

THE DINNER PARTY

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Cast of Characters

<u>ADDIE STACHNIC:</u>	28, female, runs a Polish bakery in Utica, NY. Addie is strongly but not overwhelmingly spiritual. She is almost always frazzled and stretched thin.
<u>JASELYN PORTER:</u>	28, female, a journalist for a local newspaper in Nashua, New Hampshire. Jaselyn is strong-willed, stony and dryly realistic.
<u>CAITE THOMAS:</u>	27, female, a hospice nurse at St. Elizabeth Medical Center in Utica, NY. Caite has an air of naivety entangled with her eager spirit.
<u>MICAH VITOH:</u>	27, female, was the advisor for the The Cornell Daily Sun. Micah had an optimistic dedication to everything she did.

Scene

Addie's kitchen table, a house in Utica, NY.

Time

Present day.

ACT I

Scene 1

Four chairs sit around a rectangular dinner table that is scantily set. There is a glass bottle with four silk flowers in the center.

Behind the table, upstage, there is a small bookshelf with a basket holding mail. One woman, JASELYN, late 20s, stands with a glass of wine, leaning against the shelf.

Enter CAITE, late 20s, dressed to the nines, wearing all black. She walks cautiously in tall heels, also with a glass of wine.

She and Jaselyn smile at each other, then both turn away and down a good bit of wine.

Enter ADDIE, also late 20s, who is juggling her wine glass, the bottle of wine, and a stack of plates, silverware and serving spoon. Caite steps forward to take the bottle of wine as Addie places the rest down on the table.

Caite tops off her still full glass and replaces the bottle on the table.

ADDIE

Food looks like it'll be ready in a few minutes.

CAITE

What is it?

ADDIE

It's a surprise. It's always a surprise!

JASELYN

So, pierogies, like every month you host.

ADDIE

(shrugs)

It's a surprise.

Again, ringing silence.

ADDIE

Oh! Guess who I ran into at the market yesterday?

(off Jaselyn and Caite's pretend interest, Addie ramps up her enthusiasm)

Danny! Remember him from high school? Micah's weird boyfriend?

(CONTINUED)

CAITE

The charming idiot.

ADDIE

Hasn't changed! He was trying to buy Italian sausage at the Polish market.

She laughs to herself.

Didn't you have a crush on him all through high school, Jase?

JASELYN

I don't know, probably. We swam together, so we were friends.

CAITE

Ooh, yeah.

JASELYN

What's that mean, 'ooh, yeah'?

CAITE

Nothing. That's when Micah and I got close. Because You and her stopped talking for a bit? Because of him.

JASELYN

Must we dig this all up?

Caite and Addie ignore Jaselyn, on a reminiscing kick.

ADDIE

You're right! It weirded up all our movie nights.

JASELYN

I really don't care about Danny.

CAITE

The original dinner parties.

ADDIE

(holding up her wine glass)

How classy we have become.

JASELYN

Yeah, speaking of which, Caite, what's with your outfit, you look like you're going to a rich mogul's funeral.

CAITE

I didn't have any black dresses for Tuesday, so I'm breaking in this new one.

JASELYN

Are you also breaking in those five-inch heels?

CAITE

I'm exercising the outfit.

(off Jaselyn's judging face)

I'm trying to get in a mindset. I've never had to go to one of these before.

ADDIE

I went to my grandpa's. My mom let me wear a hot pink tutu that I don't think I can pull off again. Who wants a beer?

CAITE

Do you want me to take the shoes off?

JASELYN

Yes, a beer. Please, God, a beer.

Addie salutes and ducks off stage. Jaselyn takes another big swig of wine.

CAITE

Are you okay?

JASELYN

I don't particularly want to be here.

CAITE

It'll be good for us.

Addie returns and hands Jaselyn a glass of beer.

Jaselyn downs the last shot of her wine and puts the glass on the bookshelf. She walks over to the table and sits down before starting her beer.

Addie joins her at the table.

Caite goes to sit down at the table across from Jaselyn, which is downstage, back to the audience.

Addie throws an arm out.

ADDIE

Oh, Caite! Don't sit there.

Already half sitting, Caite pauses in a squat. She stares at Addie questioning. Addie raises her eyebrows and nods her head toward the other open chair.

JASELYN

(realizing)

No. Please don't tell me this is going to be like that.

Caite stands up, her hand on the back of the chair.

She's not Elijah, we don't need to set a place.

ADDIE

I know she's not but...just leave the seat open.
Please.

*Caite and Jaselyn stare challengingly at Addie.
Then, Caite moves to sit in the seat to her right.*

Addie smiles.

JASELYN

Caite, really?

CAITE

It's not worth arguing over, it's just a chair.

Jaselyn rolls her eyes. Addie notices. There is a silent moment -- they're all in their own thoughts.

Addie, as host, brings it back together. She stands up and hands them both plates over the following conversation:

ADDIE

So, was your drive in okay, Jase?

JASELYN

Um. Yeah, it was okay. Kind of weird, doing it alone.
(a beat)

I was actually going to call and cancel. But my mom would've been furious, and if I didn't go Tuesday, everyone would talk.

CAITE

You came for appearances?

JASELYN

No! No, not in so many words. I just...have a lot of stuff going on.

CAITE

Seriously? She's your best friend!

JASELYN
Was.

CAITE
It's been four days!

JASELYN
That's not long enough?

CAITE
No!

JASELYN
I'm not going to wallow in it! I'm just acknowledging
the truth.

CAITE
Being sensitive isn't wallowing.

JASELYN
You robbed a Nordstrom's to be "presentable" at the
funeral! How is that sensitive?

CAITE
Oh, shut up! We're all dealing with the same thing
here, why are you taking it out on us?

JASELYN
Forget it.

Caite rolls her eyes.

CAITE
Of course. Brood.

ADDIE
Drop it, Caite.

*An uncomfortably silent moment. In the quiet,
they all sniff, curious looks growing.*

CAITE
Is something--

ADDIE
Mac and cheese!

*Addie jumps up, running into the kitchen. She
groans from offstage.*

*A moment later, she returns, carrying a deep white
dish with oven mitts.*

CAITE

...burning.

ADDIE

It's not burnt.

Jaselyn and Caite stare questioningly at Addie.
It's just crispy.

(Addie sets the platter down on the table loudly. She sighs.)

Surprise.

CAITE

Mac and cheese?

Addie nods. Jaselyn stares at the dish.

JASELYN

Is this your attempt to memorialize her or something?

ADDIE

You don't have to eat it.

JASELYN

I don't think I *can*.

(harshly)

Caite, if she ever tries to make my chicken parm after I die, don't let her. It doesn't "crisp" well.

ADDIE

You don't have to eat it, Jase!

Addie takes Jaselyn's plate and pushes it away from her. It stops near enough to the empty place known as Micah's. They all notice but don't acknowledge it.

JASELYN

When did this become a candlelight vigil for her dearly departed soul? It's a dinner. A normal dinner, like every other month, where we talk about our shitty jobs and get drunk and watch "Grease".

Caite sets her hand on Jaselyn's arm.

CAITE

Let's go home. We'll do it another time.

JASELYN

No we won't.

A beat of quiet.

(CONTINUED)

ADDIE

(staring at the Mac and Cheese)
I'm sorry, I ruined it.

JASELYN

No, Micah beat you to that.

CAITE

Jase.

JASELYN

Once again, she grabs the spotlight! She turns our tradition into a feat of drama, impressively from beyond the grave.

CAITE

Jaselyn, stop.

JASELYN

No, you know, if this dinner is supposed to be all of us mourning and pretending like she's a...an angelic spirit or something, coming down to grace us, I can't. I can't do that. I loved her, she was my best friend, but fuck her for doing this to us. Fuck her.

Jaselyn sighs and takes a few deep breaths.

ADDIE

I meant butchering her secret recipe.

After a beat, Jaselyn and Caite's looks grow concerned.

CAITE

Wait, *her* recipe? How did you get her recipe?!

JASELYN

She wouldn't even give it to her own mother!

ADDIE

She sent it to me.

CAITE

(more angry than Jaselyn)
There's no way she sent it to you and not either of us.

ADDIE

She did! Here--

(Addie stands up and walks to the bookshelf where Jaselyn was standing earlier. She rifles through the basket full of mail on top and finds a red envelope that she pulls out theatrically.)

Tada!

Caite grabs the envelope from Addie's hand. She opens it and pulls out an index card with Micah's recipe on it.

CAITE

(childish)

No. I'll kill her, that's not fair at all!

They're all silent at Caite's slip.
You know what I mean.

Caite tosses the envelope on the table and observes the index card. Jaselyn picks up the envelope.

CAITE

(reading the back of the index card)

"Top Secret, just in case you've run out of pierogies."
You're never short on pierogies, you're like a one-woman Polish market!

ADDIE

Does it really matter?

As she speaks, Jaselyn pulls a card out of the envelope.

CAITE

Yes it matters! Why would she send this? It's completely against tradition.

(beat)

Do you think she knew?

ADDIE

What?

CAITE

It doesn't... none of it makes any sense.

Caite sits down, defeated. Addie watches her, concerned. Jaselyn opens the card.

There's a second of silence. Then Jaselyn gives a short laugh.

CAITE

What?

Jaselyn hands her the card, smiling. Addie steps behind Caite, leaning over to read the card. The both of them break into smiles.

(CONTINUED)

They're all quiet for a moment. Each in their own world again, but this time, looking happy. Remembering the group's good times.

Caite leans back in the chair with a sigh. Jaselyn takes the card from Caite's hand gently and sets it in Micah's place.

She sits down. Addie picks up the silverware on the table and hands it to Caite and Jaselyn before she attempts to dig into the mac and cheese.

All three return to the table as lights fade out.
THE END.