

F I S H T O W N
by Michael Quinn

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Thanksgiving Day in late November, 2019. A cold and quiet night. We're inside a large studio apartment in Fishtown, Philadelphia. Third story. Dark hardwood floors, off-white walls with an ornate trim, exposed brick. Maybe a large air vent cutting through the ceiling. The whole place is decorated tastefully with antique and secondhand furniture. There's a sofa and coffee table atop a large, well-kept Afghan rug. A full size bed with pretty sheets, dark side table piled with books. There's a kitchenette, well-stocked, near a kitchen table with accompanying chairs. There's a front door and a door to the bathroom. No television. A couch with a thick wool American flag throw blanket over it. There's a large stereo setup with crates of records. Two large windows adorn one of the walls; streetlights shine in.

BOBBY O'NEILL, twenty-nine, sits at the dinner table. A big and worn-down guy. There's something slow about him, like he has to push through every moment. He's wearing a dark grey hoody underneath a long, dark wool trench coat. Jeans or dark slacks, boots. He's hunched over, hood up, writing in a notebook. There's an ashtray overflowing with cigarettes. He's lost in thought. Then he finds a word. Writes —

A knock at the door. He turns, looks. Another knock. He takes his hood down and walks over to the door. Taps on it.

BOBBY. Yo?

LENA. *(Through the door.)* It's Lena!

BOBBY. Lena who?

LENA. Lena your *sister*.

He opens the door. In the hallway stands LENA O'NEILL, twenty-three. Bobby's sister. She's apparently younger than him, but possesses a grown edge, a maturity that was cut into shape and she now wears without the self-consciousness of youth. She is quietly confident, not overeager. She's wearing thick layers, a nylon jacket, a large scarf. She's got large plastic bags in her hands.

LENA. Hey.

BOBBY. Lena. What's up? What are you doing here?

LENA. I brought you leftovers.

BOBBY. Come in.

She shuffles inside. Leans in for a hug, which he gives her uncomfortably.

LENA. How are you?

BOBBY. How'd you get in?

LENA. What?

BOBBY. How'd you get in the building?

LENA. Oh. The door was propped open. *(Taking it in.)* Wow, this is your place. *(Gesturing, standing at the dinner table.)* Can I put these down here?

Bobby paces over, gathers up his stuff, moves it somewhere... to the stereo.

BOBBY. *(Pointing.)* Put them in the kitchen.

She puts the bags down.

LENA. Mom said you were sick.

BOBBY. I am sick.

LENA. You don't look it.

BOBBY. It's a head thing. I've got a headache and I'm like, congested. Look. *(He forces a snuffle.)*

LENA. Okay. *(Beat.)* Are you going somewhere?

BOBBY. What?

LENA. You're dressed to go out.

BOBBY. I'm just dressed.

LENA. You're wearing shoes inside.

BOBBY. Yeah. Damn. I prefer to wear shoes.

LENA. In your own place.

BOBBY. Yeah. It's *my* place.

LENA. And the trench coat?

BOBBY. *(Starts taking it off.)* Yeah. I'm sick
It's warm. No, no, it's fine. If my jacket is
gonna make you uncomfortable —

LENA. Well then keep it on.

LENA. Keep it on.

He flings it onto the couch.

BOBBY. *(Pacing.)* Great. Good. Good good good.

Pause.

LENA. Well it was a really nice meal.

BOBBY. Good. That's good.

LENA. Can I sit down?

BOBBY. Sure.

She walks over to the dinner table and sits down.

LENA. We missed you.

BOBBY. I'm sure you all were fine without me. How was the food?

LENA. Good. I got a whole turkey leg in the bag.

BOBBY. Thanks.

LENA. You wanna eat it now?

BOBBY. No. I'm not hungry.

LENA. Just let me fix you a plate.

BOBBY. It's alright.

LENA. Come on.

BOBBY. I said I'm not hungry.

LENA. Well if you're gonna be difficult.

Pause. She gives up.

LENA. This is a really nice place.

BOBBY. Thank you.

LENA. I was never here before. You never let me over.

He says nothing. She stands, starts looking through things. Wanders over to a bookshelf or stack of books. Looks through them.

LENA. You have a lot of books.

BOBBY. I know.

LENA. Where'd you get this side table? I love it.

BOBBY. It's a Victorian sewing table. It's an antique.

LENA. *Where* did you get that?

BOBBY. Craigslist. Forty bucks.

LENA. Isn't Craigslist just — oh.

BOBBY. No it's not just for sex.

BOBBY. I got that bookshelf too, free. Someone just giving it away. A lot of those books I picked up from there, but there's a whole bunch of magazines — don't touch 'em if your hands are dirty — a bunch of magazines and zines I got from that anarchist place on South Street. You know the one?

LENA. No?

BOBBY. The bookshop.

LENA. I don't know it.

BOBBY. Do you read?

LENA. Okay. Not a lot. I haven't picked up anything since graduation.

BOBBY. Okay well, it's called uh, um, Wooden Shoe Books. You should go sometime, broaden your mind a little bit.

LENA. Yeah, I know how to read, Bobby.

BOBBY. Don't touch them until you wash your hands.

LENA. Okay. *(Beat.)* I didn't realize you were so into interior design.

BOBBY. Décor.

LENA. What?

BOBBY. Interior design is architectural. I just do décor. And thank you. I am.

LENA. *Okay*. Well. This is some nice stuff.

BOBBY. Yeah it is. I picked out all of it, except that chair, which I begrudgingly accepted from Renata. We got it off the curb in West Philly, like Forty-Eighth Street, it was sitting next to all this other seventies kinda funky cigarette-infused stuff. She wanted to take all of it, but I was like, No way, this stuff is straight *garbage*, especially this one chair she wanted — this big upholstered reading chair with like, this yellow and green pattern, like a fucking mid-tier retirement home embodied in a chair, and then the chair has colon cancer. I mean you would've fuckin' puked it was so horrible. I was like, I will not tarnish my home with this fucking monstrosity. Really would've fucked up the fung shui.

LENA. Right. Is she here?

BOBBY. Who?

LENA. Renata?

BOBBY. No. What? Where would she be? In the closet?

LENA. Oh — I didn't realize.

BOBBY. It's a studio. You thought I just kept a *bed* in my living room.

LENA. I don't know. I wasn't thinking.

BOBBY. Yeah. Clearly.

LENA. Well where's she? Why didn't you go over to hers for Thanksgiving?

BOBBY. We broke up.

LENA. Oh. Sorry.

BOBBY. It's fine.

LENA. When?

BOBBY. Three months ago.

LENA. Damn.

BOBBY. It's fine. Love is a fraud. The only truth is the human body against itself.

LENA. Are you alright?

BOBBY. Yes. I'm fine.

LENA. Do you need anything?

BOBBY. No.

LENA. A hug?

BOBBY. The last thing in the fuckin' universe I want is a hug.

LENA. Okay.

Pause.

BOBBY. You want to know what the most expensive thing in here is?

LENA. What?

BOBBY. Guess.

LENA. Don't do this to me.

BOBBY. Just guess.

LENA. Are you going to eat any of that food? It's getting cold and it sucks reheated —

BOBBY. *Guess.*

LENA. I don't know! The clock. The coffee table. The chairs? Are they Victorian or Edwardian or something?

BOBBY. No.

LENA. Just tell me. A book? One of the books? A first edition?

BOBBY. Savvy, but no.

LENA. What is it?

She's standing on the rug.

BOBBY. Look down.

LENA. What? My womb? My *flower*?

BOBBY. *What?* The *rug*, you fuckin' weirdo.
Oh my *God*.

LENA. I don't *know* — oh, oh.

LENA. Well I didn't — you didn't make that obvious.

BOBBY. I am so. What the fuck. The rug. It's the rug.

LENA. It kind of blends in with the floor.

BOBBY. No it doesn't.

LENA. It's the earth tones.

BOBBY. That rug is a standout piece, it does not *blend in*, it *completes*.

LENA. Okay. Sure. Where'd you get it?

BOBBY. Ask how much it's worth.

LENA. How much is it worth?

BOBBY. Thirty grand.

LENA. What?

BOBBY. Yeah.

LENA. You spent thirty thousand dollars on a rug? Are you *dumb*?

BOBBY. I didn't *spend* thirty thousand on it, it is *worth* thirty thousand —

LENA. How do you know that?

BOBBY. Because I *read*. I do research. It's a legitimate, real Afghan rug. I had it inspected by a professional.

LENA. How much did you spend on it?

BOBBY. Four hundred.

LENA. Someone sold it to you for four hundred?

BOBBY. Yeah, this old vet in Port Richmond had it. I had some suspicions about it, but when I saw it in person, I was like *goddamn*, this really is it. He picked it up in Pakistan, paid like one-fifty four it. I talked him down from six hundred. I throw it in the truck and speed back here, I'm like, holy fuck. Called up this kinda hardware-tradesy guy I know, real good taste, smart guy, he comes over, he's like, This is the real deal. He pointed out all the threading and design and shit, like a real-deal handmade Afghan. Thirty thousand.

Pause.

LENA. Why don't you *sell it*?

BOBBY. It's a real piece. I'm holding onto it. It *appreciates*.

LENA. Thirty *thousand*?

BOBBY. Yeah.

LENA. Why is a rug even worth that much?

BOBBY. Because everything nowadays is made of shit material and manufactured by wage slaves in the Global South and falls apart in ten years so we have to buy more shit product.

LENA. Well.

BOBBY. I do have some pretty valuable first editions on the shelf, by the way. That was a good guess.

LENA. Thanks. I have my moments. (*Pause.*) I haven't seen you in how long?

BOBBY. You saw me last Thanksgiving.

LENA. You were there for ten minutes.

BOBBY. You saw me.

LENA. Yeah. Right.

Silence.

BOBBY. Alright. Well.

LENA. What?

BOBBY. What?

LENA. You're trying to kick me out?

BOBBY. I'm not — no, that's not what I'm saying at *all*. Jesus Christ it was just a *lull* in the conversation. No, I'm not trying to kick you out, Lena. You can *stay*, it's fine.

LENA. I'm your own fuckin' sister and I bring you food on fuckin' Thanksgiving Day and you try to kick me out?

LENA. Good, because I'm not fuckin' leaving.

BOBBY. Shut up. Jesus.

Silence.

LENA. Well you have a really nice place, Bobby. I'm very impressed.

BOBBY. What, did you think I'd be living in some shithole in Fishtown?

LENA. No. Yes.

BOBBY. I have standards.

LENA. I just didn't expect it to be so...

BOBBY. So what?

LENA. So... tasteful.

BOBBY. Hell yeah.

LENA. Except for the clock.

BOBBY. This clock?

LENA. Yeah. It's too... digital.

BOBBY. It's the Wirecutter-recommended clock.

LENA. What?

BOBBY. Nevermind.

LENA. Just doesn't fit.

BOBBY. Okay. I'd get something vintage but I need to wake up.

LENA. Just use your phone?

BOBBY. I put my phone at least ten feet away from me two hours before bed.

LENA. What? Why?

BOBBY. (*With grave sincerity.*) Because if I don't, I'll die.

She can't tell if he's kidding. He is.

LENA. Oh. Oh my God.

BOBBY. It's better for you. The light fucks up your head.

LENA. Right. I stay up until two A.M. every night on my phone but I've just accepted it at this point.

BOBBY. How do you get up?

LENA. I just sleep five hours.

BOBBY. You need more than five hours.

LENA. I'm fine with it.

BOBBY. Yeah but you're definitely not. That is not good for you.

LENA. Okay, well, I like my phone.

BOBBY. You're *conditioned* to like the *dopamine*.

LENA. No, I think everyone very directly *likes* dopamine, I don't think you're conditioned to like it.

BOBBY. Well. Yeah.

LENA. Not everything's like, conspiratorial.

BOBBY. Okay but a lot of things are. Shouldn't you know how the world works? Don't you work in finance?

LENA. I understand how the world works, yes.

BOBBY. But I mean from like a top-down evil-empire kinda way.

LENA. It's a stock portfolio company.

BOBBY. Yeah, that shit is unconscionable.

LENA. I make spreadsheets.

BOBBY. Okay, but I'm saying the whole idea is —

LENA. The whole idea is what?

BOBBY. Fucked up.

LENA. Great observation. Wish we all had the raw drive and ambition to wait tables.

BOBBY. Hey fuck you.

LENA. Don't make fun of what I do.

BOBBY. I do something that doesn't hurt anyone.

LENA. I make *spreadsheets*, Bobby. I don't *do* anything.

BOBBY. It's the company —

LENA. You don't even know what they do! You just read whatever bullshit-bookshop-lit —

BOBBY. It's an *investment* company, Lena.
You think they don't invest in *oil*?

LENA. Sure but so does *every* fund, we'd be completely noncompetitive if we gave up on the biggest fucking industry on the planet.

BOBBY. God forbid the profits suffer.

LENA. Oh, fuck off, Bobby. I have loans to pay off. You don't. What do you want me to do?

BOBBY. Come break concrete with me on the weekend sometime. See how the other half live.

LENA. Oh my God, you are *not* the other half. Do not give me that. That's such a joke. We had the exact same opportunities from the exact same place, only I went to school and read books and you hung around with fucking losers and bailed on the family. That's the difference between us.

BOBBY. Well I'm glad you could state it so plainly. Thanks, *sis*. And there are more differences than that, FYI.

LENA. I'm sure there are.

Silence.

LENA. And I'm not saying this because you upset me or got to me, but once I pay off my loans, I have dreams that I want to accomplish and I will, and I'll go move somewhere else too, and I won't end up in a den of anger in Fishtown, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Silence.

BOBBY. Where are you gonna go?

LENA. California.

BOBBY. Where?

LENA. Santa Monica. Somewhere. On the beach.

BOBBY. And drive a car?

LENA. If I have to, yes.

BOBBY. Too much sun.

LENA. Shut up.

Silence. Lena takes out her phone. Texts.

BOBBY. What?

LENA. What?

BOBBY. You look upset about something in your phone.

LENA. I'm fine.

BOBBY. I know what girls look like when they are upset.

LENA. Even if I *were* upset, you're probably the last person equipped to help me through anything I would hypothetically be going through.

BOBBY. Thanks. What are you upset about?

LENA. Stop.

BOBBY. Well you're not gonna leave so you might as well tell me.

LENA. I'm just in a fight.

BOBBY. With mom?

LENA. No.

BOBBY. With who?

LENA. With my girlfriend.

BOBBY. Oh. (*Silence.*) I didn't know you were —

LENA. Yeah.

BOBBY. When did you —

LENA. At Temple.

BOBBY. Are you both —

LENA. Look there is no question you could ask me that would be *good* so probably keep it to yourself.

Silence.

BOBBY. What's her name?

LENA. Erin.

Silence.

BOBBY. What's the fight about?

LENA. I don't even want to say. (*Beat.*) She thinks I shouldn't work for an investment fund.

BOBBY. (*Beat.*) Okay well she's right!

LENA. Shut up!

BOBBY. You have a woke, anticolonial girlfriend. Holy shit, that is incredible.

LENA. Stop. She just sent me a text with a period, I'm gonna fucking kill myself.

BOBBY. The money's not worth it.

LENA. Oh my God, that's what everyone says but it actually *is* worth it, when you run *any* of the numbers. Okay? I am good at math. If there's one thing I am, it is good at fucking *math*. And if I actually want to get my loans paid off and move out and start living my *actual* life, I need to do this now. Blood sacrifice. My youth for my soul.

BOBBY. Okay, yeah. I see the vision.

LENA. And then I'm gonna be in California, on the coast, with a home — a tiny, good home. *(Pause.)* It's really fucked up that you bailed on me today.

BOBBY. I can't. I couldn't.

LENA. Why?

BOBBY. Don't ask me that —

LENA. Just give me a reason.

BOBBY. I don't want to see them and feel everyone walking on eggshells around me and I don't want to feel like a freak or a fuckup and I don't want anyone to say they're thankful for me at dinner and I don't want to go back there and have all these memories come back. And more than the memories, I don't want — there's so much anger. Don't you feel that? When you're there? Don't you feel like this fuckin' — *weight?*

LENA. It's just a house, Bobby.

Silence.

LENA. I know you feel different than me, and I can kind of get why. But, you know, they don't know I'm in a relationship. There are things I don't talk about. There are problems I have with them. But it's just a place I *am* right now. And it's so far from where I'm going to be that it's not even worth — not even worth *thinking* about.

BOBBY. I'm just not like that. Inside my head it's like there's this tunnel, so deep, so dark. This long tunnel into the past. *(Pause.)* You think I want to sit alone on Thanksgiving? I don't. I feel like a fucking loser.

LENA. *(Quietly.)* Well you're not alone.

BOBBY. What?

LENA. You're not alone. I came over.

Bobby drops his head into his hands.

BOBBY. Yeah. *(Pause.)* Why don't you go over to Erin's.

LENA. Because I want to stay here.

BOBBY. Well I don't want you here.

LENA. Why?

BOBBY. Because you're bringing too much shit up. I need a cigarette. *(He walks to the table, grabs the pack, takes out a cigarette. Stops. Turns.)* You want to hear some music?

LENA. Sure.

Bobby crosses to the stereo. Takes out a disc or a record. Puts it on. "Future of the City" by Group 87.

LENA. Can I have a cig?

BOBBY. What? No.

LENA. Come on.

BOBBY. No.

She goes over to the pack.

BOBBY. Stop it —

LENA. I'm an *adult* —

BOBBY. I don't *care* —

They wrestle over the pack for a moment. He gets it, but it's all crushed. He walks over to the window. Stands in front of it. Goes to light the cigarette — but doesn't.

BOBBY. Fuck it.

LENA. What?

BOBBY. Just don't feel like it. You wrecked this pack. (*Tuning into the music.*) You hear this? (*He goes over to the stereo and turns it up.*) So fuckin' good. A guy in the record shop on South Street like, bullied me into buying this. He was like, "Ah, bro, you haven't heard Group 87? Come on, bro, you gotta hear Group 87. They're *influential*." I was like, I can't compete with someone who offers the lightest amount of expertise about older music. I crumble immediately. Then I'd listen to this with Renata and... fuck it. (*Beat.*) This track's called "Future of the City." What a fuckin' idea. I wish. They didn't know what it'd really be like. Like this... shit.

Lena stares at him. Long silence except for the music.

LENA. Are you alright?

BOBBY. What?

LENA. I mean like, you didn't tell any of us you broke up with your girlfriend, it reeks of cigs, you don't want to eat anything, you yelled at me —

BOBBY. I didn't *yell* —

LENA. Or whatever.

BOBBY. I'm fine.

LENA. I'm seriously asking. I'm really asking.

BOBBY. I am fine.

LENA. Are you sure?

BOBBY. What are you asking?

LENA. What?

BOBBY. Just fuckin' ask what you know you're asking.

LENA. I don't know what that means —

BOBBY. Oh fuck off —

LENA. Not everything's so complicated, Bobby.

BOBBY. You know what you're asking! So just ask it!

LENA. What am I asking?!

The music comes to a crescendo somewhere around here.

BOBBY. You're asking me if I'm fucking sober! There! Is that so hard? Was that so difficult for you? Did you really have to cook up this whole fuckin' *concept* about you, out of the goodness of your little heart, bringing me a small bounty on Thanksgiving Day? I can see your eyes darting all over the place. Alright? I know you're waiting for me to go to the bathroom so you can fuckin' look through all my shit. And I know Mom made you fuckin' come over and check on me, you don't have to be a fuckin' liar about it. I thought you were better than that. I guess not. I just don't want to spend my holiday with a bunch of people who treat me like fuckin' shit, like a fuckin' junkie. Does that make sense? Does that *compute* to you?

LENA. (*Getting up.*) I'm searching the place.

BOBBY. If I had anything, you wouldn't be able to find it.

LENA. Fuck you.

BOBBY. Say that again.

LENA. Fuck you.

BOBBY. A little louder.

LENA. (*Shoving him.*) Fuck you.

BOBBY. Good. Well. That's my fill of the family for the holiday. I'm not dead in the bathroom, as you can see, so maybe you can just fuck off now.

LENA. I'm look around.

BOBBY. Go ahead.

She starts searching every part of the apartment. Under cushions, in drawers, on the shelf. She tears the bed apart. Bobby paces back and forth, watching her. He walks over to the wall, leans. She's tearing up the place.

BOBBY. There's nothing here.

LENA. Shut up.

She keeps looking. Goes over to his crate of records. Starts flipping between them. Then, takes each one out and removes the record, peeks inside...

BOBBY. Hey, come on! You're getting your fingers all over the records.

LENA. I'm *looking*.

BOBBY. You're gonna look through my record collection for the next ten hours?

LENA. If that's what it takes.

BOBBY. Look at me! Do I look like I'm fucked up?

She stops. Looks at him.

LENA. You're really angry, Bobby. So yeah. Maybe. I don't know.

BOBBY. Yeah! That's true! You don't know. You have no idea. I'm getting really angry? What the fuck do you know? Huh? You haven't been here in *months*. You haven't seen me in months.

LENA. Because you never *want* me here.

BOBBY. You're right. I don't want you here. So why'd you come today?

LENA. (*Choking up towards the end.*) Because it's Thanksgiving and you're my brother.

She covers her face. Silence. Bobby sits down, drops his head into his hands. Lena recovers, keeps looking around the stereo setup. She finds something — a shoebox. She opens it.

LENA. What is this?

BOBBY. What?

He sees the box in her hands.

BOBBY. Oh.

LENA. What is this?

BOBBY. It's, um. I had this journal, like a copybook, from... years ago. From when I went to the rehab in Chester. What was that, 2014? And over the summer, after Renata left, I was re-reading it, and it just all seemed so... stupid. Everything I wrote was dumb. And wrong. And just not... it wasn't the person I am now. So I put the thing in a trash can and set it on fire, and then I was like,

wait, maybe I shouldn't, so I had all these ashes, and I was not sure what to do, and... I don't know. I put them in that box. Very fucking odd. I'm really just a weirdo. But I am sober.

Pause.

LENA. You cremated your journal?

BOBBY. Yeah.

LENA. Catholic school really fucked you up.

Pause.

LENA. Mom didn't send me over to check on you. I didn't even tell them I was coming. I just wanted to see you. I'm sorry.

BOBBY. I believe you.

Silence. Bobby's sitting, wide-legged, looking down. Lena gets up, box in hand. She walks over to him. Dips her thumb in the box of ashes.

LENA. Hey.

He looks up at her. She makes a small cross on his forehead.

LENA. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust. Right?

He stares at her for a long moment. Then grabs her torso and holds against her, leaning his head on her.

Then, he moves to sit up — and knocks the box out of her hand. It spills all over a throw blanket on the couch.

LENA. Oh *fuck*.

BOBBY. Oh my God —

LENA. Sorry!

BOBBY. What was that?!

LENA. I'm sorry!

BOBBY. What was your grip game there?!

He's scurrying up to grab the throw —

BOBBY. This throw is vintage Woolrich — do you know how hard it is to find anything handcrafted in America anymore?!

LENA. Oh my *God* —

BOBBY. Motherfucker.

He runs over to the window, opens it, holds the throw out and begins to shake it. Shakes it out for a long while. Pulls it back inside. Stands for a moment, breathing, windows open, wind blowing against him. Silence.

BOBBY. I'm fuckin' hungry.

LENA. Finally! (*Beat.*) I'm sorry.

BOBBY. It's fine. Dumb to hold on anyway.

Bobby crosses to the kitchen. Takes out some of the food, goes to the cabinet, takes out beautiful dish, loads food into it.

BOBBY. You want any?

LENA. I'm okay. Microwave that.

BOBBY. It's still warm.

He eats. Silence. She sees his jacket, discarded on the couch. Puts it on. It's large on her. She bundles up.

LENA. How long have you been sober?

Bobby looks at her.

BOBBY. Two years, three months now. I don't know to the day, shitty at math. August eleventh, 2017.

LENA. Two years, three months and seventeen days.

BOBBY. Yeah.

Silence.

LENA. Do you feel better?

Silence.

BOBBY. No. But that's, you know, it's fine. I don't expect to. *(Pause.)* Lost a lot of time, Lena. A lot of time. And life never seems short to me. It just keeps going, I don't even know how. How long ago was I shooting up in the back of a sedan in fuckin' Dewey Beach, windows down, sweating through my jeans? A lifetime ago.

LENA. Where's Dewey Beach?

BOBBY. Delaware.

LENA. Oh.

Silence. He keeps eating.

BOBBY. I figure I just seem like an alien to you. That's alright.

LENA. Why's that alright?

BOBBY. 'Cause that's better than a fuckup.

Silence. Lena starts crying.

BOBBY. Are you *crying*?

LENA. No —

BOBBY. I didn't — was that *mean*?

LENA. No. It's just really sad, Bobby.

BOBBY. Yeah it's fuckin' sad but it's really not that bad. I mean it. I'm serious. It's not that bad. Look I'm alive. I'm here. Eating fuckin' mashed potatoes from some vintage china.

LENA. *(Wiping the tears.)* Okay, yeah.

BOBBY. *(He comes to her.)* It's alright.

LENA. *(Still upset.)* Why don't you like Mom and Dad? I know they're Republicans but they're really not that bad. And they're nice to me most of the time. And they're together and they work and it could be so much worse.

BOBBY. *(Pause.)* I said too many things to them that I can't take back.

LENA. They'd forgive you.

BOBBY. I don't know.

LENA. What did you *say*?

BOBBY. Shit you don't have to know about.

LENA. I'm not a kid —

BOBBY. But it's stuff that I'm not going to put onto you, Lena. But they're people. They really are people. Why do you think there's a six year gap between us? That's a pretty irregular plan. Because there wasn't... they didn't have a plan for me. They did with you. But I saw... some rough edges. And I won't say anything more but I saw a lot of drinking. I remember. It wasn't... wasn't pretty. And I was thirteen and sneaking booze before they knew what to do, and I just got set off on this whole... fucked-up direction. And I can't go back. I won't go back. I'm sorry but —

LENA. You're not sorry.

BOBBY. You're right, I'm not sorry.

LENA. Alright. Yeah.

BOBBY. Some people don't go home.

LENA. That's where I am.

BOBBY. Well now you're here.

LENA. Until I leave.

BOBBY. You can stay as long as you want. It's a futon.

LENA. I don't even know what I wanted from you. (*Pause.*) You're right.

BOBBY. What?

LENA. (*Looks at him.*) Alien.

BOBBY. Come on.

LENA. I don't know what I expected. I feel stupid and I — I told myself I wouldn't feel stupid again. (*She stands up, goes to her bag.*) I don't know what I'm doing here. Sorry.

BOBBY. Come on. Just have something to eat.

LENA. No, I don't — Bobby, this is all so — I'll make an effort, and I believe what you told me, but I should have taken you seriously when you said you didn't want to be a part of this family.

BOBBY. I never said that.

LENA. You basically said that. And I can't trust someone who doesn't — I've been talking with Erin all day about how to make sense of family at the holidays now that we're both living at home, and it was making me feel all *weird*, and I should've just shut myself up and gotten through.

BOBBY. What'd you tell her about me?

LENA. She doesn't even know I have a brother.

Silence.

BOBBY. Yeah. Alright.

Silence.

LENA. I mean really Bobby, what is this?

BOBBY. What?

LENA. What is all this? Is this your life? You wait tables and break concrete and buy antiques? Is that it? Does anyone else even come here or are you — are you alone?

BOBBY. Shut up.

LENA. No I mean it. What *is* this? This fuckin' *sanctum*? What are you gonna *do*? Because you sound so — so totally afraid of interacting with anyone who's not — safe — and guess what. Nothing is safe and everyone is getting hurt all the time and everyone is hurting all the time and some people still show up to family dinner.

BOBBY. I know that.

LENA. So what are you *doing*?!

BOBBY. I'm —

LENA. I mean, two years sober, I didn't know, I thought, I was telling myself, I thought the reason you never called me or texted me or talked to me was because you were still using and you didn't

want me to know. *(She's tearing up.)* That's what I thought. But no. It's just that I'm a liability or a bad memory or something. I'm not. I'm not a memory, Bobby. I'm not a ghost. I'm your fucking sister. And here I am. And you're being nice, but I don't think — I don't *believe* that you want me here. You fuckin' crumb.

BOBBY. You don't know anything about me.

LENA. You're right about that.

BOBBY. You don't know... you're so young. LENA. I'm not a kid.

BOBBY. You don't know what you are.

LENA. That doesn't even mean anything, Bobby! That's a completely meaningless statement!

BOBBY. I know what I am! I know what I do! Sorry if that's not good enough for you that I have a job and I pay my bills and I like fucking antiquing! But that's better than what my life used to be. So much better. And you — you know, you got this degree and this job and this résumé and this girlfriend and these parents and I — I fucked all that up. All I got is memories.

LENA. Stop saying that.

BOBBY. That's what I feel.

LENA. You think I don't have memories too? You think I don't remember you stealing my fuckin' necklace from my room and pawning it? You think I don't remember that, Bobby?

BOBBY. When did that happen?

LENA. When I was fourteen. And Dad had to drive me to every pawn shop from here to fucking Reading and we never found it, and he was angry, and I was crying, and it was horrible. But that was years ago. I got over it. I'm not even asking for an apology, because who knows anymore. It was so long ago. That's what you are in my memories, but I know I can't trust them. So I don't.

Pause.

BOBBY. I'm sorry.

LENA. Say it like you mean it.

Bobby stares at her. Stands. Takes out his wallet. Takes out a couple bills and throws them on the floor.

BOBBY. You miss your necklace? Go buy one.

He tosses the money on the floor. She stares at him. Walks over to the vinyl collection. Takes out a record and snaps it over her knee —

BOBBY. *(Rushing to her.)* Hey!

She grabs a crate of stuff and knocks it across the floor — a neat stack of papers goes flying everywhere, all over the floor.

LENA. Fuck you!

BOBBY. Fuckin' *stop* —

LENA. I'll break every fucking antique bookshelf! I don't give a fuck!

He grabs her from behind. They wrestle for a moment and she bucks her head back into his face — he stumbles back, gripping his nose, maybe bloody.

BOBBY. Oh my *God!*

LENA. Oh shit.

BOBBY. *Fuck.*

LENA. Oh my God, I'm sorry, Bobby.

BOBBY. *Motherfucker.*

LENA. I'm sorry!

Bobby groans. Finds a seat.

BOBBY. I'm alright. *(Pause.)* What record did you break?

LENA. Um. *(She carefully retrieves two pieces.)* The Mamas and the Papas.

BOBBY. Alright.

LENA. Sorry. I can buy you a new one.

BOBBY. I don't want your blood money. *(Beat.)* Kidding. *(Pause.)* I'm sorry about the necklace. Really, Lena. That's classic addict shit and I thought I remembered everything but... I didn't. I wish I could — there's nothing I can do to make it up to you.

LENA. I'm not asking you to make it up to me. I only wanted to know you're sorry.

BOBBY. I am.

LENA. I know.

Silence. Bobby's holding his nose. Lena goes to the kitchen, gets a bundle of paper towels, brings them over to him.

BOBBY. Thanks.

Silence.

BOBBY. When you drive home tonight, I don't want you to think I'm a crumb.

LENA. I didn't mean it.

BOBBY. I'm trying, Lena. I know it doesn't look like much, but I'm trying. *(Pause.)* I was bad. I had a problem. I was... so fuckin' crazy when I was using.

LENA. Why don't you talk to someone.

BOBBY. I'm talking to you.

LENA. I mean a professional.

BOBBY. I — I know I should. You know, I got a sponsor —

LENA. I didn't know that —

BOBBY. I got everything. I don't think... nothing in my life is explosive anymore, or crazy, or wild. It's just a lot of stasis. *Malaise.* But I'm okay with that now. I wasn't before. I am now. I'll tell you what's different now: I'm scared.

LENA. Of what?

BOBBY. Everything. Everything toppling over. Falling apart. You stop doing drugs it's like, your brain comes back online and you're like what the fuck. I was so anxious all the time that first year. Now I think about how close I came to dying — or not even that but like, nodding with a cigarette and burning down a building. That was always what I was like, wary of. Fucking statistically unlikely.

LENA. Why would you burn down a building?

BOBBY. Because like — you fall asleep and drop the cigarette.

LENA. Oh. Oh.

BOBBY. Why do you think there's cig burns in all my clothing at home? *(Beat.)* If I really thought about the people I had to apologize to, the people I wanted apologies from... I would never get over anything. Not just you and Dad and Mom, like this whole separate life I lived that you can't even — I'm not saying this to be condescending, Lena — but you can't even imagine it. It's all in my head now. When I was in Kensington, this guy Lennie, he'd crash at our place all the time. We stole copper wiring together. Other shit like that. Whatever bullshit for drug money. Then we'd hang around that fuckin' apartment, get high... One day he left, I never heard from him. He didn't have a cell phone. I thought that was crazy. I didn't know how he lived like that. Anyway, year later I'm at the Recovery Center of America in Delaware and he shows up. Checked into rehab two days after me. And we're back at it, just chilling, whatever, talking, doing groups, watching movies. One night, he shows up at my room and asks me for a cigarette. I'm like, you know, I don't have many, sorry, bro, gotta conserve. He says it's alright. I didn't know it but he left that night. Checked out and was heading for New Mexico to live with his cousin on some ranch. There are wild dogs out there, did you know that, in New Mexico? Wild dogs... Anyway he was driving across the country and he died. Got into an accident in Oklahoma. I wonder if he was high or if was alright, driving. And I know it's ridiculous, but then I wonder — if I had given him that cigarette, do you think he would've been fine? Maybe he would've slowed down to light it and he would've missed the other car, or the other car would've missed him and he wouldn't have crashed. I don't know. I've been thinking about him a lot. Watching movies. Thinking about this girl who OD'd in the house and her whacked-out boyfriend — she had this tattoo of his name — he tried to cut off her tattoo with a hunting knife and keep the skin. Fucking crazy. If you saw all the shit I saw, knew all these people I knew, saw them all die... it's like a curse. It's a curse out there. On the streets, in the air, in the asphalt. And just nobody gives a shit. You know what's between me and Frankford Ave.? *(He stares at her. A genuine question, but she doesn't answer.)* Do you know?

LENA. No.

BOBBY. Nothing. Nothing but me. And if I go back now I'll die. I know that, but... whatever. *(Pause.)* You fuckin' broke my nose.

LENA. I'm really sorry.

BOBBY. Not broke. Maybe fractured.

LENA. A fracture is a break.

He lifts his hand from his nose and flexes his lip.

LENA. Do you want to come back with me tonight?

Long pause.

BOBBY. I've got a while to go.

LENA. Do you want me to stay here? On the futon?

Silence. Then, he nods. She walks over, sits down next to him.

She spots a paper on the coffee table. Picks it up.

LENA. What's this?

BOBBY. Don't —

They fuss over it for a second.

LENA. Don't make me fuck you up again.

He laughs. Acquiesces. She looks at the page closely.

LENA. What is this?

BOBBY. What's it look like?

LENA. A poem?

BOBBY. That's what it is.

LENA. You write poems?

BOBBY. I wrote that one. Don't read it.

LENA. Why, is it bad?

BOBBY. No, it's fucking good.

LENA. Okay.

BOBBY. It's coming out in a... it doesn't matter.

LENA. Can I read it?

BOBBY. Yeah.

LENA. *(Reading.)*

“We were all breathing smoke in the morning ,
geese flying over smokestacks stabbed into
the blue corn sky field I fell out , that whole
grain silo I could put in my arm , guys carrying
dirt from Newark and Trenton , Philly and Erie ,
Amish Country and the Godlands , Home of the
Burnt Nostrils and Collapsed Veins , my skeleton
so hard it could walk out of my skin , doorframe so
thin you couldn’t lean there forever , that girl couldn’t
fix me but I fuckin miss her , home in another state
of mind , of matter , if I laid down in my childhood
bed I’d burn right through it , we were all breathing
smoke in the morning , spitting butane into the cup
of sorrow the world poured in our chest .”

A long silence.

LENA. You wrote this?

BOBBY. Yeah.

Silence. She stares at it. He looks at her. Puts his head on her shoulder.

Fade to black. The sound of geese.

END OF PLAY.