

17 Days
By
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MUSIC CUE

In black the sound of an old, slightly out of tune, piano fades in playing Twinkle Twinkle Little Star. This fades into sweet, gentle, and nostalgic piano music.

FADE IN:

INT. MACARTHUR HOME -- DAY

As the title credits play, there is a slow pan around the various rooms of the MacArthur family home in Iowa. It is a large forties era house, bright and airy, but all of the furnishings are covered with sheets. The following cuts blend into each other seamlessly, as if one continuous shot.

INT. CAMPAIGN OFFICE -- DAY

ELIZABETH JENNINGS is moving confidently around her crowded and hectic campaign office. She is in her early 40's, and looks like a politician - tailored, groomed, and in control. She is on a cell phone and directing various people to do various tasks. On the walls of the office are her campaign posters which read "Re-Elect Elizabeth Jennings for Congress '90." One of her aides hands her a plane ticket and a briefcase and she walks out the door, still talking on the phone.

INT. MACARTHUR HOME -- DAY

More slow pans around the house.

INT. HIGHRISE APARTMENT -- DAY

JENNY MACARTHUR is digging through the closet in her very expensive high rise apartment. She is in her early 30's, very attractive, and obviously wealthy. As she pulls outfits out of the closet she tosses them on the bed in the general direction of two open suitcases. It appears as if she is packing everything she owns.

EXT. HIGHRISE APARTMENT -- DAY

Jenny comes out of her building to her fire-engine red Mercedes convertible - her doorman has just finished putting the suitcases in the trunk. She gets in the car and peels away from the curb giving us a good view of the license plate which reads "WAS HIS."

INT. MACARTHUR HOME -- DAY

More slow pans around the house. A voice over begins from BREEANN.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BREEANN (VO)

Journal Entry, August nineteenth, 1990.
I remember this place. I know it's only been six months since I've been here last - when Grandpa died - but I'm not talking about that. I mean, I remember. I remember the smell of the kitchen when Grandpa used to make his famous chili. I remember the slightly out of tune sound that came from the old upright piano in the basement. I remember being afraid of the trap door that leads up to the attic. I remember every sound, and smell, and the feel of every square inch of this place. This place that my mother still calls home.

The camera has now panned around to the front window, through which we see an older sedan pull up.

BREEANN (cont'd)

We got here early this afternoon and a part of me felt like I was going home also.

EXT. HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

The house is a large, typical Midwestern affair with a huge front lawn, a wide front porch with a swing, and plenty of room between neighboring houses.

BREEANN BAKER, a sixteen year-old girl, is sitting in the front passenger seat of the car, looking at the house with a mixture of emotions. The rear door of the car opens and LUCY BAKER, a bright eyed twelve year old girl, comes dashing out and runs toward the back of the house. MARY ANN BAKER, a total mother type in her late 30's, gets out of the driver's side.

MARY ANN

Lucy!

But Lucy pays her no mind and disappears around the back of the house. Breeann gets out of the car.

BREEANN

God it's hot.

MARY ANN

Where is your sister going?

BREEANN

I don't know.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARY ANN

Lucy!

BREEANN

Is it always this hot in Iowa?

They collect a few of their bags and head up toward the front door throughout.

MARY ANN

Lucy! Oh for God's sake.

BREEANN

I'm melting.

MARY ANN

It's not that hot.

Breeann falls dramatically on the grass.

BREEANN

It's like a great desert!

MARY ANN

What did I do with the keys?

Breeann looks around.

BREEANN

A desert with corn.

MARY ANN

It's too humid to be a desert. Lucy!

BREEANN

It's like a great tropical jungle! The Great Bolivian Corn Jungle!

MARY ANN

This is a beautiful state with a lot to offer and the weather is just Mother Nature's way of letting you know where you are.

BREEANN

Iowa... Mother Nature's Practical Joke.

MARY ANN

Get off the grass, you'll get a stain.

Breeann gets up reluctantly and they make their way up onto the front porch. From off, EDITH calls out to them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

EDITH (OS)

Yoohoo!

Mary Ann and Breeann look.

BREEANN'S POV

EDITH ANDERSON, an elderly woman is running toward them from the neighboring house. She is dressed in brightly colored gardening garb complete with big floppy hat and gardening shears.

BACK TO SCENE

BREEANN

Oh no. I'm going home.

MARY ANN

Sit.

Mary Ann points and Breeann sits on the front porch steps. Edith comes up to join them.

EDITH

Hello? Is that you, Mary Ann?

MARY ANN

Hello, Mrs. Anderson. How are you?

EDITH

Of course it's hot! It's August in Iowa, what did you expect?

(to Breeann)

And you're Brenda.

BREEANN

Breeann.

Edith pulls her up and hugs her.

EDITH

Oh, it's just been ages since I've seen you. How long has it been?

BREEANN

Five months.

EDITH

You know, I remember holding you when you were just a baby. Of course you were too young to remember that.

BREEANN

Actually, I've had these nightmares...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MARY ANN
(interrupting)
So, Mrs. Anderson.

EDITH
Call me Edith.

MARY ANN
Edith. So what have you been doing
with...

Lucy comes running around from the back yard.

LUCY
Mom, I told you!

MARY ANN
Told me what?

LUCY
The swing set is still there. It's in
the backyard like always.

EDITH
Oh! This can't be little Lisa

MARY ANN
Lucy.

EDITH
What a big girl you are. How old are you
now dear?

LUCY
Twelve.

EDITH
Twelve! Why just a few more years and
you'll be as big as Brenda.

LUCY
Who's Brenda?

Edith holds her at arms length and examines her body.

EDITH
Why, you're even starting to grow
breasts!

BREEANN
Oh my God.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

MARY ANN

Girls, please go to the car and get the rest of the suitcases.

LUCY

Who's Brenda?

MARY ANN

Breeann, take your sister to the car. Please?

Breeann takes Lucy by the hand and they walk away toward the car.

BREEANN

Walk slow. She may be armed.

They go to the car and start pulling out bags and suitcases.

EDITH

Such beautiful girls.

MARY ANN

Thank you. Mrs. Anderson.

EDITH

(waves her finger)
Edith.

MARY ANN

Edith...

EDITH

Clearing it out?

MARY ANN

I beg your pardon?

EDITH

The house. Clearing it out for the new owners?

MARY ANN

Yes. They move in on the fourth. Gives us seventeen days to pack everything up.

EDITH

When do the new owners move in?

MARY ANN

The fourth. Day after Labor Day.

EDITH

Any of the rest of the family coming?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

MARY ANN
Jenny is driving in from Chicago and...

EDITH
She the senator?

MARY ANN
No, that's Elizabeth. And she's a member
of Congress.

EDITH
Same thing.

MARY ANN
I'm picking her up at the airport
tomorrow.

EDITH
What about your brother? Is he coming?

MARY ANN
(beat)
No. Jeff is very busy. Just couldn't
get away.

EDITH
I seen him.

MARY ANN
You did? Where?

EDITH
On that MTV channel.

MARY ANN
You watch MTV?

EDITH
It's better than that Oprah woman. First
she's fat, then she's skinny, then she's
fat again. I'm just sick of the whole
damn thing. Anyway, they was playing old
song of his. Does he take drugs?

MARY ANN
I'm sorry?

EDITH
Henrietta Conrad... you know Henrietta,
she's the president of the Cedar Rapids
Senior's Auxiliary?

Edith pauses as if waiting for a response.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

MARY ANN
I don't think I know...

EDITH
Well she says that all rock stars take
drugs.

MARY ANN
Jeff doesn't.

EDITH
That's what I told her, but you know
Henrietta. So when is he going to be
here?

MARY ANN
He's not.

EDITH
Real sorry about your father.

MARY ANN
(beat)
Thank you.

EDITH
He was a good man.

MARY ANN
Yes, he was.

Edith looks out toward her house.

EDITH
Hey! Get out of my flowers you goddamn
dog!

She runs off waving the pruning shears as Breeann return with
the rest of the luggage.

BREEANN
Is it gone?

MARY ANN
Breeann...

BREEANN
What a whacko.

MARY ANN
She's a very sweet lady.

LUCY
Will somebody tell me who Brenda is?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

BREEANN
Very sweet whacko maybe.

MARY ANN
Let's go inside.

They all move up onto the porch near the front door during the following.

BREEANN
Yes and turn on the air conditioning.

MARY ANN
There is no air conditioning.

BREEANN
Excuse me?

MARY ANN
Sorry.

BREEANN
You expect me to spend seventeen days in the Bolivian Corn Jungle without air conditioning?

LUCY
Don't you know what that's going to make her hair look like?

BREEANN
(to Lucy)
Creep.

Mary Ann is clawing through her purse.

MARY ANN
Girls, please. This is going to be a very difficult time for all of us and I really would appreciate it if you..

LUCY
Mom, what are you looking for?

MARY ANN
The keys to the house.

LUCY
You put them in your pocket.

Mary Ann checks her pocket and produces the keys.

MARY ANN
Thank you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

Mary Ann unlocks the door and they enter the house.

INT. FOYER -- CONTINUOUS

The three of them enter and the girls drop the bags while Mary Ann looks around, trying to hold back the emotions that are flooding her.

BREEANN
God, it's even hotter in here.

MARY ANN
(distracted)
Well, it's been closed up for a few months. Let's open some windows. Maybe get a breeze through here.

BREEANN
What breeze?

Lucy goes into the adjacent living room while Breeann goes into the dining room and they start opening windows.

LUCY
Why are there sheets on everything?

MARY ANN
To keep the dust off the furniture.

Mary Ann starts removing the sheets. Breeann calls out from the dining room.

BREEANN
Can we do that at home? I hate dusting.

MARY ANN
Lucy, you help me take these off.
Breeann, go upstairs and open more windows.

BREEANN
May I jump out of one once it's open?

MARY ANN
(warning)
Breeann...

BREEANN
I'm going...

Breeann trudges up the stairs as if to her doom. Lucy takes the sheet off of a grand piano and pictures that lay underneath rattle.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARY ANN

Lucy, be careful. We don't want to break anything.

LUCY

Mother, I am not a child.

MARY ANN

I'm becoming painfully aware of that, dear.

Lucy tries to open the cover on the piano keyboard but is unsuccessful.

LUCY

The piano won't open.

MARY ANN

It's probably locked. I'm sure the key is around here somewhere.

LUCY

Well, we have to find it. Uncle Jeff can play when he gets here.

MARY ANN

Honey, your Uncle Jeff isn't coming. I told you that.

LUCY

Why not?

MARY ANN

I don't know why not. Uncover that chair, please.

Lucy goes to the chair while Mary Ann yells in the direction of the stairs.

MARY ANN (cont'd)

Breeann, how are you doing up there?

BREEANN (OS)

Dying a slow, hot, painful death. Thank you for asking.

Mary Ann shakes her head and turns back to see Lucy who has her face buried in the headrest of the armchair she has uncovered.

MARY ANN

Lucy, what are you doing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LUCY
(looks up)
It smells like Grandpa.

MARY ANN
(beat)
Lucy... why don't you go up and help your
sister?

LUCY
(shrugs)
Okay.

Lucy heads for the stairs.

LUCY (cont'd)
Breeann! I'm coming upstairs!

BREEANN (OS)
No you're not!

LUCY
I am too! Mom, told me to!

BREEANN (OS)
Mother!

LUCY
(mocking)
Mother!

Lucy goes up the stairs and Mary Ann continues with the sheets, shaking her head in amusement.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Mary Ann, dressed in a nightgown, comes out of the kitchen and turns off the light. As she walks through the living room she looks around, pleased with what they have accomplished putting everything back together. After a moment, she looks at the chair that Lucy had "smelled" earlier and then walks slowly over to it. Almost self-consciously, she leans down and inhales from the headrest. When she stands back up we can see from the expression on her face that Lucy was right: it does smell like Grandpa. Before exiting the living room she takes one last look then turns off the lights and heads upstairs.

EXT. HOUSE -- DAY

The calm of a hot, Iowa afternoon is shattered when Jenny's red Mercedes convertible comes screeching around the corner a block away and speeds down the street toward the house.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

With a squeal of the tires she pulls to a halt in the driveway around the side of the house.

EXT. GARDEN -- DAY

From behind a small patch of corn, Edith pops up to see what the commotion is.

EDITH
Jenny? Jenny?!

She starts running.

EXT. DRIVEWAY -- CONTINUOUS

Jenny gets out of the car and starts for the house, obviously having gone too long without a bathroom break. Seeing Mrs. Anderson running toward her only makes her hurry to the door.

EDITH
Yoohoo!!!

JENNY
Oh, God...

She makes a mad dash to the front door only to find it locked. She looks around for a place to hide, or maybe to pee, but has no luck as Edith runs up onto the porch.

EDITH
Jenny!

JENNY
Oh hello, Mrs. Anderson.

EDITH
Didn't you hear me calling you?

JENNY
(innocently)
Was that you?

EDITH
Of course it was me! I've been yelling at you ever since you got out of that car.

JENNY
Really? Must be the heat. Does strange things. Golly, it was neat seeing you but I have to...

Edith takes a few steps off the porch to look at the car in the driveway.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EDITH
What kind of car is that?

JENNY
What?

EDITH
Car! Car!! Is there something wrong
with your hearing? I said, what kind of
car is that?

JENNY
Mercedes.

EDITH
What?

JENNY
(louder)
Mercedes Benz!

EDITH
Japanese?

JENNY
German.

Edith eyes her with suspicion.

EDITH
Hmph. I used to have me a convertible
like that. Of course it was an American
car.

JENNY
Of course.

EDITH
1953 Ford convertible. Almost that same
color. What do you call that color.

Jenny takes a few steps off the porch as if to reconfirm that
it really shouldn't be that difficult of a question.

JENNY
(beat)
Red?

EDITH
What?

JENNY
(losing patience)
Red! It's red!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

EDITH

So it is.

JENNY

Have you seen Mary Ann?

EDITH

Of course. She's your sister. About this tall, hair sort of...

JENNY

(trying to stay calm)
Have you seen her?

EDITH

Got in yesterday.

JENNY

I didn't see her car anywhere.

EDITH

It's an American car.

(beat)

Chevy.

(beat)

Green.

JENNY

I have to go inside now.

EDITH

Say hello to Brenda and Lisa. Such beautiful children.

Edith totters off and Jenny starts back up the porch but stops.

JENNY

Brenda and Lisa?

She shrugs and goes back to check the door again. Still locked.

JENNY (cont'd)

Dammit.

She looks around, trying to decide which bush she's going to pee behind when her eyes rest on a flower pot on the porch railing. Jenny walks over to it, tilts it up, and finds a key.

JENNY (cont'd)

Amazing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

She uses it to unlock the door and goes inside the house.

INT. FOYER -- CONTINUOUS

Jenny comes into the house and closes the front door, taking a moment to lock it again as if concerned that Edith may come back. She then bolts up the stairs toward the bathroom.

EXT. HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Outside, Mary Ann's green Chevy pulls up to the curb in front of the house. Mary Ann and Elizabeth get out and begin collecting her luggage. From their vantage point they cannot see Jenny's convertible parked around the side of the house.

ELIZABETH

Did you have the phone turned back on? I have a million calls to make.

MARY ANN

They came out this morning.

ELIZABETH

Wonderful.

(looks at house)

Hey! The house looks terrific. Did someone have it painted?

MARY ANN

No.

ELIZABETH

Why don't I remember it looking like this?

MARY ANN

Looks the same to me.

By now they are headed up the front walk. From off we hear the call of the wild.

EDITH (OS)

Yoohoo! Mary Ann! Elizabeth!

Elizabeth sees her and hurries Mary Ann toward the door. They make it inside just as Edith makes it to the front step. Edith looks at the door for a moment and then heads back toward her house out of the shot. There is the briefest of pauses before she comes back into the shot and looks at the front door again.

EDITH (cont'd)

Bitch.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Edith takes off again toward her house.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Elizabeth is peering carefully out of the window.

MARY ANN
That wasn't very nice.

ELIZABETH
I don't have to be nice to her. She
can't vote in my state.

MARY ANN
You're horrible.

ELIZABETH
I'm kidding.

MARY ANN
So how's Michael?

ELIZABETH
He's fine. He sends his love.

MARY ANN
I wish he could've come. We never get to
see him anymore. Do you want something
to drink?

ELIZABETH
Sure.

They head into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

Throughout the following Mary Ann prepares glasses of
lemonade while Elizabeth sits and pretty much does nothing.

ELIZABETH
Well, you know it's not easy having your
husband as your campaign manager.

MARY ANN
How's the election shaping up?

ELIZABETH
Win or lose, I'll be glad when it's over.

MARY ANN
You'll win.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELIZABETH

The polls say it's going to be close.

MARY ANN

You always say not to trust the polls.

ELIZABETH

I only say that when I'm ahead.

MARY ANN

Well, regardless, I'm glad you could get away.

ELIZABETH

So am I. We'll have a good time. A mini-family reunion.

MARY ANN

Well... almost.

ELIZABETH

(sighs)
What's wrong?

MARY ANN

I still don't feel good about the fact that we didn't call Jeff.

ELIZABETH

Mary Ann, we've discussed this a million times.

MARY ANN

I know...

ELIZABETH

And we both agreed that it would make this whole thing easier.

MARY ANN

It still doesn't seem right.

ELIZABETH

Look, this is business, pure and simple. Somebody bought the house and we're just making sure that the transfer goes smoothly.

MARY ANN

But Daddy left the house to all of us. Jeff has as much right to be here as we do.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ELIZABETH

It's not like I'm trying to cheat him out of his share of the inheritance.

MARY ANN

I didn't mean it like that.

ELIZABETH

Besides, don't you think that Jeff has other things to worry about than packing boxes?

MARY ANN

(beat)

I suppose so.

ELIZABETH

And what if he got sick here? Suddenly he's two-thousand miles away from all the doctors and nurses that are helping him keep his big secret.

MARY ANN

You're right. I know you're right. Have you talked to him lately?

ELIZABETH

About a month ago. He doesn't really want to talk to me anymore.

MARY ANN

Me either.

ELIZABETH

It's not our fault, Mary Ann. He's the one cutting us out. He's the one who always has to have things on his terms. Has to have it his way. We have to totally and completely accept every aspect of his life or we can't be a part of it at all. Which is, by the way, completely unfair. I don't demand that of him. I know he doesn't like some of my politics but he's entitled to his opinion.

Jenny comes into the doorway of the kitchen. Elizabeth and Mary Ann don't notice her.

MARY ANN

It's tough to balance what we were raised to believe against the fact that he's our brother.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ELIZABETH

At any rate, I think Jeff not being here will be for the best. Besides, we're going to need all of our strength to deal with Jenny. At least we outnumber her.

Jenny steps into the kitchen.

JENNY

True, but you should never underestimate the value of a good surprise attack.

MARY ANN

Jenny! I didn't know you were here.

JENNY

Obviously. Hello, Liz.

ELIZABETH

Hello, Jennifer.

JENNY

So what are you two plotting?

MARY ANN

Nothing.

JENNY

No? Then why didn't you tell me that Jeff wasn't coming?

ELIZABETH

She just found out.

JENNY

Uh-huh. So *why* isn't he coming?

ELIZABETH

He has work to do. You remember working for a living, don't you Jennifer?

MARY ANN

We're not plotting anything.

JENNY

Please. The air reeks of conspiracy. It happens every time there's a Republican in the room, right Liz?

Jenny exits the kitchen into the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Elizabeth and Mary Ann follow her out of the kitchen into the living room.

ELIZABETH

Eighteen seconds. We're in a room together for eighteen seconds and you've already insulted me. That's must be some sort of new record, Jennifer.

JENNY

I hate it when you call me Jennifer.

ELIZABETH

And I hate it when you call me Liz.

MARY ANN

Will you two stop it! I cannot take this for two weeks, I really can't.

There is a momentary cease-fire while Elizabeth and Jenny sulk.

JENNY

She started it.

ELIZABETH

You're incorrigible.

JENNY

Ooo, I love it when you use big words.

ELIZABETH

For once in your life, will you please take something seriously?

JENNY

And for once in your life, will you please not be such a bitch.

Mary Ann steps in between the two of them.

MARY ANN

Stop it! Right now! I will not have this. Do you understand me? You two are going to have to call some sort of truce because I will not stand for it. Not in front of my children and not in this house.

(beat)

Now... the two of you get ready for lunch. We're having tuna.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELIZABETH
I ate on the plane.

JENNY
I'm not hungry.

MARY ANN
I said we're having tuna!

ELIZABETH
Tuna sounds wonderful.

JENNY
I'm starved.

Just as Mary Ann is about to turn and go into the kitchen, Breeann and Lucy enter the house, just returning from the local municipal pool. Breeann sees Jenny.

BREEANN
Jenny!!

Breeann runs to her and falls to her knees, clasping Jenny around the waist.

BREEANN (cont'd)
Thank God, you're here.

JENNY
It's good to see you too.

BREEANN
Take me out of here. Rescue me.

JENNY
Enjoying Iowa?

BREEANN
This is not Iowa. This is hell.

JENNY
It's not this hot in hell.
(to Lucy)
Hey squirt brain!

Lucy comes over and hugs her.

LUCY
Hey fart head.

MARY ANN
Lucy!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ELIZABETH

Hi kids.

The two girls turn and look at Elizabeth with a lot less enthusiasm than they greeted Jenny.

BREEANN

Oh hi, Aunt Elizabeth.

Elizabeth holds out her arms and they dutifully go to hug her.

ELIZABETH

Where have you two been?

LUCY

We went to the pool. Breeann was flirting with this boy and...

BREEANN

I was not!

LUCY

You were so.

MARY ANN

Kids, do you want to go get washed up for lunch?

BREEANN

Do I *want* to?

MARY ANN

Breeann...

BREEANN

Okay, okay. God, she has no sense of humor.

Breeann and Lucy start up the stairs.

MARY ANN

I'm going into the kitchen to fix lunch. You two behave or you won't get any desert.

JENNY

Mary Ann, they're just having some fun.

MARY ANN

I wasn't talking to them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Breeann and Lucy go upstairs while Mary Ann goes off into the kitchen leaving Elizabeth and Jenny to eye each other suspiciously.

ELIZABETH

Do we really have a good reason for this?

JENNY

This?

ELIZABETH

This. You and I. The way we treat each other.

JENNY

I think so. I'll ask my therapist when I get home. I'm pretty sure we covered that about twelve-thousand dollars ago.

ELIZABETH

So what do you say? Do you think we can spend two weeks together without drawing blood?

JENNY

It's a big house. If we're lucky we might not even see each other.

ELIZABETH

Come on, Jenny. I'd really like to take advantage of this time we have.

JENNY

I don't know. I think the only thing that would really settle this is a knife fight in a dark alley, but...

ELIZABETH

Jennifer.

JENNY

Lizzzzzzzz.

ELIZABETH

I'm willing to try.

JENNY

A knife fight?

ELIZABETH

A cease-fire.

(offers hand)

How about it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

JENNY

I don't know. Sounds like a campaign promise to me.

ELIZABETH

I keep my campaign promises.

JENNY

Spoken like a true politician.

ELIZABETH

Politics is what I do, not what I am.

JENNY

Wrong. First and foremost, before anything - before you're a sister, a wife, even sometimes, God help me, before you're a human being, you... are a politician.

Elizabeth is stung by this but unwilling to show it.

ELIZABETH

Amazing.

JENNY

What?

ELIZABETH

We actually have something in common.

JENNY

What's that?

ELIZABETH

We don't trust each other. Now, being a politician I expect people not to trust me. What's your excuse?

Elizabeth goes into the kitchen.

JENNY

(to herself)

I hate it when she gets the good closing line.

Jenny pauses for a moment and then sneaks out the front door.

EXT. DRIVEWAY -- CONTINUOUS

Jenny comes out of the house and goes to her car. She opens the door and gets in.

INT. CAR -- CONTINUOUS

Jenny shuts the door and picks up the cell phone. As she dials she looks up at the house and sticks her tongue out.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Elizabeth is sitting at the desk in the living room working on a lap top computer. Jenny wanders through.

JENNY
You're working late.

ELIZABETH
No rest for the wicked.

JENNY
You said it, not me. Everybody else in bed?

ELIZABETH
I think so.

JENNY
Well... I guess I'll be heading off myself.

ELIZABETH
Okay. Goodnight.

JENNY
Goodnight.

Jenny leaves the living room and heads up the stairs giving a quick glance through the bannister at Elizabeth who is engrossed in her work.

EXT. HOUSE -- NIGHT

A purse lands with a dull thud next to the porch steps and a moment later Jenny shimmies down a post and lands next to her bag. She looks up at the house to make sure that no one is watching.

JENNY
It's just like being fourteen again.

She grabs her purse and takes off.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Elizabeth is on the phone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELIZABETH

What?... oh it's nothing, just Jenny climbing down the porch railing. Listen, Michael, I want you to call Hastings and tell him that I want his endorsement or I'm going to release pictures of him in a dress to the media... Michael, it's a joke. I'm working on that humor thing, remember? Okay, what else have we got?... Michael, enough okay? I'm here, it's done, I'm staying... because the campaign will live without me for two weeks... I know, and I appreciate it but this is something I have to do right now... I will... I love you too... I'll tell them. Bye.

Elizabeth hangs up the phone. Next to it is a picture of the family from happier days - Mom, Dad, three little girls, and a baby boy - all standing in the backyard of the house by the swing set. She picks up the picture and studies it carefully for a moment, then sets it back down again. She puts on her reading glasses and turns back to the lap top computer.

EXT. PORCH -- AFTERNOON

Jenny is sitting on the porch swing smoking a cigarette when Breeann comes out of the house to join her. She is wearing a walkman which she removes when she sees Jenny.

JENNY

Hey.

BREEANN

Hi.

JENNY

What are you listening to?

BREEANN

Uncle Jeff sent me a tape of the songs he's thinking of putting on the new album.

JENNY

Really? How does it sound?

BREEANN

It's incredible. You have to listen to it. You know I'm glad that he's recording again but I wish he could've come for a few days. Can I have a drag?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JENNY
You don't smoke.

BREEANN
I do sometimes.

JENNY
How old are you?

BREEANN
I'll be seventeen next week and you know it.

JENNY
You're too young to smoke.

BREEANN
How old were you when you started?

JENNY
(beat)
Too young.

BREEANN
You sound like Mom.

JENNY
That was uncalled for.

BREEANN
So is that your car?

JENNY
The Mercedes? Yes.

BREEANN
Husband number two had the bucks, huh?

JENNY
Well... he used to.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Mary Ann comes out of the kitchen stalking a fly with a rolled up newspaper. Elizabeth is sitting at the desk with a stack of papers.

ELIZABETH
So are you ready to do this?

MARY ANN
(distracted)
Do what?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELIZABETH

Go through the lists. Divide up the furniture.

MARY ANN

Well I was thinking we'd have dinner soon...

ELIZABETH

Mary Ann, we have to do this.

Mary Ann smacks the newspaper down on the desk next to Elizabeth, killing the fly.

MARY ANN

After dinner.

ELIZABETH

(beat)

How about I cook?

Mary Ann tosses the newspaper into a trash basket and goes to the stairs.

MARY ANN

(yells)

Lucy!

LUCY (OS)

(yells back)

What?

MARY ANN

What do you want for dinner?

LUCY (OS)

What?

MARY ANN

What do you want for dinner!?

Lucy pokes her head out at the top of the stairs.

LUCY

What?

MARY ANN

I'm asking you what you want for dinner?

LUCY

I don't care.

Mary Ann shakes her head and goes out on the porch. Lucy bounds down the stairs and follows.

EXT. PORCH -- CONTINUOUS

Mary Ann and Lucy come out onto the porch where Jenny and Breeann are still seated on the swing.

MARY ANN

Maybe you two can help. I'm trying to figure out what to cook for dinner.

JENNY

Mary Ann, do you do anything but cook?

BREEANN

You know, Mom, Jenny and I were just talking about my birthday....

JENNY

She wants my car.

MARY ANN

(scoffs)

You're not getting a car. Especially not a thirty-thousand dollar Mercedes.

JENNY

Ninety-thousand.

MARY ANN

Ninety-thousand?

JENNY

Uh-huh.

MARY ANN

Dollars?

JENNY

Plus tax and license.

MARY ANN

But... but that's more than we sold this house for.

JENNY

Seems about right.

MARY ANN

But... but this a house. That's just a car! What do you do with a ninety-thousand dollar car?

JENNY

Show off. So Bree, what do you want for your birthday?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BREEANN

Well, what I really want is a trip to Europe.

MARY ANN

Breeann, don't start on this again.

BREEANN

She asked what I want, I'm telling her what I want.

LUCY

(to Jenny)

They fight about this all the time.

BREEANN

Me and Kim and Dayna - those are my best friends - we want to go next summer after graduation.

LUCY

She thinks she going to meet some French guy and fall in love.

BREEANN

Shut up.

JENNY

I think it's a great idea. Everyone should see the world while they're still young.

MARY ANN

Too young. Seventeen is too...

BREEANN

Almost eighteen by that time...

MARY ANN

Almost eighteen is too young to go traveling around Europe by yourself. It's just too dangerous.

Elizabeth comes out onto the porch with her papers.

JENNY

She wouldn't be by herself. She'd be with Kim and Dayna.

MARY ANN

I've met Kim and Dayna. Believe me, that concept doesn't instill me with a great deal of confidence. Besides, there's no way I could afford that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ELIZABETH
Afford what?

MARY ANN
A trip to Europe.

BREEANN
Jenny could.

MARY ANN
Breeann, that's enough. Now, unless
somebody puts in a vote for dinner, its
Chef's choice.

JENNY
Pizza.

LUCY
Yeah!

BREEANN
Definitely.

MARY ANN
Oh, wouldn't you rather have some chicken
or a nice pot roast?

JENNY
Pot roast or pizza. Tough call, Mary
Ann.

BREEANN
I'll go pick it up. If I can drive your
car.

JENNY
You're a funny kid.

BREEANN
Oh please? Pretty please?

JENNY
Stop, you sound like husband number one.

MARY ANN
Jenny!

Jenny digs the keys out of her pocket.

JENNY
I want it back in one piece.

BREEANN
Thank you!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

She grabs the keys.

LUCY
Can I go? Please?

BREEANN
(sighs)
Okay, but if we see any cute guys you
have to pretend like you don't know me.

LUCY
Deal. Let me go get my cool sunglasses.

Lucy dashes inside. Breeann drags Jenny off the porch and
toward the car.

BREEANN
Come on and show me how everything works.

JENNY
Am I going to regret this?

BREEANN
Probably.

JENNY
You do have a driver's license don't you?

BREEANN
Of course. I mean, technically, I guess
it's suspended or something but...

JENNY
Breeann!

BREEANN
It's a joke.

JENNY
Again, uncalled for.

They are off to the car leaving Elizabeth and Mary Ann to
watch from the porch steps. Lucy comes out of the house at a
dead run wearing her "cool" sunglasses.

MARY ANN
Don't run.

LUCY
Sorry, bye Mom.

MARY ANN
Take a jacket.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Lucy stops.

LUCY

It's hot.

MARY ANN

The sun will be setting soon, it may get chilly.

LUCY

We're just going to the pizza place.

MARY ANN

Take a jacket. And one for your sister.

Lucy sighs and goes inside.

MARY ANN (cont'd)

I hope Jenny is insured. I don't think I could afford to pay for a dented hub cap on that thing.

Lucy comes running out with the jackets and toward the car.

MARY ANN (cont'd)

Bye.

(beat)

Love you.

(beat)

I love you too, Mom.

Elizabeth smiles and puts her arm around Mary Ann.

ELIZABETH

They seem good.

MARY ANN

Yeah. It's amazing how resilient they are. I want to be twelve again.

ELIZABETH

No you don't. Remember that perm?

MARY ANN

You know what I mean. Losing Frank was like... It's just, I see them running and laughing and... I don't remember doing that after Mom died.

ELIZABETH

We did.

MARY ANN

Promise?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

ELIZABETH

Promise.

Lucy runs back with the jackets, past Mary Ann and Elizabeth into the house. A moment later she runs out without the jackets and is halfway down the porch when...

MARY ANN

Hold it.

Lucy stops and turns reluctantly to her.

MARY ANN (cont'd)

What are you doing?

LUCY

Putting the jackets back.

MARY ANN

Why?

LUCY

Aunt Jenny told me to.

MARY ANN

Oh, she did?

LUCY

Uh-huh. She said to tell you that it's one-hundred and ten degrees outside and that you're being over... over...

MARY ANN

Over protective?

LUCY

Right. And that if you don't stop, Breeann and me will both become lesbians.

MARY ANN

(beat)

Breeann and I. You better hurry or your sister will leave without you.

She pushes Lucy gently toward the car and Lucy runs off.

ELIZABETH

Unbelievable. Jenny!

MARY ANN

No, no, no. I'll handle this.

ELIZABETH

But she...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

MARY ANN

Elizabeth, we made a deal. No fighting.

As the Mercedes pulls away, Jenny comes back up toward Mary Ann and Elizabeth.

JENNY

Put on your seatbelts. Bye!

She walks up to join her sisters who are glaring at her.

JENNY (cont'd)

Oh, don't give me that look, it's too hot for jackets.

MARY ANN

Lesbians?

JENNY

Stranger things have happened.

Jenny waves toward the Mercedes and then puts her arms around Elizabeth and Mary Ann.

JENNY (cont'd)

Our little girls are growing up.

(fake snuffle)

I need a beer.

MARY ANN

I didn't buy beer.

JENNY

I did. I hid it behind the apple juice. Who wants one?

Jenny starts for the front door.

ELIZABETH

Not me.

MARY ANN

No, thank you.

Jenny turns around and returns to them.

JENNY

One beer will not kill you.

MARY ANN

I don't want one.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

JENNY

Come on! The kids are gone. Let's party! One brewski? For me?

MARY ANN

(beat)

All right. One.

JENNY

Party animal. Elizabeth? How can you resist all this peer pressure? Come on, all the cool kids are doing it.

ELIZABETH

You're certainly in a good mood today.

JENNY

I'm just offering you a beer.

ELIZABETH

(beat - considering)

What kind of beer?

JENNY

Atta girl! Hey! As long as we're being wild and free, how about a game of gin?

ELIZABETH

We really should sit down and go over this list.

JENNY

What list?

ELIZABETH

The lawyer's list of everything in the house.

JENNY

Fuck the list.

MARY ANN

Jenny, don't swear.

JENNY

Oh, fuck, I'm sorry. Screw the list. We'll do it later.

ELIZABETH

The sooner we get it done the sooner we can go home.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

JENNY

You're being anal-retentive, Elizabeth.
We've talked about this, remember? Mary
Ann, go get the cards.

Mary Ann sighs and heads inside.

JENNY (cont'd)

Grab the beer too!

ELIZABETH

Fine, I'll go through the list myself.

Elizabeth goes into the house.

JENNY

(mocking)

"Fine. I'll go through the lists
myself." Anal.

After Elizabeth and Mary Ann have entered the house, we hear a loud metallic thud. Jenny looks around trying to place the source of the sound. It repeats and Jenny follows it off the porch and around the side of the house.

EXT. BACKYARD -- CONTINUOUS

Jenny comes around the side to the backyard to see Mrs. Anderson in full garden garb stalking around the backyard and occasionally whacking the ground with a shovel. She cocks her head as if listening for a response.

JENNY

Mrs. Anderson?

EDITH

Shhhh!

She smacks the shovel on the ground again and listens.

EDITH (cont'd)

I thought it was the Boswell's dog that
was messing up my garden. But it wasn't.

JENNY

It wasn't?

EDITH

No! It was gophers! We got gophers!

Edith exits quickly and we hear another loud thump.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JENNY

Mary Ann could you hurry up with the beer, please?

Mary Ann comes out with the cards and the beer. Elizabeth comes out a moment later and they all sit. Jenny shuffles and deals the cards and they play gin throughout this scene.

JENNY (cont'd)

What shall we play for?

MARY ANN

Fun?

JENNY

Boring. How about a buck a point?

MARY ANN

Penny a point.

JENNY

Penny a point and the loser has to wash dishes for a week.

MARY ANN

Deal.

(they shake on it)

Lucy is going to want to know what a lesbian is.

JENNY

I'm sure she already knows.

MARY ANN

She's twelve years old!

JENNY

That was going to be my point.

There is another loud thump from off. They all turn to look.

MARY ANN

What was that?

JENNY

You don't want to know.

ELIZABETH

Okay, let's start with the big stuff. How about the piano.

JENNY

Jeff.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ELIZABETH

You think he wants that thing?

JENNY

I know he wants that thing. Have you found the key yet?

MARY ANN

Not yet.

ELIZABETH

Okay. The piano goes to Jeff.

MARY ANN

You really think she knows? About lesbians?

JENNY

I don't know Mary Ann. She's your daughter. Don't you ever talk to her?

MARY ANN

Of course I do.

JENNY

Just not about lesbians.

MARY ANN

It's not what I'd call polite dinner conversation.

JENNY

Have you talked to her about Jeff?

MARY ANN

No.

JENNY

Silly question.

MARY ANN

I'm sorry, but I'm just not comfortable talking about Jeff being...

JENNY

A musician?

MARY ANN

No...

JENNY

A democrat?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MARY ANN

Jenny.

JENNY

Oh! You mean about him being...
(looks around conspiratorially)
...gay?

MARY ANN

Exactly. And I'm especially
uncomfortable when I think of discussing
it with my children.

JENNY

Well, you don't need to talk to Bree
about it.

MARY ANN

She knows?

JENNY

Mary Ann, please!

ELIZABETH

What about Dad's desk?

JENNY

I want that.

ELIZABETH

For what?

JENNY

I'm going to write the next great
American novel.

ELIZABETH

I had hoped to move it to my office
Washington.

JENNY

Perfect. Then we can charge the shipping
costs to the taxpayers. I don't think
so.

ELIZABETH

I'll trade you for it. How about the
dining room set?

JENNY

I don't want the dining room set.

MARY ANN

I do.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

ELIZABETH

Well, what do you want, Jennifer?

JENNY

What's behind door number three, Liz?

ELIZABETH

How about... The stereo?

JENNY

I have a stereo.

ELIZABETH

The TV?

JENNY

I have two TVs.

ELIZABETH

All of the kitchen ware.

JENNY

I can't cook.

ELIZABETH

The typewriter?

JENNY

I can't type.

ELIZABETH

Dad's books.

JENNY

I can't... Cute.

ELIZABETH

How about... Mom's dressing table?

JENNY

Sold!

There is another loud thump from off. Mary Ann and Elizabeth look to Jenny.

JENNY (cont'd)

Gophers.

Elizabeth and Mary Ann nod as if this makes sense.

ELIZABETH

Desk to me. Dining room - Mary Ann.
Dressing table, Jenny. Let's see...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

MARY ANN

Breeann has never said anything to me about Jeff.

JENNY

That surprises you?

MARY ANN

What do you mean?

JENNY

She knows you don't approve.

MARY ANN

I have never said I don't approve.

JENNY

You didn't have to.

ELIZABETH

I thought we could each go through our old rooms and take our personal effects, if that's all right with everyone.

JENNY

Fine.

MARY ANN

Does she know that he has...

JENNY

A new album coming out? Oh sure, she heard....

MARY ANN

Jenny!

JENNY

Oh! You mean about him having AIDS?

MARY ANN

Yes!

JENNY

She visited him the last time he was in the hospital.

MARY ANN

But no one every said...

JENNY

You never said. You never say...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

MARY ANN

Well, we're not supposed to. Jeff wants to keep it a secret.

JENNY

Yes, but your children do not work for the National Enquirer, Mary Ann. I mean you really should talk to them about this. One of these days he's going to go back into the hospital and he's not coming back out.

MARY ANN

Jenny, do not lecture me about how to raise my children. I hasn't even been two years since their father died and only a few months since their grandfather. I just don't think they're ready for any more.

JENNY

Are you?

MARY ANN

(beat)

What's next on the list, Elizabeth?

ELIZABETH

Mom's trunk. The one she kept all the photo albums in.

MARY ANN

I'd like to have that.

JENNY

Me too.

ELIZABETH

Actually so would I.

There is a moment of silence.

JENNY

Our first impasse. What do we do, Liz? Wrestle for it?

ELIZABETH

Looks like this is going to be tougher than I thought. Tell you what... I've got copies of this list upstairs. Why don't we each take one, check off the things we want...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

JENNY

And come out swinging!

ELIZABETH

And go from there.

MARY ANN

I'm sure we can work this out.

JENNY

Oh sure. It's not like any of us are stubborn or anything.

ELIZABETH

I'll be back in a minute.

Elizabeth exits inside and goes upstairs.

MARY ANN

We're not going to fight about this stuff, okay?

JENNY

Whatever you say, Mary Ann.

MARY ANN

I mean it, Jenny. You know how much Dad hated it when we fought.

JENNY

It would have to be an awfully loud fight to bother him now.

MARY ANN

(laughs then catches herself)
That's not funny. He left all these things to us...

JENNY

And left it up to us to divide it. Not a wise move on his part, I must say.

MARY ANN

I refuse to be like that. If you or Elizabeth want something so badly that you're willing to fight for it, well, then you can just have it.

JENNY

Great. So that way if I do get something I want I'll feel too guilty to enjoy it.

MARY ANN

I'm not trying to make you feel guilty.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

JENNY

You never need to try. It's in your genes.

Jenny looks up and notices as JEFF MACARTHUR enters. He is in his late twenties, handsome but thin. He looks worn around the edges. Mary Ann does not notice him.

JENNY (cont'd)

So, Mary Ann, what did Jeff say when you called him?

MARY ANN

About what?

JENNY

About why he couldn't come.

MARY ANN

He was busy.

JENNY

Busy? That's it?

MARY ANN

Very busy. You know, what with the new album and stuff...

She is about to play a card when Jeff speaks.

JEFF

Don't play the jack.

Mary Ann plays the card anyway and then turns to see Jeff.

MARY ANN

Jeff?

Jenny takes the jack and lays her cards on the table.

JENNY

Gin!

JEFF

(to Mary Ann)
Told you.

Jenny jumps up and runs to Jeff to hug him fiercely.

JEFF (cont'd)

Oh, careful, you're going to break my neck.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (9)

JENNY

Welcome home, baby brother! Wait! I must go find Liz. She'll be so excited. Oh Lizzzzzzz!!!!

Jenny runs into the house and up the stairs.

JEFF

Sorry. Didn't mean to interrupt your game.

MARY ANN

That's okay. I... Jeff, I... I don't know what to say.

JEFF

Leave 'em speechless. I've been told I'm good at that.

Jenny comes back down the stairs dragging Elizabeth behind her.

ELIZABETH

Jenny, let go of me! You're going to rip my...

Elizabeth stops short when she gets on the porch and sees Jeff.

ELIZABETH (cont'd)

Jeff?

They all stand around and stare at each other for a moment.

JEFF

Well... This certainly is a Kodak moment, isn't it?

BLACK OUT

ACT ONE - SCENE FOUR

Later that night. In the darkness we hear the sound of thunder. It is distant and rumbling. Lights come up slowly and dim inside the house. Lightning flashes occasionally and the thunder gets stronger throughout the scene. Jeff is seated on the porch swing looking out toward the approaching storm. Elizabeth comes down the stairs and out onto the porch, tentatively.

ELIZABETH

Hi.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (10)

JEFF
(beat)
Hey.

ELIZABETH
Do you mind if I join you?

JEFF
Free country. Thanks to our dedicated
elected officials. Wish I knew where to
find one to thank.

Elizabeth sits.

ELIZABETH
Me too.
(beat)
Listen, I've been trying to get you alone
ever since you got here.

JEFF
I know.

ELIZABETH
I wanted to apologize.

JEFF
That would be a first.

ELIZABETH
Jeff, please don't make this any harder
on me than it already is.

JEFF
You'll have to forgive me, Elizabeth, but
I'm not really interested in making it
easy for you.

ELIZABETH
I guess I deserve that.

JEFF
I guess you do. Boy, how about this
heat, huh? It's killing me. No pun
intended.

ELIZABETH
Do you want to talk about this?

JEFF
No, I want to be angry about this.

ELIZABETH
That's productive.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (11)

JEFF

Oh.. Just.. You know, you have been pulling this shit on me since the day I was born and I have to tell you the charm is wearing off.

ELIZABETH

I just figured that the last thing you would want right now is to spend two weeks in this house.

JEFF

No, you figured that would be the last thing *you* would want.

ELIZABETH

I was trying to make things easier on everyone.

JEFF

You're doing a lousy job.

ELIZABETH

Look, Jeff, all we're doing here is moving. Packing a bunch of stuff and moving it someplace else. You really wouldn't have been missing much.

JEFF

I would've missed saying goodbye to this house.

ELIZABETH

It's just a house.

JEFF

Then why are you here? I mean, if this is just a house and all that stuff in there is just furniture...

ELIZABETH

I had to be here. There are papers to sign, boxes to pack...

JEFF

Fax machines and moving men could've taken care of those things. Come on Elizabeth, you can do better than that.

ELIZABETH

I have responsibilities. I'm sorry if that's a concept you have trouble grasping.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (12)

JEFF

Elizabeth, do not start with me. I only have the energy to be angry about one thing at a time.

ELIZABETH

I said I was sorry we didn't call you.

JEFF

I heard you.

ELIZABETH

So what do you want? Do you want me to crawl on broken glass and beg for forgiveness? Well, I'm sorry, I just had this outfit dry cleaned and unless you have some sort of dog treat in your pocket, I don't beg.

Elizabeth stands and steps down off the front porch, arms crossed, back to Jeff. There is a pause.

JEFF

Dog treat. That was kind of witty. When did you get witty?

ELIZABETH

(beat)

When the polls said voters like that.

JEFF

Of course.

ELIZABETH

(turns back to him)

I don't want to fight with you. I don't think that's what you came here for, is it?

JEFF

(beat - charming smile)

Maybe a little.

From off we hear the call of Edith.

EDITH

Oooo! Yooohooo! Hello!!!

Edith enters and runs up to Jeff.

EDITH (cont'd)

Oh Jeffie MacArthur! It's so good to see you!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (13)

JEFF

It's good to see you too, Mrs. Anderson.

EDITH

My goodness! I barely recognized you!
You've gone and gotten so skinny. Are
you eating right?

JEFF

I'm eating fine.

EDITH

No, you're not! You live out there in
Holly-weird. Nobody eats right in Holly-
weird. I know! I watch all them TV
shows like "Entertainment Whatever" and
"Lifestyles of the Whozzits" and let me
tell you something... Some of those
people out there seem a little.. Well,
hell, I'm just gonna say it. They seem a
little touched. Just a little too
strange for me.

JEFF

I guess we're all a little strange in our
own way.

EDITH

That's true. People think I'm strange
'cuz I talk to myself and I get mixed up
every now and then. But compared to them
folks out there in Holly-weird I'm as
normal as a cow chewing grass.

(to Elizabeth)

How ya doin', Senator?

ELIZABETH

I'm a Congressman, not a...

(drops it)

I'm fine, Mrs. Anderson. How are you?

EDITH

Well, my bowels could let loose at any
moment.

Elizabeth blanches and Edith turns to whisper to Jeff.

EDITH (cont'd)

I love saying things like that to people
like her.

ELIZABETH

Well that's... Looks like it's going to
be quite a storm.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (14)

EDITH

Gonna be a real barn burner, that one.

ELIZABETH

Fell it in your bones?

EDITH

No, the weatherman said so, you.... Now you listen here, Jeffie, I want you to come on over and get yourself some of my famous cherry pie. Hell child, you're nothing but skin and bones. We gotta fatten you up!

Breeann, Jenny, Lucy, and Mary Ann all enter down the walkway.

EDITH (cont'd)

Oh hello, everyone!

BREEANN

God help us.

ELIZABETH

Did you guys enjoy your walk?

MARY ANN

I'll never be able to show my face in this town again.

ELIZABETH

(to Jenny)

What did you do?

JENNY

Me? Why is it always me?

MARY ANN

Every time we'd pass someone she'd scream "Heat Stroke" and fall on the ground convulsing.

Elizabeth turns to Jenny who then gives her a brief example of her convulsions. Elizabeth turns away without comment.

ELIZABETH

Looks like we're going to get a little wet tonight.

JEFF

Do you remember how we used to sit out here and watch the thunderstorms as they blew in?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (15)

MARY ANN

It was better before they put those houses over there. You could see forever.

LUCY

What was there before?

ELIZABETH

Corn fields.

BREEANN

Who would've guessed?

EDITH

My late husband Pete and I used to sit out on our porch and watch the storms just like this. Best time was at sunset. All red and orange and purple. And those big, dark clouds just rolling in across the sky. If the wind's right you can smell the rain from miles off. Those clouds get closer and closer and closer and you think the Lord Almighty is coming to take you away and then all the sudden it gets real still. That breeze dies out and there's not a sound. It's so quiet you can hear it when the first drops start to fall... Tapping real soft on the leaves of the trees.

LUCY

I felt a drop.

EDITH

So did I.

ELIZABETH

We better get in and close the windows.

EDITH

Oh my goodness, you're right. Good night all!

Mary Ann, Elizabeth, Jenny, and Breeann all go inside. Lucy starts in but stops at the door. Jeff is sitting on the swing.

LUCY

Are you coming in, Uncle Jeff?

JEFF

In a minute.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (16)

Lucy debates for a moment then goes to sit next to Jeff on the swing. She lays her head on his shoulder and they rock gently as the lightning flashes and we fade to black.

ACT ONE - SCENE FIVE

It is early the next morning - around 8am. Jeff is at the kitchen table with his head in his hands. Breeann is at the kitchen sink wetting a washrag.

JEFF (CONT'D) (cont'd)
Sorry I woke you up.

BREEANN
I wasn't really asleep. Lucy was snoring again. It's amazing how that much noise can come out of such a small person.

Breeann takes the washrag to him and places it on his forehead. She stands behind him for a moment, stroking his hair.

JEFF
That's much better. Thank you.

BREEANN
Sure. I used to do this for Dad when he was sick.
(beat)
So I guess you don't want to go to the pool with me today, huh?

JEFF
Oh sure. A couple hundred screaming, wet kids is exactly what I need right now.

BREEANN
I'd let you trip a few.

JEFF
Sounds tempting. Maybe tomorrow.

BREEANN
I hate seeing you like this.

JEFF
I'm sorry. I've tried to find a graceful and dignified way to throw up, but it cost too much to keep dry cleaning my tuxedo.

BREEANN
And through it all he retains his sense of humor, however bad it may be.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (17)

JEFF

Be nice to me.

BREEANN

So is this... You know, like, something I should be worried about? I mean...

JEFF

Oh honey, no. It's just a reaction to this new medicine I'm taking. It's supposed to make me feel better.

BREEANN

Puking makes you feel better? I'd talk to your doctor about that.

JEFF

Yeah. Listen... don't tell your mom, okay? I don't think I can handle her being all...

BREEANN

Mom.

JEFF

Exactly.

BREEANN

That's cool. I get a kind of sick pleasure knowing something she doesn't.

Mary Ann comes up the walk with a bag of groceries and a newspaper.

JEFF

Oh God. Someone's coming. How do I look?

BREEANN

Don't ask.

Mary Ann enters.

MARY ANN

Well, good morning. You two are up early.

JEFF

Couldn't sleep.

BREEANN

Hey Mom, can I go to the pool?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (18)

MARY ANN
You've been every day this week.

BREEANN
So?

MARY ANN
My daughter, the great debater.

BREEANN
I'll make you a deal: I'll even take
Lucy.

MARY ANN
I'm suspicious.

BREEANN
Mother, please. I love my sister. As
you always say, "she's the only one I've
got."

MARY ANN
I don't suppose the fact it's your
birthday next week has anything to do
with it?

BREEANN
Shocked! I am shocked and offended you
would even suggest such a thing!

MARY ANN
The keys are in my purse.

BREEANN
Thanks!

Breeann kisses Jeff on the forehead and runs out of the room
and upstairs.

JEFF
Quite a little con artist you've got
there.

MARY ANN
Tell me about it.
(beat)
You look a little pale. Are you feeling
all right?

JEFF
I'm fine. I think it's the heat. The
radio said it was eighty-five degrees
already. God, I hate this state.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (19)

Mary Ann looks at the thermometer by the kitchen window.

MARY ANN

This says eighty-eight. But I remember it always read warmer than what the weatherman said.

JEFF

Why don't I remember it being this hot?

MARY ANN

Oh, it got like this a few times. But it's not the heat, it's the humidity that will kill you.

There is a pause as Mary Ann realizes what she said. Jeff lets it slide.

JEFF

I guess I've gotten used to L.A.

Another pause.

MARY ANN

You know, you and I didn't really get much of a chance to talk last night.

JEFF

You were asleep when Jenny and I got home.

MARY ANN

Did you have a good time?

JEFF

Yeah.

MARY ANN

(beat)

Jeff, I want to apologize...

JEFF

Mary Ann, let's just forget it, okay? It's not important.

Mary Ann regroups.

MARY ANN

So, what can I get you for breakfast?

JEFF

Nothing, thanks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (20)

MARY ANN

Nothing?

JEFF

No. I don't eat breakfast.

MARY ANN

Since when?

JEFF

Since... I don't know.

MARY ANN

You should eat something. A piece of toast.

JEFF

I'm not hungry. Thank you though.

MARY ANN

Breakfast is the most important meal of the day.

JEFF

As Dad used to say.

MARY ANN

Is that were I picked up that horrible saying?

JEFF

One of his many pearls of wisdom. Like, don't cross your eyes or they'll stay that way.

MARY ANN

Sit too close to the TV and you'll go blind.

JEFF

Parenting by cliché. Oh well. He tried.

MARY ANN

He tried? That's all you have to say about Dad?

JEFF

I didn't necessarily mean it in a bad way. I just sometimes wish he would've tried harder. I know that sounds like another cliché - the unfeeling father of a gay son. I guess clichés have to come from somewhere.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (21)

MARY ANN

I know this may be hard for you to believe, but just because he didn't always understand certain... Aspects of your life doesn't mean he didn't love you. He did. Him and Mom both.

(pause - a realization)

Do you remember her?

JEFF

Not really. Just little things.

MARY ANN

Like what?

JEFF

Well, I was only two when she died, so I mainly just remember stuff like her pushing me on the swings out back. And the piano.

Elizabeth comes down the stairs.

MARY ANN

Oh that piano! She used to sit there for hours trying to teach you how to play.

Elizabeth enters the kitchn.

ELIZABETH

Good morning.

MARY ANN

Morning. Elizabeth, do you remember how Mom would sit Jeff on her lap and plunk out notes on the piano?

ELIZABETH

Sure. "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star." You two were a pair.

MARY ANN

(enjoying the memory)

She cherished you. You were her world. She used to drag Elizabeth and Jenny and me into your room and show us how to change your diaper and how to feed you. And she made us promise...

(beat)

She made us promise to take care of you... After she was gone.

There is an uncomfortable pause.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (22)

ELIZABETH

So have you found the key to the piano,
Mary Ann?

MARY ANN

No, and I'm running out of places to
look.

ELIZABETH

It would be nice to find it so Jeff can
play. I'd like to hear some of the music
you're putting on the new album.

MARY ANN

How's it going by the way?

JEFF

It's okay. It's been awhile. Sort of
like re-learning the whole process.

MARY ANN

I bet your fans will be happy to hear
from you again.

JEFF

If I have any fans left.

MARY ANN

Of course you do! It's only been a
couple of years.

JEFF

People are fickle. They have a tendency
to forget. But it's okay. I mean, it's
nice to be able to go to the grocery
store without being mobbed.

(unconvincing)

I don't miss that at all.

Jenny comes downstairs and into the kitchen.

MARY ANN

Good morning!

ELIZABETH

Good morning.

JEFF

Good morning.

Jenny looks at them for a moment blankly.

JENNY

Coffee.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (23)

MARY ANN
It's not quite ready yet. Who wants
eggs?

ELIZABETH
I do. Do you need help?

MARY ANN
No, I've got it. Jeff, are you sure?

JEFF
Positive.

MARY ANN
Jenny?

JENNY
Waffles.

MARY ANN
Eggs.

JENNY
Waffles.

MARY ANN
You want waffles, you fix them yourself.

JENNY
Eggs will be fine.

Breeann and Lucy come bounding down the stairs and toward the
front door.

BREEANN
Bye!

LUCY
Bye!

MARY ANN
Hold it! Wait!! Breakfast.

But they are gone. Mary Ann appears as if she may be having
a stroke.

ELIZABETH
Where are they off to?

MARY ANN
The pool, where else? Anything to do get
out of all the work we have to do around
here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (24)

Jenny picks up the newspaper from the table.

ELIZABETH

Speaking of which, I realize it's kind of early in the morning for this but we should discuss the move. We do have a lot to accomplish in the next few days.

JENNY

(from behind paper)
I'm not allowed to lift heavy objects. I have a note from my doctor.

JEFF

All those in favor of Jenny moving the piano say aye.

Mary Ann, Elizabeth, and Jeff all vote "Aye."

JENNY

Nay.

ELIZABETH

Actually, the moving men will get the piano and the rest of the heavy stuff.

MARY ANN

When will they be here?

ELIZABETH

The fourth. Now what we have to do is pack everything in boxes, label them, and tell the movers who gets what. They do the rest.

JENNY

Speaking of what goes to who?

MARY ANN

What goes to whom.

JENNY

So sorry. Whom is getting Mom's trunk?

MARY ANN

Do we have to start this again?

JEFF

Obviously I've missed something.

JENNY

Dad's will said we get everything but it didn't say which we gets which everything.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (25)

JEFF

Get that woman a cup of coffee.

JENNY

Please.

Mary Ann pours the coffee.

ELIZABETH

What she is trying to say is that the will was very non-specific. Basically it's up to us to decide.

JEFF

Good old Dad. The master of avoiding conflict.

MARY ANN

There will be no conflict. It would be silly to fight over the contents of this house.

JENNY

When there's so many other things to fight about.

JEFF

Well, I want the piano. If we ever find the key.

ELIZABETH

We already had that marked off for you on the list.

JEFF

What list?

ELIZABETH

It's a complete list of every item in the house. I'll give you a copy.

JENNY

What about the stuff no one wants?

MARY ANN

I'm sure among the four of us....

JENNY

What about that clock?

Jenny points at what must be the ugliest clock in the world, which rests atop the refrigerator. They all stare at it for a moment.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (26)

MARY ANN

That was Dad's favorite clock.

JENNY

Does that mean you want it?

MARY ANN

I didn't say that.

JENNY

Jeff, do you want it?

JEFF

Gay men aren't allowed to have clocks like that.

ELIZABETH

Jeff...

JENNY

Then I guess it goes to you, Liz.

ELIZABETH

Now wait a minute. I have a clock. Several clocks.

JENNY

So we have a homeless clock. Which will be joined by the black velvet bullfighter paintings in the den, am I right?

Everyone nods in agreement.

JENNY (cont'd)

And the basement is filled with crap none of us will want.

JEFF

We could sell it.

MARY ANN

A yard sale! We'll have a yard sale!

JENNY

Who is going to buy that clock?

MARY ANN

You'd be amazed what people will buy. I think it's a great idea.

ELIZABETH

We can use the money to help pay the movers. When should we do this?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (27)

MARY ANN

What about tomorrow? It's Saturday.

ELIZABETH

I think we need more time to plan.

MARY ANN

What's to plan? After breakfast we'll go around the house and pick out things no one wants. Tomorrow morning we'll put it out on the lawn.

JEFF

The kids and I can go around and put up some signs.

ELIZABETH

I could make up some lists....

JENNY

And we can use my Uncle Gus' barn! We can do it kids! We can put on a show!

MARY ANN

Then it's settled. Let's eat.

Mary Ann goes about the breakfast routine as Jenny returns to the paper.

JENNY

Jeff, what's this all about?

JEFF

What?

JENNY

(reads)

Insiders at the Westland Bottling Corporation say a multi-million dollar endorsement deal with rock superstar Jeff MacArthur...

(looks at him)

Rock superstar?

JEFF

I didn't write it.

JENNY

(continues)

Endorsement deal with rock superstar Jeff MacArthur was in the works, but those plans have been dropped suddenly.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (28)

JENNY (cont'd)

Although no official word was released, sources close to the top report concerns of image problems. MacArthur, who has been staying out of the public eye for the last few years, is vacationing in Iceland and was unavailable for comment.

(to Jeff)
Iceland?

JEFF

My publicist has a strange sense of humor.

ELIZABETH

Is this true?

JEFF

Uh, yeah. It is. You know, Mary Ann, maybe I will have some eggs.

Jeff gets up and goes to the stove.

MARY ANN

Why are they breaking the contract.

JEFF

They're not breaking it. It was never signed. Long story.

ELIZABETH

We have time.

Jeff contemplates for a moment, realizing he is trapped. He takes a deep breath.

JEFF

Well... They found out I'm planning to go public.

MARY ANN

Public?

JEFF

I'm going to announce that I'm gay... And that I'm sick.

There is a moment of shell-shocked silence.

MARY ANN

Were we going to find out when we saw it on the eleven o'clock news or were you planning on telling us first?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (29)

JEFF

I just did.

ELIZABETH

Jeff, have you really thought this whole thing through?

JEFF

Yes, I have.

ELIZABETH

And so you realize that by going public with this information, you'll be affecting all of us?

JENNY

You mean it will affect you.

ELIZABETH

I mean the entire family.

JENNY

And you being up for re-election has nothing to do with it?

ELIZABETH

Of course it does. I'll admit this is coming at a very delicate time for me. But it will affect all of us. I just think we need to discuss it.

JEFF

There is nothing to discuss. This is my decision and I've made it.

Jeff goes into the living room. His sisters follow.

MARY ANN

What would make you want to do this?

JEFF

Oh, I don't know, Mary Ann. I just thought it might sell a few more albums.

ELIZABETH

There is no need to be sarcastic, Jeff.

JENNY

Well, if you would just let him talk...

MARY ANN

(to Jenny)

I suppose you think this is a good idea?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (30)

JENNY

No, not really. But I'm willing to listen.

MARY ANN

(to Jeff)

I just want to know why you didn't talk to us earlier.

JEFF

Because you were never really interested in anything that happened to me, so I figured why should this be any different?

ELIZABETH

That's not fair.

JEFF

Yeah, well, life is unfair, Elizabeth. You don't always get what you want.

JENNY

Okay, everybody just calm down.

MARY ANN

Calm down? How can you sit there and listen to this?

JEFF

(reaches out to her)

Mary Ann...

MARY ANN

(pulls away)

No! I will not hear any more about this. I will not let you destroy this family or hurt my children.

JEFF

Oh please, Mary Ann. Don't you think you're overdramatizing this just a bit? This isn't going to hurt anyone. Especially not Breeann and Lucy.

MARY ANN

How do you know that? Can you promise me that? Will you swear to me that going public will not cause them any harm? Because if you can't, I'm asking you not to do it. Those two girls are all I have.

JEFF

I would never hurt them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (31)

MARY ANN

Lucy is twelve years old! Everybody knows that her uncle is the famous Jeff MacArthur. For God's sake they ask her to get your autograph. Do you know how they are going to treat her? Do you know how cruel this kids are going to be when they find out you're...

She stops short of saying it.

JEFF

Say it Mary Ann. Come on... When they find out you're a fag. Isn't that what you wanted to say? A fag dying of a fag disease? Come on, Mary Ann, say it! Say it!!

Mary Ann runs up the stairs.

JEFF (cont'd)

Shit.

JENNY

I'll go.

Jenny goes up after her.

ELIZABETH

That was completely uncalled for.

JEFF

Elizabeth, don't you have some hands to shake or some babies to kiss or something?

Jeff goes out onto the front porch. Elizabeth follows.

ELIZABETH

Why are you being so hostile toward us?

JEFF

I am not being hostile toward you, I am being hostile around you. There's a big difference.

ELIZABETH

Can we please just talk about this?

JEFF

You always want to talk, Elizabeth. This time, there is nothing to talk about. I'm doing it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (32)

ELIZABETH

Even if it means hurting the rest of us?

JEFF

Yes! I've taken lessons from you -
thinking only of myself.

ELIZABETH

And acting like child.

JEFF

If that's what it takes.

ELIZABETH

When were you planning on doing this?

JEFF

As soon as I get back to LA.

ELIZABETH

(beat - regroup)

Jeff... We are a family. First and
foremost above anything we are a family.
And that means we stick together and we
don't go off half-cocked like this
without considering the repercussions.
Now until we can sit down and has this
thing through and come up with a solution
that's acceptable for everyone, I think
you should hold off for awhile.

JEFF

Elizabeth, you sound like you're trying
to get me to vote for you. But let me
explain something. Unless you can pass
some sort of law, Congresswoman, you have
no right to tell me what I can and cannot
do.

ELIZABETH

I have the right to express my opinion.

JEFF

I know your opinion, Elizabeth. Everyone
knows your opinion. And that's the
problem isn't it? When I go public, the
press is going to take one look at your
voting record and they are going to hang
you.

ELIZABETH

For what? I have nothing to be ashamed
of.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (33)

JEFF

You voted against civil rights protection
for gays in your state!

ELIZABETH

They do not need special rights...

JEFF

Not special rights! The same rights!
And what about your vote against
increasing the AIDS budget?

ELIZABETH

AIDS is already receiving more federal
dollars per capita than any other disease
in history. More than cancer, more than
heart disease...

JEFF

But I don't have cancer! I don't have
heart disease! You know, it would've
been one thing if I had been keeping this
a secret from you as well, but you knew
Elizabeth. You knew all along. You
weren't voting against gays or AIDS
research. You were voting against me.

ELIZABETH

I was voting the way the people who
elected me into office want me to vote.
Don't you ever suggest I would purposely
do something to harm you. It had nothing
to do with you!

JEFF

How could it not? How can you separate
the two? Jesus, Elizabeth, if what
you're saying is true then you're more of
a cold-hearted bitch than I thought you
were.

Elizabeth takes that in for a moment and then gets in his
face.

ELIZABETH

You have chosen to live the way you do
and that's fine. I have never asked you
to justify your life to me. So I will
not stand here and justify mine to you.

She goes in the living room and is about to go upstairs when
she stops. Jeff sits for a moment.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (34)

JEFF
(to no one)
That went well.

Elizabeth considers for a moment and then goes to the phone.
She dials and then speaks.

ELIZABETH
Michael? It's me. I need you to start
making some calls. Yes, we have a
problem.

Slow fade to black.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (35)

ACT TWO - SCENE ONE

The interior of the house is dark. Dim light, cast from the porch lamp comes up.

BREEANN (V.O.)

Journal entry, August 26th. The rain the other night didn't do much to break the heat. Yesterday was another awful day in the Bolivian Corn Jungle. I think that must have been why I had such strange dreams last night. In one dream this house was right on the edge of a tremendous ocean and I was sitting on the front porch steps dipping my feet in the water. Just then this giant cruise ship pulled up and docked. But this wasn't any cruise ship. No, this was the "Love Boat," from TV. Then we were sailing around the world and my family was playing the parts from the show. Jenny was Julie your cruise director and Aunt Elizabeth was Captain Stubing. Uncle Jeff was Gopher and Mom was the Doctor and Lucy was Isaac the black bartender.

From off we hear Jenny and Jeff singing a very drunken version of the theme to the television show "The Love Boat." They enter, still singing and swaying more than a little. They go up onto the porch and finish with a big "Welcome aboard it's love!"

They collapse laughing on the front steps.

JENNY

Who's turn is it?

JEFF

Yours.

JENNY

Are you sure?

JEFF

Positive.

JENNY

My turn to ask or my turn to guess?

JEFF

Your turn to ask.

JENNY

Are you sure?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (36)

JEFF
Positive.

JENNY
Okay.

There is a pause.

JEFF
Will you go!

JENNY
I'm thinking.

JEFF
In other words this could take awhile.

JENNY
Okay, smart ass. I'm ready.

JEFF
So am I.

JENNY
"Three's Company."

JEFF
Oh please. That's so easy! It's uh...

JENNY
One thousand one, one thousand two...

JEFF
Stop it.

Jenny starts singing "The Brady Bunch" theme. ("Here's the story...")

JEFF (cont'd)
That's not fair! You're distracting me.

JENNY
If it means I win, then it's fair.

JEFF
I got it! I got it!

He begins the theme to "Three's Company" and Jenny joins in. They finish, laughing drunkenly.

JENNY
What time is it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (37)

JEFF
(checks his watch)
Three-seventeen a.m.

JENNY
I'll tell you right now... Mary Ann is going to die if she wakes me up at six o'clock in the morning again.

JEFF
Why would she do that?

JENNY
Day two of the "Great MacArthur Yard Sale."

JEFF
All we did today was sit on the porch and drink margaritas. I kind of doubt that she'll want our help.

JENNY
She had a little talk with me about that.

JEFF
She did?

JENNY
Listen to this. First she goes, "I can't do everything around here and I don't think it's too much to ask for a little help now and then."

JEFF
Stop.

JENNY
It gets better. Then she says, "Although God knows I've gotten used to doing things on my own."

JEFF
She did not say that.

JENNY
Yes, she did. I swear to God.

JEFF
You know, for someone who's not Catholic or Jewish, she's really good at guilt.

JENNY
I know and it pisses me off.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (38)

JEFF

Because you aren't good at it.

JENNY

So unfair.

JEFF

I've been waiting for it.

JENNY

What?

JEFF

The guilt trip about going public. It's driving me crazy. I know it's going to happen, I just don't know when. It's like those horror movies when you're waiting for the crazed, ax-wielding maniac to jump out and decapitate a nurse.

JENNY

Oh, I hate that! But you know how you can tell? The minute she shows her breasts you know she's going to buy it.

JEFF

I don't think that formula will work for me.

JENNY

I tried.

JEFF

We were all too busy avoiding each other to do anything about it.

JENNY

You had to know they would hate the whole thing.

JEFF

Yeah, I kind of figured. But you know me and my Donna Reed dreams.

JENNY

Sick.

JEFF

So why do you think it's a bad idea.

JENNY

I really had fun tonight.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (39)

JEFF

Jenny.

JENNY

I loved it when that guy in the band recognized you and they got you to get up and sing. You need to do that more often.

JEFF

I get up and sing all the time. It's my job. Answer the question.

JENNY

And that waitress! Can you believe she wanted you to autograph her breast? Does that happen often?

JEFF

Jenny...

JENNY

Then again, it's not like it wouldn't fit. I mean Lord, you could've written the Bill of Rights on one of those things.

JEFF

Come on, Jenny.

JENNY

I don't want to talk about this.

JEFF

Why not?

JENNY

Because I'm drunk.

JEFF

So am I. See how it all works out?

JENNY

Not really, no.

JEFF

Why do you think it's a bad idea.

JENNY

Because I'm drunk.

JEFF

Why do you think what I want to do is a bad idea?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (40)

JENNY

What do you want to do?

JEFF

Jenny!

JENNY

(sighs)

I don't think it's a bad idea. I just don't think it's a good idea. I mean, I think it's a good idea, it's just not a good idea.

JEFF

(beat)

Well, that made perfect sense.

JENNY

I told you! We really need to talk about this when I'm sober.

JEFF

I want to talk about it now!

JENNY

All right! Jesus. I understand why you want to tell the universe that you are sick. I think. And I think that's great. It's a great idea. I just don't like the idea of you being the one who does it.

JEFF

Do you want to tell people I'm sick?

JENNY

I'm being serious now.

JEFF

Okay. Why don't you want *me* to do it?

JENNY

You know you can kiss your career goodbye.

JEFF

Not necessarily.

JENNY

But maybe.

JEFF

Yeah, well... Fuck 'em. I'll work at McDonald's.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (41)

JENNY

Jeff, you're back in the recording studio again. I know how important that is to you and I just don't want anything to mess it up.

JEFF

Well, let's face facts, Jenny. The reason this album is so important to me is because it's probably going to be my last one.

Jenny punches him in the arm.

JEFF (cont'd)

Ow! That hurt!

JENNY

It was a love pat.

JEFF

Love pats don't leave bruises.

JENNY

I won't listen to you talk like that. You're being pitiful and I hate it when you get pitiful. It's very annoying.

JEFF

People with life-threatening illnesses have the right to be annoying. It's in the constitution.

JENNY

I just don't understand why you feel it's necessary to make yourself the next Jesus Christ.

JEFF

I don't.

JENNY

Jeff, you're halfway there already. All you need to do is get a cross and figure out how to part Lake Michigan.

JEFF

That was Moses.

JENNY

Parted Lake Michigan?

JEFF

Parted the Red Sea.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (42)

JENNY
We're not talking about the Red Sea.
That's been done.

JEFF
Never mind.

JENNY
Why do you want to do this. Truth.

He pauses and then speaks with the utmost of sincerity - as if this is the real crux of the matter.

JEFF
Because... It'll get me on the cover of
"People."

Jeff laughs and Jenny hits him again.

JEFF (cont'd)
OW! I wasn't being pitiful that time.

JENNY
No, but you're pissing me off. Now, why
do you want to do this?

JEFF
I don't know. It's important to me.

JENNY
Why?

JEFF
I want to make a difference.

JENNY
Oh please! Who are you? Miss America?
Don't bullshit me Jeff. Mary Ann may buy
that kind of crap, but I won't.

JEFF
(beat)
I'm just so tired. I'm tired of lying.
I'm tired of secrets. I'm tired of being
sick. I just don't want everyone to
think I was ashamed.

JENNY
I will always support you.... In whatever
you do. I just don't think I can stand
to see you get hurt.

JEFF
People always get hurt.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (43)

JENNY

But I'm your big sister. It's my job to keep that from happening.

JEFF

There's some things even a big sister can't keep me safe from.

JENNY

I know. But I wish I could.

Jenny puts her arm around him and they sit quietly for a moment. Then Jeff begins to sing the them to "The Mary Tyler Moore Show."

JEFF

Who can turn the world on with her smile?

JENNY

Cut it out.

JEFF

Who can take a nothing day and suddenly make it all seem worthwhile.

JENNY

You're pissing me off again.

JEFF

Well it's you girl and you should know it. With each glance and every little movement you show it.

Jenny relents and joins in.

JENNY & JEFF

Love is all around no need to fake it.
You can have the town why don't you take it? You're gonna make it after all...

Jeff stops singing and Jenny finishes by herself quietly.

JENNY

You're gonna make it... After all.

As the lights start to fade, Jeff takes off an imaginary hat and throws it in the air a la "Mary Tyler Moore." The two watch as the hats flies away.

Fade to black.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (44)

ACT TWO - SCENE TWO

It is around noon. Elizabeth and Lucy are in the living room putting books into boxes. Mary Ann comes out of the kitchen with a pitcher of lemonade. She heads for the door.

MARY ANN
She's driving me crazy.

ELIZABETH
You asked her to help.

Mary Ann goes outside just as Jenny is coming up the walk. Jenny is talking to an unseen customer.

JENNY
I'm sorry, I can't take a penny less than ten dollars for that painting. My father loved that painting.

MARY ANN
(to Jenny)
Dad hated that painting.

JENNY
(to Mary Ann)
Shhh!
(to customer)
He died recently you know.

MARY ANN
Jenny!

JENNY
(to customer)
Excuse me, won't you?

Jenny takes Mary Ann aside.

JENNY (cont'd)
Will you please shut up! I've almost got her. She got misty-eyed on that last part so all I need is a real clincher to drag her in.

MARY ANN
You're lying to that woman.

JENNY
I'm not lying. I'm selling. There's a big difference.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (45)

MARY ANN

This is going to stop right now.

(to customer)

Ma'am, I'm sorry, but that really wasn't my father's favorite painting.

Jenny grabs Mary Ann and turns her around.

JENNY

(to customer)

You'll have to excuse my sister. She hasn't gotten over our father's death and seeing all of these precious memories drift away is so upsetting.

She takes Mary Ann by the shoulders.

JENNY (cont'd)

You've got to let go, Mary Ann. Do you hear me? You've got to move on!

She turns Mary Ann and pushes her toward the house.

JENNY (cont'd)

Move on!

(to customer)

Did I mention that my mother gave my father that painting shortly before she died.

Jenny exits as Jeff enters from the back yard.

JEFF

Mary Ann, are we selling the swing set?

MARY ANN

No.

JEFF

There's some guy out back trying to dig it up.

MARY ANN

Oh Lord.

She hands the pitcher of lemonade to Jeff and rushes off to the back yard. Jenny enters counting her money.

JENNY

Like shooting fish in a barrel.

JEFF

I'm glad you're having fun.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (46)

JENNY

Oh I am! This is great! This is the meaning of power!

JEFF

Conning people into spending their hard-earned money on useless junk?

JENNY

Isn't America wonderful? Oh wait! Another happy customer just pulled up.

She runs off as Breeann enters.

BREEANN

(to Jeff
Hey. What's with the...

JEFF

Don't ask. How was the pool.

BREEANN

Boring. Guys in this town are so midwest. Are you going to drink all of that?

Jeff looks down at the pitcher he has forgotten he is holding.

JEFF

Oh. No, actually your mother... Never mind. Do you want some?

BREEANN

I'll get the glasses.

Breeann enters the house.

BREEANN (CONT'D) (cont'd)

(to Lucy & Elizabeth)
Hi.

ELIZABETH

Hello.

LUCY

Start packing.

BREEANN

I'm going to have lemonade on the porch with Uncle Jeff.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (47)

LUCY
(to Elizabeth)
Oh, can I too? Please.

ELIZABETH
Sure. This can wait.

LUCY
Get another glass.

BREEANN
You want some Aunt Elizabeth?

ELIZABETH
I should finish this.

BREEANN
You just said it could wait.

ELIZABETH
(beat)
Good point.

Breeann goes to get the glasses as Jenny comes running up the walkway and onto the front porch carrying a book.

JENNY
(to Jeff)
Got a pen?

JEFF
Not on me.

Jenny runs inside the house just as Elizabeth, Breeann, and Lucy are exiting.

JENNY
Excuse me. Coming through. Lady with a baby. I need a pen. Where do I find a pen?!

LUCY
Desk!

Jenny rushes to the desk. Elizabeth, Breeann, and Lucy go onto the porch and sit.

BREEANN
I brought some company

JEFF
(looks at Elizabeth)
The more the merrier.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (48)

Jenny comes rushing back onto the porch with the book and a pen. She thrusts both into Jeff's hands.

JENNY

Sign it.

JEFF

(looks at book)

Advanced chemistry? Why?

JENNY

That little girl over there will give me five bucks for it if you sign it.

ELIZABETH

That's my textbook from college.

JENNY

She doesn't know that.

JEFF

No.

JENNY

Oh come on! You'll break her heart. She thinks you are so dreamy! She has all your albums. Just wait until she tells her best friend Mindy! She'll be sooooo jealous.

JEFF

All right! I'll sign it.

(he does)

But tell her it's a gift from me.

JENNY

Jeff! The girl has a crisp Abe Lincoln just dying to be spent.

JEFF

You need to calm down.

JENNY

I'm experiencing the joys of capitalism. What's wrong with that?

ELIZABETH

You're sounding very Republican, Jennifer.

JENNY

Bit your tongue, Liz.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (49)

ELIZABETH

I don't know. A few more hours of this
and I figure I'll be able to slap a
Bush/Quayle bumper sticker on your
Mercedes.

JENNY

(beat)
All right! Fine! No charge! Happy?!
(takes the book)
Hey kid! Yeah you! You want to buy a
clock?

Jenny exits. Mary Ann enters.

MARY ANN

Where is she.

JEFF

Bilking children out of their lunch
money.

MARY ANN

Isn't there a law against what she's
doing?

ELIZABETH

Probably.

BREEANN

Mom, chill. Have some lemonade.

JEFF

We need another glass.

LUCY

I'll get it.

MARY ANN

Thank you, honey.

Lucy goes in the house.

BREEANN

So she hasn't sold the clock yet.

MARY ANN

No, but give her time.

JEFF

No pun intended.

ELIZABETH

Uh-oh.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (50)

MARY ANN

What?

ELIZABETH

She's pushing the bullfighter paintings.

BREEANN

She'll never sell those.

JEFF

Want to bet?

BREEANN

Five dollars.

MARY ANN

(objection)

Breeann.

JEFF

You're on.

MARY ANN

Jeff!

Lucy comes back out with the glass.

ELIZABETH

I believe betting is illegal in Iowa.

JEFF

I'll pay two to one.

ELIZABETH

(beat)

I'm in.

MARY ANN

Elizabeth!!

ELIZABETH

He's paying two to one.

LUCY

What's the bet?

BREEANN

We bet jeff five bucks each that Jenny can't sell those paintings.

LUCY

The bullfighter ones?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (51)

BREEANN

Right.

LUCY

Mom, can I borrow five dollars?

MARY ANN

No.

JEFF

Wait, wiat. I think she's going in for the kill.

A few beats of silence as they watch.

BREEANN

We need popcorn.

JEFF

Shhhh.

BREEANN

I think she's losing him.

LUCY

He's walking away.

BREEANN

Pay up.

JEFF

Not yet. I think he's coming back.

ELIZABETH

No....

JEFF

He's considering, he's not convinced, she's not giving up and into the turn they go it's Jenny and the man, the man and Jenny, Jenny, the man, Jenny...

BREEANN

He's pulling out his wallet!

ELIZABETH

No!

JEFF

I see cash! Ladies and gentlemen, SOLD to the guy with very little taste.

Jenny comes in and they all applaud her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (52)

JENNY

(bows)

Thank you. Thank you.

BREEANN

This is better than cable.

ELIZABETH

How did you do that?

JENNY

I was a salesperson in another life.

MARY ANN

I don't want to know what you told him.

JENNY

You're probably right. Mary Ann, could you move your car?

MARY ANN

Why?

JENNY

That couple over there wants to back in their pick-up so they can load up the swing set.

ALL

No!!

Jenny is about to protest but gives a disgusted sigh instead. She turns and starts to exit but stops in amazement.

JENNY

Someone is looking at the clock.

She bolts.

BREEANN

Double or nothing?

JEFF

You're on.

MARY ANN

I give up. I'm going inside to clean something.

ELIZABETH

I'll give you a hand.

They get up and head for the front door.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (53)

MARY ANN

She is aware we've sold the house
already?

They go inside and start packing more books.

LUCY

(points)
What did she sell that lady?

BREEANN

Who?

LUCY

She's putting something in the trunk of
her car.

JEFF

It's a suitcase.
(beat)
Huh. It looks like my suitcase.

He sits for a moment and then realizes, jumps up, and runs
off. Breeann and Lucy follow him.

JEFF (cont'd)

Excuse me?! Ma'am?!!

As they exit off, Edith enters with the clock. She shows it
to Mary Ann and Elizabeth through the window. They barely
contain their laughter until she exits.

MARY ANN

(still laughing)
We're making money at the yard sale but
we're losing it all to Jeff!

ELIZABETH

How much did you say we made yesterday?

MARY ANN

About seventy-five dollars.

ELIZABETH

Not going to make much of a dent in the
moving bill

MARY ANN

Oh well. It was fun anyway.
(beat)
So... have you talked to him?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (54)

ELIZABETH

Who? Jeff? No. I'm not sure what to say. Besides, it's been pretty obvious since his little announcement that he's not really in the mood for debate.

MARY ANN

What are we going to do?

ELIZABETH

I don't know. It seems like whatever we do, we end up sounding like the bad guys.

MARY ANN

This is so hard. Half of me wants to run to him and hold him... try to understand this... and the other half of me wants to run away and hide. Take the kids and just go away from anymore...

ELIZABETH

I understand. But going public with this is not the answer. We need to take care of this inside the family. Jeff and I public figures and after this, we'll be under a microscope. All of us.

They contemplate for a moment in silence.

MARY ANN

I know this is going to sound horrible... but is there any way that we can stop him?

ELIZABETH

This isn't a secret we're going to be able to keep forever. If he starts getting really sick there's going to be a doctor or a nurse or someone who is going to go running to the tabloids and then we've got a real mess on our hands.

MARY ANN

So maybe it would be better if he did it?

ELIZABETH

I didn't say that. The press is going to rip him to pieces when they get hold of this. And then they're going to come after us. I'd like to find a way where we can keep him out of the spotlight. If we control the information it'll be that much easier for everyone. In politics it's called damage control.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (55)

MARY ANN
This isn't politics.

ELIZABETH
It's all politics.

There is another moment of silence.

MARY ANN
You were right. We do sound like the bad
guys.

Blackout.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (56)

ACT TWO - SCENE THREE

Early evening. Lucy is on the porch reading a book. Laying next to her is a box of stuff, including a battered old green hat. Even though it is now dusty and faded, we can tell that in its day it was brightly colored with a feather plume. Jeff comes out of the house and joins her on the porch.

JEFF

What are you reading?

LUCY

Stephen King.

JEFF

You're going to rot your mind.

LUCY

That's what Mom says.

JEFF

(looking at the book)
That's not even one of his best.

LUCY

You've read it?

JEFF

Yes.

LUCY

So, it's okay for you to rot your mind?

JEFF

One of the privileges of adulthood.

Jeff spies the hat in the box.

JEFF (cont'd)

Oh my God. Where did this come from?

LUCY

It was left over from the yard sale.

JEFF

(filled with nostalgia)
I'd forgotten all about this.

LUCY

What is it?

JEFF

It's a magic hat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (57)

LUCY
(God he's a geek)
Okay.

JEFF
When we were kids, Jenny and I had these magic hats. This one is Jenny's. She loved green. She wanted to be Robin Hood. Yeah, she used to steal stuff from Elizabeth and give it to me. Mine was red. Bright, fire-engine red. We'd put on our magic hats and pretend that we were traveling all over the world. Paris and London... and this little island we owned in the South Pacific.

LUCY
You were weird kids.

JEFF
Yeah... but we believed in it then. That's all it takes... believing.

LUCY
Sounds like a Disney movie.

JEFF
Cute kid.

LUCY
(beat)
So why are Mom and Aunt Elizabeth pissed at you?

JEFF
Don't say pissed.

LUCY
Breeann says it all the time. So does Aunt Jenny.

JEFF
Yeah, well... you shouldn't.

LUCY
Why not?

JEFF
Because it's not nice.

LUCY
Does that mean that Breeann and Jenny aren't nice?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (58)

JEFF
How old are you?

LUCY
You're being evasive.

JEFF
Well, just don't say it around your Mom.

LUCY
Do I *look* stupid? So why are Mom and Aunt Elizabeth... mad at you?

JEFF
What makes you think they're mad at me?

LUCY
They both have that look on their faces whenever you're around.

JEFF
What look?

LUCY
This one.

Lucy pinches her face into a mean, angry look.

JEFF
(laughs)
Oh. That look. Well, yeah. It's kind of complicated.

LUCY
Try me.

JEFF
Lucy... your Mom and Aunt and I are very different people.

LUCY
No kidding.

JEFF
And sometimes we don't agree on things and we get mad at each other.

LUCY
Like me and Breeann.

JEFF
Pretty much.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (59)

LUCY

So what don't you agree on this time?

JEFF

Oh honey... it's grown-up stuff.

Jeff pats her on the leg and then gets up to leave.

LUCY

That's what Mom used to say.

JEFF

What?

LUCY

When Dad was sick... they knew for a long time before they told me. I knew there was something wrong and so I would ask and Mom would always say, "It's grown-up stuff."

(beat)

They should've told me.

Jeff looks at her for a moment and then sits again. He takes a deep breath.

JEFF

Lucy... how much do you know about AIDS?

LUCY

We learned about it in school.

JEFF

What did you learn?

LUCY

That it's a disease in your blood and you get it from having unprotected sex or from infected needles. You can't get it from touching someone or being near someone who has it.

JEFF

That's right.

LUCY

And that you die from it.

JEFF

(beat)

Yes.

LUCY

Do you have it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (60)

JEFF
(another beat)
Yes, I do.

LUCY
So you're going to die?

JEFF
Well, I hope not.

LUCY
But probably.

JEFF
Yeah. Probably.

LUCY
I don't want you to die.

JEFF
I'm not crazy about the idea myself.

LUCY
(beat)
How did you get it?

JEFF
Oh... uh... well, I got it through... uh.

LUCY
Sex.

JEFF
Yes.

LUCY
Are you... gay?

JEFF
Yes. But anyone can get AIDS. Not just
gay people.

LUCY
I know. But that explains it, I guess.

JEFF
What?

LUCY
Why Mom never tried to fix you up with
anybody. She does with every other
single person she meets.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (61)

JEFF
(laughs)
That's your mother, yes.

LUCY
So they're mad at you because you're sick?

JEFF
No... well... maybe a little. But not like what you think. Mainly they're mad because I want to tell people.

LUCY
What people?

JEFF
Anyone who will listen. I want to go on television and tell people that I'm sick.

LUCY
Why?

JEFF
Well, a lot of people don't know as much as you know about AIDS. They're not as smart as you are. They think that you shouldn't talk to people with AIDS or be around them. They think it would better if they all just... went away.

LUCY
That's stupid.

JEFF
Yes, it is. But it's just fear. Fear of something they don't understand. See, I think that if I tell people I'm sick, I can help them understand.

LUCY
Make them not so stupid.

JEFF
Right.

LUCY
And Mom and Aunt Elizabeth don't want you to?

JEFF
No.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (62)

LUCY
Are they the kind of people that aren't
as smart as I am?

JEFF
Sometimes.

Lucy ponders for a moment.

LUCY
I think you should tell.

JEFF
You do?

LUCY
Definitely.

JEFF
You know, it could be tough for you.
There may be other kids who don't want to
be your friends anymore. They may say or
do mean things to you.

LUCY
I don't think my friends would do that.

JEFF
But if they do?

LUCY
I'll get new friends. Ones who *are* as
smart as I am. And if that doesn't work,
I'll get Breeann to beat them up.

JEFF
Well, I don't think it needs to go quite
that far.

LUCY
Oh, it's okay. She'd do it for me.

JEFF
She would?

LUCY
Sure. She's my sister.

JEFF
(beat)
You're some kid, you know that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (63)

LUCY

I'm not a kid anymore. I know too much
to be a kid anymore.

JEFF

(beat - heartbroken)

I think you're right.

(beat)

Listen... this conversation has to stay
between us for awhile, okay?

LUCY

Because Mom will be pissed if she finds
out I know, right?

JEFF

Even more pissed than she'll be if she
hears you saying pissed.

LUCY

That's pretty pissed.

JEFF

Is there anything you need to know? Any
questions you want to ask me?

LUCY

(beat - considering)

When are they going to find a cure?

Jeff looks at Lucy and then away - a question he can't
answer. She takes the "magic hat" from him, and then puts it
on her head.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (64)

ACT TWO - SCENE FOUR

It is nighttime a few evenings later. Everyone is in attendance in the dining area - Jenny, Elizabeth, Lucy, Jeff, Edith, and the guest of honor Breeann at the head of the birthday table. Mary Ann comes out of the house with a cake, blazing with 17 candles, and they all begin singing "Happy Birthday."

Of course, Edith sings "Brenda" instead of "Breeann" but it's close enough.

Mary Ann sets the cake down in front of Breeann as they finish singing.

LUCY (CONT'D) (cont'd)
Make a wish.

JENNY
Make it a good one.

BREEANN
I will.

She pauses for a moment then shuts her eyes and blows out the candles. Everyone applauds.

EDITH
It's just a pity that you can't get that piano open. It's not really "Happy Birthday" without proper accompaniment.

JENNY
This cake looks delicious, Mary Ann.

MARY ANN
Oh, I didn't bake it.

JENNY
You didn't?

MARY ANN
No, Edith did.

Jenny pauses and then turns, with slow resignation, toward Edith who is the cat that ate the canary.

JENNY
It does look delicious Mrs. Anderson.

EDITH
Thank you. I remember when I was seventeen...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (65)

JENNY

Excuse me. Elizabeth, could I speak to you for a second?

ELIZABETH

Sure. Excuse us, will you?

The party continues inside as Jenny and Elizabeth go onto the porch. Jenny holds up an envelope.

JENNY

Would you care to explain this to me?

Elizabeth takes the envelope and extracts the papers.

ELIZABETH

Where did you get this?

JENNY

It came by messenger today.

ELIZABETH

You opened my mail? How dare you!

JENNY

You are some piece of work, Elizabeth. How can you stand there with committal papers for Jeff and say "How dare you" to me?

ELIZABETH

These are not committal papers. It's information about conservatorship.

JENNY

What's the difference?

ELIZABETH

Conservatorship means that we take over his business affairs when he is no longer able to handle them. It's for his own protection.

JENNY

Bullshit. So what was the plan? Lock him up in a room somewhere so he couldn't hurt your precious campaign?

ELIZABETH

I just explained to you...

They are almost ready to go to blows when Breeann comes outside.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (66)

BREEANN

Come on you guys, I want to open my presents.

JENNY

We'll be there in a second.

Breeann goes back in.

JENNY (cont'd)

This is not over.

ELIZABETH

You better believe it's not.

They go back in and join the party.

MARY ANN

There they are! Is everything okay?

ELIZABETH

It's fine. What about those presents?

BREEANN

Yes!

MARY ANN

Jeff, you go first.

JEFF

Oh, no...

BREEANN

Come on! Gimme, gimmie, gimmie...

MARY ANN

Breeann!

BREEANN

Gimmie, gimmie, gimmie, please?

JENNY

I think I should wait...

JENNY (cont'd)

Oh go ahead.

Jeff pauses and then reaches into his pocket to withdraw an envelope. He hands it to her.

JEFF

Happy birthday. Jenny helped me pick it out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (67)

JENNY
I wrapped it, too.

Breeann opens the envelope and reads from the papers.

BREEANN
New York, London, Paris, Rome... What is this?

JEFF
It's an itinerary. For your trip to Europe next summer.

BREEANN
(hushed)
Oh my God.

MARY ANN
What?

JEFF
You and your friends are going to eight countries in three weeks, all expenses paid.

Breeann stares at the papers for a moment then at him.

JEFF (cont'd)
Well... say something.

Breeann starts to cry and then hugs him.

JEFF (cont'd)
Why are you crying?

BREEANN
I love you.

JEFF
I love you too, sweetheart. Happy birthday.

EDITH
Oh, this is so sweet. Now I think I'm going to cry.

BREEANN
So Mom... looks like I'm going after all.

MARY ANN
Well, we'll see.

BREEANN
What do you mean, we'll see?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (68)

MARY ANN

Honey, we'll talk about it later.

BREEANN

I think we should talk about it now.

JEFF

Breeann, come on...

BREEANN

I want to hear what she has to say.

MARY ANN

All right. I think it's a wonderful gesture, Jeff, I really do. But I think you should've asked me first.

BREEANN

So you could've said no?

MARY ANN

That's enough, Breeann.

BREEANN

I'm going and you can't stop me.

MARY ANN

Breeann, we have company.

EDITH

Oh, don't mind me!

She sits for a moment, relishing the opportunity to see the big fight brewing but then realizes that was her signal to go.

EDITH (cont'd)

Well... Maybe I better be getting home. Just remember, no hitting. And if you need to throw something, use a pillow. You throw a vase or something and you'll picking glass out of the carpet for weeks.

Edith leaves.

MARY ANN

There. Are you happy with yourself, young lady? That woman went to all the trouble of baking you a cake and...

BREEANN

You're the one who started this.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (69)

MARY ANN

I do not like the way you are speaking to me.

BREEANN

I don't care.

MARY ANN

Now, you listen to me...

BREEANN

No!! You listen to me. For once in your life, listen to me! Up until a few minutes ago this was just another thing I wanted. Like that dress we saw at the mall or Aunt Jenny's car. Things I know I'll never get. And you know what? That would've been okay. It wouldn't have ruined my life if I never got to go Europe. But now I'm going, and there's nothing you can do to stop me and it's all because Uncle Jeff gave it to me. That changes everything. God, Mom, don't you get it? He's not just giving me a present for my seventeenth birthday. This is my present for Christmas... And my high school graduation and my eighteenth birthday. This is for my college graduation. This is my wedding present... And a present for my first baby shower. See, Mom... he's not going to be here for all that.

MARY ANN

Don't say that. You don't know that.

BREEANN

Yes, I do! I know it! Jeff knows it! Even Lucy knows! It seems like the only one who doesn't know it is you.

There is a hard silence in the room.

JEFF

Kids... I think your mom and I need to talk, okay?

Breeann takes Lucy's hand and they walk toward the stairs.

MARY ANN

Lucy...

LUCY

It's okay, Mom. See? I'm okay.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (70)

Breeann stops at the stairs.

BREEANN
Mom... I love you...

They turn and go upstairs.

ELIZABETH
Jeff, where is your mind? Telling something like that to a twelve year old girl?

JENNY
Elizabeth, stay out of this.

ELIZABETH
Do not start with me.

JENNY
I have not started with you, Elizabeth. You will know when I start with you.

JEFF
Will you two please stop?

JENNY
Jeff, I think you should ask Elizabeth about her special delivery today.

ELIZABETH
Jenny, shut up!

JENNY
Oh, come on, Liz. I don't think Jeff will mind that you want to have him committed.

MARY ANN
What?

JENNY
She got some papers today about conservatorship.

MARY ANN
Elizabeth, we agreed not to do that.

JENNY
You know about this? I don't fucking believe you two.

ELIZABETH
Jeff, I just mentioned it to my lawyer in passing and he sent the papers.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (71)

ELIZABETH (cont'd)

I didn't ask for them. Nothing legal has happened yet.

Elizabeth hands the papers to Jeff.

JENNY

Yet!?

MARY ANN

This was not my idea.

JENNY

Oh forget it, Mary Ann. I know a conspiracy when I see one.

ELIZABETH

We are trying to find a solution to this problem. You're only making it worse.

JENNY

You want a solution? Here's a solution. Let's just kill him. Come on. This fucking disease isn't working fast enough, so let's just shoot him. It would solve your horrible problem.

ELIZABETH

Just shut up!

JENNY

Go fuck yourself!

Elizabeth slaps her... Hard. There is a moment of stunned silence.

JENNY (cont'd)

Feel better?

Jeff gets up slowly. He seems exhausted... A shadow. He hands the papers back to Elizabeth.

JEFF

You won't need these.

ELIZABETH

What do you mean?

JEFF

I give up.

JENNY

What?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (72)

JEFF

This has gotten out of hand. Lawyers, insults, fist fights in the living room... It's too much. It wasn't supposed to be... I'm too tired for all of this. I'm too sick to fight you. So you win. No press.

MARY ANN

Jeff...

Jeff makes it to the stairs and starts to climb them.

JEFF

I'm just so fucking tired...

He sings to his knees...

JEFF (cont'd)

So tired...

JENNY

Jeff!

He collapses. Jenny runs to him.

ELIZABETH

Call an ambulance.

MARY ANN

(horror)
Oh my God.

ELIZABETH

Mary Ann! Call an ambulance.

Mary Ann can't move so Elizabeth runs to the phone and dials.

Blackout.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (73)

Act Two - Scene Five

Late afternoon, a few days later. Lucy and Edith are on the porch playing gin. Mary Ann is in the kitchen, packing. Elizabeth is on the phone.

ELIZABETH (cont'd)

We picked him up this morning. He's upstairs resting... They only kept him two nights... Michael, I told you, he just hadn't been eating. The drugs he had been taking were making him nauseous... I don't know, some sort of black market stuff. I want to check it out when I get home. Yeah, what's the name of that guy we know over at the FDA? Koehler? Koening? Something. I can't remember. Look it up for me, will you?... Okay.... Yes, I'll tell him. I'll see you in a couple of days. Bye.

Elizabeth hangs up the phone and heads out to the porch.

LUCY

Gin!

EDITH

Again? I swear, you are a cardsharp!

LUCY

You're letting me win.

EDITH

I don't let people win, dear. I just let them think that so I don't look so bad.

LUCY

It's your deal.

Elizabeth sits on the porch swing.

ELIZABETH

Who's ahead?

EDITH

I'll tell you, it's a good thing we're not playing for money or I'd be handing the keys to my house over to this one.

LUCY

I'm not that far ahead.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (74)

EDITH

Winning is nothing to be ashamed of,
honey. It's losing that sucks.

She shuffles.

EDITH (CONT'D) (cont'd)

(to Elizabeth)

How's your brother?

ELIZABETH

He's doing better, thank you.

EDITH

And how's everybody holding up? Things
like this can be tough on a family.

ELIZABETH

We'll be fine.

EDITH

(nods - beat - to Lucy)

How about you, honey? You still worried
about your uncle?

Lucy nods.

EDITH (cont'd)

Yeah... You know, when my husband Pete
had his first heart attack, I tell you, I
was pretty scared. Thought I was going
to lose him for sure. But when we were
on the way to the hospital, I saw
something... Something in his eyes. He
just wasn't ready. He still had things
to do. We sat there in the back of that
ambulance and he looked at me with that
look and I knew right then and there that
he would paint the kitchen.

ELIZABETH

(beat - there's gotta be more)

Uh... Paint the kitchen?

EDITH

That's right. See, he had been promising
me he'd do that for the longest time. It
was this shabby yellow and I hated it.
I'd pester him and he'd say, "I'll get to
it, woman!" Like to drive me crazy.

LUCY

Did he ever do it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (75)

EDITH

He sure did. And I almost killed him for it, too. I come in one day and he's up on a ladder painting the ceiling. He hadn't been out of the hospital two weeks and he's up there acting like he's fit to run a race.

LUCY

That's funny.

EDITH

Well, I didn't think so at the time. But the point is that he just wasn't ready. We still had time to paint the kitchen. Time to watch our favorite movies. See, he got done what he needed to get done and by the end, he had said his goodbyes and he was ready.

LUCY

Were you?

EDITH

(smiles, melancholy)

In a way. Don't get me wrong, I still miss that old man something terrible. But I can say that we never wasted one minute of the time we had.

LUCY

So you don't think Uncle Jeff is ready?

EDITH

No! The eyes! You could see it in his eyes. He still has a lot to do yet. And you're lucky. You still have time. Find out what his favorite movie is?

LUCY

And if his kitchen needs painting.

EDITH

Exactly. You see, honey... That's the kind of thing people who love each other know about.

LUCY

(to Elizabeth)

What's Uncle Michael's favorite movie?

Elizabeth is a little taken aback for a moment and pauses...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (76)

ELIZABETH
Well, it's... Uh...

EDITH
Oh my!

LUCY
What?

EDITH
Gin!

LUCY
You won!

EDITH
I won!! Hot damn almighty, I know I
shouldn't be this excited about beating a
young woman your age, but there it is!
(beat)
Wait... You didn't let me win, did you?

LUCY
Well... I guess I could let you think
that...

EDITH
Deal the cards, Slim. I'm on a roll.

Inside, Breeann comes down the stairs and goes into the
kitchen.

BREEANN
Mom, do you know where the Monopoly board
is?

MARY ANN
Probably in the hall closet upstairs.

BREEANN
Thanks.

Breeann turns to go, but Mary Ann stops her.

MARY ANN
Breeann... In all the... Excitement...
the other night, I didn't have a chance
to give you your birthday present.

BREEANN
(shrugs)
That's okay.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (77)

MARY ANN

No, it's not. I actually had some clothes and things that I was going to give you, but... I want you to have this. I found it when I was going through one of the trunks in the attic this morning.

Mary Ann hands Breeann a compass.

BREEANN

A compass?

MARY ANN

It belonged to your father. He was a Boy Scout. Did you know that?

BREEANN

No.

MARY ANN

He won some sort of merit badge using that compass to find his way out of the woods. When we first met he gave that to me and told me that he was going to use it someday to take us around the world... We never got a chance to use it...

Breeann studies the compass for a moment and then looks at her mother, realizing the importance of the gift.

BREEANN

(quietly)
Thanks, Mom.

MARY ANN

(beat)
You might want to check in the closet in my room, also... For the Monopoly board.

Breeann nods and goes into the living room just as Jenny is coming downstairs.

JENNY

Did you find it?

BREEANN

Mom said it was probably in one of the closets upstairs.

JENNY

Great! I'm just going to grab a smoke and I'll be up in a second.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (78)

BREEANN

Are you sure Uncle Jeff is up to this?

JENNY

He says he is.

Breeann goes upstairs as Jenny goes onto the porch.

JENNY (cont'd)

Monpoly game in Uncle Jeff's room.

LUCY

Cool! C'mon!

Lucy grabs Edith's hand and drags her inside.

EDITH

Well, all right. But I get to be the hat. I always get that cannon or the little dog. I hate that little dog.

They go upstairs as Jenny sits and lights a cigarette.

ELIZABETH

Jenny, do you remember the name of the drug Jeff said he was taking?

JENNY

No. Why?

ELIZABETH

Well, he said he got it on the black market. I've got a friend over at the FDA who can check it out for me.

JENNY

(beat)

Are you going to take that away from him, too?

ELIZABETH

Oh God, Jenny, stop it. Do you really think I'm that horrible?

JENNY

Do you really care what I think?

ELIZABETH

All I'm saying is that if the FDA hasn't approved the drug there must be a reason. It's for his own good.

JENNY

Do you really believe that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (79)

ELIZABETH

Of course!

JENNY

It couldn't possibly be for your own protection? What would people say if the great Congresswoman Jennings's little brother was taking some illegal drugs?

ELIZABETH

I am trying to explain to you that what he's taking could kill him!

JENNY

And I am trying to explain to you that he is dying! And those drugs made him feel better for awhile and they gave him some hope. Now, I don't care what you or the Federal Government has to say on the subject, but if he wants to chew bark and howl at the moon... If that makes him feel better, if that gives him some hope, then by God, we're going to let him do it.

Jenny puts out her cigarette and goes inside. Elizabeth follows.

ELIZABETH

Jenny, wait! Don't you understand that I'm just trying to help?

JENNY

We don't want your help. Go save the country, Congresswoman, we can take care of ourselves.

ELIZABETH

Why do you hate me so much?

JENNY

I don't hate you, Elizabeth. I just hate what you've become.

ELIZABETH

Oh? And what is that?

JENNY

Someone I can't look up to anymore.

Elizabeth is a little stunned by that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (80)

JENNY (cont'd)

All my life people would say, "Jennifer, why can't you be more like Elizabeth? She's so strong! So in control!" And it always pissed me off, because deep down... That's what I really wanted. I wanted to be just like you. Strong, fearless, independent... But if being those things means being like you...

Jenny shakes her head and goes up the stairs.

ELIZABETH

How did I get to be the bad guy?

JENNY

When you were in the bathroom we all took a vote. You won. Congratulations.

Jenny exits up the stairs. Elizabeth can do nothing but stare at the empty space where Jenny was a second ago. Mary Ann comes into the living room.

MARY ANN

Seems like this family can't do anything but fight lately.

ELIZABETH

We weren't fighting.

MARY ANN

Could've fooled me.

ELIZABETH

You understand, don't you Mary Ann? All I'm trying to do is help him. All of this, from the start... I'm just trying to make things easier.

MARY ANN

For who?

ELIZABETH

For everybody! We made the right decisions.

MARY ANN

You made the decisions.

ELIZABETH

Are you saying that you want him to hold the press conference?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (81)

MARY ANN

I don't know.

ELIZABETH

We did what was right and we saved everyone a lot of grief. In politics you can't question your decisions. If you do, they they weren't the right decisions.

MARY ANN

This is not about politics! It's not about your decisions or your plans or your lists! Your goddamn lists that we all filled out so everything would be all nice and tidy.

She grabs Elizabeth's lists and starts flinging the papers around the room.

MARY ANN (cont'd)

Well, it isn't nice and tidy! It's dirty and it's messy and it's painful and... Jesus, Elizabeth... It's not about us... It's not about you...

She walks toward the stairs.

ELIZABETH

Where are you going?

MARY ANN

I am going upstairs to be with my family. That is what this is all about... And there is nothing political about it.

ELIZABETH

I'm just doing what I think is right. In the end it'll be for the best.

MARY ANN

In the end?

(crying)

In the end... He's going to die. How can that possibly be for the best?

Mary Ann exits upstairs. Elizabeth is visibly shaken. She turns around, looking around the room for something to do. Something to take her mind off of everything.

She grabs a box and goes to the desk. Quickly and haphazardly she starts pulling out the drawers and dumping their contents into the box.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (82)

She builds herself into a frenzy, tossing the contents and then tossing the drawers aside until she gets to the last one and then she notices that there is something taped to the bottom of it.

She looks at it, almost not believing what she is seeing... The anger and the pain melting away.

It is the key to the piano.

She peels the tape back and takes the key to the piano. She inserts it and with a soft click she is able to open the cover. Slowly, quietly, she plays a few tentative notes... Nothing specific.. Just listening to the sound... Emotion chokes up in her throat but she tries to push it back down.

Jeff comes down from upstairs slowly. He is obviously not well.

JEFF

You found the key.

ELIZABETH

(composes herself)

Yes... It was in the desk.

(beat)

What are you doing out of bed.

JEFF

Everyone is fighting over who gets to be the hat.

Elizabeth stares at him blankly.

JEFF (cont'd)

Monopoly.

ELIZABETH

Oh. Come here... Sit down.

He moves slowly, joining Elizabeth on the bench.

ELIZABETH (cont'd)

How do you feel?

JEFF

Better.

Jeff plays the first few notes of "There's No Place Like Home."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (83)

ELIZABETH

(smiles)

I don't know if Jenny said anything about me checking out the drugs you are taking.

JEFF

(laughs weakly)

Please... Jenny not tell me something that juicy?

ELIZABETH

I'm just trying to help.

JEFF

I know. But I'm not going to be taking the stuff anymore, so don't worry about it.

ELIZABETH

Well, there must be other things. Therapies, medicines...

JEFF

I've tried them all.

ELIZABETH

Jeff, you've had a set back. That's all. You can't give up.

JEFF

I'm not... I'm just... God, how can I explain this to you?

(beat - it hits him)

It's like in an election. You campaign, and you struggle, and you fight and then on the election night, at some point, usually long before all the votes are counted, someone gets up and concedes the race. It's not that he's giving up. It's just that he has to stand up and admit that he's going to lose. He has to accept that he going to lose.

(beat)

So he gets up and he says, "That's it. It's over." And hopefully there will be a bunch of people listening... There will be a whole mob of people and they'll say, "It's okay. It was one hell of a fight... And we're all a little better for having gone through it with you... You're not alone."

(beat)

And they'll have one hell of a party.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (84)

Elizabeth stands and turns away from him, barely able to contain her grief. Jeff begins to play "Twinkle, Twinkle" softly.

ELIZABETH

That song... I can just picture Mom sitting with you on her lap, trying to get your little fingers to play the right notes...

She turns back to him.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D) (cont'd)

(weeping)

You have to tell me what I can do, Jeff. Please... Just tell me what I can do.

JEFF

Elizabeth...

ELIZABETH

No, just tell me. Okay? Tell me what I can do to fix this, okay? That's what I do, I make things better. I'm supposed to take care of things. That's my job.

JEFF

I'm sorry, Elizabeth... You can't fix this. I wish you could... God, I wish you could... But there's nothing you can do.

Jeff turns back to the piano, placing his fingers on the keys but not playing. Elizabeth stands there, watching him for a moment, and then she knows... She walks over to him and sits, taking his hand in hers... Together they plunk out the last few notes of "Twinkle, Twinkle."

Jeff looks at her.

ELIZABETH

It was one hell of a ride.

She puts her arms around him and they embrace fiercely.

ELIZABETH (cont'd)

(beat)

Jeff... What's your favorite movie?

JEFF

(taken off guard)

My favorite... I don't know... I guess, "It's a Wonderful Life."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (85)

They look at each other and laugh.

JEFF (cont'd)
No pun intended.

The embrace continues as their laughter fades.

ELIZABETH
You are not alone.

She holds him and we fade to black.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (86)

Act Two - Scene Six

Elizabeth is on the front porch facing out. Jenny, Mary Ann, Breeann, Lucy, Edith, and Jeff are all beside her.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D) (cont'd)
 Ladies and gentlemen, I guess we can start. First, I want to thank you all for coming out so early, on Labor Day, no less. I'm going to make this brief. This is the home that I grew up in. We came here... My family came here to pack up the contents and move them out so that a new family can move in. We had seventeen days to pack up a lifetime of memories. And there were a lot of them. Some good. Some bad. Some that I had forgotten. A lot I had forgotten, actually. Like the promise my sisters and I made to our mother. You see there was something she wanted us to take care of and she made us promise that we would. I thought I was doing that. But I haven't been... Until now.

She pauses, takes a deep breath.

ELIZABETH (cont'd)
 I have decided to withdraw my bid for re-election to the United States Congress this November. I need some time off to take care of a few things.
 (beat)
 I would now like to turn the press conference over to my brother. He has an announcement he'd like to make.

Jeff moves over to stand next to Elizabeth. She takes his hand and they face out together. He takes a moment.

JEFF
 Ladies and gentlemen... My name is Jeff MacArthur... And I have AIDS.

The lights change, leaving Jeff in a spot. The rest of the family moves into the house where they put the few remaining items in boxes and cover the furniture with sheets as the following monologue occurs.

BREEANN (V.O.)
 Journal entry, July 19th. I'm writing this from the hotel room at the Berkshire Court in London. It's absolutely beautiful here. First class all the way.
 (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (87)

BREEANN (V.O.) (cont'd)

I believe they call these five star hotels. We did all the tourist stuff today. Went to the Tower of London and Buckingham Palace. Kim and Dayna tried to get one of the guards to laugh but he wouldn't. We also found the perfect thing for Jeff. It's a small British flag with a horrible sparkling picture of the queen on it. It's so tacky! Jeff would've loved it. When I told the saleslady that it was for Uncle Jeff's AIDS quilt she gave it to me for free. She told me that a friend of hers was dying and that Jeff was an inspiration and a hero. It really showed that he accomplished something wonderful before he died. He didn't change the world and that's okay. He wasn't trying to. He just wanted to say something and hoped somebody would listen. He hoped somebody would care. And some people did. Even if it was only one salesclerk in a tacky gift shop in London, he accomplished what he set out to do. I think that would've made him happy. Knowing that is important to me. Aunt Jenny and Aunt Elizabeth are still planning on meeting us in Zurich for a couple of days. I can't believe they are really going to spend fifteen hours on a plane together, but I guess they've changed a little. They still argue a lot but they don't try to kill each other quite as often. They want to pick out the piece in Zurich for the quilt. When we get home, Mom is going to sew it. Jenny says she'll help but I don't think she's ever held a needle in her life. But who knows? We all changed a little last summer. How could you spend seventeen days in the Bolivian Corn Jungle and not change a little.

As the monologue ends, everyone has worked their way out onto the porch. They all pause as Elizabeth closes the door and locks it. When that is done, Lucy digs into a bag she is carrying and withdraws two hats. One is the green one from the earlier scene which she puts on. The other is Jeff's red "magic hat." She gives it to him.

LUCY

Let it take you somewhere beautiful.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (88)

The lights fade slowly as Lucy runs off, laughing with the kind of carefree glee that only 12-year-old girls can muster.

THE END