

MARK SIDE

MARK

I'm traditional. I don't know. Claire has pink hair. Kenna brought home a friend for Thanksgiving and I mixed up his pronouns. *Their* pronouns! They have this... vision, for what the world should look like –

HELEN

Well, sure –

MARK

And sometimes I think I don't –
But anyway. They're the joy of my life. It sounds corny, I know.

HELEN

It doesn't sound corny at all.

(Beat.)

START

MARK

So what about you?
Are you... seeing anybody, or...

HELEN

No, no. You know me. I don't really do...

MARK

You were seeing someone for a while after we...

HELEN

Yeah.

MARK

Ricardo, right?

HELEN

That's right, I forgot you met him.

MARK

Yeah – at that party.

HELEN

That Christmas party I had. And you and Lorraine were in the city –

MARK

Lorraine and I got in a fight that night.

HELEN

At the party?

MARK

No, after.

HELEN

Why?

MARK

I may have told her that you were –

HELEN

What?

MARK

I may have described you as... plain. And we got to the party, and you were wearing that dress, that red dress with the long sleeves. And you were.... Plain would not be the word for it. She wanted to know why I hadn't told her what you looked like.

HELEN

Why hadn't you?

MARK

I'm not sure.

And it was our weekend, our one weekend away – McKenna was a baby, we'd left her with Lorraine's mom. And Lorraine was mad because I wanted to spend part of our weekend at a party where she didn't even know anyone. Which was fair.

(Beat.)

HELEN

That wasn't the last time we saw each other, was it?

MARK

That party? No, I don't think so. We had coffee, at that place by the park.

HELEN

That was before. You didn't have kids yet.

MARK

You're right, no, you're right, that was when Lorraine and I were first –
And then Kenna was born, and then Claire, and things were so busy –

HELEN

Sure.

MARK

You know, I remember thinking, when we – it was so hard to imagine not talking to you. We'd talked so much, all the time, and it made me so sad to think about not doing that. And now it's been – half my life, and I've spent it mostly not talking to you. And it's been –

HELEN

What?

MARK

Fine.

(HELEN nods.)

HELEN

Is it hard to imagine not talking to Lorraine?

MARK

We still talk. About the girls. That was... mostly what we talked about anyhow.

(After a moment)

Do you want to know something funny?

(She nods.)

My mother died, last year.

HELEN

I'm so –

MARK

That wasn't what was funny, that was –
I mean, she was eighty-nine, it wasn't –
My sister called at two in the morning. My mom had been living with her. She'd go in and check on her in the night to make sure my mom was still breathing. And... that night she wasn't, so. After we hung up I didn't know what to do. I was tired, I'd been up late working, but it felt weird to just... roll over and go back to sleep. I was in my apartment by myself, this was a couple of months after Lorraine – and I went out into the kitchen and I thought maybe I'd make a

sandwich, but then that felt weird too so I just sat down on the couch. And I turned on the TV and I don't know what I watched, some sitcom, and I laughed at the jokes that were funny, and I was thinking, I'm doing okay. She had a long life, a good life, and I'm older than most people are when they lose...

And after a while I fell asleep there. I woke up when the light started coming in. It was cold, I didn't have a blanket, and it was that pale grey early morning light – and all of a sudden I felt so... alone, I guess, more alone than I've ever –

I think I made some kind of sound, and I was down on my knees with my head on the carpet. I think I was there for a long time. And the funny thing is that what came to my mind while I was down there was I wanted to call you.

(He laughs self-consciously.)

Can you imagine how strange that would have been? If I'd suddenly called you and told you my mother –

HELEN

I don't think it would have been that strange.

MARK

When we hadn't talked in – I don't even know –

(HELEN shrugs.)

HELEN

When my dad died I ate a pie. A whole one.

END

MARK

(laughing a little)

What?

HELEN

(also laughing a little)

I'd been saving it for Thanksgiving. I came home from the hospital – I'd been there for a couple days, and all of a sudden I realized I was starving. And I ate a piece of this pecan pie just standing there with the fridge door open. And then I ate another one. And then I didn't stop til the pie was gone. Just standing in front of the fridge and eating. I felt so sick after, I had to lie down on the couch, but it was better than feeling...

(Beat.)

MARK

That makes sense.

(Beat.)