

Shortly Later.

~~(MICHAELA stands at the base of the stairs wearing a ratty t-shirt and unwashed jeans. She looks at JOSH, who stands on the other side of the room, looking back at her. ADA stands awkwardly between them.)~~

~~(A strange silence.)~~

~~ADA. (To MICHAELA.) Well,~~

~~(Short pause.)~~

~~My condolences.~~

~~MICHAELA. C'mon, Ada.~~

~~(Another strange silence. Finally, ADA exits up the stairs.)~~

START JOSH. You shouldn't have come.

MICHAELA. You wouldn't answer your phone, what the hell else was I supposed to do?

(Pause.)

When are you leaving?

JOSH. Three days.

MICHAELA. Three -?

(Pause.)

How long are you -? I mean when are you planning on coming back?

JOSH. Right now - I'm not planning on coming back.

~~*(Then, from upstairs, we hear the sound of a choir singing "Nearer, My God, To Thee," shrill and off-key.)*~~

MICHAELA. How long have you been planning to do this?

JOSH. A long time, Mickey.

MICHAELA. So you're all just -? All of you are just *moving to the Middle East?*

JOSH. Everyone else is going for four months, that was the original plan for the mission. But I've thought about it, and I just – decided I could do more.

MICHAELA. You mean throw your whole life away.

JOSH. Okay, if you want to talk about this rationally, / we can –

MICHAELA. You could've –, you know, *kept me in the loop* about this –

JOSH. That's why I emailed you.

MICHAELA. A three sentence email sent four days before you move across the planet isn't keeping me in the loop, it's a fucking suicide note.

JOSH. Oh just stop it, Mickey –

MICHAELA. You don't know anything about the Middle East.

JOSH. I've been training for over a year, / I'm ready for this –

MICHAELA. You can't just waltz in there with your Bibles and expect everyone to / welcome you with open –

JOSH. It's not –. It's not just about evangelism, it's about working at schools, hospitals – I'll be in a more rural area so / there's plenty of –

MICHAELA. Well, you're not going. You're being crazy, and I'm telling you that you're not doing this.

(Pause. JOSH heads toward the stairs.)

JOSH. Okay, I need to go to work, we can talk about / this later –

MICHAELA. Is this some kind of – mental breakdown, should I be worried?

(JOSH turns back to her.)

JOSH. What is so hard to understand about this?! Plenty of people spend their lives doing this!

MICHAELA. Crazy people, Josh! Crazy people spend / their lives doing this!

JOSH. Alright I'm not having this discussion with you right now, you're being totally disrespectful, it's impossible to / talk to you when you're like this –

MICHAELA. Obviously I had no idea how far you had gone with this stuff, if I knew that you were ready to do something this stupid I would have come back a long time ago –

JOSH. *No. You wouldn't have.*

(Pause.)

MICHAELA. Is this about Dad? Is that what's going on?

JOSH. No, this has / nothing to do –

MICHAELA. I'm sorry I wasn't here, Josh.

JOSH. I don't care.

MICHAELA. I know I should have been here to help with everything, but that / doesn't mean –

JOSH. *I didn't need your help.* I handled the burial, the house, everything. I didn't need you. So you don't get to suddenly waltz in here three weeks after he dies and act like you have any authority over me at all. **END**

(Pause. They stare at one another. The choir continues to sing. JOSH and MICHAELA begin to calm down.)

MICHAELA. I'm sorry.

(Pause.)

~~Jesus.~~

JOSH. Don't —...

(Pause. MICHAELA outstretches her arms for a hug. JOSH relents, goes to her, embraces her.)

MICHAELA. It's good to see you.

JOSH. It's good to see you, too.

(Pause.)

You sort of—

~~TOM.~~ Josh, I've never lived anywhere else, I don't know if I could ever = ...

(Pause.)

~~Also, my dad, he =. He tries so hard with me, and if I left he'd be all alone, I just =.~~

(Pause. TOM sits with him.)

START JOSH. Oh wait, I didn't tell you –

TOM. What?

(JOSH grabs his backpack, opening it up.)

JOSH. I was packing up a couple days ago, and I found these...

(JOSH pulls out a small stack of CDs. TOM recognizes them immediately.)

TOM. *(Mortified.)* No. Why do you have those?

JOSH. I don't know, you must have left them over at my house or something –

TOM. Okay, we are getting rid of them *right now* –

JOSH. I can't believe what you listened to before we became friends. Do you realize there is an *Ashlee Simpson* single in here?!

TOM. I was like twelve years old!

(TOM tries to take the CDs away from JOSH. JOSH pulls them away playfully.)

JOSH. No, I wanna take them with me!

TOM. It's so embarrassing.

JOSH. No, it's not, it's –

(Short pause, looking at the CDs.)

I just think it's funny.

(Pause.)

TOM. I went up to the golf course last night without you, it was weird.

JOSH. Did you get caught?

TOM. Almost. New groundskeeper is such a jerk.

(Short pause.)

I went up to the top of the hill, the third hole.

JOSH. Fourth.

TOM. No it's not.

JOSH. Third hole is the one by the highway, then up the /
hill the -

TOM. *Anyway.* I was wondering if I could see your house
from up there. Like if I could just find the little red
light on top of the water tower near your place, but
there was no way, it was too far off and it was about to
rain, and -.

(Pause.)

Started feeling like I didn't even know what direction I
was facing. Like I didn't recognize anything, the whole
town was just - ...

(TOM looks down. Pause.)

JOSH. Are you -? Have you had any anxiety attacks this
week?

TOM. I'm fine.

JOSH. Tom, you can tell me, / I -

TOM. I'm just -. It's not a big deal, it's just been once or
twice, and they haven't been bad, I haven't thrown up
or anything, I...

(Pause.)

I actually - tried talking with my dad about it.

JOSH. Really?

TOM. Yeah.

(Pause.)

JOSH. Has he - helped?

TOM. I guess? His big thing is that I can find comfort in
prayer, which is right. I can. Pretty much the only time
I'm not anxious about something. But I try to tell him
it's more complicated than that, I get anxious all the

time, I never know how to calm myself down, and he just -. He doesn't get it. I can tell he doesn't know what to say, so he just keeps telling me to pray. That if my mom were still alive she would just tell me to pray on it.

(Short pause.)

Truth is, she probably wouldn't say anything, she'd just - listen to me.

(Pause.)

(JOSH reaches for his headphones.)

JOSH. Here, listen to this.

TOM. Nah -

JOSH. Seriously just listen, I just like stumbled on it earlier today, it's Wagner, it's the / prelude to -

TOM. Wagner nooooooooo -

JOSH. *You'll like this one.* Stop. **END**

~~*(JOSH puts one earbud in his ear, hands the other one to TOM. TOM doesn't put it in his ear. JOSH scrolls through his phone.)*~~

It's the prelude to this opera, "Das...rain gold?" I don't know, anyway -

~~TOM. Josh -~~

~~JOSH. Just listen - it's like one, big, huge crescendo of the same chord for like four minutes, I'd never really -~~

~~TOM. I don't - ...~~

~~*(TOM drops the earbud, standing up, facing away from JOSH.)*~~

~~*(Pause.)*~~

~~JOSH. I'm sorry -~~

~~TOM. It's fine, I - ...~~

~~*(JOSH stops the music, takes out the earbud. Pause.)*~~

~~JOSH. Tom, can't we just - ...? We only have a couple days, can we just - be normal?~~

(Pause.)

JOSH. I think I'm gonna be happy there, Mickey. Really.

(Silence.)

MICHAELA. ~~Josh, there was —. The tent, set up in the back yard? With the camping stove, tons of empty propane canisters, empty ramen packages everywhere?~~

(Pause. JOSH goes to the kitchenette, takes the electric kettle, fills it with water.)

JOSH. I just sleep out there sometimes.

(Pause.)

MICHAELA. ~~And to be honest when I was going through the house it almost looked like nothing had been touched in weeks, a layer of dust over all the cups in the kitchen / and —~~

START JOSH. Why didn't you come as soon as I told you that Dad died?

(Pause.)

MICHAELA. Josh —

JOSH. No, I'm serious. Don't act like I'm the only one who needs to explain some stuff.

(Pause.)

MICHAELA. I was in the car. I was all packed. And — I never left the parking lot at my apartment.

(Pause.)

I kept thinking about you, out here, dealing with this on your own, and I kept telling myself that I *had to go*, but... Then I'd think about Dad. I'd think about him lying in that coffin or whatever, I'd think about having to see his body, and I — couldn't do it. Sat in the car for like three hours.

(Silence.)

JOSH. I've been sleeping in the tent for about five weeks now. Maybe six.

(Pause.)

MICHAELA. Isn't it starting to get cold at night?

JOSH. Not that bad. And I just sleep down here sometimes.

(Pause.)

MICHAELA. Why?

(The kettle whistles. JOSH unplugs it, opens a cup of ramen noodles.)

JOSH. You want some?

MICHAELA. No, thanks.

(JOSH throws the top layer of vegetables in the trash. He prepares the noodles.)

Don't throw away the vegetables! Seriously, that's the only nutritious part. I can't believe you're still eating those things, I was hoping you would outgrow that –

JOSH. You realize that Dad just got worse after you left, right?

(Pause.)

MICHAELA. Yeah, I know –

JOSH. Dad started drinking *more*, as if that was even humanly possible –

MICHAELA. I know –

JOSH. We had *nothing*, when I was in junior high half the time I'd get dinner by going to the Albertson's and eating the free samples, I started working at the car wash when I was sixteen just so we could keep up with the mortgage, I'm *still* working there –

MICHAELA. I know, Josh –

JOSH. When you ran off nine years ago with – what's his name – Brandon?

MICHAELA. Brendan.

JOSH. When you ran off with some stupid drug addict you left me *behind*, with *nothing* –

MICHAELA. What do you want me to say?! I needed to get out of here! I was sixteen and I was stupid, and I

needed to get out. If I could have taken you with me, I would have.

JOSH. Oh don't say that, you never would / have –

MICHAELA. You think I went to Eugene because I wanted to *party*? I left because finally – *finally* – there was a way out. And believe me, it wasn't fun. Brendan turned out to be quite the asshole, when I realized he was stealing from me I left him and wound up sleeping in my car for over a year, and – ...

(Pause.)

Running off to Eugene was the biggest mistake of my life, but I am barely, *barely* standing on my own two feet right now. And I'm sorry I didn't come when Dad died, but I spent my last hundred bucks on gas to come out here and keep you from making the biggest mistake of your life.

(They stare at each other. Uncomfortable silence.)

(Then finally:)

Also I *really* don't like Ada. **END**

(Pause. Then, JOSH smiles. MICHAELA smiles as well.)

~~JOSH. I know you don't.~~

~~MICHAELA. I mean like *really*. And she *hasn't* changed.~~

~~JOSH. She's okay.~~

~~MICHAELA. She's *insufferable*. She *hasn't* changed *at all* since high school. Even the haircut, it's so – ...~~

(Pause.)

~~JOSH. Your last hundred bucks? I thought you had a job.~~

~~MICHAELA. I'm sort of – figuring some stuff out right now.~~

~~JOSH. What happened to the – phone surveys, or –?~~

~~MICHAELA. Telemarketing.~~

~~JOSH. Right.~~

~~MICHAELA. I just – ... I couldn't stand it anymore.~~

(Pause.)

~~then grabs some paper towels. ADA and JOSH
throw away the remaining cupcakes.)~~

ADA. You wanna split the last one with me? I put real lemon
zest in the frosting.

~~(ADA splits a cupcake, hands one half to JOSH.
JOSH sits down with his cupcake. They eat.)~~

You know, I can't tell you how much I admire you for
what you're doing. Pastor Chuck, too.

JOSH. Yeah, I — ...

(Pause.)

I guess I just want — something to happen.

ADA. What do you mean?

JOSH. I mean like these stories that you tell — the rainbow
showing up, right when you needed it, the prostitute
that you met on the street when you were over there? I
guess I just feel like — that's what I'm waiting for. Some,
like, little signal or whatever, something to let me know
that I'm on the right path, that this is what I need to
spend the rest of my life doing.

(Pause. ADA puts her cupcake down.)

START ADA. Josh you're a really smart guy.

(Pause. JOSH looks at her.)

JOSH. Thank you.

ADA. I mean, I'm just saying — you're a smart guy. I'm a
smart gal, you're a smart guy.

(Pause.)

JOSH. I don't really know what / you —

ADA. I remember when I was like ten or eleven, I was
traveling with my parents down in Brazil? We were
just like going to different churches, meeting people,
handing out tracts. I mean it was mostly a vacation,
most of the time we were at this resort dealie, but we
also did some witnessing. Anyways we were at this one
church and this Brazilian pastor was telling his story,

he told everyone about how when he was younger he had a lot of hatred toward Christianity, he even used to steal money from his family's church. And this one night he was walking through an alley, and he sees this blinding light and a guy appears in front of him and says, "My name is Jesus. Why are you persecuting me?" And I remember I was thinking – this is like, *really* similar to Paul's conversion story from Acts, right? Like *really* similar.

JOSH. Yeah.

ADA. And I almost said something to my dad, but then I looked around and everyone in the crowd was *super* moved. And you could tell, this guy was *full* of the spirit. The spirit was more important than whether or not it like, *actually* happened *exactly* that way.

(Pause. ADA picks her cupcake back up, starts picking at it.)

JOSH. Wait, what do you mean?

ADA. I just mean – you're a smart guy! You're smart enough to know that faith is enough by itself, you don't need the magic tricks. Faith and the spirit, that's always enough.

(Pause.)

JOSH. Wait, so – are you saying that the stories you tell, they aren't true?

ADA. No! They're true!

(ADA licks some frosting off her finger.)

Mm, cream cheese frosting. Seriously, if you put cream cheese frosting on a stapler, I would eat that stapler.

(Pause.)

And you know Michaela hasn't like, totally proven that she's always going to be there for you. Just saying.

(Pause.)

So are you all packed? **END**

(Pause. JOSH looks at her.)

know what my future was, I didn't really have a reason to get out of bed in the morning. But then my best friend from school invited me to go to church with him.

(JOSH looks at TOM.)

ADA. Aw.

JOSH. And my life was changed forever. I had a reason to get out of bed in the morning. I know why—...

(Pause.)

I guess—I know why I'm alive.

(Pause.)

ADA. Josh—that was *powerful*.

(ADA starts clapping. TOM, DENISE, and MARCUS join in.)

JOSH. Thanks.

ADA. Does someone want to go in for Josh?

(No one volunteers.)

Denise, why don't you go?

DENISE. Oh, sure.

(JOSH sits down, DENISE stands up.)

START ADA. Why don't you guys flip it? Marcus, why don't you witness to Denise?

DENISE. So I get to like make up a character?

ADA. Yeah sure.

DENISE. Great, I'm actually good at this I think.

ADA. Okay great. Go for it!

(Pause. MARCUS looks at DENISE.)

MARCUS. Hi there.

DENISE. Hello.

(DENISE mimes a basket in her hands.)

Would you like to buy some eggs?

(Pause.)

MARCUS. What?

DENISE. I help my family by selling eggs on the street.

Would you like to buy some eggs from me?

ADA. Nice!

(Short pause.)

MARCUS. Oh, uh – sure, I'll take an egg.

DENISE. We live on a farm outside of the village, but five years ago my father was killed in the uprising. So my brother and I had to leave school and start earning money to support our mother. She has been quite sick ever since our well was contaminated. So now we sell our white and brown eggs on the streets. How interesting! The white eggs match your pale skin while the brown eggs fit my darker complexion!

ADA. Okay, let's – ... Denise that was super creative, but – maybe try something more – simple?

DENISE. Oh.

ADA. I mean that was great but this is more of an exercise for Marcus, you know.

DENISE. *(Crestfallen.)* Okay.

(Pause, to MARCUS.)

Hello.

MARCUS. Hi there. My name is Marcus. I came here with my wife Denise, all the way from America.

DENISE. Great.

MARCUS. And I'd really like the opportunity to talk to you more about Jesus. Would you like to come to church with me, meet some of my friends?

(Pause.)

DENISE. Okay.

(Pause. DENISE looks at ADA, starts clapping tepidly. TOM and JOSH awkwardly join in.)

ADA. Okay good yeah, just –. You can make it hard for him.

DENISE. Really?

ADA. Yeah! That's what this is all about. Make it tough for him!

DENISE. Oh, okay.

(Pause.)

Hi there.

MARCUS. Hi. My name is Marcus. I came here from America so I can tell people all about Jesus. Do you know anything about Jesus?

DENISE. Yes, a little.

MARCUS. Are you a Muslim?

DENISE. I grew up Muslim, but now I don't believe in God.

ADA. Interesting! Okay keep going.

(Pause.)

MARCUS. Do you mind if I ask why you don't believe in God?

DENISE. I just think that it's torn my country apart. People believing different things about God, and arguing about those differences.

MARCUS. Truth, truth. People in your country have been arguing about different versions of Islam for forever, but – the thing is, you can choose a different path. My faith in Christ doesn't put me in harm's way – it keeps me safe.

ADA. Oh gosh, Marcus, that was / really –

DENISE. I disagree.

(Pause. MARCUS turns to DENISE.)

MARCUS. What?

DENISE. Christianity has killed many people as well, it continues to kill people all around the world. You just live in America, and in America right now it's safe to be a Christian, but that doesn't mean that it was always like that, or it'll still be like that in the future. **END**

~~ADA. Okay, this is good – Marcus, take it out of the realm of politics, point out that faith is bigger than politics, this is about their personal relationship with Jesus –~~

SIDE F- MARCUS

ONE DAY TO DEPARTURE

Morning.

(DENISE sits, pensive. Upstairs we hear the choir repeatedly rehearsing the second verse of "Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior," in an uncomfortably high key.)

(MARCUS enters, descending a few steps. He sees DENISE. DENISE looks up, seeing him. She gets up, busies herself with her backpack.)

(MARCUS continues down the stairs.)

START MARCUS. What are you [looking for] – ...?

DENISE. Chapstick.

MARCUS. I got some, babe.

DENISE. I don't like yours.

(DENISE continues rooting around in her backpack.)

(MARCUS sits down, keeping his distance. A silence.)

MARCUS. Where did you sleep?

DENISE. Air mattress in my sister's room.

MARCUS. Oh, cool.

(Pause.)

Do you think you might come home tonight?

(Pause. DENISE looks at him for a moment, then goes back to her backpack. She finds her chapstick, then stands up, applying the chapstick to her lips.)

MARCUS. You're still mad at me.

DENISE. Marcus.

MARCUS. I just think it's gonna be better for us. And it'll be more comfortable, we won't be out all day driving around to little villages, we'll be inside, we'll be safer, and –

DENISE. When did you and Ada meet with Pastor Chuck?

(Pause.)

MARCUS. It was just like – ... It was like a week ago. Maybe two.

DENISE. Why didn't you tell me?

(Pause.)

MARCUS. I just thought – ... I knew you wouldn't like it.

DENISE. You didn't think you should *ask* me first?

MARCUS. I knew you'd say no.

(Pause.)

Look, babe, I'm sorry but I'm just *worried* about you, you know? I wanted to be sure that we could still go over there, that I wouldn't have to worry about you –

DENISE. I told you that I'd be *fine* –

MARCUS. It's Chuck, if we can't tell him then who can we tell?

(Pause.)

I just want you to be safe, babe. Both of you.

(Pause.)

DENISE. Marcus, was it your idea for us to spend all four months working in the mission office?

MARCUS. No.

(Pause.)

Sort of.

(Pause.)

We'll still have fun. And it'll be safer.

DENISE. And you'll be a lot less anxious.

MARCUS. This is about *you*, babe. You and our little guy.

DENISE. *Or. Girl.*

MARCUS. Or girl, or girl.

(Pause.)

What did you, uh. I mean what did you tell your parents?

DENISE. About what?

MARCUS. Like – why you're staying with them. Why you're not staying – with me.

(Pause.)

I just don't want people to be like up in our business.

(DENISE stares at him icily.) **END**

~~*(JOSH enters. MARCUS and DENISE look away from each other.)*~~

JOSH. Oh, sorry—

MARCUS. / It's fine.

DENISE. Nothing.

~~*(JOSH senses the tension.)*~~

JOSH. O —kay.

~~*(Pause. DENISE and MARCUS look at each other.*~~

~~*JOSH awkwardly starts to go back upstairs.)*~~

DENISE. You know Josh, if I haven't told you this yet, I just want you to know that I think what you're doing is just really remarkable.

JOSH. Oh.

DENISE. I mean the way that you're just moving out there, I think it's just —beautiful. I think it might be the most inspiring thing I've ever heard of.

(Pause.)

MARCUS. Yeah, totally.

~~*(Awkward pause. The choir continues.)*~~

JOSH. Thanks, guys, that's really—

(Thinking.)

Now what was — ... Colossians! He had the book of Colossians memorized. Every word. He was — ...

(Pause.)

START I had no idea what was going on with your mother. When your father told me about her — troubles, that she had abandoned the family... I was shocked.

(Pause. CHUCK goes to the noodles, lifting up the lid.)

Little bit more.

(CHUCK finds a place to sit.)

It hit your dad so, so hard, Josh. And the next few months were — ...

(Pause.)

It was the first time I'd seen the spirit *leave* someone. When you see someone receive the gospel it's — the essence of beauty, a physical act of poetry. But when it leaves... He came to Bible study less and less, eventually fell out of contact entirely. I still count it as one of my great failures, losing him.

(Pause, looking at JOSH.)

You really didn't know any of this?

(Pause.)

JOSH. No.

(Pause.)

CHUCK. I barely recognized him when I saw him last month.

(Pause.)

JOSH. You —?

CHUCK. I saw him the day before he died, Josh. **END**

(Pause. CHUCK goes to the ramen noodles, takes the pot holder off, looks at the noodles.)