

James & Marty

LAUREN. Um.

(Lauren taps Marty on the shoulder.)

LAUREN. Will you be my mom?

(Marty nods, smiling. Lauren leads her to a spot in the room across from James.)

LAUREN. *(To Marty.)*

You're um ...

You're angry.

MARTY. Why am I angry?

LAUREN. Um ... because he's angry?

(A confused pause.)

JAMES. Should I just ...

LAUREN. You should / just —

JAMES. Wait — what you said before? About / the —

LAUREN. Yeah.

MARTY. Why don't we start? And Lauren ... you can stop us at any time.

(Lauren nods, then steps back. Silence.)

MARTY. Neil.

(James continues reading his invisible newspaper.)

MARTY. Neil. I need to talk to you about something.

(A pause while James studies his invisible newspaper. Then he looks up.)

JAMES. *(To Marty and Lauren.)*

I'm sorry. I'm having a little — I'm kind of drawing a blank.

MARTY. Can you just go off what Lauren told you?

JAMES. I don't really ... I don't really know who this guy is.

MARTY. ... Can you try?

JAMES. Can I try to *what*?

(Marty sighs. A pause.)

JAMES. Never mind.
Start again.

(He goes back to reading his newspaper.)

MARTY. James. I mean, Neil.
Neil.

I need to talk to you.

JAMES. I'm busy.

MARTY. You're reading the newspaper.

JAMES. The newspaper is important to me.

MARTY. Please pay attention to me, Neil.

(After a second, James puts down his newspaper.)

JAMES. What is it?

MARTY. I'm lonely.

JAMES. Well, fine. I'm lonely, too. We're all lonely.

MARTY. Then why do you ignore us? Why do you insist on ... why are you always reading at the dinner table? Or watching TV when you should be talking to Lauren?

(A pause.)

MARTY. Why don't you engage with me anymore?

JAMES. You're too neurotic.

LAUREN. *(From the corner.)*

He wouldn't say that. I mean, he wouldn't think that.

MARTY. What would he think / was —

LAUREN. He would say that she's always nagging him.

JAMES. *(To Marty.)*

You're always nagging me.

MARTY. Maybe I'm nagging you because you're ignoring me!

JAMES. Maybe I'm ignoring you because you're driving me crazy!

(A pause.)

MARTY. Then leave, Neil.

Why don't you just leave?

(Another pause.)

JAMES. I'm stuck.

MARTY. Well, I'm stuck, too.

JAMES. And I, uh ...

(He is in pain. A long pause.)

MARTY. But what about Lauren? Just because you're mad at me doesn't mean you should ... you can still be nice to your daughter!

(Another pause.)

JAMES. *(Softly.)*

I'm worried she's going to judge me.

MARTY. She's not going to judge you. She loves you.

JAMES. I'm worried she's going to ...

(James starts rubbing the spot between his eyes. It's unclear whether or not he's crying.)

JAMES. I, uh ...

MARTY. What? Be straightforward for once!

JAMES. ... I feel ashamed.

MARTY. Of what?

JAMES. Of what I've ...

(A long pause.)

Of my life.

MARTY. But Lauren isn't judging you, Neil.

(Pause.)

She just wants you to love her.

Neil. Look at me.

(James looks up, tears in his eyes.)

MARTY. Lauren just wants you to love her and pay attention to her.

(Pause.)

That's all you need to do.