

NAT. I wish someone had sat me down when Arthur died. I wish someone gave me a little advice.

BECCA. You know what *I* wish?! *I* wish you would stop comparing Danny to Arthur! *Danny* was a four-year-old boy who chased his dog into the street! *Arthur* was a thirty-year-old *heroin* addict who *hung* himself! Frankly I resent how you keep lumping them together. *(Silence.)*

NAT. He was still my son.

BECCA. And I don't recall anyone giving you instructions on how best to grieve for him. *(Beat.)* I think it's time for me to go to bed now. *(Turns to her sister.)* Izzy, I hope you enjoy the bathroom set.

IZZY. I'm gonna. *(Becca heads upstairs. Izzy loads the dishwasher. Nat is still shaken by Becca's comment.)*

NAT. I was never that mean to anyone. When Arthur died, I was just as upset as she was, but I never took it out on other people like that.

IZZY. What about Mrs. Bailey?

NAT. *(Turns to her, annoyed.)* Nobody's talking about Mrs. Bailey. Izzy, please.

HOWIE. You know what this was about?

IZZY. *(Regarding Nat.)* Yeah, *her* and her mouth.

HOWIE. I knew the party was a bad idea.

IZZY. *(To Nat.)* Didn't I tell you not to get into anything with her?

HOWIE. We got a letter today. From Jason Willette. *(Beat.)*

NAT. What, why? What'd he want?

HOWIE. She said it didn't bother her but ... *(Regarding the gathering.)* Sorry, Iz.

IZZY. No, hey, this was *great*, really. Let's do it again *next* year. *(Crossfade to:)*

Scene 4

Later that night. Lights up on Danny's room. It looks essentially the same as it did when Danny was alive. The door opens and Becca enters. She doesn't come in here often. She quietly closes the door behind her. She looks around a bit, then takes a seat on Danny's bed. She takes a letter out of an envelope and rereads it. Lights up on Jason Willette, seventeen.

JASON. Dear Mr. and Mrs. Corbett, I wanted to send you my condolences on the death of your son, Danny. I know it's been eight months since the accident, but I'm sure it's probably still hard for you to be reminded of that day. I think about what happened a lot, as I'm sure you do, too. I've been having some troubles at home, and at school, and a couple people here thought it might be a good idea to write to you. I'm sorry if this letter upsets you. That's obviously not my intention. Even though I never knew Danny, I did read that article in the town paper, and was happy to learn a little bit about him. He sounds like he was a great kid. I'm sure you miss him a lot, as you said in the article. I especially liked the part where Mr. Corbett talked about Danny's robots, because when I was his age I was a big fan of robots, too. In fact I still am, in some ways — ha ha. I've enclosed a short story that's going to be printed in my high school lit magazine. I don't know if you like science fiction or not, but I've enclosed it anyway. I was hoping to dedicate the story to Danny's memory. There aren't any robots in this one, but I think it would be the kind of story he'd like if he were my age. Would it bother you if I dedicated the story? If so, please let me know. The printer deadline for the magazine is March 31st. If you tell me before then, I can have them take it off. *(Becca flips through the story enclosed.)* I know this probably doesn't make things any better, but I wanted you to know how terrible I feel about Danny. I know that no matter how hard this has been on me, I can never understand the depth of your loss. My mom has only told me that about a hundred times — ha ha. I of course wanted to say how sorry I am that things happened the way they did, and that I wish I had driven down a different block that day. I'm sure you do, too. Anyway, that's it for now. If you'd like to let me know about the dedication, you can email me at the address above. If I don't hear from you, I'll assume it's okay. Sincerely, Jason Willette. *(Beat.)* P.S. Would it be possible to meet you in person at some point? *(The lights slowly fade on Jason. Becca puts the story and letter aside. She just sits on the bed, taking in the room. Meanwhile, the lights rise on Howie in the living room. It's that same night. Nat and Izzy have gone home. Howie plunks into his chair and grabs a couple remotes. He clicks on the TV, then hits play on the VCR. We hear a documentary on tornadoes playing. Howie is confused. Something isn't right. He gets out of the chair and ejects the tape. He examines the tape, panic starts to set in. He pops the tape back in and hits play again. More tornado*

Start

documentary.)

HOWIE. What is this? Becca? ... Becca?! (*He hits fast-forward.*)
Becca?!

BECCA. (*From upstairs.*) What?

HOWIE. What'd you do here?! (*The lights fade on Danny's bedroom. Howie keeps pressing fast-forward, but it's all tornadoes. He's beside himself. Becca comes running downstairs.*)

BECCA. What's the matter?!

HOWIE. What is this?!

BECCA. What's *what*?!

HOWIE. The *television*. What is this?

BECCA. (*Looks to TV.*) It's the Discovery Channel. The tornado program. You said you wanted to watch it. I recorded it for you. Why?

HOWIE. For *Chrissake*!

BECCA. What's the matter?

HOWIE. It's Danny's tape. You recorded over Danny's tape. (*Beat.*)

BECCA. No, I didn't. *Pride and Prejudice* was on that tape. We were watching it last night.

HOWIE. I switched them.

BECCA. *What*?!

HOWIE. I watched Danny's tape later. After you went to bed.

BECCA. Why didn't you take it out of the machine?!

HOWIE. Why didn't you check to see what was in there?!

BECCA. I assumed it was the TV tape!

HOWIE. Jesus, Becca!

BECCA. It was one of the baby videos?

HOWIE. No, it was the most recent, the long one. The park was on it, and Mexico —

BECCA. How was I supposed to know you snuck down here?

HOWIE. — and Christmas.

BECCA. I thought it was the TV tape.

HOWIE. It wasn't!

BECCA. I know, Howie.

HOWIE. So it's gone. The whole thing.

BECCA. I'm sorry.

HOWIE. It's the only copy, Becca!

BECCA. Well, I didn't do it on purpose.

HOWIE. Are ya sure? (*Beat.*)

BECCA. What does that mean? (*No response.*) You think I recorded over Danny's tape on purpose?

HOWIE. I don't know.

BECCA. You don't *know*?

HOWIE. I should've taken it out.

BECCA. Why would I deliberately record over it?

HOWIE. I don't know.

BECCA. Why *would* I?!

HOWIE. I don't *know*! (*Silence.*) You took the paintings off the fridge. Danny's paintings.

BECCA. To save them. I put them in plastic.

HOWIE. And shoved them in a box.

BECCA. For safekeeping.

HOWIE. Okay.

BECCA. I didn't throw the paintings out.

HOWIE. I know you didn't.

BECCA. You think I didn't want that tape?

HOWIE. I don't ... Of course, you did. Obviously it wasn't on purpose, but —

BECCA. What?

HOWIE. Maybe subconsciously.

BECCA. Subconsciously. Is this what they're telling you at group? How I'm doing things subconsciously?

HOWIE. You're trying to get rid of him. I'm sorry, but that's how it feels to me sometimes. Every day, it's something else. It feels like you're trying to get rid of any evidence he was ever here. (*It's as if she's been slapped.*)

BECCA. I didn't know that tape was in there.

HOWIE. I'm not talking about the tape. Not just the tape.

BECCA. And the paintings are downstairs. In a box. You can look at them whenever you want.

HOWIE. The clothes. His shoes.

BECCA. We don't need all that stuff. Why would we keep — ?

HOWIE. Your wanting to sell the house!

BECCA. We already talked about —

HOWIE. Taz. Sending Taz to your mother's!

BECCA. There was a lot going on, Howie. We couldn't deal with the dog.

HOWIE. I was fine with the dog. *I* was the one walking him.

BECCA. Well, he got underfoot.

HOWIE. And he was a reminder.

BECCA. Yes, he was a reminder. So what? I wanted one less reminder around here. That's perfectly normal.

HOWIE. And since you never wanted the dog to begin with —
BECCA. Oh for godsakes —
HOWIE. Well, if I hadn't bought the dog —
BECCA. And if I hadn't run inside to get the phone, or if I had latched the gate —
HOWIE. I left the gate unlatched!
BECCA. Well, I didn't check it! (*Retreats a bit.*) I'm not playing this game again, Howie. It was no one's fault.
HOWIE. Not even the dog's.
BECCA. I know that.
HOWIE. Dogs chase squirrels. Boys chase dogs.
BECCA. Are you telling me or yourself?
HOWIE. He *loved* that dog!
BECCA. Of course he did.
HOWIE. And you got rid of him!
BECCA. Right, like I got rid of the tape. I get it.
HOWIE. (*Losing it.*) It's not just the tape! I'm not talking about the tape, Becca! It's Taz, and the paintings, and the clothes, and it's *everything!* You have to stop erasing him! You have to stop it! You HAVE TO STOP! (*Howie has been reduced to tears. He has to move away from Becca. She takes him in. She seems more confused than affronted.*)
BECCA. Do you really not know me, Howie? Do you really not know how utterly impossible that would be? To erase him? No matter how many things I give to charity, or how many art projects I box up, do you really think I don't see him every second of every day? And okay, I'm trying to make things a little easier on myself by hiding some of the photos, and giving away the clothes, but that does *not* mean I'm trying to *erase* him. That tape was an accident. And believe me, I will beat myself up about it forever, I'm sure. Like everything else that I could've prevented but didn't.
HOWIE. That's not what I want, Bec. It's not what I'm talking about.
BECCA. No? Because it feels like it is. It feels like I don't feel bad enough for you. I'm not mourning enough for your taste.
HOWIE. Come on, that's not —
BECCA. Or mourning in the right *way*. But let me just say, Howie, that I am mourning as much as you are. And my grief is just as real and awful as yours.
HOWIE. I know that.
BECCA. You're not in a better place than I am, you're just in a dif-

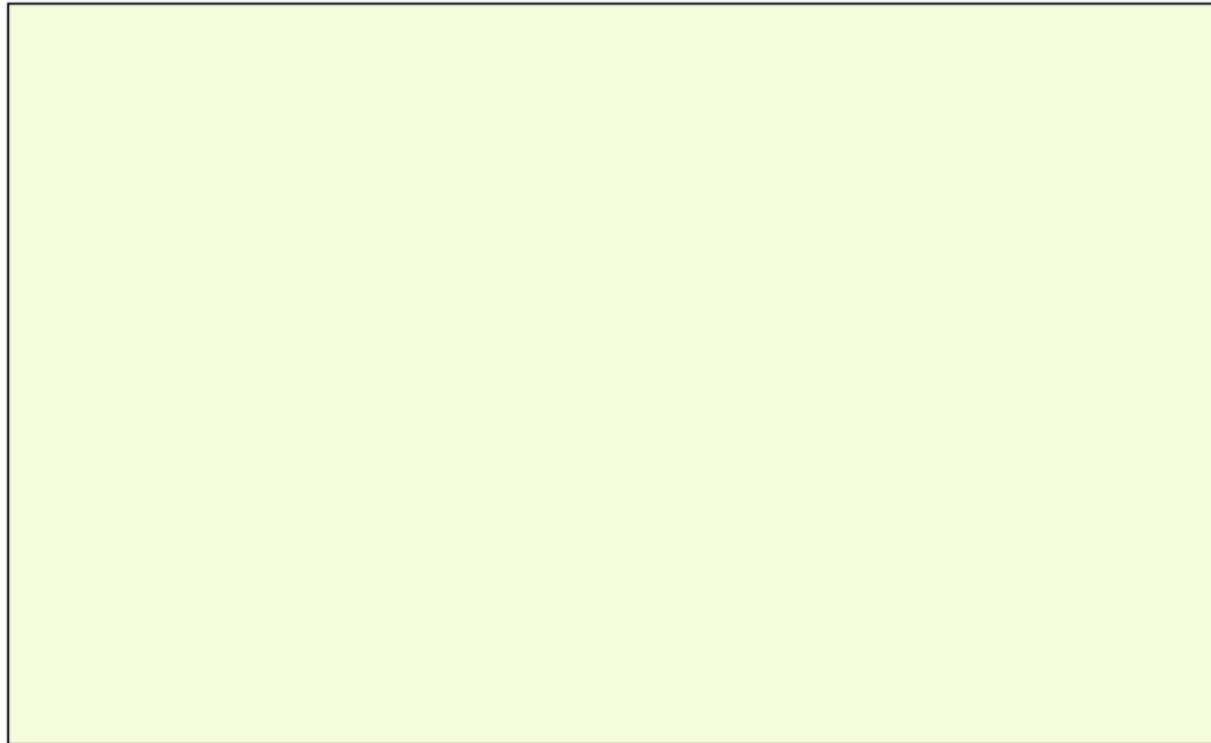
ferent place. And that sucks that we can't be there for each other right now, but that's just the way it is.
HOWIE. His stuff is all we have left. That's all I'm saying. And every bit of it you get rid of —
BECCA. I understand that. You don't wanna let go of it. I understand, Howie.
HOWIE. Do you? (*Beat.*) Do you? (*No response.*) This isn't ... Something has to change here. Because I can't do this ... like this. It's too hard. (*Beat.*) It's too hard. (*Neither speaks for a while. Then Howie heads for the stairs. He stops, and turns back to her.*) And I want that dog back. Your mother's making him fat. (*Beat.*) I want the dog back.
BECCA. Why don't we wait until —
HOWIE. I don't want to. How much more do we have to lose? (*Beat.*) I miss the dog. I'm sorry, but I miss him. I want him back. (*They regard each other silently. Howie heads upstairs, leaving Becca alone. The lights slowly fade.*)

End

Set / Furniture Plan

Draw, below, the "set" you plan to use for your scene.

SR



SL

Downstage