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# Stop and Go

## CHARACTERS:

ANTHONY - Adult man; Uber driver, not a terrible guy, but not a great one either

ABIGAIL - Adult woman; Mother, ex-wife, drug dealer

EVAN - Teenage boy; painfully awkward, blissfully ignorant, good old-fashioned lover boy

MIA - Teenage girl; responsible, infallible, flawed, scared

DARRELL - Adult man; Dallas Cowboys fan first, single father second

JOEY - Adult man; Not the brightest tool in the shed (his own words), well-meaning, kind

**Director's Note:** First, the set for each scene should not change. For the car seats, chairs or black boxes will do. The “cars” don’t need to be explicitly cars. No need for a steering wheel, gear shift, windshield wipers, etc. Four chairs/boxes should be used for each car: two in front, two in back. If it’s preferred that the cars look more automobile-esque, doors or a wheel *can* be added on, but that shouldn’t be the focus. The play is not about the cars themselves, but the people *in* the cars.

Punctuation in this script is used to enforce a rhythm/flow for the actor’s speech. Here’s a key for what the punctuation I used means and/or how to utilize it in a line:

- Slashes ( / ) are used to indicate an overlap in conversation. Wherever a slash appears, the next line should begin almost immediately.
- Commas ( , ) are used to denote short, quick changes in tone or thought. They don’t always change the objective, but they indicate a new idea or a discovery from the character. Really, this punctuation rule should be used at the actor’s discretion, however, a comma should never slow or ultimately stop the rate of speaking; no pauses should be taken as a result of a comma.
- Dashes ( - ) indicate a full pivot in thought or a correction. Whereas the comma is used to denote quick shifts in thinking, the dash is used to tell the actor when the character’s tactic changes or when a beat can be added. Again, these shifts should not slow or stop the rate of speech.
- Ellipses ( ... ) denote a fall or trailing off of a character’s speech. As used in this play, their purpose is to indicate a transition from outward reflection to inward reflection. They are much like the dash in that they represent an obstacle in the character’s objective and force the character to use a new tactic. However, ellipses can allow for longer shifts and pauses; it’s absolutely fine to go slow with these shifts.

The ultimate goal is for the dialogue to sound authentic, like human speech. Reading the line as written ensures that the dialogue sounds real and doesn’t sabotage the integrity of the characters. Fast-paced beats and careful attention to the placement of “um’s” and “just’s” are incredibly important. The speed of the actor’s delivery should be relatively quick, but not to the point where it begins to be a punchline.

## Act I, Scene I

Lights up on a parked Uber - a Toyota Corolla. The driver, ANTHONY, is leaning back in his chair, staring out the window, looking for his customer. He taps his foot in succession with the beat of the music that's playing: some kind of electro-pop. Whatever's popular these days.

ABIGAIL, clutching her purse tightly to her side, approaches the car and knocks on the back right door. ANTHONY sits up, sees ABIGAIL, and unlocks the door. ABIGAIL steps into the car.

ANTHONY  
Uber for Abigail?

ABIGAIL  
Yeah, that's me! Hi!

ANTHONY  
Hey, how's it going?

ABIGAIL  
Good, good. Whoo, it's cold today.

ANTHONY  
Yeah, sure is. I've got my seat warmers up as far as they / can go.

ABIGAIL  
Oh! Haha, that's what I'd do, too.

ANTHONY  
Yeah.

ABIGAIL settles in her seat and hugs her purse to her chest. ANTHONY leans over his chair to face her.

ANTHONY

So, where am I taking you, Miss Abigail?

ABIGAIL

Oh, um. Ha. Uh, so it might be a little far...

ANTHONY

No problem, you trying to go out of town, maybe to Philly?

ABIGAIL

I need to get to New York City.

ANTHONY

*(After a beat.)*

That's, like, 150 miles away.

ABIGAIL

I know, I know, but I'm pretty sure there isn't a limit to how far you're allowed to take me, as long as it's under eight hours. Right? That's the rule? And I did the math, and New York is only, like, two hours away, so, round trip, it shouldn't be an issue.

ANTHONY

*(After another beat.)*

Alright, sure, man, sounds good to me.

ABIGAIL

Great, thank you.

ANTHONY puts the car into motion and begins to drive. ABIGAIL peers out the window.

ANTHONY

So, what are you doing in New York?

ABIGAIL

Oh, um, just a business trip. My son is in school right now so this was the best time to get everything settled.

ANTHONY

Oh, you got a kid? That's nice, that's really nice. How old is he?

ABIGAIL

He's 10.

ANTHONY

Oh, that's / cute.

ABIGAIL

Yeah, he turns 11 in May, so- / very exciting.

ANTHONY

Oh, yeah, yeah, for sure.

Another long silence. ANTHONY looks at her in his rearview mirror, a predatory look in his eyes.

ANTHONY

So. What business do you have going on in New York?

ABIGAIL

Oh, um, you know. Business.

ANTHONY

Uh huh.

ABIGAIL

And- and economics, and- statistics. Graphs, charts, board meetings.

ANTHONY

Sure, sure.

ABIGAIL

It's all very Wall Street.

ANTHONY

Gotcha.

ABIGAIL

Mhm.

ANTHONY leans over the wheel and squints.

ANTHONY

Aw man, there must be an accident or something, everyone's slowing down. We might not get through it for a while. That alright?

ABIGAIL

Mhm! That's fine! Totally fine. No problem at all. It's fine.

ANTHONY

*(After a beat.)*

Great.

ANTHONY flashes a toothy grin. ABIGAIL makes an attempt at a smile, if you can call it that. She does her best.

Silence.

ANTHONY

So, uh, you're married?

ABIGAIL

Oh. Um- no, not married. I was, but- not married.

ANTHONY

Interesting. Any reason / why?

ABIGAIL

Oh! Um-

ANTHONY

Death, divorce, dude on the side?

ABIGAIL

Divorce. Divorce. Yeah. He just- we had a difference of beliefs.

ANTHONY

I can understand that.

ABIGAIL

Yeah. He *believes* that calling another woman “babe” and sending her flowers to her office with a card saying “For my scrumptious somebody” isn’t cheating, while *I* believe that “scrumptious somebody” is gross and unfunny and not even as sexy as he’s trying to make it sound.

ANTHONY

Mmm.

ABIGAIL

It just- You know how words have tastes sometimes? “Scrumptious somebody” tastes like an old granola bar to me. Like, one that’s so old it’s chewy now. You know?

ANTHONY

Right, yeah, sure.

ABIGAIL

Like, I think my name tastes like a strawberry lollipop. Or- just- something strawberry.

ANTHONY

I can see that.

ABIGAIL

What’s your name again? I never check that on the app, I know I / should, but I just forget to-

ANTHONY

Anthony, my name’s Anthony.

ABIGAIL

Oh Anthony! That tastes like- Oh, um, that tastes like sausage pizza. But, like, with slices of sausage links instead of ground sausage. If that makes sense.

ANTHONY

Huh. Is that good, or-?

ABIGAIL

Yeah! Yeah, I think it is. I mean, I like pizza, I like sausage, so. It's good.

ANTHONY

Well, good.

They laugh a little then drift into another silence. ABIGAIL takes her eyes away from the window and looks at ANTHONY.

ABIGAIL

Well- well, what about you? Married, / kids?

ANTHONY

Oh, no. No no no, no kids, no wife.

ABIGAIL

Oh. Just not the right time, or-?

ANTHONY

Not something I'm looking for.

ABIGAIL

Oh, oh. Right. For sure.

ANTHONY

I mean, kids are gross, you know? They're all- they're all sticky and loud and needy. (*He laughs darkly.*) Like my ex.

ABIGAIL

Haha, yeah. (*She looks down at her hands, trying to decide if she wants to speak.*) Well- I- I don't know about that. Kids being gross, I mean. Not the ex thing, or- But, I mean, sure, they have that phase where they stick everything in their mouth, but even- even then... I just think that you'll never understand the wonder of a child until you have one of your own. I mean, there's this entire human being that you get to watch become a complete person with a sense of humor and idiosyncrasies and likes and dislikes, and- Like, my son, for example, he is just obsessed with hockey right now. I put him in a junior league to see if it's something he might want to pursue, and gosh, he just- He's so passionate about it, and- I mean, seeing someone fall in love with something you know



they're going to love for the rest of their life? It's- well, it's just- it's really beautiful. So, you know, you really do have to have a kid before you can decide if they're gross or not.

ANTHONY

*(After a beat.)*

Yeah, I'm good.

Beat.

ANTHONY

So. We're both unmarried.

ABIGAIL

Mhm.

ANTHONY's right hand slips off the wheel and slowly slides up behind him to rest on ABIGAIL's knee. Her eyes widen as she looks down at his hand. It's an agonizing silence as ABIGAIL stares for one second, two seconds, three seconds. Then, his fingers spread wide against her leg, ANTHONY *squeezes*.

ABIGAIL yelps and yanks a gun out of her purse. She holds it up into the air.

ABIGAIL

BACK IT UP, BUSTER.

ANTHONY

What's- *(He looks back and sees the gun.)* OH MY GOD-!

ABIGAIL screams. ANTHONY screams.  
ABIGAIL screams. ANTHONY screams.

Blackout.

## Act I, Scene II

Lights up on the front seats of a Honda Accord. There is no sound - no music playing, no engine humming, no talking - and it feels like the car is holding its breath. The driver, MIA, stares ahead at the road, focused and confidently quiet. The passenger, EVAN, is looking back and forth between MIA's face and the car radio, tapping his fingers against his leg at a steadily accelerating pace.

EVAN

Thank you again for offering to drive me home.

MIA

*(Kindly, but with little warmth.)*

Mhm.

Silence. EVAN eyes the radio.

EVAN

I know we don't really live near each other, so it was nice of you to do this.

MIA

No problem.

EVAN nods and continues to tap his fingers. He again looks to the radio and even starts to reach for it before putting his hand back. MIA looks over and sees the anxious look on his face.

MIA

Evan, you don't have to look so terrified. I'm not going to kidnap you and murder you or something.

EVAN

*(Laughing; his laugh should sound a little forced.)*

Right, right. *(Beat.)* Well, I think the team is coming along really well.

MIA

Sure.

EVAN

I mean, Javier is improving significantly at pronouncing the word “corroboration.”

MIA

Oh, for sure.

EVAN

And Ashley-

MIA

Doing so much better-

EVAN

*So much better!* We might actually make it to State this year if we can get our costumes together on time.

MIA

Definitely.

Silence again. EVAN fumbles for a way to restart the engine of this conversation.

EVAN

You know, I heard that Nationals are in Tampa this year.

MIA

Oh wow, really?

EVAN

Yeah, so that should be / really cool.

MIA

Yeah that will be great.

Back to silence.

MIA

Ugh, everyone's slowing down, there must be a wreck or something. We might not make it to your house in the next ten minutes if you need to call your mom-

EVAN

No, no, that's okay, she won't worry.

MIA

Are you sure? This is looking pretty bad, it might be like thirty minutes-

EVAN

No, it's fine. It's cool.

MIA

Okay.

Silence again. EVAN's eyes are intensely focused on the radio now. He hasn't blinked in some time.

MIA notices.

MIA

What are you staring at?

EVAN

Hm? Nothing, nothing, my eyes are just- itchy-

MIA

Do you want to turn the radio on?

EVAN

*(A little too loudly.)*

*No! (He realizes how loud that was.)* No! No. Haha no. No no, I'm good. I'm good.

MIA

*(Incredulous.)*

Okay...

Suddenly, MIA swerves the wheel and a horn is heard.

MIA

SHI-

EVAN

AHHH WHAT WHAT WHAT.

MIA

Some IDIOT decided to merge into my lane all of a sudden.

EVAN

Geez... IDIOT.

MIA

ID-I-OT.

EVAN

I mean- just- the *nerve* of these people.

MIA

Right?

EVAN

Pfft. Idiot.

MIA

Yeah.

EVAN

I mean, what even-

MIA

The moment's passed, Evan.

EVAN

Right, okay.

Beat.

EVAN

You know, I'm actually kind of surprised you offered to drive me home. If I'm honest, I kind of thought you hated me.

MIA

What?

EVAN

*(Laughing nervously.)*

Which is stupid, obviously, cause, I mean, clearly you don't hate me. We're friends. Haha. *(He stops laughing.)* Right?

MIA

Yes, Evan, we're friends.

EVAN

Okay, good, good. I'm glad. I want to be your friend. Or- no, that sounds weird, I- Just forget I said anything.

MIA groans and stares out into the sea of unmoving cars.

MIA

*(Under her breath.)*

God, Dad's gonna kill me.

EVAN

Huh?

MIA

Nothing.

EVAN

But you said something-

MIA

I was talking to myself.

EVAN

Oh. *(Beat.)* You know, that's actually a sign of mental illness.

MIA

What?

EVAN

Yeah, talking to yourself is a sign of mental illness. I read it in an article or something-

MIA

Why?

EVAN

I don't know, I was researching Sigmund Freud and I saw this article, which- I know researching Freud sounds problematic, but it wasn't for the reason you'd think-

MIA

No, I mean- and we're going to unpack the Freud thing later, but- why would you tell me that talking to myself is a sign of mental illness?

EVAN

Because- uh-

MIA

Like, that was kind of out of nowhere?

EVAN

I know, I know, I just- I'm not- Okay, to be honest, I am really terrible at talking to people, and-

MIA

Yeah, clearly.

EVAN

Wow, ouch. Um. Yeah, I just-

MIA

I mean, you basically just called me mentally ill.

EVAN

What? (*His eyes widen.*) No! Oh my god, no. No no no, that wasn't- No I wasn't trying to-

MIA

Trying to call me mentally ill? Then I have no idea *what* you were trying to do, because whatever it was, you obviously failed-

EVAN

No, I know- I know, it sounds bad, and now it kind of looks like I hate people with mental illnesses, but that's not true! I love people with mental illnesses! My uncle has schizophrenia!

MIA

*(Covering her eyes with her hand.)*

Oh god-

EVAN

And I love my uncle! I do! He's great! His schizophrenia doesn't keep him from coming to family reunions or anything! Sure, he tried to kidnap my little brother because he thought the One-Eyed-One-Horned-Flying-Purple-People-Eater was going to eat him, but come on, that was a very chivalrous decision! I mean, honestly, who *isn't* terrified of the One-Eyed-One-Horned-Flying-Purple-People-Eater? And he decided to face it head on, just to save my little brother? That's extremely noble. So he's great! He's great.

MIA

Evan-

EVAN

And! And! My grandmother has alzheimers! And I love her to pieces!

MIA

*(More forcefully.)*

Evan-

EVAN

I'm starting to realize that my family has a frightening pattern of mental illness-

MIA

Evan, I have feelings for you.

Silence.



EVAN

Huh?

MIA

Please don't make me say it again, it sounds so gross and-

EVAN

You have feelings for me?

MIA

Yes, I do.

EVAN

Even after I kind of unintentionally implied that you're mentally ill?

MIA

Yes, even after that.

Silence.

EVAN

But-

MIA

Look, Evan, I can't explain myself at all, because if I'm honest, I never expected to have feelings for you. Like, you're just so awkward and goofy and you tend to dig yourself into holes-

EVAN

Okay, ouch, I don't think-

MIA

Shh, Evan, you're only going to prove me right.

EVAN

Yeah, right, shutting up now.

MIA

But anyway, you're basically the complete opposite of me. And I know everyone says "opposites attract," but I always saw that as kind of a romance trope. Like, something that

people use to make stories interesting. Not something that happens in real life. But then you started coming to our team meetings, and- like, I had only ever had one class with you, which was freshman English, and you did that really bad rap about Of Mice and Men because Hamilton had just become popular and you were, like, trying to imitate Hamilton, I guess? But it didn't really come off as that, it just came off as a bad rap, and- (*She catches herself.*) I'm sorry, Evan, I'm being really negative, I just- I really never expected to like you as much as I do. It caught me by surprise, and, really, hardly anything catches me by surprise. But like I said, you came to our team meeting, and you were like this soothing, calm, collected guy. You talked me down when I was ready to yell at Javier for trying to write a boob joke into our script for Regionals.

EVAN

Haha I forgot about that! You have to admit, it was a good joke.

MIA stares at EVAN.

EVAN

No, it wasn't funny. Not at all. Very déclassé.

MIA

Anyway, I just really admired your kindness and compassion for all the other teammates. And then you were elected co-captain, and we started to work together more, and you- You have such a great mind, Evan. You're creative and imaginative and- and not only that! You're deeply intelligent, like, more than you think you are. I know you think you're not as smart as me but honestly? You're smarter. And- (*She laughs.*) And you're cute, Evan. You're really cute. You have this thing you do? Where you scrunch your nose while you're laughing? It's cute, it's- and I guess I've liked you for a really long time, but I only really figured it out a couple months ago. And so when you needed a ride home today, I decided that I would tell you how I feel. Because for all the certainty in my life, all the AP classes and hours working for charities and all that other stuff that looks good on an application, I've never taken a risk before. And I thought- I thought I'd take that risk with you.

Silence.

MIA

So?

Silence.

Evan?

MIA

Blackout.

**Act I, Scene III**

Lights up on a Ford F-150. Two guys,  
DARRELL and JOEY, are arguing,  
DARRELL gripping the wheel with white  
knuckles.

DARRELL

No no no, you aren't getting it-

JOEY

Not getting it? You think I'm stupid?

DARRELL

Well, I don't think you're a Rhodes scholar.

JOEY

First of all, don't use fancy terms with me to confuse me, you know that pisses me off.  
Second, you only think I'm stupid cause I disagree with you.

DARRELL

Because I don't see how you *could* disagree with me!

JOEY

Well I do. Because- because I do.

DARRELL

See, you can't even explain yourself, that's // how wrong you are.

JOEY

No, no, don't even start with me on that, you know I'm not the most ar-articulate guy-

DARRELL

Oh, no dude, it's not about being articulate or not, it's about being wrong.

JOEY

What am I wrong about? What am I / wrong about?

DARRELL

Mulan is the best Disney princess!

JOEY

Oh please-

DARRELL

SHE FOUGHT WITH A SWORD. SHE KILLED PEOPLE.

JOEY

TIANA MADE THE BEST DAMN BEIGNETS IN NEW ORLEANS.

DARRELL

You're gonna tell me that Mulan didn't demolish gender stereotypes and redefine masculinity for an entire generation?

JOEY

Don't- don't throw big words at me, trying to- to throw me off my rhythm. Tiana worked her ass off and broke down racial barriers and GOT MARRIED TO A PRINCE.

DARRELL

Mulan didn't need a prince! She saved China on her own!

JOEY

Oh, you're gonna take one statement / I made and twist it-

DARRELL

Why'd your mind go straight to the prince, huh? Huh? Cause you can't separate her from the patriarchy?

JOEY

Shut up, Darrell, ever since you took that women empowerment course for extra vacation days you've been all messed up. Anyway, you're just saying Mulan 'cause you think chicks with swords are hot.

DARRELL

Uh, woah, way out of left field, buddy. I'm saying Mulan because she's a badass. She could replace any player on the Cowboys and do a phenomenal job.

JOEY

Whatever, man, be wrong.

Beat.

DARRELL

Man, I gotta stop taking Emily to Five Dollar Disney Nights at the Caldwell Cinema.

JOEY

It's fucked you up, dude.

DARRELL

I remember when our conversations were about player trades and Bill Belichick.

JOEY

*(Under his breath.)*

Asshole.

DARRELL

*(Under his breath.)*

Hate Bill Belichick.

JOEY

Look, man, I get it. You gotta princess it up sometimes.

DARRELL

"Princess it up?"

JOEY

Yeah?

DARRELL

Shut up, man.

JOEY

Just detox or something after you watch the movies. Like, watch SportsCenter or something.

DARRELL

Like I have time to watch SportsCenter.

JOEY

Woah, wait, did Brenda not approve your request to switch to the morning shift?

DARRELL

She did not.

JOEY

What a bitch.

DARRELL

Hey, man, she's a female business owner, show some respect. If there's one thing I learned from Linda Carter in the "Wonder Women: Fighting the Financial Patriarchy" seminar, it's that female business owners are much smarter and hard working than male business owners.

JOEY

Sure, whatever, that's great, but she doesn't get that you have to watch Emily when she gets home from school?

DARRELL

She said "Daycare is always an option," which- it's not. She knows it's not. She knows I can't afford to put Emily in some fancy-ass daycare for five hours while I work on the loading dock. And Emily hates it, too. The teachers there are awful, man. They forced some kid to sit in the corner of the room for an hour cause he didn't want to play outside while he had an ear infection.

JOEY

Dude, what? That's fucked up.

DARRELL

I know. I can't keep sending her there, man. It breaks my heart. And I hate to play the single dad card, cause it makes me look like I'm trying to victimize myself or whatever, but it really does get hard when- Like, just because her mom is- Emily shouldn't be punished for having a dad that has to work.

JOEY

Well- look, just- No, dude that's awful. You should tell her you're gonna get a lawyer. Sue her to high heaven.

DARRELL

For what? What am I gonna sue her for? Not letting me switch to the morning shift at the company *she* owns where *she* pays me for the work I do for *her*?

JOEY

*(After a beat.)*

Yeah.

DARRELL

That's not gonna work, Joey.

JOEY

Sheesh, no need to be all judgemental *Darrell*, I'm just trying to help.

DARRELL

I know, buddy, I know.

JOEY leans back a little in his chair.

JOEY

The cars are all slowing down.

DARRELL

It's 4 PM on a Thursday, everyone's trying to get home from work.

JOEY

But are they?

DARRELL

Huh?

JOEY

Well, okay, when I was a kid, I liked to imagine where everyone else on the road was going. Make up little backstories for them and stuff like that. Like, some little old lady in a Datsun is going to pick up her medicine, or a dude in a convertible is going to cheat on his wife. It's fun. Like a game.

DARRELL

Right.

JOEY

Hey, let's do it right now!



DARRELL

No, Joey, I-

JOEY

C'mon, Darrell, it'll be fun.

DARRELL

Joey...

JOEY

*(Mimicking.)*

Darrell...

DARRELL

*(After a beat.)*

Yeah, sure, fine, whatever. But you're going first.

JOEY

Okay, okay, um... Oh! That chick over there, in the blue Nissan? She's going to the vet to pick up her dog. Yeah, her dog has... uh... shingles.

DARRELL

Shingles?

JOEY

Yup. Shingles.

DARRELL

Can dogs get shingles?

JOEY

This one did.

DARRELL

*(After a beat.)*

Fair enough.

JOEY

Now your turn.

DARRELL

Okay, uh... those two teens in the Honda are going to uh... to the carnival.

JOEY

The carnival.

DARRELL

Yeah, for a night of, you know, good old-fashioned fun and romance.

JOEY

*(After a beat.)*

Dude, what are you, eighty? Kids don't go to carnivals anymore.

DARRELL

That's a lie, carnival stocks have been going up recently.

JOEY

Carnival stocks. Are you serious / dude?

DARRELL

Yeah, you take- take a look at the Nasdaq, and you look at the carnival stocks, and they're going up.

JOEY

You serious?

DARRELL

Yeah, man.

JOEY

Huh. I didn't know carnivals had stocks.

DARRELL

They do.

JOEY

That makes sense though, because I always wondered how they paid those little guys that chase you around with sticks.

DARRELL

*(After a beat.)*

What?

JOEY

Yeah.

Silence.

DARRELL

Anyway, it's your turn.

JOEY

Right. Um... Oh! Okay, the lady in that car with a gun is going to pick her nephew up from soccer practice.

DARRELL

That's nice- Wait, a gun?

JOEY

Yeah, look, she's-

DARRELL

Oh my god!

DARRELL swerves. JOEY and DARRELL lurch forward as they crash into EVAN and MIA's car.

DARRELL

Shit!

They sit in stunned silence, DARRELL clutching the wheel, eyes wide.

JOEY

I guess those kids aren't going to the carnival now. You should probably sell any shares you hold in carnival stocks.

Blackout.

## Act II, Scene I

DARRELL and JOEY approach EVAN and MIA's car. EVAN is slumped over, knocked out, and MIA is breathing heavily and staring straight ahead, a terrified look on her face. DARRELL knocks on EVAN's window. EVAN is unresponsive.

DARRELL

Oh my god I killed a kid.

JOEY

Psh, no, he's- (*He looks at EVAN. He leans in and looks closer. He leans back.*) Oh shit, dude.

DARRELL

I killed him. Oh my god, I killed him. (*Beating on the window.*) Hey. HEY!

MIA is shaken from her trance and looks over to the window. Her expression unchanged, she rolls down the window.

MIA

Uh huh?

DARRELL

Your friend, is he- is he okay? Is he breathing?

MIA

Huh? (*She looks over to Evan.*) Oh. (*It clicks.*) OH! (*She fumbles to press her fingers against his neck. She sighs in relief.*) He's fine, he has a pulse.

DARRELL

Okay, okay. Joey, call an ambulance.

JOEY

Got it, okay. (*He pulls out his phone and stares at it. Then:*) Hey, what's the number for an ambulance, again?

DARRELL

9-1-1.

JOEY

Right, but what's the phone number for 9-1-1.

DARRELL

*(Disappointed, after a beat. Is he serious?)*

9-1- / 1.

JOEY

9-1-1! Right, *right*, sorry, I'm just- not good with- emergencies- I'm calling them right now.

DARRELL

Great, thanks Joey.

JOEY

*(Running offstage.)*

Hello, ambulance?

Long beat. DARRELL shuffles his feet as MIA stares, expressionless, at EVAN. She is frozen in place.

DARRELL

Well, um, I'm glad you're okay. I hope your friend is too.

MIA

Hm? Oh, I'm- I'm sure he will be. He just- when we got hit, the car lurched forward and his head slammed into the dash, and- I got lucky, I guess, I mean, I know they say you're not supposed to brace yourself when you get into a wreck, that you're actually supposed to relax when you get hit- I learned that from this driver's ed video, it had a celebrity in it, I can't remember... he's not, like, well known / but he's-

DARRELL

Right, but you're okay?

MIA

Yes, I'm fine, not a scratch, I just can't remember that guy from the video...

JOEY runs back onstage, phone in hand.

JOEY

The ambulance is coming, along with the police and the fire department. I told them that was a little extreme, that they should save up on gas for a different emergency - gas prices are only going up these days, you know what I mean? But they told me it was procedure or whatever.

DARRELL

Okay, good, well it looks like this one's okay, she's just a little shaken-

MIA

DICK BUTKUS. It was that football guy Dick Butkus in the video, which- let's be honest, Dick Butkus is such an unfortunate name. It might be the worst name ever. Like, you just know he got bullied in school. Anyway, in the video, he said you're supposed to go limp when you get hit so you don't damage your spinal cord but I'm already really tense in my shoulder and back area- my doctor says it's from the stress and anxiety- but I clenched instead of relaxed, and I didn't hit the wheel, so I'm fine, but Evan isn't, cause he smacked into the dash.

JOEY

*(To DARRELL.)*

I wouldn't rule any brain injuries out.

DARRELL

Shut up, Joey. She's gonna be rattled, I mean, we just rammed into her car. *(He takes off his baseball cap and runs his hand through his hair, thinking. Then:)* Okay, uh- well- I- I'm the guy who hit you, uh- my name is Darrell.

MIA

I'm Mia.

JOEY

I'm Joey.

MIA

Hi.

They awkwardly shake hands.

Beat.

MIA

OH! Oh, I'm- I'm supposed to ask for your insurance-

DARRELL

Oh, right- um- just give me a quick second-

DARRELL pulls JOEY aside.

DARRELL

I can't give her my insurance.

JOEY

Why not?

DARRELL

My rate will go up, and I'm already two less paychecks away from having to drop my insurance as is.

JOEY

I'm pretty sure you have to give her your insurance, man. It's, like, for legal reasons or something.

DARRELL

I can't, dude. I can't afford it.

JOEY

Okay, okay, um... Oh, hey, you ever watch that movie Master of Disguise?

DARRELL

Yeah, it's got uh-

JOEY

Dana Carvey-

DARRELL

Yeah-

JOEY

Of Wayne's World fame.

DARRELL

Uh huh.

JOEY

*(After a beat.)*

So you've watched Master of Disguise?

DARRELL

Yeah, it's a shit movie. Why?

JOEY

He's a master of disguise.

DARRELL

Yeah, I know. *(Beat.)* And what does that / have to do with me?

JOEY

Well, okay, so you can pretend to be someone else, and give her some fake insurance. Like they do in the movie.

DARRELL

I don't think they do that in the movie.

JOEY

Look, dude, I'm just giving you options. Just tell her- oh! Just tell her you forgot it.

DARRELL

Forgot what?

JOEY

Forgot your insurance.

DARRELL

Oh. Oh! Okay / okay-

JOEY

See, you gotta give me more credit, man / I'm a genius when it comes to this stuff.



DARRELL

Yeah, yeah, I'll be sure to buy you a nice "Thank You" card at Wal-Mart, / or something.

JOEY

Well that's kinda trashy, dude, I mean, at least go to / Tom Thumb.

DARRELL

Don't be ungrateful, I don't have to- Tom *Thumb*???

MIA has walked up to DARRELL and JOEY. She interjects.

MIA

Hi. I don't mean to, like, intrude or interrupt, but could we swap insurance before the ambulance gets here? I have mine on my phone, if-

DARRELL

I forgot.

MIA

What?

DARRELL

My insurance is- I forgot it. I don't remember my insurance.

MIA

How- How do you-

DARRELL

Look, I'm a very busy man, I work many long hours / to support my family.

JOEY

*(Whispered, to DARRELL.)*

Play the single dad card.

DARRELL

I'm a single father, you know, just trying to make ends meet- working hard for my little girl, she's- she's very precious to me, you know, she's only 9, so you can imagine- I've got bigger things to worry about than what my insurance is.

Beat. MIA takes a second to process this.

MIA

Okay... but if you're a single dad, shouldn't the *biggest* thing you have to worry about be knowing what your insurance is?

DARRELL

No. (*Beat.*) No.

MIA

(*After a beat.*)

Okay, but-

DARRELL

It's not important. I'll figure it out and get back to you. You should go and sit with your friend and make sure he doesn't- um-

MIA

Right. Right, okay.

MIA crosses to her car and sits in the driver's seat, next to EVAN. JOEY and DARRELL look at each other, at MIA, then at each other.

JOEY

Well, I think that went really well.

Blackout.

## Act II, Scene II

Lights up on ABIGAIL and ANTHONY, weaving through traffic. ABIGAIL, a crazed look in her eyes, holds the gun to ANTHONY's head. ANTHONY is saying prayers under his breath, fear plain on his face.

ANTHONY

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name-

ABIGAIL

*(Strained.)*

Go faster.

ANTHONY

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on Earth as it is / in Heaven.

ABIGAIL

Come on, come on, come on-

ANTHONY

Give us this day our daily bread-

ABIGAIL

*(Forcibly.)*

Could you stop??

ANTHONY

So first you put a gun against my head, and now you're stifling my religious freedom?  
Are you some sort of terrorist?

ABIGAIL

NO! No, I love the Lord as much as the next woman. I'm a Methodist.

ANTHONY

*(Disappointed.)*

Oh.

ABIGAIL

What? What's wrong with being Methodist?

ANTHONY

What's right with being Methodist?

ABIGAIL

Okay, then what are you, smartass?

ANTHONY

*(Righteously.)*

I'm Catholic.

ABIGAIL

*(After a beat.)*

Oh good God.

## Family Reunion

### **Characters: (In order of appearance)**

BRANDY - Mid-40s, wife, mother, at her wit's end.

CASSIDY - An enigma, as most teenage girls tend to be.

CAMERON - 11-year-old boy, a bundle of energy.

TREVOR - Mid-40s, husband, father, a bit of a dork.

MEEMAW - Old, quirky, speaks with a thick Chicago accent.

PEEPAW - He's there.

UNCLE TOBY - Late 30s, loud, obnoxious, sleezy.

AUNT LINDA - Late 30s, doing her best.

ROBBIE - 5-year-old boy, backpack-leash kid.

**Director's Note:** The roles are meant to be double-cast, CASSIDY doubling as AUNT LINDA, CAMERON doubling as UNCLE TOBY, TREVOR doubling as ROBBIE. The only actors who remain the same are BRANDY, MEEMAW, and PEEPAW.

Punctuation in this script is used to enforce a rhythm/flow for the actor's speech. Here's a key for what the punctuation I used means and/or how to utilize it in a line:

- Slashes ( / ) are used to indicate an overlap in conversation. Wherever a slash appears, the next line should begin almost immediately.
- Commas ( , ) are used to denote short, quick changes in tone or thought. They don't always change the objective, but they indicate a new idea or a discovery from the character. Really, this punctuation rule should be used at the actor's discretion, however, a comma should never slow or ultimately stop the rate of speaking; no pauses should be taken as a result of a comma.
- Dashes ( - ) indicate a full pivot in thought or a correction. Whereas the comma is used to denote quick shifts in thinking, the dash is used to tell the actor when the character's tactic changes or when a beat can be added. Again, these shifts should not slow or stop the rate of speech.
- Ellipses ( ... ) denote a fall or trailing off of a character's speech. As used in this play, their purpose is to indicate a transition from outward reflection to inward reflection. They are much like the dash in that they represent an obstacle in the character's objective and force the character to use a new tactic. However, ellipses can allow for longer shifts and pauses; it's absolutely fine to go slow with these shifts.

The ultimate goal is for the dialogue to sound authentic, like human speech. Reading the line as written ensures that the dialogue sounds real and doesn't sabotage the integrity of the characters. Fast-paced beats and careful attention to the placement of "um's" and "just's" are incredibly important. The speed of the actor's delivery should be relatively quick, but not to the point where it begins to be a punchline.

Lights up on a living room buzzing with familial commotion. At center is a lumpy couch behind a short coffee table. A lamp is to the couch's right, and a small, round table stacked high with magazines is to its left.

BRANDY enters, multiple items of cleaning supplies in her arms. She crashes into the table, dumping the cans and dusters and paper towels onto its surface. She sprays and wipes, sprays and wipes, methodically and madly cleaning the area. Once she feels it's been cleaned sufficiently, she stands, gathers her weapons of mass destruction, and exits.

CASSIDY enters, earbuds in, moody teenager mode activated. She's on her phone, typing furiously. She also continuously checks out the window, looking for something or someone. Suddenly, she gets a text that she very clearly disapproves of. She groans and exits the room, but not before messing up the pillows on the couch.

BRANDY enters from where she last exited and sees the pillows are askew. She visibly droops and, careful not to drop any cleaning supplies, straightens the pillows. It takes a while.

After she conquers the cushions, she smiles, satisfied, and exits.

As soon as she exits, CAMERON stomps into the room, yanking at a tie around his neck. He flops onto the couch and wrestles with the accessory; he's not necessarily trying to remove it, but he's definitely not comfortable with it being around his neck.

Several pillows fall off the couch in the process.

As if the tie is possessed, CAMERON is pulled up off the couch by the neck accessory and exits where he entered from.

BRANDY enters, lets out a sob, and fixes the pillows. It isn't perfect, but it's all she has the bandwidth for. She exits.

CAMERON stumbles in again, still struggling with his necktie. He falls back onto the couch, a soldier wounded in battle. He writhes on the cushions, fighting the beast around his neck.

BRANDY walks back in, her field of vision occupied by keeping her supplies in her arms. She drops a bottle and bends to pick it up. On her way back to standing, she locks eyes with CAMERON.

BRANDY

CAMERON ALEXANDER COOPER. *I know* you are not on that couch with your shoes on, *especially* after I used furniture polish on it. (*She sees his tie.*) And your TIE? Come here, mister.

CAMERON, moping, stands and allows BRANDY to roughly readjust his tie.

BRANDY

I don't know what you were thinking, just crashing in here and getting mess all over our clean furniture. You know just how important it is that we're hosting this evening, so imagine how disrespected I feel when my son is just tearing through the house at warp speed, dragging his little boy muck around with him.

CAMERON

Mooooom-

BRANDY

Dooooon't even start with me, mister. I was totally fine with you going out with Lucas and his mom last night to see your first PG-13 movie, but we made a deal that if you were going to do that, you had to commit to being ready and *respectful* this morning. I upheld my end of the bargain, but I'm feeling pretty jilted on your end. If I was your boss right now, you'd be fired. And in this economy, there's no way you would ever recover from a financial loss that big.

CAMERON

Mom, I don't wanna do this. Meemaw is gonna be here and she smells like cancer.

BRANDY

I don't want to hear it. You're going to look and act nice today or you're not getting your iPad for a whole day. Ohhhh yeah, I went there. Now go clean your room, it looks like a tornado touched down in there.

CAMERON trudges offstage, squirming in his newly tightened tie. BRANDY gathers up the supplies as a doorbell rings, loud and ominous.

BRANDY

*(Whispered.)*

They're here. *(Loudly, a drill sergeant:)* EVERYONE DOWNSTAIRS. THEY'RE HERE.

BRANDY crosses to stage right where the "front door" is. She smooths her clothes, makes the sign of the cross, and puts on a pleasant face.

BRANDY

*(Sing-songy.)*

Come iiiiiiin!

MEEMAW and PEEPAW enter, tottering, old, and encircled in cigarette smoke. MEEMAW enters already talking. PEEPAW is in a permanent state of terror, his face pale and his mouth ajar. As MEEMAW speaks,



she lights a cigarette from a long-barrelled utility lighter that she extracts from her massive purse and hands it to PEEPAW, who clutches it in his shaking hand. PEEPAW makes his way over to the couch throughout MEEMAW's dialogue and stands beside it, staring blankly into the audience. He remains there for the rest of the play.

MEEMAW

God, you wouldn't believe the traffic getting over here. This idiot got the balls to cross four lanes of traffic at once and hit this other idiot. It wasn't even that big of a hit, it was a bump, really, but I guess it warranted firetrucks and ambulances and whatnot. Stopped all the cars. I mean, back when I was on the roads, 'fore I got my cataracts, I could shift lanes like Mario goddamn Andretti. You got me out on that road, the only thing I'd be hittin' was 90 miles per hour, that's for sure. Oh, Brandy, I love this sofa, have you always had it? It's so poofy, I love a good poofy sofa. I was deflowered on a poofy sofa.

BRANDY

It's great to see you, Mom. Sorry to hear you had trouble getting here.

MEEMAW

Trouble? It was like the goddamn odyssey gettin' over here-

BRANDY

Kids! Meemaw and Peepaw are here!

MEEMAW

Oh, I can't wait to see the kids. The last time I was here, Cameron wasn't even potty trained yet. When was that, his eighth birthday party?

CASSIDY enters in a mood.

BRANDY

Cassidy, say hi to Meemaw and Peepaw.

CASSIDY

*(Flatly.)*

Hi.

MEEMAW

Hey, sugar, how are you? Come give Meemaw a hug.

They embrace, CASSIDY awkwardly standing in MEEMAW's arms.

MEEMAW

You know, I saw on your mom's Facebook that you got yourself a boyfriend. What's his name, Jeremy?

CASSIDY

*(Pointedly, to BRANDY.)*

Matthew.

MEEMAW

Yeah, that's the one. How is he, is he still tall?

CASSIDY

He's good. *(Full of venom.)* He was actually going to come today, but Mom said he couldn't because this was a family thing. So.

MEEMAW

Ohh, I'm sorry honey. Here, have some pocket change to make up for it. *(She pulls a thick wad of money out of her purse.)* Buy yourself something pretty from Meemaw, alright?

CASSIDY

*(Immediately happier.)*

Thanks Meemaw, I love you! Love you too, Peepaw!

Silence as the whole family looks at PEEPAW to respond. He does not.

BRANDY

Cassidy, go get your brother from upstairs, I have no idea what he's doing.

CASSIDY

Okay. Good to see you, Peepaw!

Another pause. The family looks at PEEPAW again. He is unchanged.

CASSIDY

Be right back.

CASSIDY exits. MEEMAW teeters over to the couch and plops down, fishing around in her purse.

BRANDY

Well, um, Mom, everyone else should be getting here soon, so if you'd like, I can get you something to drink-

MEEMAW

Long Island iced tea would be great, thanks, doll.

BRANDY

Right. I'll go get that. Be right back.

BRANDY, not wanting to leave the grandparents alone, slowly exits the room, her eyes never leaving MEEMAW and PEEPAW.

CASSIDY enters with CAMERON, tugging his arm.

CASSIDY

Meemaw, Peepaw, here's Cam.

MEEMAW

*(Standing and slowly approaching him for a hug.)*

Ohhhh, Cameron! God, you've gotten tall. That's gotta be scary, Cass. One day, Cam, you'll be able to see the white of her scalp from a bird's eye view. Won't that be fun?

CAMERON

Mhm.

CASSIDY

Say hi to Peepaw, Cameron.

CAMERON

Hey, Peepaw.

They all look to PEEPAW. He remains unchanged.

MEEMAW

Well gosh, I'm sorry we haven't been able to visit more. It gets hard to leave Chicago when the tires on your cars are stolen. But thankfully the insurance company stepped in and covered half a tire, so we'll be seeing you sweethearts more often.

CASSIDY

Oh good! (*Before MEEMAW can speak again:*) Well, I'm going to go see if Mom needs help. Cam, talk to Meemaw and Peepaw, okay?

CAMERON

(*Squirming and whispering loudly.*)

Cass please don't leave, Peepaw scares me. He looks like an abused mannequin.

CAMERON and CASSIDY look at PEEPAW. He remains unchanged.

CASSIDY

Get over it, Cam, I already talked to Meemaw and Peepaw. It's your turn.

CASSIDY exits, pulling her phone out.

CAMERON

(*Calling after her.*)

Cassidyyyyyyy. (*He turns and grins painfully at MEEMAW.*) So, um, how are the cats, Meemaw?

MEEMAW

Oh, they're just fine, sweetie. Rosco's got the worms again but we think he'll be alright. He ate them last time and got over it so maybe he can just do that again.

CAMERON

*(Excited.)*

Woah, worms? That's gross!

MEEMAW

Oh, god, it was awful. *(She rummages in her purse for her phone.)* Here, lemme show you some photos.

CAMERON

Yes!

TREVOR enters, straightening his tie.

TREVOR

There they are! Hey, Mom! Hey, Dad!

MEEMAW

Oh, Trevor, sweetheart, how are you? Jesus, you've gained weight-

TREVOR

I'm great, Mom! How was the drive?

MEEMAW

Just fine, just fine. I told Brandy, the traffic-

BRANDY enters with the tea.

BRANDY

We only had sweet tea- Oh good, Trevor, you're ready. Could you come help me in the kitchen? I have to finish the chicken-

MEEMAW

Don't bother him, sweetheart, he just got out here. I'll come help you. I cook a mean bird, let me tell you. Remember that casserole I made last thanksgiving with the turkey, and the-?

BRANDY

*(The memory is painful.)*

Mmm, mhm. So good. But, Mom, I don't want you to have to cook, you're a guest-

MEEMAW

Nah, nah, nah, I'm helping. Trevor, you sit and talk to your father, he's very excited to see you. Aren't you, Arnold?

They all look at PEEPAW. He does nothing.  
As per usual.

BRANDY

Alright, Mom, if you really want to-

MEEMAW

*Want to?* I'm foaming at the mouth at the idea of it. Now let's see what you've got cooking.

MEEMAW leads BRANDY off as  
BRANDY looks back with fear in her eyes.  
TREVOR, unaware of his wife's sorrow,  
waves enthusiastically.

Once they leave, TREVOR turns to  
CAMERON and PEEPAW.

TREVOR

Well! Just the men left! Send the women away into the kitchen, let them do the dirty work while we chat, am I right? (*He sits in his statement. Then.:*) Oh but not- not like in a, like, sexist way. I'm not saying women belong in the kitchen. That's not what I'm saying. I actually think they're *better* than men in the kitchen. But- that's not- they shouldn't be relegated to that. You know? You should treat your wife with respect, Cam. Never forget that. I mean, look at Meemaw and Peepaw. There's a reason they've lasted so long. Right, Dad? (*Not bothering to glance at PEEPAW, who remains still.*) Exactly.

They sit. Then, CAMERON stands.

CAMERON

I have to pee.

He exits.

TREVOR

*(Calling after him.)*

Have fun! Don't fall in! *(Laughing, to PEEPAW:)* It's funny every time.

PEEPAW doesn't respond. TREVOR smiles at PEEPAW for a while. Then:

TREVOR

Alright.

TREVOR exits. PEEPAW is alone.

Suddenly, the doorbell rings.

BRANDY

*(Offstage.)*

I'll get it! I'll get it!

She runs on, chicken still in hands. She realizes she's still holding it, looks to PEEPAW, knows that PEEPAW will not be of any help, and runs off.

She runs back on, no chicken this time, and wipes her hands on her apron.

BRANDY

Come in!

AUNT LINDA, UNCLE TOBY, and ROBBIE enter. AUNT LINDA is dragging ROBBIE in on a backpack-leash.

AUNT LINDA

Brandy hi!!

BRANDY

Hi Linda! Hi Toby!

UNCLE TOBY

Brandy! (*Singing:*) Brandy, you're a fine girl, what a good wife, you would be!

UNCLE TOBY goes in for what looks like a kiss and BRANDY side hugs him.

BRANDY

(*Strained.*)

Haha, oh Toby, you're always a hoot. Don't forget to say hi to Peepaw!

AUNT LINDA

Hi Peepaw!

UNCLE TOBY

How's it going, Dad?

PEEPAW remains unchanged.

BRANDY

Trevor has just been so excited to see you guys. He was telling me the other day about how you two got up to some trouble on your baseball team.

UNCLE TOBY

(*Delighted, playfully.*)

Ohhh, did he now? That little- Tell you what, he got up to more trouble than me. I was the little brother, the accomplice. (*Raising his hands, caught by imaginary police.*) Don't shoot! I'm innocent! Haha, right?

AUNT LINDA

Well, I'm excited to see *you*, Brandy! And Robbie can't wait to show Cameron his new game he's been playing. It's got these little space people in it, and-

ROBBIE

Mommaaaaa I gotta pee pee.

AUNT LINDA

Oh, okay sweetie! You remember where the bathroom is from last time?

ROBBIE

Mhm.



AUNT LINDA

*(Taking off the backpack-leash.)*

Alright, go ahead.

ROBBIE dashes off, panting.

UNCLE TOBY

Well, Brandy-Brandy-Brandy, any fun developments since the last time we were here?

BRANDY

Oh, not much. Cameron joined a basketball team at the YMCA and he's been having fun with that. His coach says that what he lacks in basic fine motor skills he makes up for in hostility. And Cassidy's got herself a boyfriend.

AUNT LINDA

Oh, how sweet. Do you think he's good for her?

BRANDY

I'm her mom, I don't think any guy is good for her. But he's decent, and he holds doors open for her and whatnot.

AUNT LINDA

That's good.

MEEMAW

*(From offstage.)*

JESUS BRANDY GET IN HERE, THE CHICKEN IS BURNING LIKE POMPEII.

BRANDY

Oh lord- COMING, MOM!

She runs off. AUNT LINDA, furious, whips around.

AUNT LINDA

What was that??

UNCLE TOBY

Honey, not in front of Peepaw-

AUNT LINDA

I told you not to sing that song when we got here.

UNCLE TOBY

What song? I don't know any song / that I sang.

AUNT LINDA

You know full well you sang that stupid "Brandy, you're a fine girl" song. I mean, I was right there when you did it, too! If you're going to flirt with other women- if you're going to flirt with your *brother's wife*- at least have the decency to not do it in front of me.

UNCLE TOBY

Come on, babe, I didn't mean anything by it-

AUNT LINDA

Don't you "babe" me. You only call me "babe" when you're in trouble or you want something, and those both happen to be the case right now. You're in trouble because you want- I don't know, to get with your *brother's wife*??

UNCLE TOBY

That's not true, babe-

AUNT LINDA

What did I just say??

UNCLE TOBY

Babe-

AUNT LINDA

You never listen to me! I ask and ask for you to stop calling me babe, to try and keep yourself in line for one night, but you can't even do that. You walk in and make... make *advances* on another woman, who, if I have to say it again, is YOUR BROTHER'S WIFE. I was already anxious to come here because I want your parents to like me, I want your brother to like me, I want your brother's wife to like me, and you sabotage every attempt I make at being likable and fun and you just edge me out of the family every chance you

UNCLE TOBY

Babe- baby- baby boo- babe babe babe babe babe babe babe- come on, babe, you're over- you're overreacting. Baby. Sweetie. Honey pickles. Jujubee. Galileo figaro. Babe. Babe. Babe. Babe. That's not- You're blowing this whole thing out of proportion, babe. I don't- I'm not doing any of that! I want you here, of course I do! You're my wife! Linda, come on now, I love you, babe! Babsy! Boo boo! Babylon! Just listen-

get. Do you even want me here? Or is this all for- for stupid- that *woman*- and your little idiotic (*Singing loudly.*) “BRANDY, YOU’RE A FINE GIRL, WHAT A GOOOOOOOD WIFE YOU WOULD BE-”

During this argument, ROBBIE has entered. He watches his parents fight and tugs at his shirt awkwardly.

ROBBIE

*(Cutting AUNT LINDA off.)*

Momma?

AUNT LINDA sees him. She gasps, and rushes to kneel beside him.

AUNT LINDA

Oh, sweetie, I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to- Mommy and Daddy were just having a talk. Do you need something?

ROBBIE

Mmmmno. I just wanted- I- I- I- I pee peed in the closet.

AUNT LINDA

What???

ROBBIE

I couldn’t find the bathroom and I pee peed in the closet.

AUNT LINDA

Okay, sweetie, um. Toby, I’m going to take him to clean him up, or- Just- We are not done with this discussion.

She exits with ROBBIE. UNCLE TOBY sits on the couch, running his hands through his hair. BRANDY enters, her apron and oven mitts charred.

BRANDY

Dinner's almost done- Where's Linda?

UNCLE TOBY

There was a situation. (*Suddenly suave:*) Kinda like the situation between you and me.

BRANDY

I beg your pardon?

He stands, smiling and spreading his arms.  
He moves in on her.

UNCLE TOBY

Brandy, come on, you know how I felt about you when we were younger.

BRANDY

Toby, this is highly inappropriate-

UNCLE TOBY

(*Singing.*)

Brandy.

BRANDY

(*Stunned, frozen in place.*)

No.

UNCLE TOBY

You're a *fine* girl.

BRANDY

Toby, no.

UNCLE TOBY

(*Putting his hand on her face.*)

What a *gooooood* wife-

BRANDY

NO, Toby.

UNCLE TOBY

You would be-

TREVOR enters, asparagus in his hand.

TREVOR

Hey, Tobes, you remember *ASPARAGUS*? (*He sees them.*) Woah.

BRANDY

It's not what it looks like.

TREVOR

Then what is it?

UNCLE TOBY

You know how I feel about her, Trev.

TREVOR

(*Grim.*)

I know. But I didn't know she felt the same way.

BRANDY

I *don't*! Trevor, please get your brother off of me.

TREVOR

(*Fuming.*)

Get him off yourself.

UNCLE TOBY

Yeah, Brandy, you heard him-

BRANDY

(*Finally mustering strength, shoving TOBY back.*)

NO. I love my husband. And you... You are- you are *slime*. I don't care that you're Trevor's brother, I want you out of my house. Now. I will not have you ruin this reunion and I will *not* have you ruin this family.

AUNT LINDA has entered and is watching the proceedings.

UNCLE TOBY

Come on babe-

AUNT LINDA

What. Did. I. Say.

UNCLE TOBY

*(Whipping around.)*

Linda. Look, I-

MEEMAW

*(Entering with the chicken.)*

Alright, buttercups, time to eat. I got this bird a little less charred, although I had to work some magic and deform it a little. I don't think it's animal abuse if the animal's already dead, so we can eat it with no remorse. *(She looks around.)* Geez, what's got everyone so tense? Did you all join PETA or something?

AUNT LINDA

Leave.

UNCLE TOBY

I love you.

AUNT LINDA

No. *(She laughs.)* No. You love her. I won't be insulted by a lie anymore.

UNCLE TOBY

Trevor?

TREVOR

No, man. Get out of my house.

UNCLE TOBY

*(Setting his jaw.)*

Fine. Linda, I'll be in the car.

She doesn't respond. UNCLE TOBY walks to the door.

UNCLE TOBY

Bye, Peepaw.

Everyone looks to PEEPAW. He doesn't move. UNCLE TOBY, dejected, exits.

BRANDY

Alright, everyone, into the dining room. Food's ready.

Everyone awkwardly files offstage except for BRANDY, who sits on the couch, deflated. She grabs one of the couch cushions she spent so much time meticulously placing and clutches it to her chest. She doesn't cry. What happened doesn't warrant tears. She stares forward.

CASSIDY enters, tears streaming down her face. She's on the phone.

CASSIDY

Matthew, come on, we can- this isn't fair, you can't just end things like this. I'm at a family dinner, Matthew, I- *(She sees BRANDY, who is looking up at her.)* Can I call you back? Okay. Yeah. Bye.

She hangs up. BRANDY pats the space on the couch next to her. CASSIDY sits and rests her head on BRANDY's shoulder.

BRANDY

I'm sorry, baby.

CASSIDY

He didn't- *(Breaking down.)* He didn't even-

BRANDY

I know, I know.

CASSIDY

Over the *phone-*

BRANDY

I'm sorry. (*Beat. She gently places her hand on the side of CASSIDY's head and smooths her hair.*) Oh, baby, heartbreak is the ugliest feeling in the world. And the worst part of it is that it doesn't get better. You never create a tolerance for it. It'll hurt just as bad the next time, and the next time, and the next time, and you'll want to give up. Believe me, you will. You might want to give up now, right? (*She lifts CASSIDY's head to look at her.*) Don't. Don't give up. You're my strong, beautiful, amazing daughter and you're capable of anything, including fixing your broken heart. It's going to hurt for a while, and that's normal. I'll get you some chocolates and some fuzzy socks and we can watch Legally Blonde on loop for a few days. But after that? After you've cried yourself to sleep and your eyes are puffy and your hair is greasy and you feel like it's the end of the world? I want you to get up, put on your favorite outfit, do your hair, your makeup, whatever you want to feel beautiful. Although- and I may be biased, since I'm your Momma- you're always beautiful. But I want you to do that, and then you come to me, and we'll go to some fancy restaurant-

CASSIDY

Olive Garden?

BRANDY

Sure, baby, Olive Garden. And when you eat one of those never-ending breadsticks, you will know in your heart that you are you. Singular. Independent. You don't need someone to define yourself by. You are enough within yourself. Nobody else gets to make you whole. Okay?

CASSIDY

Okay.

BRANDY

Okay. I love you, baby. I'm so sorry.

CASSIDY

I love you too. Can we go eat now?

BRANDY

Sure we can.

BRANDY stands and offers her hand to CASSIDY, who takes it. They go to exit, but are met by MEEMAW.



BRANDY

Hey, Mom, are you not eating?

MEEMAW

Oh, I ate some already. Just gotta sit and digest in here. My stomach's like a sink disposal if I don't let it do its job in peace. You two go and enjoy.

BRANDY

We will. Thanks, Mom.

BRANDY and CASSIDY exit. MEEMAW sits on the couch and exhales.

MEEMAW

Woo, Jesus, my feet are killing me. I'm telling you, Arnold, we old farts miss all the excitement. I have no idea what happened at all today, I was stuck in that kitchen doing battle for so long. I was like Genghis goddamn Khan, conquering Italy or whatever. (*She leans back.*) I'm sorry if you were bored just parked in here, I can't imagine you had much to do.

For the first time, as MEEMAW closes her eyes, PEEPAW smiles.

Blackout.

## A Knock at the Door

### Characters:

MARY - A young woman in college with a kind heart and a burning curiosity; she sees the world as an adventure to be had.

CASSANDRA - A young woman in college with a brilliant mind and increasing paranoia; she sees the world as a threat to be avoided.

Lights up on a dimly lit kitchenette. A small fridge is perched on a counter next to a dingy microwave, which displays the time: 3 AM. MARY enters, rubbing the sleep out of her eyes. She is smiling simply, seemingly without a care in the world. She swings the door of the mini-fridge open, revealing a limited food supply consisting of a glass of water, two cupcakes, a carton of milk, a box of cherry tomatoes, and a small pill bottle. She grabs a cupcake and sits at the small, round table to the right of the counter. She places the cupcake on the table delicately, trying to keep it as perfect as possible. She rests her head on her folded arms, admiring the sweet. She sighs and closes her eyes.

MARY

Thank you, God.

She takes the wrapper off of the cupcake and pinches a bit of the cake between her fingers, then pops it into her mouth. She sighs. Delicious. She wraps the cupcake back up, stands, and places it in the fridge. She checks the microwave for the time. Still 3 AM. She laughs to herself.

MARY

3 AM again! It happens that way every night. I always wake up at 3 AM. Must be a sign, or something. (*She giggles again.*) I like to be up late. It's so quiet. Like I'm the only one

alive. (*She ponders this.*) Imagine that! Imagine I'm the only one alive. Everyone else is gone. (*Beat.*) I'd be just as lonely.

She shrugs the thought off and opens the fridge again. She takes out the half-full glass of water, then sits at the table again. She places the glass down gingerly, then rests her head on her arms again to examine it. She smiles and closes her eyes.

MARY

Thank you, God.

She takes a small sip of the water, and gulps it down eagerly. Satisfied, she wipes her mouth and puts the glass back in the fridge. She giggles to herself again, realizing something.

MARY

I always thank God for my snacks. My Momma taught me to. She said, "God has blessed you with much, be grateful." So I thank Him. (*Beat.*) My Momma used to say I was the most ungrateful child ever. She said I was a problem child. Such a hassle. (*She frowns.*)

Saddened by this, she sits at the table, fidgeting with a necklace around her neck. Thunder rumbles softly; not a threat, just a reminder. MARY smiles at the sound.

MARY

Oh, I hope it rains. I love the rain. I love the way it hits the window. It makes me feel safe. (*Beat.*) I don't know why people hate rain so much. Seems like a lot of hate wasted at such a simple thing. It's just little drops of water, falling from the sky. Nothing to be upset about. (*Softer.*) Nothing to be upset about. (*She yawns.*) Goodness, it's late. Or early. (*She giggles.*) I always find that so funny. The latest time of night is the earliest time of day. It's like symbolism, or something. Like a metaphor. I'm not smart enough to know what it means, but it's nice that I know it's there. (*An acknowledgement:*) I'm not really smart in general.

As she thinks this over, CASSANDRA wanders into the kitchenette, stumbling over her own tired feet. Exhaustion is plain on her face. She fumbles through the fridge, searching for something. Finally, her hands wrap around the pill bottle. She pulls it out, unscrews the lid, and pours three pills into her hand. She tosses them back into her mouth, swallows hard, and sighs. She screws the lid back on and puts it back in the fridge. MARY clears her throat.

MARY

Hi, Cassandra. How's the thesis going?

CASSANDRA grunts in reply and trudges offstage.

MARY

*(Looking after her.)* I worry for her. She didn't take nearly as many pills at the beginning of the year. I wonder if her doctor upped her prescription. *(She smiles sadly.)* My Momma always said I was an empathetic person. I think she came to this assumption because I always cried when she would kill spiders. It's not that I liked the spiders - I actually hated them. Too many eyes, too many legs. It's not even that I was sad that they were dying. I just didn't like the sound of the newspaper coming down...

Thunder rumbles again. MARY sighs and looks out the window. She knows the rain is coming and she waits for it with bated breath. Tired and anxious, she bounces her leg and groans as she leans again on her arms. CASSANDRA reenters, frantic this time.

CASSANDRA

Mary! Mary, did you see that?

MARY

See what?

CASSANDRA, visibly shaking, reaches into a cabinet and produces a knife. MARY, confused, stands.

MARY

*(Surprisingly calm.)* Cassandra, are you okay?

CASSANDRA does not respond, only shakes and stares out the window in terror. MARY approaches her, plucks the knife from her hands and places it back in the cabinet. CASSANDRA doesn't move. MARY sighs and hugs her from behind, stroking her hair. CASSANDRA is frigid.

MARY

She gets like this sometimes, sees things. It's not her fault. *(Shaking her head.)* I want her to be okay. I want her to heal, to stop seeing things that aren't there. I'm her friend. I care about her.

CASSANDRA slips out of MARY's arms and silently exits. MARY looks offstage after her. Then, she opens the fridge and pulls the pill bottle out. She reads the label and sighs.

MARY

He *did* up the dosage. Much good it's doing. She's been more paranoid than ever since she visited her parents. She always hated it there.

A knock on the door. MARY whirls around, startled. Who would be knocking at this hour? MARY shrugs, unbothered. Might as well answer it.

She places the pill bottle on the counter and takes a deep breath, steeling herself. With confidence, she exits.

MARY

*(Offstage.)*

Huh.

She returns, confused, but with a playful smile on her face.

MARY

No one there. Oh, this is intriguing. Like a mystery. Like I'm Nancy Drew and whoever is out there is just waiting to be caught. A knock at the door, and no one there. No one at the door. *(She thinks, then:)* I'll ask Cass if she saw anything. She has the big window.

MARY goes to exit, but CASSANDRA enters, stopping her.

MARY

Oh! Cass! I was just coming to get you-

CASSANDRA

Did you hear that?

MARY

What, the knock?

CASSANDRA

Someone's coming.

MARY

No, actually, there wasn't anyone out there-

CASSANDRA whimpers and sits at the table, her head in her hands. MARY moves to her and places her hands on her shoulders gently.

CASSANDRA melts a little, her shoulders relaxing slightly. MARY takes this as a sign that she can proceed. She crosses to the drawer, produces a flashlight, and crosses to the door.

MARY

I'm going to investigate. I won't go too far, I'm just going to look around the cul-de-sac. There's milk in the fridge, Cass, if you're thirsty.

CASSANDRA doesn't respond. MARY, accepting that she won't get a response, opens the door and exits, turning the flashlight on. The door shuts behind her.

Thunder rumbles as CASSANDRA shivers, staring at the door, waiting for MARY to return. Ten seconds go by, then twenty, then thirty. Each second passes slowly, like water dripping from a leaky faucet. The tension mounts as CASSANDRA gazes unblinkingly at the door. Her terror is visible in her eyes.

Finally, lightning flashes and thunder booms and MARY enters, giggling to herself.

MARY

This just gets more and more interesting. Oh, I love mysteries. (*She notices CASSANDRA shaking.*) Cass, don't worry. There wasn't anyone out there. Maybe someone had the wrong address.

CASSANDRA

I don't think so.

MARY

(*Startled by the sudden speech from her friend.*)

What?

CASSANDRA

I don't think so.

MARY

You don't think... what?

CASSANDRA

Someone's coming.

MARY

There wasn't anyone out there, Cass.

CASSANDRA

They're hiding.

MARY

*(Gently, like entertaining a child's imagination.)*

You think they're hiding?

CASSANDRA nods. MARY nods as well, then crosses to the window and peers out into the black night.

Suddenly, thunder cracks and the lights flicker out. CASSANDRA yelps and MARY stumbles.

MARY

Okay, just stay still! The lights will come back on soon!

The lights do not, in fact, come back on soon. MARY waits one second, two seconds, then clicks on her flashlight and swings the light around.

MARY

There's a lantern in the cabinet, hold on!

MARY balances the flashlight on the counter and rummages in the cabinets. She finds the lantern, places it on the counter and turns it on. Warm light spreads across the room, and we can finally see MARY, the counter, and the table, where CASSANDRA is no longer sitting. She isn't onstage.



MARY clicks the flashlight off and turns, then stops when she sees CASSANDRA's empty chair.

MARY

C- (*She frowns.*) Cassandra? (*She looks around, then a hint of a smile creeps across her lips.*) A mystery. A mystery in my own house.

MARY looks around, checking under the table and even in the fridge, the same smirk still on her face.

MARY

It's awful that I'm so excited, but I can't help it. I always loved mysteries. Scooby-Doo, Nancy Drew, and Sherlock Holmes. It's just so exciting, like a puzzle. Use the clues like puzzle pieces, put them together, and see the whole picture. Cassandra was there one moment, and gone the next. But where did she go? A trapdoor under the table? A hidden room behind the fridge?

CASSANDRA enters, leaving her room. She looks much calmer than before, her shoulders relaxed and no longer shivering.

MARY

Or her room. Of course. (*She smiles and walks over to CASSANDRA.*) Hey, I was worried you'd been kidnapped.

CASSANDRA

No, I just don't like the dark. My room has a candle in it so I went in there.

MARY

Fair enough.

CASSANDRA opens the fridge and takes out the box of cherry tomatoes, checking the clock as she does. The clock flashes "12:00," reset from the power outage. CASSANDRA and MARY sit at the table, CASSANDRA opening the box of tomatoes and beginning to eat them.

CASSANDRA

What time is it?

MARY

Sometime after 3. I've been waking up at 3 lately. Don't know why. (*She grins.*)  
Mysterious, right?

CASSANDRA shrugs and eats another  
tomato.

MARY

Are you feeling alright? You were pretty tense earlier.

CASSANDRA

I'm fine.

MARY

Okay. (*Beat.*) Did you get some of your thesis done?

CASSANDRA

Hm?

MARY

You were working on your thesis. Did you finish it?

CASSANDRA

Oh. No. I got out a few more pages but I'm still not sure how I want to finish it.

MARY

Oh, gotcha.

Beat. CASSANDRA eats another tomato.  
Then:

MARY

I wanna look a bear in the eye.

CASSANDRA

Hm?

MARY

I wanna look a bear in the eye.

CASSANDRA

You want to look a bear in the eye.

MARY

Yeah.

CASSANDRA

Why do you want to look a bear in the eye?

MARY

Because it's an accomplishment. Bears are huge, you know? And, I mean, I'm pretty small, especially compared to a bear. But to look something so tall, so *dangerous*, right in the eye? They say the eyes are the window to the soul, right? So it's like- I'd be seeing right into the bear's soul. And the bear would be seeing into mine.

CASSANDRA

Yeah.

MARY

And I could see everything in its eyes. Its fear, its anger, its love. How amazing would that be, to stare into the soul of such a deadly animal? (*Beat.*) It's kinda like Beauty and the Beast.

CASSANDRA

Uh huh.

MARY

Or- I don't know. Was the Beast a bear?

CASSANDRA

I don't know. He had horns.

MARY

Yeah, he did. I don't know what kind of animal he was. He was just a beast, I guess.

CASSANDRA

Yeah.

MARY

But anyway. I wanna look a bear in the eye.

CASSANDRA

Yeah.

Long beat. MARY shifts in her chair,  
CASSANDRA eats another tomato.

MARY

Well, um- had any weird dreams lately?

CASSANDRA

What?

MARY

Had any-?

CASSANDRA

*(Overlapping.)*

Oh, oh. Um, I guess? I don't know. They've been, like, odd, but not anything scarily weird. Nothing really worth mentioning.

MARY

What do you mean by "odd?"

CASSANDRA

Like... odd.

MARY

Yeah but like, what makes them odd?

CASSANDRA

Oh. Um, well, I mean, I ate my childhood fish in one of them. And then in another one, I was trapped in one of those inflatable bubbles that you get to run around in as a kid.

MARY

Ohhh like the giant hamster balls?

CASSANDRA

Yeah, those. And the only thing I could hear was “Livin La Vida Loca” by Ricky Martin on repeat.

MARY

I guess that isn’t too weird.

CASSANDRA

Yeah, not really.

MARY

Just a little off-putting.

CASSANDRA

Yeah.

MARY

Especially the Ricky Martin bit.

CASSANDRA

*Especially* the Ricky Martin bit.

Beat.

CASSANDRA

Why? What did you have in mind?

MARY

I don’t know. Omens? Warnings? Like, those dreams that people get in stories right before something bad is about to happen? Or like the ones where your teeth fall out. Those kinds.

CASSANDRA

Oh.

MARY

Yeah. It would have explained why you were so worried tonight.

CASSANDRA stiffens, pausing with a tomato in her hand.

CASSANDRA

I wasn't worried.

MARY

Yeah, you were. At least, a little bit.

CASSANDRA

No, I wasn't.

MARY

It's okay to admit that you were scared, Cass. I won't judge you.

CASSANDRA

I wasn't scared.

MARY

Whatever you say.

Thunder booms again, but softer and more distant.

MARY

You think the storm has passed?

CASSANDRA

Maybe. It could just be a lull.

MARY

True. (*Beat.*) It's a good thing we decided to rent this house together at the start of the semester. I don't know how much I'd like being on the third story of the dorm tower with this storm raging.

CASSANDRA

Yeah. I know Brandon said his frat was going to throw a party tonight but I don't know how long it lasted. It started downpouring at ten and they can't fit everyone in the frat house. Even if it did stop for a couple hours, I can't imagine anyone sticking around that long.

MARY

Yeah. (*Beat.*) Why didn't you go to the party?

CASSANDRA

Why didn't I go to a frat party when my thesis is unfinished? (*Sarcasm drips from her voice.*) Great question, Mary, I don't know why I didn't go.

MARY

I mean, it is your *boyfriend's* frat party.

CASSANDRA

Brandon knows how important my schoolwork is to me.

MARY

Sure, sure. I just- (*She fumbles for words.*) I guess what I'm trying to say is- I don't understand, Cassandra. It's not even your senior year, and every day you shut yourself into your room working on this thesis that isn't even due for another year. You just-barricade yourself from the world, all for an academic paper?

CASSANDRA

Yes, Mary. I do. Here's the thing- and you'll probably call me a pessimist or a downer, but- life is short. I woke up this morning with about fourteen hours in a day to do as much as I can. And I only have seven days in a week, fifty-two weeks in a year, and God knows how many years left. I can *feel* myself getting older, Mary. Every second is a second wasted if I don't work towards my goals. I can't- I can't look back ten years from now and regret. Regret is the most painful feeling- and sure, heartbreak and loss suck, but regret? *Knowing* you had the chance to do something, or not do something, but failing anyway? It eats you up inside. A soft ache that only grows. I mean, can you imagine being on your deathbed, and looking back at the life you've lived and thinking "I could've done more." That's- that's what scares me the most. Coming to the end of my life and dying knowing that my life was meaningless. I can't let my life be meaningless. So, no, I'm not going to go to a frat party, or a birthday party, or a school social event when I could be working towards my future because, God, how could I? The world turns so fast that by the time you make a decision, the opportunity to choose is gone. Before you know it, your time is up. I'm not going to waste the only minutes and hours and days and weeks that I have. I'm just not. (*Beat.*) Why does it seem like you're upset that I didn't go?

MARY

I'm not-

CASSANDRA

I mean, why do *you* care if I go to my boyfriend's frat's party? That's an odd thing to be upset about, Mary.

MARY

It's not that. I just- You've been kind of isolating yourself lately, and I-

CASSANDRA

*(With a rueful laugh.)*

*Isolating myself?* Oh, please-

MARY

No, I just mean- ever since you came back from your parents' house you've been on edge. You haven't really come out of your room except for classes, and, I mean, I'm worried about you-

CASSANDRA

God, you sound like my mom.

MARY stops, hurt by this comparison. She laughs a little to lighten the tension.

MARY

No, *this* sounds like your mom: "Clean your room!" "Do the dishes!" "Don't take that tone with me, young lady!"

CASSANDRA

If you think that's what my mom sounds like, then you've never met my mom.

MARY

Well, I mean, I *haven't* met your mom, but that's a pretty universal mom impression, so-

CASSANDRA stands, cutting her off. As she speaks, she crosses to put the now half-empty box of cherry tomatoes back in the fridge.

CASSANDRA

Look, Mary, I appreciate the concern, but I'm fine. I've just been really busy lately.



MARY

That's what you've been saying for months, Cass.

CASSANDRA

Well, I've been busy for months.

MARY rises and crosses to stop  
CASSANDRA from exiting to her room.

MARY

Cass, is there something going on? You know I'm here for you-

CASSANDRA

I'm fine.

MARY

I don't think you are. You certainly weren't fine a minute ago-

CASSANDRA

If I say I'm fine, I'm fine. Now get out of the-

MARY

Cassandra, come on, talk to me.

CASSANDRA

Stop blocking the door, Mary!

Thunder booms, much louder than before.  
The rain begins to pick back up and pound  
on the window.

CASSANDRA

*(In a low voice, almost a growl.)*

Mary, get out of the way.

MARY

Not until you tell me what's wrong.

CASSANDRA

Nothing's wrong with me, Mary.

MARY

Come on, Cass, you know I don't buy that. You're always paranoid, you're constantly exhausted-

CASSANDRA

Because I have a roommate that doesn't know when to mind her own business-

MARY

You're not doing okay, Cassandra! You're erratic and half of the time I don't even know what to expect from you! You're either cold to me, laughing at my jokes like they're something out of a Robin Williams stand-up special, or you're terrified out of your mind! Please, tell me what's wrong.

CASSANDRA

It's none of your business!

MARY

I'm making it my business.

CASSANDRA

Jesus, Mary! Why can't you let it go?

MARY

Because I care about you, Cass! I'm your friend! I want to help you!

CASSANDRA

I don't need help, Mary! I'm not crazy!

MARY

I never said you were.

CASSANDRA

But you were thinking it! I know you were!

MARY

Cass, please-

CASSANDRA

*(Her breathing becomes frantic.)*

You're just like my parents! "Cassandra's crazy! She sees things! She has hallucinations!" Just say you want me to up my prescription already! Tell me you want me to stop freaking out over the smallest things! It's okay, I've heard it all before. I can handle it.

MARY

*(Her voice softens.)*

Cassandra, you know I don't think any of those things. I love you. I don't think you're crazy. I just think something is going on and I want to know what it is so I can help you-

CASSANDRA

Oh, shut up, Mary. I don't believe you for a second. You just want to help me so you can feel better about yourself. No one is *that* altruistic.

MARY

*(Hurt, but still trying.)*

Cassandra, please-

BANG BANG BANG. Someone pounds on the door. MARY yelps and jumps to the side, CASSANDRA whips around, fury painted all over her face.

CASSANDRA

I swear to God, I'm gonna kill whoever keeps knocking on that door.

MARY

Cassandra, just leave it. You were right earlier, something bad is going to happen-

CASSANDRA

No, no, you know what, Mary? *You* were right. I'm a coward. I'm too scared to open a stupid door. So let's see what happens, right, when I *do* open the door! Just for fun!

BANG. BANG. BANG. The pounding crescendos. CASSANDRA looks pointedly at MARY, anger blazing in her eyes, and begins to cross to the door.

CASSANDRA

Coming!

MARY

Cassandra, please! Just leave it! You don't have to open the door!

CASSANDRA

Who's afraid now, Mary?! Huh?! Who's panicking now?!

MARY

Cassandra, please don't open the door, *please!* You're not a coward, Cassandra! And you're not crazy! Just come back to the table and we'll ignore it! We don't need to know who's at the door!

CASSANDRA reaches the door and, with a single glare over her shoulder, says in a low, dangerous voice:

CASSANDRA

It's a mystery, Mary. Don't you *love* mysteries?

CASSANDRA flings open the door as thunder booms and lightning cracks.

Blackout.

## Leave A Message

**Characters: (Note - Carol, Mom, and Receptionist can be played by the same person.)**

LILA - Young adult, owner of the phone, afraid of the consequences of her own actions.

ANDREW - Young adult, Lila's (ex?) boyfriend, determined to win Lila back.

AUTOMATED VOICE - Voicemail operator/robotic assistant, ie. Siri.

CAROL - Lila's oncologist, a professional woman.

MOM - Lila's mother, well-meaning, loving, and concerned for her daughter.

RECEPTIONIST - Receptionist at Lila's oncologist's office, kind, helpful.

### **Director's Note:**

Punctuation in this script is used to enforce a rhythm/flow for the actor's speech. It's important to understand what certain marks mean in order to follow the natural cadence of human speech that I attempted to replicate. Here's a key for what the punctuation I used means and/or how to utilize it in a line:

- Commas ( , ) are used to denote short, quick changes in tone or thought. The comma is like the shifting of railway tracks to a new line. They don't always change the objective, but they indicate a new idea or a discovery from the character. (Unless, of course, it's just for grammatical reasons.) Really, this punctuation rule should be used at the actor's discretion, however, a comma should never slow or ultimately stop the rate of speaking; no pauses should be taken as a result of a comma.
- Dashes ( - ) indicate a full pivot in thought or a correction. Whereas the comma is used to denote quick shifts in thinking, the dash is used to tell the actor when the character's tactic changes or when a beat can be added. Again, these shifts should not slow or stop the rate of speech. Dashes are like obstacles placed along the path of speech.
- Ellipses ( ... ) denote a fall or trailing off of a character's speech. As used in this play, their purpose is to indicate a transition from outward reflection to inward reflection; the character's feelings go from spoken to silently felt. They are much like the dash in that they represent an obstacle in the character's objective and force the character to use a new tactic. However, ellipses can allow for longer shifts and pauses; it's absolutely fine to go slow with these shifts.

The ultimate goal is for the dialogue to sound authentic to human speech. Reading the line as written ensures that the dialogue sounds real and doesn't sabotage the integrity of the characters. Fast-paced beats and careful attention to the placement of "um's" and "just's" are incredibly important. The speed of the actor's delivery should be relatively quick, but not to the point where it begins to be a punchline. However, the monologues - especially Andrew's - should not drag. They should be filled with energy and tension if the ultimate drive of the play is to be maintained.

Beep.

AUTOMATED VOICE

Please enter your 4-digit voicemail password.

Beep, beep, beep, beep.

AUTOMATED VOICE

You have... 8... new messages. (*Pause.*) First message.

Long beep. A man's voice starts to talk. This is ANDREW.

ANDREW

Hey! Lila! It's Andrew. Um. I don't really know why I'm calling. I just- we haven't really seen each other since... (*Beat. His speech quickens, stream of consciousness-style.*) And, you know, I was thinking about you, and I guess I wanted to call to see how you were, but, you didn't answer, so I'm leaving a message. Yeah. Uh, anyway, call me back if you want to talk. Or- I mean, if you don't want to talk, don't call me back. Yeah. Okay, uh, bye.

Beep.

AUTOMATED VOICE

Next message.

Long beep.

ANDREW

(*Jumping straight into it.*)

Okay so I feel like my last message came off as a little aggressive? Or- not "aggressive," but- you know. So I just wanted to clarify. I don't- I feel bad about what happened, and I feel worried about you, because, you know, I care about you, so I was just calling to check in on you, and- Yeah! Okay that was it. Um. I guess I'll hear from you soon. Or not. Or- yeah. Bye.

Beep.

AUTOMATED VOICE

Next message.

Long beep. A new voice, a woman's voice, speaks. This is CAROL.

CAROL

*(In a professional tone.)*

Hi, Lila, this is Dr. Carol Shelley from the Freedman Institute. Your test results have come back, and I'd like to set up an appointment with you to discuss them. Just give my office a call back soon so we can set that up. My office hours are from 10 to 5, so anytime between then would be great. I do know that you have work for a large amount of that time, so if you'd like to schedule during one of my extended workdays, I'd be happy to work that out with you. Again, just call my receptionist, and she'll walk through setting that up with you. Alright. Thank you so much, bye bye.

Beep.

AUTOMATED VOICE

Next message.

Long beep. It's ANDREW again.

ANDREW

Hey! So, I know this is like my third voice mail, but you don't answer when I call, and I really want to tell you this stuff, because I don't normally say what I'm thinking, and I was reading this magazine- not GQ, some other magazine with Lindsey Lohan on the cover looking a little sad- but- it said that breakups happen because men are never able to express what they want or what they're feeling, and- and, I mean, I'm not gonna argue with Lindsey Lohan, you know? *(He laughs weakly.)* Well, so, I feel like that had some part in what happened so- If it was my fault, if I did anything to hurt you, or hurt our relationship, I'm so sorry. I really tried to be a good boyfriend. *(Beat.)* I haven't ever really dated anyone for as long as I dated you, and I don't really know what I did wrong? I guess what I'm saying is, I'm new to the long-term relationship thing, and if I did anything, like, weird or out of the ordinary, just let me know. Cause I really- I really loved you, Lila. And it hurt, I guess, that you couldn't say that you loved me back? That sounds so stupid, um- *(He clears his throat.)* So yeah, um- if I did anything wrong, I'm really, really sorry.

Beep.

AUTOMATED VOICE

Next message.

Long beep.

ANDREW

Okay I know this is getting obsessive, and I'm sorry, it's just- looking back on our relationship, I can't really think of anything I did wrong. I mean- You know, I did good, courteous, boyfriend things. All the things that Lindsey Lohan swears by. I bought you flowers for every date, I pulled the chair back for you at restaurants, I went to your family's dairy farm in Wisconsin for Thanksgiving because you didn't want to have to listen to your Uncle's rendition of "Danny Boy" alone. Which, I mean, he wasn't terrible, just a little pitchy, but I've definitely heard worse. *(He pauses. He's getting off track.)* And I don't want to act like I was perfect, because I definitely wasn't, but- I don't know, I can't think of anything throughout the entire course of our relationship that was really "break-up worthy." And maybe that's not a good thing to say immediately after a break up, but that's how I feel. Yeah. *(A little bolder.)* I'll be honest, I'm kind of confused. I guess I don't really understand your reason for breaking up with me? I don't know. *(Beat. With more certainty.)* I think I deserve to know. *(Beat.)* So, call me back, I guess. Or not. You've kind of been ignoring my calls, so I don't really expect anything different at this point. Sorry, low blow. Okay. Bye.

Beep.

AUTOMATED VOICE

Next message.

Long beep. A different woman's voice, this time more maternal. This is MOM.

MOM

Hi Lila, it's your mom. I was just calling to check in on you. It's been a while since we talked, and I miss chatting with you. I've only had your father to talk to up here in Wisconsin and now that football season has started, if your name isn't Brett Favre or you're not wearing a striped shirt and a whistle, he doesn't give you a word. Have you gotten your test results back yet? Let me know when you do. I know your appointment was last week. I've got the whole family praying for you. I sent an email blast to everyone, including the cousins. We're all rooting for you, Lila. I know this is a scary time, but whatever happens, your father and I love you so much. Your sister is coming into town for Thanksgiving this year, and we want to know if you and Andrew will be joining us as well? Your uncle is very excited to see Andrew again. He was so happy to hear that Andrew enjoyed his singing, and he's decided to sing again this year since



Andrew liked it so much. Which is good for your uncle, but terrible for everyone else who has to listen to him sing again. We might have to seriously consider buying those ear plugs we joked about last year. Could be a smart investment. Well, that was all I wanted to talk to you about. I love you, Lila! Call me back as soon as you get the chance. You're awesome! That's a fact! Alright, I love you, sweet girl. Okay. Bye.

Beep.

AUTOMATED VOICE

Next message.

Long beep. It's ANDREW again.

ANDREW

*(Emboldened. Quicker than before, but not uncertain. Informed.)*

So I know this is getting excessive, cause this is like, what, my fifth voicemail now? Yeah. Anyway, I feel like maybe you broke up with me because I didn't tell you how I really feel about you, and I want to do that now. Because I feel like I should be able to do it. So here. I'm- I'm going to do it now. *(Beat.)* Lila, I'm in love with you. Like, the kind of love that fuels 80s rock ballads. Or maybe the kind that fuels those 90s rom coms with Cameron Diaz that you think are gonna be bad because the trailer seems to reveal the whole plot and the premise is overused but it actually turns out to be sweet and romantic, and you're once again surprised by how good of an actress Cameron Diaz is. *(Beat.)* Look, Lila. The last week has been miserable without you. I wake up with this ache in my chest that doesn't go away. I just sit on my couch feeling like I should be doing something, but to be completely honest, I'm not sure what I should do. Because the truth is, what I really want to do is kiss you and tell you a thousand times that I love you. I love you *so much*. And I'm not sure if you know just how amazing you are because you never let me compliment you, but- I just have to say, you're the most beautiful, intelligent, scary woman I've ever met. *(Beat. He realizes that might not sound very romantic.)* Scary in a good way! Like, "David Bowie in Labyrinth" scary, not "the rest of the movie Labyrinth" scary. *(Beat.)* That doesn't make sense. Um. I hope you get what I'm trying to say. I really suck at this. But I want to try and say this because you're worth it, Lila. You're worth everything. *(Beat.)* Anyway, um, I'd really love to talk to you instead of the automated voicemail lady who tells me to "leave a message after the tone." I get a feeling she's not as beautiful as you. No offense to her. *(Beat.)* But yeah, give me a call back when you get the chance. Um, bye.

Beep.

AUTOMATED VOICE

Next message.

Long beep.

ANDREW

Also, I forgot to tell you, I still have your Lost season 1 DVD, so is there a good time I could come over to drop that off? Maybe we could chat then? I just know how much you like Lost, and it's not really my favorite show, so... you get it. Just- let me know. Yeah. *(Beat. Then, laughing it off:)* Okay this is awkward now. Cause I just confessed all of my feelings for you and now I'm calling about a Lost season 1 DVD. But I guess that's just how life goes. Without you, I'm Lost. Haha, get it? *(Beat.)* Okay, yeah that was bad. Sorry. Anyway, um, all the stuff I said in my last message still applies, so- give me a call when you can. Okay. Bye.

Beep.

AUTOMATED VOICE

You have... no... new messages.

Long beat. It should feel like the end of something, like an intermission. The string of voicemails is over and LILA sits in silence, processing what she's just listened to. The silence seems to speak louder than the 8 voicemails combined.

Finally, we hear 9 beeps - a phone number being dialed - then the phone rings. Brrrring. Brrrring. Brrrring.

RECEPTIONIST picks up.

RECEPTIONIST

Freedman Institute of Oncology, how can I help you?

LILA

Hi, my name is Lila Cleary, I'm a patient of Dr. Shelley? I was told my test results came back and that I should call to schedule an appointment?

RECEPTIONIST

Lila... Yes! Your test results are back, and I'd be happy to set that appointment up for you. What is your date of birth?

LILA

7/15/85.

RECEPTIONIST types audibly, then clicks her mouse. LILA waits silently.

RECEPTIONIST

Alright... Would November 14th at 10 AM work for you?

LILA

That would be perfect.

RECEPTIONIST types some more.

RECEPTIONIST

Perfect! You're all set!

LILA

Wait, um... I don't know if this is out of the ordinary, or if it's, like, a breach of the hippocratic oath or something-

RECEPTIONIST

I haven't taken the hippocratic oath, so I don't think that will be a problem.

LILA

Okay, good. Um. Could you let me know?

RECEPTIONIST

Hm?

LILA

My test results. Could you let me know-?

RECEPTIONIST

Positive or negative?

LILA

Yeah.

RECEPTIONIST

*(After a beat.)*

Look, I'll be completely honest with you. This is my first day here. I don't really know what the procedure is for this kind of stuff. They stuck me at this desk with this George Clooney calendar and- I'm not complaining, obviously, I've seen all the Oceans movies and he's... Okay, Lila, here's what I'll do. I'll tell you the results because you sound nice and this seems like a pretty big deal. If I get fired, I can just- um- Well, I don't know what I'll do but I'm sure there won't be a George Clooney calendar there. Which is a little disheartening because October Clooney is hitting all the right notes. *(Beat.)* Sound good?

LILA

*(Laughing a little.)*

Yeah, yeah, that would be awesome.

Suspense builds with every clack of the RECEPTIONIST's keys. We can feel LILA's anxiety float from the phone. Each keystroke feels like a pang from a rapidly beating heart. What will the results be?

RECEPTIONIST

Alright, Lila, it looks like your results came back negative.

LILA breaths an audible sigh of relief. These results are, clearly, *very* good.

LILA

That's great.

RECEPTIONIST

Is that all I can do for you today?

LILA

Yes, thank you so much.

RECEPTION

Not a problem, Lila. Have a good day!

LILA

You too! Bye.

Beep. The call ends.

We hear nine more beeps. Another phone number. The phone rings. Brrring. Brrring. Brrring. Brrring.

No one answers.

ANDREW

Hey, this is Andrew. If I don't answer, I'm probably super busy doing really important stuff. Leave a message and I *might* get back to you. No promises, though.

AUTOMATED VOICE

At the tone, please record your message. If you have finished recording, you may hang up, or press one for more options.

Beep.

LILA

Hey, Andrew, it's Lila. I got your voicemails. All six of them. And I have to come clean about something: I never wanted to break up with you. I really, really like you, and I never wanted to hurt you. When you told me you loved me- I just- no one has ever told me they loved me before. Romantically, I mean. And- I felt so awful that I couldn't say it back, and I got scared that I'd never be able to say it back, especially with everything going on with me. And you deserve to know what I have going on with me. I- I had some medical tests done, and when I broke up with you, I thought they were going to come back positive. And I couldn't imagine putting you through that, and, to be honest, I didn't want to have to deal with a relationship along with... (*Beat.*) But the test was negative and I feel so stupid because I should have never let you go. No matter what was going on with me, I should have stayed with you because the truth is... I- I love you, Andrew. Yeah. Didn't see that coming, I bet. (*She laughs a little.*) I don't know why it was so hard for me to say, because you're just so amazing, and it should have been easy. And you say that I'm all these great things, but Andrew, so are you. You just- you're so vibrant and happy and funny and sweet and the fact that you came with me to Wisconsin to listen to

Uncle Richie sing “Danny Boy” just proves that you’re the only guy for me. I mean, what other guy would leave six messages professing his love for the girl that just broke up with him? You’re amazing, Andrew. I’m sorry I didn’t tell you that before. (*Beat.*) So, yeah, uh I guess that’s it. No, no that’s- ugh that’s dumb. That’s dumb.

Beep.

AUTOMATED VOICE

If you are satisfied with your message, please press-

Beep.

AUTOMATED VOICE

At the tone, please record your message. If you have finished recording, you may hang up, or press one for more options.

Beep.

LILA

Hey, Andrew. It’s Lila. I love you. (*Beat.*) And yeah, please bring back my *Lost* season 1 DVD. Cause... I’m *Lost* without you.

Beep.

Blackout.

# Slumber Party

## Characters:

AMANDA - Teenage girl, awkward, kind, extending an olive branch.

SHELBY - Teenage girl, awkward, cold, accepting the invitation.

## Director's Note:

Punctuation in this script is used to enforce a rhythm/flow for the actor's speech. Here's a key for what the punctuation I used means and/or how to utilize it in a line:

- Slashes ( / ) are used to indicate an overlap in conversation. Wherever a slash appears, the next line should begin almost immediately.
- Commas ( , ) are used to denote short, quick changes in tone or thought. They don't always change the objective, but they indicate a new idea or a discovery from the character. Really, this punctuation rule should be used at the actor's discretion, however, a comma should never slow or ultimately stop the rate of speaking; no pauses should be taken as a result of a comma.
- Dashes ( - ) indicate a full pivot in thought or a correction. Whereas the comma is used to denote quick shifts in thinking, the dash is used to tell the actor when the character's tactic changes or when a beat can be added. Again, these shifts should not slow or stop the rate of speech.
- Ellipses ( ... ) denote a fall or trailing off of a character's speech. As used in this play, their purpose is to indicate a transition from outward reflection to inward reflection. They are much like the dash in that they represent an obstacle in the character's objective and force the character to use a new tactic. However, ellipses can allow for longer shifts and pauses; it's absolutely fine to go slow with these shifts.

The ultimate goal is for the dialogue to sound authentic, like human speech. Reading the line as written ensures that the dialogue sounds real and doesn't sabotage the integrity of the characters. Fast-paced beats and careful attention to the placement of "um's" and "just's" are incredibly important. The speed of the actor's delivery should be relatively quick, but not to the point where it begins to be a punchline.

Lights up on a semi-lit media room.  
AMANDA enters, a pillow under each of her arms. She's visibly anxious, wringing her hands and looking around the room. She's laid out two sleeping bags on the floor, along with a bowl of popcorn, a liter of soda, and a stack of red Solo cups. She

tosses the pillows down onto each of the sleeping bags and straightens them.

She pulls out her phone and picks up the bluetooth speaker on her sleeping bag. She syncs her phone, then shuffles music. She can't decide what song to play, so she keeps skipping songs at a comically accelerating pace. After little success, she decides against playing music and stands, leaving the speaker on the sleeping bag.

She looks over the set-up, not completely satisfied. She rotates the popcorn bowl, nudges the cups to a more central position, straightens the sleeping bags, anything to ease her mind.

Her work is interrupted by the doorbell. She stands, takes a deep breath, and exits to answer the door.

AMANDA

*(Offstage.)*

Hey Shelby! Come in.

AMANDA enters, followed by SHELBY, who is holding a duffle bag and stands awkwardly to the side. There's some kind of weird, almost palpable energy between the girls.

AMANDA

So, um. This is where we'll sleep. I've got some snacks laid out already, but we have more stuff downstairs. I think my mom is ordering pizza.

SHELBY

Cool. *(She sets her duffle bag down. She looks around, then, to AMANDA:)* Should I- Should I sit, or-?



AMANDA

Yeah! Sure, yeah, we can sit.

They sit.

SHELBY fiddles with the straps on her drawstring bag, AMANDA looks at SHELBY, desperate to reignite the conversation.

AMANDA

So! Um, we've got some options. We could- we have Scrabble. The TV has Netflix so we could watch a movie. Like- (*She laughs.*) Remember when we accidentally watched that rated R movie that one time we were at your house- I don't remember which / movie it was-

SHELBY

It was *The Breakfast Club*.

AMANDA

Yeah! Yeah, it was. That was pretty funny, right? Cause, we were only, like twelve, and they talked about sex and, you know, they have the scene with the weed and stuff.

SHELBY

Yeah, that was funny.

Silence. SHELBY isn't trying to be cold, AMANDA isn't trying to be awkward. There's just a disconnect.

SHELBY

(*Trying to return AMANDA's energy.*)

Well, um, I like Scrabble. We could / play that.

AMANDA

Oh great! Yeah, I'll go grab that. Be right back.

AMANDA exits on the other side of the stage. SHELBY watches her leave. Once she does, SHELBY stands and explores the

space. It's familiar to her, but things have changed; different pictures hang on the walls, the chairs have moved, etc. There's a solemn sadness in the way SHELBY looks around, as if she's resigned to being lost in a space she's been in hundreds of times.

AMANDA returns, the Scrabble box in her hands.

AMANDA

Okay, so I definitely think it might be missing a few letters, cause- you remember my old dog Jackie?

SHELBY

Yeah, a little bit.

AMANDA

Yeah, yeah, well, before we gave her to my Aunt Crystal, she was still teething, and- (*She giggles.*) She got into the Scrabble box and chewed on a ton of the letters, and she must have swallowed a few because she pooped out the word "Xylophone" a couple days later.

The girls laugh, eyes on each other to figure out when to stop giggling. AMANDA sets the box down.

AMANDA

But yeah, it's missing some letters, so- we can still play it if you want, or, we have other games-

SHELBY

That's fine.

They sit, the Scrabble box between them. AMANDA opens it and sets up the board and letter-stands.

SHELBY

So, um. It's been a while since we hung out.

AMANDA

*(Focused on setting up the game.)*

No, yeah, for sure.

SHELBY

I was- I mean, I don't want to say I was surprised, or- well, I was, kind of, you know- I just didn't expect you to invite me over.

AMANDA

Well, I mean. *(She looks up at SHELBY.)* I just- I saw you in the hall and I don't know why, but I was like "Wow, I haven't seen her in so long." And I got this... ache, I guess? Like regret. And I thought, you know, why feel guilty when she's *right there*. When *you're* right there. So I invited you. And, believe me, I didn't expect you to actually want to come-

SHELBY

I wanted to come.

AMANDA

Well. I see that *now*.

AMANDA tosses SHELBY the bag of letters.

AMANDA

Pick seven.

SHELBY

*(Smiling a little.)*

I know how to play Scrabble, Amanda. You always think I don't know how to play / whatever game we play, but I do.

AMANDA

*(Smiling as well.)*

That's not true, I just want to be sure you know what you're doing.

SHELBY

I *do*. This isn't Ms. Hillary's Little Darlings dance class.

AMANDA

*(Laughing.)*

Oh my god, when we had to do that dance / from Lion King and you couldn't do a pirouette-

SHELBY

*(Laughing.)*

From Lion King, yeah.

AMANDA

And so I- stand up- and so I would grab your hand-

AMANDA pulls SHELBY up and, taking her hand, propels her into a twirl.

AMANDA

I'd *whip* you around like *that*. And she got so mad because, she was like-

SHELBY

*(In a nasally Southern accent.)*

"Shelby needs to learn how to pirouette without being launched like a Beyblade."

AMANDA

Yeah, yeah! Ooo, that was a good Ms. Hillary impression.

SHELBY

You get pretty good at it after you take private lessons with her every Tuesday and Thursday for ten years.

AMANDA

Oh! Do you- you still go to her?

SHELBY

Yeah, I'm on her competition team now.

AMANDA

Oh, cool! Very cool. I left. Obviously. Cause, you know, I wasn't- I was bad. Well, not bad, but- not good. Not like, I mean, I had rhythm, you know? I could hear the music, I just- when I would do the spins I'd get a little dizzy, you know? Like, vertigo. And, and I don't know if you know this, but I actually would like, see things when I spun. Not like

auras or something, but visions. Like, how I died and stuff like that. One time, I saw Shaquille O'Neal. So- Bad.

They sit in silence.

AMANDA

So! Scrabble?

SHELBY

Yup. Yup yup, Scrabble.

AMANDA stares at the board, then, with her letters, she spells "LOTS."

AMANDA

I spelled LOTS, and I get... eight points.

SHELBY looks at her letters.

SHELBY

I don't know how to say this. But. I only have one X, two V's, one Z, and three C's.

AMANDA

Oh.

SHELBY

Yeah, I don't- I don't think I can spell anything with that-

AMANDA

Cox?

SHELBY

Excuse me?

AMANDA

Is cox a word?

SHELBY

Uh, yeah, but I don't think I can spell that-

AMANDA  
What do you mean?

SHELBY  
I don't have a k, or an s-

AMANDA  
What would you need a k or an s for??

SHELBY  
To spell cocks?

AMANDA  
C-O-X?

SHELBY  
...OH.

AMANDA  
Yeah??

SHELBY  
I thought you meant-

AMANDA  
What??

SHELBY  
Nothing. Don't worry about it.

AMANDA  
*(It slowly dawns on her.)*  
...OH YOU MEANT LIKE-

SHELBY  
*(Hushing her.)*  
Yes, yes I did.

AMANDA  
No no no, I meant-

SHELBY

I see that now.

AMANDA

Well, no need to get snippy.

SHELBY

I'm not.

AMANDA

I was just- I didn't get it.

SHELBY

I know, I know.

AMANDA

You seem, like, upset.

SHELBY

I'm not upset, why would you think-?

AMANDA

You just sound upset, like, I upset you or something.

SHELBY

I'm not upset with you, Amanda, why would I be upset with you?

AMANDA

I don't know. I don't know, I just- I'm worried that I made a mistake.

SHELBY

What do you mean? You just mixed up cox with-

AMANDA

No. I mean- You're not having a good time, are you?

SHELBY

*(Lying.)*

What? Of course I am!

AMANDA

Shelby.

SHELBY

...No.

AMANDA

Yeah.

Beat. They stare at the board. SHELBY looks up at AMANDA and studies her.  
Then:

SHELBY

Have we really changed this much?

AMANDA

I haven't changed. At least, I don't think I have.

SHELBY

You have.

AMANDA

*(A surprisingly bitter tone in her voice.)*

That's not entirely my fault, though, is it? You changed and I changed with you. You left and I had to- I had to adapt, I guess.

SHELBY

I know. I'm sorry. *(Beat.)* Yeah, I'm sorry. For- for ditching you when we got to high school. And there's no way I can justify it or qualify it, cause, I mean, all I can say is that we started to have different interests, but that's not true. You always wanted to do stuff with me and I just decided I was too cool for you, and I made dancer friends and I abandoned you. But looking at you right now and having the image of you from elementary school in my mind, and knowing that the person I picture is my best friend and the person sitting right in front of me, that I'm looking at now, *isn't*... It hurts so much. It's like a- like a guilty nostalgia, if that makes sense? I hate that I screwed up the girl I grew up with. I hate that you changed because of what I did. You were fine before. You were *amazing* before. And I made you think you needed to change, or- *(She shakes her head.)* I'm sorry, I'm not really sure what to say to try and, like, explain myself. I want to hug you and apologize but that wouldn't make what I did any better or make



what you went through any less painful, so I'm just sitting here, looking at you, and I'm- I'm really sorry. (*Beat. She looks at AMANDA and, determined, grabs her hand.*) I understand if your answer is no. Absolutely I do. But- can we give this a chance? Being best friends, I mean? I know I'm making a bigger deal than needs to be made of this, but-

AMANDA

Yeah. No, yeah, I- That's why I invited you here, I wanted- (*She beams and squeezes SHELBY's hand.*) I want to give it a chance.

SHELBY

(*Smiling.*)

Cool. Great.

AMANDA

Great.

They smile at each other, forgiveness exchanged between their interlocked hands.

SHELBY

Hey, uh, can I- can I get a drink from the-

AMANDA

Oh! Oh, yeah, yeah, here-

AMANDA pours a drink for SHELBY and for herself, then, all business, returns to the board.

AMANDA

So. Cox.

SHELBY

I'll just pull some more letters.

AMANDA

Great idea.

SHELBY reaches into the bag to pull out more letters and smiles at AMANDA. They're giving it a chance.

Blackout.

# Expired Milk

## Characters:

CALLUM - Young man who knows what he loves and actively seeks it.

KATIE - Young woman who fears the things that are sure to bring her happiness.

## Director's Note:

Punctuation in this script is used to enforce a rhythm/flow for the actor's speech. Here's a key for what the punctuation I used means and/or how to utilize it in a line:

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Lights up stage right on a dank kitchenette in a small apartment building. A round, miniscule dining table is situated near the middle of the room, and what some might call a fridge is cramped next to the counter where a dingy coffee maker and a landline telephone rests.

CALLUM, looking disgruntled and having just woken up, enters, rubbing his eyes. He opens the cabinet above the counter, which is empty except for a bowl and a single coffee mug, which CALLUM grabs and inserts beneath the coffee maker. He inserts the coffee pod, pushes a few buttons, then leans against the counter as he waits for the beverage to pour. As soon as his mug is full, he grabs it, sits at the table, and takes a swig, sighing in relief. He takes another gulp, then another, until realizing that he should probably have something to eat.

CALLUM opens the fridge and produces a box of cereal and the remnants of a once-full gallon of milk. CALLUM sets the box on the counter, then peers curiously at the milk. He unscrews the lid and sniffs it, ponders the smell, then shrugs. Good enough.

CALLUM grabs the bowl from the cabinet and begins to pour cereal into it. He then carefully lets the milk trickle out of its carton, stopping with just enough for one more bowl of cereal. He returns the cereal and the milk to the fridge, grabs a spoon from the counter, and is just about to enjoy the fruit of his labor when the countertop telephone begins to ring. CALLUM spoons up some cereal, swallows it down, then answers.

CALLUM

Hello?

Lights up stage left on a well-kept living room where KATIE sits cross-legged on the sofa, her cell phone in her hand. She has a glass of orange juice in her other hand, and

finishes the sip she was taking before  
answering CALLUM.

KATIE

Callum, hi. It's Katie.

CALLUM

*(A little surprised.)*

Oh! Katie- Hey.

KATIE

Hi.

CALLUM

I have to admit, I'm kind of surprised that you called, considering-

KATIE

Oh. Right. Well, I was just calling to say that I was planning to come by Friday to pick up the rest of my things. You know, my DVDs, my books, that stuff.

CALLUM

Right. Right.

KATIE

Is that alright with you?

CALLUM

Sure, sure. I'll be here.

KATIE

Great.

A long pause. CALLUM grips the phone, wanting to say something but unsure how. KATIE's face contorts in discomfort, until finally she speaks.

KATIE

So I guess I'll let you go-

CALLUM  
Why did you do it?

KATIE  
What?

CALLUM  
Why did you break up with me?

KATIE  
Oh, Callum-

CALLUM  
No, no, really. I want to know. What made you want to break up with me? Was it my Transformers thing? Because if you had said that it weirded you out I would've stopped-

KATIE  
No, it was not your Transformers thing.

CALLUM  
It's an underrated film. Michael Bay is a directorial genius.

KATIE  
*(Sighing.)*  
Yeah, yeah, I know-

CALLUM  
Aha!

KATIE  
What?

CALLUM  
It *was* the Transformers thing!

KATIE  
Callum, I just said it wasn't.

CALLUM

But when I started talking about it, you did that thing you do when you're annoyed where you sigh really loudly. I know you do that when you're annoyed because you did it every time I told you I had renewed our season passes to Hurricane Harbor.

KATIE

Because Hurricane Harbor is for kids.

CALLUM

*(Indignantly.)*

They offer fun for *all* ages!

KATIE

*(Sighing.)*

Whatever you say, Callum.

CALLUM

*See?* You did it again! I annoy you, don't I?

KATIE

When you ask me stuff like this, yes.

CALLUM

So is that why you wanted to break up with me?

KATIE

No, Callum, it isn't.

CALLUM

Then why? I don't understand it, Katie. I love you. I really do. And you told me that you loved me. I mean, I tried so hard to make you happy because I love seeing you happy and I hate seeing you cry. I just wanted to make you happy.

KATIE

You did, Callum.

CALLUM

Then why?

KATIE shifts on the couch and stares down at her orange juice, searching for an answer  
CALLUM waits by the phone patiently.

KATIE

Because- God, I don't know how to put this. Because you're such a bright light, Callum. You're sweet, and goofy, and you like saying "Autobots, let's roll out," whenever you start your car. And I just- I don't know, I feel like- I'm not able to match this bright energy you put out into the world. And it's not fair to keep you in a relationship when you can do a lot better.

CALLUM

But I don't want to do better. I want you. You're the Bumblebee to my Optimus Prime. The Megan Fox to my Shia Labeouf, even though she's *way* out of his league-

KATIE

You gotta stop with the Transformers references.

CALLUM

I knew that was an issue.

KATIE

I feel like you totally missed what I just said.

CALLUM

No, I heard it. I just don't agree with it so I'm choosing to ignore it. Like how Shia Labeouf ignored Optimus and went out to rescue Megan Fox-

KATIE

*Callum.*

CALLUM

Sorry.

KATIE

You're such a great guy, Callum. I hope you find someone who's as great as you.

CALLUM

I did.



KATIE

Who?

CALLUM

You.

KATIE

Callum, I'm not good enough for you.

CALLUM

Katie, stop. I am eating cereal with three week old milk and wearing the same t-shirt I've been wearing for the last four days. If anything, I'm not good enough for *you*. But I like you anyway because you're smart, beautiful, and don't get mad when I say that if Megan Fox asked me out I would say yes.

KATIE

I know how important she is to you.

CALLUM

But I want you to know how important *you* are to me. You're amazing Katie. You're better than Megan Fox. You're so caring, so understanding, and you're, like, really hot. You're my Optimus *Prime* choice for a girlfriend.

KATIE

*(Rolling her eyes, and trying to hide her smile.)*

Oh my God, Callum.

CALLUM smiles at his own pun and takes a bite of his cereal.

CALLUM

So you're coming by Friday, right?

KATIE

Yes.

CALLUM

You sure you don't want me to pick you up? That way we can just drive straight to the restaurant.

KATIE

Restaurant?

CALLUM

Yeah, for our date.

KATIE

Callum, I don't know if you remember this, but I broke up with you two weeks ago.

CALLUM

That's how I know you're single.

KATIE

Very funny, Callum.

CALLUM

Okay, fine, I'll ask professionally. Katie, would you like to go on a date Friday night?

KATIE smiles and sips her orange juice. She rolls her eyes.

KATIE

I don't know why I say yes to you. You're nothing but trouble.

CALLUM

*(Coyly.)*

It's my endearing innocence and persistence. Also I'm cute.

KATIE

*(Sarcastically.)*

Mhm. Sure.

CALLUM

So. Friday at 8?

KATIE

Friday at 8. And in the meantime, buy some new milk. It's a wonder you haven't contracted anything from it.

CALLUM

For you, I'll buy five whole new gallons of milk.

KATIE

Very reassuring. Alright. Bye, Callum.

CALLUM

Bye, Katie.

Lights down on stage left as CALLUM hangs up. He sets down the bowl of cereal carefully, stands slowly, then pumps his fist into the air and dances.

CALLUM

YES! Yes yes yes yes YES!

CALLUM shimmies over to the fridge, grabs the milk from inside, and chucks it offstage.

CALLUM

I've gotta buy some milk!

CALLUM slides offstage, still celebrating, as the triumphant mood hangs in the air. We have witnessed a victory.

Blackout.

# The Jingle

## Characters:

JERRY - CEO, a people pleaser, just trying his best.

RANATA - Employee, overachiever, very determined.

CHRIS - Employee, slacker, underachiever.

ALISON - Secretary, shy, more of a follower than a leader.

## Director's Note:

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Lights up on a conference room. A large, rectangular table sits in the middle of the room, with a telephone and a notepad on top. A whiteboard hangs untouched on the back wall. Anticipation hangs in the air.

JERRY, a ball of energy, bursts into the room, singing to himself.

JERRY

Give me a break! Give me a break! Break me off a piece of that?

RANATA enters, excitedly chanting.

RANATA

Kit Kat bar!

JERRY

Now *that* is superior advertising. There's something about that song that really makes me want a Kit Kat. Alison!

ALISON enters timidly, adjusting the frames of her glasses.

ALISON

Yes, Mr. Harrison?

JERRY

Call me Jerry, Alison.

ALISON

Yes, Mr. Jerry Harrison?

JERRY

No, that's- (*He sighs.*) Fine, sure. Alison, take a note, "Kit Kat commercial equals Kit Kat for Jerry."

ALISON

Yes, sir.

ALISON scurries over to grab the notepad and pen on the table, then sits and begins to dictate the note. She finishes and looks up attentively.

ALISON

So what's this meeting for? Your email made it seem like it was a business emergency.

RANATA

*(Widened.)*

A business emergency? Are we bankrupt? Because if we are, I have some calls I need to make-

JERRY

No, we're not-

RANATA

I never should have invested in that traveling circus. God knows you can't trust a carnie with your finances-

JERRY

Ranata, we're not going bankrupt. I mean, we are, but not for long! Corporate has put *us* in charge of writing the new jingle for the company!

CHRIS saunters into the room, eating a sandwich.

CHRIS

Sorry I'm late, long line at Subway.

JERRY

*(Emphasizing with his hands.)*

Subway: Eat Fresh. Another example of stellar advertising. And stellar subs. Alison, make a note, "Subway equals turkey on wheat with cheddar, tomato, and low-cal mayo. Also catchy slogan."

ALISON nods and dutifully relays the note onto the paper. She finishes and looks up, at attention.

CHRIS

Anyway, what's this meeting for? Your email just said, "SOS. Get to conference room ASAP. Business emergency."

JERRY

Huh. I really need to work on my passive tone. Alison, make a note, “Enroll in an email-writing seminar.”

RANATA

I don't think that's a thing-

JERRY

*(Interrupting loudly.)*

Write it down, Alison!

ALISON nods and scribbles fiercely.

JERRY

Anyway, as I was saying before you got here, corporate wants us to write the new company jingle!

CHRIS

Us?

JERRY

Yeah!

CHRIS

Well, that's a little random.

JERRY

What do you mean?

CHRIS

I mean, do you have any experience in advertising? We're the Arlington branch of Trevor's Ties and Threads. We sell ties. And threads.

JERRY

And now we write jingles!

RANATA

This is so exciting! I've always wanted to write a jingle. I have a few ideas. What about, “Ties, ties, baby.” Like Ice Ice Baby but with ties?

JERRY

It's jazzy, it's simple, and it's multicultural. It's brilliant! Write that down, Alison.

ALISON

Yes, sir. *(She scribbles it down.)*

RANATA

Okay, another one. How about this. *(In a sing-songy voice.)* "Ties and threads can get you through, so come on down to Trevor's and we'll get them for you."

JERRY

Okay, okay. It's- well, it's kind of convoluted. Maybe not that one. Alison, don't write that one down.

ALISON

Yes sir- *(She goes to write, then realizes, and stops.)*

JERRY

Anything else?

RANATA

Oh yeah! What about "Gonna buy this suit and tie, suit, tie, suit, let me show you a good deal!" Like from Suit and Tie by Justin Timberlake!

JERRY

Smooth, catchy, and speaks to middle-class white women. Amazing! Alison, you know what to do!

ALISON

What??

JERRY

*(Softly.)*

Write it down, Alison.

ALISON

Oh, right. Write. *(She writes it down.)*



RANATA

Okay, last one. What about, “Ties and threads gonna give it to you!” Like Uptown Funk by Bruno Mars?

JERRY

Ties and threads gonna give it to you!

RANATA AND JERRY

Ties and threads gonna give it to you!

JERRY, ALISON, AND RANATA

Ties and threads gonna give it to you! Ties and threads gonna give it to you!

CHRIS

You guys do know what you’re doing, right?

RANATA

Having FUN?

CHRIS

No, you’re plagiarizing.

JERRY

Pft. No we’re not. You have to steal the lyrics too to plagiarize.

CHRIS

Actually, you don’t. I mean, just take a look at Ice Ice Baby. You know why you don’t hear any other songs from Vanilla Ice?

ALISON

Because all of his novelty is based in the middle-aged population who have nostalgia for the 90s, but in reality he isn’t a very good rapper?

JERRY

Never disrespect Vanilla Ice in my presence, Alison. Write that down.

ALISON

*(Sadly.)*

Yes, sir. *(She writes it down.)*

CHRIS

It's because he plagiarized the opening "dun dun dun dundun dun dun" from Queen in their song "Under Pressure." No words involved, still plagiarism.

RANATA

Aw man. This is just like that time I failed English for repurposing the entire first chapter of A Tale of Two Cities for my essay about Anne Frank.

JERRY

So we have to come up with an *original* piece, with no influence from outside sources?

CHRIS

I'm sorry to say it, but yes.

RANATA

Okay, uh, we can do this! Right? I mean, it can't be that hard. Right? It's just, you know, being creatively gifted. Right?

JERRY

This is honest work. I've never done honest work in my life.

ALISON

*(Timidly.)*

Um... maybe I could help?

Everyone wheels around to face ALISON, who has stood up and placed her notepad on the chair.

ALISON

I took a business management class in college, and they talked about advertising. I also did a lot of music in high school. I play the piano.

JERRY

Alison... You. Are. A. LIFESAVER!

ALISON

I am?

JERRY

You never told us you could write songs! Ladies and gentlemen, we have our very own Elton John in the building!

CHRIS

More like Billy Joel.

RANATA

I was thinking Ricky Martin.

CHRIS

Ricky Martin?

RANATA

Yeah.

ALISON

Anyway, I can write the jingle if you want. I just need-

JERRY

Great! Gosh, this was easy. I'm gonna go play golf. Thanks again Alison!

RANATA

Yeah, thanks Alison!

CHRIS

Thanks, Alison.

They exit. ALISON is left in the room, eyes wide. She sighs and sits down with the notepad.

ALISON

I see myself as more of a Taylor Swift, but whatever.

ALISON begins to jot down the beginning of her advertising masterpiece, humming to herself happily.

Blackout.

# The Master List

## Characters:

CRAIG - Office worker, suffering from a rare case of chronic boredom.

MILLER - His colleague, a little more focused on his job than Craig.

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Lights up on an office space, bright with canned lighting. CRAIG and MILLER are sitting at two separated desks, both facing the audience. Between them, a water cooler glugs softly.

The two men type into their computers and fill out paperwork. MILLER takes a sip of

his coffee and clears his throat, then resumes his work. CRAIG looks over to MILLER and grins coyly. He types something into his computer: an IM to MILLER. The words he type show up on the screen on the back wall of the stage, projected as a chatroom.

CRAIG

Hey Miller.

MILLER looks at his computer, rolls his eyes, and continues to work. CRAIG frowns and types again.

CRAIG

Millerrrrrrr.

MILLER ignores the message again.

CRAIG

General Mills-er. Miller Lite. Michill-er man.

MILLER sighs and types into the chat.

MILLER

What's up, Craig?

CRAIG

How are you?

MILLER

Tired. Working.

CRAIG

Same.

MILLER

Really? Because you seem to have a ton of energy, and you haven't finished any of your paperwork from this morning.

CRAIG

*(Grinning.)*

Touche.

MILLER sighs and shakes his head, returning to work. CRAIG taps his pen on his desk, at first very monotone and at a normal pace. Then he gets into it. He taps the pen rapidly, grabbing another pen to use as his other drumstick. He uses the cups and files on his desk as drums, performing an epic drum solo to himself.

MILLER rubs his eyes, visibly irritated. He looks up and whispers loudly to CRAIG.

MILLER

Hey, Ringo. Could you maybe keep it down? I'm trying to file these expense reports.

CRAIG

Whatever you say.

CRAIG leans back in his chair, when a ding sounds from his computer. He goes to see what it is, and his eyes widen. He mouths, "Oh my God," and quickly begins typing on his computer, into his and MILLER's chatroom.

CRAIG

Miller Miller Miller!!!

MILLER

*(Rolling his eyes as he types.)*

What?

CRAIG

You know Craig from I.T.? The one who always gets my emails by accident 'cause our addresses are so similar?

MILLER

Yeah?

CRAIG

I think I just got an email meant for him.

MILLER

Why do you say that?

CRAIG

It says, "Craig, thanks for offering your help with updating the company's computer software. Here is the company's MASTER LIST OF PASSWORDS." Dude! Every single password for every single computer is on this list!

MILLER

No way.

CRAIG

I'm not kidding, dude.

MILLER

Meet at the water cooler.

CRAIG

K.

MILLER and CRAIG stand up and rush to the water cooler, then lean on it, attempting to appear casual. MILLER grabs a cup, pretends to fill it with water, then speaks to CRAIG with the cup to his lips.

MILLER

Do this so no one is onto us.

CRAIG

Right.

CRAIG grabs a cup, fills it with water, and puts the cup to his lips, but instead of

speaking uninhibited like MILLER, his words are garbled by the water in the cup, and water spews over the rim as he speaks.

CRAIG

*(Speaking with a mouthful of water.)*

I got the master list of passwords!

MILLER

*(Yanking the cup from CRAIG.)*

Okay, you clearly didn't understand what I meant by "do this" so we're just going to talk normally, yeah?

CRAIG

Okay, fine. I got the master list of passwords!

MILLER

How?

CRAIG

I told you! Corporate accidentally sent it to *me*, when it was meant for Craig from I.T. My last name is Villeneuve, and his last name is Vanderbilt, so our email addresses are really similar.

MILLER

Wow. That's a lot of stupidity on corporate's part. I bet it's because they hired that Dartmouth grad as section chief-

CRAIG

*Or* it's destiny! I can access any computer I want! I can give myself a promotion! I can give myself a million dollar raise!

MILLER

And then immediately get arrested for asset misappropriation and go to jail.

CRAIG

God, you're a buzzkill, you know that, Miller?

MILLER

Why do you think I became an accountant?



CRAIG

*(Genuinely surprised.)*

Oh, is *that* what you do?

MILLER

Look, Craig, I think you should email corporate and tell them that they sent the wrong Craig the master list. They'll commend you for your honesty, maybe give you, like, an extra vacation day or something.

CRAIG

But that's so *boring*. Tell you what. I'm just going to log onto Devin's computer and see if he really hasn't been receiving the e-vites to my This Is Us watch parties. He's missed most of Season 4 and I really don't want to explain to him why there's a bunch of new characters-

MILLER

Craig.

CRAIG

Yeah?

MILLER

You gotta email corporate.

CRAIG

No, Miller! Come on, there's gotta be something you want to do with the passwords. Isn't there anyone's stuff you'd want to see? Someone's dirt you want to dig up?

MILLER

No, because I'm not a creep.

CRAIG

You gotta let me do *something*, Miller. I mean, if God dropped the Ten Commandments into your lap you wouldn't just leave them there, would you?

MILLER

That has nothing to do with the master list.

CRAIG

But it's similar.

MILLER

It really isn't.

CRAIG

But say he did. Say he dropped them right into your hands. What would you do?

MILLER

Craig, if God himself came down from Heaven and handed me two very old, very heavy slabs of stone, I don't know what I'd do with them. But I *do* know that doing *anything* with that master list, even if it's just logging in and out of someone else's computer, is a breach of trust and likely to get you fired. So, if you don't want that, you should just email corporate.

CRAIG

But-

MILLER

Craig.

CRAIG

Just one computer?

MILLER

No-

CRAIG

One teensy-weensy computer?

MILLER

Email corporate, Craig. You know you have to.

CRAIG

Miller, please-

MILLER

Jesus Christ, just email corporate, Craig!

CRAIG

*(Sighs.)*

Fine.

MILLER

Are you going to email them? And tell the truth?

CRAIG

Yeah, sure.

MILLER

Alright. Let's go back to work.

CRAIG

Fine.

The men return to their desks. MILLER sips his coffee and resumes his work. CRAIG looks over to him, then back at his computer. A sly grin spreads across his face as he begins to type. MILLER doesn't notice what CRAIG is doing until CRAIG, enraged, blurts out:

CRAIG

Devin *is* getting my e-vites! That son of a-

MILLER

You used the master list!

CRAIG

He's getting coupons for free bikini waxes? What is he doing with those?

MILLER

You could get fired, Craig!

CRAIG

But I've got the power to look at other people's stuff!

MILLER

And with great power comes great responsibility!

CRAIG

*(In a low, angry tone.)*

Don't you dare quote Spider-Man at me.

MILLER

Look, man, I enjoy working with you, and I don't want to see you hauled off to jail for some stupid prank!

CRAIG

You... enjoy working with me? Even though I like to perform bad drum solos with pens at my desk?

MILLER

Of course I do. You're my friend.

CRAIG

*(Touched.)*

You mean that?

MILLER

Yes, Craig, now log out of Devin's email and notify corporate.

CRAIG

Fine. But if I find out I could've given myself a raise without going to jail, I'll perform a drum solo on your head.

MILLER

You'll thank me later.

CRAIG

Nah, I'll just thank you now. Thanks, Miller. You're a great guy.

MILLER

No problem. And if you ever get another one of Craig from I.T.'s emails, just leave me out of it. I think I can feel an ulcer forming.

CRAIG

Sure thing, Miller-ion Dollar Baby!

MILLER

And please never call me one of those god awful nicknames again.

CRAIG

Yeah, okay, sure.

CRAIG begins to email corporate as  
MILLER resumes his work. The water  
cooler glugs softly in the background. Back  
to peace and quiet.

Blackout.

# Nevermore

## Characters:

ALLEN - A man plagued by the past and haunted by the future.

RAVEN - Door-to-door salesman; works on commission.

FADE IN

## 1. INT. ALLEN'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A modest fire burns brightly in a cobbled fireplace as a weary ALLEN sits in a slumped armchair, reading a book. A clock ticks softly on the mantle; meant to serve as a reminder, but perceived as a threat.

ALLEN clears his throat and turns a page, then adjusts his reading glasses gently. He looks up from the page and observes the clock. He grunts. Time to go to bed.

ALLEN sighs and stands, placing the book and his reading glasses gently on the chair. He stretches, careful not to pull a muscle in his aging back. He goes to turn out the lamp when a knock is heard from the door. ALLEN leaps at the sound, startled. He regards the clock again. Isn't it a little late for visitors?

ALLEN

Just some visitor. Heh. That's it. (*Approaching the door and speaking loudly.*)  
Coming! Coming! Sorry, I was reading-

ALLEN swings the door open to reveal no one there. He stumbles back in shock, then rushes to see out the door frame. He checks left and right, once, twice, three times, then shakes his head. There really is no one there. Baffled, he shuts the door and returns to the center of the room. He looks again at the clock, then paces, nervous.

ALLEN sighs, shaken but subdued, and again decides to retire to his bed. However, just as he is about to exit, another knock resounds through the house.

Wary and somewhat afraid, ALLEN grabs his book and holds it out as if it's a weapon in a feeble attempt at self-defense. He takes a breath to steel himself, then charges determinedly toward the door. He swings it open to reveal RAVEN, dressed in a smart tux and clutching a pamphlet advertising "Eternal Life."

RAVEN

*(Cheerily.)*

Hi.

ALLEN

*(Hesitantly.)*

Hi.

RAVEN

Do you have a moment to talk about Eternal Life?

ALLEN

...I beg your pardon?

RAVEN

Do you have a moment to talk about Eternal Life?

ALLEN

*(Incredulously.)*

It's eleven o'clock.

RAVEN

So it is.

ALLEN

Right. *(Beat.)* Well, it's just a bit strange to see a solicitor at one's doorstep at eleven o'clock.

RAVEN

It'll only take a moment. Just a moment to talk about Eternal Life.

RAVEN smiles for added effect. Beat as ALLEN ponders this.

ALLEN

Well...if it only takes a moment...

ALLEN opens the door wider so RAVEN can step through the frame and enter the home. RAVEN enters and examines the room with a sort of awe.

RAVEN

Wow, it sure is dark and dreary in here.

He reaches out and touches the mantle, then the clock. ALLEN sees and rushes to stop him.

ALLEN

Ah- please, if you could- that clock is special to me-

RAVEN

*(Removing his hand.)*

Oh, of course! My bad. *(He sighs and smiles at ALLEN blankly.)*

ALLEN

*(After a beat.)*

Well-

RAVEN

So! Eternal Life!

ALLEN

Wait, I didn't catch your name-

RAVEN

*(Continuing, undisturbed.)*

Nevermore will you fear the pain of death! Nevermore will you feel the sorrow of an ending existence! Finally, you can have all you ever wanted, at just the small price of \$39.99 monthly! When you think Eternal Life, think Nevermore!

ALLEN

Uh huh. I'm sure your boss gave you that whole spiel-

RAVEN

Nevermore will you have to mourn the death of those you loved. Nevermore will *she* haunt your dreams. Nevermore!

ALLEN

"She?" Wait, how do you-



RAVEN

Nevermore! Nevermore! Never-

ALLEN

Will you shut up? I get it; “Nevermore.” But what do you mean *she* won’t haunt my dreams? How do you know-?

RAVEN

Nevermore will you see their face in every shadow. Nevermore will their phantom hand graze your shoulder in the night! Nevermore will-

ALLEN

*(Loudly, desperately.)*

Stop it!

A long silence. RAVEN stares, wide-eyed at the shivering ALLEN. ALLEN runs a hand through his hair, drawing deep breaths and wildly glancing around the room. Sadness washes over his face as he turns to the ticking clock on the mantle and caresses the edge of it. *Lenore.*

ALLEN clears his throat and straightens, then approaches RAVEN tensely.

ALLEN

You know her, don’t you? You know about Lenore.

RAVEN smooths his tux.

RAVEN

Uh, Nevermore-

ALLEN

NO! *(He laughs tersely.)* No. *Answer me.*

RAVEN

*(After a beat.)*

Listen, man, I’m just given a script-

ALLEN

No! No, you *must* know. You *have* to know! This isn't a coincidence. You- (*He wags a finger at RAVEN.*) You know something. And you're not telling me, and it's driving me *insane!*

RAVEN

Dude, I swear, I don't know anything-

ALLEN

How do you know her? How can you possibly know that she died?

RAVEN

I- (*He sighs.*) Look, dude, I work on commission, and if you're not interested, I'm gonna go-

ALLEN

What are you, some kind of demon? A prophet, come to speak her likings into life? What are you? Who is your master? The devil?

RAVEN

Uh, my boss's name is Todd-

ALLEN

Todd! The devil!

RAVEN

No, Todd, the general manager. (*He considers the pamphlet in his hand, then places it on the shelf above the door next to a bust of a human head.*) Here, man. If you're interested, give us a call. Our number's in the pamphlet. (*He goes to leave, then remembers.*) Oh, right. And uh, if you think Eternal Life, think Nevermore!

Thunder crackles as RAVEN voices the last word. ALLEN, paralyzed by paranoia, leaps into the armchair and cowers. RAVEN looks up, amused.

RAVEN

Ooo, spooky. Well.

He looks at the terrified ALLEN, sniffs, then walks out the door.

ALLEN stares at the pamphlet above his door with wide-eyed terror. He rocks himself and mutters over and over again:

ALLEN

Nevermore, Lenore. Nevermore, Lenore. Nevermore, Lenore.

FADE TO BLACK.

# A Bump In The Night

## Characters:

ALEX - Teenage girl, deeply in love.

CALLUM - Teenage boy, deeply afraid.

STUDENT - Subject of ALEX's adoration.

## 1. INT. ALEX'S BEDROOM - MIDNIGHT

ALEX, wrapped in a late night adrenaline rush, sits at a desk, a pen dancing between her fingers. Her hair hangs in her face, still wet from a shower she took two hours ago. She wears an old college shirt, her mother's alma mater, and athletic shorts. She shivers in the cold wind her ceiling fan creates.

She's mouthing something, words she wants to put on the page. She lifts the pen, then puts it down, then lifts it again, riddled with indecision. Finally, brow tugged together, she speaks.

ALEX

I think I love you.

As she speaks, words appear on the page, in her handwriting. Her pen does not move.

ALEX

I'm writing this late at night, because I think that's when the truth has nowhere to go but into the world. Nighttime forces the truth out. It's dark, and it's cold, and it's honest. *(Beat. She thinks. She wants to get this right.)* You're just- You're so funny? You're attractive, obviously, but- but that's not- You're so, so witty. You don't ever look at me, but I see so much humor and intelligence and creation in your eyes. And I think I love you.

A piece of crumpled paper falls off of ALEX's desk, stirred by the air conditioning. Broken from her letter, she stands and picks it up, then carries it over to her trash can. Before tossing it in the trash, she unfurls the paper, expecting to find a treasure from her childhood. It's a page of Algebra notes.

She throws the page away and returns to her desk, scooping up the pen as she sits. A little less stirred by inspiration, she falters, unsure of how to proceed. She sighs and scratches out what she's written, disapproval on her face. It's not good enough.

Her phone buzzes. ALEX jumps, then checks to see who's calling. It's her friend, CALLUM. She answers.

ALEX

Hey Callum.

CALLUM

Oh my god, oh my god.

ALEX

What? What is it??

CALLUM

I- I didn't know who to call-

ALEX

Callum, what is it??

CALLUM

I was just- I was just driving-

ALEX

Are you hurt? Did you hit-?

CALLUM

I think I killed the governor.

ALEX

...WHAT???

CALLUM

He's just- He's just sitting there-

ALEX leaps up and starts to put on a jacket and shoes.

ALEX

Sitting there??

CALLUM

Laying- laying there-

ALEX

Okay, okay, I'm on my way-

CALLUM

I'm gonna throw up-

ALEX

You're not gonna throw up, just- just hold on-

CALLUM

I was just- Okay, so you know how my car is old, right? It was my grandma's, and you know, she can't drive now, because of the cataracts and other stuff. She's kinda losing it, mentally. And- and- I was driving- cause I was hungry, right, and I wanted to get McDonald's, which- I know it's unhealthy, and I know their chicken nuggets aren't real chicken, but I was hungry, and I was thirsty, and I wanted a Powerade, so- so- so I got in the car, and I'm driving, and suddenly my headlights go out, which, you'd think, not a problem, right? There's highway lights. Only, I wasn't on the highway, I was on that backroad by the highschool where there's no lights. So I'm, like, driving blind, and suddenly this car just- its lights were so tiny and greenish- I have no idea where it came from, and- and I kind of veered, cause- cause it was coming right at me, and- oh my god, I'm gonna go to jail.

While CALLUM talks, ALEX grabs the letter off of her desk and shoves it in her pocket, along with her keys and her pen. She turns off her light and quietly flies down the stairs. She opens the door, tripping her house's alarm system.

2. EXT. DRIVEWAY - MIDNIGHT

The harsh beeping makes ALEX wince, but she runs to her car, unlocks it, and jumps in the seat. She fumbles with the ignition, but once her car starts, she shoots out of the driveway, gripping the wheel with one hand, and her phone with the other.

3. EXT. THE HIGHWAY - MIDNIGHT

ALEX

You're not going to jail, Callum, I'm on my way.

CALLUM

No, no, this is really bad, Alex. This isn't- this isn't licking Mr. Donaghue's bagel, then watching him eat it. That was funny. That was harmless. I mean, he got- he got food poisoning, but- no, I- What matters is... that was *legal*. This is- this is *murder*, Alex. This is *bad*.

ALEX

Okay, Callum, okay. Just calm down. I'm on the backroad. I think- I think I see you-

4. EXT. THE BACKROAD - MIDNIGHT

ALEX and CALLUM stand over a small animal - a possum. They stare at the tiny, dead creature.

ALEX

So that's a possum.

CALLUM

Yeah.

ALEX

Not the governor.

CALLUM

Mhm.

ALEX

You should've just... stepped out of the car.

CALLUM

Yeah, I-

ALEX

You would've seen that it's-

CALLUM

I see that now.

They stare at the possum.

CALLUM

Sorry to have you drive all the way out here. I hope you weren't doing anything.

ALEX

*(A little embarrassed.)*

No, no, I wasn't- I was just- I was doing some writing.

CALLUM

Oh, cool. *(Beat.)* I'm gonna go home now.

ALEX

Yeah. Me too.

CALLUM

Cool. See you on Monday.

ALEX

Yeah, see you Monday.

CALLUM pats ALEX's shoulder and gets in his car. He drives away. ALEX is still looking at the possum. She begins to speak, seemingly to the possum.

ALEX

I feel stupid around you. Like, really stupid. Like this dumb possum. I can't- you just hit me like a car. Which is a stupidly convenient metaphor, but- I like it. *(Beat.)* I think I love you. And I want to tell you. And I'll never tell you. Cause you kill me, like a car hitting a possum. My guts are all over, bloody and red and- and I'm- I'm dead on the road. Yeah. I'm dead on the road.

##### 5. INT. A LOCKER - DAY

A hand reaches to open a locker. A note falls out. We pan down and follow the note as it flutters to the floor. The hands gently unfold the note, care in their fingers. We read the note and realize that it's ALEX's note - from scribbled out introduction to morbid ending.

STUDENT

What the hell?

CUT TO BLACK.



## Reparations

RUBY - Warrior princess, late for fourth period.

DYLAN - Instigator, also late for fourth period.

Lights up on RUBY and DYLAN sitting a chair apart from each other outside the principal's office. DYLAN has a large bruise across his cheek and RUBY's hair is a whirlwind of curls.

DYLAN looks over at RUBY and clears his throat.

DYLAN

Well, uh. You've got a killer left hook.

RUBY

*(She looks at him like, "Did you just talk to me?" then, after a beat:)*

I don't even know what that means.

DYLAN

Your punch, you- *(He shows off his bruise.)* You got me good.

RUBY

That was the point.

DYLAN

Right, yeah.

Beat. RUBY looks at DYLAN, a quick flash of remorse crossing her face.

RUBY

Does it hurt?

DYLAN

Huh? Oh, oh. Uh. *(Feigning bravado.)* Nah. Nah, it's just a bruise. Feels fine, looks cool.

RUBY

Mmm. (*Beat.*) Just, um- just so you know, I didn't- I don't- I wasn't trying to hit you / I was just-

DYLAN

No, no, you did the right thing-

RUBY

You were being kind of a dick.

DYLAN

I know. (*Beat.*) Thanks... for-

RUBY

Any time.

They stare at the ground. Waiting.

The creak of the principal's door is heard.  
RUBY and DYLAN look up.

Blackout.

## What She Said

JAMIE - Young man, wearing love on his sleeve.

CAROLINE - Young woman, trying love on like a glove.

Lights up on the front patio of a cafe. A couple exits the cafe: JAMIE holds the door open for CAROLINE, who is balancing to-go boxes in her arms. She makes her way out the door. JAMIE taps CAROLINE's shoulder and she whips around, looking for him. He's on the other side. CAROLINE shuffles to keep the boxes in her arms and playfully kicks him in the leg.

CAROLINE

I hate your guts.

JAMIE

That's not what you said last ni-

CAROLINE

*(Embarrassed but amused.)*

*Jamie.*

JAMIE

*(Grinning.)*

What?

They sit on the steps, looking out onto the street.

CAROLINE

I had a really good time.

JAMIE

Me too.

CAROLINE

And it was very gentlemanly of you to let me have your dessert.

JAMIE

Yeah, no, I didn't- I didn't want it anyway, so. It was whatever.

CAROLINE leans into JAMIE, closing her eyes. He puts his arm around her, entirely second nature. He looks down and he sees her. He aches.

JAMIE

I love you.

CAROLINE's eyes open. She looks up at JAMIE. She doesn't see him. JAMIE waits for an answer that doesn't come. As he waits, he comes to terms with the silence. Each second is another reason to walk away.

After a beat:

CAROLINE

I- Jamie, I-

JAMIE

Hey, no, um. No.

CAROLINE

Come on, Jamie, we were having a good time.

JAMIE

It's too late.

They sit on the steps, looking at the street. They don't see each other.

Blackout.

# Mousetrap

## Characters:

DOUG - 42, depressed, and that's pretty much it.

MICK - A mouse. Capitalistically motivated.

Lights up on DOUG. He's sitting in a ratty arm chair, a bowl of Lucky Charms in his lap, though he feels anything but lucky. In one hand, a spoon. In the other, a gun. He fiddles with the trigger as he watches the TV, a child's cartoon playing with an almost mocking joy.

DOUG looks at the gun, then looks at his cereal, and takes another bite. He's agonized, but it's not apparent.

Commercial break. DOUG stands and takes his bowl to the counter on his left and sets it down. He leans against the counter and stares at the gun even more. He opens the gun's chamber and checks the amount of bullets; one small, cylindrical piece of metal rests in the chamber. He flicks the chamber closed and, with quiet resignation, raises the gun to his temple.

MICK

*(Offstage.)*

Ha ha! You don't want to do that, Doug!

DOUG looks up in surprise. His eyes shoot to his right, where he sees MICK, a cartoon mouse, sitting perched on his recliner.

DOUG

M-Mick?

MICK

Hiya, Doug!

DOUG

From the- from the show? The Mick the Mouse-

MICK

That's me! And I know all about you, Doug. I know you're forty-two years old. I know your wife left you because of your inability to advocate for yourself in social situations. I know that you're about to... well... But I'm here to tell ya, Doug! You can't go through with it!

DOUG

Look, I- I appreciate it, but this really is it for me-

MICK

That's where you're wrong, Doug! See, I'm not just a mouse, I'm a businessman. And your death? That's bad for business.

DOUG

Wh- I don't-

MICK

Ha ha! Oh, Doug! Put the gun down! Let's talk this out! See, Doug, if you die, who's gonna watch my show, huh? Who's gonna watch my movies, my musicals? Who'll go to the theater, bucket of popcorn in hand, and pay eight dollars for two hours of whatever dream I devise next? Creation is powerful stuff, Doug. Someone - couldn't tell you who - once said, "Creativity is the temporary salvation of the claws of death." That's why I'm here, Doug! I'm your salvation!

DOUG

Mick, I- I really- This is nice, all this, but I'm just- I don't really have anything left. So- so I'm okay with this, you know? I'm okay with-

MICK

No, Doug! You're not! You still haven't been to Mick's World, Doug! You've only gone to Mick's Land twice. There's roller coasters to ride, princesses to see, churros to buy! You've got a whole life of Mick ahead of you, Doug! You can't give up this easily!

DOUG

I mean, I'm not a big theme park guy. I liked Mick's Land, but- I'm good, Mick, really.

MICK

*(With demonic anger.)*

*NO. (He composes himself.)* Ha ha! No, Doug! No. You can't- you haven't seen Freezing 8 yet, Doug! Idina Menzel is a smash! Kristen Bell is... there! You're not- There's more to see, more to buy! Look, Doug, look at the commercials! All my movies-

DOUG

Is that all you think I have? Your movies?

MICK

No, no! There's t-shirts, water bottles, anatomically incorrect dolls! Gosh, I mean, I can't see why you'd even *want* to-

DOUG

Cause I'm depressed?

MICK

But you don't have to be! Mick's World is the happiest place in America! Heck, the happiest place in the world!

DOUG

That doesn't exactly fix it-

MICK

Oh, but it will, Doug! In fact, why don't you buy the tickets now-

DOUG

No... no, Mick, I won't. I'm not- I'm not staying alive just so I can funnel money into your- your corporation.

MICK

Ha ha! Silly Doug! You're not being serious, are you?

DOUG

I'm not an asset, Mick.

MICK

That's where you're wrong. You're valuable, Doug. The most valuable player in my empire.

DOUG

What? No, what the-?

MICK

Aht dat dat. PG, Doug, PG. Censorship is sensible, you know.

DOUG

No. No, this isn't what I want.

MICK

See? You're coming around-

DOUG

No. I don't want to be a pawn. I won't live to serve your empire, caught in your trap.

MICK

Be careful what you say, Doug.

DOUG looks down at the gun, then makes a decision. He begins to slowly approach MICK.

DOUG

No, mouse. Be careful what *you* say.

MICK

Don't do this, Doug. I'll give you- I'll give you the keys to the kingdom. The *magic* kingdom- I'll give you anything you want!

DOUG

*(Raising the gun.)*

Then give me death.

DOUG fires the gun as lights go out.

Beat.



Lights come back up on DOUG, slumped over in his armchair. The bowl of Lucky Charms is in his lap, spoon in one hand, but no gun in the other. The TV still plays a children's cartoon.

DOUG jolts awake, fear in his eyes. What the-?

DOUG

Hell was that?

He looks down at the cereal, then takes another bite. Commercial break. DOUG stands and puts his bowl and spoon on the counter to his left. He stretches the hand that previously held the gun. He looks down at his shirt, featuring the popular cartoon mouse, MICK. He smiles.

DOUG

Love that mouse.

He exits. The TV returns to the program. MICK dances on screen, happy and joyful and conquering.

Blackout.

PETER

I can't believe it's been almost ten years. I mean, we've changed so much, you know? People always do. Change is inevitable that way. I'm quieter and shyer than I used to be, and you're- (*Beat.*) The year you left was the worst year of my life. And I got my appendix out in seventh grade, so that's how you know I mean it. I just- you left, and it was like this giant hole was carved in me. Like a jack-o-lantern smile right in my chest. I would see things, small things, like rocks or butterflies, and think "Sarah would love that." or "Sarah would say something really funny about that." Looking back, it's like I carried this idea of you with me in exchange for the real you. Like, I kept your ghost around and created this whole personality and character that you had. But it wasn't really you. And it didn't take away the ache in my chest. (*Beat.*) You just- you're such a bright light, Sarah. I don't even know how to explain it. I've written so many stories with so many words and I can't explain why you're so important to me. It's like- I'm hollow, and you're this candle burning bright inside me, filling me with light. (*Beat.*) That's so cheesy. I'm sorry. I just- I really missed you, and I think of all the time we lost, all the days we could have spent together- (*Beat.*) Sarah, I'm gonna be completely honest with you. And that scares me so much because the only thing worse than a lie is the entire truth, but if I don't tell you I'll hate myself for the rest of my life. I- I'm in love with you. And that's intense, I know, and saying "in love" sounds so certain and mature, but that's how it is. I'm certain that I'm in love with you. I have never felt as inextricably bound to someone as I feel that I am to you. You're always going to be a huge part of me, Sarah. And I hope that I haven't ruined our friendship, because I'm okay with living life by your side as a friend, as long as I can stay by your side. I just had to tell you, at least once, that you're the light of my life.

## MOLLY

You ever think about dying? Sorry if that's too forward, or something, but- I mean, like, of course we think about it. We let death occupy our minds sometimes, cause it's almost comforting, you know? Thinking about the end is reassuring, I guess. But I guess what I'm asking is- do you ever think about ceasing to exist? Just- not being here anymore? The uncertainty of it all scares me. I mean, I don't want to act like I know what's gonna happen after we die. I don't feel like I'm the expert on the afterlife. But- I wish I knew for *sure*, you know? 'Cause then I could decide how to spend my life. I could, you know, have the courage to kiss someone in the rain or ride the Tower of Terror at Disney World. But I'll never know how much time I have, and I'll never know if I'll get it back. (*Beat.*) I'm so scared of failing. I just- I don't want to try something and let the world see me, only to screw it up. It's like jumping out of an airplane, or something. You know? Failure takes up such a big space of our lives. It wastes time that we don't even know if we have. 'Cause they tell us life is made of moments, but life is long and moments are too short and the world turns so slowly but hours speed by like seconds. It feels like time is spinning out of control and I'll never be able to get my footing. Death is just so permanent and time keeps pushing us toward it and once we realize that, we'll never get to live, really *live*. We spend too much time not knowing what to do and too little time being courageous. (*Beat.*) I wish I was courageous.