

The Favorite

A new play

By Joe Correll

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The Favorite

Cast of Characters

Shelby - A tough, conservative, by-the-book woman.

Ethan - Shelby's husband, a College Professor. He is clinical, curious, and condescending

Megan- Shelby's sister, she is outgoing, superficial, emotional and liberal.

Dylan - Shelby & Megan's adopted African American brother. He is friendly, charming and has a tendency to talk to inanimate objects.

Setting: A very cluttered garage.

The Favorite

Before us a solid garage door covers the entirety of the stage.

The garage door raises revealing a pile of jumbled bags, boxes full of clothes, trunks, suitcases, tools, holiday decorations, cans of paint, stacks of magazines and many other bizarre and random items. There is an entrance to the garage from inside the house. After a moment a huge stack of boxes fall to the floor revealing Shelby Hunt.

Shelby wears a baggy sweatshirt, jeans, and a ball cap with the American Flag on it. She's in her forties and she is a woman who knows who she is, and knows what she wants. She is opinionated and inflexible in her thinking.

SHELBY

Mother F-r!

Shelby is stacking some boxes, but they are heavy and very hard for her to lift. She opens a box and pulls out an enormous ball of extension cords. She starts to untangle them, but they will not come undone. She is completely frustrated.

SHELBY (CONT'D)

Come on. Really? Really? Christ on a bike!

She angrily throws the extension cords aside. She opens a trash bag. She lifts it high and dumps out a huge pile of tired looking stuffed animals.

She holds one up and smells it. Then she starts lining all of them up one by one on one of the cartons.

Ethan Hunt, Shelby's husband enters from within the house. Ethan is a professor at a local University. Ethan is clinical, thoughtful, curious, patrician and a bit on the condescending side. He carries some shopping bags with him.

ETHAN

How's it going?

SHELBY

Very slow. You were gone a long time!

ETHAN

I got everything you asked for.

Ethan looks at a shopping list and recites it to Shelby.

ETHAN

(reading)

Trash bags, glass cleaner, duct tape, jelly beans, and an extension cord for the vacuum.

Shelby picks up the ball of tangled extension cords and aggressively shoves them into Ethan's free hand.

SHELBY

I already found extension cords. What took you so long?

ETHAN

(unpacking)

It was crowded. It's Labor Day weekend. The sales.

Ethan puts down the bag, and tries to untangle the ball of extension cords.

SHELBY

This is taking forever. We're never going to finish by tomorrow morning.

Ethan finds that a yard sale may be just a bit "beneath" him.

ETHAN

Why does there have to be a yard sale? Couldn't we just have someone come haul all of this junk away?

SHELBY

We don't know what's in here. There's a lot of good stuff. And we could use a few extra bucks.

ETHAN

(condescending)

We don't need the money. What do you think you'll make? After you split it with Megan and Dylan? Fifty bucks?

SHELBY

We can put it into our vacation fund. We'll go somewhere nice.

ETHAN

(as if to a child)

I told you, now is not a good time for me to get away from the University.

SHELBY

It never is, is it? Will you help me lift this box, please? I want to put it over there.

Ethan helps Shelby lift a very heavy box.

ETHAN

(struggling)

What's in here, meteorites?!

They lift the box onto a shelf.

ETHAN

Have you found anything good yet?

SHELBY

I found those extension cords. Now you can return the one you bought...Or maybe we should keep it. You can never have too many extension cords.

ETHAN

I think you actually can have too many extension cords.

Ethan works at untangling the cords, while he surveys the garage.

ETHAN

(half disgusted, half
fascinated)

I can't believe there are so many boxes. And crates. And bags. And jars of washers and pennies.

SHELBY

You never know when something might come in handy.

ETHAN

A bull dozer would come in handy right about now.

Shelby sorts through a big box, throwing things out of it as she speaks. Ethan knows Shelby's sister Megan is a "hot button", and he presses it anyway.

ETHAN

You and Megan seem to be getting along okay.

SHELBY

(playing the "bigger" person)

I always try to get along. She's the one who is always trying to push my buttons. It's been fine so far, but you watch—she's just waiting for the right moment to piss me off. She was just *acting* sad at the funeral. But she's not sad. She just wants all our friends and relatives to think she's a better person than me, because she's sad our mother is dead.

ETHAN

You don't think she's upset? It's normal for her to be upset.

SHELBY

She's a faker. She's happy, because she thinks we're selling this house.

ETHAN

I thought we were all still in discussions over what to do with the house.

SHELBY

Our house is way too small for all of our stuff, and this is a much better neighborhood. End of discussion.

ETHAN

This house is way too big for us, you'll just fill it with more junk. And it needs a lot of work. It will be a huge headache. I told you, I don't want to live here.

SHELBY

If she thinks she's going to get the money from our parents house and waste it to open that ridiculous winery, wine bar, or whatever stupid scheme she's concocted this time, she's got another thing coming.

ETHAN

(condescending)

Think coming.

SHELBY

What?

ETHAN

The expression is "another think coming". Not, "thing".

SHELBY

What is wrong with you??

ETHAN

I don't understand why your mother didn't put the house in her will. She put the blender in the will, but not the house.

SHELBY

That blender has a lot of sentimental value. I don't know why she left it to Megan.

ETHAN

It would have made it easier if she said which of you should have the house, or at least some kind of instructions. You and Megan should talk it out.

SHELBY

Why do you always want us to talk things out? You know, that talking never solves anything with that woman. It always ends up with her screaming at me and one of us throwing something.

ETHAN

You know, the death of a parent can bring up a lot of unresolved childhood issues. It's perfectly normal if you each express your grief in different ways.

SHELBY

Who's grieving? I'm over it.

ETHAN

Losing a parent is a traumatic event. Everybody deals with it differently. There's nothing that says how you have to feel.

SHELBY

Good. Because I don't feel anything.

ETHAN

You don't mean that.

SHELBY

Yes. I do.

ETHAN

No, you don't. It's okay. Your reaction is perfectly normal.

SHELBY

Stop trying to analyze me. We're not in your sociology class.

ETHAN

You know I teach psychology. I'm only trying to help.

Ethan gives Shelby a hug. She tenses at first but then hugs him back.

SHELBY

We're hugging now? Is that who we are? We're huggers? You don't have to worry about me honey, I'm fine.

ETHAN

I know you're fine, but it's okay if you feel a little sad going through all this stuff.

SHELBY

I'm not sad.

ETHAN

But it's okay if you are.

SHELBY

I'm fine.

ETHAN

I know you don't like feelings, but it's okay if you have them.

Ethan kisses Shelby on the forehead.

SHELBY

Go find out what's in that box over there.

Ethan and Shelby sort through various boxes.

ETHAN

Wow.

SHELBY

What? What's in there?

ETHAN

Pencils. Pens. Paper clips. Papers. Staples. And a lot of glitter.

SHELBY

That's probably from a junk drawer.

They continue to sort through boxes and bags.

ETHAN

I don't understand a junk drawer. If it's junk, then why keep it?

SHELBY

It's not really junk, it's just what people say. Come on, quit jabbering. We've got work to do.

Ethan sorts through piles of junk.

ETHAN

(horrified by the clutter)

Look at all this stuff! Dried out paint cans, bleach, turpentine, muriatic acid, tar remover, old shellac, old weed killer, old ant killer, I don't even know what this is because the label's gone... grass seed, fertilizer, broken hack saws, four garden hoses with holes in them...

SHELBY

And a partridge in a pear tree...Get over it. Everyone's garage has junk like this.

ETHAN

Not like this. You know your mother was definitely a hoarder right?

SHELBY

I don't like that word. It sounds dirty. I'd call her a collector.

ETHAN

Fine. Collector. But, traits like that often get passed on to the offspring. And you've been starting to save things in little boxes all over our house. I'm just a little concerned is all. With hoarding...sorry...collecting... the older you get, the worse it becomes.

SHELBY

I'm no hoarder. You're just wasteful. And don't use words like "offspring". You're just trying to sound fancy.

ETHAN

No, I'm trying to help you through a difficult time.

SHELBY

Well, knock it off!

Megan, Shelby's sister, enters from inside the house. She is in her forties, but it's hard to tell her age because she wears a frilly pink top, and a very short skirt. Something more appropriate for a girl in her teens. She is drinking a glass of wine.

MEGAN

(triumphant)

I finished cleaning out her closet!!!

SHELBY

We were going to do that together. I don't want you taking things without asking Dylan and I.

MEGAN

(lightly)

I'm not going to take anything without asking.

SHELBY

Did you find anything good?

MEGAN

I found a big box full of little toothpastes.

SHELBY
(towards Ethan)
Could come in handy on a vacation.

ETHAN
(condescending)
I told you, maybe next year.

MEGAN
Some of the clothes are vintage now. Somebody will want them.

SHELBY
Maybe we can sell them to that shop that sells all the old clothes. What's that place called?

A beat. Megan starts to cry, over dramatically.

SHELBY
Oh no! Here we go!

MEGAN
(through crocodile tears)
I can't believe she's gone.

SHELBY
Well, that took about thirty seconds.

MEGAN
(sobbing)
I never got to say goodbye.

SHELBY
Because you haven't been here in two years.

MEGAN
(sobbing)
I've been very busy!!

SHELBY
I told you she was going to die four weeks ago!

MEGAN
(sobbing)
I didn't know you were serious!!

ETHAN

Megan, it's okay. This is a perfectly normal reaction. Guilt. Regret. It's okay.

SHELBY

Ethan, don't take her side! This is a performance.

ETHAN

I'm not siding with either one of you.

MEGAN

(dabbing her eyes)

I think we'll all feel much better once we sell the house and get some closure.

SHELBY

We're not selling this house. Ethan and I are going to fix it up and move in.

Megan's emotions turn on a dime.
She lashes out.

MEGAN

This house is as much mine as it is yours! And you guys don't need the money like I do.

SHELBY

I took care of Mom for five years. I've earned this house. You didn't give a shit about the house or Mom until she was dead.

MEGAN

You already have a perfectly good house, you don't need this one!

ETHAN

(to Shelby)

We really don't.

SHELBY

(to Megan)

How would you know what I need? You haven't even been to my house in years. We're crammed in there, I have no place to put anything.

ETHAN

Our house is over 2000 square feet.

SHELBY

Right. Tiny.

ETHAN

It's not a tiny house. Not like on those TV shows it isn't.

SHELBY

I have been waiting for five years for her to die, so that I could finally live someplace nice.

ETHAN

If we got rid of a bunch of stuff, our house would feel a lot bigger.

MEGAN

Ethan makes a lot of money, why don't you just put an addition on your own house if you want more space?

SHELBY

Teachers just don't make a lot of money Megan.

ETHAN

(condescending and
deliberately)

I'm a pro-fessor.

MEGAN

You're so mean and insensitive Shelby.

ETHAN

Shelby is just as upset as you, Megan. She just expresses it differently.

SHELBY

I'm not upset!

ETHAN

She is.

MEGAN

I know she is. She just can't be vulnerable.

SHELBY

Will you two just shut up and stop talking about me like I'm not here?

MEGAN

You shut up!!

SHELBY

I knew this was going to happen! Ethan, you're making things worse!

MEGAN

It's not his fault.

SHELBY

Mind your own business!

MEGAN

You mind your business!

SHELBY

You're drunk!!

MEGAN

I am not!!!

Shelby pulls out a box, and goes from furious to delighted in 1.2 seconds.

SHELBY

(super excited!)

Oooooo loooooook!!! Mr. Potato head!

Megan immediately brightens, and runs over to Shelby.

MEGAN

Really?! Does it have all it's pieces?!

SHELBY

I don't know. Let's see!

ETHAN

This is good. Find positive things you can bond over.

Dylan Holmes enters through the door. He is carrying a big bag. Dylan is a tall, handsome African-American black man. Dylan is Shelby and Megan's adopted brother, and he has brought lunch. Dylan is a very cheerful man with a bright and sunny disposition. However he is subject to violent fits of anger.

He enters the garage like a ray of
sunshine!

DYLAN

(brightly)

The Chinese food is here!

SHELBY

Great. I'm starving, and Megan is driving me nuts.

Dylan starts to unpack the Chinese
food, and places it on one of the
boxes. Ethan and Shelby continue
sorting through more bags and
boxes.

DYLAN

I got Sweet And Sour Chicken!!

SHELBY

(trying to make Megan
jealous)

Thank you Dylan, you know it's my favorite.

Dylan bows with his palms together.

DYLAN

(In Chinese accent with
delight)

Ah sooo!

MEGAN

That's racist.

ETHAN

And Japanese.

MEGAN

Where did you get the food from?

DYLAN

(cheerful!)

Golden Palace! Same as always!

Dylan continues unpacking the
Chinese food.

MEGAN

You're still going to that place after all these years?

SHELBY

We love it. We still get together with Jenny and her kids almost every Friday.

MEGAN

That's so sweet. Tradition!! (Laughs) There is this cute place in my neighborhood in Chicago that I've been going to. Everything is fresh and they make it right as you order it. All of the vegetables come from within a hundred miles, and the meat is farm raised. Their Vegetable Lo Mien is to die for. It's all I order. It's really good. If you ever come up, I'll take you.

SHELBY

I hate when you make fun of us for doing what we've always done.

MEGAN

(a little "hurt")

I didn't make fun. I said it was sweet.

SHELBY

That's not what you meant though.

Megan and Shelby go back to looking through boxes.

ETHAN

Traditions are important in times like this. So, our Golden Palace ritual could actually be very helpful. It's like a coping mechanism.

Dylan suddenly become furious!

DYLAN

THEY FORGOT THE WON TON SOUP!!!!!! FUCK!!!

He throws one of the cartons of Chinese food across the garage and it splatters on the wall.

MEGAN

(like to a dog)

Dylan! No!

Dylan goes back to unpacking the Chinese food.

MEGAN

(to Shelby, half under
breath)

Shelby, I thought his temper was under control!?

Shelby and Megan each try to maintain their composure.

SHELBY

It is. He's just mad because the order was mixed up again. It's the third time it's happened. Don't worry about it.

MEGAN

I am worried about it. He's my brother too. Why can't I have a say in his well-being? I am a part of this family. Why are you trying to cut me out??

SHELBY

Because you show up after two years and want us all to throw you a parade. You're a piece of work Megan.

MEGAN

I have a lot going on! I'm trying to open a business!

SHELBY

Ha! You running a business?! That oughta be good!

MEGAN

Shut up!

Dylan holds up a carton of Chinese food and has a cheerful conversation with it.

DYLAN

I'll tell you what sir, these two are going to fight all day! We better just ignore them. But you know what I just realized?! I should have gotten some extra napkins!... BUT... I didn't see any. I should have asked about them. Oh well, them's the breaks!!

ETHAN

(to the girls)

Your brother is talking to the Chinese food.

Megan pulls a sock puppet out of a box. Cheerfully.

MEGAN

Oh my!!! Look! Remember when we made these Shelby?

SHELBY

Oh my gosh! It's Mr. Pol Pot!

Shelby goes over to the box and pulls out another puppet.

SHELBY

And Shelley Duval!

MEGAN

And Shelley Duval!

Megan and Shelby use their puppets to talk to each other and do a puppet show.

MEGAN

(in puppet voice)

Hello, Shelley Duval!

SHELBY

(in puppet voice)

Hello, Mr. Pol Pot! What are you up to this fine day?

MEGAN

(in puppet voice)

Genocide!!! Aaaaarg!

SHELBY

(in puppet voice)

Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhh!

Megan attacks Shelby's puppet. They laugh.

ETHAN

(Ethan finds this fascinating)

You two made sock puppets named Shelley Duval and Mr. Pol Pot?

SHELBY

Oh, we had a huge cast of sock puppets, I don't know where the rest of them are. Mom loved our puppet shows.

DYLAN

I was always missing socks.

Megan walks away, and begins
looking through the boxes and bags.
Ethan holds up a small jewelry box.

ETHAN

There's a jewelry box here, but it's locked.

SHELBY

There's a bag of keys over there. One of them fits.

MEGAN

Should we eat out here while we work? Should I go get some
plates from the kitchen?

DYLAN

(cheerfully)

Oh! The dishes and bowls are already packed up, thank you
very much!

SHELBY

You packed all of them? Why did you pack up all the dishes
before the sale tomorrow?

Dylan believes he had the best plan
ever.

DYLAN

(triumphant)

Because..... I thought we would sell them IN the sale!

SHELBY

What are we going to eat on? Did you bring paper plates?

DYLAN

(confused)

No. Just plastic forks.

SHELBY

You didn't ask if I wanted to have the dishes. You can't just
sell things without asking.

DYLAN

Do you want them?

SHELBY

Megan, do you want them?

MEGAN

I already have plenty of dishes.

SHELBY

I don't want them.

ETHAN

Great. Then you can sell them. That's one thing you can all agree on, right?

MEGAN

Dylan, how are people going to buy the dishes if they're all packed up? No one will know what's in the boxes.

Dylan's temper starts to rise.

DYLAN

(Getting angry)

There are dishes in them. I thought we'd sell them by the box. That will be easier.

SHELBY

But people will want to know what's in the box before they buy it.

DYLAN

(angrier)

There's dishes in the box.

SHELBY

They're not just going to buy a box marked "dishes" without going through it.

Dylan tries to calm himself down.
He attempts to be more cheerful.

DYLAN

(calmer)

Sure they will. Like a "mystery box"!

SHELBY

People don't want mystery plates! They want to know what they look like!!

Dylan SNAPS at Shelby angrily.

DYLAN

(Very angry!)

I wouldn't! I would totally buy a box marked "mystery plates"!

SHELBY

(snapping back at him)

That's because you're adopted. You like surprises!

ETHAN

I would definitely buy a box marked "mystery plates".

SHELBY

Ethan! Don't encourage him!

Ethan has found the key and opened
the jewelry box.

ETHAN

Hey! I found the key! There's eight dollars in this jewelry box!

SHELBY

That's mine.

Shelby snatches the money from
Ethan's hand.

SHELBY

(to Dylan)

Next time, just ask before you pack things up. Ethan come help me unpack the boxes of plates. Dylan, keep an eye on her. I don't want her slipping things out of here without telling us.

MEGAN

You don't trust me?

SHELBY

No.

ETHAN

We should be packing, not unpacking.

Shelby and Ethan go inside. Megan sorts through various items while she talks to Dylan.

MEGAN

It's okay that you packed up the plates, Dylan. Shelby's just being mean. She's more upset about Mom than she lets on.

DYLAN

I probably shouldn't have packed the dishes without checking with everyone.

MEGAN

It's not your fault.

DYLAN

Thanks Megan. I'm glad your home.

MEGAN

Me too. How are you holding up? Are you okay?

DYLAN

Okay with what?

MEGAN

With Mom being gone.

DYLAN

Where'd she go?

MEGAN

Huh?... She died.

DYLAN

She did? When?

MEGAN

Last week. We're cleaning out the house? Remember?

DYLAN

(innocent)

Oh, yeah, I forgot. Too bad about Mom. When will she be back?

MEGAN

Are you taking your medications?

DYLAN

What medications?

MEGAN

Your pills?

DYLAN

Oh. Shelby told me to stop taking them.

MEGAN

She what?!

DYLAN

It's okay, I don't need them. I'm fine.

MEGAN

You need to see the doctor before you stop taking medication!
You know what happens when you're off your meds!

DYLAN

What happens?

MEGAN

You throw Chinese food across the garage!

DYLAN

Shelby said they were messing with my testosterone levels.

MEGAN

Your testosterone levels?? She's not a doctor. Don't listen
to Shelby!

DYLAN

She told me not to listen to you.

MEGAN

(snapping at him)

Well, don't listen to her!

Dylan looks around the garage.

DYLAN

Wow, there is still an awful lot of stuff to go through. I
don't know if we'll finish by the morning.

MEGAN

It's Shelby. She won't get rid of anything. Including this
stupid house.

DYLAN

I don't want to get rid of the house.

Megan is no longer nice.

MEGAN

(angry)

Wait. What!?? You don't?? Why not?

DYLAN

I don't have a house.

MEGAN

Neither do I. But we don't need houses. Wouldn't you rather have the money?

DYLAN

I think I'd rather have the house.

MEGAN

If she takes this house, neither of us are going to get anything. Don't think she'll give either of us a dime, because she won't.

DYLAN

I don't think we should sell it.

MEGAN

So you're taking her side?!

DYLAN

I like you both equally.

MEGAN

Equally??! Ugh! I can't believe you're taking her side, Dylan! I don't understand this. I thought you liked me better!

Ethan and Shelby return with plates. Dylan gets out the Chinese food and they set up a dining area on boxes.

SHELBY

Okay. We've got plates.

DYLAN

Sorry about packing them up.

ETHAN

They weren't that hard to find.

ETHAN

I'm not that good at removing corks.

SHELBY

You do it all the time.

ETHAN

Okay, okay. We'll be right back.

MEGAN

Dylan, don't let her stash away anything good! This stuff belongs to all of us, whether it's junk or not, I want to see it and decide if I want it.

ETHAN

Do you have a cork screw?

MEGAN

We have eleven of them.

Megan and Ethan go inside.

SHELBY

So what did you two talk about?

DYLAN

Who?

SHELBY

You and Megan.

DYLAN

Nothing really. She just said I shouldn't listen to you.

SHELBY

I knew it!! She's trying to get you to sell the house isn't she?

DYLAN

She wants the money.

SHELBY

Don't you listen to her! She hasn't been here like you and I have. If I get the house you can have an actual bedroom instead of living in our basement.

DYLAN

I think I'd like to have this house by myself.

SHELBY

You want the house? What are you going to do with a big house like this?

DYLAN

Paint it yellow.

SHELBY

I KNEW she was going to do this!!

Shelby notices that Dylan's shirt is buttoned wrong.

SHELBY

Fix your shirt.

DYLAN

What's wrong with my shirt?

SHELBY

It's buttoned wrong.

Shelby unbuttons Dylans shirt.

SHELBY

You're all sweaty.

DYLAN

It's hot in here.

SHELBY

Hold on.

Shelby picks up a towel and slowly wipes down Dylans bare chest. They are very close together.

SHELBY

How does that feel? Better?

DYLAN

It feels weird.

SHELBY

Aren't you feeling better now without those pills? You've gained some weight back. You're looking good.

DYLAN

I guess so.

SHELBY

I'm so proud of you, Ethan. C'mere give me a hug.

DYLAN

I'm Dylan.

Shelby starts to hug Dylan. He takes a step backwards...Suddenly Ethan and Megan burst in startling them. Megan and Ethan each hold an open bottle of wine, and red solo cups. Shelby panics and immediately drops the towel. Dylan buttons his shirt hurriedly.

MEGAN

(interrupting them)
Who wants wine??!

SHELBY

What's for lunch??!

DYLAN

I got Chicken Fried Rice and Sweet And Sour Chicken. And also Kung Pao Chicken and a whole bunch of Egg Rolls.

MEGAN

(very irritated with Dylan)
Three chickens? Did you get some Vegetable Lo Mien like I asked?!

DYLAN

They were out.

MEGAN

They were out of vegetables?!

DYLAN

Yeah.

MEGAN

Ugh. You people out here. You do not eat enough vegetables. You're all going to get colon cancer!

Megan pours wine into hers and Ethan's cups.

SHELBY

Just eat the friggin' chicken. Don't make a big production out of it.

MEGAN

(sulking)

You know Vegetable Lo Mien is the one Chinese thing I like.

They all start to eat their food,
completely ignoring Dylan. Dylan
holds up an egg roll and cheerfully
has a conversation with it.

DYLAN

(chatting with the egg roll)

She's probably right about that. I should eat more
vegetables. I don't want colon cancer! I don't want any kind
of cancer. I wish I liked vegetables. I wish lots of things
were different...Sorry, egg roll.

He bites the Egg roll in half.
Ethan tries to figure out if Dylan
is pretending to speak to the egg
roll, or really believes that it is
there.

ETHAN

Dylan, who are you talking to?

DYLAN

No one anymore. I ate him.

ETHAN

Pass the rice please.

MEGAN

Do we have any chopsticks?

ETHAN

No, just plastic forks.

MEGAN

(disappointed)

Okay.

SHELBY

What do you mean "okay"? What's wrong with plastic forks?

MEGAN

Nothing. They're fine.

SHELBY

Ever since you moved to Chicago you've gotten so pretentious. Chopsticks. Really.

MEGAN

They're way more efficient.

SHELBY

You're just showing off. Just stop. We don't want to hear about your Chicago chopstick expertise. It's America. Forks are just fine.

ETHAN

Megan is right, some vegetables would have been nice.

MEGAN

Thank you, Ethan. You're very sweet.

SHELBY

(sarcastic)

Why don't you two just go make out and get it over with!?

ETHAN

(changing the subject)

Did you say this was Chicken Fried Rice? I don't see any chicken in here.

DYLAN

Dig around. It's probably all at the bottom.

They sit silently eating.

SHELBY

Did you get drinks?

DYLAN

Yeah, there's sodas in that bag.

Shelby grabs a soda. They eat for a bit.

SHELBY

Can you pass me an Egg Roll please?

Dylan passes her an Egg Roll.

ETHAN

This food is better when you eat it there.

They eat for a little bit.

DYLAN

They were really busy today.

ETHAN

Labor day weekend. The hardware store was busy too.

They eat for a little bit.

ETHAN

It's supposed to be nice tomorrow.

DYLAN

That's good.

They eat in silence for a little bit.

MEGAN

This is not too bad!

SHELBY

Great.

A beat.

MEGAN

(sad, passive aggressive)

I just wish I had some chopsticks and some Vegetable Lo Mien.

Shelby furiously throws her plate down and food scatters all over the place.

SHELBY

(yelling)

This food is cold!!! I don't want it anymore!

MEGAN

(yelling)

Me either!!

Megan throws her food violently down. Dylan points to a painting wrapped in brown paper.

DYLAN

Hey! Is that the painting wrapped up under the paper over there?

MEGAN
What painting?

DYLAN
You don't remember it?

MEGAN
I'm not sure...

Dylan goes to the painting and pulls the wrapping off of the front. The painting is of a young man screaming in agony. Dark colors. Very unpleasant. (The face is reminiscent of Caravaggio's "Boy Bitten By A Lizard" The body is pierced with arrows like Mantegna's St. Sebastian.)

MEGAN
Oh, THAT painting. So ugly.

DYLAN
I think it's rad.

ETHAN
It's a very interesting piece of art. Very disturbing. It's really a wonderful example of the grotesque genre. The artist must have experienced some sort of horrible trauma. I'd really like to meet them.

SHELBY
Not gonna happen. Our mother painted it.

ETHAN
Really?! I didn't know your mother was a painter. Come to think of it, I don't know much about her at all.

SHELBY
What's to know? She was a very unpleasant woman.

ETHAN
She was always very nice to me. The three times I met her.

MEGAN
You only met her three times?

ETHAN
Yes, Shelby didn't want me over here. I met her... what is it? Seven years ago at our wedding, that really awful Christmas when you came home, and then last week.

But she was comatose so I guess that doesn't really count... so I guess... I met her twice.

SHELBY

You're lucky.

ETHAN

Well, she was obviously quite talented.

DYLAN

She was going through her "artistic" phase when she did this.

SHELBY

She would get interested in something, and go "all in". Then she'd quit just as fast. She lost interest in things so easily.

MEGAN

Ceramics.

SHELBY

Decoupage.

MEGAN

Tie-Dye.

SHELBY

Broom making.

DYLAN

Dad.

MEGAN

Yeah, she only painted this one piece. Then she quit.

ETHAN

That's a shame. It's very good. I wonder what inspired her? It's fairly wonderful.

SHELBY

Well Ethan, I'm glad you like it because I'm going to put it over our mantle.

ETHAN

(concerned)
Really?... I think you should
let Megan or Dylan have it.

MEGAN

Wait a minute! I've always
loved that painting!

SHELBY

You didn't even remember it five minutes ago!

MEGAN

Neither did you!!

SHELBY

You just said it was ugly!

MEGAN

Lots of great art is ugly! Why do you get the painting??

SHELBY

You can come visit it. Drop by every two years.

DYLAN

I have just as much right to it!

SHELBY

I'm taking it. Mom promised me I could have it.

MEGAN

What?

DYLAN

She promised ME I could have it.

MEGAN

Wait a minute. She told me the same thing.

SHELBY

Well, I'm the oldest and I said it first. I called it.

MEGAN

You can't "call it", we're not in fourth grade.

DYLAN

I want to hang it in the bathroom, when I live here by myself!!

Dylan gets up and goes over to the painting. He looks on the back and sees an envelope. He opens it and reads it to himself.

MEGAN

I'm sorry, but she had a discussion with me about it. She told me you might say, she told you, you could have it, but that I shouldn't believe you, no matter how convincing you were.

ETHAN

It sounds like she really wanted you three to fight over it. What kind of person would enjoy watching people fight over a painting?

Awkward pause.

ETHAN

So who's gonna get it?

MEGAN, SHELBY AND DYLAN

Me!

Shelby turns to Dylan as he places the piece of paper into his pocket.

SHELBY (CONT'D)

What did you just put in your pocket?

DYLAN

Nothing. An old paper from school.

SHELBY

Why are you hiding it?

DYLAN

I got a bad grade.

SHELBY

What was the grade?

DYLAN

What?

SHELBY

What class was it?

Dylan does not speak.

SHELBY (CONT'D)

That's not a school paper. What is it?

DYLAN

I'm not telling.

MEGAN

Dylan, what is it? What did you find?

DYLAN

It's nothing.

SHELBY

Dylan Matumba Holmes! Give me that piece of paper!

She and Megan run over to Dylan and try to grab the paper from his pocket. Shelby gets it from him.

ETHAN

What is it?

SHELBY

It's a note from our mother.

MEGAN

Really? What does it say?

SHELBY

(reading)

Let's see...."Howdy folks. If you're reading this, there's a pretty good chance I'm dead.L .O. L .

ETHAN

Your mother wrote L.O.L?

Shelby shows him the paper.

SHELBY

(reading carefully)

"Miss me yet? Ha Ha Ha. I know this painting held a special place in your hearts. I wish each of you could have it. But you can't. Smiley face. It was a difficult decision, but I have decided that I would like this painting to always be with my favorite. Ha Ha Ha. B. T. W, my favorite dessert is vanilla pudding. L. M. A. O.....J.K. it's butterscotch. O.M.G. I can't believe I'm dead. O.K. kids, be good. T.T.F.N. ...Mom... F. Y. I. I'm drunk A.F.

A beat.

SHELBY

She must have wrote this when she was learning about "texting". .. Well, there you have it, it's pretty clear that she wanted me to have the painting.

MEGAN

Why do you assume she was talking about you?

SHELBY

Because I'm the one who came over here every day for five years, gave her sponge baths, emptied her bed pans, and was a generally all round model daughter.

MEGAN

She and I were always much closer, we shared similar interests.

SHELBY

Like alcoholism.

MEGAN

I'm not an alcoholic.

SHELBY

(making air quotes)

I'm sorry, "wine aficionado".

MEGAN

I hate when you "air quote"

ETHAN

It's a very interesting thing your mother has done. She's created quite a hullabaloo.

MEGAN

I don't know... did she really have a favorite? Don't you think parents love their kids equally?

ETHAN

(inflaming the situation)

A lot of studies have shown that most parents actually DO have a favorite child even though they'll never admit it...

A beat.

SHELBY

And that's me.

MEGAN

(to Shelby)

There's three of us. Why are you the favorite?

SHELBY

Dylan is adopted, so it can't be him. And it's certainly not you.

DYLAN

I could be the favorite!

ETHAN

Actually, adopted children can sometimes be a "favorite" because although they are genetically different, they were "chosen"

SHELBY

Whatever. If we're not counting adopted babies, I'm the oldest, so I should have it.

MEGAN

Oldest doesn't mean favorite, Shelby. They would have stopped having children if they were happy with you.

SHELBY

We're Catholic. They couldn't just "stop". They had to have you whether they liked it or not.

MEGAN

So, you want the house AND the painting.

SHELBY

Yes. Yes, I do.

MEGAN

Why do you get everything??

SHELBY

I'm not getting everything. You got the blender.

MEGAN

I already own a blender! If you're getting the painting then I'm getting all of her jewelry!

SHELBY

Oh no, you're not!

A beat. They look at each other and then they both make a break for the door, and run inside to get the jewelry.

ETHAN

(shaking his head)

Sisters, right?

DYLAN

How much longer do you think this is going to take?

ETHAN

So...Dylan...about this talking to things... thing you've started...

DYLAN

What about it?

ETHAN

So... You ARE aware those objects can't have a conversation with you... right?

No answer.

ETHAN

See, what I think is, this chatting with inanimate objects is a coping mechanism so you won't have to deal with your sisters. I've seen this sort of thing before.

DYLAN

You saw someone talking to an egg roll?

ETHAN

Ah ha! So you DO know the egg roll can't hear you?... Or ...don't you?

DYLAN

You decide.

ETHAN

Remember Dylan, you have to stand up for yourself. Don't let them bully you.

DYLAN

I know.

ETHAN

Did you tell them that you wanted the house?

DYLAN

Yes.

ETHAN

Well, stick to your guns. Don't let them push you around. You need a place to live. You can't live in my basement forever.

DYLAN

It's a really big house.

ETHAN

(explaining as if to a child)

You can take the guest house, fix this place up, you're really good at that stuff. Then you could rent the rest of it to a nice family. I'll bet you could make enough money that you wouldn't even have to go back to work.

DYLAN

Really?

ETHAN

I think so. Don't listen to them. You should have this house. You need it the most.

DYLAN

It's hard to get a job.

ETHAN

Because of what happened.

DYLAN

Right.

ETHAN

It's great that we're friends and can keep each others secrets... Bro code. Right?

Ethan awkwardly attempts a "pound".
They fail.

DYLAN

Right.

Megan and Shelby come back into the garage wearing necklaces, dangly earrings, and tiaras. Ethan is startled.

ETHAN

(startled)

You found the jewelry!!!!

SHELBY

This one just started grabbing whatever she could get her grubby little paws on.

MEGAN

You started it!

SHELBY

You got way more than me. How are you so fast!?! You're like a little demented badger.

ETHAN

Why don't you split it evenly?

They think about it.

SHELBY

(sarcastic)

Like she's gonna be reasonable.

MEGAN

(she's the "bigger person")

I'm willing to compromise...You can have her engagement ring if I can have her pearls.

SHELBY

Fine.

They trade the ring for the pearls.

SHELBY

I'll trade you this bracelet for those earrings.

MEGAN

Fine. But I want you to throw in that locket.

SHELBY

No way!

MEGAN

Okay, how about that gold choker?

They exchange the earrings for the bracelet and the choker.

SHELBY

Fine. And I want her rosary beads.

MEGAN

No.

SHELBY
You're not even religious!

MEGAN
But I'm spiritual!

SHELBY
Spiritual! What does that even mean? You want all of the benefits, without any of the rules. I want the rosary beads!

MEGAN
Then give me that brooch!

SHELBY
Fine!!!!

MEGAN
Fine!!!!

Shelby wings the brooch at Megan.
Megan wings the rosary beads at
Shelby's face.

ETHAN
There, now that wasn't so bad was it??

SHELBY
I still feel like I'm getting ripped off.

MEGAN
Dylan, here, would you like to have this ring?

She "presents" Dylan with a ring
and he puts it on.

SHELBY
Don't suck up to him! (To Dylan) Have this tiara, you always liked sparkly things.

She gives Dylan the tiara and he
puts it on. Meanwhile, Ethan finds
a very large trunk.

ETHAN
There's a really big trunk over here. Does anyone know where the key is?

MEGAN
In the key bag.

Ethan looks through the key bag
holding up various keys.

ETHAN

I wonder how you'll know who "the favorite" actually is. It
was never discussed? Or implied?

Ethan is trying several keys on the
trunk. He finds one that will work.

MEGAN

Can we just stop arguing about who Mom liked best? This was
supposed to be fun.

SHELBY

Everything is about fun with you isn't it? You know damn well
she didn't really like any of us. (To Ethan) Did you find the
key? What's in the trunk?

Ethan has opened the trunk and
looks inside. He stares at what's
inside without reaction.

SHELBY (CONT'D)

Ethan. What's in the trunk?!...Ethan!

ETHAN

Huh. What?... Uh, yes.

SHELBY

What's in there? Can we sell it? Or should we keep it?

Ethan is quiet.

SHELBY (CONT'D)

What's the matter with you?

ETHAN

There is something rather interesting that you should see.

She walks over to the trunk and
looks inside. She jumps back.

SHELBY (CONT'D)

What the fuck!?!

MEGAN

What?

Megan goes over to the trunk and looks inside.

MEGAN (CONT'D)

No.

Dylan walks over to the trunk and looks inside.

SHELBY

That's not real.

DYLAN

That's not something you see everyday.

Ethan reaches down.

SHELBY (CONT'D)

Don't touch it!

ETHAN

I just want to see if it's real.

SHELBY

It looks real, but it can't be.

MEGAN

No... No, no, no. Just no.

Ethan takes the attitude of a professional scientist.

ETHAN

Does anybody have some work gloves?

DYLAN

Probably in one of these boxes. Not sure which one.

ETHAN

Hand me that towel please.

Dylan hands him a small towel.

SHELBY

Careful.

MEGAN

No. This is not happening. No. No. No.

Ethan delicately pulls a human skull out of the trunk.

MEGAN (CONT'D)

(blood curdling scream)

Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhh!

Megan screams, Ethan fumbles the skull and it skids across the garage floor. They all stop and stare at it.

Ethan takes the towel and throws it over the skull.

They all stare at the lump under the towel for quite some time.

SHELBY

(coming to a realization)

You never really know your parents until they're dead and you go through their stuff.

ETHAN

(quizzically)

Anatomy class?

SHELBY

What?

ETHAN

(clinically)

Did someone take an anatomy class?

Silence.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

Let's talk this through. Any idea why there'd be a human skull in your mom's garage?

Silence.

ETHAN

No?

DYLAN

You're sure it's real?

ETHAN

Pretty sure.

Ethan picks up a pair of very long BBQ tongs. He gingerly removes the towel. They all stare at the skull. Ethan takes the tongs and tries to pick up the skull with them. It falls.

MEGAN

Ooo. Ooo. Ooo. This is so gross.

Ethan tries again. This time he is able to pick up the skull with the tongs. As he picks it up, it swings by the faces of the others and they jump back.

MEGAN (CONT'D)

Put it down! Put it down!!

Ethan places the skull on the cardboard box with the Chinese food.

SHELBY

Don't put it next to the Chinese food!

ETHAN

What do you propose that I do with it?

Ethan goes to pick up the skull with the tongs again.

MEGAN

No! No, no, no. Just leave it! Don't keep picking it up!

ETHAN

Everyone calm down. There must be some sort of simple, logical reason, correct?

SHELBY

Why?

ETHAN

What?

SHELBY

Why does there have to be a logical reason? We're talking about my parents.

MEGAN

They probably picked it up at a yard sale.

DYLAN

Maybe someone will buy it tomorrow? Is there a market for something like that?

MEGAN

I wonder why they had it?

Shelby sits down on a box and looks at the skull.

SHELBY

Who knows why they would keep a skull? I'll bet lots of people have skulls lying around someplace.

DYLAN

In their closets.

SHELBY

What?

DYLAN

Skeletons in their closets. (He laughs) This one has just come out of the closet. (laughs)

MEGAN

That's not funny Dylan. That's a really serious thing for a lot of people.

ETHAN

Everyone take a breath. It's not unusual for people to find all kinds of crazy things after someone dies. There's probably a very good explanation buried somewhere in all this junk.

Ethan begins to look through other boxes.

ETHAN

Here's a box of old photos... Anything in here that might shed some light on the subject?

SHELBY

These are their travel photos.

MEGAN

Here's Mom and Dad. Look how young they are! What country is that?

SHELBY

It looks like Africa.

MEGAN

Africa is not a country.

SHELBY

(trying to get under Megan's skin)

Sure it is. Africa. The country of Africa.

MEGAN

You're just trying to irritate me. I'm not participating.

SHELBY

(holding up a photo)

This must be from when they went to Kenya as missionaries. They must have visited some local tribe.....(sweetly)Oh, Look at all the little black children lined up greeting them!It's like a little African Sound of Music.

MEGAN

Awwwww! They're so cute!!! It almost makes me want one!

SHELBY

Hey, maybe that's it! Maybe the skull came from Africa. Like a little tchotchke.

MEGAN

A souvenir?

SHELBY

Sure why not? They went a lot of places and picked up a lot of weird stuff. Maybe she picked it up at some archaeological dig.

Dylan picks up the skull, holds it out and has a conversation with it.

DYLAN

(Cheerfully to the skull)

I wonder if I would have made a good archaeologist?

I wonder what I'd do if I was digging around and found someone just like you...?

He listens as the skull supposedly
"speaks back to him"

DYLAN

(getting "an answer" from the
skull)

Uh huh...yeah...uh huh...Yeah, you're right. I'd probably just bury you again and not tell anyone about it. I guess I'd make a terrible archaeologist.

ETHAN

Dylan....talk to your sisters, not the skeleton.

Dylan glares at Ethan holding out
the skull.

DYLAN

(angry)

We can't hear you!

ETHAN

(questioning clinically)

Do you really think your mother would steal a skull and try to smuggle something like that out of a foreign country just because she wanted it? You could spend a lot of time in a jail for something like that.

SHELBY

If she saw something in Africa she really wanted, she would just take it. You said it, she was a collector.

MEGAN

And Dad enabled her. He would have helped. He wouldn't have been happy about it, but he would have helped her.

DYLAN

(cheerfully)

Sometimes I have nightmares about Africa! I'm trapped in a crate with a bunch of bananas!

Shelby pulls out what looks like a
brown cardboard cylinder. She holds
it up with excitement.

SHELBY

Speaking of bananas! Look at this! Remember that Halloween I went as a pirate and I tried to make a peg leg out of paper mache. So hilarious.

MEGAN

Don't make fun of people with physical challenges. It makes them feel bad that they don't have any legs.

SHELBY

I'm so sorry. I apologize if "disabled" pirates make you uncomfortable, Megan.

MEGAN

Don't say disabled!

SHELBY

(calmer)

Excuse me, handicapped.

MEGAN

No!

SHELBY

Then what?

Megan thinks about what the answer might be.

MEGAN

These days you're supposed to just say..... Handy.

SHELBY

What?!

MEGAN

You know, like, "Look at that guy, isn't he handy?"

SHELBY

You know what Megan? I want to watch you walk up to some guy in a wheel chair and say "Aren't you handy". I want to see that.

MEGAN

(shrugging her off)

Go find me someone without a leg, and I'll be happy to do it.

Shelby pulls out a Girl Scout uniform.

SHELBY

Oh, look, here's my old Girl Scout uniform ...*Dylan's* favorite Halloween costume.... I can't believe Dad let you wear this, Dylan.

MEGAN

I think he always looked very pretty.

DYLAN

(to the skull)

I wasn't always a Girl Scout. One year I was a vampire, and one year I was Cheryl Tiegs, and then I went as a linen closet with that coat hanger around my neck. Hard to remember them all. But I wasn't always A Girl Scout. I'm pretty sure of that.

ETHAN

(In disbelief, to Shelby)

You were a Girl Scout?!?

SHELBY

Yeah, and I hated it.

ETHAN

Why did you hate it?

SHELBY

I just have bad memories of it. The whole girl scout cookie thing.

MEGAN

Not the God damn cookie story again.

SHELBY

Don't swear!

ETHAN

What cookie story?

MEGAN

(sarcastic disbelief)

She never told you the cookie story? Really?

Shelby tells her story to Ethan. He finds it fascinating.

SHELBY

(to Ethan)

Okay, I don't like to talk about it, but when I was a Girl Scout, my troop had a contest to see which troop could sell the most girl scout cookies. The winning troop was going to get a trip to Aruba. I knew I couldn't rely on the rest of the lazy girls in my troop, and that if our troop was going to win the trip to Aruba it would be solely up to me. So I worked my ass off selling cookies. I went from door to door practically begging people to buy them. And it worked. I sold an awful lot of cookies. I sold ten boxes to Gary Miller. I had to show him my underpants, but he bought ten boxes of cookies. I knew I had sold more than any of the other girls, and I was certain I was on my way to Aruba. I put all the money into my Barbie Dream House under Barbie's bed. Then one day I was adding to the stash, and the money was gone. All of it. Just gone. I just sat there and cried and cried. Mom came in and asked me what was the matter, and I told her that someone had stolen the money out from underneath Barbie's bed. And she told me she had just seen Barbie and Ken leaving the house, and they told her they had taken all the money and were going to Aruba in Barbie's Country Camper. Well, the Country Camper was gone, and so I just thought, "That bitch took off with my money!" And if she ever showed up again I was going to rip her arms off. So I waited everyday for her to come back from vacation but she didn't come back. I looked all over the house for her, and then I found it.

DYLAN

Barbie came back?!

SHELBY

No she didn't come back! I found the envelope of money in Mom's underwear drawer next to a pet rock and a bottle of Jean Nate Body Splash. I never said anything about it, but every time I see a girl scout cookie or a Barbie my blood pressure goes through the roof. And of course the cookie sales from the other girls sucked, because they just wanted everything done for them, and they refused to work hard to make that trip happen. So I never got to Aruba. Because of lazy Girl Scouts. And because of Mom.

MEGAN

After twenty five years you should probably let that go.

ETHAN

I wonder if that's why you always lock money up in little boxes and hide them all over our house?

DYLAN

I wanted to be in Scouts but Mom said the scoutmaster wouldn't let me in because I was too tall.

MEGAN

(it was because he was
African American)

Uh...that's right. You were way too... tall.

SHELBY

Yeah. Right...This town doesn't have a lot of "tall" people.

DYLAN

I'm really not that tall.

Megan looks through a photo album.

MEGAN

(looking in the album)

Look at this photo...Who's that kid? I don't recognize him at all.

SHELBY

I think his name was Brian. Brian Paterson maybe? Mom said he lived across the street from them, back on the farm in Iowa before they moved here.

MEGAN

Mom sure took a lot of pictures of random kids.

SHELBY

Before she adopted Dylan she took tons of pictures of all the kids in the neighborhood.

MEGAN

Because she thought she couldn't have any of her own.

SHELBY

Yeah, probably.

ETHAN

Taking pictures of strangers kids? That's creepy. Could mean a lot of different things. Most of them not good.

SHELBY

She was a creepy lady.

Megan stops. She looks at the
painting.

MEGAN

That painting is staring at us.

SHELBY

What?

MEGAN

Look at it. I feel like it's listening to us.

Shelby looks at the painting. It
is, indeed staring at them.

SHELBY

(unsure)

It's not staring...It's just...just a dumb painting.

MEGAN

I've always felt that painting was accusing me of something
I'd done wrong.

DYLAN

Sometimes she'd put it into my bed at night and make me sleep
with it.

MEGAN

(studying the painting)

All the blood, and the look on his face.

DYLAN

He's screaming. I always thought he was screaming at me.

ETHAN

Why on earth would any of you want this? It's obviously
upsetting you.

SHELBY

I want it because she told me I could have it.

MEGAN

Yeah. That's why.

DYLAN

I'm putting that painting up in the living room when I live
in this house to remind me of her. So Rad.

Ethan opens another box.

ETHAN

Hey, there are dozens and dozens of wrenches in here. Is that
weird?

SHELBY

Fenderson Brothers must have given them to her as gifts.

ETHAN

Who are they?

SHELBY

They owned an auto shop that used to be down on Atwood Road.

ETHAN

I've never seen so many wrenches. Why did they give them to her? A free wrench with every tune up or something?

MEGAN

I'm sure she stole them.

SHELBY

She was sort of friends with Peter Fenderson. Look, here's a picture of them, with the Chrysler. He must have just fixed it. I think he gave her some really big discounts.

DYLAN

(looking at the photo)

He's got a really cool cap. I had one of those Fenderson hats that Mom got me, so rad, but I lost it. He and Mom were such good friends.

MEGAN

(knowingly)

Until they weren't anymore.

ETHAN

Interesting.

He writes down a note about that.

SHELBY

She used to spend a lot of time over there getting her car worked on. And then one day she didn't. I think Mr. Fenderson moved away. I don't know for sure.

DYLAN

Her car was in the shop an awful lot.

ETHAN

What do you think was going on there?

SHELBY

Ethan are you trying to start a fight??

ETHAN

(defensive)

No, no. Why would I want to do that?

Megan changes the subject and looks wistfully around the garage.

MEGAN

It's all a little sad isn't it?

SHELBY

What's sad?

MEGAN

This. It's like people's whole lives come down to boxes of junk in a garage.

Megan pulls a pair of Pom-Poms out of a box.

MEGAN (CONT'D)

Oh my gosh! Look at these! I thought they had been thrown away.

ETHAN

You were a cheerleader?

SHELBY

(rolling her eyes)

You mean you couldn't guess?

MEGAN

(smiling)

You were always just a "little bit" jealous of me because I got more attention.

She waves the pom-pom right in Shelby's face. Shelby bats her hand away.

SHELBY

I was never jealous of you. Why would I be?

MEGAN

No one ever invited you to dances. You went to your prom with Dylan.

SHELBY

Dylan is an excellent dancer!

MEGAN

You never, ever had a boyfriend. I had lots of them!

SHELBY

Well, you're right about that. The guys sure loved you.

MEGAN

I had guy and girl friends.

SHELBY

I think you only really had guy friends. And I'm not sure you could really call those guys "friends". And the girls didn't like you. They used to talk about you behind your back.

MEGAN

What did they say?

SHELBY

You know very well what they said.

MEGAN

Do I?

ETHAN

You went to your prom with Dylan?

SHELBY

Forget it. That was twenty five years ago. I'm sorry I brought it up.

MEGAN

Those things people said about me were not true! Not true at all! You believed all of that stuff about me?

SHELBY

There were a lot of details that were pretty damned detailed.

Ethan seems concerned with the turn
the conversation has taken.

ETHAN

We should probably get back to the yard sale...And that skull.

MEGAN

It was only one guy and only for one second. I tried it because he asked me to, and I really liked him. But it was only for one second. All kids are experimenting sexually at that age.

SHELBY

Not me.

MEGAN

You never once gave a guy a blow job in High School? Never?

Ethan pulls out a dusty jack-in-the-box.

ETHAN

(flatly)

Look. A jack-in-the-box.

Ethan winds the jack in the box.
Music plays and it pops out,
"boing".

MEGAN

I know what people were saying, but it wasn't true. Do you want to know what really happened?

SHELBY

(over it)

Justine Mackenzie.

MEGAN

You're God damn right Justine Mackenzie.

ETHAN

Who's Justine Mackenzie?

SHELBY

Somebody go make popcorn, we're going to be here awhile.

MEGAN

(to Ethan)

We were in drama class together. She was usually my scene partner and I really liked her a lot. The drama teacher, Mr. Weiser, was like the cool hip teacher and he called everyone "dude", and we were definitely his favorites. Justine was very talented. She always knew where to stand and what her motivation was. And I could cry on command. We were so good we barely even had to rehearse. We were best friends. That is until our senior class production of Glengarry Glen Ross.

Shelby mouths the words "Glengarry
Glen Ross" with Megan.

ETHAN

Oh, were you in it?

MEGAN

I'm getting to that. Justine and I both auditioned for the play. The play is all guys, but there weren't enough guys in drama club, so our plan was she would play Ricky Roma and I would play Shelly Levene.

Ethan looks blankly.

MEGAN

It's not important what the parts are. But they're the stars. Anyhow the cast list goes up on Monday morning, and we all run in to see what parts we got. And Justine and I are looking at the list, and I see her name there... Ricky Roma - Justine Mackenzie. But next to Shelly Levene was not Megan Holmes. It was Terrence Millman. The only guy in drama club, and he sucked. Like, he really sucked. He could barely speak. Something was wrong with his legs. He was practically a cripple. AND he was ugly with bad skin. And his breath smelled like cat pee. Anyway I look down the list and there is my name next to "police detective" POLICE DETECTIVE?? What the fuck?? He's only in act two! So I think, "What the fuck is going on? Why the fuck is Terrence Millman the cripple retard getting my part? I'm SO much better than him, so why is Mr. Weiser acting like an asshole and giving my part to an ugly, stupid, Canadian, crippled boy?" Justine just looks over at me with a sad face, she gives me a hug, and says "There are no small parts, only small actors" And I thought, "Fuck that bullshit! There are big parts with lots of lines and there are shitty detective parts who only show up in act two!" So anyhow after school I go to talk to Mr. Weiser to ask him, "What the fuck were you thinking, asshole? Do you want this play to suck or do you want to sell tickets?" So, I go down to his office. And there is Justine on her knees blowing that fuck-face drama teacher surfer wanna-be dickhead. So it turns out, I hear from Karen Loyot, that Justine didn't want me in the play because she wanted to be the star and get all the attention, so she thought it would be a great idea to orally pleasure the director and make sure I only showed up in act two. She fucked me! She stopped me from playing my dream role of Shelly Levene! So, long story short, opening night I put Visine in her diet coke, she got really sick and couldn't go on, and the play was cancelled. Then the next week she told everyone I blew the basketball team. What a bitch.

ETHAN

I don't think you should say "Retarded, crippled boy".

SHELBY

Do you think you're the hero of that story?

MEGAN

Anyhow, I did not blow anyone. Except for Peter Crowley. And only for a second and then I spit it right out. Everyone was so mean to me after that. Fuckin' Justine Mackenzie.

SHELBY

Did you ever think that maybe, just maybe, you weren't the best one for the role? Maybe you weren't as good as you thought? And maybe you weren't going to get the part anyhow? But you've just been blaming Justine Mackenzie all these years? Because I don't remember you practicing acting or rehearsing scenes ever.

MEGAN

I didn't have to rehearse. I was way better than anyone else. She was such a "See You Next Tuesday". Blowing the whole basketball team?? Please. Who could even handle something like that?? My therapist says it's why I have so many sexual issues now.

SHELBY

Oh God. A Therapist. You are so self-involved that you have to pay someone to tell you you're a good person.

ETHAN

(helpfully)

Therapy is something you guys might want to consider!

MEGAN

You know what the problem is with people like you Shelby? You people only see things as good or bad, right or wrong, black or white, and life is just not like that. Life is a wonderful, vibrant palette of varying and glorious degrees of gray.

Shelby points to the red stripe on
her American Flag hat.

SHELBY

What color is this?

MEGAN
What do you mean?

SHELBY
It's an easy question.

MEGAN
I guess it's red.

SHELBY
Ok. Thank you!!

MEGAN
Or it could be scarlet, crimson...rose. It's really hard to say.

SHELBY
No! It is not hard to say! It's red. Red is red.... Red. White. Blue. See?! Not ruby, seashell, and turquoise!

MEGAN
Well, it's definitely not turquoise.

SHELBY
Okay then.

MEGAN
I'd call it blueberry.

SHELBY
Aaarg!

Dylan picks up a plush chipmunk,
sits it on a box next to the skull
and talks to it, while he looks
through some shoeboxes.

DYLAN
(to the skull and toy)
I wish I had a brother. That would have been nice. Not that I mind having two sisters, but a brother wouldn't talk so much. Boy, these two can talk.

SHELBY
Why do you have to say stupid things like "blueberry"? Right and wrong is what it is, regardless of how I "feel" about it.

MEGAN

You have no empathy, Shelby.

SHELBY

You with your touchy feely "feelings". Dad never had a feeling a day in his life. He turned out perfectly fine.

ETHAN

Everyone has feelings.

MEGAN

Dad disappeared without a trace one day because he "felt like it" We're not even sure he's dead, but we act like it. Life is complicated Shelby! Just look at this garage, it doesn't get more complicated than this!

SHELBY

Yes, life is complicated, decisions can be complicated, but right is right, and wrong is wrong, and the world is not some random chaos where "anything goes"! That's Mom! And she was out of her God damned mind.

MEGAN

You never want to look past the surface of anything. There's a skull staring you in the face and you are ignoring it!

SHELBY

So what? A skull. It's not like our parents murdered someone and there's a whole skeleton lying around. I really just don't think it's that big of a deal.

ETHAN

It seems like something that should at least be looked into.

SHELBY

There's all kinds of crazy stuff in this garage. Are we really surprised to find a human head? Really?

MEGAN

This is not what I was expecting when I drove all the way down here to go to a funeral and help clean out the garage. This is really, really depressing.

Dylan speaks to the skull.

DYLAN

I wonder why I have to deal with this skull. I'm not the one who found it. Oh well, nothing I can do about it.

ETHAN

Actually Dylan, there is something you can do about it. You all should be dealing with this together, as a family. Right ladies?

They ignore Ethan. He returns to sorting through the boxes and bags. Dylan goes over to the trunk, kneels down and places the skull inside. He continues to fuss with it.

MEGAN

What if I pay you for the painting?

SHELBY

It's not for sale. It's priceless. And you're not getting it!

MEGAN

Then I'm getting her elephant collection!

Megan runs inside.

SHELBY

Oh no you're not!

Shelby chases her off.

SHELBY

(running off)

I'll smash them before they get into your greedy little hands.

ETHAN

(to Dylan)

Should I stop them?

DYLAN

I wouldn't.

Ethan goes after them. Dylan is alone. He pulls out a tape measure and starts measuring everything in the garage.

DYLAN

Sweet! Plenty of room for a Bowflex!

He looks in the trunk where the skull was, and fusses with something inside.

Then he pulls out a human femur.
Then he pulls out a human arm bone.
He holds both of them up in
curiosity, and spins them like a
baton and tosses them in the air.

DYLAN

I wonder who's bones these are?! So, so, so ... RAD!!!!

BLACKOUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO: SCENE ONE

Dylan is tossing the bones. He holds them up in curiosity. Then he hears the others offstage.

MEGAN

(off)

You can have all the elephants. I don't care. Just let me have the painting.

SHELBY

(off)

I don't want a stupid elephant collection. There's no way in hell you're getting that painting!

Dylan throws the bones back into the trunk and closes it. Shelby, Megan and Ethan enter the garage. Megan has a pair of hockey skates with her.

ETHAN

Why on earth do you guys want that painting? All it is doing is upsetting you.

MEGAN

(sweetly, with nostalgia)

Dylan, look what I found. Aren't these yours?

DYLAN

Oh, yeah. Those.

ETHAN

You played hockey?

DYLAN

Yeah, not for very long.

MEGAN

Do you want these? Maybe you should have them?

DYLAN

Nah.

MEGAN

Why not?

DYLAN

I never wanted to play hockey. Dad made me.

MEGAN

He did? I don't remember that.

SHELBY

Me either.

ETHAN

Interesting.

Ethan writes down a note in his
pad.

DYLAN

(to Ethan)

Yeah- I had a pair of figure skates that I really liked. And I was pretty good at it too. But one day Dad made me change them to hockey skates and I really didn't want to play hockey. But he said he wanted me to be the first black boy to win some guy named Stanley's cup. It sounded pretty important so I said "okay". I was really terrible at hockey. No one wanted me on their team. Dad convinced one of the teams to let me play. I think he paid them, but I'm not sure. One day we went to the ice rink for a big game, they put the puck down and the guys were hitting it all around like a basket of angry cats! Then all of a sudden it went right between my legs and I reached down to try and grab it! It slipped out of my hands before I could throw it into the goal, so, I kicked the puck as hard as I could with my skate, but it missed the goal and everyone started yelling at me. So I skated over there to fetch it, and all the players were just standing still. No one was moving. Just staring at me. I grabbed the puck, picked it up, and I threw it as far as I could towards the goal watcher person, but it flew into the stand and hit this lady on the head, and she passed out, and the paramedics came and took her away in an ambulance. And everyone was booing me. So I quit.

ETHAN

(concerned)

Had anyone ever explained the rules of hockey to you?

DYLAN

I never skated again after that.

SHELBY

Wait a minute- I do remember Dad coming home one day and saying you killed someone. But I thought he was just being funny.

DYLAN

He told me to never, ever, tell that story because I had embarrassed him so badly.

ETHAN

That's awful. I'm glad you finally feel comfortable enough to talk about it now.

DYLAN

Talk about what?

SHELBY

Tall people are not known for their Hockey skills.

DYLAN

I'm not that tall!!!

MEGAN

She's trying to say you couldn't play hockey because you're African- American. It's very inappropriate Shelby. And not true.

SHELBY

It's not because he was black. He wasn't good at any sports.

MEGAN

Don't say black, they don't like that. Say African-American.

SHELBY

Nobody says that anymore. People say black now.

MEGAN

No, they don't.

SHELBY

That's what they say on the news. "Black man wanted for questioning in gas station robbery"

MEGAN

Aaarg!! Why does the African American man have to be wanted for robbery? Maybe he was wanted because he rescued a kitten.

SHELBY

They don't put stories about kittens on the news.

MEGAN

Just use the right words. They've earned it.

SHELBY

Earned what?

MEGAN

The right to be referred to any way they like.

SHELBY

You are so, SO politically correct. It's actually making me ill.

MEGAN

How do you think they feel after years of slavery and oppression?

SHELBY

Nobody's oppressed. It's not the middle ages!

MEGAN

To African American people it feels like the middle ages every single day of their entire lives!

DYLAN

It really doesn't.

MEGAN

Let's settle this right now. African-American or Black? Dylan, what do you prefer to be called?

DYLAN

What?

MEGAN

What do you want us to call you?

DYLAN

Dylan?

ETHAN

There has been some interesting research that suggests that there is no such thing as race at all. So, you really shouldn't categorize Dylan by race.

SHELBY

(Cutting Ethan off)

It's always about Dylan. Mom was obsessed with him. Which is why he turned out gay.

DYLAN

I'm not gay.

SHELBY

(adamant)

Yes, you are.

DYLAN

No, I'm not. Stop saying that all the time. Why do you think that?

ETHAN

Yeah, why DO you think that?

SHELBY

You never show interest in women, you wanted to be a Girl Scout, and you're obsessed with Val Kilmer.

DYLAN

I just think he's an excellent actor. I'm not gay. Gross.

MEGAN

Don't say gross. It's offensive. In truth, Gay people are actually all very good looking and well groomed.

ETHAN

Not all of them...You've been telling me he's gay since I met you.

SHELBY

We'll see.

MEGAN

You have always treated Dylan differently, don't deny it Shelby!

SHELBY

He is different.

MEGAN

How? How is he different?! Because he doesn't look like us?

SHELBY

You know he's different, because of the... you know...(Shelby uses her hand to mime "talking")

MEGAN

And yet you told him to stop taking his pills!

SHELBY

(turns to Dylan)

Why'd you tell her that Dylan??

MEGAN

He needs to take those! You know what happens when he doesn't.

ETHAN

Shelby, he really shouldn't stop taking medication without consulting his physician.

SHELBY

He doesn't need them. He's not violent anymore.

MEGAN

Because of the prescriptions!

SHELBY

You're not here! You don't know how he behaves. He's perfectly fine now. Those pills make his conversations with stuffed animals and cans of peaches much worse. It's exacerbating the problem Megan!

MEGAN

You're not a doctor! You can't make random medical decisions without consulting his physician! You could be putting his health in serious danger, Shelby. Who knows what damage you're doing to him!

DYLAN

(overlapping the previous)

STOP! STOP! SHUT UP! What is wrong with the two of you? For the last thirty years you've treated me like I have some kind of disease. "Don't say this in front of Dylan", "Dylan won't understand why he's different than us", "Dylan is a great dancer because he's so tall". I'm not sure why you couldn't just treat me like your brother instead of a doll in a box that you could dress up. Why do you think I wanted to be a Girl Scout?

A beat.

SHELBY

The cookies?

DYLAN

No! Because I thought if I acted like you, you might treat me equally. I never wanted or asked to be treated special or different. And every time you did that, it just reminded me that I was different, and that I really just didn't "fit-in".

SHELBY

We always tried to make you feel like you fit in!!

DYLAN

You constantly told me I was adopted!! It's like you wished I wasn't your brother!

MEGAN

You did Shelby. I tried to tell you it was going to scar him for life.

ETHAN

Yeah... He's pretty much scarred for life. Should we start putting stickers on all this stuff?

DYLAN

(turns to Megan)

And you treated me like I had a disease that needed to be monitored every second of every day. And that made all the kids at school think so too.

MEGAN

What?

DYLAN

Every week in gym class when it was time for baseball or dodgeball or whatever, I would crawl off into the bushes or hide behind a rock because I thought I was deformed or something. I wouldn't go near the locker room because I was afraid something was wrong with me and the other kids would laugh.

MEGAN

I didn't want you to get hurt. I always wanted to protect you. The other kids were so mean to you.

DYLAN

Kids are mean. They're the meanest things on the planet. But I had to deal with it myself, not have my little sister running in to save me. You made it so much worse.

ETHAN

Guys, listen...There is a lot to unpack here... I mean psychologically. Maybe we should set this aside for now? Pick it up another time?

MEGAN

Dylan, It's not right to condone racism in children. They need to know that it's unacceptable at a very young age.

DYLAN

They weren't racist!

MEGAN

They were!! Why else would they have treated you so badly?

DYLAN

Because I used to beat the shit out of them and steal their lunch money before school!!

Dylan picks up the skull and speaks to it.

DYLAN

But I'm trying to do better now, aren't I, Yorick?

ETHAN

Kids who are bullies usually feel like they have no control over their lives. That they're of no value, and no one listens to them.

SHELBY

Dylan- put that Skull away. I'm sick of looking at it.

MEGAN

And it might have germs. Go wash your hands.

ETHAN

Ever feel like that Dylan?

Dylan is angry at the turn things have taken.

DYLAN

(angry)

You know, you guys aren't the only one who can find interesting things- take a look at what I found!

Dylan pulls out the leg bone from the trunk and thrusts it into their faces.

DYLAN

Read 'em and weep!

MEGAN

Is that somebody's leg?!

Pause.

SHELBY

Where the heck did that come from?!!!

Dylan sticks the arm bone into
Shelby's face.

MEGAN

Are you kidding me?

ETHAN

Is there a whole skeleton in that trunk?!!!

DYLAN

(proudly)

YEP! They were buried under a bunch of stuff. Each piece is wrapped individually. And there are notes and instructions on how to put it back together.

SHELBY

That's weird.

ETHAN

I wonder if we should take a break? Who wants some vintage Twinkies?

MEGAN

I wonder who it is? Do you think that this is something Mom and Dad were in on together?

SHELBY

I doubt Dad even knew what was going on. She put it here. She was the crazy one.

MEGAN

Really? You think Dad was normal?

SHELBY

Who's to say what's "normal"?

ETHAN

Or even better, who wants ice cream? Should we all go out for ice cream?

MEGAN

There was nothing normal about him.

SHELBY

I don't want to talk about him.

MEGAN

Do you really think he won a contest to be an astronaut and was killed on the Space Shuttle?

SHELBY

It could have happened. Seems reasonable to me.

MEGAN

He was very unhappy. And very ill.

ETHAN

We could use a break. My treat.

SHELBY

How do you know he was unhappy?

MEGAN

Because he lived like a hermit in the basement, and he never came out. He hadn't shaved in months. I left plates of food outside the door. He was a very sick man.

SHELBY

You're exaggerating. That was his man cave. He just wanted to be away from Mom. You just had to make it dramatic like he was in the Bastille and you were bringing him his last meal.

MEGAN

No. He was mentally ill ever since what happened with Mom and Peter Fenderson.

SHELBY

I don't want to talk about that.

MEGAN

It happened. You know it happened.

SHELBY

It was never proven.

MEGAN

Dad knew. He KNEW. He walked in on them.

Shelby gets up, blocking her ears.

SHELBY

Stop. Stop. Now you're making things up. Dad would not just walk out on us and leave us with her. He's dead.

Ethan holds up his car keys.

ETHAN

I'm gonna go... so if anyone wants to come along, feel free. I think we could all use a break.

MEGAN

He told me. One afternoon he went to have his tires rotated, and he walked into Fenderson's and there was Mom and Pete Fenderson in the back of a Yugo going at it. He never got over it.

SHELBY

No. No, no, no!!! It is NOT true. Yugo's are way too small for something like that!

MEGAN

He was miserable Shelby. One night when I was around ten, I went downstairs to bring Dad some dinner. He was sitting in there with a glass of scotch in one hand and his gun in the other. I was terrified. He poured me a glass of whiskey and we toasted to something. Anyhow, he sat me down, and went off on how bad Mom was, and that she wasn't a good person, and he was trying to decide then and there whether to kill himself or kill her, and he wanted my opinion, which way to go.

SHELBY

(sincerely)

And what did you say?

MEGAN

I told him not to kill anybody. Ignore it if you want to. He wasn't killed on the space shuttle. He left us.

SHELBY

(desperate and the first sign
of sadness)

You don't know that! He wouldn't have just taken off and left us with her. He wouldn't do that. He's dead. Maybe she killed him, and that's him in the trunk.

ETHAN

No one wants ice cream? Here's a book of lifesavers. Remember those? Do you think they're still okay to eat?

SHELBY

You're making all of this up because you love drama. You LOVE it! If you want some trouble stirred up, call Megan, because she can create a shit storm in ten seconds flat. You think you're better than me, better than Dylan. Better than anyone you grew up with. And you make things up about continents to piss me off, and tell me I'm saying the wrong thing ALL the time like I'm some stupid hillbilly!!!! And your fucking chopsticks! Fuck you and your fucking chopsticks! Take your God damn, fucking chop sticks and shove them right up your Chicago loving ass!!!

MEGAN

Don't blame me for getting out. Don't you do it!! You had the chance. You had every chance to go to whatever college you wanted and you blew it!! You BLEW it! Someone with an IQ of 142 can go wherever they want. You had the whole world, but you were too afraid. Or too lazy. So don't blame me because a great Friday night for you these days is a movie and Golden Palace!!! Stop acting like you're a stupid, helpless victim. And you fucking know that Africa is a fucking continent, so STOP saying it's a fucking country!!

Shelby walks away and starts
unpacking a box ignoring Megan.

SHELBY

(cheerfully)

I don't think that's right, I'm pretty sure the capital of Africa is Nairobi.

MEGAN

I hate you.

SHELBY

(cheerfully)

Or maybe the Capital of Africa is Kenya? We should google it.

MEGAN

I really, really, hate you.

SHELBY

I don't hate you, I feel sorry for you, poor little thing.

MEGAN

SHUT UP!!

Dylan's chatting with the skull.

DYLAN

I wonder what would have happened if another family had adopted me? All families are probably the same. But maybe that family would have kept their garage a lot cleaner, and then this would be going a lot faster.

Ethan picks up a plush toy and speaks to it.

ETHAN

I wonder what would have happened if I had married someone else? ... I guess it would probably have been pretty boring. Oh well, nothing I can do about it now.

He puts it down confused and embarrassed.

SHELBY

I'm only trying to help you. You just can't grow up can you?

MEGAN

What? What are you talking about? I'm a grown up. I take care of myself.

SHELBY

Just look at the way you're dressed!

MEGAN

What's wrong with the way I dress?

SHELBY

What do you think Ethan? What's wrong with someone who desperately tries to stay young by clinging to the past?

ETHAN

(exhausted)

I don't know. There's probably a word for it. I was thinking I might just go take a nap.

MEGAN

What is wrong with the way I dress???

SHELBY

What's wrong is that you're not a seventeen year old girl. Look at yourself in the mirror sometime. You look ridiculous!

MEGAN

I don't know what you're talking about.

SHELBY

Your hair looks young, but your face is OLD Megan. Old!
You're old! Old! Old!

MEGAN

Well, you're older!!!

SHELBY

Only by a year. And I know I'm old. And I don't mind it,
because I'm not afraid to die!!

MEGAN

Who's dying?!

SHELBY

We're all dying! And we're going to end up in a trunk,
forgotten in an empty corner of a garage. That's just how
life is!!

DYLAN

Please, please, can we stop? Please?!

SHELBY

She started it.

MEGAN

You started it. You started this a long time ago!!!

SHELBY

What are you talking about??

MEGAN

You were not there when I really needed you. You couldn't be
bothered. When David was killed, you did not come to see me.
You did NOT. You sent me a card with your "thoughts and
prayers". Thoughts and prayers. The least you could do.
Literally.

SHELBY

What did you want from me?!

MEGAN

You sent me an EASTER card when my boyfriend was killed!!!

SHELBY

It was a beautiful card!

MEGAN

It had rabbits on it!!

SHELBY

I didn't know you were that close with him!

MEGAN

I was with him for eleven years!

SHELBY

Well, you weren't married!

MEGAN

Why the fuck should that matter?! If this asshole died (motions towards Ethan) I'd show up with at least a fruit basket or SOMETHING!!

SHELBY

I don't want any fucking fruit basket from Chicago!!

MEGAN

Stop talking like that about Chicago!!! You've never even been there! So shut up about it!!!

SHELBY

(mocking)

"In Chicago they have really great museums, and interesting architecture, and there's a park with a giant bean in it, and their pizza is just soooooo delicious!"

MEGAN

IT IS DELICIOUS!!!!!!

SHELBY

I heard it's just a lot of crust.

MEGAN

You're so jealous of me, Shelby, because I left to follow my dreams!!

SHELBY

You work in a BANK!!!!!!

MEGAN

(screaming)

For now I do! Only for now! For now! For now! Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!

SHELBY

(mocking)

"Would you like your change in tens or twenties? Wonderful! Here have a lollipop!"

MEGAN

I don't know how you could say all of these terrible things about me Shelby!

SHELBY

It's not just me that thinks this about you Megan. Ask Dylan!

MEGAN

What about Dylan?

DYLAN

Nothing about Dylan. Nothing!

ETHAN

Yeah, nothing about Dylan!

SHELBY

You weren't here when Dylan really needed you!

MEGAN

Why did Dylan need me?!

ETHAN

We still have an awful lot to go through.

SHELBY

If you bothered to care, you would know that Dylan has been living in my basement for the past two years.

MEGAN

What?!

SHELBY

He got fired from his job, and he couldn't find another one, so he lives with Ethan and I in the basement.

ETHAN

It's not like she's making it sound. It's a finished basement. It's very nice.

DYLAN

I did not LOSE my job! I quit!

SHELBY

What?! Why did you quit?

DYLAN

They didn't appreciate me, so I quit!

MEGAN

(sadly)

Was it because you're African American?

DYLAN

(stammering)

No! It's not because I'm African- black- Americ- You two have me all confused now!

MEGAN

Sit down and take a couple of deep breaths. Everything will be okay. This is what happens when you don't take your pills.

DYLAN

Stop talking to me like that! Both of you! Stop it! Stop it! Stop it!

SHELBY

You quit your job on purpose? You told me you were fired!

DYLAN

I never said that. I said, "I don't work there anymore"

SHELBY

You mean you've been freeloaded in my basement for two years because people didn't "appreciate you"?

DYLAN

Ethan knew. He said it was okay with him. Bro code, right Ethan?

SHELBY

What?!

ETHAN

(nervous, emphatic)

He's your brother. He needed a place to stay. Dylan... you weren't supposed to say anything. I was keeping your secret for you, remember?!

SHELBY

Everyone is lying to me! Why am I surprised?

MEGAN

(directed at Shelby)

Dylan, I had no idea. You can come stay with me in Chicago. Get away from all the bad energy and racism that you're surrounded with here.

DYLAN

I never said anything about racism! YOU keep saying it. Look, I left because I punched some guy in the face. So I was strongly encouraged to resign.

MEGAN

But why did you punch him? Did he say something about your ethnic heritage?

DYLAN

No. I just punched him.

MEGAN

But why?? What did he do?

DYLAN

He complained about me.

MEGAN

About what, Dylan?

DYLAN

He complained about the time before when I punched him...He kept trying to guess my internet password!!! He said he was joking, but it was very annoying!!!!

A beat.

DYLAN

He wasn't a racist if that's what you're wondering. He was annoying. Look, I know there are a lot of assholes out there who have a weird obsession against peoples skin for whatever stupid reason they think they have, but for me, I'm fine. People leave me alone and let me do my thing. Which is more than I can say for you two. I didn't even realize that I was a different color, or that it mattered until I was five or six. Mom always said I was "A different flavor", and that was fine with me.

They all sit in silence for a beat.

MEGAN

What flavor?

DYLAN

Huh?

MEGAN

What flavor did she say you were?

DYLAN

Pistachio.

They all calm down and sit for a
bit.

MEGAN

Can we just have all this stuff hauled away and be done with
it? Please. I'm exhausted. I just want to go home.

SHELBY

(air quotes)

To "Chicago".

MEGAN

Why are you making air quotes? It's a real place. You don't
have to air quote it. Oh my GOD! This is all Mom's fault!
Let's just get rid of all this shit!!

Ethan wants this all over asap.

ETHAN

(agreeing with her)

Yeah, please...lets get rid of all this shit.

Shelby looks up to the ceiling.

SHELBY

F you, you crazy bitch.

They sit for a bit.

SHELBY

(to Megan)

I'm sorry I said you work in a bank.

MEGAN

(sadly)

I do work in a bank.

DYLAN

I don't work at all.

ETHAN

There you go! This feels like a breakthrough! Let's go celebrate someplace that's not here!...No?

They all go back to opening boxes
and sorting through items.

MEGAN

Why don't you go finish school and get your degree, Dylan? You were so great at science. I don't know why you dropped out of college.

ETHAN

If you came to the University, I might be able to get you a family discount.

MEGAN

Why did you just quit like that?

DYLAN

I wasn't really into it.

MEGAN

Not into it?

DYLAN

I wasn't good at it. I wasn't smart enough.

MEGAN

That's not true. You were always talking about how this worked, or how this thing had some velocity squared to the fourth power, or some crazy math thing no one could understand. You are way smarter than me.

SHELBY

That is what they call a "low bar."

Ethan is sorting through a huge
box, pulling out cans, papers,
cardboard, and fast food bags.

DYLAN

I didn't fit in with the other students. So I quit. I'll be fine. I just have to find the right job. The right place.

MEGAN

I don't think you gave it a chance.

DYLAN

(getting angry)

I wasn't good at any of it! So I quit! Stop bugging me about it!!

MEGAN

I just think that you didn't work hard enough.

SHELBY

Finally, Megan and I agree on something.

DYLAN

(To Megan, very angry)

What about you!!!? You didn't move to Chicago to work in a bank!! What happened to following your dream!?!

MEGAN

I'm still following it! I'm not giving up! It's just, as much as I like Chicago, a lot of people there can be real assholes. But I'm keeping at it. It's just hard!

DYLAN

What's stopping you?!!

Megan starts to tear up.

MEGAN

(near tears)

It's not like I haven't tried. But every time I get close, someone else gets the job, because they're younger, or have more experience. Or they're already best friends, or dating the boss. Nepotism. Hard to compete with someone who is sleeping with the boss. I can't compete with that.

SHELBY

It's always everybody else. You're never responsible. Always somebody else's fault.

MEGAN

At least I'm trying! And I've been so close to getting the job, believe me, but then someone always fucks me. That's why I want to work for myself. I'm very good at what I do.

DYLAN

What does a Sommelier do exactly?

Megan immediately stops crying.

MEGAN

I taste wine and tell people whether it's good or not.

DYLAN

That's it? That's a job?

MEGAN

Yes. It's actually very difficult and takes a lot of skill. You have to know the difference between a Merlot and a Chardonnay. Is a Pinot Noir supposed to be sweet? Why do some people drink Pink Zinfandel? Things like that.

Ethan is finally genuinely interested in a topic.

ETHAN

(genuinely curious)

Where did you study viticulture?

MEGAN

What?

ETHAN

I'm really interested in wine, grapes! I've thought about taking some classes in it. It's so fascinating!

MEGAN

There's classes in it?

Ethan holds up a fast food bag that he's taken from a box.

ETHAN

This is literally a box of garbage. Someone filled a box with garbage, sealed it with packing tape, and put it into the garage.

DYLAN

What about you Ethan? We really don't know anything about you? What was your family like growing up?

ETHAN

All families have their quirks. Mine was no exception.

DYLAN

What did they do that's weird?

ETHAN

I'm not like you three. I don't like to talk about it much. It brings up a lot of emotions and bad memories.

SHELBY

Ethan doesn't talk about his family. Ever. He only met Mom twice... But I've never met any of his family. None of them. He's never even introduced me.

ETHAN

They're all crazy. They live in New Hampshire. You know how that is.

MEGAN

We've been pouring our souls out. How about you? Everyone has some childhood trauma. Maybe it will help to not bottle it up, and just talk about it.

ETHAN

Okay...Um ... well. I have a brother...

MEGAN

Go on...

ETHAN

George...Anyhow when we were ten my Dad agreed to help the two of us build a treehouse. But the deal was we'd have to share it. So Dad got all the lumber, and the paint, and nails and what have you. And we started to build it together. And it was great. We wrote out plans for it, did drawings of it. We scouted the woods behind the house to find the perfect tree. Then Dad taught us how to use power tools. I'd hold the board and George would cut. Then things started to go wrong. There started to be tension between us. I could tell. He was having second thoughts... About sharing. Anyhow, one afternoon, I'll never forget it, we were both using this power drill and I could tell he was getting really, really jealous. And as I was holding the wood he took the drill, and was drilling very, very close to my hand. Like, way too close if you get what I mean. Anyhow, we built the fort. It was so cool and awesome. I couldn't believe it. But once it was done, and we had all these great toys and games in there he wouldn't let me in it.

A long silence.

MEGAN

Why not?

ETHAN

I don't know. I never asked him.

DYLAN

He wouldn't let you in it?

ETHAN

Nope. I never saw the inside. Till almost a month later. Then he finally let me in it. He was bored with it.

Long pause.

SHELBY

That's your traumatic story? A tree fort that you couldn't get in for three weeks?

DYLAN

We had a tree fort too. Shelby and I used to show each other our junk.

ETHAN

What kind of junk?

DYLAN

You know how little kids are. We'd pull down our pants and tease each other. That's how I got my first boner.

There is silence.

ETHAN

What?!?! How old were you!?!

DYLAN

I don't remember. Very little. Like thirteen?

ETHAN

Thirteen?!!

MEGAN

What!?!

SHELBY

(overlapping the above)
Dylan, I don't know why you had to tell that story. We said we would never tell that story. And here you are telling that story. I'm not sure why. But anyhow, it's not how it sounds.

MEGAN

Now this all makes sense! The infamous Prom! I heard what people said, but I wouldn't believe them!

ETHAN

Have you just tried to convince yourself he's gay because he's not attracted to you?

SHELBY

What?? I'm not attracted to black guys.

MEGAN

Racist!!!

SHELBY

I'm just not attracted to black guys. Or Asians... It's just a preference.

MEGAN

This is so disgusting!! It's repulsive. I can't even believe it. You're brother and sister!

SHELBY

Not really we aren't. He's adopted!

MEGAN

If one day after school, Jan Brady fucked Bobby, people would have been very upset with that episode! It's so, so, wrong!

Megan screams in Shelby and Dylan's faces.

MEGAN

Sex with a relative. It's so repulsive and gross!

ETHAN

Jan would fuck Greg, or maybe Peter, but never Bobby.

DYLAN

(Screaming)

YOU SHOULD TALK MEGAN!! IF I WERE YOU I WOULD'NT SAY ANYTHING ABOUT ME AND SHELBY !!! SO SHUT UP ABOUT IT!!!

Dylan starts violently punching holes into all of the boxes.

MEGAN

Stop punching things! You're going to break something!

DYLAN

(Angry)

Shelby! Megan has something she wants to tell you. Right Megan!??

ETHAN

(jumping in)
Bro code, Dylan.

MEGAN

What are you talking about?

DYLAN

You know!!

MEGAN

What?

ETHAN

Bro code!

DYLAN

The Fourth of July thing.

SHELBY

What are you talking about?

Ethan panics!

ETHAN

Why don't we all take naps?
Doesn't anyone else think a
nap would be great right
about now?

MEGAN

It was nothing. Nothing!
Dylan you're so silly, and
tired. Okay, you were kids.
You're not related so I guess
it's not a big deal.

SHELBY

Huh?

DYLAN

Megan, It made me really uncomfortable not to tell Shelby
about it all these years. I don't think you should have asked
me to hide something like that. And now it's time for you to
tell her, or I will!

MEGAN

Why are you doing this Dylan?
Are you doing this because I
tried to protect you as a
child?

SHELBY

What is it time to tell me??

ETHAN

Okay! Okay! Everyone is
getting excited and saying
things they don't mean.

DYLAN

Things are never going to be
right in this family until
you come clean to Shelby
about it.

SHELBY
Come clean about what? What
is this??

MEGAN
Is this about the creepy
painting?? You can have the
damn thing as far as I'm
concerned.

ETHAN
(panicking)
Bro code! Bro code! Dylan,
Bro code! Bro code!

SHELBY
What happened "all these
years ago"?

DYLAN
Well not THAT long ago. The summer the year before last.

SHELBY
Dylan, What the Franklin Delaware Roosevelt are you talking
about?

MEGAN
Okay, might as well get it all out in the open. It's not a
big deal. It was right after David was killed, and we were
all getting together for the Fourth at the lake. Remember
that? So nice. Anyhow, Ethan had, had a couple of beers, and
I had just finished a bottle of a nice Cabernet. It meant
nothing. Nothing. It was over in two seconds. Like two nano
seconds. The firework display didn't even finish and he was
done.

SHELBY
(in shock)
What? Ethan.....is this true?! Think very carefully
before you answer.

ETHAN
No. Of course not. Not at all.

MEGAN
Shelby it was nothing. A casual blow job is all. And it was
over in less than a minute. Not a big deal. Ethan was just
helping me through a very difficult time.

SHELBY
With his dick?!!!

ETHAN
Dylan! Secrets!!! You promised! We talked about this! Why did
you have to say anything?!

SHELBY

Apparently Megan can never, ever keep her mouth shut. I'll just BET you blew that entire basketball team!! I knew you did! I knew it!! And what the FUCK Ethan??

Shelby picks up a wrench and flings it at Ethan's head.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

Whoa! Stop! Stop! Stop throwing wrenches at me! This is not that big of a deal. Families. You know how it is, stuff like this happens all the time!

Shelby throws another wrench at Ethan.

MEGAN

Those are expensive wrenches! Stop throwing them!

ETHAN

Stop! You could really hurt someone!

Shelby throws another wrench towards Megan.

MEGAN (CONT'D)

You're acting like a crazy person!!!

SHELBY

Don't you say it.

MEGAN

You're a crazy person!! Batshit crazy!

Megan starts throwing the plush toys at Shelby, but they just gently bounce off of her.

MEGAN

Hmmmmmmmm....Who do you remind me of?

SHELBY

Don't-

MEGAN

You're. Just. Like. Who....? Who am I thinking of? OH! ...Mom.

Shelby flies into a rage and tackles Megan pinning her to the ground.

MEGAN (CONT'D)

Aaaarg! Get off of me! Get off of me!

Ethan goes to separate them. Dylan stops him.

DYLAN

No! Let them go! It's awesome!

Shelby grabs a sweater and shoves it into Megan's mouth. Ethan and Dylan try to pull her off. They get Shelby off, Megan leaps up and throws some children's sand box toy at Shelby, she misses and hits Dylan in the head. Shelby throws a jewelry box at Ethan's head. It's chaos with everyone throwing knick knacks, clothes, souvenirs, magazines and everything else around the garage. Shelby and Megan start to wrestle again, all over the garage. Boxes topple, bags fall, as they slam each other around the room with the guys trying to pull them apart. As they fight they speak:

SHELBY

You blew my husband on the Fourth of July!

MEGAN

Does the holiday really matter!?

ETHAN

We had been drinking, it was nothing!

MEGAN

(furious)

I only did it because he said that you had never done it to him!! I can't believe you never blew your own husband, but yet you thought it was perfectly okay to have sex with our brother!

SHELBY

We didn't have sex! We barely touched each other!

MEGAN

Barely??? HA!! Then you DID touch each other!! See! You're both gross!!

ETHAN

Are you and Dylan still-?

SHELBY

What? No!! He's my brother. It wasn't sexual at all.

DYLAN

Well...I did get that boner.

SHELBY

Oh, Christ on a bike. Dylan doesn't even like girls.

DYLAN

(furious)

STOP SAYING THAT!!! Stop it!! It's a lie! You are a liar Shelby!!

SHELBY

Really Dylan?? Really!? I've never seen you with a woman ever. How many women have you been with? Come on. Stop lying to yourself. Be honest for once. No one is judging you. How many?!!

DYLAN

Well...I want to say "three hundred and thirty seven".

Shelby violently shoves Dylan into
a pile of boxes.

DYLAN

...But that depends on what we're counting as actual "sex"

ETHAN

(amazed)

Three Hundred and Thirty Seven??

MEGAN

You two are unbelievable! What would our parents think?! My God! I am so glad that they're dead!

SHELBY

At least my boyfriend never crashed his car into a tree because he couldn't stand to be living on the same planet as me!!

MEGAN

(screaming!)

It was an ACCIDENT!!!

SHELBY

Not what I heard.

MEGAN

(Megan slows down and very pointedly speaks to Dylan)

...Shelby lost a big promotion at work, because several complaints had been filed against her, and she was close to losing her job for inappropriate behavior and remarks regarding people of color. I was never going to bring it up, but now...

SHELBY

That was all made UP! That woman was out to get me because I wouldn't let her get away with shit. She made it all up!!!! She was lazy, and not doing her job.

MEGAN

And she was black, I mean African American.

DYLAN

Colored. Negro. Whatever.

SHELBY

You weren't there, and you don't know.

MEGAN

You're right. I wasn't there.

SHELBY

You blew my husband on the Fourth of July!

MEGAN

(screaming at the top of her lungs)

Stop saying the Fourth of July!!!! It doesn't matter what day it was! It was two seconds. I had almost completely forgotten about it! It meant nothing, when it was over I had some potato salad and corn on the cob and never thought of it again!!!!

SHELBY

Megan, I don't know why you even came down here for this!! You're not interested in any of this stuff. You don't care about this family, and you never have. So why don't you take that ugly painting with you, because it will be the last thing you'll get from me. So now, good luck, you can go back to Chicago and die all by yourself next to Lake Superior.

MEGAN

You fucking know it's Lake Michigan!!!

SHELBY

Dylan may be adopted, but you've never EVER really been a part of this family!!!

DYLAN

I AM NOT THE ONE WHO'S ADOPTED! SHUT UP ALL OF YOU!!! SHUT UP! SHUT UP! SHUT UP!

Dylan pulls a slip of paper from his pocket.

DYLAN

Here. Look.

SHELBY

What is it? Give it to me.

She takes the piece of paper from Dylan. She reads it.

SHELBY

What is this? Where did you find this?

DYLAN

It was in a shoe box over there with a bunch of pictures. I found it this morning.

Megan goes to the box and takes out a stack of pictures.

MEGAN

Here. Look at all these pictures of Mom and Pete Fenderson. I told you, it was true. You never believe me. (Looking at a picture) Who's baby are they holding?

Shelby wearily sits on one of the boxes.

SHELBY

Fuck it.

Shelby hands the piece of paper to Megan.

MEGAN

Who's Shelby Fenderson?

No one speaks.

MEGAN

Jesus. Really? I mean...really? Come on.

Ethan takes the paper and reads it.

ETHAN

This is your birth certificate? Your mother and the mechanic?

DYLAN

I don't even have a birth certificate. Well, not like most people anyway. Mom said my parents moved here from Africa, and lost it before they died at Three Mile Island. But that was just another lie. I'm not even adopted, not really.

Dylan pulls a piece of paper from his pocket and hands it to Shelby and Megan.

ETHAN

What is this Dylan?

DYLAN

I found this with Shelby's birth certificate this morning.

MEGAN

This is a receipt. What's it a receipt for??

DYLAN

Read it!

MEGAN

(reading)

Baby Matumba. One hundred and seventy nine dollars. What is this?

DYLAN
It's a receipt. I wasn't adopted.

A beat.

DYLAN
I was purchased. As a souvenir.

A beat.

DYLAN
Like a snow globe.

A beat.

DYLAN
In Entebbe, Uganda.

SHELBY
They don't have snow globes in Uganda.

ETHAN
What? This is insane. For one hundred and seventy nine dollars??

SHELBY
Actually less... he was 20% off.

MEGAN
What?! Why?

SHELBY
Because... what's this say?

MEGAN
20% off for slight imperfection.

A beat.

MEGAN
I wonder what was wrong with him?

SHELBY
Gay.

DYLAN
(to himself)
I wonder if those skates still fit me, and if so, how fast do you think I could skate my way out of here?

ETHAN

Who kidnaps... or should I say, purchases a baby and just takes it home in their luggage?!

DYLAN

I think it was in a crate of bananas.

ETHAN

This is horrifying.

MEGAN

And the historical implications are very disturbing.

SHELBY

I fucking hate her. I just fucking hate her.

Megan places her hand on Shelby's shoulder. Shelby pushes it away.

SHELBY

What was wrong with that woman??! That's why Dad could never look at me. I tried. But he would never look at me.

DYLAN

Me either. He only liked Megan. She was Dad's favorite.

SHELBY

Cause she was his only real kid.

MEGAN

Come on, Dad loved you. He loved you a lot. And we don't know if this is even true. We don't know if anything about our lives is really true.

ETHAN

(a bit sad)

I hope most of it isn't true.

SHELBY

Maybe. Maybe he did love me, but he could still never really look at me.

They all let this news sink in for a bit.

SHELBY

I don't know who that woman was. I doubt I ever really did. Maybe she did decide to whack Pete Fenderson off to get rid of evidence, poured acid on his body, and stored him in the garage for twenty years. Who the fuck knows what she would do?

MEGAN

Don't say "whacked Pete Fenderson off".

DYLAN

Or what about Dad?

MEGAN

What about him?

DYLAN

Maybe he offed Pete Fenderson? Or it could even be Dad in the trunk.

SHELBY

What are you talking about?

DYLAN

They were screaming at each other that night before he disappeared. Do you think there's any chance-

MEGAN

No! No! Dylan how could you even think something like that??

SHELBY

Is it really so far fetched? I mean come on. He disappears and we never ever hear from him again? You said the astronaut thing was probably made up. Maybe he came home, and she hit him with a crowbar.

ETHAN

You think your mother killed your father with a crowbar and stuffed him in a trunk?

SHELBY

Someone's in the trunk. Who knows, could be anyone. Maybe the mailman pissed her off, and she snapped. We changed mailmen a lot.

DYLAN

Or, remember Mrs. Hughes? Her dog used to shit on our lawn and she would never pick it up. Mom always said she was going to kill her. Maybe she did?

SHELBY

I need to get out of here. I vote we buy some gasoline and torch the whole place. Let insurance deal with it. Just get rid of all the crap. Thanks Ethan, for all of your help today. You really nailed it. And by nailing it, I mean my sister...Half sister.

ETHAN

Technically, it was just a blow job.

MEGAN

Isn't it better to know the truth?

SHELBY

I don't think so. In some cases, maybe in most cases, it's better to just not know anything. Which is why you're so happy.

ETHAN

She has a point.

Megan and Shelby argue. Dylan holds his hands over his ears and rocks back and forth.

MEGAN

(furious, yelling)
Come on, are we going to go through this again?? You're always putting me down. I come back here and try to help our family, but you just keep shitting on me and my dreams. I hate you Shelby! I hate, hate, hate you!

SHELBY

(furious, yelling)
Every two years when you decide to show up, everything goes to shit, because you expect everyone to just stop what they're doing and pay attention to you. And if they don't you just go around blowing people until you get their attention!

Ethan has finally had it. Cuts them off.

ETHAN

(cutting off the above lines)
What the hell is wrong with you three??? You're all out of your God damned minds! Jesus Christ!

SHELBY

Ethan!!

ETHAN

(sternly, strong, and
chastising)

You know what? You're never cleaning out this garage. You don't want to. You'd rather keep everything. Look at all of this shit. Piles and piles of useless junk that means absolutely nothing. You are drowning in your own crap. And you three will just keep piling more and more junk into this garage, until one day, finally, it won't matter anymore, and it will all just land in somebody else's lap.

DYLAN

I think I'll go unpack the dishes, because I'm going to need a lot of dishes when I have parties here.

ETHAN

Dylan! You let some stupid hockey game where no one had even explained the rules to you make you feel like a failure, and you let that one failure grow into hundreds of failures. What a waste! And instead of calling these two assholes out on the bullshit way they treated you, you decided it would be better to talk to egg rolls and plush toys? Is that how you want to live your life?? Is that what you want??

MEGAN

Ethan!! He can't help it when he starts talking to the lamps and the toasters. It's just a side effect from his medication. You're not being fair.

ETHAN

No, it's a side effect from the two of you not listening to him for the last forty years. He's doing it on purpose.

MEGAN

That is not true, is it Dylan?

DYLAN

That's for me to know, and you to find out.

ETHAN

He's not crazy, but I believe he has a serious case of IED.

SHELBY

No wonder. It's cause he slept with all those dirty women.

MEGAN

What's IED?

ETHAN

Google it!

MEGAN

You're being very mean to him Ethan. It's not nice.

ETHAN

He's a grown man. He can handle it! But you, you're so disconnected from reality, I don't know how you get through the day. You want everything given to you, but you don't want to work for it!

MEGAN

I work hard!

ETHAN

Justine, whatever the fuck her name is-

SHELBY

Mackenzie.

ETHAN

She's not the problem. You are. So you didn't get the part you wanted? Boo hoo hoo hoo. Get over it. Life is tough. You just have to work hard the next time. But of course there was no next time, because you give up on everything, and you expect success to be handed to you, and when things don't go your way and you feel bad, you pass out blow jobs like Tic-tacs. I didn't want a blow job. I wanted to watch Game of Thrones. But okay, next thing I know my dick's out and I can't see the television anymore. And go take some fucking classes on wine if you want to be a pro- otherwise really you're just a drunk.

They all sit in silence.

SHELBY

(to Megan)

It's true. He really, really doesn't like to be interrupted during Game of Thrones.

ETHAN

And you!

SHELBY

What about me?

ETHAN

You know. You're completely inflexible in every single thing you do. You think you're the only one who can do things correctly, and if they aren't done your way, then whoever did them is an idiot. Barbie and Ken gave you some massive trust issues. You're intolerant, emotionally shutdown and sexually frigid.

And I don't know what your thing is with black guys, but lets talk about it, and see where it leads. Just not with your brother... I'm open minded. Okay. That's it. I'm done. You're all beyond help. You can't even decide who gets a painting that you all hate.

MEGAN

I don't hate it!

SHELBY

Neither do I.

MEGAN

I'm taking it to Chicago!

Megan grabs the painting.

SHELBY

Like hell you are!

Shelby rips the painting out of Megan's hands.

DYLAN

Stop! You're gonna bust it!!!!

(Three siblings improvise fighting)

MEGAN

Give it to me!

DYLAN

Let me have it!

SHELBY

Let it go!!!

MEGAN

I am the favorite!!

The each grab the painting and try to take it. The frame falls apart and the painting rips into three pieces.

SHELBY

Look what you did!!!!

MEGAN

What I did???

DYLAN
(pure anguish)

Noooooo!

Dylan starts to cry.

MEGAN
Dylan, it's okay. Its just a painting.

DYLAN
(crying)
I really, really, really wanted it.

SHELBY
Why Dylan?

A long silence. Ethan comes to a realization.

ETHAN
...Because he loved her.

SHELBY
What?

ETHAN
You all want that painting because you loved her.

SHELBY
I did not love that woman!!

Megan starts to cry.

MEGAN
Poor Mom. She was so tortured.

She and Dylan cry together.

SHELBY
Oh come on. Not this again. Enough with the waterworks... She was a terrible, terrible....

Shelby starts to cry. They are all crying.

ETHAN
See. You do have feelings.

SHELBY
(through tears)

Shut up, Ethan!

The three siblings hug.

MEGAN
I'm sorry. I'm sorry I wasn't here. But I just couldn't handle it.

SHELBY
It's okay. She understood. She was always talking about you and Chicago.

DYLAN
I'm so sad.

They hug Dylan. Ethan throws his hands up in "victory"

MEGAN
(crying)
Poor Mom. I guess we have to deal with her trunk full of bones now.

They go over to the trunk, and look inside. They grab rags and towels from inside and begin to wrap up the skull, the femur and the arm bone.

MEGAN
There's a picture underneath the...the ... whatever bone that is.

ETHAN
Clavicle.

MEGAN
There's lots of pictures.

SHELBY
And a lot of bones. Jeese. Who knew the body contained so many bones?

DYLAN
206.

They all kneel down and begin sorting through the trunk.

MEGAN

Eeewww! Don't touch it! Gross!

SHELBY

Ugh. Get out of my way.

Shelby reaches right in and holds up some photos.

MEGAN

Look at all of these pictures! These are all from when Mom and Dad lived back in Iowa.

DYLAN

Who's that kid?

SHELBY

It's that Brian Paterson. That kid from across the street from them.

They all are digging around inside the large trunk looking for items.

ETHAN

But why would your parents take so many pictures of themselves with some neighbor kid named Brian Paterson?

DYLAN

There's a card in here.

He opens the card and reads it to himself. He puts it back in the envelope.

SHELBY

Dylan!! What does that card say??

He opens the card and reads it to the group.

DYLAN

(slow and deliberate)

"Brian, you will always be my favorite. I hope you like the painting I did of you. It's how I remember you. I love you. Mom."

They all think about this for a beat.

DYLAN

But why would she write Mom on a card that wasn't to any of us?

They all stare into the trunk.
Suddenly Dylan reaches towards the sky in triumph.

DYLAN

I HAD A BROTHER!!! I KNEW IT! HE'S A SKELETON, BUT I KNEW IT!

SHELBY

So, I guess this means...

MEGAN

No. It can't be.

ETHAN

So these bones are...

MEGAN

Wow. Poor Mom and Dad. No wonder they were so messed up. They never told us they had another child before Dylan.

SHELBY

At least this explains why she bought Dylan in that sale.

MEGAN

And had a baby with Pete Fenderson.

SHELBY

And why you're absolutely insane.

MEGAN

Dylan, there's your Fenderson hat. Mom must have saved it in here.

They continue to dig through the trunk pulling out various items.

DYLAN

This isn't mine. Mine had my name in it. It was so rad. This says Pete.

MEGAN

Pete? Why would Pete Fenderson's hat be in this trunk?

SHELBY

(holding up a pair of big white sunglasses)

And...Dad's glasses and his jacket?? Wonder why she put those in here?

Dylan is picking through the trunk.

DYLAN
Kids sneakers, some drawings.

SHELBY
Dad's gun.

MEGAN
Junk mail, Is that a dogs skull?

ETHAN
Yup. It's a little dogs, tiny little skull. Yup.

MEGAN
(concerned)
There's kind of like, a lot of bones in here right? Like maybe more than there should be for one person?

DYLAN
More than 206, I'd say.

Shelby's head is deep in the trunk.

SHELBY
And here's a bag of skulls! They've got name tags on them.

MEGAN
Curious.

They all consider what to do next.

SHELBY
(cheerfully)
Mmmmm. Looks like about the right amount of bones to me.

She slams the trunk shut and locks it. Shelby, Megan and Dylan sit on the trunk.

MEGAN
Okay! Should we get to work packing this stuff back up?

SHELBY

Yeah, let's deal with this crap later. We can skip the yard sale for now.

DYLAN

Sounds like a plan.

ETHAN

You're going to hide what looks like a collection of skeletons and leave it in this garage forever??

DYLAN

A skeleton collection sounds really cool.

ETHAN

(impassioned, sincere, really
trying to help them)

You have to get rid of the skeletons. And the boxes, and bags, and plush toys, and wrenches, all of this stuff! You have to clean out this garage and move on or you will never, ever change, and you'll just be back here dealing with this when the next one of you dies! So, are you going to act like adults and call the police, and clean out this place? It's quite possible, no likely, that your mother was a serial killer. Are you going to let this haunt you for the rest of your lives??

They look at each other. A beat.
They shrug their shoulders.

SHELBY

(incredulous)

A serial killer? Really?

DYLAN

I don't know about that...

MEGAN

Eh. She had a lot of hobbies.

A beat.

ETHAN

Well, if none of you are going to call the police then I will!

He takes his phone out of his pocket.

MEGAN

Really Ethan? There's no need for that.

DYLAN

Yeah, better to just let this alone, and forget about it-right guys?

Megan & Shelby agree profusely.

ETHAN

I'm not "letting this alone" Are you all crazy?... No need to answer that

He starts to dial his phone.

SHELBY

(calmly but emphatically)

Ethan, put the phone down.

ETHAN

Shelby!

SHELBY

(quite serious)

Put the phone away.

ETHAN

Are you serious?

SHELBY

(pointedly)

Put. The. Phone. Away. Forget about this. Things happen to people around here. Things that aren't very nice. You don't know the half of it. Better not to stir up the past.

Shelby, Megan and Dylan subtly, but menacingly surround Ethan.

MEGAN

Yeah. It'd be terrible if...if something, like, happened to you...

A very dark moment where the family confronts Ethan. It's serious. They mean business. But then Megan lightens her tone.

MEGAN

I mean- you know caught up in investigations, inquiries, who needs that? Paperwork. Paperwork. Paperwork!

SHELBY

I know how you really hate paperwork!

ETHAN

Dylan! Are you going to just leave things like this?

DYLAN

(serious)

We don't want trouble. You don't want trouble. Just let it go...

Then lightly-

DYLAN

(cheerfully)

So! How about that ice cream??

The mood lightens and returns to normal.

SHELBY

Since Ethan and I are taking the house, you two can have anything else you want. I don't care.

MEGAN

You are not getting the house! I need that money for my winery slash wine bar.

SHELBY

You're not going to open a wine bar. You'd drink all the profits.

Ethan backs down out of fear? Desperation? Exhaustion? He has formulated a plan to get Megan to give up selling the house. He tries to discourage her from starting a wine bar.

ETHAN

Megan, I read the wine bar market has become really saturated.

MEGAN

What?

ETHAN

People are into micro-breweries now.

MEGAN

Are you kidding me?

ETHAN

No, I saw it in a magazine.

MEGAN

What magazine?

ETHAN

(there is no magazine)

That one about wine.

MEGAN

Oh. That one. Forget it. Stupid wine bar. Who cares. Every time I try to do something, someone else fucks me. It's not fair. What am I supposed to do now?

Ethan thinks of an occupation that doesn't require money, and pretends that Megan would be good at it.

ETHAN

(sounding like a serious suggestion)

Maybe you could be a folk singer.

SHELBY

A what??

ETHAN

(trying to get Shelby onboard)

A folk singer. I'll bet she'd be great... You don't need any money to become a folk singer.

Shelby realizes Ethan is trying to get her to give up the money from the house.

SHELBY

Oh. Yeah. Right... You always had a lovely voice.

MEGAN

I did, didn't I?

Megan vocalizes.

SHELBY

Great. Then it's settled. Megan will become a folk singing sensation.

ETHAN

Right. And Dylan will have the house.

SHELBY

What? No way.

DYLAN

Thanks Ethan!

SHELBY

This is a great house. I'm not giving it away!

ETHAN

It's falling apart. It's too big. You'll just fill it with more junk. It will cost more in paperwork than what we'd get in profit. Let Dylan have it. He's very handy, he can fix it up. He shouldn't be living with us. I don't think it's healthy.

SHELBY

This is bull-crap. I'm not just giving away the house for nothing. No way, Jose.

MEGAN

Don't say Jose. It's racist.

SHELBY

I'm not going to just walk away from this.

ETHAN

What if I just take you on vacation instead?

SHELBY

(suspicious)

Vacation?! Where?

ETHAN

I don't know... How about a cruise?

SHELBY

(still suspicious)

A cruise?? To where??

ETHAN

I don't know. Wherever you want.

SHELBY

Can it be to Alaska?

ETHAN

Sure.

Shelby thinks about it.

SHELBY

Fine. This house is a dump anyway.

DYLAN

Since you guys gave me this house, I'll move out of the basement right away, and I can take care of all this junk here eventually.

ETHAN

Great idea. I've been wanting to get a foos ball table.

Dylan and Ethan quietly "high five".

MEGAN

But we really should go through everything here more carefully right? There's probably lots of stuff we want to keep.

SHELBY

Maybe we should just hang onto everything. All of it. Just for now.

ETHAN

(resigned)

Yeah, what's the rush?

They sort through some more boxes.

ETHAN

What is this?

He pulls a half-way done macrame sweater out of the bag of clothes.

SHELBY

(sarcastic)

What does it look like? It's half of a sweater.

ETHAN

Why is there only half a sweater?

MEGAN

My Mother did macramé for about three weeks back in the eighties.

ETHAN

There's no such thing as a macrame sweater.

SHELBY

Put all of those clothes into this bag. Hand me that sweater.

MEGAN

I think I want to keep that. Maybe I'll finish it in memory of Mom.

SHELBY

Do you even know how to do macrame?

MEGAN

No. But how hard could it be? I'll figure it out...What about the stuffed animals?

SHELBY

Let's hang on to them.

ETHAN

But we should wash them before we put them away.

DYLAN

Great idea Ethan!

SHELBY

They're in great shape.

ETHAN

Vintage. They could be worth something.

SHELBY

Maybe we can donate them to some, some charity, kids with cancer or some shit.

ETHAN

Kids with cancer love stuffed animals.

MEGAN

What about this pile of junk? What should we do with it?

ETHAN

Throw it into this big box. Figure it out later.

Ethan dumps the pile of junk into a box.

ETHAN
What should I label this box of junk?

SHELBY
I'd just label it "junk" for now.

ETHAN
Good idea. Then we'll know what's in there.

Ethan uses a sharpie and writes "junk" on the box.

MEGAN
(to Shelby)
Oh my goodness! Shelby! Look at this jacket! This is yours right? It's kind of retro don't you think?

SHELBY
I forgot all about it! But it's got a lot of moth holes in it. That whole sleeve looks rotten. Maybe I should throw it away.

MEGAN
Can I have it?

SHELBY
No, you can't have it!

MEGAN
I could repair it, I've been thinking about taking up sewing.

SHELBY
You aren't going to learn how to sew!

MEGAN
I can learn how to sew! I learned how to knit didn't I?

SHELBY
No, you didn't. You knit one sock, and there was no place to put your toes.

MEGAN
Let me try and repair the jacket, it's perfect for Chicago!

SHELBY
Are you crazy? I'm not giving this jacket up!

MEGAN

Why not??!

SHELBY
(pointedly)

It's my favorite!!

Shelby puts the jacket on defiantly
as they all begin to pack
everything back into the boxes,
bags and cartons, as the garage
door slowly lowers.

BLACKOUT

END OF PLAY