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Trash Fire

By Richard Bates Jr.

MAN:

I'd been waiting for my parents to die...
...so I could commit suicide without feeling
an overwhelming sense of guilt.
And there they were...
...dead.
And I didn't have the guts
to go through with it.
Florence?
Florence?
Florence!
I'm pouring my guts out and you fall asleep?
I did. How does that make you feel?
Angry.
Okay, you know how some old people
are asked to stop driving?
It's not that most of them are incapable...
...it's just not particularly safe
for them to be on the road.
I mean, that just about sums up
how I feel about you as a psychiatrist.
It's time to throw in the towel.
I'm sensing a great deal
of hostility coming from you.
Go fuck yourself, Florence.
You look nice.
What's wrong?
Nothing.
Don't do this to me.
I told myself for the longest time
you were actually gonna grow up.
- I can't... I can't do this, I'm gonna go.
- Stop, okay, fine. Okay?
Don't go. I'll cut down on my drinking,
whatever you want.
We've been together for three years,
nothing's changed.
I need security in a relationship...
...and I don't get it from you anymore, Owen.

MAN:

Thank you.

What am I still doing here?
You obviously don't care.
I don't even know what to say anymore.
Don't do that with your napkin.
There are real people here.
I need a girlfriend, not a second mother.
I'm supposed to be sexually
attracted to you...
...and right now you're not giving me
much to work with.
Happy fucking anniversary.
(VOMITING)
(DOORBELL RINGS)
(SCREAMING)
(POUNING ON DOOR)
Isabel!
Okay.
Hey.
You're such an asshole.
You fucked up last weekend.
Our anniversary sucked...
...and then you have a seizure,
and here I am taking care of you.
This looks pretty good.
Well, if it's not
and you value your life, lie.
Can I at least get some salt?
- No.
- Okay.
Hey, look on the bright side,
at least I didn't shit myself this time.
Oh, God, really?
It was only a little.
What is a girl like you
doing with a guy like me?
Working through my self-esteem issues
before planning my escape.
- Thank you.
- (BEEPING)
(BEEPING CONTINUES)
Isabel, do you hear that? What is that?
Is that the smoke detector?
It's fine. That's just the sound
it makes when the battery's low.

It makes a different beep when it's smoke.

Owen, just take the battery out.

I think I'm having a panic attack.

- Hi.

- Hi.

Sorry, we're late.

We didn't get a lot of sleep last night.

I'm a little short for time, so I took the liberty of ordering for the three of us.

You're gonna love that French toast.

You mind if I say a prayer before we eat?

Give me your hand.

Dear God, thank you for this time with my lovely sister...

...and her off-again, on-again boyfriend.

Please bless us and these gifts which we are about to receive from Thy bounty...

...through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

- Do you mind if I say a few words?

- Please do.

Dark Lord of the Abyss,

we wish to become one...

That's not funny. That's not funny.

No one's laughing, because it's not funny.

So, Mom and Dad tell me

you're doing really well.

Congratulations on the promotion at work.

It's actually not a promotion,

it's just a pay raise, but thank you.

Well, you know what, at any rate,

I'm happy for you.

We're all so proud of you

and your little achievements.

- Everyone back home sends their best.

- Well, I miss everybody.

I talk to Mom and Dad on the phone pretty much every day, but it's not the same.

I hope to come and visit you guys soon.

We would absolutely love that.

I hope you do that.

- Please make that happen.

- Yes.

And I trust you're looking after

my sister, as best you're capable?

You know, Owen, I'd be lying...

...if I said that I'd pick you
as the ideal mate for Isabel...

...but if you're going to continue
this courtship...

...you should look into making
an honest woman out of her.

I'm not taking relationship advice
from a beige earthworm.

(SLURPING)

- It was really nice seeing you.

- (SIGHS)

I'll be back in town on business shortly.

I hope we can get together again,
just the two of us.

I love you, Caleb.

- I love you.

- Love you.

Hey. I know that family
is a touchy subject for you...

...and maybe you feel
like you don't have one...

...but if you could make more of an effort
with mine, that would mean a lot to me.

Your family hates me.

They don't hate you.

They just don't know you.

All they know is what Caleb tells them
and you treat him like garbage.

He's a self-righteous prick.

You're both full of shit.

You know what? You're right.

I'm gonna make more of an effort.

- Oh, yeah?

- Yeah.

I love you, and I owe you at least that much.

Thank you, Owen.

What do you say we celebrate my
newfound transformation with a little sex?

I'm gonna have to pretend it was
another man's penis inside me.

I'm okay with that.

Okay.

What's going on?

It normally doesn't take you this long.

- It's been like 30 seconds.

- I know, is everything okay?

Maybe it's your complete lack of enthusiasm.

Well, your balls smell real bad.

I wanted to keep us in the moment.

Just take a shower next time.

You know what, I'm gonna go

jerk off in the bathroom.

Don't use the towels.

(DOOR CLOSES)

(VOMITING)

(TOILET FLUSHING)

What's wrong?

Nothing, it's just nerves.

Do you want me to take you home?

We can always reschedule.

- No, you're not getting out of this.

- Okay.

I'm fine.

- Hello.

- FLORENCE:

Uh, Florence, I'd like

to start off by apologizing...

...for telling you to find a new line of work

at our one-on-one session the other day.

You seemed caught off-guard to find out

that you're terrible at your job...

- ...and I honestly thought you knew.

- Don't talk to Florence like that.

She fell asleep at our session.

Yeah, I'd fall asleep too, if I had to

listen to you talk for an hour straight.

You know, I'm beginning to feel like

my relationship with both of you...

...is becoming equally unhealthy.

Well, let's get back on track, shall we?

Isabel, you voiced a concern

about Owen's drinking.

- Do you still have an issue with that?

- BOTH:

Because I told him I'd cut his dick off,

and he knew that, and I meant it.
She did tell me she'd cut off my dick...
...and I did know it, but I wasn't
particularly concerned on account...
...of the fact that I don't use it
for much except pissing.
In fact, I'd love to see it go...
...because all I do is look at it every day
and it reminds me of better times.
Now when I brought up your dick,
it wasn't my intention...
...for you to just run with it
as a topic of conversation.
You know, gay guys get excited about dick.
It's celebrated and sought
after in their community.
You show a picture of a dick
to a woman, watch her cringe.
What are you saying, you're gay now?
I'm saying, I wish I was. I wish I was.
It's not dick that makes women cringe,
it's specifically your dick.
Threatening Owen isn't going to help him
with his drinking problem.
- I don't have a drinking problem.
- Yes, you do...
...and all your idiotic friends
just encourage it.
Okay, so I'm a substance abuser
with an ugly dick...
...who's mentally ill-equipped to stand up
to peer pressure and you're dating me.
Sometimes you don't choose
who you fall in love with.
(SIGHS)

ISABEL:

one drink at dinner, okay?

OWEN:

drinks for me to become detached enough...
...to make it through dinner
with your friends.
What do you mean "my friends?"

Sheldon and Mimi are our friends.

- Keep telling yourself that.

- What, come on, you and Sheldon are cool.

Sheldon and I do not have a friendship,
we have an understanding.

I'm going to give you
a chance to stop right now...

...before you piss me off enough
to a point there's turning back.

It has become painfully obvious
to Sheldon and myself...

...that we're going to have
to interact on a monthly basis...

...so we let you two
do most of the talking...

...we reduce our conversation
to banal pleasantries...

...and everybody comes out unscathed.

I've spent countless evenings with the guy,
I can't tell you what he does for a living.

He's a paralegal. A paralegal, okay?

You asked him that three times last time
we hung out. It was embarrassing.

I can't wrap my head around why it's so
important for you that I like your friends.

Isn't it enough that I hang out with them?

I hate you sometimes. I really do.

Let's go, we're already late.

Yeah, great.

So what's going on with you guys?

Tell me, what's up?

Yeah, um... uh...

My father is in the advanced
stages of Alzheimer's.

- Oh.

- **SHELDON:**

It's been really tough, but all my time's
been spent going back and forth...

...between our house and the nursing home
and Sheldon's been really busy with work.

- Oh, yeah. What is it that you do again?

- (SHELDON LAUGHS)

- You gotta be kidding me, bro.

- Some sort of lawyer?
- I'm a paralegal.
- Yeah, that's right, fascinating.
- I'm really sorry to hear about your father.
- Yeah, it's been really hard.
- You need anything, let me know.
- I know, you're the best. I know, thank you.

Owen, forgive me if I'm...

I don't know, if it's a touchy subject...

...but I've never heard you bring up
your family in conversation.

My parents died in a fire.

- Oh.

- His... his sister survived.

She lives with my crazy grandmother.

That's awful. I'm so sorry. Have you
kept in touch with your sister at all?

Nah. Pretty sure she hates me.

I'm trying to convince him to,
you know, reach out to her.

Too much guilt, honey.

So long as we're on the subject
of guilt, you know...

...I don't get why they have to put
the caloric content on the menu.

You know, I was going to order a burger...
but I just can't bring myself to do it?

I just feel bad about it.

Yeah, it's hard when you know,
it's like, right there.

Owen, hey, tell us, bro. What's your secret?

How do you stay so thin, man?

- I eat whatever I want.

- Must be some metabolism.

Nope. I'm bulimic.

Wow, yeah, I thought that was a girl disease.

Well, in all fairness,
you're also kind of an idiot.

- Wow.

- Apologize to Sheldon.

I'm sorry, I'm sorry,

I haven't had enough to drink.

Can you not drink out of the carton?

It's disgusting.

I'm sorry that I snapped at Sheldon.
Talking about my family puts me on edge.
Yeah, well, we're eventually going
to run out of people to hang out with.
If I'm stuck with you all the time,
I'll go crazy.
I understand.
So, any chance you want to fuck?
Any chance you can be romantic, ever?
Okay, intimate? Do you want to be intimate?
I let you have sex with me
three times last week.
I really feel like we shouldn't do it
again until I'm back on birth control.
Isabel, we've had enough unprotected
sex without birth control...
...to come to at least three conclusions.
Either I'm the master king at pulling out...
...I'm sterile, or you're barren.
All roads leads to us having sex tonight.
Not sure I can handle
the increase in your sex drive...
...since you've slowed down on the drinking.
Starting to miss the guy who'd come
home every night in a drunken stupor...
...with a flaccid penis. Let's go.
Can you at least take off your shirt?
I'll come faster.
- Be gentle... I'm not wet yet.
- You're never wet.
Well, that means you're doing
something wrong.
This is new.
(SCREAMING)
- Well, that was unexpected.
- I think you mean traumatic.
- I'm in the hospital?
- Mm-hm.
- It was your worst one yet.
- How long have I been here?
- Three hours.
- (DOOR OPENS)
- Hi.

- **CALEB:**

- Everyone okay?

- Someone tell me I'm still dreaming.

Caleb had to jet back in town for another last minute corporate meeting.

Well, I'm not dead yet.

So you can hold off on all your celebrating.

That's very funny. Look, Isabel told me what happened and I rushed right over.

Oh, she told you I had a seizure while we were fucking?

- What? What did you say?

- Oh, my God.

Are you two sleeping together?

We've been together for three years.

He lives with me. I just assumed with your background in mathematics...

- ...you'd be better at deductive reasoning.

- I, on the other hand...

...expected you to be just as delusional and caught off-guard as you are right now.

Isabel, this is not how you were raised.

I am so ashamed of you.

Please, at least tell me he's your first.

Caleb, my sex life

isn't really any of your business.

You know what, let me just clear that right up for you.

I've never been with a virgin.

- Fuck you, Owen.

- Is that true?

Fuck both of you.

I think it goes without saying that you two should get yourselves checked out.

- In the interest of public safety.

- I'm in a committed relationship.

What about you, Caleb? How many times have you strolled through the clinic...

...while fucking your way through two failed marriages?

If you weren't already in a hospital bed, I would put you in one.

Guys, stop it! Both of you!

Will the two of you at least consider saving

face in the eyes of God and getting married?
No, because that means we'd no longer
be living in sin and we enjoy living in sin.
Speak for yourself.

Caleb, I'm sorry, I feel like you should
just go. But I'll see you next week.
I'll see you for Shelby's birthday,
I'm going to take the train in and...
You're uninvited.

I don't want such a negative
influence around my daughter.
And until you straighten up your act, you
should not be allowed anywhere near children.
Come on, who cares, you'll never see your
niece again, she's a pain in the ass, anyway.
She's supposed to be my fucking
goddaughter, you heartless sack of shit.

What if I told you I want
to have kids some day?

Go ahead. It's your body, do what
you want, but don't treat pregnancy...

...like some special achievement.

Crack whores have babies.

All you have to do is spread your legs,
and invite someone to jizz in you.

That is the most vile thing I've ever
heard come out of your mouth.

Best case scenario, you have a healthy baby
that turns into a piece of shit teenager...
...and makes only a portion of your life
a living hell. That is the best-case scenario.

- I hate your fucking guts.

- Yeah, what else is new?

I'm pregnant.

- What?

- I'm pregnant.

- Don't worry, I'm having an abortion.

- Yeah, of course, you are.

I mean, what is it, like, 400 bucks?

We'll split it.

Fucking asshole.

Hi.

- What the fuck is this doing here?

- It's a funeral spray.

Yeah, I can see that. What is it doing here?

It's part of a whole thing I'm doing.

Will you sit down?

No.

Come on, just give me
a few minutes, and then I'll leave.

You got two.

So, I couldn't sleep last night,
so I wrote your obituary.

No, it's a nice thing.

Get it over with.

Isabel Sullivan, 93,
of Los Angeles, California...

...died peacefully
of natural causes yesterday.

Though they cannot say
to an absolute degree of certainty...

...friends and family speculate
that if Heaven does in fact exist...

...that's probably where she went.

She was born in Carson City, Nevada,
and graduated with a business degree...

...from some forgettable second-tier college
even she had trouble remembering the name of.

She was married to Owen Roberts,
noted web designer...

...who loved her very much,
even though he had trouble showing it.

They adopted later in life...

...and she was often heard remarking
on what a great father he was...

...despite the fact that he
could be a miserable bastard.

He loved everything about her,
even the disgusting fact...

...that she would leave her dried contact
lenses scattered around the apartment.

To him, she was perfect and he could
not imagine himself with anyone else.

I'm sorry about last night.

Okay.

This is pretty tacky...

...and inappropriate.

But I get that you are doing

a nice thing in your own weird way.

Let's just talk about it
when I get home tonight.

Okay.

- Owen!

- Yeah.

Get this thing out of here.

Okay.

Thank you.

So...

- ...how long have you known?

- Two weeks.

How could you keep this from me for so long?

Because I wasn't even sure
if I was even going to keep it.

And I knew you'd react
basically how you did...

...so, I mean, what would be the point?

Again, I'm sorry. I was caught off-guard.

Let's be honest, you're not responsible
enough to even be in a relationship...

- ...let alone be a dad.

- Okay, don't put this on me.

We both know it's just not the right timing.

If I was in a stable relationship,
I would keep this kid.

I'm not getting any younger. I want a family.

I just don't want one with you.

That is shitty thing to say to me.

Owen, you don't even keep
in touch with your own family...

...you've alienated me from mine.

I'm sure there's love for me somewhere
in there, but it's not like it used to be.

Okay, first of all, that's not true.

And I'm not saying that it's what I want...

...but I think I'd make a great father.

Are you insane?

Some of the biggest pieces of shit I've ever
met are parents. I think I could do it.

Well, I'm not going to have a kid with you,
just so you can prove a point.

(SCREAMING)

Isabel, I want to have this baby.

Okay, wake up. Wake up, okay?
I want to tell you something.
Listen, I know things haven't been
as good as they once were.
But we'll get back there.
I'll make sure of it.
This could be your only chance
to have a baby.
It could change our lives.
I mean, as fucked up as we are...
...I can't imagine doing this
with anyone else.
You really want to keep this baby?
Yes, I want us to keep this baby together.
First, I want you to call Caleb
and apologize to him.
Of course, yes.
Be the first step in getting
my family to like you.
Okay.
Second, I want us to go and visit
your grandmother and sister...
...and reconcile with them.
Oh, Isabel...
No. I... that's...
If we're gonna have a family of our own,
I'd like to see you reconnect...
- ...with the one you've got.
- You don't know what you're asking.
So?
It's important to me.
(MUSIC PLAYING)
Not being able to drive is humiliating.
Yeah, well, if this new
medication works out...
...you'll be able to get your license
renewed in a few months.
I can't believe I agreed to do this.
I mean, we're just getting on the road,
and my hands are already starting to sweat.
Aw... you must really love me.
You know I haven't seen or spoken to my
grandmother or my sister since the funeral?
You did tell them

we were coming though, right?

- Yeah, of course.

- What'd they say?

Well, I only got my grandmother
on the phone...

...and she said she'd be willing
to tolerate the inconvenience.

Ah... she sounds a lot like you.

Well, by comparison, I'm relatively pleasant.

Is that why you guys don't talk anymore?

It's a long story.

Come on, man, we've got a long drive
ahead of us. You know all my secrets.

Okay. Fine.

OWEN:

had in common was religion.

All right, let's give this one last try.

- They never got along.

- Smile this time, Owen. A real smile.

Lower your chin, you don't look macho,
you look like a thug.

PHOTOGRAPHER:

OWEN:

I was practically hate-fucked into existence.

After they had my sister,
things went even further downhill.

They thought it would strengthen their
marriage, but it only made things worse...

...duh. As far as I was concerned...

...my father's primary method of
communication was quoting scripture.

My mom was different. Her main vice was sex.

She loved to fuck.

That's probably where I get it from.

Though, in fairness,
she was a lot better lay than me.

More often than not,
people would come back for seconds...

...and thirds, and fourths.

Around that time, I started
to refuse to go to church.

That's when they sent me away
to a school for troubled youth...
...which I was subsequently expelled from.
One night, while I was on one of
my benders, the house caught fire.
I had installed the propane,
something went wrong, I fucked up.
My parents were burned alive,
and my sister escaped...
...with third-degree burns
on over 80% of her body.
She was unrecognizable.
After my parents died, we ended up
moving in with my grandmother.
(SCREAMING)
We planned our escape,
but with her medical condition...
...I knew we didn't stand a chance.
Not together.
So I left her...
alone on the side of the road.
I planned on going back for her,
but I never found the courage.
Of course, that is, until now...
...on account of the fact that you
threatened to abort my unborn child.
Baby, the fact that you've kept
this from me...
...for the three years we've been
together, it terrifies me.
Yeah, well, you know... it's not something
you just bring up casually at dinner.
(SOFT MUSIC PLAYING)
(BEEPS OFF)
- I thought you liked that song.
- I'm starting to get nervous.
You're nervous, I'm petrified.
Say something comforting.
- It's not my fort.
- Just try.
Okay, I guess there's a chance
this won't be a complete disaster.
Okay, put the music back on.
(MUSIC CONTINUES)

(MUSIC ENDS)

Well, here we go.

No, you cannot stay the night, no.

- Owen.

- Hello, Grandmother.

You remember Pastor Sterling?

How could I forget Pastor Sterling?

Yes, well...

...you see, I look in from time
to time on your grandmother.

And isn't it wonderful to see
that she's improving.

- What do you mean?

- Well, thank you very much, Sterling.

I will see you on Sunday morning
for early service.

Okay.

- Pardon me.

- Oh, yeah, sure.

Well... and who have we here?

- This is Isabel, my girlfriend.

- Hi.

You have a girlfriend?

You said you were married.

You must have misheard.

Well, I...

...well, of course,
you will sleep in separate rooms.
You follow me to the guest room,
and Owen, you'll take the sofa.

(EERIE MUSIC PLAYING)

(GIGGLES)

Good night, Grandma.

(MUSIC PLAYING)

Stop it.

- Mmm.

- Head of the table, huh?

Oh, sorry, I didn't know.

Oh, Owen, you were properly raised.

You know the fork goes on the left.

I'll say grace.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for
this food which you have sanctified...

...and we pray that it will give us

the strength to do thy Holy will...
...through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Yup.

That was lovely.

- Where do you go to church?

- **OWEN:**

What he means is, we're not as good
about going as we should be.

Grandma, where's Pearl?

- She takes her meals in her room.

- Why is that?

Because I find it hard
to hold my food down...
...while looking at her.

(STEPS RUNNING)

Pearl?

Well, she's not ready to see you yet.

Owen, have... what's her name,
help me in the kitchen, huh?

Oh, it's Isabel.

Isabel.

Didn't your parents teach you
any manners, honey?

I've got a kitchen full of dirty dishes.

Oh, yeah, sure, be right there.

Go easy on her, huh, Grandma?

(SIGHS)

What is wrong with Owen?

He hardly touched his plate.

Waste of good food.

Oh, yeah, he has issues with food.

- Um, it's a control thing.

- Control?

He's bulimic.

Oh.

Here, this is for my teeth. Don't drop it.

(SIGHS)

Ma, tell me a little about yourself.

All I know at the moment
is you have bad taste in men.

Uh, well, I am from Carson City, Nevada.

- Hm.

- I work in interior design.

It's... it's when you make
the inside of a house nice, like this.
And I'm not sure if Owen told you,
but I am pregnant.

So...

My daughter couldn't keep
her legs closed, either.

It's beautiful here.

Reminds me of where I grew up in England.

I've never been to England.

Always wanted to go, I hear
you come back a changed person...

...something you should always experience.

- Hey, Grandma, what's all this stuff?

- Oh, that's your sister.

She has as much difficulty looking
at herself as I have looking at her.

Well, that's not a very nice thing to say.

Oh, I'm sure she didn't mean it like that.

It's so great. You get to look
out your window and just see this.

This is gorgeous.

You must never want to leave.

You know, I appreciate the company...

...but please don't talk. Can't we just sit?

Grandma, don't talk to her like that.

She's lovely to look at,
but she never shuts up.

Honestly, I don't know how you stand it.

Okay, so your grandmother's a fucking cunt.

- Yeah, I know. I told you.

- I feel so bad for your sister.

You know, maybe this trip
wasn't such a bad idea.

Our mutual disdain for my grandmother might
actually be bringing us closer together.

Yeah.

Okay, I'm going to try
and connect with my sister.

You okay here by yourself?

Yeah, I guess, just close the door.

I need to decompress.

(DOOR CLOSES)

Pearl?

Pearl, it's Owen. I just want to talk.

I'm here when you're ready.

(WEEPING)

(SCREAMING CRYING)

Take the napkin out of your shirt.

Why'd you come back here after all these years? Do you need money?

Because if it's money you're after, I don't have any.

No. I just thought it'd be good for Owen to reconnect with his family.

It's a little more complicated than that, but that's the gist.

Well, I overheard you trying to talk to your sister this afternoon.

There are things you don't know.

She's a bad girl. She's a very bad girl.

How do you mean?

Look... if you came here expecting me to be pleased...

...because you've fathered a child out of wedlock, I'm not.

I mean, the very least you could do is to marry the poor girl...

...before she's discovered for the slut that she is.

I mean, that's what your father did.

How could you say that about your own daughter?

Oh, Owen... grow up.

Your mother was a whore.

Your father was a moron, and your sister's an abomination.

And now, I have to go to my grave knowing that this bloodline continues?

Excuse me.

(STEPS RUNNING)

We have to go... now.

I know, I know. But what about Pearl?

- I'm not comfortable here.

- I can't leave unless I've made up with her.

Okay? I'm so close.

- Can we stay at a motel or something?

- The closest motel's like an hour away.

- The further away the better.
- Just give me a few days. Please.
Keep that bitch away from me.
I told you what it was gonna be like. Okay?
You were right.
Okay, so just bear with me...
...a little.

(SOFT MUSIC PLAYING)

Good morning, sunshine.
Look what I just found on my nightstand.
Wow, fashionable.
- They're awful.
- So don't wear them.
I think these are like a gift from your
grandmom, like some sort of an apology.
You can always re-gift them
to someone you don't like.
Your grandmother's the only person I've met
that I don't like enough to give these to.
Look, just put them on, and say thank you.
You'll never have to wear them again.
Are you kidding me? You want me
to say thank you after last night?
At least, she's trying to apologize,
that's more than she's ever done for me.
Can we at least clean them or something?
I'm not gonna put your grandmom's
nasty shit in my ear.
Good morning, Grandma. How are you feeling?
There's bacon on the stove.
I just couldn't wait any longer.
- I think we're okay with coffee.
- Thank you for the earrings.
Grandma, what was that about?
She was trying to be nice.
After this, you'll come to the store
with me to help with the groceries, huh?
Of course, Grandma.
(CHUCKLING)
Oh, thank you for the earrings.
If a man has a sexual relation with a man...
...as one does with a woman,
then both have done what is...
Serve the Lord with fear. And...

And God said to them,
be fruitful and multiply...
Honor your father, and your mother,
so that you might...
Love rejoices in the truth!
Pearl? It's Isabel, Owen's girlfriend.
Can I come in?
Owen and your grandmother
went into town. It's just me.
Can we talk?

PEARL:

Okay, it's on.

PEARL:

If I take off the blindfold,
do you promise not to turn around?
Promise.

ISABEL:

Do you like them? They're my favorite.
- They're beautiful.
- Thanks.
You should sell your jewelry online.
You could make a fortune.
What's 'online'?
- You're kidding, right?
- No, what's it do?
It connects people from all across the world.
Oh, so it's like a fancy telephone?
Jesus. Yes, that is what it's like.
Be careful.
I used to take his name in vain, too.
Then he killed my parents and set me on fire.
I guess it's time for you
to put the blindfold back on now.
Okay.
Turn around.
Let me get a good look at you.
What color are your eyes?
- Green.
- That's a nice color.
Not my favorite, but it's a good one.
Thanks?

So, what is it that you came here
to see me about?
Your brother... why won't you talk to him?
He was always fighting with my parents.
I don't like fighting.
It makes me feel bad inside.
Okay, but you know
he came here just to talk to you.
He wants to say he's sorry. He loves you.
Did he tell you I used to be pretty?
Not model pretty,
but I used to get compliments.
I'm sure you're still very pretty.
No. Not anymore.
Give Owen a chance.
Just think about it, okay?
I think it's time for you to leave now.
Put the blindfold outside.
- Bye, Pearl.
- Goodbye.
You are not gonna believe this.
Grandmother managed to get us...
- ...kicked out of the supermarket.
- What'd she do?
She was looking for the Brazil nuts
and decided to use a racial epithet...
...when describing them to a black employee.
Classy.
What have you been doing?
Oh, just getting ready for the day...
...thinking about perfect responses
to past arguments we've had.
Well, that sounds healthy.
Also managed to have
a conversation with your sister.
What? Really? What'd she say?
Give her some time.
I think she'll come around.
- Cool.
- Cool.
Pass the green beans.
Pass the green beans what?
Just pass the green beans.
Pass the green beans what?

Pass the green beans now...
...before your nasty old lady
skin flakes get all over it.
Tsk-tsk, in this house,
we respect our elders.
So if you want to behave like a female dog...
...you can eat off the floor like one.
You're pathetic. It's no wonder
Owen ran away and never looked back.
First thing in the morning
we're getting the fuck out of here.
Your slut has a foul mouth.
You've been on her ass ever since
we walked through that door.
It's no wonder it took her
so long to explode.
You're just like your father.
Your mother may have been a whore,
but she had backbone.
How do you call yourself a Christian?
The same way you're able
to call yourself a man.
You know, I almost wish
this Bible shit was true...
...so that I could watch you burn
right alongside me.
(PLATE SMASHES)
Stop fighting. I don't like fighting.
Pearl!
(SIGHS)
Okay, Pearl, open the door.
Pearl, I just want to talk.
Goddammit, Pearl, open the door.

PEARL:

but at least there was no fighting.
Now you came back and there's fighting again.
Okay, Pearl, I'm sorry.
There will be no more fighting.
Isabel and I are leaving
in the morning and it'll all be over.
This is our last chance to talk.
Open the door.
Fuck!

(WHIMPERING)

(SCREAMING)

(EERIE MUSIC FADES UP)

It's okay. It's just me.

It's Pearl.

Hi... hi, what are you doing here?

I brought you something.

I didn't make it.

It used to belong to my mother.

- Oh, no, no, no, I can't accept this.

- No, I want you to have it.

My mother wasn't a whore
like Grandmother says.

She just liked having sex,
and it's okay to like having sex.

Mm-hm.

Isabel, please don't go.

Please don't leave me here with her.

Stay just a little bit longer, please?

I'm... I'm sorry, sweetie,

we really do have to go back home.

Owen and I have to leave.

But if you... if you stay...

...Owen can apologize to me
for making me like this, like he wanted.

Sorry.

I'm glad we got a chance to be here.

(CHUCKLING)

(DOOR CLOSING)

Violet... what a... what a pleasant surprise.

- How's Pearl?

- Oh, queer as ever.

Well, we just need to keep praying
for her, then, don't we?

She's got a thing for my Grandson's
girlfriend. It's pathetic.

So your family's still in town, then?

How wonderful is that.

I've started seeing things again.

What...

- ...what kind of things?

- Horrible things.

God wants them all dead.

Violet...

...what would make you think
God would want anybody dead?
They weren't supposed to survive
the last time around.
None of them.
What are you saying?
I was given specific instructions.
It wanted them all to burn.
And it wanted me to watch.
- And I did.
- Instructions for what?
The boy was semi-coherent at the best
of times so it wasn't difficult...
...to convince him it was his fault.
There was a thrill...
...in hearing my daughter...
...screaming out in agony.
For a brief moment,
and for the first time, I felt...
...pleasure.
The kind of pleasure she must have derived...
...from her innumerable sexual episodes.
And then I knew
that I was doing God's work...
...and he was rewarding me.
Now, Violet...
...you are sorely mistaken if you
think that what you are doing...
...is God's will.
No, you're applying His Holy name
to some kind of personal agenda, no more.
- What you're doing is a kind of sacrilege.
- No, no, no.
After I convinced Owen...
...that he had improperly
installed the heating system...
...he was so consumed with guilt...
...I thought he would take his own life.
Instead of which, he ran away.
But I knew he'd come back one day for Pearl.
My voices told me, and now he's back.
And they want me to finish what I started.
Now, Violet, you listen to me.
These voices you're hearing,

they are a delusion.
I'm afraid I'm going to have
to contact the authorities.
You will do no such thing.
I'm afraid I have no choice.
Not unless you want them to find out...
...what you did to my daughter.
She was 15, Sterling.
She wasn't born a whore.
But you turned her into one.
Come now, Sterling...
...I thought you'd be excited to...
...sit back and relax...
...and watch a true vessel of God...
...do His work.

(CLEARS THROAT)

Violet, I have to...

Violet?

Violet!

I just gave Pearl some of my makeup,
so she could look nice for you.

- She's putting it on right now.

- Really?

- Mm-hmm.

- Thank you.

Lovely day, isn't it?

I'm gonna finish this coffee and then spend
the next hour trying to relieve myself.

I didn't know pregnancy
made you so constipated.

There is such a thing
as too much information, dear.

(SCREAMS)

- Grandma, what was that?

- A regular occurrence.

- That's it! No more mirrors!

- I'm gonna go check on her.

- I'll go with you.

- No, please, I'd rather go alone.

Pearl?

Pearl, are you okay?

- **PEARL:**

- What happened?

Isabel let me borrow her makeup
because I wanted to look pretty for you...
- ...and then I got sad.
- I don't care about looks, Pearl.
It's not important to me.
However, I am a little concerned...
...about all the bad luck you're accruing
on account of these broken mirrors.

PEARL:

on bad luck for one lifetime.
Come back tonight when it's dark out.
We'll talk then.
Oh, come on, Pearl, don't make me wait
another night. Pearl, open the door.
Do you have any reading material
other than the Bible?
I just finished what I brought
and it doesn't feel right...
...reading the Holy book on the toilet.
It's nice to know you have some dignity.
Why do you hate me so much?
You remind me of my daughter.
The so-called whore?
Anyone who would have sex
with Owen can't be too discerning.
Sounds like he had a great
support system growing up.
Are you sure this is his baby?
Excuse me. What exactly are you implying?
Presumably, exactly
what you think I'm implying.
That you've been sleeping around.
Owen is not supposed to be...
...capable of fathering a child.
Well, whatever backwards doctor
told you that was incorrect.
Owen and his college girlfriend
had an abortion.
And I haven't had sex
with anyone else in years.
You can't hide the sexual dissatisfaction.
It's written all over my face.
I believe you.

So it's settled? I'm not a whore
and you no longer hate me?

(CHUCKLES)

It appears that you're not a liar.

But you're still a whore...

...and I don't like you.

Well, at least that's a step
in the right direction.

Excuse me.

MAN:

alike, are you having money trouble?

Grandma, will you please

tell Isabel I'll be right back?

Where are you going?

I was actually going to go visit
the old property.

Uh-huh.

Thanks.

God is good! God is great! Praise his name!

I'm so excited about this Holy water,

I can barely speak.

What a gift Heaven sent, I'm telling you.

Friends, for the mere price...

(CONTINUES INDISTINCT)

Woman was created for man...

...the Bible speaks plainly on the subject.

And while an excellent wife

is the crown of her husband...

...make no mistake, she who shames him,

is like rottenness in his bone.

BOY:

My family used to own this land.

There was a house right here in the middle.

You used to live in the house

that burned down?

Sometimes we come at night

with flashlights and try to see ghosts.

I'll tell you what.

If you ever see any of those ghosts...

...do me a favor and tell them

Owen says he's sorry.

See ya, kid.

- (ALARM BEEPING)

- (SCREAMING)

Due to your loin...

...for the husband is head of the wife
just as Christ is head of the church.

(SNAKE RATTLES)

(HUMMING)

Wives! Submit yourselves
to your husbands and all things.
That is what Christ asks of you.

(SNAKE RATTLES)

(SCREAMING)

(SCREAMING CONTINUES)

ISABEL:

Oh, my God!

(FLESH TEARING)

Grandmother!

(SCREAMING)

You wicked, wicked child!

Grandma! What happened?

- She...

- Isabel, what the fuck is going on?

That snake was in the toilet.

What? Are you okay?

- Yeah.

- Did it bite you?

No, Pearl... did that.

This is a very old house. It probably
got in through a hole in the pipes.

We can't have an incident like that again.

Now, Owen, you can find
the hole in the pipes.

Okay, what do I have to do?

Get into the crawl space
under the floor, it's very simple.

I'll show you.

Okay, I'm just going to talk to Isabel
for a second. Come here. Come here.

Hey, hey, hey, are you okay? Come here.

- That was so insane.

- I can imagine.

Why are your eyes like that?

- Allergies.

- Have you been crying?

Maybe.

You know it's okay to be sensitive.

I know. I'm just not particularly used to it.

- You remember the first time we met?

- Bits and pieces.

You were the biggest piece of shit
douche bag I've ever met in my life.

- I could not stand you.

- I tend to give off that first impression.

And second, and third, fourth.

But when I ran into you that fifth time...

- ...something clicked.

- Well, you were lonely.

Well, you were drunk.

It's crazy... now you're pregnant.

I want to have this baby with you.

Me, too.

- So, it's settled?

- Yeah, that's what I'm saying.

- Okay, I'm gonna go help Grandma.

- Okay.

Make amends with Pearl

and first thing in the fucking morning...

- ...we're getting out of here.

- Amen.

GRANDMA:

- Owen?

- Yeah! I'm here, Grandma.

Oh, hurry up.

- Okay.

- Here you are.

- Yeah, what is this?

- It's an oil lamp.

Yeah, I can see that.

Don't you have a flashlight?

- No.

- Great.

If it was good enough for your ancestors,
it's good enough for you.

I don't know if I subscribe
to that philosophy.

These old, arthritic hands

are not good anymore.

Give it to me.

There, see?

Good.

- I think it's like this. There you go.

- Nice job, that's right. Now...

Let's get this done. Wait. What am I doing?

Oh, just follow the piping
along the floor to the back.

And then, any holes you find,
just wrap them up with the tape.

It's just a temporary measure,
but it's better than nothing.

Ah... okay.

OWEN:

Okay, I'm coming back up.

It's disgusting down here. Thanks for the
solid reminder never to be a homeowner.

- What's that smell?

- Oh, I spilled the lamp oil. Clumsy me.

I'm gonna go freshen up and get ready.

Isabel and I are leaving in the morning.

Oh, well, I'm going to make
a really nice last dinner.

- I'll have Isabel come help.

- No. I cook alone, Owen.

Now, as I recall,

you like chicken and biscuits, hm?

I'm actually trying to be healthy,
so maybe something lighter.

Well, why bother? You're just going
to throw it up anyway, Owen.

I'm gonna go try and see Pearl.

Damn!

(KNOCK ON DOOR)

Pearl, it's me.

I'm leaving and we don't have much time.

OWEN:

PEARL:

Sit down.

I wasn't even supposed to be there.

What are you talking about?

The evening of the fire.

I was supposed to be staying at Emily's.

Grandmother caught us kissing and told
Mother and Father, and I was grounded.

I'm sorry, I don't remember Emily.

It doesn't matter.

She's married now, has two boys.

I'm sorry to hear that.

It's okay. She seems happy.

When was the last time you two spoke?

Not since the fire.

I had third-degree burns over 80% of my body.

I spent many months in the hospital.

No one came to visit me, but Grandmother.

Has she been taking care of you?

She thinks she can talk to God.

Sometimes he tells her to do terrible things.

She hasn't hurt you though, right?

No. Not me.

- Owen?

- Yes.

You're a very lucky man.

You shouldn't take things for granted.

I'm working on that.

I would have made a great mother.

I would have understood things, you know?

I would have taken care of my babies.

- I would have protected them.

- Pearl, you can still be a mother.

Why'd you leave me, Owen? Why?

I don't... I can't say. I don't know.

All I can say is it's been
eating me up ever since...

...and...

...I need to ask for your forgiveness.

Okay, I need you to forgive me, Pearl.

Okay?

I don't forgive you, Owen.

I don't forgive you, and I never will.

Pearl.

Let Isabel and I take you
away from this place.

This is where I belong now.

Pearl, it's not too late, okay?

We can get out of here.

This... is where I belong now.

This is where I belong now.

- No, Pearl. We'll take good care of you.

- Get out!

Get out! Get out! Get out!

(WHIMPERING)

(EERIE MUSIC PLAYING)

(LAUGHING)

- Hey... shh, it's me.

- I was asleep.

Can I sleep in here with you tonight?

I'm over that couch.

- Aren't you worried about your grandmother?

- She can go fuck herself.

All I care about is right here in this room.

(CAR APPROACHING)

Hold on.

I'll be right back.

(LAMP CLICKS ON)

(ENGINE STARTING)

- What's going on?

- I don't know.

I'm feeling a little light-headed.

- Did you take your medicine?

- Shit, no, they're in the drawer there.

Thanks.

- Should probably eat something.

- Yeah, come on, I'll make you a sandwich.

Okay.

Oh, fuck.

Call an ambulance.

This doesn't make any sense.

His new medication's been helping so much.

- He's been so much better.

- No, let him rot.

What did you just say, you crazy bitch?

If Owen dies, I'll kill you myself.

Oh, I'm afraid you and your baby

are going with him.

And then it's over.

This is where it ends.

How many times do I have to say it?

No... more... fighting.

VIOLET:

(SOFT MUSIC PLAYING)

(MUSIC CHANGES)