

Small Fortune

A full-length play in one act

Characters

ROB VANTAGE, 56, White, male, husband, father, son of privilege, English teacher determined to make a lasting impact on the world.

CLAIRE VANTAGE, 57, White, female, wife, mother, Real Estate agent determined to maintain her status in the world.

JORDAN VANTAGE, 26, White, male, son, brother, bartender looking to find his place and make his mark on the world.

ALLIE VANTAGE, 21, White, female, daughter, sister, anxious college student learning about the world.

MIKAELA MURRAY, 25, Black, female, Jordan's girlfriend, trying to determine if she wants to continue their relationship and enter his world.

Time

A weekend in April of next year

Place

The Vantages' river cottage near the Chesapeake Bay

Synopsis: Rob Vantage has decided to pay reparations to the descendants of the enslaved people who built his family's wealth two centuries ago. But his own descendants aren't happy about it, and his motivation might not be as pure as he wants us to believe. How far will people go when the family fortune is at stake?

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SMALL FORTUNE

LIGHTS UP on the living room of the “The Forge”, the Vantage family vacation home on a river, just south of Baltimore, that leads into the Chesapeake Bay.

An anchor hangs prominently over the fireplace. Several pictures hang on the wall as well. There is a door that leads to a patio, outside.

ROB VANTAGE, 56, White, is collating papers and stapling them.

CLAIRE VANTAGE, 57, White, speaks into her phone.

CLAIRE

But we’re trying to sell our house. I would just love a sense of when it will be repaired
No, please don’t put me on...!

Ugh.

“Thank you for calling the Baltimore City Public Works Department. Your call is minimally important to us.”

ROB

Just hang up.

CLAIRE

I’m entitled to some basic information.

ROB

What does it matter? We’re here now.

CLAIRE

When people go to an Open House, a gaping hole in the street is not exactly curb appeal.

ROB

I’m sure the city will fix it by tomorrow.

CLAIRE

Your father could have gotten them to fix it.

Hello?

Yes, I’m just trying to determine when the sinkhole on St. Alban’s will be...

No, we don’t need to go to a shelter, but that’s very kind of you.

We’re at our beach house.

Oh, it is nice.

Well, it’s not that nice, it’s just a river house, actually.

ROB

Gosh, why don't you invite them down here while you're at it?

CLAIRE

Oh, you're sweet, but we can get our own bottled water when we get back.

Although we're really trying to reduce our use of plastics.

Now my question is when will...

Oh, I don't think I could go to a public showering facility.

ROB

That sounds like fun.

CLAIRE

We have an Open House scheduled tomorrow and we're hoping that...

I got cut off. It took me twenty minutes just to get to a real person.

ROB

Well, I'm sure you're not the only one calling. Story online says there are three watermain breaks just in our zip code.

CLAIRE

The city is a disaster. I am so glad we are getting out.

ROB

Watermains break, Claire. Freeze/thaw/freeze/thaw. It's old infrastructure.

CLAIRE

IF we can get out.

ROB

Oh, but in Whitechapel Village, the water mains NEVER // break

CLAIRE

Because they are ten years old not a hundred and ten // years old.

ROB

And the power NEVER goes // out

CLAIRE

Because the lines are // underground

ROB

And no one EVER gets anything stolen off their porch

CLAIRE

Because there aren't...

We hear a rumble of thunder.

ROB

Because there aren't what?

It was just a planter.

CLAIRE

A cast iron heirloom. And the impatiens were so beautiful.

ROB

They left the impatiens.

CLAIRE uses her phone.

ROB

You're not going to get it fixed any faster. And nor could my father!

CLAIRE

I'm texting Allie.

ROB

She's out paddling.

CLAIRE

And I want her to come in if there's thunder.

ROB

She's smart enough to figure that out for herself.

CLAIRE

Anyone who takes their phone kayaking...

ROB

Ah, youth!

CLAIRE

If the city is distributing bottled water and setting up showering facilities it must mean that they think it's going to be // a long haul

ROB

And how nice it is that the city is doing that, and how nice it is that we have The Forge to retreat to. Glass half full, Claire!

CLAIRE

Full of what, Rob? No water!

ROB

Do you have any idea when Jordan and Mikaela are getting here?

CLAIRE

“MY-kay-luh”. And you can text him, you know. Mikaela is the one driving. I wonder what she’ll think of your pronouncement.

ROB

Can you not say “pronouncement” with such disgust?

CLAIRE

It was not disgust. It was dismay. And I think that sharing that with someone we haven’t even met is very unfair to both her and Jordan.

ROB

I explained that it might not be the best time to bring a girlfriend and he corrected me and said she was not “a girlfriend” but his “partner,” and I don’t know what that means // exactly

CLAIRE

Do you think they’re engaged?

ROB

All I know is that I told him this wouldn’t be the typical birthday weekend and he threw out the term “partner” which seemed odd // but who am I to

CLAIRE

He keeps sending me pictures of the two of them eating foods I don’t recognize. What does she do again?

ROB

She’s the “social media manager” for the restaurant he works in. Excuse me, for the “whole restaurant group.” I got that wrong once and he nearly bit my head off.

CLAIRE

So she tweets for a living?

ROB

Apparently, it’s much more involved than we ancients understand, and don’t turn your nose up at it or he will bite your head off, too.

More thunder.

CLAIRE

Oh, I don't want a storm to ruin your birthday weekend. It's already going to be tough enough. I was never disgusted. I'm just...full of concerns. More than half-full.

ROB

The kids will help you move the needle.

ROB has finished collating the reports he was preparing.

CLAIRE gets a text.

CLAIRE

Allie texted back. "LOL...Lightning emoji...Face on fire emoji...Coffin emoji."

ROB

I'm glad to see that's what two hundred and fifty thousand dollars for a degree in "technological linguistics" looks like.

CLAIRE

One of my concerns is that she'll have a panic attack when you tell her.

ROB

I thought getting the snake was supposed to prevent those.

CLAIRE

She left Glide in her dorm.

ROB

Clyde?

CLAIRE

GLIDE. Get it?

ROB

What's the point of a therapy snake if you don't bring it with you?

CLAIRE

Being here is her best therapy. But when you tell her you want to sell this place, I'm afraid of what's going to happen.

ROB

You have to give her more credit.

You sure you don't want her to have a panic attack?

CLAIRE

What?

ROB

Because if selling The Forge is that upsetting to her, you know I'm not going through with it.

CLAIRE

I do not want my child having a panic attack! So just don't trigger her. Start with, "Allie, no matter what, your senior year tuition is paid in full."

ROB

Now, if that's the first thing I heard, I would panic.

CLAIRE

And she'll want reassurance about us.

ROB

So do I.

More thunder. CLAIRE gets a text.

CLAIRE

It's Jordan. "Mikaela, Ethel, and I just passed the gatehouse." Ethel? Who is Ethel?

ROB

I have no idea.

CLAIRE

A pet? I hope it's a pet and not another human.

Lightning and loud thunder.

ROB and CLAIRE both instinctively exit to the patio.

The storm picks up, and there is an orange glow, accompanied by the sound of iron bars, hot from the forge, being pounded on an anvil, getting louder and louder.

The house shakes, and a picture falls.

ROB (offstage)

Allie?

CLAIRE (offstage)

Allie, where are you?

ROB (offstage)

Oh good, she's tying up at the dock.

CLAIRE (offstage)

Sweetie, leave it! Just leave the kayak!

ROB (offstage)

She'll be fine. Here's our girl.

ROB and CLAIRE return, with ALLIE, White, 21, closing the door to the patio. The orange glow, the sound of the iron bars, and the storm cease.

ALLIE

And I was having such a great paddle, too.

ROB

It won't storm all weekend.

ALLIE notices the fallen picture.

ALLIE

Oh no. When did that happen?

CLAIRE picks up the broken picture. She carefully leans it against the wall from which it fell.

CLAIRE

Oh my. The Iron Works.

ROB

Careful.

CLAIRE

Picture's fine. Just glass.

ROB

I'll get the dustpan.

ROB exits.

ALLIE

Did you order lunch yet?

CLAIRE

Crabcakes are on the way!

ALLIE

Mom, the “family business” Dad wants to talk about...are you getting divorced?

CLAIRE

Oh, Allie. No!

ALLIE

You’re moving to Whitechapel Village, and that’s where all my friends’ Moms went when they got divorced.

CLAIRE

We’re getting a three-bedroom. You and Jordan will each have a room when you need one. Please don’t be anxious.

ALLIE

OK, first you can not say that to someone with an anxiety disorder. It’s like telling a blind person to “look around”. And I’m not anxious. But there is definitely a vibe. Is Dad ... taking another mental health break?

CLAIRE

No, sweetie, not yet. Now please don’t wor-...
There is nothing to worry about.

CLAIRE sings the “family song”, and ALLIE eventually joins in.

(singing) Down at the Forge
Is our happy place
Swimmin’ and sailin’
And stuffin’ our face-s
Sand in our toes and
Sunburned noses
Dooowwn aaat the Forge.

Now get yourself dried off before Monopoly! MWAH!

ALLIE exits. ROB returns with a dustpan and begins cleaning up. He cuts himself on a piece of glass.

ROB

Ow!

CLAIRE

Here. Let me see.

CLAIRE takes ROB's cut finger and "milks it" to get it to bleed a little. She then kisses it, and even licks it a little. It is tender, healing, and primal all at once.

ROB

I've been praying, Claire. I know. Me. I've been praying for you and for Jordan and for Allie.

ROB kisses CLAIRE tenderly.

CLAIRE

Do you need a Band-Aid?

ROB

No.

CLAIRE

What do you need?

ROB

For you to understand.
What do you need?

CLAIRE

For us all to agree.

ROB

Like I said, the kids will help you get there. You raised resilient kids, Claire.

CLAIRE

Didn't do it alone.

ROB

You filled them with resilience. Just as I have filled them with a passion for social justice.

CLAIRE

And today when you tell them you want to give away their inheritance because it was obtained through slave labor, we'll find out just how full of each they are.

*Bright lightning and sharp thunder.
The sound of a tree branch cracking and falling.
ROB and CLAIRE rush to a window.*

CLAIRE

Oh my God. Our car.

ROB

I guess we'll be here longer than we thought.

ROB exits. CLAIRE's phone rings.

CLAIRE

Hello?

Yes, this is Claire Vantage.

How nice of you to call back!

Less than 48 hours? You're sure?

I certainly understand that old pipes decay.

No, we don't need anything else.

Well, I think a tree just fell on our car.

Thank you.

And I just realized I left my migraine pills at home.

Migraines bring out the worst in me.

That's very sage advice.

You have a nice day, too.

The sound of a car approaching.

ALLIE is there.

ALLIE

What just happened?

ROB is there.

ROB

Car's actually fine. But we're not going anywhere with half a tree in the driveway. I'll call the Association.

CLAIRE

Please tell me it wasn't the treehouse tree?

ROB

Look, no one had been in that treehouse for years.

CLAIRE

Oh, no! I had visions of grandkids. Allie, your treehouse!

ALLIE

It's fine. It was really more Jor's anyway.

CLAIRE

Well, Dad can rebuild it. That must be them.

JORDAN, White, 26, and MIKAELA, Black, 25, are there.

JORDAN

Everybody safe?

ROB

Everyone is safe.

JORDAN

Man, that treehouse really bought it. Hey, Al, those vape pens yours? You must have left them in there. Looks like they made it through OK.

ALLIE

Ha ha.

ROB

MY-KAY-luh. MY-KAY-luh. Right?

MIKAELA

Hi, Mr. Vantage! It is so nice to meet you. And Mrs. Vantage. I'm so sorry about your tree. And your treehouse. Hey, Allie!

ALLIE

I'm so psyched you're here!

CLAIRE

You know each other?

ALLIE

Yeah, Jor and her came down to DC a few weeks ago.

ROB

(correcting) SHE and Jordan.

CLAIRE

Did you fly?

JORDAN

No, train.

CLAIRE

So you passed through Baltimore and didn't tell us.

ROB

Twice, apparently.

ALLIE

Mikaela wanted to do the museums, and then we did some clubs, some cool restaurants. Not stuff you're into.

CLAIRE

I like museums. Anyway, please forgive the tree and the state of the house. It's nice to finally meet you. Jordan can't stop sending us pictures of all your New York adventures. Camping, concerts, protests...your sweet little cat! Oh, THAT's Ethel!

JORDAN

Ethel is Mikaela's car.

CLAIRE

Bring her in! No one's allergic.

JORDAN

No, I said Ethel IS Mikaela's car.

MIKAELA

My folks' 2002 Dodge Caravan. I'm not proud.

ALLIE

Obviously if you're dating Jordan!

MIKAELA

My Dad can't bear to part with her for sentimental reasons, and the old girl mostly just sits in the garage.

JORDAN

Mikaela's been visiting her parents in Philly, and when I invited her for Dad's birthday weekend she said that Ethel needed a good running, so I trained down to Philly this morning, and here we are. Win win win. And Mikaela's cat is Gandalf. I've mentioned that. Multiple times.

ROB

Perhaps one day we'll meet him.

JORDAN

Her.

ROB

Forgive me for misgendering a cat.

ALLIE

Please don't joke about pronouns.

MIKAELA

I left her with my folks. I'm already worried about too much unfamiliar turf. I moved in January and she ran away.

ROB

Jordan told us about the three-hour search and rescue. In the blinding snow. Uphill both ways.

MIKAELA

You raised a very generous boy.

MIKAELA notices a picture.

Oh my Gosh! Look at you and your hair.

JORDAN

I can not be held responsible for my hair at age six.

MIKAELA

And little baby Allie!

MIKAELA notices another picture.

Is that you with your grandfather?

JORDAN

Yup.

MIKAELA

That picture could be titled "Adoration". In both directions.

JORDAN

Norman Vantage. Now there was a man. Pop Pop built that treehouse.

CLAIRE

Your father built the treehouse.

JORDAN

Dad started it. Pop Pop had to finish it.

Silence.

CLAIRE

Jordan, it's your father's birthday.

MIKAELA

Oh, I brought you all a little birthday present slash host slash hostess gift. But it's still in Ethel. It's gonna be a little hard to get it past the debris.

ALLIE

I'll get it. I want to see the damage.

MIKAELA uses her key remote to unlock her car.

CLAIRE

You don't need to lock your car here.

CLAIRE gets a text.

Lunch is here! Rob, can you take care of the delivery guy? I'll set up for Monopoly. We'll play on the patio. Everybody wear sunscreen! Mikaela, do you wear sunscreen? You are going to love these crabcakes!

CLAIRE, ROB and ALLIE are gone.

MIKAELA

Monopoly?

JORDAN

The first thing we do when we all get here, no matter what, we play Monopoly.

MIKAELA

That's the first thing you do?

JORDAN

It breaks the tension.

MIKAELA

Do you usually have this much tension that needs breaking?

JORDAN

Please don't let that influence your decision. Aren't vacations tense for your family?

MIKAELA

No.

JORDAN

I guess there's just this expectation that everything should be perfect at the beach.

MIKAELA

By the way...where's the beach?

JORDAN

Through the trees. Here, get on my shoulders.

JORDAN lifts MIKAELA on his shoulders. She looks out a window.

MIKAELA

It's like two feet wide.

JORDAN

It's at least...six. In spots. You can lay out.

MIKAELA

Sideways. This isn't "the beach." And that is definitely not "the ocean."

JORDAN

I'm sorry if I made you think it was at the ocean.

MIKAELA

When you say "beach house", // then

JORDAN

It's a little beach on the Forge River, that leads to the Bay, that leads to the ocean. This is actually the site of the old Vantage Iron Works. We're not that rich.

MIKAELA

Well, not oceanfront-beach-house-rich, just riverside-cottage-rich.

JORDAN lowers MIKAELA.

MIKAELA

I'm sorry, I'm just feeling a little out of place.

JORDAN

And I'm sorry that you got the staredown from Bubba at the gatehouse.

MIKAELA

I'll just tell myself that happens to everyone who doesn't have the community decal.

JORDAN

I'm gonna report him on Monday.

MIKAELA

You're looking very pensive, Clob.

JORDAN

I'm just wondering what Dad has up his sleeve.

MIKAELA

Maybe I shouldn't have come.

JORDAN

Of course you should. And now that you're here, I get to have my fantasy.

MIKAELA

Fantasy?

JORDAN

So ever since I was like...thirteen...

MIKAELA

Oh God.

JORDAN

When we'd come to the beach I would imagine there was a girl in my room, and I would descend into the bottom bunk // and we would

MIKAELA

You have bunk beds?

JORDAN

My grandparents got them so I could invite a friend.

MIKAELA

You are 26 years old sleeping in a bunk bed?

JORDAN

So, as established, we are not oceanfront-beach-house-rich, we are only riverside-cottage-rich.

MIKAELA

But you act that rich.

ALLIE returns with a cast iron planter.

ROB returns with the crabcakes.

CLAIRE returns with the Monopoly set.

ALLIE notices and begins reading one of the reports ROB had prepared.

ROB

Mikaela, how thoughtful of you. Look, Claire.

CLAIRE

Oh, that's lovely! Thank you.

MIKAELA

I know it's not a typical gift, but Jordan told me what happened.

CLAIRE

We'll let's not think about that. I forgot my migraine pills. Monopoly time! Then birthday presents for Dad.

ROB

I'll put this out on the patio.

*ROB exits to the patio with the planter.
There is the orange glow and the sound of the iron bars.
The crabcakes are distributed.*

JORDAN

First crabcake of the season! O'Hanlon's are the best.

CLAIRE

Do they have crabcakes wherever you're from?

MIKAELA

Yes.

CLAIRE

Now, what piece are you when you play Monopoly?

MIKAELA

I've never played.

CLAIRE

Oh. I'm the shoe. And Allie is the dog. And Dad is the hat. And Jordan is the car. Here, Mikaela, you be the thimble.

JORDAN

Nana was the thimble. The thimble will always be Nana. And Pop Pop was the cannon. The cannon will always be Pop Pop.

CLAIRE

That only leaves four pieces, since SOMEONE threw the wheelbarrow into the river the ONE time he didn't win. And there are five of us. Jordan used to call it a "wheel barrel" when he was little!

JORDAN

Everyone used to call it a "wheel barrel" when they were little. Mikaela can be the hat.

JORDAN takes a potato chip from his lunch platter.

Dad can be this limp potato chip. What is he doing? Filling the planter?

CLAIRE

Watch out for Jordan, Mikaela. He's a cutthroat. He wins every time, but if we all team up against him we might be able to beat him.

ALLIE

Mom, what is this?

CLAIRE

ROOOOB! Your crabcake is getting cold!

ALLIE

Is this the "family business"?

MIKAELA

This is breaking tension?

ROB is there.

ROB

I was calling about the tree. They can maybe get someone in by four.

CLAIRE

Now let's roll to see who goes first.

CLAIRE rolls the dice.

Six!

And look at me just grabbing the dice. I should have let our guest go first! I'm so sorry.

ALLIE

Dad, what is this?

MIKAELA rolls the dice.

Twelve. Well, we know who's going first!

Good job!

Allie, your roll.

Dad!

I did not want you to see that before Monopoly.

Well, I did.

Rob!

I think we need to talk about this before Monopoly.

Hey, fine with me.

What is that?

It is something of a birthday present to myself. It's my plan for us to // pay reparations

Wait! Say it! "Allie, your tuition is // safe

Allie, your tuition is safe.

And your mother and I...

And your mother and I are...fine.

CLAIRE

JORDAN

CLAIRE

ALLIE

ROB

ALLIE

CLAIRE

ALLIE

ROB

JORDAN

ROB

CLAIRE

ROB

CLAIRE

ROB

ALLIE

What are you talking about?

ROB

This report is my argument to you that it is time for our family to pay reparations.

JORDAN

To pay reparations?

ROB

It's time.

ROB distributes the remaining reports.

On page one you will see a picture of the anchor that hangs above our hearth.

We know it took three men to make this anchor.

One to heat the iron bars.

Two to hammer and bend them.

Hours of back-breaking pounding and pulling

And burning hands and scarred faces.

And we know the Vantage Iron Works paid those men nothing.

Page two.

The Iron Works sold thousands of anchors

And pipes

And feet of chain

And cast-iron planters

And who reaped the profit?

Our great-great-great-great-greats, that's who.

Page four.

Our great-great-great-great-greats were magicians.

They turned anchors into silver picture frames,

Carpets from Persia

Tea sets from China

Vacation homes

With tree houses

And kayaks

Degrees in Economics and Technological Linguistics

Train tickets

Therapists

Monthly rent support.

Three men crafted this anchor,

And it was stolen from them,

For we paid them nothing.

And what could they make from nothing?

JORDAN

Mom, did you know he was going to...I told you I was bringing Mikaela.

ROB

And I told you this would not be the best weekend.

JORDAN

You could have said why! I would never have brought her // if I knew

MIKAELA

I'm fine. This is definitely not what I expected, but I'm fine. For now.

JORDAN

Why are you doing this now?

ROB

Page six.

A list of names from the early days of the Iron Works.

A few weeks ago I was on one of those family tree websites.

A distant cousin I don't even know had posted it.

You'll see wages listed after some names,

But blank spaces after others,

And they were not volunteers.

And now that there are actual names, we can find their great-great-great-great-greats in *this* direction and finally pay them for this labor.

You look stunned.

I have made you aware of our unearned privilege since you were children.

ALLIE

But we never thought you were actually going to do anything about it. Finally! This is amazing. I mean I always knew real people made that anchor, but to actually see names.

ROB

So you approve?

ALLIE

Yeah. I have a lot of questions, but yeah.

ROB

And do you approve? In theory, at least?

JORDAN

Um...sure, in theory.

ROB

This is the best birthday present I could have hoped for. I'm hungry.

ROB begins eating his lunch.

JORDAN

(to MIKAELA) How are you doing?

CLAIRE

You're not eating your crabcake.

MIKAELA

I'm...just taking it all in.

ROB

Why is there a potato chip on the Monopoly board?

JORDAN

You still haven't said why this had to happen this weekend.

ROB

It's my birthday weekend.

JORDAN

Not good enough.

ROB

So I want to be honest with you. The other week I started doing some research online. I found what I believe are two confirmed descendants.

JORDAN

Confirmed by who?

ROB

"By whom." I was cross-referencing several family tree websites, and I was able to determine // that there are two

CLAIRE

You said you want to be honest. He gets on genealogy dot com and has a half a box of wine and // then starts

ROB

A couple of glasses!

CLAIRE

(*continuous*) contacting people and telling them that he thinks they are descended from slaves who worked // for Vantage

ROB

“Enslaved people”, please.

CLAIRE

(*continuous*) Iron Works and that they might be entitled to reparations. He makes it sound like they won the Publisher’s Clearing House. “Hello! You don’t know me, but my name is Rob Vantage and I // am the descendant of the people who

ROB

I contacted two people! Two brothers, it turns out. Named Darryl and Marcus Wilson.

JORDAN

You told strangers before you told us?

CLAIRE

Who happen to have posted about this on social media, which is why this can’t wait any longer.

ROB

I asked them to take down those posts! And I realize I jumped the gun, and I am sorry.

MIKAELA

I think I need to step out.

ROB

I was overexcited, but now that I know you support the idea, // we can work to find

CLAIRE

And you still haven’t told them the whole story!

ALLIE

What is the whole story?

CLAIRE

In order to pay the amount your father wants to pay, it means we have to sell The Forge!

ROB

Now who’s triggering whom?

ALLIE

Whoa, what?

Bright lightning and sharp thunder.

*The large mounted anchor falls off the wall.
ALLIE screams.*

CLAIRE

Now look what you've done!

ROB

I told you she should have brought the snake.

ALLIE

Recognize, experience, reframe. Breathe.

CLAIRE

Allie, it will be OK.
(singing) Down at the Forge
Is our happy place
Swimmin' and sailin'
And stuffin' our face-s
Sand in our toes and
Sunburned noses
Dooowwn aaat the Forge

ALLIE

(breathing, simultaneous with the song) In for four, hold for seven, out for eight.

MIKAELA

I'll be taking a walk.

JORDAN

Wait, what do you need right now?

MIKAELA

I just told you.

JORDAN

I'll come with you.

MIKAELA

I think you need to stay here.

JORDAN

Please don't base your decision on ten terrible minutes.

MIKAELA

I'm not deciding anything. And is that all it's been?

MIKAELA exits through the patio door, to the orange glow and the clanging iron.

CLAIRE

Oh no, I think I'm getting a migraine.

ROB makes a phone call. JORDAN sends a text.

ROB

Darryl, hi. This is Rob Vantage. I just wanted to talk with you about making sure that what we discussed is no longer online in any way. I just haven't really gone over all this with my family yet, so if you could make sure that both you and Marcus...anyway... please give me a call as soon as you get this. Sincerely, Rob Vantage.

CLAIRE

You don't "sign" a voice mail.

ROB

I am trying to do the right thing here.

ALLIE

Why does paying reparations mean selling The Forge?

JORDAN

Yeah, the wages that were paid were paltry. You scale that up to today's dollars, it still can't be all that much.

ROB

Page ten.
It appears about 60 percent of the workers were unpaid.

JORDAN

60 percent?

ALLIE

Wait, I always thought it was like...I don't know.

ROB

Three people? Because I always told you about three men forging that anchor?
60 percent of the profits were stolen.

JORDAN

You want to give away 60 percent of our money?

ROB

No.

More.

Because even after slavery ended, until the Iron Works closed in 1889 there were housing fees, equipment fees, clothing fees, a company store, systems in place to drive workers into debt, causing them to have a negative net worth. Less-than-zero. So, it was economically worse than being enslaved.

JORDAN

But you can't quantify that. You can't just // assume that because

CLAIRE

Oh, he tries! He has wine-soaked spreadsheets out the wazoo.

ROB

That's pages 11 through 15. Unstained.

ALLIE

So how much are we talking about?

ROB

I have calculated that approximately 80 percent of our wealth // is attributable to

JORDAN

80 percent?

ROB

80 percent of our wealth is attributable to oppressed labor.

More thunder.

ALLIE

So how much wealth is there in total?

ROB

Page 16.

When you consider the houses, the trusts, the accounts, the boat, the art, the jewelry, the crap...it's about five million dollars.

ALLIE

And you want to give away...four million dollars.

ROB

That is what we owe.

JORDAN

Four million dollars? So what does that mean? What are we left with?

ALLIE

One million dollars.

JORDAN

I can do the math! I just mean what stays?

ROB

We'll have a three-bedroom house in Whitechapel Village and a very nice nest-egg for retirement.

ALLIE

But The Forge...?

ROB

This place was the scene of the original crime. And I know it's your favorite place in the world, but this land, above anything else, is stained! I'm sorry, but it is.

ALLIE

You don't need to be sorry.

CLAIRE

It might be stained, but an acre on Forge Creek is worth about 1.5 million.

Thunder. JORDAN sends a text.

JORDAN

A three-bedroom house and YOUR retirement?

ROB

I realize you were counting on more. And having a million dollars is not exactly poverty. In fact, on a world scale that is filthy rich.

Page 18.

A million still leaves us in the top few percent.

JORDAN

Yeah, well forgive me if my first reaction is not glee.

ROB

Do I sense some remorse at having spent your first four years after college as a bartender?

CLAIRE

Rob, this is hard enough.

JORDAN

Beverage management is a serious job!

ROB

Then I assume you have started your own serious retirement package.

JORDAN

Wait. Is this some sort of “Let’s see what Jordan will do when he can no longer rely on family money! Will he stay in the service industry, or can I scare him into forging a real career?”

ROB

This has absolutely nothing to do with your vocation.

JORDAN

“Never mind that I spent my life as an underpaid English teacher.”

CLAIRE

Your father had a calling and he is a gifted teacher.

JORDAN

What if Pop Pop had decided to give your inheritance away when you were 26? All I’m saying is there’s no way you could have kept on teaching and still lived your life in the whatever percent you’re in now unless you had those two centuries of wealth.

ROB

I do not see an equivalency between molding young minds and pouring tequila shots.

JORDAN

And, by the way, I am applying to business school.

CLAIRE

Oh, Jordan, that’s wonderful!

JORDAN

No, it’s not. Mikaela’s making me!

ALLIE

She’s not making you!

JORDAN

OK, not in the strict sense, but it’s pretty clear me being a bartender is not in her plans either.

ROB

“MY being a bartender.”

JORDAN

Fuck grammar!

ALLIE

Don't fuck grammar! Our Dad is grammar and don't fuck our Dad!

JORDAN

Oh! Or maybe this is his test for Mikaela! See how she reacts to Jordan now that he's not so rich!

ROB

This is not some ploy! And it is not about you.
It is about the need for all of us to be clean.
Completely clean.

ROB picks up the fallen anchor.

This "heirloom" sickens me.
And I need to be well.
We're all sick.
And how could we not be?
Living in this thieftom
This kleptocracy
This multigenerational heist
This state-sanctioned stick-up
And I will no longer abide it!

JORDAN

Look, the world is not Monopoly, where everyone gets the same fifteen hundred dollars to start!
I wish it were, but it's not. Dismantling our own house does not change the rules of the game.

*ROB upends the board, sending pieces flying.
Thunder and lightning.*

ALLIE

Don't start smashing things again!

CLAIRE

ROB!!

ROB

I'm so sorry. Allie, sweetie, I'm so sorry.

ALLIE

You promised me you would never do that again.

ROB

I'm sorry.

ALLIE

Maybe you need another mental health break.

ROB

I promise you this will not be like ten years ago.

JORDAN

It's starting to feel like it.

ALLIE

I need to breathe. I'm going outside.

CLAIRE

Sweetie, what can I do for you?

ALLIE

Just let me eat my cold crabcake.

CLAIRE

No paddling!

ALLIE exits with her crabcake.

CLAIRE starts cleaning up the Monopoly mess.

JORDAN sends a text.

CLAIRE

Well, you've ruined Monopoly forever. I honestly can't imagine us ever playing it again.

ROB

That was not my intention and I have apologized.

CLAIRE

I was hoping sacred family traditions might be in the little bit we get to keep.

More thunder.

JORDAN

I'm gonna find Mikaela.

I think it's best if she and I go.

ROB

I don't want you to feel like you have to leave on my account.

JORDAN

I don't see this getting a whole lot easier.

ROB

No, we can table this.

JORDAN

You turned the table over.

CLAIRE

I hope Allie's OK. I don't want her to feel like she can't come in if it starts to rain.

JORDAN gets a text.

JORDAN

Mikaela says they're both sitting in Ethel. Safest place in a thunderstorm. If you're not safe inside.

CLAIRE has restored the Monopoly board. The sky glows orange and we hear the sounds of the Forge. JORDAN looks at the picture of him and Pop Pop.

JORDAN

Pop Pop worked hard for us.
He played fair.
He was nice.
He gave to the poor.
He left what he left so we could have it.

By the way, I asked Mikaela to move in with me.
She said she needed to see me with my family before making that decision.
So thanks for that.

JORDAN is gone.

ROB

Do you still think you're going to have a migraine?

CLAIRE

No, I'm having one now.

ROB

I'll go to the pharmacy.

CLAIRE

Our car is blocked, remember?

ROB

They can deliver. I'll call.

CLAIRE

I'll endure. We'll endure.
And I'm sorry about the wine cracks.

ROB

Is it wrong to pray if you don't really believe in prayer?

CLAIRE

It's probably not the best use of your time.

ROB

I hated singing those hymns when I was a kid...but, God, I still remember them.
(*singing*) "Where charity and love prevail
There God is ever found
Brought here together by Christ's love
By love we are // thus bound

CLAIRE

I just realized this all started when you got kicked out of your community chorus.

ROB

I was not "kicked out."

CLAIRE

She said you were too raspy. And that's the night you polished off // the box of wine

ROB

She suggested I retire. It happens.

CLAIRE

And that's the night you polished off the box of wine and drunk emailed // Darryl and Marcus.

ROB

No! If you must know, I polished off the box of wine the last time my book got rejected.

CLAIRE

I keep telling you to self-publish it. You might make some money.

ROB

A book about the whims and vagaries of English Grammar is not going to be a best seller.

ROB looks at the picture of Pop Pop.

How about that Dad? I spent ten years on a book no one wants to read!

JORDAN, ALLIE, and MIKAELA are there.

JORDAN

So we have a plan. Mikaela and I are going to find a hotel. If for some reason you need to get out of here, just text.

MIKAELA

And if the tree doesn't get removed by the time you need to leave tomorrow, I can drive Allie back to school and you back to your house.

JORDAN

So we're good, right? No hard feelings?

MIKAELA

Thank you for the crabcake, by the way.

CLAIRE

I'm just so sorry you didn't get to play Monopoly and see what we're all about.

*ALLIE starts dismantling the Monopoly game that
CLAIRE had reassembled.
ROB's phone rings.*

ROB

Hello.

Darryl!

Oh, I'm fine. Just discussing my idea with my family...but in much, much more detail than you and I ever discussed it.

CLAIRE's phone rings.

CLAIRE

Hello.

ROB

So I just wanted to make sure you removed any posts about my idea.

CLAIRE

Yes, this is Claire Vantage.

ROB

You need to take down that post.

CLAIRE

Well, I've been better. I hope you're calling to tell me that the sinkhole has been repaired...

ROB

OK, so could you please delete...
How many likes?

CLAIRE

You can't tell me that when I don't have my migraine pills!

ROB

How many likes do you usually get?

CLAIRE

We can't evacuate. We're down at The Forge.

Lightning and Thunder.

ROB

That's...impressive.

JORDAN

Whoa, evacuate?

CLAIRE

When are they roping it off?

ROB

What's the, uh...can you send me the link?

CLAIRE

It'll take us almost that long just to get back!

ROB

Thank you, Marcus. Best to Darryl and all your family.

ROB ends his call and checks for the link.

CLAIRE

I have to get home to save our things! We are entitled to that and you can not rope off...
Hello?

*Orange Lightning and Thunder.
CLAIRE ends her phone conversation.*

ALLIE

What is happening?

CLAIRE

We have to go back right now. The house may collapse.

ROB

(reading from Marcus' post) "Finally. A white person who walks the walk."

226 people like this.

ROB "likes" the post.

227 people like this.

JORDAN

Wait, is our name on that post?

CLAIRE

Rob, where are the car keys?

ALLIE

Your car is blocked!

CLAIRE

We have to save our things! Mikaela, drive us back // so we can

JORDAN

Do not tell her what to do!

CLAIRE

I'm not telling her what to do, I'm begging her!

ROB

Just stay here.

CLAIRE

You're not gonna even try to save our house?!

ROB

Houses do not just collapse.

CLAIRE

She said it might!

ROB

It's just things, and it's all insured!

ALLIE

They're not just things! Well, they are, but they're not.

CLAIRE

Mikaela, please drive us back. 4504 Saint Alban's Way. How long does the lady in the phone say it will take? PUT IT IN YOUR PHONE!

MIKAELA

You have a phone!

CLAIRE

But you have Ethel! So you are the driver!

MIKAELA

I am the driver?

JORDAN

Mom, you need to get ahold of yourself right now.

CLAIRE

If you could have heard the urgency in that woman's voice.

CLAIRE puts her address into her phone.

ROB

In her voice, or in your head? You know your migraines cloud your judgement. This storm will pass, and then we can all go for a paddle and drop anchor on the river and bask in the peace of the setting sun!

CLAIRE

(to MIKAELA) I will pay you to drive us back. I am sure you can use the money.

ROB

(looking at his phone) 231 likes!

CLAIRE

(looking at her phone) 52 minutes! Only 52 minutes! If we leave now, we can get there just before they rope it off!

ALLIE uses her phone.

ALLIE

Look, Mom, I'll get us an Uber.

CLAIRE

Cabs are not allowed in this community, so Ethel is our only hope!

ALLIE

An Uber is not a cab.

CLAIRE

They still won't get past the guy at the gatehouse. Allie, tell the Uber to meet us at the gatehouse. (to MIKAELA) Please just drive us to the gatehouse, and you can be on your way.

MIKAELA

Fine, but how are you going to get back?

CLAIRE

We'll Uber back.

MIKAELA

You'll only get as far as the gatehouse, and you'll have a car full of things.

CLAIRE

When the gatehouse guy sees it's us, he'll know we're safe to let in.

ALLIE

There's no Ubers.

CLAIRE

There are always Ubers.

ALLIE

The closest one is 40 minutes.

CLAIRE

We can't wait 40 minutes.

ROB

Maybe this is a good time to pray. Seriously. And breathe.

CLAIRE

I'm praying Mikaela will take pity on us. From everything Jordan has told us you are a wonderfully kind person.

MIKAELA

All right. All right.

MIKAELA takes out her keys.

JORDAN

No! That is emotional blackmail, and you are not doing that. *(to MIKAELA)* Look, I'm sorry, but I am not gonna let her do that to you. She gets like this. Look, this has been a disaster, my disaster, that I will own and do whatever I have to do to make this up to you, if that is even possible.

CLAIRE

My head is on fire!!!

CLAIRE grabs MIKAELA's keys, runs past her and is gone.

BLACKOUT.

Sound of Ethel fading into the distance.

Two hours later.

Sound of a chainsaw.

*MIKAELA is sitting on the "dock".
It appears that the storm has passed.
ROB approaches.*

ROB

Mikaela? Claire just texted. She's on her way back. She's got her jewelry, some photo albums, the kids' trophies and stuffed animals, and her favorite kitchen utensils. She's going to fill Ethel's tank for you.

MIKAELA

How generous.

ROB

She's very sorry.

May I dangle with you?

MIKAELA

What?

ROB

You're dangling your feet off the dock. We call that "having a dangle." May I dangle with you?

MIKAELA

Knock yourself out. Just don't ever say that word anymore.

ROB

From “Here is a cast iron planter” to “Knock yourself out.” I guess you’ve given up on us.

MIKAELA

Your wife stole my car.

ROB

For which I am incredibly embarrassed. Although it wasn’t technically stealing.

MIKAELA

She TWOC’ed me. Took without owner’s consent. Technically a crime, not that it would matter // to the

ROB

Please don’t be angry with her. Be angry with me.

MIKAELA

Why do you assume I’m angry? And please don’t tell me what to...Just...when will she be back?

ROB

She texted from the Exxon.

MIKAELA

I’ve never been here. I don’t know where the Exxon is.

ROB

Five minutes?

MIKAELA

Perfect.

ROB

It was very kind of you to offer to pick us up tomorrow, but given what just happened I don’t expect you to do that. We will “Uber”. Jordan would be proud of me for committing the Millennial sin of turning a noun, and a ridiculous one at that, into a verb. So...five minutes.

MIKAELA

Five minutes.

ROB

Uh...I’m curious. Where does Mikaela come from?

MIKAELA

Philadelphia.

ROB

No, I mean the name.

MIKAELA

My parents are Michael and Kayla. It took three tries to get a girl.

ROB

Clever. Claire and I couldn't do that with our names.

MIKAELA

Well, you could have. But you'd have a kid named "Clob." I call Jordan that, sometimes, for fun. 'Cause he said that, too. When I told him about my name.

ROB

Has he told you much about us?

MIKAELA

A bit.

ROB

Positive? Negative? You don't have to answer. I was surprised when he insisted on bringing you this weekend. Since he moved to New York he's barely even mentioned his girlfriends much less called one his "partner"// much less

MIKAELA

Whoa. His term, not mine.

ROB

Much less wanted us to meet her.

MIKAELA

Mister Vantage, I insisted on coming this weekend. Well, not this exact weekend, but soon. Jordan wants us to move in together, and I need to know more about him before taking that step. And I think using that term was the only way he felt you would welcome my presence on your birthday weekend tradition.

ROB

More about him, or more about us?

MIKAELA

Chihuahuas have chihuahuas, as my grandmother would say.

ROB

Jordan is more like his mother, and I'm sure my saying that doesn't have you eager to run out and get his and hers tattoos. He'll do everything he can to not turn into me. He finds me feckless and repulsive, a mere high school English teacher, a master of grammar spinning into oblivion

spending my evenings writing a clearly unmarketable book, while his friends' fathers mastered a universe obsessed with finance and acquisition and became....

MIKAELA

And became oceanfront-beach-house-rich, not just riverside-cottage-rich.

ROB

Well, I wasn't going to use that exact syntax, but the sentiment is correct.

MIKAELA

What has he told you about me?

ROB

Oh, that you are...smart, and fun, and...you share an interest in sci-fi...and you attend marches together...and you are on a very long streak with the New York Times crossword, which I am too, by the way. Two hundred and fifty-four days! And only because I was too sick one // day to even attempt

MIKAELA

What else?

ROB

Uh...I know you both like eating "bibimbap", although I'm not entirely sure what that is.

MIKAELA

Is that it?

ROB

He told us you were Black by texting us a picture of the two of you eating said bibimbap, if that's what you're after.

MIKAELA

I'm not "after" that.

ROB

I want you to know that we are not stuck in the "colorblind" past. I recognize that race matters in everything. I...am trying to embrace my whiteness. I have tried hard to do anti-racist work in my teaching and in everything I do. I have alienated white friends by pointing out our privilege to them. As a family we acknowledge the racist soup we are all swimming in, and I believe Jordan is internalizing that. You wouldn't be with him otherwise, right?

MIKAELA

What did you really think he'd do when you brought up reparations?

ROB

I would hope he would fully embrace it.

MIKAELA

I asked what you thought he would really do.

ROB

Does he get angry with you? I don't mean to pry, but I don't see him with his peers. I just wonder if all that rage is just directed at me? No, it's none of my business.

I'll tell you what. I am going to get in my kayak and go out for a paddle. See over there, that little marshy area? Where Allie is? I'm going to drop anchor there and just sit and listen to the cattails rustle and enjoy the way the sun hits them on an April afternoon. Claire should be back any minute. I hope I'll see you again, but I realize I may not, so I do apologize for causing you a very bad day.

ROB rises to go.

ROB

And please let me pay for Ethel's next oil change.

MIKAELA

In your experience, is Jordan capable of rebounding from a crushing loss?

ROB

I would like to believe that both of my children are resilient.

MIKAELA

"I would hope..." "I would like..." Expressions of wishes, but are they expressions of reality?

ROB

A father has wishes.

MIKAELA

I might react the same way as Jordan if I found out my inheritance were to be given away.

What?

ROB

You used the subjunctive correctly! "If I found out my inheritance WERE to be given away!"

MIKAELA

I received a perfect score on the grammar, spelling, and punctuation test I took to become a social media manager.

ROB

No one uses the subjunctive correctly.

MIKAELA

And I can understand Jordan having divergent points of view. “Reparations in theory? Great! Losing most of my inheritance? Not great.” We can have these two truths just sitting here, “having a dangle” ...no, I can not say that...rocking their legs on the dock of this beach house.

ROB

River house.

MIKAELA

Grief stages. Denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance. He told me that he first thought that this was a set-up, to see how he’d react. That’s denial. And then he moved on to anger.

ROB

How long do you think he’ll take to get to acceptance?

MIKAELA

I’m guessing a lot longer.

ROB checks his phone.

ROB

Five hundred and twelve likes.

MIKAELA

At that rate it won’t be long before the journalists will come to call at 4504 Saint Alban’s Way, assuming it hasn’t been swallowed by the sinkhole.

ROB

You really think so?

MIKAELA

Self-punishment is a feel-good story for a lot of folks. I can just imagine the video of you, poring over the ancient ledgers and desperately seeking information on the descendants of the enslaved, surrounded by your china, your carpets,

ROB

All that shameful crap...

MIKAELA

“Rob Vantage is a man on a mission.”
Then a little family history, then you sending an email,
and then cut to Darryl and Marcus,
who they’ve made sure aren’t dressed *too* well because, you know...
They’re reading your first email,

ROB

I already sent them an email.

MIKAELA

But this is for the cameras.
They're reading your first email,
and there's just a little tear in each of their eyes.
Then on to the meeting you'll have.
The handshake, the hugs,
all of you talking about "How Much This Means To You"
and how this helps us "Form Our More Perfect Union".
The White Savior who has eased his own pain.

ROB

And if I do this, am I going to lose my son?

MIKAELA

You need to ask him that.

ROB

I don't know if he can get there. I don't think Claire can, either. Allie, on the other hand, Allie I have hope for. I don't think most white people can get there. Do you?

MIKAELA

Please don't ask me get inside the heads of white people.

ROB

But I am doing the right thing, aren't I? I do not want you to think I am so primitive as to ask you to speak for 40 million Black people on the subject of reparations, but I do value your opinion.

MIKAELA

Mister Vantage,

ROB

Please, "Rob."

MIKAELA

Mister Vantage, you are asking me to educate you when you can educate yourself.
But because I may never see you again...
The well-intentioned gesture is immature.
It does nothing to eliminate systemic oppression.
It does nothing to dismantle racist structures.
Some of the descendants may be well off financially and feel treated like victims.
Some of the poor descendants may feel treated like victims.
The process will certainly be messy, and filled with errors, pitting claimants against each other.

A few disreputable people may seek to profit and only serve to reinforce white people's ugly stereotypes.

ROB gets a text.

ROB

Claire's back. She says she stuffed Ethel and needs help unloading.
I'm serious about the oil change.
And it looks like Ethel could use some new tires.
How about you send me an invoice?

JORDAN is there.

JORDAN

Driveway's clear.

ROB

That was fast. Thank you.

JORDAN

Anything to make sure we get out of here. I didn't take the chainsaw back to the clubhouse yet.

ROB

I'll take care of it. (*to MIKAELA*) I'm serious about the invoice.

ROB is gone.

JORDAN

Hey. Ethel's back. She's fine. Mom filled her up. With gas, I mean.

MIKAELA

And your stuff, apparently.

JORDAN

You get in touch with your folks?

MIKAELA

With my mother. I told her I'd be back tonight if at all possible.

JORDAN

Right.

MIKAELA sends a text.

MIKAELA

How will you get back?

JORDAN

They'll drop me at the train station tomorrow.

I could see from the house that Dad and you were in serious dangle mode. What were you talking about?

MIKAELA

Oh...the Orioles' chances this year. You know.

JORDAN

Just wondered if you got any more useful data.

MIKAELA

He said you were more like your Mother.

JORDAN

Wonderful.

Look, if he really does this...

MIKAELA

You think he won't?

JORDAN

He has a history of biting off more than he can chew. He started building that treehouse a month before my 8th birthday. He was gonna surprise me with an unexpected February trip to The Forge, and then it was way more than he could handle and Pop Pop had to rescue him at the last minute.

MIKAELA

Did it get finished in time?

JORDAN

Yeah, but...

MIKAELA

So it sounds like he recognized he had a problem and adjusted to that reality. And then delivered.

JORDAN

OK, so let's assume he delivers on this one. Where does that leave us?

Was that the wrong thing to say?

That was the wrong thing to say.

Tell me why that was the wrong thing to say.

No, I need to do the work.

I need to figure it out.
 That was the wrong thing to say because...
 It is asking you to inventory your feelings...no...
 It's because it is over-questioning the relationship...no...
 It's because it is asking you to do emotional labor when you are exhausted.

MIKAELA

Thank you.

JORDAN

So I won't ask you that.
 I will just say, however,
 That I know you came here today looking for signs
 And I hope we have a way forward.

MIKAELA

Your mother stole my car.

JORDAN

And I am pissed off as Hell about that.

MIKAELA

You're "pissed of as Hell" at your mother?

JORDAN

Yes!

MIKAELA

Are you as pissed off at her as you were at Bubba at the gatehouse for giving me the staredown?

JORDAN

Much worse!

MIKAELA

So if you're going to report him, what are you going to do to her?
 From what I can tell you are still planning to spend the night here as if nothing happened.
 And right now, she is unloading your crap from my car and you have not insisted she apologize to me first.

You say you recognize privilege, but something like that happens and Allie goes for a paddle and your father goes for a dangle and you walk a mile to get a chainsaw so you can cut them a path out of here free and clear.

JORDAN

I'll talk to her right now. I'll make her apologize. I won't stay tonight. I'll get an Uber, no matter how long it takes.

Or it is too late?

MIKAELA

I'm going to take a walk while you all take your stuff out of my car.

MIKAELA is gone.

*JORDAN sits on the "dock" and has a dangle.
Maybe we hear the sound of the forge.*

BLACKOUT.

*Lights up on the river cottage.
CLAIRE, ROB, and ALLIE are there.
There are some boxes and bags of the rescued items
that have been unloaded.
CLAIRE holds up a stuffed animal.*

CLAIRE

Oh, Allie, here's Mister Stuffkins. I thought you took him to school with you?

ROB holds up a ladle from one of the bags.

ROB

Why did you bring a ladle?

CLAIRE

That's not just any ladle. It was my grandmother's. Oh, I got your box, by the way.

ROB

My box?

CLAIRE

The one with all the nice little notes your students have written you over the years? It's almost bursting. I didn't realize you had so many. But of course, after thirty years. Well, if there was one thing I thought you'd want it was that.

ROB

That's very sweet of you to think of that.

CLAIRE

Go get it so we can return Ethel just as we found her. Where's Mikaela? I feel just awful about what I did. Migraines...ugh!

ROB is gone.

ALLIE holds up the picture of the Iron Works that fell off the wall earlier.

CLAIRE

Oh, careful, sweetie. There might still be some bits of glass tucked into the frame. Here are your swimming trophies. And your riding ribbons. I thought you'd be happy to see these.

ALLIE continues to stare at the picture of the Iron Works. She places her hand on the picture.

CLAIRE

Don't cut yourself! And be careful with the picture. That's the best photograph we have of the Iron Works.

Oh, I know you don't want to think about losing this place.

You know, when your father first came up with his plan, I suggested an alternative that would allow us to keep The Forge. I told him we can make a very significant donation to Christmas Anonymous.

ALLIE

Giving toys to needy children is not the same thing as reparations.

CLAIRE

Christmas Anonymous is a wonderful organization.

ALLIE

Do you really think that is somehow equivalent to what he wants to do?

CLAIRE

And he could join the Board!

ALLIE

You're already on the Board.

CLAIRE

We need more board members. And it is such a great mission.

ALLIE

But you joined it to get more listings. From all our guilt-ridden neighbors fleeing to the suburbs. “Oh, let’s list with Claire Vantage! Not only is she a million dollar agent, she gives presents to the poor children a few blocks away that we’re running away from.”

CLAIRE

You’re criticizing me for being on the board of Christmas Anonymous?

ALLIE

I think it’s awesome. But it’s just a Band-Aid.

CLAIRE

When people are bleeding you give them a Band-Aid!

ALLIE

All your generation does is give out Band-Aids! It’s time for something deeper. Something that gets to the core of the rot.

CLAIRE

Then we can start our own Foundation. Something bigger than Christmas Anonymous. By a lot. We plant the seed money by selling off some assets now, and as it grows, we can pay the reparations over time.

ALLIE

So we use today’s immoral corporate profits to pay off yesterday’s immoral corporate profits?

CLAIRE

Well, I can’t think of another way to do this and not sell The Forge.

ALLIE

Then I guess we need to sell it.

CLAIRE

You love this place!

ALLIE

I love the “where” and the “what” of it, but I don’t love the “why”. Do you love why we have this place?

CLAIRE

My family didn’t even own slaves.

ALLIE

Oh. My. God.

CLAIRE

Of course I don't love the "why". But what can we do about that now?

ALLIE looks at her riding ribbons and swimming trophies.

CLAIRE picks up a small box.

CLAIRE

I'm going to clean the glass on these pictures. I should have never let them get this dirty.

ALLIE

Do you still love Dad?

CLAIRE

I need to breathe.

CLAIRE is gone.

ROB is there with his box.

ROB

Before you say anything, I just want to say...that I'm sorry I ruined Monopoly.

ALLIE

It's fine.

ROB

It's not. It's your favorite thing, and I ruined it.

ALLIE

Did I say you ruined it?

ROB

No, but I got // upset

ALLIE

Just because Mom said it doesn't mean it's true.

ROB

You screamed when I upended the board.

ALLIE

So I screamed. I'm a screamer. It's who I am and I embrace it. And now I recognize my triggers, I experience my anxiety, and then I immediately reframe the context, thank you Doctor Fletcher. But for two seconds I'm a screamer, and I always will be. We are who we are when we're pushed.

ROB

And when I'm pushed?

ALLIE

You're a smasher.

ROB

I swear there will not be a repeat of ten years ago.

ALLIE

And you always will be. I'm a screamer, you're a smasher, Mom's a grabber, Jordan's a rager.

ROB

The grabber asked you to tell me to relinquish my plan.

ALLIE

You know her well after thirty years.

ROB

True, but I was eavesdropping. Didn't take that long to offload this box.

ROB opens the box.

ROB

All these nice things students wrote to me over the years. "Thanks for a great year." "Merry Christmas and here are some cookies." The nicest ones are from when I was in the hospital. What do you remember about that?

ALLIE

That the hardest part was that Mom wouldn't let me visit you until I pitched a fit.

ROB

The hardest part for me was that no one was angry at me. Not Claire about the china, not you about your riding gear, not the Neighborhood Association about their azaleas, not the school about their tennis courts and their lacrosse field. They took me back in the fall, no harm no foul. But I swear when it rains you can still see the ruts I made with the Escalade. Or maybe I'm the only one who can. You all took me back. "It's just things," everyone said. "We just want you to get well," everyone said. Claire had brought some notes from school. (*reading one of the notes*) "Dear Mr. Vantage. Get well soon. Sincerely, English 9B." Everyone was so sure I was the one with the illness. And why would you get angry with someone for being sick?

ALLIE

Did you want people to be angry?

ROB

It would have meant that they saw some spark of sanity in my rampage.
For what sane person plunders their own treasure?

ALLIE

Maybe they were afraid to get angry,
Because they'd be admitting how attached they were to their things.

ROB

But even Jordan wasn't angry with me for ten years ago.

ALLIE

Actually, he was angry about his baseball card collection, but Mom spent a week on eBay, so...

ROB

I never knew. He hid it well.

ALLIE

Mom made him.

ROB

We hide our feelings well most days.
But four million dollars.
That's a whole 'nother thing, as they say.
Especially for a ragers and grabbers.

ALLIE

Monopoly is not my favorite thing. But you know what is.

ROB

Having a paddle.
And that I have ruined.
Or am planning to ruin.

ALLIE

I'll miss this place.
A lot.
I had a revelation on the water.

ROB

Please go on.

ALLIE

You know my internship this summer.

ROB

Ah, that.

ALLIE

You still disapprove.

ROB

No, I think it's // wonderful

ALLIE

No hiding feelings today!

ROB

Well how could I approve of kowtowing to bad grammar?

ALLIE

Helping develop voice recognition software for people with non-standard English regardless of accents, regional dialects or proper grammar usage is a noble cause.

ROB

And I am recognizing a trigger, I am experiencing my anxiety, and I will reframe the context. Help me reframe the context.

ALLIE

I've already figured out how I am going to blow them away this summer and have a six-figure job lined up ...OK, maybe a decent five-figure job... at least a month before graduation.

And I have friends I can live with, and be there for, and who are there for me.

Just like you are.

And so when I was out on the water, I realized that I will be fine.

I know, me, who has a therapy snake.

I might seem like a kayak being tossed around by the waves, looking like I'm gonna capsize, but I have learned there's an anchor holding me in place, so I'm OK.

ROB

What's your anchor?

ALLIE

I don't know, it's...maybe it's "self-awareness" or "resilience" or some other seed Doctor Fletcher planted. I'm really sorry I rolled my eyes at her so many times.

ROB

I think that seed was planted earlier, but..."whatevs"

ALLIE

You should not even try to pull that off.

ROB

I think your growing and healing is wonderful. And I support your internship entirely.

ALLIE

Really?

ROB

I literally support you!

ROB lifts ALLIE up and tries to twirl her around.

Oh, you are too big and I am too old!

ALLIE

And I support you. Not literally.

ROB

Maybe someday you'll have to.
After you've earned all your money and mine is all used up.
I'll miss this place a lot, too.
But I'll sleep better.

ALLIE

Sometimes I'll wake up here in the middle of the night.
And I'll hear a clanging noise, way in the distance.

ROB

I've heard that, too.

ALLIE

We'll be fine.

JORDAN and MIKAELA are there.

JORDAN

Where's Mom? She needs to apologize.

MIKAELA

I really just need my keys.

CLAIRE is there with a picture.

CLAIRE

Jordan, I brought this other beautiful picture of you and Pop Pop. I just cleaned it.

Oh. Mikaela. Let me apologize again.

MIKAELA

OK, you haven't even apologized once!

CLAIRE

Oh.

Maybe that's because I've rehearsed my apology in my head so many times it feels like I already did it.

And I do apologize.

Migraines cloud my judgement.

Ethel is absolutely fine, and she's got a full tank.

Here are your keys.

You know the whole time I was driving I was so worried that all that rain was going to make the sinkhole worse, but you know what?

It didn't even rain up there!

Isn't that fortunate?

I think we're going to be fine.

The sinkhole was definitely bigger.

But at least it didn't rain.

And we're going to be fine.

JORDAN

I'm not staying here tonight. I'll Uber back home.

CLAIRE

They roped off the house.

JORDAN

I will get in, and that way I can keep the place safe. But I am not staying here after all this.

ROB's phone rings.

ROB

Hello?

Yes, this is Rob Vantage.

NBC Nightly News?

Yes, I know Darryl Wilson. Well, kind of...

Yes, I am prepared to make personal reparations.

Thursday?

But this is complicated, and I still have work to do. I need weeks to read and research and consider. Let's say early summer?

Then how about next month?

Thursday?
 There is a bit of an issue with my house...
 But I'm confident it will be fine by then. Yes, you can come.
 Will Lester Holt be there...?
 But he'll introduce the segment, right?
 4504 Saint Alban's Way, Baltimore, Mary-
 Of course you already know that. See you Thursday.

ROB ends his conversation.

MIKAELA

Please enjoy the rest of your weekend.

JORDAN

(to *MIKAELA*) Look, I'm going to get there, but I just need time.
 I'm educating myself.
 I am challenging racism directly.
 I stopped using the word "woke" like three years ago!
 I fully get why the sins of two hundred years ago led to people stealing our cast iron planter off
 our porch!

MIKAELA

How do you know Black people stole your planter?

JORDAN

I didn't say that.

MIKAELA

Is there a porch cam?

JORDAN

I don't know.

CLAIRE

No.

MIKAELA

Then how do you know Black people stole your planter?

JORDAN

I didn't say "Black people".

MIKAELA

Then who was sinned upon two hundred years ago?

I really do hope you all work things out.

MIKAELA is gone.

ROB

(to *CLAIRE*) Will you be there Thursday?

I need you there on Thursday.

You kissed my cut finger not four hours ago.

JORDAN

You can kiss my ass now.

CLAIRE's phone rings.

CLAIRE

Hello?

Yes, this is Claire Vantage.

Collapsed?

But are our things still...

You didn't tell me to shut off the gas.

An orange glow.

It's all gone?

No, we're all safe.

Thank you for asking.

CLAIRE ends her call.

She caresses her grandmother's ladle.

ROB makes a phone call.

ROB

Hello, this is Rob Vantage. We spoke a few minutes ago?

About the interview next Thursday?

Yes, something's happened.

I won't be able to meet with you...

...At my house.

Why don't you come to our river cottage instead?

One Iron Works Court, by Forge Creek.

I'll make sure Darryl and Marcus Wilson are here.

ROB ends his call.

ROB

It's just things.

ALLIE

It is just things.

CLAIRE

Let's go.

We need to go back.

ROB

You go if you want.

I need to go for a paddle.

Anyone?

ROB and ALLIE are gone.

CLAIRE

I forgot your baby shoes.

They were in a box in the basement.

I was always going to bronze them, but I never did.

And now they're gone.

I haven't thought about them in years.

But right now, for some reason,

They're all I can think about.

I have this terrible feeling those two poor little white shoes are going to be my forever thoughtworm.

And I'll never be able to stop thinking about them.

Ever.

What a strange little regret that is to pester me for the rest of my days.

A long pause.

JORDAN

What was the worst part of the day for you?

CLAIRE

There are so many to choose from.

Excuse me.

"From which to choose."

JORDAN

So many to choose from.

So, so many to choose from.

CLAIRE

We never even played Monopoly.

JORDAN

I need to go see it.
Are you coming with me?

CLAIRE

JORDAN nods yes.

JORDAN and CLAIRE are about to exit.

*JORDAN returns and looks at the picture of Pop
Pop.*

What do we do now?

JORDAN

Mourn.

CLAIRE

(singing) Down at the Forge
Is our happy place
Swimmin' and sailin'
And stuffin' our face-s
Sand in our toes and
Sunburned noses
Dooowwn aaaat the Forge.

END OF PLAY