

Years in the Hundreds

by

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Years in the Hundreds received its world premiere by Central Works (Gary Graves and Jan Zvaifler, Company Co-Directors) at the Berkeley City Club on February 18, 2017. The director was Gary Graves; the costume designer was Tammy Berlin, the lighting designer was Gary Graves, the sound designer was Gregory Scharpen, the properties designer was Debbie Shelley; the production stage manager was Vanessa Ramos, the production assistants were Emma Gifford and Natalia Rivera; the cast was as follows:

INEZ	Anne Hallinan
JESSIE	Tamar Cohn
MARCUS	Adam Roy

CHARACTERS

INEZ

A woman in her 70's who is slightly hobbled by arthritis and a bit unsteady on her feet. Every day, she wears the same outfit as her identical twin sister, Jessie, but tends to accent her look with classy, cosmopolitan flare (an Hermès scarf, diamonds, an expensive purse, a cane with a decorative handle, etc.). Her wig is brushed and orderly. Her education is of a previous era.

JESSIE

Inez's big sister (older by seven minutes). She is robust and vibrant; all of her movements are balanced and purposeful. She wears the same outfit as Inez, but accents her look with junky bohemian wares (a billowy scarf, chunky costume jewelry, wildflowers, etc.). Her wig, identical to her sister's, is windblown and hastily arranged. Curiosity has been her guiding light.

MARCUS

A young man in his 20's. Normal, boyish, and sincere. What some take for dumb, others see as enlightened.

SETTING

The play takes place in the living room of a small, airy flat in an old building (circa 1920-30's). The home's front door is studded with an excessive number of deadbolt locks. A second doorway exits to the hallway, and presumably to the bedrooms and bathroom. The living room contains a couch and a coffee table, two elegant wig stands, and a lone wooden chair set directly in front of an enormous calendar stuck to the wall. The calendar has been heavily annotated with different types of markers and highlighters (with plenty of scribbled marginalia). At the far end of the living room, there is a tiny, hint of a kitchen and a third door that connects to the opposite end of the hallway. The home is busy but clean -- well loved and well lived in (rugs, paintings, books, a hat stand). There are no framed family photos and no mirrors on the stage. The curtains should remain drawn at all times.

TIME

Friday, August 24, 2012 -- Morning. Afternoon. Evening.

ACT I

SCENE 1

(LIGHTS UP. Friday morning. INEZ and JESSIE are dressed in identical vintage Chanel-style suits (1960's). They are wearing their wigs. On the coffee table, there is a thoroughly read newspaper, a glass with ice chips, and a mug of coffee.)

INEZ

The big intrigue it is. For them.

JESSIE

Finally going to check the oil, yeah?

INEZ

The colonoscopy will show it. Put an antenna up me to poke around. See what all the fuss is about.

JESSIE

Fiber optics.

INEZ

This big. With a little dongle on the nib, like a telephoto lens. They insert it. Inch, by inch, by /

JESSIE

See your colon from outer space, yeah?

INEZ

A little laser to cauterize the nasties. So horribly painful, I imagine. I'm just dreading it.

(Beat)

JESSIE

Oh, do try to enjoy yourself.

INEZ

All things being equal, I prefer the anus. To say, an artery.

JESSIE

Without a doubt.

INEZ

A small incision sure, but then they barrel through your carotid like feeding a snake to a drain.

JESSIE

Like on that television show, yeah? Stab a coffee straw through your neck?

(JESSIE heads to the kitchen for more coffee.)

INEZ

Just any dirty old cylinder at arm's length, really. Undiscerning.

JESSIE

Pens!

INEZ (Mishearing)

Nooo... Pins? How would that even work?

JESSIE

(There's a minor spill.)

Oh, nuts!

(JESSIE returns to the couch.)

Pens, Inez! Pens. The fuselage of the pen, the body, stripped of all its extraneous bits.

INEZ

Nooo... That's not right. I'll end up on life support, likely. My Living Will in your hands. Nurses fidgeting about the curtains, calling the chaplain.

JESSIE

Give them something to write about, yeah?

(JESSIE grabs the newspaper and snaps it open.)

Us. Together in a room. Like a double vision. Dressed in mauve.

INEZ

Going under the knife... Lord, at my age.

JESSIE

Preventative medicine.

INEZ

Nooo...

JESSIE (Insisting)

A minor preventative measure.

INEZ

No, Dear. I should say not.

JESSIE

Well, this won't do. It's yesterday's news.

INEZ

Probably the last paper I ever read.

JESSIE

How is it, I'm fit as a fortune, and you skulk about like a fat sack of pennies? Honestly.

(Beat)

Well?

(Beat)

Like a bag of frozen peas!

INEZ

Jessie, Dear? What will you ever do without me to badger?

JESSIE

I'll innovate.

INEZ

When I'm gone? When I'm no longer here to corroborate your entire existence.

JESSIE

I might just summon a visit from the Book Man, yeah? Have him tuck me in and read me bedtime stories.

INEZ

He'll do all that will he? Make house calls?

JESSIE

He said I'm on his route.

INEZ

And how does that work? He just parks his library at the curb? Pops his blinkers on?

JESSIE

He gave me his business card, and said if I'm ever in need, ever in desperate need, that is. If ever I can't

muster up the energy. "It's, like, no burden, Ma'am. None at all."

INEZ

He's going to pull his mobile up the drive?

JESSIE

Look at your face. What? I suppose you'd have me re-reading yesterday's paper for all eternity, yeah? Sitting here thinking up another five-letter word for, let me see. Another five-letter word for, *Thirteen Down*: "Difficult Curves."

(Beat)

INEZ (Thinking)

Esses.

JESSIE

Yes, Esses! We know it's Esses! We did this one yesterday. Esses...

INEZ

Bends?

JESSIE (Looking at the crossword again)

No. Bends won't work.

INEZ

Loops!

JESSIE

Loops. Could be, could be loops. Might have a new game on our hands, yeah? The do-over. The double-cross. We just redo yesterday's puzzle with all new answers and make a whole new game of it. But it must coalesce, yeah?

INEZ

The second time around.

JESSIE

Like a twin.

INEZ

Well, I don't see any harm in a bundle of new books arriving at the front door. You enjoy your Book Man,

Dear. I'll be lying on an ice cold cot with my paper dress flapping in the central air conditioning. My ankles up in stirrups /

JESSIE

Ahhh, the good old days.

INEZ

Metal instruments jammed into my rectum, Jessie. Mind all aflutter. Desperately thinking to myself, what? What? What is a new five-letter word for: "Difficult Curves?"

JESSIE (Darkly)

Hooks.

INEZ (Frightened, barely)

Hooks!

(Beat)

JESSIE

He said he'd bring the latest books and cross check the account: Inez.

INEZ

Oh, it's like delivering a pizza, I suppose.

JESSIE

"No trouble, Ma'am. None at all."

INEZ

And that. What is that?

JESSIE

My personification. "No Ma'am, like, it's no problem at all, like. You don't worry your pretty little head over those big heavy books now."

INEZ

Your Book Man's a condescending twit.

JESSIE

"No, Ma'am."

INEZ (Playing along)

"No Ma'am. Yes, Ma'am. I've got your Sue Grafton right here. Now don't you lift one little finger, little

girl. What'll it be? The Letter C, is it? Ahh... C. C
is for what? C is for /

JESSIE
Curls.

INEZ
Oooh, good!

JESSIE
Coils.

INEZ
Jessie, you're a natural.

JESSIE
Coitus!

INEZ (Squealing)
Nooo!

JESSIE (Laughter)
Cunnilingus!

INEZ (Laughter)
No! Stop that, you're terrible. You're going to make
me pee.

JESSIE
Pee what? You haven't had a proper drink in two days.

INEZ
Ice chips! My procedure! Angiodysplasia, maybe. I'm on
a strict diet of ice chips. I could sink the Titanic.

JESSIE
He's actually quite nice.

INEZ
Who? Nooo... The Book Man?

JESSIE
He's a very eager boy.

INEZ
Is he now?

JESSIE

He has a BA in Literature. From Colgate University. Which I believe is a real place, even if I don't know where it is exactly.

INEZ

Oh, Colgate, yes. That's in, that's over in. I believe, Aisle 4.

JESSIE

Oh, You're rotten.

INEZ

Right next to the Listerine, Dear.

JESSIE

He's a very charming young man, actually. Always compliments my mauve, yeah? Always has a good word about my hair.

INEZ

I'll have to stop by and introduce myself.

JESSIE (Urgently)

You will not! I buy the clothes. I bring the books.

INEZ

Of course, Dear.

JESSIE

You do the finances. You buy the food.

INEZ

Of course, Dear. And when I die on the operating table, my un-stockinged feet pointing the way to heaven, you will have it all to yourself.

JESSIE

During your routine inspection, yeah?

INEZ

I'm not having my teeth cleaned, Jessie.

JESSIE

Mission critical, is it? You fighting for you life?

INEZ

During my very indelicate, and I might add, grievously necessary procedure. Should I pass on the operating table /

JESSIE

You will not pass.

INEZ

At our age nothing is to be taken for granted, Dear. Mind that. This abundance of mis-firings and failures we call our bodies. This great accumulation of fragilities.

JESSIE

Cells.

INEZ

Perhaps. Perhaps it's cancer cells. We live in a world of wearisome precarities, Dear, and our physical health is not something we have any control over. At least that much is certain to me now. Now that I've grown "old," the boondoggle. To think, all this time we have been taking care of our bodies, when really, our bodies hold all the cards. Tumors hibernating, exploring the cracks of our immunity. We are at their mercy. We live in their long shadows.

JESSIE

You should eat some applesauce, Love.

INEZ

(INEZ angrily thrusts her empty glass at JESSIE.)

Don't feign emotional distance from me. From your twin sister who's quite possibly on her last legs.

(JESSIE stands, takes INEZ's empty glass away from her, and walks to the kitchenette to get more ice.)

Really, Dear.

JESSIE

I have no intention of further discussing your thoroughly uneducated medical opinions.

(The process of crushing ice involves taking a plastic bag with ice cubes and

hammering it with a mallet to make
smaller chips.)

Your pure conjecture.

(Hammering.)

You are not an Internist.

(Hammering and scooping ice chips into
INEZ's glass.)

You're hardly of sound mind.

INEZ

I know my body. It has it in for me.

JESSIE

Our body, yeah?

INEZ (Pouting)

You go then. Up the arse with you. Double check your
medical calculus.

(INEZ is messing with her wig, trying
to get it to fit properly.)

JESSIE

Stop fidgeting.

(JESSIE brings back the glass of ice
chips and hands it to her sister. She
picks up a brush and starts to brush
INEZ's hair.)

There is something that I would like to discuss with
you.

INEZ

...

JESSIE (Stalling)

It's lovely out. I peeked. Before you were up, I
watched the sun slowly rise over the park and thought
to myself, "How lucky. Inez gets all the good days."
It looks to be sunny and crisp and exhilarating. So
perk up. This is not a good day to die, you hear me?
This is just another lovely day, without a cloud in
the sky. I believe it will be the best day of the
whole entire year.

INEZ (Still pouting)

You go then. See *your* colon from outer space.

JESSIE

They can!

(Brushing the wig, tenderly.)

My colon looks like a vast blue ocean. Cleansed by robust estuaries of the most fresh, delicate waters. My guts are like the enchanted blue planet, yeah? Like the cover from that Whole Earth Catalog. The tiny blue Earth, so peaceful on the page. Pure oceans, clean air, billowing clouds.

(Beat)

Astronauts see me on the street and get nostalgic.

(JESSIE finishes and INEZ stands to face her sister.)

INEZ

How do I look?

JESSIE (With love)

You look like a point of beautiful pale light. If I could be anyone else in the whole wide world, I would be you.

INEZ

You should have let me go first. You'd have seen what all the fuss is about.

JESSIE

Yeah? Seven minutes makes the difference, does it?

INEZ

See what being late to the dance feels like your entire life.

JESSIE

Mother always said that I was early. But that you... "You," she said. "You, were right on time."

INEZ

I remember you nudging me aside. For leverage.

JESSIE

In the womb, yeah? You remember that?

INEZ

Like a crab in a pot.

JESSIE

You remember me edging you out? I won the footrace?

INEZ

Each and every footrace, Dear.

JESSIE (As if she means it)

Well. Then. I will go.

(JESSIE begins to ready herself and moves towards the front door, all while removing her accessories. INEZ watches in disbelief.)

INEZ (Incredulous)

On my Friday?

JESSIE (Nonchalant)

Yeah, sure, why not?

INEZ

(Getting up, scrambling to get ready, removing accessories.)

It's my Friday, Jessie! I have my appointment. I'm off to get probed. My colonoscopy!

JESSIE

I don't care.

(JESSIE starts unlocking the locks.)

INEZ

Surely, you're putting me on, right? This Friday? On my day!

JESSIE

I don't care! I don't care!

(Undoing more locks.)

INEZ

I don't see what's gotten into you.

(Thrusts her finger at the calendar.)

Look at the wall! For God's sake! It's my day!

JESSIE (Ugly)

(JESSIE swings the door open, turns, threateningly. They lock gazes. They are a mirror image.)

How do I look?

(Beat)

INEZ (Retreating)
 But I'm dying, Jessie. Dear... I'm dying.
 (Beat)

JESSIE

...

(JESSIE leaves hastily, and does not lock the door. INEZ seems unsure of herself, legitimately confused, and retreats to the calendar. As she sits and focuses on the calendar, MARCUS knocks, then opens the door.)

MARCUS (A greeting)
 Buzz, you're beautiful.

INEZ (Horrorified)
 No! Don't you come any closer.
 (In her fright, INEZ retreats towards the kitchen. She grabs the mallet, defensively, all while watching MARCUS.)

MARCUS
 Wait...

INEZ (Loud, distressed)
 Who are you! What do you want!
 (Retreating.)

MARCUS
 ...

INEZ
 Neighbors! Neighbors!
 (INEZ retreats, and exits out of the kitchen door, MARCUS follows.)

MARCUS
 ...

(MARCUS opens the door.)
 Buzz?
 (MARCUS exits, following INEZ. JESSIE enters through the front door, holding the day's newspaper.)

JESSIE

Inez?

(JESSIE slowly makes her way towards the kitchen. When she's nearing the kitchen, MARCUS tentatively enters through the door at the far end of the hallway.)

MARCUS (Relieved)

Buzz! OK... I know... I know. Truce.

JESSIE

Marcus?

MARCUS

Look, I'm sorry about the way I /

JESSIE (Quietly)

Marcus. Oh, Marcus. Too early, Love.

(JESSIE rushes to MARCUS.)

MARCUS

I knocked first and you said /

JESSIE

Move you! Go on now, yeah?

MARCUS

I counted / I heard you inside

JESSIE

Quiet. Get out, yeah?

(JESSIE scoots MARCUS all the way out of the front door, and closes the door on him. INEZ enters, holding the mallet, defensively.)

INEZ

Are you hurt?

JESSIE

Am I hurt? No, not particularly.

INEZ

There was a boy.

JESSIE

I know! Running for his life. Nearly bowled me over.

INEZ

In our home.

JESSIE

Well, what did he want?

INEZ

Where were you?

JESSIE

I nipped down to the corner, to grab the paper, yeah?

INEZ

You could have said so.

JESSIE

Stop being foolish.

INEZ (Serious)

They've found us.

JESSIE

Who? Nooo... The neighbor boy?

(Beat)

Probably peddling encyclopedias. Probably running for Governor.

INEZ

I know my neighbors, Jessie!

JESSIE

He's new.

INEZ

Could have killed me...

(The sisters face each other, mallet and newspaper outstretched. They are a mirror image.)

JESSIE

Well, thank God you were armed.

(JESSIE disarms her sister.)

INEZ (Suspicious)

Which neighbor?

JESSIE

Catty-corner, with the fence, and the ivy, and the rats.

(Beat)

INEZ

You gave me a fright is all. Your huffy egress. So irregular, I didn't even have a chance to lock the door.

JESSIE

You're afraid of incremental change.

INEZ

It's unlike you. To provoke.

JESSIE

You're afraid of my newfound autonomies.

INEZ

And you've got a bug up your skirt today. Today of all days.

JESSIE (Not serious)

Maybe I *will* take your appointment, yeah?

INEZ (Serious)

I have seen this day approach for quite some time. I've felt you change.

JESSIE

Was it the tinfoil hat?

INEZ

The what?

JESSIE

It gave me away, did it? My tinfoil hat? Trying to stop your attempts at...

(Points to her own head, then to INEZ's head, and then back to her own, all while making sound effects.)

INEZ (Genuinely lost)

What?

JESSIE

Telepathy. *The twin-connection*. Oh, did it fail me? My aluminum firewall?

INEZ

I don't need to read your mind to witness your upheaval.

JESSIE

...

INEZ

A few weeks back. Something small. Something between us. A flicker of asymmetry perhaps. You acting peculiar. I asked myself, "What is she hiding? What is she hiding from me."

(Beat)

JESSIE

You know, every day, I look at that wall. At our well-plotted weeks. And really, Inez. Today means less to me than it did yesterday.

(Beat)

Is it even possible that years ago I had fantasies? Is it even possible that there was once a time when I dreamt of travel, dreamt of exploration? So many places I've read about, so much open space behind those actors on TV. Just imagine it.

INEZ

Why? For what purpose?

JESSIE

"One day, I will go," I said. "Just pack your damn bags," I said. Oh, honestly! They weren't dreams or plans, they were givens. It was a given that one day I would travel to Turkey. I've read about Istanbul in the magazines every week for two-thirds of a century. The Ottoman architecture, right there in the Style section. It's almost as if Turkey really exists. Does Turkey really exist, Inez? Could I exist in Turkey?

(Beat)

But now, what is left? I'm too old for Tibet. Really... Imagine me in Ibiza?

(Beat)

I'm so old, I've come to detest the sight of a postcard with a pyramid on it.

INEZ

A lot of sand in your shoes, if you ask me.

JESSIE

But I never took those trips, Inez. And now, for the first time in my entire life, I understand something. Something altogether troubling and befouled. Something horrific, almost. I will never see Gallipoli, or Calcutta, or Zanzibar. I have missed the proverbial boat.

INEZ

...

(INEZ snaps the paper open and reads to herself. She has no answer for her sister. Pause.)

JESSIE

Missy Sue, 64, died right on the kitchen floor. She is survived by one insensitive sibling and J.G. Simpleton, her second husband, who never touched her heart and hardly ever touched her thighs. We will always remember her as a jar of tree sap, buried in the back corner of the larder. So count your blessings, old ladies of tomorrow, and remember to reapply your liniment.

INEZ

It's not the obituaries, Dear. It is 'This Day in History'.

JESSIE

I don't care.

INEZ

Oh, well now, this day in history: August 24th. Would you look at that?

(INEZ continues reading to herself. JESSIE turns her head and stares at the calendar, transfixed.)

August 24th.

JESSIE

Don't...

INEZ

It's my Friday, Dear. And we don't change what we are just because you have a wild look.

JESSIE

...

INEZ

(INEZ reads the newspaper aloud.)

Arnold Strong... and his accomplice, still at large, blow up the basement vault at the Bank of Italy downtown San Francisco. This occurred during the small hours of "This Day in History": August 24th, 1962.

JESSIE (Incredulous)

It doesn't say that!

INEZ

Fifty years ago today! I'll be... Time is a crooked wing.

JESSIE

Don't indulge, Inez. Let me see.

INEZ

You most certainly will not!

(Beat)

JESSIE

I am sorry.

INEZ (To herself)

Accomplice still at large /

JESSIE

There's not a day that goes by /

INEZ

And tomorrow, August 25th, it will be fifty years and a day. And next Friday, it will be fifty years and a week. And still, they'll all be none the wiser.

JESSIE

There is not a year that goes by, or a moment /

INEZ (Ugly)

And tomorrow! Well, tomorrow is your Saturday, Dear. I imagine you have all sorts of priggish curiosities lined up. Chase the bookmobile around the block, stick post-it notes in your National Geographics, plan your next Invasion of Normandy.

(INEZ grabs her prescription from the kitchen counter, and examines the label.)

If you're bored, I have these. Doctors orders, Dear. They're very cleansing, so stay close to the toilet. Though, I'm not sure they'll reach your soul.

JESSIE (Urgently)

There is something that I need to discuss with you /

INEZ (Pretending to read, but over-doing it, loudly)

Mr. Arnold Strong was killed instantly in the fiery blast. His body, consumed by a small hateful ball of flame that burned so bright, and so hot, that the gold in his teeth splashed the concrete flooring in glittery molten rivulets.

JESSIE

Oh, give it here!

(JESSIE grabs the newspaper, turning the pages quickly, but not finding the article.)

INEZ

Accomplice at large.

JESSIE (Defeated)

Honestly.

INEZ

They say the decades never forget the fugitive. Those yellowing case files, crammed inside old cardboard boxes. And always some new, fresh-faced Detective itching to make his mark, desperate to better his elders, desperate to denude... delineate... decipher.

(Beat)

"Put me in, Coach. I won't let you down."

JESSIE

You're being crummy, Inez.

INEZ

It does not indulge, no.

(JESSIE puts the newspaper down and takes a seat. She is closely watched by INEZ. After a moment, INEZ raises her glass of ice chips.)

To Arnold Strong.

JESSIE

(JESSIE reluctantly raises her mug of coffee.)

To Arnold.

(Beat)

Your Husband.

(Beat)

INEZ

The proper cunt.

(They toast. Long Pause.)

When I woke this morning, I had the most horrible feeling.

JESSIE

...

INEZ

Everything off kilter.

JESSIE

...

INEZ

That Boy, he came for *me*, Jessie. He singled me out.

JESSIE

Next thing you know, we'll be installing another lock on that damn door.

INEZ

I just might.

JESSIE

So heavy, we won't be able to budge it. Take both of us an hour to escape a fire.

INEZ (Sharply)

You've had practice.

JESSIE

...

INEZ

He called me by a funny name, Jessie. He called me:
Buzz.

(JESSIE freezes.)

Missy Sue, 64, died right on the kitchen floor. Died
right on the kitchen floor? Or with her sister at the
door.

JESSIE

No. Not today. That's not fair.

INEZ

Or with her sister at the door, pants blackened,
eyebrows singed, eyes all a daze? Feral!

JESSIE

It's impossible to remember that. It's been fifty
years.

INEZ

Concussed. With pieces of my dead husband's skin
melted to the buttons on her overalls. My own sister,
just wandering around the kitchen, screeching her head
off. Pouring glasses of water all over her face. Into
her mouth. Into her ears.

JESSIE

It's been fifty years.

INEZ (Shouting)

Accomplice! At large!

JESSIE

There is only so much lonely a girl can take.

INEZ

You!

(Beat)

Well, you have me, don't you?

JESSIE

There is something gravely important that I need to discuss with you.

INEZ

Yes! Spit it out, Dear! I knew there'd come a day of reckoning. I knew they'd find us one of these days. What is it, Jessie? What have you let into our lives? No. I already know what you're going to say remember. I already know what you know. I already know /

JESSIE (Quickly, clearly, and succinctly)

I have taken a lover.
(Beat)

INEZ (Sincerely taken aback)

You have taken a lover?

JESSIE

A companion. I'm off to Mendocino with him. For the weekend.

INEZ

You're leaving me, Dear?

JESSIE

For two days, yeah?

INEZ

What if they come back?

JESSIE

Who?

INEZ

And what about my Sunday?

JESSIE

I assumed you'd be in bed, yeah? Recuperating.

INEZ (Ugly)

Laying low.

JESSIE

It's only Mendocino, yeah? A few hours away. You'll still be able to go out if you're up for it.

Impossible!

INEZ

His name is Marcus.

JESSIE

But we take turns.

INEZ (Insisting)

He's beautiful, he's a gem. You would eat him up.

JESSIE

Arnold. And now Marcus.

INEZ (Practically spitting)

Arnold and fifty years of vigils.

JESSIE

Deaf as a doornail. In my kitchen, screaming,
"Arnold's dead, Arnold's dead!" Like a stepped on
cat.

INEZ

You hit me.

JESSIE

Oh, yes.

INEZ (Relishing)

Here. So hard. Below my eye.

JESSIE

You watched him die.

INEZ

I loved him.

JESSIE

Nooo... I think not.

INEZ

I / did.

JESSIE

You never speak of him again.
(Beat)

JESSIE

Arnold saved my life, you know. I never told you that.

INEZ

No.

JESSIE

You remember his shoulders. Broad inside his coat. I watched it happen. Like God's big practical joke, spinning the world faster to speed up time. I watched the exit shrink away. I watched ourselves dying.

INEZ

Oh, you did alright.

JESSIE

He covered me like a blanket. He shielded me. He saved me.

INEZ

No, Dear. I saved you.

JESSIE

But then again, I don't even exist, yeah? You made sure of that. "Inez" exists, sure, "Inez" exists. But Jessie, she doesn't even have papers. She's off in the wind. There's not a soul in the world who knows I'm still alive.

INEZ

I know you're alive!

(Beat)

Aren't I, enough?

(INEZ finishes removing all of her accessories.)

JESSIE (Deflated)

It's a charade.

INEZ

This charade is our amaranthine field, Dear, where there is no decay and no descent into senescence.

(INEZ begins to unlock the locks on the front door.)

JESSIE

There's no denying that we are sisters, yeah? But there's no storytelling that will hide the second body, when that day finally arrives. There is nothing that will ever cover up this mischief.

(Beat)

I mean God forbid, Inez. God forbid you go first!

INEZ

(INEZ swings open the door, and turns to her sister.)

There's only two bodies *inside*, Dear. *Inside* our home. Out there. Well, out there there's only...

(Beat)

One.

(INEZ exits, and closes the door behind her.)

(BLACKOUT)

ACT II

SCENE 1

(LIGHTS UP. Friday afternoon.
JESSIE is center stage. MARCUS
knocks, then opens the door.)

MARCUS

Buzz, you're beautiful.

JESSIE

(JESSIE rushes to MARCUS and ushers him
inside.)

Were you followed?

MARCUS

Hunh? Was I... Here?

JESSIE (Impatient)

Were you followed, yeah? Were you followed?

MARCUS

Yes.

JESSIE (Genuine horror)

Just now! You were followed?

MARCUS (Realizing his error)

Yea, no. No! I thought we were playing a game.

JESSIE

Not funny at all, young man.

MARCUS

Buzz...

JESSIE

Not infinitesimally funny. Rude as all get out.
Honestly.

MARCUS

I didn't think.

JESSIE

You don't think, Marcus. You race about like running
water. Lock the door.

(MARCUS takes his time locking all of the locks.)

MARCUS

Aw, Buzz. Don't be mad. You're anxious. Going away, you're excited. We've got Mendocino in all its glory. You've just got the pre-holiday jitters.

JESSIE (Sharply)

Do I?

(She stares at MARCUS, a challenge.)

Do I, Marcus? Shake?

(Beat)

MARCUS

No, my little Jitter Bug.

JESSIE

You are an odd one.

MARCUS

My mom says that I have a tendency to put my foot in my / mouth.

JESSIE

You make me feel 10 years younger! Middle aged, even. Fifty, yeah? Could be. Although it's hard to remember how one felt at, say, fifty. Or thirty... Oh, the horrors of thirty.

MARCUS

I wouldn't know.

JESSIE (Delighted)

You wouldn't? Really! Yeah?

MARCUS

And you don't look a day over...

(Stops at her gaze.)

My mom once said /

JESSIE

There are rules young man.

(JESSIE approaches him seductively)

MARCUS

Right.

JESSIE
 There is obedience.

MARCUS
 Yes, ma'am.

JESSIE
 There is an abeyance of /

MARCUS
 Yes?

JESSIE
 Rational thought.

MARCUS
 Oh, yes.

JESSIE
 The world is clearly cross-eyed, Marcus. And not just
 the world, no, it's not the only one.

MARCUS
 No, ma'am.

JESSIE
 You too. You ought to have your head examined.

MARCUS
 Right away, ma'am.

JESSIE
 My sister's doctors would have a field day with you.
 (An awful slip, breaking the mood.)

MARCUS (Dawning on him)
 Your sister?

JESSIE
 ...

MARCUS
 She's here?

JESSIE
 Something I was going to mention.

MARCUS

Here? Really?

JESSIE

No, buzzing about town somewhere.

MARCUS

Your twin sister?

JESSIE

Don't excite yourself, Marcus.

MARCUS

Your identical twin sister.

JESSIE

There comes a time in every man's life when he seeks answers.

MARCUS

Yea, no. Of course...

JESSIE

But it should come much later in life, Marcus.

MARCUS

Right.

JESSIE

Yes. She's my identical twin / sister

MARCUS

Ha! I knew it. I knew it, I knew it, I knew it! I'd thought maybe you'd /

JESSIE (Threatening)

What? What thought did you stumble upon.

MARCUS

Nothing. No, like, it's nothing. Forget it.

JESSIE

You've stepped in this puddle young man. Dry your feet.

MARCUS

Well, I wasn't sure is all. Like. What'd I'd done to anger you.

JESSIE

Me?

MARCUS

Why you were so... fast.

JESSIE

What are you getting at?

MARCUS

Nothing... Buzzy, baby, forget it. Like, sometimes things just don't make sense to me. Like out there in the real world. But it's just me. Like, in here, we're two people, right? Of course, yea. That's stupid, but. What I'm trying to say is this, like. My school of thought is, like, I might meet your sibling or, take a trip to one of your old haunts, and once there, the gaps will just kinda fill themselves in, right? I'll learn things, like, um, things you might never have told me directly. Even things you might have forgotten. I love that. I'll just, like, glean things and then, hopefully, I'll fall deeper in love. Yea, sometimes, it's just by chance. Or, like, by accident, or just totally assisted by some weird encounter, or with, like, a piece of art, or an old book with a little square sticker inside of it that reads, *Property of Buzz*. And it's in this little girl's cursive with hearts over all the I's and /

JESSIE

Do get to your point.

MARCUS (Sincerely)

There are just, like, so many unknowns. And I want to study them. With you. I just want to study all of you.

(MARCUS goes quiet in front of the calendar.)

JESSIE

What is it?

MARCUS

Nothing. Just this. This calendar. It's like a Rosetta Stone.

JESSIE

They're cheap. They come with the year's first Yellow Pages.

MARCUS

Still. I mean. It's, like, so heavily annotated.

JESSIE

You'll carry my bags when I'm finished packing, yeah?

MARCUS

Of course, Buzz.

JESSIE

And that! Stop that nonsense. No more of that, yeah?

MARCUS (Pouty)

Buzzy...

JESSIE

Buzz is a silly little nickname. Just a kid's game, understand?

MARCUS

No...?

JESSIE

It's child's play, Marcus, and we aren't kids anymore. We're all adults here, yeah?

MARCUS (Suggestively)

Well, you tell me.

JESSIE (Trying it out)

My name is Inez Strong.

MARCUS (Incredulous)

Is it?

(Beat)

JESSIE

Yes. It is.

MARCUS (Rolling it around his mouth)

Inez. Strong.

JESSIE

Why do you say it like that?

MARCUS

Well, I. I don't know. Like, it's just, um. It will take some getting used to.

JESSIE (Frustrated)

Yes, I imagine it will.

MARCUS

Buzz... Inez! Come on... Don't be sore at me.

JESSIE

And another thing, Marcus. We don't just have to go to Mendocino. We could go anywhere in the whole entire world. We could go anywhere and do anything, OK? You need to think more expansively. You need to grow up, and be more adventurous. Because there is only so much time allotted to each of us on this Earth? And we must take in the sights.

MARCUS (Tenderly)

Inez...

(MARCUS walks towards her and takes her hands.)

Can I call you Inie?

JESSIE

No, you may not. Not yet. Marcus, just grow up.

MARCUS

Can I call you Mz. Strong?

JESSIE

Not either. I'd rather you not.

MARCUS (Suggestive)

And how long do we have before your sister returns?

JESSIE

...

MARCUS

Look. Buzzy, baby, hey /

JESSIE (Back to Earth)

What if we just left for good, Marcus?

(Beat)

MARCUS

If we just left for good?

JESSIE

Yes! Can you imagine it?

MARCUS

Well, we'd have to /

JESSIE

We would have to buy plane tickets.

(JESSIE grabs the chair from in front of the calendar and drags it to the center of the stage, beckons MARCUS to sit.)

Pack our luggage, sail around Cape Horn, there's Tokyo, Port-au-Prince. On TV, I've seen they have tourists in space now, Marcus. They've put tourists in zero gravity.

MARCUS

Yea, totally. We would just need to, return the bookmobile to the lot, and then just, like, go live somewhere.

JESSIE

Kuala Lumpur, Kowloon.

MARCUS

I could find work.

JESSIE

Oh, retire early, Dear. We can afford it.

MARCUS

Then, we go until the money runs out!

JESSIE (Delighted)

Until the money runs out, yeah?

MARCUS

Los Angeles, Phoenix, Reno!

JESSIE

That's it, Marcus! Full of ideas, full of promise. Make me feel young again!

MARCUS

Come here.

(JESSIE sits tenderly on his lap.)

I said, "Ma'am, a woman of your stature should be reading Doris Lessing or Joan Didion."

JESSIE

And I looked at you wearily.

MARCUS

Defiantly, really. You'd always just scoured the Mysteries. And I, like, just assumed you might want a break from all the trashy stuff.

JESSIE

But I said, "No."

MARCUS

Well, no, actually, you said, "I've read them, Darling. All of them." And I thought, *all of them?*

JESSIE

And I thought, *poor boy, just doing his job.*
(They look deep into each other's eyes.)

MARCUS

What is your sister's name?

JESSIE

And I thought, he's so handsome when he's quiet.

MARCUS

Seriously. What is it?
(Beat)

JESSIE

Tomorrow, when we're gone, yeah? When we're in Mendocino, Love?

MARCUS

Yes. Anything.

JESSIE

You never speak of her again.
(Pause)

MARCUS
Let's really leave.

JESSIE
We will.

MARCUS
Tonight.

JESSIE
Tonight?

MARCUS
I mean, like, if you feel this way, then let's just go. Like, leave, now! Her! Lord knows you need the distance, look at this place. Just take a break from her. From here. Just not from me, Buzzy, not from me.

JESSIE
Oh, Marcus. My Wellspring.
(They kiss.)

MARCUS
(Starts unbuttoning her top.)
Inez, perhaps you'll make a man out of me yet.

JESSIE (Delighted)
Oh, imagine the work, yeah? Might be an impossibility with this one here.

MARCUS
I'd like to give it a try.
(MARCUS removes his shirt)

JESSIE
I am so very lucky to have found you.

MARCUS
I'll be gentle, Love.
(They kiss at length.)

JESSIE
Oh, Marcus.
(JESSIE pulls MARCUS' face away from her by yanking a fistful of his hair.)
Now, why in God's name would you do a stupid thing like that?

(BLACKOUT)

ACT II

SCENE 2

(LIGHTS UP. Friday afternoon. Minutes later. MARCUS is completely naked and sitting on the couch. His clothes are in a bunch off to the side. JESSIE saunters towards MARCUS seductively. She is holding a scarf which she lightly whips him with, teasingly. She circles him, then, stops behind MARCUS and plants a long, deep kiss on his neck, which he enjoys, immensely.)

(BLACKOUT. The small sound of a shower emanates from off-stage.)

ACT II

SCENE 3

(LIGHTS UP. Friday afternoon. Minutes later. MARCUS is completely naked and sitting on the couch. The small sound of a shower emanates from off-stage throughout the bulk of the scene. INEZ is in the room interrogating MARCUS.)

INEZ

So.

MARCUS

She's in the shower.

INEZ

She likes to use up all of the hot water.

(Beat)

MARCUS

I know how it looks.

INEZ

Is it because we look exactly the same? So alike our own Mother believed she had double vision. Our own father blamed us for his deepest failings. Thought maybe Mother had over-prayed, must have prayed too hard for one. Must have tossed one too many pennies into the wishing well. "Must have dumped their whole life's savings into that damn well," he said. All the change, too much change. That was his opinion.

MARCUS

You do look a lot alike.

INEZ

Our teachers had us in these God awful getups. Just abysmal. An Indian's headdress, "and for you Dear, a ten gallon hat." Always in dialogue it seems, my sister and I, running around each day in different costumes. I'm absolutely positive *this* is how you *singulars* have treated us since the beginning of time. Halloween every day for us. Really, how hard is it for

one to differentiate twins? I imagine it's frightfully difficult for you. Telling us apart.

MARCUS

Well, you are pretty different.

INEZ (Disbelieving)

Nooo...

MARCUS

No, yea, I mean. Seriously.

INEZ

How so?

MARCUS

I mean /

INEZ

Are we a threat to your philosophical notions of identity?

MARCUS

Um?

INEZ

Are we an intervention in your cognitive apparatus? An uncanny echo? A disturbance in your antediluvian mechanisms of appraisal?

MARCUS

...

INEZ

Do we complicate your mate selection?

MARCUS (Finding an answer)

Your hair. For one.

(MARCUS wants to point at her hair, but he is tied to the couch.)

INEZ

My hair?

MARCUS

Like, it curls... less.

INEZ

Does it?

(INEZ fingers her wig.)

MARCUS

Look at it.

(He looks around, there is no mirror.)

INEZ

How old are you, Marcus?

MARCUS

She told you about me?

INEZ

I deduced.

MARCUS

My name?

INEZ

Telepathy. I feel everything she feels. The bad certainly, but I don't know. I don't believe there's a lot of good in you, Marcus.

MARCUS

I'm thirty.

INEZ (Disbelief)

Thirty?

MARCUS

Years old..

INEZ (Doubting)

Nooo... In human years, child.

(Beat)

MARCUS (Surrendering)

I'm twenty-six.

INEZ

(During this line, INEZ finds a pair of scissors in the kitchen and plays with it.)

Twenty-six. I was long married by then. Already, a Mrs. My husband was just a poor, troubled soul, really. Always preoccupied, always scheming. If he had

just focused his energy half as much on one thing, he could have been somebody. He could have been an astronaut. We could have left this town in a rocket ship.

(INEZ hovers over MARCUS pretending to cut his hair: 'snip, snip.')

MARCUS (Worried by the scissors)

What happened to him? I mean, you don't have to tell me if you don't want /

INEZ

Oh, no. Nothing. He died in a war.

MARCUS

Man, I'm really sorry /

INEZ

Nooo... Don't be...

('Snip, snip.')

Wars need to eat too.

MARCUS (Increasingly worried by the scissors)

Seriously. What are you doing?

INEZ

Mapping the terrain, Marcus.

MARCUS

Yea, no. Seriously.

INEZ

I'm planning, Marcus. It is library day, and I need your help choosing a good title, Boy.

(With the sharp end of the scissors, INEZ lifts MARCUS' chin. MARCUS is completely still.)

I'm considering the plethora of possibilities. There are so many good titles to choose from.

(INEZ removes the scissors from his skin, moves behind him, and out of his sight lines.)

Oh, Dear, your hair is so awfully 1965. Heavy and oily. So dirty. Do many of the kids wear it like this nowadays? This bouffant?

MARCUS

Seriously. Inez is going to walk in here any minute and /

INEZ

Is she now? Ha! Really? Inez?

(She circles him, scissors thrusting towards him)

You're sure of that, Dear?

MARCUS (Not sure)

Yea.

INEZ

Inez Strong? The one and only?

MARCUS (Defiant)

Yea. The one and only.

INEZ

Would you stake your life on it, Marcus? How about a few years of it? For sure, you could spare a few inopportune years. Puberty, perhaps. All of those sticky years? Or, how about your thirties? You wouldn't even know what you'd be missing... Here's the bet: Inez will or will not walk through that door? You put up a decade of your life, and I'll wager an inordinate sum of money that is burning a hole in my dresser drawer.

(INEZ walks towards the hallway door.)

MARCUS (Shouts)

(MARCUS struggles with the binding.)

Inez!

(INEZ stops in her tracks. MARCUS pleads with her.)

Seriously, this is really tight, and I'm sorry if this is, like, totally improper, but I need to go home.

INEZ (Almost disappointed)

I'm practically in awe of your Id, boy. I might like to rub it on my knees as a salve. Drink some of it as a tonic.

(As MARCUS begins to struggle with more urgency, INEZ walks back to the coffee table, picks up her glass of melted ice

and aggressively splashes him with the
ice water. MARCUS is startled, frozen.)
Fire extinguished!

(Pause)

MARCUS (Refocusing)

You are eerily similar.

INEZ

I know, Dear, I know.

MARCUS

But I know why she's done with you. You're like a
shadow. You're redundant. You envy her.

INEZ

Oh, yes. I envy her wisdom and experience. I'm deeply
envious of those four hundred additional seconds.

MARCUS (Stalling)

And, you, um, wish that you could be the one. To take
a trip to Mendocino with me, and sip chardonnay, and
be loved.

INEZ (Roaring)

I am loved, Marcus! Powerfully, I am loved! You're too
young to even begin to understand. It's the tip of the
iceberg for you, young man. And you have your tongue
stuck to it.

(Beat)

What do you know, Boy? A mother's love? A puppy's
love? Sex amidst the paperbacks? Your idea of love is
nude opportunity. You view love as something you've
gotten away with. Something you've earned through
evasion. Something you've talked your way into. Is it
a hustle, Marcus? No. Is it something you can use up
and discard? No. Something you can exhaust? Not ever.
Something that devours you? Repurposes you? All at
once, boy? Over time? Over a lifetime?

(Beat)

No bother. I'm sure you've got your finger on the
pulse, Marcus. I'm sure you're in the driver's seat.

(Beat)

Until it's your turn to play caretaker. Until the
woman you love begins to fragment, begins to
disintegrate. Begins to see the world as a myth. Wait
until the woman you love is not the woman you love

anymore. Wait until she has become the only woman on earth. The only guiding principle. Wait until love is an anachronism, and that very word 'Love' does love a fucking disservice.

(Beat)

One day you will exhale, and she will inhale. She will exhale, and you will inhale. And you will no longer tell her you love her, because that word cheapens her very existence.

(Beat)

MARCUS

But I do love her.

INEZ

Marcus, Marcus, Marcus. Nobody says, "I love you."

MARCUS (Defiant)

I love her.

INEZ

Trust me. I'm old enough to be your mother.

MARCUS

My mother is forty-seven.

INEZ

Nooo... And she likes this voluminous coif? I should say not. She hopes you stay young forever. Her wee babe. If you grow old, what will become of her? Her smooth skinned lad marching about the kitchen, drinking from the milk carton, stealing her vodka and replacing it with a finger from the tap.

MARCUS

I'm not a teenager.

INEZ

(INEZ draws in very close behind
MARCUS, to speak into his ear)

Her baby boy, suckling at her teat.

(She plants one, long, deep kiss on his
neck, which he does not enjoy.)

Sometimes, just sometimes, even the smallest
subtractions...

(She quickly snips off a lock of his
hair and holds it up over him. She rubs

her fingers together until all of the hair rains down over his face.)
 Sometimes, the slightest 'snip' can make, well, all the difference, Marcus.

MARCUS

(MARCUS explodes wildly.)

Inez! Inez! Neighbors! Neighbors!

(The sound of the shower stops.)

INEZ

(INEZ slaps a hand over his mouth. She holds the sharp scissors against his throat.)

Who are you, you stupid boy? And what do you want with us?

(JESSIE enters quickly through the hallway door. She is completely nude and still wet from her shower. She is wearing a shower cap.)

JESSIE

Oh, nuts!

(The sisters glare at each other.)

INEZ

Yes, Dear. I've met Marcus.

JESSIE

So it goes, yeah?

INEZ

Not much to it then. Insubstantial, really.

JESSIE

Marcus, oh, Love. The time got away from me.

INEZ

He's no Mr. Arnold Strong.

MARCUS (Pleading)

Help me, Inez.

INEZ

Except for *that*.

MARCUS

Seriously, this hurts.

INEZ (Mocking)

Inez. It hurts. Inez. Do something.

(Sisters glare at each other.)

Inez.

JESSIE

Give me those scissors.

INEZ

(INEZ thinks about giving the scissors over to her sister and instead puts them down. JESSIE rushes to MARCUS and works to free him.)

My colonoscopy was postponed.

JESSIE

...

INEZ

I told them I had coffee.

JESSIE

...

INEZ

I told them I had breakfast.

JESSIE

...

INEZ

"We'll have to reschedule," they said.

JESSIE (To Inez, ugly)

You've made a right mess of things.

MARCUS (To Inez)

They should lock you up.

INEZ

(During this line MARCUS is freed from his restraints, and starts to gather his clothes.)

How is it going to work, Marcus? In your mind? You have a good five years with my sister, ten, if we're

being optimistic? I don't have ten, God knows I'll probably die of malnutrition.

MARCUS

You wouldn't understand. You don't, like, you don't know her the way I do.

INEZ

Oh, now, Boy. Are you sure about that?

MARCUS

(Continues getting dressed.)

You talk about love, like, like it's an accumulation. Like one day you're going to wake up and boom, just know some grand truth that you, like, totally understand just because you got old.

(Beat)

Call me naive, but I'm not going to buy that shit. Because I believe in love at first sight, and I believe that love knows no boundaries, and I believe that love is about mutual respect, and trust, and growth, and play, and companionship. I believe that kids can love, and teenagers can love, and my mom can love, and my grandmother can love. And to be honest, I don't give a fuck what you think! Like, if this, us, is weird? Who cares? You're fucking weird! Your fucking barber shop is weird. You don't know any more about love than any of us. And for some reason, that eats at you. It eats at you that some of us believe love should be carefree and uncomplicated and /

INEZ

Love is entanglement.

MARCUS

No. No it's not!

INEZ

It strangles you.

MARCUS

Is that it? When your husband died serving our country, did you just decide to live with your sister like a parasite? Feeding on her kindness. Like, you don't even have a decent bone in your body. Don't kid yourself, it's not that you don't believe in love anymore, it's that you are totally incapable of, like,

feeling actual love. It's not my fault that you can't say it anymore, that, that you've lost the ability. That love is just something so, so terribly foreign to you.

INEZ

You are naive.

MARCUS

And you are unbearable!

JESSIE

It was you.

INEZ

It was me, what?

JESSIE

You killed Arnold, yeah? You did something.

INEZ

What? You stole my husband and it blew up in your face!

JESSIE

You must have done something. Something imperceptible. Something awful, yeah? What did you do?

(Beat)

What did you do?

INEZ

(INEZ turns away from her sister.)

...

(Beat)

MARCUS (Breaking the silence)

We're leaving now, and like, there's nothing more to say. Inez, Love, Mendocino awaits. And, like, don't wait up, OK. Come on, Love. Get dressed.

JESSIE (Soberly to her sister)

There are some things I will need from you.

(Beat)

My half, yeah? From the dresser drawer.

INEZ (Voice cracking)

Your half?

MARCUS

Just leave it, Love. Come on.

JESSIE

Marcus! Shush!

INEZ

Why on earth would you need your half? Two days in Mendocino. Two days keeping your sister cooped up in this apartment? "What about my Sunday," I asked. You remember? You said, "Go out, take a stroll, risk everything!" You said, "I don't care! I don't care!"

JESSIE

I do care.

INEZ

Fifty years ago today, you walked out of that door with my husband and a stick of dynamite.

JESSIE

But I didn't return empty handed.

INEZ

But you did return.
(Beat)

MARCUS

Come on, Love.

INEZ

But you did return.

JESSIE (Studying her sister)

I find it peculiar, yeah? That right now, we aren't wearing the same outfit.

INEZ

But you did return.

JESSIE

It's a miracle...
(Beat)
Something has come between us.

MARCUS

Come on Love, put something on.

INEZ (Distraught)

I can't read your mind. I can't read your thoughts.

JESSIE (Tenderly)

I know, yeah?

MARCUS (To Jessie)

Inez.

INEZ

I can't read your thoughts.

JESSIE

I know... I know.

MARCUS

Inez, please?

INEZ (Ugly)

No, Marcus.

(Beat)

I don't believe I will be joining you to Mendocino.

(BLACKOUT)

ACT III

SCENE 1

(LIGHTS UP. Friday evening. INEZ is alone on the couch. JESSIE enters with a large, old, partially stuffed duffel bag which she sets down on the coffee table. The sisters are dressed in identical vintage Chanel-style suits (1960's). Throughout this scene, they should hand each other items, should intuit each other's movements. They should dress each other up with accessories, refill coffee mugs and water glasses, etc. They should anticipate one another's needs.)

JESSIE

Arnold could tell us apart. And he chose you.

INEZ

Nooo...

JESSIE

Father walked you down the aisle and put you on his arm, and Arnold looked into your face and wept. We all wept. Even Mother wept.

INEZ

I'm not positive Mother could even tell us apart.

JESSIE

You killed the man I loved.

INEZ

I think not.

JESSIE

You killed the man I loved, yeah?

INEZ

Did I?

JESSIE

I'd say that's a rather unfortunate discovery.

INEZ (Incredulous)

You loved him, Dear?

(Beat)

JESSIE

Oh, I don't remember now.

INEZ

He was not yours to love.

JESSIE

Well...

INEZ

He would have stolen you away from me. Once and for all.

JESSIE

I've spent a lifetime wandering around this city, head up, wig straight, thinking about how I've wronged you. So reprehensible, me. Just disgusted with myself really. "Thank God for Inez," I said. I've said it a million times, all of these years, all of these days together.

(Beat)

Even now, it's not something I'm quite ready to remit.

INEZ

He saw something in you.

JESSIE

Nooo...

INEZ

That special something. That one thing that differentiates us. I know I don't have it. It's in your possession. I've always known that, God knows it's not in mine.

(JESSIE unzips the duffel bag, and starts to pull out large sums of old bills, stacking them into orderly piles.)

The truth is, Dear... Well, the truth is... I could always tell us apart. My greatest fear has always been

recognition. That one day I would walk out into the world and somebody would decipher us. Recognize us. Someone would finally succeed in their mission to disambiguate the sisterhood. Someone smirks, someone projects, someone chooses, and points a finger as it dawns on them, "Oh, there are two!"

(Beat)

And on that day, they would know... Right then and there, I am inferior.

JESSIE

I never got to be me, Inez. Grant me that. Just me out there introducing myself by the name Mother and Father put on that damn piece of paper.

INEZ

Born into anonymity, us. We've had the perfect cover for so long.

JESSIE

I'm going to be with Marcus now, yeah? And I'm done hiding in this apartment, growing older by the millisecond. I'm going to step out into the world and take a gander. I think I've earned it.

(Beat)

No flings, no trysts, no husbands.

INEZ

Trust me, having a husband only seemed like a good idea in the 50's.

(Beat)

JESSIE

You wouldn't have lost me.

INEZ

I didn't lose you, Dear. I kept you safe! I fed you! I clothed you and hid you!

JESSIE

You kept me!

INEZ

I gave you a life, where you never had to work at a desk, or punch a clock, or toil away in a... in a... /

JESSIE

Factory? A workhouse, earning my keep, earning a living, yeah?

INEZ

No... We've had money, Dear. We've had all of this.

JESSIE

I've had this! I did this!

INEZ

Yes. You robbed a bank for God's sake, and a good man died in your arms.

JESSIE

But you engineered this.

INEZ

My alibi is on record, and my record is clean. All these years together have assuaged my guilt. All these years with you, I have slept soundly.

JESSIE

(JESSIE hastily stuffs her half of the money into the duffel.)

Well, my ending shall have no rest.

(She grabs the duffel and walks towards the door, unlocking it.)

INEZ

Yes. I imagine your life will end in a bang!

JESSIE

(JESSIE drops the duffel.)

...

INEZ

Am I suppose to spend the last days of my life in this apartment? Too scared to do my shopping? Too afraid that some shrewd soul will put the pieces back together? Identify the players?

JESSIE

The average man is not Inspector Morse.

INEZ

The day we both step into the world is the day God takes notice, Jessie. Mark my words.

JESSIE

Oh, God. What would he want with two little old ladies?

INEZ

Two? Two! One, Dear! It's you! Don't you understand? Accomplice! At large! That's you. I answered all of their questions, fifty years ago. I'm in the clear, Dear. It's you they're after. The day I follow you out that door, is the day you become real! The day you resurface! The day you are discovered!

JESSIE

You've housed a hardened criminal in your home for 50 years /

INEZ

I don't care.

JESSIE

You've lied to the Federal authorities /

INEZ

I don't care. I don't care.

JESSIE

And fifty year ago today /

INEZ

I soaked the Goddamned fuse in camping fuel!
 (At this point, the sisters should have confused their identifying accessories and should be standing center stage. When the door swings open, MARCUS clearly cannot tell them apart.)
 Am I to be judged by my worst mistake? For one moment of negligence? One moment amidst hundreds of moments? Hundreds of thousands of moments?

MARCUS

Um. Yea. So. I've packed the car.

INEZ (Mimicking JESSIE, perky)

We're all packed, yeah?

MARCUS

I, think so?

INEZ (To Jessie)

Do consider the worst, Dear.

JESSIE

I won't. I won't consider the worst.

INEZ

Marcus? Have you ever spent 50 years of your life thinking the same thing, day after day? Contemplating? Meditating? Mulling it over? Just thinking to yourself... "Perhaps I do need another lock on that door?"

MARCUS (To Jessie)

Inez?

INEZ

Yes and no, Dear. Yes and no.

JESSIE

Oh, Marcus. My real name is /

INEZ (Barking)

Inez!

JESSIE

Jessica Emily Sinclair. Not Inez. Marcus, this is my sister, Inez

INEZ

Yes, OK.

MARCUS

Ma'am.

JESSIE

And I love you, and I'm leaving with you, and I won't be coming back.

INEZ (Distressed)

You won't?

JESSIE (To Marcus)

I don't cook, I don't clean, and no one in my family has ever lived past a hundred. So let's make short shrift of our romantic endeavors, yeah?

MARCUS (Natural)

Oh, Jessica...

JESSIE

And at the end of my life, I'm going to live, and explore the world, and make love to this young man twice a day like I'm taking anti-inflammatories. And I will be witnessed, and noticed, and watched. / and seen.

INEZ (Raising her voice over JESSIE's)

And tomorrow, someone will say, "You didn't know? Fifty years hiding right here in this woman's attic. Right here. That is something truly curious. A fugitive of the law, right under our noses."

MARCUS (Blurting)

I can tell you apart! No, yea, no. It's not, like, that hard to do. I mean, it's easy when you're right here.

INEZ

So astute, Marcus is. In context. In proximity. See, Dear? We need each other to be different. We need to be one, to be two. We'll only ever truly be ourselves when we are together.

JESSIE

It doesn't matter. If we never see each other again, no one will be the wiser. No one will ever know. No one will ever suspect, and I won't die in your arms.

(Pause)

INEZ

But who will we become?

JESSIE

You will be Inez. And I will be me. Marcus, bring the car around.

(JESSIE removes her wig.)

MARCUS

(MARCUS obeys, starts to leave, then,
turns to INEZ.)

I do, like, love your sister, Mz. Inez. I want you to
know that.

INEZ

Yes. That much is uncontested, Marcus.

MARCUS

I'm well aware of how it looks to the outside world,
but under the circumstances, you, um, have to
understand that, that /

INEZ

There are irregularities, Boy. Shit happens.

MARCUS

There's no funny business, K? And we'll write, like,
postcards from the road. I'll make sure there's plenty
of postcards.

INEZ

Yes, OK, Dear.

(MARCUS, realizing that INEZ has
nothing more to say to him, exits.)

Or you could call me on your cell phone, Boy.

JESSIE

He doesn't own a cell phone.

INEZ (Disbelieving)

Nooo...

JESSIE

You should see what we're driving. Fifty-fifty we
break down before Santa Rosa.

INEZ (Lighter)

...

JESSIE

...

INEZ

(INEZ, in front of the calendar.)

I have the urge to say, "I always knew this day would come." But, honestly, I feel a bit blindsided.

JESSIE

Goodbye, Inez.

(JESSIE turns and walks towards the door.)

INEZ

Look. Even our exits are built for one body. Even our doors are engineered against us.

JESSIE

Someone must always go first.

INEZ

I held the door for you, Dear. Remember that.

JESSIE

Yes. You've always been the one with the manners.

INEZ

Jessica... I have loved you since before you were born.

(Beat)

JESSIE

Dearest, Inez... You could have just told me so.

(JESSIE exits leaving the door wide open. INEZ follows, but can't bring herself to cross the threshold. She closes the front door and locks all of the locks. She is shaken. As the emptiness begins to fill her thoughts, she removes her wig and drops it onto the remaining pile of money. The lights shift. She turns back, for one last look at her front door.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF PLAY)