

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES

KILLING PIGEONS
“A PLAY IN ONE ACT”

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS

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The rapid clicking of a pen is heard.

An isolated spotlight comes up directly on FRANK standing S.R. He is wrapped in a blanket while looking at himself in a mirror as he nervously clicks a ball point pen. The rest of the stage is in darkness.

FRANK

I believe I'm a good prospect. I am focused, I am driven, I have a variety of skills, I am capable—I am more than capable... Of being who I need to be, for you. I will be this way for you. What way am I going to be? I am going to be one who utilizes his skills. What skills are those? Patience, fortitude, and perseverance. I possess these qualities and I practice them daily. In my waking life, my working life, I have big dreams, specific goals, and I want to work for you. I have a college degree, which shows that I'm not only educated, but resourceful. I have a vast knowledge of all the latest computer software programs that concern themselves with design, fabrics, and patterns. I've read many books on the ancient art of placement, yet I always find that the most useful tool is my own intuition. (Pause) That's good. I like that, I think that could work.

SCENE: The stage lights up to reveal the LIVING ROOM of a house. The front door of the house is S.R. There is a mantle on the back wall U.C. that is lined with pointless antiques and knickknacks. To the left of the mantle is a stairway that leads upstairs and to the left of the stairway is a door that leads to the basement. The living room has a couch, a reclining chair, and a coffee table facing D.C. toward a television. Directly S.L. from the living room is the KITCHEN that has a table in the center with four chairs. There is an organized mess of clothes lying to the left of the living room sofa.

Frank throws off the blanket and scurries over to the couch where he starts pounding away at the keys of his laptop. He is wearing a white T-shirt, colorful boxer shorts, and one long black sock.

Dear employer, after reviewing my resume, you will find that I obtain the necessary qualities and skills to excel in this position. My vast knowledge of fabrics, the Chinese art of placement or “Feng shui,” and my intuitive knack for interior design puts me above the rest in terms of uniqueness and discipline. Not to mention—

Frank is interrupted by the front door bursting open to reveal CHARLOTTE struggling with two enormous suitcases.

CHARLOTTE

Are you gonna help me with these bags or what?

FRANK

Shut up! You're distracting me.

Frank tries to regain his focus.

CHARLOTTE

Thanks for the warm welcome.

FRANK

I was in the zone and you ruined it.

CHARLOTTE

I don't care, come help me with these bags.

FRANK

Why do you need help with the bags? You got them this far.

CHARLOTTE

Just help me with the big one.

Frank goes to help her.

FRANK

I'll take the small one.

CHARLOTTE

Quit being a little girl. Take the big one.

Frank shrugs. He grabs the big suitcase and brings it inside. Charlotte follows him toward the stairs.

FRANK

What do you have in here, drugs?

CHARLOTTE

Yeah, I brought back seventy kilos of coke.

Charlotte attempts to hand the small suitcase to Frank.

Here, take them upstairs.

FRANK

I'm not gonna carry your shit upstairs for you.

CHARLOTTE

Do you know how long my drive was?

FRANK

I'm sure it was excruciating, but you can't just storm in and start barking orders at me.

CHARLOTTE

Oh, I'm sorry. I thought I was talking to a man.

FRANK

Oh, whatever!

CHARLOTTE

That's ok. I'll do it myself.

FRANK

I'll do it. I'm just saying, you can ask me. You don't have to be so demanding.

CHARLOTTE

Whatever Frank, I got it. (sarcastically) Thanks for your help.

Charlotte grabs both bags and exits up the stairs.

Frank makes his way back to the couch and stares into his laptop.

(Long Pause)

The sound of Charlotte struggling with her bags can be heard from upstairs.

A loud THUD! Followed by Charlotte's muffled cursing crescendos into clarity as she enters stomping her way down the stairs.

CHARLOTTE

...and why don't you actually do something with your life?

FRANK

What do you mean?

CHARLOTTE

Look at you! You just sit there waiting for life to pass you by.

FRANK

(Staring deeply into his laptop)

What's your point?

CHARLOTTE

My point is that you have no ground to walk on. You have no right to judge other people when you can't do anything for yourself.

FRANK

Where're you going with this Charlotte?

CHARLOTTE

Look at the way you live! Your entire means of existence is an absolute mess. Mom and Dad look at you as a complete failure, you can't even hold onto a girlfriend. When was the last time you got laid?

FRANK

That's none of your business.

CHARLOTTE

I take it it's been a long time.

FRANK

Not as long as your slutty ass.

CHARLOTTE

Everyone thinks you're gay.

FRANK

Everyone thinks you're a fucking whore!

Silence. Charlotte sits down in the chair. Frank continues pounding the keys on his laptop. Charlotte picks up a newspaper on the coffee table and thumbs through it.

Charlotte begins sobbing.

FRANK

Oh God, what? What's the matter?

CHARLOTTE

I didn't mean to do that to him.

FRANK

Do what to who? What are you talking about?

CHARLOTTE

To Jacob, I didn't mean to do that to him. I'm not a whore.

FRANK

You cheated on Jacob?

CHARLOTTE

I didn't mean to.

FRANK

What!?! I thought you two were getting married.

CHARLOTTE

I know, I know. I screwed it up.

FRANK

Have you told Dad?

CHARLOTTE

No.

FRANK

I really liked him. Why did you cheat on him?

CHARLOTTE

It wasn't my fault.

FRANK

How is it not your fault? You cheated on him! Even Dad liked him. How could you cheat on him?

CHARLOTTE

(Long pause)

I don't want to talk about it.

FRANK

(Suspicious)

Ok.

They sit in awkward silence for a few beats.

Frank clicks away on his laptop.

Charlotte studies the newspaper.

CHARLOTTE

Holy shit, get this!

FRANK

What?

CHARLOTTE

These two sisters murdered their older brother.

FRANK

Why?

CHARLOTTE

(Flipping through the paper)

It doesn't say.

FRANK

What do you mean it doesn't say? It's a newspaper it has to say.

CHARLOTTE

It says that he was sixteen, and babysitting his two younger sisters who were fourteen and seven...

FRANK

And?

CHARLOTTE

The girls broke into their Dad's closet, grabbed a loaded nine millimeter handgun and killed him.

FRANK

Why would they do that?

CHARLOTTE

It doesn't say!

FRANK

Bullshit it doesn't say!

CHARLOTTE

I'm telling you, it doesn't say.

FRANK

Let me see that!

Frank grabs the newspaper. He reads it for a few beats as Charlotte waits for his response.

You're right. It doesn't say.

Frank throws the newspaper back to Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE

I told you.

FRANK

I don't understand why it wouldn't say why they did it.

CHARLOTTE

Maybe they were being mistreated.

FRANK

How so?

CHARLOTTE

Well, maybe he locked them in a closet, or chained them to a bedpost, or maybe he just beat the shit out of them.

FRANK

That's true. I just don't get why it doesn't say it.

CHARLOTTE

Or he was raping them.

FRANK

Alright, well that's just weird.

CHARLOTTE

Why is that weird? It's possible.

FRANK

I'm just saying that's a weird scenario to bring up.

CHARLOTTE

But it could've happened.

FRANK

I know, but I just think it's weird that you would even go there.

CHARLOTTE

But it's possible.

FRANK

I know.

CHARLOTTE

Then why is it weird?

FRANK

Are you serious right now?

CHARLOTTE

Yes I'm serious. Why is that weird? Are you insecure about these kind of topics?

FRANK

No, I'm not insecure. I just think it doesn't need to be brought up.

CHARLOTTE

I think you have issues.

FRANK

What issues?

CHARLOTTE

I think you have issues that we need to talk about.

FRANK

I think **you** have issues.

CHARLOTTE

Then let's talk about it.

FRANK

No, I don't want to talk about anything.

Charlotte gets up and sits down next to Frank on the couch.

CHARLOTTE

C'mon, let's talk about it.

FRANK

What are you doing?

CHARLOTTE

What?

FRANK

Why are you sitting so close to me?

CHARLOTTE

Frank, relax. Quit being weird about it.

FRANK

I'm not. You're the one bringing up fratricide.

CHARLOTTE

That's a big word. Where did you learn that one?

FRANK

Probably on Nat Geo.

Charlotte puts her hand on Frank's thigh.

Pause.

FRANK

Stop that.

CHARLOTTE

What?

Frank grabs her hand and puts it back in her lap.

FRANK

Don't do that.

CHARLOTTE

It's not like we're really brother and sister.

FRANK

I know, it's just—

MOM enters through the front door, cursing under her breath. Frank's attention turns toward Mom.

MOM

...fffucking piece of shit!

FRANK

Hey Mom! (Pointing to Charlotte) Look who's home!

CHARLOTTE

(Standing up from the couch to embrace Mom)

Hey, I made it!

MOM

(Caught off guard)

Oh, hi honey.

Charlotte bounces over to Mom and they hug, awkwardly.

Are you parked in my spot?

CHARLOTTE

Yeah, I saw it was open so I took it.

MOM

Well, I guess that's ok. Where's your Dad?

CHARLOTTE

I don't know. (To Frank) Frank, where's Dad?

FRANK

I have no idea.

MOM

(Frustrated)

I knew it, I knew it.

FRANK

He's probably busy at work. Do you want me to call him?

MOM

Don't even bother.

CHARLOTTE

Seriously Mom? You're really going to be like this? I drove eight hundred miles just to hear you bitch about Dad again?

MOM

Charlotte, I don't want to hear it right now. Just leave me alone.

Mom starts toward the stairs but Charlotte stops her in her tracks.

Get out of my way.

CHARLOTTE

No Mom, this is not okay. Let's talk about it.

Mom bites her tongue.

MOM

Get out of my way before I slap your face.

CHARLOTTE

Do it then//

MOM

//I will//

CHARLOTTE

//Go ahead Mom, slap me in the face, I dare you.//

MOM

//Once again you're being out of control, goddammit, I don't have time to deal with this.
Where's your Dad?

Frank steps in between Mom and Charlotte.

FRANK

Charlotte, let Mom go upstairs.

MOM

Thank you Frank!

CHARLOTTE

Shut your mouth, you're a terrible person.

Frank holds Charlotte back from a perpetual attack on Mom.

FRANK

Charlotte, calm down.

MOM

(Chuckling)

Every time. I swear— I want to wring her fucking neck!

FRANK

Mom, shut up!

CHARLOTTE

Why don't you go try to kill yourself again?

MOM

Do you see how she talks to me?

FRANK

Both of you, shut up! Mom, go upstairs.

MOM

Tell your Dad not to expect a goddamn thing out of me, because if he thinks that I'm going to do anything for him then he can...

Mom's voice slowly fades out as she stomps her way up the stairs.

Charlotte and Frank look at one another in bewilderment.

CHARLOTTE

I don't know how you can live with her.

FRANK

Why do you have to be so mean to her?

CHARLOTTE

Are you kidding me? She's out of her mind.

FRANK

I understand that. But, you don't need to always antagonize her.

CHARLOTTE

She antagonizes herself!

FRANK

You don't help the situation by bringing up hurtful things.

CHARLOTTE

I'm sorry she can't handle reality, but you can't honestly think that she can just walk through life talking to people that way?!

FRANK

I don't think you should be talking to **her** that way.

CHARLOTTE

Now you're on **her** side?

FRANK

I'm not on her side, I'm just don't want you to kill each other.

CHARLOTTE

Where's Dad?

FRANK

I think he's still at work. I don't know.

CHARLOTTE

He knows I'm coming in today.

FRANK

What happened with Jacob?

CHARLOTTE

(Plops back down in the chair)

Ughh!

Frank sits on the couch in anticipation.

CHARLOTTE

(Looking through her cell phone)

Why do you want to know so badly?

Frank skims through his Laptop.

FRANK

Because I really liked him and I'm curious. Why did you cheat on him?

CHARLOTTE

You're in for a long story.

FRANK

I have all the time in the world.

CHARLOTTE

Well, for starters, he cheated on me first.

FRANK

I'm calling bullshit on that.

CHARLOTTE

I swear to God.

FRANK

No, you don't.

CHARLOTTE

I caught him having sex with Sasha Smith.

FRANK

No, you didn't.

CHARLOTTE

Yes I did.

FRANK

No, because Sasha told me you slept with Darren Taylor.

CHARLOTTE

What? She told you that?

FRANK

Is it true?

CHARLOTTE

Why did you act like you didn't know anything?

FRANK

It doesn't matter, is it true?

CHARLOTTE

Yes and no.

FRANK

What do you mean, yes and no? It's either a yes or a no.

Pause.

Charlotte stands up and walks to the kitchen. She turns the light on and grabs a soda from inside the fridge. She walks back toward the living room and turns the kitchen light off. She sits back down in the chair and crack open the soda.

CHARLOTTE

Let's talk about something else.

Pause.

FRANK

Why would you sleep with his cousin?

CHARLOTTE

I said, I don't want to talk about it.

FRANK

Of all the people you could have been screwing around with, why did you have to go with the family?

CHARLOTTE

How do you even know about this?

FRANK

So, you admit it?

CHARLOTTE

I didn't sleep with him.

FRANK

Yes, you did.

CHARLOTTE

(Emotional)

I didn't.

FRANK

Yes you did, Sasha told me.

CHARLOTTE

(Yelling)

Goddammit, I did not!

FRANK

Don't get so mad about it. You're a slut, I get it—

CHARLOTTE

He raped me.

Silence.

Frank sits wide-eyed in silence with his mouth open. He nervously gazes around the room.

FRANK

No, he didn't.

CHARLOTTE

He did.

FRANK

I don't believe you. You're lying again.

CHARLOTTE

I wouldn't lie about something like this, Francis.

Frank remains silent.

FRANK

I'll kill him.

CHARLOTTE

No, you won't.

FRANK

I'm going to go to his house, break his fucking door down, and kill him.

CHARLOTTE

You would never do that, you're too much of a wimp. You're afraid of a pigeon.

FRANK

What did you say?

CHARLOTTE

I said you're afraid of pigeons.

FRANK

You don't think I could kill someone?

CHARLOTTE

I don't think you have the balls.

FRANK

I could kill you.

CHARLOTTE

I don't think you would.

FRANK

I'd do it right now.

CHARLOTTE

Why don't you do it then?

FRANK

Maybe I will.

CHARLOTTE

Well then...

They stare each other down for a few beats. There is a strange sexual tension between them.

FRANK

Why would you say you cheated on him if he... You know. Why would you feel so guilty about it?

CHARLOTTE

I don't want to talk about this anymore Frank.

FRANK

Why would you make him the victim?

CHARLOTTE

Give it a rest.

FRANK

I mean, Charlotte, I would think that you would've gone to someone after it had happened.

CHARLOTTE

It's complicated, ok?

FRANK

I would think that you would be smarter than to put the blame on yourself for this. Does Jacob know?

CHARLOTTE

No, and you're not going to tell him.

FRANK

Something's not right. Something's missing. Are you lying to me?

CHARLOTTE

I said, give it a rest!

FRANK

Fine, I'll drop it. It just seems fishy.

CHARLOTTE

Why do you need to get all up into my personal life anyway?

FRANK

Charlotte, when you tell me that you've been raped, it's kinda hard not to make it my business.

CHARLOTTE

Look, I didn't ask you to get involved and take action over something stupid that happened.

FRANK

This isn't something that you should just brush under the rug, it's a big deal.

CHARLOTTE

What am I supposed to do? Go to the cops?

FRANK

Well yeah, of course!

CHARLOTTE

The cops aren't going to do anything. I can't even prove that it happened.

FRANK

You can still make an accusation toward him, even if you can't necessarily prove it this should still be brought to light. What if he tries to do this to someone else?

CHARLOTTE

It's not that big of a deal.

FRANK

Not that big of a deal? Do you know how many feminists you would piss off by saying something like that?

CHARLOTTE

You don't understand.

FRANK

At least go to the school board or something and report that one of their students is a rapist.

CHARLOTTE

If I go to the board and report that one of their most prestigious students is a rapist, then I not only will be ignored, but once I'm unable to provide proof I'll be labeled as a fraud, reprimanded, and possibly thrown out of school.

FRANK

You're outta your mind! What kind of bullshit are they feeding you out there?

CHARLOTTE

(Screaming)

You don't get it Frank, just drop it!

FRANK

Why don't you just admit you're lying?

CHARLOTTE

Why don't you admit you're a pervert?

FRANK

What?

CHARLOTTE

That's right. I've seen the way you look at me. I know what you're thinking.

FRANK

(Laughing)

You're completely fucked in the head.

CHARLOTTE

Oh, am I?

FRANK

Yes, completely.

CHARLOTTE

What happened with Julie, Frank?

FRANK

It didn't work out, we ended things and went our separate ways.

CHARLOTTE

That's not what I heard.

FRANK

What did you hear?

CHARLOTTE

Don't worry, she told me, you don't have to hide it.

FRANK

I don't know what you're talking about.

CHARLOTTE

She didn't have what I have, did she Frank?

FRANK

Quit being weird.

CHARLOTTE

The sex went downhill from there, she could no longer fulfill your forbidden desires.

FRANK

Shut up!

CHARLOTTE

Did you tell her about that one time?

FRANK

What one time?

CHARLOTTE

Don't you remember, Frank? When you stood over my bed, watching me.

FRANK

Shut the hell up!

CHARLOTTE

Why else would you move back home? You were waiting for me.

FRANK

I'm here to focus on my career.

CHARLOTTE

Sure you are. You want me and you don't know how to deal with it.

FRANK

Whatever dude, you're sick.

CHARLOTTE

You had to get out of that relationship somehow. So you came back home, the one place where you know that you would be taken care of while you do nothing with your life. It has nothing to do with you wanting to accomplish your goals. You're just lazy. You've always been lazy.

FRANK

I'm not lazy, take that back!

CHARLOTTE

Lazy and indifferent, you have no passion for anything, no loyalty, you have no idea what you want out of life.

FRANK

Shut up!

CHARLOTTE

You didn't even go to college because you thought Julie was going to marry you and you could just mooch off of her for the rest of your life.

FRANK

I went to college on-line.

CHARLOTTE

Please Frank, you didn't even finish, you're a loser!

FRANK

That's enough.

CHARLOTTE

Look at you, you can't even dress yourself. Keep believing you'll accomplish something. Its ok, Mom and Dad will take care of you.

FRANK

I said, shut up!

Frank picks up a water glass from off of the coffee table and throws it against the wall S.R.

The glass doesn't break. It bounces off the wall and rolls onto the floor.

CHARLOTTE

(Laughing)

You're so pathetic. You can't even break a glass.

Charlotte exits up the stairs.

Frank slumps into the couch looking defeated.

He wraps the blanket around himself and sits in silence.

He slowly gets up from the couch and goes to look at himself in the mirror S.R.

FRANK

(To himself)

I am focused. I am driven, and I have a variety of skills. I can persevere no matter what obstacles come into my way. I hold nothing back, I am a mover and a shaker. I am ascending

straight to the top. If you hire me, then you will see that I have the capabilities of a successful person. I excel at any task, big or small. I can achieve anything I set my mind to.

Dad's car is heard pulling into the driveway as the headlights light up the stage through a window.

Frank quickly throws the blanket off of him and digs through the mess of clothes on the floor by the couch. He urgently shuffles his way into a pair of khaki slacks and then pulls on a wrinkled white collared shirt, laboriously buttoning each button. He sits down on the couch and dives into his laptop in an attempt to look busy.

DAD enters through the front door. He is covered in whatever any blue collar working man might be covered in. Exhausted, aching, and disassociated; he lets out a big sigh as he hangs up his heavy jacket on the coat rack.

He painstakingly unties his boots and slowly pulls them off while grunting in exhaustion. He staggers across the living room while breathing heavily. He comes to a stop directly behind the couch as he stares at the back of Frank's head.

Pauses.

The sound of Frank clicking away on his laptop grows louder as he attempts to ignore Dad by pretending to be captivated by his computer screen.

DAD grunts and then crosses into the kitchen and goes straight to the fridge for a beer.

FRANK continues to pound away on his laptop, ignoring everything else around him.

DAD crosses back into the living room cracking open his beer. He hovers over the couch.

DAD

What have you done all day?

FRANK

I think I've nailed down some prospects.

DAD

Like what?

FRANK

Right now I'm writing a cover letter for a design company that I think could be promising.

DAD

Oh yeah? Let's see it.

FRANK

It's not done yet.

DAD

What's the rundown?

FRANK

I've been working on it all day.

DAD

Well then show me something.

FRANK

Ok fine.

Frank swipes through his laptop.

Here!

Dad reads it.

DAD

Is that it?

FRANK

Hold on, there's more.

DAD

Where is it?

FRANK

Well, hold on. My computer's screwing up.

Frank messes with his laptop a little more.

DAD

That's it?

FRANK

Alright, there! Read it.

Dad reads it.

DAD

Uniqueness and discipline?

FRANK

I'm not done yet.

DAD

How does having common knowledge make you unique and disciplined?

FRANK

I'm still working on it, it's a rough draft.

DAD

You're just saying you have skills. You need to be more specific.

FRANK

What do you mean more specific? I'm highlighting my skills right here.

DAD

No you're not. You're just listing remedial garbage! You need to be giving these employers a reason to hire you.

FRANK

That's what I'm doing. Are you not looking at the bullet points?

DAD

I see the bullet points and I'm telling you that it's not enough, Frank. This is amateur shit.

FRANK

How is this amateur? This is just like anything you would see on a professional resume.

DAD

A professional resume would have actual skills. Not just random adjectives that pretend to be skills.

FRANK

These are all scribbles anyway. I'm just using them as filler for now, I'll fix it later.

DAD

What the hell have you been doing all day?

FRANK

I've been making progress!

DAD

You can at least be honest.

FRANK

I'm telling you the truth.

DAD

No, I'm saying you can be honest on your resume.

FRANK

I am being honest.

DAD

You're saying you have a degree, you don't have a degree. You didn't even go to college.

FRANK

I did go to college.

DAD

Online college doesn't count. Besides, you didn't even finish it. You make it sound like you actually graduated from a real college.

FRANK

It was real college! Those were college-level courses.

DAD

At least say it's a trade college.

FRANK

What's the difference? It's the equivalent of a real college.

DAD

I understand, but when you list that you have a degree from a renowned university, and then they see your resume as saying attended classes at the University of Phoenix, it seems inconsistent.

FRANK

That is a renowned university.

DAD

Sure, anything is renowned if you see it on TV, but that's not what it sounds like you're trying to say.

FRANK

Dad, you don't get it. Just leave me alone, I can do this on my own.

DAD

Fine.

Dad turns around and starts to walk up the stairs. He stops.

Is your Mom home?

FRANK

She's upstairs waiting for you—pissed off as usual.

DAD

Great.

Dad walks back down the stairs and starts toward the basement door.

FRANK

Charlotte's here. She's in her room.

DAD

I'll be in the den.

Dad exits downstairs.

Long pause.

The sound of Frank clicking away on his computer grows louder. He stops and takes a long breath.

Frank grabs the blanket and pulls it over his head.

The sound of footsteps resonate down the stairs as Mom enters from upstairs wearing her mangy nightgown.

MOM

Was that your dad?

FRANK

He went downstairs.

MOM

You know, he's got a real problem, your Dad does.

FRANK

(Staring into his laptop)

Oh yeah, how so?

MOM

I don't know if you know this Frank, but your Dad is a sick person.

FRANK

Why do you always have to gossip about Dad? Why can't you just talk like a normal person?

MOM

There're things about him that you don't know.

FRANK

Like what?

MOM

You don't want to know.

FRANK

Then why bring it up? If there's a problem with Dad that I don't need to know about, then keep it to yourself. Leave me out of it.

MOM

He has other women on the side. You know that, right?

FRANK

(Rolling his eyes)

No Mom, I didn't know that.

MOM

He got syphilis from a crack whore!

FRANK

Jesus, Mom!

MOM

I can't even have sex with him anymore because I'll get infected.

FRANK

Why are you telling me this? Shut up!

MOM

Your father is a lying degenerate. A fucking scoundrel.

FRANK

Please shut up.

Mom swings the basement door open and yells down the stairs.

MOM

You hear that? You're a scoundrel. A lying son-of-a-bitch! I'll call the police on you the next time you try to touch me.

FRANK

Mom, go back upstairs. Knock it off!

Mom slams the basement door.

MOM

I'm sick of his shit, Frank.

FRANK

What shit? He's not even doing anything.

MOM

Where was he? Why did it take him so long to come home from work?

FRANK

He stayed late, it was a busy day, I don't know. What makes you so certain he was doing something?

MOM

Oh, I know your Dad, Frank. I know him very well.

FRANK

If he's up to something then you're the reason why. Do you know how miserable you are to live with?

MOM

You know he's down there doing drugs?

FRANK

No, he's not.

MOM

He's down there snorting that shit. I know it.

FRANK

Quit instigating, you're driving me nuts. Go for a walk or something.

Mom begins to pace back and forth while cursing under her breath.

MOM

I know... I know what he's up to. I should have listened to Deborah and left him a long time ago.

FRANK

I wish you would have. Life would be so much easier for all of us.

MOM

If you only knew the things he's done to me, Frank.

Mom begins to sob.

FRANK

Oh God! Mom, can't you take it upstairs? I have so much stuff to work on.

MOM

(Sobbing)

He's so terrible to me.

FRANK

Have you been drinking?

MOM

I should have divorced him a long time ago.

Mom continues sobbing.

The sound of footsteps stepping down the stairs gets louder until Charlotte enters.

CHARLOTTE

Where's Dad?

MOM

Where do you think he is?

CHARLOTTE

(Annoyed)

Why are you crying? What is it now?

MOM

You know what he's doing down there?

CHARLOTTE

Mom, shut up! Frank, Where's Dad?

FRANK

He's in the basement.

CHARLOTTE

(Emotional)

Why didn't you come to get me?

FRANK

You were in your room.

CHARLOTTE

Didn't you tell him I was here?

FRANK

I did.

CHARLOTTE

Then why didn't he come to get me?

FRANK

I don't know, Charlotte. Why weren't you down here?

CHARLOTTE

I thought you would tell him I was here and he would come knock on my door.

FRANK

Well, he didn't.

Frank lays on the couch and pulls the blanket over himself.

Charlotte lets out an exaggerated sigh. She walks into the kitchen and goes through the fridge. Mom follows her.

MOM

How is school going?

CHARLOTTE

Leave me alone.

MOM

I'm trying to ask you how school's going. Why are you being so rude?

Charlotte grabs an orange from the fridge and slams the door. She sits at the kitchen table and begins to peel it.

CHARLOTTE

School is school.

MOM

What does that mean?

CHARLOTTE

It means it's whatever.

MOM

Why can't you talk to me like a normal person?

CHARLOTTE

Why even ask? You know you don't really care.

MOM

Yes I do.

CHARLOTTE

Why do you talk about Dad like that?

MOM

Charlotte, he's not your Dad anymore. After you left for school he hasn't been right in the head. I don't know what else to tell you, Charlotte, but that's not your Dad.

Charlotte violently throws the orange rinds in the trash and sits down at the kitchen table.

CHARLOTTE

Please Mom, leave me alone.

MOM

I'm sorry honey.

Charlotte starts eating her orange.

Mom sits across from her at the table.

You don't understand the things he's done to me. His gambling nights with Carol, blowing off steam to come back at three in the morning—you kids didn't know what to think growing up, but I knew exactly what he was doing. I've been constantly betrayed by the man I love.

CHARLOTTE

Try being beaten with a hairbrush when you've missed the bus to school. Try locking yourself in the bathroom while your psycho mother stabs the bathroom door repeatedly with a kitchen knife as she threatens to kill you. You want to talk about being betrayed?

Mom stands up from the table.

MOM

You little fucking brat! I've done so much for you.

CHARLOTTE

What have you done for me? You only care about yourself. The den downstairs used to be Frank's room and you just push him aside onto the couch. You don't even let him have his room back after he's gone through such a hard time.

MOM

Frank moved out, it's no longer his room. What do you want me to say?

CHARLOTTE

You act like you're a saint for taking me in, but really you're just doing it to convince yourself that you're a good person, but you're not, you're abusive!

MOM

I work damn hard to put a roof over you kids and put food in your mouths. How dare you pass judgment on me!

CHARLOTTE

Your misery is manifesting into our lives.

MOM

I can't even talk to you about anything. You won't allow me to.

CHARLOTTE

Because you're a shitty mother!

Mom grabs a large kitchen knife from the drawer.

MOM

What did you just say to me? Say it again!

CHARLOTTE

What did I say?

MOM

I said, say it again!

CHARLOTTE

I said you're a shitty fucking mother.

MOM

I've had enough of you telling me I'm a shitty mother.

CHARLOTTE

So, you're threatening me with a knife to prove your point?

MOM

I've done nothing but try to be civil with you.

CHARLOTTE

So you wave a knife in my face to prove how civil you are? What do you wanna do, kill me? Go ahead! Prove how much you love me.

MOM

(Waving the knife)

Just say another goddamn word to me. I dare you!

Dad enters from the basement door.

DAD

What the hell are you doing? Put the knife down!

Mom points the knife at Dad.

MOM

This is all your fault you son-of-a-bitch!

DAD

Good God! Put it down!

Dad steps toward Mom.

Mom flails and takes a defensive stance while holding up the knife.

MOM

Don't you come near me! I'll call the police.

CHARLOTTE

Please do! So they can take you away.

DAD

Knock it off, Charlotte. You're making it worse.

Dad puts his hands up.

(To Mom.)

Please put the knife down.

MOM

I don't trust you for a second, I know what you're doing down there...

DAD

I'm not doing anything to hurt you.

MOM

Yes you are. You're hurting our entire family.

CHARLOTTE

You're out of your mind!

Mom points the knife over at Charlotte.

Dad quickly lunges at Mom and attempts to grab the knife from her.

Mom jumps away from Dad. Dad begins chasing Mom around the kitchen table as she screams for help.

Mom runs into the living room as Dad chases her. She stops and tries to stab Dad with the knife. Dad tackles Mom to the ground and they disappear behind the couch. The sound of struggling and yelling is heard until Dad stands up from behind the couch with the knife in his hand. Mom is still lying on the floor behind the couch, crying.

DAD

I should call the police on you.

MOM

(O.S. Hysterical)

Go ahead, you son-of-a-bitch! I'll tell them how you hit me.

DAD

You're hopeless. I'm hiding this knife from you.

Dad opens the door to the basement and starts to go down.

MOM

Yeah, go ahead. Go down and do all your drugs and your weird perverted shit.

DAD

(Pointing the knife at Mom)

Shut your mouth!

MOM

I'll tell the kids all your dirty little secrets.

DAD

I've had enough of you.

Dad storms over toward where Mom is lying and bends down to pick her up from the floor with one hand while holding the knife in the other.

Get up. Get off the floor.

MOM

Don't you touch me!

DAD

I said get up. Quit being a child.

Dad pulls her up by the arm. Mom screams in pain.

MOM

Oww! You're hurting me.

DAD

(Pushing Mom up the stairs)

Go upstairs and take your Prozac.

MOM

(Pushing Dad off of her)

Get your hands off of me. You have no right to tell me what to do.

DAD

I'm exhausted. I've been working all day in the dirt, and heat, and filth, just to come home and have a couple hours to myself. I can't even have that because I have to deal with this hurricane of insanity.

MOM

Your daughter comes home wanting to spend time with you and you can't even be there for her.

DAD

(Frustrated)

I'm here! I can't relax for two fucking minutes?

MOM

Put the knife down.

DAD

I will. Just go upstairs.

MOM

Put the knife down first. I don't trust you.

Dad puts the knife on the MANTLE.

DAD

Here, look! I put it down. Now go upstairs, I want to talk to Charlotte.

Mom stomps down the stairs and walks past Dad.

Where're you going now?

MOM

Mind your damn business!

Mom enters the Kitchen where Charlotte is sitting at the table swiping and tapping away on her smart phone.

Mom pulls open one of the kitchen drawers and pulls out a pack of cigarettes and starts packing them.

CHARLOTTE

I hope you get cancer.

MOM

You see that? You see the way she talks to me.

DAD enters the kitchen.

DAD

Don't talk to your Mother that way.

CHARLOTTE

It's hard not to when I'm raised in such a poisonous environment.

MOM

You're an ungrateful little bitch!

CHARLOTTE

You see the way she talks to **me**? Are you really going to defend her right now?

DAD

Don't talk to your daughter that way.

MOM

(To Charlotte)

Do you wanna know what he does in the basement?

CHARLOTTE

(Looking at Dad)

I don't know, do I?

DAD

(To Mom)

Go ahead, tell her.

MOM

I will.

DAD

Then tell her.

MOM

He's huffing.

Pause.

CHARLOTTE

What!?

Dad sighs.

MOM

That's what he does when he goes down there. He huffs.

CHARLOTTE

(To Dad)

What are you huffing?

DAD

It's not what you think.

MOM

Aerosol cans, spray-paint, glue, household cleaners. Whatever he can get his drug-addict hands on.

CHARLOTTE

(Tearing up)

Why are you doing that?

MOM

Because he's an addict, Charlotte. He can't stop doing it.

DAD

I'm not an addict. So, I've done it a couple of times, it's not a big deal. I don't do it habitually.

MOM

He does it all the time, I've caught him doing it, I've found the stash he keeps, I've even talked to your aunt Carla about it. This has been a problem for years.

CHARLOTTE

Dad, it can kill you.

DAD

(To Mom)

Why don't you tell her about **your** drug problems? Tell her about how you're addicted to Morphine.

MOM

I took that for my knee surgery. I was in constant pain.

DAD

And you still take it. You shouldn't even be getting prescriptions for it. God only knows how you're getting ahold of it. You know you're addicted to that shit.

MOM

I'm getting prescriptions for the pain. I need it.

DAD

You have countless prescriptions. You have prescriptions to counteract your other prescriptions. You're a pill junkie!

MOM

I'm not the one snorting cleaners to get my fix. I have real medical conditions that I need to be taking those pills for.

DAD

The only condition you have is the one in your head. You're lying to your doctor to get those pills, just like you lie about everything else.

MOM

You're the one lying to everybody! (To Charlotte) You see, Charlotte, he keeps doing this to me.

DAD

Quit acting like you're so innocent. At least I have the decency to not bring up all of the weird and shameful things that you've done over the years.

MOM

(Laughing)

Like what?

DAD

I don't want to bring it up in front of Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE

You might as well. I think you both need help anyway.

DAD

We've tried to do couples therapy but she just storms out every time.

MOM

Because it always ends up being an attack on me.

DAD

Because you don't take any accountability whatsoever. You're a sociopath.

MOM

That's it, I'm going to smoke a cigarette.

Mom walks out toward the Living Room.

DAD

You see! There we go again. Just storm out and don't deal with anything.

DAD follows her out to the Living Room.

MOM

(Putting on her jacket)

I'm not going to stand there and listen to you verbally assault be.

DAD

Go out and go find your boyfriend. I know that's what you're really doing.

Mom pauses and scowls at Dad.

Mom exits.

Dad stands still for a few beats and then walks back to the kitchen. He sits down at the table across from Charlotte.

They sit in silence as Charlotte is focused on her phone.

Dad gets up and grabs a beer from the fridge. He sits back down at the table and cracks open the beer.

DAD

So... How's school?

CHARLOTTE

(Staring at her phone)

It's fine.

DAD

Get off your phone.

CHARLOTTE

I'm not on my phone.

DAD

Put it away.

CHARLOTTE

I'm not on it.

DAD

I'm not telling you again.

Charlotte shrugs and slowly puts her phone away.

CHARLOTTE

What.

DAD

I want to know how school is.

CHARLOTTE

I told you, its fine.

DAD

Just fine? How are your grades?

CHARLOTTE

My grades are fine.

DAD

How did you do this quarter?

CHARLOTTE

I won't know for another couple weeks.

DAD

How do you think you did?

CHARLOTTE

I think I did fine.

Pause.

DAD

How's Jacob?

CHARLOTTE

We broke up.

DAD

Why?

CHARLOTTE

I'd rather not talk about it.

DAD

I really liked him.

CHARLOTTE

Dad!

DAD

Okay.

Pause.

CHARLOTTE

Can I have a beer?

DAD

Go ahead.

Charlotte gets a beer from the fridge.

I didn't know you liked beer.

CHARLOTTE

There's a lot you don't know about me.

Charlotte sits back down and cracks open the beer. She puts down half of it and lets out a giant belch.

DAD

You better be careful. It'll make you fat.

CHARLOTTE

I don't care.

DAD

Well, you should. No guys are gonna want you if you have a beer belly.

CHARLOTTE

What makes you think I want a guy that superficial? I want a man who's going to love my beer belly.

DAD

Fair enough.

CHARLOTTE

Isn't that what we deserve?

DAD

What do you mean?

CHARLOTTE

Don't we deserve someone who loves us for who we are?

DAD

I suppose we do.

CHARLOTTE

Isn't that why you married Mom?

DAD

I married your Mom out of necessity.

CHARLOTTE

How so?

DAD

We were dating in high school, I got her pregnant, end of story.

CHARLOTTE

Were the two of you in love?

DAD

I don't know.

CHARLOTTE

That's sad.

DAD

I guess we felt like we were in love at the time. We decided that if we were gonna have a kid together then it was best to be married. We didn't even have a wedding, we just went to the court house. I had to get a decent job, I didn't have time for college anymore. The same old song and dance. Marriage out of convenience.

CHARLOTTE

It sounds very inconvenient. Especially now.

DAD

Tell me about it.

Dad slams the rest of his beer. He gets up and grabs two more beers from the fridge and brings them back to the table.

CHARLOTTE

What made you decide to adopt me?

DAD

Well, there was no decision about it. Annie was unfit to raise you, so we had to take you in. I'll never forget that day. You were five years old, hair all matted, dirt all over your face. You had these tattered, dusty pajamas on, you looked like a little ball of dust. Like someone had swept you under the rug and forgot about you. I remember you looked up at me and opened your arms like you wanted me to pick you up and take you home. Like you'd been waiting for someone to dust around and find you. Like a diamond in the rough. It was never a decision, I knew that you were my daughter.

Pause.

Charlotte goes over to Dad and hugs him. She gives him a kiss on the head.

Charlotte sits back down and continues drinking her beer.

MOM enters the Living Room. She hangs up her jacket while coughing loudly. She starts walking toward the kitchen.

CHARLOTTE

Oh God, here she comes.

DAD

Just don't say anything.

Mom enters the Kitchen.

MOM

What are you doing?

DAD

We're having a beer. Do you want one?

MOM

No, I'm going to lay down upstairs, I'm tired. Can I talk to you for a minute?

DAD

Alright.

Dad gets up and follows Mom into the living room.

What do you want?

Mom starts whispering violently into Dad's ear.

Okay...Okay I get it...Alright, fine...I'm sorry, okay we'll talk about it later... give me a kiss then.

Mom and Dad kiss.

Go upstairs, I'll be up later.

Mom exits quietly up the stairs.

Dad goes and sits down in the armchair in the living room.

Charlotte enters the living room.

CHARLOTTE

What happened?

DAD

Nothing.

CHARLOTTE

Is everything ok?

DAD

Everything's fine, she calmed down.

CHARLOTTE

(Looking confused)

She didn't seem very calm.

Charlotte sits down on the couch on top of a mess of blankets and pillows.

Frank, who has blended in with the couch, pulls the blanket off from over him.

FRANK

You're sitting on my legs.

Charlotte jumps off the couch, startled.

CHARLOTTE

Jesus Christ! Have you been lying there this entire time?

FRANK

(Sitting up)

Where else would I be? You're in my room.

CHARLOTTE

I thought you left.

FRANK

Nope, I've been here this entire time.

DAD

Were you lying there when your Mom was running around the house with a carving knife?

FRANK

I don't know, I fell asleep.

DAD

You fell asleep?

FRANK

I guess so.

CHARLOTTE

What's wrong with you?

FRANK

What do you mean, what's wrong with me? What's wrong with you?

CHARLOTTE

All you do is lie around and sleep all day.

FRANK

I was taking a quick nap. I honestly didn't want to listen to you guys bitch at each other.

DAD

Frank, she's right. You've been on that couch for almost a year now with no job and no place else to go. Why don't you try to make something of your life?

FRANK

I'm trying. I've been working relentlessly on this interior decorator thing. What do you think I've been doing this entire time? Just sitting around sleeping?

DAD

That's what it looks like. Every time I come home I see you in the same spot. You never move.

FRANK

You always see me here because this is my temporary dwelling. My room and my workspace. It only looks like I'm here all the time because I have no privacy.

DAD

No Frank. I always see you on this couch. In the morning before I go to work, in the evening when I come home from work, on weekends, holidays, you don't ever move from that spot.

FRANK

Yes I do!

DAD

No Frank, you don't. I see you here every day, you don't move. It's starting to worry me.

CHARLOTTE

When was the last time you've been outside, Frank?

FRANK

I go outside all of the time, you just don't see it.

DAD

I never seen you bringing home friends or anything.

FRANK

Because I usually go to their houses, I'm not going to bring them here, there's nothing to do.

CHARLOTTE

What about girls?

FRANK

What about them?

DAD

Ever since Julie left you I've never even heard you utter another girl's name.

FRANK

I don't have time to meet women right now, I have things to work on.

DAD

C'mon Frank, let's be realistic here, a guy your age needs to get a leg-up every now and then.

CHARLOTTE

Yeah, Frank. It's a little strange that you don't go out and at least try to meet someone.

FRANK

I talk to women all the time, leave me alone. Why are you giving me such a hard time?

CHARLOTTE

Because we never see you doing anything.

DAD

You need to be living your life.

FRANK

I'm living my life, give me a break.

CHARLOTTE

I wouldn't call this living.

FRANK

I don't care what you call it, I just want to be left alone.

CHARLOTTE

Fine.

Pause.

DAD

You know Frank, if it's a problem, I have some women I can get you in touch with?

FRANK

What do you mean?

DAD

I mean, I can arrange something.

Awkward Silence.

CHARLOTTE

What does **that** mean?

DAD

I'm just saying that I know some women that would make it easy for him.

FRANK

I don't need it to be made easy for me.

CHARLOTTE

Dad, that's gross. Why would you even suggest that?

DAD

What? It's not that big of a deal.

CHARLOTTE

Do **you** do that?

DAD

Well... I have before.

CHARLOTTE

While being married to Mom?

DAD

I don't think I really need to talk about it.

CHARLOTTE

Is that why Mom gets so pissed off and accuses you of being with other women?

DAD

I don't know what you're asking me right now.

CHARLOTTE

It's simple, Dad. Mom thinks you're fucking around on her, are you?

Long pause.

DAD

Your Mom and I haven't been—you know—intimate together for a while.

CHARLOTTE

So you've been with other women?

DAD

Well, it's not like I'm in love with them.

CHARLOTTE

I can't believe you're saying this right now. Are trying to tell me that Mom is right, that you've actually been cheating on her?

DAD

She was the one who did it first.

CHARLOTTE

Oh my God, Dad!

DAD

It's true! She goes and screws the neighbors any chance she can get.

CHARLOTTE

How do you know that? Do you have any proof?

DAD

I don't have any solid proof but I know she does it.

CHARLOTTE

Have you seen her do it?

DAD

Oh yeah, I've seen her. Not directly but I've heard it and I've seen her go on her little walks, I know what she's doing.

CHARLOTTE

You mean, when she goes on walks? You think she's sleeping with the neighbors?

DAD

Oh, I know she is.

CHARLOTTE

How do you know?

DAD

I just know it. I can't really explain it, I just know.

Pause.

CHARLOTTE

Is Mom telling the truth about the huffing? Are you addicted?

Dad gives a long sigh.

Tell me the truth.

DAD

It's—um... Yeah, I've been doing it.

Charlotte becomes agitated.

CHARLOTTE

Are you serious!?

DAD

I'm sorry, you know how it is living with your Mom. She stresses me out so bad, I don't know how to deal with it.

CHARLOTTE

Get a divorce, move out, anything but resort to those kinds of drugs. You're killing yourself slowly everyday by doing that stuff.

DAD

I know. I'll stop doing it, okay.

CHARLOTTE

You were supposed to be the sane one—the one who was put together—our role model. Anytime we were scared or upset or needed someone to talk to, you've been there for us.

DAD

Yes, and I'll always be that person for you.

CHARLOTTE

I don't think I can trust you anymore.

DAD

Charlotte...

CHARLOTTE

How long have you been doing it?

DAD

(Hesitantly)

Ten years.

CHARLOTTE

Frank, did you know about this?

FRANK

Yeah, I did.

CHARLOTTE

Why didn't you say anything to me?

FRANK

You're going through school, you don't need all that added stress. Believe me, I've had trouble dealing with this too, but this is Dad's problem, not yours.

CHARLOTTE

I just wish I knew about it.

DAD

I'm sorry I wasn't honest with you, but Frank's right. This isn't your problem.

CHARLOTTE

I'm sorry, I just can't look at you right now. I have to go upstairs.

DAD

Ok.

Charlotte exits upstairs.

There is a long silence between Frank and Dad.

FRANK

I'm sorry, Dad.

DAD

It's ok. I just wish your Mom wouldn't have opened up her mouth about it.

FRANK

Why do you keep doing it? Why don't you stop?

DAD

Yeah, I guess you're right, but it's really not that bad.

FRANK

How is it not that bad? You're risking your life every time you do it.

DAD

Frank, I've been doing it for so many years that if it hasn't killed me by now, it probably won't.

FRANK

That's a ridiculous way to think.

DAD

I'm telling you, all those pills your Mom is doing are way worse. At least I'm in control of what I'm doing. If I wanted to, I could quit, I just don't feel the need to right now.

FRANK

Spoken like a true addict.

DAD

Like you're so damn special, wasting your life away by lazing around on my couch. You barely help out with anything around here, you just take up space.

FRANK

Is it true that one of your crack whores gave you syphilis?

DAD

Where did you hear that?

FRANK

Mom told me. Is it true? I wouldn't be surprised if it were.

DAD

That's it, I'm not having this conversation with you.

FRANK

Is it true or not?

DAD

The doctor gave me a penicillin shot for it, I'll be ok. Is that what you want to hear? Yeah, it's true, and you know what? Your Mom is worse than I am. Go ask her about it.

Dad exits into the basement slamming the door behind him.

Silence.

Frank grabs the blanket and wraps it around himself.

Frank slowly stands up and makes his way over to the Mirror S.R.

FRANK

I am a useful person, relevant to life. I have goals, skills, and motivation. I possess the drive that most people strive for. I face every challenge head-on. It is not uncommon for me to take initiative and to lead by example. I am the type of person who tends to do the right thing, even when no one is looking. If you were to hear others describe me, you would hear words like: reliant, efficient, and self-sufficient. My meticulous nature has me constantly pushing for the best results. I come across cool and collected, but if you look deep enough you can see the fire in my eyes. I have an extensive collection of business cards that tell of my aspirations in the design industry. I have many mentors that believe in my way of thinking, as well as my direction in life. I laboriously organize all of my contacts/slash/acquaintances in the order of opportunity that they arrive in. My restless nature is met with optimism—although sometimes stressful—I tend to balance myself by keeping negativity outside of my bubble.

Charlotte appears on the stairs peeking around the stairwell and down at Frank.

My care for environmental significance is reflected by the respect that others give to me, and the respect that is given back shows the confident and positive aura that glows around me. I do not try to make a name for myself—instead—I allow my name to make something of me. Even if I have only a penny in my pocket, I can turn it into a dollar by being the lively and infectious person that I know how to be. I care too much—

CHARLOTTE

(Interrupting)

Are you talking to yourself?

FRANK

(Startled)

What are you doing? How long have you been standing there?

CHARLOTTE

Why're you talking to yourself?

FRANK

I'm coming up with ideas for my cover letter. Why are you sneaking up on me?

CHARLOTTE

Did Dad go to bed?

FRANK

Unless he decides to sleep downstairs, no.

Charlotte tip-toes down the stairs. She is wearing slightly provocative pajamas.

CHARLOTTE

I need to talk to you.

Frank sits back down on the couch.

FRANK

Oh God! What now?

CHARLOTTE

Don't be like that.

FRANK

Like what?

CHARLOTTE

Don't be an asshole.

FRANK

I'm trying to work on something here – what are you wearing?

CHARLOTTE

My pajamas, do you like them?

FRANK

(Stuttering)

Nnno... What do you want?

CHARLOTTE

Do you not see the problems with our family?

FRANK

What problems?

CHARLOTTE

With Mom and Dad.

FRANK

Yes, I do. But I have bigger fish to fry. I have things I need to get done so I can get the hell out of here.

CHARLOTTE

You don't care about Mom and Dad?

FRANK

Of course I care about them.

CHARLOTTE

Then why don't you do something?

FRANK

What am I supposed to do? They made their bed, why should I be the one to fix?

CHARLOTTE

You don't need to fix it, just show some concern.

FRANK

(Melodramatic)

Oh, Mom, Dad, I'm sorry your marriage has gone to hell. Here, sit down and tell me all about it because I'm concerned and I may have some really good advice to give you.

CHARLOTTE

Frank, this is a dire situation. They are both drug addicts and their marriage is failing.

FRANK

Whatever, who cares.

CHARLOTTE

Who cares!? How could you be so coldhearted? How could you not care?

FRANK

Because **they** don't care.

CHARLOTTE

They're our parents, Frank.

FRANK

They're not my parents. Not anymore.

CHARLOTTE

But they've done so much for us. They're giving you a place to live.

FRANK

That's great. I'm thankful for that. But why should I be obligated to mediate their lives? I've tried to play therapist with them Charlotte, it doesn't work. Their problems are **their** problems and they're the only ones who can fix it. Why are you so adamant about being involved? Let it go.

CHARLOTTE

I can't let it go! They're my parents, I won't step aside and watch them destroy themselves.

FRANK

You're not their helpless little girl anymore Charlotte, you're an adult now.

CHARLOTTE

And as an adult I owe it to them. They need my help.

FRANK

No, they don't. They need to help themselves.

CHARLOTTE

That's easy for you to say. You just freeload off of them without giving a shit.

FRANK

Don't do that, don't start attacking me. This is about Mom and Dad.

CHARLOTTE

No, this is about you being absent, Frank. You're never there.

FRANK

How am I never there?

CHARLOTTE

It's like nothing is important to you. It's like you push everything aside, like you don't have time for it. All you do is sit there, you sit there and do nothing.

FRANK

I don't do nothing.

CHARLOTTE

I never see you do anything.

Silence.

FRANK

Why do you care so much?

CHARLOTTE

Because we're family, I have to care.

FRANK

I think it's cute that you're so concerned, but to be honest, this is an everyday thing with them. I honestly just want them to end it already. You of all people should wish for the same thing.

CHARLOTTE

Why should I wish for their marriage to fail?

FRANK

It's no mystery, Charlotte. You hate seeing them like this just as much – if not worse – than I do. Dad has become a terrible person because Mom is a psycho, and Mom is miserable living with the monster she created. They've been married for twenty five years. When you're together for that long you grow old and tired of each other. We're adults now, we don't need them to pretend they're happily married anymore. Just end it and move on.

CHARLOTTE

Don't you have any hope?

FRANK

What hope is there?

Pause.

CHARLOTTE

(Emotional)

It's just that, this is real. This is really happening.

FRANK

What did you expect to happen?

CHARLOTTE

I guess I'm just trying to hold onto something.

FRANK

What is there to hold on to?

Silence. Charlotte is in deep contemplation.

CHARLOTTE

Remember that time we skipped school and went to the mall?

FRANK

Yeah, I remember that. You were in like what, fourth grade?

CHARLOTTE

Yeah, you and Mom were fighting about something. What were you fighting about?

FRANK

I don't remember. I remember you were crying.

CHARLOTTE

I was upset that you were leaving. I didn't think you'd come back.

FRANK

You kept following me around, begging me not to leave. So I took you with me.

CHARLOTTE

I remember we took the Tri-Met, I'd never been on a city bus before. That was awesome.

FRANK

Yeah, that **was** cool. Mom was so freaked out. We called her on a pay-phone and she was blubbering. She did not want Dad to know we had run away from home.

CHARLOTTE

(Laughing)

She was so happy when we got home, I remember she told us not to tell Dad that we left.

FRANK

(Laughing)

That was fun.

CHARLOTTE

It **was** fun.

FRANK

Remember when I locked you to the deck with a bike lock and left you out there all day?

CHARLOTTE

(Unamused)

Yeah, I was pissed.

FRANK

(Very amused)

That was hilarious!

CHARLOTTE

No, it wasn't, you're an asshole!

FRANK

Dad was really mad when he saw you out there.

CHARLOTTE

Yeah, because it was fucked up.

FRANK

Mom thought it was funny.

CHARLOTTE

Mom's a bitch!

Mom comes storming loudly down the stairs.

MOM

Where's your Dad?

CHARLOTTE

He's downstairs.

Pause.

Mom exits downstairs.

FRANK

Whoa!

CHARLOTTE

What do you think is gonna happen?

FRANK

I don't know, I've never seen her go down there before.

CHARLOTTE

What does he do down there?

FRANK

(Loss for words)

I don't know. I mean, I know he does his huffing down there but I don't know what else he does. God only knows.

CHARLOTTE

What if she catches him doing something else?

FRANK

Like what?

CHARLOTTE

What if he has someone tied up down there or something?

FRANK

You and your sick mind.

CHARLOTTE

Do you ever go down there?

FRANK

No, not anymore.

CHARLOTTE

Then how do you know he doesn't have someone tied up?

FRANK

You're sick!

CHARLOTTE

I'm serious, what if there's this dark side to Dad that we don't know about?

FRANK

There already is a dark side and you just found out about it.

CHARLOTTE

What if it gets darker than that?

Pause. Frank contemplates the thought.

FRANK

Mom told me he has syphilis.

CHARLOTTE

What!?

FRANK

Mom told me he got it from a whore. But I guess it's treatable.

Silence. Charlotte hangs her head in shame.

I'm sorry. I shouldn't have told you that.

Charlotte remains silent as she puts her head in her hands.

Just forget that I said anything, it's stupid—it's probably not even true. I'm sure Mom just made it up—

Mom comes storming through the basement door yelling at the top of her lungs.

MOM

(Yelling downstairs)

You have no soul! Don't ever come back up here. I hope you rot in that basement.

Mom slams the basement door shut. She is carrying various bottles of cleaners and sprays in her arms.

(To the Kids)

Help me get rid of this.

FRANK

What happened? What is all that?

MOM

This is the shit he's been huffing. This is what's screwing his mind up.

CHARLOTTE

What are you going to do with it?

MOM

I'm getting rid of it.

FRANK

What are **we** supposed to do?

MOM

Just forget it, I'll throw it away myself.

Mom storms out the front door carrying the bottles in her arms.

CHARLOTTE

I can't deal with this, Frank.

FRANK

(Staring into his laptop)

You and me both.

CHARLOTTE

What should we do?

Long pause.

FRANK

Nothing.

Mom burst back into the living room through the front door clapping the dust off her hands.

MOM

—he just rubs it in like I'm some deviant whore who's out to destroy him. I've been nothing but a loyal wife. I'm patient and understanding – he treats me no better than any slut that he fucks on the side. I don't deserve that.

CHARLOTTE

What did you do with it?

MOM

I threw it out on the yard so all the neighbors can see. I want them to see him for the piece of shit that he is.

CHARLOTTE

Mom, you're acting crazy.

MOM

Look at you! You come in here like you own the place, and then you walk around like you're hot shit. This isn't your house, you don't live here anymore.

CHARLOTTE

Thank God I don't! I don't know how Frank stands it. I would shoot myself.

Frank closes his laptop and stands up. He starts packing away his mess of belongings into his duffle bag by the couch.

CHARLOTTE (Cont'd)

(To Frank)

What are you doing?

FRANK

I'm tired of this.

CHARLOTTE

Why are you packing your stuff?

MOM

Frank, what are you doing?

FRANK

Go ahead and keep arguing. I have too many things to worry about than to stick around and listen to it.

CHARLOTTE

Where are you going?

FRANK

It doesn't matter, I'm leaving.

MOM

You're not going anywhere Frank.

FRANK

Yes I am.

MOM

(Smiling)

Where do you plan on going?

FRANK

I'll go to a hotel.

MOM

You don't have any money.

FRANK

I guess I'll sleep on the street then. It's better than staying here.

MOM

You know you're not going anywhere.

FRANK

Watch me!

Frank heads for the door with his Duffle bag.

MOM

Frank, c'mon. Please just stay here.

CHARLOTTE

Yeah Frank, don't leave me here alone with them.

FRANK

I'm not going to stay if you keep fighting.

CHARLOTTE

We'll stop fighting then. (To Mom) Right Mom?

MOM

Yes, we'll stop fighting.

Frank stands at the door with Duffle bag in hand, ready to go.

FRANK

I don't want to hear anymore bickering between the two of you.

CHARLOTTE

No more bickering.

FRANK

I mean it. I have things to work on and all you're doing is distracting me.

CHARLOTTE

We won't distract you anymore.

MOM

No more distractions, honey. We're done.

FRANK

Cause if I sit down and you start fighting again, I'm out the door.

CHARLOTTE

We won't fight anymore Frank, just sit down.

FRANK

Are you sure?

CHARLOTTE

Yes we're sure, no more fighting, okay?

FRANK

Alright, fine.

Frank puts the Duffle bag down by the couch at S.R.

Frank sits back down on the couch.

Frank wraps himself in the blanket.

Are you going to apologize to each other?

CHARLOTTE

I'm sorry Mom.

MOM

I'm sorry too, honey.

FRANK

Thank you.

Dad enters from the basement.

DAD

Where is it?

MOM

Go back downstairs.

DAD

What did you do with it?

MOM

I'm not telling you. You're hopped up on that garbage.

DAD

I haven't been doing anything.

MOM

Quit lying, you know you have.

DAD

What the hell were you doing out there?

MOM

Out where?

DAD

Out on your little walk. I know what you were doing.

MOM

You've gotta be kidding me!

DAD

(Imitating Mom) “You’ve gotta be kidding me!” Don’t lie to me, I know what you were doing.

MOM

Those drugs have fried your brain.

DAD

You were out fucking the neighbors. I know that’s what you were doing.

MOM

Oh, please!

DAD

You go out there and fuck the neighbors, don’t lie to me.

MOM

Those drugs are making you paranoid.

DAD

What did you do with them, where are they?

MOM

I’m not telling you.

DAD

Did you take them to your boyfriend’s house?

MOM

What boyfriend?

DAD

You know what I’m talking about.

MOM

You’re not making any sense.

DAD

That’s it! We’re leaving.

MOM

Who’s leaving?

DAD

We’re leaving! Frank, get your things.

FRANK

Where're we going?

DAD

We're leaving.

FRANK

I'm not going anywhere.

DAD

(To Mom) You think you're so smart. (To Frank) Pack it up!

FRANK

Pack what up?

DAD

Pack it up! We're leavin'. (To Mom) I hope you're happy.

Frank approaches Dad and whispers in his ear.

I don't care, pack it up!

Frank whispers in his ear again.

Alright... Alright I get it... fine. No, no, I won't... I won't... Then trust me... Please try to trust me... Ok, fine... I love you too. (Announcing to the room.) I'm going to bed!

Dad exits upstairs.

FRANK

(To Mom and Charlotte)

I'm sorry about that.

Dad comes back down the stairs.

DAD

I'm not sorry, by-the-way. I think its bullshit that I have to be the one to have the finger pointed at all the time.

CHARLOTTE

Dad, please just go to bed.

DAD

You have nothing to say in this house and your mother has made it very apparent. (Pinches her cheek.) You're cute anyway.

FRANK

(Authoritative)

Dad, go to bed.

DAD

Frank, you're a joke. Why don't **you** go to bed?

MOM

(To Dad)

I'm going to make your life very difficult if you don't go to bed right now.

Dad stops. He glares at Mom.

DAD

What do you plan to do?

MOM

Go to bed!

DAD

No.

Silence.

Mom and Dad have a stare-down.

CHARLOTTE

Why don't you guys just both go to bed?

MOM

(Locked on Dad)

Shut up, Charlotte!

DAD

What are you gonna do, Magoo?

MOM

I'm going to ruin you.

DAD

Are you?

MOM

Yes, I am.

DAD

Then do it.

MOM

Don't tempt me.

DAD

I'm not trying to tempt you. I'm telling you to do it!

MOM

You're making a big mistake.

DAD

My big mistake was marrying **you**.

MOM

Finally, we agree on something.

DAD

What do you wanna do?

Mom goes to the telephone and dials a number.

Who are you calling?

MOM

(On the phone)

Yeah, hey! He's right here. I know I told you I'd call and now I'm calling. Well, he's right here. I'll see you to it. Okay, bye.

Mom hangs up the phone.

DAD

Who was that?

MOM

No one.

DAD

Who was it?

MOM

None of your business.

Pause.

DAD

What are you up to?

MOM

Nothing.

DAD

I know you're up to something.

MOM

What am I up to then?

DAD

Was that who I think it was?

MOM

Who do you think it was?

Pause.

DAD

That's it. I'm going to bed.

Dad stumbles upstairs.

MOM

(To Dad)

Goodnight!

DAD

(Stumbling up the stairs)

G-night!

Dad exits loudly up the stairs.

Mom sits in the chair in the living room.

Silent pause.

CHARLOTTE

Who was that?

MOM

Who was what?

CHARLOTTE

Who was that on the phone?

MOM

That was no one.

CHARLOTTE

That was definitely someone. What did they say?

MOM

What did who say?

CHARLOTTE

The person on the phone.

MOM

There was no one on the phone.

CHARLOTTE

Did you just make that up?

MOM

Of course I made that up.

CHARLOTTE

Why would you do that?

MOM

What else was I supposed to do? Your Dad was being a maniac.

CHARLOTTE

Why did he act like he knew who it was?

MOM

Because your Dad is gullible.

CHARLOTTE

Don't lie to me, what happened? Why did he react like that?

MOM

Because we have a dark past, Charlotte. There are things you don't know about your Dad.

CHARLOTTE

Tell me the truth!

MOM

I've already told you, your Dad is a degenerate.

CHARLOTTE

That's not a good enough answer for me. What did you do to him?

MOM

I've done nothing to him.

CHARLOTTE

Yes you did. Look at what you've done to me!

MOM

I've done nothing but love you.

CHARLOTTE

You've done nothing but hate me. The only reason I'm still a part of your life is because of Dad.

MOM

And I fucking hate you for that!

Silence.

CHARLOTTE

What?

Mom exits into the kitchen.

Charlotte follows Mom into the kitchen.

Mom grabs a beer from the fridge. She cracks it open and starts chugging it.

CHARLOTTE

I hope you drink yourself to death.

Mom pulls back from the beer and lets out a loud belch.

MOM

Here's hoping.

She continues to chug. She finishes the beer, crushes the can, and tosses it in the trashcan.

CHARLOTTE

This is getting out of hand.

MOM

I agree.

CHARLOTTE

Why can't we have a normal conversation?

MOM

Because there's just too much for us to argue about.

CHARLOTTE

You're constantly a cunt and I hate everything about you.

MOM

You're a constant pain in my ass. I can't believe I even consider you my daughter.

CHARLOTTE

Why don't we just end this relationship?

MOM

What do you mean? Are you trying to say that we should just give up?

CHARLOTTE

I'm saying that we should kill each other already.

MOM

I like this.

CHARLOTTE

I kill you, you kill me, and it'll all be over with.

MOM

(Laughing)

This is the best idea that you've come up with!

They both laugh.

CHARLOTTE

Thank you! It's been a long time in the making.

MOM

So, what's the plan?

CHARLOTTE

Well, I think we should grab a couple kitchen knives from the drawer and just go to town.

MOM

Do you want to?

CHARLOTTE

(Laughs)

Yeah, I guess I do.

MOM

Let's do it then.

Pause.

CHARLOTTE

(Serious)

What?

MOM

(Confused)

What?

Dad enters in his pajamas.

DAD

Are you coming to bed?

MOM

We're talking.

Dad goes to the fridge and grabs a beer.

DAD

Is everything ok now? Are we ok?

MOM

I'm over it. I don't even want to talk to you anymore.

DAD

Are we ok or not? I'll go back upstairs.

MOM

Yes, we're fine.

DAD

Ok.

Dad sits down at the kitchen table.

Charlotte, why are you still awake? Shouldn't you be in bed?

CHARLOTTE

Why should I be in bed?

DAD

I just figured, you have a lot of things going on. You should probably be in bed.

CHARLOTTE

You're the one acting like a psycho. I think **you** should be in bed.

DAD

Every chance you get to be a pain in my ass, you capitalize!

MOM

What about Frank? He's always being a pain in the ass.

DAD

Tell me about it.

CHARLOTTE

I think you should kick him out.

DAD

Why do you say that?

CHARLOTTE

He's taking advantage of you.

DAD

(Deep breath)

How would recommend going about it?

CHARLOTTE

I would give him an ultimatum. If he can't get his act together within a certain amount of time, then he's gone.

DAD

What if he can't fend for himself?

CHARLOTTE

He's an adult, I'm sure he can.

DAD

I really don't think he can.

MOM

You coddle him too much.

DAD

I try not to, he's just sensitive.

MOM

He's far too comfortable knowing he has a place to come back to.

DAD

I've been nothing but hard on him.

MOM

You're not hard enough. You have Charlotte to prove that.

CHARLOTTE

What?

MOM

I mean you're—

CHARLOTTE

I'm what?

MOM

You're a joke!

CHARLOTTE

What the fuck does **that** mean?

MOM

You know what that means.

CHARLOTTE

I'm gonna go to bed before you start to piss me off again.

MOM

Go to bed then.

CHARLOTTE

I really meant it when I wanted to kill you.

MOM

So did I.

Charlotte exits upstairs.

MOM

That's your precious daughter.

DAD

I hope you don't really want to kill her.

MOM

She really makes me want to. I'm sick of her trying to make me the enemy.

DAD

I'm sick of you being at each other's throats.

MOM

You can't deny that she turns us against each other.

DAD

I feel like you always find a reason to be against her.

MOM

You're never on my side when it comes to her.

DAD

Is that why there always seems to be this gap when it comes to being her parents?

MOM

No, I don't think that's it at all.

DAD

Is it because you two don't have a good relationship?

MOM

It's because she manipulates you!

DAD

How so?

MOM

She does it all the time. Every time she wants something, you're so quick to give-in to her.

DAD

I don't give her everything she wants.

MOM

Yes you do. You know you do it. You're a sucker!

DAD

She's good at talking. I'm not manipulated by her.

MOM

But, you are.

DAD

Give me an example.

MOM

Whenever she wants money, you fork it over.

DAD

No, I don't.

MOM

It's sad how far she can take it.

DAD

How?

MOM

I see her giving you the classic guilt trip.

DAD

I get that she needs things but what is it that I'm falling for?

MOM

Money. It's always about money. She gets so much money out of you.

DAD

But she needs it.

MOM

You don't even see what she's doing with it.

DAD

Is she really taking me through that much of a loop?

MOM

Yes! How do you not see it?

DAD

She's my daughter, I'm allowed to take care of her.

MOM

She's taking advantage of you.

Pause.

DAD

(Deep thought)

Maybe you're right. Sometimes I do feel like she's taking advantage of me. I feel like she's been doing this to me for a while. I don't know how I'm just seeing this now.

MOM

You've always known it. She's been pulling you by the strings from the beginning.

DAD

I just can't say no to her.

MOM

And she's laughing all the way to the bank. I understand that she's going to school and everything, but all the money you give to her just goes to one place.

DAD

And I know that, I've seen the way she is. I can't trust her.

MOM

You shouldn't trust her. You know the kind of person she is.

DAD

Yeah, I know.

MOM

Then what are you gonna do about it?

DAD

I'm cutting her off.

MOM

Cutting her off—meaning?

DAD

I'm not giving her any more money. All she does is manipulate me. It's not fair. I have too much going on than to try to accommodate her needs when all she does is pretend that she has so many problems. I don't have time for it anymore.

MOM

I told you! I told you we don't have time for this. I don't know why you keep wasting your time with her.

DAD

I know, I should just tell her it's over, in fact, the next time I see her I'm telling her it's over.

Charlotte stomps down the stairs. She enters the kitchen and makes herself a glass of water.)

CHARLOTTE

What are you two still doing up?

DAD

That's funny you ask, we were just talking about you.

CHARLOTTE

What about?

DAD

About how you always find a way of getting things from us.

CHARLOTTE

What does **that** mean?

DAD

Whatever happened to the money that you owe me?

CHARLOTTE

You mean the money that you gave me for books?

DAD

No, the money I loaned you for your trip.

CHARLOTTE

That trip was for school.

DAD

That's not what you told me.

CHARLOTTE

I believe the money you gave to me was for the trip and that trip was for school. I even got credits for that trip. Would you like to see the transcript?

DAD

(Sighs)

No. I believe you. I just want to see you do well for yourself.

Pause. Charlotte takes a deep breath.

CHARLOTTE

I have to be honest with you.

DAD

What is it?

CHARLOTTE

I'm not doing that well for myself.

DAD

How so?

CHARLOTTE

I used that money to go to Vegas.

MOM

I knew it!

DAD

You did what?

CHARLOTTE

I'm dropping out of school.

DAD

What the hell are you talking about?

MOM

I told you, I told you she's screwing us around.

DAD

How could you be dropping out? We've paid your entire way. You're not dropping out.

CHARLOTTE

I am dropping out. I can't deal with the stress anymore. Between you and Mom having all of these problems and the personal struggles I've been dealing with – I can't do this anymore!

DAD

What struggles are you talking about? Our problems have nothing to do with you, you can't just give up.

MOM

(Pacing)

All you do is take money from us. We can't afford to keep giving to you every time you come running. We're broke! If you're just gonna throw everything away then you have to pay it all back. If you keep expecting handouts your entire life, then you're in for a sad reality. This is your wakeup call. Grow up, go out and find it for yourself then, we're not doing this anymore.

DAD

We don't have enough to keep giving you what you expect, especially not if you're going to just throw it in our faces.

Pause.

CHARLOTTE

I'm sorry. I'm not trying to expect anything out of you, I just can't do it anymore.

MOM

I've had it, I've had enough of you.

CHARLOTTE

I'm sorry for disappointing you.

MOM

You're really fucking up this time, Charlotte.

DAD

We failed you as parents.

MOM

We didn't fail shit! She's a spoiled brat!

CHARLOTTE

I wish life were easier.

DAD

Life is never easy, but you have to keep trying. Charlotte, don't drop out of college.

CHARLOTTE

It's too late. I've already dropped out.

MOM

You ungrateful little bitch!

CHARLOTTE

I just think that if you had a better outlook on life then we wouldn't be having this discussion. Don't you agree?

MOM

What are you trying to say?

CHARLOTTE

I'm saying that I think the real problem lies with you.

Pause.

MOM

You're going to make me a very mad person if you continue on this way.

CHARLOTTE

I wish you could only see what you've done to me growing up. You blame everything on Dad but you know you're really the one who destroyed his life.

MOM

You're the one who destroyed **our** lives.

CHARLOTTE

Your presence is a curse. Whenever you're around I feel claustrophobic; I can't breathe.

MOM

If you only knew what it was like to raise you, you wouldn't be talking so much.

CHARLOTTE

I don't think I talk enough. There was nothing responsible about the way you tried to raise me.

MOM

You were nothing but a spoiled little shit, always getting your way.

CHARLOTTE

You're nothing but an embarrassment to the family—our cousins are completely uncomfortable around you—Aunt Carla and Sherry talk about you behind your back. Why do you think they don't want you around during Christmas?

MOM

(To Dad)

Don't let her talk to me like that.

DAD

Well, it is kind of true. You act distant toward them when we go over there, they've talked to me about it. Why do you act like that?

MOM

Because I can't stand your family! They do nothing but judge me. I can feel them doing it, I can feel them judging me.

CHARLOTTE

The only reason they judge you is because you act so weird around them.

MOM

I have anxiety issues, ok!

CHARLOTTE

Well, you take a million pills for it. You'd think you'd be over it by now.

MOM

(To Dad)

I can't believe you're letting her talk to me like this.

DAD

Alright, let's stop attacking your Mom.

MOM

I'm always the one being blamed for everything.

CHARLOTTE

Oh, woe is me! You're always the one playing the victim—making everyone feel guilty because the world is so unfair to you!

MOM

Look at yourself! You're always the one shaking your ass and pouting that you need this and you need that—wining and crying until you get your way. Talk about playing the victim.

CHARLOTTE

Oh, don't even talk! You know you have Dad wrapped around your finger.

MOM

How so?

CHARLOTTE

You're constantly lying to him and trying to manipulate him to get your way. What about that phone call?

MOM

You're such a little liar.

CHARLOTTE

You know that phone call was bullshit! You're just trying to blackmail him. That's not any way to treat your husband. You two have such a fucked up marriage that you've scared both Frank and I from ever hoping for a normal relationship.

DAD

That's it, I'm going to bed.

Dad walks into the living room and heads toward the stairs. Mom follows him.

MOM

I don't need this shit. I'm going to bed too.

Charlotte follows them into the living room.

CHARLOTTE

(Snarky)

That's it! Go ahead and run away again. You know I'm right, I always am.

MOM

I'm done with this conversation, Charlotte, I'm going to bed.

CHARLOTTE

Go to bed then, just know in your head that you're wrong.

DAD

You guys, cut it out. Charlotte, leave your Mom alone.

MOM

I work so hard just to come back here to my home and have you harass me.

CHARLOTTE

You bring it on yourself. All you do is bitch and bitch and bitch about everyone else without ever realizing that you are the one with the problems.

MOM

I'm getting really sick of you attacking me, Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE

I'm getting really sick of you attacking Dad. He does nothing but try to cater to your needs and all you do is act like an animal.

MOM

I want you out of this house, tonight!

DAD

(To Mom)

Calm down.

CHARLOTTE

No, I'm not going anywhere.

MOM

Get your things and get the fuck out!

CHARLOTTE

Where am I gonna go at this time of night?

MOM

I don't give a shit. Stay at one of your slutty friend's house for all I care. I don't want you here.

DAD

She's not going anywhere. Charlotte leave it alone and go to bed.

CHARLOTTE

It sounds like you're the one who's the slut from what Dad tells me. Why don't you go stay at the neighbor's house and I'll stay here.

Mom starts grabbing all of the little antiques and knickknacks off of the MANTLE U.C. She violently starts throwing them at Charlotte in a fit of rage. Charlotte dodges the various projectiles as she runs around the stage. Dad yells the entire time for Mom to stop.

MOM

(Hysterical; screaming)

Get the fuck out of my house. I don't want you here anymore. You're not my daughter, you never were. I don't ever want to see you again. I hope you die!

Mom runs out of things to throw.

Charlotte is standing S.R. by the front door with her hands blocking her face.

CHARLOTTE

(Laughing)

You're so pathetic. You can't even hit me. You **are** an embarrassment. I think **you** need to get the fuck outta here!

Mom see's the KNIFE lying on the mantle. She grabs it and holds it up toward Charlotte.

MOM

That's it! Now I'm going to kill you.

Mom starts toward Charlotte.

DAD

(Yelling)

Hey, hey no!

CHARLOTTE

(Antagonizing Mom)

C'mon, do it!

Dad bolts over to Mom and grabs her by the throat. He slams her up against the wall and continues to choke her.

Mom drops the knife and grabs at Dads hands in which continue to choke her.

Dad jerks on Mom's neck with each accented syllable in his following lines.

DAD

(Enraged)

What the fuck is wrong with you. You always have to cause trouble. Why can't you just calm the fuck down! I'm sick and tired of you acting like this.

MOM

(Gurgled)

I can't breathe!

Charlotte runs over to Dad and tries to take his hands off of Mom.

CHARLOTTE

(Frightened)

Dad, let her go. She can't breathe!

DAD

Shut up, just shut up! Why can't you ever shut up?

CHARLOTTE

(Panicked)

Stoppit! You're gonna kill her. Let her go!

Dad continues to strangle Mom like he's possessed by a demon. Mom tries to speak yet there is little to be heard through her constricted air passage.

DAD

I want you to die!

Charlotte grabs a last remaining knickknack on the mantle that Mom missed and bashes Dad over the head with it.

Dad appears to not be hurt by it but he suddenly snaps out of his fit of rage and releases his hands from Mom.

Mom falls to the ground, gasping for air. Charlotte runs to her aid.

CHARLOTTE

Mom, are you ok!

Mom nods while grabbing her throat and coughing.

Dad stands in shock.

DAD

I'm sorry...

CHARLOTTE

What's wrong with you? You could have killed her!

DAD

I thought she was trying to kill you.

MOM

(Voice raspy)

I was just trying to scare her, I wasn't going to hurt her.

DAD

I thought you were.

MOM

You were really trying to kill me.

DAD

(Disassociated)

I don't know what I was trying to do.

CHARLOTTE

What's the matter with you?

DAD

I was upset. I don't know what happened.

CHARLOTTE

You seemed like you were possessed. Like you weren't really there.

DAD

I think it might be the drugs. I've been having strange thoughts lately.

CHARLOTTE

Like what? What's happening to you?

DAD

I've been having extreme paranoia. It's like I hear and see things that aren't really there. It's like my actions are completely unjustified. And I have no control over it. I keep accusing people of doing things and being a problem in my life when I'm really the one with the problems. I can't make the right decisions anymore.

CHARLOTTE

Let us help you, Dad. Let's get you the help you need.

DAD

I don't know Charlotte, I don't think that's going to work.

CHARLOTTE

It can work if you want it to. You have an addiction. It's ok to get help for it. You're not any less of a person.

DAD

Yeah, but I really don't think that I do.

CHARLOTTE

But you just admitted it. That's like, the first step. You're on your way!

DAD

No, I think if there's anything that's causing me to act a certain way, it's your Mom.

MOM

(Standing up)

What?

DAD

(To Mom)

You know, I think if it wasn't for you causing me all this stress, I wouldn't be going through this.

MOM

You going through this? What about what you've put **me** through with all this shit? Have you ever thought of that?

DAD

I know what you do when you go on your little walks. You go out and fuck the neighbors, just admit it!

MOM

You want me to admit it, huh?

DAD

Yeah, I want you to admit it.

MOM

You want me to admit to something that I've never done throughout our entire marriage?

DAD

Just admit to it, I know you're doing it.

As Mom and Dad continue to argue, Charlotte rolls her eyes and walks over to the living room couch and sits down. She suddenly notices that there is more room on the couch than usual.

CHARLOTTE

(Interrupting Mom and Dad)

Where's Frank?

Mom and Dad suddenly stop arguing.

DAD

I don't know. Did he go to the bathroom?

CHARLOTTE

His bag's gone.

MOM

(Hollering)

Frank?

Pause. No answer.

Did he go downstairs?

DAD

I'll go look.

CHARLOTTE

I'll go check upstairs.

MOM

I'll go look out front.

They all exit to their aforementioned locations.

The stage is empty for a moment as we hear Mom, Dad, and Charlotte all calling for Frank offstage.

They all enter back into the living room.

CHARLOTTE

He's not upstairs.

MOM

I didn't see him out front.

DAD

Well, I guess he left.

Silence. No one has anything to talk about. It suddenly seems like these three characters have never met.

CHARLOTTE

Should we call him?

DAD

Whatever, he's a big boy. I'm sure he's fine. I'm going to bed.

MOM

Yeah, me too. I'm exhausted.

Mom and Dad exit upstairs.

Charlotte looks around the room in silence.

CHARLOTTE

Well, I guess I'll go to bed too.

Charlotte hits a light switch on the wall and the lights go down. We hear her walking up the stairs.

END