GARDEN PARTY

a play in one day

CHARACTERS

BEN: A could-have-been writer in his late twenties.

SARA: Ben’s wife – nervous and tired.

ALISON: 19. Lives in the town Ben and Sara are staying in.

SCENES
1. Morning
2. Midday
3. Evening
4. Night
5. Early Morning

SETTING
A medium-sized town in New England
The middle of July
1. Morning

   Early. SARA sits in a rocking chair on the front porch. Her pajamas are too light for the chill. She rocks gently, in her own world.

   BEN enters from inside the house. He carries a patchwork quilt and drapes it around SARA’S shoulders.

   He sits in the other chair.

   BEN
   Did I wake you last night?

   SARA
   No.

   BEN
   You’re up early.

   SARA
   Couldn’t get back to sleep.

   BEN
   I saw you didn’t run the dishwasher.

   SARA
   I was busy.

   BEN
   Its alright.

   SARA
   I was thinking.

   BEN
   I could take care of it.

   SARA
   Don’t worry about it.

   She adjusts the blanket.

   Bex and Ellen sure know how to fix up a house, huh?

   BEN
   I guess.
SARA
They’ve got a Keurig machine, bay windows, channels I haven’t even heard of and have no intention of watching, and a yard the size of the moon. Space to live...

BEN
Mhm...

SARA
Space to live.

BEN
They’re rich.

SARA
Class isn’t something money can buy.

She adjusts the blanket, rearranges her position. Yawns.

BEN
Have you been trying to meditate like I suggested?

SARA
You and Bex with your new age bullshit.

BEN
It relaxes your mind.

SARA
Who told you that?

BEN
It helps. Especially in the morning if you’re trying to have quiet time. Space to live in my own mind.

SARA
It sounds too much like prayer.

BEN
God knows you already do enough of that.

SARA
Careful there.
I’m going to make breakfast. Come in when you’re ready.
SARA gets up and offers the blanket to BEN. He shakes his head, so she folds the blanket to bring inside. She quietly bends to kiss BEN on the cheek and then enters the house.

We follow SARA into the kitchen. She gets out ingredients and begins to make pancakes. She measures out ingredients, adds eggs and milk. She begins to heat the griddle.

BEN enters carrying a large pile of mail. Newspapers, letters, bills, flyers. He sifts through it. SARA stops her prep to approach him.

SARA
You checked their mail?

BEN
I didn’t want anything to happen to it.

SARA
Isn’t that a bit rude though?

BEN
It’s my sister and her wife, I really don’t think they care.

SARA
Well don’t go through it.

BEN
I’m not going to open anything.

SARA
I’m surprised they didn’t hold their mail with the post office – you’re not even really supposed to leave it. Liability or something.

BEN
Oh. Well. They didn’t do that.

SARA
Yeah.

SARA returns to making the pancakes; she puts them onto the pan. As they cook –

I forgot to buy juice.

BEN
You went to the store? Sara, they said we could eat their food.

SARA
That feels weird.

BEN
Are you kidding?

SARA
Do you want water? Or coffee? I could see what kind of tea they have – or I think there’s a bit of milk left but it’s probably spoiled...

BEN
Water is fine.

SARA
Are you sure?

BEN
Yes. Don’t burn the pancakes.

BEN returns to sorting through the mail. SARA returns to cooking; she plates the food and gets two glasses of water, then brings the plates to the table and sits down. They begin to eat.

SARA
You didn’t come to the funeral.

BEN
No. I didn’t.

SARA
It was beautiful.

BEN
I’m sure it was.

SARA
You could have come.

BEN
I don’t do well with funerals.

SARA
I mean, no one loves them. But you could have come.
BEN
Well, sorry about that.

SARA
I wish you’d change your mind about church – it’s really beautiful, it’s such a safe space. And the church here is gorgeous, much prettier than ours at home. Richer parishioners I guess.

BEN
It isn’t about the church, Sara. It’s a bit weird.

SARA
What is?

BEN
That you went to the funeral.

SARA
There was nothing wrong with me going to that funeral. I told you. They advertised it in the church bulletin. They wouldn’t have done that if it wasn’t okay.

BEN
It’s creepy.

SARA
It was more a celebration of life.

BEN
It’s creepy that you went to celebrate the life of a twelve year old girl that you never even met – hadn’t even heard of before you saw the obituary and the funeral announcement.

SARA
It wasn’t. She was a beautiful girl –

BEN
You didn’t know her, Sara.

SARA
They talked about her. They shared the most beautiful stories.

BEN
Everyone’s beautiful after they die.
SARA
You would understand if you’d gone – you should have.

BEN
Stop it.

SARA
They talked about how she helped her mother in the garden, how smart she was, how she loved reading Nancy Drew mysteries. She did well in school and she danced –

BEN
Sara.

SARA
They had pictures of her everywhere. Her hair was so curly and wild, and her eyes sparkled.

BEN
I’m sure she was a great kid.

SARA
She’s dead now.

BEN
I know.

SARA
Underground.

BEN
This is a bit morbid for breakfast. Your food is getting cold.

SARA
It’s not fair.

BEN
No, it isn’t fair.

SARA
She doesn’t even have a headstone yet. She’s just there, under the ground, all by herself.

BEN
I’m sure she’s just in agony over that.

SARA
Don’t make fun. That family loved her so much. Can you even imagine losing your daughter?

BEN
We don’t have a daughter.

SARA
No, but can you imagine?

BEN
It sounds horrible.

SARA
She’ll never eat breakfast with them again or go for a walk with them or have game night or play in the yard or help in the garden.

BEN
And she’ll never get drunk underage or fight with her parents or sneak out of the house or drop out of school, either. What a perfect life she is missing.

SARA
You don’t know what would have happened if she grew up.

BEN
Neither do you.

SARA
That’s not the point.

BEN finishes his pancakes.

BEN
Are you going to finish your food?

SARA
Yes.

BEN brings his dishes to the sink. He refills SARA’s water.

BEN
Did you run the dishwasher?

SARA
No. I will after I’m done.
BEN
Okay.

*He starts to exit.*

SARA
Are you coming to church today?

BEN
Do I ever?

SARA
Well, no, but I thought it’d be nice –

BEN
I’m not going.

SARA
Okay. Fine. That’s great.

BEN
Are you glad you went?

SARA
To the funeral? Yeah. I am.

BEN
Well then that’s good.

SARA
I suppose.

BEN
You suppose?

SARA
I’m glad I went, but I’m very sad.

BEN
Funerals will do that to you. If you need me I’ll be upstairs napping.

*BEN exits. SARA sits and pushes her pancakes around on the plate.*
2. Midday

BEN sits quietly reading the newspaper. SARA enters from the street; she has just returned from church. She stops on the porch.

SARA
Lovely weather we’ve been having.

BEN
I suppose.

SARA
How’s the world today? Full of destruction?

BEN
Everywhere.

SARA
Sounds delightful.

BEN
How was the service?

SARA
It was beautiful. I really love the minister here, she’s so friendly and I really get the sense that she cares about each and every one of us.

BEN
Well isn’t that nice.

SARA
Don’t make fun.

BEN
Sorry. I’ll let you have your church.

SARA
Thank you. I’m going to try to take a rest.

BEN
If you slept better at night you wouldn’t have to rest during the day.

SARA
Obviously.
BEN
What are we doing for dinner tonight?

BEN
We could get pizza.

SARA
We are not ordering pizza our last night here.

BEN
Pizza is good for you.

SARA
No it isn’t.

BEN
Yes, it is. Three food groups.

SARA
That’s not the point.

BEN
Can the point be dinner?

SARA
I’ll make something, okay?

BEN
Okay.
Run the dishwasher.

SARA
I will.

BEN
I would have but you said you’d take care of it –

SARA
I will.

BEN
If you don’t do it soon we won’t have dishes for mystery dinner.

SARA
It won’t be a mystery after I’ve gotten some rest.
She goes inside. BEN remains on the porch. After a moment, ALISON enters, and approaches him.

ALISON
Hey.
Ahem.
Hello?
Excuse me?
Excuse me?

He finally looks up.

ALISON (Cont.)
Do you live here?

He shakes his head.

ALISON (Cont.)
You’re sitting on the porch.

BEN
My sister lives here.

ALISON
Oh.

BEN
Did you need something?

ALISON
No.

BEN goes back to the newspaper. ALISON slowly surveys the front garden.

ALISON
Is your sister home?

BEN
No.

ALISON
Where is she?

BEN
On vacation.
ALISON
When will she be back?

BEN
Monday morning.

ALISON
Well fuck.

BEN
Why do you want to know?

ALISON
I wanted to pick them.

BEN
Some of her flowers?

ALISON
They’re unusual.

BEN
So leave them to grow.

ALISON
I wouldn’t ask if it wasn’t important.

BEN
I believe you.

ALISON
I’m just gonna grab -

BEN
I didn’t say you could take any.

ALISON
Is she really going to notice?

BEN
Honestly? Yes.

ALISON
Okay. Fine.

BEN
“Okay. Fine.”
ALISON

BEN
I’m sure it’s important.

ALISON
I said I wouldn’t take any, Jesus Christ can you drop it already?

BEN
I’m sorry.

ALISON
Thank you.

BEN goes back to reading the paper. ALISON stands and watches him. Eventually, BEN looks up.

BEN
Can I help you?

ALISON
No.

BEN
What are you doing?

ALISON
Thinking.

BEN
Here?

ALISON walks over to the porch and extends her hand.

ALISON
I’m afraid we may have gotten off on the wrong foot. I’m Alison. It’s very nice to meet you.

BEN
Ben.

ALISON
So do you just sit on the porch?
BEN
It’s a quiet space.

ALISON
Isn’t it quiet inside the house?

BEN
Yes and no.

ALISON
That doesn’t make sense.

BEN
My wife is inside.

ALISON sits down in the other chair on the porch and settles down comfortably. BEN tries to read the paper.

ALISON
So...you’re married.

BEN
I am.

ALISON
You don’t look married. No offense or anything.

BEN
Was that a compliment or an insult?

ALISON
People who get married in their twenties are pathetic examples of romanticizing the American Dream. Be grateful you don’t look like a schmuck.

BEN
How old are you?

ALISON
How old are you?

BEN
I asked first.

ALISON
Nineteen.
BEN
Twenty-eight.

ALISON
You’re ancient.

BEN
You’re in college?

ALISON
First summer home.

BEN
They must be teaching you a lot at school.

ALISON
Business and management is really useful. Did you study something useful?

BEN
English.

ALISON
Is your house as nice as your sister’s?

BEN
It’s a work in progress.

ALISON
Anything interesting in the paper today?

BEN
Read it yourself and find out.

ALISON
Ohhh – are you that guy who only pretends to care about the paper, and doesn’t really retain anything?

BEN
Reading about the suffering of others is a coping mechanism for life. You should try it sometime. It’s a real remedy for the inevitable failure of the American Dream.

ALISON
Cheerful.

BEN
You can rely on failure.

ALISON
Does your wife read the paper?

BEN
She does not.

ALISON
Do you tell her it’s a coping mechanism for the American Dream?

BEN
Sara is the kind of person who has been in her own little world for so long that I doubt the American Dream or its subsequent failure has even crossed her mind.

ALISON
She sounds like a real keeper.

BEN
She’s my wife.

ALISON
Why’d you marry her?

BEN
Why does anyone get married?

ALISON
I don’t know.

BEN
I guess I would say we were in love.

ALISON
What a dick-ish thing to say.

BEN
We still are. In love.

ALISON
Uh-huh.

BEN
I don’t know if you’re the best person to be judging my marriage.
ALISON
I’m not.

BEN
Not the best person?

ALISON
Not judging your marriage.

BEN
When you get married you’ll understand.

ALISON
I’m not getting married.

Oh?

ALISON
Nope. And besides - I don’t think marriage is about love.

BEN
Okay…?

ALISON
It’s about not murdering people.

BEN
Optimistic.

ALISON
No, really. I guess I’ve always thought the person you marry should be someone you don’t think you’ll hate by the time one of you dies.

BEN
And that’s the only qualification?

ALISON
Well, not the only one, but it’s pretty important. More important than being in love.

BEN
Have you ever been in love?

ALISON
Nope.
BEN
Get back to me after you have.

ALISON
Love is a social construct.

BEN
I know you mean well, but you’re full of first-year-of-college bullshit. I’m going to go back to reading the paper now.

ALISON
I’m going to go look for some other flowers.

BEN
Fine.

ALISON gets up and quietly steps off the porch. She quietly approaches the garden, as if to pick some flowers.

BEN
I can still see you.

ALISON
Right, right. I was just looking. It was nice to meet you.

BEN
You too.

She exits. BEN watches her go, then returns to the paper.
3. Evening

SARA is curled up on the couch reading a book. There’s a dim lamp on the table. She is engrossed. BEN enters and stands in the doorway behind her.

BEN
It’s seven.

SARA
Okay?

BEN
Are we going to do anything about dinner?

SARA
Oh. Shit.

BEN
It’s fine –

SARA
I’m so sorry. I don’t know where my head is. We’re still not ordering pizza.

BEN
Well then what’s the plan?

SARA
I don’t know.

BEN
Do you want any help?

SARA
I don’t need help.

BEN
I really wouldn’t mind if we got something delivered.

SARA
Benjamin. I am perfectly capable of cooking dinner.

BEN
I know. It’s just already seven and you haven’t yet.

SARA
I will figure something out.

BEN
If we order now it’ll be here in twenty minutes. Will you be able to have something ready to eat in twenty minutes?

*She stands quietly and pulls out her cell phone.*

BEN
What are you doing?

SARA
I’m looking up the phone number for the fucking pizza place.

BEN
You can cook something. I’ll wait. It’ll be fine.

SARA
Already calling.

BEN
I don’t even want pizza.

SARA
*Dials and waits.*
Hi, I’d like to place an order for pick-up?

*Pause.*
Okay. Can I get a large pizza, half cheese and half onion, sausage, and green pepper?

*Pause.*
No, that’ll be it.

*Pause.*
Sara.

*Pause.*
Awesome, thanks so much.

*She hangs up the phone and sits back down on the couch.*

BEN
No delivery?

SARA
I want to go get it.

BEN
You didn’t have to order –
Please don’t turn this into a fight.
SARA
I’m not.

BEN
That is exactly what you’re doing.

SARA
I’m just saying. We’re on vacation to be with each other.

BEN
We’re not on vacation, we’re house-sitting.

SARA
It’s basically vacation.

He reaches for her.

BEN
I’m sorry I’ve been busy even though we’re not at home.

SARA
I just thought you’d have more time. I thought you’d come to church.

BEN
Want to go out for breakfast tomorrow morning?

SARA
Maybe.

BEN
It’d be nice.

SARA
If we do take-out tomorrow morning that’s twice in a row eating out.

BEN
Okay, but we’re on vacation, we can splurge a little.

SARA
I thought we were house-sitting, huh?

BEN
You’re the one who insisted on grocery shopping.
SARA
I’m going to go pick up the pizza now.

BEN sighs.

I just don’t know what to do with you sometimes.

BEN
You don’t have to do anything.

SARA
But I want to.

She exits via the front door. BEN watches her go, and then sits down on the couch. After a moment, the doorbell rings. He is surprised but goes to answer the door. ALISON walks right in without waiting for any sort of permission or greeting.

BEN
What are you doing?

ALISON
Don’t worry, I saw her leave.

BEN
I –

ALISON
I wasn’t spying, I was honestly just gonna come to the door, but I saw her go. So I know she isn’t here.

BEN
You can’t be here.

ALISON
You opened the door.

BEN
She’s just picking up pizza, she’ll be back soon.

ALISON
Don’t worry. I won’t be here long.

She sits on the couch and motions for BEN to sit with her. BEN takes a seat, hesitantly, putting spaces between them.
BEN
Did you want something?

ALISON
Maybe.

BEN
If you didn’t then why did you come here?

ALISON
To see you.

BEN
Well, you’ve seen me.

ALISON
I just – you seem like someone who is at least a little bit less lost than I am.

BEN
Is this another back-handed compliment?

ALISON
It is if you want to take it as one. I really thought the TV in here would be bigger.

BEN
It’s pretty big.

ALISON
Yeah, but it’s not huge. I guess this just looks like the sort of house that’s going to have a huge TV. Like, massive.

BEN
Oh.

ALISON
It’s just an idea I had.

They sit for a moment.

BEN
You need to leave.

ALISON
Right. Pizza. Wife. I didn’t even tell you what I came here to tell you.
BEN
I thought you were just here to see me?

ALISON
I lied.

BEN
She’s a bit on edge. If she came home and you were here –

ALISON
Would she think something was going on?

BEN
Nothing is going on.

ALISON
That’s not what I asked. I’m not saying anything is going on. I’m just saying that I feel like I could really talk to you. About my life.

BEN
You probably have lots of people you can talk to.

ALISON
Not about stuff like this.

BEN
I met you this morning.

ALISON
Sometimes things just click.

BEN
Sara’s going to be home –

ALISON
Tomorrow. What are you doing tomorrow?

BEN
We’re leaving tomorrow.

ALISON
Come out with me tonight.

BEN
What?

ALISON
Just drinks. After dinner.

BEN
You’re not even old enough to drink.

ALISON
They’re not going to know that unless someone tells them my ID is a fake. And you’re not going to do that, are you?

BEN
I can’t just let you use a fake ID.

ALISON
What if we both go, but I don’t drink anything?

BEN
Maybe.

ALISON
Club Caravan. It’s on Adams street –

BEN
I know where it is.

ALISON
Do you?

BEN
I grew up here.

ALISON
Fascinating.

BEN
If I agree to meet you, will you leave?

ALISON
Promise?

BEN
Promise.

Satisfied, ALISON stands and adjusts her outfit. BEN looks out the window.
BEN
You should go out the back door and then wait until you hear her car pull in.

ALISON
...because she’ll think something is going on.

BEN
Right.

ALISON
But nothing is going on?

BEN
Absolutely not.

ALISON
Glad we’re on the same page.

They stand a moment, very awkwardly.

BEN
Right. Well. Let me show you where the back door is.

They exit. And BEN doesn’t come back. And doesn’t come back...

SARA enters, holding a pizza box.

SARA
They managed to make it without burning it, but they cut it weird so two pieces are half cheese, half topping.

She throws her purse on the couch.

Ben?

She looks around.

Babe?

After a moment, BEN enters.

BEN
I didn’t hear you come in.

SARA
I called you.

BEN
Well, I heard that.

SARA
I’m sorry for getting all mad – it’s been sort of a weird day.

BEN
I know. Please don’t worry about it.

SARA
I will worry about it. But thanks.

They move into the kitchen to eat.
4. Night

BEN steps outside with a light jacket on. ALISON stands in the yard staring at the garden. She wears a brightly colored dress and no jacket or sweater.

BEN
What are you doing here?

ALISON
I was afraid you wouldn’t come.

BEN
What do you take me for?

ALISON
A pushover.

BEN
That’s harsh.

ALISON
I was anxious. So I just came here.

BEN
Sara went to bed.

ALISON
Okay.

BEN
So.

ALISON
So.

BEN
What did you want to talk to me about?

ALISON
My sister is dead.

A long silence.

BEN
I’m so sorry –
ALISON
The funeral was the other day.

BEN
Wait.

ALISON
What?

BEN
Nothing.

ALISON
She was too young.

BEN
I’m so, so sorry. I don’t know what to say.

ALISON
Maybe don’t say anything.

BEN
Do you want to talk about it?

ALISON
Kind of.

BEN
Okay.

ALISON
They didn’t let me say what I wanted to at the funeral.

BEN
What did you want to say?

She clears her throat and faces BEN. She gets nervous and instead turns to address the garden.

ALISON
I hate funerals. I hate them, and I’m never going to stop hating them. They’re aggressively sad. Which I guess is the norm, because someone’s died, and you’re never going to see them again, but then everyone goes and makes it worse by wearing black and crying and buying formal flower arrangements. Nobody even got Lizzie’s favorite flowers. How hard would that have been?
BEN
I’m –

ALISON
Just listen.

When Lizzie was six, and I was thirteen, our grandfather passed away. We had to go shopping because neither of us had the “appropriate clothing” for a funeral – nothing black, nothing formal. I will never forget what she said to me when we were in the dressing rooms at Macy’s.

She wanted to know why we had to wear black dresses to the funeral if Grandpa’s favorite color was green. And I didn’t have an answer for her. “Because people are sad” didn’t really cut it for a six-year-old who’d just lost her grandfather. She found this bright green dress. Like, seriously, lime green. The same color as our grandpa’s favorite necktie, the one Nana always rolled her eyes at – the one he insisted on wearing to church anyway. And nobody would let her get it, let alone wear it to the funeral. We compromised on navy blue.

When you’re little, death seems like a one-off sort of thing. We weren’t thinking about that service in relation to whose would be the next one. And even when I was old enough to pick out my own outfits for a funeral without getting too much shit for it, nobody would let Lizzie do it. But two years ago, when our Aunt Lacy passed away, I went to the grocery store and bought these bright yellow flowered headbands. And we put them in our hair and didn’t let anyone stop us.

Her favorite color has always been yellow, but I don’t own a single yellow dress. I had to go shopping. I picked this out for her and I wore it.

BEN
It’s a lovely dress.

ALISON
Thank you. I think she’s – I think she’d like it.

It’s hard to talk about her in the past tense. I think that’s the weirdest part right now, and the rest of it is still catching up. Half the reason I stayed home instead of finding some job or internship this summer was because someone needed to hang around with her while Mom and Dad were at work. She didn’t
want summer camp, she didn’t want a babysitter, she just wanted to spend time with her big sister.

During this speech, SARA has come downstairs and heard voices. She stands in the doorway quietly looking out - she doesn’t interrupt them.

BEN
What are you going to do with your summer now?

ALISON
I have no idea. But I’m so glad I was here for the first month of her summer vacation.

I think people should wear bright colors to funerals. I think you should tell your sister you love her before you leave tomorrow. I think a lot of things but most of them don’t matter to you. Let’s be honest, you’re glad that you’re not in my shoes right now. I would be, if I were you, secretly, deep down.

BEN
That’s not how this works -

ALISON
Yes it is. Don’t lie to yourself.

BEN
The things you think about are important.

ALISON
Of course they are. To me.

BEN
Okay.

He steps toward her, and they embrace for a long time. When they step apart, ALISON leans up to kiss his cheek. SARA watches. She moves quietly back into the house without a sound.

ALISON
I should go.

BEN
I could go with you -

ALISON
No you couldn’t.

BEN
Are you sure?

ALISON
Very sure.

BEN
Okay. I’m sorry –

ALISON
Stop apologizing.

BEN
Okay.

ALISON
Goodbye.

BEN
Goodbye.

ALISON exits.

BEN watches her go then waits a while before going back inside.
5. Late Night/Early Morning

The garden is destroyed. It’s been torn apart, dug up. SARA sits on the porch, wide awake in her pajamas. No blanket. It’s another chillier-than-expected morning. She is silent and very, very still. ALISON enters, slowly. She takes in the garden. She panics. She sees SARA.

ALISON
What happened to it?

SARA
To the garden?

ALISON
Yeah.

SARA
It’s gone.

ALISON
It’s ruined.

SARA
I think my heart is broken. I loved that garden.

ALISON kneels in the dirt and examines the flowers.

ALISON
There’s nothing left. I can’t save any of it.

SARA
It isn’t even your garden.

ALISON
So?

SARA
So what does it matter whether or not you can save it.

ALISON
It was beautiful.

SARA
Lots of things are beautiful.

ALISON
Beautiful things shouldn’t be destroyed.

SARA
Well. It seems it is too late for that.

ALISON
You don’t sound very heartbroken.

SARA
I’m so heartbroken that I don’t feel a thing.

ALISON
Are you Ben’s sister?

SARA
I’m his wife.

ALISON
Oh.

SARA
You’re the girl whose sister died.

ALISON
How did you know that?

SARA
I went to the funeral.

ALISON
Why would you do that?

SARA
I wanted to see how beautiful it was. How perfect your sister was.

ALISON
She wasn’t perfect. She was an unholy terror. But she was my sister.

SARA
It was a very nice funeral.

ALISON
I don’t want to talk about it.

SARA
Why not? I think you should talk about things.

ALISON
I don’t want to discuss my sister’s funeral with you, you fucked up freak.

SARA
Watch your mouth.

ALISON
No. That’s so... that’s so fucked up. That’s a violation of... I’m not sure what but definitely something. You didn’t belong at that funeral, that was for us. That was for our family and our friends and my Lizzie and not for you to stand and gawk.

SARA
I wasn’t gawking.

ALISON
It’s a bit voyeuristic to go to a funeral to see if it’s beautiful. Inappropriate.

SARA
It’s a bit inappropriate to trespass.

ALISON
I just wanted to take one flower.

SARA
You can’t.

ALISON
I know.

SARA
It was a beautiful garden... We don’t have a garden at home. Nothing compared to this, anyway.

ALISON
These were her favorite flowers.

SARA
Your sister’s?

ALISON
She doesn’t have a headstone yet - she’s all alone in the dirt. She’s all alone and I want to bring her some flowers.
SARA
I knew she would be.

ALISON
No you didn’t. You don’t know anything.

SARA
I do.

ALISON
What do you know? What could you possibly know about losing your sister?

SARA
I don’t –

BEN steps onto the porch, and immediately tries to intervene.

BEN
What’s going on?

SARA
She’s here to take the flowers.

BEN
Alison?

ALISON
I can’t – I’m not – Ben – I wouldn’t do that.

He sees the garden.

BEN
Did you do this?

ALISON
How could you even think that? I came here to get one flower. One single flower, and now I see that the whole thing has been dug up and trampled.

BEN
Sara –

SARA
I didn’t do it.
BEN
Someone did it.

SARA
Maybe it was a wild animal.

ALISON
There’s no way that was an animal.

BEN
Sara…

*SARA has begun to cry quietly. She moves down into the garden and stands among the torn up flowers.*

SARA
It was an accident.

BEN
An accident?

SARA
When I was little I thought dead bodies grew into flowers. All I wanted was to be a field of daisies. But when I told my mom about it, she said bodies don’t turn into flowers - not locked in boxes anyway.

I finally slept tonight. I fell asleep right away. I dreamed I was planting a garden but there were arms and legs and clumps of curly brown hair everywhere. And decapitated worms...maggots, filth. And I was trying so hard to clean it up. I was digging and digging and planting and cleaning and saving - Ben, I was so sure it was you in the ground. I was so certain. It was you and Elizabeth both, under there together keeping each other company. She could have been our daughter, Ben.

When I woke up, I was here. My fingers were covered in dirt and the flowers were ruined and the ground was all dug up and I didn’t realize at first what I was doing and I kept digging - I kept going because it was you, Ben. You were there. You were dead.

I kept going until it was all dead. So that it would stop trying to convince me you were under there somewhere.

BEN
I’m not –

SARA
It was an accident.

ALISON
Wow.

BEN
Sara, you should probably come inside.

ALISON
I’m going to go.

SARA
I’m so sorry.

ALISON
Of course you are.

SARA
I’m sorry.

ALISON
That doesn’t fix it.

SARA
It should.

ALISON
A lot of things “should” fix things.

BEN
Goodbye, Alison.

ALISON
Goodbye forever.

ALISON leaves. They watch her go. BEN takes his jacket and wraps it around SARA’S shoulders.

SARA
We’re a broken family.

BEN
We aren’t even a family, Sar.
SARA
We could have been.

BEN
I never wanted that.

SARA
I know.

BEN
You didn’t tell me you’d changed your mind about it –

SARA
I didn’t know I had.

BEN
Are you okay?

SARA
No.

BEN
Let’s get you cleaned up.

SARA
I can take care of it myself.
What are we going to tell Bex?

BEN
I don’t know. We’ll figure something out.

SARA
Are you going to tell her who did it?

BEN
I can’t lie to her.

SARA
You could omit a detail. She’ll hate me.

BEN
She won’t hate you. Gardens grow.

SARA
She’ll have to start over.

BEN
I think it’ll work.

   SARA
I don’t.

   BEN
We’ll have to wait and see.

   SARA
I’m not happy.

   BEN
Neither am I.

   SARA
We should do something about that, shouldn’t we?

   BEN
We haven’t yet. And it’s been a while.

   SARA
Then it’s been a long time coming.

   BEN
I guess.

   SARA
It will be okay.

   BEN
Yes.

   SARA
You don’t believe me.

   BEN
I think time will help.

   SARA
It has to.

     They almost embrace. They go inside together.

   END OF PLAY.