

Keep It Light

By Joe Correll

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

Terry - 50's A man who is clever, manipulative, and passive-aggressive.

Ronnie - 40's Terry's wife. She worries about appearances. She is self-involved and completely self-unaware

Blake - 60's Blake is a woman who has fallen from high class, to less than high class. She is very proud to be an alcoholic.

Jordan - 60's Jordan is Blake's husband. He speaks before he thinks, and is brow beaten by Blake.

Kelsey - 20's Kelsey is Blake & Jordan's niece. She is sullen and argumentative.

Jamie - 40's Jamie is a flamboyant, gay man, who loves to hear himself talk.

Pat - 40's Pat is Jamie's thoughtful and quiet, African American partner.

Taylor - 40's Taylor is good looking, he is liberal, but with great hypocrisy.

Alex - 40's Alex is Taylor's wife. She has no sense of self-worth, and she may or may not have Cancer depending on her mood.

Casey - 20/30's She is Jamie's "fiancee". And she is crazy as a loon.

Offstage Male - An unseen neighbor

Offstage Female -An unseen neighbor

* The director is encouraged to cast the show with great diversity. With the exceptions that Taylor should be caucasian due to his characters specific story, and Pat should be African American

KEEP IT LIGHT

Act one: Scene One: RONNIE AND TERRY'S LIVING ROOM

It's sometime in mid to late August, or maybe September, somewhere in the United States, that's not Indiana or Illinois, in the early part of the twenty first century. This is the living room of Terry and Ronnie; a suburban couple who have been married for eighteen years. The room is affluent, but calculated and cold. There is a large sofa with a chair that matches. The pillows on the furniture match the drapes. A large and tall window looks out into a very dark night. Almost no light comes through the window panes. There is a staircase that leads to the second level. There is a foyer area with a grand door. On hooks near the door, hang color coordinated clothing, that seem like they might have been arranged on purpose. A very well cared for and manicured plant sits near the bottom of the stairs. A bar stocked with expensive liquor and mixers sits in the corner of the room. A table with some flowers and a tablecloth that matches the drapes sits on one side of the room. There is a swinging door leading to the kitchen. And another door that leads to the basement. On the surface the room appears quite familiar. But the windows are just a little bit crooked. The stair treads are not quite even. The doors are just a bit too big, or too small. The living room is slightly raked forward so that we can see the wood floors, which are nearly straight, but not quite. Terry enters the room and begins to look through the closet. He is about fifty or so, and is dressed nicely. A cardigan sweater, and thick glasses.

(CONTINUED)

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Then Ronnie, his wife, who is several years younger, enters carrying a platter with cookies and a cake. She is also dressed very nicely, and wears a pair of trendy glasses that it took her hours to pick out. They are preparing for a gathering in their living room. Terry is rummaging through a closet that appears completely arranged like the shelves in a store. Ronnie is arranging a table with cookies and a cake. She is arranging them over and over until they are perfect, which of course they never will be.

TERRY

(In the closet)

Where do we keep the napkins?

RONNIE

The nice ones are in the cabinet.

Terry comes out of the closet. He turns to Ronnie in frustration.

TERRY

Which cabinet is that?

RONNIE

The one with the dishes and all the other stuff, where they've always been.

Terry goes over to a credenza in the corner of the room. Ronnie tries to decide what way the cake server would look best. She walks around the table arranging the server, and inspecting it from different angles. She is quite dissatisfied with her display.

TERRY

I'm looking in there now. I'm sorry, but there are no napkins in there.

RONNIE

Look in the back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TERRY
(Rummaging around.)

I did.

RONNIE
Way in the back? You looked all the way in there and there were no napkins?

TERRY
Well, I didn't pull everything out, but I didn't see- Ah okay, there they are. They were in the back.

RONNIE
Uh huh.

TERRY
What time is it?

RONNIE
A little past eight.

TERRY
Where is everyone?

Ronnie starts moving the cookies from one plate to another. Hopefully they will look better. Terry has found the napkins. He takes them over to the bar. He begins filling an ice bucket with ice. Ronnie calls over to him.

RONNIE
Do these cookies look crooked to you?

TERRY
Everyone must be running behind schedule.

RONNIE
I think this whole batch looks off.

TERRY
What time is it?

Ronnie looks over at Terry.

RONNIE
Is that what you're wearing?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Terry looks perfectly fine by most people's standards. Terry walks over to Ronnie.

TERRY

What? Should I change?

RONNIE

No. No. It's too late now. Does my ankle still look swollen to you?

TERRY

(taking a quick look)

Not really.

Terry heads back to the bar. Ronnie sits down and begins to massage her ankle.

RONNIE

You know, a lot of people jog in this neighborhood, and this could have happened to anyone. I'm actually a very careful person. It's not safe. Anyone could just trip and fall, and they might not be as nice as me, and they might sue the Association. We really need street lights. I'm glad I called this meeting.

Ronnie stops massaging her ankle and returns to rearranging her platters. She has completely forgotten about her ankle. Terry works on arranging the bar and is sucking his thumb. Ronnie notices Terry.

RONNIE (CONT'D)

Why are you sucking your thumb?

TERRY

The hammer accident. I told you.

RONNIE

When?

Ronnie continues to rearrange her cookies and other baked goods. Terry continues working at the bar, cutting lemons and limes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

TERRY

(rambling almost to himself)

Either that was a cheap hammer or I have a very powerful swing. I was working away and the head just flew off. It just missed my face by this much. (He indicates how close with his fingers) But that's what I get for buying a cheap hammer.

RONNIE

Do you think I should slice this pound cake? Or leave it as is? It goes stale faster if it's sliced, but if I don't slice it, then probably nobody will eat it because nobody will want to slice it first. And I want people to eat it, because it was a pain to make.

TERRY

Could have been bad. But luckily, no harm done.

RONNIE

I'm going to slice two pieces and leave the cake server here next to it. People will get the idea. It looks nice like this right?

Ronnie slices two pieces of cake with precision.

TERRY

Should I run out and get more vodka?

RONNIE

What?

TERRY

We're a little low on vodka, I'm afraid.

Terry holds up a bottle about half full of vodka.

RONNIE

It's late for that. You should have thought of it before. Why did I bother to make a cake? Everyone is going to go for these cookies.

TERRY

I could run out.

RONNIE

Run out of vodka?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

TERRY

Well yes, but I meant run out to the store. I could be back in five minutes. I really think I should go, people like vodka. It's the most popular.

RONNIE

It's too late. We won't run out. It's a quick meeting.

TERRY

Five minutes.

RONNIE

Ugh. These cookies are so damn ugly. Maybe I should just throw them out.

Terry shrugs his shoulders. He retrieves a box from the closet full of various bartending supplies.

TERRY

The new couple...It's her or him from work? I forget.

RONNIE

Her. I am going to ask her to car pool. She doesn't know a lot of people here, it couldn't hurt to get to know her outside the office. And nice to have a co-worker in the neighborhood.

TERRY

What's their names again? I forget.

RONNIE

Blake and Jordan.

TERRY

Right, right. The B.J.'s. Now I remember. Are Taylor and... his wife coming?

RONNIE

I don't know. I'm not sure.

TERRY

You like them right?

RONNIE

Yes, I like them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

TERRY

He's in good shape for a guy his age. Don't you think?

Terry pulls out a box full of glasses. He takes them over to the bar and cleans each one with a towel.

RONNIE

I suppose. I think Blake & Jordan might have some things in common with them.

TERRY

Like what?

RONNIE

What?

TERRY

Like what would they have in common?

RONNIE

How should I know? I barely know them. I said might. They might have some things in common.

TERRY

They might both like vodka.

RONNIE

No, I think Jordan might be an alcoholic.

Terry stops cleaning the glasses and looks at Ronnie.

TERRY

(irritated)

Well, that's rather awkward. Should I offer him a drink or not? Now I don't know if I should drink.

RONNIE

(Snapping at him)

I have to make French onion dip!

Ronnie walks through the kitchen door and immediately comes back out before the door can swing closed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

RONNIE (CONT'D)

I'll be back in a minute. Just finish setting up the bar, but leave room for some snacks okay?

TERRY

I hope we have enough vodka.

Ronnie exits into the kitchen, Terry continues to set up the bar, He rearranges the alcohol several times. He sits on the couch. He looks at his watch. He gets up rearranges the bar again. He looks out the window. He sits. He looks at his watch. The doorbell rings. Terry answers, a very nicely dressed couple are at the door. Jordan is a distinguished gentlemen and Blake is a rather beautiful older woman who takes excellent care of herself. They are obviously a very well-off couple. With them is a very pretty girl. Her name is Kelsey. She looks like she is probably twenty four years old or so. Terry flips on some high powered charm like a light switch.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Well hello there!! You must be Blaine?

BLAKE

Blake. Terry?

TERRY

Blake! That's right! May I call you Blake? (laughs)

BLAKE

Of course.

TERRY

As long as I don't call you at 3AM. (laughs)

Blake goes to shake Terry's hand. Terry smiles and pulls his hand away from hers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

TERRY (CONT'D)

(laughing)

Oops. Sorry. I can't shake. I nearly lost a finger this afternoon and it's tender.

BLAKE

My goodness, what happened?

TERRY

Hammer accident. You know how it is. Does my thumb look swollen to you?

He holds his thumb up to her face.

BLAKE

(trying to be nice)

Oh yes, maybe a little swollen.

TERRY

I thought so!

After a beat, he laughs.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Gotcha! And you must be Jordan?

Jordan goes to shake Terry's hand, but then he realizes what Terry just said and awkwardly pulls his hand away.

JORDAN

It's nice to meet you. How is Ronnie's ankle?

Terry looks at Jordan in bewilderment.

TERRY

Oh the ankle thing! She won't be dancing anytime soon. But she's holding up pretty well, you know Ronnie!

JORDAN

I don't actually know her very well. I see her out jogging in the evenings.

TERRY

Well! Well, well, well. We will just have to remedy that tonight, won't we?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (9)

JORDAN

We were very upset when we heard she took a spill. I've been saying to Blake for weeks that this is a very, very dark neighborhood. I've been saying someone is going to get killed by a speeding car, or be attacked by hoodlums, or twist their ankle. It's very dangerous. I said that, didn't I dear?

BLAKE

Yes. You said that.

TERRY

(looking at Kelsey)

Well, well, well. And who might you be?

JORDAN

Oh, I'm sorry, this is my niece Kelsey, she's living with us, and doesn't know many of the people in the neighborhood, so we thought we'd bring her along.

BLAKE

(jumping in cutting Jordan off)

Don't go on and on Jordan, I'm sure Terry has better things to do than listen to you go on and on and on.

TERRY

Not really. (laughs)

Awkward silence.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Ronnie didn't tell me your niece was living with you.

JORDAN

Kelsey has been living with us for about six years now.

JORDAN (CONT'D)

When we moved, she moved here with us.

BLAKE

(Speaking over Jordan)
I love how everything in this room matches! It's so clever.

TERRY

Isn't that something!

KELSEY

May I use your bathroom?

TERRY

Sure- the bathroom is down the hall second door on the left.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (10)

Kelsey goes down the hall and disappears. Terry, Blake and Jordan stand awkwardly in the foyer.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Well, come on in, have a seat, Ronnie is in the kitchen making onion dip.

BLAKE

Onion dip. Yum!

TERRY

It's good right?

BLAKE

Delicious.

TERRY

I like it.

JORDAN

Me too. I like most dips. I like dipping things in other things.

TERRY

Yes, it's fun.

BLAKE

It is. Fun.

Jordan and Blake take a seat on the sofa.

TERRY

So! What can I get you to drink?

Terry heads over to the bar.

JORDAN

Vodka, Soda?

TERRY

(Simultaneously vindicated
and concerned.)

Ah, yes. Vodka Soda! A very popular beverage! And for you?

BLAKE

Do you have a Fresca?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (11)

TERRY

A Fresca? I don't know. I don't think so. I may have some Sprite stashed away somewhere, but it could be flat. I guess I'm not going to win any bartending awards! (laughs)

BLAKE

That's okay. How about a Gatorade?

TERRY

With vodka?

BLAKE

(a bit proud)

No, no, can't. I don't know if Ronnie told you, but I'm an alcoholic.

TERRY

Oh? You're the alcoholic? Fascinating. But I think we're fresh out of Gatorade.

BLAKE

That's okay, I brought some.

Blake pulls a Gatorade out of her purse, pops the cap and drinks some.

TERRY

Would you like some ice?...Or a glass?

BLAKE

Ice dilutes the taste, and I like it room temperature.

JORDAN

Her teeth.

BLAKE

My teeth.

TERRY

What?

BLAKE

They're no good.

JORDAN

Yup.

Terry looks at Blake in confusion. She explains.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (12)

BLAKE

My molars don't like radical temperature changes.

They sit in silence for a moment.
Finally Terry speaks.

TERRY

So how do you like the new job?

BLAKE

The people are nice. I like that Ronnie is there, you know,
someone from the neighborhood.

TERRY

I only see the office folks at Christmas and sometimes at the
picnic in the summer, but yes, they seem like very nice
folks.

BLAKE

They are.

JORDAN

I haven't met them yet.

BLAKE

(A bit irritated)

Well, I just started, why would you?

JORDAN

Of course. You just started.

TERRY

How long have you been there now, Blake? May I call you
Blake?... Oops, I already asked you that didn't I?

BLAKE

I don't know, since July? How long ago is that?

TERRY

Like, six weeks maybe.

JORDAN

(Correcting her.)

It was early July.

TERRY

Then maybe eight?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (13)

BLAKE

Something like that. Six or eight. (Drinks Gatorade)

Terry walks over to the bar and
freshens his drink.

TERRY

Was the front walk bright enough?

JORDAN

Yes, yes. No trouble.

BLAKE

Well-

JORDAN

It was a little hard to see the path. A little.

Terry looks out the window and then
comes back over and sits down with
Jordan and Blake. He is very
concerned that more people haven't
shown up.

TERRY

Great. Great, great, great. I really thought more people
would be here by now.

BLAKE

We just came from visiting my sister up in Fairhaven. And I
wasn't sure if we'd get here on time. Which is why we were
late. But I guess we're still first.

TERRY

Was there traffic?

BLAKE

Terrible. On 434.

TERRY

You should have taken Lakeview, at least at this hour.

JORDAN

It's faster?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (14)

TERRY

At this hour. You can take Huntington to 67, but there are a lot of lights.

JORDAN

Lights are the worst.

TERRY

They are. They really are.

A fairly long and uncomfortable silence. They sip from their drinks. Finally Blake speaks.

BLAKE

I like your floors.

TERRY

Thanks. They're wood.

BLAKE

Yes.

JORDAN

I like wood floors. It's homey.

TERRY

We refinished them about six years ago.

JORDAN

Six years? Wow.

TERRY

Yeah.

JORDAN

They are really holding up.

TERRY

We paid more, but they last.

JORDAN

Totally worth it.

TERRY

We had carpet before.

JORDAN

I don't like carpet. It collects pet hair.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (15)

TERRY

Oh? What kind of pets do you have?

JORDAN

Oh, we don't have any pets.

Silence. The sipping of drinks. The
crunching sound of an ice cube
being chewed.

JORDAN (CONT'D)

We wanted to get a cat.

BLAKE

(rolling her eyes.)

Here we go with the cat.

TERRY

What?

BLAKE

I'm allergic.

Silence.

BLAKE (CONT'D)

To cats.

TERRY

My Aunt was allergic to cats.

BLAKE

Cats, dogs, birds, fish.

TERRY

You're allergic to fish?

BLAKE

Some kinds. Salmon and Snapper, and Orange Roughy. And shrimp
and lobster.

JORDAN

Which aren't really fish. Not technically.

BLAKE

They're shellfish. That's a kind of fish.

JORDAN

I don't think so.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (16)

BLAKE

What would you call them then?

JORDAN

I don't know, but fish have fins and they swim around.

Terry pulls out his phone and
begins to research whether
shellfish, are actually fish.

BLAKE

Shrimp swim around.

JORDAN

They do not swim around. They crawl around. Or they do
nothing.

BLAKE

(Getting more irritated by
the second.)

How can they crawl around? They don't have legs, or claws, or
whatever.

JORDAN

Have you ever seen a shrimp in the ocean?

BLAKE

Of course not. What are you talking about? No one has seen a
shrimp in the ocean.

JORDAN

(To Terry, good naturedly.)

She thinks they come out of the ocean sitting in a pool of
cocktail sauce surrounded by lemons.

BLAKE

(To Jordan, meaning "shut
up")

You're hilarious Jordan.

Terry has found some information on
the internet.

TERRY

They're crustaceans.

JORDAN

Yes! Crustaceans!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (17)

BLAKE

Of course they're crustaceans! Don't be ridiculous. But crustaceans are a kind of fish.

JORDAN

I don't think so.

Jordan googles on his phone.

TERRY

I love shrimp. It must be frustrating for you, not being able to eat fish. I love crabs as well.

BLAKE

I can eat crab. Crab is fine. Crab is delicious. I like it in Ravioli. Ever tried that? It's the best.

Blake takes a swig of her Gatorade.
Jordan has found out some
information on the internet.

JORDAN

Wikipedia says that they are not fish. They are water dwelling animals. And that there are crustaceans, and there are mollusks.

BLAKE

(snapping at Jordan angrily.)

What's a mollusk?

Ronnie enters from the kitchen
carrying a very oversized bowl of
french onion dip.

RONNIE

Oh my gosh? How long have you guys been here?

JORDAN

It's like a clam or an oyster. Just a few minutes. We've been chatting.

RONNIE

Not about me!

BLAKE

No, crab ravioli. Have you had it Ronnie?

RONNIE

I don't think so- not that I remember.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (18)

BLAKE

Oh- you'd remember if you had it. It's delicious!

RONNIE

I'll have to try it.

BLAKE

You should. It's delicious.

Ronnie sets the onion dip down and starts arranging some chips and vegetables around it.

RONNIE

How was the traffic? I know you had to come across town?

JORDAN

It was okay.

BLAKE

Horrible.

BLAKE (CONT'D)

It was horrible.

RONNIE

How did you come?

JORDAN

We took 434.

BLAKE

Mistake.

RONNIE

You should have taken Huntington to 67.

TERRY

There are a lot of lights that way. I was saying Lakeview.

RONNIE

But it's so far out of the way!

TERRY

But the lights- it's faster to take Lakeview, at least at this time of day.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (19)

RONNIE

Well, maybe. I never take Lakeview. I'd rather shoot myself in the face.

Silence.

RONNIE (CONT'D)

It's out of the way.

TERRY

434, is usually the best- it's just at this time people are going downtown to plays or a game, or to dinner or to whatever people do when they're downtown.

JORDAN

We're still learning the area, I'm sure we'll find our own shortcuts.

RONNIE

Well, don't take Lakeview. It's a fucking nightmare.

Ronnie dips a carrot in onion dip and eats it. There is a deafening sound of a carrot being chewed.

TERRY

Blake said it was dark out front.

RONNIE

(With her mouth full.)

Yes. It's dangerous. We need those streetlights. It's ridiculous. We pay taxes. Just look at my ankle! Look how swollen it is.

Ronnie sticks her leg out.

BLAKE

Oh how awful for you.

JORDAN

It doesn't look that bad.

Blake is very frustrated that Jordan is not being polite.

BLAKE

(On edge)

Look closer Jordan...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (20)

BLAKE (CONT'D)
 (Right at Jordan)
 It's much worse than you
 think.

JORDAN
 (To Blake)
 I was only saying that it
 doesn't look like anything
 too serious.

BLAKE
 (To Ronnie, nicely)
 You should go have that looked at.

Ronnie lowers her leg.

RONNIE
 It's not that bad.

TERRY
 What about my thumb?

Terry holds out his thumb. Pauses.
 Laughs.

JORDAN
 I'm sorry Ronnie, you were saying something about the
 streetlights?

RONNIE
 Just that we need them.

TERRY
 Well, the dark is good for privacy.

RONNIE
 Let's wait until the others come. Have some dip. And I made
 some cookies, and a lemon pound cake.

BLAKE
 Is it real lemon or lemon extract?

RONNIE
 Ummmm.

Ronnie pauses, thinking about it
 seriously. Reviewing the recipe in
 her head. What did she put into the
 pound cake? She thinks about this
 for quite some time.

RONNIE (CONT'D)
 Real lemon.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (21)

BLAKE

Then I can't have it. I'm allergic to lemons. I can only eat imitation lemon.

RONNIE

Really? That's interesting. Don't you put lemon in your tea at work?

BLAKE

Yes, yes. The tea counteracts whatever it is about lemons. It's weird I know. I just don't want to chance it.

Blake drinks Gatorade. The four are now sitting and speaking casually.

JORDAN

So do you two work together? Blake never told me if you actually worked, you know, together.

RONNIE

Not really. She's usually on the phone with clients, dealing with whatever, I do the accounting, I pay invoices when they come in. I keep track of inventory. A lot of paperwork.

JORDAN

Wow. That's really interesting.

RONNIE

Updating the files.

JORDAN

Cool. Sounds like fun.

RONNIE

There's onion dip.

JORDAN

Cool.

RONNIE

There's chips or carrots and celery.

They sit in silence for a moment. Then the conversation takes a turn and becomes fascinating to all involved.

BLAKE

I just lost six pounds.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (22)

TERRY

You don't look like you need to lose weight!

BLAKE

Because I just lost six pounds.

RONNIE

I'd love to lose six pounds.

BLAKE

I ate nothing but grapefruit for three days.

RONNIE

I don't really like grapefruit.

TERRY

I do. I think it's my favorite citrus.

RONNIE

(Mildly irritated)

What about limes?

TERRY

Okay, it's after limes.

BLAKE

You can put sugar on it.

RONNIE

That adds calories.

BLAKE

A little- just to cut the tartness.

JORDAN

I like the pink ones, they're good.

RONNIE

Ruby Red.

JORDAN

Yeah, they are sweeter.

TERRY

I like the yellow ones, but they are definitely more sour.

BLAKE

It's the acid in the grapefruit, it interacts with your body's enzymes, and sort of alters your chromosomes, and you lose weight.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (23)

RONNIE

I did not know that.

TERRY

They are messy. They squirt.

BLAKE

I like to peel them like an orange. It's way neater.

TERRY

I saw some really big grapefruits the other day, they were almost the size of a basketball. Almost, but not quite.

RONNIE

Are you sure they weren't Pomelos?

TERRY

What the devil is a Pomelo?

RONNIE

It's like a big grapefruit, or a gigantic orange.

TERRY

You've had them?

RONNIE

Yes, I've had them.

TERRY

When?

RONNIE

I don't know. Before I knew you.

TERRY

You had this Pomelo over 18 years ago, and you remember it?

RONNIE

Yes. It's a very memorable fruit.

TERRY

Why didn't you ever mention it before?

RONNIE

The subject never came up before. It came up now, so I thought this was an appropriate time to bring it up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (24)

TERRY

What other fruits have you eaten?

RONNIE

You're kind of being an asshole.

The doorbell rings. But no one moves. After a moment Terry rises and walks to the door.

TERRY

I'll get it.

At the door are two attractive men. Jamie is dressed very well and carries a bottle of wine. Pat is a rather handsome African-American man and is dressed in a suit and tie. Jamie appears to be fun and friendly. Pat is more withdrawn and seems a bit shy.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Hey, come on in guys.

Terry hugs both of the guys. Ronnie walks over and does the same. It is clear that they have at least a casual relationship and are quite friendly.

JAMIE

Sorry we're late.

PAT

Sorry.

JAMIE

We were hanging a picture and time got a way.

RONNIE

Hi guys.

JAMIE

Hi, you.

Ronnie and Jamie casually kiss.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (25)

JAMIE (CONT'D)

How's the ankle?

RONNIE

I'll live. What's the picture? Where's it going?

PAT

In that nook by the front door.

JAMIE

You know, when you come in there's that space? It's always needed something fun.

RONNIE

Oh nice, What's it of?

JAMIE

Excuse me?

RONNIE

The painting?

JAMIE

Oh. It's the Magdalen washing Jesus's feet.

PAT

It's somewhat abstract.

JAMIE

Yes! The feet are just huge, but on purpose, and her hands are very small. Like very, very small. It's cool. I saw it at a friend's art party. That's not the word. What's that thing called when someone shows their art and everyone comes, and there's wine, and everyone walks around and looks at art?

PAT

An exhibit.

JAMIE

No, not an exhibit. You know, when someone has some art and they get a space, and they put up art everywhere. And maybe it's a cool, weird place like an abandoned pharmacy?

PAT

A gallery.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (26)

JAMIE

No, not that, you know, friends come and critics come and it's like a party. An art party. That's it. I got it at an art party.

Terry speaks from across the room,
Jamie approaches.

TERRY

You know, I've been dabbling in the arts.

JAMIE

You don't say?

RONNIE

(Quite surprised and a bit
taken aback)

Yeah- you don't say?

TERRY

Well, I haven't taken any formal classes.

JAMIE

What medium?

TERRY

I've been focusing on sculpture. Wood, Plastics, Metal, Fabrics and various types of paint. There are also some organic accents. But.... I'm no Rodin. (A beat)...But who is? Except Rodin. And he's dead. (laughs)

RONNIE

You've been sculpting?

TERRY

You don't know everything about me Ronnie.

RONNIE

I guess not!

JAMIE

Pat and I collect original pieces so I'd love to take a look at it sometime.

TERRY

Oh, it's nothing like that. I'm not very good yet. I'm working at it, but I'm no professional.

JAMIE

Well, I'd love to take a look sometime.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (27)

RONNIE

Me too. So is that what you've been working on out in the garage?

TERRY

Off and on. Just dabbling. I had to quit working on it today because one of my hammers almost killed me. Does my thumb look swollen to you?

Terry holds out his thumb and laughs.

RONNIE

Oh, I'm so sorry! Jamie and Pat, this is Jordan and Blake. She just lost six pounds by eating nothing but grapefruit.

BLAKE

Hi, we moved into the neighborhood six or eight weeks ago. We live in the house with the big tree in front.

JAMIE

Oh, I love that tree! That's a darling little house. You know what they say, it's best to buy the cheapest fixer on the block. Smart investment. Ed and Mary used to live there. They were there for something like thirty years maybe. Then he died, and she really couldn't keep it up, so she kind of let it go downhill. But nobody said anything to her about it, on account of the terrible way Ed died. Then she sold it, and I think she lives in Aruba now. Or one of those islands down there. What's that island that sounds like potatoes? Maybe it was that one.

BLAKE

We've been putting a lot of time and money into it.

PAT

Barbados.

JAMIE

I'm sure you guys will make it nice. A rising tide raises all boats, as they say.

PAT

(To Jamie)

I think it's a very nice house.

JAMIE

(To Pat)

I didn't say it wasn't nice. It's darling.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (28)

BLAKE

We know it still needs some work.

PAT

(To Blake)

It's very nice.

JORDAN

We're trying, but I'm not very handy. It took me all day to put together all of our new IKEA bookcases.

Blake is horrified by IKEA and she changes the subject fast.

BLAKE

(Interrupting and speaking over Jordan)
You boys live in that house with the big garden out front right? Very nice. I've started a gardening project in our backyard, it's coming along but you can't see it from the street.

JORDAN (CONT'D)

You know they don't put instructions on that furniture. It's just diagrams with arrows. It's very confusing. The Swedes are smarter than most Americans.

Silence.

TERRY

Would anyone like something to drink?

JAMIE

I will have... Ummm... What's that drink with mint and it's sweet?

PAT

A mojito.

JAMIE

No that's not it. I will have vodka and cranberry juice.

PAT

Make it easy, make it two.

Terry turns to Ronnie.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (29)

TERRY

(about vodka, not cranberry
juice)

Do we have enough *cranberry juice*?

JAMIE

Oh if you don't that's okay, you can leave it out.

RONNIE

Look in the kitchen. You should have bought some *cranberry juice* earlier today if you thought we were going to run out of it, instead of waiting until the last minute.

Silence.

RONNIE (CONT'D)

(Turning to Jamie)

I think we have cranberry juice. But we don't drink it often... (pause) You know I'm Jewish?

Terry heads off to the kitchen in
search of cranberry juice.

JAMIE

(paying a compliment)

Well, you could never tell.

TERRY

(sing song)

I think we're going to run
out of cranberry juice.

RONNIE

What I mean is, I've been standing here thinking, and all I could think about is that you were saying that painting was of Jesus and the Magdalen, and for the life of me, I could not remember who that was. For a minute I thought you meant that little French girl who lives in the boarding school in Paris and goes on capers.

PAT

Who?

JAMIE

Oh that girl, and she's French, and she's got the hat.

PAT

Madeline?

JAMIE

No...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (30)

RONNIE

Madeline, yes- she's Catholic, so I thought maybe it was an artsy picture of the little French Catholic girl and Jesus, and I was trying to imagine her washing Jesus's feet with very tiny hands.

JAMIE

Well, you come see it in person!

RONNIE

(Pleased.)

Sure. I will!

JAMIE

It's not what you're thinking of at all.

The doorbell rings, and Terry enters from the kitchen with a half of a bottle of cranberry juice. He places it on the bar and goes over and answers the door. There is a nicely dressed couple, and they enter the house. Taylor is a rather striking man, who obviously works out. He is very self assured and just the slightest bit cocky. His wife Alex, is quite shy. Everything she says is an apology for speaking aloud.

TERRY

I'll get it. Oh my gosh! Speak of the devil!

TAYLOR

Hello! Were you just talking about us?

TERRY

(casual)

No.

RONNIE

Hi guys- We haven't really started yet.

TERRY

That's right. It's never too late for you Taylor, and your lovely wife...?

ALEX

Alex.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (31)

TERRY

Right. Alex. Got it.

ALEX

If you can't remember it, it's okay, no one does.

TAYLOR

So sorry we're running behind.

ALEX

(apologizing.)

I couldn't remember if I turned the coffee off, so we had to go back. So dumb.

TERRY

No, no it's fine. Fine. Fine. Fine. You know Jamie and Pat? From down on the corner?

TAYLOR

Yes, yes of course. We love your garden out front. It's beautiful.

JAMIE

Thanks!

TAYLOR

We have to save the bees!

JAMIE

From what?

RONNIE

And this is Blake and Jordan, who live in the house with the big tree. Blake and I work together. I'm hoping we can carpool.

TAYLOR

So sorry we haven't been by to meet you yet.

ALEX

(apologizing.)

It's my fault. I should have come over right away and brought some brownies or something.

BLAKE

Not with walnuts. I'll swell up like a Macy's float.

ALEX

I can make them with or without. It's not that difficult, but-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (32)

TAYLOR

(Cutting her off, to Ronnie)

How's the ole ankle? I heard you took a tumble.

RONNIE

Oh it wasn't that bad. I've been taking fistfuls of Advil.

TAYLOR

Would you like me to take a look at it? I've been studying up on Eastern medicine. It can work wonders.

RONNIE

It's fine. Maybe later.

Alex stands.

ALEX

(Speaking up to be heard)

When I have a headache, sometimes Taylor sticks needles in my neck.

RONNIE (CONT'D)

Well, should we start?

Everyone agrees that they should begin. Alex quietly sits down.

RONNIE (CONT'D)

Do we think anyone else is coming?

BLAKE

Well, if they do, they can catch up.

PAT

I thought a few more people might show up, but I guess this is it.

TERRY

I put up flyers and I left them on peoples doors.

JAMIE

We didn't get one, I saw Ronnie at the bank, and she told me.

TERRY

Did anyone get them?

TAYLOR

No we didn't. Did we Alex?

ALEX

I don't think so, unless I missed it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (33)

TERRY

I taped them to the doors.

JAIMIE

With what?

TERRY

With tape.

JAMIE

(quite concerned)

I know. What kind of tape?

TERRY

Scotch tape.

JAMIE

Scotch brand, or something else?

TERRY

Just tape, I suppose.

JAMIE

Was the cardboard plaid?

TERRY

No, I think it was yellow. With red writing?

JAMIE

Well, no wonder. Cheap tape.

TERRY

I didn't think it would matter.

A long period of awkward silence.
Jamie decides to make his point.

JAMIE

That kind of tape wears out so fast.

PAT

(blurts out, realizing Jaimie
is about to tell a story)

Oh, no!!

JAMIE

When I was a kid, I left a note for my parents that I was running away from home, to our cellar. I left the note taped to their bedroom door. Of course it was cheap tape and the note fell off, they never saw it and I was down in the cellar for about a week. I guess they got busy with other things.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (34)

JAMIE (CONT'D)

But when I did come out I found the note and the tape was all crumpled and it was caked with dirt and hair. It had lost all of it's stickiness. Well...I'm sure you've all experienced that! When you don't use something properly you run the risk of it getting old, dried out, and covered in unwanted hair, right Ronnie?

Ronnie sort of quietly nods uncomfortably.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

That kind of tape wasn't designed to adhere to wood, or cement, or even plastic really. It was meant to tape two pieces of paper together. Over the years people started using it for other things, but it just wasn't made to withstand it. And, it didn't even come from Scotland, even though, it's called scotch tape. Does anyone mind if I smoke?

No one says anything. Jamie takes out a cigarette and lights it. Takes a drag. Taylor is visibly upset, but restrains himself. There is silence for a beat.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

The Egyptians used to use strips of fabric dipped in glue made from horse renderings. They would use the fabric to fasten together pieces of Egyptian things, particularly papyrus. They were the inventors of paper, and also the inventors of scotch tape.

Jamie smokes a bit more. Taylor subtly coughs.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

However the modern tape as we know it today was actually invented by a guitar player, who dropped out of college named Drew something or other. Drew, what's his name, was painting his living room and he was getting paint all over the window trim, so he invented masking tape. That was first, before Scotch tape. A lot of people don't know that.

Jamie puts out his cigarette in someone's half drunk glass. He dips a piece of celery in the onion dip. He eats the entire piece of celery. The crunching is deafening. Everyone is silent, pondering the invention of tape or thinking of something else entirely.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (35)

Since no one else is talking, Jamie continues his story.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

Scotch is actually the specific brand, even though everyone calls all clear tape, Scotch tape. Little known fact, the word "scotch" was actually a racial slur against stingy Scottish people who wanted all the tape for themselves. But Drew took a big carton of it, brought it to America, where he met Andrew Carnegie, of Carnegie Hall, and together they made a lot of money making Scotch tape.

Folks ponder that rather unknown and inaccurate piece of history.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

I was mad at my parents for leaving me down in the basement for so long, until I realized it wasn't really their fault, it was my fault for using the tape in a way it was never intended. To this day if I want to post a note somewhere, I use duct tape, the greatest tape of them all... and a thumbtack. Since that day, I have never had a message lost.

Jamie eats another piece of celery.
The tension is broken when Jordan finally speaks.

JORDAN

Should someone take notes?

RONNIE

I don't think we need to be that formal.

Alex stands.

ALEX

(Speaking up fairly loudly)

I've stopped baking so much since I got cancer.

TERRY

Vodka, Cranberry, Vodka Cranberry.

JAMIE

(Celebrating, waving his hands)

Yaaaaaaaay!

Alex sits.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (36)

RONNIE

Well, since I set it up, should I start?

TERRY

Yes, I think you should start Ronnie, before we run out of cranberry juice.

Ronnie glares at Terry.

RONNIE

Well, I've just been concerned for a while now, that the street is too dark. And I think we can all agree that something needs to be done, and I think we should petition the city to see if we can finally get some lights in the neighborhood. The trouble is where they should go-

TERRY

Hold on! Hold on!

Terry goes to the closet and gets out a huge map and rolls it out on the coffee table.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Visual aids. This is a map of the whole neighborhood that I found in the attic when we moved in. It has all the streets and houses. See, here is our house. Jamie and Pat are here... And here is Taylor and ...his wife's house. And this little, tiny one belongs to the BJ's.

ALEX

(pointing to the map, and
looking at her house)

Taylor, did I leave the coffee on inside our house?

Taylor takes Alex's hand.

TAYLOR

I'm so, so sorry everyone, she's very, very ill. Honey, we went back and you turned it off, remember... why we were late?

ALEX

Yes. So stupid. Sorry. Go on Ronnie.

RONNIE

Well, that's about it.

PAT

So what do we do?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (37)

RONNIE

I think we should draft a letter to the city council, and see if we get somewhere, but we should all agree on what we say, or where we want them, how many there should be.

TAYLOR

Ronnie is right, we should have some sort of plan, or we'll just get lost in a bunch of red tape. (Laughs) You could tell us about red tape couldn't you Jamie?

JAIME

What do you mean?

RONNIE

Thanks Taylor.

TERRY

Yeah, thanks Taylor! I'm sorry, I'm a terrible host. Can I get you and...your wife... something to drink? We're rather low on cranberry, but we do have lots and lots of vodka.

ALEX

Sometimes, Taylor makes me eat smelly Chinese plants. He says it will cure me, but I think it's poison.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Something with Vodka? I'll bet you like Vodka.

TAYLOR

I'm fine for now.

TERRY

Don't be shy. We've got plenty of vodka. I don't drink it much. I'm a gin man myself.

TAYLOR

I'm a gin man as well.

TERRY

(cheerfully)

Well, that's something we both have in common! You know, we should see you and...your lovely... wife more often! It always seems like you're running off to some place or other.

ALEX

I go to a lot of doctor's appointments. I'm wearing a wig.

TERRY

Taylor, doesn't Ronnie look good? She's taken up jogging.

Terry walks over to Ronnie and slaps her on the ass.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (38)

RONNIE

Stop it.

TERRY

(To Taylor)

But you look quite fit yourself.

Terry playfully boxes Taylor in the stomach.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Blimey! You've got quite a six pack under there.

Terry gently rubs Taylor's stomach.

TERRY (CONT'D)

You're so hard.

Terry pokes Taylor with his finger.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Boop!

TAYLOR

You do look thinner Ronnie.

TERRY

(cheerfully)

You must do a lot of sit-ups. Who holds your feet?

TAYLOR

My feet?

TERRY

For sit ups.

TAYLOR

I don't need someone to hold my feet.

TERRY

(Smiling)

Fancy! I'd be happy to hold them for you sometime.

TAYLOR

Thanks?

Terry's charm is quickly switched off. He abruptly stops rubbing Taylor's stomach and walks back over to the bar to get his martini. Awkward silence.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (39)

BLAKE
I lost six pounds.

JAIME
Pat and I are going to spend
Christmas on the beach this
year.

RONNIE
Oh really? What beach are you going to?

JAMIE
We're finally going to Tahiti. I've been wanting to go for
years, but you know Pat doesn't really like to travel, but I
have been hounding him about it, that he really needs to get
away from work and just disconnect. I have been taking French
lessons, even though I know they speak English. They just
refuse to use it. My thought is if I speak French to them
they are much less likely to steal from us. Crime is quite
rampant there, but if you parlez vous, they think you're
interested in their culture and are nice to you. We are
hoping to maybe find some original pieces of art down in the
islands. Many famous artists lived there and created some
stunning pieces. I forget his name, that really famous one?
You know he's that guy and he lived in Tahiti for some time.
He painted lots of boobs and palm trees.

PAT
Gauguin.

JAMIE
No, no. Not him. You know his paintings are all bright colors
and I think he painted a lot of fat babies with wings? What
are those fat babies with wings called?

PAT
Cherubs.

JAMIE
No, that's not it. They're always smiling or flying around
someone's head and they've got those big eyes, like those
cats in those paintings that I like. Who does those big eyed
cat paintings?

PAT
Georgia O'Keefe.

JAMIE
Yes, yes. Her. So good. Love it. Have you ever taken a crack
at big eyed cats or flying babies Terry? They really sell
like crazy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (40)

TERRY

No, no. I'm into three dimensional sculpture.

RONNIE

(interrupting)

Should we get back to the streetlights?

JAMIE

You should show us all one. I'm sure we'd love to see something. Wouldn't we?

EVERYONE

Yes, please etc...

TERRY

Oh I don't know. I'm not very good yet. I told you I'm no professional. Bernini, I ain't.

JAMIE

I don't know what that means, but I've been learning a lot about what makes good art.

TAYLOR

(Ever so skeptical, but not letting on.)

Really? What's that?

JAMIE

(Very excited to share what he's learned.)

First, it has to capture you emotionally. Second, negative space, is just as important as the positive space. And lastly, it shouldn't be too big. Most people don't have a lot of wall space. Now come on Terry, don't keep us waiting, let's take a look.

RONNIE

What's negative space?

JAMIE

What isn't there. What you can't see is just as important as what you can. Maybe more so. And right now I don't see a fabulous sculpture sitting before me!

TERRY

I don't know. Really?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (41)

JAMIE

Oh stop. You're just pretending to be modest. If there is one thing I've learned about artists it's that secretly they can't wait to get their art in your face.

TERRY

Okay, if you're sure. But please go easy on me.

JAMIE

Go on!

Terry goes off to get his sculpture.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

That's amazing Ronnie. You never mentioned that Terry was an artist.

RONNIE

Honestly, I just found out.

TAYLOR

What does he do for a living?

RONNIE

You know, I'm not exactly sure. Something with stocks, trading inside the stock market or something like that.

Terry enters rolling a cart with a sculpture that is quite large but draped in fabric.

RONNIE (CONT'D)

It's so big!

JAMIE

That's what she said. (Laughs) Tell us about it Terry.

TERRY

Not much to tell really. I didn't think it was ready to show yet. It's just bits and bob's. I'm still working on it.

JAMIE

You said it's wood and metal?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (42)

TERRY

Yes. The wood is oak and pine. I hand tooled it to create the shapes. Then I did some work with a variety of plastics, as well as steel, iron, aluminum, and a patchwork of textured fabrics. There are also some organic components. Now remember... I'm still working on it. It's not a finished piece.

JAMIE

Yes, yes, you said. What is it called?

TERRY

It's called "Ronnie".

JAMIE

Oh how sweet!

RONNIE

(touched)

Really?

TERRY

Yes. Here goes.

Terry lifts the fabric from his sculpture. It is a jumble of two by fours, with sticks glued helter skelter all over them. At the center is a Cabbage Patch Doll with a nail through it's head attached to a board. The doll has on make up, a wig, and glasses that look like Ronnie's. Barbed wire encircles the doll. Nailed to the center of the doll between it's legs is a male doll. The whole sculpture is splattered in grotesque colors of paint. It is the ugliest thing ever created. The room is silent.

TERRY (CONT'D)

I'm still working on it. I wanted to put more barbed wire here at the top. And it definitely needs more nails. I was inspired by the chiaroscuro technique for the painted accents.

TAYLOR

It's very... interesting.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (43)

TERRY

Thank you, Taylor.....Would you like to touch it?

JAMIE

I like it. It's fabulous. Is that Ronnie with the nail through her head?

TERRY

(pleased)

Yes! It is! Brilliant!

JAMIE

Well, you've really captured her. You've definitely got talent.

RONNIE

That's supposed to be me?

JAMIE

Not literally Ronnie. It's abstract, right Terry?

TERRY

Sure. Why not?

JAMIE

It works. Doesn't it tell a story? Don't you feel something when you look at it?

RONNIE

I do. Yes.

TAYLOR

What does the boy doll screwed to Ronnie's stomach symbolize?

TERRY

Excuse me, was there a question?

TAYLOR

Does the male doll represent you? Like how you and Ronnie are one spirit, dealing with the pain of the world? The human condition, the constant struggle?

TERRY

No, no nothing like that. That's not me.

TAYLOR

Who is it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (44)

TERRY
(flippant)

Eh! Some other guy.

RONNIE

What is that sound?

BLAKE

Sorry, it's my stomach. I'm starving.

RONNIE

Have some onion dip.

BLAKE

I do love it, but if I eat even one bite, tomorrow I will have gained back all the weight I lost.

ALEX

I have lost quite a lot of weight. But it wasn't really on purpose.

TERRY

(completely dropping his charm.)
Are we done talking about the sculpture?

JAMIE

Don't be one of those needy artists Terry. We all said it was fabulous. You're very talented. But don't be needy about it.

JORDAN

Is that Captain Crunch shoved into the doll's eye socket?

TERRY

Yes!

JORDAN

So disturbing.

TERRY

Thank you.

Terry waits to see if anyone else has something nice to say. No one does.

TAYLOR

(Changing subjects.)

So Blake, what is yours and Jordan's story? Where did you guys move from?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (45)

BLAKE

Oh, you wouldn't know it. It's a little tiny town out in Indiana. It's very remote. We were glad to get away.

TAYLOR

What brought you here?

BLAKE

Oh you know, this and that. I got the job at the office, and Jordan wasn't...isn't working, so c'est la vie. Here we are.

JAMIE

That is life.

TAYLOR

Do you have family back home?

BLAKE

No, no. I'm an only child, and so is Jordan. Both of our parents are dead. So, no, no family to speak of.

JORDAN

Not really. No family. Everybody's dead. But it's fine. We're over it.

TAYLOR

Kids?

BLAKE

No. No. Kids.

JORDAN

No, they're all dead.

BLAKE

How about you and...your wife?

TAYLOR

No, no children.

BLAKE

That's a shame, I think you would have beautiful babies. You're very handsome. Are you Irish?

TAYLOR

No, no. No Irish in me.

BLAKE

Well, you look Irish. You should check on that.

From out of nowhere, Alex finally speaks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (46)

ALEX

Taylor is from Togo.

BLAKE

I'm sorry?

ALEX

Togo. It's somewhere in Africa. It sounds made up doesn't it?

BLAKE

I've never heard of it.

JAMIE

You don't look African.

TAYLOR

What do Africans look like?

JAMIE

I don't know- more like him.

Jamie motions towards Pat. Everyone looks over at him. Pat is quite uncomfortable. He meekly raises a hand and waves at the room gently. He lowers his arm and has a sip of his drink.

TAYLOR

Caucasians only make up 1% of the Togolese population.

ALEX

His family owned a few diamond mines, right Taylor? But they had to flee the country very quickly under cover of darkness... We're not rich.

BLAKE

Well, you wouldn't be living in this neighborhood if you were!

TAYLOR

(Correcting her.)

People in our neighborhood are in the top, point 1% of the worlds wealthiest people. There are about 6.5 Billion people on earth poorer than any of us.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (47)

JAMIE

God Bless America.

Jamie raises a glass. He then
lights a cigarette.

Everyone except TAYLOR

(Awkward)

America, cheers, etc...

JORDAN

Ronnie, we are so sorry. Everyone has gotten off track, and
your meeting has been hijacked.

RONNIE

Oh it's alright. I think we just need to get everyone's
input, and then put flyers out to the rest of the neighbors.

JAMIE

I'll bring the duct tape, you bring the thumbtacks.

TAYLOR

I think for us, well for me, I could go either way. I'd love
to have the lights, but I do sort of enjoy the darkness as
well. It's quite peaceful when I'm out for a walk or a jog at
night. I just don't want the lights to ruin the character of
the neighborhood. But at the same time, it is a safety issue,
so I think at least a few lights would be nice.

RONNIE

I think Taylor is right. I feel the same.

TERRY

I agree with Taylor too. One hundred percent... What he said.
All of it. Yes, yes, yes. Aces.

PAT

It won't be easy dealing with the city. I believe we are
going to have to prove that they are necessary. I'll make
some phone calls and see what's involved.

RONNIE

One of the girls at work, knows someone who works in city
hall. Should I ask her?

PAT

It couldn't hurt. I know some folks there too.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (48)

RONNIE

I wonder why they didn't put them in when they built the neighborhood originally?

JORDAN

I'll bet streetlights weren't popular back then. I think streetlights really became standard in the sixties.

JAMIE

(Jumping in to correct
Jordan's error.)

Oh no, no, no! That is not true. Not at all.

JORDAN

Excuse me?

PAT

Oh no!!!

JAMIE

Streetlights actually go way back. I mean way, way back. People have always been terrified of the dark and so even the earliest civilizations had some sort of illumination. For instance, one of the first and oldest civilizations on earth created an early version. That was the Aztecs. Or wait a minute. Not them. What's those ones with the fancy headdresses, and they sacrificed virgins, and cut peoples hearts out? Like in that movie?

No one answers.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

They're in Mexico or Guadalajara or Equador. Or Peru?

No one answers.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

They've got that town on the mountain?

PAT

The Incas.

JAMIE

No, not those. You know, whoever they were, they used bamboo that they fashioned into pipes and captured the gases from volcanoes and then lit that gas in clay fixtures to keep away evil spirits at night. Wait. Now I remember, it was the Incas. Well anyway, those Incas hated the dark. Hold on. I might be thinking of the other ones. You know the ones with the calendar?

PAT

The Mayans.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (49)

JAMIE

Anyway. Doesn't matter. Then soon after, during the renaissance the royal people in Europe would light up their palace grounds at night, especially for festivals. They had midgets that carried lanterns and followed them around everywhere at night so that they could see where they were going. Or were they pygmies? I always get those two confused. Anyway, you know, they were low to the ground, so the ladies in those big dresses wouldn't step on those big hoop skirts. I think there is a scene like that in Gone With The Wind, where they show that at a party. With those midgets following all those southern ladies in big renaissance dresses around?

No one responds.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

Or, I don't know, it might be some other movie that has that. But it's pretty interesting.

TAYLOR

Well, that was very illuminating.

Taylor laughs at his own joke. Then
Terry laughs.

JORDAN

Are there a lot of neighborhood meetings like this?

TAYLOR

Jordan, After this meeting you're probably ready to pack up and move back where you came from.

JORDAN

What? Oh no, no, I have put Illinois completely behind me.

BLAKE

Can we just finish up with the street lights? My stomach is killing me. Ronnie, can I use your bathroom?

RONNIE

Sure, it's down the hall second door on the left.

BLAKE

Jordan, we're leaving as soon as I get back.

Blake goes down the hall. Awkward
silence. Terry turns to Alex.

TERRY

So, what kind of cancer do you have?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (50)

ALEX

Not one of the good kinds.

Terry comes up behind Taylor and
rubs his shoulders.

TERRY

(To Taylor)

Must be stressful for you.

TAYLOR

It can be.

TERRY

You're very tense.

Kelsey returns from the bathroom
and takes a seat in the corner.

TERRY (CONT'D)

And handsome.

Terry pats Taylor on the shoulders
and heads back to the bar.

TERRY (CONT'D)

(To Alex)

You're a very lucky lady. It's too bad you waited too long to
have children.

JAMIE

Blake is right, he'd make some beautiful babies if he had an
attractive wife. Don't you think so Pat?

PAT

Yes. He's very handsome. And I think Alex is very pretty.

ALEX

You should go to the eye doctor.

TAYLOR

Have you guys ever considered adopting a child?

JAMIE

Adopting? No, no. I don't like second hand things.

The room is silent.

RONNIE

What about you Pat? Do you think you'll ever have kids?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (51)

PAT
(Emphatic)

No.

TAYLOR

Now, it could happen. Things are getting better- but still. Society has so many ridiculous prejudices and restrictions.

JAMIE

I know. It's just awful. Not all white people are racist. And not all black people are criminals. I read that on one of those postcard things on the internet, what are those postcard things with the funny little sayings called?

TAYLOR

But what you just said- that's an extremely prejudiced thing to say.

JAMIE

What are you talking about? I just paid two races a very big compliment. Racist. That's ridiculous. I'm not racist. That's preposterous. I live with a very intelligent, and articulate black man. Don't I Pat?

Jamie motions to Pat, who is very uncomfortable with the turn this conversation has taken.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

Look at this room! Our neighborhood is like the United Colors of Benneton!... Anybody remember that from the eighties? I am not racist.

TAYLOR

You know, you can have African American friends and still have prejudices against black people, or any other race for that matter.

JAMIE

(offended.)

I'm sorry. I'm not politically correct. I tell it like it is.

TAYLOR

I tell it like it is too, and it's offensive.

PAT

(cheerfully, trying to make peace)

Some of my best friends are racist!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (52)

TAYLOR

Being "politically correct" is having appropriate behavior. It is just another way of saying "not being an asshole". It's just part of living in a society.

JAMIE

I don't know how you did things in Toto, but you sound a little bit like a communist.

Jamie lights up another cigarette.

TAYLOR

Would you mind not smoking?! My wife has cancer!!

Jamie puts out the cigarette.

JAMIE

I'm sorry, why didn't you speak up before? You see, I care about how my actions affect other people.

TAYLOR

I'm sorry. I just wanted to know if you and you're partner had considered having children. I'm sorry if I have offended you.

ALEX

I really don't mind if you want to smoke. Go ahead. It's too late for me.

JAMIE

Not at all. Casey and I have thought about having children someday. But I'd really want to be married first. I know, I know, but I'm kind of old fashioned that way.

RONNIE

You two have been dating for a long time now, haven't you?

JAMIE

Six years. I keep trying to get her to commit to an actual wedding date, but you know Casey. She's a free spirit. But one of these days, I will get her to settle down.

TAYLOR

(Quite confused.)

Who's Casey?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (53)

JAMIE

My fiancée.

PAT

I'm sorry, but can we get back to the street lamps? I've got a ton of stuff to get done tonight.

RONNIE

Yes, yes, sorry everyone. Okay, where were we? Could we all agree that we need between sixteen and twenty lights? (pointing to the map) Maybe one here, and one here, and a whole bunch of them over here...

JORDAN

Why do we need sixteen lights? Won't that be overkill? We don't want it to be too bright.

JAMIE

Well, not until you get that little house of yours fixed up right?!? (Laughs)

JORDAN

Yes, yes. Very soon. I'm working with a very reasonable contractor I found on Craigslist.

RONNIE

So around sixteen will be fine?

JAMIE

Just make sure they don't use those LED lights. They make everything look so ugly. Worst things ever invented.

ALEX

What's an LED light?

JAMIE

It stands for, Light Every Day.

ALEX

Ah okay. Sorry. So dumb.

TAYLOR

They do save energy. Good for the planet, good for global warming. That's why I drive an all electric car. It keeps my carbon footprint well below average. So, I'm doing my part.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (54)

ALEX
It cost over a hundred thousand dollars. That's for just one car.

JAMIE
Oh, do not get me started on that warming brouhaha. It was freezing last winter. I can't remember it being colder.

TAYLOR
(Taking Jamie on.)
If the earth warms up and people start starving to death, society will fall apart and quickly.

JAMIE
Which is why I always carry a gun.

TAYLOR
You know society is held together with spit and that scotch tape you like to talk about. It could come apart very easily and when it does, it won't be pretty.

Blake returns from the bathroom.

BLAKE
Ronnie do you have some scrubbing bubbles and some bleach?

TAYLOR
You know, just because it's cold out doesn't mean the earth isn't warming.

RONNIE
For what?

JAMIE
I'm sorry, but last January it snowed every day for three weeks. It was freaking cold. Am I right?

RONNIE
It was pretty cold. Is everything okay Blake?

BLAKE
Don't panic. But I had a bit of an explosion. Don't worry. I'll clean it up. Do you have a mop and a bucket?

RONNIE
Um. Don't worry about it. We'll take care of it.

BLAKE
Okay. It isn't pretty. Grapefruit seeds everywhere.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (55)

PAT

I think I'm going to head home. Jamie, I think you should come too.

JAMIE

No, no Pat. Don't be like that. Look, we're finally getting a chance to meet all the neighbors.

PAT

I think we should go home... before things happen.

JAMIE

You're so silly. He's so silly. I agree with Ronnie. Sixteen to twenty streetlights. The city owes us at least that. We pay taxes.

PAT

I am not silly.

JAMIE

Okay, he's not silly. He's a stick in the mud. Now where were we? I'm no fan of taxes, but there are two things I don't mind spending tax money on. Infrastructure and prisons.

TAYLOR

Well, we agree on that. It is shameful how prisoners are treated in this country.

JAMIE

I know! Round the clock cable television, libraries, free gym. I heard they are even getting food catered in from the Cheesecake Factory.

JORDAN

What?

JAMIE

I know! I hope it's not true, but it would not surprise me.

JORDAN

(offended, speaking up)

Actually prison conditions in this country are deplorable! Have you been to one?

JAMIE

I don't need to see something in person to know it exists.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (56)

JORDAN

Just don't believe everything you read. For the most part, prison conditions are just awful.

BLAKE

Jordan. Drop it. Okay? I'm fine with sixteen streetlights, as long as they are not right in front of my house.

JORDAN

I just don't want misinformation getting out there. I'm sorry I got upset. When Brooke and I moved here, we said we were going to make new friends, and make a fresh start.

BLAKE

(Cutting Jordan off.)

Oh hell, I don't care, put the lights wherever you want them. I'll close the drapes.

RONNIE

Okay sixteen to twenty street lamps. Now, where would we like them placed?

Terry is back at the bar making himself a strawberry daiquiri. He uses fresh strawberries, and makes a rather complicated drink.

TERRY

You decide honey! We trust you!

RONNIE

Doesn't anyone want some cookies? Or some pound cake? There's two slices cut already so, you know, you might as well eat it. It'll just go stale.

Pat decides it is time wrap things up.

PAT

Sixteen lights, and I say we let the city decide what's best on where they go. Ronnie can write it all up, and then we can hand out flyers to the neighbors. Once we get feedback from everyone in the neighborhood, Ronnie can draft something up. I'll take a look at it to see if there are any legal or code issues we have to be aware of. Then I'll take it down to city hall. I've got some friends there from all my trial work, and I will push them to see if they can help get this thing moving. Good? Okay? Goodnight.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (57)

Jamie lights up another cigarette. He realizes at the last minute that it could affect Alex's cancer, so he puts it out and makes a little bow to Alex. He smiles warmly at her.

RONNIE

I think that's a great plan Pat. Would you like a sugar cookie?

PAT

I guess we're staying. Did you make them yourself?

RONNIE

I did! How could you tell?

PAT

Oh, homemade cookies are always a little uneven, always different one from another. Box cookies are all identical.

Ronnie starts to closely examine the cookies because she is quite worried that they are uneven.

JAMIE

Great. Done. Now we'll all have plenty of light, whether you've got a big house like ours or a tiny one like some people have.

TAYLOR

My wife and I are actually considering downsizing to minimize our impact on the planet. Have you heard of the Little House movement? It's about getting away from material things and focusing on what's really important.

ALEX

We have a little house in the backyard that Taylor makes me live in sometimes.

JAMIE

Well, make sure you leave space for your shoes. People forget shoes. And you need a place for at least a couple of suits. And then a spot for your guns.

ALEX

I think it's just a shed.

TAYLOR

We're thinking of going off grid.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (58)

ALEX

There are a lot of rakes and shovels in there.

TAYLOR

Getting back to basics. Get rid of all that unnecessary crap.

ALEX

I like to watch Netflix.

Blake wants to be back in the
conversation again.

BLAKE

(speaking up.)

I don't watch TV anymore. There's nothing good on.

JAMIE

(Correcting her.)

What?! Oh, no no no.

PAT

Fuck! (places his hand over his mouth quickly)

JAMIE

Have you seen that show, it's about that guy, and he's a senator or congressman, but he's totally crooked, and only this one woman knows and she's a waitress, or wait...she works in a place where you can get your nails done. What is that called?

PAT

A nail salon.

JAMIE

No, it's like a place where you go and there are Chinese ladies who rub your feet and -

KELSEY

(Leaping to her feet.)

SHUT UP! SHUT UP! SHUT UP! Please just shut up, and get the fucking streetlights.

Everyone turns and looks at Kelsey.
There is quite a delay. Silence.
Finally Blake speaks.

BLAKE

Kelsey, don't be rude. I'm sorry everyone. She hardly ever speaks. She was quiet on the whole drive over from Fairhaven.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (59)

TAYLOR
Did you take the 434 or Lakeview?

BLAKE
I don't drive anymore, but Jordan took the 434 right?

TERRY
Lakeview is generally faster.

RONNIE
But it's so far out of the way.

KELSEY
(Screams at the top of her
lungs)
Ahhhhhhhhh!!!!

BLAKE
Kelsey! I'm so sorry everyone. She's a vegan.

JAMIE
(Sad for Kelsey)
Ohhh.

JORDAN
And she's been through a lot. She hasn't been the same since
she lost her parents.

BLAKE
Let's not talk about that. It's depressing.

RONNIE TYLER
Oh dear, that's awful! I'm so sorry!

JAMIE
Well, I hope you find them.

Silence.

JAMIE (CONT'D)
I'm kidding, I'm kidding. I just don't like when people say
they've "lost" someone. It's not like they're going to turn
up.

TAYLOR
What happened?

BLAKE
Oh, don't put her through it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (60)

JORDAN

Yes, we should go.

KELSEY

Six years ago. It was early October. I had to stay late at school to finish a science project. It was about the nature of space, particularly black holes. Did you know that in a black hole the gravity is so strong that nothing can escape it? Not even light? If you were to fall into a black hole you would be stretched and stretched until you just dissolved. A scientist has actually hypothesized, that mathematically black holes cannot and do not even exist. If that were true it would challenge our entire view of the universe and its creation. But I believe that they are out there, and that they do exist. You know, no human has actually ever seen one? We can detect them, but we've never seen one. But we can feel them. There is one in the center of our galaxy, and it is slowly sucking everything we know into it, nothing can escape. There is a point of no return, and no one can escape it. We know it's there, but we ignore it, because it is the only way we can go on living. I had just put the finishing touches on the project, and I gathered all of my things together because I knew my parents were going to pick me up and take me to soccer practice. I don't play anymore, but I was pretty good at soccer. The week before I had actually scored the winning goal. Anyhow, I walked down the hall, went to my locker and spun the combination lock, 23 right, 16 left, 4 right. I got out my books, I had a research paper due on Benjamin Franklin, and his contributions to America following the Revolution. I put everything in my book bag and headed down the hall. I stopped at the drinking fountain. The water was warm but it tasted good. There was no one else in the building, and it was silent. You know, when there is no one around, and it's just quiet, and all you hear is the clip clop of your shoes on the linoleum floors. It smelled like old paper and floor cleaner. I came out of the front door and I went to wait down by the curb for my parents to come. The leaves had just begun to change. They were at that point when they are not quite green, but they haven't quite turned colors yet. You can barely make out the reds and oranges that you know will come. You can't see them. But they are there, and you can feel them. You can feel that they are about to turn, and if the temperature drops just a degree or two they will burst into color. Fall was my favorite time of year. I waited. I could feel it getting cooler. I started to be able to see my breath floating in front of my face. Then I heard it off in the distance, my parents car had a distinct rattle, and I could tell it was them. Finally I saw the car headed toward me. The sun was just about to set. It wasn't setting yet, but it was about to and you could feel it. The car was way off in the distance at first, and I could barely make it out. But I knew it was them because of that distinct rattle.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (61)

KELSEY (CONT'D)

After about a minute or two the car had gotten close enough that I could see them. My dad was smiling. My Mom reached her hand out the window and she was waving at me. Have you ever heard that sound when someone drops a stack of dishes? Not just a plate or a random glass. But a whole stack? The crash was something like that. But it was as if the dishes were dropped next to your head, with random shards piercing your eardrums until all you can hear is muffled screams. Another car had run right through a stop sign and barreled right into the drivers side. My father disappeared, or he was instantly unrecognizable. The car spun around and I could see my mothers arm still sort of waving at me as the car skidded into a street lamp, and finally everything was still again. I was frozen for a moment or two, but then I ran to the car, and I could see my mother's door was slightly ajar. She was alive, but just barely. I knew she probably only had moments. You couldn't see anything was terribly wrong. But you could feel it. She opened her mouth to speak but there were no words. Just an awful gurgling sound. I saw her eyes change, the light in them went out. I felt a hand on my shoulder. It was the couple from the other car, who were somehow miraculously completely unharmed. The man was shaking and pale and I thought he might pass out on the spot. That was three weeks and two days before my eighteenth birthday. There was no party that year. Later, much later, the husband went to prison because he claimed he was driving. But I don't think he was.

Everyone sits for quite sometime,
taking in this shocking and
unexpected story. Finally Ronnie
speaks.

RONNIE

That's awful. So awful. I'm so sorry.

TAYLOR

Terrible, terrible. You poor thing.

PAT

You are way too young to have
witnessed something like
that.

ALEX

I'm so so sorry, sweetie.

RONNIE

I can't believe it. It's just horrifying.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (62)

JAMIE
(irritated)

What do you mean not even light can escape? Where does it go?

KELSEY
No one knows. No one knows where the light goes.

BLAKE
We should go.

RONNIE
I'm glad you had your Aunt and Uncle to take care of you. You're lucky in that respect.

The doorbell rings. Terry heads over to answer it.

TERRY
Who could that be?

In the doorway is an absolutely gorgeous woman in her late twenties to early thirties. She is dressed as if she is about to attend a rather fancy party at a country club. Her hair is piled on her head, and obviously was done at great expense. She might be mistaken for a super model. Her name is Casey, and Terry invites her inside.

CASEY
Hi, is Jamie here?

JAMIE
Case! What are you doing here?

PAT
Oh no!!!

Casey walks over to Jamie. They kiss, long and hard. Very inappropriate.

CASEY
I had to stay late at church. Then I remembered that you had written this address and time on the board in the kitchen, so I thought I should come to the meeting.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (63)

PAT

No. No, no, no.

JAMIE

Oh right! Everyone this is my girlfriend slash fiancée, Casey. We were just talking about how many street lights we should get, and also this young ladies parents died in a horrible car accident.

CASEY

I'm so sorry to hear that.

RONNIE

It's just a terrible story.

CASEY

At least you know that now they're with Jesus.

JAMIE

(Trying to lighten Kelsey's mood)

Which is way better than Indiana.

CASEY

Were they saved?

KELSEY

No. They're dead.

CASEY

Only physically dead.

TERRY

(Drinking his daiquiri.)

That's the worst kind.

Casey goes over to Kelsey and takes Kelsey's hands into her own.

CASEY

You mustn't give up hope for them. Or for yourself. You have a long and fruitful life ahead of you. "For yay, I say unto thee, thou shalt not despair in the tawny grip of death. For thou art not truly dead though thou not breathest and thy brain is as old cabbage." Corinthians. 14:92

BLAKE

I really think we should go. Kelsey needs to get some rest.

JORDAN

Thank you all, and let us know how it -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (64)

Kelsey stubbornly stays seated. She sinks into her chair even deeper.

KELSEY

I'm not leaving. Not now. I'm not going to miss the ending. I want to see how this turns out.

RONNIE

How what turns out?

KELSEY

Don't you see it? Can't you feel it? It's quite clear.

BLAKE

Kelsey. You are not making any sense at all. You are speaking nonsense.

KELSEY

It's not what I'm saying. It's what I'm not saying.

A very, very long silence.

BLAKE

Kelsey. Please. We don't understand. What are you trying to say?

Kelsey stands and walks towards the middle of the room.

KELSEY

Oh no? Isn't it obvious? Well, it is to me.

Everyone waits to hear what Kelsey might have to say.

KELSEY (CONT'D)

Someone is going to die. Someone at this ridiculous meeting about streetlights. Soon. Very soon. And it's going to be spectacular.

They sit in silence. The only sound is the chewing of ice and the tinkling of the cocktail glasses.

BLACKOUT

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO: RONNIE AND TERRY'S LIVING ROOM, IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING.

Everyone is in the exact same positions. They sit awkwardly for quite awhile.

KELSEY

Isn't somebody going to say something?!

BLAKE

Kelsey, I'm sorry we brought you. You can't come to a party and suddenly announce that someone is going to die. It's very, very rude. I'm sorry. You weren't ready, now lets just go home and you can get some-

KELSEY

(spiteful, spitting out the words)

I said. I am not leaving. Aunt Blake. Everyone, just carry on. Pretend that I'm not here.

Jamie is ready to take control of this very uncomfortable situation.

JAMIE

All right. We get it. You're acting out because you're not the center of attention. I know exactly how you feel. Pat and I went to my high school reunion last summer. It was a nightmare. So, I get you Kelsey. I get it. People like us crave attention, and when we don't get it, we do and say crazy things. I don't know if your little story was true, maybe it was, maybe it wasn't. It doesn't matter. We all care about you, especially your Aunt and Uncle, but sometimes you just can't be the center of attention. You just can't. It's a hard lesson to learn, I know it's tough to hear, but I'm speaking from experience, and I can save you a lot of pain and a lot of tears. Now come here.

Kelsey just sits. Jamie goes over and gives her a perfunctory hug.

CASEY

"For yay I see unto thee, he who comforts his neighbor in a time of despair, shall be rewarded ten fold, with hugs galore, shielding thee from the tawny grip of hopelessness" Paul's letter to the Filipinos 17:76

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CONTINUED:

JAMIE

Okay. Back to business. Ronnie, you were talking about the placement of the lights. I think we should really nail that down before we go any further. Terry, can I get another Vodka cran? Pat do you want one?

PAT

Sure. Why not? We're not driving.

TERRY

Would anybody else like to have a drink that's made with Vodka?

ALEX

I'd like to have Sex On The Beach. Who's with me?

TAYLOR

Alex, you know you can't drink.

ALEX

What's it going to do kill me? (Laughs)

Terry makes drinks and distributes them.

JAMIE

Go ahead Ronnie. The lights. What do you think?

RONNIE

Um. Well. I think they should be at regular intervals to distribute the light evenly.

JAMIE

(To Kelsey)

Yes. I agree. We wouldn't want any black holes, where not even light can escape popping up randomly. (Terry hands drink) Thank you Terry.

TAYLOR

Random light. That's how it all started you know- Bang. And here we go.

JAMIE

Big Bang my ass. Big Fraud is more like it.

TAYLOR

What are you saying? That you don't believe in universally accepted science?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JAMIE

I know how the Universe was created. Right Casey?

CASEY

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And stegosauruses. "...The Gospel according to John... Hammond 19:93

TAYLOR

Is that the chapter and verse or the year you think the earth was formed?

RONNIE

I think we should draw out a map, and mark where they should go.

TAYLOR

(He can't let it go.)

You know the Bible is a product of its time right?

PAT

Jesus Christ!!!! (places hand over his mouth)

TAYLOR

It's actually a brilliant piece of literature. The metaphors are stunning.

JAMIE

A woman wants to eat a piece of fruit, and a talking snake encourages her to do so, even though he knows it will destroy her relationship? Does that sound like a metaphor to you? To me it just sounds scary as hell. Which is where you are apparently going to end up.

TAYLOR

I don't believe in Hell.

JAMIE

Do you believe in gravity?

TAYLOR

Of course.

JAMIE

Well, if you stopped believing in it do you think you would fly off the planet and be launched into outer space?

TAYLOR

The idea of Hell, sounds suspiciously like something someone made up to scare and control someone else.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

TAYLOR (CONT'D)

It sounds like a very human way to frighten people into doing what you want them to do.

JAMIE

Are you frightened of your flesh being burned off of your bones for the rest of eternity?

TAYLOR

No I am not. I don't believe in it. I don't believe in organized religion.

JAMIE

Well, it's a thing. I give 10% of my gross income to our church. It helps the less fortunate.

TAYLOR

I prefer to give through private charities. Then I know where the money is going and who I'm helping.

ALEX

(To no one in particular)

We were saving a Guatemalan child for a few months, but then, you know, the Tesla.

JAMIE

You'll see. I did my duty. I tried to save you, but you were smarter than me. Smarter than God.

Casey walks over to Taylor and takes his hands into hers. She looks him in the eye.

CASEY

"For yay, thou shalt not attempt to outsmart the Lord your God. For if thou do-est such, thou shalt fall as a tower falls when struck abruptly and with malice." Muslims 9:11.

TAYLOR

You know what really bugs me? When someone is telling me, if I don't live my life, by their rules, then I am somehow less than they are.

Jamie takes Casey's purse from her, opens it, removes a hairbrush and begins brushing her hair.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

JAMIE

Part of the deal, is I have to make an effort to save you. I have to try three times. If the third time doesn't work, and you burn, I did my part.

TAYLOR

Maybe I don't want you to save me.

JAMIE

Here's the thing. If you were in a burning building it would be my moral duty to save you. I'd have to do everything I could to save you. I'd have to try and save you three times. Now do you understand? (To Casey) Tilt your head this way.

TAYLOR

The difference is, you don't know with complete certainty that the building is actually on fire. You believe it is. You have faith that it is. But there is no smoke. There is no heat. There is no concrete evidence of fire. It is just your faith that believes in the fire. There may be a fire. There may not. So I choose whether or not I want to leave the building.

JAMIE

Oh there's fire.

TAYLOR

I don't think so.

JAMIE

And it's about to incinerate your ass. (To Casey) Now don't fuss at it.

Jamie puts the brush away.

CASEY

You should come to our Bible study. Our group meets on Wednesday evenings, and every evening of every week.

TAYLOR

Your group?

CASEY

Jamie, myself and Pat.

JAMIE

(To Taylor)

Don't you believe in God?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

PAT

Please, no one come to Bible study. It's not what it sounds like.

TAYLOR

Actually I do believe in something greater than us. You can call it God if you like. Don't you believe we are all God's children?

JAMIE

Of course.

TAYLOR

And if your children misbehave, would you stick them in the oven?

JAMIE

What did they do?

TAYLOR

Maybe they were gay.

Silence.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)

I'm just saying, the God you are describing sounds like an incredible asshole. And if, God forbid, God is an incredible asshole then I would prefer not to have anything to do with him.

JAMIE

You have made me uncomfortable.

PAT

I'm uncomfortable! Is anyone else uncomfortable? Should we all just leave right now?

TAYLOR

I'm sorry, but you brought it up.

JAMIE

(Trying for some back-up)

Ronnie, don't you believe in God?

RONNIE

What? Yes of course I do. I told you I'm Jewish.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

JAMIE

Have you considered converting?

RONNIE

Actually. Yes. I have. I'd really like to get Christmas presents. I'm kind of glad Terry and I never had kids, because I was just going to feel guilty every December that we were Jewish and they would never meet Santa.

TERRY

Oh, is that why we never had kids?

JAMIE

It is a bit tragic isn't it? When Casey and I get married, we are going to have many, many children. And they will all know Jesus and Santa. I feel so sad for all the poor little Jewish boys and girls.

TAYLOR

And Muslims.

JAMIE

What?

TAYLOR

They don't have Santa either.

JAMIE

Fuck them.

PAT

Terry, can I have another?? And does anyone happen to have a couple of spare Xanax?

Ronnie, Blake and Alex grab Xanax from their purses/pockets and give them to Pat who takes them with whiskey.

CASEY

"Some say the world will end in fire, some say in ice cubes."
Elevation: 18 hundred feet.

JAMIE

Isn't she something? Darling you are a delight. (To the group) Everyone loves Casey, you know. I just don't deserve her... Well I do, but you get my meaning. (Laughs) She is so darned entertaining. Isn't she Pat?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

PAT
(Flatly.)
We should sell tickets.

JAMIE
And she has quite the voice...

PAT
(monotone)
Don't.

JAMIE
She's always singing around the house.

PAT
(monotone)
Please.

JAMIE
Casey, why don't we do one of our songs?

PAT
(monotone)
Stop. What about the streetlights.

JAMIE
Ronnie, where's your piano?

RONNIE
We don't have a piano.

JAMIE
(Laughing)
You don't? I thought everyone owned a piano. Guitar?

RONNIE
I used to play the guitar in college. I haven't touched it in years. It's in the closet. I'm sure it's really out of tune.

JAMIE
I'll be the judge of that. I've been studying up on music for awhile now.

PAT
No you haven't.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

Pat takes another Xanax. Ronnie gets a dusty guitar out of the closet and hands it to Jamie.

JAMIE

I've been writing some songs.

CASEY

Yes, he has. And then he makes me sing them. But there are no words so I have to make them up as I go along.

JAMIE

She's very good at it. But she insists on keeping her light under a bushel, don't you Casey?

CASEY

I hate myself.

Jamie plays the guitar. It doesn't really matter what chords he plays.

JAMIE

Jump in anytime.

Jamie plays and Casey sings. She's a bit terrified but she has done this many times before. She becomes more comfortable as she goes along.

CASEY

(Singing as best she can. She should seem like she is making it up as she goes along, but the words should be exact from the actress)

LA LA LA LA LA LA LA LA LA

IT'S SO NICE TO MEET ALL YOU NICE PEOPLE.

WHAT A NICE NEIGHBORHOOD THIS IS.

LA LA LA LA LA LA LA

(To Jordan)

SOMETIMES I SEE YOU GETTING YOUR MAIL AND I WONDER WHAT THAT MAIL IS ALL ABOUT.

MOSTLY BECAUSE I NEVER GET MAIL.

I'M NOT REALLY ALLOWED.

FA LA LA LA LA LA LA LA.

(Turns to Taylor)

I LIKE TO WATCH WHEN YOU WATER YOUR GRASS.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (9)

CASEY (CONT'D)

YOU WATER IT A LOT, SO I WATCH YOU A LOT FROM THE KITCHEN WINDOW. BUT NOT IN A CREEPY WAY.

I JUST WISH I LIVED WITH YOU AND HAD NICE GRASS LIKE THAT. SOMETIMES I ALSO WATCH YOU JOGGING AT NIGHT. I LIKE WHEN YOU WEAR THOSE CUT OFF SWEATPANTS AND JOG UP AND DOWN AND UP AND DOWN AND UP AND DOWN.

THEN I ASK JESUS TO FORGIVE ME, BECAUSE I'M NOT A GOOD PERSON WHEN YOU GET RIGHT DOWN TO IT.

DOOBIE DOOBIE DOOBIE DOO DOOBIE DOOBIE DOOBIE DOO

I LIKE WHEN THERE ARE YARD SALES, AND I LIKE HALLOWEEN, AND I LIKE WHEN IT RAINS AND THE WATER RUSHES DOWN THE DRAIN AND I WONDER WHERE IT REALLY GOES.

(To Blake)

YOU HAVE VERY PRETTY HAIR, ESPECIALLY FOR AN OLDER LADY, AND I LIKE YOUR BIG TREE.

BUT I WORRY THAT IN A STORM IT MAY FALL THROUGH YOUR WINDOW AND CRUSH YOU IN YOUR SLEEP.

THEN I THINK, THAT'S NOT THE WORST THING THAT COULD HAPPEN. THERE ARE MUCH WORSE THINGS.

DEEP DARK AND SINFUL THINGS THAT GO ON BEHIND CLOSED DOORS. AND, THAT'S WHY WE NEED STREETLIGHTS!

LA LA LA LA LA LA LA LA LA LA.

Silence. Then a little bit of awkward applause.

JAMIE

You are my Angel of Music.

CASEY

Thank you.

PAT

That was a short one.

RONNIE

(Trying to be kind.)

And you just... made it up as you went along?

JAMIE

Amazing isn't it? She's like my little autistic dumpling.

Jamie puts down the guitar and kisses Casey on the head. Ronnie changes the subject quickly.

RONNIE

Casey, when are you guys going to finally set a date for your wedding? I know Jamie is ready. It's all he talks about.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (10)

CASEY

I really want to. I do. I do. It just has to be when the time is right. When I think about it, it just makes me nervous and I start sweating like crazy. And I know it sounds shallow, but I really don't want armpit stains on my wedding dress when I walk down the aisle. Plus, I'm a virgin.

RONNIE

What?

CASEY

I've never had a ding dong in my hoo hah.

RONNIE

(what did she just say?)

Never?

JAMIE

It will be a fabulous wedding. I have it all designed. I'm coordinating the bridesmaids and groomsman with the flowers. Did you know you can color match that now? Pat looks great in Burgundy. He is going to make a great Best Man. Aren't you Pat?

PAT

Terry, hit me again.

TERRY

Blimey!!! We're almost out of Vodka! It's been very popular tonight! Who knew?

RONNIE

Terry. Knock it off, okay?

TERRY

What do you mean?

RONNIE

You're embarrassing me.

TAYLOR

Terry, I think you've had a little bit too much, and maybe we should all just call it a night. My wife and I are going to take off.

TERRY

(flirty)

Why don't you take off your shirt and walk around the room a little bit. Everyone would enjoy that. I know I would.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (11)

RONNIE

I'm sorry everyone, when he drinks, he gets like this.

JAMIE

You know what they say, don't you? The difference between a straight man and a gay man?... (Waits) Three cocktails.

TAYLOR

Okay, that's enough.

RONNIE

Thank you Taylor. I'm glad someone has some sense.

TAYLOR

Someone has to.

RONNIE

Well you're a very good person.

TAYLOR

And so are you.

RONNIE

Thank you.

TAYLOR

You're welcome.

ALEX

(To Taylor & Ronnie loudly)

Oh for Christ sake will you two just fuck and get it over with?! Jesus! It's disgusting!

TAYLOR

Alex!

ALEX

No. Take Ronnie down the hall, go in the bathroom and just fuck her. Bend her over the toilet and just fuck her. Just fuck her. Fuck. Fuck. Fuck. Fuck her.

TERRY

Thank you!

BLAKE

I would not recommend the bathroom.

JAMIE

Am I missing something?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (12)

BLAKE

Are we done talking about the street lights?

Terry walks over to the map.

TERRY

No! No, no, no. Let's wrap this up! If we put a light here and one here, that will actually take care of Blake and Jordan's street, and, Blake you'll be happy to hear this, we can do it without putting it directly in front of your house. Then if we put three lights over here, Jamie and Pat and Casey will be set. Now, it looks like we've got this dark area over here on Alex and Taylor's street. We could put two lights right here, but then it might be too bright for when Taylor and Ronnie go into these woods for their bi-weekly shag-a-thon. So, I leave it up to everyone else, whether or not we need those two lights. Show of hands. Who thinks that there should be two lights on Horizon Street?

Blake and Jamie raise their hands.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Great, and who thinks we should just leave it dark for privacy?

Alex raises her hand.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Wait a minute not everyone voted. Okay, once again, who thinks-

RONNIE

Terry, you are embarrassing yourself, and you are embarrassing me.

JAMIE

Ronnie, are you and Taylor you know- ? (makes a gesture putting his finger into his fist)

RONNIE

Of course not. It's ridiculous. I don't even know where this is coming from.

TAYLOR

Ronnie, we did say we were going to tell them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (13)

RONNIE

(Irritated and dismayed)

Not tonight we didn't.

TAYLOR

Terry, can we be gentlemen about this?

TERRY

Oh, sod off.

RONNIE

Will you stop with the fucking British words already? You go to London for one long weekend and suddenly you're Ian-fucking-Mckellan.

TERRY

You decide to take up jogging, which you hate, and suddenly you're Ronnie- fucking- Taylor.

JAMIE

I should warn you, that fornication is a sin.

PAT

Being a hypocrite is also a sin you know.

JAMIE

(irritated)

Did you say something Pat?

PAT

(angry)

I'm tired of having to pray for forgiveness after every time. (Gesturing towards Casey) And I'm sorry, but it is just weird having her watch us do it.

CASEY

Dear Lord, please bring your righteous rapture forth and deliver me unto thy holy light.

Casey waits to be raptured. Pat approaches Jamie, and he is absolutely furious.

PAT

You know what?! You really shouldn't be talking to any of these people about how to live their lives, or whether or not what they do is a sin!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (14)

JAMIE

(right back in Pat's face)

You are making a scene. I have told you a thousand times. It is not a sin if I am thinking about Jesus when we do it. I'm sorry everyone, I apologize for Pat's uncalled for and very awkward outburst. We should say goodnight.

Jamie starts to leave, Pat grabs his arm.

PAT

No. Lets stay. Let's get everything out in the open. Let's tell everyone what goes on in "Bible Study".

JAMIE

Oh Pat, no one wants to listen to you go on and on with long, pointless stories.

PAT

(to everyone)

Jamie and I have sex while Casey watches and prays for our souls.

JAMIE

It's not what it sounds like.

PAT

It's exactly what it sounds like.

JAMIE

Okay, it is what it sounds like.

PAT

I warned you before we left the house! Before we left what did I say?!

JAMIE

Don't tell long stories about random things.

PAT

And what else?

JAMIE

Don't talk about Casey because it makes you feel like you're not important. And that it's weird....But I had to talk about something!

PAT

Someone doesn't always have to talk!!! Sometimes NOT talking is okay!!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (15)

JAMIE

If no one talks, then everybody is bored. I don't want to be boring.

PAT

(softening)

You could never, ever be boring. Not if you tried. I'm the boring one, not you. Look, we've been together a long time, you're fascinating and funny and you have a big ... personality ... But you can not continue to have a confused woman with self esteem issues living with us like some homeless chihuahua.

JAMIE

That is not how it is!!

CASEY

(standing)

Would anyone care to hear another song? (Sings) Jimmy cracked corn and I don't care, Jimmy cracked corn and I don't care...

PAT

Casey!! Sit!

She sits.

PAT (CONT'D)

Good girl.

Kelsey has grabbed the serving spatula from the lemon pound cake, she has gotten behind Blake. She grabs Blake by the hair, pulls her head back, and holds the cake server up to Blake's throat.

KELSEY

Keep away from me! (To Blake viciously) I have been waiting for this moment for six long years. You have ruined my life. I have no future. And now neither do you.

Kelsey becomes more restrained and matter-of-fact.

KELSEY (CONT'D)

What bothers me the most is how kind you were about it. As if kindness could make up for everything else. Maybe you thought it was the right thing to do, maybe you thought it was your obligation to take care of me.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (16)

KELSEY (CONT'D)

Maybe you didn't want to be alone in that big house all by yourself for all those years while he (indicates Jordan) was sitting in prison. But the most terrible part is that none of the reasons you took me in were because you were sorry. I don't think you were sorry, I don't think you are sorry. I don't think you are capable of thinking about anyone other than yourself. Who would let their husband, take the blame for something they had done? If I thought you were even in the smallest way just the tiniest bit sorry, I could let this go. But we both know that you are not. If you could have just driven away, I think you would have. I think part of you, probably most of you, wishes I had been out of the picture. That maybe, if you could have been just a little bit later coming down that road, and caught all three of us in the car, things would have been less messy. Metaphorically, not literally. No loose ends. I know I often wish I had been killed in that accident. I pray for that to be true, because then I wouldn't be here now, having to do what I am about to do.

Kelsey pulls Blake's head back
revealing her neck even more.

BLAKE

(sincere)

But I am sorry, Kelsey. I've tried to make things up to you.

KELSEY

Make it up to me? Like maybe you buy me a new dress and we all go to Disneyland together?

JORDAN

Kelsey. Please.

KELSEY

(Turning her anger to Jordan)

And you are no better. You may have thought you were doing a noble thing, taking all the blame. But you left me alone with her. For six years. And you left her alone with a car and plenty of alcohol.

JORDAN

What are you saying?

KELSEY

How many people Brooke? I'm not sure how you got away with it over and over, but how many people do you think you've killed?

BLAKE

I don't know. A few?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (17)

JORDAN

You've killed other people?

BLAKE

I don't know. I can't keep track of everything.

JORDAN

I'm NOT going to prison for you again!

BLAKE

Nobody asked you to go to prison in the first place. You did that all on your own. Stop acting like some kind of martyr.

RONNIE

Kelsey, put down the spatula!

KELSEY

Everyone just stay back. I am not finished yet...

JAMIE

(Stepping in.)

Oh yes you are. I know all about you Kelsey. You are what we like to call an "attention whore". I'm sorry you didn't feel included in the conversation. I'm sorry you feel left out. I'm sorry things in your life haven't gone just the way you would have liked them to. I'm sorry, but life is hard. Is that enough "I'm sorries" for you? It's time that you looked inside yourself, and see that the only one holding you back... is you.

Jamie inches just a few steps closer to Kelsey. She tenses up as he approaches. But, eventually she is listening intently to what Jamie has to say.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

(Tenderly)

I know that's a difficult lesson to learn. Yes, you have been through a lot, but, you know what? So has everyone else in this room. So has everyone else on this planet. It's time to take responsibility for Kelsey. Because only Kelsey, can help Kelsey. And Jesus. Jesus can help Kelsey too, if you will only let him.

KELSEY

You know what? You are a very annoying person.

Kelsey pulls Blake's head back violently, she goes to cut Blake's throat with the cake server.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (18)

Jamie immediately pulls out a gun
and shoots Kelsey in the head.

TAYLOR

Jesus Christ!

The silence is deafening. Kelsey
has crumpled behind the sofa, out
of sight, but everyone still stares
at her body.

RONNIE

(panicking and a bit
confused)

It was just a cake spatula.

JAMIE

(casually)

It was a judgement call. I had to think quickly.

RONNIE

It was a spatula!

JORDAN

My God, what have you done?!

TERRY

You shot her in the head!

JAMIE

(examining his gun. making
sure it isn't damaged or
smudged.)

She was going to kill her.

Blake is visibly upset, but perhaps
more embarrassed for having caused
a scene than anything else.

BLAKE

I'm so sorry. She would do things like this at home all the
time. We should never have brought her over.

JORDAN

(confused and apologetic)

We thought she needed to socialize more.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (19)

JORDAN (CONT'D)

Get out of the house meet some of the neighbors! Get involved in a project. Try to move on with her life... and now look at her.

TERRY

You shot her. In. The. Head.

The evening has taken it's toll on Casey and she begins to have a nervous breakdown.

CASEY

So much blood. I really wanted to save her. She was such a troubled soul. I could feel it.

RONNIE

What should we do?

CASEY

(sinks to the floor.)

Jesus Christ....that's a lot of blood.

TAYLOR

There's really nothing we can do.

RONNIE

Should we try to revive her? Maybe she'll be okay?

TERRY

(Looking down at Kelsey.)

She has no face.

RONNIE

This is the worst thing that has ever happened to me. The worst thing. By far. Once I stepped on a lizard. In my bare feet. But this... it's way worse.

JAMIE

It was self defense. She left me with no choice.

TAYLOR

For it to be self defense she would have to have been threatening you.

JAMIE

(Becoming a bit irritated,
waving the gun around)

She was threatening that lady. What was I supposed to do? Let her slit her throat? You're all a bunch of pussies. You should be thanking me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (20)

BLAKE

I appreciate the gesture, but I think you may have over reacted...

Jamie stares at Blake in disbelief.

BLAKE (CONT'D)

(Explaining to Jamie and to
the group)

...Just a little bit. She wasn't going to really hurt me. She gave that speech at least twice a week. Last time it was an egg beater.

JAMIE

(Annoyed.)

Well, you could have mentioned that before I shot her.

RONNIE

What are we supposed to do?! We can't just leave her there.

PAT

(to Jamie, angry)

I told you to leave your gun at home. I told you. I told you three times. I knew this was going to happen. I knew it.

CASEY

(crying and muttering all of
the following.)
Oh Lord, please take your
child Kelsey unto thy holy
kingdom, where thou art
living presently. Oh
righteous one, please shine
your heavenly light upon
her, and take her into thy
care forthwith.

JAMIE

This is no time to play the
blame game, Who knows whose
fault this all really is,
who knows who shot who?

TAYLOR

You did.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (21)

CASEY

Let her not go into the
darkness where even thine
illumination cannot reach.
Let her not be cast down into
the blackness where the
unholy demons dwell, but
raise her up into the light
that only thee may grant her
in thy mercy, for thee art
powerful beyond imagination
and more powerful than those
with no imagination.

RONNIE

Everyone should just calm
down. First we should call
911. They will know what to
do in this type of situation.
The police can then decide
how to handle this, and if a
crime has been committed or
not.

Terry quietly covers his sculpture
and rolls it away. His night is a
bit ruined now that the attention
is not on his piece of art.

CASEY

Thou art gloryful, so
deliver this child into thy
care and ever loving
spoonfulls of thine many
mercies. Look not upon these
wicked children in this
unholy living room before
you with disgust and horror,
but clutch them in thy tawny
fingers and hold them
tightly to thy merciful
bosom. In thy all
knowingness absolve, acquit,
pardon and remit them from
their terrible and
unforgivable sins. Amen.

RONNIE (CONT'D)

I can't believe this is
happening to me. It's like
no matter what good deed I
try to do, somehow I am
punished for it. I was just
trying to make the
neighborhood a little nicer,
a little safer, a little
more pleasant. And what
happens? This is what
happens.

JAMIE

Amen.

RONNIE

I really, really think we should call the police.

TAYLOR

Hold on a minute. Everybody breathe.

ALEX

(To Taylor.)

You are such an asshole.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (22)

Terry returns from putting his sculpture away, and he has had an epiphany.

TERRY
You know what? She was right!

RONNIE
What are you talking about Terry?!

TERRY
It was pretty spectacular.

The doorbell rings. Everyone freezes. Silence. The doorbell rings again. Then knocking.

FEMALE VOICE OFF
Hello?!?

Terry turns off the lights. Everything goes dark.

MALE VOICE OFF
That's weird.

FEMALE VOICE OFF
Anybody there?

MALE VOICE OFF
Do you think they went to bed?

FEMALE VOICE OFF
It's still early. Hello? Is everything okay?

RONNIE
(whispering to Terry)
You better answer it...

Terry goes over to the door. He cracks it a bit. He speaks in a low voice.

TERRY
(very quietly)
Hello.

FEMALE VOICE OFF
Isn't the meeting tonight? Did we mix it up? There was a flyer taped to our door.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (23)

FEMALE VOICE OFF (CONT'D)

We saw the lights, and then they just went out, so we're sorry if you were headed to bed. But it's early and it seemed odd. I thought it was tonight.

TERRY

(Quietly)

Yes, yes, it was tonight.

MALE VOICE OFF

Is it over? What did everyone decide?

TERRY

(Quietly)

No, no. We had to cancel.

Long pause.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Ronnie has diarrhea. So....

FEMALE VOICE OFF

Oh I'm sorry to hear that. We brought this cheese platter, can I bring it in?

TERRY

No, no. We're all allergic to cheese.

FEMALE VOICE OFF

Oh I had no idea.

MALE VOICE OFF

All of you?

TERRY

Ronnie and me. I say all of us when I mean both of us.

FEMALE VOICE OFF

Okay, tell her we hope she feels better.

TERRY

I will. You're very sweet. Goodnight now. Bye Bye.

Terry closes the door. Everyone waits quietly for a bit. Finally Terry turns the light back on.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (24)

RONNIE

Who was it?

TERRY

I don't know. It was dark. I think he was that fat guy from that house with the red shutters. I forget his name. And I guess that was his ugly wife.

RONNIE

(Irritated.)

Why did you have to say I had diarrhea?

TERRY

I wanted to stick as close to the truth as I could. She (Blake) has diarrhea. It worked. They left.

RONNIE

I'm so embarrassed. I'm going to hear about this forever. You just know I'm gonna get nicknames over this. We really should call the police.

Terry begins to make himself a rather complicated drink, that involves several liquors, muddled fruit, and crushed ice. Who knows what it is?

JORDAN

Well, we should get the police involved, yes, that would probably be the right thing to do, I guess?

RONNIE

Kelsey is bleeding out on my floors. Yes. I think we should get the police involved.

Terry uses a cocktail shaker to mix his drink. He then strains it into a glass.

BLAKE

Actually her name wasn't really Kelsey. We had it changed when we moved here.

RONNIE

(To herself)

This is unbelievable. I did not for a second imagine that this is how this meeting would go. Not at all.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (25)

PAT

I did.

ALEX

What was her real name?

Terry pours the drink from his glass into a blender and adds more crushed ice.

BLAKE

Under the circumstances this is going to sound odd...

TERRY

(from over at the bar)

What do you mean? What was her name?

BLAKE

Her given name was Bette Davis.

Silence.

BLAKE (CONT'D)

I know. I told you it was going to be odd.

Silence. Until Terry turns on the blender to finish making his very fancy drink.

BLAKE (CONT'D)

(Yelling over the sound of the blender.)

We changed it to Kelsey after my Grandfather.

Blake pauses until after the blender goes off.

BLAKE (CONT'D)

And I'm actually Brooke, and this is my husband Sidney.

Everyone

(ad lib)

Nice to meet you, hi.

JORDAN

Hi.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (26)

Terry has placed a spear of fruit, a straw, and a lovely umbrella into a large Carnival Cruise ship glass. He walks over to Blake, sipping his drink.

TERRY

Your grandfather's name was Kelsey? But Kelsey is a girl's name.

BLAKE

No it's not. It's androgynous.

TERRY

What do you mean androgynous?

Terry sips his drink through the straw.

TAYLOR

A female or male who possesses both feminine and masculine traits.

BLAKE

(Explaining)

It could be for a boy or a girl.

RONNIE

I do like those kinds of names, it doesn't impose sexual stereotypes.

Silence.

BLAKE

I like them because they have an air of mystery about them. No preconceived notions. But then again, not many people have androgynous names. With most people what you see is what you get.

TAYLOR

I don't think that is true.

Blake shrugs and walks away.
Silence. Until Terry sucks down more of his drink.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (27)

RONNIE

What are we going to do about her? I do think we have to call the police. I'm sorry Jamie.

JAMIE

Well. We could do that. That is one way to go.

TAYLOR

(Is he hopeful, or
horrified?)

What do you mean? Do you have something else in mind?

Jamie begins to address the room.

JAMIE

Do you remember last spring, there was a guy, who went over to that house, and like, did that thing, you know what I'm talking about, that guy, and he did that thing.

PAT

Murdered that family with a shotgun.

JAMIE

Yes. Yes. Yes. That's it. He murdered that Puerto Rican family in the middle of the night. So racist.

TAYLOR

I remember...

JAMIE

Well, it's just like... I saw they couldn't sell that house because of you know... that thing. I think they were going to tear it down because they couldn't give it away.

RONNIE

Really?

JAMIE

Yeah, it really sucked for the rest of that Puerto Rican family, because, you know. They couldn't sell it. It wasn't worth anything. Even to other Puerto Ricans.

TAYLOR

So what are you saying? We should...?

JAMIE

Look. All I'm saying is, we shouldn't let word get out about this accident, because a perceived murder could really adversely affect our property values.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (28)

Blood starts to pool out from under the couch and onto the floor. Terry has almost finished his drink and there is a loud sucking sound.

BLAKE

Was it really a murder? I mean she could have conceivably slit my throat with that spatula... Eventually.

JORDAN

Blake's right. Kelsey had become very aggressive at home. We had to lock up all the kitchen utensils, because you never knew when she might stick a potato peeler into Brooke's ear.

JAMIE

I'm just saying, we have to look out for the best interest of the neighborhood. It's not just us. There are dozens of families futures to consider. We should really do what's right for the neighborhood. Am I wrong?

BLAKE

We have put a lot of work into our house already. Did you know I have a four hundred square foot bonsai garden in the backyard?

RONNIE

I didn't know you were into Bonsai? Is it difficult?

BLAKE

It really is, but it is so worth it.

RONNIE

I've always wanted to try it.

BLAKE

Well, we can do one together.

RONNIE

I would love that.

ALEX

(Sulking.)

I don't really care what happens. So fuck you Taylor.

TAYLOR

(Finally incredibly irritated with his wife.)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (29)

TAYLOR (CONT'D)

Won't you just die already? God I hate you. You're so depressing!

For the first time since they have arrived Alex leaps up from her seat.

ALEX

Guess what? I don't have cancer. I just said that to make you feel bad. I'm fine.

TAYLOR

Wait? What?

Alex screams into Taylor's face.

ALEX

I'm fine. No cancer. SURPRISE!

Alex sits back down again and sulks.

TAYLOR

Where the hell have you been going every week when you said you were at the hospital?

ALEX

Macy's.

TAYLOR

Who lies about having cancer? You're the sick one. God, I hate you so, so much.

ALEX

I hope the police swarm the neighborhood and then I hope they execute you and then deport you back to wherever the fuck you are from. Togo. Who the fuck comes from Togo?

Jamie turns to Taylor with great concern.

JAMIE

You're an illegal alien?

TAYLOR

In a manner of speaking. My family's history created some issues for me to have official citizenship.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (30)

JAMIE
(Matter of fact)
Legally, I could shoot you right now.

Silence.

JAMIE (CONT'D)
I said legally. I won't. But technically, I think I could.

RONNIE
My God, that's a lot of blood.

TAYLOR
The human body has about a gallon and a half of blood. More than you might think.

JAMIE
Look, no one has to lose their house, or go back to prison again, or be deported to Toto. We just have to clean this mess up and never speak of it again.

TAYLOR
Never speak of it again?

JAMIE
We can wink at each other knowingly at the supermarket, or maybe we'll have some hidden hand signal. (Motions like shooting a gun) But we shouldn't speak of it out loud.

RONNIE
But what are we going to do about the body? She can't stay where she is.

JORDAN
(Casually, and hopefully.)
We could bury her in your backyard. No one would know.

RONNIE
Uh uh. Not in our backyard. No way. We're putting in a pool next summer.

JORDAN
(Mildly indignant.)
Well, she can't go in our backyard.

BLAKE
(Apologetically.)
We just got the Bonsai Garden so nice.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (31)

JORDAN

(To Jamie)

You should take her- you shot her.

JAMIE

I think we all killed Kelsey, in a manner of speaking. Wouldn't you say?

TAYLOR

Not really.

JAMIE

(sadly, very genuine.)

She was so troubled. It was kind of, inevitable, in a way. If it wasn't me, it would have been somebody else. You heard her. Kelsey had fallen into a very deep state of melancholy. You could see the sadness in her eyes when she spoke. She had fallen into melancholy and she had passed the point of no return. She was never going to escape it. She was incredibly unhappy, and now, she's better off...Or she's in Hell. But either way she's not here. I know that sounds harsh, but you all know it to be true. I think she wanted this to happen. I think she planned for it to happen. I think it was (draws out the word, punctuating it.) Inevitable. Sadness is a very, very powerful thing. And once you give into it, there really is no escape. Am I right Pat?

PAT

It is very difficult to escape. Yes. But sometimes the people closest to you are pushing you in even deeper.

JAMIE

You've known from the beginning that I've always wanted a family. I want a normal life. Casey can give me that.

PAT

(pointing to Casey)

You're not being fair to her. Can't you see how much pain she is in?

CASEY

Oh sweet and loving Mother Mary, pluck mine eyes from their sockets and tear my ears from this sorry visage with thy tawny fingers.

JAMIE

Casey and I are in love.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (32)

CASEY

Take me from this place of hellish torment straightaway, and grant me peace in the tawny embrace of death.

PAT

Casey is incredibly unhappy. Are you going to shoot her in the head? You're miserable aren't you Casey?

CASEY

(Suddenly composed, but
confused.)

No thank you. I'm full. Maybe later.

JAMIE

Isn't everyone a little bit unhappy? The trick is not to be TOO unhappy. Because once you give in, there really is no turning back. And it will destroy you.

RONNIE

So, what do we do?

JAMIE

It has been a very difficult night. For everyone.

TERRY

Especially Kelsey.

Terry returns to the bar where he
contemplates what his next drink
will be.

JAMIE

Yes, but I believe a small piece of Kelsey is going to stay with each of us for a long time.

TAYLOR

I know I'm never going to forget her.

RONNIE

So what do you suggest?

JAMIE

It's pretty obvious, don't you think?

There is silence.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

We should cut her up into smaller pieces, and each of us should take part of her home with us.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (33)

RONNIE

What?

JAMIE

We'll carve her up into chunks, and each take a piece. Pat and I will take an arm or a leg. Or really whatever. I'm completely open.

Complete silence.

TAYLOR

This is nuts. No this is insane.

JAMIE

Well, we're all ears, what did you have in mind?

TAYLOR

I'm not cutting up that poor girl and dividing her up like a brownie sundae.

Terry interrupts his drink making.

TERRY

(raising his hand)

I'll do it.

RONNIE

Terry!

TERRY

I've got the tools. It's sort of like sculpture right? And I could use the practice.

Terry heads off to get some tools.

JAMIE

You should get creative!!

BLAKE

Oh my. My. My. My. I know this is going to sound so bad, and I hate to even ask...

RONNIE

What is it Blake?

BLAKE

Oh never mind. It's just me being sentimental.

JAMIE

That's very sweet. I know you two were close. What's up?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (34)

Blake is unsure if she should ask this question. But eventually she gets up the courage, and she does ask.

BLAKE

Well, would anyone mind terribly if we took her head?... I know, I know- it's the smallest part, but we had gotten rather close these past few years, and it would mean a lot to Jordan and I. Am I right Jordan?

JORDAN

She did have a very small head.

JAMIE

Any objections?

EVERYONE

No, no etc...

JAMIE

It's settled. Heads it is!

BLAKE

Thank you guys. You're all good neighbors.

Terry returns with a big box full of power tools and extension cords.

TERRY

I have a jig saw, and a radial saw, and a dremel tool, and whatever this thing is... (some unidentified tool) Unfortunately, my hammer is broken.

JORDAN

I think the jig saw seems right? I'm not really very handy.

BLAKE

I think we're going to need a lot of towels.

RONNIE

I have some I was going to donate to the JCC.

BLAKE

Under the circumstances, I think they'd understand.

RONNIE

I'll be right back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (35)

Ronnie heads off to get some towels.

TERRY
I don't even know where to start.

RONNIE
(yelling from off.)
Somebody needs to help Terry! Every year he ruins the Turkey!

TERRY
I do not.

PAT
(Half to himself.)
Something about this feels illegal. I could be disbarred.

Terry, Jordan and Pat go down behind the couch where we can't really see much of what they are doing. But we can hear them.

JORDAN
Is that cordless?

TERRY
Yeah, I don't use it much, but it does come in handy sometimes.

JORDAN
Where do we start?

PAT
I think the legs? Or the arms?

Terry pops his head up from behind the couch.

TERRY
Is everyone absolutely sure this is the right thing to do?

Silence. No one speaks up to stop this from happening.

TERRY (CONT'D)
(Cheerfully and with resolve.)

Okay.....!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (36)

Terry drops down behind the couch again. A beat. The sound of a cordless saw. Then the sound of a cordless saw struggling to cut something. It's out of juice.

TERRY (CONT'D)

(Popping his head up again)

It's out of juice.

JORDAN

Didn't you charge it?

TERRY

I wasn't exactly prepared for this.

PAT

I was.

TERRY

Pat, will you plug it in?

PAT

Where?

TERRY

Plug it in over there. Behind the planter.

PAT

I don't see a plug.

TERRY

It's there, just slide the planter out a bit.

Ronnie rushes in with heaps of old towels.

RONNIE

Wait, wait wait. Don't. Stop!! Stop!! You shouldn't do that Terry!!

PAT

The cord isn't long enough.

RONNIE

Put these towels down first. The upholstery.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (37)

TERRY

Oops sorry.

PAT

Okay, sorry, got it now. Do you have juice?

Sound of a powerful saw.

TERRY

We are in business!

Sound of a saw cutting through flesh. Blood sprays up from behind the couch and covers everything and everyone. Terry cuts up the body with Pat and Jordan's help for quite some time. Blake sits awkwardly and slowly starts eating the onion dip. She pours herself a large drink with no ice. Just whiskey. Alex is quietly sipping her cocktail. Taylor observes; fairly horrified but also intrigued. Casey is in a fetal position rocking back and forth. Ronnie looks on very uncomfortably and she is making faces at each and every noise as if watching someone carry out a delicate experiment. Jamie is on his smart phone checking his emails and texting.

RONNIE

So gross. Wrap those pieces up in the towels. Ugh! So sticky.

TERRY

(rising, covered in blood,
holding Kelsey's head in his
hand.)

There. That wasn't so bad now was it?

JAMIE

(Looking up from his phone)

How's it going over there?

TERRY

We're done. Now what?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (38)

JAMIE

Now everyone take a piece with you when you go, and bury it in your yard, like a St. Joseph statue when you want to sell your house. She was quite small so it should be easy.

TAYLOR

What if one of us changes their mind and decides they don't want any part of this?

JAMIE

That's why we are each taking a piece home with us. If any one of us spills the beans as it were, all of us will be equally responsible.

BLAKE

But what if one of us somehow disposes of our piece, and turns the others in? There will be nothing that proves all of us were involved.

JAMIE

Hmmmm. I hadn't really thought of that.

PAT

We could sign an affidavit?

JORDAN

I don't want to get into a bunch of complicated legal paperwork.

TERRY

We could take a loyalty oath?

RONNIE

If someone chickens out, I don't think their sense of loyalty is going to stop them. Honestly Terry.

JAMIE

I have it. It's foolproof.

RONNIE

What?

JAMIE

Selfie.

RONNIE

What?

JAMIE

We just take a selfie right now that incriminates all of us.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (39)

TAYLOR

What do we do? Each grab a body part, take a photo and email it to each other?

JAMIE

Email. Text. Snap Chat.....But don't post it on Facebook.

TAYLOR

Doesn't someone monitor that stuff?

JAMIE

The Government? Really? They can't even put street lights where they are supposed to go.

RONNIE

Whose phone should we use?

BLAKE

What kind of whiskey is this? It's good.

Blake gets up and pours herself
more Whiskey.

JAMIE

We can use mine. Where should we take it? How about over there by the window?

RONNIE

No, no. Not the window. I hate those drapes.

BLAKE

We could gather around this chair? Some people could sit on the arms, you know, real friendly and casual.

RONNIE

I'm sorry. I don't really like that chair either.

ALEX

What about on the stairs?

JAMIE

Ronnie?

RONNIE

(Resigned. Irritated a bit,
but resigned.)

Sure, yes, the stairs are fine. I was planning on redoing them, but they're fine.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (40)

JAMIE

Okay everyone grab a bundle, and lets get this over with so we can all go home and get some well deserved shut eye!

They all grab a piece of Kelsey wrapped in the towels and jockey back and forth on the stairs for position. They change positions multiple times to make it look good. Casey is practically comatose and despondent, but they move her around. Finally they all get into place with their bundles. They practice poses that will look the best. This goes on for quite some time. At last they smile and are ready for the photo.

JORDAN

Wait a minute? Who's going to take the picture?

RONNIE

There's a selfie stick by the door next to my jogging shoes.

Jamie gets the selfie stick, while they all prepare for the picture.

JAMIE

Okay ready?

BLAKE

Wait, wait- we're all just holding up a bunch of bundled towels. No one is going to know what they are.

JAMIE

Blake slash Brooke, you are right again!

BLAKE

Thank you!

JAMIE

Everyone just drop the towels for now.

They all unwrap the body parts and pose with them. The body parts should be very realistic. In production, if suitable false ones cannot be found, actual body parts and a matching head should be acquired by whatever means necessary.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (41)

Blake has Kelsey's head, which she holds up, smiling as if it is the grand prize at a chili cook off.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

Everybody good?

EVERYONE

Yes etc...

JAMIE

Okay, say "street lights"

EVERYONE

Street lights!

Jamie grabs the camera. Checks out the picture.

JAMIE

Ohhhhh. It looks good.

Ronnie is looking over his shoulder.

RONNIE

My eyes were closed. And I look kind of disinterested. I wasn't. But it looks it.

JAMIE

Okay, I've got your emails from the neighborhood watch list, so here we go, we've got, Ronnie and Terry, and Jordan and Blake, and Taylor and Alex...Okay, and send!

The sound of multiple texts and emails being received.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

Everyone got it?... Oh no... oh no!

BLAKE

What's wrong?!

JAMIE

I think I sent it to the whole neighborhood association!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (42)

RONNIE

What?!

JAMIE

I must have hit send all.

BLAKE

Oh dear God.

TAYLOR

What have you done?

JAMIE

I'm just kidding. I'm not an idiot. You people are so gullible. And on that note, I believe it is time, as St. Paul once said, to fly the chicken coop and return to our own roosts.

BLAKE

We should go too. It was nice meeting you all. Ronnie, I will see you at work on Monday. Don't bring up the ... you know (motions to the bundle in her arms)

RONNIE

Of course not. Should we carpool? Can you take Mondays?

JORDAN

Thank you for having us. You have a lovely home.

TAYLOR

Jamie, there is nothing better than a good debate, and you are a worthy partner. I hope we can do it again sometime.

JAMIE

Pat and I throw a fabulous Easter brunch every year, and you and your wife... I'm sorry dear, I totally forgot your name...

ALEX

Alex.

JAMIE

Alex. Right. It was so nice to meet you. If you have cancer, I hope you get better, if you don't have it, that's a plus. And we'll hopefully see you at Easter.

ALEX

(Full of melancholy.)

You might. Who knows. Where else am I going to go? What with all my cancer.

JAMIE

Casey? We should go.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (43)

CASEY

(In a comatose trance.)

Please, please, please. Don't cut my head off.

JAMIE

She's exhausted. And of course, you are all invited to the wedding- as soon as I can get this little lady to settle on a date.

CASEY

I can't feel my arms. Are my arms still on?

JAMIE

Say goodnight Pat.

PAT

Good night. Thank you for everything.

BLAKE

Wait a minute. What if one of the nosy neighbors sees us all leaving with these human body part shaped bundles, and decides to ask questions?

JAMIE

No one is going to see any of us. It's as black as Pat's bubble butt out there. Well, good night all!

Jamie, Pat, and Casey leave.

BLAKE

Good night new friends. (toasting with her giant glass of whiskey, which she will take with her.) You are all the best. The very best friends a person could have. I love you. I really, really do. Jordan, you're driving. Or if you're too tired, I'll drive. I'm fine.

Blake and Jordan leave. Taylor, Alex, Terry and Ronnie are left. A long period of awkward silence. Alex and Taylor just leave without words. Ronnie and Terry begin to straighten up after the party. Ronnie is fluffing pillows and brushing away crumbs. Terry starts gathering glasses and bringing them to the bar.

RONNIE

I thought they'd never leave.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (44)

TERRY

That Blake can drink!

RONNIE

This is why I don't like to have parties.

TERRY

No more.

They begin to clean up and put things back into place. Terry takes Kelsey's wrapped arm? Leg? And throws it in the trash.

RONNIE

Why didn't you tell me about the sculpture?

TERRY

Why didn't you tell me about Taylor?

RONNIE

(Smiling weakly.)

Touché. Can you help me move this planter back?

TERRY

Sure.

They slide the planter back into place.

RONNIE

We should communicate more, you and I.

TERRY

We should. We really should. Communication is key.

RONNIE

(smiling)

Did we have enough cranberry juice?

TERRY

(smiling)

Just barely.

RONNIE

(A bit overwhelmed.)

How the heck are we going to clean up all this blood?

TERRY

(Looking in the closet)

Do you know if we have any hydrogen peroxide?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (45)

RONNIE

It should be on the top shelf in there, but that only will work if it's still wet.

TERRY

I don't see any. Should I go get some?

RONNIE

Look in the back, behind that box of detergent.

TERRY

Oh there it is.

RONNIE

If it's dry, I think ammonia gets it out.

TERRY

I'm going to try this hydrogen peroxide first.

RONNIE

Just don't use too much. Here let me show you.

They begin to scrub up the blood together. This goes on for a little while. They mutter back and forth on which is the best way to get the blood out of the floor and upholstery. The whole affair is rather tender and thoughtful. Then finally...

TERRY

Hey, I think it's coming out!

RONNIE

I'm glad we got it before it dried. It won't come out once it dries. Once it dries you are stuck with it.

TERRY

We're very lucky.

RONNIE

(Smiles, as only a wife can smile at a husband.)

Yeah, I think you're right.

They halfheartedly "high five" and then silently clean up the blood and mess for a bit in silence. Blessed silence. But after awhile...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (46)

TERRY

What about the streetlights? Did we ever decide how many or where they would go?

RONNIE

Oh forget it.

They continue to scrub the blood out of the upholstery and semi-recently refinished hardwood floors.

RONNIE (CONT'D)

I think it's better if we just keep it dark.

Terry agrees.

FAST BLACKOUT