

# **The Orange Marker**

First Draft

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## CHARACTERS

Belinda Traub, a conservative woman, 40 years old

Olivia Traub, Belinda's spirited 16-year-old daughter

Miriam Traub, Belinda's jovial 64-year-old mother

Jeff Testa, Rob Thompson, and Gil Burris, Belinda's suitors

## SETTING

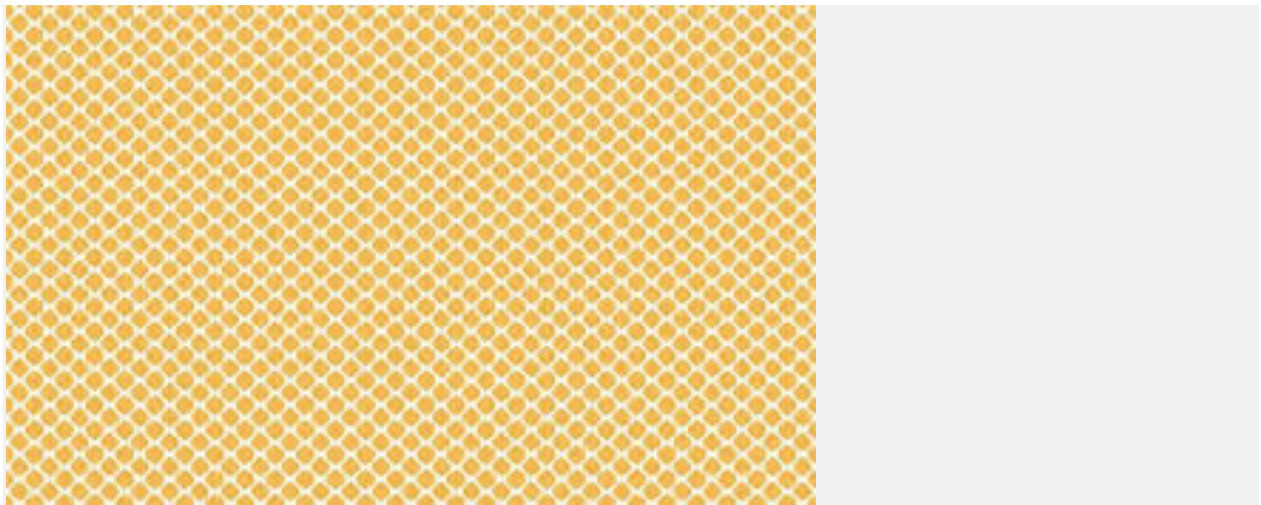
The small apartment where Miriam, Belinda, and Liv abide, modestly.

There is a couch, a coffee table, and a kitchen table in an extended living room, but the kitchen, two bedrooms, and bathrooms are offstage.

If at all possible, try to get yellow wallpaper with white latticework for the back wall.

## TIME

Summer, 1987



## **Liv**

*Alone on a blank stage.*

*Liv presses play on a cassette player.*

*“Take me On” by A-ha plays; Liv dances wildly.*

*Abruptly, she stops dancing.*

*She takes the tape out of its player, unwinds the tape, looks at the audience.*

My mother and I have always had trouble seeing eye to eye.

I just didn't think we were gonna go this far with it.

It's—I—this is what I can remember. Most of it. In pieces, like a Granny square afghan. Not that I crochet. But like I remember. There's just all kinds of patterns, some colors that go together, and some that clash.

I wish we had matched up.

It's a strange thing, clashing with your mother, and not being able to help it.

But I couldn't.

And the truth is, I didn't really want to.

It was the 80's, and I thought I knew everything.

Still do.

Like the way she should've listened, the way she should've considered what was best for me. I wasn't doing that for her, but I was the kid. Kids don't think about that kind of stuff. It's on the parents to do what they can for their kids. Not the other way 'round.

I am right about all this, aren't I?

## **Miriam, Belinda, and Liv**

*Lights up on the apartment.*

*Liv joins her mother and grandmother in the living room.*

*Belinda is sitting between the couch and coffee table, reading a parenting manual.*

*Miriam is sitting at the kitchen table, doing a crossword puzzle from the newspaper.*

*Liv is sitting at the kitchen table, with a large art project spread out all over the table.*

**BELINDA**

Listen to this! (reading) “A good mother gives reasons for her parenting decisions.”

*Liv looks up from her art project.*

**LIV**

Yeah, but—‘Because I’m the mom’ isn’t a reason.

**BELINDA**

It was good enough for a nine-year-old.

**LIV**

Hopefully, I’ve earned an upgrade since then.

**BELINDA**

How about, ‘Because I’m the mom—and then some’—?

*Liv rolls her eyes.*

**MIRIAM**

What’s a five-letter word for community?

**LIV**

Don’t know, Grandma. Try the one across.

**MIRIAM**

‘Haven’t practiced.’ Ah! Rusty.

**LIV**

Good one.

**BELINDA**

Or here’s one. (reading) “Keep your word, no matter what. Be consistent with your word. If you say you’re going to give a punishment, as soon as the child does the behavior that has earned the punishment, give the punishment.”

*Belinda makes a note in the margin of her book.*

LIV  
Too bad I never do anything wrong.

BELINDA  
Hmm.

LIV  
Why do you need a parenting manual anyhow? You're doing fine.

BELINDA  
And why do you think that is?

LIV  
I get it. You've been coached.

BELINDA  
I've learned from the best.

LIV  
Uh huh.

*Liv takes part of her art project over to Belinda to show it to her.*

What do you think?

*Belinda briefly looks up from her book.*

BELINDA  
Too bright.

LIV  
Really?

BELINDA  
Hurts my eyes.

LIV  
(considering) I like it.

BELINDA  
It's more your style.

LIV  
It's a collage.

BELINDA  
It's a mish mash.

LIV  
It's colorful.

BELINDA  
Don't you think it's a bit much?

*Liv takes it over to show Miriam.*

LIV  
Grandma, what do you think?

MIRIAM  
I think it's glorious.

LIV  
Not too showy?

MIRIAM  
I don't see why it would be. (pointing) That's a beautiful shade of orange.

LIV  
(beaming) That's my favorite color.

*Liv retrieves an orange marker from a shoe box filled with art supplies.*

Isn't it the best?

BELINDA  
Too bright. (reading from her manual) "Never overdo it."

LIV  
Well I say it's just enough. Any less, it'd be boring.

BELINDA  
Any more, it'd be the sun.

LIV  
Ooh—tribe!

BELINDA  
What?

LIV  
A five-letter word for community.

MIRIAM

Liv, Honey, that's it!

*Miriam and Liv high five.*

*Miriam writes "tribe" in the crossword as the lights fade.*

## **Miriam, Liv, and Belinda**

*Morning on a different day.*

*Miriam and Liv are sitting at the kitchen table having their morning coffee.  
They are both reading sections of the morning paper.*

LIV

Can I have the funnies?

MIRIAM

Read the international section first. Here.

*Miriam hands Liv the international news section of the paper.*

*Liv reads.*

LIV

Oh no! Says here an American ship, the USS Stark, was hit in the Persian Gulf.

MIRIAM

I know.

LIV

It says thirty-seven men died.

MIRIAM

Terrible.

LIV

One of 'em is even from Indiana. Elkhart. You been there?

MIRIAM

Not recently.

LIV

It's awful.

MIRIAM

War always is.

LIV

Are we at war?

MIRIAM

Aggression I mean.

LIV

It's never good?



MIRIAM  
Never.

LIV  
Got it.

MIRIAM  
(reading domestic news) On the good side, the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that Rotary Clubs have to admit women.

LIV  
Haven't they always?

MIRIAM  
Goodness no.

LIV  
Why not?

MIRIAM  
Because they were started for men.

LIV  
What have we got that men can't join?

MIRIAM  
Nothing.

LIV  
Seriously?

MIRIAM  
Not a thing.

LIV  
You mean it?

MIRIAM  
Well, motherhood. They can't join that.

LIV  
No but I mean clubs.

MIRIAM  
Um, Tupperware parties?

LIV  
I mean something real.

MIRIAM  
Those are real.

LIV  
I mean significant.

MIRIAM  
Tupperware keeps food fresh.

LIV  
I mean, so that women feel as special as men do.

MIRIAM  
Go on now.

LIV  
I mean it.

*Beat.*

I'm going to start one.

MIRIAM  
One what?

LIV  
A club for women. Where men can't join.

MIRIAM  
But the point of the ruling is—that both men and women should be allowed to join clubs.

LIV  
Not this one.

*Pause.*

What? I'm making up for lost time.

*Miriam smiles.*

MIRIAM  
You are now, huh?

*Belinda enters.*

LIV  
Hey, Mom, I'm going to start a women's only club.

BELINDA  
What for?

LIV  
'Cause I can.

BELINDA  
That's silly.

LIV  
But I thought/

BELINDA  
/Women only. What's the good in that?

LIV  
I thought you'd be proud.

BELINDA  
You need men in your life.

LIV  
Dad comes when he/can

BELINDA  
/No, I mean a consistent presence.

LIV  
What for?

BELINDA  
Have you forgotten?

LIV  
I don't think I need that.  
(to both Belinda and Miriam) You're my parents now.

BELINDA  
(tight) Don't talk nonsense.

LIV  
What? You are.

BELINDA  
I didn't think you'd/

LIV  
/There are all kinds of families these days. I like ours.

BELINDA  
But/

LIV  
/Seven years now. This is home.

BELINDA  
It's unnatural.

LIV  
It's HOME.

*Belinda gets flustered, exits to the kitchen.*

What?

MIRIAM  
Couldn't say, Dear. It's fine.

LIV  
Can I have the funnies now?

MIRIAM  
Sure.

*Miriam hands Liv the funnies.  
Liv reads, laughs.*

What?

LIV  
It's Cathy. Says she doesn't wanna have kids.

MIRIAM  
Why is that funny?

LIV  
Just is.

*They sit drinking their coffee and reading their paper in silence.*

**Liv, Belinda, and Miriam**

*Later that same evening.  
Liv is heading off to her bedroom.*

LIV  
G'night, Granny!

MIRIAM  
Good night, Dear.

LIV  
Night, Mom.

BELINDA  
(distractedly) Night.

*Liv exits.*

MIRIAM  
Good night, Sweetheart.

*Miriam starts to exit to her bedroom.*

BELINDA  
Mom? Can I talk to you?

MIRIAM  
Of course, Dear. What is it?

BELINDA  
I think I'm—in some trouble.

MIRIAM  
What kind of trouble?

BELINDA  
Money.

MIRIAM  
Oh, is that all? We've got that covered.

BELINDA  
Not just that.

MIRIAM  
We do alright month-to-month.

BELINDA  
It's not enough.

MIRIAM  
Honey. We both have good jobs. We pay the bills.

BELINDA  
But the loans—from before—

MIRIAM  
When you had Liv?

BELINDA  
And the divorce/

MIRIAM  
/How much/

BELINDA  
/They've gotten out of hand.

MIRIAM  
How much do you need?

BELINDA  
It's not that.  
I've declared bankruptcy.

*Pause.*

MIRIAM  
Without speaking to me first?

BELINDA  
Mom, you know I—  
I can't get us out of this.  
And I don't want you to either.

MIRIAM  
You should've/

BELINDA  
/I'll take whatever consequence there is.

MIRIAM  
But you don't/know.

BELINDA

/And Liv today—saying she doesn't need men—I can't—raise her like that.

MIRIAM

We've been doing alright.

BELINDA

You know what I mean.

MIRIAM

Men don't have all the answers, Dear.

BELINDA

...Dad did.

MIRIAM

Is that what you think?

*Silence.*

You've—decided then?

BELINDA

(looking away) Mmm.

MIRIAM

It's not for me to question then.

Good night, Dear.

BELINDA

Good night.

*Miriam heads toward her room, turning to look at Belinda as she goes.*

*Belinda makes up her bed on the couch.*

*Miriam exits.*

**Belinda, Jeff, Liv, and Miriam**

*Afternoon.*

*Liv is sitting in a nightgown on the couch reading a book.*

*Belinda and Jeff enter. He is carrying a leather-bound book.*

LIV

Mom!

BELINDA

What?

LIV

I'm practically in my underwear!

BELINDA

You're fine.

*Liv grabs an afghan on the couch and covers herself with it.*

LIV

Now I am.

BELINDA

Jeff, this is Liv.

LIV

Olivia.

BELINDA

Liv, this is Jeff.

LIV

(reluctantly) What are you reading?

*She sees that it is the Bible.*

Oh.

JEFF

Oh?

LIV

Most commonly read book in the world. Congrats.

JEFF

You've read it?



LIV  
Not cover-to-cover,/but—

JEFF  
/Then you don't know.

LIV  
I've read enough.  
I can guess the rest.  
Fire and brimstone,/all that—

JEFF  
/You don't know the glory of Heaven.

LIV  
And you do?

JEFF  
Through the word of our Lord, yes.

LIV  
He's not my "lord".

BELINDA  
Liv.

LIV  
What? He's not.

JEFF  
He's the Lord of all.

LIV  
Granny reads me passages.  
It's cool that she's a Christian.  
But it doesn't match my experience.

JEFF  
We must have faith.

LIV  
Must we?  
Mom, who is this guy?

BELINDA  
Jeff and I met at the singles dance.

LIV  
Not a Christian convention?

JEFF  
Catholic, actually.

LIV  
God.

BELINDA  
(terse) On the dance floor.

LIV  
You dance?  
Isn't that against your/

JEFF  
/Let them praise his name with dancing  
and make music to him with timbrel and harp.  
Psalm 149.

LIV  
Like in "Footloose"?  
Mom, are you kidding?

BELINDA  
Now, Liv—

JEFF  
It's alright.  
(to Liv) What do you believe in?

LIV  
I don't really think belief is the point.

JEFF  
Then you are a long way off.

LIV  
You're in OUR home!

JEFF  
God's majesty is everywhere.

LIV  
Oh my God. Mom, seriously.

BELINDA  
Jeff makes some good points....

*Liv gestures toward the Bible.*

LIV  
You don't believe in this stuff anymore than I do!

JEFF  
Belinda?

BELINDA  
(quickly) Yes I do!

LIV  
Since when?

JEFF  
You told me—

BELINDA  
Don't worry.  
I am a Christian.  
And I am interested in becoming a Catholic.

LIV  
What are you talking about?

BELINDA  
I haven't been going to church much lately,/but—

LIV  
/Yeah. Since like EVER.

JEFF  
I think I'd better—

*Jeff starts to go.*

BELINDA  
No!  
You just got here.  
Would you like something to drink?

JEFF  
Belinda, I'm getting up in years. I don't really have time to date—non-believers.

BELINDA  
But we—/

JEFF  
/I'm sorry.

BELINDA  
Can't we talk about this?

*Jeff exits.*

Well, bravo.

LIV  
Don't tell me you were into him.

BELINDA  
We—clicked.

LIV  
Was that before or after you lied about who you are?

BELINDA  
It's none of your business/

LIV  
/None of my—Mom, if I had to convert/

BELINDA  
/I didn't say that yet/

LIV  
Yet!?  
Would you listen to yourself?

BELINDA  
Jeff and I connected. We did.

LIV  
You bring this guy in here, no warning/

BELINDA  
/Get used to it.  
Start reading in your room.  
Or in pants at least.

LIV  
What's going on?

BELINDA  
Nothing.  
I just—I've started looking for, a partner.

LIV  
Even if it means becoming Catholic?

BELINDA  
Even if it means standing on my head and playing the damn flute!

*Silence.*

LIV  
Well then, play on.  
I guess.

## **Belinda and Liv**

*The following Friday night.*

*Liv is on the couch reading a magazine, wearing pajama pants.*

*Belinda enters wearing a dress.*

LIV

Nice dress.

BELINDA

You like it?

LIV

Yeah. Where you headed?

BELINDA

I'm going to the singles dance.

LIV

Again?

BELINDA

What do you mean, again? It's Friday.

LIV

Do you have to go there EVERY Friday night?

BELINDA

Why not?

*Belinda looks at herself in a mirror propped up against the wall.*

You never know when you're going to meet Prince Charming.

LIV

(looking at her magazine) I've heard it happens when you're not trying so hard.

BELINDA

Well. It never happens if you don't try at all.

LIV

Isn't there some bowling team you could join, or some like Canasta night you could play in? A Rotary Club?

BELINDA

I'd rather dance.

LIV  
But it's so obvious.

BELINDA  
Dating does not favor the subtle.

LIV  
No I guess not.

BELINDA  
Do you have something you need to say to me?

LIV  
It's fine. Let's just drop it.

BELINDA  
Drop what?

LIV  
I figure—you have your reasons.

BELINDA  
For what?

LIV  
It's just not how I would do it.

BELINDA  
Oh. Well, you're not dating yet, so/

LIV  
/I'd do it like Grandma.

BELINDA  
She never dates!

LIV  
Exactly. She's not looking for a man.

BELINDA  
She's retirement age.

LIV  
If someone worthwhile came along, I think she'd go for it, but she's not *actively* searching for a man. She/

BELINDA

/Well she was married before/

LIV

/So were you! And you were cool for a while.  
Now every day it's 'find a man this' and 'find a man that'.  
Can't you talk about anything else?

BELINDA

Liv, it's time, that's all.  
I want to get married again,/and—

LIV

/Hold on, you want to get MARRIED?  
Since when?

BELINDA

I don't have to talk to you about this.

LIV

You brought it up.

BELINDA

You're the child.  
I don't have to discuss this with you.

LIV

But if you get married, will we—move out?

BELINDA

We would go wherever we needed to/

LIV

/with some random guy?

BELINDA

No. With someone I love.

LIV

What if I don't love him?

BELINDA

That's not the point.

LIV

That is so lame.



BELINDA  
Yeah well.

LIV  
Oh my God.  
I'm gonna throw up.

BELINDA  
Then go to the bathroom.

LIV  
You know what I mean.  
Why can't you be cool like Granny?  
She's been divorced some twenty years, and she *never* talks about meeting other men.

BELINDA  
Yeah well, she never wanted to meet anyone else.

LIV  
And you did?

BELINDA  
With your father, it was different.

LIV  
Replaceable.

BELINDA  
Broken, from the start. You're just too young to remember/

LIV  
/Don't tell me what I remember!

BELINDA  
Lower your voice this instant!

LIV  
La la la la LA LA!

BELINDA  
I'm leaving. Tell your Grandma I'll be back around ten.

LIV  
You tell her.

BELINDA  
I'm going.

LIV

(putting on a southern lady's accent) You be sure to snag yourself a man. The marrying kind now, ya hear?!

*Belinda puts on her coat.*

BELINDA

We'll talk about this when I get home. When you've calmed down.

LIV

Don't you know? This is me calm.

*Belinda exits.*

*Liv fumes on the couch, alone.*

## **Miriam and Liv**

*Mid-afternoon.*

*Miriam and Liv are sitting at the kitchen table playing gin rummy.  
Miriam draws a card.*

LIV

Where else have you seen?

MIRIAM

I've seen Flagstaff, Honolulu. I've been to New Orleans.

LIV

(eyes wide) You have!?

MIRIAM

Mm hmm.

*Miriam discards.*

LIV

What was it like?

MIRIAM

Well there's always something going on. It's like a nonstop party down there.

LIV

It is? Granny, did you party when you were down there?

MIRIAM

Heavens no. We didn't drink.

*Beat.*

'Course, we didn't sleep either.

*They laugh.*

Your turn.

*Liv draws a card.*

*She lays out her cards.*

LIV

Gin.

MIRIAM  
I didn't see that one coming.

LIV  
(winking at Miriam) I learned from the best.

*Beat.*  
*Miriam collects the cards and shuffles them.*

Grandma?

MIRIAM  
Yes?

LIV  
Why do you think Mom and I are so different?

MIRIAM  
Couldn't say, Dear.

LIV  
No, but I mean like, really different.

MIRIAM  
We're all different, Honey.

LIV  
But sometimes it feels like—I'm not even related to her.

MIRIAM  
You most certainly are.

LIV  
Then why don't I feel like it?

MIRIAM  
Your great-grandmother and I, we were night and day, too.

LIV  
But you cared for her, until she died. I can't even imagine/

MIRIAM  
/You would if you had to.

LIV  
But I don't even want to now.

*Miriam gives her a look.*

LIV (cont.)  
Seriously!  
And this stuff with these guys—

MIRIAM  
Your mother hasn't dated in a long time.  
Let her have some fun.

LIV  
But if she got married again...  
I don't think I could live apart from you.

*Beat.*

MIRIAM  
We can do all sorts of things we don't think we can.

LIV  
It's still lame.

*Miriam finishes shuffling the cards.*

MIRIAM  
Your deal.

*Liv starts to pass out cards as the lights fade.*

## **Belinda, Rob, Liv, and Miriam**

*Liv is alone, working on her art project on the coffee table.*

*Belinda and Rob enter.*

*He is carrying a rabbit carcass and leading the way.*

ROB

Will you get the door—?

*Belinda gets out her keys and unlocks the front door of the apartment.*

*Rob carries the rabbit carcass into the living room.*

Hey.

*Liv climbs onto the back of the couch.*

LIV

Mom—what is that?

ROB

Ain't you got eyes? It's a rabbit.

BELINDA

It was a rabbit.

LIV

What's it doing here?

BELINDA

He plans to/

ROB

/It's dinner.

LIV

No, it's not.

ROB

Why not?

LIV

Because that's grody.

ROB

No more than buying meat at the store.

*Rob exits to the kitchen.*

LIV  
A lot more.

ROB  
(from the kitchen) Bel—where’zuh knives?

BELINDA  
(calling) Left end of the counter!

LIV  
I’m gonna ralph.

BELINDA  
Calm down.

LIV  
You—get excited! This is—why is he even carrying that thing around?

BELINDA  
Rob took me hunting/

LIV  
/as a date?

BELINDA  
And he’s so sweet, he’s offered to make dinner for us.

LIV  
This is SWEET to you?

BELINDA  
Relax. Once it’s in the stew, it’ll be just like chicken and noodles.

LIV  
I am NOT eating that.

BELINDA  
It’s what we’re fixing.

LIV  
I’ll go without. Besides, Grandma’s gonna FREAK when she sees that.

BELINDA  
No, she won’t/

LIV  
/It's her favorite animal!

*Rob reenters from the kitchen.*

BELINDA  
Shoosh now.

ROB  
I need you to hold it while I cut it.

LIV  
I'm going out.

ROB  
Weak stomach, eh?

*Rob and Belinda exit to the kitchen. Some cutting sounds.  
Liv goes to Miriam's bedroom door.*

LIV  
Granny? I'm going for a walk. Wanna come with?

*Miriam opens her bedroom door.*

MIRIAM  
What's that, Dear?

LIV  
Wanna come with me for a walk?

MIRIAM  
No, thank you. I was just going to make myself some tea.

LIV  
No!

MIRIAM  
What's the matter? I always have tea around this time.

LIV  
I think a walk would do us good. It'd do us both good.

MIRIAM  
Oh, poppycock.

*Miriam heads toward the kitchen.*



LIV  
Stop!

MIRIAM  
What's that sound?

*Miriam sees Rob and Belinda cutting up the rabbit in the kitchen, offstage. She swoons.*

Oh my Lord!

*Liv guides Miriam to her chair at the kitchen table.  
Belinda reenters from the kitchen.*

BELINDA  
Mom—are you alright?

MIRIAM  
What on earth is that man doing?

BELINDA  
He's making us dinner.

MIRIAM  
And he killed that poor, innocent creature to do it?

BELINDA  
Mom, we eat meat all the time.

MIRIAM  
Not rabbit meat!

BELINDA  
What's the difference

MIRIAM  
/When I met your father's mother for the first time—she didn't even say hello. She just opened up the back door and said, "You go out in the woods and catch us up some dinner." I had to chase a rabbit down, chop off its head, skin it, and cook it up with potatoes. I swore that when I had my own kitchen, I'd never do such vile/

BELINDA  
/It's dinner.

MIRIAM  
It's a wild creature that was probably totally unsuspecting. Did he shoot the thing?

BELINDA  
Yes, Mom. He's a very good shot.

*Rob reenters from the kitchen.*

ROB  
Where you at?

BELINDA  
Just talking with my mom.

*ROB wipes his hand, holds it out to shake hands.*

ROB  
Good to meetcha.

*Miriam does not shake hands with him.*

MIRIAM  
Would you kindly remove that poor thing from my home?

ROB  
I was gonna cook us up some stew.

MIRIAM  
No, thank you.

ROB  
Oh come on. Don't be so/

MIRIAM  
/I don't want any of that.

ROB  
Are you fucking nuts?

LIV  
Hey—

BELINDA  
Rob, Dear, we don't really cuss in the house.

ROB  
Fuck that shit.  
I'm trying to do you bitches a favor/

BELINDA

/On the road, it's okay. But not in here—

ROB

—the fuck I'm not gonna—

LIV

Dude! Stop!

ROB

(to Belinda) You think I'm gonna let a bunch of bitches tell me what to do?

BELINDA

It's just one rule/

ROB

/That's one too damn many.

BELINDA

Out of respect.

ROB

Shiiiiit.

LIV

Mom, this guy is a joke.

ROB

(turns quickly on Liv) Who you calling joke, joke?

*Belinda puts herself between Liv and Rob.*

BELINDA

Enough!

You do NOT talk to my mother that way.

And you do NOT put my child in danger.

We're done here.

*Belinda holds open the front door.*

ROB

Bel—

BELINDA

Get out!

*Rob exits.*

LIV  
Way to go, Mom!

BELINDA  
I think I'm gonna be sick.

MIRIAM  
That makes two of us.

LIV  
...I'll wash up in there, so you don't have to do it.

MIRIAM  
Thank you.

*Liv exits to the kitchen.*

Some people...

BELINDA  
Mom. I am so sorry.  
I can't believe he spoke to you that way.  
He won't ever come here again.

MIRIAM  
It's alright, Dear.

BELINDA  
No, it's not.  
Just—pickings are getting slim.

MIRIAM  
You'll find him, Dear.

BELINDA  
Will I?

MIRIAM  
And in the meantime, we've got each other.

*Belinda stares at the closed front door.*

BELINDA  
Yeah.

**Miriam, Belinda, and Liv**

*Later that evening.*

*Miriam and Belinda are sitting at the kitchen table.*

*Liv enters from the kitchen with a pot of sausage, green beans, and potatoes.  
She serves them.*

LIV

You have to tell me if I got your recipe right, Granny.

MIRIAM

I sure you did just fine.

LIV

But it's my first time!

MIRIAM

We all start somewhere.

*Liv finishes serving and sits down at her place.*

LIV

I'm just glad they had the Eckridge Farm sausage at the store.

MIRIAM

It is the best.

LIV

Mm hmm.

*Quiet.*

*Belinda stares at her food.*

MIRIAM

Shall we say grace?

LIV

If you want to.

*Belinda shoots Liv a look.*

BELINDA

No, let me.

MIRIAM

I can do it, Dear.

BELINDA  
I've got it.

*They bow their heads.*

Dear God,

I'm not very good at these.  
I'm out of practice.  
I'm sure you'll understand.  
But I do have a prayer.  
Please hear my prayer, Lord.  
Please send us a man who can take care of us.

*Liv makes a snorting sound.  
Miriam squeezes her hand tightly.  
She quiets down.*

Please send me a man I can love and who can love and respect all of us in return.  
I'm counting on it, Lord.  
I believe it can happen, Lord.  
Some people don't think that belief counts, but I do.  
Send us someone we can believe in.  
Send us someone who shelters us.  
Who comforts us.  
Who provides.  
And all of the days of my life will be yours.

Lord, our Father.  
Be with us now and forever,  
Amen.

MIRIAM and LIV  
Amen.

*Liv gives Belinda a dirty look.  
Belinda turns to her meal with vigor.  
Lights fade as they eat their dinner.*

**Belinda, Gil, Liv, and Miriam**

*Mid-afternoon.*

*Miriam and Liv are the kitchen table playing cards.  
They have a fan going.*

*Keys in the lock.*

*Belinda opens the front door.  
Gil enters, smoking a cigar.*

MIRIAM

Would you kindly—

GIL

Yes, ma'am!

*He steps outside for a moment and puts out his cigar.  
He comes back in, straightening his jacket and beaming.  
He extends his hand to Miriam.*

Gil Burris, ma'am.

You must be Ms. Traub.

*Miriam shakes his hand.*

MIRIAM

In the flesh.

GIL

Pleased to meet you.

MIRIAM

Likewise.

BELINDA

And this is my daughter, Liv.

LIV

Olivia.

BELINDA

What are you two playing?

LIV

What we always play on Wednesdays. Gin rummy.

*Belinda and Gil sit at the table.*

GIL

I used to play this when I was a kid.

LIV

Good for you.

*Belinda gives her a look.*

I mean—you did?

GIL

Yeah. Always liked it better than regular rummy.

LIV

Me too.

*Belinda looks hopeful.*

*Liv discards.*

BELINDA

Something to drink?

GIL

Iced tea?

*Belinda shoots up and into the kitchen.*

*Miriam draws a card.*

MIRIAM

So, what do you do?

GIL

Insurance salesman.

MIRIAM

You like it?

GIL

Yes, ma'am.

"I'm the business of hope," I always say.

*Liv makes a sound of derision.*

It is though.

'Cause people buy peace of mind with us.



MIRIAM

I see.

*Miriam discards.*

GIL

Hope.

Like the way Reagan gave people hope with that speech he gave at the Berlin Wall.

LIV

The only people Reagan gives hope to is the rich. “Ooh,” they say, “I hope I don’t have to pay taxes this year.” And he just bows.

GIL

Well now. That’s not the full story on that.

LIV

Enlighten us.

GIL

Who can engage in philanthropy? Only the rich.

LIV

But if the poor had more money, they wouldn’t need so much help.

GIL

If the poor got jobs, they wouldn’t need so much money!

LIV

The poor are some of the hardest working Americans!

*Belinda reenters carrying a tray with two glasses of iced tea and a plate of cheese and crackers.*

BELINDA

Cheese and crackers?

LIV

Hey, Mom.

This guy’s never heard of the working poor.

GIL

I never said—

BELINDA

I’m sure you misunderstood him, Dear.

LIV

You know what I don't understand?

Why some people think that, if you give the money to the rich, the poor will ever see it.

BELINDA

Sure they will.

They can provide jobs for people.

LIV

But that's what I mean! So many people have two, three MINIMUM WAGE jobs, and they still can't make ends meet!

BELINDA

How would you know?

LIV

I read about it.

GIL

A few hard-working people who don't make enough are always going to make the news, with the liberal media running things.

LIV

Now the media's liberal?

MIRIAM

Liv, Honey, watch your tone.

LIV

But seriously/

GIL

/Earning a fair wage is what makes this country great! (getting red in the face) Getting up and going to work and contributing to the American way is what we all hope to achieve. Whether it's going to work at McDonald's or a Fortune 500 company, we can all play a role in the American economy, to make a brighter future for our children.

*Liv puts down her cards and mock claps, slowly.*

*Then she picks up her cards again and returns her attention to the game.*

LIV

Honestly, Mom, where do you find these guys?

BELINDA

Olivia Mae, apologize to him right this instant.

*Liv looks up.*

LIV  
No.

MIRIAM  
Liv.

*Liv rolls her eyes.*

LIV  
I'm sorry—

*Gil accepts.*

—that you don't have any compassion for poor people.

*Belinda stands up.*

BELINDA  
Go to your room!

LIV  
We need to finish our game.

BELINDA  
THIS INSTANT!

*Liv looks at Miriam, embarrassed.*

LIV  
Fine.

*She stands and sulks to her room.*

BELINDA  
I'm sorry about that.

GIL  
Don't worry about it.  
She'll come around.  
Deal me in?

BELINDA  
Absolutely!

*Miriam deals cards to the three of them as the lights fade.*

## **Miriam, Liv, and Belinda**

*Miriam and Liv at the kitchen table.  
Miriam is showing Liv how to crochet.*

MIRIAM  
Take your yarn and/

LIV  
/Well it's not really my yarn/

MIRIAM  
/the yarn I gave you—and make a slip knot.

LIV  
A what?

MIRIAM  
Wrap the yarn once around your finger like this/

LIV  
/Uh huh/

MIRIAM  
/Like we're making a regular knot—only then, you don't pull it all the way through. You pull it tight like this/

LIV  
/It came out. What did you—?

MIRIAM  
Come sit beside me.

*She does.*

So—oh, so you're left-handed, so this might feel backwards to you.

LIV  
Yeah?

MIRIAM  
Just, mirror me.

*They face one another.*

Wrap the yarn around your finger, and/

LIV  
/Like this?

MIRIAM  
Uh huh. Now pull it through like this, and—

*They pull their slip knots through.*

LIV  
I did it! I made a slip knot!

MIRIAM  
You sure did.

LIV  
That's cool.

MIRIAM  
Now—slide your needle through—then with the hook part, wrap around this part of the yarn, and pull it through this loop/

LIV  
/Ak! My yarn's all twisted up!

*Miriam reaches and adjusts the angle of Liv's wrists.*

MIRIAM  
Like that. Now wrap the hook around the outside/

LIV  
/Oh, I went under it before/

MIRIAM  
/and pull it through/

LIV  
/I did it! I made a little loop thingy!

MIRIAM  
Yep. That's your first chain stitch, m'Dear. Congratulations.

LIV  
Thanks, Grandma.

MIRIAM  
My pleasure. Now/

LIV  
/Mmm?

MIRIAM  
Just 500 more/

LIV  
/What?

MIRIAM  
For practice.

LIV  
Alright.

*Liv starts making a row of chain stitches. Miriam crochets like a pro. After a few moments of silence, Belinda enters.*

BELINDA  
What's all this?

LIV  
Granny's teaching me how to crochet.

BELINDA  
That so?

MIRIAM  
Mm hmm.

BELINDA  
What are you going to make?

LIV  
Well, nothing yet.

BELINDA  
No, I mean a scarf or a hat or what?

LIV  
I'm just learning.

BELINDA  
Well, it doesn't make any difference, unless you can do something with it.

MIRIAM  
Belinda.

BELINDA  
What?

MIRIAM  
She just started.

BELINDA  
I'm just saying—you've got to have a GOAL in mind.

MIRIAM  
Give her time.

BELINDA  
Fine.

*Beat.*

I've got news.

MIRIAM  
What's that?

BELINDA  
Some pretty amazing news actually. A lot more interesting than learning to crochet/

MIRIAM  
/It's not a competition,/Dear

BELINDA  
/Gil asked me to marry him!

MIRIAM  
What?

BELINDA  
He did!

LIV  
What'd you say?

BELINDA  
I said yes!

LIV  
You're kidding.

BELINDA  
Dead serious.

LIV  
You're gonna marry that guy?

BELINDA  
You bet I am.

LIV  
Really? Him?

BELINDA  
He's perfect for me.

LIV  
That guy? I can't imagine—Are you really that serious about him?

BELINDA  
Isn't he a dream?

LIV  
Mom, I met him once, and we had an argument.

BELINDA  
Yeah, but you argue with everybody.

LIV  
Not everybody.

BELINDA  
Almost everybody.

*Pause.*

He's very mild-mannered.

LIV  
He wasn't with me!

BELINDA  
Well, he is with me.

LIV  
Probably because you never disagree with him.

*Belinda glares at Liv.*



BELINDA  
He makes a lot of really good points.

LIV  
I guess they all do.

BELINDA  
As a matter of fact/

LIV  
/He's kinda bland, don'tcha think?  
And when he's not bland, he's yelling about politics.

BELINDA  
He didn't yell.

LIV  
He got all red in the face.

BELINDA  
Well. He's the man for me.

LIV  
But he's not really much of a—  
I mean, what's unique about him?

BELINDA  
What's 'unique' about him is that we're in love.  
This is the real deal.  
He's who I've been looking for.  
I asked him to dance on the ladies choice dance.  
And he said yes.  
He's my man.  
I know it.  
I felt it from across the room.  
Watching him dance with this short lady.  
I could see his face from across the room.  
And I chose him.  
I chose him.  
I sought him out.  
And I'll be damned if my child is going to tell me that that's wrong.  
That she has more say in this than I do.

MIRIAM  
Why don't we all just take a breath and calm down—

BELINDA  
No, Mom.  
She's the child.

LIV  
I wish you would stop calling me a child.  
I'm in high school.

BELINDA  
Then you should act your age.

LIV  
(whining like a child) But I do!!

BELINDA  
Could've fooled me.

LIV  
Mom—

BELINDA  
I've already ordered my dress.

LIV  
(sarcastic) Then it must be happening.

BELINDA  
It is.

LIV  
Grandma—say something.

MIRIAM  
She's old enough to make her own decisions. If she wants to get married, she wants to get married.

BELINDA  
So, you don't approve?

MIRIAM  
I didn't say that. I'm not saying anything. I'm not saying don't marry him; I'm not saying you have to get married. You're welcome to stay here for as long as you like. Both of you are.

LIV  
Well I'm staying here in any case.

BELINDA  
No, you're not.  
You're coming with me.

LIV  
Why should I?

BELINDA  
Because I'm the—

LIV  
Don't say it! Don't.

*Beat.*

What's the rush, huh?  
All the sudden.  
Why are you bringing this parade of men home?  
Why can't we just stay here?

BELINDA  
I don't have to talk to you about this.

LIV  
About what?

MIRIAM  
It's just money issues, Dear.  
It's grown-up/stuff.

BELINDA  
/Mom—

LIV  
What, money?  
This is about money?

BELINDA  
No! I love him!

LIV  
But it started off being about money.

BELINDA  
It doesn't matter now.

LIV  
How much do we need?

BELINDA  
(to Miriam) I can't believe/you—

MIRIAM  
/Well, Honey, she's almost seventeen.  
She has a right to know.

LIV  
Know what?

*Belinda glares at Miriam.*

How can I help you if I don't know/

BELINDA  
/It's not for YOU to help ME!

*Silence.*

MIRIAM  
Belinda.

BELINDA  
It's not hers to fix.

MIRIAM  
Not to fix.  
Just to know.

*Belinda goes and sits on the couch.*

(to Liv) Your mother had to declare bankruptcy.

LIV  
What is that?  
What does that mean?

MIRIAM  
It means that—

*Miriam and Belinda look at each other.*

—It's a way of handling old debts.

LIV  
I can help!

BELINDA  
Here we go—

LIV  
Mom, let me get a job!

BELINDA  
Jesus/

LIV  
/No. You guys both work. If we need more money, the only thing that makes sense is that I get a job.

BELINDA  
No. Absolutely not.  
That is NOT the solution.

LIV  
Let me contribute.

BELINDA  
Don't be silly.

LIV  
Come on. Let me get a job.  
What's the problem?

BELINDA  
A mother is supposed to provide for her children, not the other way 'round.

LIV  
Please/

BELINDA  
/And a man is supposed to provide for his wife and children.

LIV  
Yeah, maybe in 1950.

*Belinda looks hurt.*

You've been saying that getting a job and earning money is the "American way". Well?

BELINDA

(exploding) And if you do all that and STILL have to declare bankruptcy?

*Liv is taken aback.*

MIRIAM

It's nothing to be ashamed of.

BELINDA

Easy for you to say.

LIV

Granny's been providing for us. It's been fine.

BELINDA

It's more than that. This is the best solution I can come up with.

LIV

But it's not a problem. I'll get a job. We'll stay here with Granny.

BELINDA

It's bad enough that we've put her out as much as we have.

MIRIAM

I'm not put out, Dear.

BELINDA

You say that.

MIRIAM

I enjoy the company.

BELINDA

All the same—we can't stay here forever.

MIRIAM

You could. (quickly) But I understand if you don't want to.

BELINDA

We're going to leave as soon as Gil and I get married.

LIV

No! Granny has taken such good care of us!!

BELINDA

She has, and I'm grateful, but now it's just, not enough. I don't wanna take advantage. With a husband, it's just—easier.

LIV

Easier because men are *supposed* to provide for women?

BELINDA

YES. Yes. That's correct. The husband is supposed to provide for the wife and children.

LIV

And if he doesn't?

BELINDA

That's what I grew up with. That's how it's supposed to be.

LIV

But that's not always how it is. You know that.

BELINDA

Well, I'm trying again is all. With Gil.

LIV

But why?

BELINDA

Because I'm the mom, and I say so.

## **Miriam, Belinda, and Liv**

*The following day.*

*Liv is circling want ads in the newspaper using the orange marker.*

*Miriam is working on the crossword puzzles in the same newspaper.*

*Belinda is sitting between the couch and coffee table reading a wedding magazine.*

LIV

Look, I'm circling want ads in the paper like in "Desperately Seeking Susan". Only it's in orange and not red.

MIRIAM

In what, Honey?

BELINDA

I should never have let you watch that movie. Too adult for you.

LIV

It was fine. I can almost watch R-rated movies, so—

BELINDA

"Almost only counts in horseshoes and hand grenades."

LIV

Do you ever have an original thought, or do you just quote them?

MIRIAM

Liv.

LIV

What? She does.

MIRIAM

You know better.

LIV

Like all the time.

MIRIAM

Apologize.

*Beat.*

LIV

(to Belinda) I'm sorry. Just—why won't you let me get a job?



BELINDA

You don't need a job.

LIV

But I could get one.

*Liv circles another want ad.*

Listen to this. (reading) Office Manager. In a trucking company.

I could do that. Drive a truck, not so sure. The turning? But, run an office? Tell the guys when to pick things up, how to drop things off, absolutely. I could totally do that.

BELINDA

They're big guys.

LIV

So what? I could tell them when their shift begins, when it ends, how to stay on track. I would be good at that, Mom.

BELINDA

Please. That's a man's work.

LIV

It was maybe made for a man by a man, but that doesn't mean it has to be done by a man. I swear, I would have that office ship-shape in no time.

MIRIAM

You know, Belinda, during World War II, when the men were off fighting, women took on jobs like that all the time.

BELINDA

Well, not when I was growing up. That was just not how it was done. Nursing. Teaching. Those are jobs for women.

LIV

Please! Do we live under a stone?

BELINDA

Liv!

LIV

Call me Olivia.

MIRIAM

Liv.

LIV

You can call me Liv, Grandma.

BELINDA

Liv—

LIV

You call me Olivia.

BELINDA

Liv. That's just not how it's done.

LIV

Yeah well. I aim to do it differently.

## **Belinda, Miriam, and Liv**

*The following week.*

*Belinda is lying face down on the couch pounding her fists and crying.*

*Miriam enters.*

MIRIAM

What's going on?

BELINDA

I NEVER GET WHAT I WANT!

MIRIAM

Dear, you're being overly/dramatic.

BELINDA

/Never Never NEVER!!

*Belinda wails into a pillow on the couch.*

MIRIAM

What happened?

BELINDA

(sobbing) They—ran out—of the—wedding dress—I wanted!

MIRIAM

Oh, Honey. We can find you another wedding dress. It's early yet.

*Belinda sobs and sobs.*

I'm sure we'll find you a much better one by the time we—even before we send the invites out!

BELINDA

It's—dis—(sob) continued! It was—(sob)—perfect! It had a—(sob)—lace—(sob sob)—bodice—and a (sob)—sweetheart—(sob)—neckline!

MIRIAM

Darling, lots of dresses have those things.

BELINDA

Not—like—that—one!

MIRIAM

It's a classic look. We'll go to the bridal shop and ask for the classic look/

BELINDA

/It WON'T be the SAME~!

*Belinda sobs into the pillow. Miriam can't help but laugh for a moment.*

MIRIAM

Dear, sometimes things don't go as we plan them. But that doesn't mean they've gone wrong exactly. It just means God's plan for us is different, that's all.

BELINDA

But it FELT like divine inspiration!

MIRIAM

I know, Darling. The next one will too though. Even stronger. The real one.

BELINDA

How will I know it's the real one?

MIRIAM

How do we ever know? You just... do.

*Belinda cries into the pillow again, burying her face.  
Liv enters from her bedroom.*

LIV

What's going on?

MIRIAM

Your mother's upset.

LIV

But—she never gets upset.

MIRIAM

This time she is.

LIV

What happened?

MIRIAM

The wedding dress she wanted—they ran out.

LIV

Ran out?

MIRIAM

They don't have any more in stock.

LIV

That's impossible. They must be able to make more.

MIRIAM

They said it'll be discontinued.

LIV

That's dumb. No wonder she's upset.

*Belinda sits up, immediately stops crying.*

BELINDA

(very cooly) It's not a problem. I'll just have to make due.

*She exits to the bathroom, her eyes already dry.*

## **Belinda, Gil, and Liv**

*Evening.*

*Belinda and Gil are sitting at the kitchen table playing cards.*

GIL

Is it strange for Liv—my being here?

BELINDA

Just—be extra nice to her.

I think it'll help.

GIL

Will do.

*Liv enters from her bedroom, crosses to the kitchen.*

LIV

Don't mind me.

*She exits to the kitchen.*

*Belinda and Gil Eskimo kiss.*

BELINDA

Your turn, Bunny.

GIL

Awwight, Iced Tea.

*Liv reenters carrying a glass of water.*

LIV

Ew. Get a room.

BELINDA

You forget.

This is my room.

GIL

Well not for long.

LIV

What does that/mean?

BELINDA

/Isn't that wight?

*Belinda and Gil brush noses again.*

LIV  
Gag me with a spoon.

BELINDA  
Please.

LIV  
But seriously, what does he mean?

BELINDA  
Gil and I have found our dream home.

*Liv grimaces.*

LIV  
Does it have a white picket fence?

BELINDA  
Better.

*Belinda looks at Gil, then goes to the coffee table, retrieves a real estate magazine. She shows the image to Liv.*

Isn't it grand?

LIV  
If by grand, you mean huge.

GIL  
Twenty-five hundred square feet.

LIV  
Why do you need all that space?

BELINDA  
(beaming) Why not?

LIV  
(to Gil) It's a bit much, don'tcha think?

GIL  
Anything for my dream lady.

LIV  
Okay, I really am gonna throw up.

BELINDA  
(suddenly serious) What is your problem?

*Liv gestures to the picture.*

LIV  
That's a house.  
This is a home.  
Period.

GIL  
Well. We'll make it into a home.  
Our home.

*He points to the accompanying floor plan.*

That will be your room.

LIV  
(unimpressed) It doesn't have a walk-in closet.

GIL  
(looking) Well, we could/

LIV  
/All that space and no room for your stuff, huh.  
I have a walk-in closet here, so—

BELINDA  
(to Gil) Liv is having some trouble getting used to the idea—

GIL  
(good-naturedly) That'll change after the wedding.

LIV  
Just like that, huh?

GIL  
Just like that.

*He snaps his fingers, smiles.*

LIV  
So, you guys are really getting married?



GIL

As real as the sun shines.

LIV

I'm going to bed.

GIL

You could—join us.

BELINDA

Yeah. We'll deal you in.

LIV

No, thanks.

I'm tired.

BELINDA

(turning away) Suit yourself.

GIL

(friendly) Maybe next time.

LIV

Maybe.

*She turns on her heel and exits to her bedroom.*

GIL

She alright?

BELINDA

Like you said.

She'll get used to it.

(looking where Liv exited, under her breath) She'll have to.

## **Miriam, Liv, and Belinda**

*Afternoon the following day.*

*Miriam and Liv are at the kitchen table, playing gin rummy.  
They have the fan going.*

LIV

This is nice, Granny.

MIRIAM

Mm hmm.

LIV

I don't like playing cards with anybody but you.

MIRIAM

That's sweet, Dear, but sometime you might like to try.

LIV

No. I just wanna stay at this table forever.

*Miriam looks up, concerned.*

MIRIAM

You'll find something that draws you away at some point.

LIV

Never.

*Beat.*

Gin.

*She lays out her cards.*

MIRIAM

(concerned) Good one.

*Miriam collects the cards.*

Let's do something different, shall we?

LIV

If you want.

MIRIAM

How's that art project of yours coming?

LIV  
Haven't worked on it much lately.  
Have been caught up in this stuff with Mom.

MIRIAM  
Get it out.  
I want to see it.

*Liv goes to her room and retrieves the art project and box of markers from the first scene. She brings them to the kitchen table.*

Ooh. You're close to finished, huh?

LIV  
Sort of.  
(pointing) Not sure what to do with this part.

MIRIAM  
I'm sure you'll figure it out, Dear.

*They sit in silence.  
Miriam works on the crossword puzzle from the morning's paper.  
Liv works on her art project.*

*Keys in the door.  
Belinda enters carrying several flat cardboard boxes.*

LIV  
What's all that?

BELINDA  
Moving boxes.

*Belinda sets down the boxes in the middle of the floor.*

LIV  
I'm not gonna start that 'til I absolutely have to.

BELINDA  
Well. You have to.

LIV  
What do you mean?

*Belinda jumps up and down and extends her left hand, squeals with delight.*

BELINDA  
We got married!!

MIRIAM  
Awww!

*Miriam stands and hugs Belinda.*

BELINDA  
We went to the Justice of the Peace.

MIRIAM  
Congratulations, Honey.

BELINDA  
Instead of bothering with all the details.

*Miriam looks at the ring.*

MIRIAM  
It's beautiful.

*They hug again for a long moment.*

*Liv puts down her markers.*

LIV  
What the fuck, Mom?

MIRIAM  
Language, Liv!

LIV  
What the fuck?

BELINDA  
Excuse me?

LIV  
You told me we had to move out when you got married, and now you're fucking married, and I'm just supposed to get my shit together? I'm just supposed to—pack up?

BELINDA  
Well, yeah.

LIV  
Fuck you, Mom.

MIRIAM  
Hey, now—

LIV  
I'm not going.  
I am not going.  
I've got college in a couple years.  
I'll just stay here 'til then.

BELINDA  
Bullshit. You're my daughter.  
We're a unit.

LIV  
Since when?  
Since when are we a UNIT, Mom?  
If we're a unit, it's the most discombobulated, shitty "unit" I've ever seen in my life!  
You don't share with me when you're going through tough times.  
You don't show me ANY emotion.  
And now, you're just charging forward with this life because it makes you feel better.  
Well, fuck off!  
I'm not doing it.

MIRIAM  
Honey, calm down.  
I'll help you pack.

LIV  
I don't want you to help me pack.  
I want you to help me play this card game.  
I want you to help me learn how to crochet.  
I want you to help me cook your recipes.

*Silence.*

I can't do it, Mom.  
I can't leave her.  
I'm not gonna leave her, so that I can fit inside some stupid, twenty-five hundred square foot BOX with you and Gil.  
You couldn't be bothered to share this with me.  
You couldn't ask me for my help.  
You couldn't share your life with me, but I'm supposed to drop everything and come with you to your fucking temple of domesticity?  
Your 1950's fucking anachronistic dream?  
I'm supposed to give up my entire life for you, but you can't be bothered to do shit for me.

*Pause.*

LIV (cont.)

I looked up bankruptcy, and you can't get a house loan without him.  
It's only because of him you can move into a place like that.  
Only because of him.

*Beat.*

You can't teach me the most BASIC things about how to take care of myself.  
About how to be an independent woman in the world.  
You can't teach me anything beyond what I would find on the side of a fucking cookbook  
in 1955!

MIRIAM

Hey—

LIV

(to Belinda) You've got NOTHING to offer me.

You've got NOTHING to show me.

NOTHING to teach me.

Just this.

Just—find a man, marry a man, he'll provide, get a house, sit there—what? Twiddling  
your thumbs? Reading your parenting manuals? Quoting him?

I'm not gonna give up anything that means shit to me—for you.

I can't be fucking bothered. I'm not gonna—

*Liv folds over in angry tears.*

BELINDA

And what do you think it's been like for me?

I'm a grown woman.

You ARE a child.

You are MY child.

And you talk to me like I'm five.

You talk to me like I'm not even here.

You talk to Granny like I'm not even here.

You two are soul mates?

Fine, good, yeah.

VISIT.

I have wanted this one thing.

I've claimed this one, small thing.

After years of taking a back seat.

*A moment.*

BELINDA (cont.)

You don't even know.

We had it.

We had the dream.

In the 50's!

We had the fucking dream.

We had the house, and the three kids, and the fucking Frigidaire.

We had it.

And SHE (pointing at Miriam) took us away from it.

She packed us in the car one day because she wanted to.

She took me away from my father.

Okay?

My father.

Because she got a wild hair up her ass.

I was a kid, and I had to go with her.

I didn't get a say.

And I don't care about "women's lib" or any some shit—YOU don't get a say.

You are my daughter.

If I say pack your shit, you damn well pack your shit.

If I say get in the car, you get in the goddamn car.

And if I need to take you away from your grandma, or if your dad was still here, or whatever, I would take you to the edges of the fucking earth if I felt like it. And you would get in the fucking car! That is how shit works. And if I missed some modern movement that changed all that, then I'M GOING BACK, and I'M GETTING ALL THAT.

It doesn't change just because you want it to.

(pointing again to Miriam) She UPROOTED us.

It was perfect.

Before she took us away from it.

It was everything I could've dreamt of.

Before I had to come here.

Well here I am.

I'm forty fucking years old, sitting between our coffee table and our couch, which is MY BED, because my daughter wanted a room of her own.

I've given up my whole life for you.

(to Miriam) And I gave up my other life for you.

And I won't do it anymore!

I need something that's MINE.

A love.

Being provided for, yes.

But it's MINE.

It belongs to me.

And you don't get a say.

LIV

Is that true, Granny?

Did you leave Grandpa?

MIRIAM

(quietly) Your grandfather was a wonderful man, but sometimes he couldn't be bothered to get out of bed to go to work. So—I needed to get a job. My brother knew someone. We came to the city.

*Miriam turns to Belinda.*

I had no idea you were this unhappy.

BELINDA

Right.

(to Liv) I was fifteen.

*Silence.*

*Belinda starts making one of the boxes into its three-dimensional form.*

LIV

I don't care what you say.

I'm getting a job, and I'm staying with Granny, because I WANT TO.

*Liv goes to the kitchen table and gets the orange marker and the morning paper, holding them both up.*

BELINDA

Don't you dare.

LIV

I'm gonna circle this one.

*Liv circles a want ad using the orange marker.*

BELINDA

Liv.

LIV

Olivia. And this one looks good.

*Liv circles another want ad in orange.*

BELINDA

You watch yourself.

LIV

This one? Oh yeah, I could totally do this one.

*She circles another want ad in orange marker.*



LIV (cont.)  
And this one looks right up my alley.

*She circles another one.  
And another.*

BELINDA  
You're coming with me.

LIV  
No, I'm not.

BELINDA  
And that's that.

LIV  
Wanna bet?

*Liv circles another one and shoves the want ad section in her mother's face.*

This one looks great!  
What a fit!

*Belinda grabs the orange marker.  
Liv and Belinda struggle over it.  
Ultimately, Belinda gets ahold of it.*

BELINDA  
I'm throwing this away.

*Belinda exits to the kitchen and throws away the orange marker.*

*When Belinda reenters, Liv tries to exit, to retrieve the orange marker from the trash.*

BELINDA  
Olivia Mae, you go get that marker out of the trash, I swear, I'm leaving.

LIV  
You wouldn't do that.

BELINDA  
Try me.

*Silence.  
Liv goes and gets the orange marker out of the trash.  
She reenters holding it.*

BELINDA (cont.)

(quoting) “Be consistent with your word. If you say you’re going to give a punishment, as soon as the child does the behavior that has earned the punishment, give the punishment.”

*Belinda puts on her coat.*

LIV

Mom, I/

BELINDA

(seething) /No, you’ve made your choice.

LIV

When will you be back?

BELINDA

Can’t say.

*Belinda exits.*

LIV

(surprised) She left.

MIRIAM

She said she would.

LIV

Yeah, but I didn’t think she’d do it.

MIRIAM

When have you known your mother NOT to do something she said she would?

LIV

Yeah. But it’s my favorite.

MIRIAM

Even so.

LIV

...

MIRIAM

Liv, I try not to interfere, but you should be careful what you say to your mother.

LIV

She drives me crazy!

MIRIAM  
She's also the only mother you've got.

LIV  
Well—

MIRIAM  
She is. And she's been with you every day of your natural born life.

LIV  
Except today.

MIRIAM  
Why do you think that is?

LIV  
I made her mad.

MIRIAM  
You thought you knew better.

LIV  
But—

MIRIAM  
Would you rather be right—or connected to your mother?

LIV  
But she—

MIRIAM  
We don't love each other by being contrary to one another.

LIV  
But she contradicts me all the time!

MIRIAM  
That's different.

LIV  
Why?

MIRIAM  
Because she's the mother.

LIV  
Oh my God! I hate that!

MIRIAM  
It's still true.

LIV  
But it's not a reason!

MIRIAM  
It may be the only reason you get for some things.

LIV  
But you never do that with her.

MIRIAM  
Our relationship is different.

LIV  
I guess.

MIRIAM  
You need to make this up to her.

LIV  
Why do I have to?

MIRIAM  
Because she won't.

LIV  
Go-od!

MIRIAM  
You better hide that marker before your mother gets back.

LIV  
But it's my favorite!

MIRIAM  
You don't have to throw it away, but don't let her see it anymore.

LIV  
But—

MIRIAM  
Promise me.

LIV  
I don't want to.

MIRIAM  
Sometimes we have to do things we don't want to. That's life.

LIV  
Is it?

MIRIAM  
It's part of life.  
Yes.

LIV  
Do I have to?

MIRIAM  
I think it's best.

LIV  
But I really don't want to. Why should I have to?

MIRIAM  
It'll upset her to see it around, much less to see you using it.

LIV  
Granny/

MIRIAM  
/You can show it to me whenever you like.

LIV  
Can I?

MIRIAM  
Sure you can. I think it's a good color. Just make sure she doesn't see it.

LIV  
Because she's the mother?

MIRIAM  
Because you love her, and you want her to feel good.

LIV  
...Okay.

*Liv exits to her bedroom and hides the orange marker under her pillow.*

*Liv goes and sits quietly at the kitchen table, using a pencil to complete a word search puzzle in the newspaper.*

LIV

I'm sorry we cussed in front of you.

MIRIAM

You were both angry.

It makes sense.

LIV

...

MIRIAM

Besides, I used to cuss up a storm in my day.

LIV

You did!?

MIRIAM

(smiling sadly) She's right, you know.

I never asked.

Back then, there was never any discussion with your children.

That's just not how it was done.

You told them, and they did as they were told.

It's strange for her that you don't.

*Belinda returns.*

*Liv is relieved.*

BELINDA

I've made a decision.

I'm leaving.

LIV

I'll—pack my stuff.

BELINDA

You don't have to.

You wanna sit here?

Sit here.

I need to get my stuff together.

Gil will be here soon.

*Belinda starts gathering her things.*

LIV  
But I thought we were a unit.

BELINDA  
(sadly) Yeah, so did I.  
But, you know.

*Belinda packs the box she has made.*

LIV  
I want to be with you.  
I do.

BELINDA  
Well I'm going with him.  
Whether you're coming or not.

LIV  
...

BELINDA  
I told you.  
I told you, you need men in your life.  
And if you don't believe me, then just wait awhile.

LIV  
I won't argue anymore; I promise.

BELINDA  
It's too late for that.  
You've already said everything.

LIV  
But I—I can see it upsets you.  
And I'm not gonna do that anymore.  
I promise.

BELINDA  
Yeah well—

*Belinda continues gathering her things.*

LIV  
But—what about Granny?

BELINDA

This isn't about Granny.

This is about you.

About how you don't wanna do anything you don't wanna do.

LIV

But I did what you wanted!

I hid it!

I put it away.

I don't understand.

I thought—

*Liv goes and gets the orange marker.*

Look!

MIRIAM

Now, Liv—

LIV

You want me to throw it away?

You want me to prove to you that I mean it?

*Liv goes toward the kitchen to throw the orange marker away, when it explodes all over her hands.*

*Shock.*

BELINDA

You can no more throw that away than you can cut out your own tongue.

*There is a knock at the door.*

I'll come back for the rest of my stuff.

*Belinda starts to exit carrying the box she has packed.*

LIV

Mom—?

BELINDA

You don't wanna do anything you don't wanna do?

Then don't.

*Belinda exits.*

*Liv drops to her knees, wailing.*

*Miriam tries to grab her by the shoulders to comfort her, but it is no use.*

*Liv breaks from her grandmother and runs back to the spot where she started the play.*



**Liv**

*Alone on a blank stage, holding the orange marker, with it all over her hands.*

LIV

I got what I wanted, right?

I saw her after that. But always like I was looking through glass. Through windows, you know? Always one step removed.

To this day, I haven't seen her house. The one with him.

That was never my room.

I never went to that house.

Not even for the house warming.

I couldn't.

Not that I was invited.

I'm sure I could've crashed, but I wanted an invitation.

I wanted it to be on bright orange paper.

But I saw Granny's invite.

It was mint green.

And everybody knows, bright orange clashes with mint green.

So I stayed home.

And made the best of it.

*End Play.*