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Miles and Ellie

A Comedy in Two Acts

By Don Zolidis

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Full-Length Comedy
3F 2 M

Miles and Ellie fell in love in high school . . . and then they broke up. That much is clear. But everything else is up for interpretation, and when the two meet twenty years later at Ellie's dysfunctional family Thanksgiving, they finally get to compare notes. A hilarious and wistful romantic comedy that asks the question: is it possible to get a second chance at your first love?

Cast of Characters

Ellie, 16, and 36 (played by an actress in her 30s)

Miles, 16, and 36 (played by an actor in his 30s)

Illyana, Ellie's older sister – 17, and 37, blonde and perfect

Mary, 40, and 60

Burt, 43, and 63

Setting: Suburbia. As you may have guessed, the time shifts. Act one is set in 1991-92. Act two is present day.

Casting: In my mind, this play works best with the three leads being played by actors in their early 30s. I wouldn't do too much to make them overly teenager-ish in the first act, beyond maybe well-constructed wigs and some makeup. I wouldn't intentionally age them in act two – (I don't think adding weight would be a good choice) – just allow them to be closer to their real age. Allow the audience to suspend disbelief.

Miles and Ellie premiered at the Purple Rose Theatre, in Chelsea, Michigan from June 20th to August 31st, 2013. It was directed by Guy Sanville, and the original cast was as follows:

ELLIE: Rhiannon Ragland
MILES: Rusty Mewha
ILLYANA: Cheryl Turski
BURT: Bill Simmons
MARY: Michelle Mountain

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Act One

(A living room in a fairly affluent suburban home. ELLIE is snipping a Barbie's hair while making little Barbie death sounds.)

ELLIE *(as the Barbie)*

Nooooo! Why are you doing this to me!!! I was so pretty!!! Aaaaaaaaah!

(She looks up to the audience.)

First of all, this isn't a love story.

(She pops the head off the Barbie.)

(ILLYANA enters.)

ILLYANA

You're sick, you know that? You are a sick person. You are sick in the head. And I hope you die. Okay? And also – Mom told me to tell you that she is very disappointed and that as compensation I will be receiving a fifty percent share of your Christmas presents this year. So there, okay? Oh – and here is your My Little Pony, Sparkles, as you can see, I have cut off his feet.

(She tosses the remnants of Sparkles at ELLIE and storms off.)

ELLIE *(to the audience)*

That's not actually what this play is about. That's my older sister, Illyana, circa 1983 or so.

(ILLYANA returns with more pieces of Sparkles.)

ILLYANA

Sparkles screamed while I did it, you know that? He screeeaamed. You know what they do to ponies that can't walk? They shoot them.

(ILLYANA acts out killing Sparkles and making Sparkles death noises.)

(she leaves again.)

ELLIE *(to the audience)*

But if I'm really going to go to beginning of this – it was 1991, and I was in eleventh grade in health class. That's when I met him.

(Lights up on MILES, with long hair, sitting in a chair.)

The basic thrust of Health class was to scare us into behaving ourselves. Most of the year was spent cataloguing various sexually transmitted diseases and watching short videos of the horrors that would await you if you did drugs. But the most important terrifying unit, was the pregnancy unit. First, we watched the video on labor.

(Screaming off-stage. MILES cowers.)

Here comes the episiotomy.

(MILES reacts as if he's been shot.)

And after that was the baby unit. The major assignment was to take care of a flour sack which was supposed to be our baby. Before we got to have the baby, though, we had to get our husbands. It worked like this: The boys got assigned incomes at random, and then whoever had the highest income got his first pick to be his bride. Yeah, real progressive. Miles landed at 36 thousand per year, which was ninth out of twelve.

(Lights change.)

(ELLIE and MILES enter, after school.)

ELLIE

Okay, first of all, Spud is not a name, it's a description of a potato. And there is no way my baby boy is being called Spud.

MILES

Dracor.

ELLIE

What is that? Dracor? What are you talking about?

MILES

Kind of got a fierce individualism about it.

ELLIE

Dracor? You think this is a good idea? Is this some kind of Dungeons and Dragons name?

MILES

I don't see how that has any relevance to the issue at hand –

ELLIE

Okay – our baby is not a place for you to experiment your weird geekishness, okay? Carter.

MILES

Oh God. This kid is going to get killed in school.

ELLIE

And Dracor won't?

MILES

Dracor will terrify them. He will be an unstoppable force.

ELLIE

Carter or a divorce. Those are your choices.

MILES

We can't even get divorced. She said that we're supposed to learn to live with our mistakes like the rest of the adults.

ELLIE
Fine. Trial separation. You get the baby on even hours, and I get him on odd hours.
(MARY enters, with cookies.)

MARY
Hello there!

ELLIE
Hey Mom.

MARY
Who's this?

ELLIE
This is Miles. We're married.

MARY
Oh wow!

ELLIE
It's for health class. We're raising our baby together.

MARY
Oh she looks just like you. I'm so glad she's white.

ELLIE
Mom!

MARY
Sorry, sorry. I'm not allowed to make jokes. Well I'll get out of your hair –

MILES
It's a boy, actually. You can't tell.

ELLIE
Can Miles spend the night?

MARY
I'm sorry?

ELLIE
It's part of the assignment. We're supposed to spend a sleepless night with the baby.

MARY
Oh! How fun. Um… Well… uh… just how um… married are you supposed to be?

ELLIE

A lot married.

MARY

What does that mean?

ELLIE

What do you think that means?

MARY

I don't know, honey, that's why I'm asking you.

ELLIE

It's for school.

MARY

Right, but – honey – the school promotes liberal values – so I just – I mean this could be some kind of sordid safe sex lesson thing –

ELLIE

Mom! We're just supposed to stay up all night and bicker like a married couple. That's all we're supposed to do.

MILES

Trust me, I'm a gentleman.

MARY

Okay… well – can I play along? I'll be Grandma.

ELLIE

Sure.

MARY

I'm just glad you're not a lesbian. All right – well you two get to it – but not too get to it, if you know what I mean – remember – realism. There's no action for a good while. This is fun! I'm so glad we get to spend this time together.

ELLIE

What time? What are you - ?

MARY

Bye.

(She darts away, leaving the cookies.)

MILES

Wow.

ELLIE

I wish I could say that she's had some kind of mental ailment that creates that behavior – but that's kind of… how she is.

MILES

She's great. Perfect mother-in-law.

ELLIE

Ha.

(opens Notebook.)

Okay – first thing we're supposed to do is feed him. We have to feed him every hour and a half for twenty minutes at a time.

MILES

Jesus Christ.

ELLIE

I know, right?

MILES

How are we supposed to feed him?

ELLIE

It just says feed him.

MILES

Are we supposed to like, mime it?

ELLIE

I guess.

MILES

Or you could…?

ELLIE

What?

MILES

You know, do the thing.

ELLIE

What thing?

MILES

You know…
(begins to mime breast-feed)

ELLIE

Are you fucking gross? I'm not gonna do that!

MILES

Well I don't know!

ELLIE

That's just bizarre, okay?

MILES

It is healthier for the baby –

ELLIE

I don't care.

MILES

Well I mean that's what they're there for –

ELLIE

Ack!

MILES

Fine, we'll mime making formula. That's what you want.

ELLIE

Yes.

MILES

You don't care that our baby will have a lower IQ and have difficulty forming attachments.

ELLIE

Nope. I'm cool with that.

MILES

No Harvard.

ELLIE

No offense, but looking at you, I think Harvard's out of the question already.

MILES

Oh nice one miss Mensa.

ELLIE

I don't even know what that is.

MILES

My point is proven.

ELLIE

You're a moron.

MILES

And you're a moron with boobs that you are too selfish to use as God intended. That's fine, keep them to yourself.

ELLIE

That's what I plan on doing thank you. You're just too weird. You are too weird. Give me the baby.

(He throws the baby at her, ELLIE misses it, and it hits the ground.)

Are you kidding me?!

MILES

You were supposed to catch him!

ELLIE

You don't throw the baby!

MILES

I'm just showing you what it's like to be careless with a child! See look! We're just gonna take chances! We're gonna be terrible parents!

ELLIE

Shut up all right.

(She picks up the flour.)

That's okay Carter. Mommy's here. Daddy's a stupid bad man.

MILES

And that's good parenting? You're going to tear me down -

ELLIE *(cradling the flour)*

Shhhh. Shhhh.

(MILES takes the notebook.)

MILES

So you have to sit there for twenty minutes and not move.

ELLIE

Great. Twenty minutes? What kind of baby eats for twenty minutes?

MILES

A fat one, I guess.

ELLIE

Well let's work on the future history thing then.

MILES

Okay.

(He takes out a sheet of paper)

Create the future history of your relationship. How did you meet? How did you fall in love? When did you get married? How old were you when the baby was born? How do you intend to pay for college? Jeez.

ELLIE

Okay um… we met… in a –

MILES

In the circus. You ever see the circus where they ride those motorcycles in the sphere?

ELLIE

No.

MILES

You know there's like a big metal sphere and all these crazy guys are riding motorcycles inside of it?

ELLIE

No I've never seen that.

MILES

Well anyway, I'm a stunt rider – and you escape from the stands and run delirious into the sphere, and then I crash my motorcycle to save you from certain death.

ELLIE

Why would I go into the sphere?

MILES

You're demented. And you were hit in the head by a flying object. And it caused you to spin out of control.

ELLIE

That is not how we met. We should do it like – ooh, like a romantic comedy. I got it. He was a drug kingpin, she was a tough as nails prosecuting attorney – the only thing they didn't count on was…

MILES *(trailer voice)*
Falling in love. I like it. I am a drug kingpin. And you compromised your dignity and your ethics in order to save me –

ELLIE
Because you were really innocent – and the judge was corrupt –

MILES
Right. So I then became a computer programmer –

ELLIE
Why?

MILES
Cause it's cool. And it's a growth industry. I became a computer programmer and we got married in a medieval castle in Ireland.

ELLIE
But… you were impotent – for many years –

MILES
Wait, what?
(ILLYANA enters with backpack.)

ELLIE
So we had to use in-vitro fertilization with Ivy League pro athlete sperm.

MILES
No. No – un huh –

ILLYANA *(calling out)*
Mom! There's a weird kid here and they're talking about sperm!

ELLIE
Shut up it's for an assignment.

MILES
She's feeding our baby.
(ILLYANA looks at both of them in disgust.)

ILLYANA
Ohhhh-kay. This is really gross.

MILES
It's a beautiful miracle of nature.

ILLYANA

Great.

ELLIE

This is Miles, my future husband and recovering fake drug dealer. He's impotent so we have to use in-vitro fertilization.

ILLYANA

Ohhhh.

MILES

I'm not impotent.

ILLYANA

It happens to a lot of guys.

ELLIE

How would you know?

ILLYANA

I know things, all right? I'm sorry if I have a life.

ELLIE

Your life involves finding impotent boys?

ILLYANA

Um… hello? Alcohol. God you're stupid.

ELLIE

I'm stupid because I'm not out getting trashed on weekends and discovering important fun facts about male genitalia?

ILLYANA

You wish, okay?

ELLIE

Oh right. Yeah, that sounds like great fun.

ILLYANA

Fine. Stay here with your dorky husband.

ELLIE

I will, thank you. I have a child to raise.

ILLYANA

Probably be just as retarded as you are.

ELLIE

You're like so special. You're like my favorite.

ILLYANA

Bye.

(She walks by MILES and winks at him.)

ELLIE

Did you just wink at him?

ILLYANA

No.

ELLIE

You just winked at my fake husband.

ILLYANA

Why would I wink at your fake husband?

ELLIE

You're jealous.

ILLYANA

Oh I'm sorry what?

ELLIE

Leave him alone.

ILLYANA

Does he belong to you?

ELLIE

Why do you have to try and wreck things?

ILLYANA

I didn't wink at him! Jesus! I got something stuck in my eye!

ELLIE

Good.

ILLYANA

I'm leaving. I'm going to get the yellow pages for you and highlight some counselors you could talk to about your weird issues, okay? And maybe then you can get the help you need.

(ILLYANA exits. ELLIE fumes.)

Skipping Forward

Oh so there it is! There it is! There's the problem! Well you know what a non-functioning man does? He teaches his baby to smoke!

ELLIE

Oh great so Carter can grow up to be a loser like his father!

MILES

A loser?! I'm the loser – you don't even have an imaginary job!

ELLIE

I'm not allowed to have a job because of strange sexist attitudes in our society! And besides, having a job is a hundred times easier than taking care of a baby.

MILES

Ptthh!

ELLIE

Did you just go pthhh!

MILES

Yes I did! Pthhh!

ELLIE

I never loved you! I was just using you!

MILES

I knew it! That's why I've only been pretending to be impotent!

ELLIE

What!

MILES

That's right! I've been withholding the gift of my sperm from you! In reality – I do it all the time –

ELLIE

With who?

MILES

She lives in Canada.

ELLIE

I want a divorce again!

MILES

Tough! We're locked into this! You're stuck with me!

ELLIE

My life is ruined.

MILES

Mine too.

(Pause. He turns off the tape recorder.)

You think we should try it again?

ELLIE

No that was pretty good. I wanted to work in something about how you were a huge disappointment to me.

MILES

That came across. I wanted to say something about how I wanted more blowjobs.

ELLIE

I don't think that will fly.

MILES

But we can talk about how impotent I am all day long.

ELLIE

It's one of our vocab words, thank you.

(MILES takes the notebook.)

MILES

Okay: record a marital argument. Done.

ELLIE

Did you need to put a hole in the baby?

MILES

It's more realistic this way.

(ELLIE takes the baby and starts to change his diaper.)

ELLIE

Did you draw a penis on him?

MILES

I was sick of everyone calling him a girl.

ELLIE

So… you did this?

MILES

Yes. It's fun.

ELLIE

Drawing a penis is fun?

MILES

Yes. You should try it.

ELLIE

Was your Mom like high when she was pregnant with you?

MILES

My Mom died before I was born, thank you very much.

ELLIE

Oh –

MILES

I'm kidding. How could my Mom die before I was born? Who's the one with mental problems now?

ELLIE

I'm erasing this.

MILES

You are not erasing our son's penis.

ELLIE

No I am. This is gross.

MILES

You know I'm pretty sure there's a very serious Greek term for what you're doing –

ELLIE

Do I care?

MILES

It makes you nervous, doesn't it?

ELLIE

No it doesn't make me nervous, it's gross and stupid and childish and has no business being on our baby.

MILES

You castrating wench.

ELLIE

Would you stop? Seriously, please stop. I don't know if you think this is funny or whatever, but it's just annoying and stupid. And we both get the same grade on this, and you're happy to deface our child – have him smoke, what if you set him on fire?

MILES

Then we buy a new bag of flour.

ELLIE

And we just toss the old one?

MILES

That would be my plan, yes. If I accidentally set our baby on fire, I would toss his charred remains in the garbage and buy a new one from the supermarket. Yes, that is exactly what I would do in a similar situation in real life.

ELLIE

It's not funny.

MILES

It is funny! The whole thing is funny. It's just acting! So I put a penis on the baby – he's a boy – he has a penis – it's a condition he's born with –

ELLIE

You don't need to draw it on.

MILES

It was for fun. It's fun.

ELLIE

Fine. You explain it then.

MILES

I'll say I was paying attention in the anatomy portion of class, unlike some person who had her eyes closed.

ELLIE

What are you talking about?

MILES

You had your eyes closed.

ELLIE

During what?

MILES

When they put the slide up.

ELLIE

It was a gross slide.

MILES

But you couldn't even look at it.

ELLIE

Why were you looking at me anyway?

MILES

Because I know what one looks like.

ELLIE

But why were you looking at me?
(short pause.)

MILES

Cause you're the prettiest girl in the class.
(ELLIE steps out to speak the audience.)

ELLIE

It might just have been that I was so pathetic that no one had ever really called me pretty before – and I know that's stupid – but he was sincere, you know, and here was I was thinking I was the ninth-prettiest girl in the class – so…
(She returns to him.)

(They kiss. Then they make out. On top of the flour baby. Flour goes everywhere. They start playing with it.)

ELLIE *(tossing some into the air)*

It's snowing!
(Soon they are coated. Then they stop.)

MILES

Dude. Um… we need a new baby.
(Lights change.)

ELLIE

So I got my first boyfriend. Ever. Now there's one person who I haven't introduced yet who's pretty important –
(BURT enters.)
My Dad.

BURT

What happened in here?

(ELLIE is beginning to clean up.)

ELLIE

I broke a bag of flour.

BURT

I can't say that I approve of this mess.

ELLIE

I'm cleaning up.

BURT

Good. Personal responsibility is what America was built on. Hard-working immigrants cleaning up their own bags of flour. Sometimes twelve or fourteen hours a day. Nowadays people want the government to clean up their flour for them.

ELLIE *(to the audience)*

I should add that my father was running for State Senator.

BURT

You know your grandparents were coal miners.

ELLIE

I know that Dad, but I fail to see how that has any relevance to my current situation.

BURT

We come from the Earth.

ELLIE

Okay – I'm not old enough to vote yet. Talk to Illyana.

BURT

So what is it you wanted to talk to me about?

ELLIE

I didn't – actually – want to talk to you about anything.

BURT

No, I think you do.

ELLIE

I'm pretty sure that I don't.

BURT

Come on Ellie Belly, come on –

ELLIE

Please don't call me that any more, I'm not five.

BURT

I'm pretty good at reading people. It's allowed me to get where I am in life – with a beautiful family that I love very much, a successful business career –

ELLIE

Dad!

BURT

Who's this boy?

ELLIE

Oh. Um. Who told you?

BURT

Sources.

ELLIE

Illyana?

BURT

I'm not going to discuss that at the moment.

ELLIE

Dad, when she was born did you notice that she had little horns protruding from her skull and smelled like brimstone?

BURT

Who's the boy?

ELLIE

His name is Miles. He's a junior.

BURT

And his parents are…?

ELLIE

Monkeys? What? What do you want?

BURT

Who are his parents?

ELLIE

I have no idea.

BURT

Is he named after Miles Davis?

ELLIE

I don't know.

BURT

Miles Davis was a jazz musician.

ELLIE

I get that.

BURT

What kind of parents name their child after a jazz musician?

ELLIE

You know in the New Mutants comic book, there's a character called Illyana Rasputin – you know what she is? She's an evil witch raised by demons, Dad.

BURT

Why are you reading comic books?

ELLIE

I'm aware of them. It's not like I actually read them on a consistent basis.

BURT

Bring this boy to me.

ELLIE

Who says that? Are you like the king or something? `Bring the Boy to me.'

BURT

Ellie. You know who I am. We live in the public realm, okay? Which means that everything we do must conform to certain standards. I need to see him.

ELLIE

Um… you are aware of what your other daughter does on weekends, right?

BURT

Bring him to me.

ELLIE

I'm just saying – you never take the trouble to meet her boyfriends because they only stick around for one night.

BURT

Listen. We're a family. I love both of you equally. But – there are standards for people like her and standards for people like you, and they are different.

ELLIE

What does that mean?

BURT

I think I was pretty clear.

ELLIE

No. You weren't.

BURT

Well then you'll just have to figure it out. While you're bringing him to me.

ELLIE

This is so Not Fair!

BURT

Just like our tax code. Which I why propose –

(ELLIE flounces off and returns momentarily with MILES.)

ELLIE

Here. This is the boy.

MILES

Hello sir.

(BURT regards him. For a while.)

ELLIE *(after a painful pause)*

Dad?

BURT

What's going on with your hair?

MILES

I like it this way.

BURT

Mmm hmm. You do. You like it that way.

MILES

Yeah.

BURT

Long. You like your hair long. Is it like a hippie thing?

MILES

No it's just – that's just the way I like it.

BURT

Right.

(He takes a deep breath.)

Where are you going to college?

MILES

I don't know yet.

BURT

You don't believe in planning for things?

MILES

Well I'm a junior so I'm still looking, but I'm hoping to go to a small liberal arts college and major in Philosophy.

BURT

Oh.

MILES

Maybe Oberlin or Reed –

BURT

I don't feel well.

MILES

Some place where I can explore the meaning of life, but really at the same time investigate the damage that America has done worldwide – I mean, if you think about the military-industrial complex and how we've overthrown leaders in Latin America – and how we turn a blind eye to Africa – when you think about the blood on America's hands – then you see that our ideals are practically paper thin and…

(ELLIE steps out. MILES continues to speak, but he can't be heard. BURT looks sick.)

ELLIE

He went on like that for about thirty minutes. It was like watching a slow motion car accident. Here, you can watch on my Dad's face.

(ELLIE approaches BURT and points to his face as he changes expressions.)

Can I have this boy killed?

(BURT thinks about it.)

Would anyone be able to trace it to me?

(BURT thinks about it.)

Is there a way to sterilize him?

(BURT thinks about it while looking at MILES' crotch.)

If I hate him, will that make Ellie like him more?

(BURT thinks about it.)

If I pretend to love him, will that drive him away?

(He thinks yes)

Maybe that's the way to go. Pretend to love him.

MILES

So yeah. That's why I'm a vegetarian.

BURT

Great. Terrific. Well – good. This is a good day.

(He walks off, slightly shaken.)

ELLIE *(back to the audience)*

Unfortunately for my Dad, I knew that he was pretending to like Miles and secretly hated him. He didn't know that I knew that he was pretending, so he continued to pretend, which was fine by me. I think. Anyway – this is the time in the romantic comedy where we see the montage showing the two main characters fall in love. First we need a song –

(Bryan Adams' "Everything I do, I do it for you" begins to play)

No that's for the end. Something upbeat.

(Another inappropriate song plays)

No.

(Cheesy 80's love song plays)

Thank you. So here we go: romantic comedy love montage. 90 percent of which takes place at a county fair.

(ELLIE and MILES act out a romantic comedy love montage.)

(They are side-by-side on a roller coaster.)

(They eat corn dogs.)

(MILES hands her a tiny stuffed animal he won at a ball toss.)

(ELLIE hands him a gigantic stuffed animal she won at the same ball toss.)

(They laugh about it.)

(They play softball for no apparent reason.)

(It rains on them.)

(ELLIE takes shelter under MILES as they run, laughing.)

(They snort cocaine in slow-motion, smiling.)

ELLIE

All right all right no that didn't happen. I was just seeing if you were paying attention. So anyway – five months passed. And our relationship was kinda like this:

(ELLIE sits on the couch. MILES sneaks in, looking in both directions. Then he leaps on top of ELLIE, and they begin to furiously make out (no clothes are removed) they somehow manage to topple over the back of the couch. Pillows are thrown. ILLYANA enters, with a look of withering contempt.)

ILLYANA

Oh God. Stop it.

(She picks up a water spray bottle and starts spraying them.)

It's like a hormone fog in here. Jesus.

ELLIE

Do you mind?

ILLYANA

Yes I mind. This is the living room. It's time for 90210 to come on. If you want to go have sex, go in the bathroom or something.

ELLIE

Ew.

ILLYANA

Well you don't have to hump out here in public.

MILES

We haven't actually had sex.

ILLYANA

Great. Thanks. I am so happy to learn that information. I'm going to go get my diary and put that down because that is *so* important to me. Dear Diary! Guess who hasn't had sex? My little sister and her troll boyfriend.

ELLIE

Yeah I'd hate to take up all that space in the list of people you've had sex with.

ILLYANA

Like you know anything about it.

ELLIE

I know you rented a porno.

ILLYANA

Shut up.

MILES

You rented a porno?

ILLYANA

Educational purposes, okay? Thank you.

ELLIE

It's gross.

MILES

Did you watch it?

ELLIE

No! God.

ILLYANA

Maybe you'd learn something.

ELLIE

Ew. And double ew. And oh my God. What is wrong with you?

ILLYANA

What! I was curious. I wanted to see one. No big deal. You're such a little puritan. Why do you think they make pornos?

ELLIE

Cause there are sick lonely people in the world. Like you.

ILLYANA

And also to give people ideas of what to do.

(MARY enters, with cookies.)

MARY

What to do about what?

ILLYANA *(not missing a beat)*

For a craft project.

MARY

Why are all the pillows messed up?

ILLYANA

We were having a pillow fight.

MARY

How cute! Can I play?

ELLIE

That's okay, Mom. It's over.

MARY

Aww. All right so I guess it's time to get out the box.

ELLIE

I'm sorry, what?

MARY

The craft box. For crafts.

ILLYANA

Oh. Well we weren't actually doing crafts –

ELLIE

We were in more of the preparation and planning stage –

MARY

Girls. If there's one thing I know: If you don't follow up preparation and planning with execution, then you'll never get anywhere. Right? Get. To. The. Action. Right Miles?

MILES

Yes.

MARY

Good!

ELLIE

Illyana feels the same way, Mom. She gets right to the action.

MARY

All right, here we go! Popsicle sticks, paints, sewing supplies – oh look at this – baby booties for your cousin Margie – I never sent them out because I was being passive-aggressive. Oh well!

ILLYANA

Margie had a baby?

MARY

Didn't you know that? Remember when she spent that year in Sweden as a foreign exchange student? Came home looking like she had a bowling ball under her dress.

ELLIE

Wow.

MARY

Yes. Yes indeed wow. I'm so glad I was blessed with you two. Who would never do anything wrong like that tramp. Did I say that? I didn't mean that. Margie is a very special girl who loves everybody a little too much, if you know what I mean. Not the brightest bunny in the hutch. But I love her, and we all love her, and we're all there to support her. That's what a family does. And you know what? When a family member messes up, it makes all the rest of the family feel a little bit better about themselves. Okay?

ELLIE

Mom are you feeling okay today?

MARY

Why wouldn't it be?

ELLIE

You seem a little acerbic.

MARY

Acerbic? Me? Why would I be acerbic? What possible reason could I have for feeling embittered about anything whatsoever? Why on Earth would I be upset? It's not like there's a sex scandal going on in this house, right? There couldn't possibly be a sex scandal in our house!

(She takes a deep breath.)

Under the carpet. It's going under the carpet. I have to leave now.

(She exits.)

(Silence for a moment.)

ILLYANA and ELLIE

She's talking about you.

(ELLIE steps out.)

ELLIE

But she wasn't talking about either of us.

(BURT enters, in the middle of a speech. MARY is right next to him, smiling plastically.)

BURT

The government that governs least, governs best. What we need is lower taxes, lower restrictions, more freedom –

(MARY cuts in.)

Skipping Forward

It's a dress.

MARY

That's half of a dress.

ILLYANA

It looks good.

MARY

Where did you even buy that?

ILLYANA

At the mall. Jesus.

MARY

You understand you are going to be on television.

ILLYANA

Why do you think I'm wearing this? I want to look good.

ELLIE

Hey here's a thought Ill – maybe you could just wear a teddy or something. Then you'd look really good.

MARY

You're awfully clever when you're sick. You need to go change.

ILLYANA

I'm not eight years old, Mom. I have boobs. I plan on using them.

MARY

To do what?

ILLYANA

To make guys do whatever I want. What do you think boobs are for?

MARY

I just – I – I – I

(she breaks down and begins sobbing.)

ILLYANA

You can't do that! You can't just cry because I'm wearing a dress. That's not fair!

(MARY keeps crying.)

Fine. Fine. You win. I'll go change into a nun's habit. That's what you want. God! I can't do anything around here!

(She exits.)

MARY *(through tears)*
And you're not even going to come.

ELLIE
Not gonna work on me.
(MARY is quiet.)
You all right?
(short pause)
You know, if it were me, I'd tell him to go to hell.

MARY
Would you?

ELLIE
Yep.

MARY
You'd throw out twenty-five years of marriage to the only person you'd ever loved because they did one bad thing? That's what you'd do?

ELLIE
Well I mean –

MARY
Listen honey – I'm not stupid. I know why you're not coming. But… there are times when you have to swallow a little bit of ugliness to keep on functioning – and sometimes it's better to forget certain things, okay? I'm choosing to forget. So I can move on.

ELLIE
That's called being a pushover.

MARY
That's called being an adult. All right?

ELLIE
I'll watch it on T.V.

MARY
Fine.
(she calls out)
Illyana! We're going to be late!

ILLYANA *(off-stage)*
How much cleavage can I show?

MARY

None!

ILLYANA *(off-stage)*

This is like the Soviet Union!

(MARY exits.)

ELLIE *(to the audience)*

Now, as much as I resented Dad's indiscretions, that wasn't the primary reason I wasn't attending the primary. Sorry. Just slipped out. No, the real reason was –

(MILES drops onto the couch next to her.)

Nobody was going to be home for a long, long time.

(The lights dim. Perhaps candles are lit. In the background we hear the television.)

ANNOUNCER

And with forty-five percent of the precincts in, challenger Burt Thompson leads incumbent Danny Guerin fifty-six percent to forty-one percent.

ANNOUNCER 2

Thompson is looking pretty good.

ANNOUNCER

He sure is.

(It fades out as MILES and ELLIE make out.)

MILES

Thompson is looking pretty good.

ELLIE

Shut up.

MILES

With forty-five percent of the precincts of my heart reporting –

ELLIE

Oh God you're a fucking dork.

MILES

That's why you love me.

ELLIE

Ha.

MILES

Well I love you.

ELLIE

Well all right then.

MILES

And?

ELLIE

And yay.
(short pause)
Oh! I love you too!

MILES

Now you say it!

ELLIE

No I didn't know what you wanted me to say.

MILES

Um… what do you think you're supposed to say?

ELLIE

I went blank, sorry.

MILES

You went blank?

ELLIE

I didn't realize what you just said and then – I'm sorry. I love you. There. See? We're cool?

MILES

Okay.

ELLIE

Oh my God we said it.

MILES

Well I've been thinking it for a while now.

ELLIE

You have?

MILES

Yeah, I mean like – every time I see you and even when I don't see you I think it.

ELLIE

Really? That's so adorable.

MILES

Do you think it?

ELLIE

Totally.

MILES

When did you start thinking it?

ELLIE

I don't know. When did you start thinking it?

MILES

Remember that time we were at the fair? And we had that montage?

ELLIE

Oh yeah.

(she talks to the audience.)

Sorry no he didn't say that. That was my lame attempt at humor.

(back to the scene)

MILES

And you won that gorilla thing for me? That weird gorilla thing?

ELLIE

Oh.

MILES

I was thinking – I love you.

ELLIE

Wow.

MILES

When did you start thinking it?

ELLIE

I don't know.

MILES

It wasn't at the fair?

ELLIE

No it was after that.

(short pause)

What?

MILES

Well I mean like I was thinking it and you weren't thinking it.

ELLIE

But I was feeling it.

MILES

You weren't thinking it though. We had this like unspoken inequality in the relationship – Like, was it a month later or two months later?

ELLIE

I don't know.

MILES

So approximately how long do you think you've been thinking that you loved me?

ELLIE

Like two months.

MILES

That's it?

ELLIE

Why are you being paranoid and strange about this? I love you. I love you currently.

MILES

But I've loved you for longer.

ELLIE

Are you always this neurotic?

MILES

Well I've never been in love before. It's a pretty neurotic feeling.

ELLIE

It is, isn't it?

MILES

I mean like it's this joyous amazing crippling insanity, you know? All of a sudden pop songs make sense and I find myself looking at women's magazines at the check-out stand. Why? Why am I taking the Cosmo quizzes? Why would I do this?

ELLIE

You took the Cosmo quizzes?

MILES

Yes and our relationship scored quite well! We are hot. Every night before I go to bed I just try to remember every minute with you – you know – like the highlights of the day – and it just feels great. I feel great all the time. Every second that I'm not actually engaged in something horrible I feel amazing. Because of you. Because of us. And you – you know what's even better about everything?

ELLIE

What?

MILES

It's like we're teammates. That's the best part. Like, before, when I liked a girl – inevitably, they hated me or were disgusted by me or whatever and in my mind I'd be like – I must break them down and they will love me – and believe it or not that doesn't work – but with you – it's like, you're trying to break me down. We're trying to break down each other. But there's nothing to break down! We're in it together!

ELLIE

Aww.

MILES

And listen to me, I'm spouting trite romantic nonsense, but it's all perfectly sincere. You make love sincere.

(She kisses him.)

ELLIE

Just think – if you would've got a better salary in that stupid thing, none of this would've happened.

MILES *(without forethought)*

Oh no. I would've picked you first.

ELLIE

I would've picked you first too.

(she kisses him again and again.)

You know what we should do?

MILES

What?

ELLIE

It.

MILES

It?

ELLIE

You know. It.

MILES

Oh. Oh! It!

ELLIE

Yes!

MILES

Oh my God that's a great idea!

ELLIE

I know!

MILES

That is the fucking best idea I've ever heard!

ELLIE

I know!

(She kisses him again.)

MILES

Should we like go somewhere –

ELLIE

No there's a blanket here –

MILES

Really?

ELLIE

Sure. Why not?

MILES

I'm cool. Whatever you want.

(They start trying to take off shirts simultaneously. This is not easily done.)

ELLIE

Oh wait wait wait.

MILES

What?

ELLIE

Do you have a condom?

MILES

Why would I have a condom?

ELLIE

I don't know, cause you're a guy.

MILES

I don't have a condom. Do you have a condom?

ELLIE

No.

MILES

Um… Shit. Where's the nearest gas station?

ELLIE

Like three miles.

MILES

What the hell?

ELLIE

Zoning laws.

MILES

Who the hell puts a gas station three miles away from your house?

ELLIE

I didn't put it there!

MILES

All right.

(He starts getting his shirt back on.)

ELLIE

What are you doing?

MILES

I'm gonna run there.

ELLIE

You're gonna run three miles, buy condoms, and then run three miles back?

MILES

Yes. That is what I am going to do.

ELLIE

No wait wait wait. My sister's a total slut. She's got to have condoms in her room.

MILES

I'm not using her condoms.

ELLIE

It's not like she's used them. She's probably just got some.

MILES

You don't know? You're not sure?

ELLIE

Let me go check.

(ELLIE gets up.)

No you go check I don't want to go in her room.

MILES

I'm not going in her room!

ELLIE

We'll both go.

MILES

You sure that's not weird?

ELLIE

It's a lot weird but we're still gonna do it.

MILES

All right. Wait let's make out some more first.

ELLIE

Okay.

(They make out for just a second.)

MILES

All right let's go.

(They dart into the room. We hear them from off-stage)

ELLIE *(off-stage)*

Why are you looking there for -

MILES *(off-stage)*

Maybe they're under the bed!

ELLIE *(off-stage)*

Why would they be under the bed –

MILES *(off-stage)*

Oh wait – what is this? Ah!

ELLIE *(off-stage)*

What did you find? Ah!

MILES *(horrified, off-stage)*

WHAT IS THIS?!

ELLIE *(off-stage)*

PUT IT BACK! Oh my God PUT IT BACK!

MILES *(off-stage)*

Wait what does - ?

(We hear the sound of a vibrator.)

ELLIE *(off-stage)*

AHHHH! STOP IT! PUT IT BACK!

MILES *(off-stage)*

AHHH!

(We hear something clunk to the floor, still vibrating.)

ELLIE *(off-stage)*

You can't just drop it! It's MOVING!

MILES *(off-stage)*

AHHHHHH!

(The vibrating noise stops.)

(short pause.)

ELLIE *(off-stage)*

Bingo.

(ELLIE and MILES return, spent.)

MILES

You ready?

ELLIE

Hold on.

(she tries to clear her head. Then, slowly -)
I have heard that noise at night - and I did not know what it was.

MILES

Oh. Ready yet?

ELLIE

Nope.

MILES

Now?

ELLIE

Still nope. I need like music or something.
(She heads over to the "stereo." Presently, "Everything I do, I do it for you," by Bryan Adams plays. It plays on repeat until noted.)

MILES

Bryan Adams?

ELLIE

What?

MILES

No I'm good with it.

ELLIE

Okay.
(She takes a deep breath.)
Time for sex.

MILES

Yes.
(They get under the blanket. Much kissing. It's very awkward. Under the blanket, Miles attempts to remove the bra.)

ELLIE

No like this.

MILES

How?

ELLIE

Pinch your fingers. Ow! Not like that.

MILES

You said pinch.

ELLIE

Pinch the two sides together.

MILES

What two sides?

ELLIE

There's two sides to it.

MILES

Why are there two sides?

ELLIE

There are. You pinch them together. Ow! Not like that!

MILES

Stop using the word pinch then.

ELLIE

Like – haven't you like practiced on a teddy bear or anything?

MILES

Why would I put a bra on a teddy bear?

ELLIE

Just here – like – dammit –

MILES

Screw it. Forget it.
(He goes for the pants instead. Much fumbling.)
Let's each do our own.

ELLIE

Okay.
(Pants are tossed out from under the blanket.)
All right.

MILES

Progress.

ELLIE

All right.

MILES

All right. Dang it.

ELLIE

What's wrong?

MILES

Nothing.
(furious fumbling under the blanket.)

ELLIE

What are you doing?

MILES

Dang it.

ELLIE

What's going on?

MILES

It's not working.

ELLIE

What's not working?

MILES *(still fumbling furiously)*

I'm not working.

ELLIE

Oh. Ohhhhh.

MILES

Yeah.

ELLIE

Well what do you do then?

MILES *(still at it)*

I've never had this happen before.

ELLIE

Maybe it's scared.

MILES

It's not scared! It's – goddamn it. Goddamn it. Come on. Come on you stupid –

ELLIE

Stop talking to it!

MILES

I'm not talking to it.

ELLIE

You just called it stupid!

MILES

Goddamn it – it's the fucking Bryan Adams.

ELLIE

No it's not.

MILES

No it's the fucking Bryan Adams that's what it is. This music is destroying me.

ELLIE

You just said you liked pop songs –

MILES

Not this one. This is the worst one.

ELLIE

Miles – no –
(he tries to get up)
Don't go anywhere.

MILES

If I have to kill that music.

ELLIE

Don't.
(MILES gives up.)
Maybe we should stop. Maybe we should just – no – let's just – we don't have to do this –

MILES

Arrrrrrhg.

ELLIE

What? Maybe there's too much pressure. That's the problem.

MILES

No.

ELLIE

Skipping Forward

Yes. That is how it works. I provide the boobs. Therefore, you pay. I didn't make the rules. I just exploit them.

MILES

So I got you something.

ELLIE *(completely charmed)*

You did?!

MILES

Because you have boobs.

ELLIE

You noticed!

MILES

So, anyway – um –

(he produces a gift-wrapped box from behind his back)

ELLIE

Wow! Fancy.

MILES

I know – so – like – I hope you like this.

ELLIE

You're all nervous.

MILES

Yeah, well –

ELLIE

Should I open it now or after dinner?

MILES

Are your parents home?

ELLIE

Ooh. I'll open it now. Yay!

(She unwraps it. Inside is an extremely tiny, lacy negligee with a thong back. Probably red. Something that might be bought at an "adult" store.)

(Pause.)

(Pause.)

(Pause.)

ELLIE

What the hell is this?

MILES

You like it?

ELLIE

What the – what – why – what is this?

MILES

It's lingerie.

ELLIE

I know that. I just – I just – what is the meaning of this?

MILES

I don't know that it has a meaning other than what it is.

ELLIE

This is like – you want me to look like a hooker, is that what you want?

MILES

This is not going how I planned.

ELLIE

You want me to look like a hooker?

MILES

I don't imagine you would wear it out.

ELLIE

When do you imagine I would wear it?

MILES

You know like, for us.

ELLIE

For us?

MILES

You know like – when we're doing stuff.

ELLIE

You can't even get off my bra! How do you imagine, how do you possibly imagine, you could handle something like this?

MILES

I just thought you would like it.

ELLIE

Oh – yeah – cause that's what I like? I'm thinking, wow, you know what would be great right now? If I looked like a total whore. That would be just great.

MILES

But who cares? It's just us. So like – you know – be my total whore.

ELLIE

That's great, Miles. You should put that on little candy hearts.

MILES

Oh come on – it's not that bad.

ELLIE

Look at this! Look at the back of this! Where is this supposed to go? Like up in crevices? Like wedged –

MILES

I just thought it might be fun to play dress-up!

ELLIE

How am I supposed to wash this? What if I put this in the laundry and my Dad finds it? What is he going to think?

MILES

He's gonna think it's Illyana's! It's just for us! It's just for fun. It's just for… maybe this would help with…

ELLIE

With what?

MILES

You know… the… issues.

(she gives him a withering look.)

You know, you kinda have boring underwear, so I thought – maybe that's why –

ELLIE

Oh! OH! My UNDERWEAR is the problem! That's what's wrong with this relationship! My UNDERWEAR isn't slutty enough! Well you're not gonna see it anymore!

MILES

Oh come on! I would wear whatever you wanted me to wear!

ELLIE

Wear this, then!

(She tosses it at him.)

No. Do it. Put it on. Be my whore! Go ahead!

MILES

Okay, that's just not gonna look good!

ELLIE

Well now you know how I feel!

MILES

Do you have any idea how hard this was for me to buy?

ELLIE

You didn't just get it out of a magazine?

MILES

No I went to the mall!

ELLIE

There's a Sluts-R-Us there?

MILES

No – there is a store – and it took me a while to find it – And I WENT INTO THAT STORE FOR YOU.

ELLIE

WOW! I'M SO FUCKING IMPRESSED!

MILES

You should be! There's this ancient woman, like fifty years old, and she just looks at me – they all turn – right? It's like one of those Western movies where a guy walks into the bar and the music stops and everybody turns. Well that's what happened. Except they're all there – and they're all looking at panties and bras and Jesus knows what else – and I just can't even look at anything! I start to sweat! I start feeling this pounding pressure in my brain and I'm thinking, do they think I'm a cross-dresser? Is that what they're thinking? And everything around me is pink and black and red – and what am I supposed to do? Am I allowed to touch these things? How am I supposed to behave? And finally – I'm walking through molten lava and the grandma behind the counter says, "Can I help you find something?" And I said…

(gasping)

…Yes! And one of the girls says, "For your girlfriend or your Mom?" And they all start laughing and the lingerie is screaming out, touch me touch me touch me and finally I just grabbed the

closest thing next to me – I didn't even look at it – and I said I want this! Please God this and let me go! And a gift box.

(he stops, out of breath, spent.)

ELLIE

You expect me to believe you bought this without looking at it?

MILES

Yes.

ELLIE

But why would you think we need something like this?

MILES

Because I love you.

ELLIE

That's idiotic.

MILES

Sorry. But you have to keep it cause I'm not taking it back. I can't go into that store again.

ELLIE

I'm not keeping it. And you know what, we shouldn't even be trying to have sex anyway.

MILES

How can you say that?

ELLIE

Clearly, God has struck you down because you're not supposed to be doing this. And also clearly, God has cursed me with boring underwear.

MILES

Well maybe you could borrow some of your sister's then.

ELLIE

Excuse me?

MILES

That was a joke.

ELLIE

No no no no – what?

MILES

I was joking.

ELLIE
You want me to borrow my sister's underwear?

MILES
I was joking. Funny joke.

ELLIE
Get out. We're breaking up. You know that? Get out.

MILES
I was kidding!

ELLIE
Get out.

MILES
I was kidding. I wasn't being serious.

ELLIE
Get out! I don't even want to look at you.

MILES
Oh come on!

ELLIE
Go!

MILES
I'll call you later, okay?

ELLIE
No.

MILES
I'll call you.
(He leaves. ELLIE fumes. Then comes forward to the audience.)

ELLIE
I may have overreacted to that. But you have to understand I was neurotic, and by any objective sense, the gift was… well it was very gross.
(ILLYANA enters, picks up lingerie.)

ILLYANA
This is cute!
(She takes it back to her room.)

ELLIE

But anyway. I stayed mad for a good week. And then I calmed down and I thought – is this really something to break up over? This is kind of ridiculous. So I actually bought a sexy pair of underwear that was still tasteful, thank you very much – and I decided to go over to his house and get back together.

(ELLIE moves to another part of the stage. Lights change.)

And I was about to ring the –

(ILLYANA and MILES appear in the window of the house, making out.)

(ELLIE just stands there, then turns to the audience.)

ELLIE

I told you this wasn't a love story.

(End of act one.)

Act Two

(Twenty years later.)

(The same living room. Mostly new furniture. The family's financial situation has clearly improved. ELLIE, 36 now, with a different hairstyle, enters)

ELLIE

So. Where was I? Oh yes I was relating my tale of misery and heartache.

(MARY and BURT enter with a banner. BURT steadies himself on a chair to tape up one side.)

MARY

Be careful.

BURT

I think I can handle being on a chair.

(he wobbles)

Spot me.

MARY

What?

BURT

Spot me.

MARY

I'm not going to catch you if you fall. I told you to use the ladder.

BURT

No you told me to hire assistants. I don't need an assistant.

MARY

Oh really?

BURT

Don't start.

(BURT moves the chair and attaches the second half of the banner. It reads: "WELCOME HOME ELLIE!" He unfolds a second lower portion which reads "SORRY ABOUT YOUR FAILED MARRIAGE.")

MARY

Did you have to put that on there?

BURT

What? I want her to know that we're not going to pussyfoot around this thing.

MARY

Wouldn't it be painful to be reminded of it?

BURT

I'm sure it's painful to just look in the mirror for her. Look – a marriage is a community endeavor. Part of that community response is to stigmatize divorcees. We would not being doing our job as citizens if we didn't look down on her a little bit right now. Otherwise the gays win.

MARY

Oh the gays don't care.

BURT

They care. The gays care. They always care. That's what makes them gays.

ELLIE *(to the audience)*

Yep. Not that much has changed in twenty years.

MARY

There you are!

ELLIE

Hi!

BURT

Sneaking in on us.

ELLIE

It's so good to see you!

(Hugs around. ELLIE spots the banner.)

That's a great banner.

BURT

We're about truth here.

ELLIE

Okay thanks.

MARY

Do not worry. I have a friend whose son has an actual job this time – and he is beautiful – I mean, really built, gorgeous, you just want to bite him – muscles like tractors, the man looks like he could lift a tractor -

ELLIE

Mom. Please. I'm not really looking right now.

MARY

You don't need to give up. You still have a few good years left.

ELLIE

Mom –

MARY

Look at you – your skin is still great – you've got hair that's the right color – you are not garbage, darling.

ELLIE

I didn't say I was garbage.

MARY

Many fallen women are able to pick themselves up –

ELLIE

I'm not fallen!

MARY

If you get pregnant next year, your chances of having a healthy baby are still good –

ELLIE

Mom. Please. Stop. Dad make her stop.

BURT

I've never been able to do that honey.

MARY

Why am I supposed to stop? You may want to stop time, but that's not really possible.

ELLIE

Can I just – can I just wallow for a second? Okay? I'm not fallen, I'm not depressed, I'm fine –

BURT *(to MARY)*

See? What did I tell you?

ELLIE

I'm okay. This was a long time coming.

BURT

Again. What did I say to you?

MARY

Fine, Burt, yes, you predicted this would end in a terrible childless divorce their wedding night. You were right all along.

BURT

Thank you.

ELLIE

You predicted it was going to end on my wedding night?

BURT

Oh yes. Completely obvious to anyone with half a brain.

ELLIE

Why didn't you say something?

BURT

I did. I told your mother. That's why we didn't go for the more expensive photo package.

ELLIE

I thought you just didn't like him.

BURT

Oh absolutely. Hated Gary. But this country is predicated on the freedom to fail, darling. If this were Communist France, sure, I could have had him sent to a Gulag to learn how to bake bread and mispronounce words – but here, where the descendant of coal miners can achieve greatness through hard work and determination, you need to be able to marry a scumbag for yourself. God Bless America. I'm not a hero. You know who the real heroes are? Working Americans – people who might see that the winds are blowing against them, but they tighten their scarves and face full brunt into the maelstrom – all they need is government to get out of their way and they will rise like dough rising in the oven.

MARY

I don't like the dough rising thing.

BURT

Yeah, I know I gotta fix that. Rise like – like a star – like an American idol –

ELLIE

I can't believe you're actually practicing campaign speeches while talking to me about my divorce –

BURT

Gotta stay sharp.

(His phone rings. The ring tone is something like "God Bless America.")

There's my baby girl. Where are you?

MARY

Who is that?

BURT

Illyana. Our daughter.

ELLIE

Oh God what is she doing -

(ILLYANA enters with suitcase, and on the phone. She looks like a suburban super-mom.)

ILLYANA

Surprise!

BURT

You called me from the driveway!

ILLYANA

Hilarious, right?

(She swoops in for hugs.)

Daddy!

BURT

There's my girl. There's my girl. Where are my munchkins? Where are my munchkins?

(He begins hunting for Grandchildren – going to the door.)

ILLYANA

Greensboro, North Carolina.

BURT

What?

ILLYANA

Last second the in-laws guilted Ronnie into going home for Thanksgiving. I swear to God, Dad, his Mom was faking pneumonia on the phone just to get him to go.

ELLIE

How do you fake pneumonia?

ILLYANA

You whine and you cough and you say things like, `the doctors think I have pneumonia.' Ronnie falls for it every time. She did the same thing two years ago with the quote unquote broken hip.

MARY

I thought she did break her hip.

ILLYANA

On purpose. Anyway – I refuse to be drawn into the web. So I said – I am going home to be with the fun side of the family – who's coming with me? Nobody.

BURT

What?

ILLYANA

I know. Later I found out Ronnie's Dad sent them checks for a hundred dollars in the mail and promised them another hundred if they showed up for Thanksgiving.

BURT

Is he a Democrat? That sounds like a Democrat tactic.

ELLIE

Why is that a Democrat tactic? That's just an asshole tactic. Not everything has to have a political party, Dad.

ILLYANA

Um… language.

ELLIE

The kids aren't here, Ill.

ILLYANA

We're gonna Skype later and I want to make sure their favorite aunt doesn't drop the f-bomb like she did at Christmas. Four times.

MARY

Four times, Ellie!

ELLIE

Gary was there.

ILLYANA

Of course Desdemona picked up on it and she was running around – f this, f that, f you Gary – we had to do some major praying to get that fixed.

MARY

Well I'm sure prayer worked.

ILLYANA

It did. Praise Him. But… I do have joy to share –
(She takes out an I-pad.)
Pictures!

MARY *(perhaps too excited)*

Yes!

ILLYANA

These are from the Pumpkin Patch.

MARY *(nearly orgasmic)*

Oh. Oh are they darling.

ILLYANA

Look at how high Carter gets in the swing –

MARY

Wow! Oh Burt you have to look at this.

BURT *(looking at it)*

Yep.

MARY

Ellie come see what you're missing.

ELLIE

No I don't want to crowd you –

MARY

No! Nonsense. There is room for you here.

ILLYANA

There's always room for Ellie.

(ELLIE steps out to address the audience while ILLYANA continues to delight MARY and BURT with adorable digital photos of their only grandchildren.)

ELLIE

Now you might think that with twenty years under the bridge, the wound would not be raw. It would be scabbed over in some sense. Or I've come to accept the fact that my sister is not the spawn of Satan. That she's changed. And I grant her. She has changed completely. She has gone from a larval demonic stage, through some kind of demonic chrysalis, and she has emerged now, full-adult devil.

MARY

Isn't that the sweetest thing you have ever seen?

BURT

My God these kids.

ILLYANA

I know. We are blessed.

ELLIE

Desdemona, Carter, and London.

ILLYANA

And guess what?

(ILLYANA raises up a fourth finger.)

MARY

No!

BURT

I thought you were done!

(MARY squeals in delight.)

ILLYANA

Accidents happen!

(MARY is apoplectic with joy. She hugs and squeezes ILLYANA.)

So number four – or as we like to call him or her – Quattro –

BURT

Is he Spanish? Why would you call him Quattro?

ILLYANA

Of course the baby's not Spanish –

BURT

Why would you call him that then?

ILLYANA

It's just a funny thing. Like you know Ocho Cinco or something.

BURT

The man's name is Chad Johnson. You can't just choose to be Mexican. It's not like being gay.

ILLYANA

Dad. It was just a joke between Ronnie and me.

BURT

Well I think you should just call him Four. An American number.

ILLYANA

Anyway, whatever his or her name is, is due on May 16th.

MARY

Oh we are so blessed with grandchildren.

Skipping Forward

And we just spoon all night long. You need a big spoon Ellie. Just a big sssspoon.
(short pause.)

MARY

Can I say what I did? Well – I was at the Aldi and you know who I ran into? That boy. That one from high school. You remember that one from high school?

ILLYANA

I didn't have a boyfriend in high school.

MARY

No Ellie's boyfriend. What was his name?

ELLIE

Miles?

MARY

Yes Miles.

BURT

You dated that hippie kid?

ELLIE

Like all junior year, Dad.

BURT

No. The longhair?

ELLIE

Yes. I dated him all junior year.

BURT

I don't remember that at all. What was I doing?

MARY

Sabrina.
(MARY snaps back into friendly mode.)
Anyway – he was in town visiting his parents – and he didn't have any plans for Thanksgiving because they're like Indians or something and don't believe in Thanksgiving.

BURT

Wait a minute –

ELLIE

Dad shut up! You invited him for Thanksgiving?

MARY

Yes!

BURT

Why wouldn't Indians believe in Thanksgiving?

ELLIE *(quickly to BURT)*

Because the holiday celebrates the destruction of their culture and the raping of their land –
(back to MARY)
What did he say?

MARY

He said he'd come over after dinner.

ELLIE

And he's not an Indian. He's just weird.

ILLYANA

Wait, who is this guy again?

MARY

Ellie's boyfriend from high school?

ELLIE

Miles.

ILLYANA

Doesn't ring a bell.

ELLIE

Miles. You remember Miles.

ILLYANA

Was he the - ?

ELLIE

I had one boyfriend in high school, Ill. One boyfriend.

ILLYANA

Well I'm sure when I see him again I'll know him.
(Lights change.)

(ELLIE addresses the audience as she tries to take down the "Sorry about your failed Marriage" part of the banner.)

ELLIE *(to the audience)*

You know there's a moment in your day when you think, `did I shave my legs today?' And part of you says fuck it, I don't want to shave my legs, who cares, but another part of you says, what if you happen to meet the love of your life today? I had been so good. Okay, maybe I had friended him on facebook and maybe I followed him on Twitter and maybe I had googled him and tried to find pictures of his wife or his kids or maybe photoshopped our photos together – and maybe I knew that he wasn't married and still looked good – but it wasn't like I was obsessed. Much. But mostly the only things he ever posted were Korean pop videos, which I found strange, but I think he meant them to be ironic. My point is that I hadn't seen him in person in eighteen years. Also, I needed to shave my legs.

(a loud ticking noise begins.)

ELLIE

Dinner, as always, was a special kind of Hell –

BURT

Why do we blame the job creators? Think about this. These are the people –

ELLIE *(to the audience)*

It kept going.

BURT

They don't care about black people. They say they care about black people, but you know what black people care about? Freedom.

ELLIE *(to the audience)*

And it kept going.

BURT

You all right Ellie Belly?

ELLIE

I'm fine.

BURT

You look uncomfortable.

(MARY bursts in with several boxed board games.)

MARY

Game time!

ELLIE

Noo. No.

ILLYANA

Oh come on, Ellie! It's the Holidays. You'd feel less lonely if you participated.

ELLIE

No trivial pursuit – okay – seriously – we only have set –

MARY

I'm good at Trivial Pursuit!

ELLIE

Because we've had the same version for twenty-five years and everybody knows all the answers. And the questions aren't even right anymore!

MARY

Well I do have Balderdash – although it gets a little saucy.

ILLYANA

Oh I don't know.

ELLIE

Really? Balderdash is too saucy for you? Too avant-garde or what?

ILLYANA

Is that the game where you come up with fake definitions?

BURT

I'm remembering it now. Yes. Oh we've had some good times with Balderdash. Of course, I like to be honest. Some people out there are trying to pull the wool over America's eyes – a gigantic game of Balderdash – well, I'm not going to stand for it. If I have to grab my bullhorn –

ELLIE

Dad. Please. Just stop for once.

BURT

That's what they want.

ELLIE

No. That's what I want.

BURT

You and they are closely related.

MARY

Balderdash it is!

(The ticking clock grows louder. ELLIE speaks to the audience.)

ELLIE

I just kept staring at the door.

BURT

The word is Blosnep.

ELLIE

Six o' clock.

MARY

The word is Chivigger.

ELLIE

Six thirty.

ILLYANA

The word is Assnivel. And the possible definitions are: Number 1. A type of cravat worn by eighteenth century dandies. Number 2. A person with buttocks which resemble their navel. Number 3. Poor quality health care because liberals insist on spreading insurance to shiftless layabouts. And Number 4. A cheating, conniving whore. Again. For the third time in a row someone has written cheating, conniving whore. Great. Okay –

ELLIE

Could you pronounce the word again?

ILLYANA

Assnivel.

(The doorbell rings. ELLIE jumps up. Then she sits down.)

ELLIE

Can you get that, Mom?

MARY

Oh. Okay.

(MARY gets the door. Behind it, of course, is MILES. He no longer has long hair, (or is perhaps bald) but otherwise time has been kind to him. MILES carries a wrapped present.)

Miles!

MILES

Hey there.

(ELLIE stands up.)

ILLYANA

Ohhh. That Miles.

(ad lib greetings.)

MILES

I don't know if I should hug or what.

MARY

Oh just do it.

(MILES hugs MARY.)

(ILLYANA hugs MILES.)

(BURT shakes his hand.)

(ELLIE manages to hug him.)

ELLIE

What's in the box?

MILES

Oh. I brought a present for everyone.

ELLIE

For everyone?

BURT

As patriarch I accept.

(He starts to unwrap it.)

MILES

Maybe um…

(BURT opens the box.)

BURT

Chocolates! Are you trying to make us fat?

ILLYANA

Over here. Those belong to the pregnant lady.

ELLIE

I thought it was going to be something else.

MARY

Come on in! Come on in! We were just playing a game of Balderdash and someone keeps writing whore for all the answers.

MILES

Sounds like great fun. It's good to see you, Ellie.

ELLIE

Yeah. Thanks. How are you doing?

MILES

I'm doing great. How are you doing?

ELLIE

Fine.

MARY

Oh my God no. She is not fine. She is far away from fine. Let me just fill you in –

ELLIE

Mom it's okay.

MARY

No we are going to wash the decks here – you have to let pain erupt out of you – Ellie went to college, fell in love with a series of losers –

ELLIE

I didn't fall in love with them.

MARY

Every month she would have some new disaster. Like they were running off to Africa to photograph hippopotami or something – and then she met Gary, the chiropractor – and they got married –

MILES

Oh.

MARY

Don't worry, no children, apparently that wasn't important to them – but Gary lost his job and became a free-lance journalist which was just a rotten idea, and he found himself going to a lot of stripper joints – apparently most of the stories he was covering were about stripper joints – and they also required him to tip liberally and do things like get in showers with women who had a lot of tattoos – but this one here didn't think, hey, my husband needs to be kicked to the curb, no, she stuck with him like a face-sucking leech until he came home with Gonorrhea one night from a special lady named Destiny, who wasn't actually a lady if you know what I mean. No manners at all. So, finally, after three counseling sessions and twenty-five hundred dollars paid to a guy named Dr. Larry, they decided it would be best if they got a divorce. And so, here she is, her best years wasted on a loser, raw, emotionally naked, and writing down the word whore on her Balderdash cards and thinking we don't know who wrote that. There.

ELLIE

I didn't write the cheating, conniving whore comments.

MARY

Oh right. I wrote those. I'm working through my own issues. But I feel better now. It's out of the system. The truth is out. Well, don't we all feel better that the truth is out?

MILES

I'm uh… I'm sorry.

MARY

She has terrible taste in men.

ELLIE

Mom. Please.

MARY

Honey. It's amazing gossip and all of us here have already heard it.

ELLIE

I'm sure Miles was able to glean all of that from my history of liking cat videos. It's a desperate sign of lonely self-destructive behavior. Not that I'm lonely and self-destructive. I am awesome.

MARY

Oh the lies.

ELLIE

Would you stop?!

BURT

So Miles. I see you've cut your hair. Where are you living these days?

MILES

San Francisco.

BURT

You got a job?

MILES

I'm actually a video game designer.

BURT

Really. You design video games for a living?

MILES

Yeah, it's actually really challenging.

BURT

When people came to America they worked the land. That was a challenge. That was a challenge, my friend.

ILLYANA
Ronnie and I are very conscious about limiting our kids' exposure to culture. There's just so much out there that is so inappropriate.

ELLIE
Yeah I know it's amazing how inappropriate some things are.

ILLYANA
I know!

ELLIE
I know, right?

ILLYANA
Right.

ELLIE
And some people don't even realize they're being inappropriate.

ILLYANA *(after a beat)*
Yeah.

ELLIE
I mean some people could be just like total whores and not realize it.

ILLYANA
You're so right.
(shaking it off)
So is there a Mrs. Miles?

MILES
Not right now, but –

MARY
Illyana don't bring that up. It hurts your sister.

ELLIE
It doesn't hurt me. I know this. We're friends on Facebook. I know what his relationship status is.

MARY
I keep telling her she's attractive but she doesn't believe me.

ELLIE
What?! That's not even what we're talking about!

MARY

It's on her mind a lot.

ILLYANA

Can I just tell you? When you're pregnant, there are actual hormones that make your skin and hair more beautiful. Not only are you giving the gift of joy to the world, but you're giving it to yourself too. It's the best spa in creation. All part of God's plan.

ELLIE

You know it's funny because I've never heard any other pregnant woman actually say that before.

ILLYANA

It's true. That's why most men find pregnant women irresistible.

ELLIE

You sure they don't just say that not to anger you – you know with your amazing pregnancy strength they're afraid you'll throw them through a brick wall or something?

ILLYANA

You are so adorable.

MILES

Well, anyway – uh… it's great to see you guys again – I really missed this kind of dynamic.

ELLIE

Yes. We missed you too. I mean – I –

ILLYANA

These chocolates are great.

(ILLYANA eats one in a seductive manner while looking at MILES. ELLIE watches.)

ELLIE

Can you excuse me for one second?

(She yanks ILLYANA aside.)

Are you kidding me?

MARY

Do you want to see some pictures of Illyana's children?

MILES

I uh -

ELLIE

Did you just eat that chocolate in a slutty manner?

ILLYANA

What are you talking about?

ELLIE

You did that thing with the tongue! I saw you! I saw your tongue! You don't need to show your tongue when you eat! You're not a puppy!

ILLYANA

I was just eating a chocolate!

BURT

Girls? You all right?

ELLIE

We're fine. We're great.

ILLYANA

It's so nice to be able to catch up. We don't get to spend enough time together.

ELLIE

I feel like I see you enough.

ILLYANA

You know what? For Easter this year, you should come stay with us.

ELLIE

I don't know I have so many Easter plans –

ILLYANA

Do it. Do it. We have a guest room. We have a lot of extra space in our home and you're so cramped all the time in that tiny little apartment. It would do you so much good to see how we interact with each other. Like as role models, you know?

ELLIE

I'll probably just spend Easter under a bridge like I normally do.

MARY

You're so funny! You are so funny! She's so funny isn't she Miles?

MILES

She's really funny. It's true. I'm actually funnier, but um –

BURT

All right all right sorry to break this up but it's seven o' clock and you know what that means.

Skipping Forward

ELLIE *(to the audience)*

Oh it was going to be fun.

(Lights change.)

(BURT, ILLYANA, MARY, and MILES in their winter coats approach a "door." ILLYANA is still talking to her Ipad.)

BURT

Hi! I'm State Senator Burt Thompson. And this is my family. We'd like to share a little Christmas cheer with you.

(They launch into "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen." Burt sings in a very rich baritone. ILLYANA holds up the Ipad, and we hear the kids singing off-key.)

ELLIE *(to the audience)*

I'll just say it: Christmas caroling is weird. It's just weird. The people stand there –

(The family approaches a second home.)

BURT

Hi! I'm State Senator Burt Thompson –

(They launch into "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen" again.)

ELLIE *(to the audience)*

And they're like smiling at you, but you know they're thinking like, "how do I escape? How do I get these crazy people off my porch?" And we're thinking, "How do we leave? How do we get off this fucking porch?"

(The family moves to another home.)

ILLYANA *(into the Ipad)*

All right babies. I love you! You did so good! You did so good! Bye!

(She shuts down the Ipad.)

ELLIE

How `bout we do something more upbeat?

BURT

God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen is our signature song.

ELLIE

I didn't realize we had a signature song.

BURT

People expect it of us. They wait for it all year.

ELLIE

All right.

MARY

Oh Ellie. Isn't this great? A family together? Think about what you've been missing.

BURT

I think people want to know what to expect with Burt Thompson.

ELLIE

All right we keep singing the song. It just sounds like we're at a funeral.

MILES

Maybe we could jazz it up or something?

BURT

You'd like that, wouldn't you, Miles?

ELLIE *(to the audience)*

We kept going. And going. And -

(Behind her – ILLYANA is standing very close to MILES now. ELLIE turns to look at them. They separate.)

And I kept getting this weird sensation that –

(She turns to look again, and ILLYANA is standing very close to MILES again. They separate.)

What did I care, right? If she wanted to do that, fine? It's not like we were still dating. It's not like I'd been waiting twenty years for him to -

(ILLYANA gets close to MILES again.)

Who would be crazy and stupid and lonely enough to spend twenty years thinking about the first boy she fell in love with? I mean, that would be a pretty pathetic person, wouldn't it? That would be a person who had almost nothing going right in her life and had weaved an entire insane fantasy universe in which her old boyfriend returned and he just *happened* to be single and not have kids – because that's really likely, right? That's really likely that there's just an amazing 36-year old there with an actual job who hasn't been snatched up – that's an entirely likely scenario, and -

(She can't stand it anymore. She grabs the other side of MILES and pulls him violently away from ILLYANA.)

MILES

Whoah!

ELLIE

Sorry! Slipped on the ice a little bit!

ILLYANA

It's getting so cold out here!

BURT

Only got nine houses left.

ELLIE

Nine houses? That's like an hour!

BURT

You have to put in the time, darling. That's what being in government is all about. Tell you what – just for you, we'll do O come all ye Faithfull.

ILLYANA

I'm so cold.

(MILES starts rubbing her shoulder to warm her up.)

Oh that feels good!

ELLIE

Oh Ill Ill – let me do that!

ILLYANA

No that's okay –

ELLIE

No I have really strong spinster muscles –

(ELLIE starts forcefully rubbing ILLYANA's shoulders.)

ILLYANA

No I'm fine – I'm fine.

ELLIE

I'm fine. Cause I can keep rubbing you. I can rub you as long as you need it, even though you already have three kids.

ILLYANA

I'm fine.

BURT

Hi! I'm State Senator Burt Thompson. And this is my family.

(ELLIE purposefully squeezes between ILLYANA and MILES.)

ALL *(singing)*

O come all ye faithful joyful and triumphant –

(ILLYANA scoots around behind MILES and gets close to him on the other side.)

O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem –

(ELLIE pulls MILES away and tries to get between them again)

Come and Behold Him Born the King of Angels –
O come let us adore him –

(ILLYANA goes to the other side but ELLIE is too quick and intercepts her – ILLYANA goes back the other way and ELLIE hip-checks her, knocking her down. Singing attempts to continue.)

O come let us adore him O come let us adore him

ILLYANA *(underneath, during the singing)*

What is your problem?

ELLIE *(hissing)*

What is *your* problem?

BURT

OH COME LET US ADORE HI-IM
CHRIST THE KING!

(MARY sees the impending fight and tries to get between them.)

MARY and BURT and MILES

SING! Choirs of Angels!
Sing in Exultation!

ELLIE *(hissing, underneath)*

Stop touching him!

ILLYANA

I'm cold!

ELLIE

Suffer!

MARY, BURT, MILES

Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!

ILLYANA

I'm not doing anything!

ELLIE

You're totally slutting on him again!

MARY, BURT, MILES

Glory to God
Glory In the highest

ILLYANA *(starting to get louder)*

You're insane, you know that? I'm married and have three kids!

ELLIE

Then what the hell are you doing?

ILLYANA

I'm sorry, do you own him or something?

ELLIE

He's my ex-boyfriend!

MILES, BURT, MARY

Oh, come, let us adore him,
Oh, come, let us adore him,

ELLIE

Are you gonna sleep with him again? Is that what you're planning on doing!

(MILES and BURT stop.)

MARY

OH COME LET US ADORE HIM
CHRIST THE LORD.

ILLYANA

You're delusional and paranoid! I never slept with him!

ELLIE

OH REALLY?! YOU SLEPT WITH EVERYTHING THAT MOVED! DO YOU EVEN KNOW WHO THE FATHER IS?

ILLYANA

Oh that's it! I'm kicking your ass!

(ILLYANA charges ELLIE.)

BURT

And remember: Vote Burt Thompson. And I'd appreciate it if you stopped videotaping now.

ELLIE

No fair! I'm not going to hit a pregnant woman!

ILLYANA

Oh but you have no problem impugning my character!

ELLIE

You don't even know what impugning means!

(ELLIE tries to scamper away, but ILLYANA is surprisingly quick and grabs her. ELLIE tries to punch ILLYANA in places that aren't near her stomach, like her feet.)

BURT

ALL RIGHT STOP! TIME OUT GIRLS!
(BURT separates them.)

MILES
Um… so I'm gonna go. Nice seeing you again. And um… just to clear the air, I didn't sleep with her. So… All right… bye.
(MILES leaves.)

BURT
Now. Both of you. Stop this. Ellie – you two are going to sit here until you resolve this –

ELLIE
Oh yeah that's gonna happen –

BURT
Shut up. Until you resolve it. Mary and I are going to go continue to sing our songs. If you feel like being adults, you can join us, if you want to be teenagers, you can stand out here and fight.

ELLIE
It's not a fair –

BURT
Resolve it. Mary. Come along.

MARY
I'm pretty disappointed. If you make up, we can sing Rudolph.

BURT
Come on Mary.
(MARY and BURT exit.)

MARY
Do you think they'll kill each other?

BURT
Probably not.
(Pause. ELLIE and ILLYANA sit down.)

ELLIE
If you weren't pregnant, I would've totally kicked your ass.

ILLYANA
Oh please. Do you know how much time I spend at the gym to look like this? You're lucky Dad stopped it. I would've Zumbaed and Tai Boed all over you.

ELLIE

You screwing your trainer too?

ILLYANA

Okay – first of all – the way I remember it, you were equally horrible to me growing up, so I don't know where this deep-seated rage comes from.

ELLIE

Equally horrible? *Equally* horrible? I didn't steal any of your boyfriends.

ILLYANA

I didn't steal any of your boyfriends, you idiot.

ELLIE

You admitted it. I went over there. I saw you.

ILLYANA

You are imagining things.

ELLIE

I saw you there.

ILLYANA

Where?

ELLIE

At Miles' house.

ILLYANA

I have no idea where he lived. Why would I have done that?

ELLIE

Because you hated seeing me happy.

ILLYANA

Really? *I* hated seeing *you* happy?

ELLIE

Yes!

ILLYANA

You're the one who hates seeing *me* happy.

ELLIE

I admit that. I hate that you are happy.

ILLYANA

Why? Because of something from twenty years ago?

ELLIE

Yes!

ILLYANA

Who cares? Who cares? Seriously. It's ancient history. I am being completely honest with you: I don't remember that. I couldn't have told you what that guy looked like. I never slept with him. I never even kissed him. I have no idea why you think I did.

ELLIE

You slept with tons of guys.

ILLYANA

Oh god I had sex with like four guys in high school. That doesn't make me the Devil.

ELLIE

You did a lot more than four.

ILLYANA

No I really didn't. Okay? Do you remember their names? I do. There was Chuck, Kevin, um… Kevin's brother, and…

ELLIE

Miles.

ILLYANA

No. Dave what's his face. With the mini-van. That's it. I swear to God. And I have been nothing but nice to you for years.

ELLIE

Really?

ILLYANA

Yes! Why can't you grow up? I've grown up. You're acting like a teenager. I know you despise the fact that I'm happy and have a family, and yes, okay, I was flirting a little bit tonight, so what? You put two drinks in Mom and she'd be behaving the same way. You are just this pit of envy and miserableness – it's not my fault you broke up with Miles – I have no idea why you broke up – and it's not my fault you picked a terrible guy to get married to – I didn't do that either. You've invented this insane story that I stole your boyfriend to justify stupid choices on your part.

ELLIE

I *invented* it?

ILLYANA

Yes. Did you listen to him? Did you listen to what he just said when he left? He agreed with me. Is he lying too?

ELLIE

Yes, to make himself look better.

ILLYANA

Why? Who cares? Honestly – if I really did sleep with him, I'd tell you. It doesn't matter now, does it? Isn't it possible that you don't really remember what happened? I don't remember what happened in high school –

ELLIE

Cause you were high half the time.

ILLYANA

Maybe a little – but can you really tell me with absolute certainty that you remember what happened that night? Isn't it just a little bit hazy? Isn't it possible Miles and me are right and you're wrong? Is there a chance I'm telling the truth?

(Pause.)

ELLIE

I saw you.

ILLYANA

You think you saw me. Maybe you didn't. All right I'm done with this. You can be okay with me or not. I'm gonna go sing some more carols. I'm not missing Rudolph.

(She leaves.)

End of Excerpt.
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