

Setting alternates between:

EVENING AT HOME: The dining room of the Bowers family. A massive oak table. It is raining outside which you can see through glass windows. Smells like melted butter on sourdough toast. 2019.

A WARM UNIVERSE: Dark velvet sky, stars everywhere. The sound of TV static and space.

Extract from Scene Fifteen — Spaghettification

MARGARET (O.S.)

Dark matter.

(The lights come on. A WARM UNIVERSE/EVENING AT HOME mix)

STELLA

Wha— I don't — I — I don't get it

I don't get it

MARGARET

No time for that. We've got to talk spaghettification.

STELLA

Spagh— what are you talking about? Spaghetti. Did you hear that?

MARGARET

Did you?

STELLA

Yes

MARGARET

And?

STELLA

And — I don't - I don't know. I don't know what it means

MARGARET

(sighs) I warned you about this before, Stella, and now it's here. Spaghettification. The tearing apart of limb from limb by tidal force. The black hole you don't make it through. If your limbs feel at all tingly, please let me know. Spaghettification comes on quickly.

STELLA

Lucy. Lucy.

Lucy and who else?

MARGARET

Are you asking?

STELLA

Yes!
No?
I —

MARGARET

Lucy and her mother, Paula, and Lucy's half-sister, but she was born after Bo left, so you don't really have to worry about her and the—

STELLA

No no no no no, stop. I don't want to know.
Can I unknow? Please can I unknow?

MARGARET

It's the cosmic cartographer's *job* to know.

STELLA

Does mom [know] ...

MARGARET

No. Only you

STELLA

They never told her?

MARGARET

Speaking in silence. Pros and cons.

STELLA

Voids and lumps — Do they gnaw?

MARGARET

At your bones? Your gut?

STELLA

Both

(MARGARET nods, apologetically)

STELLA

Can you reverse it?

MARGARET

To be honest, I can't quite remember. Some formula. I've forgotten.
But! You can collect your atoms back together sometimes.

STELLA

How?

MARGARET

Number seven.

STELLA

I don't feel like—

MARGARET

Otherwise, irreversible.

STELLA

But—

MARGARET

Not even the stars. Just nothingness. Hurry up hurry up – the process is a quick one – I can see
your matter spiraling as —

STELLA

SEVEN!

(MARGARET disappears into the dark. As STELLA speaks, snap back into EVENING AT HOME. BO has entered with a vat of borsht to find STELLA surrounded by a mountain of cassette tapes, holding the recorder. They look up at each other)

I know you have another family you don't talk about

(A stunned silence on both sides. Time extended. Finally, BO sets down the borsht, starts gathering up the tape. He doesn't stop moving. Completely in his own world)

BO

You shouldn't have been listening to my tapes

STELLA

Are you serious?

BO

Invasion of privacy

STELLA

Invasion of privacy? *Invasion of privacy?*

BO

Please don't do it again
We will forget about it. Ok? Now, there's flan on the back porch for dessert, if you'll go get it.
Cream in the fridge.

STELLA

Grandboppy – sit down! I just told you I KNOW.
Lucy? Paula?
I know!!

BO

(Denial)
Deborah needs to get her brakes changed. I can hear her driving away from here in that damn
Toyota

STELLA

You LIED! You're lying!

BO

Grocery bills, garlic, superglue, Grandmummy needs a sponge

STELLA

LISTEN TO ME!

(BO stops. Looks at STELLA)

Listen to me.

(BO crumples into his chair. The television (which we might not have even noticed was on) cuts out)

BO

She is so angry with me.

STELLA

Which she?

BO

I can feel her all the way from the nursing home.
No one was supposed to know. To...
It was better – it was

STELLA

It's fucked up

BO
Well, I—

STELLA
No. It's fucked up.

(BO is quiet. STELLA watches him)

BO
It is.
. .
It is.
. .
I guess ... do you want me to try and explain?

STELLA
Not really

BO
Okay.

(STELLA reconsiders)

STELLA
But maybe just –
when did

BO
Before we got married. I was – Paula and I – we

STELLA
Yeah, no... Did you know about Lu/cy

BO
Yes. Lived with her the first year, then ... needed something different ...
wrote letters and

STELLA
Just left

BO
I paid for her college. Part of her graduate degree

STELLA
Jesus

AND DON'T YOU DARE say fucking Zeus! You don't get to do that! You don't get to shit on people's morals for believing in things and then abandon some poor family and never tell the people who love you - people who love you so much - that you have this other fucking universe attached to you! That— you just could — that people can just leave and then not deal with the consequences and...

BO

.
. .
.

STELLA

Say something!
Are you sorry?

BO

(thoughtful, honest)
I don't think I can be that sorry, really. I had to.

STELLA

You're supposed to just say YES! You're supposed to just say YES I'M SORRY I HURT PEOPLE AND AM HURTING PEOPLE. That's what good people say! Sorry! All the time – sorry sorry sorry sorry!

(BO gets up to put the cassette tape away in the box)

BO

Well, I've told you the truth.

(STELLA stops BO. As she speaks, she pushes towards him)

STELLA

The TRUTH? You do NOT tell me the truth! I found it in that stupid box! You don't ever tell the truth! You don't tell me about this other FAMILY you've been harboring all my life – all *your* life! You never talk about anything important You don't even ask me how I'm doing and I'm not doing okay. Ok? I'm not doing okay and I don't think you are either!
You don't tell me Grandmummy's health stuff – I hear it all from Mom. I pretend I don't know things – like I know she forgot who you were last Monday but I pretend not to because I don't want to hurt you. I don't want to hurt you!

(She's cornered him. She shoves him, with urgency at first and then half-heartedly. He lets her)

You know what? **EIGHT**. You're fat. Obese. I used to look at you and think that when I was old I was gonna live like you do. Just eat and drink whatever I want and not have to worry because if

you're old, you can just kind of go *fuck it* and accept the consequences. But now? Now I worry that you're going to die suddenly of a heart attack and I'll have to look at your ugly face and you'll look like you do when you fall asleep during Jeopardy but won't be snoring and I won't cry which will hurt and I won't be able to talk to anyone about stupid things like the stars and garlic and – and –

(BO stops her pushes, hugs her. She collapses into him, sobbing)

STELLA

She's not coming back, is she

BO

I'm sorry, Stella.

.
.

We had beige carpets. Paula and I. Beige carpets and beige walls.

She wasn't bothered by them; that was how the house came. But after a while it was all I could see. Beige covering every surface.

Then that night I heard Dot sing at the club ...

I ... her voice was cosmic. It was inevitable. I came home and saw beige carpet under my feet and maybe I lost my mind a little but I couldn't bear that color anymore.

It was like I had this home in the stars and if I didn't get away from that beige color I would combust.

(STELLA is unsure how to react. Turns away)

Paula was – is - I'm sure - still – a wonderful person. She was smart, very smart, sent in little comments for the newspaper's opinions section every week.

And Lucy was a sweet baby – didn't complain or cry much.

.
.
.

Sometimes we get lost.

(STELLA clings to him)

STELLA

(unconvincingly) I'm mad at you

BO

I know

STELLA

I really am. I'm so mad.

(beat)

You're not obese.

BO

I've been walking 4,000 steps a day. Your mom got me a pedometer.

(STELLA laugh-cries into his arms, recovers a little)

STELLA

God...
And now you've put this whole huge secret on me,
and I can't tell Mom
That would be—
She has so much going on

BO

No.
I'll tell her
. .
Not today
But
I will tell her.
. .
I don't know how to do this, Stella.
Because she — Dot —
she's here, on earth I mean
But she's not here with us, she's not at the table
(beat)
I forgot to give you something.

STELLA

What

BO

It was — a few weeks ago, last time I was there — she asked me to record this and I...

(He gets up, rifles through the box, pulls out a cassette to play. As he does, MARGARET enters, taking a seat at the table)

I thought it might make things worse,
But, uh, it's for you.
I was supposed to save it for your birthday, she said. But you can hear it now. Might as well. She won't fucking know.

MARGARET

Today's your birthday, sweet Stella. Stella — what a beautiful name. If my mind starts running away from me more — which is coming — I want you to know that I will always feel you in my teeth and DNA and blood. You are there, Stella. You, my Marla and Grandboppy. There together.

Also, please make sure he takes his blood pressure medication. He hides it in the bread drawer. He needs to be reminded.

STELLA

(processes, nods)

We need to go. We need to be *here*

BO

I know.

It's time

(MARGARET exits)

Scene Sixteen — How to Speak

*Lights dim slowly from EVENING
AT HOME to A WARM UNIVERSE.*

*MARGARET/DOT and MARLA
stand behind the nursing home desk
which is suspended in space. BO and
STELLA turn to face the desk.
Everything is absorbed by starlight,
leaving only BO and STELLA.*

BO

Stella?

STELLA

Grandboppy?

BO

Can you hear me?

STELLA

Can you hear me?

BO

I can hear

STELLA

Ok, listen.

Nine: When I look at the stars or consider the cosmos, I am looking at you.

(They inhale the universe.)

(End play)