



**TWO PLAYS THAT
TAKE PLACE IN
UHAULS (AND
ONE THAT
DOESN'T)**

**ZINE #2
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BY DAN DALY**

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MOVING

CHARACTERS

SON – m. late 20's.

MOM – f. late 50's.

The following character appear through text but are never seen onstage:

CHRIS – m. mid 20's. friend of SON

DAD – m. early 60's

SISTER – f. late 20's

NOTES

ON CASTING - As written, the only characters seen onstage are SON and MOM. Depending on how technology is approached in the production additional characters may appear. Race should not be a factor in casting, but MOM and SON want to feel as though they are related.

ON TECHNOLOGY USE – Many moments in this story take place within SON's phone. While writing this piece I assumed that some sort of projection or digital media would be used to convey these moments and texts, but I am not declaring that is how they must be presented. Whichever direction the production and acting teams feel is the most appropriate way to approach these moments is valid and I support.

ON THE SCENERY – This play began with a question about how scenery for theater is made and how wasteful the production process tends to be. As a scenic designer, I find myself using moving trucks to cart scenery and materials back and forth all the time. I wondered if there was a way to reduce the 4 or 5 truck trips per production to just 1. This play is a response to that question, and I would prefer if this play can be produced with this thought process in mind. Performing in the actual back of a moving truck or outside with a truck parked next to the performing space is ideal but a simple reference to a truck is fine as well. Please, whatever you do, do not build a fake truck, put it in a real truck, cart it to a theater, and then throw it away when you are done.

SON is moving boxes and items into a U-Haul truck, stopping every once and a while to drink some water. It is tough, heavy work. A couch has already been loaded into the truck as well as a bicycle and boxes labeled with the eventual rooms they will go to. He is sweating. He stops, looks at his phone, sighs, then opens a music app. He places the phone down on a box and continues his work. After a bit the music is interrupted when the phone rings. SON presses speaker on the phone and continues his work.

SON

Hi mom.

MOM

(on phone)

Oh I'm so glad I caught you! I was worried you would have left already. How's the packing going?

SON

It's going ok. Chris never showed up so I'm doing it all myself.

MOM

You should have told me! You should have told us! You never should have trusted Chris when we could have helped. Honestly. Well, we can come over. You need a hand and we are not that far. Have you eaten? We can bring some sandwiches. I just bought some of that iced tea you like...

SON

No. It's fine. I can do it. It's just taking longer than planned.

MOM

How much longer? Oh, I hope you can get it done on time.

SON

I'll get it done. It's not a big deal. I'm just having to adjust my schedule a bit.

MOM

If you need to take an extra day that's fine. We can cover the cost of having the truck for two days. You shouldn't be driving if you are tired from moving all that stuff. It's not safe. It's really not safe. That's what you should do. Stay for an extra day. That's what you should do.

SON

I can't Mom. I need to pick up the keys today.

MOM

Just ask if you can get them tomorrow. I'm sure it's not a big deal. We can have dinner together if you leave tomorrow instead.

SON

I really need to leave today.

MOM

Ok. Suit yourself. If you get in a crash because you fell asleep at the wheel it's not my fault. I warned you. I did... I don't even understand why you are moving.

SON

We went over this—

MOM

I know, I know. Its just that... you don't know anyone there and we are here. I'm sure your sister will miss you. How are we supposed to help you if something goes wrong?

SON

I can figure it out on my own—

MOM

No, no. I've decided. I know you told us not to but you need help and we are free, so we *are* coming over. Even if just for a little bit. We will make sandwiches. It'll be fun! We love making lunch for you. Do you want ham or turkey in your sandwich? I have ham or turkey.

SON

Mom—

MOM

Nope. Its settled. We are bringing you food. If I can't help you move or convince you to stay another night I'm bringing you some lunch. Ham or turkey?

SON

Mom, I'm almost finished. Really, it's not worth it for you to come all the way over here.

MOM

(yelling to DAD)

Can you get the cookies? We should pack some cookies. And get the good bread.

(to SON)

It's really not a problem Not a problem at all. I want to do it. Ham or turkey?

SON

It's not... please.... just...

(sigh)

Ok...turkey... I'll have turkey.

MOM

Great! We'll head out now. See you soon! Love you!

SON

Love you too.

Son hangs up phone and puts it back down. Music begins playing once more. He is working on moving the

last few boxes as the phone rings again. It is MOM. SON doesn't answer it and just keeps on working, hoping to get the work finished before MOM appears. The phone rings a second time. Son again ignores it and keeps on working. A text message comes through.

MOM
(in text)

U OK?

SON
(sighs)
(in text)

Sorry. Didn't hear my phone ring. Just moving things still.

MOM
(in text)

K

MOM
(in text)

LEMONAIDE OR ICEDTEA

SON rolls his eyes and doesn't respond. He continues moving boxes.

MOM
(in text)

?

SON ignores message again and continues packing the truck.

MOM
(in text)

?

SON ignores message once again and continues packing the truck trying to speed up to finish the job.

DAD
(in text)

Please answer your mom.

MOM
(in text)

U OK?

Son picks up his phone, stops the music, and calls MOM. This time he holds the phone up to his ear instead of having it on speaker.

SON

Hi Mom. I really don't want you to—
I know it's no trouble, its just—
Yes, but—
Please. Mom. I'm trying to start something on my own.
I'm trying to—
I know I don't have a job lined up. I know this sounds
crazy.
I appreciate everything but I just can't stay here any
longer. I need to get away from you—
I'm sorry. I didn't mean—
You're not—
I love you, I just don't want—
I know, but you're not helping things.

MOM is terribly upset at this point and is yelling on the other side of the phone. SON holds the phone away from his ear so he can still hear what she is saying.

SON

Ok. Ok. Ok. Ok.
Ok.
Iced tea. I'll have iced tea.

MOM has calmed down. She continues to talk.

Yes. I'll see you soon.

No its no trouble at all.

None.

Wait....

Just....

It's just...you don't need to give me things to show that you love me. I already know you do.

Yes.

Ok.

Love you too.

SON hangs up the phone. The music starts again. He fumbles with his phone to shut it off. He sits, exasperated, on the couch with no cushions. He reaches over and gets his water and drinks the rest of it. He throws the bottle against the wall of the truck.

DAD

(in text)

Tryign to stop her. You know mom...

SON

I'm never getting out of here.

A notification sound comes from the phone. He looks at it. MOM has transferred \$100 to SON through Venmo.

MOM

(in Venmo reason text)

2 keep truck xtra nite

SON stares at phone. He feels defeated. He texts SISTER.

SON

(in text)

Mom's doing it again 😞

SON gets up and continues with his work. It takes a while but he finally loads the last box into the truck and ratchet straps everything in place. He takes a picture of his handiwork and posts it on Instagram.

SON

(in Instagram caption text)

Finally packed. #TheGreatEscape

Seconds after posting SON gets a notification CHRIS liked his picture. He rolls his eyes and reaches up to close the back of the truck. Before he gets a chance to close it there is the sound of a car approaching.

MOM

(out of sight)

Hello!

SON

Hi Mom. Hi Dad.

MOM

Just a second, we need to move some things around.

SON

Thanks for coming over, but I just finished packing the truck and I really need to leave. I want to get ahead of rush hour. Thanks for coming but—

MOM

Oh, you can stay one more night, it's just one more night, it's no big deal at all. Just stay. We can go to that Japane—no, what is it...um—ah... Thai! That Thai place you like for dinner. I don't know what I'll have, but you like it there I know.

SON's phone beeps noting a text from SISTER. He reads it

SISTER

(in text)

She just wants to know she is needed. Show her that.

The text screen shows SISTER is still typing.

MOM

(speaking to DAD)

Can you move the seat up? I think it rolled underneath the seat. Nope. Found it! It was in with the extra clothes. Can you get my bottle of water from the front? No, not that one, the other one. That one wasn't any good.

SISTER

(in text)

We will all miss you.

SON reads text from SISTER, takes a breath, then tries to get MOM's attention.

SON

Mom... mom... can you look at me please.... Mom... Mom.... Mom!...

MOM approaches the truck and is seen by the audience for the first time. She carries her purse, a half full bottle of water, and a reusable shopping bag filled to the brim.

MOM

Yes, yes. What is it? Help me up into this truck. Oh wow, how did you move all this by yourself? I didn't know you would be bringing your bike too! Do you still remember how to ride it?

SON

Mom, please.

MOM

Yes yes. Sorry. What is it?

There is a pause where they truly see each other for the first time. SON reaches out and grabs MOM's hand.

SON

Thank you. Thank you for everything. For raising me. For listening to me. For protecting me from that duck in fifth grade. For giving me the best birthday parties a kid that liked Power Rangers could ever ask for. For going to my band concerts even though I never really learned how to play that guitar. For fixing my pants. For helping me figure out my taxes. For baking me cookies. For buying me that weird shirt that we always laugh about every Christmas. For taking me to the hospital when I broke my foot. (For not saying “I told you so” *after* I broke my foot). For remembering my favorite candies. For driving me to that internship every single day. For holding my hand when I was scared. For trying to make my life the easiest that you could. For listening to me. For being my mom.

I need to take the next step now. It’s time for me to leave and see what else is out there. I love you. I always will. I appreciate everything you have done for me and all that you still do. I just can’t stay this town anymore. I have to leave. I love you. And I’ll miss you.

There is a long pause in the conversation where neither speaks.

MOM

(with tears welling up from inside)

Ok. Well. Umm. Here. Please. Take this sandwich. We were... well... we were actually out of turkey so it’s just ham.

SON

Its ok. Thanks mom.

They hug.

MOM

(through the tears)

I’ll miss you so much... I’m so proud of you.

SON

It's ok. I know you are. Thank you.

Another pause as MOM composes herself.

MOM

Ok. Ok. That's enough. We also packed some cookies, a banana, and that iced tea you like. Here.

MOM hands SON the reusable shopping bag.

SON

Thanks.

MOM

Actually, there is an iced tea and a lemonade. I thought you might get thirsty on the ride so I packed you both.

SON

Thank you.

MOM

And I had a few extra boxes of spaghetti that I threw in there because you will need something to eat when you get to your new place.

SON

Thanks Mom.

MOM

And a jar of sauce to go with it.

SON

(with a small laugh in his voice)

Ok.

MOM

And some other things I had laying around that I know you like.

SON smiles and there is another moment of connection.

MOM

Ok... I guess... then I guess we'll get going. Give me one more hug.

There is a pause while SON hugs MOM and she hugs back as if it is the last hug they will ever have, even though it won't be.

MOM

Now make sure to call at every rest stop. I have the road atlas out so I can keep track of where you are.

SON

Ok. I will. I got a hug for you too Dad.

Son hops off the truck to go give DAD a hug, leaving MOM alone with her thoughts. She looks at all the boxes imagining SON's future, and then out at SON and DAD hugging. She wipes the last few tears from her eyes. SON comes back to the truck.

SON

Here, let me help you back down.

Son helps MOM out of the truck and they hug one last time. MOM walks back to the car and SON waves as they drive off. There is the sound of MOM and DAD's car starting and driving away. After they are gone SON take the extra food items and stows them away. He pulls out his phone and checks the time. He has a few minutes so he sits down on a box, pulls out the sandwich, and takes a bite. It's better than he expected it to be. He takes a second bite, stands up, and walks to the back door of the truck. With one last look, making sure he has packed everything he needs, he lets out a breath, has a moment where he contemplates if he is doing the right thing, then reaches up and closes the door.

GHOSTS IN THE TRUCKS

BY
DAN DALY



L.S. Sam Shoen and Anna Mary Carty Shoen,
circa 1944

CHARACTERS

L.S. – m. 83 but is a ghost so whatever

ANNA – f. 34 but is a ghost so whatever

WOMAN – f. mid 20's.

ST. PETER – no gender, any age. Played by the same person playing ANNA.

JOE – m. 71 but never seen onstage so whatever

PERSON – should kind of resemble ANNA, might even be the same actor. Seen for a second if we even see them onstage at all.

SETTING

2021? Maybe? Definitely after June 1, 2018 when the dog adoption fiasco ended and likely a ways after 2019, ten years after L.S. died.

NOTES

ON THE TEXT - Lines “within quotation marks” are actual quotes by the historical person speaking.

ON CASTING – While the historic figures of L.S. and ANNA were white, race should not be a factor in casting for any roles. Additionally, many choices could be made for the age of the actors playing the ghosts and I welcome whatever solution fits the production.

ON THE SCENERY – This play began with a question about how scenery for theater is made and how wasteful the production process tends to be. As a scenic designer, I find myself using moving trucks to cart scenery and materials back and forth all the time. I wondered if there was a way to reduce the four or five truck trips per production to just one. This play is a response to that question, and I would prefer if this play can be produced with this thought process in mind. Performing in the actual back of a moving truck or outside with a truck parked next to the performing space is ideal but a simple reference to a truck is fine as well. Please, whatever you do, do not build a fake truck, put it in a real truck, cart it to a theater, and then throw it away when you are done.

SCENE 1

Inside an empty U-Haul Truck, L.S. sits on a stack of folded packing blankets. He is sullen and pale and wears an old suit. He moves with a precision of someone who has said these words thousands of times but has never had anyone to listen... until now.

L.S.

“People might say I was a fool for letting this happen, but I was an interesting fool. It's God's will for me to get a chance to see what would have happened after my death anyway--and to speak the truth about it.”

These trucks. There are ghosts in these trucks. I worked hard to build this orange empire, literally, with my own two hands welding steel and greasing axels. Before our grand idea became reality moving was only for the wealthy. America was only as far as you could get in a day. America. I built modern America and I created the suburbs! I made it so that the GI's coming back from the war could find a home and find some peace wherever they chose to live. This simple idea of renting a truck in one city and driving it to another transformed the country. While professionally it was a success, personally it was a disaster. I'm not sure if I worked too hard, if the business was too unwieldy, or if my family asked to much of me. I do know that the creation of U-Haul took at least three lives and destroyed so many more. It was a curse. The making of this rental truck kingdom doomed me and my family from the start. Once a truck starts rolling down a hill its next to impossible to stop and that's what this whole thing was. A runaway van filled with fertilizer waiting for the explosion to come. So, where do I begin? Born in 1919, on leap year day, my parents –

WOMAN comes around the back of the truck holding her cellphone. She has been following the U-Haul directions on how to check out a truck when she is startled by the sight of L.S.

WOMAN

Who the hell are you!

L.S.

– were poor farm –

Who am I? Who am I! I'm L.S. Shoen! I am the founder of this company and...ah... here. Where was I? Let me start again.

These trucks. There are *ghosts* in these trucks.

WOMAN

Listen, I don't care. I rented this. I need to get to Ikea. You need to get out.

L.S.

Don't you want to hear the sordid history of my life and this company? The tales imbued into these nomadic aluminum caverns? The family feud, the cut-throat tactics, the murder?

WOMAN

No.

L.S.

Oh... I... ah... I wasn't expecting that...

WOMAN

Can you get out?

L.S.

No. I can not.

WOMAN

And why not?

L.S.

I can't leave. I haunt this truck. That's how a haunting works.

WOMAN

Seriously?

L.S.

Seriously.

WOMAN

Ok. Suit yourself. I guess I'll see you at IKEA.

WOMAN takes a photo of L.S. with her phone and uploads it to the U-Haul check-out website.

WOMAN

(typing into "notes" field on website)

Creepy old white guy haunting back of truck.

WOMAN reaches up and begins shutting the back door.

L.S.

WAIT!

WOMAN

What now?

ANNA, a beautiful woman dressed as she was on May 4, 1957 when she died, appears outside the truck.

ANNA

Hello Sam.

L.S.

Anna!? Oh Anna.

ANNA climbs into the truck with ease, practically floating up. Her joy of seeing L.S. is written across her face and the ease at which she traverses the truck gives away how many times she has had to make these movements. She slowly approaches L.S.

ANNA

It's been so long.

WOMAN

And who are you?

L.S.

This is my wife. Anna Mary Carty Shoen –

WOMAN

That's too many names.

L.S.

– And we haven't seen each other in... what has it been... 7 years?

ANNA

Around that. It was a lonely 42 years waiting and waiting for you to join me as a ghost... I didn't realize we would haunt different trucks.

WOMAN

I have to deal with two ghosts now? Do I need to put this on the rental form?

WOMAN begins fumbling with her phone again to fill out more of the rental form.

ANNA

How are you? What are you doing?

WOMAN

I don't see a "Ghosts" entry.

L.S.

I was telling this woman my life story. I was just at the beginning.

WOMAN

I guess I'll just keep using the notes section.

ANNA

Oh the life story again. You always love telling that don't you.

L.S.

Help me tell it. You spin tales so beautifully.

ANNA

Of course. Anything. I miss you. I miss talking with you.

L.S.

Please.

ANNA

Well, who knew we would end up here? We gave up so much and expected even less. The world was changing. The war was over. Everything that happened was our own making. The work we did over those few years together –

WOMAN

Can we please wrap this up?

ANNA

Excuse me?

WOMAN

It's wonderful you two are reuniting and all but I've got to go. You rent these trucks by the hour. Do you know where to put ghosts in this form?

L.S.

Well I –

ANNA

No. No. It's ok. It's ok. Don't listen to him. I didn't realize you were in a rush! I'll hurry up. So, he's kicked out of school, too sick for the Navy. We get married. His sister hates me. We move to Oregon and on the drive there come up with the idea of U-Haul. You couldn't rent trucks one-way before.

L.S.

Anna!

ANNA

What? She has to go.

L.S.

You lost all the detail, the passion, the sorrow, the drama. Where is the suspense of what will happen next!

WOMAN

I'm just renting a truck. I don't care about suspense.

ANNA

(tongue in cheek)

If you want to be more *dramatic* and *sorrowful* go ask one of your five other wives for help.

WOMAN

Wait, you had six wives?

WOMAN abandons searching the form on her phone while she gets caught up in the strange details of L.S.' life.

L.S.

I only had 5!... I married one of them twice. And they were in succession. I only ever had one wife at a time! Mostly.

WOMAN

That's crazy.

ANNA

And he had 13 kids.

L.S.

Those ungrateful –

WOMAN

Hold on now.

L.S.

I was a kind and caring father. I gave each one of them a percentage stake in the company when they were born. Out of the goodness of my heart -

ANNA

And the tax write-off.

L.S.

I was a busy man! I may not have been around as much as I should have but those kids –

ANNA

You sent Sam and Mike to boarding school the day after you married Suzanne. The first Suzanne. He married two Suzannes.

L.S.

Those kids got everything they ever wanted.

ANNA

They never saw you. You worked 16 hours a day.

L.S.

I did the best I could. I wanted them all to like me. Hell, I gave them a hydroplane. I gave them sports cars. I bought them an entire theme park!

WOMAN

You bought your kids a theme park. So they'd like you.

L.S.

As any father would if he had the means! And they repay me by kicking me out. To the curb! They ganged up and Joe took everything.

ANNA

Oh no. you got him talking about Joe.

L.S.

He tried to kill Suzanne! The first Suzanne. He had the gun in his hand and had to be talked down. At the 1986 shareholders meeting Joe beat Mike to a pulp right in the middle of the conference room. And I don't care what the cops say, Joe called out a hit on Sam and his poor wife got killed instead.

WOMAN

What the hell is happening?

ANNA

Go ahead and leave. He's on a roll now. You're lucky you got to skip over the part where he was on *Unsolved Mysteries* in 1992.

WOMAN

I can't yet. I need to put this... haunting...?

ANNA nods head to show approval of the term and that is not offensive.

Haunting. This haunting on the rental form before I take this truck out. I've been charged ifor much smaller shit I didn't do. I'm not getting charged for an old guy living in the truck.

ANNA

Here. Let me help.

ANNA takes WOMAN's phone and begins searching for the place to input the haunting.

L.S.

Poor Eva. Killed in her sleep in Telluride.

WOMAN

What now?

L.S.

Sam's wife. The one I was just talking about. Are you listening? She didn't know what she was marrying into. The bitterness. The greed. The feud that pitted generations of a family against each other. This kind of hatred wears people down like a brake pad rubbing against the rotator disk until it becomes nothing more than dust. Now she haunts these trucks too.

WOMAN

There's a third ghost now? Do I –

WOMAN takes phone back from ANNA before she finds the correct part of the form.

ANNA

Her truck is in Peoria last time I checked. Don't worry.

WOMAN

Listen. This is all... *fascinating*. But –

L.S.

If Joe didn't have such a thirst for power. If he didn't care so much about money. He *illegally* kicked me out of my own business! When we *won* that lawsuit he had to pay 70 million dollars for acting with, and I

quote, “hatred and ill will.” He was the sugar in my gas tank, the nail in my tire, the rusty tie rod just waiting to snap –

ANNA

Ok. Ok. We get it. We understand. I’m sorry for egging you on. We’ve told this woman everything we need to say.

L.S.

Anna. You always were the strong one. The emotional rock of the family. The steel-belted tire to my nylon ply. When you died I... I didn’t know what to do. And those rumors. I never would hurt you let alone... why do we let rumors fill our heads –

WOMAN

I feel like I’m in a soap opera.

L.S.

Our family deals in trucks, not soap.

WOMAN

Jesus. I don’t care! I don’t have time for this. Can you go so I don’t have to worry about this form anymore?

L.S.

I told you, I can’t leave.

WOMAN

Well I can. Fuck this form. If you’re not going to leave, I’m going to go ask for a different truck.

WOMAN puts her phone away and begins heading out of the truck.

L.S.

Don’t do that.

WOMAN

I was not planning on dealing with melodramatic ghosts today. I just need a truck. Renting a U-Haul is always tough but this.... this is crazy.

L.S.

You got this truck for a reason.

WOMAN

Yeah. To go to Ikea.

L.S.

No. That's not it.

WOMAN

What –

WOMAN is caught off guard by this and stops her exit from the truck. A pause. The first moment of quite in their interaction, no matter how small it is. Could this ghost, this mystical being, know something she doesn't?

What are you getting at?

L.S.

This is part of something bigger than just a trip. You have a connection to this truck.

WOMAN

It's just a truck. I've rented plenty before.

L.S.

There is something special about this one.

WOMAN

What?

L.S.

How old are you?

WOMAN

I don't see how that matters –

ANNA

Oh leave her alone. Let her go.

L.S.

You don't find it odd that out of all the trucks you get the haunted one?

WOMAN

If you know something or have some sort of ghost intuition come out and say it. I don't have all day.

L.S.

It's fate. It always is.

WOMAN

What is?

L.S.

This is.

WOMAN

So why am I here according to your fate stuff?

L.S.

I don't know. I just figure there must be a connection. I was asking you if you knew.

WOMAN

So... you are *not* trying to tell me some cosmic-ghost-truth from beyond the grave right now.

L.S.

Oh no. I don't have any of that. I'm just curious. I spent my whole life creating a way for people to travel, a way for people to move, a way for people to get beyond their hometown. I'm certain there is

someone out there that can help me get out of this truck. For decades now I've been traveling the country looking for someone that will listen. Someone that will help.

WOMAN

Well I'm sorry to tell you, I'm not the person for that responsibility. This has been real, but im out. I just need a truck. I don't need all of this.

WOMAN exits the truck.

ANNA

Maybe we do.

L.S.

There has to be a connection. There has to be.

ANNA

You barely got through your story with her.

L.S.

People that rent these trucks just don't care anymore. They aren't fulfilling a dream they are just moving couches or selling scrap metal.

ANNA

Its ok. The world is changing, its getting smaller, its getting bigger. We can leave it up to chance. If that woman doesn't want this truck that means we get to spend more time together. You and I.

L.S.

Oh Anna, you always know what to say. You have no idea how much I miss you.

ANNA

I might have an idea.

L.S.

I've been waiting so long. These trucks. They are so lonely. I pace, I fold these blankets over and over, I think about all the things I did wrong.

ANNA

You did some things well in your life.

L.S.

No I didn't.

ANNA

You raised kids, you loved me, you built all of this.

L.S.

And now I am trapped in it.

ANNA

You think you are trapped?

L.S.

Of course I am, Anna. I can't escape.

ANNA

It may feel that way but is it the truth?

WOMAN returns and stands outside the truck.

WOMAN

This is their last truck in the size I need... of course.

L.S.

Well then –

WOMAN

At least he showed me where to put you in the rental form. "other non-mechanical issues."

L.S.

That does make some –

WOMAN

So we are stuck together.

L.S.

It seems that way –

WOMAN

And you?

ANNA

My truck is over there.

WOMAN

I thought you had to stay in it.

ANNA

We have a little wiggle room. We are not confined to our three walls and one door, but we can't leave them behind.

WOMAN

Great. Now you –

L.S.

Yes.

WOMAN

How can I get you to just leave me alone?

L.S.

I am not a burden, I am a feature of this truck!

WOMAN

Right.

L.S.

And we must figure out why we are connected here.

WOMAN

If I let you do that will you leave me alone?

L.S.

Yes.

WOMAN

Ok. Well... hurry up and ask your questions. Let's get this out of the way so I can go.

WOMAN sits on the pile of blankets.

L.S.

Where are you going?

WOMAN

I'm going to Ikea. I said that.

L.S.

Why are you going to Ikea?

WOMAN

I need a table.

L.S.

Why?

WOMAN

I moved.

L.S.

Why did you move?

WOMAN

Does that matter?

L.S.

Anything might help.

WOMAN

I moved out of my parents' house.

L.S.

Why did you move?

WOMAN

I just said. I left my parents' house.

L.S.

Yes, but *why* did you move out.

WOMAN

What is this?

L.S.

Why did you move?

WOMAN

This is getting invase –

L.S.

Why did you move?

WOMAN

I don't have to answer to some guy that just shows up and –

L.S.

Why did you move?

WOMAN

Fuck this. We aren't going to get anywhere. I'm leaving.

L.S.

Why did you leave?

WOMAN

No, I'm leaving this situation. This. Right now.

L.S.

I need to know.

WOMAN

No you don't. You may want to tell your story to everyone within ear shot, but I don't. I don't want people to know what happened.

L.S.

Well what happened?

ANNA

L.S. –

WOMAN

Are you even listening to me? Does he ever stop?

L.S.

What happened? I want to know why your move lined up with my truck.

WOMAN

No.

WOMAN gets up and prepares to leave.

L.S.

You can't just walk away.

WOMAN

Watch me.

L.S.

You still need this truck.

WOMAN

I know I can't –

L.S.

Then why.

Why –

WOMAN

They died!... Ok? Don't you ever give up? Jesus. My parents died. It was unexpected and an accident and...

WOMAN manages to check her emotions before allowing them to erupt. She closes her eyes, clenches her fists, and begins breathing deliberately in an attempt to will the emotions back out of her body using a way to calm down she has obviously learned somewhere before.

ANNA

Oh, I'm so sorry.

WOMAN

They... They left me some money. I couldn't stay in that house. So I'm here... I'm here alone... I'm on my way to get a table for my new apartment. Is that ok with you?

ANNA

Of course. Of course. And we are holding you up. And have only been talking about *our* troubles. I can see... I'm so sorry. Please. Don't let us hold you up anymore. Go.

L.S.

Anna, I don't know when we will –

ANNA

It's not about us right now L.S. Let her go.

L.S.

I don't want to loose you again.

ANNA pulls L.S. to the side and the first true moment of stillness washes over the truck. There is a quiet moment where they all are feeling the weight of their

meeting. Despite her best efforts WOMAN is beginning to feel emotions she left behind when she moved out and would prefer to not feel again.

WOMAN

Look, I'm Sorry –

ANNA

There is nothing to be sorry about.

WOMAN

Everything has been moving so fast and I am doing this by myself...

ANNA

Of course, of course.

WOMAN

But, like, I don't really understand what's... what's happening here.

ANNA

Look at it as two old friends. L.S. and I knew each other a long time ago and don't see each other often. It's not a big deal. We will see each other again soon.

WOMAN

So what happens when I drive away?

ANNA

I'll go back to my truck. L.S. will stay here. And he won't bother you. Right Sam?

WOMAN

No, I mean, will I be keeping you two from seeing each other? Is that on me?

L.S.

Yes.

ANNA

No. It's not. It's fine. We travel in our trucks. It's always a wonderful surprise when we end up at the same place.

L.S.

There are 176-thousand trucks, Anna. I search every truck every time I'm in a new lot. Every time. Whenever we meet again it is like our relationship is brand new. Every time we split I feel the heartache and pain of losing you again.

ANNA

Oh Sam...

L.S.

She might be hurting but so am I.

WOMAN

I don't want to be responsible for ripping you two apart.

ANNA

No, no, no. Please. Don't think of it like that. We will meet again. It's the way being connected to these trucks goes.

WOMAN

I... I don't know much about ghosts but... I mean... am I supposed to help you in some way? Isn't that how the stories always go, like, a ghost needs something to move on. Isn't it some "unfinished business" sort of thing? Do you need to *do* something? Can I *help* you?

L.S.

You can go tell Joe to fuck himself.

ANNA

Leonard Samuel Shoen!

L.S.

What! He said it to me plenty of times. I'd just be returning the favor.

ANNA

Listen, I know you mean well but ghosts don't work like that. We aren't waiting for anything, we aren't *restless*, we aren't trying to complete anything. We are... how can I explain it... You know that feeling you have when you miss someone. That deep weight down inside. That churning of sadness that they are no longer there but relief that they don't feel pain anymore.

WOMAN

I know.

ANNA

That's a ghost. Its that simple. Everyone that is gone lives inside the people that cared about them. Their lovers, their children, their friends. Everyone. They are there supporting you on the bad days, helping you celebrate on the good, and they move with you as you travel from place to place. L.S. and I are a bit special –

L.S.

That's an understatement.

ANNA

You see, much of our family and friends abandoned us. There are very few people left that truly care. But we care for each other. We haunt ourselves... and these trucks.

WOMAN

And I'm just supposed to leave you here.

ANNA

Maybe you will see me again, maybe you won't. It's all based on the ebb and flow of these trucks traversing the country. We are moved by the people who rent them and where they must go. It's like a leaf in the wind, but with ghosts in the trucks.

Anyway.

It was nice to meet you.

I've got to get back now.

L.S.

Anna –

ANNA

I've got to get back to my truck now.

L.S.

Please, don't go.

ANNA kisses L.S. gently on his forehead and grasps his hands tightly. They share a tender moment before they separate and ANNA steps gracefully out of the truck.

L.S.

Anna!

ANNA

Yes?

L.S.

I'll miss you.

ANNA smiles, turns around and walks off. L.S. lives with his sadness as WOMAN tries to engage with him.

WOMAN

So... is she gone now?... Well, I mean she's still in this lot, but she's not here anymore... can I leave?... are we still....

I'm going to go. Ok?

L.S.

I can't stop you.

WOMAN

Ok... well...are you staying?

L.S.

This is my truck. I have to.

WOMAN shrugs and reaches up to close the rolling door. Before she manages to move it L.S. interrupts her.

L.S.

Wait! Would you leave the door open? I never get to see the world going by anymore. I want to see everything.

WOMAN

Is that legal?

L.S.

Does it matter?

WOMAN shrugs and hops out of the truck. She walks out of view on her way to start the truck up. The cab door opens and closes, the truck's break lights turn on, and L.S. returns to his stack of packing blankets. The break lights turn off, the truck engine starts, and L.S. exhales.

SCENE 2

WOMAN is driving the truck. She is doing another rhythmic breathing or calming technique she learned.

WOMAN

Two, three, four... two three four...two three four....
Two three four

WOMAN gives up on the calming techniques and just start talking to herself instead

What the fuck was that? I mean I've seen some messed up shit before but this takes it. These trucks. There are *ghosts* in these trucks. Bullshit. I'm going through a lot and my mind is playing tricks on me. I must have eaten something weird. I'm having a tough time digesting some cheese or something... Wait. No. That's Michael Cain in *Muppet Christmas Carol*. I don't see any puppets. No frog on crutches and I don't think I'm not being followed by a rat and a... umm... What is Gonzo? Is... is he an anteater? An aardvark. He's got that huge nose but it bends down. Is he just considered a monster or something? Maybe there a website or where I can look up –

WOMAN begins reaching into her pocket to grab her phone but then quickly slams on the breaks.

Fuck! Are we not using turn signals today!? Asshole. Jesus.

I should probably stop saying that with these ghosts around. Even if they might just be puppets, but I think Jim Henson has better things to do with his time. He's dead though I think. Maybe he is a ghost too. Anyway, I should stop saying *Jesus* so much... It could upset a balance or something. Lords name in vain and all that shit. Isn't that a commandment or something? I sure got yelled at enough times as kid for saying it, but I mean who even knows if Christianity's the right –

WOMAN slams on the breaks a second time

Again with the turn signals! You are supposed to *signal* when you are changing the direction you are

going in. Hasn't anyone taken a driver's test? Didn't you read that handbook they give you when you are 16 and have no idea what you are doing? Didn't you have to sit in that car with the instructor with an extra break peddle on their side? Remember? Arm straight out for a left turn, point it up for a right. Read up on it asshole. It's not that tough, it's in that handbook. Go find your old handbook and remind yourself about how to turn correctly.

God...

I should probably stop saying that one too.

There is a long moment where woman is just driving. We hear the creaking of the cab and the sounds from the street and she slowly breathes in another calming technique.

I need to... I don't know... This has all been a lot. And a creeper in my truck is not what I need right now. Remember, Dr. Manes said none of this is a one-way street and there will be better days and worse days and that is fine and normal and to be expected... I should expect set backs and roadblocks but it's all about moving in the right direction. Just head forward. One foot in front of the other and all that shit. But, I mean, she didn't prepare me for anything like this. Like, how am I supposed to help this jerk in the back of the truck when I've been going through it myself. Am I even supposed to help him? I know that woman said not to but I mean he's stuck right? Like physically stuck here I think. This is all my luck, hu? Getting stuck with a cranky old man who won't leave me alone.

I'm just going to go get my stuff at IKEA. One thing at a time. That's what the doctor said. One thing at a time. Stop stressing out. You have this. Deal with one thing at a time. You don't know why the founder of Uhaul is haunting the back of this truck but that is

the next thing to deal with after this. Just get to the store. That's the next goal. Just get to the store.

Maybe I can make that ghost push the cart or something.

SCENE 3

WOMAN is pushing a cart filled to the brim with IKEA boxes. A flat packed table, some bookshelves, lamps, a rug. The cart is heavy and unruly. She is struggling.

WOMAN

Are you still here?

L.S.

I have nowhere else to go.

WOMAN

Then help me with these boxes! Can a ghost pick up a box?

L.S.

I'm a ghost not an invalid.

WOMAN

Ok tough guy. Here.

WOMAN tries to hand L.S. a bag but he doesn't move.

L.S.

Now why should I help you?

WOMAN

Oh come on.

L.S.

You tore Anna from me.

WOMAN

I asked if I could help you back at the U-Haul place
and you said no.

L.S.

She said no, I didn't. I'll blame you if she isn't there
when we return. You ripped her from my arms like a
mechanic removing an inspection sticker from the
windshield of my heart.

WOMAN

What?...here. Take this. If we go fast enough, she'll
still be there when we get back. That's how this
works right?

L.S.

You have no idea how this works.

WOMAN

You're right. I don't. I've never met a ghost before
let alone one as grumpy as you. Now help me or
we're going to be out here all day.

*L.S. begins to begrudgingly help WOMAN with her
boxes. Lifting them up and stacking them in the truck.*

L.S.

(reading boxes)

Ypperlig...Lommarp...Tvärfot. What in God's name
are these things?

WOMAN

Table. Bookcases. Lamp.

L.S.

Well then what are these names?

WOMAN

It's Swedish... or something. Ikea's a Swedish company I think. They sell those little meatballs. You know? Those little meatballs covered in gravy.

L.S.

Well U-Haul is an American company. With American names. We would never sell something like that.

WOMAN

Really.

L.S.

We rented other things for a while. Jet skis, dance floors, lawn mowers. In 85' we even opened seven VHS rental places in Michigan. Guess what we called them.

WOMAN

I really don't –

L.S.

Oh just guess.

WOMAN

I don't know.

L.S.

Haullywood Video. HAULLY... wood. Do you get it?

WOMAN

Oh... I get it.

L.S.

I was immensely proud of that name.

WOMAN

I bet.

L.S.

We even rented VCRs for free so you could watch your movie.

WOMAN

And what could have stopped you from taking over the world?

L.S.

Blockbuster... and Ryder trucks... and Joe. You know in '84 we brought in over forty-one-and-a-half million dollars. All profit not gross sales! That all started to slip, sure, but the rental business was getting crowded. We were refocusing and finding our place in the new landscape. Joe couldn't wait. He wanted it all for himself. He hated me and staged a coup in '86. Kicked me out of my own company. The company I founded. He made me throw myself my own retirement party. The gall.

WOMAN

Yes. The gall. Now if you can hold off on story time I can go return this cart and get us back to the rental place.

L.S.

Yes, yes. Please go and do hurry up.

As WOMAN backs up the cart, she notices something under the truck and stops in her tracks.

WOMAN

You've got to be shitting me.

Woman investigates the rear tire of the U-Haul.

WOMAN

Fuck.

L.S.

What is it? What's wrong?

WOMAN

We have a flat tire.

L.S.

No.

WOMAN

Uh, yes. We do.

L.S.

Well... do something about it!

WOMAN

Ok...

L.S.

Why are you just standing there!

WOMAN

Calm down, ok. I've never got a flat tire in a U-Haul before.

L.S.

Well fix it! Do you even know how to change a tire?

WOMAN

Sexist... I do. I've just never changed one on a box truck before... I don't even know if I'm allowed to. Is it like an apartment thing where I need to call the landlord if something breaks?

L.S.

I don't know. I founded the company I don't run it.

WOMAN

Well that's a ton of help.

L.S.

We need to get back to the lot. As fast as we can. I need to see Anna.

WOMAN

You just spent a half hour explaining that your video rental place was called “Haullywood”... Just... give me a second. One thing at a time.

WOMAN pulls out her phone.

L.S.

What are you doing?

WOMAN

I’m looking up the number for U-Haul.

L.S.

You don’t know it?

WOMAN

Now why would I know the U-Haul number off the top of my head. Do you? You founded the company! You’ve told me how many times now? I’m trying to fix this. Ok? Let me look.

WOMAN starts googling “who to call when your U-Haul gets a flat tire.” After clicking on a few dead end links she sees the number for U-Haul Roadside Assistance. Before she manages to call the number her eye is caught by a news article.

WOMAN

What’s this “Amerco” thing?

L.S.

It’s pronounced “A-Miracle” and it is the parent company of U-Haul. I incorporated it in 1971 in Reno, Nevada when I –

WOMAN

Yeah, yeah, and who is this Joe that runs it?

L.S.

That's Joe! That good-for-nothing son of mine. When I say he stole U-Haul from me I really mean he took everything, the whole company, all of Amerco.

WOMAN

(reading from phone)

Well... what is this from... the Consumerist? Yeah. It says, quote, "The CEO of Uhaul gave out his cellphone number last night on an episode of Inside Edition, inviting consumers to call with complaints or questions. Joe Shoen explained saying, "People can't get this organization to behave, I can." That number is 602-390-6525."

L.S.

That. Son. Of. A. Bitch!

WOMAN

So... should we call him?

L.S.

Of course not! Call Joe? What kind of an idea is that? We can do this on our own! We used to put small tool kits in the trucks for issues like this. I'll look back here, you go look in the cab.

WOMAN

I think we should we call him.

L.S.

And now why would we do something so preposterous. He can't help. He can't do anything right. We have to do this by ourselves.

WOMAN gives L.S. a disapproving look.

L.S.

Here. Joe, the second richest person in Arizona, and his wife, dropped off seven rottweilers at an adoption charity. The shelter waived the 600 drop off free because they believed Joe couldn't afford to take care of so many dogs. The seven dogs had never been vaccinated and at least two needed major surgeries. When the woman who runs the charity found out who Joe was she asked him to pay the medical fees. His response? A text saying "This Bitch will never see a copper penny!" Seriously.

WOMAN

Why do you keep telling me these stories about him?

L.S.

To show you how corrupt, how deranged, how power hungry he is.

WOMAN

I don't even know him.

L.S.

He would never admit he was wrong. It was not my fault. Any of it. Everything that happened was because of him. Not me.

WOMAN

Then let's call him and confront him about it.

L.S.

I never want to talk to him again.

WOMAN

Oh, come on.

L.S.

I'm serious. He did so much to destroy me life. And so many others.

WOMAN

But isn't that how kids act? Parents and kids never get along.

L.S.

This was more than not getting along.

WOMAN

It seems like you keep exaggerating –

L.S.

I'm doing no such thing! Sure, getting along is not something that happens in every relationship, but you should never be afraid that your child is going to hire someone to kill you. I had that fear for years!

WOMAN

Did you really or –

L.S.

I did!

WOMAN

I mean you're a ghost. Can I trust the memory of a ghost?

L.S.

I'm sure you got on swimmingly with your parents.

WOMAN

Of course not. Who gets along with their parents?

L.S.

Obviously not Joe and I.

Woman rolls her eyes at L.S. in exasperation.

WOMAN

My dad... well... we didn't get along. No, that's an understatement. We got into these full-fledged shouting matches about the most idiotic of things. A

neighbor once called the cops because of how out of control we got. One time I refused to talk to him for a week because of something. I don't even remember what it was anymore. I thought I hated him. I thought we were enemies. I thought that nothing could change how I felt for him. Nothing. Then do you know what happened? He died. Just like that he was gone. And... I don't have all the words for this but... there isn't a day that goes by that I don't wish he was still around. You know? Even just to yell at. I... I don't know what to do without... We may not have gotten along, and we may have fought tooth and nail about the stupidest of stuff but I wish he was still here, you know? I wish I could still yell at him. I wish I still had this rage that I had built up over so many years thinking he was the worst person on earth. I wish I had someone to blame.

I also... I also wish it was his fault. I'm serious, I wish the accident was because of him. I wish I had a reason to blame him. I wish that I had that because it would make everything so much easier. I could hate him all over again and find some greater plan in why all of this happened... like that it wasn't random but it was his arrogance, his horribleness, his fault. But I can't. None of this is true. I'm stuck with the memory of hating someone but the truth? The truth is I miss them.

L.S.

How did he die.

WOMAN

Car accident. A guy driving a semi-truck fell asleep at the wheel and...

L.S.

Oh.

WOMAN

He wasn't even driving, mom was.

I'm not able to blame him or forgive him or anything like that. He had no say in what happened. It's another.... No. I was complaining about you talking too much before. I don't need to be saying all this. We won't call Joe. Ok? Let me figure out the number to call to get this tire fixed.

WOMAN pulls her phone back out and begins looking for the U-Haul Roadside Assistance number again. She takes a few deep breaths. She tries calling the number but gets stuck in an automated menu.

WOMAN

English.
Eng-lish.
Roadside Assistance.
No.
No.
Yes.
Two.

L.S.

I drove my car into a telephone pole.

WOMAN

What?

L.S.

I drove my car into a telephone pole. That's how I died. I didn't veer away at the last second or anything. I had made a decision and I went through with it. I took my seat belt off and I drove into a telephone pole. Blunt-force trauma they say.

WOMAN slowly lowers the phone from her ear and eventually hangs up as L.S. speaks.

L.S.

I could have been more dramatic. I could have used one of the trucks to do it or I could have crashed into

a rental location. I could have taken everything down with me when I decided I'd had enough. But it wasn't about that. I was done. I was done with the arguing and backstabbing and lawsuits, the fist fights and the secretly tape-recorded conversations. I had made this cruel culture. It was all my fault. I drew all of my kids into this whether they wanted it or not. I was trying to build a strong family but at 83 I saw the damage I had done. I thought I was setting them all up for success but I forced them into a business some wanted nothing to do with. I made their lives miserable.

I am King Lear. I'm the foolish king who let his world fall into mayhem at the hands of his children.

WOMAN

A Shakespeare reference. Wow.

L.S.

It was an apology. Kind of. An atonement?

WOMAN

You don't need to explain anything to me.

L.S.

I know. It's just... "I created a monster"

WOMAN

And now we are referencing Frankenstein.

L.S.

And what am I supposed to do now? I'm here. Stuck in this truck. Everyone has moved on but I can't. I physically can't. I am tethered to this truck, to this business, and I can't pull away. All I can do is search for Anna and stew. Stew on all my choices over all those years.

WOMAN

Well I know one thing we can do.

L.S.

And what would that be?

WOMAN

We can call Joe.

WOMAN and L.S. stare at each other as if they are in a standoff. After a moment WOMAN reaches out, holding her phone to L.S. He signs, grabs it from her and attempts to start the call.

L.S.

I have no idea how to use this.

L.S. Passes the phone back to WOMAN who gets into it, finds JOE's number and dials it. She holds the phone up to her ear waiting for him to pick up.

WOMAN

It's ringing.

Oh! Hello. I.. ah.. I didn't expect this to actually work.

Yes, well, ah, my rental truck got a flat tire.

Yes, but it's much weirder than that.

Yes... well... you see... there is a ghost. In my truck.

I know! I know. It sounds crazy but... here. Let me... let me put you on speaker.

WOMAN puts the phone on speaker mode and holds it out.

WOMAN

So, yeah.

JOE

(through phone)

Hello?

L.S.

Hello?

JOE
(through phone)

Hello?

WOMAN

Hello?
Can you hear us?

JOE
(through phone)

Us?

WOMAN

Yeah, me and L.S.

JOE
(through phone)

Who?

L.S.

Hi Joe.

WOMAN

L.S. You know? Your father. He's a ghost now. He's here.

JOE
(through phone)

Are you –

WOMAN

Just give him, like, one minute. Listen. He wants to say something... I think.

L.S.

Hi Joe. I... I know you haven't heard from me in over twenty years but I want to –

JOE
(through phone)

Hello?

L.S.
Joe can you hear me? I want to say –

JOE
(through phone)

Hello?

WOMAN
Yes.

L.S.
Joe? Joe. I want to say –

JOE
(through phone)
Great. Another prank call.

L.S.
No!

WOMAN
No! Can you not hear him? Can ghosts talk on the phone?

L.S.
I don't know. I've never tried before.

WOMAN
Great. I'm sorry. This was –

JOE
(through phone)
Are you trying to say that my dead father who hated me, who hated me so much he sued me over and over and had secret recordings made and blamed me for

murders, is with you and is trying to say something to me?

WOMAN

Yes! Exactly! He is. But apparently ghosts can't talk on phones? I guess. I mean, who knew –

JOE

(through phone)

I've had a lot of messed up people call me on this number but this one...this one... you are pathetic. How dare you? I usually hang up on idiots like you prank calling me but this is just despicable. You fucking bitch. Do you know what that man did to me? Did to people? He was fucked up. Once he called all of the top employees into his office, put an *armed guard* at the door and proceeded to throw thousands of dollars out the window to teach us all some kind of fucked up lesson? There were accidents in the street, people were fighting over the money, people got hurt and we could do nothing. We were literal fucking hostages.

WOMAN

You two really have a way of telling stories about each other.

JOE

(through phone)

"Shut up. Shove it up your ass. Shove it up your goddamn ass." How dare you even think this is funny. Pretending he's alive? He fucking killed himself. He took the easy way out. You don't know what It's like –

WOMAN

Actually –

JOE

(through phone)

Fuck you.

WOMAN

Jesus, say something. Something to your dad. He's here listening.

JOE

(through phone)

“You dirty cocksucker! Fuck yourself! Fuck yourself! You got it straight? Can I help you with it? You fuck yourself! I ain't your kid!”

WOMAN quickly hangs up the phone. A moment of quiet washes over the truck.

L.S.

“I wanted to make a point...I wanted them to realize that when an executive spends money on something that only makes him feel good, he might as well be throwing it into the street.”

WOMAN

It doesn't seem like that's the point you made.

A pause erupts in the conversation where L.S. seems to be mulling over what just happened.

L.S.

Can we get the tire fixed.

WOMAN

I'll see what I can do.

WOMAN opens her phone back up and calls U-Haul Roadside Assistance number again.

WOMAN

English.

Eng-lish.

Roadside Assistance.

No.

No.

Yes.
Two.

SCENE 4

The truck is parked outside WOMAN's apartment. L.S. is lying on the floor as WOMAN struggles to get the boxes out of the truck, out of view, and into her apartment. L.S.'s refusal to help isn't out of malice or spite, he is incapable of noticing she could use a hand.

L.S.

Do you think I can get out of this? Not just out of this truck but out of this whole afterlife thing? When you die no one gives you a rule book, you have to figure it all out by yourself. You die and then find yourself back somewhere learning what it all means. I don't remember picking out these clothes or this truck or deciding on anything about what I'm doing now. It all just happened. I died and found myself here, alone. Well... I mean... I was pretty much alone before I died too. For the last ten years of my life I ran a motel in Las Vegas. Did I tell you that before? The World Trade Center Hotel out near the Convention Center. Hardly the retirement one hopes for. It wasn't bad, just not... a fitting end.

You know, this isn't how all these movies and books said being a ghost was going to be. "Casper" and "Hamlet" and "Poltergeist" and "Sleepy Hollow" and, what was it, that movie where Bruce Willis didn't know he was a ghost... it came out the year I... Well, they all set it up where being a ghost is about causing mischief or not being aware that you're dead or being mean and causing fear and moving furniture from one side of the room to the other. Making unsuspecting humans have to move out because it is all too occult for them. Or how there's all those philosophers who tried to figure out

what happens after you “pass on.” Boy would they be disappointed. Some said there is nothing after death, a void, nothingness, blackness. It’s even bleaker than that.

I originally painted these trucks black. True story. It was economical and hid dirt and soot very well. The issue was safety. I was making a turn at an intersection and – bam – an oncoming car. They couldn’t see me. I was lucky I didn’t die right then. I had worked so hard on finding ways to keep costs down and evolving the technical requirements of building a trailer it didn’t even cross my mind that people may need to see it. See me. Without an inch of artistic skill I just copied the design and colors I saw on highway barricades, bright orange and white, and slapped it onto the trucks. They suddenly became the most visible things on the road. They became huge billboards for my business and for me. Orange. Who would have thought that my legacy would be orange trucks.

Maybe we were wrong somewhere? Maybe being a ghost isn’t about sitting around and wallowing. Maybe if I work hard enough or do the right thing this will all be over. Maybe I can find a way to end this all for a second time. This pain, this longing, this constant feeling that I missed everything. Or maybe not. Probably not. I’m stuck in this truck. Stuck until I can figure something out or... well... I don’t know. I don’t know if I even want to know.

Woman has returned from her last trip shuttling boxes up to her apartment by now and has been watching L.S. as he speaks. All that is left in the truck are some packing blankets and L.S.

WOMAN

Are you finished? Good.
Let’s get you back.

SCENE 5

*The truck is now back at the U-Haul Rental place.
L.S. stands alone in the back of the truck.*

L.S.

Anna! ANNA! ANNNNNNNNAAAAAAAA!
ANNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNAAAAAAAAAAAAA!

*This last "Anna" is so powerful the truck shakes
from the supernatural force of L.S.'s voice. WOMAN
comes into view but does not enter the truck.*

WOMAN

You're going to get every Anna in the state yelling
like that.

L.S.

What if she isn't here anymore?

WOMAN

Then she isn't here. People rent trucks a lot but not
that much. I'd bet she's still around.

L.S.

But you don't know that.

WOMAN

You're right, I don't.

L.S.

We need to find her.

WOMAN

Well then go find her.

L.S.

But what if she come to this truck and I'm over at
another and we are walking around missing each

other thinking we are not here but we are on opposite sides of the same truck?

WOMAN

My first suggestion would be to calm down – I know that you should never say “calm down” to someone but really that’s the only advice I have.

L.S.

Very helpful.

WOMAN

I mean can you, like, talk to her in your head? What’s it called? Telepathy or something? Do ghosts have that power or is that some other supernatural creature I didn’t think were real until today.

L.S.

Ghosts can’t do that.

WOMAN

Then is that Witches? Vampires? Bigfoots-Bigfeet?

L.S.

I don’t know. I’ve never met any of those. And I do not appreciate you making light of the situation.

WOMAN

Sorry, sorry. It’s... Look. I know you’ve been dead for a long time and who am I to give you advice or anything but... you see, I’ve been dealing with loss a lot lately and talking to a therapist and stuff and she has given me all these little sayings and processes and stuff to help when I’m feeling overwhelmed. I try to listen even though I think she is a quack half the time and it seems like...

L.S. Is clearly not paying attention to WOMAN, he is looking out of the truck straining to see if he can catch a glimpse of ANNA anywhere.

You really don't care. Great.
Ok. Well, I have to go do the return paperwork for the truck.

L.S.

Make sure to get the receipt now. These locations sometimes try to pull one over on the customers. Corporate never would do that, at least not in my day.

WOMAN

Thanks.

WOMAN begins to leave as L.S. continues straining to see if he can find ANNA.

WOMAN

I know it's scary not knowing, but –

L.S.

Sorry, did you..?

WOMAN

It's ok. Nevermind.

L.S.

While you are getting your receipt would you look for Anna?

WOMAN

Of course. I'll be back.

WOMAN leaves and L.S. paces in the truck. He goes through a range of emotions and movements.

L.S.

She's still here. She's still here. She's still here.

L.S. takes a few steps out of the truck, just to run back worried he will miss ANNA. He climbs up the side of the doorway to try to get a better view. He decides to distract himself by folding blankets. He folds and folds but can't get it right and begins to fling the blankets around the back of the truck in anger. In frustration? He sits at the end of the truck with his feet dangling off the edge feeling defeated when a PERSON walks by...

Anna!

It isn't her.

Sorry.

L.S. begins to pace again. He begins mumbling.

Please... Please.

His mumbling gets fainter as he is convincing himself less and less that these things could be true. L.S. gets more and more despondent as he slowly pieces together that ANNA likely isn't here anymore. WOMAN returns, U-Haul receipt in hand.

WOMAN

Got my receipt!

L.S.

You promised she would still be here.

WOMAN

How do you know she isn't?

L.S.

She isn't.

WOMAN

Maybe she's out of ear shot or sleeping. Do ghosts sleep?

L.S.

No.

WOMAN

Well I'm sorry. It just seems a little unbelievable that she –

L.S.

She's gone. And now I'll have to wait years too see her again.

WOMAN

I mean if the whole ghost thing works the way you say doesn't that at least give you something to look forward to? Something beyond sitting here.

L.S.

You wouldn't be able to understand.

WOMAN

I'm trying to help.

L.S.

Well you are not. You couldn't possibly understand the loss I am feeling.

WOMAN

Yes. I do. I told you. My parents –

L.S.

Oh your parents don't count.

It is as if L.S. punched WOMAN in the stomach. There is a moment where WOMAN gets her breath back before she talks again.

WOMAN

I'm done.

WOMAN begins to walk away.

L.S.

Now wait –

WOMAN

How dare you. I'm going through shit and I have tried to help you over and over. I don't know why.

L.S.

I didn't mean it like –

WOMAN

My parents count. Ok? They will always count no matter what assholes like you say. You know, fuck you. You hated just about everyone in your life and it is now pretty obvious to me why they hated you right back. I'm an idiot for even thinking I could help you, a washed up nobody that couldn't even pretend to hold his family together. I tried. Ok? I was in that hospital. I saw the tubes coming out of my mom. The stitches straining to hold her body together. The wires and buttons and beeps and accordions pressing air into her because she couldn't breath for herself anymore. That counts. This counts. How dare you say it doesn't.

L.S.

I'm sorry –

WOMAN

You never even asked me who she was. You keep on talking about how much you hate Joe. Like, come on. Get over it. There are other people in this world. Other problems that are as big as yours or even worse. You...do you even know my name? have you even asked me who I am? What is my name? tell me. Who am I?

L.S.

Well, that's unfair.

WOMAN

You are L.S. Shoen. You had 5 wives, one of which you married twice and two were named Suzanne. You had thirteen kids. You founded U-Haul. You owned a motel. I could write a Wikipedia page about you based of what I know just from your non-stop talking. Do you know what I do for a job? Do I have a husband? A wife? Kids? What is my name? Hu? What is my name? What. Is. My. Name.

L.S.

...Kristina?

WOMAN

I've been through a lot these past few months and I saw a guy that was going through some of the same shit and thought maybe I could help him because I've been doing what I am supposed to be doing. I'm talking to a therapist. I've been trying to unpack what happened. I write in a journal and try to exercise and try to find ways to cope with their death. I thought maybe I could pass some of this to you but obviously you don't want it. Obviously.

Goodbye L.S. If there is a way out of this truck, I wish you luck, but you obviously do not have the skills to figure it out on your own.

WOMAN turns to leave and almost runs right into ST. PETER who has just turned the corner. ST. PETER looks like what you imagine a census taker to look like, ball cap, messenger bag, clipboard filled with slightly askew papers. Maybe a slight sunburn. ST. PETER is played by the same performer as ANNA but neither L.S. nor WOMAN seem to notice.

ST. PETER

Hi. Excuse me. Sorry. Is one of you...

ST. PETER looks down at his clipboard and maybe has to rifle through a few pages. He climbs into the truck at some point over the following exchange.

ST. PETER

L.S. Shoen?

WOMAN

And who are you?

ST. PETER

Me? I'm Saint Peter.

WOMAN

You're St. Peter?

ST. PETER

Yes. I'm Saint Peter.

WOMAN

Of course.

L.S.

But you are a wom –

ST. PETER

I'm Saint Peter.

L.S.

Huh. Ok.

WOMAN

Well I was leaving. That's L.S. Good luck with him.

L.S.

Don't go yet.

ST. PETER

I'm here for L.S.'s 10-year ghost review.

L.S.

10-year? I died in 1999...

ST. PETER

Yeah, I know. We are running a bit behind. The other saints aren't pulling their weight.

WOMAN

I don't need to be here for this.

ST. PETER

I just met with... Anna... was it? In that other truck? Wonderful lady. Passed her review with flying colors.

L.S.

Anna's still here!?

WOMAN

I told you. Jesus.

ST. PETER

No, I'm Saint Peter.

WOMAN

I'm so sorry...

ST. PETER

Anna was –

L.S.

Was?

WOMAN

So she's not here?

ST. PETER

No. No. She's... wait... do you know what your 10-year review is?

L.S.

I can't say I do.

ST. PETER

Didn't you read your handbook?

L.S.

My handbook?

ST. PETER

Yes. Your handbook. The handbook you got when you died.

WOMAN

You had a handbook this whole time? You said you didn't –

L.S.

I didn't get a handbook.

ST. PETER

You didn't get a handbook.

L.S.

Not that I recall.

ST. PETER

Well why didn't you let someone know? There is a lot of very important information in that book. You need it.

L.S.

How was I supposed to let someone know I didn't have a handbook?

ST. PETER

Oh come on, it's so easy! You just had to get in-touch with ex-human resources. As I tell everyone, their email address is on the third page of –

Oooooooooohhhhhhhhh

You didn't have a *handbook*.

Sorry about that.

Well.

Let's go through the questions shall we?

WOMAN

I'm going to leave.

ST. PETER

Oh no. Stay. Stay. This won't take long.

WOMAN

I feel like I'm seeing something I'm not supposed to and I'm really done talking to L.S. I should probably –

ST. PETER

It's fine. Really. Plenty of living people have seen this and only a handful have gone into a coma because of what they heard. I'm sure you will be fine.

WOMAN

Excuse me?

ST. PETER

Now, L.S. what have you been doing these past ten years?

WOMAN

I don't want to go into a coma...

Woman begins to leave but is unable to.

ST. PETER

You'll be fine. Stay.

L.S.?

L.S.

I've... well... I've been... here...

ST. PETER

Yesyes, but what have you been *doing*?

L.S.

I... uh... I've been... ah...

ST. PETER

Yes?

L.S.

Telling my story?

ST. PETER

Is that all?

L.S.

And... helping people?

ST. PETER

Good start.

Oh.

Wait a second.

This is form 3-B.

ST. PETER begins riffling through his forms to correct his mistake. L.S. mouths "Help me" to WOMAN who puts her hands up in disbelief. L.S. continues silently pleading with WOMAN who eventually rolls her eyes and begins.

WOMAN

So, ah, Saint Peter was it?

ST. PETER

That's me.

WOMAN

Pearly gates and all that?

ST. PETER

Something to that effect.

WOMAN

So, if you're here...then... Christianity....?

ST. PETER

Well...no? It's all very complicated and above my paygrade to explain. I need to find the other –
Ah.

Here it is.

Form 3-C.

Back to you L.S. back to the questions. Now we will start easy. How many amends did you make?

WOMAN moths "Sorry" to L.S.

L.S.

I was supposed to be making amends?

ST. PETER

Yes, page two –

Oh. Right. No handbook.

We'll try something else.

L.S.

I was supposed to be doing something this whole time?

ST. PETER

How was your haunting quotient?

L.S.

My what.

ST. PETER

Your wall-walk-through sum then?

L.S.

I have no idea what that is.

ST. PETER

Did you even take ghost meet-up minutes?

L.S.

No...

ST. PETER

Don't say you didn't keep track of your spirit points?

L.S.



ST. PETER

You were at least writing in your ghost journal... right?

L.S.

I had no idea –

ST. PETER

No handbook. Right. Well... honestly L.S. I really don't know what to do with you. You didn't follow any of the protocol.

L.S.

That's not my fault. How is that my fault?

WOMAN

This is –

ST. PETER

Look, L.S. we are going to have to start over with you. You didn't do anything wrong, and I want to stress that, the first line of the handbook even says "no matter how you got here, we welcome you." Since you didn't get a handbook I'll say it. Welcome

to the postlife. This is all about your work after you joined the caucus of spirits, we don't touch on the before.

ST. PETER begins riffling through his messenger bag.

L.S.

But, what am I supposed to do now? And where is Anna?

ST. PETER

I can't be telling you everything now. You have to do this yourself. Pull yourself up. Bootstraps and all that. Look, I thought I had an extra copy of the handbook but It doesn't seem I do.

L.S.

So how am I supposed to know what I should be doing?

ST. PETER

I don't know what to tell you L.S.

WOMAN

This doesn't seem fair at all.

ST. PETER

Now you should remember all this for when you die.

WOMAN

That I need a handbook.

ST. PETER

They you should pay attention.

ST. PETER puts his clipboard in his bag and makes to leave the truck.

L.S.

Where are you going?

ST. PETER

We are done. I can't help you. You didn't fail the test per se, but you didn't give me anything to work with.

L.S.

And where does that leave me?

ST. PETER

Here, I guess.

ST. PETER hops out of the truck and begins walking away.

L.S.

(yelling to St. Peter)

But what am I supposed to do now?

ST. PETER

Read your handbook.

L.S.

I still don't *have* a handbook

ST. PETER

I'm sorry but I can't help you with that.

L.S.

Who is supposed to help me with that?

ST. PETER

I don't know. You'll have to figure that out.

L.S.

Why can't you help me?

ST. PETER

That's not my job.

ST. PETER has walked out of view.

L.S.

Wait. Help. Help me. Please!

ST. PETER

See you in ten years.

L.S.

And where's Anna!?

L.S. and WOMAN stand gob-smacked in the back of the truck. There are almost no words to describe what just happened and they are struggling to piece together a coherent timeline in their heads.

WOMAN

Was that... was that... real?

L.S.

I have no idea.

WOMAN

You asked me before is there was a reason I picked this truck and... was that it? So I know about the handbook?

L.S.

I'm still not convinced there is a handbook.

WOMAN

Was that Fate?

L.S.

No, it was St. Peter. Didn't you listen?

WOMAN

Oh shut up.

*WOMAN starts towards the back of the truck,
attempting to leave once again.*

L.S.

You can't leave too.

WOMAN

I have to.

L.S.

Where's Anna?

WOMAN

I have no idea.

L.S.

Where are you going?

WOMAN

This has been... I'm heading home. Where all those new things are I bought. I still have to build them. Stuff from Ikea has to be assembled. It's a lot of work using those little wrenches and shit.

L.S.

Take me with you.

WOMAN

I can't. You are stuck here. You've told me tons of times. You should probably be trying to find that handbook.

L.S.

I was never given one –

WOMAN

Sure. Fine. I believe you.

L.S.

But you could... you know... drive the truck to your house... or something? Let me just sit outside?

WOMAN

I'm not going to –

L.S.

Oh come on.

WOMAN

No. I'm not stealing a truck so that a ghost that doesn't know my name can sit and stare at me.

L.S.

I wouldn't –

WOMAN

I'm leaving. Goodbye L.S. you'll figure something out. Drive this truck somewhere yourself.

L.S.' eyes widen in realization

L.S.

I never...

WOMAN

You never what?

L.S.

I never even thought...

WOMAN

Are you serious?

L.S.

No... I –

WOMAN

How many years have you been here and you never tried driving it yourself?

L.S.

It's complicated! I was depressed.

WOMAN

Can ghosts drive?

L.S.

I mean...

WOMAN

If you can carry boxes you can probably drive.

L.S.

I... I guess...I've never even thought about this....

WOMAN

Jesus.

Ah. Gee wiz?

Whatever.

WOMAN, with an eye roll and a look of "fine, ill help you one last time" hops out of the truck and starts walking away.

L.S.

Wait! Where are you going?

WOMAN

To get the keys again genius.

L.S.

How will you –

WOMAN

I'll say I forgot something... or something. Be right back.

WOMAN walks away leaving L.S. alone once more.

L.S.

If I...

If I can drive...

Do I remember how to drive?

If I drive away from here. In my truck. What will I...

Where will I...

Will Anna be...

The world is so big again suddenly.

I'm sorry

I'm sorry Anna Mary

I'm sorry Suzanne

and Suzanne

and Janet

and Carol

and Mike

and Edward Joseph

Mark

Mary

Paul

James

Sophia

Cecilia

Theresa

Katrina

Scott

And Shana

WOMAN comes back bearing the keys to the truck.

She throws the keys to L.S.

WOMAN

Ok here. Now, I'm out of here.

L.S.

I don't know what to do.

WOMAN

You go to the cab, start the truck, and drive away.

L.S.

But where do I go?

WOMAN

That's not my problem. That's all you.

L.S.

(directly to woman)

I... I'm sorry. I know it doesn't mean much but..

WOMAN

It's fine.

L.S.

Things are complicated in life and it doesn't get any easier after. I was an observant person, now I'm just a lonely ghost.

WOMAN

I'm not here to judge you. It's all ok. Good bye.

L.S.

It's just... I haven't made a choice like this in years... decades. Please. Help me one last time. Where do I go?

WOMAN

I mean...ugh... well, where were you happiest? That's where I would go, the place that makes me feel the best.

L.S.

(immediately, with almost no thought)

The Milk House.

WOMAN

The what?

L.S.

The Milk House. Its where... its where Anna and I started building the business. It was a building on her

parents ranch... well.. it still is. The ranch is now part of a wildlife refuge but the building still stands. It was one of the few things Joe did that was good. When the land was given to the refuge Joe worked with Mark to have the house moved brick by brick to a nearby hilltop. Its empty but he wanted to save it.

WOMAN

Perfect.

L.S.

It was never mine, but the whole family cared for it.

WOMAN

But it was yours. It was your home, right?

L.S.

Yes. Yes it was.

WOMAN

Then it sounds perfect. You remember how to turn on a truck?

L.S.

I think so.

WOMAN

Great. Then what are you waiting for?

L.S.

I don't know. A sign.

WOMAN rolls her eyes yet again, reaches over and takes the keys from L.S.'s hand. She shakes them making a jangling sound.

WOMAN

Every time a bell rings an angel gets his wings.

L.S.

What?

WOMAN

Oh come on. I know Jimmy Stewart wasn't technically a ghost in that movie but it's the best I have right now.

L.S.

Ah. Ok.

WOMAN hands the keys back to L.S. and begins herding him out of the back of the truck.

WOMAN

Now you have everything. The keys, a mostly full tank of gas, and the will to find something better. Get out of here L.S. Goodbye.

WOMAN begins walking away.

L.S.

Wait! Wait. One last thing.
What is your name?

WOMAN smiles, says nothing, and exits leaving L.S. alone with keys in hand. He holds them tightly and runs through everything that happened in his head. His uncertainty about the future melts away and he seems to grow a few inches taller as he realizes the adventure and the home that awaits him. L.S. turns, steps out of the truck, and reaches up to grab a hold of the overhead door.

L.S.

Milk House. Here I come.

L.S. reaches up and closes the overhead door.

The End.

Cavernous

A monologue by Dan Daly

It was dark. I squeezed through the cracks and crevasses of the tunnel ducking under boulders and forcing my way around sharp turns. It was messy. I was unrecognizable because of the thick mud caking onto my skin. It was dangerous. Sharp stones cut and rough patches scoured my skin leaving me bruised and bloodied. I was exhausted. I had no guide, no light, no compass, no way of knowing where I was going or what I would find. I kept going. It took years, or what felt like years, to feel my way through the unexplored passages constantly retracing my steps. Slowly, agonizingly, delicately, I started to piece the dizzying maze together and began to understand where I was.

Growing up I wanted to be a geologist. I know, not the most common “what do you want to be when you grow up” answer for a kid, especially one that moved a lot (even if it was all in the same state). Most kids my age wanted to be doctors or marine biologists or football players or singers, you know, but I had a rock collection, I had books on volcanoes and earthquakes, and I couldn’t learn enough about how tectonic plates worked. In the middle of the state was my favorite place to go; The Caves. They were a left-over heap of boulders, sand, and sheer rock cliffs created fifteen-thousand years ago when the glaciers retreated. I gave up on studying rocks and minerals by the end of high school but kept going to the caves on particularly hot days or when I was having a rough time. The echo of my own voice bouncing around those granite walls was my closest confidant and best friend.

After trudging through all that muck and slime and being battered by the unforgiving surfaces of the earthen walls, the passage suddenly opened up. The stale air was pulled from my lungs and my labored breathing suddenly calmed. There was a freshness, a newness to where I was, but there was absolutely no way to know what I had discovered. I stopped. I took a deep breath. I reached out into the darkness and it started to give way. Shapes began to emerge and colors started to appear. The space slowly became illuminated, from where I don't know, until I could see everything. A shimmering, gleaming, colorful world filled with brilliant crystals and crystal-clear streams. I explored. I rejoiced. I found where I was meant to be. I settled in and stayed. I was there for a very long time.

For a few years of my life I lived in the woods. Not like "in a hut miles away from civilization" woods, but more like "oh hey, there are deer looking in my window and I need a car to go get groceries" woods. It was nice, quiet, but it was next to impossible to meet people. It was the kind of place you go to retire, not the place you go to after college. As the months went by and the quiet and stillness started to overtake me I began playing a video game; one of those giant MMOs. I fell into the expansive world. I slayed dragons and built up my character. I found gold and traded it for supplies. I made friends, well, I made people-from-halfway-around-the-world-that-I-have-never-seen-what-they-actually-look-like-but-go-fight-trolls-with-online friends. I read books. I went on hikes. I tried to do small things to keep active. I was lonely, but I just wouldn't admit it.

I spent ages in that cave exploring, frolicking, basking in the splendor I found myself in. I convinced myself I was enjoying it, enjoying the colors and the radical shapes, but something wasn't right. The crystalline cavern was beautiful but the structures were

hollow, there was no substance behind them. While it was nice, it just didn't sit right. This cave, no matter how wonderful, just wasn't the place for me. I started digging. Right in the middle of the cave. My bare hands were mangled by the effort. I ripped crystals from their mounts and shoveled handfuls of glittering soil over my shoulder in the hopes of getting somewhere. I fought my way through layers of dirt, geologic epochs, all in different colors and textures. Some were soft and easy, some were terrifying and painful, but I kept fighting my way down. I clawed at the earth until the soil began to give way. I fell. I tumbled. Into a black abyss I went, flipping and spinning just trying to find my balance.

I went west. Los Angeles isn't as fun as it sounds. It was the first true city I ever lived in. I waded my way through museums and beaches. I went to concerts and bars. I tried to make the most of the sun and I had a small house that I called my own. I found myself at a party and that's where it happened. We met. It wasn't love at first sight or anything, but there was an emptiness inside both of us that the city wasn't filling. We were both there, alone, and happened to be standing by the same bowl of chips.

"Hi."

"Hey."

"This party..."

"Sucks."

"Wanna..."

"Tacos?"

I landed not with a thud, but with a gentle settling. This space was quieter, calmer, and covered in a thick mat of moss. It wasn't perfect, what is, but it was a nice place to rest. I breathed in, found a comfortable spot, and slowly closed my eyes.



