

SHRIMP & GRITTS:
SHE'S GONE

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CHARACTERS

SHRIMP	Mayor of Yachihash, lesbian, drinks a fair amount, 50s
GRITTS	Retired Merchant Marine captain, never a family man, enjoys a beverage most any time of day, 60s
CLEMENTINE	Musician, 30s
RUUD	Musician, 30s

SETTING

Various locations around Yachihash, Oregon, including:
The Sandraker Inn,
Gritts' house,
Shrimp's house.

TIME

About a year ago to the present.

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTES

On Shrimp & Gritts

SHRIMP & GRITTS is a kind of theatrical comic strip, the title characters of which are refugees from the real world who have landed in the tiny coastal burg of Yachihash,¹ Oregon (population 609). Shrimp comes from a background of East Coast privilege, educated in private and Ivy League schools, and has battled addiction most of her adult life. Gritts is a retired Merchant Marine captain who never had time for a family but plenty of time to read, everything from the complete Louis L'Amour canon to the works of Augustine of Hippo in the original Latin. They are best friends, drinking buddies. They are both sharp and worldly in some ways, absurd in others.

On the Set

The stage can be divided into three areas: 1) The lounge at the Sandraker Inn, which could include a table and chairs, a sitting area next to a gas fireplace, and a small platform for the musicians, which could be separately lit, 2) Gritts' living room, with a loveseat, a couple of stuffed chairs, and a coffee table, and 3) Shrimp's dining room, with a table and chairs. If the stage can't accommodate all three areas at once, simple set changes can be made between vignettes, but the musicians' platform should always remain in place.

On Music

Between each play there should be a live musical interlude, each song or song segment performed by the duo Clementine & Ruud. These characters should be played by actors who also sing and play instruments, or musicians who have some acting chops. The choice of music performed is entirely up to the production. The script offers musical suggestions that can be tailored to the talents of the actors and the intentions of the director. Clementine & Ruud represent the multitude of excellent itinerant musicians who play small-town restaurant lounges across America.

Annotations

... indicates dialogue that trails off.

— indicates dialogue that is cut off.

// indicates overlapping dialogue.

Dialogue in parentheses is not spoken, but indicates an expression or gesture.

¹ A fictional city, pronounced "YOSH-uh-Hosh" (from the Siletz phrase "yaa-ch'ii-xash" meaning "they are dipping for fish").

1. SHE'S GONE – GRITTS

About a year ago – Gritts' living room.

2. ONE OF US

A week later – Gritts' living room.

3. BOOK GROUP

A few weeks later – The lounge at the Sandraker Inn.

4. THE RACE CARD

A couple months later – The lounge at the Sandraker Inn.

5. SHE'S GONE – SHRIMP

A few weeks later – Shrimp's dining room.

6. STINK EYE

Present – The lounge at the Sandraker Inn.

Intro

Lights rise on CLEMENTINE (30s) and RUUD (30s), a duo and a couple. They sit on stools on the "stage"—no more than a raised platform—at the Sandraker Inn. One or both of them play instruments and they both have mics. They look weary for their age but eager to give a good show and earn their tips.

CLEMENTINE

(more indie than pop)

Good evening. How y'all doin'? Good to see everybody. Thanks for coming out. Gonna try and show you a good time tonight.

RUUD

Yes, we are.

CLEMENTINE

I'm Clementine.

RUUD

And I'm Ruud. That's R-U-U-D.

CLEMENTINE

And Clementine is C-L-E-M—

RUUD

I'm only spelling it so they don't think it's R-U-D-E.

CLEMENTINE

And I'm only spelling mine so people know how to spell it.

RUUD

Babe, everyone knows how to spell Clementine.

CLEMENTINE

Nuh-uh.

RUUD

Yes, they do. It's spelled phonetically.

CLEMENTINE

(to the audience)

Hey, who doesn't know how to spell Clementine? Raise your hand if you're just the teensiest bit unsure.

They look out at the house and then one of them raises his or her eyebrows at the other to say, "See?"

RUUD

Anyway, together we're ...

CLEMENTINE & RUUD

Clementine & Ruud!

RUUD

We'll be playing some tunes while you sit back and enjoy a beverage ... or two or three.

CLEMENTINE

I promise you, the more you drink, the better we'll sound.

RUUD

And if you drink a whole lot, you'll just *have* to buy one of our CDs, which we have for sale here.

CLEMENTINE

So drink up, folks.

RUUD

And don't ignore the tip jar. The better you tip, the more *we* can drink.

CLEMENTINE

Haha. He's joking. The tips go into our prescription drug fund. (*off Ruud's look*) What? It's true. We don't have insurance.

RUUD

(*trying to make light*)

Don't say that too loud, Clem. Could get busted. Gotta have insurance these days.

CLEMENTINE

Between my chronic fatigue and his irritable bowels, we got expenses.

RUUD

(?!?!)

CLEMENTINE

'Kay, whatever. (*to the audience*) Tips are appreciated.

RUUD

Enjoy.

They launch into a number about leaving home, like "[Rocket Man](#)." Music and lights fade.

1. She's Gone—Gritts

A special rises slowly on GRITTS (60s) sitting on his loveseat. On the coffee table in front of him are a torn envelope, an open greeting card, and a gun. GRITTS is still. His eyes are open, but it's not even clear he's breathing. Music might be playing on the radio, some sad melody like Hall & Oates' "She's Gone."

Lights rise on the rest of the living room. It's close to midnight. There's a knock offstage. GRITTS doesn't respond. The knocking grows louder and becomes pounding. A small pane of glass shatters offstage. SHRIMP (50s) enters carrying a six pack of moderately good beer. GRITTS doesn't greet her.

SHRIMP

Since when do you lock the door?

She circles behind him assessing the situation. She stops at the coffee table, picks up the greeting card, reads it, drops it back on the table.

She sits in the easy chair and stares at GRITTS.

SHRIMP (cont'd)

You fucker. *(no response)* You ... you ... motherfucker.

GRITTS looks at her finally.

GRITTS

I don't care for that word.

SHRIMP

I don't like it either. But right now? That's the only word that even remotely describes you.

GRITTS

Me?!

SHRIMP

Yes, you.

GRITTS

What about *her*?

SHRIMP

If you think for one second this kind of bullshit is gonna fly ... Jesus, Gritts!

GRITTS

It's none of your business.

SHRIMP

Excuse me??? None of my ...? None of my business? You putting a bullet in your head is none of my business?!

GRITTS

I'm ... I'm not—

SHRIMP

You don't show up for lunch. You don't show up for happy hour. You're completely absent at dinnertime. And you're nowhere to be seen at the Sandraker tonight. Then this. You lock yourself in—

GRITTS

Shrimp, please. It's been a hard day.

SHRIMP

Oh, yeah, "To be or not to be." That's hard work.

GRITTS

Who would blame me?

SHRIMP

Everyone would blame you! The blame is squarely on you!

GRITTS

What about *her*?

SHRIMP

You're not the only one affected by this, Gritts. It ... (*beat, softly*) kills me, too.

GRITTS

Did you know? (*beat*) You knew? And you didn't—?

SHRIMP

I didn't know! Just this instant.

GRITTS

Are you going to open one of those?

SHRIMP

Get rid of the gun first. I didn't even know you had a gun.

GRITTS

Everyone has a gun.

SHRIMP

I don't.

You're a woman. GRITTS

Not all men have guns. SHRIMP

Pastry chefs don't have guns. Badminton coaches don't have guns. Real men have guns. GRITTS

Oh, you're a real man. SHRIMP

Forty years at sea. GRITTS

I need you to get rid of it. SHRIMP

Then you'll give me a beer? GRITTS

Yes. SHRIMP

He reaches for it.

Don't touch it! Not in front of me. SHRIMP (cont'd)

How'm I supposed to get rid of it if I don't touch it? GRITTS

I don't know. SHRIMP

I'm going to have to touch it. GRITTS

It could go off. SHRIMP

It's not— GRITTS

Like that baby who shot his mother in the head in the grocery store. SHRIMP

GRITTS

I believe that was a Walmart. I'm not a baby. I know how to handle a gun.

SHRIMP

What do you need it for, anyway? There's no crime in Yachihash. A few drug deals, the occasional lowlife skipping out on his bill at the Sandraker. But no *violent* crime.

GRITTS

I need it.

SHRIMP

For what? To shoot the seagulls that shit on your roof?

GRITTS

I have a *right* to own—

SHRIMP

Oh, don't give me that Constitutional bullshit.

GRITTS

I love the Constitution and it's amendments.

SHRIMP

Oh, yeah? What's the Third Amendment?

GRITTS

Uh ...

SHRIMP

It's about the quartering of troops during times of war. You care about the Constitution like you care about the Little Mermaid.

GRITTS

Who?

SHRIMP

And don't tell me guns don't kill people. That's *all* they do!

GRITTS

I've killed many a marine predator with said gun.

SHRIMP

Or that you need the government to stay out of your business, Mr. Social Security and Medicare Recipient.

GRITTS

A gun is just a tool.

SHRIMP
That you like.

GRITTS
That I like, yes, like I like a crescent wrench.

SHRIMP
You can't kill yourself with a crescent wrench.

GRITTS
What you don't know about wrenches. Shrimp, I'm not going to kill myself.

SHRIMP
But you thought about it.

GRITTS
I thought about it.

SHRIMP
Motherfucker!

She takes a bottle of beer out of the six pack and tries to twist off the cap. She can't.

GRITTS
You need a tool.

She hands the bottle to him. He uses the opener on his retractable keychain and hands the bottle back. She reluctantly hands him another bottle, which he opens. They drink.

GRITTS (cont'd)
What do you care anyway whether I kill myself?

SHRIMP
I can't believe you.

GRITTS
It's not like—

SHRIMP
Haven't we lost enough already? You've lost enough. I've lost enough. Everybody has.

GRITTS
Serena.

SHRIMP
Serena what?

GRITTS
She'd lost enough.

SHRIMP
Right?

GRITTS
But she *had* a lot.

SHRIMP
I thought so.

GRITTS
That she didn't want.

SHRIMP
Apparently not.

GRITTS
So you lose some stuff. And the stuff that's left, you toss.

SHRIMP
Looking for the right stuff.

They drink.

GRITTS
We're not the right stuff.

SHRIMP
Doesn't look like. Murders me.

GRITTS
What I'm saying.

SHRIMP
Nice card.

GRITTS
Dolphins.

SHRIMP
Swimming into the sunset.

GRITTS
Poetic.

SHRIMP
How would you know?

GRITTS
I'm not all guns.

SHRIMP
And salt.

GRITTS
Why'd she leave, Shrimp?

SHRIMP
Phhh. That's the wrong question. The question is: Why'd she stay so long? Why do any of them stay, ever?

GRITTS
No idea.

SHRIMP
They get your hopes up.

GRITTS
You think it's unconditional.

SHRIMP
They even say it.

GRITTS
Say what?

SHRIMP
That it's unconditional. They say ... (*hesitates*) ... "Gritts, it's unconditional."

GRITTS
But there *are* conditions.

SHRIMP
Unknown conditions.

GRITTS
Unknown even to her?

SHRIMP
Maybe. But she got hip to 'em.

GRITTS
Somewhere along the way.

They reared their ugly heads. SHRIMP

My ugly head. GRITTS

My ugly head. SHRIMP

It had nothing to do with you. GRITTS

What you don't know about me. SHRIMP

Shrimp? GRITTS

What? SHRIMP

You didn't ... did you have a thing for her? GRITTS

Shut up. SHRIMP

(???) GRITTS

Who *didn't* have a thing for her? SHRIMP

True enough. Lovely woman. GRITTS

The loveliest. SHRIMP

And then she does this. Why? GRITTS

SHRIMP
Because of the conditions. We pretend there are no conditions, but we all know there are and *what* they are. *And* we know that the one in charge, the loveliest one, has the most conditions and holds all the cards. And we just pray to fuck we don't blow it.

GRITTS
But we always do.

SHRIMP
There's no way not to.

GRITTS
But Serena?

SHRIMP
Don't blame her.

GRITTS
No?

SHRIMP
I can't blame her.

They drink. GRITTS finishes his.

GRITTS
Another, please?

SHRIMP
Get rid of the gun.

GRITTS
Then I can have one?

SHRIMP
(yep)

GRITTS
That's extortion, Shrimp.

SHRIMP
No, Gritts. It's a condition. It's love.

They both look at the gun. Lights fade.

Interlude 1

Lights up on CLEMENTINE & RUUD.

RUUD
We're thrilled to be in Yachihash tonight. That how you say it? Yosh-uh-Hosh?

CLEMENTINE
Had a very long drive to get here.

RUUD
Right? Drove up from a gig in the Bay Area.

CLEMENTINE
Well ...

RUUD
Well ...?

CLEMENTINE
Red Bluff. Not exactly "the Bay Area."

RUUD
Close enough.

CLEMENTINE
A gig at the Red Bluff Sausage and Mustard Festival.

RUUD
What are you saying?

CLEMENTINE
Nothing, Mr. "Bay Area" gig.

RUUD
(nonplussed)
Right on. *(to the audience)* This next number ... is about love.

CLEMENTINE
Mmmm ...

RUUD
What does that mean? *Mmmm.*

CLEMENTINE
Nothing.

RUUD
Uh-huh. I guess we've all loved and we've all lost the game.

CLEMENTINE
The "game"? Love is a game?

RUUD
Well, no. It's not a game. I just say that. It's an expression.

CLEMENTINE

But ... so ... you must think it's a game or you wouldn't have said it.

RUUD

Look, no, love is real. Right folks? But it has this win-or-lose element to it, like a game.

CLEMENTINE

So you *do* think love is a game.

RUUD

You're not hearing // what I'm—

CLEMENTINE

Or something very much like a game.

RUUD

Well ... yeah. It has rules. You play by the rules or you get penalized.

CLEMENTINE

That's so diminishing.

RUUD

But unlike most games, you don't know what the rules are. You only learn them by breaking them.

CLEMENTINE

You know, this explains a lot.

RUUD

And, *and*, the rules are always changing. What used to be a rule can fly out the window with no warning whatsoever.

CLEMENTINE

Example.

RUUD

Like the baby rule.

CLEMENTINE

What?

RUUD

The rule used to be: No babies, no talk of babies.

CLEMENTINE

That was never a rule.

RUUD
Yes it was.

CLEMENTINE
That was your rule.

RUUD
And you agreed to it.

CLEMENTINE
Aaaand now I don't.

RUUD
That's what I'm saying!

CLEMENTINE
Okay!

RUUD
I mean, think about it, Clem. How could we possibly—

CLEMENTINE
'Kay, 'kay, point taken. Can we just play the next song?

RUUD
You bet.

RUUD introduces the next song and they play it. It's a song about losing at love, perhaps "[Annie](#)" by Johnnyswim. Lights fade.

2. One of Us

Lights rise on GRITTS alone in his living room. He has an electric guitar and a practice amp with the gain and treble turned up to 11. He plucks out the first seven notes of the song "One of Us" and stops to appreciate the effort. He swigs from a pint of Canadian Club. He plucks the same seven notes again but flubs them. Swigs again. Plays the seven notes again, better this time.

SHRIMP enters carrying two grocery bags, one with about ten cartons of cigarettes in it and the other full of bottles of expensive booze.

SHRIMP
Gritts. Gritts. I got it. I figured it out. The answer to all my problems. I'm doubling down on my smokes so my retirement only has to stretch half as far. Smart, huh? (*pulls a carton of American Spirits from one bag and a bottle of Tanqueray from the other*) Look at this stuff. I can afford this now.

GRITTS

Good morning to you, too.

SHRIMP

What? What's wrong?

She goes in search of a glass.

GRITTS

Is it wrong to desire, expect even, that the accouterments of civilized culture be upheld even if, as you are so fond of saying, it's all going to hell in a hand basket?

She returns with an ice cube and a glass, which she blows dust out of and pours gin into. She plops in the ice.

SHRIMP

Say what now again?

GRITTS

Is it way too much to ask for? A polite greeting. A mere sequin on the gown of civility which might indicate that you acknowledge the humanity at large within this manly bosom of mine?

She sips and relishes her gin.

SHRIMP

Good morning, Gritts.

GRITTS

Shrimp. I have a message for you.

SHRIMP

From whom?

GRITTS

God.

He plays the seven notes.

SHRIMP

Cool.

GRITTS

I'm God.

SHRIMP

Cool.

GRITTS

It came to me while I was watching MTV.

SHRIMP

Is that show still on?

GRITTS

It's a *network*. A bunch of networks. And yes, it's still on, but I was watching my tapes from 1995. Best music video year ever. Thank God—me—I still have my VCR.

SHRIMP

Is this a midlife crisis? 'Cause you're a little long in the tooth for that. Can I play?

GRITTS

If you must.

He hands the guitar over to her. She scratches out some nonsense notes and chords. GRITTS turns off the amp.

SHRIMP

Hey!

GRITTS

Try to focus. I was listening to that song about God being a slob.

SHRIMP

That's hearsay.

GRITTS

You mean heresy.

SHRIMP

No, I mean hearsay. Nobody knows what God wears for sure. I like to think he prefers Armani.

GRITTS

Wrong. He wears this. A T-shirt, a down vest, ridiculously long shorts, tube socks, Birkenstocks, and he has facial hair like mine. Mine *is* God's facial hair.

She puts down the guitar and gets more gin.

GRITTS (cont'd)

Shocking, isn't it.

SHRIMP

Does that mean I have to worship you?

GRITTS

Have you ever worshipped me?

SHRIMP

Well, not you, per se. But, you know. Hey, can you turn this gin into wine?

GRITTS

No.

SHRIMP

Can you levitate?

GRITTS

Have you ever known me to levitate or suspected I could?

SHRIMP

What good are you, God?

GRITTS

I'm not. But that's beside the point.

SHRIMP

Wait, wait. I get it. It's like ... we're *all* God.

GRITTS

Nope.

SHRIMP

Or, wait, I know ... the *spirit* of God is within us all.

GRITTS

Maybe, but there's only one honest-to-God God. Me.

SHRIMP

Do I have to be good? Even when you're not looking?

GRITTS

I don't think so.

SHRIMP

How'd you figure this out?

GRITTS

After I heard that song, I spilled some oatmeal on my shirt. Right here.

SHRIMP

Uh-huh.

GRITTS

And the spill was in the shape of—

SHRIMP

I see it! The face of Jesus Christ!

GRITTS

No ... Guatemala.

SHRIMP

(studies the spill)

Uh-huh. Well, okay, but your northeastern border's spilling a little over into Belize there. How does that mean you're God?

GRITTS

I just knew it. It was a feeling that overtook me. Listen, I've drunk beside enough shrinks to know that feelings are just as important as thoughts. You have to honor feelings. Negating them or suppressing them leads to all kinds of bad shit.

SHRIMP

Okay, then.

She raises her glass to him. He clinks it with his pint. They drink.

SHRIMP (cont'd)

God?

GRITTS

Yeah.

SHRIMP

I need your help.

GRITTS

You're praying now.

SHRIMP

Yeah.

GRITTS

Go on.

SHRIMP

Is there some way, *any* way, I can quit smoking altogether, live a happy life, find a really great partner, and have as much money as I need to get through these next, I don't know, twenty-five years, if I'm lucky? Not a lot of money, but enough to keep me comfortable, eat some cracked Dungeness crab once in a while, pay my property taxes, go to Hawaii every four and a half years. Is there a way you could help me out with that?

There's a long silence during which GRITTS just drinks.

Huh, God? SHRIMP (cont'd)

Another long silence.

Should I take that as a yes? SHRIMP (cont'd)

Whatever. GRITTS

Are you mad at me for being a lesbian? SHRIMP

No. GRITTS

You approve? SHRIMP

I'm neutral. GRITTS

No you're not. SHRIMP

Whatever you say. *(beat)* Let me ask you something. GRITTS

As God or Gritts? SHRIMP

There's no difference. GRITTS

Shoot. SHRIMP

Don't you have enough money? GRITTS

Is that a kōan? SHRIMP

GRITTS

Wasn't your father the vice president of Ford Motor Company or something?

SHRIMP

General Electric.

GRITTS

What happened to his money?

SHRIMP

He's still got it.

GRITTS

Won't you get it?

SHRIMP

Not likely.

GRITTS

Ask him.

SHRIMP

I'm asking you ... God.

GRITTS

I feel like you want something from me. Wisdom or something.

SHRIMP

I'd like some money first. But yeah, you're omnipotent. You know everything. Why don't you share some of what you know with me?

GRITTS

I don't have any money ... to *spare*. And I don't know a damned thing. I take that back. I know some very specific things.

SHRIMP

Like?

GRITTS

Like the nature and frequency of my bowel movements.

SHRIMP

Aw, Gritts!

GRITTS

Sorry. I know some better stuff. I know, for example, that the hopper and hose nozzle of a grit blasting machine's gotta be electrically earthed to the deck you're blasting. Or you're in a world a hurt. Gotta be done. But there's a guy on every crew wants to cut corners—

SHRIMP

(shouting)

You're not God!

GRITTS

You're wrong about—

SHRIMP

You're a fucking sagging old salt whose girlfriend left him! Washed up on this coastline like every other piece of debris, perforated and drenched, and so ground up, you're only a shell of your former self, and nobody looking at you would be able to tell what you were supposed to be in the first place!

GRITTS

That hurts. And it's not true.

SHRIMP

If it's not true, why does it hurt?

GRITTS

Why is it so hard for you to believe?

SHRIMP

What are you saying, Gritts? That you're *as good* as God? Or that you *might as well* be God?

GRITTS

No.

SHRIMP

That you're *obtuse* as God?

GRITTS

No, it came to me. I can't explain it. There's no rhyme or reason to it. I just know in my heart of hearts—

SHRIMP

In your rusty old enlarged heart—

GRITTS

That I am God. Nobody made me God. Nobody should care that I *am* God. *I* certainly don't.

SHRIMP

Let me stop you right there. Okay. Would Serena care?

GRITTS

What?

SHRIMP

If she could hear you now. If she was standing in this room and you said to her, Serena, dear, I'm God. What would she say?

They drink a while. GRITTS straps on the guitar again. He noodles on the strings without the amplifier on.

GRITTS

Tell you something else I know. I know ... before she took off ... Serena used to wash those abalone shells every year at the end of June. Ones along the path through the garden out back.

SHRIMP

She did?

GRITTS

Made the mother-of-pearl shine after all that rain and the mud splashing up on them.

SHRIMP

I never knew that.

GRITTS

There's a lot you don't know.

SHRIMP

Come on, Gritts, don't be mad.

GRITTS

I'm not.

SHRIMP

And don't be sad.

GRITTS

You can't tell God what to do.

SHRIMP

All right.

GRITTS

You got no control.

SHRIMP

I've got *no* control. For damn sure.

GRITTS turns on the amplifier. He plays the seven notes sadly.

SHRIMP (cont'd)

Are you trying to make me question my faith?

GRITTS

I would never do that.

SHRIMP

God would never do that.

GRITTS

No I wouldn't.

SHRIMP

You want me to believe, right?

GRITTS

I don't care if you do or you don't.

SHRIMP gets a cigarette out, pulls a lighter from her pocket.

SHRIMP

You coming out to lunch?

GRITTS

Nah, I got ... stuff ... leftovers.

SHRIMP

You coming out tonight?

GRITTS

Who's pouring, Dave or Bets?

SHRIMP

You should know. You're God.

GRITTS

I can't see into the future.

SHRIMP gathers up her bags. Heads for the door. Stops.

SHRIMP

She could come back, Gritts. She might.

GRITTS

That woman is never coming back. I know that for a fact.

SHRIMP

Then you *can* see into the future. Okay, Gritts. You win. You're God. See you tonight.

She leaves. He takes a drink. Thinks about playing. Drinks. Lights fade.

Interlude 2

Lights rise on CLEMENTINE & RUUD having a heated conversation we're not privy to. We might hear a phrase or two: "If you're unhappy ..." or "Can we do this later?" They turn away from each other and face the house.

RUUD

Sorry, folks. We're back.

CLEMENTINE

Just having a powwow.

RUUD

As we are wont to do.

CLEMENTINE

"Wont."

They give each other a look and then play a song about God. Something like "[One of Us](#)" or "Heavenly Aeroplane" or a smooth jazz styling of a standard hymn. Lights fade.

3. Book Group

Lights up on SHRIMP and GRITTS in the Sandraker Inn lounge. They sit in the easy chairs next to the gas fireplace. SHRIMP is nursing a bottle of Chardonnay. GRITTS sips a margarita. They both hold copies of a novel by a Jewish writer. The title is something like "Children of the Desert Light" or "Kaufman's Lament."

SHRIMP

See ... now ... this was a very difficult book for me.

GRITTS

What was difficult about it?

SHRIMP

Like when the little Jewish toddler was blown up by the suicide bomber.

GRITTS

Uh-huh. On the first page.

SHRIMP

Right. That was hard for me.

GRITTS

I think that's a given. It's hard for everyone. It pre-echoes the events several chapters later when the Palestinian youths are killed in the air strike while swimming in the public pool.

SHRIMP

Pre-echo? You mean foreshadow?

GRITTS

Pre-echo sounds more ...

SHRIMP

Whatever. See, stuff like this? The kid getting blown up?

GRITTS

Yeah?

SHRIMP

That's hard for me.

GRITTS

Yeah. Yeah. It's the backdrop.

SHRIMP

The backdrop?

GRITTS

The frame for the story of the lovers.

SHRIMP

Right, right. The frame. The larger political landscape against which the intimate conflict, both internal and external, plays out in the hearts and minds of lovers from different cultures.

GRITTS

Wow, I couldn't have said it better myself.

SHRIMP

Yeah, this guy Chaim (*she pronounces it with like "chain" with an "m"*) Markovits said it. It's on the back cover here.

GRITTS

Chaim (*he says it right*).

SHRIMP

What's that?

GRITTS

Chaim. His name is pronounced Chaim.

SHRIMP
How do you know that?

GRITTS
He's a Jew.

SHRIMP
He's a ...

GRITTS
It's like a Hebrew pronunciation.

SHRIMP pours more wine in her glass, drinks it, eyes GRITTS.

SHRIMP
It's okay to use the word "Jew"?

GRITTS
What do you mean? I use it all the time.

SHRIMP
All the time?

GRITTS
Whenever it comes up, yes.

SHRIMP
When does it come up?

GRITTS
Whenever I talk about Jews?

SHRIMP
How often is that?

GRITTS
I don't think I could quantify it. Once, twice a month?

SHRIMP
Really. See, I didn't grow up around ... people of the Jewish persuasion. Faith.

GRITTS
Jews.

SHRIMP
Right. So ... it's okay to say it.

Of course. Long as it's not pejorative. GRITTS

If it's okay, how can it be pejorative? SHRIMP

If you use it as an insult. GRITTS

I don't get it. SHRIMP

(uh-huh) GRITTS

How do you know so much about the ... Jewish people? SHRIMP

They're everywhere. GRITTS

Here in Yachihash? SHRIMP

Fred at the wine shop is Jewish. GRITTS

He is? See there you just said Jewish and not "a Jew." SHRIMP

You can say it either way. GRITTS

Is Fred a Jew name? SHRIMP

Now, see, there you have to say Jewish. Jew is a noun, not an adjective. Or a verb. GRITTS

Uh-huh. But Fred, the name, is Jewish? SHRIMP

I think it comes from, like, Frederick. GRITTS

Like King Frederick. SHRIMP

Who's that?

GRITTS

It just sounds like a name a king would have. Sounds royal. I know, Fredrick the Great.

SHRIMP

Anybody can use it.

GRITTS

Ethiopians?

SHRIMP

Sure.

GRITTS

Koreans.

SHRIMP

Inuit.

GRITTS

Fred the Eskimo.

SHRIMP

Right.

GRITTS

Jews. *(beat, and then she squirms)* Just doesn't sound right to me.

SHRIMP

I don't know what to say.

GRITTS

I've led a sheltered life.

SHRIMP

Why would you need to be sheltered from Jews?

GRITTS

See, you're making me sound like I'm prejudiced. I'm just ignorant. It's not the same thing.

They drink.

SHRIMP

Should we get back to the book?

GRITTS

SHRIMP

I didn't read it.

GRITTS

Shrimp, there's only two of us in the book group now. If you don't read it, there's no discussion.

SHRIMP

I know. I'm sorry. It's just so political. And the toddler. That really got to me.

They drink.

SHRIMP (cont'd)

It was better when—

GRITTS

When Serena was in the group. I know.

SHRIMP

She could have discussed the hell out of this book. Discussed it till kingdom come.

GRITTS

Yeah. Yeah, she would have. She would've talked about the characters like ... like she grew up with them.

SHRIMP

Like she was their shrink and knew their deepest, gnarliest secrets.

GRITTS

Oh, oh ... she would have talked about the red water draining from the bombed out pool, and how it symbolized the broken and bleeding social infrastructure of the Middle East.

SHRIMP

And how the charred rubble from the blast resembled the atrophied heart of the toddler's uncle.

GRITTS

God, that woman knew how to talk about books.

SHRIMP

Not like us. We don't have a clue.

GRITTS

A book was like a lost part of her soul.

SHRIMP

Or mind.

GRITTS
Or heart.

SHRIMP
That she didn't know was missing until the moment she read it.

GRITTS
But she welcomed it spontaneously.

SHRIMP
Like a twin sister you never knew you had showing up on your doorstep one day.

GRITTS
And you think you're looking in a mirror but you're looking out at this person.

SHRIMP
At the half of you you'd lived a whole lifetime without.

GRITTS
That's how Serena read books. Like a reunion.

SHRIMP
Reunion.

They drink.

GRITTS
We don't have that.

SHRIMP
Nope. Why'd you pick this book anyway? You always pick books like this.

GRITTS
They interest me.

SHRIMP
What, war? Bombs? Toddlers exploding into a million bloody bits?

GRITTS
That's reality.

SHRIMP
They have TV shows for that! Pisses me off. I'm sorry, if an author is going to drag us into the middle of someone else's world, into these characters' heads, why does it have to be a world with babies blowing up and cultures crapping on each other like in-laws? Why can't authors give us a break? Give us some beauty. Why can't there be some hope?

GRITTS
There's hope in this book.

SHRIMP
There is?

GRITTS
How many pages did you read?

SHRIMP
Almost two.

GRITTS
If you'd read the whole thing you'd know that the grandchildren find meaningful work as—

SHRIMP
Grandchildren?!

GRITTS
Yes. Five of them.

SHRIMP
Whose?

GRITTS
The lovers.

SHRIMP
Aw, Gritts, you mean they don't die?

GRITTS
No, they do die. Eventually. He gets Alzheimer's at a very old age in San Diego, and she—

SHRIMP
SAN DIEGO?!?! How the fuck do they end up in San Diego???

GRITTS
Read the book, Shrimp.

She pours wine into her glass and gulps. She sits back in her chair and turns to page two. She reads. GRITTS licks salt off the rim of his margarita.

SHRIMP
(dropping the book to her lap)
San Diego?! What else happens?

GRITTS
You want me to spoil it for you?

SHRIMP

No! But give me a hint.

GRITTS

Okay. The middle daughter goes back to the homeland and establishes a home for orphaned prairie dogs amidst the chaos of—

SHRIMP

Prairie dogs ...?! ... (*realizes he's teasing her*) Go to hell.

GRITTS

No, but the other stuff is true. They immigrate to the U.S. and raise a family.

SHRIMP

Do any of the kids die?

GRITTS

No.

SHRIMP

Are any of the grandkids blown up?

GRITTS

One gets in a car accident and breaks his collarbone.

SHRIMP

And there's a hopeful ending?

GRITTS

It's unrealistic in that respect.

SHRIMP

Okay, I'll read it.

GRITTS

You won't regret it.

They drink.

SHRIMP

What's our next book?

GRITTS

It was Serena's turn to pick.

SHRIMP

Oh, right. *The Secret Hunger of Stone.*

What? GRITTS

That's the book she ... wanted to ... SHRIMP

She told you? GRITTS

She mentioned it. SHRIMP

When? GRITTS

Sometime before she left. Obviously. SHRIMP

Are you going to—? GRITTS

SHRIMP
Yes, I'm going to read it. Hey, I have an idea. Let's read it like her. Let's reunite with some lost part of us we didn't know was missing.

They both think about that a moment.

Or not. SHRIMP (cont'd)

GRITTS drinks. SHRIMP reads her book. Lights fade.

Interlude 3

Lights rise on CLEMENTINE & RUUD. He's ready to play but she's lost in thought. He clears his throat at her.

Oh, uh ... yeah. CLEMENTINE

They start to play, but she stops.

(??) RUUD

Sorry. I'm sorry. CLEMENTINE

RUUD
What?

CLEMENTINE
Nothing. No, I was just thinking.

RUUD
You do that a lot. Too much, maybe?

CLEMENTINE
I was just thinking how grateful I am for you all coming out here tonight to hear us play. That's a real gift. Like a ... reunion or something.

RUUD
They didn't come to hear us play.

CLEMENTINE
Ruud.

RUUD
We're nobodies, Clem. It's just a coincidence. They came here to drink and we happened to be here.

CLEMENTINE
Well, maybe so, but I'm still grateful. And we're not nobodies.

RUUD
Oh, we're nobodies. I mean, we're just minor players playing any gig we can get. Any ... lounge, festival, brew pub. We're okay musicians ...

CLEMENTINE
Yes we are.

RUUD
We may have a lot of heart.

CLEMENTINE
That's our strong suit.

RUUD
But we don't have it all.

CLEMENTINE
News to me, folks.

RUUD
Not even close. Look, there are three things you need in this business—

CLEMENTINE
Oh, it's a business, not a game?

RUUD
It's a game, too. And in order win—which, let's face it, everyone wants—

CLEMENTINE
Not everybody needs—

RUUD
You need talent.

CLEMENTINE
Which we do.

RUUD
You need skill, chops.

CLEMENTINE
Which you get from gigging a lot. (*to the audience*) In front of you guys.

RUUD
And you need luck.

CLEMENTINE
Okay.

RUUD
And the greatest of these is luck.

CLEMENTINE
Whoa. What? It's better to be lucky than to have talent or skill?

RUUD
I'm saying to make it big.

CLEMENTINE
Oh. I guess that could be true.

RUUD
We meet so many musicians on the road. Really great players. People who should have major contracts, could be huge if they'd just gotten the right breaks.

CLEMENTINE
They work so hard.

RUUD

But they're just unlucky. Like us.

CLEMENTINE

(a little stung)

I wouldn't say we're *unlucky*.

RUUD

I would.

CLEMENTINE

How are we unlucky? We do what we love. We get by.

RUUD

"Scrape" might be a better verb.

CLEMENTINE

We have each other.

RUUD

(sarcastic)

Lucky.

CLEMENTINE

What? You don't think that's lucky?

RUUD

It is what it is.

CLEMENTINE

How romantic.

RUUD

Just saying—

CLEMENTINE

Yeah, what are you saying? I'm sure we'd all like to hear. Right, folks?

RUUD

I mean, we obviously haven't broken out. And that's our luck. There are so many possibilities in life. Infinite branches we could have taken. Door number one, door number two. Maybe luck was hiding behind the door not taken.

CLEMENTINE

What's wrong with *our* door?

RUUD

Don't get me wrong. What we have is okay. But there were so many other doors.

CLEMENTINE

Hey, don't let me hold you back, champ. If you want to go for door number three, you go right ahead.

RUUD

That's not what I'm saying.

CLEMENTINE

Are you sure? 'Cause that's what it sounds like you're saying.

RUUD

Can we just play the song?

He plays a chord. They play a song about luck, maybe "[Luck of the Draw](#)" by Bonnie Raitt. Lights fade.

4. The Race Card

Lights rise on GRITTS who sits alone at a table in the Sandraker Inn lounge, a half-full glass and half-empty pitcher of beer in front of him. He's reading Knausgård's "My Struggle: Volume 4."

An agitated SHRIMP enters and sets down a shoulder bag and G&T on the table.

GRITTS

Good. I need your help.

SHRIMP walks offstage.

SHRIMP

Be right back.

GRITTS

Okay.

SHRIMP returns with a second G&T, which she sets down. She picks up the first G&T and gulps down half of it before she looks at GRITTS.

GRITTS (cont'd)

Better?

SHRIMP

Not yet.

She downs the rest of the first G&T and sits.

GRITTS
Now?

SHRIMP
Don't worry about me. What about you?

GRITTS
Half way to oblivion.

SHRIMP
You wish.

GRITTS
That I do.

SHRIMP
I mean what do you need my help with?

GRITTS
The city has issued me a warning.

SHRIMP
About?

GRITTS
Too many boats in my front yard.

SHRIMP
Just boats?

GRITTS
And random rusted heaps of machinery, buoys, piles of netting, you know, flotsam.

SHRIMP
I do know. And?

GRITTS
Can you talk to your friends down at city hall? Call off the circling sharks?

SHRIMP
Friends?

GRITTS
Yes, Ms. Mayor?

SHRIMP
Your yard is a trash heap—

GRITTS
More of a nautical museum.

SHRIMP
Your neighbors have complained—

GRITTS
They have no interest in nautical history or memorabilia.

SHRIMP
Vociferously.

GRITTS
Can you call 'em off? I'll straighten it up.

SHRIMP lifts her shoulder bag off the table and slams it back down.

SHRIMP
No, I can't help you! I've got my own problems to deal with. My so-called "friends" down at city hall have stabbed me in the back.

GRITTS
Et tu, Brute?

SHRIMP
My so-called "friends" down at city hall have denied me my business permit.

GRITTS
You're opening a business?

SHRIMP
No, Gritts. I'm *not* opening a business. That's what "denied" means.

GRITTS
What kind of business?

SHRIMP
Doesn't matter now.

Now halfway through her second G&T, she signals the bartender to start two more.

GRITTS
No, I'm interested.

SHRIMP
You'll steal the idea.

GRITTS
Try me.

SHRIMP
No, I won't try you.

GRITTS
You'll never know if I'll steal it if you don't tell me.

SHRIMP
You don't make sense most of the time. (*beat*) Okay, you've heard of a planetarium?

GRITTS
Yes, I have. I won't open a planetarium, so your idea is safe.

SHRIMP
No, this is a "micro"-tarium.

GRITTS
I'll drink to that.

He drinks and refills his glass.

GRITTS (cont'd)
What *is* a microtarium?

SHRIMP
Instead of observing the macro, you observe the micro. Instead of telescopes, you'll look into microscopes. Not only microscopes, but also *electron* microscopes.

GRITTS
Holy Jesus. What would you see?

SHRIMP
Everything you can't see with the naked eye. Everything from amoebas to bacteria. Paramecium to Ebola. Crystals, tardigrades, butterfly eyes—

GRITTS
Whoa.

SHRIMP
What?

GRITTS
Ebola? Wouldn't that be dangerous?

SHRIMP

The city council sure thought so! No! It would be encased in something. I don't know. Poly-something-ite. It wouldn't be contagious!

GRITTS

I kind of side with the city on this, Shrimp.

SHRIMP

You would!

She polishes off her second drink and takes the two glasses offstage. She returns with two fresh G&Ts.

GRITTS

What are you going to do?

SHRIMP

I'm thinking of playing the race card.

GRITTS cleans out his one good ear with a pinkie.

GRITTS

Say again?

SHRIMP

The race card. I'm thinking of playing the race card. You know, discrimination.

GRITTS

You?

SHRIMP

Me, what?

GRITTS

What race?

SHRIMP

African-American.

GRITTS

You don't have that card.

SHRIMP

What do you mean?

GRITTS

In order to have that card to play, you need to be black.

I'm not black.

SHRIMP

Then you can't play that card.

GRITTS

I can't?

SHRIMP

You're pulling my leg, right? You know you can't play the race card because you're not a race.

GRITTS

I am too a race. I'm Dutch-Irish, with a little Mowhawk thrown in there about eight generations ago.

SHRIMP

Well, you might be able to play the Native American card, but it might be too diluted by now. Shrimp, tell me you're not serious!

GRITTS

I'm fucking with you, Gritts!

SHRIMP

Thank God. You had me going.

GRITTS

Okay, but now I'm serious. What if I *self-identified* as black?

SHRIMP

You mean like that gal? The head of the NAACP?

GRITTS

Not the head, but some chapter.

SHRIMP

You can't self-identify as black.

GRITTS

Why not?

SHRIMP

Because it's obvious. You're not. It's an insult to their struggle.

GRITTS

What if I wanted to self-identify as a man?

SHRIMP

That's okay.

GRITTS

But why?

SHRIMP

Because those are the rules.

GRITTS

That's arbitrary.

SHRIMP

Maybe so.

GRITTS

Who makes the rules?

SHRIMP

We all do.

GRITTS

I don't make the rules. I have no say in the rules. I'm not on that committee.

SHRIMP

Skin color is inviolable. Gender is mutable.

GRITTS

You're saying that if a person, a white person, honestly and truly identifies as black, or Albanian, or as a fucking Hobbit, that's fucked up? But if I want a penis, say, sticking out of my chest—

SHRIMP

Odd, but surgically possible.

GRITTS

—because that's how I self-identify, that's just dandy?

SHRIMP

How it works.

GRITTS

I don't get it.

SHRIMP

You know, you could play the sexual orientation card.

GRITTS

The what? SHRIMP

The lesbian card. GRITTS

Why would I do that? SHRIMP

To get what you want. GRITTS

No way. That's nobody's business but mine. SHRIMP

Okay. GRITTS

And things are getting better anyway. The Supreme Court and everything. SHRIMP

Well, yeah. But that doesn't mean people abide by the law of the land. That's why you have to use those cards from time to time. GRITTS

Do you have any cards? SHRIMP

Not a one. GRITTS

You're an old white guy. SHRIMP

Not a card. GRITTS

You guys are supposed to have all the cards. (*he shrugs*) You're a drunk. SHRIMP

Definitely not a card. GRITTS

You don't have any control or power over anything. SHRIMP

'Cause I got no cards. GRITTS

SHRIMP
Hmm. And *I* don't have any cards that I want to play.

GRITTS
I thought I had the Shrimp card.

SHRIMP
What's that?

GRITTS
I know the mayor.

SHRIMP
Oh.

GRITTS
But that card's a bust.

They drink.

SHRIMP
It's not a bust.

GRITTS
No?

SHRIMP
I'll see what I can do.

GRITTS
I'd appreciate it.

SHRIMP
Now you got no cards.

GRITTS
I've still got the Shrimp card.

SHRIMP
You can play a card and still have it?

GRITTS
Yep.

SHRIMP
Shit!

GRITTS

It's the mystery of cards.

SHRIMP

Okay, I'll help you, but would you try to clean up your yard a little?

GRITTS

I'll rearrange my "exhibits" into a more aesthetically pleasing configuration.

SHRIMP

Thank you.

GRITTS

I like your idea. The microtarium.

SHRIMP

You do? For real?

GRITTS

For real. Seeing what's small. I like that.

SHRIMP

I thought it was a great idea.

GRITTS

How would it look? How would you lay it out?

Excited, SHRIMP pulls a binder from her shoulder bag, opens it, and shows GRITTS.

SHRIMP

I got a beautiful floor plan. You walk into the lobby and there are all these giant amoebas and viruses hanging from the ceiling. Oh, oh, and on the ceiling is this giant human eyeball looking down through the microscope!

GRITTS

Brilliant.

SHRIMP

So there would be three main wings: the Natural World, Bacteria Hall, and the Virus Pavilion ...

Lights fade.

Interlude 4

Lights rise on an empty stage at the Sandraker. A visibly upset CLEMENTINE enters and takes her seat.

CLEMENTINE

Well, uh. I guess ... I guess you're stuck with me for the rest of the evening. Sorry about that. I'll try to ... I have a song or two I can sing for you solo. Bear with me. Sorry about that. I guess I should've ... should've been more ... more something. Something I'm not.

She plays a chord. It sounds wrong to her. She plays another chord. No better.

CLEMENTINE (cont'd)

No. No, I'm sorry, but I won't apologize. Godamnit! Whatever he's looking for, he's just not seeing what's right in front of him. I mean, does he really think door number three will bring him everything he wants? I'll tell you what's behind door number three. A toaster oven! That's it. How's he going to feel when he gives up all this for his new toaster oven? Successful? Happy? Free?

She plays another chord. Still not right.

CLEMENTINE (cont'd)

Although ... you can make those little pizza rolls in a toaster oven. He likes those. He could make stuffed mushrooms, too. Little parmesan sprinkled on top. Doesn't sound so bad ...

She plays a song. Something like "[Over the Rainbow](#)."

5. She's Gone—Shrimp

A special rises slowly on SHRIMP sitting at her dining room table piled with junk food: chips, pretzels, packaged cupcakes, coffeecake, big bags of M&Ms, peanut butter cups, 2-liter bottles of soda, popcorn, etc. She eats and eats from a bag of Doritos and washes them down with Mountain Dew. Her eyes are red and glassy and she's got the shakes. She's in pajamas.

Lights rise on the rest of the dining room. GRITTS enters from the hallway, startling SHRIMP.

SHRIMP

Oh! Jesus, Gritts! What the fuck? You hiding in my bedroom or what?

GRITTS

Front door was locked, so I came in the back.

SHRIMP

(she continues to eat)

Well, who invited you in? Get out!

GRITTS

What's going on?

SHRIMP
What do you mean?

GRITTS
Are you hungry? Looks like you're hungry.

SHRIMP
Yes, I am hungry. I'm hungry and I'm thirsty.

GRITTS
What it looks like.

SHRIMP
So? I am.

GRITTS watches her eat.

GRITTS
Don't you have any better food?

SHRIMP
This is what I'm hungry for.

GRITTS
Okay, Shrimp. Why don't you take a shower, put on some clothes, come down to the Sandraker?

SHRIMP
Why don't you go down there and I'll catch up.

GRITTS
What is this? What's going on?

SHRIMP takes a long, long pull on the Mountain Dew, sets down the bottle, and twists off the cap of a Dr. Pepper and gulps that.

GRITTS (cont'd)
Oh, no. Don't tell me.

SHRIMP
(wiping her mouth)
What it looks like.

GRITTS
Cold turkey?

SHRIMP
(yep)

Just booze or smokes, too? GRITTS

Cold, cold turkey. Deep freeze. SHRIMP

Jesus. You coulda told me. GRITTS

None of your business. SHRIMP

You said you were going to Portland. GRITTS

Yeah, I said I was going to Portland. SHRIMP

For two days. GRITTS

Right. So why are you here? SHRIMP

That was five days ago. (she continues to scarf) GRITTS
You've been at this for five days?

SHRIMP chokes a little, spews Dorito dust. She stops chewing, looks forlorn, drops her head to the table.

Okay, that's enough. GRITTS (cont'd)

He grabs some empty grocery bags from the floor and starts packing the junk food.

Gritts, wait, don't do that. It's the only way I can do this. SHRIMP

You've done this before? GRITTS

(yes) SHRIMP

And it didn't work, did it. GRITTS

SHRIMP
It worked for a while.

GRITTS
How long did you eat like this?

SHRIMP
Only a couple of weeks. Then things normalized.

GRITTS
Then how long were you sober?

SHRIMP
A little over six months.

GRITTS
So it doesn't work.

SHRIMP
Sure it does. Six months would be great. Inside of six months I could decide to go into rehab again. And that could do the trick.

GRITTS
I won't let you do this to yourself. You're poisoning your body with all this shit. Refined sugar, trans fats. This'll kill you in way worse ways than booze.

SHRIMP
I don't think that's true.

GRITTS
So skip the freak food and go straight into rehab, why doncha?

SHRIMP
I can't.

GRITTS
Sure you can. I'll take you there myself. But let's go have a drink first.

SHRIMP begins to cry.

GRITTS (cont'd)
(distressed)
Aw, Shrimp.

SHRIMP
I can't. Don't make me do it. I can't do that. It's too hard.

GRITTS
Well, you're not doing this.

SHRIMP
Those people don't have any sympathy.

GRITTS
No they don't.

SHRIMP
They're all hard-asses. They're all ex-addicts themselves and they hate you for being a drunk. They have no empathy.

GRITTS
Empathy kills, is their thinking.

SHRIMP
Just let me do this.

GRITTS
Why? Why do you need to do this now? What's going on? Something must've happened.

SHRIMP sniffs, wipes her eyes, sits up straight.

SHRIMP
Gritts?

GRITTS
Yes?

SHRIMP
I have a confession to make.

GRITTS
You're not a Catholic.

SHRIMP
But you're God.

GRITTS
Was, maybe.

SHRIMP
Close enough.

GRITTS
What is it?

SHRIMP
Don't hate me, okay?

GRITTS
That's a loaded request.

SHRIMP
But as someone who was formerly God, you should have infinite sympathy.

GRITTS
That hasn't been my experience.

SHRIMP
Oh.

GRITTS
Just tell me.

SHRIMP
You know how I said I had a thing for Serena?

GRITTS
Yeah. You said everybody had a thing for her.

SHRIMP
I used the wrong preposition.

GRITTS
Preposition. (*thinks*) "I had a thing" ... You mean "for"?

SHRIMP
Yeah.

GRITTS
What's the right preposition? You had a thing "at" her? A thing "on" her? (*beat*) Not "with," right?

SHRIMP
(*uh-huh*)

GRITTS
You had a thing "with" Serena? *With* her?

SHRIMP
Yeah.

GRITTS
Okay. Now I'm interested in the noun.

What, "thing"?

SHRIMP

Yeah, what was the "thing"?

GRITTS

Well, you know.

SHRIMP

What? A fling? A dalliance? A one-night stand? (*beat*) An affair?

GRITTS

No, I'd say "relationship."

SHRIMP

That's the noun you'd use?

GRITTS

Uh-huh.

SHRIMP

Okay. How about some adjectives.

GRITTS

Long-term. Deep. Committed.

SHRIMP

How long-term?

GRITTS

Fifteen years?

SHRIMP

Shrimp!? Serena and *I* were in a relationship for fifteen years.

GRITTS

There was some overlap.

SHRIMP

I can't believe this!

GRITTS

I ... *loved* Serena, Gritts.

SHRIMP

Was it ... physical?

GRITTS

Physical, emotional, spiritual. SHRIMP

Oh, I don't want to know. GRITTS

I'll tell you // everything— SHRIMP

I don't want // to hear it—! GRITTS

Those weekends we went away— SHRIMP

To the Crab Festival // up in—? GRITTS

The wine tasting // down in— SHRIMP

The trip to Patagonia???! GRITTS

Best two weeks of my— SHRIMP

I DON'T WANT TO HEAR IT, SHRIMP! GRITTS

Gritts, I'm sorry— SHRIMP

Here's your shit. GRITTS
(handing her bags of junk food)

She loved you, too. SHRIMP

Fuck you! GRITTS

No, she did. SHRIMP

GRITTS
She didn't love me!

SHRIMP
Don't you think you can love two people?

GRITTS
(?!?!)

SHRIMP
I think that's how it was for her.

GRITTS
No, I don't think so.

SHRIMP
You're loveable, Gritts.

GRITTS
That's not what I mean.

SHRIMP
(??)

GRITTS
I don't think she loved either of us.

SHRIMP
That's not—

GRITTS
She didn't love us, she didn't respect us. How could you do that to two people and love them? How could she love herself? That's why she left.

SHRIMP
The guilt?

GRITTS
The shame of it all.

SHRIMP
The deception.

GRITTS
Turning a blind eye.

Long pause.

SHRIMP
Did ... did you know?

GRITTS
On some level ... I must have.

SHRIMP
I guess I knew you knew.

GRITTS
We know and we don't know.

SHRIMP
We suspect.

GRITTS
And we ignore.

SHRIMP
We drink—

GRITTS
We drink ... It's like ... Rust-Oleum.

SHRIMP
Rust ...?

GRITTS
Oleum. Cover's up the corrosion.

SHRIMP
Ah. Looks pretty.

GRITTS
Not that pretty. But it covers it up.

GRITTS sits. He takes a handful of Doritos and scarfs them. He washes it down with Mountain Dew, grimaces.

SHRIMP
I know. *(beat)* What now?

He stands, wipes his mouth, dusts his hands.

GRITTS
There is some shit I will not drink.

He exits.

SHRIMP

Gritts? Come back, Gritts!

She eats Doritos. Lights fade.

Interlude 5

Lights up on the Sandraker Inn. GRITTS and RUUD sit at a table, a pitcher of beer and two glasses in front of them. Canned music plays over the PA.

RUUD

We talked, Skyped, when I was in L.A.

GRITTS

Where was she?

RUUD

All over. Back east. Midwest. She's been busy.

GRITTS

Sounds like you were too.

RUUD

Spinning my wheels. I don't know what I was thinking.

GRITTS

It's never very good, is it?

RUUD

What?

GRITTS

The quality of our thinking.

RUUD

(agreeing)

It's shit.

GRITTS

Even the best thinking falls short.

RUUD

Short-sighted.

GRITTS

Narrow. Case in point: Einstein.

RUUD

Right? Wait, what? Einstein was a bad thinker?

GRITTS

No, one of the best. Out there pushing the envelope.

RUUD

I never got what that means. Like, pushing an envelope? Like across the table?

GRITTS

More like expanding the boundaries of our perceived limitations.

RUUD

Huh. You'd think they'd come up with a better analogy.

GRITTS

That's what I'm saying. You'd think.

RUUD

So, Einstein. He had it wrong?

GRITTS

He only went so far. Young guys now, and ladies, physicists, are discovering new particles all the time. You can't even call them particles. They're just behaviors, probabilities. See, all of us. We can only go so far. Whatever we're thinking about, we can't grasp all the dimensions. It's impossible.

RUUD

Yeah. Yeah. So, say, my girlfriend.

GRITTS

Clementine.

RUUD

Right. I thought I had it ... her, us ... all figured out. All the dimensions. But really, I saw just a, a ...

GRITTS

Fraction.

RUUD

A fraction. There were so many other dimensions I wasn't even aware of.

GRITTS

(yep)

RUUD

And I couldn't really even see the dimensions until ... until, like, I broke out of her orbit. Like the baby thing.

GRITTS

(baby thing?)

RUUD

At first we didn't want babies. We were focused on our careers, getting gigs, getting noticed, recording, videos, posting on the internet. That came first. That's what I thought. Maybe she even thought it. But guess what? When I was in L.A. I saw the bigger picture. Or I should say, *a* bigger picture. There could be bigger and bigger pictures.

GRITTS

Exactly.

RUUD

But beyond the tiny orbit we were making around each other, there was a whole galaxy. The galaxy of our lives, our past, our future, the people around us, like our parents and the families we came from, and the communities we move through, and like ... there was this constellation of interconnections that we weren't even aware of, not even considering, because we were so narrowly focused, circling each other and not looking out beyond ourselves. And babies, possible future babies were a part of that, maybe. And I was blind to it. Sounds crazy, I know. I'm not making sense.

GRITTS

Makes perfect sense.

GRITTS lifts his glass to RUUD. RUUD lifts his and they clink. They drink.

RUUD

I don't know how to talk to her about it. I feel like I already blew it beyond all ...

GRITTS

I don't give advice.

RUUD

No, it's okay.

GRITTS

But ... you know I was a Merchant Marine?

RUUD

You said.

GRITTS

Captain. Mostly the Pacific. All up and down the west coast from Alaska to South America. Talk about perspective, dimensions. Blows your mind wide open. But the vessel itself is small, a microcosm. Crowded. So the advice I gave my crews was three things. One: You have to take care of the vessel first. You have to be organized, particular, see the details.

RUUD

Organization.

GRITTS

Attention to detail.

RUUD

Two?

GRITTS

You need patience. With others and with yourself. Because everybody's different, and *you're* different, and everybody needs to work together.

RUUD

Makes sense.

GRITTS

If you're not patient, you either lash out or build up resentment. Most people build up resentment. And that's like rust, or like cancer. It'll kill you.

RUUD

And three?

GRITTS

Bravery.

That word lingers between them a moment.

RUUD

Huh. Bravery. (*they drink*) Hey, is it true what they say about a ship's captain? Captain goes down with the ship?

GRITTS

If it's just me and a sinking ship? To hell with that hunk of metal and oil. But if there's crew on it? You bet. Crew comes first. I'd die for my crew.

They drink. RUUD goes to the stage and picks up his instrument.

RUUD

I'm back. How y'all doin'? Been a while since I was here last. Spent some time in L.A. Playing gigs. Meeting with industry types. (*plays a chord, smirks*) Industry types. Wasted time.

He sings a song about wanting to love better, like "[Ledges](#)" by Noah Gundersen.

Lights dim. RUUD and GRITTS exit. SHRIMP enters with a mug of tea and a biscotti on a plate and sits. Lights rise. She reads a book.

CLEMENTINE enters carrying her instrument case. She looks around. Goes to SHRIMP.

CLEMENTINE

Is Audrey around?

SHRIMP

Yeah, I saw her. While ago. Clementine.

CLEMENTINE

(pleased)

You remember my name?

SHRIMP

I know so many Clementines, it's hard to keep 'em straight. But I remember you.

CLEMENTINE

Haha. Funny.

SHRIMP

So I've been told. You playing tonight?

CLEMENTINE

Just got here from Boise. I'm exhausted. But I'll rise to the occasion.

SHRIMP

Take a load off.

CLEMENTINE sits.

CLEMENTINE

Thanks. I just need to tell Audrey I'm here, then I'm going to lie down.

SHRIMP

Where you staying?

CLEMENTINE

The Mudbrick Inn.

SHRIMP

Nice. *(beat)* You ... solo?

Yeah. Used to be a duo. CLEMENTINE

I know. Never a trio? SHRIMP

(nope) CLEMENTINE

I've been a trio. SHRIMP

Oh? CLEMENTINE

SHRIMP
(changing the subject)
I think your former ... partner ... was here a few weeks ago.

Yeah. He was. CLEMENTINE

Ruud. SHRIMP.

R-U-U-D. CLEMENTINE

Oh, right: Ruud. SHRIMP

You're good with names. CLEMENTINE

Pretty good. Do you see him? SHRIMP

Funny you should ask. We're meeting up. In Seattle. After this. CLEMENTINE

Been a while? SHRIMP

(yeah) CLEMENTINE

SHRIMP

What happened? If you don't mind me ...

CLEMENTINE

No, no, it's okay. We ... we just had a difference of opinion.

SHRIMP

About?

CLEMENTINE

Everything.

SHRIMP

Now who's funny?

CLEMENTINE

Marriage, kids, music, food, life.

SHRIMP

Politics?

CLEMENTINE

No, we agreed on that.

SHRIMP

It's a start.

CLEMENTINE

I guess.

SHRIMP

This woman I was with—

CLEMENTINE

Oh?

SHRIMP

Yeah. We agreed on everything. Every single thing. It's like we were the same person. We were passionate about the same things. Art, music, politics, food, wine, books, mattresses, movies—

CLEMENTINE

Everything.

SHRIMP

Except clothes. She was a little artsy, and I'm fine with, well, what you see.

What happened?
CLEMENTINE

I'd ask her, if I knew where she went.
SHRIMP

That sudden?
CLEMENTINE

Blink of an eye.
SHRIMP

No warning.
CLEMENTINE

None.
SHRIMP

Ouch. Double ouch.
CLEMENTINE

Right? And the worst part ... I thought it was all okay. I'd worked it out in my mind that it was all perfect. Pretzel logic.
SHRIMP

Wait, does this have something to do with your ... trio?
CLEMENTINE

It does.
SHRIMP

Oh.
CLEMENTINE

Yeah, triple ouch.
SHRIMP

Was it like an arrangement? Like, above board?
CLEMENTINE

Oh, no, no. Sunken treasure. Hidden. Dark and deep.
SHRIMP

Who ...? How ...?
CLEMENTINE

He didn't know.
SHRIMP

Wow. *He*.
CLEMENTINE

Her significant other. My best friend.
SHRIMP

Where's he now?
CLEMENTINE

Here. Yachihash.
SHRIMP

Small town.
CLEMENTINE

Population six hundred and nine. Well eight since ... (*beat*) I see him every day.
SHRIMP

Do you talk?
CLEMENTINE

Oh sure. I say, "Hey." He says, "Hey."
SHRIMP

I'm so sorry.
CLEMENTINE

I deserve it. I did it. I knew I was doing it. (*drinks tea*) The thing about pretzel logic. It's twisted, it's salty, it's nutritionally empty, and it's brittle.
SHRIMP

And yet ...
CLEMENTINE

And yet, some of us live and die by it.
SHRIMP

All of us, really.
CLEMENTINE

That would be comforting.
SHRIMP

If?
CLEMENTINE

SHRIMP

If ... I don't know. If my bed weren't so full of crumbs.

A quiet moment.

CLEMENTINE

Guess I should find Audrey. *(stands)* Will you be here tonight?

SHRIMP

I'll try to make it. *(beat)* Not really. I'm lying. I can't ...

CLEMENTINE waits. Then exits. GRITTS enters with a pitcher of beer and a glass. He sees SHRIMP, looks around, sits at a different table. They eye each other.

GRITTS

Hello.

SHRIMP

Hey.

Lights fade.

6. Stink Eye

About a year has passed from the beginning of the play. Lights rise on GRITTS seated at a table in the Sandraker Inn lounge, a pitcher of beer and a glass in front of him. He's reading Knausgård's "My Struggle: Volume 6."

SHRIMP enters walking backwards, a chai latte in her hand. She's giving the stink eye to someone offstage. Her stink eye is constant and unflinching. She backs into the table, maintaining her stink eye throughout most of the scene, glancing at GRITTS only occasionally.

GRITTS

Said you'd be here at five.

SHRIMP

Yeah.

GRITTS

You're late.

SHRIMP

Traffic jam.

GRITTS

In Yachihash?

SHRIMP

Beach Loop. Tourists still mobbing the beached whale.

GRITTS

Thing's practically decomposed. Stinks to high heaven.

She shrugs, sits.

GRITTS (cont'd)

But I suppose there's a fascination with ... with what? A great monster of the deep reduced to a stinking lump of blubber on the beach. The mighty fallen. A reminder to us all. *(beat)* What are you looking at?

SHRIMP

Ethel's over there.

GRITTS

Oh?

SHRIMP

Right over there. Just as carefree as you please, sipping her drink with her stupid girlfriend.

GRITTS

Her girlfriend, the sheriff?

SHRIMP

Uh-huh.

GRITTS

Looks like Ethel's giving you the stink eye back.

SHRIMP

Yes, she is.

GRITTS

Why don't you leave that poor woman alone?

SHRIMP

Gotta let her know the Sandraker is *my* territory.

GRITTS

This lounge is open to any and all who wish to imbibe and have a good time.

SHRIMP

Not in *my* town.

GRITTS

Your town? You're sounding like a megalomaniac.

SHRIMP

It *is* my town. And I'm the head lesbian in it. And she'd better get that through her thick skull.

GRITTS

Really? You're the head lesbian?

SHRIMP

And you and everybody here better know it.

GRITTS

Jesus, Shrimp, you've been giving her the stink eye ever since I've known you.

SHRIMP

Longer.

GRITTS

Why? Wha'd she ever do to you?

SHRIMP

I never told you? I'll tell you what she did.

GRITTS

Please. Enlighten me.

SHRIMP

She changed the rules.

GRITTS

The rules?

SHRIMP

Twenty-two years ago next month.

GRITTS

That's a long time ago.

SHRIMP

Blackberry Festival was coming up, and Ethel was the newly elected chair of the board.

GRITTS

Yeah?

SHRIMP

So what does she do? Without consulting anybody else?

Change the rules?
GRITTS

Change the rules.
SHRIMP

What rules?
GRITTS

The *bake-off* rules.
SHRIMP

How so?
GRITTS

SHRIMP
Instead of using only blackberries in your recipe, she decides you can use any other kind of berries too. Any fucking berry you want!

GRITTS
But it still has to have blackberries.

SHRIMP
Duh! Yes, it has to have blackberries. But it used to be that it had to have *only* blackberries.

GRITTS
Lots of berries in season that time of year.

SHRIMP
It's the *Blackberry* Festival, Gritts! Not the *Mixed Berry* Festival! Think about it. The Oregon coast is like the blackberry capital of the universe. We're surrounded by blackberry brambles. They choke every unclaimed corner of this village. It's the fruit we're most associated with as a people. Blackberries are the *essence* of Yachihash. Our corporate identity. You can't dilute your corporate identity. One day she's going to regret her little power play and admit the error of her ways!

GRITTS
Forget about it, Shrimp ... she's the post mistress.

SHRIMP
So?

GRITTS
You fuck with her, you don't get your catalogues.

SHRIMP
(?!?!)

GRITTS

Your catalogues, Shrimp. Aren't your catalogues important to you?

SHRIMP

Well, sure. Everybody needs catalogues. But we're talking about principles here.

GRITTS

Tough call. Principles or catalogues ...

SHRIMP

True. Which ones do you get?

GRITTS

Every one I can. Just got a Sundance. That's a good one. They've used the same models for twenty years.

SHRIMP

Bit grandmotherly by now, wouldn't they be?

GRITTS

Redford must have a thing for ... or *with* ... them.

SHRIMP

What else?

GRITTS

Oh, I love one called CarbonXXL.

SHRIMP

What's that?

GRITTS

For families with outsized carbon footprints.

SHRIMP

What do they sell?

GRITTS

Anything that takes a lot of petroleum products to make, or emits exhaust, or that's non-recyclable ... and pet supplies.

SHRIMP

Pet supplies?!

GRITTS

Pets create a huge carbon footprint. One Springer Spaniel has a bigger carbon footprint than a Cadillac Escalade.

SHRIMP

Did not know that.

GRITTS

The poop alone. I also get Territorial Outpost. Best shirts on five continents.

SHRIMP

You ever buy any?

GRITTS

Noooo, no, no. Too spendy. Way too spendy. But I can dream.

SHRIMP

So you're saying catalogues are the stuff of dreams.

GRITTS

(Need it be said?)

SHRIMP

I guess you're right. But still ... Look at her over there... so cool, cool as a cucumber.

GRITTS

In fact, I think that's a cucumber mojito she's drinking.

SHRIMP

Just rubbing it in.

GRITTS

(pulling a postcard out of his pocket)

This came. From Kapa'a, Kaua'i.

Hands it to her.

SHRIMP

Wow, that's a really big flower.

She flips it over and reads it. Sets it down. She resumes her stink eye with renewed vigor.

GRITTS

She send you one?

SHRIMP

No!

GRITTS

Lucky you.

SHRIMP
Yeah, lucky me. Lucky, lucky me.

GRITTS
Shrimp, we're too old for this.

SHRIMP
For what?

GRITTS
We're too old to be wrapped up so much in other people. We need to let this crap go.

SHRIMP
I disagree.

GRITTS
I disagree with your disagreement.

SHRIMP
We need other people.

GRITTS
Yes we do.

SHRIMP
Then what are you saying?

GRITTS
Other people come and go. *We* come and go. I've come and gone my whole life. I'd hate to think that my going ever caused someone to question who they were, why they're here, to give up.

SHRIMP
Gritts, we don't exist without other people. We can't even begin to know who we are unless other people do things to us. From the time we're born to the time we die, we're all about other people. Other people *is* our identity.

GRITTS
Like, Ethel is you?

SHRIMP
Right! When people screw you over, they become you. They get inside you. Didn't I get inside you when I screwed you over?

GRITTS
You and Serena both.

SHRIMP

Exactly. I mean for fifteen years I was screwing around with your partner behind your back. Not just screwing around but thinking I was in a deep, committed, kind of star-crossed relationship with her. Something meaningful. That's an awful thing to do to a person. To you. And that pain has got to make you question the world and who you are in it.

GRITTS

Well, I admit it hurt. It hurts yet. But the pain is not me, Shrimp. It's a quality of me at a particular moment in time.

SHRIMP

What do you mean?

GRITTS

Buckminster Fuller put it this way—

SHRIMP

You've read Bucky?

GRITTS

Forty years at sea, I've read everything. He said imagine there's a rope made from three different *types* of rope spliced together, end-to-end. Say, three feet of cotton, three feet of nylon, and three feet of hemp. You tie a loose knot at one end, just a square knot, so you can slide it down the rope from the cotton to the nylon to the hemp. You getting this?

SHRIMP

(*yep*)

GRITTS

See, you're not any one of those materials. You're not cotton, you're not nylon, you're not hemp. You're the knot.

SHRIMP

(*struck by the profundity of it*)

Whoa. Wow.

GRITTS

Right? It's called "pattern integrity."

SHRIMP

But you say you still hurt. It's been a year. That would support my "we are who screws us" theory.

GRITTS

Okay, the part of the rope made of hurt is pretty long. But eventually ...

SHRIMP

Wait, wait ... Are you saying one day you, "the knot," will slip onto the part of the rope that is pure and unconditional love for Shrimp? You won't be mad at me anymore?

GRITTS

Something like that.

SHRIMP

Good to know.

GRITTS

So how about you give up your little vendetta with Ethel?

SHRIMP

What?! No way!

GRITTS

It was twenty-two years ago!

SHRIMP

You said it yourself, Gritts, some parts of rope are very, very long.

GRITTS

Longer than they need to be. You're wasting your time, Shrimp.

She stops giving the stink eye to Ethel and looks at GRITTS.

SHRIMP

Not to belabor the metaphor, but you know that the rope isn't made of just one material at any given point, right?

GRITTS

No, that's true. It's a—

SHRIMP

Composite—

GRITTS

Of all our hurts and joys and shame and disappointment.

SHRIMP

All that shit.

GRITTS

Starting and stopping.

SHRIMP

And starting up again.

GRITTS

Until the knot slips off the end.

SHRIMP

Slips off the end. Into oblivion. *(beat)* I need another chai latte.

GRITTS

Hey, let's go check on the whale.

SHRIMP

I thought they were going to bury that thing.

GRITTS

I think they're going to let it rot some more, then bury it.

SHRIMP

Sure, I guess. Then we'll come back.

GRITTS

And have another round.

They clink, glass and mug, and drain their drinks. They stand.

SHRIMP

(to the bartender offstage)

Keep the tabs going.

Coda

As SHRIMP and GRITTS exit, lights rise on CLEMENTINE & RUUD on the Sandraker stage.

CLEMENTINE

Hi, I'm Clementine.

RUUD

That's C-L-E-M—

CLEMENTINE

They know how to spell Clementine.

RUUD

I know. But I just like to spell it. And I'm Ruud.

CLEMENTINE

R-U-U-D.

Together we're ... RUUD

Clementine & Ruud. CLEMENTINE & RUUD

We played here together about a year ago. And it was ... well, not one of our finest moments. RUUD

Not one of mine, for sure. CLEMENTINE

But after some soul searching ... RUUD

And some scratching and clawing ... CLEMENTINE

Weeping and a-wailing ... RUUD

And an unplanned pregnancy. Well ... CLEMENTINE

We're back ... RUUD

All three of us. CLEMENTINE
(patting her belly)

Still scraping by ... RUUD

Lucky we can still scrape. CLEMENTINE

Amen to that. RUUD

So we'll scrape out a few tunes for you. And we hope you have a good time. CLEMENTINE

They play a song of brokenness and healing, like "[Broken into Better Shape](#)" by Good Old War.

Fade. End of play.