Abstract

OPYR, NICOLE RENEE. Deviled Eggs and Going Home. (under the direction of Wilton Barnhardt)

This original screenplay is about a woman who has tried desperately to escape her past and her family. She is drawn back into the fold upon the death of her grandfather, a man she still resents, and is suddenly faced with the knowledge that she will have to confront her estranged father, her none-to-stable family, and the ramifications of a decision made long ago, a decision who has returned to his home next door. In a moment of panic, she enlists the help of her best friend to pose as the boyfriend and human shield, a job he is a little too quick to take on. Through the course of the screenplay, the main character struggles with the girl of the past, only to find that said girl no longer exists, and therefore there is no reason to suffer for her anymore.

Deviled Eggs and Going Home

by

Nicole Renee Opyr

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APPROVED BY:

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Dr. Joseph Gomez Dr. Maria Pramaggiore

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Wilton Barnhardt, Chair of Advisory Committee

DEDICATION

For my mother, Polly

BIOGRAPHY

Nicole Opyr was born in Ypsilanti, Michigan (though she often refuses to admit to such) on February 26, 1974. She grew up in Raleigh, North Carolina where she still lives, works, and mines her family and friends for story ideas or good dialogue. In May 2002, she graduated from North Carolina State University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Multi-Disciplinary Studies, or a fancy way of saying film production. She likes long walks on the beach and getting caught in the rain. She dislikes Piña Coladas, so there goes that song.

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by

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FADE IN:

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - EVENING

The city shifts into nightlife as the sun drops on a warm, summer evening.

INT. GREENWICH VILLAGE APARTMENT

A modest apartment, light, and airy. Framed movie posters, candid photos, and a few Southern landscape paintings placed throughout. Sketchbooks littered about. A drafting table with book covers and posters in varying stages of design.

JODIE, 29, dressed in a sleek black dress and heels, rushes through the living room. She is a combination of grace and edginess, and some might say slightly waifish though she would hate them for it.

The telephone rings. She dashes over, snatching up a pair of earrings instead of the phone. The answering machine picks up. She pauses at the door.

JODIE (ON MACHINE)
This is Jodie. Leave a message.

ROSE (ON MACHINE)
Jodie? Are you there? It's me. Your mother. Again.
(sighs)
I thought I might have missed your call...

Jodie leaves.

EXT. GREENWICH VILLAGE

KEVIN, 30ish, waits outside of a small theatre. He is tall, oddly handsome, speaks with a slight British accent, and is not quite as well-dressed as Jodie, wearing a black T-shirt and black jeans.

Jodie rushes up, her enthusiasm fading visibly as she sees him.

JODIE
(confused)
Kevin, I thought we were going to the theatre?

CONTINUED:

KEVIN
We are. It's right here.
(faking an Italian accent)
The Teatro del Corpo.

Kevin finishes his words with a flourish of his hand.

JODIE
The what?

KEVIN
The theatre of the body. It's a performance of hands, feet and props.

JODIE
Hand puppets?

Kevin starts up, sidestepping a DRUNK MAN sprawled across the steps in front of him.

KEVIN
Crudely speaking. I've performed in this myself a few times...

He continues speaking as he enters the building. Jodie rolls her eyes and sighs deeply as she trudges up after him.

JODIE
(mumbling to herself)
Hand puppets. Great. Just fantastic...

INT. PLAYHOUSE

On stage, TWO ACTORS stand, one with his foot through the neck of a shirt, a face painted on the bottom of the foot, and the other with his hands through the armholes. They hobble across the stage. ANOTHER ACTOR is dressed in a giant carrot suit.

CARROT MAN
But I tell you the carrots are not the source of all power. I was turned into this! By that!

The foot actors turn, lose their balance, and fall over. Carrot Man goes on.

The tables are empty save for TEN PATRONS who mostly look confused or bored.

CONTINUED:

Jodie and Kevin sit at a small table with several empty cocktail glasses. She looks miserable, draining her drink. He is enjoying himself.

Kevin leans over, his eyes still on the stage.

KEVIN
That guy right there was almost the understudy in a touring production of *Rent*.

JODIE
(slightly tipsy)
The foot man?

KEVIN
No, the carrot.

JODIE
Was there a carrot in *Rent*?

KEVIN
He's really very good. This is all a metaphor for the vegetabalization of America.

JODIE
Right. Of course it is. He's got fantastic range. Fantastic.

A large TV is rolled out and shadow puppet people appear in the screen. Jodie signals the WAITRESS for another drink.

JODIE (CONT'D)
Vegetabalization. Is that word? I don't think that's a word.

The waitress drops off the drink.

KEVIN
I should probably tell you, my fiancee and I have decided to get back together, so this will be the last night we can spend together.

He leans back in his chair, laughing a bit too loud at the antics on the stage.

Jodie turns to him.

JODIE
You mean to tell me--

CONTINUED: (2)

She is interrupted by a MAN'S VOICE onstage calling Kevin's name.

MAN
Kevin, why don't you come up and join us for this last bit?

Kevin bounds up on stage, stripping off his shirt, and tying a band around his arm as a hand with a giant needle comes out of the TV screen, injecting him. Kevin falls to the floor, and the foot actors begin singing the *Mister Ed* theme song.

Jodie stares in shock before throwing back the last of her cocktail and leaving.

EXT. NEW YORK STREET - NIGHT

Busy street. PEOPLE spill out of bars and shops, laughing loudly and rushing around her.

Jodie walks down the street, oblivious to the chaos around her. A cell phone rings. She looks around before realizing that the sound is coming from her bag.

INTERCUT TELEPHONE CONVERSATION - JODIE AND ERIN

JODIE
Hello?

ERIN leans against the wall of a neat, little kitchen. She looks very much like Jodie, only a little older and a little more conservative. She absently minds the dinner cooking on the stove.

ERIN
Jodie? Is that you? Tell me this, what's the point of having a cell phone if you never turn it on?

Jodie has a slight Southern accent that reappears when she talks to her family.

Jodie dodges a group of running teenagers.

JODIE
Because when I do, Erin, people call me.

ERIN
Ah, yes, my sister the great non-communicator.
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

ERIN(CONT'D)
Mama's convinced you fell in the shower because you didn't call her back.

Jodie looks uncomfortable on a cell phone. She stops short as a cab whips around the corner in front of her.

JODIE
I've been working. I haven't had time to do much else. I just got the contract to design the posters for some new Tom Cruise movie.

One of the pots on Erin's stove begins to boil over. She snatches the pot off the eye and fans away the smoke.

ERIN
(momentarily sidetracked)
Tom Cruise? Really? I love him. I have three kids and work, and I can manage to check in from time to time.

JODIE
You live three miles away from home. It's easier for you.

A STREET VENDOR steps in Jodie's path, trying to sell her a sweater.

JODIE (CONT'D)
(to vendor)
It's the middle of summer. Do I look like I need a sweater?

ERIN
Sure it is. Do you get to meet him?

JODIE
Who?

ERIN
Tom Cruise.

JODIE
Why would I need to meet him?

Erin tries to scrape out the pot, but bends the spoon instead. She flings the whole works into the sink.

JODIE (CONT'D)
Burning dinner again?

CONTINUED: (2)

ERIN
Listen, PaPa's in the hospital again. Seems pretty bad. You might want to think about coming down.

JODIE
What for?

ERIN
To see him.

JODIE
I know what he looks like.

ERIN
You know, you hold a grudge longer than anyone I have ever known.

Jodie pauses at a newsstand, scanning the headlines, and picking up a couple of art magazines.

JODIE
(paying VENDOR)
He set my first car on fire because he said he wouldn't 'hit a hog in the ass' with a Ford.

ERIN
Well, he'd been drinking.

JODIE
Do you remember our three-legged dog?

ERIN
That was an accident. I'm sure.

JODIE
What about when he ran off with Nana's Avon lady. Was that an accident too?

There is a crash in the background on Erin's end. Erin peers around the door.

ERIN
Okay, fine, but if this is it then--

JODIE
How many times has this been it in the past ten years?
(MORE)

CONTINUED: (3)

JODIE(CONT'D)
I can't keep running home for every cough and wheeze.

Erin starts to speak.

JODIE (CONT'D)
And don't give me that closure bit. I've heard that from you until I could scream. Besides, closures bad for art, didn't you know?

ERIN
Oh dear lord, fine. Fester away if that's what you want.

JODIE
Thank you. I think I will.

ERIN
At least call Mama. Tomorrow.

Erin hangs up.

EXT. A COUPLE OF BLOCKS AWAY

MORRIS steps out a used bookshop followed by an irate, ANNA. Morris, 30ish, is a theatre critic. He is handsome while a bit scruffy, but he looks as if he might clean up well.

Anna, 22, is very tall and very beautiful until she moves and then her gangliness betrays her.

Anna angrily waves a newspaper in his face.

ANNA
This is just vicious! This is...oh, it's so much worse!

MORRIS
Worse?! Anna, you slept with your director!
(snatching her paper)
How is this worse?

ANNA
Because it is! You wrote this out of spite!

MORRIS
No. I could have, but I didn't. I should have, but I didn't. This was not because you cheated on me.
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

MORRIS(CONT'D)
It was because it was a terrible production! Do you expect me to write that it wasn't? Listen, Anna, you are a terrible actress. He is a terrible director. You're perfect for each other. I give you my blessing.

ANNA
That's it? Just like that it's over?

MORRIS
What?!

Jodie rounds the corner, she and Morris spotting each other at the same moment. She tries to duck back around the corner.

MORRIS (CONT'D)
I see you, Jodie!
(catching her arm)
Get back here. Where's the artwork for my bookcover?

JODIE
It's done. I dropped it off this morning, so call off the stroke you're about to have there.

Anna looks back and forth between the two of them, arms folded tightly, foot tapping.

ANNA
(clipped)
It's her isn't it? Her with her little accent and her...shortness.

Jodie and Morris turn, staring at Anna.

ANNA (CONT'D)
He hums in bed you know. Really bad eighties stuff.

JODIE
Yes, I remember.

Anna stomps off, incensed.

JODIE (CONT'D)
You have got to stop this whole actress-dating thing, Morris.

They start walking.

CONTINUED: (2)

JODIE (CONT'D)
Oh, God, you're not going to start playing that damn Elton John record over and over again, are you?

MORRIS
She doesn't deserve my *Little Jeannie*.

Morris pauses, rethinking that statement.

JODIE
Mmm, yes, well who does?

He eyes her appearance admiringly.

MORRIS
So.

JODIE
So.
(taking a long breath)
It's been one of those nights.

MORRIS
It's always one of those nights, isn't it?

They arrive in front of Jodie's apartment building. Morris follows her inside.

INT. JODIE'S LIVING ROOM

Jodie and Morris enter. Jodie kicks off her shoes and begins to wriggle out of her dress. Morris gets a bottle of something pink from the refrigerator and steps to the counter. The answering machine is blinking.

MORRIS
You have seven messages. I can't believe you still have this machine.

JODIE (OS)
It still works.

He presses the button and the messages begin.

ROSE (ON MACHINE)
[Beep] It's your mother again.

CONTINUED:

MORRIS
It's you mother. In case you couldn't tell.

ROSE (ON MACHINE)
Did you get the message I left this morning? Your sister says she hasn't heard back from you either.

MORRIS
They think you're dead.

INT. BATHROOM

Jodie digs through a pile of clothes, pulling on a T-shirt and jeans, brushing out the wrinkles. She leans forward, staring at her reflection in the mirror for a moment.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Morris looks up as she enters.

MORRIS
I liked the dress better.

JODIE
That one only comes with dinner and drinks.

Rose's message drones on. Jodie ignores it, searching for her shoes.

ROSE (ON MACHINE)
...and so I told them to take him to the hospital if that's where he needs to be. He looked awful when we were there on Saturday. I think he's had another stroke. Of course that hasn't stopped him from trying to grope that cheap-looking nurse the home just hired. His hands haven't worked for five years, and yet he can still manage to pinch whatever swings around his way. I know he's my father, but sometimes I--

The machine cuts Rose off.

Jodie grabs her keys and heads to the door.

CONTINUED:

MORRIS
You aren't going to call her back?

JODIE
I already talked to my sister. Let's go do something. It's a Saturday night. Staying in would be far too sad.

Morris follows her out the door.

MORRIS
Who were you all sexy-ed up for?

EXT. NEW YORK STREET

Jodie and Morris walk down the street. Holding a lit, but unsmoked cigarette, Morris swigs his drink, and makes a strange sound as he tries to scratch his throat.

MORRIS
Does this have mango in it? I think I'm allergic to mango.
(coughs again)
Where did he take you?

Jodie takes the bottle and reads the label, handing it back to him.

JODIE
(drably)
To the Teatro del Corpo. Maybe it's the cigarette.

MORRIS
Nah, I'm not actually smoking. Man, feet puppets.

Morris coughs again, and stomps his cigarette. They turn into a small, cluttered record store. The TRAGICALLY HIP CLERK looks up at them from his paper.

JODIE
Gets better. He and his fiancee are deciding to get back together, but she let him have this last date.

Morris howls with laughter. The clerk looks up, irritated.

MORRIS
He broke up with you on your first date? That's a new one for you.

CONTINUED:

JODIE
(flipping through the CDs)
It wasn't a first date.

A MAN, mid-twenties, catches her eye and smiles, moving closer. Jodie glances at him briefly. Morris bristles. He coughs again.

MORRIS
Oh, really? Well, this must have been big seeing as how you haven't said anything about him. What is it they say? You only hide the ones you love.

Jodie hands him a CD.

JODIE
Not likely. Here. Get this. Yellow Brick Road is a much better album. No one cries over "Benny and the Jets."

MORRIS
That's because no one knows what the hell he's saying. And I don't cry.

Jodie moves on. Morris puts the CD back, following her out of the shop, still coughing.

INT. MORRIS'S APARTMENT

They enter Morris rather cluttered but welcoming apartment. Newspaper scattered across the coffee table. Morris goes to the refrigerator. He pulls out an obviously out of date carton of milk, looks at it and puts it back.

MORRIS
You know, you bring a lot of this on yourself. You find every possible way to run these guys off.
(looking in cabinets)
What am I supposed to take so I won't die from this mango?

Jodie hits the power on his stereo and *Little Jeannie* starts. She glares over at him, but he doesn't look up.

JODIE
It obviously didn't work with some of you. You need to take Benedryl.

CONTINUED:

MORRIS
You know what I mean. I don't have any Benedryl. How about Pepto?

JODIE
My God can we find something else to talk about?

MORRIS
(gargles water and coughs)
You always find something wrong with these guys. He demands too much of your time. He blows his nose in the shower. He falls in love with you.

JODIE
Now, none of them were in love with me. And that nose thing of yours was disgusting.

Jodie scans over the newspaper.

MORRIS
What about Ashley?

JODIE
He was a bookie. With a girl's name.

MORRIS
Rob?

JODIE
He kept quoting Yoda.

MORRIS
Justin? Wait, he kept moving. You could never remember his phone number.

Morris flops down on the couch, grabs a bag of chips, lights another cigarette, and lets it burn.

MORRIS (CONT'D)
They aren't what you're looking for, Jodie.

JODIE
(defensively)
Oh really? And what am I looking for?

CONTINUED: (2)

Morris starts to speak, but stops. Jodie yawns.

JODIE (CONT'D)
You know what, this is ridiculous. I'm tired. I haven't slept in forever. I need to go home.

MORRIS
It's late. You can stay here if you want.

JODIE
I've heard this line from you before.

MORRIS
What line? That's not a line. I don't have any lines.

Jodie eyes him.

MORRIS (CONT'D)
Well, it worked on you that time around, didn't it?

JODIE
Listen, I'm not going to be a rebound girl...Well, actually, I'm the rebound girl it seems...but not for you. I just...

MORRIS
Not for me? What's that supposed to mean? I am a catch.

JODIE
Yesterday's.
(reluctantly)
You're you. You're Morris, and...look, I don't want to get into this now.

MORRIS
The conversation or the relationship?

JODIE
(frustrated)
Oh my God.

CONTINUED: (3)

She slumps back on the couch and kicks off her boots, turning on the TV. Morris slouches down, passing her the chips and taking the remote.

INT. MORRIS'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Jodie sprawls across the couch, tangled in Morris and the couch throw. A clock radio clicks on loudly and they both awake with a start. Jodie squirms away, burying her head. Morris shuffles to the bathroom.

The door buzzer sounds repeatedly.

MORRIS (O.S.)
Jodie.

Jodie buries further into the couch. Morris steps out, toothbrush in his mouth, bedhead still in affect.

MORRIS (CONT'D)
Jodie! Don't you hear that?

She mumbles. The sound stops. He starts to return to the bathroom just as a sharp knock comes at the door. Morris opens the door and Anna breezes in, overdressed for morning, coffee in hand. Morris stares at her, dumbfounded.

MORRIS (CONT'D)
Anna?

ANNA
Would you believe I couldn't find your key? Luckily, your neighbor came along and I followed him up.

MORRIS
Anna, what are you doing here?

She hands him a coffee. Morris shuffles into the kitchen, pulls the carton of milk from the refrigerator, looks at it and then puts it back. Anna passes him some creamer from her bag.

ANNA
I thought maybe we should--

Jodie's cell phone rings on the coffee table. She flings her arm out, grabbing it and holding it up, squinting. Anna turns sharply, her mouth dropping open as she spins back to Morris.

JODIE
Hello?

CONTINUED:

ROSE (ON PHONE)
Jodie, thank God.

Jodie flops back down. Anna shoves Morris into the kitchen, their voices becoming muffled.

JODIE
Mom, it's six in the morning. I told Erin I'd call when I could.

ROSE (ON PHONE)
I've been trying to call your apartment all night.
(pause)
Are you even home? No, I don't want to know--

JODIE
Really, I have been busy.

ROSE (ON PHONE)
No, no, listen...
(taking a shuddering breath)
Daddy died a few hours ago.

Jodie lifts up on her elbows, her eyes still closed.

JODIE
What?

Morris and Anna step back out.

ANNA
Well, that was mighty fast work, even for you. I should have known--

Morris looks at Jodie, his expression becoming one of concern.

MORRIS
Jodie?

She waves him off, rising and disappearing down the hall and into...

INT. MORRIS'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room is a man's room. Plain, wood furniture, dark sheets, and laundry strewn about on the floor. Jodie sits on the bed and picks up a pair of socks, mating them.

CONTINUED:

ROSE (ON PHONE)
Your grandfather. He's passed away.

JODIE
(confused)
But...how? I thought he was just--

ROSE (ON PHONE)
(overly calm)
He had another stroke. Jodie, you need to come home.

Jodie stands quickly, giving herself a headrush.

JODIE
Mom, I--

She begins to pace, picking up more socks.

ROSE (ON PHONE)
Jodie, this is important. I know how you feel about all this, and you have every right I suppose. I need you here though. At least for a little while.

An uncomfortable moment of silence passes between them. Jodie paces over to the dresser. The top of the dresser is covered in framed family photos. In the middle of the bunch is a picture of her and Morris. She picks up the picture.

JODIE
(under her breath)
Oh, God.

ROSE (ON PHONE)
Now, Jodie, I realize you have a lot happening, but things just can't go on like this forever.

Jodie looks teary as she sweeps up a pair of jeans, her arms are becoming filled with clothes and the picture.

JODIE
Mom--

ROSE (ON PHONE)
This isn't good for anybody. You're never going to--

CONTINUED: (2)

JODIE
Mom. Mom! I'll be there.
(mumbling)
Jesus Christ.

ROSE (ON PHONE)
Watch your mouth. It is such a long drive to make by yourself though...

JODIE
(sitting and folding the jeans)
Mom, I haven't owned a car in ten years. I'll get a flight.

ROSE (ON PHONE)
Oh, okay then. Well, good.
(pause)
You should probably know that your father will be there also.

Jodie's eyes widen in horror. Rose quickly hangs up. A knock at the bedroom door.

MORRIS (O.S.)
Jodie? You okay?

Jodie flings open the door.

JODIE
You <u>have</u> to come with me!

MORRIS
(looking at folded clothes on the bed)
Come where? Did you pick up in here?

JODIE
Fly home with me.

He moves past her to his closet, pulling off his socks and dropping them on the floor. Jodie glances down at them.

MORRIS
What? No.

She picks up the socks, mates them and drops them on the bed. He steps out in his shorts, picking up his jeans from the bed. He puts the picture back in it's place, taking a moment to straighten it.

CONTINUED: (3)

JODIE
Come on. This is serious, Morris. My grandfather just died. I've been summoned home. I need you.

MORRIS
(suddenly concerned)
Oh, Jodie. I'm sorry.

Morris reaches for her, but she begins to pace.

JODIE
(becoming frazzled)
Yeah, well, my father is coming to the whole shebang as well.

MORRIS
The "cradle-robbing-sack-of-shit"? I think you've mentioned him...once.

JODIE
(narrowing her eyes)
Christine Kelley was my stepmother for six months! Christine Kelley! I did her English homework for a year! I had to sleep in the--while she had--Who drops in for a visit and marries their daughter's college roommate?! Who? And then what if he's--and, oh, God--My family, Morris, they're all crazy. You can't make me go through this alone. Please!

Morris reaches for her again. She jerks away then turns back and looks at him desperately. Morris looks confused and hesitant.

MORRIS
I don't know, Jodie. I have work and...

Jodie looks as if she might burst into tears.

MORRIS (CONT'D)
I'll go. Just give me a little time to get ready. But you owe me for this one.

Jodie's relief is momentary. Morris walks out of the room.

CONTINUED: (4)

JODIE
Wait, owe you? Owe you what exactly? Hey. Hey!

She follows him down the hall.

INT. PLANE - DAY

Lush, green North Carolina landscape passes beneath.

Morris watches Jodie. She stares out the window, her foot jiggling constantly.

PILOT
(on intercom)
We're about fifteen minutes outside of Raleigh/Durham folks. We should be landing shortly, so just sit back and relax.

Jodie's foot begins to jiggle faster. Morris reaches over and touches her knee. She jumps, and her foot stops moving for the moment.

INT. PLANE - AT THE GATE

The plane is deboarding. PASSENGERS collect their belongings. Morris stands, getting his bag from the overhead.

Jodie remains in her seat. Her eyes dart around. She looks like she wants to run. Morris pulls her bag from the overhead compartment and drops it in her lap.

MORRIS
Come on.

INT. AIRPORT BAGGAGE CLAIM

Large CROWDS are gathered around the baggage carousel.

CHARLOTTE, Jodie's tall, overly tanned older sister walks up behind them. The quick snap in her step and the hurriedness of her manner sharply contrasts the lilting Southern voice that rolls off her tongue.

CHARLOTTE
There you are. I'm parked in the pay lot and I've already been here half an hour.

Charlotte starts to walk but turns back as Jodie doesn't follow her.

CONTINUED:

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
You know I hate to pay for parking, Jodie. Where's your stuff?

Morris walks up, several bags strapped across his shoulders.

Charlotte smiles when she sees him. She holds out her hand high enough for him to either shake or kiss.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
I didn't know you were bringing someone.

JODIE
Charlotte, this is Morris. Morris, my sister, Charlotte.

Morris manages to shake Charlotte's hand before the bags slip from his shoulders.

MORRIS
Good to meet you.

Charlotte's smile and hand linger a moment before she turns on her heel and walks on. Jodie and Morris follow behind her. Jodie offers to take one of the bags, but Morris refuses.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

It is a North Carolina summer day and most people look wilted from the heat. Charlotte appears fresh and cool.

Jodie walks quickly to keep up with Charlotte's long strides.

CHARLOTTE
Well, you know Mama is running herself ragged trying to do everything alone, and Nana is right behind her to tell her how to do it right.

JODIE
(sarcastically)
Isn't that Nana's job?

CHARLOTTE
Always has been. Mama has to have everything perfect. Have to keep up appearances so to speak.

JODIE
Appearances of what?

CONTINUED:

CHARLOTTE
Sanity.

Charlotte looks back over her shoulder at Morris who has fallen far behind them.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
(tauntingly)
So, what's up with your little friend back there?

Jodie avoids Charlotte's gaze.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
Maybe you should go and offer to help him with some of that.

Jodie trots back to Morris.

JODIE
Want me to take one of those now?

Morris lets one of the bags drop from his shoulder.

MORRIS
Jesus, what did you bring with you? And why is it nine thousand degrees here?

JODIE
Because the gates of hell are opening.

Charlotte sits behind the wheel of a small convertible, over-sized sunglasses perched on her face. She checks her reflection in the rearview mirror and waves them to hurry.

Morris eyes the tiny backseat with dread.

MORRIS
Where am I supposed to sit? The trunk?

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Charlotte has tied a scarf around her head, not a hair out of place as she speeds down the highway. Morris is squished in the backseat, the bags piled on top of him, looking miserable, buffeted by the wind.

CONTINUED:

CHARLOTTE
You know Erin and her "therapy can heal the world" speech. Talk about it. Talk, talk, talk. I say after a certain amount of time, what is there left to talk about?

JODIE
I don't think that's all there is to it.

Charlotte zips around an OLD LADY in a ridiculously large car in front of them. Jodie gasps, squeezing her eyes shut and gripping the armrest.

CHARLOTTE
Oh, honestly, Jodie, couches are for naps and finding loose change, not for crying about your problems to the tune of $120 an hour. Hell, I can cry on my own couch for free.
(checking in the mirror)
You okay back there, Morris?

Morris nods and waves.

Charlotte leans over, opening the glove box. She begins to swerve and Jodie grabs for the wheel. Charlotte pops back up with a hat in her hand.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
Here, put this on.

Morris puts the hat on his head. The wind promptly whips it off down the highway.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
It's that damn therapist who told her to invite Dad to this. All this mental health and forgiveness trash just makes me sick.

Jodie stares at the lush scenery as it flips past.

JODIE
Mental health doesn't sound like such a bad thing.

CHARLOTTE
Please. Let's not ask the impossible.

EXT. ROSE'S HOUSE - DAY

A quiet neighborhood. The house is of modest size, with a neatly manicured front yard, and a wraparound porch furbished with rocking chairs and a hanging swing.

Pure chaos. SIX CHILDREN are running about though it seems like more. A dog barks incessantly in the background. In the driveway and street are several large, American cars.

INT. ROSE'S KITCHEN - DAY

ROSE walks into the kitchen where, NANA, sits making deviled eggs.

Rose, 60s, is small but sturdy, with a gently trained resolve, a firmly set jaw, and a voice the mixture of honey and steel.

NANA is powdered, genteel, and eighty-seven though she would never admit such.

The kitchen is a mess of construction, part of the ceiling gone, and plastic taped up all over. RAY'S legs dangle from the ceiling in one corner.

Ray, 40ish, is Charlotte's husband. He is a little more handsome than is good for him though at the moment he is only a pair of legs in expensive, but dust covered trousers.

Rose looks up into the hole in her ceiling.

ROSE
Ray, is this going to be finished...ever?

RAY
Rose, damn it, I'm working on it as fast as I can.

ROSE
Well, what happened to George and that other one you had here?

RAY
I've got them on another job.

Ray tucks his legs up and slides further into the ceiling. Rose shakes her head in disgust.

CONTINUED:

NANA
That's what you get for hiring your son-in-law.

ROSE
I didn't hire him, Mama. He's doing this for free. And I told you I would help you with that.

NANA
Well, I couldn't wait for you forever. I can just do it myself.
(wrinkling her nose)
What's that smell?

ROSE
What smell?

NANA
Oh, I don't know why you let that cat stay in here.

Rose pulls a platter from the cabinet. Nana edges her out of the way and starts arranging her eggs on the platter.

ROSE
Mama, you have brought three of the foulest dogs I have ever seen into this house and I haven't said a thing, so not one more word about my Henry.

Nana huffs.

The kitchen door bangs open. NATALIE, a small girl in a once pretty but now rumpled dress runs in.

NATALIE
Grammy Rose, Johnny just broke the handle off the bathroom door, and now Aunt Martha is stuck in there.

Rose drops the tongs she is holding and retrieves a small toolbox from under the sink.

ROSE
I have told you kids that you will not destroy my house today. Which one is it?

NATALIE
The one on the den.

CONTINUED: (2)

She opens the toolbox, finding it empty.

ROSE
Mama, where are all the screwdrivers?

NANA
I hid them.

ROSE
Why?

NANA
So someone can't break in here and kill us with them. I saw a story on the news about that happening to a woman up in Virginia.

ROSE
(exasperated)
Good Lord. Why on earth--oh, nevermind.
(to the ceiling)
Ray, do you have a screwdriver up there?

A screwdriver falls from the ceiling. Rose pushes the child out of the room, following after her.

ROSE (CONT'D)
Johnny! Where is your mother?

Nana continues arranging her eggs.

EXT. ROSE'S HOUSE - DAY

SEVERAL CHILDREN shriek as they run through the yard, water guns blazing.

CHARLES EVANS, 60s, the next door neighbor, sprays off his driveway with a water hose. He is mostly gray, and looks like a cross between an insurance salesman and a Beach Boy.

GILBERT EVANS, 30, stands on a ladder at the side of the Evans house, fixing the gutter. Gilbert is Southern charm, refined, neatly groomed, and constantly ready for a day of either business or golf.

Charlotte screeches to a stop in front of the house, checks her reflection, and gets out. Jodie helps Morris unfold from the backseat.

CONTINUED:

JODIE
Whose cars are these?

CHARLOTTE
The Aunts. They're staying here.

Jodie suddenly looks pained. She slumps up the walk.

JODIE
Which ones?

Charles glares at them. Charlotte waves. He quickly returns to watering his driveway.

CHARLOTTE
(under her breath)
Ill-natured old bastard.
(to Jodie)
All of them.

JODIE
Where has she put them?

CHARLOTTE
They're all in the front room sleeping in a pile like a litter of puppies I guess.

JODIE
(to Morris)
You're in for a treat.

Morris strains along behind them with the bags.

Charlotte opens the front door and a rush of sound greets them. The sound of running footsteps comes closer. A YELLOW DOG skitters around the corner, bounces off of Jodie and out the door. The children shoot out after him.

Charlotte leans out the door.

CHARLOTTE
Maggie, you better not be as dirty as you look!

Gilbert peers carefully around the hedges, just out of sight.

INT. VESTIBULE - CONTINUOUS

The THREE AUNTS can just be seen talking in a small sitting room off the front entrance.

CONTINUED:

AUNT RUTH, 85, is slight in stature and sharp in tongue, her white curls cropped close, and her summer linen as neatly pressed as she.

AUNT LOIS and AUNT FANNY, 82, are twins though they long ago ceased to appear as little more than sisters. Lois is the taller, thinner and more verbose of the two, and they still tend to dress alike in their complimenting pastels.

CHARLOTTE
Let's get all of this upstairs before--oops, too late.

The Aunts spot the small group in the hallway. They come tottering out as fast as their age and high heels will allow.

AUNT RUTH
Look who's here! Your mother said you were coming. It's been just ages since we've seen you.

AUNT RUTH pulls Jodie into a hug.

JODIE
Yeah, I know--

AUNT LOIS brushes her fingers through Jodie's hair.

AUNT LOIS
What is this? What color do you call this? You had such pretty hair as a child. Well, I hear that's what they're doing up there. I never have understood these fashion trends. What's attractive should stay attractive I say.

AUNT FANNY pushes in next.

AUNT FANNY
Oh, leave her alone Lois. Hair will grow, but darling you're so skinny.
(feeling Jodie's arm)
Do you do all that exercising that I see on the TV shows? I just don't think all those muscles can be good for a woman. If you run too fast what man is ever going to be able to catch you?

CONTINUED: (2)

Jodie pulls her bag higher over her shoulder and opens her mouth to speak. Her movement bares her stomach, and Aunt Lois spots her navel ring.

AUNT LOIS
My Lord, child, what have you done here?

Aunt Lois lifts Jodie's shirttail.

AUNT LOIS (CONT'D)
That's just dreadful. Honey, why on earth would you do something like that?

Jodie pulls away. She starts to speak again, but with no luck.

AUNT RUTH
Lois, times have changed. Even tattoos aren't considered trashy any more.

AUNT LOIS
By whom?

Jodie gives up with a groan.

AUNT RUTH
My Ralph had a tattoo.

AUNT LOIS
Well, that was from the Navy, Ruth. That's different. I saw something on the TV just the other day about a boy who had a piece of metal put through the top of his nose and within a month he was crossed-eyed. A good looking boy too, or he was. Such a shame.

AUNT RUTH
This isn't in her nose now, Lois. It's--
(spotting Morris)
Who do we have here? Rose didn't say anything about you bringing someone with you.

AUNT FANNY
(slightly disappointed)
This could change things a bit.

CONTINUED: (3)

The Aunts encircle Morris. A look of panic crosses his face.

AUNT RUTH
Come sit down and talk to us for a while. We want to hear all about you and our Jodie. You know, she never writes.

They guide a confused and reluctant Morris away.

Charlotte and Jodie take their chance to dash up the stairs.

MORRIS
(mouthing to Jodie)
Hey!

INT. UTILITY CLOSET - SAME

Rose fishes through a toolbox. A box of nails falls out and scatters across the floor.

ROSE
Damn!

She tries to pull herself together before walking back out.

INT. DEN - CONTINUOUS

Her grandson, JOHNNY, 10, a gangly, wild-haired child is fiddling with a screwdriver jammed in the bathroom door.

ROSE
Johnny, get away from that door! You've done enough already.

Johnny runs around the corner.

ROSE (CONT'D)
(calling through the door)
Martha, are you all right in there?

Something glass breaks on the other side of the door.

AUNT MARTHA
I'm fine.

Rose sighs and shakes her head. She suddenly frowns and sniffs the air.

ROSE
Martha, are you smoking in there?

CONTINUED:

AUNT MARTHA
Uh...no. No, it's not coming from in here, honey.

The sound of the bathroom exhaust fan starts. Rose sniffs again.

ROSE
You are too smoking!
(shocked whisper)
Martha, what are you smoking?

INT. JODIE'S OLD BEDROOM

The room looks like a cross between a bedroom and a storage closet. Jodie drops her bag on the bed.

JODIE
Doesn't Mom ever throw anything away?

CHARLOTTE
Never. She says she's saving it for a yard sale. Nothing more than a firetrap if you ask me. The kids like to root through all this crap.

Jodie opens the closet door. Several faded paintings fall out.

JODIE
I can't believe she still has these. I told her she could toss them the last time I was here.
(suddenly panicked)
She hasn't been showing these again, has she?

CHARLOTTE
Mama throw away something you painted? You must be kidding. Where are we putting this?

Charlotte holds up Morris's bag and raises her eyebrows tauntingly.

JODIE
With all of them here? Their eyebrows would shoot straight off their faces if we put him in here. In Mom's sewing room I guess?
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

JODIE(CONT'D)
Is there enough space in there? What? What is that look for?

CHARLOTTE
Nothing.

Charlotte disappears down the hallway.

JODIE
(calling after Charlotte)
Always in somebody's business. And you wonder why I never come home.

Jodie scrounges around in her bag and pulls out a large bottle of Advil.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY

Charlotte is coming downstairs just as Ray steps out of the kitchen.

They both stop, the air suddenly icy between them. Ray wipes his hands on his shirt.

CHARLOTTE
I see you still haven't finished.

RAY
Oh, give me a break, Charlotte. I'm trying here.

CHARLOTTE
Well, trying isn't always doing, is it my dear? What happened to George and Davis. I thought they were doing this job?

RAY
I can do it myself.

CHARLOTTE
Don't you start thinking this will get you back home this time around.

Charlotte breezes past her husband with her chin held high.

Ray watches after her, punching the wall once she's past. His hand goes through the plaster. He looks shocked and then horrified, trying to cover it up.

Rose pokes her head around the corner.

CONTINUED:

RAY
I'll fix it, Rose. I'll fix it!

ROSE
Yes, I suspect you will. Right now though I need you to fix this in here.

INT. DEN - CONTINUOUS

Ray enters. He stops and sniffs the air.

RAY
Is that...?
(sniffing again)
Is that weed?

ROSE
I knew it!
(calling through the door)
Aunt Martha, I am shocked! This room smells like a commune!

Ray twists the screwdriver and the rest of the doorknob clatters to the floor. He looks perplexed. He starts to fling himself against the door. Rose stops him.

ROSE (CONT'D)
Have you lost your mind?

RAY
Rose, I can't get it open any other way. You want to leave her in there?

Rose hesitates and then backs up. Ray breaks down the door. Smoke puffs out.

RAY (CONT'D)
Glaucoma botherin' you there, Martha?

INT. SITTING ROOM - SAME

The three Aunts and Morris, questioning him from all sides...

AUNT LOIS
So, Morris, what a lovely name! People don't give children the old names anymore. It's all these Stones and Clays running around.
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

AUNT LOIS(CONT'D)
Seems like they're building a wall rather than naming a baby. They should just name the child Cinderblock and get it over with.

MORRIS
Well, actually, I was named after the cat. You know, from the commercial--

AUNT FANNY
Better a cat than what I got. Everyone else got named after a relative, even Lois here, and I got named after your hindquarters.

AUNT LOIS
Must you be so crude, Fanny? You could have changed it.

AUNT FANNY
Then no one would know who I was.

AUNT RUTH
Would that be so bad?
(to Morris)
Fanny always worried about being the younger twin. Feels left a bit behind.

Aunt Ruth and Aunt Lois chuckle. Aunt Fanny looks none too pleased.

AUNT FANNY
That is most certainly not the case, Ruth! And I will have you know that joke ceased to be funny sixty years ago!

MORRIS
You two are twins?

Aunt Lois and Aunt Fanny turn, surprised.

AUNT LOIS
You can't tell?

AUNT FANNY
You can't tell?

AUNT RUTH
So, Morris, tell me again what it is that you do.

CONTINUED: (2)

MORRIS
(brightening)
I'm a theatre critic for The Times.

AUNT RUTH
Theatre! Really? That's just grand. Esther's boy worked in the theatre up there for a while. And you remember Rose played the flute. She was preparing to audition for the symphony when she married Frank instead.

Sounds of footsteps in the hallway. Morris peers out hopefully.

AUNT FANNY
Esther's boy? Oh, you mean the funny one?
(to Morris)
But you aren't...funny, are you?

MORRIS
Not particularly. I have my moments I guess--

AUNT RUTH
They call it gay now, Fanny. And why would you ask that about the boy what with him seeing our Jodie?

Morris looks suddenly surprised.

MORRIS
No, I'm not gay, but--

Aunt Fanny ignores Morris's interjection.

AUNT FANNY
Well, we didn't know for certain that he wasn't. You never can tell anymore what the relationship might be. Perhaps I've just been watching my stories too long. Ruth here got me into them, and I tell you, some of the things they get away with...but then I guess you wouldn't have come all this way for any other reason now, would you?

CONTINUED: (3)

AUNT LOIS
Fanny, I am sure he is not interested in your soap operas. She'll go on about these people for ten or twenty minutes before you realize they're on the TV.

Morris reaches back and pushes the window open further.

AUNT FANNY
I'm afraid we don't know much about theatre criticism, Morris. We get some of the shows in the auditorium downtown. I saw...Ruth what was that show we went to last month?

AUNT RUTH
Fiddler on a Hot Tin Roof I think.

AUNT LOIS
You mean Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, Ruth. Cat. That was the one with Elizabeth Taylor. The other was all the Jewish people.

AUNT FANNY
Is that stable work? You aren't one of those starving artists, are you?

MORRIS
I write for The New York Times.

The Aunts don't react.

MORRIS (CONT'D)
Jodie and I both do quite well, but we aren't--

AUNT FANNY
Well, that's nice. We've been worried for years that Jodie would never find a stable man to settle her down. Especially after all that with the Evans boy. Gilbert was such a fine, handsome boy too.

Morris perks up.

INT. OUTSIDE THE SITTING ROOM - SAME

Jodie listens. She dashes into the room, stopping the Aunts conversation.

CONTINUED:

JODIE
(nervously)
Hey, hey, hey Morris, looks like it's cot city for you. You want to help set it up?
(to the Aunts)
Mind if I steal him away for a few minutes?

The Aunts look disappointed. Morris looks relieved.

AUNT RUTH
All right. Why don't you come back and visit with us afterward?

JODIE
I will. Soon. I promise.

Jodie pushes Morris out of the room.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Morris runs for the stairs once they turn the corner. He trips and falls up the stairs. Jodie trips over him, both of them landing in a heap.

MORRIS
I think I just broke my shin. You wanna get off of me before they come out here?

Jodie gets to her feet, offering him a hand up. Morris rubs his shin, pulling up his pant leg to look at it.

JODIE
Oh, poor thing. Lois was a nurse. I'm sure she would like to come out and check on that for you.

Morris ignores her hand, pulling himself up They hurry up the stairs.

INT. SEWING ROOM

The sewing is small but neat, material and clothes hanging about. Jodie is sunk down in a chair in the corner, staring up at the ceiling, and twisting her hair around her finger. Morris struggles with the cot frame.

MORRIS
Answer me this then. Did you drag me down here as your boyfriend?

CONTINUED:

JODIE
No. Well, maybe. A little.

MORRIS
Oh, you owe me big for this one. Big. And who's the "Evans boy?"

JODIE
No one.

Morris pinches his finger in the cot frame, dropping the whole works. He gazes at her.

JODIE (CONT'D)
Boy next door.

MORRIS
You and the boy next door, huh? Never figured you for that type. Intriguing.

JODIE
Not really. Do you want any help with that?

MORRIS
I got it. There has to be more than you're telling me.

JODIE
You'd think that, wouldn't you?

Morris fits the frame together triumphantly. It immediately falls apart.

MORRIS
I still can't believe you would ditch me down there like that.

JODIE
I panicked.

MORRIS
Liar. You knew what you were doing.

JODIE
Yeah? What's that?

MORRIS
Chumming the water.

CONTINUED: (2)

Jodie laughs. She walks over, takes the frame from him and easily slips it together.

JODIE
Oh, they loved you.

Morris gazes at her. She falters a moment and turns away.

JODIE (CONT'D)
I wouldn't put too much stock into that. They aren't the best judges of character when it comes to men.

Morris looks dejected but musters a smile when she turns back.

JODIE (CONT'D)
Most of them have a liking for drunks. Mean ones.

MORRIS
I don't drink.

JODIE
Hmm. Well, give it time.

INT. KITCHEN - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Rose is standing at the sink filling a tea pot and staring out of the window. Nana sits at the table feeding bits of hamburger to a small CHIHUAHUA in her lap.

Jodie enters.

ROSE
Jodie, you finally got here.

JODIE
Yeah, we made it.

ROSE
(looking over Jodie's shoulder)
Who's we?

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE THE KITCHEN

Aunt Fanny has stopped Morris. She holds up a plate of hors d'oeuvres.

AUNT FANNY
Pickle?

CONTINUED:

Morris stares at her blankly.

INT. KITCHEN

Jodie looks back over her shoulder.

JODIE
Me and Morris. Where'd he...

NANA
Morris and I.

Jodie narrows her eyes at her grandmother who doesn't notice. Rose brushes the hair off of Jodie's face.

ROSE
Morris came along? Where are you planning to put him? Maybe I shouldn't ask that? It's not really my business, is it? But then it is my house--

JODIE
(wrinkling her nose)
What's that smell?

Nana starts to speak up. Rose shoots her a look.

ROSE
Deviled eggs. They stink to high heaven don't they?

JODIE
No. Just smells like home.
(hugging her mother)
Mom, I' sorry about PaPa.

ROSE
Yes, well, he's really been gone for a long time now, hasn't he?
(looking her over)
You look tired. You did bring something dressy?

JODIE
(sarcastically)
Nope, this is it.

Rose doesn't catch Jodie's tone.

JODIE (CONT'D)
Yes, I brought something dressy.

CONTINUED:

ROSE
I just wanted to make sure that dressy wasn't black jeans and combat boots. I know how you are.

JODIE
Mom, I was sixteen and it was a joke! You sent me to a cotillion. Me. What did you expect?

Rose turns back to the stove as the teapot begins to whistle. Jodie looks around at the mess of construction in the kitchen.

JODIE (CONT'D)
Where's the rest of the kitchen? Ray screw up again? What'd he do this time?

Rose rolls her eyes.

JODIE (CONT'D)
He and Charlotte keep on, you could get the whole house remodelled. Why are all the Aunts staying here?

ROSE
They didn't want to stay in a hotel, and so they asked to stay here. It's not like I could say no.

Jodie sits down at the table with Nana. She reaches to pet the dog. He growls at her through a mouthful of hamburger.

JODIE
Sure you could. It's easy.

ROSE
Now, Jodie, be nice. They wanted to be close, especially when I told them you were coming down.

JODIE
I'm always nice to them.

Nana huffs. Jodie cuts her eyes at her grandmother.

NANA
Always? Just last year Lois wanted to come up to see your little show and you didn't even let her know when it was.

CONTINUED: (2)

JODIE
I did let her know. She wanted me to pay for the hotel room and airfare!

Nana huffs again.

JODIE (CONT'D)
Aunt Lois is worth a fortune! If she wanted to see it so bad she could've paid her own way!

Rose calmly sits a cup of tea in front of Jodie.

ROSE
Now Mama, Lois wouldn't give a quarter to see Jesus ride a bicycle down Main Street. You know that as well as any of us--

Erin bursts into the kitchen with groceries. She looks surprisingly fresh for having three children hanging off of her. The kids disperse quickly. The dog in Nana's lap barks shrilly as they run past.

ERIN
What's up with Martha? She and Ray were snatching at the groceries like a couple of hyenas--Jodie, you made it! I didn't know you were bringing Morris with you.

Jodie suddenly remembers Morris.

JODIE
Damn! Where is he?

ERIN
Outside with Jim.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Morris stands with Erin's husband, JIM, looking over into the engine of Jim's new truck. Morris holds a cigarette.

Jim is a straight-backed man, thin, closely shorn, and easy, with a slow Southern accent and an unexpectedly bright smile.

Morris crosses his arms high over his chest.

MORRIS
So, a 6.8 liter V-10?

CONTINUED:

JIM
Yep. With 310 horsepower.

Morris rocks forward on his toes, cutting his eyes at Jim.

MORRIS
What does that mean?

JIM
No idea. Erin wanted the big one.

Both men smile.

JIM (CONT'D)
How'd she talk you into coming down here?

MORRIS
She asked.

JIM
Yep, that'll do it.

MORRIS
She said her father was coming.

JIM
Frank? Yeah, that's what I hear. Should be interesting.

MORRIS
Jodie never says too much about him. At least nothing good.

Jim wanders around the truck.

JIM
Not surprising. Those two don't exactly get along anymore.

Morris follows Jim.

MORRIS
Him marrying her roommate and all?

Jim looks confused. He wipes away a bit of dirt from the truck with his sleeve.

JIM
He did do that, didn't he? Huh, almost forgot about that one.
(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

JIM(CONT'D)
I guess that didn't help, but that's not really...how long have you and Jodie been going out?

There is a rustling behind the Evans's bushes. A pair of electric clippers starts.

MORRIS
We met in college, but I'd say this is...recent.

JIM
So, you and Jodie, huh?

MORRIS
Yeah. Why?

JIM
No reason.

Ray and Aunt Martha walk up, Martha clinging to his arm.

AUNT MARTHA, 79, is a tall, lean woman with thick glasses and smoker's voice.

JIM (CONT'D)
Hey, Martha. You doing okay there?

AUNT MARTHA
Oh, I'm just dandy. Can't see a thing at the moment...
(patting Ray's arm)
but Ray here is walking me down to the Krispy Kreme so I don't have to sit in there listening to those old birds.

RAY
They aren't so bad, Martha.

AUNT MARTHA
Oh, pooh. They're insufferable. All of them. I grew up with those women remember. Now, I think I have what my doctor said would be the munchies, so let's get a move on.

Ray and Aunt Martha walk slowly down the drive.

Jim and Morris lean on the side of the truck, staring at the house. Laughter flows from the open windows.

EXT. ROSE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A balmy night. Sounds of cicadas in the trees. Moths circling the street lights. Jodie and Morris sit on the front steps. Morris holds a lit cigarette, but doesn't smoke it.

MORRIS
So, which next door?

JODIE
What?

MORRIS
The boy. Which next door was he?
(flicking ashes)
This one or that one?

JODIE
That's not meant to be literal, you know. So, what's going on with this cigarette thing here?

Morris stares at her, flicking his ashes.

JODIE (CONT'D)
(pointing toward the hedges)
That one.

MORRIS
Did you make him sleep in the storage room, too?

JODIE
No. He lived next door. Had his own room.

Morris's cell phone rings. Anna's name appears on the caller ID.

MORRIS
Damn.

Jodie stands up, and starts into the house.

MORRIS (CONT'D)
You're going to give yourself an ulcer the size of your head.
(to caller)
Hello?

CONTINUED:

JODIE
I think I already have one.

She looks back at him a moment before going into the house.

MORRIS
(to caller)
No...no...what?...No, you can't...Because...why would I do that after...what about him?
(walking down sidewalk)
Really?...No, I...Just don't...no! How many times have I told you that's been over?...I'll think about...

Morris snaps his phone shut. A LARGE DOG barrels across the Evans's yard, barking. Gilbert snatches his leash just before he reaches Morris.

MORRIS (CONT'D)
Jesus!

GILBERT
Sorry about that. He's harmless. All mouth. Hey, I was sorry to hear about Mr. Matthews.

Morris is trying to avoid the unruly dog.

MORRIS
Who? Oh, yeah, well thanks. Didn't actually know him. I'm just down here with Jodie.

Gilbert stiffens, faking a smile.

GILBERT
With Jodie? Really?
(looking him over)
You?

Morris's phone rings again. The dog barks at the sound.

MORRIS
(mumbling to himself)
Damn.
(to Gilbert)
Yes. Me. With Jodie.

Backing away from the straining dog.

CONTINUED: (2)

GILBERT
Huh. Who would have thought?
(extending his hand)
I'm Gilbert Evans.

Suddenly intrigued, Morris stuffs his phone back in his pocket.

INT. KITCHEN - SAME

Rose is at the sink washing dishes when Jodie walks in behind her.

JODIE
Mom, why are you doing that? You have a dish washer.

Rose jumps at the sound of her voice, dropping a plate.

ROSE
Lord, Jodie, you scared the life out of me.

She tosses the pieces of broken plate into the trash.

ROSE (CONT'D)
It's therapeutic.

JODIE
Washing dishes?

ROSE
That's Erin's word for it. I say it needs to be done, and it gets my mind off of things.

Jodie leans against the counter, eating from a bag of chips.

JODIE
When's Dad coming in?

ROSE
Knowing him? Just pick the absolute worst time.

JODIE
You okay with all that?

Rose dries her hands and reaches into the bag of chips.

CONTINUED:

ROSE
I don't have time to worry about your father. If he wants to come, then let him.

JODIE
That sounds healthy.

ROSE
It does, doesn't it?

Jodie sits at the table while Rose wipes down the countertops. She presses back a piece of fallen tarp, eyeing the mess of construction in the kitchen with disgust, and sits with an exhausted sigh.

Jodie plucks the card from a flower arrangement on the table.

JODIE
These are nice When did they come?
(eyes widening as she reads)
Gil!

Morris bursts into the kitchen, limping, his pants smeared with mud.

MORRIS
You were almost married?!

Rose stands quickly, avoiding Jodie's gaze. Jodie glances at Morris, her eyes widening as she turns back to her mother.

JODIE
He's here? Gilbert's back in town?!
This town? Here?

MORRIS
<u>You</u> were almost married!

Jodie looks to her mother, ignoring Morris.

ROSE
Jodie, he's been back here for almost a year. Don't get all...well...how you get.

MORRIS
(brushing mud from his pants)
Oh, now this explains a lot! Of course.
(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

MORRIS(CONT'D)
Why wouldn't I die like this? It's all very poetic. You would be the one to get me killed. Look at the size of this pawprint!

JODIE
How I get? Mom, if this is something you've cooked--you could have at least--Is he going to be at the funeral?

ROSE
Possibly. Probably. Okay, yes. But Jodie, he's known the man all his life. Certainly he would want to be there.

Jodie stands, eyes wide.

ROSE (CONT'D)
Oh, Jodie, for heaven's sake sit down. Must everything be the end of the world with you?

Morris studies the pieces of his phone.

MORRIS
All tall and...tall...Probably plays golf. Every Sunday. Biggest damn dog I've ever seen. Look what he did to my phone. Whatever happened to just hitting someone? If I had known this--

Jodie whirls around and looks him over.

JODIE
(irritated)
Good Lord, Morris! Were you bitten? By either of them? Give me that.

She takes his phone, snapping the battery back into place, and handing it back to him. She walks out of the kitchen, mumbling to herself. Morris's phone rings. He turns it off.

MORRIS
She was almost married?

ROSE
She was. Put those pants in the laundry tonight and I'll wash that mud out. Do you need an ice pack or a Band-Aid or anything?

CONTINUED: (3)

MORRIS
No, I'm fine, but...so you're saying white dress and all? To that guy?

Rose leaves a stunned Morris in the kitchen.

INT. FRONT HALL

The downstairs is dark. Jodie slips quietly out the front door, walking down the stairs and out into the night.

INT. FUNERAL HOME - THE NEXT DAY

The room is large, morbid, and filled with WOMEN. Most of the them seem more interested in their own conversations than the coffin at the end of the room.

Jodie and Morris enter the room, both dressed quite sharply, together making a handsome statement. Several heads turn in their direction.

MORRIS
(whispering)
Well, then where were you? You can't just drop something like that on me and then vanish. Were you this imponderable when we <u>were</u> dating?

JODIE
Was I what?

MORRIS
Imponderable. Evasive. Secretive.
(scanning the room)
Don't you have any men in your family?

JODIE
There are a few left. All stuck to the wall over there.

Along the back wall are FOUR OLD MEN, Jim, and Ray, all looking extremely bored. Jim sits, picking at his nails with a pen knife.

Jodie clings to Morris's arm.

JODIE (CONT'D)
I think we should find someplace to hide.

CONTINUED:

MORRIS
You're good at that game, aren't you? Should I hide my eyes and start counting to ten now?

JODIE
Did you or did you not just spend an entire evening with these people?

MORRIS
They aren't my problem at the moment. You are.

JODIE
Oh, honestly, Morris! What is it you want me to say? I was eighteen! That's reason enough right there not to--

Nana calls Jodie's name from across the room. Jodie deflates. Nana drags an ELDERLY WOMAN along with her.

NANA
Jodie, honey, there you are. You need to come and say hello to everyone. They've been waiting to see you. Eva, this is Jodie's young man. We have hope.

Jodie rolls her eyes. Morris extends his hand, wrapping an arm mockingly around Jodie, giving her temple a smacking kiss.

MORRIS
Hi. Morris. The boyfriend.

Nana pulls Jodie away from Morris and into the room. Morris goes to sit with the other men.

MORRIS (CONT'D)
(to Jim)
Her grandmother seems to be holding up well.

JIM
No reason for her not to be. She and Walter divorced years ago.
(Morris looks confused)
This is just a chance for Olivia to rub it in his face that he went first.

CONTINUED: (2)

UNCLE CARL, 83, turns to Morris. Jim and Ray turn away quickly.

UNCLE CARL
I'm a veteran. Lost my leg in the war. The real war. Not one of these damn "conflicts" as they like to call them now.

MORRIS
Really? That's too bad.

MAN
Too bad nothin'...

Nana drags Jodie through the room.

JODIE
I don't even know half these people.

NANA
Well, you should. They're your relatives.

JODIE
Do I have to admit that?

NANA
You know, you're Gilbert was asking about you the other day. I told him we didn't see much of you, but it would be nice if you could take the time to see him while you're here.

Rose is standing with Erin and Charlotte as Nana pulls Jodie past them.

CHARLOTTE
See what you get for running away.

Jodie's temper flares. Rose steps in.

ROSE
Don't you two start.

Nana moves on, taking Jodie with her. Charlotte tries to argue.

ROSE (CONT'D)
Charlotte, please! I'm not going to deal with any of that today.

CONTINUED: (3)

Nana and Jodie weave through the crowd.

NANA
Don't you want to see him.

JODIE
(bewildered)
Not especially. Why?

NANA
That's what he's here for.

JODIE
He's here? Where?

NANA
Of course he's here, Jodie. Right there in the casket. It is a viewing.

JODIE
What?

Nana stops at the casket. Jodie looks somewhat relieved and then disgusted.

NANA
He looks so natural, don't you think?

JODIE
No, not particularly...

Jodie's voice trails off as she cautiously looks down at her grandfather.

Erin walks up behind them.

ERIN
Dad's here, and it seems he's got himself a little treat.

Jodie whirls around to see her father entering the room.

FRANK, mid-sixties, is a once-handsome man, though his looks have faded somewhat. He is a man with more charm than sense, more charisma than character.

Trailing behind Frank is RITA, mid-thirties, a beautiful, expensive-looking woman. She is well-dressed, pleasant, and while she clings to Frank, her eyes tend to stray to the next best thing.

CONTINUED: (4)

JODIE
A treat or a trick?

Frank moves through the crowd with ease. Responses are initially cold, but few people can resist his charm. He spots his daughters and waves. Jodie ducks behind her sisters, escaping.

Ray is slouched in his chair, swirling a cup of coffee. He looks up and sees Frank approaching Charlotte and Erin.

RAY
Oh, here goes.

Jim and Morris interests are suddenly piqued.

FRANK
Hello, Erin.

Frank embraces Erin in an awkward hug. He moves toward Charlotte, but she points a finger at him.

CHARLOTTE
Don't you dare.

FRANK
Now, what is it that I've supposedly done this time? I swear Charlotte, every time it's something new with you. You are just like your mother. Just like her. A man can't win with any of you lot.

Charlotte flames up a little more.

CHARLOTTE
What have you done? What haven't you done? Do you want me to make a list? Should we start with her? I can't believe you would drag some cheap tramp--
(to Rita)
No offence to you, honey--
(to Frank)
To this!

Rita walks away, unfazed.

FRANK
Now, you watch it. She is not cheap, and I am still your father.

CONTINUED: (5)

CHARLOTTE
Ha!

Rita walks to the chairs against the wall. The men watch her every move. She sits down next to Ray and smiles. Checking that Charlotte isn't watching, Ray smiles back.

FRANK
Oh, Charlotte, get off the cross.

CHARLOTTE
Why are you dragging Jesus into this? What has he got to do with it? Erin, I ask you--

Erin steps between Charlotte and Frank.

ERIN
Can we not have one of you bursting a vessel today! No, wait, actually maybe you two should just kill each other here. It'll make for a shorter trip to the slab.

FRANK
Now Erin, what kind of talk is that for a funeral home?

ERIN
(walking away)
My God, the therapy bills I'm going to have after this is over.

Charlotte catches sight of Ray and Rita looking friendly.

CHARLOTTE
Ray! Have you lost your entire mind? I am standing right herein front of you!

Charlotte snatches Ray from his chair, dragging him out of the room. Frank walks over, sinking into a chair, his hand on Rita's knee.

FRANK
Daughters.

Rita excuses herself. Frank and Morris watch after her for a moment.

CONTINUED: (6)

FRANK (CONT'D)
(nodding to Rita in the hallway)
She's something, huh? Family's worth a fortune. They own one of those companies that makes all that overpriced, gourmet dogfood. I say a dog will eat the crotch out of your underwear, what the hell does he care about gourmet food, but people will buy anything. Great investment though if you're looking for such.
(glancing over Morris)
I don't think I know you. Frank.

MORRIS
(shaking Frank's hand)
Morris.

FRANK
So, who's grandson or nephew or whatever are you?

Charlotte and Ray walk past the doorway, arguing noisily.

MORRIS
None of them. I'm here with Jodie.

FRANK
Jodie? You? With like a boyfriend?

MORRIS
(peeved)
Yes. Why does everyone keep asking that?

FRANK
Eh, Jodie and men. We don't expect too much in that department. She's just never been much of a keeper...of men that is. Certainly none she keeps long enough to bring down here.

MORRIS
I can't believe you just said that. About your own daughter.

Frank's smile remains soft but his eyes turn sharp.

CONTINUED: (7)

FRANK
You ever pay for a big, fancy wedding to have it not result in a marriage? She's a good girl, but I'm just saying that I wouldn't set my sights on picket fences if I were you.

MORRIS
Well, Manhattan doesn't have a lot of places to put picket fences, so my sights seem to be set just fine.

Morris's phone rings. He glares at Frank as he gets up, stepping into the hall.

FRANK
(to himself)
God help a man in love.

Rita walks up. Frank brightens.

INT. HALLWAY

Morris paces, listening to his caller. He watches out the door. Charlotte and Ray are arguing dramatically outside. After a moment they split, stomping away in opposite directions. After a moment Charlotte stomps back by in Ray's direction.

INT. HALLWAY - A HALF HOUR LATER

Jodie rounds the corner, stopping short as she sees Frank and Rita exiting the viewing room acting a little more amorous than is proper. Frank sees Jodie.

FRANK
(to Jodie)
Can't stick around long enough to say hello to your father?

Looking trapped, Jodie gives him a quick gesture of excuse and ducks into the ladies's room.

INT. SITTING ROOM

A small room just off the viewing room with a couple of chairs and a coffee maker. Morris stands in the doorway with a paper cup, his cell phone, and a surly expression.

Rose enters behind him, pouring herself a cup of coffee.

CONTINUED:

ROSE
What are you doing all by yourself? Where's Jodie?

MORRIS
Who knows?

ROSE
Give her time. I'm sure someone will root her out of whatever hole she's crawled into soon enough.
(straightens tablecloth under coffee maker)
She didn't drag you all the way down here just as a friend, and I'm quite certain you didn't come as such.

MORRIS
No, of course not. She and I have been--

ROSE
Dating? Yes, that's what I've been hearing. Of course you didn't know that until you got down here, did you? Listen, Morris, I understand more about her than she might give me credit.

Morris watches Frank and an uninterested Rita as they talk to Aunt Lois.

ROSE (CONT'D)
(stepping over)
Frank always could get the girls. It's a shame marriage couldn't quell that talent. That is an expensive little package he has there though. If I'd ever been the jealous type, that right there might be enough to do it. Course then I'd have to want Frank back, wouldn't I? What a dreadful thought.

Ray enters the viewing room and sits, alone. Rita slips from Frank's side, making a beeline for Ray. Morris pulls out his cigarettes and steps outside.

EXT. GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

Small garden with a bench, a fountain, and lush flowers. Morris lights a cigarette. His phone rings. It's Anna. He silences it and stuffs it in his pocket. Firecrackers pop loudly around the end of the building. Intrigued, Morris heads in that direction.

INT. LADIES'S ROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

The room is large and nicely decorated, with a small sitting area. Jodie is slumped in one of the overstuffed chairs.

Erin enters, exasperated.

JODIE
Erin?

ERIN
What are you doing in here.

Jodie shrugs.

JODIE
You okay?

Erin flops into one of the other chairs.

ERIN
I will be. Eventually.
(sighing deeply)
This seems like a good place to be right now. Quiet. Like a church.

JODIE
Filled with little flushing confessionals.

ERIN
Only if we were Catholic.
(a moment of silence)
Seems like things should be sadder. Don't you think? I mean this is a funeral and all.

JODIE
Maybe. Why didn't anyone tell me about Gil?

ERIN
Jesus, Jodie. Allow for the moment here.
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

ERIN(CONT'D)

(she takes a moment)
One would think for all your conflict-avoidance issues, you actually want to see Gilbert.

Jodie looks away.

ERIN (CONT'D)
You do! You want to see him! What about Morris?

JODIE
What if I do? And I don't want to see him. I just would kind of like to see him. Don't you ever think about your exes?

Erin walks over, inspecting her makeup in the mirror. She fishes through a basket on the counter, slipping the small packs of tissues into her purse.

ERIN
What exes? I've been married to Jim since birth. Good, solid, mellow, unruffled, dependable Jim.

JODIE
Problems with Jim?

ERIN
No. No problems. That's the problem.

JODIE
I can see where this might cause you concern. What with the having of a good husband and all.

The door opens and Aunt Martha toddles in.

AUNT MARTHA
Are any of my sisters in here?

ERIN
No.

AUNT MARTHA
(lighting a cigarette)
Thank God.

Jodie and Erin chuckle.

CONTINUED: (2)

JODIE
Those things will kill you, Martha.

AUNT MARTHA
Honey, I'm well past dying young. Who cares at this point? So, girls, tell me something good. Gossip. Lies. Whatever you've got.

Jodie pulls the cigarette from Martha's hand, takes a long drag, and hands it back.

JODIE
(coughing)
Erin's got no marital problems and apparently that's a problem.

AUNT MARTHA
Darling, sometimes there's nothing worse than a boring man. I should know. Had one for fifty years. Sweet as he could be, but, my God, there were times when it was like watching a haircut.

The door opens and a WOMAN enters. They go silent. The woman leaves. Erin sits, toeing off her shoes and relaxing.

SERIES OF SHOTS

The crowd dwindles as the afternoon wears on to dusk.

Jim sits, listening to Uncle Carl, miserable.

Frank and Charlotte snipe at each other throughout the funeral home.

Rita sits with Ray. They go silent, staring blankly each time Frank and Charlotte pass.

EXT. GARDEN

Morris, Johnny, and TWO OTHER CHILDREN. Johnny is lighting smoke bombs. Colored smoke billows. Morris looks long at his cigarette and then takes a drag. Johnny pulls a string of firecrackers from his pocket.

MORRIS
Where did you get all these?

CONTINUED:

JOHNNY
Dad got 'em from South Carolina. These ones are illegal up here.

MORRIS
Rightly so. You're going to blow your hands off. Give me those.

Morris takes the firecrackers, straightening the fuse. He holds his cigarette to it. The other children cover their ears.

JOHNNY
You marrying my Aunt Jodie?

MORRIS
(taking eyes from fuse)
What?! Where--who did--why would you ask that?

JOHNNY
(shrugging)
Are you?

MORRIS
Should I?

JOHNNY
Sure. Someone's got to. She's not getting any younger.

Morris smiles. The fuse fires. Morris just barely tosses them before they explode, singeing his fingers and eliciting a screech from him. Johnny shakes his head, disgusted.

INT. LADIES'S ROOM

Jodie, Erin, and Martha sit with their feet up, shoes off.

JODIE
(to Erin)
You're telling me that I have a guilt complex? Well, hell, I could have told you that much. I've spent years cultivating it. The least I can do now is enjoy the wallowing.

AUNT MARTHA
Oh, child, all you did was leave a man at the alter. Plenty of people do that. Get over it. I'm sure he has.
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

AUNT MARTHA(CONT'D)
What you both need is a stiff drink, or some of my 'medicinal marijuana.' Boy that stuff's great.

JODIE
(chuckling)
You might have a point there, Martha.

AUNT MARTHA
You just let me know, honey. I'll get you right.

Jodie looks shocked and highly amused.

The door opens and Jim sticks his head into the room.

JIM
Jodie? Are you in...Morris just tried to blow his hands off.
(slightly puzzled)
What are y'all doing in here?

EXT. FUNERAL HOME PARKING LOT

Jodie leans against Jim's truck. Erin tends Morris's fingers with a first aid kit.

MORRIS
This is my writing hand too.

ERIN
I don't think you need to see a doctor, but we should keep an eye on it.

JODIE
You type everything.
(inspecting his hand)
What is wrong with you anyway? Firecrackers? At a funeral?

MORRIS
Well they weren't mine! I took them away from--

ERIN
Johnny? Of course. Who else would it be? That's Charlotte's juvenile delinquent, not mine.

CONTINUED:

MORRIS
(wincing as Erin bandages)
He asked if we were getting married and I got distracted...

ERIN
Married?

She turns to Jodie, questioning. Jodie shakes her head.

MORRIS
Apparently Jodie's not getting any younger. Ow!

Erin chuckles.

JODIE
I'm not get--oh, I know exactly where that came from!

ERIN
You should think about it, Jodie. You could do it now. We already paid for all these flowers and the church is booked.

Jodie glares. Morris and Erin stare at her tauntingly. Aunt Lois walks up.

AUNT LOIS
(checking the bandage)
Mmm, that's too bad. Hope these fingers don't try to web together. Might want to bandage them separately.

Morris goes wide-eyed. Aunt Lois starts to re-bandage.

JODIE
The burn's not that bad, Lois.

AUNT LOIS
How did you manage to do this?

ERIN
Someone said marriage and Morris tried to blow his ring finger off.

Jodie turns sharply to her sister.

AUNT LOIS
Jodie, you're engaged?

CONTINUED: (2)

JODIE
No! Certainly not.

MORRIS
We haven't really--Certainly not?!

He looks rather put out.

MORRIS
Certainly not? Boy, that was a quick no. I mean I'm not that unthinkable. Plenty of women would love--

Jodie whirls to Morris, aghast. Aunt Lois vacillates between the two. Jodie cuts her eyes at Lois.

JODIE
(tightly)
Morris, I...just think maybe it's a bit soon for that.

Jodie and Morris turn, smiling broadly at a very intrigued Lois. Erin looks bored with the conversation, studying her wedding rings in the light.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jodie and her sisters are in the kitchen. Erin sits demurely in one of the chairs. Jodie sits on the countertop, and Charlotte is rummaging around in the cabinets.

CHARLOTTE
Well, I think you're out of your minds to want to have any contact with him whatsoever.
(pulling out a bottle of wine)
Mom has wine?

Erin leans around to look.

JODIE
I sent her that from California four years ago.

CHARLOTTE
Now, Jodie, you know baptists don't drink. At least not in public.

Charlotte scrounges in her purse, pulling out a Swiss Army knife.

CONTINUED:

ERIN
Then why are you opening it?

CHARLOTTE
I'm not Baptist, darling.

ERIN
Since when?

CHARLOTTE
Since...
(the cork pops)
Now.

Charlotte pours the wine into a jelly glass.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
Well, Erin?

ERIN
Well, what?

CHARLOTTE
(speaking into her glass)
Well what makes you give a damn?

ERIN
Who says I do? But I can't sit around and dwell on things. All he did was leave, Charlotte. Am I supposed to be bitter forever?

CHARLOTTE
Yes! It's not dwelling, Erin. It's remembering. He always did exactly what he wanted, and now you spend half your damn life letting a therapist tell you that you need to be the one to "reach out." Wait, wait, wait. To heal yourself you must heal your past. Did I say that right?

ERIN
Maybe you should try doing it instead of just saying it. Might do something for that trainwreck you're living.

Jodie exchanges a glance with Erin, who tries to ignore her. Charlotte glares.

CONTINUED: (2)

CHARLOTTE
What about you, Jodie? Are you going to do all this forgive and forget crap, too, or do you just plan on hiding in the bathroom for the next thirty years?

Jodie looks suddenly put on the spot.

JODIE
I just...well...Erin was in there too.

CHARLOTTE
(tauntingly)
And how do you feel about that, Erin?

Erin rolls her eyes.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
So, what's it gonna be, Jode? And before you answer, remember his rehearsal dinner speech...
(holding up her glass)
"And I said to my daughter here, girly, do you want a husband or a degree? Cause I'm only paying for one."
(snickering)
Then he didn't pay for either.

JODIE
Yes, I know! Look, I deal with things in my own way!

CHARLOTTE
(speaking into her cup)
Or not.

Jodie hops off the counter. She stands quite straight, her jaw set tight.

JODIE
No, Charlotte, I am capable of handling things without your input. I've been doing so for quite a few years now, if you haven't noticed.

Jodie stomps out of the room. Charlotte rolls her eyes and refills her glass.

CONTINUED: (3)

A moment passes and the door bangs open again. Jodie stalks in, snatches the bottle of wine off the table, and stalks back out.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Jodie strides down the hallway to the front door. There is a flurry of activity in the sitting room. She slips past. Rose catches sight of her.

ROSE
Jodie?

Jodie keeps moving onto the...

EXT. FRONT PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Morris and Jim talking. Jodie steps out, taking a long drink from her wine bottle. They look over, amused.

MORRIS
Wow, drinking straight from the bottle. What step would you say that is?

JIM
The step right off the wagon. Hear it's a doozy.

JODIE
Oh, ha ha.

Rose pops her head out the open window.

ROSE
Jodie, are you--oh, boys, you're here. You can help me move down the little puppet theatre I bought for the kids. They need something to occupy them other than destroying my furniture.

Morris holds up his bandaged hand.

JODIE
Morris is wounded.

ROSE
He can still help. It's just awkward, not heavy.

CONTINUED:

MORRIS
I can help. I'm a helpful guy.

JODIE
(to Morris)
You wouldn't even help me move a couch across the room.

Jim and Morris step inside.

ROSE
Jodie, I do wish you wouldn't drink out on the porch like that. Why don't you come inside and watch?

JODIE
I don't have the greatest luck at puppet shows.

INT. SITTING ROOM

Jodie sits on the couch, Nana in the chair next to her. Nana looks over at the bottle of wine and shakes her head.

NANA
You know, it starts with the first drink.

JODIE
(dryly)
I'm not an alcoholic, Nana...
(under her breath)
yet.

Nana huffs. The Chihuahua runs into the room, chased by a LARGE CAT. He leaps into Nana's lap, turns and growls at the cat.

Jim and Morris struggle into the room with the puppet theatre. Aunts Ruth and Fanny are congregated in one corner. They look up eagerly when Morris enters.

Swarming around him, Morris backs up slightly, stumbling into the theatre.

AUNT RUTH
Morris, darling, we wish we had known about the engagement. You didn't say a word earlier. So secretive with family.

Jodie's head snaps up.

CONTINUED:

MORRIS
The what?

JODIE
(taking a long drink)
Oh God.

Nana cuts her eyes and tisks. The cat walks the back of the couch toward Nana. The Chihuahua growls.

AUNT RUTH
Lois was just telling us how you proposed.

MORRIS
(eyes wide)
I did? When?

Jim sits, trying to untangle the strings of a marionette. He looks up, surprised. Johnny breaks the head off one of the puppets and tries to hide it before anyone notices.

AUNT RUTH
Don't you worry about her saying no initially. I turned my Ralph down three times.

AUNT FANNY
Oh won't Gilbert be disappointed?

Aunt Martha sits in the corner, her eyes closed.

AUNT MARTHA
Never marry a man who wears an earring.

MORRIS
I don't have an earring.

Martha puts on her glasses, squinting at him.

AUNT MARTHA
Huh.
(to Jodie)
Okay then. Go ahead.

Martha closes her eyes and drifts back to sleep. Jodie leans forward, her head in her hands.

JODIE
Oh God. Everyone wait a second.

CONTINUED: (2)

They ignore her.

MORRIS
We are not engaged.

AUNT RUTH
You love her, don't you?

Morris looks over at Jodie who is watching him between her fingers.

MORRIS
Sure.

The Aunts beam. Jodie, taken aback, stares at Morris. All eyes turn to Jodie. She stands, walking out of the room and then the house, breezing past Gilbert who strides across the lawn toward her. Morris follows Jodie, ignoring Gilbert as well.

Gilbert enters.

GILBERT
Evening ladies. Was that Jodie?

AUNT FANNY
Oh, Gilbert, darling, you missed it. It seems Jodie and Morris here are getting engaged.

Gilbert glares. Rose rubs her temples.

EXT. ROSE'S STREET - NIGHT

The street in front of the house is quiet, most of the homes dark. Jodie has wandered several houses down. Morris jogs to catch up to her. She walks faster.

MORRIS
Could you just stay put for one second?

JODIE
What for? So you can drop down on one knee?

MORRIS
I did not start that in there.

JODIE
No, you didn't.

CONTINUED:

She keeps walking.

MORRIS
Oh, you cannot be mad at me about this.

Jodie cuts her eyes at him.

JODIE
I'm not mad at you.

Jodie starts to walk faster, but Morris grabs her arm, stopping her. She yanks her arm away, glaring up at him.

MORRIS
Yeah? Then what's this act?

JODIE
It's just...here I am again knee deep and there's not going to be a wedding or an engagement and I think they're going to notice eventually and it will all look like I've run off another one and none of this should matter and...and you certainly didn't help matters! Sure! That's your answer? Do you love her? Sure!

MORRIS
(stunned stuttering)
Not--what--how can you--I have spent the better part of two days here on varicose vein lane pretending to be your boyfriend! I sat and listened to your Uncle Carl, who told me all about his artificial leg and then popped it off and showed it to me! I've nearly lost a hand, been attacked by a giant dog and an ex-fiance and you're mad because I--Just what was I supposed to say?

A porch light flips on in one of the nearby houses. They both look over, quieting their voices.

JODIE
I don't know, but not that!

CONTINUED: (2)

The door opens in the house. Jodie grabs Morris's arm and starts to walk back to Rose's house. Morris waves an apology to the AWAKENED NEIGHBOR peering out.

MORRIS
Why not?

JODIE
Why not?

Morris cocks his head. Realization sweeps across Jodie's face.

JODIE (CONT'D)
Oh, honestly Morris.

They start up the walk to Rose's house. Jodie freezes. Gilbert stands on the porch with Aunt Ruth, Aunt Lois, and Aunt Fanny.

MORRIS
(mumbling)
Oh, speak of the devil. And without the hellhound.

GILBERT
Morris. No dog tonight. How's the knee? Able to get down on it without a problem?

Morris sneers.

GILBERT (CONT'D)
Hey Jodie.

AUNT FANNY
(gazing adoringly at Gilbert)
Gilbert was going to leave, but we convinced him to stay and say hello.
(hopefully)
You two aren't having a little tiff already, are you?

Aunt Ruth elbows Aunt Fanny. Morris sighs, exasperated. Jodie shifts nervously under the many gazes.

JODIE
Gil.

CONTINUED: (3)

Morris's phone rings. Jodie sees Anna's name in the caller ID.

JODIE (CONT'D)
(under her breath)
Why not indeed. You better answer that. Wouldn't want to let that one slip away.

Morris goes into the house. Gilbert looks pleased at Morris's exit.

GILBERT
You look good.

Morris stalks back out, grabs Jodie, and kisses her. Jodie is stunned. Morris pulls away, staring into her eyes for a long moment, before glaring at Gilbert, and disappearing inside again. Jodie is dumbfounded.

Gilbert and Jodie stand uncomfortably for a moment.

AUNT RUTH
Ladies, I think I'm going to retire for the evening. Gilbert, will we see you tomorrow?

GILBERT
Yes, ma'am.

The three hastily retreat inside.

Jodie look as if she wants to run. Gilbert motions for them to sit. Jodie hesitates, but trudges up the steps, sinking into the swing. Gilbert shoves into the swing next to her, draping his arm across the back.

GILBERT (CONT'D)
I take it I'm a bit of a surprise?

Curtains in the sitting room window rustle.

AUNT FANNY
(from inside)
Don't mind me. Just closing the window. Bit of a draft coming in here.

JODIE
(distracted)
Among many.

CONTINUED: (4)

GILBERT
Do you...did you need to go after him? I mean, I don't want to--

JODIE
(looking past him)
No, no. Safer out here...I think.

GILBERT
This isn't about me, is it?

JODIE
(temper flashing)
Now, why would it be about you? You know, you always--

GILBERT
Hey, don't get all testy like you do. I was just asking.

The door opens and Aunt Fanny steps out with two glasses.

AUNT FANNY
Don't mean to interrupt. I thought you both might like some tea.
(patting Gilbert's cheek)
Such a handsome face. This is so nice. Jodie, isn't this nice?
(Jodie sighs)
Well. I'll leave you two.

Fanny disappears inside. Jodie and Gilbert sit silently for a moment.

GILBERT
So, I haven't seen you since...well, I didn't actually see you...But I hear the dress was beautiful. And I looked fantastic in my tux in case you ever sat around wondering about that.

JODIE
(softly)
Oh, God.

GILBERT
Yeah. That was great. Great day. And how was college? Good? I mean, you were gone as fast as it takes to open an acceptance letter, so I'm just assuming...
(MORE)

CONTINUED: (5)

GILBERT(CONT'D)
I've Googled you a couple of times. You seem to be doing well.

JODIE
Googled me? That sounds...sordid.

GILBERT
Like it?

JODIE
(shrugs)
I'm doing okay.

The sound of footsteps inside. Jodie looks to the door expectantly, but no one emerges.

GILBERT
Good. Good. Glad to hear it. I'm doing fine, in case you were wondering. Been handling contract negotiations for Nortel for the past year, in case you were wondering. Not seeing anyone. I was a while ago, but not now, in case you were wondering about that too.

Jodie slowly shrinks in her seat as he talks.

JODIE
(defeated)
Gil, I'm sorry. Really. I just...

GILBERT
You didn't want to get married. That's okay. You probably knew that long before the day though, huh? Bet you did. Yeah, I'll just bet you did. Did the ring at least pay for a semester.

JODIE
I got a scholarship.

GILBERT
Oh. I see. Well, then I hope that it paid for some good times.

JODIE
I didn't sell the ring, Gil. I still have it.
(Gilbert looks surprised)
(MORE)

CONTINUED: (6)

JODIE(CONT'D)
I was going to send it back, but...I don't know. I just never did and then it got to be too long.

They sit silently. Gilbert's gaze softens. He reaches to touch her hair. She lets him.

GILBERT
You know, I don't blame you so much...well, actually I do...but I blame the mailman too. He was never on time once until that day. Just a couple of hours later and...

JODIE
You think that would have made a difference?

GILBERT
I would've gone with you...if you'd asked.

Jodie looks at him thoughtfully. The lights in the window turn off. They sit silently.

GILBERT (CONT'D)
Would he?

JODIE
Gil.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE SEWING ROOM - A COUPLE OF HOURS LATER

Jodie stands nervously in the hallway outside Morris's door. She knocks. She hears him laugh. Morris answers, phone pressed to his ear.

MORRIS
Hold on a second, Anna.

Jodie turns and walks away, passing her room and going down the stairs.

INT. SITTING ROOM - FUNERAL DAY - MORNING

Jodie is sleeping in an overstuffed chair. She opens her eyes to see the cat staring at her intently from the back of the chair.

Jodie gets up from her chair and peers carefully into the empty hallway before slipping out.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - SAME

The Aunts and Nana sit in the rocking chairs on front the porch, deep in conversation. Rose sits silently. The Chihuahua in Nana's lap barks at nothing.

AUNT FANNY
Why on earth would you be interested in that, Lois? Doesn't your Davis handle all your accounts now? What does he think?

AUNT LOIS
He does, but I figure, Frank's done all right with his money.

ROSE
He'll do all right with yours as well. You won't be worth a damn afterwards, but he'll do okay.
(mumbling to herself)
Knew he had to here for some reason.

AUNT FANNY
What was that, darling?

Rose waves off her answer. They all rock silently for a moment. The Chihuahua yaps again.

Jodie listens to the conversation from the hallway for a moment before tiptoeing away.

A POLICEMAN walks up to the house, guiding Aunt Martha.

POLICEMAN
Morning. This lady flagged me down. Said she was staying here.
(whispering)
She seems a little out of it.

ROSE
(stepping down)
Yes, well that wouldn't be out of the realm of possibilities now would it? Come on Martha.

POLICEMAN
Does she need to go to the hospital?

CONTINUED:

ROSE
No.
(under her breath)
Jail maybe. Nuthouse.

AUNT MARTHA
He wouldn't even stop at the Kripy Kreme. That's the only reason I stopped him.

The Policeman smiles and walks away. Rose searches Martha's eyes as she helps her up the stairs and into the house.

AUNT MARTHA (CONT'D)
What is it, Rose?

ROSE
Just checking.

EXT. BACKPORCH - MORNING

Morris sits, staring out over the yard rather distantly.

Jodie steps out onto the porch. She nervously picks at her fingernails.

JODIE
Morning.

Morris turns his ear to her, but doesn't look around. Jodie bites at the edge of her nail.

JODIE (CONT'D)
Morris, listen, I'm sorry...

MORRIS
No, I'm sorry. I'm sorry about last night.

Morris stands and turns, leaning against the railing, looking anywhere but at her.

MORRIS (CONT'D)
I shouldn't have done that, but I did. And I won't say that I wish I hadn't.

Jodie starts to speak but he stops her.

MORRIS (CONT'D)
I'm going to go home after the funeral.
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

MORRIS(CONT'D)
You don't really need me here, and I...I don't want to do this anymore.

JODIE
(awkwardly)
I, well, I can't say that I was exactly expecting that last night, but it's okay. Better than okay really. You don't...I don't want you to leave.

Her eyes are rimmed with tears. Morris maintains his distance. She sniffs back tears and straightens.

JODIE (CONT'D)
Actress's are easier...to deal with I mean?

Morris remains expressionless.

JODIE (CONT'D)
This is just hard, Morris. I'm afraid you want something I might not be have to give.

Morris tenses, rubbing his hand over his face.

MORRIS
Yeah, well, maybe you don't.

He walks across the porch and into the house.

JODIE
Come on. Morris?

INT. KITCHEN

Ray, dressed in dirty work clothes, is setting up a ladder beneath the hole in the ceiling. Rose enters.

ROSE
You're working on this today?

RAY
You said you wanted it finished.

Rose walks to the sink, filling the teapot with water. Through the window she sees Jodie leaning against the porch railing.

Ray starts up the ladder. One of the rungs breaks, spilling him onto the floor. Rose rushes over to help him up.

CONTINUED:

ROSE
I want this done, but you don't have to kill yourself in the process. I already have a big enough mess in here as it is.

Ray limps over to the table.

RAY
I don't think I should go to the funeral today.

Rose returns to her teapot.

ROSE
I think you better. We all have to suffer through this. You certainly aren't getting out of it. The way I see it, for whatever you did it seems you haven't made parole just yet.
(tossing him a bottle of aspirin)
Take these. You probably bruised something.

They are silent for a moment.

RAY
I didn't do it, Rose. Not this time.

ROSE
You know, Ray, I don't really care if you did or you didn't. I was pretty much done with you after the first time. All I care about now is that you treat Charlotte and your children the way you should, and finish this kitchen sometime before I die. Do that and maybe I'll change my mind.
(helping him stand)
Now, go and clean up, and I'll bring you some tea.

EXT. BACKPORCH

Jodie is still staring out into the yard when Rose walks out. She hands Jodie a steaming mug.

Jodie leans against the screen, staring into the mug.

CONTINUED:

ROSE
Where did Morris go?

Jodie shrugs.

ROSE (CONT'D)
How's work?

JODIE
(collecting herself)
It's fine. Busy, but you already know that.

The cat twirls itself around Rose's legs. She picks him up. He promptly sticks his face in her mug. Rose sighs, putting both the cat and the mug on the table.

ROSE
(to cat)
Just once I would like to finish my morning tea.
(to Jodie)
Listen, you and Morris--

JODIE
There is no me and Morris.

ROSE
(sarcastically)
You don't say. Jodie, don't you think all this has gone a bit far?

A chain saw starts behind the hedges. Rose glares in that direction.

JODIE
Usually does. I always forget how hard it is to come home.

ROSE
It's only as hard as you make it.

JODIE
That's deep. Been reading from Erin's bookshelf?

ROSE
You know, this broody sarcasm is not your best trait, Jodie--

A small tree falls, crashing through the hedges and crushing Roses's rose bushes.

CONTINUED: (2)

ROSE (CONT'D)
Charles Evans! Look what you have done!
(stomping into the yard)
What on earth--well, you finally did it! You killed them!

Charles pokes his head around the hedges.

CHARLES
I did what? Where?

ROSE
Look at my roses!
(scooping up a pile)
Pulverized! Do you have any idea how long these took me to get them looking like that? Years I tell you! Years! Last week it was weed killer on my tomato plants and now this!

Charles looks coldly at Jodie. Jodie goes into the house.

ROSE (CONT'D)
It's not bad enough that I have to listen to the racket of that damn leaf blower or some other gas-powered monstrosity you've got running...

EXT. FRONT PORCH - A SHORT TIME LATER

The children are playing, dressed in their church clothes though one wouldn't know it for the way they are rolling on the ground.

Jim walks up and flops into the porch swing. Erin continues inside.

INT. JODIE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jodie is dressing in front of the mirror. She adjusts her low cut dress, checking the cleavage level, and looking none too happy.

Erin pushes open the door and leans against it.

JODIE
One button or two? Wouldn't want to offend God.

CONTINUED:

Erin stares.

JODIE (CONT'D)
What? Maybe I should just put on a jacket. It's too hot for that though, isn't it. Sweat stains would probably look worse.

ERIN
Do you think I use therapy as a weapon?

Jodie slips on a black jacket and spins in front of the mirror, still not pleased.

JODIE
Are you kidding?
(shrugging out of the jacket)
Of course.

She rummages through her garment bag.

ERIN
No, I mean does it ever come off as passive-aggression?

JODIE
Yes. Maybe I should just wear a blouse and skirt.

ERIN
But does it seem that--

JODIE
My God, Erin, yes! The therapy talk gets a little old. Yes, I don't even understand half of what you're saying without a textbook in front of me. Yes, we all think about falling on a steak knife during some of your speeches. What are you getting at?

Jodie holds a white, silk shirt up.

ERIN
Do you think you'd still be married if you'd gone through with it then?

JODIE
I doubt it.

CONTINUED: (2)

Erin walks away, mumbling. Jodie stares at her reflection for a moment before turning suddenly to the empty doorway.

JODIE (CONT'D)
(rushing to the door)
Wait! What? Erin!

The hallway is empty. Morris steps out of his room, looking dashing in a dark suit and fresh shave. Jodie is awed. He looks at her, expressionless, before walking past.

SERIES OF SHOTS - LEAVING FOR THE CHURCH

Everyone rushing around the house.

Charlotte, Ray, and their three children arrive.

Two limos pull up. The FUNERAL DIRECTOR hurries the family along, constantly checking his watch.

The dogs scurry from room to room, trying to find a place to hide.

Morris sits on the sofa in the entryway, looking at a painting on the wall across from him. Aunt Lois and Aunt Fanny walk up.

AUNT LOIS
That's us. Jodie painted it a few years ago. She did a wonderful job, don't you think?

MORRIS
It's very nice.

AUNT FANNY
I do wish she would have brushed out some of this dwaddle of mine though.

AUNT LOIS
It's a paint brush, not a magic wand, Fanny.

AUNT FANNY
Well, you have it too.

AUNT LOIS
I do not.

They head out the door, still arguing.

CONTINUED: (3)

Morris's cell phone rings, Anna's name showing up in the caller ID. He answers, cheering up.

INT. ROSE'S BATHROOM

Rose is trying to fix her hair. She twists around with a mirror, trying to see the back of her head. Jodie leans in the doorway, having settled on the low cut dress.

Rose drops her arms, exhausted, and hands the brush to Jodie. Jodie works on her mother's hair for a moment and then grabs a hat, slapping it on Rose's head. Rose flings the hat off and shoos Jodie out of the room.

EXT. FRONTYARD

The family pours noisily out of the house and into the limos. Jim and Morris climb into Jim's truck to follow.

INT. FRONT HALL

The house is completely silent. The dogs poke their heads out of one of the rooms, glancing around before flopping down on the floor. A moment later the cat slinks into the hallway and flips upside down in a spot of sunshine.

INT. CHURCH - THE FUNERAL SERVICE

The casket lies at the front of the small church, draped in an American flag and a spray of lilies.

The PREACHER, 50s, stands beside the casket as he gives his sermon. He is a man who looks uncomfortable in a suit, but completely at ease in front of the congregation.

PREACHER
Now, Walter had his faults as we all do. My father, who worked with him for years, always said that Walter was about a foot shorter than his temper. But Walter had something wonderful; a sense of humor. Shortly before he passed, my father and I went down to see him. He was having a good day and he told us a joke...

The Preacher pauses and begins to chuckle. The congregation leans forward in anticipation.

CONTINUED:

PREACHER (CONT'D)
Well, no, I better not repeat that one right at this moment. Still, a sense of humor is a gift, and any man who can make another laugh has good in him.

The congregation leans back, disappointed.

Morris sits next to Jodie, stonefaced. Jodie watches Morris. Gilbert, off to the side, watches Jodie. Rose dabs at her eyes with a handkerchief. She catches eye of Gilbert, interest piqued.

EXT. CEMETERY

The FAMILY mills about in the cemetery, talking in low voices. The day is hot, but most people have left the shade of the funeral tent. The TWO FUNERAL ATTENDANTS stand beside the casket.

Nana and the Aunts surround Erin. She looks miserable, frequently glancing over the tops of their heads for an escape.

People weave in and out, stopping to shake someone's hand or give a brief hug.

Rita poses by several of the large wreaths as Frank snaps her picture. He and Charlotte begin to squabble over this. Rita approaches Ray. He moves by Charlotte, and Rita scans the crowd for another.

Morris and Jim stand over in a shady corner of the cemetary, leaning against an iron fence. Morris somberly watches the scene, holding a cigarette. He flicks the ashes, scrubbing them into the grass with his foot.

Jodie walks hesitantly over to them. Jim takes his cue to leave.

JODIE
Are you still going?

MORRIS
I couldn't get a flight any earlier than the one we already have.
(Jodie brightens)
I got a hotel room at the airport. Jim's going to drive me out a little later.

CONTINUED:

JODIE
(scuffing her toe in the dirt)
Please don't go, Morris. I'm sorry. I just...need some time to think about all this.

MORRIS
No, you don't. See, that's your problem. You sit and think and think and think yourself right out of it all. Do you know how many girlfriends I've gone through while I waited for you to think it all out? I can't keep tossing them off for you. I'm happy with Anna...mostly.

JODIE
Mostly? Is that what you want?

MORRIS
It's better than this.
(kissing her cheek)
You can blame it on me if they ask.

He walks away. Jodie stands, dismayed and teary-eyed.

Across the cemetery, Frank approaches Rose. Rose wipes at her eyes with her handkerchief. She quickly puts it away, stiffening when she sees Frank.

FRANK
Rose.

ROSE
Frank.

FRANK
(sincerely)
I just want to say how sorry I am. I know things haven't been easy for you with him being sick these past several years.

ROSE
(cautiously)
Thank you.

CONTINUED: (2)

FRANK
I just wish I had known how bad he'd gotten. I might have been able to help, lend support or something.

ROSE
Yes, he used to...
(narrowing her eyes)
What do you want, Frank?

Frank acts hurt.

FRANK
Rose, that is not what why I'm here. I was genuinely concerned. I know there's a lot you need to do about what with all these arrangements and life insurance policies and the like. That kind of stuff can get complicated. I'm imagining you've got a lawyer.

ROSE
All that's taken care of for the time being.

FRANK
You should ask him about investments. You don't really want all that lying around, you know.

ROSE
Yes, well...
(narrowing her eyes)
If he did leave anything, and I'm not telling you, he didn't leave any of it to you.

FRANK
I didn't expect he would.

ROSE
I'm not investing anything with you either.

Rose walks away.

FRANK
Is that how little you think of me?

CONTINUED: (3)

ROSE
(over her shoulder)
Yes.

FRANK
He would've listened to my advice.

Jodie still stands in the shade. Gilbert strolls over.

GILBERT
You okay?

JODIE
(feigned enthusiasm)
Sure. Great. Morris is heading back. Work.

GILBERT
Big theatre emergency? Someone break a leg?

JODIE
(chuckling)
Now that was a terrible joke.

Morris watches the exchange from a distance, climbing into Jim's truck. She catches sight of him leaving, and her smile fades. She watches as the truck pulls away, her expression sad. Gilbert nods to Jodie and they stroll away from the crowd.

EXT. ROSE'S DRIVEWAY - AFTERNOON

Ray's work van sits in the driveway. He is rummaging through the tools in the back. Expensive glass-front, cabinet doors are laid around on the grass.

Charlotte comes out of the house, breezing past Frank on the porch. Ray looks up at her, but keeps working.

CHARLOTTE
These are nice. Where did they come from?

RAY
(unenthusiastically)
The woman in that big job on White Oak decided she didn't like them after they were installed.

Charlotte nods and walks around, pretending to look at the cabinet doors.

CONTINUED:

CHARLOTTE
Nice. Mom will be pleased.
(pause)
You've spent a long time on that house. Is that where you were last night?

Ray stops working. He is fed up.

RAY
Goddamnit, Charlotte! I am not after that woman, I didn't do anything with that other woman, and that Rita was chasing me! I look at other women sometimes! Guilty. But I am not your damn father!

Charlotte stares at him, emotionless. Ray tucks the tools he needs into his belt and gathers up the cabinet doors. He waits for Charlotte to say something. She doesn't.

RAY (CONT'D)
I'm need to get these up.

He starts toward the house.

CHARLOTTE
I'll make up the couch for you tonight.

Ray stops, looking over his shoulder.

RAY
The couch? I swear, Charlotte, you...

Charlotte stares. He nods and continues into the house.

Jodie and Gilbert walk up the sidewalk.

GILBERT
I just don't get the...I don't like that guy, Jodie.

JODIE
(picking up the newspaper)
Well, it's a good thing it's not up to you then isn't it?

Frank clears his throat. Jodie looks up and grimaces when she sees her father.

CONTINUED: (2)

FRANK
There you are. You haven't been dodging me, have you?

JODIE
Not really.
(hesitation)
What are you doing out here?

FRANK
Rose won't let me in the house.

Jodie tries to hide a smile. Frank stretches across the swing. Jodie steels herself, tapping the paper against her leg.

FRANK (CONT'D)
I've tried calling you a few times.

JODIE
When?

FRANK
I don't know. A couple of times back a while ago.

JODIE
I never got any messages.

FRANK
I don't leave messages. I hate those machines.
(pause)
What happened to the fiance? The other one. Your old dad's been hearing things.

Gilbert scowls. Jodie cuts her eyes at him.

JODIE
Have you now? Well that's never a good sign. Sanity doesn't run real deep around here as it is.

FRANK
Ah, hey...
(to Gilbert, snidely)
Gotten a little bite to her over the years, hasn't she?

GILBERT
Kind of like it.

CONTINUED: (3)

Charles Evans comes down the driveway, pushing a wheelbarrow full of wood and branches. Rose is close behind him, fussing.

ROSE
I don't know how you've lived this long without someone killing you, Charles. If I'd had a place to hide the body I might have done so myself long ago.

Gilbert sighs and walks over, coaxing his father away. The Evans dog leaps across the yard to Gilbert. Rose marches back around the side of the house, mumbling.

Alone with her father now, Jodie sinks down onto the top step. Frank reaches out and scraps at the paint on the porch railing. A large chunk of paint pulls away, leaving a bare spot.

FRANK
Huh, she might want to take care of that. Rose seems to be holding up well, but then she was always of that damn stiff upper lip brood. She still blames me for all that with your Grandfather. I say, if he wanted to run off with that woman who was I to stop him?

JODIE
You set him up on the date with her.

FRANK
(shrugs)
Ah, well...Are you sure he didn't say anything about me before he passed?

Jodie stares in awe. Frank shrugs it off. He taps his foot on a hollow-sounding board beneath the swing. Jodie drops her head back and closes her eyes.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Sounds like a rotten board here. It's a decent house I suppose. Good thing her Grandmother left it to her. She couldn't have gotten it on her own. Your mother never was all that smart with her money.

CONTINUED: (4)

JODIE
(anger flashing)
What money?

Frank wears a cocky grin.

FRANK
Oh, Jodie, she could have done so much more than this. I mean all the things she left behind. Of course you know what that's like, don't you. I mean look what you left behind.

JODIE
Oh my God, I'm so tired of this. I did it! I ruined everyone's life! Gilbert's. Mine. Everyone in the wedding party. You all had to get dressed up in tuxes and ugly bridesmaid dresses, and then nothing. The damage has been irreparable. God help me for the mayhem I have caused.

The Aunts' and Nana's faces appear in the window.

FRANK
All that wedding bit cost a pretty penny. Did you ever think about that, Miss?

JODIE
What do you care? You didn't pay for it! You said you would, but you didn't! Just like everything else that you ever promised!

FRANK
So now this is all about me?

The window inches open. Neither Jodie nor Frank seem to notice.

JODIE
Yes! Well...no...but YES!

FRANK
I admit I was perhaps not the best father.

CONTINUED: (5)

JODIE
Perhaps?... You were... you abandoned us, you used my college fund for a trip to Cancun, you married my college roommate! My roommate! She was three months younger than me for God's sake! What is wrong with you?

Frank looks surprised.

FRANK
And because of that you broke a man's heart? Did you even think about Gilbert as you were running off to be some sort of "artist"? I loved that boy like a son.

JODIE
Loved him? You met him at the rehearsal dinner. I suppose it's good for him that I did run off because we all know how you love your children. Gilbert was... I didn't love him.

FRANK
No. Well, that's too bad. Now all you've got is the Yankee theatre boy. You love him? He love you?

Jodie realizes she does.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Because where is he now?

Jodie stands quickly, glaring down at him. Frank looks suddenly nervous.

JODIE
He's gone! No engagement! No wedding! Gone! Happy? Have you always been such a sack of shit, or is this recent?

FRANK
I really don't--

JODIE
(yelling)
It was a rhetorical question!

CONTINUED: (6)

Franks starts to stand, but Jodie steps forward and he sinks back down. Just then a vase tumbles out of the open window, breaking across the porch. Sound of several people scrambling back.

JODIE (CONT'D)
You know what? You know what this is? I'm done. That's what this is. It's me being done, finished, had enough. Why should I ruin my life...over you, over him, over...
(softly worried)
Oh God, I messed it up. I let him...

Jodie stops, glares at Frank, and flings her newspaper sharply against the back of the swing. It scatters across the porch. She storms into the house, slamming the door behind her.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The Aunts and Nana stare in stunned silence. They creep to the edges of the doorway. Jodie doesn't acknowledge them as she strides by, grabbing the phone and heading up the steps. Rose stands behind them, wearing a small, satisfied smile.

AUNT RUTH
No wedding? And I was going to give them my fine china.

AUNT FANNY
Ruth, that's Corning Ware you have, and I'm certain they don't want those old white dishes. He left her. Well, I just knew I didn't trust that boy.

INT. KITCHEN - SAME

Ray is putting the cabinet doors up, making the kitchen look somewhat less of a disaster. Erin stares into the refrigerator.

Charlotte speaks from the pantry.

CHARLOTTE (O.S.)
Would you believe this same can of Hershey's has been in here since I left for college. Why would she keep something like this?

CONTINUED:

ERIN
Sentimental value?

CHARLOTTE
It's hot chocolate. I tell you, your mother has become Fred Sanford.

Ray starts to hum the theme song from *Sanford and Son*. Charlotte walks out of the pantry, eating from a box of raisins.

ERIN
Raisins? You haven't eaten a raisin since you ate that box with the bugs twenty years ago.

Charlotte shakes the box and peers in suspiciously.

CHARLOTTE
Yeah, well it's all she has other than hippie food. Nothing but a jar of wheat germ and dried fruit. Let her read one health food book. I thought people were supposed to bring food to the house when someone dies.

Charlotte pops a couple of raisins in her mouth and grimaces. She drops the box onto the counter.

Erin pulls out a plastic-wrapped plate of deviled eggs, tearing it open as she walks back to the table. Charlotte reaches over and grabs an egg, popping it into her mouth whole. Erin nibbles.

Rose enters.

ROSE
Oh, girls, is that the plate from the bottom shelf?

Charlotte stops in the middle of her second egg, looking panicked.

CHARLOTTE
Yeah, why?

ROSE
Well, Fanny made those. You know she lost her last marble years ago.
(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

ROSE(CONT'D)
Let's the dog eat right off the spoon while she cooks.

Charlotte and Erin spew out their eggs. Ray chuckles.

CHARLOTTE
I think I feel sick.
(holding her stomach)
You should label these things.

ROSE
Maybe you should ask first.

Rose starts to bag up the eggs. She picks a hair from one, thinks about it, and drops it back. Charlotte and Erin look confused as they wipe out their mouths with napkins.

ERIN
What are you doing?

ROSE
Oh, well, there's no need for them to go to waste. I thought I'd pack them up for Frank before I send him on his way.

Charlotte sports a delighted grin. Rose calmly finishes the bag, and walks back out.

EXT. FRONT PORCH

Frank still sits in the swing, unable to move. Rose steps out, handing Frank the bag.

ROSE
(smiling slyly)
I think it's time for you to go, Frank. Here are some of Lois's deviled eggs. She wanted you to be sure and eat them before they go bad.

Frank takes the bag without a word, still dumbstruck.

Rose goes back inside, a light spring in her step.

INT. HALLWAY

Jodie trudges down the steps, phone in hand, looking defeated. She stops suddenly, sniffing the air.

INT. DEN

Jodie enters. The bathroom door is propped up. She sniffs again, and peers around the door.

JODIE
Martha? What are you doing?

Martha exhales a long stream of smoke out the window.

JODIE (CONT'D)
Lord, it's like living in a dorm again. You know Mom will kill you if she smells that.

AUNT MARTHA
Want some?

Jodie hesitates and then takes the joint, flopping down on the floor beside Martha.

JODIE
(coughing)
My God this stuff is horrible.

Martha shrugs and takes the joint back. Jodie turns the phone on and off, on and off.

JODIE (CONT'D)
(gloomily)
I love him, Martha. For once.

AUNT MARTHA
Who? Oh, the boy with the earring?

JODIE
He doesn't...yes.

AUNT MARTHA
Well, I should hope so. Usually makes an engagement go better.

Jodie sighs deeply.

JODIE
There isn't an engagement. He left.

AUNT MARTHA
So call him. Or are you making crank phone calls? Oh, let's do that. I haven't done that in years.

CONTINUED:

JODIE
I can't call him.

AUNT MARTHA
Well he's not calling you, is he?

JODIE
No, I mean I can't. He's got his phone turned off. He never turns his phone off.
(getting an idea)
Oh, hey, Jim! Does he have a cell phone?

Jodie rises, heading out the door. Martha stops her, tossing her a bottle of Visine.

INT. JIM'S TRUCK - DAY

Jim and Morris are driving through the city. Elton John's *Little Jeannie* comes on the radio. Jim starts to change the station. Morris bolts up.

MORRIS
No, don't change that.

JIM
What? Why not?

MORRIS
That's a great song.

JIM
Oh, you have got to be kidding me.

MORRIS
No, this is good stuff. When he stopped with all the drugs the music went to hell, or maybe it was the Disney thing, but...You seriously don't like this song?

JIM
Philadelphia Freedom. Now that was a great song. That and *Captain Fantastic and the Dirt Brown Cowboy*.

Jim turns the radio up. His phone rings and he turns the radio back down.

CONTINUED:

JIM (CONT'D)
Hello? Yeah.
(glancing at Morris)
I can try I guess...No no, a few minutes.

Jim hangs up. Morris pulls out a cigarette and rolls down the window.

JIM (CONT'D)
You know, I hate to say this because I barely know you. I mean you seem like a nice enough guy and all, but you're a jackass.

MORRIS
(startled)
Oh, sorry. Is it the smoke? I can put it out. I'm trying to quit anyway.

JIM
Not that. How long have you been chasing after Jodie? You should know by now that she doesn't get all teared up about anyone. She didn't even cry when she left Captain America back there. Just got that NYU admissions letter the day of the ceremony and she was gone.

MORRIS
Why are you telling me this?

Jim slows for a squirrel tiptoeing across the street.

JIM
My wife's probably about to leave me. I keep finding books about saving the long-term relationship on the bed. Didn't know this was a relationship. Thought it was a marriage, but I'll do whatever she wants. You can't offer ultimatums to the women in this family.

MORRIS
How about offering them a sedative?

CONTINUED: (2)

JIM
(contemplating the idea)
That might help. No, wait, Erin gets all testy on meds. Listen, I need to stop by Rose's to pick something up.

MORRIS
That was Jodie, wasn't it?

JIM
No. Maybe.

EXT. FRONT YARD

Charles Evans is watering his driveway again. The dog is sprawled in the grass. Jim and Morris pull up as Gilbert finishes dragging the fallen tree to the curb.

The dog looks up as Morris steps out of the truck. Morris sees him just as the dog barrels over, tackling him to the ground, and lying on top of him.

MORRIS
(yelling loudly)
Hey! Hey! Hey!

Morris tries to squirm out from the under the dog, but to no avail.

Jodie out of the house at the sound of the commotion. The Aunts, Nana, Erin, and Rose step out onto the porch.

With some effort, Gilbert pulls the dog off of Morris. Morris scrambles to his feet, covered in dirt and grass, and mad to the core.

JODIE
Are you okay?

MORRIS
(brushing himself off)
Yes. What is it with that damn dog?
(to dog)
What did I ever do to you?

Gilbert is struggling to hold back the wiggling dog. Jodie looks expectantly at Morris. He glances nervously around at the faces watching him.

CONTINUED:

MORRIS (CONT'D)
Okay, here I am...again. Should I?
(Jodie gazes)
I love you.

At that, Gilbert releases the dog, who proceeds to tackle Morris once again, licking his hair into a sloppy mess.

JODIE
Morris--My God, Gil, can't you tie that dog up or something?

Jim steps over to help. Morris tries to look up from the wrestling heap of him, the dog, and Jim. Gilbert is looking at Jodie incensed.

GILBERT
She still has my ring. Did you know that?

MORRIS
What?

GILBERT
My engagement ring. Kept it all this time. What do you think that means?

Morris manages to roll out from under the dog.

MORRIS
That she never throws anything away. Listen, Jodie, I love you.

AUNT FANNY
Well, I say don't trust him. He already left you once today, and at a family gathering no less. What kind of man would have our Jodie and leave her like that? I know what kind of man. Lois had one just like him.

Jodie snaps around. Lois looks shocked.

AUNT LOIS
I did not!

JODIE
He doesn't have me, Aunt Fanny. We weren't even dating--

CONTINUED: (2)

Gilbert jumps forward, waving his finger in Morris's face.

GILBERT
I knew it! I knew there was no way she would go for you. Ha!

Morris knocks his hand away. Gilbert steps forward, fist raised. The dog slips out of Jim's grip and tackles again, sending both Morris and Gilbert tumbling to the ground.

Charles Evans comes running over, waterhose in hand, drowning the wrestling pile and Jodie in the process. The dog separates himself. The men continue to wrestle for a moment before Jim pulls them apart. Gilbert's arm flings out, hitting Jim. Jim punches him solidly in the face.

GILBERT (CONT'D)
What the hell was that for?

JIM
(thinking a second)
For hitting on Erin in junior high.

GILBERT
What? It was junior high, man.

JIM
Yeah, well, I thought you probably wouldn't be expecting it now.
(to Morris)
We were best friends growing up. He was always kind of a git.
(to Gilbert)
And Jesus, man, it's been eleven years. She left you. Let it go.

GILBERT
A git? What, are you British now or something?

They stand, breathing heavy, angry, and wet. The dog sits next to Morris, looking up at him and wagging.

MORRIS
(to Jodie)
So?

He shakes the water out of his hair. She walks over.

JODIE
(with a smile)
So.
(MORE)

CONTINUED: (3)

JODIE(CONT'D)
(whispering)
This is a little weird what with my whole family watching. What say we save that whole last part for later?

MORRIS
I told you that would owe me big for this one.

She gives him a kiss and a grin before walking into the house. Morris dashes in after her.

NANA
At least she's finally getting married to someone is all I can say.

AUNT RUTH
Who said anything about a wedding? Did he re-propose? I didn't hear that.

AUNT LOIS
No, Ruth, apparently he never proposed int he first place. Weren't you listening?

ROSE
Oh, hush up now. All of you.
(looking over at Martha)
Martha? I swear woman. You are going to get hauled in one of these days, and I'm not bailing you out. I'm telling you that now.

AUNT MARTHA
I have absolutely no idea what you're talking about.

ROSE
Oh, don't give me that. I grew up in the sixties. I know what I'm looking at. Glaucoma my foot.

A delighted squeal and laughter is heard inside. Gilbert trudges back home, holding his nose and mumbling.

EXT. CEMETARY - DAY

The tent is still up and flowers cover the grave.

CONTINUED:

Jodie sits on the grass out in the sun. She wraps her arms around her knees and squints thoughtfully at the grave.

Charlotte walks up behind her, standing next to her. They are quiet for a long moment.

JODIE
Charlotte?

CHARLOTTE
Yeah?

JODIE
Are you happy with Ray?

CHARLOTTE
(thinking a moment)
For the most part. There are certain problems I could do without.

JODIE
How can you deal with all that forever stuff?

CHARLOTTE
I don't deal with forever. But I can do it today and tomorrow and maybe the next, depending on what he does, and then, all of a sudden, it's fourteen years. If I thought about forever I would have never gotten married.

Charlotte squats down and feels the grass for dampness before she sits. Jodie plucks a couple of dandelions, tucking one behind her ear.

JODIE
I came out here to check something
(pause)
It's kind of hard to hold a grudge against a dead man.

CHARLOTTE
Not impossible mind you, but it does make it kind of tough. At least that's what the grown folks say.

JODIE
Who are they?

CONTINUED: (2)

CHARLOTTE
Looks like it might be you and me.

JODIE
What about everything with Dad?

CHARLOTTE
Okay, maybe it's just you because I plan on holding that grudge for many years to come.

Jodie plucks the petals from her flower. Charlotte slips her sunglasses on and stretches out. Jodie smiles and drops back in the grass as well.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
Listen, Morris has put up with you this long.

JODIE
What do you mean put up with me?

CHARLOTTE
Oh, honestly, Jodie. You're as much of a pain in the ass as I am. Admit that and you'll be fine. You about ready to go?

JODIE
Yeah.

Neither sister moves. Morris walks up and sprawls out next to Jodie. She reaches out and takes his hand.

MORRIS
We planning on leaving anytime soon?

JODIE
Yeah.

They don't move.

MORRIS
Feel like I should be clasping some flowers to my chest or something.

Jodie hands him her dandelion. He folds his hands across his chest in a funeral pose. The three stay in their places, relaxing in the sun.

--FADE OUT--