

[This is an excerpt from Act II. After a cross-country trip to bail Arthur's ex-girlfriend Melissa out of jail, during which Arthur and Amy's fraught siblinghood explodes, they discover that Melissa has already made bail and fled. Arthur abandons Amy in a small town in Wyoming to track down Melissa, and he convinces her to run away with him. Meanwhile, Amy hitches a ride from the bounty hunter chasing Melissa and, in a desperate attempt to escape from herself, seduces him.]

(Lights up on ARTHUR and AMY in separate spotlights, facing front.)

ARTHUR & AMY

(Not quite simultaneously.)

How to escape.

(They stop, notice each other. They glare at each other for a second, then turn front again)

ARTHUR

The goal, of course, is to get out of danger as quickly as possible.

AMY

It's not enough to know what you're escaping from.

ARTHUR

It astonishes me how many people don't get that simple idea.

AMY

You also have to know where you're escaping to.

ARTHUR

Watch kids playing tag. The ones who hover around the edges of the field, hoping not to be seen, hoping to sneak around to home base when the coast is completely clear – they always get tagged.

AMY

It's like running through the woods at night. If you don't have a path leading out, you'll just run around in circles until whatever's after you steps up and grabs you.

ARTHUR

It's the china-shop bulls, the ones who charge straight through for home, damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead, they're the ones who get home safe.

AMY

Life isn't a kids' game. Home base is not always clearly defined.

ARTHUR

You have to be bold.

AMY

You have to be careful.

ARTHUR

You can't dither until the choice gets made for you.

AMY

I don't do that.

(A pause. The lights come up between them. There is a table, two chairs, and a hand of gin all dealt out. The scene should be both nowhere and everywhere at once – echoes of everywhere they've been in the play. They look at it, at each other, and without a word, sit down and begin playing. They don't look at their cards. They pick up and discard in automatic motion.)

AMY

So where are you escaping from?

ARTHUR

(Smug.)

From a town in Nebraska. In my car. With Melissa.

AMY

Oh. You got the girl. Happy ending.
So what are you doing here?

ARTHUR

I was worried about you.

AMY

Oh please.

ARTHUR

I was. I am. What if you couldn't get to the airport? What if they wouldn't let you on a flight last-minute? Who was going to take care of you once you got home?

AMY

Or what if I decided not to go home at all?

ARTHUR

At least I know you're smarter than that. Unlike some people I could mention, you're not going to wind up screwing some sketchy stranger who might land you in jail. Come to think of it, what are you escaping from?

AMY

It's... complicated.

ARTHUR

Oh boy. You're not having another breakdown, are you?

AMY

Um... no, I don't think so. It's just... does it ever change? I mean, no matter how you alter who you are, how you behave, or misbehave, whatever you do... do you ever stop wanting to get out of your own skin?

ARTHUR

Tell me again how this isn't a nervous breakdown.

AMY

It's a sex scene, actually. I'm screwing some sketchy stranger right now.

ARTHUR

Ha ha.

(Pause.)

Are you serious?

AMY

Or, I guess, he's screwing me. I'm playing cards.

ARTHUR

...Do girls really do that a lot? No, don't answer that. I am not having this conversation with you.

AMY

It's not about the sex, you see. It's about changing the story. Taking the road less traveled.

ARTHUR

Is that what you're escaping from? My path?

AMY

Jesus, it isn't all about you. It's...
Remember Leona the Lion?

ARTHUR

That stuffed animal that you insisted was a girl even though it had a mane? What's that got to do with it?

AMY

Well, one of her button eyes popped off.

ARTHUR

...So? Maybe that means it's time to throw it out. You should have done it years ago.

AMY

I knew you'd say that!

ARTHUR

Then don't! It's none of my business! Sew the damn eye back on, Mom taught you how.

AMY

I know she did. That's the thing. Something was broken, and everything I could do to fix it was someone else's solution.

ARTHUR

Wait... When was this?

AMY

(She has stopped playing cards.)

It's the law of entropy. The eye can never be unbroken. I can never go back to when Leona was completely mine. Either way, it's a patch, it's a lie, it's a gloss over the crack. No matter what I do, it's not really me making the decision, it's somebody else's choice, somebody else's life, and there's no way out. Nothing I can do, no way out, nothing I can see that's really, finally irreducibly me. But a decision has to be made. And this stupid little glass eye is staring at me, saying, all right then, kid, whatcha gonna do?

ARTHUR

(Understanding.)

And so you sobbed. On your dorm room floor. For twelve hours.

AMY

(Nods.)

I couldn't move, I couldn't get up or lie down, go forward or back, because everywhere I turned, everything I did was a script, follow the expectations or follow you. Get my degree or get you. Be good or be you.
...I guess it was a little bit about you.

ARTHUR

So?

AMY

So.

ARTHUR

So move.

AMY

Right.

(She discards. ARTHUR picks it up, then discards face down, laying his cards down.)

ARTHUR

Gin.

(The lights come back up on the motel room. AMY is pulling on her clothes. HUNTER watches from the bed.)

HUNTER

Where you going?

AMY

I thought you had work to do.

HUNTER

It'll wait a little longer. There's no rush.
Was it... was it not okay?

AMY

(Sincerely.)

It was fine. Just what I needed. I just realized... I have to keep moving. It doesn't matter where, as long as I choose it. Even if I make the wrong move, even if I throw the wrong card, it doesn't matter. The point is the decision. Making the choice is everything.

HUNTER

(Impressed with himself.)

You got all that from a little afternoon sex?

AMY

I guess my mind was elsewhere.

HUNTER

You sure do blow hot and cold, don't you?

AMY

I'm sorry. Look... how are you going to tell your friends about me?

HUNTER

I'm not really the kind of guy to...

AMY

Come on.

HUNTER

Well... I picked up this amazing girl hitchhiking in Wyoming – a bit crazy, but absolutely gorgeous – and we had a good time, and then she put on her clothes and left.

AMY

“And I never saw her again.”

HUNTER

And I never saw her again.

AMY

And... here's the point... how does the story end if I stay with you until you have to go to work?

HUNTER

Then, we had a good time... and then I brought her into town, sent her on her way, and went about my business.

And I never saw her again.

AMY

You see? It's all about who's active in the story, who's making the decision, who's leaving who. I have to be the one to leave this time, I just do.

HUNTER

"This time?"

AMY

My brother. I told you about him. Ditched me in Hotspurs.

HUNTER

(Laughing.)

Hotspurs. That town's still trying to save up for one horse. What the hell were you doing there, anyway?

AMY

Doesn't matter. It was a failure.

HUNTER

What was?

AMY

It... I mean, look. You're from around here, right?

HUNTER

More or less.

AMY

Fine. But you've had encounters with the cops in Wyoming, right?

HUNTER

More than I'd like.

AMY

So you tell me. Is it common practice for them to practically arrest you for asking a simple question?

HUNTER

Not normally. You must've done something to piss 'em off.

AMY

I swear, all I did was ask to see my friend. Not even. I just mentioned her name, and whoops, here comes my trusty semi-automatic.

HUNTER

What friend?

AMY

...I probably shouldn't tell you, if she really skipped bail. It's bad enough my brother ran off to look for her, without involving a stranger who...

(HUNTER is now up, throwing his clothes on as quickly as possible.)

What's wrong?

HUNTER

And here I've been wasting my time with you...

AMY

"Wasting?"

HUNTER

Did she put you up to this? Did she send you to...

(More to himself:)

No, no, of course she didn't. Don't get paranoid now. Just think.

Your brother. He went looking for her, you said. Did he say where?

AMY

No, and I don't care. I don't understand what you...

HUNTER

Do you have any idea what I had to do to raise the money to bail her out? The promises I made? What I've been through to get her back? And now, no Melissa, no Jimmy...

AMY

Melissa?! How does she do it?

HUNTER

And while I've been dicking around with you, your brother's probably got her halfway to nowhere. Just because you've got to prove some adolescent point about independence...

AMY

Adolescent?

HUNTER

You've got to do something, anything you can think of, to get away from your brother, so what do you do? You cost me a hundred thousand dollars. Do you have any idea what it's going to look like that I lost her twice? People are going to laugh at me. I do not like it when people laugh at me. And the people I owe money to do not like deadbeats. What do you care, you probably piss away a hundred grand in a good weekend at the mall. You stupid, self-absorbed, needy child.

AMY

...Well, you fucked me. If I'm a child, what does that make you?

So none of this was my story after all. It never was. It was always about you and her.

HUNTER

(Calculated.)

You want to make this your story? You want to be the hero? Then tell me where your brother is going to take her.
Into the mountains? Across the border? Back to your place in... what was it, Connecticut?

AMY

Even if I had any idea, I wouldn't tell you.

HUNTER

(Drawing his gun, advancing on her.)

The hell you wouldn't.

AMY

Stay away from me.

HUNTER

You'll talk to me, Amy.

AMY

I can give you a hundred thousand dollars. I can, right now. Then you can just leave us alone.

HUNTER

That's a start, but it's not enough. I've already spent another ten grand hunting her down. I want her, and I want her friend.

AMY

(Mustering all her courage.)

I said, you leave her alone!

HUNTER

You think you're giving me orders now? Who the fuck are you. Who the fuck are you to be giving orders. You can't even get your undies off without thinking of your brother.

AMY

Shut up.

HUNTER

Oh, yeah, that's it, isn't it? She's a big woman without her big brother. But get him into the picture, and watch the little girl crumble.

AMY

I said, shut up!

HUNTER

Or what? What'll you do, without asking big brother's permission?

(She flies at him. He easily grabs her, pins her arms at her sides, and throws her down on the ground. He moves to continue to follow up his advantage, sees her crumpled on the ground, and stops.)

HUNTER

Nah. Not even worth the effort.

(He pulls his cell phone out of his pocket, dials, and speaks as he exits.)

Hey, it's me. I think the bitch got away.

Yes, again.

It's not funny, Charlie.

It's not!

(He is out.)

AMY slowly stands up. She is crying, but not too much. She picks up her bag, and starts toward the door. She limps a little. She stops, stares out at where HUNTER just exited. Could he be waiting for her? If not, what else is? Slowly, she reaches into her bag, pulls out her cell phone, and dials.)

AMY

Arthur?

(The lights come up on ARTHUR.)

ARTHUR

Okay, here's the secret.

It's all about the tiger.

Imagine a monkey riding a tiger. All the monkey can do is hold on while the tiger goes anywhere it wants – but the monkey sits up their, clinging to the fur and telling itself it's in control. And the other monkeys go on believing that he's steering the tiger, because they're all riding their own tigers, telling themselves the same lie. None of them has the balls to look the tiger in the eye and say, okay, run.

But I find it comforting. If there's no control, there's no responsibility. We're all subject to the whims of a feral cat, and if you fail to proverbially herd it, it's not your fault. I mean, come on, do you know how fast tigers run? It's hard enough just to stay on board without worrying about direction. Why pretend I have direction in my life when the direction I'm facing is never the direction I'm going? If free will is an illusion, isn't it better just to close my eyes, feel the wind go whipping by, and pray the tiger doesn't notice me on its back and eat me?

And so the monkey clings with all his might. The illusion of control straps him to the tiger, makes sure that even if he can't go where he wants, at least he'll go. Better to be deluded about being in control than to be thrown off into the jungle. Better to keep moving under a power not our own than to stand still, alone.

Oh.

Oh God.

Amy.

(The lights come up on MELISSA in the passenger seat beside him. ARTHUR speaks into his cell phone.)

Amy? Did you get home okay?

MELISSA

Amy? Let me talk to her.

AMY

Um, I'm in this town in Nebraska, called Parsons.

ARTHUR

What?

MELISSA

(Worried.)

What?

AMY

Arthur, don't.

ARTHUR

I told you to get on a plane. I told you to go home.

AMY

Please. Don't.

ARTHUR

It's just, I'm leaving Parsons as fast as I can. Where are you?

AMY

I'm at this motel, and I'm kind of... stuck here. Could you... could you pick me up?

ARTHUR

Okay... fine. I can't come all the way back, though. You'll have to hitch out. I'll call you when I have a place to meet.

MELISSA

Let me...

(But he has hung up. Lights out on AMY.)

Arthur, what are you doing?

ARTHUR

Going back for Amy.

MELISSA

What? Are you crazy? I told you, we are not turning around.
WE ARE NOT TURNING AROUND!

ARTHUR

Don't!...

(Blackout. There is the noise of tires squealing, and a sickening crunch.)