

A Shot in the Dark

By

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CHARACTERS

CARSON Young professional coming off a recent divorce. 30s.

CAROLINE Carson's older sister. Also coming off a recent divorce from a wealthy man. 30s.

JEFFERY Carson's best friend. A charismatic high energy high school English teacher. 30s.

LIZ Caroline's best friend. A sarcastic corporate drone. Exceptionally bright and good looking...and in love with Carson. 30s.

MEGAN Carson's ex-wife. 30s.

SETTING

At various locales throughout Chicago. Present.

BRIEF SYNOPSIS

On the one year anniversary of his divorce, Carson's world is thrown into a tailspin when he gets some shocking news. Forced to face his future and come to terms with his past, A Shot in the Dark is a fast-paced raw look at the curve balls that life tends to throw. (2M, 3F ~ 100 mins).

Scene 1

(Late night. Four friends are wrapping up a dinner party celebrating the anniversary of CAROLINE and CARSON's separate divorces. CAROLINE's best friend LIZ, and CARSON's best friend JEFFERY are present as well. All four have been drinking but are not by any means drunk. The conversation flows quickly and often overlaps. Any insults are given and taken with good humor unless otherwise noted.)

JEFFERY

I'm just saying that it's very strange.

CARSON

It's not strange.

LIZ

It happens all the time.

JEFFERY

No it doesn't. People always say that. It never happens, that's the point. That's why something is strange Liz; because it rarely if ever happens. Maybe in St. Louis the post office has enough time to personally visit all twelve residents, but in Chicago—

LIZ

Whatever. Your pizza sucks.

JEFFERY

Cutting a pizza in squares is not a style!

LIZ

Neither is piling crap on a hot dog—

JEFFERY

Quit trying to change the subject 52nd city.

LIZ

Memo to Chicago - the mustache went out in 1979.

JEFFERY

Whatever slave state. Caroline, sweet Chicagoan Caroline, do you or do you not receive junk mail nearly every single day?

CAROLINE

Pretty much.

CARSON

Just agree with him so he'll shut up. I can't handle any more St. Louis crap.

JEFFERY

If Liz'll just admit that St. Louis hemorrhages more population than that little Russian prince Anastasia or whatever.

LIZ

Anastasia? Really? That's your pro-Chicago argument?

JEFFERY

Whatever, St. Louis is like Robert Redford.

LIZ

And that's supposed to be an insult?

CARSON

Oh God, I don't want a repeat of the Dennis Hopper-Robert Redford debate.

JEFFERY

Don't get me started on Redford.

CARSON

You're really going to argue for Hopper?

LIZ

Please don't make us relive this.

JEFFERY

Caroline, I know you are on my side here.

CAROLINE

About Robert Redford, St. Louis or your mail?

JEFFERY

The mail.

LIZ

Caroline, please tell this man that he's an idiot.

CAROLINE

I think it's a little strange, but that doesn't mean-

LIZ

I should have known.

JEFFERY

You're just too cold to realize-

LIZ

I'm too cold? You're too stupid. It's mail. What's there to be cold about? What kind of argument is that? I'm too cold.

JEFFERY

A very good one lesbian.

LIZ

Are you guys listening to this asshole? I'm too cold to understand why this guy doesn't get any mail?

JEFFERY

Then you explain it to me your benevolence.

LIZ

You aren't using that word properly. Aren't you an English teacher?

JEFFERY

I'm drunk. Someone tell me why I don't get mail!

CARSON

You have no friends.

JEFFERY

Thank you Carson.

CAROLINE

I don't really like you either Jeffery.

LIZ

I think we all know I can't stand you.

JEFFERY

Fuck you very much everyone. But seriously, someone please explain to me why I haven't gotten one piece of mail in over three weeks.

CAROLINE

Maybe your mailman is stealing your mail.

LIZ

Maybe he's in love with you.

CARSON

You are a very attractive man.

LIZ

Didn't he leave you little notes when you moved in?

CARSON

Oh my god. Your mailman is single-white-femaling you.

JEFFERY

Great. That's fabulous. If I wind up with a high-heel through my forehead tomorrow you're all my witnesses.

LIZ

We can't be your witnesses if we aren't there. How do you function?

JEFFERY

You know what I mean MetroLink.

LIZ

Did you give him a Christmas tip?

JEFFERY

Who do you think I am? Carson? I gave the guy a bottle of Johnny Walker. Black. That shit's aged twelve years.

CARSON

I tip my mailman.

CAROLINE

You barely tip waiters.

JEFFERY

No offense, but you're a fucking cheapass Carson. Am I using that word properly Liz?

LIZ

Do we have anymore wine?

CAROLINE

Let me go check.

(She exits into the kitchen.)

CARSON

There should be a bottle under the sink.

JEFFERY

Why do you have a bottle of wine under the sink?

CARSON

Because it was there when I moved in.

LIZ

Oh, breaking out the good stuff, eh Carson? Are we really drunk enough to pawn off your sink wine on us?

JEFFERY

You drink Budweiser.

LIZ

You drink Old Pyle.

CARSON

I bought three bottles, but I guess I forgot what a lush you are Liz.

LIZ

You wish.

JEFFERY

Can we please get back to my mail?

LIZ/CARSON

No.

JEFFERY

It's weird. No bills, no junk mail, no letters. Nothing. For three weeks. I'm not even getting mail at work. No flyers, memos, announcements. You're telling me that's not strange?

CAROLINE

(Re-enters with wine.)

Who wants some of Carson's sink brew? It's been aged with bleach, Windex and some strange green bottle for exactly one year.

LIZ

Right here.

JEFFERY

They must know something. There is too much information going through that place for them not to know anything. They probably know more than the CIA. It's like they know something bad is going to happen to me and they're stopping my mail.

CARSON

That's pretty nice of them.

LIZ

This wine sucks Carson.

CARSON

Blame the previous occupants.

CAROLINE

At least you won't have to pay your bills for the last month of your life.

JEFFERY

This isn't funny you guys.

LIZ

Shut up Jeffery. Nobody cares about your mail. We are here to celebrate the freedom of the Carlson kids.

CARSON/CAROLINE

Thank you...thank you...

LIZ

For on this day exactly one year ago, our beloved Carson Carlson, after four years, five months and seventeen-

CARSON

Eighteen.

LIZ

My apologies. And eighteen days of persistent pettiness, bitchiness and all-around whoredness-

JEFFERY

I didn't know you were married to Liz-

LIZ

He wishes, signed the papers freeing him from his loveless marriage to the whore.

JEFFERY

(As a toast.)

To the whore!

ALL

(They drink.)

The whore.

LIZ

As if that were not enough. In a strange twist of the cosmos, stranger even than Jeffery not getting mail for two days-

JEFFERY

It's been three weeks lesbian.

LIZ

-our beloved Caroline Carlson, wiser and beautiful older sister of Carson, precisely forty-three minutes after her brother was put back on the shelf of singlehood, also freed herself from the chains of matrimony ending her indentured servitude to Walter.

JEFFERY

To the...did we ever have a nickname for Walter?

CAROLINE

Walter.

JEFFERY

To the Walter!

ALL

The Walter.

LIZ

Speech. Speech.

CARSON

Okay, okay. On behalf of my sister, the lovely and talented Caroline—take a bow sweetheart—who looked after me as we were growing up, failed to set me up with any of her friends in high school or college, and who warned me about the whore—

ALL

The whore!

CARSON

I'd like to thank you for coming over to my new bachelor pad to drink my wine, eat my food, and complain about your mail service.

JEFFERY

It's the least we could do.

LIZ

Hey, at least you guys have been married.

CAROLINE

'Tis better to have failed at marriage than to have never married at all.

JEFFERY

Is that Yeats?

CARSON

She just made it up you jackass.

LIZ

Seriously, quit your job.

JEFFERY

Quit your job.

CAROLINE

I think I'd rather not have gotten married in the first place.

LIZ

God, I'd totally rather be a divorcée than a never been married thirty something.

JEFFERY

I believe the proper term is bitch. But you might want to check your dictionary to make sure I'm using that word properly.

LIZ

Shut up you moron. I'd check a thesaurus.

JEFFERY

Are you listening to this? I'd check my thesaurus? No wonder you're still single.

LIZ

Ten championships. What's the Cubs tally? 1908 anyone?

JEFFERY

Whatever. At least our players aren't gay.

CARSON

If only I'd listened to my parents.

JEFFERY

And your best friend. I told you that bitch was a whore.

LIZ

You think every woman that doesn't want to sleep with you is-

JEFFERY

And I think we just established-

LIZ

I'm an exception.

JEFFERY

Of course if you wanted to retire to the bathroom for ten minutes perhaps you could be my gateway to the west.

LIZ

How romantic. Who said chivalry was dead?

CAROLINE

I remember the first knight who I went down on in a bathroom. Jimmy Henderson.

CARSON

You gave Jimmy Henderson a blowjob?

LIZ

Who didn't?

JEFFERY

I fuckin' hated Jimmy Henderson. God, I always wanted to kick his ass. What a little faggot.

LIZ

Do you have any redeeming qualities?

CAROLINE

How could he be gay if I went down on him?

LIZ

Maybe you're the faggot.

CARSON

What an asshole. He was my friend. He was supposed to ask my permission before going after my sister.

LIZ

Are you serious?

CAROLINE

We were fifteen. Get over it Carson.

JEFFERY

He broke guy code. However stupid or silly or what-have-you, it is still code to ask the brother for permission. You want chivalry, here it is.

LIZ

How come everyone's first blowjob was with a kid named Jimmy? Nobody ever does it with like a Hank or Robert or something. Who was your first Jeffery?

JEFFERY

Arthur Stephens.

CARSON

Okay, this is getting weird.

JEFFERY

What? He would have been gentle.

CARSON

Would have or was?

JEFFERY

Fuck you Carson, what kind of queer name is that.

LIZ

You're really stupid Jeffery. I pray for your students. I meant who was the first girl. Although Arthur is a good name for an inaugural BJ.

JEFFERY

I was just fucking with you guys.

CAROLINE

It's always the most homophobic who turn out to be the closet queens.

JEFFERY

I will fuck both of you right now if you want me to.

LIZ

Is this going to be in the bathroom too? Cause it's kind of small in there, have you thought about the logistics-

JEFFERY

I'll think about your logistics.

CARSON

On that note, it's like three in the morning. I think it's time to call it a night.

CAROLINE

You're not going to call Megan are you?

JEFFERY

The whore!

ALL

The whore.

CARSON

No. I'd like to get some sleep seeing as how I have to be at work in like three hours.

JEFFERY

By the way, we all know that you call her constantly and have seen her fifteen times in the last three months alone. I just thought I'd throw that out there.

CARSON

What are you talking about?

JEFFERY

Stop being such a fucking girl. Do you not remember Megan flying on her broomstick? I'm mean, seriously? Are you kidding me man? It took all my strength to not kill that whore.

LIZ/CAROLINE/JEFFERY

The whore!

CARSON

We just have a few things to discuss.

JEFFERY

Do not treat me like a child.

LIZ

I know it's hard not to Carson, but he's got a point.

CAROLINE

You need to stop seeing her Carson.

JEFFERY

You need to fuck a Thai hooker or something and move on.

LIZ

That's your advice? A Thai hooker?

JEFFERY

What's your advice your benevolence?

CARSON

You guys, I'm not secretly seeing Megan.

CAROLINE

Look at how miserable you are. This is her fault Carson.

CARSON

Will you guys stop treating me like I'm in junior high?

LIZ

God, men were perfect in junior high. Sure they were a little awkward and gangly, but all they wanted was foreplay. Just hours of uninhibited foreplay that would

only lead to more foreplay. And we turned them down. Now I'm lucky if I get ten minutes. Mark my words, my daughter will not make the same mistakes as I did.

CARSON

You'll be an excellent mother Liz, and probably a very young grandmother. But for now, if you'd please leave.

(The phone starts ringing.)

JEFFERY

Looks like somebody isn't making any friends in his new building.

CARSON

Just let it ring. It's probably the old lady downstairs.

CAROLINE

You don't know her name?

CARSON

Why should I?

LIZ

Because she's your neighbor. You've lived here for a year Carson. Jesus you're oblivious.

CARSON

No I'm not.

JEFFERY

Dude, it took you like three months to figure out that your dog died when you were a kid.

CARSON

How come nobody ever told me?

CAROLINE

That better not be Megan.

CARSON

It's not Megan!

JEFFERY

He's too pathetic. She still has all of the power. He only calls her. Now will you fucking answer it? It's giving me a wicked headache.

CARSON

This is all your fault. I want you all to take responsibility.

LIZ

Answer the phone.

CARSON

(On the phone.)

Hello? I'm sorry. Yes, I'm Mr. Carlson.

ALL

(Loud whispers.)

The whore. It's the whore.

Is that your Thai hooker?

CARSON

Would you guys shut up?

ALL

Sorry Mr. Carlson.

CARSON

Look I don't want any okay...what? I'm sorry. What did you say?

CAROLINE

(Getting more serious.)

Who is it Carson?

Carson.

CARSON

Are you sure you have the right number...Yes, that's me. Look is this some sort of joke. Are you Megan's new boyfriend?

JEFFERY

The whore!

(CARSON keeps going.)

What the fuck you guys. He said the whore.

CARSON

I'm...what? What's going on? Who is this?

CAROLINE

Carson, Carson! Give me the phone.

(She takes the phone from him.)
Hello. This is Caroline Carlson...yes.

CARSON
My parents are dead.
(Lights fade out.)

Scene 2

(The next day, very early morning. JEFFERY and CARSON are at a morgue. CARSON has just identified his parents' bodies.)

JEFFERY

These Danishes aren't too bad. You sure you don't want one?

CARSON

No thanks.

JEFFERY

You're gonna kick yourself later if you don't have one.

CARSON

Jeffery, please.

JEFFERY

(He places a plate of Danishes next to Carson.)

Well I got a plate of them for you, so I'll just leave it here. And when you're ready you just pick one up and eat it. No judgment. Whenever you're ready. They've got doughnuts too, but I thought you'd like a Danish.

CARSON

Don't you have to go to work?

JEFFERY

It's Casimir Pulaski day.

CARSON

Don't you ever work?

JEFFERY

Hey man, I told you to become a teacher, but you let the whore crush your dreams and get you that job stealing money from old people.

CARSON

I don't steal-

JEFFERY

If that helps you sleep at night.

CARSON

I investigate fraudulent claims. Look, could we not do this now?

JEFFERY

All you used to talk about was going to LA to make it in television. You even wrote those fake episodes of Family Ties. Those were good man. Elise Keaton, fuck man. I always had a thing for her when we were growing up. And that show you wrote about the moron English teacher—that was hilarious man.

CARSON

Not now—

JEFFERY

You should get back into it man. It's what they wanted. Fuck, I'll go with you if you're too big of a pussy to go by yourself. This is your chance man. I'm just saying I don't know too many writers working for the government. I mean how many people are really trying to swindle the Social Security Administration anyway? Like two.

CARSON

Lots of people—

JEFFERY

If you don't go now you're—

CARSON

My parents shot each other, okay? I just had to identify their bodies. Could you please shut the fuck up!

(Pause.)

JEFFERY

Now that is certifiably strange.

CARSON

It certainly is.

JEFFERY

I always thought your parents were cool, but what a fucking blaze of glory man. My parents would never do something like this. Never. It took them five years to decide to get a dog.

CARSON

A blaze of glory? You are aware that they're dead, right? That my parents are dead? That I'll never see them again? Never get to tell them what I needed to tell them? Could you not say how cool that is in front of their only son?

JEFFERY

I'm sorry Carson, but I think that in its own sick way it's romantic.

CARSON

Romantic?

JEFFERY

Sure. It's a beautiful form of self expression. It's uninhibited free will. It's the ultimate fuck-the-establishment. Your parents are totally punk man. That's awesome.

CARSON

You're an idiot.

JEFFERY

Fuck you.

CARSON

Fuck you.

(He picks up the Danish.)

JEFFERY

I knew you'd come around.

CARSON

Who is Casimir Pulaski anyway?

JEFFERY

Polish exile. Revolutionary War hero. Father of the American cavalry.

CARSON

Really?

JEFFERY

Really.

CARSON

Huh.

I never knew that.

JEFFERY

Yup.

(Pause.)

This is fucking bizarre. I cannot believe that we are sitting here right now.

CARSON

I know.

JEFFERY

Murder-suicide. You're fucking parents man. Wow. I wonder who did the shooting?

CARSON

Double suicide. Not murder-

JEFFERY

It had to be your dad.

CARSON

(Chuckling.)

Mom would have just shot him and then gone out to the movies.

JEFFERY

Right there. That's the difference between men and women.

CARSON

I can't believe this. Parents don't do this. They die in nursing homes or in Florida. Or...in nursing homes in Florida.

JEFFERY

My parents moved to Arizona.

CARSON

As unbelievable and insane as the whole situation is - I mean, I'm still waiting to wake up and go to work - I can't fathom why they did it. Was one of them sick or something? Did Mom have cancer? She always said she didn't want to be a burden, but...Jesus. You don't have to shoot yourself.

JEFFERY

It could have been anything. Hell, your Dad could have been cheating on her. He always was a charmer. Maybe they signed

a pact on their wedding day. Maybe they always secretly hated each other. I don't know.

CARSON

Why didn't they just get a divorce?

JEFFERY

Who gets a divorce when they're seventy? How sad would that be?

CARSON

You're right Jeffery, not as sad as killing each other. I don't know why I brought it up. What was I thinking?

JEFFERY

I'm serious man, forty-three years is a long time. You of all people should know. You barely made it four years.

CARSON

Thank you Jeffery.

JEFFERY

I'm just saying that forty-three years is a long time to be in love with someone and see them every fucking day. Forty three years, man we haven't even been alive that long, let alone with someone that long. Think about it. Marriage evolved when people only lived to be like forty if they were royalty. Ten-fifteen years of marriage is no problem; present company excepted. Perfect length. I'm telling you, God never intended for people to live so fucking long.

CARSON

God, I'm exhausted. Could you please shut up?

JEFFERY

Take the Cubs. I love the Cubs. Cherish the Cubs. I'd give anything to see them win. Fuck! I've ended relationships because of the Cubs. I didn't speak to my brother for two years because of the Cubs. I lost a job because of the Cubs. I boycotted the Tribune because they refused to put a decent team on the field. I don't boycott anything. I probably would have still ridden buses in Birmingham because I'm too fucking lazy to walk. Suffice it to say, Carson, that my life is heavily invested in this baseball team. But they only play a hundred and sixty-two games right, roughly half the year. And even then I don't watch every game. I mean who gives a shit about Cincinnati and

Pittsburgh? Then you add in holidays, social engagements, vacation and what not, that knocks it down to say a hundred games a year, and that's in a good year. So the Cubs, my oldest and truest love is only capable of my love and attention about a third of the year. Roll that over.

CARSON

Will you please shut up?

JEFFERY

I'm just trying to give you some perspective.

CARSON

I just can't believe this. I mean, is this really happening?

JEFFERY

I know man, it's pretty surreal.

CARSON

This is all just to get back at me and Megan. I know it is.

JEFFERY

Damn you take yourself too seriously. I know this is shocking Carson, but your parents had a life outside of you.

CARSON

You wouldn't know it by how much they called me.

JEFFERY

And for the record they hated Megan more than anyone. For Christ's sake Carson, they told you not to marry her.

CARSON

No they didn't.

JEFFERY

You said so yourself last night. Don't you know anything about your parents?

CARSON

I know that they adored Megan.

JEFFERY

I guarantee you there are things about those two people that you never knew—never would have even guessed—that go

way beyond Megan. Haven't you figured out that we don't know each other at all? Hell, it takes most people a lifetime to figure themselves out. We don't have time to untangle the mysteries of our friends. We hang out because I like the fake Carson and you like the fake Jeffery. We barely know anything about each other, and all that we do know is from observation. I'm telling you if you knew what I was really like you'd move to fucking Mexico. I promise you that this had nothing to do with you.

CARSON

I've been seeing her.

JEFFERY

I know Carson. That's not a confession. Everyone knows. And if you keep seeing her I'll take your father's gun and blow your pathetic brains out.

CARSON

I can't just cut her out of my life Jeffery. She was my wife. We have a history that makes it a little difficult. I mean, I invested almost a decade of my life in this woman, so I'm sorry if I'm not ready to let go just like that.

JEFFERY

Those who forget history are destined to repeat it.

CARSON

What?

JEFFERY

Vietnam? Iraq?

CARSON

What are you talking about?

JEFFERY

Megan is your Vietnam. Pull out, man. Send the boys home.

CARSON

I can't do this right now.

JEFFERY

You can't hide from me Carson.

CARSON

Fine.

What happened to Caroline?

JEFFERY

She's dealing with the funeral home people.

CARSON

God. I should be helping her.

JEFFERY

Relax, she's got Liz with her. If Liz is well suited to deal with anybody it's the dead.

CARSON

Probably.

(Pause.)

JEFFERY

Can I ask you something?

CARSON

What?

JEFFERY

I've been thinking about this for awhile, and I know the timing isn't perfect, but would it be all right if I asked Caroline out?

CARSON

Are you serious?

JEFFERY

I just think we might hit it off. And she could probably use somebody right now.

CARSON

My parents just killed themselves and you ask me if you can go out with my sister?

JEFFERY

Well I wasn't gonna ask but then you made such a big deal about Jimmy what's-his-name that I figured I should ask.

CARSON

No.

JEFFERY

No? Come on man.

CARSON
She can barely tolerate you.

JEFFERY
That's only because of Liz.

CARSON
Why don't you date Liz? There's so much sexual tension there already.

JEFFERY
I would kill Liz. C'mon.

CARSON
Do whatever you want Jeffery.

JEFFERY
Seriously?

CARSON
I don't care.

JEFFERY
Is that just the dead parents talking? Or are you serious?

CARSON
Jeffery!

(Pause.)

CARSON
I guess the post office got you and my parents mixed up.

JEFFERY
Fuck you man. Maybe they stopped your parents' mail too.

CARSON
Maybe you were supposed to go down with them.

JEFFERY
And maybe Redford is half the actor that Hopper is.

CARSON
I'm too tired, filthy and one-hundred percent correct to have this argument.

JEFFERY

Redford's a one-trick pony Carson, and deep down you know it.

CARSON

Super Mario Brothers.

(He repeats "Super Mario Brothers" during Jeffery's next lines.)

JEFFERY

That's such a weak argument. You can't just say Super Mario Brothers. Redford has no range. He plays the same character over and over again. I mean, how hard is it to be handsome?

CARSON

Super Mario Brothers. End of argument. You cannot say Hopper is better. He was in Super fucking Mario Brothers.

JEFFERY

At least admit that Hoosiers is better than The Natural.

CARSON

Never. And Hopper is a totally secondary character in that movie. What kind of argument is that? And lets not forget how he almost single handedly killed the first season of 24.

JEFFERY

Fuck you.

(Pause.)

CARSON

Super Mario Brothers. You can never trump that.

(Pause.)

JEFFERY

Why are we still sitting here?

CARSON

Because once we leave it's history Jeffery. Once we leave it happened.

JEFFERY

I can go get more Danishes?

CARSON

I don't want another Danish, Jeffery.

(Pause. Lights fade out.)

Scene 3

(A funeral home. CARSON and CAROLINE are in a back alley taking a break. She is smoking.)

CAROLINE

God, our family is so taxing.

CARSON

When I die just throw me in the lake or something. I don't want you to have to go through this again.

CAROLINE

God, I think this is the best cigarette I've ever had. I'm never quitting again.

CARSON

Mom knew that you smoked, you know.

CAROLINE

Bull.

CARSON

She found a pack in the car when we were in high school.

CAROLINE

And you ratted me out?

CARSON

She was going to ground me and I had a date with Jessica Hallyday.

CAROLINE

Jessica Hallyday? She was such a slut.

CARSON

I know.

CAROLINE

I wonder why she never said anything?

CARSON

She said plenty to me about it. I don't think she ever told Dad though.

CAROLINE

Oh God, he would have killed me.

CARSON

And now we know just how serious a charge that is.

CAROLINE

Jesus Christ, Carson. I want to laugh at the absurdity of it, but then I remember that it's our parents in there.

CARSON

They look surprisingly good.

CAROLINE

It's a miracle they were able to have an open casket. Mom must have told Dad not to shoot her in the head.

CARSON

I can just see her now giving him detailed instructions about it.

CAROLINE

"Now I want everyone to be able to see us at the wake, Henry. I'll never live it down with Aunt Helen if those caskets are closed. So just aim right around here."

(They share a chuckle.)

CARSON

Was Mom sick?

CAROLINE

No.

CARSON

Do you think somebody killed them?

CAROLINE

The police said it was pretty open and shut.

CARSON

Do you know something you aren't telling me?

CAROLINE

I wish.

CARSON

Swear?

CAROLINE

I swear. Why would I be hiding something from you?

CARSON

I don't know.

(Pause.)

CARSON

Is Walter coming?

CAROLINE

He's bringing his new bitch. That's pretty f-ing arrogant if you ask me, but that was always Walter's style. Is Megan coming or can she not enter a building with a crucifix?

CARSON

I don't know. I haven't gotten a chance to really talk to her since, well, you know.

CAROLINE

Have you been seeing anybody?

CARSON

No.

CAROLINE

Why not? No Thai hookers?

CARSON

I don't speak the language. It would just get messy.

CAROLINE

Why don't you ask Liz out?

CARSON

Are you kidding?

CAROLINE

Okay, so she's a little...Liz. But that doesn't mean you have to marry her. Just go out and have a good time.

CARSON

I don't think Liz can have a good time. Besides, I need to find somebody new. Who has no connection to Megan.

CAROLINE

Just don't wait too long there loverboy. Maybe you could look up Jessica Hallyday?

CARSON

Maybe she's still a slut.

CAROLINE

Once a slut always a slut.

CARSON

Is that Yeats?

CAROLINE

Frost.

CARSON

What about you?

CAROLINE

Nobody too serious.

CARSON

You know, the other day at the hospital, Jeffery asked me if he could ask you out.

CAROLINE

He did?

CARSON

Yeah.

CAROLINE

The guy certainly lacks tact.

CARSON

I told him to call Liz.

(Pause.)

What? What's with that look?

CAROLINE

What look?

CARSON

That look. Oh God.

CAROLINE

Carson, we've actually been seeing each other for a few months now.

CARSON

You're shitting me.

CAROLINE

No.

CARSON

This is unfucking-believable. Jeffery?

CAROLINE

He can be very endearing.

CARSON

Jeffery? Endearing? How did this happen?

CAROLINE

It just happened.

CARSON

Why didn't you tell me?

CAROLINE

I was gonna tell you the other night, but then, well you know. And it's just been a whirlwind since and I didn't want to upset you anymore. I didn't want you to feel alone and run to Megan.

CARSON

Oh God, will you guys please stop bringing her up? It's hard enough.

CAROLINE

Stop seeing her and we'll stop bringing her up. Do you really think this is what Mom and Dad want for you?

CARSON

Does it really matter now?
I'm not seeing her.

CAROLINE

Who do you think you're fooling? Everyone knows Carson. And quite frankly it's pathetic. I can't stand seeing you like this.

CARSON

At least I'm not sleeping with Jeffery.

CAROLINE

I haven't slept with him yet.

CARSON

Yet. Once a slut always a slut.

CAROLINE

Oh, please.

CARSON

Jesus Christ. Can this get any more bizarre? Jeffery?

CAROLINE

He was there for me when I needed him Carson. Some of us deal with things by talking about them.

CARSON

You couldn't talk to Liz?

CAROLINE

No, I couldn't. I needed someone who was...detached from the situation. I'm trying to move on and get my life back from Walter, Carson. I'm not trying to recapture a past that never existed like you are.

CARSON

For someone who supposedly is moving on you sure bring up my problems a lot.

CAROLINE

Fine. I won't bring up Megan ever again. But that doesn't change the fact that you're a pathetic piece of crap.

CARSON

I get it. Walter's the big shot. Big job. Big money. Big house. I don't think I ever saw him without a tie on. Might as well live in Connecticut. What is further away from that than Jeffery. The moron English teacher. Very clever.

CAROLINE

We're moving in together.

CARSON

What!?!

CAROLINE

He's a very loving person. And he's quite insightful about you.

CARSON

Oh, that's fantastic. I'm glad my problems are bringing you two together. At least some good can come from them.

CAROLINE

Maybe you should listen to him.

CARSON

He told me to start Vietnamization.

CAROLINE

What?

CARSON

Were you ever going to tell me?

CAROLINE

I'm telling you now.

CARSON

Are you that afraid of being alone? Jeffery? It's barely been a year since your divorce Caroline.

CAROLINE

Shit. Here comes Liz. Hey, don't tell her about Jeffery. She'll flip.

CARSON

Who's hiding now?

(LIZ enters.)

CAROLINE

Just shut up.

LIZ

How are you guys doing?

CAROLINE

Good. We just needed a little break from the family.

LIZ

You guys should probably head back in. Your Aunt Helen keeps asking about you. I told Jeffery to head her off, but I don't know how long you can trust a moron.

CARSON

I think we can trust him, don't you Caroline?

CAROLINE

I'll go talk to her.

(She exits.)

LIZ

How are you doing?

CARSON

(Suddenly acutely aware of his sister's suggestion about Liz.)

I'm fine. How are you?

LIZ

Good. Can I get you anything? Some coffee or a Danish or something?

CARSON

No thanks. I had a Danish the other day.

LIZ

Okay.

CARSON

Has Megan come yet?

LIZ

No. But Walter just left. God, don't get me wrong, he was a bastard, but he's very good looking.

CARSON

Yeah.

LIZ

You don't think so?

CARSON

I don't really know.

LIZ

And his new toy can't be more than nineteen. I'll give it to him though, she's gorgeous. They're quite the striking pair.

CARSON

I bet.

LIZ

What is with you Carson? I mean, I know you're at your parents wake and everything, but snap out of it.

CARSON

Sorry.

LIZ

C'mon, our whole relationship is based on talking about Walter and Jeffery. God, that's pathetic. How long have we known each other?

CARSON

Ten years? Fifteen?

LIZ

Do you even know what color my eyes are?

CARSON

I don't even know what color Caroline's eyes are. I assume that they're the same as mine, but I've never really checked.

LIZ

(She covers his eyes.)

Guess.

CARSON

I don't know.

LIZ

Oh c'mon. Quit being such a baby and guess.

CARSON

White.

LIZ

Carson.

CARSON

Hazel.

LIZ

Ding ding ding.

(Pause.)

Listen, I don't want to be too forward and I know that this is totally bizarre, but would you want to get a bite to eat sometime? No pressure, no big deal just you know, get to know each other better?

CARSON

I don't know if I'm ready for that.

LIZ

It's not a date Carson, just a friendship thing. A get out of the house thing.

CARSON

I don't know.

LIZ

Think of it as payback. For when you helped me when my mother died.

CARSON

Can we maybe talk about this another time? I've got too much going on right now. I'm sorry. I'm just having trouble piecing this all together.

LIZ

Sure. Just, let me know.
Um, I'd better go check on your sister.

CARSON

Yeah.

LIZ

You might want to come in for a bit too.

CARSON

I will. I just need a few minutes.

(LIZ exits. Pause. JEFFERY enters.)

JEFFERY

Fuck man, your Aunt Helen is a fucking handful.

(CARSON lunges at JEFFERY.)

JEFFERY

What the fuck are you doing?

CARSON

What the fuck are you doing?

(They struggle for a few moments until CARSON just breaks down and falls to the ground in a lump.)

(Lights fade with Carson lying on the ground.)

Scene 4

(About two weeks later. LIZ and CARSON are at a restaurant on an official friendship date.)

LIZ

You look good Carson.

CARSON

Thanks. My mom got me this shirt for my birthday and I never wore it. Talk about guilt. I've worn it three times since.

LIZ

I meant you. You look...healthier or something.

CARSON

I guess I just needed a few weeks to digest everything.

LIZ

I guess it was a lot to swallow all at once.

CARSON

You could say that.

LIZ

Well, I'm glad that you decided to give me a call.

CARSON

This place is nice. Have you been here before?

LIZ

Once or twice. The duck's overrated.

CARSON

Duck's too greasy for me anyway.

LIZ

Really?

CARSON

Yeah.

LIZ

Well, you're not missing anything.

CARSON

Okay.

(Pause.)

CARSON

So, um, how's your job?

LIZ

It's good.

CARSON

You know, I don't even know what you do.

LIZ

Neither does my boss.

CARSON

Oh yeah?

LIZ

I'm a data processor. Basically I play with numbers until my boss is happy with them. It's not very interesting, and probably illegal, and hardly what I imagined my life would amount to, but it pays the bills and keeps me busy.

CARSON

Fair enough.

LIZ

What about you? Still stealing old people's money?

CARSON

Why does everybody say that? I make sure that old people don't get swindled out of their money.

LIZ

Whatever helps you sleep at night.

CARSON

I've found alcohol more effective than lying to myself about my job.

LIZ

It can be in some cases. Why don't you go back to your old job?

CARSON

I like my job.

LIZ

Oh please. I spend all day pretending to do work. I know someone who hates their job when I see them. Why don't you suck it up and finally make a go of it? What do you have to lose?

CARSON

Why don't you?

(Pause. LIZ hesitates for a moment, seemingly about to say something but thinks better of it. Pause.)

LIZ

Caroline told me you guys went to some group therapy the other day?

CARSON

Yeah.

LIZ

How was that?

CARSON

I don't know. Everyone else had some really crippling story. And at first you're really devastated, and you feel like you shouldn't be there because you're, I don't know, not as bereaved or whatever. But then, I don't know, after like five stories you start trying to make your story sadder than their story. It's this really sick competition. I can't really explain it. I don't think I'm going back next week.

LIZ

Therapy's not for everyone.

(Long pause.)

CARSON

Your hair is nice.

LIZ

Carson, things don't have to be weird.

CARSON
This is weird?

LIZ
Are you kidding me?

CARSON
I haven't been on a date in awhile, so-

LIZ
Carson-

CARSON
Well, it's kind of hard to pretend that everything's okay.

LIZ
It is going to be okay.

CARSON
That's what I hear.

LIZ
Do you remember what you told me when my mother died?

CARSON
No.

LIZ
You said that it was okay to be sad. That I was a strong enough person to get through anything. And that you'd always be there for me when I didn't think I was.

CARSON
Well look at your big strong man now.

LIZ
Believe me Carson. You are better off without her.

CARSON
My mother or Megan?

LIZ
Very funny Carson.

CARSON
I actually feel like shit, so if that's better off then I'm in trouble.

LIZ

As an outside observer, believe me when I tell you that you definitely are better off.

CARSON

I don't know that I'd classify you as an outsider.

(Pause.)

I know this is going to sound dumb, but do you know how depressing it is to wake up alone on Christmas?

LIZ

Yes I do. And that is a pretty shitty reason to stay married to someone that's sucking out your soul. She's like a dementor.

CARSON

High and mighty Liz reads Harry Potter?

LIZ

I like to touch base with the masses.

CARSON

I know it's dumb, but...

LIZ

But what? You know you're pathetic and you just can't say it out loud? I don't get it. Please enlighten me.

CARSON

No. I'm just not sure if I was really ready to end it.

LIZ

(Gesturing toward his temple.)

Carson, you got something there—

CARSON

Did I get it?

LIZ

Not quite.

CARSON

What is it?

LIZ

It looks like, it might be, oh, it says 'I'm a pathetic fucking loser. Please take advantage of me.'
It might just be a hair though.

CARSON

Shut up.

LIZ

You need to stop sneaking around Carson.

CARSON

We're trying to work some things out.

LIZ

You know, most people usually try to work things out before they get divorced.

CARSON

Well we had a little help in that department.

LIZ

I did it for your own good.

CARSON

Did you?

LIZ

And if I remember, I didn't have a gun to your head. No offense.

CARSON

You took advantage of me. You know how I feel.

LIZ

I was helping you.

CARSON

Look at me. Does it look like you were real helpful?

LIZ

That woman was killing you Carson.

CARSON

That woman was my wife.

LIZ

So what?

CARSON

So what? She was my wife and you ruined my life.

LIZ

No. She ruined your life. I saved it. I should get a medal for it. Going above and beyond the call of friendship.

CARSON

Look could we just not talk about it.

LIZ

Why is that your solution for everything?

CARSON

Because it works.

LIZ

Are you kidding me? Look at your life.

CARSON

Thanks Liz. Real classy.

LIZ

I'm sorry, Carson, but honestly you need to stop running away from yourself.

CARSON

I'm just trying to get out of the way.

LIZ

That's a great philosophy.

CARSON

I'm sorry if I'm not taking my life to the extreme Liz, but we can't all turn ourselves off. And last time I looked, your life wasn't so great either. Actually, our lives seem pretty similar to me Liz.

LIZ

Oh please Carson. You are the most unhealthy person I've ever met. I just intimidate men. There's a big difference between us.

CARSON

You keep telling yourself that, Liz.

LIZ

Look, maybe this wasn't such a good idea. I don't think you're ready to be a grown up.

CARSON

I never asked for any of this.

LIZ

So what, Carson? It still happened. So you need to fucking deal with it.

(Pause. She waits for a response.

Nothing.)

I'll see you around Carson.

(She exits. Lights fade.)

Scene 5

(Jeffery & Caroline's apartment, which used to be Jeffery's apartment. It is rather sparsely decorated and more closely resembles a dorm room than an apartment. JEFFERY is sitting on a futon, which is set as a couch watching television. CAROLINE is sitting next to him reading.)

CAROLINE

This is pathetic. You're pathetic you know that? You're a pathetic little child. Will you turn it off? It's like three in the morning. Don't you have to go to work?

JEFFERY

School improvement day.

CAROLINE

School improvement—

JEFFERY

Please let me watch the game in peace. I don't disturb your reading.

CAROLINE

I can't get through a paragraph without—

JEFFERY

This is important.

CAROLINE

Important? It's a baseball game.

JEFFERY

It's more than a baseball game.

CAROLINE

Yeah, it's a baseball game that's five years old. What's the point? Are you some sort of masochist?

JEFFERY

So, you know what's going to happen in your stupid little Pride and Prejudice—

CAROLINE

You don't.

JEFFERY

So?

CAROLINE

This is pathetic.

JEFFERY

I need to purge it from my system. You can go to sleep if you want.

CAROLINE

You watch this game like three times a week.

JEFFERY

And you've read that book about five million times.

CAROLINE

Jeffery, this is really unhealthy.

JEFFERY

It always seems like they're going to win. Three zip, only five outs from the Series. The Cubs in the World Series. What if this time Alou makes the catch? I know it's dumb, but it's possible. Anything's possible. Hell, I would have never guessed that I'd be with Carson's sister and here we are. The lord and the maid. A real Jane Austen novel. Oh fuck, here it comes.

CAROLINE

Would you turn it off?

JEFFERY

I think I'm going to be sick.

CAROLINE

This is ridiculous. That game was like five years ago Jeffery. You need to get over it.

JEFFERY

Take Prior out! Take him out! He's done! Can't you see that? He's wiped, pull him! Pull him! But who the fuck do you put in? They've got shit in the pen. That's the problem all year. Oh fuck I can't watch this.

CAROLINE

I'm going into the other room. Call me when you're ready to be an adult.

JEFFERY

Why couldn't you have gotten a ticket along the first base line? Not like it fucking matters thanks to Alex-fucking-Gonzalez. Piece of shit can't catch a two hopper. Oh fuck. Oh fuck, oh fuck, oh fuck, oh fuck. No! Fuck. No! Jump Moisés! Jump!

(A pause. The Bartman incident has occurred. Jeffery has a quick fit of dry heaves and falls to the ground. Pause.)

CAROLINE

(From the other room.)

Are you finished?

JEFFERY

(To himself. In a fetal position on the floor.)

It all happened so fast. One moment - one split second - exposed what an entire season couldn't; cracked them open and showed them for what they were. Everything crushed in an instant. Next thing you know the Marlins have put up eight runs. It's all over, just like that. I don't want to die before they finally win the Series.

(To Caroline.)

Do you remember where you were when it happened?

(To himself.)

I was with Carson. We were watching the game with fucking Megan. We were supposed to be ball-hawking on Waveland. Instead I'm sitting in a fucking condo in Lincoln Park watching the most important game of my life with fucking Megan. Stupid fucking whore didn't know two players on the team and she's been to more games than I have. I threw up on the bitch though. Right in her fucking face. She just started screaming, fucking puke all over her and her fucking leather couch. Carson didn't do shit. He just sat there. That fucking pissed her off more than the puke. She was demanding that he kick my ass and throw me out and he just sat there. Didn't even look at her. I'd like to think that I'm somehow responsible for their divorce.

(CAROLINE enters. She has obviously been crying.)

JEFFERY

Oh it's okay. I cried too, baby. I'm barely holding the tears back right now. Come here and give me a hug.

CAROLINE

Jeffery! I don't care about your stupid game.

JEFFERY

What's the matter baby?

CAROLINE

Why?

JEFFERY

What?

CAROLINE

I was with my parents.

JEFFERY

When?

CAROLINE

The Bartman game Jeffery? The stupid f-ing game that you watch every night of the week.

JEFFERY

I thought your dad was a Sox fan?

CAROLINE

Shut up Jeffery.

JEFFERY

I'm sorry. I didn't know.

CAROLINE

I'm sorry. This is stupid. I'm sorry. It's stupid.

JEFFERY

No it's not. C'mon, it's okay. I didn't know. I won't watch it ever again.

CAROLINE

It's not like we watched baseball all the time. I don't know why it's making me so upset. I hate baseball. I was

over there because I had a big fight with Walter about having a baby and didn't have anywhere else to go.

JEFFERY

You guys were having a baby?

CAROLINE

I wanted to, but he said no. And that was it. He said no so we didn't have a baby. And then I ran to my parents' house and I thought, maybe Walter's right. Maybe kids aren't all they are cracked up to be. I mean look at me and Carson. No wonder they killed themselves.

JEFFERY

I'm sorry.

CAROLINE

Why did they do it Jeffery?

JEFFERY

I don't know.

CAROLINE

It's so stupid.

JEFFERY

I'm sorry.

CAROLINE

I just want to know.

JEFFERY

Maybe it's okay not to know.

CAROLINE

Shut up Jeffery.

JEFFERY

It's just like the game. Maybe it's for the best that they didn't win. Maybe Bartman did us all a favor. What if something worse woulda happened in the Series? I'm sure they had a reason Caroline, and maybe someday you'll figure it out. And maybe you won't. But maybe it doesn't matter. Fuck, I never know why my parents do half the shit they do, and then sometimes ten years later it makes sense. And sometimes it doesn't. Sometimes you look like there is

nothing between you and the Series, and sometimes you puke all over your best friend's wife.

CAROLINE

I wish I could have seen that.

JEFFERY

It was probably the greatest thing that's ever happened. And it never would have happened if Alou makes that catch.

(Pause.)

I think it's safe to say that we wouldn't be here right now if your parents hadn't, well, you know.

CAROLINE

You're my puke in Megan's face.

JEFFERY

Metaphorically speaking.

CAROLINE

You know what a metaphor is?

JEFFERY

Very funny.

CAROLINE

I just don't know what's happening anymore.

JEFFERY

I never know what's happening.

CAROLINE

A year ago everything was different. Everything. I feel like I'm a completely different person now and I don't know why, or if I want that. I can't even tell you what that other woman felt or thought or believed, I can barely tell you that right now. I wanted a baby more than anything in the world, and now I can't imagine my life with a child. And tomorrow I won't be able to imagine it without one. I mean, Caroline last year and Caroline now wouldn't even be friends. Caroline tomorrow might not be friends with me. That can't be healthy. Look at me. What am I doing? Is this my life?

JEFFERY

If you want it to be.

CAROLINE

I don't know what I want.

(She begins crying again and falls into Jeffery. He holds her and lets her cry. Something about the embrace begins to console her. Pause.)

JEFFERY

Are you okay?

CAROLINE

I don't know. I think I'm kind of having a nervous breakdown.

JEFFERY

I can deal with that.
Can you deal with that?

CAROLINE

I guess. I'm going to be pretty unpleasant.

JEFFERY

Going to be?

CAROLINE

Very funny Jeffery.

JEFFERY

I teach high school English, all I deal with is unpleasantness.

CAROLINE

I'll be moody too.

JEFFERY

Moody? Who isn't?

CAROLINE

I'm gonna be really crazy and crying all the time.

JEFFERY

Crazy girls are awesome in bed.

CAROLINE

I'm sorry Jeffery.

JEFFERY

For what?

CAROLINE

You deserve better than this.

JEFFERY

Are you kidding? I deserve Swanson frozen dinners and forty-five year old hookers.

CAROLINE

I've never had a Swanson frozen dinner.

JEFFERY

They're surprisingly delicious.

(Pause.)

JEFFERY

Do you really hate baseball?

CAROLINE

I don't know anymore. I used to.

JEFFERY

We can work with that.
Do you wanna get married?

CAROLINE

Okay.

JEFFERY

Will Caroline in two weeks want to get married?

CAROLINE

I'm not speaking to her right now.

JEFFERY

Okay. I can work with that.

(Lights fade out as Caroline cries on
Jeffery's shoulder.)

Scene 6

(CAROLINE and LIZ are meeting in a coffee house for their daily coffee before they have to go to work. LIZ is seated. Beat. CAROLINE enters in a disheveled state for her.)

LIZ

(Excited.)

Jesus Caroline, you look like shit. Give me the details. Is he Latin?

CAROLINE

What?

LIZ

Nobody looks this bad at eight in the morning without a juicy story to back it up. Italian? Stock broker?

CAROLINE

I just couldn't sleep.

LIZ

Do not treat me like a child.

CAROLINE

I'm not.

LIZ

This is important. I need to know the details. I haven't had sex in over a year. Do not deprive me of my God-given right as your best girlfriend. This will sustain me at work today. You have the unbelievable power to make this not just another typical Tuesday. As someone with a job they enjoy I don't expect you to understand how important this is to people like me.

CAROLINE

There are no details. I just couldn't sleep.

LIZ

Fine. Live in your cold storage locker. I hope you enjoy the caramel macchiato I got you you lying slut.

CAROLINE

Thanks. And for the record I do not enjoy my job.

LIZ

But you do not hate your job. Therefore, from the perspective of people who process data you must enjoy it.

CAROLINE

That doesn't make any sense—

LIZ

Don't argue. It just makes you like a Republican trying to understand the plight of the common man.

CAROLINE

I'm not a Republican.

LIZ

The only reason you aren't is because you feel guilty that you have so much more than most people. That doesn't change the fact that you do in fact have more than most people.

CAROLINE

I only make like seven thousand dollars more than you.

LIZ

See, only a Republican would use the words 'only' 'more' and 'seven-thousand dollars' in the same sentence. And Walter 'only' made about five hundred thousand more than me.

CAROLINE

Could you just drop it? I'm sorry that I don't have any details for you, but that's because there aren't any details. I read Pride and Prejudice last night because I couldn't sleep and I cried all night. And I don't know if I was crying because of the book or because of Walter or my parents or just my life right now, but I cried from one in the morning until about ten minutes ago and I'm barely holding the tears back right now, so I'd appreciate it if you would stop picking at me. Those are the details, okay?

LIZ

Thank you. Was that so hard?

If you want to cry you can. I've found that it can be a good way to meet men. And then ultimately drive them away when you realize that they couldn't possibly be worth the

time and effort you're expending to learn the rules of hockey.

CAROLINE

Was that Jason who loved hockey?

LIZ

He thought that despite the fact that he could barely skate, was in his mid-thirties and out of shape that the Blackhawks were going to call him. Loser. I can't believe I wasted three prime years on him. I should be able to charge him for that or something.

CAROLINE

I dated Dan.

LIZ

Emotional black-hole Dan? God, I can't believe it took you so long to break up with him. Who yawns through their mother's funeral? No offense.

CAROLINE

What happened to men?

LIZ

A more accepting society of homosexuals. I mean even if it was all just for show, gay men sure knew how to treat a lady.

CAROLINE

I'm sure that there are a few straight men that have a gay friend to give them tips.

LIZ

I think I might have met one at the store the other day. He was buying cheese at the deli and looked down my shirt. We're going out on Friday.

CAROLINE

Can you believe that it cost me sixty dollars to buy toiletries at the Jewel last night?

LIZ

This is what makes you cry all night? Toilet paper?

CAROLINE

Just being alive is so expensive nowadays. I mean, back in colonial times if you needed a bar of soap you made it. You needed heat you built a fire. If you needed something you didn't have you borrowed it from your neighbor.

LIZ

Or stole it from Indians.

CAROLINE

You're missing the point.

LIZ

The guy who lives upstairs from me actually asked if he could borrow my soap the other day. Can you believe that? Isn't that sick? I mean I gave it to him on account of his insane gorgeousness, but I kinda felt weird about it.

CAROLINE

What happened to us? I mean, are indoor plumbing and caramel macchiatos really worth humanity's soul?

LIZ

Yes. I have enough trouble going to the bathroom in public restrooms, okay. I am not going in some outhouse for the rest of my life so you don't have to pay for your own toilet paper.

CAROLINE

Look at us. (Pulls out a dollar bill.) Is this piece of paper worth it?

LIZ

Actually it's worth nothing except your belief that it's worth something.

CAROLINE

Exactly, what kind of world is that? It's so fake. So sterile, heartless, lonely.

LIZ

I think it's beautiful. It's like a child's unflinching belief in the reality of Santa Claus.

CAROLINE

Tomorrow the government could come out and say that this is worth nothing.

LIZ

They did two centuries ago. I'm telling you, the dollar only stays alive because of our childlike belief in it. This Santa thing is no mere sarcastic remark by an English major who realized too late that being an English major was only good for dinner party witticisms and insults that nobody understands. Santa Claus is the world's monetary policy. You want scary, roll that over in your little head for a few days.

CAROLINE

How ironic that my belief in our monetary system is the only remnant of my childhood optimism.

LIZ

See, and you thought everything was so bad.

CAROLINE

What?

LIZ

It's not all gloom and doom Caroline. So a cup of coffee costs five bucks, big deal.

CAROLINE

Do you realize that instead of spending nearly three-thousand dollars a year on coffee we could probably feed a family of four?

LIZ

Stop it. I like coffee. I'm sorry if your Everyman family of four is hungry, okay? But I'm not going to start growing my own coffee beans so some metaphorical family that you feel sorry for to make yourself feel good about your lazy-white-guilt-ridden-urban-liberal-ass can eat. I need this coffee. It's my escape.

CAROLINE

Exactly, you really think that a cup of coffee is an escape? What kind of world is that?

LIZ

Until soap boy upstairs gets up enough nerve to ask me out, this stupid cup of coffee is all that I have, so back off. You're drinking coffee too.

CAROLINE

I know. That's the point. Modernity has ruined love. We have no soul.

LIZ

I'm a postmodernist. I don't need a soul. I need coffee.

CAROLINE

We exchanged our capacity to love for trivial conveniences. We traded Jane Austin for email.

LIZ

If you hate modernity so much then move to the South. I personally happen to like my life, as lonely and pathetic and meaningless as it is, it's mine. And that's what I've got. A pathetic hope that the mythological soap boy upstairs is the charming and rich gentleman that I know he cannot possibly be.

CAROLINE

Don't you want romance?

LIZ

I want to wake up next to somebody everyday. I want stability. I want to not be afraid that today is going to be the rest of my life. Hell, I want somebody to split the rent with. I want help paying the gas bill. I want to tell you stories about my husband and kids. I want to tell my boss that I have to leave early to go to my kid's soccer game. I want to complain about my husband to my friends. I don't care about love letters anymore. Romance? Fuck romance. If he's good at oral sex and has some sort of job that's all I really care about. I'm sorry if we can't be friends now, but that's how I feel and if you bring this up one more time I will kill you.

(Pause.)

CAROLINE

I was with Jeffery last night.

(Pause.)

LIZ

I was with your brother.

CAROLINE

He proposed to me.

LIZ

Please tell me you said no.

CAROLINE

I said yes.

LIZ

No wonder you're so upset.

CAROLINE

I've never been happier.

LIZ

You are messed up.

CAROLINE

I know. When I got here I thought I had made the biggest mistake of my life. And now I've never been more confident of anything.

Are you marrying Carson?

LIZ

No. We're so incompatible it's scary. I just thought that if you and Jeffery...it's too messy. Things would be a lot easier if we just loved each other. You're lucky. Even though your parents shot each other and a bar of soap costs you ten bucks.

CAROLINE

I know.

(Lights fade out.)

Scene 7

(CARSON and CAROLINE are at their parent's house. They are sorting things to be sold, given away, kept, etc.)

CARSON

Jesus, people sure accumulate a lot of crap over the course of a lifetime. So this is it, huh? Our parents' lives have been reduced to stuff. Modern man becomes boxes of his past purchases.

CAROLINE

Where did this all come from?

CARSON

God, you'd think that our parents were crack dealers based on this place.

CAROLINE

That would certainly explain a lot.

CARSON

Like your underdeveloped brain?

CAROLINE

Or your small penis.

CARSON

Hey now.

CAROLINE

Maybe that's why you always sucked at sports.

CARSON

I just chose to apply my talents to more scholarly pursuits.

CAROLINE

Then why did you do so poorly in school?

CARSON

That was an intellectual strike against the establishment. I wouldn't expect you to understand. You were always such a little conformist.

CAROLINE

You wish.

CARSON

You wish. You married Walter. I mean, you practically married corporate America. Do I need say more?

CAROLINE

You married Megan. At least people could tolerate Walter.

CARSON

He was such an asshole. I bet his family didn't even come over on the Mayflower.

CAROLINE

What are you talking about?

CARSON

The Mayflower. He told me one time that he could trace his ancestors back to the Mayflower. He's such a pompous ass.

CAROLINE

You're such an idiot. He was making a joke Carson.

CARSON

What's so funny about that?

CAROLINE

Walter's from Sweden.

CARSON

Sweden? Since when?

CAROLINE

Since he came over here when he was twelve.

CARSON

How come nobody told me?

CAROLINE

How come you didn't know?

CARSON

How come nobody in this family tells me anything?

CAROLINE

Oh grow up Carson.

CARSON

No. You and Mom and Dad always kept stuff from me. I only found out at the funeral from Aunt Helen that Dad changed his last name when he came to this country.

CAROLINE

You didn't know that?

CARSON

No. I did not know that. She kept asking me what name we were going to put on the headstone and I said, 'Dad's name.' I mean, what kind of question is that? And then she said 'Which one?' 'What do you mean which one?' 'His new name or his family name?' 'His new name?' And then she explained it to me. Aunt Helen? Do you know how painful that was?

CAROLINE

I pity you.

CARSON

How could I not know that my real name should be...what's our name?

CAROLINE

Leibowitz.

CARSON

Leibowitz. We're fucking Jewish? Jewish! Do you know how huge that is? Carson Leibowitz? I've been living the wrong person's life.

CAROLINE

We aren't Jewish, Carson. Our family is.

CARSON

Why did I have to go to CCD then?

CAROLINE

Dad's parents were Lithuanian Jews. They fled across Europe before World War II? This is all new information to you?

CARSON

Yes. I thought we were south-side Catholics.

CAROLINE

The Catholicism comes from Mom's side.

CARSON

Is Nona the Pope's secret kid or something?

CAROLINE

No, but you did know that Nona didn't want Mom and Dad to get married, right?

CARSON

Okay, just go to hell.

CAROLINE

Did you know that Mom didn't speak to her mother for seven years?

CARSON

What is the conspiracy? Am I adopted or something? Mom didn't talk to Nona for seven years? Nona!?! Sweet Nona?

CAROLINE

I guess she wasn't always sweet old Nona.

CARSON

(Jokingly.)

That's a lie!

CAROLINE

Did you know that Mom and Dad had a kid before me?

CARSON

What?

CAROLINE

They had a son that died in infancy. He was the reason they got married and the reason that Nona hated Dad.

CARSON

You're lying. Do you take comfort in lying about dead babies?

CAROLINE

I'm not lying Carson. Didn't you see the headstone when we were at the cemetery?

CARSON

There's no headstone there.

CAROLINE

It's in the ground, right next to Mom and Dad's plot. You were probably standing right on top of it.

CARSON

Awesome. So at my parent's funeral I was standing on top of my dead brother. Fabulous. This has been the best year of my life.

CAROLINE

Didn't you ever notice at Christmas that Nona always had an extra stocking hanging?

CARSON

I just figured that was for good luck.

CAROLINE

For good luck?

It was because she felt so guilty about the baby. She never saw him. It was her way of apologizing to Mom and Dad.

CARSON

I need some fresh air.

CAROLINE

How do you not know this stuff? Didn't you ever listen to anything anyone ever said?

CARSON

Am I even a part of this family?

CAROLINE

I suppose.

CARSON

I need some fresh air.

CAROLINE

No. We've got too much to go through today. Aunt Helen already sold the house and she told them we'd be out by Friday.

CARSON

Can I have a minute here? Unlike you, I'm taking all this in for the first time.

CAROLINE

Oh yeah, and Grandpa isn't Mom's real father either.

CARSON

You are the devil. Why are you doing this to me?

CAROLINE

I thought you wanted to know. I still can't believe you didn't know any of this before.

CARSON

I guess I'm just the worst son in the world.

CAROLINE

And back in the old country, we have a half sister.

CARSON

No. No we don't. I refuse to believe that.

CAROLINE

Like you'd know the difference.

CARSON

Have you been lying to me this whole time?

CAROLINE

Only about Nona.

CARSON

Really?

CAROLINE

No, that happened too.

CARSON

Who are these people? Whose life is this? How could I not know anything about these people?

CAROLINE

You knew some stuff. Most stuff.

CARSON

Most stuff? Most stuff. I have no idea who my parents were. What kind of person am I?

CAROLINE

Quit being so dramatic Carson. Settle down and take a deep breath. It's not that big a deal. Now you know. Would your life have been any different if you would have known any of this stuff? Would Carson Leibowitz really be that much different than Carson Carlson?

CARSON

Yes. Yes. I would have gone to temple.

CAROLINE

Oh please. Now you're suddenly Hassidic?

CARSON

I could've been.

CAROLINE

Will you just help me with this stuff.

CARSON

You need to write down everything you know about this family and let me read it.

CAROLINE

Do you want me to throw in some pointers about women while I'm at it?

CARSON

Our family history will do just fine thank you.

CAROLINE

I can't believe you didn't know this stuff.

CARSON

Believe it.

CAROLINE

We talked about it all the time.

CARSON

Will you shut up.

CAROLINE

The dog knew all this stuff.

CARSON

Very funny.

CAROLINE

Then again you always were such a self absorbed little prick.

CARSON

You were the little tattletale brat.

CAROLINE

Oh please. You had no respect.

CARSON

What little kid respects his sister?

CAROLINE

Don't try and pick a fight with me because you're the worst son in the entire history of the world.

CARSON

Mom and Dad liked me best.

CAROLINE

You wish.

CARSON

In your dreams.

CAROLINE

That doesn't make sense.

CARSON

Shut up.

(Pause. They both go through a few things. After a moment Carson pulls out a Hawaiian shirt.)

Oh my God. I can't believe Dad still has this shirt.

CAROLINE

He loved Hawaiian shirts.

CARSON

You don't remember this one?

CAROLINE

I tried to block Dad's Hawaiian shirt phase out of my memory.

CARSON

I don't think you can classify a life-long passion as a phase.

CAROLINE

I'm sorry Carson, I love Dad, but I can't admit that he was a Hawaiian shirt guy.

CARSON

It's sad but true Caroline. If I know anything about our family history, it's that our father was that guy.

CAROLINE

Do you remember how pissed off Mom used to get when he'd wear those in public? I mean, sure it was embarrassing for everybody, but Jesus. You know, now that I think about it I bet that for the past twenty years he wore them just to spite her. No wonder she shot him.

CARSON

You think Mom shot Dad?

CAROLINE

Of course. Dad got way too sappy to shoot somebody. He cried all the time. You couldn't get through a conversation without Sappy Saperstein crying about some stupid plant or rabbit or childhood memory. My phone bill doubled the day he turned fifty-five.

CARSON

It's amazing how much nostalgia was bottled up in that man.

CAROLINE

When did he become a Cat Stevens song?

CARSON

And what was with the constant toasts?

CAROLINE

"I'd like to thank everyone for watching me water the flowers."

CARSON

"Do you guys remember the Christmas of '92? That sure was a great one, huh?"

CAROLINE

Do all men emotionally implode at some point? You bottle it for too long and then it just explodes and you're a mess ever after?

CARSON

Probably. Still, Dad's penchant for tears aside, Mom couldn't have done it.

CAROLINE

Why?

CARSON

Ask Jeffery.

CAROLINE

Don't start with me Carson.

CARSON

You guys happy together? You like his futon?

CAROLINE

Could we just talk about this later?

CARSON

What better place than our dead parent's attic?

CAROLINE

What is the big hang-up here? Is it because he didn't ask your permission?

CARSON

I just don't like it. You can't marry Jeffery.

CAROLINE

You sound like Dad.

CARSON

Why is that so shocking? Everybody is always so surprised. 'Oh, you're just like your father.' Who am I supposed to be like?

CAROLINE

I always thought you'd look like Mr. Feldman.

CARSON

Mr. Feldman?

CAROLINE

From across the street? Mom totally had the hots for him.

CARSON

No she did not. Mr. Feldman?

CAROLINE

Mom and Dad were people Carson. People you knew nothing about.

CARSON

(Half-jokingly.)

No they weren't. They were our parents.

CAROLINE

Wait a second, is that the San Diego shirt?

CARSON

The one and only. Quite possibly the most famous article of clothing in Carlson/Leibowitz family history.

CAROLINE

God, this shirt defined my childhood.

CARSON

That's a little dramatic.

CAROLINE

Think about it Carson, this shirt put our parents on the path that would twenty-two years later end with them shooting each other not twenty feet from this very spot. This is the catalyst. This shirt is why we're here.

CARSON

I cried for three weeks straight because of this shirt.

CAROLINE

I can't believe he kept it. That's ballsy.

CARSON

I can't believe Mom attacked him in public and tried to rip it off of him. Look, here's the tear. You know I still can't set foot inside a zoo.

CAROLINE

Do you remember the cop that took them in? Oh God, what was his name?

CARSON

Officer Tweedy.

CAROLINE

Yes! How did you remember that? Officer Tweedy. I'll never forget the look on his face when he had to call for backup after Mom gave that zookeeper a black eye.

CARSON

I don't think that zookeeper was ever the same.

CAROLINE

I can't believe Mom had such an effective right-left combination.

CARSON

I can't believe we didn't spend the next four to six years in San Diego.

CAROLINE

I bet if we hadn't been there they would have totally locked them up.

CARSON

I wish we'd have realized it then. What a bargaining chip.

CAROLINE

How did we ever turn out half-way normal?

CARSON

I'm barely a-third normal. And I now attribute that to my complete ignorance of this family.

CAROLINE

You're at least forty percent.

CARSON

And which forty percent would that be? The failed marriage or the crippling job?

CAROLINE

You don't have to stay in that job.

CARSON

Yes I do. I have responsibilities. I like my job.

CAROLINE

Why don't you get back into writing? It's what mom and dad wanted.

CARSON

Could you ever imagine doing this?

CAROLINE

I figured it was bound to happen.

CARSON

Not like this. Not with us like this. No wonder they shot each other.

CAROLINE

I didn't really give it that much thought Carson.

CARSON

Look at us. Here we are, two fucked up divorcees with fucked up lives and fucked up friends and fucked up jobs going through our parents fucked up lives after they fucking shot each other. How did this happen?

CAROLINE

I think you should keep the shirt.

CARSON

What?

CAROLINE

I think you should keep the shirt.

CARSON

That's your answer? I question the direction and purpose of our lives and you tell me to keep a shirt?

CAROLINE

This shirt is your life Carson. Keep it.

(Pause.)

CARSON

I could pass it down. Give it to Lenny Leibowitz.

CAROLINE

Don't name your kid Lenny Leibowitz.

CARSON

No?

CAROLINE

No.

(Lights fade.)

Scene 8

(LIZ is seated in a waiting room at a local sperm bank. She is very uncomfortable and quickly flipping through a magazine. After a moment JEFFERY enters from the office.)

JEFFERY

(To a nurse off-stage.)

...All the President's Men? You wish...Stop saying that. You can't just keep repeating Super- I'll see you next week.

(To himself.)

Lesbian.

(JEFFERY walks right past LIZ, and exits the office.)

LIZ

Oh thank God.

(A moment passes. JEFFERY enters.)

JEFFERY

Liz?

(LIZ pretends that she cannot hear him.)

JEFFERY

Hey, Liz! It's me, Jeffery. Liz!

LIZ

Shut up Jeffery! If you don't mind I'd rather the whole world didn't know I was here.

JEFFERY

(Realizing that Liz is at a sperm bank.)

Why are you here?

LIZ

None of your business Jeffery.

JEFFERY

Wicked. I always knew you were a dude.

LIZ

Spare me Jeffery.

JEFFERY

Spare you.

LIZ

That isn't an insult. You can't just repeat what I say.

JEFFERY

I'll repeat whatever I want.

LIZ

Could you please leave?

JEFFERY

You're the one who called me in here.

LIZ

No I didn't.

JEFFERY

It's okay Liz, you don't have to be embarrassed that you can't get a guy to sleep with you. Is that why you left St. Louis? Couldn't get either of the two homeless dudes to do it?

LIZ

Why are you here? Does Caroline know that you're here? Shouldn't you be at school? Do you ever work?

JEFFERY

It's an institute day.

LIZ

Aren't you supposed to be at those?

JEFFERY

They told me to stop coming.

LIZ

I wonder why.

JEFFERY

Maybe because you're pizza sucks.

LIZ

I don't even know what to say to that.

JEFFERY

And for your information, I am here for Caroline.

LIZ

Please tell me you're sterile.

JEFFERY

You wish. I've probably gotten like twenty girls pregnant.

LIZ

What?

JEFFERY

I'm here for the money. I'm saving up for a ring.

LIZ

That's disgusting. Please tell me you're joking. For all things holy Jeffery, tell me you aren't doing this.

JEFFERY

What else am I supposed to do? Fuck, I do it anyway—

(LIZ groans.)

—so why not get some money for it.

LIZ

You could save some money. Take a loan. Wait. You've only been dating for a few months. She's only been divorced for a year Jeffery, she's not ready.

JEFFERY

We don't want to wait anymore. This is it Liz. I don't need to wait and find out; I know. Me and Caroline have got something special. I've had my fun, but this is different. I know you think I'm just this overgrown retarded frat boy, but I'm an actual person Liz. I have actual wants and needs and dreams that go beyond fucking you in the bathroom. Like fucking you in a park or something. And I want to pursue those dreams with Caroline. I don't want to be another Dorian Gray—

LIZ

What?

JEFFERY

Dorian Gray.

LIZ

I know who Dorian Gray is. But that sort of makes sense. Not really, but close enough considering the source—

JEFFERY

I'm not a complete imbecile.

LIZ

Yes you are.

JEFFERY

Anyway, Mrs. Dalloway—

LIZ

You're Mrs. Dalloway.

JEFFERY

That doesn't make sense.

LIZ

I know, Jeffery. That's the whole point.

JEFFERY

Anyway, Caroline is different. She opened up this totally new part of me. She's like Carson, but she's got tits.

LIZ

So all this time you've been in love with Carson.

JEFFERY

I'm not in love with him. But he is my best friend, so obviously I like something about him. Don't pretend like you and Caroline haven't done it like a thousand times.

LIZ

You're an idiot. Look, just don't tell Caroline how you got the money.

JEFFERY

Give me some credit here Lizbian.

LIZ

I can't believe this.

JEFFERY

Pretty fucking genius isn't it.

LIZ

Ingenious, and that's not what I'm talking about.

JEFFERY

You mean how pathetic it is that you're here and you ran into me.

LIZ

Yes Jeffery. Why the fuck do you have to be here.

JEFFERY

I just told you—

LIZ

I don't even know why I'm here.

JEFFERY

You get sperm here.

LIZ

Jeffery, please shut up. You don't have to comment on everything I say.

JEFFERY

Sorry.

LIZ

I don't even know if I want a kid, but I want something real. I mean, this is my life? Making fun of you? What's my headstone going to say? Here lies Liz; she was good at insulting morons and fudging numbers? I'm tired of just sitting around and waiting for something wonderful to happen to me, because you know what Jeffery? It's probably never going to just happen. So here I am. And I'm obviously never going to get married. I mean, if Caroline's so desperate that she's marrying you then I'm doomed.

JEFFERY

For your information I can be a very charming person.

LIZ

Would that be when you are offering to screw me in the bathroom, or when you're donating sperm to buy an engagement ring?

JEFFERY

Both.

LIZ

When are you going to give it to her?

JEFFERY

I don't know. Tonight I guess. They're putting the headstones in the ground, so I figure she could use a pick me up.

LIZ

Maybe you should wait until tomorrow.

JEFFERY

You think?

LIZ

Yeah.
Are you sure about this?

JEFFERY

Yeah.

LIZ

Are you sure she's sure about this. I just don't know if she's emotionally ready for this.

JEFFERY

If I'm emotionally ready then so is she.

LIZ

That doesn't make sense.

JEFFERY

You don't make sense.

LIZ

Whatever. That's just perfect. I hope you two are happy together.

JEFFERY

Do you want to be my best man?

LIZ

Grow up Jeffery.

JEFFERY

You just let me know.

(Short pause.)

LIZ

How come we never got together?

JEFFERY

You're a lesbian.

LIZ

Jeffery.

JEFFERY

I asked you out about fifty times in college and you turned me down—

LIZ

Because you were always cheating off of me in Lit classes.

JEFFERY

You cheated off of me in that grammar class.

LIZ

What grammar class?

JEFFERY

Well who else was I supposed to cheat off of?

LIZ

You could have done the work yourself.

JEFFERY

You could have done the work yourself. Plus you were always with that one asshole.

LIZ

Ugh, don't bring him up.

JEFFERY

I told you he was a fuck face, but you didn't believe me.

LIZ

You also told me that Edgar Allen Poe wrote The Brothers Karamazov.

JEFFERY

You wrote The Brothers Karmazovov. Well, you're welcome for kicking his ass.

LIZ

You could have just told me he was cheating.

JEFFERY

Yeah, well, I don't always think before I act.

LIZ

Really? I never noticed that about you.

JEFFERY

Anyway Lez, I guess you saying no and dating Wilt Chamberlain is the reason we never got together. I don't know, you're kind of like my hot older sister.

LIZ

Younger sister.

JEFFERY

I prefer older. It's less creepy that way if I sleep with your friends. Or you. 'Cause I'm sure there is a bathroom or park around here somewhere if you want-

LIZ

No Jeffery. I don't want to be with you. I can't imagine a worse fate. I was just feeling sorry for myself and asking a rhetorical question.

JEFFERY

But it has an answer, so it can't be rhetorical.

LIZ

Jeffery, shut up.

JEFFERY

You'll find somebody. What about Carson?

LIZ

If he had tits he'd be perfect.

JEFFERY

You lesbian-

(Realizing that this is a dig at him.)

You know what, fuck you okay?

LIZ
Carson and I are just friends.

JEFFERY
So were me and Caroline.

LIZ
Just drop it Jeffery. It wouldn't work out.

JEFFERY
Why?

LIZ
Are you two?

JEFFERY
Are you?

LIZ
There's a history there that would make it a little messy.
Plus there's you and Caroline and that would be too cute. I
can't do cute.

JEFFERY
What history?

LIZ
A history that would make it impossible.

JEFFERY
Have you slept with Carson?

LIZ
Just drop it Jeffery.

JEFFERY
You lesbian slut.

LIZ
Drop it.

JEFFERY
He could be your donor. You guys already did it once, just
do it again.

LIZ

With my luck you'll end up being my donor.

JEFFERY

You wish. Lesbian.

LIZ

Would you stop calling me a lesbian?

JEFFERY

Stop being a lesbian.

LIZ

Could you just leave?

JEFFERY

So who are you picking? I saw this pretty hot guy in here last week. I think his name was Jack Canfield.

LIZ

What?

JEFFERY

I saw his chart. I think he's in insurance.

LIZ

I'm not picking Jack Canfield.

JEFFERY

Those guys make good money. And your kid would be good at math. Fuck, I hated math.

LIZ

I'm not picking anyone just yet.

JEFFERY

Okay, I just thought he'd be good for you. Cold, analytical, you know, you with a dick.

LIZ

I thought I did have a dick Jeffery.

JEFFERY

You probably do, but that means Carson's gay. Which would explain a lot.

LIZ

Aren't you the one who admitted to having sex with Arthur
what's-his-name?

JEFFERY

We didn't have sex, and we were like thirteen.

LIZ

You are so fucked up.

JEFFERY

I'm fucked up? Have you stopped and looked in the mirror
lately?

LIZ

At least I know I'm fucked up.

JEFFERY

Whatever lesbian. Look, I gotta get going, but if you want
any help or any sperm suggestions just give me a call.

LIZ

Don't worry, I won't ever call you for help.

JEFFERY

Too late lesbian, you just took my advice.

LIZ

Please leave.

JEFFERY

Catch you later Lez.

(He exits. Lights fade.)

Scene 9

(CARSON is at home watching TV, making dinner, etc. He's wearing an apron and oven mitts. He exits to go into the kitchen. While he is gone, MEGAN enters and stands waiting for his return.)

CARSON

(Re-enters. Startled.)

Jesus Christ!

MEGAN

That's a good look for you Carson.

CARSON

You scared the hell out of me. You can't just appear like that.

MEGAN

I was going to call, but...

CARSON

What do you want?

MEGAN

I'm fine. And how are you? Sure, I'd love to have a seat. Thank you Carson. Some place you got here.

CARSON

What do you want Megan?

MEGAN

I stopped by your work but you weren't there.

CARSON

They gave me some time off.

MEGAN

They fired you?

CARSON

They gave me some time off.

MEGAN

Okay. How's your sister?

CARSON
She still hates you.

MEGAN
That's good to know.
Are you cooking?

CARSON
Why are you here Megan?

MEGAN
I came to tell you something.

CARSON
Okay. Tell me.

MEGAN
Eric and I are getting married.

(Pause.)

CARSON
You want some fish sticks?

MEGAN
Carson.

CARSON
What? What do you want me to say?

MEGAN
I want to know how you feel.

CARSON
I made too many, so...it's no big deal if you want—

MEGAN
Carson. Please.

CARSON
Does it matter?

MEGAN
Yes it does. That's why I came here.
It isn't too late.

CARSON
For what?

MEGAN
For us.

CARSON
I think it is.

MEGAN
I forgive you Carson.

CARSON
You forgive me? Oh, well thank you.

MEGAN
Don't take that tone with me. If I remember correctly you did sleep with that little bitch.

CARSON
She's not a little bitch.

MEGAN
You two having a good time together?

CARSON
We aren't together.

MEGAN
Eric saw you two the other night.

CARSON
We were out as friends. She's my sister's best friend.

MEGAN
And your fuck buddy.

CARSON
Good to know you're still trying to micro-manage my life.

MEGAN
Somebody needs to live your life.

CARSON
I don't have to justify myself to you.

MEGAN

I think you do Carson. In this case, I think I have every right to demand an explanation. She is the reason we got divorced after all.

CARSON

She was simply telling me what a fuck-up I am. Okay? That's all.

MEGAN

That's all? Boy, you have got a lot of nerve. That's all? Was that all she was doing when you were fucking her in our bed?

CARSON

Is that why you came here tonight? To berate me about Liz?

MEGAN

I don't know why I'm here. I just know I needed to see you before...

CARSON

Well here I am Megan. Take a good look.

MEGAN

What happened to us, Carson?

(Pause. CARSON approaches MEGAN. He gets incredibly close without actually touching her.)

CARSON

Don't you still love me?

MEGAN

I don't know anymore.

CARSON

I miss you, Megan. Don't you miss me?

MEGAN

Sometimes.

CARSON

We can make this work.

(They kiss. CARSON begins trying to escalate the situation. At first MEGAN

is receptive but she gradually becomes non-responsive. She stands still, almost limp for a moment while Carson continues.)

MEGAN

Carson. Please.

CARSON

What? What's the matter?

MEGAN

I can't do this.

CARSON

What did you come over here for then?

MEGAN

I don't know.

(Pause.)

CARSON

Fuck.

MEGAN

What?

CARSON

I can't do this anymore.

MEGAN

We aren't doing anything.

CARSON

This. Us. This game you're playing. I just can't do it. We got divorced for a reason Megan.

MEGAN

You cheating on me. But I forgive you Carson.

CARSON

No. We got divorced because of you.

MEGAN

Me? Have you not been here for the past five minutes? I didn't sleep with anybody else.

CARSON

So what? Big deal. So I slept with Liz. That doesn't change the fact that you were sucking the life out of me. Everything was on your terms. Everything was about you. I had to get rid of my dog, change my clothes, cut my hair, buy a condo - in Lincoln Park, become Episcopalian-I'm fucking Jewish! Did you know that? Of course you don't. We didn't have a TV for fuck's sake. I love TV, I worked in TV until you made me quit so I could steal money from old people. But I threw it out because you didn't want a TV in your house because you think you're so fucking cultured. Even tonight it's all about you and I'm just your little marionette. I can't do that again, Megan. You beat me. You win. I love you, but...I'm done.

MEGAN

TV? This is your big raison d'etre? TV? I didn't make you do anything Carson. You quit. You didn't make it. You didn't even try. Not because of me; because of you. You did all of those things. Go back to your pathetic eighteen thousand dollar a year job playing commercials if you loved it so much. And if you remember correctly I let you get a TV for your stupid baseball playoffs.

CARLSON

There it is.

MEGAN

What? You're manhood?

CARLSON

You let me get a TV.

MEGAN

Oh please. Go join the battered wives club you pussy.

CARLSON

I was always afraid of saying the wrong thing, or doing the wrong thing, or buying the wrong thing. And for what? For your little play world? You think I'm the one that needs to be taken care of? Take a look in your three thousand dollar mirror when you get home and take a look at the stuck up thirteen year old girl staring back at you.

MEGAN

Who do you think you are Carson Carlson?

CARSON

You're the one who just appeared in my living room.

MEGAN

Oh, I'm sorry I interrupted your pathetic life Carson—

CARSON

You're pathetic.

MEGAN

I'm pathetic? Who was just groping who? Grow up Carson. God, you're so immature. I can't believe I came over here. I got exactly what I wanted.

CARSON

Then leave.

MEGAN

That's the first good idea you've ever had.

CARSON

Bullshit.

I picked the curtains in the dining room and everybody fucking loved them! Your mother couldn't stop talking about them and you took credit for it and I let you. But no more. I'm gonna call her and everyone else and tell them who really picked them out.

MEGAN

You do that, Carson.

CARSON

I'm sorry, but I can't be your whipping boy any more Megan.

MEGAN

You want to pick our new curtains?

CARSON

You wish.

MEGAN

Goodbye Carson. I'm sorry your life didn't turn out how you wanted it to.

CARSON

I love my life. I couldn't be happier. I've got some fish sticks waiting for me. What do you have? Eric? I'll take the fish sticks thank you very much.

(Slight pause.)

MEGAN

Don't shoot yourself.

(Slight pause.)

CARSON

I should have shot you.

MEGAN

You wouldn't have had the balls.

CARSON

Jeffery would.

MEGAN

Tell Jeffery to fuck off.

CARSON

You tell Eric to fuck off.

MEGAN

I'll do that after I finish sucking his giant fucking cock.

CARSON

Nevermind then, tell him I'm sorry.

MEGAN

Fuck you Carson.

CARSON

You know what? Fuck you Megan. Get the fuck out of my house.

MEGAN

Gladly.

CARSON

And I don't think I'll be able to make the wedding.

MEGAN

Fuck you Carson. Enjoy your fucking pathetic fish sticks.

CARSON

I fucking will!

(CARSON shoves a handful of fish sticks
in his mouth and out a guttural scream
as MEGAN exits. Lights fade out.)

Scene 10

(One year later. Carson's apartment. It is a little brighter than before. There are curtains all over. All are gathered as in the first scene.)

CARSON

Super Mario Brothers.

JEFFERY

You guys can't just keep repeating Super Mario Brothers—

CAROLINE

It's the elephant in the room Jeffery.

JEFFERY

You guys mention it every five seconds so it can't be the elephant in the room. Square Pizza?

LIZ

It hurts, but he has a point. The actual elephant in the room is Jeffery and Caroline's impending nuptial.

CAROLINE

Touché. I thought it was your pregnancy Liz.

JEFFERY

What about mister thirty two year old college boy. You gettin' any sweet freshman—

CARSON

Let's just leave those elephants alone.

JEFFERY

I wish my parents would leave me a bunch of money so I could go get a Master's in Creative Writing. Do they teach you to wait tables and mix drinks or is that the PhD?

LIZ

Seriously, how can you be attracted to that.

JEFFERY

She's not a lesbian.

LIZ

I forgot. Women that don't want to sleep with you are lesbians.

JEFFERY

If you—

LIZ

No, Jeffery, I don't want you to do me in the bathroom.

JEFFERY

Then shut up lesbian.

CARSON

Really, Caroline, what do you see in this guy?

CAROLINE

He was your friend first. It's your fault.

JEFFERY

You can't ignore me forever. Brother.

CARSON

I can try.

JEFFERY

You know you love me Carson. And deep down you're thrilled that I'm with your sister.

CARSON

You were right Caroline. Jeffery can see right through me. I do love the fact that you're sleeping with my sister Jeffery. It's the best part about being alive.

CAROLINE

Carson—

CARSON

You can impregnate my sister and have fifty kids together Jeffery, but that doesn't change one simple fact: Super Mario Brothers.

JEFFERY

You guys are fools. Hopper is an American genius.

CARSON/CAROLINE

Super Mario Brothers.

LIZ

You can't win Jeffery.

JEFFERY

Rebel Without a Cause. Out of the Blue. Rumble Fish. Blue Velvet. Easy-fucking-Rider?

CARSON

Wait, what was that other movie he was in? Caroline, do you remember?

CAROLINE

It's coming to me...give me a second.

(She begins humming the Super Mario Brothers theme.)

JEFFERY

Maybe you're thinking of the American classic Apocalypse Now.

CARSON

No. That's not it. It starts with an 'S' I think. Su...Su...God, what is it? Liz?

LIZ

Leave me out of this.

CARSON

Oh that's right. Super Mario Brothers.

JEFFERY

Fuck you guys. Okay. Just fuck you.

CAROLINE

Awww. Did we hurt wittle Jeffery's feewings?

JEFFERY

You guys should watch it because I have something for you.

LIZ

You quit your job?

JEFFERY

You wish.

LIZ

I think the parents at your school wish.

JEFFERY

These.

(He produces two envelopes.)

One for each of you.

(Hands them each a letter.)

LIZ

You're mail's back!

JEFFERY

Yes thank you. It's been back for awhile now.

LIZ

You're mailman get over his crush?

JEFFERY

Shut up Liz.

CARSON

What are these?

JEFFERY

They're from your parents. Turns out they put a freeze on my mail before they killed themselves. Thought they were real clever.

LIZ

That's hysterical. God, I love your parents.

JEFFERY

Yes. Very funny. Yuck it up. I missed two credit card payments and had my cable turned off.

LIZ

Have you heard of the internet? Or do they not have that in Chicago?

CAROLINE

I can't believe you still pay for cable. Even Carson had enough guts to pay off the cable guy.

CARSON

Thank you Caroline.

LIZ

You are kind of a pussy Carson.

CARSON

Liz, as always.

JEFFERY

Anyway, they apparently put these letters for you guys in my stopped mail stack or something. I don't know. They came the other day. I'm still getting stuff from last year. I missed my cousin's wedding.

LIZ

Don't you have a phone?

JEFFERY

Shut up Liz.

LIZ

Are you guys going to open those or what?

JEFFERY

O-pen. O-pen. O-pen. O-pen.

LIZ

Why are you chanting? Sweet Jesus, I pray for you Caroline.

CAROLINE

They seem kind of private.

JEFFERY

Then why did they send them through me?

LIZ

They either wanted Jeffery to lose them, or they wanted you to read them in public.

JEFFERY

At least in front of me. I was kind of like a second son to them.

LIZ

Oh please.

JEFFERY

It's not my fault they have impeccable taste.

LIZ

He is saying this stuff out loud, right? I'm not just imagining it?

CAROLINE

Should we open them?

CARSON

For some reason it seems bizarrely fitting.

JEFFERY

Today is the one year anniversary of their death.

LIZ

Once again Jeffery misses the subtext. Please tell me you don't teach actual children.

JEFFERY

I'll teach your kid.

LIZ

What is that? Is that supposed to be an insult? I'll teach your kid? Seriously, someone please confirm that this is happening.

JEFFERY

Will you shut up so they can open the fucking letters?

CAROLINE

Okay. You first. Wait. What do you think it says?

LIZ

There's only one way to find out.

JEFFERY

That's to open it.

LIZ

Oh my God—

JEFFERY

I know Gateway Arch, it was a joke.

CARSON

Okay. Here goes.

(Opens the letter and reads it to himself.)

JEFFERY

I don't know if I want to hear this.

LIZ

Are you twelve years old?

JEFFERY

What if it's personal?

CAROLINE

Then why did you tell us to open them?

JEFFERY

I don't know. I got caught up in the moment.

LIZ

What does it say Carson?

CARSON

Nothing. You open yours.

JEFFERY

Nothing? It's got to say something.

CARSON

You were right. It was something personal.

JEFFERY

Come on.

CAROLINE

Come on Carson, you said yourself it was bizarrely fitting.

CARSON

I don't want to tell you guys, okay?

LIZ

Give him a break you guys. I'm sure this is very hard for him. You don't have to tell us anything Carson.

JEFFERY

Pussy.

LIZ

You're a good friend Jeffery.

CAROLINE

C'mon Carson.

CARSON

You open yours and you can share whatever you want.

CAROLINE

I will.

LIZ

Open it.

CAROLINE

(To Carson.)

Does yours say what I think it does?

CARSON

Probably.

LIZ

What is it?

CAROLINE

It says, "Carson was adopted."

CARSON

"You were adopted. Love Mr. & Mrs. Carlson"

LIZ

God, you're parents are too much.

JEFFERY

That's funny. Super Mario Brothers that bitch.

LIZ

How do you manage to ruin everything?

CARSON

Hysterical. I'm expecting some heartfelt confessional and I get a fucking joke.

LIZ

Maybe it's not a joke. Maybe you were adopted.

JEFFERY

Maybe you're Mr. Feldman's kid. Your Mom always had the hots for him.

CARSON

Fuck you.

CAROLINE

C'mon Carson, you gotta admit that's pretty funny.

CARSON

They're lucky that I look exactly like Dad otherwise this could be very traumatic. God, even in death I'm the butt of the joke.

JEFFERY

Oh fuck, that is awesome. God, what a great fucking suicide note. 'You're adopted.' That's legend. Legend.

LIZ

Legendary. I can't take this guy. Somebody find Mr. Carlson's gun. You're really certified to teach English to actual children?

JEFFERY

Fuck yeah I am. Jealous?

LIZ

Of course I'm jealous. You've never even read Tom Sawyer and I'm a data processor?

JEFFERY

We do Huck Finn.

LIZ

You do Huck Finn. Jesus Jeffery, you are honestly too much.

CAROLINE

You guys are forgetting why we're here.

JEFFERY

The whore!

LIZ

Jeffery, please.

JEFFERY

You know something? Fuck you guys. Okay? You can all go straight to hell.

CARSON

Somebody needs to get the wine from under the sink. And the sparkling cider.

CAROLINE

I'll get it.

LIZ

How many bottles do you have under there?

CARSON

I bought a new one last year and put it under there.

JEFFERY

How sweet. Oh I forgot to ask you how your vagina was Carson.

LIZ

You do realize that you come up with the worst insults and comebacks on the face of the Earth, right?

JEFFERY

You're the worst insult on the face of the Earth.

LIZ

You are such a child.

CAROLINE

Here it is.

CARSON

What'll I do without you guys?

JEFFERY

Is it strange that I've never been called for jury duty?

LIZ

Shut up Jeffery.

CARSON

That is a little strange.

JEFFERY

Thank you. That's all I wanted. Some vindication.

LIZ

Validation. Could you just not open your mouth around me anymore?

CAROLINE

Children, please. Could we get on with the festivities?

LIZ

Shut up Jeffery. Nobody cares about your stupid jury duty. Although we should all take a moment to thank God that Jeffery isn't deciding the fate of his fellow man.

JEFFERY

I'll decide your fate.

LIZ

We are here tonight to celebrate the freedom of the Carlson kids, the fuck-the-establishment glory of the Carlson parents.

CARSON/CAROLINE

Thank you...thank you...

LIZ

For on this day exactly two years ago today, our beloved Carson Carlson, after four years, five months and seventeen-

CARSON

Eighteen.

(Lights fade as the scene continues as in Scene 1.)

THE END