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A play in one act

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JIM: 40-ish male obsessed with angels, currently at a career crossroad

FAYE: Jim's 40-ish female neighbour of 21 years, also his writing coach

GAILIANA: Jim's unexpected (and attractive) hotel visitor, also in her 40s

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SCENE 1

(It is 11 PM and JIM is hunkered down on his laptop in the middle of his living room. He sits facing the audience. To his right is the main door. To his left is the dining area and a door leading to his room)

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(The scene opens with “Send me an Angel” refrain blasting loudly in a well-lit living room that is adorned with many posters of angels. JIM types furiously on his laptop.

A call comes in on his mobile)

JIM:

Babe, how can I finish my story when you keep calling me every hour? (pause) Yes, I will just deliver the entry myself after lunch hour. Yes, it is the last day (pause) Well, if I don't win this contest, I will accept the job offer in Switzeland! See? Win-win! Yes, Babe. Yes, Faye is on her way to check my work, and she will probably bring me some groceries, too! Well, she is my neighbour for 21 years now! Yup, that's why I know. (pause) Babe, I can't wait to see you after submitting my entry. I miss you. Bye-bye!

(JIM stops typing)

(sighs) Good god! I have asked you all week to send me my angel. The week is over tomorrow, yet you have sent zip. This contest means everything to me! If I lose, then it's corporate banking life for me. What is it with You? Just tell me if my story is ready!

(Someone knocks. JIM gets up but it grows louder.)

JIM:

(shouts) Hold your horses, Faye!

(JIM stomps his way towards the door)

Faye, my work is not yet...

(opens door)

Who are you?

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(GAILIANA steps in, holding a small purse)

GAILIANA:

Pardon me if my timing is off, but it took me a while to find you.

(She moves gracefully in the room, inspecting the place)

JIM:

Excuse me, but I asked who you are!

GAILIANA:

Jim, you pestered the heavens for a week. You have a way of showing gratitude!

JIM:

What are you talking about? I'm calling security.

(He moves closer to the hotel phone. In the background,

"Talking to An Angel" by Eurythmics starts to play)

Oh. My. God. Oh. My. God. Oh. My. God.

GAILIANA:

You should really stop that nasty habit of taking the Lord's Name in vain! My name is

Gailiana. I am your guardian angel.

JIM:

My what? But you're a girl! There must be a mistake? How can my guardian angel be

female? And what a name! Is that Nordic or something?

GAILIANA:

Old German to be exact. No mistake. The assignment of guardian angels to humans is

not determined by gender. Shall we get to work?

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JIM:

What took you so long? I have revised my work fifteen times and you arrive the night before my submission deadline? What is up with your timetable?

(GAILIANA moves towards JIM's laptop)

GAILIANA:

Look, there is a process in heaven before any of us are sent here. We can discuss that or we can start working on your entry. You choose.

JIM:

Ok. You win. But after we submit my entry tomorrow, you owe me an explanation!

GAILIANA:

Just for the record, I don't owe you anything. Can I use your bathroom?

JIM:

Sure. It's over there. Wait, bathroom? What for? You're an angel? It's not like you have biological functions.

(As GAILIANA enters, a rhythmical knock on the door is heard. Jim rolls his eyes and rushes to open it, shouting as he heads for the door)

JIM:

Faye, Faye, Faye, Faye! Could your timing be more off!

(The door opens and FAYE hurries in with bags of groceries)

FAYE:

Well it's nice to see you, too!

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JIM:

Faye, my story is not ready yet. You have to go.

(He holds Faye's shoulders and turns her towards the door)

FAYE:

What? Revision number 12? I hear you! I'm not your writing coach for nothing!

JIM:

Well, number fifteen actually. Don't take being my writing coach too seriously!

FAYE:

Well someone's got to take writing seriously around here! For 21 years I've been telling you to write. Finally, you listened! Wait, are you serious about revising for the 15th time? You did four more revisions since our session last night? I am impressed! Where is it? I want to read it. I need to read it!

JIM:

Faye, let me just email it to you later. You really have to get going.

(JIM eases FAYE out the door, she turns around to face him)

FAYE:

Hey, not so fast! Tomorrow is submission day and I want to see it before the judges do, are we clear?

JIM:

Yes, Faye. Clear. Now please go away.

FAYE:

Fine. Make sure you submit the entry early!

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(JIM slams the door after FAYE. He is putting the groceries in the fridge and takes out a bag just as GAILIANA emerges from the bathroom, wearing a completely different outfit, one that caught every possible light in the room. "Angel in the Centerfold" starts playing. JIM holds a bag of cookies)

GAILIANA:

My goodness. Your play list is horrible.

JIM:

(muttering under his breath)

I could say the same for your fashion sense.

GAILIANA:

What did you say?

JIM:

Nothing! About my taste in music- hey, I'm single-minded okay? I want angels so bad that I all I can do now is think, breathe and listen to angel music! You want some angel cookies?

GAILIANA:

You can't be serious.

(JIM eats a cookie then stuffs the bag in the fridge)

So, where shall we start? Or are you pretty much set with your piece?

(JIM walks towards GAILIANA)

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JIM:

Well, why don't you read it and you tell me.

GAILIANA:

Jim, your story is about angels. What could possibly be in there that will be new to me?(under her breath) Or be interesting to me for that matter.

JIM:

Well, you are not my market are you?

GAILIANA:

You have a point.

JIM:

I want to ask you if there is anything in my story that, well maybe you are not comfortable with? I mean, being an angel and all.

GAILIANA:

I understand now. Let's see. Before we start, I want to know- what is your expectation of me, Jim and what is your expectation of this encounter of ours anyway?

JIM:

(JIM stands and moves away from GAILIANA)

Look, I did wait for you for, oh I don't know, my entire life to show up, so you can imagine how the word "expectation" is, given the circumstance, an understatement. But let us let bygones be bygones.

GAILIANA:

I am all for that.

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JIM:

Good! So, we're clear. Let's start fresh. This contest will make or break my life.

(JIM moves back to sit beside GAILIANA)

GAILIANA:

Do you always exaggerate?

JIM:

Yes, it's a disease.

GAILIANA:

That must be tiring.

JIM:

Oh, only when you're at the receiving end. It is very therapeutic to dispense.

GAILIANA:

This is why being a writer suits you just fine.

JIM:

What is that supposed to mean?

GAILIANA:

Nothing. Shall we just start working on your work?

JIM:

In case you didn't notice, that is exactly what I've been trying to do. Here, start with these, and tell me what you think.

(JIM hands GAILIANA a bunch of papers. She closes her eyes, slowly passing her hands over it, hums a hymn, then opens her eyes abruptly)

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GAILIANA:

You deliberately used UK English?

JIM:

Uh-huh.

GAILIANA:

Those unnecessary letters distract me.

JIM:

I happen to be an Anglophile.

GAILIANA:

Why am I not surprised?

JIM:

So, apart from my spelling, anything else you want me to change? Revise? Take out?

Edit? Enhance? Remove?

GAILIANA:

Did you swallow a thesaurus? Sheesh!

JIM:

First my spelling, now my vocabulary! I get the feeling this is not a job you lined up for?

GAILIANA:

Oh, you have no idea!

JIM:

Ok listen Gailiana, we have all night. If you are frustrated about this (looks for the words)... assignment, then let's just get it over and done with! I would love to send this

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work ahead of schedule, and I'm sure you would like to head back quickly to wherever the hell you're from.

GAILIANA:

I find your choice of words very appalling.

JIM:

Well, I don't care what you find. Can we just get this over and done with? I have been sleep-deprived for a week. I want my life to get back to normal!

GAILIANA:

Trust me, you're not the only one who wants your life to get back to normal

(GAILIANA starts to head for the door)

JIM:

Wait. Where are you going?

(U2's "Angel of Harlem" plays)

GAILIANA:

Jim, this is your contest. This is your story. My appearance here? That is your idea. I cannot be hovering about while you change your story. Besides, I need some fresh air. I hear New York is wonderful this time of year. I'll be back in a few.

JIM:

What? You are leaving? You could at least tell me where to start working!

GAILIANA:

Jim, angels come at your bidding. Ideas come from you. We do not initiate ideas. We implement them.

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JIM:

I'm confused.

GAILIANA:

Think about it this way: you lead, we follow. You come up with the ideas, we back you up. Copish?

JIM:

Oh, okaaaay! I get it.

(The two of them stare at each other)

Be on your way then. I will look my piece over and then revise. Or not. We'll use your return as my time limit.

GAILIANA:

That makes sense. Goodbye.

(JIM starts to make a call on his mobile. GAILIANA leaves.)

JIM:

Faye? (pause) Hi! Are you still close by? I could sure use some company. (pause) Cherry tomatoes would be great, too. Thanks Faye, you're a star.

(He paces for a few seconds when there is knock on the door)

Look! I haven't even started and you're back! You need to stay away for a while longer!

(JIM opens the door and FAYE steps in)

Why do you always get here so fast?

FAYE:

Magic! Here are your cherry tomatoes!

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(FAYE hands JIM a small bag of cherry tomatoes, which JIM opens and starts eating. FAYE moves to the couch and makes herself comfortable)

What made you ask me back here?

(Sarah Maclachlan's "In the Arms of an Angel" plays)

JIM:

(JIM walks towards the couch and sits next to FAYE)

Nothing. I guess I'm just getting edgy about tomorrow's submission.

FAYE:

Ah, that feeling you will never get used to.

JIM:

Really? What do you mean?

(JIM continues to eat the cherry tomatoes)

FAYE:

Jim, I have been writing for over two decades now. You can say I have two decades worth of experience ahead of you.

JIM:

I guess you're right. This is why you are my writing coach. Switzerland is becoming a really attractive option for me now, to be honest.

FAYE:

Jim, you know that writing is your passion. Take the Switzerland offer if this contest does not work out for you.

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JIM:

(JIM puts the bag away and faces FAYE)

Hey Faye. Can I tell you something that you promise never to ever tell anyone?

FAYE:

Anyone?

JIM:

Anyone.

FAYE:

This is weirding me out. You never hold anything back from anyone.

JIM:

(JIM stands up and paces away from FAYE)

Well, I need to talk to someone about this and it just so happens that you are here.

FAYE:

In case you didn't notice, I have been in your life for half of your adult life!

JIM:

You're right. And this is why I feel you know me the best among anyone else on earth.

FAYE:

This sounds serious, Jim. You are scaring me.

(FAYE stands abruptly)

Oh my! Jim? Are you dying?

JIM:

NO! Silly! Of course not!

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FAYE:

You've been losing a lot of weight recently! Okay, now the worst part is out. Hit me!

(Jimi Hendrix's "Angel Eyes" plays in the background)

JIM:

(Paces again, and then stops to sit next to FAYE)

Faye, an angel appeared to me tonight.

FAYE:

Ha ha ha! Okay, that's just as bad as a terminal illness. Sorry. Come on, what is it?

JIM:

I'm serious!

FAYE:

(Stands up, mimicking an adult getting mad at JIM)

James Jeffrey John, if this is your idea of a joke, I am not laughing. It's not funny.

JIM:

(Pulls FAYE back down to sit next to him)

I am serious! Remember when I had to hurriedly get you out of here when you dropped by earlier? She was in my bathroom and I didn't want you to see her!

FAYE:

What? You're telling me a woman was here who told you she is an angel, and then you let her in and use your bathroom?

JIM:

Okay, you are making it sound trivial. But yes, that's how things went.

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FAYE:

And so tell me, where is she now?

(FAYE walks over to the bathroom and returns)

JIM:

She stepped out because she said this story is my idea and just because I asked for her doesn't mean she needs to hang around. Hover is actually the word she used.

FAYE:

Well, she has a point. So, is she giving you some secret formula or something?

JIM:

Not at all. She stepped out to get some fresh air. I don't know how far she'll go without attracting attention, though. She was wearing this dress that almost seemed luminous in broad daylight!

(FAYE stands up and goes downstage right)

FAYE:

Luminous?

JIM:

Yeah!

FAYE:

How did she look like, Jim?

JIM:

Well, she was a looker I'll tell you that!

(FAYE spins around and glares at JIM looks away sheepishly)

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She had long black hair, just like yours, but hers seemed to, I don't know- shine?

FAYE:

Maybe it's product.

(JIM gets up while FAYE crosses back to sit on the couch, She grabs the bag of cherry tomatoes and starts eating nervously)

Whatever it was, it reflected light. If it weren't for that radiance about her, and her weird name, she could very well be a model!

FAYE:

She gave you her name? They say when they do, the angels mean to harm you.

JIM:

(Gulps) That is not a good sign, is it? Anyway, she said her name is Gailiana.

(FAYE spills the cherry tomatoes and JIM helps pick them up)

JIM:

Are you okay? You look a little pale.

(FAYE and JIM continue collecting the cherry tomatoes)

FAYE:

Jim, what did she say about your work exactly?

JIM:

(JIM gets the bag from FAYE and just holds it)

Well, she said using UK English was unnecessary.

FAYE:

Ok. What else? Did she comment on your character development?

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(FAYE starts to grab the bag back from JIM)

Your plot? The setting of your story? Anything that specific?

JIM:

(JIM yanks the bag back from FAYE)

Wait, hold on! Why are you grabbing my bag of cherry tomatoes?

FAYE:

Sorry Jim. But could you just answer me? Did she give you any technical advise?

JIM:

None at all. I mean, you give me technical advise on my writing. Her comments were more broad I suppose.

FAYE:

(FAYE walks back to the couch and plops down on it again)

Well of course, they were broad. She knows nothing about writing!

JIM:

What? What are you talking about? Have you met this girl?

(A knock on the door is heard. JIM and FAYE look at each other. The knocking continues and JIM walks to open it.)

FAYE:

Jim, before you open that door, know that you can trust me, okay?

(JIM stops on his tracks and turns to FAYE)

JIM:

Of course, Faye.

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FAYE:

Jim, just tell me you trust me.

JIM:

Of course, Faye. I trust you! We've been neighbours for over 20 years.

FAYE:

Correction. 21.

JIM:

Yes, 21

(The knocks turn to pounding now)

FAYE:

Just remember you can trust me, ok Jim?

JIM:

Sure, Faye. Sure.

(JIM opens the door, and GAILIANA storms in. JIM follows her but at a slower pace. GAILIANA is wearing a different outfit. It is blood red, but still shimmery and shiny and bordering gaudy. She stops on her tracks when she sees FAYE on the couch. FAYE stands up and their eyes lock. JIM stands between them from behind the couch)

JIM:

Your fashion sense leaves me speechless.

(GAILIANA ignores JIM, still at a staring match with FAYE)

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GAILIANA:

Well, well, well. If it isn't Fastunia. It's been a while, hasn't it?

(GAILIANA and FAYE start circling each other)

FAYE:

No one calls me that around here. Shut up.

JIM:

Okaaaaay, I know introductions are no longer necessary, but Faye I want you to meet Gailiana, I told you all about her earlier. Gailiana, this is Faye, she is my neighbour and my writing coach.

(JIM crosses to down stage left)

(Evanescence's "Angel of Mine" plays in the background)

FAYE:

Jim, save your latest file and shut down your laptop.

JIM:

What? Now?

(JIM starts moving towards his laptop while GAILIANA and FAYE move downstage centre, still circling each other)

FAYE:

Yes. Now.

(GAILIANA continues to circle FAYE. JIM goes to his laptop)

GAILIANA:

Really Fastunia? Why do you care so much for Jim?

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FAYE:

I don't care about Jim. I care about Jim's work, so leave him out of this. This is between you and me.

JIM:

Okay, laptop shut down. What is this about you leaving me out?

GAILIANA:

Jim? Do you really think Fastunia is just your neighbour?

JIM:

Well, if you put it that way, she has become my writing mentor for a while now.

FAYE:

Jim! You don't have to talk to her!

JIM:

What? You're being paranoid Faye! She was just asking me if..

FAYE:

Stop it, Jim! Remember before you opened the door I told you to trust me?

JIM:

Oh, of course. Wait. How do you two know each other?

(GAILIANA laughs, giving JIM the chills on his arms, which he tries to rub away)

GAILIANA:

You mean in all the years you have known Fastunia, she has never told you about her mission order?

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FAYE:

Shut up!

JIM:

Her mission what? Faye, what is she talking about?

FAYE:

Jim I am your guardian angel. I will explain this to you later.

JIM:

(JIM starts to approach GAILIANA and FAYE)

Guardian angel? Wait? What? I have two? I though 1:1? And wait, both female?

FAYE:

Yes. I am your guardian angel! I was asked to be here to encourage you to write.

JIM:

All those years and you didn't tell me who you really were?

FAYE:

(Exasperated) Look Jim, now you know!

JIM:

Why are you telling me this now? If Gailiana didn't show up, would you have told me?

FAYE:

Jim? You have no idea what your role is. You need to write. I have been telling you to be a full-time writer for the last 21 years but you didn't listen to me. Now we have to face Gailiana.

(GAILIANA and FAYE move towards the couch. JIM stays where he is)

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GAILIANA

That's right. You have been away from home for 21 years.

FAYE:

It seems longer since I left home. (sigh) Now we know its time to go back.

(JIM starts to move closer, trying to eavesdrop. JIM drops a book clumsily; both women look at him)

JIM:

I'm just fixing things around here if you ladies don't mind?

(FAYE motions for JIM to sit between them. JIM does)

FAYE:

Jim? Gailiana and I have opposing mission orders.

GAILIANA:

That's putting it very mildly!

FAYE:

If you win this contest, I get sent back home. If you lose, Gailiana goes back home.

JIM:

What? This is crazy! Look guys, I just want to launch my writing career!

FAYE:

And you will! When you win, so many doors are going to open up for you. Believe me Jim, you have no idea how your writing will stir up humanity.

JIM:

What? Me? Stir up humanity? I just want to try my hand at writing!

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GAILIANA:

And what a small dream you have for yourself, Jim! The post in Switzerland is yours for the taking, Jim. You have always been comfortable with the corporate life, why are you rocking the boat? And at this stage of your life? Seriously? Come one, Jim. Just take Switzerland, marry and be expatriated along with your family! Your children will have the best education. Think about it. Will writing give you those perks?

JIM:

Wow, you angels are beginning to give me a headache!

GAILIANA:

If you lose this contest, your life is made! In fact, this is the life you are meant to live with your fiancée! This is the life she deserves!

(Just then, JIM's phone rings)

JIM:

Babe! Hi! No, it's a good time now. Yes, now is a good time to talk. (pause) Thank you Babe. Good night. I'll see you tomorrow. (Another phone call comes through) Roland? Well if it isn't the best head-hunter in the world! Listen Roland, I am still sticking to my original plan. I will decide on Switzerland by the end of this month. An offer like this needs a lot of thought, you know! Thank you, Roland. You're the best.

GAILIANA:

Jim, you always like putting things off until the last minute, don't you?

JIM:

Works for me!

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FAYE:

Jim, you need to turn down Switzerland.

JIM:

Not so fast! My timeline has been well thought out. See? Tomorrow I submit my entry, by the 29th of the month they announce the winners. The very next day, I will decide whether to accept Switzerland or not.

FAYE:

Jim, just make it easier for you and rule out Switzerland as an option.

JIM:

Come on! Let's not be quick to make decisions now. Winning this contest will be my confirmation that it's time I switched careers, preferably something far, far away from corporate banking!

GAILIANA:

You know Jim, just don't join the contest. There will be hundreds and thousands of contests that will open for you. Pick Switzerland. Writing can be a hobby!

FAYE:

Jim, no! Writing is not your hobby! Writing is your passion! You have been prepared many years for this contest. You will win it. Send in your entry tomorrow. You've got this, Jim! Believe me! You've got this!

(JIM is now standing between FAYE and GAILIANA. He is obviously torn)

GAILIANA:

Well, Jim you decide. A writer's life or an expat's life?

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FAYE:

Jim, being a writer is what you are meant to become! Stop confusing yourself.

(Jessica Simpson's "Angels" play in the back)

JIM:

There can't only be two choices.

GAILIANA:

I am not sure I am following you.

JIM:

What is a third alternative?

GAILIANA:

A third alternative?

JIM:

Yes, a third alternative. A third option! You guys are angels, right? Surely you can come up with another plan!

FAYE:

Well Jim, there is another way.

GAILIANA:

Fastunia, you are going to get us into trouble. Don't even suggest it.

JIM:

Oh let her speak! Faye, what is it?

FAYE:

It's not that simple.

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GAILIANA:

Nothing is simple, Fastunia. Accept the job offer in Switzerland, Jim! You want to!

JIM:

Faye? What is my third option?

FAYE:

You create a third option.

JIM:

Create? How?

GAILIANA:

Now you've done it!

FAYE:

Gailiana, if I am truly Jim's guardian angel, I need to look after his best interest.

JIM:

Thank you, Faye. So let's do this "creating a third option" thing.

FAYE:

Oh, that's not how it works. You have to come up with the details, then we make a way.

JIM:

Oh I get it! The ideas come from me, and you angels implement them?

GAILIANA:

Finally! I'm glad you're on the same page! So tell us, what will our third option be?

JIM:

Let's see. If I win, I become a writer. If I lose, I live the charmed life. Let's see.

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(JIM paces. John Lennon's "Angel Baby" starts playing)

Make me forget.

GAILIANA:

Excuse me?

JIM:

You heard me. Make me forget. Erase my memory so I can start fresh.

FAYE:

Jim? If we erase your memory, then there goes your dream of becoming a writer.

JIM:

Exactly. Which is why we will do it. If your way back home depends on my winning or losing this contest, the best thing to do is eliminate the cause on which your circumstance depends on. You see, if the conditions cease to exist, you are no longer beholden to them. And for what it's worth, I want you ladies to get back home, too.

(FAYE and GAILIANA goes to stage left while JIM paces)

FAYE:

Gailiana? I must admit, his idea is genius.

GAILIANA:

Yes, I didn't expect it from him at all!

FAYE:

We can work this out, right?

GAILIANA:

Oh, of course!

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FAYE:

Does this mean we can go back?

GAILIANA:

We'll find out.

FAYE:

You're right. If it doesn't work, Jim will still have to make the choice.

GAILIANA:

Yes. And if it works, we are home free!

FAYE:

Home. I like the sound of that.

(FAYE and GAILIANA hug, then move back to JIM)

JIM:

Well, are we ready?

GAILIANA:

Are you sure this is what you want, Jim?

JIM:

I can't say that it is, but it seems to be our best option for now.

FAYE:

What about your dreams? You were doing so well as a newbie writer.

GAILIANA:

Yes. Writing is your passion.

JIM:

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Oh, don't be overdramatic. I've only been "writing" for the last three years.

FAYE:

But you derived such great pleasure from it!

JIM:

Yeah, well. What can I say?

(Slowly, FAYE and GAILIANA move toward JIM)

FAYE:

Jim, if this works, this is goodbye.

JIM:

Faye, you have been the best neighbour one can have. Thank you.

(FAYE and JIM hug, GAILIANA looks away)

GAILIANA:

Here we go.

(Just then, JIM's mobile rings. He picks up. The song in the background goes back to "Send Me an Angel")

JIM:

Babe? Hi! (pause) Yes, it's almost midnight (laughs) Well, I should drop off my entry by 9 AM (pause) then I head straight over to your house. (pause) Thank you, Babe. Bye bye. (pause) Oh, and Babe? I love you. You are my angel.

CURTAIN