

GAYLE. Nope. I got it. It's not heavy. *(She returns with an ENORMOUS bunch of HUGE red bags full of love. The bags should be filled with clothes or towels [for a little bit of weight and stability] and foam or pillow stuffing [for shape, and to keep them soundless]. She dumps the bags on the floor.)* Here you go.

LENDALL. *(Truly puzzled, referring to the bags of love.)* And this is ... ?

GAYLE. *(Exiting.)* All the love you gave me, yeah.

LENDALL. Wow. *(Beat.)* That's a lot.

GAYLE. *(Returning with more bags of love.)* Yeah. *(She exits.)*

LENDALL. Whole lot.

GAYLE. Yeah. *(She returns with even more bags of love. There is now a GIGANTIC pile of love in Lendall's living room.)*

LENDALL. Wow. What the heck am I gonna do with all this? I mean ... I don't know if I have room.

GAYLE. *(Upset.)* I'm sure you'll find a place for it *(I.e., another woman.)* ... And now, I think it's only fair for you to give me mine back because ... I want it back. *(Beat.)* All the love I gave to you?

LENDALL. Yeah?

GAYLE. I want it back. *(Beat.)* So go get it. *(Lendall doesn't move. He's probably trying to figure out what is happening and why it's happening.)* Lendall, go get it. *(Lendall still doesn't move.)* Please. *(Lendall still doesn't move.)* Now!!!

LENDALL. *(A little shaken; a little at a loss.)* Okay. *(Lendall exits. Gayle sits in the chair and waits. She's still in a state. Long beat. Lendall returns ... with a teeny-tiny little bag — a little red pouch — and places it on a little table next to the chair. They look at the little bag. The little bag should be between Lendall and Gayle. And Gayle should be between the many bags of love and the little bag of love.)*

GAYLE. What is that?

LENDALL. *(It's obvious — it's exactly what she asked for.)* It's all the love you gave me.

GAYLE. That's — ...? That is *not* — . There is no way — ... That is *not* — . *(Mortified.)* Is that all I gave you?

LENDALL. It's all I could find ...

GAYLE. Oh. Okay. *(Taking in the little bag ... and then at all the big bags.)* Okay. *(And she's crying.)*

LENDALL. Gayle ... What's goin' on, here?

GAYLE. I told you: We're done.

LENDALL. Why do you keep saying that?

GAYLE. Because —. *(This is hard to say, but has to be said.)*

Because when I asked you if you ever thought we were gonna get married — remember when I asked you that? (*Lendall doesn't seem to want to remember.*) In December? ... It was snowing?

LENDALL. (*But he remembers.*) Yeah.

GAYLE. Yeah, well, when I asked you ... *that*, you got so ... *quiet*. And everybody said that that right there // shoulda told me everything.

LENDALL. Everybody *who*?

GAYLE. Everybody!

LENDALL. Who?

GAYLE. ... Marvalyn >

LENDALL. *Marvalyn?!?* Marvalyn said that, like she's an expert?

GAYLE. said — yes, Marvalyn, yes, said that how quiet you got was all I needed to know, and she's right: You don't love me.

LENDALL. What — ? Gayle, no!

GAYLE. Shh! And I've been trying to fix that, I've tried to *make* you love me by giving you every bit of love I had, and now ... I don't have any love for *me* left, and that's ... that's not good for a person ... and ... that's why I want all the love I gave you back, because I wanna bring it with me.

LENDALL. Where are you going?

GAYLE. I need to get away from things.

LENDALL. What — ? What things?! There aren't any things in this town to get away from!

GAYLE. Yes there are: You!

LENDALL. Me?

GAYLE. Yes. *You* are the things in this town I need to get away from because I have to think and start over, and so: all the love I gave to you? I want it back, in case I need it. Because I can't very well go around giving *your* love — 'cause that's all I have right now, is the love *you* gave *me* — I can't very well go around giving *your* love to other guys, 'cause // that just doesn't seem right —

LENDALL. Other *guys*? There are other guys?!?

GAYLE. No, not yet, but I'm assuming there will be.

LENDALL. Gayle —

GAYLE. Shh!!! So I think — . I think that, since I know now that you're not ready to do what comes next for people who have been together for quite a long time (*I.e., get married.*), I think we're gonna be done, >

LENDALL. Why? Gayle — !

GAYLE. and so, I think the best thing we can do, now, is just

return the love we gave to each other, and call it ... (*Taking in the bags — the pathetic one that contains the love she gave him, and the awesome several that contain the love he gave her.*) ... even. (*It's not "even" at all.*) Oh, Jeezum Crow, is that really all the love I gave you, Lendall? I mean, I thought — . I mean, what kind of person am I if this is all the love I gave y — ... No ... n-n-no! (*Fiercely.*) I know I gave you more than that, Lendall, I know it! (*She thinks. Collects herself. New attack.*) Did you lose it?

LENDALL. What?!? // No, Gayle, no!

GAYLE. Did you *lose* it, Lendall? 'Cause I know I gave you more than that, and I think you're pulling something on me, and this is not a good time to be pulling something on me!

LENDALL. I'm not. Pulling something on you. I wouldn't do that to you ... Just — I think — ... Gosh — ... (*Not mean; just at a loss.*) I think maybe you should just take what you came for, and I guess I'll see you later. (*This is pretty final. He exits into the rest of the house.*)

GAYLE. (*Realization of the finality; calls him, weakly.*) Lendall ... Lendall ... (*Now Gayle is at a loss. But this is what she wants. She looks at the little bag, takes it, and is about to leave. But curiosity stops her. She sits in the chair, opens the bag, and examines what's inside.*)

Lendall!? What is this? What the heck is this, Lendall? This is *not* the love I gave you, Lendall, at least have the decency to give me back what — . Lendall, what is this?

LENDALL. (*From off.*) It's a ring, Gayle.

GAYLE. What?

LENDALL. (*Returning.*) It's a ring.

GAYLE. What? Well, what the — ? (*She takes what is in the bag out of the bag.*) This isn't — . This is *not* — ... (*Realizes it's a ring box.*) Oh, Lendall, this is a ring! Is this a ... *ring*? A ring that you give to someone you've been with for quite a long time if you want to let them know that you're ready for what comes next for people who have been together for quite a long time...?

LENDALL. Yup.

GAYLE. Oh ... (*She opens the box, sees the ring.*) Oh! (*Beat.*) But ... all the love I gave to you? Where is it?

LENDALL. It's right there, Gayle. (*Referring to the ring.*)

GAYLE. But —

LENDALL. It's right there.

GAYLE. But —

LENDALL. It *is*! That's it! Right there! There was so much of it

— you gave me so much, over the years —

GAYLE. *Eleven.*

LENDALL. — over the eleven // years —

GAYLE. *Eleven, yeah.*

LENDALL. — yeah, you gave me so much ... that I didn't know what to do with it all. I had to put some in the garage, some in the shed. I asked my dad if he had any suggestions what to do with it all, and he said, "You got a ring yet?" I said, "No." And he said, "Get her one. It's time. When there's that much of that stuff comin' in, that's about the only place you can put it." (*Beat.*) He said it'd all fit. (*I.e., in the ring. Beat.*) And he was right. (*Beat. They look at the ring. Then, simply:*) That thing is a lot bigger than it looks ... (*Beat.*) So, there it is. All the love you gave me. Just not in the same ... form as when you gave it.

GAYLE. Yeah. (*Beat.*)

LENDALL. You still want it back?

GAYLE. Yes. I do.

LENDALL. Well, then ... take it.

GAYLE. (*She takes the ring out of the box. Then, referring to all the bags of love:*) Can I keep all that?

LENDALL. It's yours.

GAYLE. Thank you. (*Lendall takes the ring, puts it on Gayle's finger. Music.*) Lendall — ... You didn't have to get me a ring. That's not what I was asking —

LENDALL. Yes I did. It was time. And it's honorable.

GAYLE. Well ... it's very beautiful. (*Beat.*) Lendall — ... I'm so sorry. It's just — it's a Friday night, and I was sittin' home all by myself — we didn't even go out or anything, and I started thinkin' that that's just not right, and —

LENDALL. Shh. (*Into a kiss. And a hug. After a moment — still in the hug, and unbeknownst to Lendall — Gayle can't help herself but to take a good long look at that ring. Lights fade on Gayle and Lendall hugging and swaying — two small people in love, underneath a big, spectacular, star-lit northern night sky. Transitional aurora. End of "Getting It Back." End of Act One. Fade to black. Intermission. After the intermission, we move to what I'm calling the ...*