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Cast of Characters

MARIE BARRETT, a woman in her mid 20s

MARIE HARVEY, a woman in her mid 50s

VIRGINIA, 35-45 years old, head flight attendant, speaks with a Southern accent

VOICE OF PILOT

Place

On board an airplane flying from New York City to Charleston, South Carolina

Time

Present day

RELATIVE STRANGERS

by Sheri Wilner

(At rise we are on board an airplane The voice of an airline pilot can be heard over the intercom.)

VOICE OF PILOT. Once again, ladies and gentlemen, from the flight deck, it's our pleasure to welcome you aboard National Airlines Flight 1738 from New York City to Charleston, South Carolina. Flight time is approximately one hour and forty-four minutes, which means we should be landing at 12:44 P.M.

(Lights gradually rise to reveal two women seated next to each other on an airplane. It is a few minutes after takeoff. MARIE BARRETT, mid-20s, seated on the aisle, reads a book without the overhead light on. MARIE HARVEY, mid-50s, seated by the window, reads a magazine. She appears uncomfortable and frequently looks at MARIE BARRETT.)

VOICE OF PILOT. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for selecting National Airlines. We bring people together.

HARVEY. You *cram* people together.

BARRETT. I'm sorry. Am I crowding you? Here, I'll move my jacket.

HARVEY. They really pile us on top of each other... *(Indicates seat belt:)* and strap us down. If they truly wanted to "ensure our comfort," they wouldn't strap us down.

BARRETT. Don't they have to? For safety's sake?

HARVEY. Do you feel safe bound up like a prisoner? I sure as hell don't.

BARRETT. Planes scare me no matter what.

(MARIE HARVEY returns to her magazine.)

HARVEY. Don't worry. You're safer up here than you are down there.

BARRETT. Do you live in New York?

HARVEY. I live about an hour's drive from Manhattan. Twenty minutes if you walk.

BARRETT. I've only lived there for three years. I'm originally from Rhode Island.

HARVEY. Quite a change.

BARRETT. Yeah, it was. The biggest I've made.

HARVEY. There'll be bigger.

BARRETT. What's the biggest change you've made?

HARVEY. I used to be your age. Now I'm mine.

BARRETT. Are you going to Charleston for anything special?

HARVEY. Not special. No.

BARRETT. Just visiting?

HARVEY. Just divorcing. My divorce hearing is tomorrow.

BARRETT. Your family lives in Charleston?

HARVEY. Just my husband. Divorcing me isn't enough. He also needed to move to a different climatic region.

BARRETT. I'm sorry.

HARVEY. Don't be. We had ten happy years of marriage...which isn't bad out of twenty-five.

BARRETT. You were married that long?

HARVEY. Yeah, well, what's twenty-five years?

BARRETT. Me. My birthday was last month.

HARVEY. Well I hope the past twenty-five years have brought you more happiness than they've brought me.

BARRETT. I don't know that they have.

HARVEY. Unless the only things you have to show for them are bills from your lawyer and a tan line on your ring finger, I'd say they have.

BARRETT. Are those really the only things you have? Bills and—?

HARVEY. And in a couple of weeks I won't even have a tan line.

BARRETT. You don't have any children?

HARVEY. I didn't say that.

BARRETT. Oh. So you do have something.

HARVEY. Divorces don't allow for much neutrality. At least not in my family. Good news is, if you know anyone at Hallmark, you can tell 'em to make one less Mother's Day card this year.

(MARIE BARRETT stares sympathetically at MARIE HARVEY. MARIE HARVEY tries to ignore her for as long as she can and then:)

HARVEY. Yes?

BARRETT. If you want to talk about anything, I'm a great listener. I wouldn't mind at all. Really. I don't know much about divorce, but I know a lot about being alone. Would you like to talk about being alone?

HARVEY. Not at the moment. Maybe when we reach cruising altitude.

BARRETT. Well you know where to find me.

(MARIE BARRETT returns to her book. MARIE HARVEY tries to read her magazine, but keeps looking at MARIE BARRETT as if she wants to say something.)

HARVEY. Um...excuse me—

BARRETT. Yes?

HARVEY. Nothing, I'm sorry.

BARRETT. No, no. Did you want to talk about something?

HARVEY. No. I—

BARRETT. Go ahead. I'm listening.

HARVEY. It's just, well, I can't help it, the mother in me wants to tell you to turn the light on while you're reading.

(A call button “bing” is heard, indicating a “passenger” requesting service.)

BARRETT. What did you say?

HARVEY. You should turn the light on. You’re destroying your eyes—

BARRETT. No, no before that. What did you say before that?

HARVEY. Nothing.

BARRETT. No. Something. “The mother in me.” Right?

HARVEY. Yeah...

BARRETT. That’s what I thought. Wow.

HARVEY. What?

BARRETT. Wow.

HARVEY. What?!

BARRETT. I’m just going to seize the opportunity, OK? Because who knows when it will ever come my way again.

HARVEY. I don’t know what you’re talking about.

BARRETT. I’ll throw out a bunch of questions and you can answer them one at a time...or pick and choose the ones you want—whatever feels right... Just go wherever “the mother” in you takes you, OK? All right, this is it. *(Taking a deep breath:)* Would you definitely say it’s better to breast-feed a baby? Does the fork go on the left or the right? Um...oh yeah—is it true you can’t wear white until after Memorial Day? And should you really wait an hour after eating to swim? Um...damn, why haven’t I been writing these down? I literally have hundreds—*thousands* of— Oh, I know, if an invitation says “and guest”—?

HARVEY. I just thought you should turn your light on.

(She reaches above MARIE BARRETT’s head and turns on her light.)

That’s all.

BARRETT. I know you must think I'm a weirdo, but I'm not. I don't have a mother, you see. It's something I'm aware of every second of the day. Like if I didn't have any arms or legs...or skin. She died during childbirth. They say as soon as I emerged—as soon as I took my first breath, she took her last. She really was only a vessel for me if you think about it—just like this plane. She received me, took me to a destination and then I emerged, disembarked and she was gone. Lame metaphor I know, but the mind—my mind—needs ways to understand, to make sense. I'm always feeling so...lost—like everyone in the world has a map that I don't have. Sometimes, I find I just don't know how to get around. Like there's vital information I don't have access to. Letters missing from my alphabet, you know? But now, all of a sudden...here you are. And I know this is lousy timing given your situation, but there's too much I need to know. So I'm just gonna grab a hold of this before it floats away. OK?

HARVEY. I don't think so.

BARRETT. But you offered—

HARVEY. I didn't offer anything.

BARRETT. Yes you did.

HARVEY. No I didn't.

(Beat.)

BARRETT. How many children did you say you have?

HARVEY. I didn't.

BARRETT. Sons?

(MARIE HARVEY shakes her head no.)

Daughters. How many?

HARVEY. Enough.

(MARIE HARVEY flips through her magazine. Pause.)

BARRETT. My name's Marie. What's yours?

(No response.)

OK—I'll guess.

HARVEY. (*Before she can guess:*) Marie.

BARRETT. Yes?

HARVEY. No. That's my name too. Marie.

BARRETT. Is that the truth? Is it?

HARVEY. Yes.

BARRETT. That's...phenomenal. My God! Can you believe it? Maybe that's how they seat us.

VIRGINIA. Ladies and gentleman the pilot has just turned off the fasten seat belts sign indicating that you are free to move about the cabin.

HARVEY. (*Unfastening her seat belt:*) Hallelujah.

BARRETT. It's an amazing coincidence, don't you think?

VIRGINIA. However, for your safety, we recommend you keep your seat belt fastened while you are seated. Also, please remember that due to federal regulations, smoking is not permitted on this flight. If you choose not to obey these rules, you all might not get that midday snack you were promised. Just a joke. We will be around shortly with our complimentary beverage service. Please refer to the "Flight" magazine in the seat pocket in front of you for your selections. Thank you.

BARRETT. Marie, there's something I really need to ask you—

HARVEY. Look, I don't know you—

BARRETT. My name is Marie Barrett. I live in Brooklyn, I'm 25 years old, I'm Episcopalian. I work for a small but reputable publishing company and...um...I'm allergic to birch trees. What else do you want to know?

HARVEY. I shouldn't have said anything about the light.

BARRETT. The mother in you couldn't help it.

HARVEY. Marie, in twenty-four hours I have to stand in front of a judge and a bunch of other strangers and bicker with my husband

about how much of an allowance he'll give me per month so at forty-nine years old, and having acquired no marketable skills, I won't have to beg anyone to give me my first job—

BARRETT. You've never had a job?

HARVEY. I paint.

VIRGINIA. Hello, ladies. What would you like to drink today?

BARRETT. *(To MARIE HARVEY:)* You paint? I work for a children's book publisher. I could help you find a job.

HARVEY. *(To VIRGINIA:)* Are there any empty seats?

BARRETT. Please don't.

VIRGINIA. No ma'am, there are no vacancies. And as far as I can tell, that seat you got there is perfectly fine, so let's not make complaints just to hear the sound of our own voices, OK?

BARRETT. Is your name Marie?

VIRGINIA No. It's Virginia. Why?

BARRETT. We're both Maries.

VIRGINIA Really? Isn't that an amazing coincidence?

BARRETT. It sure is.

VIRGINIA So. What can I get you two Maries to drink?

BARRETT. Orange juice please. Wait. No. My stomach feels a little weird. All this excitement's got it doing somersaults. *(To MARIE HARVEY:)* Is it OK to have the acid? What does the mother in you say about that?

(MARIE HARVEY does not respond. She continues to flip through her magazine. VIRGINIA and MARIE BARRETT stare at MARIE HARVEY for a few beats.)

VIRGINIA. Ma'am?

HARVEY. What?

(MARIE HARVEY realizes they are staring at her.)

VIRGINIA. What's your call on the OJ?

HARVEY. Oh good God— have ginger ale.

BARRETT. Excellent. Ginger ale please.

VIRGINIA. Peanuts?

(MARIE BARRETT and VIRGINIA look at MARIE HARVEY, as if asking her a question. MARIE HARVEY sighs heavily.)

HARVEY. Are they salted?

VIRGINIA. Yes.

HARVEY. Skip the nuts.

VIRGINIA. And what would you like for yourself?

HARVEY. A Bloody Mary.

(VIRGINIA looks at her watch.)

Believe me, I'm entitled to it today.

BARRETT. She certainly is. Her divorce hearing is tomorrow.

VIRGINIA. *(Sympathetic:)* Do you really think alcohol is an answer?

HARVEY. No. Alcohol is a beverage. You asked me if I wanted one and that's the one I chose.

VIRGINIA. Suit yourself. But remember, I do have the authority to cut you off at any time.

HARVEY. Don't worry, I found a designated driver to fly the plane.

VIRGINIA. I'm only doing my job. Four dollars, please.

HARVEY. I don't suppose I can start a tab.

VIRGINIA. That's not in keeping with our policy.

(MARIE HARVEY pays her. VIRGINIA pours ginger ale into a glass.)

When I was a little girl, and my tummy felt funny, my mother would stir up my ginger ale until all the bubbles were gone.

BARRETT. Oh yeah? Why?

VIRGINIA. Strangely enough, I never asked.

(MARIE BARRETT *looks at* MARIE HARVEY.)

HARVEY. I am not stirring your ginger ale.

VIRGINIA. Would you like me to stir it for you?

BARRETT. Yes please.

(VIRGINIA *stirs and then stops suddenly.*)

VIRGINIA. Whoops. There is no tomato juice on my cart. Be right back.

(VIRGINIA *hands* MARIE HARVEY *the ginger ale and walks to the front of the plane.* MARIE HARVEY *looks at the ginger ale for a moment, sighs heavily and then begins to stir.*)

HARVEY. It prevents gas.

(MARIE HARVEY *hands* MARIE BARRETT *the ginger ale.* A call button “bing” is heard.)

BARRETT. Thank you.

(MARIE BARRETT *sips her ginger ale and watches* MARIE HARVEY *read her magazine.*)

Could I ask you just one thing? Just answer this one question and then you can go back to your magazine, which I can tell you’re only *pretending* to read. Marie? Could you put that down, please? Please?

HARVEY. Are you working for my husband? Did he hire you to drive me mad?

(VIRGINIA *returns, handing* MARIE HARVEY *a Bloody Mary.*)

VIRGINIA. You sip this slowly now, understand? (*Pointing to* MARIE BARRETT’s *glass:*) Did you stir that for her?

HARVEY. Yes.

VIRGINIA. Good. Lord knows I can’t do it all.

(VIRGINIA *exits.* MARIE HARVEY *takes a big gulp of her Bloody Mary.*)

BARRETT. I wouldn’t bother you like this if I hadn’t been waiting what feels like my whole entire life to ask someone this quest—

HARVEY. (*Interrupting:*) In approximately five minutes, this Bloody Mary will kick in, allowing me to pretend I don't have to do tomorrow what I have to do tomorrow. So if I enlighten you with some motherly advice now, you'll leave me alone for the rest of the flight, agreed? Minimal interaction only, right? Right?

BARRETT. Well, I might—

HARVEY. I'll sweeten the deal. Stop asking questions and the entire armrest is yours. OK? Maternal advice. Here goes—

(Taking a drink.)

If you *have* to get married, marry a lawyer...surround yourself with people you can tolerate but don't particularly like and most importantly—never, *ever* have any children. Lovely meeting you—have a good trip.

(She turns away.)

BARRETT. Why shouldn't I have kids? Because I didn't have a mother of my own? Am I missing something essential that all other women have? Like some internal instruction book?

HARVEY. Just do what I did—read Dr. Spock and then hire a nanny.

(She takes another gulp of her drink.)

BARRETT. (*Laughs:*) Did your daughter inherit your sense of humor?

HARVEY. No, just my nervous condition.

BARRETT. I see.

HARVEY. You see? Really? What do you see? Do I have an “I've-driven-my-child-to-see-extensive-psychotherapy” look to me? I've also driven her to an aroma therapist, a scalp masseuse, an herbalist, a dog psychologist...an astrologist...and a marriage counselor. And every goddamn one of them tells her it's all my fault.

BARRETT. Even the dog psychologist?

HARVEY. Apparently even little Snowcake isn't immune to the tension my visits create.

BARRETT. (*Laughs:*) You're really very funny.

HARVEY. Well, I'm glad you've enjoyed our little time together.

(Lifting her glass in a toast.)

Good-bye.

BARRETT. I have enjoyed it. That's actually what I wanted to ask you about. You see, I always hoped I could find someone...like you...who I could talk to from time to time. You know, like if I have any questions, maybe I could call you—

HARVEY. What?

BARRETT. I'm just so tired of never knowing where to find answers. I need someone...a woman...an older woman, who I can go to when I need help—

HARVEY. Are you asking me to be your mother?

BARRETT. No.

(Beat.)

It would be more like freelancing.

HARVEY. Good God—don't give yourself away to a stranger.

BARRETT. See—you're giving me advice already—you're a natural.

HARVEY. (*Uneasily:*) You're going too far. Now leave me alone.

BARRETT. I don't mean to imply that I'd call you constantly, just on occasion—

HARVEY. (*Overlapping:*) I'm not listening to this.

BARRETT. We both live in New York. We could meet for coffee from time to time.

HARVEY. Stop it.

BARRETT. Your own daughter would have first dibs of course, but we could all work out a schedule I'm sure—

HARVEY. Not another word.

BARRETT. Only when it's—

HARVEY. *I mean it!*

BARRETT. I'm sorry. This isn't a good time for you.

(MARIE HARVEY finishes her drink, shakes the ice around her glass, then looks up and down the aisle.)

I spend so much time trying to acquire family I can't imagine having to give any up. I'm sorry.

HARVEY. Don't be. My husband and I were happy for twenty years. And then we met.

(MARIE BARRETT does not laugh.)

HARVEY. *(Imitating a rim-shot:)* Ba-dump-ump.

BARRETT. Would you like to talk about how you're feeling?

HARVEY. I'm feeling annoyed.

BARRETT. I mean about your divorce. Would you like to talk about that?

HARVEY. Yes. But to someone I've known for longer than five minutes.

BARRETT. Well that's unfair.

HARVEY. What is unfair?

BARRETT. Shutting me out like that. It's not my fault we've only known each other for five minutes.

HARVEY. You shouldn't take it personally. I don't like talking to strangers.

BARRETT. Why?

HARVEY. Because they end up asking you to be their mother.

BARRETT. This has happened to you before? Has it?

HARVEY. I was speaking figuratively.

BARRETT. That's a relief. You're the first person I've asked. It would be just my luck if you had like a waiting list or something.

HARVEY. *I'm* the first person?

BARRETT. Yes.

HARVEY. Why on earth would *I* be the first person you've asked?

BARRETT. Because of what you said—"the mother in me." You saw me reading in the dark and the nurturer in you was so strong you couldn't resist reaching out to me. I'm a perfect stranger but you wanted to take care of me, to protect me. You're who I've been searching for. You've got the right stuff.

HARVEY. I don't have any stuff.

BARRETT. Exactly. You're alone like me. I mean, you're going to get divorced tomorrow, and no one's coming with you. It seems like...maybe...you have no one to ask.

(Beat.)

Hey—would you like me to go with you?

HARVEY. What?!

BARRETT. You don't want to be there alone, do you?

HARVEY. Thanks, but no thanks. Maybe next time.

BARRETT. I think you're looking for someone as much as I am.

HARVEY. Oh God, I'm in Hell, I'm in sheer Hell.

BARRETT. Truthfully, I don't believe for a second that you want me to stop talking to you.

HARVEY. Then make believe. Please.

(VIRGINIA enters carrying plastic bags containing earphones. She passes them out to the other passengers.)

VIRGINIA. Now don't y'all push these too far into your ears. With the cabin pressure being as high as it is, we don't want any of your heads exploding. Just a joke.

HARVEY. Excuse me—

VIRGINIA. *(Pointing at MARIE HARVEY's empty glass:)* You shouldn't drink that fast.

HARVEY. I wouldn't drink at all if you could suggest another way to get it down.

VIRGINIA. Sarcasm will not get you better service.

HARVEY. I want to change my seat.

VIRGINIA. One at the bar perhaps?

BARRETT. Don't change your seat. I—

(A call button "bing" is heard, indicating a "passenger" requesting service.)

VIRGINIA. Duty calls.

(VIRGINIA abruptly tosses MARIE HARVEY a package of headsets and quickly exits.)

HARVEY. Hey!

(She pushes the call button, but gets no response.)

Oh, for crying out loud.

(She rips the plastic bag open, puts the earphones in her ears and stares out the window.)

BARRETT. Please don't do that. I wasn't finished talking—

(MARIE HARVEY closes her eyes and leans her head back.)

I'm sorry to bother you, but there are things I have to talk to someone about. You see I'm really scared about something and there's no one else who I— Are you listening? Marie? Come on... Talk to me. I don't think what I'm asking is so bad... I only meant that I'd call you every once in a while...just when I need an answer, or some advice. That's all, really. I just want to know there's someone out there I can talk to when I don't know what to do. Like about dating, or getting rid of strep throat...or cooking roasts...or buying flatware...or...or about...about lumps. You know, as in what if you feel something in your body you know wasn't there before?

(MARIE BARRETT becomes more emotional; MARIE HARVEY removes her headsets and listens to her.)

And you don't know a single thing about what a lump could be, except— And you're too scared to find out because you don't think you could go through anything that bad without someone...a mother to help you through it. Does it always mean something bad? Does a lump always mean cancer? Does it? Marie? Answer me. ANSWER ME PLEASE!

(VIRGINIA rushes over.)

VIRGINIA. Is there something I can help with here?

BARRETT. *(To MARIE HARVEY:)* Does a lump always mean cancer?

VIRGINIA. Excuse me?

BARRETT. Does a lump always mean cancer?

VIRGINIA. Ma'am, I think I'll defer to you on that one.

BARRETT. Excuse me. I feel sick.

(She exits to lavatory at the back of the plane.)

HARVEY. Oh, brilliant. Is that how they teach you to handle crises in stewardess school? To defer?

(VIRGINIA sits down in Marie Barrett's seat.)

VIRGINIA. Does she have cancer?

HARVEY. I don't know. She said she found a lump.

VIRGINIA. Does a lump always mean cancer?

HARVEY. Why is everybody asking *me* that?

VIRGINIA. Does it?

HARVEY. No.

VIRGINIA. Well go on and tell her that.

HARVEY. I don't know who she is.

VIRGINIA. She seems to have formed an attachment to you.

HARVEY. Yes. However, I can't have her attached.

(Beat.)

Look, before she comes back, I need you—I *want* you to change my seat.

VIRGINIA. Tell her she's all right and then we'll discuss the seating arrangements.

HARVEY. I bought a ticket for this plane so I could get from point A to point B. That's it. As far as I know, I'm not required to adopt anyone. So move my seat, please.

VIRGINIA. That's against policy.

HARVEY. No it's not.

VIRGINIA. And how would you know? I don't see any wings pinned to your chest.

HARVEY. Don't force me to make demands—

VIRGINIA. Oh, we're threatening to make demands, are we? I guess our morning cocktail wasn't such a good idea after all, was it?

HARVEY. She won't leave me alone despite numerous requests—

VIRGINIA. Requests? No demands? I see, it's only airline personnel that are threatened with demands.

HARVEY. I apologize if I've offended you. I'm *asking* you, politely, could I possibly change seats with someone?

VIRGINIA. What would you like me to do? Walk up to a passenger and say, "Excuse me, that woman up there is sitting next to someone who is driving her crazy. Would you mind switching seats with her?"

HARVEY. Surely you can find another way to phrase it.

VIRGINIA. (*Earnestly:*) Go tell her she's all right.

HARVEY. I'd prefer it if you told her.

VIRGINIA. You know, I chose this profession, so I could help people on a daily basis. But all it usually entails is passing out drinks and pillows. I know that. However, you have a real opportunity here to help someone. And for that I envy you.

HARVEY. If you want her, you can have her. She's currently accepting applications for a mother.

VIRGINIA. (*Patting MARIE HARVEY's lap:*) Not anymore. So. What kind of arrangement did you all work out?

HARVEY. We didn't work out an arrangement. She's a total stranger—

VIRGINIA. But "stranger" is a relative term. Compared to say, that gentleman right there, she isn't such a stranger, is she? You know her name, where she works...her current medical situation.

HARVEY. She's allergic to birch trees.

VIRGINIA. See there? Seems to me the two of you could have a nice little relationship.

HARVEY. There's no such thing as a nice little relationship.

VIRGINIA. Ma'am, I'm a recent divorcée myself, and personally the amount of people exiting my life if greater than the amount of people boarding, if you know what I mean. Lucky for you if that's not your situation. Oops, she's coming back. Try talking to her. You never know—

(*MARIE BARRETT returns to her seat.*)

How are you feeling, dear?

BARRETT. Fine, thank you. Could I have a pillow please?

VIRGINIA. Would you like a pillow also?

HARVEY. Just another Bloody Mary.

VIRGINIA. Are you su—

HARVEY. I'm sure.

VIRGINIA. (*To MARIE BARRETT:*) A lump doesn't always mean cancer, you know. (*To MARIE HARVEY:*) Does it?

HARVEY. No.

VIRGINIA. (*Indicating to MARIE BARRETT:*) Tell her.

(*VIRGINIA exits.*)

HARVEY. Are you OK?

BARRETT. Yes.

HARVEY. I'm sure there isn't anything wrong. But go to a doctor as soon as you get home.

(MARIE BARRETT *nods. Beat.*)

Usually, a woman your age has nothing to worry about.

BARRETT. Usually. The women in my family aren't really known for their longevity. So...I get scared.

HARVEY. (*Gently.*) Don't get so scared.

BARRETT. If this is bad, I won't be able to do it without...a mother.

HARVEY. I'm not who you want for a mother. The truth is, that's an item my own daughter is currently debating.

BARRETT. There's something unbelievable to me about a mother and a daughter not getting along.

HARVEY. It's unbelievable to me that any do. If the truth be told, you've asked me more questions in the past ten minutes than my own daughter has asked me in the past ten years. I'm not as adept at mothering as you'd think.

BARRETT. I don't care. In fact, I prefer it that way. If you've been waiting ten years for someone to ask you for advice, you must have a lot of it to give. Right?

(MARIE HARVEY *laughs.*)

Hey, and just think, you'd be getting me at the best possible time. No teething, no toilet training...I've had all my shots.

(VIRGINIA *returns with a pillow and a glass.*)

VIRGINIA. Here's your *second* drink. FYI, regulations do not permit us to serve more than three.

HARVEY. Thank you.

(MARIE HARVEY *pays VIRGINIA for the drink.*)

VIRGINIA. (*Handing MARIE HARVEY the pillow:*) My hands are full. Would you put this behind her? (*To MARIE BARRETT:*) Lean forward honey.

(*MARIE BARRETT leans forward. MARIE HARVEY fluffs up the pillow and then puts it behind her. VIRGINIA watches happily.*)

So, is it settled? Are you two gonna go out and buy matching outfits?

HARVEY. Go away. Shoo.

VIRGINIA. Don't blow this.

BARRETT. You did tell me that all you have are lawyer bills and a tan line. When you said that, you reminded me of this quote I use to describe how I feel: "Life has not yet offered me a trinket of the slightest value." It's from Virginia Woolf—Mrs. Dalloway. Except for the yet. I added that—I try to be optimistic. "Life has not *yet* offered me a trinket of the slightest value." That's how you feel too, isn't it?

HARVEY. Well, like I said...I paint. That's my trinket.

BARRETT. (*Disappointed:*) Maybe I'll buy some watercolors.

HARVEY. I'm sure you have something.

BARRETT. Books, I guess. Virginia Woolf, Willa Cather, George Eliot. Anything written by a woman, I've read. But Virginia, Willa, and George, God bless 'em, have little to say about yeast infections and monthly mood swings. I can't find my mother in a book.

HARVEY. So now you're looking for her on airplanes?

BARRETT. I'm looking for her everywhere. I search for her the way you look for something you've dropped in the grass. Parting every blade...I used to dream that she didn't actually die. Instead a team of evil doctors kidnapped her from the operating table because she had a rare something or other—like three fallopian tubes. Or a five-chambered heart. I liked that idea the best—that she had a tremendous heart. Anyway, they kidnapped her to study her, so she's not really dead and it's only a matter of time until she escapes and I find her... That's why I start conversations with strangers.

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!

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