

(DRAFT: 08 Sep 2021)

LOST IN PLACE
MARLENE & GINNY
By Craig Houk



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MARLENE & GINNY

Early into a world-wide pandemic, Marlene and her mother-in-law, Ginny, decide to get fancy and make martinis. Their fun, however, is interrupted by that damn lesbian from next door, who's hell-bent on stealing their rutabagas. Seems Dwayne, Marlene's infant child, has slept through the whole ruckus.

Characters

MARLENE Female, Late Thirties

GINNY Female, Late Fifties

Time

Present.

Setting

A small American town. Autumn. Dusk. The Lumley living room.

(AT RISE: Two armchairs several feet apart. Ginny sits in one of them. She's absentmindedly watching TV; the volume is on low. A landline phone sits on a small table nearby. A moment passes before Marlene enters. She has a fresh spit-up rag draped over her shoulder and a full bottle of baby formula in her hand. She sits in the other armchair. Silence.)

MARLENE: Whatta you watchin'?

GINNY: *(Preoccupied.)* What's that?

MARLENE: I asked you what you're watchin'. On the TV here.

GINNY: Can't you see for yourself?

MARLENE: Well, I can see there's a commercial on, but I ain't got no idea what program you're watchin'.

GINNY: Oh. I guess I wasn't payin' attention. I think it's, uh... whatta you call it...? Well, it's that cop show; always ends with a courtroom scene.

MARLENE: Law and Order

GINNY: That's the one. Anyway, they got a marathon goin'; every episode over the last - shit, I don't know - fifty thousand seasons.

MARLENE: I like that show. Oh, and that fella who plays Lennie Briscoe is a goddam comedic genius.

GINNY: Jerry Orbach. Damn fine actor. Dead, though.

MARLENE: Oh yeah? I didn't know that.

GINNY: Yep. He died years ago. Some kinda cancer, I think.

MARLENE: That's too bad.

GINNY: Yep. *(Silence.)* Sounds like Dwayne finally settled down.

MARLENE: Yeah, well he's restin'.

GINNY: His fever break?

MARLENE: I believe it has.

GINNY: Oh, well that's good. Poor little guy. He's been sick for weeks.

MARLENE: Almost four months now.

GINNY: That long? S'awful. Just awful. Virus don't care about who it infects, not even an innocent little baby.

MARLENE: He's all right now. *(Silence.)* Have you talked to Barb, lately?

GINNY: Dammit, Marlene. That ain't funny and you know it?

MARLENE: I agree. It ain't.

GINNY: And besides, Barb hasn't spoken to me since... well, you know damn well since when.

MARLENE: Can you blame her?

GINNY: Shit, you're never gonna let that go, are you?

MARLENE: Oh, I don't know, Ginny. Maybe someday, I suppose.

GINNY: Well, I've apologized about a million times now. I don't know what more I can do.

MARLENE: Thanks to you, I've learned to sleep with one eye open.

GINNY: Oh, for... Ain't I the one who went ahead and put a lock on your bedroom door? And a loaded gun in your nightstand? For your protection?

MARLENE: Yeah, that was you.

GINNY: I mean, come on. It's not like I'm gonna try and kill you again. What would be the point? And you know, maybe I oughta be the one worryin' about whether you're gonna try and kill me.

MARLENE: You're nuts.

GINNY: It ain't so farfetched. Maybe you wanna get back at me, you know? Payback and all that?

MARLENE: I suppose I haven't ruled it out.

GINNY: See there. You've got the gun. And you've got the means and the motive.

MARLENE: Is that your closin' argument, Mr. McCoy?

GINNY: As a matter of fact, it is. So, do you think we could just drop it altogether? Hm? And maybe never speak of it again?

MARLENE: Hell no.

GINNY: Fine then. I don't give a rat's ass anymore, anyway. (*Silence.*) I need a drink. You want one?

MARLENE: Sure.

GINNY: What'll you have?

MARLENE: Surprise me.

GINNY: Well, I used to make a mean martini. Haven't had one of them in ages. Whatta you think? We can be all classy and shit.

MARLENE: Sounds good.

GINNY: Gin or vodka.

MARLENE: Gin.

GINNY: Good. I prefer gin too. Vermouth or prussic acid? *(Marlene shoots Ginny a look.)* I'm just screwin' with you. Vermouth it is.

(Ginny exits. Marlene sits quietly for a moment. The phone rings.)

MARLENE: Well, who the hell could be callin' us? *(She gets up and answers the phone.)* Hello...? *(She puts her hand over the receiver and calls off to Ginny.)* Aw, Jesus. It's one of them lesbians!

GINNY: *(Off.)* Which one!?

MARLENE: Rhonda!

GINNY: *(Off.)* Well, what the hell does she want!?

MARLENE: *(Back to the phone.)* No, yeah, I'm here, Rhonda... Yeah, sorry about that. My mother-in-law was just hollerin' at me about somethin'. You know how she gets...

GINNY: *(Off.)* Go to hell, Marlene!

MARLENE: *(On the phone.)* Mm hm... Well, no, I ain't seen Adele at all today; didn't realize it was my day to keep track of her... My apologies Rhonda, I was just tryin' to be funny... I'm sorry, what? Check where...? Our backyard...? Are you serious...? Well, ok. *(Calling off to Ginny.)* Ginny!

GINNY: *(Off.)* Keep your pants on! I'm just about finished with these drinks!

MARLENE: It's not about the drinks! I need you to look out the kitchen window! See if Adele is fumblin' about in the backyard!

GINNY: *(Off.)* Why the hell would she be back there!?

MARLENE: I don't know! Just take a look! *(Back to the phone.)* Hang on, Rhonda. We're checkin'.

GINNY: *(Off.)* Well, I'll be damned! She sure is back there! Looks like she's makin' off with a bunch of our rutabagas, stuffin' 'em into her cargo shorts!

MARLENE: You're lyin'!

GINNY: *(Off.)* I am not! Come see for yourself!

MARLENE: *(Back to the phone.)* Rhonda... Yeah, well listen, your... your lady pal is hijackin' our rutabagas. I'm gonna head out back now, but I suggest you get your ass over here asap... Yeah, all right. Bye. *(She hangs up the phone. To herself.)* Dammit.

(Marlene heads off. We hear a screen door opening and slamming shut. The stage is empty.)

MARLENE: *(Off.)* Hey Adele! Yeah, I'm talkin' to you, old lady! Put 'em rutabagas back where you found 'em and get the hell off my property, you hear me!? Now listen, I am deadly serious! Just empty your pockets and go home! Yeah, well you can give me the bird all day long; I don't care! Just get the fuck outta here! Go!

(Silence. Ginny enters with two martinis. She sets hers down somewhere near her chair and Marlene's down somewhere near hers. She then settles in and begins sipping her drink. We hear a screen door opening and slamming shut. Marlene enters in a huff.)

MARLENE: Can you believe that bitch?

GINNY: Ok, now. Sit down and enjoy your martini. I found some olives, so I decided to make 'em dirty.

MARLENE: That took some real balls.

GINNY: What's done is done. Just sit down and relax.

(Marlene relents and lets out a big sigh. She then settles into her chair. She begins to sip her drink. Silence.)

GINNY: Did she leave the rutabagas?

MARLENE: She did not.

(Marlene looks to Ginny, exasperated. Ginny starts to laugh quietly. Her laughter gets louder and louder until Marlene joins in. Their shared laughter lasts a moment and then subsides. They both let out a sigh and continue to drink. Silence.)

GINNY: We should check on Dwayne, don't you think?

MARLENE: Let him rest, Ginny. He's fine.

GINNY: You sure? I mean, I just can't believe we haven't heard a peep outta him. Especially considerin' all the ruckus.

MARLENE: Leave him be. I'll look in on him in a bit.

GINNY: *(Skeptical.)* All right.

(They drink. Silence. Ginny rises out of her chair.)

GINNY: You know what? I'm just gonna peek in. Just to make sure he's okay.

MARLENE: What did I just say?

GINNY: Yeah, I heard you, Marlene, but there ain't no harm in it. So, why don't you just shut up about it? Okay?

MARLENE: Fine. Suit yourself.

(Ginny exits. Marlene drinks quietly. A long moment passes before Ginny re-enters. She is pale and appears spooked.)

GINNY: *(Quietly.)* Marlene.

MARLENE: Yeah, Ginny?

GINNY: What have you done?

(Marlene takes another sip of her martini and then turns to Ginny.)

MARLENE: I think he's suffered enough. Don't you?

(End of play.)