

DIVIDED AMONG THEMSELVES

A dramatic comedy

by Hank Kimmel

DIVIDED AMONG THEMSELVES

© 2023 by Hank Kimmel

CAUTION: Professionals and Amateurs are hereby warned that performance of **DIVIDED AMONG THEMSELVES** 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 **DIVIDED AMONG THEMSELVES** 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 **DIVIDED AMONG THEMSELVES** 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.

DIVIDED AMONG THEMSELVES

SYNOPSIS

A righteous rabbi tries to honor the memory of her scheming father without betraying her core beliefs.

Samantha Marcus is a progressive rabbi who wants to live a good and decent life. She and her three sisters – a real estate developer, a struggling tennis pro, and a spiritualist – have been out of touch for years. Following the death of their father, who was a hard-drinking, hard-driving union activist, Samantha is impelled to bring them together to re-calculate their shared legacy and divide his estate.

Divided Among Themselves is a dramatic comedy that explores America's differing views toward money, charity, and self-reliance – while examining the relationship of a grown child to a deceased parent. The expected run time is 80 minutes. There is no intermission.

DRAMATIC PREMISE

Righteousness is overridden by practicality.

NOTES

The play requires six actors -- four female and two male. Though the ages are specifically defined in the character breakdown, there is flexibility so long as age differences are reasonably maintained.

The playwright acknowledges and deeply thanks Robert Drake, Academy Theatre, Working Title Playwrights, Faye Sholiton, Interplay Theatre, Deborah Baer Mozes, and Theatre Ariel for their artistic support. *Divided Among Themselves* was selected by the Jewish New Play Project as one of its best new plays of 2013 and was selected as a semifinalist by the 2020 New American Voices Playwriting Festival.

DIVIDED AMONG THEMSELVES

CHARACTERS

- (1) DAD: 72. A former union leader. A gambling man. Trying to channel his spirit of self-empowerment through one of his daughters. Looking for one more chance at immortality.
- (2) SAMANTHA: 42. Female. A rabbi in Poughkeepsie, NY. Devout, humanistic. Trying to create harmony in the world.
- (3) ROBIN LESTER: 54. Male. Lawyer for Dad. A zealous advocate, mostly for himself. Looking to be loved and to become larger than life, but in the end will take whatever he can get.
- (4) CLARK: 44. Female. A successful real estate developer who lives overseas. Self-reliant. Rational. Wants to put her signature on the world.
- (5) JOHNNA (pronounced “John-na”): 38. Female. An underemployed tennis pro from Santa Monica. Self-consumed. Vibrant. Strategic and impulsive, often at the same time. Seeking validation and independence.
- (6) ALEX (also known as Felicity): 32. Female. A former ballet dancer who lives at a spiritual community in Minnesota. Searching, but not necessarily finding. Looking for agency and control, but also transcendence.

The Mother is not a character in the play, but is integral to the story. If her soul is everlasting, she would seek reunion.

DIVIDED AMONG THEMSELVES

DIVIDED AMONG THEMSELVES

PROLOGUE: *In darkness, a grandfather clock chimes 12 times, getting louder with each ring. At the fourth chime, a spotlight at center stage. Samantha Marcus comes forth as if she's about to give a sermon.*

SAMANTHA. *(to audience)* Just before my father died of a second heart attack, he made me an offer he thought I couldn't refuse, and while I thought he was offering one thing, I'm starting to wonder if he was really offering something else....

Lights come up to reveal a post-World War II apartment in Manhattan, or at least the suggestion of one. Dad sits in an armchair with Samantha nearby. It is at the cusp of a new millennium.

DAD. All you have to do is sign this. No strings attached.

SAMANTHA. This is one big string.

DAD. Completely to your advantage.

SAMANTHA. This is why you had me rush into New York? You said it was an emergency.

DAD. Who says it's not?

SAMANTHA. I'm not saying I don't appreciate the gesture.

DAD. I'm not looking for appreciation.

SAMANTHA. You're looking for what?

DAD. What if I said fairness?

SAMANTHA. I thought you didn't believe in fairness.

DAD. I don't, but you do.

DIVIDED AMONG THEMSELVES

SAMANTHA. What about my sisters?

DAD. What about them?

SAMANTHA. They're going to have an opinion, aren't they?

DAD. Maybe I'll do something for them that doesn't involve you.

SAMANTHA. What if I don't sign?

DAD. Then you'd be the biggest fool in the world.

SAMANTHA. When you say you're going to leave me everything.....

DAD. I mean, cash. You want to know how much?

SAMANTHA. No.

DAD. Good. Cuz I'm not going to tell you.

SAMANTHA. If, hypothetically...

DAD. ...Not hypothetically...

SAMANTHA. ...one was to consider your offer....

DAD. You couldn't share it with anyone.

SAMANTHA. My sisters.

DAD. No.

SAMANTHA. My synagogue.

DAD. Especially not your synagogue.

SAMANTHA. Or any other cause.

DAD. Isn't that a wonderful proposition? For you.

SAMANTHA. It's...

DAD. Too good to be true?

SAMANTHA. Depends on your definition of good.

DAD. C'mon, I'll be dead soon. There's no need to bluster.

SAMANTHA. First, there's no reason you can't live another 10 years. Second, it's not bluster to say I want to live my life with all good intention.

DAD. You live in Poughkeepsie. Not the best part of Poughkeepsie, if such a thing needs to be said.

DIVIDED AMONG THEMSELVES

SAMANTHA. I'm a Rabbi, for God's sake. Most parents would be proud.

DAD. I'd be more proud if you had a greater following.

SAMANTHA. We're going to march in Washington next weekend. Want to come?

DAD. Have you figured out the cause?

SAMANTHA. What if I said the empowerment of women?

DAD. Put me down for a thirty-six dollar pledge.

SAMANTHA. In your own way, you've made me a better person.

DAD. Just say I'm an intractable son of a bitch.

SAMANTHA. It's never too late to change.

DAD. I admit I've been a crappy father. Hailed as a great union leader – who can't keep his own family together. You've stayed with me not because I deserve it, but from obligation.

SAMANTHA. If it weren't for Mom death–

DAD. I make no excuse for that – and neither should you.

SAMANTHA. Why don't we go out for oatmeal and talk some more?

DAD. Because I can't stand oatmeal and neither can you. The only reason we eat it is because you think it's good for us.

SAMANTHA. I happen to like oatmeal.

DAD. You don't.

SAMANTHA. I've acquired a taste for it.

DAD. Just sign the damned the thing and live happily ever after. One of us should.

SAMANTHA. I could never betray my sisters.

DAD. The younger ones would benefit from a kick in the ass, and your older sister would appreciate certain elements of this.

SAMANTHA. That doesn't make it right.

DAD. That's your problem – you're a rabbi who wants to be like Jesus Christ.

DIVIDED AMONG THEMSELVES

SAMANTHA. One time I said Christ had many admirable traits, and now I regret saying it to you.

DAD. Take a gift while it's there. Count your blessings instead of subdividing them.

SAMANTHA. Whatever you do with your will is your choice.

DAD. No, it's yours. I had my signature notarized by two witnesses.

SAMANTHA. *(looking at signatures on the document)* Your day nurses.

DAD. I had to give them each 20 bucks to prove I wasn't trying to deport them.

SAMANTHA. An obnoxious thing to say.

DAD. You know how many immigrants I've hired in my life?

SAMANTHA. You hire them because you're afraid they'll go somewhere else and do twice the work for half the pay.

DAD. Self-interest is at the core of altruism.

SAMANTHA. I took an oath to uphold certain standards.

DAD. No one expects you to be perfect all the time. Sometimes it's better to say go to hell.

SAMANTHA. I'll keep that in mind the next time I expect to stray from my stated purpose.

DAD. Stated purpose?

SAMANTHA. To cultivate harmony in the world.

DAD. Who speaks like that?

SAMANTHA. I do.

DAD. Which is why your synagogue is going broke.

SAMANTHA. We're not going broke. We just run out of money from time to time.

DAD. Because you associate yourself with a cast of misfits, herbalists and life coaches.

SAMANTHA. That's dismissive.

DIVIDED AMONG THEMSELVES

DAD. The truth?

SAMANTHA. Still dismissive.

DAD. It bothers you.

SAMANTHA. No.

DAD. Underachieving.

SAMANTHA. My time will come.

DAD. Sooner, if you sign this.

SAMANTHA. Is this supposed to be an expression of love?

DAD. However you need to justify it.

SAMANTHA. Just because the rest of the world's obsessed with money doesn't mean I have to be.

DAD. You've been wearing the same shoes for 15 years.

SAMANTHA. They're comfortable.

DAD. Worn out.

SAMANTHA. How much we talking about?

DAD. Interested?

SAMANTHA. Just give me an answer.

DAD. Enough for you to buy a new pair of shoes – and a car whose bumper doesn't have to be held together by duct tape and prayer.

SAMANTHA. What happens if I don't sign it?

DAD. You'll have to wait to find out.

SAMANTHA. You already have something else in place?

DAD. You make a presumption. While I'm giving you the chance to establish something as fact.

SAMANTHA. What if I sign this, and gave the money to my sisters after you die?

DAD. Then we'd at least know you had the gumption to stray from your "stated purpose."

SAMANTHA. (*a transition*) I'm dedicating my next sermon to you.

DAD. Is that a threat?

DIVIDED AMONG THEMSELVES

SAMANTHA. You want to know the topic?

DAD. Helping people get full value from their lives?

SAMANTHA. How distance doesn't have to be a barrier to intimacy.

DAD. Sounds like bullshit already.

SAMANTHA. The desire to honor father and mother?

DAD. Your mother's been dead for 20 years. You don't have to speak to her like she's still in the back pew.

SAMANTHA. Before she died –

DAD. I know. She asked you to look out for me.

SAMANTHA. Well?

DAD. (*Dad pulls out a bottle of scotch*) She didn't mean it as a curse.

SAMANTHA. I wish you wouldn't do that.

DAD. Care to join me?

SAMANTHA. I thought we agreed to get rid of the booze.

DAD. You have your means of uplift, I have mine.

SAMANTHA. The doctor –

DAD. I know what the doctor said, but it's just as likely I could die tomorrow from something else so if we're going to raise a glass together, we might as well do it now.

SAMANTHA. I'm supposed to lead a youth group event tonight. If anyone shows up, I can't have my breath smelling like scotch.

DAD. Maybe another time. Like the next life.

SAMANTHA. Why don't you take the train back to Poughkeepsie with me? You don't have to do the service project, but it might be good for you to get out of your apartment at least once this week.

DAD. (*pulling out a pipe*) I like being in this apartment. It keeps me connected to the promise of a more glorious past.

SAMANTHA. Now we're going to smoke?

DIVIDED AMONG THEMSELVES

DAD. One of my few remaining pleasures. Don't say it can't be a pleasure if it comes at someone else's expense. You served your time, and now you're free to leave.

SAMANTHA. Do I need to remind you this is now a smoke-free building?

DAD. Yes, I heard. The Condo Board was taken over by the Righteous.

SAMANTHA. If you want, I can help you stop.

DAD. You still don't know what it means to do things from impulse. Like your mother who had everything planned out but got shortchanged at the end.

SAMANTHA. She didn't get shortchanged. She continues to live through us.

DAD. Of her four daughters, she'd be frustrated with you the most.

SAMANTHA. *(going to the window.)* It was going to be a surprise, but I'm planning to bring everyone together for your birthday.

DAD. Don't worry. I can plan my own surprise, and I bet it'll be grander than yours.

SAMANTHA. What's wrong with the window?

DAD. It gets stuck. From the last time you had them paint.

SAMANTHA. How come you didn't say anything?

DAD. When it comes to things getting stuck, I'm more concerned about you. *(Lights fade but not completely, leaving a center spotlight.*

Samantha returns to center stage. Dad remains, as a vivid ghostly presence.)

SAMANTHA. *(to audience)* I didn't sign the document. Would it have been different if I knew the exact amount? I'd like to say no, but....

(As Samantha speaks, Dad takes the document and tears it in half.) My father died that night, sitting in his armchair. Reading an article about my older sister Clark in *The New York Times*. *(Lester enters carrying two envelopes.)* He was found by Robin Lester, his personal attorney

DIVIDED AMONG THEMSELVES

who was a master of finding legal loopholes for the Union. Lester came to the apartment to retrieve the document I never signed. My Dad claimed Lester was his only friend in the world, which was disappointing, because I knew how much he despised him. (*Dad continues to sit in chair, reading newspaper, occasionally looking up.*)

LESTER. I know I'm supposed to offer condolences, but since I'm a lawyer and you're a rabbi, it seems extraneous to offer words of sorrow or praise.

SAMANTHA. I'll take that as something coming from deep within your heart.

LESTER. (*businesslike*) I made arrangements to have the burial tomorrow and the memorial service the day after that. I'll see if the papers will run a short piece on him so we can save the expense of a paid obit. He'd appreciate that.

SAMANTHA. Are these times negotiable?

LESTER. With your Dad, everything was negotiable, but now you're dealing with me. Drink?

SAMANTHA. Champagne?!

LESTER. Secretly, your father was saving it for when one of you got married. Just as secretly, he was glad you never did because he didn't want his daughters to think they had to define themselves through a man. Like me. (*Lester pops the cork, and is about to bring a glass to Samantha.*)

SAMANTHA. No thanks.

LESTER. I'll let it breathe, just in case.

SAMANTHA. Champagne doesn't breathe.

LESTER. We do.

SAMANTHA. Do you have any other instructions?

LESTER. You find me off-putting.

SAMANTHA. We're all redeemable – in our own way.

DIVIDED AMONG THEMSELVES

LESTER. C'mon. Don't you think we've earned the right to be honest with each other?

SAMANTHA. Why do I think honest for me isn't quite the same thing as honest for you?

LESTER. A divisive statement.

SAMANTHA. The truth?

LESTER. I know I'm not a lovable man. I joke when it's time to be serious, and I'm serious when everyone's having a good laugh. Still, I make myself useful in other ways, and I'm willing to be useful to you.

SAMANTHA. I thought you were here to give me instructions about the service.

LESTER. (*businesslike*) Your father doesn't want any fuss, but I've arranged for a funeral home that can seat 500. If you want to do something upstate at your synagogue, that's your choice....but don't expect me to come unless you pay for my time. I don't say that to be callous or mercenary, but as a means of making you smile.

SAMANTHA. I presume I can be part of both services.

LESTER. Absolutely. But your father mandated each one be short, not more than 30 minutes.

SAMANTHA. I begged him to talk to me, but apparently he spoke to you.

LESTER. I assure you it was a short conversation as I was being paid by the word.

SAMANTHA. Did he leave any other instructions?

LESTER. He did leave two envelopes, one which I can share now. The other, well, you'll see. (*Lester gives her the envelope. Samantha reads the first sentence aloud until Dad interjects.*)

SAMANTHA. (*reading*) "I instruct my daughters to report to my apartment by 4 p.m. on the second Sunday after I die. If I die on a Sunday...."

DIVIDED AMONG THEMSELVES

DAD. (*from memory*) "... that will be considered the first Sunday. If any of my daughters are not present by the time the grandfather clock strikes four on the second Sunday, they lose whatever claim they may have had from my estate."

LESTER. (*to Samantha*) Not what I recommended. I recommended something that accounted for time served... (*as Samantha stares at him*)
Go on.

SAMANTHA. (*continuing*) "At four o'clock, the daughters who are present shall open the second envelope and work together from there. I charge Samantha..."

DAD. "With giving each of my daughters reasonable and timely notice of this mandate. Such reasonableness should be adjudged by my attorney, Robin Lester, who's making me use this bullshit language."

LESTER. (*picking up from memory*) "If reasonable efforts are not made, or if the second envelope is opened prematurely, then Samantha forfeits any claim she may have to the estate. After that, you'll see."

SAMANTHA. In other words....

LESTER. There's going to be a reading of your father's will next Sunday – a week from today – in this apartment. At that time, you'll open the contents of this second envelope, which I shall leave for you today. I trust you understand the consequence of opening it early – or not showing up.

SAMANTHA. Do you know what's in this second envelope?

LESTER. I'm still bound by attorney-client privilege. Unless you hire me to work for you.

SAMANTHA. I'm not asking you to tell me what's in the document, I'm asking if you know.

LESTER. (*businesslike*) Your father asked you to do the sermon, without notes. He says if you want to make any religious references, they should be specific, relevant, and unrehearsed.

DIVIDED AMONG THEMSELVES

SAMANTHA. He said all those things to you? He didn't say them to me.

LESTER. I knew the man better than my own brother and liked him more than my own father – which may not be saying much because my father...*(cutting himself off)* Well, let's just say he played favorites, and I was never his first choice....even when my older brother was carted off to jail. *(Lester moves to side. Samantha comes forward.)*

SAMANTHA. *(to audience)* We buried my Dad on Monday, next to my mother. In a small plot at the Gates of Heaven Cemetery. Just Lester, me and a few of my “misfits.” Lester kept prodding me to move it along.

LESTER. Time is money, and money is time.

SAMANTHA. *(to audience)* The service the next day was well attended. More than two thousand people showed up, mostly men from the union, who, fittingly, were being paid for their time. I defied my Dad's wishes and wrote out something by hand. When I got to the podium, I couldn't find my speech and had to speak off the cuff about how my father always had to have the last word.

LESTER. *(holding up piece of paper, probably the sermon)* Remember to keep it short.

SAMANTHA. *(to audience)* There were three paragraphs about my Dad in The New York Times, but only one in The Daily News. Even so, my father was hailed as a tough negotiator, who wanted to give all men the chance to rise up.

LESTER. *(holding hat over his heart)* In lieu of flowers, please send cash. Directly to his attorney. *(Lester exits.)*

SAMANTHA. *(to audience)* Through it all, I tried to get in touch with my sisters, which was not easy, and, yes, I kept thorough documentation. I sent three emails and two text messages to my older sister Clark. *(Clark appears.)* I left four phone messages for my younger sister Johnna. *(Johnna appears.)* And I had a frustrating time trying to reach

DIVIDED AMONG THEMSELVES

my youngest sister Alex. (*During the following phone conversation, we only hear Samantha's side of the conversation, with interjections coming from Dad during the unheard responses on the other end. There can be an overlap of dialogue.*)

SAMANTHA. I'd like to speak to my sister...

DAD. Don't tell them what you'd like. Tell them what you want.

SAM. Do you know when she'll be available?...

DAD. End your sentences hard.

SAMANTHA. May I please speak to someone who would?...

DAD. Don't make your questions sound like apologies.

SAMANTHA. Can I speak to someone higher up?....

DAD. Good. Dismiss them.

SAMANTHA. Yes, I understand she's working outside, but I need to speak to her now...

DAD. Keep pushing.

SAMANTHA. My name is Samantha Marcus. I'm the older sister of Alex Marcus. If you know anything about Alex, you'd understand I was supportive of her move out West...

DAD. Use less words.

SAMANTHA. Do you want to tell me her new name?...

DAD. Oh boy.

SAMANTHA. (*sighing*) She's always been going through "an important transitional time"...

DAD. Challenge them.

SAMANTHA. Wait. Don't hang up....

DAD. You hang up on them.

DIVIDED AMONG THEMSELVES

SAMANTHA. *(more emphatic)* I'm sorry for taking you out of a comfortable space, but I said it was an emergency... Yes, a matter of life and death.

DAD. Mine!

(At another part of the stage, Johnna pops up. Johnna and Samantha are talking long distance.)

JOHNNA. Samantha, shit. I've been meaning to call, but I keep getting caught up in my own thing.

SAMANTHA. Dad's dead.

JOHNNA. Oh God. Really?

SAMANTHA. I didn't want to blurt it out, but I've been eager to let you know.

JOHNNA. So many times I wanted to pick up the phone and chat with him, but I thought I should wait until I had my life together. I was almost there, but not quite.

SAMANTHA. You okay?

JOHNNA. When's the funeral?

SAMANTHA. It happened.

JOHNNA. I know you're there and I'm not, but that doesn't mean you should intentionally shut me out. *(Dad stands, gives Samantha the instruction letter and returns to his armchair.)*

SAMANTHA. Dad wants you to come back East.

JOHNNA. A little late, isn't it?

SAMANTHA. For what I presume will be a reading of his will.

JOHNNA. Just tell me what I'm going to get. It's okay if it's nothing. Dad always said he couldn't give me what I could better give myself. That frustrated us both.

CLARK. *(from a distance)* Got your message.

SAMANTHA. *(sidetracked by Clark's text)* "Got your message" Are you coming back or not?

DIVIDED AMONG THEMSELVES

JOHNNA. (*as if the question was addressed to her*) Sure, but I'll need help.

SAMANTHA. (*to Johnna*) You want me to pay for your ticket?

JOHNNA. Until I get back on my feet.

SAMANTHA. My finances are tight, too.

JOHNNA. Don't you have a discretionary fund?

SAMANTHA. It's not for my personal use.

JOHNNA. Then what's the point of having it?

SAMANTHA. Johnna.

JOHNNA. I know. I make a big deal about being independent, but whenever it comes to doing things on my own, I need help.

SAMANTHA. I'll pay for your ticket. This one time.

JOHNNA. Have I ever said you're the best?

SAMANTHA. Only when you don't intend to pay me back.

(*Alex is on the phone at another part of the stage.*)

ALEX. (*to Samantha*) You called?

SAMANTHA. Thank God you got my message.

ALEX. You said it was an emergency.

SAMANTHA. Not really an emergency. Dad's dead.

ALEX. Okay.

SAMANTHA. Is that all you can say?

ALEX. I had a premonition he was going to die this week, and when I heard you called, I wasn't sure I could receive the news. So, yes, I'm sad. But ready, I think.

DAD. (*frustrated*) Just tell her what you want!

SAMANTHA. I know you think you've distanced yourself from money, but you depleted Mom's trust years ago, and the only reason I've been able to send you a few hundred bucks each year is because I've been taking it out of my own account. I'm not saying that to force you do something you don't want, but to let you know I can't keep it up - and I

DIVIDED AMONG THEMSELVES

say that without judgment or recrimination - but merely to let you know it's hard to move into the future unless you deal with the past. (*Lights up on Johnna at another part of stage. Dad remains a presence, overseeing Samantha.*)

JOHNNA. (*loud whisper*) It'd help if you could wire money.

SAMANTHA. Why don't you tell me the flight, and I'll pay for it directly?

JOHNNA. (*urgently*) Did you hear what I said – now!

SAMANTHA. Where are you?

JOHNNA. There's a guy here who can take your credit card, and give me an advance on the cash. I can then purchase the ticket without bothering you again.

SAMANTHA. Are you in a casino?

JOHNNA. I'm in Reno.

SAMANTHA. You made a pledge....

JOHNNA. Yes, I made a pledge not to drink, smoke or gamble, but I made a mistake by doing it all at the same time.

SAMANTHA. I'm getting maxed out on my credit card.

JOHNNA. Don't you have a regular job?

SAMANTHA. Yes, but I don't always have regular pay.

JOHNNA. That's bullshit. To stiff a rabbi.

SAMANTHA. You do it.

JOHNNA. That's different. We're family.

SAMANTHA. I barely have enough to cover my own rent.

JOHNNA. Just give me an advance from whatever Dad was going to leave me.

SAMANTHA. What if I said I don't know what that is?

JOHNNA. He's going to leave me something, isn't he? At least ten thousand bucks? I hate you for making me say something specific, but his death is hitting me harder than I thought, and I'm starting to revert.

DIVIDED AMONG THEMSELVES

SAMANTHA. I'll advance you five hundred bucks if you promise to stop whatever you're doing right now.

JOHNNA. Can you make it a thousand – and still pay for my ticket home?

SAMANTHA. Against my better judgment.

JOHNNA. Have I ever said you're the best?

SAMANTHA. Too many times to make a difference.

JOHNNA. Give the man your credit card and I'll take it from there.

(Samantha turns away and speaks to an unseen person from the spiritual community.)

SAMANTHA. I just want to know if she's coming back.

DAD. *(shaking his head)*

SAMANTHA. What happens if I pay for her ticket, and she doesn't use it?

DAD. Tell him you'll call the state regulators and nail them for selling un-pasteurized yogurt.

SAMANTHA. You want me to book it under her old or new name?

DAD. Book it under the old.

SAMANTHA. I think we're making progress.

DAD. Don't get ahead of yourself. *(During the proceeding, Dad stands and pushes ahead the clock so it chimes once. Dad returns to his chair, Lester enters the apartment.)*

SAMANTHA. *(to Lester)* How long have you been here?

LESTER. Long enough to see you're doing your job well.

SAMANTHA. You let yourself in?

LESTER. After 20 years, don't you think I can be trusted?

SAMANTHA. I'd like your key.

LESTER. Not until things gets settled.

SAMANTHA. Mr. Lester.

DIVIDED AMONG THEMSELVES

LESTER. Please call me Robin. Like your father. Who teased me for having what he thought was an effeminate name, not understanding that I'm like Robin Hood, who takes from the rich and gives to the poor, and then gives back to the rich again.

SAMANTHA. If you don't mind, I'd like to clean out the apartment and give it back to the landlord before the end of the month.

LESTER. You don't give back a rent-stabilized apartment. You make the landlord fight for it.

SAMANTHA. I don't want to live that kind of life.

LESTER. It's how things work.

SAMANTHA. For other people, not me.

LESTER. Which is why you live in a subterranean apartment in downtown Poughkeepsie.

SAMANTHA. Do you mind getting out of my way?

LESTER. (*attempt at charm*) I can get someone to clean out this place for a thousand bucks, including anything I skim off the top.

SAMANTHA. Is that supposed to make me smile?

LESTER. If I'm doing my job right, yes.

SAMANTHA. (*indicating a box of stuff marked Good Will*) Would you like any of this?

LESTER. (*pounding his chest*) Most of what your Dad gave me is right here.

SAMANTHA. That's actually a touching thought.

LESTER. I know people like to poke fun at the attorney, but we have a unique skill in bringing people together.

SAMANTHA. If you don't mind, the last train goes back to Poughkeepsie in less than an hour.

LESTER. I could give you a lift.

SAMANTHA. That's completely out of your way.

LESTER. Not out of my way to do something good for you.

DIVIDED AMONG THEMSELVES

SAMANTHA. Maybe it's better if I head to the station now.

LESTER. Look, Sam-Sammy. It's time we start being realistic with each other because you have the most to gain, but also the most to lose.

SAMANTHA. Oh?

LESTER. Sit.

SAMANTHA. First, the key.

LESTER. You drive a hard bargain.

SAMANTHA. You've got a minute to say what you have to say. (*Lester gives Samantha the key. Samantha stands by the sofa, away from Dad.*)

LESTER. When you look at your father's life, who would you say was the most invested?

SAMANTHA. My mother.

LESTER. Let's be realistic. Through no fault of her own, she checked out years ago so when I say who was the most invested, I think the answer is clear, and I can make sure we both get what we deserve.

SAMANTHA. We both deserve a good night's sleep.

LESTER. You're not coming onto me, are you? Not to brag, but I still look fantastic under this shirt.

SAMANTHA. Mr. Lester.

LESTER. I want to know your plans.

SAMANTHA. Clean out this apartment.

LESTER. Beyond that.

SAMANTHA. Sit shiva.

LESTER. No interest in keeping control of a three-bedroom rent-stabilized apartment in midtown Manhattan for a third of what it would usually cost? Don't give me bullshit about how it's supposed to revert back to the landlord because arrangements can be made.

SAMANTHA. What do you get in return?

LESTER. Aside from the satisfaction of doing a good deed?

SAMANTHA. Never mind.

DIVIDED AMONG THEMSELVES

LESTER. While I can't reveal the contents of your father's will, I can tell you it makes sense for us to work together. Think it through. You're not getting any younger, and the people in your congregation aren't getting any richer. (*Samantha moves toward door.*)

SAMANTHA. Why don't you get out?

LESTER. Let's split 50-50 whatever we get. If you get it all, I get half. If I get it all, you get half.

SAMANTHA. Not to be crass, but why should you get anything at all?

LESTER. Think of the deals your father was able to close because I was willing to act like the bastard your Dad pretended he couldn't control.

SAMANTHA. Work that out with him.

LESTER. Half, I'm telling you. It's the only way to hedge our bet.

SAMANTHA. I'd rather live and die on my own.

LESTER. Then you better consider a new plan because it looks like you're going to miss the last train back to Poughkeepsie, and you'll be forced to stay here alone. (*beat*) If you don't mind, I'll take the booze. I'd like to think I'm at least entitled to that. (*Dad pushes ahead the clock so it chimes twice. Lester recedes. Samantha addresses the audience.*)

SAMANTHA. I ended up spending the night in my Dad's apartment, which still smelled of a lit pipe. I thought it might be a transformative experience – until the A.C. went out. I busied myself by going to an all-night market, stocking up on food my sisters might like, but would never eat from some sort of unprescribed principle. Still, I decided to extend myself fully to them, if they were going to show at all. (*Samantha puts out food and drink, oblivious to Clark's presence.*)

CLARK. I'm coming. (*Clark moves off.*)

SAMANTHA. What do you mean? All the way from Dubai? Whatever Dad might leave for us wouldn't make a difference to you – if what they said in *The New York Times* is true. (*Dad pushes forward the clock so it*

DIVIDED AMONG THEMSELVES

chimes three times. Then sits in the leather armchair.) What are you doing?

DAD. When Clark comes, don't worry about getting her approval. Just because she's older, richer and better looking doesn't mean she's entitled to anything more. Remember, everything she does is strategic, and if you pierce her corporate veil, she'll have no choice but to see you as an equal and that'll almost give you half a chance. (*Doorbell rings. Samantha opens door. Clark is there.*)

CLARK. Who were you talking you?

SAMANTHA. What if I said myself?

CLARK. Say anything interesting?

SAMANTHA. Hello, dear.

CLARK. What should I do with my umbrella?

SAMANTHA. You can leave it in the hall.

CLARK. Still a safe building?

SAMANTHA. People come and go, but yes.

CLARK. Reassuring.

SAMANTHA. That people don't change?

CLARK. That they don't change for the worse.

SAMANTHA. Can I take your coat?

CLARK. How long we gonna be?

SAMANTHA. All I know is what you know.

CLARK. To be here by four. Or don't bother showing up at all.

SAMANTHA. Did you speak to Dad?

CLARK. Sometimes he called on my birthday, and sometimes I called on his, but it didn't matter if one of us forgot.

SAMANTHA. Amazing how people can have a relationship without taking stock of each other.

CLARK. Yes, you can take my coat.

SAMANTHA. I'll be gentle with it.

DIVIDED AMONG THEMSELVES

CLARK. Don't worry. It was meant for rugged wear.

SAMANTHA. English?

CLARK. Australian.

SAMANTHA. Custom made?

CLARK. I could have one done for you.

SAMANTHA. I don't think something like this would work on me, would it?

DAD. You won't know until you try.

CLARK. What did you say?

SAMANTHA. *(to Clark)* How marvelous you look – like you're two years younger instead of the other way around.

CLARK. I suppose if I was looking for a compliment, thanks.

SAMANTHA. You wanna say how I look?

CLARK. A long week?

SAMANTHA. A long couple of years.

CLARK. Your hair looks better short. Like you're no longer hiding from the world.

SAMANTHA. I know you're not the touching sort, but don't you think we should give each other a hug?

CLARK. *(pre-emptive)* I may have something contagious. From working overseas. Nothing alarming, but I tend to pick up things that bother other people but not me.

SAMANTHA. I do come in contact with a lot of people, and I have an obligation to keep myself well.

CLARK. Nothing personal.

SAMANTHA. No.

CLARK. But don't you think we could best honor Dad by not bullshitting around?

SAMANTHA. Why do you equate being nice with bullshit?

CLARK. Did you just say –?

DIVIDED AMONG THEMSELVES

SAMANTHA. I retract it.

CLARK. Too late. (*Beat. They look at each other. Smile. They give each other a hug.*)

SAMANTHA. Oh what the hell. If I'm going to be infected, it might as well be by you.

CLARK. I always thought you can handle more than you think.

SAMANTHA. You realize that statement is tinged with condescension.

CLARK. Only if you allow it.

SAMANTHA. I saw that article about you in *The New York Times*.

CLARK. Did they call me cold-hearted – or something worse?

SAMANTHA. You didn't read it?

CLARK. What's it going to say that I don't already know?

SAMANTHA. Are you really trying to construct the tallest building in the world?

CLARK. Folks laughed when I said it. Now they don't laugh. They either beg, cringe or try to stop me.

SAMANTHA. It says you're still single.

CLARK. What you see is what you get. (*beat*) You?

SAMANTHA. I've been dating a guy named Brook. A life coach. I'm mostly unbothered when Dad says...

DAD. Kind-hearted men don't push the world forth.

CLARK. No booze?

SAMANTHA. I've got four different kinds of club soda. I'll give you black cherry and load it up with ice. Sorry it's so hot, but the window gets stuck after it rains.

CLARK. What's wrong with the A.C.?

SAMANTHA. It doesn't work when it's hot. I mean it works, but it doesn't work, work.

CLARK. Dad couldn't insist on something new?

DIVIDED AMONG THEMSELVES

SAMANTHA. This is new. Not new, new – but what the landlord gives the stabilized tenants.

CLARK. Dad couldn't insist on something new, new?

SAMANTHA. Toward the end of his life, he was no longer as willing to rock the boat.

CLARK. Disappointing.

SAMANTHA. That he learned to go with the flow?

CLARK. That you let him.

SAMANTHA. Can we make a deal with each other?

CLARK. Not until all the cards are on the table.

SAMANTHA. Johnna and Alex are nervous about our reunion, and I'm hoping we can make them feel more at ease.

CLARK. They're both coming?

SAMANTHA. I bought them each a non-refundable airline ticket.

CLARK. They couldn't buy something on their own?

SAMANTHA. I thought it would be sisterly of me to help them out.

CLARK. Maybe more sisterly not to help them out. (*Johnna bursts in.*)

JOHNNA. Sorry I cut it close. The bus broke down on the way from the airport, and I dropped my phone in the Jacuzzi last night so I couldn't call. But here I am – soaked, sorry, but on time.

SAMANTHA. Didn't I give you enough money to take a cab?

JOHNNA. Clark, shit. Look how ravishing you are. I'm not just saying that because what I'd like to say is I look marvelous and you look like shit, but that wouldn't be the truth, would it?

CLARK. Only you could say.

JOHNNA. (*to Samantha about Clark being here*) I thought you said....

SAMANTHA. I said it'd be God's little miracle if she came, and sure enough here she is.

JOHNNA. Do you want to give me a big, fat hug?

DIVIDED AMONG THEMSELVES

SAMANTHA. She may have something contagious...from working overseas.

JOHNNA. Who cares? Maybe something from you will rub off on me.

CLARK. As long as you've been forewarned. (*Johnna gives Samantha her coat and bag, which Samantha takes as Johnna and Clark hug.*)

SAMANTHA. Okay, Johnna, that's long enough.

JOHNNA. (*about Clark*) You should feel the muscles in her back. Ripped.

SAMANTHA. Do you want to give me a hug?

JOHNNA. Absolutely. I'm trying to be more touchy-feely without it leading to something more. (*Johnna and Clark hug.*)

SAMANTHA. Not so tight. I'm still trying to recover from the last time you gave me a hug. (*Johnna releases Samantha.*)

JOHNNA. (*to Samantha*) The muscles in your back, not so ripped.

SAMANTHA. Good thing, then, it's not a competition. (*Grandfather clock chimes four times, after Dad has pushed it forth.*)

JOHNNA. Holy shit. I didn't realize I was cutting it so close.

SAMANTHA. That clock usually runs fast. It's finally showing signs of age.

CLARK. I've got an atomic watch, precise to the exact second, and it says four right on the dot.

JOHNNA. Then let's get started.

SAMANTHA. I think we should wait for Felicity.

JOHNNA. Who?

SAMANTHA. Alex changed her name to Felicity.

JOHNNA. Why?

SAMANTHA. It's a choice she made, and we should respect it. (*Doorbell rings. Persistently.*)

JOHNNA. Don't answer that.

SAMANTHA. She's our sister.

DIVIDED AMONG THEMSELVES

JOHNNA. I don't care if it's the Messiah. Rules is rules, and late is late.

SAMANTHA. If it was you –

JOHNNA. It's not me, so let's get on with it.

SAMANTHA. *(to Clark)* Would you object if I let her in?

CLARK. If I did?

SAMANTHA. I suppose I'll let her in anyway.

CLARK. Then why do you need my blessing?

JOHNNA. Don't blame us if this doesn't go the way you want.

(Samantha pauses. Then goes to the door. Doorbell continues to buzz. Samantha opens the door. Lester is there.)

SAMANTHA. What are you doing?

LESTER. Trying to convince Alex to ring the bell.

SAMANTHA. Where is she?

LESTER. She could be jumping off the roof for all I know.

SAMANTHA. I'll be right back.

LESTER. You leave this room, and you run the risk of losing everything you have to gain.

SAMANTHA. *(to Lester)* Move out of my way! *(Samantha exits the living room, and goes down the hall, looking for Alex. Dad stands, but realizing he can't follow Samantha, he sits back down in the chair.)*

LESTER. *(to Johnna and Clark)* Hello, Ladies. Any interest in cutting a deal?

CLARK. I'd offer to show you the door, but I'm sure you're used to letting yourself out.

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