

BENJAMIN & ABBY *(This side reads for Derek as well)*

(Marilyn has invited Benjamin to visit his mother, Abby. Abby and Benjamin are estranged due to Benjamin's years of drug use and theft.)

BENJAMIN: I didn't realize Marilyn was sick.

ABBY: In the head, you mean? Oh, she's not sick. She's diabolical.

BENJAMIN: She seems so sweet.

ABBY: That's what makes her so diabolical.

(After a moment, Benjamin looks around.)

BENJAMIN: So this is nice. It's a nice place. I would've come to visit sooner, but I had no idea where you were.

ABBY: Well, I wanted to leave a forwarding address, but you were otherwise engaged. *(Beat.)*

BENJAMIN: You look good.

ABBY: I *am* good.

BENJAMIN: Me too. Much better than I was. And I'm working.

Odd jobs mostly. Drywalling and things like that. Nothing big, but it pays the rent. I think you'd be proud.

ABBY: Where are you living?

BENJAMIN: In Freehold. With Zoe.

ABBY: I don't know who that is.

BENJAMIN: No, I know. She's uh . . . pretty great actually. You'd like her.

ABBY: Well I hope it sticks, because if it doesn't work out in Freehold you can't live here. Too many people in this room as it is.

BENJAMIN: I know, Mom.

ABBY: I wanted a private room but there wasn't enough money for that. Actually, I wanted to stay in my own house, but it was hard to make those payments with an empty bank account.

BENJAMIN: Okay, you don't need to –

ABBY: Are you clean, Benjamin? (*Beat.*)

BENJAMIN: Yeah. Almost two years now.

ABBY: Well that's good. If you are in fact clean.

BENJAMIN: I *am*, Mom.

ABBY: Good. That's good. But you'll forgive me for not patting you on the back. If that's what you came for, then you're out of luck.

BENJAMIN: That's not what I came for.

ABBY: No? "I think you'd be proud."

BENJAMIN: Are you not?

ABBY: I was proud, Benny. The first time you got clean. And the second time and the tenth, and after twenty years of you saying you're clean, it gets hard to muster an "Atta boy, kiddo."

BENJAMIN: I bet.

ABBY: But, congrats, you're not sticking needles in your arm.

Neither am I. Neither is anyone else in this building, except maybe the diabetics. And yet nobody's proud of us. Not for being clean. Because, guess what? You *should* be clean. You *should* be.

BENJAMIN You're right.

ABBY: I know I am. (*Pause.*) But you're doing better.

BENJAMIN: Yes. Much.

ABBY: So you'll be able to pay me back then? (*No response.*) So not *that* much better. Can I safely assume you didn't meet this Zoe woman on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange then?

BENJAMIN: No, I didn't meet her on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange.

ABBY: But on *some* kind of floor, I bet.

BENJAMIN: (*Chuckles.*) You just let me know when you're finished getting in your punches.

ABBY: Oh it's gonna be a while I think.

BENJAMIN: Then I should probably sit down.

ABBY: What do you want here, Benny?

BENJAMIN: I don't want anything. Your friend called *me*.

ABBY: She's not my friend.

BENJAMIN: Well, regardless, I'm here. We might as well catch up.

ABBY: Right. I remember how this scene goes. You come to catch up, and the next day I notice that things are missing

BENJAMIN: I'm not gonna take anything.

ABBY: Jewelry, radios, the *change jar*.

BENJAMIN: Jesus. When did you get so mean?

ABBY: Oh it just happened, in dribs and drabs.

BENJAMIN: Because of me?

ABBY: I didn't say that.