

ART OF NECESSITY

By

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ART OF NECESSITY

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ART OF NECESSITY

*“The art of our necessities is strange
That can make vile things precious.”*

– William Shakespeare, King Lear

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Art of Necessity was produced by Act Your Page in January of 2021, directed by Parker Sterling and featuring the following cast:

Lea	Susan Hochtman
Kennedy	Gina Mazzara
Reg	Peter Quinones
Gordon	Pete Blatchford
Cormac	Van Ferro
Fran/Alice	Amy H. Peterson
Ozzie	Zev Johnston
Glory	Carrie Grove
Emily/Corinne	Angelina Mussro
Ember	Laura Rovi

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Cast: 7W/5M

LEA	a Hoarder
KENNEDY	Lea's Therapist (later disguised as Krystal, a psychic)
REG	Lea's middle son, a Designer
GORDON	Lea's eldest son, a Chef
CORMAC	Lea's youngest son, a Survivor (later disguised as Chance, a Drag Queen)
FRAN	Cormac's boyfriend, a Biker
ALICE	Gordon's wife, a Trainer
OZZIE	Gordon & Alice's son, an Addict (can double with Fran)
GLORY	Gordon's neighbor, a Housewife
EMILY	Glory's daughter with her abusive husband, a Singer
EMBER	Glory's older daughter born out of wedlock, a Model
CORINNE	Reg's girlfriend, another Designer
Setting:	The alternate universe of reality TV

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ACT I

SCENE I: HOARDER

A spotlight fades up revealing LEA, a sprightly woman of a certain age, struggling under the weight of a load of shopping bags. Some of the bags bear the logos of well known retail outlets; some are the plastic bags a shopper might find at a thrift shop or garage sale.

LEA. *(breathless)* God, what a haul! Seventy--nine cents for votive candles. Not those little tea lights, --proper votive candles, with a prayer on back, and the picture of a martyr. Seventy--nine cents! Can you believe it? When are you going to see a deal like that again, ever in your lifetime? My arms are on fire, and look at this. Look at these biceps. All these years, carrying shopping bags. My Will used to say "You've got the biceps of a World Wrestling superstar!" I almost didn't make it home this time. *(Lea sets the shopping bags down. Lights come up to reveal unbelievable heaps of junk towering all around Lea, dwarfing her small body: shopping bags, furniture, stacks of books, toys and tchotchkes, broken appliances and scrap metal, piles of clothing, packages and cans of food, unopened toiletries, packed cardboard boxes, newspapers and magazines, junk mail and receipts.)* Today was my lucky day all right. *(Lea searches for a way in, amidst all the junk.)* Just need to clear a way through... I know there's a chair here, somewhere... No matter. *(Lea manages to stack a couple of shopping bags and sit.)* Kennedy might see things differently, but she hasn't seen these martyrs. Look at this. St. Jude. Patron of the desperate. *(She lights the candle. Gazing at the flame, she takes a flask of whiskey out of her pocket and takes a long swallow. Then she takes a snickers bar out of her pocket, unwraps it, and begins to eat. KENNEDY enters, a stylish middle--aged therapist.)*

KENNEDY. How's it coming, Lea?

LEA. Brilliant.

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KENNEDY. Is that your dinner?

LEA. It's dessert. This is my dinner. *(Lea takes another swig of whiskey.)*

KENNEDY. You haven't started packing yet.

LEA. Yes, I have.

KENNEDY. I don't see any boxes.

LEA. I've got plenty of boxes. Brand new ones. Boxes with edges so sharp they could cut you.

KENNEDY. I don't see any boxes, Lea.

LEA. You don't know where to look.

KENNEDY. The house is going on the market tomorrow--. The Realtor will be here at 10am to talk to Corinne about staging.

LEA. I'm not quite at the staging stage...

KENNEDY. I can see that.

LEA. I need a few more days.

KENNEDY. We talked about this, Lea--

LEA. I haven't finished my estate planning--

KENNEDY. We set a date.

LEA. I have to figure out who all of this is going to go to.

KENNEDY. Salvation Army? Goodwill?

LEA. Of course not – my children!

KENNEDY. Have you spoken to your children? Have you asked them... if they wanted... any of this?

LEA. Why wouldn't they want it?

KENNEDY. Lea--.

LEA. These are valuable antiques! These are originals. Some of this stuff is worth a fortune...

KENNEDY. Well, you better open some boxes. Because the realtor is coming with the decorator, and Gordon and Reg are paying them--.

LEA. Like they're paying you!

KENNEDY. Lea! You know how much I care about you. Haven't we been friends for 30 years? *(Lea sighs.)* You know we want what's best for you.

LEA. Want to see these votives I found today? St. Jude, patron of desperate situations.

KENNEDY. Did St. Jude bring you any boxes?

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LEA. I suppose there's this box, that the candles are in... *(Lea takes the rest of the votives out of the cardboard box they came in.)*

KENNEDY. What good is that going to do?

LEA. It's a cardboard box, isn't it? A nice, sturdy box ... these are heavy.

KENNEDY. You're taking things out, when you ought to be putting things in!

LEA. It's a box... -- isn't that what you wanted?

KENNEDY. Lea, it's time to face facts. If the house is going to sell, we're going to have to clear away this junk--

LEA. Junk? There's a fortune buried here! If I put some of this up on eBay...

KENNEDY. Tonight?

LEA. Of course not! This is my legacy. I'm leaving it all to my boys... that's why I've done this, it's all for them – for Gordon and Reg and Cormac!

KENNEDY. I'm not sure they're going to have room for it.

LEA. Call Gordy. Right now. You call him

KENNEDY. Are you kidding?

LEA. Call Reggie. Tell them I need them. Cormac is supposed to be home soon. Tell them I'm going to bestow their inheritance.

KENNEDY. You want me to call them?

LEA. They'll listen to you. You're a doctor.

KENNEDY. What the hell...where's your phone? *(Lea looks around helplessly.)*

LEA. I know it's here, somewhere...

KENNEDY. Where?

LEA. When it rings, I can usually find it.

KENNEDY. Shit, Lea.

LEA. Why don't you call me? If you call me, the phone will ring...

KENNEDY. I don't bring my mobile to sessions!

LEA. Go to the laundromat, on the corner. They've got a payphone there. *(Lea digs into her purse, hands Kennedy some change.)*

LEA. Here's a couple of quarters. Call, and it will ring, and then I'll find it. *(Kennedy exits. Lea takes the cardboard box, finds a small bit of*

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floorspace for it. She sets it down, carefully, reverently. She looks at the towering heaps of junk, trying to decide what to pack. REG enters, a carefully dressed young hipster with a cautious way of moving.)

REG. I saw your so--called therapist on the stairs. What's she doing here, Ma?

LEA. She's helping me!

REG. I told Gordy he was wasting his money on that one.

LEA. She's helping me pack. That's more than my own sons will do for me.

REG. Doesn't look like much packing going on.

LEA. My own sons are turning me out of the house that I've lived in for thirty years! The house where I raised them, the house that their father worked overtime in the Department of Sanitation for twenty--five years so we could pay the mortgage every month...

REG. Lose the drama, Ma.

LEA. You're turning me out!

REG. Because we love you, Ma. Look around. You can't live like this.

LEA. I love this house.

REG. It's for your own good.

LEA. It's everything, my whole life ... everything I saved -- for you!

REG. You'll have a new life.

LEA. I'll be homeless!

REG. You aren't gonna be homeless, Ma. You're going to live with Gordy and Alice, in the guest room – and winters you can spend with Corinne and me, out in L.A.

LEA. This is where I live. This is where I've lived for thirty years!

REG. Ma ... you just gotta – look at this place.

LEA. Where will I keep my things?

REG. I told you, in the guest room. Allie's got it fixed up all nice for you. There's a TV, and a separate bath...

LEA. But, my fortune!

REG. You can bring a suitcase. The movers are gonna put the rest of this stuff in storage.

LEA. In storage where?

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REG. Someplace safe.

LEA. Where?

REG. Someplace nearby...

LEA. This is nearby!

REG. We gotta get this place ready to show.

LEA. I want a key to the storage.

REG. Sure, Ma. We'll get you a key.

LEA. So I can go there, and sort through my treasures, and find what I need there, anytime?

REG. Sure you can, Ma.

LEA. I've got collector's items, you know. These things are worth something. I know I'd make a fortune if I put this stuff up on eBay... but I'm saving it for you, and Gordy, and Cormac...

REG. Like what?

LEA. Have you seen these votives? Take a look at these... --these are not the kind of votive candles you come across every day. Look at that. It's not a sticker, see? It's printed right on the glass!

REG. Hum.

LEA. Who knows how much I could get for these?

REG. You think so?

LEA. Who knows? *(A telephone rings. The ringtone is the Bee-Gees "How Deep Is Your Love?" or something similar.)*

LEA. Where's that coming from?

REG. How should I know?

LEA. Close your eyes, follow the sound! *(Reg and Lea hunt for the buried phone. Reg closes his eyes and trips over a pile of junk. GORDON enters, a thirty--ish restaurant owner.)*

GORDON. What the hell? *(Lea emerges with a cell phone in her hand. She hands the phone to Gordon.)*

LEA. It's for you.

GORDON. Nothing doing! The Realtor will be here at 10am. Corinne is supposed to talk to her about staging--

REG. We're not exactly at the staging stage...

GORDON. We talked about this!

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REG. Ma thinks some of the junk she's got might be worth something...

GORDON. You've got to be kidding.

LEA. I've been saving it for you. It's your legacy. (*Gordon picks up some debris from the floor and hurls it.*)

GORDON. Legacy of crap...

LEA. I've got a 1913 Buffalo nickel around here, somewhere!

GORDON. Yea, right.

LEA. And if you don't want it, I'll leave it to Reg.

REG. How much is it worth, a Buffalo nickel?

GORDON. She's bluffing.

LEA. I am not!

REG. I'll take it!

GORDON. Fine – take it!

REG. Where is it?

LEA. I just need a few more days, to sort things out...

GORDON. We'll put it all in storage, Ma.

REG. I could use a few extra bucks right now...business is slow.

GORDON. Tell me about it... I just took out a second mortgage to keep the restaurant afloat. The sooner this place sells, the better...

LEA. This teaspoon --- it's pewter!

REG. How much is pewter worth?

GORDON. We'll box it up and take it--

LEA. Do you want it?

GORDON. I'd love to have it!

LEA. Will you take good care of it?

GORDON. Of course, Ma!

REG. Hey, how come he gets it?

LEA. He's promised he's going to take care of it, and hand it down to his children.

REG. No fair --- I don't have children! Are you saying he gets more stuff because he's got children?

GORDON. Don't worry about it! We'll divide it all up evenly.

REG. What about Cormac?

GORDON. What about him?

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REG. But he's not even here. We're the ones who give a shit, and we're the ones taking care of Ma, and he's not even here.

GORDON. He's our little brother. We can save him some of the little stuff.

LEA. Do you see this barrel, this porcelain barrel magnet? I got it when your father and I were on our honeymoon, in Niagara falls.

REG. Gee, that's something, Ma.

LEA. Promise you'll keep it on your fridge forever!

REG. Uhm...

GORDON. Sure, no problem!

REG. Hey!

LEA. Do you want it?

REG. Uhm...

GORDON. Okay, he can have it!

LEA. Promise!

REG. Is it worth something? *(CORMAC enters, a teenage boy dressed simply in a worn t--shirt and jeans.)*

CORMAC. It's garbage. Tacky. Useless. Crap. Like the rest of this shit, and it's burying us alive.

GORDON. The prodigal son returns.

CORMAC. Her therapist said it was some kind of emergency--

LEA. I have to settle my estate.

CORMAC. What are you talking about?

REG. Where was he when we were interviewing Realtors, huh?

GORDON. We're putting the house on the market...

CORMAC. This house? *(Cormac laughs, imagining the house on the market.)*

REG. As soon as we get rid of all this junk...

LEA. Junk?

CORMAC. Who would ever want to live in this house?

LEA. You call this junk?

CORMAC. You can't even walk in here--

REG. The neighborhood's getting trendy. There's a gallery.

GORDON. And a Starbucks.

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REG. The market's heating up.

LEA. Look at this toaster, --practically new!

CORMAC. That will be the day.

LEA. Do you want this toaster, Cormac?

CORMAC. No, Ma.

REG. Just leave it for the movers.

GORDON. Ma is moving in with me and Alice.

CORMAC. What?

LEA. I've got a bunch of dot--matrix print cartridges... do you want them?

CORMAC. What do you mean?

GORDON. Sure, Ma--. The movers will bring them.

CORMAC. You can't!

LEA. They're going to be worth something, someday.

REG. I'll take them.

GORDON. The movers will take care of it.

CORMAC. You can't put her out! What am I supposed to do?

GORDON. You'll figure something out.

REG. You've got the rest of your life ahead of you, Cor.

CORMAC. It isn't right! She's our mother!

GORDON. Cormac, Look around you!

CORMAC. You haven't been here.-- I'm the one who's been here!

GORDON. No one should have to live like this.

CORMAC. The therapist is helping!

LEA. Do you want one of these votive candles?

CORMAC. No!

GORDON. Leave it!

REG. For the movers.

LEA. Will you keep it on your bedside table?

GORDON. Of course, Ma.

CORMAC. This is bullshit!

REG. Think of it as the first day of the rest of your life.

LEA. Cormac, you're my baby. You get the pick of the lot. Whatever you want.

CORMAC. Nothing.

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LEA. It's your legacy...

CORMAC. Keep it.

LEA. Do you want this ivory letter opener?

CORMAC. No, Ma.

LEA. This ostrich leather card case?

CORMAC. No.

LEA. This flash drive?

CORMAC. You can keep it.

REG. Is it worth something?

GORDON. I'll take it, Ma. I can put it in storage.

CORMAC. Wake up, Ma! Don't you get it? None of us want this crap. All of it's garbage!

LEA. It's your inheritance.

CORMAC. Nobody wants it!

REG. Speak for yourself!

LEA. This is your legacy. Take it!

CORMAC. Let it go, Ma.

LEA. Take it! Please...

CORMAC. No! I don't want anything! I'm not like them -and I'm not like you!

LEA. Then you can get out of my house!

CORMAC. Gladly!

LEA. You're no son of mine! *(Cormac stalks off.)*

CORMAC. So pretend I was never born!

LEA. Good riddance to bad rubbish! *(Kennedy enters, passing Cormac.)*

KENNEDY. Looks like that went well. *(Lea picks up a toaster and cradles it...)*

LEA. Idiot! He doesn't know how much this is worth. None of you do!

REG. How much?

LEA. Ingrateful bastard...

GORDON. Come on, Reg. Let's go get the truck. *(Gordon and Reg exit. Lea begins to cry, hugging the toaster.)*

LEA. What was it all for, huh? Why did I do it?

KENNEDY. The toaster doesn't love you, Lea.

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LEA. Gordy would like it...for his kitchen, don't you think?

KENNEDY. Go after him.

LEA. They're bringing the truck.

KENNEDY. Your youngest. He's just sitting there, out on the curb. Go after him.

LEA. I don't care if I ever speak to that monster again.

KENNEDY. Lea, please...

LEA. What do you care?

KENNEDY. I want to help.

LEA. Do you have any boxes?!?

KENNEDY. No.

LEA. Then F off.

KENNEDY. Lea--...

LEA. F off! This is my house. And this is my toaster. And you can F off. I'm fine on my own – just leave me in peace! *(Kennedy exits in despair. Lea sits, still cradling the toaster, and begins to hum softly to herself.)*

SCENE 2: INTERVENTION

Lights up on Cormac, who sits humming softly to himself by the side of the road. Kennedy enters.

KENNEDY. She loves you.

CORMAC. Everything she loves is worthless.

KENNEDY. That's not true.

CORMAC. It's garbage.

KENNEDY. It's not too late.

CORMAC. I'm leaving.

KENNEDY. Have you got someplace to go?

CORMAC. I called my boyfriend to pick me up. *(We hear the roar of a huge engine. Headlights glare on Cormac, blinding him. Cormac looks up, runs his hands through his hair. FRAN enters, a big, tough--looking kid with multiple tattoos. He opens his arms. Cormac runs to him. Fran envelops Cormac in a big bear hug.)*

FRAN. You're done then? *(Cormac nods through tears.)*

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FRAN. About time. You were crazy to stay as long as you did.

CORMAC. She's my mother.

FRAN. It had to happen sometime, didn't it?

CORMAC. She kicked me out. Disowned me.

FRAN. Come with me. On the road.

KENNEDY. She needs you, Cor!

CORMAC. I don't want to abandon her...

FRAN. It's time.

CORMAC. Are you sure?

KENNEDY. She loves you, Cormac.

FRAN. You can be free, C. Think of it. Free. *(Cormac smiles and kisses Fran. Kennedy walks away.)*

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ACT II

SCENE 1: MAKEOVER

Gordon's open--plan living space accommodates both his high--end gourmet kitchen and his wife Alice's considerable workout gear. At rise, Gordon and Alice's teenage son OZZIE is passed out at the breakfast bar. A shrill, high pitched alarm clock sounds, and we hear Alice shouting.

ALICE. *(from offstage)* Five--forty seven! Time to seize the day! *(ALICE, in workout gear, jogs across the stage.)* When was the last time you saw the sun rise?

LEA. *(from offstage)* Never! *(Alice marches a sleepy Lea into the living room. Lea is dressed in a bathrobe and slippers.)*

ALICE. It's about time! If not now, when?

LEA. It's dark outside!

ALICE. That's why you wear this helmet --with reflectors!

LEA. Is there coffee?

ALICE. Gordy will be manning the espresso machine as soon as we get back from our morning ride.

LEA. *(noticing Ozzie)* Who's that?

ALICE. That's Ozzie.

LEA. My grandson? What happened to him?

ALICE. Time flies, doesn't it? My baby's all grown up...

LEA. Is he alive?

ALICE. Had a late night, probably.

LEA. I don't think he's breathing.

ALICE. We'll wake him up in time for yoga...

LEA. Wait a minute --- yoga is where I draw the line...

ALICE. It's never too late.

LEA. Then let's start tomorrow. Or maybe the next day!

ALICE. Today is the first day of the rest of your life, Lea. We want you to be around for us, for Gordy and Reg, and for Ozzie! That's why we brought you here, to become the new you.

LEA. Who?

ALICE. The new Lea. The real Lea. The one you've always been inside.

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LEA. I'm just as fat and lazy inside, dear... probably fatter!

ALICE. That isn't true.

LEA. Inside, I've already gone back to bed.

ALICE. I believe in you, Lea!

LEA. There's no accounting for taste...

ALICE. You can do it. You can be the mother that Gordon and Reg deserve, the grandmother Ozzie deserves.

LEA. What I deserve is to be left alone, with a coffee: --one cream, two sweet and low. *(Gordon enters, dressed in chef's whites. He goes to the kitchen and begins making breakfast.)*

GORDON. Morning, Ma. Back from your bike ride?

ALICE. I haven't got her out the door yet.

LEA. I'm not going anyplace unless I get a coffee!

GORDON. Coffee? Do you think I would serve my own mother that pigswill?

LEA. If you haven't got a sweet and low, two creamers will do.

GORDON. It's nothing but the best for my Ma. Would you like an egg-white omelet, or some toasted kale, with fresh carrot juice?

LEA. I just want a coffee! I'll drink it black, if it comes down to that.

GORDON. Were you aware that caffeine consumption is associated with increased risk of heart attack, stroke, brain cancer, dementia, OCD, attention deficit disorder, narcolepsy and ingrown nails?

LEA. So?

ALICE. Get that heart rate up to 165 and you'll forget all about caffeine...

LEA. Large cup of coffee and then I'll forget all about it... *(A doorbell rings. Enter GLORY, a fashionably-dressed woman, with her beautiful teenage daughters, EMILY and EMBER.)*

GORDON. Morning, Glory!

GLORY. Always the early bird, Gordon! Didn't I tell you he'd be up, girls?

GORDON. Want a coffee?

GLORY. You're a prince among men, Gordon!

LEA. What?!?

ALICE. She's not his mother.

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GORDON. This is our neighbor Glory, Ma.

ALICE. He doesn't give a damn about her.

GORDON. Nope!

GLORY. Pleased to meet you, hon. You remember my daughter Emily, and her sister---

EMBER. Half--sister!

GLORY. Ember. *(Gordon reaches out to hand Glory a cup of coffee, --but Lea swipes it. Gordon glares at her.)*

EMILY. We came to ask for your support, Mr. Gordon.

EMBER. And Mrs. Gordon.

GLORY. It's like a dream come true for me. My daughter's name --up in lights!

EMBER. What lights?

GLORY. Metaphoric ones.

EMILY. But maybe...

EMBER. There aren't any lights!

GLORY. Why not? Don't you think so, Gordon? Aren't we as good as any of those Kardashians you see on TV?

EMBER. No!

GLORY. She's got low self--esteem...

EMILY. She never knew her Dad--.

GLORY. This is New Jersey, for godsakes!

EMBER. Just tell them why we're here!

EMILY. The contest ends at midnight, and I really need your vote!

GLORY. Em's in a competition--

EMILY. I uploaded this video...you know --the kind of thing you record in your bedroom late at night.

EMBER. She spent the last three weeks lighting it, and editing and mixing the sound.

EMILY. I'm the one sitting home every night with nothing else to do --she's the one out partying!

EMBER. I'm the one who's got to work ... she's the one whose daddy buys her a top- of -the- line Black Magic Mini Pro camera.

EMILY. I'm the one who gets good grades.

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EMBER. I'm the one who's got ADHD because my mom got pregnant at seventeen, and smoked pot and drank too much coffee!

EMILY. Then take your goddamn medication!

GLORY. Now, girls...

EMILY. Just because I have three hundred ninety--nine thousand, seven hundred sixty nine votes, and you've only got thirteen...

EMBER. I shot my video on a webcam!

GLORY. I didn't know you shot a video, dear!

EMILY. She didn't tell anyone.

EMBER. I didn't tell you because I knew you wouldn't vote for me.

GLORY. You don't sing.

EMBER. Who cares? Singing is so over.

GLORY. So why did you make a video?

EMBER. To prove a point.

EMILY. I liked your video.

EMBER. So what?

EMILY. I voted for you. Did you vote for me?

EMBER. Does it matter?

EMILY. Of course it matters!

EMBER. You know that mom would have voted for you over me. That's why I didn't tell anyone about my video. I did it to protect you all from the awful truth about yourselves, that you're the kind of mother who would vote for your younger daughter who already has three hundred ninety--nine thousand, seven hundred sixty nine votes, and not vote for your older daughter who only has thirteen!

GLORY. But, sweetheart, Emmy sings.

EMBER. And you're the kind of sister who would think that it's cool that her mom voted for her over her sister, just because you could sing, and think that voting for me yourself makes you some kind of martyr saint, when I'm already three hundred ninety--nine thousand, seven hundred fifty-six votes behind!

EMILY. I think thirteen votes is awesome, Em. Especially since you suck.
(Lea puts down her coffee cup and stares at Ozzie.)

EMBER. It's just a popularity contest!

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GLORY. Emily's neck and neck with this Australian girl...

EMILY. She put a Koala in the video! --I mean, how fair is that?

EMBER. All's fair in love and war.

EMILY. It's supposed to be a singing contest!

EMBER. Singing is over.

ALICE. We'll vote for you, dear.

EMBER. I'm going to be a model. *(Lea approaches Ozzie. She leans down and peers at him.)*

GORDON. Don't you want to hear her sing first?

ALICE. Gordy, she's our next door neighbor!

EMBER. See? Popularity contest!

GLORY. Go on, baby --show us your song. *(Lea nudges Ozzie. He doesn't respond. She nudges him harder.)*

EMILY. Right here?

GORDON. Let's hear it.

EMILY. Right now?

ALICE. I'm sure you'll be terrific.

EMILY. I've only ever done it in my bedroom...

EMBER. Want to watch me model?

GORDON. Model what?

EMBER. Oh, I can model just about anything.

GORDON. Can you?

EMBER. Or nothing...nothing is my specialty. *(Lea takes Ozzie's pulse.)*

EMILY. They wouldn't let her do it on the contest video.

GORDON. That's a shame.

EMBER. Just one more advantage for my sister --she got to sing her favorite song.

EMILY. "House of the Rising Sun!" *(Lea begins to look for her phone.)*

LEA. Can somebody please call my phone?

EMBER. Would you like to see what I did for my video?

GLORY. Not now, dear --your sister's going to sing.

ALICE. Why don't we just watch the video online?

ART OF NECESSITY

GORDON. And miss out on the real thing? *(Emily stands in front of the room and takes a deep breath. She closes her eyes, and bows her head,-- preparing to sing.)*

LEA. Can somebody call me?

GLORY. Why?

LEA. So I can find my phone.

ALICE. In a minute. Emily's going to sing.

GLORY. You can vote on a mobile site--. *(Lea picks up Gordon's phone and dials. Her own ringtone begins to sound.)*

EMBER. Here's what I did. I started out like this, only with just a little more nothing. *(Ember stands much too close to Gordon and pulls off a couple of pieces of clothing.)*

EMBER. And then I did a couple of turns like this... *(Ember twists around Gordon and pulls off a couple more pieces of clothing.)*

EMBER. And then I did this, like this... and this... *(Ember twists and shimmies over Gordon, settling into his lap and striking a seductive pose. Lea finally locates her phone. The ringtone stops.)*

GORDON. Bravo!

ALICE. Gordon!

GORDON. She's our next door neighbor... *(Lea sends a text.)*

EMILY. *(Emily launches into a stunning rendition of "House of the Rising Sun.")* There is a house in New Orleans they call the Rising Sun. It's been the ruin of many a poor girl, and God, I know I'm one... *(When she's finished, a stunned silence fills the auditorium.)*

LEA. Damn! *(They burst into applause.)*

ALICE. Whoo!

GORDON. That one always brings a tear to my eye.

ALICE. Whoo! Woooo!!!!

EMILY. Thank you.

GORDON. Nicely done, love.

EMBER. You see what I mean? It's not fair! You're going to vote for her, aren't you?

ALICE. What's the prize?

EMBER. Who cares?

ART OF NECESSITY

GLORY. I think they get plastic surgery!

EMILY. I'll give you my plastic surgery, Ember.

EMBER. No you won't!

GLORY. Girls, girls! Is this how sisters treat each other?

EMBER. Half--sisters!

GLORY. I'm so proud of both of my angels...

EMBER. Except I don't sing.

GLORY. But you model--

EMILY. I'll text you all the url to vote for me... *(Suddenly, a siren blares outside, and a red light flashes.)*

ALICE. Hmm...paramedics.

GLORY. Did you call the paramedics, Emily?

EMILY. Of course not.

EMBER. You've told us a billion times, Mom -- --not unless he won't stop hitting you, and you've totally lost consciousness.

GLORY. Sorry, Gordon. Sometimes your phone does that thing where you accidentally hit re-dial...

LEA. I called them.

ALICE. Oh, no!

GORDON. Are you feeling okay, Ma..?

ALICE. We haven't even had a chance to do yoga yet! *(Lea walks over to the breakfast bar. She shoves Ozzie, rolling him over onto his back, limp and unconscious.)*

GORDON. Oh.

ALICE. Oh, dear.

GLORY. Looks like that O.D. thing happened again. *(The doorbell rings.)*

ALICE. I'd better go let them in...

GLORY. Come on girls, let's move on to the Browns...

EMBER. We're going door to door.

EMILY. I'll text you the url!

GORDON. Stop by anytime!

LEA. Is there a Walmart anywhere near here?

GORDON. Isn't there always?

LEA. How do I get there?

ART OF NECESSITY

GORDON. I don't think that's a good idea, Ma.

LEA. I need to pick up a few things.

GORDON. We've got everything you need right here. *(Gordon gets a text message from Emily. He votes on his phone as two paramedics – --the actors playing Reg and Corinne – -- bring a stretcher in, load Ozzie's body onto the stretcher and take him away. Lea watches.)*

SCENE 2: DRAG RACE

Lea stands at the checkout lane in Walmart. KRYSTAL, a cashier (who is actually Kennedy in disguise) scans item after item with a rhythmic beep...beep...beep.

LEA. I've got one of those in storage. One of those too. Two of those three... in storage. *(Krystal continues to beep items.)* Great deal on those tealights, huh?

KRYSTAL. Yes, -definitely.

LEA. I might need to pick up a few more boxes... *(Lea hands Krystal a credit card. Krystal slides the card: a buzzing sound. She slides the card again. Same result. She looks at Lea doubtfully. Lea nods for her to try the card again. She does. Same result.)*

LEA. Problem?

KRYSTAL. As I see it, yes.

LEA. That card should be good.

KRYSTAL. Don't count on it.

LEA. It's my son Gordon's.

KRYSTAL. *(examining the card)* Yes. *(Krystal gets on the phone and punches in the card numbers.)*

LEA. I took it from his wallet just this morning. A top grain leather Armani wallet. Didn't he pay the bill?

KRYSTAL. My sources say no.

LEA. Damn! *(Krystal shrugs.)*

LEA. Will you take cash?

ART OF NECESSITY

KRYSTAL. Yes, definitely. *(Lea scrounges in her bag, and comes up with a handful of change. She hands the change to Krystal. Krystal begins to count it, looking doubtful.)*

LEA. Maybe if I put a few things back...

KRYSTAL. Don't count on it.

LEA. Just the candles? *(Krystal counts the change.)*

KRYSTAL. Very doubtful...

LEA. One tealight? Only one?

KRYSTAL. My sources say no. *(Lea sighs.)*

LEA. Listen... *(Lea leans up close to read the nametag on Krystal's apron.)* Krystal. You may not realize this, but I'm a very wealthy woman. A noted investor in valuable antiques and rare collectibles. I have a considerable fortune amassed – it happens to be in storage – so if your venerable institution might see fit to extend me some credit...you'll receive considerable return for your generosity, down the line. What do you think, Krystal? Do you have an application?

KRYSTAL. Yes. *(Krystal gives Lea a credit application.)*

LEA. What do you think are the chances, huh?

KRYSTAL. Better not tell you now... *(Lea fills out the application. CHANCE, a drag queen who is actually Cormac in disguise, enters. He comes up to the register with a package of panty hose and some bandaids.)*

LEA. *(whispering)* Name: -yes. Address: unsure. Phone: somewhere. Definitely somewhere. Very nearby. Employment: none. Income: none. Assets: in storage. If I put everything up on eBay, I'd be a millionaire. I could retire in luxury. But I'm saving it all for my boys.

CHANCE. *(to Krystal)* What are you doing here?

KRYSTAL. *(to Cormac)* Shh! I'm in disguise. Lea doesn't want a therapist – but she might listen to a psychic medium!

CHANCE. Don't count on it.

KRYSTAL. I have to take a chance.

CHANCE. That's my drag name!

KRYSTAL. Chance?

CHANCE. This is who I really am. She's never been able to see it. *(Lea hands Krystal the application.)*

ART OF NECESSITY

LEA. What do you think?

KRYSTAL. Concentrate and ask again. (*Krystal gives the application back to Lea. Lea looks at it, suddenly realizing she is at the end of her rope.*)

LEA. They aren't going to give me any credit, are they?

KRYSTAL. Outlook not so good.

LEA. The thing is, the thing is, Krystal... I was walking up and down the aisles of this store, and one of your helpful associates came up to me and said, have you been finding everything you need? And I wasn't quite sure how to answer... Had I been finding everything I needed? I was not at all sure if I had been. This morning I wanted to call someone, I wanted to call my therapist, to be honest. She's a lousy cognitive behaviorist, but sometimes she's a good listener, so I picked up my son Gordon's phone to call my phone, and there was a photo on Gordon's phone of this neighbor girl, this singer. She'd just won a big international singing contest, and she posted a picture of herself with her arms around her mother, and I saw this mother beaming, gazing up at her beautiful, glamorous, daughter with so much pride and joy that she seemed to be lit from within, as if she had been waiting for this moment for a lifetime, just waiting to see her little girl's name up in lights. And underneath the picture, in the caption, this girl had written: "So profoundly #blessed and #grateful to win plastic surgery! I definitely lost the genetic lottery, thanks to the hot mess on my left. One more modeling gig, and I'm getting as far away from her as possible. Modeling is it now, BT dubs. Singing is over." That's what she wrote, Krystal. It's been haunting me, that photo -- her mother gazing up at her, the tears of joy gleaming in her eyes. And that song she sang, about selling herself -- it may have been the most beautiful thing I've ever heard. How could that angel write something so ugly? Is singing really over?

KRYSTAL. Ask again later.

LEA. I haven't been finding everything I need. I definitely haven't been finding it. I can't go on like this. Can I?

KRYSTAL. As I see it, yes.

CHANCE. You shouldn't have signed the house away to your money-grubbing sons--!

ART OF NECESSITY

LEA. What do you know?

CHANCE. I know when I'm not wanted.

LEA. I can't go back there, can I? *(to Krystal)* Do you think Reg would come get me?

KRYSTAL. Don't count on it.

LEA. Why wouldn't he?

KRYSTAL. Ask again later.

LEA. He isn't like Gordon. Reg is an artist. He knows what's important.

KRYSTAL. Without a doubt.

LEA. You're a good listener, Krystal. What are you doing working at Walmart? I'm going to hire you as my new life coach! What do you say?

KRYSTAL. Yes, definitely.

LEA. Have you got a car? *(Krystal shakes her head.)* How will we get to Reg's house?

KRYSTAL. Reply hazy...try again? *(Krystal looks at Chance. Lea looks at Chance.)*

CHANCE. I've got my boyfriend's chopper. Can I drop you ladies somewhere?

LEA. It's 2462 miles.

CHANCE. What the hell.

SCENE 3: BACHELOR

Ember's bedroom. Reg lies asleep in the bed next to Emily, who is sitting up typing on a laptop. Gordon climbs in through the bedroom window. He carries a basket of muffins.

EMBER. Hello, Mr. Gordon.

GORDON. Ember!

EMBER. Nice of you to drop by.

GORDON. I was on my way to visit Ozzie in rehab when I noticed your bedroom window.

EMBER. How thoughtful.

GORDON. And it suddenly occurred to me you might like to taste one of my kale muffins. *(Gordon hands Ember a muffin.)*

ART OF NECESSITY

EMBER. Mmmm... Heavenly.

GORDON. Who's that?

EMBER. Who?

GORDON. There, asleep!

EMBER. Oh, nobody.

GORDON. It looks like my brother, Reg...

EMBER. It's just some artist. (*Ember throws a blanket over Reg.*)

GORDON. What's he doing here?

EMBER. Performance art.

GORDON. In a teenage girl's bed?

EMBER. That's what he does. He sleeps in girls beds.

GORDON. Just sleeps?

EMBER. Uh Huh. He gets crazy grant support.

GORDON. For lying there?

EMBER. It's very deep.

GORDON. A deep sleep?

EMBER. That's what *The New York Times Magazine* said.

GORDON. I don't get it.

EMBER. But he does. Or does he? See, it's brilliant.

GORDON. Hmm...

EMBER. Mom wants to hire him for Emily's headshots...

GORDON. I think he should be shooting you.

EMBER. Me too.

GORDON. Feel like modeling for me?

EMBER. I've just got to finish this tweet...

GORDON. You're a twitterer?

EMBER. Emily is.

GORDON. Your sister,- the singer?

EMBER. Yep.

GORDON. What sort of thing does she tweet about?

EMBER. Right now, she's tweeting about how she wants to kill our mother, Glory.

GORDON. Really?

EMBER. Who knows. Can't believe everything you read on the internet.

ART OF NECESSITY

GORDON. Does she tweet about that sort of thing very often?

EMBER. Quite a bit lately, ever since her password got hacked.

GORDON. I'm surprised it isn't censored.

EMBER. Freedom of speech and all...

GORDON. Sounds a bit risky...

EMBER. It will be, if my stepfather finds out. How do you spell "kale"?

GORDON. K - A -- L - E

EMBER. How do you spell "cyanide"?

GORDON. C -- Y -- A -- N -- I -- D -- E.

EMBER. Thanks! *(She closes the laptop. Emily enters.)*

EMBER. Emily!

EMILY. Hello, Mr. Gordon.

EMBER. Look! Mr. Gordon's brought us some muffins. They're heavenly. Why don't you take one to Mom?

EMILY. Thanks, Mr. Gordon.

GORDON. Anytime. *(Emily exits with the plate of muffins.)* Do you want to go to rehab?

EMBER. It's tempting. But, the thing is, Mr. Gordon... how would it look if your wife saw us coming out of my bedroom window?

GORDON. I suppose it would look like we were having an affair.

EMBER. Which is the furthest thing from my mind.

GORDON. Of course. Me too. *(Gordon and Ember begin to kiss.)*

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