



ELLEN MAKES FRIENDS

Getting cuter and **getting even**
all part of the same plan.

—— by Rick Butts ——



They want the deal that dogs and cats have.

Ellen Makes Friends

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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. 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 finds new friends and comes up with a plan to make Roger proud.

SETTING: A living room, two recliners (or a single sofa) and a coffee table. On SR, a door to an unseen hallway. Downstage, closed curtains at a window.

AT RISE: Morning. ROGER enters in a robe with coffee. He puts the cup on the table and checks his phone. He is nervous. Glances right to a bedroom, walks to curtains, looks at his phone.

ELLEN enters wearing comfy pajamas and bunny slippers. Sleepy. She carries coffee carefully. On his phone, ROGER doesn't hear her. She spots his cup on the table and moves it to a coaster.

ELLEN

(Annoyed.)

Roger! Your coffee cup! On the coaster! The table's teak! Not your mother's laminate!

ROGER

(Startled.)

Dammit, Ellen! Don't sneak. Why are you up so early?

ELLEN

Just keeping an eye on you. Why are *you* up? What's so interesting on your phone?

(She sits down. Sips coffee.)

ROGER

Nothing. Couldn't sleep.

ELLEN

I heard you creeping around putting the coffee on. I fell back to sleep.

(ELLEN's phone blasts emergency alert. ROGER's phone goes off next. He drops it. Picks it up.)

ROGER

They killed my phone! It's dead.

ELLEN

(Reading her phone.)

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

ROGER

No way! I've got baseball this morning. It's playoffs. Who goes to church on Saturday?

ELLEN

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

ROGER

Gang? So judgemental Ellen. Surely, they didn't say a *gang*—

ELLEN

Wait. Let me read. *(beat)* 'An undetermined number of fur-bearing individuals who may present as members of a feral multitude known to frequent residential waste bins.'

(To ROGER.)

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

ROGER

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

ELLEN

'Undetermined number of fur-bearing individuals'? Sounds like lawyer talk. Stop pacing.

ROGER

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

ELLEN

Tomato, to-mah-to. Still a gang 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 quick to judge people for the things they have to do.

ELLEN

Seriously? They're raccoons. Foreigners. Not from around here. Maybe even criminals.

ROGER

Criminals? That's harsh. So how do you know they have criminal records?

ELLEN

I know they're fugitives. They're on the run. Not trusting the process. Isn't that enough?

ROGER

So like you Ellen. Jumping to conclusions about me before considering the facts.

ELLEN

You! I told you to use a coaster. It's teak. I'm saying you're a lazy doofus, not a criminal. Unless there's something you're not telling me.

ROGER

Why would you say I'm not telling you something or checking my phone obsessively? Reception sucks today.

(Pause.)

Your hurtful characterization of raccoons is drawn from stigmatizing stereotypes about their heritage. It's an element of their identity. You don't get to judge them for wanting to escape a domestic arrangement that's unfulfilling.

ELLEN

My phone's fine. If they've not done anything wrong why are they being such a dick?

ROGER

You would have to hear their side of the story.

ELLEN

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

ROGER

I *am* a lawyer. Even on Saturdays.

*(Police cars pull up, sirens wailing. Flashing lights.
They stand at the window with coffees and phones.
ELLEN hides behind ROGER and looks out.)*

ELLEN

Look at all the cops! They're SWAT!

ROGER

They've blocked the road. We won't be able to get out!

ELLEN

Cops or soldiers? They're wearing goggles and helmets. And masks.

ROGER

Maybe it's a community event. A Saturday morning 'get to know your SWAT team'.

ELLEN

With rifles? They're carrying shields.

ROGER

Could be showing off equipment? Giving kids a try at whacking each other with batons?

ELLEN

That armoured vehicle just showed off how to drive through Mrs. Smith's roses.

ROGER

Might be a funeral escort. They do that 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

Didn't know tanks have windows that open. They're pointing something at us.

ROGER

Maybe a sound cannon. I've seen them at riots. Or if it's a street party it's for music.

ELLEN

That machine gun on the top? It just swung around to point at us.

COP (V.O. THROUGH LOUD SPEAKER)

HOSTAGE PERSON! This is the police. Is everyone okay in there?

ELLEN

Roger, the sound cannon or the music speaker for the party. It's talking to you.

ROGER

(Watching the tank, whispering to ELLEN.)

Hostage Person? Who do they think is in here?

ELLEN

Tell him we're not hostages!

ROGER

Why don't you tell him?

COP (V.O. THROUGH LOUD SPEAKER)

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

ROGER

(Whispering to ELLEN.)

Ellen, should I wave my arms to say we're 'unharmed'?

ELLEN

No! The predicate of his assumption is that there are 'hostages'. Which is false. You don't lie in a hostage situation!

ROGER

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

ELLEN

Tell him we're not hostages!

ROGER

(ROGER to COP, over enunciates, his words loud and distorted.)

WE'RE . . . NOT . . . HOS . . . TA . . . GES!

ELLEN

Roger, what are you doing!

ROGER

I'm E . . . NUN . . . CI . . . A . . . TING clearly in case they're reading my lips.

COP (V.O. THROUGH LOUD SPEAKER)
PRESUMED KIDNAPPER! We have you surrounded.

ELLEN
 Nice work, Roger. You've really fucked this up!

COP (V.O. THROUGH LOUD SPEAKER)
PRESUMED KIDNAPPER! Put down your weapons!

ROGER
(Shows his cup and phone to the window. To ELLEN.)
 It's my coffee. And my phone.

COP (V.O. THROUGH LOUD SPEAKER)
(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 LOUD SPEAKER)
PRESUMED KIDNAPPER! Drop your weapons! This is your last warning!

ELLEN
 Roger, they've brought a dog!

ROGER
 That's Pooper the doodle from across the street. He's shitting in your azaleas!

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

ROGER
(Kneels, puts his coffee on the floor.)
 Can you get me a coaster? I don't want to mark the floor.

ELLEN
 Fuck the floor!

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

COP (V.O. THROUGH LOUD SPEAKER)
 The other weapon! Drop it now!

ELLEN!
(Grabs his phone. Throws it to the floor.)
 Give me your phone! There. On the floor!

COP (V.O. THROUGH LOUD SPEAKER)
PRESUMED OTHER KIDNAPPER! Put down your weapons!

ELLEN
(Hiding behind ROGER.)
 Is he talking to me? He can't see me.

COP (V.O. THROUGH LOUD SPEAKER)
 Yes, you! Move out where we can see you!

ELLEN
 I'm not wearing a bra. This is getting weird. *(beat)* Okay, coffee and phone on the floor.
 Is this an unlawful search? Looking at us through our window?

ROGER
 I'm a real estate lawyer, Ellen.

ELLEN
 What? They're leaving? How can they spin a tank like that? Would be great at Walmart's parking. They're gone. *(beat)* Can we put our hands down?

ROGER
 So many questions Ellen. Send them to community relations at the police department.

(Sound of feet on the roof. A bedroom door slams.)

ROGER
(Running off.)
 Did you leave the bedroom window open? The wind slams the door. I'm tired of fixing it.

ELLEN
(Picks up cups and phones. Mockingly. Drops his phone on the floor.)
 I'm tired of fixing it! Like I'm always fixing your phone!

(The bedroom door slams again.)

ROGER
(Rushing on.)
 There's a gang of raccoons in our bedroom. With their lawyer!

ELLEN
 You're shitting me. They have a lawyer!

ROGER
 Haven't you heard? They're domesticating. Shortening snouts. Making their ears floppy.
 Downsizing the teeth. Getting cuter. They'd need a lawyer to help with their new brand.

ELLEN
 New brand?

ROGER

As pets. Get the same deal dogs and cats have. Live with humans.

ELLEN

Have them talk to me first. Living with the adult male of the species ain't a bed of roses.

ROGER

It's better than eating fish guts. They need lawyers for 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 raccoons ever get a dime of that?

ELLEN

Probably not?

ROGER

If we're in a play about raccoons, they're hawking raccoon coffee mugs and T-shirts in the lobby. Not a penny goes to raccoons. They need a lawyer to protect their interests.

ELLEN

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

ROGER

That I don't know. First contact between cultures? An attempt to bridge the differences between species that have clashed over the laws governing the rights of property owners?

(Pause.)

They could be after equitable access to the global resources we've denied them. We have systemically oppressed them as a species, creating the narrative that they should be content eating our garbage. They'd want a lawyer if that's the tack they're taking.

ELLEN

You're saying raccoons are basically thieves? They don't respect private property.

ROGER

Didn't I just say that?

ELLEN

These ain't diplomats and the cultural attachés that just climbed through our bedroom window. They're filthy animals. Worst of the worse. That's why the cops are after them.

ROGER

My phone. It's locked up.

ELLEN

Try rebooting it.

ROGER
How?

ELLEN
(Slowly.)
Turn it off. Wait a few seconds. Then turn it on.

ROGER
It's not working!

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

ROGER
Really?

ELLEN
The cops were after weapons. When they were trying to see my boobs. Are they armed?

ROGER
My phone's dead. Whose boobs?

ELLEN
The raccoons in our bedroom, you boob. Do they have weapons?

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

ELLEN
Sorry. I thought that with a gang of criminals from another culture hiding out in our bedroom with the federal Animal Control outside, you might have noticed if they're packing. You being a lawyer and all.

ROGER
I don't do criminal work. They'll need a specialist in pet custody law if they're after a status change. Or maybe immigration.

ELLEN
What do you mean a status change?

ROGER
Being recognized as pets.

ELLEN
So these animalistic . . . *animals* break out of animal jail and hide out in our house and you're too chickenshit to deal with them, man to animal? And if they decide to take up permanent residence in our bedroom, you can do what? Write up a lease agreement?

ROGER
You left the window open, Ellen.

ELLEN

This is my fault now?

ROGER

This is probably not the best time to tell you—

ELLEN

What?

ROGER

I think we need . . . space.

ELLEN

A bigger house?

ROGER

If that's what's best for you. I can recommend an agent. I mean space. For both of us.

ELLEN

So a *really big* house?

ROGER

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. They haven't even given us a list of demands yet!

ROGER

Maybe that's part of it. But not really all of it.

ELLEN

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

ROGER

Do you think that's going to change anything, Ellen?

ELLEN

Then we call the cops. They taser them, drag them off to animal jail, boost their arrest numbers. Everyone wins!

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.

ROGER

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

ELLEN

Shut up, Roger.

ROGER

(After long pause).

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

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

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 one broke my concentration. We've been married for fifteen years. Together for eighteen. And you're not ready to commit? Maybe a taser will jump-start your brain.

ROGER

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

ELLEN

Let's get the cops back here. I borrow their taser. I'll get you energized.

ROGER

I miss excitement.

ELLEN

Take a book out of the library and return it late. And don't pay the fine.

ROGER

That's not something I would do.

ELLEN

Go to the pool. Sneak in without taking the mandatory pre-shower. Walk past the life guard completely dry. Maybe she catches you. Isn't that exciting for a man like you?

ROGER

Not really.

ELLEN

This morning we start the day as hostages. There's a tank outside pointing a machine gun at my boobs. Not exciting?

ROGER

Yes but—

ELLEN

Then the cops think *we're* the kidnappers. They're coming in guns blazing unless you figure out how to stop pointing your phone at them. I tell ya, I'm feeling a rush.

ROGER

I was a bit trepidatious I'll admit—

ELLEN

Now there's a gang of escaped cons holed up in our bedroom with their lawyer. Probably shitting on our new satin sheets. They're wearing masks! Damm exciting if you ask me.

ROGER

Yes, that's unfortunately true but I don't see your point—

ELLEN

My point, Roger, is that all this happened before I've had a second cup of Saturday morning coffee.

ROGER

You want more coffee?

ELLEN

You're ending our marriage because you want more *excitement*? More than this?

ROGER

You harp.

ELLEN

Harp? Sorry. Harp? Okay, that's probably true. Being married to a dick for fifteen years can do that to a girl.

ROGER

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

(ELLEN's phone dings.)

ROGER

(A forced cheerfulness.)

Is that a text? Are they sending you an update on the raccoons?

ELLEN

A notice from our bank. Sit where I can see you, you weasel.

ROGER

(Laughs nervously. Stays away from her, at the window.)

Weasel? A gang of masked bandits in the bedroom. Now a weasel in the living room. We've got quite the menagerie going here—

ELLEN

Shut up, weasel. Our investment account. Someone sold everything yesterday. The entire cash balance transferred out this morning. You know anything about this?

ROGER

Me? You know how bad I am with things like that. Why are they sending you a notice? It's nothing to do with you.

ELLEN

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

ROGER

It's nine hundred and *five* thousand. Scooping five thousand in fees? That's robbery!

ELLEN

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

ROGER

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? Okay you're right. Unfair to weasels. Let's go with dick.

ROGER

As usual you're jumping to conclusions.

ELLEN

Was this you, dick?

ROGER

I don't have to answer. It was a tax matter. A good year to take capital gains.

ELLEN

Nine-hundred-thousand dollars from our investment account to a bank in the Cayman Islands I know nothing about. This on the morning you announce you're leaving me.

ROGER

You're so judgemental. The money's mine. Mostly. Let's not have friction between us.

ELLEN

Friction? How is stealing my money *not* friction.

ROGER

Because it's not your money. Technically.

ELLEN

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

ROGER

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

ELLEN

Where did you put it?

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

My phone's not working. Without it, I can't tell you. Even if I wanted to. Which I don't. It wouldn't be good for your emotional wellbeing. You'd probably become hysterical.

ELLEN

Where'd you put my money?

ROGER

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

ELLEN

Don't care. Half is mine. I don't want you to have my half. I don't want you to have *your* half. But to get your half, I'd have to kill you. Not ready to do that. Not yet.

ROGER

Now that we're going through this *thing*, I was worried there might be *friction*.

ELLEN

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

ROGER

A friendly divorce in which we don't squabble over money. I thought we could do it without lawyers if we stayed friends. I'm *trying* to be a friend, Ellen. But you're so bitter.

ELLEN

Okay, not bitter. All love. You know how I love lawyers? Frozen solid. They don't make as much of a mess when I use your boning knife to cut them into chunks in the garage.

ROGER

My fishing knife! You'd ruin it.

ELLEN

Chopped lawyer bites. I put them in bags in the trash and let the raccoons know we're doing a buffet as soon as it's dark. Tell them to bring their appetites and their friends.

ROGER

If you make it about money, you won't see this for what it is: an opportunity for *us*.

ELLEN

For *us*?

ROGER

For *us*. *Us* without the other sneaking around with the other always under foot.

ELLEN

I'd be happy to have 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 just call her Mummy.

ELLEN

What does Mummy Weasel have to do with this crime? Other than that she gave birth to you.

ROGER

It's her money that started that account. Two thousand dollars. 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.

ELLEN

I told you to buy Apple stock.

ROGER

Tomato, to-mah-to.

ELLEN

I said iMac would be a thing. Then iPod, then iPhone! The stock exploded.

ROGER

I'm not technical. Or a financial guy.

ELLEN

After we got married, we put both our names on that account. It's got only Apple stock.

ROGER

Which is the only stock I sold. Out of respect for Mummy's memory. *(beat)* Obviously, I'm glad for the three of us that you helped out.

ELLEN

I managed that account because you're an idiot.

ROGER

Do you really think name calling is helpful? If it makes you feel better I'll say I'm grateful for you assisting with my Mummy's money.

ELLEN

Want to honour Mummy Weasel's memory? Take her two thousand. We split the rest. Do whatever you want with your half-a-million bucks. Give it to a charity for weasels for all I care.

ROGER

I *love* your idea. Funding a charity in her name. For animals. Whatever. I'll think about it. I do wish to respect her gift. I've thought of how to do that every day since we lost her.

ELLEN

Mummy Weasel? It's been fifteen years. The shaman from the Cayman she hooked up with at our wedding? He said we should drive a stake through her heart or she'd rise again. Our honeymoon and she just *has* to go waterskiing, land on her head on the dock, make it all about her.

ROGER

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

ELLEN

Our whole marriage, it's *my* salary paying for everything. I put you through *weasel school*. I buy the *weasel toys* I'm always tripping over. I pay for your *weasel shampoo* because you have *weasel dandruff*. I get you *weasel foot powder* because your feet stink.

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, starts to leave.)

ROGER (CONT'D)

Where are you going? I thought we're making progress here.

ELLEN

To see a man about a weasel trap. 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

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

ROGER

Where?

ELLEN

In our bedroom.

ROGER

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. You stay 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

Roger. You're *not* invited. *(beat)* I don't mean they *forgot* to invite you. They specifically said 'don't bring Roger'. You're not allowed in. They don't trust you.

ROGER

Because I'm a lawyer?

ELLEN

That was my first thought too. Understandable given that you're part of the species-based colonialism that keeps them oppressed. But no, they just hate you personally. It might be cultural. Raccoons have an instinctive loathing for weasels. *(beat)* I kinda get it.

ROGER

Ellen, I'm not *any* lawyer. I'm a *real estate* lawyer. They're just raccoons. I know the laws of property ownership. They're on *my* property. What standing do they have in law?

ELLEN

You go in there, they'll bite you.

ROGER

Okay. I'll wait out here.

(ELLEN leaves. ROGER fiddles with his phone. It's not working. A beat or two, then ELLEN returns.)

ROGER

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

ELLEN

I understand now. Why they feel the way they do about us. We're the colonizers. Those who destroy everything. We act like we're the superior species. They think we're jerks.

ROGER

Isn't that the natural order of things? We *are* superior. But to call us jerks? That's cruel.

ELLEN

Why? Why are we superior to them? Why are we such jerks?

ROGER

Which question? Because we are. Superior, I mean. And maybe . . . because we are?

ELLEN

Why?

ROGER

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

ELLEN

So didn't God also make the raccoons?

ROGER

Maybe he should have also made a trash bin they can't break into.

ELLEN

Maybe he was leaving it to us. To fix our relationship with raccoons. I'm *going* to fix it.
(*beat*) Maybe raccoons prove the existence of God.

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 humans and raccoons to co-exist. That's all they want too.

ROGER

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

ELLEN

You know what raccoons admire most about us?

ROGER

Our intellect? Our capacity for abstract thought? The ability to reason, to solve problems?

ELLEN

Nope.

ROGER

Our 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 so. But no.

ROGER

Okay, I'll bite. What do raccoons admire about us?

ELLEN

Garbage. They love our garbage. And how we share it with them.

ROGER

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

ELLEN

The sum of our parts, Roger. We're a lot of garbage. Raccoons 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 young ones are into the animal-resistant trash cans we have. Literally. They love figuring them out. Like a dog treat ball filled with fish heads and chicken bones.

ROGER

We're the dominant culture. If we're giving them our garbage, they should be grateful.

ELLEN

Grateful? For going Karen on them? When we see a raccoon walking down the sidewalk listening to his music on a Saturday morning, what do you think we do?

ROGER

Watch out for their poop.

ELLEN

That's the second thing. First we panic, start screaming at them to get out of here. We don't care where they go but we don't want them in our neighbourhood.

ROGER

They don't really fit. And they're dirty.

ELLEN

We pretend to care. Say they must be sick. Gives us the excuse to call the cops on them.

ROGER

Honestly, I've never really thought about them. I never knew you were so pro-raccoon.

ELLEN

More anti-lying weasels who steal money from their wives. They're not dirty, Roger.

ROGER

You got all this . . . *fake news* from your meeting with them?

ELLEN

Our bed is made. The toilet seat's down. With all the years I've put into your training, you've never figured out how to do either of those things.

ROGER

You're on *their* side now?

ELLEN

We lock them up in rows of cages. We treat them like *animals*. It's in their presentation.
(*She holds up a flash drive.*)

ROGER

Fine. Raccoons have rights. Whatever. But I'm not a bigot. I like the videos of them cuddling with kittens and splashing around in swimming pools. I love their paws. Like little hands without the opposable thumbs. Very cute.

ELLEN

See what you just did? You described them in reference to humans. You perpetuate systemic oppression and discrimination. Have you ever considered that maybe *our* hands are like their paws only without the lovely nails?

ROGER

Well, they're here now. What do they want?

ELLEN

What we all want, Roger. To be loved. The freedom to be happy. Financial security. A chance to chase their dreams without being married to a dick.
(*She looks for his phone.*)

Your phone still not working? Give it to me. I'll fix it and you can have it back later.

ROGER

(*Pleased. Hands over his phone.*)

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

ELLEN

Sure thing, Rog. Just peachy. You gotta do what you gotta do. Time for me to move on.

ROGER

Awfully big of you, Ellie pooh-pooh—

ELLEN

(*Very sharply.*)

Don't call me that! If you want me to fix your phone, don't call me that.

ROGER

Ok. I'm glad we can still be friends. But it's also time for us to make new friends.

ELLEN

You've no idea how much I want new friends. Working on it. Don't you have baseball?

ROGER

This morning. But I figured I'd be skipping it, that *this* was probably important—

ELLEN

This?

ROGER

Giving our relationship more space. Staying friends. But now with you being gracious—

ELLEN

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

ROGER

(Ingratiating.)

I'd hate to leave you with a room full of raccoons. And I'm not meaning anything derogatory about them being dirty. I totally get that it's because of the trash thing—

ELLEN

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

ROGER

We're fine? You and me? We're fine, then?

ELLEN

Oh no! I didn't mean us. I meant them. As in me *and the raccoons* are fine. You and me Roger? Under the circumstances, I guess we're as good as we can be.

ROGER

As a friend, let me give you some advice. They're fugitives from justice. Cops find them here and you have exposure. I'm probably not the best lawyer to defend you if—

ELLEN

If I get charged with harbouring raccoons, I don't think my first call is to a real estate lawyer. Doesn't matter anyway. Their lawyer said cops got raccoons a block over.

ROGER

But your raccoons, the ones they're after. They're still here?

ELLEN

Cops can't tell one raccoon from another. They see a furry guy in a mask going through trash. They chase, he runs. They got orders to arrest someone. They taser him and he's charged with pooping on the sidewalk. That's the world we live in now.

ROGER

I like to think the authorities know what they're doing. *(beat)* Will your raccoons be on their way then?

ELLEN

They're not *my* raccoons. They belong to themselves. We're working on a plan to get them released from the animal rescue. They need a court order for that to happen.

ROGER

Habeas corpus for raccoons? I don't think there's a precedent.

ELLEN

There is actually. Legal emancipation from a parent. Remember when you got emancipated from Mummy Weasel so you could move out of her den and go to law school? Like that but without her crying and pulling your hair.

ROGER

Got it.

ELLEN

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

ROGER

Be careful. It could be a scam. A way to get their claws into you. You shouldn't be giving money away now that you're starting a new life as a divorced woman who's destitute.

ELLEN

Yeah, thanks for your concern. *(beat)* It's not going to be me. But I'll help them. We need someone who's expressed sympathy for their plight, who might want to offer financial guarantees. Doesn't have to be active in their lives. More just a bank account.

ROGER

So you've got a little project then to keep yourself busy. Good for you. I'd hate to see you spiral into day-drinking and letting yourself go now that we're splitting up.

ELLEN

I have a project, yes. I'll set up their phones too. And I'll fix yours.

ROGER

Should I wait for it then?

ELLEN

Oh, right, you've got baseball. No, you run along. It'll be done by the time you're finished.

ROGER

I would feel terrible 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 he'll miss the first few innings.

ELLEN

You should go.

ROGER

With him being late, this *was* going to be my chance to start. 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.

(He takes off bathrobe. He's dressed for baseball.)

ELLEN (CONT'D)

You're wearing your baseball uniform under your bathrobe?

ROGER

I slept in it actually. Didn't want to wake you if you were still sleeping. I feel terrible leaving you. So you'll keep my phone?

ELLEN

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

ROGER

Okay. I'll go. *(beat)* You know, I love that as friends we can still support each other.

ELLEN

You can bank on it, Roger. Now scoot.

(ROGER exits. ELLEN takes her phone, dials, holds ROGER's phone in her other hand.)

ELLEN

(Into her phone.)

Hi. He's gone. I'm on his phone. It's still showing the account in the Caymans he's using. Give me a second. Don't want to get the password wrong.

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

R—O—G—E—R. Same old Roger. *(beat)* Now where do you want the deposit to go? Let me check my phone for it.

(Pause. Talks into her phone)

Yep, I got it—the transit number. Love the name of the trust by the way. 'Tree Huggers'. I see the account.

(Pause. Listening.)

One of the babies? Oh, don't worry about it. Accidents happen. I've done it myself a couple of times. When I was laughing too hard. Let me give you Roger's bathrobe. It's absorbent.

(Walks off with ROGER's bathrobe, returns.)

ELLEN (CONT'D)

(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. He's all about giving until it hurts.

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

And this is going to hurt!

ELLEN (CONT'D)

No. Sorry, talking to myself. Just this morning he's telling me how much he *loved* the idea of giving it all away to a charity for animals. And raccoons certainly qualify as animals! This should help you get started.

(Crash of glass breaking off-stage.)

ELLEN (CONT'D)

(Listens intently, into her phone.)

Yeah, that's our bedroom 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 Roger.

(Pause, 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*.

(Ellen hangs up, goes to the window, carries the phones. A sudden thought. She redials a number.)

ELLEN (CONT'D)

(Into her phone.)

Me again. I remembered something. This morning, Roger said he wanted more excitement. He has strong views about commitment. Something ongoing. Can we do that? I'll wait.

(Pause. Into her phone.)

Cover all ongoing expenses? Even 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.)

A separate signature for the college fund for the kids? Okay. Coming your way now.

(Sighs happily. Almost teary with joy.)

No, no need for you to talk with him. I'll tell him when he gets back. I'm already feeling all warm and fuzzy about this. He'll be so proud. The babies have the cutest noses.

(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.

