

Beauty*

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* It's a working title.

the siblings,

Net, 33, butch, six months pregnant.

Riley, 30, getting older.

CJ, 19, often upstairs.

All Ashkenazi Jews.

and respectively,

Guy, 30s, likeable, “all-American,” white (not Jewish), six feet tall. Also plays Date.

Allison, 24, a friend of the family, also Ashkenazi.

stasisman09, CJ’s age, his internet friend, white or perhaps biracial and nearly-but-not-quite white-passing. But not Jewish.

time/place,

a few days in New Jersey

some notes,

ambiguity and sincerity over easy answers and moral binaries

the play is a swift, steady escalation from start to finish

also, these siblings really love each other

This play was developed in the Clubbed Thumb Early Career Writers Group.

1.

Late afternoon. The family's fancy kitchen, which features an island (with swivel stools) and a big sink and a big fridge.

Riley, 30, enters in a dress slightly too sexy for temple. She's playing something like Sabrina Carpenter's "Please Please Please" on her phone.

Riley knows every word. She claps on the clap parts. She is a liiiiiittle tipsy.

Shortly after her: Net, her older sister, butch, six months pregnant, 33, pants and a shirt, holding the leftovers they stole from their cousin's Bat Mitzvah.

They are buoyant and eager and ecstatic to see each other after months apart.

Riley serenades her sister. She is a total ham, and very funny.

Riley

*I know I have good judgment, I know I have good taste
It's funny and it's ironic that only I feel that way
I promise 'em that you're different and everyone makes mistakes
But just don't.*

Net unloads leftovers into the fridge and tries to hide her smile.

Riley

*I heard that you're an actor, so act like a stand-up guy
Whatever devil's inside you, don't let him out tonight
I tell them it's just your culture and everyone rolls their eyes
Yeah, I know
All I'm asking, baby*

Is Riley on her knees now?

Riley

*Please, please, please
Don't prove I'm right!*

Net claps good-naturedly at the clap parts.

Riley

And please, please, please

Don't bring me to tears when I just did my makeup so nice

Heartbreak is one thing, my ego's another

I beg you, don't embarrass me, motherfucker, oh

Please, please, please...

Riley boogies offstage, upstairs to change, taking the music with her –

Riley (*calling, off*)

They swapped out the stair photos????

Net

Oh yeah, Mom –

Riley (*off*)

I miss the old ones!!!

Net's phone rings – she looks at the caller, then silences it. Riley comes back in comfy clothes.

Riley

I'm dedicating my life to Bat Mitzvahs, Net. I'm going to leave PR and become a Bat Mitzvah party pumper.

Net

I support it. You crushed that dance off.

Riley

I was robbed. I have way better moves than that 12-year-old asshole. Pass me a poppyseed?

Net hands her a poppyseed bagel.

Net

What is up with this family and poppyseed?

Riley (*stuffing her mouth*)

Not my fault you're a Sesame Traitor. Did you steal egg salad?

Net ("yep")

You didn't eat?

Riley

I can't eat in front of those women, I have trauma, I have trauma from the phrase "scooped out."

Riley puts egg salad on her bagel.

Riley

I can't believe this is it. The very last Kaplan Bar Mitzvah. I remember thinking "at Michaela's Bat Mitzvah I'll be thirty. I'll probably be married. I'll probably have a kid."

(*"hahahahahahahahaahhahaimaginethatgodl'msosingle"*)

Ahhhhhh.

Net

It's the end of an era.

Riley (*indicating Net's stomach*)

That is the next child called to the bimah.

Net

Horrifying.

Riley (*as Net's kid, as if at a Bar/Bat Mitzvah candle lighting*)

"This candle's for Aunt Riley, who's been there since day one. Even though she's still single and childless at 43, we always have lots of fun."

Net

Oh stop –

Riley

It's a joke! I'm joking! Don't make me stop joking about my loneliness it's my only bit! Plus did I tell you Aunt Fredda pulled me aside to tell me about JDate? Apparently Isaac is having great success. "Finally appreciated as a nice Jewish boy."

Net

“That Isaac. Such a mensch.”

Riley

“You know he *called* Bubbe on her birthday. So sweet.”

Net

“Did you try his mashed potatoes on Thanksgiving? He’s *such* a cook!”

Riley

Which PS. Claire did all the work, he just physically mashed ‘em. Also, she told me her mom basically forced her to get Invisalign with emotional blackmail, that’s why her teeth aren’t fucked up anymore.

Net

Do you remember when he went on growth hormone and they’d put us back to back? “Sorry Jeanette, looks like you can’t catch up!” Yeah no shit.

CJ, 19, comes into the kitchen, buried in his phone. The energy shifts.

Riley

Oh. Hey.

Net

Hey CJ.

CJ doesn’t reply, just goes for the fridge. He stuffs a poppyseed bagel into his mouth and goes back up the stairs.

Net

He looks worse.

Riley

He needs to wash his face.

Net

Do you think he’s okay up there?

Riley

Mom said he's allowed to be alone.

An awkward silence. They're far apart.

Riley slides the egg salad back to Net, an offering of togetherness.

Riley

This egg salad is terrible. Try it.

Net tastes it.

Net

Oh wow, that's really bad.

They smile at each other. Back together again.

Riley

You're here for the whole week?

Net

Yep. You too?

Riley

Yeah. It's gonna be great. We'll hang, get caught up. You look great, by the way. Pregnancy...*suits* you. Get it? 'Cause you're in a suit? But also legitimately, you are glowing. Very... fertile nature goddess.

Net opens the fridge to deflect on the vague dysphoria of that statement.

Net

Are you still hungry?

Riley

There's nothing edible in there. It's all expired.

Net

You appear to be correct.

Riley

I bet even the balsamic is expired.

Net

There are three balsamics and they are all expired.

Riley

Told you!

Net

Were you going to sit down and have some balsamic?

Riley

Drink it like a Danimals. Should we order Ozakaya? You could get gyoza?

Net

You *know* Ozakaya is gross.

Riley

We could go to the dine-errr!

Net

I just spent three hours being fawned over by women who previously considered me a hairy dyke so I kind of need a break from being perceived.

Riley

That's so unfair, don't they know you're still hairy?

Net

You know what we have the ingredients for.

Riley

What?

Net

Snack tray.

Riley
No way.

Net
Yes way.

Riley
Net Kaplan, beloved older sister, I want nothing more in the world than for you to make me snack tray.

Net
Ask and you shall receive.

Net starts to make snack tray. It is a very creative charcuterie board but assembled only of things in the back of their parents' cabinets. Crackers. Apricot jam someone got mom once. Tiny peanuts in tiny bags. A cheese stick cut into little slices. Pizza rolls in your toaster oven (Net starts there). Frozen bread defrosted cut into little triangles with baby bell cheese on top.

Riley pours soy sauce as Net keeps assembling. She dunks a pizza roll in soy sauce.

Riley
Why is this so good.

Net
Because it's salt. Did I tell I showed it to Bailey and she said it was disgusting?

Riley (*this is a joke*)
Antisemitism is out of control.
I can't believe they have pizza rolls. Imagine Mom and Dad eating them. Like okay Aaron and Jodie.

Net
I think CJ likes them.

Riley
Oh, right. Hey, sit down!

Net

I'm not that hungry, just wanted you to be set.

Riley

Okay Dad.

Net (*but she's flattered*)

Booo.

Riley

Are you going to be like him? Like cook everything, do the dishes, keep the appointments? Because if I were you, I'd put my kid to work. Dishes, vacuum, dusting.

Net

Swiffer pads on the knees so they can scrub as they crawl.

Riley

Yeah, I gave you life, earn my love. Unless you're cute in which case, never mind, you're crushing it, slay, slay, et cetera et cetera.

Net

Oh you can control that.

Riley

Oh yeah?

Net

Yeah, they told me and Bailey in one of the classes –

Riley (*finally, details!*)

You take a class on how to be pregnant?!

Net

-- if your baby isn't cute, just shove it back up and let it cook a little longer.

Riley

Right right, before the shoulders are out you look at the face –

Net

That could be your job-- park between my legs and –

Riley

And make a game time decision: hot or not?

Net

And if not –

Riley

Just – swoop.

She does a move like shoving a baby's head back up a vagina.

Net

Yep. That's the birth plan.

Riley

You sound so old when you say that. "Birth plan."

They eat snack tray. Riley bites into a pizza roll dunked in soy sauce. It's way too hot. Riley does the hot pizza roll open mouth thing. Net holds out her hand. Riley shakes her head. Net insistently holds out her hand. Reluctantly, Riley spits the chewed-up too-hot pizza roll out into Net's hand.

Riley (*full of love*)

Seeester.

2.

Evening. Riley in the kitchen eating terrible sushi, Net just off in the living room. Still joyful, but a hair more muted.

Riley (*mouthful of terrible sushi*)

It's so bad!!

Net (*off*)

Told you.

Riley (*eating her roll*)

How did we ever like this? Did we just not know sushi could be good?

Net (*off*)

It's possible. I remember the first time I had actual sushi I was like, Holy shit.

Riley

And you've only had east coast sushi.

Net (*off, an old ritual*)

West Coast Traitor.

Riley (*yup*)

West Coast Traitor.

Net comes in with a big box of maternity clothes from Mom.

Riley

Oh, let me carry that for you!

Net

I've got it.

Riley

No here, let me do it!

Net

Really got it.

Riley

Stop it. Shoo. Shoo.

Riley takes the bin and sets it on the counter. (Net is frustrated, but she hides it.)

Riley

I can't believe she has all this.

(*random British accent?*)

For her daughters.

Net (*still a little pissed*)

Yuuup.

Net starts to go through it and make yes no maybe piles. It's all femme.

Riley

I wonder when this stuff is from. Us, or CJ?

Net

Probably CJ.

Riley

Aw. I feel like it's cuter if it's stuff she wore when she was pregnant with us. Like. More sentimental.

CJ comes down. The energy shifts.

He looks upset. Net and Riley watch him. CJ doesn't say anything or look at them. He gets a roll of paper towels.

Riley

Did you spill something?

CJ

No.

Net

Do you want sushi?

CJ

No.

Riley

Are you good?

CJ goes back upstairs with the paper towels.

A weird beat.

Net returns to the clothes. Riley looks at the stuff. They pull it back together.

Riley

So nice that she has all this stuff for you. Like. An inheritance.

Net

How much do you think I have to take so she doesn't get mad?

Riley

Well damn you know. Leave some for the rest of us.

Net (*trying to be sensitive*)

Oh yeah. I mean. Of course – you can have whatever you want.

Riley

Eugh, don't look at me like that.

Net

Like what?

Riley

All "you'll find someone." I'm *trying*, but it's hard out there. The hinge lesbians don't want bi women –

Net (*"I'm not so sure about that"*)

Ahh –

Riley

-- and the straight men are just like, "oh my god you're so funny." I'm not funny. You've just never dated a Jew before.

Something bangs upstairs. Then silence. They try to ignore it. After a beat, to deflect:

Riley

What about that?

Net
This?

It's a black maternity dress with a pink bow.

Riley
It would look good on you.

Net
In what world.

Riley
You have the right body.

Net
For this black dress.

Riley
Especially with your boobs now?

Net
For this arguably hideous black dress with a bright pink bow on the belly?

Riley
I don't think it's hideous at all and I wish I could fit into that kind of thing. But I got dad's body, you got mom's, and you don't even want her stuff. You have that amazing J Crew dress from when she was in school and it looks so good on you and you don't even wear it.

Net
I don't think I'm morally obligated to wear mom's old clothes?

Riley
I don't think that's even at all what I said?

It's quiet for a moment. They're far apart.

Net takes out her phone.

Net

Hey. Look at this mini dachshund in a hotdog costume.

Riley takes the phone.

Riley

That's really cute.

They smile at each other. Back together again.

Riley

Actually um. Can I talk to you about something kind of serious?

Net

Oh yeah. Of course.

Riley

It's um. It's about Bailey?

Net

What about Bailey?

Riley

You said she has a work thing this weekend right? So she couldn't come?

Net

Mmhm.

Riley

Look.

She shows Net her phone.

Net

Uh-huh.

Riley

I don't think she's. At a work thing.

Net

Mmhm.

Riley scrutinizes Net's non-reaction.

Riley

You knew this.

Net

... she's not a big party person.

Riley

She is literally partying on her Close Friends.

Net

There's only one bed here.

Riley

There's a couch.

Net

Are you volunteering?

Riley

I feel like I never see her.

Net

You also live on the other side of the country.

Riley

When's the last time she was here?

Net

Maybe dad's 60th?

Riley

But that was two years ago.

Net

Well, you know.

Riley

Net. Are you guys good?

Net

We're great.

Riley

Because if you need me to fight her I'll fight her.

Net

Please do not fight the mother of my child.

Riley

Dude, you're the mother of your child.

More sound upstairs.

Net (*calling up the stairs*)

Ceej? You good?

Their phones ping.

Riley (*reading the text*)

"Thumbs up emoji."

It's silent for a long while.

(Riley eats another piece of sushi. God it's terrible.)

Net

I appreciate you looking out for me, but I promise we're fine. She just – you know. Her family's not like ours.

Riley

Psychologically demented and plagued with IBS?

Net

Close. Now. Seeester. Do you still want to watch the 2002 modern classic Bend It Like Beckham.

Riley

Desperately.

3.

Night. Net cleans up popcorn bowls, Riley gets a glass of water and gets ready to head upstairs for bed.

Riley

And that's why I have a silk pillowcase. I saw two doctors, no one knows why.

Net

For what it's worth I didn't notice.

Riley

Okay Net.

Net

I didn't.

Riley

Okay, but it's true.

Net

If you say so.

Riley

Yeah I mean. It is. It's a fact.

Net

Well, you look the same to me.

Riley

Like there is an actual bald spot on my head.

Riley goes to a mirror downstage (facing us) to inspect it.

Net

I guess I just don't notice stuff like that.

Riley

See but you're lying to me.

Net

I'm not.

Riley

And it makes me feel worse, because you're implying my body needs to be lied about.

Net

You look beautiful. You look like my beautiful sister.

Riley

It's not bad that my hair fell out. It's a neutral fact.

Net

I don't know what you want me to say. I don't notice stuff like that.

Riley

So if all my hair fell out you wouldn't notice? You would just lie.

Net

That stuff's not on my radar.

Riley

Okay, well "that stuff" is having eyes so, good luck raising a baby. With no eyes.

Riley heads upstairs, pissed.

Net is alone in her parents' kitchen. That feeling of late-night solitude at home. She can finally relax for a second.

She takes off her belt and exhales. She takes her bra off from under her shirt. (She has tits now... The fuck?) She puts the bra on the counter.

She takes a second to breathe with her eyes shut.

Her phone rings. She silences it without opening her eyes.

She breathes again.

She goes to get herself a glass of water. She can't reach the cups. Fuck. *Fuck.*

Guy walks in, seemingly through the wall. Flannel. Work boots. Six feet tall.

Guy
Need a hand?

Net
Nope.

Net finds something to stand on.

Guy
You sure?

Net
Yep.

Net grabs a cup and fills it with water. Guy leaves as CJ enters, buried in his phone.

Net
He emerges.

CJ goes to the fridge, and takes out the leftovers, then heads towards upstairs.

Net

Wait. Hey. There's not that much sushi left. You want me to make you an Elio's?

CJ nods and sits. Net grabs her bra and starts to make him an Elio's in the toaster oven.

There is both distance and fondness between CJ and his sisters.

CJ (*kinda amused*)

Since when do you wear bras?

Net

It's a new development.

CJ eats the leftover sushi.

CJ

You know they never have good food here anymore.

Net

Oh yeah?

CJ

It's like they decided since you guys are old they're just done being parents.

Net

I mean you did – leave. And then... come back.

CJ retreats into himself a little. The toaster oven dings. Net gets the Elio's on a plate for CJ. She slides it to him. He wolfs it down hot.

Net

So uh.

You know. I know what you're going through.

CJ doesn't respond.

Net

Just. I don't know if you know but I... also have depression.

CJ

Is that why you used Bailey's egg?

Net

What? Who told you that?

CJ

Is it a secret? 'Cause when it comes out looking fresh off the Mayflower everyone's gonna know.

Net

It's not a secret, it's just private.

CJ

Sure.

He goes to go back upstairs.

Net

Wait. Hey. I just meant I'm here if you need anything. You know that, right? Both of us are.

CJ

What about money?

Net

Oh, um –

CJ

Forget it.

Net

Wait –

CJ

I said forget it.

Net

What do you need it for? Are you in trouble?

CJ

“In trouble” – / what the --

Net

Like crypto / or –

CJ

You think I’m some fucking / crypto bitch –

Net

Or with weed or –

CJ

Yeah I’m in debt to Garrett Neuberger for *fucking indica* – / you don’t even know me –

Net

I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I don’t know why my nineteen-year-old brother “taking time off from college” needs money.

Riley comes downstairs in slightly too sexy pajamas.

Riley

You guys are stupid loud.

Net

CJ, what do you need money for?

Riley

He doesn’t need money.

CJ (*to Riley*)

Like you have any.

Riley

What? I make way more than Net –

Net

Okay –

CJ

She has a house –

Riley

Yeah ‘cause Bailey–

CJ

Fuck.

Riley

Makes bank --

Net

Okay –

Riley

Why fuck?

CJ

Bailey hates us.

Net

She does not hate you.

Riley

Why does he need money?

CJ

Yeah she does –

Riley

Why do you need money?

All their phones light up.

Net

Dad’s pissed.

Net goes to text him back, promising they’ll be quiet.

Riley (*whisper hiss*)

Just tell me why and I’ll Venmo you. What’s it for?

CJ (*a total shit*)

I got Net pregnant and I need to pay for her late-term abortion.

Riley

Gross, CJ –

Net

You're disgusting.

CJ flips them off and heads back upstairs.

Riley looks at Net.

Riley

You know. Mom did ask me one time if he was going to be your donor. So the baby could have both of your genetics.

Net (*"what the fuck"*)

Ew.

Net goes to tidy up as Riley goes to go back upstairs.

Riley

You coming to bed?

Net

One second.

Net puts CJ's dish in the dishwasher.

Riley

By all means, clean up his mess.

Net ignores her and starts it up. It roars.

4.

We're with CJ now. It's his bedroom at the top of the stairs. It's dark in here. It smells like boy. It smells like weed and cool ranch Doritos.

CJ gets online. He's in a good mood.

CJ
You up?

Stasisman09 is there, online with CJ. CJ's age. His internet friend. They shit-talk each other, but they're good buddies – everything said with a grin.

Stasisman09 (*a joke*)
Yeah baby wanna fuck?

CJ (*fond*)
Fuck you.

Stasisman09
Let's do it. Cmon baby gimme that big Jew dick.

CJ
You're such an asshole. How come up you're up?

Stasisman09
Got two hours til my next dose of pain meds. You?

CJ
Sisters.

Stasisman09 (*"ah yes," half joking*)
The family femoids.

CJ
Don't say femoids you sound retarded.

Stasisman09
It's a joke, dumbass. You got anything for me?

CJ
Oh yeah. Here.

CJ sends a file. It's a photo we can't see. Stasisman09 snorts.

Stasisman09

Oh *god*.

CJ

I know right?

Stasisman09

You can't make this shit up. This is why AI won't win – you can't generate a human face like that. That is a raw human catastrophe. What's his name?

CJ

Benjamin.

Stasisman09

Benhameen! A member of the tribe!

CJ

What do you think his facial width to height is?

Stasisman09

Probably what? 1.75?

CJ

Eugh. Look at his eye area – so bad –

Stasisman09

It's the negative eyebrow tilt – it's just –

CJ

Yeah but it's also his eyes they're like – like *beady* –

Stasisman09

Recessed –

CJ

-- and his bigonial width is like what 70% of his cheekbone?

Stasisman09

What I want to know is: where are his lips?

CJ

He looks like a fish!

Stasisman09

How tall is he?

CJ

Dunno like – 5’7”?

Stasisman09

And where’d you find him?

CJ

We did Model UN together.

Stasisman09

Well someone should tell him.

CJ

“Excuse me delegate? Point of information? Your nasofacial angle is outside the 30-40 degree range so you are going to die a virgin.”

Stasisman09 (*suddenly serious*)

No, I mean it, for real someone should tell him. He deserves to know.

Yeah so he can do something about it, sure, or just so his whole life makes sense.

So he can understand why people treat him the way they do – I mean god, what do you think’s worse? Not knowing or knowing?

What was worse for you?

CJ

... Not knowing.

Stasisman09

That's what I thought.

Before, you were a puddle on the floor.

Chugging vodka and Advil because you can't get your dick wet.

And now... things aren't perfect, but they're better. Right?

CJ

Yeah. They're a lot better.

5.

The next day. Net in the kitchen on her laptop. She bends down to plug it in to an outlet... except she can't bend.

Net

Fuck.

Guy is there.

Guy

C'I I help you?

Net

No thanks!!

Riley (*calling*)

Seeeeeester –

Riley enters, Guy is gone – and Riley is pestering, little sister to big sister, and this scene moves as fast as possible –

Riley

It's been all day. I thought we were going to hang out.

Net

We are.

Riley

But you've just been on your laptop working.

Net

Yeah so the thing about PTO is my job doesn't have it. And this crazy thing is happening in a few months, I don't if I mentioned it, where like, I need as much money as possible.

Riley

But *you* told me you were coming for the week.

Net

So we could hang out.

Riley

But you're working.

Net's phone rings.

Riley

Bailey's calling.

Net silences her phone.

Riley

It's just the thing is, I took PTO.

Net

Right.

Riley

To come out for the week.

Net

Yeah.

Riley

So we could hang out.

Net

We're going to hang out.

Riley

Okay.

Net

Okay.

Riley

So let's go to Clubhouse tonight.

Net

Clubhouse? We're not 24.

Riley

Well let's go *somewhere*.

Net

I want to.

Riley

Right...

Net

But I can't.

Riley

And why not?

Net

Because I'm working.

Riley

OH MY GOD.

CLUB MUSIC CLUB MUSIC CLUB MUSIC CLUB MUSIC --

6.

Night. Riley is making out with Allison in the kitchen. Allison is 24 and looks exactly like a younger version of Riley.

After a moment:

Allison

Did Cheryl Andrews do your guys's kitchen?

Riley

What?

Allison

Did Cheryl Andrews do your parents' kitchen, it looks so good.

Riley

Oh – I don't know.

Allison

It looks like her. She did my parents' too.

Riley

Cool?

They make out.

Allison

I don't know if you remember our kitchen. From like. When you would babysit.

Riley

I remember you guys had Snackwells? Yeah I would like, I would steal all your Snackwells!

Allison

Seriously?

Riley

I mean, yeah. We only had Chewie Chips Ahoy at my house.

Allison

... Wow. I'm seeing you in a whole new light.

They make out –

Allison

But yeah so they did the addition six years ago and Cheryl –

Riley

Hey, Allison, so we actually have to be kind of quiet just 'cause my parents and sibs are asleep upstairs –

Allison

Wait, is your sister in town? Are your parents so excited for the baby?

Riley (*kill me*)

Yeah. They are.

Allison

I'll be quiet. But can I just say one more thing?

Riley

What is it?

Allison

I've actually always had a massive crush on you.

Riley (*actually quite flattered by this*)

Really?

Allison

When you were my babysitter I thought you were really sexy.

Riley

That's a really specific thought for an eight-year-old.

Allison

You had these... little boobs. Not big like my mom's. In my brain I called them "boobettes." I wanted your body so bad. In both senses. I was like, "I want to touch them, but I also want them to be mine. I wanna go through puberty like Riley Kaplan." And now...

Allison takes off her shirt.

Riley

"Boobettes."

Allison smiles. They make out. Riley takes off her shirt.

Allison

Oh huh.

Riley does not have "boobettes" anymore.

Riley

What?

Allison

Nothing!

They hook up –

Riley

Do you like when I touch you?

Allison

I love when you touch me.

Riley

Yeah?

Allison

It makes me feel so good.

Riley
Yeah?

Allison
It makes me feel like we're sister Israelites in the desert.

Riley (*um, what*)
Sure –

Allison
My hands in your hair. Your hands in mine. Sometimes I hate my hair but yours is sexy and that means mine is too.

Riley (*kinda into it now?*)
Yeah. You're right.

Allison
When you touch me it's like the women with Miriam, dancing with the tambourine after coming out of Egypt.

Riley (*wait, is she fully into it?*)
That's hot.

They hook up.

CJ is lying in his bed, and also, online.

CJ
How's your legs?

Stasisman09
Excruciating. How's the foids?

CJ
I don't know, they don't tell me shit. It's like they're sisters and I'm just there -- I didn't even know Net wanted kids til she was pregnant.

Stasisman09

Ah yes. The hot chad injection.

CJ

Please don't talk about my dumb sister like she's a cum dumpster.

Stasisman09

It's a joke? Though technically someone did get off at some point –

CJ

Gross?

Stasisman09

And got paid – for the record, we know who it was. Some guy who's grade A All-American breeding stock: super white, clear-skinned, Ivy League, physically fit, and six feet tall. Your sister and her "wife" –

CJ (*dude homophobia is cringe*)

Dude –

Stasisman09

-- picked that guy right out of the catalogue. You know sperm banks have height requirements? Look it up. I'm just telling you because frankly, it's antisemitic. You ever heard of a six foot Jew?

CJ

Funny.

Stasisman09

That kid's gonna be the tallest Kaplan ever born. You and me? We're the last generation of the suboptimal mandible. It's Master Race Barbie and Ken here on in.

CJ

Well then, good.

I'm happy for them.

No suffering. No pain.

Stasisman09

Damn. No pain.

Net is dreaming, running without going anywhere.

She's dressed like herself before – like if they made custom maternity wear for butch dykes.

She is running. She is running. (She is running out of breath, she is six months pregnant.) She is running. She is --

Guy

Hey. Hold up a sec.

Guy is there. He's dressed exactly like Net. They're in a place (not a real place) with an old brick wall.

Net

Nope. Not doing this.

Guy

You don't have to do one thing, honey. Just stand a while with me til you catch your breath.

Net relents. She stands there and catches her breath.

Guy lights a cigarette, then offers her one.

She hesitates, then takes it.

He lights her cigarette for her.

Guy leans against the brick wall. Net leans against the brick wall too.

They smoke. Brick wall. Tan jackets. Leaning bodies.

Guy

Nice pants.

Net
Thanks.

Guy
Sturdy.

Net
Yeah.

Guy
Good amount of pockets.

Net
Yep.

Guy
Important. Never know what you might need to have handy.

They smoke.

Net
Nice hands.

Guy
Thanks.

Net
Big.

Guy
Yeah.

Net
Rough, too. I can tell from looking.

Guy
Well don't just look. Give 'em a feel.

He holds out his hands for her.

She touches them.

Guy
Well?

Net
Scratchy. Strong. The veins are all – mine don't do that.

Guy
Well, I've been busy. Hauling. Hammering. Hard at work.

She holds her fingers against his. Hers are smaller.

Net
What are you working on?

Guy
The whole world. You see everything out there that's ever been built? Courtesy of yours truly.

Net (*genuinely impressed*)
Wow.

They smoke.

Net
You uh. You think you could teach me?

Guy looks at Net slow, appraising. His gaze feels electric. He gives a little smile.

Guy
Sure thing.

7.

Morning. Allison at the kitchen counter with CJ, mid-conversation.

They're comfortable with each other. CJ is perhaps a little shy.

Allison

God I miss college. Being a recent grad is so depressing, and then you turn 24 and you're not even recent. You're at Mich, right?

CJ

Yeah.

Allison

That's so cool, I FULLY got rejected.

CJ

Didn't you go to Tulane?

Allison

Yeah but *everyone* I went to camp with went to Mich. Do you know Sarai Goldberg?

CJ

I don't think so.

Allison

She'd be a senior – you're a sophomore?

CJ

Yeah.

Allison

She's like um. Long brown hair. Kinda tan but not really.

CJ

Yeah I don't think I know her.

Allison

It's nice that you came home for your cousin's Bat Mitzvah. When do you go back?

The doorbell rings. She goes to answer it. It's doordash.

Allison

Lemme guess. West End Deli #3.

CJ

You want hot sauce?

Allison

You got me one?

He shrug-nods.

Allison

I'm good on hot sauce. But thank you.

They eat.

Allison

I remember when I would pick you up from Monroe and I'd be like what do you want and you literally always wanted a west end deli / number three breakfast burrito.

CJ

Number three breakfast burrito.

Allison

With a Yoohoo.

CJ

With a Yoohoo.

Allison

And hot sauce.

CJ

And hot sauce.

Allison

'Cuz I remember being like, what fifth grader wants hot sauce.

CJ smiles a little.

Allison

After two months my mom was like, Allison, you cannot keep spending your money on this little rat child's breakfast burritos, have them reimburse you, and your dad was SO mad.

CJ

My dad? He's never mad.

Allison

Well I confronted him with two hundred dollars of receipts being like "sir. Hello. Please compensate me for feeding your child." He was like, "Allison, I assumed this went without saying, but please do not buy CJ a breakfast burrito every day." And I was like, why not. He wants it. How often do you just get to give someone what they want? You were so cute.

CJ

Aghhhh.

Allison

And your sisters were *obsessed* with you. Didn't Riley *build you a wall* for her senior project?

CJ

Lax wall. To practice. Yeah. It's out back.

Allison

Do you still play lacrosse?

CJ shakes his head.

Allison

Yeah me neither. Well I mean duh. I'm an adult. Do you remember sleeping with your hot wheels in your bed? I remember telling all my friends that – I was like you guys, this kid I babysit, someone must've told him stuffed animals are for girls so he cuddles his hot wheels. But so Mich is good?

CJ

Yeah.

Allison

Well, tell me more.

CJ

Um.

I um.

I'm... in a frat.

Everything he says here is a lie, but it's not really funny? Or it's sad-funny.

Allison

Oh cool, which one?

CJ

Um. Snu.

Allison

You're in *Snu*? Do you know Andrew Silverman?

CJ

Uh yeah. Yeah. We um – we play uh – club basketball together. A lot of the guys do.

Allison

Oh cool, that's fun.

CJ

Yeah and um a bunch of the girls come and you know they like cheer us on. It's sort of dumb because like, club, but it's fun. And you know Mich is a big football school so we all those games –

Allison

Wait go back to the girls. Tell me about the girls.

CJ

Oh they're. Cool. And. Pretty and. Nice.

Allison

Do you have a girlfriend?

CJ

I do. I mean I did. Her name was Madison. I mean it's still Madison. Here's a picture.

He shows her a picture of a girl named Madison on his phone.

Allison

Oh my *god*, she's gorgeous.

CJ

Yeah but I uh caught her fucking another guy so –

Allison

No way you caught them –

CJ

My roommate actually so –

Allison

No!

CJ

Yeah and I – pulled him off her and I punched him in the jaw. He was you know he had some height on me but I got a few good – hits – in.

Allison

Holy shit.

CJ

Yeah so I moved to a new room but it's funny because Madison is like you know, she wants me back, she's like, I made a mistake, you know, I love you, but, I feel like I deserve better. I deserve better than a cheating slut.

Allison

Okay don't say slut c'mon. You have two sisters.

CJ

Sorry.

He eats his burrito.

CJ

But yeah. So like. I'm single now...

Allison

Fun! The world is your oyster. Make good choices, stay safe, use the free condoms in the doorway -- I can't believe saying the word "condoms" to "Baby CJ"! You're all grown up!

Then Riley walks in with two Starbucks cups right about –

Riley

Allison!

Allison

Riley!

Riley (*"lie now"*)

What are you doing here?

Allison (*"okay, but unfortunately I'm not an amazing liar"*)

I was... dropping off your jacket! That you left at Clubhouse last night? You went home before me, without your jacket! The back door was open so I just came in and CJ was here. He bought me breakfast, so sweet.

Riley (*harsh, to CJ*)

So dad bought her breakfast. Because you doordashed. With Dad's credit card.

CJ

Why do you have two coffees.

Riley

One's for you, asshole, the Keurig is broken, thank me.

She hands Allison's cold brew to CJ.

Riley

Well, thanks for bringing back my jacket.

Allison

Any time. Seriously. I'll bring back your jacket whenever. Thanks for breakfast, Ceej.

She hugs him. He savors her touch. And then she leaves.

CJ is tense. Simmering rage.

Riley

Get in the car I gotta drive you to your thing.

CJ

I thought Dad was taking me.

Riley

He had work stuff, he'll meet you there. And apparently you can't drive yourself so. Now it's on me. C'mon, get your burrito... you *do* know we have a stove right? It's actually very easy to use.

CJ

Can you not make fun of me for five seconds?

Riley

I'm just messing with you, take a joke.

CJ

Well it's not funny so fucking stop.

Riley

You know, you used to be really cute. The first year I was in college every time you talked to me on the phone you'd say "loveyoumissyou" like it was all one word. And now –

CJ

You guys always talk about me like I died. You talk about how much you loved me and how I great I *used* to be –

Riley

Well yeah, we used to have a little munchkin who adored us and now you don't even talk to us when we visit. It's sad for us.

CJ

Sorry I'm such a disappointment.

Riley

I just mean you're not a little kid anymore, be an adult brother – spend time with us, be interested in our lives.

CJ

You don't know shit about my life either.

Riley

Because you won't talk to us. I didn't know you left school until you were already home. I didn't know you were depressed until Mom told me. You weren't even going to say goodbye?

CJ won't look at her.

Riley

I don't know what's going on with you, CJ. I won't know if you won't tell me. But I love you, asshole. Can you just get in the car? This doctor is stupid far.

CJ

Can I just ask you something first?

Riley

Sure, what is it?

CJ

... do you think we have good genes?

Riley pauses.

Riley (*"isn't it obvious?"*)

... No.

They leave.

8.

In the brick wall elsewhere escape, Net and Guy in white undershirts and work pants, under a car with tools out of a red toolbox.

Elsewhere, stasisman09, telling us a hard truth. It's not easy to tell us, but he's going to do it. Because he cares about us. Because we deserve it.

Stasisman09

The first thing that happens is they break both your femurs.
I'm not going to sugarcoat it: for once, you deserve the truth.
After they break them, they insert nails in the break --
Adjustable, titanium, high-quality – this is all when you're out.
Then, a remote control keeps the nail extending:
One millimeter a day. 90 days to six feet.
The pain is – about what you'd expect.
Excruciating. Constant.
But the pay-off? They say it's everything.
There's a world out there you never knew.

Net and Guy work. It's exhilarating and tiring all at once. Hot sweaty work.

Guy

Pass me that torque wrench?

Net

Got it.

She passes it to him.

Stasisman09

That's your legs, but what about your face?
The jaw and the brow are easy.
A silicone implant goes in, sew it up, you're done.
For the chin, it's pretty clever.

They saw off the end, place that end further out,
and then let bone growth to the rest.
Rhinoplasty is simple, you add or you take.
You might use cartilage from the ear, some from a rib.
Smoothing a bump is easy, they've done that one for years.
Recovery: yeah, it'll hurt. No way around that.
But every throb is saying: finally, finally.
You've got what you deserve.

He smiles at us. So sincere. Tender, even.

Stasisman09

You were born screwed, no way around it –
Industrialization, race-mixing, genetic bad luck –
But you can fix it. You can repair it.
You can make a new body.
You can get what you deserve.

Net's sweating now. Guy wipes the sweat off her brow with a rag. She looks at him.

Net

Show me how you use that wrench.

Guy

It's like this.

He uses the wrench. She feels his bicep as he does it.

Net

Keep going.

9.

Mid-day. Riley on her laptop at the counter, Net standing behind her. Visible to us, all over the white kitchen: optimized male faces.

Riley

"I'm the parent." That's what Dad said to me. "I'm the parent."

Net

This was when?

Riley

On my drive home, I called him after I googled the doctor's office – here wait, switch with me, you should sit.

Net switches, but she's irritated at the special treatment. She swallows her annoyance.

Net

I wonder how much it costs.

Riley

A lot, Net. It costs a lot. Because it's not just your legs getting longer – they can change your whole face. Look! They can make you look like an Aryan male model for the cost of a new car.

Net

You said it was a consultation. Maybe it's just –

Riley

When has anyone in this family ever denied him anything? What did you say to me? You said, "I didn't know Dad saw us as *daughters* til he finally got his son."

Net

He's a *teenager* –

Riley

Dad said it's about self-esteem. Said it's different for boys, with their height, we wouldn't understand. But of course, no one is talking about the *real* reason.

Net

Okay –

Riley

The second Google result for this doctor, Net. The *second* result. Looksmax.org – they love this doctor, he’s their favorite, he’ll do anything they like – and what else is on looksmax.org?

(these are all real quotes from the real website, in case you were wondering)

“why most muslims are lower IQ and don’t contribute to society” “black people have no concept of robbery and rape” “an honest female should accept her inferiority and worship men” “why do normies refuse to talk about Jewish control” “what would you do if you saw a Jew nose IRL” --

Net

It’s the internet, there’s a post right there about sea salt spray.

Riley

You are wildly underreacting to the possibility that our brother is a white supremacist misogynist incel.

Net

Those are words that just came out of your mouth.

Riley

But you see it, right? He gets told his whole life he’s so great –

Net

We got told the same thing –

Riley

He’s never had a girlfriend – then all the time in his room – we don’t know anything about him, the last time either of us lived here he was *seven*. Plus...

Net

What?

Riley

Well just. We don’t actually know why he left school.

Net

Oh come on.

Riley

Did he *leave*? Or did he do something and they kicked him out?

Net

Do something like what? Like assault someone?

Riley

I don't know. And neither do you.

Net

So, what do you want to do? You want to print out all the racist, sexist dreck on this random website that happens to worship CJ's maybe-doctor and present it to our parents and say... your son is an incel, fix it or else?

Riley

Say get him real help, get to the *real* root of the thing, the misogyny, the entitlement, because we're not going to just pretend everything's normal. Hey, here's a question, do you want your kid around someone who thinks "lesbians and gays need to get treatment or be killed ruthlessly"? Maybe that's why Bailey --

Net (*testy*)

Hmmm. Hmmm. Yeah. No. Mind your own business.

Riley

I'm actually not going to mind my own business and let CJ stick nails in his thighs.

Net

I'll talk to him.

Riley

Don't do that thing you do. Seeester. No bullshit.

Net (*tight smile, restraint, restraint*)

No bullshit.

WHACK WHACK WHACK WHACK –

10.

In the brick wall elsewhere, Guy watches Net chop wood.

Guy
Nice swing.

Net chops.

Guy
Good.

Net chops.

Guy
Good!

Net stops.

Net
You know, I actually know I'm good. I don't need you to tell me.

Guy
Something on your mind?

Net
No.

She chops.

Guy
You sure.

Net
Yup.

Guy
Sure seems like there is.

Net
There's not.
Though now that you mention it.
Actually there is.

WHACK

Net
The thing is, this has been fun.

WHACK.

Net
But I'm kind of over your presence.

WHACK.

Net
And I don't want to think about you anymore. Ever again, really.

WHACK.

Net
And by the way? You say you made everything.

WHACK.

Net
You didn't make shit. You're some random guy who wrote a moderately compelling profile
and then ejaculated into a cup.

WHACK.

Net
But I'm the father.
I made all of this.
I didn't need you.
I built this kid myself.

Whhhh – she misses.

Guy

Here. Swing's off. Can I –

Net

I'm fine.

Guy

No. You need my help.

He helps her fix her stance. Behind her, his body encircling hers. She leans against him, her face against his chest. Exhale.

Net

You smell like the detergent I like best.

You smell like my favorite soap smelled, before it made me nauseous and I had to switch to Dove. Like cedar. Musk. Pine trees. Mint.

Guy

You and me, same soap? Well, if you say so...

She holds herself to his chest as he fixes her stance to swing.

Net

Can I ask you something?

Guy

Sure. Always do my best to help out.

Net

What's it like up there? Height-wise.

He smiles down at her.

Guy

Aww, sweetheart.

They swing the axe together. WHACK. The wood splits.

Guy

You know I can't tell you that.

CJ is there.

CJ

You wanted to talk to me?

In the kitchen. Night. (Guy takes the axe and the wood and he's gone.)

Net

Hey, yeah. Sit down. You hungry?

CJ

Kinda.

Net

You want me to make you something? Egg in a hole?

CJ

That's dad's thing.

Net

Don't tell him I told you this, but it's actually very easy to make.

She starts making him egg in a hole. (I know, I know. We'll figure it out.)

Net

So how'd your appointment go today?

CJ

Fine.

Net

Yeah? What was it for?

CJ

I'm not stupid.

Net

I didn't say that?

CJ

Riley googled and you guys talked? Do you guys always talk about me?

Net

Not always, but you know. When we're worried.

CJ

It's none of your business.

Net

Okay but – you know. Changing your body is a big deal.

CJ

I know that?

Net

So I just –

CJ

Just 'cause you're too chickenshit to do it doesn't mean I can't.

Net

Excuse me?

CJ

Aren't you like. Kinda trans or whatever.

Net

No.

CJ (“*yeah right but like whatever*”)
Okay.

Net cooks.

Net

Are you going to do your face or just your legs?
Because the height thing I get, I actually *really* get that, but – I really like your face, CJ.
You’ve got the same nose as Riley. And the same eyes as Mom.
And your jaw kind of looks like mine.

CJ

But you didn’t want your kid to have it. “Our face.”

Net

We wanted the baby to have a biological relationship to both of us. Her egg. My body.

CJ

You could’ve flipped it. What? It’s extremely obvious you hate being pregnant.

Net

I don’t hate being pregnant.

CJ

By the way, what face did you pick for your sperm guy, huh? You picked the BEST. You want your kid to have the BEST.

Net

We just want the baby to be healthy.

CJ (*it’s almost funny to him, how fucked it is*)

You’re lying! You’re literally lying to my face, you’re telling me you randomly picked some healthy Black sperm, I bet you a thousand dollars you didn’t. I bet you a thousand dollars your kid’s gonna be tall and white. And I mean, *white* white. Fucking Nordic.

Net

I really don’t like it when you talk like this.

CJ

I really don't like it when you bullshit me.

Beat. Net slides him the finished egg in a hole.

Net

Technically our sperm donor is white and tall. But that doesn't mean that's the only good kind of body.

Look. I get it, okay? This –

She indicates her pregnant body.

Net

Has been a lot for me. People thought I was someone who could carry their bag, now they give me their seat. But before, even when I was – looked like me, people thought I was capable. They did. You don't have to be a man to be masculine, and you don't have to look a certain way. You just carry yourself in a way that says, "hey, you don't have to take care of me. I'm going to take care of you." It's about confidence. Capacity.

CJ (*sincere – he's trying to help her*)

I'm sorry but I don't think people were looking at you before you got pregnant thinking, wow, she should lift my heavy shit. I think they were just humoring you.

A beat.

Net

I just want to understand. Because um, I love you is the thing? No matter what, I will always love my brother. So just make me understand. None of this – weird racist shit, come on. Just talk to me.

Another beat.

CJ

Everyone e said I was going to like Mich. You guys liked it. It's where mom and dad met. It's big school, everyone has a place. Not me.

First group of guys I met we hang out every day first week. Then every other day. Then once a week. Then never. I follow them on Snapchat, they're all hanging out without me.

Forget rush, are you kidding me? I lasted fifteen minutes. Felt like I was dying.

Big lecture. Big cafeteria. Big group chats. Big everything. And then me. Just me.

You ever listen to your roommate have sex with your crush in the bed next to yours? 'Course she likes him. Everyone likes him. Fucking douchebag WASP with three houses. What's not to like?

The thing I'm *like* them. I'm not some weirdo – I'm so close. Why don't they like me, why don't see me? I'm not doing anything wrong. I watch the shows. I buy the clothes. It's not enough. I'm so close and it's not enough.

Art history, in section we talk about beauty. All the girls talk and talk about beauty standards and everyone's nodding like you're so brave, you're so brave, like that's not in every stupid deodorant commercial. I say what about what men have to look like? They laughed at me. Even the grad TA. Pretty and laughing, like I'm the idiot. Their fucking faces –

Net

Hey – hey hey –

CJ

You talk about being depressed, you're so brave, I talk about it I'm a loser, you talk about wanting to die it's so vulnerable, I do it I'm whiny, I'm just this little, whiny, loser and by the way? Isaac got testosterone shots when he wasn't growing. He literally got testosterone so he'd be tall.

Net

He had a medical deficit –

CJ

If I were trans you'd cheer me on. You'd tell me to change my face if it made me the right gender, come on, be honest, if you could change your body, *would you do it?*

Net

This is the body I have.

CJ

Why are you so – *passive*? You're just like "yeah Mom yeah Riley yeah Dad whatever you want." You're having a baby. You're gonna let everyone walk all over you like dad does?

Net

Dad's steady.

CJ

He's passive. He's makes the money, he cooks the food, he cleans the house, he does *everything* while mom –

Net

He's our rock.

CJ

Some rock.

Net

It's called being the bigger person. Taking it on the chin. Being a grown-up.

CJ (*sincere*)

Net. No offense, but. That's really sad.

Net

Well, maybe you'll feel differently when you're older.

(*re: the food*)

And you're welcome, by the way. Put your dish in the dishwasher.

She leaves.

CJ stands alone.

Stasisman09, online. Persuasive. Believable. Sincere. Here for us.

Stasisman09

When you're growing up they talk like love's inevitable. Like sex is obvious.

"When you get married." "When you lose your virginity." "When you have kids."

When. When. It's coming. Be patient.

There's someone for everyone in our world made for two.

So you're waiting. And you're waiting.

And you're starting to realize:

I think I've been stood up.

I don't think anyone's coming.

I think I was lied to.

I was lied to.

You were lied to.
It's a world made for two, but not for everyone.
Not for you you.
Luck of the draw, bad genes, so sorry,
Better luck in the next life. In this one you get nothing.
You'll never be loved. You'll never even be looked at, really looked at,
Someone thinking, I want that body.
No one wants your body.
Unwantable. Unfuckable.
Are you still patient? Are you still waiting?
How long are you willing to wait?

CJ goes upstairs.

11.

Middle of the night. Allison and Riley are in the kitchen.

Allison

I don't feel good about this.

Riley

Please.

Allison

It just doesn't feel nice.

Riley

Please. I am exhausted with the people pleasing whatever crap. It's like it's from everyone we know. They bullshit to your face and they shit talk behind your back.

Allison

I hear you I just. I wouldn't want to talk to me the way you want me to talk to you.

Riley

Yeah but it's different for you. You're like a... nimble princess of youthful beauty. Like a fountain of youth. Look under your eyes. It's the skin of a baby.

Allison
Thank you?

Riley
I need this. I need a reality check.

Allison
Okay.

Riley inhales, preparing herself. Allison is reluctant throughout, but she's honest.

She points to her eyes.

Allison
I like them. Good color, I like the flecks.

Riley points to her eyebrow.

Allison
... A little thick.

Riley nods. That's fine, she knew that. Riley points to her nose.

Allison
What do you want me to say? Mine's the same.

Riley points to her neck.

Allison
Hot. Smooth. Long. I enjoyed kissing it.

Riley points to her tits.

Allison
... I think they'd be cuter if they were smaller. But that's just a personal thing.

Riley indicates her stomach.

Allison

I don't want to do this. I'm gonna go –

Riley

One more, one more.

Allison

Fine.

Riley

Okay.

(deep breath)

Can you see the bald spot on my head.

Allison takes a moment.

Allison

Yeah. I can. It's not that bad but. I can see it.

Riley *(sincere)*

Thank you.

Big exhale.

Allison

Is that it? I actually really think you're really good-looking, for what it's worth.

Riley

Yeah actually one more, sorry, um, am I selfish?

Um, basically, I think I might be selfish?

I was talking to my sister-in-law and I kind of thought we were really close and she basically was like, I don't like being around the family 'cause you guys just walk all over Net. You just take from her, and she lets you, and she thinks it's noble, and it's not. Um and so I basically I was wondering do I just take from people. Is she right.

Allison

I mean. You did me call over here to do this activity.

Riley
Fuck.

Allison
But like, whatever? I'm selfish all the time? I basically had sex with you to get back at my ex boyfriend? Plus to feel older and less of an infant for living at home still? But we had fun. So. I think selfish can be good. I don't think it's bad to want things and then take them.

Riley
I feel like I want everything and I don't know how to get it.

Allison
Well what do you want right now?

Riley
Um, honestly. Mindless sex.

Allison
Coincidentally I feel similarly.

They go to it.

12.

Morning. CJ and Allison eating burritos, CJ so happy to see her.

Allison
God this is good.

CJ
It might be the best deli on earth.

Allison
Yeah, wow, it really might.

They eat.

Allison

I do have one question.

CJ

Yeah?

Allison

How do you not have massive farts from eating these all the time? How are you not constantly farting?

CJ

Who said I'm not!

Allison

Ew!

CJ

Maybe I'm farting right now. Maybe it's about to hit you. Silent, but deadly.

Allison

Okay, okay. I'm eating here.

They eat.

Allison

Are you behind on work or will you be good?

CJ

What?

Allison

For school. It's like a whole week off, that's like a month in college time.

CJ

Oh. Um.

Yeah I um.

I'm taking some time off from school.

Allison

Oh. I didn't know that.

CJ

Yeah. Um. I just gotta deal with some stuff.

Allison

Okay, yeah.

CJ

Sorry I –

Allison

No – good for you. And um, yay, I'll see you around then. 'Cause you'll be here.

CJ

Yeah. I'll be here.

They eat. They're close to each other.

Allison

Hey. You know what? Good on you for taking that time.

CJ

Eugh...

Allison

I mean it. Good for you, CJ. Sometimes you have to – take what you deserve.

CJ looks at her and CJ leans forward and –

Allison pulls back and gives a nervous chuckle.

Allison

Um, oh my god, I'm so stuffed. I don't know if I can finish this.

CJ

Fuck.

Allison

Hey, no, don't – you're very sweet –

CJ

Fuck.

Allison

CJ, it's okay, it's just – you're like a little brother.

CJ

But you keep coming here to see me? What the fuck?

Riley comes in with coffee from Starbucks.

Riley

Seriously, more doordash? There's a *stove*.

CJ is clearly freaking out a little – like the precipice of a panic attack.

Allison

I'm going to go.

Riley

I got your cold brew –

Allison

Yeah, thanks–

Net comes downstairs.

Net

You guys are SO LOUD.

(to Allison)

Oh, hi –

Allison

Hey –

Net

What're you – [*“doing here”*]

Riley

Sorry everyone I had sex in the house, call the police. Here I'll walk you to your car.

Riley walks Allison out.

CJ

Is everyone gay now?

Net

Uh, I think Riley would self-describe bi as opposed to gay – Allison is news to me, that was not on my radar –

CJ

Fuck!

CJ throws a plate.

Net

Hey!

Riley comes back inside.

Riley

Did you throw that?

CJ

Did you fuck all our family friends or just Allison?

Riley

Go clean that up!

CJ

You hopped on every dick in Portland / and that wasn't enough so you have to move on to kids you babysat?

Riley
What the fuck?

Net
Stop it –

CJ
That's sick –

Riley
No, you know what's sick, the fact that you just smashed a plate because I hooked up with someone –

CJ
Not just someone, someone *I liked* –

Riley
You know CJ, maybe the reason girls don't like you is because you throw a fit when they're not obsessed with you back –

Net
Guys –

Riley
That's *creepy!* You're being *creepy!* You have two sisters, what is wrong with you?

CJ
She liked me. You couldn't let me have this one thing –

Riley
Okay, so first of all she's not a thing –

CJ
It's not like you want to *date* her – you don't live here, you're just using her for –

Riley
For what? For sex? I know it's an unfamiliar concept for you –

Net
Okay Riley –

CJ
Bitch.

Riley

What did you call me?

CJ

A bitch.

'Cause you are. You're an ugly, used-up, selfish bitch.

Riley

I'm selfish.

Ha. Haha.

You dropped out of college. They lost that tuition.

Net

That's not fair –

Riley

You skipped your cousin's Bat Mitzvah.

We wait on you hand and foot. Doordash. Driving.

And now you want our parents to take a big chunk of money *they worked for* so you can be *three inches taller* in order to ask out girls who *still won't want you*.

Net (to CJ)

We're glad you came home.

CJ goes to grab her – hit her? Something – Net grabs his arm.

Net

Stop. It.

CJ looks at Net's hand. Like, is this supposed to stop me? Stop anyone? He shakes it off.

Net

Both of you. Stop it. Take a breath.

You both said things you don't mean.

Just apologize. Take them back.

Riley

Take it back? Just just wipe it away, wave in the sand, smile and bullshit and never confront who this scumbag has turned into –

Net

Don't talk to him like that –

CJ (*to Net*)

I don't need *you* to defend me.

Riley

I'll talk to however I like --

Net

That's your brother --

CJ (*to Net*)

I don't *need* you –

CJ (*to Net*)

I don't need you, you're bullshit, you're just sand. You think you're strong? You're not strong – you're like dad, you're pathetic, you freaking spineless kike.

Black.

13.

Months later.

Somewhere else. Portland, sushi, trendy.

A man sits at a table, waiting for someone. Nervous, sweet. We'll call him Date.

He looks around.

He checks his phone. He checks his teeth in his phone camera.

Around now, we see the kitchen again. It's empty.

Riley comes into the restaurant, checking her phone. The man gets up.

Date

Riley K.?

Riley

That's me.

Date

Nice to meet you in person.

Riley

Yeah, you too.

They sit.

Date

The sashimi here is *really* good.

Riley

Oh, it looks great.

Date

I do have a question for you, though.

Riley

Shoot.

Date

Will you. Judge me. If I get a really foofy drink?

Riley

That is a good question.

I am going to say... Slightly.

Date

Fair enough, appreciate the honesty. I can't help it – I love a lychee martini.

They look at the QR code menu.

Date

Ugh, I hate QR code menus.

Riley

I know, right?

At the house:

Sound of a car pulling into the driveway.

The back door opens.

Sound of a baby crying.

Net rushes in with a baby in a car seat, shushing the baby.

Net puts the car seat down and goes back outside.

Riley

I think I'm going to get the crazy roll.

Date

Feeling ~crazy~?

Riley

You know it. And um – I'll try the lychee martini, sounds really good, why not?

Date

You won't regret it. It's great. So – tell me all about Riley K.

Riley

Yeah! Well, I'm from Jersey...

They talk.

The back door opens.

CJ, legs bandaged, barely able to walk. Barely awake. We can't see his face.

Net

There you go. There you go.

CJ moans.

Net

I know, I know. It's okay.

After a moment of hesitation, Net picks him up. She carries him to the couch. CJ whimpers.

Net

What do you want, do you want water?

CJ nods.

Net

Okay. Just tiny sips though, okay?

She gets him some water with a straw. He sips it like a baby.

Net

There you go. Little sips.

In the restaurant:

Riley (*looking at his phone*)

Oh my god, so cute.

Date

I feel like I was born to be an uncle. Rocking it so far.

Riley

Yeah I bet.

Date

What about you? Nieces or nephews?

Riley

Uh, my sister just a kid. A boy.

Date

Cool! You guys close?

Riley

No.

Date

I hear that. Family's hard.

Actually, hold that thought – I'm gonna hit the bathroom.

He smiles and gets up to go to the bathroom.

Riley is alone.

She looks at her phone.

She looks out at nothing.

CJ moans.

CJ

Ook.

Net

Book?

CJ

Ook. OOK.

Net

Look?

CJ nods vigorously.

Net

Okay.

Riley sits alone.

Net helps CJ to the mirror. We see CJ's face: bloody, bandaged, and swollen.

CJ looks at us to see his new face.

He smiles. His mouth is full of blood – it dribbles onto his chin.

He smiles so wide it hurts him.

End.