

2019

# White Birch Trees and Purple Finches: A Year of Ten Minute Scenes

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## Recommended Citation

Sarasin, Kristine, "White Birch Trees and Purple Finches: A Year of Ten Minute Scenes" (2019). *Honors Theses*. 1.  
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*Approval Page*  
*HON 499 Thesis or Creative Project*

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*May 6, 2019*

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White Birch Trees and Purple Finches: A  
Year of Ten-Minute Scenes

Kristine Sarasin

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the University Honors  
Scholar Designation

5/1/19

Jayne Decker

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5/1/19

5/4/19

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### Dedications:

This project has been supported by so many wonderful professors, peers, and family members. It wouldn't have been possible without all the support. I'd like to thank my parents for all of their encouragement as I worked on this play, Zoe Mann-Weiner for her notes on my work and constantly listening to me talk about this project, and of course, a special thank you to Jayne Decker who advised this ambitious endeavor and was a constant source of support, encouragement, and invaluable feedback and constructive criticism.

## Project Assessment

*White Birch Trees and Purple Finches* was originally proposed with the working title “Home: A Calendar Year,” however as I worked on the project, I couldn’t help but feel as though the name needed to be more indicative of New Hampshire. This script is about New Hampshire and I wanted the title to reflect that more. I decided to name the show after the state tree and state bird of New Hampshire and I feel that this helps immediately establish the setting of the piece. There’s an image in the audience’s mind before any lights rise. The format of the project is the same as the one I initially proposed. I knew that I wanted to write 12 ten-minute scenes about young adulthood in New Hampshire and that’s something that remained consistent throughout the process of working on this project. The order of the show however is different from what I had originally expected. I thought that I would create a chronological calendar year of scenes. However, as I worked on the project, I began to realize that I was thinking about this script in terms of seasons more so than in terms of a chronological calendar year. Instead of starting with January and ending with December as I initially thought I would, I began with winter and ended with the fall.

One of the consistent notes I received about these scenes was the need for a simple set. My rough drafts of each scene tended to have rather complex and distinct set details. While this would be reasonable for a play taking place in primarily one location it simply wasn’t reasonable or realistic for a series of brief scenes. I needed to become more practical in terms of set and this is something that I tried to work on in revised versions of the scenes. I also tried to use sets that would work along with multiple scenes. “December,” “February,” and “September” all require a couch whereas “March” and “July” both call for benches. Other notes I got included maintaining

conversational tone throughout the scenes. There were moments within scripts where the conversational and natural tone of characters would drop or shift into something less natural sounding. Revising this required reading through the scripts out loud and identifying the specific areas where lines became mouthfuls or where I found myself, or someone else, stumbling over the words. Often the solution was rephrasing the line with fewer words. Maintaining a conversational tone was one of my top priorities with this piece and I found that this often involved writing lines that didn't fully follow the rules of grammar. In real life, people don't speak perfectly and they often butcher the language. People conjugate words incorrectly, skip over words or repeat parts of their sentences, and these are tendencies I incorporated into the dialogue of my characters. This results in more natural sounding conversation. One of the most significant notes I received involved the suggestion of cutting a character from a scene. "May" originally had three women in it, but the scene lacked any sort of conflict and the characters weren't distinguishable from each other. One character, in particular, was flat and didn't serve a clear purpose. It was unclear how she differed from the other two characters and her goals were also undeveloped and unformed. When I began revising this scene, I knew that the flat character couldn't stay in the piece. Once she was removed, I reworked the premise of the scene and found that there was now a clearer sense of direction. The scene would have remained weak if the original cast stayed the same. New layers were added to each scene every time I revised them.

*White Birch Trees and Purple Finches* falls into a long history of writers working with their home and placing stories in these familiar landscapes. *Almost Maine* by John Cariani and *The Vermont Plays* by Annie Baker are two such examples. Both of these works take place within

their playwright's respective home state. Working with one's home state allows for a sense of love and authenticity to grow throughout the piece. There are few places that one is as familiar with as they are with "home," (wherever that may be.) Additionally, this project relates to other shows composed of vignettes. A vignette play has multiple short scenes that all focus on some commonality, whether that be an idea, a theme, or a feeling. Shows done in this style include *Almost Maine* and *Love Sick* by John Cariani, as well as *Superheroes* by Ian McWethy, and *Love, Death, and the Prom* by Jon Jory. *White Birch Trees and Purple Finches* is formatted similarly to these scripts and would likely be of interest to those who have enjoyed these other shows.

I consider this project in many ways to be a love letter to both New Hampshire and the people who live there. This piece has more than one intended audience, but I wrote it first and foremost for people who live in New Hampshire, people who grew up in New Hampshire, or anyone who cares about New Hampshire. One of the goals of this piece was to carve a space for New Hampshire outside of *Our Town* by Thornton Wilder or Adam Sandler movies. This piece is meant to show what current day life is like for young adults in New Hampshire and as such, it is directed to that audience. To be even more specific than that, this project is focused on the ages of 18-26. However, the stories being told in this work can resonate with anybody and the feelings expressed within each scene certainly apply to people outside of New Hampshire as well. This project's other intended audience is young adults at the high school and collegiate level. The nature of this show and the way that it's formatted means that it's also ideal for student directing. This project would be helpful in laboratory settings where students would be blocking, directing, or focusing on technical elements of the show for class projects. A series of

ten-minute scenes allows for a large cast and provides opportunities for students to participate in a variety of different ways.

*White Birch Trees and Purple Finches* without a doubt has been the most challenging and rewarding project that I've worked on during my time at Farmington. It has pushed my writing greatly and demanded that I revise and revise again. I feel that over the course of this semester I've become adept at recognizing the issues, problem spots, and tendencies within my own work. Before meeting with anybody to revise I would write down my concerns about the piece and ask for feedback particularly in those areas. I could identify when a character felt flat or when an ending arrived a few sentences too soon. This growth is significant compared to when I entered the Creative Writing program and felt self-conscious about my writing, but unable to identify the individual aspects that weren't working. One of the most challenging aspects of this endeavor was writing 25 different characters. Character voice is one of the most important things to me as an actor, reader, and writer. It was important to me that each of these characters felt and sounded different. This was difficult at points as the characters are from the same area, know the same people, and are within the same age group. In order to make the characters separate from each other, I spent more time developing the movements and stage business of them all. This project made me think deeply about character, New Hampshire, what feelings I associate with the seasons, and what ideas I gravitate towards. This project made me work more intensely than I ever have before on my writing and it resulted in me learning a significant amount about who I am as a writer and who I am as a person.

A Note on Setting: The following 12 scenes all take place within the same fictional county of Tisdale, New Hampshire. Each scene is set in one of four towns, or has characters from those four towns. These towns are: Gravelshaw, Rowding, Chelfair, and Bromwich. These towns are all located in Southern New Hampshire. Of the towns, Bromwich is the most rural, and Chelfair is the most developed and where most people do their shopping.

DECEMBER

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Cast of Characters:

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LYNN: 24. Raised Catholic. Not sure she believes in a god. A little immature, but trying her best to be supportive right now.

TIFFANY: 24. Raised Jewish. This is an important part of her identity and life, but she doesn't go to synagogue. Her mother recently passed away.

Scene:

Lynn and Tiffany's cramped apartment. Bromwich.

Time:

Current day. 3 days before Hanukah begins. It is night.

Estimated Run Time:

8-9 min.

*Lights up on Lynn and Tiffany's apartment.*

*The only furniture needed for this scene is a coffee table and something resembling a couch.*

*Boxes are strewn throughout the living room in no particular order.*

*Some are still taped shut, some are open and half empty, and some are almost completely empty.*

*Tiffany sits alone on the ground (in front of the coffee table and couch) surrounded by a circle of boxes.*

*She searches through the boxes, shuffling items around, clearly looking for something specific. Her movements are filled with frustration.*

*A door screeches open and then closes with another screech. Tiffany looks up briefly before returning to her boxes.*

*Lynn enters the living room humming an off-tune Christmas song. She is still bundled up in a bulky winter coat, a hat that lights up, and a thick handknitted scarf.*

LYNN:

*It. Is. So. Goddamn. Cold.*

TIFFANY:

*It's supposed to drop down into the negatives tonight.*

*Lynn begins taking off her winter gear. She drops it unceremoniously onto the ground in a pile.*

*Tiffany glances at the pile with mild irritation.*

*Lynn clenches and then unclenches her fists to demonstrate.*

LYNN:

I can't feel my hands! That's how cold it is.

TIFFANY:

Lynn. You have nerve damage in one hand. That might be part of the problem.

LYNN:

Nah. I don't think that's it. Doesn't sound right.

*Lynn crosses over to Tiffany, easily sidestepping the boxes. She bends down to kiss Tiffany.*

*Suddenly, she slides her hands under Tiffany's shirt. Tiffany jumps back with a squeal. Lynn grins.*

TIFFANY:

Jackass.

LYNN:

I told you it was cold.

*Tiffany looks over at Lynn's pile, and then back at Lynn. She scooches backwards a bit to look over in the kitchen. Lynn follows her gaze.*

TIFFANY:

Did you bring anything in?

*Lynn shifts from foot to foot, still hovering near Tiffany and the boxes.*

LYNN:

Okay, soooooo, no luck at Walmart.

TIFFANY:

Well. That's kind of a problem.

LYNN:

I mean, there's gotta be a place somewhere around here?

*Lynn bends down, touches her toes, stretches tall. A long day of standing has made her eager to stretch freely. She twists from one side to the other.*

*Tiffany sinks down onto the floor, now sprawled out across it. She keeps her arms pressed to her sides. Otherwise she'll hit a box in any direction.*

TIFFANY

I'm not really sure about that.

LYNN

Oh c'mon. Don't be that way.

Tiffany

*(Exasperated. Irritated.)*

Lynn.

*Unphased, Lynn doesn't look over. Instead, she settles at the edge of the coffee table and sits down.*

LYNN

Babe, we're gonna find everything we need. I promise.

TIFFANY

It starts in three days. We're kind of running out of time.

LYNN

We'll go to Nashua, okay? There has to be something there.

TIFFANY

That's a 45-minute drive, there better be.

*Tiffany huffs. She sits up and pulls an already opened box towards herself.*

LYNN:

We can try some thrift stores too. The ones here, I mean.

TIFFANY

Nope.

LYNN:

No?

TIFFANY:

I went to all of them today. All of them.

LYNN:

Okay, no big deal. Nashua it is.

TIFFANY:

I don't know why this is so fucking hard.

*She pulls out a bubble wrapped item, and tries to examine it under the light. She huffs and places it back in the box before shoving the box away.*

*She pulls in another one.*

*Lynn watches from the table.*

LYNN

I'm sorry it's so difficult.

TIFFANY

I don't want you to be sorry. (Beat.) It's not your fault. (Beat.) I'm just... I'm just really frustrated. This is ridiculous.

LYNN

I know, I can see that. I didn't think it would be this hard to find either. Like? It's a menorah?

TIFFANY

Just a staple of the holiday. No big deal. Not needed or anything.

LYNN

At least Hannaford's has the Matza ball mix that you like.

TIFFANY

Yeah, and they have the biggest Kosher section in this entire state.

*Lynn shrugs.*

LYNN

Soooo, where are we at with the boxes?

TIFFANY

I don't even know at this point. I feel like I've gone through them all.

*Lynn steps off the coffee table to go sit closer to Tiffany. She squeezes her shoulder briefly. Lynn pulls a box towards her. Tiffany doesn't look away from that box.*

LYNN

Okay, okay, let me rephrase. Are these your boxes from moving in or *(Here there is a split-second of hesitation, an awareness of poking an open wound)* your mom's?

TIFFANY

These ones are hers. But uh, none of it is what we need. So. It just. This is all just her stuff. Or what Chloe let me keep, I guess.

*A pause.*

*Lynn goes to say something and stops herself. Instead she simply holds Tiffany's hand.*

*Tiffany squeezes it twice before letting go and pulling another box towards her. She doesn't open it immediately.*

TIFFANY

I'm so dumb.

LYNN:

What? Don't talk about yourself that way!

TIFFANY:

It was really stupid for me to let Chloe take the Hanukkah stuff. She doesn't even go to synagogue.

*Lynn shifts. Looks down at the box she still hasn't opened yet.*

LYNN

I mean. Tiff, you don't go either.

TIFFANY

So?

LYNN

Never mind.

*Long beat.*

*She shuffles the box around on the floor, still not going to open it.*

Okay. Soooo, what exactly do we need besides the menorah?

*Tiffany looks down at the box, then up at Lynn.*

TIFFANY

I want a dreidel. It's not going to feel right if we don't have one. But that's really it.

LYNN

Should we try looking online?

TIFFANY

I guess.

LYNN:

There are some really cute dreidels on Etsy. I meant to get you one for your birthday last year, but I kind of forgot.

TIFFANY

I don't think it will get here on time.

LYNN

That's what expedited shipping is for.

TIFFANY

It's not like we can afford overnight shipping.

LYNN

I mean. Maybe if we move some of the budget around?

TIFFANY

We're already moving the budget around to even get the menorah. And we still need to get candles and pick up some of food, and...and...and... fuck. Fuck! I need to pay my phone bill at the end of the week.

*Tiffany groans.*

*Lynn begins stretching again, leaning down on one leg and then the other. she eventually lays down on the ground, staring up at the ceiling.*

LYNN

Deep breaths, we'll figure it all out. (*very sagely*) One breath at a time. One movement at a time. One box at a time.

TIFFANY

Yeah, well, can you help me with the boxes then?

*Lynn stops stretching, irritation passing through her for a moment. She pulls the box onto her lap and rips off the tape. She's going to open the box when-*

TIFFANY:

Can you just be careful with the stuff in the boxes?

LYNN

Of course. I promise.

*This is said with concern, not irritation.*

TIFFANY:

Some of it's really fragile. And old. I know a few of those things are from my grandparents.

LYNN:

Careful, I got it.

*Tiffany and Lynn finally each open their box.*

*They sit in silence as they go through the contents of each one.*

*Lynn pulls out an item double wrapped in bubble wrap. She looks at it with curiosity, before handling it gently and unwrapping it.*

*She holds a Seder plate in her hands, turning it around to fully examine it. The ceramic plate is gorgeous with shades of red, orange, and a greyish blue.*

*She reads off of it:*

LYNN:

Parsley?

*Tiffany doesn't look up.*

TIFFANY:

Parsley?

LYNN:

Yes.

*Tiffany repositions herself so she can look at Lynn more easily.*

TIFFANY:

What are you talking about?

*Lynn holds up the plate for Tiffany to see.*

LYNN:

It says horseradish too? Is this Hanukkah related?

*Tiffany rubs her temples. Sighs.*

TIFFANY:

No. No, that is not Hanukkah related at all.

LYNN:

Oh.

TIFFANY:

That's a Seder plate. For Passover.

LYNN:

So, I was way off?

TIFFANY:

Just a little.

*She looks at the plate for a beat. She reaches across to take the plate from Lynn's hands. She holds it with reverence.*

TIFFANY:

Well, I guess we have something now. For a totally different holiday. But still.

LYNN:

It's really beautiful.

TIFFANY:

I think so too. Bubbie got it on a trip to Israel. I'm glad it's in one of the boxes. I kind of just assumed Chloe took it.

LYNN:

See? It's a good thing we're going through them.

*Tiffany nods. She still holds the plate close to her chest.*

TIFFANY:

I've been putting it off for so long. But uhm. It's kind of a relief.

*Lynn rests her head on Tiffany's shoulder.*

LYNN:

I'm proud of you.

TIFFANY:

I'm not.

LYNN:

Oh c'mon, please, just for once? Be proud of yourself.

TIFFANY:

Lynn, no. You don't get it.

LYNN:

Then tell me! Explain it to me, you know? Make me get it.

TIFFANY:

I don't remember the prayers right.

LYNN:

We'll look them up, I'm sure there's tons of sites with like huge lists of prayers. I mean if you look up Hail Mary you get like a million results.

TIFFANY:

I don't want to look them up. I want to be able to call my mom about it.

LYNN:

Oh babe. That's uh, that's really tough.

TIFFANY:

I just want to ask her which one is the opening prayer, and if we did the blessing over the candles before or after we lit them.

*She looks at Lynn who doesn't say anything.*

I just don't remember any of it.

*A pause long enough for them both to think.*

LYNN:

You could call Chloe. She might remember?

TIFFANY:

I'd really rather not do that.

*Lynn shrugs.*

LYNN:

I know, but like, if anyone is going to have answers for you it's her.

TIFFANY:

She'll be an ass about it though.

LYNN:

So? Let her be. But at least get some answers. You'll know whether or not you guys used to bless the candles and then light them, or light them and then bless them.

TIFFANY:

Mmmm.

*Lynn stands up abruptly. She offers a hand to Tiffany.*

LYNN:

C'mon, c'mon. Get up.

TIFFANY:

But we're in the middle of-

LYNN:

Food first. Then we'll come back to this. We'll keep looking okay? Through the boxes. And Nashua tomorrow if that's what we need.

*Tiffany relents and takes Lynn's hand.*

*They stand together for a moment, before Lynn goes to pick her winter clothes off the ground.*

END SCENE.

JANUARY

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Cast of Characters:

---

ALLIE: 19, almost 20. She's tired and angry. She used to have a thing with Lucas.

BELLA: 20. She was never close with Lucas, but she knew him. She's gentle and warm. She's also sadder than she thought she would be. She's one of Allie's close friends.

Scene:

Allie's childhood bedroom. Rowding.

Time:

Current day. January 4<sup>th</sup>. Allie, Bella, and Lucas' sophomore year of college.

Estimated Run Time:

9-12 min.

*Allie opens the door of her childhood bedroom. She steps into the room and slips off her heels. She tosses the shoes to the side.*

*Bella slips her shoes off as well. She drops them next to the doorway.*

*Both women wear black dresses over black tights.*

*Allie lingers by the doorway as she rummages through her purse.*

*Bella walks across the room and sits on the edge of Allie's bed.*

ALLIE:

He would've hated that tie.

BELLA:

Huh?

ALLIE:

He would've hated the tie he was wearing.

BELLA:

His stepdad's tie? Yeah. I thought it was kinda ugly. Busy, you know?

ALLIE:

No. (Beat.) John's tie was fine. (Beat.) Well. I mean, he at least picked it.

BELLA:

Oh. You mean?

ALLIE:

Yeah.

*A long beat passes.*

*Allie finally finds the makeup remover wipes that she was looking for.*

*She tears a pack open and crosses over to her mirror. She begins wiping off her makeup.*

BELLA:

I don't know. I thought it was kinda nice. Would have brought out his eyes.

ALLIE:

He hated the color green.

BELLA:

Oh.

ALLIE:

I mean, a green and yellow striped tie? Really?

BELLA:

Didn't he wear a green tie on game days? I feel like I remember seeing him in the halls with a really, really, green tie? Like that thing was practically neon.

*For a moment Allie pauses and turns to face Bella.*

ALLIE:

He got it from his dad one Christmas. And it was the only tie he had. Doesn't mean he liked the color.

*She resumes wiping her makeup off.*

*After another moment she sighs and leans forward to inspect her face.*

*With a frown she turns away from the mirror and drops down on the bed across from Bella.*

BELLA:

He's, *(still unfamiliar with using past tense for him)* uh, he was, pretty easygoing. He'd probably just laugh about it, right?

ALLIE:

They should have picked a different tie.

BELLA:

It's just a tie.

ALLIE:

It isn't.

*A long beat.*

*Bella shifts uncomfortably.*

BELLA:

I just don't think he would have minded that much.

ALLIE:

It's forever. He's going to wear it forever. And it's a color he fucking hates.

BELLA:

It's not like he knows-

ALLIE:

Stop.

*Another beat passes.*

*Bella stands up. She reaches into her purse and pulls out the program for the funeral. She holds it out so that Allie can see it.*

BELLA:

Where do you want me to put the program?

ALLIE:

On the side table is fine for now.

*Bella brings the program over to the side table and places it down. She pauses at a framed photo of Allie and Lucas.*

BELLA:

Okay. I'm putting it next to the photo of you guys.

ALLIE:

Okay.

BELLA:

It's a nice photo.

ALLIE:

Thanks.

BELLA:

He looks so young there. You too.

*Allie turns around to look at the photo. She can't help but smile when she sees it.*

ALLIE:

It's from after prom.

BELLA:

You were up at his family's camp, right?

ALLIE:

Me and ten other people, yeah.

BELLA:

Well, you guys look happy.

ALLIE:

Hard not to be happy when you're day drunk and stoned.

*Bella snorts as she turns away from the side table.*

*There's a long pause as she sits back down on the bed.*

BELLA:

Do you ever think some of them knew?

ALLIE:

About us? I don't know. We tried keeping things on the down low.

Not sure how well that really worked.

BELLA:

Nothing ever really went around school about it.

*Allie shrugs.*

ALLIE:

Then you have your answer.

BELLA:

I kinda always thought you guys would end up back together. Like for real.

ALLIE:

Yeah. *(Beat.)* Yeah. Sometimes I thought that too.

BELLA:

I just...

ALLIE:

Yeah.

BELLA:

I mean? We've known him since first grade.

ALLIE:

Kindergarten, actually.

BELLA:

Kindergarten then.

ALLIE:

It's not fair.

*Bella nudges Allie's shoulder.*

BELLA:

I just keep thinking about the time he got lice and his mom shaved his head-

Allie:

He looked ridiculous, oh my god. He had those huge eyebrows and a big ass bald head.

Bella:

And remember? A bunch of girls wouldn't stop jokin' around, so he cried in class, and then Ms. Zello read us some book about feathers and bullying?

Allie:

That's when we started sitting together on the bus.

Bella:

Really? You remember that?

Allie:

Yeah. He started crying on the bus about it *again*. So, I sat next to him and told him his hair would grow back. And after that he just always sat next to me.

Bella:

Awww. That's cute, really cute.

Allie:

I guess.

BELLA:

Really were the glory days, huh.

*A moment passes. And then another.*

I just... I mean... I wasn't close to him. I think the last time we even talked was bio sophomore year. And this still just... sucks.

ALLIE:

That's one way to put it.

BELLA:

I didn't think we'd be going to a funeral over winter break.  
That's all.

ALLIE:

Me neither.

BELLA:

*(She tries to force lightness:)*

You go away for college for a few years and suddenly people  
start dying, huh?

ALLIE:

It's usually just not someone we know.

BELLA:

Yeah. It's hard to wrap your head around.

*A beat passes.*

*Allie pushes herself up from the bed. She picks up a pair of  
sweatpants and a t-shirt left at the foot of the bed.*

*She begins taking off her tights.*

ALLIE:

Are you angry?

BELLA:

Huh?

ALLIE:

You mad at him?

BELLA:

Um. No. Not really.

ALLIE:

Just sad then?

BELLA:

Well, yeah. I'm just sad. For him, for his family, for us. For all the old football guys, I mean you saw them crying earlier. It's really, really, sad. And, god, I know you don't want to hear this, but Ashley too. I feel bad for her.

ALLIE:

Yeah.

BELLA:

Are you-?

ALLIE:

Angry? Yes.

BELLA:

Oh.

*A beat passes.*

ALLIE:

I mean... Seriously? Seriously???

BELLA:

*(gently:)*

Allie-

ALLIE:

We're from fucking New Hampshire, Bella. What was he thinking?  
Heroin? He knew better.

BELLA:

But it's not about "knowing better"//

ALLIE:

// Yes. Yes, it is.

BELLA:

// You can't think about//

ALLIE:

// Why can't I? Huh? Why?//

BELLA:

// Because that does absolutely-

*Allie whirls around to face Bella. She's half dressed in her funeral clothes and half dressed in her comfortable clothes.*

ALLIE:

But he knew better! He did! Because every time you check the news, or go on Facebook, or see anything ever really, it's just about arrests or deaths and it's always, always, always about heroin. And now he's dead and just another number in some opioid crisis.

BELLA:

You can't think about it that way. That doesn't do any good. Blaming. It just doesn't.

ALLIE:

Nothing does any good at this point. That's kinda the problem.

*Allie finishes dressing, but doesn't sit down on the bed again.*

BELLA:

I saw you waiting in line to talk to Mrs. Harran. Please tell me you didn't tell her all that.

ALLIE:

*(She snorts.)*

I'm not a monster.

BELLA:

I wanted to say something to her. But I couldn't make myself do it.

ALLIE:

It's not easy.

BELLA:

I've felt guilty about it since we left. I should have said something, you know? Told her I was sorry for her loss, and that he was a really good kid.

ALLIE:

I was behind Ashley.

BELLA:

Oh... Honey, I'm sorry. That had to be difficult.

ALLIE:

She kept saying that she was sorry. That she missed him. That she loved him.

BELLA:

I kept looking over at her and she looked so... lost.

ALLIE:

I do feel bad for her. Awful, really. They might not have been together long, but he has, (*Wincing, and then correcting.*) had, a way of making an impact. A big one.

BELLA:

(*Trying to recall. Hesitant to ask.*)

When did they start dating?

ALLIE:

Six months ago. Maybe a little longer. I don't know exactly.

(*She shrugs.*) Around the time he stopped talking to me.

BELLA:

Six months is long enough for this to be a nightmare.

ALLIE:

Yeah.

BELLA:

I hope you know-

ALLIE:

Mrs. Harran hugged her so tight. And they were crying together. They could share that. And I wanted that so badly, but I mean,

obviously that's not the time or place. But I really wanted that. To cry with her. To know that he was loved so much.

BELLA:

What did you end up saying to her?

ALLIE:

Um nothing. Nothing.

*She turns to the side table and picks up the framed photo of them.*

BELLA:

Nothing?

ALLIE:

I left. Like before it would have been my turn.

BELLA:

You walked away?

ALLIE:

I just left. Which, I mean. That's so rude. I did possibly one of the rudest things. One of the shittiest things. But I couldn't stand there and listen to them crying.

*Allie places the photo back on the side table. She picks up the program and stares at it.*

BELLA:

Jesus. I mean... I'm sorry. I don't want to shame you, but that's pretty bad.

ALLIE:

I know.

*Beat.*

BELLA:

*(Clearly not convinced:)*

There's a chance she didn't even notice though. So that's um good.

ALLIE:

We both know that's not true. Don't even bother.

BELLA:

Alright, alright.

ALLIE:

But what was I supposed to say anyways? *(Too energetic here:)*  
"Hey Mrs. Harran! I used to fuck your son a lot! If you were away for the weekend, I was at your house the whole time! I was also a little in love with him, except unlike Ashley, I never got introduced to you as a girlfriend! Also, heyyy, I really thought that one day we'd end up together! But now he's going in the ground, so I guess not!"

*She closes the program and drops it back onto the side table.*

BELLA:

Maybe it's a good thing you left the line.

ALLIE:

Or maybe I should have told her that his tie is terrible. It's the actual worst. And they could have picked any other tie in the world, why did they have to pick that one?

BELLA:

*(There's a firmness in her voice:)*

Lucas wouldn't have cared about the tie at all. You know this.

ALLIE:

Don't.

BELLA:

Don't what? Use his name? Pretend that he would ever be upset over a tie?

*A beat passes.*

*Allie doesn't respond.*

Lucas wouldn't care. Not about the tie.

ALLIE:

He shouldn't be dead.

BELLA:

He?

ALLIE:

Lucas. Lucas shouldn't be dead.

BELLA:

No. He shouldn't.

ALLIE:

But he is.

*Bella pats the spot next to her on bed.*

*Allie doesn't hesitate before joining her. Bella puts an arm around Allie.*

*They sit together in silence.*

*END SCENE.*

FEBRUARY

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Cast of Characters:

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ALISSA: 24. She's a little disorganized and messy. She tries to see the best in everyone, but is currently irritated. She lives with Holly.

HOLLY 23. She has a big personality and a strong presence. She's not a very serious person. Alissa is her roommate of a little over two years.

Scene:

The living room of Alissa and Holly's apartment. Chelfair.

Time:

Current day. Unusually warm weekend.

Estimated Run Time:

7-10 min.

*Alissa drags an overflowing laundry hamper over to the couch where Holly sits.*

*Alissa's hair is up in a loose bun on the verge of falling apart. She wears an oversized sweatshirt and neon shorts.*

*Holly wears a fuzzy bathrobe. To her left is bag of chips and to her right is a bottle of beer. She picks up a large handful of chips, but doesn't eat them yet.*

HOLLY:

Sooooo, when you say bad date, just how bad are we talking?

ALISSA:

Bad.

*Alissa plops down onto the couch.*

*She sighs deeply before she pulls the laundry basket closer. It is noticeable that none of these clothes have been separated into light or bright loads. Instead, there's a mix of bright colors and of neutral whites, creams, and beiges.*

*She picks up the first few items in the laundry basket. They're rolled up and she straightens them out before folding them.*

*Holly moves further to the side so that Alissa has more room to fold. She finally eats some of the chips.*

HOLLY:

To be fair, you had a bad first date with Thomas. And you guys went on to enjoy a beautiful four months together.

*Alissa laughs and shoots Holly a look.*

ALISSA:

Those beautiful four months where he cheated with his ex the entire time?

HOLLY:

You got that nice necklace though. *(Beat.)* Honestly, that alone made the relationship worth it.

*Holly takes a long sip of her drink.*

ALISSA:

I'm glad *you* feel like that shitshow was worth it.

HOLLY:

Look! All I'm saying is I've been in way longer relationships with scummier men and didn't even get a necklace out of it! Fuck, or anything really. So silver linings and all that good stuff. *(Beat.)* It's a nice necklace. Brings out your eyes. And catches the light just right. You're like a little disco ball in the summer when you wear it.

*Alissa pauses briefly.*

*She then continues to fold.*

ALISSA:

A disco ball? Are you sure that's a good thing?

HOLLY:

Well it's definitely not a bad thing.

*A beat passes.*

ALISSA:

Maybe I just need to stop expecting tinder dates to be good.

HOLLY:

Oh, for sure. You need to lower your expectations like ten notches.

ALISSA:

They're already so low. The bar can't be dropped anymore.

*Holly raises an eyebrow.*

ALISSA:

I mean it!! There's nowhere lower for it to go.

HOLLY:

Well. Consider not swiping left on guys who have fish in their pictures.

ALISSA:

He didn't. For once, for once, there was a guy without a fish in any of his pictures. Any of them!

HOLLY:

Was there a picture of his jeep though?

*A beat passes.*

*Alissa doesn't respond.*

Yeah. That's what I thought.

*Alissa groans.*

ALISSA:

It was a horrible time, Holly. And it's not like I was expecting Prince Charming. I was just hoping for a decent dinner and maybe a few laughs. But apparently that's too much to hope for.

*Holly repositions on the couch so that she's facing Alissa more.*

HOLLY:

Alright. I'll bite. What made it so awful?

ALISSA:

I mean? He showed up ten minutes late and stoned off his ass. So. *(Beat.)* Wasn't a huge fan of that.

*Holly speaks with her mouth full.*

HOLLY:

Oh yikes. Okay, so not the greatest first impression admittedly.

*Alissa pulls out more clothes and continues folding.*

*Holly absentmindedly matches a few pairs of socks.*

But, I'm pretty sure that's how you met me the first time too.

ALISSA:

It was.

HOLLY:

So sometimes first impressions are wrong.

ALISSA:

Are they though?

*Holly throws a pair of socks at Alissa.*

*Alissa lets them fall on the ground.*

HOLLY:

Even though you're rude, I'll still ask. What else went wrong?  
'Cus it sounds like you're just gettin' started.

*Alissa begins dropping the folded clothes into sorted piles on  
the ground.*

*She then takes another large pile from the basket and dumps it  
onto the middle of the couch.*

*She considers the rest of the date before speaking again.*

ALISSA:

He asked me maybe three questions in total. That's being  
generous.

HOLLY:

Were they at least good questions?

ALISSA:

Favorite movies. Which he for some reason felt the need to like  
dispute them all?

HOLLY:

*Heated:*

There's nothing to dispute with the Princess Bride. And I know that had to be one of your picks.

ALISSA:

Exactly! Like in what world would I ever wanna listen to someone shit talk the Princess Bride? Ultimately it comes down to the fact that some people have taste and that others sadly, don't.

HOLLY:

How could you ever go on a second date with someone who can't respect the classics?

ALISSA:

And I'll be damned if I take someone seriously who's top movie of all time is Avatar.

HOLLY:

What? I'm sorry... What year is this?

ALISSA:

I should have just ended the date then.

HOLLY:

I'm beginning to agree with you.

ALISSA:

OH!

HOLLY:

Oh?

ALISSA:

That was another thing! He was rude to the waiter? Which like wow. I really thought that was a baby boomer thing. But I guess not.

HOLLY:

Oh, dude, super gross.

ALISSA:

I know! I made a comment about being a waitress and he was still rude. So, clearly not the brightest bulb either.

HOLLY:

How did you get so lucky? He seems like a real catch. *(Beat.)*  
Get it? 'Cus he didn't have a fish in his profile picture?

*Alissa groans.*

ALISSA:

I don't know if I hate how loud you are at three in the morning or your jokes more. Or if it's how funny you think you are.

HOLLY:

None of them. They're all part of my charm. Also, I've gotten a lot better at being quiet when I get home late. Give me some credit. When's the last time I even woke you up?

ALISSA:

Literally last week.

*Holly shrugs. She takes another sip of her drink.*

HOLLY:

I don't recall.

ALISSA:

Well, I know the last thing will just drive you-

HOLLY:

There's more? Jesus, babe. This is ridiculous. You have enough for a listicle.

ALISSA:

It's about to get worse. *(Beat.)* He talked about his ex for at least 15 minutes. Probably closer to 25.

*A beat goes by.*

*Alissa continues with her folding.*

*Holly looks on in stunned silence.*

HOLLY:

It's almost like he wanted this date to be awful.

ALISSA:

Seriously! That's what I'm saying.

HOLLY:

Sorry, I'm trying to wrap my head around it still. Just like? That takes active effort.

ALISSA:

*She's still folding clothes.*

*She pitches her voice lower. Mocking:*

Yeah, it's just that she really hurt me after years of me not taking her needs seriously and now I'm never going to love again.

*Holly cackles.*

HOLLY:

Ooooh, that was good. I really *felt* it.

*Alissa takes a slight bow.*

ALISSA:

Thank you, thank you. But, seriously. Couldn't he have just stood me up? Would have preferred that, honestly.

*A comfortable pause.*

HOLLY:

Okay, so I gotta know. Was she the "crazy ex" or the ex that he's not over and never will be?

ALISSA:

Oooh. Good question. I think both.

HOLLY:

Now that's an accomplishment.

ALISSA:

I'm pretty sure that's how... oh my god, I'm totally blanking, what's his name?

*Holly shrugs. There are too many people Alissa could be talking about.*

*Alissa snaps in frustration as she tries to remember.*

Ugly alien tattoos, patchy beard, obsessed with vaping?

*Holly almost shrieks with amusement:*

HOLLY:

No, no, no-

ALISSA:

Jarret!!! Yes! That was his name!

HOLLY:

We DO NOT use that name in this house.

ALISSA:

Oh, yes, yes, we do.

HOLLY:

No, I promise you, we really don't.

ALISSA:

Well, I'm talking about him now. And I'm almost 100% sure he considers you his crazy ex and the one that got away. (*A beat. She considers.*) Actually. No. I am 100% sure.

HOLLY:

That's infuriating. I mean, you're definitely right. But god, I'm still mad. (*Beat.*) He should have to pay a fine anytime my name comes out of his mouth.

ALISSA:

Those were just such dark times. He sucked. And uh... (*a beat goes by as Alissa tries to figure out how to word this*) you weren't the mature, loving, calm woman that you are today.

*Holly snorts.*

HOLLY:

Remember, him and I went to the Rochester Fair? We got into a huge fight. Honestly, I can't even remember what about anymore. I think... I think something about another girl? But somehow, I ended up throwing his cotton candy on the ground and stomping on it. And then he left without me? And I cried in front of all those people?

ALISSA:

I had to Venmo you the money for an uber back. (*Beat.*) Admittedly, that wasn't your finest moment.

*Holly shrugs. She takes another handful of chips.*

HOLLY:

That man was a soul sucking vampire. Soul sucking.

ALISSA:

I just never knew that a couple could break up that many times and still celebrate a one-year anniversary.

HOLLY:

I live to show these things to people.

*Alissa finally finishes folding all the laundry on the couch.*

*She starts dropping all the organized piles back into the laundry basket.*

*A few more beats pass.*

ALISSA:

Hey, is the Bachelorette on tonight?

HOLLY:

Kind of offended that you have to ask. But yes.

ALISSA:

Oh, thank god, I was really hoping it was.

HOLLY:

I thought for sure I'd be watching it by myself tonight.

ALISSA:

Were you even going to record it for me?

HOLLY:

If I remembered, sure.

ALISSA:

So no?

HOLLY:

It's probably for the best that you're here.

ALISSA:

I'll make popcorn for us in a few minutes.

HOLLY:

Oooh, yes please. *(Beat.)* See? This is way better than a date. You get to eat popcorn and watch another people's drama. It's the ideal situation.

ALISSA:

And I got laundry done. For like the first time in forever.

HOLLY:

Life is good. Well... sometimes it is.

*A beat passes.*

I need to make something clear though. If Jeff doesn't go home tonight, I'm never and I mean *never*, watching this show again. I've never hated a man so much before. This can't be healthy.

ALISSA:

Aw I think he's kind of sweet. A little misunderstood, you know?

HOLLY:

Absolutely not.

ALISSA:

Oh, whatever.

HOLLY:

Popcorn?

ALISSA:

I said in a minute.

HOLLY:

Yeah, like a minute ago.

*Alissa tosses a pillow at Holly but she stands up and begins to exit the stage.*

*The lights fade.*

*END SCENE.*

MARCH

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## Cast of Characters

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MAGGIE: 23. Deeply self-conscious. From  
Bromwich.

RONALD JR "RONNIE": 25. A bit awkward but he has good  
intentions. From Rowding.

### Scene:

A bench set off to the side near the entrance of a nice  
restaurant.

### Time:

Current day. Evening.

### Estimated Run Time:

8-10 min.

*A streetlamp shines on a bench outside a restaurant.*

*It's late March and there's still a chill in the air.*

*Maggie sits on the bench, hunched over a bit. She has no jacket on over her plain black t-shirt.*

*She sighs loudly. Her feet tap against the ground and she twirls a piece of hair around her finger.*

*This continues for a long moment.*

*She sighs again and goes to push herself up off the bench. She brushes off her pants and takes a step towards stage right.*

*Ronnie then appears from stage right and slowly crosses over to her.*

*He doesn't say anything at first. He's dressed nicely and noticeably more formally than Maggie. His hands are shoved into his pockets.*

*Maggie hovers in front of the bench. She fidgets.*

*He keeps approaching.*

RONNIE:

Hey.

MAGGIE:

Hi.

*An uncomfortable beat. They both stand, staring at the other.*

RONNIE:

Thought you might be out here.

MAGGIE:

*(weakly, an attempt at a joke)*

I thought you might be in there.

RONNIE:

Uh. Yeah? We're at dinner... You know, in the restaurant.

MAGGIE:

It was a joke...

RONNIE:

Oh. Got you.

MAGGIE:

Uh... so, you're out here?

RONNIE:

I was wondering where you went. I even checked the bathroom. But uh, you weren't there. So, I thought maybe you went to get some air.

MAGGIE:

Wow. *(Beat.)* That's some dedication. The bathroom wasn't near our table at all.

RONNIE:

I've been coming here since before I even remember, I still get lost on the way to the bathroom.

MAGGIE:

Yeah, it's a real maze in there. Bigger than the Cheesecake Factory too.

RONNIE:

Yeah, I guess.

*A beat passes.*

MAGGIE:

Well, you found me.

RONNIE:

You've been gone for a bit.

MAGGIE:

Shit, really? I might have lost track of time...

RONNIE:

It's what I said.

MAGGIE:

Sorry?

*He shrugs.*

RONNIE

*Not unkindly:*

I'm not looking for an apology.

MAGGIE:

I just didn't think I'd been gone that long.

RONNIE:

Definitely longer than 15 minutes. My parents started asking where you went.

MAGGIE:

So not a great first impression then. *(Beat)* Great.

RONNIE:

They think you're very nice.

MAGGIE:

Uh huh. I'm sure. *(Beat.)* The girlfriend who disappeared from the dinner table. What's not to love?

RONNIE:

I mean, they said it themselves. And they don't just say stuff.

MAGGIE:

Everyone just says stuff.

RONNIE:

Believe me, not them. They never told my sister they liked her boyfriend. And they were together for over a year and a half.

*Maggie rolls her eyes as she turns away from Ronnie.*

MAGGIE:

That's nice and all, but they think I smell like pastrami, Ronnie.

RONNIE:

Excuse me?

MAGGIE:

They think I smell like. *(Emphasizing this)* Pastrami.

RONNIE:

I really don't think they think that-

MAGGIE:

They aren't gonna tell you that. You know this, right?

*Ronnie takes a few steps back.*

RONNIE:

I mean, no, they won't say that, you're right, but still-

MAGGIE:

*Frustrated:*

I didn't have time to shower before coming here!

*A beat passes.*

*Ronnie tries to follow Maggie's line of thinking.*

RONNIE:

Did you get out of work late?

MAGGIE:

Yes. Yes. Half an hour. Because Jenny came in late. She always does.

RONNIE:

Right...

MAGGIE:

What? You've got that look on your face.

RONNIE:

I guess I'm just confused?

MAGGIE:

About what?

RONNIE:

Everything, I think.

*Maggie laughs.*

*A beat passes.*

*She sinks back onto the bench.*

MAGGIE:

Uh, yeah. That seems reasonable.

RONNIE:

I was kind of trying to ask what's up.

MAGGIE:

Yeah, I know.

*Ronnie sits down after a moment. They're sitting close to each other but aren't touching.*

*Maggie looks at him.*

RONNIE:

You're just acting really strange.

MAGGIE:

You want honesty?

RONNIE:

Of course.

MAGGIE:

I'm so embarrassed. *(Beat.)* Really, really embarrassed.

RONNIE:

Because of the pastrami?

MAGGIE:

Because of everything. Literally everything, Ronnie.

*She drops her head into her hands.*

*He reaches out to her, but she shrugs off his hand.*

*A pause.*

*He shifts on the bench.*

RONNIE:

I really like you.

*She glances over at him.*

MAGGIE:

Thanks? I like you too?

RONNIE:

Well... I mean, I do like you. But also, I love you. And for what it's worth I don't think you should feel embarrassed.

MAGGIE:

That's... that's very sweet, honey.

RONNIE:

I mean it.

MAGGIE:

It doesn't really change how I feel.

RONNIE:

I know.

*She faces him directly now.*

MAGGIE:

Like... I smell like pastrami. My hair is greasy. And I could have really used a heads up about the dress code here.

RONNIE:

I didn't even think about it. Didn't cross my mind at all.

MAGGIE:

Yeah. Exactly. You didn't even think about it. You just go to places like this. *(Beat)* Really nice places.

RONNIE:

Is that a bad thing?

MAGGIE:

That's not what I'm saying.

RONNIE:

The clothes aren't a huge deal-

*She stands up and begins pacing in front of the bench.*

MAGGIE:

They kind of are though. I stick out. I wouldn't have worn a goddamn t-shirt if I knew this place was like this. A t-shirt really stands out. Not in a good way either.

RONNIE:

You didn't have time to change, look, accidents happen.

MAGGIE:

Did you not see the look your mother gave me?

RONNIE:

What are you talking about?

MAGGIE:

She was clearly not impressed.

RONNIE:

I told you alre-

MAGGIE:

I don't care that they said I'm nice! I really don't care. I saw the way she looked at me, my clothes, my nails, my hair.

RONNIE:

They know you just got out of work; they're not judging you.

MAGGIE:

Well it really felt like it. (*Heavy beat.*) I don't want them to think that I'm a hick.

RONNIE:

They wouldn't think that.

MAGGIE:

Yeah? You sure about that?

*Ronnie doesn't look at her.*

RONNIE:

I just don't get where any of this is coming from, Maggie.

MAGGIE:

You don't have to!

RONNIE:

I'm trying to understand-

MAGGIE:

Fine. You wanna understand? Where do I even start? Huh? Do I start with everyone ordering drinks? Even though that's like an extra \$30? That no one was trying to pick out the cheapest thing on the menu? Or do I start with pulling into the parking lot? My car is the oldest, shittiest thing here! I worked so hard to buy it and I was so, so, soooo proud. But now I see that it looks like an actual piece of trash. And, and, I was terrified about opening my door and scraping the paint on anything next to me. God knows I can't afford that! And then my clothes! Everyone else looks so... so... pristine. I clearly came straight out of the deli! Oh, also! I kept hearing that table next to us talk about their summer home on Lake Winnepesaukee, the renovations they're going to start hiring for, the party they'll host when they go back up for the summer. Meanwhile my dad's house just got foreclosed! Or do I start with: hi, it turns out that I'm white trash and everyone knew but me.

*Ronnie stands up.*

RONNIE:

What? No one thinks that-

MAGGIE:

They really do. Are you blind?

RONNIE:

I feel like you're projecting, that's all.

MAGGIE:

You think I'm projecting?

RONNIE:

Maybe just a little bit?

MAGGIE:

You ask what's going on and then tell me I'm projecting?  
Unfucking believable.

RONNIE:

I'm trying to help.

MAGGIE:

Well you're not.

RONNIE:

Look, I don't know what you want me to say. I'm trying.

*Maggie brushes past Ronnie. She heads towards the restaurant again.*

MAGGIE:

Let's just go back inside.

*He doesn't follow her.*

RONNIE:

How do I help? Tell me.

*Her shoulders sink. She's lost all her energy and all her anger. She doesn't turn around to look at Ronnie.*

MAGGIE:

I don't know, Ronnie.

RONNIE:

Alright. *(Beat.)* Fine.

MAGGIE:

Yeah... it's fine.

RONNIE:

Right.

*Neither of them attempts to actually head back inside yet.*

*Ronnie should say something. He wants to say something. Maggie wants him to say something.*

*He says nothing.*

*With a sigh she turns around and offers her hand to him.*

MAGGIE:

C'mon. Don't want to keep your parents waiting any longer.

*He takes her hand and pulls her in closer for a moment. He kisses her forehead.*

*She takes a step away.*

*The lights fade.*

*END SCENE.*

APRIL

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## Cast of Characters

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DIANA: 21. She's lived in this town her whole life. She thinks and feels a lot but vocalizes very little of what goes on in her head. The fact that she's leaving weighs heavily on her.

JUNE: 21. She's also lived in this town her whole life. She's not particularly sentimental. If she's hurt by something she will shut down in response.

Scene:

Back porch of a rundown house. Gravelshaw.

Time:

Current day. Early Morning. Approaching the border of spring and summer.

Estimated Run Time:

8-11 min.

*Early dawn light streams down on June and Diana. They sit on the stoop of June's family's porch as they slowly pass a half smoked joint back and forth.*

*The wood of the porch is worn and bleached from the seasons. A few floorboards are in dire need of replacement. Maybe there's a few dirty plastic lawn chairs on the porch. Maybe there's a dead plant or two.*

*Birdsong and the occasional distant 18-wheeler are heard throughout their conversation.*

*Diana smokes. June glances over at her.*

JUNE:

*(Con conversationally)*

*Mary thinks she might be pregnant.*

*Diana snorts.*

*She takes another drag.*

DIANA:

*She take a test yet?*

JUNE:

*Nah.*

DIANA:

*Course not.*

JUNE:

*She's afraid to.*

DIANA:

*Isn't she always?*

*June shrugs.*

*She reaches out for the joint.*

DIANA:

*When did she tell you?*

*June smokes before answering.*

JUNE:

I dunno. Wednesday maybe.

DIANA:

I'm guessing Jason doesn't know?

JUNE:

Doubt it.

DIANA: `

She should take a test. Just in case.

*June rolls her eyes.*

*She hands Diana the joint.*

JUNE:

Yeah. Well, you know Mary.

DIANA:

*(Exasperated more than angry or condescending)*

The fuck does she expect?

JUNE:

Huh?

DIANA:

Never using condoms. At some point you're gonna get pregnant. That's just statistics. And I know she dropped stats after like two classes. But still. Common sense, right?

JUNE:

She doesn't like them. Condoms, I mean. Statistics too though, I guess.

DIANA:

So?

JUNE:

Jason doesn't either.

DIANA:

And they're gonna like a baby?

*June shrugs.*

JUNE:

Maybe she'll turn her life around.

DIANA:

Yeah. Maybe. (*Beat.*) Or she'll just really fuck up her kid.

*June shifts uncomfortably on the stoop.*

*She sits cross-legged.*

*Diana takes another drag.*

JUNE:

Hey, Di?

DIANA:

Mhmm?

JUNE:

I think she's actually pregnant this time. For real.

*Diana cocks her head to the side.*

*She holds the joint away from herself.*

DIANA:

Oh.

JUNE:

I know. That's what I thought.

*A beat goes by.*

DIANA:

What makes you think it's not another false alarm?

JUNE:

She hasn't had her period in two months.

*Diana turns more towards June.*

DIANA:

Jesus.

JUNE:

Yeah. So. Guess I'm gonna be an aunt. Or something. Maybe a godmother.

DIANA:

You sure about that?

JUNE:

She's too Catholic for anything else.

DIANA:

Fuckin' Catholics.

*Diana snorts.*

*June shrugs.*

*Diana hands June the joint.*

*June takes a long drag and flicks the ash over the porch.*

*Diana looks up at the sky.*

*June takes another drag.*

*She taps Diana's shoulder and passes her the joint.*

DIANA:

You know, she was so close to beating teen pregnancy. Only a few months away.

JUNE:

Not close enough apparently.

*A long pause.*

*Diana takes a final drag. She puts out the joint.*

*June lays back on the porch.*

*June traces the legs of one of the lawn chairs.*

*Diana rubs her eyes before taking out a pack of cigarettes.*

*She lights one and then offers the pack to June.*

*June eagerly sits up and grabs a cigarette.*

*Diana laughs and lights it for her.*

JUNE:

Being friends with other smokers makes it impossible to quit.

DIANA:

I thought it was the nicotine.

*June isn't amused. Diana smiles at her own joke.*

JUNE:

You know what I mean. (*Beat.*) Definitely doesn't help that Dad smokes either though. It's just too easy to bum cigarettes off him. It's not like he's awake long enough to smoke many.

*Diana huffs.*

DIANA:

Yeah. He's real generous that way. I think he's been letting me nick them since I was 16. Always just told me to not tell my mom.

JUNE:

As if Judy would give two shits.

*Another beat passes.*

DIANA:

I'll quit in the winter.

JUNE:

You said that last year.

*Diana only shrugs in response.*

DIANA:

And maybe this year I'll actually do it.

JUNE:

Live above the influence.

*A comfortable beat passes.*

DIANA:

I love this time of morning.

JUNE:

I know you do. Fuckin' weirdo.

DIANA:

It's peaceful. More peaceful than any other time.

JUNE:

Mmmm. I guess.

DIANA:

It's like we're the only people in the world. You know?

JUNE:

Would suck if one of us needed a lung transplant.

*Diana takes a long drag from her cigarette.*

*June follows suit.*

DIANA:

C'mon. Just admit it. You like this time too.

JUNE:

It's nice enough. Way too fucking early. But nice enough, I guess.

DIANA:

Well, thanks for letting me swing by so early. Oh, I brought over some dinner too. Shepherd's pie. I thought you and your dad would appreciate it.

JUNE:

No worries. I know you don't sleep. Plus, I gotta be at Dunks in an hour anyway. Might as well see you first. And thanks for dinner. Shepherd's pie is a staple meal here.

DIANA:

What time are you working 'til?

JUNE:

Only 'til 3.

DIANA:

That's not too bad.

JUNE:

Yeah. If I actually get to leave then.

*Diana hesitates. She needs to tell June soon, but she doesn't know how.*

DIANA:

June...

JUNE:

What?

DIANA:

You're a good friend.

JUNE:

Thanks. *Beat.* I try.

DIANA:

I know.

*The words linger.*

*They each focus on their cigarettes.*

*Diana's cigarette is nearly finished and she burns her fingers on the butt of it. She hisses in pain.*

*June glances over but stays silent.*

*Diana fumbles with the cigarette pack and pulls out another.*

*She holds it between her fingers but doesn't light it.*

*June puts out her cigarette on the porch board next to her.*

*After double checking that it's put out, she tosses it onto the lawn. She yawns.*

*Diana looks over at her.*

*She starts to say something and then stops. This process repeats itself two more times. She passes the unlit cigarette between her hands.*

*Finally, she gets the words out:*

DIANA:

I'm leaving.

JUNE:

Huh?

DIANA:

I'm leaving. *(She clarifies)* Here.

*June snorts and glances over at Diana.*

JUNE:

Yeah. Me too. One day.

DIANA:

No. I mean... I mean I'm leaving, leaving. Like when Jared gets home from work. The car is already packed. The fridge is all cleared out. I found someone to sublet the place.

*June blinks. She shakes her head.*

*This is confusing. This hurts.*

JUNE:

What the actual fuck?

DIANA:

We're going to Florida. *(Beat.)* We're leaving this shithole.

JUNE:

I... what... when... When did you guys decide this? Why didn't you tell me? I... what the fuck Diana?

*It takes her a moment to respond.*

*Diana stares at her cigarette.*

DIANA:

A few months ago. We've been saving up.

JUNE:

Why didn't you tell me? This is big. *(Beat.)* Like. Really big.

*Diana shrugs.*

*June stares at her.*

*She won't look at June.*

*She finally lights the cigarette. She fumbles with the lighter.*

DIANA:

I don't know. *(Beat.)* I thought it might fall through. Or something.

JUNE:

So. You're leavin', huh?

DIANA:

Yeah. I guess so.

JUNE:

*(Stiffly)*

Congrats. You're getting out.

DIANA:

*(Softly)*

I didn't want to say goodbye. Not to you.

JUNE:

Oh.

DIANA:

It's always been us. You an' me. Then us an' Mary.

JUNE:

Yeah. It has.

DIANA:

I'm really gonna miss you.

*June nods but doesn't say anything.*

*Diana looks at June again by this point.*

DIANA:

I'll call. Or facetime.

JUNE:

Yeah.

DIANA:

I will.

JUNE:

Everyone says that. Everyone means it when they say it.

DIANA:

I'm sorry.

JUNE:

Don't be. Leaving is good.

DIANA:

You know I love you, right?

JUNE:

Yeah. Why else would you be here?

DIANA:

I know it's dumb, but god, I wish you could come with us.

JUNE:

Me too.

DIANA:

I mean, if you save-

JUNE:

Don't.

DIANA:

But what if-

*June turns away from Diana.*

JUNE:

You know I can't. It's not like anyone else is gonna take care of my dad. And I won't let him just rot in that house.

DIANA:

June... I'm just really gonna miss you.

JUNE:

Yeah. I'll miss you too.

*She checks her phone.*

*She curses at the time.*

*Diana shifts towards her.*

*June surges up.*

JUNE:

Fuck, I gotta get ready. I can't be late again; I'll get written up.

DIANA:

Shit. It's really that time already?

JUNE:

Time flies when you're getting high.

*An uncomfortable pause.*

*Neither are quite sure of what to say.*

*Diana shifts awkwardly on the porch stoop, but she doesn't stand yet.*

JUNE:

So. Uh, drive safe.

DIANA:

Yeah. Of course.

JUNE:

And I guess that I'll see you, whenever I see you?

*Diana nods.*

DIANA:

Don't work too hard.

*June snorts. She stretches in a ray of sunshine.*

*Her hand is already on the doorknob.*

JUNE:

Never do.

*They share a final look before June opens the door and slips inside.*

*It slams shut behind her.*

*Diana stares at the door for a moment, too many things left unsaid.*

*She returns to her cigarette.*

*The birds keep chirping.*

END SCENE.

MAY

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Cast of Characters:

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KATIE: 24. She's a hairdresser at a family friend's salon. She has a two-year-old daughter and three-year-old son. She's pretty sure she's about to get divorced. She's a little on edge.

LIV: 23. She's a recent college graduate and is trying to save up and move out of her parent's house. She's working at a winery while she tries to find something in her field.

Scene:

A winery in NH. Gravelshaw.

Time:

Current day. Mid-May.

Estimated Run Time:

10-12 min.

*Summer sunlight streams through a window onto a wooden counter.*

*A few stools are positioned in front of the counter. On the far-left Katie sits. She wears a large sunhat and a loose dress. Her purse sits on the stool next to her and is visibly disorganized.*

*Katie plays with a coaster left on the counter in front of her.*

*Liv pops up from behind the counter with a wineglass in hand.*

*She wears a pristine apron over a floral dress.*

LIV:

And are you doing a tasting or getting a glass? Either way, I need to let you know that we just sold the last bottle of the Spicy Pineapple wine.

*Katie stops playing with the coaster and looks up.*

KATIE:

Spicy pineapple?

LIV:

I know, it sounds a little weird, right? People really liked it though. It's the perfect wine for the start of summer.

KATIE:

Hmmm. Sounds interesting. *(Beat.)* And I'm getting a glass. Just not sure of what yet.

*Katie picks up a menu and skims it over.*

LIV:

Let me know if you want any suggestions.

*Katie turns the menu over in her hands.*

KATIE:

Actually, I think I'm gonna go with a tasting. There's too many ones I want to try.

LIV:

You can't go wrong with a tasting.

KATIE:

Yeah, that's what I was thinking.

LIV:

Alright, so with the tasting you can pick four. I usually recommend one red, one white, one of the fruit ones, and a dessert wine to top it all off.

*Katie nods her head in acknowledgement. She looks over the menu a final time.*

KATIE:

I didn't think there'd be so many fruit wines. But there's a lot. I mean... who knew? Mango wine in New Hampshire?

*Liv laughs.*

LIV:

I hear that a lot. I think it's got something to do with the grapes and the weather? That's what I usually tell people. It's what my boss told me and she seems to know her stuff.

KATIE:

Oh. I guess that makes sense. Doesn't explain the mangos though?

*Liv only shrugs in response.*

Well, anyways, I think I'm going with the cranberry apple wine for starters.

*Liv makes an approving noise.*

LIV:

It's my personal favorite one here. I buy a bottle probably about every other month.

*She bends underneath the counter and pulls out a bottle. She pours a generous sampling in Katie's glass.*

KATIE:

Well that seems like a good sign.

*Katie reaches out to grab the glass and Liv stares down at her hand.*

LIV:

Oh wow, that's a gorgeous ring. I'm a real sucker for rose gold.

*Katie looks down and pulls her hand back.*

KATIE:

Oh. Thanks.

LIV:

Uh... sorry? I didn't mean to-

KATIE:

No, no, it's fine. It's fine. *(Beat.)* I just don't think I'll be wearing it much longer. That's all. It's a strange thought.

LIV:

Oh. I'm sorry, I shouldn't have said anything. It just caught my eye...

KATIE:

It's really fine.

*She pulls the glass towards her again. She swirls the glass for a split second before taking a large gulp.*

*Liv stares.*

*Katie nods her head in a pleased manner.*

That's good. Really good. Not too sweet. There's a nice bite to it. It would be amazing with thanksgiving dinner.

LIV:

That one is super popular in the fall. It practically flies off the shelf. It pairs really well with poultry. Ham too.

KATIE:

You know. That's the first time I've told anyone that.

*Liv pauses. She knows that this isn't about the wine.*

LIV:

Really?

KATIE:

About not wearing my ring, I mean. I haven't told a single person that. Not my mother, not my best friend, not anyone.

LIV:

It's good to say things out loud sometimes. Makes it less scary.

KATIE:

Yeah. Yeah. You're right. *(Beat.)* It's silly though. Really silly. I thought I'd be wearing this ring for at least the next fifty years. Thought I'd be married to him until the day one of us died.

*Liv stands uncomfortably. She brushes an invisible crumb off the counter.*

*Katie sighs.*

Can I try the merlot?

LIV:

Oh, sure. It's another best seller.

KATIE:

Are they all best sellers? Because it seems like you keep saying they're all best sellers.

LIV:

No. Just the ones you're picking.

KATIE:

No one in my family has ever gotten divorced. Sure, there's been unhappy couples. But no divorces.

LIV:

Divorce is definitely better for kids than having two unhappy parents. *(Beat.)* Do you have kids?

*She puts the first bottle away and searches for the second one.*

*She eventually finds it and pours Katie a glass.*

KATIE:

Two. They're my whole world. And it's not like... it's not like my husband is horrible. He's, don't get me wrong, he's a good dad. We just... we don't get along anymore. We were really young when we met. And we're older now. Not the same. Well... correction, I'm not the same.

*Liv nods.*

*Katie takes a sip of the wine.*

LIV:

How long have you been together?

KATIE:

Since we were 16. It's been a while. A little over eight years. From prom to a joint checking account.

*A beat passes.*

*She takes another sip of the wine.*

*Her nose wrinkles.*

LIV:

Not a fan of that one?

KATIE:

I don't think so. *(Beat.)* No, not at all.

LIV:

I can get you a different one. I'm a big believer in never making people drink wine they don't like. (*Gently*) Or stay in marriages they don't want to be in.

*Katie rolls her eyes.*

KATIE:

I'm guessing you're not married?

LIV:

No. My last relationship ended pretty much after I graduated college. We didn't have enough money to move anywhere and we were both too stressed out.

KATIE:

Ah. And nothing since then?

*Liv shrugs.*

*She pours Katie another glass of wine.*

*Katie sniffs it curiously.*

LIV:

That's a plum wine. It's good. I'd be more surprised if you didn't like it.

*Liv pulls the wine menu away from Katie and looks it over herself.*

And, no. Nothing since. I've been busy. I'm working a lot. Trying to save money, you know? I wanna move out west maybe. A relationship would just get in the way of all that.

KATIE:

You're right about the plum wine. And probably about the other thing too.

LIV:

If there's anything I know, it's good wine.

*A beat passes.*

*Katie takes another sip of her wine.*

Which wine are you thinking about now?

KATIE:

The pumpkin pie one sounds beautiful.

*Liv gets the next bottle ready.*

*Katie rummages through her purse, looking for something intently.*

*She pulls out a little notebook and quickly scribbles a note down.*

LIV:

What's so urgent?

KATIE:

Oh, I just remembered that I need to stop by that hardware store down the street. And if I don't write things down, I'm totally useless. I'm gonna pick up some paint swatches. I'm planning on repainting the living room, but my landlord is picky about colors. So, I'm going to him with options and I'm gonna say: "Andy. I'm painting the living room. One of these colors has to work. If you won't let me turn the attic into a third bedroom, you can at least let me make the living room look like sunshine."

*Liv leans forward.*

LIV:

You said your landlord's name is Andy?

KATIE:

Yes. Never rent from him. He doesn't plow like he says he does. Andy Corman. Also, he raised the rent another \$100.

LIV:

Oh, I know him! He's a real bastard of a man.

KATIE:

You do?

*Liv nods.*

*Katie sips the pumpkin wine. She makes an impressed face at it.*

LIV:

Andy sucks. He always has. He used to date my aunt, but he broke up with her on her birthday back when I was like in fifth grade. I never liked him.

KATIE:

How charming.

LIV:

I hope you don't mind me saying it but the quicker you guys are out of there, the better.

*Katie leans back in her stool with a loud sigh.*

KATIE:

At one point I was on a house hunt. But not so much with everything going on now. Not gonna buy a house just to have one of us move out in a month or two. Doesn't make any sense.

LIV:

It won't be like this forever, though. Eventually things will settle down a bit more and I'm sure you'll be able to find the perfect dream house.

KATIE:

I'm not going to get my hopes up. I'm a hope free zone from now on.

*Liv laughs.*

LIV:

I don't think I believe you.

KATIE:

You sound like my husband when I say I want a divorce.

*Liv lets out a surprised laugh.*

LIV:

Hey, I think I know the one you've gotta try for your last choice.

KATIE:

Oh?

LIV:

Yeah, give me one second.

*Liv bends down to search for this final bottle.*

It's one of our limited reserves. But I know it's around here somewhere.

*Beat.*

Just give me a second.

*She looks for another moment.*

*She pops up triumphantly with a bottle in hand.*

*She pours Katie a very generous glass.*

*A few drops spill on the counter and Liv quickly cleans them up with a rag.*

*Katie pulls the glass towards her.*

KATIE:

*Dryly:*

Is that hints of oak that I'm picking up on?

LIV:

I had a woman once tell me that this was divorce your husband wine. I didn't know what she meant by it then. And honestly? I don't really know now either. But it seemed fitting for you.

*Katie is quiet for a moment. This is strangely touching.*

KATIE:

Thank you.

*Katie takes a sip.*

LIV:

So, what do ya think?

KATIE:

It's a little bitter. But I like it.

LIV:

Bitter isn't always bad.

KATIE:

With wine at least.

LIV:

Well of course.

*Liv puts the bottle away.*

*Katie takes a final drink.*

END SCENE.

JUNE

---

Cast of Characters:

---

JULIA: 24. She hates upsetting anyone. She's a gentle soul and loves the people in her life. She's been dreading this moment for years. She's from Gravelshaw.

Scene:

Julia's apartment.

Time:

Current day. Mid-June.

Estimated Run Time:

5-8 min.

*Julia stands alone in her apartment. The only furniture needed is a table, a mirror, and a chair. The mirror is off to the side and the table is positioned behind Julia. The chair is pushed out from the table. On the table is a covered bowl of curried cauliflower.*

*Julia faces the audience as she nervously smooths out her perfectly unwrinkled sundress.*

*Her hair is up in a tight bun. She turns away from the audience and leans forward in her mirror to determine if her hair is acceptable.*

*She's unsatisfied with what she sees and takes her hair down.*

*She brushes it out with her fingers before putting it up again. She does this once, and then a second time. Finally, she gives up and leaves her hair in a ponytail. She takes a step back.*

*She pushes her glasses up a bit. She leans forward in the mirror again and examines her makeup. She makes a few mild adjustments and corrections.*

*She practices the interactions she's bound to have at the family party scheduled later in the day.*

JULIA:

"Hi Auntie, it's good to see you. How's the knee been since the replacement? Oh sure, let me go get you a drink. Ginger ale?"

*(Beat.)*

"Hi Auntie, yes, you're right, I have gained a bit of weight. Thank you for pointing that out. *(Muttering this:)* Really needed to hear that."

*(Beat.)*

"Auntie! So glad to see you. Boyfriend? Oh no, I've been busy with school. Really busy."

*Julia stares in the mirror. She groans. Even the practice versions of this conversation are going poorly.*

*As she repeats the word boyfriend it begins to sound funny and unfamiliar in her mouth.*

Boyfriend.

BOYfriend.

Boyfriendddddddd.

Boi-Friend.

Friend boy.

Boyfriend.

*(Rushed:)* Boyfriendboyfriendboyfriend.

*A beat passes by. She turns away from the mirror.*

*With too much energy:*

Nope. Don't have one. I love school! So busy with school! Plenty of time for boys later. Plenty of time.

*An uncomfortable beat passes.*

*She drops into a chair and slumps in it. She stares up at the ceiling. Her feet tap against the ground.*

I can't do this. No fucking way can I do this.

*She tries again. More determined this time:*

"Hi Auntie, make sure to try some of the curried cauliflower I brought."

*She shakes her head.*

Okay. No. No. That sounds dumb.

"Hi Auntie. I brought- "

Okay, no. This is... This isn't... *(Beat.)* Maybe I should try a different person? Maybe practicing with Auntie first is the problem. Auntie's just... well, she's Auntie.

*She gets out of the chair.*

*She wanders around her apartment and pantomimes handing over her bowl of curried cauliflower.*

"Papa! Wow, can't believe Cindy graduated already. Crazy how time flies. I brought curried cauliflower as my dish for the potluck! Make sure to try some!"

Okay, cool...cool. That sounds better. Yeah, I think that sounds okay. I can work with this... I can really work with this.

"Papa! Wow, can you believe that Cindy graduated eighth grade? Wild. I brought something for the pot luck by the way! Curried cauliflower! It's delicious, if I do say so myself. (*Beat.*) My girlfriend, well fiancée actually, gave me the recipe."

*The words hang in the air for a moment.*

"My fiancée. I know that might be a little surprise huh?"

*Mocking herself:*

"It's a little surprise huh?" Who says that? Who would say that? That's definitely not the way to do this.

"My fiancée. I know I haven't brought her up before, but that's only because I didn't know how."

*A beat passes.*

Mmmm. Still not right.

"You know how I have that roommate? The one I've been living with for five years? Well it turns out that..."

*She lets the sentence trail off.*

*A beat passes.*

*She tries picking up the sentence again.*

"She's the best roommate in the world so I want to spend the rest of my life with her."

*She groans.*

*There's barely any time between these three lines:*

"Roommates for life!"

"Best friends. Super close friends."

"Remember that friendship ring you were asking about? It was actually a promise ring."

*She pauses. She returns to the chair, but this time she stands behind it instead of sitting.*

Okay. *(Beat.)* Alright. *(Beat.)* Maybe I just shouldn't say anything. It's not a big deal. It's really not! I'm just engaged. That's all. *(Beat.)* I mean, do they even need to know? Plenty of people get married and don't tell their families. That's a thing! Not just a closeted thing either. And I mean if I tell them... well if I tell them, I need to invite them and...it's

just a whole mess. A whole thing. And then it's the family gossip. The family drama. I don't want that. I mean... ugh. Maggie will be normal about it. But the rest of them? There's just no way...

*Another brief pause.*

So, I'll just drop the curried cauliflower on the table. Probably next to some other veggie dish. Maybe next to whatever Maggie brings. Anything I make will look good next to her... attempts at cooking. Then, I'll let Auntie and Nana know that YES, I did use low fat milk, and also, I substituted the sour cream for Greek yogurt. It's as healthy as I can possibly make it. It's as healthy as anyone can make it.

There's no reason to be suspicious of it. A little curry powder won't kill anyone. Yes, I promise. And I just... I just won't mention that my fiancée gave me the recipe. Or that it's the reason we keep so much cauliflower in the house all the time. Or that it's a really good comfort food and we had it just last week.

*Beat.*

*Her pacing slows to a halt.*

*With disgust:*

God damnit. God damnit! I'm a coward. (*Beat.*) I am a coward! I! Am! A! Coward! 24 years old and engaged. And I can't tell half my family? I can't even figure out how to tell them? Jesus Christ.

I go to pride. I'm out at work. I talk such a big talk! And it's all just that. Talk!!!!

*Beat.*

*Almost muttering:*

Fucking curried cauliflower. I think that's gonna let me come out? That's what's been holding me back? I didn't have the right potluck meal? God. What was I thinking? No one is even going to eat it. I'm a coward who can't cook for shit. I'm gonna criticize Maggie's cooking when I messed up this dish twice? And didn't actually substitute the sour cream for Greek yogurt?

*She returns to the mirror.*

*She looks at her reflection for a moment before turning and grabbing the cauliflower bowl.*

*She holds it up.*

*Trying to practice again:*

"Hi! I brought something new. It's my fiancée's favorite dish. She loves it and I hope you will too."

"Please tell me Nana made her famous honey glazed carrots! I want to bring back some to my fiancée. I'm always telling her about them. Who knew carrots could taste so good?"

*She grips the bowl tightly. She holds it out towards the audience.*

"Hey I'm a lesbian; hope you enjoy the cauliflower!"

*The lights fade.*

END SCENE.

JULY

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Cast of Characters:

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- DANIELLE: 23. She always knows everyone's drama and gossip. She's not really sure what her plan is.
- MARK: 22. He's an odd combination of studious and reckless. He took the SAT three times because he wanted to get the best score he could. But he also goes out every weekend.
- KASEY: 22. She is the shyest one out of her friends. She's been a little bit in love with Tyler for as long as she can remember.
- TYLER: 23. He's more than a little bit oblivious. He's easily distracted and gets sidetracked often. He deeply values his friends.

Scene:

The backyard of Tyler's house. Rowding.

Time:

Current day. Beginning of July.

Estimated Run Time:

8-10 min.

*Summer is in full swing. The air is sweet, the spring peepers are singing, and life feels filled with potential.*

*Danielle and Mark stand next to each other, their shoulders touching. They both hold unopen beers.*

*Kasey sits on a bench across from them. Next to her is a bag of marshmallows, and Hershey's bars. She's the only one wearing a sweatshirt.*

*Something acting as or representing a fireplace is between them.*

KASEY:

It's his own party and he's nowhere to be found.

DANIELLE:

I mean? Are we really surprised?

KASEY:

Not even remotely.

MARK:

He'll wander back out eventually.

KASEY:

Yeah, but the question is, with or without the graham crackers?

*Kasey swats at mosquitos.*

*Mark takes a step back from the fireplace.*

MARK:

Ohhh, is that why he went in?

KASEY:

I mean, it was at first.

DANIELLE:

He's definitely gonna forget.

MARK:

Think he'll bring out a bottle opener?

KASEY:

Absolutely not.

DANIELLE:

You're expecting too much of him. It's the graham crackers or the bottle opener. No way he'll bring both.

KASEY:

There's even a chance he won't bring out anything.

DANIELLE:

A big chance.

MARK:

You guys have no faith.

DANIELLE:

I've known him since he was ten. I have no reason to have faith.

KASEY:

He just gets sidetracked so easily. And believe me, we did enough school projects together. I would know.

DANIELLE:

Like that time you guys waited until the last minute to do anything for the environmental science final?

KASEY:

Hey, that was a good project. I don't care what anyone says. But yeah, exactly like that.

MARK:

I know it was a few years ago, and I get that one day I need move past it, but I *still* can't believe you guys got an a on that mess and I actually worked on my project all semester and got a c. Or a c minus. (*Beat.*) I don't remember.

*Kasey laughs.*

KASEY:

If you had just joined science honor society with us you probably would have gotten a better grade.

*Mark makes a flippant gesture.*

MARK:

Whatever. Also, we need a bottle opener so I'm going in. I don't want to wait for him.

*Mark hands Danielle his drink before starting to head towards the house.*

KASEY:

Good luck. *Overdramatically:* Thank you for your services.

DANIELLE:

If you start talking to his dad, you're gonna be in there forever too.

*Mark doesn't turn around as he says this.*

MARK:

Look, his dad is amazing. I will listen that man talk about anything.

*Danielle laughs. She leans closer towards the fire, putting her hands out towards it.*

*After a beat or two she crosses over to Kasey and drops down on the bench next to her. She lays her head on Kasey's shoulder, clearly content in the moment.*

DANIELLE:

Hard to believe we might not ever sit on this bench again.

KASEY:

Nah, that's not true.

DANIELLE:

*Amused:*

You planning on coming over without Tyler?

KASEY:

I totally would. I love his parents. *(A beat passes. She considers:)* And his sister. Oh! The dogs too. Can't forget the dogs.

*Danielle elbows Kasey.*

DANIELLE:

And him.

KASEY:

Oh, shut up.

DANIELLE:

I just feel like at some point you should say something. We're all adults. Worst case scenario is things are awkward for a bit.

KASEY:

Drop it. Maybe I'll say something. Okay? Maybe.

DANIELLE:

*(Realizing that the conversation needs to be rerouted:)*

Well, anyways. His parents are pretty great.

*(Beat. Recalling:)*

Except for that time, they took all the alcohol we bought for after prom.

KASEY:

God, I forgot about that. That was ridiculous.

DANIELLE:

One of the biggest betrayals of all time.

KASEY:

That was like 60 dollars' worth.

*Danielle snorts.*

DANIELLE:

I was ready to kill Tyler. I knew we should have kept everything at Mark's. But Tyler insisted his house was best.

KASEY:

Every day I'm so grateful I'm not the oldest child.

DANIELLE:

Right?

KASEY:

Oh! Speaking of that, can you believe that his little sister is graduating this year?

DANIELLE:

What? No! she's a baby.

KASEY:

Not anymore.

DANIELLE:

Hannah's seriously graduating already?

KASEY:

Yeah, she made a comment about it and it really fucked me up.

DANIELLE:

When did we get this old?

KASEY:

I've been trying to figure that out.

DANIELLE:

Goddamn, class of 2020 *[adjust year as needed]* already.

*The sound of footsteps approaches.*

*Tyler and Mark appear.*

*Mark triumphantly holds up a bottle opener.*

*Tyler smiles sheepishly.*

TYLER:

Sorry, sorry, I started talking to Dad.

DANIELLE:

It's all good.

KASEY:

Did you remember the graham crackers?

TYLER:

Of course, I did.

*He tosses the box towards Kasey. She doesn't catch it.*

KASEY:

That was a horrible throw.

TYLER:

Eh, what can I say? I'm out of practice.

*Mark walks over to where Kasey and Danielle are sitting. He opens all the beers. He hands one to Kasey, one to Danielle, and takes a sip of his own. He turns briefly towards Tyler.*

MARK:

You want one?

TYLER:

Who do you think I am? Of course.

*A moment of comfortable silence.*

*The fire is warm and the beer is cold.*

*Everyone sips at their beers.*

*Kasey starts opening up all the s'mores stuff.*

*Danielle grabs a marshmallow.*

KASEY:

Do you have any of the sticks left over from your mom's party?

TYLER:

Uhh...

MARK:

She bought like a million, there's no way you ran out.

TYLER:

Did she go through your line again?

MARK:

She always does. And I appreciate it. But not when she's buying stuff for one of her parties.

*Danielle starts to stand up.*

DANIELLE:

Do you want me to just go ask where they are?

KASEY:

No, no, it's fine.

*Danielle shrugs and sits back down.*

*Mark looks around for a moment. He bends down and grabs a stick. He dips it in the fire for a moment before pulling it back and blowing the spark out.*

*He hands it over to Kasey who grabs it with a smile.*

KASEY:

Thanks, Mark.

*She slides a marshmallow onto the stick and puts it over the fire. She rotates it every few moments.*

*Mark goes to get a second beer.*

DANIELLE:

Hey Tyler?

*Tyler is in the middle of a long drink.*

TYLER:

Mmmm?

DANIELLE:

You haven't told us anything about the new place.

*Tyler shrugs.*

TYLER:

What do you want to know?

DANIELLE:

Anything?

KASEY:

Like where exactly? Before or after the Walmart?

DANIELLE:

And do you have a dishwasher?

KASEY:

Renting or buying?

DANIELLE:

And what's the parking situation?

MARK:

Are you getting a new TV?

*Tyler looks between them for a moment.*

*Mark takes a long swig of his drink.*

TYLER:

When I get my tax returns, I'm getting a new TV. Gonna go up to 55 inches.

MARK:

Oh, good call, good call. That will be great with the Xbox one. The graphics are-

TYLER:

I can't wait to see the graphics on it.

KASEY:

Seriously? *(Beat.)* That's the only thing you answer?

*Kasey pulls back the stick suddenly. The marshmallow is on fire, she blows on it.*

*Tyler takes a step back from the fire.*

TYLER:

It seemed like the most important one.

*Danielle scooches away from Kasey on the bench.*

DANIELLE:

Do NOT get that on me.

KASEY:

Oh my god, relax, no one's gonna get caught on fire.

*Tyler gets closer to the fire again. Curiously:*

TYLER:

Are you still gonna eat that?

*She examines the marshmallow a last time.*

KASEY:

It's beyond charred.

TYLER:

That's not an answer.

KASEY:

If you want it, take it.

*She passes the stick over to Danielle who then passes it over Mark to Tyler.*

*Tyler eagerly grabs the marshmallow and pops it into his mouth.*

*Kasey swats at mosquitos again.*

*Danielle now starts putting a marshmallow over the stick. She holds it over the fire.*

DANIELLE:

I'm gonna miss this. Bonfires, beers in the backyard.

MARK:

I won't miss all the goddamn bugs.

KASEY:

Make sure to have us over before I go back to school, I wanna check out the new place.

TYLER:

You can help me move tomorrow if you want? Mark's coming over at nine.

KASEY:

Nine? Oooh, that's kind of early.

*Tyler snorts.*

TYLER:

I'll keep that in mind next time you ask me to pick you up from the airport.

KASEY:

I'm playing, I'm playing. I'll help. *(Beat.)* Sure.

*Danielle pulls her marshmallow back towards her.*

*She makes a s'more and bites into it while still holding the stick.*

DANIELLE:

You want the next one Mark?

MARK:

Yeah, sure, why not.

*Mark grabs the stick.*

*Kasey opens a chocolate bar. She pauses for a moment and then pulls out a cigar from her sweatshirt pocket. She stands up and takes few steps to the side, away from the fire and her friends. She gestures towards Tyler.*

*He points to himself questioningly.*

*Kasey rolls her eyes before nodding.*

*Mark and Danielle glance over but aren't particularly interested. They return to the fire and their own conversation.*

KASEY:

I got you a little moving out present. And this is like a legit cigar. Not one of the \$5 ones we used to smoke.

TYLER:

Oh, you didn't have to do that.

KASEY:

I know, I know. I wanted to though. Plus, this is how we always celebrate. Prom, graduation, graduation again, your first real adult job, me quitting my job with no notice. It only makes sense that we keep up the tradition.

*Tyler digs in his pocket for a lighter. He triumphantly pulls one out.*

*Kasey hands him the cigar.*

*He fumbles with the lighter for a moment.*

*They pass the cigar back and forth in a practiced manner.*

*Kasey wants to say something, but can't quite make the words come out yet.*

TYLER:

It's a good tradition.

KASEY:

Yeah. *(Beat.)* You're the only one I ever smoke them with.

TYLER:

It's been forever since our last one.

*Kasey tries to be casual:*

KASEY:

I almost kissed you the first time we shared one.

*A beat passes.*

*Tyler holds the cigar.*

*He looks over at Kasey.*

TYLER:

Really? Huh. Seems like a weird time.

KASEY:

Well. That wasn't exactly my point.

TYLER:

I almost asked you out when we shared one after graduating.

KASEY:

Which time?

TYLER:

Both times.

KASEY:

Oh.

*He hands Kasey the cigar. She faces him. Quickly she kisses him. She makes a face as she pulls away.*

God, you taste awful. Cigar kiss is a no go.

TYLER:

Guess we'll just have to try again?

KASEY:

I guess so.

*They both smile, almost on the verge of beaming.*

*Everything is warm.*

*END SCENE.*

AUGUST

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Cast of Characters:

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SOPHIA: 22. She's been friends with Jake since middle school. She's a very playful person. From Rowding.

JAKE: 22. People typically describe him as sweet. He's usually good-natured but is currently more than a bit stressed. From Chelfair.

Scene:

The wall overlooking Hampton beach. A bit off from the crowded strip.

Time:

Current day. Evening in August.

Estimated Run Time:

7-8 min.

*Sophia sits on the wall with her legs crossed. She looks out over the water for a long moment.*

*In front of her is a box of beach pizza. It has not yet been opened.*

*She takes her phone out of her pocket and checks the time. She sighs and puts it away.*

*She stares at the pizza box for a moment before reaching over to pull it closer.*

*She looks around one last time before opening it.*

*She takes out a slice and is about to take a bite when Jake suddenly approaches the wall.*

JAKE:

Sophia!

*He's out of breath and leans heavily against the wall for a moment.*

*Sophia turns around with a wide smile. She drops the piece of pizza back into the box.*

*Jake is also holding a box of beach pizza; this one is from a different business however.*

SOPHIA:

*(not unkindly)*

About time! I've been here for over half an hour.

JAKE:

You know how traffic gets-

SOPHIA:

You didn't leave on time, did you?

JAKE:

What? No, of course I did.

*A beat.*

*Sophia's eyebrows raise. Jake groans.*

JAKE:

Don't look at me that way.

SOPHIA:

Then don't lie to me!

JAKE:

The roads get all backed up in Salisbury, you know that.

*Sophia laughs.*

SOPHIA:

Not at night they don't.

JAKE:

Well, how about when there's fireworks?

SOPHIA:

That's only on Wednesday nights. It's Monday. And not all that busy. Well. *(Beat.)* At least not for the summer.

JAKE:

Okay, fine, fine, you caught me. *(Beat.)* I left like twenty minutes after I said I was on my way.

SOPHIA:

Now was that so hard?

JAKE:

Oh my god, shut up.

SOPHIA:

Just don't do that at the airport next week. *Beat.* Or maybe do actually.

JAKE:

Very funny.

*He puts the pizza box on the wall and then pulls himself up. This is not a very graceful movement.*

*Sophia grabs Jake's pizza box and opens it.*

*She sighs after seeing it.*

SOPHIA:

Jake...

JAKE:

Yeah?

SOPHIA:

Did you get plain pizza?

JAKE:

No? Obviously, it's extra cheese. If you're doing beach pizza, you need extra cheese.

*Sophia drops her head into her hands.*

SOPHIA:

Cheese doesn't count as a topping!

JAKE:

It totally does.

SOPHIA:

No! It really doesn't. It's just the thing that makes a pizza, a pizza.

JAKE:

Wrong. There's vegan pizzas out there. No cheese, just veggies.

SOPHIA:

We are not using vegan pizza as the standard here.

JAKE:

I just don't get what the issue is? One cheese pizza and one olive pizza, just like we always do.

*Sophia looks at him.*

SOPHIA:

Yes. Just like we always do.

*A beat passes.*

*Jake looks at Sophia's pizza box.*

JAKE:

Ohhhhhhhhh. God damnit, was I supposed to get the olive pizza?

*Sophia rolls her eyes. She opens her box again and holds up a plain piece of pizza to Jake. She takes a bite out of it.*

*He flops back onto the wall so he's laying down.*

SOPHIA:

Well, cheese is good too.

JAKE:

I'm so sorry.

*Sophia shrugs.*

SOPHIA:

No big deal. I know you've got a lot on your mind.

JAKE:

Yeah, that's one way of putting it. *(Beat.)* I just could have sworn that you get the olive one.

SOPHIA:

Nope, that's all you buddy.

JAKE:

You're sure?

SOPHIA:

Remember? I didn't like olives until you made me try them on beach pizza. And it's the only way I'll eat them.

JAKE:

People who don't like olives are weak.

SOPHIA:

And people who forget the olive pizza are weak.

JAKE:

We can go out and get it?

SOPHIA:

Absolutely not. We don't need a third box of pizza.

JAKE:

I mean, we could just buy slices.

SOPHIA:

When have you and I EVER had the self-control to just get slices?

JAKE:

Okay, fair.

*A beat passes. He sits up.*

But... what if we really only did get slices?

SOPHIA:

Do you know how hard I fought for my parking spot?

JAKE:

Please tell me you didn't wait for someone to leave and then immediately take their spot.

SOPHIA:

It's effective! There's nothing wrong with it.

JAKE:

It makes you seem like a Masshole.

SOPHIA:

*(dramatized and very playful)*

How dare you!

JAKE:

It's true! You drive like my mom does.

*He opens his box and begins eating a piece of pizza.*

SOPHIA:

I hope a seagull shits on you.

*Jake laughs, clearly unbothered.*

JAKE:

What is wrong with you?

*Sophia shrugs.*

SOPHIA:

I gotta get it all out of my system before-

JAKE:

No, no, c'mon don't bring it up please.

SOPHIA:

Fine, fine, I won't.

JAKE:

Okay good.

*A moment passes.*

*They both eat their pieces of pizza.*

*Jake looks out over the water.*

*Sophia looks at Jake.*

SOPHIA:

It's just that you're leaving//

JAKE:

//Sophia, don't//

SOPHIA:

// in literally less than a week//

JAKE:

//I said I don't want to talk about-

SOPHIA:

*Rushed:*

Not talking about it doesn't make it less real, Jake.

JAKE:

*Irritation visible:*

Why can't we just eat our fucking pizza and watch some drunk people get into a fight? It's why we fucking came to Hampton beach.

*Sophia is taken off guard by this. She doesn't respond for a moment.*

*She turns around to face where the ocean would be.*

*Jake looks away. He leans back on the wall again.*

SOPHIA:

If we're lucky people might start shooting off fireworks.  
(*Beat.*) Then we'll probably get to see some cops.

JAKE:

Yeah.

*Sophia pushes the pizza box away from her and closes it.*

SOPHIA:

I'm sure someone will start screaming soon. It's only a matter of time. The night is young and the bars are open.

JAKE:

Look... I'm sorry. Shouldn't have snapped.

*Sophia shrugs but doesn't verbally acknowledge this.*

SOPHIA:

Remember last time we were here? I thought that woman was gonna deck me. All I did was ask if she'd dropped her wallet. Which she had!

*Jake pushes himself up.*

JAKE:

By now we should know to avoid the strip on Saturday.

SOPHIA:

Yeah, but then we'd miss the fried dough.

JAKE:

It's not even that good.

SOPHIA:

Fine, we'd miss the fried Oreos then. Better?

*She bumps his shoulder with her own.*

JAKE:

Much. *(Beat.)* I think... I think...

SOPHIA:

You think? Now that's news to me.

*Jake snorts.*

JAKE:

I think I'm going to miss Hampton.

SOPHIA:

That's fair. It's trash. But it's our trash.

JAKE:

Exactly.

*They both look out at the water for a moment.*

SOPHIA:

Guess it's our last beach pizza night for a bit, huh.

JAKE:

Just for a little while though. I'll be back in November for my sister's wedding.

SOPHIA:

I'm still your plus one, right?

JAKE:

Of course. *(Beat.)* It's gonna be an open bar I'm pretty sure.

SOPHIA:

Oh, thank god. I'm so ready for this wedding. And super ready for the open bar.

JAKE:

You can't go full drunk-Sophia.

SOPHIA:

Why not?

JAKE:

Because you're a monster and I absolutely won't deal with it. Or subject my sister to it.

*Sophia laughs. She is unbothered by this.*

SOPHIA:

I'll play nice, I promise.

JAKE:

And you'll visit right? You're still planning on that?

SOPHIA:

Absolutely. Once you're settled in? I'll be flying down there in a minute. *(Beat.)* This is good, Jake. Really good.

JAKE:

Right.

SOPHIA:

And, it's just for a bit. You know? It's a yearlong program. If you hate it, if it's awful, it's just one year.

JAKE:

Just a year. Just a bit.

*Sophia leans into Jake. She rests her head on his shoulder.*

*He drops his head onto hers.*

*The lights fade.*

END SCENE.

SEPTEMBER

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Cast of Characters:

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BRENDAN:

20. He's more tired than he  
thought he would be at this age.  
He's struggling to make ends meet.  
His feet hurt.

Scene:

Brendan's apartment. Chelfair.

Time:

Current day. Morning.

Estimated Run Time:

4-5 min.

*Lights rise on Brenden.*

*He sprawls across a couch and groans as he checks the time on his phone.*

*He drops the phone down on his chest and stares up at the ceiling for a beat.*

*Another beat passes by.*

*He checks the phone again.*

*With a sigh he pushes himself up so he's sitting straighter.*

*He cracks his neck first and then his back.*

*He twists and stretches on the couch.*

BRENDAN:

What I want. What I really want, more than anything really, is to not be working 35 hours a week while also taking three classes at NECCO.

*(A beat passes.)*

That. That just sounds so good. To not have to do that? To not drive 30 minutes one direction for school and 50 minutes the other direction for work. *(Beat.)* God. I'd have so much goddamn free time that I wouldn't know what to do with myself. Maybe I'd finish that series I started a few months ago. It's one of those ones you have to binge, you know? You can't just watch an

episode here and there. No. You really just gotta go for it all at once. At least five episodes in one sitting. At least. And I just don't have time for that right now. But if I did? Yeah. I'd finish that series for sure. Hell, maybe I'd get through everything on my watchlist.

*He stands up from the couch and walks behind it. he grabs a pair of shoes and returns to the couch.*

*He starts to put the shoes on and tie the laces.*

All three of my classes are on Monday, and then I've got two of them again on Wednesday. It's a good schedule, mostly. Mondays are really long though. I mean, no one *likes* Mondays, I know that. But I really, really, hate Mondays. I'm in class from 8am to 6:30, and by the time I get home it's closer to 7, 7:30. I don't want to do anything at that point. I don't want to cook. I don't want to look at homework, and of course, there is always homework. I don't want to think about going back to work. I just want to sit down and not think ever again. Mondays really burn me out. And it's not like I ever have a weekend off. God no. So, I'm burnt out before the week even really begins. And every time I think that I might finally get to sleep in or just even have a minute to myself.. every single time, work calls me in. And what am I going to say? No? As if I can afford to say no?

I need the money. They know that, I know that, everyone knows that. So, if they call me in? I'm gonna go in. Even if it's my only day off that week, or I have a project due, or a paper that really needs to be written. I would like to keep my power on, I would like to pay my car insurance, I would like to pay that EZ pass fee that keeps getting bigger and bigger because I never have the money to pay it off all at once, even if it starts out as only \$13.

I thought stuff like that would make me look good too. I thought it would show my dedication to the company, my work ethic, my potential. I've been at that place for years now. Since I was 16 and still had braces. I've calmed down so many upset customers, I've put up and taken down sale signs for almost every sale, I help the managers with paperwork every time I work an opening shift, I train almost all the new hires. I really, really thought I might get the assistant manager position. They said they were keeping me in mind for it. They said I had the skills for it. It's just a small raise. But it would be enough to make a difference, and that's more than enough for me at this point. So, I thought it might work out. That things might get a little easier.

*He pauses. He shifts on the couch.*

But no. That? That was me being a dumbass for believing them. My least favorite manager let me know last night right before we closed that I was out of the running because of my poor availability. Poor availability? Can you believe that? Because I can't. I can't believe that having one day where I can't work at all and just one, ONE, day where I can't work before 5 is "poor availability." I come in every time they ask me to. Every single time. But I need less than two days off a week so they won't promote me? Even though I already do the paperwork? Bullshit. It's bullshit. But what am I gonna do? Not like I can quit. I have a good thing going. So, I'm gonna stay here. I'm not happy about it. But it's what I'm gonna do.

And you know? This is not, this is not at all what I thought adulthood was gonna be like. I didn't think it would be sunshine and rainbows all the time. But I didn't think it would be this brutal. This goddamn brutal. I didn't think that I would be this tired all the time. Every day I think about quitting work or dropping out of school at least a few times. I mean, how can I not? How can that thought not cross my mind when I'm waking up at 5am to get ready for work or when I see that I got another shitty grade on a quiz that I didn't really have the time to study for? If I could do one less thing it would be a lot easier. If I could just work. Or if I could just go to school. If I could just work, I'd maybe get a promotion. If I

could just go to school... well... I'd be able to just focus on school like all the people who only work here during the summer and their breaks. I probably wouldn't be falling behind as much as I am.

My GPA has never looked like it does now. I wasn't a genius in high school but I was able to pull good grades pretty much every time. I always tried to not obsess too much over grades or my GPA like my sister does. It's just a number. There's no point in getting all worked up about it.

But now? My grades aren't what they used to be and it turns out I do care about numbers. With work and everything it's just harder. A lot harder. When my focus is on the power not getting shut off, it makes it a lot more difficult to be concerned about finishing a book for class discussion or writing a reaction paper to something watched last class. I wish I could put more time towards school. I wish I didn't have to be at work so much. I dunno. There's a lotta things I wish. Maybe that's not productive. But it's true. It's reality. It's a new semester and I'm trying to not fall behind again, but that's a lot easier said than done.

*He checks his phone again.*

*He stares at the time.*

*His fingers drum on the arm of the couch.*

*He's considering something.*

I have an essay due tomorrow. *(Beat.)* It's a decent chunk of my grade. Not as much as the final essay. But still. It's a decent chunk and it's early enough in the year that I don't want to fall behind again. I've got goals for this semester. I do. I mean it.

*Once again, he looks at his phone.*

*His fingers drum quicker against the couch.*

You know what? Fuck it. Fuck it! I'm calling out. They can live without me for one more day. They'll be just fine. But I'm tired. And I need a nap, I need to write this paper. They'll be just fine without me.

*He picks up his phone.*

*The lights fade away.*

*END SCENE.*

OCTOBER

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Cast of Characters:

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HANNAH: Recently turned 18. She's still in high school. She was once very close with Jessie and Riley. She misses her friends. She isn't as mature as she thinks she is. From Bromwich.

JESSIE: 19. She's a sophomore in college. She's back for the weekend. She goes to UNH with Riley. She cares about Hannah, but she's fairly stressed as she's applying for internships. From Gravelshaw.

RILEY: 18. He's also back for the weekend. He still has the excitement that comes from the first semester of college and "being on your own". From Gravelshaw.

Scene:

A pumpkin patch.

Time:

Current day. Columbus Day weekend.

Estimated Run Time:

7-10 min.

*Warm lights rise on a pumpkin patch that has about 10 pumpkins.*

*Jessie kneels next to one in the middle of the patch. She looks it over carefully for bruises or any marred spots. She traces a cut she finds in the pumpkin's skin.*

*Riley stands off to the side as he takes pictures of the pumpkin patch. He repositions a few times in order to get different angles of the pumpkins and land.*

*Hannah bends down to pick up a pumpkin. It's significantly larger than the rest and she struggles with it.*

HANNAH:

*Okay, so what about this one?*

*Neither Jessie or Riley seem to hear her.*

*She looks between them both.*

*She tries again:*

*Hey? Guys? What about this one?*

*Riley and Jessie look over this time.*

RILEY:

*That's fucking huge.*

JESSIE:

*Could you even carry that to the car?*

HANNAH:

*Yes? Of course, I could. I can.*

RILEY:

*Uh huh.*

HANNAH:

I'm serious!

*Jessie shrugs.*

JESSIE:

I mean, if that's the one you want. Go for it.

HANNAH:

You guys are no help. I wanted opinions! Thoughts! Not apathy.

RILEY:

It's a pumpkin. I feel like there's only so many thoughts you can really have.

*Jessie sighs and softens.*

JESSIE:

I think it's a fine pumpkin. Just double check for bruises. You don't want it rotting.

*Hannah looks over the pumpkin more carefully. She sighs and puts it down.*

Guessing it didn't pass inspection?

HANNAH:

No. Unfortunately.

RILEY:

Good thing there's other fish in the sea. Or should I say, other pumpkins in the patch.

JESSIE:

No, you really shouldn't say that.

RILEY:

Sorry my humor is too evolved for you.

JESSIE:

Yeah. That's it. Too evolved.

*Hannah watches this interaction with a smile on her face.*

*They haven't all been together since mid-summer.*

HANNAH:

Guys, c'mon, I really need your help.

*Jessie rolls her eyes.*

*Irritation seeps through her tone:*

JESSIE:

Hannah, sweet child, honey, it's a pumpkin. How much help do you need?

HANNAH:

Look, spirit week is literally starting in two days. Two days! And the seniors still haven't finished putting together our float for the pep rally.

RILEY:

//Wait

JESSIE:

//Ugh

HANNAH:

What?

RILEY:

Are you guys doing seasons AGAIN for the classes?

*A beat goes by.*

*Jessie returns to looking at the pumpkins.*

HANNAH:

*Tersely:*

Yes.

JESSIE:

God that's boring.

RILEY:

I mean. C'mon. We literally did that last year. Guys should've done something different.

HANNAH:

Well we didn't. So.

JESSIE:

It's not a personal attack, Hannah. I promise. It's just... I mean? Not the most original idea. That's all. Seniors did that when I was a freshman too. It's been done like a million times.

HANNAH:

It's not like I picked it. And if I did, I certainly wouldn't have made seniors Fall. I would have picked summer. So, we could have done like a vacation themed float. Instead of a fucking pumpkin one.

RILEY:

It's not a big deaaaaaal. Don't stress, dude.

HANNAH:

Except it is a big deal! It's just me and another girl even working on the float.

RILEY:

Is it Kelsey?

HANNAH:

Why does it matter if it's Kelsey?

RILEY:

I was just wondering. *(Beat.)* Do you think she's still mad at me?

*Jessie sighs and rubs her temples.*

JESSIE:

Riley. Listen to me: That ship has sailed. Get over it.

HANNAH:

Okay, also that's like not the point??

*A beat passes.*

*Hannah looks between them both.*

*Riley only shrugs.*

*Jessie moves onto another pumpkin.*

Also, no. It's not Kelsey. She quit at the beginning of the year.

RILEY:

Kelsey quit? That's a shock.

HANNAH:

She's on dance team now instead. Said she wanted something different for her last year and that planning spirit week took too much time up.

JESSIE:

I'm sorry? What? (*Beat.*) Kelsey's on dance team now? Kelsey, Kelsey?

HANNAH:

Yeah. Kelsey, Kelsey. The weirdest thing is that she's actually a pretty good dancer. She's doing a solo for the spring showcase.

RILEY:

Huh. It's real weird how things change.

*Hannah shrugs.*

HANNAH:

Yeah. It's been an interesting few months. My brother moved out, I got the lead in the fall comedy, Kelsey joined dance team, Stacey started dating Eric. All sorts of stuff is goin' on.

RILEY:

What a world. Right?

*He turns to Jessie.*

It's like how Paige is a total partier now. Never would have guessed that in high school.

*Jessie laughs.*

JESSIE:

It's like everything flips. I used to get trashed on the weekends and never study. Now the salutatorian skips class to get wrecked on Fridays, and I'm working my ass off to get an internship.

HANNAH:

Paige parties?

*An uncomfortable beat passes.*

*Jessie and Riley glance at Hannah.*

RILEY:

All the time. Can't believe we haven't mentioned that.

HANNAH:

Yeah. Me neither.

*Another beat.*

*The discomfort grows.*

*Jessie attempts to smooth it over.*

JESSIE:

Well. Anyways, I promise you, in a few months? This whole float thing won't matter.

RILEY:

That's 100% true. None of it matters.

HANNAH:

None of it?

JESSIE:

None of it.

RILEY:

Like, I get it. I do. I know it seems super stressful now, but keep in mind it's *just* spirit week.

HANNAH:

But it's my last one, I want things to go well.

JESSIE:

Get all the fun pictures with people and stuff. That's all that matters. Trust me.

RILEY:

Also, college homecoming is way better.

*A beat passes.*

JESSIE:

How about this one?

*Jessie lifts up a pumpkin for Hannah to see.*

*Hannah walks closer to Jessie. She takes the pumpkin from her.*

HANNAH:

I guess this one works. No bruises. No dents.

*To Riley:*

I haven't thought much about that.

RILEY:

Well you should!

JESSIE:

And there's Greek stuff too. It's just something to think about.

RILEY:

So, bottom line? You're all good.

HANNAH:

Do you guys even know what schools I'm looking at?

JESSIE:

*Taken off guard by both the tone and question:*

What?

*A beat passes.*

HANNAH:

Nothing. Never mind.

RILEY:

Doesn't sound like nothing.

*An uncomfortable beat goes by.*

*Jessie straightens up and takes a step towards Hannah.*

*Riley stands off to the side.*

HANNAH:

I just feel like you guys maybe haven't been listening to me lately.

JESSIE:

About your schools?

HANNAH:

Yeah. About my schools. And just. Everything kind of.

RILEY:

Why though?

JESSIE:

Look, we've got stuff going on. Both Riley and I. But, but, I promise, and I think I can speak for us both, that we do listen.

HANNAH:

I'm not going to UNH.

RILEY:

Right... And that's fine? You've said that just about a million times.

JESSIE:

Still not sure I'm following you. Neither of us said anything about UNH. I don't think I've ever even suggested it.

HANNAH:

Well, yeah. *(Beat.)* But... It's just that, none of the schools I'm looking at even have Greek life.

RILEY:

Oh. God. That sounds like that sucks.

*Hannah shrugs.*

HANNAH:

I don't think it's that big of a deal.

JESSIE:

As long as they've got the program you want.

HANNAH:

Right. Yeah.

*Riley glances at Jessie.*

*He makes a vague gesture.*

RILEY:

Have you gone to any of them yet? Gotten a feel for life on campus?

*Jessie shoots a look at Riley. They should both have known the answer to this.*

*Hannah sighs. There's frustration in her voice now:*

HANNAH:

Yeah. One. I'm doing more next month.

JESSIE:

Mount Holyoke, right?

HANNAH:

Uh huh. I don't think that's gonna work out though. It didn't feel right.

JESSIE:

That's how I felt before I transferred to UNH. It's good you figured that out now before making any choices.

RILEY:

Oh! My ex goes to Mount Holyoke! Bella, remember??

HANNAH:

Yeah. Yeah. You already told me.

RILEY:

Oh, sorry.

JESSIE:

Remember? The group facetime?

*A beat.*

*Riley looks between his friends.*

RILEY:

Uhhhh. No?

*Jessie shakes her head. For a moment she funnels all her attention to the pumpkins.*

*Hannah stands holding her pumpkin tightly.*

*Awkwardness has taken over.*

*Jessie checks her phone.*

HANNAH:

You were pretty drunk. So. I'm not surprised you forgot.

*She tries to laugh it off, but is clearly is still bothered.*

*Another beat goes by.*

JESSIE:

You're mostly looking at Texas, right? Or is it in? In Texas?

HANNAH:

Hmm. Yeah. I'm looking at three schools there. Two in Houston. One in Denton.

RILEY:

Three in Texas? That's kind of a lot.

HANNAH:

You said that last time too.

RILEY:

I'm pretty consistent.

JESSIE:

That's so far from here. What a big change.

HANNAH:

Yeah. I think that's what I want.

RILEY:

Hey, change is great.

*Hannah glances at him. She shifts the pumpkin in her arms.*

HANNAH:

Most the time.

*Jessie checks her phone again.*

JESSIE:

Uh, hey, I really hate to be that person...

HANNAH:

What?

JESSIE:

I gotta head out soon.

HANNAH:

*Disappointed.*

Oh. I thought you were staying 'til tomorrow?

JESSIE:

I was supposed to. My boss called me in. I'm trying to pick up more hours at the café. Me and my roomie want to actually go somewhere for spring break this year.

HANNAH:

Well that would be nice.

JESSIE:

Yeah, it would be super nice honestly. I'm really hoping it works out.

RILEY:

Wait... You're still driving me back, right?

JESSIE:

I mean, I was planning on it. Unless you want to stay the extra day and one of your parents can drive you back.

RILEY:

Nah, there's a party Andy invited me to tonight anyways. Might as well head back with you still.

JESSIE:

So, is that pumpkin the winner after all?

*She points at the pumpkin Hannah is still clutching onto.*

HANNAH:

I guess.

*Jessie picks up the pumpkin that she's kept returning her attention to.*

JESSIE:

Sweet. And I'm gonna get this one. It's small enough to keep on the windowsill. It'll be adorable.

HANNAH:

Oh, cute. Well. I guess we can head out then.

RILEY:

Early Bird before we leave?

HANNAH:

Nah, I'm pretty full. Plus, you guys have like an hour drive. Better get going, probably.

*Hannah looks over the pumpkin one last time.*

*Jessie takes a step away from the pumpkin patch.*

*The lights fade.*

*END SCENE.*

NOVEMBER

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Cast of Characters:

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LUISA: 20. She's a pre-law student. She's been close friends with Morgan since middle school. She doesn't think she'll ever live in New Hampshire again.

MORGAN: 21. She's a waitress at a vegan café a few towns over. She's the type of person who won't pick up the phone if you call unexpectedly but would drive three hours to provide emotional support after a breakup.

Scene:

In the woods behind Morgan's apartment complex. Bromwich.

Time:

Current day. Mid to late November. It's been an unusually warm fall.

Estimated Run Time:

7-10 min.

*Morgan smokes a cigarette off to the side as the lights rise. There's only the slightest chill in the air. She wears a thick sweater and jeans.*

*Luisa stands off to the other side with her hands shoved in her pockets. She's wearing a jacket.*

LUISA:

I didn't know you smoked.

*Morgan shrugs but doesn't say anything.*

Well... that's new.

MORGAN:

I only started a few months ago. Everyone at work smokes, you know. Just kinda happened.

LUISA:

It explains why you wanted to come back here. I thought maybe you just really wanted some fresh air. Or you wanted me to see the pond.

*Morgan huffs.*

MORGAN:

I mean, I'll never say no to fresh air. And I think it's a pretty nice pond. *(Beat.)* But the apartment is smoke free. And my neighbor to the left... ugh. She bitches even if I smoke on my porch. She leaves all these passive aggressive notes on the door.

LUISA:

You have to hate that.

MORGAN:

Oh, believe me. I do.

LUISA:

*(Playfully:)*

We were in the same D.A.R.E. class. I know you know smoking is bad for you.

MORGAN:

*(Dryly:)*

Oh no. Officer Marcello will be so disappointed.

LUISA:

I think he already is.

MORGAN:

It could be worse.

LUISA:

Yeah, but it could be better.

MORGAN:

I'll quit in the winter.

LUISA:

That's what my roommate says.

MORGAN:

Funny.

*Too long passes by.*

*Morgan keeps smoking.*

*Luisa tries to find something to say.*

LUISA:

I can't believe it's almost December and we don't need winter coats.

MORGAN:

Yeah, it's warmer than it should be. *(Beat.)* It's been a warm November.

LUISA:

I'm surprised there's no snow yet.

MORGAN:

Me too.

LUISA:

I really thought I'd come back from Georgie to see a bunch of snow.

MORGAN:

Well, sadly, as you can see, you were mistaken.

LUISA:

I even bought snow boots just in case.

MORGAN:

You're only back for a week. Why would you possibly need snow boots?

LUISA:

What if someone wanted to go on a nature walk? Or if I wanted to help shovel out the driveway?

MORGAN:

Both of those things are incredibly unlikely. This?

*She gestures to their surroundings.*

Is definitely the closest you'll be getting to any nature walks.

LUISA:

But I'm prepared.

*Morgan rolls her eyes, but says nothing more.*

*Luisa looks around.*

*Suddenly:*

You would hate Georgia. More than you hate most things.

MORGAN:

You're probably right.

LUISA:

The summer alone would make you lose it.

MORGAN:

Me and the heat don't get along.

LUISA:

Yeah. And god, does it get hot.

MORGAN:

I sweat enough without it being 90 degrees. Summer here is almost too much for me.

LUISA:

Some things don't change, I guess.

*Morgan puts out her cigarette. She looks around for a brief moment before dropping it to the ground. She steps on it for extra measure.*

MORGAN:

No forest fires today.

*She pulls a pack of gum from her back pocket. She pops a piece into her mouth and holds out the pack to Luisa.*

*Luisa grabs a stick.*

LUISA:

You're the only person I know who likes cinnamon as much as me.

MORGAN:

It's the only gum my mom would ever buy. I didn't have much of a choice about liking it.

LUISA:

Oh, actually, you do have some competition.

MORGAN:

Oh? The roommate?

LUISA:

Nah. She *is* practically perfect in every way. But even she has flaws.

MORGAN:

I'm shocked.

*Morgan looks around for a place to sit comfortably. She finally finds a spot she approves of.*

*Luisa follows suit.*

*There's space between them, but they're angled towards each other.*

LUISA:

C'mon. Don't you want to know who your competition is?

MORGAN:

Yeah, yeah. Who is it?

LUISA:

Kiara.

*A beat goes by.*

*And then another.*

*Luisa looks over at Morgan.*

MORGAN:

Ah. A worthy opponent.

LUISA:

That girl. Can't handle any spice in anything. But for some reason she loves cinnamon gum. *(Beat.)* And Fireball.

MORGAN:

Eh, not so much the Fireball anymore.

LUISA:

Ah, did she switch back to Goldshläger?

MORGAN:

She switched to sobriety, actually.

LUISA:

Now I find that hard to believe.

MORGAN:

Well. I mean it.

LUISA:

She can outdrink any of us.

MORGAN:

Could. Not can.

LUISA:

You're sure?

MORGAN:

Yeah. I'm sure.

*Pause.*

*Luisa looks expectantly at Morgan. Morgan says nothing.*

LUISA:

Oh, c'mon. You can't leave it at that. There's clearly a story.

MORGAN:

No, there really isn't.

LUISA:

*With mild irritation:*

Fine. Sure.

MORGAN:

What?

*Luisa shrugs but doesn't say anything.*

*Morgan raises her eyebrows.*

LUISA:

Sober? Kiara?

MORGAN:

Yes. Sober. *(Beat.)* She's in rehab.

*Luisa cocks her head to the side.*

LUISA:

Just alcohol? Or other stuff too?

MORGAN:

This is the most you've asked about her since she started dating Mark.

LUISA:

She was my friend too. I can ask questions.

MORGAN:

I was just saying.

*Luisa isn't willing to let this go.*

LUISA:

Well? Other stuff or no?

MORGAN:

Heroin.

LUISA:

Jesus.

MORGAN:

She's in a three-month program right now. She's doing good. Really good.

LUISA:

I'm, uh, glad she's doing good. *(Beat.)* Was it a surprise for you?

MORGAN:

Yes and no.

LUISA:

You really can't leave it at that.

MORGAN:

Fine. Okay. I knew things weren't going well. *(She snorts.)* I mean, that's an understatement. But I could tell things weren't right. And I knew something was up. I kept meaning to reach out to her. I... I just didn't think it was heroin.

LUISA:

Damn. I'm... I'm glad she's getting help. Genuinely.

MORGAN:

Me too. I visited her a few weeks ago and she was looking more like herself. Sounding like it too.

*A beat passes.*

*Luisa nods, taking in this new information.*

LUISA:

So... Her and Mark? Not together anymore?

MORGAN:

God, no. That ended like three weeks after you went back to school. Maybe a little longer? Not much though.

LUISA:

Really? That long ago?

MORGAN:

Yeah. It was a pretty short run.

LUISA:

Is it bad I'm a little happy it didn't last?

*Morgan shrugs.*

MORGAN:

Probably not your finest moment.

LUISA:

Still can't believe I was dumb enough to date him.

MORGAN:

Aww, be more forgiving of yourself. He had pretty eyes. It was an understandable mistake.

LUISA:

Pretty eyes only go so far.

*A moment of comfortable silence.*

LUISA:

So besides, you know, how is she?

*Morgan stiffens. She says nothing for a moment. She sighs.*

MORGAN:

Kiara?

LUISA:

Yes. How is Kiara?

MORGAN:

Could be better, could be worse.

LUISA:

That's no answer at all.

MORGAN:

Her grandparents sold the farm last month.

LUISA:

What?

MORGAN:

I know.

LUISA:

I mean... we all knew it was coming... But still. (*Beat.*) It actually happened? Like they really sold it? It's not theirs anymore?

MORGAN:

Yeah. Hard to believe, huh? It's getting torn down.

LUISA:

Wow. We spent so much time there, and it's just gone.

MORGAN:

It's on my drive to work. I see it every single day. It's crazy.

LUISA:

Have they already...?

MORGAN:

The barn is gone.

*Luisa tries to be light. It falls flat:*

LUISA:

Was it ever really up though?

MORGAN:

It was never the same after the ice storm.

LUISA:

It's a miracle that thing never came crashing down on us.

MORGAN:

Yeah. We got lucky. That's for sure.

LUISA:

Kiara must be devastated.

MORGAN:

It was pretty upsetting.

LUISA:

I bet. That place was her whole world.

MORGAN:

If she wasn't in school, she was probably at the farm. And if she wasn't at the farm, she was out running errands for her grandparents.

LUISA:

Are her grandparents moving in with them?

MORGAN:

What? There's no room. There's already the four kids.

LUISA:

The farm really got sold, huh? (*Beat.*) I can't believe no one mentioned it in the group message or anything. I had no idea.

*Morgan shoots Luisa a look.*

MORGAN:

It didn't really feel like our news to share.

LUISA:

No, no, I get it. I just? I don't know. I thought I would have heard about it.

MORGAN:

There's just been a lot going on.

LUISA:

Yeah. Sure.

*Another beat passes.*

*Morgan stands up. She brushes herself off.*

*She offers a hand to Luisa who takes it.*

MORGAN:

Did you get that internship? The one you were nervous about?

LUISA:

No. Didn't work out. I don't think I interview well.

MORGAN:

I'm sorry to hear that.

*Luisa shrugs.*

LUISA:

Could be worse, right?

*Morgan pulls out another cigarette. She fumbles with the lighter for a moment.*

MORGAN:

Definitely could be worse.

END SCENE.