Life Cycles
The Reincarnation Play

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ACT ONE

At center stage is a large ring of chairs, the kind of ugly and uncomfortable folding chairs you find at community centers or dull group therapy.

One at a time, the group members enter and take their usual seats, ELSA first. She, as a good group guide, shuffles the chairs around, sets down a small basket of candies—Werther’s, because her taste is like a grandmother’s. She checks the time, and chats casually with the group as they enter.

ELSA is the group “guide,” as she likes to insist. A mid-fifties spiritual healer turned reincarnation specialist after a near-death experience, Elsa ranges from “off her fucking rocker” to “maybe onto something?” In either case, she is well loved, even if her “sage” advice is often spoken over.

VICKI is a tall, blonde, transgender woman. She wears her hair in a plain ponytail and is neat but not overly made up. While waiting for the others to arrive (neither are impatient—everyone else is always nearly late), Vicki and Elsa might discuss Vicki’s upcoming book tour for her debut novel (really, rather a mediocre work, but it’s a lifelong dream fulfilled). Vicki is quiet but attentive, and rather unfazed by some of the odd quirks of those around her.

CLAUDETTE is the very definition of a middle-aged suburban mom, probably drinks kale juice for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, and has a kid named Quaitelynne (pronounced Katelyn). She dresses to match and has a pack of Marlboro reds poking out of her bag (don’t tell her ex-husband, or her beloved son.) Claudette would like you to believe she is exactly as superficial as she appears.

MARIGOLD is in her late twenties, from Brooklyn, wears neat makeup and rather obviously dresses to impress. She’s intense to the point of instigating fear from others—though she sits next to Vicki, the seat to her other side remains empty. Marigold probably hit boys on the playground when she was young (and when she was old enough to know better). Marigold wears an engagement ring.

VERA is an eccentric older woman with dyed hair, three layers of various colored and textured shawls. She finger knits yarn and fidgets in the chair, but everyone knows she’s paying the best attention of anyone here. The group generally treats her like a relative that’s gone a bit funky in the head but who has garnered so much respect no one dares say it out loud.

Finally, EMILY rolls in (fashionably late, to no one’s surprise). She is young enough to be Claudette’s daughter (she isn’t, as she likes to remind Claudette). She plays with a keyring constantly and makes little eye contact. She dresses like the punk she wishes she is.
THE NEWCOMER

ELSA
Now that we have all come together as one beautiful circle, who would like to start us off? Maybe with something positive from the week?

Quiet for a long moment.

CLAUDETTE
Well, I… Like I guess I have something. If no one else does.

ELSA
You know you can always share here.

CLAUDETTE
It’s not like it’s a big deal or whatever.

ELSA
Please, grace us with whatever pains you this week.

CLAUDETTE
It’s not exactly pain—

EMILY
Oh my god, just spill.

CLAUDETTE (clearly building herself up to say something big)
Well, I… I… I… picked Michael up from school today.

VERA (the only one who knows what she’s really saying)
Oh, honey, I’m so sorry.

EMILY
I don’t get it.

(An awkward beat.)

ELSA
So, Claudette… can you say a little more about how you’re feeling about Michael?

MARIGOLD
Oh my gawd, was he sick? Poor kid, probably home now all wrapped up in bed—

CLAUDETTE
He’s not sick.
VICKI
Claudette, I know you know what you mean, but please, please fill the rest of us in.

CLAUDETTE
I picked Michael up from school today.

EMILY
Oh my god.

CLAUDETTE
Because I was home all day. Because I didn’t really... go to work today.

EMILY
And you lost your job. That’s balls.

CLAUDETTE
I’m probably still employed, like it’s fine, it happens. I called out, told them I was taking like one of those mental health days, you know? Like to just take a break, and really take care of myself. My manager’s all about that, I think. Because it’s been like a really hard week. Like, I finished all the divorce papers on Monday, and then all of a sudden, I just couldn’t really get out of bed. You know what I mean, like you’ve probably been there, where you’re definitely not depressed—because I’m not depressed, and no one in my family is, but like—moving is really hard? And the shower is so far away and there’s like so many steps to turning it on, and if you can’t shower, then you can’t like... go to work. Anyway. I called out on Monday and told them Michael was home sick—he wasn’t, and then I called out on Tuesday and told them I caught what Michael had, and yesterday I just like, worked from home, like on my laptop. And then today, like I knew it was going to be hard because Thursdays used to be, like our date night or whatever, but I looked in the mirror and I told myself that I had to get it together. So I took a shower, and I put the papers in the mail to the stupidly expensive lawyer and I made dinner and then I picked Michael up from school.

EMILY
Fuck.

CLAUDETTE
Watch your mouth.

EMILY
I’m watching it!

VERA
Are you feeling more yellow now?

CLAUDETTE
Yellow, I don’t know.
VERA
You look more yellow to me, I could tell as soon as you walked in the door.

CLAUDETTE
Maybe it’s just that I actually showered today.

VICKI
Or, maybe it’s that the divorce has been weighing on you more than you would like to admit.

CLAUDETTE
Yeah, or that.

VICKI
Do you feel relieved? Is this a good thing?

CLAUDETTE
Like, no. I thought I would, you know? Like it’s off my back, it’s sent off, and it’s something I’ve wanted for like, so long. So I should feel good, right?

(The sound of a door opening and closing echoes loudly and stops anyone from responding. The entire room fester in painfully awkward silence as the culprit, SHILOH enters, looking like a deer nose-to-nose with the grill of a car. She stumbles to the one empty chair (beside Marigold). It scrapes loudly across the floor and she sits down suddenly, causing a bit of a clatter.

SHILOH is an extremely plain young woman who does nothing to change the fact that she is plain. She crosses and uncrosses her legs often, fiddles with the edge of her jacket (which she did not take off before sitting down) and looks as if she is about to dart away from the circle.

The room waits. And waits. And waits. The weight of the silence could kill.)

SHILOH
Um… Hi.

ELSA
Oh, well, hello. Hi.

SHILOH
Am I… in the right place?

(This seems to break the silence.)

ELSA
Yes, I’m so sorry, welcome, of course you’re in the right place. Everyone is welcome here, even
if they have never been here before and are a rather unusual candidate. All are welcome to join in the circle.

SHILOH
Okay. Thanks. Is this the reincarnation support group? I saw it advertised.

ELSA
You’re in the right place. I’m so glad you’ve found us.

MARIGOLD
It’s destiny, I’m sure.

SHILOH
Well, I don’t know about destiny.

MARIGOLD
You were fated to be here today, honey.

SHILOH
I don’t really believe in fate—

VICKI
It’s not a problem. We all have our belief systems, you’re fine.

VERA
So, new girl, blue girl…

SHILOH
Blue girl?

VERA
New girl.

SHILOH
Blue…?

CLAUDETTE
It’s her thing, you just nod along.

EMILY
It’s like your weird aunt. You just gotta nod along when she says weird shit—

CLAUDETTE
Shh!

EMILY
because you know she means well, even if it’s not completely clear. That’s how it is with my Aunt Barb. We all nod and act like all is good, but she’s pretty out of it.

VERA
I am much better company than anyone named Barb, and I am certainly in it.

EMILY
That you are, Ma.

SHILOH
She’s your mother?

EMILY
God, we all wish.

SHILOH (Elsa interrupts at the //)
I’m sorry. Am I in the right place? This is not // what I expected.

ELSA (interrupting at the //)
There’s no right place, or wrong place. Only the place you are in.

EMILY
So what’s your deal, new girl?

SHILOH
My name is Shiloh.

EMILY

SHILOH
I’m not shy—

ELSA
What has brought you to join us today?

SHILOH
Well, I’ve been reincarnated.

EMILY
No shit.

SHILOH
This is the reincarnation support group… right?
ELSA
I was right, it was fate.

SHILOH
I just thought this might be the right place to talk about some things that are happening to me.

CLAUDETTE
So like, what’s your story? What do you do? Married, divorced?

EMILY
Single as fuck?

SHILOH
I’m single, but I don’t think that really—

VICKI
Where do you work?

SHILOH
Well, I write the mechanic’s column.

VICKI
Main Line Life or The Voice?

SHILOH
Main Line, but I—

CLAUDETTE
Do you, like, have any kids or anything? Or friends or whatever?

SHILOH
I—no kids, a very normal amount of friends, I don’t see how—

MARIGOLD
Are you madly in love with somebody? I bet they’re // gorgeous.

SHILOH
// I’m a little in love with someone—but—

VERA
And what’s made you so royal purple?

SHILOH
Royal purple, what?

VERA
Royal purple, what other color did you think you would be?

SHILOH
I don’t understand what that means—

EMILY
What’s your thing?

SHILOH
My thing?

EMILY
Do you just repeat everything we say? Why are you here? What’s your thing?

SHILOH
Well, I was reincarnated. Isn’t that why we’re all here?

(The group exchanges an alarmed look, almost in unison.)

SHILOH
This is a support group about reincarnation, right?

(More awkward silence.)

SHILOH
I mean, if I got that wrong, I’ll just go, I didn’t mean to intrude on something else—

ELSA
You’re in the right place. It’s just…

(She looks around, unsure what to say.)

EMILY
We got other stuff to talk about.

MARIGOLD
I’m planning a wedding, and my Andy likes to make me all anxious about it, ya know? So I gotta come in here and talk about him and the wedding and all that jazz. But I’m really excited about it. I’m really excited about it.

SHILOH
But… so you don’t talk about reincarnation at all?

VICKI
We do when it’s relevant.
SHILOH
But I need help.

(The group exchanges another look.)

CLAUDETTE
Well, what’s your story? Like, why do you need help with the reincarnation part of it all?

SHILOH
Should I just… go for it?

EMILY
Nah, you should let us sit in silence.

SHILOH
Okay, so… A person who looks like my twin died in San Francisco on my birthday.

(A beat.)

EMILY
That all you got?

SHILOH
No, no. I didn’t know about him before I started having all these weird memories and things where I’d see this guy who I didn’t know but I knew, if you know what I mean. Maybe you know what I mean. He was like a long lost brother or something, but I definitely knew him. Except I’d only ever seen him when I was sleeping or in daydreams, and I thought maybe I was making it up.

VICKI
You can’t make up a face when you dream, every face you see is one you have seen before, even in passing.

SHILOH
Right, right, that’s why it was so weird. I’d never seen this guy before but we have the same nose, the same face, the same smile, the same laugh—it was weird. And then I started knowing this name and it would cycle over and over in my head: Joel Weiss. Joel Weiss. Joel Weiss. Joel Weiss. Like a heartbeat, but it wasn’t coming from me. It wasn’t my voice. I thought I was going crazy, so I googled him and this guy died on my birthday, at the exact minute I was born.

CLAUDETTE
 Couldn’t it be a coincidence?

SHILOH
Maybe, except we look identical, and I know that he had a cat when he was little named Romeo and he started working as a mechanic because he couldn’t afford to fix his car, and his first kiss was a girl named Regina and none of that is in his obituary.

MARIGOLD
How do ya know it’s true at all?

SHILOH
I wrote a letter to his mother. She’s still alive, because he died a week before his twenty-sixth birthday.

VICKI
How old are you?

SHILOH
Twenty-five. My birthday is in two weeks.
A LOVE STORY?

(The following lines are delivered overlapping, in a rush of WTF)

EMILY
Oh, shit.

VERA
You must be so frightened.

SHILOH
Well, I—

MARIGOLD
I don’t get it.

CLAUDETTE
She’s going to, like, die or something. Right?

SHILOH
I hope not—

VERA
Darling, you must feel so dark green!

EMILY
She’s not going to die.

CLAUDETTE
I didn’t mean for it to come out like that—

SHILOH
Can you slow down—

MARIGOLD
How tragic!

ELSA (quietly)
Could we come back together as one circle, as a team?

VICKI (louder)
Could you all stop shouting for five minutes and let the girl breathe?
(Quiet.)

MARIGOLD
Honey, you were just right to come here. It makes sense that you were all scared ‘bout all this.

SHILOH
That’s not exactly why I came. I’m not finished—

CLAUDETTE
Dying’s a really normal thing to be scared about, like most people are afraid of dying.

SHILOH
I’m not—

CLAUDETTE
If we weren’t scared about the end and all that, we wouldn’t be afraid of getting hurt, and that’s really important.

VERA
You might be young and blue and nowhere near the end, but feeling green is—

SHILOH (loudly)
I’m not afraid of dying.

(beat.)

ELSA
This might be beyond my expertise.

SHILOH
No, I’m not… suicidal or anything. It’s just… It’s not the end that scares me, I’m in love.

MARIGOLD
She’s in love! And she’s dying! Oh, it’s so romantic.

EMILY
What’s romantic about that?

MARIGOLD
It’s star-crossed lovers! Honey, it’s so beautiful. Oh my god. She’s in love!
SHILOH
I’ve never said that out loud before.

MARIGOLD
Isn’t it just a wonderful feeling, darling? Oh my god. I love love.

A beat.

MARIGOLD
So, who is he? Is he handsome? Is he smart? Is he good to you, ‘cause honey if not, we’ll get rid of him for you.

SHILOH
I’m in love. I’m in love!

MARIGOLD
Isn’t it beautiful how the threat of death can bring ya such emotion?

SHILOH
No—I— I don’t know her.

MARIGOLD
Her?

SHILOH
I’ve never said this out loud before.

EMILY
That you’re gay? ‘Cause I got that impression the second you walked in.

SHILOH
I’ve said that before.

EMILY
Too cool to say you’re in love?

SHILOH
I haven’t met her.

MARIGOLD
Ooooooooooohhhhhhh. Now it’s getting good. You fell in love at first sight and had to wait until you were a week away from death to let ‘em know!
SHILOH
Well, I’ve met her, but I haven’t.

MARIGOLD
I can see it now! You approach and she saves you from death at the last second so you can spend the rest of your lives together!

SHILOH
It’s not really like that.

MARIGOLD
And then—

VICKI
Let her breathe!

ELSA
Yes, yes, of course, dear sweet new girl—what was your name? – oh, no matter. You have experienced the greatest feeling of any emotion: LOVE—

CLAUDETTE snorts.

ELSA
Love, which binds us all together, which makes us one cohesive human experience, which allows us to feel compassionate, empathetic, LOVE!

SHILOH
She doesn’t know I exist.

EMILY
Shit. Well, that’s step one.

SHILOH
I don’t even know how to approach it.

VICKI
Who is she?

SHILOH
Joel Weiss’ wife.
EMILY
Joel Weiss, your past life?

SHILOH
The very same.

MARIGOLD
You’re in love with a widow? That’s kind of kinky.

SHILOH
Is she a widow if I’m alive?

EMILY
Fuck, dude.

SHILOH
Well, she doesn’t know I’m alive.

CLAUDETTE
That sounds made up. How old is she now, like fifty? Double your age?

SHILOH
Double my age exactly.

CLAUDETTE
So you’re fantasizing about a fifty year old woman in your head?

SHILOH
No, no. I wouldn’t fantasize about someone I’ve never met—

MARIGOLD
I would. I do—

SHILOH
And mostly I remember her when she was younger. My age.

CLAUDETTE
Is she like a real person, or just in your head?

SHILOH
Angeline Weiss. She kept her married name.
(EMILY whips out a phone and starts googling.)

CLAUDETTE
How did you even find her?

SHILOH
Just, some searching. Normal searching.

CLAUDETTE
This just sounds like a coincidence, like maybe you shouldn’t be worked up about it. Just like, make it through the next two weeks, celebrate your birthday and like, move on with your life.

SHILOH
But it’s real. She’s alive. I-I’m pretty sure of it, at least. It all makes sense, it all adds up.

EMILY
“Angeline Weiss, Professor of American History at UPENN, recently won an award for her new book, The Great American Prophecy // Political Cycles of the Past and What Happens Next...”

SHILOH
// Political Cycles of the Past and What Happens Next.

EMILY
She’s been a professor at UPENN for a long fucking time, got her doctorate from – fuck—from the University of San Francisco in 1994. How bout that for a coincidence?

SHILOH
At some point it’s got to stop being just coincidence.

EMILY
She’s what, fifty? A tenured professor, publishing like mad—oh, shit, she’s here. “Joel Weiss is survived by wife of two years, Angeline Weiss, a San Francisco native.” Damn, new girl.

CLAUDETTTE
You coulda just read that yourself or whatever. That’s not legit evidence.

SHILOH
Except I didn’t read it before, that was published when I was an infant. There’s no way I would have even known to look for it.

EMILY
She’s engaged.
SHILOH
Yeah.

EMILY
Shit.

SHILOH
I guess twenty-five years is long enough to move on.

EMILY
Shit.

VICKI (interrupting EMILY)
Let me get this straight. You’re in love with someone you’ve never met, who happens to be basically old enough to be your mother and who has no idea that you even exist, let alone are the reincarnation of her dead husband.

SHILOH
Well. Yeah.

VICKI
And you know all of this because of some feelings you have had, some weird images popping up in your head.

SHILOH
It’s a little more than that.

VICKI
And you expect us to think that you’re not completely off your rocker—maybe dealing with
some kind of Freudian mess—or maybe just scared to be getting older, all of this isn’t supposed to make us concerned for your mental wellbeing?

SHILOH
This is a reincarnation support group.

(A beat.)

SHILOH
I don’t know where else to go.

(A beat.)

SHILOH
Maybe it is all in my head. If you think I haven’t thought of that, you must think I’m stupid, or gullible. If you think I haven’t spent just as long doubting every little thing in my head—fuck, I don’t even believe in god! If you think I’m anything but at the end of my rope, anything but completely desperate, then I don’t know what to tell you. Now I don’t know if any of this is true, but it’s getting worse and it’s taking over my life and somehow my body is convinced it’s going to die in a week, so if that’s true then I might as well go and talk this woman. If it’s true, then at least I got to talk to her before I died again, and if it’s not, then there’s another person who thinks I’m completely crazy. At least I have an answer. At least I have something. The way things are right now doesn’t work. I can’t eat, I can’t sleep, I can’t work, I can’t even think. I’ve lost… I’ve lost so much time over this. I’ve lost so much. I feel lovesick, love-stupid, like everything in my life is revolving more and more around her and if I don’t talk to her, if I’m not with her, it’s like resisting gravity.

(A long pause.)

EMILY
Fuck, dude.

SHILOH
I haven’t been sleeping, because it feels like the bed is too small, too cold. I was dating this girl I really liked, but… she was sure I was cheating because I kept saying ‘Angeline’ in bed and — how did she say it? I look at her like I’m trying to figure out why her face isn’t the one I’m in love with.

(A beat. No one speaks.)
SHILOH
I’m sorry I’m talking so much. I didn’t even know I had so much in my head, I’ve just—I’ve never said any of this out loud.

VERA
Stop apologizing, blue girl.

SHILOH
Blue…?

VERA
We’re going to help you.

EMILY
Oh are we?

CLAUDETTE
Hush. It’s the right thing to do.

MARIGOLD
It’s such a beautiful love story.

SHILOH
How do I talk to her? Should I?

ELSA
I dislike saying no, but—

EMILY
Then don’t. We’ve finally got a real problem!

MARIGOLD
I have real problems—
THE DECISION

VICKI
Look, this sounds nice and all, but why should we believe it?

VERA
Why ever not?

MARIGOLD *(nodding to Vicky)*
This is just about the most exciting thing that’s happened here since you came out.

ELSA
I agree. This group is for support and care, but we must remain focused and not care too much about one singular group member’s rather odd situation.

SHILOH
This is a reincarnation group! It’s supposed to be odd!

ELSA
But not this odd.

EMILY
Look, we can sit around gossiping like old farts—

VERA
Now, don’t be yellow, young lady.

EMILY
—Or we can actually help someone.

VICKI
I just don’t, believe it. Reincarnation… honey, it’s a nice idea.

SHILOH
Reincarnation. Support. Group??

VICKI
Yes, but…

*(She exchanges a look.)*

VICKI
It’s not like it’s real.

ELSA
Reality is a relative term, really, we all make our own realities each and every day that we’re alive.

**VICKI**
But there’s no scientific evidence for it. Nothing that would make it anywhere near factual, and in fact it makes little actual sense.

**CLAUDETTE**
Yeah, but, like, why not?

**VERA**
Love is patient, love is red, love is all around us and unknowable.

**VICKI**
That doesn’t mean anything—

**EMILY**
No, she’s onto something.

**MARIGOLD**
Even if I can’t define how I feel when I look in my Andy’s eyes, I know it in my heart.

**VICKI**
You have some barely legitimate evidence that doesn’t prove anything. There’s no good reason we should believe you at all.

**EMILY**
That’s not fair—

**SHILOH**
You’re right.

*(A beat.)*

**SHILOH**
You’re right. You have no reason to believe me. I have no reason to believe me. I’ll go.

**EMILY**
Wait—

**SHILOH**
No, it’s fine. I thought I had found a group of like-minded people who could help me, but clearly I was wrong. I’ll go.

**MARIGOLD**
Honey, we can—
SHILOH
Thank you for your time.

(She stands, straightening the jacket she still hasn’t taken off and shoves the chair back, exiting the circle and awkwardly knocking against the chair. The group exchanges an alarmed glance. A beat.)

VERA
Well that’s rather chartreuse.

VICKI
Good riddance.

CLAUDETTE
That was maybe the most exciting thing that’s ever happened.

(Another beat. Shiloh’s almost out the door.)

EMILY
Goddamn it, I don’t know about you all but I want to know how this story ends.

(She stands, waiting a moment to see if anyone will stop her. MARIGOLD stands with her. They rush off after SHILOH.)

(overlapping:  )

MARIGOLD
Shiloh!

EMILY
Yo, new girl!

VICKI
We’re wasting our time—

CLAUDETTE
Would you shut up?

(VICKI sputters)

CLAUDETTE
I get this is all, like, unusual or whatever, but I’m kind of bored of talking about what color Marigold’s bridesmaid dresses are going to be.

VICKI
I just don’t see any evidence—
CLAUDETTE
Then forget the evidence.

VERA
The new girl is blue, after all.

CLAUDETTE
See? If the new girl can be blue, you can, like, sit down and try to help her, or whatever.

VICKI
Fine.

ELSA
And you really ought to be kind about it. Every new circle, when welcoming someone new, ought to open themselves up first in order to be truly opened.

VICKI
I’ll be open.

CLAUDETTE
Even if it’s fake, it’ll be a great story to tell your boyfriend, won’t it?

VICKI
I suppose that’s true.

VERA
I would call you a green-old-grump, but you’re far pinker than I am.

VICKI
Thank you?

(MARIGOLD and EMILY re-enter, SHILOH between them, looking a bit like she’s been coerced back in the room.)

EMILY
We have decided.

VICKI
Oh have we?

EMILY
Yes, we’ve made a democratic decision.

CLAUDETTE
Doesn’t that mean we all get a vote?
EMILY
Not in this democracy.

SHILOH
I don’t think that’s a democracy.

EMILY
Alright then, we’ve made an oligarchic, monarchical, tyrannical, whatever-you-wanna-call-it decision.

VICKI
Have you?

EMILY
We are going to be wing-women.

VICKI
We’re what?

EMILY
*Wing-women.* We’re going to get Shiloh here and her wife-to-be to hook up.

SHILOH
I don’t know about hook up.

EMILY
Do the dirty.

SHILOH
I don’t think—

EMILY
Whatever. *Talk* to each other.

MARIGOLD
Besides, I know I’m just dyin’ to find out if it’s all true.

SHILOH
I’m not lying—

MARIGOLD
No, honey, I don’t think you are.

VICKI
Just crazy.
VERA
We’re all a little fuchsia in the face from time to time.

ELSA
Crazy is an othering word. We all experience things at different levels of reality. You don’t need to be crazy to be wrong, or right, or anything in between.

SHILOH
Was I supposed to understand that?

EMILY
No, sit.

(SHILOH sits, Marigold again to one side.)

MARIGOLD
So. What are your goals for therapy?

ELSA
Not therapy—

MARIGOLD
What do you want outta all this?

(A beat.)

SHILOH
Should I talk to her? What do I say? What do I do if she thinks I’m completely crazy? What do I do if she thinks I’m not crazy? What if I am… crazy? What if I’m not, and I only have a week left? What if this it? What if I die again and have to try again? What if—

EMILY
Woah. Reasonable goals, we’ve only got one session this week.

SHILOH
You’re right. Damn. Okay.

MARIGOLD
We know you’ve gotta talk to her.

SHILOH
Yes. I think so. Yes.

EMILY
So how about: what do I say to her to make her think I’m not completely crazy?
SHILOH
What do I say to her to make her think I’m not completely crazy and maybe hear out my story and maybe tell me if she remembers me?

EMILY
That’s a good question.

VICKI
What’s your plan?

SHILOH
Uh.

VICKI
You have no idea?

SHILOH
I’ve never even said any of this out loud before.

EMILY
Well, she's a professor, right?

SHILOH
Yes. Yes, so I could go to UPENN.

VICKI
Convenient, that it’s so close.

SHILOH
Or maybe the universe was looking out for me.

VICKI
Maybe.

EMILY
Well, all my profs have office hours.

MARIGOLD
You could bring her flowers to office hours!

CLAUDETTE
Or you could, like, not do that. That would scare anybody.

MARIGOLD
You could bring her chocolate to office hours.
CLAUDETTE
What if you start with a conversation?

SHILOH
A conversation?

EMILY
Just… talk to each other.

SHILOH
I could have a conversation.

EMILY
Oh good.

MARIGOLD
With one flower?

EMILY
Maybe as a back-up.

SHILOH
But… I don’t even know when her office hours are. Maybe she’s on sabbatical. Maybe she doesn’t have office hours.

EMILY
I wanted to be a detective when I was little. Bet I can do it ten minutes or less.

VICKI
Bet you ten you can’t.

EMILY
Well now I definitely have to.

(She whips out her phone and begins typing quickly.)

VICKI
I’m counting seconds.

EMILY
Whatever. Alright, the hours aren’t on the UPENN website…

SHILOH
I did check that. I wasn’t entirely lost, just…
EMILY
Bradley Chance is a senior history major. Bet he’s in one of her classes if I just…

MARIGOLD
Did you just add him on facebook?

EMILY
What of it?

MARIGOLD
That’s a little weird, y’know?

EMILY
We have a problem and a solution. I’ll do whatever it takes.

SHILOH
But even if we can figure out when she’s in her office, I have no clue what to say.

VICKI
“Hi, I’m a nut who thinks I’m your wife.”

EMILY
Not that.

MARIGOLD (dramatically)
“Hello, lover. I have arrived, finally, to take my rightful place as your soulmate.”

EMILY
Definitely not that.

ELSA
Being honest and straightforward with our feelings is the only true path to deep and intimate communication. You should open your heart to her and share all you have to give.

EMILY
And that will absolutely scare her off. I’d just start with ‘hi.’

SHILOH
And then what?

EMILY
You know what? We’re going to roleplay.

SHILOH
We’re going to what?
EMILY
Roleplay.

SHILOH
Uh.

EMILY
Come on, it’s nothing kinky. Go, move those chairs.

(The room erupts into a flurry of movement. ELSA drags her feet in helping, but then jumps it like it was her idea all along. VICKI, grumbling, helps. VERA remains seated, and the others respectfully arrange the chairs around her. When all is said and done, there is a semi-circle and two chairs facing each other.

EMILY grabs VICKI’s sleeve.)

VICKI
What?

EMILY
You’re going to play the professor.

VICKI
No way, why me?

EMILY
One, you’re a heartthrob, and two, new girl needs to be prepared for a tough subject.

VICKI
Ugh.

(She plops into the ‘professor’ chair and assumes a haughty professor type.)

EMILY
Now, Shiloh, sit.

(She sits.)

SHILOH
Now what?

EMILY
Go for it. I’ll jump in only when needed.

SHILOH
Uh, hi—
EMILY
Too uncertain.

SHILOH
Hello.

EMILY
Much better.

SHILOH
Could we just try it a little first?

*(EMILY, huffily, sits down beside Marigold, who is watching with rapt excitement.)*
IMAGINE ME & YOU

(Shiloh and Vicki exchange a glance during an awkward beat.)

SHILOH
So. Uh. Hi.

VICKI
Hi.

SHILOH
Well, I’m…

VICKI
Are you one of my students? – is that what a professor would say? I never went to office hours.

SHILOH
I think so, I don’t know. I don’t know.

EMILY (whispered)
Stay in character!

SHILOH
I’m playing myself.

EMILY
Shhh.

SHILOH
Alright, alright. Uh. No, Professor Weiss, I’m not your student.

VICKI
Look, you can’t audit my class, it’s full. Sorry.

SHILOH
No, I—I’m here for personal reasons.

VICKI
Oh, personal reasons?

EMILY
God, no, no just stop there.
VICKI
What did I do wrong?

EMILY
That’s not how professors talk.

MARIGOLD
That’s not too far from how all of my profs talked.

EMILY
Well, let’s try again anyways.

VICKI
Hi, welcome… to my office hours…uh.

SHILOH
Hi. Thank you for letting me come to your office hours.

CLAUDETTE
You don’t have to thank her for letting you come to office hours.

SHILOH (huffily)
Okay, fine. Hi.

VICKI
How can I… help… you? – is that better?

SHILOH
Well, I have a personal question. Or two. Or more than two.

CLAUDETTE
This is, like pretty horrible.

SHILOH
God, I shouldn’t talk to her at all, should I?

CLAUDETTE
No, come on. Vicki, just—you know what, just like, switch with me.

EMILY
I can do it.
CLAUDETTE
You can have a turn in a minute.

EMILY
Always have to butt your nose in when it’s not welcome.

SHILOH
I mean, if you can help—

EMILY
Whatever.

(VICKI happily gives the seat over to Claudette, who plops down and crosses her legs primly, embodying a snooty professor type.)

SHILOH
What do I do?

CLAUDETTE
Hello, student, and welcome to my office hours. What can I do for you today?

EMILY
‘Sounds like Elsa.

ELSA
I would be a wonderful professor if that was the right profession for me.

CLAUDETTE
Hello, student—

SHILOH
Hi.

(She cuts CLAUDETTE off and sticks out a hand.)

CLAUDETTE (aside, out of “character”) Good, pushy, I like it.

CLAUDETTE
So… like,

SHILOH
I’m your wife. Your husband. Well, I suppose now—

CLAUDETTE
What?
SHILOH
What I mean to say is that we were married. Once.

CLAUDETTE
Who the – heck – are you?

SHILOH
Well, I’m… my name is Shiloh—

CLAUDETTE
Are you one of my students? Is this like, some prank?

SHILOH
No, I—

CLAUDETTE
Because that would be like, pretty messed up.

SHILOH
I’m not!

CLAUDETTE
Coming here all like “I’m your wife.” Shiloh, whatever your name is, whatever your game is, I am not even, like, a lesbian or whatever the word the kids use for it. Besides, I don’t date students.

SHILOH
I’m not a student.

CLAUDETTE
How did you even get in here?

SHILOH
I walked.

CLAUDETTE
Yeah, like, alright.

(She turns and mimes dialing a phone.)

SHILOH (halfway out of the scene)
What are you doing?
CLAUDETTE
What do you think I’m doing? (to the “phone”) Yes, hi, campus security, please come down, like right away.

(End the “scene.” Claudette slouches out of her prim professor look and grins at the room.)

CLAUDETTE
How did I do?

EMILY
Better than Vicki.

SHILOH
Hopeless.

CLAUDETTE
I don’t think—

SHILOH
Not you, me.

CLAUDETTE
Well, yeah, like it’s pretty hopeless looking right now.

SHILOH
Fuck.

EMILY
She said right now.

VICKI
You’ve got four minutes left, Emily.

(EMILY looks at her phone)

EMILY
Whatever. He’ll accept my friend request—

MARIGOLD
From a stranger…?

EMILY
—and we’ll be fuckin’ golden.

SHILOH
This is not going to work.

    EMILY
    It’s definitely going to work.

    SHILOH
    I shouldn’t even bother. I don’t know why I bother. I’m better off just letting the next two
    weeks pass and chalk all this up to being completely off-my-rocker crazy—

    MARIGOLD
    Woah. I know that panic voice, honey, you gotta take a deep breath. Shiloh, honey, you’ve got
    a beautiful love story. We just have to figure out how to tell it.

    VERA
    Well said. And Claudette, if this person loved Shiloh—or Joel—like Shiloh seems to, she is
    probably red over heels, blue eyes and gold over her. Or him.

    SHILOH
    Red over heels?

    EMILY
    Crazy about you too.

    SHILOH
    This is stupid. I feel stupid.

    ELSA
    We all feel stupid sometimes, this is a natural part of life. What matters most is what we do with
    that feeling. We can let it dominate our lives, or we can make concrete changes to be present
    and welcome new people into our lives.

    EMILY
    In short, you might be gone in a week anyway, so YOLO.

    SHILOH
    YOLO?

    EMILY
    Well, you might live again. But you’re fucked if you do because she’ll be gone or really wrinkly
    by then, and if you don’t then you’re definitely fucked.

    VICKI
    That’s one way to put it.

    EMILY
    I’m not wrong. You said it yourself, worst case she thinks you’re crazy. Best case, you’re right.
MARIGOLD
I wanna be the professor this time.

CLAUDETTE
I was a perfectly good professor.

VICKI
I don’t think I want to know what kind of traumas you experienced in college to try to show that sort of professor. That was just mean, Claudette.

(CLAUDETTE, huffily, rescinds the professor chair. MARIGOLD pulls some brightly colored papers out of her bag and excitedly rushes over and plops down into the chair.)

MARIGOLD
I’m ready.

EMILY
Alright, I’m going to come and coach you this time.

SHILOH
I don’t know about all this.

MARIGOLD
You should exit and come back in. Make it feel real.

SHILOH
I don’t know—

EMILY
Yes, good plan.

(EMILY pushes Shiloh towards the door. Shiloh, stumbling slightly, exits the circle. MARIGOLD begins “grading” papers in earnest, her pink frilly pen an odd image for the resolutely academic expression she attempts to embody.)
ANOTHER LIFE

(SHILOH re-enters the room, faking confidence and seemingly determined to get this right. She mutters something to herself as she enters, and only hesitates when she is a foot away from the chair across from MARIGOLD. MARIGOLD continues to grade papers, fluffy pink pen darting back and forth across the page. She might even mutter aloud to herself “James, you idiot, it’s clearly 1974, not 1973” because Marigold was, of course, a method actor in her college years. Shiloh pauses outside the “door.”)

SHILOH
Knock, knock.

MARIGOLD (uninterested)
Come in.

SHILOH
Hello, Professor Weiss.

MARIGOLD (still not looking up)
Sit, sit. You know where the coats go, yeah?

(SHILOH, a little taken aback, finally takes off the awkward tan coat. It slumps over the back of the chair revealing a neat, modest outfit, lacking eccentricity or bright colors.)

MARIGOLD
How can I help you…?

SHILOH
Shiloh Stevenson.

MARIGOLD
Miss Stevenson. (beat, finally looks up from the grading) Which of my classes are you in? I don’t remember that name on my roster.

SHILOH
Well, I’m not yet in one of your courses.

MARIGOLD
Then maybe you could come back next semester. It’s a bit late to add you in, I think.
SHILOH
I’m… I’m actually here on more of a personal matter.

MARIGOLD
What kinda personal matter? Maybe the Counseling Center—

SHILOH
I—Well—Professor Weiss, I know about your husband.

MARIGOLD
My husband?!

EMILY
Wait, pause, pause. Shiloh, too fast, too much. You can’t scare her away before she hears you out.

SHILOH
You’re right. Damn it. What should I say?

CLAUDETTE
Something not creepy.

VICKI
Lead with something else, anything else. Maybe just get her attention or something.

SHILOH
Okay. Okay.

EMILY
Okay?

SHILOH
Do I need to start from the beginning?

EMILY
Go from where you are. Marigold, your line.

MARIGOLD (assuming her role again)
What kinda personal matter? Maybe the Counseling Center would be better for you.

SHILOH
It’s a… a bit of an academic survey I’m doing.
MARIGOLD
I don’t really have the time right now.

SHILOH
Please. Please, it will only take a few minutes, I swear.

MARIGOLD
Look, I’m glad you’re excited—

SHILOH
I need a history professor’s opinion! It’s for a grade. I’m sorry for interrupting you.

(A phone dings, but Shiloh and Marigold are entranced in their “scene.”)

MARIGOLD
How long will it take?

SHILOH
Five minutes. Tops. You can cut me off if it takes long than that.

(Marigold looks at her watch (she’s not wearing a watch) and nods once.)

MARIGOLD
Shoot.

SHILOH
Do you believe in reincarnation?

MARIGOLD
I might.

(EMILY is no longer watching the scene intently, instead, is staring at her phone, typing furiously.)

SHILOH
As a historian, do you feel there is evidence for reincarnation?

MARIGOLD
As a historian? Girl, I don’t know.

VICKI (hushed)
Stay in character!

    MARIGOLD
Uh… yes. Uh huh, yes, as a historian, I do indeed, uh, believe in reincarnation.

    SHILOH
You think it might be plausible?

    MARIGOLD
Yes, I think so.

    SHILOH
So if someone were to report to you that they were reincarnated… you might believe them?

    EMILY (loudly)
Oh, shit yes!

(Everyone turns to the interruption. EMILY does not notice for a moment.)

    EMILY
Shit, what day is it? This is today. Shit this is today.

    VICKI
Your time’s up anyway.

    EMILY
No, I have it. I have it!

    VICKI
No way.

    EMILY
Yes way.

    VICKI
How did you even…?

    EMILY
Bradley Chance accepted my friend request.

    VICKI
And?
EMILY
And I sent him a very sweet message: “hey, brady—that’s what his friends call him on his facebook timeline—I’m in Weiss’ history class and I majorly bombed the last thing for her—because I don’t know if there was an exam or a paper but either way, there’s got to be something—what are her office hours again?”

(Showing the phone to the group.)

SHILOH
That’s brilliant.

EMILY
I know.

MARIGOLD
Damn. That’s impressive.

VICKI
I suppose.

EMILY
So we’re going now.

SHILOH
What?

EMILY
We have forty-five minutes before office hours end, Claudette’s got a minivan with room for seven—thanks soccer mom—and you’ve got a week left to live.

VICKI
We don’t know if she actually has a week—

EMILY
It’s a fuckin’ adventure. And… according to Waze, it’s only twenty-five minutes. Leaving twenty minutes for pure seduction.

MARIGOLD
This is so romantic!

SHILOH
I don’t know about this—

    EMILY
Well I do, so let’s go.

    VICKI
She’s going to end up arrested.

    CLAUDETTE
Or worse, heartbroken.

    ELSA
I am not sure this an appropriate use of our group time.

    EMILY
Let’s take a vote. All in favor of following a beautiful love story to its end and connecting two soulemates separated by time and making the world a more wonderful place, raise your hand.

    (EMILY puts two hands in the air. MARIGOLD also sticks a hand up, then VERA cautiously joins. CLAUDETTE, sighing, puts her hand up.)

    CLAUDETTE
Why not? This will be, like, an adventure or whatever.

    (SHILOH looks around the circle.)

    SHILOH
I guess…I can’t live without knowing.

    (SHILOH puts her hand up. ELSA looks at her, then around the group, and finally raises her own hand.)

    ELSA
If the goal is really to support each other, and this is the best form of support for your troubles… I am ethically obligated to help you gain spiritual enlightenment in this way.

    SHILOH
Thank you?

    CLAUDETTE
C’mon, Vicki. Don’t be a grump.
VICKI
I’m not a grump. Fine.

(She begrudgingly puts a hand up.)

VICKI
I still think you’re crazy, and I don’t think talking to her is a good idea, but damned if I’m going to be left here while you all go off on an adventure.

EMILY
Yes! Yes! Okay, let’s go!

(She dashes out of her seat, hauling Shiloh up by the hand.)

VERA
This has turned to a rather greeny-blue day after all.

(The group leaves the chairs behind, led by CLAUDETTE, who pulls a brightly-colored keyring out of her bag, and EMILY, who drags Shiloh behind her as Shiloh tugs the bulky tan jacket back on.)
ACT TWO

ANGELINE WEISS

Angeline Weiss’ office is an absolute mess. Two comfortable chairs sit close to the desk—or there’s probably a desk under there. No one has seen it in under least three years’ worth of low-scoring essays, article ideas, manuscript drafts, and—is that a coffee cup or an animal? There is also a rather lumpy two-seater couch in the corner between two overflowing bookshelves. The space feels smaller than it is because of so many precarious stacks of books against each wall. A door divides The Office from the other half of the stage.

ANGELINE sits at the desk, wearing a pair of reading glasses. She is, like Shiloh, rather plain-looking. She is dressed neatly if eccentrically, as if she got dressed in a rush (she did) and perhaps could have done with a second glance in the mirror. She isn’t too over-the-top, but if one were to look close, she would notice mismatched socks, a messy bun, and a stain on the collar of her shirt. Angeline is rather erratic. She picks up a book, sets it down, picks up a paper, sets it down, then returns to the book to find her lost page, then sifts through a stack of papers hanging on the edge of the desk and scribbles herself a note.

After a few moments of Angeline’s shuffling, the Support Group enters.

A loud thunk reveals SHILOH being shoved on stage. She skitters forward and ends nearly nose-to-nose with Angeline’s door. The culprit, EMILY is close behind, aided by MARIGOLD. CLAUDETTE, keeping a close eye on VICKI enters next. Finally, ELSA helps VERA onstage. VERA sits in a chair usually reserved for students just outside Angeline’s office.

SHILOH
Oh god. Oh god. Take me back.

(Shi洛 tries to exit. EMILY and MARIGOLD catch her easily.)

SHILOH
Uh-uh. This isn’t happening. I can’t do it.

MARIGOLD
Honey, it’s true love.
SHILOH
Nope, I’m crazy.

CLAUDETTE
We didn’t drive all the way over here for nothing, like, c’mon. Get in there and, like, make us proud. That’s what works on my son.

SHILOH
Nope, this is definitely worse than not doing anything—

VICKI
Even I think you should do it.

SHILOH
Oh my god—

EMILY
New girl!

SHILOH
--my god—

EMILY
Get it together!

(SHILOH, startled, pauses.)

EMILY
Close your mouth, stop waffling, and go and get your girl!

(EMILY, sensing an opportunity, spins SHILOH around and pushes her boldly at the door. CLAUDETTE, a conspirator, opens it, and EMILY shoves SHILOH inside, slamming the door closed behind her.

ANGELINE does not look up, nor does she look phased by the commotion.)

ANGELINE
Come on in, take a seat.

EMILY
Go, new girl!
ANGELINE
You’ve certainly waited ‘till the last minute of my hours.

SHILOH
Uh.

ANGELINE
What is it?

(SHILOH still has not moved from her spot just inside the door. She’s awestruck, falling head over heels, love at first second sight kind of in awe.

ANGELINE, annoyed, finally looks up. She takes off her reading glasses, stashing them in a shirt pocket which she’ll soon forget.)

ANGELINE
You good?

SHILOH
Hungdayou.

ANGELINE
Was that English?

(ANGELINE stands up, concerned, and knocks a giant stack of papers off the side of her desk and onto the ground.)

ANGELINE
Shitdamn.

(SHILOH, snapped out of it by a distant memory brought suddenly forward, rushes forward to help pick up the papers. ANGELINE bends to help, and they are suddenly very close. SHILOH stares at the papers.)

SHILOH
Sorry. Sorry, I, uh… have low blood sugar. Sometimes. I got a little dizzy.

ANGELINE
Thank you, here.

(She takes the papers from Shiloh and catches her eye. There’s something oddly familiar about Shiloh that she can’t quite place.)
ANGELINE
Well, pull up a chair if you’re dizzy.

(SHILOH begins to sit down on one of the chairs, on top of some papers.)

ANGELINE
Wait!

(SHILOH stands quickly, anxiously. ANGELINE pulls a few papers out from behind her and sticks them back on the still-teetering pile.)

ANGELINE
There. Now we can get you sorted. What is it?

SHILOH
I just had a few questions.

ANGELINE
Right. Which of my classes are you in again? The history 103, 105—is it 102? No, it can’t be. Whatever, the big one on American History, right?

(ANGELINE is sifting through papers again, not paying total attention.)

SHILOH
Well—

ANGELINE
And… hmm.. I don’t remember you being one of the really bad exams. I remember the F’s quite well, let me tell you. You didn’t get an F, right? I’m usually better at keeping track of names, sweetheart, I’m sorry yours just hasn’t stuck yet.

SHILOH
It’s Shiloh. Shiloh Stevenson.

ANGELINE
Mmm, yes, yeah, I’m sure I’ve seen your name on that roster.

SHILOH
I’m not—

ANGELINE
You know, a C or even a D really isn’t that bad for the first exam of the semester. Are you a Freshman?

CLAUDETTE
She doesn’t, like, look like a freshman, does she?

SHILOH
No. Sir. Professor. Ma’am.

EMILY
I don’t know, she’s kind of young looking.

VICKI
You’re young looking.

EMILY
Shut up.

ANGELINE
God, I’m not that old, am I? Just Professor is fine, none of that ma’am crap.

SHILOH
Not old. Definitely not old. You look very young actually—

ANGELINE
Flattery won’t up your grade.

SHILOH
That’s not what I was trying to do!

ANGELINE
You know, I see it all the time. Sweetheart, you’re very bright, obviously. Anyone can see that. A B or a C is a perfectly good grade, really. You shouldn’t be so hard on yourself. This isn’t high school anymore.

SHILOH
I’m nearly twenty-five—

ANGELINE
Getting an A takes a lot more work. Very few students actually get A’s anyway, so really, take your B or your C and study a little harder next time. And don’t get so worked up about it, okay?
SHILOH
But—

ANGELINE
I won’t be changing the grade.

SHILOH
I just—

ANGELINE
Did you have other questions? My office hours are almost done, and I’m meeting my fiancé very soon.

SHILOH
Your fiancé?

ANGELINE
Yes. My fiancé.

SHILOH
I see.

EMILY
Oh, honey.

(SHIOH stands.)

SHILOH
I should be going.

ANGELINE
Glad to hear it. And don’t worry too much about the grade, sweetheart.

SHILOH
I won’t.

(SHIOH exits through the door, walking straight into EMILY, MARIGOLD, and CLAUDETTE.)

MARIGOLD
What are you doing?
EMILY
Get back in there!

SHILOH
I’m sorry to drag you all here.

CLAUDETTE
Don’t be ridiculous.

SHILOH
You heard her. This was a waste of time.

CLAUDETTE
She doesn’t know what she’s got.

SHILOH
She clearly does.

MARIGOLD
Honey, I don’t know where ya went wrong.

VICKI
You didn’t go wrong.

(Everyone turns, surprised.)

VICKI
She didn’t. You just stopped before you really got started. Get back in there, do your thing, and don’t come back out until you’ve won her back. If you break down at the first obstacle, you’re certainly not going to achieve your goal and damned if I’m driving back to that godforsaken community center before you achieve it.

SHILOH
I—

VICKI
Stop your stuttering and believe in yourself.

VERA
You’re an orange soul.

VICKI
Get in there and show her your orange soul.

ELSA
We should form a circle so you know we support you.

VICKI
Nah.

SHILOH
I don’t—

*(VICKI pushes her forward as EMILY opens the door.)*

SHILOH
—Know about this.
LET’S TALK ABOUT JOEL

(ANGELINE looks up as SHILOH stumbles in backwards, nearly falling over.)

ANGELINE
You’re back?

SHILOH
I remembered a few questions I had.

ANGELINE
You know, that’s really odd.

SHILOH
My questions?

ANGELINE
Which class of mine did you say you were in?

SHILOH
I didn’t.

ANGELINE
And?

SHILOH
I’m not in one of your classes.

ANGELINE
That’s even odder.

SHILOH
What is it?

ANGELINE
Sit down and let me look at you.

SHILOH
Look at me?

ANGELINE
Yes, look at you. Sit.
(SHILOH sits.)

SHILOH
Like this?

ANGELINE (studying Shiloh)
When you first came in, I thought you were familiar, but there’s something more here.

SHILOH
Oh?

ANGELINE
Are you a history major?

SHILOH
No.

ANGELINE
Have I seen you around?

SHILOH
I’m not usually around this part of campus.

ANGELINE
I swear I know you from somewhere.

(She is now leaning over the desk. SHILOH stopped breathing several minutes ago.)

SHILOH
Don’t you wear glasses?

ANGELINE
No one’s supposed to know that, shush up.

SHILOH
Oh, sorry.

ANGELINE
You caught me with them when you walked in, no?
SHILOH
You’ve always needed them for—I mean. Obviously I saw them when I walked in.

ANGELINE (putting the glasses on)
Since you already know my secret.

SHILOH
What do you see?

ANGELINE
Nothing out of the ordinary.

(She takes off the glasses.)

ANGELINE
What was it you needed?

SHILOH
To ask you a few questions.

ANGELINE
Didn’t we already do that part? My hours did end at 3.

SHILOH
It will be very quick, I promise.

ANGELINE
If you’re not a history major, nor in my class, what questions could you possibly have?

SHILOH
Uh.

EMILY
Stay on target.

SHILOH
I’m conducting a survey.

ANGELINE
I don’t do surveys.

SHILOH
It will only take a few minutes of your time.

ANGELINE
Too many questions.

SHILOH
Please. I really need a history professor’s opinion.

ANGELINE
Couldn’t you go ask Andrews, down the hall? He always seems to have time on his hands.

SHILOH
I want your opinion.

ANGELINE
Fine. Fine.

(She pulls out her phone.)

ANGELINE
Alright, sweetheart, you’ve got five minutes, and then I really have to go. I’m setting a timer.

SHILOH
I’ll keep to it. Thank you. Thank you.

ANGELINE
Time’s already ticking.

SHILOH
Okay. Uh. Do you… believe in reincarnation?

ANGELINE
What?

SHILOH
Do you think people, if they die, could be born again?

ANGELINE
Well, I’d have to think about it.

SHILOH
And if you thought about it?
ANGELINE
I mean, anything is possible right? Do we ever really know what happens after death?

SHILOH
Maybe not. What’s your answer?

ANGELINE
A firm maybe.

SHILOH
If someone you loved had passed away, could you believe that someone new could be a reincarnation of that person?

ANGELINE
I’ve never really thought about it.

SHILOH
Have you ever lost someone and wished they would come back?

(beat.)

ANGELINE
Yes.

(Outside, everyone has reacted except VERA.)

VERA
Girl can’t speak up. Blue like everyone else.

SHILOH
I-I’m sorry to hear that.

ANGELINE
This was a long time ago.

SHILOH
I’m sure.

(beat.)

ANGELINE
What did you say this survey is for?

SHILOH
Uh.

EMILY *(Loudly at the door)*
PSYCHOLOGY.

SHILOH
It’s a psychology survey. For a class. About… spiritual beliefs.

ANGELINE
And you needed me… why?

SHILOH
… Well… Telling you why would mess up the survey.

ANGELINE
I see.

SHILOH
So you have someone… in your past… who you wished was reincarnated?

ANGELINE
I don’t know if I would go that far.

SHILOH
But you would be glad if he was?

ANGELINE
Yes, I would be glad if he was.

SHILOH
And if he were sitting here right in front of you, you would be happy to see him?

*(This has sent ANGELINE into a train of thought far from the present. She looks intently at Shiloh, but only seems to half-hear her.)*

ANGELINE
I would be happy.

SHILOH
Even if he looked very different?

ANGELINE
Even if he looked different.

(beat.)

ANGELINE
You look so familiar. Are you certain we haven’t met?

SHILOH
No, Professor.

ANGELINE
Your eyes, I think that’s it. They remind me of someone I used to know.

(beat.)

SHILOH
I have one last question.

ANGELINE
Ask.

SHILOH
If he—if Joel was reincarnated, if he was here in front of you, but looked different. If he told you who he was—or who he had been, would you believe it?

ANGELINE
I’d want to believe it.

(The phone alarm goes off. Angeline is shaken from her thoughts.

Both stand up. Angeline begins to pack her things, not really paying attention as she crumples papers in the bag.)

ANGELINE
That’s time, then.

SHILOH
Thank you.
(ANGELINE stops packing.)

ANGELINE
What was that last question again?

SHILOH
If the person you said you would want to be reincarnated—if he was here and reincarnated, would you believe him?

ANGELINE
That’s not how you said it.

(She pulls out her phone and begins dialing.)
THE CLUSTERFUCK

ANGELINE  (to the phone)
Yes, hi. I’m here in room 303 in Madison Hall, and I’d like a security escort down to my car.
Yes. Angeline Weiss, I’m a professor. Well, I seem to have a stalker.

(SHILOH stands, clearly upset and with no idea what to do)

Yes. Well, she’s right here in my office. Yes. Great. Please do. Shiloh Stevenson is her name, possibly a psychology student, or maybe just a weirdo. Thank you.

(she hangs up.)

ANGELINE
How the hell do you know about Joel?

SHILOH
Intuition?

(ANGELINE, clearly shaken, throws the bag over her shoulder and begins to walk towards the door. SHILOH rushes the door and throws herself flat in front of it.)

SHILOH
Wait!

ANGELINE
Get out of my way.

(The entire support group is pressed against the other side of the door. If it opens, they will all fall inside.)

EMILY
Fuck, fuck, fuck!

ANGELINE
I don’t know who you are or what this is really about, but I’m not hearing another word.

(She tries to push SHILOH or get to the door.)

ANGELINE
Move!
SHILOH
It’s me! I’m Joel. I’m Joel.

(ANGELINE steps back like she’s been struck. A long beat.)

SHILOH
That’s how I know about anything, I swear.

(Outside the door, EMILY is foreseeing a problem.)

EMILY
Alright, that guard is going to come any minute.

MARIGOLD
But she’s done it now!

EMILY
We have to let them talk for as long as we can.

(VICKI steps forward and links arms with CLAUDETTE)

VICKI
We’ll make a wall.

ELSA
Now we can make the support circle!

VICKI
Something like that.

(All six of them, including VERA stand and link arms. They form a linked circle, backs to the door and standing firmly.)

ANGELINE
I don’t believe you. Move from the door.

(SHILOH remains plastered against it, arms out, holding herself up with the weight of blocking Angeline from leaving.)

SHILOH
You just said you would believe it.
ANGELINE
I said I would want to believe it. But I don’t. I think you’re crazy and a stalker, and I hope to
god you’re still here when they come so they can arrest you.

SHILOH
You said I look familiar.

ANGELINE
I must have seen you in passing in the halls.

SHILOH
But I’m not a student.

ANGELINE
Then I have seen you around the city. I don’t care. It’s not the truth.

SHILOH
How do you know?

ANGELINE
I don’t care. It’s not the truth. It can’t be.

SHILOH
We got secretly married before the wedding. No one knew about it except me, you, and your
best friend.

ANGELINE
The court published the marriage certificate after Joel died. That’s just more evidence of your
stalking.

SHILOH
Or my memory.

ANGELINE
Where is that security guard?

CLAUDETTE (to EMILY)
You don’t think she just, like, looked at old documents, do you?

EMILY
Shut up.
SECURITY
What, exactly, are you all doing outside this office?

MARIGOLD
Defending true love.

SECURITY
I’m going to need to ask you to move.

ELSA
… Please don’t?

SECURITY
Now.

EMILY
Look, officer, I’m sure you’re just trying to do your duty and all that, but we are defending this woman’s right to an absolutely beautiful love story, and really you should be up for that. That whole defending people’s rights thing. Isn’t that your job?

SECURITY
What did you say your name was?

EMILY
I didn’t say it was anything.

CLAUDETTE
And she’s not going to!

SHILOH
What can I tell you to convince you? Anything?

ANGELINE
I’m going to be late to dinner. This is your fault.

SHILOH
Do you even want to go?

ANGELINE
Of course I do.

SHILOH
But you hate dinner. Breakfast is your favorite meal.

ANGELINE
Maybe when I was twenty-five.

SHILOH
That’s what I’m saying!

ANGELINE
But certainly not anymore. And not when dinner with my fiancé is on the table.

SHILOH
Are you happy with him?

ANGELINE
Of course.

SHILOH
As happy as you were with me?

(ANGELINE crosses her arms, eyeing the door. SHILOH is no longer plastered against it, and she might just be able to get out.)

SECURITY
If you do not move, when my reinforcements arrive, we’ll arrest all of you—

MARIGOLD
‘Scuse me, sir.

SECURITY
And who are you?

MARIGOLD
You’re wearing a wedding right, aren’t ya?

SECURITY
Stay where you are.

MARIGOLD
D’you love your wife?

EMILY
Maybe he’s gay!

SECURITY
I’m not gay, and yes, I love my wife, thank you very much. Now step back.

MARIGOLD
Would you be happy if your wife just up n’ died?

SECURITY
Does this one ever stop talking?

MARIGOLD
If you’re truly in love with your wife, if ya really love her, then you must believe in true love. Don’t you?

SECURITY (to his walkie-talkie)
Could I get an ETA on that back-up? We’ve got a bunch of hysterical women here.

MARIGOLD
I believe in love! I believe in love!

ELSA
I believe in love! I believe in love!

EMILY
Wait.

(The support group falls silent.)

EMILY
Give us five minutes.

SECURITY
I will give you nothing—

MARIGOLD
We’re not moving either way, so ya might as well try it, honey.

SECURITY
Absolutely not—

EMILY
Listen to this.

SECURITY
I will not! I’ll have you know—

(EMILY and CLAUDETTE decide to fully commit to the life of crime and grab the SECURITY GUARD by either arm, finagling him into their arm-in-arm line until he is facing the door, unable to reach for the handle and get to Angeline.)

SECURITY
Campus police are real police! I will have you arrested and charged with assaulting an officer—

VERA
Listen, son, you’re all scarlet-yellow and ugly and I can promise you would do well with a bit of good green listening.

SECURITY
I’m what?!

(EMILY clamps a hand over his mouth.)

MARIGOLD
It’s for a good cause, I promise you.
SOMETHING CRAZY

ANGELINE
Fine. Fine. Tell me something. Tell me something only Joel would know.

SHILOH
Anything?

ANGELINE
No, no, this is ridiculous.

SHILOH
Wait.

ANGELINE
That I even entertained the thought—

SHILOH
You’re not crazy. You always call yourself that when you get worked up and all emotional, but you’re not crazy. Or if you are, then at least you’ve got me.

ANGELINE
That’s something Joel would say.

SHILOH
Weird, isn’t it?

ANGELINE
It’s not weird, it’s…

SHILOH
Crazy.

ANGELINE
But Joel is dead. God knows I’ve spent enough time pretending he was ever going to come back. That’s all this is. I’m sliding backwards. That’s it. I’ll make an appointment with Margie and talk through it. That’s all this is.

SHILOH
I’m right here.

ANGELINE
I’m hallucinating, or making this up—it’s a backslide. I’m under a lot of stress right now, that’s it.

SHILOH
Look at me.

ANGELINE
And with planning this stupid wedding, I’m just having flashbacks. PTSD, whatever it’s called. That’s it.

SHILOH
Look at me.

ANGELINE
Tell me something only Joel would know.

(beat.)

ANGELINE
See, you don’t know anything.

SHILOH
The apple tree.

ANGELINE
What apple tree?

SHILOH
It’s this stupid memory I keep having any time I eat apples. There’s a random apple tree in the middle of nowhere—near Windy Hill? I don’t know. It’s not supposed to be there, I don’t think, but maybe some kids dropped an apple and it somehow sprouted up there. And there’s you and me and your hair was in that ridiculous bob you got—and I don’t think it’s even anything important at all—but, we’re just standing there at this random tree and I decided to show off and climb it. And I know we knew each other a long time, but we hadn’t been a couple for so long and I think I just wanted to impress you but then I got up there in the branches and there was a squirrel who was very angry that I was in his home and then suddenly the world is just upside down and I’m hanging on by my feet and hoping—I can almost hear the thoughts—this girl is going to dump me if I break an arm like this. This girl is going to dump me when I fall out of this stupid tree—and by some cupid-like miracle, I didn’t fall. The squirrel got distracted. I managed to make it look graceful—or I thought I looked graceful—and I landed on my feet.
And those apples. Those apples! They were the freshest thing I’d ever tasted so we just kept eating them and eating them until, we were just sitting there surrounded by apple cores and I thought I was going to throw up. That’s how I knew you were the one. That stupid, ridiculous moment under an apple tree that wasn’t supposed to be there, but I knew that there had to be somebody out there, some kind of love god or cupid or whatever making sure I didn’t crack my skull or throw up on the girl I was supposed to be with for the rest of my life.

(A long pause. ANGELINE makes a decision. She steps forward and kisses SHILOH. SHILOH, momentarily surprised, takes a moment to react before throwing her arms around Angeline and kissing back.

The kiss breaks. Angeline steps back, aghast. Shiloh looks stunned.)

EMILY
No fucking way.

MARIGOLD
Told ya it was true love.

CLAUDETTE
Did they just, like—

SECURITY
I think you ladies have some explaining to do.

EMILY
Shut up.

ANGELINE
Shitdamn.

SHILOH
Uh.

ANGELINE
No one knew about that.

SHILOH
Yeah.

ANGELINE
No one was supposed to know about that.
SHILOH
Yeah.

ANGELINE
How the hell…?

SHILOH
You know how.

ANGELINE
Shit.

SHILOH
Was it that bad a kiss?

ANGELINE
No. No it was… it was…

SHILOH
Muscle memory.

ANGELINE
But—

SHILOH
Can I kiss you again?

ANGELINE
Maybe one more time. Just to check.

(SHILOH moves back into her personal space.)

SHILOH
Just to check.

(Just as SHILOH is about to kiss her, ANGELINE’s phone rings. She drops the phone trying to answer it, fumbling and cursing.)

ANGELINE (on the phone)
Hi. I know, I’m running late… No, I’ll be there when I can… No, I can’t talk… I’m… I’m with a student. (to herself) Shit. Damn. (to the phone) Look I’ll be there as soon as I can, I swear. No. Bye.

(She sets the phone on the desk with shaky hands.)

A REALITY CHECK

(No sooner has the phone landed on the desk as the SECURITY GUARD, sensing an opportunity, breaks the line and shoves open the door, rushing inside.

He finds ANGELINE leaning against the desk looking extremely stressed, SHILOH standing anxiously nearby, and the pile of papers, yet again, knocked off the desk.)

SECURITY

Professor Weiss, I’m here to be your escort.

(The entire support group stumbles in after him. ANGELINE appears even more alarmed than she already was (though no one thought that possible.))

SECURITY

I’m sorry it took so long to get to you.

ANGELINE

Uh.

SECURITY

There are reinforcements on the way to arrest all of these hysterical women.

ANGELINE

Yes. No. Wait.

SECURITY

Can I help you with your bags?

ANGELINE

No.

SECURITY

You seem very shaken up.
(He moves closer to her. She sits on the desk, pushing the papers out of the way.)

ANGELINE
No, I’m not leaving.

SECURITY
Excuse me?

ANGELINE
I’m staying right here.

(SHILOH leans against the desk next to her.)

SECURITY
I will not have that—

ANGELINE
I’m the one who called you, and now I’m un-calling you. Leave.

SECURITY
I still have to arrest all of these—

ANGELINE
I’ll tell them you’re harassing me.

SECURITY
But—

ANGELINE
Now.

SECURITY
You can’t be serious.

ANGELINE
Deadly.

(The SECURITY GUARD exits, and EMILY proudly shuts the door behind him.)

EMILY
Men.
SHILOH
I was a man, y’know.

EMILY
But you’re not now.

ANGELINE
Who are all of these people?

(All at once:

EMILY
Friends of Shiloh’s.

MARIGOLD
Agents of true love.

VICKI
Fed up, bored, and waiting for you all to get together.

ELSA
A circle of those who believe in true love.

(Then:

CLAUDETTE
We’re like, a reincarnation support group. For women.

ANGELINE
You’re a reincarnation support group.

CLAUDETTE
For women.

(ANGELINE sits down at the desk, amid a sea of papers.

The support group, after a beat, sits down on the couch and the chairs, giving deference (of course) to VERA. SHILOH hovers awkwardly beside the desk, unsure of where things stand.)

ANGELINE (to VERA)
What about you? You look wise and you haven’t spoken. Do you believe all of this?
VERA  
It’s quite clear, isn’t it?

VICKI  
You’re not going to get a whole lot of clarity—

ANGELINE  
I’d like to hear her.

VICKI  
Wisdom doesn’t necessarily come with age.

VERA  
My husband had a violet gasket in his heart ten years ago, and now my bed is big and blue and gray. Sometimes, it looks like there might be something there, something like all the lights turned on and shining vital gold. And sometimes, like there might be something there in the big blue bed but all that might be has nothing to reflect off of, so there simply isn’t anything there. But it being big and blue and foggy gray doesn’t mean I don’t wish my husband were there in the green. I think he might be there sometimes, but the light can’t reflect off of nothing, so I’m not able to see him even if he’s there. But I would want to think him yellow. I would want to believe all his yellow yarns and red tales. Even if he showed up like a blue girl in a tan coat.

(beat.)

SHILOH (quietly)  
And here I am. A blue girl in a tan coat.

ANGELINE  
Here you are. But…

(beat.)

EMILY  
But what? You’ve found your long-lost love, what could possibly be a ‘but’?

ANGELINE  
But I’m engaged and you’re twenty-five, and…

MARIGOLD  
And you’ve been waiting your whole entire life to get back to this person you were supposed to spend your life with, and here she is: right in front of your face, and you have doubts? Honey!
ANGELINE
My fiancé is a good man.

MARIGOLD
I’m a good woman! You shouldn’t go off and marry me, right?

ELSA
No one’s getting married here.

ANGELINE
I’m meant to be!

VERA
Meant to be, meant to be. Only one thing here that’s meant to be.

ANGELINE
He’s not perfect, but we’re good for each other. That’s what a relationship’s supposed to be, right? Good for each other.

CLAUDETTE
Maybe there’s one right person for you. Maybe there’s, like, twenty-seven. It’s all, like, whatever, when you find a right person for you.

ANGELINE
But—

ELSA
Saying ’but’ is a good excuse for not moving forward.

ANGELINE
But there are so many reasons not to just stop and think for a moment.

SHILOH
That’s it then. You’re overthinking, like you always have. You have to remember to turn off your brain sometimes.

ANGELINE
That’s ridiculous. And precisely how Joel says it. Said it.

(A beat. A decision. Another beat.)
ANGELINE
But it’s been years. *Years.* I’m not the same person I was twenty-five years ago. I’m not the same person I was *yesterday.* I’m not… I’m not the Angeline you fell in love with.

SHILOH
And I’m not Joel. I’m someone new.

*SHILOH offers Angeline a hand. ANGELINE takes it. They clasp fingers. The circle is complete, and thus: the end.*