

APARTMENT 259  
by John Lincoln  
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A barren room. Single beat-up bed, damaged dresser with a damaged clock-radio, threadbare chair, well-used table and chairs, tiny kitchenette. A door leads to a small bathroom. Another door leads into the hallway.

The hallway door opens, three people enter.

ELIJAH TENDELTON is first. Late 30s. He is the apartment manager.

HOWIE KURB is second. Early 60s. He is wearing an old suit and carrying a suitcase. The only signs of aging he has are an arthritic left hand and, perhaps, gray hair.

LORNA HIRSCHBECK comes in last. 18 years old, carrying a small purse.

ELIJAH: So this is it. Not much to look at, I know. But it's home. You got the bed there, of course, and the dresser. Cupboards have a few dishes in them, though you might need to get some odds and ends. Through there's your bathroom. Tight quarters, but it should be clean enough. Any questions?

HOWIE: When do I... How do I pay?

ELIJAH: State covers you this month, so you're good until the first. Five hundred bucks. First of every month. Cash is fine until you get set up with a checking account.

HOWIE: Thank you Mr. Tendelton.

ELIJAH: Call me Elijah. I've always found it makes sense to be on a first name basis with anyone who gives you money.

HOWIE: Elijah. Thanks.

ELIJAH: The adjustment can be tough. But you aren't the first guy to go through it. Keep your head down, stay on the straight-and-narrow, chin-up. They became cliches for a reason. Basically it boils doils down to this; Don't screw this up.

HOWIE: Sure.

ELIJAH: I'll be back in with some linens in a little while here. I'm not sure why Kelly didn't get them in here already. You know what? Let me check...

He goes to the bathroom, opens the door.

ELIJAH (cont'd): Yeah. I'm gonna have this whole room given a once over. I don't think it ever got done properly. Kelly's a good girl. She's my cleaning girl. She can be... kind of... slow.

HOWIE: Ok. Thank you.

ELIJAH: Alright. I'll be back with those linens. Welcome to your new home Howie. Nice to meet you ma'am.

LORNA: Thanks. You too.

ELIJAH: Oh. Damn it. The sink there in the kitchen. I need to get that fixed. The sprayer works, but the actual spout isn't putting any water out. Just a little beyond my skill set.. I have a guy coming tomorrow.

HOWIE: No problem.

ELIJAH: Sorry. It's been a crazy week.

HOWIE: Sure.

ELIJAH: Alright. Have fun.

ELIJAH exits. HOWIE looks around at the dumpsy apartment.

LORNA: This is nice. (laughs) Lots of room. (beat) It's not terrible. Except for whatever that smell is... Hopefully when the cleaning girl comes...

An awkward silence.

HOWIE: Am I supposed to tip you or something? I don't have much...

LORNA: No, no. Sorry.

HOWIE: Ok.

LORNA: Yeah.

HOWIE: Sure.

LORNA: Do you want me to leave?

HOWIE: Why would you want to be here. I mean, look at you. Look at this place.

LORNA: It's a good start... Mr. Kurb.

HOWIE: Something like that.

LORNA: Would you like me to help you unpack?

HOWIE: Not much to unpack.

LORNA: Do you need anything?

HOWIE: I'll make due.

LORNA: I can take you over to the store. We can get some of the basics...

HOWIE: I've been in a cell for over forty years sweetie. Let me collect my bearings a little bit before...

LORNA: Of course, sorry.

Small pause.

LORNA: How's it feel to be out?

HOWIE: You've asked me that twice already.

LORNA: You didn't really answer.

HOWIE: It doesn't feel like much at all.

LORNA: You don't feel... you don't feel anything?

HOWIE: I don't know if I would put it that way.

LORNA: Well, is it like... is it just emptiness, or have you just not gotten used to it, or...

HOWIE: I don't know. Look, I don't... what is this?

LORNA: Just making conversation.

HOWIE: Is that what that is? Guess the art of conversation has changed in the last few decades. I can't remember the last time someone asked me how I feel.

LORNA: It's a perfectly normal thing to ask.

HOWIE: If you say so.

LORNA: I think for everyone. I mean, for everyone normal anyway.

HOWIE: Normal is something I am not usually accused of being.

LORNA: Yeah, me either.

Another awkward pause.

HOWIE: Ok then. (He moves downstage, looks through a 'window') Not much to look at. What is that? That a scrapyard?

LORNA moves to another 'window' downstage.

LORNA: A repair place, I think.

HOWIE: Look at that. (small laugh) Last car I had was a '68. A '68 T Bird

LORNA: Really?

HOWIE: Oh yeah. Course, it was stolen. My brother got it out of some airport lot in Albany. We drove that thing around for eight months. Beautiful car. Something about being in a nice car makes you feel more important than you are.

LORNA: Are you a car guy?

HOWIE: No more than anyone else. Not something I've kept up on or anything. That's not a bad car you've got.

LORNA: My Corolla? What's nice about it?

HOWIE: You got the map that talks to you. Tells you where to go. You got all these buttons for the radio, and the windows, and the... I don't know. It's just nice. Look, I'm giving you a compliment here. That's not something I'm particularly good at. You got a nice car, ok?

LORNA: (laughs) Yeah. I'm just bathing in luxury.

HOWIE: Is that the car they gave you for the job?

LORNA: What job?

HOWIE: Driving ex-cons from prison to their new homes.

LORNA: No. It's just... its' my car.

HOWIE: How do you like doing that?

LORNA: I don't know yet. I haven't been doing it long.

HOWIE: Can't be much pay in it.

LORNA: Not really, no.

HOWIE: Doesn't seem like a job with many perks. Girl like you, seems like an odd sort of thing to be doing. Dangerous even. Hell, I just assumed they put everyone on a bus. I didn't even know they gave out rides to guys getting out. Seems like a waste.

LORNA: I guess so.

HOWIE: Look... What's your name sweetheart? Sorry, my head just goes sometimes.

LORNA: Lorna.

HOWIE: Ok. Look Lorna. I'm 62 years old and I just got outta prison. I don't have time for BS, and my radar for it is pretty well honed. You can keep it up if you want, but if you're going to lie and lie and lie, I'd ask you do it somewhere else. What do you want? Are you a reporter? You writing a book or something?

LORNA: I'm 18 years old. I'm not writing a book.

HOWIE: No kidding. 18. I'd have guessed 24. 25 maybe.

LORNA: Nope. 18.

HOWIE: Well what the hell are you doing here? And drop the act. I got into the car with you cause... well, what the hell, right? You're a pretty girl, and frankly I haven't seen many pretty girls in the last 40 years.

LORNA moves across the room, away from him.

LORNA: Do you remember a pretty girl named Patricia Hirschbeck?

HOWIE: (beat) Can't say as I do.

LORNA: Are you sure? The name doesn't set off any bells?

HOWIE: Sorry sweetheart. Lots of people have come and gone in my life. I've never been much good with names.

LORNA: Don't call me that.

HOWIE: What? Sweatheart? I don't mean anything by it.

LORNA: I just... Whatever.

HOWIE: I do not miss that about women. Don't be so... you know what? Forget it.

LORNA: How about Patty?

HOWIE: What?

LORNA: Her friends called her Patty Hirschbeck.

HOWIE: Patty? Nope, no... (beat) Patty H? Damn. Patty H. What'd you call her?

LORNA: Patricia Hirschbeck

HOWIE: Small world. Well yeah. (laughs) Patricia Hirschbeck. I remember Patty H alright. Jesus, it's probably been...

LORNA: Nineteen years.

HOWIE: I woulda guessed ten. But time can be funny that way. (beat) I don't know what you're getting at Lorna. I don't know what you're looking for from me. I don't think...

LORNA: Tell me a story. Tell me how you knew her...

HOWIE: ...I just got here. I got a lot...

LORNA: ...I want to know how you knew her...

HOWIE: Cut the attitude.

LORNA: Tell me the goddamn story.

HOWIE scowls at this.

HOWIE: Don't tell me... I may not know how I 'feel' about being out, I may not be sunshine and goddamn posies, but I know I'm not ready to sit here and take orders from you sweetheart. I'm not going back to having people tell me what to do and when to do it. And don't confuse polite for soft... God, I should pick you up by that pretty hair and throw you out the door is what I should do. (beat; then comes back angry) I've been out for all of an hour and a half. I'm tired. And I've got to start some ridiculous job at a hardware store tomorrow at seven AM. I don't know what you're looking for here, but I can't help you. So I suggest you get yourself out my door.

LORNA produces a bottle of Wild Turkey from her purse.

LORNA: Tell me the story.

HOWIE: Is that...?

LORNA: Your favorite, right?

HOWIE: How'd you know that?

LORNA: You are all over the internet. I even know that you are partial to turkey club sandwiches.

HOWIE: I don't know what you're talking about.

LORNA: You're one of the infamous Kurb Brothers. You were huge. Womanizers. Murderers. Thieves. Taylor Lautner played you in the movie.

HOWIE: I didn't see it.

LORNA: No? They didn't consult you?

Beat.

HOWIE: Ok, fine. Pour the drinks. If I tell you the story will you get the hell out?

LORNA doesn't answer. Instead she moves to the kitchenette and grabs a couple of small cups from the counter. Tries the faucet, but it is broken. Uses the sprayer. She looks at them, then gets a tissue out of her purse to clean them up a bit. She pours one for him, sprays water into the other glass.

HOWIE: You going to make me drink alone?

LORNA: I'm not old enough.

HOWIE: Nobody likes a smart ass.

LORNA: What does that mean?

HOWIE: Forget it. Please, have a drink with me.

LORNA: I'm ok, really.

HOWIE: Fine. Suit yourself. What exactly do you want me to tell you?

LORNA: Patricia... Patty H. How did you come to know her? You must have been inside when you met her, right?

HOWIE: Right. To be honest with you, I actually don't mind telling this story. It's one of the few I can tell where I don't come off as a prick. (takes a long sip, enjoys it a moment) God. So it was twenty, twenty-one years ago. I'm sitting in my cell and the mail comes. All the normal junk. My brother writing from San Quentin. My mother in Schenectady. Normal stuff. And I get this letter from a woman who called herself Patty H. Married to a newsman. The guy was doing some story on the anniversary of my arrest. She said she became fascinated with it all. The cars, the banks, the... I don't know... all the stuff you just mentioned. The excitement I guess. She became interested in me. She asked a bunch of questions. When did I decide to start doing all that stuff? Did I feel different from everyone else? Was it exciting? Different questions from what the reporters and the police and everyone else had asked. So I wrote back. I had gotten some of those letters before, especially early on. I always ignored them. But Patty H. She sent me this Polaroid of herself in this pretty little yellow sundress. That photo. Woo. Let's just say, I answered her letter. (beat) Then she got back to me and it was like that for a year or so. Back and forth, back and forth. I got to know her pretty well, well I mean as well as you can know someone from writing. I mean, I never even knew her last name until you just... Anyway, she'd send me more pictures, I'd send her little stupid things I'd find around the yard. A flower, a nice lookin' piece of quartz, whatever. Then one day, she showed up. I walked into the room, and there she was, this beautiful thing. Probably ten years younger than me. And way out of my league. She had no reason to be there, I was sure the whole thing was some kind of a joke. But we talked. We talked that way, I don't know, two three months before we started doing the conjugal... you don't want to hear this stuff.

LORNA: Yes, I do.

HOWIE: You're something. You know that? (beat) We had those visits for, I don't know, maybe six months. I think we had, maybe four in all. Hell, it was the longest relationship I'd ever had. She was a good woman. And then one day she stopped showing up. I wrote her, but she didn't answer. I tried looking into who her husband was, but I don't think, ironically, I don't think he ever got that article published, cause I could never find him. She just vanished.

LORNA: Walter Hirschbeck.

HOWIE: Excuse me?



LORNA: His name. Walter Hirschbeck. And he did get the article published.

HOWIE: No. No way, I searched...

LORNA: He hates his last name. He writes as Wally Beck.

HOWIE: (laughs) That's funny. Oh man. That's funny.

LORNA: What?

HOWIE: I spent weeks, months probably, trading cigarettes, favors, whatever. Just trying to get copies of old newspapers to find this guy. I'm reading every writer with a last name starting with H. I'm digging through.. I never read so much in my life. Two or three times I thought I might have found... I mean, you spend so much time trying to do a thing and some little girl, 20 years later, walks in and gives his name like it's no big deal. How do you know all this?

LORNA: He's my Dad.

HOWIE: Oh. Ok. Well. How the hell is he?

LORNA: He's good.

HOWIE: So your Mom then...

LORNA: Patty H. Want another drink?

HOWIE: Please.

She pours the drink. HOWIE looks around a bit. Considers his next question.

HOWIE: How's your Mom?

LORNA: She's dead.

Pause.

HOWIE: I'm sorry.

LORNA: Thanks.

HOWIE: What happened?

LORNA: Breast cancer. She fought for a long time. She wanted to see my little sister make it into high school, and she did.

HOWIE: Yeah. That's an understatement.

LORNA: And then she told me, the night before she passed away, as she laid in her bed. Unable to lift her head really. She told me that you were my father.

After a small pregnant pause...

HOWIE: Your father? I'm your father? Why would she say that?

LORNA: That's what she told me.

HOWIE: How is that possible?

LORNA: Do you really need me to explain that to you? Ok. Sometimes when a man and a woman really love each other they...

HOWIE: Shut up.

LORNA: Yeah... I guess it doesn't necessarily have to be love, right?

HOWIE: That was clever. That was a clever little line. You don't know anything about anything. You're this little punk who doesn't know enough not have these big brass balls. But you're clever.

LORNA: What is that supposed to mean?

HOWIE: That was a compliment.

LORNA: If that was a compliment I'd hate to hear your insults.

HOWIE: I told you, I'm not real good with compliments.

A KNOCK on the door.

HOWIE: Come in.

ELIJAH enters with the linens. He works his way over to the bed.

ELIJAH: Bit of a madhouse around here. Had a guy who refused to check in with his PO, and they just had to haul him away. Room's not too bad, though, if you want I can show it to you before you settle in. You might like it better than what you've got here.

HOWIE: No, I like this just fine.

ELIJAH: Are you sure, because...

HOWIE: I said this is fine.

ELIJAH: Alright, sure.

HOWIE: I can take care of the sheets.

ELIJAH: I wasn't about to make your bed for Christ's sake. I've got a...

HOWIE: Just leave them.

Beat.

ELIJAH: Let me advise you not to piss on the only friend you've got here. No offense, young lady, but I don't envision you being around all that long.

HOWIE: I mean no disrespect. It's been a day.

ELIJAH: I can imagine. But, and this is important, I don't care. At all. I'm not here to be abused by you. If that train is going to move at all, it's going in the other direction. Do I make myself clear?

HOWIE: Sure.

ELIJAH: Now, the cleaning girl, Kelly, she's going to be in here in a minute or two. She's going to clean the bathroom, and feel free to ask her to clean whatever else. If you'd like to arrange another time for her to come, that would be fine. But do not let me find out that you have been rude to her. Is *that* clear?

HOWIE: Yes sir.

ELIJAH: Ok.

ELIJAH leaves.

HOWIE: I'm not sure how this is different from prison.

LORNA: I don't think you get to play victim here.

HOWIE: Don't you do that now. We were getting off to a good start.

LORNA: Were we?

HOWIE: Another drink?

LORNA: Aren't you a little out of practice with this stuff?

HOWIE: You can't bribe me with that bottle just to give me a guilt trip now. Give it here.

He takes the bottle. Pours another drink.

HOWIE (cont'd): Not like people didn't drink during prohibition sweetheart.

LORNA: Stop calling me that.

HOWIE: (waves her off) Oh don't go getting all offended.

Beat.

LORNA: I've done my research on this stuff. How did you get my mom in for conjugal visits if she wasn't your wife? The law is that you have to be married, right?

HOWIE: In prison there are a lot of rules. Some are breakable and some aren't. And even the unbreakable ones can be bent if you know how to go about it.

LORNA: You would have to have had help, right? There's got to be a paper trail for all of that.

HOWIE: Well, paper is just paper. Easy to get if you know where to go. And the nice thing about paper, and it's different these days with everything being done on the computer, but with paper it's just as easy to make it go away when you don't need it anymore.

LORNA: Who helped you?

HOWIE: Hell, I don't remember his name. Tall, skinny kid. Lots of freckles. Timid as all hell. He had no reason to be a guard. I think his Daddy worked in the system somewhere, threw a gun and a badge at him and shoved him in.

LORNA: Why would he help you?

HOWIE: Kendall Grint. His name I remember. He was a real bastard, used to antagonize everyone. All the guard wanted was to stop being bothered by Kendall. And beatings didn't work, Kendall liked the beatings. He needed to be convinced, you know?

LORNA: No. Tell me.

HOWIE: Some stories are better untold.

LORNA: So this guard forged all the papers and stuff just because you got an inmate to stop teasing him.

HOWIE: You never met Kendall.

LORNA: Couldn't you have just asked the guard my mom's name? I mean, he had to know something about her, right?

HOWIE: It was all fake. Whatever name he gave her, it wasn't real. Look, when you're getting involved the way that guy was getting involved, the less you know the better.

LORNA: I just don't believe my mom would...

HOWIE: Don't take this the wrong way, but how did she know it was mine.

LORNA: (laughs)

HOWIE: I don't think that's a funny question.

LORNA: It's the first thing I asked her.

HOWIE: Did she have a good answer?

LORNA: She said she just knows. A woman knows, she said. She didn't get into a lot of detail... but I guess my Dad was working pretty hard on the story and there was a long period of... well, she called it a drought. No one but you for months.

HOWIE: Lucky me.

LORNA: Wow. Thanks.

HOWIE: I didn't mean it like that. Calm down.

LORNA: No offense taken. Thanks for asking..

HOWIE: What'd you expect? I'd get out of jail, then you'd pick me up and I'd take you back to my exotic one-room apartment and sing you John Lennon songs about how wonderful the world is. My God, girl, you're naive.

LORNA: Yeah, that's exactly it...

HOWIE: ...Calm down...

LORNA: ...Right, I've got an awesome dad who does everything he can for me. But I was sure hoping I'd come down here and you'd take me under your wing and be my new Daddy.

HOWIE: You've got an attitude.

LORNA: Don't think it comes from mom

HOWIE: I'm not sure why I should believe you about any of this.

LORNA: I don't care if you do or not.

HOWIE: (laughs)

LORNA: I'm not here to make you feel better about knocking up my Mom. I don't really care what you think.

HOWIE: So what do you want from me?

LORNA: What?

HOWIE: What do you want? There's got to be some reason you're here. You don't go through all the trouble you went through for nothing. What do you want?

Another knock on the door.

HOWIE (cont'd): Damn it! What?!?

KELLY (os): I'm here to clean up.

HOWIE: Not now. Come back later.

LORNA: No, it's ok. Come in.

KELLY, 16, enters. HOWIE stares at Lorna.

HOWIE: You just make yourself right at home, don't you?

LORNA: This place is filthy. It needs to be cleaned.

HOWIE: Sorry it doesn't meet your high standards your majesty.

He sits on the bed, LORNA turns to KELLY.

LORNA: Ignore him. He's a grump.

KELLY: Ok. What can I do?

LORNA: The dishes over there are pretty bad. And the bathroom needs a cleaning I think.

KELLY: No problem. Sorry I wasn't able to get to it before you got here.

LORNA: It's ok.

KELLY goes over to the kitchenette. Starts working on cleaning up. LORNA turns back to HOWIE.

LORNA: Come on. Let's get you unpacked a little bit.

HOWIE: Look, sweetheart. I've given you enough here. What is it you want from me?

LORNA: It won't take long. You don't have that much...

HOWIE: Don't ignore me.

LORNA: You need to let me take you over to the mall or something. These clothes are ridiculous.

HOWIE: Answer the question.

LORNA: Not now. (motions to Kelly, as if to say she doesn't want to talk about it with her there) There will be time for that later.

HOWIE: Are you moving in?

LORNA: No. Shut up. Come on Mr. Kurb...

HOWIE: Please. Call me Dad.

LORNA: You're a... God you're frustrating.

HOWIE: Listen kid, forget the question. This is all a bit too much. Why don't you get yourself home to your rich Daddy, the one who provides everything for you, and we can work this out later.

LORNA: You're not going to...

HOWIE: Going to what...

LORNA: You don't get to dictate how this goes.

HOWIE: I disagree. This might be a hole, but you're in my house sweetheart. When I swing by your mansion you can make the rules.

KELLY: I think I'm going to clean the bathroom.

KELLY scurries into the bathroom, closing the door behind her. HOWIE and LORNA ignore her.

HOWIE: Hell, you didn't even bring me a full bottle. I'm not sure what you think this bought you. Where the hell did you get this anyway? Did you steal it from your Daddy?

LORNA: Yes.

HOWIE: Don't you worry that he'll find out.

LORNA: He has people over all the time. He'll just assume it was one of his friends. Actually, he'll probably assume it was my sister. She's the drinker.

HOWIE: And you'd just let her take the fall?

LORNA: Don't patronize me. The real world is a little different from the criminal world.

HOWIE: Sure is. (beat) I remember one time, I was fourteen. When my Dad came home from work he saw a cigarette butt in the grass. He came in, really came in with a head of steam. Wanted to know who was smoking. I told him it was me. He didn't even hesitate. Took me into the bedroom and gave me some of his belt. He wasn't a violent guy, so I don't want to make it sound like that. He had some rules you just didn't break. He was sort of ahead of the whole thing about cigarettes being bad for you because his brother died of emphysema. I liked Uncle Jack. He was a... But, anyway... what the hell was I saying?

LORNA: I have no idea. Something about your Dad beating you because you smoked a cigarette.

HOWIE: Oh right. Right. It wasn't me who smoked it. I knew it must have been my brother. But I'd be damned if I was going to let my Father take it to him for smoking one lousy cigarette which he probably hated anyway.

LORNA: So you're some saint, and I am a crappy sister. Point taken.

HOWIE: Shut your mouth. That's not what I'm saying. I'm not sure what I'm saying. Maybe just that things are different. I feel like people are different now. I feel like people take things for granted now.



LORNA: And how did it *feel* when you killed the bartender?

HOWIE: What did you say to me?

Beat.

LORNA: You heard me. I want to know how it felt when you killed that bartender. The one in Buffalo. At the... what was it... the Kudgel?

HOWIE: It was called the Kennel. Why do you want to know that?

LORNA: Because I do.

HOWIE: No. Get out.

LORNA: Did it feel good? Did you enjoy it? Did you hate it?

HOWIE: I'm not... This is the last thing I want to be reliving today.

LORNA: Did the blood excite you? Did it make you...

HOWIE: No! Stop it. It wasn't like that at all. It wasn't. The whole thing... it was an accident. No one was supposed to be there.

LORNA says nothing, stares at him and waits.

HOWIE: You're a pain in the ass.

LORNA: I know.

HOWIE: Fine. But if I do this, I do it for the rest of the bottle of Wild Turkey. That way we've each given each other something and I don't owe you anything. Deal?

LORNA: Works for me.

HOWIE: Good. Alright. Jimmy's buddy... Jimmy is my little brother... well you probably already know... anyway Jimmy's buddy said that the place was closed at one, and no one came to get the money until seven the next morning. So Jimmy and I did... we did what we did. We went in to get the money and go. No one was supposed to be there. Then this guy hits Jimmy over the head, real hard. I turned and fired. It was reactionary. I didn't even think about it. I didn't... So the guy goes down. We took the money, and we left. That's it. All the stuff in the trial, all the stuff you read about with Jimmy and the guy, the crap they put in the movie... none of it was true. They didn't know each other. Jimmy hadn't been to the bar before.

It wasn't planned. It was all an accident.

LORNA: In that moment when you realized the guy was dead...

HOWIE: Mike Russo.

LORNA: Right. When you realized he was dead, how did you feel?

HOWIE: What?

LORNA: How did you feel? What did you feel?

HOWIE: What kind of question is that?

LORNA: Where you upset? Did you like it? Did it hurt? What?

HOWIE: Stop it.

LORNA: I need to know.

HOWIE: I'm not talking about this. Stop.

LORNA: How did it feel?

HOWIE: Get out.

LORNA: It's a simple question

HOWIE: Get out of my apartment.

LORNA: Tell me first.

HOWIE: Who do you think you are?

LORNA: That's why I'm here.

HOWIE: Leave. Now.

LORNA: I'm not going anywhere.

HOWIE: Fine. I'll go. I'm going to take a little walk. Get the lay of the land. When I get back, don't be here. I'll call the police. I'm not joking.

LORNA: Don't threaten me.

HOWIE: Patty H. Goddamn Patty H.

He exits. LORNA fumes a minute. She goes over to his suitcase and knocks it off the bed, spilling the contents everywhere. She kicks the bed. YELLS in frustration. She then gathers herself. She rights the bed. Turns on the radio, finds a station. She then goes to the clothes and starts neatly putting them into the dresser.

RADIO ANNOUNCER: It's 9:42 on this unusually cold Monday, and you are listening to 103.5, the only station that will play anything you want! It's time for some headlines (sound cue). Well, let's get the bad news out of the way first. The Yankees lost 4-1 to the Red Sox last night, completing a sweep which leaves them a full game back for an AL wild card spot with three to play. The Mets held on for a 3-2 win over the Cardinals, but the playoffs are officially out of reach after the Nationals shutout the Padres 6-0. In national news, the President signed a bill which extends rights to naturalized citizens. This, of course, started an entirely partisan debate which was so asinine that I refuse to get into it. And finally, in local news, infamous bank-robber and murderer Howard Kurb was released from prison this morning. His new location is undisclosed, but you may want to keep your daughters close and your doors locked, just in case. But enough of the boring. On with the music on 103.5, the only station that will play anything you want!

Next song starts up. LORNA finds a picture of her mother in Howie's bag. She sits down on the couch with it.

At some point, KELLY comes out of the bathroom. LORNA turns, and is startled.

LORNA: Oh my God. I completely forgot you were there.

KELLY: I'm sorry. I didn't mean to scare you.

LORNA shuts off the radio.

LORNA: It's ok.

KELLY: That bathroom was embarrassing. It was pretty bad.

LORNA: Yeah, sorry.

KELLY: You don't need to apologize. It wasn't you.

LORNA: Yeah. (beat) How much of that fight did you hear?

KELLY: Nothing. I didn't...

LORNA: It's ok. I'm not mad. I don't really care if you heard.

KELLY: I'm just the cleaning girl.

LORNA: God, I didn't mean it like that.

KELLY: I know. I'm not saying you said that. I'm saying that. I'm just the cleaning girl. You don't have to worry about me.

LORNA: Stop that. How old are you?

KELLY: Sixteen.

LORNA: Oh yeah? My sister is sixteen. Do you go to... what would it be here... Mason High?

KELLY: Mason, yeah.

LORNA: We played you guys in Volleyball every year.

KELLY: Oh yeah? Where do you go?

LORNA: James Street. Well I did. I graduated last year.

KELLY: Cool. I hear its nice over there. That's a really nice school.

LORNA: Yeah.

KELLY: I don't go to Mason anymore. I did.

LORNA: Why not?

KELLY: I just... it's not important.

LORNA: Alright. Whatever. I'm not trying to be pushy.

KELLY: Yeah, it's not something I really like to talk about.

LORNA: Ok.

Beat.

KELLY: My Dad didn't think it was worth it. He said there wasn't really any sense in finishing if I wasn't going to use the education anyway.

LORNA: That's horrible.

KELLY: Yeah, well. You know. I guess he's right.

LORNA: What an ass.

KELLY: He's not that bad. He can be, but it makes it sound worse than it is, you know?

LORNA: No he's an ass. And I'd tell him that if I could.

KELLY: You could.

LORNA: What?

KELLY: Tell him. You could tell him. He's the guy... the landlord.

LORNA: Elijah?

KELLY: Yeah.

LORNA: He's your Dad?

KELLY: Uh-huh.

LORNA: The guy who said you were... I'm meeting some real winners today.

KELLY: Welcome to my life. That's sort of what it's like around here. My Dad's an ex-con too. This whole building is filled with ex-cons.. It started as wanting to help guys out, but now he just sort of takes the money and doesn't care. But that's how it goes. Right? When you start doing something, or you learn something like with your Father... it seems like a huge deal at first. But over time, it just sort of becomes... life.

LORNA: I guess so. I can't believe you have to live here.

KELLY: I keep telling myself I'll be eighteen in two years and I'm out.

LORNA: That's good.

KELLY: Yeah. But it feels like a lie when it say it out loud.

(beat)

KELLY: How long ago did your Mom die? I mean, how long ago did you find out about him?

LORNA: Oh it was... God. Almost seven months now.

KELLY: What a coincidence. With him getting out now.

LORNA: Well, my mom knew he was due to be paroled. She'd been thinking about him a lot I guess. She said that if he was never getting out that she probably wouldn't have told me.

KELLY: Does your Dad know?

LORNA: No. And he isn't going to find out.

KELLY: That has to be hard.

LORNA: It is. It's even harder not to tell my sister. We tell each other everything.

KELLY: Are you happy your Mom told you the truth?

LORNA: I'm still not sure. I guess it depends on how it goes when he gets back.

KELLY: Yeah. I can't imagine what that's like. What it's like to have everything flipped like that. But I can tell that you're strong. The way you stand up to some stranger you don't really know. That sort of... confidence. You'll be ok. I know it. Is that stupid to say? I mean I just met you. And I didn't even really meet you. Is that stupid to say?

LORNA: No. It's nice of you. Thanks.

KELLY: Sure. He doesn't seem like too bad of a guy.

LORNA: Who?

KELLY: Mr. Kurb. Your father.

LORNA: Are you kidding?

KELLY: I mean, he's rough. He's super defensive. But I've met some real jerks doing this. I mean, you can usually tell within thirty seconds if someone is halfway decent or not. Some of the people that move in here really scare me. I really don't like... Well, I'm just saying your father, this father I mean, he seems at least halfway decent.

LORNA: So is this what you do? You clean the place for your Dad?

KELLY: Yeah.

LORNA: Do you like it?

KELLY: Would you?

LORNA: Do you live here?

KELLY: Apartment 101.

LORNA: Do you drive?

KELLY: No.

LORNA: Can you get to Fullerton Avenue?

KELLY: Sure. I can take the bus.

LORNA goes to her purse, writes down a number.

LORNA: Call me. I'm an assistant manager at Hovar's. It's not awesome, but it's pays for my books and stuff at school. Anyway, call me. I can get you in there and you can stop cleaning up for rapists and murderers and... God only know who else.

KELLY: Really?

LORNA: Yeah.

KELLY: I'm not sure my Dad would like it.

LORNA: All the more reason to do it. I'm Lorna, by the way.

KELLY: Kelly.

LORNA: Good. Now we've officially met.

KELLY: My Dad's not terrible either. I mean he's not very smart. And he's not as nice to me as he is to the people who move in here. But he's ok.

LORNA: Doesn't mean you have to clean his bathrooms.

KELLY: I know. Thanks.

LORNA: No problem. It's the least I can do. You obviously don't know me, but if there's one thing you should know about me it's...

The door opens, HOWIE comes in. KELLY and LORNA stand.

KELLY: I'm gonna go. Bathroom is all set Mr. Kurb.

HOWIE: Thank you.

KELLY: Bye. Thanks.

LORNA: Call me.

KELLY leaves.

HOWIE: Still here.

LORNA: I was less worried about your police threat when I realized that you don't have a phone.

HOWIE: That's a problem, sure. Making friends with the cleaning girl?

LORNA: Her name's Kelly.

HOWIE: You *are* making friends. You two don't seem like you come from the same world.

LORNA: You don't know anything about me.

HOWIE: Look at you. Look at her.

LORNA: You're a jerk.

HOWIE: I've been called a lot worse.

LORNA: She was just sticking up for you too.

HOWIE: Me? Why?

LORNA: I have no idea.

HOWIE: I mean, I don't know the girl as a person. I'm not trying to say she's a bad kid. She just looks like she's been cleaning dirty toilets her whole life.

LORNA: Some people have it tough.



HOWIE: So now you're going to talk to me about how crappy life can be? I didn't spend much time in school sweetheart, but I believe the scholars call that 'irony'.

LORNA: Do they?

HOWIE: You tell me. You in school?

LORNA: Yeah.

HOWIE: What are you studying?

LORNA: What, are you concerned about me now?

HOWIE: What... are... you... studying?

LORNA: Psychology. I'm going for Psych.

HOWIE: That's good. Lot's of money in that.

LORNA: I guess so.

HOWIE: Good. That's good. Education is good.

LORNA: What are you even talking about?

HOWIE: I think you should go home.

LORNA: You established that already.

HOWIE: I said it angrily. I said it to just be free of.. whatever the hell is going on here. But now, I thought about it as I took a walk. I realized... You seem like a good kid. You're obviously smart. You have a good thing going on. You made your play, found your father, hopefully that gets it out of your system. You need to go home to your dad, and I'm not going to talk bad about the guy, I think you should go home to him and live your life. Nothing is different for you now from what it was yesterday, or last month, or last year. Go home and be free of this.

LORNA: (laughing) Who are you?

HOWIE: I don't know Lorna. I know I'm not who I was when I went to prison. I know I'm not that twenty one year old kid who thought he was owed something, and thought it was him versus everyone else. I'm certainly not the honorable guy... the victim almost... that the movie made me out to be. (beat) Look, I guess prison was, strange a thing as it is, prison was the first place I found people who were like

me. And now that's gone. And here I am. And we'll see what's next.

LORNA: So you DID see the movie.

HOWIE: Are you kidding? If they made a movie about you, don't you think you'd be at least a little curious? Of course I watched it. Only thing they got right was getting a good looking kid to play me.

LORNA: He's overrated.

HOWIE: Eh, he did alright. But they definitely tried to make it like my brother was some villain and I was this... saint. A fallen saint or something. Definitely not how it was.

LORNA: I can tell you loved it.

Beat.

HOWIE: Hey, I want to apologize for saying stuff about you being good looking earlier. Not that you aren't good looking. You're a good looking kid. But... that must have been a little weird for you. Hearing that. I didn't mean anything by it.

LORNA: You didn't know you were my father when you said it.

HOWIE: Sure. True. But it still wasn't right.

LORNA: No worries.

HOWIE: For all my faults, I'm usually not a chauvinist. At least I'm not anymore. I might have been in my youth.

LORNA: Well, if my mom liked you it means you can't be all bad.

HOWIE: That's nice of you to say.

LORNA: This whole thing, it's so out of character for her. She never was one to sleep around, at least that I knew of. She didn't have a wild streak or anything like that. I didn't believe her at first when she told me about you. It just didn't fit what I knew of her.

HOWIE: Sometimes there can be a hell of a gulf between reality and our expectations.

Lorna goes and cleans out her glass. Takes a moment.

LORNA: I didn't feel anything when she died.

HOWIE: What does that mean?

LORNA: Just what I said. When my mom died I didn't feel anything. In the moment that we watched her slip away, I was sure that I was just tired and that I had prepared myself for the day she would go. I wasn't concerned when I didn't cry that first day. I mean, I wasn't really aware of it. Same thing at her funeral. I was watching my sister cry, my Dad cry, people I hadn't even met... they're all there crying. I just looked at that dark casket against her pale face and the white dress and for some reason I started identifying with the casket. I know that sounds crazy.

HOWIE: That's not crazy. No.

LORNA: A week later my sister was cleaning the house, we were in this mode of trying to start over, you know? So she has the couch pulled out and inside this airvent she finds a bracelet my Mom wore, which we all thought she lost years ago. And Elsa just lost it. She was inconsolable. Which made my Dad lose it. So we are all there at the house, Dad had locked himself in his room crying like a ten year old. My sister draped over the couch, just pouring tears. And I was standing in the middle of the living room, not getting upset, not even getting angry. Just... there was nothing there. My sister looked up at me, she threw the bracelet at me, she got pissed, like 'Why are you so calm about this?' And I looked at her and said 'Because my father is a murderer.'

HOWIE: Jesus Christ.

LORNA: I hadn't thought about the answer, it must have been crouching in my subconscious waiting to spring, but once it was there... man. (beat) Elsa slapped me. Confused as all hell, thinking I was blaming Dad for giving Mom cancer or something. Fortunately she was so hysterical that she didn't even really remember it later. I was able to pass it off like I misspoke. And, eventually, everything went back to normal. I mean, that day, and then you know, the next week and whatever. So here we are months later, and my Dad and my sister have moved on, and I still haven't cried, or even felt like it actually happened. To some extent I feel like she would be in her bed if I just showed up at the hospital. And so, I've been spending all this time, thinking it could be my fault, that there's something wrong with me. Or it could just be that it's because *you* are this soulless bastard, and that you passed that on to me.

HOWIE: No, you're not. You're not soulless Lorna. That's absurd.

LORNA: Is it? Nature, nurture right? Hell, this was first day of Psych 101 for me. First day of class we're talking about nature-nurture, and I'm sitting there just trying not to laugh out loud in the middle of class because of the absurdity of it all.

HOWIE: When you lose someone you are close to, you can't explain why...

LORNA: Shut up. No offense, but shut up. You don't know what you're talking about.

Beat.

HOWIE: That's funny. That's good. I'm going to let that go because you just, I know that's an emotional thing you just said. So, I'm going to pretend you didn't just say what you said. You know what I mean?

LORNA: You don't...

HOWIE: I got upset when I killed that guy. Not right away, because of the adrenaline, but that night I did. It hurt. It still hurts. (beat) Maybe more to the point, the night I realized I wasn't going to see your mom again, sharing a cell with another guy, in a prison full of malicious pricks... you're in your cell, with your face buried in a pillow, trying not to let anyone know you're crying about a woman whose last name you still don't know.

LORNA: Great. So what you're saying is that you've been more emotional about my mom than I have. That's awesome.

HOWIE: Don't beat yourself up, sweetheart.

LORNA: This sucks.

HOWIE: Hey, look at it this way. If it was because of me, if it was in your genes or whatever, then there would be nothing you could do about it, right? This way, you can still figure out what it is...

LORNA: Lots of things it could be. I'm a psych major, right? PTSD, depression, hell lack of emotion is a symptom of Schizophrenia. But, I mean, I feel other stuff. I'm pissed at you, for example, even if I don't know why.

HOWIE: Fair enough.

LORNA: And I can have a good time with friends usually, I mean as much as is normal. It's just this thing with my Mom, and I don't know how to break it.

HOWIE: I wish I could give you an answer.

LORNA: Yeah. Me too.

HOWIE: I'm sorry Lorna.

LORNA: Thanks.

HOWIE: Sure you don't want a drink?

LORNA: (laughs through her frustration) I'm not old enough, remember?

HOWIE: I won't tell if you don't tell.

LORNA: I think I'm ok. I should probably go. (beat) Is there anything I can help you with first?

HOWIE: Sure. I'm terrible at making beds. Want to give me a hand?

LORNA: Yeah. Yeah, sure. In fact, you sit and have another drink. I can do this.

HOWIE: No, let me help.

LORNA: There's really no need.

HOWIE: Hey, I won't keep arguing if you really want to.

LORNA starts making the bed. A vicious knock slams the door.

HOWIE (cont'd): I don't think I had this many visitors in forty years.

KELLY comes plowing through the door.

KELLY: You need to go. You need to go right now.

LORNA: What? Kelly? What...

KELLY: He's coming right now!

HOWIE: What the hell is this?

ELIJAH comes plowing in with a baseball bat in hand.

ELIJAH: What the hell is going on here?

HOWIE: What are you talking about?

ELIJAH: I don't care what you do with this hooker, but she needs to stay away from my daughter.

HOWIE: I don't...

LORNA: Hooker?

ELIJAH: You shut your mouth.

HOWIE: Do not speak to her...

ELIJAH pulls out the paper with the phone number on it, goes by HOWIE, shoves it in LORNA's face.

ELIJAH: My daughter isn't going anywhere. She stays with me.

HOWIE: Get out of my apartment right now.

ELIJAH: Your apartment?

ELIJAH backs HOWIE up. As soon as ELIJAH touches HOWIE, he snaps off a jab, punching ELIJAH in the face. They tussle.

HOWIE maintains the upper hand. He lands a few good shots, ELIJAH ends up bloody.

HOWIE continues, gets a few extra in. KELLY rushes in.

KELLY: Stop it! Stop it, you're hurting him, stop it!

HOWIE relents, ELIJAH backs up, into the corner, discovers the blood. ELIJAH is trying to maintain whatever dignity he has left.

ELIJAH: I hope you didn't get too comfortable here. Hey, hooker, you might want to clear out before the cops get here.

HOWIE steps towards ELIJAH, who shies away.

ELIJAH: Let's go Kelly.

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He grabs KELLY, starts to pull her out of the room.

KELLY breaks away.

KELLY: Let go of me! I'm done. I'm done with this place, I'm done with you. You can't do this to people.

ELIJAH goes to hit her, HOWIE threatens again. ELIJAH backs away.

ELIJAH: Fine. Kelly, you can come downstairs when you are ready to apologize. Otherwise, don't bother getting anything on your way out the door.

ELIJAH leaves.

LORNA: Kelly...

KELLY: I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry.

LORNA: It's not your fault.

KELLY: Oh my God. I have to go. I have to apologize.

LORNA grabs her arm.

LORNA: No. You can't.

KELLY: I have to. The longer I wait, the more mad he'll be. I can't...

HOWIE: He doesn't have anything over you.

KELLY: Right. Except my bed, and my clothes, and a home, and money, and...

LORNA: Come stay with me.

KELLY: I can't. I can't. I just... Oh my God. He got blood on me. I'm going to go clean up.

KELLY goes into the bathroom.

LORNA: Does this kind of thing happen to you a lot?

HOWIE: Not for a long time, no.

LORNA: Are you ok?

HOWIE: Sure.

LORNA: You too. You can come with me, stay at my place.

HOWIE: Think about that. You're going to take me to stay at your Dad's place? And tell him what exactly? I can take care of myself Lorna.

LORNA: No, we need to get you out of this place. And...

HOWIE: Your mother was a good woman. She was kind. She'd be so proud of you.

LORNA: What are you doing?

HOWIE: I'm sure she's somewhere out there, looking down on you. She's smiling on you Lorna.

LORNA: Are you trying to make me cry?

Beat.

HOWIE: Didn't work?

LORNA: No. But it was sweet. Thank you.

HOWIE: (laughs)

LORNA: Do you even believe that stuff? That she's up there looking down and all that?

HOWIE: Oh I don't know. It's just something people say right?

LORNA: I guess so. You're a good man Howard Kurb. I did not expect that.

HOWIE: Me either.

Beat.

LORNA: It's not about the crying, really. I mean, sure, I want to feel like I have some kind of response. But with everything that happened... I think I just had gotten it into my head that you were this monster, and that made me some kind of monster. But I know its not that simple.

HOWIE: Life rarely is.

LORNA: Said the wise old convict.

HOWIE: I spent a lot of time in the library.

LORNA: Really?

HOWIE: No.

Lorna laughs. SIRENS ring from outside.

HOWIE: I think that's my ride.

LORNA: No, no way.

Lorna begins to throw his clothes into his suitcase.



HOWIE: What are you doing?

LORNA: You're coming with me.

HOWIE: Stop this.

LORNA: You can come stay with me.

HOWIE: This is ridiculous. Do you always just hand out rooms to people you don't know?

LORNA: First time for everything. We can make it work.

HOWIE: Your father doesn't even know I exist.

LORNA: He'll understand.

HOWIE: Lorna...

LORNA: We have plenty of space. We have two spare rooms noone even...

HOWIE: Lorna, stop.

He gently places his hand over hers, stopping her packing.

LORNA: This isn't fair.

HOWIE: It's fine. I know what happened, you know what happened. This will be a small thing. Really.

LORNA: But they can revoke your parole, they can...

HOWIE: Running away would be much worse.

LORNA: But...

HOWIE: It's ok. I'm ok, really. You should go. Get home.

LORNA: You...

HOWIE: I think a cell would be more comfortable than this place anyway.

LORNA: Don't say that.

HOWIE: Why are you more upset about this than I am? This isn't a big deal sweetheart.

LORNA reaches up, hugs him hard.

LORNA: I'll walk you out.

HOWIE: You don't need to...

LORNA: We'll meet them at the door. I'll tell them what happened.

HOWIE: It won't matter.

LORNA: It matters to me. I want them to hear it from me.

HOWIE: Well I won't argue then.

LORNA: Are you sure? You like to argue.

HOWIE: So do you. I guess we have that in common.

LORNA: Come on, let's go.

HOWIE starts to lock up his suitcase. LORNA moves to the bathroom door.

LORNA: Kelly? You ok in there? (No response). You should come with me, really. I can help you.

No response. LORNA looks at the door, turns to go. She stops, pulls another paper out of her pocket, writes her number down again.

LORNA: My number is on the table. You should call me. You need to call me.

No response. LORNA turns, takes HOWIE by the arm, and leads him out the front door.

The bathroom door opens as the front door closes. KELLY looks around, she starts to clean up, takes a couple of moments to organize and clean. She goes to leave the room. Stops. Looks at the phone number. She takes it, reads it, puts it in her pocket.

She exits.

Blackout.

