

BREAKUP AT BREAKFAST

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ACT I

Setting: All the scenes take place at the Bremmer's, a nice house in a small town near a big city. There is also a small orchard and a piece of lawn with a cow.

At rise: All the actors are always on stage.

SCENE 1

Setting: Apart from the main set, on a separate corner clearly marked as not being part of the Bremmer's house, there is a small kitchen table and a small kitchenette. It could even be a children's kitchen with toy kitchen-like equipment. Matt is making breakfast while Jane is sitting at the table wearing only a t-shirt. There's a stuffed-cat.

MATT

Do you like thyme?

JANE

Sure

MATT

I'll put some on the eggs.

JANE

Sounds good.

MATT

I've been putting it on everything recently. (*Long pause*) It's so good. (*Long pause*) It goes well on almost anything. (*Long pause*) Sweet potatoes, beef, salmon. (*Long pause*) It has to be fresh, though.

JANE

Yeah, I agree. (*Long pause*) I like thyme. (*Long pause*) I usually use it on potatoes. (*Long pause*) Actually, (*Pause*) I still have to cook those potatoes for you.

MATT

Do you want bread?

JANE

Sure. (*Long pause*) It's funny I haven't cooked for you yet. (*Long pause*) I love cooking. (*Long pause*) I think you'd like my potatoes.

MATT

I bought a bread from a local farm this week, it was so good. A new corner shop opened two blocks from here. It's so good. A bit pricey. It's worth it though. I end up eating less, but I eat better. There was nothing like it in this neighborhood until like a month ago. Anyway, it seems that I finished the bread. Sorry, it was so good. Let me see, what else I can offer you? Sorry, I haven't had time to do my groceries. I've been working until late.

JANE

Eggs and coffee is just fine.

MATT

Sorry

(*Long pause*)

JANE

Yeah, I was wondering, I did send you a lot of messages.

MATT

Before yesterday?

JANE

Yeah.

MATT

Oh, sorry, ehm, I don't know, I've been having problems with my messages, I guess.

JANE

Ah.

MATT

This week was crazy. I'm exhausted.

JANE

(Shudders) So, what are your plans for today? Still busy?

MATT

Well, I have errands to do. Clean up a bit, ha, go to the grocery store. Laundry. I have to send some emails. *(Long pause)* What about you? *(Pause)* I mean, you are more than welcome to stay if you want to. I'll be in and out but--

JANE

Oh no, no, sorry, I didn't meant to... I have stuff to do, but thanks. *(Long pause)* My laundry is getting out of control.

(Long uncomfortable silence. They both look at the cat for a while)

MATT

Sir Arthur has been weird lately. I took him to the vet, he said he's fine. I don't know. Do cats get depressed? *(Pause)* I've been thinking I should find him a lady.

JANE

Jane?

MATT

(nervous laughter)

JANE

(nervous laughter)

(Long uncomfortable silence. They both look at the cat for a while)

JANE

It's not a cat name. I'd never name my pet after myself. *(Long pause)* Well, I guess she would be *your* pet, anyway.

MATT

Yeah. *(nervous laughter)* No, I don't think it's a cat name.

(Very long pause)

JANE

I liked the thyme on the eggs.

MATT

Thanks.

SCENE 2

Setting: The family is having coffee early in the morning at the kitchen table. Gloria speaks while the others seem to be frozen, or painted.

GLORIA

It's such a lovely day. O my, the weather. What a long winter we had this year. I'm so glad you're here, finally. We don't have Steve coming that often. You know, he is a busy guy. A curious man. Right, Anthony? See, that's what I like about small towns, you really get to know your neighbors. Even the awkward ones. Doesn't that bother you about the city? Well, I'm sure you have a lot of friends in the city. Like-minded people, blah blah. Do you? I mean real friends. Really. I bet you wouldn't recognize your neighbors on the street. Tell me if I'm wrong, but have you made new friends since you turned 25? Maybe you've met girls, or boys? It's ok you can tell me. But I mean friendship... real friendship. It gets harder with age. You better rush. I often think about that. In the city, oh my! The city. I'm so glad we left. It was about time. Right, Anthony? I've always told you to keep your old friendships, guys. But you need to feed them, you know, friendships vanish. At some point one realizes it, suddenly, you are my age and you ask yourself "where did everybody go?". Matt, are you still in touch with Santiago? He was so nice and smart, I loved Santiago. *(Looks at the clock.)* Well, it's past 9 already. Hands to work! Jupiter, would you mind picking up some basil from the orchard? and thyme? A lot. A LOT.

(Starts to prepare the kitchen for cooking. Grabs a living chicken, clearly intending to kill it.)

MATT

I'll go. *(Goes out into to the orchard. We see him all the while, there are no walls on stage)*

(The kitchen turns dark. Only the living room is lit, to where Jupiter and Anthony move and seat on the couch.)

JUPITER

Who's this Steve again?

ANTHONY

Gloria exaggerates, he's no one. Just a neighbor.

JUPITER

Why do you want us to meet him so badly? Is it mom's best friend now?

ANTHONY

Have you heard the theory that women have a tendency to fall in love again in their 60's? It's like a hormonal revival after menopause.

GLORIA

(From the kitchen) Oh my, Anthony, you know when I fall in love, I fall in love with you when you are in a good mood, again and again. I can't stop falling in love with you when you are in a good mood.

ANTHONY

(Shouting) I'm always in a good mood! *(to Jupiter)* She's also got that "oh my" thing. *(Shudders)*

JUPITER

The husband accepts as a scientific fact that his wife has fallen in love with another man. He's younger, I assume. All without further consequences for their marriage. Nice. You're in Hippieland again in this town.

ANTHONY

One gets scientific with age.

GLORIA

I'm so glad I don't have to fall in love anymore. In these times. I would rather be single, I tell you. Or I'd be with a girl.

JUPITER

You were high all the time, that's why you fell in love.

ANTHONY

Don't tell me you don't get high anymore! It's even legal!

GLORIA

(Coming out of the kitchen) That's why my little Matt suffers so much.

JUPITER

Where did that come from?

GLORIA

He came too late to the party, it was over. He doesn't fit in the new one.

JUPITER

You see? He is her sweetheart.

GLORIA

Shut up. You know you are my sweetheart, and I love you both the same. *(Long pause)*. Steve is very nice. You'll like him.

ANTHONY

I'll wear my pajamas. I want him to feel at home.

GLORIA

Anthony *(kisses him tenderly)*. We should start cooking. Can you guys go buy some fruit and vegetables while I start preparing

some stuff? And see if they have a good wine at the store.
Otherwise I'll have to open that bottle.

ANTHONY

No. We are not opening that bottle. Gloria, you are taking this
too far. We will not open that bottle.

GLORIA

See if you can find something decent.

(Jupiter and Anthony leave. Gloria goes back into the kitchen.)

SCENE 3

Setting: Matt, in the orchard.

MATT

Many times I wished at a subway morning that herds would come
instead of cars
on the rails, cows and sheep and horses, and the fire
too, lead by a man with a smile, and he seems to see more
He says hi with a nod like a tree, points out
a piece of livestock
I know I should mount it and the carrousel turns

I was told in a recent dream
the highways are closed

It is summer, bright and chill
there is time, to shudder
my way out of here
a voice speaks of places
where I can't press my feet

I used to be afraid of dogs
I was a child at the park one day, kids from the buildings
a small dog
I run
they laugh
the boy is scarier than the dog, they think
embarrassing
too much for playing

SCENE 4

Setting: The three men are back in the living room. Gloria is still cooking in the kitchen.

MATT

I need to be heading back around two. What time is he coming?

GLORIA

I told him to come by noon.

MATT

It's five to noon.

GLORIA

Is it? He must be about to ring the bell.

ANTHONY

How is that chicken going?

GLORIA

The chicken is ready. I'm just finishing here with the cream, I'll put the pie in the fridge, be with you in a minute.

ANTHONY

(In a low voice) She is wearing that dress. Did you see?

(They laugh.)

MATT

Dad's jealous?

ANTHONY

It's charming, to see her like that. She is making that chicken!
(Pause) She wants you guys to meet this Steve so badly. To be honest, I don't understand why. But, well, in this town...

JUPITER

Are you getting bored already?

ANTHONY

We are too old for the city. And Gloria loves it here. She's been so happy since we moved.

MATT

So, who is this guy again?

JUPITER

We already had that conversation. You missed it.

ANTHONY

It's just Steve, our neighbor. He lives down the street. The big house on the corner with the large garden and the old Mercedes.

He used to live in the city and moved to the town before it became fashionable. Did you notice? A lot of people are moving in. Younger people, usually.

MATT

No, I didn't notice. I saw a few farms. Mom, it's past noon. I'm leaving at two no matter what.

GLORIA

Yes. He should be here any moment now. Did you place the table already? Anthony, did you air the wine? Why are you so rushed,

Matt? I can't believe you! You never come to visit, I make arrangements to have a special guest because you finally made it, and now you are in a rush!

MATT

Mom.

GLORIA

Why are you in a rush? Really? Can't you have a weekend for your parents? Just one, once in a while? Am I asking too much? I don't think so! You didn't even get to see the town, we could have done so many things, I thought you were staying for the farmers market... I really would have liked to show you the farms, the owners are really young. I thought you would like to see that. And I told you that we were cooking! So now don't come and say that you are in a rush, I won't take it.

MATT

Mom.

ANTHONY

(to Matt) Mom misses you. Gloria, I don't know, I think this Steve is not coming. I have the feeling. (to the guys) I've never trusted him.

JUPITER

Excelente. We are skipping the small talk! And we'll have more chicken each.

GLORIA

It's only 12:30... I can't believe--

ANTHONY

Maybe he forgot. Let's just eat, dear, we are starving.

JUPITER

Yes, mom, let's eat. I think we can live without meeting your lover.

GLORIA

Stop it with your love affair... You're all being such a-- (*the doorbell rings.*) There he is! I told you.

ANTHONY

Would you get the door, Mat, please?

SCENE 5

Setting: Matt opens the door.

MATT

Hi, Steve. I'm Matt. Welcome. It's a pleasure to meet you.

JEREMY

Hi. I'm Jeremy. *(Pause)* I guess you're Matt. Ha *(Looks at him carefully)* Is Mr. Anthony home?

MATT

Jeremy?

JEREMY

Jeremy Coltrane. I'm the owner of the Spirits.

MATT

I see. I'll call him.

(Matt goes back into the living room.)

MATT

It's the guy from the Spirits.

ANTHONY

(Shouting.) Oh, Jeremy! Jeremy, please, come on in. We were about to serve lunch. *(Jeremy comes in)* You met Jupiter this morning, and this is my younger son, Matt.

(Gloria comes out of the kitchen.)

JEREMY

Nice to meet you. So, you are Matt *(laughs)*. Hi, Mrs. Gloria. Whatever you are cooking in there smells delicious.

GLORIA

Hi, Jeremy. Thanks. We were having a special lunch today. It's a French recipe.

JEREMY

I'm impressed. *Le poulet guillotiné?* (laughs awkwardly loud) (Makes a gesture with his hand as if cutting a chicken's head and laughs again) I like that! (Pause) I'm sorry to interrupt you. I'm just paying a quick visit. I brought you this bottle. You were looking for something special this morning and I forgot I had this nice bottle. I'm sorry. I hope it's not too late. It's not French, but it's on the house! (laughs) Please.

ANTHONY

Oh, Jeremy, Jeremy! Thanks! This is just terrific. There was no need, you know. (Looking at the bottle in his hands) Holy cow, this is wonderful, a Rioja from 1985! Did you know that Spanish wines are my favorites? You got me there. It's just absolutely fantastic that you remembered about this bottle. Did you know--- (laughs) Thanks, this is wonderful.

JEREMY

Well...

ANTHONY

But, please, let me pay you. It's so nice already that you remembered. I--

JEREMY

No, no, no. Please. Really. Let me make this gift to the family. It's an honor. The better that you can enjoy it all together. It really makes me happy... to see a family like this. I won't interrupt you anymore. Nice meeting you boys, come visit more often. It's a nice town up here. You'll see.

ANTHONY

Well, I'm really moved. Thanks again. Appreciate it. You know, I do love Spanish wines. Let me walk you to the door.

MATT

Thanks, a pleasure.

JUPITER

Thanks, I'm sure we'll love it.

(Anthony and Jeremy walk to the door. Jeremy offers Anthony a cigarette, lights one for himself.)

ANTHONY

Thanks, I quit.

JEREMY

(Nods. Brief silence.) Are you waiting for Mr. Steve by any chance?

ANTHONY

Yes, we are waiting for Steve. He was supposed to come at noon.

Didn't show up. Too bad... We are having all the chicken for ourselves! *(Laughs) (Brief pause)* Are you sure you don't want to stay? There is more than enough--

JEREMY

Absolutely, but thanks. How strange. It's not like Mr. Steve.

(Pause) He came to the store this morning, you know. He was looking for non-alcoholic beer. *(Laughs loudly)* I don't sell that nonsense.

ANTHONY

Is he sober?

JEREMY

I didn't ask. Each one his own. *(Pause)* He said he was having a special lunch. Strange he didn't mention it was at your place. *(Pause)* I'm sorry, if this was supposed to be a secret... Don't

worry, I won't tell anybody. You know what they say about small towns. But not me, Mr. Anthony. Not me. You know that already, right? These lips are sealed with fire. Not me. My family came from the city too. We are not rural people, we don't like gossip. That's definitely something I can brag about me and Goldney. She grew up in the town, but she is not like the other girls. I always knew gossip was just something I didn't like about small towns... So when we decided to move here, I told her. And we keep things private. That's our way to be small-towners. Right? You know I deal with a lot of people at the store, the whole town is my client. Who doesn't like a good bottle of wine? By eight o'clock there's nothing to do around here. You better open a bottle, enjoy yourself. Good people. No one's looking for trouble. It happens sometimes. But it's definitely not like people are looking for it. Sometimes when someone has more than a bottle, you know... But hey, name a place free of trouble! You can't. And don't get me wrong, I'm not religious. (*Laughs*) No. Goddamn I'm not. Booze is gotta be good. Good is gotta be good. It's that simple. Good is good. That's my only principle. Why? Reinvent the wheel, saying that good, that good is actually bad?! Doesn't make a whole lot of sense to me. Just because a few people can't control themselves? It's the same with weapons. But hey, we need to be prepared. We need to have the right to be ready. Right? Let me know if you need help with that. I know things are different in the city. And I know you are not religious, that's why I'm telling you this. Not many people around here with whom to talk from the heart. I guess you feel the same way. Right? Not many people like us in this town. I know. It's changing, though. But you know you can count on me and Goldney, both you and Mrs. Gloria. We are very happy to have you around. You know what, actually, I'll tell Gold we should have you over for dinner some time. We are both great cooks. And I'll tell you a secret: we do kill the chicken with our own hands. (*Pause*) Yeah, that would be sweet. Don't you agree? And I'll tell you more: I keep the best bottles at home. You can't say no to that one, can you? (*Laughs*) The first thing we built when we moved here was our cellar. It's great. Let me know if you want to build one. (*Pause*) All right, it's all set. Count on it. On my way now. (*Lowering the voice*) Enjoy your secret party. Yeah, and have a great evening with your boys. You got a nice

couple, ah? You don't have any girls, right? You told me that, or was it Ms. Gloria? She does talk a lot about the boys. We too, only boys. Younger than yours, of course. I sent them both to college. You want to know how? Selling goodness! That's my pride. Well, see you... You'll love that Rioja, you'll see. Let me know how'd you like it. So that I can know better what to save for you in the future. Only good stuff. (*Laughs*) Tailored alcohol. You don't get that kind of service in the city, do you? You don't. Of course you don't. See you, Mr. Anthony. Have a good evening.

ANTHONY

Thanks, again, I really appreciate it. Now I'm worried about this guy. Maybe something happened to him. Does he live alone?

JEREMY

(lights another cigarette)

I don't know *(long pause, as if going to add something)* I don't know. *(Pause)* Why don't you call him?

ANTHONY

I don't think we have his number. Ha, I think we actually don't. Do you?

JEREMY

His phone number? No, no.

ANTHONY

I guess I'll just... Well, no... Knocking at his door would be too intrusive, right? Does he have a dog?

JEREMY

Let me do something else for you. I'll pass by Steve's on my way home and I'll make sure everything is in place. I hope he is fine, you never know.

ANTHONY

Appreciate it. Jeremy, you're solid. Hope you don't come back with bad news. Gloria has been cooking the whole morning... That lad. I'm sure he just forgot and made other plans.

JEREMY

Yeah, I don't think he would have missed it on purpose. Later, Anthony. You've got a great family. Lucky guy!

(Anthony goes back in. They serve the meal and start eating. As the lights go down, the sound of people chewing is heard for a while, like a song.)

SCENE 6

Setting: *A ladder comes down from the ceiling of the stage. Matt steps all the way up until he disappears from the audience's view. We hear him say "Shit, the ceiling." He comes down again and returns to his seat. The ladder stays there for the rest of the play. The family is still sitting at the table.*

GLORIA

Matt, do you like the chicken?

JUPITER

It's delicious, mom.

ANTHONY

Holy, holy.... I love this chicken!

JUPITER

Mom, this is obscene. Incredible. You have to give me the recipe.

MATT

You, cooking? Are you dating again? How do you do it? If I ever have to tell someone again that I'm a Pisces...

ANTHONY

Gloria, Gloria, Gloria. You know I fell in love with your mom because of that song? I wish my wife would cook this chicken for me. She only cooks it for special guests, to show off. The rest of the time, I'm the one who cooks in this house.

GLORIA

My poor and wretched husband. Matt, did you like the chicken?

JUPITER

Actually, it's an old one. Stephanie.

MATT

And you are cooking for her? That's great.

ANTHONY

I like Stephanie.

JUPITER

You don't know Stephanie..

GLORIA

Matt, did you like--

ANTHONY

She comments on every single one of your posts. She is funny. I like her. Cook for her, this chicken.

JUPITER

Dad--

GLORIA

Matt, did you like the--

ANTHONY

What about you, Matt?

GLORIA

It has fresh herbs and a lot of orange zest, and, well, the butter is home-made. I'll give you some. Anthony made it last week. You can feel the difference, right? Matt, it's the recipe you--

ANTHONY

Matt, I don't like that girl.

GLORIA

What girl?

MATT

Dad, can you please stop--

ANTHONY

She is complicated. I can tell. I've always told you, boys, marry a girl if she brings you peace. Marry peace.

MATT

No one is getting married.

JUPITER

Well, actually, I am.

GLORIA

Matt, you have to open an account for me. How many times have I asked you?

MATT

Mom, what do you want it for? You've been fine without it. I actually closed mine.

ANTHONY

How am I going to know about my boy now?

GLORIA

Well, you call him, Anthony. We still pay for a telephone line.

ANTHONY

They don't answer the phone!

JUPITER

You closed your account?

ANTHONY

Gloria, you are not listening. Jupiter is getting married. What do you think? I don't believe him.

GLORIA

Jupiter? But---why? We haven't even met the girl!

(The doorbell rings.)

GLORIA

There he is! That has to be Steve. I knew it was not like him not showing up, not without even dropping a word. O my, clean up the table. What am I offering him now? Hurry up, clean it. You see, I shouldn't have let you eat the whole chicken.

ANTHONY

Gloria, come on, do we need to pretend that nothing happened? The guy is two hours late!

GLORIA

We'll serve the pie! Just don't mention the lunch, it never happened. Would you do that for me? We invited him for dessert, right? Lemon pie!

MATT

Really? The guy is two hours late.

GLORIA

Let me take care of it, ok? (*Bringing her finger to her mouth, lowering her voice*) Not-a-sin-gle-word-a-bout-the-frea-king-chi-
cken.

(Gloria goes to the door. Blackout.)

Act II

SCENE 1, Break up at breakfast (rehearsal)

Setting: Same as ACT I, SCENE 1.

At raise: Jane gives stage directions to Matt. Matt moves on stage as if he were really performing the actions, but there are no props, just the two of them. He doesn't do everything she says, sometimes he stops, doesn't do anything. Sometimes he does something completely irrelevant, like running, something completely disconnected to what she is saying, then he goes back to the actions she is commanding him to do. She doesn't pay attention to what he does nor acknowledges it when he doesn't seem to follow her directions.

JANE

Place the kitchen table here. Put the flowers and the fruit basket on top of the table. The stove goes over there. Do you have the eggs? The thyme? Butter? Bread? We need some orange juice, the coffee pot around there. Cups. Sugar and milk. The salt. The fridge besides the stove. Bring the stools. Place the plates and cutlery as if they were actually being used. Ok. So, you are preparing eggs with thyme for her. Jane is sitting at the table wearing your t-shirt. She is really happy about wearing your t-shirt. You will have some sort of irrelevant breakfast conversation. You will be very affectionate, very caring, open. You are going to tell her about your week, your brother, your cat, some friends of yours who were just in town. She doesn't seem to care that much about your stuff. Doesn't tell you anything about her week. Suddenly she starts to try subtle, obscure moves. She'll sneakily try to move into your place. She wants to ask your mom about your favorite recipes. Maybe she wants to poison you. She will fake that she finds a ring in the scrambled eggs. And you die of a natural death at the end of the scene.

SCENE 2

Setting: Steve and Matt sitting on two chairs, like in a set for a TV interview.

STEVE

This is not good business for me. I want prime-time, and even more, Matt. You know what I mean? I MEAN MORE when I say more. I'm one of the few people you will meet who really means what he means when he means it. And I don't talk much. You know. I make others talk. They talk so much so that I can keep silent. Now, open your mouth. I mean, open your mouth.

The first political frontier are our teeth. Our teeth are the first political frontier.

I wish I had a better audience. Matty, Matty, Matty. I dream about teeth growing out of my mouth, like white flowers. I wake up with pain in my gums. I don't know. I don't know.

Talk! Matt Bremmer.

(Claps)

We want to know about you. All. And even more. Even.

WHO, ARE, YOU

(Claps)

There was a talk-show once where people didn't talk. Remember? They sat facing the camera, and a heavy voice in off asked: "Who are you?" And nobody said anything. It didn't last much. There were constant complains about the silence.

But this is not that show. Matt, I have an ethical commitment to my work.

(Sound of pre-recorded claps)

Matt!! Stop it! My ears are hurting.

(Sound of pre-recorded claps)

There is really nothing we can do for you: love is not a transformation of the self.

(Sound of pre-recorded claps)

Do you, beloved, beloved audience believe me?

(Sound of pre-recorded claps)

Voice, please.

(A voice in off says:

Welcome to *The Dentist!!!*)

(Sound of pre-recorded claps)

(Show intermission)

STEVE

What do you think?

MATT

About what?

STEVE

Do you find my work original? Do you like it? I consider it a work of art.

MATT

I think you are witty. Compelling. A little bit intimidating, in the good sense.

STEVE

Good. What year are we in?

MATT

2014

STEVE

Repulsive.

MATT

I never truly believed in the end of the world. But I was afraid. I was 15. You know. All the excitement. I was excited. Being fifteen was exciting. The whole thing could end any minute, and so what, I'm fifteen. "I'll go partying, see you later, if the world doesn't end tonight," I was waiting for the first party invitation to say that to my mom. Never happened. "Happy birthday, darling, stop that thinking, you were born for something special," is what she said. I had played with the idea of spending my birthday sitting on a bench in the park, looking at the downfall of the universe in the afternoon. There was no park in our neighborhood. There was a basketball court with some benches. I didn't go there. You could be robbed, my mom said. I didn't hang out either, never liked parties. A bunch of anxious people getting it all wrong. I didn't have an alternative view, but at least I was mad. There was something grandiose in refusing. I remember the night I turned 15 I hid in our garage all night. Smoking my dad's cigarettes and listening to music. Sort of reading. Then past midnight I opened the garage door with a bit of fear, made sure the world was not over yet. It wasn't. I entered the house by the front door. I liked it. Repeated it every Friday. And it was never over, but I was always a bit unsure, a bit afraid, a bit expectant. Of the end, of opening the rolling gate of the garage in the exact moment of doom. My mom would take it on me that I had come back too late, that I smelled like I'd been drinking all night, getting wasted like the other kids who didn't have love. I didn't drink, ever, I don't know where she got the smell from. I never contradicted

her, though, just for fun.

STEVE

Ha. Matt, you are a good story-teller. Aren't you? I have a story for you. You know a friend recommended this book to me. We were hanging out, casually, nothing serious. Went to his place for a beer. I didn't know that it would mean so much more. We are chatting. I tell him I'm looking for inspiration for a script that is not quite coming through. I didn't tell him anything about the story. I'm super zealous with my ideas while they aren't out yet. But he listens to what I say very carefully. Then walks to the shelves, picks up this book, tells me this is what you need. I thought there was something magnificent in his conviction. Something blind that was worth pursuing. So I obediently go to the bookstore the next day. I stay home that night, reading, and shaz, there you are. This fucking asshole had already written it. And, it was really good.

MATT

Ha.

STEVE

It's so damn good.

MATT

Burn the book, Steve. No one will know.

STEVE

You know.

MATT

What?!

STEVE

Well, now you know. I told you about it. I shouldn't have.

MATT

What?! Are you serious?

STEVE

What if you don't forget?

MATT

(Silence)

STEVE

What if you remember. One day you walk into a bookstore, or you are looking at a friend's shelves, or you date someone who just happens to love Barthelme, and shaz!, you remember. And then you tell the story to your new friend, because you need something to talk about, because you don't have anything else to talk about, because you need to make an impression. You need it so badly, and in that moment you don't give a shit, you want to get laid, so fuck my friend Steve and the secret we shared. That's how it happens, Matt, that's how it always happens. No one can keep a secret. Once it's out...

MATT

Listen--

STEVE

Tell me, what should I do with you now?

SCENE 3

Setting: Matt, still sitting on the same chair of the TV Set from the previous scene, talks on the phone. Gloria, Anthony, and Jupiter are sitting at the dinning table, where we left them at the end of Act I. Gloria talks on the phone with Matt, but without a phone in her hand.

MATT

How's the kitchen going?

GLORIA

Ough, I don't want to talk about it. The workers came in on Monday, the electrician didn't finish the job, so when the plumber came in later he couldn't do anything, he said, until the electrician had finished, of course he charged me anyway---

\$100, just for the visit, can you believe that? And I had already paid \$200 to the other guy, it will be another \$200 tomorrow, at the least, so I hope he finishes, it's a mess, I told Larry I can't go on like this, I'm getting tired, I said, Larry tell your guys to finish this thing soon, I need you to be a little bit more efficient, I'm sorry if I'm being rude, but listen, Larry, I'm paying you a lot, it can't be a couple of hundreds more every time one of your guys comes, and they don't even finish their job, I tell you, I'm tired, two weeks like that, and that's just for the kitchen, I mean, what's the limit? You know what? What really bothers me is not the money---you know I'm not sparing in this project, you know I'm not, you know this is *my* project, how long I've been dreaming to have a kitchen like this..

MATT

Mom, sorry, but I just don't think you should be spending all of your money in a kitchen. I mean, it's only a kitchen, how much difference can it make? Really. Do you need marble tops? That water filter! A professional stove! I mean, what can I tell you, it's your money, it's your dream, I know how you've been saving for this for years. But, really!

GLORIA

Yah... Mhmmm...

(Long, uncomfortable silence)

MATT

I'm sorry, I don't mean to... But, mom, don't you think it's a bit too risky?

GLORIA

Yeah. Well, they should be done in a couple of weeks. It's gonna look fantastic. You'll understand when you see it. You have to come visit. Would you? Visit us when it's ready. You and Jupiter have to come. My two boys have to come. We'll cook something special for you. Anthony is crazy about it, don't think it's only me. We'll cook something you have never tried before. Something really, really good. You'll come, Matt, right? I know you'll love it. Everything. And the town!

MATT

I'll try. In three weeks you said?

GLORIA

A couple, just a couple. It might even be ready next week. But tell me, how's the film going?

MATT

Good. Good. How's dad?

GLORIA

Well, I told you, he loves it. You know him. He jokes around with the workers, I argue with them. You know how it goes. I know he's looking forward to all the things we are going to prepare here, from scratch like you guys say. And the people we will invite. I want to have great parties. Healthy parties. Once

a month. Not much happens around here, but people are interested in living well. They will love it. Hopefully you'll come often. Will you? I know you are worried about the cost, but well, it's just money. What matters is the good that comes with it. The good, that's what matters. It's funny, you know it was only because of the kitchen that we bought the cow. Otherwise it would have never occurred to us.

MATT

What did you say?

GLORIA

The cow, we wouldn't have bought it if it weren't because of--

MATT

The cow?

GLORIA

Yess!! Oh my, Matt, didn't we tell you? How long has it been since we last talked? Oh my, yesss. Isn't that great? You know I always wanted to have sheep or something. You know how we love cheese. You know that. Well, now we are making it. And you know, this is going to be the next trend, people are leaving the cities, they want space, houses, lawns, fresh food, quality of life. We are going back to the land, it's the new peasants wave----well, that's how your dad and I like to call it----and we are among the first ones. It's already happening, I tell you.

You know how we got the cow? We bought it online! Matt, you wouldn't believe it, Oh, I have pictures, I documented the whole process since we saw it on the screen until it arrived. Anthony and I just couldn't believe it, we didn't grow up with the internet, you realize that, right? Can you imagine? Matt, the cow was shipped to us in a box!

ACT III

SCENE 1

Setting: The lights go on. We are back where we left the family at the end of the first act. Outside, the day is still beautiful. Gloria opens the door.

GLORIA

Steve!

STEVE

Gloria. Hi. How lovely to see you!

GLORIA

Oh, hi, hi. Just in time. Come on in, meet the boys.

STEVE

Thanks. I brought you this (*hands her a box of tea*).

GLORIA

Oh, tea! How lovely!

STEVE

I went town shopping yesterday. There's a new tea house, very fancy--

GLORIA

Oh, well, how lovely. That was very nice of you. Come on in. (*walking into the living room*) Matt, Jupiter, this is our special guest, Steve.

STEVE

It's a pleasure to meet you, boys. Hi, Anthony.

ANTHONY

Hi, I'm glad you made it.

STEVE

Of course I made it. How could I ever miss this? Mmmmm, smells delicious! Chicken?

(Uncomfortable silence.)

GLORIA

Lime! It's the limes from our orchard. I made my special pie.

STEVE

Chicken pie with lime! I'm impressed.

GLORIA

Ha ha. Steve. You should have told me you like chicken pie so much. I have a wonderful recipe. Next time, Steve, I promise. For tea time today we're having a delicious *key-lime* pie, with fresh cream. Anthony made it.

ANTHONY

From Joy.

STEVE

Joy?

ANTHONY

I made the fresh cream from the the fresh milk from our own little personal farm.

GLORIA

What do you think?

STEVE

Wow, Gloria, I'm flattered. You didn't need to. But shall we---

GLORIA

Yes, we should. Of course. Anthony, can you take care of the tea?

ANTHONY

Sure.

(Anthony goes into the kitchen)

STEVE

The tea is really something. If you want to try it, I mean, you don't have to open it now--

GLORIA

Of course. We'll try the tea later.

JUPITER

Are you feeling ok?

STEVE

Wonderful. Thanks for asking.

JUPITER

I thought you might be sick.

STEVE

Sick?

JUPITER

Yes.

STEVE

I'm feeling better.

MATT

Just in time for dessert.

GLORIA

(to Matt) Don't be rude. Steve, I'm glad you made it, that's the only thing that matters. Just in time.

MATT

I'm sorry, I'm leaving now. It was a pleasure to meet you, even if so briefly.

STEVE

You are leaving?! But I just came in.

MATT

Yes, I'm sorry. I have to go. My parents are great hosts, please, enjoy yourself.

GLORIA

You can't leave! Really? What could be so important? On a Saturday night! You've been so mysterious.

(Silence)

STEVE

Oh, I'm sure Gloria is an excellent host and a terrific cook.
(Pause) Well, too sad you're leaving. I was so ready to meet you.

MATT

You were so ready to meet me?

ANTHONY

(from the kitchen) Gloria, Jupiter, can you come here one minute?

GLORIA

Be kind to your guest, Matt. Don't go yet.

(Gloria and Jupiter go to the kitchen. They are cutting the pie and improvising some snacks: cheese, wine, crackers, bread.)

STEVE

Is someone waiting for you in the city? Why didn't you bring him?

MATT

Ha. No. But it would be her.

STEVE

Why didn't you bring her?

(Uncomfortable silence)

MATT

So, what did you do? Before you moved here, I mean?

STEVE

Show business.

MATT

Show business?! What kind of show?

STEVE

Reality. Reality TV.

MATT

Interesting. Well, It's a shame I won't learn more about it. Another time.

STEVE

Don't go yet. If you didn't bring him that means he can wait.

MATT

Her.

STEVE

If you didn't bring her--

MATT

You make a lot of assumptions.

STEVE

You tell me: am I making wrong assumptions?

(Gloria brings them each a glass of wine)

GLORIA

Steve, you have to try the cheese. Jupiter is preparing a nice plate. We made it ourselves.

STEVE

How amazing! Thanks, Gloria.

(Gloria goes back into the kitchen)

STEVE

I'm not! So, what's her name?

MATT

(Silence)

STEVE

Jane.

MATT

Jane.

STEVE

It's a lovely name.

JUPITER

(with a tray of cold cuts and cheese in his hand) Here. Have some, please.

STEVE

Oh, thanks. Amazing. *(Puts some food on a plate, but doesn't eat)*

JUPITER

You should definitely try the cheese. It's home made, from raw milk.

STEVE

So I was told, amazing. Is it safe?

JUPITER

I don't know. I don't eat cheese. Matt, are you heading back? I think I'm going to take the train with you.

MATT

Right now?

JUPITER

I thought you were in a rush.

MATT

I was, yes.

STEVE

(to Jupiter) Are you in a rush?

JUPITER

Sort of, yes.

MATT

Oh, you didn't say so before.

(Uncomfortable silence)

MATT

Jupiter is getting married, we just learned.

STEVE

Tonight?

JUPITER

(Laughs) No, no, not tonight. We don't have a date yet.

STEVE

Lovely. I'd love to be there.

JUPITER

Well, ha, I'm flattered. It will be something very small. Very simple. Basically just our parents.

MATT

Are you not inviting me to your wedding?

JUPITER

Of course, Matt. Of course I'm inviting you. It was implied when I said our parents--

MATT

Well, I'm certainly not our parents. And that's what I heard. What did you hear, Steve?

JUPITER

Oh, come on, stop it. Matt, don't--He loves to do this. That's why I didn't want to invite him.

STEVE

So he was right.

JUPITER

No! He forced me to say this. He always does that! Yeah, whatever you want, as long as you're right, yes, that's what I said.

MATT

Fine. Fair enough. Weddings are idiotic!

JUPITER

Grow up!

STEVE

I love weddings. The speeches, the dresses, the decoration. Everyone's commitment to be happy. There's like a mute agreement to have fun. Isn't it amazing? I love weddings. At my age not that many people are getting married, which is so sad. People should get married all the time. We need that sort of commitment. Do it for us, please, I say. Before we die.

JUPITER

Thanks, Steve. Yeah. Yeah. Hmm. Are you enjoying yourself? Do you need more wine? Water?

STEVE

Water, yes, thanks, water is fine.

JUPITER

(Pours a glass of wine and hands it to Steve) Here, try this. Good Jeremy brought it earlier, as a gift. A Rioja from 1985.

STEVE

(Steve doesn't drink) Jeremy? Coltrane?

JUPITER

From the Spirits.

STEVE

(Still without drinking) Yes, Coltrane. How strange. I went to the store this morning asking precisely for this bottle of wine. I'd seen it before, he said he had just sold it. I wanted to impress your dad, you see, he loves Spanish wines.

JUPITER

Strange. Well, now you have a glass of it in your hands, it was meant for you. Did you try the cheese? Amazing, right?

STEVE

Thanks, Jupiter. Yes. Amazing. Cheers. *(Still doesn't drink)*

(Jupiter's phone rings.)

JUPITER

Excuse me.

(Jupiter goes outside and never comes back for the rest of the play. Matt looks at his phone. Steve puts the glass away and glances at the house without knowing where to set his eyes, uncomfortably lonely.)

SCENE 2

(Matt has gone out to smoke. Gloria notices that Steve is alone and comes to the rescue.)

GLORIA

What a lovely day, ah? I love this weather. We had such a long winter this year.

STEVE

A lovely Sunday, yes.

GLORIA

Saturday.

STEVE

Saturday, yes, you're right.

GLORIA

I'm so glad the boys came. And they finally met you.

STEVE

Yes, thanks for the invitation. It's been my pleasure.

GLORIA

Oh, but don't think we are done yet. We'll have the pie with the tea now. And I'll prepare a Caprese.

STEVE

Salad after desert. Gloria, you're funny.

GLORIA

Am I? *(laughs nervously)* The French do it that way! We just picked up a lot of basil from the orchard this morning. I'll show you the orchard later. I'll make a little pesto now. Delicious, you'll see. *(goes into the kitchen)*

(Anthony brings Steve a piece of pie)

ANTHONY

Here. You'll see. This is something else. I made the cream myself this morning. Gloria is bringing the tea now.

STEVE

Thanks. *(Steve holds the plate with the piece of pie in his hand and doesn't eat it. He makes constant gestures as if he were going to try it, but interrupts them with gestures of speaking or carefully listening, just moving the spoon a lot in his hand.)*

ANTHONY

Well, I saw you and Matt got along well. Gloria must be very pleased.

STEVE

Oh, we did. Yes.

ANTHONY

I'm glad to hear that. I wish he visited more often.

STEVE

Children.

ANTHONY

Do you have any?

STEVE

Oh, no, no.

ANTHONY

There's no reason why you couldn't. I hope you don't mind my asking.

STEVE

Of course.

ANTHONY

I think he recently broke up with a girl. I didn't like her.

STEVE

Jane?

ANTHONY

Oh, did he tell you about it? I'm impressed. I've been trying to get a word from him about it since yesterday!

STEVE

Ha. I have my ways.

(Silence)

STEVE

Anthony, excuse me, would you mind having a word in private with me for a second?

ANTHONY

Sure. Let's go out to the backyard. The birds must be singing lovely at this hour of the day.

(They go out to the lawn. Matt was already there. Steve offers Anthony a cigarette, which he accepts this time, and lights one for himself.)

ANTHONY

Thanks.

STEVE

Sorry, I needed some fresh air.

ANTHONY

Air is very fresh here.

STEVE

So you like the town.

ANTHONY

Gloria is very happy. So I am happy.

STEVE

I'm glad to hear that. *I* am happy to have you around.

(Silence)

STEVE

I have so much time in my hands, I've even started writing.

ANTHONY

What are you writing?

STEVE

A script.

MATT

What about?

ANTHONY

Too much free time, that's an illness of the soul. Gloria and I keep our hands busy, so that our minds stay focused. Otherwise one just--

STEVE

--(to Anthony) I can see that you're staying busy. Great kitchen, by the way. *(Long pause. Everyone seems like they are going to say something but then doesn't.)* (to Matt) A secret is revealed and the people who learn about it are in trouble.

ANTHONY

We always dreamed about cooking things from our own orchard. The chicken Gloria cooked was actually raised in this same lawn.

MATT

It was delicious.

STEVE

I'm sure it was.

(Long silence. They listen to the birds)

STEVE

Actually, there's something I need to tell you. It's a bit uncomfortable, so I don't know how to begin.

ANTHONY

Send it straight.

STEVE

Well, you know. I didn't want to embarrass Gloria--

ANTHONY

Aha!

STEVE

You know... I know how much she...

ANTHONY

Steve, tell me.

STEVE

It's nothing serious.

ANTHONY

Are you alright?

STEVE

Yes, I'm fine.

ANTHONY

Good. I'm glad you're fine. So?

STEVE

Thanks. The thing is, I have some food sensitivities--

ANTHONY

What do you mean?

STEVE

I can't eat.

ANTHONY

You can't eat?

STEVE

Well, there's a long list of things I can't eat.

ANTHONY

I see. Thanks for telling us. I know this must be a delicate topic. Being sick is not easy. I'm sorry, Steve.

MATT

Well, we've only served really good stuff.

STEVE

(Laughs nervously) I bet. Anyway, it's just that the Caprese would really be too much--

ANTHONY

Oh, I see. Don't worry, Steve. I'll talk to Gloria. We serve all diets in this house. Matt had a girlfriend once who wanted to lose weight and it was very hard to cook for her, but we managed to do it just fine. She was very pleased, I think. I didn't think she was overweight, but well, you know how it is. What would you like to eat, then?

STEVE

It's complicated. Don't worry, really.

ANTHONY

What about the wine? Did you like it? It was a special bottle.

STEVE

Yeah, amazing.

ANTHONY

That wine was almost 30 years old! Do you want some more? You need some pleasure!

STEVE

I'm fine, thanks.

ANTHONY

Can I offer you coffee? We have crackers and country bread, from the local bakery. Only good stuff.

STEVE

Oh, no. It's fine, Anthony, I really appreciate it. But don't worry.

ANTHONY

But you have to eat something. My goodness. Lettuce? I can make you a salad.

STEVE

There's no need. Really.

ANTHONY

But it takes me two seconds.

STEVE

(Exasperated) I am not hungry, thanks.

ANTHONY

Oh... OK.

GLORIA

(from inside the house) The Caprese is ready!

(They come back in)

GLORIA

What's going on?

ANTHONY

There is a serious problem, Gloria.

GLORIA

What?

STEVE

Nothing, Gloria. It's really nothing.

ANTHONY

We've terribly failed our guest.

STEVE

Oh, Anthony come one. It's not that serious. It's all good.

GLORIA

What happened? I don't understand what you are saying. Anthony, you're being obscure. You know I hate it when you are obscure.

STEVE

I have food allergies.

GLORIA

Oh my, Steve! You should have told us! Are you alright?

STEVE

I'm fine. I'm fine.

GLORIA

Matt, why didn't you tell me? You didn't try the cheese, Steve? But I saw you eating the lemon pie, you said it was delicious!

STEVE

I'm sorry, Gloria, I don't mean--

GLORIA

Well, this is a disaster. Isn't it? Why didn't you tell me in advance? I would have prepared something adequate. Why did you wait until the end? I feel terrible.

STEVE

Oh, no, no, please, it's been a wonderful evening. The food is the least important. Your company has been wonderful.

ANTHONY

There's surely something we can offer you to make this right.

STEVE

I only eat beef.

GLORIA

Oh, you eat beef!

STEVE

Yes!

GLORIA

But the cows suffer, Steve!

SCENE 3

Setting: It's night. Anthony plays the guitar sitting on the couch in the living room. Gloria and Matt stand next to the cow in the small lawn, smoking weed. Steve has mounted the ladder and we can only see his legs.

MATT

I'm sorry this didn't turn out as you expected. You were gorgeous, mom, but the guy is a total bore.

GLORIA

But you stayed.

MATT

I did.

GLORIA

I didn't expect much. Just to be together, you know.

MATT

But what did we need Steve for?

GLORIA

I don't know.

MATT

I'm glad I stayed, though.

GLORIA

I know.

MATT

The kitchen is great. I'm glad you guys are having the life you wanted. Really.

GLORIA

Did you like the chicken?

MATT

It was good.

GLORIA

Just good?

MATT

It was really good.

(Long silence. They stare at the sky)

GLORIA

You know this is all ending very soon, right?

(Long silence)

(They laugh without control for a long time)

MATT

Can I take home what's left of the pie?

GLORIA

But of course! We'll make more during the week. That's our favorite pastime now, you know. Are you bringing it for someone?

MATT

I don't know.

GLORIA

You'll figure it out. There's still time for that.

MATT

Did Steve leave?

GLORIA

He can't.

MATT

What are we doing with him?

GLORIA

I don't know. I don't know.