

"YOU SHOULD BE SO LUCKY"

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT/EXT. JULIE'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

JULIE MATTHEWS (early 40's) is an adorable brunette with bloodshot eyes. She looks horrified when she opens her front door at two o' clock in the morning and sees MARION SILVERBERG (late 60's) clutching a vacuum cleaner against a badly singed bathrobe. Marion is seemingly attractive but completely disheveled.

JULIE

Mom?

MARION

I managed to save the vacuum.

INT. JULIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Julie tries to make coffee as Marion rearranges the kitchen cabinets. Julie's daughter JESSIE (16) wanders in. She has dark hair and deep blue eyes. She curiously observes her mother and grandmother stepping all over each other.

JESSIE

What's Giggy doing here so early
and why is she rearranging our
kitchen cabinets?

JULIE

It's what Giggy does when she's
nervous. She cleans and rearranges
things.

JESSIE

Why is she so nervous?

JULIE

It might have something to do with the fact that Giggy's house caught on fire and burned to the ground last night.

Jessie runs over to Marion and throws her arms around her.

JESSIE

Oh my god. Giggy, are you okay?

Marion is non-responsive and continues to shift plates from one cabinet to another.

JULIE

Giggy's in shock sweetie. She hasn't said a word all morning. She's lost everything.

Julie glances at Marion.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Except for her vacuum.

JESSIE

This is awful. What happened? How could something like this happen?

JULIE

I don't have any answers for you right now. All I know is that your grandmother wasn't physically harmed or injured. She's safe, and somewhat sound. That's all that matters.

JESSIE

We're all so vulnerable and at the mercy of life's seemingly random and meaningless events.

JULIE

You're only sixteen Jessie, you have years to sort out our ontological dilemma. In the meantime, if we could table your discourse on existentialism and you could help your grandmother get dressed I'd greatly appreciate it. Just pull a pair of sweats out of my dresser and maybe comb her hair or something. Please?

Jessie gets up and walks over to Marion who is busy shifting glasses around. She gently takes Marion's hand and slowly leads a dazed Marion out of the kitchen.

JESSIE

C'mon Giggy, let's go to my room.

Julie turns the dishwasher on. She grabs the receiver from the handset cordless phone and calls her boss at work.

JULIE

Hi Shirley, it's Julie. Listen I'm not gonna make it in today. A fire destroyed my mother's house last night and I have to be here for my mom.

Julie listens for a moment.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Uh huh. Can't Horowitz take them? I'm overloaded with cases at the moment.

Julie's eyes widen as she listens to Shirley.

JULIE (CONT'D)

He's going on vacation? He just got back from Puerto Vallarta a couple of weeks ago.

Julie shows growing irritation.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Well, I can't do anything about it today. I'll be in on Monday and we can figure it out then. Yeah, thanks. I'll be sure to give her your best.

Julie hangs up the phone and scowls. All of a sudden a terrible noise emanates from the dishwasher and the dishwasher dies.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Perfect.

INT. JULIE'S HOUSE - DEN/HOME OFFICE - DAY

Julie walks in and finds Marion vacuuming with the salvaged vacuum cleaner. Marion is still in her bathrobe but her hair looks better. Julie sits on the couch and shouts above the vacuum cleaner as she speaks.

JULIE

Hey Mom, why don't you take a break? Come sit down on the couch so we can talk.

Marion doesn't pay any attention to Julie so Julie gets up and turns the vacuum cleaner off. Marion looks confused as Julie leads her to the couch.

JULIE (CONT'D)

It's going to be okay Mom. This is your home now. You've got me and Jessie.

JESSIE (O.S.)

I'm headed out. Giggy didn't want to get dressed but I did her hair. See ya later.

Julie yells back to Jessie.

JULIE

Thanks sweetie. See you tonight.

Julie smiles proudly.

JULIE (CONT'D)

I called Aunt Corinne and told her what happened. She's away for the week but is cutting her trip short just to be with you. You know how wonderful she is in a crisis. She loves to take charge.

Marion looks horrified as she speaks in halting tones.

MARION

Corinne? Corinne's coming here?

JULIE

That's right. Don't you feel better knowing that your very best friend will be here soon? She'll be a tremendous source of comfort.

Marion breaks down and starts sobbing. Julie tries to comfort her with hugs.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Let it out Mom. We're all here for you.

Marion suddenly pulls away. She jumps up off the couch and grabs the vacuum cleaner. She turns it on and starts vacuuming again at a more frantic pace.

Julie is bewildered and forced to shout above the din of the vacuum cleaner.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Mom?

Marion doesn't respond.

JULIE (CONT'D)

I don't understand. Did I do something wrong?

Marion is clearly agitated. She ignores Julie and mumbles to herself as she vacuums.

EXT. JULIE'S HOUSE - DAY

GAIL MARCUS (early 40's) pulls up in front of Julie's house and honks for Julie to come out. Gail is blonde, vivacious, and fun.

Julie rushes out of the house and hurries to meet Gail. She trips over an outdoor planter en route to Gail's car and lands face first in the grass. Julie picks her head up and spits out some grass.

INT. GAIL'S CAR - STREET IN FRONT OF JULIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Julie appears none too pleased as she closes the passenger side door and slides over the front seat of the car. Gail fusses with her hair in the rear view mirror.

GAIL

Took ya long enough.

JULIE

Remind me again why we're friends.

GAIL

'Cause I know all your secrets and you'd be lost without me.

Julie responds in a facetious tone.

JULIE

Right. How could I forget.

Gail looks pleased and finally stops fussing with her hair. She grins back at Julie.

GAIL

So, what's going on with your mom?

Julie sighs.

JULIE

She's walking around in some kind of OCD stupor Gaily. She won't stop cleaning. Plus, I can't find anything because she's rearranging my entire house. I had to call Aunt Corrine for backup.

GAIL

That bad huh?

JULIE

I was contemplating a leave of absence from my agency before the fire. My business card should read: Julie Matthews, Clinical Basket Case. Now I don't know what to do.

Gail reaches into the glove compartment and pulls out a humongous dark chocolate bar.

GAIL

I brought some first aid. You need to medicate.

Julie smiles with appreciation after Gail hands her the chocolate bar. She unwraps the treat quickly and breaks off a piece. Julie takes a bite and savors the chocolate.

GAIL (CONT'D)

Poor Marion. I can't believe her entire house is gone, not even one shingle left.

JULIE

Mom loved her new place. She'd only been in it about six months. She threw herself into decorating and fixing it up. It was the best thing for her.

GAIL

And it was gorgeous. Your mom is really talented. She has a great eye.

JULIE

She could have a second career doing interior design but she's not up for much these days. The divorce really did a number on her. Should be final any day now.

GAIL

I like your dad. Bernie is a trip.

JULIE

To say the least.

GAIL

Didn't he go out to Cali?

JULIE

Some kind of consulting job. He needed something to do after he retired from the plastics industry.

GAIL

Plastics.

Gail sports a wry smile.

GAIL (CONT'D)

Now there's a thrill.

Gail breaks off a chunk of chocolate and hands the bar back to Julie.

GAIL (CONT'D)

Speaking of divorce, what are you and Andy waiting for?

Gail munches confidently while Julie devours her piece nervously.

GAIL (CONT'D)

The two of you are stuck Jules. You're not together but you can't cut each other loose. If you can't make it work isn't it time to move on already? You're just prolonging the inevitable.

JULIE

We haven't gotten around to it yet, that's all. Andy's always on the road. We're never in the same place long enough to deal with it.

GAIL

You're just making excuses. If you love each other and care about each other it doesn't have to be so bad, does it? Does divorce always have to be so nasty?

JULIE

You tell me. I haven't experienced otherwise. And I've got way too much on my plate right now to even think about it.

Gail and Julie plow into more of the chocolate bar. Gail looks in the rear view mirror and pulls out a tissue from the glove compartment. She wipes a bit of chocolate from her mouth as she speaks.

GAIL

We're all so messy Jules. That's why I always hold true to my mantra: fuck 'em and leave 'em. No pain, no heartache, and no attorney fees.

Julie quips back.

JULIE

Wow. I wonder why I never thought of that.

INT. JULIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

CORINNE GOTTLIEB (early 70's) is a tiny woman with short hair and high cheek bones. She speaks in a blunt and dictatorial manner as she sits at the kitchen table with Marion and Julie sipping iced tea.

CORINNE

Once the investigator from the insurance company signs off on everything you should expect a check within a few weeks. It's unfortunate that these things happen but you can't look back. Your luck it'll turn out to be a flaw in the original wiring. You've got to look ahead and start lining up contractors now Marion. You need to get quotes from some reputable builders. At least three, if not more.

JULIE

My new neighbor Jeff is happy with his contractor. Supposedly he does beautiful work. Gail's got a name for me too.

CORINNE

Good, then it's all settled. We'll compile the quotes and compare numbers. Then we'll do some background checks so we can make an informed decision.

Marion is flabbergasted.

MARION

We?

CORINNE

Under no circumstances should we accept the lowest bid. But we're not going to get screwed by someone who writes a million change orders either. I know the type.

JULIE

I know Mom's going to receive some money for living expenses but I don't want her staying in some hotel. She's staying right here with us till she can rebuild.

MARION

I am? Thank god everyone's making decisions for me. I was beginning to worry that my opinion didn't matter.

Jessie walks into the kitchen with a stack of mail in her arms. She places the stack of mail down on the kitchen table. Sticking out from under the stack is an express mail package from Marion's attorney. The top two lines of the label are visible.

INSERT - MAILING LABEL

"CELESTE A. SHECKHAM
ATTORNEY AT LAW"

BACK TO SCENE

JESSIE

Hi. Mail just came. Something for you Giggy.

Marion quickly grabs the package and studies it in silence.

CORINNE

How are you sweetheart?

JESSIE

Pretty good. I met someone in my theater group and I really like him. We're building sets together for our school play. His name is Macro.

Julie is startled by Jessie's announcement.

JULIE

Macro? You never mentioned anything about him to me.

JESSIE

We've known each other for a couple of months and went out for some pizza after school. Macro's an artist. He loves sculpture more than anything else.

JULIE

Just for my edification, how old is this Macro?

JESSIE

Seventeen. He's a year older than me.

JULIE

Yes I can count sweetie.

CORINNE

That sounds wonderful. Young love in bloom.

Julie gives Corinne a dirty look.

JULIE

Please be sure to bring him around so I can meet him Jessie.

Jessie looks mildly annoyed. She turns her attention to Marion.

JESSIE

Giggy?

Marion eyes are filled with sadness.

MARION
I'm fine honey, thanks.

JESSIE
I still don't understand why you
and Grandpa have to get a divorce.
Mom and Dad aren't together and
they're not getting a divorce.

MARION
That's because your dad happens to
be a very good person and your mom
likes to procrastinate.

Julie sneers at Marion.

JESSIE
But isn't Grandpa a good person
too?

MARION
Let's just say that he's a good
Grandpa and leave it at that for
now.

Corinne chimes in.

CORINNE
And funny too. Don't forget the
fact that he's very funny.

MARION
Hysterical.

CORINNE
Okay, we have a lot of work to do
Marion so let's get focused.
Tomorrow we must buy you some new
clothing. We can stop by the
cosmetics counter on the way over
to women's apparel.

Marion mumbles under her breath.

MARION
I can hardly wait.

INT/EXT. JULIE'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Julie freaks out when she finds BERNIE SILVERBERG (late 60's)
standing at her front door in the middle of the night
carrying a banjo. He's a tall, big, gregarious man. He has a
full beard and moustache.

BERNIE
Sweetheart!

JULIE
Dad? What time is it? What are you
doing here?

Bernie lifts his arm and looks at his watch. The banjo is
attached to the same arm.

BERNIE
It's around three. Sorry baby, I
guess I'm still on California time.

JULIE
I don't understand. Is everything
alright? You're not sick are you?

Bernie responds awkwardly.

BERNIE
Me, I'm fine baby. Just hit a
little snag. Aren't you gonna let
me in?

JULIE
Snag? What kind of little snag?
This can't be good.

BERNIE
Um. Ya see I've run into some bad
luck lately regarding my finances.

JULIE
How bad?

BERNIE
Very. The bottom line is this: I'm
wiped out. I've lost everything.

JULIE
Everything?

Bernie holds up the banjo and smiles proudly.

BERNIE
Everything, except for this banjo.
I picked it up in a yard sale. It
was a steal.

Julie shakes her head in disbelief.

JULIE
This doesn't make any sense.

BERNIE

How 'bout if you let me in and make me a cup of coffee? I promise I'll explain everything.

JULIE

So does this mean you plan on staying here? Tonight?

BERNIE

That would be a yes, considering I've got no place else to go.

Julie looks dumbfounded as Bernie sidles past her through the front door.

INT. JULIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Julie becomes increasingly frustrated as she frantically searches through cabinets for coffee mugs. She's completely off kilter.

Bernie sits at the kitchen table nervously tapping his fingers.

Marion looks worried as she rushes into the kitchen in her badly singed bathrobe. Her hair is pushed over to one side of her head and black mascara runs down her face. Marion's voice trails off as she catches a glimpse of Bernie.

MARION

What's going on? Is something wrong with Jess...

Bernie addresses Marion in a sarcastic tone.

BERNIE

You're looking well Marion.

Marion scrunches her face and looks at Bernie with disdain.

MARION

What are you doing here Bernie? At this hour? Why aren't you in California?

BERNIE

So nice of you to be concerned for my welfare. I could ask you the same question. What are you doing here? Don't you have a beautiful new home?

(MORE)

BERNIE (CONT'D)

The one that you bought with all
the alimony money I've given you?

Marion responds sarcastically.

MARION

The only thing I could have
afforded with your alimony money is
a pup tent, or maybe a lean-to.
That's about all.

BERNIE

I see. Then perhaps you'd like to
refund it all to me, seeing that
it's such an insignificant amount.

MARION

I think not. Small change always
comes in handy.

Julie is exasperated. She continues to search for the mugs as
she yells at Marion.

JULIE

Mom, where did you put the damn
mugs? I can't find them anywhere!

Marion gets up and pulls three mugs out of a corner cabinet.

MARION

I'll make the coffee honey. Sit
down and talk to your father. The
man obviously needs a lot of help.

Julie sits across the table from Bernie. She's exhausted and
out of patience.

JULIE

Alright Dad, from the beginning.
What happened?

BERNIE

Guess your mother's gonna find out
soon enough so she might as well
hear it all now. I was losing a lot
of money so I cashed out my pension
fund and invested it all with your
uncle Saul. He let me in on a once
in a lifetime opportunity: A
commercial real estate development
deal that was guaranteed not to
fail. We were gonna make millions,
none of which your mother would
have been entitled to by the way.

Marion sneers at Bernie as she pours coffee into a mug.

JULIE

So uncle Saul brought you in on this deal. Then what? The economy is still so shaky Dad. You can't count on anything right now.

BERNIE

I had to do something baby. I lost over half my pension in the market. I wanted to test my entrepreneurial wings but ended up landing on my ass. The developers pulled out shortly after construction got underway. The market bottomed out and they suffered major losses. It was all so unexpected.

JULIE

I've never trusted uncle Saul. I know you grew up with him and he's one of your best friends but he's an unscrupulous character. Remember that incident with Aunt Rita? All of her jewelry went missing after uncle Saul left, along with her entire collection of custom made wigs. It made her crazy. She was especially sensitive about her bald spot.

BERNIE

Another wonderful marriage. Suffice it to say that my friendship with uncle Saul has been abruptly terminated.

Marion brings coffee mugs over to the table and places one in front of Bernie.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

Do I need a taste-tester to try mine out before I drink it? Knowing you Marion, you probably threw some poison in my coffee.

Marion smiles deliberately as she leans over to Bernie and responds.

MARION

I even threw a little extra in, just to be sure.

Bernie laughs uncomfortably as he stares down at his coffee mug.

MARION (CONT'D)

Saul is bad news with a capital B,
but he always loved me.

BERNIE

So much for good judgement.
Should've tipped me off back then.

Marion snickers at Bernie.

JULIE

So what happened to the rest of
your money? You had some savings
and an IRA.

BERNIE

It's all gone. I had to use it to
live on. San Diego isn't cheap ya
know and the state's in shit shape.
I couldn't find work anywhere and I
can't make it on social security
alone. I hung in there as long as I
could. Sold off everything but I
wasn't able to swing the rent
anymore.

MARION

That's just what the world needs,
another unemployed plastics
executive.

BERNIE

Before you delight in my misfortune
Marion I hope you realize what this
means. No more alimony payments.
Zilch. I've got nothing left to
give.

MARION

Your paltry alimony payments are
the least of my worries. You're not
the only one here who's lost
everything.

Bernie takes pleasure in goading Marion.

BERNIE

Marion darling, please don't be
embarrassed. You know you can tell
me the truth. We were married for
over forty years.

Marion's mouth opens slightly as if she's about to say something but nothing comes out. She looks at Bernie with obvious skepticism.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

Did you lose it all playing online strip poker? Be honest now.

Julie quickly interjects.

JULIE

Actually Dad, it was a fire. Mom's house is gone, along with everything she's ever owned.

Bernie sinks in his chair sheepishly.

BERNIE

I don't know what to say Marion.

Marion enjoys watching Bernie squirm. She milks the situation.

MARION

It's fine Bernie. I don't expect any empathy from you.

BERNIE

How can you say that?

Bernie looks helplessly at Julie.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

I care. Don't I baby?

Julie responds halfheartedly.

JULIE

Sure you do.

BERNIE

Besides, I'm a stand up guy. Aren't I?

A moment of awkward silence precedes Marion's response.

MARION

Do you really want me to answer that?

INT. JULIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Julie is on the phone with her boss Shirley.

JULIE

Hi Shirley. Yeah, it's me Julie.
Unfortunately, something else just
came up. I'm dealing with another
family emergency today.

Julie listens for a moment.

JULIE (CONT'D)

What's that? No, not another fire.
My dad showed up at my doorstep in
the middle of the night with
nothing but a banjo.

Julie listens for another moment.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Banjo. That's right, I said banjo.
What? No, that doesn't matter. The
issue is--

Julie is clearly frustrated by Shirley's constant
interrupting.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Shirley, will you forget about the
banjo? It's a long story but
essentially my dad has informed me
that he too is homeless. You see my
parents recently divorced and they
don't get along. And they're living
with me and Jessie in our three
bedroom house.

Julie silently mocks Shirley as she rambles on.

JULIE (CONT'D)

I understand the timing couldn't be
worse but I'm doing my best under
very trying circumstances. I
haven't taken any personal time in
over a year.

Julie pantomimes strangling Shirley as she listens.

JULIE (CONT'D)

All I know is I've got thirty-two
cases. Horowitz on the other hand
has nineteen. I'm going out of my
mind Shirley. I understand that
we're down a position but there's
only so much I can handle. You've
got to do something.

Julie scrunches her eyes and responds in a sarcastic tone.

JULIE (CONT'D)

You'll what? You'll bounce Horowitz up to twenty? Thanks ever so much, that should make all the difference. Yeah, I'll let you know as soon as I can. Huh? No, I've never been a fan of banjo music. Right. Goodbye Shirley.

INT. JULIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY - A SHORT TIME LATER

Bernie, Julie, and Jessie sit at the kitchen table. Jessie reads an essay by Søren Kierkegaard.

INSERT - ESSAY

"The Concept of Anxiety by Søren Kierkegaard"

BACK TO SCENE

Bernie crunches numbers on a calculator. Julie sits on the opposite side of the kitchen table in front of a pile of bills. She writes out checks as she interacts with Jessie and Bernie.

BERNIE

It's always wonderful to be with my beautiful granddaughter. I'm glad I didn't wake you up when I arrived.

JESSIE

It's okay Grandpa. I can sleep through anything.

JULIE

So Grandpa is going to be staying with us for a awhile too.

Julie looks none too pleased.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Just till he finds a new job.

BERNIE

And it better happen quickly. The numbers aren't pretty.

Bernie looks pleadingly at Julie.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

I can't expect you to support me,
now can I baby?

Julie wears a stern expression.

JULIE

No Dad, you can't. Sweetie maybe
you can give Grandpa a hand with
his resume?

JESSIE

Sure. Have you thought about what
kind of work you want to do
Grandpa? Weighed your options and
choices, ones that may hold meaning
for you? Can you stress the
importance of self-actualization
over monetary gain to a potential
employer? And where do you stand on
the issue of personal
responsibility as it pertains to
your own happiness?

BERNIE

Gee honey, I guess I haven't
thought much about any of those
things. I mainly think about things
like food and eating.

JESSIE

Perhaps some food for thought would
serve you better, in light of your
current circumstances. Have you
resigned yourself to the inexorable
agony of our individual freedom? Do
you fully accept the consequences,
ramifications, and repercussions of
your actions? Ultimately, the onus
is on us Grandpa.

BERNIE

You know me. I'm fine with anything
as long as it tastes good.

MONTAGE - JULIE'S HOUSE

- Bernie eats a muffin at the kitchen table and gets crumbs
all over his shirt and everywhere else. Marion vacuums up the
crumbs on the floor with a cordless handheld vacuum cleaner
and then proceeds to vacuum Bernie.

- Julie lies in bed and reaches for something in the top drawer of her night table. She fishes around for a moment and then pops up in a panic when she comes up empty.

- Julie winces when she reaches for some toilet paper and discovers a quarter of a sheet hanging from the cardboard core. She grimaces when she reaches for a new roll of toilet paper in the vanity and pulls out the plastic remnants of an empty package.

INT. GAIL'S CAR - STREET IN FRONT OF JULIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Julie fumes as Gail pulls out a box of breakfast pastries.

GAIL

And a very good morning to you too.

JULIE

Can you believe this? It's beyond outrageous. How could she do this to me?

GAIL

I take it you're not pleased with your mom this morning.

JULIE

The woman took it upon herself to rearrange my night table. She rifled through my personal things and moved my vibrator to some undisclosed location. Now what am I supposed to do, just casually bring up the subject? Oh by the way Mom, can you tell me where you put my vibrator? I'm incredibly stressed out these days and could really use a good release.

Gail giggles as she downs a bite of cinnamon roll.

JULIE (CONT'D)

I'm glad you think it's funny. What the hell am I supposed to do Gaily?

Gail pulls out a croissant and hands it to Julie.

GAIL

Eat.

JULIE

So that's your advice. I should sublimate my sexual frustration with baked goods?

GAIL

I could think of worse things.

Julie looks at Gail with resignation and starts plowing into the croissant.

JULIE

And now my dad shows up and I have to deal with all of his bull shit too. I tell you it's one big party in my house these days.

GAIL

Listen Jules I'm all over it. I'm working on a plan.

Julie looks doubtful.

JULIE

A plan huh?

GAIL

Yeah. It's not a problem for me to pull a trip together for us, you know that. That's why I love working in the travel industry. Fuck therapy. Whenever I can't deal with something I just escape. It's much easier on my constitution.

JULIE

I don't know why I don't adhere to your methodology more.

GAIL

Neither do I.

JULIE

So how do you propose I run away from home?

GAIL

It's easy. You have built in adult supervision. Your folks can look out for Jessie while you get away for a bit.

JULIE

And who's going to supervise them?
I don't trust them alone together
in my house. God only knows what
I'd come home to.

Julie spots a cheese Danish and pilfers a few bites for herself.

JULIE (CONT'D)

And Shirley's on my ass about not
taking time off from work. Freakin'
Horowitz is on vacation every other
week but I'm not allowed to have a
life. It's unreal.

GAIL

What is her problem anyway?

JULIE

Perpetual constipation.

Gail nods her head and laughs.

JULIE (CONT'D)

You're the best for trying to
rescue me but unfortunately I can't
escape now. I've got to stay here
and start setting some limits. I'm
calling a family meeting so we can
figure out how to coexist
peacefully under one roof. It's
either that or we'll all end up
needing psychiatric
hospitalization.

GAIL

Well if that ever happens you know
I'll bring lots of treats when I
come visit.

Julie finishes off the remainder of the cheese Danish and smiles knowingly back at Gail.

JULIE

Naturally. I wouldn't expect
anything less.

INT. JULIE'S HOUSE - DEN/HOME OFFICE - DAY

Bernie sits on one end of the couch awkwardly picking out notes on his banjo.

Marion sits on the other end of the couch looking thoroughly disgusted. Julie sits in her office chair facing the both of them.

JULIE

Since we're all together now under one roof I think it's important that we lay out some ground rules.

Bernie and Marion stare blankly at Julie.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Good. Now that we're in agreement let's start with the issue of personal boundaries. This isn't a very big house and we really need to respect each other's privacy and space.

Bernie looks nonplussed as he turns to Marion for answers.

BERNIE

What's she talking about Marion?

MARION

She's mad because I was straightening up and inadvertently threw her vibrator away. I didn't know it was a vibrator, I thought it was an ugly shade of lipstick. Terrible color for Julie so I tossed it in the garbage. You see how pale she is? Candy apple red just doesn't work with her skin tone.

BERNIE

Oh, I see. They do make them in all kinds of interesting shapes and sizes now. Guess you wouldn't know Marion since you've never owned one. Of course you had me around for over forty years so you never needed a vibrator.

MARION

Don't flatter yourself Bernie. I happen to be a very good actress.

Julie is annoyed and embarrassed by the topic of conversation.

JULIE

Could we please get back to the whole point of this meeting?

BERNIE

Sorry baby, didn't mean to digress. But now that we're on the subject I would like discuss the sleeping arrangements.

Julie's anger rises.

JULIE

What? What about the sleeping arrangements?

BERNIE

Your mother has her own room and I'm stuck sleeping on the pull out in the living room every night. That doesn't seem very fair. I propose a more equitable arrangement. Your mother I and can sleep together here in the den.

MARION

It's a shame you stopped taking your medication Bernie.

BERNIE

Why not Marion? There's nothing to worry about. There's no chance of anything happening given that it rarely ever happened when were married.

JULIE

Alright, that's it. This meeting is over. I'm so glad we were able to sort through everything openly and honestly and come to a better understanding. Dad, Mom was here first so you're on the sleeper sofa. If you're not happy with the accommodations you're more than welcome to search for other lodging that is more agreeable to you. Mom, I say this with love: Stay the hell out of my bedroom! Oh and Dad, the next time we run out of toilet paper would you be kind enough to throw on a new roll? I'm not particularly fond of the air dry method.

Julie gets up and smooths out the wrinkles on her blouse.

JULIE (CONT'D)

I have to go to work now. Have a lovely day.

Julie walks out of the room. Bernie looks at Marion with deadpan expression and starts picking out notes on his banjo again.

BERNIE

She really needs to start dating again.

EXT. JULIE'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Bernie comes out of the house and meets VITO (17). Vito is a strikingly handsome pizza delivery boy with dirty blond hair and chiseled features.

BERNIE

Good evening.

VITO

Hi. It comes to twenty-one eighty.

BERNIE

That much, huh? Nothing's cheap anymore, not even a pizza.

Bernie takes cash out of his wallet and hands it to Vito.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

There's a five for you. Don't worry about the change.

VITO

Thanks. Appreciate it.

Vito hands the pizza to Bernie.

VITO (CONT'D)

You ordered the meat mania combo... our most expensive pie. My brother Joey invented it. He's the creative one in the family.

BERNIE

So you're family owned and operated. That must be nice. You get to eat all the meat mania combo pizza you want.

VITO

Not me, I'm a Buddhist. My diet is vegetarian.

BERNIE

A Buddhist? How interesting. Are there any other Buddhists in your family?

VITO

No, I'm the only one. My family doesn't really get it. When I turn eighteen in a few months I may take off and spend some time in a monastery. Name's Vito by the way.

BERNIE

Bernie, a pleasure. So tell me Vito does your family know about your future plans?

VITO

They don't have a clue. The less they know the better.

BERNIE

Well, you seem like a fine young man Vito. The girls must love you.

VITO

Yeah. They flirt and come on to me but it's pointless really 'cause I'm celibate.

BERNIE

Celibate? Why would you choose to be celibate when you're at your sexual peak? Can't you push it off for awhile and come back to it later? Enjoy yourself and have some fun while you've still got it. Giving up a pizza's one thing, but can't you draw the line at sex?

VITO

It doesn't work that way Bernie.

BERNIE

It seems like such a shame to waste all that stamina and staying power. You're so young and virile. I'd like to be seventeen again.

Bernie ponders for a moment.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

The things I would do.

VITO

I'm making a conscious choice to focus my energy on spiritual matters. We're not here for very long and I'm thinking about the big picture.

BERNIE

You're obviously a man of your convictions Vito. But if you change your mind I certainly understand. I never had your kind of discipline, that's for sure.

Bernie ponders for a moment before he starts talking again.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

So this Buddhist thing, how does it work exactly? What are the benefits?

VITO

I don't really have time to get into it now... I'm backed up with deliveries. If you want, we can talk more about it when I see you again. If I see you again.

Bernie takes a slice of pizza out of the box. He takes a big, sloppy bite and talks with his mouth full.

BERNIE

Mmm. Oh you'll see me again Vito. The meat mania combo is out of this world.

INT. JULIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

ANDY MATTHEWS (early 40's) and Bernie are hunched over various accounting spread sheets that are strewn across the kitchen table. Andy is a tall man with boyish good looks. His tenor saxophone case and duffle bag are shoved in a corner.

ANDY

So that leaves you with just enough money to cover your health insurance. You have to cut back on the takeout, at least till you get a new gig.

BERNIE

One of the few pleasures I have left in life. I don't cook, and I'm not about to ask Marion for anything.

ANDY

You don't have to. If you stick to the budget I'm laying out for you you can still afford to buy some prepared food. It's much more cost effective to pick up a frozen pizza than to order one for twenty bucks.

BERNIE

Sounds mouth-watering.

ANDY

It's just for the time being, till you get on your feet again. You just have to show a little restraint Bernie.

BERNIE

As long as I don't have to eat any tuna. I hate tuna.

Julie walks into the kitchen and discovers Bernie and Andy sitting at the kitchen table together.

JULIE

Oh my god! Andy, what are you doing here? You never called to say you were coming.

ANDY

Tour's over and I wanted to surprise you and Jessie. I thought you'd be happy to see me.

Julie doesn't respond truthfully. There's a hint of guilt in her voice.

JULIE

I'm happy to see you. It's just that a lot's been happening around here and I wasn't prepared. Did Dad tell you about Mom?

ANDY

Since when do you have to prepare for me? I'm the most easygoing guy on the planet.

Andy pops up from his chair and hugs Julie. Julie is noticeably uncomfortable as she hugs Andy back.

JULIE

So what's going on in here?

ANDY

I haven't been entirely honest with you Jules. I've been shoving my feelings down for years and I just can't take it anymore. I've been lying to myself, to you, and everyone else in my life. I can't live like this anymore.

JULIE

What are you talking about Andy? Are you trying to tell me that you're gay?

Andy looks horrified.

ANDY

Gay? No, I'm not into guys. What makes you think I'm gay? Do I seem gay to you?

Julie grows impatient.

JULIE

Then tell me what it is already.

Andy winces as he starts speaking.

ANDY

I hate being a musician and I want out. I was forced into the family business when I turned twenty-one 'cause Dad's a musician and band contractor. That was his dream, not mine. I hate show business and I'm tired of being miserable. I have a dream too.

JULIE

Would you care to share it with me?

ANDY

Promise not to laugh?

Julie crosses her arms and frowns.

ANDY (CONT'D)

It sucks being on the road all the time. I don't want to be a touring musician anymore, hopping from one gig to the next. I don't get one iota of pleasure from playing out in front of people and being around all these celebrities. Who wants that kind of life?

Bernie starts to say something but thinks better of it and quickly closes his mouth.

ANDY (CONT'D)

I dream of being an accountant one day, a CPA.

JULIE

An accountant? You're a musician who dreams of being an accountant?

ANDY

I started taking some online classes and I'm doing a little gratis work for your dad since he's flat broke.

Bernie grumbles quietly to himself.

ANDY (CONT'D)

For the first time in my life I feel free and happy.

JULIE

Have you told your dad yet? I wonder how he's going to react to this revelation.

ANDY

Not yet, I wanted you to be the first to know. Actually, you're the second. I didn't expect to find Bernie here in such an impoverished state.

Bernie chimes in.

BERNIE

Thanks. I'm relishing it.

Julie sneers at Bernie.

JULIE

So what are your plans? What are you going to do now?

ANDY

Hang here and spend some time with you and Jessie. While we're on hiatus I'm going to let my dad know that I'm quitting. I've been saving up for awhile and Dad owes me so don't worry about money. Where is our beautiful daughter anyway?

JULIE

Out with her new boyfriend. His name is Macro and he's an artist, a sculptor to be exact. That's all the information I've managed to glean so far. I told her to bring him around soon so I can meet this budding genius.

ANDY

Good thing I'm here so I can check him out too.

JULIE

I'm sure Jessie will be thrilled.

Bernie chimes in again.

BERNIE

So... Who's up for Chinese?

INT/EXT. GAIL'S CAR - STREET IN FRONT OF JULIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Gail and Julie sit in Gail's car. They remain silent as they watch Andy and Jessie walk out the front door of Julie's house. Andy and Jessie are playful and affectionate with each other. They get into Julie's car and drive away.

Julie looks dejected. She takes a cookie from a large box of cookies placed between her and Gail. Julie pops the cookie in her mouth. Gail follows suit.

GAIL

So Andy's back?

JULIE

Yup. He showed up without warning. And the best is, he came out to me.

Gail looks stunned.

GAIL

Andy's gay?

JULIE

Try closeted accountant. Apparently he hates being a musician. He's dreamed of being an accountant all his life. My life just gets better all the time.

GAIL

You had no clue?

JULIE

None whatsoever.

GAIL

So what's he gonna do?

JULIE

He says he's taking online classes now and he's going to tell Marty that he's quitting the business.

GAIL

Do you think he'll actually go through with it? He's never been able to stand up to Marty.

JULIE

He says he's miserable so we'll see. In the meantime, my house runneth over.

GAIL

Crazy. So where's Andy sleeping?

JULIE

Where do you think? I've got hardwood floors, remember?

GAIL

So he's sleeping with you? That's awkward.

JULIE

Not really, we're just sleeping. There's nothing sexual between us anymore.

GAIL

And that doesn't bother you?

JULIE

I realize it's not ideal Gaily but I honestly don't know what to deal with first. Let's review, shall we? My parents have lost everything except for a vacuum cleaner and a banjo. Though they have recently divorced and despise each other deeply they've been thrust upon me by some cruel twist of fate. My husband the musician is a closeted accountant who secretly fantasizes about doing audits instead of me. My daughter thinks life is a series of seemingly random and meaningless events. My boss needs to be admitted to a psych unit for immediate observation and my vibrator is lying in some landfill in New Jersey. Now I ask you, wouldn't you like to have my life instead of the unencumbered, free-spirited life you're leading?

Julie shoves a couple of cookies in her mouth.

GAIL

As appealing as it sounds, I don't think I could ever come to appreciate these enriching life experiences in quite the same way.

Julie is startled by a tap on the passenger side window. She turns around and sees her extremely good-looking neighbor JEFF (early 40's) peering into the window. Jeff is a tall man with jet black hair and blue eyes. Julie rolls the window down and Jeff leans in.

JEFF

Sorry Julie, I didn't mean to startle you like that. I just wanted to make sure my guy sent a bid over to your mom.

Julie's mouth is full so she's unable to respond right away. She holds her finger up to indicate that she needs a moment and swallows quickly.

JULIE

Yes, she got it last night. Thanks so much Jeff.

Gail takes notice. She quickly leans across Julie and holds out her hand so she can connect with Jeff.

GAIL
I'm Gail by the way, Julie's best
friend.

Jeff smiles broadly at Gail as he reaches for her hand.

JEFF
Hello. I'm new to the neighborhood.
Just moved in a few months ago.

Jeff ponders for a moment.

JEFF (CONT'D)
Do you live around here?

GAIL
Not too far from here. I'm only
about ten minutes away.

JEFF
Really? I'd love to have everyone
over now that the reno's done.

GAIL
That sounds lovely.

JEFF
Great. I'll swing by soon so we can
set something up Julie. Let me know
how things go with your mom.

JULIE
Will do Jeff. Thanks.

Jeff and Gail let go of each other slowly as Jeff starts to
leave.

JEFF
So good to meet you today Gail.

Gail smiles back at Jeff.

GAIL
See you again soon I hope.

Gail is starry-eyed and still leaning across Julie after Jeff
leaves. Julie gives Gail a gentle shove to get her to move.

JULIE
What was that all about?

Julie mocks Gail.

JULIE (CONT'D)

That sounds lovely. When was the last time you used the word lovely?

GAIL

I was just trying to make conversation Jules. How come you never mentioned anything about Jeff to me before?

Julie is clearly pissed off.

JULIE

Oh, I don't know. Could be I've been a little preoccupied lately.

GAIL

Alright, fair enough. But I've got to get an invite to that dinner party.

JULIE

I'm not sure how serious Jeff is about having people over Gaily.

GAIL

Come on Jules, it's been awhile since I've met anyone I'm remotely attracted to. Help me out here.

INT. GAIL'S PLACE - BEDROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Gail is lying in bed with her back to Ben. Ben tries to snuggle up to Gail and spoon her. Gail is clearly turned off and slithers away.

GAIL

Look, I'm not a cuddler. Could you please get dressed and leave already so I can have my space?

BACK TO PRESENT

Gail taps Julie on the shoulder.

GAIL (CONT'D)

Hello. Thought I lost you there for a second.

JULIE

Like I lost my friend Ben? What about Ben? He said you were cold Gaily.

GAIL

Too clingy. I couldn't breathe.

Julie raises an eyebrow.

GAIL (CONT'D)

Forget about Ben. He had issues.
We're talking about Jeff now.

Julie lifts up the box of cookies.

JULIE

Please, do me a favor and have a
cookie. It's much easier on my
constitution.

Gail reaches into the box and pulls out a chocolate cookie.
She takes a bite and savors it slowly.

GAIL

Mmm. My senses are in overdrive
today Jules.

Marion and Corinne pull up behind Gail and Julie. Gail looks
in the rear view mirror and sees Marion barking at Corinne as
they get out of the car. Marion is wearing sunglasses and has
a silk scarf wrapped around her face and neck. The two women
are overloaded with shopping bags and struggle to the front
door before entering the house.

GAIL (CONT'D)

Looks like something's up with your
mom. She doesn't seem to be in a
very good mood.

JULIE

All the more reason for me to hang
here with you and finish off this
box of cookies.

Gail and Julie nod in agreement and reach for more cookies.

INT. JULIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

Marion and Corinne enter the kitchen carrying more shopping
bags than they can handle. They plop the bags down on the
kitchen table and collapse in their chairs. Marion's face is
very puffy and red.

CORINNE

How was I supposed to know you'd have an allergic reaction to a facial? It was supposed to be relaxing and rejuvenating.

MARION

I told you it was a bad idea Corinne. You can see how well it worked.

CORINNE

Who knew you had such sensitive skin? Besides, it's not like you have to be anywhere right now.

Marion grits her teeth and seethes.

MARION

Ow, I'm so uncomfortable.

CORINNE

Just use the cream my dermatologist prescribed and you'll feel better by tomorrow. Honestly Marion, you get so worked up over things. Stress can kill you if you're not careful.

MARION

So can friendship.

Corinne doesn't fully take in Marion's biting remark.

CORINNE

In any event, the sooner your house gets rebuilt the better off you'll be. Why don't you pull out the contractor bids?

Marion gets up and pulls out two different folders containing estimates and contracts from a wooden organizer on the kitchen counter. She turns around to face Corinne but remains standing with the folders.

CORINNE (CONT'D)

You say you've narrowed it down to two choices?

MARION

Expensive and expensive. There's barely any difference in terms of cost between the two.

(MORE)

MARION (CONT'D)

I got five bids overall and these two fall somewhere in the middle. I'm leaning towards using the contractor that Julie's neighbor recommended. He said he has immediate availability.

CORINNE

Did you check his references?

MARION

He just got into the business so he only has one other client. I spoke with her yesterday and she was pleased with the kitchen remodel he did for her a couple months ago.

CORINNE

It sounds a little risky to go with him since he doesn't have much of a track record. You only get one shot at this Marion.

Bernie suddenly enters the kitchen and heads for the refrigerator. He pulls out a can of ginger ale and fumbles with the pull tab. Soda sprays all over the place as he opens the can and takes a sip.

BERNIE

Lovely as always to see you Corinne.

CORINNE

Bernie. I see you haven't lost your magic touch.

BERNIE

And you Corinne are as charming as ever.

CORINNE

So what are you doing with yourself these days?

BERNIE

Cranking out resumes mostly. As a matter of fact, I just sent out my two hundredth resume. I applied for a position in a funeral home. They desperately need funeral assistants and will provide tuition reimbursement if I decide to go for a degree in mortuary science.

(MORE)

BERNIE (CONT'D)

I'm not turning anything down at this point. Dead bodies don't bother me. I lived with Marion long enough.

Marion sneers at Bernie as she pats his hand gently.

MARION

If I were you Bernie, I'd sleep with both eyes open tonight.

Bernie furrows his brow as silence permeates the room for a moment. Corinne breaks the silence and speaks in a wry manner.

CORINNE

I wish you all the best in your new career Bernie. I'm sure you'll do quite well.

BERNIE

Thank you Corinne. Now if you'll excuse me, I have to go practice my banjo. I've been slacking off lately and need to adhere to a rigorous practice schedule.

Bernie leaves the dripping soda can on the kitchen counter before he walks out of the kitchen.

CORINNE

Banjo?

MARION

The man's an idiot.

INT. JULIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Jessie and MACRO (17) walk into the kitchen holding hands. Macro is tall and thin. He carries a large sketch pad under his free arm. He has shoulder length brown hair and a youthful face. He wears loose fitting jeans and an orange T-shirt.

JESSIE

Hmm, that's weird. Nobody's here.

Jessie walks over to the refrigerator. She opens the refrigerator door and leans in.

JESSIE (CONT'D)

Are you thirsty? We have iced tea, root beer, ginger ale, juice, and filtered water.

MACRO

Water's fine. Thanks.

Jessie pulls out the large pitcher of filtered water and pours a glass for Macro. She places the glass of water on the kitchen table.

JESSIE

We can hang here and wait for my folks. You'll probably get to meet Giggy and Grandpa too.

MACRO

Cool.

Macro waits for Jessie to sit down before he plops in a chair across from her. He puts his sketch pad on the table and watches Jessie intently. After a few moments he opens his sketch pad and flips to a fresh sheet of paper. He pulls out a pencil from behind his ear and starts sketching.

JESSIE

You sure you want to sketch me? I don't think I'm your best choice for a model.

MACRO

You're perfect Jess. Want me to stop?

Jessie squirms in her chair.

JESSIE

No, I'm okay.

Macro focuses on the contours of Jessie's face as he sketches. He stops for a moment and looks closely at his work. He flips to a new sheet of paper and starts sketching again. He repeats this process a couple more times.

Jessie becomes increasingly self-conscious and uncomfortable. She confronts Macro in an uneasy tone.

JULIE

Why do you keep starting over on a fresh sheet of paper? Why don't you just use an eraser?

Macro continues to sketch for a moment before he looks up at Jessie. He answers thoughtfully.

MACRO
How can we learn from our mistakes
if we erase them?

Macro's response lingers in the air for a moment. Marion enters the kitchen carrying a bag of groceries.

MARION
Hi sweetheart.

JESSIE
Giggy, you're home!

Jessie jumps up and takes the bag of groceries from Marion. She puts the bag of groceries down on the kitchen counter and hugs Marion excitedly.

JESSIE (CONT'D)
Giggy, I'd like you to meet my
boyfriend Macro.

MARION
Hello, I'm Marion. So nice to meet
you Macro. Would you like to stay
for dinner?

Macro smiles shyly and nods his head yes.

JESSIE
Where is everyone?

MARION
Your mom had to work late today and
your dad is running some errands.

JESSIE
Where's Grandpa?

MARION
Orbiting another planet.

Jessie eyes Marion skeptically.

MARION (CONT'D)
Okay, he went on a job interview
for some funeral home. Anyway,
they'll all be home soon.

Marion notices Macro's sketch book and is captivated by the partial sketch of Jessie.

MARION (CONT'D)

That's splendid Macro. Can I see it when it's finished?

MACRO

Sure, but it's just a sketch. Pretty bare, not a lot of detail.

MARION

That's what I like about it. I can see everything that matters.

INT. JULIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT - LATER

Jessie, Macro, Julie, Andy, Marion, and Bernie sit around the kitchen table and dine on pasta, salad, and crusty bread. Marion puts a heaping portion of pasta on Macro's plate.

BERNIE

You know art is one of my passions. I'm quite a collector. I have a Braque and several pieces by Miró.

Marion's face is full of scorn as she responds to Bernie.

MARION

You had a Braque and several pieces by Miró. You sold everything... Or have you forgotten?

BERNIE

The point is I have excellent taste and you can never have enough art in your home. Tell me Macro, what are your aspirations?

MACRO

Study abroad. Probably France and Spain.

BERNIE

It's wonderful to be young with all of your dreams before you.

JESSIE

In actuality Grandpa, age is just an artificial measurement of time that has little bearing on one's potentiality.

ANDY

That's right sweetie. There's no shame in being a late bloomer.

(MORE)

ANDY (CONT'D)

Verdi was in his late fifties when he wrote Aida. Some of his greatest operas came later in life.

BERNIE

In that case, I'm going to acquire an easel and start painting. Who knows, I might even become the next Van Gogh.

Marion's sarcasm is in full force.

MARION

Well Bernie, you certainly fit the profile.

Julie interjects quickly.

JULIE

So Jessie tells us that you're primarily a sculptor Macro.

MACRO

I like making subjectively representational pieces that pierce the psyche and innervate consciousness.

Julie is floored by Macro's response.

JULIE

You don't say.

Julie pauses for a moment and sighs.

JULIE (CONT'D)

I mostly garden. It's a peaceful, non-confrontational kind of activity.

ANDY

We'd love to see some of your work. Do you have any pieces for sale?

MACRO

I haven't sold much. I end up giving away a lot of stuff.

BERNIE

Well I for one would be honored to have an original Macro in my collection.

Bernie's grandiosity galls Marion.

MARION
What collection?

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF JULIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Bernie stands next to a hearse with the driver's side door open. He leans into the hearse and honks the horn repeatedly. Julie and Marion come running out of the house. Julie looks horrified when she and Marion reach the curb and see the hearse up close.

JULIE
Dad, what the hell is this?

BERNIE
It's official: I got the job! I am now gainfully employed at Embers Funeral Home. My boss asked me to take the hearse out for a test run. Pretty cool, huh?

Julie and Marion appear incredulous. They don't utter a word.

BERNIE (CONT'D)
Come on Marion, hop in and I'll take you for a little spin. I've got a wonderful spot for you right here in the back. It's your perfect ride.

Marion scrunches her eyebrows and feigns laughter.

JULIE
That's great news. But when are you getting this thing out of here?

BERNIE
I have an early call in the morning.

JULIE
Seriously Dad? You can't leave a hearse parked in front of the house all night.

BERNIE
Why not? Trust me baby, no one will ever notice.

Julie's cell phone rings and she answers.

JULIE

Hi Jeff. Jessie and I are fine,
thanks. No, nobody died.

Julie glares at Bernie.

JULIE (CONT'D)

At least not yet.

Julie listens for a moment before wrapping up the call.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Yeah, let's definitely talk later
in the week. Thanks again for the
call Jeff. Bye.

Julie grits her teeth.

JULIE (CONT'D)

You see Dad, this is what I was
afraid of. A hearse isn't exactly
inconspicuous.

BERNIE

Please sweetheart, just help me out
this one time. It's too late for me
to bring the hearse back now and I
want to make a good impression. I
promise it'll never happen again.

JULIE

Fine, but just for tonight. I don't
like having to explain all of this
to my neighbors.

BERNIE

Thanks baby, you never let me down.
You're the best person in my life.

Marion chimes in.

MARION

She's the only person in your life.

BERNIE

That's not entirely true Marion. I
have Jessie too.

Marion's cell phone goes off.

MARION

Hello. Yes, this is Mrs.
Silverberg.

Marion listens for a moment.

MARION (CONT'D)

Thank you so much Nancy, that is wonderful news. Tomorrow morning at ten is fine. You have a good night too. Bye now.

Marion looks pleasantly surprised as she ends the call.

MARION (CONT'D)

That was my insurance company. They're ready to settle my claim. I just have to go in and sign some paperwork.

JULIE

Mom, this is so exciting! We have to celebrate. Dad just got a new job and you're going to have a gorgeous new home.

Julie's cell phone rings. She looks perplexed as she answers.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Hello? Hi Deb, how are you?

Julie cups her hand over the phone and whispers to Bernie and Marion.

JULIE (CONT'D)

It's my neighbor from across the street.

Julie goes back to her conversation with Deb.

JULIE (CONT'D)

I truly appreciate your concern but I promise you nobody died. My parents are actually quite well and healthy.

Julie cups her hand over the phone and grits her teeth as she whispers.

JULIE (CONT'D)

For now anyway.

Julie finishes her conversation with Deb.

JULIE (CONT'D)

I realize how it looks but we really are okay here.

(MORE)

JULIE (CONT'D)

The hearse will definitely be gone by the time you wake up. Thanks for checking in Deb.

BERNIE

What a lovely neighborhood... surrounded by all these people who care.

JULIE

Nice try Dad. You're buying dinner for everyone tonight.

EXT. JULIE'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Bernie comes out of the house to retrieve his Chinese food. He greets CHAO (early 60's). Chao is a short Chinese man. He wears thick glasses and cheap clothing. He's a very caustic person.

BERNIE

Good evening to you.

CHAO

Ha?

BERNIE

I said good evening. It's a beautiful night, isn't it? I'm new to the neighborhood and can't wait to sample some of your delicious Chinese fare.

Chao looks at Bernie like he's crazy.

CHAO

That's sixty even.

BERNIE

Food is so expensive now. I miss the days when I could buy a feast for twenty bucks. Wonton soup, egg roll, spare ribs, fried rice, roast pork with Chinese vegetables--

Chao cuts Bernie off.

CHAO

When was that, a hundred years ago? Tonight it's sixty even.

BERNIE

Okay, okay. I can see you're not in a chatty mood.

Bernie fumbles around in his wallet as Chao places the bag of food down in front of Bernie.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

I left my glasses inside and it's dark out. I just need a minute.

Bernie pulls out a hundred dollar bill and three twenty dollar bills. He hands all the cash to Chao.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

That's sixty even and a ten for you.

Chao sees the hundred dollar bill and quickly stuffs all of the cash into his pocket.

CHAO

We're busy tonight. Enjoy your dinner.

Bernie stands there smiling as Chao scoots away.

INT. JULIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Julie's phone rings twice and then the outgoing message on the answering system begins to play.

JULIE'S VOICE (V.O.)

Hi. If you're looking for Julie, Andy, Jessie, Marion or Bernie, please leave a message. Contrary to popular belief, none of us are dead. Thank you.

INT. JULIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Julie is propped up against a pillow on one side of the bed. She wears sweats and a T-shirt and is surrounded by files from work. Andy is propped up on an elbow on the opposite side of the bed. His head is buried in an accounting book. Julie looks burnt out as she puts a file down and starts talking to Andy.

JULIE

So what do you think of Macro?

ANDY

He's a nice kid Jules. Smart,
creative, very laid back.

JULIE

I can see why Jessie's drawn to
him. He's an intellectual kindred
spirit.

ANDY

Nothing wrong with that.

JULIE

No, I guess not.

Julie ponders for a moment.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Remember when we were in high
school? Things were a lot lighter
then. We didn't obsess about the
nature of the universe or the
meaning of life.

ANDY

Yeah, I remember. We were tight and
had the best time. We joked around
and teased each other incessantly.
We were always laughing.

JULIE

Exactly. That was good stuff.

ANDY

Sure was.

Julie speaks softly.

JULIE

What happened to us Andy?

Andy is more focused on his accounting assignment than Julie.

ANDY

What do you mean?

Julie is clearly frustrated.

JULIE

Could you stop what you're doing
and focus on me for a second?

Andy pushes his book aside. He looks at Julie with sincere
eyes.

JULIE (CONT'D)

I mean, what happened to us? What are we doing?

Julie's cell phone rings before Andy has a chance to respond. She flinches when she sees the caller ID.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Great. It's Shirley, my lunatic boss. I have to grab this.

Julie answers her cell phone with obvious disdain.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Hello Shirley.

Julie listens for a moment. She responds to Shirley with sharp cynicism.

JULIE (CONT'D)

No, this isn't a bad time. Why would you think this is a bad time? It's only eleven o' clock on a Sunday night. It's not like I have a life, or anything that remotely resembles a life outside of work.

Julie turns beet red.

JULIE (CONT'D)

What do you mean Horowitz is stranded at the airport in St. Croix? Tropical Storm what? Listen Shirley, I'm scheduled to take some comp time tomorrow. I've got roughly eighty-seven hours. Maybe if Horowitz bothered to show up once in a while--

Julie is fit to be tied.

JULIE (CONT'D)

I'm telling you right now Shirley, this is the last time. I'm fed up to here with Horowitz's bull shit and I'm tired of covering his ass!

Julie listens for a brief moment. She responds with a hint of resignation in her voice.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Yeah, I got it. Tomorrow morning at eight-thirty. Send me the file tonight. Right. Good night.

Julie looks helplessly at Andy.

ANDY

Fucked again by Horowitz, huh?
Don't worry Jules, I can bring
Jessie to her dental appointment
tomorrow. Why don't I take us all
out for a nice dinner afterwards?

Julie smiles appreciatively at Andy. She retrieves her laptop from under the bed and assumes her previous position. Julie opens her laptop and stares at the screen. Andy goes back to his accounting assignment.

EXT. JULIE'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Vito arrives with a large pizza for Bernie. Bernie looks dejected when he greets Vito.

VITO

Hey Bernie, got your chicken catch
pizza. It's our other best seller.

Bernie takes the pizza from Vito.

BERNIE

Thanks Vito. How much do I owe you?

VITO

Uh oh, something's up. You seem
down tonight.

BERNIE

I got ripped off. That lowlife Chao
from the Chinese restaurant made
off with a hundred bucks of mine.

VITO

How did that happen?

BERNIE

The light was bad and I didn't have
my glasses on. I thought I pulled a
ten out of my wallet but it turned
out to be a hundred. The guy never
said a word. He just pocketed the
money and split.

VITO

Are you sure he knew it was a
hundred? You said the light was
bad.

BERNIE

Oh, he knew alright. Trust me.

Bernie imitates Chao in a mocking tone.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

We're busy tonight, enjoy your dinner. And to make matters worse, I had to borrow money from my ex-wife. I won't get my first paycheck till next week. You don't know Marion.

VITO

I know it's a drag, but maybe you could try shifting your perspective a little. It's only paper Bernie. It doesn't mean anything in the grand scheme of things.

BERNIE

On the contrary Vito, it means everything to me. It's all I think about.

VITO

Ah, therein lies your problem Bernie. Last time I was here you wanted to know more about Buddhism. You can't understand why I'm choosing a chaste, spiritual existence.

BERNIE

You could be having a great time with your looks.

VITO

I don't want to develop unhealthy lifestyle patterns that can get me into trouble and bring me grief down the road.

BERNIE

How can getting laid ever bring you grief?

VITO

You have to let go Bernie. Of money, things, and yes, even sex. You're unhappy now because you lost a hundred bucks, right?

BERNIE

True.

VITO

You cling to paper and objects and crave physical gratification. When you don't have these things you're absolutely miserable. Chances are you will always be missing some, if not all of these things, at any given point in your life. You'll lose your wallet or your car will get stolen or a hot woman will dump you. Then what, where does that leave you? In a state of eternal misery, that's where. You will never find any happiness or peace.

BERNIE

Try not to be so uplifting Vito... It's overwhelming.

VITO

You can joke and deflect all you want Bernie. I'm just saying that happiness has to come from within. No amount of booty or boobs can ever fulfill you or lead you to a state of enlightenment. You have to transcend desire. I don't want to have to keep coming back here till I get it right.

BERNIE

Have you ever considered the possibility that enlightenment may be highly overrated?

Vito grins and shakes his head.

VITO

You're something Bernie, you know that? And you owe me twenty-three ten. Please take your time and make sure you give me the right amount. I wouldn't want to cause you any more pain.

Bernie puts the pizza down. He pulls out thirty dollars from his wallet and hands the cash to Vito.

BERNIE

Not you Vito, you could never cause me any pain.

(MORE)

BERNIE (CONT'D)

For one thing, you're much too honest. And in case you haven't noticed, you don't have any boobs.

INT. JULIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Marion sits alone at the kitchen table with a variety of flooring, tile, and paint samples. She nervously sips a cup of coffee and intermittently stares at her watch.

INT. JULIE'S HOUSE - DEN/OFFICE - NIGHT

Bernie sits on the couch holding his banjo. Andy sits next to Bernie with a tenor sax strapped around his neck and a crumpled piece of manuscript paper on his lap. Marion sits in Julie's office chair across from Bernie and Andy holding an egg shaker.

BERNIE

Pay attention Marion. I'm going to give you a brief music lesson so you can be in the band.

MARION

What if I don't want to be in the band?

BERNIE

Relax. Put your sponge down for a few minutes and maybe you'll learn something wonderful. Now there are three elements of music. There's melody, harmony, and rhythm. Andy's going to play the melody, that's the relationship of adjacent single notes. I'm going to play harmony, chords on my banjo to accompany Andy. And you, you're going to keep time with the egg shaker. Rhythm relates to every aspect of time in music.

MARION

The only time I keep is with a watch and you're running out of it Bernie. I have no idea what you're talking about.

BERNIE

It's easy Marion. All you have to do is count to four. You can count to four, can't you?

Marion gives Bernie a dirty look.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

I'll set the tempo and count off.
One, two, three and four. Just
follow the four beats with the
shaker. We're going to play an
original composition of mine. I bet
you never knew about my skills as a
musician and composer. My talents
are innumerable.

MARION

It's a shame you have such a low
opinion of yourself Bernie. You
really ought to take a class in
remedial self-esteem.

Bernie glares at Andy as Andy chuckles to himself.

BERNIE

I think it's important to
periodically take stock of oneself
and make an accurate assessment.
After careful consideration, I've
come to the conclusion that I'm
perfect and everyone else is
terribly flawed. That of course
includes you Marion. Now if we can
get back to music I think we should
play at a medium tempo and Andy can
take a solo after the bridge.
Ready?

Bernie doesn't give anyone a chance to respond.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

One, two, three, four...

Marion looks bored as she plays the shaker in perfect time.
Andy has a gorgeous tone and plays beautifully as he reads
notes from the crumpled piece of manuscript paper. Bernie
butchers the chords and isn't in sync with Andy and Marion.
Bernie is frustrated and suddenly stops playing.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

No, no, no. You missed the fourth
beat of the last measure Marion.
You totally threw me off so please
try to concentrate and follow me.

Andy and Marion look amused as they begin to play again.
Bernie continues to stumble through the piece and becomes
increasingly agitated. He stops playing abruptly and yells.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

You're ruining the music Marion!
You have to feel it. It's something
that can't be taught. I'm sorry to
have to say this but you just don't
have it. You can't be in the band.

Marion looks relieved and quips back.

MARION

Obviously, I'm devastated. It's
going to take some time for me to
get over this Bernie. I need to be
alone now.

Marion gets up slowly and acts like she's distraught. She
puts the egg shaker down on Julie's desk and quietly leaves
the room.

Bernie looks at Andy curiously.

BERNIE

She's playing with me, right?

Andy smiles at Bernie and shrugs.

INT. GAIL'S CAR - STREET IN FRONT OF JULIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Gail and Julie savor individual ice cream sundaes.

GAIL

Can we talk about Jeff now that the
situation with your folks is
improving? I'm really attracted to
him Jules and I'd like to get to
know him better.

JULIE

Define know him better. In what
sense?

GAIL

In every sense.

JULIE

That's what's so troubling.

GAIL

Frankly, I'm at a loss here. I've
never done anything in my life that
could be construed as offensive.

INT. GAIL'S PLACE - BEDROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Gail and Larry are having sex in Gail's bed. Larry is on top of Gail. Larry tries to kiss Gail but she pushes him away. Gail is extremely turned off by Larry's body odor and confronts him about it.

GAIL

What's with the BO? Ever hear of deodorant?

Larry is mortified by Gail's insensitivity.

LARRY

You are a really mean person.

BACK TO PRESENT

Gail rolls the car windows down and a cool breeze hits Julie's face.

JULIE

You've never done anything that could be construed as offensive? You told poor Larry that he reeked during sex. I'd say that qualifies as offensive.

GAIL

You want to know what was offensive? The stench, that's what. Larry did reek, and it really skeeved me out. If anything, he should be grateful to me for pointing out his poor personal hygiene. I did him a favor Jules.

JULIE

How so?

GAIL

I significantly increased his chances of getting laid.

JULIE

Has anyone ever told you that you have an uncanny way of looking at things?

GAIL

Yes. In fact, I hear it all the time.

INT. JULIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Macro and Jessie sit next to each other at the kitchen table. Jessie's eyes are full of tears.

JESSIE

I thought you weren't leaving for awhile.

MACRO

This is an amazing opportunity. It's always been a dream of mine to study in Paris. A slot opened up for me and I have to go.

JESSIE

I know you have to go. I guess I was just hoping we'd have a little more time together.

Jessie reaches for some tissues in her bag.

JESSIE (CONT'D)

It's just that I'm going to miss you so much Macro.

Macro moves closer to Jessie. He puts his arms around her and gives her a tender kiss.

MACRO

I'm going to miss you so much too.

Macro reaches into his backpack and carefully pulls out a box containing an original sculpture.

MACRO (CONT'D)

I made this for you Jess.

Jessie opens the box and places the sculpture on the table. She's fascinated with the piece and takes a couple of moments to explore its contours and textures with her fingers.

JESSIE

It's exquisite... like two interconnected souls.

Macro smiles lovingly at Jessie and brushes the bangs away from her face.

MACRO

It's anything you want it to be.

EXT. JULIE'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Chao stands at the front door with another Chinese food delivery. Bernie comes out of the house to retrieve his food and grill Chao.

BERNIE

Well if it isn't the original
Chinese food rip-off.

CHAO

I have your food.

BERNIE

Yes, I see that. But do you also
have my hundred bucks? The hundred
bucks you stole from me when I
mistakenly handed you a hundred
dollar bill instead of a ten.

CHAO

I didn't steal your hundred bucks.
You probably dropped it somewhere.

BERNIE

I'm not that careless. You know you
stole it. You took advantage of my
kind nature. You're Chinese, you're
supposed to be more evolved than
that.

CHAO

Says who?

BERNIE

Confucius. The Buddha. Guys like
that. Where are your ethics?

CHAO

Fuck if I know. I'm an American.

INT. JULIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Bernie stumbles into the kitchen holding the steering wheel from the hearse. He looks like a total wreck. His suit is torn and filthy and one sleeve is completely gone. Bernie's hair is tousled and adorned with tiny branches and shrubbery. He has cuts and scrapes all over his face and hands. Julie is shocked at the sight of Bernie.

JULIE

Dad!

Julie tries to collect herself.

JULIE (CONT'D)

What in the world happened to you?

BERNIE

It's nothing baby. I just had a little accident, that's all.

JULIE

A little accident? You look like you drove over a cliff.

BERNIE

Well, in a manner of speaking, yes. See I inadvertently totaled the hearse.

JULIE

How do you inadvertently total a hearse?

BERNIE

As you are well aware, low blood sugar is a serious medical condition. I had no choice but to pull off the road for nutritional sustenance.

Bernie pauses awkwardly.

JULIE

And?

BERNIE

As I made my way down a highway off ramp I hit a bump. My french fries went flying all over the place. I got distracted for a moment and missed the partially hidden sign for steep curve. I guess I was going too fast. All of a sudden, I found myself sailing into a dense thicket that borders the highway. I know I definitely ruined one rabbit's day.

JULIE

I can't believe this. You could've been killed Dad. Thank god you're alright.

BERNIE

Perhaps that would have been an easier fate than what transpired next. Needless to say, my boss was none too pleased. He canned me without hesitation and now I'm back to square one. I've got nothing.

JULIE

You can always find another job.

Bernie answers with a tongue-in-cheek response.

BERNIE

Oh, sure. Countless opportunities await me because I'm such a hot commodity.

Marion enters the kitchen carrying more finish samples. She stares at Bernie for a moment before speaking with deadpan humor.

MARION

You're looking well Bernie.

INT. JULIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Marion sits alone at the kitchen table with her collection of finish samples. She compulsively rearranges paint chips.

INT. JULIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Marion sits alone at the kitchen table with her large collection of finish samples. Julie enters the kitchen and finds Marion staring at a piece of tile she's holding.

JULIE

Mom, what are you doing?

MARION

No show Charlie stood me up again.

JULIE

Who?

MARION

My contractor.

JULIE

This is ridiculous. Did you try him on his cell?

Marion nods yes.

JULIE (CONT'D)
Well, what did he say?

MARION
He didn't say anything. He doesn't answer.

JULIE
Can't you leave him a message?

MARION
No, I'm afraid it isn't possible.

JULIE
What? Where's his number? I'm calling him right now.

Marion hands Julie a business card. Julie puts her cell phone on speaker and dials the number. The phone rings four times and then the call is transferred to voice-mail.

COMPUTER GENERATED FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)
Mailbox full.

Marion throws her arms up.

MARION
See what I mean? He's vanished.
He's nowhere to be found.

Julie is infuriated. She composes an email to Marion's contractor.

JULIE
I'm sending him an email.

MARION
He probably isn't checking that either.

JULIE
Then I'll go over to his office if I have to. He better get his ass in gear or I'll demand the immediate return of your deposit.

Marion looks skeptical.

MARION
I wouldn't hold my breath.

INT. JULIE'S HOUSE - DEN/HOME OFFICE - NIGHT

Bernie walks into the den and discovers that his banjo is missing from the stand. He freaks out and screams for Julie.

BERNIE

Julie! My banjo's missing!

Julie runs into the room.

JULIE

It's okay Dad.

BERNIE

No, it's not okay. It's gone!
Somebody stole my banjo!

JULIE

No Dad, it was me. I took it into
the music shop to have it restrung.
An early birthday present... I
wanted to surprise you.

Bernie looks visibly relieved.

BERNIE

How sweet.

JULIE

They were supposed to get it back
to me before you got home today. I
was hoping you wouldn't be in here
tonight.

BERNIE

That's alright, baby. I'm just so
relieved that no one took my banjo.

Julie smiles at Bernie and kisses him on the cheek.

JULIE

Sorry for the scare. No one took
your banjo. Promise.

INT. JULIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Julie, Jessie, Bernie, and Marion sit at the kitchen table and eat breakfast. Julie's cell phone rings.

JULIE

It's the music shop.

Bernie perks up when Julie answers her cell phone.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Hello.

Julie's expression shifts from pure delight to horror. Bernie anxiously watches Julie. He accidentally knocks his mug over and spills coffee all over Marion.

JULIE (CONT'D)

What? You're saying it was--

BERNIE

What is it? What's wrong?

Julie motions for Bernie to calm down. Marion is incensed.

MARION

Great. In case you hadn't noticed,
you just spilled coffee all over me
Bernie!

Julie puts a finger on her mouth and signals for everyone to be quiet. Bernie is too stunned to respond to Marion. Jessie jumps up and grabs some paper towels. She quickly hands them to Marion.

JULIE

Okay, so where does that leave us?

Marion grumbles and glares at Bernie as she blots up the coffee stains on her blouse and slacks.

MARION

Soaked, that's where. Why do you
make messes wherever you go?

Bernie is too focused on Julie to respond to Marion.

JULIE

Thanks Tom. Please call me as soon
as you hear something.

Julie slowly puts her cell phone down on the kitchen table and faces Bernie with a look of dread in her eyes. Bernie's panic intensifies with every passing second.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Something happened down at the
shop. Something bad.

Bernie is about to jump out of his skin.

BERNIE

Something bad? For god's sake tell
me what happened!

JULIE

There was a break in and...

Julie hesitates for a second and then blurts it out.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Your banjo was stolen.

INT. JULIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY - LATER

Marion struggles for a mug from the back of the kitchen cabinet. Bernie sneaks in and pours the last drop of coffee from the coffee pot into his own mug.

Marion turns around and screams at Bernie.

MARION

Do you ever think about anyone
other than yourself?

BERNIE

Please... be kind to me Marion. I
did just lose the only thing I had
left in the world.

MARION

And I lost my entire construction
deposit. Forty thousand dollars. I
can't just go out and replace that
kind of money. You lost a stupid
banjo. I lost a home.

Julie walks in and finds Marion in distress.

JULIE

What's going on?

Marion storms out of the kitchen.

BERNIE

Your mother hates me.

JULIE

Don't say that Dad. Mom doesn't
hate you.

Marion yells from the hallway.

MARION (O.S.)

Yes, I do.

INT. JULIE'S HOUSE - JULIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Julie walks into the bedroom and finds Andy throwing clothing and accounting materials into a suitcase.

JULIE

Are you leaving again Andy?

ANDY

Last minute gig Jules. I worked everything out with my Dad but he needs me to fill in one last time. Mike's got the flu.

JULIE

How long will you be gone for this time?

ANDY

Not long. Just a few weeks, maybe longer. It's a short tour. Then I'll come back.

JULIE

Come back to what? What are you coming back to Andy?

Andy avoids making eye contact with Julie. Julie speaks in gentle tones.

JULIE (CONT'D)

I can't do this anymore. We don't talk and we don't fight. We don't make love or share our dreams. We're a million miles away from where we started.

Andy turns and looks at Julie with deep sadness.

ANDY

And how did we get here?

Julie wears a sad smile and shrugs her shoulders.

ANDY (CONT'D)

I don't want to lose you Jules.

Julie touches Andy's shoulder gently.

JULIE

We'll be alright. Everything will be alright.

Julie's cell phone goes off on the night table and she glances at the screen.

INSERT - JULIE'S CELL PHONE SCREEN

"Shirley"

BACK TO SCENE

JULIE (CONT'D)
For the most part.

EXT. JULIE'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Vito arrives with two large pizzas. He finds Bernie in a state of utter despair and tries to lighten Bernie's mood.

VITO
Having a little party tonight
Bernie?

BERNIE
Hardly.

VITO
What's wrong with you man? You look
terrible.

BERNIE
My life is in shambles Vito. I have
no job, no home, and no money. To
make matters worse, my banjo, my
one prized possession was just
stolen from the music shop. I'm
turning sixty-nine and I'm nowhere.

VITO
You're somewhere Bernie. We're
always somewhere. You may not like
where you're at right now but that
doesn't mean it's always gonna be
like this.

BERNIE
But how do you know that Vito? How
can you really be sure?

VITO
'Cause nothing's fixed in time.
We're always in a state of motion
whether we like it or not.

(MORE)

VITO (CONT'D)

I'm sorry that your banjo was stolen but you have to let go of it Bernie. You're too attached. It may come back to you or something better may come in its place.

BERNIE

It's hard for me to trust that something better might come along.

VITO

I know. But there must be a reason why your banjo was stolen. You have to let go of certain things so the universe can bring other things into your life.

BERNIE

I wish I had your faith Vito.

Bernie looks down and stares at a dead bug. He wallows in self-pity.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

I'm a lot like that dead bug... crushed.

Vito laughs and shakes his head.

VITO

Nah, nothing can crush you Bernie. You're much too big and way too stubborn.

INT. JULIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT - LATER

Bernie sits alone at the kitchen table surrounded by empty pizza boxes and empty Chinese food containers. He looks like he's nursing a bad hangover. Julie rushes into the kitchen and speaks excitedly.

JULIE

Dad, what are you doing?

BERNIE

Drowning my sorrows baby.

JULIE

You ate all that food? How could anyone eat all that--

BERNIE

I saved you a couple of chicken wings.

JULIE

How thoughtful. Anyway, I have some incredible news for you. Tom from the music shop just called. They recovered your banjo Dad! Apparently, the new kid they hired stole a bunch of instruments and equipment from the shop. The police found your banjo in his car, buried under some stolen guitars.

Bernie is still in a stupor and doesn't respond right away.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Dad are you listening? They found your banjo! But it gets better.

Bernie struggles to overcome his self-induced torpor.

BERNIE

They found my banjo?

JULIE

Not only that, but the appraiser on the case is a collector of rare instruments. You're never gonna believe this. Your banjo is extremely rare. There are only three like it in the entire world. This guy wants to make you an offer if you're interested. It's worth a lot of money.

Bernie's eyes light up.

BERNIE

Did you just say a lot of money? Of course I'm interested. I'm very interested. Where's his number? Can I call him now?

JULIE

You can give him a call in the morning.

BERNIE

I hope for his sake he's an early riser.

INT. JULIE'S HOUSE - DEN/OFFICE - NIGHT

Bernie walks in and finds Marion sitting on the couch reading a book. He approaches her in a sheepish manner.

BERNIE

Can I talk to you for a minute?

Marion looks mildly annoyed.

MARION

What is it Bernie? I'm trying to get through this book.

Bernie sits down next to Marion and speaks with the utmost sincerity.

BERNIE

I'm really sorry that low life contractor ripped you off and I want to help.

MARION

Thanks. But there's not much you can do unless you've recently come into a large sum of money.

Bernie pulls a small envelope out of his shirt pocket and hands it to Marion.

BERNIE

Suppose I have.

Marion is flabbergasted when she opens the envelope and finds a check made out to her for forty thousand dollars.

MARION

I don't understand.

BERNIE

I sold my banjo to a private collector after I got it back. It was a fluke thing but suffice it say my banjo was worth a small fortune.

MARION

You're kidding.

BERNIE

It's true. That stupid banjo was a godsend.

MARION

It's wonderful for you, but why on earth do you want to give me so much money? You're always asking for your alimony back.

BERNIE

Because you need a home. Now you can hire a reputable contractor and start rebuilding.

MARION

And what about you, don't you need a home? You're always saying that you've got nothing.

Marion makes quotation marks with her fingers.

MARION (CONT'D)

You're wiped out.

BERNIE

I've got plenty left so don't worry about me. I'll probably rent once I figure out where I'm going. Besides which, I'm simplifying.

MARION

You're simplifying? I don't know, Bernie. It's very generous of you but I feel funny taking your money.

BERNIE

Well don't. I wouldn't feel funny taking yours.

MARION

I don't doubt that for a minute.

BERNIE

Seriously Marion, I want you to have this. Let me help you.

Marion stares at the check and then looks up at Bernie.

MARION

You're absolutely sure you want to do this?

BERNIE

Yes. I couldn't be more sure.

MARION

This is the nicest thing you've ever done. Without a doubt, the nicest thing.

BERNIE

You don't have to thank me Marion. Seeing you in your new home will be thanks enough.

Marion pats Bernie's hand and then Marion and Bernie stare straight ahead in an awkward silence till Bernie breaks it.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

So does this mean I can sleep in here with you tonight?

MARION

I don't see that happening Bernie.

BERNIE

Yeah, I didn't think so.

INT. GAIL'S CAR - STREET IN FRONT OF JULIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Gail and Julie grab jelly beans from a huge plastic jar that sits between them on the front seat.

JULIE

So Andy and I are filing when he gets back. He'll get a place nearby so he can be close to Jessie.

GAIL

Well Hallelujah. I'm glad you two are finally taking action.

JULIE

Thanks for being so understanding.

GAIL

Always Jules.

JULIE

Now I just have to figure out what to do about work.

Julie receives a photo of Shirley on her cell phone.

INSERT - PHOTO OF SHIRLEY ON JULIE'S CELL PHONE SCREEN

Shirley looks crazed and totally wiggled out.

BACK TO SCENE

Julie's jaw drops. She holds her cell phone up to Gail.

JULIE (CONT'D)

A co-worker of mine just sent me this pic of Shirley. It's going viral around the agency.

Julie's cell phone goes off and she answers.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Julie Matthews.

Julie looks surprised.

JULIE (CONT'D)

I'm fine. How are you Maxine?

Julie listens for a moment.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Yes, it's terrible. Is there anything I can do?

Julie listens for another moment.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Me? You want to make me--

Julie shakes her head in amazement.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Sure, I can meet you there at nine tomorrow. Thanks so much Maxine, I really appreciate the opportunity.

Julie ends the call and speaks excitedly.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Ready for this one? That was Shirley's boss. Horowitz called in sick so Shirley had to cover for him. She went to meet with a family that lived on the twentieth floor of a high-rise building. On the way down there was some kind of a mechanical failure. Shirley's elevator dropped almost twenty floors before any safety features kicked in. She's lucky she wasn't killed.

GAIL

Wow, that is unreal Jules.

JULIE

Wait, there's more. Shirley is so traumatized she'll be out on medical leave for quite awhile. She won't be coming back for a very long time, if ever. They want to make me acting director!

GAIL

Oh my god! Do you realize what this means Jules? You're going to be Horowitz's boss!

Julie grins widely and exhibits a look of great satisfaction.

JULIE

That's right. And according to my calculations Horowitz isn't eligible for any vacation time until 2017.

EXT. JULIE'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Chao arrives with Bernie's food. When Bernie comes out of the house he discovers that Chao's demeanor has changed. Chao is friendly and talkative.

CHAO

Hello. Nice to see you.

Chao hands Bernie his food.

BERNIE

You seem very chipper tonight.

Chao smiles broadly.

CHAO

My father died.

Bernie is surprised by Chao's glee and responds awkwardly.

BERNIE

I'm sorry to hear you lost your Dad.

CHAO

Don't be. He was a prick and treated me like crap.

(MORE)

CHAO (CONT'D)

But I'm his only son so he left the restaurant to me. I'm selling it and opening my own place at the end of the month.

BERNIE

You're opening your own Chinese food restaurant?

CHAO

No, I hate Chinese food. I dig Jewish deli and Southern soul food. I'm opening a joint up in Harlem: Chao's Jewish Deli and Southern Soul Food Eatery.

BERNIE

What an interesting combination.

Chao hands Bernie a coupon.

CHAO

Use this.

BERNIE

What is it?

CHAO

A coupon for twenty percent off your first meal. Try the kreplach and ham hocks. It's our signature dish.

Bernie furrows his brow and nods agreeably.

BERNIE

Kreplach and ham hocks. I'm looking forward to that.

INT/EXT. JULIE'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - DAY

Julie opens the door and finds Jeff standing there with a sour look on his face.

JEFF

How could you do this to me?

JULIE

Do what? What did I do?

JEFF

Why didn't you tell me about Gail?

Julie looks horrified. She stumbles over her words.

JULIE

Jeff, I'm so sorry. I wanted to--

JEFF

You know how hard it is to find the right person to share your life with? You have to go on all these miserable dates and put up with a lot of unpleasantness. You could have spared me some of that unpleasantness if you'd told me about Gail earlier. Thanks to you, she took matters into her own hands last night.

Julie wears a pained expression.

JULIE

Oh no.

JEFF

Oh yes. She showed up at my door wearing a sexy red silk dress and six inch heels. Believe me, it was the last thing I expected.

JULIE

I don't know what Gail was thinking.

JEFF

Well, it was obvious to me what she was thinking.

INT. JEFF'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT - IMAGINING

Julie imagines Gail and Jeff having sex in Jeff's bed. Jeff is on top of Gail. Jeff is trying hard to please Gail but Gail looks bored and dissatisfied and finally speaks up.

GAIL

Look, you're a nice guy. But you just don't do it for me.

Jeff looks dejected and uncomfortable.

BACK TO PRESENT

Jeff's voice interrupts Julie's imaginary scenario and brings her back to the present.

JEFF

That's why I'm so ticked off.

JULIE

I understand if you don't want to be friends with me anymore.

JEFF

Huh? I never said that. Whatever gave you that idea?

JULIE

You know, the sexy red dress and six inch heels thing. What Gail was thinking or doing. What you were both thinking or doing. I get it Jeff.

JEFF

I don't think you do. Last night was the best night of my life, and Gail is the sweetest woman I've ever known. You were holding out on me Julie.

JULIE

We are talking about my Gaily, right?

JEFF

She's so warm and giving. She's the kindest, gentlest, most caring woman I've ever been with.

Julie looks puzzled yet relieved.

JULIE

I didn't mean to hold out on you Jeff. I'm really very happy for the both of you. I'll be sure to express my sincere and heartfelt sentiments to Gail when I see her.

JEFF

I'm not really mad at you Julie. I'm just joshing. Truth is I couldn't be happier. Thanks for bringing Gail into my life. Oh and sorry that things didn't work out with my guy. I don't know what happened there. Well, I'm off to the chiropractor. Back's acting up today. Let's all have dinner soon.

JULIE

Sure Jeff. Looking forward to it.

Julie looks baffled as she closes the door.

INT. GAIL'S CAR - STREET IN FRONT OF JULIE'S HOUSE - DAY

A large empty bag of popcorn lies crinkled on the front seat between Gail and Julie.

JULIE

What happened to your fuck 'em and
leave 'em mantra?

GAIL

It's currently undergoing
revisions.

INT. JULIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Jessie rushes into the kitchen carrying an arm load of books.
Julie sips a cup of coffee at the kitchen table.

JESSIE

Can you give me a lift to the
library? I want to return these
books. I'm done.

JULIE

You're done? But what about being
at the mercy of life's seemingly
random and meaningless events? The
agony of individual freedom and
responsibility? The inescapable
reality of our aloneness?

Jessie looks at Julie but doesn't respond.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Have you sorted it all out Jessie?
Have you figured out the meaning of
life?

JESSIE

The meaning of life Mom?

Jessie ponders for a moment before she responds.

JESSIE (CONT'D)

It's anything I want it to be.

INT. JULIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Bernie sits alone at the kitchen table with a newspaper and a cup of coffee. He turns to the food and dining section of the newspaper and sees an article about Chao's new restaurant.

INSERT - ARTICLE HEADLINE

"Chao's Jewish Deli and Southern Soul Food Eatery is Harlem's Hottest Haunt- Rakes in Record Profit During First Week"

BACK TO SCENE

Bernie frantically searches through his wallet for the coupon Chao gave him. He beams widely after he finds the coupon tucked away in a credit card slot.

SUPER: "Six Months Later"

INT. JULIE'S HOUSE - JULIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Julie stands in front of a mirror and starts to put a pair of earrings on. Her bedroom door is slightly open. Marion knocks on the bedroom door and calls out to Julie.

MARION

Good morning. Is it alright if I come in for a minute?

JULIE

Hang on a second Mom.

Julie puts her other earring on. She hurries over to the bedroom door and opens it all the way for Marion. Marion stands in front of the door with a beautifully gift wrapped package. The package is rather large.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Hi Mom, come in. Is everything okay?

Marion enters Julie's bedroom revealing an understated smile.

MARION

I wanted to give you something. A little gift to thank you for everything you've done for me during this terrible ordeal.

JULIE

Oh Mom, that's so sweet. You know I'd do anything for you.

Marion hands the package to Julie.

MARION

I can't wait to see your face when
you open it.

Julie sits down on the bed and sports a youthful smile as she
peruses the package.

JULIE

It's almost too beautiful to open.

Julie unwraps the package slowly and carefully. She pulls out
a colorful box with a picture of a giant vibrator. Large
letters across the top read: TURBO 5Z3-6000

Julie is blown away and embarrassed.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Wow Mom, I don't quite know what to
say.

MARION

The girl at the shop--

JULIE

Girl at the shop?

MARION

Yes honey, the girl at Ride the
Waves, or something like that. It's
an adult toy store. Anyway, this
girl was so informative and
helpful. I specifically asked her
for the top rated vibrator, not for
me, for you of course. And she told
me all about the Turbo 5Z3-6000. It
has three adjustable rotating
heads, six variable speed settings,
and numerous optional attachments
to enhance female sexual pleasure.

Marion eagerly awaits a response from Julie. Julie has
difficulty making eye contact with Marion.

JULIE

It's an unbelievable gift Mom.
Words fail me at the moment.

MARION

So you like it? You must try it out
soon and let me know what you
think.

(MORE)

MARION (CONT'D)

I can return it within ninety days
if you're not completely satisfied.

JULIE

Good to know. I don't mean to rush
you but I'll be late for work if I
don't get going soon.

Marion pops up and exhibits a look of great satisfaction.

MARION

Sorry, I didn't mean to slow you
down this morning. I just couldn't
wait to surprise you. Have a
wonderful day!

Marion walks out of the bedroom. Julie picks up the gift and
shakes it near her ear. She carries the vibrator over to her
closet and quickly places it on the floor. She closes the
closet door and leans against it. After a moment, Julie turns
around and slowly opens the closet door. She peers furtively
into the closet with a look of wonder and curiosity.

EXT. JULIE'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Vito arrives with a large pizza and rings the doorbell.
Bernie is surprised when he opens the door and finds Vito
standing there with a pizza.

BERNIE

Vito, how nice to see you. I didn't
order a pizza.

VITO

I know Bernie, this one's on me.
It's your favorite... a meat mania
combo. Come on out and dig in with
me.

Bernie steps out of the house.

BERNIE

I'd be delighted, but I thought you
don't eat meat.

VITO

Yeah, well I thought I'd go to town
for a bit since I had a little
slip. Might as well, before I get
back on the horse.

Bernie and Vito sit on Julie's front porch. Vito opens the pizza box and takes out a couple of napkins from his jacket packet. Each guy grabs a slice and starts chowing down.

VITO (CONT'D)

Man, that does taste good.

BERNIE

So what happened Vito? You said you had a little slip.

VITO

Carlotta Antonia Lucia... Shit! I can't remember her last name. She's what happened. Five foot eight, auburn hair, dark green eyes, and a full set of lips. My brother asked me to close last night, something I don't normally do. I was doing some cleaning when Carlotta cornered me in the back of the shop. My brother hired her a couple of days ago because we needed an extra server. Maria's been with us for years but she just left to have a baby.

BERNIE

So you and Carlotta? In the back of the shop?

VITO

Best sex I've ever had.

BERNIE

Do tell.

Vito grabs another slice and savors a huge bite before he responds.

VITO

Please. I may have had a weak moment or two but I'm still a gentleman.

Bernie looks at Vito skeptically.

BERNIE

Forgive me if I seem skeptical but the operative word here is man.

VITO

What do you want? You want details?

BERNIE

Yes, details! Lots and lots of details.

Bernie grabs a slice and woofs it down.

VITO

Whatever happened to using your imagination?

BERNIE

I'm lazy.

VITO

I'm not gonna paint a picture for you if that's what you're after. But I will tell you that we covered every inch of space in the shop. It went on for hours.

BERNIE

Hours? Why must you torture me like that? Incidentally, that doesn't sound like a little slip to me. Seems more like a giant fall from grace.

VITO

And that is exactly why I'm getting back on the eightfold path starting tomorrow.

BERNIE

Tomorrow? Can't you hang out for awhile and have some fun? I mean, what about Carlotta Antonia Lucia what's her name? She isn't going anywhere, right?

VITO

Yeah, but I am. I'm not about to forsake eternal spiritual enlightenment for a few fleeting moments of unimaginable physical pleasure.

BERNIE

Really?

Bernie ponders for a moment.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

I would. Besides, it wasn't a few fleeting moments according to you.

VITO

You know what I mean.

BERNIE

I may not be headed for eternal spiritual enlightenment but I'm going somewhere too. A guy I worked with at my last plastics gig is forming a new company out in California. He wants to bring me on board. He's going to assume all the risk so I've got nothing to lose. If it doesn't work out, I've still got enough to live on. Andy's handling all my finances now.

VITO

Wow Bernie, that's great news. I'll miss you man.

BERNIE

Same here Vito.

VITO

When are you taking off?

BERNIE

Sometime next week. I have to be out there by the end of the month. I thought I'd take my time and drive but I'm making a little detour first. There's a beautiful mountain retreat I want to check out. It's an ashram actually. I thought I'd spend a few days there and explore the whole spirituality thing.

VITO

For real? You're going to an ashram?

BERNIE

What can I say, you've inspired me Vito. And there's this woman I've been chatting with online. It seems we have a lot in common so we made arrangements to meet up there. She was very impressed with my knowledge of Buddhism.

VITO

Oh, now I get it. Glad I could be helpful.

BERNIE

You'll never know how helpful
you've been.

Bernie and Vito sit quietly for a moment and finish off the
pizza.

VITO

I don't know what I'll miss more:
sex with Carlotta or meat mania
pizza.

Bernie looks at Vito and laughs.

BERNIE

Sounds like a no-brainer to me.

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF JULIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Bernie, Marion, and Julie stand near a rental car. Bernie
pulls out an envelope from his jacket and hands it to Marion.

MARION

What is this Bernie? Did you
suddenly come into more money?

BERNIE

It's a copy of my will. Out of the
goodness of my heart I've decided
to include you in my estate.

Marion purses her lips and scrunches her eyebrows.

MARION

Exactly how much money are we
talking about?

BERNIE

If you must know, I've left you a
percentage of my estate. That's
assuming you survive me of course.

MARION

You'll probably live till a hundred
and eighty just to spite me.

BERNIE

Oh, I intend to. I am, after all,
in excellent physical condition.

Marion gives Bernie the once over and laughs.

MARION

Right. All that pizza and Chinese food are doing you wonders.

BERNIE

You know Marion, it's not too late for you to see the error of your ways. You could still have me, before some incredibly fortunate woman succumbs to my charm and I'm no longer available.

Marion smiles knowingly at Bernie.

MARION

You should be so lucky.

Bernie tenderly holds Marion's face in his hands and kisses her on the cheek.

BERNIE

Goodbye, darling. Take good care of yourself.

Marion fixes the crooked shirt collar of Bernie's stained white shirt.

MARION

Be careful Bernie. And don't buy any more white shirts.

Bernie hugs and kisses Julie. He gets in the rental car and rolls the car window down.

JULIE

Dad, please do me a favor. Promise me that you won't eat and drive at the same time.

Bernie chuckles and turns the key in the ignition.

BERNIE

I promise baby.

Bernie starts to slowly pull away from the curb. He leans out the window and yells to Marion.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

Try not to miss me too much Marion.

Marion tries to deflect the bittersweet moment with humor.

MARION

You know your father is not a well man. He really needs intensive therapy.

Julie puts her arm around Marion.

JULIE

I know, Mom.

Marion and Julie start walking back to the house.

MARION

You're obviously in a good mood this morning but you seem unusually quiet for you.

JULIE

It might have something to do with that gift you gave me

MARION

Gift?

Marion looks curiously at Julie and then smiles and nods.

MARION (CONT'D)

Oh, that gift. While we're on the subject of gifts, Aunt Corinne enrolled me in an interior design class. A little housewarming gift... her words, not mine. It wasn't cheap, but you know you can't argue with that woman.

JULIE

It's futile, really.

MARION

After I finish decorating my new house I'll give you a hand with yours. There's a lot we can do with your place. Take the den for example. The colors are all washed out and the furniture is so old. It wouldn't take much. It's amazing what a paint job will do to transform your home.

JULIE

Mom.

MARION

We'll throw some bold colors on the walls and buy a couple of nice accent pieces. That corner table has got to go, it does nothing but collect dust. Needs a good polishing too.

JULIE

Mom.

MARION

A few well placed furnishings and you'll go from blah to charming in no time. After that, we've got to tackle the kitchen. Those kitchen cabinets are ancient and the hardware is from the year one. If you want to go with a contemporary design there are many options to choose from. Custom design is pricier so it all depends on your budget and how much you're willing to spend. Not that money has anything to do with good taste. Your father and I used to go to these boring dinner parties thrown by some of the wealthy executives in his company. We saw the tackiest homes. These women had taste like my--

Julie wears a look of consternation. Her voice grows louder.

JULIE

Mom!

Marion is in a world of her own and continues to yammer on. She reaches the front door first and enters the house. Marion inadvertently slams the door in Julie's face and locks her out of the house. Julie yells at Marion as she pounds on the door and jiggles the doorknob.

JULIE (CONT'D)

I don't like bold colors and I'm keeping that corner table. Ya hear me? Keeping it!

FADE OUT.

The End