

to experience catharsis, they have to be able to *feel* something, right?

JAMES: Yeah . . .

SARAH: But if they're desensitized . . . They're numb. Right? Isn't that what you're saying?

*(A beat.)*

JAMES: Uh-huh . . .

SARAH: So how . . . ? I don't know, sweetie . . . This seems a little . . . It's good; I think it's really good. But you might want to flesh it out a little bit more, don't you think?

*(He thinks she's right—dammit. A beat.)*

*What time did you say he was coming?*

*(She begins the arduous process of getting up to go to the bathroom.)*

JAMES: He *said* four.

SARAH: I need time to clean myself up.

JAMES: You know Richard: he's never on time.

SARAH: I wish you could have put him off.

JAMES: I did; for days. He's dying to see you.

SARAH: The last thing I want to do is chat.

*(He comes to her aid.)*

*(Rejecting his help; sharp)* Stop. *(Realizing she was harsh)* Jamie. Honey. Please. You're going to have to let me do things myself.

JAMES *(Backing off; softly)*: Okay.

*(He tries to hide his attention to her journey to the bathroom.)*

SARAH *(Her back to him)*: Stop. Staring. It only makes it worse.

JAMES *(Softly)*: Sorry I'm sorry.

*(The downstairs buzzer sounds. He checks his watch.)*

That's him.

SARAH: Fuck.

JAMES: Relax. It's only Richard. *(He buzzes back, unlocks the front door, and calls downstairs)* Come on up!

*(She enters the bathroom and sees herself in the mirror.)*

SARAH: I gotta do something about this face.

JAMES: Okay, hurry, he's on his way up.

*(She closes the door behind her.*

*James prepares coffee.*

*Richard enters.)*

RICHARD *(Warmly)*: Heyyyy!

JAMES: Hey.

*(Richard gives him a bear hug.)*

RICHARD: Boy am I glad to see you!

JAMES: Me, too.

RICHARD: Thank God you're home.

JAMES: I know!

RICHARD: Some nightmare, huh?

JAMES: Oh yeah.

RICHARD: Unbelievable. *(Lowers his voice)* Is she uh . . . ?

*(Meaning: "Is she napping?")*

JAMES: Bathroom.

RICHARD *(Looks toward the front door)*: C'mere, sweetie, it's okay . . .

*(Two mylar balloons precede Mandy through the doorway.)*

JAMES (*Surprised*): Whoa!

MANDY (*Shyly*): Hello.

RICHARD: Jamie, this is Mandy.

JAMES: Mandy. Hi.

*(She starts to hug him.)*

MANDY: Jamie.

JAMES (*Offering his hand*): James.

MANDY: So nice to meet you finally!

JAMES: Nice to meet you, too.

MANDY: Richard talks about you guys all the time.

RICHARD (*Prompting James*): I told you about Mandy. Remember I wrote you?

JAMES: Oh, yeah . . .

MANDY (*Regarding the balloons*): These are for you, by the way.

JAMES: Oh, thanks.

MANDY: I didn't know which one to get: Welcome Back or Get Well Soon, so I got both.

JAMES: They're great. Thank you. You want to give me your uh . . . ? (*Meaning: "their coats"*)

*(He hangs up their coats.)*

MANDY: I love your neighborhood!

JAMES: Oh, yeah? We were here way before it was cool.

RICHARD: Listen, thanks for having us.

JAMES: Of course.

MANDY (*Seconding Richard*): Oh, yeah!

RICHARD: We're not going to stay long. I promise.

MANDY: We know you guys just got back and everything.

RICHARD: You just got back, I know you must be wrecked.

JAMES: No no, we're glad to see you; we'll see how long she holds up. Started physical therapy the other day . . .

RICHARD (*Understanding*): Oh . . .

JAMES: Really knocks the wind out of her.

RICHARD: Kick us out whenever you want. I just had to see her with my own eyes. Y'know?

JAMES (*Nods; then*): Try not to look shocked when you see her.

RICHARD (*Dreadfully*): Oh, no, really?

*(Mandy takes Richard's hand. A crutch falls in the bathroom.)*

JAMES (*Calls*): Honey?

SARAH (*Irritated, from off*): What?

JAMES: You okay in there?

SARAH (*Off*): Yes!

RICHARD: She certainly *sounds* like herself.

*(They laugh. A beat.)*

How was your flight?

JAMES: Turbulence you would not believe.

*(Richard groans.)*

MANDY: I hate that!

JAMES: Why those humongous airbuses don't routinely fall out of the sky, I do not know.

RICHARD: I know! I don't either!

JAMES (*To Mandy*): You know what I do when I hit turbulence like that—the really scary, rollercoaster kind?

*(Mandy shakes her head.)* I keep my eye on the flight attendant. I figure, as long as *she* looks cool . . .

MANDY: How'd this one look?

*(James bugs out his eyes in an impression of panic.)*

*(Laughing.)* Oh, no!