**THROUGH SICKNESS AND HEALTH AND SOME OTHER STUFF**

by Max Langert

Rory: 30-ish

Jenna: 30-ish

Susan: Rorys’ mother

*SCENE: Inside a non-descript train station somewhere. Rory stumbles out from back stage, stomach covered in blood. Staggers, holds his stomach, falls to the floor.*

*Jenna walks out, conflicted but strangely calm. She holds a knife and a small object. Her hand is covered in blood but she’s not hurt.*

*She stands over Rory.*

*Beat.*

JENNA : Don’t tell your mother about this.

*She tosses the knife to the side of the stage and walks off.*

*LIGHTS DOWN*

*LIGHTS UP*

*SCENE: Inside a modest home in Idaho. Earlier the same day. Susan is here sprucing up the room. Trying to make it look its best. She’s old and a bit decrepit. Bent over, faltering vision. But she still has a bit of pep and can get around.*

*Rory and Jenna enter.*

RORY : Hey Mom. *(gives her a hug)*

SUSAN : *(turns to Jenna)* You must be Jenna. I’ve heard so much about you.

JENNA : You too. You’re so much prettier than your photos. *(gives her a hug)*

SUSAN : *(to Rory)* Oh goodness. She’s a keeper.

RORY : *(looks lovingly at Jenna)* I know.

SUSAN : I don’t have a lot to offer you for lunch. I know you’ve been driving all day. Things are pretty simple here in Boise, I imagine Rory told you all about that.

JENNA : Oh, don’t be silly. I’m just so grateful you let us come.

SUSAN : I made chicken noodle soup. Without celery, Jenna. Rory tells me you don’t like celery.

JENNA : I just find it so stringy, you know? I mean, if I wanted something stringy in my mouth I’d floss.

SUSAN : Be right back.

*Susan exits.*

*Jenna is looking around, taking the place in.*

RORY : So this is where I grew up.

JENNA : I know.

RORY : What do you think?

JENNA : It’s smaller than I expected.

RORY : You’re disappointed.

JENNA : No. It’s just different, that’s all.

RORY : We didn’t have a whole lot of resources. My dad couldn’t hold down a job. We did the best we could.

JENNA : You don’t have to make excuses.

*Susan out with soup. Jenna notices the ring on her finger.*

SUSAN : *(about soup)* Tried to keep it low in sodium. I’m watching my health these days.

RORY : Been to the doctor lately?

SUSAN : A few months ago. Guess I’m about due again.

RORY : You should go.

SUSAN : It’s always so depressing. Do more exercise. Try to keep your blood pressure down. I already know all that.

RORY : You need to go, Mom.

SUSAN : I know.

JENNA : I couldn’t help notice your ring.

SUSAN : *(holds up left hand)* This? It was in Angus’s family for generations. Has a lot of sentimental value for me.

JENNA : Can I see it?

SUSAN : Sure *(holds it out)*

JENNA : Would you mind if I got a closer look?

*Susan holds her hand out and Jenna gives it a hard tug, a bit harder than Susan expects. Susan gasps a little.*

RORY : *(scolding)* Jenna.

JENNA : What?

RORY : Be careful.

SUSAN : Oh, she’s fine. Would you like me to take it off for you?

JENNA : Would you mind?

SUSAN : It’s been so long. I haven’t taken it off in ages.

JENNA : Maybe if we used some butter.

RORY : It’s not necessary.

SUSAN : There’s a tub of margarine in the middle drawer in the fridge.

JENNA : Perfect.

*Jenna leaves to the kitchen.*

SUSAN : *(once she’s gone)* Well she seems very nice.

RORY : You like her?

SUSAN : What’s not to like?

RORY : I like her too, Mom. I know we haven’t been dating long, but I just feel connected to her on such a deep level.

SUSAN : That’s the way it was with your father too. We knew after just a few weeks. And look how we turned out. Married forty years.

RORY : I want what you guys had. *(pulls something out of his pocket)* I got my own ring.

SUSAN : Oh Rory, how exciting! When are you going to propose?

RORY : As soon as it feels right.

SUSAN : You know, things weren’t always perfect with your father and me.

RORY : I know.

SUSAN : Your dad was a drunk.

RORY : Yeah.

SUSAN : And he could be lazy.

RORY : True.

SUSAN : He was a handful sometimes but I loved him. You accept your partner for who they are. Warts and all. Oh, and he had warts. All over his body.

*Jenna enters with a large tub of margarine.*

JENNA : Okay. Here we go. You sure you don’t mind, Mrs. Peterson?

SUSAN : Please, call me Susan.

JENNA : All right. Susan.

SUSAN : I don’t mind at all, Jenna.

*Jenna takes a big glop of margarine and smears it on Susan’s finger. Then more. Then more still. She’s being pretty aggressive. Susan starts to get uncomfortable.*

RORY : Take it easy, honey.

JENNA : It’ll wash off.

*Jenna pulls on the ring on Susan’s finger.*

*Suddenly it pops off and Jenna goes flying in one direction. Susan in another. Jenna has the ring. Susan rubs her aches.*

RORY : Mom! You all right?

SUSAN : *(weakly)* I think so.

RORY : Jenna?

JENNA : I’m fine too.

RORY : What were you thinking?

JENNA : I didn’t know it’d be so tight.

*Rory helps Susan to stand. She walks off to clean up.*

RORY : *(about Jenna’s behavior)* Unbelievable.

JENNA : Isn’t it? This ring is amazing.

RORY : You’ve got to be more careful with her.

JENNA : I know. But check this out. It’s Scottish gold. The most expensive gold in the entire world.

RORY : I didn’t know.

JENNA : Your mom’s got a fortune on her finger and she doesn’t even appreciate it.

RORY : She appreciates it, Jenna.

JENNA : You know what I mean.

RORY : She says she likes you, by the way.

JENNA : Oh yeah? That’s sweet. I like her too.

*Susan back in, looking freshened up.*

SUSAN : *(about the ring, takes it back from Jenna)* So what do you think? Just a simple old thing passed down through the generations.

JENNA : It’s gorgeous.

RORY : Jenna says it’s actually worth a—

JENNA : *(covers his mouth)* Shh!!

RORY : What?

SUSAN : *(sliding it back on her finger)* Anyway, it’s mine and I wouldn’t give it up for the world.

*Susan beams as she looks at it. Rory is thoughtful, Jenna contemplative.*

RORY : *(turns to Jenna, a bit choked up)* Can I see you outside for a minute?

JENNA : Sure.

*They exit to outside as Susan clears dishes. Susan tries to see for a second, is excited for her son.*

RORY : *(takes Jenna’s hand)* I know I’m a simple guy, Jenna, and I know I’ve got my flaws, but I think maybe we’re meant for each other.

*He reaches into his pocket and pulls out his ring. Shows it to her. She seems disappointed.*

JENNA : Is that it?

RORY : What do you mean?

JENNA : That’s the ring you’re offering me?

RORY : Yeah.

JENNA : I just wanted to be sure it wasn’t a placeholder or something.

RORY : A placeholder?

JENNA : Until you could get your hands on something a little nicer.

RORY : Well if it’s not good enough for you...

JENNA : I just don’t know how we’ll make ends meet.

RORY : Love will find a way.

JENNA : You seem so sure.

RORY : Have faith in us, Jenna.

JENNA : I need to think. It’s a maybe for now, okay? It’s just such a big decision. Though there is one thing that might help me decide.

RORY : What’s that.

JENNA : Come on.

*They enter the house again.*

RORY : Hi Mom.

SUSAN : What happened? Did you ask her?

RORY : She said probably

JENNA : I said maybe.

SUSAN : *(shrugs)* It could be worse.

JENNA : Do you think I could look at your ring again?

SUSAN : What on earth for?

JENNA : It’s already come off once, it should be easy to take off again. I want to see the inside. Does it have an engraving?

SUSAN : Not that I remember.

JENNA : Let’s check.

SUSAN : My hand already hurts so much from last time.

JENNA : You can put some Bengay on your knuckles.

*She grabs Susan’s hand suddenly and pulls and pulls. And pulls.*

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RORY : Jesus, Jenna.

JENNA : Come on, Rory, help me out.

RORY : Sorry, Mom.

*Rory helps Jenna pull on Susan’s finger.*

*And pop! Off comes the ring with Susan and the others flying again.*

JENNA : There we go!

RORY : Everyone all right?

JENNA : *(looking at ring)* Nope, no engraving.

*Jenna leans over to Rory who’s sprawled on the floor with her.*

JENNA : *(whispers)* Put it in your mouth.

RORY : What?

JENNA : The ring! In your mouth!

RORY : Are you insane?

JENNA : If you want to be with me you’ll put that ring in your mouth right now.

*He looks at her, and shoves the ring in his mouth.*

*Meanwhile, Susan has stood up and walks over.*

SUSAN : Where’s that ring?

JENNA : Give me the ring, honey.

*Rory reaches into his mouth to pull out the ring and Jenna slaps away his hand. As she does this, Rory loudly swallows his mother’s ring.*

JENNA : No, you know, the *ring.* The one in your pocket.

*Rory is in shock, doesn’t know what’s going on. Jenna helps him reach into his pocket and pull out the cheaper ring. She slides this one onto Susan’s hand. Susan looks at it skeptically but just can’t see very well to tell if it’s right or not.*

JENNA : *(quietly, to Rory)* Do you realize what we can do with that ring? That ring will get us a new life. It will buy us whatever we need, whatever we want.

RORY : But it’s my mother’s ring that my dead father gave her.

JENNA : She doesn’t even know the difference!

RORY : That doesn’t matter.

JENNA : Give me that ring. Or we’re through.

RORY : I swallowed it.

JENNA : Oh my God, seriously?

RORY : Yeah.

*She grabs his hand.*

JENNA : We have to go, Mrs. Peterson.

SUSAN : Susan.

JENNA : Right. I just remembered we have a very important engagement to get to.

SUSAN : *(encouraged)* Engagement?

JENNA : We’ll see you soon.

*Jenna and Rory exit as Susan gets near the light of the window and squints at the ring on her finger, not sure what she sees.*

*LIGHTS DOWN*

*LIGHTS UP*

*SCENE: Inside a train station an hour or so later. Rory and Jenna are here.*

JENNA : Cough it up.

RORY : No.

*She grabs him, tries to get him to cough up the ring. Really squeezes him.*

RORY : Stop it!

JENNA : Damn it, Rory! If you want to be with me, give me that ring now. We have a train to catch.

RORY : Well if that’s the way you feel about it, I’m just going to go back to Boise.

*He walks away. She pulls a knife from her pocket and stabs him. Then she reaches in and rips out the ring. Holds it up. He staggers forward and falls to the floor. She looks at the ring and smiles.*

*END*