

Voices Excerpt

By

Ayelet Schrek

Gladys lightly strides off in the direction Alice went. Patricia, alone, checks her cell phone, checks her email, but there's nothing new. She finally--after exhausting all other options--turns to her mother. She speaks tentatively, but with growing fervor.

PATRICIA

Mother? Mom? Look, I think you're too far gone to hear me but maybe, and I shudder to say this, Gladys is right. Maybe speaking to you is providing you with existential comfort...or maybe it's a major pain in your dying ass. I know you're supposed to fear dying alone, but it seems to me there isn't any other way to die so maybe it's best not to have any illusions. I mean it's the last thing you ever get to experience so maybe you really want to be able to focus on it, and I'm just distracting you from the vital task of ending living.

Maybe you're thinking why the fuck did she wait till now to start monologuing. Where the fuck has my oldest daughter *been* for the past four years. Well I've been working Mother. Where do you think your rent comes from? Came from. Now it's hospital bills.

I couldn't be you and you always said you didn't want me to be. But you were wrong. You weren't lying cause you didn't know it. But you wanted me to have your values. To be the shiny successful *modern* you...but still you.

She stares at her mother's chest rising and falling, and each breath heightens her feeling of being accused.

I know I wasn't there. Haven't been...h-here. I haven't been here. IT'S MY LIFE! MINE NOT YOURS! I DON'T OWE YOU MY LIFE!

Or maybe I do. But it wasn't my choice! Why should you birthing me indebt me to you for my entire life? And why should you want to collect?

Why should you want to collect?

Alice and Gladys have entered.

ALICE

You'll understand when you have children. That's how she would have answered.

PATRICIA

How long have you been--

ALICE

Don't worry, Pat, we know you're not a robot. You can still be shiny and successful and modern and have feelings.

Patricia makes a funny sound in her throat. After a moment:

PATRICIA

I'm surprised to see you back.

ALICE

I'm more patient than I thought.

PATRICIA

What did Gladys say?

ALICE

She's right here. You should ask her.

The women look at each other. Patricia looks down. When it becomes clear she isn't going to speak: Have it your way. C'mon Glad, sit next to me.

They arrange the chairs appropriately and sit. A moment, and then Gladys whispers into Alice's ear.

ALICE

Really? Ask her yourself.

It becomes clear Gladys isn't going to.
Wow. Just...wow. What's more important to you?

A pause. And then, to Patricia:

GLADYS

Has there been any change? Is she any worse?

A beat. And then:

PATRICIA

She's no better.

The three women sit in silence--except for the always pervasive breath. Suddenly:

GLADYS

I can't stand it. This...silence...that isn't silent. I can't be here like this.

PATRICIA

So go--

ALICE

What do you want to talk about?

GLADYS

Oh no, no more talking for me. I've learned my lesson--

--to Patricia--

--see, I can learn if I want to! I can change if I care to!

Back to Alice:

No, I'd much rather hear you speak. Or...well, if you wanted to...I mean, if you didn't mind...really Alice, what I'd like is to hear you sing.