

# *The Rule of Thirds*

by

Jacqueline Bircher

## Contact Info

[jacqbircher@gmail.com](mailto:jacqbircher@gmail.com)

917-843-7053

## Characters

**STEF** - the oldest sister. White. Late 30s. A nurse. Square, with a nearly-trendy Kohl's fashion sense. She might look put-together if she hadn't run out of time.

**LESLIE** - the middle sister. White. Mid 30s. A writer. Lots of tattoos. Moderately edgy in the fun, approachable way that suggests a woman who plays bass guitar and also watches Real Housewives. She walks with a cane, but it's not a big deal.

**CHARLIE** - Leslie's husband. Black. Mid 30s. A math teacher. But, that cool math teacher who gives great advice and writes really thoughtful letters of recommendation.

**CHRISTINE** - the youngest sister. White. Early 30s. A hot mess. Too skinny. Too much makeup. Total chaos wrapped up in one petite package. Like a pipe bomb.

## Setting

Staten Island, New York.

A living room crowded with moving boxes. A small kitchen. There's an old couch, an upright piano, a hand-painted nature scene framed on the wall, and three distinct piles of junk:

1. A neat stack of trunks and bins, mostly labeled "STEF".
2. A collection of cardboard boxes with "DONATE" written on their sides.
3. A mountain of black trash bags.

## Time

Present day.

### **Notes**

A double dash at the end of a line ( line-- ) indicates that the next character should begin speaking immediately, almost on top of that last word.

A slash ( / ) indicates overlapping dialogue. The next character should begin speaking at the point where the slash appears.

Double slashes ( // ) indicate continuous lines of dialogue. Any lines or interjections in between sets of slashes should be ignored entirely by the character who is speaking.

### THE RULE OF THIRDS

The living room is in darkness. Nobody's home. Yet.

From offstage:

LESLIE  
It's the silver one.

CHARLIE  
I tried that one.

LESLIE  
Try it again.

The handle jiggles. The door doesn't open.

CHARLIE  
What?! Don't give me that look, Leslie.

STEF  
Let me do it. Here, take this.

The lock clicks. The door opens. Stef flicks on the light and the room comes into view.

All three enter: Stef, with the house keys in hand. Charlie, holding a cardboard box. Leslie, using a cane for support as she navigates the mess.

LESLIE  
I told you it was that one.

CHARLIE  
I know. But there's this whole sacred ritual to getting that door open. Pull, push, turn to the left, make a wish, and then MAYBE the house will permit you to enter. Maybe.

LESLIE  
That's a little dramatic.

CHARLIE  
That lock is a little dramatic.

LESLIE  
It's a tug and twist situation.

CHARLIE  
Yeah, yeah. I'll get it eventually.

Leslie nearly trips over a box on her way to the couch.

LESLIE

Oh, shit. Can someone move that for me?  
Charlie, can you--?

STEF

I got it.

Stef drags the box out of the way. Leslie sinks onto the couch.  
Charlie throws Leslie a sharpie. She sticks it behind her ear.

LESLIE

Hey, Stef. Did you call those guys? The  
people from--

STEF

Yeah, Goodwill's coming tomorrow.

LESLIE

Tomorrow? I thought we said Friday.

STEF

I have to work on Friday.

LESLIE

You were supposed to take the whole  
week.

STEF

I had to trade shifts. And besides,  
we're almost done.

LESLIE

We're not done yet.

CHARLIE

(playfully, to Leslie)

Maybe it's time to start pulling your  
weight around here instead of directing  
traffic all day...

LESLIE

Oh, ha ha. Hilarious.

They kiss. It's all in good fun. Heart-eyes emojis for days.

STEF

Could be worse.

LESLIE

Yeah? Like how?

STEF

Daddy could be here.

LESLIE

Oh man. Going all hoarder-ific like,  
"What do you mean you're throwing out  
this crossword puzzle from 1987! I'm  
saving it!"

LESLIE

"I'm saving it for a rainy  
day!"

STEF

"I'm saving it for a rainy  
day." Exactly.

Stef finds a box full of books and starts going through them  
methodically -- checking and flipping through each one before  
placing it back in the box.

LESLIE

Thank god he let us do this without him.

STEF

(not convinced)

Mmmmmmmmmmmmm.

LESLIE

What?! He said we could decide!

STEF

You made him say that.

LESLIE

I absolutely did not make him--

STEF

You gave him the face. You know the one.  
The Leslie face.

LESLIE

If he was here, not one single thing  
would go in the garbage. You see all  
this trash? It would be over here, in  
the keep pile.

CHARLIE

You're not afraid he's gonna fly back  
here for Christmas one year and start  
asking why we sold all his baseball  
cards on eBay?

LESLIE

He had his chance. He chose Boca.

STEF

Technically Karen chose Boca.

LESLIE

And daddy chose Karen, so, same thing.

Stef eyes Leslie. She's not buying it.

LESLIE

What?!

STEF

Karen is convenient.

LESLIE

Oh, come on!

CHARLIE

I think Karen is great.

LESLIE

Thank you.

STEF

Don't go taking all the credit.

LESLIE

I found her! Karen. Only one previous marriage. From Brooklyn. Real Brooklyn, not hipster Brooklyn. And, lovely! You try getting daddy on an over-50 dating website sometime, I'm telling you, finding Karen took a steady hand.

Stef hasn't found anything of interest in the box of books, much to her dismay. She hands the box over to Leslie.

STEF

How about you use that steady hand to tape this up.

LESLIE

My pleasure.

STEF

(to Charlie)

Are all the books packed?

CHARLIE

Yeah. Do you wanna move on to the furniture?

LESLIE

Hey, Stef? Where do you want this?

STEF

You're sure that's all of them?

CHARLIE

Yeah, I think so.

STEF  
We're missing some.

LESLIE  
Hello! Stef, what pile?

STEF  
Middle pile. Books get donated.  
(to Charlie)  
There should be handwritten ones. You  
didn't see anything like that?

CHARLIE  
I don't think so.

LESLIE  
No one wants your teenage diaries, Stef.  
"Oh, I'm so tortured and angsty. No one  
understands me. Except Allison  
Carpenter, who has the most beautiful  
brown eyes. What does it all mean?!"  
Spoiler alert: it means you're a  
lesbian.

STEF  
Yeah, you know, I figured that one out  
on my own, thanks.

LESLIE  
Just trying to be helpful.

Stef grabs the box from Leslie and heaves it up to the top of the  
middle pile.

CHARLIE  
(to Stef, but for Leslie)  
Do you think she's faking so she doesn't  
have to do any hard labor?

LESLIE  
Definitely. I definitely am.

STEF  
That's not funny.

LESLIE  
Well, okay, I didn't want to hurt your  
feelings, but actually I was granted the  
position of "box sealer extraordinaire"  
because I have the best handwriting.

CHARLIE  
That is true.

STEF  
Can you stop that?

LESLIE  
What?! //

CHARLIE  
Stef, it's fine.

LESLIE  
// Your handwriting sucks. You're a nurse, so you're like practically a doctor--

STEF  
It's not funny.

CHARLIE  
It's a little funny.

STEF  
(to Charlie)  
Will you shut up?

LESLIE  
I'm not dying. Just, you know, randomly falling everywhere like I'm three tequilas in, only there's no fun buzz.

CHARLIE  
Too many margaritas, babe. I told you--

LESLIE  
I know, I'm even falling off the wagon.

STEF  
If anyone on the street was laughing at you like that, / I swear, you don't even know what I would do...

LESLIE  
Oh my god. It's not anyone on the street! It's me! It's Charlie!--

STEF  
Like, I might literally murder them. //

LESLIE  
It's different!

STEF  
// Snap their necks with my own bare hands.

LESLIE  
It's a joke, Stef. Find a sense of  
humor. Oh my god.

Leslie throws a couch pillow at Stef. She's got good aim.

STEF  
Leslie!

LESLIE  
What's your problem? I'm good. Really.  
I'm fine--

STEF  
All I'm saying is you know I don't like  
it when you make jokes--

CHARLIE  
Okay...! Moving on! Furniture! Anything  
you want to keep? Couch? Dressers? Bed  
frames? This... whatever this is.

He points to a set of low cabinets.

STEF  
It's a credenza.

LESLIE  
I jammed my finger in that thing when I  
was seven.

STEF  
That was not you. That was Christine.

LESLIE  
No it wasn't!--

CHARLIE  
Ladies! Keep? Yes or no?

Yes.

STEF

No.

LESLIE

LESLIE  
Stef--

STEF  
I like it!

LESLIE  
That thing is so old.

CHARLIE  
Leslie. The rule.

LESLIE

Yeah, yeah. If someone wants to keep it, they get to keep it. That's all fine. Except, Stef. Look at this huge pile of crap.

She indicates the pile of bins and boxes labeled "STEF". It's a big pile.

STEF

It's not that big.

Leslie gets up, peeks through the pile.

LESLIE

Let's really take stock of this, okay. Examine our life choices. Where are you gonna keep all of this stuff?

STEF

You don't want to keep anything, / so what does it matter...

LESLIE

I don't need daddy's stuff. I have my own stuff. In my own apartment. Which, I mean, you do too, you have your own house--

STEF

You can't live in that apartment forever.

LESLIE

Oh please--

STEF

You can't!

LESLIE

Not again with this, I mean, you're like a broken record--

CHARLIE

Leslie... We really can't.

A beat from Leslie... he's supposed to be on her team.

LESLIE

Well, once we sell this house, we can stop taking turns paying our dad's mortgage and we can live wherever we want.

STEF  
I'm not selling this house.

LESLIE  
Are you crazy?

STEF  
We worked so hard figuring out how to keep it, I'm not putting it on the market--

LESLIE  
You already have a house!

STEF  
I'm not selling it.

LESLIE  
We could use the money.

STEF  
I don't care about the money! / I care about the house.

LESLIE  
Okay, that's great for you. But, Charlie and I, / we care about the money.

CHARLIE  
Oh. Whoa. No. I, um... Ha. I think it's... You know, it's up to you.

LESLIE  
(to Stef, with finality)  
We are selling the house.

Leslie sits down at the piano. Dusts it off.

Stef and Charlie exchange a glance behind Leslie's back, and mouth to each other in a silent argument as if saying:

STEF  
What the hell, Charlie! We talked about this!

CHARLIE  
I don't know! I'm sorry. I don't know!

Leslie, oblivious, plays a chord on the piano. It's so off-key it hurts. But, it gets Stef and Charlie to snap back into reality.

LESLIE  
Oh, yuck. That sounds...

She plays the chord one more time. Still painful.

LESLIE

Not good.

STEF

Half of those keys don't even work.

LESLIE

I could get it fixed.

A skeptical glare from Stef.

LESLIE

What?! I work at Spin. You don't think I know anyone who can tune a piano? Because, I do.

STEF

It's junk.

LESLIE

Mom taught me how to play on this piano.

STEF

Do you want to keep it?

LESLIE

I can keep the piano without keeping the whole house.

CHARLIE

We don't really have room for it...

STEF

Not where you're living now.

LESLIE

No, no. You're right. Yeah.

CHARLIE

If you really want it--

LESLIE

No, I know. I mean, it's probably for the best. You can't even get a proper chord on this thing. Like, listen to this. F major.

Leslie plays a chord that bears only a distant family relation to an F major.

LESLIE

Blegh. What is even wrong with that, the C?



STEF

Asking price: 200 dollars. Post.

LESLIE

When did china go out of fashion, anyway? Who wants china? What do you even do with china?

CHARLIE

We didn't get china for our wedding.

LESLIE

I know, that's what I'm saying.

STEF

It's for special occasions.

LESLIE

But how special is special? I mean, I bet Mom never even ate off those plates one day in her whole life.

STEF

Maybe she didn't want to break them.

LESLIE

Who cares?! Break the plates. The whole set's worth 200 bucks, who cares if you break one? Throw one against the wall. Live a little, you know? Celebrate life.

STEF

It's not like she had that much to celebrate.

A beat from Leslie...

LESLIE

That's a pretty fucking awful thing to say.

STEF

I didn't mean it like that.

LESLIE

Then how'd you mean it?

CHARLIE

Leslie--

STEF

Just that... I don't know. Not like that.

LESLIE  
Convincing argument.

STEF  
You know that I would never / say  
that...

LESLIE  
No, just like, everything has to be  
depressing all the time, right?

CHARLIE  
(angry teacher voice)  
Leslie.

There's a long, uncomfortable beat...

Stef checks her phone, just for something else to look at.

STEF  
Jen Maniscalco wants the china.

CHARLIE  
Is it still for sale?

LESLIE  
I don't want it. Why would I want it?

CHARLIE  
You just said--

LESLIE  
I don't need my mother's sad, bad-luck  
china. I've already got enough of her  
crap.

STEF  
She left you plenty of good things.

LESLIE  
Oh yeah? Like what?

STEF  
Like... the piano. And... this house--

LESLIE  
We paid for the house--

CHARLIE  
Okay! Are we gonna tell Jen to come get  
the plates or not?

LESLIE  
Maybe Stef should go bring them to her.

A beat... Leslie just wants Stef out of the house and she's not even trying to hide it.

STEF

Fine.

Stef huffs off to grab the box of china. She exits.

From offstage, the sound of Stef's truck pulling out of the driveway.

Leslie and Charlie exchange a glance from across the room. Charlie's gaze has just a hint of pissed in it.

CHARLIE

Why'd you have to do that?

LESLIE

I don't know. I felt like it.

CHARLIE

To Stef? I mean, come on.

LESLIE

Whatever. Sorry.

CHARLIE

Don't apologize to me.

Leslie sinks deeper into the couch. She fucked up and she knows it. She tries to disappear...

LESLIE

Ughhhhh. I hate this house.

CHARLIE

It's just a house.

LESLIE

Nothing good ever happens here.

CHARLIE

That's not true.

LESLIE

Oh yeah?

CHARLIE

Yeah! You don't believe me. Okay, fine. What about... Santa Claus. Learning to play the piano. Or...! Junior prom?

LESLIE

That was good for you.

CHARLIE

I seem to remember that you did just fine.

LESLIE

Mmmmmmmmm..... Yeah I did.

Leslie kisses him. She drags him down onto the couch.

Mid-make-out:

CHARLIE

You really can't think of anything good?

LESLIE

Charlie--

CHARLIE

Not anything?

LESLIE

Is this really important to you?

CHARLIE

Yes!

LESLIE

Okay. Fine.

(...)

We had a cat. For a while. Do you remember that?

CHARLIE

You had a cat?

LESLIE

Yeah. When I was in elementary school. Until middle school, I think. It was this crazy, mangy looking cat. And we didn't even go to the shelter to get him or anything, he just started skulking around the backyard one day. Christine was maybe five at the time and she named him Lucky. Which is a dog name, I know, but she was five. And he just kept coming around, day after day until this cat could not be ignored. And I think my mom was really, like, charmed by this cat. Because she coaxed him inside, and once Christine went to kindergarten, the cat would hang around with her in the house all day. And things were good.

(MORE)

LESLIE (CONT'D)

This was before she started to get really sick, you know, so I have these really vivid memories of her and the cat. And it wasn't anything special, but it was just... normal.

CHARLIE

She must have been great.

LESLIE

The cat? He was a little bastard.

CHARLIE

Your mom.

LESLIE

Oh. Yeah. She was... I don't know. Yeah. She was great.

CHARLIE

I wish I knew her.

LESLIE

You did know her.

CHARLIE

I mean before.

LESLIE

Oh.

A beat... they've backed into territory neither wants to occupy.

CHARLIE

What happened to the cat?

LESLIE

The cat. Right. He just, uh... He just got old. And when my mom took him to the vet that last time, she told us it was the right thing to do, but I still cried for like, weeks.

CHARLIE

That's not a happy story.

LESLIE

I know! But it is. Kind of. He was a really good cat. I was kidding. Before. About the bastard thing. He was a really good cat.

CHARLIE

We could get a cat. If you want.

LESLIE  
Maybe.

CHARLIE  
Or a dog.

LESLIE  
Yeah?

CHARLIE  
Or a baby.

LESLIE  
(warning)  
Charlie.

CHARLIE  
Several babies. Two. Three? However many  
you want.

A beat... Another conversation Leslie doesn't want to be anywhere  
near. But Charlie's not giving up.

LESLIE  
I don't think it's a good idea.

CHARLIE  
You would be such a great mom.

LESLIE  
Ahh... No, though. I... Mmmm. I don't  
think so.

CHARLIE  
Yes, you would!

Leslie gets up from the couch, just to put some space between  
them. She and Charlie stare each other down for a moment...

LESLIE  
We don't have the money.

CHARLIE  
So?

LESLIE  
We don't have the space.

CHARLIE  
What?!

LESLIE  
There are twenty-seven steps up to our  
apartment.

(MORE)

LESLIE (CONT'D)

I have enough trouble getting myself up there lately, you want me to do it pregnant? You want me to do it with an infant? A toddler? A stroller? Charlie--

CHARLIE

Forget the apartment. Okay? We'd move out of the apartment. We'd have a baby in this house. Which we're already paying for.

LESLIE

No.

CHARLIE

Why not?

LESLIE

What about your job?

CHARLIE

What about it?

LESLIE

You're gonna commute to Queens everyday from Staten Island? That is so much time in the car. You hate the car.

CHARLIE

I'll get a different job. Here. At Wagner. Or Curtis. Or... Tech! Tech would be amazing. And, you know, math teachers? They need them everywhere. Even on Staten Island.

LESLIE

This place is a dump. It's literally a dump. This is where the rest of New York sends its garbage. It's a dump so big you can see it from space.

CHARLIE

We grew up here!

LESLIE

No. This is... I said no.

CHARLIE

Is this about your mom?

LESLIE

No.

CHARLIE  
Is it about my mom?

LESLIE  
No!

CHARLIE  
Because, I know that living near your  
mother-in-law is not exactly ideal--

LESLIE  
It's not your mom. I love your mom.

CHARLIE  
Then... I'm gonna need some help here,  
because I don't... what's the problem?

LESLIE  
I don't know.

CHARLIE  
This is a nice house. It's near my  
parents. And my sisters. Stef lives five  
minutes away. It's got three bedrooms. A  
basement. It's got... Leslie, it's got a  
backyard.

LESLIE  
It's not safe.

CHARLIE  
The house?

LESLIE  
No! I don't know. No.

CHARLIE  
Then... what?

A beat...

LESLIE  
Me.

CHARLIE  
Leslie... We talked to Dr. Hammond about  
this. She said women with MS have  
perfectly normal pregnancies all the  
time, / it's not an issue--

LESLIE  
I know that! Okay? I know.

CHARLIE

I thought we wanted a family. That's what we used to talk about, right? And we could have one. Stef can help--

LESLIE

Oh my god. Please don't say that.

CHARLIE

Why not?

LESLIE

I just... Can we talk about this later? Any other time. Literally anywhere that is not here.

CHARLIE

Okay. Okay, fine.

Charlie gestures next to him on the couch.

CHARLIE

You wanna come sit?

Leslie walks over and sinks down next to him.

She blows some flyaways out of her face. She catches Charlie looking.

LESLIE

What?

CHARLIE

You look really pretty.

LESLIE

(laughing)

Fuck off.

CHARLIE

You're not gonna tell me that I look really pretty?

LESLIE

You are covered in dust, and you know I hate that shirt.

Charlie kisses her.

LESLIE

Mmm, you're good at that.

CHARLIE

Yeah, that's what they all say.

LESLIE  
Wanna give junior prom another go?

CHARLIE  
I've got a better idea.

LESLIE  
Yeah?

CHARLIE  
How about senior prom?

LESLIE  
Oooh. Okay.

The sound of a lock turning. As if the person on the other end were crashing in at 3 AM.

Charlie and Leslie both glance up at the door, then back at each other. Fun interrupted.

CHARLIE  
I'm gonna come back to this later.

LESLIE  
You better.

Charlie disentangles himself from Leslie and approaches the front door.

Another forceful attempt. The door doesn't open.

LESLIE  
(to the door)  
Tug and twist, Stef!

CHARLIE  
I told you it's not that easy.

Charlie turns the lock and opens the front door.

But, it's not Stef. It's CHRISTINE. A mess and a half, wearing thick smudged eyeliner from last night if not the night before.

CHRISTINE  
Hellooo.

CHARLIE  
Christine?

LESLIE  
Chris?!

CHRISTINE

Love what you've done with the place.

Christine drops her purse to the floor.

CHRISTINE

(to Leslie)

Wow. You look amazing.

LESLIE

...Thanks.

CHRISTINE

With the tats! Let me see...

She reaches for Leslie's arm. Leslie lets her have it, somewhat unwillingly.

CHRISTINE

I love them. Oh my god. Wow. You look so different.

LESLIE

You smell like cigarettes.

CHRISTINE

Yeah, that happens sometimes.

Christine glances over at Charlie.

CHRISTINE

Charlie.

CHARLIE

Christine.

CHRISTINE

You look the same.

Christine breezes off toward the kitchen and starts pilfering through what's left of it.

LESLIE

Chris, what are you doing here?

CHRISTINE

I was in the neighborhood. Must've, you know, missed your call. Your text. Your voicemail. Whatever. When you invited me to this hot ticket event.

LESLIE

I thought you were in Seattle.

CHRISTINE

Seattle? God no. I was only in Seattle for... two months? Three? Who can keep track really. I barreled out of there like a bat outta hell. It was so depressing. Always raining. If I wanted to be wet all the fucking time I'd pick somewhere closer to the equator. Somewhere I could wear a bikini, you know? //

While she's distracted, Charlie takes Leslie's cane and stashes it out of sight.

Christine doesn't notice a thing.

CHRISTINE

// And the men, too. So goddamn strange. Nothing like Grey's A-fucking-natomy. I'll tell you that. Please. You want a chiseled doctor who likes to play it fast and loose with a prescription pad? Try Miami. I mean that. Miami is so much fun.

She finds nothing but empty drawers and cabinets.

CHRISTINE

This place is like fucking licked clean. What have you been eating, may I ask, on this big hush-hush adventure down memory lane? I'm starving.

LESLIE

We can... um, we can get some food. Charlie? / Can we...

CHARLIE

Yeah. Yeah, sure. Take out? Whatever you want.

CHRISTINE

Where's Stef?

CHARLIE

She, uh... stepped out.

CHRISTINE

She stepped out. She stepped out? Like, to where? The fucking bank?

LESLIE

Jen Maniscalco wanted mom's china.

CHRISTINE

Jen...? That bitch from high school?  
With the all the self tanner?

LESLIE

Chris. What are you doing here?

CHRISTINE

What, am I not allowed in the house or something?

LESLIE

No, of course you are. I just mean...  
what are you doing in Staten Island?

CHRISTINE

They're making the landfill into a park now. Haven't you heard? It's supposed to be beautiful.

CHARLIE

That doesn't / answer the question...

CHRISTINE

No, it's real. Wind turbines and soccer fields and everything. The whole suburban shebang. Right on top of this big heaping pile of garbage.

LESLIE

If we knew you were in town--

CHRISTINE

Whatever. Whatever! I don't care. Really. But, no one asked me if I wanted the fucking china. And next thing you know Stef's advertising to all 200 of her Facebook friends, which includes ME, by the way, if they're interested in shelling out some cash for our prized family heirlooms.

LESLIE

They're just plates, it's not--

CHRISTINE

No. It's not just plates. This has been going on all fucking week. Tables. Chairs. The coffee machine. The china. Just now! The china! It's everything. This whole house.

LESLIE  
You've been a little off the grid.  
Seattle. Miami...

CHARLIE  
Baltimore?

LESLIE  
Right. Baltimore.

CHRISTINE  
When was I in Baltimore?

LESLIE  
A couple of months ago? You posted those  
photos?

CHRISTINE  
Ooooooh. Baltimore.

LESLIE  
And I would have... I would have called.  
Obviously, I would have called. But  
you're kinda hard to track down  
sometimes.

CHRISTINE  
Well, I'm here now. Girl of your dreams.  
Ready to party.

Christine starts picking up items, looking, putting them back.  
Touching everything she's not supposed to.

CHRISTINE  
So, how's this working, hm? We draw  
straws for what we want or, like, beat  
each other up Fight Club style?

LESLIE  
No. There's like, a system. We have / a  
rule...

Christine spots the credenza.

CHRISTINE  
Ugh. This thing. I fucking hate this  
thing. Remember when Stef got her finger  
caught in the hinge like an asshole?

LESLIE  
That wasn't Stef.

CHRISTINE  
Well it wasn't me.

LESLIE

Yeah.

CHRISTINE

Oh. Well, whatever. It's not important anyway.

(...)

What about the beds. Upstairs? You haven't sold those yet, have you? Because, I would love to crash on one. If they haven't been, like, auctioned off at Sotheby's.

CHARLIE

It's just the frames. We tossed the mattresses.

CHRISTINE

Fucking figures.

LESLIE

Where have you been sleeping?

CHRISTINE

Whatever. Don't worry about it.

LESLIE

Chris--

CHRISTINE

What do you want me to say? Around, okay? I've been sleeping around.

CHARLIE

Like, couch surfing?

CHRISTINE

(lol, no)

Yeah, exactly like that.

LESLIE

You know that you can always stay with us, or with Stef--

CHRISTINE

No. No, I couldn't. Kim doesn't like me.

LESLIE

Kim? Chris. Stef and Kim are not together anymore. They broke up.

CHRISTINE

What? When?

CHARLIE

A while ago. Last year?

LESLIE

October, I think. Before the holidays.

CHRISTINE

But, I liked Kim.

LESLIE

Yeah, well. I don't think she liked Stef anymore.

CHRISTINE

Damn. That's... Fuck. What else is, you know, going on?

CHARLIE

Nothing. Everything's good. The same. Fine.

CHRISTINE

You didn't like, have a kid or anything, right?

LESLIE

Oh... No.

CHARLIE

No.

LESLIE

Definitely not.

CHRISTINE

Okay. Yeah. That's, uh... that's good. That I didn't miss it, I mean. Like... you two are gonna have the most gorgeous kids. I'm sure people tell you that all the time. So, like, yeah.

CHARLIE

You didn't miss anything.

There's the sound of a TRUCK pulling into the driveway.

CHRISTINE

Is that Stef?

Christine starts toward the door, but Charlie intercepts her.

CHARLIE

Oh, whoa.

CHRISTINE  
What? "Oh, whoa," what.

CHARLIE  
Maybe we should take this slow.

CHRISTINE  
(fake scandalized)  
Charlie! I thought you were married.

CHARLIE  
Look, I don't / know if this is  
really...

LESLIE  
Chris, Stef's just not expecting you so  
/ maybe we should...

CHRISTINE  
I need to be "expected" now?

LESLIE  
No, of course not--

CHARLIE  
We don't want another Thanksgiving 2009  
is really all / I'm saying...

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

CHARLIE  
Yeah, you see, that's kind of the whole  
point...

The front door opens. No struggle this time. Stef enters.

STEF  
Alright. We're 200 dollars richer and  
we're running out of time to...  
(she notices Christine)  
Waste.

CHRISTINE  
Hi Stef.

STEF  
You are not supposed to be here.

CHRISTINE  
Uh, yeah, you know, I kind of inferred  
that / actually.

CHARLIE  
Okay, can we please / just...

STEF  
(to Leslie)  
What did you tell her?

LESLIE  
Nothing!

CHRISTINE  
She didn't have to tell me anything.  
You're the one who can't figure out how  
to work a fucking Facebook privacy  
setting. It's not that hard. There's a  
little button that says "Who should see  
this?" and all you have to do is say NOT  
CHRISTINE.

STEF  
I need you to leave. Now.

LESLIE  
Stef, come on.

STEF  
(to Christine)  
You're coming off some kind of high or  
whatever? //

	LESLIE	CHRISTINE
Stef!		I'm not--

STEF  
// Well, get down now.

CHRISTINE  
I just told you, no--

STEF  
Alright, sure, whatever you say.

CHRISTINE  
It's a free country.

STEF  
Not for you.

CHRISTINE  
Wow. God forbid anyone does anything  
around here without Stefanie weighing in  
first.

STEF

Why are you even here? What do you want?

CHRISTINE

I figured I'd pop by. See my big sisters. Ride the ferry. I'm thinking of going to that Tibetan art museum, like, all the years I lived here and I've never / even been inside...

STEF

Don't bullshit me, Chris. What do you want?

CHRISTINE

Okay. Fine... I want my cut.

STEF

Your cut? Your cut of what?

CHRISTINE

My cut of the money.

STEF

The money. The... This? This 200 dollars? That's what you came for? For your cut.

CHRISTINE

The china belonged to mom. You don't get to sell all her shit and not tell me so you can keep the cash for yourselves.

STEF

What are you gonna do with it? Save up to go to school? Get an apartment?

CHRISTINE

I don't know. Maybe. If I had enough of it.

STEF

No, really, though. What are you gonna use it for? Come on. We all know.

LESLIE

Just give it to her.

STEF

What?!

CHARLIE

Oh, no. Leslie--

LESLIE

Give it to her. She's right. She should get a cut. It's only fair.

CHRISTINE  
Exactly. Thank you.

STEF  
No.

LESLIE  
Then give it to me and I will walk over  
there and put it in her hand right now.

STEF  
Absolutely not.

CHARLIE  
Leslie, come on, please  
don't--

LESLIE  
Give me the money, Stef.

STEF  
We agreed.

LESLIE  
Give it to me.

STEF  
No.

LESLIE  
Give it to me!

CHRISTINE  
Yeah, give it to her.

A beat...

STEF  
(to Leslie)  
What you're trying to do right now? It's  
a mistake.

Leslie sinks back down into the couch.

Stef counts out sixty dollars of crumpled bills and shoves it into  
Christine's hand.

STEF  
Here.

Christine starts to count it, much to Stef's annoyance.

Charlie and Leslie exchange a look.

LESLIE  
What?

CHARLIE

Nothing.

Christine finishes counting.

CHRISTINE

What about the rest?

STEF

There's three of us and 200 dollars. I gave you sixty. That's your cut.

CHRISTINE

That's not even.

STEF

That's really just too bad.

CHRISTINE

Maybe we should have Charlie count it out, he's great at math.

CHARLIE

I'd really rather not--

STEF

That's your cut, Chris. The end. That's all you're getting.

CHRISTINE

What about the house? Daddy's selling the house, isn't he? //

STEF

No--

LESLIE

Yes!--

CHRISTINE

// That's what all this is for? So, what happens to all that money? What happens to me?

CHARLIE

You're not getting a cut of the house.

CHRISTINE

This is my dad's house. It's not yours. It's my dad's. It's ours.

STEF

It's not though. Not anymore. Not legally.

CHRISTINE

What the fuck are you talking about?

STEF

I'm talking about six years ago. When you were off slumming in Pittsburgh somewhere and Leslie and I were here, being adults. Daddy was in this mountain of debt, not that you knew anything about that, and he was gonna lose the house. So me, and Leslie, and Charlie pulled together all the money we had, Daddy got to stay, and the three of us got our names on the deed. So, even if we did sell this house, which we are NOT, you don't get a cut.

CHRISTINE

Wow.

LESLIE

Christine--

CHRISTINE

No, no. It's just... wow. You didn't even... you didn't even call.

CHARLIE

There was a lot going on. At the time.

CHRISTINE

Yeah. Obviously.

STEF

You didn't have the money.

CHRISTINE

How would you know? You just assumed--

STEF

Yeah, I did. Because three weeks before you'd sent Leslie an email asking for 500 dollars because you didn't even have that.

LESLIE

Can we not bring this up.

CHRISTINE

Well, I'm sorry that I'm such a fucking albatross for you, Stef.

LESLIE

Don't say that.

CHRISTINE  
Well, it's true. Right?

A beat... Stef doesn't respond.

CHRISTINE  
Why do you think I didn't email you?

LESLIE  
Oh, no. Chris, please--

CHRISTINE  
Because you don't care about me. You care about everyone to this extreme unhealthy degree, like, to the black hole point of suffocating everyone around you, except for me. I needed that money.

STEF  
You needed it to buy drugs off some shady dealer in the armpit of Pennsylvania.

LESLIE  
Stef, can we not do this?

CHRISTINE  
First of all, that's not what I used it for. //

LESLIE  
Chris...

CHRISTINE  
// And second of all, this is exactly what I'm talking about. Because, yeah, okay, maybe it was sad, and embarrassing, and maybe I felt like scum for even having to ask, but you don't give a shit. And that's why I email Leslie and I don't email you. //

LESLIE  
Christine!

CHRISTINE  
// Because Leslie's the one who helps me out when I don't have anyone else to ask!

A beat...

CHARLIE

Wait, what?

Leslie shoots Christine a look. Like, good fucking job, asshole.

CHRISTINE

Oh, fuck me.

STEF

You sent her the money.

LESLIE

What was I supposed to do?

STEF

Jesus, Leslie. Tough love! You knew what she was gonna do with it!

CHRISTINE

Oh my god.

LESLIE

Maybe not, though. I don't know!

STEF

Did you not care?

LESLIE

Of course I cared.

CHARLIE

Where'd you get the money?

CHRISTINE

What does it fucking matter. God.

CHARLIE

Leslie. Where'd you get the money?

LESLIE

I just... I picked up some extra freelance articles. And... it was kind of a weird time, you know? With my dad, and the house, and everything. It was stressful. And I was going to all those doctors--

STEF

Alright. That's enough.

CHARLIE

No. We were... I would have noticed. I was working summer school, that shitty summer school out in Crown Heights, just for a couple extra bucks. I was... We didn't have--

LESLIE

Can we please talk about this later?

CHARLIE

Did you take it out of your HSA?

CHRISTINE

What's that?

A long beat... Leslie's silence is all but confirmation.

CHARLIE

No, come on.

LESLIE

I'm sorry.

CHRISTINE

What is that?

STEF

Shut up, / Chris.

CHARLIE

That's supposed to be for medical expenses only.

LESLIE

I know--

CHARLIE

How could you do that?

LESLIE

I didn't think you'd find out.

A beat...

CHARLIE

I need to get out of here.

LESLIE

No. Wait.

CHARLIE  
That was our money. Ours.  
(to Christine)  
Not yours!

CHRISTINE  
What's the big deal, it was just gonna  
sit there.

CHARLIE  
No, it wasn't! //

STEF  
Charlie, don't.

CHARLIE  
// That was our money.  
(to Leslie)  
Your money. For you.

LESLIE  
I know.

Charlie grabs a set of keys from the kitchen counter and heads  
toward the front door.

LESLIE  
Where are you going?

CHARLIE  
I don't know. Out.

LESLIE  
Charlie!

Charlie exits.

CHRISTINE  
God, everyone's so fucking testy today.

STEF  
How about you lose the attitude and just  
shut up and say thank you.

CHRISTINE  
I can't shut up AND say thank you,  
that's like a paradox or something, /  
I'd have to unravel the fabric of the  
universe...

STEF  
Shut up. Just shut up! Stop talking! I  
need to think for ONE second.  
(...)  
(MORE)

STEF (CONT'D)

I have this feeling... now that I'm thinking about it... that maybe... that the incident we're talking about was not the only time this happened. So, if that feeling is even a little bit wrong, and one of you could just say, "No, Stef. You're crazy! This was just a one time thing!" then... now would be the time to say that.

There's an uncomfortable silence... The confirmation stings.

STEF

I want to be very clear. I do not want to know about any of those other incidents. It happened. It's over. And it will not be happening again.

(to Leslie)

Got it?

LESLIE

Yeah.

STEF

(to Christine)

Alright. Here's how this is gonna work. If you need money, you will not ask Leslie. You will not ask daddy. You need money, you call me. You need a bus ticket? A plane ticket? You wanna finally let me get you checked into rehab? //

CHRISTINE

I don't need to go to rehab, oh my godddd...

STEF

// You call me, and I promise you, I will pick up the phone, and I will handle it. But, you call me. Understood?

CHRISTINE

This is such bullshit, Stef. / This is...

STEF

Christine! You do not call Leslie. You call me. Do you understand? Yes or no.

CHRISTINE

Yeah. Yeah, whatever. Yes.

STEF

Alright. We're done with this. You're here now. So, you can take what you want. And then you can go. So, let's just... This is all trash.

Stef indicates the pile of black trash bags. Then, she moves on to the DONATE pile.

STEF

And this is for Goodwill so, anything you want, it's fine. You can keep it.

CHRISTINE

I can take anything?

LESLIE

That's the rule.

CHRISTINE

There's no, like, time limit? Or...I don't know, weight limit? Fifty pounds, or whatever.

LESLIE

We're not an airline.

STEF

Just pick what you want.

CHRISTINE

Okay, okay. Just checking.

Christine steps forward slowly. She rifles through the piles.

She picks out a few items. An old sweater. A book. Whatever looks interesting. Whenever she puts something back, it's definitely not where she found it.

She shifts over to the pile of trash bags, peeks inside. She pulls out a stack of CDs, somewhat accusingly.

CHRISTINE

These are still perfectly good.

LESLIE

No one listens to CDs anymore.

CHRISTINE

I thought you were some kind of music expert. Isn't that your job? Where's your sense of, like, solidarity. I mean...

(she holds up a CD)

(MORE)

CHRISTINE (CONT'D)

Destiny's Child. Survivor! That's a relic. And you're sending it to the dump.

LESLIE

They have this thing called iTunes now. Spotify. Pandora. Beyonce's pretty popular, you can get her, you know... wherever.

CHRISTINE

Still. Ironic.

Christine tosses "Survivor" back into the trash. It's not gonna make it.

She spots the painting hanging on the wall above the piano. It's a landscape. Hand-painted. Good, but in an unremarkable kind of way.

CHRISTINE

What about this?

LESLIE

The piano?

CHRISTINE

No, the painting.

STEF

If you want it, you can have it.

CHRISTINE

Mom painted it, right?

STEF

Yeah.

CHRISTINE

God, she had to leave her fingerprints on fucking everything, didn't she. Never met a blank piece of paper she couldn't absolutely deface. Like, seriously goddamn compulsive.

(...)

But... I like this one. Sort of. I mean, it's good. Compositionally. The way she's got the tree over here. Like, off to the side. And then the ground, and the mountains, and the sky... This one time, when I was in art school, I got really into composition. I mean, I knew everything, all the rules. I could go on about this crap for literal hours.

(MORE)

CHRISTINE (CONT'D)

And I was dating this guy at the time, I think his name was Josh, and I swear, I wouldn't even let him fuck me on a king size bed because the proportions were wrong. He thought I was such a fucking freak. But, anyway. You're supposed to think about the canvas like a grid. And where the lines intersect, that's where the important shit happens. Like, the tree. You see what I mean? That's how you make a good picture.

STEF

When were you in art school?

CHRISTINE

Hmm?

STEF

That never happened.

CHRISTINE

You don't know everything about my life, Stef.

STEF

I know you that you were never in art school.

CHRISTINE

Well, it was like an art... class.

STEF

That you paid for?

CHRISTINE

Yes. I'm not always a complete freeloader. God. Like, I am a licensed bartender.

STEF

You know what, if you want the painting, then I think you should take it, and I think you should go.

CHRISTINE

Oh. Really?

STEF

Yes.

CHRISTINE

Why?

STEF

Chris.

CHRISTINE

No, I mean. Whatever. It's your house, I guess. Your house, your rules, right? So, whatever.

Christine lifts the painting off the wall and hops down off the bench, one hand on top of the piano to steady herself.

She doesn't move for a moment, gaze locked on the piano.

Then, she opens up the top of the piano and peers inside.

LESLIE

What are you doing?

Christine SLAMS the lid shut.

CHRISTINE

Can I have the piano?

STEF

Fine.

LESLIE

No.

STEF

(to Leslie)

Wait, I thought--?

LESLIE

No.

CHRISTINE

What about the rule?

LESLIE

You can't have it.

CHRISTINE

Stef says I can.

LESLIE

The piano's mine.

CHRISTINE

No. It's not--

LESLIE

Yes, it is.

CHRISTINE

I need this piano.

STEF

Where are you gonna keep it?

CHRISTINE

That's not the fucking point.

LESLIE

It's mine!

CHRISTINE

You don't want it. Trust me.

LESLIE

I want it.

CHRISTINE

You can have the painting. I will trade you.

LESLIE

I don't want the painting.

CHRISTINE

You can have the china. The CDs. The whole, stupid house. I'm getting nothing, here.

STEF

You're getting sixty dollars.

CHRISTINE

I want one thing, and I want this piano.

LESLIE

No.

CHRISTINE

You don't understand--

LESLIE

No. Absolutely not. You don't... It's the only good thing in this house! And I'm the one mom taught to play. You can't even clink out a chord on that thing //

STEF

Hey. Leslie...

LESLIE

// I'm the one who can play and I'm the one / who...

STEF

Leslie! Don't.--

LESLIE

I deserve it! It's mine.

Christine sits down on the piano bench, facing them. Something so weird is going on here.

CHRISTINE

What the fuck is up with you two?

A beat... no one answers.

CHRISTINE

Nothing. Okay. Well, that's cool. But, I'm not blind. And I know what a secret looks like on your face, Leslie. I mean, your eyes right now look exactly like when you lied to Stef about when we skipped school and went to Great Adventure. And it's not like I have anywhere else to be, so I can sit here all fucking day.

Another beat...

LESLIE

Chris, I have to tell you something.

CHRISTINE

Aha! I knew it.

STEF

Jesus Christ, Leslie. How many times...

LESLIE

(to Stef)

What else are we supposed to do?

STEF

Not this.

CHRISTINE

Come on, what's it gonna be?

LESLIE

(to Stef)

She's not leaving. And eventually I'm gonna have to get up and like, go to the bathroom or something.

STEF

No.

A silent battle of wills between Leslie and Stef. Neither's backing down.

Suddenly, Christine's jaw drops.

CHRISTINE

Oh my god. Are you pregnant?

A deep sigh from Leslie. Fuck.

CHRISTINE

You're totally pregnant. I knew it.  
Fucking finally! What took you so long?

LESLIE

I'm not pregnant.

CHRISTINE

Come onnnnnnnnn!

LESLIE

I'm not.

CHRISTINE

You're pregnant!

LESLIE

I'm not!

STEF

You could be.

LESLIE

Stef! That is not helpful--

STEF

I'm just saying. If you say yes, then  
maybe she'll go away.

CHRISTINE

I'm not going anywhere.

LESLIE

I'm not pregnant.

CHRISTINE

Then what is the fucking deal?

LESLIE

I, um...

CHRISTINE

What?!

LESLIE  
Where's my, um... Shit, where did  
Charlie put it?

STEF  
(quiet rage)  
Leslie...

LESLIE  
No, I'm doing this.

STEF  
Please can we just talk about this  
before you say anything...

Leslie finds her cane from where Charlie stashed it.

CHRISTINE  
What's that for?

STEF  
It's nothing--

LESLIE  
It's mine.

CHRISTINE  
Why, did you sprain your ankle or  
something?

LESLIE  
No. It's... It's not like that.

CHRISTINE  
I'm confused... What's going on?

LESLIE  
Chris... I don't want you to freak out,  
okay?

CHRISTINE  
Why would I freak out?

LESLIE  
We, um... I probably should have told  
you a long time ago. //

STEF  
Leslie, you promised me that you would  
not do this. Leslie...

LESLIE

// But, it was... I didn't have a lot of answers. And I didn't really know what to say...

CHRISTINE

What is going on? Because, like, I'm a little freaked out now.

LESLIE

Chris...

STEF

Why don't we just forget this conversation ever happened.

LESLIE

Chris, I have MS.

CHRISTINE

...What?

Christine almost laughs. Then... doesn't.

CHRISTINE

No... No, it doesn't work like that.

LESLIE

It's different for everyone. And it's just a thing, / it doesn't...

CHRISTINE

No. That's... No. You can't catch it. Just because mom had it doesn't mean any of us can get it. It doesn't, like, run in families.

STEF

Sometimes it does.

CHRISTINE

What?

STEF

Not anything genetic, just, susceptibilities. There's a correlation. Sometimes.

CHRISTINE

A correlation? Who cares about a corre-fucking-lation. Mom was the only person we ever knew with MS. It doesn't run in our family.

LESLIE

Well, it does now.

A beat...

CHRISTINE

When did you find out?

LESLIE

Right after we bought the house. Right before. Right around then.

CHRISTINE

Six years ago? You waited six fucking years to tell me? Why? Because of... me. / What I...

STEF

No. Christine. No. Shut the fuck up, Chris.

Leslie looks over at Stef. What's that about.

Stef catches her mistake, reins it in.

STEF

You didn't need to know. That's it.

Christine stares at Leslie. Long and hard...

CHRISTINE

Are you gonna be okay?

STEF

She'll be fine.

LESLIE

Yeah! Yeah, I'll be fine...ish. I'll be fine.

CHRISTINE

What do you mean? Like, what does that mean? Are you okay, like, right now?

STEF

She's fine.

LESLIE

Right now's not... great.

STEF

Jesus Christ, Leslie.

CHRISTINE

Not great how?

LESLIE

Just, like... I don't know. I go numb sometimes. And I'm tired a lot. And lately walking is not totally happening exactly the way I'd like it to. So, that's fun. But, it's not, like, a big deal, okay? It's not a big deal. It'll... you know, it comes and goes, just like with mom, / except it's not...

CHRISTINE

Oh my god. I think I...

Christine gets up and disappears into the bathroom.

LESLIE

Chris...?

From offstage: the sounds of VOMITING.

LESLIE

Chris, are you okay?

CHRISTINE (O.S.)

I just need a minute.

More retching from the bathroom.

LESLIE

(to herself, mostly)

Well, uh, that about sums it up, doesn't it.

STEF

I can't believe you did that.

LESLIE

What?

STEF

We made a pact. We had a deal. We were not going to tell Christine. That's what we decided. / Together. Here. In this room.

LESLIE

That's what you decided!

STEF

No. You agreed, Leslie. You and me and Charlie and daddy. We all agreed.

(MORE)

STEF (CONT'D)

And just now, you decided, all by yourself, that you would take matters into your own hands and not even consider that you were breaking the rules that we agreed on together.

LESLIE

It's my decision.

STEF

It's not, though. It's not.

LESLIE

It's happening to me.

STEF

And that sucks. I know. It's not fair. But that does not mean you get to overrule the rest of us.

LESLIE

Yes, it does!

STEF

No, it doesn't--

LESLIE

It's my body. So, I get to be the dictator of this peace treaty alliance of powers or whatever. It's my body. It's not a democracy.

STEF

Leslie...

LESLIE

And I know, Stef, I know. About the pact. I was here, okay? And I remember. But, that was, like, six years ago. I was still in my twenties. I was a baby. And I was scared. I was really, really scared. And you knew exactly what to do. You were like, BOOM! Solutions, appointments, family pacts! I don't know what I would have done without you, I mean that so, so sincerely, because I was like, in a haze. And I just... I let you decide because... I don't know. You were so adamant about it. And I wasn't ready to have that conversation with her. But, I'm not a baby anymore. And I get to make my own decisions about what my body looks like and who I get to tell about how fucked up it is lately.

STEF

Even just a head's up would have been nice, / that's all I'm saying...

LESLIE

Oh my god...

STEF

Look. You wanna get tattoo sleeves and a tramp stamp--

LESLIE

I would never get a tramp stamp--

STEF

Or whatever else? It's fine. Do what you want. But, this? This is not only about you. You're not seeing the whole picture. You're only seeing one angle. Because... alright, I don't want you to take this the wrong way, but things are usually about you. That's just the way it is. And I don't mind. I don't. Because... you are the most important person in the world to me. You know that, right? You know that?

LESLIE

Yeah.

STEF

You are my best friend. And sometimes, if I'm being completely honest... if I'm being honest, sometimes it feels like you are my only friend. But, you are not my only little sister. And if you just trusted me, then maybe you would realize that not having all of the information is not the worst thing that could happen.

LESLIE

I didn't want to lie anymore.

STEF

Yeah, I know.

LESLIE

It's exhausting. Like this deep, dark, depressing secret because, you know, the whole thing isn't shitty enough already. And I just... I don't want to be this, like, tragic vortex.

STEF

You're not--

LESLIE

No, I am. I can tell by the way you're looking at me right now.

STEF

I'm not looking at you--

LESLIE

You are! You're always looking at me in this infuriating way where I know exactly what you're thinking, and I hate it. I hate when people look at me with that, like... tentative pity.

STEF

I never look at you like that.

LESLIE

Whatever.

A beat... Stef's still looking at her.

LESLIE

Oh my god. STOP.

STEF

What do you want me to do? Not look at you?

LESLIE

Yes. Look... over there. Like, out the window or something.

Stef turns away. A tense beat...

STEF

This is so stupid.

LESLIE

I know.

STEF

You know, if you really didn't want people to look at you differently, then maybe you shouldn't have said anything to Christine.

LESLIE

Thank you. For the tip.

STEF  
 I'm just saying.  
 (...)  
 There are things...  
 (...)  
 I'm just trying to protect you.

LESLIE  
 I don't need to be protected. I'm not  
 gonna break.

STEF  
 Yeah. Maybe.

LESLIE  
 Why can't anything just be normal.

STEF  
 Good question.

After a long beat...

Leslie walks over to the bathroom door and KNOCKS.

LESLIE  
 Hey, Chris?

CHRISTINE (O.S.)  
 Yeah?

LESLIE  
 Do you want a glass of water or  
 something?... Chris?

CHRISTINE (O.S.)  
 Yeah. Yeah, okay.

Leslie fills up a glass from the tap in the kitchen. She sets it  
 on the counter.

Offstage: a FLUSH from the bathroom.

The bathroom door opens and Christine enters the living room. She  
 leans against the wall. Like she hasn't quite committed to  
 entering the room.

Then, Christine takes the glass, sits on the couch, and swallows  
 the water in one gulp. Like a shot of something stronger.

CHRISTINE  
 I'm sorry for... for the... That doesn't  
 usually happen to me.

LESLIE

Don't worry about it.

CHRISTINE

Wow. This is the fucking worst.

LESLIE

It's not that bad.

Stef shoots her a look. Like, what.

LESLIE

What? Last week you said some guy came into the emergency room with a huge shard of glass sticking out of his eyeball, like, buried way in his frontal lobe. Now, THAT would be really bad... This is not that bad. And the parking, if you remember, is killer.

CHRISTINE

Oh god. I do remember that.

LESLIE

Right? Like, when mom used to take us to the mall around Christmas. And the entire lot would be packed, like, people would be parking all the way back in those afterthought half parking lots right off Richmond Avenue. And mom would just swing the car into a handicap spot, / no problem...

STEF

I don't want to talk about mom.

LESLIE

What?

STEF

I just don't think that it's a good idea to talk about mom right now.

LESLIE

So... what are we supposed to do? Sit here and pretend like we're not thinking about her?

STEF

We shouldn't be thinking about her. You're not mom. You are completely different from mom.

(MORE)

STEF (CONT'D)

When we were little, and mom found out she was sick, in the 80s or whenever it was, you know what they sent her home with? Nothing. Maybe a steroid shot. She probably didn't even get an MRI because MRIs were barely even invented. You are not mom, Leslie. You go to the neurologist every three months and you've got a dozen drugs to choose from. And then you get an MRI every year, at least, which I know because you come to the hospital where I work to get it done and we eat lunch together afterwards. And, honestly, the only way that scan could be any more accurate was if it told us why you say all the stupid things you say sometimes. So, I want all of us to stop thinking about mom, stop talking about mom, stop comparing you to mom, because you are going to be fine, and you are not mom.

LESLIE

I can't not think about her.

STEF

Leslie...

LESLIE

None of this exists without her. She is everywhere. In every crevice of this house. Every time I look in the mirror.

STEF

Please don't do this / right now...

LESLIE

What, Stef? Don't do what? Don't think about how hard she had to fight? Don't think about how strong she had to be? Don't think about her at all?

STEF

I didn't say that.

CHRISTINE

Mom didn't even come to your high school graduation.

(...)

She didn't. You can check the pictures. She wasn't...

(MORE)

CHRISTINE (CONT'D)

She wasn't even mom at that point so I don't know what kind of magical fucking person you've constructed in your head, but mom was like... Mom was like a fucking shell.

LESLIE

Don't talk about her like that.

CHRISTINE

She couldn't move. She couldn't eat. She was in pain all the time. And when she was, you know, with it, she was fucking mean. //

LESLIE

Stop!

CHRISTINE

// So don't tell me that you look at yourself in the mirror and you see mom. Because mom was a miserable, miserable woman. //

STEF

Chris, that's enough.

CHRISTINE

// And at least when I look in the mirror, I know that I fucking did something about it.

LESLIE

What did you do?

Christine takes a beat... There's a gap of information here and she's just stepped right off the ledge.

STEF

It's not important.

CHRISTINE

(to Stef)

She doesn't know?

LESLIE

Know what?

STEF

Shut up, Chris.

CHRISTINE

Oh, come on. Seriously?

LESLIE  
(to Stef)  
What did she do?

STEF  
I...

LESLIE  
(to Christine)  
What did you do?

STEF  
Do not say anything Chris, do not--

CHRISTINE  
She deserves to know!  
(...)  
Didn't you ever wish mom would die?  
Because, I did. I wished it all the  
time. And I'm not... you know, I'm not  
proud of that. But I think, really, if  
you say you never wished it too, not  
once, then I think you're lying. So,  
when I had the chance... I helped. Okay?  
I fucking helped. That kid Joey Lauer  
used to sell me Xanax for like  
practically a steal, I think his dad was  
like a doctor or something, I don't  
remember. And I had this shit ton of oxy  
saved up. It wasn't... It was so easy  
you wouldn't even fucking believe it.

LESLIE  
Oh my god.

CHRISTINE  
But, you have to understand--

LESLIE  
Oh my god.

STEF  
Hey. Leslie? //

CHRISTINE  
It wasn't like the way it sounds...

STEF  
// Leslie! Look at me! This was a long  
time ago and it has nothing to do with  
you.

LESLIE  
Did you know?

STEF

No--

CHRISTINE

Oh please!--

LESLIE

Oh my god. You knew, didn't you.

STEF

No.

CHRISTINE

She knew.

LESLIE

You knew and you still let her step foot in this house?

STEF

You are the one who let her in this house! And... besides. I didn't know. I guessed. I knew what it looked like.

(to Christine)

I knew what you were into. But you never said anything! //

CHRISTINE

You're not listening to me!

STEF

// And after mom died, when they asked me if I wanted to do an autopsy? I told them no. Of course I told them no. Because I knew what they would find and I couldn't...

(to Leslie)

I couldn't do that to you.

LESLIE

This is so fucked up. This is so. Fucked. Up.

CHRISTINE

You don't even know the half of it.

STEF

Shut up, Chris.

LESLIE

(to Stef)

Why didn't you tell me?

STEF

I couldn't. I... I thought I would. One day. Eventually. But, you were in college. And then you were getting married. And then you moved. And then you got sick. And then... I couldn't. Anymore.

Stef reaches out for Leslie.

STEF

Leslie...

LESLIE

No. Don't. Do not touch me.

Stef backs away.

A long beat...

LESLIE

(to Christine)

Is that why you left? Because you couldn't... I don't know, you couldn't live with yourself so you just left?

CHRISTINE

I don't remember.

LESLIE

Yeah, you wouldn't, would you.

CHRISTINE

Fuck off, Leslie.

LESLIE

It's all... It's all becoming kind of clear now though because I always assumed you were just... sad. And I never understood why we couldn't all be sad together. As a family. And why it was so important for you to leave. But, I guess it was more than that. Right? Because you weren't sad. You were just... running.

CHRISTINE

Yeah, well, I didn't think I'd be running in a fucking circle, now, did I.

A beat... Ouch.

Leslie looks around. Checks her pockets. Finds nothing.

LESLIE  
Where's my phone? Is it...?

It's on the coffee table over by Christine.

Christine holds it up.

LESLIE  
(to no one in particular)  
Can, um... can someone please text  
Charlie and tell him that I want him to  
come back here. Like, as soon as  
possible. And um... oh god, I don't even  
know, I just, um...

A beat... Leslie can barely look at either of them. She needs to  
get out of this room. Like, immediately.

LESLIE  
I think there are like, some VHS tapes  
and stuff upstairs that we haven't gone  
through. So I'm just gonna... yeah, I'm  
gonna go do that.

CHRISTINE  
Do you want any help?

STEF  
Shut up, Chris.

Leslie starts up the stairs.

CHRISTINE  
(to Stef)  
Is she okay with the stairs, or...?

LESLIE  
Shut up, Chris!

Leslie exits.

Christine grabs Leslie's phone and sends a text to Charlie.

Christine and Stef exist in the silence for a long beat...

CHRISTINE  
So, um... What happened with Kim?

STEF  
Are you serious right now?

CHRISTINE  
I was just wondering.

STEF

We broke up.

CHRISTINE

Yeah, I know. But why.

STEF

I cared to the black hole point of suffocating her. She moved to San Francisco to do Chinese medicine or something stupid like that.

CHRISTINE

She's not Chinese.

STEF

I know that.

CHRISTINE

She's not even Asian.

STEF

Yes, I am aware.

CHRISTINE

She was always a little hippie-dippie crazy, though.

STEF

Alright.

CHRISTINE

Sorry. I mean, that blows.

STEF

Yeah.

CHRISTINE

I guess Kim knew. About Leslie.

STEF

Yeah, she knew.

CHRISTINE

And daddy. Obviously. And whatsherface.

STEF

Karen.

CHRISTINE

Karen. Right. Karen.

(...)

What about, like, Aunt Sylvia?

STEF  
Everyone knows, Chris. It's not a  
secret. Everyone knows.

CHRISTINE  
Just not me.

STEF  
Yeah.

A beat...

CHRISTINE  
Did Kim know about me? Did you tell her?

STEF  
No.

CHRISTINE  
You didn't tell her what I did?

STEF  
No.

CHRISTINE  
And you didn't tell Leslie.

STEF  
Obviously not.

CHRISTINE  
Did you tell anyone? Like, a priest? Or  
a therapist? Or, I don't know, a dog?

STEF  
No.

A long, intimate beat...

CHRISTINE  
Is Leslie gonna be okay?

STEF  
I really... I would really feel more  
comfortable if you just stayed out of  
this.

CHRISTINE  
Because of mom.

STEF  
Yeah.

CHRISTINE

That's not the whole story, you know.

STEF

It doesn't matter.

CHRISTINE

Actually, it matters a lot. And if you knew the whole story, you'd realize how much it matters, like, really fucking quickly.

STEF

(brushing her off)

Alright.

CHRISTINE

I'm serious. I'm not a fucking monster, you know. They were just... just pills.

(...)

Mom taught me this trick once. When I was... I don't know. Ten or eleven. And I remember this moment just like, so clearly because it was right when things started to go really...

(downhill)

...you know? Like, it was that summer when Lucky died and then mom crashed the car and daddy stopped letting her drive. And you were like, obviously secretly gay and half-dating that girl Allison Carpenter who we all hated. And then of course I got an ear infection, I've always had amazing timing. But, anyway. Mom taught me this trick. Because I had to take these antibiotics. The amoxicillin tablets? Which are just like, gigantic. I mean, you know what I'm talking about, those pills are fucking huge. And the trick was just, like, the bigger the gulp of water you take, the easier the pills go down. And it works, you know, it really works. You can totally psych out your system, no problem. Just distract it with enough of something else. And, I'll tell you... I got really good at that trick. Like, really, really good.

STEF

What does this have to do with anything?

CHRISTINE

It wasn't my idea. It was mom's idea.  
She asked me.

STEF

You expect me to believe that?

CHRISTINE

I'm not lying. She saw it on 60 Minutes.

STEF

What are you talking about?

CHRISTINE

They had Kevorkian on 60 Minutes. They even, I mean, can you fucking believe this, they aired this shitty home movie of Kevorkian killing some poor son of a bitch in primetime on CBS. You can watch it on YouTube now, like, it's so messed up. But, I guess it captured mom's imagination or some shit, because she ASKED ME. And I didn't want to, at first, but... she was so persuasive. And I didn't know what else to do.

STEF

That's a good story.

CHRISTINE

It's not a story.

STEF

You're a great liar, Chris, I'll give you that. And if that's what helps you sleep at night, then that's... you know, it's good. Not quite as good as the one where you convinced us that that guy you brought home for Thanksgiving was your boyfriend and not your dealer, but, on the whole, not your worst.

CHRISTINE

Okay, for the last time, that was an honest mistake. //

STEF

Alright.

CHRISTINE

// And I'm trying to tell you something here. I'm trying to talk to you about mom--

STEF

Why can't you just let this go?

CHRISTINE

Because it's not a lie.

A beat... Stef is prepared to crack this if it's the last thing she ever does.

STEF

Why would she ask you? You were nineteen.

CHRISTINE

Well, I was the one who could get them. The pills? I mean, it was kind of common knowledge, at the time, that I was what the middle-aged Staten Island housewives liked to call "experimenting".

STEF

I could have gotten them. I work in a hospital. Why didn't she ask me?

CHRISTINE

Oh, please.

STEF

No, really. Why? Why wouldn't she have asked me?

CHRISTINE

Because you didn't have the balls to do it for her.

STEF

I don't believe you.

CHRISTINE

It's the truth!

STEF

Then... what did she say to you?

CHRISTINE

I don't remember / exactly...

STEF

Alright. Then, when did she ask you? She died in January and she barely even knew what was going on at that point, so when was it?... A day before? A week before? A year?

CHRISTINE

A couple weeks, I think / maybe, but...

STEF

You don't remember?

CHRISTINE

You're not listening. You never listen to me--

STEF

She wouldn't leave us like that.

CHRISTINE

She was done! With all of it. And she wanted you to live your fucking life. You and Leslie and daddy, and like, not me, I guess. But, honestly, if you don't believe me, then fine, whatever, I don't care. Because if you think I regret it for even one second, then you're fucking insane.

STEF

You wanna say that to Leslie? You wanna tell her not to worry because... you have no regrets! And one day, if she needs you to, you'll get her the pills and you'll... I don't know. What? You'll hold her fucking hand?

A beat... Christine doesn't say anything.

STEF

This just never goes away, does it.

(...)

You know, I thought of myself as your mom for a long time. And it didn't... I don't know, it didn't bother me. Probably because we all knew that mom was... erratic, and unreliable, and we never knew when anything was gonna be... anything. But, at least she was there, even if it wasn't always pretty. And after she wasn't there anymore, it became very clear that I was not anyone's mother. Because there are all of these things that you're supposed to do with your mom that you don't think about. Like, when Leslie went to pick out her wedding dress, because what the hell do I know about that, you know? And none of that was easier. With mom gone. And maybe...

(MORE)

STEF (CONT'D)

yeah, maybe it would have been a hassle.  
And maybe people would have stared,  
because we would have been those girls  
there with our sick mom in the  
wheelchair like some tearjerker Lifetime  
special. But... I don't know. I mean...  
I'll never know. We'll never have that.

(...)

You are the one who ruins everything,  
Chris. You're a liar. And it's your  
fault. Not mom's.

Stef and Christine sit in the silence...

And then, the sound of the lock turning in the front door.

The door opens without a struggle. It's Charlie. Holding a bag of  
takeout.

CHARLIE

Hey. I figured out the lock.

(...)

I brought Chinese...

(...)

Where's Leslie?

STEF

She's upstairs.

CHARLIE

Is everything okay?

STEF

Okay is not the word that I would use  
exactly.

CHARLIE

What happened?

STEF

Christine was just leaving.

CHARLIE

Okay, well, I'm gonna go up / and get  
her...

STEF

No, wait. You should really just--

CHARLIE

I got a text that said "Come home ASAP  
J.F.C. Dude" whatever that means, so...

STEF

No. It's alright. It's just... I have to talk to her about something. I owe her a groveling apology. So... I'm gonna go up and... Let me go up and talk to her.

CHARLIE

She asked for me.

STEF

I know that. But, I really just need my sister for a minute. So, if you could deal with this...

(this being Christine)

Before Leslie comes back down here... I would really, really appreciate that.

Stef exits.

CHARLIE

Stef...!

But she doesn't answer.

Charlie stands between the steps and the living room. Not sure which scene he really belongs in.

Christine takes her empty glass and fills it up from the tap.

She sets the glass down on the counter, stares at it.

CHRISTINE

Karma's such a fucking bitch.

CHARLIE

What happened?

CHRISTINE

I killed my mother.

CHARLIE

...What?

CHRISTINE

Yeah. The fucking ripples of that, man, I did not see coming.

CHARLIE

...What?

CHRISTINE

Do you not believe me?

CHARLIE

I don't know. That's... I don't know.

CHRISTINE

Always a mystery, right? Crazy Christine. We never know what she's been up to.

CHARLIE

Does Leslie...? Did you tell her? Did she tell... you?

Christine picks up her purse, hauls it up onto the counter, and starts rifling through it.

CHRISTINE

Oh, I know. Leslie knows. Stef knows. We alllllll know. Everyone knows everything. Which is why I'm here, waiting to be dealt with. By you. You're doing a great job, by the way.

Christine finds what she's looking for in her purse. A bottle of pills.

She shakes out two pills, maybe three.

CHRISTINE

I get it, you know. I'm volatile. Dangerous. Hard to... be around. I know that. About myself.

She pops the pills. Takes a big gulp of water. Downs the hatch.

CHRISTINE

But I'm not... you know, I'm not--

CHARLIE

You're not a good person.

CHRISTINE

Wow. Thank you.

CHARLIE

You're not, though. You ask for money you didn't earn. You spend it on drugs. And back in high school? I used to hear the rumors. About how you would sell your mom's Vicodin. And I never told Leslie about that, and I never told Stef, but I want you to know... Stuff like that? It makes you a bad person.

CHRISTINE

Aw, that's adorable. Have you been practicing that since you left earlier? Were you, like, sitting in the parking lot, constructing your little speech? Getting all amped up?

(...)

God, that's precious! I'm touched. Got anything else you've been holding on to?

(...)

Ohhhh, you do have something. Let's hear it, then. Now's the time. Say it, Charlie. Say it. Say it!

CHARLIE

You showed up high at our wedding.

CHRISTINE

Ooooh. Good one.

CHARLIE

Or, I thought you were high. No one said anything though, because Leslie was so happy you'd shown up at all. But, it felt like you were high.

CHRISTINE

You caught me. I did a line of coke in the confessional and then I gave the priest a blow job. Bless me Father, for I have sinned! Is that what you want to hear?

(...)

I wasn't high at your wedding. God. Has it ever occurred to you that I could be a bad person, just, straight up?

Because, it's true. I'm what they call rotten to the core. And I have always been. So, whatever.

(...)

Leslie's never gonna speak to me again. Neither is Stef, but that's nothing new. I mean, but... Leslie and I, we used to do everything together. Thicker than thieves, is what my dad used to say. And we would rip into Stef, God, like, who did she think she was, you know? She was so fucking uptight. This one time, she caught us smoking in the backyard and she just exploded. And we were like, oh my god, chill the fuck out, take a hit or something, Jesus. But, whatever. That was a long time ago. And... I did my part for this family.

(MORE)

CHRISTINE (CONT'D)

I sacrificed everything. And, I don't care what you think. I don't care what Stef thinks, I will stand by it, I will, I... I don't care what a bad person it makes me. But, Leslie... honestly, Leslie should just stay far away from me.

CHARLIE

Leslie's a good person.

CHRISTINE

Yeah. Well. We can't all be Leslie, now, can we. Not that anyone really wants to be. If we're being fucking honest with ourselves.

A beat...

Charlie snatches Christine's bottle of pills.

CHRISTINE

What the fuck?! Give those back. They're mine.

Christine lunges at Charlie like an animal, but he keeps her at bay easily.

CHRISTINE

Give them to me! Give them back!

CHARLIE

You're so tiny. //

CHRISTINE

Fuck you!

CHARLIE

// You really think you can beat me?

CHRISTINE

I don't care--

CHARLIE

You can't have them.

Charlie shoves her away. Christine stumbles backwards.

She takes stock of the situation, back against the wall, figuring out where best to strike...

CHRISTINE

You are so fucked, dude.

CHARLIE

You're high.

CHRISTINE

You think you're all like, stock photo that comes in the picture frame perfect kind of happy, but... that can't last forever. One day, you're gonna wake up, and realize that you're wasting your life on someone whose needs will always be more important than yours. Your wife is sick. And she will always be sick. Always. This shit does not go away. And if you're not careful, it will eat you alive faster than it eats her. I mean, look at my dad. His marriage was crap. Full of deep resentment and a furious kind of masochism. At least he had kids, though. You... You are just a time bomb. My advice? Sister to... brother? I guess. If that's what we are? Life's tough, get a mistress.

CHARLIE

I would never do that.

CHRISTINE

Hmmmmmm. Never say never.

CHARLIE

Never.

CHRISTINE

Okay. Calm your fucking tits. I'm just looking out for you. How long have you been with my sister, Charlie? Since you were fifteen? Sixteen? You've never even fucked another woman, have you? Don't you ever wonder what you're missing?

CHARLIE

No.

CHRISTINE

I bet you think about it constantly. Not in the way where you'd sneak off and screw some woman just for shits and giggles, no. No, no. That's not your style. Nope. It's just that nagging, back of your mind type of way. Where you just... wonder.

CHARLIE

I wouldn't even know where to start.

CHRISTINE

Oh my god, wow. The internet, obviously. Have you been living under a fucking rock.

CHARLIE

That's not what I'm talking about. I don't... I don't even know who I am without her. And you don't know what that's like. It's terrifying. It's overwhelming. It's like... I don't know. I'm not a words guy. I can't explain it.

CHRISTINE

Maybe you're addicted to each other. Ever think of that?

CHARLIE

Addicted?

CHRISTINE

Oh yeah.

CHARLIE

Well, you're the expert.

CHRISTINE

I'm not addicted to anything. And we're not even talking about me. We're talking about you.

CHARLIE

Okay, sure.

CHRISTINE

No, but really. It's so obvious. Codependency 101. I've seen it a million times. You know that she's bad for you. That you'd be happier without her. But you just can't fucking quit. Because you like that she needs you. You get off on it. You like how it feels.

CHARLIE

It's not like that.

CHRISTINE

Then why don't you leave?

CHARLIE

I'm not addicted to Leslie. I love her. My marriage...? That means something to me. And I know it's not glamorous.

(MORE)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

It's boring, and it's messy, and it's a lot of fights about things like toothpaste, because Leslie likes that cinnamon crap which is impossible to find and also just bizarre, but... I don't care. I don't. I don't care. And I feel sorry for you. That you think the way you feel about pills is what love feels like? Because it's not.

CHRISTINE

Ugh. You're such a nice guy. Such an insufferably NICE guy. Don't you ever want to be interesting?

CHARLIE

Sorry?

CHRISTINE

Sorry. Sorry! You're apologizing now.

CHARLIE

I'm not apologizing--

CHRISTINE

You're like, impenetrably fucking nice. That's how you see yourself, isn't it? Okay. Fine. I'll buy it. But, you know, part of being a nice guy is returning stolen property.

CHARLIE

Why are you like this?

CHRISTINE

Just give me the bottle.

CHARLIE

This is why Leslie barely talks to you anymore. This, exactly. Because you manipulate people. You lie. //

CHRISTINE

I'm not a liar!

CHARLIE

// And you steal. And you leave. Over and over again, you leave her. And me and Stef, we stay. Through all of it. And that's why she loves us more than she loves you.

A beat...

CHRISTINE

Wowwwwwwwwww. Wow.

CHARLIE

Sorry, I... I didn't mean that.

CHRISTINE

No... Whatever.

(...)

Whatever.

Christine takes another beat... but, she's still got an ace up her sleeve and she's finally ready to play it.

CHRISTINE

You know, my mother didn't like you.

CHARLIE

Yes she did. I went to her funeral.

CHRISTINE

Yeah. You went to her funeral. And I'm sure she liked you plenty when she was already fucking dead.

CHARLIE

Well, she was sick. And she doesn't deserve / to be talked about like that...

CHRISTINE

Wow, you know, I'm getting really tired of everyone painting her as this like tragic fucking martyr. She was a normal, messed up person, just like the rest of us. She was a shitty cook, and a bad driver, and she didn't like you! Why didn't she like you? God. I can't remember. Was it...? Was it because you're BLACK? Because that would just be fucking perfect, wouldn't it.

CHARLIE

That's ridiculous.

CHRISTINE

You don't believe me. No one ever believes me. But, I can prove it to you. I can prove everything.

Christine walks over to the piano and pushes open its lid.

CHARLIE

Hey! Whoa! What are you doing?

She reaches into the piano, digs around.

CHRISTINE  
I'm so tired of this shit. //

CHARLIE  
Chris...?

CHRISTINE  
// I'm so fucking tired of it. No one  
ever listens to me...

CHARLIE  
Christine!

A swift pull makes hammers fall against strings, and Christine produces a JOURNAL.

She throws it at Charlie.

CHRISTINE  
Here, take that one.

She reaches in again, at a different angle this time, and continues to fish around.

Charlie flips through the book.

CHARLIE  
Is this someone's diary or...?

He closes the book. Fast.

CHARLIE  
Where'd you find these?

CHRISTINE  
In the piano.

Sounds of hurried, uneven footsteps coming down the stairs.

CHARLIE  
No. Before that. How did you--

Leslie emerges from upstairs, Stef right behind her.

CHARLIE  
(to Leslie)  
Hey.

A beat... Leslie looks from Charlie to Christine, who's still armpit deep in the piano.

LESLIE  
What are you doing? You can't have the piano!

CHRISTINE  
I seriously don't know why you even want this thing--

LESLIE  
Just stop!

CHRISTINE  
I almost have it.

LESLIE  
Christine!

Christine produces a second journal. She holds it up in surrender, backs away from the piano.

CHRISTINE  
Okay. Fiiiiine. I got it. I'm done.

STEF  
Holy shit.

Stef vaults forward, but Christine pulls the book away.

STEF  
Give that to me.

CHRISTINE  
No way.

LESLIE  
What is that?--

STEF  
How did you even find that?

LESLIE  
Stef--

CHRISTINE  
It's none of your business.

LESLIE  
Are those yours?--

STEF  
Give it to me. Now.

CHRISTINE

Oh, no, no, no. They're not Stef's.  
That's for sure.

Leslie and Charlie lock eyes from across the room. Leslie spots the book in his hand.

LESLIE

Charlie. What is that?

Stef turns to look at Charlie. She does a double take when she sees the other journal.

CHARLIE

I don't think this is a good idea.

Stef starts towards Charlie.

STEF

Give that to me, I've been looking for these--

CHARLIE

No. Stef. No.

He backs away from Stef's intensity. He manages to shake her off.

LESLIE

Oh my god... Are those mom's?

CHARLIE

I think this is a really, really bad idea.

LESLIE

What were they doing in there?

CHRISTINE

I put them there.

STEF

That's why you wanted the piano?

CHRISTINE

It's no big thing. Cat's out of the bag now anyway, right? I'm sure you told Leslie what a big fucking liar I am. But, whatever. You're all walking around this house like mom was this paragon of virtue and I'm the one who fucked up everyone's lives. Well, here's the proof that the only person who's being honest with themselves here, is me.

Leslie approaches Charlie. Goes for the book.

CHARLIE  
No. Leslie, no. Come on.

LESLIE  
Give it to me.

CHARLIE  
We don't need to know what she thinks.  
Please.

LESLIE  
I want it.

Leslie reaches out for the book again. She gets a hand on it but Charlie doesn't give it up.

CHARLIE  
You can't take it back. And we don't  
need to know.

Leslie takes a beat... She lets go of the book.

And then Stef swoops in and takes the journal out of Charlie's hand.

CHARLIE  
Whoa! Hey!

LESLIE  
Stef!

Stef goes for the journal in Christine's hand as well. But, Christine pulls away.

CHRISTINE  
Get away from me.

STEF  
That doesn't belong to you.

CHRISTINE  
Okay, fine. Okay. You wanna know what's  
in the journals?--

STEF  
No. No! I didn't say that. / I just want  
to have them...

CHRISTINE  
You wanna see how much of a fucking liar  
I am? Let's take a look then, shall we?

CHARLIE  
Christine, no. Come on.

Christine climbs on top of the piano bench, like a preacher taking the pulpit.

STEF

What are you doing? Get down from there.

Christine flips through the journal, lands on a page, and starts to read.

STEF

Oh, no. Chris, no. / No, no, no, no, no, no, no. Please, no.

CHRISTINE

Okay... let's see... Yes. Monday, September 15th, 2003. Blah blah blah. Complaining, complaining. //

STEF

Chris, I told you...

CHRISTINE

// I'm tired. My back hurts. No one loves me... //

STEF

Chris--

CHRISTINE

// Blah blah blah. Oh. Yes. Here we go. The list. She made a list of pros and cons for each of us, that's how fucked up our mother was, okay? //

STEF

What are you doing?

CHRISTINE

// But, anyway. Three pages on daddy. Spineless. Soft. Etc, etc. Won't put you through that. And... okay. Yes. "Stefanie." Full name, Stef. Serious business. //

STEF

Chris!

CHRISTINE

// "Stefanie has the means but not the temperament. She looks at me with so much pity sometimes, I just want to claw her eyes out." Not very poetic, I guess, but, you know, whatever feels right in the moment.

(MORE)

CHRISTINE (CONT'D)

"I think about all the patients she sees and I hope for their sakes that she doesn't look at them like she looks at me." She's got a keen eye, doesn't she, Stef?

Stef tries to bark back a retort, but she's got nothing.

Christine feeds off her discomfort. Stands a little taller.

CHRISTINE

If you want to know how she feels about you being a raging lesbian, she's already covered that in Volume 1. So, peruse at your leisure. But, anyway. "Leslie." Can't forget Leslie.

CHARLIE

Stop! Okay? I'll give you what you want--  
-

LESLIE

Wait.

A beat... Charlie turns back to Leslie. What the fuck is she doing?

CHRISTINE

Are we stopping? Because this could all be over.

LESLIE

Read it.

CHARLIE

No...

LESLIE

Read it.

CHRISTINE

"Leslie is fragile. She'll always need someone to take care of her. I often find myself thinking of how long she cried about Lucky. That stupid cat." That's underlined, by the way. That. Stupid. Cat. "She can be so naive. For instance, how she continues to carry on with that boy--" That's you, Charlie. Not your name, but like--

LESLIE

Leave Charlie out of it.

CHRISTINE

He's in it. I can't fucking change it. He's been here the whole time, so he's in it. "For instance, how she continues to carry on with that boy as if she has no idea how difficult she's making everything." Ah, so just a subtle undertone of racist, then. It's like, "Toto I've a feeling we're not in the 90s anymore."

STEF

Alright. That's enough.

CHRISTINE

No, no. Why stop now? She wrote it all down, right? Every single thought that came into her head. So, she obviously wanted someone to read it.

STEF

Chris, get off the bench. That's not how it works / and it's not yours...

CHRISTINE

"Christine." Now we get to the juicy parts. "Christine has no self-control. She never has. Though I don't see how anything can be done about it." Do you see where this is going? //

LESLIE

Chris...

CHRISTINE

// "At times I find her exhausting to be around." Something you can all relate to, I'm sure. "And lately, as Christine grows older, I find her harder and harder..."

Christine pauses... This one's been weighing on her. And to see it on the page? It stings like the ink is poison.

CHRISTINE

"...I find her harder and harder to love."

A beat... No one knows what to say.

CHRISTINE

"But Christine understands darkness. She understands feeling caged inside yourself" //

LESLIE

Stop.

CHRISTINE

// "and how much it hurts. And she is  
the only one who will understand" //

LESLIE

Stop!

CHRISTINE

// "that there is no one else I can turn  
to. And no one else--"

LESLIE

Give me this.

Leslie snatches the journal out of Christine's hands.

CHRISTINE

Oh, I'm sorry. Does that hurt? Does it  
fucking hurt?

LESLIE

You're not the only one who has to deal  
with her shit, you know that, right?

(...)

Yeah. And, once, a long time ago, you  
did something that was really brave. You  
let her decide. You helped her. And I'm  
sorry. That it got you all twisted up.  
I'm sorry she did that to you. But,  
this?

(she holds up the book)

Hiding this? And then digging it up?  
It's not brave. It's mean. And you  
shouldn't have done it.

Leslie backs away from Christine. She takes the journal out of  
Stef's hands too. Though that one comes much more easily.

CHRISTINE

(a little crazed)

I can do whatever I want! You're not the  
boss of me. None of you are. Not you.  
And not you. And definitely not you. You  
can't tell me what to do.

STEF

Are you high right now?

CHRISTINE

No. Like... what? No.

CHARLIE  
She took some pills earlier.

CHRISTINE  
That's not true--

CHARLIE  
When you went upstairs. I don't know  
what kind or how many. But...

He holds up the bottle he took from Christine.

STEF  
Jesus Christ.

Christine clambers down from the bench, eyes on the prize. But,  
Stef grabs the bottle first and then gets ahold of Christine.

STEF  
Look at me. Look at me right now.

CHRISTINE  
Give that to me.

STEF  
Look at me.

CHRISTINE  
Whaaaat?!

STEF  
What's in here, Chris? What'd you take?

CHRISTINE  
It wasn't anything.

STEF  
You don't think I can figure it out?

CHRISTINE  
It's not like I shot up some heroin,  
god. It's just a couple Percocet.

STEF  
How many?

CHRISTINE  
I don't know! Two? Three? Nothing to  
lose your fucking panties over.

STEF  
Alright, let's go. Get in the bathroom.

CHRISTINE

It doesn't work like that, it doesn't--

Stef pushes Christine into the bathroom and follows her inside.

The bathroom door SLAMS shut.

CHRISTINE (O.S.)

It doesn't work like that!

A long beat...

Leslie places the two journals on the coffee table in front of her. She stares at them.

Charlie stands with his hands in his pockets. Awkward. As if he doesn't quite belong.

CHARLIE

Hey, uh... Are you hungry?

LESLIE

Yeah.

Charlie grabs the bag of Chinese food and sets it on the table.

Charlie and Leslie both look down at the journals...

Charlie picks up the two books, carefully, like they might explode at any moment.

He surveys the piles of boxes scattered across the room. Keep. Donate. Trash.

CHARLIE

I don't, uh... I don't really know what pile these go in.

Leslie watches his dilemma. Doesn't say a word.

CHARLIE

I'm gonna... I'm just gonna...

Charlie compromises. He sets the journals on top of the credenza.

CHARLIE

There.

Leslie opens the bag of Chinese food. Charlie sits down next to her.

They reach in and start unpacking the food, emptying the bag's contents in near-silence and perfect sync.

They each open up a container and peek inside.

LESLIE

Lo mein.

CHARLIE

Chow fun.

They exchange without missing a beat and start eating right out of the cartons.

After a moment...

LESLIE

I'm so embarrassed.

CHARLIE

About what?

LESLIE

Christine. And my mother. And those journals... Oh, god.

CHARLIE

Leslie. Your mother's dead.

LESLIE

She's... Yeah. She's very very dead.

CHARLIE

She's been dead for a long time.

LESLIE

Yeah.

CHARLIE

And she was kind of a bitch.

LESLIE

I'm so sorry.

CHARLIE

It's not your fault.

(...)

You're not her. She's gone--

LESLIE

I know! But, I miss her. I can't help it. And I wish that I didn't. Because she was... But it is suffocating. I miss her so much. And if we could just get rid of this house... Then maybe I would stop missing her.

CHARLIE

Do you really think that would change anything?

LESLIE

I don't know.

(...)

I don't know what we're supposed to do.

CHARLIE

We could move in.

LESLIE

Are you crazy?

CHARLIE

This house... it's just a house! It's a pretty nice one, actually. And we already own it. Let's live here. Let's knock down the walls and rip up the rugs and, I don't know, plant a garden or something. Let's make it ours.

LESLIE

What about Stef?

CHARLIE

Stef really wants us to live here.

LESLIE

You talked to her about it.

CHARLIE

She just worries about you.

LESLIE

I know.

CHARLIE

And we'd be closer to her. You could see her more.

LESLIE

Yeah.

CHARLIE

And we'd be closer to my parents. Who you love.

LESLIE

Yeah.

CHARLIE

And my sisters. Who are very low drama.  
Compared to yours.

LESLIE

Oh, yeah.

CHARLIE

And it's just a house.

LESLIE

But, it's like... I'm so tired. And I don't want any of this stuff. Dividing it up... It's so much work. "You can have this. And you can have that. And divide this in three." And then all of this junk comes up... I hate it. And I'm just... I'm really tired... And my back hurts.

Leslie buries her face in her hand.

Charlie rests a hand on her back, tender and comforting, not sure what to say.

Leslie lets him, but it still feels as if she's very much alone.

After a few moments, Charlie feels it too. He stops touching her.

CHARLIE

You wanna know something about division?

LESLIE

Okay.

CHARLIE

When you take something and you divide it in half... It's easy. Here, give me those.

He indicates a set of chopsticks over by Leslie.

LESLIE

These?

CHARLIE

Yeah. Give them to me. I'm about to turn into math teacher of the year right now, just wait.

She hands them over.

CHARLIE

Okay. If you have one whole, and you divide it in two...

He breaks the chopsticks in half.

CHARLIE

You get 0.5 and 0.5. Half and half. Basic arithmetic. Right?

LESLIE

Right.

CHARLIE

Right. Simple. But threes... Threes are harder. Because when you take one whole and you divide it in thirds? Bad news. Chaos. Infinite turmoil. Forget those nice, neat halves. Instead, you get 0.3333333333 forever and ever, each piece always fighting over the next thing that needs to be divided. And it never ends. It's never whole. There's always this little piece that's missing. And the longer it goes, the smaller that little missing piece gets, but it never stops being missing. You see what I'm saying?

LESLIE

I think so.

CHARLIE

They're your sisters, you know?

LESLIE

Yeah.

A beat...

LESLIE

Charlie...? If we live here... That doesn't mean I want a baby.

CHARLIE

Why don't we just see what happens?

LESLIE

But that's the whole thing, right? I don't know what's gonna happen to me. Anything could happen.

CHARLIE

We could make this happen.

LESLIE  
I can't, though...

CHARLIE  
Yes you can.

LESLIE  
But that doesn't mean I should, and it's not... I don't want to trick myself into wanting a baby just because I want everyone to shut up and stop telling me that I should have a baby.

CHARLIE  
We'd make a really cute baby.

LESLIE  
I hate when people say that. I hate it.

CHARLIE  
It's the worst, I know.

LESLIE  
The worst.

CHARLIE  
Yeah.

LESLIE  
Ugh, mind your own business.  
(...)  
I mean, it's your business too.  
Obviously. I'm--

CHARLIE  
It's fine.

LESLIE  
It's not. I just... I can't.

CHARLIE  
I would be a really good dad.

LESLIE  
You would be such an amazing dad. The best dad. Like, I don't even want to talk about it.

A beat...

CHARLIE  
You used to want a baby. A big family.  
You wanted that.

LESLIE

I know.

Another beat...

CHARLIE

Why can't you give this to me?

LESLIE

I can't have a baby just to make you stay.

CHARLIE

I'm not going anywhere. We have a house. Where am I going?

LESLIE

I don't know. Seattle. San Francisco. Boca.

CHARLIE

Boca Raton? Like your dad?

LESLIE

Sure. Why not.

CHARLIE

That place is for white people. Old white people.

LESLIE

You know what I mean.

After a long beat...

CHARLIE

Do you want me to leave?

LESLIE

No. That's like, the last thing in the world that I want. That would be the worst thing ever.

CHARLIE

Then, maybe... Let's just take the house. And we can worry about the rest of it later.

LESLIE

Maybe.

Stef enters from the bathroom, closing the door behind her.

STEF  
Christine's, um... Christine's gonna be  
another minute.

LESLIE  
Are you hungry?

STEF  
Yeah.

Stef sits down and grabs a carton of Chinese food.

LESLIE  
Is she okay?

STEF  
I took care of it.

CHARLIE  
That doesn't sound good.

STEF  
She'll be fine.

Leslie reaches for a fortune cookie and cracks it open.

LESLIE  
"To forgive is greater than to be  
forgiven." Do you think that's true?

CHARLIE  
Yeah.

STEF  
I don't know.

LESLIE  
No?

STEF  
No, I just... I don't know.

Leslie tosses another fortune cookie at her.

LESLIE  
Try that one.

Stef opens it. A long beat...

CHARLIE  
What's it say?

STEF

"To forgive is greater than to be forgiven."

LESLIE

Oh my god. Are you serious? Let me see.

Leslie takes the fortune from Stef.

CHARLIE

Whatever happened to "You will inherit great wealth."

LESLIE

Wrong crowd.

STEF

(laughing, finally)

Everything we inherit is crap.

Charlie takes the fortune from Leslie.

CHARLIE

Maybe it's a sign.

STEF

No, I think... Shit just happens sometimes, you know?

LESLIE

Yeah.

Stef takes a beat... She takes in the house, all boxed up...

STEF

I don't want to sell this house.

LESLIE

I know.

CHARLIE

We know.

STEF

Every memory I have of her is here.

LESLIE

Yeah, me too.

(...)

But, I don't know, I mean, it's all mixed up, right?

CHARLIE

She wasn't who you thought she was.

STEF

She was just... Different. Deeper.  
Scarier.

LESLIE

Yeah. Scarier.

STEF

If you don't want it anymore... I get  
it. And... It's your decision.

LESLIE

You're gonna let me decide?

Stef shrugs. Like she's a little uncomfortable with it because the  
concept is all so new.

LESLIE

The last time you let me decide  
something I think it was 1997.

STEF

Alright, alright. But, I will say--

CHARLIE

Ah, there's the but.

LESLIE

There's always a but.

STEF

But, I will say that the only realtor I  
know is Allison Carpenter //

LESLIE

Oh, no!!!

CHARLIE

She's a realtor?!

STEF

// and I would do that, for you, I would  
call her, but that would be so awkward  
and I really don't want to do that.

LESLIE

Well, you're single now, so... why not?  
/ Maybe you should call her!

STEF

Ughhhhhhhhhh.

CHARLIE

Aw, Steffie!

STEF  
Please don't make me do that. Please.  
You're not gonna make me do that, are  
you?

LESLIE  
No.

STEF  
Really?

LESLIE  
Yeah, no. She's horrible.

STEF  
So, you'll stay?

LESLIE  
Yeah, you don't have to--

STEF  
Final answer?

LESLIE  
Yes. Final answer. Yes. We will stay.

STEF  
(a deep breath)  
Thank you.

She kisses Leslie on the cheek.

STEF  
(to Leslie)  
Thank you. I love you.

She kisses Charlie too, for good measure.

STEF  
(to Charlie)  
Thank you.

CHARLIE  
Yeah, you're welcome.

STEF  
We can change the lock though. If you  
want. It's a pain in the ass.

CHARLIE  
Nah, it's part of the charm.

LESLIE

It's not that hard, once you get / used to it.

CHARLIE

Once you get used to it, yeah, / I know.

LESLIE

Tug and twist!

CHARLIE

Yeah, yeah...

The bathroom door creaks open.

CHARLIE

...Yeah.

Christine slinks out of the bathroom. Her hair's wet, and all of the intensity's been slapped out of her.

Everyone turns to look. There's a long, long, long beat...

STEF

Are you hungry?

Christine walks over to the table. Every action is tentative.

Leslie hands her a carton and a pair of chopsticks.

They eat in silence, until...

LESLIE

Maybe we should go to the movies or something. Daddy used to take us to the movies, remember? Whenever we were fighting. And it didn't even matter what was playing. Like, he took us to see Major League 2 that one time. Remember that?

STEF

Oh, god, that's right.

LESLIE

And who did he think he was kidding, you know? He was the one who wanted to see that movie. The man has three daughters and he picks Major League 2, like, he's not fooling anyone. But, I mean, I don't even remember what we were fighting about, but I remember that stupid movie.

A beat...

CHRISTINE  
I fucking hate the movies.

STEF  
You love the movies.

CHRISTINE  
No, I don't!

LESLIE  
It doesn't have to be the movies, / it  
can just be...

CHRISTINE  
No, it can't... It can't be anything.

Christine stands up to go.

LESLIE  
Chris...

CHRISTINE  
No, it's just, like... I can't change  
it. I can't change any of it. What I  
did. And what happened. To you. It's  
all... fuck. Stupid fucking... Fuck.

A beat... It all feels unanchored. No ports to be found.  
But then she swallows the shame whole, like she's had practice.  
She almost laughs.

CHRISTINE  
Charlie's probably saying to himself  
"wow, thank god I'm an only child!"  
right about now.

CHARLIE  
I have three sisters...

CHRISTINE  
Whatever.  
(...)  
Thanks for the food. Sorry about, you  
know, everything.

Christine starts to gather up her things.

STEF  
You don't have to leave.

CHRISTINE

No, I do, though. I mean, they even closed the dump, so like my garbage self doesn't even belong here anymore.

LESLIE

Chris...

CHRISTINE

No, stop. Just... God. Don't look at me like that, Leslie! Stop it with that FACE.

Christine turns away...

LESLIE

Where are you gonna go?

CHRISTINE

I don't know. Anywhere. Anywhere else. It doesn't matter.

LESLIE

You could stay. / For a little...

CHRISTINE

No, I can't. I can't do... this. With you. And the look. And the whole... thing. Because... I will fucking drown in it.

STEF

Then maybe you should leave.

CHRISTINE

Yeah, you know, I would. But it's like... I haven't really figured out how to do that.

(...)

I mean, maybe if I had some money--

STEF

No.

CHRISTINE

...Yeah. Yeah, okay.

But she still can't bring herself to leave.

CHARLIE

Are you gonna go, or...?

CHRISTINE  
I'm trying! God, just... give me a  
minute.

A long beat...

CHRISTINE  
What's gonna happen to the house?

LESLIE  
It's mine.

CHRISTINE  
Wow... You just... You just get  
everything, don't you? All of it.

LESLIE  
Yeah. I do. And it sucks.

Christine spots the two journals on the credenza. She picks them  
up.

CHRISTINE  
And what about these? Who gets these?

Leslie gets up from the couch. She walks over to Christine.

LESLIE  
(to Christine)  
Give them to me.  
(...)  
Chris, come on. Let me have them.

Christine lets them go. Leslie takes them gently.

LESLIE  
They're not ours.

Leslie tosses the journals into the garbage.

LESLIE  
They're not ours.

And once more, for the charm:

LESLIE  
They're not ours.

A beat... and then...

BLACKOUT.

END OF PLAY