine.

Simon takes a moment to recover, then makes his way down to the table.

BEN

You want to talk about it?

SIMON

Ian was on the fucking call. Ian for Christ's sake.

Don't worry, it's just Rodger being more of a dick than usual.

BEN

I was thinking of putting Izzie in her old room.

SIMON

Shouldn't she be downstairs next to Adam? In case something happens?

ADAM

Nothing's gonna happen.

BEN

Penny's a nurse. Guess it makes more sense to put her and Gavin downstairs.

ADAM

Except she's a bitch who hates my guts. I don't need a nurse, you guys. Not yet.

*(beat)*

Maybe we could all have our old rooms back.

SIMON

Maybe Ben can carry you up and down the stairs.

BEN

I'll put Izzie next to you. If she even shows.

Ben gets up to go inside.

SIMON

Where are you going?

BEN

I need to clean the upstairs toilet.

SIMON

Gavin and Penelope will be happy they're not shitting in a hole in the ground.

BEN

They don't have a squat toilet.

SIMON

The whole continent's a squat toilet.

BEN

That is so racist.

SIMON

It's not / racist to point out that as a continent...

BEN

Racist, yes it certainly is.

SIMON

You're racist. Who gives a fuck what the bathroom looks like? Penelope's a cunt, make her clean the toilet.

BEN

You make her clean the toilet.

ADAM

Why wouldn't Izzie show?

SIMON

She better fucking show...

ADAM

Why would Izzie not show up? Because of me?

BEN

No. It's because she's my sister and she does shit like that.  
Also I haven't heard from her in like... days.

ADAM

Should we call somebody?

BEN

She e-mailed from Barcelona.

SIMON

That was a week ago.

ADAM

But she knows I'm here?

BEN

Babe, yes, they all know you're here.

ADAM

See you guys invited all these people but nobody ever asked me how I felt about it.

SIMON

Jesus, Adam, it's our house.  
Well, it is, isn't it?

ADAM

A hundred percent.

SIMON

Fuuuuck. How are we even still arguing about this? I don't care where anyone sleeps.

ADAM

I never should've suggested it.

SIMON

I'm going for a ride.

Simon opens the storage compartment under the pool.  
Adam turns back to his laptop.

ADAM

*(reading from his screen)*

This says I need oil of lavender.  
*(getting to his feet)*  
Maybe I'll just go out front and pick some.

BEN

Adam's making up some of that spray like we used to use on the bedsheets.

SIMON

We've got a whole bottle back in London. It's under the sink.

ADAM

I knew it.

SIMON

I thought you said it made you sick.

ADAM

It didn't used to.

SIMON

No, it does. Remember that night you made me get out of bed so you could change the sheets? That's how sick it made you.

Beat.

BEN

That was years ago.

ADAM

Forget it. It was a dumb idea.

BEN

If you're going through the village could you look for some?

ADAM

Not if it makes you sick.

BEN

*(to Simon)*

You know where to find it?

SIMON

One of the six different shops that sell lavender crap maybe?  
Fine, what else do you need?

ADAM

Seriously, Simon I—

SIMON

Tell me what you need.  
Adam? Oil of lavender and what else?

ADAM

Witch hazel.

SIMON

Fine. Ben?

Ben hands him a list.

BEN

Thank you, babe.

Simon pulls his bike out from the storage compartment  
under the pool.

SIMON

Your old bike's still under here.

ADAM

Great. I'll race you down the mountain.

SIMON

You used to race me *up* the mountain.  
I could put you on my handlebars.

ADAM

That'd be real aerodynamic.

SIMON

I didn't shave my legs this morning anyway.

Simon waits for a smile. Adam obliges. Simon mounts  
the bike and starts riding out through the gate, leaving it  
open.

ADAM

Hey! Where's your damn helmet?

SIMON

Forgot it. Sorry! Byeeee!

Simon rides away.

ADAM

I'm sorry.

BEN

Don't be. He's being a dick.

ADAM

I told you I wouldn't stay unless he was completely—

BEN

It's not you.

ADAM THEN

*(offstage)*

Ben!? Hey, Ben, where are you?

BEN

He's glad you're here, you know that. And I am too. I miss taking care of you.

ADAM

You don't have to.

BEN

I'm happy to.

ADAM

You're happy to?

BEN

I didn't... that's / not what I—

ADAM

Nothing about this is happy. I should go.

BEN

Don't you fucking dare. I mean it.

Adam Then enters through the still-open gate, dressed for autumn in the country. He seems to see Ben, though Ben stays focused on Adam.

ADAM THEN

There you are. Simon, he's back here! Look at this place. Holy shit. The heck with London, you guys, let's live here year-round!

BEN

I'm not happy you're sick...

ADAM THEN

I can tell you're in love, Ben.

BEN

...but how can I not be happy you're here?

ADAM THEN

Come on, this is the place, right?

ADAM

Just please don't ever let me see you enjoying this.

BEN

Do you really not want to stay?

ADAM

Of all the available choices?

ADAM THEN

This is definitely the best one. Simon, come see!

Simon enters from inside the house, now also dressed for autumn. He is on the phone - headphones in place. *In the following exchange, Simon is in Adam Then's timeline, while Ben goes back and forth between them.*

SIMON

*(on phone)*

We're there now... In Provence... I know, right? Fucking Provence!

Wait, maybe I shouldn't tell you that while we're negotiating compensation...

This one's a bit shit, actually... not sure I'd be caught dead.

Okay. Cheers. Bye.

*(he hangs up)*



Fuck me this place is perfect!  
There's a... what do you call those? It's a trellis, innit?

ADAM THEN

A pergola.

SIMON

I always wanted a pergola, I just didn't know it 'til now. And look at / the pool!

ADAM

I want to get in the pool but I'm kinda scared.

BEN

It's only five feet deep.

SIMON

Yeah, well people were smaller back then.

ADAM THEN

*(reading a brochure)*

It says the pool was added in 1986.

SIMON

When people were smaller. Studies have shown.

ADAM THEN

Fine, we'll make it deeper.

I freakin' love this place, boys! Let's do it.

BEN

It needs work.

SIMON

Then we'll hire someone.

ADAM THEN

Don't you dare.

SIMON

I can afford it.

ADAM THEN

No. Look, I know how to do this. Seriously, anybody else'll just fuck it up. Come on, boys.

*(they hesitate)*

Let me contribute something.

SIMON

Yeah, alright.

ADAM THEN

*(kisses Simon)*

Thanks.

SIMON

Anybody been in the cellar? I'm gonna check it out.

Simon goes inside. Adam Then moves to the pool and inspects it further. He climbs the stone steps and walks around the perimeter of the terrace. He discovers a LARGE LOOSE STONE somewhere in the stonework. He tries to snug it back into place.

ADAM THEN

That'll be a bitch. There's a huge tree root under here.

BEN

We'll get you some help.

ADAM THEN

You're sure he's okay with this?

ADAM

If you're sure he's okay with this.

\*

BEN

He wants you here as much as I do.

*(he straddles the bench behind Adam and folds him in his arms.)*

It does give me pleasure to take care of you. Both of you. It always did.

Ben kisses Adam's cheek and neck.

ADAM THEN

My grandma taught me it was a sin to take anything for free. Which is funny 'cause she's a Lutheran and supposedly they believe you can't get to heaven by good works but only by the grace of God, so I don't know. But I gotta earn this. Okay?

Ben looks up and sees Adam Then, *staring directly at him* from the terrace above, as if frozen in the frame of Ben's memory.

ADAM

You're making me all hard.

I am not.

BEN

No, seriously.

ADAM

Ben peeks over Adam's shoulder, sees his erection.

Fuck, you are. Can I...?

BEN

Can you what?

ADAM

This.

BEN

I don't know if that's— ahhh...

ADAM

Ben puts his hand inside Adam's shorts. Adam closes his eyes and enjoys Ben's touch. *But as Ben strokes Adam, his gaze never leaves Adam Then.*

It's been a long time since I felt this. Still nice.

BEN

We're never gonna forget this day.

ADAM THEN

Simon comes back outside with a bottle of champagne.

Is it bad luck to toast a new house before closing?

SIMON

Not if it's stolen champagne. Pop that bitch open!

ADAM THEN

Adam Then jumps down off the terrace and comes over to Simon. Simon works on opening the champagne. Adam's breathing grows labored.

Ben...

ADAM

SIMON

They left a shedload of wine down there.

ADAM

*(gasping)*

Seriously... I can't breathe. Stop!

BEN

*(pulling his hand away)*

I'm sorry!

ADAM THEN

Need me to open it?

SIMON

No, I can manage.

Simon POPS the cork. Adam gasps for air.

BEN

Are you okay?

ADAM THEN

Fuck yes!

ADAM

I just need to catch my breath.

Simon takes a swig from the bottle. Adam Then kisses Simon, champagne flowing between their mouths. They laugh.

ADAM

*(breathless)*

I can get it up but it nearly kills me to come.

SIMON

Oh my God. / Fucking hot.

ADAM

Fucking sucks.

ADAM THEN

I know, right?

BEN

Adam...

ADAM

Stay out here. I'll be fine.

Adam grasps his cane and slowly makes his way inside.

SIMON

Hey, baby, come join us.

Ben crosses to them. Adam Then hands him the champagne bottle, he drinks. Adam Then kisses Ben, then puts one arm around each of them. They stand, surveying the view of the countryside.

ADAM THEN

Jesus, boys. We're buying a house in Provence.

*(raising the bottle in a toast)*

Fucking Provence!

They all drink. MUSIC comes up loud on Adam's laptop. Maybe it transcends the laptop. Lights fade.

## SCENE 2

In the blackout, the music quickly recedes as Simon's voice, remote and tinny, as if we're on the phone with him, takes over. As the lights slowly come up, his voice normalizes. He's up by the pool, on the phone, smoking and pacing. Adam lies on the chaise, reading and listening to music on his laptop.

The ambient music on Adam's laptop changes to one of Edith Piaf's more aggressive standards, *Padam, Padam*.

SIMON

*(off)*

Please, yes, this has to be confidential. If they got wind of me...

Yes, okay. Just making sure...

Ben? I'm sure he'd be fine with it.

No, he's American, actually, so if we did have to relocate there he'd be... right.  
No, he was my European History teacher... yes, it was all quite scandalous. After graduation he and... that is, he just sort of... followed me home to London.  
No, no, it's just the two of us.

Adam turns the volume up on his laptop.

SIMON

Can you hang on a second?  
Adam? Adam! Jesus Christ.  
No, sorry, I just...

Simon goes inside. As the song reaches the chorus, a  
LOUD, RASPY VOICE of indeterminate gender is heard  
OFFSTAGE, singing along in a sharply American  
(Southern) accent.

IZZIE

*(off stage, singing)*

*Padam, Padam, Padam!*  
*Il arrive en courant derrière moi...*

IZZIE COMFORT bursts through the gate, just in from a  
long-distance bike ride. Her bike is loaded down with two  
big saddlebags. She wears a helmet and sunglasses that  
obscure her face.

IZZIE

*(singing)*  
*Adam! Adam! Adam! Il me fait the coup*  
*of the century or something something...*

ADAM

*(singing along)*  
*Padam! Padam! Padam! Is my fate to be*  
*toujours quelque chose...*

Their French and their singing break down into nonsense  
and laughter until Adam's laughter turns into coughing.  
He turns down the music.

Izzie leans her bike against the house, takes off her  
helmet and sunglasses and gets a good look at him.

IZZIE

Qu'est-ce que vous faites ici, motherfucker?!

ADAM

Waiting for your sorry ass to get here.

She crosses to him, he rises and hugs her. She hugs back, hard.

ADAM

Ow, ow, ow. Easy. Your French is still kinda shit.

IZZIE

You taught me everything you know.

She looks him up and down.

ADAM

What?

IZZIE

Jesus, Mama, you're all skin and bones.

ADAM

Thank you.

IZZIE

That ain't exactly what I...

ADAM

So where'd you ride in from, Cowboy?

IZZIE

Wellsir, I'll tell you. I have been to *Barthelona*, Girona and Léon! I have toured la France sur ma bicyclette, rode up the Costa Brava, inland over the Pyrenees, back down the Pyrenees and across this beautiful fuckin' country lookin' for the love of a fine French mamzell but finding nothing but patchouli-scented pussy of a distinctly American variety. Everywhere you look in this goddamn country it's nothing but spoiled college kids on their five thousand dollar bikes, or pasty British gals "doin' their gap year, alright?" I mean you think you're gonna find some kinda authentic old world romance in the lushness of the French fuckin' countryside but there ain't nothing here but a bunch of privileged assholes looking to score some skunky-ass weed!

She pulls out a gallon-size zippy bag half-full of marijuana.

ADAM

So, you're still in pharmaceuticals, then.

IZZIE

Sure am. Found me a wholesaler in Barcelona. Made many centimes of euro, too. Here, be good for your appetite.

ADAM

I don't think I can smoke that, Iz.

IZZIE

Since when?

ADAM

Since I quit smoking. Now, if you wanted to bake your old ma some cookies...

IZZIE

You got yourself a deal.

In the house, the sound of a VACUUM CLEANER.

IZZIE

Oh, shit.

ADAM

Go tell him you're here. He's been trying to reach you for days.

IZZIE

I would've been here last night but I took a wrong turn somewhere and ended up climbing this big ass mountain. Jesus, that was one high fucking mountain.

*(the vacuum drones on)*

That is the unmistakable moan of a passive aggressive vacuum cleaner, originated by my late mother and perfected by my big queer brother.

ADAM

He's cleaning up after the cleaners.

IZZIE

Figures.

I ain't been back here since you and me took off.

ADAM

Me neither.

IZZIE

I was kinda surprised to hear you was back in the picture. Is that a permanent situation?



ADAM

I dunno. It's only been a few weeks so...  
When Ben told me he invited you I was scared you wouldn't want to come.

IZZIE

Well that's dumb.

ADAM

I haven't been a very good friend.

IZZIE

Are you kidding? You're why I said yes. If anything I figured you didn't want to see me. The shit back in Shitsville did get real after you took off, but I knew you was busy with your modeling and all... you were so pretty in all them magazines! I saved every one of them.

ADAM

Please tell me you didn't–

IZZIE

Not those! Gross!

ADAM

Izzie, if you had–

IZZIE

Who wants to see your ol' wiener dog anyhow?

ADAM

Ben said you're still living in the trailer.

IZZIE

Yep. Not that he comes to see me. The last time I saw my brother was at the asshole's funeral. That was, fuck, two years ago? We had it at the morgue. It was more of a "yeah, that's him" kinda thing than a funeral. After that, we proceeded to divide the estate. I got the trailer and the pickup, and Ben got –

SOUND of the vacuum snagging the edge of a rug or something inside. Izzie gestures to it.

IZZIE

That. 'Course it was Mama's. Shit, where's Simon? Maybe he'll protect me.

ADAM

He's out on his bike.

IZZIE

When ain't he?

ADAM

When he's on the phone.

IZZIE

When he's on the phone.

The vacuum shuts off. Ben comes out of the house.

BEN

How long have you been here?

IZZIE

I don't know, five minutes I reckon?

BEN

I've been texting you for five days.

IZZIE

My phone died two days ago and I couldn't charge it last night cause the people at the hostel were kinda, well, hostile.

BEN

Why do you stay at these places where you can't trust / who you're sleeping—

IZZIE

Because I can't afford a damn hotel every night / I'm on the road—

BEN

I told you we'd pick you up so you / wouldn't have to —

IZZIE

Not in Barcelona, no, no. Trust me. You did not want to drive across France with the stuff I'm holding. You know they got border guards now? Motherfuckers are armed and shit.

BEN

You could've used a pay phone or something to let us / know you —

IZZIE

Pay phones are weird over here.

BEN

An internet café then? You could've / emailed us—

IZZIE

I told you I'd be here.

BEN

How many times have you said that?

ADAM

Guys...

IZZIE

Said what?

BEN

That you'd come visit but then you never—

IZZIE

Maybe I was scared to.

BEN

Why would you be scared?

IZZIE

Because you're gonna be mad at us for like the rest of our freakin' lives, that's why.

Adam stands to leave. Izzie notices his cane.

BEN

You don't need to leave, babe, we're just—

ADAM

I gotta go potty.

BEN

Hey...

ADAM

I thought you guys had had enough of this. I'm glad you're here, Izzie. Welcome back to fucking Provence.

He goes inside.

BEN

I'm not mad at you.

IZZIE

What's wrong with him?

BEN

He always hated it when we yelled at each other.

IZZIE

That ain't what I meant. What's wrong with him?

BEN

I'm sorry I /didn't tell you before you—

IZZIE

Answer me, God damn it.

BEN

It's ALS.

*Pause.*

IZZIE

But he did a triathlon like four years ago, right before y'all got married.

BEN

I know. They think that's actually a risk factor. Athletes get it more. Lou Gehrig's disease, right? He was a—

IZZIE

I know who Lou Gehrig was.

Beat.

BEN

There's no / cure.

IZZIE

I know that, too.

BEN

He was staying in his grandma's house in Minnesota. You remember how much he loved his grandma?

IZZIE

She died. Oh, fuck, I never sent him nothing.

BEN

He was staying with her. Trying to fixing everything in sight, you know, like he does. But then she died. As they were walking back to the car from the graveside, his uncle told him to pack his faggoty bags and get the hell out of the house. He was carrying a suitcase down the stairs and fell. They did some tests but you know he has no insurance so...

IZZIE

How long as he got?

BEN

Four years maybe? He'll be paralyzed long before that.

She breaks down. Ben holds her.

BEN

He's going to need full time care.

I know you don't like it here but... think about it?

A CAR HORN sounds in the distance. Ben picks up some of her luggage and heads toward the house.

BEN

We put you downstairs so you could be next to him. Is that okay?

*(she nods "yes")*

Put your bike up before you come in. You remember / where we—?

IZZIE

Yeah, I remember.

Ben goes inside. Izzie stows her bike under the pool. While she's under there, Adam Then enters from beyond the back wall. He climbs over it, carrying a hatchet. He finds the loose stone, starts working it out of its niche. He's dressed to soak up the sun as he works – just shorts and garden gloves.

*Izzie re-emerges from under the pool. Izzie is now sixteen. This need not be suggested by anything other than the actor's performance, though a subtle wardrobe or hair change might be fine.*

ADAM THEN

Hey there. I'm Adam.

IZZIE

I figured.

ADAM THEN

How was your flight?

She shrugs.

ADAM THEN

Where's your brother?

IZZIE

He told me I could put my bike under there.

ADAM THEN

You brought your bike? That is awesome. Maybe you and me can go for a ride later. What do you say... Isadora?

IZZIE

Nobody calls me that.

ADAM THEN

Okay. What should I call you then?

IZZIE

Izzie. I guess.

ADAM THEN

You guess? That's what your brother calls you.

IZZIE

Yeah. It's not what my friends call me though.

ADAM

What do they call you?

IZZIE

Cowboy.

ADAM THEN

Cowboy?

She turns to go inside.

ADAM THEN

Hey hey hey ... come back here. Sorry. It's just I think your real name is prettier, that's all.

IZZIE

Yeah well I hate it so don't call me that.

ADAM THEN

Okay. I might have to work up to “Cowboy” though.

IZZIE

Whatever.

ADAM THEN

You miss them? Your friends?

IZZIE

No.

So... you work for them or what?

ADAM THEN

Is that what your brother told you?

IZZIE

He told me you fixed up the house.

ADAM THEN

Yeah, I did.

IZZIE

He said you take care of this place while they’re in London or wherever. That’s what he told the judge, anyway.

ADAM THEN

Uh huh...

IZZIE

Social Services was gonna make me stay with my Uncle Frank and his wife, but they’re Pentecostals and I swore to God I’d run away if I had to live with them. Her hair is so long it turns sour before it dries, least in the summertime. Did you know they can’t cut their hair? Pentecostals I mean? They wanted me real bad but I like my hair short.

Beat.

ADAM THEN

*(calling into the house)*

Hey, Ben...?

SIMON

*(from inside the house)*

Where’s my Izzie? Where is she?

Simon comes outside.

SIMON

There she is. Oh my God look at you!

*(picks her up, hugs her.)*

Jesus, you grew up! Did you meet Adam?

IZZIE

Sorta.

SIMON

He's cute, right?

IZZIE

No.

Ben pokes his head out of the upstairs window.

BEN

Izzie, come see your room.

*(to Adam Then)*

I thought you were going to town today.

ADAM THEN

Nope. Met your sister, though.

SIMON

I'm making lunch. You hungry?

IZZIE

Depends. What are you fixing?

SIMON

Two options: duck leg confit with mixed greens and spring radishes in a light mustard vinaigrette...

*(beat - she's grossed out)*

...or grilled cheese.

IZZIE

That. Please.

ADAM THEN

After that you can get in the pool if you want.



IZZIE

I ain't got no swimsuit.

SIMON

It's okay, we'll improvise something.

IZZIE

I don't want no improvised swimsuit.

ADAM THEN

This one time? I was doing a swimwear shoot, and the designer literally painted the swimsuit onto me.

IZZIE

No fucking way.

ADAM THEN

It was like this bright yellow latex goo. Painted on real thick like, like you couldn't tell it wasn't a real swimsuit except for it was real tight around... I mean, like, they had to put Vaseline on my...

Izzie bursts out laughing.

ADAM THEN

... on my you-know... so it wouldn't like stick on there permanently...

Izzie continues to laugh hysterically.

ADAM THEN

God damn thing never did come off!

He drops his shorts, revealing his bright yellow Speedo underneath. Izzie collapses with laughter.

SIMON

If only her social worker were here. Right, lunch is in ten.

Simon goes inside.

OFFSTAGE: Sounds of car doors slamming, people approaching. Adam Then takes Izzie's backpack.

ADAM THEN

Come on, I'll show you your room.

Adam Then goes inside, leaving Izzie alone. She stares after him for a long time.

VOICES off:

PENELOPE

Are you sure this is the right house?

GAVIN

Yes.

PENELOPE

I thought it was bigger.

GAVIN

It's the same house, Pen.

Izzie carries her bike luggage inside.  
Offstage, Gavin KNOCKS on the side door to the house.

GAVIN

Ben? Simon? Hello?

BEN

*(from inside the house)*

Come in through the back, okay?!

Ben comes outside just as PENELOPE FALLOWES enters, followed by her husband GAVIN, loaded down with luggage. Both look tanned, sweaty and bedraggled after a long drive. Gavin is a bit out of shape but holding his own, Penelope is as careless of her looks as she is of what other people think of them.

PENELOPE

God fucking damn it, that was an arduous drive. I'm used to bad roads, God knows, but the hills and the twists and the turns... and you know Gavin drives like a blind cephalopod. We should've bought vomit insurance for the rental car because I nearly hurled five times. Hello darling.

BEN

Hello darling.

They kiss-kiss.

GAVIN

If I'd known you'd be this hysterical I would've left you in Spain. Hi...

He and Ben hug.

PENELOPE

Seriously these roads ... I mean it was pretty and all but I thought this was the civilized part of the E.U.

BEN

There's no such thing anymore. If you're feeling sick there's Dramamine.

PENELOPE

*(she notices the huge baggie still on the table)*

Fuck Dramamine - holy shit! Cheers, Benjamin.

BEN

Thank my little sister.

PENELOPE

Your sister...

BEN

Isadora.

PENELOPE

Isadora! Of course. Izzie! That's why I couldn't remember. Is she here? Well I shall thank her profusely. Roll me a joint while I pee?

GAVIN

Do it yourself.

PENELOPE

Ben doesn't mind me being bossy, do you, Ben? We're all family here, after all.

GAVIN

Wait, we've got a bit still...

He fishes around in one of the bags.

PENELOPE

That's a roach, this is a goddamn life's supply.

GAVIN

*(handing her a half-smoked joint)*

No reason to waste it though.

PENELOPE

Point.

Penelope takes the roach from him and lights up, takes a quick hit as she talks and meanders about the garden.

PENELOPE

Oh, the pool! The cute little pool! I'm getting in right now and never coming out. Ooh, I have to pee really bad, though. What the hell, I'll pee in the pool. / Ben, may I...

BEN

There are two toilets inside.

PENELOPE

Fine. Oh, and we've got a box of wine in the car.

GAVIN

She means a case of wine. Not a / box of –

BEN

Actually they do a pretty / decent boxed –

PENELOPE

It's only a half-case actually. And it's delicious, trust me. I tasted it personally. Right, now it's serious.

BEN

You remember–

PENELOPE

Yes!

She goes inside.

BEN

Sorry the drive was shit.

GAVIN

Penelope's just being – you know – herself, I guess. So Adam's here, yeah?

BEN

Yeah, but before you see him you need to know—

A SCREAM from inside the house. It's Penelope.

PENELOPE

*(from inside - downstairs)*

Aaaaaghh! Oh my God.

ADAM

*(from inside and behind a closed door)*

Sorry!

GAVIN

Okay in there, Pen?

Inside the house, Penelope crosses the living room on her way upstairs.

PENELOPE

Yes, fine.

BEN

Wonder what that was about?

GAVIN

Best not to enquire. So what are we working on these days?

BEN

It's called "Charlemagne's Dream: a revisionist deconstruction of European history from the medieval period to the early Renaissance."

GAVIN

You fucking sell-out.

Gavin steps outside the gate, where he and Penelope left some luggage and food bags. Ben helps him bring the things inside.

GAVIN

Oh, cheers.

BEN

I'm still in the mulling stage right now.

GAVIN

Mulling medieval history. Should be a fun week.

BEN

She didn't really throw up in the car...?

Another offstage SCREAM from Penelope, this time from upstairs.

PENELOPE

*(from upstairs)*

Aaaaggh!

IZZIE

*(from upstairs)*

Shut the fuckin' door would ya?

PENELOPE

*(from upstairs)*

Doesn't anyone lock the toilets in this house?

GAVIN

What did Charlemagne dream of?

BEN

Pigs, among other things.

GAVIN

You're writing about pigs?

BEN

Wild boar to be specific. Which reminds me, we didn't buy any bacon or ham, I hope that's okay.

GAVIN

Sure. Any particular reason...?

BEN

It'll sound weird.

GAVIN

We've been friends for fifteen years. I know you're fucking weird.

BEN

I can't simultaneously write about animals and eat them.

Gavin picks up the last food bag from the table - it's full of mussels.

GAVIN

I totally get that.  
Any moral misgivings about mollusks?

BEN

That's the next book.

Ben takes the food bag inside. Adam emerges from the house, leaning on his cane.

ADAM

Downstairs is free now. We gotta put locks on the bathrooms.

GAVIN

Adam, Jesus!

ADAM

Abraham, Moses!

GAVIN

Wow, mate, it's... awesome to see you.  
(Gavin gives Adam a hug.)  
Jesus, you're thin.

ADAM

So are you, buddy. What are you doing, Crossfit? Zumba? Is there Zumba in Zambia?

GAVIN

We're in Malawi, now. Were in Malawi. Sorry if I hurt you.

ADAM

I'm fine. Seriously though, you look great. Penny too, at least what I just saw of her.

GAVIN

So, yeah... great to see you.

ADAM

You, too. Hey, get your suit on. Time to hit the pool.

Adam walks over to the pool steps and with an effort begins to climb them, making it only onto the first step before he has to stop.

GAVIN

Can I... do you need help?

ADAM

No thanks. You can grab me a towel when you come back out.

GAVIN

Sure. Sure, no problem.

Adam watches as Gavin goes inside. Once he's gone, Adam climbs the rest of the stone steps up to the terrace/pool area, with effort. He finds the big loose stone to see if it's still loose. It is.

Penelope comes outside, now in her swimsuit, and heads toward the pool, carrying a glass of wine. But when she sees Adam up on the terrace, she stops, turns back and lays her towel on the chaise instead. She lies down, hiding her eyes behind dark sunglasses.

ADAM

Sorry you had to see me like that. In mid-poo, I mean.  
How are things going at the clinic? Ben tells me you guys are doing amazing...

Penelope puts her earphones in.

Gavin comes back out in his baggy swim shorts, carrying towels. He looks at both of them, decides to walk past Penelope and up to the terrace. He hands Adam a towel, then spreads his own out and lies down.

Penelope looks over at Gavin and Adam. Then she lies back down and turns up her music. We hear the music she hears, a loud all-female band, something like GIRLS ALOUD.

The three of them lie in the sun for a long time.



SCENE 3

The light perceptibly changes from the hottest midday sun to slightly cooler afternoon. Shadows of clouds move across the stage. Through the open kitchen window, we see Izzie and Ben preparing dinner inside.

SIMON

*(offstage)*

Right but... right, Rodger, but that's the whole reason we...  
I don't think you do.

*(Simon comes in through the gate. He puts out a cigarette.)*

As I said it's about the bloody carbon footprint...

Shrinking it, Rodger. Shrinking it.

Sorry, why is that funny, exactly?

Penelope GIGGLES at Simon.

GAVIN

Shhh!

As Simon drones on, Penelope sits up, grabs her glass of wine, goes up the steps and sits on the edge of the pool opposite Adam and Gavin.

SIMON

So all those endless presentations about A Better World were what, just smoke and mirrors...?

But... but Rodger... but Rodger, we do still have some environmental standards in Britain...

Well until they do, I'm not changing course mid-flight, no fucking way. We're building this thing in Slough and we're building it to these specs. If they—

Well if he wants to reopen that subject he can bloody well tell me himself.

Simon rips out his earphones and throws them onto the table as he plops down in front of a laptop.

Penelope sips her wine and dangles her feet in the water. She stares at Gavin a moment, then flicks water onto him with her foot.

GAVIN

Pen...

Gav... PENELOPE

Fucking fuck. SIMON

Alright, Simon? PENELOPE

Simon ignores her.  
Penelope kicks more water onto Gavin.

Cut it out. GAVIN

Cut what out? PENELOPE

Pen, for fuck's sake stop splashing me. GAVIN

Gavin, for fuck's sake, stop being an asshole. PENELOPE

One last splash, this one accidentally hits Adam.

Hey now. ADAM

Jesus Christ. GAVIN

Gavin stands up, goes to leave.

Come back here. Gavin. Come on. Be fun. Let me splash you some more. PENELOPE

I don't want to be splashed. GAVIN

Gavin! Come back. Fine, I won't do it again. I promise. PENELOPE

All right. GAVIN

But before he can sit back down she does it again, so Gavin tips her into the pool with his foot, splashing Adam good this time. Penelope screams. Izzie laughs at them from the kitchen.

ADAM

Jesus, you guys...

PENELOPE

Goddammit, Gavin. I spilled my wine you fucking piece of shit bastard.

GAVIN

Serves you right.

Gavin grabs his empty glass and heads for the house.

PENELOPE

Hey, while you're up...?

She waves an empty wine glass at him.

GAVIN

Say please.

PENELOPE

You spilled it.

He takes her glass over to the table and picks up the bottle.

GAVIN

*(to Simon)*

Is there more?

PENELOPE

Christ on the cross, Gavin, we're in France. There's always more wine.

SIMON

Here, I'll get it.

GAVIN

Don't be ridiculous.

Gavin takes the empty bottle inside, goes into the kitchen where he finds Ben and Izzie preparing dinner. Adam rolls over, his back to Penelope.

PENELOPE

They must be real idiots.

SIMON

Hm? Who?

PENELOPE

The people who work for you.

SIMON

Some of them are quite clever, actually.  
Some.

GAVIN

*(in the kitchen)*

Is there wine in the fridge?

IZZIE

Yeah.

GAVIN

*(re: what Ben is doing)*

Ooh, Pimm's, better still. Can I help?

PENELOPE

Do you really understand all that business mumbo jumbo?

SIMON

It's my work. Of course I understand it.

PENELOPE

It just sounds so... I dunno... like you're faking it. Like you all got together and made up all those words just so you could sound impressive and beyond the ken of us mere mortals.

SIMON

Maybe I am. Maybe we're all faking it.

Adam sits up and slowly begins gathering his things to go inside.

PENELOPE

At least it pays well, darling. You are very rich.  
Buy me something.

SIMON

What would you like?

PENELOPE

How about a pair of balls for my husband?

SIMON

I don't think they sell those online. Maybe in the village?

PENELOPE

Yes! They do! I saw them at the chartreuserie.

SIMON

The charcuterie?

PENELOPE

*(laughing)*

You said cooter.

SIMON

I blame Ben for teaching you that word.

PENELOPE

Cooterie...!

SIMON

That's what I said. The cooterie. They sell cooters and balls.

PENELOPE

See, I was right.

SIMON

But I think they'll be pig balls. Wild boar in fact.

PENELOPE

That'd certainly be an improvement.

SIMON

A *huge* improvement.

Penelope CACKLES. Adam tries to stand but nearly  
loses his balance. Gavin comes back outside.

GAVIN

Ben's made a pitcher of Pimm's if that's okay with—

Adam quickly sits back down, clutching at his calf in pain.

ADAM

Ow, ow, ow! Shit!

GAVIN

What is it?

ADAM

*(clutching his calf)*

Muscle spasm. Fuck fuck fuck.

GAVIN

Hang on.

Gavin runs over to the stone wall and reaches up for Adam's calf, now dangling over the wall.

GAVIN

Here?

ADAM

Yeah but... ow... no, don't touch it.

GAVIN

Relax.

PENELOPE

He said don't touch it.

Gavin massages Adam's calf.

ADAM

*(sitting up)*

Ow. God damn it, it hurts.

Careful... oh you're touching my foot. I just tense up more when someone / touches my —

GAVIN

Just relax it. Stop. Lie back.

Adam lies back, still in pain. Gavin continues to massage.

ADAM

Okay, that might be good.  
Good good good. Oh, that's good.

SIMON

Alright?

ADAM

Yeah.

Ben comes out with a pitcher of drinks and several glasses with ice on a tray. He sees the commotion around Adam.

BEN

What happened?

SIMON

Muscle spasm.

PENELOPE

He's fine.

Izzie comes outside.

IZZIE

What's wrong?

BEN

Adam had a muscle spasm.

IZZIE

I'm sorry.

ADAM

Why are you sorry?

IZZIE

I don't know. He made it sound like it was my fault.

BEN

What do you do for a muscle spasm?

IZZIE

Huh?

BEN

What do you do when somebody has a muscle spasm?

IZZIE

I don't know.

BEN

Well you need to learn.

Ben heads toward Adam.

GAVIN

I got it, Ben. You okay?

ADAM

Yeah. I'm good thanks. Maybe I should get off these stones.  
I'm fine, Ben. Try not to look disappointed.

GAVIN

Give me your arms.

Gavin turns and offers Adam his shoulders. Adam puts his arms around Gavin's neck, Gavin carries Adam over to the chaise, lays him gently down.

Ben starts pouring drinks. Izzie reaches for one, Ben holds it back.

BEN

What do you do for a muscle spasm?

IZZIE

Jesus, I said I don't know.

GAVIN

Penelope?

PENELOPE

Oh, for God's sake. Heat first, then cold.

IZZIE

I'll get a hot towel.



ADAM

It's fine.

IZZIE

I'm getting it anyway.

Izzie hurries inside.

PENELOPE

Gavin? Bring us a Pimm's would you?

GAVIN

Not in the pool.

PENELOPE

Gavin! Now please.

GAVIN

Get it yourself.

PENELOPE

No. I'm never getting out.

ADAM

It's fine. I'm fine, honestly.

Gavin pours a drink, takes it over to Penelope.

GAVIN

Never getting out you say?

PENELOPE

No. I'm staying in to protest my ill treatment.

GAVIN

He was in real pain, you know.

PENELOPE

Whatever, I don't care. I'm on holiday from caring!

GAVIN

You have to get out of there eventually.

PENELOPE

Not 'til I'm clean.

GAVIN

You showered when we got here.

PENELOPE

Not what I mean. I'm soaking to forget.

GAVIN

That won't work, love. No matter how long you stay in.

Gavin crosses back to the table and starts to roll a joint.  
Izzie returns with a hot towel. She applies it gently to  
Adam's calf.

ADAM

Really, you guys, I'm fine.

BEN

Not too hard.

IZZIE

I got it. That okay?

ADAM

Thanks, Cowboy.

Simon goes to the table to get a drink but the pitcher's  
empty.

SIMON

Hey, where's mine?

BEN

I thought you were working.

SIMON

I can have a Pimm's for God's sake.

BEN

Sorry. I'll make more...

SIMON

Even Penelope has one and she's already pissed.

BEN

Fine. I'll make another pitcher while I'm making dinner and teaching a first aid class and  
choosing the wine. Anything else you need me to do?

SIMON

Maybe serve me first next time?

Ben goes back inside with the empty pitcher.  
Simon sits and taps on his laptop.

IZZIE

*(to Gavin, re: the joint)*

Ooh, good idea, Gavster.

GAVIN

*(to Izzie)*

Cheers.

PENELOPE

Rolling a joint, now that's one thing my husband knows how to do. We bought one yesterday, on the beach in Barcelona. There was this gorgeous dark Spaniard with a man bun, a gigantic cock and a big-titted girlfriend. Totally naked of course, both of them, and they were smoking this fat spliff. So anyway I said to Gavin I said go over there and see if they want to hang out. And Gavin of course wouldn't move a bloody muscle. So I had to go over and be all smiley and charming and see if they'd share a little.

IZZIE

I thought Brits didn't smoke weed.

PENELOPE

Not as a rule, but have you ever tried snorting coke on the beach? Wind, Izzie, wind!  
Pssshhh!!

IZZIE

But it's awful calm tonight, here in fucking Provence...

PENELOPE

Oh, Isadora, you didn't. Really?

GAVIN

Penny, I wish you wouldn't.

PENELOPE

What, speak to Isadora?

GAVIN

You know what I mean. Sorry, Iz, it's just the sourcing I object to.

PENELOPE

Oh, give it a rest, Gavin.

GAVIN

Last year we were protesting blood diamonds for Christ's sake, where the hell do you think cocaine comes from?

PENELOPE

You were protesting. Anyway I just spent three years treating AIDS babies in fucking Africa so / don't lecture me about sourcing and—

GAVIN

And I put bloody roofs over their heads and keep the snakes out the loos but that doesn't / erase the fact that —

PENELOPE

Fine... fine! Forget it, Izzie.

But when Gavin looks away, she makes gestures and mouths silently to Izzie that *she'll have some later*, until Gavin catches her and she abruptly stops.

PENELOPE

Anyway... the guy with the cock said something in Catalan or whatever and I had no idea what he was saying. So I yelled at Gavin — my beloved husband — to come over and translate.

GAVIN

Yeah, so I go over there and it's like very uncomfortable for me, but Pen is, as you all are learning, quite persistent...

PENELOPE

His penis made you uncomfortable.

GAVIN

He wasn't exactly trying to hide it. I mean you'd think he'd tuck, or at least drape a knee or something when strangers approach.

PENELOPE

Jesus, you are ridiculous.

GAVIN

No need to say everything you think, love. So it turns out they're not sharing, but he's happy to sell us some.

All we had was ten euros and the guy says “that’s fine.” Turns out that’s what he was there for. The tits and the cock and the blowing of the smoke was all just ... advertising.

PENELOPE

Which went totally unnoticed until I took decisive action.

GAVIN

You are nothing if not decisive, Pen.

PENELOPE

Talking of which, when are you going to finish that?

GAVIN

Not in the pool.

PENELOPE

Yes, in the pool.

GAVIN

You’ll get it wet.

PENELOPE

Gavin...

GAVIN

No way. You want some of this, you’ve got to get out of the pool.

Izzie starts clearing the table for dinner.

Gavin finishes rolling the joint and offers it and a lighter to Adam.

GAVIN

Start us off? Do your leg some good.

ADAM

I can’t really smoke anymore.

IZZIE

Don’t worry, Mama. I’m baking you some cookies that’ll make you see sexy Jesus.

ADAM

In that case I better go wash my hands.

He exits into the house.

Well if no one else wants to...

GAVIN

Gavin lights up, takes a hit, holds it.

Oh shit.  
Iz?

GAVIN

Thanks.

IZZIE

Izzie takes a hit.

Right. Shutting down.

SIMON

Simon reaches for the joint like a hungry toddler. Izzie passes it to him then goes inside.

Nom nom nom.

SIMON

Simon takes a toke.

Nice, yeah?

GAVIN  
(to Simon)

Simon please bring that over here.

PENELOPE

No, don't. She'll just drop it in the pool.

GAVIN

I'll hold it.

SIMON

Simon crosses over and up the steps to the pool, puffing on the joint as he goes. He gets to her and crouches down.

Simon? What's wrong with Adam?

PENELOPE  
(sotto)

GAVIN

Pen... leave it alone.

SIMON

Why don't you ask him?

Gavin crosses over to them.

PENELOPE

He's very lucky to have friends like you.

SIMON

*(holding the joint for her)*

Now, no touching...

PENELOPE

Cheers.

*(she hits the joint)*

I mean... it's not exactly my field... but it looks like it could be serious.

SIMON

It is.

PENELOPE

Well then tell me.

SIMON

He has A.L.S. He was just diagnosed a few months ago.

GAVIN

Oh, Christ.

PENELOPE

So that explains it.

SIMON

Explains what?

PENELOPE

Why you'd let him back in your house. Because let me tell you something sweetie. If it were me, and he showed up at my back gate begging after all these years? I'd tell him to fuck right off.

Penelope takes another toke from the joint, then Simon offers it to Gavin, who waves it off.

Lights shift to early evening. Simon, now very stoned, crosses back toward the table to get his wine. He looks into the kitchen window, where he sees Ben, Izzie and Adam Then prepping food together.

He stops and watches them, lost in a memory.

IZZIE

Food is so weird here.

ADAM THEN

Taste this.

IZZIE

No, I fucking / hate radishes.

BEN

Hey now...

IZZIE

Sorry, I *freakin'* hate radishes.

ADAM THEN

These are totally different. Taste.

She takes a bite, spits it into the sink.

IZZIE

Can we have hamburgers instead?

ADAM THEN

Hamburger is weird here, too.

IZZIE

I hate France.

BEN

You just got here.

IZZIE

Maybe if I had some wine.



BEN

You're sixteen.

IZZIE

Which is old enough to drink wine and beer in France. I looked it up.  
Listen, if I have to eat radishes and ducks you gotta let me drink some wine.

ADAM THEN

You heard your father. Sorry, your brother.  
I'm so sorry.

BEN

It's okay. You can have one glass. With dinner.

Ben leaves the window, brings a basket of bread outside  
and sets it on the table.

In the kitchen, Adam Then pours Izzie a glass of wine.  
She shoots it in one gulp, asks for more. He takes the  
glass away.

IZZIE

Where do you sleep?

ADAM THEN

None of your beeswax.

*(Beat.)*

What's totally better than having a jerk for a dad?

*(No response.)*

Having three! Now get your butt to the table young lady.

IZZIE

Name's Cowboy.

Izzie picks up a platter of mussels and brings it outside.

BEN

First course, y'all.

Gavin, Simon, Ben, Izzie and Adam take seats at the  
table, start passing around food. Ben goes to sit beside  
Adam.

SIMON

No, I want to sit next to Adam.

ADAM

Aww, are you guys fighting over me?

BEN

That'd be an improvement.

Simon kisses Adam on the head and sits next to him. Ben takes note. So does Penelope... all the way from the pool.

Adam Then watches from the kitchen. Penelope stays in the pool.

GAVIN

Pen? You coming or not?

Penelope, you can't be serious...

Penny holds her nose and goes underwater. They eat.

#### SCENE 4

Lights shift as afternoon swiftly becomes evening. CHILL DINNER MUSIC plays. The sky grows darker and the stars come out, the fairy lights in the pergola come up slowly.

Penelope resurfaces in the pool, gasping for air. Adam Then is still in the kitchen window, now he's washing up the pots and pans in the sink.

Dinner is just about over. Wine is still being drunk, the occasional nibble of cheese.

PENELOPE

Gavin please...

Gavin brings Penelope a box of wine, half-filling her glass from the spout. Penelope takes the box from him and sets it on the lip of the pool. As he returns to the table she squirts more wine into the glass.

IZZIE

You didn't eat your steak.

ADAM

I'm off red meat. Not that it's helping anything.

He puts his steak on Izzie's plate. She starts cutting into it.

IZZIE

Helps the cows I guess.

SIMON

Who gives a fuck about cows? I mean – I don't mean that cruelly. I don't want them mistreated. I'm just... like cows are basically just genetically engineered protein cultures at this point. They barely have a brain, which is fortunate for them I guess.

ADAM

It is?

SIMON

Yeah, because, like they can't dread what's coming to them in the abattoir. Until they get there, that is. They're too stupid to know they're dying.

ADAM

In that case I'd love to be a cow. But I don't want to chew the cud cause that's disgusting.

BEN

Who's having cheese?

A LOUD RIFLE SHOT echoes up the valley. Adam Then disappears from the kitchen window. A shocked silence follows for a beat.

PENELOPE

*(so drunk)*

Well I'll have some cheese. And some of that luxury jam / we brought...?

Ben goes up onto the terrace.

IZZIE

That was a rifle shot.

SIMON

Ben, don't–

BEN

Hey! Hey assholes! Can you see there are houses down here!? *Chausseurs, regardez-vous! Nous sommes ici! Arrêtez!*

ANOTHER SHOT echoes up. Ben ducks down. Izzie goes up to him.

SIMON

Ben, get the / fuck down from there!

ADAM

Izzie / Jesus Christ...

IZZIE

The fuck are they shooting at?

SIMON

The pigs.

BEN

Wild pigs. Wild boar.

PENELOPE

Good for them. Ugly bastards.

IZZIE

Pigs ain't ugly. Not to each other. They're smart, too. No, that ain't the word. They're more than smart...

BEN

They're self-aware. They make decisions, they learn.

ADAM

I used to pretend I was a pig. When I was little. My grandma didn't have pigs on her farm, not after my grandpa died. She used to call me her sweet little piglet. Said if I wasn't good she'd ship me off to the butcher.

PENELOPE

I love your grandmother. Eat the cute ones first.

SIMON

These aren't cute. They terrorize small children and unsuspecting tourists.

ADAM

I'd rather be the cute kind.

BEN

They don't terrorize anyone. They're just trying to survive.

IZZIE

Then some hunter comes along and shoots 'em in the head.

SIMON

They're overpopulated. They're ruining the carefully balanced ecosystem.

PENELOPE

And they don't share our values, therefore they must die.

SIMON

Sometimes that's what has to happen.

BEN

It's just a lame excuse for killing.

ADAM

I'm telling you. Life on the farm – a much better choice.

GAVIN

Maybe your grandmother's farm. Most pigs live in appalling conditions, crowded, stinking warehouses where sows are forcibly inseminated while–

PENELOPE

Gavin, shut the fuck up.

IZZIE

Are we seriously having a conversation about what kind of pig we want to be?

GAVIN

That may be the existential question of our time.

BEN

The existentialist would simply describe the kind of pigs we already are.

PENELOPE

I am not a pig. They are the pigs. We are the people and we must protect our way of life against all foreign invaders.

ADAM

Grandma used to tell us that when a pig looks in a mirror it recognizes itself. Like, it knows what it sees in the mirror is itself and not some other pig.

As Adam speaks, Adam Then comes out of the house,  
with two drinks in his hands, in just his yellow Speedo.  
He lies on the chaise, apart from the others.

BEN

It's called The Mirror Test. If it recognizes itself in the mirror then it's self aware.

ADAM

Right. Like, dogs don't pass it. You ever see those videos...?

SIMON

Oh my god, so funny.

GAVIN

Dogs aren't self-aware?

BEN

To a degree. But pigs look in the mirror and they know they're looking at their own  
reflection. They can say "I" and "me." They know what "past" and "future" mean.  
They're capable of anticipation. Anxiety. Dread.

PENELOPE

How about you, Gavin? Do you pass the mirror test?

GAVIN

If you're asking if I have a sense of dread, Penny, the answer is yes.

BEN

They've hunted the wild boar in these woods since Charlemagne. Since before  
Charlemagne.

ADAM THEN

Charlemagne. First Holy Roman Emperor. Father of Europe!

Ben crosses to Adam Then, takes a drink from him.

BEN

Charlemagne used to dream about wild boars tearing his arms off. He was the bravest,  
most revered man in Christendom but they scared him to death.

ADAM THEN

It's hot. Take your shirt off.

Ben takes his shirt off.

SIMON

You made us read about this in class, didn't you?

ADAM

Oh, God, I remember. / I got an A in that class.

ADAM THEN

I got an A in that class. But who assigns obscure histories of medieval Europe to a bunch of farm boys and sorority girls?

Ben sits next to Adam Then on the chaise.

BEN

It's important. For better or worse, without Charlemagne's dreams we wouldn't be here.

ADAM THEN

That you gotta explain to me.

GAVIN

Was this on the syllabus when you taught it at King's?

BEN

I think so.

PENELOPE

Not me! I wasn't among your collection of undergraduate boys. Hm, isn't that curious? Which of these three is not like the other. Gavin...?

BEN

None of you fuckers remembers the story?

ADAM THEN

When the Emperor Charlemagne was yet young and strong, he had this dream.

ADAM

He's hunting with his friends when they get separated. It's night, and he can't find his way back home. He wanders, hopelessly lost, until he comes to a clearing, and standing in the middle of it is this enormous wild boar, with these huge tusks, just about to charge him. Charlemagne thinks he's gonna die, so he prays to God for deliverance.

SIMON

When he opens his eyes, a naked man-child appears to him, standing in the clearing, between him and the wild boar. The boar starts to drool, the hairs stand up on its back, its eyes...

ADAM

Charlemagne cries out again, praying to God to save him. But then the child speaks. He says...

Adam Then stands and drops his Speedos, kicking them aside.

ADAM THEN

What about me?

Ben stands and wraps his arms around Adam Then, caressing his back.

BEN

And Charlemagne says *what can you do?* And the child says... do you remember what he says?

ADAM THEN

*If you clothe my nakedness, I'll save you.*

BEN

So Charlemagne wraps his cloak around the boy's shoulders and begs him...

BEN & SIMON

Save me.

Adam Then kisses Ben passionately as Adam finishes the story.

ADAM

The boy turns to the boar and calls to it. And it comes! The supposedly bloodthirsty boar just bounds over, totally submissive now, wagging its little corkscrew tail like a whipped puppy. He presents his back for the child to ride...

Adam Then pulls free of Ben, bounds up the stairs, splashes into the pool and, unnoticed by Penelope, disappears under the water as Adam finishes the story.

ADAM

The boy jumps on and rides off into the night, leading Charlemagne safely out of the woods. And home.



SIMON  
(applauding)

Well done.

ADAM

I got an A in that class.

SIMON  
Only because you were sleeping with the teacher.

ADAM

So were you.

GAVIN  
I have no memory of that story whatsoever.

BEN

I didn't teach it your year.

PENELOPE

Go on.

BEN  
Charlemagne was totally mystified by the dream, so he goes to the local bishop and tells him about it. The bishop had no idea what the dream meant so at first he refuses to interpret it until Charlemagne threatens to kill him. So he makes up this bullshit explanation that somehow the man-child asking him to clothe his nakedness meant that God wanted him to pay for a new roof for the cathedral.

SIMON  
Brilliant.

BEN  
To seal the deal, the bishop promised Charlemagne God would bless his war against the Muslims who then occupied Spain. God would in fact save him and his newly-unified Europe from the heathen Moorish invaders. So Charlemagne did as he was told.

SIMON  
He paid for the roof?

BEN  
Yes. He gave the money, and went back to his wars.

IZZIE  
Did he win?

BEN

No. Because the bishop was lying.

Izzie takes a huge platter of food scraps and crosses up to the terrace.

ADAM

I don't remember that part.

BEN

I think this is what I'm writing about. The Bishop knew Charlemagne believed God wanted him to convert the pagans and kill the Muslims that had invaded Spain, so he manipulated him to get what he wanted. But what if he was just afraid to tell Charlemagne the truth?

PENELOPE

I always tell the truth.

Izzie dumps the food scraps over the wall and down the hillside.

IZZIE

SOOOOOOEY! PIG!

BEN

Why did you do that?

IZZIE

It's just shells and bones. Maybe they'll like it.

PENELOPE

Are you actually trying to attract them?

IZZIE

Yeah, why not?

PENELOPE

Because they charge you and slice you open with their razor-sharp tusks, that's why. Were you not listening just now?

Ben gets up and crosses to Izzie.

BEN

At the very least can we not feed them?

IZZIE

You want me to go clean it up? Fine, I'll go down there / and pick it all up.

BEN

No, you are not going down there in the dark. Jesus.

GAVIN

*(low, just to her)*

Why are you still in the pool?

PENELOPE

Shh, listen. I want to tell you something. I think Adam's faking.

BEN

The village writes tickets for shit like that.

GAVIN

You're drunk.

PENELOPE

No, no, no, listen to me. A.L.S. is notoriously difficult to diagnose with certainty especially—

GAVIN

Especially when your pissed / and stoned.

PENELOPE

—especially in the early stages. What tests has he had? Has anyone asked?

GAVIN

Pen look at him, he's wasting.

PENELOPE

He's deliberately not eating. I'm telling you he's faking. Ben, can / I ask you...?

GAVIN

You're talking rubbish.

BEN

This isn't the trailer park, you can't just —

IZZIE

What would you know about my trailer park, you ain't never been there. Adam has, though. Hey Adam, tell my brother how nice my trailer park is.

ADAM

Oh, you betcha, it's real nice. They put in this water feature, but they had to take it out cause people kept peeing in it. Isn't that right, Cowboy?

A beat. Izzie heads into the house.

BEN

Izzie come on.

IZZIE

I got my own place. I ain't got to stay with y'all.

She goes inside.

PENELOPE

*(to Gavin)*

Is she moving back in with them too?

GAVIN

You've been in there for four hours, now come and get something to eat.

PENELOPE

It hasn't been four hours.

GAVIN

It has been. Longer, actually. You're deliriously hypothermic.

IZZIE

*(from inside)*

Simon, you got a flashlight in here?

SIMON

By the door.

PENELOPE

Why does she get to live here? Christ, of course, she's in on the scam! She and Adam are lying to Ben and Simon so they'll put a roof over their heads! That's what the story is about. Ben, is / your story about—?

GAVIN

Penny, this isn't funny anymore.

BEN

Gavin, please get her out of the pool.

PENELOPE

*(chanting and splashing)*

Hell no I won't go! / Hell no I won't go...

SIMON

Fucking hell.

BEN

Gavin!

GAVIN

Yeah, okay. Come on, Pen. Let's go.

Gavin reaches down for Penelope but she splashes water on him and pushes away.

GAVIN

God damn it! Simon could you...?

Izzie comes back out with a large flashlight and climbs the steps back up to the terrace.

BEN

What are you doing?

Izzie do not go down there in the dark you'll...

Shit.

But she's already headed down the hillside and off.  
Simon attempts to help Gavin get Penelope out by reaching for her from the edge of the pool and trying to grab her hands. She plays with him, staying just out of their reach.

GAVIN

Christ, Penelope get out of the pool!

PENELOPE

*(singing - a la 'Hey Jude')*

No...no...no...no-no-no-no.

No-no-no-no.

Fuck off!!

GAVIN

Seriously, Pen, this is beyond stupid.

If you make us come in there –

BEN

Just leave it, seriously.

ADAM

*(standing)*

Yeah, come on, Iz!

IZZIE

*(off)*

He tells me I'm trash but won't let me clean it up.

BEN

I'm sorry I said that.

IZZIE

*(off)*

Shit balls!

BEN

What?

IZZIE

*(off, sotto)*

There's a big fat one down there in the trees!

ADAM

A big fat what?

IZZIE

*(off)*

He's looking right at me!

PENELOPE

Pray for a naked baby, Izzie!

GAVIN

That's it. Simon?

Gavin grabs Penelope by one arm, Simon grabs the other as they pull her out of the pool.

PENELOPE

No, I don't want to get out! NO!

Gavin drags a whining Penelope down to the chaise and wraps her in a towel.

PENELOPE

No! Gavin, no! Aiiieeee!

IZZIE

*(off)*

He's looking at me funny.

BEN

I don't see anything. If you're fucking with me...

IZZIE

*(off)*

Should I get in a tree or something?

BEN

Just come back up here please.

ADAM

Hey, Cowboy? Come back up, okay?

IZZIE

I want to hear it from him.

BEN

Here what from me?

Izzie raises her head above the wall.

IZZIE

That you don't hate me.

BEN

You're my sister.

IZZIE

I'm your uneducated trailer trash drug dealing sister. You ain't got no respect for me.

BEN

You two left us! I tried with you. I wanted the four of us to be a family...

PENELOPE

Six of us.

GAVIN

No, Pen. Not us.

PENELOPE

Why? Because we're breeders?

SIMON

No evidence of that.

PENELOPE

Fuck you.

BEN

You all left me.

SIMON

I didn't.

BEN

You leave me a little bit every day.

IZZIE

I'm here now, ain't I?

ADAM

Me too.

BEN

Only because you have to be. You said it the other day... *of all the available choices...*

SIMON

Is that what you said? How many other choices do you have, exactly?

IZZIE

None. He ain't going anywhere.

SIMON

That's not your call, Izzie. Or actually, it is. Have you told her?  
Christ, you haven't, have you?

BEN

I started to...

IZZIE

You want me to move back in and take care of Adam. What was so hard about asking me that? Did y'all think for one minute I would say no?

ADAM

Cowboy you can't just drop your life and come here to—



IZZIE

What life? The asshole's dead. Mama's dead. And you're right. Everybody does pee in that fucking water feature.

ADAM

I love you so much, but no. I got family back home—

IZZIE

Bullshit. Your family's right here. Ain't that right, Simon?  
I said ain't that right, Simon?

SIMON

That's right, Izzie.

IZZIE

Good. Now can we all please get fucked up?

PENELOPE

Are we invited? Or is it family only?

A rustling in the bushes, a faint animal sound.

BEN

What is it?

IZZIE

Oh, fuck.

Offstage, the SOUND of an angry, frightened  
BAAAAAAA!!

IZZIE

Shit!!!

BEN

Fuck!

Izzie VAULTS HERSELF up and over the wall and  
tumbles down onto the lawn.

ADAM

What the heck was it?

SIMON

*(looking down the hill)*

*Les moutons sauvages.*

ADAM

A sheep?

SIMON

A wild sheep.

IZZIE

Well it looked like a big ass pig.

ADAM

That's it! That's what I want to be!

PENELOPE

A pig in sheep's clothing. Imagine.

BLACKOUT

SCENE 5

EARLY MORNING LIGHT slowly fills the garden, revealing Adam, sitting at the table, various bottles and other lavender-spray-making materials arrayed in front of him. Some sprigs of lavender scattered about. He mixes and sniffs various combinations.

Simon is inside, in the kitchen, dressed for his wedding day. And he's on the phone.

SIMON

*(on phone)*

Fantastic! No, that's fantastic, Rodger, I'm thrilled to be joining...

No, thank you so much. I can't imagine a nicer wedding gift...

Thanks, I'll pass that along to Ben. I'm only sorry you couldn't make it today...

Yes, it is a bit far...

No, seriously, it's fine, he understands I have to be reachable...

Actually, we've got a... we've got someone to mind the place when we're not here...

No, he's just an old student of Ben's... yeah, from the States...

Adam pours some liquid into a spray bottle. He screws the sprayer top onto it, shakes it hard, then stands up, sprays a thick cloud of the stuff into the air, inhales deeply. He then coughs and retches, CHOKING on the spray he's just inhaled. He gasps for air, bends over the dining table, breathing hard.

Adam Then enters from the woods beyond the wall. He's sweaty and scraped up from trimming back trees and undergrowth. He sits on the edge of the stone wall, pulls off his gloves, drinks some water.

Ben's head appears in the upstairs window. He's wearing a white dress shirt and an untied necktie.

BEN

Where were you?

ADAM THEN

The freaking vines are trying to take over the pool. Oh shit, I think I burned a little. Yep. I have a weird tan on my feet.

BEN

Is that what you're wearing?

ADAM THEN

*(sarcastic)*

It's all I have, sorry.

Ben disappears back into the bedroom. Adam catches his breath, sits up, dazed, and watches the rest of the scene unfold.

SIMON

*(on phone)*

My God, you mean preferred shares? Rodger...!

Penny enters from the house, dressed for an outdoor wedding.

PENELOPE

Christ, your legs are prettier than mine. I should just kill myself now.

ADAM THEN

How would you do it?

PENELOPE

I'm not serious.

ADAM THEN

I'd jump out of a plane I think.

PENELOPE

Mm mm *(no)*. Too much time to change your mind. If you decided on the way down that this life, for all its agony and bullshit, is worth living after all, then what? You'd start screaming for help, flapping your arms like a pathetic wounded bird.

ADAM THEN

But I wouldn't change my mind. I'd just fall and enjoy the view. Or I'd swim out into the ocean and dive down real deep, and hold my breath until I just... *(makes a gasping sound)*.

PENELOPE

Same thing, only underwater. The instinct for survival is too strong. You'll panic and try to swim back, but by then it'll be too late.

You'll struggle until your arms and your legs get tired and then you'll die, helpless and terrified. Why are you contemplating suicide at your best mate's wedding?

ADAM THEN

You brought it up.

PENELOPE

Yes but I wasn't serious. Are you depressed?

ADAM THEN

No.

PENELOPE

You're angry, though.

ADAM THEN

That's not the same as depressed.

PENELOPE

Oh. So you are.

ADAM THEN

You brought it up, I just went with it.

SIMON

*(on phone)*

Oh, there are those who still don't believe in it, but Ben and I definitely believe marriage is the best thing that's happened to the Gay Community.

PENELOPE

If you're angry, why don't you kill Simon? Get him out of the way. You know you want to.

SIMON

*(on phone)*

Exactly. Otherwise what were all those goddamn marches about...?

Simon laughs.

ADAM THEN

My grandpa used to say the only perfect piece of furniture was a three-legged stool. Three is all you need, but you definitely need three. Two's not enough. I don't think he meant it to apply in this case but...

PENELOPE

You know at first I thought you were just Izzie's nanny. Then it was all explained to me.

ADAM THEN

Izzie's eighteen now.

PENELOPE

It won't be long 'til she strikes out on her own life's long, sad journey. She won't stay around and live off her brother I'm guessing. I expect she'll go back to the states, right? Doubt college is in her future.  
What will you do?

ADAM THEN

What do you mean? This is home. We have a house here, another / in London...

PENELOPE

You could go back to being a sexy drifter I suppose. That's how I always imagine your life before this. Epic bike rides, hikes in the Andes, summers in Ibiza, modeling in Milan. Being beautiful must pay very well.

ADAM THEN

Nobody's kicking me out.  
Are they...?

PENELOPE

Come on, Adam. Wake up. How do you feel about this wedding, hmm? Real feelings, I mean, not that bullshit Minnesota cheeriness you use as a screen to keep us all out. How do you feel right now?

Long beat.

ADAM THEN

Abandoned.

He starts to cry.

PENELOPE

Oh, yes. Yes, I know. I know, darling. Of course you do.  
But here's the thing. Listen to me. Shh. Listen. And forgive me being so blunt about it. But you are too much a man to settle for being second wife.

ADAM THEN

They made me the best man. Like that makes me somehow part of it.  
Fuck...

PENELOPE

Sweetheart, what did you think would happen? Did you think marriage wouldn't change things between, sorry, *among* you? Did you think Simon would bring you and Ben along to his posh after-work drinks? Have you met my two husbands, Ben and Adam? Did you think you'd somehow become Ben's equal in this arrangement? Or is it that you thought if this ever happened it would be you and Ben? Oh, you foolish, foolish child. Is that what this grand experiment in polyamory comes down to? That's bloody disappointing, isn't it?

*(Adam nods his head "yes.")*

Then stop pining for something you never wanted. You're better than that.

Gavin appears in the door, struggling with his tie.

GAVIN

Can you help me, Penny?

PENELOPE

I'll be right there.

Gavin goes back inside.

PENELOPE

Move on, sexy drifter. There are tons more houses to renovate, hundreds of baby dykes to nanny. But I'd hurry if I were you.

Penelope exits into the house, passing Ben, who comes out, now fully dressed for his wedding: a very nice suit and tie, a white boutonniere in the lapel.

SIMON

*(on phone)*

I know, I know, but it was important...

No, it's no problem, I swear.

BEN

He scheduled a call on our wedding day.

Jesus, you really can smell the lavender. It's exactly what you said this place would smell like in the summer. Remember? As soon as Simon's shares vested you said "throw that spray shit from Williams-Sonoma in the garbage and just buy a house in fucking Provence." You always know how things will turn out.

ADAM THEN

I have to leave.

BEN

No you don't.

ADAM THEN

Why him and not me?

BEN

What? You never wanted to get married. We talked about this. All this is about is a little security for the future.

ADAM THEN

Security for who?

BEN

I can't marry both of you.

ADAM THEN

You still haven't put the house in my name. Legally, I got nothing.

BEN

I'll take care of you.

ADAM THEN

I don't want to be taken care of.

BEN

I've been taking care of you since you were twenty years old. Both of you.

ADAM THEN

I've paid my way. I've remodeled two houses in two foreign countries, planted and tended your gardens, satisfied two very different people's sexual needs and spent the last two years raising your fucked up little sister. I do not need taking care of and I pray to God I never will because that's the day I will fucking kill myself. So who's taking care of who again?

SIMON

*(on phone - in kitchen now)*

Subject to approval, I understand.

No, no honeymoon, we're just doing a quick thing here then back to London tomorrow.

Great, I'll see you then. Cheers, Rodger.

He hangs up.



BEN

Get dressed.

Get dressed or get out.

Ben exits back into the house, passing Izzie as she comes out the door. Izzie wears a pretty sundress, though she's clearly uncomfortable in it.

IZZIE

What's wrong with him? Hey, look at me.

ADAM THEN

You look nice.

IZZIE

I ain't worn a dress since my real Mama died.

ADAM THEN

You look real pretty, Cowgirl.

IZZIE

Thanks. You do, too. Like something straight outta Southern Bride.

Ben re-appears with Simon in the kitchen.

SIMON

I just spoke to Rodger. We got a second round of funding.

BEN

Will you please talk to him.

SIMON

Ben, did you hear what I just said? Five million this time.

BEN

Yeah, that's great, honey.

SIMON

What?

BEN

I think he needs to hear it from you.

SIMON

What does he need to hear from me?

Adam Then tunes in to their conversation, crosses toward the window to listen.

IZZIE

Seriously, you do need to—

Adam Then shushes her with a gesture, listens to Ben and Simon.

BEN

That things haven't changed. That our feelings for him haven't changed / just because—

SIMON

Maybe I don't think that anymore.

BEN

Were you planning to share / that with either of—

SIMON

I don't want him for a husband. I want you. We merge perfectly. You're poetry and I'm maths. You buy towels and fucking lavender spray, shit I never would've known existed. I need you.

BEN

So does he.

SIMON

Yes but I don't need him. Not anymore. It's grown-up time, and grown-ups get married.

Izzie tries to put her arms around Adam Then, he pulls away.

BEN

This is all for your fucking Tory boss's consumption, isn't it? Well I don't see him around anywhere...

SIMON

He and his wife had a thing... one of their kids had a thing.

BEN

What will Izzie do? She's so much better with him around.

SIMON

She's eighteen. Let them get a flat together. In London, or back in the States...

BEN

Christ, Simon, you were the one who brought him home.

SIMON

And you were the one who decided we'd keep him.

Adam Then opens the gate. He goes to pull his bike out of the storage compartment.

IZZIE

What are you doing?

BEN

We're about to get married.

SIMON

Right, so can we talk about us and not him?

BEN

You've been on work calls since eight this morning.

SIMON

Yes, and the last one just paid this house off.

BEN

Without him there wouldn't have been a house.

SIMON

No, without me there wouldn't have been a house. *Houses.*

BEN

It won't matter if they both leave. This was for all of us.

SIMON

No it wasn't. I wanted to stay in America but you said America was a shit show and couldn't wait to escape. Europe was your dream. London was lovely and lively and progressive, with universities to teach in and clubs to dance in and saunas to fuck in. And France! Your beloved France was paradise for you, a long-tortured land finally at peace. And so it is. And you take such good care of us. I love that about you, but he resents it. He resents the fuck out of it. I want to marry you. Which of us do you want?

Ben hesitates a bit too long. Simon grows angry.

SIMON

Adam!?

Adam Then gets on his bike and rides out through the gate.

IZZIE

Stop it. Adam stop!

Simon comes outside, Ben on his heels. They both see Adam Then ride away.

Gavin and Penelope emerge from the house, fully dressed and ready for the wedding. Penelope carries a thin black binder.

IZZIE

Wait. Please.

SIMON

Adam!

Jesus, I have another call in an hour.

IZZIE

He'll come back. Adam! We can't do this without him.

SIMON

That's exactly what we're doing. Penny?

IZZIE

No...

PENELOPE

Let him go, Isadora. He'll be fine.

IZZIE

No he won't.

GAVIN

Izzie. Come on.

They line up for the ceremony: Ben and Simon stand next to each other, Gavin stands next to Simon. Izzie, torn in two, joins them, taking her place beside Ben.

IZZIE

Ben, please, can't we / please wait?

ADAM

Please wait.

Penelope turns to face all of them and opens her little binder.

PENELOPE

Welcome to the wedding of Benjamin Lee Comfort and Simon James Collins. Are all your devices silenced? Simon?

Everyone laughs but Izzie and Adam. They are both crying. As Penelope begins the ceremony, the lights slowly dim on the wedding party, until only Adam is illuminated, under the lights of the pergola.

PENELOPE

After paying the requisite fees – I kept the receipt by the way – and obtaining a legally binding but spiritually questionable online certificate, I have been invested with the power to marry this man, and this man. So, who gives Benjamin to Simon?

*(no response)*

Who gives Benjamin to Simon?

BEN

Izzie...

IZZIE

I do.

The light on them fades to black, leaving only Adam illuminated by the fairy lights.

VOICES in the dark:

PENELOPE

Who gives Simon to Ben?

GAVIN

I guess I do.

PENELOPE

You guess? Are there rings?  
Are there rings?

After a long beat, the rest of the lights slowly come back up. The wedding party have all disappeared in the blackout. The afternoon has turned cloudy and cool, as if a storm has just passed.

Adam picks up the bottle of lavender. He crosses over to the pool, unsteady and without his cane. He unscrews the top, reaches up over the stone retaining wall and *pours the lavender mixture out into the pool.*

Izzie enters through the gate, now in clothes she probably slept in, wearing sunglasses, a can of soda in her hand. She is obviously, hugely hung over.

IZZIE

I took the garbage down. Ugh. Stinky.  
*(She picks up a lavender sprig, puts it to her nose and inhales deeply.)*  
Supposed to be a good hangover cure.

Adam turns to her, starts to walk toward her, but after a step or two he *stumbles and falls on his face, sprawling on the grass.*

IZZIE

Shit.

Izzie runs over to him, turning him over and cradling him in her arms. He looks up at her, eyes wide with fear as she gently rocks him.

BLACKOUT

SCENE 6

Late afternoon. Somber music – something like Mumford or Sufjan Stevens – plays from somewhere.

Ben finishes hanging towels on a line up by the pool. He takes the last one out of a damp canvass bag, hangs it, then hangs the bag to dry. It's a big laundry bag with a sturdy drawstring cord.

Ben crosses to the table, picks up a different spray bottle, having apparently taken up Adam's abandoned experiment. He mixes some liquid, puts a spray pump on it.

Izzie is in the kitchen, cooking something.

OFFSTAGE, the familiar sound of a car pulling into the drive. People getting out. Penelope enters through the gate, carrying shopping bags.

PENELOPE

Hi, we made it.

BEN

How was all the old shit?

PENELOPE

Positively ancient. We saw a thousand year old olive tree. Can you imagine?

BEN

Crazy.

Penelope flops onto the chaise.

PENELOPE

Exhausting.

Ben, you have a lovely house.

BEN

*(holding out the bottle of lavender spray)*

Tell me what you think.

She has a sniff of his concoction.

PENELOPE

Mmm. Bit weak I think.  
Gavin thought we'd all retire here one day.

BEN

Gavin thought that, did he?

PENELOPE

Yes. He did. He said that to me in the car just now. And he's said it before.  
He said you promised...

BEN

Everything's just so fucked up right now.

PENELOPE

That's what I thought. He thought the promise was good, though.  
Gavin is such a trusting soul.

Gavin enters through the gate and closes it behind him.

GAVIN

What am I so trusting about?

PENELOPE

My affairs, sweetie. My many affairs.

In the kitchen, Izzie removes a sheet of cookies from the oven and starts plating them.

GAVIN

You can have affairs if you want.

PENELOPE

See? That's how trusting he is.

GAVIN

So long as I can too.

PENELOPE

You may not.

GAVIN

Well fuck you, then.

PENELOPE

That'd be refreshing. On second thought, no.



GAVIN

How's Adam's head?

BEN

Dunno, he's still asleep.

PENELOPE

Have you checked on him? Is he breathing?

GAVIN

Jesus.

Izzie drops the cookie sheet into the sink with a bang.

BEN

*(calling to Izzie)*

You okay?

IZZIE

*(munching a cookie)*

Yeah, okay.

BEN

What are you making?

Simon comes into the kitchen with a large mixing bowl.

IZZIE

Wake-and-bake cookies for the resident cripple, why?

PENELOPE

See? Izzie can take care of him. You don't need to worry.

Adam comes into the kitchen. He has a bandage on his forehead.

ADAM

*(to Simon)*

Oh my God, did you lick the bowl?

SIMON

Yes it was yummy.

*(they laugh)*

Why? What?

Ohhh! That's why...

ADAM

Here, let me wash that.

SIMON

*(still licking)*

No way!

PENELOPE

We bought cheese. We're making a contribution, see?

BEN

Hang on, Pen.

Ben goes inside and into the kitchen.

GAVIN

That was a pretty bad fall. Still think he's faking?

PENELOPE

If I thought it'd get me my own room here at the Hotel Entitlement I'd fake just about anything.

GAVIN

Are you saying they're entitled? That they act entitled? And you think you don't? You're the most entitled human being I know.

PENELOPE

You're goddamn right I'm entitled. At least I've earned it. I earn it every bloody day. What did he ever do?

GAVIN

Contract a terminal illness maybe?

PENELOPE

He's not exactly bleeding out on the floor of a shack made of rubbish. What has any of them done that they deserve all this?

GAVIN

Some people choose lucrative jobs. Some people dream big, and work hard to get what they want.

PENELOPE

And some think they're above all that. Right, Gavin? Some people feel guilty and decide to drag their girlfriends to bloody fucking Africa to watch children get kidnapped and raped and then mutilated and burned / right under our—

GAVIN

Pen... we said we wouldn't. I know it seems wrong to you but the world isn't fair.

PENELOPE

Well then fuck it. Fuck the world.

In the kitchen, we see Adam with the plate of cookies he has balanced precariously in his hands. He takes a bite of one.

ADAM

Yum.

BEN

Hey, give me those.

ADAM

No, no. I got it. I'm taking them outside.

BEN

Let me carry them.

ADAM

I got it.

BEN

Okay then...

A mild shriek from Adam as Ben lifts him into his arms and carries him outside, still holding the plate of cookies.

Simon stays in the kitchen, still licking the bowl.

ADAM

Jesus... ow...

BEN

Here, Penny, have a cookie.

She takes one from the plate in Adam's hands.

What do you say...?

BEN

Penny's mouth is full.

Say thank you, Adam.

BEN

Thank you, Adam.

ADAM

Not you.

BEN

Penelope puts the half-eaten cookie back on the plate.

PENELOPE

Something stronger I think. Isadora?!

Oi, over here...

GAVIN

Ben carries Adam over to Gavin, who takes the whole plate.

Hey! Give those back.

ADAM

Ben holds Adam as he grabs at Gavin, but Gavin bobs and weaves, dodging him playfully.

Right.

PENELOPE

Penelope goes inside. Ben and Gavin carry Adam up to the pool.

No, no, no. I'll sink to the bottom.

ADAM

We'll hold you up.

BEN

In the kitchen, Penelope whispers something to Izzie, who nods and leads Penny and Simon out of the kitchen.

ADAM  
No, it's too cold.

BEN  
The heater's on, now hush.

ADAM  
I'm scared.

BEN  
But it'll feel so good.

ADAM  
Yeah, okay, but you gotta hold onto me.

BEN  
I will babe. I promise.

They set Adam down. Adam pulls off his bathrobe, Gavin backs away. Ben gently helps Adam down into the water.

ADAM  
Careful.

BEN  
Shhh... I gotcha.

Gavin munches his cookie and watches Adam and Ben float around.

PENELOPE  
*(from inside)*  
Ahhh! Yes, Isadora, that's what I'm talking about.

GAVIN  
Dear God what is it now.

BEN  
Cocaine I reckon. Go have some, Izzie brought plenty.

GAVIN  
Yeah, I dunno.

BEN  
Okay. Either way.

GAVIN

I worry about the sourcing.

BEN

You said.

GAVIN

Simon seems more than usually preoccupied. Is it work?

BEN

They're moving to Australia. So far, Simon hasn't been invited.

ADAM

Why don't you get in?

But Gavin makes no move.

GAVIN

I was going to ask you, Ben, I know we said a week, but I wonder if we might stay a bit longer.

Gavin is clearly upset.

BEN

Is something wrong?

GAVIN

I... sorry... sorry...

*(getting it together)*

Something happened and we can't go back. We thought if we could get here, get back to friends and... and safety. Just for awhile...

BEN

It's not safe here anymore either.

GAVIN

Yeah, well everything's relative, isn't it?

Gavin fills his glass.

GAVIN

We got this grant to go out into the villages, vaccinating and educating people. A few weeks ago we went to this little village in the central district, Mnchinji, where there was this little church school. Penny gave them their shots, I fixed the roof. Funny, yeah? Like in your story. The children were so beautiful, so happy.

We handed out mosquito nets for them to take home. Things like that. But there was this group of seven little girls living in the church. All the other kids went home at night, but not these. The priest there told us they were Ebola orphans. I've never seen Penny so full of pity, of compassion. Their presence at the school, it was like bait for the local gang of boys that called themselves Boko Haram but were really just a bunch of kids using religion to justify rape and murder. So the vicar begged us to take the girls back with us. He couldn't keep them safe, he said. Penny wanted to, but I said no. We didn't have room, we barely had security of our own. So we left them there, and Penny stopped speaking to me. We got a call two days later. Four of the little girls had washed up on a riverbank about three miles downstream from the church. There was enough left of them, some of them, that you could tell they'd been raped. Mutilated. Maybe crocodiles did that, I don't know. Penny examined them herself, every single one. Filed reports, demanded investigations. Then she came home and started packing. All she said was "I cared. And now I don't anymore."

PENELOPE

*(from inside)*

Gavin?!

GAVIN

Just wanted you to know that. I know she's been difficult.

PENELOPE

*(from inside)*

Don't come in here, Gavin. You wouldn't like it.

GAVIN

When I said "safety" I didn't mean the house. I meant you. I was hoping we could maybe sort of join the family. I was part of it for awhile, back in the day, before Yoko in there came along.

BEN

Nothing feels safe to me. Nothing and nowhere.

PENELOPE

Gavin! Now!

Gavin goes inside.

ADAM

Should we go in?

I'd rather stay here.

BEN

Adam leans back, floats on his back as Ben supports him.

Don't get my bandage wet.

ADAM

I won't.

BEN

I had a cookie, too.

ADAM

I know.

BEN

Poor Gavin.

ADAM

You're staying no matter what happens. You understand?

BEN

You got married without me.

ADAM

I won't do it again.

BEN

Then Penelope said I should go and she was right.

ADAM

Wait, what?

BEN

At the wedding. She said I was a sexy drifter and I had to move on.

ADAM

Penelope told you to—

BEN

Simon comes outside, really hyper from the cocaine he's just inhaled. He pulls off his tee-shirt and shorts as he makes his way up to the pool.



SIMON

Hi, hi, hi, hi, hi...

Simon eases into the water, takes Adam's feet in his hands and massages them.

ADAM

Kinda getting used to this foot massage thing, I gotta say.

SIMON

You used to love it.

ADAM

I was faking.

No, don't put them in your mouth!

Simon looks up.

SIMON

Do you see that?

That's a satellite I think. See? Look how fast it moves.

ADAM

It's really bright.

SIMON

Maybe it's the space station. Yeah, see how fast it is? Space Station *Freedom*.

BEN

Do they still call it that?

SIMON

I think so. I don't know.

Now it'll start to fade out... there it goes... there it goes... gone.

ADAM

Bye, *Freedom*.

SIMON

You and Izzie can stay. I want you to stay. Please stay.

Simon kisses Adam.

After a moment, raised voices are heard inside the house.  
Not every word below need be (or even should be)  
audible, especially not the first few lines.

VOICES INSIDE:

PENELOPE

He said that? He didn't even... I mean what about Adam, he's going back to London I'll just bet. Part of the plan probably.

IZZIE

What the fuck are you talking about?

PENELOPE

Oh, come on, haven't you been wondering?

GAVIN

Penelope you don't have to say everything / you think.

PENELOPE

Oh you're thinking it too, you all are. It's fine with me if you all want to keep worshipping your dying god but for fuck's sake at least make sure he's dying first.

Penelope storms out of the house, smartphone in hand.  
Gavin and Izzie come out after her.

ADAM

What's happening now?

IZZIE

Bitch what are you talking about?

PENELOPE

Bitch? Really? I'm the bitch? Do you even know who I am? Or what I do? Do you even have a job? You're a smart girl, though, aren't you? Both of you probably cooked up the whole scheme together so / you could squat here until—

★

GAVIN

Penelope really can you just—

PENELOPE

Adam? May I ask you some questions?

IZZIE

Leave him the fuck alone.

PENELOPE

Have you had an electromyogram?

ADAM

What?

PENELOPE

An electromyogram. It's a test for ALS. How about a nerve conduction study?

ADAM

This is the first time you've talked to me in three days.

IZZIE

God fucking damn it y'all, either she's outta here / tomorrow or I am.

PENELOPE

Have you had those tests?

I didn't think so. Wow, is Simon actually massaging your feet now? / Well done, Adam.

IZZIE

If there's anybody taking advantage of my brother it's your sorry ass.

Ben gets out of the pool.

BEN

Izzie back off. I mean it. Stand over there.

PENELOPE

I know we aren't rich as goddamn rock stars. You invite us here out of pity, I know that. I know that. If my husband had an ounce of pride we wouldn't be here.

GAVIN

Oh for Christ's sake Penny you're ridiculous / and paranoid.

PENELOPE

Do I embarrass you? I guess I do. Not that I deserve a holiday. I only work my ass off in the goddamn jungles of Africa—

GAVIN

Malawi.

PENELOPE

— fucking Malawi, saving babies from Ebola and AIDS and... and horrors you privileged, protected bunch of so-called liberals can scarcely imagine.

GAVIN

I told them. I told them what happened.

PENELOPE

What exactly is your diagnosis, Adam? Had to come up with something, didn't you, mate? To justify your ignominious return.

BEN

Gavin if you don't–

PENELOPE

You're a faker too. You're all fakes, fakes, fakes. Fake marriages, fake friends, fake family. Say you're married but fuck who you want. Call us your friends but turn us away. Live like bloody royals and call yourselves good people –

Izzie has had enough. With a YELL she jumps on Penelope, takes her down to the ground and starts punching her in the head.

BEN

Fuck.

SIMON

Oh shit.

Penelope SCREAMS. Gavin tries to pull Izzie off of Penelope. Ben jumps down from the terrace and tries to help Gavin pull Izzie off Penelope.

IZZIE

You think I live like a fuckin' queen?  
How do I fight, huh?  
How do I fight?! This fake enough for you bitch?

GAVIN

Jesus Christ.

BEN

That's enough! Izzie...stop...stop it!

ADAM

Izzie, stop it! Izzie!  
Izzie, listen to me.  
Izzie... I don't... I don't have ALS!

Everything stops. Izzie gets off of Penelope. Simon moves away from Adam in the pool.

ADAM

They don't know what's wrong with me. But something is. Something is really, really wrong with me.

SIMON

Fucking hell.

Simon gets out of the pool, finds a towel, dries off.

ADAM

Simon, I swear. I'm not faking anything.

SIMON

Then why did you lie?

ADAM

I wanted to come home. I was afraid you'd send me away again / if I'd told you—

SIMON

We never sent you away, you left.

ADAM

I couldn't stay. I just couldn't bear it. Penelope was right about that, too.

SIMON

Hang on. Did you tell Adam to leave us?

PENELOPE

Oh, Simon, don't. You wanted him out, you know you did. There were millions of pounds on the line, weren't there?

SIMON

God damn it.

PENELOPE

It's true, isn't it? Come on, it's only been four years, none of us has forgotten. Now the sexy drifter's lost his looks, so what, we all do. Now he's got nowhere else to go so he conveniently develops this tragic disease and comes crawling back. And oh how the gays love a fallen beauty, don't they? So who could resist? Right, Adam?

ADAM

If you knew anything about me... I'd die before I took advantage of these people, of anyone. Yeah, Penny, I have enjoyed my life, but I never took anything for free. I wasn't raised like that. You think you deserve some reward for living the life you've led? Maybe you do, but you have such contempt for the people who try to care for you, you make it impossible. They'd let you in, too, Penny, but all you seem to have for them is hostility, contempt and envy.

PENELOPE

I have nothing left to give. Years I've spent in the blood and the mud and the death. After all that I've got nothing to show, nothing. But that's on me. I chose what I chose and it makes very little difference at the end of the day. I deserve more than what I have, but at least I can say I did some good.

I did good. But not well.

And I work. I *work*.

Gavin takes her in his arms. Simon goes inside.

GAVIN

She's exhausted. And cocaine never did her any / favors I'm afraid.

PENELOPE

Don't talk about me like I'm not here.

GAVIN

Sorry, Pen. You're right. Let's go to bed.

PENELOPE

Well I can't sleep now.

GAVIN

How about a walk then?

PENELOPE

But the feral lambs will eat us.

GAVIN

Maybe that's for the best. Come on.

Gavin opens the gate and leads Penelope out.

BEN

Stay with him.

Ben follows Simon into the house. Adam struggles up out of the pool.

ADAM

I'm sorry, Cowboy.

Adam shivers uncontrollably. Izzie finds a towel, walks over to Adam and wraps it around his shoulders. She sits on the edge of the terrace next to him, holding him.

ADAM THEN enters from the gate, walking his bike, dressed as he was when he left the wedding. He sees Izzie, and she sees him. *She's in both their timelines now.*

ADAM THEN

Everybody gone?

Izzie nods. Adam Then comes up onto the terrace and sits next to her, opposite Adam.

IZZIE

You missed the wedding.

ADAM

I guess I should go / pack.

ADAM THEN

I'm all packed.

IZZIE

I'm staying with you.

ADAM THEN

I'm not going back to London. I'm going home.

IZZIE

You ain't got no home.

ADAM THEN

I can stay with / my grandma.

ADAM

I wish my grandma was still alive.

IZZIE

Me and you could hit the road.

ADAM THEN

You're eighteen years old, Izzie.

ADAM

You're twenty-one, Izzie.

\*

IZZIE

Shit...

ADAM THEN

We can't spend the rest of our lives biking around Europe.

IZZIE

No... I was thinking more like... Oregon.

Izzie jumps down off the stonework and heads inside.

For the first time, Adam Then seems to *see* Adam. He puts his arms around him and holds him tight as he cries. He rocks him like a baby for a long, long time.

Then he gently pulls away. As Adam watches, Adam Then finds a shirt and pulls it on. He finds shoes and puts them on. He finds his already-packed saddlebags under the pool, puts them on his bike.

Izzie comes back out with a backpack and helmet. She pulls her bike out. *Now she's just in Adam Then's timeline.*

IZZIE

Let's go.

She mounts her bike and pedals out through the open gate. Adam Then pauses, then follows her on his bike.

Alone now, Adam considers his options. He looks around, sees the canvas laundry bag Ben hung on the clothesline, the heavy rope drawstring dangling from it.

Adam gets to his feet, walks over to the clothesline and pulls the bag down, then crosses back and finds the loose stone by the pool. He sits at the edge of the pool and, with some serious effort, manages to slide the stone loose and into the bag.



He pulls the drawstring as taught as he can. Then he loops both ends around his neck and ties them into multiple hard knots, bending down so that his neck is now tied to the bag with very little slack left in the rope.

With all his strength, he slides the rock and bag toward the edge of the pool. Then he gets back in the water, his neck still tied tight to the bag. He hesitates a few seconds, then yanks the bag hard into the water, pulling his head under.

Izzie comes out of the house, now back in the present timeline.

IZZIE

Where'd you go, Mama?  
Adam?

Adam begins to struggle in the pool, his feet kicking at the water. Izzie registers what's happening, runs up the steps and into the pool. She ducks her head under and heaves the rock back out of the water and onto the terrace, bringing Adam's strained neck with it.

She struggles to untie the rock, but can only manage to loosen the ropes a bit from around his neck. Adam vomits water, then lies back in her arms.

Izzie holds him to her. Lights fade.

SCENE 7

The next morning.

Ben looks wiped out, as though he hasn't slept. He stands near the pergola, reading a note. A large styrofoam cooler is on the table, the lid opened slightly, as if Ben has gone through the contents.

After a moment, Penelope comes out in a sundress, a big wicker tote bag on her arm and a cup of coffee in her hand. She lights a cigarette, sits on the chaise.

PENELOPE

Morning. God, did you get any sleep at all?

*(Ben shakes his head "no.")*

What is that?

Ben finishes reading the note, then hands it to Penelope.

PENELOPE

My French is shit...

BEN

It's an apology. For shooting at us the other night.

PENELOPE

To be fair they were shooting at the pigs, not us...

BEN

Apparently they got one.

Ben pulls a huge rack of ribs out of the cooler, wrapped in plastic just translucent enough to tell what's inside.

PENELOPE

Oh my Christ.

BEN

I'm not eating it.

PENELOPE

You can't waste it. Wouldn't that be worse?

BEN

I can't.

PENELOPE

Because of Charlemagne's Dream?

BEN

You weren't as fucked up as we thought, were you?

PENELOPE

I never am.

What would you have told Charlemagne, if he'd asked you to interpret his nightmare?

BEN

That the naked boy in the dream was Christ, the Christ Child. And that the wild boar was God himself. Because all God does is destroy the beautiful things God has made, including his own son, who stands naked and vulnerable before his bloodthirsty father. Not offering to save us, but begging us to save him. Not only to clothe his nakedness, but to thrust a fucking spear right into the heart of the murderous, ugly god of our dreams.

PENELOPE

But the child didn't skewer the boar. He tamed it. And they rode off happily ever after. It seems to me that Charlemagne didn't need saving from the boar, so much as the boar needed saving from Charlemagne.

Simon comes out; he wears a business suit and rolls a suitcase. His earbuds are in.

PENELOPE

Good morning, Simon. Good god, look at you. You're like a wall, a very well-dressed wall.

SIMON

*(on phone)*

I'm just leaving...

No, the train. Ben's keeping the car here. The passport control lines at the ferry are absolutely impossible these days.

Gavin's head appears in the upstairs window.

GAVIN

What time do we need to drop you?

Simon?

SIMON

Half ten.

*(on phone:)*

Honestly. I can work from home. So long as I have a goddamn job I suppose I should be... yes, I'll hold.

BEN

What's going on?

SIMON

I have no fucking idea. What time did you get home?

BEN

They wanted to keep him for observation. I talked them into letting us bring him home.

*(he waits for Adam to leave the kitchen)*

They took the full history. Psychological, medical, personal.

PENELOPE

Raised an eyebrow, some of it. The look on that woman's face...

BEN

Thanks for coming with, Pen.

PENELOPE

Nothing like a good suicide attempt to sober you up.

She goes in.

SIMON

After everything I did for that fucking asshole I think he's actually going to sack me.

BEN

The psychologist... her English wasn't great... she asked me whether he'd been in an accident, or in combat. If he'd suffered any recent tragedies. She told me to look something up. Somatic Symptom Disorder. It can cause paralysis, wasting... It can come with profound depression, or after a severe traumatic loss... a death, or a divorce.

*Pause.*

SIMON

I just... I just couldn't imagine how we'd answer the questions.

BEN

What if that's what's wrong with him, Simon?

SIMON

If you don't fit in you don't get ahead. Gay was fine, so long as we were married. And how they rewarded us for becoming like them. At least for awhile. Their approval now seems... suspect.

BEN

He's sick. He wants to come home. He's dying to come home.

SIMON

Ironic that they're cutting me loose because they think my being gay will offend the Muslims. Fucking convenient.

BEN

You are so much more than your job, babe.

SIMON

Am I? What am I, exactly, without that? The fucking selfish prick who broke this family apart for an equity stake in a fascist corporation?

BEN

Can we just blame Penelope? That would be so much easier.

Adam Then enters from the house, crosses up to the terrace. He's dressed for autumn... just as he was on the day they bought the house.

SIMON

*(back on phone)*

Yes, Rodger. I'm still here.

Gavin and Penelope come out with their cases.

PENELOPE

All right. Good-bye, Ben. It's been a fantastic holiday, truly.

GAVIN

*(to Ben)*

See you back in Blighty?

Ben hugs Gavin. Penelope presents herself. Ben thinks about hugging her, but Simon's call grabs all their attention.

SIMON

I understand... No, Rodger truly, I do. I just want to... no, please, I just need to ask one question, no hard feelings, I promise. I just want to know if they have wild boar in Australia...? Yes, wild boar... do you happen to know...? More pigs than people, is that so...? Five hundred pounds, my goodness me... yes, they are good hunting. I hope you get to go. And when you do, Rodger, I hope your entire family, your wife, your child and whatever pets you may have are attacked and killed by a bloody herd of them. Eaten as well. Good bye, Rodger.

He hangs up, takes out his earbuds and THROWS THEM INTO THE BUSHES.

Adam comes out in his bathrobe, sleepy, relying heavily on his cane. He has bruises around his neck from the rope. He makes his way to the far end of the dining table, where he sits with his back to them.

PENELOPE

You know, it's sad, I suppose. But I could only believe in an ugly god. An ugly god might just understand me... forgive me. Save me.

BEN

You ever ask?

PENELOPE

For God's forgiveness? All the time.

BEN

Does it work?

PENELOPE

Usually.

*(Ben hugs her. She hugs back.)*

Then I forgive God.

Izzie appears in the doorway, sleepy, just up.

IZZIE

Is there any Diet Coke in this country?

*(re: the cooler:)*

What in the hell is this?

Ben silences her with a gesture. He pulls out a blue ice pack from the cooler, wraps it in a towel, gently presses it against Adam's bruised neck.

Simon crosses to the table, sits next to Adam, close enough that their bodies touch.

SIMON

Adam?  
Save *me*.  
Please?

LIGHTS FADE. END OF PLAY.