

*She passes it to Dwight.*

DWIGHT

A house made of paper.

*Dwight tries to build a little house out of the paper.*

JEAN

Yeah.

And this one! Braided hair.

*Dwight touches it.*

DWIGHT

Can I braid your hair?

JEAN

What?

Okay.

*Dwight stands behind Jean and fumbles with her hair.*

DWIGHT

Am I pulling too hard?

JEAN

No, that's fine. It feels nice.

You know what's funny? I never had a cell phone. I didn't want to always *be there*, you know. Like if your phone is on you're supposed to be there. Sometimes I like to disappear. But it's like—when everyone has their cell phone on, no one is there. It's like

we're all disappearing the more we're there. Last week there was this woman in line at the pharmacy and she was like, "Shit, Shit!" on her cell phone and she kept saying, "Shit, fuck, you're shitting me, you're fucking shitting me, no fucking way, bitch, if you're shitting me I'll fucking kill you," you know, that kind of thing, and there were all these old people in line and it was like she didn't care if she told her whole life, the worst part of her life, in front of the people in line. It was like—people who are in line at pharmacies must be strangers. By definition. And I thought that was sad.

But when Gordon's phone rang and rang, after he died, I thought his phone was beautiful, like it was the only thing keeping him alive, like as long as people called him he would be alive. That sounds—a little—I know—but all those molecules, in the air, trying to talk to Gordon—and Gordon—he's in the air too—so maybe they all would meet up there, whizzing around—those bits of air—and voices.

DWIGHT

I wonder how long it will take before no one calls him again and then he will be truly gone.

JEAN

I wonder too. I'll leave his phone on as long as I live. I'll keep recharging it. Just in case someone calls. Maybe an old childhood friend. You never know.

DWIGHT

Did you love my brother?

JEAN

I didn't know him well enough to love him.

DWIGHT

It kind of seems like you do.

JEAN

Were the two of you very close?

DWIGHT

We had our moments. Gordon wasn't always—easy.

JEAN

Tell me a story about him.

DWIGHT

One time Gordon made up a character named Mr. Big X and he said: I'll take you to meet Mr. Big X! I was really excited to meet Mr. Big X. But in order to meet him, Gordon wrapped me up in a blanket and pushed me down the stairs.

JEAN

You have any nice stories about Gordon?

DWIGHT

Yeah. They're just harder to remember, you know. No imprint. Like—one time we had dinner and—Gordon was nice to me—and—what kind of story is that ...

JEAN

You crying?

DWIGHT

I'm okay.

JEAN

How's that braid coming?

DWIGHT

It's pretty good. I've never done a braid before.

*Jean reaches up and feels the braid.*

JEAN

It's good. Only you did two parts, not three.

DWIGHT

Huh?

JEAN

Usually a braid has three parts. Two parts is more like a twist. But that's fine. I bet it's pretty from the back.

DWIGHT

It does look pretty.

Here—let me show you—

*He tries to show her the twist.*

*Their faces are close to each other,*

*in the dark, in the back of the stationery store.*

*Jean and Dwight kiss.*

*Gordon's cell phone rings.*

Don't answer that.

JEAN

It could be—

DWIGHT

Don't get it. It'll take a message, okay?

JEAN

But I can't get Gordon's messages—I don't have his password! I'll never know who called—

DWIGHT

Their number—on the in-coming calls—will be saved. Okay?

JEAN

Okay.

*The phone rings.*

*They kiss.*

*Embossed stationery moves through the air slowly, like a snow parade.*

*Lanterns made of embossed paper,*

*houses made of embossed paper,*

*light falling on paper,*

*falling on Jean and Dwight,*

*who are also falling.*

*Gordon walks on stage.*

*He opens his mouth, as if to speak to the audience.*

*Blackout.*

*Intermission.*

PART TWO



scene one

*the last day of gordon's life*

GORDON

*(To the audience)* I woke up that morning—the day I died—thinking I'd like a lobster bisque.

I showered. I had breakfast. Hermia has it timed so she finishes her cereal just as I begin mine. Something proud and untouchable about the way she eats her shredded wheat. A rebuke in the rhythm of her chewing, the curve of her back as she finishes her last bite, standing, washing out the bowl. Who cleans the bowl while they're chewing the last bite? She washes the bowl like this. Getting rid of all the unchewed bits. No respect for the discarded.

I ran to the subway in the rain. I didn't say good-bye. I didn't have an umbrella. I thought about going back for an umbrella, maybe giving Hermia an old-fashioned kiss on the cheek that would