

FALL FOREVER
A drama in two acts
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FALL FOREVER

Characters:

Leah Cosgrove: in her forties. She's a librarian who loves books and knitting, very organized, tends to wear neutral colors and practical clothes.

Lorenzo Rossi: forties or older. Alan's gallery owner. Very good at his job. Has handled Alan's work since Alan started professionally.

Darrin Cosgrove: close to Leah's age, maybe a couple of years older. Sick and tired of everyone's grief, especially Alan's.

Alan Keller: forties, well-known painter. Devastated by his wife's death, he paints the same image of her dancing in the leaves over and over again, trying to capture that perfect moment the afternoon before she died.

Lily Keller: a couple of years younger than Leah. Alan's deceased wife. Loved plants, dancing, sketching, children, and laughter. Loved bright colors.

Selena: anywhere from early thirties and up. Professional psychic.

Basil: around Leah's age, maybe a little older. British. Leah's first love when she studied in London, he's now running the family estate in Cornwall.

The Time: contemporary, pre-pandemic.

The Place: Alan's New England home, his painting studio, the garden

Act I

Scene 1: The porch

Scene 2: The porch, a different day

Scene 3: The porch, a different day

Scene 4: The porch, a different day

Scene 5: The porch, a different day

Scene 6: Inside Alan's studio

Scene 7: The porch

Scene 8: The porch, a different day

Scene 9: The porch, the next day

Scene 10: The porch, a different day

Scene 11: The porch, a different day, early evening

Act II

- Scene 1:** The porch, a beat after the previous scene
- Scene 2:** The porch, later that night
- Scene 3:** Alan's studio, night
- Scene 4:** The porch, a different day
- Scene 5:** The porch, later that day
- Scene 6:** The porch, the evening of the Summer Solstice
- Scene 7:** Alan's studio
- Scene 8:** The garden
- Scene 9:** Alan's studio
- Scene 10:** The garden, at sunrise

FALL FOREVER**ACT ONE****Scene 1**

Lights up on the yard of a New England house. The front porch is angled, a lovely, covered front porch with a railing and gingerbread frou-frou. A hook on one of the porch posts has a dead hanging plant.

The porch has a couple of rockers, a loveseat, small tables, etc., indicating that it's often used.

There's a vase of dead flowers on one of the small tables, and the mail is piled in front of the closed screen door that's in front of the closed front door.

A walkway leads to a studio at the upstage area of the stage. The door and a window are visible, but it's too far away to see inside, other than the occasional light.

SOUND of a car pulling up offstage, doors open and close.

A moment later, LEAH COSGROVE enters, carrying reusable grocery bags filled with groceries and produce. She also carries a hanging plant.

She puts everything down in front of the door, sees the mail, looks at the studio, and back at the door.

The first thing she does is take down the dead hanging plant and put up the live one. She sets the dead plant pot on the top step.

She opens the screen, unlocks the front door, places the groceries inside, then comes out to pick up the vase of dead flowers, gather the mail, and go in. She shuts the screen door, but leaves the other door open.

The sound of A SECOND CAR, this one with a much smoother, more expensive engine pulls up on the driveway. A moment later, LORENZO ROSSI enters, wearing expensive business casual.

He looks around, sees the front door open through the screen door.

LORENZO

Alan?

No answer. He looks toward the studio.

LORENZO

(louder)
Alan?

Still no answer. He knocks on the frame of the screen door.

LORENZO

Leah?

LEAH

(calls from offstage)
In the kitchen! Be right out.

Lorenzo takes a minute to walk around, looking at everything. He starts toward the studio, has second thoughts, and turns back.

Leah comes out, holding a broom.

LEAH

I was putting away groceries.
(she starts sweeping the porch)

LORENZO

He could use Insta-cart.

LEAH

(gives him a look)
We both know that's not going to happen.

They both look at the studio.

LORENZO

I assume he's in there?

LEAH

I think he's sleeping in there again. The mail was stacked up.

LORENZO

Is he eating?

LEAH

Some of the casserole dishes are empty; others are untouched. At least he puts his dishes in the dishwasher, even if he doesn't remember to turn it on.

(looks around)

I'm going to have to get someone to mow the lawn soon.

LORENZO

I'm worried.

LEAH

You think I'm not?

LORENZO

Professionally.

(at her look)

Yeah, I'm worried personally, too, of course I am. But, on a professional level, he's in trouble. *We're* in trouble. People want more from him than the same painting over and over again.

LEAH

He's working through his grief.

LORENZO

Lily's been gone for six months.

LEAH

Died. She *died*, Lorenzo.

LORENZO

Yeah, I know. I—

LEAH

Euphemisms don't make it easier. She didn't leave by choice. She was killed by a drunk driver. You can't expect us to have a date when we don't still love her. Miss her. Mourn her.

LORENZO

We're not in grief competition.

(Leah glares at him)

Painting their last perfect day together before she got into the car and had her accident, over and over again, for *six* months, is not a healthy response.

LEAH

You mean it's not a lucrative response.

LORENZO

It's not variations on a theme. It's the exact same painting. Over and over and over again. I'm calling them the "fall foliage forays" because it's Lily dancing among the autumn leaves in the yard. I can't number them and sell them as limited editions, because there doesn't seem to be a limit on how often he'll paint it.

LEAH

He needs to get it out of his system.

LORENZO

He needs to earn a living.

LEAH

He needs time.

LORENZO

Is there anything around that I can show in the interim? Older work, work Alan's never put up for sale? To tide us over?

LEAH

(looks at the studio)

It's not like I can ask him.

(sighs)

I'll look around. Maybe there's something in the attic, in the basement, somewhere in the house. . .

LORENZO

There's the painting in the sunroom.

LEAH

No.

LORENZO

It's beautiful. It's the French countryside in summer, with Lily laughing among the lavender. It would sell in a heartbeat, and remind everyone of Alan's talent.

LEAH

He painted it as his gift to Lily on their wedding. She loved it. Alan wouldn't give it up.

LORENZO

It might be healthier for him to let it go.

LEAH

No.

LORENZO

If he doesn't come up with something new soon, even a sketch, that's *not* about Lily's last day, I'm going to have to drop him.

LEAH

Lorenzo, please. Let him heal. At his own pace.

SOUND of another car pulling up. Car door slams. Angry footsteps herald DARRIN COSGROVE'S arrival.

DARRIN

You're here instead of home.

LEAH

I texted you and told you I was stopping by on my way home.

LORENZO

Hello, Darrin.

DARRIN

Lorenzo. When are you going to shake Alan out of this stupid stupor?

LORENZO

We're working on it.

DARRIN

Alan's doing nothing more than indulging himself.

LEAH

You're being unfair.

DARRIN

He's play-acting his grief instead of moving on with his life. And all of you let him. Enable him.

LEAH

He's in therapy.

DARRIN

It's not working.

LEAH

Stop it.

DARRIN

Lorenzo. Drop Alan.

Leah and Lorenzo exchange a glance.

DARRIN

If Alan had the safety net of the two of you removed, he'd get his life together.

LORENZO

I need to go. You'll think about what we discussed, Leah?

LEAH

I'll let you know.

Lorenzo exits.

DARRIN

I'm your husband. Not Alan.

LEAH

Is this because I asked you to pick up your own dry cleaning? What is it, once in our entire marriage?

DARRIN

I'm worried about you. You're carrying your own grief around Lily's death, and Alan's using his grief so he doesn't have to shoulder any of the practicalities of day-to-day life. Lily handled all of those, and Alan can't be bothered. Let him hire an assistant, instead of you spending every waking moment here.

LEAH

It's not every waking moment. I go to work. I go to the gym.

DARRIN

How long has it been since you went to yoga? Or your pottery class?

LEAH

I associate those things with Lily. It's hard to do them without her.

DARRIN

Then join a walking club or sing with a local chorale. But don't just shut yourself up. . .here.

LEAH

I'm still cleaning out her things. I can only face doing it a little bit at a time.

DARRIN

Let Alan deal with it. Oh, wait. He won't.

LEAH

I tried bringing some of the paperwork home, but. . .I need to read them here.

(gestures)

Where we spent so much time laughing and talking together. Please, Darrin, don't hassle me. I can't take it anymore. I need some more time. A few weeks, maybe? It'll give me the chance to go through Lily's papers and make some decisions. By then, maybe Alan will—

DARRIN

He'll never do anything for himself as long as you let him lean on you.

LEAH

We're his support system. His family. That doesn't have an expiration date.

DARRIN

He's taking advantage.

LEAH

Please, Darrin. Stop doing this to me.

Beat.

I'm sorry.

DARRIN

Thank you.

LEAH

Come home?
 (Leah nods)
 I'll follow you.

DARRIN

I'll get my purse.

LEAH

She goes into the house. Darrin watches her. She comes back with her purse, closes (but does not lock) the front door. She exits. He glares at the studio, then follow her out as

The lights fade.

Scene 2

Lights come up on a fresh day. There's a vase of blooming lilacs on the porch table.

Leah sits in one of the rocking chairs. There's a crate of notebooks, magazines, and papers in front of her. In easy reach, she has a tote bag (which already has some notebooks in it), a small trash can with torn, discarded papers. There's a stack of magazines on the floor nearby, and a small box on the table which holds some bills, a checkbook, stamps, etc.

There's a half-filled glass of lemonade on the table beside Leah.

She sorts: notebooks, magazines, papers to toss. She opens an envelope, reads through a bill, writes the check. She clips the check to the bill and puts it in the small box. She continues her work.

The door to the studio opens and ALAN KELLER emerges. His hair is tousled, with a little bit of paint in it. He hasn't shaved in a few days. His pants and shirt have streaks of paint on them. When he first exits the studio, he's physically and emotionally vigorous; throughout the scene, he deflates and ages.

He spots Leah on the porch and stops short, with a gasp.

LEAH

(looking up)
And he emerges.

ALAN

Sorry. You look so much like her. The way she always sat on the porch to work. She said it made bill paying easier to do it out here.
(sees her glass)
I'm going to get something to drink. Want a refill?

LEAH

Sure.

Alan takes her glass and goes into the house.

Leah opens one of the notebooks. She touches the page gently. As she hears Alan return, she shuts the book and puts it into the tote bag.

Alan returns with two glasses, puts hers down, and sits in the other chair.

LEAH

Thank you.

ALAN

You're welcome. What day is it?

LEAH

Thursday.

ALAN

You stopped labeling the casseroles by the day.

LEAH

I figured you could choose what to eat. I can start doing it again.

ALAN

No, no, it made me feel like I was five. Although I'm grateful.

LEAH

I saw the empty casserole dish with Mrs. Thurbridge's name taped to the bottom. She's been by again, huh?

ALAN

(imitating her)

Oh, you poor dear. I bet this is the time you regret not having children to help you through it.

(normal voice)

As though they wouldn't be equally traumatized, and be something else to deal with.

(beat)

At least she's a good cook.

LEAH

(handing him small box)

I need you to sign these.

Alan puts down the glass, takes the pen out of the box, and signs all the checks without looking at them. He hands Leah the box.

ALAN

Another month's bills paid.

Leah puts the checks in the right envelopes, seals them, puts stamps on.

LEAH

(as she works)

Mmmm. I need to hire someone to mow the lawn.

ALAN

(wistful)

I used to do it.

LEAH

But you won't.

ALAN

Lily used to sit here on the porch or out on the back deck and laugh at me struggling with the machine. I swear, it was trying to kill me.

(realizes what he's said)

You're right. Just hire whomever you think will do a good job without destroying the plants. Lily loved her lilacs and all those other plants whose names I don't know. Especially the sad ones she rescued from the garden center's sale table and nursed back to health.

Beat.

LEAH

Do you want any of the magazines?

ALAN

Gardening and fashion? No, thanks.

LEAH

I'll drop them at the laundromat on my way home. I'll make sure there's no auto-renew on the subscriptions. What about the NEW YORKER? They're stacking up.

ALAN

We used to lie in the hammocks out back and read them to each other. Even though Lily read them cover-to-cover as soon as they arrived.

(beat)

Cancel.

He drains his glass and looks at the studio door with longing.

ALAN

I need to get back.

LEAH

It's going well?

ALAN

(vague)

Yeah, yeah. I'm in a flow.

LEAH

Can you talk about the work?

ALAN

(firm)

I'm in a flow.

He gets up and walks to the studio, with a slight limp, as though he's twenty years older than when he emerged and in pain.

Leah watches him enter the studio. She braces, as though she expects him to slam the door, but he shuts it with gentle care.

Leah relaxes a little. She picks up the top notebook in the tote, opens it, and begins to read as the lights fade.

Scene 3

Lights up. Leah is sitting on the porch, reading Lily's notebooks. It's a different day, with Leah in different clothes. The stacks of magazines, bills, and trashcans are gone.

LILY KELLER enters, and watches her sister.

Leah reads the notebook and covers her mouth with her hand.

LEAH

How did I not know any of this?

LILY

Because everyone had to think everything was perfect.

SOUND of car engine turning off and footsteps approaching. Lily darts out of sight as Lorenzo enters.

LORENZO

How's it going?

LEAH

Going.

LORENZO

Nice job on the lawn.

LEAH

I found someone good. I tried to mow it myself, but Alan's right. That's one homicidal lawn mower.

LORENZO

Heaven forbid Darrin help.

LEAH

He's—

LORENZO

Done with Alan. I get it. Did you find anything?

LEAH

I didn't find any paintings. I'm still looking.

LORENZO

(frustrated, but resigned)

Yeah.

LEAH

I found some sketches, but they're not Alan's. I'm trying to work out the provenance. And who did them.

LORENZO

They're not signed?

LEAH

I think the signatures are hidden in the sketches themselves.

LORENZO

That sounds intriguing. Can I take a look?

LEAH

Let me do a little more research. Soon?

LORENZO

I'm thinking of bringing in someone else.

LEAH

To replace Alan?

LORENZO

What? No, no, I'm sorry. To help Alan.

LEAH

He's in therapy.

LORENZO

Is he making his sessions?

LEAH

Yes.

LORENZO

Because you make sure he does.

LEAH

It doesn't matter, as long as he makes them.

LORENZO

I bet it matters to Darrin.

LEAH

Please don't.

LORENZO

I'll go.

LEAH

You don't have to. I can get you something to drink. Or eat.

LORENZO

No, no, it's fine. Is he talking about the work?

LEAH

Just that he's in a flow.

LORENZO

So it's still the fall foliage paintings.

(at her look)

I'm sorry, I'm sorry. None of this is on you.

LEAH

It feels that way.

LORENZO

Is it okay if I bring someone by? Who could help?

LEAH

I can't promise he'll be willing to take a break.

LORENZO

You'll understand when you meet her. Take care, Leah, okay?

She nods. Lorenzo exits. Leah clutches the notebook to her chest as

The lights fade.

Scene 4

Lights up on a different day. Leah waters the hanging plant, which has blossoms. She puts down the watering can and sits on the porch. The vase of lilacs has been replaced by peonies. She takes out a notebook and reads for a few beats.

LEAH

I can't believe I didn't know this. I can't believe you didn't confide in me.

Lily comes around the side of the house and sits on the railing, swinging her legs.

LILY

Talking about it would only make you feel bad.

LEAH

Not talking about it made *you* feel bad. I never knew you wanted children.

LILY

You didn't want them. Alan didn't want them. Wanting them made me a cliché.

LEAH

It's not a cliché to be honest about what you want.

LILY

At the time, I wanted Alan more than anything else. The choice was between having Alan and having kids. I chose Alan.

(shrugs)

They always told us marriage was about compromise. Look how much you've compromised.

LEAH

This isn't about me.

LILY

Why not?

Beat.

LEAH

I don't know. But it's not.

LILY

You miss me, right?

LEAH

Every minute of every day. I feel like part of me has been torn away and will never heal.

LILY

Part of *you*. You see, it is about you.

LEAH

If I'd known you wanted children so badly—

LILY

What? You would have offered to have some?

LEAH

No. I wouldn't have gone that far.

LILY

Good. Wanting to be a mother for *me* wouldn't have worked. You have to want to be a mother for you. And you don't.

LEAH

I don't.

LILY

Is that why you stay with Darrin? Because he won't pressure you to change your mind about having kids?

LEAH

No!

LILY

Darrin and Alan are a lot alike. That's probably why they've never gotten along.

LEAH

Alike? They're completely different.

LILY

They both need to be the center of their partner's attention.

(wistful)

I wish I'd lived long enough to teach art at the summer camp.
Six-year-olds and paint!

LEAH

Messy.

LILY

Joyful.

(they laugh)

You told them I couldn't, didn't you? And, and. . .why?

LEAH

I found the letter confirming you as a teacher, and wrote to them.

They'd already seen your obit—

(catches a sob)

Your obituary in the paper.

Beat.

LILY

Well, that's that. It's not like I can teach from here.

LEAH

Spirit painting. Didn't they do that in Victorian times?

LILY

I think that was automatic writing. Same principle, though.

At least by those not into grifting. Did you find my sketches?

LEAH

Yes. I'm trying to figure out what to do about them. If I should
say anything—

Darrin enters, from around the studio.

DARRIN

Say anything about what?

LEAH

Nothing. Just thinking out loud.

Lily snickers.

LEAH

I didn't hear the car.

DARRIN

You weren't home when I got there. I figured you were still here. I cut across the preserve. I figured we could drive back together.

LEAH

I was going to stay a little—

DARRIN

It's getting late.

LEAH

It's still light.

DARRIN

It does that in summer.

LILY

It'll be the Solstice soon. I used to love staying up all night on Solstice and dancing in the garden.

LEAH

We should do something for the Solstice.

DARRIN

Like what?

LEAH

I don't know. Have a picnic out here? Stay up all night, since it's the shortest night of the year? Lily loved the Solstice.

DARRIN

I don't remember you doing anything for Solstice with her.

LEAH

I haven't. Not since we were married.

DARRIN

So why. . .? A final farewell?

(considers)

That makes sense. We can talk about it on the way home.

LILY

Like I said, Darrin and Alan need to be the center of their partner's attention.

Leah and Lily exchange a look as

The lights fade.

Scene 5

Lights up. A new day. Leah is sweeping the porch. Lily sits on the railing again.

LILY

I mean, I started doing the sketches just for fun.

LEAH

You were serious about drawing and painting when we were growing up. You were an art major.

LILY

Which taught me that I didn't have what it takes to be a painter. Or a sculptor. And then I met Alan.

LEAH

Did he discourage you from your art?

LILY

He didn't *en*-courage it. He was the one with the talent, the vision.

LEAH

The gallery owner willing to represent him.

LILY

Well, yeah. Lorenzo saw Alan's work in a group show and pulled him right out for representation.

LEAH

That was during my graduate work in London, wasn't it?

LILY

Weren't you dating that hot British guy?

LEAH

I'll have you know I dated several hot British guys while I studied in London.

LILY

The one you really liked. The one you almost married. What was his name?

(finds the memory)

Basil.

LEAH

How British is that name?

LILY

Basil with the motorcycle whose family had the big house in, where was it?

LEAH

Cornwall.

LILY

Cornwall, right! Like those Daphne du Maurier novels. You guys saw a lot of Europe those two years.

LEAH

We travelled every chance we had: Paris, Vienna, Berlin, Florence, Amsterdam—

LILY

(snickers)

Of course. *Amsterdam*.

LEAH

The only time I ever tried hashish.

(they laughed)

Scotland, Majorca. We even went to Casablanca one time.

LILY

Because you loved the movie so much. I thought you were going to marry him.

LEAH

So did I.

LILY

Then Alan and I would have an excuse to visit you in Cornwall.

LEAH

If you could pry Alan out of the studio.

LILY

I'd convince him it would give him inspiration for more paintings. Even if he hadn't come along, I would have visited.

LEAH

We'd visit the house that inspired Du Maurier's *Rebecca*. You could have gotten married there. Except you ran off and married Alan while I was in England.

LILY

You sound like you resent it.

LEAH

I would have liked to attend my younger sister's wedding.

LILY

We eloped on the spur of the moment.

LEAH

The whole relationship happened on the spur of the moment. I wish we'd discussed before you just went away for the weekend and came back married.

LILY

Your overprotectiveness was stifling at times.

LEAH

Is that why you married Alan?

LILY

I married Alan because I *loved* him. I married him fast because I didn't want you trying to talk me out of it.

LEAH

If you could have been talked out of it—

LILY

I needed to leave home. I needed to create my own home.

LEAH

I always imagined you'd come to visit me in England, and then we'd travel to Paris and you'd stay there. Have a studio with skylights and create beautiful paintings. Fall in love with a Frenchman.

LILY

You know I hate the scent of cigarettes.

LEAH

But the wine would be great. And the men. . .

LILY

Men and cities were your thing. I wanted to play in the dirt, grow pretty flowers. Sketch the flowers and their imaginary friends. Love Alan. I got to do all those things. I know how lucky I am. I'm grateful.

(beat)

So why didn't you? Marry Basil? You mumbled something about incompatibility when you came home, but I never believed it.

LEAH

It was fear.

LILY

Was he cruel?

LEAH

No. No! He was kind and smart and funny. That's what scared the hell out of me. I was too terrified to marry him.

LILY

(compassionate)

Oh, Leah!

LEAH

Plus, if I'd married him, I would have been *obligated* to have children. Carry on the family line, you know?

LILY

Did you ever talk about it?

LEAH

He said we could “work it out” but I knew that, to him, it meant changing my mind.

LILY

You came home, met Darrin in a bar—

LEAH

--and here we are. At least it wasn't a shotgun wedding.

Beat.

LILY

Have you kept up with Basil's life?

LEAH

I look at the website of the family home. It's a destination now, for weddings and holiday rentals. He's got a lovely English rose of a wife and six lovely, perfect children.

LILY

(laughing)

You dodged a bullet there!

LEAH

I guess I did.

SOUND of a car pulling up. Two doors open and close. Lily slides off the rail and vanishes around the side of the house as two sets of footsteps approach on the gravel.

Lorenzo enters, with SELENA, who's dressed casually in jeans and a tee shirt.

LORENZO

I didn't want to call, because I wanted the element of surprise.

SELENA

Which I told him was a bad idea.

LORENZO

Leah, this is Selena. She's the person I think could help Alan.
She's a psychic.

Lily peers around the corner of the house at that. Selena looks in her direction, but Lily withdraws.

LEAH

A psychic? Seriously?
(to Selena)
No offense.

SELENA

Don't worry. I'm used to it.

LEAH

Okay. Wow.

LORENZO

That's why I didn't tell you.

LEAH

How does this work?

SELENA

I don't need a table and candles.
(smiles)
At least, not yet.

They laugh.

SELENA

I'd like to see the paintings Alan keeps creating.

LEAH

He's in there, but I don't know if he can be disturbed.

LORENZO

He won't even notice.

Lorenzo starts for the studio door as the scene begins to shift.

The porch set recedes to the side of the stage as the studio set moves forward and rotates to show the interior of Alan's studio and the lights cross fade into

Scene 6

The inside of Alan's studio. What would be the back wall of the studio (which now faces the audience) is a metaphorical wall of windows, and there's a skylight. The walls are filled with large canvas paintings of Lily dancing among the fall foliage, the same painting over and over and over again. They're on the side walls, on the walls on either side of the door, with additional canvases stacked on the floor. There's a wooden bench, off to one side. There's a cot with a blanket and pillow neatly folded on it.

Alan is painting at his easel, deep in concentration. A small RADIO plays softly, in the corner.

There's a knock on the studio door. Alan doesn't answer. A beat later, Lorenzo opens the door, and ushers Selena and Leah in ahead of him.

SELENA

(looking around)

Wow.

LORENZO

The view out back is spectacular.

LEAH

I don't think that's what she meant.

SELENA

This tells me a lot.

LORENZO

Hi, Alan.

ALAN

(not missing a beat)

I'm working.

LORENZO

This is Selena. She's here to help.

ALAN

I already have a therapist.

LORENZO

She can help with Lily.

ALAN

Unless she's a necromancer, there's not much she can do.

SELENA

Not a necromancer, but I do talk with the dead.

Alan stops work and looks at her.

ALAN

You talk to the dead?

SELENA

With them.

ALAN

They answer?

SELENA

It wouldn't be much of a conversation if they didn't.

They size each other up.

ALAN

Huh.

(starts painting again)

SELENA

If we could have the room.

LEAH

I'm not sure that's a good idea.

SELENA

I like to get to know my client a little.

LORENZO

It'll be fine, Leah.

ALAN

I'm a grownup, Leah. Even if I don't always act like one.

Leah nods. She and Lorenzo leave, closing the door behind them.

Selena walks around the studio, looking at the paintings, while Alan continues work.

SELENA

These are intense.

ALAN

I haven't captured it perfectly yet. The moment, that last afternoon, where Lily and I were deliriously happy.

SELENA

Before she got in the car.

ALAN

For *milk*.

(beat)

Pointless. So how does this work? You need to cast a salt circle? Light a few candles?

SELENA

At least you didn't assume a Ouija board is involved.

ALAN

The last time I even saw a Ouija board, I must have been about thirteen. What do you do? You summon her? She tells me something soothing? Placating? And we're done?

SELENA

I don't have to summon her. She's here.

ALAN

(drops the paintbrush)

Here? Now?

SELENA

Not in the room.

ALAN

Thank God for that.

(picks up brush)

I don't think I can handle that.

SELENA

(sits on bench)

I felt her presence earlier, in the garden.

ALAN

She loved the garden. Instead of painting on canvas, she painted with plants.

SELENA

What do you hope to achieve? By capturing that perfect moment? Surely it's in your memory. You won't forget it.

ALAN

I want it to be on the record. For posterity.

(beat)

We had a fight that day.

SELENA

Is that why she went out? For milk?

ALAN

(joins her on bench)

Yeah. She was so excited about teaching at the summer camp this year. I thought it was a silly idea. Too much time.

SELENA

Too much time away from *you*.

ALAN

We decided not to have kids. Why teach them?

SELENA

Because it made her happy.

ALAN

I made her happy.

SELENA

That's a lot of ego. And far too much responsibility, for any one person to be the sole reason for someone else's happiness.

ALAN

She was mine. I was hers.

SELENA

Your *painting* makes you happy. Lily shared that burden of responsibility for your happiness with your painting. What did you share it with?

ALAN

I don't know. I don't know what Lily did when I painted.

SELENA

Didn't she talk about it?

Beat.

ALAN

(softly)

I didn't listen.

He drops his head into his hands. Selena places her hand on his back as the lights fade. The studio recedes and turns and the lights crossfade into

Scene 7

Lights crossfade back up on the porch, which has returned to its original position. Leah sits on the steps. Lorenzo is in the yard, looking at a series of sketches.

LORENZO

These are good. I mean, *really* good.

LEAH

They are.

LORENZO

There's a sense of joy and whimsy to them. Very much not Alan's style.

LEAH

That's because he didn't do them.

LORENZO

Who's the artist? I want to meet them.

LEAH

The name's woven into the sketch. Look closely.

LORENZO

Can you give me a hint?

LEAH

I want you to discover it for yourself.

Lorenzo looks closely. Follows the design.

LORENZO

L. . .I. . .L—Lily did these?

LEAH

She did.

LORENZO

I had no idea she was an artist.

LEAH

She decided not to pursue it professionally when she married Alan.

LORENZO

She's very good. *And* very different. They appeal to two completely different audiences. Not to mention working in different mediums. I mean, Alan made some sketches for his paintings—

(Leah hands him another
sketch)

She did the initial sketch for "Solstice Bonfire"?

LEAH

Alan changed details in the painting, but this is the sketch he used. I saw it in the studio while he worked on the painting.

LORENZO

Still. . .wow. Are these the only ones?

LEAH

Sketches he used as a basis for painting? There are more.

LORENZO

She shouldn't have stopped her own work.

LEAH

It was part of the deal.

LORENZO

What deal?

LEAH

Being married to Alan.

LORENZO

I can't believe he wouldn't let her—I mean, she was a grown woman—

LEAH

You *know* Alan. You *know*.

Beat.

LORENZO

I want to talk to Alan about showing these.

Lily creeps around the side of the house, watching.

LEAH

You don't need to.

LORENZO

(not listening)

About whether he'd let me show the sketches beside the finished paintings. Show the journey. About whether he'd show Lily's other work. Maybe sell some of it.

LEAH

(stronger)

You don't *need* to.

LORENZO

Why not?

LEAH

She left them to *me*.

LORENZO

The sketches? All of them?

LEAH

Everything. Sketches. Letters. Her notebooks. Alan has some sketches she made for him and gave him over the years. But the rest – are mine now. The will's been through probate. Alan didn't contest that.

LORENZO

Did he *know*?

LEAH

He was there when the will was read.

LORENZO

Was he paying attention?

LEAH

What do you think?

LILY

Don't tell me you've suddenly grown a conscience, Lorenzo. Not now.

LORENZO

Would Lily want these shown?

LILY

Yes.

LEAH

(overlapping)

Yes.

LORENZO

I have to—

The door to the studio opens and Selena exits. She shuts the door gently behind her.

LORENZO

How'd it go?

LEAH

Is he okay?

SELENA

He's...thinking about it.

Lily stands there, making faces at Selena. Selena turns and looks directly at Lily. Lily freezes.

LORENZO

You think he'll agree?

SELENA

Eventually. I'd like to come back and talk to him again.

(to Leah)

And talk to you.

LEAH

Me?

SELENA

You.

LEAH

Um, okay?

LORENZO

You want to do it now?

SELENA

I need to go over a few things first. Don't worry; I can get myself here.

LORENZO

No, it's not, I mean—

(at Selena's look)

Thanks.

SELENA

Nice meeting you, Leah.

LEAH

Same?

LORENZO

I'll talk to you in a few days about. . .what we talked about, okay?

LEAH

Fine.

Lorenzo and Selena exit.

SELENA

(not looking back)

Bye, Lily!

Leah looks from Selena to Lily in shock. Lily starts to laugh as the

Lights fade.

Scene 8

Lights up on the front porch. The peonies have been replaced with iris blooms. Leah has folding table set up at the bottom of the porch steps. She's sorting Lily's sketches into piles, using small, smooth stones to make sure they don't fly away.

Some of the notebooks are also open on the table.

LEAH

I don't know whether to sort by date or by theme.

LILY

Keep the notebooks separate. I just sketched in the diary entries whatever was on my mind that day.

LEAH

I don't want to rip anything out of the notebooks, so yeah, that makes sense. I'll sort the loose sketches by theme. I have to ask Lorenzo how to copy the ones in the notebooks without tearing them out.

LILY

Maybe ask an art restorer at one of the museums, or over at the college?

LEAH

Maybe.

(beat)

I notice you didn't suggest I ask Alan.

LILY

You know what he's like when he's working.

LEAH

Is that the only reason?

LILY

What else—

(knows she can't pull
it off)

He doesn't know I kept sketching. Like this.

LEAH

He didn't want you to be creative?

LILY

Maybe it wouldn't have been an issue if I'd been a writer or a photographer.
Or a dancer.

LEAH

He knew you were good. He was afraid you were better than he is.

LILY

I'm not.

LEAH

It's apples and oranges anyway. Lorenzo said you'd appeal to two different
audiences.

(beat)

But Alan didn't want you to *have* an audience.

LILY

Can we not talk about it now? I have all of eternity to figure it out.

LEAH

Point taken.

Darrin enters. Lily retreats.

DARRIN

Talking to yourself again?

LEAH

That way I know someone's listening.

DARRIN

Ouch. I was hoping we could go over to Jamie's tonight. Have a few beers. They've got a live band.

LEAH

Maybe later. I want to finish this.

DARRIN

I don't think you have to take on any more of Alan's organizational work.

LEAH

Take a look.

Darrin looks at the sketches.

DARRIN

These are terrific. Not Alan's usual style. Might get him a broader audience, though.

LEAH

They're not Alan's.

DARRIN

If they're not. . .you mean these are Lily's? I didn't know she was an artist.

LEAH

They're good, right?

DARRIN

They're beautiful. Playful. I mean, I don't have that much patience with art, and I like them. What does Alan plan to do with them? I bet they'd bring a pretty penny at auction. Along with the story behind them.

LEAH

No decisions have been made yet.

DARRIN

Alan will want to do what's best financially. He may be inhaling too much turpentine, but he – and Lorenzo – are always smart about the business.

LEAH

It's not—

(makes the decision not
to reveal it's up
to her)

Alan's lucky to have Lorenzo.

DARRIN

Which is why the threat of losing Lorenzo will kick his ass into gear. I don't want to talk about this now. I just want to go and relax a little with some beer and live music.

LEAH

Go ahead. I'll join you when I'm finished here.

DARRIN

Will you? Or will you be too *tired*?

LEAH

Grief is exhausting, Darrin. If I'm too tired, I'll text you and stay home. I'm sure plenty of your friends will be there.

DARRIN

I don't want to argue with you.

LEAH

Then don't argue. There are plenty of times I give in because I'm too tired to argue with you.

DARRIN

It would be good for you to get out. Get away from this oppressive atmosphere.

LEAH

Oppressive? Look around. Look at this beautiful garden!

DARRIN

It's a tomb that smells good.

(beat)

Did Lorenzo ever bring that person by? The one he thought could help?

LEAH

Yes. Her name is Selena. I thought I told you this?

DARRIN

I don't remember. Selena? Is she a different kind of therapist?

LEAH

She's a psychic.

DARRIN

A what?

(he starts laughing)

How much is she taking him for?

LEAH

What if it works?

DARRIN

You believe in all that mumbo jumbo?

Lily sneaks up to him.

LEAH

Does it matter, as long as it helps him?

Lily yanks on Darrin's shirt.

DARRIN

Hey!

LILY

Oooh, I'm getting better at this!

DARRIN

What was that?

LEAH

(pretending she has no
idea)

What was what?

DARRIN

Never mind.

LEAH

Looks like you need a relaxing night out more than I do.

DARRIN

Will you join me later? Please?

LEAH

(relents)

Yes.

DARRIN

Okay. See you later. Love you.

He turns to exit. Lily trips him.

LEAH

Watch those roots.

DARRIN

I didn't see—never mind.

Beat.

LEAH

Love you, too.

Leah and Lily watch Darrin exit as

The lights fade.

Scene 9

Lights up on the porch. The next day. Lily sits on the porch, looking at the garden.

The sound of Darrin's car. Door opens and closes; Darrin's footsteps crunch across the gravel until he enters.

Leah! Leah! DARRIN

She's not here. LILY

Leah! DARRIN

He goes into the house.

(off-stage)
Leah! Leah! DARRIN

Alan comes out of his studio, wiping his hands on a paint rag.

Darrin comes out of the house and glares at him.

Where is she? DARRIN

Leah? I don't know. She's usually out here on the porch. ALAN

Not today. LILY

Then where is she? DARRIN

I don't know. ALAN

She's *always* here. DARRIN

I'm not hiding her. ALAN

DARRIN

It wouldn't surprise me if you were.

ALAN

What's that supposed to mean?

DARRIN

Never mind. I don't know. Where could she be?

ALAN

At work?

DARRIN

I called over at the library. She's not there.

ALAN

You tried her cell?

DARRIN

Yes, I tried her cell. Over and over and over again.

ALAN

Is there a reason you're so worried?

DARRIN

I need to know where she is!

ALAN

Maybe she's out with a friend. Taking a break.

DARRIN

She needs to take a break from all this.

ALAN

I know.

DARRIN

She needs to be done with this. With you.

ALAN

What are you talking about?

DARRIN

Do you have any idea how much she does for you? Every damn day?

ALAN

Yes. And I'm grateful.

DARRIN

No, you're not. You're taking advantage of her. Lily's not here to pick up after you and pay attention to you every waking moment—

LILY

Well, actually—

DARRIN

(without noticing)

So you're using Leah as a replacement.

ALAN

I'm *what*?

DARRIN

Leah is *my* wife, not yours, and that's not going to change.

Leah enters, with a suitcase, near the end of this exchange.

LEAH

Plenty of things are changing.

DARRIN

Leah! Where have you been? Why don't you answer your phone? Do you have any idea how worried I've been about you?

LEAH

Alan, can I stay for a few days, until I get things sorted out? In the guest room?

ALAN

(confused)

Sure. Take any room you want. I'm sleeping in the studio most nights anyway.

DARRIN

What are you talking about? Staying here? You'll stay in our home.

LEAH

No. I'm not staying under the same roof as you.

DARRIN

Oh, come on! You're blowing everything out of proportion.

LEAH

"Come out. It'll be good for you." So I *do* come out, and what do I see? You playing tonsil hockey with a woman in the bar.

LILY

(trying not to laugh)

Tonsil hockey?

DARRIN

Oh, come on, it was nothing. A slip between two people who had a little too much to drink.

LEAH

It's something *to me*. And really? Cora Davis? Bad enough you do it publicly in a place we both spent a lot of time, but Cora *Davis*?

DARRIN

You should be glad it wasn't one of your friends.

Leah slaps him across the face.

Beat.

DARRIN

I should—

ALAN

(stepping between them)

You should walk away. Now.

LEAH

You don't need to intervene, Alan.

DARRIN

You've done enough. If it wasn't for you, Leah wouldn't be here so much, and last night wouldn't have happened.

LEAH

Don't you *dare* try to shift the blame for last night onto me or onto Alan. It was your *choice*.

DARRIN

Then let's talk about it and fix it.

LEAH

I do not want to be around you right now.

ALAN

Give her some time and space, Darrin. Stop breathing down her neck all the time.

DARRIN

I better not catch you near any part of her anatomy.

ALAN

She's my sister-in-law.

DARRIN

I can't see that stopping you.

ALAN

I'm not *you*, Darrin.

Beat.

LILY

Uh-oh.

LEAH

Darrin?

ALAN

Did you really think Lily wouldn't tell me?

LEAH

Darrin, no.

DARRIN

I was drunk. And you were at that library conference in Washington.

LEAH

Trying to shift blame. Again.

(beat)

With my *sister*?

DARRIN

She slapped me. Threatened to knee me in the nuts.

LILY

I would have.

ALAN

She would have.

DARRIN

We agreed not to tell anyone. To act like it never happened.

LEAH

I see you didn't have an issue with that.

ALAN

Lily tried to hide it, but I know her. I knew she was upset. I thought Lorenzo or someone at one of the gallery shows made her uncomfortable. I didn't think it would be you.

DARRIN

It was one bad decision.

LEAH

Paired with last night? I'm seeing a pattern. And that's just what I know about.

DARRIN

There's a not a pattern.

LEAH

How many other "bad decisions" are walking around out there?

(He doesn't answer)

Damn it, Darrin, you know how I feel about this stuff. You know how our father's cheating wrecked my mother, and how it affected Lily and me. And you do this? Get out of my sight.

DARRIN

We need to talk about this. Work it out.

LEAH

Not right now.

ALAN

(gently)

Please go, Darrin. Give her some breathing room.

DARRIN

Don't pretend you're so pure. You can't tell me you never—

ALAN

Not since the day I met Lily.

LILY

I knew you never cheated on me after we were married, but I had no idea you weren't with anyone since we met.

DARRIN

I think you're lying.

ALAN

I don't care what you think. Now, please get off my property and stop hassling my sister-in-law.

DARRIN

My wife.

LEAH

But not your property. Leave me alone, Darrin.

DARRIN

(vulnerable)

For how long?

LEAH

I don't know.

Darrin leaves. SOUND of his footsteps, the car leaving.

ALAN

Is there more luggage in the car?

LEAH

A couple more suitcases. Some bags.

ALAN

I'll get them.

He exits.

LILY

I'm sorry, sweetie.

LEAH

Yeah, well. . .

Alan returns, with two suitcases, a tote bag, and a backpack.

ALAN

I'll take them in. Don't worry. Don't worry about anything right now.

He exits into the house with the luggage. Leah stares out as

The lights fade.

Scene 10

Lights up on the porch. A different day. There are more potted plants blooming on the porch, the garden is brighter.

Leah comes in with two more hanging pots of blooming plants. She sets them on hooks on the upstage side of the porch.

Selena enters.

SELENA

Hello, Leah. I hope this isn't a bad time.

LEAH

Selena! I didn't hear a car.

SELENA

I had the taxi drop me at the end of the driveway and I walked up.

LEAH

Would you like something to drink? Lemonade? Iced tea? A cocktail?

SELENA

(laughing)
Lemonade's fine.

LEAH

Be right back.

Leah disappears into the house. Selena wanders around, looking at the plants, the garden, glancing at Alan's studio.

SELENA

Hmmm. Not around today.

Leah returns, carrying a tray with two glasses of lemonade and a plate of cookies. They sit on chairs on the porch, with the tray on a table between them.

SELENA

Thank you. How is he?
(gestures to studio with
glass)

LEAH

Working.

SELENA

Still on the fall foliage paintings of Lily?

LEAH

Yes.

SELENA

How are *you* doing?

LEAH

I think I'm getting better. Day by day. Accepting that Lily is dead. She was my younger sister. I was supposed to protect her. Alan was supposed to protect her. We both failed.

SELENA

Lily's accident is not your failure.

LEAH

(wry)

Fate?

SELENA

No, just the way things work sometimes. And it's not always fair.

(beat)

You're staying here for the moment? Lorenzo told me.

LEAH

Yeah. Alan's kind enough to let me stay.

SELENA

You're family.

LEAH

It wasn't just what happened in the bar.

SELENA

It never just is.

LEAH

It's been building for years. I didn't want to face it. And then—

SELENA

Lily died.

LEAH

I was so smug, you know? I married a successful guy and we had all this *stuff*. He earned a lot of money, so it was okay if my job didn't bring in that much. I could buy books and knit and work a job I love at the library and go to conferences and spend time with my sister. I liked to tell myself that my marriage was better than hers. I didn't give up my art, step back to let my husband shine. I didn't devote my life to running the daily details

LEAH (CON'T)

of existence so he could be some great artist. But slowly, slowly, I gave away pieces of myself. I diminished myself to make my husband comfortable. I want to be the person I was before I got married.

SELENA

But you've changed.

LEAH

I don't want to be in my twenties again. Surviving it once was enough. And I've learned a lot over the years. But I want my sense of adventure back. My sense that I have the skills to try new things, the capacity to learn. Not start something, and then have to retreat because my husband doesn't like that it takes the time away from him. I didn't even notice it was happening, inch by inch.

(beat)

I'm a boiled frog.

SELENA

As long as you're trying to be you, and not trying to fulfill things Lily didn't have a chance to do before she died.

LEAH

I want to be myself again, and grow into more of myself. As far as what Lily didn't get to do, I'm not going to start wearing sundresses and dance in meadows. That's very Lily and not me. But I want the world to see her sketches and her work.

SELENA

Lorenzo will be happy to hear that.

LEAH

He will, won't he? Are you sure you're not a therapist?

SELENA

I minored in psychology in college. Majored in mythology and folklore.

LEAH

How did you get into. . .psychic work?

SELENA

I was always comfortable with the dead, even as a child. I felt compassion for ghosts and spirits, not fear. Integrated with my studies, it made sense.

LEAH

Is it hard to get people to take you seriously?

SELENA

How they respond is up to them. I do my work, I stay true to my core beliefs and values. I do the best I can to help people.

LEAH

That makes sense. What did you want to talk to me about?

SELENA

Have you been talking to Lily as you sort through her things?

LEAH

Yes. I mean, I don't see her ghost or anything. But I talk to her. Or to my own subconscious. Is that weird? To do it, and not to know if it's Lily or just my imagination of what Lily would say in the situation?

SELENA

It doesn't matter, as long as you get answers.

LEAH

Some of them surprise me.

SELENA

Then you're making progress in your grief.

Lights out.

Scene 11

Lights up on a different day, in the early evening. Leah sits on the porch, a manila envelope in her lap. There's a knitting bag beside her, with yarn and needles sticking out.

Alan exits the studio, goes into the house, and comes out with two beers.

ALAN

Here you go. I'm starting to enjoy this nightly ritual.

LEAH

(distant)

Thank you.

ALAN

Are you okay? Are Lily's journals upsetting you?

LEAH

Lily's journals are wonderful. Are you sure you don't want to read them?

ALAN

No. I can't bear the thought of reading her insight into my imperfections. What's in the envelope?

LEAH

Proof.

ALAN

(thinks)

Not—

LEAH

Yes. There are photos, copies of receipts. . .

ALAN

I'm sorry. It's got to be a shock.

LEAH

Part of me knew. And ignored it. He. . .remember when Lily and I went on that yoga retreat?

ALAN

I heard about nothing else for weeks when you came back. Lily insisted on planting lotus.

LEAH

When we got back, I found an earring in the corner of the bathroom, near the shower. I confronted Darrin. He admitted it. I reminded him of our conversation, before I agreed to marry him. We weren't going to have kids, and fidelity was part of the deal.

ALAN

Deal? Marriage isn't a business. Yeah, you make compromises—

LEAH

Lily did more than make compromises. She gave up her dream of having children. And she gave up her dream of being a professional artist.

ALAN

It wouldn't have worked to have both of us in the business.

LEAH

Those were compromises you weren't willing to make.

ALAN

But Lily was.

LEAH

Marriage is a legal contract, as well as being about love and romance. Darrin and I made a *deal*. He broke those terms. I was ready to be done. But he begged for another chance.

ALAN

Did you discuss it with Lily?

LEAH

No. I never told her any of it. I felt like a failure. Instead, I gave Darrin another chance. Now this.

ALAN

I'm sorry Lily and I never told you he made a pass at her. She was afraid you wouldn't believe her.

LEAH

I would have *said* I didn't believe her. I would have raged at her. I would have known it was true.

ALAN

What now?

LEAH

I have an appointment with a lawyer. I'll file for divorce. There's no coming back from this. If I don't hold this boundary, he'll do it over and over again, any time he wants to hurt me. I won't turn into my mother, destroyed by my father's cheating.

ALAN

I'm sorry.

LEAH

While he's been at work, I've packed up and moved stuff out of the house, especially the books. I can just picture him getting mad at me, putting all my first editions in the fire pit and throwing in a match.

ALAN

Won't he notice the books are gone?

LEAH

I bought fake ones to replace them. You know, where you can buy so-called books by the foot, just for show? It's not like he'll be able to tell the difference until he destroys them. He doesn't read much.

ALAN

Do you need help? I should have offered sooner.

LEAH

I'm almost done. There are a lot of boxes in your dining room right now. But I'll figure something out. Rent a place near the library. Put things in storage.

ALAN

You can stay here as long as you like.

LEAH

Thank you. But I need to be on my own.

ALAN

I'll help you move all those boxes wherever you say. If you need money—

LEAH

I'm okay. I have my job. It doesn't pay all that much, but maybe I can pick up more hours. Or get a second job.

ALAN

I should pay you for all you're doing here.

LEAH

That's not what I meant.

ALAN

I know. But I should. Eventually, I'll have to hire an assistant. I'd like to pay you for what you've done and what you continue doing. When you're ready to stop, maybe you'll help me find an assistant?

LEAH

Yeah, sure.

ALAN

It's temporary, I promise. I don't want you to get into a rut. I let Lily get into a rut of building her life around mine, and it was unfair. Now it's too late to fix it.

LEAH

We should talk about what I found in her journals—

ALAN

Not yet, okay? Maybe one day. But not yet.

LEAH

(conflicted)
Okay.

ALAN

You found her knitting!

LEAH

Actually, this is mine.

ALAN

Oh. I thought I recognized the yarn.

LEAH

We were working on matching projects. Lily had this idea of us wearing matching oversized sweaters. She had me design one set in cotton for warmer weather, and one set in heavier yarns for winter.

ALAN

There's an alpaca farm a few miles down the road.

LEAH

We got some of our yarn from there.

Alan looks at the door of his studio with longing.

LEAH

Go back to work.

ALAN

You're going through a rough patch. I don't want to abandon you. How often did I leave Lily to deal with something because all I could think about was if I should use Phthalo Blue or Prussian Blue?

LEAH

Go back to work. I'll sit out here for a little longer.

ALAN

Okay.

He gets up and kisses the top of her head. He goes back into his studio.

Leah puts aside the manila envelope. She takes out the knitting, and tries to start. After a moment, she's overcome with emotion. She puts it down, takes a deep breath and tries again.

LEAH

I haven't seen you or felt you around lately, Lily. Are you still here? Or did Selena scare you? She's really a nice woman.

There's no answer. Leah starts knitting. After a few beats, her rhythm gets smoother.

The SOUND of a car driving up. Leah frowns, not recognizing it. Car door opens and closes, footsteps on the gravel.

BASIL enters. He and Leah stare at each other for a moment.

BASIL

I hope you don't mind that I just showed up.

LEAH

Basil?

Lights out.

End of Act I.

ACT II**Scene 1**

Lights up a beat after the previous scene.

BASIL

In the flesh. You're not easy to track down. Haven't you heard of social media?

LEAH

I have no reason to be on social media.

BASIL

You look fantastic.

LEAH

I'm a mess.

BASIL

You were always an old soul.

LEAH

Now I'm in an old body.

BASIL

No! You've grown into yourself. It's beautiful.

LEAH

(unsure)

Thanks.

(beat)

Why are you here? Oh, wait. Come, sit down, Can I get you anything?

BASIL

Beer's fine.

LEAH

Be right back.

She dashes into the house, clearing away her beer and Alan's. Basil looks around the garden, and looks to the studio, where a light shines through the window.

Leah returns, with two beers. She's freshened her lipstick.

LEAH

Come, sit down.

Basil sits where Alan sat and accepts the beer.

BASIL

The great painter at work over there?

LEAH

That's a story in itself. Why are you here? I mean, I'm thrilled to see you. But we haven't been in contact for nearly fifteen years. Now you show up?

BASIL

I was worried about you.

LEAH

Why?

BASIL

I read about Lily's death. I know how close you were.

LEAH

It made the British papers?

BASIL

The wife of a highly regarded artist dies in a car smash? Yes, it made the papers. Besides, my wife used to work for Sotheby's. She's sold a few Alan Kellers over the years.

LEAH

Oh.

BASIL

I know you were close. I'm sorry for your loss.

LEAH

Thank you. It's been hard.

BASIL

I was going to write a letter. But Emma said, "Just go see her. Maybe you can help."

LEAH

How did you find me?

BASIL

Lorenzo Rossi.

LEAH

Alan's gallery owner?

BASIL

He represents Pamela Gallowglass and Jose Franklin, both of whom Emma and I collect. I knew he handles Alan's work. So I got in touch. He said you lived in the same town, and you were helping Alan.

LEAH

There's a lot of paperwork. When our parents died, Lily and I did the paperwork together. Now. . .

BASIL

What about her husband? Alan?

LEAH

He's painting.

BASIL

Mmmmm.

LEAH

Oh, I remember that "mmm."

BASIL

Not my business.

LEAH

That never stopped you before.

BASIL

Emma's a good influence on me.

LEAH

How are your children?

BASIL

Wonderful. Growing up fast.

LEAH

I bet you're a great dad.

BASIL

Never as good as I hope to be, but I try.

LEAH

You took over the family's estate?

BASIL

Yeah. *And* the title. I'm in the Viscount business now. Doesn't seem possible.

LEAH

You always knew you'd have to step in at some point.

BASIL

I always thought it would be when I was older. Now, I'm older than I ever expected.

LEAH

Aren't we all. Do you still ride a motorcycle?

BASIL

Only occasionally. More horses than hogs now, I'm afraid.

LEAH

That's right, your family has stables.

BASIL

My eldest daughter is determined to make the Olympic Equestrian team one day.

LEAH

Good for her!

BASIL

I'm proud of her.

LEAH

Your estate's open to the public, now, isn't it?

BASIL

Yes. I mean, we kept a massive amount of living space for ourselves, more than most in our position would have.

LEAH

With six kids, you'd have to.

BASIL

But there's an entire wing that's used for holiday rentals and big events, like weddings. You'd think Emma has enough to do keeping all of us sorted, but she's brilliant at managing everything else, too.

LEAH

Which leaves you strolling around being a Viscount?

BASIL

I do most of the photography for the website, write the marketing copy, all of that. I wrote up versions of the various ghost stories and history of the estate, and had them printed in little books, which garner a lot of sales in the gift shop. We didn't want the house to feel like a museum. We want it to be a home, albeit a large one, so we converted one of the outbuildings into a museum. We've got a tea shop on the grounds, a gift shop, and a full-scale restaurant. We earned our first Michelin star last summer.

LEAH

That sounds wonderful.

BASIL

I never thought I'd like that type of life, but I do. The people who visit are interesting. I mean, some of them are perfectly horrid, but then, if they try to book again, they discover we are perpetually full and have no room for them.

Leah laughs.

BASIL

Lorenzo mentioned you're married?

LEAH

About to get divorced.

BASIL

I'm sorry.

LEAH

It—let's just say that Lily's death opened my eyes to a few things.

BASIL

Death can be a catalyst.

LEAH

In my case, a wake-up call.

BASIL

Are you going to chuck in all in to take a cargo ship around the world and go sky diving?

LEAH

(laughing)

Nothing that extreme. But I'd like to find out what makes me happy.

BASIL

I hope you haven't been miserable all these years?

LEAH

No. At least, not at first. But I feel as though I've been shrinking.

BASIL

Then it's best to cut loose. Your partner should make you expand, in the best possible ways, not diminish.

LEAH

I'm learning that.

BASIL

Do you still work with books?

LEAH

I'm the reference librarian for the town's library.

BASIL

Brilliant! You always loved books. I figured you'd be a librarian.
Or work in a storied archive. Or be a rare book dealer.

(teasing)

Or be a rare book thief!

LEAH

I still have that book. In fact, it's in a box in the dining room.

BASIL

I still can't believe we got away with it, after consuming all that alcohol.
The gods smiled on us that night.

LEAH

Wait here.

She jumps up and goes into the house. As Basil waits, he picks up one of Lily's notebooks and starts flipping through it. He doesn't read the text, but he notices the sketches.

Leah returns, with a small, leatherbound book with gilt edges.

LEAH

Here it is.

BASIL

(paging through it)

Annie Besant's *The Doctrine of the Heart*. Published in 1914.
We used to sit and debate these writings for hours. Whether
Annie was unhinged in her fascination for Helena Blavatsky and
yoga.

LEAH

With lots of alcohol. Besides, look how mainstream yoga's become.
We were ahead of the curve.

BASIL

I would have bought you a copy.

LEAH

I wanted *this* copy. Especially since Dickie MacGregor was such a dick about it. He didn't deserve a beautiful copy of a book by a woman for whom he only had contempt.

BASIL

I'm glad you kept it.

LEAH

I doubt he even realized I'd stolen it from his father's study. Although I was terrified every time we saw Dickie at the pub that he'd figured it out and would have me arrested.

BASIL

He would never. He adored you.

LEAH

He loathed me.

BASIL

That was his way of showing affection.

LEAH

That's seriously messed up.

BASIL

(shrugging)

That's how we were taught.

LEAH

You never did that.

BASIL

I was always a bad pupil.

LEAH

Whatever happened to Dickie?

BASIL

He got drunk and fell off a cliff in Keri, Greece.

LEAH

Oh, I'm sorry to hear that.

BASIL

It was only about a year or two after you left.

LEAH

So he's been gone a long time.

(beat)

I guess I can stop being mad at him now.

They laugh. Basil hands her back the book and then points to Lily's sketches.

BASIL

These are gorgeous.

LEAH

They're Lily's.

BASIL

I didn't know she was an artist.

LEAH

She gave it up when she married Alan.

BASIL

That's unfortunate.

LEAH

Lorenzo thinks they're commercial.

BASIL

They're all kinds of wonderful. That can translate to commercial.

LEAH

I don't want to destroy them. Or give up the originals.

BASIL

Get prints made of the sketches. You can sell numbered prints. Or make books out of them. Or license some of the images, if you don't think some of them on a tea towel or a ceramic platter is blasphemous.

LEAH

I wouldn't even know where to start.

BASIL

Lorenzo would know who could create the prints. I can put you in touch with the people who supply our gift shop with merchandise made from photos and sketches around the estate. We interviewed a lot of different companies until we found one with whom we felt comfortable.

LEAH

Thank you.

BASIL

If I can save you some pain and frustration, I'm happy to help.

LEAH

I always felt I was the cause of a lot of pain and frustration for you.

BASIL

You encouraged me to be adventurous.

LEAH

I did? I always thought it was the other way around.

BASIL

I would have been a very dull boy if I hadn't wanted to show off for you so much.

LEAH

There I was, pushing myself out of my comfort zone, because I was afraid you'd think I was boring!

They laugh.

BASIL

You are never boring.

LEAH

I've dulled down over the years.

BASIL

I don't believe that.

Beat.

LEAH

Do you remember when we—

They start chatting as the lights crossfade into

Scene 2

Later that night.

BASIL

The stars are beautiful out here.

LEAH

Don't tell me you can't see stars from the estate?

BASIL

You have to trot pretty far down into the gardens to get away from the floodlights. It's pretty spectacular from the bench in the middle of the hedge maze, though.

LEAH

You have a *hedge maze*?

BASIL

It's been there for a couple of centuries now.

LEAH

I don't remember it. One would think I'd remember a hedge maze.

BASIL

We were a little preoccupied. And we only stopped in to see the parents for lunch on our way to the ferry to France.

LEAH

I'm glad I saw Paris with you.

BASIL

Have you been back?

LEAH

No.

Beat.

BASIL

I should get back to the motel. It's after 2 AM.

LEAH

I could make up a guest room for you. Alan won't mind.

BASIL

No, no, that's okay. I can come back tomorrow if you need help sorting things out.

LEAH

How long can you stay?

BASIL

Just another day or two. Then I have to be getting back.

LEAH

To the estate.

BASIL

Big society wedding coming up. Would rather avoid it, in truth, but needs must.

LEAH

To the children.

BASIL

They love running around the estate in the summer. I'm sure I'll return to some broken bones.

LEAH

To Emma.

BASIL

Yes.

Beat.

LEAH

Why did you come here, Basil? Why did you track me down?

BASIL

Because I was worried about you.

LEAH

After fifteen years?

BASIL

Yes.

LEAH

With everything that's going on, that's working in your life?

BASIL

Is that so difficult to believe?

LEAH

Frankly, yes.

(beat)

I always thought of you as the one who got away.

BASIL

Really? Because it was *you* who left *me*.

LEAH

I considered it a pre-emptive strike.

BASIL

You've lost me.

LEAH

That's why I left.

BASIL

Don't. Just say what you mean.

LEAH

I knew you were destined for the life you have now. You love the estate. You wanted a family. I didn't. Deep down, you believed I would change my mind. I knew I wouldn't. That would have torn us apart.

BASIL

I wish you'd let me be part of the conversation you had in your head before you made the decision.

LEAH

Would it have changed the result?

BASIL

We might have still broken up. But I was part of the relationship. I should have been part of the decision.

LEAH

I was young.

BASIL

Twenty-four. Not fourteen.

LEAH

It would have been statutory if I'd been fourteen.

BASIL

You know what I mean.

LEAH

I knew my own mind enough to know I wasn't going to change mind about having children. Even though everyone kept telling me that I would. I couldn't even find a doctor to get a hysterectomy, for crying out loud. That should be *my* choice, not society's choice based on imaginary children I'll never have.

BASIL

What if you'd gotten pregnant?

LEAH

I would have had an abortion.

BASIL

Would you have told me about it?

LEAH

Yes. Maybe. I hope so.

BASIL

But even if I wanted the child, you wouldn't have kept it?

LEAH

I would not have.

Beat.

BASIL

But you didn't. . .?

LEAH

No. I give you my word on that. We were reckless in many things, but we were careful in that.

BASIL

My mum was sure you'd get pregnant so I'd have to marry you.

LEAH

At least something good came out of my refusal to have children. You were able to find the right partner. Emma is the right partner, isn't she?

BASIL

She is. She is the love of my life.

(beat)

You were my first love. I'd had other girlfriends—

LEAH

Quite a few of them, if I remember the outcry when we got together.

BASIL

--but you were the first woman I was ever in love with.

LEAH

Is that why you're here?

BASIL

Yes.

LEAH

To have one last fling with your first love?

BASIL

No! I'm not here to cheat on Emma or to hurt you with revenge sex. I was in love with you once. When you left, I was hurt and angry. But I still cared. I still care.

LEAH

Even though you haven't been in touch for fifteen years?

BASIL

I didn't know how. Every time I started to compose a letter, it felt wrong. But when I heard that your sister died, all I could think of was how much pain you must be in. You talked about Lily with such luminosity.

LEAH

She was the light of all our lives. She was smart and funny and loving. Kind. She forgave everything. Everyone fell in love with her as soon as they met her.

(beat)

That's why I never let the two of you meet.

BASIL

Because she was a good person?

LEAH

Because if you met her, you'd fall in love with her, like everyone did. You'd choose her and forget about me. Like everyone did. Because when I was beside her, all anyone could see was her perfection and my flaws.

BASIL

You trusted me so little?

LEAH

Any time someone met Lily, I just faded into the background. It wasn't malicious on her part, it's just who we are.

BASIL

Why can't you see what a vibrant, wonderful woman you are? I wouldn't have left you for Lily. Even if I'd been attracted to her, dumping you to be with your sister is inappropriate.

LEAH

It happens.

BASIL

It's not something I do. Besides, wasn't she already with Alan?

LEAH

Lily wanted children. You wanted children.

BASIL

Again, you create scenarios that have nothing to do with me. It's your fantasy version of a me I would thoroughly despise if I met him, and despise even more if I *was* him.

LEAH

Lily gave up her dream of having children when she married Alan.

BASIL

But what if she got pregnant?

LEAH

Alan got a vasectomy the month before their wedding. Lily gave up her dream of children to keep the man she loved. I would have to give up my dream of not having children to keep the man I loved.

BASIL

I'm sorry. I don't know what to say.

LEAH

You know why I married Darrin?

BASIL

I hope there was love involved.

LEAH

I thought so, at least at the beginning. Darrin made me feel special, like a prized possession. I didn't realize how literal that would become. He made me laugh. And he didn't expect me to change my mind about having children.

BASIL

(cautious)

It sounds like a good foundation?

LEAH

The one thing I told him was non-negotiable was fidelity.
We had a discussion about it before I agreed to marry him. No cheating.

BASIL

And he broke that.

LEAH

That was my punishment for having interests apart from him.
It's not like he'd get anyone pregnant. He'd gotten a vasectomy, too.
That was my wedding present.

BASIL

I would have rather had the silver soup tureen, but each his own.

They laugh.

LEAH

I'm sorry. I don't mean to dump this all on you, or sound like
I blame you for my bad choices.

BASIL

That's why I came over. To help you. If this is helping—

LEAH

I think it is, actually.

BASIL

Your choices might not be what you want now. But you did the
best you could with the information at the time.

LEAH

I tried.

BASIL

You *did*. You think of yourself as passive, but you're really not.
Your husband might try to clip your wings, but he can't clip your
soul.

LEAH

He would if he could, although he doesn't see it that way.

BASIL

But you won't let him, because you're strong.

LEAH

I don't feel strong.

BASIL

You don't see it, you don't realize it, because you're so busy doing. You always had wonderful ideas. We'd all sit around in the pub and throw out ideas, but you were the one who got us to do things.

LEAH

I always thought *you* were the catalyst.

BASIL

I tried to jump on the ideas first because I didn't want to get left behind.

LEAH

Weird that I don't remember it that way at all.

BASIL

You made the decision to study in England, and you did it. You made the decision to come back home. You did it. You married and found a career you love. You were always Lily's rock. I remember crisis after crisis, while you were in England. You solved Lily's problems from thousands of miles away.

LEAH

I was just being a sister.

BASIL

Now, here you are. You've had enough of your husband's philandering, so you're *doing* something about it. Your sister died, and there's all that administrative work to do in the aftermath. You're the one *doing* it. Do you not see how amazing you are?

LEAH

All I see is a hot mess.

BASIL

May I suggest an appointment with your optometrist?

LEAH

(laughing)

Maybe it should be with my therapist.

BASIL

(mock horror)

I'm British. I would never suggest that.

They laugh.

BASIL

I'm going back to the motel to get some sleep. Why don't I stop by in the late morning tomorrow—well, today, actually – and we can look through Lily's sketches. I can give you some idea of what's worked for us when it comes to notecards, mugs, tea towels, and the like.

LEAH

That would be great. Thank you.

Basil gets up, leans over to kiss her cheek, and jogs off. She hears him get into the car, the car start, and he pulls out.

LEAH

Me? Strong?

The lights fade.

The porch set recedes as the studio set moves forward and rotates.

Scene 3

Lights fade up on Alan's studio. He is painting, still the same painting of Lily as he's painted countless times, with fierce concentration.

Lily ambles around the studio, staring at the paintings.

LILY

Aren't you bored?

Alan doesn't hear her.

LILY

One of the things I loved about your work is that you weren't afraid to try new things. You could go from being a Canaletto wanna-be pleasing the tourists to abstract expressionism to figurative, sometimes all in the same day.

Alan keeps painting.

LILY

But this? This is just. . .creepy.

Alan finishes a canvas, puts it aside. He picks up a fresh, gesso-ed canvas from a stack against the wall, puts it on the easel and starts painting.

LILY

Do the lilacs this time! Or how about a portrait of Leah? She doesn't realize she's beautiful.

Alan paints.

Lily walks around behind him and looks at his work, disappointed.

LILY

No. Not again.

Alan paints.

LILY

I wish I was one of those ghosts who could pick things up and move things around. I'd take a knife and shred all these paintings.

Alan paints.

LILY

You're better than this, Alan.

She exits.

Alan blinks.

ALAN

Lily?

(beat)

Sometimes I almost feel as though she's here. . .

Lights fade.

The studio set recedes and rotates as the porch set returns to its usual spot.

Scene 4

Lights up on the porch set. Leah has notebooks and piles of sketches organized on a long table in front of the porch steps.

Lily joins her.

LILY

Color! You're wearing something with more color!

LEAH

Yeah, well, summer and all.

LILY

You look great in that. I always said you should wear more color.

LEAH

Color was always your thing.

LILY

Anyway, you look wonderful.

LEAH

You haven't been around much lately.

LILY

No. I've been. . .

(confused)

I don't know where I've been. Or what I've been doing. You have to stop Alan from painting that last afternoon over and over and *over* again.

LEAH

Why don't you stop him?

LILY

He doesn't pay any attention to me. I don't know if he *can't* hear me, or if he was doing his usual Alan thing of ignoring anything outside of the canvas in front of him.

LEAH

Were you lonely?

LILY

Sometimes. But then you and Darrin moved to town, and we could do things together.

LEAH

What about your other friends?

LILY

It's hard to make friends when your husband is famous, and you can't tell if they want to be friends with *you* or just use you as a conduit to get closer to *him*. I felt safer with you. I always felt safe with you.

LEAH

Basil was here last night.

LILY

You should have kissed him.

LEAH

He's coming back today.

LILY

You should kiss him.

LEAH

He's married.

LILY

That never stopped Darrin.

LEAH

Basil loves his wife.

LILY

Again. . .Darrin.

LEAH

I don't understand that kind of love.

Sound of the car. Car doors open and close. Footsteps on the gravel precede Basil's entrance.

BASIL

Good morning!

LEAH

Good morning. Did you sleep well?

BASIL

Every time I sleep in a bed not my own, I compare it to the beds we use in the holiday lets.

LEAH

How did it measure up?

BASIL

Ours are better.

(they laugh)

Emma suggested that, as soon as you've dealt with all the paperwork and other folderol around here, that you come and stay with us for a fortnight. As our guest. To get some rest.

LILY

What's your angle? Does she want a threesome?

LEAH

That's a very generous offer. I'll think about it.

BASIL

Please do. We'd love to have you stay. You could use a break.

LEAH

I could.

BASIL

You and Emma would like each other.

LEAH

(unsure)
Probably.

BASIL

She often teases me that if you hadn't trained me up properly, she would never have married me.

LEAH

I'm not sure I understand what that means.

BASIL

We're still friends with some of the old crowd, and get together with them. Well, usually, they come to the estate and stay for a bit. Although we've managed to get away to Majorca a few times, and even Corfu.

LEAH

And for me, getting into Boston is a big deal.

BASIL

Troy, Elliot, Melissa. Troy married Melissa, you know.

LEAH

I figured they'd get together eventually, from the way they always annoyed each other.

BASIL

They're happy. Most of the time. Elliot married a French girl.

LILY

Girl?

LEAH

(overlapping)
Girl?

BASIL

Woman. Sorry. Anyway, she's lovely.

LEAH

They all have kids, too?

BASIL

Troy and Melissa have two. Elliot and Dominique have three. Our kids are all growing up together as a pack. As parents, we're seriously outnumbered.

LEAH

It sounds great. But what does any of that have to do with me?

BASIL

Oh, you know how it is. We get together, have a few drinks. Tell *stories*.

LEAH

Don't Emma and Dominique feel left out?

BASIL

They have plenty of stories of their own. They had adventures before they settled down with us.

LILY

Did they settle down or settle for?

BASIL

You, of course, are a big part of these stories.

LEAH

I'm there even when I'm not? That's a little disturbing.

LILY

(sing song)

Cre-eee-py.

BASIL

Troy and Elliot adored you. They were quite put out when you chose me.

LILY

Oh, some more of the hot British guys you dated?

Basil looks around, as though he heard something, then brings his attention back to Lily.

BASIL

And you and Melissa were friends.

LEAH

Only when we were all in the group. We didn't spend much time together otherwise.

BASIL

The point is, Emma's heard all the stories—

LILY

Numerous times, I'm sure.

BASIL

(hasn't heard Lily)

--and she's set me straight, more than once. Although she loves the man I am now, she wouldn't have liked, far less married, the man I was when you and I first met.

LEAH

She can't give me credit for the man you've become.

BASIL

After you left, I sputtered for a bit.

LEAH

I'm sure you replaced me within the week.

BASIL

I dated. Quite a bit, actually.

LILY

(sarcastic)

Quelle surprise!

Basil looks around and frowns. He rubs under one ear.

LEAH

Are you okay?

BASIL

I keep thinking I hear someone. My ear must be still mucked up from the plane. Usually I hear less, not more.

Lily blows on his cheek. He looks in her direction, as she jumps back and laughs.

LEAH
Is your estate haunted?

LILY
Whooo! Whooo!
(laughs)

BASIL
An edifice has been on site for hundreds of years. Of course there are stories.

LILY
Edifice? Really?

BASIL
The stories are quite popular with the tourists.

LEAH
Have you ever experienced one?

BASIL
I've experienced things I can't explain. When I was a little boy, I thought I played with the ghosts, but Nanny explained it was the old stories mixed with the imaginary friends an only child my age sometimes comes up with.

LILY
Nanny says!
(laughs)

LEAH
Do you think you can stay until the Solstice?

Lights out.

Scene 5

Lights up on the porch set. Leah and Lorenzo are at the table, talking about the sketches and notebooks.

LEAH
You're sure they won't hurt the notebooks?

LORENZO

They know what they're doing.

LEAH

I guess I'm also afraid that someone there will read the text between the words, and maybe find something that doesn't paint Alan in a positive light.

LORENZO

Pun intended?

(Leah laughs and shakes
her head)

Amazing how our subconscious works.

LEAH

You haven't been to one of those workshops so you can psychoanalyze your artists again, have you?

LORENZO

No. But if I thought it would help Alan. . .

LEAH

We need to discuss this with Alan.

LORENZO

You're right.

Alan enters, riding a brightly colored women's bicycle, with a bag in the front basket.

LEAH

(laughing)

Alan! What are you doing, riding Lily's bicycle?

ALAN

I was out of Cadmium orange. I figured I could get some air, some exercise, and my paint.

LEAH

I wish I had my phone. I'd take a picture.

LORENZO

Please do *not* post it on social media?

LEAH

Why not? It's adorable. It humanizes him.

LORENZO

Great artists should remain enigmas.

ALAN

Make that a meme; I'm sure it'll get tons of hits.

LORENZO

Are you starting something new?

ALAN

Started a new painting last night.

LORENZO

I mean different.

ALAN

I haven't captured this—

LORENZO

You have. Too many times to count. I need something new from you, Alan.

ALAN

You'll get it, Lorenzo. Just not...yet.

LORENZO

I need a timeline.

ALAN

I can't give you one.

LORENZO

I have an idea to carry us through this, this *foliage* period.

ALAN

I need to get back to w—

LORENZO

I need you to listen to me, Alan.

LEAH

I need to talk to you about something, too.

ALAN

Do we have to do this now?

LEAH

Yes.

Beat.

ALAN

Okay, what is it?

LORENZO

(shuffling through the sketches)

I want to do an exhibit about your journey. The original sketches hung beside the finished works. The paintings themselves are all sold, but we have the clause in the sales agreements that they will be loaned back for exhibition.

(hands Alan a sketch)

ALAN

Lily's sketch.

LORENZO

That became your painting.

ALAN

Are you accusing me of something?

LORENZO

No, these are two different mediums. The sketches have never been seen before, or even discussed. It would be a tribute to your partnership.

ALAN

Or I'll be accused of stealing her work.

LEAH

Is that what you did?

ALAN

Not intentionally.

(beat)

Not really. But I'd look at her sketches and I'd see how the painting would look. I'd let the images speak to me as I painted them, instead of trying to re-create the sketch.

LORENZO

Different ways of interpreting an image.

ALAN

Well, *her* interpretation of it inspired *my* interpretation of it.

LORENZO

We can make this work. It's no secret that Lily was your main inspiration.

LEAH

It's a way to honor her memory.

LORENZO

And buy us time while you work through your foliage phase.

ALAN

I'm never going to get over losing Lily.

LEAH

No one expects you to.

Lorenzo gives her a look.

LORENZO

But you have to learn to live with the loss.

ALAN

I remember when she drew this. We were on Front Street in Hamilton, Bermuda. We rented bicycles and rode around. She loved the colors on the buildings, the blue, the pink, the yellow. She stopped and sketched in pencil first. Later, when we got back to the room, she added in some color. We joked how the buildings looked like ice cream sorbets lined up in a row.

LEAH

Wait, this sketch was the inspiration for *Sorbet Emporium*?

ALAN

Yeah.

LORENZO

That? That painting that went from the light ice cream parlor theme leading into something dark and unknown?

ALAN

Yeah. I loved what she did with the colors, but as I painted I wondered, what if they were the enticement, leading to something much darker? It's not as though the colonial history of the island is upbeat.

LEAH

I had no *idea* that
(points to studio)
could come from *this*.

ALAN

I can't really explain it. It just *is*.

LORENZO

That's why it would be so fascinating to put the sketches and the paintings in a show together.

LEAH

I don't think anyone would consider that you stole her work to get to yours.

LORENZO

But the way her vision contradicts your vision is fascinating.

ALAN

(reluctant)
Okay. Yeah. Whatever.

LORENZO

We'll make an appointment to go through the sketches and you can tell me what pairs with what. You can tell me the anecdotes behind each. I'll tape our interviews and have Macy, who does our copy, turn them into short behind-the-inspiration pieces to hang with them.

ALAN

(weakly)

Great.

LEAH

While we're on the subject of Lily's work, I need to talk to you about the rest of Lily's sketches.

ALAN

Do we have to do this now?

Leah hesitates.

LORENZO

Yes.

(Alan folds his arms)

I want to do a show of Lily's sketches.

ALAN

That's what you're doing, with the ones that inspired my paintings.

LORENZO

No. Lily's other sketches.

ALAN

What other sketches?

LEAH

These.

(taps stack of notebooks).

These.

(waves pages at them).

They're whimsical and beautiful and deserve to be seen.

Alan starts paging through the sketches.

ALAN

I had no idea she did all these.

LEAH

She did them while you were in the studio and she was alone.

(beat)

Why didn't you encourage her work?

ALAN

She did this for fun.

LEAH

She had *talent*. Or did you only want one artist in the family?

ALAN

The business is ruthless.

LEAH

Obviously.

ALAN

Lorenzo can tell you—

LORENZO

Nope. Not on me, friend.

ALAN

I was afraid she'd be hurt.

LEAH

So you hurt her first? By making her think she wasn't good enough?

ALAN

(turns abruptly and heads
for his studio)

She left them to you. Do whatever you want with them.

They watch him go.

LEAH

(sarcastic)

Well, *that* went well.

LORENZO

You told him. You're not doing anything behind his back. Let's move on with the show.

LEAH

We haven't discussed the merchandising with him.

LORENZO

You don't need to. You heard him. Do whatever you want.

(beat)

Word of advice? Don't sign the contract for the merchandising until after your divorce. You don't want it to be part of your assets.

(at her look)

I know a thing or two about divorce. I'll see you later.

He exits.

Leah goes back to sorting.

Darrin enters and watches her. She knows he's there and ignores him.

DARRIN

Are we ever going to talk about this?

LEAH

I'm letting my lawyer do the talking. I, personally, have nothing to say to you.

DARRIN

Come home, Leah. I miss you.

LEAH

You should have thought about that before sticking your tongue down Cora Davis's throat in public.

DARRIN

Come on, Leah, we're not teenagers in high school.

LEAH

Yet there you are, making out in public. No, Darrin, we're not teenagers. We're supposed to know better.

DARRIN

Look, I made a mistake—

LEAH

You've been doing it for years. *Knowing* how I felt about it. *Knowing* that when, not if, but *when* I found out about it, how much it would hurt me.

DARRIN

You do whatever you want. *We* do whatever you want.

LEAH

That's not true.

DARRIN

We moved here so you could be near Lily.

LEAH

Yeah, well, that's not an issue anymore.

DARRIN

You want to move somewhere else? Name it. We'll go anywhere you want. I can transfer. I could start my own business. What do you want?

LEAH

I'm fine here.

DARRIN

Then come home.

LEAH

I'm fine without you.

DARRIN

Are you in love with Alan?

LEAH

That is ridiculous.

DARRIN

You're living here with him.

LEAH

In the guest room.

DARRIN

Your British boyfriend visiting you there at night?
Did you think I wouldn't find out about it? It's a small town,
Leah.

LEAH

He's an old friend who came over for Lily's memorial service on
the Solstice.

DARRIN

What memorial service?

LEAH

We're doing something to honor Lily and release her on the
Solstice. She loved Solstice. We talked about this, Darrin.

DARRIN

What about the psychic?

LEAH

She'll be here. We hope that'll finally make Alan let go.

DARRIN

We? You and your British boyfriend?

LEAH

Lorenzo and I. Don't tell me you think I have something going with
Lorenzo, too. Unlike you, I don't have time to go catting around.
I'm too busy here.

DARRIN

We moved here so you could be close to Lily. You were worried
about your younger sister.

LEAH

Of course I was. I was off studying in England. She meets Alan and
marries him right away. He stashes her here while he works.
She was lonely.

DARRIN

The one time you leave her, she makes her own decision.

LEAH

The one time I do something for myself, she goes off and gets married.

DARRIN

It's not like she was underage and kidnapped. She was a legal adult when she met and married Alan. You've always behaved as though you two were orphans and you brought her up.

LEAH

I practically did. Both our parents worked so hard to keep a roof over our heads. And all the time my father spent with those other women.

DARRIN

Marrying Alan was the only decision in her life you didn't control, and you've never forgiven her for it.

LEAH

That's not true.

DARRIN

You think I never noticed those small moments when you punished her? Where you made fun of the way she danced barefoot in the grass, or called her the artist's little drudge instead of his muse? Do you know who you sounded like?

Beat. Leah finally looks at him.

LEAH

You.

Beat.

DARRIN

(unsteady)
Me?

LEAH

The way you make fun of the cardigans I wear because the library's air conditioning is up so high. The "Marian the Librarian" cracks when I wear glasses. How I'm too old to take over and lead an archive with technology changing so fast.

DARRIN

Those are jokes. I mean them with affection.

LEAH

When I tell you they hurt and you don't stop, that's not affection.

DARRIN

You were being oversensitive.

LEAH

You *hurt* me, Darrin. Over and over and over again.

DARRIN

I'm, I'm sorry. Why didn't you tell me?

LEAH

I did, and you'd tell me I was oversensitive.

DARRIN

And you'd get over it and be fine.

LEAH

All I did was hide the pain because I was too exhausted to keep fighting with you.

DARRIN

I'm sorry.

LEAH

You're right, though. I took the pain from what you did and flung it at Lily.

DARRIN

Now you're blaming me for your behavior?

LEAH

No. I did it, and I can never make it right. I ran out of time before I could make it right. But I'm going to honor Lily at the Solstice. Beyond that, in the way I live my life.

DARRIN

By acting like Lily?

LEAH

By letting the best of who I was with Lily inform who I want to be in the future.

(beat)

Without you.

Beat.

DARRIN

(quiet)

Were you going to invite me to the memorial?

LEAH

No.

DARRIN

I'd, I'd like to come. I cared about Lily, even though I sometimes made bad decisions around her. I'd like to say goodbye.

LEAH

I don't—

(deep breath)

Yes. If you don't make trouble.

DARRIN

I won't.

LEAH

If you do, I'll ask you to leave.

DARRIN

I promise. Thank you.

He turns and exits. Leah watches.

LEAH

I hope I haven't made a mistake.

Lights fade.

Scene 6

Lights up for the Summer Solstice. The flowers in the hanging pots bloom. The vase on the porch is filled with roses. Multi-colored string lights are hung across the porch.

Leah exits the house carrying several bottles of wine and goes around the house, out of sight.

A moment later, Lorenzo exits the house, carrying a box, headed for the car, as Leah returns.

LEAH

You're taking Lily's notebooks *now*?

LORENZO

I'm putting them in the car. You know how it goes. Alcohol. Emotion. A bonfire. Someone's going to try throwing them in the fire.

LEAH

I don't think anyone—

LORENZO

I do.

He exits with the box. Leah watches him.

LEAH

Okaaay.

Selena enters, from around the house, from where Leah recently entered.

SELENA

Everything looks beautiful. Basil's doing a good job with the firepit.

LEAH

Thank you. Alan's still in his studio. I'm worried he won't—

SELENA

I'll handle Alan.

(Lorenzo enters)

Both of you go ahead. We'll be there soon.

They exit.

Selena sits in the chair Leah usually used.

SELENA

Okay, Lily, come on out. It's time to get things settled.

Beat.

Lily enters, as though she doesn't want to be there.

LILY

I always loved Summer Solstice.

SELENA

That's why they chose today to honor you.

LILY

Will there be more summer solstices wherever's. . .next?

SELENA

I can't answer that.

(beat)

But I do believe that you can create the afterlife you want.
It's not a wave in the ocean that just sweeps you away.

LILY

I hope there are roses.

SELENA

You haven't been around as much as you used to.

LILY

Not much reason to be here. Leah's got everything organized.
As usual. Alan, I don't know how to help Alan. He still doesn't listen to me.

SELENA

Where are you when you're not here?

LILY

I don't know. I can't remember where I was when I get back. That's one of the reasons I'm scared to leave for good. What if there's . . . nothing? What if I just cease to exist?

SELENA

Do you believe that?

LILY

I don't know what I believe any more. I was never much of a church goer. But I always believed there was *something*. Now I'm afraid I'll find out I was wrong.

(looks at Selena)

I don't want to hear any platitudes about how I'm not really gone as long as someone remembers me.

SELENA

I wasn't going to offer any.

LILY

Oh.

SELENA

If what you want isn't where you're going, then create it. Isn't that what you did here? In the fabrics you chose, the way you decorated, the garden you created. You chose colors and scents and textures to create beauty and joy. Everyone who walks up to the house smiles when they see what you've created.

LILY

A legacy of domestic happiness. Gee, how original.

SELENA

It made you happy.

LILY

Sometimes.

(admits it)

Yes. It made me happy. Sometimes I was ashamed of how happy it made me.

SELENA

You used this garden as the basis for a lot of your sketches. You saw beyond the tangible, and your sketches teach others to see.

LILY

Teaching six-year-olds to paint somehow seems more tangible.

SELENA

But this is where you are now. You'll create wherever you go. That's who you are.

LILY

You're right. But how do we shake Alan up?

SELENA

Let's go in and convince him to attend the solstice celebration.

LILY

Will you help me? With everything?

SELENA

(holding her hand out)

Yes.

Lily takes her hand. They walk toward the studio as the porch set moves out and

The lights crossfade into

Scene 7

Lights crossfade up into Alan's studio as it moved forward and rotates.

There are even more canvases of Lily in the foliage than before. Alan is working on more of the same.

A small RADIO in the corner of the studio plays softly.

Selena knocks, then enters the studio, with Lily behind her.

SELENA

It's the Summer Solstice.

ALAN

(painting)
I know.

SELENA

The bonfire's ready.

ALAN

Let me guess: Lorenzo sent you in here to suggest I take all these Lily paintings and toss them in.

SELENA

No. But it's a party in Lily's honor. Don't you want to be there?

ALAN

I need to work.
(looks at her)
Don't start on me with what Lily would want in this situation.

SELENA

I wasn't going to.

ALAN

Then you'd be the first.

SELENA

I'm unique that way.

Alan looks at her and laughs.

SELENA

Why don't you ask her yourself?

ALAN

She's here?

LILY

(annoyed)
I'm here, Alan. Where am I going to go?

SELENA

You're holding her here.

ALAN

If only that were true.

SELENA

You need to let her know you're going to be okay.

ALAN

I'm not going to be okay. I'm never going to be okay.

SELENA

You're being selfish.

ALAN

Because I grieve?

LILY

I admit, I'd be annoyed if you didn't miss me. At least a little.

SELENA

Because you refuse to learn to live with the grief.

ALAN

I'm afraid.

LILY

Of forgetting me? Maybe I'll come back for the occasional haunt.

ALAN

I'm afraid I'll forget what it felt like when things were wonderful between us. I'm afraid I'll forget what it felt like when I realized it was my fault she died.

LILY

It's not your fault!

SELENA

The drunk driver of the car who hit her is the reason she's dead.

ALAN

But she was on the road at that moment because she tried to get away from me.

LILY

I was on the road because we needed milk.

ALAN

If I hadn't said those things to her, if I hadn't made fun of her for wanting to teach kids to paint at camp—

LILY

--we still needed milk.

SELENA

This is your chance to apologize to her.

ALAN

I don't deserve her forgiveness. I don't deserve to feel better. Ever.

LILY

Oh, Alan! Of course you do. You think I'm *happy* that I was killed when I was? It's not my idea of a good time. But it's not *your* fault.

ALAN

It feels almost as though she's in the room. Trying to talk to me.

Lily tips over a jar of paint brushes. She's pleased that she can finally do it.

Alan looks at the brushes scattered all over the floor and then at Selena.

SELENA

She's here.

ALAN

Cue the scary music? Come on, how'd you do that?

SELENA

She's here, Alan. She wants to say goodbye. She wants to let you know she loves you. She needs you to let go so you can live the rest of your life, and she can go to what's next.

ALAN

What's next for her?

SELENA

I don't know.

ALAN
Something good?

LILY
I hope so. I'm scared.

SELENA
I believe it's something good because of Lily's intrinsic joy.

ALAN
But it was joy in *life*.

SELENA
It *is* joy in being.

ALAN
Lily? Are you really there?

LILY
(stands in front of
him)
I'm really here.

ALAN
I'm sorry. For every time I was thoughtless. For every cruel word.
For every time I didn't realize I was cruel.

LILY
I know. I'm glad to hear you say it. But I know.

ALAN
You think she knows how much I love her? How much I will
always love her?

SELENA
She knows.

LILY
I know.

They embrace and touch foreheads for a moment.

RADIO

Breaking news: A shooter opened fire at the Jingle Bee Summer Day Camp today, killing twelve six-year-old campers and three counselors during their art session. The shooter, who took his own life, is thought to be the parent of one of the campers, who lost custody in a divorce.

Alan and Lily break free of each other and step back in horror.

LILY

Those children! Those poor children!

ALAN

That's where Lily was supposed to teach!

LILY

Selena, what can I do to help those children?

ALAN

It means if Lily hadn't gone out that day last fall and been killed by the drunk driver, she would have been killed. . .*today*.

LILY

My options were killed in a car accident or shot? Not loving those.

ALAN

It would be the same outcome. No more Lily. But I would have had her for six more months, at least. . .

LILY

You wanted me to get *shot*?

SELENA

You didn't want Lily murdered by a mass shooter.

ALAN

I didn't want her murdered by a drunk driver, either. I want her *alive*.

SELENA

But she's not.

LILY

Alan, you have to let me go. Please. I can hear children crying. . .

ALAN

(turning off the radio)

Do you think they heard anything about it? Out there, at the fire pit?

SELENA

I don't know. If they left their phones in the house, as I asked them, then no.

LILY

Alan, please! I can hear them crying, but I can't get to them!

ALAN

We need to do this. We need to have the celebration for Lily before they find out.

LILY

Thank you, Alan. Thank you.

Alan leaves the studio.

SELENA

Are you ready, Lily?

LILY

Yes. I know what's next now, Selena. Thank you.

She rushes after Alan. Selena takes a beat, then follows as the lights fade.

Scene 8

The porch set remains off, revealing the beautiful back garden. The studio set turns and recedes.

The garden is set up for a beautiful party, with a firepit, decorated tables, poles in the ground with decorative lights strung between them.

Leah, Basil, and Lorenzo are there, chatting as the lights fade up. Alan strides in, followed by Lily and Selena.

ALAN

Let's honor Lily.

They look at him for a minute, surprised. Leah looks for Darrin, but he's not there.

ALAN

(grabbing a glass of
wine)

Our favorite Lily stories.

SELENA

Speak from the heart about Lily. Simple's best, don't you think?

LEAH

I'll start. Lily, you were my younger sister. I always wanted to protect you. The first time you captured fireflies in a glass jar, when we were kids, they died overnight. I knew their deaths would make you cry, so I built tiny little fireflies out of pipe cleaners and tulle and glitter and phosphorescent paint, and put them in the jar. When you woke up, I told you the fairies changed the fireflies into something that wouldn't try to escape.

LILY

I thought Mom did that! Or maybe that neighbor, who was into crafts. Those fireflies are still in a box somewhere in the house.

LEAH

When we were teenagers, I didn't want any of the boys to hurt you by not understanding you. But you were the one who protected me when my senior prom date stood me up. We went to that carnival passing through town, going on the rides and eating too much cotton candy.

LILY

We had so much more fun than those at the silly old prom.

LEAH

We laughed so much that night, I sometimes forgot to be sad. We met that really cute guy—

LILY

The one with the motorcycle! I think I see a pattern here.

LEAH

He ran the Tilt-a-Whirl. I was sure he'd fall in love with you, but he was so kind that night, and even bought us ice cream.

LILY

Milo! I often wondered what happened to him. Or that carnival.

LEAH

After his shift was over, he took us to play the arcade games his friends ran. He won a stuffed penguin, which he gave to me, and a giant butterfly, which he gave to you. The next morning, we found out that most of the kids at the prom got food poisoning from contaminated shrimp.

BASIL

Sounds like you got the best part of that night.

LEAH

Fly free like this origami bird.

Leah tosses the bird into the flames. She raises her glass and drinks. Everyone drinks.

LORENZO

What did I tell you? Alcohol? Bonfire? Paper?

LEAH

You're up next, Lorenzo.

LORENZO

To Lily, filled with grace, charm, beauty, talent, endless patience, and bottomless compassion.

LILY

Who's he talking about? Because that doesn't sound like me.

LORENZO

The world will know your whimsy. May you dance in all the meadows of the universe.

He raises his glass and leads them in a drink.

LEAH

Basil?

LILY

Sexy, sexy, Basil!

BASIL

I only knew Lily through Leah's stories. She was a woman of boundless energy and talent, and very much loved by those who knew her.

LILY

If you don't visit him in England, I *will* come back and haunt you.

BASIL

I'm sorry I never knew you, but the woman I met through the stories was extraordinary. Rest in love, my girl.

He leads them in a drink.

Leah goes around refilling glasses as Darrin enters.

DARRIN

(to Alan)

Did you hear about the shooting?

ALAN

Don't say anything. Please?

Leah comes over and hands him a glass.

LEAH

Darrin, why don't you say something next?

DARRIN

Um, yeah, sure.

(deep breath)

Lily, you were always kind. No matter what. The world needs more like you.

Leads them in a drink.

LILY

Thank you? I think? I'm glad you think I was kind, because sometimes, with you? Not so easy.

LEAH

Selena?

SELENA

Lily, I only met you after you left this world, but your humor, your talent, and your compassion touch me.

LILY

Thank you.

SELENA

May you have a delightful, energized afterlife.

Leads them in a drink.

DARRIN

I thought we were supposed to hope she rests in peace?

ALAN

I don't think a bland afterlife would suit Lily.

LILY

Not at all.

LEAH

Finally, you, Alan.

ALAN

I feel as though you should have the last word, Leah. Start with you, end with you. Full circle.

LEAH

Her life started with me and ended with y—okay, that sounded better in my head, never mind. But she loved you so much, Alan. The last word should be yours.

ALAN

Lily, I always made fun of people who claimed they fell in love at first sight. Then, I walked into the group student show at the end of your first semester. You were the only freshman who got a few pieces in. You were trying to hang that multi-media piece of the mermaid dancing in the waves on the tips of her tail, and it wouldn't hang straight.

LILY

I'd made her scales out of pieces of soda cans I'd cut up and painted. Since she wasn't in the center of the painting, one side was heavier than the other, and I couldn't get it to hang straight.

ALAN

You were the most beautiful, luminous creature I'd ever seen. I wasn't sure how to get you to notice me. I came over to help you with the painting and figure out how to attach weights to the back the frame to make it hang straight.

LILY

You were my hero, that night and forever forward, even during the rough times.

ALAN

I regret every word said in anger or through lack of understanding. Know that I loved you with everything I had, and I will always miss you. I still have a lot of work to do to learn to be without you. But I don't want you trapped here, in my misery. I want you to continue your soul's journey in joy.

LILY

I love you, Alan.

ALAN

I love you, Lily.

He leads them in a drink.

LILY

I love all of you. Very much.

There's the faint SOUND of children crying. Lily looks over her shoulder.

LILY

I have to go. I'm needed. I'm *needed*.

ALAN

May your soul always fly in love.

Lily blows kisses at all of them. She starts to leave, then runs back to kiss Alan. She runs out.

DARRIN

Now what?

LEAH

It's the longest day and shortest night. We sit up, feed the fire and tell more Lily stories.

DARRIN

Is it okay if I--?

LEAH

Yes.

ALAN

I'm going back to the studio. I have work to do.

LORENZO

Alan—

LEAH

(overlapping)

Alan. . .

ALAN

I'm going.

He sends a look to Darrin, who understands the request not to mention the shooting. Alan exits to his studio. A moment later, the light goes on in the studio.

Crossfade lights down on the garden to

Scene 9

Lights crossfade into Alan's studio as it partially rotates and comes forward.

Alan takes off the half-finished canvas and puts it to one side. He puts up a fresh canvas on the easel and walks over to choose paints.

Lights crossfade from Alan's studio into

Scene 10

The garden, at sunrise. Everyone is in different places, having moved around in the night.

Leah stands up from her chair and stretches.

LEAH

Now that we've solved all the world's problems, I'll get the coffee started and make some breakfast.

BASIL

I'll help.

Darrin glares at him, but keeps his mouth shut.

Alan enters, carrying a painting so no one can yet see it.

ALAN

I finished!

LORENZO

(weary)
Another?

ALAN

Even *you* will like this one.

He turns the painting around. It has a vibrant, colorful background. The single image is the painting of a botanical lily with Lily emerging out of the top, reaching for the sky.

LEAH

Alan, it's beautiful!

LORENZO

This is amazing!

DARRIN

Even I like it.

BASIL

That's quite extraordinary.

SELENA

You did it. You let her go.

Lights down except for a spotlight on Alan with the painting and on Lily.

ALAN

Go in love, Lily.

LILY

Love.

Lights fade.

###END OF PLAY###

