

Hand
By Mark Cornell

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Characters:

VIRGINIA, 60s, broken-hearted, bitter,
bossy

BARRY, 60s, in crisis, fed-up

NICK, around 30, a guy's guy, a little
slow

LILA, around 30, pretty, slightly
spoiled

Setting:

A living room.

Lights up on a living room in a modest, middle class home. NICK and LILA sit next to each other on a couch. VIRGINIA sits in an adjacent chair.

NICK

Whoa, that is some story, Mrs. Detler.

VIRGINIA

It was very traumatic, Nick.

LILA

Mom, give it a rest.

NICK

I'll bet it was traumatic. Watching your cousin being eaten by squirrels. Are you kidding me?

VIRGINIA

All that was left of my cousin was a hand.

LILA

I don't know why you tell this story. Your cousin wasn't eaten by squirrels. No one has ever been eaten by squirrels.

VIRGINIA

I'm sorry, Lila, were you there? Did you witness the horror? This is why we avoid city parks.

LILA

Squirrels are not carnivores!

VIRGINIA

Then why did they chow down on my cousin!?

NICK

How did all those squirrels get into your cousin's garage?

VIRGINIA

Her father, my uncle, was a sales rep for Planters and-

NICK

Ooh, I love Planters. McGinley's serves these honey roasted ones. I could scarf a million of them. Oh, and then at happy hour they got these buffalo wings. With this sauce-

LILA

Nick. You're doing it again.

VIRGINIA

Anyway, my uncle stored most of his inventory in the garage. He specialized in macadamia nuts. He had a banner year for sales and the garage was empty. The squirrels were upset.

My cousin and I went out to get some Rocky Road from the deep freeze.

(emotional)

We never saw them coming.

BARRY returns with drinks, puts them on the coffee table.

BARRY

Stop telling that stupid story, Virginia.

VIRGINIA

Death is stupid to you, Barry? I've learned a lot about you recently.

Sitting in a chair opposite her, BARRY gives VIRGINIA a "not now" look.

BARRY

The squirrel thing was 50 years ago.

VIRGINIA

Seems like yesterday to me.

BARRY

That's because you told it yesterday to our new neighbors.

VIRGINIA

I like communicating with people, Barry. Communication builds trust. Unless, of course, the communication is a series of lies, then it does not build trust.

BARRY

I've never lied to you, Virginia.

(to Lila and Nick)

So what did you guys want to talk about?

LILA and NICK look at each other and smile. She grabs his hands.

NICK

Well, Mr. Detler, me and Lila have been going out for, like, three years now...

VIRGINIA

You *have* lied to me, Barry. Our entire marriage is a lie.

NICK

...and, you know, we love each other, uh, a lot.

BARRY

Our marriage is not a lie, Virginia.

NICK

So I wanted to ask you, Mr. Detler, and Mrs. Detler, for your daughter's hand in marriage.

VIRGINIA

It's a fucking lie, Barry! I thought I married a nice, Episcopal man, but instead I got a perverted piece of shit!

Everyone stops.

LILA

Mom? Dad? What the hell is going on?

VIRGINIA

We're getting a divorce.

LILA

What?

VIRGINIA

Turns out your father likes to suck cocks.

LILA

Mom!

BARRY

You should try it sometime, Virginia. Maybe we wouldn't be in this situation if you had.

VIRGINIA

You knew full well when we met that I had severe lockjaw as a child.

BARRY

You'd think with all that communicating you do it would have loosened you up.

LILA

Then it's true?

BARRY

I'm leaving your mother for a young man I met on the internet.

VIRGINIA

He's a Chinese boy. His last name is Ho, which I find pretty fucking appropriate.

LILA

Dad, are you gay?

BARRY

I'm not sure. Define "gay."

VIRGINIA

You, Barry! I define "gay" as you! Y-O-U with a capital U!

LILA

How did this happen?

BARRY

When I lost my knick-knack business, I woke up one morning and I just decided I was going to let it rip.

NICK

(aside, to Lila)

Lila, I'm thinking this ain't such a good time for us.

VIRGINIA

You've already done it, Nick. It's too late. You want my daughter's hand? Let me ask you, are you sexually aroused by boys?

LILA

Mom, for God's sake.

BARRY

Ho is 22, Virginia, he's not a boy.

VIRGINIA

Well, Nick? Tell us the truth, if you're capable of it.

NICK

Uh, no, boys don't do it for me.

VIRGINIA

Are you sure? Were you turned on by *Lord of the Flies*?

NICK

Uh, what's that?

LILA

It's a book, Nick. *Jesus*.

BARRY

Virginia is bitter, Nick. Always has been. Her mother was the same. It's a genetic thing. If you detect it in Lila, run for the hills.

NICK

(aside, to Lila)

I told you I wanted to do this through email. We could be at the Steelers game right now.

LILA

You can't do everything by email, Nick.

VIRGINIA

She's right, Nick.

LILA

Sometimes you have to talk.

VIRGINIA

Right again. Because the last thing you want to happen, Lila, is to go into your husband's email and find out he's sending a fleet of anal beads to Shanghai.

LILA

Mom, gross!

BARRY

I didn't tell you about Ho because I was sparing you the pain, Virginia.

VIRGINIA

Oh? How'd that work out?

BARRY

You snooped. You're a snooper.

VIRGINIA

I went into your email, Barry, because the night previous I found a fortune cookie from a restaurant called "Hung Lo" in your dirty underwear.

(to Lila and Nick)

Here's what I'm thinking. You two have my blessing. Furthermore, Lila, you can have my engagement ring. In fact, you can have it right now.

BARRY

Don't be ridiculous, Virginia.

VIRGINIA tries to take it off. Can't.

LILA

Mom, we can't accept that ring.

VIRGINIA

I insist.

NICK

Mrs. Detler, with all due respect, I think emotions are a little raw right now and-

VIRGINIA

Shut up, Nick, and help me get this ring off. I don't need the ring anymore. You need one, right? I want you to have it. Just pull, please.

VIRGINIA pushes her hand at him and
NICK reluctantly start pulling.

BARRY

That is my mother's ring, Virginia.

VIRGINIA

Your mother was a steel-plated bitch. Pull harder, Nick!

He does.

BARRY

I am invoking the obey clause in our marriage contract! I
forbid you to give them that ring!

VIRGINIA

Well, I forbid you to diddle hairless Asian boys! Oh, wait,
too late! We're getting a divorce anyway, so fuck off,
Barry! PULL, NICK!

NICK yanks hard.

VIRGINIA (cont'd)

Ow!

LILA

Nick, you're hurting her!

NICK

I almost got it!

BARRY

You're insane, Virginia!

VIRGINIA

Ow!

NICK

I can feel it slipping!

VIRGINIA

Stop! You're pulling off my finger!

NICK

BUT IT'S COMING!

VIRGINIA

Stop! STOP!! Stoooooooooooooooooooooop!!

VIRGINIA screams as the ring is
dislodged from her finger. She falls
backwards against her chair. NICK
falls the other way.

NICK
Yeah, baby!

BARRY
Are you OK, honey?

VIRGINIA
I think my finger's broken.

LILA
Nick, what is the matter with you?!

NICK
What'd I do? She told me to pull it off.

VIRGINIA
(weeping)
My hand is mangled.

BARRY
Let me see it.

LILA
Nick, she told you to stop! Don't you understand "stop?!"
Oh, that's right, you don't!

NICK
Oh, I understand stop, Lila. What I don't understand is
"stop, don't stop, stop, don't stop-"

LILA
At least I give signals! All you do is grunt!

NICK
That's a pretty clear signal, don't you think?

LILA
If you're a gorilla!

LILA mocks NICK by acting like a
gorilla.

VIRGINIA
(emotional)
I love this hand.

BARRY
You love it?

VIRGINIA
Barry, I have a confession to make.

BARRY
What?

VIRGINIA

This is not my real hand. This is my cousin's hand. The squirrels ate *my* hand, and the doctors were able to put my cousin's hand in its place.

NICK

(re: Lila's gorilla charade)

You probably don't want to hear this, Lila, but I'm a little turned on right now.

LILA

(ending the act)

You're disgusting!

BARRY

Why didn't you tell me, Virginia?

VIRGINIA

You never noticed the scars on my wrist? Or the fact that my left hand is half-Columbian?

NICK

You didn't think I was disgusting last night when you were sitting on my face!

LILA

I didn't have to look at you!

NICK

Yeah, well, look at this!

He gives her the finger. She gasps.

BARRY

For thirty years I've been knee-deep in knick-knacks. I'm sorry. I was blind. But you should have told me.

VIRGINIA

I was afraid if I told you the truth about this hand, that you'd think I was deformed and not want to be with me.

LILA

I don't know what I'm thinking marrying you, Nick!

NICK

Well, no one says you got to, Lila!

He holds up the ring.

NICK (cont'd)

You want the ring or not?

LILA

So romantic! I feel swept off my feet!

NICK

Fuck it. I'm outta here.

He puts the ring on the coffee table.

NICK (cont'd)

Where's my coat?

NICK looks for his coat.

BARRY

We can't have secrets, Virginia.

BARRY and VIRGINIA embrace.

VIRGINIA

I love you, Barry!

BARRY

I love you, Virginia! I've never stopped loving you!

LILA trails NICK as he heads for the door.

LILA

Nick, you walk out that door and we are through!

NICK

Yeah? What if I run out?

LILA

Asshole!

NICK

Ah, there it is. I ain't heard it all day. Like sweet music. Oh, and one more thing, you're fired.

LILA gasps again.

NICK (cont'd)

That's right. You're dead to me. I can hire another greeter for the hotel.

He finds his coat by the door and puts it on.

LILA

You don't have the authority to fire me! You work in the landscaping department!

NICK

I'm pretty friendly with your supervisor. He always says "hello" to me and shakes my hand.

LILA

He's a greeter, too, you moron!

NICK

Goodbye, Lila! I hope you have fifty cents for the bus!

LILA

I hope you have fifty cents to go fuck yourself!

NICK raises his hand to her.

LILA (cont'd)

Don't you dare raise your hand to me!

She hits him.

LILA (cont'd)

Ow! My hand! Neanderthal!

NICK exits. LILA trails him.

VIRGINIA

I'm a little worried about those two.

BARRY

They'll be fine. As long as they are open and honest with each other.

VIRGINIA

I'm not my mother, Barry. I wasn't always bitter.

BARRY

And I wasn't always interested in Chinese boys. I just didn't know who I was without my knick-knacks.

VIRGINIA

For years, I felt so much resentment because it seemed like you chose the knick-knacks over me.

BARRY

Goddamn knick-knacks.

VIRGINIA

I don't want to lose you.

BARRY

I am so sorry I hurt you. I should have paid more attention to you.

VIRGINIA

And I you.

BARRY grabs the ring and gets down on one knee.

BARRY

Virginia, will you marry me? Again?

VIRGINIA

I will.

He puts the ring back on her finger.

BARRY

Come on. Let's go compose an email to Ho.

They exit arm-in-arm. Lights fade.

THE END