

Bernie and Mikey's Trip to the Moon

A play

by
Scott Aiello

Scott Aiello
88 Clifton Place, #205
Jersey City, NJ 07304
773-316-2140

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Bernadette Vincolo (called "Bernie") Italian-American female, early 20's
Gladys Vincolo: Italian-American female, mid-late 40's, heavy Chicago accent
Michael Vincolo Jr.: (called "Mikey"): Italian-American male, early 20's, very slight Chicago accent
Michael Vincolo Sr.: Italian-American male, mid-late 40's, heavy Chicago accent
Laura: Open ethnicity, female, early 20's
Charles Bodanski: (called "Ski"): Polish-American male, early-mid 70's, heavy Chicago accent
Jeff Goldblum: Open ethnicity, male, early 20's

Note: a / in the script indicates that the next character should begin speaking. Also, in all professional productions, the roles of Bernie and Jeff MUST be cast with performers with disabilities.

ITALIAN AMERICAN VERNACULAR GUIDE

Madonn (mah-DAWN) : Italian-American explicative; short for Madonna, in reference to the Blessed Mother.
Madonn-a-mi (mah-DAWN-ah-mee): Italian-American explicative; same as above, but possessive form- MY blessed mother.
Nonna (NAH-nah): Italian for grandmother. Normally, NO-nah. In Chicago accent, pronounced NAH-nah.
Mother Jenner: Italian-American explicative; meaning and source lost to history.
Putanz: (poo-TANZ) : Italian-American slang for whores.
Pishod (peh-SHOD): Italian-American "polite" way of saying vagina.
Salud (sah-LOOD): Italian-American slang for 'cheers.'
Stunod (stoo-NOD): Italian -American slang for 'stupid'
Chiacchierone (ka-kya-RONE) : Italian-American slang for a 'loudmouth'

The girl runs home along the beach,
a pocketful full of jewels to show her mother.
But
There's a hole.
And
Oh, how lucky were we,
Who lived in the sand?

- First year Ancestor Project, Juilliard, 2009

For Dessiere.

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

A modest home in the Chicago suburbs. Late-1990's.

In the darkness, we hear murmured, off-tune singing.

As the lights slowly come up, we find *BERNIE sitting in her sand box.

**Though Bernie is intellectually disabled, she understands everything that is being said to, and about her. The damage is in the processing. Something gets lost en route from understanding to expression. As a result, she often expresses herself through simple language and a torrent of emotions; she laughs, cries, or becomes angry on the turn of a dime. When she says "I dunno," in response to something, it may simply be easier than attempting the mental gymnastics required to provide an accurate answer. Further, her brain-damage has caused short-term memory problems and a slight speech impediment. Her "R's" sound slightly like "W's" and her "T's" like "D's," unless she struggles very hard to get them right. Every so often, she will stutter a word, as indicated in the script.*

At rise, she is slowly, methodically pouring sand from a small red bucket into a blue one, then back again. She does repetitive actions like this often, as they are calming to her. She sings to herself as she does this. Loudly. *Tone deaf* does not even begin to describe it.

BERNIE

Well blessa my soul, what's a wong with me?... Itchin' like a man ona fuzz and twee... Hada hada ha I'm uh wild bug... I'm in LOVE! UGH! I'm all shook up!... WhoaaaHO! Huh! Yeaah, yeah!

(Beat)

Hunda huh's shaky and my knees are weak... Canna seema stand huna whole two feet... Pwoud to say she's-a-my butterCUP! I'm in LOVE! Huh! I'm all shook up!

Somewhere in the singing, Bernie's mother, *GLADYS enters.

** Gladys is strong, relentless, bitter, loyal to a fault, and loves like a savage. She sees*

the world in black & white / right & wrong. As she likes to say, she forgives- but she doesn't ever forget. Never without a cigarette in her hand or close by. In Act One, she should be still as little as possible. There is always something to clean, something to fix.

She goes to the stove and stirs the two giant pots on the burners- one of gravy (tomato sauce), the other with boiling water for pasta. She then leans out the kitchen window and calls to her daughter.

GLADYS

Bernie! Enough! You've been out there for hours! Come inside!

BERNIE

(ludicrously loud)

I'M SINGIN' ELVIS, MOM!!!

GLADYS

I know, Bernie. The whole neighborhood knows. *The Pope in Rome knows!* Give it a rest!

BERNIE

BUT I DON'T WANT TO!!!

GLADYS

Bernie- I don't have the energy for this today. Now, please, come inside. I made gravy.

This gets Bernie's attention.

Gladys ducks back inside.

BERNIE

Fiiiiine.

Bernie begins the long process of getting up. This involves the shifting of her rear end back & forth, and using the momentum to grunt and groan to a standing position.

She brushes sand off her legs, missing about 99% of it.

Gladys ducks back out.

NOW, Bernie.

GLADYS

Gladys ducks back in.

GOD, MOM, I'M COMIN!

BERNIE

More sand brushing.

BERNIE!!!

GLADYS (OFF STAGE)

I KNOW!!!

BERNIE

Intense sand brushing. Full ten seconds of brushing.

Pause.

Bernie forgets the reason she got up.

She sits back down and resumes pouring sand from one bucket to another.

BERNIE!!!

GLADYS (FROM GRAVY POT)

BERNIE

(Genuinely curious)

What do you want, Mom?!

GLADYS (FROM GRAVY POT)

I want you to come inside like I've asked 25 times, now!

BERNIE

FINE!

(mumbling)

Why she so angwee all the time...

Bernie begins the long process of getting up again.

*MIKEY enters through the front door. He is exhausted & wears the uniform of a theme restaurant.

**Mikey (a bit overweight) has a subdued wit and humor about him, mixed with a touch of quiet sadness.*

MIKEY

Ma! Bernie! I'm home!

At the sound of her brother's voice, Bernie goes ballistic. She greets him like this every time she sees him, whether he's been gone a week or an hour.

BERNIE

MIIIIIIKEEEEEEYYY!!!

Bernie runs up and assault-hugs him.

MIKEY

Whoa! Haha... easy, Bern! Ok, ok!

BERNIE

I missed you, Mikey! A lot!

MIKEY

Ya saw me this morning, Bern, but ok, I missed you too.

He walks into the kitchen. Gladys turns from the gravy pot to greet her son.

Mikey

Hey, Ma.

Smiling at first, she is horrified when she sees his feet.

GLADYS

AHHH! No! Not those filthy work shoes!! Off, Mikey, off!!

BERNIE

Yah, off, Mikey!

GLADYS

How many times do I have to- / What the hell is wrong with you?! Oh, shut up, parrot!!

BERNIE

Yah! How many times do she have to- I'm not / a parrot, Mom!!

GLADYS (TO BERNIE)

Yes you are!

Mikey retreats back to the door and removes his shoes as Gladys hurriedly attempts to clean the (real or imagined) dirt or scuff marks from her clean floor.

MIKEY

Good to see you, too, Ma.

Mikey plops down at the kitchen table.

BERNIE

How was work, Mikey?

MIKEY

Oh, ya know... Another day, another two hundred pounds of grease...

Bernie laughs.

GLADYS

You smell awful.

MIKEY

Thanks, Ma.

BERNIE

Yah, you stink.

MIKEY

Yep. Thanks, Bern.

GLADYS

Why don't you go up and take a shower?

MIKEY

Nah. I'll take one later. I just wanna sit here for a minute.

GLADYS

Well, your father should be home soon.
Bernie- set the table, ok?

BERNIE

I'm talkin to my bwutha, Mom!!

GLADYS

Please Bernie?

BERNIE

NOOOO!!!

Gladys looks as if she's on her last nerve.

MIKEY

Bern- I'll talk to you while you do what Mom says, ok?

(Beat)

BERNIE

Fiiiiiiiiine.

Over the rest of the scene Bernie will 'set' the table. Though there will only be four of them, she will get out enough silverware, glasses, plates, etc. to feed a small army. Which she then sets completely wrong.

MIKEY

How was your day, Bern?

BERNIE

I dunno.
How was *your* day, Mikey?

MIKEY

Good, Bern. Good.

(Beat)

GLADYS

...What's wrong?

MIKEY

Waddya mean? Nuthin.

GLADYS

Your *ass*, nuthin.

BERNIE

Haha! Yeah! Your *ASS!*

MIKEY

I'm fine. Just tired is all.

BERNIE

Why you tired, Mikey?

MIKEY

Cuz I smell like a fried turd and had to deal with assholes all / day, Bern.

Bernie laughs.

GLADYS

Ehy- Language!

MIKEY

Any calls from your boyfriend today, Bernie?

BERNIE

HE'S NOT MY BOYFWEND, MIKEY!!

MIKEY

(Smiling)

Ok, ok. I'm sorry. So- did he call?

Mikey goes over and checks the answering machine.

GLADYS

Oh, MaDONN. Only every five seconds. I finally had to take the phone off the ringer.

MIKEY

(checking the machine and chuckling to himself)

Half as many today. He's losing his touch.

Mikey presses 'play' on the machine.

MACHINE VOICE

You have... Thirteen new messages.

(Beeeeep)

We hear the voice of *JEFF GOLDBLUM. Each message is spoken with the *exact* same cadence and inflection.

**Jeff Goldblum is a cognitively disabled man from Bernie's workshop shelter. He has no filter and ZERO guile. He says what he means and earnestly means everything he says.*

JEFF (ON MACHINE)

Hi. Uh... Jeff Goldblum. For Bernie. Eleven-thirty-five.

(Beeeeep)

Hi. Uh... Jeff Goldblum. For Bernie. Eleven-forty-two.

(Beeeeep)

Hi. Uh... Jeff Goldblum. For Bernie. Eleven-fifty-one.

Mikey begins to lose it. Gladys is smiling and chuckling, too, but tries to hide it.

(Beeeeep)

Hi. Uh... Jeff Goldblum. For Bernie. Eleven-fifty-three.

(Beeeeep)

Hi. Uh... Jeff Goldblum. For Bernie. Twelve-oh-two.

(Beeeeep)

They are now all laughing hard. It eventually turns into the kind of laughter that makes you pee yourself.

Hi. Uh... Jeff Goldblum. For Bernie. Twelve-oh-seven.

(Beeeeep)

Hi. Uh... / Jeff Goldblum. For Bernie. Twelve-twelve.

(Beeeeep)

MIKEY

Ahhh!! I can't take it! Holy shit!

JEFF (ON MACHINE)

Hi. Uh... / Jeff Goldblum. For Bernie. Twelve-fourteen.

(Beeeeep)

GLADYS

Oh! I'm gonna peeeeee!

JEFF (ON MACHINE)

Hi. Uh... Jeff Goldblum. / For Bernie. Twelve-eighteen.

(Beeeeep)

GLADYS

Turn it off, Mikey, turn it off!

JEFF (ON MACHINE)

Hi. Uh...

Mikey turns off the machine.

MIKEY

(trying to get control of himself)

Oh, GOD. It's so good! And I love that his name is Jeff freaking Goldblum!

GLADYS

(Trying to re-gain her composure, as well)

I wish you'd answer when he calls, Bernie. It's the only way to stop him.

BERNIE

I-I-I don't wanna talk to him, Mom!

MIKEY

Why not, Bern? He really seems to like yah.

BERNIE

He dwive me cwazy alla time!

GLADYS

I know, Bernie, but-

BERNIE

HE DON'T SHUT UP!

Gladys and Mikey laugh.

The sound of keys in the front door brings the laughter to an abrupt halt.

The temperature in the house changes.

*MIKE SR. enters through the front door.

** Mike is gregarious and quite the charmer. Always ready with a smile or a joke, he is almost impossible not to like. A MASTER storyteller.*

MIKE SR.

(Removing jacket, hanging keys, etc)

Hey, hey, hey! Boy whataday, whataday, what. A. Day!

(In a bad upper-class british accent)

Heeeeeeeello, all.

(Heading over to kiss Gladys on cheek)

Your Highness?

GLADYS

Hi.

MIKE SR.

(Rounding on Mikey)

Ehy! There he is!

MIKEY

(Standing up to hug his Dad)

Hey, Pops.

MIKE SR.

Whew! You stink!

MIKEY

Yep. Thanks.

MIKE SR.

(Rounding on Bernie)

And the princess...

BERNIE

I'm not a pwincess, Dad!

MIKE SR.

Do I get a hug, today?

BERNIE

NO!!

MIKE SR.

Oh yeah? And why not?

BERNIE

I'm pissed at you!

GLADYS

Ehy- Watch it!

MIKE SR.

Haha, what did I do, now?

BERNIE

... Nuthin.'

MIKE SR.

So, why can't I have a hug?

(Beat)

BERNIE

I-I-I dunno.

MIKE SR.

So, gimmie one.

BERNIE

NO!!!

GLADYS

(Rubbing her temples)

Bernie, please... My head.

MIKE SR.

(giving up and taking his place at the table)

Ok, fine. But maybe the next time *you* want a hug, *I* "don't want to."

(Beat)

Mike Sr notices the piles of glasses, plates, and silverware on the table.

Whoa. What're we feedin' the friggin' marines tonight?

GLADYS

(noticing the table)

Bernie...

BERNIE

I did what you told me, Mom!

MIKEY

S'alright, I got it...

Mikey begins rearranging the table / putting extras away.

MIKEY

Remember what we talked about, Bern? One for each person, right?

BERNIE

Yah...

GLADYS

C'mon, guys. Food's ready.

Over the following, Bernie and Mikey help Gladys serve the food. There is WAY too much: Sausage, meatballs, pork neckbones, fusilli pasta covered in a thick gravy, garlic bread, frisée salad in light vinaigrette, cheap red wine, Coca-cola. After the food is served, they will all dig in. They eat very quickly. Like, at any moment, someone might take it away from them.

GLADYS

Don't drop that, Bernie.

BERNIE

I won't, Mom! God!

MIKE SR.

So listen ta this...

**Note: whenever Mike Sr. Tells a story, he never looks at Bernie. Even when she asks him a direct question, he keeps right on going, as if she is not there.*

MIKE SR.

So I'm workin' the bar, right?

MIKEY

Why were you workin' the bar? Ski not show up again?

MIKE SR.

Nah, I just had him doin' somethin' in the back.
So, anyways, I'm workin' the bar an' these bitches walk in...

Bernie laughs.

GLADYS

Miiiiike...

MIKE SR.

I knew they were trouble the minute they walked in the joint. Big, dark sunglasses.. friggin' shopping bags... a cloud of perfume that hits yah in the face from ten feet away. Typical "Lincoln Park Trixies." *You* know. You'd think these bi- these *broads* 'd know better than to come into a place like The Scorp', but they're probly "slummin'" / or whatever they call it-

BERNIE

Who, Dad?

MIKE SR.

Anyways, they find a table way-the-hell away from the bar in a corner. Meaning, I gotta come all the way around ta get their drink order, right? So I figure- the hell with that. They want service, they can get off their liposuctioned asses / and come ta *me*.

BERNIE

Who, Dad?

MIKE SR.

So I just keep watchin' the Cubs, right? Five minutes go by. Ten. Almost *twenty* freakin' minutes. So finally, the 'Head B,' she comes up ta me, right? And she's goes "Ummm... *excuse* me, but we've been waiting over there for *quite* a while." And I go, with my best look of death, "... Oh yeah? That right?" She goes, "Yes. Could we have three Cosmopolitans, please?"

MIKEY

(laughing)

They ordered *Cosmos* in the *Scorp*?

BERNIE

What's a / Cosmo, Mikey?

MIKE SR.

You *believe* that shit?!

MIKEY

Its a drink, Bern.

(To Mike Sr.)

Do you even know how to *make* one?!

MIKE SR.

(laughing)

I haven't got a friggin' clue! But I catch that *Sex in the City* over at yer grandma's house / every once in a while, so I know enough to know they're red-

BERNIE

Nonna, Dad?

MIKE SR.

And I decide to have a little fun with these ladies. So I start doin' my thing-

Mimes bar-tending with great aplomb: bottles flying,
speed pouring, jiggers, shakers, etc.

Little bit-o-this, little bit-a-that..

MIKEY

What the hell did you put in there?

MIKE SR.

Mikey- I don't even remember. I think I grabbed Galliano at one point. But then, I'm looking round the bar, goin- "Shit! I need red! Red, red, - what d'we have around here that's red?"

MIKEY

Why didn't you just use grenadine?

MIKE SR.

What'm I, Chucky Cheese? Yah think I've got *cherry juice* at the *Scorp*? So, my eyes come to rest on some Pop Rocks that yer sister left the / last time she was at the bar-

With each "Dad," from Bernie, Gladys gets increasingly angry.

BERNIE

Dad?

MIKEY

You didn't!

MIKE SR.

You bet yer sweet ass, I did. / Threw 'em right into the shaker, Mikey-

BERNIE

Dad?

MIKEY

Did it *explode*?

MIKE

A little. / But I just let it settle down and poured out three perfectly red "Cosmos," Scorpio-Lounge-style.

BERNIE

Dad?

MIKEY

Oh my God. Did they puke?

MIKE SR.

(looking hugely satisfied)

Swore they were the best damn Cosmos they ever had. Said they'd be back & would tell all their friends about the place. I *really* hope they don't.

BERNIE

Dad?

GLADYS

(Glaring at Mike Sr.)

Will you answer her, please?

MIKE SR.

What is it, Bernie?

BERNIE

... Nuthin.'

Silence. Eating.

MIKEY

Oh, shit!

He shoots out of his seat and heads for the phone.

MIKEY

Ma- did you say you took the phone off the hook?

GLADYS

Yeah, why?

MIKEY

Dammit! I'm expecting a call...

Mikey hangs up the phone.

It rings, immediately.

Mikey answers it.

MIKEY

Hello?!

(Rolls his eyes, looks at Gladys and Bernie)

Oh, hi Jeff... no, its Bernie's big brother, Mike...
Yeah, Bernie's here-

BERNIE

(too loud)

I don't wanna talk to him!

MIKEY

(covering receiver, then continuing)

... But she can't come to the phone right now... Because we're eating dinner, Jeff... what's that? ... pasta... with gravy...

(Smiling)

It's very good, Jeff, yes... Oh. Great. And how was that?... Yep, I like hot dogs, too...
Oh, yah know, with mustard and onions, I guess...

Mike Sr looks confused. Gladys is trying not to laugh.
Bernie enjoys her brother's torture.

MIKEY

Really? And where do ya ride it?... Nope, I drive... Yeah... A Honda CRX... Green... No,
no I like yellow, too... *why* do I like yellow? Well, right now, because its the same color
as a noose, Jeff...

Gladys slaps him.

Ooooookay, I should probly go... Cuz I'm expecting another call... yeah... It was good
talking to you too, bud... Okay... Yes?...

(laughing, almost dying, as he looks at
Bernie)

Wow. Better than *her's* even?... Okay... You sure you want *me* to tell her that, bud?...
Well, because I'm her brother and that might be a little awk- ya know what? Never mind.
I'll be sure and tell her... Yep... No prob... Okay, Jeff. Bye, now.

Mikey hangs up the phone.

MIKEY

Bernie- Jeff would like me to inform you that your butt is "awesome." Better than the
pink Power Ranger's.

BERNIE

(perfectly frank)

Yah. I know.

GLADYS

(laughing)

Oh, you *do*, do you?

The phone rings again.

Mikey quickly picks it up.

MIKEY

Hello?...

(Exasperated)

Hi, Jeff.

GLADYS

MaDONN-a-mi!

MIKEY

Yeah, I told her... She's, uh, well aware of the situation and very flattered, but... Yep...
Jeff- ...Yes, but I really have go now, okay? ... Don't call again tonight, okay dude?...
Yah... Try tomorrow... Yes, Bernie will be home... I don't know, Jeff, about four pm?...
Oooookay. Okay. Bye.

Mikey hangs up.

MIKEY

Wow, he really-

The phone rings.

GLADYS

Oh, Mikey, enough's enough. Just answer and let me talk to his mother...

Mikey answers.

MIKEY

Look, Jeff- I told yah, pal, you can't...

Mikey immediately blushes.

Oh! Hi, Laura! Yeah!... No, no... He's somebody that I... never mind, its not important.

(Overly enthusiastic)

How *are* you?!.. Uh-huh...

(Becoming aware that the family is watching)

Uh... Hey. Listen, Laura- I'm in the middle of dinner right now, can I call you back in fifteen minutes?... Great... Talk then. Bye.

(Hangs up)

(Beat)

BERNIE

You gotta girlfwend, Mikey?

The phone rings.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE TWO

Much later that same evening. A picnic table in the backyard. A quarter-full bottle of wine and two glasses. Moonlight.

Mikey and *LAURA sit on the tabletop with their feet on the bench, looking up at the stars.

**Laura probably could've been a poet, in another life. A good one.*

LAURA

This was fun. Thanks for hanging out with me again, tonight.

MIKEY

Sure.

(Beat)

Sorry we couldn't go out someplace.

LAURA

Its okay. You're a good brother.

MIKEY

I guess.

LAURA

Do you need to check on her, or anything?

MIKEY

Nah. Bernie pretty much takes care of herself. My mother just doesn't like her being alone in the house is all.

Pause. Wine.

LAURA

You haven't even asked me what's wrong.

MIKEY

Sorry. What's wrong?

LAURA

No. I like it. I mean... I like that you haven't asked me. Most of my friends would've asked me a thousand questions by now. It's like, they want to find out what's wrong with you as fast as they can, so they can start "fixing" you and get you back to "normal."

MIKEY

Figured you'd talk about it when you wanted to.

LAURA

I don't want to.

MIKEY

Ok.

Pause. Wine.

LAURA

Where are your parents tonight?

MIKEY

My Dad works nights, mostly. And my Mom's at Jewel.

LAURA

At Jewel?

It's, like, nine-thirty at night.

MIKEY

...
Yeeeeeeeah.

LAURA

Well, she should be back soon then, right?

MIKEY

You'd think that, wouldn't you?

LAURA

How long's it take to buy groceries?

MIKEY

She'll be gone at least three more hours.

LAURA

(Laughing)

Seriously?

MIKEY

Yeah. She loves that place. I don't get it.
Maybe...

LAURA

What?

MIKEY

Nothin'. It's just. I think she finds it relaxing, for some weird reason? It's like Jewel is the... *break* she lets herself have.

Pause. Wine.

LAURA

What happened to your sister, anyway?

MIKEY

Waddya mean?

LAURA

Was she born like this, or...

MIKEY

So. What's wrong with you tonight, anyway? Tell me quick, so I can fix it.

Laura smiles at Mikey.

Silence. Wine.

LAURA

I hate our jobs.

MIKEY

Yep.

LAURA

I reek of grease for hours after I come home. Sometimes I have to take two showers.

MIKEY

Yep.

LAURA

I hate our boss.

MIKEY

Yep.

LAURA

I hate this town.

MIKEY

Yep.

LAURA

I hate my boyfriend.

Pause.

MIKEY

Yep.

Silence.

LAURA

Can I smoke out here?

MIKEY

(*hates smoking*)

... Sure.

LAURA

(Pacing and gesturing with the cigarette as she talks)

Its just... he doesn't *do* anything, ya know? He works the grill, he comes home, he watches TV, we fuck, we go to sleep, we get up and do it all again. And that's, like, enough for him, ya know? He's talking about getting married now and having kids and all that shit and I'm like- I'm fucking twenty three! I mean- is this what life is gonna be? Just working in that gross place, occasionally drinking at the bar after closing and- fuck!

(Beat)

You ever been to the Art Institute? Of course you have. Everybody has. Its, like, required shit in the Illinois School System or something. Anyway, we went on a field trip in high school. And, up to that point, about the most I ever thought about art was to contemplate the curves of Tommy Beradino's ass cheeks. Long story. I was obsessed. So- we're there, right? And I'm joking with my friends and making fun of all the naked Italian pictures- no offense- ... and then we enter the Impressionist room. And, like... fucking *bam*. It hits me...like...

There's this picture. Its not of anything special. Just a tree. Later on, I looked it up and found out it was a *cypress* tree. But this thing... it wasn't so much painted as it was *sculpted* out of the canvas, ya know? I mean...you could actually see the artists fingerprints in the paint. From where he had pinched and kneaded and worked it with his fingers. I'd never seen anything like it. The wild colors, the paint piled on top of itself in deep strokes. And it pulls me in.

Then I realize... its not a tree that I'm looking at, ya know? Its this man. Its his guts, his hate, his blood, his piss, his shit - all the churning parts of his heart- fucking poured- no, *thrown* onto this canvas. On display for all the world to see.

And I notice... I'm fucking *crying*. And I can't stop. This stupid fucking tree has me weeping like a baby in front of all my friends.

(Beat)

And I didn't know *why*, ya know?

But, like, now I think I do.

What that man did... to me... he did a hundred years after he died. Stabbed me in the heart with a fucking Christmas tree and made me cry. I mean- he just got up one day, walked outside, and was so moved by some dumb-ass tree that he created this... *thing*... that's so beautiful it has the ability to stab teenage girls through time.

(Beat)

I've never moved *anyone* like that, ya know? Or met anybody who could. And that's- kinda sad. I just work in this place where I shove grease into peoples faces all day.

(Beat)

I don't know. I need to find my cypress.

Otherwise, my life will just be working in grease, fucking in grease, sleeping in grease, having a bunch of greasy little fucking children and gaining so much weight that I eventually turn into a huge puddle of grease myself.

(beat)

You look weird. I'm freaking you out, aren't I?

MIKEY

No, no. I'm just marveling at how seamlessly you were able to link Impressionism, stab-wounds, and grease.

Silence. Wine.

MIKEY

We were on vacation.

I was four or five at the time. Bernie was two. I don't really remember much about it. Maybe a.... vague memory of laughing my little ass off as my Mom pulled me around a tan hotel carpet by my legs.

My parents told me I was the one who found her. Two weeks later. And that part I think I do remember.

The room was really sunny. She was twisted in a weird angle in her crib. And there was baby-puke all over her... blue blanket?

My memory gets pretty hazy after that. A whirlwind of hospitals and staying with my Nonna. It took them forever to figure out what was wrong with her. Finally, they diagnosed Encephalitis. You know what that is?

Laura shakes her head 'no.'

MIKEY

Ever heard of Meningitis?

LAURA

Sure.

MIKEY

Yeah. Encephalitis is basically the same thing except, instead of your spine, it makes your *brain* swell. Its actually more common than you'd think. Most people who contract it never even know they did. The thing runs its course, but the brain only swells a little. The symptoms are bad, but not life-threatening. So it gets written off as a kind of bad flu. In the worst cases, the brain swells so much it kinda pops in the skull and the victim hemorrhages and dies.

LAURA

Jesus.

MIKEY

Yeah.
Then, there's this tiny percentage who end up like Bernie. Brain swells, pushes against the walls of your skull, and you wind up with brain damage.

LAURA

Holy shit.
How'd she catch something like that? Were you guys in Africa or something?

MIKEY

(Mikey laughs)

Disney World.

LAURA

Oh, shut up.

MIKEY

No, seriously. Florida is basically a giant swamp, right?
Fucking. *Mosquito*.

LAURA

Shut. Up.

MIKEY

That's not even the best part. Don't forget- its 1979, right? Bernie gets diagnosed and the doctors basically say to my parents "Nothin' we can do. It's just gotta run its course and you have to watch. She'll either be fine, she'll be a vegetable, or she'll be dead. Good luck!"

LAURA

Fuuuck.

MIKEY

Yeah. So, my Ma. She's holding Bernie, right? It's after the doctor's sentence has been laid down and she's burning up. Fever's out of control. Bernie's not quite two-years-old at this point. Enough to have started talking. Apparently, Bernie looks up and says-

Bernie suddenly appears at the patio door. She is in her underwear. Her brassiere is undone and she holds it up to her breasts.

BERNIE

I'm havin' twouble with my bwa, Mikey.

Mikey jumps up and heads for Bernie, ushering her inside.

MIKEY

Whoa! Okay, Bern, okay! But don't come out-

BERNIE

(As if an explanation for being in her underwear)

I'M HAVIN TWOUBLE WITH MY BWA!!!

MIKEY

Okay! Just- go up to your room and wait for me, okay?! I'll be there in a minute.

BERNIE

(As she goes)

Fiiiiine.

Mikey stands in the doorway, mortified.

MIKEY

Sorry about that.

LAURA

(Smiling)

Its totally okay. Go take care of her. I should get home anyway.

MIKEY

(disappointed)

Okay...

Laura gathers her things and starts to leave the yard.
Mikey looks pained.

Hey Laura?

Stops. Turns.

LAURA

Yeah?

Pause.

They stare at each other across the yard. Then-

MIKEY

See yah at work tomorrow.

LAURA

Yeah. Bye, Mike.

She leaves.

Mikey stares after her for a beat. Then, resignedly, heads inside.

LIGHTS FADE.

SCENE THREE

Same time of night in the Scorpio Lounge. A simple bar with a few stools and swinging “saloon” door in the rear, which leads to the back room and adjacent alley.

Mike Sr is sitting at the bar, smoking a cigarette and sipping from a glass of whiskey. He casually flips through a newspaper. "Redemption Song" by Bob Marley plays from the bar speakers.

We hear the sounds of an argument from the back room.
*SKI (off stage) is attempting to eject an unruly patron
JOE (off-stage voice) from the bar.

**Ski is that rare Greatest Generation paradox of Chicago chauvinism and chivalry. He is the type of man who could stare down a hawk, and moves only when absolutely necessary.*

JOE (OFF STAGE)

(drunken, slurred)

C'mon, Ski. Jus' one more-

SKI (OFF STAGE)

Goddammit, Joe! Now, I told ya THREE TIMES, already!!!
YOU'VE HAD ENOUGH!!!

JOE (OFF STAGE)

(drunken, slurred)

I know when I've had enough!

SKI (OFF STAGE)

Just go *home*, Joe! Go home and sleep it off!

JOE (OFF STAGE)

(drunken, slurred)

But I lost my keys-

SKI (OFF STAGE)

No! *We*'ve got yer keys! You can pick 'em up in the mornin' on yer way ta work! Just go home an-'

The sounds of a physical altercation commences. Joe is attempting to muscle past Ski to get to his keys.

SKI (OFF STAGE)

Why, you fuckin' prick-

The struggle intensifies. Maybe we see Ski's legs under the saloon door, as he is pushed back a bit by Joe.

Mike Sr finds this entire altercation hilarious. He picks the keys up off the bar and shakes them, tauntingly-trying to egg Joe on.

Ski eventually manages to wrest Joe back the way they came and out the door (all OFF-STAGE)

Mike Sr poises his hand in the air, raising an imaginary conductor's baton in anticipation of a tell-tale sound...

Aaaaaand...

BONG! - We hear the sound of a head bouncing off a metal traffic pole.

Mike Sr times a dramatic baton gesture precisely with the sound and chuckles to himself.

Pause.

Suddenly, Ski bursts through the back door, wearing a bar apron. He's breathing heavily and sweating profusely.

He's probably fifteen years too-old to be bouncing patrons, and it shows. He leans on the bar and wipes at his brow with his apron.

Mike Sr pours a shot of whiskey for Ski.

MIKE SR.

(Smiling at Ski's exertion)

Look how fuckin' winded you are. Poppy's lookin' down right now sayin' "Wow. What a fuckin' pussy old age turned Ski into. Can't even chuck a drunk without needing a friggin' oxygen / tank!"

SKI

Fuck. You.

Ski downs the shot.

MIKE SR.

At least you can still hit the pole.

SKI

(winded)

'Course I hit the pole! I always hit the pole!

Ski is still *very* winded. He actually looks as if he might collapse.

MIKE SR.

Holy shit. You gonna die on me, or what?

...

You want me to grab you a tampon?

SKI

(winded)

Ya know? You got a lotta fuckin' nerve. Time was, yer old man'd be back there himself chuckin' drunks like The Mussels out. You sit out here sippin' drinks and listenin' to what the fuck *is* this shit, anyhow?

MIKE SR.

See? That's yer problem, Ski. Ya got no appreciation for the finer things in life. This happens to be one of the greatest albums ever made- *Uprising* by Mr. Robert Marley.

SKI

Yeah?

MIKE SR.

Yeah.

Supposedly, he wrote this song after he was diagnosed with the cancer that finally killed him.

SKI

Yeah?

MIKE SR.

Yeah.

(Beat)

SKI

I like Marley, too, asshole. I just didn't recognize it.

What was the cancer that finally got that crazy, old pot-head, anyway?

*

MIKE SR.

Uh... it started in his *toe*, I think.

SKI

Fuckin' guy died from *toe cancer*?

MIKE SR.

Yeah.

(Beat)

SKI

Pussy.

Ski slams another shot. Pours more in Mike's glass.

How're Glad & the kids?

MIKE SR.

Eh. You know. Gladys is pissed at me, but then she's *always* pissed at me. And Mikey... fuckin' kid is so smart, ya know? Wish he'd do somthin.' I dunno. Go ta college or sumthin.'

SKI

Tell him to join the Corps.

MIKE SR.

Mikey?! Ha. No fuckin' way.

SKI

Why not?! What's wrong with the Corps? I was a marine! So was yer father!

MIKE SR.

Yeah, yeah. I know. But that was a different time. You and Poppy joined for like, God and country and all that.

SKI

(Pride)

Greatest Generation of All Time...

MIKE SR.

Oh, that's such fucking *bullshit*. I'm so tired of hearing that. "Greatest Generation." Why, exactly, were you the greatest generation? Cuz yah figured out nazis were *assholes*? Whopty-fuckin' doo.

SKI

(Hurt. The war meant a lot to him.)

You wouldn't understand. Ya little Jagoff.

MIKE SR.

Shit. I'm sorry, Uncle Ski. I get it. I do. You and Poppy. Those stories you used to tell each other about the war? Fuck. I used to be fucking rapt watching you two tell those stories. *Rapt*. Ya know?

Ah, but things are different these days, Ski, an' you know it. Only schmucks join the military nowadays. Fuckin' die for oil in some scorpion-infested, sand dump? No-fucking-thank-you. I ain't that dumb, and neither is my son.

Plus.

Mikey's... *sensitive*, ya know?

SKI

Yeah...

MIKE SR.

Shit. I mean, between me an' Glad, I don't know where the fuck he gets it from.

SKI

Hehe -do you remember... the time when the turtle bit him?

Ski and Mike laugh together.

MIKE SR.

An' he's standing over the bowl, his hand wrapped in a towel, rocking back and forth, crying and yelling / "I FORGIVE YOU, CHaaaaAAAAAaaaaRLY! I WUV YOU CHaaaaAAAAAaaaaRLY"

SKI

"I FORGIVE YOU, CHaaaaAAAAAaaaaRLY! I WUV YOU CHaaaaAAAAAaaaaRLY"

Laughter falling into silence.

SKI

Didn't you tell Mikey you 'freed' that thing, then put it in a fuckin' Jewel bag an' smashed it against the wall?

MIKE SR.

Hey. Shelly little fucker bit my son. Had to go.

Mimes winding up and smashing a turtle against a wall.

They both laugh.

MIKE SR.

Ah, shit. What the fuck is that kid still doing in that house, Ski?

Ski gives Mike a look of utter puzzlement.

SKI

C'mon, Mike...

MIKE SR.

What?

SKI

You seriously don't know?

MIKE SR.

The fuck you talkin' about?

Ski takes a long, hard look at Mike.

Suddenly, there is a loud banging off-stage, behind the saloon doors.

Joe is back.

JOE (OFF STAGE)

(drunken, slurred)

SKIIIIII! MIIIIIIIIKE! HAVE YOU SEEN MY KEEEEEEYS?!?!

Ski throws his bar towel down in anger as he heads toward the back room.

As he goes through the door-

SKI

(exiting)

GODDAMM-DRUNKEN-DEGENERATE-ASSHOLE, JOE! HOW MANY TIMES DOES YER HEAD HAVE TA HIT THAT LIGHT POLE BEFORE IT KNOCKS SOME GODDAMM SENSE INTO YA?!

Mike Sr. sits, alone, and sips his drink, thinking.

He picks up the phone on the bar and dials.

MIKE SR.

Hey baby...

Yeah, it's really dead here, so I shouldn't be too late... Yeah. Can't wait to see you, too.

LIGHTS FADE.

SCENE FOUR

**Back in the house, shortly after the "bra" episode.
Now in her pajamas, Bernie sits in the living room, on
the couch, reading a book.**

**Note: whenever Bernie reads, she only gets about 75% of the words correct. The rest, she just skips or makes up completely, for her own entertainment.*

BERNIE

Elvis. Was. Born. In... ummm... Tulip. Miss. Pie!
On. Janu-air-wee. Eight. One. Nine. Thwee. Five.

We see Mikey coming down the hall, from the stairs.
He's about to enter the living room, but stops when he
hears Bernie. He listens in the doorway, unseen by her.

BERNIE

He. We-weseeved. His. Fiwrst. G-g...gutter. From. His. Mother.

She finds this hysterical, for some reason.

In. One. Nine. Four. Eight. Elvis. And. His. Family. Move. To. Ummm...
Mmm-mmem-p-peh... umm... Mom. Is. Ten. See. Me!

Again, she cracks herself up. Mikey quietly laughs
along.

She flips to another part of the book. She turns the book
sideways to look at a picture. Reads the caption.

One. Nine. Five. Six. Elvis. On. Dee. Ed. ummm... Suleh... Vv-v...

You so *handsome*, Elvis.

She gives up and just leers at the picture.

She give the picture a chaste peck. Mikey smiles.

Each of the following kisses becomes more and more serious and sexual.

I love you.

Kiss.

I love you.

Kiss.

I love you.

Kiss.

Mikey looks a little horrified at this point.

Bernie stares at the picture. Then-

Do you want to come to my bed, Elvis?

(Beat)

And we can have sex?

Mikey tries to extricate himself from the situation as quietly as possible, heading back up the stairs.

(Beat)

I want to do you *so bad*, Elvis.

Mikey misses a step and falls, hitting his knee with a loud bang.

MIKEY

Oww!! Shit!!

BERNIE

(Calling loudly)

Mikey?!
You ok?

MIKEY

(calling from steps)

I'm good, Bern! Just comin' out!

Mikey comes back down the steps and limps into the room, looking as casual as possible, trying to hide the throbbing pain in his knee.

MIKEY

Hey! Whatcha up to?

BERNIE

I'm readin' my Elvis book, Mikey!

MIKEY

Elvis, huh?

BERNIE

Yah.

Mikey sits on the couch with her, rubbing his knee.

Pause.

MIKEY

He still alive, ya think?

BERNIE

I-I-I dunno.

MIKEY

Well... what does the book say?

BERNIE

I dunno.

MIKEY

Ya mind if I take a look?

Bernie hands the book over to Mikey.

MIKEY

(Flipping through pages)

Hmmmm.... let's see here...

Yeah, here we go-

"We have it on good authority that Elvis is alive and well and living somewhere in the suburbs of Chicago. He reportedly became obsessed with one of his fans, a Miss Bernadette M. Vincolo, and faked his own death to be closer to her.

Bernie laughs.

(Impersonating Elvis)

'I... I just couldn't *take* it no more! She's a hunka-hunka burnin' loooove!' Elvis told reporters. He then sold all his worldly possessions, packed a large supply of peanut butter and banana sandwiches, and moved into Miss Vincolo's closet. There to stay, he says, until she agrees to make him her boyfriend."

BERNIE

(Exasperated, but enjoying it)

Mikey!

MIKEY

"Reportedly, a Mr. Jeff Goldblum was quite shaken and extremely upset.

(Imitating Jeff's monotone from the machine messages)

'Uh... Bernie's mine. Elvis better step-the-hell *off*. Twelve-thirty-four.'

"There is a battle scheduled to take place later next week between Elvis and Jeff Goldblum, for the hand of the Lady Bernie. The smart money, of course, is on Mr. Goldblum. With an army of velociraptors, he is heavily favored to win. However, Elvis' flatulence is *never* something to be taken lightly." *

BERNIE

What's dat?

Mikey makes an extremely loud, long farting sound.

Bernie laughs louder, she loves fart jokes.

Mikeeeey! Elvis don't fawrt!

MIKEY

(Again, impersonating Elvis)

'Ughhh... I'd have to, uh, disagree with yah there, mam!'

Fart sound.

(Singing)
'Love me tender...'

Fart sound.

(Singing)
'Oh, my darling...'

Bernie, laughing, makes the fart sound, this time.

MIKEY

(impersonating Elvis)
'Well thank you very much..'

Laughter and random fart sounds descending into silence.

MIKEY

Hey, Bern?

BERNIE

Yah?

MIKEY

Can I ask you somethin'?

BERNIE

Yah.

Pause.

MIKEY

I'm thinkin' about going away... for awhile...

BERNIE

You takin' a trip, Mikey?

MIKEY

Yeah.
Kinda, but-

BERNIE

You gonna take Mom?

MIKEY

Um. *No*, Bern.

...

But I might not be back... for a bit.

Tense pause.

BERNIE

Where you gonna go?

MIKEY

I don't know.

...

Ha. I actually hadn't gotten that far, yet.

...

Where do you think would be fun?

BERNIE

I-I-I dunno.

...

You should go to de moon!

MIKEY

(laughing)

Hah. The moon, huh?

Well, good a place as any.

Would you come visit me?

BERNIE

Yah.

MIKEY

You gonna take Jeff Goldblum?

BERNIE

NO.

MIKEY

Yeah. He's already been in space, anyway.

BERNIE

Noooooo...

MIKEY

Sure he has.

Remember when he fought space aliens with The Fresh Prince of Bel Aire?

BERNIE

(laughing)

Noooooo...

The front door opens and Gladys enters, *ridiculously* burdened down by grocery bags.

GLADYS

Ughhh... MIIIIIIIIKE!? BEEEEEEERNIE!? Come help me!!

MIKEY

(Funs over)

Uh-oh.

The two of them get up and head to go help Gladys.

Mikey notices all the groceries.

MIKEY

Whoa, Ma. Anything left on the shelves?

GLADYS

Shut up.

MIKEY

We got a fallout shelter I don't know about?

GLADYS

Oh, shut up.

Gladys goes in the house.

MIKEY

(conspiratorially)

Hey Bern- ya think Mom's secretly raising a herd of cattle in the basement?

(beat)

BERNIE

Yah.

LIGHTS FADE.

SCENE FIVE

The next morning. Gladys is under the kitchen sink, attempting to fix it. Only her lower half is visible.

Gladys repairs for a bit.

GLADYS

You mother...

Loud, banging sound under sink. A bang for each 'dirty.'

Dirty-

Bang!

Dirty-

Bang!

Dirty!-

Bastard.

Bang!

Pause.

Her legs flail for a moment, as she tries to torque something into place.

HnnneeeeAhhhhHHHHHHhhhh... *Shit!*

A tool sails out from under the sink, striking a wall.

She has hurt her hand. She jumps out from under and shakes her hand in pain.

Shit, shit, shit... mother *Jenner!!*

She runs her hand under cold water to numb the pain.

Son of a *bitch*.

Mike Sr walks in through the front door. He is wearing the same clothes as the night before.

GLADYS

(Deadpan.)

I was just talking about you.

MIKE SR.

What the hell happened?

GLADYS

Waddya think? Its leaking again... woke up to a pond in the middle of the kitchen.

MIKE SR.

Well, why didn't you wait for me? I woulda taken care of it.

GLADYS

Oh, yeah? When, Mike?

MIKE SR.

Well... now. As soon as I got home.

GLADYS

And how am I supposed to know when *that's* gonna be? By the time you decide to show your face, I could be cooking dinner in a *swimsuit*.

MIKE SR.

(Attempting to be flirty)

Well *that* might be fun.

She just glares.

GLADYS

Where were you?

MIKE SR.

C'mon, Glad. I hadda work. You know what that place is like some nights. Ski's gettin' old. Place got busy. He couldn't handle it by himself.

GLADYS

And you couldn't take two minutes to call?

MIKE SR.

I didn't wanna wake you.

GLADYS

(not buying it)

Fine.

Gladys climbs back under to return to her repairs.

MIKE SR.

Let me take care of that...

GLADYS

It's fine.

MIKE SR.

No, really.

GLADYS

I got it.

MIKE SR.

Glaaad...

Another tool sails out from under the sink, nearly hitting Mike.

He gets the message and begins heading toward the stairs, but stops and turns back.

MIKE SR.

I... uh, stopped by Social Services... On my way home from the Scorp.

Gladys stops working.

I got those papers. We, uh, just need to fill 'em out.

Mike produces a hefty packet of folded papers from his coat pocket. Gladys immediately goes to him.

GLADYS

Lemme see...

She takes the papers from his hand, and begins rummaging through them. She absentmindedly lights a cigarette as she reads.

MIKE SR.

She'd also have to... uh... well, flip to the last page. In red lettering.

Gladys flips to the final page. She tears up.

GLADYS

Oh, Mike...

MIKE SR.

I know...

GLADYS

These questions...

"What *year* is it, currently?"

...

"Who is the *President*?"

We can't do that to her.

MIKE SR.

If we want it, I don't think we've got a choice.

GLADYS

But ... in *public* and...

MIKE SR.

I know. But I think its the only way they can prove it, Glad. Ya know... to make it legal.

Pause. Gladys shakes her head.

GLADYS

We don't need the money that badly.

MIKE SR.

Actually, we do. But that's not even the point.

GLADYS

Waddya mean?

MIKE SR.

It'll be good for her. Yah know? In, like, the long run. She'll have certain rights and benefits that the rest of us don't get...

Plus...

It'll be good for Mikey, too.

GLADYS

Mikey? Why?

MIKE SR.

Less red tape for when...

GLADYS

When what?

MIKE SR.

For... yah know...

Gladys just stares at him.

MIKE SR.

For when we're *gone*, Glad.

GLADYS

What does *that* have to do with anything?

MIKE SR.

... yer really gonna make me fuckin' say it, aren't you?
For when she needs to go... to / a *facility* of some kind.

Gladys abruptly turns and heads back to her project. Or
to clean some part of the kitchen. Anything to avoid this.

GLADYS

No. *No*. We did not come so far with her, just so she can wind up in some, some /
fucking-

MIKE SR.

It wouldn't be anything like that. I've actually looked into it a bit and there are some /
very nice-

GLADYS

Oh, I *bet* you have!

MIKE SR.

What does *that* mean?

GLADYS

Nothing. Just go to sleep, Mike. Or back to one of your putanz / I don't care.

MIKE SR.

No! What does it mean?!

GLADYS

It means you forget everything, Mike! I don't know if its the booze, or just your la-dee-
da / head-in-the-clouds-

MIKE SR.

What, Glad? What do I forget?

GLADYS

Everything! You forget what those bastards-
"Whoop! Well, *this* ones broken! Put her some place and move on!"
Tell *me* to give up on my *daughter*? Those *motherfuckers*!

She tries to calm herself.

And then the hours, Mike. The *hours*.
Teaching her to walk again. Teaching her to talk again. Hours and hours.
And you weren't there to *see it happen*. / You don't know what its like-

MIKE SR.

This / again...

GLADYS

Yeah, this again!
To hold your baby girl in your arms and know there's nothing you can do as this... *thing*...
To have her look up into your eyes and...

(Overcome, she can't quite bring herself to
say it)

And then- poof! Everything she was... everything she could be... is gone. You weren't
there! / So how could you appreciate-

MIKE SR.

Ah, fuck.
Yah know why I wasn't there, Gladys?! How's *your* fuckin' memory?! You remember
what *you*-

GLADYS

I had a bad feeling!

MIKE SR.

Oh, fuck your bad feeling!
Telling me this was *my* fault?! Because I was the one who picked stupid fucking *Disney*
World?!
Do you know what a mindfuck that was?!
Of course I fucking ran! I loved you! I believed you! Like a fuckin asshole, I believed
you!

GLADYS

So that gave you the right to check out for the next twenty years?

MIKE SR.

Check out?! I'm right here, Glad!
And don't act like Anne-fucking-Sullivan! You didn't do this on your own! What about
the specialists, the private tutors, the speech pathologists- THAT I FUCKING PAID /
FOR!!!

GLADYS

Always with the money!

MIKE SR.

Ah, there's no fuckin' winning with you, is there?! Nothing I say or do will ever-

Mikey enters through the front door with the day's mail.

He takes in the tension in the room.

(Beat)

MIKEY

Oh, shit.
Who died?

GLADYS

No one. Watch your language. And why are you home so early?

MIKEY

Lunch was crap. We had, like, two reservations. So they cut me almost as soon as I walked in. It's fine, I gotta work tonight anyway.

Comes in and plops down at his seat at the table.

MIKEY

So.
If no one's dead, what's goin' on?

MIKE SR.

Nuthin.'

MIKEY

Oh, good. Then I guess all that yelling I heard was just you guys psyching each other up for the "World's Best Marriage Awards."

MIKE SR.

Watch it, smart-ass.

(Beat)

MIKEY

C'mon. What's going on?

GLADYS

Nothing you need to worry about, sweetie.

MIKEY

Aw *fuck me*. / For *once*, cant you just-

GLADYS

Ehy! Watch / your mouth!

MIKEY

Watch my mouth? Are you *fucking* kidding me, Ma? You do know that my earliest childhood memory is of Dad calling the Christmas lights "fucking cocksuckers," / right?

MIKE SR.

Whoa, *whoa!* What got up *your* ass, today?

MIKEY

This! Just tell me what's going on! Maybe I can help?
... You guys gotta stop treating me like I'm five-years-old.

Gladys and Mike Sr. exchange a look.

Long silence.

Nothing.

MIKEY

Fine.

Mikey gets up and heads for the stairs.

MIKEY

If anybody needs me, I'll be in my room, *playing*.

MIKE SR.

We were talking about what to do with your sister after we're *dead*, smart-ass.

Mikey freezes.

MIKE SR.

Yeah.

Any more choice comments you'd like to make?

Mikey sits back down.

(Beat)

MIKEY

Okaaaay. So, what brought this on?

Mike Sr slides the papers across the table for Mikey to peruse. Gladys is deathly still during all of this.

MIKE SR.

Your sister may have an appointment with a judge in a few weeks to be officially deemed "intellectually disabled" by the State of Illinois.

MIKEY

(looking at papers)

What? Why?

MIKE SR.

Well... one, because this way she'll start receiving government benefits.

MIKEY

You mean, like, money?

MIKE SR.

(trying to avoid Gladys stare)

... Yeah.

And other stuff. Like, certain protections. Like becoming a ward of the state if, God forbid, something should happen to me and your Mom.

MIKEY

A ward of the state? Like... an institution or something?

MIKE SR.

... It wouldn't necessarily be a-

MIKEY

Couldn't she go to Nonna / or something?

MIKE SR.

Yer Grandma's gettin' pretty old, / Mikey.

MIKEY

Or Aunt Cathy-

MIKE SR.

Are you *crazy*? I'd sooner give your sister to the Ayatollah than *that* fucking head-case...

MIKEY

Well... what about me?

MIKE SR.

(Dread)

... What about you, what, Mikey?

MIKEY

I dunno.

I guess I just assumed that, when the time came... I'd be the one to take care of Bernie.

Gladys can't help herself- she immediately gets up and goes to her son, wrapping her arms around him and kissing his head.

Mikey looks a bit uncomfortable.

GLADYS

At least one person in this house understands.

MIKE SR.

(Trying to contain himself)

... Mikey. I don't think you really know what you're saying, pal.

MIKEY

Yeah I do. I could do it.

MIKE SR.

Really? You gonna take care of yer sister with tips from Mulligan's?
Do you even know how much her pills cost?
Or what I pay that speech therapist? I've sunk about a hundred grand into *that* motherfucker over the last ten years and yer sister still sounds like a Mexican Elmer Fudd!

MIKEY

I'd find a way.

MIKE SR.

Your *ass*, you'd find a way!
Christ...
Use yer fuckin head, will yah? What're you gonna do? Yer gonna do what your *Mom* does, huh?
You gonna cook her all her meals? Make her bed every day? Dress her? *Bathe* her?!
Gotta wash her *pishod*, ya know! Did you think of *that*?!
You gonna check her ass after she takes a shit so she doesn't get a rash?!

Mikey sits, stunned.

And what about her *period*? Never thought of *that* one, did yah?

The phone begins to ring.

(To Gladys)

And is that what *you* want? You want your son cleaning up after Bernie the rest of his life?!

GLADYS

She's not a *burden* that we can just pawn off on someone else! She's our *daughter*!

MIKE SR.

You don't think I know that?!

Phone ringing continues.

GLADYS

No! I honestly don't think you do! To you, she'll always be an inconvenience; a problem to be fixed!

SHE'LL ALWAYS BE *WHATS LEFT* OF YOUR DAUGHTER!!!

MIKE SR.

AND TO YOU, SHE'LL ALWAYS BE A CROSS! A BADGE YOU CAN WEAR AROUND YOUR NECK, FOR THE WHOLE WORLD TO SEE!!!

The machine answers the phone.

GLADYS (ON MACHINE)

Hello, you've reached the Vincolo residence. We can't come to the phone right now, so please leave a message and the time you called and we'll get back to you as soon as we can.

(Beeeeeep.)

JEFF (ON MACHINE)

Hi... uh. Jeff Goldblum. For Bernie. Ten-thirty-nine.

Mikey is about to speak, but-

JEFF (ON MACHINE)

I'm, uh...

I'm home sick from work today and I thought I'd call in case Bernie was home sick too and we could talk. But I guess she's at work. So I guess I'll just call back at four pm.

(beat)

See, but the thing is? The thing is that I've called a few times over the past few days and Bernie is always busy. And I really need to tell her something. Which I can't tell her at work, anymore. Cuz I got a new job. And I miss her. And its really, like, super private.

(beat)

The thing is. I love Bernie. And.

(beat)

It's different. Than what I usually do. Which is watch tv. And I like tv. A LOT. I talk to the people on tv and I know they can't talk back but sometimes I like the fact that they can't. But Bernie used to. Talk back. And I didn't seem to mind so much. Even though she was mean sometimes. But sometimes she didn't yell and she smiled. And her smile is like. It's like Monica from *Friends'* smile and when Darth Vader throws the Emperor down the hole and when Judge Harry does magic on *Night Court*. Though I don't know who Mel Torme is. Anyway. It's different from that. Cuz. Cuz I feel it all the time. Even after I turn the shows off. When I'm alone in my bed at night. And it's nice. But it kinda hurts sometimes. In my chest and in my stomach. But I feel like... like it could hurt less if I could talk to her about these things. And maybe it would be nice for Bernie too. So maybe you could play this for her? And have her call me back? Or call me yourself, Mike. Or Bernie's Mom. Or Bernie's Dad.

Pause.

Gladys and Mike Sr should be gone by this point. Mikey is alone on stage, listening.

But I think it's better if I talk to her myself... cuz maybe she can help me figure out... why it's really nice, but it hurts sometimes...

LIGHTS FADE.

SCENE SIX

Later that night. The backyard. The moonlight is a bit brighter than the last time.

Mikey sits on the picnic table. There is a glass of whiskey sitting next to him. He is holding a bottle of syrup to his face and a bottle of Ranch dressing to his left side.

Laura suddenly bursts in through the back gate, flush and angry.

LAURA

What the fuck is wrong with you?!

Mikey just stares at her, from behind the syrup.

LAURA

What were you thinking?! You're lucky he didn't kill you! That was none of your fucking business! I'm perfectly capable of fighting my own-

Notices the strange ice packs.

LAURA

... Is that maple syrup and.. and Ranch?

(Beat)

MIKEY

Yeah.

LAURA

???

MIKEY

Bernie sometimes gets confused about what goes in the freezer.

(Beat)

Slowly, despite her anger, a smile creeps onto Laura's face.

Mikey scootches over to make room on the table top.

Reluctantly, Laura sits next to him.

LAURA

Fuuuuck.

(Indicating his drink)

What's in that?

MIKEY

Whiskey. Straight.

LAURA

Gimmie some.

Mikey hands her the glass and she takes a long pull.

MIKEY

(wincing, as he gingerly inspects his ribs with
his fingers)

I don't even remember how I got this one...

LAURA

... You don't?

MIKEY

Everything after the "steaking" is kind of a blur.

LAURA

Its from when he was kicking you. After you went down.

MIKEY'S

Ah.

Classy fellow.

LAURA

You threw a *T-bone*. At his *head*.

MIKEY

Well, tell him to be nicer and he won't get steaked.

LAURA

You had no right.

MIKEY

He called you a...
Uh... ya know, a...

LAURA

A cunt, Mike! He called me a cunt. And, ya know what? Sometimes I am!
You don't believe me? Just ask my Mom. That's practically her pet name for me!

MIKEY

Still shouldn't have grabbed you like he did...

LAURA

Oh, please.
That was nothing.

MIKEY

Oh, really?

LAURA

Yes! He barely touched me.

MIKEY

Huh. Okay- then this shouldn't hurt at all-

He flicks Laura's upper arm.

LAURA

OWW!!
Fuck!

Laura shoves Mikey. Hard.

Too hard. Against his injured left side.

MIKEY

OOOOOOWWWW!!!
SHIT!

LAURA

Oh, fuck! I forgot! I'm sorry, I'm sorry!

Mikey paces and tries to walk off the pain.

MIKEY

Shit, shit, shit....

I know you don't feel the same way about me.
And I know this is just about the last thing you wanted to hear.
But I can't take it anymore. It hurts too much. I sit here with you. And we talk. And the most ridiculous, amazing shit comes out of your mouth. And I look into your perfect eyes --they are perfect, do you know that?- and all I want to do is find out what it would be like to hold you. Just that. Really. Just to wrap my arms around you and know what it feels like to... *breathe* with your body against mine.

(beat)

And the fact that your beautiful, intelligent, hysterical... self... is with that fucking moron we work with drives me insane.
It drives me to steak.
And I know it's not fair to hit you with all this. And I know we haven't known each other that long and you only think of me as a friend, but I just...
I can't do it anymore.
So.
I need you to kiss me.
Or I need you to leave.

Long Pause.

Laura leaves the yard.

MIKEY

(sitting back down)

Yep.

Bernie comes out with a small, stuffed monkey, which she holds and treats like a real human baby.

Pause.

She studies Mikey for a minute, then sits next to him.

BERNIE

You okay now, Mikey?

MIKEY

Nope.

BERNIE

(offering the stuffed monkey)

You want to hold Japes?

Nah. I'm good.

MIKEY

Silence for a bit. Bernie tends to her baby.

I'm fat, Bern.

MIKEY

BERNIE

(Laughing)
Mikeeeey! Y-you not fat!

Mikey lifts up his shirt and inspects his pudgy belly.

Fat. Big time.

MIKEY

N-no you not!

BERNIE

Mikey stands and sticks out his belly. Proudly.
Superhero-style.

Glorious.

MIKEY

Bernie laughs.

Mikey begins lightly slapping his belly and seeing how far he can make a "fat ripple" travel.

Eventually, he begins twisting the fat folds into various shapes, making faces, giving them unique voices, and talking to Bernie with them- much to her delight.

Finally, this becomes a very physical, musical exploration of fat slapping with a great, climactic ending.

**Note: the actor playing Mikey is encouraged to embrace his inner-clown and improv skills here. Nixon, Yoda, and Jimmy Stewart all make excellent belly-faces, just FYI. The Improv Belly Show should go on as long as possible. Ideally, it should be kinda epic and disturbingly beautiful. But if it's just stupid and silly, that's okay too.*

Mikey kneels down, exhausted and out of breath, and puts his head in Bernie's lap.

Long silence.

Mikey begins to cry.

Bernie strokes his head.

MIKEY

Think it's any better on the moon, Bern?

Pause.

BERNIE

(frankly)

No.

LIGHTS FADE.

END OF ACT ONE.

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE

Early the next evening. The Scorpio Lounge. Just before opening.

Mikey sits on the side of the bar, close to the kitchen door. He wears a white kitchen apron and a Cubs hat. He is eating a slice of pizza and drinking a Coke, while reading his book. His eye is blackened from bruising.

After a bit, Ski enters, in a clean bar apron.

Ski will set the bar up during the scene- filling the speed rails, cleaning leftover dirty glasses from the previous night, cutting garnish fruit, etc.

SKI

Thanks for workin' the kitchen tonight, kid.

Mikey raises his glass in polite acknowledgment.

An' sorry 'bout the short notice.

Mikey continues reading.

SKI

Whatcha readin'?

Mikey shrugs.

SKI

Huh.

Ski works.

SKI

Any good?

Mikey shrugs.

Ski works.

SKI

What's the story?

Mikey shrugs.

SKI

Huh.

Ski works.

SKI

Is it about an old fucker that keeps interrupting a kid just tryin' ta read in peace?

MIKEY

(smiling, not looking up)

Yep.

Ski gets the message. He continues his work in silence.

After a bit...

MIKEY

It's.

It's not really a story.

SKI

Oh yeah?

MIKEY

Yeah.

SKI

Non-fiction, eh?

Mikey shrugs.

Ski walks over and takes a look at the cover.

SKI

(reading)

"An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding and Selections From A Treatise on Human Nature."

Ski gestures: "check out Mr. Smarty Pants."

Mikey is a little embarrassed.

Ski resumes his work.

SKI

What's that mean, anyway? An inquiry?

Mikey looks up at Ski for the first time.

He's trying to decide if his Uncle is just busting his balls.

MIKEY

...

It's like...

It's like a question.

SKI

Well thank you very much, Mr. Peabody. I know what a fuckin' in-QUIRY is. I mean why'd the writer call it that?

MIKEY

...

Why do you care, Ski?

SKI

Don't, really.

Just makin' conversation.

Ski resumes his work.

(beat)

MIKEY

I guess... I guess cuz it's philosophy.

Ski works. Indicates for Mikey to continue.

MIKEY

I dunno. I've been reading a bunch of this stuff lately. And these guys seem to like to do that. They pose whole books in the form of giant questions. It's like they're afraid of answering anything definitively, so they just offer up *suggestions* as to what the answers to life's Big Questions "might" be. And I kinda dig that.

SKI

So what's the "Big Question" this guy is tryin' ta answer?

MIKEY

Stuff about Morality, I guess.

SKI

Morality, huh?

MIKEY

Yeah.

Like... Why we have morals. What those morals are based on.

SKI

...
Bible, no?

MIKEY

(treading carefully)

... yeeeah.

But, no. Not really.

...
He was an atheist, this author.
He didn't really believe in God.

(Tense beat)

SKI

Huh.

MIKEY

Yeah.

Mikey returns to his book.

Ski returns to his work.

SKI

No God, huh?

MIKEY

Nope.

SKI

So... no God, who's to say what's right an' wrong?

MIKEY

...

Well, I suppose he'd argue that *we* say.

People, that is.

I think- and, again, I'm not through the whole thing yet- I think he'd argue that people are basically good, with an innate sense of right and wrong. And that it's this...*feeling*, for lack of a better word, that morality should be based on. It's a pretty cool idea, actually.

...

Like, a "Collective Conscience of Humanity."

Ski just stares.

(back to his book)

Anyway, that's what the guy thinks.

SKI

...

Huh.

...

Kinda sounds like a ball game with no umpire, if ya ask me.

MIKEY

Hah. Yeah, I guess.

SKI

Could work, I suppose.

I mean... when I was a kid 'an we played ball in the street, there wasn't any ump. An' we had shitloads of fun.

In fact.

Haha... I remember, we had this one kid. He was kinda like the Stickball-Jesus of the Taylor Street Game:

Jimmy Vallenti.

God. Whatta sweet kid. Didn't matter what team he was on, ya know? Would fight for whoever was right. Always honest. 'An smart, too!

I mean, ya had to give it to him. He knew that fuckin game. I don't think he ever missed seein' the Cubbies play.

'An the way he'd talk... That's what I remember most, ya know? Never raised his voice. Always calm. Passive-like. Yah sorta hadda stop yellin' about whatever the fuck *your* problem was and lean in ta hear what he was sayin.'

'An the weird thing was, no matter how pissed you were, ya *wanted* to listen, ya know? I mean, yah really didn't do what he said so much cuz he was right- which he usually was, mind you- but because he made you *feel* like he was right. Made yah feel good.

Like... like disagreeing with him would make clouds, ya know?

Yeah.

It was always hotdogs and blue skies at Wrigley when Jimmy Vallenti talked.

(beat)

Anyway. Allz this is ta say, I get whatcha mean about the morality shit.
Sometimes... ya just know “right” when ya hear it. In yer guts.
An’ maybe, in the end, we trusted Jimmy cuz we felt like he was just a good kid who
wouldn’t steer us wrong.

(pointed)

More often than not, a good man almost always does the right thing, Mikey.

(beat)

(indicating the crucifix around his neck)

But, for the record, *this* never hurts either.

Ski kisses the crucifix, makes the sign of the cross, and
goes back to work.

MIKEY

Yeeeeeah, I think there’s about a thousand alter boys who’d disagree with that last part,
Uncle Ski.

SKI

(dangerous)

Watch it, kid.

Mikey holds up his hands in apology.

MIKEY

So... how do you know if you’re a good man or not?

SKI

Don’t know.
Never been one.
...
Why you askin’?

Pause. Mikey looks uncomfortable.

The phone rings.

Relieved to have a distraction, Mikey goes to answer it.

Scorpio Lounge.
MIKEY

Ski gestures for Mikey to say the rest.

MIKEY

(loathes this part)

“Bada-boom, Bada-bing, Where the Night Life is King”

...

We open at six AM.

...

And we close at five AM.

...

Yes, you heard me right.

Mikey hangs up.

Ski is still staring, waiting for Mikey to answer.

SKI

You gonna answer my question?

MIKEY

(a bit too harsh)

I dunno, Ski. *You* were the one who started talking. I just wanted to read.

Ski raises his hands in apology.

SKI

Okay.

You go back to yer book. I gotta finish settin’ up, anyway.

Ski goes back to work.

SKI

Yah mind if play a little music?

Mikey gestures, “*whatever*” and goes back to his book.

Ski presses some buttons on a bar remote and “*The Girl From Ipenema*” by Frank Sinatra begins to play from the bar speakers.

As Ski continues his set-up, he choreographs his motions along with Frank.

He just might be trying to elicit a smile from Mikey.

Eventually...

SKI

I kicked Sinatra's ass once, ya know.

Mikey gives Ski a disbelieving glance.

My hand to God, Mikey, I'm serious.

He was from Hoboken, Sinatra. Same place yer Uncle Ski grew up. An' we both went ta the same high school.

He was older, a' course. So, we never had any classes together or nuthin.'

But one day, after school, I go to meet yer Aunt Therese- we was already goin' together and *boy* she was a fuckin' looker back then. Legs up to here- fuckin' ass that'd make you wanna cry- and a pair a' titties so perfect, Saint Peter himself woulda dropped trou and started jerkin' it / if he saw-

MIKEY

Ski...

SKI

Sorry, sorry.

Anyways.

I go ta meet yer Aunt... an' who do I see chattin' her up? The fuckin' Chairman of the Board, himself. 'Course, he wasn't The Chairman back then.

An' the ballsy little fuck has got his arm around her! Like they're old swells or somthin'!

Weeeeeell, yer uncle Ski was a football player back in those days. Fullback. An'

Sinatra? I dunno, Sinatra was in glee club or theater or some fruity shit like that.

So I walk up... real nice, like. Big smile. An' I say "Hey buddy- yah wanna hear a joke...?"

What sound does a ninety-five pound sack of shit make when it hits the ground?"

He kinda puts his head to the side and looks at me like I'm wacky or sumthin'...

And BAM- I cold-cock 'im right between the baby blues!!!

Boom! Down he goes! Like an Irishman at a wake!

So now, of course, yer Aunt starts up: "AAHHHHH!!! Oh my God!!! *Oh my God!!!*"

What're you doing?! We were just talking!!!"- you remember how hysterical yer Aunt could be-

So I fire back- "Just talkin,' huh? Well, don't worry- when he wakes up, we'll *ALL* have a nice little talk- about why this grease-ball *fuck* should learn ta' keep his hands to himself!"

MIKEY

(enjoying it, despite himself)

Oh. My God.

SKI

Wait, wait! That's not even the best part!

Right at that exact moment... yer Aunt's father pulls up!

Ooooo... and Mikey, yer lucky you never got to meet *that* miserable S.O.B.. Meanest motherfucker I ever knew.

So, he gets outta the car, right? Starts walkin' over...

And there we are: Me, yer cryin' Aunt, and a bleedin,' unconscious Frank Sinatra.

He walks up. Doesn't even ask if his daughter's okay or nuthin.'

He just looks down at Sinatra.

Looks up at me.

An' he says-

"Fair fight?"

An' I say-

"Yes, sir."

He goes-

"He deserve it?"

An' I go-

"He disrespected yer daughter. So, yes sir. Absolutely."

Nods his head.

Says, "Ya know... fer a pollock... you might be alright, Bodanski."

Then he pats me on the cheek, sticks a sawbuck in my pocket, and walks Therese back ta the fuckin' car!

So, yeah.

Yer Uncle Ski got paid ten bucks ta beat up Sinatra, once.

Pause.

MIKEY

(laughing)

That's a *terrible* fucking story, Uncle Ski.

SKI

What? Why?

MIKEY

Why?! Ski! Do the words "aggravated assault" mean anything to-

...

Wait a minute...

Didn't you *just* finish telling me about playing stick-ball in Chicago when you were a kid? Then how the hell did you *also* grow up in Jersey?

...

Plus. Sinatra is, like, eighty now. There's no way you ever went to school with him.

Ski looks at him, deeply offended.

The offense turns to guilt.

The guilt turns into a wolfish smile.

MIKEY

(sharp. *Too* sharp.)

You and your bullshit.

You're a real fucking jerk. You know that, Ski?

Mikey goes back to his book.

Dangerous silence.

SKI

Hey kid? I get that somethin's eatin' you, tonight...

An' I ain't even gonna ask about that shiner yer sportin,'

...

But if yer gonna lay inta me about *my* bullshit, I want you ta know somethin'...

Noboby's makin' you sit here, pal. Yah know?

...

In fact... what the fuck are you doin' here, anyway?

MIKEY

...

Uh, you asked me to work, so-

SKI

Yeah. And why the fuck did you say yes?

MIKEY

Okaaaaay. What the hell, Uncle Ski?

I'm doin' you a favor cuz / Ramon called in sick-

SKI

I don't need yer fuckin' favors, kid.

MIKEY

/ Okaaaay..

SKI

I don't need yer favors. And neither does yer old man.
You've always looked down on this place, anyway.

...

C'mon, why don't you tell me what's really buggin' you?

Pause.

MIKEY

I'm *fine*, Ski.

SKI

Yer fine.
Alright.
Well, yah know what? I'm fine, too.
So just get the fuck outta here.

MIKEY

What?!

SKI

You heard me. Get the fuck out. I'll be all right by myself.

MIKEY

Ski-

SKI

No.
Out.

(beat)

MIKEY

(gathering his things)

Fine.

Mikey heads for the door.

SKI

'An kid?

...

Yer sister? She don't really need yer fuckin' favors either.

MIKEY

What the hell is *that* supposed to mean?

SKI

Yer the philosopher.
You figure it out.

Ski goes back to work.

Mikey exits.

The phone rings.

SKI

Scorpio Lounge.
Plato, speaking.

...

Aw, shit. Hey, Mike, sorry... Nah, I was just fuckin' around.
Waddya need?

...

No, why?

Ski listens for a bit. All the color drains from his face.

Are you fuckin' kiddin' me? When? *How?!*

...

Okay... okay...

Yeah, don't worry about it. I got it covered.

...

Nah. He, uh. He's not here...

Cuz I gave him the fuckin' night off, that's why!

...

Yeah.

I'll tell him if I see him.... Alright, bye.

Ski hangs up.

Pause.

SKI

(to God)

Yer a real fuckin' jerk, ya know that?

LIGHTS FADE.

SCENE TWO

Back at the house, in the family living room.

Gladys has collapsed to her knees in the center of the room. She looks as though she's been through a war. She stares into space.

Mike Sr is on the phone, pacing. He's scared. And when he gets scared, he rages.

MIKE SR.

...

Uh-huh.

Uh-huh.

So what yer *really* sayin' is- you have no fuckin' idea what anybody out there is doin'? Thataboutright?

...

Look- all I wanna know is how many bulls are on it, okay? Cuz maybe there should be a few more, ya know? I mean, it ain't like she's a normal person-

...

I understa-... I understand that.

But there's gotta be different laws that apply ta people like her, no? Maybe a special division that deals with-

...

Yeah...

Yeah, no, sure... you don't know *nuthin'* do ya?

I'll tell ya what, though- next time yoos guys call me fer a *union donation*? Guess what? I DON'T KNOW NUTHIN,' EITHER!

Mike slams the phone down, hanging up.

Useless. Fuckin.' *CUNTS!*

This is un-real! What do I pay all these taxes for?!

Just wait. Just fuckin' *wait* till the next time one 'a those bulls shows up at the Scorp lookin' fer a hand-out.

"Sorry, Officer! We're all tapped out. No more free boiler-makers fer *you!*"

Fuck!

...

You don't even *know*. Okay? You don't even know how many of those useless fuckin' pigs are crook, all right? Shit, the number that Ski and I have greased over the years? I've lost fuckin' *track!* I prolly put most of their kids through *college*. But, no, when it comes ta *mine*- they're all too fuckin' busy!

...

'An I'll tell ya somethin' *else*-

Michael. GLADYS

Yeah? MIKE SR.

Stop talking. GLADYS

Mike is about to respond, but thinks better of it and finally sits down.

Long Silence.

He gets back up.

He paces again, for a bit.

Finally, he goes for the phone again, but-

Mikey enters through the front door.

He takes in the tension in the room.

Oh, shit. MIKEY
Somebody really *did* die this time, didn't they?

No. MIKE SR.
Ski talk ta you?

Mikey shakes his head.

Siddown. MIKE SR.

Mikey goes to an armchair and sits, trepidatiously.

Yer sister's missin.' MIKE SR.

MIKEY

...
What?

MIKE SR.

She was on this new out-reach program... with Happy fuckin' Helpers, 'an... they were at K-mart, learnin' ta... buy toilet paper or some shit, 'an... one a' the other kids started freakin' out- you know how they get sometimes- so he pushed one a' the Aides, an' she fell over a stack a' *paint cans*-

MIKEY

Jesus.

MIKE SR.

Yeah. An'... I guess after they calmed everybody down, the Aide turned around, an' yer sister was... she was just *gone*.

MIKEY

What do you mean, *gone*?

MIKE SR.

Gone, Mikey. She's gone.
They can't find her. Anywhere.

Gladys begins to cry, quietly.

Mike Sr goes over, kneels down, and puts his arm around her.

MIKE SR.

They, uh. They searched the whole place, called security, searched the parking lot. But they don't know where the fuck she is.

MIKEY

Did you call the police?

MIKE SR.

What am I? An idiot? Of course we called the cops! It's the first thing we did. They want us sittin' here, like dumb shits. They said its important for us to stay home in case she comes back. You believe that? Like yer sister could find her way home even if she tried! But they said it's important ta stay close ta the phone in case they-

MIKEY

Well we gotta go look for her!

MIKE SR.

Aw, Christ! Gimmie some credit, will yah?! Ya think we listened ta that shit?! We been out *for hours*, Mikey. Kmart, her friends' houses- the whole neighborhood! We just came back ta check the machine and call the Scorp ta let you an' Ski know.

MIKEY

You've known *for hours* that Bernie was missing and you're just telling me now?!

MIKE SR.

If you'da known, what the fuck would you have done, differently, huh?!

MIKEY

(furious)

You still shoulda told me.

MIKE SR.

It's not like we knew what was goin' on! She coulda just been in the Kmart bathroom for all we knew!

MIKEY

...

Don't they have security cameras in that place?

MIKE SR.

Yeah, yeah I talked ta the security. They have her description. They said as soon as their manager comes in, they'll go through the tape footage and lemme know-

MIKEY

Their manager?! Why the hell / can't *they*-

MIKE SR.

It ain't that simple, Mikey. They can't. They don't have the key ta the tape / room-

MIKEY

Fuckin' *key*?! Did you tell them about her?!

MIKE SR.

Mike-

MIKEY

Did you say she's *different*?

MIKE SR.

/ of *course* I told em-

MIKEY

That she doesn't understand / and might have just gone off with the first-

MIKE SR.

Nobody. *Yes*. Nobody... NOBODY GETS IT, MIKEY!!!
Not like we do! Okay?! 'An they never will! No matter how many times I try to explain it or how many useless fuckin' security guards I threaten! They don't get it!
They don't get that she's *worse* than a little kid! That she'll go off *with anyone*. That she'll *do anything*. That she might be with some sick fuckin' asshole *right now* 'an he could-

...

I mean. These poor sonsabitches actually asked me "have you talked to her friends? Maybe one of *them* knows?"
'An I'm like 'Yeah. Sure. Who should I start with? The kid in the wheelchair who hasn't moved in ten years, or the girl who throws her own *shit* at people?!

MIKEY

Maybe one of the Down's kids-

MIKE SR.

We asked, Mikey. They don't know.

...

Her friend Julie suggested that maybe Bernie was in her room, *coloring*.
You wanna go upstairs and check?

Pause.

Mikey sits, stunned, as the reality as what has happened sinks in.

MIKEY

(realizing)

Holy shit. This is my fault.

MIKE SR.

Waddy talkin' about?

MIKEY

I said something to her. The other day.
Told her I was thinking about going away for a while.

MIKE SR.

Wha? Where *you* goin'?

MIKEY

No, nowhere. I was. I was just thinking about taking a trip, but... maybe she thought I meant I wasn't coming *back*.

MIKE SR.

Aw, Mikey. / No.

MIKEY

No, I- I may have lead her to believe that I was gonna be gone for longer / than I-

MIKE SR.

Mike.

MIKEY

No! Listen to me! She might have gotten upset and-

MIKE SR.

And what? She decided to take off an' join the carnival? C'mon, Mikey, use yer head. How far you think yer sister coulda gotten on her own? It's more likely that somebody came up ta her in the Kmart, an-

MIKEY

What was she doing out of the workshop shelter in the first place? What "Out Reach" program are you talking about?

MIKE SR.

I told yah. It's this new program Happy Helpers is doin.' They take the kids out into the community. Teach 'em ta shop and mail letters 'an all that. Tryin' ta make 'em self-reliant.

MIKEY

When did she start doin' this?

MIKE SR.

I dunno. We signed the permission slip a couple months ago, I think?

MIKEY

Again with this shit! Are you fucking kidding me?

MIKE SR.

What?

MIKEY

How could you not *tell* me something like that?!

MIKE SR.

What does it even *matter* right now?

MIKEY

It matters because she's my *sister!*
And maybe I would've had something to *say* about that!
Maybe, if you actually gave a shit about my opinion, I coulda told you that that was a *terrible* idea!
That she wasn't *ready*, yet!
That it was too dangerous!
Then, maybe, Bernie would be sitting right over there, *safe*, instead of God-knows-where!
FUCK!

Pause.

MIKE SR.

Whaddaya want from me, Mikey?

MIKEY

I want you to start tagging me in! I want to share some of the responsibility-

MIKE SR.

No. Yah *don't*.
I love yah and I know yah wanna help, but yah don't understand. It's a fuckin' *war*, Mikey, fightin' for her everyday, and yah don't want no part a' this.
Yer too young.
Yah gotta learn how ta take care of *yerself*, kid, before yah can take care of anybody else.

MIKEY

Yeah.
Well, you'd know all about *that*.
Wouldn't you?

(tense beat)

Mikey heads for the door.

GLADYS

Mikey! Where you goin'?

MIKEY

I'm gonna go look for her.

GLADYS

But we might need you here, / in case they-

MIKEY

I can't just sit here, Ma. I can't. I gotta go look.
I'll check the park. She loves the park.
It's not far. I'll be right back.

Mikey exits.

Silence.

GLADYS

Michael?

Mike Sr is a churning volcano, lost in his own thoughts.

GLADYS

He's scared, Michael. He's just scared and lashing out.

...

Michael.
Look at me.

He does.

Gladys goes over and takes his face in her hands. A rare tender moment between them.

GLADYS

This isn't your fault.

MIKE SR.

(as emotional as he gets)

I'm such an asshole, Glad. Why d'yah think Bernie yells at me every time I go ta hug her these / days-

GLADYS

(tenderly)

Michael.
Stop talking.

Pause.

Suddenly, the front door opens and Ski bursts in. He is still wearing his bar apron, and carries a baseball bat.

SKI

(out of breath)

Okay! I'm here!

What's the fuckin' plan?!

MIKE SR.

Ski! What're you doin' here?

...

Who's watchin' the *Scorp*?!

SKI

Don' worry.

I got somebody ta cover it.

MIKE SR.

Who?

SKI

Don' worry about it.

MIKE SR.

Don' tell me not to worry! Who's watchin' my fuckin' bar, Ski?!

SKI

(hesitant)

... Joe Mussels.

MIKE SR.

Are you outta yer fuckin' mind?!

SKI

There was nobody else around!

MIKE SR.

The taps'll be bone-dry by the time we close!

SKI

C'mon, how much could one guy drink...?

MIKE SR.

The Mussels?!

A LOT.

SKI

I couldn't... I couldn't just *sit* there, Mike.

MIKE SR.

Look, Ski, I appreciate the gesture, / but-

SKI

C'mon, Mike.

Thaz my *girl*.

I love her just as much as you and Glad.

Ya gotta let me help.

MIKE SR.

...

Alright, alright.

...

But what the fuck's the *bat* for?

SKI

Well we're gonna go look fer her, right?

MIKE SR.

... *Yeah?*

SKI

Soooo...

Indicates the bat. As if the answer should be obvious.

MIKE SR.

So *what?*

SKI

Well, I...

(beat. He really doesn't know.)

(an idea)

Well! If we ever find the motherfuckers that *took* her, we can-

Ski swings the bat, demonstratively.

MIKE SR.

(exasperated)

Ski...

We don't even know what happened. Not really. She mighta just decided ta go fer a walk. We don't know.

SKI

Well... let's get out there, then!
Comb the neighborhood! Bust some heads!

MIKE SR.

Waddya wanna shake down the *local punks*, Columbo?

SKI

C'mon, Mike!

Pause.

Mike shares a look with Gladys.

She nods her approval.

MIKE SR.

Alright.
But leave the bat, yah crazy old fuck.

Ski places the bat in a corner.

MIKE SR.

I guess we'll just start at the Kmart an' make a circle till we-

The doorbell rings.

Ski opens the door.

Bernie is standing there. She holds a small, stuffed, pink butterfly.

BERNIE

HI, MOM!

Behind her, just out of view, is a young man with a big yellow bicycle and a huge grin on his face.

**Note: In this scene, Jeff sincerely does not think that he's done anything wrong. And, honestly, he just might be right.*

GLADYS

BERNIE?! / OH MY GOD!

Gladys rushes to Bernie and embraces her. She quickly ushers her into the apartment.

MIKE SR.

Bernie! Where the hell have you been?!

BERNIE

(casual)

I dunno.

JEFF

(waving from the doorway)

Hi, Mrs. Vincolo!

MIKE SR.

Who the hell are *you*, kid?

GLADYS

Oh my God, it's-

JEFF

(coming forward and shaking Mike Sr.'s hand)

Nice to meet you! Are you Bernie's Dad? I'm Jeff Goldblum... Bernie's boyfriend!

Gladys begins fawning over Bernie, looking for injuries, etc.

GLADYS

Bernie! Are you okay?! / Are you hurt anywhere?!

BERNIE

Yah, Mom! God, I'm fiiiiine!

Bernie squirms out of her grasp.

MIKE SR.

Who the fuck is this?

JEFF

Whoa. That's a *really* bad word.

GLADYS

Mike!... this is *Jeff Goldblum*.
Jeff used to work with Bernie... over at *Happy Helpers*.

(beat)

MIKE SR.

(realizing)

Oh, *Chriiist*

JEFF

Yeah, you really shouldn't say that either, Mr. Vincolo. I don't know if that's technically a swear or not, but you definitely don't want to make Jesus mad.

GLADYS

Jeff-

JEFF

He doesn't like hearing his name out loud, for some reason?

GLADYS

/ Jeff-

JEFF

And my Mom says that Jesus hears everything we say / and so it's probably-

GLADYS

Jeff!

...

Were *you* the one who took Bernie from Kmart?

JEFF

Aw, no.

No, no, no, Mrs. Vincolo. I didn't *take* her... I *saved* her! It was *awesome!* I was just at work, cleaning the floors, ya know? And I turned around and there she was!

GLADYS

Wait... you work at Kmart?

JEFF

Yeah! That's my new job! I'm a janitor over there! Anyways, I saw her and I really wanted to go up and talk to her and tell her how I felt, ya know?

BUT THEN! Guess what?! A FIGHT broke out! People were getting thrown around and there were, like, *paint cans* flying all over the place! It was pretty scary stuff!

But I take karate and my Sensei? He always says that, if you can, you should always try and run away from a fight, first. So, I got Bernie *out* of there! I mean, I'm not trying to brag or anything, but I've been thinking about it? And I think I probably saved her life, ya know?

(beat)

SKI

I dunno whether ta' kiss this kid or fuckin' kill 'im.

JEFF

Wow. You guys swear a lot, huh?

GLADYS

Jeff, where have you two *been* all day?! Why didn't you bring her straight home?!

JEFF

Oh! I didn't tell you the *best part!*

After I got her outside and out of immediate danger, I asked her out on a date! And guess what?! She said yes!

BERNIE

Yah.

JEFF

Yeah! And I didn't wanna wait, ya know? Cuz I've already been waiting, like, a super long time to take her out / and I also kinda didn't want her to change her mind-

GLADYS

Jeff... *Jeff!*

Where did you two go, Jeff? On your date?

JEFF

Well, I tried to ask Bernie where she wanted to go and what *she* wanted to do, but she just kept saying that she didn't know.

BERNIE

Yah. *I dunno.*

JEFF

Right! So probably my favorite thing in the world to do, besides watch TV, is to go *bowling*. So, I thought maybe Bernie might like to do that, too. AND SHE TOTALLY DID!

BERNIE

Yah.

JEFF

So we bowled a buncha games and then Bernie said she was hungry-

BERNIE

Yah. I was *hungwy*, Mom.

JEFF

So, we got a pepperoni pizza. And some hot wings. And some jalapeño poppers. And a basket of cheese fries with bacon. And some nachos. And a pitcher of Dr. Pepper. Which, I don't normally drink / but I remembered-

MIKE SR.

Madonn, this chiacchierone!

Pause. The Italian throws Jeff off.

JEFF

I don't know what that means.

...

So, anyway, I didn't drink the Dr. Pepper-

GLADYS

Jeff.

Is that all you did? You went bowling?

JEFF

Aw, no! We were having such a great time, I didn't want it to end!

BERNIE

Yah!

JEFF

We did *tons* of other stuff! We went to Magical Palace and played ski-ball. AND I TOTALLY WON BERNIE A PRIZE!

BERNIE

Yah, I got a butterfly, Mom!

Bernie holds up her prize.

JEFF

Yeah! Then I took Bernie back to my house and made her my girlfriend. And we watched some TV for awhile / and I made a baloney sandwich. Then I realized-

MIKE SR.

Wait...

SKI

/ The *fuck* he-?

GLADYS

Jeff... what did you say you did at your house? Did you say that you... made Bernie your girlfriend?

JEFF

(very pleased)

Yeah.

GLADYS

(carefully)

What does that *mean*, Jeff?

JEFF

Well I wanted to make sure that Bernie was my girlfriend before the date was over and my brother told me about the things that people do when they're boyfriend and girlfriend, so I wanted to make sure *we* did those things before she left.

Pause.

Mike Sr bites his own fist.

GLADYS

(dread)

What did you *do*, Jeff?

JEFF

Oh, well I really can't tell you *that*.
Cuz it's really, like, super private.

GLADYS

Jeff.

...

You *have* to tell us what you did? Do you understand?

JEFF

No, I don't think I do. My brother says it's not polite to talk about that stuff.
That...

(trying hard to remember)

What happens... between a man and a woman... is their... business. And no one else's.

BERNIE

Yah.

Pause.

MIKE SR.

(quiet. Dangerous.)

Gladys...

Take Bernie upstairs and check her out, please.

Gladys goes to Bernie and tries to usher her up the stairs.

GLADYS

C'mon, Bernie, let's-

Bernie jerks away.

BERNIE

NO, MOM!!!

GLADYS

Bernie, please...

BERNIE

I DON WANT TOOooo!!!

GLADYS

(on the edge)

Bernie... You're still in yer work clothes... Let's go change, okay? Don't you think you'd be more comfortable?

BERNIE

NOOOO!!!

SKI

Hey Bernie? Yah know that Beatles sweatshirt you have, that I like? Do you think you could put it on fer yer Uncle Ski? I really wanna see it, again...

(beat)

Fiiiiiiiine.

BERNIE

Gladys tries, again, to usher Bernie up the stairs.

She notices something, when she puts her hand on Bernie's back.

Bernie... where's your bra?

GLADYS

I-I-I dunno.

BERNIE

Bernie exits up the stairs, stomping in protest, as she goes.

I'll... um.
I'll try calling Jeff's parents while I'm up there, too.

GLADYS

Oh, nobody's home, Mrs. Vincolo. My Mom and Dad don't get home from work till super-late.

JEFF

Gladys exits, up the stairs.

After the girls are gone, Ski and Mike Sr slowly turn toward Jeff. Like a pair of wolves, focusing in on a rabbit.

Jeff waves at them, happily.

(beat)

Mike Sr starts moving toward Jeff, murder in his eyes.

Ski intercepts him and pulls him aside.

Whoa, whoa. Eaaaaasy there, Mike.

SKI

MIKE SR.

(shaking Ski off)

Mind yer fuckin' business, Ski.

SKI

(trying to calm him)

Okay, okay...

Lez just... let's take a couple deep breaths and just... just try and caaaalm down.

Alright?

Mike Sr tries to calm himself.

SKI

Yah can't do it, Michael-Angelo.

Okay?

Yah just... yah just *can't*.

I don't think the kid knew he was doin' anything, like.. *wrong*, ya know?

Plus... we don't really know *what* he did. Maybe he thinks *huggin'* a broad makes her yer girlfriend? How do we know this kid knows what the other stuff even *is*? Or that he can even *do* it? I mean... they're on a lotta medications, these guys, right...?

MIKE SR.

...

Yeah.

Maybe.

Mike Sr takes a breath.

He starts to move towards Jeff.

Ski stops him, again.

SKI

Mike-

MIKE SR.

I'm just. I'm just gonna go *talk* ta him, okay?

Ski studies Mike, for a moment.

Satisfied that Mike will behave himself, he lets him go.

Mike Sr moves back toward Jeff.

JEFF

Hey, Mr. Vincolo? Can I some water, or something?
Or some Cheerios, if you have them?

MIKE SR.

...
Ski... get the kid a glass a' water.

Still suspicious, Ski heads off and exits to the kitchen.

(beat)

Ski re-enters, retrieves the bat, and exits with it, for good measure.

JEFF

I should probably go home pretty soon, Mr. Vincolo. My Mom likes it when I tape *ER* for her and it's on in / about-

MIKE SR.

Hey Jeff- yer on medications, right?

JEFF

Medi... you mean, like, pills?

MIKE SR.

Yeah, pills.

JEFF

Well, my Mom gives me a red Flintstones vitamin every day. And sometimes my Dad makes me take castor oil, cuz I get constipated a lot.

MIKE SR.

/ Fuck.

JEFF

He says it's cuz I eat too much cheese. But I don't think that's it. Personally, I think it's the bananas that my mom puts in my oatmeal. / Cuz those things just *look* like they'd block the poop from-

MIKE SR.

Jeff...

JEFF!

That's it? Just vitamins?

JEFF

Well sometimes, late at night, I drink the grape Dimetapp. Even though I don't have a cold. I just like the taste.

MIKE SR.

Fuuuuuck.

JEFF

Wow. I've never heard the f-word used *so many times*.

MIKE SR.

Jeff.

Can you tell me what a boyfriend and a girlfriend do together?

JEFF

Waddy mean?

MIKE SR.

Like... when they're alone.

Like, what you and Bernie did together at your house?

JEFF

Aw, no. I already told you, I can't talk about *that*, Mr. Vincolo. It- it wouldn't be right.

MIKE SR.

Right, right. Okay. Ooooookay.

...

(an idea)

But what about just... in general? Huh? Like, uh, what did yer brother *tell* you a boyfriend and a girlfriend do?

I don' wanna know what you and *Bernie* did, ya understand?

Cuz yer right. That wouldn't be nice.

But just, like, what do a boyfriend and a girlfriend do- when they're alone- ta show their feelings?

Can you... explain it ta me?

JEFF

(amazed)

Ya mean you don't *know*?

MIKE SR.

(strained)

No, Jeff... I don't know.

JEFF

(confused)

But aren't you, like, *married* to Mrs. Vincolo?

Ski re-enters with the glass of water.

SKI

How's it goin' in here?

JEFF

Kinda confusing, actually. Is that my water?

SKI

Yeah. Here ya go, kid.

Ski hands Jeff the water.

JEFF

There weren't any Cheerios?

SKI

No. No Cheerios.

JEFF

Could I get some ice, do ya think?

Mike Sr looks as if he might explode.

SKI

Kid, trust me... just drink the fuckin' water, okay?

Bernie and Gladys come down the stairs and enter.

Bernie wears her Beatles shirt and a fresh pair of pants.

BERNIE

Look at my Beatles shirt, Uncle Ski!

SKI

Ah, it's beautiful, darlin'.

BERNIE

(looking down at the shirt, proud)

Yah, it's got Wingo on it! He's my favorite!

JEFF

Wow! Cool shirt, Bernie!

Mike Sr and Ski look to Gladys, expectantly.

GLADYS

...

I couldn't tell.

MIKE SR.

Waddy mean?

GLADYS

I don't know, Mike! I'm not a doctor!

I mean... there was no *blood*, but... that doesn't necessarily mean...

Mikey enters, through the front door.

He freezes, when he sees his sister.

BERNIE

MIIIIIIIKEEEEEEEYYY!!!

Bernie runs up and assault-hugs him.

MIKEY

(as he holds her)

Thank fucking God.

Where *were* you, Bern?! Huh?!

BERNIE

I missed you, Mikey! / A lot!

MIKEY

Yeah, yeah- I missed you too, Bern, but where *were* you?

(to the family)

What the hell happened? / Where was she?

JEFF

Hi, Mike!

MIKEY

Yeah, hi Jeff.

Mikey does a double-take.

MIKEY

JEFF?! What are *you* doing here?!
Ma?!

GLADYS

Yer sister was with Jeff all day, Mikey.

MIKEY

What?! Why?!

JEFF

We were on a date!

BERNIE

Yah!

Mikey looks to his parents, confused.

MIKE SR.

Jeff kinda... bumped into her at Kmart, an'... thought it'd be a okay, ta... just take her or somethin' an'... I dunno, they spent the day together. He thought, uh... he thought they were out on a *date*.

MIKEY

Oh my God...

(enraged)

Jeff! You can't...
Ya can't *do* that, pal!

JEFF

Waddy mean?

MIKEY

Yah can't just *take* my sister / cuz you *like* her-

JEFF

Well, I didn't *take* her. I asked her out on a date.

MIKEY

Well, yah *can't* Jeff... okay?

JEFF

...

Well why not?

MIKEY

CUZ YAH JUST FUCKIN' *CAN'T!!!*

GLADYS

Mikey...

JEFF

But she's my *girlfriend*...

MIKEY

NO, SHE'S *NOT*, JEFF! OKAY?! *SHE'S REALLY FUCKIN' NOT!!*

Bernie begins to cry. All the things she's feeling are overwhelming her and she can't get them out.

JEFF

But she *said* she was...

MIKEY

Yeah, I'm sure she *did*, Jeff! I'm sure she *did*! She says *a lot* of things! But she doesn't know what she's sayin', pal, okay?! / She doesn't understand!

BERNIE

(quietly)

I know what I'm sayin'...

MIKEY

So she can't be your *girlfriend*, okay?!

JEFF

Well, why don't we just ask *her*?

MIKEY

Cuz it wouldn't *matter*, Jeff!

BERNIE

(a bit louder)

/ I know what I'm sayin'...

MIKEY

She'd just say 'yes!' But that doesn't *mean* anything, do you understand? We can't trust that she *actually* knows what she's-

BERNIE

I KNOW WHAT I'M SAYIN'! I KNOW WHAT I'M SAYIN'! I KNOW WHAT I'M SAYIN'!

Pause.

For the first time in the play, everyone completely focuses on Bernadette M. Vincolo.

MIKEY

Bern, I...

BERNIE

(furious)

YOU GO TO DE *MOON*, MIKEY!!!

MIKEY

(stunned)

What?

Bernie pushes Mikey on each "Moon."

BERNIE

GO TO DE *MOON!*

Push.

GO TO DE *MOON!*

Push.

GO TO DE *MOOOOON!*

The final push sends Mikey onto the couch.

He sits there, stunned.

Bernie, crying and terrified of what she's done, runs to her mother.

Gladys holds her.

GLADYS

Shhhh... its alright, Bernie.

BERNIE

(crying)

I'm sorry, I'm so sorry...

GLADYS

Shhhh... I know, baby, it's okay, shhhh...

BERNIE

I hit Mikey, Mom! I hit *Mikey!*

GLADYS

He knows you didn't mean it, sweetie. It's okay, shhhh...

Long, stunned silence.

GLADYS

Well.

I think that's quite enough drama for one day.

BERNIE

(still crying, a little)

Yah.

GLADYS

Ski? Would you take Jeff home, please?

JEFF

I have my bike, Mrs. Vincolo.

GLADYS

Well, don't you think its time to head home for dinner, Jeff?

JEFF

I'm not really hungry, but... I think I wanna leave, anyway.

GLADYS

Will you be okay getting home by yourself?

JEFF

Yeah. I'm super-good at riding my bike.

Jeff heads for the door.

JEFF

Bye, Bernie. I'll call you when I get home, okay?

BERNIE

Okay.

JEFF

(at the door)

Boy. This house is kinda *crazy*.

Jeff exits, shutting the front door behind him.

(beat)

Mike Sr walks over and, very purposefully, rips the phone chord out of the wall.

GLADYS

Miiiiike... what if Happy Helpers calls and wants to-

MIKE SR.

Fuck 'em.

Let 'em think she's still missing.

Let 'em sweat.

(beat)

God, I'm fuckin' starvin.'

Anybody else / hungry-?

BERNIE

/ *Yah.*

GLADYS

/ *Yes.*

SKI

/ *Oh, yeah.*

MIKEY

/ Can we *please* never stop eating?

SKI

I'll go.

Ski heads for the front door.

SKI

Whatta yoos guys think? Dominoes?

GLADYS

Ugh. Their pizza is terrible.

MIKE SR.

Fuck *that*.

BERNIE

Yah, *fuck dat*, Uncle Ski!

The entire family cracks up. This is the *first time* they have ever heard Bernie say the F-word in her life. She is delighted with herself.

MIKE SR.

(laughing)

Well, yer just *fulla* surprises, today.

GLADYS

(laughing- to Mike Sr.)

You see! You see what you do?!

SKI

(laughing)

Ah, shit. Okay! No Dominoes!
Maybe Miss Potty Mouth should pick.
Waddya *you* want, Bernie?

BERNIE

I-

SKI

(teasing)

And don't tell me ya don't know!

BERNIE

I w-want de Kewnel Chicken!

Ski nods, impressed at her quick decisiveness.

SKI

Well, alright then.

Colonel Chicken.

Fer my *girl*.

With a wink, Ski exits through the front door.

(beat)

GLADYS

(the Jeff situation)

Mike, what about...?

MIKE SR.

Later. We'll just. Deal with it all *later*.

Mike Sr heads for the stairs.

MIKE SR.

I gotta lay down fer awhile.

Call me when Ski gets here with the grub.

Bernie runs over and intercepts him.

She envelopes him in a gigantic hug.

MIKE SR.

Oh, *now* I get a hug, huh?

BERNIE

Yah.

MIKE SR.

How come?

I dunno.

BERNIE

A bit awkwardly, Mike Sr. Hugs her back.

MIKE SR.

I love you, Bernie.

BERNIE

Love you too, Daddy.

MIKE SR.

C'mon. You should probably have a little nap, too.

Mike Sr breaks the hug and starts heading for the stairs.

MIKE SR.

You've had a long day of giving your father a heart-attack.

BERNIE

Yah.

Bernie follows him, and they both exit, up the stairs.

Silence. Peace.

Mikey has remained on the couch, still spaced-out and reeling from his exchange with Bernie.

Gladys notices. Eventually, she comes over and puts her hand on his shoulder.

GLADYS

You okay?

MIKEY

Huh?
Oh, yeah. Yeah.

He takes his mother's hand.

Just glad to have her back, ya know?

GLADYS

...

She didn't mean what she said, Mikey.

MIKEY

Yeah, she did. She definitely did.

GLADYS

All that nonsense about the moon? She was angry. It doesn't mean anything.

MIKEY

Nah, you're wrong.

I actually think it might mean *everything*.

Deciding not to press it, Gladys simply gives her son a kiss on the head and exits.

Mikey is left alone on stage, with his thoughts.

LIGHTS FADE.

SCENE THREE

The next evening. The back yard. The moonlight is the brightest that we've seen it.

Bernie and Laura sit on the picnic table and flip through Bernie's Elvis book.

LAURA

Wow.

He was actually pretty hot, when he was younger.

BERNIE

Yah!

LAURA

I mean... I guess I *knew* that? But I think our generation only thinks of Elvis as, like... fat and old. Like a bad Vegas Lounge act, ya know?

BERNIE

Yah.

LAURA

(as she flips through)

But, man, his career was *amazing*.

Behind the girls, we see Mikey come home from work. He wears his theme-restaurant uniform. They do not notice his arrival.

Mikey listens by the patio door, unseen.

LAURA

Is that him with Mary Tyler Moore?!

Ohmygod look how *young* she is!

God, I fucking *love* her.

BERNIE

Yah, I-I fuckin' love her, *too!*

LAURA

Right?

Laura high-fives Bernie.

They flip through some more.

BERNIE

(pointing)

D-dis one's my favorite, Laura!

LAURA

Oh yeah? How come?

BERNIE

Cuz he's so handsome!

LAURA

Yeah, *I'd* do him.

BERNIE

(laughing)

Yah! Me too!

I'm gonna make him my boyfwend!

MIKEY

(from behind them)

Oh *please* God, no.

The girls turn around.

BERNIE

/ HI MIKEY!

LAURA

Oh, hey!

MIKEY

I think you've reached maximum boyfriend capacity for the week, Bern.

BERNIE

Mikey, d-dis my fwend, Laura.

MIKEY

Oh! Well, hello. So nice to meet you.

Laura laughs.

Awkward pause.

MIKEY

So... what're you guys doin' back here?

LAURA

Well, I came by to see *you*, and your sister was nice enough to invite me in and show me her Elvis book.

...

Its such a gorgeous night, we thought we'd just hang out here.

BERNIE

Yah.

MIKEY

Cool.

...

Well... what'd ya wanna see me about?

(beat)

LAURA

Um, hey, Bernie?
Do ya think I could talk to your brother alone, for a second?

BERNIE

Yah.

MIKE

Why don't you go get ready for bed, Bern?

BERNIE

Okay.

Bernie starts to head into the house.

BERNIE

(turning back)

I really like your hair, Laura.

LAURA

Aw. Thanks, Bern.

BERNIE

Yah. It's really fuckin' cool.

Bernie exits into the house and up the stairs.

MIKEY

That is gonna take some getting used to.

LAURA

What?

MIKEY

Bernie decided, yesterday, that she really loves the f-word.

LAURA

Ah. I can relate.
What was so special about *yesterday*?

MIKEY

That... is a three-beer-minimum question.

LAURA

Mm.
Rough one, huh?

MIKEY

You could say that, yeah.

LAURA

Mmm.

(beat)

That the reason you, uh, put in your two-weeks-notice, today?

MIKEY

...

You heard, huh?

LAURA

Yup.
John told me. When he got home.

MIKEY

Ah.
And how is Dear Old John?
Healing nicely, I hope?

LAURA

(teasing)

Well, I mean...he didn't really have a mark on him, so...

MIKEY

Nice.

Pause.

LAURA

So... what's the plan, Stan?
Whatcha gonna do?

MIKEY

Ooooh... thought maybe I'd move to the south of France.
Cut off my ear. Paint some trees.

LAURA

(embarrassed)

Nice.

...

Listen. If you're quitting... because of / *me*...

MIKEY

I'm not. I'm just, uh...

Its just time, ya know?

Way *past* time, to be honest.

Gotta get outta this house. Outta this town.

(beat)

LAURA

Where ya gonna go?

MIKEY

The city, I guess. Somewhere with cheap rent.

LAURA

And do what?

MIKEY

Well, its gonna have to be another restaurant job, at first, but.

I dunno. I was thinkin' maybe college?

Loyola's got a decent philosophy program, so...

LAURA

Philosophy?

MIKEY

(embarrassed)

Yeah, maybe.

LAURA

Dude, you're crazy. Major in *money*.

Mikey laughs.

Pause.

LAURA

So... am I still gonna see you?

MIKEY

Yeah, I mean. I've still got two weeks.
So, I'll see you at work.

LAURA

That's not what I meant.

MIKEY

I know.

Pause.

LAURA

Got it.
Okay.

Pause. Laura starts to leave the yard.

LAURA

No. *Not* okay.

...

Fuck! You're right, I don't feel... *that way* about you.

And I'm sorry about that, but-

No. *Fuck* that. I'm not sorry. I'm entitled to my feelings just as much as you are to yours. And I hate this. In my fucking *guts*, I do.

I respect how you feel, but...

Look.

(beat- this is hard for her)

Maybe you have, like, a zillion friends?

But I... *don't*.

So this hurts *my* heart just as much as it does yours.

MIKEY

...

You're right.

Sucks to be us both. I wish I could turn it off, but.

...

I just need... I just need a little space. I think.

And some time. Okay?

LAURA

...

Okay.

...

But don't take too long.
Cuz I really miss you.

Laura walks over and embraces Mikey.

Awkwardly, he returns the embrace.

It continues for a *really* long time.

MIKEY

Um.
Are friends supposed to hold each other / this-?

LAURA

Mikey.

MIKEY

Yeah?

LAURA

Stop talking.
...
Just breathe.

Mikey finally realizes what is happening and just enjoys the feeling of her breathing, against him.

After a bit, Laura breaks off and heads for the back gate.

LAURA

I am gonna make sure everybody hazes you sooo baaad these last two weeks.

Laura leaves the yard.

Mikey sits on the table top, looking up at the moon and enjoying his euphoria.

Bernie comes down the stairs, dressed in her pajamas and carrying her stuffed monkey.

She studies her brother for a minute from the back doorway.

BERNIE

You okay, Mikey?

Yeah, Bern.
I think I actually am.

MIKEY

Bernie starts to head to her sandbox.

Hey Bern?

MIKEY

Yah?

BERNIE

Thanks.

MIKEY

(beat)

BERNIE

Yah.

(frankly)

Bernie plops down and begins her methodical sand-pouring.

Pause.

Mikey starts to exit into the house.

Yah know mom's gonna kill you when she finds you in the sand in yer PJ's, right?

MIKEY

I-I don't fuckin' care.

BERNIE

Mikey nods and smiles.

Night, Bern.

MIKEY

N-night, Mikey.

BERNIE

Alone on stage, Bernie continues her sand-pouring.

After a bit, she sings to herself.

Maybe she's aware of the significance of the words.
Maybe not.

Maybe it doesn't matter.

BERNIE

Know I can be found
Sittin' all alone
If you can't come around
At least just use de phone
Don be cruuuuuuuuel
To a heart dats truuuuuue

LIGHTS FADE.

END OF PLAY.