

THE APPLE DON'T FALL

a comedy in three movements

by Brent Englar

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CHARACTERS

DAN, 30

GLENNE, 35; Dan's half-sister(?)

LEON, 24; visionary director and founder of Gestation Theatre

SUSAN, 30; aspiring playwright and Leon's wife

GESTATION THEATRE ENSEMBLE (ENACTORS): 2 men and 2 women in their 20s. Each "enactor" should have a distinct yet complementary physical style, so that when all four are together the effect is of interlocking pieces of a puzzle.

TIME

Approximately six months after the tragic deaths of Dan's known relations

PLACE

In front of Dan's house: a modest, two-story structure with a very large garage in a western Maryland college town. A path leads from the driveway through a bit of yard to the front door; sometime ago, an attempt was made to line the path with shrubs and flowers, but the effort was abandoned and the plants have died.

The garage, which remains open throughout the play, is empty except for a sheet that hangs in back to mask entrances and exits. On either side of the driveway and facing the garage are two spotlights clamped to poles, along with a picnic table and benches and several folding chairs. Hanging between the poles is a hand-painted banner proclaiming "2 DAYS UNTIL ..."; the "2" hangs separately and can be swapped for different numbers as needed.

I

(Lights up on GLENNE seated at the picnic table before DAN's house, a suitcase at her feet. Her costume is smartly professional and her posture is excellent. After a long moment, the front door opens and DAN enters, blinking in the morning sun. He wears jeans, a faded sweatshirt, and the unfocused expression of one who has only just awakened)

GLENNE
(standing)
Daniel Couch?

DAN
Just Dan.

GLENNE
I'm your half-sister, Glenne.

(She extends her hand. DAN stares, then turns and walks back inside. After a moment, he re-enters with a fire extinguisher)

GLENNE (Cont'd)
I know this is unexpected—

DAN
—Get off my property.

(He points the fire extinguisher at GLENNE)

GLENNE
Are you threatening me?

DAN
I'm warning you.

GLENNE
With a fire extinguisher?

DAN
You ever been sprayed with a fire extinguisher?

GLENNE
No ...

DAN

Believe me, it stings.

GLENNE

If you'll let me explain—

DAN

—I could go for the chainsaw.

GLENNE

I think that's extreme.

DAN

What's extreme is posing as a half-sister for money. My family's dead.

GLENNE

I know that, Dan. That's why I'm here.

DAN

You're here to sponge off the bereaved!

GLENNE

Would you give me a chance?

(reaching for her suitcase)

Let me show you something—

DAN

—KEEP YOUR HANDS WHERE I CAN SEE THEM!

GLENNE

IT'S A PHOTOGRAPH!

(Very slowly, GLENNE removes a manila envelope from her suitcase.
She holds it out for DAN to take)

GLENNE (Cont'd)

Open it. Please.

(DAN opens the envelope. Inside is a photograph. His expression
changes)

GLENNE (Cont'd)

Is that man your father?

(DAN nods)

GLENNE (Cont'd)

Could you put down the fire extinguisher?

(DAN obeys. GLENNE crosses to his side. She points to the photograph)

GLENNE (Cont'd)

That's my mother. And that little baby right there is me.

(DAN peers at GLENNE, as though trying to find himself in her features. Suddenly he pulls her into a bear hug)

DAN

I thought I was alone!

GLENNE

You're not—

DAN

—I HAVE A SISTER!

GLENNE

Half-sister.

DAN

I never had any kind of sister. Am I your first brother?

GLENNE

I'm an only child, yes.

DAN

But where did you come from?

GLENNE

Geographically?

DAN

I want to know everything.

GLENNE

How old are you?

DAN

Thirty.

GLENNE

Well, Dan, five years before you were born, our father was a graduate student at the University of Chicago.

DAN

What did he study?

GLENNE

Theology.

DAN

That makes sense.

GLENNE

Was he a preacher?

DAN

Investment banker.

GLENNE

Then why does it make sense?

DAN

He wasn't a very good one. Not like Ma.

GLENNE

Ah ...

DAN

Who was your mother?

GLENNE

She was his postal worker.

DAN

He married his postal worker?

GLENNE

Not exactly.

DAN

Oh ...

GLENNE

Listen, Dan, I'm not here to slander your father.

DAN
Our father.

GLENNE
Ours. Right.

DAN
Did you know him?

GLENNE
Only from that photograph.

DAN
I'm sorry. Didn't your mother ...?

GLENNE
She raised me herself. She was a proud woman.

DAN
She was certainly pretty.

GLENNE
She was beautiful.

DAN
She was. Beautiful. My mother too.

GLENNE
He was a handsome man. Our father.

DAN
I guess it skips a generation.

GLENNE
What?

DAN
Just a joke he liked to tell.

GLENNE
Dan—

DAN
—I'm sorry, I didn't catch your name.

Glenne. GLENNE

Glenn? DAN

With an “e.” GLENNE

How pretty! DAN

You think so? GLENNE

It’s like a man’s name, but for a woman. DAN

Yes. Thank you. GLENNE

Glenn ... e ... DAN

Dan ...¹ GLENNE

My very own half-sister. DAN

I can’t believe I’m here. GLENNE

You must be exhausted. DAN

I’ve been driving twelve hours. GLENNE

You drove from Chicago? DAN

(She nods)

¹ Perhaps she mimics him by saying “Danny”?

DAN (Cont'd)

Glenny, I'm touched. Let me get you some tea.

GLENNE

No thank you.

DAN

They just opened a Wegmans in town. You never saw so much tea in your life.

(crossing back to the house)

Maybe in Chicago.

GLENNE

Dan, please—

DAN

—Would you rather have orange juice?

GLENNE

Did they really die like that?

DAN

Yes.

GLENNE

But everyone? Your whole family?

DAN

All except you.

GLENNE

I wouldn't expect you get many tornadoes out here.

DAN

That's what made it so unexpected.

GLENNE

I can only imagine.

DAN

I couldn't. I've been camping these woods since I was a boy. My grandparents' farm was just a mile down the road. I used to come every summer to help with the crop.

GLENNE

What did they grow?

DAN

Kittens. They need so much love when they're small. So finally I moved here for good. We were a real family farm. Ma's the only one who ever left. She had greater expectations, she always said. I guess maybe she worried that maybe I didn't, because on my thirtieth birthday last spring, she and Pop flew their plane down from New York to stage an intervention.

GLENNE

What does that mean?

DAN

I didn't want to stick around to find out. There was a huge fight, and I took off for the woods. I think much better in the air, don't you? I couldn't have gone more than five minutes before the skies opened up and just plowed through my grandparents' farm. Took out every man, woman, and kitten inside.

GLENNE

I'm so sorry.

DAN

That was six months ago. For six months I was sure I was alone in the world. Today, Glenny ... today is my new birthday!

GLENNE

It's Glenne.

DAN

I'm sorry.

GLENNE

No, I'm—

DAN

—Glenne.

GLENNE

Right.

DAN

All right, Glenne. Tell me about yourself.

GLENNE

Well ... I grew up outside Chicago. I went to college in the city. I graduated.

DAN

Good, good.

GLENNE
Are you sure you're okay?

DAN
Sure I'm sure. And now?

GLENNE
I'm an entrepreneur.

DAN
That's fantastic! What do you mean?

GLENNE
I started my own business.

DAN
So you probably know all about marketing and branding and 501(c) status?

GLENNE
My business is for-profit.

DAN
That sounds really impressive. Can you wait right here?

GLENNE
Where else would I—

DAN
—Thanks!

(DAN hurries into his house)

GLENNE
You're not going for the chainsaw?

(She glances at her watch, shrugs, and sits at the table. Two ENACTORS, a young man [1] and woman [2] wearing only black unitards, enter from behind the sheet in the garage. ENACTOR 2 crosses to sit opposite GLENNE)

GLENNE (Cont'd)
(startled)
Oh! Hello. Are you looking for Dan? He just went inside.

(ENACTOR 2 stares into GLENNE's eyes but says nothing)

GLENNE (Cont'd)

Can I help you with something?

(Without breaking eye contact, ENACTOR 2 shifts her posture)

GLENNE (Cont'd)

Should I know you from somewhere?

(ENACTOR 2 shifts her posture again)

GLENNE (Cont'd)

Should I call a psychiatrist?

(ENACTOR 2 leans forward until her nose nearly touches GLENNE's)

GLENNE (Cont'd)

I'll tell you what—I'll come back later ...

(GLENNE grabs her suitcase and stands. As she turns to leave, she bumps into ENACTOR 1, who has crossed directly behind her)

GLENNE (Cont'd)

Oh! It's another one ...

(ENACTOR 1, who is very tall, bends at the waist so that his eyes are level with GLENNE's. She steps backward. He steps forward. Meanwhile, ENACTOR 2 circles around the table behind GLENNE, who realizes she is trapped and screams. DAN races from the house, carrying a laptop)

DAN

What happened?

(Both ENACTORS turn to face DAN)

DAN (Cont'd)

Perfect timing! Per usual!

(DAN sets down the laptop and crosses to the ENACTORS, peppering them with questions. As before, they make no response other than to stare intensely into his eyes and shift posture. These postures are not representational—they are not attempts to convey literally through gesture what would ordinarily be spoken, nor are they sign language. They are spontaneous displays of movement for its own sake, and they may be as exaggerated or simple as the moment warrants.)

Nevertheless—and despite GLENNE's increasing bewilderment—
DAN responds to each gesture as though it were another line in an
otherwise unremarkable conversation)

DAN (Cont'd)

Martin—hey, Vanessa—is Leon still at breakfast? I was on my way to meet him ...

(responding to a gesture)

Don't I know it—useless without coffee. Where's he at?

(responding to a gesture)

You're kidding, right? That's not what he told me.

(responding to several gestures in succession)

Because—because—I know, that's what I told him, but—

(laughing)

Will you stop? You can't get salmonella from a Danish. Because—why would they
make it on the same surface as the eggs?

(to GLENNE)

They wouldn't, would they?

GLENNE

My God, you're all insane.

DAN

Excuse me?

GLENNE

Do me a favor—pretend we never met.

(GLENNE moves to exit. DAN hurries to catch her)

DAN

You don't understand—there's a reason they don't speak.

GLENNE

Is the reason they're crazy?

DAN

Of course not. They're my friends.

GLENNE

I'm not sure that's comforting.

DAN

Martin, Vanessa, this is Glenne. My long-lost older sister.

(The ENACTORS bow deeply and solemnly. GLENNE does not
reciprocate)

DAN (Cont'd)

Please don't be rude.

(GLENNE gives an awkward bow. The ENACTORS cross into the garage and begin stretching)

GLENNE

Long-lost older half-sister.

(The ENACTORS continue to stretch, oblivious now to everything but their own bodies. GLENNE turns to DAN)

GLENNE (Cont'd)

Who the fuck are they?

DAN

Is that what passes for polite conversation in Chicago?

GLENNE

I thought they were going to attack me!

DAN

Don't be silly.

GLENNE

THEN WHY ARE THEY FREAKS?

(DAN stares at GLENNE, appalled by her rudeness. The ENACTORS balance themselves in a shared pose)

GLENNE (Cont'd)

I'm sorry. That was unfair. But you can understand my concern ...

(Still DAN says nothing. GLENNE sighs)

GLENNE (Cont'd)

Right. No excuses. I'm truly sorry, Dan.

DAN

Apology accepted.

GLENNE

Now who are they? Brother?

DAN

They're my theatre company.

GLENNE

You're not serious.

DAN

Okay, half a company. Call's not for another couple minutes.

GLENNE

Why do you have a theatre company?

DAN

Initially, at first I needed something to do with myself. After losing the farm and my family, you know? But lately, I can't tell you how excited I've been. Remember the name, Glenne—Gestation Theatre.

GLENNE

What kind of theatre?

DAN

It's us.

(gesturing toward the ENACTORS)

It's them. It's a totally new mode of performance.

GLENNE

It looks like stretching.

DAN

You've got to loosen your body, Glenne, before you re-make theatre.

GLENNE

Is that your tagline?

DAN

That's a great idea! Hang on ...

(He takes a digital recorder from his pocket and begins dictating)

DAN (Cont'd)

"You've got to loosen your body, Glenne, before you re-make theatre."

GLENNE

I think without the "Glenne."

DAN

(dictating again)

"No 'Glenne'."

(DAN turns off the recorder. Two more ENACTORS, another young man [3] and woman [4] in black unitards, enter and join their partners in the garage)

GLENNE

Who are they?

DAN

My other halves.

(calling to the ENACTORS)

Rudy, Shelby, please say hello to Glenne. We're family.

(The new ENACTORS bow to GLENNE)

DAN (Cont'd)

Rudy and Shelby are what you might call character enactors.

GLENNE

Why?

DAN

Because they play every part. Ergo: Old men ...

(ENACTOR 3 assumes a posture like an old man)

DAN (Cont'd)

Old women ...

(ENACTOR 4 assumes a posture like an old woman)

DAN (Cont'd)

Non-traditional gender casting ...

(ENACTOR 3 becomes the old woman and ENACTOR 4 the old man)

DAN (Cont'd)

Clowns ...

(ENACTORS 3 and 4 perform bits of clowning. GLENNE points to ENACTORS 1 and 2)

GLENNE

And them?

DAN

Our stars!

(ENACTORS 1 and 2 pose heroically. Then all four join hands and form a circle. As though responding to silent cues, they begin swaying in every direction, counterbalancing each other as they alternately rise and fall²)

GLENNE

They never speak?

DAN

In Gestation Theatre no one speaks. To speak is to distract, to proffer lies. We are a theatre of gesture.

GLENNE

Are there others?

DAN

I'm pretty sure we invented it. Truth is our guiding light. The voice is but a shadow of the body.

GLENNE

I'm not sure I understand ...

DAN

I might have misspoke. To be honest, Glenne, I'm not the one you should be talking to. This isn't my baby.

GLENNE

Whose baby is it?

DAN

Leon's.

GLENNE

The guy with salmonella?

DAN

Now don't you start with that. He's got a weak stomach is all.

GLENNE

Where is he?

DAN

He's coming.

² Or they do something else.

(From both sides of the garage, the spotlights illuminate the swaying ENACTORS. The rest of the stage darkens, as though a cloud has blocked the sun. The ENACTORS tighten their circle, then open to reveal a tall figure wrapped in a cloak. This is LEON. The circle opens wider, and we see he is standing on a stool; in fact, he is rather squat)

DAN (Cont'd)

He's here.

(LEON steps down from the stool and crosses to the far wall of the garage, where he flips a switch. The lights revert to normal. He turns to face the ENACTORS, who quickly perform an exercise. Without speaking he makes a correction, then watches as they try again. At last, and visibly disappointed, he turns to DAN; the ENACTORS continue rehearsing)

LEON

What kept you this morning?

DAN

I'm really sorry.

LEON

We were scheduled to discuss social media.

DAN

Leon, you've got to meet someone!

LEON

That illiberal arts blogger?

DAN

No ...

(presenting GLENNE)

My half-sister!

LEON

I thought she was eaten by bears.

DAN

That was my mother's sister.

LEON

Then who is this?

DAN
My father's daughter. Glenne!

LEON
I don't understand.

DAN
I just found out she existed.

LEON
(to GLENNE)
Were you in prison?

GLENNE
Chicago.

LEON
I love Chicago! Have you been to the Goodman?

GLENNE
No.

LEON
Second City?

GLENNE
No.

LEON
Steppenwolf?

GLENNE
No.

LEON
Why are you here?

GLENNE
To meet my half-brother.

LEON
I see. Dan, may I speak with you?

DAN
You are speaking with me.

LEON

Alone, Dan.

(LEON pulls DAN aside)

LEON (Cont'd)

I think she's a charlatan.

DAN

I think she said entrepreneur.

LEON

An imposter! A fraud!

DAN

Excuse me?

LEON

She's trying to snow you.

DAN

You're crazy.

LEON

Crazy, Dan, is living in Chicago and not going to Steppenwolf.

DAN

Not everyone's an expert on theatre, Leon. Most people don't even like it.

LEON

I refuse to talk to you when you're raving.

DAN

I used to hate theatre—I've told you dozens of times. My parents dragged me to Broadway shows every summer.

GLENNE

I never understood all the singing and dancing.

DAN

Me too!

GLENNE

Nobody sings and dances in real life.

LEON

I know many people who sing and dance in real life.

DAN

Not all at once.

LEON

I see. Excuse me.

(LEON turns to exit. DAN hurries to stop him)

DAN

Leon, wait! You didn't let me finish. I used to hate theatre, I was going to say. Until I met you.

(to GLENNE)

Until I met this man.

(clapping LEON on the back)

And Glenne, I promise, if you open your mind to Gestation Theatre, just a crack, your cultural prejudices will be shattered. Like mine.

LEON

She knows about ...?

DAN

I was trying to explain when you appeared. To be honest, I was making a bit of a mess of it.

(LEON sighs and sits at the table, followed by DAN, followed by GLENNE)

LEON

The question to which I must always return is ... Why go to the theatre at all?

GLENNE

I don't know.

LEON

Please listen.

GLENNE

What?

LEON

I find it difficult to articulate when I'm interrupted.

GLENNE

You asked a question—

LEON

—GODDAMN WHAT'S THE MATTER?

(to GLENNE and DAN)

One moment ...

(LEON stands and crosses to the ENACTORS, who have been repeating a series of simple gestures. Commanding their attention, LEON demonstrates the proper technique, then gestures for the ENACTORS to try again. When he is satisfied with their progress—or perhaps exasperated by their lack of progress—he returns to the table)

LEON (Cont'd)

Where was I?

GLENNE

Is something wrong?

LEON

I sympathize with their struggles, I do. The art of enacting is an exacting mistress.

(to DAN)

That might look good on a website.

GLENNE

I'm sorry, the art of acting?

LEON

Acting!

(snorts)

At Gestation Theatre, we do not subject ourselves to pale imitations of truth.

DAN

The voice is but a shadow of the body. Right?

LEON

I really wish you'd stop saying that.

DAN

It's not right?

LEON

“A gesture's worth a thousand words.” That's my preference.

DAN

Leon, you were outvoted.

GLENNE

A picture?

LEON

A gesture! Imagine, if you will, you're walking through Chicago, late one night—you're headed home from clubbing, or from Steppenwolf, let's pretend—your mind on the *mise-en-scène*—you're suddenly accosted by a handgun-toting thug. What is your instinctive response? You clutch your purse, you tense to run, you scream, perhaps. You do not give a speech. You do not pause for tears. You do not, that is to say, "act," as we see too often at the local theatre. It is gesture—movement, Glenne—that captures the emotional truth of our experience.

(To demonstrate, LEON pulls out and points a gun at the ENACTORS, who scream and scatter offstage)

LEON (Cont'd)

No worries. Blanks.

(He fires the gun. GLENNE screams)

LEON (Cont'd)

You see? The air is thick with truth, and not a word was spoken.

DAN

They're very talented.

GLENNE

They're terrified!

LEON

No.

DAN

They're enacting.

GLENNE

What the hell's enacting?

LEON

To enact is to act naturally.

GLENNE

That makes no sense.

LEON

It makes perfect sense.

GLENNE

How?

LEON

Because “naturally” begins with an “n.”

(Two ENACTORS cautiously re-enter and cross to LEON. They perform a gesture for him, he responds, and they exit)

LEON (Cont'd)

(to DAN)

They're going to find the others.

GLENNE

They said that?

LEON

It is not clear to me what you mean by “said.”

GLENNE

To speak words.

LEON

Words are for strangers in strange circumstances. I know their faces, I know their bodies, as well as my own. Do I require words to know myself?

DAN

No!

GLENNE

You understand this?

DAN

It's taken some practice.

LEON

To achieve transparent intimacy takes years of practice. Dan is still learning, of course. Our audience is still learning. There is no map to lead us to destiny. If there were, we would not read it.

(Suddenly LEON stiffens, as though sensing a far-off gesture)

LEON (Cont'd)

I must go to my wife.

GLENNE

You have a wife?

LEON

I have the most wonderful wife.

GLENNE

What does she do?

LEON

She writes plays. Excuse me.

(LEON crosses to exit. DAN grabs the digital recorder)

DAN

Leon, wait! How's this for a tagline?

(DAN rewinds the recorder, then plays back the statement from before: *You've got to loosen your body, Glenne, before you re-make theatre.* LEON listens, confused)

DAN (Cont'd)

Without the "Glenne."

LEON

Who is Glenne?

DAN

My half-sister.

GLENNE

It was nice to meet you.

LEON

Glenne ... Can we expect your presence opening night?

GLENNE

I'm not sure. When is opening night?

(LEON crosses to the banner: "2 DAYS UNTIL ..." He swaps the number "2" for a "1" and then exits)

II

(DAN and GLENNE sit at the table)

GLENNE

How did you meet him?

DAN

I think it was serendipity.

GLENNE

Serendipity?

DAN

It was right around the time my known family died. What a mess I was. No direction, no appetite—it was all I could do not to spend each day sitting naked in the park.

GLENNE

Does that mean you did or you didn't?

DAN

Occasionally I had to sign some papers, but in truth the lawyers have handled most of it. I know it's cliché, but thank God for the lawyers. I can't tell you how much good it did me just to shut off my mind and think.

GLENNE

And sit naked in the park?

DAN

Especially.

GLENNE

Didn't anyone tell you to stop?

DAN

Don't let me give you the wrong idea. I wasn't in the main park, not where people have picnics. I was over behind the pond.

GLENNE

Why?

DAN

Nobody goes that way anymore—not since they ran out of fish.

GLENNE

Why naked?

DAN

That's a good question.

GLENNE

You don't know?

DAN

A tornado had just dropped out of the sky and smushed everything I loved. If you know the answer to why, you're a heck of a lot smarter than me.

GLENNE

I'm sorry, Dan, you're right. I shouldn't pry.

DAN

It means a lot that you care.

GLENNE

So Leon ...?

DAN

Of course. Leon saw me one day by the pond—he explained to me later, he was scoping future venues for the theater—and there I was, naked as a gay bird, and he figured, quite naturally, I was some kind of performance artist. Leon has tremendous respect for performance artists, you can imagine, so he put a dollar in my hat, which was over with the rest of my clothes, and went on his way. The next day he came back, and he'd brought people with him—Rudy and Vanessa, you met them earlier—and they stood there and watched, maybe an hour, and then they each put a dollar in my hat and left. The next day the whole company came to watch, and midway through the hour one of them finally stripped naked and sat down next to me, and then another, and suddenly everyone was naked. So I had to ask what they were doing, and they asked if I was protesting the war or the Recreation and Parks Department ... and after I explained the truth, we all had a good laugh and they invited me to join. So you see—serendipity!

GLENNE

No ... I'm sorry.

DAN

Does it not mean what I think it means?

GLENNE

I think it means good fortune.

DAN

And I do feel fortunate. I mean, I'm clearly no enactor, but it turns out I can help in a much more impactful way.

GLENNE

Which is ...?

DAN

I'm their patron.

(taking out his wallet)

I will be their patron. Look here ...

(DAN opens his wallet and shows GLENNE a slip of paper)

GLENNE

Blank check?

DAN

The second the estate clears—I expect to hear from the lawyers any day—I'm putting the whole figure into that little box. And “Gestation Theatre Company” on that line there. As in “Pay to the order of.”

GLENNE

I know how to make out a check.

DAN

I didn't mean to—

GLENNE

—No, I know.

DAN

I get so excited and I babble.

GLENNE

I'd babble to think of all that money.

DAN

To tell you the truth, I try not to.

GLENNE

Do you mind if I ask how much?

DAN

Sure.

GLENNE

How much?

DAN

I'll probably inherit a couple dozen million dollars. Before taxes.

GLENNE

Our father made millions of dollars?

DAN

Pop didn't, not really.

(putting the check back in his wallet)

I told you—Ma was the brains in the family.

GLENNE

And all those dozens of millions ... to Leon?

DAN

To Gestation Theatre Company, yes.

GLENNE

That's extraordinarily generous.

DAN

I wouldn't say extraordinarily.

GLENNE

Aren't you doing anything for yourself?

DAN

Sure.

GLENNE

Well ...?

DAN

I'm donating to Gestation Theatre Company.

GLENNE

For you alone.

DAN

Like what?

GLENNE

Whatever you want! If you'd never sat naked with Leon, and you'd just won a million

dollars playing Lotto, what would you spend it on?

DAN

I don't play Lotto.

GLENNE

Or fished it out of the pond—who cares?

DAN

It would be nice if someone restocked the pond.

GLENNE

That's not what I mean.

DAN

What would you do?

GLENNE

I'd make my dreams come true. Don't you have a dream?

DAN

Nothing that costs millions of dollars.

GLENNE

That's very lucky for you.

DAN

Do yours?

GLENNE

Starting a business costs a lot of money.

DAN

What kind of business are you in?

GLENNE

If you're interested, I'll tell you.

DAN

Of course I'm interested.

GLENNE

I never want to be that person who just talks about herself.

DAN

I'm really interested.

GLENNE

I'm in the fitness business, Dan. Athletic clubs—well, club to start, for now. But that'll change—it's got to—because in this country, having the idea is half the battle won.

DAN

What's your idea?

GLENNE

I call it Play to Pay.

DAN

That's very catchy. Pay to Play—

GLENNE

—No, Play to Pay.

DAN

What's that?

GLENNE

My business.

DAN

What?

GLENNE

At Play to Pay Fitness, you pay only if you play.

(DAN shakes his head, confused)

GLENNE (Cont'd)

Let me guess—you're ten pounds overweight? Give or take.

DAN

I could maybe stand to lose a couple.

GLENNE

Great! So you join a gym, you pay for a membership—couple dozen dollars a month, I'd wager—you sweat and you sweat and whether you lose weight or no, you're still on the hook for the membership, right?

DAN

I've never joined a gym.

GLENNE

Trust me, nobody's refunding your money because you got a shitty metabolism.
Except ...

DAN

Except your gym.

GLENNE

Athletic club. But yes.

DAN

How come?

GLENNE

Because we're Play to Pay Fitness, that's how come! Because your body is God's
fault, not yours, so here's the deal. Lose ten percent of the paunch, you pay ten bucks.
Lose nothing, you pay zero.

DAN

What if I gain weight? Do you pay me?

GLENNE

Don't be a socialist.

DAN

But—

GLENNE

—Anyway, you asked and that's my dream.

DAN

Sounds like you're nearly there.

GLENNE

Just have a look ...

(She removes various pieces of merchandise from her suitcase and
spreads them on the table before DAN)

GLENNE (Cont'd)

We've got bumper stickers, mugs, DVDs of my patented 12-Step Cardio Bake—
patent pending—and all with the Play to Pay logo ...

(handing DAN a T-shirt)

Throw one on for size. It's yours, brother.

(DAN puts on the T-shirt, revealing—stretched across his chest—the Play to Pay logo)

DAN

It's a little tight.

GLENNE

Makes you want to run to the nearest athletic club, don't it?

DAN

I'm not much of a runner.

GLENNE

Who is? Anyhoo, running's not till Step 4 in the Bake.

DAN

What's Step 1?

GLENNE

Admitting you have a problem.

DAN

(pulling at the T-shirt)

Do you mind if I take this off?

GLENNE

Don't like?

DAN

I like.

GLENNE

How 'bout a jump rope?

DAN

Excuse me?

GLENNE

Step 2.

(GLENNE hands DAN a jump rope from her suitcase)

DAN

You're remarkably prepared.

GLENNE

In ten years, I aim to stick a franchise in every city from Chicago to Atlantic. All I need's an investor.

DAN

Let me ask you something.

GLENNE

Sure!

DAN

How long did it take to design this?

(He points to the T-shirt)

GLENNE

What?

DAN

You wanted to make exercise funny, right? Like, you'll laugh all the way to the gym.

GLENNE

Um—

DAN

—I hadn't tried funny ... It's a reason why.

GLENNE

Why ...?

DAN

Why should people see Gestation Theatre? Or see a play at all—that's Leon's question, right? I've tried to find an answer—all the while they're rehearsing, my job is to find an answer and tell the world, or at least people who might want to buy a ticket, or at least the neighbors, if they only knew why. Look, I made posters ...

(DAN opens the laptop and taps a few keys. In the garage, two ENACTORS appear; they "enact" the poster by making severe, shushing gestures)

DAN (Cont'd)

Does this make you want to see a play?

GLENNE

What play?

DAN

Exactly. So I tried the other tack—more like a friend, or an invitation, or an invitation from a friend ...

(DAN taps another key. In the garage, two more ENACTORS appear; they “enact” the new poster by making warm, welcoming gestures)

GLENNE

An invitation to what?

DAN

Exactly! What differentiates Gestation from a million years of talking plays?

GLENNE

I don't think a poster can convey that.

DAN

I thought that too! What can?

GLENNE

Dan, the question is what can't! Every day another tool's invented you can use to build a bridge.

DAN

To what?

GLENNE

To six-plus billion individuals and their discretionary incomes.

DAN

I made a video. You want to see?

(DAN taps another few keys on the laptop, then gestures for GLENNE to watch. For a long moment nothing happens)

GLENNE

Is it still loading?

DAN

Shh!

(Another long moment of nothing, followed by the sound of vigorous applause, or cymbals, or a yowling cat. DAN grins and looks eagerly at GLENNE)

GLENNE

Dan ...

DAN

Do you need to see it again?

GLENNE

What does Gestation Theatre mean to you?

(ENACTOR 1 enters, sipping tea. DAN crosses to meet him)

DAN

Did you find them?

(ENACTOR 1 takes a long sip of tea)

DAN (Cont'd)

Oh good. And there's no hard feelings?

(ENACTOR 1 embraces DAN and exits into the house)

DAN (Cont'd)

(to GLENNE)

I keep worrying one day they won't come back—especially since he started shooting off that gun. But I guess he knows them better than me.

(ENACTORS 2 and 3 enter, holding hands)

DAN (Cont'd)

You two know the rules against intimacy.

(ENACTORS 2 and 3 embrace DAN)

DAN (Cont'd)

Now listen—I'm happy you found love, but there's a show to rehearse!

(ENACTOR 2 stares at DAN's T-shirt)

DAN (Cont'd)

It's a gift from my sister. She's going to be a fitness tycoon.

(ENACTOR 2 makes a face. She takes ENACTOR 3's hand, and they exit into the house)

GLENNE

“Rules against intimacy”?

DAN

They're becoming harder to enforce.

GLENNE

What the hell's wrong with holding hands?

DAN

Leon dislikes sexual tension.

GLENNE

I really dislike Leon.

DAN

The crucial key to enacting is trust.

GLENNE

Enacting?

DAN

Complete faith that your partner has something to say.

GLENNE

Who said anything about enacting?

DAN

Your problem, Glenne, is you have no faith that someone else might have something to say.

(DAN places two chairs back to back and gestures for GLENNE to sit in one)

GLENNE

Did you join a cult?

DAN

Are cults easier to mock?

(DAN gestures again for GLENNE to sit. Finally, she complies. DAN sits in the other chair)

GLENNE

What are you doing?

DAN

Shh ...

(DAN performs a simple gesture. GLENNE is oblivious. DAN repeats the gesture. GLENNE turns to look at him)

DAN (Cont'd)

No peeking.

GLENNE

What do you want me to do?

DAN

What comes naturally.

(GLENNE turns away from DAN, who performs another gesture. As before, GLENNE is oblivious. DAN repeats the gesture)

GLENNE

I don't know what you want from me!

DAN

Be wordless!

(GLENNE is frustrated)

DAN (Cont'd)

That's good!

GLENNE

You can't even see what I'm doing.

DAN

It doesn't matter what I see. Something happened. We'll call it your base.

GLENNE

Why?

DAN

Any time you feel lost, return to base.

(DAN performs a new gesture. GLENNE remains frustrated. DAN absorbs her energy, then responds with a new gesture. GLENNE senses that DAN has moved. Very tentatively, she performs a simple gesture of her own. DAN responds with another new gesture. GLENNE repeats her gesture with greater confidence³)

³ Or perhaps she just gives Dan the finger.

DAN (Cont'd)
You're progressing nicely.

GLENNE
I'm glad you think so.

DAN
What does that gesture mean to you?

GLENNE
I probably shouldn't say.

DAN
Then why perform it?

GLENNE
You said do something.

DAN
Exactly!

GLENNE
What?

DAN
Here, let me—

(DAN turns in his chair to face GLENNE, and she turns to him)

DAN (Cont'd)
No, don't even think I'm here.

GLENNE
How do I not think you're—

DAN
—SHHHH! Shut it off. Respond.

GLENNE
Respond to what?

DAN
My words.

GLENNE
You said be wordless!

You. DAN

Okay ... GLENNE

A birthday party. DAN

(GLENNE doesn't move)

Respond! DAN (Cont'd)

A birthday party ... GLENNE

(GLENNE places her palms on her cheeks and opens her mouth in exaggerated surprise)

DAN

You needn't be literal. First day of school.

(GLENNE pantomimes asking a question)

DAN (Cont'd)

You're an enactor, not a mime, Glenne!

GLENNE

I'm an enactor ...

DAN

Blind date with a lobster.

GLENNE

What?

DAN

Respond!

(GLENNE turns and stares at DAN)

DAN (Cont'd)

Don't look, don't look!

(GLENNE continues to stare)

DAN (Cont'd)

All right, return to base ... Base, Glenne, your base!

(GLENNE continues to stare)

DAN (Cont'd)

Right, let's stop. All right, a guide—here, I'll be you and you be me.

GLENNE

I be you and you be—

DAN

—Right. We're close.

(He sits with his back to GLENNE)

DAN (Cont'd)

Just give me a scenario.

GLENNE

What scenario?

DAN

Whatever you like.

GLENNE

A birthday—

DAN

—Wait! I need to focus ...

(DAN closes his eyes and releases the tension from his body. After a long moment, he opens his eyes)

DAN (Cont'd)

Begin.

GLENNE

A birthday party.

(DAN performs a series of gestures that have no apparent relation to anything that happens at a birthday party)

GLENNE (Cont'd)

Halloween.

(As before, DAN performs gestures that appear totally unrelated to Halloween)

You see? DAN

No. GLENNE

Give me another. DAN

I'm blank. GLENNE

You're never blank. DAN

I'm blank. GLENNE

Respond! DAN

GLENNE
A FREAK TORNADO ACCIDENT, YOU FREAK!

(DAN concentrates for a long moment, then cuts through the air with a powerful gesture. A sob racks his body. He takes a deep breath, then moves to perform a new gesture, and suddenly he is weeping)

Dan? Dan, you're crying—shit ... GLENNE (Cont'd)

(DAN continues to sob. GLENNE helplessly rubs his shoulders)

Shh ... I'm sorry, Dan—shh ... I didn't— GLENNE (Cont'd)

(DAN exhales, stretching his body to its limits, as though wringing out the emotion; then he rolls forward and springs to his feet. Turning to face GLENNE, he performs full-body gestures while continuing to breathe deeply. GLENNE watches him until, caught by some strange impulse, she responds with a full-body gesture of her own. DAN absorbs her gesture, transforms it, and returns a variation to her, which she likewise absorbs and returns to DAN. This time when DAN

responds, he adds a wordless vocalization. GLENNE giggles, then responds with a vocalization of her own. As they pass vocalized gestures back and forth, their giggling swells to giddy laughter. The ENACTORS appear in the garage. GLENNE immediately stifles her laughter)

DAN

Don't stop!

(The ENACTORS begin to stretch. GLENNE grabs her suitcase)

DAN (Cont'd)

Where are you going?

GLENNE

I need to lie down.

DAN

You can lie down here.

GLENNE

I'll find a motel.

DAN

Don't be silly. We have a furnished guest room.

GLENNE

I passed a lovely motel back in Pittsburgh.

DAN

I insist!

(DAN takes from GLENNE her suitcase and crosses to the front door. She glances warily at the ENACTORS, who continue to stretch)

DAN (Cont'd)

Glenne, you drove all the way from Chicago. The least I can do is offer you a room.

GLENNE

It means that much to you?

DAN

It means everything.

(He opens the door. At last she follows him into the house.)

The ENACTORS begin clearing the stage as they prepare for their upcoming performance. When the stage is clear, LEON appears. He passes energy to ENACTOR 1, who transforms the energy and passes it to ENACTOR 2, who transforms the energy and passes it to ENACTOR 3, who transforms the energy and passes it to ENACTOR 4, who releases the energy to the audience.

LEON crosses to the banner —“1 DAYS UNTIL ...”—and swaps the “1” for a “0”. Blackout)

III

(Lights up to reveal SUSAN, dressed elegantly and standing before the garage. DAN and GLENNE sit in the audience; DAN has changed into slacks and a tie. LEON, still in his cloak, watches from the back of the theater)

SUSAN

A brief, true history of Gestation Theatre ...

(In the garage, ENACTORS 1, 3, and 4 appear. As SUSAN speaks—sometimes to the audience, sometimes to DAN or GLENNE, sometimes to herself—the ENACTORS perform their play. Each new production team should develop its own play—you may do anything consistent with these guides:

1. The ENACTORS do not speak (though wordless sounds and music are encouraged).
2. The ENACTORS move non-representationally and always with purpose.
3. You do not change the play's essential "shape" as outlined below.

Above all, please remember that my intention is not to generate laughs at the expense of the ENACTORS; however strange their ideals, they are skillful performers)

SUSAN (Cont'd)

Scene One. My husband, Leon, likes to say ours was a childhood romance. This is half true. In fact, only one of us was a child. I was sixteen when his parents first asked me to babysit. I tell you this not because we overcame great obstacles to consummate our love—Leon's family adored me, and my parents always said he was the cutest little boy. Nor should you think as a teenager I was attracted to ten-year-olds in Rodgers and Hart pajamas ...

All I knew at the time was a night sitting Leon would entail no watching of television, no reading of bedtime stories. No, every night he led me to the sofa, opened his costume trunk, and put on a

(ENACTORS 1, 3, and 4 perform the birth of an artist)

(As ENACTORS 3 and 4 look on, ENACTOR 1 dances like a primordial god at Creation)

show. Just for me. It wasn't until years later, when a young, husky man enrolled in the theatre department at my alma mater—myself having long since graduated, and working part-time in the costume shop—that we fell in love. Or perhaps, that I realized, finally, I loved him back ...

SUSAN (Cont'd)

My point, simply, is be wary of origin stories. At best, they are half-truths. At worst, they obscure criminal intent. Not that what happened in Leon's parents' living room was criminal. As I explained, it was innocent fun and theatre games. But any number of presently respectable organizations sweep the dirt of their foundations beneath the rug of a captivating origin myth. Facebook. Ford Motor Company. The Washington Redskins. And Gestation Theatre ...

Scene Two. Like so many prodigious collaborations, Gestation Theatre was born of jealousy and mistrust. Can two people never find happiness without hurting a third? Can the unhappy third never be satisfied but violently? These are not merely questions for artists, although artists may lead us to answers that lead us to ask new questions without answers. So it was with Leon. He had carved out a space for himself, but could he find others to fill it?

It was around this time a play I'd written won a prestigious regional award. My triumph was Leon's warning shot—for all his brilliance in the rehearsal room, Gestation Theatre still hadn't mounted a production. At least one enactor talked openly of law school. Efforts redoubled; experiment followed improvisation—my husband obsessed with the sound of a new language for actor and audience—

(ENACTOR 2 appears, wearing a flesh-colored unitard; she joins ENACTOR 1 in his dance. ENACTORS 3 and 4 begin their own dance)

(The dances collapse. The ENACTORS find each other)

(The ENACTORS move in shifting ways. They become frenetic)

but just as important and at the same time, we entered a raffle and won free ballroom dance lessons. The bodily freedoms thrilled us—within a month, the whole company was learning to tango ...

SUSAN (Cont'd)

Leon pushed hard—too hard, perhaps. One evening he announced mandatory weekend Tantra workshops. He told me later, at that moment he could read “fuck you” in every face. He called them slackers, they called him an overbearing prick; he ordered them to leave, they ordered him to take his Tantra and shove it ... or so he thought. Midway through another vodka shooter, he realized the entire conversation had been wordless. The mutual contempt existed only in their bodies, their expressions. But surely no less real for that—and how much clearer! Pen in hand, he scribbled his new manifesto: The essence of theatre lies not in speech but gesture. This done, he passed out from the vodka. Next day at rehearsal, he refused to give direction—he simply moved, and gradually, the others, they moved with him. They built a language of pure gesture, and now, in spite of all the silence, won't shut up. I ask them how rehearsal went, and they ...

Or they ...

Sometimes they even ...

Yet still they persevere. They won a backer's money. They found this large garage. They enticed you here today. While I have your attention, I'd like to point out that in these troubled times, many, many companies are struggling. Only across town, the Herb and Zelda Morris Actors Theatre just announced the resignation of their literary manager. She called me from her office—she said,

(The ENACTORS dance—briefly as one, increasingly at odds—until they collapse and then find each other again)

(An ENACTOR performs a gesture)

(An ENACTOR performs a gesture)

(All four ENACTORS perform a gesture, then fly apart as though carried by winds. At some point and without warning, ENACTOR 2 disappears)

“Susan, we’ve known each other how long, seven years? I need to tell you something—swear you’ll keep it secret.” I swore—so unfortunately I can’t go into details about two-faced, contract-breaking board members who wouldn’t know their assets from their asses, but suffice it to say, her leaving was no more voluntary than a heifer’s march to the slaughterhouse, and with her goes the region’s only dedicated new works festival, and the best hopes of many talented local playwrights ...

SUSAN (Cont’d)

But I digress. The truth is I couldn’t be happier for Leon. He’s busted his butt building his vision, and he deserves nothing but success and adulation. I love him dearly. So should you.

(The remaining ENACTORS come together triumphantly. In the garage, a sudden blackout. When the lights return, the performance has ended)

(SUSAN turns to the garage and begins clapping. The sound of applause fills the theater. DAN rises from his seat but does not clap. ENACTORS 1, 3, and 4 face the audience and bow repeatedly, then exit as the lights in the garage fade and the applause dies. LEON, DAN, and GLENNE join SUSAN onstage)

LEON

Well?

SUSAN

Magnificent!

(She kisses LEON)

LEON

You really think so?

SUSAN

You’re a brilliant, brilliant man.

LEON

We were sloppy. Unfocused. Rehearsal tonight—if they haven’t left me already.

SUSAN

Celebration tonight. You’re a hit!

GLENNE
Why would they leave you?

LEON
You know how enactors are.
(to DAN)
Well?

DAN
I don't know what to say.

LEON
As though your dearest preconceptions had been shattered?

DAN
What did it mean?

LEON
Why don't you tell me?

DAN
No, Leon—tell me.

LEON
It's not for me to say.

DAN
You made it! It's your company.

LEON
It's all our company.

GLENNE
Is that a fact?

LEON
Without question.

GLENNE
Oh, I have questions.

LEON
Remind me—who are you?

DAN
Leon, my half-sister.

LEON

(to GLENNE)

Your brother is our most important backer.

GLENNE

Except it's not clear to me, after watching this performance, what his money is being spent on.

LEON

Ridiculous.

GLENNE

Dan, what's your money being spent on?

LEON

Dan hasn't given us one dime to make theatre.

DAN

I gave you my garage.

LEON

And housing for enactors, of course, and we're forever grateful. But what you see on stage belongs entirely to the company. The Gestation aesthetic brooks no compromise with the Gestation bank account.

DAN

Also, the estate is still in probate.

GLENNE

You said any day now.

LEON

The plan for your brother's inheritance, whenever he finally receives it, is to fund our worldwide tour.

GLENNE

You're planning a worldwide tour?

LEON

The beauty of gesture is it transcends language.

GLENNE

You're taking this show to other countries?

SUSAN

Is there a problem, Glenne?

GLENNE

The problem is it doesn't sound like this is Dan's company at all. It sounds to me like he's the guy handing out the free lunch.

LEON

Dan, I never knew you felt this way.

GLENNE

Did you ask?

LEON

Need I ask? He has the same right to speak his mind as anyone.

DAN

The same as you?

LEON

You're at rehearsal—you want to say something, say it.

DAN

I think our shows would be easier to follow if there was some dialogue.

LEON

There's no dialogue in gesture theatre—that's the point!

DAN

I'm just saying—

LEON

—Fine. Noted. Overruled.

DAN

You said I had equal say—

LEON

—So you said it!

DAN

But you overruled me.

LEON

I have final say.

DAN

But Leon—how can I tell people why they should come see us when I don't know myself?

LEON

Perhaps you should try harder.

DAN

How much harder can I try? For six months I've given my life to this company! Can any of you say that?

LEON

It's not for you to question our dedication.

GLENNE

It's not just Dan. Your wife said the company nearly split.

LEON

(to SUSAN)

Did you?

SUSAN

You did nearly split.

LEON

"Split" is rather strong, my love. Besides, that's in the past.

SUSAN

Eight months ago.

LEON

The past.

SUSAN

The recent past.

LEON

Darling, we've had this conversation.

SUSAN

Leon, nobody doubts your passion.

LEON

That's exactly what he doubted!

DAN

I didn't mean—

LEON

—Then what, Dan? What?

DAN

You doubted me!

(The ENACTORS enter from the house, having changed into everyday clothes. ENACTOR 1 sips tea; ENACTORS 2 and 3 are giggling. Everyone stops when they see LEON)

ENACTOR 1

You coming out?

LEON

We'll meet you.

(ENACTOR 1 nods and exits; the others follow)

LEON (Cont'd)

Never in my life have I met more talented enactors. You know I hate cliché, but Susan, if they see this journey through—

SUSAN

—If. If.

LEON

Of course “if.” Tomorrow we could all be struck by lightning!
(to DAN)

I'm sorry.

DAN

It was a tornado accident.

LEON

My point is we've got talent, and talent rises. As their careers take off, they'll leave the nest—that's nature's truth, not mine. But talent absent dedication achieves nothing. You cannot look me in the eye and tell me we've achieved nothing.

SUSAN

De-lovely, please don't think we think that.

LEON

I don't think you think that.

SUSAN

Well, neither does Dan.

DAN

And neither does Glenne.

Who? LEON

My half-sister! DAN

Listen to me, Leon— SUSAN

—I'm listening— LEON

SUSAN
—Really listen. My fear isn't that in ten years you'll still be teaching others your language. That's what it means to have a dream—I understand. But as long as I've loved you, I think the dearest part of you has been dreaming. If in ten years—if in ten days—if no one's listening ... I don't want to see you disillusioned, Leon.

LEON
Are you asking me to wake up?

SUSAN
I'm asking you to stay illusioned.

LEON
I need to shower. And change.

SUSAN
And celebrate.

(They kiss and LEON exits. GLENNE stares at SUSAN)

SUSAN (Cont'd)
What is it?

GLENNE
You're a playwright?

SUSAN
Yes.

GLENNE
Then you must agree that plays without words is a pretty strange idea?

SUSAN
I wouldn't say "strange."

GLENNE

But you'd think it.

SUSAN

It doesn't matter what I think. It isn't my company.

GLENNE

That's right—it's Dan's.

DAN

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

GLENNE

Then tell me what you do think.

DAN

About what?

GLENNE

All of this!

DAN

This—

GLENNE

—This cocoon you've wrapped yourself in without having the first clue what it is.

DAN

And you do?

GLENNE

I don't have to have a clue.

DAN

You just know I don't have one.

SUSAN

Should I leave?

DAN

I don't want anyone to leave. But I won't stand for rudeness any longer.

(to GLENNE)

You drive halfway across the country to meet me for the first time, and the first thing you assume is I don't have a clue?

GLENNE

Because you don't!

DAN

I'm sorry, Glenne—you're my sister and my guest, and it's time you started acting like it.

GLENNE

I didn't come to be your guest, Dan. As far as acting like your sister, I figured blood looks out for blood—but clearly not in this family.

SUSAN

I'm going to leave.

GLENNE

No. I was rude to you and your husband. I'm sorry.

DAN

I wish you'd known him like I did.

GLENNE

Who?

DAN

Our father.

GLENNE

Well, I didn't.

DAN

But if you had, you wouldn't say—

GLENNE

—If I had, you wouldn't be here, Dan, because he never would have left my mother. And I wouldn't be me, so we should both be grateful.

DAN

Don't say that.

GLENNE

Did it ever occur to you why I own a goddamn gym? Because I'm a fitness fanatic. Why? Because from the age of five I ran to school each day and back. Why? Because our shitty neighborhood scared the shit out of me, and my mother worked shitty hours—and all that may sound bitter, but I'm not, because not only did I survive, I survived with a 40-bpm heart rate and a track scholarship to the University of Illinois. So when it came time to choose a career path, I could aim higher than the dog-eat-dog

underworld of personal training. I got a job in the marketing department of an up-and-coming chain of gym-spas, I learned what it takes to manage a nationally recognized brand, and I set out to make my own.

DAN

And you succeeded!

GLENNE

My mother's one regret—the only one she'd admit to—was she was never her own boss. It was never what do I want, not for her. It was always what do you want—“you” the Postmaster General, “you” the Internal Revenue Service, “you” the bastard child.

DAN

She said that?

GLENNE

She didn't have to. I heard it plenty from the neighbors.

DAN

Oh, Glenne, I'm sorry.

GLENNE

Why? It's a fact.

DAN

It was cruel. They had no right.

GLENNE

They said it anyway. And the only thing I could do was beat them. On every test, in every race, at every conceivable turn—be better than them.

DAN

Your mother must be proud.

GLENNE

She's dead.

DAN

Oh no!

GLENNE

Three years ago, she came to see me in Chicago, to celebrate the opening of my club. She left the party early—she was tired—and walking to the “L,” she was suddenly accosted by a handgun-toting thug. He grabbed her purse, she screamed and ran

across the street, a mail truck swerved to miss her, spooked a hansom cab ... My mother was trampled under-hoof.

DAN

I'm so sorry.

SUSAN

I'm sorry, Glenne.

GLENNE

It's fine. It's been difficult, yes, but I've had my work.

DAN

(to SUSAN)

She's got an incredible idea.

GLENNE

And ten-percent of every membership goes to further the cause of handgun distribution. My mother would have never run blindly across the street had she been properly armed.

DAN

(to SUSAN)

When she finds an investor, she has plans to expand to every city in America.

GLENNE

I had an investor.

DAN

Who?

GLENNE

The Windy City Horse and Buggy Company. I sued them for wrongful death.

SUSAN

But you said your mother ran blindly across the street.

GLENNE

She wasn't jaywalking, Susan. She was fleeing for her life.

DAN

Did you win?

GLENNE

We agreed to an out-of-court settlement, yes.

DAN

For how much?

GLENNE

It doesn't matter. Hansom cabs are a dying industry. Not six months later, the goddamn Buggy Company went bust.

DAN

So you got nothing?

GLENNE

I got royally fucked, but that wasn't part of the settlement.

(to SUSAN)

That's why it's so moving—it is—to find people who are truly committed to helping each other. Their spouses ...

(to DAN)

Their friends ...

(DAN's cell phone rings)

DAN

Excuse me.

(answering the phone)

Hello?

(to GLENNE and SUSAN)

Excuse me.

GLENNE

Take your time.

(DAN walks away, holding the phone to his ear and occasionally nodding. GLENNE turns to SUSAN)

GLENNE (Cont'd)

Where in this town can I get a really good sausage?

SUSAN

I'm vegetarian.

GLENNE

I'm not asking you to eat it, Susan.

SUSAN

I really don't know.

GLENNE

What about a drink?

SUSAN

I'm meeting Leon in a couple hours at our favorite pub. It's kind of a cast party, but Dan will be there, and you're welcome to join us. I believe they have bangers.

(Having ended the call, DAN returns)

GLENNE

(to DAN)

Susan's invited me out for something dirty.

SUSAN

And beer.

GLENNE

Who was on the phone?

DAN

The lawyers.

GLENNE

All of them?

DAN

The main one. The estate cleared. I've got my inheritance.

GLENNE

Congratulations.

SUSAN

I'm sure it's a relief.

DAN

Can I borrow a pen?

(SUSAN takes a pen from her purse and hands it to DAN. DAN opens his wallet and removes the blank check. He fills out the check, signs it, and hands it to GLENNE)

GLENNE

What's this?

DAN

Your share.

You're serious? GLENNE

Of course. DAN

I couldn't— GLENNE

—Don't be silly. It's yours. DAN

No, Dan, it's yours. GLENNE

And blood looks out for blood. DAN

(GLENNE embraces him)

On one condition ... DAN (Cont'd)

What? GLENNE

Take me on as your partner. DAN

In my athletic club? GLENNE

(DAN nods)

Why not? GLENNE (Cont'd)

(DAN embraces her. She pulls away)

There's so much to do—you'll have to excuse me. GLENNE (Cont'd)

(GLENNE hurries inside, talking all the while)

GLENNE (Cont'd) (O.S.)

I'll drive to Chicago tonight, deposit the money, call a few meetings, draft an entirely new plan of attack. This changes everything—

(GLENNE re-enters with her suitcase)

GLENNE (Cont'd)

You'll have to excuse me.

DAN

Of course! Go!

GLENNE

I'll call you from Chicago.

DAN

I can't wait.

GLENNE

Excuse me ...

(GLENNE hurries to exit. At the edge of the stage she pauses, then turns back to DAN)

GLENNE (Cont'd)

Hey, Dan ...

DAN

Yes?

GLENNE

Thank you.

DAN

You're welcome.

(GLENNE exits. DAN grins at SUSAN, who frowns)

DAN (Cont'd)

What's the matter?

SUSAN

Of course you have every right to spend your money as you wish, but I have to ask ... What about Leon and his theatre company?

DAN

Susan, this money isn't mine to give—not all of it, not anymore. I'm sure he'll understand.

SUSAN

Are you?

DAN

Think of it like this—when Play to Pay Fitness takes off, I'll be earning more than I could ever inherit. That's a steady stream of money for Gestation Theatre. In the short run, maybe ... maybe some hard feelings. In the long run, everyone wins.

SUSAN

What is Pay to Play—

DAN

—It's the other way ... It's Glenne's business.

SUSAN

You're so confident in Glenne's business?

DAN

You're not?

SUSAN

I don't know anything about it.

DAN

But she does. And she's very confident.

SUSAN

And she'll call you from Chicago ...

DAN

You heard her say it.

SUSAN

Does she have your number?

DAN

What?

SUSAN

Did you give her your phone number?

DAN
No.

SUSAN
Did she give you hers?

DAN
No.

(SUSAN stares pointedly at DAN)

DAN (Cont'd)
She knows where I live. She found me from—how far is Chicago?

SUSAN
I don't know.

DAN
From thousands of miles away, she found me once.

SUSAN
I hope you're right.

DAN
For Leon's sake, you mean?

SUSAN
For your sake, Dan.
(glancing at her watch)
You'll be at the party?

DAN
Of course.

SUSAN
Do me a favor ... Don't tell Leon what happened tonight.

DAN
Are you going to tell him?

SUSAN
You are. Just not tonight.

(SUSAN exits. DAN takes out his phone. He stares at it for a long moment. Suddenly it rings)

DAN

(answering)

Hello? ... Yes, she just left ... To meet you, I figured ... Hey, listen, what are you doing tomorrow? We should meet for breakfast ... No reason. Need to talk ... Right, social media ... Great.

(DAN ends the call. The lights begin to fade, as though the sun were setting. The phone rings again)

DAN (Cont'd)

(answering)

Hello? ... I'm fine, how are you? ... No, no, that's no mistake. She gets half ... My half-sister ... That's my signature on the check, isn't it? ... I understand, you're just doing due diligence. That's difficult to say ... Thank you for your concern ... Great.

(DAN ends the call. He wanders around the stage, tidying whatever he can. His phone rings again)

DAN (Cont'd)

(answering)

Hello? ... Who? ... Who is this? ... No, you have the wrong number ... No problem ... Bye.

(DAN ends the call. Again he stares at the phone for a long moment. Suddenly it rings)

DAN (Cont'd)

(answering)

Hello?

(Blackout. End of play.)