

TOM

Written by

Daniel Irving Rattner

Based on "The Matchmaker" - *Frasier* (Season 2, Episode 3)

Daniel Irving Rattner
291 Sterling Pl
Brooklyn, NY 11238
danielirvingrattner@gmail.com
(917) 623-7553

TOM

An apartment. Small and open concept, so everything is visible except the bedroom. The room is filled with boxes that have yet to be unpacked. There are a few large pieces of furniture, like an unfilled bookcase and a sofa. A TV set from the early '90s sits on the floor.

You are seated on the couch. The TV turns on, and an episode of *Frasier* plays—specifically Episode 3 of Season 2: “The Matchmaker.” In the episode, Frasier invites his new boss, Tom, over for dinner in order to set Tom up with Frasier’s live-in physical therapist, Daphne. The catch? Tom is gay and thinks he’s on a date with Frasier. A typical *Frasier*-ian farce plays out over the course of the dinner party, with Tom discovering only at the end that the entire evening has been a misunderstanding.

The episode ends, and the credits begin to play. The door to the apartment swings open, and a man comes in. He flicks on the lights. He’s tall, white, with wavy dark hair and a square jaw. He’s wearing a coat with a dark blue suit and a red tie under it. He’s carrying a grocery bag.

He mutes the TV and tosses the keys and wallet into a box, which they fall into without his noticing. He goes into the kitchen area and tosses the bag onto the counter.

On top of one of the boxes is an old landline phone with the cord and everything. He takes the receiver off the hook and dials a number. The phone rings on the other end of the line, and then a voice: “*Hi, you’ve reached Roz. I’m not-*”

TOM hangs up the phone. He turns on more lights.

He goes to the phone and calls again. He waits for the phone to finish ringing and for it go to voicemail (*"Hi, you've reached Roz. I'm not in right now, but leave a message and I'll get back to you as soon as I can."*). Then:

TOM

(in a stern voice)

Roz. It's Tom. I've just gotten home from my date at Frasier's. Frankly, I don't understand why you thought it would be appropriate to- Well, look, Roz: I think it would be best if you came by my office first thing Monday.

He hangs up. Almost instantly the phone rings.

TOM

(now chipper)

Duran residence, this is Tom.

...

Rozalinda! I had a feeling you'd call-

Frantic jabbering on the other end. TOM laughs.

TOM

No, it's fine. It's fine! Everyone deserves to be hazed.

...

I promise. I'm not upset.

...

And how are you spending this lovely Saturday eve-

...

Oh! Oh.

...

Well it sounds like you're having a much more successful date than I did. Don't let me keep you a second long-

The dial tone cuts him off. He hangs the phone up. He looks around the apartment.

What does he do? No phone to check. What did they do in the '90s when they were bored?

On the TV, commercials play. Or perhaps an old network show—*The John Larroquette Show* or *Sisters* with Sela Ward and Swoozie Kurtz. Or better yet, the *Dateline* episode that aired on October 4, 1994, after “The Matchmaker” episode of *Frasier*, which covered the story of Rodney Wilson, a high school teacher in St. Louis who faced a backlash after coming out to the students in his history class.

TOM picks up the phone and dials a number.

TOM

(in an overly chipper voice)

Hello, is this Suzanne Samuels?

...

Tell me, Ms. Samuels, are you satisfied with your vitamin supplements?

...

Because here at Vitamins ‘R’ Us, we’ve got pills for your every need. Vitamin C for chlamydia, D for dysentery, E for-

...

(in a new voice)

No, it’s Warren Christopher. I’m staffing up, and I really need a kindergarten teacher from the Bay Area to flesh out my team.

...

(dropping the voice)

Yes, it’s me.

...

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

Yyyuuuuup.

...

TOM pulls a box of Cheerios out of the plastic grocery bag and starts making himself a bowl.

TOM

No, Suzanne, it went great. I just came home to grab my toothbrush and a bathing suit cause he's flying me to Bora Bora in the morning for a romantic weekend.

...

It was a set-up. With his physical therapist. He thought I was straight.

The sound of laughter from the phone. TOM holds it away from his ear.

TOM

I'll have you know, I had the entirety of Woonsocket High fooled. No fewer than three girls made it clear they wanted me to take them to prom.

...

I went stag. Said it was a political statement.

Laugh. And then sigh.

TOM

I really don't want to talk about it.

...

Oh god. What a night. If they find me floating in the Puget Sound tomorrow face down, don't assume foul play.

...

The world is morbid, Suzanne. Don't you read the news? Genocide in Rwanda, Sarajevo is under siege!

...

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

I'm telling *you*, that's what I'm doing about it. It's your problem now.

They laugh. TOM takes a bite of his cereal.

TOM
(with his mouth full)

How was your day?

...

Yeah... Why?

...

Cheerios...

...

Are you serious?

...

No, fine, I'll stop eating if it *repulses* you.

...

No, Suzanne, I'm happy to starve so you can be comfortable.

...

Inedible. French something. Drowned in butter and overcooked. I even drank Chardonnay for him! I spent the entire evening fantasizing about ordering a pizza, and those fantasies got... vivid.

...

I wish you could come over too.

...

Hey, at least we don't have the time difference anymore now that-

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

...

A sudden shift in TOM's blocking.

TOM

I'm not gonna call him.

...

I'm not gonna call him!

...

Well if for no other reason than that London is 9 hours ahead so it's-

TOM looks at his watch.

TOM

Oh. I guess it's almost 7 in the morning there already.

TOM holds up a spoonful of Cheerios and examines them with disappointment.

TOM

Can I call you back in like two minutes?

...

I'm not calling Stephen!

...

Because I would have been a lot less obvious about it; I'm ordering a pizza.

He hangs up. And rummages around for a pizza menu. He dials the number and over the following call, he unpacks cassette tapes from a nearby box. He puts one in a tape player.

TOM

Hey! Yeah, I'd like to place an order for delivery?

...

One small pizza?

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

...

Nope—uh, maybe extra cheese.

...

Uh, sure I'll do sausage. But could I do only half sausage?

...

Thanks.

TOM farts. Even he is taken aback by it.

TOM

Oh, actually, what's the difference between a small versus a large. Like, how big are they?

...

Ok I'll do the small. But maybe with some—do you have, like, garlic knots?

...

Actually, you know what, make it a large. And sausage on the whole thing.

...

Yeah, I still want the garlic knots.

TOM lets out a much bigger fart and grimaces.

TOM

(speaking faster now)

It's 809 Olive Way. Apartment 5C. Thanks.

As soon as he can, TOM hangs up the phone and dashes into the bathroom. He doesn't bother to shut the door.

You are left alone and listening to the letter scene from *Eugene Onegin* on the cassette player.

After a few moments, the sounds of bowel movements emanate from the bathroom. Loud and frequent at first, before becoming quieter and further apart—kinda like the pace of a bag of popcorn in the microwave.

This goes on for several minutes, four or five maybe.

And perhaps on the TV, news clip from the day play—images of war and destruction and Newt Gingrich campaigning. Until suddenly:

Fuck!

TOM (O.S.)

Pause.

Goddammit.

TOM (O.S.)

The bathroom door opens, and TOM waddles out gingerly. His pants and underwear are around his ankles, though he still wears his shirt and tie. He resembles a foppish Winnie the Pooh.

You fucking moron...

TOM
(muttering to himself as he goes)

TOM goes through a few boxes searching for something. He doesn't find it. He takes the plastic grocery bag. He looks at it in something akin to horror. Then he spots a roll of paper towels on the counter. He sighs with relief. He grabs it and waddles back into the bathroom.

After a minute or two, he comes back out of the bathroom, this time with his pants back on. He picks up the phone again and dials a number.

Hi sorry.

TOM

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

...

I did not call Stephen!

...

I told you: I was ordering a pizza.

...

A work thing came up.

...

Well you know that old expression: *Seattle, the city that never sleeps.*

...

Oh. Huh. Are you sure that's not it? *Anaheim, the city that never sleeps.* No that's not right either. *Port St. Lucy... ?*

...

Fine, I had to take a shit. Something I ate on my date, I'm sure.

...

The music soars.

TOM

Girl this is *Eugene Onegin*. This is Tchaikovsky.

...

Wow, Suzanne. I thought you were more tolerant than that.

...

Tchaikovsky? Of course he was. Would a straight man write something called *Swan Lake*?

...

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

I'm not a fag, I'm refined.

...

Sorry. You're right. I'm a fag *and* I'm refined.

...

TOM sniffs his fingers and wrinkles his nose.
He washes his hands in the kitchen as he
continues to talk.

TOM

Well, being a little maudlin never killed anyone.

The call waiting line on his phone beeps.

TOM

Hold on, I have to take this. Hold on!

...

Because someone is calling me!

He switches the phone lines.

TOM

Duran residence, this is Tom Duran—Duran Duran's number one superfan.

...

(his voice deepens)

Oh, hi Dad.

...

Fine. Pretty quiet night.

...

Saw a few friends from work for dinner. Called it early.

...

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

One of the hosts at the new station, Frasier. And his dad.

...

(a laugh)

Yeah, well I told them all about you.

...

No, no ladies. Guys night in. You're calling awfully late, Dad.

...

Mom did? Or- who?

...

Hold on-

...

Slow down, Dad. Slow down.

...

No- no I'm listening. I'm just trying to understand.

...

No, go ahead.

He listens for a long time. As he does, he unpacks the boxes. From one box, he pulls out a large formal gown—all skirts and tulle. He pulls the dress out gingerly, to avoid making a sound. As he listens to his dad talk, he holds the dress up in front of his body and watches himself in the mirror as he swishes (quietly) around.

TOM

Oh gosh.

TOM

Well-

...

Uh huh.

...

Yeah. Yeah...

...

(suddenly frustrated)

It's Tom, Dad.

...

TOM stands to hang up the dress.

TOM

(calmer)

Where are you now, Dad?

...

Ok. Can you make yourself a cup of tea?

...

No I'm not going anywhere.

...

Ok, yeah. Can you sleep in Jenny's room? Just for tonight?

...

I'll be here.

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

...

Yeah, I love you too.

He switches back the lines.

TOM

Sorry. My dad.

...

No he's fine. He gets kinda confused late at night. He thinks my mom is in bed with him, yelling at him. But like she's his mom. I've learned it's best to let people talk it out when they're in one of those states. So, I listen.

...

He sort of knows who I am, yeah. As much as he ever did.

He rises suddenly and lets the dress fall to the ground.

TOM

Well, you said nothing maudlin!

He steps out of the dress and turns off the cassette player. And he turns on the radio. "Stay" by Lisa Loeb is playing. TOM lets out a laugh and puts the receiver down and puts the phone on speaker:

TOM

This is what you get for telling me to put on the goddamn radio.

SUZANNE

You love the radio.

TOM

Of course I do! It pays my bills.

SUZANNE

You're so full of shit.

TOM

Ok, enough with the flattery. Tell me about *your* day.

SUZANNE

It was good, to be perfectly honest.

TOM

That's ok. You can have a good day, even if mine was horrific. What did you do?

SUZANNE

I went to the movies with Denise.

TOM

She sobered up long enough to sit through a movie?

SUZANNE

It's been a month actually.

TOM

Hey! That's wonderful!

SUZANNE

Yeah. Yeah, it kinda is...

TOM

Your parents must be relieved.

SUZANNE

They are.

TOM

What did you see?

SUZANNE

Little Women.

TOM

With Katharine Hepburn?

SUZANNE

No, they made a new one.

TOM

They did?

They did!

SUZANNE

Who plays Jo?

TOM

Winona Ryder.

SUZANNE

We love her.

TOM

We love her. And Susan Sarandon is Marmee.

SUZANNE

TOM gay gasps.

And the girl from *My So-Called Life* is-

SUZANNE

Meg.

TOM

Beth.

SUZANNE

I wanna see it!

TOM

I'd go again.

SUZANNE

Sure, just fly up from SF.

TOM

I can be there by tomorrow morning.

SUZANNE

It lingers. The song has changed to "Come to My Window" by Melissa Etheridge.

Is this Melissa Etheridge?

SUZANNE

TOM

I know! Can you believe they're allowed to play this on the radio? What are they gonna let us do next? Get married? *Own property?*

SUZANNE

I like it.

TOM

Get it off my airwaves!

SUZANNE

Thank God you're in charge.

TOM

I agree. Thank you.

Beat.

TOM

Perhaps we can do a brief customer survey while I have you. What are you listening to these days? What would you like more of? Less of?

SUZANNE

I don't really listen to the radio.

TOM

Jesus, Suzanne. You know I hate it when you say that?

SUZANNE

Say what?

TOM

"I don't really listen to the radio." I would never dismiss your work like that. I would never show up at your classroom and tell a bunch of toddlers they were wasting their time.

SUZANNE

No, you'd be arrested.

TOM

Do you have any idea what you're missing, Suzanne? The radio is one of the greatest inventions of our time. One of the singular achievements of human history. I mean think of it. Just think of it. Anyone, anywhere in this country, has access to music, to news, to—therapy! With the push of the button. From their home. At work. In their car.

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

From the moment you wake up, to the second your head hits the pillow...

You can go your entire day without silence. And not just without silence. You can get financial advice. Listen to sports. Enjoy a gameshow. And not just you and me, but anyone who's got 15 bucks and a dream. Think of the little gay boy in Kansas hiding his transistor radio under the sheets, discovering his love for restaurant criticism. Or some dyke in Peoria listening to Ani DiFranco for the first time-

SUZANNE

Do you enjoy trafficking in stereotypes?

TOM

I do, in fact. I find it makes the world that much more digestible.

SUZANNE

I'm just saying, if you're going to be melodramatic you may as well be creative.

TOM

Ok fine, our sad little lesbian in Illinois can listen to whatever she wants on the radio. She can listen to Mozart, Bach, Beethoven. Pink Floyd, The Rolling Stones. Pavarotti, Callas, Placido Domingo. She can listen to Nirvana. Tupac. Boyz II Men. Run DMC. Red Hot Chili Peppers. Cyndi Lauper. Mariah Carey. Lauryn Hill. Patti LaBelle. AC/DC. Jon Bon Jovi. R.E.M. Bell Biv DeVoe. Michael Jackson. Madonna! Think about that. You could listen to music on the radio every second of every day for the rest of your life and probably still not hear everything that's ever been written. Think about what you could be missing, Suzanne!

Silence on the other end.

TOM

We live in an incredible time.

SUZANNE

We do.

Beat.

SUZANNE

But that's not why you love radio.

TOM

How do you know?

SUZANNE

I know you.

It's tense, suddenly. TOM rifles through some boxes. And finds what he's looking for. A change of clothes. He takes off his suit pants and replaces them with baggy shorts; his shirt and tie with a t-shirt.

TOM

So, you never said: How was the movie?

SUZANNE

Fine.

TOM

Oh.

SUZANNE

But you should go!

TOM

Yeah, no I probably will.

SUZANNE

It was nice to go. You know, things have been so tough with Denise. Better now to be sure. We're not fighting exactly anymore but... we don't really talk. About anything. That's been years. That's been hard. Sometimes when I go home, like for Thanksgiving, I'll sleep in Denise's room and just lie there. And I think about how, if I could have imagined, when we were kids that this is how our relationship would have turned out- ?

Her voice catches.

TOM

Sweetie.

SUZANNE

But today was good! It was good. It was a good day. We watched the movie, and we got lunch. And it was just *good*. I used to think so much that life was about being as happy as possible. But sometimes it's like... the absence of unhappiness is enough. Just to be able to exist.

TOM

Yeah...

TOM pulls off his button down. The audience sees on his back: a large purple splotch or two.

SUZANNE

Anyways, I thought that was a good sign.

TOM

Wasn't exactly an auspicious omen for my date.

TOM puts on the t-shirt, hiding his lesions from the audience once more.

SUZANNE

Who knows? Maybe tonight was the last event of something. A turning point. A funny story you'll look back on someday.

TOM

Maybe.

SUZANNE

I know you don't want to talk about it-

TOM

I really don't.

SUZANNE

I know but-

TOM

Suzanne.

SUZANNE

One question.

TOM relents with a groan.

SUZANNE

How did you... find out? He was straight?

TOM

He told me.

SUZANNE

But at what point?

TOM

Right after I made my famous 'come-hither' eyes at him.

SUZANNE

Oh. Do you think maybe that's what turned him straight?

They laugh.

SUZANNE

So he just said it? "I'm straight"?

TOM

Something like that.

SUZANNE

What did you say?

TOM

I told him it was fine. What else was I going to do? He was so flustered and--sweating. I told him it was fine and that I'd... I told him I'd learn to love again.

SUZANNE

There's my helpless romantic.

TOM

Of course as soon as I said it...

SUZANNE

What?

Call waiting beeps again.

TOM

Ugh. Another call... I must have a beacon today, I swear to God. All afternoon, too, I couldn't get off the phone-

SUZANNE

You know you don't have to pick up.

TOM
(mock Valley girl)

I don't understand.

SUZANNE
When someone calls, you don't have to pick up.

TOM
(still playing dumb)

Wha?

SUZANNE
You can pretend you're not home.

TOM
(mock gasp)

Lie?!

SUZANNE
No one's gonna smite you.

TOM
Hmm... Let's find out. Why don't we hang up, you call back, I won't answer, and if I get smited-

SUZANNE
Smote-

TOM
Smoted. I die. And if not, I don't have to have this conversation anymore!

SUZANNE
Har har.

TOM
I love talking on the phone.

SUZANNE
Then don't complain.

TOM
See that's tough, because I also love to complain.

Call waiting beeps again.

TOM

It's probably my dad...

SUZANNE

Take it. But see? This – *this* – is why you love radio.

TOM

I don't know what that means but

(in a funny accent)

Sank you for ze insight Doctah Freud.

(rushing)

I have to go!

He picks up the phone off the speaker and answers the other call.

TOM

Dad?

...

Oh! Bryan.

...

Yeah. How are-

...

(sad but unsurprised)

Oh, Bryan. Oh, I'm so sorry.

...

Were you there?

...

Yeah, but it's good you were there.

...

No, it's a lot to absorb.

...

Of course.

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

...

The buzzer. TOM hits the button on the panel to open the lobby door.

TOM

You'll sleep tonight. And then tomorrow will be hard. I'll call you first thing if you like.

...

Are you doing a service?

...

Oh, god. I wish I could be there. New job... But no, I can tell them I have to. I'll fly down-

...

I'll try my hard-

....

Ok. Ok.

A knock on the door. TOM hustles over.

TOM

Sure I'll call Phillip.

...

No, someone else should call Stephen. He and I aren't-

...

He doesn't want to talk to me-

...

Trust me, Stephen *won't* want to hear it from me.

TOM opens the door. It's the pizza guy. Young, anywhere between 15 and 25.

KYLE

Large pie with knots?

TOM nestles his phone in the crook of his neck and reaches into his pants for his wallet. He realizes he doesn't have it. He's still on the phone. He holds up a finger to the pizza guy indicating to wait for a second.

TOM

(responding to something on the call)

Oh, Bryan...

TOM makes his way over to his discarded suit pants and begins rummaging through the pockets. No wallet.

TOM

Sleep. It will be the best thing for you. See if Monica will spend the night.

...

I'll call her.

The wallet isn't in his suit jacket either.

TOM

I will.

...

Ok.

...

I love you. I'm so sorry.

He hangs up. Finally. He looks at the pizza guy apologetically.

TOM

Sorry I can't find my wallet.

The pizza guy, KYLE, has not moved from the doorway. He holds the pizza out in front of him.

TOM

You can put that down if it's heavy.

KYLE

It is not a problem.

TOM is still looking for the wallet.

TOM

I'm sorry I know it's around here somewhere.

He notices KYLE lingering in the doorway.

TOM

You wanna come in and sit or something?

KYLE steps into the apartment.

KYLE

(indicating the boxes)

You coming or going?

KYLE seems relaxed. Very relaxed. Might even be a little stoned, relaxed.

TOM

Coming.

KYLE

For good?

TOM

It'd be a lot of boxes to bring for a temporary stay, don't you think?

KYLE

Life is a temporary stay.

TOM

Deep.

KYLE mimes being shot in the heart.

KYLE

(deadpan)

Ouch.

They laugh.

TOM

It's gotta be around here. Can I get you some water? Or, one of these boxes has liquor in it...

KYLE

Not supposed to drink on the job.

TOM

It's almost midnight, how many more deliveries do you have?

KYLE

Don't stop 'til I drop.

TOM

Conscientious.

KYLE

I wasn't bragging.

TOM

No, I meant—that's funny. Please put the box down, you're stressing me out.

KYLE sets the pizza down on one of the unpacked boxes. TOM extends a hand to him.

TOM

I'm Tom, by the way.

KYLE

Kyle.

TOM is stumped in his search and looks at KYLE apologetically.

TOM

I just had my wallet. I was at the market downstairs. I bought Cheerios. I came straight here. I put my wallet down...

He tries to identify the spot where he put the wallet down.

KYLE
Maybe you left it at the store?

TOM
He would have called. Right?

KYLE's not sure.

KYLE
Maybe your jacket?

TOM
I checked.

KYLE
Maybe you left some money in a different coat.

TOM clicks his finger guns at KYLE to indicate
"smart idea."

He goes and rummages through jackets hanging
in the closet.

KYLE sees it's going to be a minute.

KYLE
Do you mind if I use your bathroom?

TOM
Of course. It's just down there, on your right. I'm going to run downstairs to the grocery
store while you're in there.

TOM is grabbing his coat.

TOM
Just, uh, don't rob me or anything.

KYLE
(indicating the pizza)
Technically, you're robbing me.

TOM chuckles. KYLE goes into the bathroom.
And then TOM races out of the apartment.

And you are left alone.

After a minute, a faint flushing noise. KYLE enters the living room.

He doesn't sit, but he does drift through the apartment and look around.

He opens the pizza box. He takes out a slice. And he eats it. Fast.

TOM comes back in.

TOM

No luck. You don't accept payment in the form of used Phil Collins CDs do you?

He holds up a few from a nearby box. KYLE shakes his head.

TOM

Foolish of us to ever stop being a barter economy. Ok. Well. What do you normally do? In these situations? This must happen to other people?

KYLE

Not really.

TOM

Then the hunt is on...

TOM resumes searching.

TOM

How's it been tonight? Busy?

KYLE

Saturday's not actually a big night for pizza.

TOM

I suppose most people like to go out. Hit the town?

KYLE shrugs. And joins in on the search.

TOM

I imagine you'd rather be doing that than working.

KYLE

I like being home.

Me too. Do you live around here?
TOM

Not far.
KYLE

You grew up here?
TOM

Yeah.
KYLE

Nice city.
TOM

Is it?
KYLE

I don't know; I just moved.
TOM

I'd like to move. I'm into photography.
KYLE

They don't allow cameras in Seattle?
TOM

What's there to take pictures of?
KYLE

Then where?
TOM

I've been thinking San Francisco.
KYLE

TOM stops his search.

No kidding. My best friend lives there.
TOM
(leading)

Why San Francisco?
KYLE

No real reason.

TOM
You have family there?

KYLE
No, just: Seems fun. And it's not Seattle.

TOM
Well. Someday.

Beat.

TOM
Would you at least sit? I'm having a Maalox moment.

TOM clears some boxes off the couch to make room for KYLE. And this spot for KYLE should be near to the audience—on the same couch as you, for instance. Nearer than TOM has been to you all night. Maybe he sits in an area you thought was inviolable, and it startles you a little.

KYLE
This is a really nice place.

TOM
Thank you.

KYLE
I like the green.

TOM
I started with the walls. The wallpaper in there.
(indicating the wallpaper in the hallway)
Rest of the furniture comes next week.

KYLE
Priorities.

TOM
Exactly.

KYLE
I wanna place of my own I can really decorate.

TOM
You don't live alone now?

KYLE
Uh, no.

TOM
Right. I'm sure you have dormmates?

KYLE shakes his head.

TOM
A girlfriend?

KYLE
I live with my cousin.

Not a helpful answer.

TOM
Well, this is my first time living alone in 18 years.

KYLE
That's almost as long as I've been alive.

TOM
Terrific.

KYLE
Is it weird?

TOM
That I'm talking to someone who probably isn't old enough to know who Ed Muskie is?

KYLE
No, living alone. For the first time. In a long time.

TOM
Uh...

For some reason, this seems to have stumped TOM. He thinks for a while as he makes his way towards KYLE on the couch.

TOM

Yeah. It is. To be honest. It's been weird remembering what it was like to be alone, remembering what your body—is—when it isn't... in relationship to someone else's body.

TOM is sitting close to KYLE, and close to us, now. He flushes red off of Kyle's non-reaction.

TOM

Too much.

KYLE

No, I know what you mean. My, uh, girlfriend, and I *used* to live together.

And now KYLE is up and getting his things together.

KYLE

And sometimes she would, like, go stay at her mom's for a weekend to help with her brothers. And I would get like *freaked* out at home, 'cause like I'd be doing all the same things me and her would do, except she wasn't there. And it was like- I was like: 'This is what it would feel like if she died.'

TOM

Yeah. Something like that.

TOM is defeated. KYLE is ready and by the door.

KYLE

Look obviously you're good for it. My boss'll send someone in the morning to get the cash.

TOM rises to resume the search.

TOM

Give me another sec.

KYLE

Nah, don't worry about it. It's fine, I promise.

Practically before he's finished his sentence, KYLE is out the door, leaving the pizza behind.

TOM sits on the floor. He picks up the phone. He grimaces.

He punches a number into the phone. He squeezes his eyes tight as if bracing himself for impact as he listens to the ringing on the other end waiting for- someone picks up.

TOM

Hey. This is, uh, it's Tom. Donthangup, donthangup.

...

I'm not gonna yell.

...

Bill died.

...

Bryan thought you'd want to hear it from me.

...

I'm glad he did too.

...

Bryan's doing ok.

...

Yeah, I'm ok. I'm ok. How are you?

...

I can't ask how you are?

...

Fine. How's our apartment?

...

But more closet space.

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

...

What's going on there?

...

What do you see? Out the window?

...

Wait, I'm putting you on speaker phone.

...

'Cause I wanna look out my new bedroom window while you look out the old one. But the receiver won't reach my bed so...

TOM picks up the phone and drags it as close to the bedroom as he can. You are left alone with the phone.

TOM

(speaking loudly, but not having to shout)

Can you hear me?

A voice crackles through the speakerphone, audible enough. He has a British accent:

STEPHEN

Yes.

TOM

What?

STEPHEN

I SAID YE-

TOM

I'm kidding.

A tense silence.

TOM
What do you see? Out the window?

STEPHEN
Um. The sun is starting to come up...

TOM
Good start to the day.

STEPHEN
Yeah.

TOM
What does it look like?

STEPHEN
Like a fucking sunrise, Tom.

TOM
You can be a bit more descriptive.

STEPHEN
This is inappropriate.

TOM
There are multiple oceans between us. I harbor no illusions of a reunion. We're just exchanging vowel sounds.

STEPHEN
Fine.

TOM
I miss you.

STEPHEN
Tom!

TOM
A joke!

STEPHEN
It's too early for this.

TOM
Saved you a pound on coffee though...

STEPHEN
I miss you too.

TOM
You do?

STEPHEN
You know I do.

Beat.

STEPHEN
I'm sorry I- couldn't-

TOM
Don't.

STEPHEN
You'll find someone. Someone else. Someone who can-

TOM
You think so?

STEPHEN
You, Tom? Of course.

TOM
Do you think I'll have time?

Long pause.

TOM
Stephen?

STEPHEN
(almost a whisper)
Yes.

TOM
I do too. Ok! Enough! Now be a pal and describe the sunrise to me.

STEPHEN
Why?

TOM

'Cause it won't be there much longer.

STEPHEN

Ok. Uh, the sun is like a third of the way up-

TOM

Colors, Stephen. Colors!

STEPHEN

Orange. Blue. Uh, purple.

TOM

(over the top)

Paint me a picture!

STEPHEN

(after a long sigh)

Well... it's unusually clear. So the sunrise, it kinda goes on forever. Like sometimes you can see an end to it, you know? 'Cause of the clouds, or the buildings. But this one, it has no edges. It's...

TOM

I follow you.

STEPHEN

Yeah.

TOM

What else do you see?

A pause.

TOM

Stephen?

STEPHEN

I'm looking.

TOM

Did you forget how?

STEPHEN

(shutting him up)

Ok ok. Remember that school across the street?

TOM

Mmhmm.

STEPHEN

Well. Its doors just opened for the morning. There's a teacher waiting out front. And a little further down the block, there's a mum- I suppose, I shouldn't assume: A woman in her 40s, I'd guess. She's wearing—what would you call it? A housecoat? Like it's for indoors, but it's warm, you know? She's certainly not meant to be wearing it out here. And she's got a kid in tow. A little girl. Maybe 8 or 9. Or 6? I'm terrible with kids' ages. The girl is carrying- oh she's just dropped it. She had a little doll and she dropped it. She's trying to go back for it, but her mum is pulling her forward. Wait! Turn around, you ninny! Oh. Her mum's noticed now. They're going back for the doll. It's in the gutter- They can't see it. By the grate! By the- ! Oh, I should say something. Where are my shoes? Where are my- No, oh. No, she's found it. Oh good... My god she's really crying. And clinging to it. Is that normal? At that age? To be so attached? To something else?

No response. A pause.

STEPHEN

Oh. She's giving the doll to her mother. And she's walking into school. She's hugging the teacher. It's like she's forgotten about the doll completely. How silly. How easily she moved on. After all that.

No response again.

STEPHEN

Tom... ? Are you there... ?

A click.

STEPHEN's hung up.

The lights are out.

END OF PLAY

[Curtain/bows music: "Bless the Telephone" by Labi Siffre]