

Distant Neighbors

by
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Distant Neighbors

Characters: (3m, 2w)

Adams: 20s-30s, a black man. A gardener and lover of the earth, with a strong capacity for wonder.

Talia: 20s-30s, a white woman. A physical therapist, who is interested in the new, and has made her fair share (or more than her share) of mistakes.

Griffin: 50s, a white man. A copier repairman with a strong desire to keep his promises and his feet on the ground.

Elanie Tomlinson: 40s-50s, woman (of any race). A NASA scientist and life-long dreamer.

Blake: 30s-50s, a white man. Talia's ex-husband, biker, and pharmacist.

Time: Late summer, this year.

Place: A collection of adjoining suburban back yards outside of Denver. They are normally separated by six-foot high privacy fences. Unless part of an alien spaceship were to crash into them and smash them to pieces. Which it has.

SCENE 1 DISTANT NEIGHBORS

In the darkness, a loud crash.

Lights up to reveal a collection of suburban back yards on a peaceful summer night. Each yard is separated from the next by a six foot high wooden privacy fence. We see the intersection of four yards/fences, which meet near the center of the stage. One of the yards is lush with vegetation-- flowers, vegetables. The other most visible yard has scraggly grass and a few dead plants.

At rise: A gigantic, metallic wing has smashed the intersecting fences to bits. The wing is so large it extends off either end of the stage. It lies steaming in the warm night. There are strange markings on the oddly structured device, and flashing lights in unusual colors.

Adams, a black man in his 30s, stands on the deck of his house, overlooking his lush backyard garden. He stares at the object that has just fallen out of the sky into his yard.

ADAMS

Whoah.

The wing just sits there steaming. A section of fence falls over with a crash. Adams continues to stare, in stunned disbelief.

Griffin, a white man in his 50s, exits from his house, into his yard, rubbing the sleep out of his eyes.

GRIFFIN

Hey! What the hell!

ADAMS

Careful. It looks pretty hot.

Adams cautiously approaches the wing.

GRIFFIN

What is it?

ADAMS

I think it's... Well. I... It...

GRIFFIN

Where did it come from?

ADAMS

The sky. I saw it fall. Well, floated, really.

GRIFFIN

Son of a gun.

Adams walks even closer to the wing.

Talia, a white woman in her late 20s/early 30s, enters from her house, wearing a robe over pajamas.

TALIA

What happened? Oh, my god! Is anyone hurt?

ADAMS

Just the fence. And my lemon apple cucumbers.

TALIA

Oh. You. I. Ah. Did you call anyone?

ADAMS

Me?

GRIFFIN

Who should we call?

TALIA

Anyone. Someone. It's an emergency. A catastrophe. We should call 9-1-1. I'll get my phone.

Talia is about to run back into her house.

ADAMS

Don't! Please?

TALIA

Someone could be hurt.

ADAMS

Not here. No one is hurt here. We don't need to panic. We don't need to call. Not yet.

Adams is now standing right next to the wing, transfixed by it.

GRIFFIN

Where's the rest of it?

ADAMS

Rest of what?

GRIFFIN

The plane that it came from.

TALIA

You think it just fell off? Where are the other pieces?

She looks out away from their yards, out into the neighborhood, but sees nothing.

ADAMS

This might be the only piece that survived.

TALIA

Oh, no.

GRIFFIN

I just replaced this stupid fence. Insurance is not going to cover this.

TALIA

Those poor people. The pilot, the passengers. I should call.

ADAMS

I'm not sure it was a plane.

GRIFFIN

What do you mean? Look, it's an airplane wing.

ADAMS

Does it look like any airplane wing you've ever seen?

TALIA

What are you saying?

GRIFFIN

Maybe it's from the air force base. Some sort of drone or something. Could be loaded full of explosives.

Griffin and Talia take a nervous step back. Adams gets even closer.

ADAMS
What are these markings?

GRIFFIN
Russian?

TALIA
Definitely not Cyrillic. What? I took Russian in college.

GRIFFIN
What language then, professor?

TALIA
Maybe Chinese? Korean?

GRIFFIN
Look at all the squiggly lines. Could be Arabic.

ADAMS
I don't think so.

Adams reaches out and touches the wing, carefully.

ADAMS (CONT'D)
Oh. Wow.

GRIFFIN
What are you doing?

TALIA
Are you okay? Is it still hot?

ADAMS
Barely warm. Incredibly smooth. Almost like... I don't know how to describe it. I really think... Oh, man. This is crazy. Come on. Feel this.

GRIFFIN
I don't think so. Could be a piece of radioactive space junk.

Talia's curiosity brings her closer to the wing. Griffin keeps his distance.

ADAMS
Go ahead.

TALIA
I don't know.

ADAMS

It won't hurt you.

GRIFFIN

He doesn't know that.

Adams smiles at her. Talia looks at him, then touches the wing.

TALIA

Oh. Oh my, that's strange.

ADAMS

Like liquid and solid all at once.

TALIA

But strong.

GRIFFIN

You're both nuts. I see radiation burns in your future.

TALIA

No. I don't think so. You don't understand. It's--

GRIFFIN

You don't know what it is or where it came from.

ADAMS

Space. It came from outer space.

GRIFFIN

Bull.

TALIA

Outer space?

ADAMS

Does it look like anything you've ever seen before? Does it feel like anything you've ever felt before?

TALIA

No.

GRIFFIN

What are you saying?

ADAMS

It's not from earth.

TALIA

Oh, my god.

ADAMS

Come feel this.

TALIA

You really think it could be?

ADAMS

I saw it float down out of the sky. Not like anything I've ever seen before.

GRIFFIN

You're an expert in alien life? In space materials?

ADAMS

Me?

GRIFFIN

Yeah, you. Neighbor whatever-your-name-is.

ADAMS

Adams.

TALIA

Nice to finally meet you, Adams. I've watched you, I mean, seen you, out here. In your garden, but we never--

GRIFFIN

Do you work for NASA, Adams?

ADAMS

I'm a gardener.

GRIFFIN

Yeah. A grower of tall tales.

TALIA

An alien spacecraft.

ADAMS

Part of one. And you're touching it.

Talia quickly pulls her hands away. Adams keeps exploring the wing with his sense of touch. He leans forward to smell it.

GRIFFIN

Aliens. Aliens. You think they're trapped inside?

ADAMS

Who knows. Hello?

Adams knocks on the wing. They all step back, then lean forward to listen. No response.

ADAMS

Remember this moment. We were the first to know, for certain, that man is not alone in the universe.

GRIFFIN

You've been smoking too much of whatever you've been growing.

ADAMS

If you call the cops, or NASA, or whoever, they're going to take this away.

GRIFFIN

Good.

ADAMS

And they'll hide it, cover it up, make up a story.

GRIFFIN

You've been watching too many movies.

ADAMS

They may hide it from the whole world, but you'll know, because you saw it with your own eyes. Touched it with your own hands. History is being made tonight, right this minute, in your own back yard, and you're part of it.

Talia puts her hands on the wing again.

TALIA

Wow.

ADAMS

You think I'm right?

TALIA

I think you could be.

GRIFFIN

What you're feeling is the biggest load of horse hoey ever laid down in suburban midnight.

TALIA

(to Griffin)

What's your name?

GRIFFIN

Griffin.

TALIA

Griffin. You don't need to be afraid.

GRIFFIN

Who said anything about being afraid?

TALIA

It'll be okay.

GRIFFIN

This thing doesn't belong here. It...

Talia extends a hand towards him,
gently, beckoning him closer.

TALIA

It's all right.

ADAMS

History.

TALIA

It feels like... the future.

GRIFFIN

What if it's dangerous?

ADAMS

What if it's the opposite?

TALIA

Just one hand.

Griffin reaches forward and places
a hand on the wing.

GRIFFIN

Oh.

Griffin definitely feels what they
feel. He looks up at the sky
again.

End of scene.

SCENE 2

The next afternoon.

Adams is in his garden, trying to repair the damage to his vegetables, but he can't keep his eyes off the wing.

Melanie, a woman in her 40s, enters, carrying a duffel bag. She's dressed for business, like a detective or small time official.

She sees the wing and stops dead in her tracks, stunned.

MELANIE

Holy crap.

She walks cautiously over to the wing and looks at it closely, without touching it. She does not notice Adams, who watches her curiously.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

Man, oh man, oh man, oh man. No. No. No, no, no. No way. No. No. No no no no no no. Wow. Okay. Okay. Okay. Deep breath. Okay. Okay.

She's completely flustered. Walks first one way, then another. Looks even closer at the wing without touching it. Almost touches it, but refrains.

She rummages in her bag and pulls a roll of yellow police caution tape out of her bag. She unrolls the tape along the wing on one side, exits, re-enters, now lining the other side. She climbs over the broken fences, but nothing will stop her from creating a perimeter with the caution tape. Her eyes never leave the wing, oblivious to anything else. This causes her to slip, fall, and generally be a clumsy disaster. (Think: Lucille Ball meets the X Files.)

She steps into Adams' garden, eyes still on the wing.

ADAMS

Hey! Watch out for my carrots.

Melanie shrieks in surprise.

MELANIE

Ah! Oh, my god you scared me. Have you been...

Melanie looks down and sees that she is trampling Adams' vegetables.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

Sorry. I'm, ah... You've noticed the, ah...

ADAMS

You're from NASA?

MELANIE

A woman called, claiming that an, uh, alien space craft landed in her back yard.

ADAMS

She's my neighbor. She insisted we call someone.

Griffin enters from his house and walks quickly over to them.

GRIFFIN

Who are you?

MELANIE

Melanie Tomlinson

ADAMS

From NASA.

GRIFFIN

Prove it.

Melanie shows them an id on a lanyard around her neck.

GRIFFIN (CONT'D)

What took you so long?

MELANIE

I was, ah... We get all kinds of reports, you know. I just flew in from Houston.

GRIFFIN

We called hours ago. This is an emergency.

ADAMS

Where's your crew?

MELANIE

My crew?

ADAMS

Shouldn't you have a team of scientists and trucks and instruments?

MELANIE

Um, no. It's just me.

Melanie takes a clipboard out of her duffle bag.

ADAMS

I thought they'd send the whole team.

GRIFFIN

I told you they wouldn't take this seriously. (to Melanie) There is an alien spacecraft in my back yard and I want to know what you're going to do about it.

MELANIE

Well, sir, first let me get a little more information--

Talia enters, flustered.

TALIA

Someone's here?

GRIFFIN

Claims she's from NASA.

TALIA

Why didn't you call me?

ADAMS

I didn't have your number.

TALIA

You could have knocked on my door. We're all in this together.

ADAMS

Sorry.

Talia takes out a pen from her pocket and writes on Adam's palm.

TALIA

Now you have my number.

ADAMS

Um. Okay.

Melanie starts to fill out the form on her clipboard, though she has a hard time taking her eyes off the wing.

MELANIE

So... when exactly did this arrive?

ADAMS

Just after midnight.

MELANIE

You saw it fall. All of you?

TALIA

Just Adams.

ADAMS

I like to look at the stars. And listen to the vegetables grow.

MELANIE

And what makes you think that it's an... an... Alien spacecraft?

GRIFFIN

It was his idea.

MELANIE

I see. (looks at Adams) *nuqneH. Blplv'a'.*

ADAMS

(laughing nervously)
J'lplv. Vlpl'va'.

GRIFFIN

What?

MELANIE

Klingon. Just trying to understand who I'm dealing with.

ADAMS

So I used to be a fan. That doesn't mean this isn't real.

TALIA

The markings are so strange. And the shape.

ADAMS

Just touch it.

GRIFFIN

What are you going to do about it? And what are you going to do about this?

Griffin holds up his hands to show that his palms have turned bright blue.

MELANIE

Oh, my. That's where you... Touched it?

Adams and Talia hold up their palms—
—they're the same bright blue.

Melanie instinctively takes a step back from them.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

Okay. Wow. Was not expecting that. Let's see... I don't know if I, uh...

She looks for something to check off on her form.

GRIFFIN

What is it? Where does it come from?

MELANIE

Does it hurt? Burn? Sting? Itch?

TALIA

No. But nothing will wash it off. I've tried everything, even bleach.

MELANIE

And you showed this to a doctor?

GRIFFIN

Useless quacks, the whole bunch of them.

TALIA

I thought it would go away. I was a little embarrassed that I just touched some random...

MELANIE

Has anyone else touched this? What about the neighbors in that house?

TALIA

It's empty. There's a foreclosure notice on the front door.

MELANIE

What about the police?

GRIFFIN

This one (*pointing at Adams*) convinced us to call you folks first. Look, you have to help us. My wife is very afraid.

ADAMS

You have a wife?

TALIA

Is she coming out?

GRIFFIN

She doesn't come out.

MELANIE

Has any of this spread to her, from you? Though contact?

GRIFFIN

No. We... It hasn't spread.

MELANIE

What about you two? Have you left your houses? Touched anyone?

ADAMS

I've been waiting for you. And trying to save my tomatoes and zucchini.

TALIA

My ex-husband stopped by, but...

MELANIE

Did you touch him?

TALIA

No. I didn't let him in.

MELANIE

Okay.

Melanie checks a box on the form.

ADAMS

The motorcycle guy?

TALIA

(to Adams) It's a long story.

GRIFFIN

What is this thing?

TALIA

Look, I'm a physical therapist. I can't go to work with my hands like this.

MELANIE

Absolutely not. You can't go anywhere. Any of you.

GRIFFIN

What?

MELANIE

Not until we know exactly what's happened. No one else comes in this perimeter, and you don't go anywhere. Strict quarantine.

GRIFFIN

I called in sick today, but I have to go to work on Monday. I have bills to pay.

MELANIE

Impossible. Show me your hands again.

Melanie looks closely at their hands.

GRIFFIN

(to Adams) I told you we shouldn't have touched it.

ADAMS

I'm not sorry I did.

Melanie turns back to the wing and looks at it closely again.

GRIFFIN

What are you going to do?

Melanie takes out some forms from her bag.

MELANIE

Well, I, ah, guess I'll ask you to fill out these forms, on both sides. In black ink. And then, I, um... The normal protocol doesn't exactly cover this sort of...

ADAMS

Are you going to ask for the full team now?

MELANIE

The full team?

GRIFFIN

The UFO team.

MELANIE

There is no team. Alien spacecraft aren't real. They're hoaxes, phoned in by crackpots. Misinterpretations of natural phenomena. Space junk. Remnants of failed experimental aircraft.

TALIA

Then what are you doing here?

MELANIE

My job is to calm people down and sweep up the mess.

ADAMS

You're the space janitor?

MELANIE

I give out paperwork. Paperwork makes people feel better.

TALIA

But this is real.

MELANIE

Yes. I mean, it could be. I don't know. It's probably not. It's probably nothing. It's always nothing. You people should just go back inside until I have a chance to... examine this... this...

She admires the wing with complete devotion and fascination.

GRIFFIN

You don't know what the hell you're doing, do you?

ADAMS

Nobody does.

MELANIE

You really touched it?

ADAMS

If you put a hand on it, you'll know something.

TALIA

You'll understand.

MELANIE

I... (*she's tempted*) I don't think that would be a good idea. We have a strict no touching policy.

GRIFFIN

(holding up his palms)

Very wise.

MELANIE

Have you told anyone else about this?

TALIA

I called my sister. She thinks I'm nuts.

MELANIE

It's best if we keep this quiet, until I can get it out of here.

GRIFFIN

Can they fix my fence, too?

ADAMS

You can't have it.

MELANIE

What?

GRIFFIN

What?

ADAMS

It's in my yard. I don't want to give it away.

GRIFFIN

It's in my yard, too, and I don't want an alien space ship in my yard.

ADAMS

This is the most important thing that's happened in modern history, and she wants to take it away and keep it secret.

MELANIE

Look. Mr.--

ADAMS

Adams.

MELANIE

Mr. Adams. There's nothing to get excited about. This is probably not what you hope it is. But if you were to spread rumors about...

TALIA

Alien spacecraft.

MELANIE

There could be panic.

ADAMS

Or there could be a shift, in the way we all look at the sky, at the world, at each other.

GRIFFIN

I don't want it here.

MELANIE

We will take this, and study it, and figure out what it is, where it came from. And you will all be fine.

ADAMS

(to Talia)

It's in your yard, too. Are you going to let her take it?

TALIA

I don't know. If it's dangerous...

Griffin thrusts his palms towards her.

GRIFFIN

Who knows what else it will do to us? Maybe whoever sent this thing will come retrieve it. Maybe these lights are sending signals, telling the aliens exactly where to land.

ADAMS

Now you're the one who watches too many movies. The galaxy is a big place. It might be centuries until any signal reaches home. Whoever launched this probably died before mankind turned a telescope up to the sky.

GRIFFIN

(to Melanie) You're the expert. Tell us something.

MELANIE

I don't know where it came from, or how long it took to get here. Officially, I will tell you that this is just a strange accident.

ADAMS

If this is what it seems to be, it changes the context of everything.

TALIA

Everything. *(to Griffin)* Can't you feel it?

ADAMS

Life is either rare or plentiful in the universe. Until now, everything pointed to rare.

TALIA

But we were never alone.

GRIFFIN

Exactly. There might be ships circling above us right now.

ADAMS

I'm not afraid. I just want it here a little longer. *(to Talia)* It's not going to hurt us.

GRIFFIN

He tells you to touch it and your hands go all blue. Mind control--maybe this thing wants to lull us.

ADAMS

(to Talia) Nothing like this will ever happen to us again.

Talia looks at Adams, then at the wing, considering.

TALIA

Let's keep it.

MELANIE

That's not how this is going to work.

TALIA

Just a few more days? Please? (to Griffin) Then you can have your yard back. Adams and I promise we'll fix your fence. Right?

ADAMS

Sure.

GRIFFIN

But. But. (to Melanie) You're not going to let them do this, are you?

MELANIE

It's complicated. I need to make a few calls. I want to move this as soon as possible, to a protected environment, and start tests.

ADAMS

And tear it apart.

MELANIE

To determine exactly what it is.

TALIA

A few days.

MELANIE

This is not a toy or souvenir for you to admire. Not a prize-winning squash.

ADAMS

I've been dreaming about something like this since I read my first Isaac Asimov book. How many nights did I spend hiding out in my yard with my Star Wars action figures, looking at the stars, wondering who might be out there? Do you know what I mean?

MELANIE

Maybe too well.

ADAMS

Let us have a little time with it. Then it's all yours.

MELANIE

The wheels of government move slowly, especially over the weekend. And people won't know what to... A couple days. Maybe Monday. Then it's mine.

ADAMS AND TALIA

Thanks.

GRIFFIN

What? What are you talking about? This is crazy. (to Adams) You're a crazy person. (to Talia) And you. You seemed normal, but no, you'll listen to this guy, this, this, this, this, this...

TALIA

Griffin...

Overwhelmed with frustration, Griffin turns and stomps back into his house. He leaves a little cloud of uncomfortable silence behind him.

MELANIE

You seem pretty sure of yourself, Trekkie.

ADAMS

I am.

MELANIE

Be careful.

She pulls out a cell phone and dials.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

Bob? It's Melanie. You know the call we got. Well, we've got a situation. You are not going to believe this.

She exits, while still talking on the phone, back in the direction she first entered.

Adams and Talia look at each other, and then back at the wing.

LIGHTS TO BLACK.

END OF SCENE.

SCENE 3

Night. The wing is in the same spot, the lights still flashing in the same pattern, though perhaps a little slower now.

Adams sits in a lawn chair, right next to the wing, watching it.

Talia comes out of her house carrying a picnic basket and walks over to Adams.

TALIA

Hey. You're still out here.

ADAMS

Can't seem to shake the hold this thing has on me.

TALIA

Mind if I join you?

ADAMS

I. Ah. Sure.

She puts down the basket and gets a lawn chair and sets it up next to Adams.

They watch in silence for a bit.

TALIA

I brought some sandwiches. You've been out here so long, I figured you must be hungry.

ADAMS

Yeah. I am. Thanks.

TALIA

Turkey, ham, roast beef, tuna, veggie?

ADAMS

Wow.

TALIA

I didn't know what you like.

ADAMS

Veggie. Please.

TALIA

Mustard? Mayo? Ketchup? Salt? Pepper? Relish?

ADAMS

You went all out.

TALIA

No, I just tossed things in, I wanted to be sure that... I wanted you to like it.

ADAMS

I do. It's good. Thanks.

She takes sandwiches and plates out of the picnic basket. They eat. She watches him closely. He watches the wing.

ADAMS (CONT'D)

Do you believe in God?

TALIA

God? I did when I was a kid. We went to church every Sunday. Good, upstanding Catholic family. We lived in Nebraska--hard to stand under that big sky and not wonder about God.

ADAMS

But now?

TALIA

I don't know. Not in the literal, big-man-in-the-sky- making-everything kind of God. And not the one that's kind of hanging out, waiting to do you a favor, if you just call. But... maybe in something more like hope. Is that what you're doing out here? Thinking about God?

ADAMS

Wondering. What will this mean for people who take the Bible literally? My mom was like that. She believed in Noah's ark and the burning bush and all that. What happens to people like her when the world won't fit in the pages?

TALIA

They just won't believe it. That's the thing, isn't it? You pick what you want to believe, and the stuff that falls outside of that, well, you don't see it.

ADAMS

But this can be seen, can be touched. It's right in front of us.

TALIA

Not for long. In the end, people will still have to choose to believe what they read, what they see in photos.

ADAMS

Maybe a new cargo cult will suddenly pop up, you know, like those people in the South Pacific who worshipped airplanes. Someone might invent a whole new scripture wrapped around this wing of some fallen space angel.

TALIA

Fallen space angel. I like that. Some people think all religion started from space aliens anyway.

ADAMS

Maybe they're right.

They watch in silence again.

TALIA

You are not what I expected.

ADAMS

Expected?

TALIA

From seeing you out in your yard, with your garden. You see someone, you look at them, and you make up a story about what they'll be like.

ADAMS

And you thought I had a good story?

TALIA

Maybe.

ADAMS

But now that you've talked to me...

TALIA

You're different.

ADAMS

In a good way?

TALIA

Yes. Deeper.

ADAMS

You never said hello. Not a word.

TALIA

You seemed like you valued your privacy. That's why they call them privacy fences, right? Keep out the nosy neighbors.

ADAMS

You watched me anyway. Guess they don't work.

TALIA

Maybe we're never as invisible as we think we are.

ADAMS

I know I don't exactly fit in around here. But it seemed like people didn't pay much attention.

TALIA

Did you ever notice me?

ADAMS

Sure. I did. Your ex has a big voice.

TALIA

Biggest thing about him. Sorry. Stormy times. We all make choices, right? Some better than others. I have a certain talent for... the wrong ones. As you may have noticed.

ADAMS

Yeah. Well. I, ah... I try not to poke my nose in. I try to focus on what I'm growing, on the Earth.

TALIA

Are you really a gardener? Is that what you do to eat, to live?

ADAMS

I used to fix computers, did IT work. Business casual kinds of jobs. Now I create edible gardens for the kinds of people who used to be my bosses.

TALIA

Is that what you always wanted to do? Grow things?

ADAMS

Nah. When I was a kid, I dreamed of being an astronaut. Then it was being a ship's pilot, then a surgeon, a chef. I had a talent for dreaming.

TALIA

That's a good talent to have. I used to dream about being anyplace but Nebraska.

ADAMS

Mission accomplished.

TALIA

Yeah.

ADAMS

Now I dream about being a farmer. I think about moving out of the suburbs, to the country. I like my feet on the ground.

TALIA

But your head's still in the sky.

ADAMS

I guess so.

They look at the wing some more.
She puts her hand on his. He does
not pull away.

TALIA

I never dreamed about anything like this.

ADAMS

I did.

TALIA

It's so... I like that you're not afraid.

ADAMS

In high school, I read every scrap of science fiction I could find. I had to hide it, you know, because it was so not cool in my neighborhood. And now this thing is sitting in my backyard. Like some weird figment of my imagination.

TALIA

Except it's not.

ADAMS

Nope.

He stands up and touches the wing.

TALIA

Are you sure you want to touch that again?

ADAMS

I have to. While I still can.

TALIA

(looking at her blue palm)
Do you think it'll ever come off?

ADAMS

I have a friend from the old neighborhood. Has tattoos all over. Girlfriend leaves him, teardrop. Falls in love again, heart with her name on it. Baby's name on his forearm. Even one of his new car. I never felt the need to have life mark me. Not like that. Maybe if you lose enough, you learn to not hold on so tight.

TALIA

But now?

ADAMS

The earth keeps shifting in its orbit.

Talia joins Adams at the wing and places her hands on it, too.

TALIA

It like the way it feels. The way it makes me feel.

She steps closer to Adams, still trailing one hand on the wing. He looks at her. She kisses him. The kiss deepens, but each still keeps one hand on the wing.

The flashing lights change, briefly, in color and pattern, but neither Adams or Talia notices.

TALIA (CONT'D)

Wow.

ADAMS

That was...

TALIA

Amazing.

ADAMS

Unexpected.

Adams lifts his hand from the wing and looks at it, looks at Talia, a little confused.

ADAMS (CONT'D)

Did you feel that?

TALIA

Definitely.

A loud rumble from off stage.

ADAMS

Would you... Could we...

TALIA

Again?

ADAMS

Please.

They kiss again. He reaches out and touches the wing, and the flashing lights shift again, but this time he sees. They break apart.

ADAMS (CONT'D)

The lights. Did you see that?

TALIA

No.

ADAMS

Keep your eyes open.

He kisses her again, with passion, and presses her against the wing. She keeps her eyes open and sees the lights shift. They break apart and he stumbles down to the ground, laughing in amazement. She just watches him, not unhappily.

TALIA

What does it mean?

ADAMS

I don't know.

TALIA

Do it again?

ADAMS

For science.

TALIA

For me.

They kiss again, with the same result.

Blake enters through Talia's yard, holding a manila envelope. He's in his 40s, with a biker beard and full leathers. An intimidating looking guy.

BLAKE

Talia?

Talia and Adams break apart, startled.

She's still leaning against the wing (Adams is not), and the lights take on an entirely different hue and pattern now that Blake has arrived.

BLAKE (CONT'D)

What the hell are you doing?

TALIA

Blake.

Talia and Adams step away from the wing. Once Talia breaks contact with the wing, the lights resume their normal pattern.

Blake notices the wing and the broken fences.

BLAKE

And what is that?

TALIA

It's hard to explain.

ADAMS

It's from outer space.

BLAKE

As in from another planet?

ADAMS

Exactly.

BLAKE

Nice. (To Talia) You're really leaving me for this nutjob?

TALIA

Let's not do this right now.

Blake tosses the envelope at her feet.

BLAKE

I signed the papers. All right?

TALIA

You should go.

BLAKE

You're making a mistake.

TALIA

We can talk another time. Not now.

BLAKE

I tried, you know. I really tried.

TALIA

I know.

BLAKE

But nothing I do is good enough to drag you away from the window. Away from fantasizing about this... This... Gardener.

TALIA

Blake. Please. I know this is hard.

BLAKE

(to Adams) Don't think it won't happen to you. She saw me like that, once upon a time. Exotic, fascinating. That's what she likes. She gets a little purr in her voice. Makes you think you're the only one she sees in the whole world. She gets a little on fire, with biker fever, farmer fever. It never lasts.

TALIA

Get out of my yard, or I will call your parole officer.

BLAKE

Talia. You'll be sick of this geek in ten minutes.

TALIA

At least he knows an alien spaceship when he sees one.

BLAKE

This isn't what you need. Seriously. It's not too late.

Talia takes out her cell phone.

TALIA

I'm calling.

Blake steps closer to Adams.

BLAKE

Maybe you should call an ambulance, too, 'cause he's gonna need one.

TALIA

Stop it. Right now.

Blake restrains himself.

BLAKE

You really like this guy, huh? Him and his little space ship. Is it worth anything?

ADAMS

NASA's going to take it.

BLAKE

It's probably worth serious cash to one of those billionaires who pays to fly into space.

He walks over to the wing.

ADAMS

Don't touch it!

BLAKE

Don't tell me what to do.

Blake prepares to touch the wing.
Talia holds her palms out at him.

TALIA

This is what happens if you touch it.

Blake laughs.

BLAKE

What is that? Some weird space disease? (to Adams) You got it, too?

Adams holds up his blue hands.

BLAKE (CONT'D)

Maybe you two deserve each other (to Talia) Whatever you get for it, I want half.

Melanie storms on stage, clothes and hair ruffled, as if she's been sleeping in her car (which she has).

MELANIE

What are you doing here? This entire area is off limits. Did you touch that?

BLAKE

Hell, no.

MELANIE

Good. It is the wing off an experimental aircraft. We're worried it might have contaminants from a malfunctioning weapons system.

BLAKE

I wouldn't touch that thing if you paid me. Speaking of which--whatever government joke you represent will need to pay for damage to the property. And for emotional stress and suffering. Aircraft, huh? They said it's from outer space.

Melanie laughs.

MELANIE

Outer space? Did they show you the little green men, too? Maybe I can take you down to Area 51, and we can have an alien dance party.

BLAKE

Yeah.

MELANIE

But you would naturally believe them, because they're your friends. I'm just a lackey from the Air Force. Listen to your friends about E.T.

BLAKE

Okay, I get it. (to Talia and Adams) Screw you both. I'm not stupid. (to Melanie) And I'm serious about that money. Those divorce papers aren't finalized. That makes whatever you pay half mine. My attorney will be in touch.

MELANIE

Of course. Do you have a card?

Blake pulls a business card out of his vest pocket.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

Pharmacist?

BLAKE

Hogs don't come cheap. (to Adams) And neither does Talia. You'll see.

MELANIE

Mr. Ketowski, if you don't leave now, I'm going to have to require that you stay. Because of the contaminants, this area is under quarantine.

BLAKE

I'm going. I'm going. (to Adams) Good luck.

Blake exits.

TALIA

Sorry about him. Don't listen to anything he says. He's just lashing out.

ADAMS

Yeah. Sure.

TALIA

(to Melanie) You were pretty fast on your feet.

MELANIE

I've seen his type before.

She approaches the wing and looks at it with longing, but does not touch it.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

Look, you wanted this thing as a temporary pet, or talisman, or whatever, but that only works if you keep it quiet. Don't mess this up.

She exits.

Talia and Adams look at each other.

TALIA

Okay. That was not what I... I'm sorry, I... Let's just...

She steps over to the wing.

TALIA (CONT'D)

Come on.

He considers it, sorely tempted.

ADAMS

I, uh... I should go inside. I'm kind of tired. Thanks for the sandwich, and for...

TALIA

Adams. Please.

ADAMS

You. You are... I have spent some time, years really, trying to... Which is a long time. And, you, you... uh... You are, so... And when you, when we... I... I really want to. But. Ah. I. I should get some sleep. Good night.

He exits.

She puts a hand on the wing. The pattern and color is different, matching her melancholy and longing, as she watches Adams disappear.

End of Scene.

SCENE 4

Very early morning.

Melanie paces in front of the wing.
Stops. Looks at it. Considers.
Resumes pacing. Her desire to
touch this thing is intense.

Griffin comes out of his house.

GRIFFIN

It's too early to be up.

MELANIE

What? Oh. Hello. It is early. But here you are.

GRIFFIN

I couldn't sleep. Not with this thing out there. Where are
the other two? I thought Adams would never let this out of
his sight.

MELANIE

It is compelling.

GRIFFIN

It's real, isn't it?

MELANIE

It's really something. What that something is, I don't know.

GRIFFIN

Haven't touched it yet, have you?

MELANIE

No.

GRIFFIN

Maybe if you did, then... Nah. You're smart. Smart. Which
makes sense, you being a rocket scientist and all.

MELANIE

So you believe?

GRIFFIN

In this? No, it's more than just belief, it's... I don't
know. I don't want to. Not like Adams. What about you?

MELANIE

I've been waiting for something like this since I was five
years old. Other girls played with dolls, I made rockets in
my backyard.

GRIFFIN

NASA's probably the perfect place for you.

MELANIE

Even they think I'm a little too... dreamy. So they gave me this job. I have to deal with the loonies, who want it to be true because their own lives are so empty. And their desperation feels so...

GRIFFIN

Dirty?

MELANIE

Familiar.

GRIFFIN

Oh.

MELANIE

I am a scientist, not a fanatic. I am supposed to base my life on facts, not faith, not desire. I should not believe this is real. Not yet. I am not one of those people.

GRIFFIN

I don't know what I've been waiting for my whole life. Maybe nothing. Maybe it's good to have something you want so much.

MELANIE

It's horrible. (beat) You were brave. To touch it.

GRIFFIN

I didn't know what I was doing. The other two, they got so googly eyed. I guess I... It wasn't very smart.

MELANIE

Maybe.

GRIFFIN

Look at my hands.

MELANIE

But now you know better. And you warned me. So no matter how much I want to...

GRIFFIN

You know you shouldn't.

MELANIE

Exactly. I know, and I want to anyway. But I won't.

GRIFFIN

You're sensible.

MELANIE

Maybe it will only be the three of you who ever touch it. In the lab, we will have all sorts of safety precautions. No one will ever lay a finger on it.

GRIFFIN

Good. Though, I will say, it's not like anything I ever... And once you touch it, well, then you know something.

They both look at his blue hands.

GRIFFIN (CONT'D)

It's harder to keep away than it should be. My wife can't know that I'm out there.

MELANIE

She doesn't come out?

GRIFFIN

She's afraid. There are reasons. And then there was Columbine, those kids with their guns. Maybe a mile from here. I used to walk our dog over by that school, years ago. And 9-11. The Boston Marathon. An endless stream of shootings and explosions. Every one a little push.

MELANIE

It's okay to be afraid of this. I don't blame her.

GRIFFIN

I walk around the house like this (*sticks his hands in his armpits*) because I don't want her to see my hands.

MELANIE

Of course.

GRIFFIN

Sometimes it seems like I'm the last thing that she's not afraid of. But here I am. It's not what she thinks. And I don't know how to make her understand.

Griffin steps forward and puts his hands on the wing.

He looks at Melanie and smiles. The lights shift. They both notice. He quickly pulls away.

MELANIE

What was that?

GRIFFIN

Crap. What's it done to me now?

MELANIE
Did it hurt?

GRIFFIN
No. Not at all. I just felt...

MELANIE
Felt what?

GRIFFIN
Something.

MELANIE
Are you okay?

He stares at his hand and at the wing.

GRIFFIN
Maybe you should get this out of here sooner.

MELANIE
What did it...

GRIFFIN
This is making everything...

He puts his hand on the wing again.
The lights beat to his pulse.

MELANIE
Wow.

GRIFFIN
Griffin. My name is Griffin. And the way this makes me feel... um.. I am... You should not touch this.

MELANIE
No.

GRIFFIN
Because once you do...

Melanie looks at him, and then reaches her hand out and touches the wing.

MELANIE
Oh. Oh my.

The colors and pattern shift to something more complicated now.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

I can't believe how this... To know. To know. And you...
You. Are we...

GRIFFIN

I'm married.

MELANIE

I'm not.

GRIFFIN

My wife is inside. She is afraid of everything.

MELANIE

I'm not. Not of this, not of you, not of the way I feel. My
whole life. And now it's here.

GRIFFIN

Melanie. Your name is Melanie. Melanie. And I--

He pulls his hand away from the
wing. The pattern shifts again.
He steps away. They look deep into
each other's eyes.

GRIFFIN (CONT'D)

I should get to work. I have copiers to repair.

MELANIE

Quarantine. You can't. Sorry.

GRIFFIN

Get this thing out of here. I don't care what the other two
say. We can't have it here.

MELANIE

I'm sorry.

GRIFFIN

Yeah. Me, too.

He exits back to his house.

Melanie takes her hands off the
wing. The lights shift. She
stares at her hands.

SCENE 5

Later that morning.

Talia stands alone by the wing. At her feet is the picnic basket, with an untouched breakfast spread laid out beside it--fruit, bagels, juice.

She looks over at Adams' house. No sign of him. No sign of anyone.

She starts to enter Adams' lush garden, but stops herself.

Instead, she packs up the untouched breakfast into the basket and is about to leave for her own house, but stops.

She puts down the basket and approaches the wing, cautiously. Looks around. Sees no one.

Touches the wing. First with just one finger, then another, then with the palm of one hand.

Considers. Feels something. The lights shift slightly.

She puts another palm on the wing. Nothing happens. Looks deeply at the wing, really studying it. She explores it with her hands. The lights shift.

She steps away, a bit surprised. Then steps forward and puts both hands on the wing again.

The lights shift.

Talia smiles.

SCENE 6

Afternoon

Adams stands by the wing, staring at it.

Melanie enters, cautiously, and approaches the wing. She starts to measure it with a tape measure, taking notes. She is careful not to touch it.

ADAMS

Hey.

MELANIE

Sorry. Didn't mean to bother you.

ADAMS

What are you doing?

MELANIE

Trying to figure out how big of a truck we'll need tomorrow.

ADAMS

Tomorrow? You said we could have at least until Monday. We still have more time. We've kept it quiet. We've done everything we're supposed to.

MELANIE

I understand why you want it here.

ADAMS

Do you?

She holds up her palm, which is now blue.

ADAMS (CONT'D)

One of us now, huh?

MELANIE

You don't know if this thing is benign. You just want it to be.

ADAMS

And you want it to be dangerous? You touched it. You know it isn't.

MELANIE

I've met your kind before.

ADAMS

My kind?

MELANIE

Believers. You were so sure, right from the very beginning, weren't you?

ADAMS

I saw it fall from the sky. I've touched it with my own hands. I've felt it, and it's felt me.

MELANIE

Yep.

ADAMS

And so have you. Now you know.

MELANIE

I don't. And neither do you. But I suspect.

ADAMS

Suspect?

MELANIE

Yes. And if what I felt is real, then I need to take it seriously. It can't stay here. Griffin is right.

ADAMS

Griffin is afraid of his own shadow.

MELANIE

It's his wife who's afraid. Not him. He's not what you think. You don't understand him.

ADAMS

And you do? Wait. You and he...

MELANIE

No. It wasn't like that.

ADAMS

It's a little scary, isn't it? That little tug, that pull? That sense of something about to open. A door, a window.

MELANIE

A little.

ADAMS

A lot.

He almost puts his hands on the wing, but refrains.

MELANIE

You and Talia.

ADAMS

Maybe you're right. Maybe you should get this out of here.

MELANIE

You can come visit it.

ADAMS

Yeah. Maybe. You're NASA, huh?

MELANIE

By way of Star Trek, Star Wars, Battlestar Galactica, Alien, 2001, all of them.

ADAMS

I keep trying to decide what this is like. The Borg? Cylons? Pods? None of them fit. Not even close. An entire childhood of geekdom for nothing.

MELANIE

Childhood?

ADAMS

Well, maybe a little beyond childhood. And it cost me. But I'm not that person anymore. I'm a gardener now. Feet on the ground.

MELANIE

All those stories are make believe. This is real.

ADAMS

Tomorrow, huh?

He touches the wing. She watches him closely.

ADAMS (CONT'D)

Boo!

She jumps back, startled. He laughs.

MELANIE

Very funny.

ADAMS

Sorry.

He looks at Talia's house. The lights on the wing shift.

ADAMS (CONT'D)

Oh, man.

He releases his hand, a little surprised. The lights return to normal.

ADAMS (CONT'D)

Might want to be careful with this thing.

MELANIE

I will.

Adams exits to his own house.

Melanie returns to measuring the wing.

She puts a single finger on the wing. The lights shift, ever so slightly.

End of scene.

SCENE 7

Night.

Talia walks along the wing, trailing her fingers sensuously along the metal as she moves. The lights flash a little brighter than before.

Adams comes out from his house and approaches. The lights shift when Talia sees him.

ADAMS
I think it likes you.

She takes her hand off the wing, and the lights go back to their initial state.

TALIA
What about you?

ADAMS
I'm not sure it likes me as much as it likes you. Which is understandable.

TALIA
Oh, really. Do you like me?

ADAMS
I think I do.

TALIA
You think?

ADAMS
This thing, when we touched it... I... I wonder if it changed something inside me.

TALIA
Me, too. In a good way.

ADAMS
We hardly know each other. Not enough for me to feel so...

TALIA
And that's all right with you? It must be, since you've been avoiding me for the past 24 hours.

ADAMS
I'm a little confused.

TALIA

And will staying away bring you clarity?

ADAMS

I was hoping it might.

TALIA

How's that going?

ADAMS

Not so great.

She puts both hands on the wing.
The lights shift.

TALIA

I'm glad this thing fell out of the sky.

ADAMS

I am, too, but--

TALIA

You're the one who convinced me to embrace what's in front of us.

ADAMS

I want my feelings to be real. And especially the way you seem to feel about me.

TALIA

I noticed you long before this. You seemed interesting, unusual.

ADAMS

I'm not.

TALIA

You showed me this, you embraced this. I don't know many who would.

ADAMS

I don't know what this thing wants from us, or what it does, or what it can do.

TALIA

Now you sound like Griffin. What happened to the man with stars in his eyes?

ADAMS

I'm still here.

TALIA

Melanie is taking this away in the morning.

ADAMS

I know.

TALIA

I'm letting her stay in my guest room--she's been sleeping in her car. But I couldn't convince her to leave this here any longer.

ADAMS

You want it here?

TALIA

More than anything.

ADAMS

What happens after it's gone?

She reaches out a hand to him.

TALIA

Don't let moment this pass you by.

ADAMS

Sometimes, wanting something so much... Once it's gone--

TALIA

Trust. Reach. Leap.

She extends her hand and he takes it. He puts his other hand on the wing. The lights shift to a more energetic pulse and color.

ADAMS

Oh. Yeah. This. Is.

TALIA

We'll never forget.

ADAMS

Never.

He takes off his shirt and presses his body against the wing. His arms, his chest, even his face. The lights shift again.

TALIA

(not displeased)

What are you...

ADAMS

I am ready to be marked, all the way. I want to feel what this is, and I want it to feel me. It's trying, don't you think? To reach out to us, to touch us in some way.

TALIA

It is.

ADAMS

All the way across the galaxy, to this spot. To us. Right now.

She takes off her own shirt, and follows his lead and presses her skin against the wing. Together, they and the wing are incandescent.

TALIA

Oh, yes.

They move closer to each other. The lights intensify.

TALIA (CONT'D)

I have been waiting--

ADAMS

I know.

TALIA

For you. For you.

ADAMS

I'm here. You're here. We're here.

She smiles.

TALIA

Tomorrow, we'll be marked.

ADAMS

Oh, yes.

They kiss and embrace passionately, but are sure to maintain contact with the wing. The lights shift.

Griffin appears at the other end of the wing.

GRIFFIN

Hey. It's my yard, too, you know.

Talia and Adams break apart, but not very far, and they don't let go of the wing. The lights shift.

ADAMS

Sorry. We--

GRIFFIN

Couldn't help yourselves. Which should give you second thoughts.

TALIA

Maybe.

GRIFFIN

But it isn't. Which should definitely--

ADAMS

Give us more second thoughts.

GRIFFIN

Just saying. I saw the lights. You got it all worked up.

ADAMS

Only a few more hours.

TALIA

And then...

GRIFFIN

Life goes back to normal. You'll see.

ADAMS

We don't care.

GRIFFIN

I imagine not.

TALIA

Why are you here?

GRIFFIN

My wife's asleep. Finally.

ADAMS

Maybe you should--

GRIFFIN

Go back inside? Mind my own business? Pretend this isn't here?

TALIA

It's an option.

GRIFFIN

I know what tomorrow will bring. And the one after that, and the one after that.

He puts his hands on the wing. The lights shift to an entirely new pattern with the three of them touching it. Griffin smiles.

GRIFFIN (CONT'D)

Sometimes, one little moment is everything.

Melanie enters, from Talia's house, not dishevelled at all this time. She walks directly to the wing, but hesitates.

TALIA

Hello.

ADAMS

What are you--

MELANIE

After tomorrow, I won't get to put a hand on this thing. Not the way you are.

GRIFFIN

Don't.

She smiles at him, then places her hands on the wing. The lights make yet another jump in intensity.

MELANIE

Oh. Yes.

GRIFFIN

Yes.

ADAMS

Wow.

TALIA

Oh, my god.

GRIFFIN

I see... I see...

He and Melanie move towards each other, both still touching the wing.

GRIFFIN (CONT'D)

I'm not ready.

Melanie touches a finger to his lips, keeping her other hand on the wing. She and Griffin stand very close to each other.

MELANIE

Shhh. You're here. We're all here.

ADAMS

For one moment.

TALIA

Right now.

GRIFFIN

Now.

MELANIE

Now.

They all close their eyes and the lights grow brighter and brighter, pulsing faster and faster, the two couples leaning close into each other, as the wing begins to rumble and vibrate and hum.

Blackout.

End of Act One.