

A Female Variety of Suffering

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CHARACTERS

ORNAH: 20s-30s, female, Jewish, can be a woman of color or white

CAL: 30s, male, white gentile

TIME

The present

SCENE

Apartment living room, a sofa and low table with a TV assumed, not actually seen, either not heard or a low, garbled sound. Simple lighting suggests an apartment in evening; jazz sometimes plays; buzzer sounds once. Props are a pizza box and beer cans or bottles, TV remote.

RUNNING TIME

Approximately 25-30 minutes

SYNOPSIS

Ornah and Cal are sharing an easy camaraderie in the trenches of early parenthood when a television report on a rape that took place ten years before in the basement of a college dorm intrudes into their evening. Their conversation and interactions until just before their very last exchange of dialogue, sometimes directed to the audience, are played with a vaudevillian comedic energy that belies the serious nature of what is happening between them, fueled by a manic level of exhaustion and a growing unease about how well they know each other. They are highly physical, with outsized gestures, affectionate, with a sexual push and pull and sexual and at times a tension that expresses a dangerous edge between them.

Originally Developed and Produced by the New Perspectives Theatre Company's Women's Work Project, NYC, directed by Melody Brooks, August 2024, and included in a festival of readings at Steeple Playhouse, New Bedford, MA, July, 2025. A monologue will appear in the Best Men's Stage Monologues, 2025, Smith & Kraus.

Bix Beiderbecke song such as In a Mist plays softly
ORNAH collapsed on sofa, CAL enters upstage right with a flourish

ORNAH
sits up quickly

He's asleep?

CAL

Yeah. Jesus.

ORNAH

That was unnerving, wasn't it?

CAL

Unnerving? I've never seen anything like it, it was, it was like *magma*, just pouring out of him.

ORNAH

Lava.

CAL

Huh?

ORNAH

Lava. Magma when it's inside, under the earth's surface. Lava when it exits.

CAL

It's exiting alright. (*she laughs*) It can't be normal, this once a week outpouring.

ORNAH

I know. It is, though. We were warned.

CAL

Who warned us? I wasn't warned.

ORNAH

I read about it when I was pregnant. In the same chapter as projectile vomiting. Anyway, you wouldn't not have a child just because he might poop writ large. Right? (*he appears to consider, she laughs*) I asked the doctor when it happened last week. Sometimes breastfed babies skip for days. And then - (*rolling hand gesture*)

CAL

Yeah. In the end I had to hold his lower half under the shower. (*she begins to protest, he holds up hands*) He didn't mind, he enjoyed it. He did that thing where he sort of hyperventilates and flaps his hands.

ORNAH

Oh, I *love* that. He does that whenever he's excited.

both mimic baby's breathiness, hand flapping, laugh

CAL *sits*

I know, right? It's the best. He's so cute I can't stand it. (*moves to turn up sound on smart speaker or whatever*) Ah, Bix.

ORNAH

Don't turn it up! We don't want want Bix Beiderbecke waking up his little namesake.

CAL *groans*

True. (*turns off music*)

ORNAH

He's the greatest, isn't he? I mean our baby Bix?

CAL

Yup. Objectively. (*ORNAH laughs*) Even with the weekly eruption. When do they stop doing this?

ORNAH

Isn't it funny that we say they when we talk about babies? As if babies were some other species. Babies are small humans. We were all babies. Why don't we say we? It's as if we're distancing ourselves from our former babyhood.

CAL

I'm definitely distancing myself from ever having pooped like that. (*she laughs; he groans, slumps forward*) When will I get to *sleep* again?

ORNAH

When will I stop being a pair of breasts? Even at the office, I squeeze bursts of work between squeezing myself for milk.

CAL

sits up, mock alarm

If I didn't have your supply to give him when you're at work he'd kill me. *(they laugh)* We appreciate your, your - fleshification.

ORNAH

Synecdoche. The part becomes the whole.

CAL

I can't match your vocabulary, but I acknowledge the female variety of suffering.

ORNAH *laughs*

The what?

CAL

You know. Female. The body. Women, you're like, embodied. Ripe for suffering. Solid. Present. Low hanging fruit. You're like Henry Moore sculptures.

ORNAH

Henry Moore sculptures are like women. Women came first. Then the sculptures.

CAL

puts arm around her; nuzzles, kisses her; she neither rejects nor responds to him
Okay. Anyway, The Body. *The Body*. It's, it's female.

ORNAH

Well this body sure is. *(looks down at self)* I've become a body. You have a body. I am one. *(they laugh)* I'm starving. *(wistful)* Remember those beautiful pastas you made me when we were first together? We did nothing but have sex and eat in those days. We never got out of bed.

CAL

I got out of bed. To make the pasta and bring it back to bed so we could eat.

ORNAH

That's true. You'd get out of bed and return with huge bowls of your sublime creations. I fell in love with those bowls of pasta.

CAL

I thought you fell in love with me.

ORNAH

Oops. *(they laugh)*

CAL

And now we don't have sex and I'm trying to make it to the kitchen to find my phone and order pizza. I know I should be cooking for you but I can't stand up long enough to boil water.

ORNAH

Don't worry. You will. Besides, you bring stuff home from the restaurant. You can't cook your nights off too. (*reaches a hand to him*) This is temporary. Not having sex, being so tired, ordering pizza. Just think, someday you'll make pasta for Bix.

CAL

Not if he keeps pooping like this I won't. (*calls over shoulder*) You hear that, Bix? Incentive to learn bowel control!

ORNAH

gets up, checks on baby

Cal! Ssh! You'll wake him. (*laughs*) Your pastas made me think you'd be a good baby daddy.

CAL

You hoped my baby would turn out as well my tagliatelle?

ORNAH *laughs*

You're sensual, tactile, so, I don't know, so *hands on*. And this baby business is all about those things. I thought you'd be good at it.

CAL *beat*

How did you know you'd be good? (*stare at each other a beat*) Did you even think about it?

ORNAH *shrugs*

I must have.

CAL

I take that for a no. You wondered whether to take a chance on me, but trusted yourself without thinking twice.

ORNAH *laughs*

Who knows what I thought back then? Neither of us knew how breathtakingly perfect he would be. (*excited*) You know what? (*picks up remote, points it at TV*) Let's watch the news and remember there's a whole world outside our baby's diaper!

CAL

Even if it looks like the contents therein. (*puts head back, closes eyes, beat, lifts head, looks at screen*) This is news? How does an old woman tripping in Williamsburg constitute news?

ORNAH

They're doing a report on the dangers of broken sidewalks for older New Yorkers.

CAL

Old Jewish women. Jews in Williamsburg have so much clout, why don't they get their streets fixed?

ORNAH

Anti-Semitic, misogynist, ageist - I hate to state the obvious -

CAL

Then don't. (*points*) Look at that guy, is that topiary on his head?

ORNAH

WASPs love topiary, don't they?

CAL

In our gardens, not on our heads.

ORNAH *laughs*

You know I happen to be a Jewish woman, and if I live long enough I'll be stumbling into cracks -

CAL

That's stating the obvious. It's okay to hate Jews now, haven't you heard? Even Jews hate Jews, and a lot of women hate women. As for the age-*d*, I don't let them in the restaurant. They fall. They get sick. They die on you.

ORNAH *laughs*

You can't keep them out.

CAL

You screen for them. When they call for reservations (*voice shakes, hand shakes as if holding phone with tremor*) you hear that quaky, croaky, about to drop dead this second voice - you're full up that night. You're full up every night.

ORNAH *laughs*

Monstrous. I shouldn't be laughing. Even if you owned the restaurant you couldn't limit the age of diners -

CAL

Nice. Great. I don't own the restaurant. (*throws up hands, paces*) I'm 32 years old and I'm a hack chef in someone else's kitchen. A loser. Thanks a lot.

ORNAH

Of course you're not a loser. I'm saying I know you aren't ageist, racist, misogynist -

CAL

I am. It's normal. There are societies where girls are, are cast out at birth. Where old people are cast out when they reach a given age.

ORNAH

rises, laughs

This is what happens when you're beyond yourself. So underslept you say things you don't think.

CAL

Or things you think all the time.

ORNAH

You're joking right?

CAL

comes face to face with her

What do you think? Am I joking?

ORNAH

You tell me.

CAL

No, you tell me.

ORNAH *hesitant*

No, you tell me.

stare at each other

CAL

Yes. I'm joking. (*kisses her*) Had you going there, didn't I?

ORNAH

lightly punches him

But Cal, listen. I'm laughing, but you have a Jewish son now. (*parodies aged voice*) A son with a future old decrepit Jewish mother.

CAL

I want Bix to have a sense of humor. (*parodies old time comedian's voice*) You're not going to tell me Jews and humor don't go together. Besides, you smear WASPs. Do I take offense?

ORNAH

No, but - Okay, okay. Point taken. (*mock dramatic*) I've made my last WASP joke. (*beat, comedic*) I can't believe half my child's DNA is WASP.

CAL *laughs*

I think that was another WASP smear. Now - I'd better order pizza before I get too old to walk. (*exits upstage left*)

ORNAH sits, points remote, leans toward screen frowning; CAL enters, collapses on sofa

CAL

What are you watching now?

ORNAH

It's that viral show, *Hotline*, they cover hot button issues.

CAL

And what button is *Hotline* pushing this week?

ORNAH

College dorm rape.

CAL

Hah! Great. (*stands*) A little light viewing to round out the day. Wine or beer? (*exits upstage left*)

ORNAH *calls out*

Cal, what college did you go to again?

CAL

What's that? (*enters carrying two beers*)

ORNAH

Your college, remind me where you went.

CAL

Seriously? You don't know where I went to college? I know where you went. Of course, I didn't go to a school everyone has heard of.

ORNAH *laughs*

I know it was a small school in Vermont, now defunct. I guess there aren't too many of those.

CAL

You'd be surprised. Defunct colleges are a dime a dozen in New England. (*sits close to her*)

ORNAH

The woman they're interviewing went there. (*gestures*) That's where this happened to her.

CAL *looks at screen*

Ha! Whadayah - (*jokey*) the old alma mater. (*laughs*)

ORNAH

What, really? That's too funny. Amazing coincidence. You graduated what, ten years ago? She was probably in your class.

CAL *squinting*

What's with her face?

ORNAH

They're blurring it. They're also not using her name. She lived in that dorm. (*points*) You recognize it? You remember if your dorm had a basement hangout?

CAL *shrugs*

I'm lucky I recognize our building now.

ORNAH *laughs*

She was hanging with a guy one night in the basement rec room of that dorm and the next thing she knew he was on top of her.

CAL *turns away*

I'm not watching this. You're watching this. I'm not. (*he puts beer down before her, walks back around behind sofa, drinking from his*)

ORNAH

Thanks. (*lifts beer, replaces it on table, quickly turns to him*) Did you tell them to leave it outside the door? And specify not to use the buzzer? When you ordered?

CAL

I did.

ORNAH

They always use the buzzer.

CAL

They do.

ORNAH *sighs*

They'll wake him.

CAL *sits*

They will.

ORNAH

You'd think living in the basement apartment we'd heard their footsteps coming but we never do. (*looks up as though at a window near ceiling*) Can you keep checking your phone? Then you'll know when they're getting near and you can run up and stop them buzzing.

CAL

Okay.

ORNAH

Where's your phone?

CAL *feels pocket*

Must have left it in the kitchen. I'll get it.

ORNAH

I just don't want him to wake up!

CAL

I said okay. (*exits, returns with phone, puts it down, doesn't look at it again*) Can we watch something more fun?

ORNAH

You're not interested? I mean, it's your school.

CAL

I guess I'm not as entertained by this topic as you are.

ORNAH *laughs*

I'm not entertained.

CAL

I was at the restaurant until three a.m., then I spent the day with Bix. Excuse me if I don't find date rape as appealing a way to unwind on my night off as you do.

ORNAH

They weren't on a date. She lived down the hall from him, they were hanging out. (*leans forward, watches intently*) I was at work all day and I'm interested. She's not familiar?

CAL

stands, walks around

She is not.

ORNAH

What was the culture at your school?

CAL

The culture.

this exchange snippy, irritated with each other

ORNAH

Rape culture.

CAL

Rape is a culture. (*laughs, speaks louder, over her attempt to speak*) Rape is like painting, music? No, nuh uh. Rape is not culture.

ORNAH

No, it means, it's a way of talking about -

CAL

I know what it means. It's a stupid way of talking about nothing.

ORNAH

I had no idea you were sensitive about your school.

CAL

You didn't even know where I went.

ORNAH

I just forgot. (*beat; both burst out laughing, she goes on in conciliatory tone*) But there's nothing to get uptight about, this happens everywhere.

CAL

And everywhere men are blamed. Men get uptight when this subject comes up because we're all going to be blamed for something we didn't do.

ORNAH *laughs*

Poor men. Anyway, something most of you didn't do. I mean, someone did it. Every time a woman is raped, someone's a rapist. Unless it's a gang -

CAL

Oh, Jesus. Please. *(both laugh)* I'm just saying tension is a normal response to this subject, Ornah. *(flops onto sofa)* If this happened so long ago, why talk about it now?

ORNAH

It's traumatic. Not something you just get over.

CAL

Why didn't she report it when it happened?

ORNAH

I didn't say she didn't report it, but true, she didn't. For all the usual reasons women don't report, plus her assailant being white and she being a woman of color, she felt they'd be even more inclined to take his word over hers.

CAL

She sounds like a New York Jew. I definitely didn't know her, I didn't know any New York Jews until I came here after college.

ORNAH

What? (laughs) How does a New York Jew sound?

CAL

Like you. She sounds like you. Kinda.

ORNAH

She doesn't sound anything like me!

CAL

Also they're not blurring her whole face, just her nose. Must be her most identifiable feature.

ORNAH *laughs*

Oh my - Cal, this isn't even funny.

CAL

stands, moves, gestures, ironic/humorous

I don't know. I don't see what people are getting out of this, being so *noisy* about it.

ORNAH

Noisy?

CAL

Can we maybe take a more nuanced approach?

ORNAH *humorously*

To rape? Ummm...

CAL

Two people have sex and then - (*shakes head, laughs*) We're not talking about a creep hiding behind the bushes while some unsuspecting girl walks home. (*mimes crouching, jumping out at her, she jumps*) Boo! There's noooo violence here. It's sex. This dorm stuff: sex! People get drunk and have sex and then cry rape. It happens every day now.

ORNAH

I didn't say they were drunk.

CAL

Well, were they?

ORNAH

Yes.

CAL

Exactly. College kids are always drunk. They spend four years drunk. They got drunk, they had sex. They had sex in a basement! We live in a basement apartment. You've had drunk sex with me. Was that rape? We were both drunk. Did you rape me?

both laugh, she turns back to screen

ORNAH

I wasn't drunk for four years.

CAL

I was.

ORNAH *watching*

It's wild to think how many people might watch this and relive something. Maybe the guy thinks he's left it behind. Do you think there are men remembering doing something like this? Realizing it'll always be there?

CAL

Whoa. Heavy. Philosophical.

ORNAH

Imagine women who are with men who have something in their pasts -

CAL moves around, drinks

That's *gone*, Ornah. (*beat*) Is every college boy who has sex a rapist?

ORNAH

No. Of course, sex with a drunk girl is not consensual -

CAL

It's consensual when a drunk guy and a drunk girl choose to have sex. The girl doesn't get to change it later. (*points finger*) No, no, no!

ORNAH *laughs*

I think you're not getting it.

CAL laughs

You're not getting it.

ORNAH

No, you're not getting it. (*laughs, beat*) I know virtually nothing about your college days. We skipped over that part.

CAL

The part where the guy reminisces about the time he raped someone in college? (*both laugh, she tosses pillow*) You know every guy isn't a potential offender, right?

ORNAH

Of course -

CAL

Because, I mean, where would that leave Bix?

ORNAH

What about Bix?

CAL

He's a boy.

ORNAH

I've noticed.

CAL

He's a baby dude. A dudelet. A future guy. Where would it leave him if his own mother was waiting for him to become a predator? I mean, is he a danger to little girls? If he hits on the babe in the stroller next to him at the park, does that make him a pedophile?

stare at each other a beat, both burst out laughing; buzzer sounds; ORNAH gasps, jumps to her feet, CAL throws himself on sofa, they gape at each other

ORNAH

Oh no. Now he's awake.

CAL

I'll go. *(making no attempt to rise)*

ORNAH

No, I will. He'll want my body. You can get the pizza. *(exits upstage right; CAL turns off TV, turns on jazz; long beat; she enters)*

CAL

That was fast. He's asleep?

ORNAH

Yes, he's fine. *(sits, looks around)* Where's dinner?

CAL

I'll go up and get it in a minute.

ORNAH

The pizza is getting cold up there. *(stands)* Okay, I'll go.

CAL

grabs her, pulls her down to sofa

I'm going! One minute!

ORNAH *beat*

A raccoon will eat it.

CAL

There are no raccoons.

ORNAH

Really? Raccoons don't exist?

CAL

Not in New York. No urban raccoons. It's a myth. The Myth of the Urban Raccoon. (*she laughs*)
Like all New York myths, probably Jewish in origin. Have you ever even seen a raccoon?

ORNAH

Have you?

CAL

Plenty.

ORNAH

WASPs have a thing about wildlife.

CAL

We do. We kill and eat animals and mount their heads. You should've seen all the raccoon heads
I looked at growing up.

ORNAH

Oh yuck. Thank you for planting that image in my mind.

they laugh

CAL

I want another beer. I'll get the pizza. (*he rises, exits upstage left, she turns off jazz, turns on TV,
he returns with another bottle, stands beside sofa, ORNAH stares at screen*)

ORNAH

Where's the pizza?

CAL

I'm going! (*slams beer on table, exits; beat; enters*)

ORNAH

You didn't get it?

CAL

I got it. It, um. It had bite marks in it. I disturbed it. The raccoon. You knowing, running away.
With a slice in its mouth.

ORNAH

A raccoon took the trouble to separate slices?

CAL

Well-mannered. But look, only the box has bite marks. The pizza's fine. What's left of it. I'm warming it. (*looks at screen*) You're still watching this.

ORNAH

turns back to screen

She's describing the guy. (*laughs*) Actually, this is funny. He reminds me of you. Her description of him, it's almost a little like you.

CAL *laughs*

I'm honored. A would-be rapist sounds like me. What did I say? Some girl cries rape and every guy in the room is guilty.

ORNAH

She didn't cry rape. She was raped.

CAL *sits*

A guy who has sex with a girl is not de facto guilty. Any girl at your college accuse someone?

ORNAH

Sure. A girl I knew was raped while I was there.

CAL

Were people suspicious of you? Because you happened to be there?

ORNAH *laughs*

How does the six foot frat boy hockey dude who raped my classmate point to me?

CAL

How does this guy point to me? (*sits, nods to TV*)

ORNAH

rises, walks around

He doesn't. Obviously it's *not* you. I'm not saying it *is* you, but. A sweet, sort of nerdy guy, she felt safe with him. Not a lot of experience with girls, bad kisser -

CAL

Thanks a lot.

ORNAH

laughs, realizes what she's said

Oh, no. You're great now, I just, I can imagine - No, she saw here big white teeth coming at her -

CAL

A lot's coming out tonight, isn't it?

ORNAH

No, come on.

CAL

So I'm a bad kisser.

ORNAH

Look, please let's - (*laughing helplessly*) I'm sorry. I'm exhausted, I'm practically hallucinating, of course I don't think you're a bad kisser. You're making me say things I don't even -

CAL

No, no, I get it. (*stands, exits upstage left; beat; enters, walks up to sofa, jokey*) One bad kiss and she's singing this dog tune, huh? Whoa, college boys, watch out! Make sure your teeth aren't too big or too white or you might get zapped with a rape charge like the big bad wolf!

ORNAH *laughs*

No one is being charged with anything. She's telling her story.

CAL

A story you relate to, about a *lounusy* kisser!

ORNAH

I didn't mean that. (*embraces him tiredly*)

CAL

I know, I know! (*laughs; picks her up, walks with her to sofa, sits with her on lap*) You've always been easy going, Ornah! You're smarter than me but you don't act judgy.

ORNAH *laughs*

I am easy going.

CAL *laughs*

Until you're not!

ORNAH *beat*

Until I'm not!

both laugh

CAL

We're both so tired we're saying what we really think.

ORNAH *laughs*

No, I mean - What does that - What do you really think?

CAL *beat, stares*

I hate your voice.

ORNAH *laughs*

My voice.

CAL *laughs*

Yeah.

ORNAH

laughing uneasily, pulls slightly away

You hate my voice. Since when?

CAL *laughing*

Always. Well, I never liked it. But I ignored it at first. You didn't talk much. Your mouth was full of my cock most of the time we were together. Now it never is and I hear your voice a lot more.

ORNAH

Wow. (*long beat, bursts out laughing, comically tries to change voice*) This is - What's wrong - what's wrong with my voice?

CAL

knee on sofa, bends over her, in her face, rubs fingers of one hand together, mock-grimacing
It's as if there's something sticky clinging to it. Like a glob of something, a glob of of *goo* at the edge of your tongue that I try to ignore but I can't ignore because it *antagonizes* me.

ORNAH

bending backward away from CAL

What's the *goo*? What's the thing clinging to my voice?

CAL

Your superiority, Ornah.

ORNAH

My *what?* (*rises*)

CAL
rising, finger to lips

Ssh!

ORNAH

What -

CAL *finger to lips*

Ssh!

ORNAH

Why are you -

CAL

Ssh!

they freeze, stare at each, he tiptoes away backwards holding finger to lips, exits upstage left, she stares after him, turns slowly back to screen

ORNAH
gasps, stares at screen

Oh my -

CAL
enters with fresh beer, throws himself on sofa, they look at each other
You know I'm kidding.

ORNAH
stares at him a beat, laughs loudly

What? Right! Of course!

CAL
What - what's wrong? You look - *(nods at screen)* What's she saying now?

ORNAH *stunned*
Early jazz.

CAL *slowly*
Okay. What about early jazz?

ORNAH *sits*
The guy who did it to her! He was playing 1920s jazz in his room. *(laughing)* To this day she can't hear it without having a panic attack! That's so funny! That's funny, right?

CAL *laughs uproariously*

Hysterical! Jazz was really big there. At least half the guys were in the jazz program.

ORNAH *laughing*

Yes, she said this guy was doing a dual major. (*beat*) Jazz and Culinary Arts!

CAL *laughing*

Huh. Too funny.

ORNAH

It is, isn't it? She went to his room to talk about doing Culinary Arts. I'll bet a lot of students took that program too. Right?

CAL

Right!

ORNAH

With the jazz program. That dual major must have been popular. I mean they're both sensory. The ears and the taste buds, smell, sight, touch. All senses covered! Right?

CAL

Right! Well, I mean, nothing was *popular*. Haha, the school folded. But as popular as anything else!

ORNAH

turning back to screen, chuckling

How many students were there again?

CAL

Oh, who knows? Like - 200 or so?

ORNAH *laughs*

Only 200 in your program!

CAL

Yeah! No! All together! I mean, 200 at the school. It was, like, a unique curriculum. We designed our own majors -

ORNAH

So cool!

CAL

It was! Every guy at that school was into early jazz. We played jazz in our rooms twenty-four-seven. Nerds and bad kissers, one and all! Moldy figs! The raccoons listened to jazz!

ORNAH

The raccoons took Culinary Arts! Haha! (*beat; jokey*) You guys, you didn't just listen. You all *worshipped* those performers. Like you do! You all named sons after Bix Beiderbecke!

CAL

stands, jumps around, laughing

That's right! And studies have shown guys who like Bix Beiderbecke aren't predators!

ORNAH

rises, walks downstage

Have you ever thought - have you ever thought - this is so funny - we all know someone who's been a victim. But no one ever knows any offenders. Isn't that - How does that add up?

CAL

laughs, gestures and speaks like a showman

All I know is: It doesn't add up to *me*. It doesn't add up to Cal! (*toots imaginary horn*) Tah-dah! Presenting the man it *doesn't* add up to!

ORNAH

Yes! (*laughs, hugs herself, turns away from him*) Oh, my - my stomach hurts from laughing - this is so funny - we have a baby. I have a baby with you.

CAL

Baby? What does - ? Wait! (*holds a hand out to her*) I get it! You're having that postpartum thing. (*laughs*) That psychosis thing, where you go off the deep end after giving birth.

ORNAH *laughing*

I'm deranged!

CAL *loud hand clap*

What a relief! Haha, for a minute there it was like some random TV show makes me a criminal and we're headed to divorce court! (*laughs*)

ORNAH *laughs harder*

We don't need divorce court! We're not married! You can walk out and we don't even need to get divorced!

CAL *laughing*

I said we should get married. You didn't want to be married!

ORNAH

I don't!

CAL *laughing, jokey*

Why? I mean, why? Why don't you want to be married? Why say you don't want to be married and then say I can just walk away. (*comically mimes fast walking in place*)

ORNAH *laughing*

I don't want to be married *so* you can just walk away! (*copies his comical walking in place; they stare at each other a long beat; she catches her breath from laughing*) We were only together six months before I got pregnant.

CAL *jokey*

Who's counting? We live together -

ORNAH

We started living together because I was about to go into labor.

CAL

But we know each other. You know me! We're, we're getting to know each other in a whole new way.

ORNAH *broadly winks, laughing*

We sure are!

CAL

Not this, tonight. I mean since Bix! (*exhausted*) I'm not perfect - but I'm not the enemy. I'm not the enemy, Ornah!

ORNAH *laughs, sits*

Of course you're not the enemy! We're together. You're Bix's father! You can't be the enemy! (*beat*) What does that mean? What does 'not perfect' mean?

CAL

It means I'm not going to spend my whole life apologizing.

ORNAH

Well, sure, but - How about - *one second?* Oooone second of your life apologizing? Haha! I'm not sure I've ever heard you apologize for anything!

CAL

beat, gestures at TV

You know this isn't me?

ORNAH *laughing*

I know! I know! It isn't you! It couldn't be!

CAL

Because if you thought it was me, I mean, even if for one second you thought this was me -

ORNAH *mock dramatic, stands*

Then what?

CAL *laughing*

Exactly! Then what! It would be like, like, we'd - (*waves hand*) - it would like we'd fallen into something! Like you said before. We'd be in a space we wouldn't be in if we weren't so, so not ourselves right now. It would be like we'd stumbled into the twilight zone!

ORNAH *laughing*

Or like we'd been circling a huge sinkhole and didn't know it! And now we'd stepped on it and everything collapsed!

CAL

laughing, gesturing, shouting

But nothing's collapsed!

ORNAH *laughing, gesturing, shouting*

Nothing's collapsed!

CAL

We're good?

ORNAH

We're good!

She laughs hysterically; he laughs uneasily, exits upstage left; her laughter turns to sobs; he returns with pizza box, floating it in his hand into the room ahead of his entrance, jokey, then sees that she is sobbing, reacts, sets box on table, sits; both stare straight ahead for a beat, stunned, speak with no trace of humor

CAL

Can we just forget this? Can we pretend this isn't happening?

ORNAH *beat*

I don't think so.

Bix Beiderbecke song plays

END