

Extended Wings
By Michael Armstrong

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"...downward to darkness, on extended wings."
from Sunday Morning by Wallace Stevens

Notes

Extended Wings was developed and commissioned by Western Edge Theatre in Nanaimo, BC, in collaboration with Nanaimo Senior's Connect and the Nanaimo Women's Centre.

Extended Wings premiered at the Harbour City Theatre in Nanaimo with the following cast:

VIV	Judy Hipkin
WILLIE	Sam Bob
MADS	Whitley Dunn
LUCY (voice)	Lorna McLellan
SUSAN (voice)	Beth DeVolder
JOSIE (voice)	Braeja Chadwick
DOCTOR (voice)	Dean Chadwick

Directed and set design by Michael Armstrong
Stage Management by Dean Chadwick
Sound Design by Paul Tedeschini
Lighting Design by Erik Tully

Cast of Characters

Viv, 75. She is in vigorous health and seems young for her age.
Willie, 72. His health is not great and he walks with difficulty.
Mads, 17. She is a hard-core teenager.

Lucy, Viv's daughter, a ghost.
Susan, Willie's wife, a ghost.
Josie, Willie's sister. A memory and a future.
The Grannies. A memory.

There is a single set that represents the homes of both Viv and Willie: a couch, a dining table, and a piece of the kitchen.

The sounds of birds or wind may mark the transitions as necessary.

Prelude

Willie enters. He has a pencil in his teeth. He has made a decision and is now looking urgently for something that he has misplaced. He searches the apartment and finally finds a note that he had started working on earlier. He is relieved.

His sister's voice is heard but he does not acknowledge it. As she speaks, he takes the note to the table, makes a couple of corrections with his pencil, and finally takes it with him as he exits.

Josie

Ma'a, she was so mad at you that morning. You forgot we were leaving for camp and almost didn't come home in time. She made you come get me at Cousin Rosie's. It was a hot day and we rode in the back of the pick up all the way to the river where the salmon were jumping in the sun. Where the cottonwoods stand along the water, watching. Summer camp.

The women were cleaning fish and Grandmother's hands were so fast. Her knife jumped and flashed like the fish she was gutting. You and me, we took the bright guts for Crow. We lifted the Salmon's heart up in our hands and Crow came right to us and stole it from our fingers. He flew away with it. I remember you said he is saving that heart for later, Crow. Always good to have another heart. In case. You never know.

And we laughed, Willie. And Crow laughed. Ah, ah, ah, ah. (*A sharp dry repetitive cawing.*) We laughed together. All of us. We were very young.

At a point near the end of this, Viv enters to the sink where she picks up a bird feeder. She takes it outside and hangs it in the kitchen window. She comes back in and takes a couple of aspirin for her headache. As Willie exits, she crosses to the table with her day timer and her cel phone. She looks up Annie's number but pauses before she dials to remember a happier time when her daughter was young, before things went off the rails.

Lucy

It was hot that morning. The sand was already warm.

We were building a castle on the beach. A big one with a moat, with towers at the corners and all these little bumps along the tops of the walls like teeth.

Notches for shooting arrows at our enemies but we had no enemies that morning except that little white dog running around like crazy. We had peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and we had slices of watermelon from a cooler and cookies we made the night before.

In your yellow bathing suit and your big floppy hat, I thought you were the most beautiful woman on the beach that morning.

I could feel the coarse hot sand on the skin of my legs.

I could hear the seagulls and the other kids chasing each other and yelling and the dog barked again.

You looked at me, Mom, and I could see myself in your sunglasses like somehow I lived inside you.

And the whole beach was there and the sun was there and I wanted to stay there, forever, in my beautiful mother's eyes.

I was very young.

Viv comes back to herself and completes the call.

Scene One

We hear the distant chants of the Raging Grannies as she begins to talk to Annie.

Grannies

We're old and slow and have no fear!

We don't want no pipeline here!

No pipe line! No pipe line! No pipe line! No pipe line!

Viv

Yes, Saturday morning on the steps of the legislature. There's at least three other groups of Grannies coming. Zelda's spreading the word down island and there's at least one group coming over on the ferry.

OK. Who's going to call the press?

Thanks, Annie. Oh, and don't forget about Facebook.

OK. I'll start calling the gals.

Yeah, I'm waiting up for Mads. She should be home any time really. I'm just an old worry wart.

Mads enters. She wears black. She always wears black.

She dumps her coat and her backpack on the couch and exits to her bedroom.

Viv

Speak of the devil.

(To Mads.) Where were you?

Mads

(Off) What do you care?

Viv

Watch it, buster!

Viv

No, not you. Mads finally waltzed in. OK. Glad you were still up. Yeah, me too these days. I hibernate all winter but come spring... Anyway, see you Saturday. You'll pick me up? Great. Bye.

Viv puts the phone down and makes a note in her daytimer.

Viv

Mads? *(No response.)* Mads!?

Mads *(from off)*

What?

Viv

Can you come in here?

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Mads (from off)

Why don't you come in here?

Viv

Mads!

There is a pause and Mads finally enters and stands near the door checking her texts. Face off.

Viv

I'm glad you're home safe.

Mads

Whatever.

Viv

It's a school night.

Mads

So?

Viv

So it's what... almost eleven? Where were you?

Mads

Out.

Silence as Viv waits. Mads finally puts her phone down.

Mads

I was with Ash. We went to the beach.

Viv

OK. I would appreciate knowing where you are.

Mads

Why?

Viv

Getting frustrated.

Cause I'm your grandmother and I'm supposed to be taking care of you. That means, I should know approximately where you are or who you're with.

Mads

I can take care of myself.

Viv

That's what your mother said just before she got pregnant with you.

Mads

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Whoa! Like I'm some kind of big mistake?

Viv

That's not what I meant/ and you know it.

Mads

Yeah, but it's what you said!

Viv

Mads.

Mads

Well, there's no way I'm gonna get pregnant.

Viv

That's also something your mother said. Are you taking your pills?

Mads

Jesus, Grandma. I'm seventeen years old and I know what I'm doing!

Viv

Why does everything with you have to be an argument? I just want to have a conversation here.

Mads

Whatever.

Viv

Sit down.

Mads

No. I want to go to bed. "It's a school night." *(She turns to leave.)*

Viv

Sit down!

Mads

Whatever.

Viv

AHHHH!

Mads sits.

Viv

It drives me crazy when you say that.

Can you just listen for a minute, okay? I've got a little speech.

Pause.

When your mother died...

Mads

Jesus! Why do your speeches always have to start with Mom?!

Viv

Because you're just like her!

This hits them both.

Mads

I am not.

Viv

Oh, but you are, honey. You are.

I see more of Lucy in you everyday.

It breaks my heart sometimes. And it scares the shit out of me.

Pause.

You're growing up and I've kinda been letting you do your own thing but I'm getting the feeling that maybe I should be paying more attention.

Mads

I'm not doing drugs.

Viv

I smelled marijuana on your jacket.

Mads

Wait! How do you even know what that smells like?

Viv

Oh honey. You have no idea. I was at Altamont.

Mads

What's that?

Viv

Really? Rolling Stones? Hells Angels?

Mads

Whatev...

Pot doesn't count. It's pretty much legal.

Viv

Not quite yet for you, sweetheart.

Look, I'm not trying to lay down some kind of big hypocritical rule, "Don't do drugs." I'm trying to say that I'm worried about you but you get me so riled up I can't get the words out straight.

You're out late, I don't know where you are, I'm smelling pot on your clothes, and we seem to be arguing a lot these days. I don't want to make the same mistakes I did before and I don't want you to make the same mistakes your mother did.

Please.

Pause. Mads shows Viv her phone.

Mads

Brandon broke up with me.

Viv

By text?

Mads

Yeah, well, I was gonna break up with him anyway so...

Viv

Still.

Mads

Yeah.

Viv

Can I help?

Mads

No!

Viv

Need a hug?

Mads

You think that fixes everything.

Viv

No, but it can help you feel loved.

Mads

Yeah, but I'm not, am I? That's the big point here, isn't it? I'm not!

Viv

Boy. It's a long time ago but I seem to remember being dumped once or twice. It's shitty. But open your eyes. There are people out here who love you.

Mads

Who? Huh? Dad? I haven't even seen him since I was seven. I can't even remember what he looks like!

And Mom? I guess I'm shit out of luck on that one too!

Brandon says he wants to "explore" other possibilities. What he means is he's tired of me.

Weird Madison.

Everybody. Leaves.

Viv

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I love you.

Mads

Yeah, well, you pretty much have to.

Viv

No, actually I don't. It's not part of the contract but... I do.

Mads

Great.

Viv

You'll get over it.

Mads

Thanks for that advice.

Viv

Honey, your life is bigger than some guy. It takes a while but you'll figure that out. Why don't you and Ash go to the movies tomorrow?

Mads

Ash is going with Mason and besides I don't have any money.

Viv

I'll lend you some.

Mads

I already owe you like thousands of dollars.

Viv

Get a job.

Mads

Whoa. Radical idea.

Viv

McDonald's hires lots of young people, don't they?

Mads

Are you joking? That's just what I need. A loser suit and a side of fries.

Viv

Well, there's lots of things you can do.

Mads

I'm going to bed.

She gets up to leave.

Willie enters, moves to the table, sits and works on a small carving.

Viv

Wait!

Viv grabs Mads' pack and coat and hands them to her.

How's school?

Mads

Like you care.

Taking her stuff, Mads exits.

Viv takes out her frustration as she cleans up.

Viv

Oh, Lucy. Why aren't you here when we need you?

She exits as...

Scene Two

There is a knock at the door. Willie doesn't get up.

The doorbell rings.

Willie

Come in! It's not locked!

Willie struggles to get up.

Mads enters and stands just inside. She has a note in her hand. They look at each other uncomfortably.

Mads

Uhh.. hi. Did you put this note up at the mailboxes?

Willie

Yeah.

Mads

I'm here about the job.

She steps into the apartment.

Willie

It's not really a job.

Mads

Help with stuff then. Whatever.

Willie

You look pretty young.

Mads

Well you don't really need a college degree to go shopping or clean toilets.

Willie

Might help though, eh?

Mads

What?

Willie

It's a joke.

Mads

Oh.

There's an awkward pause.

Willie

I don't get around too good anymore.

Silence.

I'm waiting for a hip replacement.

Silence.

But I gotta lose some weight first. My blood sugar...

Silence. He lets out a small embarrassed laugh.

Uh. Shopping. You can do shopping, right?

Mads

Yeah.

Willie

I don't have much money so...

Mads

But the job pays right?

Willie

Yeah, but not much. I was thinking ten bucks.

Mads

You gotta pay me twelve sixty five an hour. It's the minimum wage.

Willie

Jeez. You know how much I made my first job? Dollar twenty five. And that was good money.

Mads

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What kind of hours?

Willie

Ten hours a day. Five, mostly six days a week...

Mads

No no. For me, if I work for ya.

Willie

Oh, uh, just a couple of hours now and then, eh. Some shopping once a week. Maybe an hour cleaning.

Mads

Wow, that's not much.

Willie

It's all I can afford.

Pause.

Willie

You want it?

Mads

I guess. OK.

Willie

OK.

Mads

OK.

Willie

OK.

You got a name?

Mads

Yeah. Mads. Madison.

Willie

You can call me Willie.

Mads

That's weird.

Willie

What is?

Mads

I just never called anybody as old as you by their first name.

Willie

That is weird.

Mads

OK. So what do you want me to do? *(She starts to take off her coat.)*

Willie

Oh, not today. I'm not ready. I put that notice up two weeks ago. You're the first person to come by. I didn't really expect you.

Mads

Oh, OK. When?

Willie

Tomorrow? Maybe you could do some shopping for me. I'll write a list.

Mads

OK. How do I get them here?

Willie

You don't have a car?

Mads

No. What do you normally do?

Willie

I call a taxi.

Mads

Well, I might be able to borrow my grandma's car.

Willie

And then maybe you can do some cleaning for me.

Mads

OK. What time?

Willie

You go to school?

Mads

Yeah. This is my last year.

Willie

So after school.

Mads

OK. Like four?

Willie

Sure.

Mads

Alright. OK, I'll come back then.

Willie

Sure. Mads?

Mads

Willie, right?

Willie

Yeah.

Mads

See you tomorrow.

Willie

See you tomorrow.

She leaves.

Willie

Thanks.

Willie returns to the table and sits.

Susan

She seems nice.

Willie

Yeah.

Susan

We never had kids.

Willie

We never had kids.

Susan

Maybe if we'd met sooner.

Willie

If only we'd met sooner.

He turns his attention back to his carving as...

Scene Three

Viv enters with a large bag over her shoulder. She's dressed in her "Raging Granny" outfit and carries her coat and hat with her. She drapes her stuff on the couch and calls out to Mads as she finishes dressing.

Viv

I'll be back late tonight!

Mads enters.

Mads

Wait! What! You were going to take me shopping for a prom dress.

Viv

No, honey. That's tomorrow.

Mads

No. It's 100% on my phone. You promised. Anyway, tomorrow's Sunday! Nothing will be open.

Viv

No, I think most of the malls are open. And Value Village is open.

Mads

I'm not getting a dress at Value Village!

Viv

What's wrong with Value Village? We get lots of stuff there. You got that shirt there. I got this whole outfit there.

Mads

Yeah, it looks like it. We're talking about a prom dress. I can't wear somebody's ratty old dress to prom. It's not some crazy parade costume thing. It's my prom! It's the only one I'll ever have. Everybody will have beautiful new dresses.

Viv

Honey, we don't have a lot of money to spend on a fancy dress. We're either going to find something on sale or we're going to have to get a used dress and refit it for you.

Mads

That is so completely lame.

Viv

Can we talk about this tomorrow? I have to go to Victoria today for the rally. Annie will be here in a minute.

Mads

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You never said anything about going to some stupid rally.

Viv

I'm sure I talked to you about this last weekend.

Mads

No.

Viv

Maybe you forgot

Mads

I didn't forget. You never mentioned it.

Viv

I'm sorry. I'm getting old. We'll go shopping tomorrow. I promise. All day on prom dresses. OK?

Mads

You're always going off.

Viv

I don't go away that much.

Mads

And you look like an idiot.

Viv

I do not.

Mads

Can't you just not go?

Viv

I'm saving the world honey.

Mads

Yeah, fat chance.

Viv

Look, this is me counting for something, OK? At my age, most people don't count for much. In fact, most of my life I really didn't count for much. I feel like I'm doing something that matters again, finally. It took a long time to get back here but it feels good. So I'm going to do it. And you can like it or lump it. It's up to you.

Silence. Mads has her arms crossed.

Viv

I left some dinner in the fridge. It's just leftover meatloaf from yesterday but it will keep you from starving to death. You think you can deal with heating it up?

Mads

Yeah. Whatever.

Viv

And tomorrow. All day.

Mads

Yeah.

Viv hugs Mads.

Viv

Mmmm. You smell like strawberries.

Mads

What?

A horn sounds. Viv breaks the hug and Mads sniffs herself.

Viv

That's Annie. Gotta run. See you tonight.

She stops at the door.

Viv

Here's an idea.

She crosses back and pats the sewing machine.

Why don't we saddle up old Rocinante here and make you a dress?

Mads

What?

Viv

Back in the sixties I used to make all my own clothes. In fact, I even made stuff for some of my friends. I practically put myself through college sewing stuff for people. What do you think? Could be fun.

Pause.

Well, think about it. Go online and look around and see what you like. We can make anything that turns your crank. In fact, we can make stuff that would cost hundreds of dollars in the store. Brand spanking new. Tailor-made for Madison's prom. Haute couture from the House of Viv.

Another horn.

Viv

See ya.

She catwalks out the door. Mads is exasperated. She exits back to her bedroom as...

Scene Four

Willie sits at the table with his carving and remembers.

Susan

You know, Willie, that day you asked me to come with you? I think that was my best day. You were like a little boy. So nervous. Big puppy dog eyes. How could a girl say no, huh? I'd never been out of Winnipeg in my whole life before. Never seen the ocean. I had no idea what to expect out here. But I knew you'd be there too.

So I said, "Yeah. I'll go with you, Willie." To Na Nai Mo. Such a funny name

Willie

No funnier than Win Nee Peg.

Susan

No. No funnier than Winnipeg.

And that day in the hospital. That was a good day too, my love. With you sitting there holding my hand. You just keeping holding on, mister.

Willie

I'm trying.

Some days it's so hard.

Susan

Promise me.

Willie

I promise.

There is a knock at the door. Mads enters.

Mads

Hey, it's me.

Willie stands up as Mads comes in with two bags of groceries.

Mads

I think I got everything you asked for.

Willie

Thanks.

Mads

You want me to put them away.

Willie

OK.

Mads puts the bags on the counter, unpacks and puts things away. Willie moves to try and help.

Mads

Milk. The small one right? I didn't know if you wanted whole milk or two percent. I got the two percent. And margarine. This was on sale. Frozen peas. In the freezer?
Six cans of stew. Where do I put these?

Willie

Over there.

She opens the cupboard and puts the stew away.

Mads

That's all you eat?

Willie

I get different stuff sometimes. Chili. Or frozen lasagna. I mix it up. One day stew. One day chili. The lasagna lasts for three or four days.
You want some? I can heat some up for us.

Mads

No thanks.

Bread. Eggs. Peanut butter. This was on sale too. In the cupboard?

Willie

No, the eggs go in the fridge.

Mads

Duh. And toothpaste. I didn't know which one you wanted so I got the one on sale. And toilet paper.

Willie

Oooh, the fancy stuff.

Mads folds the shopping bags and puts them away.

Mads

I can't believe you didn't get any fruits or vegetables.

Willie

You gotta cook em.

Mads

Not fruit. You gotta have fruits and vegetables.

Willie

I got canned peaches in the cupboard. I got the peas. I mix that with the stew.

He crosses back to the table.

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Mads

Yeah, but that's not fresh. You gotta have fresh. I mean you can even get bags of salad you know.

Willie

Salad?

Mads

You just take it out of the bag. You don't even have to wash it or anything. Just maybe put some dressing on it and eat it.

Willie

Muttering to himself.

I hate salad.

Mads

Whatever. But you gotta get some fresh stuff. It's not good for you.

Silence. She's done. She watches him for a moment.

Mads

You know they deliver right?

Willie

Who?

Mads

The store. They deliver.

Willie

Huh.

Mads

It's only \$5. That's WAY less than you pay me to do it. Or a taxi. Man. I asked about it. And they will do the shopping for you too. For free. It's totally awesome. You just gotta go online and they have a shopping thing you fill out. They got guys who do all the shopping and then they deliver it for you. The same day.

Willie

I don't have a computer.

Mads

Oh. Well, they got an app for your phone. You can do the whole thing on your phone.

Willie

You mean like a cell phone?

Mads

Yeah.

Willie

I don't have a cell phone.

Mads

Whoa. Flintstones. OK, look, I gotta phone. Maybe I can do it for you. You tell me what you want and instead of me going down there or having to borrow my grandma's car, I'll just order all the stuff on the phone and we get them to deliver. I mean, I don't want to talk myself out of a job but maybe you got other things I can do instead. I know you don't have a lot of money or nothing.

Willie

OK. We can try that. Thanks.

He gets up and crosses back to the counter.

Mads

So. Whadaya want me to clean?

Willie picks up the toilet paper and toothpaste and hands them to Mads.

Willie

Follow me. I'll show you.

They exit as...

Scene Five

Viv enters with a small cardboard box full of memories. She sits at the table and starts going through it. She slowly spreads the photographs and letters out on the table in front of her.

Viv picks up one particular photograph.

Mads enters. Just passing through.

Lucy

Is that Dad?

I don't think I ever saw a photograph of him.

Viv is confused. Who has spoken?

Viv

I thought I'd thrown them all away.

Mads

Who are you talking to?

Viv

Oh!

Just mumbling to myself like the old woman I am.

Mads

What are you doing?

She crosses to look over Viv's shoulder.

Viv

Remembering.

Mads

Who's that?

Viv

Lucy's father.

Mads

Whoa. Really? He's kinda cute.

Viv

I thought so too once. He was a lot younger than me.

Mads

What happened to him?

Viv

He found out I was pregnant.

He left.

Mads

What an asshole.

Viv

Fred.

Mads

Fred. Figures.

Don't wait up.

Mads exits.

Viv puts away Fred's photograph and looks at several more photos before she starts searching for one in particular: a picture of Lucy as a child sitting on the beach. She can't find it. She knows it's there. She dumps the box out on the table and paws through the pictures. The photograph she wants is not there. She is beginning to panic.

Viv

Where are you?

Lucy

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I'm right here.

Viv picks up handfuls of photos, quickly scanning them before throwing them back in the box.

Viv

I can't find you.

Lucy

Mom? Mom. I'm right here.

Viv seems to hear her. She is frantic.

Viv

Is that you?

Are you here?

Please.

Viv's breath comes fast and shallow.

Lucy

Shhh. Shhh. Shhh.

Lucy's susurrations are the breeze outside in the trees. It calms her mother and she gathers up her scattered memories only to find the missing photograph in her hand.

Lucy

Do you remember that day, Mom?

Viv

Yes.

Lucy

You were so beautiful

I was so happy.

Mads and Willie enter and take their places.

Viv sits with the photograph and her memories as...

Scene Six

Mads is doing the dishes. Willie sits on the couch and struggles to order groceries on Mads phone. The sound of the breeze slowly fades.

Mads

So, you're an Indian right? I mean First Nations.

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Willie

Huh?

Mads

We're studying in my History class about treaties and residential schools and stuff.

Willie

You study that stuff in school?

Mads

Yeah, we just started. We gotta whole unit on it. Like a month.

Willie

I'm not sure I'm doing this right.

He waves the phone in the air.

Mads

Let me look.

She takes the phone.

What are you trying to order?

Viv exits.

Willie

The frozen peas.

Mads

Don't you ever eat anything else?

Willie

I like peas.

Mads

OK, you get a couple of choices here see? And you just click on the one you want.

Willie

OK.

Mads

What else?

Willie

I want some cheese.

Mads

OK.

She hands him back the phone and leans over his shoulder to help him.

You go up to the search bar. Right. Up in the corner. Click on it. See the curser blinking?

Willie

Where?

Mads

There. That shows you are in there. See? And the keyboard shows up. Now type cheese.

Willie

How?

Mads

Tap the letters with your finger.

Willie concentrates and types out "cheese." Mads goes back to washing.

Willie

Dammit.

Mads

What?

Willie

I spelled it wrong.

Mads

How can you spell cheese wrong?

Willie

I got fat fingers.

She looks over his shoulder, takes the phone and corrects.

Mads

There. See?

OK, now scroll down until you see what you want and click on it.

Willie

This is a lot of work.

Mads

No. It's easy once you figure it out. It would be so much easier if you had a bigger screen. Like a real computer or even a tablet, you know?

Willie

I don't know how to use those things.

Mads

But you can learn right? If you buy one, then maybe I can teach you a little. Instead of shopping, you know. Maybe an hour now and then, and then you could fiddle around with it while I'm not here.

Willie

Maybe.

He concentrates on the phone.

Mads

So are you from around here?

Willie

I lived in Nanaimo almost thirty years.

Mads

I mean before. Where you're from. Your village or nation or whatever.

Willie

No. I'm not from around here.

Mads

Where then?

Willie

Up the coast. Listen, are you finished there?

Mads

Yeah, pretty much.

Willie

I'm pretty tired.

He doesn't want to answer these questions.

He struggles to his feet and hands her back the phone.

Maybe you can come back on Friday?

Mads

Yeah, sure.

She wipes up the counter and gets her coat.

Mads

Look, Willie? I gotta write a report on something and I wondered if maybe you could help me a little.

Willie

I don't know a lot of stuff. Unless you want to talk about working in the mill.

Mads

It's for my history class. On native stuff. Like history or culture or stuff?

Willie

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I don't think I can.

Mads

Oh.

Willie

He sees Mads' disappointment.

Maybe.

Mads

Great! See you in a couple of days.

She's out the door before he can change his mind.

Willie

Wait!

It's too late.

I haven't been an Indian since I was a kid.

This is a hard memory for Willie.

Viv enters with her paperwork and sits at the table.

Susan

Are you OK?

Willie

I just left her.

Susan

It was a long time ago.

Willie

I just left them all.

Susan

What could you do?

What could you do, Willie? Sometimes the ghosts are bigger than us.

Willie exits. The train whistle blows as...

Scene Seven

Viv sits with papers spread in front of her. She has another headache. She takes a couple of pills from a prescription bottle and returns to her paperwork.

Mads enters with her laptop.

Mads

27

Grandma?
I think I found it.

Viv
Found what, dear?

Viv closes her paperwork up so Mads can't see it and puts her pills in her pocket.

Mads
My dress. Wanna see?

Viv
Absolutely.

Mads
What do you think?

Viv
Ahh, honey. It's lovely.

Mads
Can you make this?

Viv
I sure can. What color are you thinking?

Mads
Black.

Viv
Well, that's a choice.

Mads
You don't like it.

Viv
Look, your graduation is a celebration of the work you've done to get here but also your escape out into your life. Black doesn't exactly speak to this theme of accomplishment and freedom. Don't you think something more colorful?

Mads
I like black.

Viv
I know. Tell you what. Let's go to Fabricland tomorrow and have a look at what they have.

Mads
You don't sound real excited.

28

Viv

I'm sorry, I'm just working on something.

Mads

Like what?

Viv takes a breath and opens the file in front of her.

Viv

My will.

Mads

What!?

Viv

Gotta do it sometime, right?

Mads

Are you sick or something?

Viv

Just because I'm writing a will doesn't mean I'm dying. I'm just planning ahead, Honey. I can see eighty from my house. It's probably a good time to make a few plans.

Mads

You went to the doctor for those headaches, right? Does this have anything to do with that?

Viv

They're still running tests.

Mads

You still having those headaches?

Viv

They come and go. They gave me these pills. They help.

Mads

I don't want you to be sick.

Viv

I don't want to either.

Mads

OK. Just so you know.

Viv

OK.

Mad

29

You're still gonna make my dress right?

Viv

Yes. I'm still gonna make your dress and we're going shopping tomorrow for fabric.

Mads

And you're just making plans?

Viv

I'm just making plans.

Mads

She points to the will.

Do I get anything?

Viv

Not if you keep pestering me.

Mads

OK. Jeez.

Mads turns to the counter and turns the kettle on.

Viv

Constable Ellesburg.

Mads

What?

Viv

Constable Ellesburg. I just remembered his name.

He was the policeman who phoned to tell me your mother was dead. Had driven off the road and hit a tree all by herself in the middle of the night. He asked me to come get you.

You were at that woman's house. She was a support worker or something.

Mads doesn't speak.

Something occurs to Viv.

Viv

Where were you when your mother died?

Mads

I was home.

Viv

Alone?

Mads

Yes.

30

Viv

You were nine.

Mads

I was used to it.

Viv tries to go to her.

Viv

I'm sorry, Madison. That shouldn't have happened.

Mads

But it did.

Mads leaves and the kettle begins to boil.

Lucy

When are you going to talk to her?

Viv

I'm working my way up to it.

Lucy

Don't leave it too long.

Viv

No. We don't want to leave it too long.

Lucy

Or you won't get to say anything.

Viv

You mean like you?

The kettle whistles as...

Scene Eight

Willie enters to the counter and shuts off the kettle. He makes two cups of tea. Mads comes out of the bathroom wearing rubber gloves and holding a toilet brush aloft.

Mads

Hey, Willie. You owe me big time. That was so totally gross. I would never do this at home.

Willie

Oh, merci mademoiselle. I'm forever in your debt.

He struggles to remember his French.

Je vous dois beaucoup.
Come and get some tea.

Mads disappears back into the bathroom for a few seconds. Willie takes his tea to the table. Mads emerges and gets her tea. She finds the sugar in the cupboard, a spoon in the drawer, and comes to the table. It's obvious she is getting to know her way around his house.

Mads

Wow. When was the last time anybody cleaned in there?

Willie

I don't remember.

Mads

Yeah. That's what it looked like. I think you can go in there now without too much fear of getting diphtheria.

Willie

Thank you.

Mads

OK. So the deal was I clean your bathroom, you talk to me, right?

Willie

OK. But I think I'd rather have diphtheria.

Mads

Really?

Willie

I don't know. I never had it.

Mads takes out her phone and puts on the table between them.

Mads

Do you mind if I record this?

Willie

I feel like I'm in trouble.

Mads

So. OK.

Where are you from?

Willie

He speaks a little loudly for the benefit of the microphone.

Up the coast. Near Prince Rupert.

Mads

Is that like Haida?

Willie

No. Tsimshian. But my father was Haisla.

He repeats for the microphone.

Haisla. H A I...

He realizes he maybe doesn't have to spell it.

Mads

What's that?

Willie

From Kitimat.

Mads

OK. But you're from Prince Rupert.

Willie

No, a little village up the coast. I never really been to Rupert much except to go catch the train to school. I kinda remember going there with my mum once or twice when I was little.

Mads

You took a train to school?

Willie

Residential school. Out near Edmonton.

Mads

Wow. You went to residential school?

Willie

Yeah. Most kids did. Even my mum too. For a little while.

Mads

What was that like?

Willie

Residential school?

I'm not sure I want to talk about that.

Mads

OK. Sorry. I guess it was pretty rough. We were talking last week in class about that. And those Truth and Reconciliation Hearings they had? People telling these horrible stories about what happened to them.

Willie

I heard about that.

Mads

So how long were you there?

Willie

Residential school?

Mads

Yeah.

Willie

Ten years.

Mads

You lived there?

Willie

Yeah. That's why they call it residential school.

Mads

You come home on weekends? I gotta friend that goes to a private school down island. She comes home on weekends a lot.

Willie

It's not like that. It was a long way away. Took three days to come home. By train and then a boat. Pretty expensive too.

Mads

Christmas?

Willie

Not really. No.

Mads

Summers?

Willie

Sometimes.

Mads

What do you mean sometimes?

Willie

At first, yeah, when I was younger. It's hard, eh. The longer I was in school, the less I remembered about home. Then came a time I didn't really fit there.

Mads

You didn't fit in your own home?

Willie

You gotta understand those schools, eh, they wanted to take the Indian out of us, out of all of us kids. If it didn't come quietly, they beat it out. With me, after that, going home just got hard to do.

Mads

I don't understand.

Willie

They worked hard to turn us into white kids. Some of us, we tried hard to hold onto stuff. In the dorm, talking or whatever. But we weren't allowed. If they caught you talking Indian, they'd beat you or worse. Some got it pretty bad. Some of us didn't speak English real good when we got there. We used to speak mostly Tsimshian at home.

Mads

But you went home after, right? When you graduated.

Willie

Yeah. For a while.

(Pause)

When I got there, I didn't really know anybody. I mean I knew who they were supposed to be, I remembered who each of them were supposed to be, but I didn't know them. They were like moving in a ghost world, like dancing in some kind of smoke and I couldn't hear them anymore.

Even my sister, she was at the same school for a couple of years but we were never allowed to see each other. But sometimes, we'd find a way to meet outside or there was this place up a stairwell, anyway... they transferred her to another school and then she came home after that. Way before me.

So, when I got home after spending ten years learning how to be a white guy, living on the rez again was kinda weird.

So who was I, eh? Maybe I was the ghost. Dancing just outside the world. After the school, maybe my spirit sorta shifted just outside so I was looking back from there. Couldn't reach out and touch them. Couldn't really hear them anymore. Just noises, eh? Like people talking in another room.

We can hear the distant and overlapping voices of the past but we cannot understand them.

Mads has stopped taking notes. She is a little stunned.

Anyway, I lasted almost a year. Walking around in the smoke.

Then I left one morning, I just left without saying anything except to Sis. She was pretty pissed.

Got up early and caught a boat ride into Rupert.

Mads

Where'd you go?

Willie

I hopped a train to Edmonton. Got me a job cleaning up on a big construction site. This theatre they built there. Almost a year. Shared a room with a couple of guys from work.

And those guys? They looked after me, taught me stuff. Some of them English, some of them French, a few Indians, eh. From here and there. Taught me how to build things.

I fit in there way better. None of us really had a home.

And I been all over after that. The guys, we'd just go from one big job to another. There's always something going on.

Ontario. Winnipeg. Never in Quebec. One time even up in the Yukon. Building government buildings.

Then I got this job here at the mill and I moved down here. Worked there till the accident.

Mads

The accident?

Willie

Fell off a ladder at work.

Mads

Oh.

Pause. Mads turns off her phone.

Mads

You okay?

Willie

Yeah.

*There's a long pause during which Viv enters and sit at the sewing machine.
Willie gets up to leave.*

Willie

So, was that worth cleaning the toilet for?

Mads

I guess. Was it worth having your toilet cleaned?

Willie

I'll let you know in a minute.

Willie exits to the bathroom as...

Scene Nine

Viv is sewing. A bolt of shiny black cloth is moving steadily through the sewing machine. Mads has won the color battle. Viv pauses periodically to pull out pins or adjust things. Mads looks up from the table where she's been texting with Ash.

Mads

Done yet?

Viv

Not even close.

Mads

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I'm going out.

Viv

Where?

Mads

Me and Ash are going up to the mall. Can I take the car?

Viv

You can walk to the mall.

Mads

Yeah, but we're maybe gonna go downtown after. There's an open mic at Christie's and Ash wants to bring her guitar and play something.

Viv

OK

Mads

Cool. See ya.

Viv

Mads.

Mads

Yeah?

Viv

The dress is coming along fine. We'll have to fit it on you soon. Maybe Sunday.

Mads

Cool.

Viv

And then we'll have to do some alterations and stuff. We got lots of time so there's no need to worry on that front.

Mads

OK. I should be back by nine or so.

Viv

You're gonna look great in this.

Mads

Thanks.

Viv

I hope I'll be there to see you.

Mads

Why wouldn't you be?

Some protest, right? It's still three months away. Can't you reschedule? This is the most important day in my life. You have to be there.

Viv

We need to talk.

Mads

I gotta go.

Viv

Now.

Mads

I just texted Ash that I'm on my way.

Viv

Well, text her again and tell her you'll be a little late.

Mads

Man! (*She texts rapidly.*) You couldn't wait a couple of hours?

Viv

In a perfect world sure. But I've been putting this off for a while and I have finally screwed up my courage so...

Mads

She slaps her phone down on the table.

Fine. What's so important?

Viv

The tests for my head aches came back.

Mads

What?

Oh my god! You ARE sick!

Viv

Yeah.

Mads

How bad is it?

Viv

Pretty bad.

Mads

What does that mean?

Viv

I have these... things. Tumours. They're pressing on my brain and causing the headaches.

Mads

Tell me it's not cancer.

Viv

Honey, I'm...

It's cancer.

Mads

Can't they fix it? They can fix it.

Viv

Maybe, if they'd found it sooner. / It's too late.

Mads

Oh my god. Oh my god. Oh my god.

Mads gets up and paces the room.

Viv

I found out last week.

Mads

You found out last week?! And you didn't tell me?

Viv

I didn't want to upset you.

Mads

Yeah, well, congratulations on that one.

Viv

And I didn't know how to tell you.

Mads

You were working on your will.

Mads realizes something.

Are you gonna die? Is that what's happening? You're dying, right? / Oh my god.

Viv

Not right away. But soon. It's bad and it's gonna get worse. I'm pretty much OK right now but I've got these headaches and sometimes I get dizzy and sometimes weird things happen...

Mads

Like?

Viv

Like I smell things or I forget things and all that's gonna get worse.

Mads

Oh my god.

Viv

After a while, I'm probably not gonna be able to stay here without help. And I don't know what to do about you. / I'm not gonna be able to take care of you...

Mads

What do you mean you're not going to be able to stay here?

Viv

At some point, I won't be able to take care of myself properly and I'll have to go into hospice or/ we'll have to bring someone in...

Mads

This can't be happening.

Viv

I'm sorry/ honey.

Mads

You can't be sick. Why do you have to be sick?

Viv

I don't know. It just/ happened.

Mads

Oh my god. First Mum and now you.

Viv

I know.

Mads

How can you be sick? How come you have to be sick now? I'm graduating in three months. I need you here to help me. What am I supposed to do if you die? Huh? What happens to me? Don't you ever think of that? Don't you ever think of anybody but yourself and your goddamn protests? What about me?! / What am I supposed to do?

Viv

Baby, I'm sorry. I don't know how to make/ this better.

Mads

Take it back!

Viv

I can't.

Mads

TAKE IT BACK!

Mads comes to a full stop. Shell shocked.

I'm leaving.

Viv

Mads! Don't leave. We need to talk about this.

Mads

Fuck you.

Mads runs out the door and slams it behind her. Viv is stunned.

Lucy

That went well.

Viv

Shut up.

Lucy

Mom.

Viv

Why don't you get out of my head?!

Lucy

Mom.

Viv

Just leave me alone!

Lucy

I'm sorry.

Viv

Why do I have to deal with all this? Where the hell are you?!

Lucy

I'm right here.

Viv

God, I hate you. I hate you so much.

Long pause.

Lucy

No, you don't.

Viv

No...

Long pause.

I miss you so much.

I just don't know what to do anymore.

Lucy

No, there's no rules. There's no plan. It just happens and you deal with it or you don't.

I'll help you.

Viv tries to pull herself together and slowly exits as...

Scene Ten

Willie enters with his new computer. He crosses to the table and sits.

He is obviously delighted by his new toy but also confused by it.

Susan

Look at my little boy with his new toy.

Willie chuckles.

There is no knock at the door. Mads enters. Clearly upset. Willie isn't really paying attention to her.

Willie

Hey Mads!

I got one. At Staples. The flyer came in the mail and they had a sale so I called a cab and I went there and bought this and the young guy at the store he gave me a few lessons so's I could get online and I been sitting here all day fiddling with this but I need help. So it's good you're here. You can help me figure this out. I'm having trouble looking stuff up. You know, and the truth is, I don't even know what I'm looking for.

Mads

So whadya buy it for?

Willie

Well, you said. Like with the store and stuff. I could order things easier. And maybe I could read the news or whatever. I don't really know. I mean, what can you do with these things anyway?

Mads

My grandma is dying.

Willie turns to her and registers her emotional state for the first time.

Willie

You better come sit down. You want me to make you some tea or something?

Mads

No, thanks.

Willie

So what's going on?

Mads

She had these headaches and she went to the doctor and it's cancer and she's dying and I yelled at her and took off.

Willie

Oh. *(Pause)* Why'd you yell at her?

Mads

I don't know!

She puts her head on the table and cries. Willie's not quite sure what to do. Eventually he puts his hand on her back and pats it gently.

Willie

There. There.

Mads catches her breath and looks at him.

Mads

There, there?

Willie

Well, I don't know. You seemed upset.

Mads

I am upset.

Willie

You sure you don't want tea?

Mads

You want tea?

Willie

Yeah

Mads

OK, I'll make us some.

She gets up and puts the kettle on to make tea. Willie comes to help.

They make tea together.

Mads takes her cup back to the table. Willie stands watching her.

Mads

I don't know why I yelled at her. I yelled a bunch of stuff and I wish I could take it back.

Willie

Yeah, that happens when we yell stuff at people.

Mads

I hate her for it.

Willie

For what?

Mads

For dying.

Willie

She's not dead yet, is she?

Mads

No.

Willie

Good.

Mads

But she's gonna be.

Willie

You gonna hate her all that time? All up until she dies?

Mads

No. Yes. I don't know.

There's a pause. Willie comes to join her at the table.

Willie

My wife died of cancer.

Mads

I didn't know you were even married.

Willie

Oh yeah.

Mads

I mean I'm sorry.

Willie

Why? You didn't give her the cancer. Anyway, it was ten years ago.

Mads

Wow.

Willie

She, uh... Her name was Susan. We met in Winnipeg when I was working there. In a cafe where I used to have breakfast. I'd always go in there early, before work. They opened at five for breakfast and I'd be in there by six most days. She'd pour my coffee and get me pancakes and stuff. And I liked her you know, I'd dream about asking her out but I'd never do anything about it cause I'm Indian and she's not and well I didn't know how she'd feel about that and I'm pretty much a chicken when it comes to the ladies so...

Anyway one morning, she poured my coffee and then just stood there looking at me with her hand on her hip, you know. And I just kinda looked back at her and there was a couple of seconds there and then she said, "Are you ever gonna ask me out?"

He laughs.

And I spilled my coffee.

Mads

Did you ask her?

Willie

I did. We went to the movies. The Princess Bride... or Predator or something.

There's a long pause.

When she got sick, we thought maybe she could beat it. Medicine today. Not like when I was a kid. Her doctors were pretty encouraging too. She worked hard at it and it seemed like she had a real chance cause it went into, uh...

Mads

Remission.

Willie

Yeah, remission for awhile and we had a good year, year and a half when we thought yeah we're gonna be OK but then it came back.

Mads

Oh no.

Willie

I got around a little better then. I looked after her here as long as I could. She looked after me too, after the accident. You do that for each other. But when the pain got real bad though, she had to go in the hospital where they could give her the morphine and I'd sit by her bed and just hold her hand. Fall asleep sometimes. Wake up drooling all down my shirt. I was pretty much a mess.

We had twenty years. That's more than most.

Yeah. So. Anyway. Cancer's rough. I'm sorry.

They sip their tea.

Willie

How long you gonna hate your grandmother for?

Mads

I don't hate her. I just hate that she's sick.

Willie

Hmm. Whadya gonna do?

Mads

I don't know.

Willie

You got other family? Somebody you can call?

Mads

Not really. No.

Willie

Then you're gonna have to go home and take care of her.

Mads

How can I take care of her? I'm only seventeen.

Willie

You do a pretty good job here.

Mads

But that's different.

Willie

What? Cause I pay you?

Mads

No. It's just... You don't understand.

Willie

I guess not. But you got family, you gotta stick with them. Believe me, that's a story I know. That's what your Gramma did, right? When your mum died.

Mads

I guess.

Willie

So, it's your turn.

Mads

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It's not fair.

Willie

It's not a contest. Fair isn't part of it. It just is. Sometimes you get a chance. You gotta take it.

Mads

A chance for what?

Willie

To do something. To be something for somebody. To be a human being.

Mads thinks it over and sips her tea. She looks at Willie. He looks back at her.

Mads

OK.

Willie

OK, what?

Mads

Can I finish my tea first?

Willie

It's your tea.

Pause.

But if you're gonna sit here you gotta help me figure out this computer thing.

He slides the computer over so she can see. They work together briefly before Willie continues on his own as...

Scene Eleven

Viv sits alone. The dress is abandoned in the sewing machine for now.

Mads sips her tea at the table.

There is only silence for a long while.

Neither Mads or Viv know how to start.

Viv

When your mother died, I was so angry. I'm not sure at who. Her for dying. Me for not being there for her. For not being able to stop it. I've been carrying that a long time. I didn't know what to do with all of it. And as it turned out, I didn't really have a chance to do anything because there you were and you needed me so much. And I guess I needed you too.

Now I'm somewhat at a loss cause here I am doing the dying and that's a bit embarrassing, isn't it?

Mads

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I'm sorry.

Viv

I know, honey. Me too.

Mads

Can I come give you a hug?

Viv

Please.

Mads goes to the couch and they fall together like magnets.

Mads

I love you Gramma.

Viv

And I love you too. I sure wish this could be different.

Mads

Me too.

Viv

What can I do for you?

Mads

I don't know.

How much time have you got?

Viv

It's kind of a crap shoot. The doctors say that the average time is anywhere from six months to a year.

Mads

Whoa.

Viv

Could be more, could be less. Depends on how things progress. How strong I am. And I'm a tough old bird, honey. I'm going to go down fighting. "Downward to darkness on extended wings."

Mads

What?

Viv

Deer walk upon our mountains, and the quail
Whistle about us their spontaneous cries;
Sweet berries ripen in the wilderness;
And, in the isolation of the sky,
At evening, casual flocks of pigeons make
Ambiguous undulations as they sink,

Downward to darkness, on extended wings.

My mother's favorite poem.

She takes Mads hand.

Mads

What do we do?

Viv

There's no rules. There's no plan. It just happens and you deal with it or you don't.

I'll help you.

First thing is we finish this dress cause I start chemo next week and that's gonna be a pain in the ass.

Mads

I'm gonna take care of you.

Viv

Oh honey, it's not your job

Mads

Yeah it is. It's my turn.

Viv looks her in the eye and see she means it.

Viv

Well, I guess I'm a little speechless.

Mads

You need to teach me to cook.

Viv

That's a good start.

Mads

And probably sew.

Viv

OK.

Mads

And I need to know stuff.

Viv

What kind of stuff?

Mads

Stuff about the house I guess. The bills and the mortgage and stuff.

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Viv

Okay.

Mads

And I need to know more about Mum, about you, about family stuff. About who I am and where I come from.

Viv

We can do that.

Mads

Cause there's not much time.

Viv

No.

Mads

I need to know everything.

Viv

Nobody knows everything.

Mads

You know what I mean.

Viv takes her granddaughter's face in her hands.

Viv

OK. I'll tell you anything you want to know, Mads. Don't worry. You'll be so tired of listening to me that you'll be relieved when I can't talk anymore.

Mads

No I won't. Don't say that.

Viv

OK. Sorry.

Pause.

Mads

Tell me something now.

Viv

Like what?

Mads

Tell me a story about when you were little.

Viv

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OK. OK.

They settle in together.

Viv

You know I'm from California, right?

Mads

No. I mean I guess I did but I didn't, you know?

Viv

Well, I am. But I moved up here in my late twenties with a guy who was dodging the draft so...

Mads

You were a draft dodger?

Viv

Well, Tom was. I just came along for the ride.

Mads

Still. That's awesome.

Vietnam, right?

Viv

Thanks right. Good for you.

Mads

We talked about it in history a while ago.

You want tea?

Viv

Sure.

Mads jumps up, turns the kettle on. She begins to get tea ready.

Mads

Keep talking. I can hear you.

Viv

OK, so here's something.

One time, in the sixties, at a sit-in in Berkeley, I was arrested on national TV with about 800 other people.

Mads

NO WAY!

Viv

Way.

Mads

Cool.

Viv

We were all part of this Free Speech movement trying to change the world. We were making a difference.

We hear the distant chants from the rally that fade away as...

Interlude, Scene 12

Willie sits at the computer. He types a bit. He is very nervous. He gets up once and walks around the table before sitting down again.

Viv and Lucy move to the sewing machine.

Willie is petrified.

Susan

Come on, Willie. Don't stop now. I'm proud of you.

Willie

Here goes nothing.

Willie takes a breath and very deliberately punches a key and waits.

Willie

Josie?

Pause.

Josie?

Pause.

Can you hear me?

We hear Josie's voice through the computer.

Josie

Willie?

Willie

Josie?

Oh my god.

Josie

Willie.

Willie

You look just like Ma'a.

Josie

We are old.

Willie

We are.

Willie continues to chat as...

Mads slowly pushes the fabric of her dress through the sewing machine. Viv sits beside her and coaches. Her hands shake a little.

Viv

That's it, honey. Not to fast.

Mads throws her hands up in the air.

Mads

Dammit.

I wish you'd just do this.

Viv

I can't anymore. And you said you wanted to learn.

Mads

I did.

Viv

You gonna have to rethread that.

As Mads works to get the machine running again, Viv tells her a story.

Viv

I remember trying to teach your mother how to sew.

Lucy

You were so impatient.

Viv

She was so impatient. She used to say,

Lucy and Viv

That's why they have stores, Mom. Nobody sews anymore.

Everybody laughs.

Mads

Nobody know how to sew anymore.

Viv

The world would be a better place if everyone just learned to sew.

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Mads

Ha.

Viv

You're doing fine, honey.

Mads

Okay, I think I got it.

Viv

Then let's try again. A little slower this time.

As Willie talks to his sister, Mads exits with the dress and Viv makes her way back to the couch. It is difficult for her.

Josie

Ma'a was so mad at you that morning. You forgot we were leaving for camp and almost didn't come home in time.

You remember?

Willie

What I remember was Ma'a was mad at me a lot.

Josie

That's cuz you were mostly an idiot.

Willie

I guess so.

Josie

You had to come get me at Cousin Rosie's.

Willie

What were you? Five? You remember all that?

Josie

Yeah, I do. It was a special day.

We got to ride in the back of the pickup all the way to the river. It was my first time.

Willie

I used to love that. I remember you were scared.

Josie

I was not.

Willie

You were too. I used to call you little chicken.

They laugh.

Josie

I'm a pretty big chicken now.

Willie

Me too, Sis. Me too.

Pause.

Josie

Willie.

Willie

I'm sorry, Josie.

Josie

For what?

Willie

For leaving.

Josie

I know.

Willie

You were pretty mad.

Josie

I was.

Willie

I had to go.

Josie

I know.

Willie

I just...

Josie

I understand, Willie. Don't.

We do what we have to, huh. Our ghosts, Willie, they were pretty big.

Mads calls from the bedroom.

Mads

Okay. Hold your breath.

Ready?

Viv

Ready.

Mads enters wearing the dress. It is black, not traditionally formal. More of a cocktail dress. Perhaps with butterfly sleeves or feathers. It is, in some way, suggestive of a bird.

Mads

Ta da!

Willie exits.

Viv

Oh, my girl. You look lovely. You look... grown up.

Mads

I so love this.

Viv

And you can wear it anywhere.

Mads

Maybe not anywhere.

Viv

You know what I mean.

Mads

Thank you.

Viv

We did it together.

Mads

You still want to go? If you're too tired...

Viv

Honey, I wouldn't miss it.

Mads

I totally get it if you can't.

Viv

You couldn't keep me away.

Mads

Okay. Listen, we don't have to leave for a couple of hours. You need a nap or something.

Viv

Maybe a little lie down. Just help me here.

Mads returns to her Grandmother's side. She helps her lie down on the couch. Mads covers her with a blanket and makes sure she's comfortable.

Mads

I got you, Gramma.

She bends and gently kisses her forehead. She gets up to leave but before she exits she stops and looks back at her sleeping grandmother. For just a second, the weight of her life passes over her face. She exits.

Scene Thirteen

Six months later, Willie enters with his suitcase and sits at the table to check his computer. There's a knock at the door.

Willie

Come in. It's not locked.

Mads enters wearing her dress. She has a bag over her shoulder and perhaps a hat. The look is far less formal than her graduation would have been.

Mads

Hey Willie.

Willie

Well, hello stranger!

Mads comes over and gives him a hug.

Willie

What was that for?

Mads

I missed you.

Willie

And I missed you too. It's been, what, six months?

Bad news. The bathroom's a mess again.

Mads

You didn't get somebody to replace me?

Willie

What? And have to start all over from scratch with some greenhorn? After all the time we spent getting used to each other? No way.
You look amazing. All grown up.

Mads

Thanks.

Willie

How's your grandmother?

Mads

She can't really talk anymore but she still knows who I am.
She's in hospice now. We just moved her in there yesterday.

Willie

Who's we?

Mads

The home support worker and me.

Willie

So you looked after her?

Mads

I had some help but yeah I did.

Willie

Good for you. How'd that go?

Mads

It was great, Willie. *(Pause.)* No it wasn't. It was the hardest thing I've ever done. But I might have missed it if you hadn't... Anyway, that's really why I came over. To thank you for helping me out and setting me straight.

Willie

Hey, you did that all by yourself. I'm proud of you.

Mads sees the suitcase.

Mads

What's with the suitcase? You going somewhere.

Willie

Well yeah actually. I was thinking about you. Good thing you dropped by. I wonder if maybe you could come by once in a while and water my plant?

Mads

Sure. I'd be happy to. Where you going?

Willie

Well. That's a bit of a story actually. I'm going home.

Mads

What do you mean?

Willie

This computer you talked me into. It's pretty cool. I been figuring it out and exploring and stuff. And a couple of months ago, I found my sister.

Mads

Awesome!

Willie

Yeah, it kinda was. I found this website about Tsimshian stuff right? You know, just looking to see if I remembered anything and what was happening with them. Well I found a picture of her. She works for the band council and they had pictures posted on there. Her name's different now. She got married but I recognized her. She looks like ma'a. Anyway, I sent her an email.

Mads

Cool.

Willie

Yeah. It took me a week to get up the courage. She got right back to me. And then... I Skyped her.

Mads

Whoa. Welcome to the future.

Willie

I know, right? Anyway, we been talking ever since. So, I'm flying up there tomorrow morning to meet her.

Mads

Oh, Willie. That's awesome.

Willie

I'm scared half to death.

Mads

Yeah, I can understand that.

Willie

I wanted to thank you... for teaching me how to use this thing.

Mads

You're welcome.

(Pause)

How long you going for?

Willie

I don't know. We'll see how it goes. My cousins still live there too. And I got nieces and nephews in Rupert. Even one in Vancouver. I haven't booked a return flight yet.

Mads

You'll let me know how things go?

Willie

Yeah. Maybe I'll send you an email.

Mads

I'd like that.

They laugh silently together as were hear the overlapping voices of Josie and Lucy and the lights fade to black.

Josie

Always good to have another heart. In case. You / never know.

Lucy

You look at me, Mom, and I can see myself in your sunglasses like somehow I live / inside you.

Josie

And we laugh, Willie. And Crow laughs. Ah, ah, ah, ah. *(A sharp dry repetitive cawing.)* We laugh together. / All of us.

Lucy

And the whole beach is there and the sun is there and I want to stay here forever, in my beautiful mother's eyes.

Josie

We are very young.

Lucy

I am very young.

The End