

THE GARBOLOGISTS

By Lindsay Joelle

A full-length original play based on interviews with DSNY: "New York's Strongest"

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Perusal for Cape May Stage

MARLOWE — Female (she/her). Late 30s. Black. First week at DSNY. Confident and competent, both physically and mentally. Keen sense of wit and irony. Vivid inner life; even when silent, her face speaks volumes. Practiced in making you to think she's got it all together, but she's guarding a secret she doesn't wear on her sleeve.

DANNY — Male (he/him). 41. White. Nine years at DSNY. Mansplaining, dad jokes, and run-of-the-mill machismo thinly mask a profound desire to love and be loved. With less wear-and-tear, he might be attractive—ruggedly handsome, even—but you'd swallow hot coals before saying that to his face.

Time and Place:

Manhattan. 2019. Winter.

Inside the cab of a DSNY garbage truck, and at various stops along the route.

Notes:

This is a play about working, doing, collecting, transporting garbage. It's constant physical labor, it's hard on the body, and it should not be mimed.

SPACE is fluid. Locations are sketched with minimal strokes.

The TRUCK may be fragmented, abstract, as theatrical as necessary. There must be an elevated front cab section and a hopper space (or multiple hopper spaces) where trash is deposited. They need not be attached.

THE THROWING OF BAGS into the hopper may act as percussive commentary after a punchline. To avoid bag noise competing with dialogue, bags should be discarded between lines when possible. New bags should be picked up between lines when possible. Prioritize rhythm and pacing over realism; the story is more important than the trash. Comedy is Queen.

The TRASH must have real heft and weight. This is a world filled with black plastic bags—as well as mattresses, chairs, plants, paintings, kitty litter, pizza boxes, mannequin limbs, and all manner of broken and beautiful things we discard from our lives daily.

SCENE 1 - MONDAY: IN TRANSIT

6 AM. Manhattan.

Danny sits behind the wheel of a white garbage truck. He's wearing a green jumpsuit embossed DSNY. He's been wearing it for nine years.

Marlowe rides shotgun. Same uniform, but hers is new. She drinks bodega coffee from a paper cup as she watches the city pass by.

It's winter—crusty ice, slush on the ground, just hanging-on-til-Christmas winter. 6 AM Monday morning winter.

The engine rumbles and clicks.

DANNY

This here's a Mack LR low-cab truck.
You got your mirrors.

He points to the mirrors.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Windows.

He moves the windows up and down.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Your air and heat.

A beat.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Marla?

MARLOWE

Air. Heat.

Marlowe begins to re-lace her new, stiff work boots.

DANNY

Now, on your steering column, you got your main gauge pods.

Right:

And left:

Center storage for coolers. Cups. Bottles...

He clocks that his partner's not listening.

DANNY (CONT'D)

I'm not talking for my own education. This here's a nineteen ton vehicle. And that's when she's empty. Now, you load in fifteen tons of garbage, you're not careful, you're not paying attention, you could do a lot of damage. So you got any questions, ask now.

Marlowe double knots the laces.

DANNY (CONT'D)

No questions?

Marlowe looks him square in the eye.

MARLOWE

(rattling off specs like a pro)

Danny, this is a Mack MP7 eleven-liter diesel engine with three-hundred-forty-five horsepower, twelve-hundred-eighty foot-pounds torque, running on a B20 biodiesel blend. She's got an Allison RDS six-speed auto transmission, tilt and telescopic steering. They told us the specs in training, and I memorized them on the first day. I also passed the strength, mental, vision, and CDL driving tests, and got a perfect score on the written exam.

DANNY

Top score on the written exam?

MARLOWE

That's right.

DANNY

Well, *pardonnay mwa*, I didn't know I got a Shakespeare on my route.

Marlowe takes a sip of coffee.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Besides, the written exam's a joke. They ask you questions like: "What color was George Washington's white horse?"

What score'd *you* get?

MARLOWE

I don't remember.

DANNY

M-hmm.

MARLOWE

Marlowe smiles to herself.

Thing is, and they don't tell you this in training, each truck's a bit different. Got its own quirks. Its own personality. This particular truck, for example, reminds me of my ex wife.

DANNY

A beat.

Ask me why.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Why?

MARLOWE

Cuz of the engine. Whines so loud I can't hear myself think.

DANNY

Silence.

That's a joke.

DANNY (CONT'D)

(reconsidering)

Based on truth.

See, *comedy*, to be funny, it's gotta be based on truth. Otherwise it's not funny.

Marlowe picks up her phone.

So, where you from?

DANNY

Sorry, can we not?

MARLOWE

Not what?

DANNY

MARLOWE

Nothing personal, it's 6 AM and I don't like talking before I've had my coffee.

DANNY

That bodega shit's like jet fuel, you should be flying by now. How can you drink that?

MARLOWE

'Cuz it's a dollar.

DANNY

It'll burn your gut.

Marlowe shrugs and takes another sip.

DANNY

How long you got?

Danny turns the wheel.

MARLOWE

What?

DANNY

How much time you got on this job?

MARLOWE

Six to two.

DANNY

Not your shift. How long you been wearing that uniform?

MARLOWE

You know how long.

DANNY

You bet I do: One hour. You know how long I been wearing mine? Nine years. Nine years of on-the-job wisdom. And it's not every day a Junior Jack like you ends up on a senior route, riding around with someone with seniority.

(realizing)

How'd you get this route?

MARLOWE

It's what the Board said in the garage.

DANNY

You know the supervisor? He a personal friend of yours?

MARLOWE

No.

DANNY

Junior flips like you are typically put on corner baskets or graveyard shifts driving relays back and forth to the dump. But house-to-house? On your first day? It's unheard of. Honest to God, how'd you pull a senior route with no seniority?

MARLOWE

Just lucky, I guess.

Marlowe flashes him a winning smile. Danny's momentarily disarmed.

DANNY

You're right, you did get lucky today, you know why? 'Cuz I got a knack for showing people the ropes!

(looking at the street)

Look at this asshole. You call that a parking job? It's like he's begging to lose a mirror.

Marlowe types something into her phone.

Danny tries to ignore it...

Nope, he's gotta know.

DANNY

It's 6AM, who're you texting?

MARLOWE

I'm not texting.

DANNY

Looks like texting.

MARLOWE

I can't help what it looks like, I can only tell you what it is.

DANNY

Okay, so tell me: what are you doing, looks like texting but isn't texting?

MARLOWE
Reading the news.

DANNY
Which paper?

MARLOWE
Times.

DANNY
Waste-your-times.

MARLOWE
'Scuse me?

DANNY
The Waste Your Times. The Waah Street Journal. Bunch of whiners and crybabies. Trust me, the world's not half as bad as they want you to think. Me, I read the *Staten Island Advance* every morning. Tells you what's going on, street level, straight from the people. Why we always gotta hear about bad shit happening far away?

MARLOWE
I like knowing what's going on in the world.

DANNY
Tell me this: What's the weather outside? What's the weather gonna do in eight hours? What's the traffic on the Major Deegan? This snow turns to ice, that highway becomes slick, it'll take three times as long to dump your load at the end of the day. Your shift'll be over and you'll be stuck on a highway somewhere 'tween here and the Bronx with your thumb up your ass.
You see, Marla, you gotta think local. Gather the details.
Weather. Traffic. Road conditions. Details.
I'm a Details Man, Marla. Never miss a detail.

MARLOWE
It's Marlowe.

DANNY
What?

MARLOWE
My name. Is Marlowe.

I thought it was Marla.

DANNY

It's not.

MARLOWE

What kind of a name's Marlowe?

DANNY

My parents are professors.

MARLOWE

I woulda guessed winos.

DANNY

Winos?

MARLOWE

Bottle of red. You're telling me you never heard of a nice *mar-lowe*?

DANNY

Danny waits hopefully for a laugh. No dice.

Tough crowd.

DANNY

He pulls the brake.

Hissssss.

Oh wait, that was *comedy*, right?

MARLOWE

She rolls her eyes and exits the truck.

SCENE 2 - MONDAY: SITE #1 (A FEW MINUTES LATER)

Marlowe's greeted by rolling hills of black bags piled high on the curb.

She closes her eyes, savoring the moment. The sounds of the city wash over her.

Her face opens, softens. It's almost spiritual.

MARLOWE

We're doin it, baby.

DANNY

(appearing behind her)

Lift with your legs.

Marlowe's eyes snap open.

MARLOWE

Why'd you get out of the truck?

DANNY

What do you mean why'd I get out of the truck?

MARLOWE

I mean, why'd you get out of the truck?

DANNY

Cuz this uniform says it's my job.

MARLOWE

The three-fifty says I'm the Loader, you're the Driver.

DANNY

That's just the card. Doesn't mean anything.

MARLOWE

I was told it means: I load, you drive.

DANNY

You can't load all those bags yourself.

MARLOWE

You think cuz I'm a woman, I can't lift?

DANNY

Did I say that? Don't put words in my mouth. I got nothing against women. I been married to one—and not an easy one neither, a real piece of work—so I got no illusions about women being delicate flowers. I don't give a rat's ass if you got muff or balls 'tween your legs, long as you pull your weight and don't slow me down.

MARLOWE

I passed the strength test.

DANNY

Good on you.

MARLOWE

I don't need special treatment.

DANNY

You ain't gonna get any from me.

MARLOWE

So get back in the truck.

DANNY

I can't do that.

MARLOWE

Why not?

DANNY

“A” of all, because “New York's Strongest” is just a motto. It's not actually literal. You load all these bags alone all day, you'll kill yourself.

“B” of all, House Rules say if you don't help your partner load in, you're an asshole. And I'm not an asshole.

Finally, and this is perhaps the most important: They're gonna honk at me.

MARLOWE

Who?

DANNY

The civilians. People see me up in the cab all warm and toasty and you out here busting your ass in the snow, they're gonna honk. They're gonna roll down their windows—
“*Hey scumbag. You let her do all the work, you scumbag?*”
Bad optics.

MARLOWE

Is this because I'm Black?

DANNY

No ma'am. My last partner was Black, and we drove around for five years together. The man was like a brother to me. But I stay in the truck, you better believe I'm gonna get heckled.

MARLOWE

Tell 'em the card says I'm the Loader.

DANNY

Screw the card, this is New York City.

Marlowe's phone rings. A clip of Gangsta Boo's
“Where dem dollas at?”

*Where dem dollas at? Where dem dollas at?
Where dem dollas at? Where dem dollas at?*

Danny stifles a laugh as Marlowe searches her pockets.

DANNY

Jesus, at least put it on vibrate.

Marlowe finds the phone and silences it.

MARLOWE

Look, I'ma be real with you a minute. I'm new here, I get it, and you've got a way of doing things. But I need to do this one alone. Just this first stop.

DANNY

Why?

MARLOWE

Don't ask me why.

DANNY

Why shouldn't I ask you why?

MARLOWE

Because I'm trying to—

(regaining composure)

Look, I'm not asking you to understand. I am asking you to let me throw these bags into the back of this truck, *alone*. Like I planned. Like I trained for. Like the card today says is my job.

DANNY

Double A. Do it alone. Be my guest.

MARLOWE

Thank you.

DANNY

I'll just stand here, stretch my legs. Take in the morning air.

Danny deep lunges.

MARLOWE

Seriously?

DANNY

Go on, load in. I'm not watching, I'm stretching.

Danny does a side stretch like an 80s jazzercise video.

Marlowe says a few choice words under her breath and begins to load bags into the hopper.

Bag.

Bag.

Bag.

DANNY

Torque like that, your gonna be sore tomorrow in muscles you didn't even know exist.

He changes stretches.

Bag.

Bag.

DANNY

See, you wanna bend your knees and twist—

MARLOWE

You always talk this much when you stretch?

Bag.

Bag.

DANNY

You're lifting with your back—

MARLOWE

Danny, I'm a double ivy *suma cum laude*. I know how to take out the trash.

She flings a bag over her head with a flourish.

Some mystery liquid arcs out of the bag.

She wipes her face, disgusted.

DANNY

Ivy league?

MARLOWE

Yeah.

DANNY

Where?

MARLOWE

Columbia.

DANNY

You? Went to Columbia?

MARLOWE

(a small warning in her tone)

Why wouldn't I?

DANNY

Nah, it's just, most of the guys I ride around with came through a different institution.

MARLOWE

Which?

DANNY

Rikers.

Marlowe continues loading bags.

DANNY

My old partner? Muscles like superman. Nicest guy you ever met. He did some time in Rikers 'fore he wound up on my route. Wanna know what he used to say about Columbia?

Bag.

DANNY (CONT'D)

See, to get the joke, first you gotta know trash from Section 5's heavier than other districts in Manhattan 7. More rats, more roaches.

Bag.

DANNY (CONT'D)

That's why he used to say to me about Columbia, when we ran that route together, he used to say:

"They all might think their shit don't stink...but their trash sure does."

Bag.

Danny repeats the punchline more deliberately.

DANNY (CONT'D)

They all might think their shit don't stink, but their —

Marlowe lifts an unexpectedly heavy bag, hoisting it with her knee.

DANNY

No! Never let it touch you!

MARLOWE

Jesus! You gonna micromanage me all day?

DANNY

You know what's in there?

MARLOWE

Yeah. Garbage.

DANNY

Jagged can tops. Broken lightbulbs. Rusty nails. Some asshole throws away knives—*Knives*. In a plastic garbage bag. You use your knee for leverage, they'll slice through your flesh like butter. You get poked by a needle, I swear to God it'll be the longest six weeks of your life waiting for those test results.

Marlowe grabs a bag in each hand.

DANNY

Hey! One bag at a time. Union rules.

Marlowe drops the bags.

MARLOWE

Look, I appreciate what you think you're trying to do. But I got this.

DANNY

Oh yeah? What color are your gloves, you think you're so smart?

MARLOWE

Orange.

DANNY

That's right. Orange wet gear gloves. Why? Cuz it's been snowing all night and the bags are slick. So are your gloves. You go too fast, you're gonna get punched.

MARLOWE

Are you threatening me?

DANNY

No! Why does everyone think I'm threatening them?

(mimes his hand slipping off a bag and
punching upward into his eye)

Punched by yourself!

MARLOWE

If you ever lay a hand on me—

DANNY

Lay a hand on you? I would never lay a hand on a woman. Who you been talking to? You been talking to Tiffany?

MARLOWE

Tiffany?

DANNY

My ex.

MARLOWE

No, I don't know Tiffany.

DANNY

Good. That's good. Of course, even if you did know Tiffany you'd probably say you didn't.

MARLOWE

Why?

DANNY

To get information? To spy on me? I don't know. Let's not talk about our personal lives. Let's keep this professional.

MARLOWE

Great. Let's be professional.

DANNY

(blurting)

She took away my son.

I just wanted to say that before we started being professional, just so you know. She went to a judge, behind my back, with no warning, and took away my son. What kind of person does that? That is evil.

(a beat)

Now we can be professional.

MARLOWE

What'd you do?

DANNY

Nothing! It's a *temporary* restraining order, T.R.O. Temporary. 14 days. Why? 'Cuz she's got nothing. 'Cuz we live in a time where a woman can say anything and you gotta believe her.

Marlowe shoots him a look.

DANNY

(backpedaling)

And that's *good*. I'm a feminist. I know it's hard to be a woman. You gotta bleed every three weeks for chrissakes! And childbirth? God didn't give with both hands, I know that. But there are *some* women—like the woman I was married to—there are *some* women...

Listen: I'm not a bad guy, Shakespeare. I got impulse control problems, I got a weak filter, I'm working on that, but I'm not a bad guy. I'm an acquired taste. Like blue cheese. It's mold, it smells like feet, but it's a fucking delicacy. It's French. Gimme a chance. You're gonna like me in the end.

This guy. Man oh man. Marlowe decides: Not my circus, not my monkeys.

She might "hit the handle" here to let the hopper digest its meal. Only if space is getting tight.

Marlowe sizes up a king-sized mattress wrapped in torn plastic.

She tries to lift a side. Nope. Too big. Tries again from another angle. No dice.

MARLOWE

You wanna give me a hand?

DANNY

Hey, you're the Loader. I'm just the Driver.

Marlowe wrestles the mattress close to the truck. It takes a while. It might fall over on top of her. She might fall over on top of it.

Finally, through some determined wedging and wiggling and pushing, she successfully hoists the front corner into the hopper.

She looks at Danny to make sure he's minding his own business. He is...sort of.

She moves behind the mattress and, using her full bodyweight, shoves the rest of it in.

She wipes a bit of sweat and looks at Danny, triumphant.

DANNY

You check it for bed bugs?

Marlowe's eyes grow wide.

MARLOWE

Are you fucking kidding me? Fuck!

She inspects her uniform frantically.

MARLOWE

Sonofabitch. Goddamnit.

DANNY

Look at the mouth on you.

MARLOWE

You know how long it takes to get rid of these fuckers?

DANNY

There's no bugs.

MARLOWE

I can feel them. They're crawling all over me. I'm getting bit.

DANNY

Relax. There's not enough bags.

MARLOWE

For what?

DANNY

Infestation like that? Everything's gotta go. Clothes, books, furniture. Look around: Not enough bags.

Marlowe stops squirming and looks.

DANNY

That's why you always gotta read the bags.
(gesturing presentationally)

Read the bags.

A beat.

MARLOWE

Do people ever tell you they want to strangle you?

DANNY

All the time.

He lobs a bag in the hopper like a free throw.

DANNY (CONT'D)

I'll go pull up the truck.

Danny exits.

Marlowe retrieves the last box. She pulls out an abandoned stuffed animal.

It's in bad shape—an appendage dangling, stuffing leaking out. Marlowe sees this creature has been well-loved.

She props it in the crook of a tree or some scaffolding, somewhere out of harm's way.

MARLOWE

(to the creature)

You stay safe, now.

SCENE 3 - TUESDAY MORNING

Marlowe paces outside a Starbucks, mid-call.

MARLOWE

(on the phone)

I'm with him *again*. Yeah, same guy.

He says he's Blue Cheese.

Forget it, it's too long and convoluted to even—

I can't request to be transferred, it's my second day. It goes by seniority. I don't have any.

No, Mom, that doesn't matter.

It doesn't matter. They don't care.

Because they don't.

Yes, I know this was my choice, as you've already reminded me more than once.

(whoops)

I'm not raising my voice at you.

(she really wasn't)

I'm not. I'm just matching your tone.

(a beat)

And I am *also* very calm.

(she is)

Yes I am.

(less so)

Yes I—Mom.

Mom.

(a beat. An outburst:)

Because he's incredibly irritating!

Danny enters, carrying a large Starbucks cup.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

I gotta go.

Marlowe ends the call in a hurry.

DANNY

One Venti sugar-free vanilla soy no-foam latte.

MARLOWE

(reaching for it)

Gimme gimme gimme.

DANNY

Jesus. You're an addict.

She takes the coffee from him.

Sips.

Closes her eyes and savors.

MARLOWE

(eyes still closed)

You're watching me.

DANNY

How'd you know that? Your eyes are closed.

MARLOWE

I can feel it.

DANNY

Is it good?

She opens her eyes.

MARLOWE

You watching me?

DANNY

No, perv, the coffee.

MARLOWE

So good.

DANNY

Double A.

MARLOWE

Thank you for this.

DANNY

You got it. You owe me seven-thirteen.

MARLOWE

Wait, for real?

DANNY

What do you mean, “for real?” Did I get you *pretend* coffee?

MARLOWE

I thought it was on you.

DANNY

Why would it be on me?

MARLOWE

You had to pee.

DANNY

So?

MARLOWE

I thought you couldn’t use the bathroom without buying something.

DANNY

Taking a piss is free. That was a seven-dollar cup of coffee.

MARLOWE

Fine. I got next.

DANNY

I don’t drink coffee.

MARLOWE

So I’ll get part of your lunch.

DANNY

I pack my lunch.

MARLOWE

Seriously, Danny, you can’t float me seven dollars? Is there something you need to buy right this minute?

DANNY

It’s not about the money, it’s about the principle.

MARLOWE

Don’t be an asshole.

DANNY

Asshole? How am I an asshole? I got you coffee! I waited in line, I ordered, I waited for the order, I brought it out to you. That makes me an asshole?

MARLOWE

I said I got next.

DANNY

Yeah, tell that to Ramsburg.

MARLOWE

Who's Ramsburg?

DANNY

Ramsburg's the guy ruined it for everyone. King of "I got next." Always promising to buy the next round. Till one day, he's gone.

MARLOWE

Gone?

DANNY

Got himself transferred to Queens 3, this guy. All the way out by La Guardia fucking airport. By the time he left, he owed me like twenty-five bucks!

MARLOWE

(yeah right)

You really think he transferred garages to get out of paying you twenty-five dollars?

DANNY

Turns out he'd been saying "I owe you one" to the whole garage. Worked up quite a tab. That's how come me and my old partner, we developed The Principle.

MARLOWE

What principle?

DANNY

Neither a borrower nor a lender be.

Marlowe looks at Danny, incredulous.

MARLOWE

You and your old partner.

DANNY

That's right.

MARLOWE

The two of you made up: *Neither a borrower nor a lender be?*

Danny looks at Marlowe.

DANNY

No, that's *Hamlet*. You don't know *Hamlet*?

MARLOWE

I do.

DANNY

That's like the most famous line.

MARLOWE

I know *Hamlet*.

DANNY

You thought *I* made up neither a borrower // nor a lender be?

MARLOWE

(overlapping)

I thought *you* thought you—

DANNY

(overlapping)

You're telling me a san man from Staten Island knows more about Shakespeare than some big shot Ivy League—

MARLOWE

(maybe only slightly smug)

*Neither a borrower nor a lender be
For loan oft loses both itself and friend
And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.
This above all: To thine own self be true.*

DANNY

Fancy!

(a beat)

Too bad no one supports the arts in this country. Seven dollars please.

MARLOWE

I don't have seven dollars.

DANNY

You don't have seven dollars? How were you gonna buy me lunch?

MARLOWE

With my credit card.

DANNY

Ahhhhh.

MARLOWE

Don't "ahhh." Not everyone carries cash on them. We're transitioning to a cashless society.

DANNY

Okay, cashless society, let's say the grid goes down. Now you gotta pay someone to get you off the island. How much you got on you?

MARLOWE

I'd call an Uber.

DANNY

No grid.

MARLOWE

Cell phone towers have back-up generators.

DANNY

How much?

MARLOWE

Two dollars.

DANNY

Two dollars?

(changing tack)

Okay. Gimme your two dollars, drink two-sevenths of your coffee now, and the rest when you pay me back.

She glares.

DANNY

I'm joking. Coffee's on me.

MARLOWE

I don't want it anymore.

DANNY

Sure you do.

(a beat)

OK, fine.

Danny takes the cup and starts to pour it out.
Marlowe grabs it back quickly.

MARLOWE

I'll pay you tomorrow.

DANNY

Don't worry about it, I can swing it. I could pull six figs this year with blizzard overtime.

That catches Marlowe's interest.

MARLOWE

They do say it's supposed to be a snowy winter...

DANNY

(white gold = snowplow overtime)

Fulla white gold.
Drink up.

Marlowe starts to sip, but feels him watching.

MARLOWE

Can we go now?

DANNY

(with a goofy flourish)

Apres vous...

She starts to exit. He follows on her heels.

Marlowe's phone rings. *Where dem dollas at?*
She silences it, but continues interacting with
the screen.

DANNY

Yeah, that's right, check any last messages. Wouldn't want your job to get in the way of your social life. Check your emails while you're at it. Supervisor cruises by, I'll just get another partner, no sweat off my back.

MARLOWE
(still checking the phone)

We're not partners.

DANNY
Good thing, too. Maybe tomorrow I'll get to ride around with someone who laughs at my jokes. This is good material you're ignoring. You laugh at your boyfriend's jokes? You got a boyfriend?

MARLOWE
No.

DANNY
Girlfriend?

MARLOWE
You wish.

DANNY
Hey, love is love. It's a beautiful thing.

MARLOWE
M-hmm.

DANNY
You got a Tinder profile?

MARLOWE
Stop talking.

Marlowe exits.

DANNY
I'm starting to get the feeling you're not really a morning person...
(a beat)
That's okay, I'll be here all day.

Danny exits.

SCENE 4 - WEDNESDAY MORNING: SITES #2 AND #3

It's warmer now. The sun's come out, and Danny and Marlowe have removed their outer layers.

The trash pile has grown.

Perhaps: Busted suitcases.

Costco-sized containers of Cheese Balls.

Life-size cardboard cutouts, all of the same dude.

A taxidermied raccoon wearing an ugly holiday sweater.

Danny pontificates, mostly to himself, as Marlowe loads in an assortment of increasingly weird shit.

DANNY

The best butcher in all five boroughs. Hands down, second to none.
Lamb. Beef. Sausages.
Whatever you want, he's got it.

There's this cheese...
I don't know if it's goat's milk, sheep's milk, I think maybe it's goat's milk.

Was it goat's milk?
Maybe it's sheep's milk.
I think—Yeah, I think it was sheep's milk.

(determined to crack this mystery)

Was it sheep? I'm try'n'ta remember, but I think it was.
It coulda been a goat, but I think it was a sheep.

He picks up a bag and extends it to Marlowe.

DANNY

Feel how light this is. Bag fulla tissues. Someone's got a cold in this house.

Marlowe holds the bag at arms length and carries that biohazard gingerly to the hopper.

DANNY

I'd blow so much money at this place. I'd come home loaded with brown packages.
My ex used to flip her shit at what I'd spent on cheese.
Cut into her nail budget.

All the meat's pre-seasoned, which makes it twice as expensive.
But if you're gonna grill?
I'm a grill man.
Do you grill?
Maybe you got a boyfriend who grills, I notice you don't got a ring.
You got a boyfriend?

Danny glances at Marlowe, who shuffles by with a giant, unwieldy birdcage.

Anyway, take my word: if you're gonna grill?
Hands.
Down.
Second. To —

He freezes—Eureka!

It was goat's milk! That's what it was. Goat!

Marlowe puts down the cage with a small bang.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Although it actually could've very possibly been sheep.

MARLOWE

Do you ever shut up?

Danny looks at her, surprised.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

It's been three days and you're still monologue-ing at me.

DANNY

You said you don't like talking till you've downed a gallon of coffee.

MARLOWE

What part of no talking do you not understand?

She loads the birdcage into the hopper.

DANNY

I shouldn't talk till you've had coffee? Listen, Shakespeare, I got rights. Freedom of Speech. You telling me I can't say whatever I want whenever I want, that's un-American. Talking about grilling is basically my patriotic duty.

Finally, Danny starts tossing bags.

Unlike Marlowe, he's super fluid. He makes it look easy.

Bag.

DANNY (CONT'D)

My old partner drank so much coffee it gave him an ulcer.

Bag.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Had to switch to tea.

Bag.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Organic.

Bag.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Three cups a day.

Bag.

Marlowe lifts a rolled up rug.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Big bald guy, drinking tea. Sometimes he'd do the pinky thing, as a joke, you know how they do in England? Actually, I'll tell you a little known fact about green tea—

Marlowe turns and Danny's forced to duck fluidly under the rug.

He moves on to the next trash pile: SITE #3.
There are significantly more bags here than at
previous sites.

En route to SITE #3, Marlowe hears the happy
sounds of children on a playground.

She pauses, momentarily transfixed.
Transported.

Earth to Shakespeare.

DANNY

What?

MARLOWE

Take a peek in that box.

DANNY

Why?

MARLOWE

Because I think you'll find it interesting.

DANNY

It better not be full of dead kittens, I swear to God.

MARLOWE

Dead kittens? You think I'd make you look at a box of dead kittens? That's not even
funny, that's just sad.

DANNY

You made me lift that bag of birds yesterday.

MARLOWE

Hey, I didn't know there were pigeons in there.

DANNY

Yeah you did.

MARLOWE

Yeah I did. But I didn't know it was gonna break on you.

DANNY

He laughs a little to himself.

MARLOWE

That's right, laugh it up.

DANNY

I told you, Shakespeare: Read the Bags.

MARLOWE

How'm I supposed to read the bags if you don't teach me *how* to read the bags?

DANNY

I am teaching you.

MARLOWE

You're not teaching me, you're hazing me.

DANNY

How else're you gonna learn? It's just some bird soup.

MARLOWE

And maggots.

DANNY

We call that disco rice.

MARLOWE

Nasty.

DANNY

Urban white fish? That's what we call condoms. Floating in the river.

MARLOWE

Ew.

DANNY

For a sanitation worker, you sure don't like trash.
Go on. Take a peak.

Marlowe looks at the box skeptically.

MARLOWE

I know it's something disgusting by that shit eating grin on your face...
Is it shit?

DANNY

Check the box.

Not checking the box. MARLOWE

Don't be a baby, just look. DANNY

You look. MARLOWE

Fine, don't look. DANNY

Marlowe's curiosity wins out. She goes over to the box.

Kicks it.

No rats. DANNY
(approvingly)

She sniffs.

Sniff test. Good technique. DANNY

She cautiously opens the flap and peers in.

M-hmm. MARLOWE
(deadpan)

She closes the box and returns to the pile of trash.

That's it? That's all you gotta say? DANNY

M-hmm. MARLOWE

You saw what it was? DANNY

M-hmm. MARLOWE

DANNY

And?

MARLOWE

(of course it is)

It's a box of dildos.

DANNY

A box of dildos! Cuz when one dildo's not enough, you gotta get yourself a whole box!

Danny goes to the box and pulls out an enormous purple dildo.

DANNY

Look, this one's got veins and everything! This is, uh...

He holds it against his groin for scale.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Yeah, I would say this is some unrealistic expectations.

(using the dildo like a lightsaber)

Whoom. Whoom.

MARLOWE

Dumbass.

Danny flips a switch and the thing starts to rotate.

DANNY

Christ on a bicycle!

He throws it up in the air like it's on fire.

Marlowe laughs.

Danny watches her as she laughs. He grins wide.

DANNY

I did it.

MARLOWE

Did what?

I made you laugh.

DANNY

I'm laughing *at* you.

MARLOWE

Same thing. You know, your face changes. When you laugh.

DANNY

Changes how?

MARLOWE

I dunno. You look... different.

DANNY

You saying I look dumb? I got a dumb looking laugh?

MARLOWE

You're luminous.

DANNY

A beat.

MARLOWE

Luminous?

DANNY

Forget it.

MARLOWE

You think I'm *luminous*?

DANNY

Like a light bulb.

MARLOWE

I know what it means. You've just never given me a compliment.

DANNY

Maybe you should laugh more often.

MARLOWE

Maybe you should get funnier jokes.

DANNY

Fair enough. Fair... enough...

Danny slips the giant dildo in his coat.

MARLOWE

Hold up.

He looks at her, all innocence.

MARLOWE

Don't even front. *I saw you put that dildo in your coat.*

DANNY

You wanna say that a little louder?

MARLOWE

It's a used dildo! It's got... Juices.

DANNY

I'm gonna sterilize it first.

MARLOWE

Oh that is foul. That is *foul*.

DANNY

Listen, I'm not lacking in that department. In case you're wondering.

MARLOWE

I'm not.

DANNY

Let's just say I don't get any complaints. Besides, it's not about length, it's about girth—

MARLOWE

Stop. You're making my ears bleed.

DANNY

You're wondering what a well-endowed guy like me needs with a dildo.

MARLOWE

I'm really not.

It's for O'Shaughnassy.

DANNY

A beat.

MARLOWE

Explain.

DANNY

I know the code to his locker. I just gotta figure out how to make this baby start rotating when he opens it.

Danny giggles.

MARLOWE

What are you, twelve?

DANNY

It's locker room antics.

MARLOWE

You can't take a stranger's dildo.

DANNY

Says who?

MARLOWE

Put it back. That is not your dildo.

DANNY

Technically, anything left out on the curb becomes property of the City of New York.
(with a flourish)

This is New York City's dildo.

He becomes Lady Liberty, the dildo as her torch. Maybe he then pop-and-locks into a new position and freezes, like the Lady Liberty impersonators in the park.

MARLOWE

Look, do this shit on your own time, but not while we're in uniform. We're on the job. It's like you say: bad optics.

DANNY

Nah, this city thinks we're invisible. People put their crap out on the curb and think it's gone. They think the Garbage Fairies take it away in the middle of the night. *Poof!* Street's clean. No one thinks about the middle men. The dedicated, hardworking sanitation men (and women) who pick it up and chauffeur it to the Great Beyond. So what if now and then we claim a bit of mongo?

MARLOWE

Mongo?

DANNY

Mongo. Verb: To Scavenge.

Noun: Junk.

Use it in a sentence: "Fuck yeah, I'd mongo this mongo."

MARLOWE

Stealing. Gerund: Taking something that's not yours.

DANNY

Think of it as recycling.

MARLOWE

This is someone's private collection, show some respect. Whoever threw this out wanted it gone.

DANNY

Nothing's ever gone. Ever since New York closed the landfills, we got ten thousand tons a day of residential waste going to Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia. Some goes as far as India or China. Think about that, you throw something out, it might end up seeing more of the world than you. And that costs money. So what's better? Me mongoining this dildo and reusing it, or you paying tax money to ship it around the world til it ends up in a landfill?

MARLOWE

So everyone in the garage mongos?

DANNY

No—

NO.

No one in the garage mongos.

MARLOWE

But you just said...

DANNY

You're not listening.

MARLOWE

You're speaking in riddles.

DANNY

Supervisor asks?

(air quotes)

"No one in the garage mongos."

Union rules says its illegal.

And House Rules say you don't rat on a partner.

Remember that.

You see me take something and someone asks about it? Never happened.

You don't rat on a partner.

You're still on probation. One strike your first eighteen months, you're out. But hey: you see something small? Slip it in the mongo bin. I'll say it's mine.

MARLOWE

What's the mongo bin?

DANNY

That bin we got on the side of the truck.

MARLOWE

You mean the tool bin?

DANNY

Yeah, that's what they want you to think.

(he winks conspiratorially)

Listen, you didn't hear it from me, but you need something in particular? Ask the Street.

MARLOWE

Ask the Street? You're telling me to knock on some stranger's door like a girl scout?

DANNY

Not the residents, the Street. The Street shall provide. Last week, Delgado found a brand new trombone. Enrolled his kid in music lessons.

MARLOWE

That's some hippy dippy shit coming from you.

Danny shrugs.

Nevertheless, Marlowe squats and improvises an elaborate physical, non-denominational prayer to the Spirit of the Street.

Danny makes the sign of the cross with a detached mannequin arm.

Amen.

DANNY

Danny scans through the trash, using the mannequin arm for assistance.

What're you looking for?

MARLOWE

I dunno, but I'm gettin' close, I can feel it.
Zeroing in.

DANNY

(using the arm like a metal detector)

Beep. beep. beep.
boop boop boop boop.....
JACKPOT!

What?

MARLOWE

Hell yes!

DANNY

What'd you find?

MARLOWE

Danny holds up a Singing Bass.

The fuck is that?

MARLOWE

Danny presses a button.

The mounted plastic fish flaps around. Its mouth opens and closes as it sings Bobby McFerrin:

*Here's a little song I wrote
You might want to sing it note for note:
Don't worry. Be happy.
(Don't worry, be happy now)
Dooooo doo-doo doot doot, etc.*

Danny does a little dance as he sings along.

MARLOWE

Don't tell me you're keeping that too.

The bass stops singing.

DANNY

Of course I'm keeping this, are you kidding? My kid's gonna flip.

MARLOWE

What kind of a person throws out a box of dildos and a singing fish?

DANNY

An awesome one.

MARLOWE

You better pray they don't walk by right now.

DANNY

Yeah, right.

MARLOWE

I'm serious.

DANNY

What are you talking about?

MARLOWE

I'm talking about you got zero stealth. You're bopping around in broad daylight. How you gonna explain if the owner walks by and catches you mid-mongo?

DANNY

They're gone.

MARLOWE

People work from home.

DANNY

Jesus, you don't notice anything, do you? Look.

MARLOWE

What am I looking at?

DANNY

Read The Bags.

MARLOWE

Don't pretend you're some *jedi master sensei*...

DANNY

What?

MARLOWE

Wax on wax off bullshit.

DANNY

That's two different movies!

MARLOWE

Just tell me.

DANNY

There's too many.

MARLOWE

Too many?

DANNY

Bags. This house is a death.

That touches something deep and uncomfortable
in Marlowe.

MARLOWE

No...

DANNY

This is what it looks like when the family lives outta town and a service comes in to sort through all the valuables and dump the rest out on the curb. A whole life, wrapped in black plastic.

Marlowe goes to the hopper.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Get used to it. Lots of deaths in this city. Murders. Suicides. People get sick, get old. Old person dies, landlord raises the rent, new family moves in. You go from collecting big diapers to small diapers. Circle of life.

Marlowe removes the last bag she loaded in.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Hey Shakespeare, our job is to load the bags IN the hopper, not take them out.

Marlowe unloads another bag.

DANNY (CONT'D)

The fuck are you doing?

MARLOWE

We can't take this.

Bag.

DANNY

Cut it out! You're doubling our work.

Bag.

MARLOWE

This is someone's stuff. Someone's memories.

Bag.

DANNY

It's just junk—

MARLOWE

(agitated)

It's not junk!

DANNY

You're making a scene.

Marlowe's fighting off a growing panic attack.
Her breath gets short and shallow.

MARLOWE

(to herself)

I don't need this shit. Not today. Not today.

Seeing her distress, Danny wraps his arms
around her to provide helpful pressure.

DANNY

I got you. Breathe.

They breathe together. It works. Marlowe calms.
A moment of stillness.

MARLOWE

Danny.

DANNY

Yeah?

MARLOWE

Remove your hands from my shoulders.

DANNY

What?

He lets her go.

DANNY

Sorry. I was just trying to—

MARLOWE

I don't need anything from you, okay?

DANNY

Okay.

MARLOWE

You don't know me. You don't know my life.

DANNY

So tell me.

MARLOWE

I can't get a word in.

DANNY

What's someone with two ivy league degrees doing riding around on a garbage truck?
Tell me.

Marlowe tries. Can't. Deflects.

MARLOWE
You're not worth it.

Danny's stung.

Marlowe goes to the side of the truck and pulls the lever. Hydraulics grind.

Danny SHOVES her, hard.

MARLOWE
WHAT THE FUCK?!

A STREAM OF PAINT sprays out eight feet behind the truck and onto the street.

MARLOWE
(re:the paint)
What the fuck...?

DANNY
(angry)
SPLISH.

MARLOWE
What?

DANNY
Coulda been a THUD: Bowling ball.
That hopper blade comes down on a jug of ammonia? Hydrochloric acid?
POP. That shit eats your lungs, burns you from the inside. Closed casket at your funeral.
You hit that handle, you get the fuck outta the way.

MARLOWE
OK, I get it—

DANNY
(overlapping)
No you don't get it. You're a junior jack and you don't know jack shit. And you don't fucking listen. Jesus, this is why I've been stuck with you three days in a row. Cuz no one else wants to ride with you. It's like babysitting.

MARLOWE
I'm sorry.

DANNY

Get outta here. I'll finish loading myself.

MARLOWE

Should I go back to the truck?

DANNY

I don't give a rat's ass, just go.

Marlowe returns to the truck to regroup. She sits in the cab.

Danny loads in bags.

Bag.

Bag.

Bag.

Danny heads towards the truck. His phone vibrates. He checks the number and answers.

DANNY

Hello?

(acting cute)

Hello, Beverly-from-the-Nurse's-Office.

From inside the cab, Marlowe's struck by how quickly Danny drops the anger and lays on the charm.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Nah, he's faking. He's got a spelling test third period.

Jesus, is he flirting? Marlowe shakes her head at this guy's bullshitery.

DANNY (CONT'D)

(concerned)

How high?

Marlowe clocks the change in his voice.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Did you give him Aspirin?
What do you mean you can't give him Aspirin?

MARLOWE

Note.

DANNY

(receiving the same answer from Beverly)

A what? Since when do you need a note to give a kid Aspirin?

MARLOWE

(leaning out of the cab)

Tylenol.

DANNY

(to Marlowe)

What?

MARLOWE

Tylenol's for fever.

Danny waives her away.

DANNY

(to Beverly)

I'm his father. I'm giving you permission. Yeah, I'm giving you a verbal note.

(a beat)

This. Right now. This is a verbal note. If he's got a fever—

MARLOWE

Could be Strep.

DANNY

(to Marlowe)

Will you be quiet?

(to Beverly)

Not you. I was talking to a coworker.

(turning on the charm)

Look could you just make an exception, just this once? The kid's got a fever. He hates fevers. He says it feels like he's floating through space. That's scary for a seven year-old.

I'm 41 and I don't wanna be floating through space, that's fucking terrifying.

Can you just give him the Aspirin, Barbara?

DANNY (CONT'D)

(a beat)

Beverly?

He curses silently.

DANNY (CONT'D)

No, I can't come get him, I'm on a job right now. Can you call his mom?

Well did you try her cell?

Could you try it again?

No, fine, yeah I'll take care of it—

No, I understand, that's not your responsibility.

No, thank *you*...

(hanging up)

You bitch.

MARLOWE

She's just doing her job.

DANNY

Her job? It's her job to torture little kids? Since when is it a crime to give a kid Aspirin?

Danny dials a number.

MARLOWE

Who're you calling?

He puts the phone to his ear.

DANNY

Tiffany.

MARLOWE

Don't call Tiffany!

DANNY

What kind of a shitty mom doesn't pick up her phone when her kid's sick?

MARLOWE

Hang up.

DANNY

She's probably fucking that pediatric dentist loser. In his chair. In his stupid fucking dentist office chair, with his goddamn stickers.

MARLOWE

Danny, hang up the phone.

DANNY

Pick up the phone, you slut.

MARLOWE

You have a TRO, you wanna never see your kid again?!

Danny realizes his mistake.

Tiffany answers: "*Hello?*"

Danny looks to Marlowe for help.

"Hello??"

MARLOWE

(under her breath)

Hang up.

Danny hangs up the phone.

DANNY

What'd I just do?

The phone vibrates.

DANNY

She's calling back.

MARLOWE

Don't answer.

DANNY

I'm not supposed to call her. She's gonna try to use this against me. Say I violated the terms.

MARLOWE

Say it was a butt dial.

DANNY

(agreeing)

It was a butt dial! I'll tell that to the judge.

MARLOWE

Not your fault.

DANNY

You can't take a guy's kid away because of a butt dial. Right?

MARLOWE

I don't know.

DANNY

Don't tell me you don't know. Why would you say that?

MARLOWE

I've never had a TRO.

DANNY

You're supposed to make me feel better. You're the one who told me to hang up before I had a chance to explain myself. That's like a prank call. That's harassment. I gotta call her back and explain.

MARLOWE

Take a minute—

DANNY

Stay out of my life, you've done enough damage. Fuck! Fuck Tiffany. Fuck Barbara.

MARLOWE

Beverly.

DANNY

You're all in cahoots. You're trying to keep me from my kid. *She* came at *me*.

MARLOWE

Who?

DANNY

Tiffany. She didn't see he was next to me. She came at *me*, and I pushed her away. To protect Max. And now *I'm* the one with the restraining order? *I'm* the one who's a danger to his kid? That kid is everything to me. He's my world. He's my air.

MARLOWE

I know.

DANNY

She took away my air. You know what that feels like?

MARLOWE

I know.

DANNY

(exploding at her)

No you don't fucking know! You have no idea what that's like. You're not a parent.

MARLOWE

(snapping back)

I had my kid. I did that, Danny. The kid died. My son fucking died.

Danny stares at her, gut punched.

Marlowe stares back, just as surprised.

Danny's phone vibrates, interrupting the moment.

He glances at the screen. Back at Marlowe.

DANNY

I gotta...

Marlowe turns away.

DANNY (CONT'D)

(answering)

Hello?

Okay.

Okay. Yeah.

Thanks for letting me know.

Beverly.

He hangs up.

DANNY (CONT'D)

(deeply awkward)

Tiffany's on her way. She's taking him to the doctor. So. Everything's fine...

MARLOWE

(ice cold)

I don't want to hear another word for the rest of the day. We're done.

SCENE 5 - WEDNESDAY: GARAGE PARKING LOT

2:30 PM. After shift.

Danny's outside the garage, smoking.

Marlowe enters in civilian clothes. She cleans up nice. Polished, but not forced. A bit of personal flair.

Danny holds up his cigarette in silent acknowledgment.

I'm good.

MARLOWE

I wasn't offering.

DANNY

Oh.

MARLOWE

I would, but it's my last one.

DANNY

I quit. Last year.

MARLOWE

Good on you. I never smoke in front of my kid, by the way. In case you were wondering.

DANNY

Danny takes a drag of his cigarette.

You got your Captain America lunch pail?

MARLOWE

In the car.

DANNY

The singing bass?

MARLOWE

Yeah.

DANNY

MARLOWE
The Hustler Magazines?

DANNY
The *vintage* Hustler Magazines.

MARLOWE
Okay.

DANNY
All the shit I took, I got. Thanks for your concern.

MARLOWE
You didn't want the book?

Danny crushes the cigarette beneath his boot.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)
I found a book in the... *mongo bin*. Looks like a bunch of botanical prints or something?

DANNY
Yeah, you can just cycle that up.

MARLOWE
So to confirm...you want me to trash it?

DANNY
Up to you. It's yours.

MARLOWE
It's not mine.

DANNY
It's flowers.

He figures that'll clarify everything. It doesn't.

MARLOWE
And?

DANNY
It's a book of flowers.
(with an eye-roll)
I mongoed you flowers.

MARLOWE
You mongoad me flowers?

DANNY
In my experience, you yell at a woman, you get her flowers.

MARLOWE
Were you gonna tell me it was in there?

Danny shrugs.

MARLOWE
I gave you the silent treatment for four and a half hours.

DANNY
I know. I was there.

MARLOWE
Who gets someone a gift and doesn't give it to them?

DANNY
Did you find it or not?

MARLOWE
Yeah, but—

DANNY
Okay then.

She smiles a little at his twisted logic.

Danny takes the opening.

DANNY
You wanna get a drink?

MARLOWE
With you?

DANNY
No, with Delgado. Yeah with me.

MARLOWE
It's two in the afternoon.

DANNY

Shift's over. One drink. Celebrate you probably don't gotta ride with me tomorrow.

MARLOWE

You think?

DANNY

Someone more senior's gonna take this route. You'll be moved to corner baskets, where you belong.

MARLOWE

Three days in a row was pretty—

DANNY

(simultaneously)

Lucky.

MARLOWE

(simultaneously)

Miserable.

DANNY

It had its moments. Come on. One drink. Whaddya say?

Marlowe considers.

MARLOWE

Nah, I should get home.

DANNY

Sure thing.

I wasn't asking as a date.

MARLOWE

I know.

DANNY

You're not my type.

MARLOWE

Well thanks so much.

DANNY

I'm not saying you're not an attractive woman—

MARLOWE

I'm all set.

DANNY

What's that mean?

MARLOWE

It means no.

DANNY

Cut a guy a break. I'm extending an olive branch.

MARLOWE

You don't have to give people things to make them like you, Danny. You've just gotta be better.

DANNY

I'm trying. I'm trying to be better. Look, something happened to you today, at that house with all the bags. We had a moment.

MARLOWE

We didn't have a moment.

DANNY

We had a moment. And then when I found out my kid was sick, and you told me your kid was, *you know*... It made me think, maybe we're not so different. Like, maybe we're the same.

MARLOWE

We're not the same.

DANNY

No, I know we're not the same. I know, but...

(grappling for words, then blurting)

"Time is how we spend our love."

MARLOWE

What?

DANNY

Zadie Smith said that. Something like that. It's in one of her books.

MARLOWE

What do *you* know about Zadie Smith?

DANNY

Hey, I read books. I know how to read.
Plus, Tiffany was in a book club. Which I think is really just an excuse for ladies to get together and drink wine and talk crap about their husbands. Sometimes I'd take the book-of-the-month to the john for my morning constitutional. I liked that one. The one that starts with that quote.
Also, the one about the teeth.
I'm not saying we're in love, by the way. That's not what it means.

MARLOWE

I get that.

DANNY

But not for nothing, you ever wanna share some of your details? One sanitation worker to another? Let's just say... I got time.

He stops talking and gives her time.

He really means it. He's really trying.

Marlowe sighs. It kills her to do this, but...

MARLOWE

Hey Danny?

DANNY

What's up?

MARLOWE

It's just, this book's pretty old.

DANNY

Well I'm sorry. Next time I try to do something nice, I'll get you a newer edition.

MARLOWE

I mean old, old.

DANNY

How old?

MARLOWE

Turn of the century.

DANNY

Which century?

MARLOWE

Not ours.

If Marlowe is holding the book, she is treating it very gingerly, not letting the oils from her fingers get on the pages.

DANNY

You're pulling my leg.

MARLOWE

I wrote my Master's Thesis on the proliferation of Anglo-Indian intaglio travel printmaking as a byproduct of 19th century colonialism.

DANNY

Sounds like a real page turner.

She throws him a look.

DANNY

You think it could be worth some money?

MARLOWE

Could be.

DANNY

What kind of money we talking about?

MARLOWE

I don't know if these prints are original, and they obviously haven't been preserved to museum standards, but...one of my sources was a bound collection like this one and it was up for auction.

DANNY

Ebay?

MARLOWE

Sothebys.

DANNY

How much?

MARLOWE

Five to seven.

Hundred?

DANNY

Thousand.

MARLOWE

Dollars? You're telling me someone's gonna pay seven thousand dollars for that old book?

DANNY

It would have to be appraised to know for sure—

MARLOWE

Who put you up to this? Is this O'Shaughnassy's revenge?

DANNY

I'm serious.

MARLOWE

This doesn't happen to me. I've never won anything. Not even a goldfish at a carnival.

DANNY

We've gotta return it, though, right?

MARLOWE

Return it? Earth to Shakespeare. Come in, Shakespeare.

DANNY

Someone just lost a very expensive book. They've gotta be looking for it.

MARLOWE

No one was keeping it special behind glass. It was out on the curb.

DANNY

Where?

MARLOWE

I dunno.

DANNY

Danny!

MARLOWE

DANNY

Honest to God! You think I store every detail of every mingo? I can't even remember what I had for breakfast today. It was in a pile of bags filled with books. I don't even know what building, let alone what apartment.

MARLOWE

If someone were looking for it, though. What would they do?

DANNY

They'd call 311. If they're quick enough, DSNY mobilizes a search and rescue to the waste transfer station. But no one's looking for this. It looks like a beat up old book. If it didn't have flowers in it, I would've cycled it up myself.

MARLOWE

(in awe)

You would have sent seven thousand dollars—

DANNY

To a garbage transfer station—

MARLOWE

To a dump—

DANNY

(gleeful)

In the Bronx.

MARLOWE

Holy shit!

DANNY

You sure you're not pulling my leg?

MARLOWE

I asked the Street.

DANNY

What?

MARLOWE

I Asked the Street!

DANNY

You asked it for books?

MARLOWE

For money! I asked the Street for a shitload of money and it took my request! It took my request!

SCENE 6 - WEDNESDAY: A PUB

Marlowe and Danny have been celebrating.

They've mummified the book in Saran Wrap to keep it safe. It's on the table between them.

They each have a shot glass of whiskey at the ready and another shooter filled with cloudy liquid.

Marlowe's drunk but not sloppy. Danny's pleasantly buzzed.

DANNY

What's this one to?

MARLOWE

To mingo!

DANNY

The past three rounds have been to mingo.

MARLOWE

To stipple engravings with original hand coloring.

DANNY

We did that one too.

MARLOWE

We did?

DANNY

How drunk are you?

MARLOWE

To the Street!

DANNY

(agreeing)

To the Street.

One, two, three, shoot.

MARLOWE

They down the first shot, followed by the second. They each make a face.

DANNY

What is that, pickle juice?

MARLOWE

A Pickle Back.

DANNY

Oh you want it back?

He pretends to gag himself and vomit it up in her lap.

MARLOWE
(giggling)

You're gross, trash man.

DANNY

San man.

MARLOWE

Yeah, what's up with that?

DANNY

San man?

MARLOWE

Why can't we be garbage men?

DANNY

"A" of all, cuz you're not a man.

MARLOWE

Whatever.

DANNY

And you're not a garbage woman.

MARLOWE
I'm a garbage broad.

DANNY
Don't say that.

MARLOWE
A garbage dame.

DANNY
Cut it out.

MARLOWE
I passed the tests. I got the uniform. I'm a garbage man!

DANNY
Just because we pick up trash, that don't make us garbage.

MARLOWE
(admiringly)
That's deep Danny, fuck.

(a beat)
Fine, then I'm a Refuse Scientist.
A Garbage Relocation Engineer.
A Garbologist!

DANNY
You're funny, you know that?

MARLOWE
I used to be.

DANNY
What's that mean?

MARLOWE
It means I need another drink.

DANNY
How 'bout I get you some water.

MARLOWE
Get me tequila.

DANNY
Jesus, not tequila.

MARLOWE

Tequila!

DANNY

It's always the ones wound up the tightest that don't know how to unwind in moderation.

MARLOWE

Moderation? I thought this was a celebration.

DANNY

You'd better be stone cold sober tomorrow morning. There's a blizzard coming tonight. We're gonna need all hands on deck.

MARLOWE

Danny, this is my first celebration in a long time. Don't ruin it. You know what we should do? Yes.

DANNY

What?

MARLOWE

We should get pot.

DANNY

No.

MARLOWE

Yes.

DANNY

No we shouldn't.

MARLOWE

I know a guy.

DANNY

Shakespeare—

MARLOWE

We should smoke some weed.

DANNY

You're on probation, new hire.

MARLOWE

So?

DANNY

You know we get random drug tests.

MARLOWE

Come on, no one in the garage smokes a little weed?

DANNY

I'm not kidding: They find anything in your system—muscle relaxants, allergy meds, anything stronger than aspirin—and you didn't report it ahead of time? You go down. No appeal, no nothing.

MARLOWE

(eye roll)

Such a Garbologist.

... You wanna microdose on gummies?

DANNY

Micro what?

MARLOWE

Forget it.

DANNY

Lemme ask you a question: Let's say the book sells.

MARLOWE

Yeah?

DANNY

What're you gonna do?

MARLOWE

Pay my bills.

DANNY

How come you didn't get a job at a museum somewhere?

MARLOWE

Oh, you think there are dozens of museum jobs just lying empty?

DANNY

You didn't think about that before you paid for a degree in art history?

She shrugs.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Not that you're asking me, but you know what I'd do with the money? Deposit it straight into my Rangers Fund.

MARLOWE

Rangers fund?

DANNY

Yes ma'am.

MARLOWE

That's hockey?

DANNY

You're killing me right now. Seriously, you're killing me.

MARLOWE

It's a bunch of men with sticks—

DANNY

(a pinball machine's admonishment)

Hold on, TILT—

MARLOWE

Getting in fights. It's boxing on ice.

DANNY

The Ranges are our thing. Nights when I've got Max, that's what we do, how we bond. TV, mac and cheese with hot dogs cut up in there. The Rangers. If I had enough to buy him season tickets? He'd flip.

MARLOWE

How much are season tickets?

DANNY

Seven thou, give or take.

MARLOWE

Oh hell no.

DANNY

Listen—

MARLOWE

That's insane.

DANNY

Listen. The guys my ex goes around with? They buy things for my son.
The ones who're trying to get in good with her.
Sometimes, he'll come over to my house wearing a pair of new basketball shoes...
We don't say nothing, but we both know.
We know it came from some stranger romancing his mom, taking her out to fancy
dinners. Buying him shoes.
Bad enough he's gotta grow up with a divided family, parents who can't talk to each other
without shouting. I don't want his childhood memories to be that I couldn't get him the
things strangers could get him.

Danny leans in with a smile.

DANNY (CONT'D)

I want him to remember the season his dad took him to the Rangers, and he sat right by
the ice. So close he could smell it.

Marlowe's drawn into the fantasy.

They lock eyes. A moment of connection.

DANNY

What about your boy? You telling me he didn't get riled up over hockey? Baseball?

MARLOWE

Comic books. He liked to draw.

DANNY

Double A.

A dark cloud passes over Marlowe. She leans
back, disengages.

DANNY

I'm sorry, I shouldn't've—
You don't gotta talk about it if you don't wanna.

MARLOWE

After my son...

DANNY

(trying to be helpful)

Passed.

MARLOWE

Died. After he died. I didn't get out of bed.

DANNY

How long?

MARLOWE

A while.

DANNY

How long's a while?

MARLOWE

I had to go to a... place.

DANNY

In-patient?

MARLOWE

They made me do a fucking ropes course. There were horses.

DANNY

Jesus.

MARLOWE

And when the support group was over, when I got home... It was gone.

DANNY

What was?

MARLOWE

Everything. His clothes. His books. His blankie.
They threw away my baby's blankie.

DANNY

Who's they?

MARLOWE

My parents.

DANNY

That's a fucked up thing to do.

MARLOWE

It's bad enough losing a four year-old to cancer. I lost him twice.

DANNY

Where do they live? Your parents.

MARLOWE

Brooklyn Heights.

DANNY

Brooklyn Heights? What are they, rich?

MARLOWE

Upper middle class.

DANNY

Yeah, that's code for rich. Okay, come with me.

MARLOWE

Why?

DANNY

We're gonna go T.P. their house.

She scoffs.

DANNY

No seriously. We'll egg their brownstone. You'll feel better.

MARLOWE

I can't.

DANNY

'Course you can.

MARLOWE

I really can't.

DANNY

Why not?

MARLOWE

Because I live there.

DANNY

You live with your parents?

MARLOWE
For the moment.

DANNY
What about the kid's father?

MARLOWE
What about him?

DANNY
Where is he?

MARLOWE
He's not in the picture.

DANNY
What kind of a man doesn't provide for the mother of his child?

MARLOWE
I don't need a man to provide for me.

DANNY
After a tragedy? Where is he? I wanna give that joker a piece of my mind. Where's he live?

MARLOWE
Nowhere.

DANNY
Doesn't live anywhere? Oh wait, he's not...
(hesitant to say it)
Dead?

MARLOWE
No.

DANNY
Homeless?

MARLOWE
He's a number. A sperm donor.

DANNY
Sperm donor? Holy shit, Shakespeare. My life's fucked, but your life's a real dumpster fire!

Marlowe recoils.

DANNY

Oh come on. Don't be that way. I mean it with respect.

MARLOWE

...My life is a little bit of a dumpster fire.

She starts to laugh.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

Fuck it, it is.

DANNY

(tender)

Hey, it takes one to know one. You're in good company.

MARLOWE

This is a good bar. I like this bar.

DANNY

One of the bartenders went to high school with my sister, if she was on right now she'd be giving me shots of Jameson on the house. Me and Darondel, we used to roll in here after shift with our pockets full of quarters, cue up Springsteen on the jukebox.

MARLOWE

Who?

DANNY

You don't know Springsteen?! Springsteen's the Boss!

MARLOWE

(pointedly)

Darondel?

DANNY

Oh. Yeah. My old partner.

MARLOWE

Darondel, your old partner.

DANNY

That's right.

MARLOWE

Your old partner. Darondel.

Is there an echo in here?
DANNY

Muscles like superman.
MARLOWE

Double A.
DANNY

“They might think their shit don’t stink but their trash sure does.”
MARLOWE

That’s the one.
DANNY

Shaved head?
MARLOWE

What’s happening here?
DANNY

Darondel with the shaved head?
MARLOWE

Yeah, why?
DANNY

Darondel who got fired because of his partner?
MARLOWE

That wasn’t my fault.
DANNY

You.
MARLOWE
(with vitriol)

Who you been talking to?
DANNY

I gotta go.
MARLOWE

She stands.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)
(getting the spins)

Whoa.

DANNY

Let me get you some water.

MARLOWE

Gimme a minute, I process tequila really fast.

DANNY

Don't go. Stay.

MARLOWE

I'd rather pluck out my eyelashes.

DANNY

Thats...weird.

Marlowe assembles her stuff quickly.

DANNY

Whatever you heard, it's not true. I didn't get Darondel fired. Darondel got Darondel fired.

MARLOWE

How?

DANNY

Christmas tips.

MARLOWE

Christmas tips?

DANNY

Darondel took Christmas tips. Union rules says that's illegal.

MARLOWE

Bullshit.

DANNY

In New York City, it's a violation of ethics for a civil servant to accept gifts on the job. Supervisor said if we saw it happen and didn't report it, the whole team would be held equally responsible.

MARLOWE

Aka you.

DANNY

Supervisor called me into his office after shift. He put me on the spot.

MARLOWE

You don't rat on a partner.

DANNY

I was going through my divorce. Tiffany was bleeding me dry. I couldn't afford to lose my job.

MARLOWE

You don't rat on a partner. You know who told me that? You did.

DANNY

I KNOW THAT!

Marlowe puts on her coat as fast as she can.

DANNY

(adjusting his tone)

Wait. I'm sorry. Don't go.

The sleeves are inside out and it's confusing,
who made this coat so confusing?

DANNY

You think I wanted to get my partner fired? My fucking family was falling apart, you think I wanted to lose the only family I had left? The guy was at my kid's baptism. Now I call and he wont even pick up the phone.

Fuckit, she'll wear the damn coat backwards.
She grabs her purse and the book.

DANNY

Shakespeare. Don't leave.

MARLOWE

I should've known.

DANNY

Known what?

MARLOWE

(cold as ice)

I'm not on your route 'cause no one wants to ride with *me*. I'm on your route 'cause no one wants to ride with *you*.

INTERLUDE

A blizzard rolls in—garbage collection halts.

We see the snow as it falls.

The romance of New York City in the snow.

Neon traffic lights reflected bright. Strings of
Christmas lights. City noise insulated by fresh
powder.

The peace before the slush, before the
mysteriously deep lakes of black water at every
crosswalk...

Momentarily clean.

SCENE 7 - SATURDAY

During the past two days, garbage collection halted and DSNY fought the snow. All night and all day. Mandatory overtime. Now, normal routes have resumed and it's time to dig out the trash.

Marlowe drives. She looks worn out. Danny sits in the passenger seat. He has a black eye. A real shiner.

MARLOWE
What happened to *you*?

DANNY
I got in a fight.

MARLOWE
With who?

DANNY
I dunno.

MARLOWE
You don't know?

DANNY
Some guy at that Irish bar with a frou frou mustachio.

MARLOWE
A what?

DANNY
The mustache with the pointy ends that twirl up like Snidely Whiplash. Fuckin' stupid.

MARLOWE
You punched a guy because you thought his mustache was stupid?

DANNY
Yeah.

MARLOWE

And he punched you back.

DANNY

That jaunty fucker had a mean right hook.

Marlowe shakes her head at the stupidity.

DANNY

How'm I gonna walk into court next week to argue my T.R.O.? My eye's the color of an eggplant. The judge is gonna take one look at me and double down.

MARLOWE

It'll heal.

Marlowe pulls out a wad of Kleenex from her pocket and blows her nose.

DANNY

When'd you get a cold?

MARLOWE

Round the time I started pulling back to back overnight shifts plowing snow.

DANNY

'Tis the season. We got four seasons in DSNY: Spring, Maggots, Leaf, and Night Plow.

MARLOWE

I know.

DANNY

Winter storm rolls through, mandatory overtime. Gotta salt, gotta plow.

MARLOWE

I know.

DANNY

Then when it's over, we gotta chase garbage to get all the bags that were snowed over.

MARLOWE

Danny, I know. I work here too.

Danny concedes she may have a point.

DANNY

You handle the plow alright? Cuz a truck outfitted with a plow and tire chains, whole different animal. Different turning radius, width, weight—

Marlowe's phone rings. (*Where dem dollas at?*)
She silences it.

DANNY

Don't touch your phone while you're driving.

MARLOWE

(with an edge)

You got a problem with my driving, report it to the Supervisor.

They ride in silence. A cold, uncomfortable
silence.

DANNY (CONT'D)

You gonna tell me now how you know him?

MARLOWE

Who?

DANNY

Darondel.

MARLOWE

I never said I knew him.

DANNY

You just hate my guts on principle? Yeah, well, take a number.

Danny looks out the window. Touches his
busted face. Yup, still hurts.

When he can't take it any longer:

DANNY

How's the book?

MARLOWE

The book?

DANNY

You put it somewhere safe?

MARLOWE

No, Danny, I left it outside on the stoop in the snow. Think it'll be okay?

DANNY

You whisked it outta that bar so fast I didn't get to ask about what happens next.

MARLOWE

Next?

DANNY

If we're splitting the proceeds, it's only fair we split the overhead. Appraisal, listing fees, whatever comes up, I'm good for it. 50/50. Partners.

MARLOWE

We're not splitting the book.

DANNY

What do you mean we're not splitting the book? Of course we're splitting the book!

MARLOWE

You said it was a gift.

DANNY

Yeah, but we were gonna share it.

MARLOWE

You gave me a gift, but we were going to share it?

DANNY

Shakespeare—

MARLOWE

No, tell me. I'm curious how gifts work in your world.

DANNY

Come on. Don't do this. Don't punish me.

MARLOWE

I'm not.

DANNY

You heard a bunch of shit about me that happened over a year ago in another garage, and now you're trying to use it as a reason to cut me out of the agreement.

MARLOWE
What agreement?

DANNY
We had an understanding.

MARLOWE
You gave it to me.

DANNY
That was before I knew it was worth something!

Marlowe blows her nose loudly.

DANNY
(changing tack)
Listen, we found that book together. I mongood it, you recognized its value. That was teamwork.

MARLOWE
You told me to cycle it up.

DANNY
Yeah but I knew you wouldn't.

MARLOWE
Why's that?

DANNY
Because they're pretty fucking flowers, that's why! They don't belong in a dump, they belong in a museum. What kind of idiot throws out a book like that?

MARLOWE
What kind of idiot gives it away?

She looks at him.

DANNY
Look, we don't gotta split it 50/50. We can go 60/40.

MARLOWE
This is not a negotiation. I'm the one with the Masters in Art History. I'm the one with the network of experts and professionals.

DANNY

It's house rules. House rules say we split it. You wouldn't even have that book if it wasn't for me. I'm the one who can mongo. I'm the one with seniority.

MARLOWE

In the garage. You don't get seniority over me in life. You don't outrank me in life.

DANNY

You think I don't know that? You think I got any confusion who has the upper hand outside the garage? You've got an Ivy League degree, Shakespeare.

MARLOWE

And you're a white man in America, Danny. You're gonna be fine.

Danny realizes he's been checked. He pivots.

DANNY

I'm not asking for me. I'm asking for my kid. Christmas is coming up and I need that money.

MARLOWE

Cuz you wanna take him to hockey.

DANNY

It's not *hockey*. It's the Rangers! Plus, I've got alimony. Court fees. Lawyers' fees. Counselors' fees. Mortgage, tuition, travel soccer, not to mention, the kid's gonna need braces—

MARLOWE

I've got 500 K in chemo.

That silences Danny.

MARLOWE (CON'T)

Those are the phone calls.

Those are the vultures chasing me down, every morning, every night, because the one thing that was mine, that came from my body, the one thing that lived because I lived
Died.

So I'll tell you what, Danny, here's what we'll do:

Let's go ahead and let *your* kid suffer from cancer.

Let's have *your* kid die.

Let's have you lose everything he ever touched, every toy, every teddy bear, every picture of him, gone—

And then we can talk about splitting the book. Until then, it's my fucking money.

Marlowe's phone rings:
Where dem dollas at? Where dem dollas at?

MARLOWE

Oh for fuck's sake!

She looks down to silence it.

DANNY

BRAKE!

Marlowe brakes.

The truck squeals to a stop.

The car next to them leans on the horn. As do
several cars behind it.

DANNY

Who rides a bike in front of a garbage truck?

MARLOWE

Where'd he go?

DANNY

Those delivery guys are like kamakazees.

MARLOWE

Do you see him? Ohmygod, where is he?

DANNY

He's all the way down the block. He's fine. Relax. You missed him.

MARLOWE

I missed him?

DANNY

Good reflexes.

MARLOWE

I almost hit a biker.

DANNY

But you didn't. You handled the Truck. You handled it like a boss.

MARLOWE
(looking at her hands)

I'm shaking.

The closest car honks angrily.

DANNY

We hear you, asshole!

MARLOWE
(looking out the side window)

That car's missing a mirror. Did I—

DANNY

Big deal.

MARLOWE

I hit his mirror?

DANNY

Tapped it.

MARLOWE

If he files a claim, am I fired?

DANNY

It's snowing. Shit happens.

MARLOWE

I'm on probation. One violation my first eighteen months—

DANNY

You won't get a rocket. You will get tested though.

MARLOWE

Tested?

DANNY

Drug test. You're clean, right?

MARLOWE

Yeah.

(realizing)

No...

DANNY

What do you mean, no?

MARLOWE

I...I took a NyQuil last night... And a DayQuil this morning—

DANNY

Did you report it?

MARLOWE

It's over the counter!

DANNY

What did I tell you? Anything stronger than Aspirin!

MARLOWE

Fuck. I fucked it up. I'm fired.

She is. Shit.

DANNY

Change seats with me.

MARLOWE

He saw me. The driver. He already—

DANNY

When we call the Supervisor, *I'm* behind the wheel. I'll say it was me.

MARLOWE

But—

DANNY

Move!

SCENE 8 - THE FOLLOWING WEEK

A sidewalk cafe. Marlowe sips coffee from a to-go cup. A second cup rests on the hi-top table.

Danny enters in a suit. His shiner has faded.

MARLOWE

(re: the suit)

Is that for me?

DANNY

I've gotta be in court this afternoon, end of the T.R.O.

(re: the cup)

Is that for me?

MARLOWE

Maybe.

DANNY

I don't drink coffee.

MARLOWE

I know. It's tea.

DANNY

Well whaddya know?

He takes it and sips.

MARLOWE

How are you?

DANNY

I'm good.

MARLOWE

I heard you got suspended.

DANNY

Yeah, I had a few AWOLs with a no-call. The time Max broke his arm jumping outta a tree, shit like that.

MARLOWE

I didn't know.

DANNY

Don't worry about it. It's only garbage.

MARLOWE

How long's it for?

DANNY

It's just for show. Trust me. Next big snowstorm, they're gonna need all hands on deck.

MARLOWE

Can I ask you something?

DANNY

Shoot.

MARLOWE

Did you do it for the money?

DANNY

What?

MARLOWE

When you told me to switch seats, did you do it because... So I'd feel obligated?

DANNY

What do you take me for?

MARLOWE

Or because you wanted to be a hero? Save my ass?

DANNY

Are you kidding me with this shit? Look at me, I'm in a monkey suit to go to court so I can pay both lawyers' fees to maybe see my kid two weekends a month. And he hates my guts right now. I got no illusions. I know I'm no hero.

A beat.

MARLOWE

Malik thought you were a hero.

DANNY

Malik?

MARLOWE

My son.

He loved garbage trucks. More than cement trucks or tow trucks or fire trucks. How they scoop the smelly, stinky trash deep into their belly, it cracked him up. Garbage men were his heroes.

DANNY

(appreciative)

Double A.

MARLOWE

There was this time, after his third round of chemo... he had a fever. It was maybe six in the morning. I was alone with him, and I was scared. He was feeling so bad. We heard the garbage truck come down the block and he perked up.

He begged me to carry him outside to watch.

I wouldn't let him near the truck because his immune system was too weak. but the guys on the truck...

(she looks at Danny pointedly)

They took a picture with him.

DANNY

Wait...

MARLOWE

He started crying. He was so happy to meet his heroes.

DANNY

(holy shit)

Wait a minute...

MARLOWE

He just lost it, he was so happy.

DANNY

Your hair was different.

MARLOWE

Longer.

DANNY

You look different.

MARLOWE

I am different.

DANNY

I remember you! I remember taking a picture with your son.

MARLOWE

And Darondel, with his shaved head...

DANNY

I remember.

MARLOWE

He took one look at Malik without his hair, and he said: "Lookin' good."

DANNY

"Lookin' good, my man."

MARLOWE

"Lookin' good."

He told Malik when he got better he could sit up in the truck.

Oh, I heard about that for weeks. How he was going to get better so he could sit up in the truck. And he did, he got better. For a short while.

DANNY

And then?

MARLOWE

Different guys took over that route. Said you two wouldn't be coming back round.

DANNY

No...

MARLOWE

Christmas tips.

DANNY

I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

MARLOWE

I don't need your apology, you take that somewhere else.

DANNY

I promised a kid dying of cancer he could ride in the truck, and I never delivered. I'm scum.

MARLOWE

You gave him something to fight for.

DANNY

Don't give me that shit.

MARLOWE

He fought twice as hard. He made it six weeks longer than any doctor gave him so he could ride in the truck with you. You gave me six more weeks with my son.

Danny sees Marlowe clearly now. He calls her by her name.

DANNY

Marlowe.

In place of physical gesture, she slides an envelope across the table.

DANNY

What's this?

MARLOWE

Your cut.

DANNY

Of what?

MARLOWE

The book sold.

Danny impulsively tears the envelope in half.

MARLOWE

Are you crazy?!

DANNY

I don't want your money.

They look down at the torn envelope.

Danny panics.

DANNY

That was your name on top of that check, it was written from your account?

MARLOWE

Yes.

DANNY

Oh thank God.

Danny pumps his button down shirt to get air to his pits.

MARLOWE

I can write you another check.

DANNY

I can tear that one up too.

MARLOWE

Take the money. You mongoad the book.

DANNY

What kind of a scumbag gives a person a gift to make amends and then tries to take it back? Put that money toward your fresh start. Toward the day you got better places to be then riding in a truck with me.

MARLOWE

It's not gonna pay off my debt.

DANNY

And we're never gonna get all the garbage, but we do one street at a time, one bag at a time.

He glances at the torn envelope.

MARLOWE

You wanna know how much it was for?

DANNY

Fuck no.

Marlowe laughs.

Danny smiles.

Something shifts between them. Something new becomes possible.

Danny's phone alarm goes off.

DANNY

I gotta get to court. Thanks for the tea.

MARLOWE

I told you I got next.

Danny low-key toasts her with the cup and starts to go.

MARLOWE

(re: Danny's son)

Go get him.

Danny pauses in his tracks.

DANNY

He was tall for a four-year-old.

A memory comes to him. A memory he didn't know he had.

DANNY (CON'T)

Malik.
Tall and skinny, like a bean.

Danny has Marlowe's full attention, but he's not addressing her; he's simply receiving the memory as it comes.

DANNY (CON'T)

He was wearing—he had some kind of pajamas on. With cartoons on them. Anime characters from a show Max watches. I remember 'cuz I had been staying on couches at that point for probably longer than I was welcome, and I'd just rented an apartment of my own. And I thought, I'm gonna get Max a pair of pajamas like those.

Marlowe watches Danny experience the memory of her son. A moment of grace.

DANNY (CONT'D)

He had a way of standing.

An easy way.

Taking up space like he wasn't apologizing, like he knew he deserved it.

You could tell he was a kid accustomed to being liked.

And I liked him for it.

He lets that land. Simply. Fondly.

DANNY (CONT'D)

That's what I remember.

MARLOWE

(simple, genuine)

Thank you.

Danny nods.

SCENE 9 - MONDAY: IN TRANSIT

A sunny, crisp winter morning. 6 AM. Danny and Marlowe are in the truck.

Danny drives.

Marlowe's got her bodega coffee in one hand and her phone in the other. She scrolls.

DANNY

The thing about paper is it's heavy. Especially in the rain. If it's raining and you're on paper, 90% of people will try to switch off that and do metal or glass instead.

Think about a three-foot bundle of newspapers tied together.

It's pretty heavy, right?

Now let it sit in the rain for an hour... It's three times as heavy as it once was.

When you have a three-foot bundle of newspapers, there isn't a garbage bag tough enough to hold it. I go to lift that bag, throw it in the back of the truck— Let's say the building didn't bother to tie it up with twine and that bag rips?

Now I've got one month of newspapers sprawled across the street.

MARLOWE

(on her phone)

M-hmm.

DANNY

Are you listening to me?

MARLOWE

M-hmm.

DANNY

Cuz I ain't talking for my own education...

MARLOWE

A month of newspapers in the street.

He stops at the light.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

Did you see the Rangers game last night?

DANNY

4-3 in overtime. You're telling me you follow hockey now?

MARLOWE

Hell no.

She tosses an envelope in his lap.

DANNY

What's this?

MARLOWE

Two tickets to boxing on ice.

DANNY

Wait. Hold the phone. Tilt. Are you asking me out on a date?

MARLOWE

Relax. They're for you and your son. So close to the ice he'll smell it.

DANNY

What'd this cost you?

MARLOWE

Don't worry about it.

DANNY

Come on. How much do I owe you?

MARLOWE

Let's just say, you tear up those tickets, I'll kill you.

DANNY

You know, you don't gotta give people gifts for them to like you.

MARLOWE

Who says I want you to like me?

DANNY

Fair enough.

MARLOWE

Go back to mansplaining recycling.

DANNY

Mansplaining?

MARLOWE

It's when a man explains to a woman something she already knows.

DANNY

That's cuz you think you know *everything*.

Marlowe returns to her phone.

DANNY

This was a nice thing you did.

MARLOWE

M-hmm.

DANNY

Don't Tinder in the truck.

MARLOWE

Don't tell me what to do.

He smiles at her.

MARLOWE

(looking up)

What?

DANNY

Luminous.

She rolls her eyes.

DANNY

You reading the news?

MARLOWE

Yep.

DANNY

Anything good happening in the world?

MARLOWE

Archeologists think they found a Byzantine dump. They're raising money to excavate it.

DANNY

Most of what we know 'bout ancient civilizations came from studying their garbage.

MARLOWE

Oh yeah?

DANNY

Sure. You can learn a lot about a person by what they throw out.

MARLOWE

I wonder in a thousand years what they'll think of us...

Danny pulls the brake. Hiss.

Marlowe starts to exit the truck. She pauses
halfway out.

Around her, the orchestra of the city comes to
life in harmonious cacophony. Everything
becomes louder. Brighter.

Marlowe looks back at Danny, a glint in her eye
and sunlight in her hair.

She is luminous.

MARLOWE

Let's go chase some trash.

BLACKOUT.
END OF PLAY.