Relatively Speaking
by Ethan Coen, Elaine May
and Woody Allen
TALKING CURE

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Non-descript doctor’s office. Two men.

Doctor: Okay, Larry. Do you know why you’re here?
Larry: I’m not sure.
Doctor: You’re not sure why you’re here.
Larry: Not really.
Doctor: What’s a guess? Why do you think you’re here?
Larry: I killed somebody?
Doctor: (laughs) No Larry, you didn’t kill anyone.
Larry: Okay.
Doctor: Not at all.
Larry: That’s good news.
Doctor: Yes it is. So why—
Larry: I didn’t kill the elderly lady?
Doctor: What elderly lady?

Beat.

Larry: Never mind.

Doctor: Larry, you’re here so that I can help you. Is there some way that you think you might need help? Or relief, maybe, or, or, or clarity? What do you hope for, in this encounter?

Larry: I don’t know. (thinking beat) I guess I’m hoping—maybe—could this be one of those things where it turns out I’m the doctor and you’re the mental patient?
Beat.

Doctor: No, Larry.

Larry: How do you know? You don’t know everything.

Doctor: No, I don’t know everything.

Larry: It could turn out that way. As a surprise.


Larry: Well I guess you have to say that. Or it wouldn’t be a surprise.

Doctor: Let’s go back—I don’t really care for that word, those two words, “mental patient.” Why describe yourself that way?

Larry: I’m saying I might not be.

Doctor: But getting away from that idea, the reversal idea. Why would you refer to yourself in those terms, as a “mental patient.”

Larry: I’m in a mental hospital.

Doctor: Well.

Larry: And they didn’t gimme a SMOCK.

Doctor: Well, okay. Okay, but. Okay. But I help a lot of people who don’t think of themselves as “mental patients.” They have problems, problems that sometimes I can help them with, just like I want to address your problem. And the first question I want to talk about is, how would you characterize the problem? Or do you think you don’t have any?

Larry: Everybody has problems.

Doctor: Everybody has problems.

Larry: Who helps you with yours?

Beat.

Doctor: Let’s—I have friends who help me with mine, and loved ones. But let’s—

Larry: That’s what friends are for.
**Doctor:** That’s what friends are for. But doctors can help sometimes too.

**Larry:** Which you claim to be.

**Doctor:** . . . Okay—

**Larry:** If I say I don’t have a problem, you’ll say that proves I’m crazy.

**Doctor:** No I wouldn’t say that, but you yourself said, Everyone has problems.

**Larry:** Not because it’s true. I only said it because it’s one of those things people say. You’re supposed to accept it, repeat it—“Everyone has problems.” Keep building it into the system.

**Doctor:** The system?

**Larry:** Make it a core belief. To reinforce the system, keep everybody in line. The house always wins.

**Doctor:** Okay.

**Larry:** Am I right?

**Doctor:** Okay. Okay. Fair enough.

**Larry:** I am right.

**Doctor:** Yes, okay, it’s a truism. We shouldn’t set too much store by little sayings like that, “Everybody has problems,” I agree.

**Larry:** You agree. Because, the house lets you win sometimes. They have to. Or you’ll stop playing.

**Doctor:** I’m not the house, Larry. I have nothing to gain by your having a problem.

**Larry:** If people don’t have problems you don’t eat.

**Doctor:** Okay—

**Larry:** You invested a lot of money in people having problems. Medical school. You have to work it off. All those years in medical school, you have to beat it out of my ass. Or you lose.

**Doctor:** Okay. So you don’t have a problem?
Larry: That's not what I'm saying. I'm saying I don't necessarily have a problem. It's not like I have a boil on my face and I walk in and everyone says Whoa, that guy has a problem.

Doctor: Okay.

Larry: Hasn't been established yet, if I have a problem.

Doctor: Okay. And your opinion on the matter?

Larry: Whether I have a problem?

Doctor: Uh-huh?

Beat.

Larry: Everybody has problems.

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Doctor: Larry, I think we made some good progress last time. But then, when you assault the nurse, when you call her a dyke from hell—that negates the progress. Or it makes it so people don't believe in the progress. They say, progress, I don't think so, Larry still has to stay in the institution. I don't think so.

Larry: There was no assault.

Doctor: You say there was no assault.

Larry: There was shoving.

Doctor: Well, okay—

Larry: Open hand. No fist.

Doctor: But shoving.

Larry: Assolutamente.

Doctor: You speak Italian?

Larry: No. (beat) Get it? That's Italian for "no."

Doctor: Ah-hah.
Larry: “Assault” is a misnomer. “Assault” is AAAAAHHH! (he demonstrates, batting the air with his fists)

Doctor: Well, let’s not get caught up in semantics.

Larry: Whatever I want to talk about is semantics. Maybe I consider the things you want to talk about semantics. I don’t yell, Semantics! What kind of example would that be, for the rest of the mental patients.

Doctor: Okay, but let’s not say “mental patients.”

Larry: For the rest of the loonies. My point is about shoving. Shoving is not assault, necessarily. Shoving might just be, hey, you’re too close, get away from me. That’s the opposite of assault. That’s, Don’t assault me. Stay away from me. Dyke from hell. And that is just semantics. Sticks and stones.

Doctor: She was just doing her job.

Larry: A mafia hit man is just doing his job. She should join the mafia. She has the skills.

Doctor: Nobody here is in the mafia, Larry.

Larry: She could be I said not she is, I am not a raving lunatic.

Doctor: Okay—

Larry: I might even turn out to be the doctor.

Doctor: Okay. Larry. I think the first step in solving a problem, is recognizing there is a problem, let’s go back to that, because I’m not sure we’ve even taken that first step, we’ve just been talking about other people by and large.

Larry: You don’t like other people?

Doctor: I like other people fine, but—

Larry: All other people?

Beat.

Doctor: Larry, I think the first step—

Larry: We’ve been through that.
Doctor: We’ve—what.

Larry: Your trying to co-opt me. Trying to enlist me in the myth, get me to say I have a problem.

Doctor: Why then, Larry, why then are you here? Why are you in this institution, in your opinion?

Larry: Y’ask me there’s no good reason, but I don’t get the last word. The institution gets the last word, and it’s gotta lock up somebody. Or it’ll cease to exist. The army, basic training they had us dig holes then fill in the holes. Why? In order for there to be something. You should grasp this already, it’s not one of the great puzzles.

Doctor: Okay—

Larry: And please stop calling me Larry.

Doctor: Isn’t that your name?

Larry: Not the way you use it.

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Doctor: Larry, you’re a very good boxer. You slip punches. And while I might admire the skill, while the crowd might admire the skill of such a boxer, at a certain point they want him to engage. They want the contact, the exchange, to take place.

Larry: They want one fighter to beat the living shit out of the other guy and pound his head against the canvas and break all the bones in his face so it’s just a rubbery, bloody piece of smush. That’s what the crowd wants.

A beat.

Larry responds to the silence:

Larry: What, now I’m the dick? You brought up boxing. And now you sit in stoney disapproval? I’m the dick?

Doctor: Nobody’s a dick.

Larry: Somebody’s the dick, Doctor, believe me.

Doctor: I, just, would not have said that that’s what the crowd wants, necessarily.
Larry: Who made you an expert on what the crowd wants?

Doctor: I—okay, let’s not get hung up on the analogy.

Larry: I’m the dick, getting hung up?

Doctor: No no—

Larry: Don’t bring up the boxing if you’re not going to take it seriously.

Doctor: I think the—Okay. Put the boxing aside. Again we seem to be talking about peripheral issues.

Larry: You brought it up.

Doctor: Okay.

_Larry licks an index finger and paints a stroke in the air._

Larry: One for Larry.

Beat.

Doctor: Is it a contest, then?

Larry: On your analogy.

Beat.

Doctor: I got a letter from your mother, Larry.

_A beat, through which Larry glares at the doctor._

Larry: And I got a letter from yours.

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Doctor: I respond to something you said last time: “Somebody’s the dick, Doctor.” Somebody’s the dick. Is somebody always the dick, Larry?

Larry: Somebody’s always the dick.

Doctor: Why do you say that?
Larry: Because it's true. Or, possibly, not true. But you can say it. It has applications.

Doctor: It has applications.

Larry: Do you think it's true?

Doctor: Well, I don't know. I'm interested in what you think.

Larry: I think it has applications.

Beat.

Doctor: Do you think it's a good description, generally, of what goes on between people?

Larry: Well "generally," that's a general word. What do you think about the post office, generally—is it a microcosm, or is it just the post office?

Doctor: You want to talk about the post office?

Larry: (shrugs) It's your pizza party.

Beat.

Doctor: You know what they used to call what we're doing? There was a term for what we're doing.

Larry: Jerking off?

Doctor: They used to call it "the talking cure." It was taken to be a remarkable thing. And it is a remarkable thing. That someone could be in distress, they could have a complaint, an illness, and it could be remedied just by talking. Not by surgery, or taking a drug—just talking. An illness cured—just by talking. "The talking cure."

Larry: What if the illness is, talking too much? Is there a shutting-the-fuck-up cure?

Doctor: Well—

Larry: I know a couple people who could use it.

Doctor: Who do you know who could use it, Larry?


Beat.
Doctor: You were going to say something about the post office?

Larry: I sure was. You know how people joke about postal workers? Let me tell you something. Let you in on a trade secret. We joke about postal customers. Put that in your pipe.

Doctor: I believe it.

Larry: Why wouldn’t you believe it, I’m not reporting a UFO. (sour taste) Customers.

Doctor: Uh-huh. Do you want to talk about the altercation?

Larry: Nurse Evert?

Doctor: At the post office.

Larry: We’ve been through that. Assault. You think it’s all Semantics.

Doctor: No, I didn’t say—

Larry: Somebody is always the dick, yes. I believe so. Is it as universal as the laws of Newton? Maybe not. Kepler? Maybe not. Orbits sweeping out equal areas over equal time? Come on. What standard are you holding me to. Rule of thumb, is somebody always the dick—yes.

Doctor: Okay.

Larry: Or you tell me, you’re a man of science. (beat) If you are the doctor.

Doctor: Well, I, I hope I’m also a man of empathy.


Doctor: Really. Don’t we owe each other—

Larry: Empathy is an invasion. Like Hitler. Hitler saying, You look sad—lemme send tanks. You know what you owe me? Not to cross the Rhine. You’ve got your side—stay there, don’t help. I am not Alsace, buddy.

Doctor: Okay—

Larry: Do I look like the fuckin Low Countries?

Doctor: Okay... Let’s forget empathy—let’s talk about the post office, you wanted to talk about the post office.
Larry: Yeah yeah, the post office—what did my mother say?

Doctor: The letter? Well, of course, she’s concerned. She wanted to know what’s going on with you, and not being able to get out, not being able to talk on the phone—

Larry: She can talk. Believe me.

Doctor: She wrote that her hearing is poor.

Larry: Uh-huh, the yelling all those years, the hearing goes. She’s like a rock musician, too many concerts.

Doctor: Yelling at you?

Larry: Mostly my father.

Doctor: What does he do?

Larry: Now? Drools.

Doctor: Well, when you were a child—

Larry: Yelled back.

Doctor: What sort of—

Larry: Ya stickin sabers inna steamer trunk.

Doctor: ... What?


Doctor: It’s just talk.

Larry: It’s poking. As if I have a secret problem ya gonna hit with a poke. Nuh-uh. Why am I in this institution? Not because I have a problem.

Doctor: There was no problem at the post office?

Larry: The post office is fine! It’s a living. It’s fine with me. In my mother’s mind it’s a problem. How could I end up working in the post office. I should have been a man of science. Or a great artist. Heifetz. A substantial man. The shame I pulled down on her, not being Heifetz, working in the post office.

Doctor: Okay. I meant—
Larry: You know what would be funny. If Heifetz’s mother always wanted him to sort letters.

Doctor: That would be funny.

Larry: Who made you an expert on funny?

Beat.

Doctor: When I asked about the post office, I meant the altercation.

Larry: The alter kocker.

Doctor: The altercation.

Larry: (dismissive) There was an old lady. Whose parcel was not in order.

Doctor: I see.

Larry: The wrapping.

Doctor: And you took issue with it.

Larry: I personally had no problem with it. But the postal service has regulations. She thought I had a problem. Like you. And was wrong.

Doctor: A clash of personalities.

Larry: That’s exactly right, the lady was a clash of personalities. She walked in, clashing. Like a bad marching band.

Doctor: Uh-huh.

Larry: She complained the service was poor. The service.

Doctor: Uh-huh.

Larry: Had she never seen a tape dispenser? I showed her the one we have there for the customers. Took her by surprise. They’re quite heavy. (beat) Quite solid.

Beat. Larry’s attention has been out; it slowly returns to the doctor.

Larry: You know what the waiter said to the table of Jewish mothers?

Doctor: What?
Larry: Is anything all right?

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Living room. Early-middle-aged husband, pregnant wife. From their dress, the period is late 1950's. The husband looks at his watch. He waits. He looks at his watch again.

Husband: Nu?

Wife: What.

Husband: You calling?

Wife: Me!

Husband: Who else? They're late. They're your friends.

Wife: They're not my friends.

Husband: Not your friends. Who invited them?

Wife: I did—on your behalf.

Husband: I asked you?

Wife: Tacitly.

Husband: How?


Husband: By golly, then where's the king of the Hottentots? I asked you to invite him—tacitly.

Wife: You know what I mean.

Husband: I have no idea what you mean.

Wife: You said, "We haven't seen—"

Husband: Not the foggiest notion.
Wife: You said, “We haven’t seen Maurice and Dodi in quite a while.” So I invited them.

Husband: So if I’d said, We haven’t seen the Hitlers in quite a while—you’d invite Hitler?

Wife: First of all, Reuben, there’s no such couple as “the Hitlers.” Even a close personal friend of Hitler, and Eva Braun, does not say, “Let’s have the Hitlers over. We owe the Hitlers a dinner.” In the history of socializing the words “Let’s have the Hitlers over” have never been spoken. And in the second place—we know Hitler? What, we met at the Goerings? The idea of having him over, let’s have the Hitlers over, as if this would happen.

Husband: It was hypothetical.

Wife: And in the third place—in spite of what you think—Adolf Hitler is not the answer to every argument.

Husband: What? How often do I talk about Hitler?

Wife: Oh my god Reuben, are you joking with me? I am so sick of your Hitler.

Husband: My Hitler? What makes him “my” Hitler? I talk about Hitler?

Wife: Well I don’t talk about Hitler. Hitler is your answer to every argument. “Hitler!”

Husband: When do I go “Hitler!”?

Wife: I could set my watch by your Hitlers. Move on!

Husband: You’re talking through your ass, lady.

Wife: Stop with Hitler! Move on!

Husband: You’re talking through your goddamn ass!

Wife: Don’t address me that way. Reuben: I am not your doormat.

Husband: Oh, for god’s sake.

Wife: Call your friends! They are very late! The roast is now Saharan!

Husband: So take the roast out!

Wife: What, serve cold?
Husband: Better cold than arid!

Wife: I didn’t say arid!

Husband: I heard what you said! Saharan! I am not deaf!

Wife: No, you hear fine—anything on the Nazi Channel.

Husband: Now who’s bringing up Hitler! Nazis! Was that me, broaching Hitler?

Wife: In reference to you always talking about Hitler I broached.

Husband: So only when I do it, it’s reprehensible. You can say Hitler whenever you please!

Wife: Ach.

Husband: It’s a question!

Wife: Reuben, don’t be a martyr.

Husband: Who’s a martyr? It’s a question!

Wife: Oh, Reuben! It must be such a burden!

Husband: You’re talking through your ass.

Wife: Such a burden!

Husband: Through the cheekflaps of that ass.

Wife: You have to have the last word, don’t you.

Stymied beat. Then:

Husband: Ya describing yaself?

Wife: See!

Husband: I don’t have to have the last word!

Wife: Unbearable you should not have the last word.

Husband: I’ll tell you why that is if you’ll shut up!

Wife: What kind of language is this!
Husband: What—“shutup”? That’s language?

Wife: It’s not an endearment! Will it be “shutup” when the child gets here?

Husband: “When the child gets here”—he’s out-of-state?

Wife: My point all the more so—Larry’s here as we speak!

Husband: So we know it’s Larry.

Wife: Yes, Larry—I’m carrying low.

Husband: And God forbid the, the Larry thingamajig should hear “shutup” through the walls of the uterus.

Wife: Reuben!

Husband: “Don’t make me go out there! Those people are monsters! They say shutup! Or it might have been shutup; hard to hear wearing this uterus.”

Wife: Please don’t talk about my uterus.

Husband: Irrespective, that thing is not the issue.

Wife: That thing is a child, Reuben! Set an example!

Husband: Set an example? He doesn’t even have skin.

Wife: You know what I mean!

Husband: I have no idea what you mean.

Wife: Don’t make him think—

Husband: Not the foggiest notion.

Wife: Don’t make him think, to be an adult is to be a vulgarian.

Husband: Vulgarian! Because of me?

Wife: With your blue language—this is a home, not a nightclub!

Husband: No—at a nightclub they give you dinner.
Wife: This should be a home of science—and the arts! The child should think, I can grow up to be Heifetz!

Husband: Sure, Heifetz, Heifetz! In reverse, Heifetz is your Hitler!

Wife: Again, Hitler!

Husband: Yes Hitler! Holding a mirror up to you!

Wife: Now I'm Hitler!

Husband: For God's sake, Hildy!

Wife: Will it be Hitler, Hitler when the child gets here?

Husband: Remind me—he's where now? Jersey City?

Wife: And always with the last word when the child gets here?

Husband: The child should have the last word?

Dingdong. He does not react to the doorbell.

Husband: We're the parents!

Wife: Reuben—

Husband: Who should have the last word?!

Wife: Reuben—

Husband: The parents! Always!

Wife: Reuben—

Husband: Always!

Wife: Reuben!

Her look is fixed not on her husband but on a spot in space. Her hands rise to her belly; her focus is inward.

Wife: ... I think Larry's coming.

The husband is nonplussed—only for a moment:
Husband: . . . Through the Holland Tunnel?

Dingdong! Dingdong!

Husband: Wonderful! And your friends are here!

Wife: (gaze still off) They’re not my friends.

Another dingdong, followed by banging at the door.

Husband: Not your friends. Who invited them?

The banging becomes more insistent as the curtain starts to fall.

Wife: Reuben—

Husband: Everybody’s coming—what a simcha! Wonderful! Let the party begin!

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GEORGE IS DEAD

by Elaine May
The lights come up on a small living room with a counter that separates it from the kitchen “area”. There is a door L leading to the bedroom and a door r leading to the bathroom. The entrance is UC next to a window. It is night. CARLA in her pj’s is talking into a land phone that sits on the edge of the counter.

CARLA’S VOICE
Michael, it’s me again. It’s after midnight. I guess you’re still not...well, obviously you’re not picking up but I just wanted to make sure you got my message about the subway delays. I’m so sorry I missed hearing you give your speech at Amnesty International tonight. I know you must have really shaken them up, it was so powerful. Please call me when you get the chance. I’ll be waiting up for you when you get home. I love you. Okay. Bye.

She hangs the phone up, finishes her coffee, then starts at the sound of the doorbell. After an uncertain moment she goes to the door, peers through the peephole and freezes. Then begins tiptoeing toward the bedroom. The doorbell rings again, there is the sound of knocking, ringing, more knocking.

Defeated, she goes back and opens The door.

Doreen stands there.

DOREEN
George is dead.

CARLA
What?

DOREEN
They called me from Aspen. He died doing a double snowplow on the intermediate hill. We’re going to sue, of course but it’s too fresh for me to think about that.

CARLA
Oh, Doreen, come in. When did this happen.

DOREEN
I just got the call. I was at a fundraiser,
CARLA
He was skiing at midnight?

DOREEN
Is it midnight in Aspen? I think it’s three hours earlier.

CARLA
Oh, what does it matter? Oh, God, how horrible. How horrible! Do the children know?

DOREEN
I don’t know. I e-mailed them at The Ritz Carlton but don’t know if they’re in the country. They can’t stay here for more than six months or they get taxed or fined or something.

CARLA
(she is to the phone)
Let’s see if we can find them. Where do they live when they’re not here?

DOREEN
Switzerland.

(Carla begins dialing)
But they’re never there either. They follow the sun. Oh, Carla, I have no one. No one! How did this happen? How did it happen that the night my husband dies I have no one to turn to but you.

CARLA
Well...we’ve know each other a long time and I

DOREEN
I didn’t mean that in a bad way. I just mean...we’re not relatives. We’re not the same age. We didn’t go to the same college. We were never in the same sorority...but I so adored your mother.

CARLA
And she adored you.

DOREEN
She was my favorite nanny. Is she still alive?

Very much so.

CARLA
She must be very old.

DOREEN
She’s ninety.
DOREEN
Oh, God! She was so much younger when I last saw her.

CARLA
Well that was forty years ago.

DOREEN
How did this happen to me.

CARLA
You’ll find a way to go on. Women lose their husbands. It’s horrible but it happens.

DOREEN
No, no. I mean...how did this happen. How did forty years pass so quickly. How did I get...so...old.

CARLA
You’re not old.

DOREEN
I’m a widow. I’m like my mother and all my aunts. I’m old.

CARLA
You’re not old. You’re just...older. Take off your coat. Let me make you some tea.

DOREEN
And put some bourbon in it.
(taking off her coat)
George used to make me tea every morning. English breakfast tea. And he would bring me the paper. He adored me so. Oh, God, he was so mad about me.
(she holds out her coat)
Nobody will ever love me like that again.

Carla looks up and sees the coat. Goes to take it.

CARLA
Of course they will. Why do you say that.

DOREEN
Because George was eleven years older than I am when I married him. And I married him 15 years ago.

CARLA
Well...he was still eleven years older than you are when he died, isn’t he--wasn’t he?

DOREEN
Yes, but that’s not my point. My point is--no man who’s eleven years older than I am will want me now. They’ll want a woman the same age I was when I married George.
CARLA
Well, it’s...it’s so early to think about that. George just died, didn’t he?

DOREEN
But that is what I’m thinking about. I can’t change it. It’s better than thinking of George racing down that hill, digging in his skis in a double snow plow, trying to stop and not even slowing down.

CARLA
Would you...would it help to talk about him...to remember him?

DOREEN
I am talking about him and I don’t have to remember him. I just saw him three days ago.
(picks up the teacup)
Is this the tea?

CARLA
That’s the bourbon. The tea will take a few minutes to boil.

DOREEN
I had no idea your apartment was so small. I don’t know how to handle this. I feel...awful. What will I do? I don’t have the depth to feel this bad. That’s a cute pillow. How can George be dead? How can dull, silly, faithful old George be dead?

CARLA
It’s a terrible thing. But we grieve and we get past it. You’ve had people die before.

DOREEN
Actually, I haven’t. Everyone I know is still alive. Except my mother and father. But they were so old. Do they count? And the last time I saw them was when I came home from boarding school to pack for college, and then they moved to Palm Beach and we only wrote to each other. It’s so odd. I’ve often thought that if the houseman dropped me a line now and then asking how I was and signed it 'Mother', I would never know she was dead. Of course, the houseman is probably dead, too, now but he wasn’t when they died.

CARLA
Here’s your tea.

DOREEN
Thank you. Would you pour some more bourbon in it?
(Carla stops...takes the cup back to the counter)
I was so beautiful in college. I didn’t think I was beautiful then, but when I look at my pictures and see
how young I was, how my skin sort of glowed... as though I had swallowed a light. Nothing brings that back, not the alpha hydroxy, not the laser, not the peels... Oh, that's so adorable, a tiny pretend fireplace.

CARLA

It's just for decoration. I've been working so late I haven't had time...

DOREEN

That's so clever. George loved a fire. Be used to sit in front of the fireplace when it was snowing out and say 'this is our nest; nothing can get to us. And then he would fly off to Aspen to ski. I wonder if I should eat something?

CARLA

(who is just bringing the tea again)

I'll see what I have.

(She goes back to counter)

DOREEN

I hated the word nest. It always made me feel like a hen. But now... I won't ever hear that word again... nest.

CARLA

Well, you still have the house and the fireplace and... memories.

DOREEN

Yes, but that isn't a nest. George was, actually, the nest. Without George it's just a big house and I don't understand the purpose of memories. Do you have any little thing like cheese?

CARLA

I think I do.

DOREEN

Oh, good. Brie, if you have it. Stilton would be nice. And maybe a beer. And some kind of water biscuits. I'll just have it on the coffee table with my tea. This is so cozy here. It's so small and shabby and... nesty.

CARLA

I'm going to get new carpets as soon as I cover the couch...

DOREEN

Oh, no, no. Don't change a thing. I love it like this. Do you live here alone? I've forgotten. Were you married?
CARLA
(from inside the refrigerator)
Yes. I still am. Or rather I am again.

DOREEN
Because it’s perfect for two people but children would
make it feel crowded.

CARLA
Yes. Well, Tom and I couldn’t have children so it’s
not a problem. I don’t have Brie or Stilton. I have
beer and American cheese.

DOREEN
Oh, well, then, no beer. I only wanted it for the
Stilton. Our house in South Hampton is so enormous.
And all the grounds. It’s such a burden keeping it up.
The townhouse in Manhattan isn’t easy, but it’s like
living in a trailer compared to twelve acres and
seventeen rooms.

CARLA
It must take a lot of upkeep.

DOREEN
Oh, you can’t imagine. And the staff is totally
helpless. They can’t make one decision, would you like
quiche or a soufflé, shall we cut the roses or will the
poppies be happier, will you want a fire in the bedroom
or are you going into Manhattan, Sandra is off tonight
should Raquel run your bath, will you want the manicure
before the hairdresser, the chauffeur is sick shall we
hire a car or will Alberto drive, the furs have come
back from storage, where do they go?...and on and on
and on.

CARLA
It sounds very time consuming. Here’s your cheese.

DOREEN
Thank you. Oh, how yellow! And what adorable little
crackers. What are they?

CARLA
Saltines.

DOOREEN
Oh, I love them. But there’s so much salt on the top.
Would you be a darling and scrape it off?
(she holds out the cracker;
after a moment Carla takes it
back to the counter)
Your mother used to do that for me with pretzels. My
darling nanny. She was so wonderful. She was the
perfect mum, wasn’t she?
CARLA

(scraping the cracker)
I don't really know. We didn't see her much when she was working and she was tired on her day off. Is this salt-less enough for you?

DOREEN


CARLA

I...no, Of course not. I'm just a little...my nerves are a little ragged because I argued with Michael. But, my God, considering what happened to you, the shock...

DOREEN

Do you remember your little rooms in our house? Your pretty little blue and white rooms in back of the kitchen?

CARLA

Yes. Actually it was one little blue and white room with a screen for my brother.

DOREEN

Yes. So pretty. Is Tom...Tom is your husband, right? Not your brother?

CARLA

Tom was my husband. Dolf is my brother. Michael is who I'm married to now.

DOREEN

So not Tom. I have to remember that. Not Tom, not Tom, not Tom. So is Michael sleeping? Am I talking too loud?

CARLA

No, he's...he made a very important speech at Amnesty International tonight and I couldn't...I didn't get there to hear it so he decided to stay out late and not call me. That's the way he argues.

DOREEN

I'm so sorry. Did you make up?

CARLA

No. He decided to stay out late and not call me. Forgive me, Doreen, but don't you listen?

DOREEN

No, not really. I'm always stunned that people listen to each other's stories. It's like having someone give you their underwear to keep. You'll never use it. It
doesn’t fit. It just uses up your space and you can’t throw it out because it’s in your drawer.

CARLA
I have no idea what you’re talking about.

DOREEN
Oh, neither do I. It was kind of a metaphor but I got so bored in the middle of it I just said anything. I know it’s wrong not to be interested. Especially with you. You’re my dear friend and you’ve been so kind. So he decided to stay out late and not call you and that means you’re still fighting. Well, he’ll be back. George won’t come back, but Tom will. Not Tom! Tom is the other one. Michael. See? I remembered.

CARLA
Yes. Very good.

DOREEN
Thank you. And now may I have some more crackers, nanny Carla?

CARLA
(she stares at her; then after
a long moment)
Without salt?

DOREEN
Please.

Carla takes out the box of saltines, dumps them on a plate, and begins scraping them.

DOREEN
Oh, this is so snug. I almost feel like a little girl again. I so loved your mother. Is she still alive?

CARLA
Yes. You asked me that before.

DOREEN
I’m so sorry. I did. You see? But don’t be cross. I just can’t seem to make anything stand still in my mind. All these words just come in and slither around

CARLA
It’s the shook of everything.

DOREEN
No, I’m always like that. It’s the underwear thing. It used to make George laugh so. He told me I had a pink brain. Isn’t that sweet? Oh, I feel so bad. He loved me so. I wish I could cry.
You will.

Do you think so?
(squeezing her eyes shut and making a little sound)
No. There's absolutely nothing wet going on yet. May I make a suggestion about your throw pillows?

I'm going to get some that match as soon as I...

No, don't get ones that match. Different patterns are wonderful. The problem is you don't have enough different patterns. Four different patterns clash, fourteen different patterns have style. That's odd. My throat keeps closing.

You feel bad.

Is that it? Oh, I hope so. I mean I do feel bad but I want to feel the right kind of bad. I want to feel grief.

You've never felt grief?

No. Not grief. Not this great big important flood of feeling. How is that possible? But bad things just haven't happened to me and now--I wonder if it's too late to have the right response.

If enough bad things happen to you you hardly have any response. You just think, Oh, another bad thing. Of course.

That sounds like a lot of bad things have happened to you and I'm truly sorry about that. Perhaps later, after George has been dead for awhile, you can tell me about them.

Oh, Doreen. I'm so sorry. I don't know what's wrong with me. I'm just this bitter, thoughtless woman.

No, it's me. It's hard to take me seriously. May I stay here tonight?
CARLA

What?

DOREEN

I know you probably don't want me to, but it's such a big house not to have George in.

CARLA

Well, I...you're certainly welcome to stay. I would have asked you to stay before but where would you sleep? We only have one bedroom and one bed.

DOREEN

The couch. The couch is fine. Do you have an extra toothbrush?

CARLA

No.

DOREEN

Well, I'll rinse very, very well. Is that all right?

CARLA

Is it alright with me?

DOREEN

Then it's all right with me. Do you have a nightie?

Yes.

DOREEN

May I have it?

Carla rises slowly and starts for the bedroom.

DOREEN

I'm afraid I'll look too much of a wreck if I show up at the funeral tomorrow in clothes that I've slept in.

CARLA

The funeral is tomorrow?

Isn't it?

DOREEN

Well...don't you know?

DOREEN

No. Maybe it isn't tomorrow. That does seem awfully fast. I'll call in the morning and ask. I have to find out which chapel it is anyway.
CARLA
You don’t know which chapel-- Who’s making the arrangements?

DOREEN
I have no idea. Don’t the lawyers do that?

CARLA
I don’t think so. Unless...did you tell them to?

DOREEN
Well, no. I mean...don’t they just...do it.

CARLA
No. The family makes the arrangements. Normally.

DOREEN
Well, the children are away and their mother is living
God knows where, and George doesn’t speak to his
brother so...
(she breaks off suddenly)
You don’t mean me? You don’t mean I’m supposed to make
the arrangements.

CARLA
Well, yes I do. You’re his next of kin. Someone’s got
to...to...authorize everything. Where’s the body?

DOREEN
I don’t know. Aspen, I suppose.

CARLA
Well, somebody has to arrange to get the body here.

DOREEN
Who? It can’t be me. I don’t know how.

CARLA
By plane. Charter a plane. Or arrange something with
a commercial flight. Or call the lodge where he was
staying. Or call the lawyers and have them call the
lodge where he was staying and they can make
arrangements to ship the body back.

DOREEN
Please don’t call George the body. It is makes it seem
like he’s...

CARLA
Dead.

DOREEN
No, I know he’s dead. But it makes it seem like he was
never alive. Like I made him up.
CARLA
Doreen! Choose a mortuary, pick a coffin, have the body shipped. Have the mortuary pick up the...pick up George at the airport.

DOREEN
I don’t understand any of this. I don’t understand what you mean by shipped. Where will he be? Is there a special compartment?

CARLA
He’ll be in a simple—but very nice temporary pine box.

DOREEN
Don’t tell me anymore. I’m not going to do it.

CARLA
But you can’t just leave him in Aspen.

DOREEN
Yes, I can. I’m certainly not going to put him in a box. They’d have to put him somewhere in the luggage compartment. He’d come out on the carousel.

CARLA
No, he wouldn’t. They have special arrangements. Very...dignified...special arrangements.

DOREEN
I’m not going to do it. I don’t want to talk about it. May I have my nightie now?

CARLA
But...Doreen, my God, they called you from Aspen to notify you that he was dead and now they’re waiting for you to call back and tell them what to do.

DOREEN
I’m used to that.

CARLA
This isn’t like the servants. Legally someone has to... What’s the name of the lodge?

DOREEN
I’m not going to talk until I’m in my nightie.

Carla stares at her for a moment, then walks into the bedroom.

DOREEN
(calling after her)
Why are you so worried about the lodge? You’d think you were the manager.
CARLA OFF
I'm not worried about the lodge. I'm worried about George.

DOREEN

George is dead.

CARLA

(walks in with a nightgown)
But it's wrong. It's wrong to just leave someone who died in his room at a skiing lodge. I mean what will they think when no one calls to make arrangements.

DOREEN

(takes the nightgown)
You're just like nanny. Always worried about what people will think. Oh, how pretty. Little flowers and slippers. Thank you.

(she goes into the bathroom)

CARLA

I'm not worried about anything. Leave George there for all I care. He's your husband.

DOREEN OFF

Yes, he is. And I'm sure he'd rather be in a ski lodge in his lovely room with white snow and trees out the window than in some horrible pine box in the luggage compartment. Oh, how perfect. It's just the perfect thing to sleep in. It's been worn and it's all comfy and faded and not a strange new nightie.

Carla has taken out the bedding, then stands in Indecision, picks up the phone.

DOREEN OFF

Do you have two pillows?

CARLA

What? ... Yes.

(into phone)
Michael? It's me. I... I...

Are they down?

DOREEN OFF

What?

CARLA

Are the pillows down?

DOREEN

CARLA

No. [into phone]
Michael...please call
me before you come
home.

(hangs up, goes
back to making
the couch)

DOREEN OFF
Oh, good. I’m allergic to
down. And it complicates my
whole life. All my
comforters have to be filled
with silk floss and then
shipped ahead when I travel.

(she gargles)
Do you have a television?

CARLA

What?

DOREEN OFF
I didn’t see a television set in the living room.

CARLA
We gave it to my mother. We have a little one in the
bedroom.

Oh good.

DOREEN OFF
Doreen comes out of the bathroom in a
faded flannel-nightgown. Her makeup is
off. Her hair is tied back.

DOREEN
I love this nightie. It’s just like the ones nanny used
to wear.

CARLA

Yes.

DOREEN
(picks up a pillow, tries to
stuff it in the case)
Is this what you sleep in in winter? Or is this
something you had from college, something you liked so
much you couldn’t throw it away.

CARLA
(taking the pillow and case
from her)
It’s something I sleep in in winter.

DOREEN
It’s just dear. Let’s go shopping tomorrow, want to?
We can hit the boutiques in the morning and then have
lunch and then do some serious shopping on Madison and
Fifth and then...just shop all day, like we used to when we were girls.

CARLA
We didn’t shop all day when we were girls. You shopped. I stayed and paid for the clothes and then met you at the next store with the packages.

DOREEN
Yes. That was such fun. And then I bought you something at the end of the day, something you picked out. So really you were shopping, too, because you had to keep your eye out for your present.

CARLA
Yes.

DOREEN
Do you still have any of the things I bought you?

CARLA
Yes. I have everything you bought me.

DOREEN
You’re joking. That’s so sweet. Like souvenirs.

CARLA
No. I just never had any place to wear them.

DOREEN
Oh, that’s so awful. Oh, Carla dear. Don’t you go out?

CARLA
Yes, but not to places where I can wear Versace. I just picked silly things. I had this whole fantasy about how I would live my life. Everything I did seemed like until.

DOREEN
Yes. Actually it still seems that way to me.

CARLA
You’re joking.

DOREEN
No. At night when I sit by the fire or look at television with George I always think I’m just doing this until my real life begins. And I picture my real husband and how young he’ll be and muscular but not, you know, gross, and how much fun we’ll have and how he’ll be a marvelous dancer and do something very artistic for a living but still be athletic and he’ll know exactly how to kiss me and we’ll travel, he’ll know all the places to go because he’s been there with other women who bored him, and tears will fill his eyes
because he finally found me and I'll be famous for something and be in the papers all the time, not just those little pictures on the society page and someday pretty soon I'll take ice skating lessons and become an incredibly good ice skater. I know it's too late for ballet.

CARLA
You mean...you think all this will really happen?

DOREEN
It can. Zelda Fitzgerald was in her thirties when she started ballet and she worked so hard she danced in the corps de ballet in actual performances until she was committed. And ice skating is much easier.

CARLA
Do you ice skate at all?

DOREEN
Well, not for years and years.

CARLA
And is that where you'll meet your young husband? On the ice?

DOREEN
Maybe. Or at a very luxurious spa.

CARLA
He'll see you this young, muscular, artistic, sophisticated person and he'll come over.

DOREEN
Yes. Why not? I'm still very pretty and I'm rich, although I would want him to be rich, too, so that won't matter, but I'm rich enough to do all the right things to make up for not being young; Botox and collagen and trainers and great lingerie and gorgeous clothes.

CARLA
So...actually, now that George is dead, you're free.

DOREEN
Yes. But this is such an awkward age for him to die. My age not his. If he had only died when I was old and past it or right after we were married, when I was young.

CARLA
But you don't mean that. If he had died when you were old and past it how could you still ice skate and find a husband.
(after a moment)
I don’t know.

CARLA
And you’d have to be eighteen to be young.

DOREEN
I don’t think I can look eighteen. That’s not realistic. But I can look late twenties or early thirties if I really work at it.

(Carla stares at her)
Well, of course, I don’t look like that now, I’ve been married and I haven’t taken care of myself. Because no matter what I looked like George would say perfect. Beautiful. You’re irresistible. It was so annoying. Oh, look at how perfectly you made up that couch. Thank you, thank you. What a delicious bed. Is your cable hooked up in here?

CARLA
Yes. Why?

DOREEN
Because this is a bad night not to have television.

CARLA
You mean you want to move the television in here?

DOREEN
I know it’s a dreadful imposition...or if Michael isn’t coming home can I just sleep in the bedroom with you.

CARLA
Michael is coming home.

DOREEN
Do you think so? It’s two in the morning.

CARLA
That doesn’t mean he isn’t coming home. That just means he’s in some restaurant explaining to four other high school teachers how Amnesty International and the Board of Education and the President Obama failed them. I’m probably on the list, too.

DOREEN
Well, may I sleep in the bedroom until he gets here?

CARLA
Absolutely not.

DOREEN
It would be better. Really. Think about it. He opens the door and comes in. There’s a total stranger on the couch. He—quite possibly—slams out again.
CARLA
(after a moment)
He's ... I've asked him to call before he comes home.

DOREEN
What if he doesn't?

CARLA
I'll...stay up and explain it to him.

DOREEN
But even so--he'll already have seen me. If I'm in the bedroom and you're waiting up for him you can explain that George is dead and I have nowhere to go and when he says something sympathetic you can say I knew you would feel that way and then when you bring me out and put me on the couch he'll feel that it was his decision, too.

Carla stands for a moment staring at the door which is directly across from the couch.

CARLA
Alright.

DOREEN
Oh, thank you.

She starts for the bedroom. An elaborate, tinkling sound fills the room. Carla jumps back.

CARLA
What...

DOREEN
It's my cell phone. I forgot to turn it to Vibrate. Would you turn it off? It's in my purse. Just turn it off.

(Carla takes the phone out of Doreen's purse)

Just hit the little red thing on the bottom and turn it off. Thank you.

(she runs toward the bedroom)

CARLA
(looks at the cell; puts it to her ear)

Hello?

DOREEN
(gives a little scream)
No! Turn it off! Turn it off!
CARLA OFF

(into phone)
This is... her assistant. Who's calling? ... Hold on
one moment, Michelle.
(She goes toward Doreen with
the cell)
Doreen, it's the Powder Mountain Lodge in Aspen.

DOREEN
(diving down behind the
counter)
No! Hang up!

CARLA
Doreen! Just tell them.

DOREEN
NO! Hang up! Hang up!

She turns and runs into the bedroom.

CARLA
(into phone)
She ... Mrs. Whittlesey isn't available right now,
Michelle, can I help you? ... Yes, of course, we're
grief stricken but isn't this very, very late to be
calling? ... She's going to pay for the room for as
long as Mr. Whittlesey...occupies it ... He's not? I'm
sorry. I was misinformed. Where is he?

There is the sound of the key in the door.
Carla's voice speeds up.

CARLA
I'm afraid I have to hang up now. We'll talk later and
work this out.

She clicks off just as Michael enters. He
stands staring at the couch.

Michael

MICHAEL
I see you've anticipated where I'll be sleeping
tonight.

It's not for you

MICHAEL
Thank you, but I couldn't be so unchivalrous.

CARLA
I called you three times. Didn't you get my message?
MICHAEL
No. I turned my cell phone off during the human rights violation speech because I was making it.

CARLA
Darling I’m so sorry. I just...my mother couldn’t program the television set we gave her because she feels it’s...a little too complicated for her.

MICHAEL
Oh, did I fuck that one up, too? I’ve ruined her life with technology?

CARLA
She isn’t criticizing you.

MICHAEL
Then she’s lost her will to live.
(he goes to the couch)

CARLA
Michael, I have something to tell you.

MICHAEL
I’m surprised your brother hasn’t o’d yet. But he’s probably saving that for our anniversary.

CARLA
Are you going to use that smug, ugly, sarcastic tone all night.

MICHAEL
Yes. All night. Because I’m a smug, ugly sarcastic fella.
(he kicks off his shoes)

CARLA
Darling, please listen...

MICHAEL
I told you not to go to your mother’s. I knew you wouldn’t make it back in time.

CARLA
I would have but there’s no service on the N and the H.

MICHAEL
Well, how could you have anticipated that. Who would dream that the New York Transit system might be unreliable.

CARLA
Oh, stop using that tone. I’m sorry. I truly thought I would make it. Now please stop beating up on me, I have something to tell you.
MICHAEL
(unbuckles his belt)
Oh, am I beating up on you now? The wrong tone is the same as a beating? Is that what your mummy the cuntessa told you.

CARLA
Oh, you are being so fucking hostile.

He begins taking off his pants.

DOREEN
Oh, is this Michael?

He quickly pulls his pants back up as Doreen comes out of the bedroom with a small TV and cable box on a cart. Wires and cable dangle from it.

DOREEN
I'm Doreen Whittlesy nee Cates. Carla has told me so much about you.

MICHAEL
I... who are you?

DOREEN
Doreen Whittlesy. Carla's darling mother was our nanny. My husband was killed a few hours ago in an avalanche in Aspen. And although I haven't seen Carla in a while she was the first one I came to for help.

MICHAEL
I don't... I don't understand. That's our television.

DOREEN
Yes. I don't understand either. I still can't really take it in. It's so sad that we haven't met before. How long have you and Carla been married?

What?

MICHAEL
Five years.

CARLA

DOREEN
That long? That's amazing. It seems like just yesterday I was here talking to Carla's first husband. I'm sorry to break in on your argument. I know how I feel when waiters do it. You're so incredibly lucky to have each other. And always remember--arguments are a part of marriage. Although it was very hard to start one with George. He gave in and I got distracted. Well, don't let me interrupt anything. It's just that... if I'm going to sleep on the couch its better
that I break in on you now than when you’re really
going at it. Although it doesn’t seem to me—from the
sound of your argument—that you’ll be sleeping
together tonight.

MICHAEL
(to Carla)
Tell me what’s happening. She’s sleeping here? On the
couch?

DOREEN
And I’ll be as quiet as a little mouse. I’ll keep the
T.V. very low. You won’t even know I’m here.

MICHAEL
Tell her to go

CARLA
Michael.

MICHAEL
Tell her to go.

CARLA
Michael, her husband just died.

MICHAEL
This is Doreen, isn’t it? This is the selfish,
brainless, heartless, little slut your mother loved
more than you.

DOREEN
Oh, Carla. “Heartless?”

CARLA
Doreen, please go back in the bedroom until Michael and
I finish talking.

DOREEN
Alright, I’ll just be in there until you call me.

MICHAEL
Don’t you fucking dare go in my bedroom.

CARLA
Michael, please let me talk to you. Please.

MICHAEL
You can talk to me while I pack my bag.

He turns and slams into the bedroom. Carla
runs after him. Doreen wheels the
television toward the outlet.

CARLA OFF
There was nothing I could do. She knocked on my door
MICHAEL OFF
You could have not been here. You could have been with me.

CARLA OFF
You mean just let my mother sit alone in the dark.

MICHAEL OFF
without her television. Yes. Or--unthinkable request--ask her to learn how to program it.

He strides on with a suitcase and begins
taking clothes out of the dresser that
doubles as a sideboard.

CARLA
It must be wonderful to have so much pity for the
victims of human rights violations...

MICHAEL
Move away from the drawer.

CARLA
...and so much contempt for every other kind of
suffering. Your students, my mother, my brother. There
are little tragedies, too you know.

MICHAEL
No, there aren't. There are just little melodramas. I
being one of them.

CARLA
Oh, stop it!

MICHAEL
Stop it, "loser" Finish your sentence.

CARLA
I didn't say that. Are you doing both sides of the
argument now?

MICHAEL
Yes. Both sides. Can't we fix this damn thing so the
drawers open without divine intervention.
(straightens, kicks the
drawer)
Goddamnit!

CARLA
Please lower your voice!

MICHAEL
Why? Are you afraid the neighbors in this elegant walk-
up will think we're not classy? Wouldn't want the
junkie upstairs to judge us!
CARLA
Oh, my God! Shut up!

MICHAEL

(shouting)
Sorry, junkie!
(to Carla)
Afraid he'll be conscious enough to be offended. Afraid he'll tell your mummy?

Doreen crouched in front of the sofa has now re-attached the cables on the TV.

CARLA
Oh, Michael, I don't want us to fight. Please don't fight with me. I love you. More than anything in the world.

MICHAEL
But I still come second after your mother and your brother and every other needy millionaire who decides to make you a slave.

CARLA
My mother is an old woman.

MICHAEL
And she limps. I'm sorry. You'll have to get your signals straight. Some nights she was this cold-hearted bitch who liked serving the rich and some nights she was this working mother who did it all for you.

CARLA
Whatever she was she's not anything anymore. She was useful and needed and now she's... irrelevant. Her world is gone.

MICHAEL
I know how she feels. I was useful and needed too. And now I teach history to students who can't stop texting long enough to absorb one fact about one thing that happened before they were born. And tonight after 20 years I quit Amnesty International.

CARLA
Oh, no! Why? Because of your speech?

MICHAEL
No one gave a crap about my speech. They just kept explaining that no member can get involved in human rights violations in their own country because that's the Amnesty International way. That's over, I said. It's not about countries anymore. The fucking icecaps are melting. America is torturing her own citizens in Turkey. We can't just sit here and watch... Ah, her...
eyes roll toward the junkie again. Too loud. So glad that you’re interested in my point which is that America has now become a reality show and no one will change the channel. Put my computer down.

CARLA

Please listen to me...

MICHAEL

I need this computer to look up the multiple choice Questions on highschoolexitexamrep.com and figure out what to teach my students so they'll pass. Actually, they could look it up by themselves so I’m every bit as irrelevant as your mother. More. Because at one point I thought being a teacher was the most relevant thing you could be.

CARLA

It is.

MICHAEL

No, it isn’t.

(he shakes his head)

I don’t believe this. I’m competing with your mother for irrelevancy. You see ... that’s what I’m afraid of...that I’ll make myself sadder and weaker and needier just to keep your interest. And even if I get it I’ll think—is she really interested? Is she listening to me rant on and thinking I hope my mother is alright. Am I making her life even harder by forcing her to choose.

CARLA

Oh, Michael, you have all my interest

MICHAEL

No, I don’t. I have your interest now because I’m leaving you.

CARLA

Oh, God.

MICHAEL

At last I’ve captured your attention.

CARLA

I don’t know what you want me to do; put my mother in a home? hang up on my brother? slam the door on another human being. because the icecaps are melting?

MICHAEL

(quietly)

I don’t care what you do.
He opens the door and walks out. Carla stands in the doorway, frozen. There is a pause.

DOREEN

Carla? Now is it alright if I sleep in the bedroom with you.

CARLA

(her voice quivering)

No.

She runs into the bedroom. There is the sound of sobbing.

Doreen clicks on the television set. Nick at Nite comes on. After a few moments there is the sound of Doreen’s cell phone. Doreen does not turn her eyes from the TV screen. The cell phone rings on and on until Carla comes out of the bedroom and answers it.

CARLA

Hello? ... No, it isn’t. It’s...her assistant. ... Oh, yes. I spoke with the lodge earlier. She...Mrs. Whittlesey isn’t available right now can I call you back?

The I Love Lucy show is heard under Carla’s voice.

CARLA

I’m sorry, you’ll have to lower your voice. ... You’re screaming into a cell phone. ... Yes, I do understand that. ... Yes... Of course, she intends to. ... Yes, she could have but she didn’t. Alright? Well, this is a ridiculous argument. Just tell me what you’re called Montavardi—you’re going to have to spell that for me. Wait a minute I’m writing this with an eyebrow pencil. ... Is that a hospital or a ... I see. The Montavardi Mortuary on Oak Street. And what is that number? ... 0 7 4 8 ... I’m very sorry. Hold on please, I’ve got to find something better to write with....

She goes into the bedroom. While she has been speaking the light in the living room has changed. Dawn breaks through the window. We hear It’s five o’clock Then we hear The Dick Van Dyke show.

CARLA OFF

Frank Campbell? Have you spoken with the Montavardi Mortuary? ... Good. He’s arriving at six this morning and Andrew Manilow of Baker and Gruen will meet the plane. He’ll be in a pine box and I’ve chosen a
mahogany casket for closed viewing when he gets here. Thank you.

The lights have gradually brightened. We hear it's seven o'clock. Doreen has not moved. The music for The Andy Griffith Show comes on.

CARLA OFF
Andrew Manilow? ... Andy? This is Carla Kerns again. I was just calling to see... Oh, you have. Thank you so much, Andy. This was so nice of you to do on your Saturday. Thank you.
(she clicks off; to Doreen)

CARLA
They've picked up the body and it's at the Frank E. Campbell Funeral Home. I've been up all night arranging it. They're waiting for us to call and tell them what to do with it.

DOREEN
Please don't say it.

CARLA
Him. Come on, Doreen. Put this dress on. It's a Donna Karan you bought for me and I've never worn it.

DOREEN
I love this show. Do you think Aunt Bea is dead?

CARLA
I'm 98 percent...I don't know. We have to go.

DOREEN
So much of her would be dead. All that fat and that pretty face.
(Carla aims the remote. The TV goes off)
No! No!

CARLA
Doreen, no one is at the funeral home. George's lawyers met the plane and now they've gone back to East Hampton.

DOREEN
I can't. I can't go.

CARLA
Doreen, come on. Stand up and put this dress on.

DOREEN
Poor Aunt Bea. No.
There is the sound of the door and a very old woman enters. Doreen looks up.

**CARLA**

(to the old woman)
Oh, thank God. I can’t get her to move.

**THE OLD WOMAN**
Come on now Doreen. Come on. Into our nice dress.

**DOREEN**
I can’t nanny.

**OLD WOMAN**
Well, you’ll have to. Come. Come.

She holds out her arms. Doreen runs to her.

**NANNY**
That’s my good girl.
(to Carl, briskly)
Now bring her dress.

**CARLA**
I have it right here Mother.

**NANNY**
(to Doreen)
Here we go, into our nice dress.

Carla has picked up the dress from the counter and takes it toward Doreen and Nanny who are now C.

The two women stands in front of Doreen as they dress her.

**NANNY**
Now—off with our nightie. Arms up. That’s a good girl. That’s right and on with our pretty dress. Stand still like a little statue. Yes. Good. There we are

**CARLA**
I have her shoes
Mother.

**THE OLD WOMAN**
Lift her foot. Put the left foot into our nice shoe. Now the right foot into the other one.
(to Carla)
Get her coat. There we are. That’s my girl.
Now, walk! Walk with nanny.

Organ music begins as they continue to dress her. The lights come up DR and a FUNERAL DIRECTOR enters DL with a wreath on a stand. He adjusts the wreath, fusses with the flowers, then signals off. Two men enter DL wheeling a brass and mahogany coffin. They bring it to a mark C and the Funeral Director kneels and adjusts the skirt of the gurney, rises, glances at his watch.

Together Doreen and the nanny begin walking downstage toward the coffin. Carla runs but of the bedroom putting on her coat.

CARLA

Wait! Wait for me!

The Funeral Director looks up as Doreen approaches supported by the Old Woman and Carla.

FUNERAL DIRECTOR

Mrs. Whittlesey? I'm Thomas Moran. I will be arranging the service. We'd like to know how we can help in this sad hour. When would you like the service to take place, what kind of flowers...

Doreen walks past him as if in a trance and stands looking down at the coffin.

DOREEN

George...

(she knocks on the lid)

Are you in there?

They gasp as Doreen opens the upper portion of the coffin lid, then reaches in and arranges the pillow.

DOREEN

Oh George. You're so crowded in there. There's no room for you to turn.

The Old Woman gently moves her back; as the Funeral Director closes the lid.

Doreen leans forward and rests her head on the coffin.
DOREEN
Oh, George, put your arms around me. I'm so tired of being young.

(she straightens and looks around, then cries out in a grief-stricken voice)

George is dead.

She begins to sob. The old woman puts her arm around her

DOREEN
Don't leave me, nanny.

THE OLD WOMAN
(she begins leading her out)
No, no. Oh no, my darling girl, my darling child. It's you and I. You and I.

As they walk toward the door Carla starts to follow them. Without turning, the old woman waves her away with a curt gesture...and exits with her arms around the weeping Doreen.

Carla stands looking after them. After a moment the funeral director comes over to her.

FUNERAL DIRECTOR
I'm very sorry to intrude but we haven't received any instructions and we have to know what to do with the body.

CARLA
Burn it.

THE END
HONEYMOON MOTEL

by Woody Allen
Stage is dark. We see flashing neon sign that blinks Motel-Vacancy. Light up on interior of standard roadside motel room. The small accommodation consists of a bathroom and small bedroom. Without being a horror show it's low-end overnight joint. The upstage center door bursts open and Jerry in tuxedo lifts Nina in wedding dress and carries her with joyful gallantry over the threshold. They pull in a small valise and shut the door. He kisses her playfully.

JERRY

How do you feel?

NINA

Happy.

JERRY

No second thoughts?

NINA

Same as my first thoughts – that I love you. And you?

JERRY

I'm walking on air.

NINA

My god – it's so magnificently tacky.

JERRY

I drove past here a million times. What a break the bridal suite was vacant.

NINA

I love it. I've always dreamed of spending my wedding night at a tacky motel in the rain.

JERRY

It's not raining.

NINA

No but it's definitely tacky.

JERRY

A round bed.

NINA

We won't know which way is up.
Will we care?
I won’t.

(kisses her)

We are alone at last. Far from the madding crowd.

Are you hungry?

(affectation)

Now? You’re thinking of food now? After we’ve escaped all the relatives, the noisy band, the over enunciating rabbi who teaches them to talk like that? Now that we’re finally in the tacky motel in the rain you’re hungry?

It’s not raining.

We’ll make love so hard we’ll cause it to rain. I feel a cloudburst coming on.

We passed that pizzeria a mile back –

Vesuvius? Yes, it’s very good. What can I say. The woman has a healthy appetite.

(sexy)

And not just for pizza. Do they deliver? Because I deliver.

My God! Food trumps sex - it proves you’re a Jewish princess.

I’ll order it - you can open the Martinis.

You must admit it was brilliant of me to bring along a beaker of gin and vermouth.

You are brilliant.

Martinis and pizza. That will forever define our honeymoon
night.
NINA
(getting close to him)
Uh-uh. After - when we get into bed we’ll define our
honeymoon night.

JERRY
You’re the best. Today I consider myself the luckiest man on
the face of the earth. Lou Gehrig said that. Because of his
endurance they called him The Iron Horse - well, we’ll just
see about that.

NINA
I knew we were meant for each other that evening in the rain
when you said your dream was to move to Paris.

JERRY
Isn’t it great that we both have the same taste? We adore
Paris, we adore rain, we both want two children, we love sex
and Turner Classic Movies.

NINA
And pizza. Half with sausage -

JERRY
And half with pepperoni.

NINA
(cell phone)
I’ll order and slip into this Victoria’s Secret nightgown I
imaginatively purchased for this occasion. Vesuvius...

She goes into bathroom, closes door. He
sets up room, dims lights, puts on music
from radio, pours drinks -

JERRY
(to himself, testing sound of it)
Mrs. Jerry Spector, I love it - the former Nina Roth - Mrs.
Nina Spector - Oh Bonjour Monsieur, oh, have you not met?
This is Madame Nina Spector. Oui elle est charmant...I love
her eyes too... and you noticed her full bosom and slim hips
they are all mine - would you believe it if I told you she
has a PhD in sociology? Oh yes. Oh that? C’est le jacuzzi -
we like making love in the jacuzzi - don’t you have one in
your bedroom?

Knock on door. Jerry is startled, after a
moment to gather himself he goes to door
and opens it. Eddie enters, a friend of
his. Ad-libs of “Eddie” “Jerry” - “Oh
Jesus" or the equivalent.
10/12/11

JERRY

Eddie! How’d you know I was here?

ED

Are you kidding? How could you not know. It’s the only motel in these parts. Plus your smart car is parked right in front.

JERRY

I put a Do Not Disturb sign on the door for a reason.

ED

Jerry, what were you thinking?

JERRY

That I’m the luckiest guy in the world. I’m thinking she’s radiant and sweet and makes a ravishing bride.

ED

Yes but you’re leaving out one key thing. You’re not the groom.

JERRY

I admit, it’s an awkward detail.

ED

You’re not even the best man.

JERRY

So?

ED

So you’re the groom’s father.

JERRY

It’s a technicality.

ED

Yes. How long have you and Nina been having an affair?

JERRY

A flirtation. A benign flirtation. We never had an affair. It was all done with our eyes, with glances, with subtle sub-rosa innuendos, delicate nuanced gestures.

ED

And why did this benign flirtation suddenly turn malignant?

JERRY

She loves me. And Paul is not my son. I never laid eyes on the kid till he was sixteen.
Your stepson. Pardon me.

JERRY

Is he upset?

ED

Er, let's say he's - concerned.

JERRY

And my wife?

ED

There was once a woman named Lorena Bobbitt - she took scissors and -

JERRY

Stop! I can't help it if I fell in love.

ED

Ok. Where is the blushing bride?

JERRY

Inside, slipping into a hot, satin fabric with great erotic potential. We're finally going to consummate something that began one balmy June night on Paul's sailboat in the moonlight, when my hand accidentally brushed against her full cleavage.

ED

Your hand brushed against her breast?

JERRY

That's where I put it.

ED

You're having a mid-life crisis which may turn out to be an end-life crisis.

Knock on door.

JERRY

Nina changed her mind. Is that so crazy? People about to be married get cold feet at the last minute. She realized when push came to shove she loved me, not Paul.

ED

(furious pounding on door)

I think it's your wife. I recognize her knock.
Relax. We’re two sophisticated people. I’m prepared. I know exactly what I’m going to say.
Admits Judy. He goes into rehearsed bonhomie.

JUDY
You rotten, degenerate, psychotic scumbag.

JERRY
Hello Judy. What brings you here?

JUDY
You’re lucky I don’t take a knife and castrate you.

ED
Lorena Bobbitt?

JUDY
You slimy, despicable, roach

JERRY
Can I offer you a very dry martini?

ED
Jesus Christ - somewhere Noel Coward is turning over in his grave.

JUDY
How Could you? Has your brain disintegrated from too much alcohol or is it early dementia?

Nina enters in negligee.

NINA
What’s going on? Oh Judy.

JUDY
Don’t Judy me you twisted little bitch.

JERRY
Did you tell them no sausage on my half?

JUDY
I’m talking to you, you moron.

JERRY
She hasn’t eaten Judy.
NINA
What did I do? You two were planning on divorce anyway.

JUDY
We were? It’s news to me.

JERRY
(to Nina)
I never said divorce, I was thinking of faking my own death.

JUDY
Since when was all this?

JERRY
Since the magic went out of the marriage, since we stopped communicating, since we only fought, since we stopped sleeping with each other.

JUDY
But apart from that we were happy.

JERRY
I mean what did you expect?

JUDY
That life would be boring and asexual and we’d grow old together - like everyone we know.

ED
She has a point, Jerry. There’s a lot to be said for inertia in marriage. Especially now with Netflix.

JUDY
Shut up - you - enabler.

ED
Enabler? I was trying to talk him out of it when you came.

JUDY
You’re the one that first told him about sex in a Jacuzzi.

ED
I’ve never been in a Jacuzzi in my life.

JUDY
Well he made me try it and we ended up dialing 911.
JERRY
She accused me of water boarding her.

JUDY
Ten more seconds and she'd have been married to Paul and this retard screams out - Nina, don't do it, I love you!

ED
Did you see the look on the rabbi's face? Like someone gave back the West Bank.

JUDY
(to Nina)
You were all set to say, I do. What possessed you?

NINA
In one sudden wave it came over me I didn't love Paul, I loved his father.

JERRY
He's not my son, he's your son. We never bonded.

JUDY
He always hated Paul. From the day we were married.

JERRY
I tried - believe me, I tried. But he was always such an arrogant little snot.

JUDY
(to Nina)
He's a genius.

You gave up a genius for an idiot.

NINA
If he was an idiot why did you marry him?

JUDY
Because my hobby was cooking and he ate what you put in front of him.

JERRY
That's all I ever heard. Paul's a genius, Paul's great, Paul's this, Paul's that - your incessant pampering turned him into a coddled little prince who I tried to teach baseball but he couldn't hit a curve - he couldn't throw a football - he became a cheerleader.
JUDY
I’m only sorry my first husband didn’t live to bring him up.

JERRY
It’s my biggest regret too. Of course if your wife is a world
class shrike and is ice cold in bed it’s not surprising the
husband commits suicide.

JUDY
Harvey’s death was an accident!

JERRY
Yes, I know. His hunting rifle went off by mistake while he
was cleaning it. People always clean their rifles by putting
the barrel in their mouth.

NINA
I guess you don’t want me to call you mom anymore.

JUDY
(to Nina)
Y’know you’re going to have to give back the ring.

She knows that.

NINA
And all the wedding presents.

Knock on door.

JERRY
That’s ok. No couple needs fifty-five stupid glass apples.

Oh. Pizza.

Nina opens door. Enter Sam and Fay Roth,
her parents.

NINA

FAY
Are you alright?

SAM

NINA
I’m fine mom – oh dad, don’t worry, I’m fine.
You were about to say I do then a strange man leaped from the crowd and screamed. He grabbed you - there was a commotion - I blacked out.

SAM
She’s suffering from post-traumatic shock syndrome. She thinks you were kidnapped.

FAY
(to Nina)
I’ll pay the ransom. Just don’t hurt the child.

NINA
I’m here - I’m back - it’s me - Nina. There was no kidnapping. Jerry grabbed me and we ran out.

Is ransom deductible?

NINA
Snap out of it, mom. I left voluntarily - to marry Jerry.

Who’s Jerry?

FAY

SAM
Paul’s father.

FAY
She’s marrying his father? What do you mean, there was no kidnapping?

NINA
No. I’m ok - I’ve decided to marry Paul’s father.

FAY
I - I think I’d prefer the kidnapping.

SAM
You caused a madhouse. Everyone went berserk - Uncle Mendel had a stroke.

NINA
Mendel? Which Mendel? Mendel Klien or Mendel Slotkin?
SAM
Mendel Klien - you remember Uncle Mendel, he used to put you on his knee and bounce you, he'd give you a pony ride.

NINA
Is he ok?

SAM
Do I know? He was rushed to Columbia Presbyterian.

ED
From Great Neck? There's nothing closer?

SAM
He refused to go anywhere else - he wants to die at Columbia Presbyterian because that's where Elsie died.

FAY
Elsie died?

SAM
Eight years ago.

NINA
Elsie wasn't his wife. Elsie was Mendel Shapiro's wife.

SAM
But he was sleeping with Elsie.

NINA
Mendel Klein was having an affair with Mendel Shapiro's wife?

FAY
She must've liked the name Mendel.

SAM
Ah - she's definitely coming out of it now. You get it finally, Fay? Nina's rejecting Paul for him. She's not marrying Paul - she's marrying his father.

FAY
Yes, I see now but -
(to Judy)
What kind of deranged husband have you got?

JUDY
Husband? What about your daughter, the betraying, disloyal temptress should rot in hell for eternity and I say that with no bitterness.
FAY
You’re criticizing my daughter because your husband seduced her?
JUDY

Jerry? Jerry couldn’t seduce a nymphomaniac if he blew in her ear for six hours. Believe me, it was your daughter’s mini-skirts and see-through blouses that drove him wild, meanwhile she accepted a five karat ring from poor Paul.

NINA

Here - here - I’m not after his ring.

JUDY

I’ll take that ring. Not that Paul needs the money – his books get on the best-seller list. Not like his father, who writes post-modern novels that people read only when they run out of Ambien.

FAY

We thought you were a decent family. Why don’t you say something, Sam?

SAM

It’s hard for me because this incident made the whole thing with your boss come up.

FAY

Oh god, will that not stay dead and buried.

SAM

I can’t help it, Fay. I try but I’m still not over it.

FAY

This is not the place -

SAM

She had an affair with our marriage counselor.

FAY

I’d hardly call four years an affair.

SAM

Four years knew about - but who knows what went on I previous six the years.

NINA

I never knew about the marriage counselor.

SAM

We went to a marriage counselor.

NINA

Yes but why?
Because she was having an affair with her boss.
10/2/11

Mom.

NINA

FAY

I sought help.

SAM

Right, then I caught her in bed with the marriage counsellor. We needed a marriage counsellor to save our marriage from the marriage counsellor.

JUDY

That's what we need, a marriage counsellor.

FAY

Be sure and get one who's hands on.

SAM

And throughout it all, I took the high road.

FAY

Some high road. He slept with a prostitute.

SAM

She was not a prostitute, she was your sister.

NINA

Aunt Carrie? She's a dental hygienist.

FAY

To the world she's a dental hygienist, to me she's a prostitute.

SAM

I was lonely - how do you think I felt, my wife was sleeping with other men.

FAY

I'd hardly call my boss and the marriage counsellor, other men. They were two guys.

Knock on door.

NINA

Please god let that be the pizza.

Enter Rabbi Baumel.

RABBI

My heart is heavy. I hear the voice of Abraham - I hear all Israel wailing.
Rabbi, talk to them.

RABBI
A hundred marriages I’ve performed and never, never have I experienced anything like this. When Moses first accepted the ten commandments from the Lord on Mt. Sinai -

JERRY
Oh stop it, we love each other, it’s that simple.

RABBI
A father runs off with another member of the tribe’s beloved. A good father, a loving father, a decent provider, a man who supported his family by the sweat of his brow - Jerry Spector born to Rose and Myron Spector - attended City College, served his country in the Navy, - Vayichoo hashimayem -

JERRY
Rabbi I’m not dead.

JUDY
You should be.

RABBI
I am reminded of the two brothers, Jacob and Esau - Jacob smooth, Esau hairy -

ED
No Rabbi, this is more like David who coveted Bathsheba.

RABBI
Ok, make it David - do I care? The point is a man with a wife, a fine wife, a good mother, the former Judith Shapiro, the daughter of a physician, she enjoyed sporadic visits from her working children - Never forgot a birthday. Made a delicious brisket.

JUDY
Stop with the eulogies, Rabbi - I’m also alive.

RABBI
A eulogy is called for. A man is married to a good woman, she may not be the most beautiful creature on earth - I’m reminded of when Moses struck the rock with his rod and water flowed - pure drinking water -
JERRY
What the hell is that supposed to mean?

RABBI
That I’m thirsty.

ED
I think I saw the Rabbi going a little heavy on wine all night.

RABBI
Yes - I imbibed. So joyous was I at this occasion that I partook of the ceremonial wine. Then so dismayed by this horrendous tragedy I sought the calming effects of something with greater proof - the vodka to be exact. Incidentally, are those martinis?

ED
The Rabbi’s potted.

RABBI
(drinking)
According to the great seventeenth century scholar, Rebb Yitzhork Ben Tsvi Levy, the bride and groom get married, the father of the groom keeps his schlong in his pants.

ED
I’m sure the scholar didn’t exactly put it that way.

NINA
I love Jerry. I don’t love Paul. Why is that so hard to accept.

JUDY
It’s not love, it’s revenge.

JERRY
Revenge?

RABBI
Seek not vengeance but turn the other cheek - Or is that the other guy...

JUDY
It killed you that Paul was an instant success.
JERRY
Because he's a hack, because his book is the lowest form of escapist garbage.

FAY
I liked it.

SAM
She likes any story where the wife cheats.

JERRY
You liked it? Well you're wrong.

NINA
How can she be wrong? It's taste.

JERRY
What is there to like? A third rate sentimental piece of drivel, conceived in venality to titillate morons.

SAM
You're not calling Fay a moron?

JERRY
(pause)
Have you had her tested?

SAM
She's low normal.

ED
I kind of liked the book too. I mean it's light reading but the plot was absorbing.

JERRY
How can a book that's not about anything be absorbing? There's no substantial theme, no issues -
JUDY
That’s always been the trouble with your writing. There’s no pleasure - it’s all like homework. Like being in school.

FAY
(to Sam) That’s exactly what I was trying to tell you about our sex life -

SAM
You felt sex with me was like school?

FAY
Why do you think I took weekends and holidays off?

JERRY
But every great book says something, about metaphysics - the human soul, our relation to one another, our failure to love, to communicate, to find meaning in an empty, violent, tragic universe.

(through out Jerry’s profound speech, Fay is taking notice of the room for the first time.)

FAY
What was this place originally, a whorehouse?

RABBI
The universe is not empty or meaningless. God exists, he may have attention deficit disorder, but he exists.

FAY
I loved Paul’s novel - the stranger stops the elevator between floors and deflowers the virgin.

JUDY
Oh, I love that section!

NINA
The character of Rosalee who performs oral sex at the seder was based on me.

FAY
That’s okay darling - everyone likes to celebrate Passover in their own way.
SAM
I like that character in the book. Your stuff is plodding. Your post-modern thing about the atheist who sits alone in an empty room without moving for eighty years because he wants his life to pass slowly - I fell asleep.

RABBI
It’s very fashionable these days to extol atheism but when you’re on your death bed, you want a comforting clergyman or you want to be surrounded by a lot of guys in black turtle necks, drinking espresso and discussing Swedish movies?

JERRY
Oh, I see Rabbi - and you can help me?

RABBI
Not me - God can help you. But for a few bucks I can give you a very nice burial.

JUDY
Could you do it tonight?

FAY
I’m being cremated.

RABBI
Our religion forbids cremation - and tattoos. I’m reminded of the story of the pious Jew who died with a tattoo of a little heart on his arm and then also got cremated. Our religion doesn’t believe in Hell, so I don’t know exactly where they put him.

SAM
All I know is I’m giving all my organs to science.

Knock on door.

FAY
Nobody’s going to want your organs, Sam, unless you include Pepto Bismol.

JERRY
I love you, Nina - and everything these people say only strengthens my resolve.

Enter Dr. Brill a shrink.

DR BRILL
Jerry!

JERRY
Ohmigod, Dr. Brill, what are you doing here?

JUDY
8/29/11
I called your shrink to try and talk some sense into you.

DR. BRILL
Your wife said it was an analytic emergency.
JUDY
Oh thank God you’re here, he’s beginning to go through puberty again.

JERRY
I want Nina.

DR. BRILL
But we did discuss it and you did promise not to act out.

JERRY
Did I act out?

ED
I think you could call running up to the altar and abducting her acting out.

JERRY
But remember when I said I keep thinking she’s flirting with me all the time?

DR. BRILL
Yes. And I pointed out those were all fantasies.

NINA
But they weren’t fantasies. I was flirting.

ED
(to Dr. Brill) I know it’s not an exact science but shouldn’t he get a refund?

DR. BRILL
Be logical – what’s lacking in your life that you act out such an irrational thing?

JERRY
How is it irrational?
9/30/11

DR. BRILL
I’m thinking of the recurring dream where you decapitate your wife and stepson with a chain saw.

JUDY
That’s what you dream?

SAM
My shrink says dreams mean nothing.

RABBI
Not the dream of seven lean cattle and seven fatted cattle — the Egyptians then experienced famine —

DR. BRILL
That’s a fairy tale.

RABBI
So is penis envy.

DR. BRILL
And you, Nina. Did you always act out your momentary whims? Even as a child?

NINA
Let’s not get into my childhood.

FAY
What does that mean? She was a cesarean. She never forgave me.

JUDY
He must’ve told you he was always competitive with my son.

JERRY
Her prissy son — from a former marriage.

JUDY
Yes, and to a man who, if he was alive, would tower over you like you were a pygmy. A physician.

JERRY

FAY
What did you not have as a little girl? What was lacking? Name one thing?

NINA
I wanted to be an only child.

FAY
What did you expect me to do about your older sister?
FAY (cont)
We sent you to camp, you had music lessons, toe shoes, I had you tested for every allergy.

NINA
You’ve often admitted I was an unplanned child.

FAY
Unplanned but not unloved. Yes - so what - you were an accident.

SAM
The only way we made love was by accident.

FAY
Sam!

DR. BRILL
(to Jerry and Nina) Can’t you see you two are both trying to get even with your parents?

FAY
Even for what? I’m still waiting to hear.

SAM
Fay, no matter what you do they grow up angry with you. It’s nature’s way of getting them to leave the nest - she’ll mellow when you get Alzheimer’s.

JUDY
(to Jerry about shrink)
I’m just curious. Did you tell him for my birthday you got me a bracelet and had it engraved with the words, “Do not resuscitate”?

JERRY
That was a joke. The woman has no humor.

JUDY
Freud said there were no jokes.

DR. BRILL
Freud said sometimes a cigar is just a cigar.

FAY
Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar but it’s the times it’s not that you have to fake a headache.

RABBI
I admit Freud was a genius. Who else could make an hour into fifty minutes.
FAY

If anyone had a deprived childhood, it was me, not you.
Not that story again.

FAY
I was a little girl. I had an Uncle Shlomo,

NINA
Oh Mom!

FAY
Three fingers, he tried to molest me. Suddenly, three fingers
I feel fondling me -

JUDY
What’s the three fingers got to do with it?

FAY
To someone who’s never been fondled by three fingers it’s
hard to explain.

SAM
At least you were molested, I didn’t have sex till I was
twenty-five - you were the first one.

No wonder.

FAY
What the hell does that mean?

SAM

NINA
(placating)
Only that it probably accounts for your inexperience.

FAY
Inexperience? He turned me this way, he turned me that way.
That’s when I knew he needed reading glasses.

RABBI
With my parents the sex was different - they were always
fleeing from a pogrom - they learned to make love while
running - as they ran. My father was fleeing from the
Cossacks - he was crossing the border - he took all his tiny
diamonds and my mother’s and put them in a condom - he tied
it and then swallowed the condom - later he and my mother
were hiding in a barn - they felt the urge to make love -
then he realized he was out of condoms - and that’s how I was
born.

Knock on door - ad-libs - Sal enters.

SAL
Pizza delivery? Half sausage, half pepperoni?
8/29/11

JUDY

I’m glad we bought all those wonderful canapes for the wedding.
JERRY

I told you nobody would eat the quail eggs, I said everyone likes the little frankfurters -
(to pizza boy)
What do I owe you?

SAM

I wouldn't mind a slice.

FAY

You're not having pizza. You'll be up all night.

SAM

One slice can't hurt. Please?

FAY

You may not.

SAM

I wanna slice!

DR. BRILL

Do you always act out this maternal-child relationship?

SAM

I'm the son she never had.

FAY

He's the son I never wanted.

NINA

Would you like a slice, Rabbi?

RABBI

Actually I'd like a slice with sausage but God sees everything. Unless I eat it in the bathroom.

JUDY

Look, here's an impartial person - he has no ax to grind - what would you think of a man who attends his son's wedding -

JERRY

Stepson.

JUDY

And runs off with the bride.

SAL

(re:money)

You don't have anything smaller? What? I wasn't following.

JERRY
Leave him alone - what the hell does he know? He’s an ignorant delivery boy.
Why am I ignorant? I'm uneducated – I don't know anything. I'm not ignorant.

What does that mean?

I never finished college, probably because I never started it.

Nothing to be ashamed of. I never went past high school.

I dropped out of high school. Why did I need to learn Latin or Geometry to do what I do? The pizzas are cut into triangles, that's all the geometry I need.

In Poland, where my grandparents came from, they serve pizza with no salt, no cheese, no tomato sauce, no flour. There was no taste, but the portions were huge.

For instance, this bed could be cut into exactly eight slices.

Knock on door.

Christ, this is like Route 66.

(Nina opening door)

Enter Paul.

Aha! Here you are. I might've known he'd take you to this tacky motel!

Bravo. Tell him darling.

I like tacky motels.

For this you throw away your chance to consummate your wedding night in the Waldorf with me?
8/29/11
Listen to this kid's confidence. You'd think he was a quarterback, not a chorus boy in The Nutcracker.
PAUL
Forget me. How could you do this to mom? Oh mom, I feel your pain.

JERRY
Mom. Mom this, mom that - his whole life he’s fixated on mom.

PAUL
Why am I fixated? Because I care about her? Because I show her the devotion she craved and never got from you? Because I always believed she could do better than a snake like Mr. Jerry Spector.

RABBI
A snake - the symbol of evil from the Garden of Eden -

DR. BRILL
I think rather in this case a phallic symbol.

PAUL
I think rather in this case a simple reptile.

JERRY
At least I don’t prostitute my talents.

PAUL
Prostitute?

FAY
Leave my sister out of this!

SAL
Your sister is a prostitute? Awesome.

Who is this guy?

PAUL
Sal Buonacotti.

SAL
(offers hand)
Sal Buonacotti. Not the head of the literary department at Amherst?

SAL
Amherst, we don’t deliver there, it’s too far.

PAUL
What’s going on? Nina, you love me.
NINA

Yes, I know, the world loves you. You’re a success but I’ve come around to Jerry’s way of thinking that you are a shallow mama’s boy who got lucky with a superficial overpraised first novel.

PAUL

Is that what you said about me?

JERRY

I never said superficial. I said vacuous first novel.

PAUL

This sonofabitch goes around knocking me out of pure envy.

RABBI

Please – to hear such language from little – Paul Spector –

PAUL

Paul Jessup – my father’s name was Jessup.

JUDY

May he rest in peace from that terrible accident.

JERRY

Right, the one with the gun barrel in his mouth.

RABBI

Little Paul – the bar mitzvah boy – now fully grown, a mature man – a fine citizen, a credit to the community, a loving son – who brought respect and praise to his mother, giving her joy as from dust he came, so to, to dust he returns –

PAUL

I’m not dead.

RABBI

Honor thy father – and the Lord bade Abraham to take his only son –

DR. BRILL

Issac.

RABBI

Issac and to sacrifice him –

JERRY

He’s not my son but I’m willing to sacrifice him.

PAUL

My real father was a brilliant man – a healer of the ill.
If you happened to be a goldfish.
A doctor of animals with the soul of a poet.

DR. BRILL
Tell me something do you have fantasies about trying on your mom’s clothes?

PAUL
God No. She’s a twelve. Who are you? Does he deliver Chinese food?

JUDY
Your father’s shrink who has obviously done him no good after nine years of intense psycho-therapy.

DR. BRILL
How can you say that? He goes on escalators now.

SAL
I slept with a prostitute once. I wonder if it was your sister?

FAY
Did she have a nose job that looked like it was done at Zabors?

PAUL
(taking Nina by hand)
I won’t allow this charade to continue. You’re marrying me.

JERRY
(pushin Paul off)
Leave her alone!

PAUL
I’ll kill you, you weasel.

DR. BRILL
It’s the ritual murder of the father. Freud right as usual.

RABBI
(amidst ad-libbed confusion and struggle)
I am reminded of Rabbi Mordecai Ben Rifkin who questioned God and said, exactly what’s wrong with pork?

JUDY
A stranger would think we're a dysfunctional family.

Sal steps into it and using his youthful force puts a halt to the
SAL
Now just a minute - everybody calm down - I’ve had enough - now you people listen to me. You may be formally educated but I see more of life than all of you. For cryin' out loud, delivering pizzas brings you into contact with all sorts of people. I’ve met rich and poor - young and old, all races and creeds - each with his or her own tastes. This one likes pepperoni, this one likes plain margarita. In the yuppy joints I’m told they serve pizza with truffles. The point is that from delivering pies and dealing with people’s impatience, their hunger, their tipping habits, I’ve learned that life is short and there are no rules. Yes, Nina was scheduled to marry Paul but the human heart is so unpredictable. For whatever combination of miraculous reasons she and Jerry have fallen in love and while it defies conventional logic or science or religion, it’s yet a reality. My advice is to accept it, go with the flow, try not to be embittered and move on with life - which as I say is short and why waste it squabbling and resisting the inevitable.

The crowd ad-libs a kind of grudging assent and slowly mills toward the door.

FRAY
Who’s going to be the in-laws now?

JUDY
(to Jerry) My lawyer will call you.

They file out chastened.
The last to go is Sal.

JERRY
You’re very astute for a pizza delivery boy.

SAL
There’s a vast difference between the knowledge one learns in school and true wisdom. Good luck to you both.

NINA
My pizza’s gotten cold.

SAL
Yes, that’s what constant bickering does - you’re left with hard cheese.

CURTAIN