

THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE HOUSE OF ENDING

by

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CHARACTERS:

ELLA ENDING	house mother
AARON ENDING	son to ELLA
ZIGGY ENDING	son to AARON, husband to DELILAH GENESIS
CAROLINA ENDING	daughter to ZIGGY
AGGIE ENDING	daughter to ELLA, wife to JOE BRONCO
JOE BRONCO	husband to AGGIE
JEREMIAH BRONCO	son to AGGIE, husband to SARAH
JOHN GENESIS	house father
KAREN GENESIS	house mother
CARLOS GENESIS	son to JOHN and KAREN
DELILAH GENESIS	daughter to JOHN and KAREN, wife to ZIGGY
PETER PARK	house father
MARIA PARK	house mother
SARAH PARK	daughter to MARIA, wife to JEREMIAH
PARIS PARK	son to MARIA
TOMMY WASHINGTON	employee to ELLA
WAYNE BOOKER	employee to ELLA
JAMAL TURNER	employee to ELLA
RUTH WILLIAMS	waitress in a diner
ERIC FISHER	attorney to Ella
Attendants, workers, etc.	

SCENE

New Jerusalem

PROLOGUE

Enter CHORUS, proscene

CHORUS

It begins like this: in darkness; a city; you rise. And you rise, and the city falls, silent and shadowed beneath you. And you rise above the city, but the silence and the shadow hide your rising from you, even from yourself. And in the silent rising shadows you rise high above the stoic city, you don't know you rise, but then the city misses you, and calls you, calls you back, its silent dark perception, knows you are not there, and calls you back again, and calls you back again, and in the darkness you break the silence and you answer, and call back, call "here I am," and where are you? And where's this city, New Jerusalem, beneath you, calling back? You answer, "here I am," and answer, and the same call from the New Jerusalem unyielding, and you doubt yourself, and in the middle, there is light, and in the lightness and the calling, in the bright sound you perceive your rise, and now the city calls you, deafening, you cannot answer it.

Exit

ACT I
SCENE 1

A diner.

Enter TOMMY, WAYNE, JAMAL.

WAYNE

You heard that Ella Ending's dying?

TOMMY

Nah man she's old she ain't dead she's retired.

WAYNE

No she ain't dead yet but I heard she's mad sick

JAMAL

What did she get?

WAYNE

Dunno. Maybe it's cancer.

JAMAL

Maybe. She smokes like a fiend.

WAYNE

That shit'll getcha. My uncle and my cousin they both got cancer.

TOMMY

Maybe. I dunno.

enter RUTH

RUTH

Hi hunns. whatcha having?

JAMAL

Coffee.

TOMMY

Coffee please.

WAYNE

Coffee, and could we get some waters too?

RUTH

Be right back.

exit RUTH

TOMMY

Hey man but I got plans though.

WAYNE

mmhmm

TOMMY

kna'mean?

JAMAL

hmm.

they sit in silence.

enter RUTH

TOMMY

I'm bout to flip this shit. no more tech work. I'm bout to be a writer.

RUTH

oh yeah? honey aint you know that writing's dead?

TOMMY

i'm not trying to set up cameras and mop floors no more. fuck this shit...

long beat

TOMMY (continued)

sorry ya. I aint mean to come off all fucked up like that. i'm just sayin

WAYNE

yea we heard you. what you sayin.

JAMAL

damn son. That was some harsh shit son, kna'mean? I mean ... what u goin' write then?

TOMMY

It's already done. I wrote a show for Happy Endings.

WAYNE

oh wait what? you write? like you a writer now? you write a book?

TOMMY

nah man a show, a script, a screenplay for a show...

WAYNE

my man! and I thought you were just fucking with me and shit. i'll watch that shit! i'll watch it just to watch it!

TOMMY

good look then.

JAMAL

yeah man good look.

RUTH

and good luck too hon! don't you go forget me when you famous though

WAYNE

Tommy bout to be a movie star.

TOMMY

tell you what though - i don't know how to get this shit into Ending

JAMAL

like you can't finish it? but you said

TOMMY

nah J I mean the company, the Ending company. Happy Endings. I been working here so long and almost never seen the Endings out around here.

WAYNE

tell you what though - when you see them, i mean if it was me and i had this bomb script and i been working here so long - if it was me i'd be like hey Ella lemme get a meeting, my name is wayne thomas, i been working here so long, i wrote you this bomb show, can i get some?

RUTH

Wayne you crazy. 'can I get some' - what you think goin' happen then?

WAYNE

Damn Ruthie all i'm sayin is we been here so long - years and shit - you heard that Ella Ending bout to die?

RUTH

oh Stop. Tommy, Jamal - ya heard that same?

TOMMY

Only from Wayne. But you know what - I saw her son, that Aaron Ending, yesterday up by the midtown office.

JAMAL

oh word? what he said?

TOMMY

nothing - i ain't have no time to talk to him. and he ain't have no time neither.

JAMAL

well I saw his sister Aggie over by the studio this morning, looking like she bout to faint. How Aaron looked?

TOMMY

Dunno. tired I guess. If Mama Ella bout to die, they got some shit to handle. How you think that will is gonna go?

RUTH

uh-uh! don't ya go speculating on that. 'scuse me.

exit RUTH

TOMMY

Well Ruthie you know that's our jobs right there!

WAYNE

damn Tommy you two-faced! ain't you trying to get out though? be a writer and that shit? But true though, true. that IS our jobs. What happens to the company if Mama Ella dies?

JAMAL

she give it to them two kids.

WAYNE

Aaron?

JAMAL

And Aggie. but I dunno neither. Bet she made a will though.

TOMMY

yea she made a will! who wouldn't? you ain't got one J?

JAMAL

man I ain't got no will.

TOMMY

why not?

JAMAL

for what? I ain't got nothing to leave no one, no one wants the shit I got no way...

TOMMY

I tell you what Jamal

enter RUTH

I'm bout to make me one of them

RUTH

one what hon? it's four-fifty total, by the way, and it's almost eight-thirty.

TOMMY

make me up a will.

RUTH

a will... a will?

TOMMY
what?

RUTH
well, Tom, a will - for what?

WAYNE
yea Tommy - will for what?

TOMMY
for what? man what you mean for what?

JAMAL
Well, man, a will...

RUTH
Baby, you need two things to make a will up.

TOMMY
ok

RUTH
first you need some stuff, some things to will to someone else. And then you need someone to give it to.

TOMMY
damn, Ruth - why you do me like that?

RUTH
Well, Tommy, what you goin' will?

TOMMY
My papers.

RUTH
Tsk. Your 'papers.' Boy, go take that play up to the offices, and then we'll talk about some papers. Go ahead, now. Ya goin' be late to work. Go ahead.
Thanks boys.

Exit TOMMY, WAYNE, JAMAL.

RUTH

And they don't leave no mess. And they tip so nice, to be so broke. Too bad. Good luck boys.

Exit RUTH.

blackout.

ACT I
SCENE 2

the middle of the night.

enter AARON.

he paces incessantly.

AARON

now in the ugly hour
of creative consciousness
twilight of clarity
rank stench of slack procrastination
succor into supine and fetal forms
senses of laze and waste
arise incongruous
swell unsuppressed
burn down the cities
rife with cologne-clouds
stiletto-puckered floors
to burn my own possessions
singe my feet and hair
be clear, burn down the Capital
the castle, court, and prisons,
the war-rooms, the factories, the shops
all houses, apartments, slums, docks,
train stations
till the roads
replant them with sequoias
loose the people in the land
divest from government

from symbolics
from movements
from art
from world
what thousand tears
express and mask security
and restless longing
spastic soreness
slightest touch withdrawn
last intimacy
of another ugly hour
the translucent dress
the dream-boy
dragging elfin bastard
paralyzed ambition
waiting for a transportation
in emergency
destroy
of course
none of this that what
who it says is it or this or i or you
et cetera et cetera and so
it says nothing at all
only the body waiting for sunrise
propinquity to first and last frustration
middle of a clear head
love, the burning time and weeping time is over
come through fire immolated, tempered
know abandoned things unfinished
carbon crushed to diamond

sharp clear-black of crystallized experience
becoming angelus becoming animus
final titration
the sudden strange taste of soap
reiteration of a demon
final brushstrokes
significance and music
waiting smoking my last cigarette
my shoes torn up worse than Eragon's
implied to be, i am, ground fragments
crystal dust
the roots and traffic city in between us
mutes the chants and changes
crushed unwished perfection
patience
no more gimmicks
if the work be concrete
let it be the beauty and the ugliness of concrete
nothing more and nothing less
found poetry collaged
all the faces of a queen
describe
all the focus on royalty
and no glory remains for the commons
so remains and the house of the Endings goes
glory to morning.

sunrise.

he collapses.

blackout.

ACT I
SCENE 3

a silent street

enter TOMMY

TOMMY

Now to combine my skills and my research ... looking and listening now. I put to work.

enter PARIS

There goes my man! Ain't seen you for a minute. you been hiding?

PARIS

yea, had a job to finish. got a scene to shoot today.

TOMMY

oh word what project? you been working on a shoot? man let me see it.

PARIS

I can send it to you. How you wanna watch it?

TOMMY

what you mean?

PARIS

you want a disc, or can i send it to you email?

TOMMY

i don't care. i'd watch it just to watch it. whats the project?

PARIS

drama ... like a family breaking down.

TOMMY

ok

PARIS

kind of sad... you'll like it, always so depressed and shit. what you been working on?

TOMMY

well since the show we shot wit you wrapped up, been working, other stuff at Endings, tryin' to finish my own projects on the side.

PARIS

not porno is it?

TOMMY

nah man. one's a screenplay, one's a piece of music

PARIS

like a song?

TOMMY

more like a symphony... But the screenplay... I think it could be what they need, their hit, to get them out of this slump.

PARIS

what slump? who needs a hit?

TOMMY

aint you know? man Ella Ending's dying, and the company, the whole damn Happy Ending studio, we broke, man. We aint had a hit since your show ended.

PARIS

no shit? I heard Genesis Productions was coming hard at the Endings but I ain't know Ella's dying.

TOMMY

yes man.

pause

PARIS

damn... Mama Ella ... she's been running shit since before I was born, though.

TOMMY

well, she's old.

PARIS

who's gonna take it over if she dies?

TOMMY

not if, man. Not even if, just when.

PARIS

yea but I'm saying, who's next?

TOMMY

iuno.

PARIS

ey man I got to run, I got to get to this next shoot

TOMMY

yea i should go too...

pause

who's running that shoot?

PARIS

i am ... its nothing big, maybe an art-house kind of movie... don't you worry Tommy - I won't go to Genesis with shit like this.

TOMMY

I ain't never scared. Send me your shit I wanna see it

PARIS

you too son - let me know, we could trade, you know? we could work together.

TOMMY

right on.

PARIS

peace.

TOMMY

peace, Paris.

exit PARIS

TOMMY

hmm.

lingers;
exits opposite
blackout.

ACT I
SCENE 4

ELLA ENDING'S bare office

enter ELLA.

She sits at her empty desk and prepares to write.

ELLA

When I am dead and gone, no tombstone for your visitation. I've epigraph, that's enough. Syndicated, broadcast, acted, sung, danced, screened, ten million recordings, opening or closing with my family's name, and a lie. The end of prime time shows, the opening credits of feature films -- what is this HAPPY ENDING that we blast up there? More to the point, who is a happy Ending? no one HAS one, this i know. And so no tombstone, no memorial beyond the frozen lies of television, stage, amovies, radio, webcasting. That web's killed us. more sure than this disease killing me. don't be afraid of this face, of this sagging skin, this skeleton and bruised bald head, this reeking rotting flesh. my mind is sound. the whole building is sterile. it's the final insult. death stroke. words catch in my throat. i want my life to flash before my eyes, but all i see are pictures. stills and promo shots from past productions. and what was I? what was Ella Ending? was I any more than what I helped to make, or kill?

...

was I any more than what I helped to make or kill?

...

was i any more than what I helped to make, or kill?

She goes on repeating this,

invisible and inaudible to the family that enters severally:

AGGIE, with JOE, JEREMIAH, and SARAH;

ZIGGY, with DELILAH and CAROLINA;

and finally AARON.

When they are assembled,

ELLA rises,

withdraws,

and continues:

ELLA (continued)

It's dark by now, and humid through this city... Fecund, fertile, feminine... my time. Gather, family. No better time to die than darkness. Never been a better time to die than broken. No, no better time to die

...

no better time to die

...

no better time to die

...

*she goes on repeating this,
sotto voce,
throughout the ensuing conversation.*

CAROLINA

Great-grandma looked so thin and blue last week. Is she a ghost?

DELILAH

No, baby. Mama Ella's not a ghost. she's very sick.

CAROLINA

Is she about to die?

*long pause.
ELLA continues, "no better time to die..."*

Is Gramma Ella gonna die?

*long pause.
ELLA continues, "no better time to die...",
climbs slowly onto her desk,
and lies down on it,*

*on her back,
still repeating her mantra.*

CAROLINA (continued)

How old is great-grandma?

DELILAH

She's very old, baby. very old... How old *is* Ella, Ziggy?

ZIGGY

hm. Dad?

AARON

hm... Oh, god, she must be nearly... a hundred twenty... Aggie?

AGGIE

yeah... we're pushing ninety, and she didn't have us till she was at least thirty. i don't know years.

JEREMIAH

I guess that makes sense, but that's crazy! no one gets that old and ... *works* so long!

SARAH

hm. Just cause you don't work...

JEREMIAH

Sarah, please.

AARON

alright kids.

AGGIE

shut it.

long pause.

ELLA continues chanting, on her back, up on her desk.

ZIGGY *aside, to DELILAH*

I'm freaking out a little bit. It's like I hear Gramma breathing or something. She *is* like a ghost, D.

DELILAH

hush. you're worse than Lina. Don't make her nervous.

ZIGGY

sorry...

pause.

ZIGGY (to everyone)

who called us all here, by the way?

AARON

you know, I just assumed one of you wanted to meet here.

AGGIE

me too. I thought it was your idea, Aaron.

AARON

I thought it was Joe's.

JOE

not me... but, hi. long time.

AARON

yes.

pause

AARON (continued)

You, Jerry?

JEREMIAH

No, sir. Me and Sarah heard the same as you, I figure. just a blank card. I was kind of surprised to see you all here, actually. Hi, mom.

AGGIE

hi, Jeremiah. good to see you. Sarah.

SARAH

Hi, Aggie. Hi, Joe.

no one but AARON and CAROLINA see or hear ELLA die.

They scream.

blackout.

ACT II

*proscene**enter CHORUS.*

CHORUS

*pause;**as long as possible,**smoke a whole cigarette*

...

wait.

No
no better time
than now
to pause
or
for example

pause

before starting
over
so

pause

now ancient Ella Ending's dead
and only Carolina
and her mad grandfather Aaron
seen it happen

pause

her family
congeals in mourning
even if
they don't know why

pause

all the time
they gather
and they never understand

pause

you gather too
and now the middle
who can master her world now?
and for the light
you rise again
remember city

pause

and so each time
these Endings clash
collide with Geneses
you turn to madness
silent rage

lingers, then exits. blackout.

ACT II
SCENE 1

ELLA's office.

her body dead upon the desk.

enter AARON, ZIGGY, and CAROLINA together.

AARON

what can one (increasingly unimportant) person do

ZIGGY

for what, what do you need to do

AARON

not just me, no, not just you

ZIGGY

what anyone can do

AARON

what can any one do

ZIGGY

about what

AARON

about anything. to anything

the exponential function

dwarfs the interstices

ZIGGY

no. what do we need to do

AARON

what we - there is no we between us

population grows, causes the

increasing unimportance of us

CAROLINA

then burn it all down.

burn what down
ZIGGY

their house. i'll burn it to the ground
AARON

what house? who?
ZIGGY

burn their house down
CAROLINA

NO! what's wrong with you?
ZIGGY

they fucked me.
they killed Mamma.
AARON

burn their house down
CAROLINA

you will not.
ZIGGY

a challenge?
AARON

no challenge.
ZIGGY

not alone.
CAROLINA

you will not burn
ZIGGY

i will not burn alone
AARON

YOU WILL NOT BURN!
ZIGGY

CAROLINA

what else can one do?

exit CAROLINA.

AARON follows.

ZIGGY

lingers

if the burn be the origin of beauty

...

exits opposite.

blackout.

ACT II
SCENE 2

a street

enter ZIGGY, alone.

he waits as long as is possible:

solitary meditation.

enter CARLOS GENESIS, attended.

CARLOS

there goes my man.

ZIGGY

what up

CARLOS

hows my sister

ZIGGY

good.

CARLOS

hows carolina

ZIGGY

o.k. ... you?

CARLOS

not bad man not bad. you?

ZIGGY

o.k. ... i'm a little stressed.

CARLOS

I know its hard man your grandma just died its hard.

pause. attendants disperse, awkward.

CARLOS (continued)

but listen Zig i'm glad you came.

ZIGGY

yea?

CARLOS

yea. we need to talk.

ZIGGY

what up

CARLOS

I need your help.

ZIGGY

ok what can i do for you

CARLOS

my family wants to buy yours out

ZIGGY

say what

CARLOS

Genesis wants to buy out Happy Endings

ZIGGY

why?

CARLOS

do i need a reason?

ZIGGY

yea

CARLOS

your mother's company-

ZIGGY

my grandmother's. my father's.

CARLOS

sorry.

ZIGGY

nobody knows my mother.

CARLOS

wait, what? i thought-

ZIGGY

forget it.

pause.

attendants reconverge, encircle them.

CARLOS

look Ziggy ...

ZIGGY

no look i don't see how i can help you

CARLOS

you can't help me. but I can help you.

ZIGGY

no one i know wants your help.

CARLOS

but you need it! Zig, the Happy Ending company is going to go broke.

ZIGGY

it's not about the money. Anyway, what do you want with me, then?

CARLOS

all i need are names.

ZIGGY

carlos genesis.

ziggy ending.

aaron ending, my father.

ella, his mother.

aggie, her daughter, my aunt.

joe bronco, aggie's husband.

jeremiah bronco, their son, my cousin.

sarah park, his wife.

paris, her brother.

carolina ending, my daughter, and your niece.

delilah, my wife, and your sister.

karen and john genesis, your parents.

pause

ZIGGY (continued)

i have to go.

CARLOS

you can't go.

circle closes on ZIGGY

ZIGGY

the company's not mine.

CARLOS

that's right. it's mine.

ZIGGY

fuck you.

CARLOS

who's gonna take care of this problem for me, then?

ZIGGY disappears under the blows of the ATTENDANTS

blackout.

strokes.

silent violence.

exit CARLOS stage right.

ATTENDANTS writhe in a pile, still concealing ZIGGY.

blackout.

an engine approaches from stage left

bright lights from the same.

ATTENDANTS scurry, exiting.

ZIGGY is gone. blood stains remain.

engine cuts out, lights remain.

enter AGGIE and JOE, from stage left

AGGIE

What was that?

JOE

I don't know.

AGGIE

weird.

JOE

Where's Ziggy?

AGGIE

like cockroaches...

JOE

what time did he say to meet him?

AGGIE

now. well, a few minutes ago.

JOE

sorry if i made us late

AGGIE

no, it was me... he's probably running late too, he's never on time.

JOE

hope he's ok

AGGIE

let's just wait in the car. it's cold.

JOE

ok. call him.

AGGIE

phone's in the car.

JOE

ok. should I leave it running, do you think?

AGGIE

no, we can turn it off. the street just creeps me out.

JOE

why here? why did he want to meet here?

AGGIE

i dunno. I'll call him, we'll see.

exeunt stage left.

after a moment, blackout.

ACT II
SCENE 3

bright colorful cemetery.

enter separately:

ENDING family;

GENESIS family;

TOMMY, WAYNE, JAMAL, and RUTH;

and CHORUS.

they separate and cluster according to group, loosely.

all of the following conversations happen simultaneously:

JAMAL

whose fool idea was it to have this funeral way out here in the freezing cold?

WAYNE

weren't mine, for sure not.

TOMMY

we meant to pay respect.

don't be bitter cause we ain't in her will.

think on that - we don't owe her nothing

and she sure don't owe us neither.

RUTH

hush boys. Hi, Mr. Aaron.

AARON

Hi, you all. Thank you for coming.

KAREN

Is that them, John?

JOHN

Yes, that's Aaron Ending, his sister Aggie, her husband...

CARLOS

There's Delilah.

DELILAH

Hi, Mom; Dad.

CAROLINA

Hi Gramma; Hi Grampa.

CARLOS

Hi Carolina

CAROLINA

Hi Uncle Carlos.

CARLOS

Who's giving the eulogy?

KAREN

I don't know. John?

JOHN

I don't know... Aaron or Aggie, I'd guess.

KAREN

Who's that?

JOHN

Jeremiah's wife, Sarah. Her parents are the Parks - Peter, Maria?

KAREN

Oh, yes, of course.

SARAH

Aggie, how you doing?

AGGIE

I'm ok. You?

SARAH

I'm ok... sad.

AGGIE

Glad you came?

SARAH

So far. you, Delilah?

DELILAH

Yes, thanks. How about you, baby? how you doing?

CAROLINA

I'm ok. what happens now?

ZIGGY

Who'll deliver the eulogy?

AARON

Joe will deliver.

JEREMIAH

Dad - you'll speak?

JOE

I'll speak. But we need to go get her, first.

ZIGGY

We four will carry her.

AGGIE

Get going, then.

exit ZIGGY, JEREMIAH, JOE, AARON
the crowd continues to circulate and make small talk.

enter ELLA, opposite.
unseen by all but CAROLINA, CHORUS.
silent acknowledgments.

re-enter pallbearers.
silence settles over the crowd.
coffin hides ELLA from AARON.
pallbearers return to seats, JOE remains up.

JOE

The family's asked me to speak, all right. They want me to say something. But I think it's also saying something to remain unspeaking. I won't do that, though. I am a man of words. She might have not said nothing. I think she might not have spoken. She was introverted, inverted. Some of you don't know that. Some of us never know that. We never know what that means, or how that feels. I don't. My wife does, and her brother does. They're introverted, too. One's tempted to say that they get it from her ... all right. That's maybe why I'm here to speak,

for her,

what can I say?

What's a eulogy?

an epitaph?

A death?

long pause

You all know, long before her cancer, how she built the Happy Endings studios into the greatest in this city.

I don't know some of you here, so I won't tell you what you don't already know about her.

I'll just remind you of things you already do know.

she might have kept silent.

on politics, on ethics, on current events, on family drama, on vernacular, on strikes and on disasters, she kept silent.

When Ella was young,

she was a bad-ass-mothafucka.

then she got older...

and she was still a bad-ass-mothafucka.

and you don't get to live

as long as she did, or as hard,

without learning some shit.

so what do we know, yet?

And what has she left possible now, here, in this aporia, caesura, withered aristocracy?

I am a man of words,

and she was kind to me.

For this, i ask impossibility, and mourn.

The mourners form a line and proceed past the casket.

ELLA observes from the side.

AARON and CAROLINA join her after they pass the casket.

Fade to black as the others proceed.

ACT II
SCENE 4

ERIC FISHER'S office

enter FISHER and his SECRETARY

SECRETARY

Do you have all the signatures you need to make it public? The Endings are here.

FISHER

yes. would you let them in?

SECRETARY

yes sir

FISHER

oh! wait a minute please. I want to clear my desk and fix this tie... can you please let them know i'm almost ready - and send them in after a minute or two?

SECRETARY

OK no problem ... are you ok?

FISHER

I'm fine... she was ... i'm fine.

SECRETARY

OK. I'll hold them for another few minutes.

exits

FISHER

... ok ... the will ... yes. this one was ... ok ... Oh! ella ... where did that pen go? ... ah. here ... ok ... the ... the ... ok... the tie ... ok ... here goes ...

*enter AARON, AGGIE, JOE,
ZIGGY, DELILAH, CAROLINA,
JEREMIAH, and SARAH*

FISHER

composing himself

Hello.

Greetings exchanged.

FISHER

Please, have a seat.

How are you all?

Good, good...

I'm sorry ... Sorry. Sorry for your loss, i'm sorry. This is ... hard, i'm sorry. This is harder than I thought. Um, if I haven't met you yet, I'm Eric Fisher, Ella's attorney. I have your mother's will here. If it's all OK with you, I'll read it through.

general tacit agreement

FISHER

OK.

"Being of sound mind and decrepit body, I hereby bequeath all that I own and all my worldly possessions to my family. My children, Aaron and Aggie, will divide my estate equally, including the controlling stake in Happy Endings production company, my money, and my property. They will donate fifteen percent of any liquid assets to charities of their choosing. Fifty percent of what remains they will invest in savings for their children. These, Ziggy and Jeremiah, will follow the same procedure: fifteen percent of their share they will donate to charities, and fifty percent of the rest they will invest for their children - Ziggy, for Carolina, and Jeremiah, for any future children. Again, of those investments, fifteen percent will go to charity. After these conditions are met, each may do as they like with what they have inherited. Eric Fisher will relinquish power of attorney and execution of this will to Aaron and Aggie together. So instructed, this day and year, by myself alone. Ella Ending."

pause

silently, all rise and exit.

blackout.

ACT III
SCENE 1

the diner

enter RUTH.

RUTH

aright ... ok ... whoof.

that's a long day.

how did i miss that, there?

ok. where did i put that cleaner?

there it is. bah. right off.

hums

ok, last load of dishes

and i can lock up

and go home.

that's a long-ass day.

yes honey. mm.

where did i put them keys?

searches, hums

enter TOMMY, with luggage.

RUTH

Oh! tommy, honey, i ain't see you there.

what're you doing here?

TOMMY

i know you're closing up ruth, I just came to drop you off a copy. Can i leave it here by your keys?

RUTH

Oh! there they go.

laughs

RUTH

yes baby thank you.

don't you look wonderful! all dressed up...

pause

you want me to read it now?

TOMMY

no, love, i know you been here all day
and it's too much to read all at once i think
but take it home
read it
and let me know
here go my phone number

RUTH

your phone number? honey why, where you going?
all dressed up and packed up?
you leaving us?

pause

honey don't just stand there staring at me.

TOMMY

aaah, Ruthie, ma, I'm sorry.

RUTH

where you goin'?

TOMMY

well ... i'm gonna go try it in New York.

RUTH

New york? well, ok, baby. you can make it anywhere you like. you got the gift.

pause

don't you look at me like that. honey, i just know. i been here for thirty years. a waitress all my life. and i'ma be a waitress till i die. but i been working hard, i save money, i bought my house, my car, my kids' college tuitions, and just listen. i seen many people come through here and most of them forgettable.

RUTH (continued)

a lot of people working, just like you, for Ending company, by day, and like you working just as hard at night to make it - writing, music, movies - most of them forgettable. and they get in here in the morning or at lunch, and drink their coffee, and tip, and leave, and forgotten. but not you. they all play like they're so tired, coming in and coffee and their breakfast junk. but you come in here every day and your whole heart is broken. you get coffee and your sandwich in the morning cause you HAVE been up for hours writing this thing here, and you're dirty and your eyes red, so beautiful and sad. and know this - anyone who works that hard, and breaks their heart so bad on that work every night, they can't be wrong. Tommy, you can't be wrong. you win. you'll win. go ahead. go get that bus. get up there, i'ma make some calls so when you get there you can stay with my cousins. Go do your thing, baby. i'm proud of you.

they hug.

Exit tommy

Ruth pauses a moment, absorbed, then exits opposite.

blackout.

ACT III
SCENE 2

a room in AARON'S house.

enter AARON, seething.

AARON

that fucking BITCH ... I need a cigarette ...

he searches the room for smokes

enter AGGIE

AGGIE

Aaron - yu can't just run away like that! did you see Fisher? He was having seizures! What's so wrong with -

AARON

where's joe?

AGGIE

outside at the car

AARON

we need to figure out -

AGGIE

bullshit. aaron. bull- no. she wrote that will and that's the way it is

AARON

but what am i supposed to do with it? i never asked for this. i didn't want her money. i do'nt want the company. it should have gone to you. i don't want it.

AGGIE

i don't want it.

AARON

the fucking HOUSE? i live ALONE. since Delilah left Ziggy, and with carolina gone, Ziggy's nowhere in sight, he could be dead, i don't know what the fuck is going on, and i'm supposed to run the company? the genesis assholes are calling me all night and day, trying to buy out hte last pieces of my soul - where are you going?

AGGIE

i can't talk to you like this. but i'm not going anywhere. i came HERE - don't you get this? do you see me standing here? fuck you. you ran away. you always run away. you break under the slightest pressure - any stress and you collapse. what could you possibly fuck up with Happy Endings?

AARON

i can't feel my fingers

AGGIE

sit down. Aaron. ... Aaron. don't panic. breathe. listen to me. do you remember, after Grandpa Jack died, we were at our house after the funeral? you'd just come back from school, and we sat out in the car, and i told you that we expected you to come home for some holiday - thanksgiving or christmas or something - and you said that you couldn't, that you had to work? i got SO MAD at you - but you got just as mad, when I said Ma wanted you there, that she needed you - you said, "when's it gonna be OUR turn?". do you remember that? well, guess what, asshole. It's our turn. So sit down, catch your breath. Smoke a cigarette. do what you have to do. And then get up and take some control of your life. Pathetic.

silence. Aaron finds a cigarette, and smokes.

AGGIE

I have to go. think about what you owe to all the people working for you now.

AARON

i'm giving you my half.

AGGIE

your seventeen point five or whatever.

AARON

whatever. you can have it. it's yours.

AGGIE

i don't want it.

AARON

don't care. give it to Jerry then. he can run it.

AGGIE

what about Ziggy, Delilah, Carolina?

AARON

they have their share.

AGGIE

fine. I'm leaving. joe's waiting for me.

AARON

Aggie?

AGGIE

yea.

AARON

thanks.

AGGIE

bye, aaron.

exits.

AARON left alone, smoking.

blackout.

ACT III
SCENE 3

a parking lot

enter ZIGGY, DELILAH, CAROLINA

DELILAH

I'll miss this city, Zig.

CAROLINA

Mommy, why do you have to go? Can I come with you?

DELILAH

Sorry, baby. I can't take you.

Enter TOMMY, opposite.

he recognizes them, and withdraws before they see him.

CAROLINA

Figured I should ask.

ZIGGY

yea, it was worth a shot.

CAROLINA wanders.

DELILAH

I need to just get away from my family, and yours.

ZIGGY

I know.

DELILAH

How's she doing?

ZIGGY

she'll miss you. but we'll be OK.
you packed everything that you need?

DELILAH

yea. Sorry again about this. I'll be back when I can.

ZIGGY

I know.

DELILAH

here comes the bus.

ZIGGY.

yea. Carolina! come say goodbye.

CAROLINA (*returning*)

Bye, mommy. I love you.

ZIGGY

Bye, Delilah. I love you.

DELILAH

I love you both.

ZIGGY

Travel safe; let us know when you get there.

DELILAH

gonna make it big in the big city!

going, with TOMMY following.

enter CARLOS

CARLOS

Dee!

DELILAH

Oh! Hi, Cee. I didn't know you'd come here.

CARLOS

came to say goodbye.

DELILAH

yes.

pause

CAROLINA

Uncle Carlos...

CARLOS

oh! hi, Carolina.... Ziggy ...

cold silence.

DELILAH

Look, i have to go.

CARLOS

OK. safe travels...

DELILAH

You know what? Carolina, baby, come with me.

CAROLINA

really??

ZIGGY

what?

CAROLINA

i don't have a bag or anything with me!

DELILAH

I've got stuff for you.

CAROLINA

OK! daddy...

ZIGGY

go. I love you. Go, you'll miss the bus. you'll like it in New York.

the women exit behind TOMMY.

ZIGGY and CARLOS measure one another.

silence.

enter PARIS.

PARIS

Tommy!

TOMMY returns.

ZIGGY and CARLOS take no notice.

TOMMY

Paris! You came here?

PARIS

My Man! i came to say bye

TOMMY

good look!

ZIGGY and CARLOS whisper to one another

PARIS

Hey, ain't that --

TOMMY

yea.

PARIS

What's up with them two?

TOMMY

I dunno ... wait, what's up there?

they stop talking, observe ZIGGY and CARLOS

ZIGGY

You were wrong to come here.

CARLOS

I just wanted to say--

ZIGGY

You have no right!

CARLOS

--goodbye! She's my sister, and my niece, and you--

ZIGGY

I never wanted to see you again.

CARLOS

I understand that. After what my men did--

ZIGGY

I don't give a fuck about your men. I never wanted to come meet you the other night. Meeting you there was my mistake.

CARLOS

I couldn't handle it.

ZIGGY

you couldn't handle US.

CARLOS

what's that supposed to mean?

ZIGGY

You know. None of this is about money, or business, or any of that nonsense. This is all, still, it's always been, about you and me.

CARLOS

no, don't start with that shit again!

ZIGGY

you couldn't handle the idea that I might tell someone about us.

CARLOS

I did nothing wrong!

ZIGGY

neither of us did something wrong. That's not the point. the point is that you were too scared then, and you're still too scared, to admit to who you are.

CARLOS

what we had--

ZIGGY

what we had could have stayed nothing, a fling, a shit affair. But you and I both wanted to be serious.

CARLOS

well, yea, but

ZIGGY

but you were too scared! too down-low, too fucking closeted. You couldn't face the idea that I might have been proud to call you my partner. You tried so damn hard to hide me, to hide us... but i wanted to tell anyone who'd listen. I loved you! and you introduced me - even to D - even to your own sister - as a 'friend.' So how else could we act when she found out?

CARLOS

it's your own fault she found out!

ZIGGY

but I had nothing to hide. and you were so scared of ... i don't know what - of coming out? of her judging you? of me leaving? ... i don't know... but you hurt me then. worse than your fucking thugs tried to hurt me the other night. you couldn't deal with serious. you couldn't deal with a human relationship.

CARLOS

yes ok i was scared, and i didn't want to lose you, or her...

ZIGGY

well you did. you got so fucking paranoid, so violent. I still have scars you left on me before I left you. and who was there? She was there. Delilah was there for me. when you couldn't be a human being, and you drove me and her both away, we went together. You know this was your own doing. If it's my fault she found out, it's your fault we ended up together. It's your fault that we found strength and comfort together, your fault that we could be stable, could raise Carolina, so thank you, and fuck you, you small-dicked lonely sadist. Fuck you.

CARLOS

reaches out, touches ZIGGY on the arm

Wait!

ZIGGY

YOU DON'T EVER TOUCH ME!

ZIGGY pushes CARLOS away.

CARLOS lunges, then he and ZIGGY lock eyes, arms, and furiously fight.

PARIS and TOMMY intervene.

CARLOS falls.

they cease.

ZIGGY

get out of here.

PARIS

no, it's my fault

TOMMY

no, mine. Ziggy-

ZIGGY

you know me?

TOMMY

I worked a long time for all you Endings.

ZIGGY

Who are you?

TOMMY

Tommy Washington.

ZIGGY

Get out. Go get your bus

TOMMY

I can't

PARIS

you have to. Ziggy's right

ZIGGY

Paris! i didn't recognize you. why are you here?

PARIS

came to say goodbye to Tommy

ZIGGY

well, say bye. Tommy, go get that bus. Watch Carolina, watch Delilah. Please. Take care of them. GO!

TOMMY

... Be careful.

exits

long pause.

ZIGGY and PARIS stare at each other and the body.

exeunt, dragging CARLOS.

blackout.

ACT III
SCENE 4*daylight.**routine.**numb.**apartment.**enter JEREMIAH and SARAH.*

SARAH

let's go out tonight.

JEREMIAH

where?

SARAH

let's go downtown.

JEREMIAH

i can't ... I have to work late.

SARAH

so get done earlier.

JEREMIAH

we could go another night

SARAH

whatever

JEREMIAH

what's tonight then?

SARAH

never mind

JEREMIAH

whatever

pause

JEREMIAH

ugh. tell me why. what's downtown? for what?

SARAH

besides that I just want to go out, and you want and need to spend some time with me, you mean?

Right. That's what I thought.

exits

JEREMIAH

fuck.

throws the first thing he can find against the wall.

exits

enter CHORUS

CHORUS cleans up.

fade to black.

ACT III
SCENE 5

interior of a bus.

DELILAH, TOMMY, CAROLINA, seated.

DELILAH

What happened back there?

TOMMY

Carlos got knocked out.

CAROLINA

he dead?

TOMMY

dunno.

long pause

DELILAH

good. he's an asshole.

CAROLINA

mommy! your brother ...

TOMMY

'scuse me.

DELILAH

what's your name?

TOMMY

Tommy Washington.

DELILAH

hi. I'm --

TOMMY

Delilah Genesis-Ending.

DELILAH

... yes...

TOMMY

I worked for Happy Endings for a long time.

DELILAH

Oh! well, i'm glad to meet you, and to have someone familiar on this ride

CAROLINA

i'm familiar.

TOMMY

You're... carolina?

CAROLINA

yes. why are you leaving?

TOMMY

I could ask you the same thing

CAROLINA

I'm going with mommy.

TOMMY

Gotcha. And why's mommy going?

CAROLINA

get away... gon' make it big--

TOMMY

in the big city! haha

DELILAH

yea... though New Jerusalem's pretty big... New York is bigger

TOMMY

True. That's why i'm going, also.

DELILAH

you were at Ella's funeral!

TOMMY

true.

CAROLINA

Oh! I thought I reconized you! so WHY are you leaving?

TOMMY

well ... I see that Happy Ending's not going to survive now that Miss Ella's dead.

DELILAH

can't argue with that.

TOMMY

I heard your brother wants to buy the studios. Was Ziggy home the other night?

DELILAH

no... now that you mention it. He said he'd work that night.

TOMMY

they said he and Carlos met up and that your brother's boys jumped Ziggy. Aggie and Joe picked him up later, all fucked up.

DELILAH

no wonder.

CAROLINA

uncle Carlos really *is* an asshole... what'll happen to daddy and Paris?

TOMMY

I hope they're ok.

DELILAH

they'll be OK.

TOMMY

hope your father-in-law's ok. He's seemed ill lately, too.

DELILAH

Aaron's not well.

But Tommy -- *why* are you leaving?

TOMMY

like i said. the company's going down. but i've got a script and a symphony and other works of art to keep me busy; if Genesis weren't gonna take it over, I'd have given them to Aaron. now... well, maybe i will. Maybe i've got a will, now.

CAROLINA

this ride's too long... too damn long.

silence.

fade to black.

ACT III
SCENE 6

prison.

PARIS and ZIGGY, seated.

silence.

as long as possible.

fade to black.

ACT X

SCENE *

(a bonus scene: insert at any point.)

enter CHORUS, proscene

CHORUS

watch this train wreck.

a permanent state of distraction

enter AARON, DELILAH, TOMMY, JOE, PARIS separately

they wander quietly,

crying out whenever necessary;

improvising; and/or

with the following lines,

spoken in any order

at any pace

repeated as many times as necessary.

lines may be traded among speakers.

see what happens.

PARIS

put it in the back in the back of your mind

JOE

I got to get away a bit away somewhere

TOMMY

no big deal it's no big deal i'm alright

DELILAH

baby be good baby i'll come back soon

AARON

I love you

CHORUS interacts with each, with audience, maintains control

exeunt separately

(CHORUS exits last)

blackout.

EPILOGUE

reflections, in polluted water

enter CHORUS and ELLA, proscene, opposite.

long pause.

CHORUS

Ella, come tell a brother what it is and how you do

ELLA

I tell it to you proper

CHORUS

go 'head

ELLA

no right treatment, no synopsis.

Understand?

If you did i'd be shocked.

And then again, if anyone could get it, you could get it
get me?

CHORUS

get me?

ELLA

ain't no one got you.

You're code-switched.

Uninterpretable.

CHORUS

we're out of time.

long pause

ELLA

what happened, even?

who cares? CHORUS

fair enough. ELLA

what did you think? CHORUS

it was ... ok. you? ELLA

I dunno. Guess it was OK... CHORUS

You wanna leave?

OK ELLA

going, together

Have you eaten? CHORUS

I could do some dinner ... ELLA

exeunt.

let reflections shimmer.

do not blackout.