

IVORIES

by Riley Elton McCarthy

IVORIES

© 2023 by Riley Elton McCarthy

CAUTION: Professionals and Amateurs are hereby warned that performance of **IVORIES** is subject to payment of a royalty. It is fully protected under the copyright laws of The United States of America, and of all countries covered by the International Copyright Union (including the Dominion of Canada and the rest of the British Commonwealth) and of all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention, the Berne Convention, and of all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations. All rights, including without limitation professional/amateur stage rights, motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video or sound recording, all other forms of mechanical, electronic and digital reproduction, transmission and distribution, such as CD, DVD, the Internet, private and file-sharing networks, information storage and retrieval systems, photocopying, and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved. Particular emphasis is placed upon the matter of readings, permission of which must be obtained from the Author in writing.

The English language stock and amateur stage performance rights in the United States, its territories, possessions and Canada for **IVORIES** are controlled exclusively by Next Stage Press. No professional or nonprofessional performance of the Play may be given without obtaining in advance written permission and paying the requisite fee. Inquiries concerning production rights should be addressed to genekato@nextstagepress.com

SPECIAL NOTE

Anyone receiving permission to produce **IVORIES** is required to give credit to the Author as sole and exclusive Author of the Play on the title page of all programs distributed in connection with performances of the Play and in all instances in which the title of the Play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the Play and/or a production thereof. The name of the Author must appear on a separate line, in which no other name appears, immediately beneath the title and in size of type equal to 50% of the size of the largest, most prominent letter used for the title of the Play. No person, firm, or entity may receive credit larger or more prominent than that accorded the Author.

IVORIES

For Godfrey, Chloe, Ryan, Hans, Raffi, Hope, Julia, Maggie, Greg, Júlia, Lena, Hailee, Jody, Alex, Tully, Lily, Charlie, Jesse, Kira, Ian, Mark, Amir, and many other collaborators and friends who breathed life into this play and believed in its growth. Our flower baby has bloomed.

For my Becks. You know who you are.

IVORIES

Ivories made its world stage premiere at The Tank, an NYC home for emerging artists, as part of their June 2021 PrideFest.

Ivories returned to New York City in March 2023, with a run at The Brick. This production transferred to 59E59 for a limited engagement in July 2023, and then to Edinburgh Fringe, at theSpaceUK's The Space on the Mile, Stage One in August 2023. This production was directed by Riley Elton McCarthy, stage managed by Leni Jenson, and production managed by Nick Godfrey.

This production starred...

Riley Elton McCarthy ... SLOANE

Ryan Pangracs ... BECKHAM

Hans Mueh ... GWYN

Chloe Kramer ... THE NEIGHBOR

IVORIES has held subsequent productions at Yale School of Drama in April 2023, directed by Alexandra Thomas, and made its regional premiere at The Gilbert Theater in Fayetteville, North Carolina, in April 2024.

IVORIES

CHARACTERS

SLOANE - A bisexual playwright. Complex and macabre, Sloane guards their heart closely. 20s. Nonbinary. (they/them)

GWYN - A bisexual botanist. Warm but fragile, Gwyn is the glue holding the lives of his loved ones together. 20s. Male-identifying. (he/him)

BECKHAM - A bisexual real estate agent. Charismatic but wounded, Beckham can't forgive his own regrets. 20s. Male-identifying. (he/him)

THE NEIGHBOR - The next-door neighbor. Standoffish and cold, the Neighbor is always watching. 20s. Female or Nonbinary. (she/they)

SETTING

Sloane's grandmother's house. Somewhere in New England.

Probably the house from your least favorite horror movie.

Definitely suburban. Sometime in October. Year unspecified. Maybe now.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

/ indicates lines being overlapped.

— indicates lines being cut off.

(lines in parenthesis are internal thoughts, not spoken)

IVORIES

IVORIES

IVORIES

ACT 1 SCENE 0

There is an empty stage with just one giant HOUSE, sitting in the center. Suddenly! A crash of thunder. Rain slaps against the windows and exterior, like a wicked curse, or a vicious roar of a slumbering beast. The house is lifted away, revealing SLOANE underneath, typing away at their laptop.

SLOANE. Act One. The House is dark. Vicious wind is howling. A tree scrapes against the large upstairs window. Thunder crashes. Lightning flashes. After a moment... a flicker. Then, illuminated, a window in the neighbor's house. No one is in the window. Thunder. *(The larger house comes into clear view— we are seeing the world that Sloane is creating, or, is it the world that Sloane is capturing into their words? The house is very well decorated. An old lady definitely lives here. There are lots of portraits and paintings on the walls. Some are very old. Some are weirdly contemporary. All are kind of morbid but not enough to be obvious. The basement light flickers on. Sloane turns to look. They close their laptop, leaving it behind as they turn to investigate. As they outstretch their hand towards the light, the door opens. Sloane opens their mouth to scream, when— darkness.)*

SCENE 1

A CLAP OF THUNDER! A MAN appears outside the house, obscured by a giant map he's sprawled out, and is wearing a thick yellow raincoat. He lowers the map to stare at the house. It's GWYN, Sloane's husband. He folds the map, and enters the house. Grandma's bedroom is dark. Everything else is bright. Gwyn sets his suitcase by the door. He dusts himself off and steps into the living room.

IVORIES

GWYN. Sloane?

SLOANE. *(from within Grandma's bedroom, unseen)* Grandma just settled down, I'll be there in a minute!

GWYN. Okay! Take your time! *(Gwyn starts studying some of the paintings. There is a huge painting of Grandma in the living room. She's younger in the picture. There is something odd about her smile. He walks into the kitchen... it's too clean. He wipes his finger across the marble counter. No dust.)*

GWYN. Should I make you a pot of tea?

SLOANE. *(from within Grandma's Bedroom, unseen)* English Breakfast... pretty please!

GWYN. Got it! *(Gwyn searches all the cabinets for mugs. He pulls out dusty china, blowing the dust off with disdain, before finding a clean set. He looks around and finds a tea kettle on the stove. He opens it up and pours out all the water. He refills it and starts to heat up the kettle on the stove. Somewhere upstairs, the floor creaks. Dust rains down. Gwyn coughs. The floor creaks. Dust rains down. Gwyn dusts off his jacket with disgust. The kettle starts to squeal, a shrill sound. There's a groan upstairs. A grandma-sounding groan. An uncomfortable groan. He steps out into the hall between the living room and kitchen. At the end of the hall there's a single light hanging from a chain, in front of the door to the basement. He stops and stares.)*

GWYN. Everything okay up there? Sloane? *(Gwyn is trained on the Basement. He reaches out to touch the knob, when suddenly... Sloane appears on the stairs.)*

SLOANE. Grandma doesn't want us in the basement.

GWYN. Oh god! Jeez. It's you. You nearly gave me a heart attack. What's down there? *(Sloane leads him away from The Basement.)*

SLOANE. Nothing important. I just had a breakthrough on my play. Oh, hey, when does Beckham get here again? Did you make yourself anything?

GWYN. No, I'm good. Uh, Beckham ll be here sometime next week.

IVORIES

SLOANE. You should eat something. Did you check the pantry? Oh, is that my tea?

GWYN. How was your week? How's Grandma? I'm... happy /to see you—

SLOANE. /I've been getting a lot of writing done here. The house is... really *quiet*. When I was little, there was always noise in the house... from my grandfather and his garden, or my grandmother's pots of tea... the piano in the attic, the big crooked tree. All the noise, all the stirring about in the house... that's how I knew it was *living*. And now it's so quiet here. But maybe quiet isn't bad. Maybe it's just... different. I know how much you love the quiet.

GWYN. I'd give *anything* for a lifetime of quiet, especially when I'm out gardening... nothing but the wind in the trees and the sun beaming down... it keeps me centered in what moments I have, you know? Like the moments I have /with you—

SLOANE. /I think we should probably start with figuring out how to get some of the more useless shit out of the house first, right? Beckham will probably have an idea of where to begin, but we can get a head start.

GWYN. ...hey, Sloane? About last week, and um, what we... said to each other

SLOANE. Hey, forget it. We don't have to talk about it. Why don't we go set your shit upstairs then? (*Gwyn gathers his things and lets Sloane lead him towards the living room.*)

GWYN. Yeah. Sure. Hey Sloane—?

(*Sloane ignores him, trekking up the stairs. Gwyn lingers by the basement light for just a moment, before he follows Sloane to the guest room.*)

SLOANE. And here it is. I spent every fucking summer in this hideous looking room. Oh— I found this little guy at the depot down the street. I thought maybe you could fix it. (*Sloane shows off a wilting tomato plant.*)

GWYN. Wow... I... *love* it... thank you. (*Sloane hands the plant to Gwyn.*)

SLOANE. I thought you might. It's like... our own little plant guy. He just needs a little love, huh?

GWYN. Sloane, I— (love you)—

IVORIES

SLOANE. I'm thinking of breaking down pretty much everything in the house, just get rid of all this shit...

(Gwyn starts observing all the plants in the room. They're all dead. Long dead. He wilts, like the plants. This is the biggest sin to Gwyn.)

SLOANE. ...oh, also, I was thinking— about my big breakthrough for my commission. I meant to tell you. Well. Here goes... I'm thinking of scrapping that pitch about the queer romantic drama... and writing about *me*. Well, not me. Actually. My *grandmother*.

GWYN. ...you told me you weren't going to be writing about your family.

SLOANE. I'm feeling inspired! I couldn't get a word out for weeks and now it's like flowing out of me—

GWYN. Sloane, I mean... we talked about the house *stirring up* things you want to stay buried—?

SLOANE. What, are you afraid I'm gonna write about you? Nah, just these fuckin' people. Promise.

GWYN. What!? No! It's just that...your grandmother's in the next room over.

SLOANE. *(calling out)* Would you like to provide input, Granny?

GWYN. Sloane, jeez—

SLOANE. She can't hear us. She's gone deaf. Gwyn, it's *okay*.

GWYN. ...babe, it's just. Are you... okay?

SLOANE. Yeah, I'm doing great. There's a story here, and I want to capture it. So, relax. Come sit. *(They motion for him to sit next to them on one of the twin beds.)*

SLOANE. Can I be honest with you? I don't want to sell this house. Or flip it. Or fix it. Or anything.

GWYN. ...what do you want to do with it, then?

SLOANE. I want to light the match and watch it burn.

GWYN. *Oh.*

SLOANE. I don't want anyone to have the house. I don't want anyone to ever set foot in this house. I want to drive away from an empty lot of rubble and ash and dust as hot as summer asphalt and the vacant hole in its wake to be so vapid that everyone forgets anything ever stood here in the first place. And I don't ever want to think about it again. So once

IVORIES

grandma's gone, and it's all over, I want to burn it all down and let my play be the last story that comes out of this place.

GWYN. ...is this about what happened?

SLOANE. ...forget it.

GWYN. Sloane! It's not— I don't know, maybe *burning's* a little extreme, like, you wanna commit *arson*? You want to... burn the house down? Like light the house on... fire? You're serious, it isn't a joke?

SLOANE. I should've known you wouldn't understand... I shouldn't have said anything. (*Sloane starts to get up.*)

GWYN. No, I just— *Sloane*. Sloane, don't get up, I just need to... process that, that's all. Look at me. Hey. Hey. (*Gwyn kisses Sloane.*) I love you. (*Gwyn kisses Sloane again.*)

SLOANE. Gwyn, about the house, there's—

GWYN. Shh. (*Gwyn kisses Sloane again. Grandma groans from her bedroom. Sloane breaks away from Gwyn, immediately getting up.*)

SLOANE. Fuck. Her medicine must have worn off.

...hey... why don't you call Becks for me? Ask him about his plans? See when he's coming?

GWYN. Wait. You want me to go?

SLOANE. ...It's not like that, it's... I think I need some privacy with Grandma.

GWYN. I haven't seen you in a week. I've just missed you, that's all. I want to take care /of you. Why can't I help?

SLOANE. /I know, I know you're trying to help, Gwyn— My grandmother is dying! Please, stop smothering me, okay?

GWYN. ...I'm sorry. I didn't mean to be callous. I'm just worried about you.

SLOANE. Being in this house, being here... it just... *eats* me. It devours me whole with chiseled, ugly, rotting teeth. And when I look at all these portraits of everyone in my family who's *died* before me, I see myself. And I see myself being smothered. I think I wish... I wish... (*Sloane drifts off, having caught themselves standing beneath the looming portrait of Grandma.*)

IVORIES

GWYN. ...Sloane? (*Sloane doesn't respond, staring deeply into the eyes of their grandmother's portrait.*) ...I'm gonna go check out town, see if I can get a few things. I love you. ...Sloane? ...are you sure you're okay?

SLOANE. (*snapping back into it*) Love you too.

GWYN. Are you sure you want me to go?

SLOANE. Yeah. (*Sloane turns back to the portrait.*) Grandma's sleeping. (*Gwyn heads out the door. The lights close in on Sloane staring at the painting. They turn their head to the basement light, still lit. The basement light suddenly shatters. Darkness.*)

SCENE 2

Thunder crackles. A light drizzle mists the window. It's a little lighter outside, the sky a foreboding but pale grey. The house is dark. Upstairs in the guest room, Sloane sits in a chair by the window, laptop in hands. The room is dimly lit, save for a candle on the stand by Sloane's chair. Downstairs, Gwyn is watering that dying little tomato plant that he's placed in the kitchen. He's trying to save it, but it doesn't seem to respond to anything he can do. A floorboard creaks in grandma's room. Dust rains down into the kitchen. The floorboard in grandma's room creaks again. Dust filters down into the kitchen. Gwyn coughs. Sloane continues writing. Gwyn starts to take notice of the brightly lit basement light. He looks around for Sloane first, and when the coast is clear... he begins to approach it.

SLOANE (*upstairs*) "And the longer I stand in that thick, caustic heat, the longer I bind myself up to what my beloved pleases... The more I forget myself. My identity." My identity? *Hrmmm...* is there a better word? What's a word? What...? She's... remembering... "I remember only my fleeting moments of suppression. Silence. My womanhood stripped. My sisterhood stolen. My—" "My (sisterhood—) (*Gwyn reaches for the basement door handle. Just as his fingers brush it, the doorbell rings.*)

SLOANE. (*upstairs*) Is that Beckham? I'm busy.

IVORIES

GWYN. *(downstairs)* I've got it! *(Gwyn trudges over to the door in The Kitchen. He opens it. There, standing in the doorway, is BECKHAM, wearing very suave designer sunglasses and the coolest outfit you could ever imagine. Beckham lowers his sunglasses.)*

BECKHAM. GWYNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNN!

GWYN. Hey Becks— *(Beckham squeezes Gwyn in a hug.)*

BECKHAM. It's been too long!

GWYN. It's been— a week—

BECKHAM. Too long! *(Beckham releases Gwyn.)* I brought this very fancy, very expensive rosé for rosé all day!

GWYN. You got it from Walmart, didn't you?

BECKHAM. Like I said, very fancy. Very expensive. Get out some glasses. We have to toast! This house is fucking INCREDIBLE... look at the archways! That rustic fireplace! How old is it again?

GWYN. I regret that you've become a wine mommy in my absence... it was built in the 1890s, I think? Maybe older? It's only ever been in Sloane's family, so I dunno. *(Gwyn gets out the glasses.)*

BECKHAM. I thought so, it's got Queen Anne style written all over it. Super 19th century. Where's Sloane?

GWYN. Upstairs.

BECKHAM. Ah. I see. I see. Well, you did marry a bookworm.

GWYN. Ideal spouse material.

BECKHAM. Head in the clouds, nose in a book. Or a play, I suppose. What're they working on right now?

GWYN. Ahhhhh, we'll get to their plays later. Drinks first. *(Beckham stares at Gwyn with the glasses.)* What?

BECKHAM. You're not gonna get out an ice cube?

GWYN. Right. *(Gwyn puts an ice cube into Beckham's glass. Beckham pops open the rosé.)* I forget you're so particular about your drinks.

BECKHAM. Very fancy day today! Speaking of... *(Beckham gets out his phone.)* Calling all Sanderson Sister wannabes, have I got the perfectly witchy house for you. You have to check out this antique two-bedroom, two-bathroom rare find in a Queen Anne style house only occupied by one family for over 100 years. A true American gem in a semi-private neighborhood with lots of evergreen trees and an abundance of neighborly

IVORIES

friendly faces, this house has a *lot* of character. Just take a look at these incredible archways and a spellbinding refurbished kitchen— (*Gwyn steps into Beckham's path with the rosé. Beckham stops recording.*) Dude. You're in my frame.

GWYN. I got the ice cube! Wait... what are you doing?

BECKHAM. ...I'm trying to sell the house, dude. I'm vlogging it. It helps my algorithm.

GWYN. ...I thought we were toasting? What? (*The floorboard creaks above their heads. Dust rains down.*)

BECKHAM. What is that?

GWYN. Grandma.

BECKHAM. Doing *what*? (*Gwyn shrugs.*) Lord.

GWYN. This house is weird, man.

BECKHAM. Yeah. Yeah. I can see that. So, how's Sloane holding up? I imagine it's all been very hard on them. Should we bring them a glass?

GWYN. They don't like being *distracted* when they're in the zone, or else they'll write a whole play about how much you inconvenienced them. Well. They haven't yet. But... you never know when that'll change.

BECKHAM. You know it took me forever to find this house. This town. It's so small on the map.

GWYN. Literal suburbia, right?

BECKHAM. And so few landmarks. Everything's cookie cutter. Even my office said they'd never heard of it, it has absolutely no presence anywhere. No recent rental or sales histories, so the neighbors must be grandfathered into the town. You know, I hate these kinds of neighborhoods actually! The ones filled with old people. Makes me think of *Hereditary*.

GWYN. I hate that movie.

BECKHAM. It's a great movie.

GWYN. I don't like to think of beheadings. Makes me feel self-conscious. With my... thyroidism and all.

BECKHAM. Yeah but... *Toni Collette*.

GWYN. Sloane actually said this neighborhood's like the one from that Jordan Peele movie, *Us*. "There's a family in our driveway" type shit.

IVORIES

BECKHAM. Yeah. YEAH. I can see that. I mean, we've got the cul-de-sac already. All we need is a getaway boat, huh? Oh, I could advertise that easily... how much was Sloane thinking of listing it for?

GWYN. Were you and Sloane talking about *selling* the house?

BECKHAM. Not yet, but I mean I assumed that's why I'm here. I think it's an easy sell. Why do you ask?

GWYN. Uh. *Nothing*. Never mind. It's honestly been weird staying here. We're not really in contact with these people, so it's just... shedding light on things, I suppose.

BECKHAM. Isn't this your first time here? It's one hell of a house. If I had the money for this kind of place... I'd knock the in-laws off myself to live here.

GWYN. ...they didn't come to our wedding. And it's all their dad's side of the family, so...

BECKHAM. ...*Ohhh*. Right. Their dad *was* an asshole, though, wasn't he? Glad that cow tipped. Can't imagine his mom would be any better. Fuck, can she hear us?

GWYN. I haven't even seen the lady of the house *once*. Sloane says she's knocking on death's door.

BECKHAM. Any will?

GWYN. Not that I've seen.

BECKHAM. So that's where I come in...

GWYN. Yeah. Sloane wants everything gone, pretty much.

BECKHAM. They know they could have just sent me to take care of it without having to be here, right?

GWYN. Oh, they *know*. They totally know they didn't have to stay in this creepy fuckin' house. And they're writing something...? I don't know, they called it "site-specific?" I don't know all playwriting terms or whatever.

BECKHAM. You get a bachelor's in Theatre and then think you run the fucking world. Not in a bad way I mean Sloane's a genius. But. Theatre kids, am I right?

GWYN. I'll drink to that! *(They both take long sips of their drinks. A dog begins barking somewhere in the near distance, but somewhere outside of the house.)*

IVORIES

BECKHAM. Does Granny have a dog?

GWYN. Not currently. *(The dog continues barking. It sounds like it's in the house now.)*

BECKHAM. Does *Sloane* have a dog?

GWYN. No, they hate dogs.

BECKHAM. *Sloane* hates *dogs*? Like for real?

GWYN. Yeah, they'll avoid them outright. Something about— I don't even remember.

BECKHAM. That's weird. I'm such a dog person. Though— though— I will say... I do quite appreciate a very lovely cat every now and then...

GWYN. Yeah, yeah.

BECKHAM. Makes me ideal husband material.

GWYN. Ha, ha, very funny. Should I give you the house tour? *(The floor board creaks, sending a shower of dust on top of Beckham and Gwyn.)*

BECKHAM. Gross.

GWYN. I don't think this ugly house has been repaired in years.

BECKHAM. Ugly is right. This feels like a time capsule. Straight out of a Steinbeck novel.

GWYN. Well, she did survive the Great Depression.

BECKHAM. Really?

GWYN. No. *(Beckham and Gwyn head into the living room. Beckham stops in front of the huge portrait of GRANDMA.)*

BECKHAM. Who's this?

GWYN. Grandma herself.

BECKHAM. She looks just like *Sloane*. What's *Sloane* think of it?

GWYN. Straight to the burn pile.

BECKHAM. Sweet. This loveseat could fetch a pretty penny. But it's also ugly as fuck.

GWYN. Old people love ugly furniture. Grandma got that in 1952, I've been told. It's vintage. She was gifted it off a neighbor.

BECKHAM. How much do we want to bet she grew up with everyone in this neighborhood?

GWYN. Dude, the neighbors look at *Sloane* and I like we're immoral heathens or something. This old lady in her front lawn yesterday stopped

IVORIES

watering her flowers to just stare at us in the driveway. Just stare. In her big yellow raincoat. She was watering flowers *in the rain*.

BECKHAM. Major sin to you, to destroy a plant like that. Do you miss working at Marty's Floral?

GWYN. You know the answer to that.

BECKHAM. Personally, I miss the clerk behind the counter stuttering about whether or not violets or lilies are better for a barn wedding. One thing I don't miss though? Barn weddings. Only straight people get married in barns.

GWYN. Sloane and I had a barn wedding.

BECKHAM. *RIIIIIGHT!* I remember! Sorry. I guess bisexuals have barn weddings.

GWYN. And my Best Man had to leave early because of his hay allergy. Sorry about that by the way.

BECKHAM. I was allergic to the straight people at your wedding more like it. Never make me go to a barn wedding again. Guest or otherwise.

GWYN. I don't plan on remarrying so, Scout's honor.

BECKHAM. Hey, about this Jesus portrait—

GWYN. Sloane hasn't said anything about it but my allergy to Christianity indicates that we should probably burn that too.

BECKHAM. How religious is their family? Because I don't remember this much *live laugh love* memorabilia in their house...

GWYN. Oh, it's all their dad's side of the family. Sloane's... well, they're not doing so hot right now, with all of this... and they won't even ask for an extension on their commission. I don't really get why they didn't just put this off until they've sorted through their grief? But I'm gonna support them anyways, you know? Love is filled with compromises.

BECKHAM. I wouldn't know.

GWYN. ...right. (*Grandma groans, it sounds dark and off-putting. Sloane curses and gets out of their chair in the guest room, heading to grandma's dark bedroom. They disappear inside.*)

BECKHAM. You sure she wasn't listening in on us?

GWYN. Who?

BECKHAM. Granny!

GWYN. Nah. At least, I don't think so. Wanna check out the guest room?

IVORIES

(Beckham pauses as Gwyn leads him towards the stairs. His shoe crunches on the broken glass from the shattered basement hall light. He looks down at his shoe, then the door.)

BECKHAM. What is up with this freaky looking side dish here?

GWYN. That's the basement. Sloane doesn't want anyone going down there, it's off-limits.

BECKHAM. These stupid old houses and their creepy basements...

(Beckham gets out his phone and walks towards the door.)

BECKHAM. Besides the freshly renovated attic for optimal storage capabilities, this house even includes a completely finished basement *that's to die for*: perfect for a private office space, a man cave, or satanic rituals for communing with the dead... *(Beckham reaches for the door. Gwyn takes Beckham's phone.)* Come on. You know you want to check out your granny-in-law's creepy fucking basement.

GWYN. I said I don't want to upset Sloane.

BECKHAM. I bet Sloane's already been down there!

GWYN. Either way, Sloane said no. Come on, Becks, let's check out the rest of the house.

BECKHAM. Buzzkill. *(Gwyn starts up the stairs. Beckham lingers, staring at the door. Entranced.)*

GWYN. Beckham. Dude.

BECKHAM. *(snapping out of it)* Sorry. I'm coming! *(Beckham and Gwyn make their way up the stairs towards the guest room. Gwyn opens the guest room door, leading Beckham in.)* Oh my god, this definitely feels like the spare Grandma room. The loom, the two twin beds, the big chair by the window— Definitely the convertible craft room.

GWYN. What's a loom even for?

BECKHAM. Dude, you don't know?

GWYN. No? Do you?

BECKHAM. I totally know what a loom is for.

GWYN. Okay hotshot, what's a loom for? *(Beckham stares.)* ...thought so.

BECKHAM. Oh, shut up. Why are there *two* twin beds? You and Sloane having trouble in paradise? Or is this like, a summer camp in the 70s kinda vibe going on here?

IVORIES

GWYN. Well, about that—

BECKHAM. Aha! I knew it!

GWYN. Knew about what?

BECKHAM. You and Sloane are totally fighting.

GWYN. No, not about that. About the twin bed thing.

BECKHAM. That wasn't a no.

GWYN. That wasn't a yes.

BECKHAM. Well, then why don't you just spit it out? You know you can tell me anything. What is *up* in Gwyn's Social Dilemma of the Week?

GWYN. Becks... Sloane is— *(Sloane enters the guest room, having changed from their athleisure into somewhat of a more masculine but casually stylish outfit.)*

SLOANE. Hey guys, keep it down a bit. I just got Grandma to settle down—

BECKHAM. SLOOOOAAAANE! /How's your playwriting coming along? *(Beckham squeezes Sloane into a hug.)*

SLOANE. /Why do you always do this? /And it's fine, I'm not done quite yet— *(Beckham releases Sloane from his hug of doom.)*

BECKHAM. /Because I love being your third wheel!

GWYN. We're looking at selling the beds, I think. Right Sloane?

BECKHAM. Yes— Sloane— you arrived just in time. Twin beds— sell? Why are there two, by the way? I was asking Gwyn, but— *(Sloane suddenly looks really upset.)* Orrrrrrr, we can move on! Hey, what about this loom?

SLOANE. That's an antique. Hmmm. We can sell that too. Oh, and the dresser can go. *(Beckham picks up a small jar and pulls out his phone.)*

BECKHAM. While the house itself will hit the market completely gutted from the inside out, this bedroom has been outfitted as a craft room, perhaps as a testament to the versatility of the space. See for example this midcentury decorative jar... filled with... Sloane, I can't get it open, what's in this?

SLOANE. Grandma's dog's teeth.

BECKHAM. OH MY GOD!? Ew! Gross, why does she have that?

SLOANE. I don't know, she's fucking weird. When the dog died, she kept the teeth.

IVORIES

BECKHAM. I'm starting to see why you're not in touch with her.

SLOANE. Hey Gwyn, why don't you do me a favor?

GWYN. Well, depends, what do you need?

SLOANE. I know I told you no a few days ago... but... I think it's time I let you take a look at the garden? We could go to the store later? I'll buy you some shovels and shit... for weeding

GWYN. I would like a new toolset... but—

SLOANE. Exactly. *(SLOANE pulls GWYN in for a kiss. BECKHAM averts his gaze.)*

SLOANE. Have fun playing in the mud.

GWYN. Ha. I'm not in my good gardening clothes, so, that won't happen. Holler out the window if you need anything.

(GWYN heads down the stairs, leaving SLOANE and BECKHAM alone. SLOANE closes the door after him and heads to the mirror, observing their outfit with equal parts curiosity and disdain. GWYN disappears out the back door in the kitchen.)

BECKHAM. It's so stuffy in here. So many books... you know, I think we're going to make fucking bank off this shithole, Sloane. It's going to go for a fortune, you've got a killer inheritance.

SLOANE. Do you think I'm...?

BECKHAM. Huh? Are you what?

SLOANE. It's stupid, never mind.

BECKHAM. Do I think you're what? Pretty? Handsome?

SLOANE. I don't know...

BECKHAM. Pretty handsome? Yeah. Absolutely. ...Sloane, you okay?

SLOANE. ...I'm good. Sorry. I can't believe you came all this way to destroy a bunch of furniture with me.

BECKHAM. That's what friends are for. Helping each other out and drinking a metric fuck-ton of wine. Why don't you tell me a little bit about the house?

SLOANE. Sure, yeah. It's been in my family for generations. A lot of the furniture's vintage. There's not much worth saving in my opinion.

BECKHAM. Not much worth saving? Sloane, be for real. This is a goddamn gold mine. Look at the LOOM!

SLOANE. It's a loom.

IVORIES

BECKHAM. It's a really fucking cool loom! Okay, maybe it's a little lame. Look at these post cards! These gotta be worth something! Look at this shit— look, the Virgin Mary! She's kinda fucked up looking. Or sexy? Tell me you wouldn't fuck this woman right now. Tell me you wouldn't take her out for a beer and talk her ear off about your new play right fucking now Sloane. She kinda looks like your ex-girlfriend. Who was the one before Gwyn? That little redhead?

SLOANE. Annamarie.

BECKHAM. ANNAMARIE! What a cunt little lesbian. Never trust a ginger.

SLOANE. My type does appear to be fucked up people. Friends, partners, and in between...

BECKHAM. Yeah but she's the *cheat on my partner* fucked up, Gwyn's fucked up is Gwyn... *Gwynning*, right? Woah, what's back here? *(BECKHAM squeezes through a tight bookshelf. SLOANE follows. BECKHAM picks up a book, which blows dust right into his face.)*

BECKHAM. Jesus christ, this house is so fucking gross, holy shit. My fucking allergies— got a tissue? Goddamn! And then the layout— this is like Labyrinth.

SLOANE. Oh, yeah, Pan's Labyrinth.

BECKHAM. No. The queer one, Sloane. The Bowie one. It's a fucking staple of our culture. Come on. Don't look at me like that. Don't tell me you haven't—

SLOANE. I'm fucking with you, okay? I've seen the fucking Labyrinth. I think the basement's like Pan's Labyrinth—

BECKHAM. —Oh, why?—

SLOANE. —But the upstairs is more like the Coraline house. “YOU DARE DISOBEY YOUR MOTHER!?” type of shit.

BECKHAM. We could take these bookshelves apart, right? Two-man job? You can put Gwyn and I to work like little lawn boys while you recline in your little chair and drink your little depression juice and write your little play. How's that coming along?

SLOANE. Hard to focus in a quiet house.

BECKHAM. Really? Gwyn can only focus in the quiet, so...

SLOANE. Yeah, I know.

IVORIES

BECKHAM. Honestly, I think it's Gwyn's most endearing trait... how particular he is about his quiet little gardening time. When he was working at Marty's, I used to just... watch him work... I'm so sure Marty was so pissed off when I would just hang around there, but Gwyn—

SLOANE. I think we should get rid of all the family portraits. If I never had to have these people staring down at me like I'm some fucking sinful burden, I think the rest of my life I'd finally like the damn quiet. We could have a fucking portrait barbecue or something, and Gwyn can sit aside and whine about it like he always does.

BECKHAM. Oh, woah, okay. Are you two—

SLOANE. Fighting? Not currently.

BECKHAM. ...recently?

SLOANE. It was last week. It really doesn't matter. Just like it doesn't matter how I want to handle this stupid fucking house in my own fucking way.

BECKHAM. He really didn't say anything—

SLOANE. Hey, would you look at that? (*SLOANE pulls out a ouija board.*) This was mine as a kid. Why the fuck does she still have it?

BECKHAM. Hey Sloane, I—

SLOANE. I used to scare the shit out of my friends with this. I actually kissed my first girl playing seven minutes in heaven after summoning the dead. We felt so metal. We lit a blood candle and everything.

BECKHAM. ...you had a candle with blood in it?

SLOANE. Hers. It was so hot.

BECKHAM. Sloane, are you okay?

SLOANE. Don't be like Gwyn. (*SLOANE hands BECKHAM the ouija board, starts going through another box.*) I keep thinking about the last few years. It's like a record needle scratching at my brain, skipping parts I don't want to relive, holding onto the best parts as it weathers down with time. It goes on loops and loops and loops. What if this? What if that... what if my family didn't fucking suck, what if dad hadn't died? What if I wasn't a writer? What if I had never... (*SLOANE shakes their head.*) I can't wait to be done with the house so I can get through act two. I'm onto a breakthrough with my writing and I wanna keep at it and trust that I can

IVORIES

do it. We can haul this junk out if you want, I don't have any attachment to my grandmother's shit... but the portraits. The portraits go.

BECKHAM. You're a talent, Sloane. But talent doesn't override your happiness. Don't let it eat you up, okay?

SLOANE. Writing is a space for me to process everything that happened here on my own terms. The thing that bites is the damn deadlines. No more extensions for me. Which is... *soooooo* great...

BECKHAM. I'm trying to not be that guy, really, but you're my friend, Sloane. A little more than just friends... you're family to me. You know that, right? (*SLOANE seems despondent.*) Regardless, I think about the past a lot myself. There's lots of things I wish I could go back and change myself and... being around those things... makes me want them more. It's like an insatiable hunger. The more I attempt to starve it out, the more the hunger grows. So you start micro-dosing that hunger right? Little tastes of the big thrill, like chasing a high that you once had but will never experience again. And then that leaves you empty when that isn't enough. So sometimes it's just better to let the past be past, and instead of trying to devour it, or even, let it consume you, you just... make friends with your ghosts and hold onto them just like that. Memories. And then that want transforms into your present. It makes you move forward. So. Moving forward with the house... how much were you thinking we should list it for? I think you could easily get it off the market no matter what, but we don't wanna overshoot, you know?

(*GWYN reenters Grandma's House. SLOANE stares at the portrait again.*)

SLOANE. Oh. I think Gwyn's back. That was fast.

BECKHAM. You give the boy a plant, he gives you a garden. Is Grandma an only child? It's weird she's the only one in all these paintings anyways. Is it like a matriarch of the house kind of thing or does she just like looking at herself so much?

SLOANE. She doesn't have any siblings.

BECKHAM. Ah, just like you! And me! Only child trauma bonding! Punch it in! ...Sloane. Sloane please don't leave me hanging. (*SLOANE hesitantly fist bumps BECKHAM. BECKHAM pulls SLOANE in for a hug. SLOANE tenses up, and then accepts the hug.*)

SLOANE. I'm glad you're here.

IVORIES

BECKHAM. Me too. I got your back, dude. Always. ...we could put the stupid portraits in the basement, right? Oh! What's down there, by the way?

(GWYN enters The Guest Room, bucket of strawberries in hand.)

GWYN. There weren't any roses, at least not alive. The garden is a disaster, it's gonna take days to work through all that... *(GWYN pauses in the doorway, eyeing them both with an unreadable expression. BECKHAM releases SLOANE from his hug.)* ...okay. Well. There was this big bush of strawberries... and it isn't even strawberry season, so they shouldn't even be growing. Very strange. You two been busy up here? *(GWYN brings the bucket to BECKHAM. They start eating them.)*

SLOANE. Going through some old boxes, onto the beds next I think. I need to get this done so I can get a head start on act two, though... so...

BECKHAM. Gwyn. We have something to show you. *(Beckham holds out the board for him.)*

GWYN. No.

BECKHAM. Yes. Remember when we used to play with these as a kid? Fifth grade. We pulled an all-nighter for it? You cried because I spooked you with a flashlight?

GWYN. Aw, come on...

BECKHAM. Your cheeks were all red, snot and tears... It was kind of endearing. Sloane, I made the board move to say his name and he thought the Boogeyman was gonna get him...

GWYN. ...that was you?

BECKHAM. Oh my god, Gwyn.

GWYN. I didn't sleep for a month after that! I kept checking under my bed for the Boogeyman.

SLOANE. Don't you summon Satan with a spirit board anyways?

GWYN. It doesn't matter what you summon. All I found under the bed was dust. Coating everything. And when I closed my eyes. For a full month. I would see a monster. Covered in dust. Made of dust. And whenever I opened my mouth to scream, only dust would fall out. Covering everything in a thick smog until I couldn't see. ...my dreams were really fucked up over that, my childhood nightmares were very over-imaginative. We also snorted pixie sticks like cocaine because we thought

IVORIES

the lines they shot in *The Godfather* were really cool though so that's probably what escalated their intensity. Childhood is fucking weird.

BECKHAM. Ever get your dreams analyzed?

GWYN. ...what does that have to do with anything?

BECKHAM. I used to have these recurring nightmares about teeth falling out. Like I would be dreaming and in that dream I'd start eating something. Munching. Meat usually. Chicken, rotisserie, typically. And in my dream I would chew and chew and then I'd feel a crunch. And taste metal. And I'd touch my lips and there'd be blood dribbling out. And I was never a child in these dreams so it wasn't baby teeth. And my teeth would fall out. Into the food I was eating. And it would start with one. And then it'd be all of them. One by one. Bloody, crunchy, shattered, broken teeth falling out of my mouth. Until there was just gums and blood clots.

GWYN. ...that's disgusting.

SLOANE. Go on, this is interesting.

GWYN. Really?

BECKHAM. I know! Well, I went to this dream doctor about it. She said my dream indicated that I was dealing with some kind of loss, like an *abrupt end to a relationship...* or a job change or something like that. Maybe you should see a dream doctor about your dust dreams.

GWYN. ...well, what'd your teeth dream mean to you? (*Beckham goes fishing through the boxes again.*)

BECKHAM. There's some vinyls in here. Lots of Tchaikovsky. Chopin... the motion picture soundtrack of *Grease*?

GWYN. I love *Grease*!

BECKHAM. Of course you do.

GWYN. What's that supposed to mean?

BECKHAM. How the turntables when there's a turntable involved. Hey! I have a great idea.

GWYN. We're not doing a seance.

BECKHAM. I wasn't gonna suggest a *seance*. (*Sloane and Gwyn stare at Beckham.*) Okay, maybe I was.

GWYN. Every horror movie does a seance in the creepy house, and it's always a bad idea.

IVORIES

BECKHAM. I'm not gonna tell you we should do a seance. I'm just gonna leave it out there.

SLOANE. A little birdie told me that you're here for a few extra days, Becks...

BECKHAM. See? Even Sloane agrees. If we can't go in the creepy basement... we should at least do a creepy seance. For shits and giggles.

GWYN. I don't like that idea much.

BECKHAM. You can be such a baby, come on. I'll be your best friend.

GWYN. You are my best friend.

BECKHAM. Yeah, but like, I'll go and buy a new bottle of wine since it got that gross ceiling crap in it.

SLOANE. Maybe... you wanna swing by tomorrow night and grab us dinner? As a treat? Or bargain?

BECKHAM. Make me drive all the way out here as your guest and I'm buying dinner?

SLOANE. I'm gonna pull the *my grandma's dying* card on that.

BECKHAM. Okay, okay, my treat...

SLOANE. Deal. I'll see you tomorrow, okay?

BECKHAM. See ya, Sloane! *(Beckham and Gwyn leave the guest room. Sloane stares at themselves in the mirror, entranced, and then bends down to search through their suitcase. Their reflection remains in the mirror, its face shifting into this twisted, demented smile. The guest room lights flicker off. Beckham lingers by the creepy basement door for a moment, before heading into the kitchen with Gwyn.)*

GWYN. Don't bring any rotisserie chicken, okay? Your stupid teeth story ruined that for me.

BECKHAM. I'm totally buying chicken. Just to fuck with you.

GWYN. Becks... I'm... glad you're here.

BECKHAM. *Oh.* I'm glad I'm here too, Gwyn.

GWYN. And I... nah. It's stupid.

BECKHAM. Nothing you say is stupid to me. *(Silence.)*

GWYN. Actually. You should get going, I bet Sloane's getting tired. They've hardly left that room all day.

BECKHAM. Okay. Yeah! Totally. Anything for y— Sloane.

GWYN. Right. Yeah. I'll be seeing you. Don't get lost this time.

IVORIES

BECKHAM. Ha! I won't, I promise— (*Gwyn suddenly hugs Beckham.*)

GWYN. Sorry— I— It's been hard.

BECKHAM. You don't have to apologize. I'm here for you. (*Gwyn lets go.*)

GWYN. I'm really glad you're here.

BECKHAM. Are you sure you're okay? I know this hasn't been easy but... I admire your courage. Both of you. Truly. I'm really sorry.

GWYN. Yeah, I'll— we'll be fine. Thanks, Becks. Hey, be safe on the road. And come early if you want.

BECKHAM. Miss me that much?

GWYN. ...I'll see you soon.

BECKHAM. Gwyn. You can tell me anything.

GWYN. No it's really okay. Really... I'll see you later, Beckham.

(*Beckham exits. Gwyn heads up the stairs.*) Sloane? Are you up here still? Should we go grab a bite to eat? (*Gwyn enters the guest bedroom, where Sloane's play is sitting, seemingly finished, on a twin bed. Gwyn looks around. No sign of Sloane. Hesitantly, he opens it. Darkness.*)

SCENE 3

The house is dark and quiet. Crickets chirp. Trees sway in the wind. The neighbor's window flicks on. Its eerie light casts a glow over the sleeping Gwyn, upstairs in one of the twin beds. Gwyn turns in his sleep. THE NEIGHBOR appears in the window, just a silhouette. Almost like they're... watching Gwyn. Gwyn turns again, a little more troubled. Trees sway in the wind. Then suddenly... Gwyn sits up, gasping for breath. He's just awoken from a nightmare, having fallen asleep with the play in his hands. The figure in the window disappears. Gwyn turns and looks out the window at the eerie light from the neighbor's house. He sets the play on his nightstand. After calming himself down, he leaves the guest room. He heads downstairs into the kitchen, and starts filling up a glass of water. He takes a few sips, and then sets the glass on the counter. He opens the fridge. As he does so, the basement light flickers on. Gwyn goes to turn it off. As he does so, Grandma's floor creaks. Dust rains down from the

IVORIES

ceiling. The light is turned off. Gwyn returns to the kitchen. He refills the cup and heads back upstairs. As he makes it into the guest room, the Neighbor's light turns off. Gwyn sets the cup down on his nightstand and goes back to bed, staring at the ceiling. From downstairs, the basement light flicks on. Silence. Faint footsteps are heard from within the basement. Creak. Creak. Creak. Then with a groan, the basement door cracks open. It slowly opens. The basement is empty. But then, more footsteps. Creak. Creak. Creak. Sloane emerges from the basement, covered in dust. They look up at the basement light. It flickers off.

END OF ACT ONE

***THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS—
ORDER A COPY AT WWW.NEXTSTAGEPRESS.COM***