

Limbo

A play by Tammany Barton

Genre: Romantic Drama

Sub-Genre: Psychological

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Tammany.barton@gmail.com

Premise / Logline

When a renowned 'agony aunt' columnist, refuses to accept the demise of her own marriage she resorts to drastic measures to rescue it (and her reputation). Will inviting another woman into their lives, and receiving a 'message from the dead' help mend what is broken? Or will it reveal more haunting revelations?

CHARACTERS

JANE	Jane is an "Agony aunt" columnist for a magazine. 30-35 years old.
MANNY	A 35-year-old hotel manager. 35-40 years old.

SETTING

JANE and MANNY's apartment. Storage boxes everywhere. A couch center with a coffee table and a few odd pieces of furniture.

TIME

A Sunday afternoon.

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

Black Out.

SOUND: *Dripping tap.*

THE STAGE: *A living room. Labelled storage boxes everywhere. Odd pieces of furniture and a couch. A light is on off stage L, it is the bathroom. **JANE** is on stage, expressionless and wearing an oversized shirt. There is a continuous dripping of water and a hum that distorts the sound of clanking and scoffing coming from the bathroom where **MANNY** is off stage fixing a leak. Slowly the sounds become clearer.*

MANNY (O.S)

Urgh! Stupid thing!

Clanking

Half my stuff is missing? *(beat)* I have to go to the store.

MANNY enters the room.

Jane?

Louder.

Jane?

MANNY

Jane! *(beat)* Are you listening to me?

JANE does't respond. MANNY frustrated exits through the front door. JANE is startled by the slamming of a door. She runs over to the front door to have a look. No one is there.

JANE

Manny?

She walks to the bathroom looks around, takes up her place on the couch. Dripping. After some time MANNY returns.

Keys in the door.

JANE

Manny? Manny... where...

MANNY (*Annoyed*)

That was a useless trip.

JANE

Where'd you go?

MANNY

Hardware store.

JANE

It's 1 o'clock on a Sunday? The shops closed.

MANNY

Now you tell me. (*beat*) Guess we're stuck with the leak then...

JANE

If we sell this place - we won't be stuck.

MANNY heads back towards the bathroom. Turns to the boxes.

MANNY

When we sell it. Half my stuffs gone. Have you seen... (*beat*) What are you doing?

JANE still sitting on the couch staring into nothing.

JANE

My ring.

MANNY

Still?

JANE

I can't think of where I left it.

It is clear JANE hasn't groomed in a few days.

MANNY

Probably nice and cozy with all my tools...

(beat) What's in these boxes....

MANNY looking through boxes.

MANNY

When last did you shower?

JANE sorting them back into place or closing them behind him.

JANE

I was wearing it before...*(beat)* I can't remember.

MANNY

You haven't left the house in days, can't have gone too far.

MANNY *(tactfully)*

Shouldn't you get dressed?

JANE

Dressed?

MANNY

We have a date.

JANE

We still doing that?

Stops scratching through boxes. JANE repacks and closes them.

MANNY

Maybe even a shower? *(beat)* Look, I've started to enjoy that dirty 5-day hair thing you've got going on and my shirt...which still looks great on you after a week. *(beat)* But I think you are going to want to slip into something *(beat)* sexier.

JANE

Sexier?

MANNY

Unless that's the look you've been planning?

JANE

I didn't plan any of this.

MANNY

You called her.

JANE

For you.

MANNY

You called her.

MANNY exits to bathroom.

JANE (*To Manny O.S*)

Are you planning on wearing that?

MANNY (*O.S*)

Nope! I will be in my birthday suit for this one.

JANE (*To Manny O.S*)

Yeah right! (*beat*) Remember that birthday at that weird Alice and Wonderland place... (*No response from Manny*) When the cat peed in your cereal bowl and the owner acted like he didn't see. But he totally did? (*No response from MANNY*) (*to herself*) ... That was fun.

She looks through a box of clothes and pulls out a few options. She calls, but he doesn't answer again.

JANE

What do you think? This one?
Or... this... God, what is this?

There is silence.

Manny... (*Beat*)

Manny? (*Beat*)

Manny!

MANNY pops his head out of the bathroom.

MANNY

What's up?

JANE

Don't ignore me.

MANNY

I didn't hear you.

JANE holds up two dresses for MANNY to choose from.

MANNY

Neither.

JANE

What do mean?

MANNY

Unless you are going for Morticia Adams? *(beat)* What is that thing? *(referring to ugly dress)* Charity box. Sexy remember?

JANE

Innapropriate.

MANNY

It's a once in a lifetime experience *(beat)*. For me at least.

JANE

Pretty sure for me too.

JANE throws on a dress over her t-shirt and slips on a pair of pumps. She looks a mess.

MANNY

Who knows, you might like it.

JANE

Doubtful.

JANE *presents herself to* MANNY.

MANNY (*Laughing*)

I can only fix one disaster at a time.

JANE

What does that even mean?

MANNY

Nothing.

JANE

Don't do that.

MANNY

Do what?

JANE

Laugh and then act like nothing is wrong. That's how you make someone feel insecure.

MANNY

Fine! You have different colour shoes on.

JANE

Come on!

MANNY

Little more effort Jane. Just a little.

She starts removing shoes.

JANE

How are you so relaxed about this?

MANNY

She's going to love you. *(beat)* It's me we should be worried about.

JANE

You?

MANNY

My wife having "intimate moments" with another woman. It's going to be pretty hard.

JANE roles her eyes

MANNY

She is going to take one look at me, and feel sorry for you.

JANE

This is meant to bring us closer together, not pity us.

MANNY

Don't pretend you don't want to give it a bash.

JANE

It's ... strange.

MANNY

Strangely exciting.

JANE

It's not normal.

MANNY

Every marriage goes through it. *(beat)*
You've always said you want to try new
things.

JANE *(Under her breathe)*

Not what I had in mind.

MANNY

Pardon?

JANE looking for her ring.

JANE

Can you think of where you saw it last?

MANNY

What?

JANE

My ring?

MANNY

Your finger? *(beat)* You know, we might
even enjoy it.

JANE

what?

MANNY

Exploring our relationship in this new way?

JANE

With her?

MANNY

Let's look at her as a mediator.
Someone to listen, give advice ...
bring us "closer together."

JANE

Nice try.

JANE struggling to get out of the dress. MANNY watching her struggling.

MANNY

My wife and another woman... (beat) Are
you okay?

JANE

Oh, no. Please, don't let me stop
your fantasy.

MANNY

Can I help?

JANE

You have helped enough.

MANNY

We will find it. Okay?

JANE refuses help from MANNY to remove the dress.

JANE

I've got this.

MANNY

Of course you do.

MANNY exits to bathroom. Dripping sound grows louder. Distorted clanking and banging from off stage. Jane has given up trying to remove the dress for now.

JANE (To Manny O.S)

I did something today.

No response

JANE (To Manny O.S)

Manny?

No response

Manny...

JANE walks to the bathroom

Manny!

MANNY pops his head in and out of the bathroom.

MANNY

What?

JANE

Did you hear me?

MANNY

Sorry, what?

JANE

I said I did something today.

MANNY

ok?

JANE

Don't judge.

MANNY

I'm not...

JANE

You don't even know what it is yet.

MANNY

Exactly!

JANE hesitates

JANE

I saw a shaman.

MANNY

What?

MANNY enters. JANE gives MANNY the "look" of "Stop judging me!"

MANNY

This is my surprised face. No judgement. Just oddly surprised. I thought you didn't believe in that hocus pocus, fortune telling stuff.

JANE

She is not a fortune teller. And I don't believe, I'm just... curious.

MANNY

About?

JANE

You know?

MANNY

No I don't know? *(beat)* Me?

JANE

It's not always about you.

MANNY

Isn't it? *(beat)* Fine, so what happened?

JANE

She said that I should stop writing about other people's dating advice and instead write a self-help column or book about *this*.

MANNY

Moving? *(beat)* You should have asked her where your ring is?

JANE

She's not psychic. *(beat)* But, she
doesn't know.

JANE carefully watching for a reaction.

JANE

She also told me that I would meet "the
one."

MANNY

What's that mean?

JANE

She said love is around the corner, on my
doorstep.

MANNY

Our doorstep?

JANE

Ahuh.

MANNY

What am I? chopped liver?

JANE ignores him

JANE

She saw "the one" trip and fall hopelessly in
love with me.

MANNY

Did you tell her about me?

JANE ignores him again.

JANE

Someone from the dead came to visit me too.

MANNY

Wait. Back up. Before the "dead guy." Can we unpack "The one?" please?

JANE (*playfully*)

It's all hocus pocus remember?

MANNY

What do you mean she saw "the one?"

JANE

Shamans. They see, hear, feel things.

MANNY

Like a fortune-teller?

JANE

No, a fortune-teller tells you your fortune. Shamans, they're um... different.

MANNY

So who is he?

JANE

Who says it's a he?

MANNY

Come on.

JANE

Maybe your three o'clock appointment?

MANNY

Our appointment.

JANE

Your idea.

MANNY

You called her.

JANE

Relax. You're taking all of this too seriously. A "fortune teller" told me my "fortune." *(beat)* She also said I would win awards for my book. *(beat)* Come on Manny It's a joke.

MANNY

Funny for you. Between you and the fortune teller, I have been stripped bare of all confidence while you go off winning awards and meeting "the one." *(beat)* I hope you didn't pay her for this.

JANE

Can you at least give me the book? *(beat)*

MANNY

Fine. As your *muse*, add my name to the credits. Better yet, dedicate a whole chapter to me. And when you meet "*the one*" tell him... or *her* - it's a pleasure. *(beat)* I can see it now. Jane Siller, helping all women to navigate their way through turbulent waters..

JANE

Suitable title! *(Referring to the dripping tap)*

MANNY *exits.*

MANNY Enters

MANNY

Who's the dead guy?

JANE

Some guy...

MANNY

Ah yes of course, just the usual dead guy?
Seriously Jane?

JANE

Some dead guy.

MANNY

Did she like roll her eyes back and speak in a weird voice. *I am from the dead I want to speak to Jane.*

JANE

No...

MANNY

Not like that show when the "ghost"
speaks through them?

JANE

No, not like "coming back from the dead".

MANNY

Pity! That would have been interesting.
So?

JANE

He was in a car accident, a kudu ran in front
of his car.

MANNY

You never told me this?

JANE

I'm telling you now. It was out on that road
between my mom's place in Addo and
Grahamstown. The one you hate.

MANNY

For that exact reason!

JANE

Anyway, a Kudu came out of nowhere.

MANNY

You were there?

JANE

Yeah.

MANNY

Damn Jane. There are no lights on that section. I've told you so many times not to drive that route at night. Right? How many times?

JANE

All the time.

MANNY

Exactly. What were you doing out there anyway. It's so dangerous.

JANE

Are you going to lecture me or can I carry on telling you.

MANNY

I'm just saying. It's a dangerous road...

JANE

I know! I know! Trust me I know!

MANNY

Okay.. okay...So what happened?

JANE

The car hit the kudu and it smashed right through the window. It was still alive, moaning for hours after he died. Poor

thing. *(beat)* He was in the driver's seat, his hair was white so white.

MANNY

What did he say?

JANE

Nothing. He was dead.

MANNY

I mean when he visited you today?

JANE

Thank you.

MANNY

Polite.

JANE

I prayed when he died.

MANNY *(sarcasm)*

What if he didn't want that?

JANE

Well he thanked me. Wouldn't you?

MANNY

Thank you?

JANE

Want to be prayed for?

MANNY

I dunno. We spend our whole life wondering if God exists and just before you die, decide he does. So I guess yeah, probably, just incase he does.

JANE

I keep having this recurring dream. I'm walking down a long piece of road in the middle of nowhere. It doesn't look like it, but I am sure it's the same road. I walk past a car accident...and there is a man lying upside down in the car and he is so mangled... his face grazed up against the tar... he's scary. Frightened, but he scares me. His eyes are open, staring at me.... he can't speak though, his jaw is to the side, but I can see in his eyes he needs me. I can't help him. In my dream there isn't a buck.

MANNY

That's a nightmare.

JANE

There was an article in the newspaper the next day, after the crash. It had a photo of him and his wife, smiling. He had brown hair.

MANNY

You said it was white?

JANE

Snow white. His wife looked happy. They both did. There's something about that photograph that bugs me. *(beat)* Have you heard of people's hair turning white like that?

MANNY

Promise me you won't ever go out on that road at night again?

Dripping starts. MANNY exits. JANE frustrated bursts into an annoyed action still trying to get out of the dress.

JANE

Please fix it!

MANNY *(O.S)*

I'm trying.

JANE struggling to remove the dress.

JANE

Are you sure we are doing the right thing?

MANNY *(O.S)*

You, me, another woman. This is something most men can only dream of. Plus if I am going to be booted out soon, I would like to get something out of it.

MANNY enters. He watches JANE unzip her dress and free herself.

JANE

Finally!

JANES catches MANNY staring at her.

JANE

You do know it's going to change everything.

MANNY

We can't go on like this.

JANE

I want things to be the way they used to be.

MANNY

Impossible.

JANE

Why?

MANNY

You know why Jane. *(beat)* Remember those first few months when we started dating? We were infatuated with one another?

JANE

Yes...

MANNY *(Interrupts)*

Can't go back there. *(Beat)* If we keep trying we will only be disappointed.

JANE

What's the point of her then?

MANNY

Come on girl, where is the crazy adventurous woman I married?

JANE

This isn't a game Manny.

MANNY

Did you know there are couples out there with splooshing fetishes!

JANE

I don't think this is a good idea.

MANNY

Throwing food on one another and getting off on it. Can you imagine? Weirdos. Google it. This is mild in comparison.

Jane's phone rings she looks at the screen and ignores it.

MANNY

Who is it?

JANE

No one. *(beat)* What do we do?

MANNY

When?

JANE

With her, what do we do with her? How does it work?

MANNY

She's the professional. Let her take the lead.

MANNY (*after Jane*)

Believe it or not, but this could be more uncomfortable for me than you.

JANE

For you?

MANNY

Yup.

JANE searching for her ring.

MANNY

I think you should write the book. The magazine will miss you. Damn, I'll miss you.

JANE

I'm not leaving.

MANNY

What about the book then?

JANE

One day. Maybe. Not now.

MANNY

I suppose as long as the world has Miss Quirky Jane Siller and her seven-part programme it will be a better place.

JANE

I've been writing for the magazine for seven years.

MANNY

The lifespan of our marriage.

JANE

Is this the part they call itchy?

MANNY

You tell me. *(Beat)* My Friday morning ritual. Espresso with cream and Jane Siller.

JANE

Con panna. It's called a con panna. Why can't you just call it what it is?

MANNY

That is what it is, an espresso with cream!

JANE

It has a name... urg... never mind!

MANNY

Anyway. Every Friday I whip out my copy of *Jane's seven part programme*, close my door, pull down the blinds... and for fifteen minutes I am transported into Jane Siller's

world. (Beat) My favourite is still Aunty Lois and her big gardening tools. Remember her?

JANE

Poor Aunt Lois.

MANNY

Poor gardening tools! (Beat) When we started dating, everyone thought I was *the man* dating the relationship guru and sextoy tester.

JANE

I basically share other people's relationship mishaps!

MANNY

Read this week's submission letters.

JANE

What?

MANNY

Yeah! Read 'em! How much fun? I think we need to lighten up the mood. All this packing is exhausting.

JANE

You haven't packed a thing.

MANNY

I am fixing a leak!

JANE

Are you?

MANNY

Were you always this bossy?

JANE

Were you always this stubborn?

MANNY

Here. Read one.

MANNY passes printed emails to JANE and as she is about to take them from him, he puts it down on the table Infront of her. She takes them from the table.

JANE

Did you mean what you said earlier?

MANNY

About?

JANE

Never being able to go back?

MANNY

Go back to what Jane? *(beat)* Right, I am ready!

JANE

For?

MANNY

Jane Siller's seven part programme?

Referring to the letters on the table or in her hands.

JANE

I haven't edited any.

MANNY

What have you been writing so ferociously
the last few days?

JANE *(hesitant)*

Nothing.

MANNY

Are you sure the fortune teller never
mentioned anything about me?

JANE

Manny...

MANNY

She knows you are married though, right?

JANE

I didn't give away any many personal details.
The less you tell the less they can use your
information to make up stories. Okay?

MANNY

Okay.okay.

*JANE prepares to read the submission letters. MANNY gets comfy.
JANE gets an ounce of excitement.*

JANE

Georgina's story. (beat) Hang on I think we need a scarf for this.

She grabs a scarf from a box.

MANNY

Hello Georgie.

JANE

Meet our award winning quirky, fun, and catchy relationship guru, Jane, and her seven-part programme, seven women, seven tips, and seven ways to avoid heartache. seven days a week. *(beat)* Georgina's story - "Dear Jane, I am writing to share with you a belief I have acquired over my forty t...

MANNY *(interrupts)*

Do it properly.

JANE

What?

MANNY

The voice... *(beat)* Come on! You gotta do the voice.

JANE Does impersonation of Georgina. MANNY finds this to be the funniest thing.

JANE

"Dear Jane, I am writing to share with you a belief I have acquired over my 42 years on this planet dating the wrong men.

MANNY *can't contain the laughter anymore.*

JANE (*cont'd*)

You know I can't do voices.

MANNY (*Laughing*)

I know. I know. Carry on.

JANE (*Normal voice*)

I believe through my many years of research...

MANNY

Accent!

JANE continues with GEORGINA'S accent in italics.

JANE (*Reading*)

Through my many years of research, I have found that if you don't have sex with a man, or a woman, whatever it is these days, then you can't fall in love, which means no heart break.

MANNY

A revelation!

JANE (*Reading*)

Georgina. (*beat*) Georgina swears by this tip. She has decided that "The "Poofier" you are, the less chance you have of having sex with someone who doesn't love you."

MANNY

Poofy?

JANE

Yes, you know?

JANE *actions a "poofy vagina"*

MANNY (*Confused*)

No, I don't know.

MANNY *repeats the "poofy vagina" action.*

JANE (*Reading*)

Let the expert explain. "Grow an unruly bush ladies." Says Georgina the divorcee from Lonehill. "One can't just whip out a flamboyant bush in the heat of the moment. Make sure it is cultivated and beautifully prepared for "the one."

MANNY

Wait, what?

JANE (*Southern pastor voice*)

When you grow that bush ain't no man getting in!

MANNY

Okay Reverend Price Junior!

JANE (*Reading*)

Georgina says " *When you go on a date and it has been while since you "got any action," you might find yourself slipping into the old habits of having sex with anyone purely out of desperation.*" She is a busy woman. "So, to prevent sex, grow your bush and create an obstacle."

MANNY

This isn't real...

MANNY looks at JANE who is carrying a knowing smile.

JANE

Well...

MANNY reacts to JANES facial expressions confirming the truth behind the bush.

MANNY

No. No. nope. Not a chance. Impossible! This is not a thing Jane!

JANE

Creative licence Manny.

MANNY

So you've tried this?

JANE

Not actively.

MANNY

Inactively?

JANE

Accidentally?

MANNY

Accidentally?

JANE

There is proof in the poof Manny.

MANNY

What?

JANE

Once upon a time..

MANNY

Please don't....

JANE

Once upon a time.

MANNY

And you are going to tell me anyway.

JANE

I hadn't *cultivated* for a while.

MANNY

Here we go....

JANE

I was on a sabbatical one would call it. It also wasn't my intention to grow a huge (*bushy action*) either. But, as nature has it over time it took on a shape of its own. (*beat*) There was a gentlemen.

MANNY

Here we go...

JANE

Let's call him Peter.

MANNY (*Unimpressed*)

Peter.

JANE

Peter. Peter asked me out a couple of times. I got tired of saying no, so eventually I said yes. (*Beat*) I thought if I went on one date, he would stop pestering me.

MANNY

Did he?

JANE

No...

MANNY

Could've told you that.

JANE

You weren't around. Anyway, the night came to an end things started to get steamy, so I asked him to take me home.

MANNY

Good girl.

JANE describes a man that looks nothing like MANNY. She can even adorn MANNY who sits there simply taking in the dreaded story of his wife and another man.

JANE

He was absolutely gorgeous, tall, six pack, blonde hair, blue eyes, the most perfect specimen to walk this planet.

MANNY

Nice Jane, nice.

JANE

If I hadn't grown the hell out of my bush we would probably have illegitimate children now.

MANNY

But you don't, so it worked?

JANE (*dramatically*)

The poof protected me! I shouted "We cannot possibly do it with a hairy vagina, release me from your strong embrace and muscular arms oh handsome one!" And he took me home. (*beat*)
The end.

MANNY

I don't believe you.

JANE

Suit yourself.

Dripping starts again.

TOGETHER

JANE.

I don't want her in our relationship.

MANNY

I hate the thought of you with another man.

Keys rattling in the front door. Startled JANE signals to MANNY to keep quiet.

JANE (*whisper*)

Someone here?

MANNY walks to door and has a listen. MANNY shakes his head "no".

JANE (*whisper*)

You sure?

MANNY

Yeah.

JANE looks out the window to see if anyone is leaving.

JANE

This place is a mess.

MANNY starts going through boxes again. JANE closes them behind him.

MANNY

It's just boxes. *With my name over everything?* Seriously, this all my stuff? *(beat)* where's yours? Are you sure my tools aren't in one of these? You have a tendency to hide my things all the time.

Before JANE can answer, a BANG is heard in the bathroom. MANNY exits to bathroom. JANE follows. Both off stage. There is a commotion, laughing, moaning etc.

JANE (O.S)

Oh shit!

MANNY (O.S)

Urgh!

JANE (O.S)

Come on!

MANNY (O.S)

I guess we found the problem.

JANE enters stage laughing with a spray of water on her.

MANNY (O.S)

Do we have any towels?

JANE

On the towel rack.

MANNY (O.S)

Are there any dry towels?

JANE

On the towel rack.

MANNY (O.S)

Dry ones? Jeez, when are you going to stop using every damn towel in the house?

JANE

I hate re-using them. Germs grow on them and then I dry myself with the germs. You know this, don't act so surprised!

MANNY enters drying off.

MANNY

That is not a thing.

JANE

It should be.

JANE watches MANNY drying his hair.

JANE (Cont'd)

There is no scientific evidence why hair should turn white instantly.

MANNY

Trauma ?

JANE

Maybe it was the glow from the street lamp.

MANNY

There were no street lamps, remember? *(beat)*
How much time do we have?

JANE

For?

MANNY

I don't know if that tape is going to last, I
need to pop out and get a few tools.

JANE

You can't - remember?

MANNY

Shit. Why do I keep forgetting?

JANE

What about a plumber?

MANNY

Cost you an arm and a leg on a Sunday.

JANE

Worth it...

MANNY

The tape could last?

JANE

Maybe I should phone one anyway?

MANNY

It's going to be expensive... First find out what they charge....

JANE *calls a plumber.*

JANE *(On the phone)*

Sssh. Hi, do yo work on a Sunday? So you are able to come out? I have a burst pipe in the bathroom.

MANNY *(Whispering)*

A leaking pipe...

JANE

Um.. ah.. a leaking pipe - leaking a lot.

MANNY *(Whispering at her)*

Don't make it bigger than it is, he will charge you before he even gets here!

JANE

Shshs *(to Manny)* Yes.. okay. I will send you a location pin.

MANNY *(Whispering)*

Ask him what he charges!

JANE

Um... how much? Okay...

MANNY *(Whispering)*

How much?

JANE (*getting annoyed*)
Four Fifty call out fee... okay.

MANNY (*Whispering*)
Is he mad? Tell him no... no.. no!

JANE *trying to get away from MANNY*

JANE
This afternoon would be great. After five?

MANNY (*Whispering*)
Four Fifty? It's a rip off, I will fix it.

JANE
Thank you. Good bye.

MANNY
I told you I'll do it. You never listen to me.

JANE
Then fix it! If your taping works, then you can call and cancel.

JANE *ignores MANNY's ranting. Sits down on her couch exhausted staring into nothingness.*

MANNY
Four fifty, day light robbery. He better do a good job. (*beat*) What are you doing?

JANE

What does it look like?

MANNY

The last time you were doing that you told me you were looking for your ring?

JANE

Just... thinking.

MANNY

Wanna read another one?

JANE

Okay.

JANE excited finds a new story with a new impersonation.

JANE (*Reading*)

This one! "Dear Jane, I have come to the conclusion that one must never, and I repeat never date a man that looks like Jesus."

MANNY

What?

JANE (*Reading*)

"Your sins will not be forgiven, he will not turn water into wine nor will he raise anything either."

MANNY

Jesus?

JANE

Michelle, a 38 year old single mom.

MANNY

You can't have Jesus's name in your column next to a poofy vagina!

JANE

Says who? God speaks to all of us in our own ways.

MANNY

Right... poofy vagina it is.

JANE (*Reading*)

"Ruben loved the sound of his own voice. He was suave, magnetic, short and stocky, built like a staffie. He told me that I would eventually fall in love with him."

MANNY

Confident.

JANE (*Reading*)

"Ruben was persistent and loved my book ideas." Aww she's a writer too.

MANNY

Yippee.

JANE (*Reading*)

"Ruben was connected to the publishing world and would help me get my work out there."

MANNY

Match made in heaven!

JANE (*Reading*)

"Ruben, said I was beautiful."

JANE shows him the page.

MANNY

What does she look like? (*beat*) Not bad.
For an old hag.

JANE

Tch! "A beauty unknown to man. A magnificent,
beautiful creature."

MANNY

Okay now she is getting ahead of herself.

JANE (*Reading Dramatically*)

"One evening with tears in his eyes he asked
me to run away with him and marry him."

JANE is distracted by the sound of keys rattling in the door.

MANNY

Did she? (*JANE doesn't respond*)

JANE puts the letters on the table and walks towards the front door.

MANNY

Hey? Did she... what are you? Urg.

MANNY *impatiently starts reading the submission letters on the table Infront of him. When he starts reading JANE comes "back" into the room. MANNY puts on a great impersonation of Ruben. Dramatized.*

MANNY (Reading)

"You, Michelle, make me feel like I can breathe again. ... the air has been renewed and for the first time I am breathing in heaven."
This guy...come on, she didn't actually fall for this?

MANNY *impersonates Michelle and Ruben.*

MANNY (Reading)

I am reading now. (Michelle) "Oh I forgot to mention, he had an affinity to wearing white robes and Jesus sandals."

JANE AND MANNY

Ah! Jesus!

MANNY (Michelle's voice)

"He invited me to a writers conference in Durban, where we would discuss my book and meet influential people. Dum dee dum dum... "I however would never make it to Durban."
Suspense... Michelle! "There was a moment."
Blah blah ... "My heart blah blah.... she goes on Blah blah blah ... "I was promised."Blah blah blah... get on with it. "But then, something strange happened. As soon as I started showing a sexual attraction towards him, he became distant. Ignoring phone calls, emails, texts ... I am sure I even saw

him ducking below his windowsill when I
rocked up at his house." Ouch! etc. I managed
to get him to join me for a coffee the day
before we were meant to leave for Durban...I
don't know what came over me... but I did the
most embarrassing thing, I said...

JANE

Let's make love!

MANNY (*Taken back*)

What?

JANE

That's what she said. "let's make love."

MANNY

How do you know?

JANE

I read that one. (*beat*) She was ready to give
it to him right there and then on the coffee
table to get him back.

MANNY

No!

JANE

He must be Gay.

MANNY

Why?

JANE

He said no.

MANNY

Just because a man doesn't want to sleep with a woman, doesn't make him gay. She sounds too needy.

JANE

No she doesn't! She was just trying to get something back in return.

MANNY

That's the problem.

JANE

So this is her fault?

MANNY

I'm just saying...

JANE

When you are in a relationship it should be a two way street.

MANNY

Needy is so unattractive.

JANE

What is wrong with a person, wanting to get out of a relationship the same thing they put in?

MANNY

It doesn't always work out that way!

MANNY puts the papers back down where JANE left them.

JANE

That's for sure.

MANNY

What does that mean?

JANE

Nothing.

MANNY

It obviously means something.

JANE

Oh, now all of a sudden you are intuitive.

MANNY

What does that mean?

JANE

Nothing Manny. Will you help me look for my ring?

MANNY (*hesitant*)

Sure...

MANNY doesn't move.

JANE

Now?

MANNY

On it!

JANES phone rings. She ignores it again.

MANNY

Who is that?

JANE

No one.

MANNY

Same number?

JANE

Sales call probably.

JANE takes a moment to watch MANNY who is obviously suspicious.

JANE

He had a trickle of blood run down his face.

MANNY

What?

JANE

The guy in the car. The accident. I watched it slowly run down his face. He looked perfect like a porcelain doll with a red line running down his cheek. Nothing like my dream. When I think of them, I see that photograph in the newspaper, She's smiling and he seems to fade a little each time.

There is something wrong with that photograph.

MANNY

Trauma?

JANE

Dunno.

MANNY

Look what I found!

JANE

My ring!

MANNY *pulls out an old photograph of JANE.*

MANNY

Even better! *(beat)* Look at this sexy minx!

JANE

Look at me then and look at me now, not a day! I am still trafficable.

MANNY

That's not an achievement. Do you listen to the things you say?

JANE

Irresistible.

MANNY

The things that comes out of your mouth Jane.

JANE

My ankles! (*Referring to her own now*) These came over night.

MANNY

What?

JANE

Kankles!

MANNY

You don't have Kankles.

JANE

I've been doing research about how emotions reveal themselves in the body.

MANNY

Trauma ankles?

JANE

It's a real thing. We store emotions and they manifest in weird and wonderful ways. Often not so wonderful.

MANNY

Your emotions are in your ankles?

JANE

Well, no. But, you know what I mean. Your body holds onto past emotions. Traumas, loss, grief. They get stored up inside us.

MANNY

Your ankles are fine.

JANE

I remember this day actually.

MANNY

You must have been twenty five here.

JANE

Twenty five, big city, new gynae and I never went back.

MANNY

Why?

JANE

He told me my vagina was beautiful.

MANNY

Is that even legal?

JANE

He said it was perfect.

MANNY

Are you sure he was a gynae?

JANE

"Practically perfect in every way."

MANNY

Yes Mary Poppins.

JANE goads MANNY into the role playing of the doctor. She directs him in his role.

JANE

So here I am nervous to go to a male Gynae, unsure of what to expect. I mean I've been before, I know what to expect ... from a woman. But, anyway, I was told he was good. What a good gynae means I still don't know... So I go. There he was a big German man who wore a checked bowtie. *(beat)* Wear this. *(A tie)* And he looked like Einstein *(Ruffling Manny's hair)*...

MANNY

Ive been looking for this!

JANE

He said my vagina was beautiful. Those were his words....with an accent. GO!

MANNY

We are not doing this...

JANE

My vagina is worth celebrating Manny.

MANNY gives in and *impersonates a German doctor.*

MANNY *(German accent)*

"Ah my dear. Everything looks so good. Very healthy. You have a beautiful vagine."

JANE

Then he said my ovaries are fresh and healthy!

MANNY (*German accent*)

Your ovaries, they are good and healthy perfect for ze babies.

JANE

No he didn't mention the baby thing, yet. That's later, for now just the good and healthy bit.

MANNY (*German accent*)

Your ovaries, they are good and healthy.

JANE

The first man, no the second man, not discouraged by my poof!

MANNY (*Normal voice*)

Wait. The second? Who was the first?

JANE

You silly! (*beat*) Now he said that I will make the most beautiful babies.

MANNY (*German accent*)

You will make ze most beautiful babies...and I um.. do not look at your vagine the same way your husband does.

JANE

That's not...he didn't say that? Why would he say that?

MANNY (*No accent*)

I am just saying, he shouldn't be looking at it the way I do.

JANE.

It's not an it!

MANNY

Jane...

MANNY

Okay.. okay...Then he said my husband is a lucky man.

MANNY

I am such a lucky man...

MANNY moves in closer to Jane, almost like he is about to kiss her.

JANE

I miss this...

Knock on door.

JANE

Shit!

MANNY (*whispering*)

Is that her?

JANE (*whispering*)

It's early!

MANNY (*whispering*)

So?

JANE (*whispering*)

I'm not ready. No, don't answer.

MANNY (*whispering*)

What...

JANE (*whispering*)

Don't open the door.

JANE *frantically trying to figure out what to do.*

MANNY (*Normal voice*)

Just a minute!

JANE (*whispering*)

Did you just speak through the door?

MANNY (*whispering*)

No..Yes?

JANE (*whispering*)

I look terrible.

MANNY (*whispering*)

She isn't going to care.

JANE (*whispering*)

Do we have to do this?

MANNY (*whispering*)

You agreed.

JANE (*whispering*)

I don't think I am ready for this.

MANNY (*whispering*)

Jane.

JANE (*whispering panic*)

This was a bad idea. (*beat*) Do something!

Two loud knocks

MANNY (*whispering*)

What do you want me to do? How else do you want me to help you? Fix your leaking tap, find your ring? Pack your boxes?

JANE (*whispering*)

Your boxes!

MANNY (*whispering*)

This is for you, she is for you!

JANE (*whispering*)

Bullshit!

The doorbell rings again. The both get a fright.

MANNY (*whispering*)

You said you were okay with it.
Please, Jane.

JANE (*Whispering*)

Don't do this Manny.

MANNY (*whispering*)

Jane, I need this.

JANE (*whispering*)

I don't want her in our marriage.

Two loud knocks on the door. Both silent looking at the door. Something is slipped under the door. It is a delivery card.

JANE (*whispering*)

What is it?

MANNY (*normal voice*)

Not her.

MANNY opens the door and brings in a fruit basket.

JANE

Fruit?

MANNY

For you.

JANE

Me?

JANE reads the card.

MANNY

Who they from?

JANE (*hesitant*)

Remember that guy I dated before we got together. The one who told me that he wouldn't introduce me to his mother. "I'm not Greek enough."

MANNY

You aren't "Greek" at all.

JANE

Him.

MANNY

Him?

JANE

Yeah?

MANNY

The guy with the large. You know...

JANE

No I don't know.

MANNY

Really big.

JANE

Come on...

MANNY

Massive...

JANE

What?

MANNY

Astronomical.

JANE

You are killing me.

MANNY

You had no problem blurting it out on our first date.

JANE

What has gotten into you? (*beat*) and why on earth would I speak about some guys woohoo on a date?

MANNY

For goodness sakes it's a penis woman! Say it!

JANE

No.

MANNY

Say it.

JANE

No.

MANNY

Say it. P-E-N-I-S. Just let it roll off your tongue, let your mouth...

JANE

Manny

MANNY

Jane!

JANE

Stop it.

MANNY

Say it!

JANE

PENIS! *(beat)* Happy?

MANNY *(Sarcastically)*

Ecstatic.

They both sit staring at the fruit basket on opposite ends of the couch. Water dripping.

MANNY

Nice of him to send you... fruit. What's the card say?

JANE pushes the card in front of MANNY. MANNY leans over it and looks at it.

MANNY (*Cont'd*)

Thinking of you? (beat) You two still
stay in contact?

JANE

Not really.

MANNY (*confused*)

Really?

JANE

Ahuh...

MANNY gets up to exit to the bathroom

JANE

Where are you going?

MANNY

I have a leak to fix.

JANE

Don't be like this Manny.

MANNY

Like what?

JANE

This is not my fault.

MANNY

I didn't say anything Jane...

JANE

You don't have to! I didn't do anything...

MANNY

I didn't say anything.

Manny turns back when the phone rings. Jane puts it on silent.

MANNY

That him too? You seem to be getting a lot of calls lately from "sales people."

JANE

No.

MANNY

You say you want this to work Jane, to get better? Then you are going to have to start taking ownership for your actions. It's the only way things will get better.

MANNY exits.

JANE

What does that mean? Manny?

MANNY doesn't respond

JANE

I feel stuck Manny.

MANNY enters.

MANNY

Stuck? You feel stuck? *(beat)* How the hell do you think I feel?*(beat)*I have to pretend like everything is okay. Play doctor doctor, put on a stupid voice, play into your silly games, act like its normal you get a fruit basket from an ex?! When the truth is at three o'clock we are going to put the proverbial nail in our coffin. And there is nothing I can do to change any of this. And you feel stuck?

MANNY *puts on a jacket.*

JANE

Where are you going?

MANNY

The shops.

JANE

You can't.*(beat)* Sunday.

MANNY

Well in that case I am going fucking nowhere right! Fuck! I can't do this Jane, I can't help you anymore. There is no way to save this.

JANE

Don't say that.

MANNY *walks up and down the room trying to calm himself down. Bursts of anger, kicking boxes etc.*

JANE

Manny...

MANNY

Don't touch me.

JANE

Manny, please don't...

MANNY

You know you have a problem Jane. All you do is lie to yourself. I mean sure, we all do some way or another... but, especially you.

JANE

What?

MANNY

There you go again, acting like you don't know what I am talking about? When will you be honest? Not with me, that ship has sailed.

JANE

Tell me what to do Manny. I'll do anything.

MANNY

Why don't you keep packing boxes, keep hiding everything! Making everything look perfect so no one can see the mess on the inside.

JANE

Manny.

MANNY

What Jane? What do you want me to tell you? What I think, what to do, what I don't want to do, just for you to ignore me? You are going to do your own thing anyway, you always do.

JANE

Where is this coming from?

MANNY

Come on, you are "Jane Siller" relationship guru. Why don't you use some of that agony aunt shit on us for a change?

JANE

Why are you doing this Manny?

MANNY

You are making this difficult.

JANE

Me?

MANNY

The sooner you accept it the better for all of us!

MANNY digging through boxes making a mess. She follows behind trying to put the mess back in the boxes.

JANE

Stop it! Stop it!

MANNY exits.

JANE

When I was a little girl, I had panic attacks when I heard my mother switch off the tv to go to bed at night. If she wasn't awake, then who would be thinking about me? Who would be loving me? And if she wasn't thinking about me, or loving me then did I even exist? And if I didn't exist, then what ... happened to the love... where did it go?

MANNY stands by the bathroom door.

MANNY

What are you on about ...this isn't the same.

JANE

It feels the same. *(beat)* I need to find my ring.

JANE goes through the same boxes MANNY was in earlier.

MANNY

A ring isn't going to change this.

JANE

And she is? *(beat)* You don't wear yours anymore.

MANNY

You can't sum us up in a round piece of metal.

JANE

I'm getting a widow's ring.

MANNY

God you're dramatic.

JANE

A woman wrote in once. Her husband passed away and she had a ring made that matched her wedding band but with black diamonds. She said it honoured her love for him and she would always be his wife even in death.

MANNY

This isn't the same. Are you listening to yourself? Anyway, death isn't a bad thing. It's part of life, why is everyone so scared of it.

JANE

So you are okay with being dead?

MANNY

Sure. I guess... I mean, I imagine it would be pretty amazing.

JANE

That means leaving me?

MANNY

Yeah. Dead Jane.

JANE

And you are okay with it?

MANNY

If I die I have no choice really...

JANE

So that's a yes then?

MANNY

What's the question?

JANE

So you wont fight to stay alive for me?

MANNY

Do you know something I don't know?

JANE

I just want to make sure that you will fight
to stay alive for me.

MANNY

How did we get here?

JANE

So if you can so easily die, then why are you
with me now?

MANNY

Hang on.. what is going on here. Why are you acting like this?

JANE

Nevermind.

MANNY

Wait.. am I dying and I don't know it?

JANE

Joking about it wont make this better Manny.
(beat) Our love has clearly died. Otherwise,
there wouldn't be another woman! Widows ring.

MANNY

How is a ring meant to help her move on?

JANE

I knew you wouldn't understand.

MANNY

You are right, I don't.

JANE

It's a reminder of what our love once was.

MANNY

You don't need a ring to remind you.

JANE

You are the last person I should be speaking to about this.

MANNY

You're right. How did you turn this whole thing around like this anyway. *(beat)* I think you are letting these women from the column and that fortune tellers pull a number on you. You shouldn't have gone to see her...and these women attach their love to anything Jane. Even assholes like stupid Jesus sandal guy. *(beat)* Love doesn't just die, it keeps looking till it finds something right again, even if it has to go through hell and back to find it. That's all.. our love isn't dead it's just finding a new way to exist.

JANE

So that's what this is? Recycled love?

MANNY

Stop it.

JANE

Is this why we have a three o'clock today? To attach it to something? Because we can't attach it to one another?

MANNY

You're twisting my words.

JANE

I keep thinking about her. The wife in the photograph. Where did she put her love after he died?

MANNY

Stop it!

JANE

I have something else I want to read to you...

MANNY

Not now.

JANE

Why is this so easy for you?

MANNY

I thought we were having fun Jane. Like how we used to be before all of this. Part of me thought .. I dunno what I was thinking.

JANE

Fun? Fun? Is it fun packing your things? Selling the house? Meeting her? This? So much frikken fun!

MANNY

I have a leak to fix.

MANNY walks to exit.

JANE

Leave the damn leak!

MANNY

No.

JANE

Leave it!

MANNY

You're the one that has been begging me to fix it. I can't do anything right with you.

JANE

It's too late now.

MANNY

What do you want from me?

JANE

I want to go back, to before.

MANNY

Before what Jane?

JANE

Before.

MANNY

What?

JANE

Before that night...I want to go back to that night...

MANNY

Say it... Say it Jane.

JANE

The night...

Silence

JANE

You asked me to leave in the morning, but I was so adamant to leave my mother's house that night. *(beat)* I just wanted to get home.

MANNY

Now we are stuck in the middle.

Both JANE and MANNY sit in silence.

JANE

The middle of nowhere.

MANNY

Limbo...

JANE

So where does it go?

MANNY

Where does what go?

JANE

The love? Where does my love for you go?

They sit next to one another.

MANNY

It's still here... it changes shape. Like a running stream over rocks and boulders, over time it shifts and changes ... but the stream always runs. It's always running... Our love is still here.

JANE

I can't do this...

MANNY

You are right about that newspaper article.

JANE

I am?

MANNY

It doesn't make sense... The smiling woman in the photograph... How could you be smiling when you were sitting in a cold hospital room? You are right that photograph is a lie.
(beat)

Dripping starts again.

JANE

When the shaman said someone came to see me from the dead. She asked me if I knew who he was. I lied and said I didn't. (beat) Why did you come back? (beat) I don't smell you anymore, I stopped washing towels to try and keep your smell, but all I smell is damp.

Phone rings. She ignores it.

MANNY

Who is it?

JANE

The funeral home...

MANNY

Vultures...

JANE

Yeah. They want your body too.

They laugh.

MANNY

You need to get ready. It's almost three.

JANE

Dressed like this ...

MANNY

I warned you.

JANE

I can still cancel.

MANNY

It's important.

JANE

You going to join? Right?

MANNY

I'll be right there. *(beat)* What have you been writing...?

JANE pulls out the screwed up paper from the top pocket of her shirt.

JANE

Your story.

MANNY

Finally.. I make it into your column.

JANE and MANNY start preparing for the next story.

JANE

Manny's story.

MANNY

You left out a part.

JANE

What?

MANNY

Do it properly.

JANE

Meet our award winning quirky, fun, and catchy relationship guru, Jane, and her seven-part programme, seven women, seven tips, and seven ways to avoid heartache. seven days a week? *(beat)* This is Manny.

MANNY

Accent!

JANE

Will you stop interrupting me and let me start?

MANNY

OK, but, don't forget the important parts. *(beat)*
Hang on...

MANNY exits to the bathroom. Jane watches him leave. She tells his tory anyway.

JANE

Manny's been dead for ten days. The worst ten days of my life. *(beat)* I have a leak too. Manny was good at fixing leaks. Fixing everything actually. Ive been trying to figure out how to use his tools let alone fix a leak. I packed them away in his boxes. Marked "Manny." I don't know how the world works without him.

MANNY enters

MANNY

Do you want the truth?

JANE

Hit me up!

MANNY

I have absolutely know bloody idea how to fix that leak.

JANE

Good thing I called the plumber.

MANNY

Bloody R450 call out fee! Day light robbery.

JANE

You can wipe your hands clean.

MANNY

Do you know what the dripping reminds me of?

JANE

Water torture?

MANNY

Our first date.

JANE

Seriously. Wow.. thank you!

MANNY

No... it's a good thing! Remember when we first kissed?

JANE

Yes...

MANNY

You wore that beautiful green dress that moved ever so slightly in the breeze. It was like the wind was delicately dancing around you. We walked down that little road, to the park, I had my ukulele in my backpack and I serenaded you... joined in with the birds. I could have sat in that park forever. I asked if I could take your picture, you were shy. When you looked away I quickly snapped one. I love that photo of you.

JANE

You still have it?

MANNY

It's in my blue jacket pocket.

JANE gets up and looks in the pocket. A gift from the heavens.

JANE

You don't perhaps know where my ring is?

MANNY

Sorry...

JANE

And the dripping?

MANNY

There was that small trinkle of water in the river just below us, a gentle trickle, adding

to the soundtrack of our life. I keep hearing it.

JANE

I'm not ready Manny.

MANNY

Do you know what you taught me... that when you hear the birds singing the water rushing, dripping and bubbling with life, the wind blowing in the tree tops rustling the leaves...that's our love. That's where our love will always be... It's where it is now. Love doesn't die, love lives on all around you. My love for you is everywhere now.

MANNY sits next to her, he doesn't touch her. Throughout this time the dripping gets louder and louder.

MANNY

Thank you.

JANE

For?

MANNY

Praying.

JANE

Praying?

MANNY

The moment you prayed, I heard God. I chose God.

Dripping gets louder and louder.

JANE

What happens now?

MANNY

You will heal. And when you are ready you will meet "the one" and he will love you *(beat)* differently to me, but he will love you the way you need. He will feel different, but he will be right.

JANE

I don't want anyone else.

MANNY

There will still be cracks where I once was and he won't be able to fill them, but he will help you shine a light through them, a light where we used to be.

JANE

I can't breathe.

MANNY

Just breathe.

JANE

I don't want this Manny! I don't want this! Stop it! I don't want to see her. Please Manny. Please come back. I will do anything.

MANNY

I can't Jane. I'm sorry.

JANE

Please...I don't know what to do without you.

MANNY

You are going to talk about our beautiful relationship, our love, my frustration with you wetting every damn towel in the house. The stupid Kudu moaning long after I died. My white hair. Which was actually just the grey coming through. I don't know why you have to keep going on about it.

They laugh. JANE cries

MANNY

You'll need those tissues on the table maybe even the extra ones you keep in the top drawer.

JANE

I'm sorry...

MANNY

Don't be. I forgive you. You are loved.

JANE

I should have listened to you.

MANNY

No more "could haves" or kudu's for that matter.

MANNY Laughs at his own joke.

JANE

Unbelievable...

The dripping gets louder.

MANNY

I love you.

MANNY kisses JANE on her forehead, the first time he ever touches her.

JANE

Wait, Manny. I have one more story to read to you. *(beat)* It's Mary's. You won't believe her story. She was married to a man for 10 years... who she eventually found out was actually a woman in her/his past! Do you want me to read it to you?

MANNY walks towards the bathroom.

MANNY

Not now Jane.

JANE

But, I've even got an accent for her! You'll love it! *(beat)* What about my ring? Manny!

MANNY

I need to fix your leak.

MANNY *exits*.

JANE

No, Manny... don't worry about...

There is a knock on the door.

JANE (*Panicking*)

Manny! Manny! She's on. Manny! The pastor is here, she's on time. Please. I can't do this alone. I'm not dressed. I need you Manny I need you.

Knock again. JANE walks to the door and opens in.

JANE

Our love is in the trees, the rustling of the leaves...

BLACKOUT

THE END