

REACH

By
Ryan Sprague

REACH

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REACH

Naïve Orleans

*Is this the way you want it?
Is this the way it has to be?
Sitting here beside you
But my heart's lost in New Orleans
Dreams come clever
Hearts now severed
Difference of forever
And I'm lost there*

- Stephen Christian, Anberlin

REACH

Reach received its World Premiere by Encore Presentations in Syracuse New York, featuring the following cast:

Leila..... Danielle Valeriano
Jordan..... Ryan Santiago

Reach received its Festival Premiere by Misfits Theatre Company in the Boulder Fringe Festival, Colorado, featuring the following cast:

Leila..... Emily Tuckman
Jordan..... Damon Guerrasio

Reach received its International Premiere by Ivy Theatre Company at the Teatro del Lido, in Rome, Italy, featuring the following cast:

Leila..... Katie Braden
Jordan..... Brandon Ferrero

CAST: 1F, 1M

LEILA Early 40s, thin and slightly disheveled. She is guarded, has a sharp edge, and can be very unpredictable.

JORDAN Late 30s, clean-cut, but a little worn down. He is charming, anxious, and desperate to be useful.

TIME: Summer of 2006.

PLACE: The living room of a modest shotgun house in New Orleans.

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SCENE 1

The living room of a one story New Orleans shotgun house. Excessive plants, mostly dead, are strewn about. Stacks and stacks of books and magazines everywhere. A door leads to an unseen bedroom. The front entrance door is positioned somewhere in the living room. A record player rests on an overstuffed bookcase. It plays blues music. No furniture except for a coffee table, set off center. LEILA, early 40s, lay flat across the table, staring at the ceiling, listening to the music. The sound of a hard rain outside, along with a siren. She springs up, her gaze towards the window. After a moment, she moves to the kitchen area and pours herself a glass of water, takes a sip, and sets it down. From underneath the sink she grabs a bottle of vodka. She moves to the plants throughout the room and begins to “vodka” the plants. After a moment, a knock on the door. She stops. Another knock.

LEILA. Ruth? *(Another knock.)* Ruth, is that you?

JORDAN. *(Offstage)* No it's uh... it's...

LEILA. Who is it?

JORDAN. *(Offstage)* It's me.

LEILA. Who is *me*?

JORDAN. *(Offstage)* Jordan. *(Beat.)* It's Jordan. *(Leila is frozen.)* Leila? *(Beat.)* Could ya open the door? *(Few beats.)* Lay?

LEILA. I'm not here!

JORDAN. *(Offstage)* Right. *(Beat.)* So... door?

LEILA. *(Whispers.)* Shit. *(A long pause. Leila paces the room. She takes a deep breath. She moves to the door and opens it. She comes face-to-face with Jordan, late 30s. He's sobbing wet, but looks pretty happy. She does not. A stare down.)*

JORDAN. Hi Lay. *(Nothing.)* Can I uh... you busy or...? *(Few beats.)* Been a couple years, huh? *(Beat.)* Would you mind if I came in? Kinda weird just standing out here. *(Beat.)* Know it's outta left field, me showing up here and all. *(Starts to move in, but Leila stands her ground.)* Maybe we could just sit and... *(He*

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slithers his way past her.) Or stand. We could stand and talk.
(*Beat.*) You eat dinner yet? That Flying Burritos place looked...
interesting. (*She shakes her head 'no'.*) No you haven't eaten or no
you don't want to get a “flying burrito”? (*Leila doesn't answer.*
She continues staring at him. He looks around the room, politely
nodding.)

JORDAN. Lotta plants. That's good. Oxygen. Good for
breathing.

LEILA. Four years.

JORDAN. What?

LEILA. It's been four years.

JORDAN. Oh. Since we uh... really? That long?

LEILA. Yes. That long. What are you doing here?

JORDAN. (*Beat.*) Let's grab some food.

LEILA. Not hungry. Why are you here?

JORDAN. You're always hungry.

LEILA. I am not hungry. WHY ARE YOU HERE?

JORDAN. (*Beat.*) I was in the area. Thought I'd stop by and...
say hello.

LEILA. You live in Chicago. How were you in the area?

JORDAN. Conducting interviews. Heard you weren't too far.
Thought I'd... I don't know. Swing by.

LEILA. Swung pretty far.

JORDAN. Sammy Sosa-style. (*Beat.*) Watching the Cubbies?

LEILA. No.

JORDAN. Why not?

LEILA. Baseball was *your* thing. I'd rather watch paint dry on
the wall of a retirement home.

JORDAN. (*Searching for a television.*) Not watching much at all,
are ya?

LEILA. Television is for idiots.

JORDAN. Guess I'm an idiot.

LEILA. Guess so. (*Beat.*) Why here?

JORDAN. What?

LEILA. Why do you have interviews *here*? You're the ones
offering a job.

JORDAN. New recruiting process. Grab kids straight out of
college. Set em up nicely. Pay em a quarter of what we'd pay a
veteran. Get twice the work out of em.

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LEILA. Like the Cubbies.

JORDAN. Exactly! They're just excited to have a job right out of school. Especially around here, you know? Give em some hope of getting out.

LEILA. Not everyone wants to get out. (*Beat.*) This was *his* idea, wasn't it?

JORDAN. I mean... yeah. He is the boss.

LEILA. And you follow him blindly. You know you'll be the one on the way out some day. And he won't think twice about leaving you to the wolves like he did me.

JORDAN. I'd like to think I've earned a little more loyalty than that.

LEILA. I don't think either of you have earned the title of "loyal." And stop calling me Lay.

JORDAN. Sorry.

LEILA. Don't apologize. Just don't do it.

JORDAN. I'll stop when you stop ripping my throat apart like a... a lion.

LEILA. A lion? Why a lion?

JORDAN. I dunno. Cuz they do that. (*Beat.*) Don't they? (*Beat.*) Any animal that rips throats. How's that?

LEILA. Weasels also do it.

JORDAN. How do you even know that?

LEILA. Read it somewhere. (*Jordan looks at the books and magazines scattered everywhere.*)

JORDAN. Read a lot these days, huh? (*After a moment, Leila gets on all fours, and starts to growl, preparing to attack. Jordan's not quite sure whether to laugh or run for cover. Leila slowly crawls towards him. Suddenly, she lashes at him with her massive... lion paws?*) What the hell are you doing? (*Leila continues to growl, following behind him, continuing to lash out at him.*) Stop. (*She doesn't.*) You're gonna... can ya just...?

LEILA. Just what?

JORDAN. Can't we just...?

LEILA. Just what? Just what?

JORDAN. Just stop the animal thing. You know I hate it.

LEILA. That's why I'm doing it.

JORDAN. Come on, Lay...

LEILA. So help me dog, if you call me Lay one more time, I will

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actually rip your throat out!

JORDAN. I just... did you say dog?

LEILA. What?

JORDAN. Dog... you said "So help me dog." You meant to say God.

LEILA. No. I didn't. I choose to replace God with something that is tangible. And that just so happens to be a furry dog with a wet nose, droopy ears, and a knack for giving people attention. Something God has never done for me. *(Jordan's phone rings. He looks at it, but doesn't answer. He moves to Leila and reaches for her hair. She recoils, stopping him immediately.)*

LEILA. Do you want a broken finger?

JORDAN. You changed your hair color.

LEILA. Yeah.

JORDAN. Why?

LEILA. Why? I don't have to tell you why.

JORDAN. Was just curious. Is it a seasonal thing or...?

LEILA. It's my favorite color. You should know that. *(Jordan nods.)* How's Lily? *(Beat.)* Just curious.

JORDAN. Fine. She's fine.

LEILA. Oh good. And what's her favorite color?

JORDAN. Do we have to talk about her?

LEILA. Yeah. We do.

JORDAN. *(Beat.)* Cerulean. Okay? Her favorite color is cerulean.

LEILA. Cerulean. *(Laughs.)* You're shitting me.

JORDAN. I am not.

LEILA. That is...

JORDAN. Don't say it...

LEILA. Pretentious as hell.

JORDAN. I knew you were gonna say that.

LEILA. What did you expect!?

JORDAN. Wait... you're favorite color is red. You used to say it made you horny.

LEILA. First off... do not use that word in my presence again. And second... *(Refers to her hair.)* this is my favorite color now.

JORDAN. You can't change your favorite color. It's like the eleventh commandment or something.

LEILA. Thanks, Moses.

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JORDAN. You've lost weight.

LEILA. So my hair's a few shades darker and my weight's a few pounds lighter. Anything else you want to point out?

JORDAN. You seem...

LEILA. Seem what?

JORDAN. Miserable.

LEILA. (*Beat.*) Leave.

JORDAN. What?

LEILA. Did I stutter?

JORDAN. Hard to stutter a one syllable word.

LEILA. Leee-ve.

JORDAN. Give me a break here! You've been on the attack from the second I walked in the door.

LEILA. Four years, Jordan. All that time and not a single phone call. Nothing.

JORDAN. That's what this is really about. Okay. Okay, I get it.

LEILA. Do ya? Cuz you still seem to be here.

JORDAN. How could I call you? You don't have a phone.

LEILA. You could have mailed me a letter.

JORDAN. Fine. I could have mailed you a letter. Happy?

LEILA. Why don't you tell *me* if I'm happy. Since you seem to know me so well.

JORDAN. You can't stuff yourself in here and expect everyone to just forget about you. It's not healthy.

LEILA. So what would be healthy? Oh, I know. I could join a book club. Or maybe open up my own coffee shop. Charge seven bucks for a cup of burnt runoff.

JORDAN. He's worried about you.

LEILA. What?

JORDAN. Jacob. He's worried about you.

LEILA. Don't call him Jacob. You lost first name privileges.

JORDAN. He told me to call him Jacob.

LEILA. I don't care if Jacob told you to call him Jacob. Don't call Jacob Jacob. And don't give me that "boss" bullshit. He chose *you* over me. His own fucking daughter.

JORDAN. That's why I'm... he's worried about you.

LEILA. (*Laughs.*) Worried? Yeah. I'm sure.

JORDAN. He loves you. You know that.

LEILA. He loves *you*. That's the problem.

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JORDAN. Just go home and see him. It's a reasonable request.

LEILA. I'm not going home.

JORDAN. Few days. Then you can crawl right back under your rock again.

LEILA. I need to be here.

JORDAN. I get that. Considering what you've been through. I just...

LEILA. Oh. So he told you?

JORDAN. He did.

LEILA. And how much did he tell you?

JORDAN. That's what I... it's just a few days. Come back and maybe just...

LEILA. I'm not leaving.

JORDAN. He's had some health scares. Okay? I think he would like to... I dunno... just in case something...

LEILA. Just in case something happens? Do you know how many packs a day that man has smoked since he was, like, fifteen? How many sleepless nights he pulled, how many ulcers... heart attack scares he put us through? I think I'll take my chances.

JORDAN. It was pretty scary this time.

LEILA. So the only reason he wants to see me is because he thinks he's kicking the bucket? (*Laughs.*) That's rich.

JORDAN. I just think...

LEILA. Tell *Jacob* that if he was actually worried about *me*, he would have hopped his nicotine-fueled ass on a flight himself instead of sending his lackey. The answer is no, Jordan. Period.

JORDAN. (*Beat.*) It's been a year.

LEILA. And?

JORDAN. Don't you think it might be time to...?

LEILA. To what?

JORDAN. I'm just saying...

LEILA. Goodbye, Jordan.

JORDAN. I didn't mean...

LEILA. Goodbye.

JORDAN. Can I just...?

LEILA. GET OUT! (*Jordan starts to leave, but stops.*)

JORDAN. I'm not leaving.

LEILA. I'll call the cops.

JORDAN. With what?

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LEILA. I can scream really loud.

JORDAN. I think you want me to be here.

LEILA. Oh yeah? How's this for your *thinking?* (*Leila runs to the window and opens it.*) HELP ME! SOMEONE HELP ME!

JORDAN. Okay... let's just...

LEILA. HELP ME! I'M AN UNHEALTHY WOMAN WHO CAN'T THINK FOR HERSELF!

JORDAN. I get it! I get it. Stop.

LEILA. SOMEONE PLEASE SAVE ME!

JORDAN. Leila, stop.

LEILA. HELP! HELP! HELP! SOMEONE HELP ME!

JORDAN. STOP! (*Pulls Leila away from the window. After a moment, she grabs her glass of water and throws what's left of it in his face.*) And I was just beginning to dry down...

LEILA. I'll get you a towel. I'm not sorry, by the way.

JORDAN. Thank you? (*Leila goes to the unseen bedroom. Something catches Jordan's attention outside the window.*) What's with all the kids?

LEILA. They're always out there.

JORDAN. Even in the pouring rain?

LEILA. (*Offstage*) They're used to it. You didn't play in the rain as a kid?

JORDAN. Yeah, but shouldn't they be in school?

LEILA. (*Offstage*) Half the schools were destroyed, so they just stuff em all together. Teachers can't keep up with it, so the kids don't even bother showing up. (*Re-enters and throws a towel at him. He dries off.*)

JORDAN. What about their parents?

LEILA. What about them?

JORDAN. They don't care?

LEILA. They don't have time to care. Job market's shit. They're all working minimum wage jobs just to survive.

JORDAN. Well I'm hoping we can help at least a couple of em.

LEILA. Yeah, something tells me your junior associate jobs aren't gonna help some middle-aged parents in Louisiana.

JORDAN. I know... but... it's something. Isn't it?

LEILA. Maybe you should go recruit the twelve year olds out there then. (*Jordan's phone rings. He looks at it and stuffs it away again. It rings again.*)

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LEILA. Just answer it.

JORDAN. It's nothing.

LEILA. Answer you damn phone!

JORDAN. (*Beat. Answers.*) Hello? (*Beat.*) Sorry, bad re... bad reception. Can you...? (*Beat.*) Yeah. Yeah probably a day. (*Beat.*) No it's... a day, okay? This isn't... I just need a little more time. (*Beat.*) I'll let... I will let you know. Okay. (*Beat.*) Okay. Bye.

LEILA. Was that him?

JORDAN. Accounting. They funnel all this petty cash in to office parties and business meetings, but when it comes to me recruiting, they get all stingy about it.

LEILA. Someone should hang them from their ankles, slit their throats, and let their penny-pushing blood drain in to the streets.

JORDAN. Or they could just up their travel expense budget. But medieval torture is always an option. (*A moment between them. Almost endearing. Almost.*) It's nice up here. I mean, compared to some of the other areas.

LEILA. Yup.

JORDAN. So you didn't really get hit up here?

LEILA. Some wind damage. Sorta reminded me of...

JORDAN. Of home?

LEILA. Of Chicago.

JORDAN. I just can't believe how unscathed it is. I mean, like, right here.

LEILA. We're high up. Flooding didn't reach us.

JORDAN. Have you seen the rest of the city?

LEILA. We never had to evacuate, so...

JORDAN. You never left. (*Beat.*) I was thinking of taking one of those bus tours. Brings ya down to the lower ninth and whatnot. Heard they got it the worst.

LEILA. Yeah. They did. So yes... you should go take a tour of the worst part of the city and see all the poor people sweating their asses off while they try to rebuild their neighborhood by themselves. I'm sure they would love to see you staring at them in your air conditioned bus like they're zoo animals.

JORDAN. That's not what I... it just puts things into perspective. Driving in... it was just... and there was this cemetery a few blocks down before I turned onto your street.

LEILA. Lafayette.

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JORDAN. Think that was it.

LEILA. That was it.

JORDAN. The grass was so high. You could barely see the headstones. It's like they forgot it was there. It almost seemed... I don't know... poetic in a way? Depressing as hell... but poetic. Made me think.

LEILA. First time for everything. (*Another moment between them. It's broken by the sound of a siren outside.*)

JORDAN. So... he was a uh...

LEILA. Firefighter. Battalion Chief.

JORDAN. Is that like... top brass?

LEILA. Sorta. In charge of all engines. All emergency calls.

JORDAN. Is that how...?

LEILA. Yeah.

JORDAN. How did it... happen?

LEILA. (*Few beats.*) They were stretched thin. Departments had guys scattered all over the city. Pulling double shifts every day, working with people they'd never even met before. It was chaos. But Connor... he just wanted to help however he could. A lot of people refused to leave. They boarded up their homes, stocked up on food, figured they could ride it out. But the flooding just got worse and worse. This family ended up trapped. By the time Connor got there, they'd managed to get everyone out except one little kid. He was stuck in a closet upstairs. Connor got to him, picked him up... and then the stairs gave way. From what they figure, the kid reached for him, but Connor was just out of reach. He fell... hit his head. Knocked himself out. And the water just kept rising. By the time backup got there and pulled him out, he was barely breathing. They got him to the hospital, but he kept crashing. They finally got him stable... but they had to put him in a medically induced coma.

JORDAN. (*Beat.*) And that's where it's... at?

LEILA. That's where it's at. (*Beat.*) Sorry I couldn't be more... poetic.

JORDAN. That's... a lot. I'm...

LEILA. There's times I wish he hadn't gone down there.

JORDAN. Kid would've died if he didn't.

LEILA. I know that. That doesn't change the fact that he wasn't supposed to be down there. But he cared. Too much. "One more

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house. One more rescue.” That was their mantra every morning.

JORDAN. Sounds like a good mantra.

LEILA. It put him in a fucking coma. Someone *else* could have responded. Anyone else. If that family wasn't so goddam stubborn, none of this would've happened. So forgive me if I'm not as understanding about the kid.

JORDAN. I can... understand that.

LEILA. Can you?

JORDAN. I mean...

LEILA. Can you, Jordan? Yes or no?

JORDAN. I mean, he was *your* husband so...

LEILA. Is.

JORDAN. What?

LEILA. *Is* my husband.

JORDAN. Right. (*Beat.*) How often do you go to the hospital?

LEILA. Every day. Help the nurses with his physical therapy. Move his limbs back and forth, his legs up and down, arms in and out. Used to sleep there, too. But the pity started wearing off. Made me leave at night.

JORDAN. That's good.

LEILA. How is that *good*?

JORDAN. Just that you were able to leave at night. You know? Not dwell on it.

LEILA. I didn't have a choice. And I wasn't dwelling. I was waiting. There's a big difference.

JORDAN. Waiting. Right. I just... what I meant was... okay so I have been dodging this since I got here. Can we please turn on the air conditioning? I feel like I'm in the seventh level of hell.

LEILA. No air conditioning.

JORDAN. Okay then. (*Moves to the window to get some fresh air. Outside, children can be heard screaming.*) Sounds like they're killing each other out there.

LEILA. Wouldn't put it past them.

JORDAN. It would at least quiet them down, right? You know... cuz they'd be dead. (*Beat.*) That was a joke.

LEILA. Hilarious.

JORDAN. Come on. I'm trying to keep up with your cynicism, here.

LEILA. You were always able to keep up with me. I'll give you

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that. (*A small smirk.*)

JORDAN. Was that a smile? (*Leila immediately goes neutral.*)

LEILA. Not a chance in hell. (*They sit in silence. Jordan stares at her.*) I write him letters.

JORDAN. Letters?

LEILA. Things I want to say to him. Things I'd want him to hear.

JORDAN. That's good. Therapeutic.

LEILA. Thanks, doctor.

JORDAN. It's good you're writing. But maybe you should write something... I don't know... not about him?

LEILA. They're not *about* him. They're *to* him. And I enjoy it. I also enjoy being here. Waiting.

JORDAN. How about a job?

LEILA. Unless you're a construction worker or some washed up celebrity pretending to rebuild houses, then there's not much hope. It's like people have just forgotten what happened.

JORDAN. I don't think they've... *we've* forgotten. It's just that if it didn't happen a week ago, a day ago, an hour ago, we lose focus. Move on to the next news cycle.

LEILA. It's good to know that the rest of the world has the attention span of a two-year old.

JORDAN. What about all those government programs?

LEILA. Bullshit.

JORDAN. Relief funds?

LEILA. (*Laughs.*) You want to know what people do with their "relief funds"? They bought season tickets to football games. It's true. I heard the nurses talking about it one day. One of them even said that a woman tried to collect benefits after watching her two children drown.

JORDAN. That seems reasonable.

LEILA. She didn't have any children. Made it all up. People are lined up for blocks at shelters and food banks and this woman is cashing in on it. Millions of dollars pissed away on scavengers like her.

JORDAN. Think it'll ever be normal again?

LEILA. Will what be normal?

JORDAN. This place. The people.

LEILA. Time heals everything, right?

JORDAN. I'm serious.

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LEILA. Let's just say it has a giant magic eight ball staring it in the face, screaming "outlook not so good".

JORDAN. Man, I loved those things. What is that blue stuff in an eight ball, anyways? That's seriously bothered me since I was, like, ten.

LEILA. It's a mystical potion from the future, extracted from scientists, put into a plastic ball, and brought back in time to entertain rubes like you.

JORDAN. Not bad.

LEILA. It's blue food coloring.

JORDAN. See. It's that mystical future stuff or... or the blood draining in the streets. You come up with these images that are so... I still have that first article you got published. The one about the ghost on Navy Pier. (*Beat.*) You should start writing again. Maybe talk to Rachel?

LEILA. She probably doesn't even remember me.

JORDAN. I have her number.

LEILA. That's... weird. Why would you have my editor's number?

JORDAN. Contacted her before I came. You two were good friends.

LEILA. *Were.*

JORDAN. Maybe it's worth... reconnecting?

LEILA. I have her number. If I wanted to reconnect I would reconnect with her. (*Beat.*) What does *cerulean* think of your little excursion here?

JORDAN. (*Beat.*) I told her I had to get away from the city for a little while. She... well I didn't exactly tell her I was...

LEILA. Wait... she doesn't know you're here, does she? (*Jordan shakes his head 'no.'* *Leila laughs.*) This looks great for you. Flying cross country to see your ex. I'm sure she'd be *so* okay with that.

JORDAN. It's not that bad.

LEILA. No? Why don't we give her a little ring on your phone and tell her where you are? (*Leila reaches for his pockets.*)

JORDAN. No.

LEILA. You can make time to talk to accounting, but you can't take two minutes to let her know you're...?

JORDAN. I'm serious. Stop it.

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LEILA. Oh come on. You appear out of nowhere and give me the third degree about how I'm living, and I can't even bust your balls about her?

JORDAN. No actually. You can't.

LEILA. She's got you wrapped around her-

JORDAN. STOP TALKING ABOUT HER!

LEILA. Didn't know it was such a touchy subject.

JORDAN. Yeah. Well... I guess it is.

LEILA. What happened?

JORDAN. (*Beat.*) We're sorta... in the seventh inning stretch.

LEILA. You're... enough of the baseball analogies. Just spit it out.

JORDAN. We're not together. Right now.

LEILA. What does that mean? Right now?

JORDAN. We split up.

LEILA. (*Beat.*) What did you do?

JORDAN. Why do you automatically think it was something I did?

LEILA. Seriously?

JORDAN. We just need some time apart.

LEILA. And now you're here.

JORDAN. And now I'm here.

LEILA. (*Beat.*) Fuck you.

JORDAN. What?

LEILA. You have a little scuffle with your girlfriend and then you come see me?

JORDAN. It's not like that.

LEILA. The hell it isn't.

JORDAN. I had no intentions of coming here and...

LEILA. And what?

JORDAN. Whatever it is that you think I'm here for.

LEILA. One minute it's for recruitment. The next it's to convince me to visit *Jacob*... and now it's because you fled the state to get away from little miss *cerulean*. Which is it, Jordan?

JORDAN. It's...

LEILA. Huh? Which is it? Which is it?

JORDAN. It's... all of em. None of em. I just... I don't know why I'm here. Entirely. Okay? I'm just... I didn't know what else to do. The push and pull. The back and forth. Left and other left. I just...

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I'm just trying to do what *they* want. What *she* wants. What everyone else wants. And I had a moment where I just said... fuck it. And now I'm here. Okay?

LEILA. A real answer. Finally. I mean, it's not really an answer, but at least it... wait. Are you...?

JORDAN. No.

LEILA. Yes you are.

JORDAN. No... I'm just... shit. (*Jordan retreats, wiping tears from his eyes.*)

LEILA. Hey. I wasn't... (*She slowly makes a move to console him, but his cell phone rings.*)

JORDAN. Dammit! (*He throws it on the ground. They sit in silence for a moment.*) If we're not going to eat, can I at least have a drink?

LEILA. A drink drink?

JORDAN. Well I'm guessing a drink drink to you actually means drinking it and not throwing it in someone's face, but to me, it means alcohol.

LEILA. I have vodka. And you deserved it.

JORDAN. Vodka works. OJ?

LEILA. No.

JORDAN. Soda?

LEILA. Nope.

JORDAN. You don't mix it?

LEILA. I don't drink it.

JORDAN. What's it for then?

LEILA. My plants.

JORDAN. Explain.

LEILA. Vodka is made with grain. The more it distills, the better source it becomes for the plant. I uh...

JORDAN. You read it somewhere?

LEILA. Want some or not?

JORDAN. On the rocks.

LEILA. (*Retrieves the vodka.*) No rocks. Fridge went to shit. Tossed it a couple months ago.

JORDAN. Alright. Neat, I guess. (*Leila pours a glass rather full.*) Wow. That's a... healthy pour there.

LEILA. Throw whatever you don't want in the plants.

JORDAN. Oh don't get me wrong. I want it all. But if I drink this

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whole thing I may never wake up. (*Realizes what he just said.*)
Shit. I didn't...

LEILA. You never change.

JORDAN. Hey... what can I say?

LEILA. Nothing. Please. For once.

JORDAN. I know your hair's different and you've lost some weight. But you haven't changed either. You know... like... inside. You. The you I knew. Know. Whatever.

LEILA. Make sense.

JORDAN. You've always intrigued me. I think that's what first attracted me to you.

LEILA. Oh no. No we are not doing this.

JORDAN. What?

LEILA. The whole post-mortem thing. (*Takes the vodka from Jordan..*)

JORDAN. I'm serious. The meetings... business trips... the whole corporate ladder bullshit. I never really enjoyed what we... you know... had. I guess that's why...

LEILA. Why you left me?

JORDAN. That's one way to put it.

LEILA. That's the only way to put it.

JORDAN. I just wish I knew why I left.

LEILA. It's what you do. You leave. Jobs. Friendships. Relationships. When things get even remotely tough, you bail. Hence... (*Gestures to him and the room.*) *this.*

JORDAN. Yeah. I guess I... you ever feel like no matter what you do, no matter what choice you make... it's just... never right?

LEILA. Oh I'm obviously doing everything right. (*Jordan is holding back tears again.*) That was a... can I have a sip?

JORDAN. Thought you didn't drink.

LEILA. It's a *special*.... weird, fucked up occasion. (*Takes a nice strong swig from his glass and hands it back to him. She swishes it around, finds a plant, and spits the vodka into it. Jordan curiously laughs and moves to the record player.*)

JORDAN. Anything good?

LEILA. What?

JORDAN. To listen to. Lighten the mood.

LEILA. From what I can remember, "good" to you means power ballads. And if so, then I absolutely have nothing "good."

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JORDAN. It was one of my phases! Like magic? Remember when I was a magician?

LEILA. You weren't a magician. You were a guy who attempted to do magic.

JORDAN. What about your dive into the world of crocheting? It's like you were twenty-four going on eighty.

LEILA. It was relaxing. And to be honest, that phase has yet to fizzle. There's this woman a couple blocks over. Ruth. She owns an antique shop. I met her at the hospital one day when I was visiting Connor. Told her about my hobby, and she's been buying my stuff ever since. She turns around and sells it for, like, fifty cents more.

JORDAN. Wow. Her profit margin must be sky rocketing.

LEILA. Pull your head out of your financial ass for two seconds and maybe you could see that she enjoys my work. She enjoys getting my stuff out to the public.

JORDAN. Like I'm trying to do with your editor?

LEILA. I haven't written anything worth publishing in years.

JORDAN. Yeah but you could if you...

LEILA. Nothing.

JORDAN. (*Beat.*) Music. Come on. We're in jazz central, here. Gotta have some good jazz.

LEILA. Not really.

JORDAN. What do you listen to?

LEILA. Blues.

JORDAN. What's the difference?

LEILA. Seriously? (*Laughs.*) I've got some stuff in my room.

JORDAN. I can help you pick something if you...

LEILA. I'll get it. (*Leila exits to the unseen bedroom.*)

JORDAN. (*Yells to her.*) Hey, I'm just throwing this... heaving it from the outfield. I could get you a nice setup. Matching couches... chair... entertainment center. The works. I know this guy back home. He has places all over the country. Get you a good deal.

LEILA. (*Offstage.*) Don't care.

JORDAN. Why?

LEILA. (*Offstage*) Because I don't need it.

JORDAN. Who doesn't need furniture? (*Leila re-enters, records in hand.*)

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LEILA. I like standing.

JORDAN. Think of it as a gift.

LEILA. I won't think of it ever again. I don't need the clutter. I like my space just the way it is.

JORDAN. (*Indicating the records.*) What have you got?

LEILA. Ruth Brown. Koko Taylor.

JORDAN. Should I know these people?

LEILA. Charlie Patton. Lonnie Johnson. Blind Blake.

JORDAN. Was he related to Ray Charles?

LEILA. Are you serious?

JORDAN. I dunno. The whole blind thing. (*Leila shakes it off.*)

LEILA. Lonnie it is. (*She goes to the record player, putting a record on. Lonnie Johnson's 'Long Road to Travel' begins to play. They listen.*)

JORDAN. I like it. It's got rhythm. Soul...

LEILA. Listen.

JORDAN. Sorry.

LEILA. Don't apologize. Just listen. (*They listen.*)

JORDAN. I like his... pitch? His range? Am I using those right?

LEILA. Shhhh... (*They continue listening. Jordan starts to sway, snapping his fingers. Totally off tempo. But he's trying. He starts dancing and it is like a creature that's never walked before.*) What are you...?

JORDAN. I'm feeling it out.

LEILA. You're what?

JORDAN. I'm feeling the music out.. Like when you rev a car's engine? Or grip a baseball bat or something?

LEILA. You look like you're possessed.

JORDAN. That's what dancing is. Giving in, right? Letting go...

LEILA. You're letting go of whatever pride you had left.

JORDAN. Will you let me feel this, please?

LEILA. Feel away. (*Leila moves to the vodka, taking another swig. She grabs a nearby plant, vodka'ing it.*)

JORDAN. Oh yeah... this is good.

LEILA. You look like a zombie.

JORDAN. Walking dead of corporate America baby! And I'm breaking out. Right now. So let me enjoy this... (*Leila takes a swig of vodka.*) Stop right there! Don't you dare waste another drop of that. Swallow. (*She sits, her cheeks bloated, shaking her*

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head.) Swallow it! (Again, she shakes her head.) You asked for it. (Jordan pulls Leila to her feet.) Swallow! (Instead, Leila spits it in his face.)

JORDAN. You're batting a thousand with the water thing, huh?

LEILA. I told you I don't drink it, Connor! *(Leila looks at him. He stares at her.)* What?

JORDAN. You uh... you called me Connor.

LEILA. No I didn't.

JORDAN. You did.

LEILA. I think you heard wrong.

JORDAN. Yeah. Yeah maybe I did.

LEILA. You definitely did.

JORDAN. Yup. *(Jordan isn't sure what to do. He shakes it off, swaying to the music again, grabbing Leila by the hand, attempting to get her to move with him.)*

LEILA. Oh no... no I'm not...

JORDAN. Come on. You were pouncing around like a lion earlier. This is nothing.

LEILA. I don't want...

JORDAN. Just feel it. Come on. Feel the music.

LEILA. I hate you.

JORDAN. I know. Come on *(They start dancing... kind of. Eventually, they're close enough where Jordan successfully spins her out and into him as the song transitions in to Lonnie Johnson's 'Flood Water Blues.')* That actually works!

LEILA. Thanks for consulting me first.

JORDAN. I'm totally in control.

LEILA. You better be. *(They continue dancing throughout the room, becoming more and more aggressive and free. They're laughing and getting closer.)* What the hell are we doing?

JORDAN. Dancing.

LEILA. No. I mean, how did this even happen?

JORDAN. It's possible to have a good time with me, you know. *(Jordan starts dancing wildly, losing his balance and knocking over a bunch of potted plants, some shattering)* Shit.

LEILA. It's fine.

JORDAN. I know I'm not supposed to apologize but I'm...

LEILA. It's okay. Really. I'll get a dust pan and broom. Just... could you stop the music?

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JORDAN. Yeah. (*Moves to the record player as Leila begins sweeping.*) I feel like an idiot.

LEILA. We've been through this. You are an idiot.

JORDAN. True as that may be, I still... (*A sudden loud shattering glass can be heard from outside. Then a car alarm. Leila looks out the window.*) Please tell me that's not a black sedan...

LEILA. That is a black sedan.

JORDAN. Dammit!

LEILA. Looks like we're even.

JORDAN. You've got to be shitting me.

LEILA. Did Jacob spring for insurance?

JORDAN. What do you think? (*Jordan rushes out into the rain, tripping and falling.*)

LEILA. Are you okay?

JORDAN. (*Offstage.*) THAT'S A RENTAL YOU LITTLE BASTARDS! (*Leila watches from the door, the muffled sounds of kids yelling, Jordan shouting, and the pouring rain. From the floor, Jordan's cell phone rings. Leila retrieves it and puts it on the coffee table. She goes back to sweeping up the plants and remnants of pottery. The cell phone rings again. She ignores it. It rings for a third time. Frustrated, Leila answers it.*)

LEILA. Jordan can't come to the phone right now, he's berating a twelve year old. (*Beat.*) Yeah. Also, tell big boss man to up his travel expenses, would ya? I mean, ya got this guy recruiting naive little business grads for you after all so... (*Beat.*) Who am I? I'm the head of house-keeping at the motel you stuck him in. How's that? (*Beat.*) New Orleans? Christ, you send him out and you don't even know where he... wait. Who is *this*? (*Beat. She's stunned.*) I'm sorry I... I'm actually... he left his cell phone unattended so I... can I take a message? (*Beat.*) Uh huh. Mhm. (*Long pause and she listens intently.*) Okay. I will let him know. (*Beat. Hangs up.*) Fuck. (*Jordan re-enters with a bicycle wheel.*)

JORDAN. They want to break into my car, I'm making sure they walk home! (*Leila doesn't speak. She goes back to sweeping, clearly distracted by the phone call. Jordan notices his phone on the coffee table. He starts to dial it.*) Sirens up the ass and not a single cop in sight when I need one. If these kids think they're getting away with this they can... (*Looks at his phone.*) Did my phone ring?

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LEILA. Yes.

JORDAN. Did you... answer it?

LEILA. Huh?

JORDAN. Did you answer my phone?

LEILA. I did.

JORDAN. And?

LEILA. And they left a message.

JORDAN. Which was what?

LEILA. All of your stuff has been moved to storage and the lease on your condo is officially voided and... there was one other thing... you're an asshole. That came from her, but I tend to agree.

JORDAN. Look, I...

LEILA. All those phone calls and not a single one from the office. *Cerulean* kicked you out and you have nowhere else to go. That's why you're here.

JORDAN. Why the hell did you answer my phone?

LEILA. Because that's what you do when a phone rings. (*Beat.*) You lied to me. You told me that it was mutual.

JORDAN. I didn't lie. I just... I kept some of the truth from you. (*Beat.*) That sounded much better in my head.

LEILA. You're not even here for recruiting, are you?

JORDAN. I'm staying at a B&B right outside the French Quarter. I've got the keys right here, okay? I also have all my recruiting packages in the trunk of my now damaged rental car. Would you like me to go get them?

LEILA. It's just a little hard for me to believe you when...

JORDAN. I get it, alright? You don't trust me. Great catching up, Lay. Really was. (*Jordan, bicycle wheel still in hand, grabs the rest of his things.*)

LEILA. Where are you going?

JORDAN. You know, maybe a part of me did stop here because I had nowhere else to go. But a part of me... a very big part of me... actually gives a damn about you. I know that's hard to believe but...

LEILA. Coming from you it sort of is.

JORDAN. Well then there ya go. Who really cares, though, right? I mean, you've got your house and your books and your plants. Oh... and Connor. You've got him, too. So I... it's... whatever.

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LEILA. Giving up that easy?

JORDAN. What?

LEILA. I just thought that maybe you'd grown a pair, you know? Maybe even hoped that... and this is a long-shot... maybe leaving me for *her* was actually worth something. But I guess I was wrong. (*After a moment, Jordan dials his phone.*)

JORDAN. Hello? Yes. I'd like to report a robbery in progress.

LEILA. What are you doing?

JORDAN. Of what? Testicles. (*Beat.*) Tes-ti-cles.

LEILA. Jordan... stop.

JORDAN. That's correct. Ball robbery.

LEILA. Hang up. (*Reaches for the phone as it becomes a game.*)

JORDAN. My balls were here one second. And now they're not.

LEILA. Hang up the phone! (*They play tug-of-war with the phone.*)

JORDAN. I think you should send back-up on this one.

LEILA. HANG UP! HANG UP! HANG UP! (*Jordan finally hangs up the phone.*)

JORDAN. How's that for balls?

LEILA. They trace those calls you know.

JORDAN. I didn't really think that far ahead.

LEILA. I hope they take you in.

JORDAN. My car window is busted. So technically there was an attempted robbery.

LEILA. Idiot...

JORDAN. Established. (*Leila is dumfounded. They both break out in laughter. It's the first moment of relief either of them have felt in a while. Leila playfully pushes him, her hand remaining on him for just a bit too long. It stays there. He doesn't stop it. They stare at one another when Leila breaks the gaze.*)

LEILA. You fucking kidding me?

JORDAN. What?

LEILA. You were gonna kiss me.

JORDAN. What?

LEILA. The dancing... the games... you were gonna kiss me.

JORDAN. I wasn't... I thought you were gonna...

LEILA. Kiss you?

JORDAN. Yeah.

LEILA. Why the hell would I kiss you?

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JORDAN. I don't know! Why'd you even bring it up?

LEILA. Because I know you. You strategize everything in these little business meeting-like ways... I can't believe I fell for it.

JORDAN. What are you even talking about?

LEILA. Just because you made a prank call or... or cuz you're homeless or whatever... it doesn't mean I'm going to kiss you, got it?

JORDAN. Yeah. I got it.

LEILA. Good.

JORDAN. Good. *(Silence. They both move for the dust pan and broom, quickly darting as far away from each other as possible. After a moment, Leila goes to the record player, putting on a new record. Victoria Spivey's 'Moaning the Blues' begins to play. Jordan moves to fallen plant and begins cleaning.)* Where's your garbage?

LEILA. Leave it.

JORDAN. What?

LEILA. Leave it. I'll spread everything into the other plants.

JORDAN. Well... do you want me to help?

LEILA. Just leave it...

JORDAN. Okay... *(Stands, not knowing what to do.)* Can I at least...? *(Leila darts to him, kissing him, forcefully. Jordan gives in. Just like their dancing, the kissing becomes more and more aggressive, clothes and inhibitions shedding.)*

JORDAN. Do you have any more records in your room?

LEILA. Yeah.

JORDAN. Can we...?

LEILA. Yes.

JORDAN. One more question...

LEILA. Dammit, Jordan...

JORDAN. You at least have a bed, don't you? *(She answers with another kiss. The music pulsates with moans as Leila and Jordan disappear into the bedroom. Lights fade.)*

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