

RACCOON

Getting **cuter** is part of the plan.

———— by Rick Butts ————



They want the deal that dogs and cats have. In one act.

Raccoon

In one act.

By

Rick Butts

Getting cuter is part of the plan.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

ROGER, husband, mid 30s.

ELLEN, wife, mid 30s.

COP (voice only)

SCENE

The living room of a middle-class house.

TIME

Now.

SYNOPSIS

Raccoons are domesticating. They want the same deal that dogs and cats have. They break out of the local animal shelter and the police are off in hot pursuit. Roger and Ellen find themselves on the front line of the raccoons' fight for acceptance and equity as a gang of the furry fugitives and their lawyer seek refuge in their bedroom. At the same time, the SWAT team arrives to deal with what they assume is a hostage taking in their living room. A few minutes earlier, Roger had transferred all their money to a secret off-shore account and is waiting for the right moment to tell Ellen he's leaving her. What follows is a Saturday morning in which Ellen has a change of heart about where her loyalties lie.

SETTING: A living room with two recliners facing downstage. A coffee table between them. A door stage right opens to an unseen hallway to other rooms. Down right, curtain panels at a front window are closed.

AT RISE: It's early morning. ROGER enters wearing a bathrobe. He has a cup of coffee which he almost spills as he puts it on the table. He checks his phone. He looks harried and nervous, tired. He glances right in the direction of the bedroom, walks to the curtains, looks at his phone.

A beat or two later, ELLEN enters from the hall wearing large comfy pajamas and bunny slippers. Still sleepy. She carries a coffee carefully with two hands. Lost in his phone, ROGER doesn't see her coming. She stops at the table and moves his cup onto a coaster.

ELLEN

Roger! I've told you! Coaster—

ROGER

(Startled.)

Damn Ellen! Don't sneak around. Why are you up so early?

ELLEN

(Puts coffee down, crosses to open the curtains.)

Just keeping an eye on you. Why are *you* up?

(She sits down. Sips coffee.)

ROGER

(Puts his phone away. Gets his coffee, goes back to the window.)

Couldn't sleep.

ELLEN

I heard you creeping around putting the coffee on. I must have fallen back to sleep.

(A phone blasts an emergency alert. ELLEN jumps up, rushes out, returns reading her phone. A beat. ROGER's phone screams. He drops it pulling it out of a pocket.)

ROGER

(Looking at his phone. Walks back and forth in front of the window, holding it up to get reception.)

My phone's dead!

ELLEN

(Reading her phone.)

It's raccoons. They busted out. We're supposed to shelter at home. Stay alert. Don't go out unless for medical emergencies. Or to church?

ROGER

That's ridiculous. I have baseball this morning. It's the playoffs. Church on Saturdays?

ELLEN

It's a *gang* of raccoons. They've broken out of the animal rescue.

ROGER

Gang? That's so judgemental. Ellen, they didn't call them a *gang*!

ELLEN

Okay, fine, I'm trying to figure out what it says.

(Reading her phone.)

An undetermined number of fur-bearing individuals who may present as members of a non-human community known to frequent residential waste bins.

(To ROGER.)

You're right. I called them a *gang*. My bad for being succinct in an emergency.

ROGER

There's no need to use alarmist language. It stokes fear and chaos unnecessarily.

ELLEN

Undetermined number of fur-bearing individuals? Written by a lawyer? Sit. You're pacing.

ROGER

Don't start. I need to stretch my legs.

ELLEN

Sounds like a *gang* of raccoons to me. They're probably wearing masks.

ROGER

Not funny, Ellen, even as you stigmatize them.

ELLEN

Stigmatize?

ROGER

Language can be hurtful. You're so quick to judge people for the things they have to do.

ELLEN

Seriously Roger? They're raccoons, not people. And probably, they're criminals.

ROGER

Probably? That's harsh. You know for a fact they have criminal records?

ELLEN

I know they escaped custody. Not waiting to go through . . . whatever the process is. Isn't that enough?

ROGER

Just typical for you, Ellen. Always judging me before you know all the facts.

ELLEN

Judging *you*! What's that about? I told you to use a coaster. It's teak. The cup will mark it. Not saying you're a criminal. Unless there's something you're not telling me.

ROGER

Why would you say that I'm not telling you something or needing to check my phone?

(Moves his phone up across the window trying to get reception.)

Reception sucks today.

(Pause.)

Your false characterization of raccoons as criminals is based on stigmatizing stereotypes about their heritage as animals. They can't help being animals. You don't get to judge them for that.

ELLEN

(Reading her phone.)

My reception's fine. If they haven't done anything wrong why are they running amok?

ROGER

Amok? I'm sure it doesn't say that. No lawyer would write that. Amok is prejudicial.

ELLEN

Relax Roger. It's Saturday. Stop being a lawyer.

ROGER

I *am* a lawyer. Even on Saturdays.

(The sound of police cars pulling up, sirens wailing. Flashing lights. They go to the window with coffees and phones. ELLEN takes up a position behind ROGER and peaks around him.)

ELLEN
(Looking out the window.)
Geeze, look at all the cops! They're SWAT!

ROGER
They've blocked off the corner. We won't be able to get out!

ELLEN
Are they cops or soldiers? They're wearing goggles and helmets.

ROGER
Maybe it's a community event. For Saturday.

ELLEN
With rifles out? They're carrying those shield things.

ROGER
Just shields Ellen. Not shield *things*.

ELLEN
Well, that armoured vehicle *thing* just drove through Mrs. Smith's roses!

ROGER
Maybe they're bringing a funeral down the street. Sometimes they escort funerals. To manage traffic.

ELLEN
Are you an idiot? We're in a cul de sac! What traffic?! Other than *that*. Is that a tank?

ROGER
It's a tank. Stopping in front of our house.

ELLEN
See that little window on the side? I didn't know they have windows that open. They're pointing something out. Right at us.

ROGER
It could be a sound cannon. Or a speaker if they're going to play music. For a street party.

ELLEN
You know that the machine gun on the top just swung around to point at us?

COP (V.O. THROUGH MEGAPHONE)
HOSTAGE PERSON! This is the police. Is everyone okay in there?

ELLEN

Roger, the sound cannon thing is talking to you. Do something.

ROGER

(Watching the tank, whispering to ELLEN.)

Hostage Person? We live here!

ELLEN

Tell him we're not hostages!

(ROGER shakes his head "no" at the tank.)

COP (V.O. THROUGH MEGAPHONE)

HOSTAGE PERSON! Please indicate that you are unharmed by waving your arms.

ROGER

(Watching the tank, whispering to ELLEN.)

Should I wave my arms to say we're unharmed?

ELLEN

No. The predicate of that statement is that we're hostages. Which we're not. You can't let him think this is a hostage situation.

ROGER

(Watching the tank, whispering to ELLEN.)

Who's the lawyer now Ellen? What should I do?

ELLEN

Tell him we're not hostages!

(ROGER looks out, mouths the words "No, we're not hostages." Shakes his head "no" vigorously.)

ELLEN (CONT'D)

Roger, what are you doing!

ROGER

(Watching the tank, whispering to ELLEN.)

I've told him we're not hostages.

COP (V.O. THROUGH MEGAPHONE)

PRESUMED KIDNAPPER! We have you surrounded.

ELLEN

Oh, nice work there, Roger. You've really fucked this up!

COP (V.O. THROUGH MEGAPHONE)

PRESUMED KIDNAPPER! Put down your weapons!

(ROGER shows his cup and phone to the window.)

COP (V.O. THROUGH MEGAPHONE)

(Much more aggressive at the sight of ROGER's raised weapons.)

PRESUMED KIDNAPPER! Lower your weapons!

ROGER

Weapons? He can't be talking to us!

COP (V.O. THROUGH MEGAPHONE)

PRESUMED KIDNAPPER! Drop your weapons! This is your last warning!

ELLEN

(Peering out from behind ROGER.)

Roger, they've brought in a dog!

ROGER

That's Pooper the doodle from across the street who's always shitting in your azaleas. He just crapped on our sidewalk!

ELLEN

(Shouts at ROGER.)

Dammit Roger, drop your weapons. You've had your last warning!

ROGER

(ROGER starts to kneel, puts his coffee on the floor.)

Can you get me a coaster?

ELLEN

Fuck the coaster!

(ROGER stands up with his phone in his hand.)

COP (V.O. THROUGH MEGAPHONE)

The other weapon! Drop it now!

(ELLEN hip-checks ROGER causing him to drop his phone to the floor. He stands with his hands up.)

COP (V.O. THROUGH MEGAPHONE)

PRESUMED OTHER KIDNAPPER! Put down your weapons!

ELLEN

(Still behind ROGER.)

Is he talking to me? He can't see me.

(She shows herself a bit, points at herself with her phone.)

COP (V.O. THROUGH MEGAPHONE)

Yes, you! Move out where we can see you!

ELLEN

I'm not wearing a bra. This is getting weird.

(ELLEN kneels, puts her coffee and phone on the floor. Stands behind ROGER, her hands up.)

ELLEN

Is this an unlawful search? Looking at us through our window?

ROGER

I'm a real estate lawyer Ellen.

(For a beat, they stand hands in the air, unmoving.)

ELLEN

What's happening now?

ROGER

The sound cannon is going back in.

ELLEN

(Peering out from behind ROGER.)

Wow. I didn't realize they could turn around like that.

(They stand hands up for a few more seconds.)

ELLEN (CONT'D)

They're gone. Can we put our hands down?

ROGER

So many questions Ellen. Why don't you forward them to community relations at the police department?

(The sound of running on the roof. They look up. Off-stage, the bedroom door slams.)

ROGER

Did you leave the window in the bedroom open again? The wind slams that door. I'm tired of always fixing it.

(ROGER exits. ELLEN picks up cups and phones.)

ELLEN

(She looks at ROGER's phone. Mockingly.)

I'm tired of fixing it!

(ELLEN tosses his phone across the room. The bedroom door slams again. ROGER rushes in.)

ROGER

There's a gang of raccoons in our bedroom. With their lawyer!

ELLEN

You're shitting me. They have a lawyer!

ROGER

Don't you follow the news? They're domesticating. Shortening their snouts. Making their ears floppy. Going with smaller teeth. Generally, getting cuter. Of course, they'd hire lawyers to help with their new brand.

ELLEN

New brand?

ROGER

As pets. They want to live with humans. Get the same deal dogs and cats have.

ELLEN

They should talk to me first. Believe me, living with the adult male of the species ain't a bed of roses.

ROGER

It's better than eating garbage. They also need lawyers to help with lobbying, advocacy and commercial representation.

ELLEN

Commercial representation?

ROGER

We use the likeness of raccoons everywhere. In advertising, TV. Obviously in movies. Even in plays. You think actual raccoons ever get a dime of that?

ELLEN

Probably not?

ROGER

Definitely not. In fact, if we were in a play right now about raccoons, they'd probably be hawking raccoon coffee mugs and T-shirts in the lobby. Not a penny would go to raccoons. Of course they need a lawyer to protect their interests.

ELLEN

Why have they broken into our house if they're trying to, you know, . . . go all *we come in peace, Earthling*?

ROGER

That I don't know. Baby steps? First diplomatic contact between different cultures? An attempt to bridge historically difficult divides between species that have clashed over the laws governing the rights of property owners?

(Pause.)

Maybe they want equitable access to the global resources and opportunities we've denied them. Systemically oppressing them as a species because we think they should be content with eating our garbage. I can definitely see that they'd want their own lawyer if that's the tack they're taking.

ELLEN

So raccoons are the same as thieves? They don't respect someone else's property.

ROGER

Didn't I just say that? A bit less blunt, however.

ELLEN

(Scrolling on her phone.)

Well this ain't the diplomats and the cultural attachés that just climbed through our bedroom window. These are the worst of the worst! The filthy animals that busted out of the pen! The ones the cops are after!

ROGER

Where's my phone?

ELLEN

Wherever you dropped it.

(Looking at her phone.)

They say it was an inside job. They're working with the Red Squirrels!

ROGER

(Finds his phone. Taps at it repeatedly.)

It's locked up.

ELLEN

Try rebooting it.

ROGER

What?

ELLEN

(Slowly.)

Turn it off. Wait a few seconds. Then turn it on.

ROGER

(Punching frantically at his phone.)

It's not working!

ELLEN

Fine. Then leave it off for a week. Put it in the window to get light. It'll restart by itself.

ROGER

Really?

ELLEN

The cops thought we had weapons when they were trying to see my boobs. Are they armed?

ROGER

(Working at his dead phone.)

Who?

ELLEN

The raccoons in our bedroom. Do they have weapons?

ROGER

How would I know? I didn't frisk them if that's what you're asking.

ELLEN

It's just that I thought that when a gang of criminals from another cultural group breaks into our house to hide out from the cops, you being a lawyer and all . . .

(Long pause.)

you might have paid a little attention to whether they're packing.

ROGER

I don't do immigration law. Or criminal. Never even read a pet custody case if this is about them seeking some change in status.

ELLEN

Change in status?

ROGER

Seeking standing as pets.

ELLEN

Right. The wild animals who have escaped custody break in to our house. And you're the man here but too much of a chickenshit to deal with them. I assume that if they want to permanently occupy our bedroom, you could write them up a lease agreement—

ROGER

Break in? It was more like they *waltzed* through the open window that someone's always leaving wide open. Pretty simple for any Tom, Dick and Harry to simply climb the wall and pussyfoot right in.

(ELLEN slumps into a chair. Sips her coffee.
ROGER stands downstage occasionally looking out the window and checking his phone.)

ELLEN

So this is all my fault now?

ROGER

(Long awkward pause.)

This is probably not the best time to tell you . . .

ELLEN

What?

ROGER

No time is ever a good time—

ELLEN

Spit it out, Roger.

ROGER

I think we need . . . some space.

ELLEN

A bigger house?

ROGER

Well. Maybe. If that's what's best for you. I can recommend a good agent. I mean space . . . for both of us.

ELLEN

So a *much* larger house?

ROGER

More space for both of us. Just not space together.

ELLEN

You're leaving me? Because I left the window open? Because we got a gang of raccoons in our bedroom? With their lawyer? Roger, they're not even making demands yet!

ROGER

(Draws circles in the air as he tries to explain.)

Of course not. I mean not *that*. Or maybe a bit of *that*. But it's not *just that*. It's . . . *all* of that. In truth, it's more than *that*. It's more like *all* of *this*.

ELLEN

We could call one of those pest control guys to get rid of them.

ROGER

Do you think that's necessary?

ELLEN

Then bring the cops back. I'm sure they'd just love to taser the crap out of them and drag them back to jail. It would boost their arrest numbers.

ROGER

If that's what you want.

ELLEN

You know what I want Roger? I want the cops back here so I can borrow their taser and put it on your nuts and pull the trigger to see how long it goes before it runs out of gas. And I'm sure those mean dicks would love watching and giving me tips on when to turn you over and start again from the back side.

ROGER

A taser doesn't use gas. It's a rechargeable battery actually—

ELLEN

Shut up, Roger.

(ROGER raises his hand to ask if he can speak.)

ROGER

I would like to add . . . it's not you, it's me.

(ELLEN breaks into tears, her face in her hands.
The crying is fake.)

ROGER (CONT'D)

You deserve better.

(ELLEN fake crying hysterically.)

ROGER (CONT'D)

I'm not good enough for you.

(ELLEN fake crying.)

ROGER (CONT'D)

I don't think I'm ready to commit.

ELLEN

(Stops crying. Looks at him. Then wild laughter.)

Okay! That last one broke my concentration. We've been married for fifteen years. Living together for eighteen. And you're not ready to commit? You need to be tasered so it will jump-start your brain.

ROGER

We're in a rut. We're stuck. We need to experience new things. I want to feel energized about something again.

ELLEN

Wait for the cops to get here. The taser. I'll give you energized.

ROGER

I miss excitement. Risk taking.

ELLEN

Sign a book out of the library and return it late without paying the fine.

ROGER

That's not something I would do.

ELLEN

Then sneak into the pool without showering. Walk dry in front of the life guard. Maybe she'll catch you. Maybe she won't. That's anticipation and risk taking all rolled into one. Should be exciting enough for a man like you.

ROGER

Not enough.

ELLEN

This morning the police drop by thinking we've been taken hostage. Then you tell them
(beat.)

oh hold on a minute . . . *we're* not the hostages. So we get to cosplay kidnappers and ravishers in our pjs while the cops try to see my boobs and kick open our door.

ROGER

Ravishers?

ELLEN

Then a *gang* of animals—literally, *animals*—breaks out of prison and hides out in our bedroom. With their lawyer, as you so helpfully pointed out. These are very likely the same fugitives—who may be carrying weapons but you were too busy shitting your pants to notice—that the authorities are hunting as we speak. All this before I've had my coffee.

ROGER

I'm not sure I get your point. You want more coffee?

ELLEN

You're adding ending our marriage to this Saturday's *to-do* list because you're not getting enough excitement. I'd say we've had the kind of morning most couples would find pretty freaking exhilarating.

ROGER

When you put it like that you make me sound a bit . . . self-centered.

ELLEN

Yeah, I'm *soooo* sorry about that. That constant nagging you about being a selfish dick? It's what being a wife to an asshole for fifteen years does to a girl.

ROGER

Soon, we're going to be over the hill. In a few years, I'll be . . . fortyish—

(ELLEN's phone dings. She looks at it. Then stares at him without speaking.)

ROGER

What!?

(A forced chuckle.)

An update on the raccoons?

ELLEN

No. A notice from our bank. Sit down where I can see you, you weasel.

ROGER

(Laughing nervously. Stays standing at the window.)

Weasel now? Already a band of marauding raccoons in the bedroom. And now a weasel in the living room. We've got quite the menagerie going here.

ELLEN

Our investment account. Someone sold everything yesterday. Then the entire cash balance was transferred out this morning. Do you know anything about this?

ROGER

Moi! You know how bad I am with things like that. Maybe. Why are they sending you a notice? That has nothing to do with you.

ELLEN

Nine-hundred thousand dollars! To an account in the Cayman Islands!

ROGER

(Alarmed. Picks up his phone and taps at it furiously.)

I thought it was nine hundred and *five* thousand. They said there'd be no service charges.

ELLEN

I rounded down, weasel. Was this you? Sit.

ROGER

(Sits in the other chair. Reaches for her phone.)

My phone's not working. Can I see yours?

ELLEN

No you can't see my phone. I might never get it back, weasel!

ROGER

Stop calling me that. It's demeaning.

ELLEN

Weasel. Weasel. Weasel.

ROGER

You're using a clichéd stereotype. It's stigmatizing.

ELLEN

To you or the weasels? By the way, you don't have to call it a *clichéd* stereotype because by definition stereotypes are all clichés. But you're right. Unfair to weasels. Let's just go with dick.

ROGER

As usual you're jumping to conclusions.

ELLEN

Was this you, dick?

ROGER

What if it was? I don't have to answer your questions. It was more a tax thing. I thought it might be a good year to take some capital gains.

ELLEN

You're transferring nine-hundred-thousand dollars in cash out of our investment account to the Cayman Islands on the morning you're telling me you're leaving me.

ROGER

You're making it sound . . . like a big deal. It was . . . *is* . . . all mine. I moved it because I didn't want it to be a source of friction between us.

ELLEN

Friction? How is stealing my money *not* a source of friction.

ROGER

Because technically it's not yours.

ELLEN

It's in a joint account. Either one of us can take everything in it, no questions asked!

ROGER

And yet you badger me with questions. I was quite within my rights, Ellen.

ELLEN

Where did you move it to?

ROGER

I don't remember.

ELLEN

It's a lot of money. You stole it this morning. How can you not remember?

ROGER

You mean remember *exactly*?

ELLEN

Yes, *exactly* is good.

ROGER

(Sympathetically.)

Ellen, Ellen, Ellen.

ELLEN

Half of everything in that account is mine.

ROGER

(Less sympathetically.)

Ellen, Ellen, Ellen.

ELLEN

Weasel, weasel, weasel. Where'd you put my money?

ROGER

Well, here's the thing.

(Holding up his phone.)

My phone's not working. Without it, I can't tell you. Even if I wanted to. Which I don't. I don't think it would be good for you emotionally or even spiritually. Given how hysterical you're about to become.

ELLEN

Where'd you put my money?

ROGER

You make so much more money than me. You don't need it.

ELLEN

Don't care. Don't want you to have it. No a dime of it.

ROGER

You know, now that we're going through this *thing*, I was worried that this would happen. There'd be this *friction* between us.

ELLEN

Again, *friction*? And now this *thing*? What *thing* are we going through?

ROGER

An amicable divorce in which we don't fight over money. I was hoping we might manage it without lawyers if we kept it cooperative. I'm trying to be cooperative Ellen. You just need to compromise a little and not hold on to your bitterness.

ELLEN

You know, maybe that sounds good. I do so *hate* lawyers. Want to put them in the freezer until they're hard so it won't make too much of mess in the garage when I cut them into freeze-dried chunks with my new reciprocating saw. Then put the pieces out the night before our regular trash pickup and let the local raccoons know we've got a buffet happening here as soon as it's dark. Tell them to bring their appetites and their friends.

ROGER

I hear you. You're angry. But if you get petty Ellen . . .

(He clucks sympathetically.)

If you make it all about the money, you'll miss seeing this for what it really is: an opportunity to focus on us.

ELLEN

On *us*?

ROGER

Yes. On *us*. Only without each other always under foot.

ELLEN

I'd be happy to put your neck under my foot. Weasel, where'd you put the money?

ROGER

It wouldn't be fair to tell you. Or to me. And it wouldn't be fair to Mummy.

ELLEN

Mummy Weasel!

ROGER

You can call her just Mummy.

ELLEN

What does Mummy Weasel have to do with this?

(Waving at him like he's rotting meat.)

Other than that she's responsible for giving birth to you.

ROGER

It was her two thousand dollars that started that account. Mummy gave it to me. A gift to her son. She'd be hurt if I simply gave it away now that you're leaving me.

ELLEN

I told you to buy Apple stock with that money.

ROGER

Tomato, tomato.

ELLEN

I watched the market. I knew iMac would be a thing. Then iPod, And now iPhone! The stock exploded.

ROGER

I'm not technical. Or a financial guy.

ELLEN

The account is joint. We put both of us on it after we got married. It's only Apple stock. All the dividends reinvested.

ROGER

Which is the only stock I sold. Out of respect for Mummy's memory.

(Pause.)

Obviously, I'm glad for all three of us that you helped a bit.

ELLEN

I've always managed that account because you're an idiot.

ROGER

Do you really think name calling is helpful? Okay, I officially declare I'm *very* grateful for your advice with my Mummy's money.

ELLEN

If you really want to honour Mummy Weasel's memory, you could take her original two thousand in cash. Then we split the rest fifty-fifty. You could do whatever you want with your share. Almost half-a-million dollars. You could give it to a charity for weasels.

ROGER

I absolutely *love* your idea. Love giving it all away to a charity for . . . sure, animals. Whatever. I'll give it some thought. And I'm only claiming the portion of the stock, at current market value, bought with Mummy's money.

ELLEN

The two thousand that bought Apple almost twenty years ago. Which is everything in the account.

ROGER

I couldn't hurt Mummy. Disrespect her gift.

ELLEN

Mummy Weasel's been dead fifteen years. I was there when the priest wanted to drive a stake through her heart to make sure she didn't wake the next full moon. She just *had* to drop by on our honeymoon in the Caymans. She just *had* to learn to waterski. She just *had* to land on the dock on her head. Just to make it all about her.

ROGER

I'm only glad she's not here to hear you be so cruel about her.

ELLEN

We've lived off my salary our entire marriage. I worked like a dog to put you through weasel school. We let you plow all your money into paying off *your* weasel student debt. Every penny that bought your *little weasel pellets*, your *weasel toys* I'm always tripping over, your *weasel shampoo*, even your *weasel foot powder* because your feet stink. All of that I paid for.

ROGER

Wow, Ellen. It's like you're keeping a tab! We were in love! You wanted to do all that!

(ELLEN's phone dings. She looks, gets up to leave.)

ROGER (CONT'D)

Where are you going? We're making progress here.

ELLEN

To see a man about a weasel trap. Doesn't have to be humane. Just something that can nail the little sucker.

ROGER

Who's that on your phone?

ELLEN

The lawyer for the raccoons.

ROGER

What do they want?

ELLEN

(Impatient.)

How would I know Roger. Maybe that's why they want to meet. In person.

ROGER

Where?

ELLEN

In our bedroom.

ROGER

(Nervous.)

I should go in with you.

ELLEN

Why?

ROGER

In case it's a trap. I'm the man.

ELLEN

If it's a trap, we'd both be caught. It's better you stay out here. If I don't survive, you can run for help.

ROGER

Okay, makes sense. But I still feel bad that I'm not going in with you.

ELLEN

(Sigh.)

Roger, listen to me. You're *not* invited. I don't mean they *forgot to* invite you. They specifically said you're *not* to come, *not* allowed in, they *don't want you there*. They don't trust you.

ROGER

Because I'm a lawyer?

ELLEN

That was my first thought too. Understandable that you're part of the whole species-based colonialism that keeps them oppressed. But no, they just hate you personally. I think it really is cultural with them. Raccoons simply have an instinctive loathing for weasels.

(Pause. Stares at ROGER.)

And looking at it from their point of view, I kinda get it.

ROGER

Ellen, I'm not *any* lawyer. I'm a *real estate* lawyer. Every day, I wrestle with the most perplexing legal and moral issues known to man: the transfer of property. I won't be intimidated by raccoons. I'm going in. What's the worse they can do against the law?

ELLEN

They'll bite you.

ROGER

Okay. I'll wait out here.

(ELLEN leaves. Left alone, ROGER fiddles with his phone. He can't get it to work. In frustration, he tosses it away. A beat. ELLEN returns.)

ROGER

What were you doing in there? Do you have any idea how long I've been waiting?

ELLEN

I understand everything now. Why they feel the way they do about us as the colonizing species. We destroy everything. We can be such jerks to all the living things that share the world with us. We think we're so superior to creatures that aren't humans.

ROGER

Isn't that just the natural order of things? We *are* superior.

ELLEN

Why?

ROGER

Because we are.

ELLEN

But why?

ROGER

I don't know Ellen. I didn't make the rules. Maybe . . . because we're made in God's image?

ELLEN

So didn't God also make the raccoons who don't like the deal they're getting?

ROGER

I guess. He probably made weasels too then, eh? Bet He'd like to have that one back whenever He puts out his trash.

ELLEN

Which only goes to show He didn't have a clue what he was doing. And He's left it up to us to fix the system. Which is what I'm going to do.

(ROGER starts pacing while he thinks. Hums the opening of Queen's *We Are The Champions*.)

ELLEN

Really? That song? Stop it. Or I'll bite you.

(ROGER stops humming.)

ROGER

So saving raccoons? That's your next project Ellen?

ELLEN

Not saving them Roger. Acknowledging their unique cultural identity as raccoons. Finding a way for us and them to co-exist. That's all they want too.

ROGER

Why don't they go co-exist in the animal shelter? Or the zoo? We build nice zoos for them.

ELLEN

You know what most raccoons associate us with?

ROGER

Our advanced intellect. Our capacity for abstract thought. The ability to reason and solve complex problems.

ELLEN

Nope.

ROGER

Our successful history of reshaping the world for the betterment of all mankind?

ELLEN

Probably not that.

ROGER

Our incredible achievements in art, science and technology?

ELLEN

I could see why you'd like to think that. But no.

ROGER

Okay, I'll bite. What do raccoons think when they see humans?

ELLEN

Garbage. They love our garbage.

ROGER

That's absurd. We're more than garbage!

ELLEN

The sum of our parts Roger. We're a lot of garbage. Raccoons have evolved to know this.

ROGER

I can honestly say I've never put out an ounce of garbage!

ELLEN

What do you think our cleaning lady lugs out to the trash every week?

ROGER

I thought that was stuff she brought with her. For cleaning.

ELLEN

The kids are really into the animal-resistant trash cans we got now. Literally. Like those dog toys filled with kibble. They love figuring them out. It's the raccoon equivalent of a rubik's cube filled with fish heads and chicken bones.

ROGER

I don't believe they told you all this. And even if they did, it's quite unflattering to us as the dominant species. I would expect them to show a little more gratitude.

ELLEN

Gratitude? Real life is ugly for raccoons in the city. When we see a couple of them walking down the sidewalk minding their own business on a sunny Saturday morning, what do you think most people do?

ROGER

So in your little hypothetical, these two raccoons are just listening to their music and doing a little walking dance shuffle?

ELLEN

Sure. Make fun. But what if they are busting a few moves and skipping along, not hurting anyone? What's the first thing you think, Roger?

ROGER

Don't step in their poop.

ELLEN

No. I know you better than that. That's the *second* thing you think. *First*, you think they don't belong. In this neighbourhood. That's what we do. We go all Karen and start screaming at them to get out of here.

ROGER

Okay, but you said it yourself. It's what everyone does. Because they're dirty.

ELLEN

We pretend to care about them. Assuming they need help because they're sick or lost gives us the excuse to call the cops to round them up.

ROGER

Honestly, I've never really cared about them. Or animals in general.

ELLEN

A few minutes ago, I would have been disappointed to learn that about you. Now, it seems to make sense.

ROGER

I never knew you were so pro-raccoon.

ELLEN

I'd describe myself as more anti lying weasels who steal money from their wives just before they leave them. And they're not dirty Roger.

ROGER

Really? You got all this . . . *propaganda* from your meeting with them?

ELLEN

They made our bed while they've been in there. And the toilet seat's down so I know that's them not you. You've never learned to do either of those things even with all the years I've put into your training.

ROGER

You're on *their* side now?

ELLEN

We lock them up in these facilities that are all rows of cages. They're treated as if they're . . . *animals*. It's all in their presentation.

(She holds up a flash drive.)

ROGER

I had no idea. Raccoons? Okay, but I'm not a bigot. I like the funny videos of them cuddling with kittens and splashing around in swimming pools. I love their little paws. Like small hands without the opposable thumbs. So cute.

ELLEN

And yet you're still judging them as inferior in reference to humans. Your prejudice is perpetuating a systemic oppression and discrimination. Have you ever considered that maybe *we* have hands that resemble raccoons' paws. Only ours are larger with shorter nails?

ROGER

Fine. They're here now. What do they want?

ELLEN

What we all want, Roger. To be loved. The freedom to be happy. Financial independence. A chance to pursue their dreams. Not to be married to a dick.

(ELLEN picks ROGER's phone up from the floor.)

ELLEN (CONT'D)

You still having trouble with this? Leave it with me. I'm techy. I'll get it working and give it back to you later.

ROGER

(Pleased.)

Really? Does that mean you're okay with us—?

ELLEN

(Smiling.)

Sure thing, Rog. Just swell. You gotta do what you gotta do. It's time for me to move on.

ROGER

Awfully nice of you Ellie the little pooh pooh—

ELLEN

Don't call me that!

(Holds up his phone.)

I have your phone. You want it fixed? Don't call me that!

ROGER

Okay. I'm glad we can be mature about all this and get on with the rest of our lives.

ELLEN

You have no idea. Don't you have baseball this morning?

ROGER

I do. But I figured *this* was probably more important.

ELLEN

This?

ROGER

This resetting of our relationship. But now with you being so gracious about it, umm—.

ELLEN

Yeah, that's me. Ellen The Gracious. A regular superhero of graciousness.

ROGER

I'd hate to leave you with a room full of raccoons . . .

(Conciliatory.)

And I'm not implying anything negative about them. I accept they're not . . . umm, dirty.

ELLEN

No, they're fine in there. *We're* fine.

ROGER

(Gesturing at the two of them together.)

We're fine? Really?

ELLEN

Oh no! I didn't mean us. I mean you and me Rogers, under the circumstances we're as good as we can be. But I meant *we* as in me and the raccoons. *We're* getting on fine. You don't need to worry about me and them.

ROGER

You know, they're fugitives and the police are looking for them. If you let them hang out here, you could have some exposure. I might not be the best person to defend you if there were charges.

ELLEN

You're a real estate lawyer, Roger. A damn good one I might add. But if the cops want to come after me for harbouring raccoons on the lam, then you're probably not my first call. It doesn't matter. They aren't after them now. Karen spotted another raccoon a few streets over. Called the cops and they came by, tasered him, took him away.

ROGER

They got the wrong raccoon?

ELLEN

Happens all the time. They can't tell one raccoon from another. He was furry, had the mask, head in a garbage can. They chased him and he ran. So they scooped him up and charged him with running on the sidewalk. That's the world they live in now.

ROGER

Well, I prefer to trust that the authorities know what they're doing.

(Gesturing at the bedroom.)

Will your raccoons be going on their way then?

ELLEN

They're not *my* raccoons, Roger. They belong to themselves. And right now they're working on a plan. We're trying to get them released from the rescue. They need a court order for that to happen.

ROGER

I've never heard of that.

ELLEN

Think of it as legal emancipation from a guardian. Except for raccoons. Sort of like when you got emancipated from Mummy Weasel so you could go to law school. But without all the crying and spitting and her pulling on your hair.

ROGER

Got it.

ELLEN

They need a sponsor. Someone to pledge to help them a bit financially until they get on their paws.

ROGER

You should be careful with that. It could be a scam. A way for them to get their claws into you. You're not exactly in the position to be handing money away given . . . you know . . . this *thing* we're facing.

ELLEN

No worries, Roger. I absolutely am not going to become their sponsor. Legal, financial or any other way. I'm thinking more like being a good shepherd to them. A coach, a cheerleader, a shoulder to cry on . . . whatever they need. And I'll set up their phones.

ROGER

Sounds good. You should probably get something to occupy yourself so that you'd don't spiral into day-drinking and letting yourself go now that we're splitting up.

ELLEN

I'll keep that in mind.

ROGER

Should I wait for it then?

ELLEN

What?

ROGER

My phone. For you to fix it.

ELLEN

What about baseball?

ROGER

I feel terrible about letting the team down. The guy who plays centre field is a rabbit. Runs down everything. But hands of cement. Couldn't catch a cold. His wife's having a baby so we figure he'll miss the first few innings.

ELLEN

(Not particularly interested.)

Yeah, probably.

ROGER

With him being late, it was pretty much assumed I'd start in centre field. This *would* have been the chance I've been waiting for to take his job. Put him on the bench permanently! No one can shag a fly like me!

ELLEN

I can see that. You should go.

ROGER

I feel terrible leaving you.

ELLEN

Seriously, go.

ROGER

My phone?

ELLEN

It'll take hours. Be ready for you when you get back.

ROGER

Okay. I'll go then.

(ROGER takes off his bathrobe, drops it on the floor, revealing his baseball uniform. Heads for the exit. Stops and looks back at ELLEN.)

ROGER (CONT'D)

You know, I think what makes us special as a couple is the trust we have between us.

ELLEN

(Smiling.)

For sure, Roger. You can take that to the bank.

(ROGER exits. ELLEN takes her phone, dials, holds ROGER's phone in her other hand. For the rest of this scene, ELLEN talks on her phone while doing transactions on ROGER's phone.)

ELLEN

(Into her phone.)

Hi. He's gone. I've got his phone. It's still on the account in the Caymans. The new one he's using. Give me a second here. Don't want to get the password wrong.

(Paces as she taps on ROGER's phone.)

R . . . O . . . G . . . E . . . R. Incredible. Same old Roger.

(Looks at her phone. Taps on ROGER's phone. Talks into her phone.)

Now where's the money got to go? Let me check my phone for it.

(Pause to look. Talks into her phone)

Yep, I see the trust info for your clients—the transit number—love the name of the trust by the way. TREE HUGGERS.

(Listening.)

What? One of the babies. Oh, don't worry about it. Accidents happen.

(Laughing, picks up ROGER's bathrobe.)

I don't always get to the bathroom in time myself. Especially laughing. I'll give you something to wipe it up with.

(Walks off-stage to give ROGER's bathrobe to the raccoons. Returns and sits.)

ELLEN (CONT')

(Into her phone.)

Yeah. Just waiting while you set up your end. Don't put my name on this—this is all Roger. Make him the donor—yes, he really is a piece of work—he's all about giving until it hurts.

(Puts her phone down, laughs, talks to herself.)

And this is going to hurt!

(Puts her phone back to her ear.)

No. Sorry, I was talking to someone else. Yes, just this morning he was telling me how much he *loved* the idea of giving it all away to a charity for animals. Last time I checked, raccoons still qualify as animals! This should help you get started.

(Sudden pause. Listening intently.)

What was that crash?

(Listening, then talking in her phone.)

Don't worry about it. That's a picture of his Mummy. Just watch the glass. Your little bandits always trying to get their paws on things that don't belong to them. A lot like little Roger. Soooo cute!

(Pauses, waits. Watches ROGER's phone.)

No—not here right now. He's shagging a fly. Because the rabbit's having a baby.

(Pause.)

He left me his phone. I'm logged in as him so all the records will show it's him.

(Pause.)

Nine-hundred and *five* thousand. Let me know when you see it come in.

(Waiting.)

Okay. Bye bye. No no no—thank *YOU*.

(She hangs up, goes to the window, carries the phones down as she looks out. She suddenly has a thought. Looks at the phones again. She redials a number on her phone.)

ELLEN (CONT')

(Into her phone.)

Me again. I just remembered. When we discussed this earlier, Roger said he wanted more excitement. He has very strong his views about the long-term commitment of an ongoing sponsorship. Can we do that? I'll wait

(She paces. Looks at her phone, finds music, starts *We Are The Champions*. Cuts it off immediately.)

ELLEN (CONT')

(Into her phone.)

Cover all their ongoing expenses? Even their legal bills? You can do that? What about college?

(Waits.)

Yeah, I know raccoons have a lot of kids. But we got to take care of them right? I can see them getting their little claws into him right now.

(Studies ROGER's phone. Taps it several times)

Yep. One electronic signature coming your way from Roger. Financial support for living expenses. Coverage for the legal bills?

(Taps ROGER's phone again.)

—and one more signature for the college fund for the kids.

(Sighs happily. Almost teary with joy.)

No. I'll tell him when he gets back. I'm already feeling all warm and fuzzy about all this. Yep, the babies have the cutest noses. And now he'll be paying through the nose forever. No, it's an inside joke.

(END OF PLAY)

PRODUCTION NOTE ABOUT THE SET

Set and props are best kept to a minimum to encourage the theatricality of the actors in performance. See the sketch for the essential set features and props.

