**WISDOM OF THE FOOL**

**HAL**: Thought I heard someone creeping up on me…why didn’t you shout for me first?

**JOANNE**: I thought I’d find you dead.

**HAL**: Good one.

**JOANNE**: What’s good about it? (beat) It’s been days. I’ve tried your phone a million times. How can you make me worry like this?

**HAL**: Oh, hell, I told you I needed some time alone.

**JOANNE**: But you promised communication.

**HAL**: How can I truly be alone with communication?

**JOANNE**: Why make me worry? A simple, “I’m Fine” would have sufficed.

**HAL**: I’m fine.

**JOANNE**: Are you?

**HAL**: I came here alone so I can figure things out. I don’t know what it’s like to have time to myself anymore and everything’s all jumbled up inside and wouldn’t you know it, here you are still not respecting the fact that I need to be alone.

**JOANNE**: I thought something happened to you.

**HAL**: You see me, don’t you? I’m alive and well.

**JOANNE**: You look horrible. And this apartment, what happened? Looks like a hurricane passed through here.

**HAL**: I’m pretty sure one did.

**JOANNE**: This isn’t normal behavior, Hal. A man doesn’t abandon his wife and kids with no explanation.

**HAL**: I gave you an explanation!

**JOANNE**: Telling me you need time alone makes no sense.

**HAL**: Is there something wrong with you? Is there? Damn it, I need to breathe. Life is going too fast for me and I’m trying to slow it down so I can see what’s in front of me. Too many things spinning round me and I’m getting all mixed up. I know who I am but I need to reassess who I am.

**JOANNE**: So you go off leaving me and the kids?

**HAL**: I’m not going off! I’m taking a break because if I don’t take a break I’m gonna be permanently broken. Why aren’t you hearing me?

**JOANNE**: Broken from what? Success? Happiness? You have it all! A wife, kids, one of the most successful careers in your profession. What more do you want?

**HAL**: It’s not a question of wanting things, I don’t want anything, material things…I feel distracted by all of it, anyway. Just clogs my mind! I just need some distance so I can gain perspective. I need to feel whole again, I’m running around on loose ends.

**JOANNE**: What’s making you so unhappy?

**HAL**: I’m crowded! THIS! What you’re doing this instant by coming here and pressuring me…I gotta be here, I gotta be there, all these assignments and I don’t see myself anymore…I can’t get one good look at myself.

**JOANNE**: look in the mirror.

**HAL**: Tried that.

**JOANNE**: Why don’t you go spend some time at our summer home?

**HAL**: I need to do things the old way, when I had nothing. I’d spend days on end by myself not giving a damn about anything but eating, sleeping and drinking…and I loved it. I loved not having worries, not giving a damn about anything or anyone…felt free, felt peaceful…I had curiosities that took me down rabbit holes I wasn’t ever afraid to venture into…nothing was a waste of time and it shaped me, made me feel connected, to myself, to the Earth, to something bigger than myself…I was able to see life in all its beauty and appreciate the little things…our kids, they are so spoiled it makes me sick…you give in to them, they have everything and yes I don’t want them to have the struggles I’ve had but there needs to be some sort of filter…life shouldn’t be asks and gets…there needs to be a necessary friction because without that, things get taken for granted and life gets tilted the wrong way…you, you’re more about the business side of things, everything’s all business…when’s the last time you and I ever felt that honeymoon feeling? WHEN? Can’t recall it, can you? And even if you did it will feel like some far off forgotten memory too far to touch…what happens then? I wonder, what happens when your reach exceeds your grasp? I’m here now, living in this pig stye apartment as a last ditched getaway, in order to get back some ground under my feet. I’m so sick of all the smiles and handshakes and whispers and waves and all the shit that stinks everything up!! I want to feel again, Joanne! I want to wake up one morning with your head on my chest and a nice cool breeze slipping through the window curtains and I want to breathe…I want to start my day with lousy coffee, I want to walk around in my boxers and a stained t-shirt, I want to be allowed to make mistakes, take risks and follow my curiosities…if I don’t find it soon, I don’t know what will become of me.

**JOANNE**: If you want to walk around in soiled boxers all day that’s fine by me but don’t expect me to change who I am on account of you.

**HAL**: Yeah, I know, I know you’d say that.

**JOANNE**: What’s that supposed to mean?

**HAL**: It means I know who you are. I’ve, we’ve built this life together and you are locked in baby, there’s no going back.

**JOANNE**: Back? Back?? Back to what?!

**HAL**: BACK, when things were simpler and all we had was each other.

**JOANNE**: We still have each other.

**HAL**: Do we?

**JOANNE**: Of course we do.

**HAL**: How so?

**JOANNE**: I wouldn’t be here…

**HAL**: If, what?

**JOANNE**: If—

**HAL**: If you didn’t love me or if you didn’t fear losing what you have?

**JOANNE**: You’re disgusting!

**HAL**: Answer my question.

**JOANNE**: What?

**HAL**: When did you stop loving me?

**JOANNE**: I never stopped loving you, you idiot.

**HAL**: You say it like someone stuffed crab cakes in your mouth and I know you hate crab cakes.

**JOANNE**: I love you, Hal.

**HAL**: I didn’t know success could ruin you.

**JOANNE**: ME?!

**HAL**: US, RUIN US.

**JOANNE**: I’m happy!

**HAL**: Are you? Are you really happy or are you happy with the *lifestyle* you inhabit? If we lost everything today, do you think you could cope? Do you think you could smile?

**JOANNE**: No.

**HAL**: Exactly.

**JOANNE**: There’s nothing wrong with having a *lifestyle*.

**HAL**: No, there isn’t but there is when you start losing out on the things that matter most.

**JOANNE**: Such as?

**HAL**: If I have to tell you that then it’s already too late.

**JOANNE**: You son of a bitch. Haven’t I given you everything? I’ve given you all of me!  So much so that at times I think I’m you. You are acting like a selfish son of a bitch and I can’t stand you.

**HAL**: It’s all my fault.

**JOANNE**: You’re damn right it is.

**HAL**: It is.

**JOANNE**: Make me feel ashamed. Why? Aren’t you proud of what we have, what we built, with nothing?

**HAL**: I am.

**JOANNE**: I shouldn’t feel shame for wanting a better life. How dare you accuse me of, of, of guilting me of being happy?

**HAL**: I wasn’t trying to guilt you.

**JOANNE**: After all that we’ve been through together. Haven’t I earned the right to take pride in what I have?

**HAL**: You do.

**JOANNE**: So, don’t you dare take that away from me.

**HAL**: I won’t.

(pause.)

*Joanne sits but before she does she moves a dirty plate of food off the couch to the nearby coffee table.*

**JOANNE**: Disgusting.

**HAL**:  Last nights pasta and clam sauce…

**JOANNE**:  …I’ve sacrificed so much for this…so much.

**HAL**: Honey, listen…(sighs) nothing makes me more pleased than seeing you happy…everything I do, I do for you and our children.

**JOANNE**: DO YOU?

**HAL**: You see, that’s the problem…I give so much that I’m losing sight of myself.

**JOANNE**: How? Are you stupid?

**HAL**: Can you show some kind of compassion?

**JOANNE**: Fine.

**HAL**: I’m trying to talk to you—

**JOANNE**: Okay, okay….go ahead.

**HAL**: I want things to be as good as they can be—

**JOANNE**: Aren’t they?

**HAL**: You gonna let me speak? (beat) Things *are* good but we’re slipping. I see the train coming straight for us in the distance and if we don’t get off the tracks in time, we’re gonna get smashed. There are values, values that we need to cling to if we are going to be a strong family…I don’t want to lose the Joanne I fell in love with…sometimes, I don’t recognize you and I know we evolve but please, don’t forget your deeper self…that’s why I came here, I’ve been losing out on who I am. I figured if I am strong enough to hold my value, I can be strong enough for you and the kids and lead by example…I don’t want it all to fall apart because I wasn’t wise enough to see it coming.

**JOANNE**: Are you strong enough?

**HAL**: With you at my side…

**JOANNE**:  You’re a damn fool.

**HAL**:  I know.

**JOANNE**:  But a wise one.