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Chester's Place

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THE CARL AND WINIFRED LEE HONORS COLLEGE
CERTIFICATE OF ORAL DEFENSE OF HONORS THESIS

Kendra Flournoy, having been admitted to the Carl and Winifred Lee Honors College in the spring of 2011, successfully completed the Lee Honors College Thesis on April 24, 2012.

The title of the thesis is:

Chester's Place

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S. Feffer', is written over a horizontal line.

Dr. Steven Feffer, English

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Dustin Hoffman', is written over a horizontal line.

Mr. Dustin Hoffman, English

Chester's Place

By Kendra A. Flourney

Kendra A. Flournoy
Lee Honors College Thesis

Abstract

Chester's Place is a one act drama that follows the relationships between a husband and wife and a father and son. The newlywed couple that the drama revolves around is Eric and Raine who reside in Chester's Place, an apartment building that has taken a turn for the worse. The grounds are unkempt, the apartments are in need of repair, and the tenants are loud and disruptive. The couple decides that they have had enough and are ready to move into a home of their own where they can prepare for the future. In order to hurry the process along, the couple asks Eric's father, Mr. Gibson who Eric idolizes, to advance them money that Eric received in an accident settlement. The couple comes to find that the money is gone, and Eric finds himself at an impasse with his father. Eric and Raine are forced to put their wish of homeownership on hold and remain at Chester's Place. Even though the couple's wish to be homeowners has been postponed, they come to realize that they can not control or plan every aspect of their lives but instead do the best that they can, take their time, and enjoy the ride.

Characters

Eric- 24 year old black man

Raine- 24 year old black woman

Mr. Gibson- 55 year old black man

Setting

The play takes place in Eric and Raine's apartment. Their kitchen and living room are seen on stage. A doorway separates the two rooms. Their apartment appears to be old and run down. Although it appears ragged, the place is neat, things are kept orderly.

Chester's Place

By Kendra A. Flournoy

Scene 1

The lights come up on ERIC who is leaning against the kitchen counter talking on the telephone.

ERIC

Uh huh. Dad, it's fine. She won't mind at all if you come down. You know how great my Raine is she'll welcome you with open arms.

A door slams.

RAINE

[Offstage] Jackass!

ERIC

Oh that was uh... the T.V.

RAINE

[Offstage] Gets on my damn nerves.

ERIC

Umm dad, I have to go. Alright, see you in two weeks. Bye.

RAINE enters the kitchen. She is mumbling angrily under her breath as she removes her coat and purse. She tosses them into one of the kitchen chairs.

ERIC

Raine.

RAINE doesn't seem to see or hear ERIC. She continues to mumble as she crosses over to the cabinet and takes out a cutting board and knife.

ERIC

Umm, Raine.

She takes vegetables out of the refrigerator and starts chopping them.

ERIC

Raine!

RAINE

Huh? Oh, hey honey.

ERIC

Woman, what's the matter with you?

RAINE

I just came from seeing the maintenance manager.

ERIC

I take it things didn't go well.

RAINE

That man drives me crazy.

ERIC

What happened?

RAINE

He still won't tell me when he plans on fixing the faucet. I told him that we've already been waiting for three weeks to get it repaired and he just stood there and said, '*I heard you the first time, lady. Ima get to it when Ima get to it.*' Who behaves like that?

She begins to chop the vegetables with more force.

ERIC

You better be careful with that knife.

RAINE

Hmm.

ERIC

And maybe he has a lot on his plate and just hasn't had a chance to get to us yet.

RAINE

Oh please, I do not buy that not when it comes to that guy. He came to the door with a beer in his hand. He didn't look too busy to me.

ERIC

Raine, calm down.

RAINE

Eric, this isn't the first time he's done this. Honey, I'm really getting tired of dealing with this.

ERIC

I'll try and talk to him tomorrow ok. Everything will be fine.

RAINE

No, it won't. Talking to that man is a waste of time.

ERIC

So what do you suggest we do then?

RAINE

Move.

ERIC

What?!

RAINE

You heard me.

ERIC

Babe, come on don't you think that's a little much to just up and move over this.

RAINE

No, I don't think it's a little much.

ERIC

Raine, I'm sure the faucet will be repaired. It's not that big of a deal.

RAINE

Yes it is. I mean, the faucet and the lazy manager aren't the only problems.

ERIC

What are you talking about?

RAINE stops cooking and steps away from the counter.

RAINE

Look, I've tried to hang in there because I know you love this place, but Eric, I've had it. This apartment is awful.

ERIC

Raine.

RAINE

I'm serious. It's old and raggedy—

ERIC

Raggedy!

RAINE

Yes, raggedy. This place is falling apart. The faucet is the third thing that's had to be fixed over the past four months. On top of that the paint's chipping. There are water spots all over the ceiling and just about everything in here creaks—

ERIC

Ok for the most part, those are all things that can be fixed. All we have to do is get some paint and touch things up here and there.

RAINE

Honey, it wouldn't be worth it to do that and I wasn't finished.

She takes a seat at the kitchen table.

RAINE

When I say this place is falling apart I mean it in every sense. The tenants that have moved in here over the last couple years just don't seem to want to do their part around the building. There's trash everywhere but in dumpsters and what I can't stand the most is the ruckus and constant drama. I know it's getting on your nerves too.

ERIC

Well...

ERIC takes a seat at the table with RAINE.

RAINE

I notice you tossing and turning in bed when they get noisy at night.

ERIC

Yeah, you've got me there. I can't stand it. I haven't gotten much sleep lately. I've been going to work exhausted.

RAINE

I know you have.

ERIC

[Sighs.] I have noticed things changing around here too, but I've been trying to look past it. Like you said I love this apartment.

ERIC & RAINE

This is my first place.

RAINE

I know, honey.

ERIC

This is where I stepped out on my own. I learned how to do for myself here. Paying bills you name it. My parents were so proud when I told them that I had moved off campus and got my own place, especially my dad. He was all like, '*You're doing it, son. You're doing what I taught you to do.*' ... This is my place. My spot. [Beat.] This is where I brought you for our third date. There are a lot of good memories here. I don't want to give that up.

RAINE

We have had some great times here but things aren't like they used to be when we first started dating five years ago. Things have taken a bad turn. I don't think this is where we should be anymore. We're married now. We need to go somewhere that will allow us to grow and prepare for the future. I want to live somewhere nice where there aren't people living above me cussing and fighting or people below me blasting vulgar music. If I wanted to deal with that I would have kept my tail at home in that rowdy little neighborhood instead of going off to college to better myself. Honey, I think moving is the best thing to do.

ERIC

But Raine—

RAINE

But Raine nothing. We can't live in Chester's Place forever, Eric. It's time to move forward.

ERIC

[Sighs.] I know. You're right.

RAINE moves to comfort ERIC.

RAINE

You know the good times won't stop once we leave this apartment. They're going to carry on in the house we settle in.

ERIC

A house, huh?

RAINE

Yeah, we might as well get a house. It makes better sense to get a house instead of renting another apartment. We should put our money into something that we can own.

ERIC

True.

RAINE

It falls into our plan. We've always said that we'd buy a house soon after we got married.

ERIC

Yeah, but houses cost.

RAINE

I know they do. I was thinking we could start shopping around and see what the market is looking like.

ERIC

Hell, grim.

RAINE

Eric.

ERIC

I'm serious. It's especially hard for us. We just got through making the final payments on things from the wedding.

RAINE

I know that but if we get on a budget and start saving we could do it.

ERIC

Ok, when would you like to be out of here?

RAINE

By the end of the year. It would be great if we spent our first wedding anniversary in a new house.

ERIC

That's about six months. Don't you think that's a little fast?

RAINE

No, not at all. Plus, I can't stay here much longer.

ERIC

Alright, but if we're going to move that soon we have to get going on the budgeting and saving. What suggestions do you have?

RAINE

Let's make it simple and only spend on food and personal items like soap and toilet paper.

ERIC

Damn baby, you really want that house huh.

RAINE

You've got that right. I want it so much I'm going to make another suggestion.

ERIC

And what's that?

RAINE

Why don't we tap into your settlement money for the house?

ERIC

What? [He rises from his seat.] Whoa, let's not be hasty, Raine. That money is for emergencies and important expenses.

RAINE

What's more important than this? How long do you intend to let that money sit? When will something more important come up?

ERIC

I don't know.

RAINE

Eric, think about it. It's a great investment, something that will last a lifetime.

ERIC begins to pace the kitchen floors.

RAINE

We can be smart about this. We could budget, start saving, and use only a portion of your money. What do you say?

ERIC

It sounds like a good plan. I'm not opposed to spending a portion of it but even so I don't have access to the money yet.

RAINE

Oh damn. How old do you have to be to use it? Twenty-five right?

ERIC

No, thirty.

RAINE

Thirty! I can't wait that long. Isn't there some other way to access the money?

ERIC

My dad has access to it. Since the settlement for my accident was made while I was a minor everything was placed in my dad's name until I reach the age of thirty.

RAINE

Well, why don't you ask him to take out the money for us?

ERIC

Raine.

RAINE

He wouldn't mind would he?

ERIC

I guess not. I've never really mentioned the settlement money to him before. I was told about it and we had an understanding that it wouldn't be touched until that time came.

RAINE

It wouldn't hurt to ask him, and it's not like he can say no. It's your money.

ERIC

I was actually on the phone with him when you came in. He's supposed to be in town in two weeks. I'll ask him then.

RAINE

He does make his yearly visit around this time doesn't he? Yeah honey, take advantage of this time.

ERIC

I will. As tough as it's going to be to leave this apartment, you're right. We need to find a place of our own.

RAINE

I'm glad you see the light.

Suddenly, loud music starts blaring.

RAINE

Oh god! I hope your dad jumps on board too so we can start getting things in order because I can't stay here much longer.

RAINE covers her ears and exits the kitchen.
ERIC sighs and follows after her. Lights down.

Scene 2

Lights up on RAINE she is in the kitchen cleaning. In the midst of her cleaning, she abruptly stops and places her hand on her stomach. She groans a bit then gets herself a glass of water. ERIC enters with a broom and dustpan.

ERIC

Hey, why are you frowning? Are you alright?

RAINE

My stomach is bothering me again.

ERIC

Again? This has been going on for a little while. What do you think the problem is?

RAINE

I don't know. I think it has something to do with what's been going on around here lately. I've been so keyed up and worried

about things in the apartment. And these other tenants are starting to really get to me.

ERIC

Yeah, did you hear what was going on last night?

RAINE

Of course.

ERIC

The people above us were at it again.

RAINE

I couldn't even make out what they were arguing about, but I could feel the tension. I couldn't sleep with all of that in the air.

ERIC

I know. I didn't get much sleep either.

RAINE

It's so draining to be surrounded by this drama all the time. Soon, we'll be away from it all.

RAINE continues with her cleaning. ERIC joins her and begins to sweep.

RAINE

You finished cleaning the bathroom and living room already?

ERIC

Yeah, I took care of it.

RAINE

Good. How do you feel now?

ERIC

I feel like I killed some time. He should be here soon.

RAINE

You're nervous about asking him aren't you?

ERIC

A little bit. Like I said the other day we never really talked about this money.

RAINE

Not ever?

ERIC

No, not really. I was told what it was for and that it would be put away for me and that's about it.

RAINE

How did you manage to not talk about \$20,000? You didn't ask him any questions or anything?

ERIC

At the time, I was still reeling from the car accident. I was in physical therapy trying to get full movement back into my arm, when my dad sat me down and told me we won the lawsuit. It kind of went over my head. I mean, I was fourteen. I wasn't thinking about that money, my focus was on getting back to normal. It took awhile for things to sink in and for me to realize that I had a nice chunk of money put away.

RAINE

[Beat.] You amaze me. Whenever we talk about this I just think about what it must've took to get through all of that. You deserve that money and a whole lot more after all the pain that stupid drunk driver caused you and your family.

ERIC

It was a tough time, and I'm glad it's all behind me. [Beat.] Let's never mind all that and focus on today.

RAINE

Things will workout. Your dad will understand our reasons for wanting it now.

ERIC

Yeah, my dad is usually reasonable and fair.

A knock is heard at the front door.

RAINE

That must be him. Come on.

RAINE quickly puts things away, and they go into the living room. RAINE fixes her outfit then brushes lint from ERIC'S shirt. They both take a deep breath. ERIC opens the door. MR. GIBSON enters.

MR. GIBSON

Hey, junior! [Pulls ERIC in for a hug]

ERIC

Hey, Dad, how are you?

MR. GIBSON

I'm good. I'm glad to see you. It's been awhile. [Draws attention to RAINE] Hey there, my pretty daughter-in-law.

RAINE

Hi, Mr. Gibson.

MR. GIBSON

Come on now, stop with that Mr. Gibson business. Call me Dad.

RAINE

Alright...hi Dad.

MR. GIBSON

There you go. How are you two?

ERIC & RAINE

We're doing good.

MR. GIBSON

Look at you acting like husband and wife, already speaking as one. Looks like you two are getting the hang of this marriage thing.

ERIC grabs RAINE'S hand.

ERIC

Well, things haven't changed too much. We've been together and in love for a long time. The only thing that's changed is that we live together. It just feels good waking up and coming home to each other every day.

RAINE moves in closer to ERIC and takes hold of his side.

MR. GIBSON

I tell you, you guys are a beautiful couple.

MR. GIBSON removes his coat.

RAINE

Oh, I'll take that, Mr. Gib-uh Dad. Why don't you have a seat? I know you're tired from that long drive.

RAINE takes his coat and hangs it up by the door. ERIC and MR. GIBSON cross over to the couch. RAINE takes her seat in the chair beside the couch.

MR. GIBSON

Honey, I've been making that drive for years, since before you were born. I'm alright.

RAINE

You're a good one. That twelve-hour drive wears me out.

ERIC

Dad, she's not lying. We drove to Detroit a few times and each time she'd pass out by the time we'd hit Tennessee.

MR. GIBSON

That'll happen if you're not used to it. Junior, you've got a leg up on her you used to ride down to Atlanta with me when you were younger.

ERIC

Yeah, I remember that. We'd all cram into the station wagon to go see the folks. You and Momma would be up front, while me, Sonya, and Mikey would be sitting in the back with that old cooler. We'd spend a couple days in Atlanta with Momma's people then go and make a few stops in Buena Vista to see your folks. Man, those road trips used to be fun.

MR. GIBSON

Boy, those were some nice times weren't they.

ERIC

Yes sir, if we hadn't come down here nearly every summer I probably would've ended up somewhere other than Clark Atlanta. Those road trips made me want to go to college down here.

RAINE

I guess I have you to thank, Dad. If you hadn't brought him down here we probably would've never met.

MR. GIBSON

You are most welcome, daughter-in-law. I love pairing folks up.

They laugh.

MR. GIBSON

But really that is something. A northern city boy came all the way down here and found a southern girl. That's no coincidence.

ERIC

Don't I know it. I'm so lucky.

ERIC and RAINE look at one another with adoration. This lasts for a short beat.

MR. GIBSON

Alright newlyweds, snap out of it.

ERIC & RAINE

Oh, sorry.

MR. GIBSON

[Laughs] It's ok. I remember what it was like to be newly married. Me and your mother used to—

ERIC

Whoa Dad, come back. I don't think I want to hear this.

MR. GIBSON swats a couch pillow at ERIC.

MR. GIBSON

Boy, I wasn't gone say nothing like that. You always got something crazy to say.

ERIC

[Laughs] Ok, what were you about to say, Dad?

MR. GIBSON

Nothing. Forget it.

ERIC and RAINE laugh.

ERIC

Fine. So, how long are you going to be here this time?

MR. GIBSON

Not too long, a week maybe. I just want to check in on everybody, Uncle Boon, Aunt Claude and Cousin Tony. I was actually going to cut my time with you two short this go around.

ERIC

So I did all that cleaning for nothing huh?

MR. GIBSON

I didn't mean to make you two go out of your way.

RAINE

He's just kidding. It was going to get done one way or another.

ERIC

Hmm. So Dad, what do you have going on?

MR. GIBSON

Me and Uncle Boon got some plans.

ERIC

Oh no, it can't be anything too good if Uncle Boon is involved.

MR. GIBSON

What do you mean?

ERIC

Come on, everybody knows he's the family misfit. Anybody who hangs out with him is bound to get into some sort of trouble.

RAINE

Eric.

ERIC

What? It's true. It's no secret that he spends most of his time gambling and downing moonshine.

MR. GIBSON

Hey now, you better watch how you talk about your uncle.

ERIC

Ok, ok. What time are you trying to head out to catch up with him?

MR. GIBSON

I wanted to get going in a few minutes. I want to make it over there before it gets too late.

MR. GIBSON begins to pat his pockets to check for his keys and shifts in his seat. RAINE begins to shift also. She gestures to ERIC urging him to ask about the money.

ERIC

Uh, Dad, before you get going I wanted to uh talk to you about something.

MR. GIBSON

Go ahead. What is it, junior?

ERIC

Well, me and Raine have umm decided that we're going to buy a house soon.

MR. GIBSON

Is that right? How soon are we talking?

ERIC

We want to be out of here by the end of the year.

MR. GIBSON

Ok...that's a quick move, son. Do you have all you need?

ERIC

You see, that's what I wanted to talk to you about. We were thinking that maybe you could give us a portion of my uh...settlement money.

RAINE

Just a portion. We want to combine that with what we save up.

MR. GIBSON

Are you sure that you want to spend that money?

ERIC

Yeah, we're sure. We talked it over and we don't want to take out too much. We want to keep the majority of it put away.

MR. GIBSON

How much do you want to take out?

ERIC

Uh about...uh I'd say...

RAINE

About 5,000...or so.

MR. GIBSON

I don't want you two to jump the gun on this. This is a big move to be making in such a short period of time. You want to make

sure you pick the right house and that it's in good shape. You might pick something in a hurry and end up with a house that ain't worth half of what you paid for. I think you should take your time on this. Just wait a little while to make sure it's right. You're young. There's no rush.

RAINE

Mr. Gibson, we are sure about this. We are ready to move into a place of our own where we can prepare for the future.

ERIC

Look Dad, we've thought this through.

MR. GIBSON

I just want you to hold on to that nest egg for a little while longer.

ERIC

Dad, come on.

MR. GIBSON

Now Eric, trust me I know what I'm talking about. I've been there. I went through the process. Let me tell you, it's tough buying a house. There's a bunch of things to consider.

ERIC

I know that. I'm not a kid. I'm a grown man. I'm aware of what buying a house entails.

MR. GIBSON

Watch your tone, son. Now all I'm trying to do is look out for you. I wish I had somebody when I was your age to give me a little advice. You should hold off on spending that money.

ERIC

I'm sorry. I wasn't trying to step out of line. I appreciate what you're saying and trying to do, but Raine and I feel that it's best to take this route.

MR. GIBSON

Junior, just trust me when I tell you that—

ERIC

Dad, trust that I've taken in all the things you've told me over the years about doing things for myself and taking care of home. I can handle this. Would you please do this for us?

MR. GIBSON

[Sigh.] Alright son, if that's what you want. [Rises from the couch.]

ERIC

Yes, it is.

MR. GIBSON slowly makes his way to the door.
ERIC and RAINE soon follow.

MR. GIBSON

Well, let me umm get it together for you. I'll come back through here in uh say a few days when I'm on my way back to Detroit.

ERIC

Thanks, Dad.

RAINE

Oh yes, thank you.

MR. GIBSON

Let me run on so I can see Boon and everybody.

MR. GIBSON puts on his coat then steals a quick hug from them both.

ERIC

Bye Dad, and thanks again.

MR. GIBSON opens the door and stands in the doorway.

MR. GIBSON

Alright, bye now. [Exits]

ERIC and RAINE turn to each other. ERIC slumps and gives a sigh of relief. RAINE goes to embrace him.

ERIC

We did it. We asked.

RAINE

Yes, we did, but I'm surprised that your dad put up such a fight though.

ERIC

Me too. Maybe I caught him off guard. I've never really spoken to him about this money and now I suddenly want it.

RAINE

Yeah, maybe that's the reason. Either way, I'm glad he's going to give it to us.

ERIC

So am I. Now, I'm like you I'm ready to start the next chapter.

RAINE

We'll get the money then house-hunting we go.

ERIC and RAINE start moving upstage toward their bedroom. Lights down.

Scene 3

Lights up on RAINE who is in the kitchen cooking.

RAINE

How am I going to break the news to him? [Beat] Honey, there's something I need to tell you... Naw, not like that. [Sigh.] Oh Lord, help me find the right words.

After a beat ERIC enters with a folder in his hand. He sets it on the edge of the counter. Then he goes over to kiss RAINE's cheek. He hovers around her and watches her put things together.

ERIC

Good morning, babe.

RAINE

Good morning.

ERIC

You're up earlier than usual.

RAINE

I thought I'd get up and fix you a big breakfast this morning.

ERIC

A big breakfast, huh.

ERIC goes to sit at the kitchen table, which is set with some of the dishes RAINE has finished preparing.

RAINE

Yes, sir.

ERIC

What made you want to do all of this?

RAINE

I thought it would be nice to do something out of the ordinary.

ERIC

When something out of the ordinary involves food you know I'm all for it.

RAINE

Yeah, I know. I also wanted to talk to you this morning.

RAINE picks up a bowl from the counter and brings it over to the faucet. She tries to turn it on.

ERIC

Actually, I wanted to talk to you too but you go first. What do you want to talk about?

RAINE

Well, I...I... [Struggles with the faucet.]

ERIC

Woman, what is going on over there?

RAINE

I'm trying to turn the faucet on, but it's stuck. [Continues to fiddle with the handle.]

ERIC

Let me give it a try.

ERIC rises to assist RAINE, but by the time he reaches her the handle breaks off and is left in her hand.

RAINE

Damn it! [Throws the handle into the sink.]

ERIC

Babe, are you alright?

ERIC takes RAINE's hand into his and examines it. She pulls it away.

RAINE

Yeah, I'm fine.

ERIC

Hold on, let me see your hand.

RAINE

I said I'm fine, Eric.

ERIC

What's the matter with you?

RAINE

This stupid apartment is what's the matter with me.

ERIC

Calm down, Raine.

RAINE

Now, I can't finish making your breakfast.

ERIC

Babe, it's ok. There's already more than enough food here.

RAINE

No, there's not. I wanted to make all you favorite dishes. It was going to be perfect then this stupid thing ruined it. [Slaps at the faucet.]

ERIC

Ruined it? What is all of this about?

RAINE

I wanted to sit you down to a wonderful breakfast and share some news with you.

ERIC

You can still tell me, just go ahead.

RAINE

Ok. Well...

ERIC

Go ahead just say it.

RAINE

Ok, ok. Someone will be joining us soon.

ERIC

Who will be joining us? Are you expecting company?

RAINE

No Eric, that's not what I meant.

ERIC

Then what are you talking about?

RAINE

Someone will be joining us soon. [Places his hand on her belly.]

ERIC

Oh...ooh so this is what you wanted to talk to me about.

RAINE

Yes.

ERIC

We're going to have a baby.

RAINE

Yes, we are.

ERIC runs his hand through his hair.

RAINE

I'm sorry that I said it like this. I was hoping that the right words would come to me before we sat down to eat.

ERIC

How long have you known about this?

RAINE

I took a pregnancy test yesterday. When my stomach was bothering me I thought it had something to do with stress and how hectic things have been. I hadn't realized that I was late.

ERIC

I can't believe this, a baby. I mean, we just got married. We just got into careers. This is happening so soon.

RAINE

Honey, I know we planned to start having kids once we got ourselves established and—

ERIC starts counting on his fingers.

RAINE

Eric, what are you doing?

ERIC

This isn't going to work.

RAINE

What isn't going to work?

ERIC

Our plan to move in six months.

RAINE

What are you talking about?

ERIC

I mean, you'll be pretty far along by the time we move. I don't think it would be good if we were to go through that process so late in your pregnancy. That wouldn't be good for the baby right? Packing up stuff here then shuffling around to get things settled in the new house. Then after that we'd have to get the baby's room and stuff together. [Beat.] Naw, change of plans. I don't want to wait to move anymore. Let's move as soon as possible. I don't want you to be stressed out or doing too much around that time. I've heard those stories about women who over exert themselves during their pregnancies, that won't be you. I want to have everything set up. I want you to be comfortable and at ease at that time, and for us to be settled when the baby comes.

ERIC goes to rifle through the papers he left on the counter.

RAINE

What in the world are you doing?

ERIC

I'm going to get the ball rolling on this house project. Remember when I said I wanted to talk to you about something? Well, last night I started looking up prospective neighborhoods online. There were a few that I thought we could look into. I

also looked up some realtors that could steer us in the right direction. I have to narrow it down and pick someone so we can start this process.

RAINE

Honey, you need to calm down, for a minute. I mean we still have to get our funds in place.

ERIC

Raine, I'm fine. And like I said we're changing the plan. We're going to skip saving and the budget. I'm going to call my dad and tell him to take out 10,000 instead of 5,000... aww hell probably more than 10,000. We're going to need furniture, paint, the works. I mean it. I want things to be set up when the baby gets here. Things can still pan out the way we envisioned. We just have to shift some things around. Don't worry, I'm going to take care of things.

ERIC picks up his papers and exits.

RAINE

Eric, would you wait a second. Eric.

RAINE follows after him. Lights down.

Scene 4

Lights up on ERIC. He is sitting on the living room couch looking at his laptop and making notes on a pad. He is mumbling under his breath. It sounds as if he is trying to make sense of what is before him. RAINE enters carrying a plate of food and a beverage. She places it on the coffee table in front of him. She takes a seat beside him.

RAINE

I made you something to eat. I thought you might be hungry.

ERIC

No thanks, I'm fine right now.

RAINE

Are you sure? You said you didn't eat much today.

ERIC

I said I'm fine, Raine. [Pushes the plate aside.] I want to finish getting this together.

RAINE

Alright, I just want to make sure you eat and that you're fine.

ERIC

I'm ok.

RAINE

No you're not, Eric. You have been in work mode since I told you that I was pregnant.

ERIC

Is that a bad thing?

RAINE

Yes, when that's all you've been doing. You've barely said a word.

ERIC

Look, I need to do this. I need to make sure that I get things set up for you and this baby. If I sit idly I'm going to get caught up in worry and start thinking about how we aren't prepared. I don't want to think about how it would be if we stuck to our original plan. I'd rather make moves and take action. Will you let me do that?

RAINE

Yes, I can let you do that.

ERIC

Good.

RAINE

[Beat] So tell me what you've found out so far. What have you been up to this evening?

ERIC

I've been doing a few things. I looked into the realtors I found a few days ago. There's this one guy who typically works with first-time buyers and helps them stretch their money. It seems like he's got a good reputation. I think we should go with him. I actually made an appointment to meet with him tomorrow.

RAINE

Do you need me to do anything? What should I do to get ready?

ERIC

There's nothing for you to do really. I took care of it. All we have to do is tell him what we're working with and see what he has to say about the next steps we should take so we can be out of here as soon as possible.

ERIC hands RAINE the notepad he had been working in. She looks it over for a beat.

RAINE

I can't believe you did all of this in such a short period of time. If this is what you think we should do then I'm behind you.

ERIC

Alright, the meeting is tomorrow. I grabbed his last opening. It works for both of us. We will be available then. The only thing left to do is get the money from dad. He should be here soon.

RAINE

Did he ever tell you exactly why he couldn't make it the first time? He was supposed to be here two days ago.

ERIC

He called and said that the bank was giving him a hard time. He also said that he was still with Uncle Boon.

RAINE

I hope that everything is ok and that he was able to work things out at the bank.

ERIC

I'm sure it is. I'm more concerned about him spending so much time with Uncle Boon. Crazy things happen when you're around him.

RAINE

Isn't your Uncle Boon like fifty-five?

ERIC

He's actually sixty.

RAINE

How is he still ripping and running at that age?

ERIC

I have no idea. I've been asking myself the same thing. But apparently he's always been like that. There are so many stories about him getting into mess over the years.

RAINE

Well, I don't see your father going along with him. He seems mindful about what he does and what he gets involved in.

ERIC

It's funny because I'd always thought the same thing. When I was growing up he always used to warn me about living the fast life and was on me about staying away from bad things. But awhile ago I heard that in his earlier days he used to gamble and drink with Uncle Boon. That's why he always used to lecture me about that kind of stuff. He dealt with it first hand...

ERIC slowly puts aside his laptop and notepad onto the coffee table.

RAINE

Honey, are you alright?

ERIC

Yeah, I just hope that everything is alright and that he gets here soon. I just can't stop thinking about getting this money. It's crazy because until a few weeks ago it was the farthest thing from my mind. Isn't it something how quickly things change?

RAINE

Yeah, I know.

RAINE moves to comfort ERIC. After a beat, a knock is heard at the door. ERIC quickly rises to answer it.

ERIC

Finally.

Eric opens the door and MR. GIBSON enters.

ERIC

Hey Dad, come on in.

MR. GIBSON

Hey you two, how are you guys doing?

RAINE

We're alright-

ERIC

-now that you're here. We've been on pins and needles. So, what happened?

RAINE

Uh, what he means to say is how are you? And was everything ok in Buena Vista?

RAINE moves in between ERIC and MR. GIBSON. She gestures to MR. GIBSON to have a seat. MR. GIBSON sits on the couch. RAINE and ERIC also take their seats.

MR. GIBSON

Oh I'm fine, and it's ok. I get it. You guys have your minds set on buying a house, and you want that money.

ERIC

There you go. You've got it.

MR. GIBSON

But uh, I have to tell you something... you see the trouble is I uh I don't exactly have it.

ERIC

What do you mean you don't have it? Is the bank still giving you a problem or something?

MR. GIBSON

No, that's not it.

ERIC

Dad, I'm lost here. What's going on?

MR. GIBSON

I can't give you the money because... it's gone.

ERIC & RAINE

Gone?

ERIC

Gone where?

MR. GIBSON

Look junior, calm down.

ERIC

No Dad, answer my question.

MR. GIBSON

[Beat.] I spent it.

ERIC

You spent it?

MR. GIBSON

Yes.

ERIC

You spent my money, the money I received from the accident settlement. You spent \$20,000.

ERIC stands up and moves toward MR GIBSON.
RAINE grabs ERIC'S arm.

RAINE

Eric, please.

ERIC pulls away.

ERIC

How could you do that?

MR. GIBSON

I'm sorry. I didn't plan on doing it.

ERIC

I can't believe this. You're going to sit there and say I'm sorry I didn't mean to do it like it's nothing, like it was only twenty bucks. This is a big deal, Dad. That money was important. I needed it. I mean, I have a family. I have a wife and a baby on the way. We had plans for that money... I can't believe you.

MR. GIBSON

A baby? You didn't tell me that you guys were having a baby. This is major news.

ERIC

We didn't know at the time. We just found out. And don't try and change the subject. Baby or no baby you had no business spending my money.

MR. GIBSON

Son, I'm not trying to change the subject. Listen, I didn't want to touch your settlement money, but I was in a bind. I didn't know what else to do.

ERIC

What kind of bind could you have been in that calls for you to spend that kind of money? Did you get caught up in some mess with Uncle Boon? Did he need you to bail him out of trouble?

MR. GIBSON

Junior, come on that's not what happened.

ERIC

What else am I supposed to think? Everybody knows what he's always up to. Did you get mixed up with him again? I've heard about how you used to run with him.

MR. GIBSON

Yes, I was gambling but-

ERIC

How long have you been back into it? I thought you had put that behind you years ago.

MR GIBSON

I was gambling with Uncle Boon over this visit but that's not how I spent the money. And this was the first time in years since I've been into anything like this. It hurts to know that you think I would gamble your money away.

ERIC

Whatever. It doesn't change the fact that you touched it, and I'm hurt that you spent the money I got after going through a horrible ordeal.

MR. GIBSON

I'm sor-

ERIC

Don't say that again.

MR. GIBSON

Fine. Just let me tell you what happened. You know I wouldn't just up and take your money. A lot has been going on over the last few years. I've had a tough time. I kept getting laid off from Chrysler and going long periods without working. I couldn't

keep things up. I was getting behind on the mortgage and other bills. I was on the verge of losing damn near everything. I had to do something. So, I used your money. I know it was wrong, but I was stuck. I intended to put it back. I was going to build it back up. That's part of why I came down here. Uncle Boon was telling me about some of the bets and things he was getting into. Normally I'd tell him no, but I thought I could get some of your money back. When you told me you needed the money my heart nearly fell out of my chest. I've been scrambling in Buena Vista trying to get it back.

MR. GIBSON reaches in his pocket and produces a wad of money. He tries to hand it to ERIC who doesn't take it. MR. GIBSON sets it on the coffee table.

MR. GIBSON

It's not what you asked for but I hope it can help. It's only a few hundred dollars. I know this isn't what you want to hear but I am sorry. I thought I could put it back. I didn't know you were going to need it so soon. I didn't know you guys had a little one on the way. If I had known I would have done things differently.

ERIC

[Beat] Why didn't you just tell me that you were having problems and that you needed it?

MR. GIBSON

How does that look me coming to my son telling him I can't make the payments on the house he grew up in? Huh? It's not right for a man to turn to someone he raised for help. I couldn't do that. I couldn't tell you that I couldn't do things for me and your momma.

ERIC

Dad, everybody struggles. Everybody needs help sometimes. There's nothing wrong with admitting that. You could've come to me. That's what I'm here for. That's what this family thing is all about.

MR. GIBSON

I couldn't do that. I couldn't live with asking you for that kind of help. I hate that I had to tell you about it but I had no choice. I couldn't keep giving you guys the run around.

ERIC

I know it was hard but you should've come to me. We wouldn't be here right now if you did. Me and Raine wouldn't have gotten our hopes up and relied on that money if you'd said something.

MR. GIBSON

I'm sorry that this puts you off track and keeps you from getting the house as soon as you planned. [Beat.] I'm going to make sure I get the rest of it to you. It might take me a little while, but I will get it to you.

ERIC

You might be able to pay the money back but it's not going to fix everything.

MR. GIBSON

I know son, I know.

ERIC

I mean, how am I supposed to look at you the same? Here you are the man that's taught me everything I know. You always told me to be honest. You used to tell me all the time, '*Your word is your bond, son.*' You told me to never resort to wrong doing no matter what the circumstances are. How am I supposed to look at you the same way after you defied everything you taught me to do?

MR. GIBSON

Son, look—

ERIC

No Dad, I don't want to hear it. I can't be near you right now. I just...I need you to leave.

ERIC turns away from MR. GIBSON.

MR. GIBSON

Alright, I'll go. But I know in time, we're going to mend things.

After a beat, MR. GIBSON begins to back away toward the front door. MR. GIBSON goes to exit but stops on the threshold. He turns to ERIC and RAINE.

MR. GIBSON

Congratulations to you both.

MR. GIBSON exits. ERIC slowly moves toward the door. He watches it for a beat. RAINE rises and goes over to embrace ERIC. They hold each other for a moment.

RAINE

Eric, I'm sorry about all of this. Honey, I know that this is hard and that your dad-

ERIC

Raine, please. I don't want to talk about him.

RAINE

Fine.

After a beat, ERIC turns and goes to the coffee table and picks up the money.

ERIC

[Sighs.] So, I guess we won't be taking a short cut after all. I better cancel that appointment with that realtor. Are you ok with that?

RAINE

Maybe you don't have to cancel it. We can still talk to him and get some suggestions. We'll just let him know that we won't be able to buy right away like we thought.

ERIC

Are you ok with not buying right away?

RAINE

It may be tough, but it won't kill me to be here a little longer.

ERIC

I'm sorry that I can't get you out of this apartment and guarantee that we'll be settled before the baby is born.

RAINE

Please don't apologize. It's ok if we don't stick to the plan. I know we said marriage, house, then kids but things don't always work that way. I know you don't want to talk about him but look at your father. It wasn't in his life's plan to have trouble at work, and he didn't plan on spending money that was put away for his son. Things happen and change is a blink of an eye. It's too much to try and plan every little thing out.

ERIC

Yeah, I know.

RAINE

We'll just have to save and wait until we have enough to move. Let's not worry anymore. Let's just enjoy this time.

ERIC

I've been so preoccupied with trying to get things in order since I found out about the baby that I haven't even stopped to celebrate.

RAINE

I know me either.

ERIC suddenly takes RAINE and dances in a circle. She laughs.

ERIC

Congratulations, Mrs. Gibson.

RAINE

[Kisses ERIC.] Congrats, Mr. Gibson.

Their dance continues as the lights slowly go down.

END OF PLAY