

SIDES FOR APPROPRIATE - TABLE OF CONTENTS

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RIVER/FRANZ SIDE A

Franz climbs through the window and, with his phone's light, immediately starts taking the place in.

RIVER. It's so beautiful...

FRANZ. Uh, okay... If you're not careful, they'll get caught in your hair, so stay away from the trees. That's where they all gather.

Beat, as Franz tries to find a light switch before he is distracted by a scraping noise from outside. Suddenly, someone—River—shoots up into the window and tries to pull herself in, sort of in slow motion, but she doesn't quite make it, falling back down. River tries to spring up into the window, again, and, again, she doesn't make it. Eventually, Franz notices.

Baby, what is happening?

RIVER. I'm too sleepy! Help!

Gets help.

How long were we on the road?

FRANZ. Twenty hours—Watch your he—?

River hits her head hard.

RIVER. OW!!!

FRANZ. *(Putting her in.)* I said, watch your head.

RIVER. *(Rubbing her head.)* Owwww—wuh!

FRANZ. *(Holding her, rubbing her head.)* Aww, come here. *(Kissing her head, eating her "booboo.")* Nom-nom-nom.

Beat, as River takes a look around.

RIVER. ...This is it?

FRANZ. Yeah... What?

RIVER. I didn't say anything! ...It's just different from what I imagined.

FRANZ. Which was what?

RIVER. I don't know—When you said "plantation," I thought more... *Gone with the Wind*, less...hoarding. But I love it?

FRANZ. We were supposed to turn it into a bed and breakfast.

RIVER. What happened?

FRANZ. Jesus, River, you just said it—My father was a fucking / hoarder—!

START

RIVER. Hey hey hey—Stop it. Stop. No anger. Let it go.

Beat, looking around.

So you grew up around all this?

FRANZ. Someone's actually cleaned up a bit—if you'll believe it. (*Fidgeting.*) Though I don't know how they think they're going to get rid of this place with it looking like this.

RIVER. (*Noticing, calming his fidget.*) You're nervous.

FRANZ. Yeah.

RIVER. Well, don't be because you've got me here. And, if you ever get nervous, just look for me—Besides, you have a right to be here. This is your house, too. They can't do anything with it without you. Plus you grew up here. You lived with him. And you deserve what you're asking for. You deserve it. Say, "I deserve it."

FRANZ. I deserve it.

RIVER. Good.

She kisses him, before a creak is heard.

What was that?

Beat.

FRANZ. ...It's my dad.

RIVER. Stop!

FRANZ. I'm joking—it's an old house—

RIVER. Spirits are not a joke! You know I'm sensitive!

FRANZ. Please. You just went clomping through that cemetery with no problem.

RIVER. What cemetery?

FRANZ. (*Gesturing out a window.*) On the way up here. What did you think that was—all those stones? That little gate?

RIVER. (*Looking out the window.*) That's not a—I thought it was like a cute little patio—Stop! / Stop messing with me.

FRANZ. (*Looking out the window.*) I guess it sort of looks like a—What? It's true! The tombstones are just knocked over. See? Five generations of us are out there. That's how long this place has been in the family.

Beat, before River hits him.

Ow! River!

RIVER. Why did you let me do that? (*Gasp, realizing.*) I forgot my sage—!

FRANZ. Will you stop it—

RIVER. Stop what? Spirits are real and our bodies are just porous vessels of energy vulnerable and susceptible to corruption and influence and— (*Off Franz's reaction.*) Don't look at me like that! I don't know if I can sleep here—

FRANZ. River, I was just messing with you. It's an old cemetery and an old house that creaks. There are no spirits here. Trust me. I would know. You and that stupid shaman.

RIVER. My shaman is not stupid. The world is a very old place full of all kinds of things...

Beat.

Your father's not out there, is he?

FRANZ. No. I think they buried him back in D.C. next to Mom...

RIVER. Who knocked over the tombstones?

FRANZ. Probably kids from the town.

Beat.

Or maybe me when I was drunk. I don't remember.

RIVER. (*Re: the cemetery.*) Why didn't you tell me about this?

FRANZ. I forgot. (*Pointing out the window.*) But you see that lake there?

RIVER. Yeah...?

FRANZ. Well, through those woods alongside it is where all the slaves were buried, but you have to go looking for that. They don't have grave markers or anything...

RIVER. Oh no...

Beat.

FRANZ. BAHHH!!!

RIVER. (*Shrieks a little, then.*) STOP! / YOU JERK!

FRANZ. / WOOOOOAAAHHHAAAAHAAAAA!

RIVER. STOP, FRANZ! I SAID / STOP—!

END

FRANZ. Good morning, everybody!

BO. / Frank?

TONI. Ew, Frank, why are you soaking wet?

FRANZ. I've been swimming!

TONI. Swimming?

FRANZ. In the lake! Can you believe in all the years I lived here, I never once went swimming in that lake? It's amazing! And I—I think I might have baptized myself! (*Off reactions.*) I mean, I don't know if I "baptized" myself—I don't know how people do it—but I just went to the edge of the water and said, "Water, heal me!" And it did... I got out of that water and I feel...changed. I'm literally shaking right now—Oh my god—

Beat.

RIVER. Honey, did you take something?

FRANZ. No! No, I wish! I'm just feeling good for once!

BO. Frank, we don't have time for this. We're in the middle of a crisis—

FRANZ. What happened?

BO. The photos are missing.

FRANZ. Missing? No they're not.

BO. Well then where are they?

START

Beat, as Franz takes a moment to collect himself.

FRANZ. Okay. Where do I even start? Okay. Okay.

Beat.

So this is going to sound a little weird, but yesterday River thinks she saw a ghost. (*Off River's reaction.*) Or felt a ghost! Or a ghost felt her! A spirit! (*Off everyone's reactions.*) I know, I know—but River is actually very sensitive. She's actually certified in something called / reiki—

RIVER. Reiki.

FRANZ. And okay maybe it's not really a spirit—usually, I rag on her about it—but, yesterday, I saw it happen and—I mean, she looked really spooked—It seemed really real and then, last night, I couldn't sleep. I mean, I've had a lot of trouble sleeping these days and last night I was just lying in my childhood bed with River and I realized...

I was feeling something, too—an old feeling—and this old feeling it was like...the air was like buzzing with it and I couldn't take it anymore—I couldn't breathe—so I got out of bed and came downstairs to have a cigarette and— (*Accidental eye contact.*) You know, Rhys was on the couch with the photos—you know, just looking at them—no big deal—and I was like, “He shouldn't have this!” So I took them away and, as I was leaving, I was like: “Wait. Maybe this is why I'm here.” I mean, I'm here to prove that I've changed, but maybe I am being selfish, Toni. Maybe I am a taker and chaos. But I want to change and I have to be the opposite in order to be different, so I have to bring order. I have to help. So I'm thinking, you know how I'm going to help? I'm going to solve the mystery of who these belonged to, because I grew up here and I never once saw these before or saw Daddy with them and, honestly, I really can't see Daddy ever...having something like this—like if I'm being really honest—it's like they came from nowhere, but I guess I had this idea that I was going to figure out if Daddy or anyone in this family had anything to do with these photos. I would see if I could find the trees. I know the property well enough. If any of the trees...used in these pictures were on our property, I would know. So I just set out with my little iPhone flashlight and I'm looking at the photos and I'm looking at the trees and the bugs are going crazy and I mean I was out there for a while just chasing these trees when I hear a voice in my head—Daddy's voice—go, “François? What are you doing? These pictures are so old. The trees in them are probably completely different-looking by now.” And by the time I realize this, I also realize that I'm lost—like I don't know where I am, I don't recognize this place anymore—the trees are all different—and these cicadas are just...roaring—and every pine or oak or whatever is just covered in these bugs—it's just terrifying—it's like the whole forest—all that darkness—it's moving—and I'm just trapped in this sound—and I'm trying to figure out where I am—trying to, like, locate myself—and, after a while, all these memories start coming back to me about this place—every memory that I've buried—memories of when I used to pace through these orchards, high or drunk out of my mind, trying to hatch some escape plan—and I'm like really scared I'm not going to get out of here alive—like my life is flashing before my eyes—like I'm going to die here—but then I look up and see I'm standing in the slave cemetery—that little

clearing in the woods where all the slaves are buried. You hardly realize you're there until you're right up on it and I'm standing in the middle of this graveyard and I was remembering all this stuff River's been saying about spirits and how we're just these porous vessels of energy susceptible to influence and we're not what we think we are and that sometimes there's this thing inside of us that's leading us and we just have to follow it and so you sometimes just have to trust it and that something led me here. And I turned around and there was the lake—The water and the sun coming up over it and it's glittering and it's calling to me and then I realized this was the whole purpose to this journey and I was lost and this thing helped me find myself and it was taking me to the edge of the water and it seemed to be telling me, "Go on in. Go in and cleanse yourself. Cleanse everyone. Wipe it all away. Take it all in with you and leave it there." So I did. I took everything—all my pain, all Daddy's pain, this family's pain, the pictures—and I left it there. I washed it away.

Beat, in which Toni starts laughing. She continues laughing for a while and over the following.

TONI. Frank. Those photos were worth a lot of money.

FRANZ. They were?! How much?

TONI. Hundreds of thousands of dollars. Maybe more.

Beat.

BO. YOU FUCKING IDIOT!

RACHAEL. / BO!

FRANZ. I didn't know they were worth money! You told me to throw them away!

END

BO. *(About to have an aneurysm, basically.)* OH MY GOD!

FRANZ. / I didn't know.

Toni laughs.

BO. OH MY GOD FRANK WHAT THE FUCK IS WRONG WITH YOU?!

RIVER. You leave him alone! How can you not see the gift he has tried to give you people! Look at the evil and rot you're descended from—and all Franz tried to do was purify you—and lift whatever curse it is that—

RIVER(/RACHAEL) SIDE B

Rhys finally stands up, grumpily, and exits slowly up the stairs.

(To River.) See? Sometimes these Lafayette boys just need a little push.

Rhys, hearing this, flips Rachael off behind her back before exiting. Bo wanders in from somewhere, hanging up his phone and dialing a new number.

Any luck?

BO. He just gave me some other guy's number to call. Hold on.

Bo wanders out onto the porch.

RIVER. What's going on?

RACHAEL. He's talking to someone about the photos. And thank you by the way— (*Needing help, re: a couch.*) Can you—?

RIVER. Oh, sure—!

Over the following, they push the couch against the wall, to clear out the floor, then they set up another table where the couch was.

RACHAEL. When Bo told me he tried to throw these pictures away, I almost killed him. I told him we have to deal with these things. We should sit down with them and the kids and really unpack what is going on. Especially after Rhys had seen them, because, you know, kids talk. Ainsley's one thing—if we're lucky he'll forget all about—but Cassidy is the one to worry about. If she wants to see something, she will go after it. And if she saw those pictures without me, I literally might have to kill her and then kill myself. She's at such an impressionable age.

They're done.

RIVER. Can I just say we are both amazing?

RACHAEL. We are. Look at this. Thank you so much for your help.

RIVER. This was all you.

RACHAEL. Well, it was mostly for my own sanity. After those photos, the last thing I needed was for someone to find a...jar of... penises or something.

RIVER. What?

RACHAEL. Bo and I spent all night reading about these awful lynchings and apparently, it was customary for people take souvenirs

after these killings—ears, fingers, genitals— (*Poking her head in the den.*) HEY! KEEP IT DOWN IN THERE! YOUR AUNT TONI IS STILL SLEEPING!

END

The noise quiets down—for a little while. Rachael starts arranging things on the new table. Bo wanders through.

BO. Uh huh... Well, I haven't gotten a good look, but I'd say at least forty, fifty, sixty pictures... / Uh-huh...

Bo wanders out just as Toni comes stalking downstairs. She is clearly hungover. Beat, as the women look at each other.

RIVER. Good morning!

RACHAEL. Toni, what time is the sale supposed to start?

Unresponsive, Toni exits into the kitchen.

RIVER. I think she's hungover.

Rachael goes over to the den.

RACHAEL. Cassidy?

Cassidy enters from the den, wearing something crazy on her head like a lampshade.

CASSIDY. What?!

RACHAEL. (*Taking the thing off her head.*) What are you two doing?

CASSIDY. We're playing ghosts!

RACHAEL. Well don't play that! Your aunt Toni is finally up. I need you to take your brother upstairs and the two of you finish cleaning out your grandfather's room.

CASSIDY. Ugh—!

RACHAEL. Just do it! / And quickly!

Cassidy stomps upstairs, Ainsley in tow.

CASSIDY. (*Offstage.*) OKAY! JESUS!

Bo pokes his head in from the porch and motions to everyone to keep it down.

BO. I guess some of them looked like postcards, / but some were like, photo-photos... Is there a difference? I'd have to look again...

Bo wanders back out onto the porch, just as Toni reenters with a cup of coffee.

RACHAEL. HELLO?!?!

Beat.

Can we sit around being casually dysfunctional later and focus for one second?

BO. / Rach—

RACHAEL. *What* are we going to do with these photos? I mean, what in the world was your father even thinking having them out in the open like this?

TONI. Rachael, we are just as upset as you are, but let's not get irrational. We have no idea where these came from.

RACHAEL. Frank just said they weren't his, Toni, and he's the only other person who lived in this house—

TONI. They could have been here when he and Daddy moved in— There was all kinds of stuff in the attic—

RACHAEL. We didn't find these in any attic. They were sitting on the shelf right here with all of your father's things!

BO. Rach—

RACHAEL. Bo, you've got one more time to try and shush me!

TONI. And there were all kinds of people coming through here—

RACHAEL. Okay, so you want me to believe that some "friend" of your father came over and was just like, "Dooop-de-dooop, let me just leave my disturbing photographs of dead black people I carry around with me all the time on this shelf over here while I pay old Ray a visit" and completely forgot about them?

Beat.

These belonged to your father. And let me just say I resent you standing there and calling me irrational. Your child was not exposed to this...sickness. A small child!

Beat.

TONI. Well, what would you like us to do, Rachael?

RACHAEL. Excuse me?

TONI. Tell me what you would like the adults in this room to do right now to help you deal with that? I mean, you handed these things over to Ainsley yourself.

RACHAEL. Oh, okay, so whatever psychological damage my child has just incurred due to his grandfather's...*prejudice* is now *my* fault?

TONI. *Prejudice?*

RACHAEL. (*A breath, then.*) Listen, Toni: I appreciated Ray just as much as anyone and, yes, he cannot be held responsible for how he may have been brought up to feel or think about other people—

TONI. What?

RACHAEL. Toni, none of us are strangers to the history of the South. We're all standing in the middle of your family's plantation for / crying out loud!

TONI. Our father spent half of his life in Washington!

RACHAEL. But he came back here, didn't he? This is the soil upon which / his world-view was fashioned—

TONI. Rachael, you didn't even know this man!

RACHAEL. Toni, he was the grandfather of my children. I am not some / stranger.

TONI. Being a *daughter-in-law* does not make you privy to the full understanding of a person, my dear.

RACHAEL. And neither does being a daughter. My dear. Your father was a somebody long before you came along. And certainly somebody else when you weren't in the room. Now, I'm not saying Ray took these photos. I'm not saying he was involved in any of these lynchings... I don't know and frankly I don't care. I am just saying he was a slave to his upbringing just like everyone else and, like everyone else, he had his issues. Now can we just own that and figure out what we're going to do, because there are still children in this house and I'm not interested in any more surprises!

Beat.

TONI. No. I want to talk about my father's "issues."

BO. Okay, you two—

RACHAEL. / Bo, shut up—

TONI. Shut up, Bo! (*To Rachael.*) Go ahead.

Beat.

RACHAEL. Fine, Toni. You want to look at the way he treated me?

TONI. What about the way he treated you?

RACHAEL. Ray obviously had real problems with me because of my heritage and this...anti-Semitism was always very uncomfortable for me, and for Bo... So I don't think his...race issues are so far of / a leap—

TONI. Wait, wait, I'm sorry, so Rachael, let me get this straight: You think our father is a racist because you think our father is an anti-Semite because you feel like he didn't *like* you?

RACHAEL. First of all, I did not call him an anti-Semite. He was in *possession* of latent anti-Semitic traits—

TONI. Anti-Semitic traits like what?

RACHAEL. Anti-Semitic traits like wh—? Like having a problem with / Jews, Toni!

TONI. No, give me a concrete example, Rachael, of our father's "latent anti-Semitism."

Beat.

RACHAEL. I don't have to prove anything to you.

TONI. That's right. Because you're full of it.

Beat.

RACHAEL. I once overheard your father referring to me as Bo's "Jew wife." We were visiting him—here, actually!—the summer I was pregnant with Cassidy and he was on the phone and he didn't know I was standing there and I overheard him refer to me to someone as "Bo's Jew wife." "Bo and his Jew wife are here from New York." Now would someone like to explain to me why it was necessary to distinguish to whoever this person was that I was, in fact, a Jew? Why couldn't I just be "Bo's wife"?

TONI. Are you kidding?

RACHAEL. And that's just a small example. Your father had a very difficult time with me and the fact that I was Jewish, which is maybe why he was so distant to me and Bo and our kids—I don't know— But did I feel the need to say anything to him? No. He was an old man. You can't blame people for the ways they were raised. And do I expect you guys to totally...be able to grasp this? No, because you've never been discriminated against, but that's how it is.

Beat.

TONI. Alright—Bo, I think it's time to take your wife upstairs. This is now a family-only discussion.

RACHAEL. Am I next in line for the Toni Bully Treatment? I think that must make me family!

TONI. No, Rachael. You're a Jew. And you're being kicked out because I subconsciously hate Jews and you, my dear, are a big ole Jew.

Beat.

RACHAEL. Well, if it's how you were raised.

Beat.

Why don't you just call *me* a Shylock?

TONI. Sure: Shylock.

RACHAEL. How about a kike?

TONI. Sure, kike.

Beat.

RACHAEL. Excuse me—

BO. / Rach—

RACHAEL. I'm going to go check on our youngest kike.

END

Rachael exits up the stairs.

BO. (*Going after her.*) Rachael! Rachael!

Wheels around.

TONI! WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT?!

Bo exits after Rachael.

TONI. (*Calling after Bo.*) How long was I supposed to stand there and let her insult my daddy—*our* daddy! (*Turning on Franz.*) You piece of shit!

FRANZ. What?

TONI. You know our father wasn't guilty of one thing that witch just accused him of and you and Bo just sat there!

FRANZ. I though I was going to have to break up a / fistfight!

TONI. Ungrateful! After everything that man tried to do for you—

BO. I don't care. Listen, when I get back to New York, my lawyers are going to handle this—

The door opens. It's Franz—soaking wet, again. In his hands, he carries a pile of wet paper pulp—the remains of the photo album—a mess. He comes to the center of the room and plops it down. Beat.

FRANZ. That's all of them.

BO. Frank, why did you even bother?

FRANZ. (*Angry.*) I wanted to fix something! I just wanted to come back!

START

Beat.

TONI. You know what I just realized? I've known both you idiots your whole entire lives—isn't that crazy? I remember holding both of you—Mama handing each of you over in the hospital and me looking down on these...helpless little things trying to figure out the world. Bo, you cried the whole time, but Frank you just stared. You seemed so peaceful—happy to be here. Remember, Bo? You must remember—

BO. Is there a point to all this?

TONI. Yes, because there's no one alive who's held me. Isn't that sad? There's no one left in this family—in this whole world—who could have told me about the whole me—the me before I became...this. Daddy was the last. And, think whatever you want about him now, but Daddy held me. He knew me—maybe more than I'll ever know me—and nothing anyone can say is ever going to make that love less real. All this life you live—what's it for if no one's there to tell you about it? To hold on to it and then give it back to you? To remind you of the things you forgot or never knew you even knew? I always thought that was what family was for.

Beat.

But we don't seem to be on the same page, memory-wise. We can't seem to get our stories straight. And why is that? Or is family just a bunch of mismatched memories—stories you tell yourself when you need an excuse to explain how trapped you feel or broken or cheated?

Beat.

I wonder what kind of story this weekend is going to be? Tell me, Bo. What story are you and Rachael going to go back and tell people? That this is the weekend I kicked her ass? Or that I was crazy and attacked her? That I ruined everything? And what about you, Frank? That you came to be forgiven and I denied you?

Beat.

(After no response.) Well, I have a request. If anyone asks, I want you to tell them that this is the weekend your sister died.

BO. What are you talking about?

TONI. Because I need you to kill me. Put me out of my misery because I don't like myself in these stories—in whatever stories you're telling. All I really tried to do was love you. I promise. Maybe I don't know how—you know, maybe I never did—but I need to figure that out for myself, starting today. And you are the price.

Beat.

So, if anyone asks, I'm going to tell them I had two brothers, who loved me and who took care of me and who were there for me when I needed them. And I just hope we never find ourselves wondering where a certain memory or feeling is coming from, because now we'll just have to make something up. Though maybe that's what you've wanted all along. If so, congratulations.

Beat.

I'm going to say goodbye now, go finish packing with my son, get in my car, and drive away. By the time I come back down, I really hope that, out of respect, you will both be gone.

BO. Toni—

TONI. Goodbye.

END

No one says anything, as Toni goes upstairs, leaving Franz and Bo alone. There is a very long pause, as the cicadas chirp, and they look at each other. Beat. A horn honks.

BO. Rachael.

FRANZ. Bo—for the record—Cassidy added me as a friend. I thought you had told her about me.

BO. We did. She saw the obituary. You weren't at the funeral. She had questions.

RACHAEL(/RIVER) SIDE B

Rhys finally stands up, grumpily, and exits slowly up the stairs.

(To River.) See? Sometimes these Lafayette boys just need a little push.

Rhys, hearing this, flips Rachael off behind her back before exiting. Bo wanders in from somewhere, hanging up his phone and dialing a new number.

Any luck?

BO. He just gave me some other guy's number to call. Hold on.

Bo wanders out onto the porch.

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RIVER. Oh, sure—!

Over the following, they push the couch against the wall, to clear out the floor, then they set up another table where the couch was.

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after these killings—ears, fingers, genitals— (*Poking her head in the den.*) HEY! KEEP IT DOWN IN THERE! YOUR AUNT TONI IS STILL SLEEPING!

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The noise quiets down—for a little while. Rachael starts arranging things on the new table. Bo wanders through.

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Bo wanders out just as Toni comes stalking downstairs. She is clearly hungover. Beat, as the women look at each other.

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RACHAEL. Toni, what time is the sale supposed to start?

Unresponsive, Toni exits into the kitchen.

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Rachael goes over to the den.

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Cassidy enters from the den, wearing something crazy on her head like a lampshade.

CASSIDY. What?!

RACHAEL. (*Taking the thing off her head.*) What are you two doing?

CASSIDY. We're playing ghosts!

RACHAEL. Well don't play that! Your aunt Toni is finally up. I need you to take your brother upstairs and the two of you finish cleaning out your grandfather's room.

CASSIDY. Ugh—!

RACHAEL. Just do it! / And quickly!

Cassidy stomps upstairs, Ainsley in tow.

CASSIDY. (*Offstage.*) OKAY! JESUS!

Bo pokes his head in from the porch and motions to everyone to keep it down.

BO. I guess some of them looked like postcards, / but some were like, photo-photos... Is there a difference? I'd have to look again...

Bo wanders back out onto the porch, just as Toni reenters with a cup of coffee.

but...I don't know.

CASSIDY. (*Coming around to sit next to River.*) Are you going to keep them? They're so creepy.

RIVER. (*Clutching the book.*) I don't know. **START**

CASSIDY. (*Re: River hiding the book from her.*) Don't be so weird. I already saw them, I told you. You can keep looking. I'm just going to sit here.

Beat, as River starts looking at the photos again. Cassidy pretends for a moment to be dealing with something on her phone before she starts to peek at the book again.

Why do you think Grandpa had these? Aren't these like...racist?

RIVER. I don't know.

CASSIDY. Do you think he was racist?

RIVER. I didn't really know your Grandpa.

CASSIDY. (*Prepping something on her phone.*) Me neither. It was so weird going through all of his stuff today. I kept being like, "This guy was related to me?" Like, what the eff? It's so weird you can be related to someone you've never met—or like a stranger, basically—and like just because you share some genetic material? Like what if you just randomly happen to share the same exact amount of genetic material with a totally random person on the street—which probably totally happens all the time—You can't call them Grandpa. You know what I mean? Like, it's so weird—

Cassidy tries to take a photo of the photos with her phone. River stops her.

RIVER. Whoa—what are you doing!?

CASSIDY. Instagramming?

RIVER. Cassidy, you can't do that!

CASSIDY. Do what?

RIVER. Just, like, force your friends to look at something like this!

CASSIDY. You're looking at them...

RIVER. That doesn't mean everyone in the world needs to see them—I'm *making a choice* to look at them.

CASSIDY. Fine, nevermind.

Beat.

It's probably good you're keeping these though. They might be worth something.

RIVER. Really?

CASSIDY. Yeah. You can sell anything on the internet.

Unlocks her phone, starts googling.

Let's find out. What do I search for? (*Googling.*) "Antique dead people photos."

Beat, as something loads.

There's definitely stuff... Victorian photos... Post-mortem photos...

Reads, then, unsatisfied, types.

... "Dead black people"... (*Off River's reaction.*) What? They are black.

Something loads.

Same stuff. Oh, duh— (*Typing.*) "...African-American."

Beat, something loads.

Who is Emmett Till?

RIVER. (*With the photos, rapt.*) I don't know...

CASSIDY. (*Reading something.*) "Lynching"?

Reads, clicks, something else loads.

OMG—Bingo! Look! There are some on eBay!

Excitedly, Cassidy tries to show River, but River isn't listening, engulfed as she is in looking. Beat, as Cassidy clicks through her own photos online.

These are so creepy...

Finds something, shows it to River.

OMG, look—look at that little girl in the crowd in this one—She's, like, smiling at us!

RIVER. (*Overwhelmed, closing the album.*) Okay! I think we should stop—

CASSIDY. Why?

RIVER. They're just upsetting and I don't think we should be looking at them anymore.

CASSIDY. (*Picking up the album to leaf through.*) But I'm not upset.

Beat.

(*Off River's gaze.*) Am I supposed to be?

RIVER. (*Exasperated.*) I don't know, Cassidy.

Beat, as Cassidy closes the album.

CASSIDY. Where is Uncle Franz?

RIVER. Upstairs. He's in a mood, so I decided to give him some space.

CASSIDY. A mood about what?

RIVER. Well, I don't love being here and he's having trouble sleeping, so—

CASSIDY. I hate it here, too.

Beat.

It's so crazy Uncle Franz is here though, huh? (*Lying.*) Why did he disappear from the family again? I always forget.

RIVER. (*Suspicious.*) Uh, I don't know... You should ask your parents.

Beat.

CASSIDY. Do you know why Aunt Toni left today?

RIVER. (*Shakes her head, then.*) You should ask your parents.

CASSIDY. (*A little angry.*) Ugh, why? They never tell me anything. No one ever does.

RIVER. I'm sorry—

CASSIDY. You should be. You're retarding my development. This whole trip is. The whole point was to learn more about Daddy's family and all I've learned is that everything is a secret. I could have done that back in the city. (*Sniffing the candle.*) Why are you wasting these candles? Doesn't this lamp work?

She turns the lamp on. River turns the lamp off.

RIVER. Yes, but I prefer candlelight.

CASSIDY. Why?

RIVER. I feel safer with candlelight.

CASSIDY. Safe from what?

RIVER. You don't find this house a little creepy? With that graveyard out there? All those old bones in the ground. You don't think it could

be a little haunted?

Beat.

CASSIDY. Ghosts are for children.

RIVER. You're a children.

CASSIDY. I'm a teenager—and what do ghosts have to do with candles?

RIVER. They say if you hold your breath and keep still and a flame flickers, it means there are spirits present.

They stare at the candle's flame.

CASSIDY. Or a draft.

END

RIVER. Okay, so you're a little know-it-all.

CASSIDY. I know there are things called science and logic.

RIVER. Science can't explain everything.

CASSIDY. Yeah it can.

RIVER. It can't tell us why we laugh.

CASSIDY. Uh, we laugh because something's funny—?

RIVER. Yeah, but why does it come out like a laugh. Why doesn't it come out like a scream or a sigh? Or why does water pour out of our face when we're sad? Why do we dream? Science still doesn't know the answer to that.

CASSIDY. And you think ghosts are the answers.

RIVER. I think the universe is full of mysteries we'll never fully comprehend and we delude ourselves into thinking otherwise but that if we respect the mystery and open ourselves up to it, the universe can sometimes reveal its truer self to us and even deeper mysteries.

CASSIDY. Whatever...

RIVER. Like this house. Sometimes a place can have its own spirit. A house this old can hold all sorts of things—not just ghosts—bad energies, memories. Who knows what happens when we're not here? Who knows what's happening right now that we can't even see...or hear? The problem is we don't know how to listen—or have forgotten how to listen. Maybe this house is trying to say something to us right now, Cassidy. Listen. What's it saying?

There is a scratching and banging on the door, which startles

TONI. Then why did you say it?

BO. You were being so...cruel.

TONI. Do you think I am a bad mother?

BO. No.

TONI. Then why doesn't he want to be with me?

Beat.

Can you believe I was actually looking forward to this weekend? I thought it was going to be fun. I don't know what exactly I thought was going to happen. I guess maybe we were just going to go through Daddy's stuff, maybe swaps stories about him—about each other—tell them to our kids. Somehow we would keep him alive that way. But nobody here cares about any of that. People seem happy that he's dead.

BO. No one is happy that he's dead.

TONI. Oh, really? Because the only thing upsetting you seems to be your bank account—

BO. I'm about to lose my job, Toni.

TONI. What?

BO. I think. I have a feeling corporate is about to close us down. This is why I've been on the phone all weekend. Rachael doesn't know so please keep that to yourself. So I really can't afford any of this. If it happens, I don't know what I'm going to do.

Beat.

TONI. Did you ever think maybe Daddy wanted us to lose the place?

BO. What?

TONI. Juanita thinks that Daddy hid the notices from the banks—that's why I never saw them. She says she sees it all the time, that he was probably ashamed of the mess he made and didn't want us to be bothered with any of it. Maybe we were supposed to lose it. Maybe he wanted us to let it go.

Beat.

BO. How did we ever sign on to this nonsense?

TONI. We thought it would give the two of them something to do.

BO. Who were these morons that Dad thought who would be like,

“You know where I’ve always wanted to vacation? Arkansas! Let’s find a little B&B somewhere in Arkansas and stay there for the weekend!”

TONI. This place has its charms. You’ve just always been a brat about it.

BO. What are you talking / about?

TONI. You’re the reason we stopped coming in the summers—Mommy and Daddy were tired of watching you sulk and complain all day—

BO. Well, sorry my idea of fun wasn’t...killing some animal or Grandma’s endless stories about some great-great-great-cousin Bubba hiding sacks of flour from the Yankees or whatever—No air conditioning—and if you said anything about it, people told you to go jump in that disgusting lake. “Go take a cool dip in the lake if ya get hot!” That cesspool—covered in algae and they treated it like Niagara frickin Falls—I just didn’t get it—I just didn’t effin get it—Bugs everywhere—What did you like about it?!

TONI. I don’t know. I always liked Grandma’s stories. Though I can’t remember any of them now. But I sort of get what Daddy was trying to do. Those cousins were just letting it fall apart. This place has history—our history. He wanted to honor it. It had value to him.

BO. Value. Look at this place. You think Dad had any idea what half of this junk was?

Rachael comes downstairs.

RACHAEL. Bo—!

Rachael sees Bo and Toni. She freezes. There is a seething between the two women.

BO. Sorry—I got distracted—

RACHAEL. Fine. I’ll get them. But I’m getting sleepy, so...

Rachael exits into the kitchen.

TONI. What’s happening?

Bo pulls out a bottle in his pocket.

BO. We’re having a nightcap, but it’s hard to sneak with the kids. You want some? It’s good.

TONI. No, no, don’t let me crash the celebration—

BO. What?

TONI. (*Re: the order.*) The takeover.

BO. What? No, Toni, this is just like a little ritual we do. (*Gesturing to the house.*) You know, I think Rachael actually did all this because she wants to make up.

TONI. Oh—not to prove she's better than me?!

BO. Please just apologize? I don't want to choose sides.

TONI. Tell me to my face that you don't think Daddy is a bigot.

Beat.

BO. Do you remembering dropping me off in New Haven my freshman year?

TONI. Yes. Mom was so sick she couldn't leave the car.

BO. Well, we showed up at my quad that I'm sharing with three other guys and lo and behold one of my roommates is this black kid from Philly. This nice, bright kid, Clarence Montgomery. I even remember his name. The quad was split into two bedrooms, two guys each bunking up, and for whatever reason we were the last to arrive and the only bed left was with Clarence. And while you and Mom sat in the car, Daddy and I set about unpacking and the whole time, he wouldn't look Clarence in the face—He was so uncomfortable—

TONI. Daddy's discomfort around your college roommate is not the / same thing—

BO. And right before he left, Daddy pulls me aside and says, "You keep an eye on your stuff." And I see he's looking at Clarence, who's not even paying attention to us. "Be careful," Daddy said. Now why would Dad say something like that to me?

END

TONI. Bo, it was a different time. These things were still so new! He was anxious.

BO. But how do we know he ever stopped being...anxious?

Beat.

Though, I guess, now we'll never know.

Beat.

How are you dealing with the pictures by the way—with Rhys?

TONI. What do you mean?

START TONI. Are you sick?

RHYS. No but I had to tell them something so they'd leave me the fuck alone—What took you so long? I thought you were coming right back!

TONI. I stopped by Juanita's.

RHYS. You stopped answering your phone.

TONI. It died—

RHYS. How could you leave me here with these awful fucking people? You should have seen Uncle Bo and Rachael bossing everyone around—nagging and whining about money as if they hadn't all just flown down here first class. I fucking hate these people.

TONI. You don't hate your family.

RHYS. I hate this family.

Beat.

TONI. You like Cassidy.

RHYS. She's just a kid.

TONI. But you two should know each other. One day you might need each other. For like a kidney or something. Plus I think she has a little crush on you—

RHYS. Mom, ew—

TONI. What? I'm not telling you to do anything!

RHYS. She's just really into science—

TONI. Okay—

RHYS. Whatever—Did you do it or not?

TONI. I did.

RHYS. Good. That'll show Rachael, the Jew bitch.

TONI. Rhys! Where did you get that from?

RHYS. What? That's what she is! Bo, too, basically.

Beat.

(*Noticing.*) Are you drunk?

TONI. No.

Beat.

Hey—do we need to talk about those photos you saw earlier?

RHYS. I don't know. Do we?

TONI. Do you have any questions, or...?

RHYS. No.

Beat.

Did they belong to Grandpa?

Beat.

TONI. I don't think so, but we actually don't know. And now we'll never know.

Beat.

Why don't you come up and sleep in Grandpa's room with me?

RHYS. Mom, no.

Beat.

TONI. Do you think I'm a bad mother?

RHYS. What?

TONI. Do you?

RHYS. ...No.

TONI. Then what is wrong? Something's wrong. Do you think I'm mad at you or something—because I'm not. I forgive you and I will always forgive you, no matter what. I'm on your side. You know that, right?

RHYS. Yes.

Beat.

TONI. Can I have a hug?

RHYS. Uh, sure.

Toni embraces Rhys with intensity.

TONI. You give good hugs.

RHYS. You're drunk.

END

TONI. Drunk on loving you—and I'm still going to wake up tomorrow morning and thank God for you because I love love love you.

They disengage.

Good night.

AINSLEY SIDE

Please choose any poem or monologue you like – approximately 1 minute in length.

The director will then do an exercise with you exploring physical and vocal imagination!

Some examples:

- Running between different sides of the room
- Making noise/shouting like:
 - A pirate
 - Your favorite super-hero
 - Someone being chased by a monster
 - A monster chasing someone!