**How to be happy**

*We see a modern style dining room. There is a big table with six chairs. All the furniture looks as if taken from an interior design magasine. On stage left we can see the front door, there is a coat hanger and shoe rack next to it.*

*BAILEY comes into the room with three plates in her hands. She is in her early thirties and wearing black formal jeggings and a red off-the-shoulder tunic. Her hair is gently curled and falls freely down. She has applied a decent amount of make-up, but she doesn’t look trashy or cheap. There is a long silver necklace around her neck, coupled with a pair of earrings. There is a diamond ring on her right hand, but not on her ring finger. She also has a cooking apron on. BAILEY sets three plates on the table and straightens a wrinkle in the tablecloth. She opens a drawer behind her and takes out three sets of cutlery and napkins, which match the tablecloth perfectly.*

**BAILEY:** Babe, when did you say Niki is coming?

*WILLIAM comes on stage. He is in his early forties with a carefully styled hair. He is wearing a light blue shirt and formal black trousers; he has just come home from work. He is in good physical shape for his age, slightly muscular. He walks in, un-buttoning his shirt.*

**WILLIAM:** He said around six.

**BAILEY:** It’s five-fifty now.

**WILLIAM:** And?

**BAILEY:** Don’t you think you should be getting ready?

**WILLIAM:** He’s just visiting.

**BAILEY:** I want him to know this is a celebration. You know, him coming home.

**WILLIAM:** He knows I’m not the guy who wears shirts at home. And if you really want him to feel welcome, maybe you shouldn’t call him Niki.

*BAILEY puts a hand on her hip.*

**BAILEY:** It’s what his friends call him on Facebook all the time.

**WILLIAM:** Probably should not mention you’ve been looking through his profile, either.

*BAILEY crosses her hands*

**BAILEY:** I was just trying to find out about his life.

*WILLIAM walks closer to her.*

**WILLIAM:** Just *(puts his arms on her shoulders)* stop stressing about it. Ok?

*BAILEY takes a big breath.*

**BAILEY:** *(breathes out)* You’re right, I will be ‘chill’. That’s what they say now, isn’t it?

**WILLIAM:** That’s my girl. *(kisses her on the forehead)* I’ll go put on a T-shirt.

*WILLIAM leaves the room. BAILEY arranges the plates and cutlery, carefully folding the napkins.*

*We hear the sound of a doorbell, which makes her jump.*

**BAILEY:** *(calls out to WILLIAM)* He’s here.

**WILLIAM:** *(from off-stage)* Can you open the door, please, I’ll be right there.

**BAILEY:** *(still calling out to him)* William … I can’t do that.

**WILLIAM:** Why not?

**BAILEY:** You know …. It’s just … it’s better if you do it.

**WILLIAM:** I’m changing right now, you want me to come out in my boxers? And while we’re arguing, he’s standing at the door.

*A second ring of the doorbell is heard.*

**WILLIAM:** See.

**BAILEY:** Fine. *(to herself)* Hate it when you do that, Will.

*She dusts off her perfectly clean clothes, then looks down, realises she’s wearing an apron. Quickly takes it off. She walks to open the front door. NIKO is standing there. He is about twenty four, wearing simple trainers and a backpack.*

**NIKO:** Hel- *(pauses, a bit disappointed, but tries to hide it)* Hi, Bailey.

**BAILEY:** Hi, Niko. Come on it, your father is just getting changed.

*NIKO walks in. He puts down his backpack.*

**NIKO:** Well, I am five minutes early, so of course he’s not ready.

*BAILEY laughs awkwardly.*

**BAILEY:** *(re the backpack)* Is this all you have with you? No suitcase?

**NIKO:** *(taking off his jacket)* I like to travel light, you get around faster.

**BAILEY:** I see.*(pauses)* Still, you’re going to be here a while.

**NIKO:**  Well, I’m presuming you have a washing machine.

**BAILEY:** Yes. Yes, we do.

**NIKO:** *(motioning to his jacket, which he’s been holding)* Do I just hang this here or?

**BAILEY:** Yes, pick any hanger you like.

**NIKO:** How … generous of you.

*NIKO hangs his jacket, then goes on to take off his shoes. BAILEY stands there.*

**NIKO:**  I see the sofa remains where I left it. The wallpaper is new.

**BAILEY:** Yes, we wanted to change it up a bit.

**NIKO:** Yes. *(pauses)* Of course.

*Pause.*

**WILLIAM:** *(comes on stage)* Is that my son, I hear?

**NIKO:** Hello, father.

*WILLIAM walks to him to give him a hug. He squeezes NIKO then steps back.*

**WILLIAM:** I see all that traveling has turned you into a man. You’re taller, more muscular, you look good.

**NIKO:** Well … you haven’t seen me in five years, so … boys grow.

**WILLIAM:** And you have grown well.

*WILLIAM laughs, as NIKO and BAILEY try to join in.*

*Pause.*

**NIKO:** *(clears his throat)* So umm, dad, and Bailey *(turns to her).* I made a friend on the journey here and was wondering if he could come over? Have dinner with us?

**WILLIAM:** What kind of friend?

**BAILEY:** Not that it’s any of our business, you’re a grown man. *(Shoots WILLIAM a look)* Right?

**WILLIAM:** Yes.

**NIKO:** He’s just a friend. Which does not mean I’m not one of ‘those people’, as you’ve called it throughout the years. I am still, very much, one of them.

**WILLIAM:** Well … as we’ve said … you’re a grown man. You can be whatever you want.

**NIKO:** Sure. So can he stay with us?

**WILLIAM:** As long as, you’re ok with it, babe. You’re the one who has to deal with extra dishes.

*BAILEY laughs semi-awkwardly.*

**BAILEY:** We have more than enough food and one more plate won’t burden me that much.

**WILLIAM:** Then, let him come in.

**NIKO:** Great. Thanks, guys.

*NIKO runs out the room and through the front door off-stage.*

**BAILEY:** You’re doing great.

**WILLIAM:** Well, I’m trying.

**BAILEY:** I know it’s not easy, but you’ve developed so much since the last time.

*Pause.*

**WILLIAM:** Must be a really special friend. He ran outside in his socks to get him.

**BAILEY:** You know, Niko … He just … loves everyone.

*NIKO runs back in the living room.*

**NIKO:** Dad, Bailey, this is Emanuel.

*EMANUEL comes in rather slowly. He is a homeless man. He looks around the room.*

*There is silence as WILLIAM and BAILEY continue to look at him.*

**BAILEY:** Who is this, Niko?

*NIKO smiles apologetically at EMANUEL.*

**NIKO:** Emanuel is someone I met outside the supermarket. The one just opposite your house.

**BAILEY:** Yes, I know. I see him sitting there every day.

**NIKO:** So you know each other?

**BAILEY:** I know of him.

**NIKO:** I saw him sitting there and I was so cold, I thought he must be even colder than me. So I thought I could do something kind and invite him to eat with us.

**WILLIAM:** Nicholas, what is this man doing in my home?

**BAILEY:** When you said a friend, we thought …

**NIKO:** Ok, so I could’ve presented it differently, but you would’ve said no.

**WILLIAM:** You’re damn right, we would’ve said no.

**BAILEY:** Well, you know, Niko, we say no because-

**NIKO:**  He’s a person, dad. Don’t you think you should show him some respect?

**EMANUEL:** I don’t want to cause trouble. If your folks don’t want me here-

**NIKO:** No, you should stay. Whatever prejudice they have towards you, they are wrong.

**WILLIAM:** Nicholas.

**BAILEY:** Ok, how about we all calm down? Emanuel, how about you … can you wait outside, please?

**NIKO:** You can’t kick him out.

**BAILEY:** Niko, this is a delicate situation.

**NIKO:** Fine. *(to EMANUEL)* Do you mind, just waiting outside? I am really sorry about this.

*EMANUEL puts a hand on his shoulder.*

**EMANUEL:** Don’t worry.

*EMANUEL leaves the room and goes to wait quietly outside.*

**WILLIAM:** Nicholas, how dare you?

**BAILEY:** Ok, how about we avoid raising our voi-

**WILLIAM:** You bring this unknown-

**NIKO:** You used to bring strangers to the house all the time.

**WILLIAM:** I bring people I work with, I bring my friends, I don’t bring people infested with vermin. God knows when’s the last time he cleaned himself.

**NIKO:** Dad, you are talking about a human being, not an animal. Just because you were fortunate enough-

**WILLIAM:** Fortunate? I worked day and night to have everything I have, my twenties were spent in sweat; I did not get this by simply waiting for luck to strike.

**NIKO:** Yes, we all know the story. My point is *(breathes in, tries to calm down)* his situation is probably the result of some rough circumstances and as people who have … things, it is our duty to help him.

**WILLIAM:** So you decided to offer my house for this heroic gesture?

**NIKO:**  Well I …

**WILLIAM:** Right, you don’t have your own house. I’ve been feeding you all your life, so why would you attempt to take care of yourself?

**NIKO:** I’ve been taking excellent care of myself for the past five years.

**WILLIAM:** And still you have no house, no job, no constant partner.

**NIKO:** I think the slut-shaming is a bit too much.

**WILLIAM:** Don’t be a smart-ass with me, Nicholas. And sorry that I want you to have a good and decent life.

**NIKO:** I have a great life.

**WILLIAM:** What happens when you’re no longer twenty? When your body hurts, you can’t fall asleep on any random surface, you start getting tired, you need to go to the doctors’ more often? I doubt you’ve been paying your national insurance, or any taxes for that matter, so where will you go in case of an accident? Who will take care of you when your mother and I are so far away? With no savings how will you retire?

**NIKO:** So my life is not as well-put as yours. But … now I am in my twenties, it’s the time to be lost, to figure things out, to be free.

*Pause.*

**WILLIAM:** Are you sure you can afford this freedom?

**NIKO:** Dad, things now are a lot different than what they were back then.

*WILLIAM rubs his forehead and sighs. He catches BAILEY’s gaze.*

**WILLIAM:** So what do we do with your … friend?

**NIKO:** Just let him eat with us.

*Pause.*

**WILLIAM:** Fine, then.

*NIKO leaves the room to go call EMANUEL.*

**WILLIAM:** What do I do with him?

**BAILEY:** Well, you said some harsh things *(WILLIAM tries to protest)* both of you. So let’s just go along with his whole helping-the-needy cause.

**WILLIAM:** It’s not just that.

**BAILEY:** Maybe you need to leave him alone. Let him figure it out.

**WILLIAM:** I can’t just let him ruin his life until it’s too late.

**BAILEY:** You’re not exactly doing anything by fighting with him. In fact you may be doing the opposite of what you want.

**WILLIAM:** You might be right.

*NIKO opens the door and enters with EMANUEL.*

**WILLIAM:** Emanuel … sorry about my earlier behaviour.

**EMANUEL:** No need to apologise, I understand. I’m just happy you’ve let me stay.

**BAILEY:** Well, how about we all have a seat then?

*WILLIAM heads to the table silently, followed by NIKO and EMANUEL. BAILEY runs off-stage to the ‘kitchen’. She comes back with an extra plate and a bowl of salad in her other hand. She puts the plate down in front of EMANUEL and leaves the salad in between the men. She then goes to the cupboard to get cutlery. She hands a fork, a knife and a napkin to EMANUEL. Everyone puts salad on their plate, EMANUEL goes last.*

**BAILEY:** So, Niko, tell us about Spain?

**NIKO:** Actually, I left Spain a year ago.

**WILLIAM:** And you didn’t think to tell us?

**NIKO:** I wanted to live off-the-grid for a while. You know? I wanted to … be on my own, to separate myself from the world.

**BAILEY:** I see. *(pause)* So where did you go?

**NIKO:** Bulgaria, actually. It’s a small country in Eastern Europe.

**WILLIAM:** Ah yes, I know it. I have a business partner there, very interesting fellow. We went to visit him a while back.

**NIKO:** You did?

**WILLIAM:** Yes. Quite a nice country. Very poor though.

**EMANUEL:** It has actually developed quite a lot in the past few years.

*NIKO, BAILEY and WILLIAM look at him.*

**BAILEY:** Is that so?

**EMANUEL:** Yes, their GDP has been growing exponentially. The EU has had a very positive effect on them, despite the population continuing to be dissatisfied.

*Pause.*

**BAILEY:** You seem to know a lot about the subject.

**EMANUEL:** There is this one guy who teaches economics at the university, he lends me his books and magazines once in a while.

**NIKO:** That’s very nice of him.

**EMANUEL:** Well, I sometimes help him with some small things. Looking after his luggage, while he visits the toilet, participating in his studies as a test subject. Sometimes when he’s waiting for the bus we just sit around and chat.

**BAILEY:** So is that why you’re so well spoken for … generally well-spoken.

**EMANUEL:** For someone homeless, you meant to say? Yes. I also read a lot of old literature, the library lets me stay there when it rains.

**NIKO:** So you’re a big reader then?

**EMANUEL:** I have a lot of free time.

**WILLIAM:** That you definitely do.

**NIKO:** Dad.

**WILLIAM:** I was just being a part of the conversation.

**EMANUEL:** It’s alright. I’m grateful for the meal and being inside for a while, so no offence taken.

**NIKO:** That’s very nice of you. But still, I think my father should apologise.

**EMANUEL:** No, young man, your father doesn’t have to do anything. He let me stay in his house, he has the right to speak his mind.

**WILLIAM:** Thank you. *(BAILEY gestures towards NIKO)* And I’m sorry if you felt offended by my comment.

**EMANUEL:** I didn’t.

**BAILEY:** Well, that’s *(pause)* great. So umm, we were talking about you, Niko. Tell us about your time in Bulgaria.

**NIKO:** It was … really *(pauses to think about his words)* eye-opening. Like I just realised so many things. Saw a completely different way of life and attitude towards … existence, I guess, is the best way to describe it.

**WILLIAM:** It is eye-opening to see people who don’t have access to the same things we do. Makes them work even harder for the things they have.

**NIKO:** Yes, sure, that too. But … I was actually talking about something a bit different.

**BAILEY:** Do elaborate.

**NIKO:** Well, I … I actually found a relationship with God again.

**WILLIAM:** Sorry?

**NIKO:** I became a Christian.

**WILLIAM:** But you are … you know.

**NIKO:** Well, I have actually come to realise that one doesn’t have to exclude the other.

**BAILEY:** Really? That’s an interesting point.

*NIKO ignores her comment.*

**WILLIAM:** If that’s how you feel about it. I never knew much about the whole religious thing.

**NIKO:** I’ll be more than happy to share with you sometime.

*Pause.*

**WILLIAM:** Maybe not at the dinner table.

**NIKO:** Right. Yes.

**BAILEY:** How did this happen, Niko? I mean, you’ve only been there for a year, as you said.

**NIKO:** God can move in mysterious ways. Some people are born into Christian families, some take years to come to faith and others, like me, just need one push.

**EMANUEL:** So what was that push then?

*NIKO hesitates*.

**EMANUEL:** You don’t have to share, of course, if you don’t want to.

**NIKO:** No, no I want to tell this story. I umm, while I was there, I was walking along the streets one day and I saw this … crowd of people. Crowd is not actually the right word, more like a gathering in front of a building. They seemed to know each other very well and there was just this air of … welcomness and peace. I got curious and went to check it out, didn’t understand a word of what they were saying. But I … I just went for it.

**BAILEY:** And?

**NIKO:** Umm … well, so I … I sat there, in this, improvised theatre. More like a big room with lots of chairs, these people really stretch every resource to the fullest. *(laughs)* So they stand up to sing and … I start singing with them. I know none of the words, none of the melody, cannot read what’s being projected on the wall. But umm, I don’t know I just had this really peaceful and nice feeling. Just being amongst those people felt really … comforting. So I stayed.

**BAILEY:** What about the sermon?

**NIKO:** I didn’t understand a word of it. But somehow it didn’t matter. I just … I don’t know how to explain it. The atmosphere just felt … right.

*Everyone remains like this in silence.*

**EMANUEL:** That’s a very interesting experience you’ve had.

**NIKO:** Yes. So I … I just kept going week after week.

**EMANUEL:** That’s really profound. I’ve found that many people who come to faith find that they start feeling more centred.

**NIKO:** I do actually feel like that. Like … the way I think of my life is so much different now.

**BAILEY:** Well, I’m glad you found something that gives you that peace. Shall I bring the lamb?

**NIKO:** *(doesn’t look at her)* Yes, sure. *(to EMMANUEL)* So who have you discussed this with?

*BAILEY stands up, looks around. She goes to gather everyone’s plates, the men just move slightly to let her do it, but don’t acknowledge her. She leaves to the ‘kitchen’.*

**EMMANUEL:** *(while BAILEY is gathering dishes and leaving)* Oh, St.Mathew have this street patrol initiative. They go around in the late evening, early morning, sort of helping people in need.

**WILLIAM:** Try to turn you, do they?

**EMMANUEL:** Hm, I wouldn’t say so. They usually ask if I want a meal or some water, I think they just have pity on me.

**NIKO:** It’s good that they do something to help the community. And, dad, not all Christians are viciously trying to drag you to believe.

**WILLIAM:** Well, sorry, Nicholas, but that’s just my observation. As you recall, I’m sure.

**NIKO:** It was just one time. And not all of us are like that.

**WILLIAM:** You’re saying not all of you are set on forcing your belief on others?

**NIKO:** Forcing – no. Trying to lead you into a better life – yes. But not all of us will-

*BAILEY comes from the ‘kitchen’ with a baked lamb on a tray.*

**BAILEY:** Here I am.

*Pause.*

**BAILEY:** What happened?

**WILLIAM:** Niko, was just saying how we should all drop our lives and join the church.

**NIKO:** That is not what I was saying. I was just trying to explain to you, you can’t judge all Christians, based on one experience.

**BAILEY:** *(looking from WILLIAM to NIKO and back)* What experience would that be?

**WILLIAM:** Just something that happened with Jess and the kids a while back. *(pause)* What are you standing there with that tray for? Put it down already.

*She puts the tray down, but doesn’t sit. She looks around the table unsure of what to do.*

**WILLIAM:** We might need some plates and cutlery, if you don’t mind.

*BAILEY looks at him, almost replies, but then leaves it and walks over to the cupboard again. She takes out new plates and cutlery and brings them to the table.*

**BAILEY:** *(while distributing plates and cutlery)* So … what was that thing that happened?

**WILLIAM:** Just some Bible freaks trying to push their agenda. Told me if I don’t accept the saviour into my life me and my whole family would go to hell.

**NIKO:** He went mental on them.

**WILLIAM:** You suggesting I was wrong?

**NIKO:** You could’ve been more discrete, having in mind there were children playing around.

**WILLIAM:** Well, I’m not going to allow anyone to speak to me or my family like this.

*Pause.*

**NIKO:** Dad … when’s the last time you went to church?

**WILLIAM:** Probably when I married your mother.

**NIKO:** Then how do you know that all Christians are the same?

**BAILEY:** You married Jessica in a church?

**WILLIAM:** Ok, Nicholas, you’re right, I don’t. But I’m sick and tired of getting approached again and again, when I’m just trying to mind my business. And-

**BAILEY:** William, can you please answer me?

**WILLIAM:** What?

**BAILEY:** You married Jessica in a church?

**WILLIAM:** Now is not the time for your drama. We’ll discuss it later.

**BAILEY:** Sure. *(pause)* Eat up everyone, the lamb is getting cold.

*Everyone reaches over to the tray and fills their plate. NIKO, WILLIAM and BAILEY poke around in their plates. EMMANUEL is the only one who eats properly. When he’s finished he looks around the table.*

**EMMANUEL:** Well, I think I better leave now.

**NIKO:** No, you can’t leave.

**WILLIAM:** Nicholas-

**NIKO:** No, I invited him here to share our meal and all we’ve done is burden him with our problems.

*EMMANUEL puts his hand on his shoulder.*

**EMMANUEL:** It’s ok, young man.

**WILLIAM:** Nicholas, let him leave.

*NIKO puts his fork down, unable to protest.*

**NIKO:** I’ll walk you out.

*NIKO and EMMANUEL both stand up and walk to the door.*

**BAILEY:** William, can you help me with the dishes please?

*BAILEY and WILLIAM leave to the ‘kitchen’. NIKO and EMANUEL are left alone.*

**NIKO:**  Sorry about their behaviour.

**EMMANUEL:** No need to apologise.

**NIKO:** I just …

**EMMANUEL:** Can I ask you something young man. Why did you really do this?

**NIKO:** I wanted to help you.

**EMMANUEL:** You could’ve just bought me a sandwich.

**NIKO:** Well … I … I thought that people have probably done that before and I wanted to do more.

**EMMANUEL:** You wanted to prove yourself.

**NIKO:** Wait, wait, wait, you think I did this just to make myself feel good? That’s not, it’s not like that.

**EMMANUEL:** There you go, making it dramatic again. Look, boy, you are a good man. But I’m not here tonight just because you wanted to do some good.

*EMMANUEL puts on his shoes and jacket and leaves.*

*NIKO goes back to his seat. WILLIAM and BAILEY soon return.*

**NIKO:** He’s gone. Thanks you for the meal and letting him stay.

*BAILEY gives a brief nod.*

**WILLIAM:** Glad he enjoyed the food I provided.

**NIKO:** Really? That’s what you’re going to say right now?

**WILLIAM:** Yes, that’s what I’m saying. He is a parasite to society, he does nothing but sit around and wait for people to hand him things out. And you offer him a piece of my food?

**NIKO:** You have more than enough food. I bet Bailey here throws out food every week. And you can’t spare some salad leaves and a piece of meat without making a scene?

*Pause.*

**WILLIAM:** Nicholas, I went along with your little … charity-cause or whatever you were trying to do, I’ve been as patient to you as I could and you’ve shown me nothing but disrespect all evening. And in front of this riffraff?

**NIKO:** Go on say it, say everything you’ve been thinking all night.

**WILLIAM:** Why should I Nicholas? You do nothing but spit back at me and roll your eyes.

**NIKO:** What else do you expect with the example you’ve set for me?

**WILLIAM:** Young man, you better take that back.

**NIKO:** I won’t. Sorry I can’t be more like mom and just nod and agree with everything you say. Wonder how that turned out? Or maybe I should be more like Sally and just show you the finger. Never speak to you again.

**WILLIAM:** Well, why haven’t you? All you do is tell me how much you despise me anyways.

**NIKO:** I don’t know. All right? I don’t know why I keep coming back here, why I keep talking to you. I should’ve stayed in Bulgaria, where my life was happy and peaceful. But no, for some reason I took pity on you and came to visit.

**WILLIAM:** I don’t need your pity. See that wall? I took down all the pictures with your sister on them. Those with your mother I didn’t even hang after the paint job. I can just as easily remove yours.

*Pause.*

**NIKO:** Is that what you want?

**WILLIAM:** If you don’t give me the respect I deserve as your father, as the person who wiped your stinky ass, paid for your food and your private lessons, I don’t need you in my life.

**NIKO:** I see. I can leave, no problem. It’s probably even going to be better for me.

**WILLIAM:** Go ahead then. If I’m such a burden, go, leave.

*Pause.*

**NIKO:** Well, I can’t you see. Because the person who’s going to hurt the most from this is you. I will live a peaceful life, but you? You’ll be stuck with yet another hole inside of you, make your life that more shallow. *(pauses)* You see … I can’t do that to you. Because then … I become you.

*Pause.*

**NIKO:** I will never do that to myself.

*Pause.*

**WILLIAM:** You hate me that much, huh?

*WILLIAM shakes his head, goes to the cupboard to take a bottle of whiskey and leaves the room.*

*NIKO watched his father walk away. He then takes a seat and buries his head in his hands. BAILEY observes him, stands up and walks out. The stage remains like this until she comes back, a wine bottle in hand.*

**BAILEY:** I guess, I’ll follow your father’s example.

*She removes the cork and proceeds to drink straight from the bottle.*

*NIKO raises his head.*

**NIKO:** Why are you with him, Bailey? It’s been eight years, haven’t you gotten bored already?

*Pause.*

**BAILEY:** Aren’t you done underestimating me?

**NIKO:** Bailey, look, you’re nice, you can follow a cooking recipe well-enough-

**BAILEY:** You’ve always thought I’m this Barbie doll, haven’t you? Oh, please, don’t deny it. I never expected you to welcome me with open arms, but c’mon, it’s been eight years and you still think that little of me?

**NIKO:** What are you getting at?

**BAILEY:** Niko, throughout all these years, did you … ever, think to learn something about me? You bring a homeless man here, and you fight for him, try to make him feel welcome and respected and all that, but did you think to say even one nice word to me?

**NIKO:** I … well …

**BAILEY:** I … I’ve been following your Facebook profile, you know? For months now. I tried to learn what I could about you, what you like, where you’ve been. I persuaded your father to let Emmanuel stay, and … you know how many nights I’ve spent arguing with him over you? Over Sally? Over how he needs to change, because he obviously misses both of you. I’m the one who urged him to invite you, the one who … all evening has been trying to smooth things out.

*She takes a sip.*

**BAILEY:** Six years. Six years I’ve been trying to move everyone past the whole cheating situation … yet, I’m just this girl who likes to shop and look pretty.

**NIKO:** Well, since we’re being honest … you… you’re the reason my parents split up.

**BAILEY:** We loved each other. We had something your parents had long lost. Yes, I begged him not to go back to a loveless marriage. Not to break both of our hearts just because society demands it.

**NIKO:** You begged him to leave his children.

**BAILEY:** I never did such a thing. From the start I was ready to take you both in. But I knew you probably hate me and I understood. And honestly … I’m sorry you two had to go through it, but … I’m not going to apologise for wanting to be with the person I love. *(pause)* I know I’m not your mother, I obviously can never be her, and I’m not Oxford educated or anything, I don’t consider myself a genius. And yes, I like clothes, I like shopping, I like looking fabulous. But … as you said, I’m still a human being and I deserve respect.

*Pause.*

**BAILEY:** For six years I’ve been trying to move forward, not just with myself, but with your father, Sally, even Jessica. But no, you Niko, want to keep drilling into it.

**NIKO:** Sally-

**BAILEY:** Sally doesn’t hate. Granted, she doesn’t love me either. But you? You just despise me. And you never even let me defend myself.

**NIKO:** Bailey, I …

**BAILEY:** Your father … he’s a difficult man. It certainly isn’t easy living with him. *(pause)* For a year now, he’s been telling me he won’t get married in a church, because he *(makes air-quotes)* ‘doesn’t see the point in it.’

*Pause.*

**BAILEY:** Yeah. And I’m not ignoring the fact that, he’s also to blame for the way you treat me. But you know what? Despite all his annoyingly painful traits … he’s a good man. If you just … give the hate a rest.

*She takes a final big sip and leaves the bottle on the table.*

**BAILEY:** You know … I’m glad you found God. I’m glad you’ve been saved and you’re taking steps to living a better, fuller life. But before you start helping strangers … you need to solve your own mess.

*She stands up, takes the bottle and leaves the room.*

**The end**