

PREPARATIONS FOR DEPARTURE EXCERPT

JULIUS

Goodbye, Nat.

He looks at her, then exits.

ROSA

Goodbye.

DANNY

Bye!

OLGA

Bye daddy!

Turning, JULIUS blows a huge kiss to the family.

It hits them like a slap.

They freeze.

From the distance, the magician's voice, singing a song of loss.

He leaves. Slowly.

And then he's gone.

The children, at the table, fall asleep.

NAT watches.

NAT's monologue, slow and lost at first, builds into a breathless, beating heart.

NATALIE

If nothing else it's ridiculous for me to put them to bed. Olga asks for a story with her eyes so expectant, it's like her world will fall apart if - when - I fail her and I always fail her, I could spend years sitting by her bedside and I'd never get a word out, not one word of story. Not one word of magic. I'm not magic like you're magic - like they're all magic. Call it empty but it's practical;

my world is dinner and breakfast and cleaning up at night and getting up before you hear me in the morning so the cleaning can be done when you get up and come to eat and then I feed you they're up and need you and I feed them and you play imagine and I watch it happen and it's magic. My magic is in honey and in scrubbed feet and clean sheets and birthday cake and kisses and it might not be much but it's enough it was everything I wanted I was happy I am happy and you told me you were happy but happy doesn't put on a coat say 7:30 or was it 7 and smile and crinkle your eyes that way you do and go and Julius I must have done something or said something implied or I don't know but no one does that and it's like the kids know, like it's a secret club and I missed the invitation but they're off and dreaming like you were always off and dreaming while I sit here waiting, and writing to your father and calling up the landlord and your boss and the fellows by the dock and the lady on the corner and I wouldn't be surprised if they know but if they do and if you're here it'd be so great if you could just let me know because I don't work that way I never have I never will and in the meantime you said you'd fix the cabinet and the doorknob's loose and we're running low on funds because your 13 a week stopped coming and all I want is to get away and maybe that's how you felt but I hate you and I love you and I miss you and I wish you'd just tell me or call or write back or come back because I can't live without your crinkled eyes and your unwiped feet and sloppy kisses and your It'll-be-alright-because-it-has-to it doesn't have to anymore I can't see this world without you near me so please if you can hear me come back home I just want to get out and see it all the way you see it all the way the children see it all I've never been good at any of it my world's too small but it's enough and too much calls and now somehow I've got to open my eyes each day

(how?)

and get up out of bed and make the day work and smile and tell them it'll be alright and make the food and scrub the sheets and in the years since you've been gone it gets harder every day they told me it'd get easier but the busyness of being alive and trying to strive I wish I could just drop it all forget it all but breakfast lunch and dinner call and there's always that faint hope that at the end of every day the door will open and - DINNER!