

(Scattered) Arranged

A play in two acts

By

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Perusal  
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|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| Phillip Edel      | Mid 40's – mid 50's. All about status and appearances.   |
| Estella Edel      | Early 40's. Sweet and supportive, reluctantly takes a backseat to Phillips work. Wants one more child.   |
| June Edel         | Early 20's. Thoughtful if not petulant daughter/sister.  |
| Bruce Edel        | Early 20's. Ignored and feels persecuted by family.  |
| Arthur Edel       | 65+. War vet. Angered by the world and gruff.  |
| Victor Abraham    | Mid 40's – mid 50's. Phil's devoted best friend. Subservient and eager to please.                        |
| Alexander Abraham | Early 20's. In love with June. Canadian. Adopted son to Victor. Well meaning but clueless.               |
| Amanda Leaf       | Early-mid 30's. Attractive and a touch vapid. Eye candy/girlfriend for Victor that he barely holds onto. |
| Lucinda Lopez.    | Early – mid 20's. Latina. Bohemian painter who likes Bruce.  |

ACT I

|              |                        |                          |
|--------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Act 1</b> |                        |                          |
| Scene 1      | The Edel's living room | Friday. Early evening    |
| Scene 2      | Bruce's Room           | A few hours later        |
| Scene 3      | Edel's Living Room     | Saturday. Early morning  |
|              |                        |                          |
| <b>Act 2</b> |                        |                          |
| Scene 1      | Bruce's Room.          | Saturday. Early evening. |
| Scene 2      | Edel's Living Room     | Saturday. Dinnertime     |
| Scene 3      | Edel's Living Room     | Sunday evening.          |

## Act One, Scene One

*(The Edel's living room. Estella has broom in hand and sweeps. Arthur sits in his chair reading. She passes by him – carefully sweeping around him, but cannot go further)*

Estella:

*(Sing song)* Feet, please.

Arthur:

*(Plainly)* No.

Estella:

*(She points)* Crumbs, Art.

Arthur:

*(He points at his leg)* Shrapnel, Estella.

*(He enters into storytelling mode. Estella endures this, having heard it dozens of times)*

They sabotaged our Jeep. We were riding along the morning route and next thing you know – there's a live grenade in the back seat. None of us could fall on it in time. Flipped on a dirt road and the shrapnel all came in our direction. Two broken legs. A dislocated hip. Why, I'm lucky to be alive.

Estella:

*(Aside)* And we're lucky to have you, Art.

*(Estella huffs and continues on elsewhere)*

Art:

You just about done?

Estella:

Almost.

Arthur:

Good. I hate that sound. It's like nails on a chalkboard.

Estella:

I'm sorry, Art. Just trying to make everything pleasant for when Phil gets home. (*Happy with herself*) I've got a special dinner planned.

Arthur:

(*A glimmer of excitement*) Pork chops?

Estella:

(*Gently*) I'm sorry, Art. This is a *personal* dinner for just Philip and I.

Arthur:

You gonna finally kick the bum out?

Estella:

Don't joke! I love Philip. (*Teasing*) You do too-

Arthur:

Barely. (*Cranky*) Don't worry about me.

Estella:

Why don't you head down to the VFW and flirt with Joy. (*Playful*) Doesn't she buy you beer?

Arthur:

That girl looks like she's been kicked ugly by a mule, but she *listens*.

Estella:

Please don't be upset. It's good news. (*Tentative*) It's just the kind of news that needs ...careful delivery.

Arthur:

(*A laugh*) Good luck with that.

(*Bruce enters*)

Bruce:

What's for dinner?

Arthur:

Nothing.

Estella:

Art, that's not true.

*(She crosses to Bruce and hands him a bill from her pocket)*

Here. Order yourself a pizza.

Arthur:

Where's my twenty?

Bruce:

*(Sarcastic)* Made from Mom's kitchen with love.

Arthur:

*(To Bruce)* Ingrate. You don't even know what pizza tastes like. Back when I was stationed in Italy –

Bruce:

Stop. It's bad enough Mom and Dad make me go pick you up from that sad, smelly bar once you're drunk, but I have to hear these stories *all* the way home.

Arthur:

*(Rising above him)* When I was your age, I defused landmines! When I was eighteen, I'd already bedded half a dozen girls –

Estella:

Art!

Bruce:

*(Barely fighting back)* I've got a.... girlfriend.

Arthur:

Sure you do. Even if you did, you wouldn't know what to do with one, Sport. Would you?

Bruce:

I'm repressing that!

*(He puts on his headphones in his classic 'repression mode' and closes his eyes, listening to music.)*

I hate this family! When's Dad getting home? He'll put you in a home for talking to me like that.

Arthur:

Not a chance. *(Indicating Estella)* Besides, *she's* got a special dinner with your father.

Bruce:

*(Honest)* Dad? Why?

Estella:

Enough. If you have nothing to contribute, than either give me a hand or scoot.

Bruce:

Later.

Arthur:

Early bird special.

*(They start to exit in opposite directions. June enters excitedly with Alexander following)*

June:

Hi Mom! Guess who is having the *best* day of her life!?

Estella:

Well that's refreshing, June. *(To Arthur and Bruce)* Better than you two mopes.

Alexander:

*(Nervous)* Hi, Mrs. Edel. You look lovely today.

Estella:

Hello, Alexander.

*(He looks nervously to Estella for reassurance and then to Arthur. He does a terrible salute)*

Alexander:

Sir.

Estella:

*(Quietly)* Oh dear.

Arthur:

Are you enlisted young man?

Alexander:

No, sir.

Arthur:

You're originally from Vancouver. Isn't that right, son? Were you in the RCMP?

Alexander:

No, sir.

Estella:

Be kind, Arthur.

Arthur:

I am. Since, you aren't a Mountie or a military man... *(Explodes)* I never want to see you salute again!

Bruce:

*(Laughing)* He didn't know any better, Gramps!

Arthur:

Next time I see you... if that pointer finger even touches your brow, you'll lose it. Understand, Canuck?

*(Arthur starts to exit again)*

June:

Where are you going, Gramps?

Arthur/Bruce (together):

VFW.

June:

I was hoping you could stick around. I've got...good news...of sorts and I was hoping I could share it with everyone. Now, will you be there or not?

Arthur:

*(Indicating Estella)* I'm afraid you'll have to get in line.

June:

What is he talking about, Mom?

*(Estella hands June a couple of bills)*

Estella:

*(Upbeat)* Why don't you and Alexander have a nice date tonight and share your news with us tomorrow instead?

June:

Ew. No, Mom. We are not dating! He just seems to think we are. And that he can follow me everywhere.

Bruce:

*(Whining)* How much money did she get?

Arthur:

You going to repress that too, Nancy?



Estella:

Art!

June:

Mom! My news can't wait!

Estella:

*(More serious)* Mine either. What's yours?

June:

It's a surprise.

Estella:

*(Cool)* Same here.

*(Estella and June have a stare down of sorts)*

June:

*(Barely keeping emotion in)* Guess who's having the worst day of her life?

*(She exits in a hurry. Alexander chases after her dutifully. Bruce and Arthur start to exit)*

Estella:

*(Angry)* Hold it! *(She rants)* You two are family. You've done nothing but exude nastiness to each other ever since Arthur moved in here. Bruce, I know it's a tough adjustment but your Grandfather deserves your respect and love no matter what. And Arthur, you know we love you. We didn't want to see you bored and stagnant in some facility, but this is Bruce's home too. He's a good boy. And both of you – all I asked for was one night where I could have dinner with Phil and you act like martyrs tossed to the street. I deserve a break too. You two are going to start getting along. *(Sighs)* I'm going to check on June.

*(She exits. Bruce and Arthur stand still avoiding eye contact. Arthur crosses and claps Bruce on the arm as he passes. Bruce acknowledges this and exits. Philip and Victor enter. Victor excitedly rambles never once stopping despite his interruptions)*

Victor:

*(Excitedly)* I can't believe you called him out on that! You should've seen the look on his face! Right in the middle of the merger meeting. That jerk had the audacity to stand up and say. *(Mocking voice)* "Do you know who I am?" And you, without even lifting your eyes from the table said, "Yes, yes I do." He didn't know *what* to think!

And you say, “You’re Bob Miller. Played fullback for Canton back in ’78. I stopped you short on the goal line in the state title game with a few seconds left on the clock. Sure, buddy. I know *exactly* who you are, but please tell me *exactly* how that’s pertinent to me buying out your company”. He just sat there. Eyes wide open, mouth wide open. Didn’t know what to do. You finally look up, smile, sign the buy out, and walk out of the room. (*Happy explosion*) Classic! What a day.

Philip:

It’s not over yet, Vic.

Victor:

What do you mean?

Philip:

Tomorrow is June 18<sup>th</sup>. (*Beat – Victor doesn’t get it*) June’s eighteenth birthday.

Victor:

(*Quick realization*) Oh my God!

Philip:

(*Annoyed*) You told Amanda to be here at seven. Right?

Victor:

(*Nervous*) I’m sorry, Phil. Totally slipped my mind! Is it too late?

Philip:

(*Sigh*) Call her.

Victor:

I’m such an idiot, Phil. You know this is important to me too, right?

Philip:

(*Sighs*) I do, Vic.

(*Victor pulls out his phone and quickly dials. He smiles at Philip for reassurance*)

Victor:

*(Into phone)* Hey baby, it's me. Look, I know this is short notice but Phil and Estella asked us over for dinner tonight. *(Beat)* I don't know – now? *(Sighs)* Just tell the girls you'll meet them another night. Sure, I'll pay. What do you mean you've got nothing to wear? You've got a walk-in closet full of clothes.

Philip:

*(A grin)* Tell her to wear that short red dress.

Victor:

*(Pause for a moment)* How about that red dress of yours? You know – the one you wore on our vacation? *(Sheepish)* Please.

*(Philip snatches the phone)*

Philip:

*(Charmingly)* Amanda, I'm so sorry for the short notice. I was chatting with the wife and she feels remiss about not seeing you guys often enough. Felt so bad, I think she made some of that peach cobbler you like so much. Sure. Bring over what you have – we'll call it a pot luck. What do you say? *(He smiles)* Great. I'll tell him. Oh, and bring Alex. Bye bye.

Victor:

*(Earnest)* Sorry, Phil.

Philip:

*(Calm)* Don't worry, buddy.

Victor:

Why'd you ask her to wear that?

Philip:

You deserve the best. You two have been dating for how long?

Victor:

Nine months.

Philip:

*(Heavily)* It's not easy to raise a child alone.

Victor:

*(Relieved)* Right. *(Beat)* I miss Becky every day.

Philip:

There's no denying she was a good looking gal, Victor. *(With a wry smile)* Not all of us could land a cheerleader, either.

Victor:

*(Abashed)* Phil...

Philip:

*(Conceding)* I know. I know. It wasn't your fault. You just looked so darn cute out on the field... crumpled under the linebacker....leg twisted a few different ways. Who knew Becky liked a guy who could cry?

Victor:

*(Ounce of courage)* Just a minute, Phil!

*(Philip raises a finger for him to wait and dials into his phone)*

Philip:

*(Whispers)* Just a second, Vic. I'm on hold. Something you said reminded me to check my account balance with the bank. Wonderful automated system they've got. Beautiful hold music too. I think its Vivaldi. You'd probably know better, much more refined tastes than me.

*(He hands the phone to Vic who begrudgingly takes it. He listens and hands it back)*

Victor:

*(Mutters)* Concerto for Strings in D minor.

Philip:

Dance with me, Vic. It's beautiful.

*(Phil does a classical/waltz dance around the room. Vic looks at his feet)*

*(Into phone)* Oh hello. Philip Edel here. 4260. Yep, that's me. Savings account. That much? So many zeros I just go cross eyed! Really? No, you've been a tremendous help. Have a good weekend!

*(He hangs up the phone and dials again)*

Hang on. *(He dials)* Philip Edel. Could you please send my father back here? Yep. Arthur – doesn't shut up. You got it. I'll pay. *(A smile)* Now. What were we talking about? You didn't think I was serious about Becky? You landed her fair and square, buddy. Honestly.

Victor:

*(Relieved)* Of course. Thanks, Phil. *(Nervous)* Do you think Estella will go along with our plan?

Philip:

This is a long standing pact, Victor. As the men of our respective households, it's our duty to lead the family into greatness in the best way we know how. As best friends, we swore on blood and brotherhood that this was the only way.

Victor:

I know. You know that Alex isn't really um... our birth son-

Philip:

*(Interrupting)* Shut up. Vic, this is the life we wanted. Working side by side in a great office –

Victor:

*(Quietly)* You're my boss.

Phillip:

Neighbors. Best friends.

Victor:

*(Hopeful)* Best friends.

Philip:

Sure, pal. And we're about to take things to the next level.

*(Estella enters and excitedly walks to Philip)*

Estella:

Philip! What a day I've had, the kids are just off the wall and your *dear* father –

Philip:

It's gotta wait, honey. We need to set three more places at the dinner table. We've got some big news to share with both families.

Estella:

So do I, Phil. I've already sent your Dad off to the bar, gave the kids money for dinner, and ... I need it to be just us.

Philip:

Well, tell them to hang onto the money until later. Dad's on his way back. *This* is important.

Estella:

Phil, please!

Philip:

Don't worry, we'll get to your news too.

*(June and Alexander enter. Bruce tails behind)*

June:

*(Boldly/snide to Estella)* Fine, Mother. We're going out. We're going to Del Carmen's and ordering the best steaks on the menu.

Alexander:

*(Excited)* We are?!

June:

*(To Alexander)* It is *not* a date.

Philip:

No, you're not going.

Bruce:

What? They get steak and I get a stupid pizza?

Philip:

Be quiet. Everyone's staying right here. Vic and I have important news.

June:

So do I!

Alexander:

I think this is the most eventful house I've ever been in.

*(Amanda enters. She has a few trays of food)*

Philip:

What's for dinner anyways?

Estella:

*(Nervous)* Good question. I was just planning on it being the two of us.

Amanda:

No need to fear. I can help! *(Taking control)* Vic, put on the table. Estella, this can be microwaved – 3 minutes on high. June, help your mother and set the table.

*(Victor and Estella exit. June and Alexander begrudgingly start to set the table)*

And Bruce. I brought your favorite. Shrimp cocktail!

Bruce:

I hate shrimp. I *hate* shrimp. You do this every time! What part of 'I'm allergic to seafood and even if I weren't, I'd rather vomit than eat something that swims in its own waste' – don't you seem to get? Have you ever seen me physically *eat* the shrimp?

Amanda:

No.

Bruce:

Did I ever tell you face to face that I like shrimp?

Amanda:

No.

Bruce:

*(Eruption)* So what is wrong with you?!

*(He tosses on his headphones in 'repression mode' and exits to the kitchen. Arthur enters)*

Arthur:

*(To Philip)* You owe me ten bucks for the taxi. This has better be important.

*(All the family members re-enter from the kitchen. Estella pulls Philip to the side)*

Estella:

Can I talk with you a moment, Phil? Please.

Philip:

Just a second, everyone. What's so important?

Estella:

I didn't want to tell you like this. As you probably don't know, this year is my fortieth birthday. It's a big milestone one. I don't necessarily look or feel old...this is where you agree.

Philip:

Right! Not too old.

Estella:

Thanks...but it's when the body starts to change internally. *(Stammering a bit)* This is the age when your body starts to lag in terms of what it can and cannot support. I had my doctor's appointment today.

Philip:

Everything all right?

Estella:

Picture of health.

Philip:

Great!

*(He kisses her quickly and makes a move to pass by. She stops him)*



Estella:

Doctor Schwartz said if we felt up to it, I have the green light for one more baby. (*Rushing in case he overreacts*) I know we haven't talked about it that much, but I'm ready.

Philip:

I don't now, Stel. Kids are both off to college next year. I have big plans for those rooms.

Estella:

We'll never get another chance. Dinner didn't go quite as I planned, but I was thinking... maybe tonight we could go for a drive...pull into a B&B off the interstate... what do you say?

Philip:

Can't. Golf tournament starts at noon tomorrow. I've got to get *some* sleep. Especially since I'll be the one shooting a 65. (*To Vic*) Isn't that right, Vic? Don't worry honey, we'll talk more about this baby nonsense when we get back.

(*He gives her a familiar peck and crosses to the table*)

June:

Would *anyone* care to hear the news I've been holding in since this morning?

Estella:

(*Quietly*) Go ahead, love.

June:

My news was that Darren Riley asked me to prom. I said yes. I love him and I'm going to marry him. He is the most beautiful, amazing, man I could ever imagine in this world.

Philip:

You're not going with Darren.

June:

Excuse me?

Philip:

Did I stutter? The answer is no.

June:

Why not?

Philip:

Nothing against you, dear. I have no doubts that Darren is everything you've mentioned. The answer is simple.

Victor:

*(Not subtle)* Didn't you have something to say, son?

Alexander:

I've got something to say too!

*(Long beat as Alexander looks around lost)*

June and I have come a long way.

June:

What?!

Philip:

Shush.

Alexander:

I met her in my twentieth century English lit class and immediately was attracted by her way with words and sharp mind. Of course I developed an appreciation for her outer beauty as well. Mr. Edel, I have an important question to ask you, sir.

Bruce:

Don't salute.

Arthur:

Ha!

Alexander:

I'd be my honor, sir, if you'd grant me your daughter's hand in marriage?

Estella/Amanda/Bruce/Arthur:

Oh my goodness./So romantic!/Are you kidding me?/Lame.

Arthur:

*(Topping them all)* He's doing it for the green card!

*(A loud argument breaks out in reaction to this. Philip quiets them all)*

Philip:

He is not.

Victor:

Art, he's a U.S citizen.

June:

*(Cool)* I am not marrying *him*.

Philip:

Yes, you are.

Alexander:

He's joking, right? I can't tell.

Amanda:

Me either.

Estella:

You've had your fun, Phil. Come on.

*(Philip and Victor stand together – they recite this by heart)*

Philip:

On July 12<sup>th</sup> of 1978, a pact was made.

Victor:

Best friends from birth bonded together to unite themselves as brothers for all time.

Philip:

They swore upon a piece of parchment

Victor:

Here forth referred to as 'The Edelbraham Pact of 1978'.

Philip:

Upon this pact, they combined their blood, sweat, and spit together to signify their oneness.

Victor:

They decreed that in the instance that one bore a son and the other a daughter, or vice versa, that those children would be destined to be wed.

Philip:

And we as men of the household would arrange it to be so. Tomorrow, June eighteenth, signifies June's eighteenth birthday, the entrance into womanhood –

Bruce:

Gross –

*(Bruce is smacked upside the head by Arthur)*

Philip:

And this wedding will be celebrated one year from tomorrow.

Estella:

*(Blankly)* You're kidding, right?

Victor:

We have spoken.

*(Philip and Victor shake hands. The others look around speechless. June looks to Estella)*

June:

Mother, say something to him!

Estella:

*(To Amanda)* They're kidding, right?

Amanda:

*(Upbeat)* You boys. Who wants coffee?

June:

*(To Philip)* I hate you!

*(Chaos ensues – she is followed off by Alexander)*

Estella:

I can't believe you two would hide this.

*(Estella exits quickly after June - Amanda follows her)*

Amanda:

Wait – they weren't kidding? *(To Alexander)* You knew about this?

Alexander:

I love her!

Bruce:

Will everyone just shut up?

*(He goes into 'repression mode' and exits. Philip sits calmly)*

Alexander:

*(Nervously)* I should go check on my fiancé.

*(Long beat as Arthur, Philip, and Victor sit together taking it all in)*

Philip:

Good work, Vic.

Victor:

Thanks, Phil. *(A laugh)* Just like we imagined...right?

Philip:

Right.

Arthur:

Nice work, idiot.

*(Philip is surprised but pretends not to be hurt. Black out)*

### **Act One, Scene Two**

*(Lights up on Bruce as he is playing a war video game. He is clearly into it and yells interjections towards his defeated enemy. There is a knock at his door. He tries to ignore it, but frustrated, pauses the game and stands to unlock the door. Arthur sits on his couch. Bruce ignores him and resumes playing. Over the following dialogue, he keeps playing and avoids eye contact)*

Arthur:

What's this nonsense?

Bruce:

It's called 'PFC'. It's only the best first person shooter game ever created. *(Beat)* PFC stands for-

Arthur:

Private First Class. I'm fully aware of that. So what do you do?

Bruce:

Why do you care?

Arthur:

*(Sighs)* Been a rough night. Your mother wants us to get along. I'm trying.

Bruce:

Okay, if you're going to watch, there are a few rules. One, respect the dude seat.

Arthur:

The what?

Bruce:

The dude seat. It's like when you go to a movie with a buddy and the row is empty. You keep the seat open in between you.

Arthur:

Is that to lessen the desire to hold hands?

Bruce:

Funny. Rule number two. No old war stories. This game takes a lot of concentration. Agreed?

Arthur:

*(Sighs)* Fine.

Bruce:

Basically, you move your way up to the ranks to General. You start off in boot camp and have to master the basic weapons.

Arthur:

*(Fondly)* I miss my Browning Automatic.

Bruce:

What did I say?

Arthur:

Sorry. Carry on.

Bruce:

So at first you do the grunt work – infantry, raids, front line defense, recon missions, but then you start calling the shots and sending the troops all over the globe.

Arthur:

I see. And what rank are you now?

Bruce:

I'm a First Sergeant. Only took me two weeks. See the symbol in the upper right hand corner?

Arthur:

You know, it took me five years to become a Second Lieutenant.

Bruce:

*(Sarcastic)* I know, Gramps. Only heard that story ten times this year.

Arthur:

Watch out. Sniper's got you in his sights. (*Teasing*) Where is he? Where is he? Too late.

(*Bruce throws the controller*)

Bruce:

That was your fault!

Arthur:

It's not realistic. Know what happens if you get shot like that in *real* life?

Bruce:

I don't care! It's a game, Gramps. I'm not in the military and I thank God every day that I never will be.

Arthur:

Glad to hear it. You certainly don't have what it takes. Constantly playing the 'poor little boy' card and being the victim to everything that happens to you in this world. Know that basic training you clicked through on your game? In reality, you'd be face down in the mud, crying for your Mama by the time midnight struck on day one. But no, you'll go off to your pretty little liberal arts college. I'm sure you'll make a difference in this world.

(*Arthur goes to Bruce's video game machine and clicks a button. The disc pops out*)

Bruce:

What are you doing?

Arthur:

Doing you a favor.

(*Arthur tosses the disc down and stomps on it*)

Bruce:

I can't believe you did that. That game cost me fifty dollars! I am so going to repress-

Arthur:

(*Arthur tosses his headphones*) Here's your headphones, *soldier*.



*(Bruce catches them and storms off. Arthur sits quietly. He looks at the game and regrets his action – taking out a handkerchief and drying it off. He gives up and tosses it aside, laying down on the couch. He closes his eyes. A knock at the window. He doesn't stir. A knock again. Lucy enters quietly – not seeing Arthur)*

Lucy:

*(Whisper)* Bruce? Are you in here?

Arthur:

*(Without moving)* Did Zapata send you? Stop right there. I'm unarmed, but I'll have you know I killed a man in combat with nothing more than a pair of shoe laces and a pencil.

Lucy:

*(Scoff)* No, you didn't.

Arthur:

Excuse me?

Lucy:

I know who you are.

Arthur:

That's wonderful, darling, but I can't say the same.

*(Lucy extends her hand)*

Lucy:

Lucinda Lopez. Bruce's girlfriend –

Arthur:

You're kidding? What've you heard about me?

Lucy:

Let's see. Big grumpy teddy bear with a heart of gold. Tells lots of long winded stories about the war. And arguably, one of the only tolerable people under this roof. Or so Bruce tells me.

Arthur:

Sounds about right. *(Beat)* Haven't really seen you around here.

Lucy:

Bruce says that your family is insane and he's trying to protect me. It's kind of sweet in a way. I usually sneak up here at night. There's a ladder out back.

Arthur:

Noted. And how long have you been doing this?

Lucy:

A few months.

Arthur:

You ever consider a career in the special ops?

Lucy:

*(Laughs)* No thanks. *(Indicating herself)* Pacifist. We don't always meet here. Sometimes he'll come to my exhibits. That's where we met actually. His English class had some requirement where they had to review several artistic events happening in town. I guess he figured it was better than being stuck in some ballet. It was cute – he just kind of wandered around scratching his head. I walked up to him and asked him if he needed any help, and he simply said "How do I write about a stupid yellow box with a stupider blue one on the inside? I have more complex things on my fridge!" I took the time to explain some of the more...interpretational ways of modern art. We kind of hit it off.

Arthur:

*(Skeptical)* An artist, huh?

Lucy:

Sculptor, painter, free thinker, poet, musician, awful singer – all wrapped up in one.

Arthur:

Please don't tell me you're a vegetarian?

Lucy:

*(Giggles)* I eat meat. Not every day though. *(Fake)* Otherwise I'll get bloated and fat and no man will ever want to marry me!

Arthur:

I like you.

Lucy:

Likewise. So, where's 'trouble?'

Arthur:

*(A bit embarrassed)* It's been an eventful day.

*(Bruce enters.)*

Bruce:

*(Shocked for a moment)* You've met. What've you two been up to? Hanging out and talking about how big of a jerk he is?

Lucy:

Zip it. He probably did you favor. Did you study for your final on Monday?

*(Bruce avoids her eyes and murmurs)*

There you go.

Arthur:

*(Gritting through this)* I'm sorry, Bruce. You know how I get about those things. They make it seem like bullets don't make an impact. In those games soldiers just pop right back up after they're gunned down, when the real ones left families alone and starving. Stars and medals are handed out like candy and there's no rhyme or reason to the attack and defense. No strategy. No respect to those who dedicated their lives to the service. It hurts...but I should know better. It's just a silly game. If I can get a ride to the mall tomorrow, I'll buy you a new one. I'm sorry.

Lucy:

I'll drive!

Arthur:

Problem solved. Now, I'll get out of your hair. Enjoy your night, kids.

Lucy:

Come here.

*(Arthur is a bit taken back. Lucy gives him a big hug. He happily reciprocates and then exits)*

Bruce:

Where are we going tonight?

*(Lucy hands him flash cards)*

Lucy, I'm going to be fine for my final. Promise. Let's go out.

Lucy:

*(Fake pout)* Took me a lot of time to make those flash cards.

Bruce:

I appreciate it. I do –

*(Lucy crosses and locks the door)*

Lucy:

Kisses for correct answers.

*(He crosses over to her for a kiss as the lights dim.)*

And what about the all of the wrong answers I get?

Lucy:

Spoken word poetry night at the Albino Elephant Café.

Bruce:

Crap.

*(Lucy giggles. End of Scene)*

### **Act One, Scene Three**

*(The next morning. Everything is momentarily quiet. Philip jogs in wearing his golf outfit –A knock at the door. He answers the door to find Victor in the same)*

Philip:

*(Indicating the kitchen)* Coffee?

*(Victor nods and Philip exits. Victor awkwardly sits. June enters and averts her eyes)*

Victor:

Happy birthday, June.

June:

*(Sweet as pie)* Thank you, Mr. Abraham. Go die in a fire.

*(Estella enters)*

Estella:

*(Surprised)* Victor. Are you two still going golfing today?!

*(Philip enters with a thermos of coffee)*

Philip:

We'll be back in plenty of time for June's party. *(Beat)* What time is that anyways?

Estella:

If you step out that door, you can consider yourself uninvited to the party.

Philip:

It's my little girl's eighteenth birthday.

June:

What did you get me? I mean, other than a death sentence.

Philip:

It's a surprise.

*(Amanda enters with Alexander. He, too, is dressed to go golfing)*

Amanda:

*(To Victor)* Silly. You almost forgot your sun block.

*(She hands him a bottle)*

Alexander:

*(Quietly)* And me.

Amanda:

*(To Estella)* He'd be a lobster by noon.

Estella:

You're okay with them going after everything last night?

Amanda:

I can help you get ready for the party.

Estella:

That's not the point!

Alexander:

Happy birthday, June.

June:

*(Nose in the air)* Do I know you?

Philip:

*(Building)* Enough! We're golfing, you're having this party, and you're going to have a good time. I'm the father, you're the kid; and that's the end of that.

June:

No, it's not. *(To everyone)* You know what? These last twelve hours have been the worst of my life. I was so happy. Had a date to prom. Big birthday coming up. And then out of the blue my *family* decides they know how I should live my life without...I don't know... *asking* their daughter. Birthday cancelled.

*(She storms off – Alexander chases after her)*

Alexander:

June, wait!

Estella:

So, what's it going to be? Tournament or party? I think you should go. *(Building)* Heck, make a weekend out of it. We'll see you Monday.

*(She crosses and opens the door for them to leave, but stands in the way)*

Philip:

*(Obstinate)* Okay. We will.

Estella:

Before you go, I just wanted to give you some things to think about while you're off having fun. For starters, I don't care how long you two have been best buddies, you are not dictating June's wedding nor her birthday. You are her father and have every chance to speak your *opinion*, but that is it. I honestly can't decide who you've hurt more this weekend, June or me. At the very least, you have a chance to make it up to her. I'm not even talking about some lavish birthday present, just come to her party and tell her you were wrong. That's it.

Philip:

*(Skeptical)* That's it?

Estella:

As far as you and I go...I can't make you have another child. You have to want it.

Philip:

*(Trying to charm)* Don't you remember all of those diapers? The crying? The children's cartoon songs that stay in your head for days!

Estella:

I miss them.

Philip:

A vacation. When was the last time you and I had a nice, quiet vacation alone? How about once the kids graduate, we go on a cruise? We'll have time to unwind and fully talk about this. *(Last ditch)* Stel, close your eyes. Picture a world where Bruce and June are off to school. Maybe Dad finds his way back into that home if things don't shape up. I'm at a place where I can reduce my hours or even retire if I wanted. We could have everything – free time to travel, sight see, fix this place up right. But we can do it at our own pace. No teenagers and hormones running amok. Just you and me.

Estella:

*(Emotional)* Close your eyes, Phil. Picture a world where we have peace, quiet, and stability for once. Imagine us not being children having children. We can now avoid pulling out our hair and that feeling that we were aging years by the day. Instead, having the financial stability to raise a child on our terms. Not scraping by and wondering where we'd find the money for that next box of diapers. Of course, June and Bruce turned out beautifully, but we'd have the comfort to raise a child right – without a worry or a care. I love you, Phil.

Phil:

I love you too, Stel.

*(They kiss)*

We'll talk later.

*(Estella steps back, heartbroken. She nods)*

Estella:

Right.

*(Estella picks up their thermos and tackle box and throws them violently out the door. From here she adopts a sweet/Stepford tone to contradict her anger)*

Estella:

I hope you boys truly get to relax. No worries. No commitments. No cares

Philip:

*(Placating)* We don't have to go.

Estella:

Have fun!

*(She nudges Victor and Philip out the door. Estella holds up his keys and slams the door, locking it. She pockets them and sits on the couch)*

Amanda:

Too early for a drink?

Estella:

Oh good. You're not totally oblivious.

*(The guys knock on the door and yell)*

Philip/Victor *(O.S.)*

Come on!/Let us in!/This is ridiculous/Please?!

Estella:

Top shelf of the pantry. Gin with ice, please. Help yourself.

*(Amanda exits – The phone rings. Estella lays her head back and closes her eyes. Amanda enters with the drinks)*



Amanda:

Want me to get that?

Estella:

Nope.

*(Amanda hands her the drink and sits, sipping her own. The ringing stops)*

Thank you. *(Beat)* So when did you rescind your womanhood?

Amanda:

Excuse me?

Estella:

At least you're not married yet. There's still hope for you.

Amanda:

Not all men are the same.

Estella:

No. That's where you're right. Some are leaders. And some are followers.

Amanda:

If you feel the need to keep attacking Victor, then I'm leaving.

Estella:

*(Building)* You were right there! You saw what he did! How would you feel? Within a few brief moments, the man who is *supposed* to be the love of your life, promises away your daughter and thwarts any discussion of having a third child which *he* agreed to.

Amanda:

*(Edge)* And you're accusing me of 'rescinding my womanhood'? Please.

*(Estella is enraged and stands quickly. She turns to say something to Amanda and stops. She sits, crumples, and starts to cry)*

Estella:

You're right. This isn't about you. Or Victor for the most part. It's my fault.

Amanda:

Don't be ridiculous. None of us knew about the whole arranged marriage thing except for Victor, Phil, and Alexander. And you can't blame him. Poor kid. June is such a doll.

Estella:

I know. God, this is so embarrassing. I think I may have put a little too much faith into Phil's promise for baby three.

Amanda:

Why?

Estella:

He was drunk. The kids were both out for the night and we fired up the hot tub. He'd been drinking since two. They had had some meeting at work where they had to woo these big wigs and took them to some oak whiskey bar. I opened the door and got a huge kiss – he seemed different, but it was nice. So, later we're floating around and I get the courage to broach the subject. He looked me square in the eyes and said 'Sure, baby. Anything for you.' And that was the last time we talked about it. I've tried since, but obviously with no luck. The unattainable talk.

*(Estella gives a small laugh and finishes her drink. She stands and grabs Amanda's glass. She exits to the kitchen. Amanda sees a photo frame and glances at it. She picks it up, closely analyzing. Estella re-enters and hands her the drink)*

Amanda:

Who are these people?

Estella:

Why, that's 'family two'. Read the caption.

Amanda:

*(Reads)* "To be replaced with family photo."

Estella:

I *meant* to put a picture of us in there. They just looked so... *perfect*. The guy, I call him Dan, with that gorgeous salt and pepper hair and dimples. The gal, she's Betty, with zero crow's feet mysterious gray eyes, and the carefully bundled infant that they're all smiling towards. And then there's the twins, Craig and Kelly, with their gorgeous long blonde hair and impish smiles that just complete it. For a while, it was my vision of what we needed to be. *(Aside)* I know they're all models who probably went home to their own worlds of dysfunction, but in my mind they ate dinner together, had game nights, and took trips together. I hoped someone would notice.

Amanda:

*(Gently)* It's a nice dream.

Estella:

Thanks. *(Beat)* So, how does one live life in the shadow of the immortal Becky? And how does it feel that your potential future stepchildren are only, what, fifteen years younger than you? How old are you anyways? You can answer one at a time. I've got *all* day. And another bottle of gin hidden in the pantry.

Amanda:

Victor doesn't really talk about Becky.

Estella:

*(Sarcastic)* Philip sure does.

Amanda:

I know the essentials. They both dated her at some point in high school, she apparently had a heart and fell for Victor when he got hurt and really needed her as opposed to Philip who just wanted her. She married Victor out of high school, they adopted Alexander, and then she was gone. Not going to lie, sometimes it gets irritating. I'll hear them blabbing late at night and eventually Philip will call her 'the one who got away' Victor will get upset, Philip will apologize, and repeat it a few weeks later.

Estella:

*(Soberly)* Really?

Amanda:

It's nothing. Just drunk boys talking.

Estella:

Spoken like a true girlfriend.

Amanda:

I'll take your word on that one. And sure, it's awkward that Alexander is young enough to be my little brother, but he's a good kid. I think he's just happy to get some attention and guidance. I love Victor. I wish he'd grow a pair, but he treats me right. He's thoughtful. He raised a good boy. That's a lot more than you can say for most guys out there my age. And I'm thirty two.

Estella:

I'd have guessed under thirty – still nice and perky.

*(Estella smacks her head and finishes her drink)*

Refill!

*(Estella runs off to the kitchen. Philip and Victor enter from upstairs gear – Bruce follows them)*

Bruce:

Mom! They need to put the ladder back up.

Amanda:

Your mom's in the kitchen. Is that how you boys got in?

*(Estella re-enters and stops in her tracks, hiding her drink behind her back)*

Philip:

Forced to climb back into my own house with a ladder. Insulting and insane.

Estella:

Get out.

Victor:

Phil, let's just grab the keys and go.

Philip:

We're going to stay right here until the party. Happy?

*(Philip tosses the cushions off the couch and tosses his cooler on it)*

Come on, Victor. Join me.

*(Victor eyes the women and shamefully sits with him)*

Estella:

*(Tired)* Why don't you just go to the stupid course?

Philip:

You don't want us to have any fun. So, we'll just sit right here until the birthday party.

Amanda:

There isn't going to be a party.

Bruce:

Why not?

Estella:

June got upset because your father was going to skip it to go golfing.

Bruce:

Does this mean there won't be cake and ice cream?

Estella:

Afraid so.

Victor:

*(Begging)* Let's go.

*(Bruce crosses to Philip. He takes off Philip's golf hat and throws it as far as he can)*

Philip:

What's the big idea?

Bruce:

You're acting like a child.

Estella:

*(Sarcastic)* Don't talk to your father that way.

Philip:

*(Angry)* Listen to your mother! *(To Estella)* Wait – you meant that, right?

Amanda:

We're going home, Victor.

*(Victor is torn. He starts to stand but is eyed down by Philip)*

Estella:

Decision made. Bravo. *(To Amanda)* Let's go.

*(Estella and Amanda exit)*

Philip:

*(To Victor)* Good decision, best buddy.

Victor:

She's going to be so mad.

Philip:

*(To Bruce)* If you feel like being a big man, how about an apology? Then you can come and join the men.

Bruce:

Mr. Abraham, have you ever heard of 'Tablex'?

Philip:

*(Angry growl)* That is none of your business! *(To Victor)* Don't-

Bruce:

*(Announcer voice)* Scientifically, it means he suffers from what one out of five adult males over the age of forty encounter on a regular basis. See, Dad has a lack of blood flow going from –

Philip:

Enough!

Bruce:

In layman's terms, it's a "male enhancement medication."

Philip:

*(Erupts)* That's it!

*(Philip lunges towards Bruce. He crashes down hard and sits still. Bruce laughs and walks to the kitchen)*

Victor:

It's nothing to be ashamed of, Phil.

Philip:

Can you just shut up for one minute, please?

Victor:

I mean, Becky wasn't able to –

Philip:

*(Building)* I said - !

Victor:

Got it. Shut up.

Philip:

I miss Becky.

Victor:

*(Touch annoyed)* She was my wife, Phil.

Philip:

*(Edgy)* Pretty darn convenient that you took that hit on the field. She and I were planning on going out that night.

Victor:

You think I broke my leg on purpose?!

Philip:

Who can tell? You sure won though.

Victor:

I should go.

Philip:

*(Quickly)* I'm sorry, Vic. Stay. We've got things to talk about.

Victor:

*(Begrudgingly)* Such as?

*(Philip reaches into his shirt pocket and pulls out a check)*

*(Embarrassed)* Phil.

Philip:

Part of the agreement, Vic. A dowry is a traditional completion of this sort of familial contract. Why, if we were in colonial times, I'd be backing up the wagon to give you sugar, tobacco, and cotton.

Victor:

You could just give me the corner office.

Philip:

Nope. Can't mix family and business.

*(Philip tucks it into Victor's shirt pocket and extends his hand. They shake)*

Besides, this might help you afford a new ring for Amanda

*(Victor shushes him and looks around)*

Victor:

*(Stage whisper)* There is nothing wrong with my mother's wedding ring.

Philip:

Let me see it again.

*(Victor looks around and pulls out a chain that's around his neck and shows it to Philip – seeking approval)*

Cute.

*(Victor, hurt, tucks it back in)*

Victor:

*(Laughs)* You're insane if you think the women are going to agree to this.



Philip:

You'll see.

*(Alexander enters and curiously watches)*

Alexander:

Room for one more?

Victor:

Take my seat, son. I've got to use the bathroom.

*(Victor and Alexander exchange places. Victor exits. Philip is clearly intoxicated)*

Philip:

Your old man thinks our 'deal' won't go through. Crazy, huh?

Alexander:

Honestly sir, I love June and all, but why would I want to be married to someone who hates me?

Philip:

So young and pure. You'll learn that hate wavers. Just like love. You're lucky, son. Not everyone gets what they want. Others, like me, have to work hard to keep those important people and things within reach. Take your mother, for instance. You never really got to know her, huh?

Alexander:

You mean, Becky? No, sir.

Philip:

She was a ten. Perfection. Even though your father eventually let go of her, I haven't followed the same path. Want in on a secret?

Alexander:

No.

Philip:

I could have never arranged this whole deal with June and yourself if I'd told the big picture to your Dad. Sometimes, you just have to let people know as much as they *need* to know to get ahead.

Sure, he and I go way back. He *wants* to think that this marriage is a way to keep us as kindred spirits until death.

Alexander:

Right. And that June and I would fall in love.

Philip:

Whatever.

*(Victor enters but is unseen)*

You're the only remaining manifestation of Becky. Having you married to June means I'll always have a part of her blood in my family. That way, I'll never have to let her go. When the day is done, I've won.

Alexander:

*(Becoming upset)* But I love June.

Philip:

Bonus for you then. Grab another six pack from the kitchen, would you?

*(Bruce, Amanda, and Estella enter from the kitchen)*

Alexander:

*(Explosion)* You're a monster! No wonder everyone hates you.

Victor:

Are you serious, Phil?

Philip:

*(Breezy)* Please. We'll still be friends. You need me.

*(June enters and watches)*

Victor:

I took a risk for you. I wagered my family's honor and respect to unite with yours. Honestly, I thought this pact was silly. We were eighteen, Phil! Headed off to college where I figured we'd both forget about it and laugh some day. When you brought it up again, I thought you were crazy, but figured what the heck. I'm lonely. Alex could use a real family. Estella's more than you deserve. June's a lovely girl. Bruce would be a good stepbrother. It was a risk, but one that we took together.

And then we find out that this arranged marriage business was *all* about some creepy way of keeping my dead wife as part of your family? (*Yelling*) Let her go, you jerk!

Estella:

(*Pale*) Are you serious?

Victor:

There's one inherent problem with your whole equation.

Philip:

(*Exhausted*) What's that, buddy?

Victor:

You don't listen. Everyone, but you, knows that we adopted Alex from Vancouver when he was a baby.

Estella:

We've told you this a dozen times.

Philip:

Huh. How about that? Wedding's off.

Alex:

But I really do love June!

Philip:

It'll never happen, bastard.

Alexander:

I hate you!

*(Alexander dives at Philip. He tackles him off the couch and starts to hit him. Chaos ensues as everyone tries to break them up. Lucy enters and is in awe of what's happening. She tries to get someone's attention)*

Lucy:

Excuse me?

*(Bruce freezes at seeing Lucy. Victor now successfully holds Alexander back. June moves closer to Alexander and can't keep her eyes off of him. )*

Lucy:

Excuse me!

Estella:

Who are you?

Lucy:

Lucy.

*(Long beat)*

Bruce's girlfriend?

Estella:

How long has this been going on?

Lucy:

About three months. I usually sneak in through the ladder out back, but it was gone. I think Bruce was a little worried about me finding you all insane. Listen, I took Arthur to the mall and he asked if we could stop at the VFW. I need a little help getting him in from the car. He might've had a few too many.

*(Philip crosses to the farthest part of the stage and slinks down. Victor and Bruce exit to help Lucy. Alexander sits, still breathing heavily and overwhelmed by what he's done. June still hovers near and gazes at him. Estella and Amanda, break from their stupor and approach Lucy)*

Estella:

Lovely to meet you, dear.

Lucy:

Likewise.

*(Arthur enters with Bruce and Victor holding him up. He staggers forward a bit and stops)*

Arthur:

Happy Birthday, June.

*(Lights fade slowly. End of Act One)*

**Perusal  
Only**