

# ITHAKA

By  
Andrea Stolowitz

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**Time:** The Present

**Settings:**

Lanie's House, Valley Center, CA  
The Car  
The California Desert  
Desperado Roller Coaster, Primm, NV  
Hospital Room, Henderson NV  
The Car  
The Nevada Desert  
Evie's House, Stewart, Nevada

**Characters:** (5 actors needed 3W/2M)

Odysseus (doubles with Jacob)

Captain Elaine (Lanie) Edwards, USMC: Convoy Commander, 8th Logistics Battalion. 31 years old.

Lance Corporal Eve (Evie) Richardson, USMC: Driver, 8th Logistics Battalion. 25 years old.

Bill Edwards: Lanie's husband.

Jacob: A psychiatric technician in Henderson, NV (doubles with Odysseus).

E.M. Richardson: Evie's Mother

Pixie/Celeste The Cat (doubles with Evie)

**Running time: 80 minutes, no intermission**

**Notes:**

1. The actor playing Odysseus must also play Jacob. Although I leave the specific ethnicity and conflict from which Jacob hails open to the director, a specific place/ethnicity must be chosen. The characters speech is accented by this choice.
2. The actor playing Evie must also play the cat.
3. It is the playwright's wish that the play be cast as diversely as possible, reflecting the diversity of the American landscape and the makeup of the US military.

**Synopsis:**

Marine Captain Elaine Edwards has just returned from her latest tour in Afghanistan but this time things are different - home doesn't feel right and nothing makes sense. After a blow up fight with her husband propels her to skip town, she undertakes an Odyssean journey through the American landscape battling her monsters, trying to find her way home.

Stolowitz's work draws from interviews with veterans and their families. In Fall 2011, Stolowitz was awarded the Fowler/Levin Prize with this winning play concept.

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*Scene 0. Prologue: Odysseus in the  
Phoecian Court.*

ODYSSEUS

It is without guile that I stand before you now.

It is well known I believe the struggles of the Trojan war.

And you have asked me to speak of it from what I know.

But how shall I tell it to you who have not been there?

Home. Home where I have longed to be since the ending of this wretched war. The sweet smell of Ithaka when the grasses bloom. The sea air. The rocky coast.

*We are in Ithaka for a moment.*

ODYSSEUS (CONT'D)

The war as you know it ended long ago. Ten years in fact, with everyone else arriving home, but not me. A punishment for me perhaps for my failures as a leader. And now I Odysseus have been swept here, to your shores.

You have asked for my story and I know I should spin a great tale of monsters and treasures of whirlpools and rocks and sun gods and Gods of wind and this story will so delight you that you'll take pity on me and bring me home.

But I cannot tell you this story. The truth is what I am here to tell. The song that forces men to stuff their ears. I am here to sing the siren's song. The true story of the Trojan War.

*Odysseus holds in that moment while lights come up to  
reveal Lanie in her yard. He fades out as she fades in.*

LANIE

Pixie. Pixie. Pixie. Here girl. Here girl girl. Come on Pix.  
Come on. Come on Pixie. Come on. Come on girl. God damn it. Come on Pixie.  
Come on girl! Come on!

*Lanie pulls a cigarette and lighter out from her running  
shorts. She looks back at the house, at her cigarette and  
then decides to put it away.*

LANIE (CONT'D)

Fuck.  
Come on girl! Pixie!

*Bill enters in his work clothes.*

BILL

Lanie-

LANIE

Yeah?

BILL

Come on in. Breakfast is ready.

LANIE

I went all the way across the big field at the end of the road. I didn't see her.

BILL

She'll come back. She will.

LANIE

You don't know that. You can't possibly know that.  
She doesn't know what to do outside. How to protect herself.

BILL

We've already looked for her for two hours.

LANIE

I saw her sitting by the glass door, looking out and I stopped and then I opened it for her. Because when I was a kid I had this cat who went outside and for a moment I thought...I got confused. So I opened the door and she ran out.

BILL

It's OK.

LANIE

Why would I forget that?

BILL

It's nothing. It happens to everyone. And you're tired.

LANIE

I've been back nine days.

BILL

Remember when we went to Panama? It took us weeks to get back to feeling normal. We walked around like zombies. And that was only a three week trip. And that was only Panama.

LANIE

I forgot where the silverware drawer was yesterday. I opened every damn drawer in the kitchen trying to figure out where to put the spoons.

This could be it. This could be what it is. The cognitive functioning of a fucking chimp. This could be fucking it.

*She starts to crack up. Bill stares. She stops laughing when she notices he's not laughing.*

Sorry. Sorry. Not funny. Not funny at all.

Guess we just have a different sense of what's funny now.

BILL

Lanie, did something happen?

*Lanie stares*

BILL (CONT'D)

You know...over there?

LANIE

It's a war. Things always happen. Otherwise no one would bother to show up.

BILL

Right. It's just...You seem-

LANIE

What?

BILL

I don't know.

You could talk to someone, you know. They have people for you to talk to.

LANIE

Fuck you.

BILL

Lanie-

LANIE

Maybe you should go fucking talk to someone. Maybe you're the one with the problem.

*Beat.*

LANIE (CONT'D)

Look I'm sorry. I know you're just trying to help.  
Just so you know, so you can cross that off your list, I did that already. Talk to  
someone I mean. They make you do it when you get back. I did it; they checked the  
little box and I passed ok?

BILL

OK.

LANIE

So please don't worry about me. I'm fine.

BILL

OK.

You ready to go in? The food's getting cold.

*Beat*

LANIE

I'll come in a minute.

BILL

Lanie-

LANIE

I will. I just need a minute.

*Bill waits.*

LANIE (CONT'D)

You don't have to wait.

BILL

I know.

*He waits.*

BILL (CONT'D)

Lanie...I'm sorry I didn't write more. When you were gone.

LANIE

No you did. You did write. I got a letter a week. I just didn't...By the end I didn't have  
much to say. To write back.

*Bill nods.*

BILL

Yeah. It felt dumb writing about how the gardener flooded the neighbors pond or that there was a new mall opening up.

*Lanie nods.*

So I'm sorry I didn't write more.

LANIE

Yeah. Don't worry about that.

BILL

Dave and Cassie are super excited your back. Cassie especially. She says she has so much to tell you. She wouldn't even tell me. They asked about dinner on Saturday.

LANIE

I don't know.

BILL

Dave said he'd bring those huge chocolate covered strawberries you like. And they have photos from their Costa Rica trip.

I think it would be good for you. To see some people I mean. Friends. Yeah?

LANIE

Ok.

BILL

Great. It'll be fun. You'll see. It'll help you feel like everything is getting back to normal.

LANIE

I'm gonna look around a little more. Around the block and stuff.

BILL

I have to go to work.

LANIE

Yeah. Yeah. I know. It's OK. I'll be OK.

BILL

Alright. I'll-uh-I'll leave your breakfast on your plate.

LANIE

Thanks buddy.

BILL

Well, have a good day.  
I'll call you.



LANIE

OK. Thanks. You too.

*Pause. Bill leans in to hug Lanie. She remains stiff but tries to hug back. It's awkward.*

BILL

Call me if you need me.

LANIE

Will do.

*Bill exits. Lanie looks after him. She pulls out the cigarette. She lights it.*

LANIE (CONT'D)

Come on Pixie. Come on girl. Here Pix Pix. Come on baby. Come on back.

*Scene 2. Lanie sleeps fitfully. Evie speaks a letter.*

EVIE

Dear Mom and Chrissy-  
I'm fine.

We've been through four and half months here and sometimes it feels like four and a half years and other times four and half minutes. The roads are so bad and we spend so many hours in the truck I can feel my teeth rattling even when we're not driving. I think of you guys a lot and I try to picture the house.

I look different now. I mean I cut off all my hair. Well a friend of mine did it for me. Chrissy, I got the photo of you and Bo and the wedding dress. Of course I'll sing.

We went to a wedding here once. We had to search everyone so it wasn't like we were guests, but it made me think of you. I don't know if I'll ever send this. I write a lot of letters I don't mail. And sometimes my hand just gets tired in the middle and I stop writing. And sometimes I just think of the letter I would write if I had a pen.

It's hard for me to hear in my right ear. It feels like it needs to pop, like remember when you and me and Chrissy took the airplane to see Grandpa in Texas. Remember how Chrissy cried about her ear? That's how I imagine it feels.

*Sounds of shelling as Evie starts to fade out. Sounds of shelling. Lanie screams. Bill wakes up.*

BILL

Lanie? Lanie?

*She gets out of bed. She's up now and pacing. Nervous.  
Looks out the window.*

Lanie. Are you ok?

LANIE

Yeah. Yeah.

BILL

What was it?

LANIE

Nothing. I thought I heard some-

*Bill looks at her*

A noise.

Probably a truck or something. Just startled me awake.

BILL

You want me to...Should I get you some water?

LANIE

No. No thanks. I'm just...I'm gonna just go outside for a minute.

BILL

It's dark.

LANIE

I know. I just want to get some air, outside.

BILL

I'll come with you.

LANIE

No. No. You should sleep. You need to be up for work.

BILL

I don't mind.

LANIE

It's fine. I'll be back in a few minutes. I will.

*She rushes out. Bill looks after her.*

BILL

Lanie-

*She's gone.*

*Scene 4. Evie's in a pool of light, driving.  
She's talking as if she's talking to the person  
next to her in the truck.*

EVIE

I know a joke about death. What? Don't look at me like that. You have to laugh at it.  
It's like a big fuck you to death.  
Alright. Fine. I'll tell it to Carlito then.  
He likes jokes about death.

*She turns her neck around to talk to Carlito.*

Hey Carlito? Wanna hear a joke about death?

*She turns back to the passenger.*

See. He wants to.

BILL (IN DARKNESS)

Lanie-

*Evie starts to fade into darkness and the light expands to  
Bill and Lanie who are cleaning up a messy post-dinner  
party kitchen. Dishes all over. Empty wine bottles.*

LANIE

I'm sorry-

BILL

I'm trying to talk to you.

LANIE

I-I'm sorry.

BILL

Why did you...

LANIE

I didn't mean to-

BILL

Lanie why would you say that to Dave and Cassie?

LANIE

They asked.

BILL

They were making conversation.  
He was joking.

LANIE

But it happens to be true. They do explode.

BILL

It's obvious he was just joking.

LANIE

I don't get the joke.

BILL

He was joking about the flavor of MREs.

LANIE

How would he even know what one tastes like? And how am I supposed to know it was a joke?

BILL

It's fine. It's fine.

LANIE

Obviously it's not.

BILL

Just please please don't talk about people's legs being blown off.

LANIE

He brought it up.

*Bill stares at her*

BILL

He did not.

*Beat*

And you don't want to go to the movies with Cassie.

LANIE

I said sure. I said I'd go. I told her I would.

BILL

It would be nice if it seemed like you wanted to go.

LANIE

Well I don't want to go.

BILL

Why not it's just a movie--everyone goes to movies. It's what people do.

LANIE

I tried to say it but-

BILL

No you didn't, you just looked bored.

LANIE

Well those movies sound boring. And Cassie is boring. And baby clothes are boring. You'd think she's the first fucking person on the planet to get pregnant the way she talks about it. It's not that fucking hard. People have been doing it for millennia. Anyway that's boring too.

*Bill stares.*

LANIE (CONT'D)

More fucking people on the planet. What for?

BILL

I see.

Well something's got to be interesting. There's got to be someone you want to see. Something you want to do.

LANIE

I want to find the cat.

*He clatters around the dishes. It's loud.*

LANIE (CONT'D)

And I don't want to sit in a movie theater in the dark. There are too many people.

*Bill looks at her*

LANIE (CONT'D)

Forget it. You wouldn't get it.

BILL

That's all you ever say. You never give anyone a chance.

LANIE

All of you people sitting here with great cares about nothing. Shitty stupid jokes about things you don't understand. I hate all of you smiling and pretending you know where it's at. Like you can even understand.

BILL

Well I'm sorry we didn't all have your experiences.

LANIE

That's stupid.

BILL

Well maybe I'm just stupid then. Look at me, your stupid fucking husband trying to make it all ok. Do you even know what it's like trying to talk to you?

LANIE

Don't-

BILL

Why? Are you the only one who gets to express opinions? You sit around all day moaning about how no one understands but when anyone tries to do anything, be nice, whatever, you just make everyone feel bad.

LANIE

I don't-I didn't mean-

BILL

Every time you see me you leave. And I think, I do, I think maybe there's somebody else you'd rather be with and that's why-like maybe when you were gone you-all that time away-

LANIE

No-I-  
No.

BILL

You scream at night but you don't want me there. If I even try to touch you, you back away.

LANIE

That's not-

BILL

And then you're obsessed with the cat and finding the cat and asking all the neighbors about the cat. People talk you know-they all think-you know what they think-

LANIE

Stop-

BILL

I know shit happened over there and you won't talk about it. So I wonder if it's me, or the circumstances, or what, but everything anyone does or says-

LANIE

Please-

BILL

I understand you're having a hard time but other people have-

LANIE

Stop talking now.

BILL

You don't get to decide who gets to talk. You can't write me up-

LANIE

I don't want to talk-

BILL

Listen-

LANIE

About any of-

BILL

Listen to what I'm-

LANIE

Stop-

BILL

You think it's all about you-Well it's not, it's not all-

*Suddenly Lanie lunges at Bill. She grabs him and pushes him up against the wall hard.*

LANIE

Stop. Stop fucking talking. Stop.

*As Lanie holds him steady she pushes her forearm against Bill's throat. He gasps. Lanie continues to push and then realizing what she's doing, stops. Blood drips out of Bill's nose. He looks at her. He wipes the blood away with his hand and stares at it. She stares at him in horror. She takes a step away from him.*

LANIE (CONT'D)

Oh my god. Oh my god.

*He wipes his nose again and looks at the blood. He glares at her and exits.*

LANIE (CONT'D)

Wait-

*Lanie slides down the wall and collapses on the floor.*

Wait-

*Scene 5. Morning. Lanie is asleep on the kitchen floor dressed in her clothes from the night before. The kitchen is a disaster. Evie enters. She looks at Lanie. She shakes her awake gently with her foot.*

EVIE

Captain Edwards, you're drooling on the dash.

*Lanie wakes up.*

LANIE

Richardson?

*Evie smiles.*

EVIE

God fucking damn it, demobilization is a bitch. All the hurrying up and waiting.

LANIE

I know. Days of waiting in lines.  
You see the shrink?

EVIE

Checked that box.

*Evie looks around*

EVIE (CONT'D)

You ready?

LANIE

For?

EVIE

Don't try to get out of it. You said you would. This was the plan and here I am.  
It'll be fun.

LANIE

Yeah right.

*Lanie looks at her*



LANIE (CONT'D)

You look good.

EVIE

You don't.

*Lanie laughs*

LANIE

Always you with the honesty.  
No really. You're fine?

*Evie spins around.*

EVIE

Still a little hard to hear in the ear but other than that, all ok.

*Evie looks around.*

EVIE (CONT'D)

What happened in here?

LANIE

Don't ask.

EVIE

Looks the same as in the pictures. Except for the mess all over.

LANIE

Oh my God, you've got to see what I got. You're gonna love this.

*She pulls out eight boxes of different breakfast cereals.*

I bought them. All eight of them.

EVIE

The list of top 8 breakfast cereals. Where were we when we made that?

LANIE

Leatherneck to Fiddler's Green.

EVIE

That's where we had to wait like ten hours for them to clear the road.

LANIE

Not that trip.

EVIE

The one with the exploded goat?

LANIE

No, the one with the state department guy who got sick in the back. I don't know why they don't just fly those guys around.

EVIE

They like to scare 'em so they don't want to come back. Or at least make it so they'll want to travel with the Army next time.

LANIE

Really?

EVIE

You didn't know that?

LANIE

I'm sorry. I was in charge of convoys not strategic thinking about state department passengers.

EVIE

That was the trip where Carlito was telling us about how his latest girlfriend was the prettiest girl ever. That guy dated more people in country than anyone could possibly date at home.

LANIE

And you sang LOVE IS A BATTLEFIELD.

EVIE

Yeah. For his new girlfriend. Poor her.

*Lanie takes out the froot loops from the box and holds a few in her hands.*

LANIE

Aren't they pretty?

*Evie starts to sing LOVE IS A BATTLEFIELD. She hams it up using the milk as a mic.*

EVIE

"We are young, heartache to heartache we stand"

*She hands Lanie the mic/milk. Motions for her to sing. Tells her the words.*

EVIE (CONT'D)

Come on. "No promises, no demands." Come on.

*Lanie sings.*

LANIE

“No promises, no demands”

EVIE

“Love is a battlefield”  
What were we carrying then?

LANIE

Cement. Building supplies.

*Lanie takes out frosted mini-wheats. She gives one to Evie. Evie eats it. Lanie eats one too.*

Isn't that amazing?

EVIE

Let's eat them all. Like a sample tasting or something.

*Lanie gets out bowls and spoons and milk. They have many little bowls. They pour different cereals into each bowl. They eat with wild abandon.*

LANIE

I had to go to three stores to get the cap'n crunch with crunchberries. But you know, there's plenty of time these days.

EVIE

Yeah.  
Oh my god. Cinnamon toast crunch.

*Beat*

EVIE (CONT'D)

You have a map?

LANIE

In the car.

EVIE

I'll check that.

LANIE

You're driving?

EVIE

Of course.  
You remember that canal?

LANIE

It was a ditch.

EVIE

It had flowing water in it used to irrigate fields. I think it'd be called a canal.

LANIE

There were a lot of buttons and levers on the dash.

EVIE

You drove it into a canal.

EVIE (CONT'D)

And who got the thing out of the canal? Who saved the \$250,000 vehicle? I think I did.

LANIE

Fine.

EVIE

I like you in the navigator's seat. Away from the controls. And bring all the cereal.

LANIE

We'll need sleeping bags. Tent. Food.

EVIE

Beef Jerky.

LANIE

Really?

EVIE

I love that stuff.

LANIE

Really?

EVIE

Oh yeah. Just like old times.

*Lanie looks around the messy kitchen. She pulls out a pen and paper.*

LANIE

I should leave a note. But what would I say?

EVIE

Say you're taking a vacation from your respite.

*Lanie writes*

Say you're following an already made plan. Say you're driving out of state lines. Say you'll be home soon?

*Lanie writes. She looks up at Evie.*

LANIE

I have all the letters and pictures that were by your bunk The ones you always wanted to mail to your Mom...

I'll bring them. You can have them back now. You can give them to her yourself.

*Lanie turns back to the letter she's writing*

"Don't worry. From Lanie"

EVIE

You can't finish letters with "don't worry". It's like an invitation to worry.

LANIE

Oh. Well. Wouldn't it be worse if I crossed it out now?

EVIE

Fine. Let's go.

LANIE

Now?

EVIE

Why not?

LANIE

I let the cat out.

EVIE

Well she'll get back in.

LANIE

No I mean she's not supposed to be out.

I've been looking for her.

EVIE

And she's gone?

*Lanie nods.*

You want to look again?

*Lanie nods. She pulls out the binoculars.*

Alright, let's go.

Come on. Lighten up.

We've got an adventure to go on, 15 months in the making.

*Lanie nods.*

"We are young, heartache to heartache we stand"

*Evie sings the rest of "love is a battlefield" as they exit.*

*Scene 6. Lanie and Evie in the car. Evie is driving. Mirrored sunglasses on. Lanie is looking through binoculars with the map spread out on her knees. They are eating beef jerky and drinking bottled water. Lanie is smoking a joint.*

LANIE

Three o'clock. Joshua tree three o'clock.

*She points*

There.

EVIE

Got it.

*Lanie looks through binoculars.*

LANIE

Keep the speed constant. Don't slow up on the hill. Truck coming up on the left.

*She observes.*

Truck passing on the left. Nothing remarkable about the truck. One driver. No passengers.

*She drinks water. She passes a joint to Evie. Evie takes it and smokes.*

EVIE

This makes me feel like I'm 15 again. Driving through the desert high. Such nice roads here. You can just drive and drive.

LANIE

No checkpoints.

EVIE

No explosions.

LANIE

No state department people in the back.

*She looks in the back.*

No one in the back.

*Lanie looks through binoculars.*

Cop up ahead. Slow up. Slow up. More. Keep it steady now.

EVIE

Wave to him when we pass.

*They pass the cop and smile and wave.*

LANIE

Look he waved back.

EVIE

Law enforcement seems so sweet after being in the marines. Kind of like a kindly uncle or something.

*She smokes.*

LANIE

Left side, 10 o'clock in the sky. Red tailed hawk.

EVIE

We've already seen like ten of them. Don't you know any other birds?

LANIE

Road runner. Turkey vulture. Desert sparrow.

EVIE

Well tell me when you see something that's not a red tailed hawk.

*Lanie looks at the map.*

LANIE

53.4 miles till we're over the pass. 350 miles to destination. Steady pace till then.

*She looks with her binoculars.*

One desert to another huh.

EVIE

You wanna finish this? (re: joint).

*Lanie takes it.*

LANIE

I like that no one's shooting at us.

*They eat the beef jerky.*

EVIE

Or yelling at us.

LANIE

Or telling us where to drive, with whom, and when.  
So big out here ya know.

EVIE

Yah.

LANIE

Home is too small. Closed in. I like to have space. When you have space you can see everything. The whole terrain. You'll know what I mean when you get home.

EVIE

Oh I know what you mean.

LANIE

Yeah. At home it's just like one day goes into another.  
And all the people you see are shopping or smiling or doing some dumb bullshit thing and you think what the fuck is wrong with these people because they seem really happy and you wonder, "did I used to be happy doing some dumb bullshit thing? Is it all really just a succession of more bullshit things?" And I want to shake them. Like say, "Don't you know? Don't you know? We're at war. There's a war." I try not to go out too much. Sometimes people know you've come back and they're all like stopping you and saying "thanks for your service" like they've done this amazing thing by noticing you and you're thinking, "don't fucking thank me, I was just doing my job. Now you do your job and I'll do mine."

*She pulls out her phone.*

Here look. I took a picture. There was this mall with an indoor skating rink, like in the middle of summer. Here, look--

*She passes the phone. Evie looks.*

That's what people do all day. Ice skate inside during the summer in the desert.

*Evie hands the phone back.*



EVIE

It wasn't your fault you know.

LANIE

I don't want to talk about that.

Do you think in ten years that stupid fucking health center is going to be there?

It'll still be half-built.

EVIE

That's not the point.

LANIE

No?

I led people in there- I was responsible for them. And for what?

I- I don't want to talk about this.

*She looks out with binoculars*

LANIE (CONT'D)

Century plant. Two o'clock.

After it happened that stupid shitty lieutenant tried to take over my convoy. Asshole. I stood up to him. I told him, "You get the hell off that vehicle *Lieutenant*, this is *my* convoy and I'll make the decisions here". You were already in the helicopter. He jumped down. It was a mess. Such a mess. That's the story I should tell the people who thank me.

*She looks at the phone. She throws it out the window.*

EVIE

Did you just drop your phone out the window?

LANIE

No. I threw it.

EVIE

Well how will we know what time it is now?

LANIE

We'll tell time by the sun like the cowboys of old. I hated that picture anyway. Jerky?

EVIE

Sure.

*Lanie breaks it in half and gives it to her. They eat.*

LANIE

Remember how Carlito was always going on about dead people?

EVIE

Yeah.

LANIE

Saying like he could see them and all that and like that they hung around for some undetermined length of time while they separated from their bodies?

EVIE

Yeah.

LANIE

That's how I feel sometimes. Like I'm separated from my body.

EVIE

But you're not dead.

LANIE

I'm not talking about the dead thing I'm talking about being separated from your body.

EVIE

Are you really high?

LANIE

No. I'm being serious.

EVIE

So you think he was right?

LANIE

What, about dead people?

No. You?

EVIE

I don't know. Maybe.

LANIE

So you think that maybe there are all these half-dead people hanging around that only Carlito could see? What a fucking nightmare. The living people are annoying enough, now I have to worry about pissing off the dead ones too? Think of all the half-dead people who like to hold a grudge.

EVIE

Have you seen him?

LANIE

Carlito. No. I heard he's doing OK though. Adjusting. I'm sure he doesn't want to see me.

One o'clock. Palm canyon.

EVIE

You should go see him.

LANIE

And say what? "Hey Carlito, sorry about that leg." What, am I gonna bring him a new one? Anyway, I don't want to talk about this. And I'm not going to see him and I'm not going to think about any of this. So tell me more about the whatever it's called.

EVIE

The Desperado.

LANIE

I can't believe I ever agreed to this.

EVIE

Length: 5, 843 feet. Max speed 90 miles per hour. Duration: two minutes and 43 seconds.

*They drive.*

Music?

LANIE

No radio reception. And I just threw my phone out the window.

EVIE

Just like old times.

LANIE

Oh no.

EVIE

We got to have some music.

LANIE

No more Pat Benitar.

*Evie thinks. She sings Beastie Boys.*

EVIE

"Just plug me in like I was Eddie Harris  
You're eating crazy cheese like you think I'm from Paris"

LANIE

Uhhhhh. Not Beastie Boys.

*Scene 7. Thirty miles outside Primm,  
Nevada. It's dark, before sunrise.*

EVIE

Are we there?

LANIE

Almost.

EVIE

You didn't crash the car.

LANIE

I can drive you know.

*She hands Evie a granola bar. Evie takes it.*

EVIE

Thanks.

LANIE

What now?

EVIE

What do you mean?

LANIE

Sleep more or go on?

EVIE

Is that the sun?

LANIE

Yeah.

EVIE

It'll be up soon.

LANIE

So go on?

*Evie looks at Lanie*

EVIE

You're tired.

*Lanie nods*

I told you you should have let me drive.

LANIE

I'm fine. I don't sleep much. I don't need to sleep much.

*Evie looks at her*

EVIE

Sleep.

LANIE

We're almost there.

EVIE

It's been there since 1996. It's not going anywhere.

LANIE

I can't sleep.

EVIE

Of course you can. You close your eyes and think of nothing and let your body relax.  
Here.

*She pulls a sleeping bag out of the car and makes Lanie  
a bed.*

Lie down.

LANIE

Here?

EVIE

Why not? We're way off the road. No one's here.

LANIE

The sun'll be up soon.

EVIE

It's not up yet.

LANIE

It'll get hot here real quick.

EVIE

It's not hot yet.

LANIE

You think I should lie down here and sleep?  
Right now?

EVIE

You have to sleep when you're tired or it doesn't work.

LANIE

What?

EVIE

Lie down and I'll tell you.

*Lanie lies down.*

The trick to sleeping is to lie down when you're tired. Don't try to sleep when you're not tired.

LANIE

That's a little asocial isn't it?

EVIE

You just got back from a war and you're worried about being asocial?

LANIE

No I just mean you know, like long term. Life wise. You can't just lie down and sleep when you're tired. It's like hard to function in society and all. "I'm sorry Mr. Boss person but I'm tired now so I need to lie down and take a nap even though I just got to work. My body just says it's tired you know?"

*Evie stares at her*

What?

EVIE

You're talking when you should be sleeping.

LANIE

The sun is coming up. It's day.

EVIE

You slept fine over there.

LANIE

I got used to sleeping there. It's quiet here in the wrong ways.

Close your eyes. EVIE

No. LANIE

Close them. EVIE

I- LANIE

I'll watch you. EVIE

I don't like closing them. LANIE

I know. EVIE

*Evie sits down and puts Lanie's head on her lap. She strokes her eyebrows.*

I used to do this for my nephew. EVIE (CONT'D)

Justin? LANIE

Yeah. EVIE

Your sister's kid. LANIE

Yeah. EVIE

I loved that birthday photo you had of him. LANIE

EVIE  
He called it the eyebrow trick. Here's the trick: If you put your fingers on somebody's eyebrows they close their eyes. Every time. And the first step to sleeping is closing your eyes.

*Evie holds her hands over Lanie's eyes.*

LANIE

They said I should take pills.

EVIE

Shhh. Shhh.

LANIE

I don't like them. They do make me sleep but then I wake up all terrified.

EVIE

Shhh.

LANIE

How come you can sleep?

EVIE

Shhh.

LANIE

No, how come?

EVIE

Because I never had great responsibility.

LANIE

What does that mean?

EVIE

That means you can't control everything. Now shhh.

LANIE

It's funny isn't it?

EVIE

No.

LANIE

Maybe it's like the spider/snake thing.  
Don't you want to know about the spider/snake thing?

EVIE

Oh my God. You can't sleep if you don't stop talking. You don't need sleeping pills  
you need stop talking pills. Now shhh.

*Beat.*

LANIE

Sing.  
Please.



*Evie looks at Lanie.*

EVIE

There's a land that is fairer than day  
And by faith we can see it afar  
For the father waits over the way  
To prepare us a dwelling place there

In the sweet by and by  
We shall meet on that beautiful shore  
In the sweet by and by  
We shall meet on that beautiful shore.

*Scene 8. Lanie and Evie in line at the  
Desperado Roller Coaster, Primm, NV. They  
are watching it.*

EVIE

Look at that.

LANIE

It's big.

EVIE

I told you it was big.

LANIE

It didn't sound that big.

EVIE

It's called the Desperado. How can it not sound that big?

LANIE

But it wraps around the whole building.

EVIE

I told you that.

LANIE

Seeing is believing.

EVIE

You scared?

LANIE

No. Well. Maybe.

EVIE

You don't HAVE to do it. You can watch.

LANIE

I have to do it.

EVIE

That's silly.

LANIE

I'll do it. Does it look like what you remember?

EVIE

Pretty much. I said it was fast.

LANIE

It's not even called a roller coaster. It's called a hypercoaster.

EVIE

I know.

LANIE

Alright. Ready?

*Evie nods*

This was the most fun thing you ever did?

EVIE

It is.

LANIE

Maybe it was circumstantial. I mean you were 15. With a guy you were in love with. Without any parents.

EVIE

And it was summer and it was hot and it was night.

LANIE

Right. My point exactly. Maybe it was circumstantial.

*She looks at Evie*

I'm just kidding. I mean I am scared shitless. But I'm glad we're here.

EVIE

You helped me you know.

LANIE

Don't-

EVIE

I was scared. It was loud. And I thought any moment it would stop but it just kept going. Louder and louder.

*Sound of roller coaster or shelling*

In my ears. My teeth were rattling. And then there was a pause. And you told everyone-

LANIE

Not to move.

EVIE

But I-

LANIE

You were scared-

EVIE

So you grabbed me.

LANIE

Your eyes were off. Like faraway.

EVIE

I wanted to run into it. I wanted to make it hit me so I didn't have to wait for it. And I felt someone pulling me back and it was you-

*The scene transforms into a war scene with heavy shelling*

LANIE

Richardson-

*Evie stares at her*

Don't go out there. Stay close by us here.

*Lanie pulls her.*

Stay here. Don't go out there. It's not time yet.

*Evie stares at her.*

Richardson--Look at me-

*Evie looks at her*

What's the first thing you're gonna do when you get home.

EVIE

What?

*Shelling. Evie crouches. Lanie crouches. Silence.*

LANIE

When you get home.

*She turns Evie's face to her.*

When you get back what's the first thing you're gonna do?

EVIE

Ride the Desperado.

*Shelling.*

LANIE

Look at me.

*Evie stares*

What's the Desperado?

EVIE

It's a roller coaster.

LANIE

Yeah. Is it big?

*Evie tries to walk out again.*

Stay here and tell me about the Desperado.

EVIE

Nevada. Used to be Stateline but people confused it with the other Stateline.

LANIE

What else. Tell me more about it.

EVIE

It's big,

LANIE

Yeah?

*Loud shelling.*

Stateline?

EVIE

It's big.

LANIE

Picture it. Can you picture it? Do you see it?

EVIE

Yeah.

LANIE

We're gonna be here for a while.

EVIE

Yeah.

LANIE

I want you to imagine that you're belted into your seat on it.

EVIE

Yeah.

LANIE

And when it's loud here you just think about how loud that roller coaster is and just pretend your riding that roller coaster? Ok Richardson?

EVIE

I'm going up now. I'm riding it up.

LANIE

Good.

*Loud noise. Scene shifts. Roller coaster. They are back in line.*

Our turn.

EVIE

Ready?

LANIE

Let's go.

*They climb into the roller coaster*

EVIE

Now we go up. For 209 feet.

LANIE

Great.

EVIE

This is the best part because it's all in front of you and hasn't happened yet.

*They start to slowly go up*

LANIE

Like the kiss. With the guy. When you were 15.

EVIE

Right. Like on the way up I didn't know that three months later he would fool around with his ex-girlfriend at a party.

LANIE

This is steep.

EVIE

Look at the mountains.

*Lanie looks down.*

LANIE

Oh shit.

EVIE

Look up at the mountains.

*Lanie does.*

Better, right?

LANIE

Yeah.

EVIE

Just don't look down. Keep looking at the mountains.

LANIE

I'm looking at the friggin' mountains.

EVIE

Good.

*They go up.*

LANIE

This is it. The top.

EVIE

Hold on there. Not quite yet. We're in the first car. They'll hold for a few seconds at the top.

LANIE

Great.

EVIE

Privilege of being in the first car. Here it comes. Here it comes.

*They are at the top.*

EVIE (CONT'D)

Lanie?

LANIE

What?

EVIE

Don't look down OK?

*Evie starts to unfasten her safety belt*

LANIE

What are you-

*Evie is unbuckling and leaning forward.*

EVIE

I mean it. Look at the mountains.

LANIE

What are you doing?

EVIE

I'm unbuckling.

LANIE

What? You can't-What are you-You'll die.

*Evie looks at her and shakes her head and touches Lanie's eyebrows. Evie unbuckles. She looks at Lanie.*

EVIE

But I'm already dead.

*Evie climbs out as the coaster descends. Lanie starts screaming as the roller coaster falls with a rush of noise. The screaming continues into darkness into-*

*Scene 9. Lanie screaming as she wakes up in a hospital bed in Henderson, NV. A male nurse has come in practiced and efficient with a syringe. He has a foreign accent.*

LANIE

Wait-

*He stops.*

What's-

JACOB

It's to help you calm down.

*She pauses. She tries to calm down.*

LANIE

There's been an accident. I was in an accident. On...I was in an accident on a roller coaster.

*She starts to get upset.*

There's been an accident.

JACOB

You are in a hospital. In Henderson. Nevada.  
Give me your arm.

*Lanie looks*

Trust me ok. You'll feel better. It'll quiet your mind. Trust me.

*She calms but does not give her arm.*

LANIE

There was an accident on the roller coaster.

JACOB

Was there?

LANIE

Yes. Yes. Someone...Someone fell off.

JACOB

Really?

LANIE

Yes.



JACOB

Who?

*Lanie stares at him. She realizes.*

LANIE

It wasn't real.

*Jacob nods.*

JACOB

Good.

LANIE

None of it was real.  
Was I even on a roller coaster?

JACOB

Oh yes.

LANIE

I was?

JACOB

You went on the Desperado.

LANIE

Right.

JACOB

At Buffalo Bill's. You went on, but kept screaming. At the bottom they helped you out but you wouldn't stop screaming. Couldn't stop. They called an ambulance. And here you are.

*Lanie stares*

They gave you a tranquilizer in the ambulance.

*He looks at his watch.*

That was about 11 hours ago. So that means if everything settles down you have 61 hours left.

LANIE

Left?

JACOB

Until you can go.

LANIE

What? I don't? What?

*She starts to get upset again.*

JACOB

I think you'd feel better if you'd let me give you that shot.

LANIE

If you give me that shot I'll be asleep for the next 11 hours.

JACOB

That's usually better in the short term. The body needs sleep.

LANIE

Yes.

JACOB

You can trust me on this. This is normal in cases like these. You will calm down and then figure things out after that.

LANIE

Is this a common situation?

JACOB

We get many people here who are like you.

LANIE

Like me?

JACOB

You are in an emergency psychiatric bed. Happens more than you would think really.

LANIE

Right.

JACOB

Are you going to want this shot? My arm is getting tired.

LANIE

Maybe in a bit.

JACOB

Well. I'll put it down then.

LANIE

Is this real?

JACOB

Yes. We are in Henderson, Nevada and you are-

*He looks at the chart*

Elaine Edwards.

*She thinks*

LANIE

I see.

Aren't there any doctors? Or other people?

JACOB

Yes, yes of course. They've been checking on you periodically but while you were sleeping there is not much they can do. There is not much they can do now anyway.

LANIE

Oh.

JACOB

I'll tell them you woke up and someone will be in to see you.

LANIE

Unless I have another shot.

JACOB

In that case I'd tell them you'd be up in another 11 hours and then they'd come in to talk to you.

LANIE

Oh. Don't you have other people-other patients to-

JACOB

It's 4AM.

LANIE

Oh.

JACOB

It's because you got the shot at 5PM.

LANIE

11 hours.

JACOB

Right.

LANIE

Right. I get it. So this is real.

*She looks around*

LANIE (CONT'D)

Because this is pretty weird too.

JACOB

Yes, but look you can see...

*He knocks his fist on his head*

I am real.

*He knocks his fist on her head.*

And so are you.

And someone in the last world, with the roller coaster, was not.

LANIE

How do you know that?

*He holds up her chart.*

JACOB

You told the doctor when you came in.

LANIE

Right.

But maybe those things...in that other world...maybe those...

*Beat. She waits.*

JACOB

Maybe those are the better ones?

LANIE

Right.

And if you split the difference between what's real or not...

JACOB

Maybe you'll prefer to stay in the not real?

*Lanie nods. Jacob nods. Pause.*

LANIE

Right. You know I think I will have that shot.

JACOB

Alright.

*He gives her the shot.*

JACOB (CONT'D)

You'll feel better soon. Sleep. Sleep.

*Scene 10. Haldol/Lorazepam dream. Lanie on an empty night club stage.*

LANIE

Hello? Hello. Is anyone there? Hello?

Evie? Evie? Are you there? Are you out there? Is anyone out there?

*She calls*

All I can see is a picture of you. When you were driving. I took that picture with the digital camera your sister sent. You were smiling, sun shining through the window, giving me the thumbs up sign.

I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

*She looks out into the audience.*

Hello? Hello? Is anyone there?

*Scene 11. The hospital. Lanie wakes up. There is a flower on the night stand. She looks at it. She picks it up. She sniffs it. She puts it down. It's the only element of great color in the white room. Jacob enters. He brings her a meal.*

LANIE

I thought you gave the shots.

JACOB

They pay well in overtime.

It's meat loaf.

LANIE

I'm sure I've eaten worse.

JACOB

You might not have.

*He hands her the tray. She takes off the cover. She sees her pill cup. She takes her pills.*

JACOB (CONT'D)

I brought you the flower.

I thought it was kind of sad. No one was coming for you here.

LANIE

No one knows I'm here.

JACOB

Maybe it would help you...you know...if someone knew.

LANIE

I like to take care of things myself.

JACOB

I can see that.

LANIE

Look, I appreciate that you want to, help me. I just...I'm not interested...thank you.

JACOB

When you were sleeping I came in. To check on you. You were talking in your sleep.

LANIE

Look, the doctor was in here this morning.

I didn't want to talk to him and he's a trained professional. So thanks.

JACOB

You were saying things like "yes sir, top intel, sir" and then you started to yell about not traveling in the dark.

LANIE

Stop.

JACOB

And about trucks.

LANIE

No.

JACOB

And about a boy who played soccer.

LANIE

I don't want to talk about it. I don't want to fucking talk about it. Talking changes nothing. It changes fucking nothing alright so what is there to say? That's what's wrong with everyone. People talking with nothing to say.

(MORE)

LANIE (CONT'D)

Fuck you.

What do you fucking know? What do you even fucking know anyway?

*Beat.*

JACOB

I know the crunch that bones make when you walk over bodies. And I know the feel of feet sinking into a ground soft with mud and flesh.

I know what it is like to tell your wife who begs you to flee the country with her and your baby girl that it will all be fine. That it is nothing. A few upstart rebels, but nothing important. Telling her to trust you and smiling at her worry. Insisting that you know best.

I know what it is to believe in something with your whole heart and then be wrong.

I know what it is like to search and search and then finally find their bodies and hold them, wishing they would wake up or that you could go back, go back in time, and make the right choice.

I know what it is like to beg and wish for death but instead to be granted asylum. To live when the others are dead.

To be here, in this very very strange land that is not my home.

And that is all I know.

*Scene 12. Lanie Haldol/lorazepam dream.*

*Lanie is on the stage again, this time there is an audience.*

LANIE

That's the thing about death folks. It feels final and not at the same time. I find sometimes laughing at death helps. It's like saying a big "fuck you" to death. What do you say? Who wants to say "fuck you" to death? Let's all say it together--ready--1,2,3 "Fuck you death". Come on folks. One more time. All together now, "fuck you death". OK folks now some jokes.

Three buddies die in a car and go to heaven for an orientation. They are all asked, "When you are in your casket and friends and family are mourning over you, what would you like to hear them say about you?"

The first guy says, "I would like to hear them say that I was a great doctor of my time, and a great family man."

(MORE)

LANIE (CONT'D)

The second guy says, "I would like to hear that I was a wonderful husband and school teacher which made a huge difference in our children of tomorrow."

The last guy replies, "I would like to hear them say, 'LOOK, HE'S MOVING!!!!!!'"

LANIE (CONT'D)

What do you think of that folks? A funny joke about death. But it is funny because none of us really wants to die. I mean we walk out the door in the morning and if we come back that night we all think, "whew this was great. Didn't die today". Didn't die today.

Ever wonder what happens after you die? Everyone wonders this. Here's what I think happens. I think people go to where they say they're gonna go. So like this, "Mabel and I believe that the soul circles around the body for seven days and then ascends to heaven". Bam. You are circling the soul for seven days and ascending to heaven. Or like, "I believe you go into the ground and you are cold and you compost". Bam, that's what's happening to you. You are what you eat folks and you are what you think about death. Here's another one for you all. Anyone like baseball? Any baseball fans out there.

LANIE (CONT'D)

Two buddies, Bob and Earl, were two of the biggest baseball fans in America. Their entire adult lives, Bob and Earl discussed baseball history in the winter, and they pored over every box score during the season. They went to sixty games a year. They even agreed that whoever died first would try to come back and tell the other if there was baseball in heaven.

One summer night, Bob passed away in his sleep after watching a Yankee victory earlier in the evening. He died happy.

A few nights later, his buddy, Earl, awoke to the sound of Bob's voice from beyond.

"Bob is that you?" Earl asked.

"Of course it me," Bob replied.

"This is unbelievable!" Earl exclaimed. "So tell me, is there baseball in heaven?"

"Well, I have some good news and some bad news for you. Which do you want to hear first?"

"Tell me the good news first."

"Well, the good news is that, yes, there is baseball in heaven, Earl."

(MORE)



LANIE (CONT'D)

"Oh, that is wonderful! So what could possibly be the bad news?"

"You're pitching tomorrow night."

LANIE (CONT'D)

Ladies and Gentleman thank you very much, this is a live taping of jokes about death sent to you by Haldol and lorazepam and sponsored by Glaxo-Smith-Klein. Good night everyone.

*Scene 13. Lanie sits on hospital bed wearing the clothes she came to the hospital in, the same ones she wore the night of the dinner party. She has her purse next to her.*

JACOB

Looks like they almost have you all ready. They give you the medicine?

LANIE

Yes.

JACOB

Are you worried?

LANIE

Yes.

JACOB

You'll be fine.

LANIE

You think?

JACOB

I don't know. What do I know anyway?

*He smiles. Beat.*

LANIE

Yeah. I'm not going to take the pills.

JACOB

I think they want you to.

LANIE

Yes. I know.

JACOB

Where are you headed? Geographically I mean.

LANIE

North.

Outside of Carson City. Stewart.

*Jacob nods*

You think it's crazy right?

JACOB

Elaine. I do not know which way is better. Perhaps your way will work. There are many ways to return home. You will have to find yours.

*Lanie looks at him. He smiles.*

JACOB (CONT'D)

But one thing...

*Lanie looks at him. He smiles.*

JACOB (CONT'D)

Stay off the roller coasters.

*Scene 14. Lanie is driving through the desert.*

LANIE

OK Evie. No shots. No meds. Come back. Come back. OK. That didn't work. Evie I'm driving north to Stewart. I'm bringing you home. Just like the plan. Would you mind accompanying me? I've spent a complicated 72 hours in Henderson because you jumped the fuck out of the roller coaster. So get in the car. My god here I am ready to be crazy and I can't even make it happen.

OK fine. I'm going to do something really crazy. I'm going to close my eyes for ten seconds while I'm driving and when I open them you'll be here. In fact, I won't open my eyes until I hear your voice. OK? Here I go.

*She closes her eyes.*

LANIE (CONT'D)

One...Two...Three.

*A horn sounds.*

Four.

*Another horn. Someone falls from the sky into the car.*

LANIE (CONT'D)

Five...Six

CAT

Open your goddamn eyes. You're gonna cause an accident.

LANIE

Evie?

*Lanie looks. It's the cat.*

Oh my god.

You're...

CAT

The cat.

LANIE

My cat.

CAT

Your cat. I mean I hate the ownership titles but if you insist.

LANIE

OK.

*Lanie touches her.*

You feel real.

CAT

You can't look for markers like that to check for sanity.

Anyway, you threw away the medicine so what do you care?

LANIE

Care about what?

CAT

About what's real. Now look, I have three rules of traveling. 1) You let me stop when I want. Moving vehicles make me wretch. 2) If I say I need to go potty I mean "and now". No dilly dallying around looking for the next exit. 3) Don't get offended if I fall asleep mid sentence. I am a cat.

*Lanie stares.*

CAT (CONT'D)

Oh wait--one more. No more driving with your eyes closed pleased. You may have a death wish but I like the reality that I'm inhabiting. I'm not interested in being in a car accident with you. Now drive.

LANIE

Drive?

CAT

Are we going to Stewart or not?

*Cat shuffles around and sits down, the way cats do with her head curved around her body.*

LANIE

Have you seen Evie?

CAT

It's not like a giant holding cell you know. It's not like all of us dead things cluster around and have a giant party.

LANIE

I see.  
So you are then?

CAT

What?

LANIE

Dead.

CAT

Brace yourself.

*Cat looks at her.*

Yes.

LANIE

So I'm talking to my dead cat?

CAT

Again with the ownership. But yes.

LANIE

I guess it doesn't really matter does it?

CAT

What?

LANIE

I'd be just as crazy if I were talking to my alive cat, right?

*Beat*

LANIE (CONT'D)

So.

CAT

So.

LANIE

Are you here to tell me something?

CAT

What?

LANIE

I don't know. But whatever it is, I'm sorry about it.

CAT

You humans are so self-important.  
But I will tell you something.

*Pause. The cat licks her paw for a long time.*

LANIE

Now?

CAT

What?

Oh yes.

I really don't like the natural litter. Not the recycled paper, not the wheat sand, not the pine.

LANIE

OK.

CAT

And when you were gone Bill fed me tuna fish. Sometimes sardines. By the end he and I had a good system worked out. It wasn't so smooth at first. When you were gone. It wasn't so easy.

LANIE

What?

CAT

For me.

*Lanie looks at the Cat. A horn beeps.*

Watch out. That was a truck.

LANIE

Sorry.

CAT

First off you left, quite suddenly.

LANIE

We weren't expecting to deploy. They moved us up.

CAT

All I'm saying was that it was rather sudden for all of us.

LANIE

I-

CAT

Shhh. I'm telling the story from my perspective now. And then Bill kept forgetting to buy cat food and litter. So I started peeing on the bed. Which he wasn't happy about. So he moved to the couch.

LANIE

Are you kidding me?

CAT

Pipe down. He bought a new mattress after a month.

LANIE

A month?

CAT

Or maybe it was just a new mattress cover.

*Lanie looks at cat. Car beeps.*

So there you were, gone, leaving me with Bill who frankly wasn't remembering to feed himself let alone me and-

*The cat suddenly stops talking, yawns, and start to lick her paws and wash her face*

LANIE

Pixie-

*The cat looks*

CAT

Right. Sorry. Bill. He stayed up late, wrote you letters which he recycled, ate canned chili and let me pee on the bed. And those were months one, two, and three. By month four things got better. That fucking talking refrigerator picture frame ran out of batteries. The one where you said, “hi sweetie!” everytime someone went by it. Bill and I avoided it but occasionally we’d wander into its range. “Hi Sweetie”, “Hi Sweetie”. And there you were god knows where away. What if you never came back and we were left with just that photograph and voice? Anyway, the friggin thing ran out of batteries and things improved after that. Like we got into a routine and I guess Bill didn’t know you had a thing for the natural litter so he bought me Fresh Step and let me tell you, the natural kind sucks. We were fine. I mean he missed you. He’d re-read your letters and sometimes set the breakfast table and put a picture of you there with him so he could have breakfast with you. It was nice in a saccharine kind of way, if you go in for that sort of thing. Anyway, he missed you.

LANIE

And you didn’t?

CAT

I’m a cat. My needs are few.

*A horn beeps.*

Do you want me to drive?

LANIE

No. Definitely not.

CAT

Maybe you could slow down.

LANIE

I like driving like this.

CAT

No doubt.

*Horn beeps*

CAT (CONT'D)

But you know what, if you drive like this the cops are gonna pull you over. Or you'll end up dead. Up to you.

*Cat licks herself.*

LANIE

I looked for you.

CAT

I know. I heard you calling me.

LANIE

Why didn't you come?

CAT

Because I'm a cat.

LANIE

And?

CAT

Slow down and I'll tell you.

LANIE

I'm not going to bargain with a cat.

CAT

Suit yourself.

LANIE

Tell me.

CAT

Slow down.

*She slows down a little.*

CAT (CONT'D)

I was having a good time.

LANIE

What?

CAT

I had never been outside before. I like chewing on the grass. It feels good in your teeth. And then I caught a fly and ate it. And sat in the sun.



LANIE

You were gone for a long time.

CAT

It drizzled. But even that felt great. I mean I went under the porch to get out of the rain. I didn't know what rain felt like. And it smells kind of earthy. Who knew.

LANIE

I was worried about you.

CAT

I know, I heard you calling.

LANIE

It's dangerous out there.

CAT

I know. I found that out.

LANIE

That's why I wanted you to come back.

CAT

I know but you let me out.

LANIE

Not on purpose. It was an accident. I forgot. I forgot. I didn't remember right. I forgot. When I was a kid I had a cat that went outside-I just wasn't thinking right. I let you out but you stopped in the door and looked back at me.

CAT

I couldn't believe you were letting me out.

LANIE

I wasn't.

CAT

You were. So I waited and looked and saw what was happening. And then I ran.

LANIE

And then I realized.

CAT

But I was gone.

LANIE

I thought you were lost.

CAT

I know.

LANIE

You could've told me.

CAT

You would've made me come back in.

LANIE

If I hadn't let you out, you would be alive.

CAT

I walked out the door.

LANIE

But I'm responsible for your well-being. That's my job. My job is to protect you, feed you, to not forget that you can't go outside. That you don't go outside.

CAT

You don't own me.

LANIE

Great. Well I'm glad we cleared that up.

CAT

So you know where you're going?

LANIE

Yes. Outside Carson City.

CAT

Well we are outside Carson City. You have an address?

LANIE

I got it. If I can find my way through Afghanistan I think I can navigate through Nevada.

CAT

So you know the way?

LANIE

Why? Are you leaving me?

*Looks at the cat*

LANIE (CONT'D)

What?

CAT

I need...I need to ask you a favor.

*Lanie looks*

Will you stop calling me? I want to go.

LANIE

Like you're dead and you want to move on?

CAT

Left. Go left.

LANIE

What?

CAT

Left on James, Right on Guilford, Right on Alder.

It's not really exactly like the way you are thinking of it, but yes. If you keep calling me I can't really leave. I'm OK. I really am.

LANIE

You're dead.

CAT

There's the house. Do you know what you're going to say?

LANIE

No.

CAT

Maybe you want to think about that.

LANIE

The lights are off.

CAT

It's late. Maybe wait for morning.

LANIE

Yeah.

*All of the sudden we hear the howl of a coyote. The cat gives a low plaintive meow back. The coyote howls again. The cat meows. Lanie stares.*

Did you just...Are you...

CAT

So here's the thing.  
I've got a date.

LANIE

A date?  
But you're dead. And you're fixed.  
How would that even work?

CAT

Such a killjoy.  
Look here's what happened. I spent a couple of days chatting up a coyote. We drank from swimming pools and ate out of trash containers and ran through the canyons and slept in the bushes. And you know the danger is what made it exciting. Like at any time I could be eaten or maybe he'd get caught in a coyote trap. And it was all so different than anything else.

*The coyote howls. The cat looks at Lanie.*

LANIE

So what happened?

CAT

Oh, in the end he ate me. It was loving. You know. The whole instinct thing. Hard to overcome. But see this weird thing happened-we're like connected or maybe he's dead now. I don't know. Might have gotten shot. But he's out there looking for me and I want to go with him. I want to run with him. He wants to run with me. We have swimming pools to drink out of. I want to go.

LANIE

And I go in there alone?

CAT

I came because you felt guilty. But I'm telling you I chose to go through that door and this is all worth it, these moments. So let me have them.

*The coyote howls again. The cat looks at Lanie.*

LANIE

Go.

CAT

Really?

LANIE

Why are you asking permission now? You just gave me a lecture on ownership.

CAT

Thanks-

*The cat looks at her and goes to run off.*

LANIE

Wait- So this is it?

CAT

What? Ohh. Ummm. Right. Well cats are kind of independent. And impulsive. But I will tell you something else. That name you gave me?

LANIE

Pixie?

CAT

Yeah. I never liked it. The coyote, he calls me, CelOste. "Ayyy CelOste" he says. Oh and something else.

LANIE

What?

CAT

Your husband really loves you. You should know that.

*Offstage a coyote howls. Lanie and the cat look at each other. The cat lets out a low moan. The coyote answers, she looks back at Lanie and then she is gone.*

*Scene 15. Evie's's house. Stewart, NV. Lanie stands on the porch. A woman who looks like Evie, but older, comes out.*

LANIE

Hello

Mrs. Richardson-

*Beat.*

I'm Capt. Elaine Edwards.

US Marine Corps.

(MORE)

LANIE (CONT'D)

Convoy Commander.  
8th Logistics Battalion.

*E.M. looks at her.*

I was wondering if I could-

E.M.

My grandson's napping. If it's about Evie someone came already.

LANIE

I know.

*They stand there*

LANIE (CONT'D)

She was my driver. She might've mentioned?

E.M.

She didn't write much.

LANIE

Right.

E.M.

I didn't want her joining. I should've put my foot down. I should've done that.

LANIE

She talked about you.  
And Chrissie.  
And the kids.

*E.M. Looks at Lanie*

LANIE (CONT'D)

We had a lotta time together. In a truck. A lot of miles logged. A lot of hours.

*Pause. E.M. nods.*

LANIE (CONT'D)

She would sing a lot. Sometimes we could jerry rig an ipod or something but mostly we couldn't. And it was hot and boring. And she would sing to us.

E.M.

She used to do that on long car trips. She'd make all the kids laugh. She had a real pretty voice.

*She points to the chairs on the porch.*

You want to sit?

*Lanie does.*

LANIE

Thanks.

E.M.

Baby won't be wakin' up for a while yet.

*Pause*

E.M. (CONT'D)

At church everyone said she had a voice like an angel. They all said she could have been a singer but she wanted to go to college. Had her heart set on that.

LANIE

Yeah. She had a real pretty voice.

*Silence.*

E.M.

Were you with her?

*Lanie winces.*

LANIE

Yes.

*E.M. Looks at her. Studies her.*

LANIE (CONT'D)

I mean not in the helicopter but when it...I was there.

E.M.

Was it bad?

LANIE

She...It was hard to tell. You know the body, it goes in to shock so the pain, it...it's not so bad. So you don't feel much.

*E.M. nods.*

E.M.

It feels so empty without her. When she was away we knew why. Now she's just not here.

She was gonna come back here. We joked around about opening a bakery.

(MORE)

E.M. (CONT'D)

Like up in Tahoe. All authentic old Nevada-like for the tourists. And she would sing. And those tourists, skiers, whatever, they would eat it up.

Sometimes I think I see her, real quick, out of the corner of my eye, just around the corner. Like she's there for half a second.

LANIE

I know. I do too.

*Pause*

LANIE (CONT'D)

She wrote letters, sometimes half letters, sometimes dictated them to me and I would write them while she drove.

She never wanted to mail them though.

Said it'd worry you. Said she'd just give them all to you when she came back.

*Beat*

LANIE (CONT'D)

So I have them.

And some pictures.

I thought maybe you'd want to see them.

*E.M. looks at her.*

Or I can just leave them with you. You can look at them later.

*Lanie takes out the package of letters/photos. She hands it to E.M. They wait. E.M. takes the contents out and puts them on the table. She picks up a photo and hands it to Lanie. E.M. waits for Lanie to talk. We see the photo projected .*

LANIE (CONT'D)

This is her bunk. When we were traveling we just set up our bunks behind one of these walls. Hesco barriers is what they're called.

*A new photo.*

LANIE (CONT'D)

This is before she cut her hair.

*E.M. selects another photo.*



LANIE (CONT'D)

This is us driving. Carlito took the picture. Evie's face is in the sun but you can see what it looked like inside the truck. After a couple of days it gets pretty gross in there.

*E.M. picks another photo.*

LANIE (CONT'D)

Us unloading supplies at a medical clinic. That was the trip where we were shelled for 4 hours straight while we trying to drive there.

We were 4 months into the deployment and Evie got freaked. I made her tell me about her favorite thing to do at home so that you know, so that she would stay calm. She kept trying to run out into the shelling and I needed to keep her still. So I made her tell me and you know what she picked?

*E.M. thinks a moment and then sighs.*

E.M.

That roller coaster. In Stateline.

*Lanie nods*

E.M. (CONT'D)

She and her sister would drive out and ride that thing whenever they could. There was a boy her sister knew, her sister was always knowing too many boys, but anyway he fancied them and let them ride as often as they wanted for free. When it was slow he'd ride with them. Evie would tell me she loved to sail up so high above the desert, looking out over the mountains. She said she could be free up there, like the world was wide open to her.

LANIE

And this is her singing.

*E.M. looks at the photo--the same one Lanie described in the Haldol world.*

E.M.

So pretty. Such a beautiful girl. My baby. My baby. I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry. They told us it was a bomb.

LANIE

Yes.

E.M.

That's all they said.

LANIE

I-

E.M.

Were you hurt too?

LANIE

No. I-I wasn't hurt. I wasn't hurt at all. I wasn't driving with her. We'd traveled together every other time but not that time. We--we were supposed to bring cement and building supplies.

*Lanie pauses. E.M. looks at her.*

E.M.

She's my baby.  
I want to know.

LANIE

I-

E.M.

Please.

LANIE

We'd been there before, five or six times. Civil affairs people were working with them. We'd played soccer with some of the village kids.

Usually we traveled daytime but this time they told us to hold off eight hours which meant we'd be traveling in the dark. I kept asking if the intel was good, if they were sure we should travel when it was dark and they insisted that the intel was good. And the building supplies had to be delivered because they needed to start construction. They didn't want the village elders to change their minds about letting us build our health center there. So we had to go. It was our convoy that was going.

*Lanie looks at E.M.*

LANIE (CONT'D)

And I don't know why this was true but our convoy drew more fire than the three other convoys in our battalion. Ours was considered the unlucky one. But the truth is, we knew what to do when getting fired at because it happened all the time. But then they added some more supplies. Which meant we had to get more trucks and more people. Which we had to borrow from another convoy. And no one wanted to lend me their trucks or their people on account of that we were seen as unlucky, so I had to choose them. I checked the intel again. Again the orders, get there as fast as possible, don't leave before 1500.

So I split us up, me, Evie, and Carlito because I trusted us. Because I knew we could all work well under pressure and I didn't know about the new people.

(MORE)

LANIE (CONT'D)

Three new trucks. Evie would drive one, Carlito would be the gunner for another, and I would be the passenger on head-set running the convoy for the third.

We started out late. 1600. There was wind. Sand. I was up front but it was hard to see. We'd been traveling for several hours, crawling along the road, stopping whenever we saw something.

*We shift into the scene. All voices on headset except Lanie's which is live.*

LANIE (CONT'D)

Watch up front...up front. Something shiny. Take a look.

CARLITO (ON HEADSET)

Just a reflection I see it too. Steer around it.

EVIE (ON HEADSET)

I got it. I got it.

LANIE

Everyone OK? Keep traveling. Almost there people. Almost there. Richardson, you see anything.

EVIE (ON HEADSET)

Negative.

LANIE

Rivera?

CARLITO (ON HEADSET)

All clear.

LANIE

And we were there then. Just outside the village and it was getting dark and I saw this kid running towards us.

LANIE (CONT'D)

Hold. Three o'clock. Gunner ready. Kid running toward us.

CARLITO (ON HEADSET)

Should I take it?

LANIE

And I paused. I waited. I almost called it but I didn't.

CARLITO (ON HEADSET)

Should I take the shot?

LANIE

Negative.

LANIE (CONT'D)

Because I recognized him. He had played soccer with us. His name was Daoud. And he was running towards us. He was a kid.

EVIE (ON HEADSET)

Where are my eyes, where are my eyes?

LANIE

I've got eyes on him.

CARLITO (ON HEADSET)

Should I take the shot-

EVIE (ON HEADSET)

He's coming closer.

LANIE

And I realized if we took the shot and we were wrong we'd kill an innocent kid. I paused again. And then I saw it. I saw his hands. He had a cell phone. But I still didn't get it because he was a kid and we played soccer with him.

LANIE (CONT'D)

He's got a phone.

CARLITO (ON HEADSET)

Should I-

EVIE (ON HEADSET)

I can't go around him, I can't-

LANIE

Take the-

EVIE (ON HEADSET)

I can't-

*Loud explosion. Reeling of noises. Screaming.  
Screaming.*

LANIE

Who's hit? Who's hit.

CARLITO (ON HEADSET)

Oh Fuck. Fuck.

LANIE

Richardson. You there? Richardson. Richardson.

*Silence*

Richardson?

LANIE (CONT'D)

And I got out of the convoy and I called for a casevac. And I went up and down that line checking people. And I got to Evie's truck and she was alive. She saw me. She even smiled at me. But she looked bad. And I knew I was wrong. Terribly terribly wrong. I should never have split us up. Carlito, if he had been with us he would never have waited for me to tell him to take that shot. And Evie, if we had been all together she would have been up in the front she would have had the chance to control the vehicle. And I was wrong because I saw the kid and I hesitated. And because of that, she's dead. I'm the one who should have been dead. It was my mistake. I should be dead. But I'm not. I'm just here. And I wish it were different. I wish it were me that had been in that truck because it was my fault. And after they medevaced her to Germany I called. And they told me she was alive. For many many days. But they had her confused with another Richardson. Evie Richardson died on the way to Germany.

Sometimes I see her, when I close my eyes and she's in this light like the afternoon sun in the picture.

*Evie appears on stage in magical memory light and for a moment she is there.*

LANIE (CONT'D)

And she's at the wheel of the truck and she's smiling sideways at me and she's singing that hymn she liked.

EVIE

In the sweet by and by  
We shall meet on that beautiful shore  
In the sweet by and by

*The song and memory begin to fade*

We shall meet on that...

*And Evie disappears. E.M. looks at Lanie.*

E.M.

It's not your fault.

*Lanie nods.*

It's not.

*They stand there together. Finally-*

Do you know how to get home?

LANIE

No.

*E.M. holds her shoulders gently and turns Lanie towards her.*

E.M.

You go back the way came. You follow the way you came.

Listen to me. There are people waiting for you at home.

Look at me. I can tell you that.

Now you get in that car and you drive and you go home. And remember, if you get lost you just think of me and you find yourself on the map, Ok?

*Lanie nods. They hug. E.M. goes back in the house.  
Lanie looks around. She's alone. She goes to her car.  
She sits there. She waits. Silence. No cat, no coyote, no  
Evie. Just sounds of the high desert.*

*Lanie opens up a map and looks at it. Odysseus  
appears upstage. She folds it up again. Odysseus stands  
at the ready. They both wait and look at the world  
around them, the journey in front of them.*

*Lanie starts the car. Odysseus fades.*

*Blackout. End of Play.*