

Ana and the Closet

by
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TIME

Now

PLACES

A home not far from here

A suggestion of a car

A mall nearby

A nasty closet

CHARACTERS

Ana , a woman

John, her husband

David, her other husband

A Fitting Room Attendant

A Crone (to be played by A large, talented puppet... or a male actor)

AUTHOR'S NOTES

The stage should be as bare as possible while providing enough varied surfaces for the projections of memory to be seen, heard, to allow them to become part of the world of this play. It is after all, a moment in time where these characters might not be able to tell the past, present, or future, apart.

Speeches ending with "-" have been interrupted and those containing a "/" indicate an overlapping of dialogue.

When the closet breathes, it may be in the form of sparks, or little explosions, or whatever that means.

When John and David speak over their bodies, it should be by way of large projections in the ash or against something else not quite solid.

Directors are encouraged to remember that the closet makes it's own rules.

When David and Ana of Yesterday dance/speak it should be by way of projections. Think an old home movie being played in the air. It is a new memory, and it should stay there, happy to live in the land of things past.

SCENE 1

A kitchen table, two chairs, perhaps a wall or two, and a door.

John sits at the table, waiting.

Ana enters, carrying some shopping bags. She walks in, full of life, a bit harried, wielding carry-out from the Chinese restaurant down the street.

ANA

I know, I know, late, late, late. There was a sale, and I, well, there were shoes, then a dress. The perfect dress, actually, and I know I've said that before, about other dresses, but this, this really is the one to beat all. It practically sings when I put it on. You'll love it. I can wear it to your mother's thing this weekend. I'll wear my new dress, and the shoes. You'll love them, you won't even remember how late I am. I brought take-out.

John looks at her.

She looks at John.

JOHN

(finding his voice)

I thought, you would be home earlier. I did the laundry, I cleaned out the fridge-

ANA

That was a strange thing to do.

JOHN

I know, listen. Someone called.

ANA

Oh?

JOHN

Someone sounding kind of important. They didn't explain.

ANA

(pulling out the dress)

Mhmm.

JOHN

Then, are you listening? This is important.

ANA

I'm listening.

She holds the dress up.

JOHN

Than your husband called. You see?

ANA

Yes, I understand. Your wife was bad. Your wife was very bad. But she probably couldn't hear her phone ringing over the sound of her screaming credit card. She's been a very bad girl...

Ana steps towards him seductively but the look on John's face makes her stop.

JOHN

No. Not me.

The perfect dress falls to the floor.

ANA

What?

JOHN

You see, there was a Colonel, he was very closemouthed. I didn't pay it any mind. I thought, so they have another check or something, we just moved, maybe... An update or something, for their records. So then, it rang again, at 5:15. I thought, so what? She's going to be late, that's her calling to tell me she's going to be late. I'll ask her to pick up Chinese for dinner to make it up to me.

ANA

Yes?

JOHN

It wasn't you.

ANA

I know. What are you saying?

JOHN

It was him. 5:15 and nine seconds. My watch stopped the exact moment he said hello. So I cleaned. Then I sat here and I waited for you to come home. I don't even know what time it is. You see? My watch, it still says 5:15.

Ana sees David the first time they met. She sees him on their first date. Ana sees their first house, a picture of his mother, an old pair of boots. Ana sees David everywhere she looks.

JOHN

Are you alright?

ANA

You're, your mouth, it's moving, I just really can't understand what you're saying to me.

JOHN

Ana?

ANA

Maybe I should, I think there's something I should do now.

JOHN

I didn't know how to tell you-

ANA

It's fine, really, I just, I really can't hear you. Do you understand? I can't hear you!

Ana backs towards the door. The memories are filing the room, all shapes and sizes. On the counter tops and on the walls.

JOHN

I didn't know, what this means... We should, talk to the Colonel, he said he'd call back-

ANA

STOP TALKING!! I can't, you're not making any sense.

She opens the door. Ana's thoughts follow her out of the kitchen into the driveway. She hides inside her car.

Silence.

Beat.

She puts the keys in the ignition. A man on the radio preaches the safety of tires, then...

"At Last" starts playing on the radio. It is Ana and David's wedding song.

The wedding comes to Ana.

She cries silently.

David and Ana of yesterday are dancing in front of her. She and the car watch.

After an eternity, David lets go of the Ana from yesterday, and Ana lets go of the wedding. David turns to Ana in the car. He is the same, but not. He is thinner, and more tired looking. No matter where Ana steps, his eyes are with her.

Ana gets out of the car.

They look at one another.

ANA

Are you real?

DAVID

Yes.

ANA

How-

DAVID

There was a mistake.

ANA

A mistake is ordering french fries instead of onion rings. This is not a mistake. Are you real?

DAVID

Yes. Do you want to touch me?

ANA

No. No. I can't.

DAVID

Oh.

ANA

Not yet. I might, fall right through you, I might never stop falling, if you're not here.

(beat)

You look real.

DAVID

You look beautiful.

ANA

Thank you. You look beautiful too. But different.

DAVID

I do?

ANA

Yes. Is that okay?

DAVID

You tell me.

ANA

Yes, it suits you, this, it's older. This body. Like you bought a new suit.

David laughs. Ana laughs too.

DAVID

I missed you.

ANA

I... No one has told me yet, how?

DAVID

We crashed, in the mountains.

ANA

There were mountains?

DAVID

Didn't they tell you where I was?

ANA

No. I couldn't get any information. It was all classified. Name, date of birth, date of death, and a flag. It's all I got.

DAVID

I'm sorry. What did you do with it?

ANA

The flag?

DAVID

Yes.

ANA

I put it... with my heart...

DAVID

What?

ANA

I wrapped it around my heart and kept it in my chest. Then I had to... it was too heavy. I put it in a box in the garage. So I could breathe. I'm sorry.

DAVID

It's alright.

ANA

No, I, should have known-

DAVID
How could you?

ANA
I should have felt, that you were, I should have known.

DAVID
They told you I was dead. They gave you a flag.

ANA
Yes. I carried it with my heart.

Ana does not breathe.

DAVID
But then you put it away.

ANA
Yes.

DAVID
That's when...

ANA
John.

DAVID
He seemed-

ANA
He is.

DAVID
When I called. He was, well, it was a shock. He was cordial, but I could tell-

ANA
He cleaned out the fridge.

DAVID
He, what? Really?

ANA
Yes.

DAVID
That was a strange thing to do.

ANA
I know.

Ana looks at David.

ANA

I'm sorry.

DAVID

Me too. Do you want to touch me now?

ANA

Yes.

David steps towards Ana.

Ana steps towards David.

Ana hears John's heart.

She runs away before it breaks.

SCENE 2

Ana is at the department store. She has lots of dresses. The dressing room attendant knocks on the door.

ATTENDANT

Miss? Miss?

Ana does not respond.

ATTENDANT

Excuse me, Miss?

Ana opens the door wearing a yellow dress.

ANA

What do you think about yellow?

ATTENDANT

I'm sorry Miss, there's a 6 item limit.

ANA

It's John's favorite color.

ATTENDANT

You see, the other attendant, she's been quite busy all day, what with the sale, we really need to make sure everyone's following the rules.

ANA

Do you think it's a little snug? I think maybe I need a bigger size. You see? Right here, the hips. It's fine now, not too tight, but when I sit- what is this? Cotton? It might stretch.

(MORE)

ANA (cont'd)

It feels like Cotton, or maybe... It's awfully soft.
Can you tell me, is it a blend?

*Ana forces The Attendant to check the tag
for her.*

ATTENDANT

It's brushed silk.

ANA

Silk? Really? I thought for sure... Well that will
never do.

Ana closes the door again.

ATTENDANT

Miss, I'm sorry, but-

ANA

Silk wrinkles.

ATTENDANT

Yes-

ANA

What do you think about the blue one?

ATTENDANT

I beg your pardon?

ANA

Blue. I wore a blue ribbon in my hair when I was
younger.

ATTENDANT

I could hold the rest of those dresses up front, you
see. Bring them back to you as you need them. Miss?

Ana peeks out from the door.

ANA

What are you saying?

ATTENDANT

It's just, there's a 6 six item limit, you see-

ANA

Did you call me Miss?

ATTENDANT

Yes, I-

ANA

I'm married!

Ana shoves her ring in The Attendant's face.

ATTENDANT

Oh.

Ana closes the door tightly.

ATTENDANT

I'm sorry.

ANA

I'm married. I'm looking for a new dress to wear to my Mother-in-Law's party. It's a big party, lots of people. I should look good. I should look perfect. For my husband. John. And his mother.

ATTENDANT

Umm-

ANA

I thought I had the perfect dress, but, well, I dropped it. I dropped it on the floor, and it stayed there all night. I couldn't bear to pick it up, it looked so pretty lying there. My husband didn't pick it up either. That was Tuesday. What's today?

ATTENDANT

Friday.

ANA

Yes, three days. So you see, I couldn't possibly wear it to the party.

ATTENDANT

I, no one picked it up?

ANA

No. It's an art project. It's already collecting dust, pretty soon it will become part of the carpet.

Ana opens the door.

ANA

Can you zip me?

The Attendant zips her up.

Ana looks at herself. The Attendant looks at the dresses.

ANA

I don't think this dress is perfect either. Do you?

ATTENDANT

Please, ma'am, I can see that you have about 20 dresses in there. That's well over the limit.

ANA

You don't like it either. That's okay. Some people just aren't made to show off their necks. The collar bones stick out too much, or not enough. Necks are tricky. Maybe the red. Or is that too sultry? Can you wear red to your mother-in-law's house?

ATTENDANT

I-

ANA

I'll try it on.

Ana closes the door again.

ATTENDANT

Ma'am, I'm sorry about the dress, but I'm afraid I really must insist... Can I please hold some of those dresses at the front for you. Ma'am?

Ana puts on the red dress. She hears a song. She sees David.

ANA

Oh dear.

Memories play on her legs, on her arms, on the walls of the fitting room. Ana is lost.

The Attendant is blissfully unaware of the explosion bubbling behind the door.

ANA

Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear.

ATTENDANT

You see, it sets a precedent. People come in here, they see one person not following the rules, they think "Why's she so special?" They want to bring all of their items into the room with them as well. Do you see? Do you see what you could be starting?

ANA

It was my husbands going away party.

ATTENDANT

I, what?

ANA

I wore red, I thought it was sexy. To say goodbye to your husband in a red dress. I bought special underwear. He was going to think about me everyday. In that red dress. Lace panties. I was sure.

ATTENDANT

Ma'am?

ANA

He took me home...

Ana sees David taking Ana home.

ANA

He slipped off my dress...

Ana sees David take off Ana's dress.

ANA

His hands loved my body...

Ana sees David's hands loving her body.

ANA

I wonder if he thought of that dress.

ATTENDANT

Should I perhaps- are you alright?

Ana and her memories spill out of the dressing room, onto the floor, onto the poor, undeserving attendant.

ANA

NO I'M NOT ALRIGHT!! Do you see this? Do you see what is happening?! DO YOU SEE?!

Ana sees the terror on The Attendant's face. Ana runs out of the dressing room.

ATTENDANT

Ma'am! The dress!

SCENE 3

Ana shows up at David's door. Of course it is raining. It couldn't possibly NOT be raining. Ana and the red dress are soaked.

David answers the door.

He looks at Ana.

Ana looks at David.

Ana has to talk loud over the rain.

ANA

I was wondering if you remembered, the red dress I wore, before you left.

David looks at Ana.

ANA

I was wondering, because I was at the mall, trying on this dress, and I thought that was a selfish thing to do. To try to make you think of me everyday. I wanted you to think of me, and miss me. I thought it would bring you home sooner. I'm sorry. I'm sorry for that.

He reaches out to touch her.

Ana runs away.

SCENE 4

Ana and John drive home from his mother's party. Anna has the hiccups. She wears the dress and a layer of rain.

JOHN

So, tell me again why you were-

ANA

I needed some fresh air.

JOHN

In the rain.

ANA

I thought it might be good. To walk.

JOHN

You didn't think to tell anyone where you were going?

ANA

No.

JOHN

Or bring an umbrella?

ANA

No.

JOHN

My God, Ana, a coat then, or something.

ANA

No. You can see I didn't. Why do you keep asking-

JOHN

Because I am trying to understand what you were thinking.

ANA

I told you, I wasn't thinking anything. I didn't have any intimate thoughts about umbrellas or coats, responsible choices that I ignored, choosing instead to dance off into oblivion with the rain-

JOHN

And the dress?

ANA

Stolen.

JOHN

I thought maybe you were, confused, about that part-

ANA

It's stolen. And then rained on.

JOHN

Yes. So you can't-

ANA

Give it back? Probably not without getting arrested.

JOHN

How can you not know you're stealing a dress?

ANA

It was an accident, I wasn't thinking. You know how it is-

JOHN

No, Ana, I do not know how it is. When I go into a store to buy, oh I don't know, a new suit, I don't wear it out the door by mistake. But then I don't go for walks in the rain without an umbrella either-

ANA

I was distraught.

JOHN

Distraught.

ANA
Yes! My mind, this has been a difficult week-

JOHN
For both of us.

ANA
For all of us.

Beat.

JOHN
Yes.

John adjusts the heater.

ANA
Thank you.

Ana absorbs the heat.

JOHN
You were thinking about him.

ANA
I was thinking about your mother.

JOHN
Ahhh.

ANA
I don't know.

Beat.

Hiccup.

Beat.

JOHN
Try holding your breath.

ANA
I did that already. Then I opened my mouth and took in the rain. Nothing has helped. I'm sorry I didn't tell you where I was going.

JOHN
It's alright.

ANA
And I'm sorry I missed the party.

JOHN

You didn't miss much. A lot of stuffed shirts. The food was just alright I thought. They overdid it on the presentation.

ANA

And your mother?

JOHN

She understood. Although I think you frightened everyone by showing up the way you did.

Beat.

Beat.

ANA

Do you think she minded the dress? The red?

JOHN

Of course not.

ANA

Your father gave me a funny look.

JOHN

I didn't see anything.

ANA

That's because he gave it to *me*, John.

JOHN

Oh.

ANA

I'm sorry.

JOHN

I'm sorry.

ANA

The whole world's sorry. See it rain?

Ana looks out the window at the world.

SCENE 5

Ana returns to the department store. She sees the Attendant, the Attendant sees her. The Attendant picks up the phone, presumably to call security.

ANA

Wait! Wait. Credit card! See? I brought my credit card. I brought my whole wallet, actually. And the tags, for the dress, so I could pay.

The Attendant pauses as Ana pulls out her wallet.

ANA

I brought everything. I wanted to, apologize. And explain. I wanted to explain while I pay for the dress that I-

ATTENDANT

That you stole?!

ANA

Well...

The Attendant starts punching buttons.

ANA

Yes. Yes.

The Attendant decides to hang up the phone.

ATTENDANT

My manager was incredibly disappointed.

ANA

I believe you.

ATTENDANT

He was incredibly disappointed in *me*. In my ability to *supervise*.

ANA

But he understood. He had to understand. This is a store, after all. I mean surely this sort of thing happens every once in a while-

ATTENDANT

Yes. We have the occasional deviant, immoral teenagers with sneaky, greedy paws. They come in, they steal, they leave. We don't always catch them... But never, in the six years that I have been working for this company, has someone stolen, outright in front of my very eyes, a dress, *on their body*, and not been brought to justice.

ANA

I'm sorry.

ATTENDANT

I'm no longer the dressing room *supervisor*.

ANA

No?

ATTENDANT

No. After yesterday the manager said to me, if I couldn't handle the dressing rooms without keeping some crazy woman from walking right out of here, *wearing* a dress, how could I supervise the whole department? How could he ask people to listen to the mandates of a an ineffective dressing room attendant who can't even enforce the six-item limit?

ANA

I am sorry. Really.

The Attendant grabs the card from Ana.

ATTENDANT

I'm sure you are.

ANA

I, you see, it's just that, I would like to, try, to explain. If I explained maybe you wouldn't be so angry-

The Attendant looks at Ana as though she will be angry for the rest of her life.

ANA

You see, four days ago, I found out that my husband, my first husband, has been "found". Well that's what the army is saying. I say "resurrected" because you see, four years ago, they told me he was dead. That he died in some top secret operation that I have never been privy to the details of. His fucking wife, and all they tell me is he died serving our country. Like that makes it all okay. But, I, managed to heal. In a way that a person who is still breathing, still beating, still aware of things moving around her, but totally and completely numb, does. Do you see what that might do to a person? And I, somewhere in all of that, I remarried. I found myself, well, pieces that had been missing seemed to come back to life. I felt, almost, better. Happy even. And, then, then he comes back. And it's like, impossible to know what to feel. I remarried. I was supposed to go to my new husband's mother's house for a big party. I wanted a new dress, I was going to buy a new dress. I just...

The Attendant feels a pang of sympathy for Ana.

I was rude. ATTENDANT

No. ANA

Yes. ATTENDANT

You weren't. ANA

I was just trying to enforce the rules- ATTENDANT

I understand. ANA

I didn't realize- ATTENDANT

How could you? ANA

Are you alright? ATTENDANT

Probably not. ANA

Beat.

Did your mother-in-law like the dress? ATTENDANT

I never made it to the party. ANA

I can see how that would happen. ATTENDANT

ANA

I walked to my first husband's house, they put him up in a house. It's small, but, it seemed... Well I didn't go inside. How could I? I would, melt. So then I walked to my mother-in-laws house, and I was covered in rain, so I didn't go inside. And then John saw me, and he took me home.

*The Attendant returns Ana's credit card.
Ana signs the receipt for the dress.*

ANA

Oh, did you hear that? I think my credit card just screamed. It was a lovely dress though. Even in the rain.

SCENE 6

John has a dream. He sees his life with Ana, without David. Ana at the pool, John making dinner, Ana decorating the Christmas tree, Ana with grey hair, John with spectacles. Ana and John laughing, kissing, laughing... He is happy. He wakes up. Ana is not there.

SCENE 7

Ana sits on David's couch, nervous. David brings her tea.

DAVID

It's just Lipton-

ANA

It's fine.

DAVID

I didn't know, they sent someone over with groceries, you know, some fucking vet to see that I'm alright. Supposed to help me, know that there are other people out there went through similar stuff... Anyway, nice guy, gruff, but real, you know. Brings me a couple of steaks, some potatoes, soup, food you can't really fuck up, you know, and Lipton.

ANA

I'm sorry I didn't call.

DAVID

No, you don't need to. Ever. Just, you know, stop by.

ANA

I'm sorry about yesterday too. That was, strange of me.

DAVID

No. It was nice.

ANA

Nice? How could that have been nice? I wasn't even making... I don't even remember what I said, how could that be nice? Some crazy person on your porch in the rain?

DAVID
Do you need lemon? I remember you like lemon in your
Lipton-

ANA
That's when it's cold.

DAVID
Oh, right.

ANA
I've never had it hot before, it's good. It's simple.
I don't think I want any lemon.

Ana sips her tea.

David watches her lips grab the glass.

DAVID
I did think of you, you know. In that red dress. Every
day. Practically every minute.

Ana spills the tea.

ANA
Oh.

DAVID
I'm sorry.

*David reaches for a towel, a napkin, or
anything to help dab at the spill.*

ANA
No, it's my fault. It's hot.

David hands her the towel/napkin/etc.

DAVID
It wasn't a selfish thing to do at all. The dress. It
was a send-off anyone of those guys would have killed
for.

ANA
Really?

DAVID
Yeah.

Beat.

*Ana sips her tea, more carefully this
time.*

Beat.

DAVID

How are your parents?

ANA

They're good. Dad retired. I haven't told them yet.

DAVID

They, uh, that's probably better for now.

ANA

I just, I didn't know what to say. I don't really understand yet myself, even.

DAVID

Sure. I understand. It might be hard on them.

ANA

And all the questions.

DAVID

They will ask questions.

ANA

I want to be able to give answers.

DAVID

Of course.

ANA

They'll want to know, what this means.

DAVID

Of course.

Beat.

DAVID

But they're good?

ANA

Yeah.

DAVID

That's good. I hoped they were well. You make them into grandparents yet? Your mom was always after us to get started...

ANA

No.

DAVID

Oh.

ANA

I, it didn't seem right, somehow, you know, to go ahead with that-

DAVID

How does John feel about it?

ANA

He, I told him. When we met. I told him "No kids."

DAVID

Wow.

ANA

I, those plans were, you know, just ours. They would have all had your eyes, anyway, even if you say it's impossible. I know somehow they would have had your eyes, and they would smell like you, because I knew that you were still living inside me somehow, and I didn't want that to not be true, so I imagined them. I imagined children that looked like us.

Beat.

Beat.

Beat.

David's heart almost breaks.

DAVID

Ana-

ANA

Can I touch you now? I don't care if I fall forever, I have to know if you're here.

Ana and David.

Finally.

Ana and David.

SCENE 8

It is the next morning. Ana wakes up. John wakes up.

Ana sees John, John sees Ana.

David is sitting on the bed. He stares into his closet. A darkness sits in the closet. It breathes.

David stares at the darkness.

The darkness stares at David.

ANA

David, do you see... Hey, are you alright?

David pries his eyes away from the darkness to look at Ana.

He feels better.

DAVID

Yeah. Yeah, how about you? How'd you sleep?

ANA

It felt nice, to be next to you. You didn't snore. Can you, do you want to hold me?

David holds Ana.

DAVID

This is nice. You smell the same.

ANA

I do?

DAVID

Yes.

ANA

You smell the same too. How can we remember something like that, I wonder?

DAVID

I don't know. I'm glad though.

ANA

I don't want to get out of bed. If we get out of bed, everything will become solid again.

DAVID

Then we won't get out of bed.

Beat.

ANA

I should though. I should. John will be worried.

DAVID

Right. John. I, what will you tell him?

ANA

I don't know.

DAVID
You're not a widow anymore.

ANA
I know.

DAVID
That makes you a bigamist.

ANA
What?

DAVID
Tell him that.

ANA
I don't, are you trying to be funny?

DAVID
What else is there?

Ana laughs.

David might laugh.

John contemplates his heart.

ANA
Alright. I'll tell John I'm a bigamist, that I'm keeping you both, since it's no one's fault, really, or at least, not ours... God, this is, I can't say that.

David hears a noise, he stares into the closet.

ANA
David? What is it?

DAVID
I don't know. There's something *in* there.

ANA
What? In your closet?

DAVID
Yes. I, when I moved in, it was weird... I couldn't put anything in there, it was already full... of something. It's, I think there's something in there. I can feel it, can't you feel it?

ANA
You must still be dreaming.

DAVID

Maybe. How do I know?

ANA

If you're still dreaming? I suppose I could pinch you-

David stands up and walks towards the closet.

ANA

David? Where are you going? I thought we weren't going to get out of bed yet... David? Don't go in there!

DAVID

Why not?

ANA

I don't know. I'm scared.

DAVID

It's just a closet, right?

David disappears into the closet.

John sits on his bed. He sees Ana on the walls, he sees her in the sheets. He sees her everywhere he looks. John decides he must wash the sheets. He begins separating them from the bed.

Ana speaks to John.

ANA

I need your help.

JOHN

I'm making the bed.

ANA

John?

JOHN

You didn't come home last night.

ANA

I know... About that-

JOHN

You're wearing his shirt.

ANA

I... Yes.

JOHN
So then, there isn't much to be said.

ANA
I'm sorry.

JOHN
Except that.

ANA
John, I, don't know what I'm doing, I don't know what, there isn't any clear, reason to, any of this, and I want to, to give you a discussion. This, requires a discussion, but something has happened-

JOHN
Are you leaving me?

ANA
I... I don't know.

JOHN
Well. I've got to get these in the wash-

ANA
John!

JOHN
What? What is it Ana?

ANA
It's, I need you.

JOHN
You do?

ANA
Yes, in a million different ways and reasons, but, and you shouldn't have to, I am asking you to help me today, with something... This is an impossible thing, but, John, this is bigger than us. He's, David, has disappeared, and I can't find him, and it doesn't make any sense, except, I don't think he can find his own way back... and I think he needs, both of us, to find him.

John looks at Ana.

He looks at the sheets with Ana wrapped inside them.

JOHN
What if I can't?

ANA

Then who's left?

John thinks.

John breathes.

JOHN

I felt this crack, you know? The moment before I woke up, it was a terrible... electricity. It was that moment between sleep and awake where you're not sure which side you'll be landing on, so you hope wherever you fall it's soft. Real or not, you just hope it's soft... I woke up on pavement, bleeding. And you're still the one who needs help.

Beat.

Ana listens to John's broken heart.

ANA

John, I-

JOHN

What do you want me to do?

SCENE 9

Ana sits on David's bed. She holds a spool of string, that leads into the closet. The spool is almost completely unravelled.

She sits and waits, waits and sits

The darkness in the closet breathes.

Ana addresses the closet.

ANA

Could you please just SHUT UP?!

Beat.

ANA

I'm sorry. I'm not really a loud person, usually. I didn't mean to yell like that. It's just... I'm trying to keep it together here. I, I'd like it if you could burp forth my husbands. Both of them. You see, if you keep them, either of them, how am, how do I, ever understand any of this? They tell you your husband's dead, you die inside. I mean, you can't breathe normal for at least a year, and then...

(MORE)

ANA (cont'd)

Well, If I lost another one, if you are, in the habit of eating them, these men who enter your belly, then I might, I might have to join them, in there, because I couldn't be out here alone. I couldn't be. Do you understand? Because I don't know, I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU ARE DOING IN THAT CLOSET! Oh, I'm sorry. I yelled again. It's just, it's just that this is really, really, unusual. And I am starting to believe in things I wouldn't have before thought possible. So, if you are, what I think you are, some breathing, loathsome, *thing*, then please, please give them back to me. Let me have them back, and I will... I will, feed you. I will feed you. Please...

The spool is out of string. Ana jumps to catch the tail end of the string before it can be pulled into the closet.

ANA

Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear! John?! JOHN?! There's no more string! Come back, there's no more...

Ana tugs on the string.

Nothing.

ANA

JOHN!!!

The closet lets out a terrible belch.

ANA

Alright. Everything is alright. I'll just, ummm, I just- It's still early. Perhaps we should start with breakfast?

SCENE 10

Ana tries on shoes. A LOT of shoes. The Attendant holds her keys.

ANA

These are too small. You're sure they didn't have a seven?

ATTENDANT

She said no.

ANA

Oh. You know, you don't need to hold onto those. I'm not going to walk out with these.

ATTENDANT

Say my manager finds out I let the "Lunatic-Who-Walked-Out-Wearing-A-Dress" back in the store-

ANA

Which I paid for, eventually-

ATTENDANT

And say he finds out I helped her try on shoes-

ANA

Which I am also going to pay for, *today*-

ATTENDANT

What do you think he'd say if I didn't at least require that she give me the keys to her car? Maybe you should try the 7 1/2?

ANA

I mean, I just don't understand-

ATTENDANT

It's simple, really, someone just beat you to them.

ANA

What? What did you say?

ATTENDANT

The 7's. It is a popular size.

ANA

Do you know anything about closets?

ATTENDANT

Excuse me?

ANA

You know what, forget it. I'll just, I'll try the brown ones again. Closets, you know, have you ever, gone into one before?

ATTENDANT

See, this is why I'm holding onto your keys.

ANA

My husband, the first, his closet, it was breathing, the other morning, and then... It ate him, or, I'm hoping it didn't really eat him, he just, well he went in and... he hasn't come out yet..

ATTENDANT

Ha, you're, what? You're joking.

ANA

I sent my other husband in after him, I don't know what I was thinking, sending him in there like that. I mean, I don't even know where that, I mean, it's a closet-

ATTENDANT

Ha, you're husbands are in the closet... You mean symbolically, like they hit it off-

ANA

No, not like that. I'm not, this is serious! I'm not speaking in euphemisms here, what's not to understand? They have literally disappeared amongst the hangers and shelves. And I can't just leave them there. So I'm sleeping in his bed. I brought some things from home and am sleeping in my first husband's bed, with that... *thing* in the closet. I hear it breathing, *breathing*. I don't know what's happening in that house. Can you hand me that pair with the strap?

ATTENDANT

I, you realize you're not making any sense, right?

ANA

I've been leaving food out, in case they come back. How can someone live in a closet for three days? Three days?! I made dinner. I made breakfast. For lunch I made sandwiches, because I figured they wouldn't go bad, and then I left them in plain sight. I had to get out of the house. Do these make my ankles look fat?

ATTENDANT

Yes.

ANA

Shame.

ATTENDANT

So, you haven't seen them in three days?

ANA

No.

ATTENDANT

Did you call the police?

ANA

What, and let them tell me I'm crazy? What if it's not real? What if I'm imagining all of it? No, it's better I just let them be. They'll come out when they're ready. In the mean time, I'm buying these. These feel good, they feel, real. I can walk in them, they feel solid.

ATTENDANT

I think, I think maybe it wouldn't be a bad idea to get a second opinion-

ANA

You don't like them?

ATTENDANT

About your husbands...

ANA

Oh, I don't know, I don't know if I could handle it, if you came over and everything was... You might never let me back in here.

ATTENDANT

Oh, no, I didn't mean-

ANA

It's already bad enough, what with you holding onto my keys... I mean, I used to shop here all the time, now I'm like *persona non grata* around here, a pariah, worthy of sampling goods only when attended. Personally. On the other hand, you have been exceedingly gracious to me, and if I am going crazy, maybe it's best you be there to witness it. I would like a friendly face to do the honors, really.

ATTENDANT

Friendly... No, I don't think you understand, you should call a detective, or a, a doctor, of some sort, someone who deals in, things of this, nature... You know, to make sure they're not, er, seriously injured in there, or something.

ANA

Oh, God, they can't be injured, can they? I don't know the statistics on closet injuries. No, no, I can't possibly call the police, they'll think I'm crazy, and well, see, *I'm* starting to wonder if I'm crazy. But isn't that the mark of someone *not* crazy? That they question their own sanity?

ATTENDANT

I...

ANA

So, I'll take the brown ones, you can put them on my card. Then we can go to the house. You can drive, I trust you. Plus my hands are shaking. But first we have to stop by the grocery store. I promised the closet I'd feed it.

SCENE 11

The closet as before.

Ana enters with a brown paper bag of groceries.

ANA

I'm back. I told you I'd be back. Anybody miss me?

Nobody missed her.

ANA

I, uh, brought a friend. Sort of. She, well...

The Attendant peeks her head into the room.

ATTENDANT

Who are you talking too?

ANA

I, probably no one- Umm, it's a habit I've kind of developed...

Beat.

Beat.

ANA

Do you want to come in?

ATTENDANT

Oh, well, everything looks okay to me-

ANA

But the closet and everything-

The Attendant steps in nervously.

ATTENDANT

Not much of a decorator, your ex-husband.

ANA

He's not my ex. He was dead. And he just moved in here, how could he possibly have decorated when he's only just moved in.

ATTENDANT

Of course. I'm sorry.

ANA

You're right though. It's kind of drab. I should bring him a plant.

ATTENDANT
Do you mind if I open a window? It smells weird in here-

ANA
Oh, maybe it's the sandwiches...

ATTENDANT
No. It smells, greasy.

ANA
What?

ATTENDANT
Mechanical, or something.

ANA
Really?

ATTENDANT
Yes. You can't smell it?

They sniff.

ANA
No.

ATTENDANT
It's coming out of there. Is that the bedroom?

ANA
Yes.

ATTENDANT
May I?

ANA
Oh, of course. Of course.

ATTENDANT
The smell is definitely stronger in here.

ANA
What do you mean?

ATTENDANT
It's practically pouring out of, is that the closet?

The Attendant and Ana look at the closet.

Ana is scared.

ANA
Yes.

ATTENDANT

My God! Can't you smell it? The fumes alone would be enough to knock a person out. Maybe that's why they didn't come out. You've got some sort of gas leak in here-

ANA

Wait, before you-

The Attendant opens the closet doors before Ana can stop her.

The dark belches. Both women stare.

ATTENDANT

My God.

ANA

I know.

ATTENDANT

My GOD.

ANA

I've told him.

ATTENDANT

I've never...

ANA

Seen anything like it? I know.

ATTENDANT

I thought for sure... I mean, it was crazy of me to even have come here, I thought I'd turn around and you'd shove me in a meat locker or something, but this-

ANA

I know. Wait, a meat locker?

ATTENDANT

This is unbelievable! The heat, alone, can you feel that?

ANA

Well, no, actually, I... Heat?

ATTENDANT

And that smell, God, it reminds me of something... Like asphalt, and tar...

Ana reaches into the grocery bag. She pulls out a box of Fruit Loops, or a generic version thereof.

She opens the box and starts throwing handfuls into the dark.

ATTENDANT

What are you doing?

ANA

Well, I don't know what to feed it, so I've been trying different things. This morning I went through the flakes, the grahams, and the crispies, now I'm thinking sugar and red dye number 7 might be more up it's alley.

ATTENDANT

Cereal?

ANA

Well, I bought steak too, but I don't want to use it unless I have to, prices being what they are these days-

ATTENDANT

It's going to take a lot more than steak and red dye number 7 to make something like, *this*, go away.

ANA

Yeah, maybe, but I don't even know what *this* is, and I thought, a sort of trade, you know?

ATTENDANT

Trade? With this? Fat chance. You should seriously consider moving.

ANA

I don't live-

ATTENDANT

I mean, I've never seen anything like this, but, in your closet? It can't be good. And the smell... You should get as far away from this as possible. Like Alaska far.

ANA

I can't leave with my husbands in there!

ATTENDANT

It's soooo dark.

The Attendant notices the string.

ATTENDANT

What's this?

ANA

Oh, I tied a string to John. So he could find his way back. He took a flashlight.

ATTENDANT

And?

ANA

And what?

ATTENDANT

Is he still attached to the string? Have you felt him move at all?

ANA

No, I sat there with it unravelling and then it just, stopped. I, sort of freaked out.

The Attendant pulls on the string.

ANA

NO! No, he might, he might have dropped it, if it's not exactly where it was when he dropped it, how will he, they, find their way back?

ATTENDANT

Alright. I'm sensing that we might be a little outside our element here. We don't know what we're dealing with, so we should get ourselves prepared, for anything.

ANA

We?

ATTENDANT

Well you can't expect me to leave you alone with this, foul, smelly-

ANA

-What smell-

ATTENDANT

-Loud, burdensome expanse of... whatever, do you? Not after you've shown me what's here, no, I couldn't possibly, leave...

The Attendant inhales deeply.

ATTENDANT

It kind of grows on you doesn't it?

ANA

What are you... suggesting?

ATTENDANT

We should have, materials... David was in the military, right, he's bound to have guns, ammunition-

ANA

Whoa! Guns? Are you crazy?

ATTENDANT

You're just not seeing the bigger picture here. I'm talking about you and me, arming up, in case this thing gets wicked. I mean, my God, you've got a real-life home invasion happening here and you're at the mall buying shoes?!

ANA

I needed to get out of the house! And, I don't think guns are really the solution to, well, this isn't a burglar or something, this is.. Well, it's... I mean, aren't you getting a little carried away?

ATTENDANT

Ana, we don't have time to vacillate between fruit loops and steak. I'm not an expert on evil, but I can tell when it's looking at me, breathing on my neck, thinking about wrapping it's slimy claws around my heart. We are going to have to work together if you want to get your husband's back, and we will have to be resolute. We will have to be innovative. We will have to be steadfast in our vigilance if we want to keep this force of evil at bay and in your closet.

ANA

But, that's just it, I don't want it in my closet.

ATTENDANT

Well of course you don't, but imagine what it could do if it ever got out of there. My God... it could spread.

Ana tosses more cereal into the closet.

SCENE 12

As before, but a day or two later.

Ana sits on the bed opening a tin can of peaches. Once it is opened she throws the contents into the closet peels the label from the can and commences to punch a hole in the bottom, tying the string to it, telephone style. While she works on this, she addresses the closet.

ANA

It's not polite, you know, to just, move in like this. I don't remember David mentioning any sort of invitation.

(MORE)

ANA (cont'd)

In fact, I distinctly recall a certain look of bewilderment on his face when he was looking into that craw of yours. It's just not polite. And then you go holding onto them like this. I just, I don't understand. Any of it. And here I am...

Ana commences to pick up the "telephone"

ANA

Hello? John? What am I doing?

Ana considers what she is doing. She talks into the "phone."

ANA

(sigh)

I, don't know if this will work, at all. It seemed, well, it seemed absurd, but then nothing about this makes any... What do people do when the rules stop making sense? So, I, I wanted to tell you, I wanted to at least try to make you hear me inside that expanse of... Because it's important that you know that I know I should never have asked you to go in after him. It should've been me. I've been numb for so long I'm sure I could handle it. But this... It should be me. Then I wouldn't have to worry about who's going to walk out of there first, if you're going to walk out at all, and who's arms I am going to lay in when it's all said and done. We didn't talk about it, you and I, but David says I'm a bigamist now. Oh God. I never thought... Even in my wildest dreams he was always a ghost. Are you there? Can you hear me?

Ana addresses the closet.

ANA

You're not living up to your end of the bargain, you know.

She sighs, sits on the bed, and begins systematically unwrapping Ding-Dongs and throwing them into the closet.

After a moment the Attendant enters, a messenger bag slung across her shoulders. She removes the tags from a spray bottle and proceeds to pour water into it from a water bottle inside her bag.

ATTENDANT

Has anything changed? Anything emerged?

ANA

No.

ATTENDANT

It was crazy today, everyone shopping like mad, I hate those big clearance sales they do. I didn't think I'd ever get out of there. How are you? What's happened since I left? Did anyone come by?

ANA

No. John's boss still thinks he's sick, and the rest of the world still thinks David's dead.

ATTENDANT

Good, that's good. The last thing you want with something like this is a media frenzy. They can turn anything into a circus. What are you... Are you feeding it again? I told you to stop feeding it. Ding-Dongs and soup are NOT going to make this thing go away-

ANA

I made the soup for us-

ATTENDANT

And you gave a bowl to the closet.

ANA

Well, so what if I have? I mean, it's become a habit, you know. Makes me feel like I'm doing something anyway. Instead of just sitting around... What's with the spray bottle?

ATTENDANT

Holy water. I stopped by a church and asked the priest for some. As I was leaving work I thought to myself what we need here, what we really need, are holy sacraments, to fend this thing off. He wanted to know what it was for, I told him my cousin had moved into a bad neighborhood and wanted me to bring her some cleansing waters from the church. He gave me this teeny, tiny container full. Honestly, what good was that going to do anybody? I guess he's more of a faith man, but he left to get me some sort of literature to send her, so I poured the rest of what he had blessed into my water bottle and booked it out of there.

ANA

That doesn't seem very Christian.

ATTENDANT

You stole a dress. Besides, desperate times call for desperate measures. I couldn't very well tell the priest what we were up to now, could I? He'd want to come, meddling, reporting to his superiors, and then the media. My God, the media. No, I did what was best. Don't you think it's worth a shot?

ANA

Ummm... I don't know. We were always more spiritual than religious-

The Attendant squirts the closet.

Nothing.

She squirts again.

The closet lets out a terrible belch.

ATTENDANT

I don't understand.

ANA

Maybe it's agnostic.

ATTENDANT

I was so sure...

She sits down, dejectedly.

ANA

Hey, look, at least you're trying.

ATTENDANT

"Trying" isn't progressing.

ANA

Well, not yet, but I appreciate the effort you're making. Really. Thanks.

ATTENDANT

I mean, little efforts here and there, they're just not cutting it. Did you give anymore thought to the guns?

Ana sighs.

ATTENDANT

Ana, it's obvious that we are going to have to try stronger tactics! That thing isn't budging. Whatever it's done to your husbands, it isn't giving them back... We're going to have to go in. We're going to have to fight this thing-

ANA

What? No way!

ATTENDANT

We've tried everything else-

ANA

Have you completely lost your mind? This is not a fight! It's a mystery. We can't just go marching into something we don't understand!

ATTENDANT

Look, I brought supplies-

The Attendant brings a grenade out of her bag.

ANA

What on earth!

ATTENDANT

Now, I know what you're going to say, but my friend walked me through all the steps-

ANA

What kind of friend gives you a grenade?!

ATTENDANT

Relax, he showed me how to use it-

ANA

What was he even doing with a grenade in the first place?

ATTENDANT

He knows people. Besides, it's not lethal till you pull the pin. I've got a gun, and some trail mix-

ANA

I can't believe you would bring something, so terrible... That is an instrument of death! And you brought it into the house?

ATTENDANT

Ana, just please, hear me out on this! We have tried everything, EVERYTHING, to eradicate that force of evil from your closet, but you won't let me try the big guns. I'm telling you, you have got to fight fire with fire. You cannot sing to it and bring it soup. I know I'm right about this. Please.

ANA

No.

ATTENDANT

But-

ANA

You are ABSOLUTELY NOT BLOWING UP THE HOUSE!

ATTENDANT

Of course I'm not, will you just calm down? I'm not going to blow up the house-

ANA

/What is wrong with you?/

ATTENDANT

-I'm going to blow up the closet-

ANA

David and John are still in there! What do you think will happen to them?

ATTENDANT

Ana, I think we are beyond just thinking about two men-

ANA

(overlapping)

I asked you here to help me get them OUT of THERE, not blown to bits! Get that thing out of here. I want it out, out, OUT! I want that thing out of this house right NOW!

ATTENDANT

(overlapping)

Calm down, Ana, you're not thinking clearly, you're too- Ana, would you just listen to me?!

Ana steps towards The Attendant, reaching for the grenade. There is the tiniest of struggles wherein, with a gasp, the grenade gets knocked into the closet.

Ana and the Attendant look at the attendant's finger. The pin dangles from it.

Both women freeze. The lights flicker as the closet bellows.

There is a large boom, smoke, and darkness... A light ash starts to fall.

BLACK.

ACT II - EMBEDDED

In Act II the stage should be barren of structure. The ash falls from the direction that is up, but other than gravity, things are not working the way they should. Ana's string trails up the stage in misery.

SCENE 1

The echo of a bar seems to have taken over the stage. Two men, John and David, sit at stools. They are buried in their drinks.

A Crone polishes glasses behind the bar. It wears a ball and chain.

Static.

Ana comes in with her bag. She looks different.

She sits.

The Crone looks at Ana.

CRONE

Watcher want?

ANA

Excuse me?

CRONE

This a bar, ain't it? So watcher want? Fire for the belly, ice-cubes for the heart? Got a nice little worm that makes you dance the salsa?

ANA

Ah, I'm not sure... Do I... know you?

CRONE

Fog around you dear, so thick... can't see straight. Something perhaps to light the way?

ANA

Ah, alright...

The Crone gives wave and a miserable looking Attendant shuffles in. A ball and chain around her ankle scrape the ground behind her.

CRONE

Getcher, watcher doing? Customer needs a drink here!

The Attendant gets a bottle.

David sips. John sips.

ANA

E, excuse me... Can you tell me where I am?

The men laugh.

ANA

I, is that an answer?

DAVID

Drink up little lady. Questions don't fly around here.

JOHN

Go thud, like metal, instead.

The men laugh, and glare.

ANA

Oh.

JOHN

Something familiar about you.

ANA

I was thinking the same... Do I know you?

The Attendant returns with a glass of something sweet.

CRONE

Watcher, don't spill it!

(to Ana)

Drink up.

ANA

Thank you. What is it?

DAVID

Always questions! So much asking... /You-

ANA

/You-

DAVID

-I know-

ANA

-You/

JOHN

-You/ giving me a sensation here-

CRONE

-Drink up!

All three drink.

ANA

There's something strange about all this. I don't know how I got here.

The Attendant laughs.

ANA

Is that funny?

CRONE

Watcher, yes, you're in good company.

ANA

Are you all friends?

DAVID

What's with all the questions?

CRONE

We like it private here. Makes for ease. You want another?

DAVID, ANA, JOHN

Yes.

The Crone snaps her fingers, The Attendant pours a round.

CRONE

Drink up.

Ana looks in her glass.

ANA

But, there's stuff floating in it.

She holds up her hands, collects the ash.

ANA

That's weird.

The men clink their glasses, down their drinks.

ANA

Uh, Miss? Can you do anything about this? It's ruining everything.

The Crone hands over a bright yellow umbrella.

CRONE

That'll be nine ninety five.

Ana opens the umbrella.

ANA

What luck.

Ana sips her drink.

John sips.

David sips.

A phone rings.

JOHN

Hello?

DAVID

Hello?

JOHN

Hello?

ATTENDANT

Your bag is ringing.

The Crone glares.

ANA

Oh?

CRONE

This is a quiet place.

ANA

Of course, I'm sorry.

Ana reaches into the take-out bag and pulls out the tin can telephone, string trailing behind.

Another ring.

Ana stares at the can.

Well? CRONE

I don't know how to turn it off- ANA

Ana shakes the can.

Ana's voice vibrates.

Hello? Can you hear me? John? David? It's me/Ana ANA'S VOICE

/Ana. DAVID, JOHN

/Ana? ATTENDANT

The men look at one another.

The Crone reaches for the phone.

That's me! ANA

Nothing... Makes sense... A million times... ANA'S VOICE

Ana looks at the men.

That's me! ANA

ANA'S VOICE
(under the following)

I, I wanted to tell you, I wanted to at least try...who's going to walk out of there first... If you're going to walk out at all... who's arms I am going to lay in-

Ana spills her drink.

/Oh my God/ ANA

I'll get that... ATTENDANT

/You/ DAVID

/You/ JOHN

ATTENDANT

Always cleaning up somebody's mess.

ANA

Wait!

And gets off her bar-stool.

David and John lock eyes.

Static.

ANA

Oh my God, wait!

A terrible wind picks Ana up by the umbrella and carries her away. It pushes The Attendant and the bar in the opposite direction.

David and John.

David and John.

Everything is gone but for David and John.

Locked in battle till kingdom come.

Only, neither one seems to be landing a solid hit.

Static.

David and John stare at one another above the melee.

Their bodies are getting weary, but neither thinks to rest.

SCENE 2

Ana lands with a thump. A little white table and two little white chairs take comfort in the shade. They are set for tea.

A whisper from off-stage...

WHISPER

Have a seat.