

COMMUNION

By
Tim Klein

COMMUNION

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COMMUNION

*for Jane
may your love and light continue to shine*

COMMUNION

CAST: 6 Women, 1 Man

JANE	A professional actress
STACEY	An actress and professional sommelier
MARY	Jane's mother
SARAH	An actress
JANETTE	Jane's younger sister
ELIZABETH	A friend of Mary from church
DAVID	Jane's ex-boyfriend
TIME:	Today
PLACE:	Chicago, IL

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ACT 1
SCENE 1

A very tastefully decorated middle class living room somewhere in northern Chicago. JANE is busy tidying a table with hors d'oeuvres.

JANE. What time do you have?

STACEY. *(Offstage.)* What?

JANE. What time is it?

STACEY. *(Offstage.)* What, hon?

JANE. Do you have the time?

STACEY. *(Offstage.)* What?

JANE. Forget it!

STACEY. *(Entering.)* I'm sorry. I couldn't hear you. I was picking the ice. *(She makes a stabbing gesture with the ice pick.)* It's very therapeutic.

JANE. How much time do we have?

STACEY. Oh, we've got a few minutes yet. Who knows when this crew will show up, you know? Especially Janette. She'll show up a couple hours late with a bottle of pinot already under her belt.

JANE. Yeah, sorry.

STACEY. That doesn't bother me much, actually. What bothers me is that she drinks Yellowtail before tasting my wine. Her taste buds have already been incapacitated.

JANE. I'm not worried about my sister. You don't know my mother. She shows up forty minutes early for church. *(Stacey laughs.)*

JANE. I'm not making that up! She arrives before three thirty for a four o'clock mass and sits in a pew by herself.

STACEY. Maybe she's praying.

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JANE. She's not. She just dozes.

STACEY. Oh, that's priceless.

JANE. You know how insanely Irish Catholic my family is, right? God, country, Notre Dame?

STACEY. Yeah.

JANE. She's so early to church that she misses the majority of the Notre Dame game because she doesn't want to go to church on Sunday, and she doesn't know how to work her own VCR. She rushes home to catch the very end every week, and then calls me to find out about the rest.

STACEY. Why doesn't she just go on Sunday?

JANE. She gets too anxious and wants to 'get it over with' on Saturday.

STACEY. She's adorable.

JANE. My Dad used to go to mass everyday towards the end of his life and nap through the whole service. I never figured out what he was getting out of it.

STACEY. He probably wanted a quiet place to rest.

JANE. I guess so. I don't know.

STACEY. So, are we going to be good hosts and wait for the guests, as one should, according to Emily Post, or do we be naughty and open a bottle of the fermented grape ambrosia right now?

JANE. I think you know that answer to that.

STACEY. What are we in the mood for?

JANE. What are the options?

STACEY. A buttery chardonnay from the Niagara Region; a spicy cabernet from Chile; a light pinot grigio from New York; and a very fruity pinot noir from the Napa Valley.

JANE. The Chardonnay.

STACEY. I'll be right back in two shakes of a lamb's tail. *(She exits.)*

JANE. *(Calling off.)* I'll need at least one glass before Mom shows up.

STACEY. *(Offstage.)* What?

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JANE. (*Louder.*) I said I need some wine before my mother shows up and starts driving me crazy!

MARY. (*Offstage.*) Hello? Hello, dear? Anybody home?

JANE. Oh, dear God.

MARY. (*Entering.*) Honey?

JANE. I'm right here, Mom. Come in.

MARY. Hello, darling.

JANE. Hi, Mom. How are you?

MARY. You're too thin.

JANE. Thanks, Mom. Good to see you. Make yourself at home.

MARY. What are you doing?

JANE. Just making last minute adjustments to my hors d'oeuvres presentation. Cutting the cheese; arranging the fruit; opening the...

MARY. Can I help?

JANE. No. I'm almost done.

MARY. What can I do?

JANE. Nothing.

MARY. I can do something.

JANE. Just relax.

MARY. Why do you always do things at the last minute?

JANE. I don't, Mother. You're at least fifteen minutes early.

MARY. Why don't you let me do that?

JANE. I'm almost done.

MARY. I can do that for you.

JANE. I'm almost done.

MARY. Why don't you let me help?

JANE. I've got it, Mother.

MARY. Just tell me what to do. Here, I can take this.

JANE. Mother.

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MARY. Why don't you just sit down and rest? I can take care of the rest of this.

JANE. Mother. Please. Stop. Please.

MARY. What's wrong?

JANE. Nothing. Please just let me finish. Please.

MARY. You don't have to use that tone, do you?

JANE. I don't have a tone.

MARY. That's the tone. You know the tone.

JANE. I don't have a tone, Mother.

MARY. I'm your mother.

JANE. I know. Why don't you just...

MARY. You don't have to use that tone with me.

JANE. Mother. Stop.

STACEY. (*Entering.*) Wine!

JANE. Thank you!

MARY. Oh, you're here early.

STACEY. Just thought I'd help out.

MARY. Why didn't you call me to help?

JANE. Because I didn't need help.

STACEY. I just showed up.

JANE. Give me that glass. (*Jane takes a glass of wine and exits to the kitchen. Offstage.*) Be right back.

STACEY. So, how are you, Mary? You're looking good.

MARY. Stacey, why didn't she call her mother if she needed help?

STACEY. Because she didn't need help.

MARY. But you're here.

STACEY. I just thought I'd show up early, make sure we had enough ice, open some red wine to let it breathe, you know?

MARY. Forgive me for asking, dear, but are you trying to turn my daughter into one of those...

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STACEY. One of those...?

MARY. You know...

STACEY. What?

MARY. Lesbians. (*Stacey laughs uproariously.*)

MARY. Didn't I get the name right? It is 'lesbians,' isn't it?

STACEY. Yes, 'lesbians' is the right word.

MARY. You're turning my Jane into a lesbian?

STACEY. The thought had occurred to me, but, sadly, no. I'm not turning your Jane into a lesbian.

MARY. Are you sure?

STACEY. Yes. I am positive I'm not turning Jane into a lesbian.

JANE. (*Returning from the kitchen with the empty glass.*) I'm feeling much better now.

STACEY. It's a nice Chardonnay, isn't it?

JANE. Buttery.

MARY. Drinking already?

JANE. Just a little wine tasting. It is a wine and cheese tasting party. I know I told you.

STACEY. It's a wine and *pairings* tasting party. I have a lot more goodies than just the cheese.

MARY. It's a little early for drink, don't you think?

JANE. If it makes you feel better, Mother, it's five o'clock even on the west coast.

STACEY. Try the Chardonnay, Mary. You'll like it.

MARY. I think I'll wait for the others.

JANE. Do start now, Mother. As a favor for me.

MARY. Jane, are you sure you should be...

JANE. It's fine, Mom.

MARY. But, don't you...

JANE. It's fine, Mom.

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STACEY. Mary, this is an affordable Chardonnay from the Niagara on the Lake region of Ontario. I believe you'll find it very drinkable, but at the same time possessing very full flavor. Chardonnay is this country's number one selling white wine varietal. The Chardonnay grape itself contributes to the wine's popularity. It is a relatively "low-maintenance" vine that adapts well to a variety of climates, resulting in fairly high yields worldwide. Hence, you can find a decent bottle for as little as fifteen bucks.

MARY. Does that mean it's good?

STACEY. Yes, Mary, if it appeals to you.

JANE. Just pour.

STACEY. Savor the bouquet first.

MARY. Smell it?

STACEY. Stick your whole nose in there and breathe deeply.

MARY. Oh. It smells kinda like the butter in microwave popcorn.

STACEY. Enjoy.

MARY. *(Sipping tentatively.)* Is it supposed to be cold?

STACEY. Yes, very. I've got some reds we're going to sample later which are served at room temperature.

MARY. Oh, I'll stick with one glass, thank you. I have to drive home later.

JANE. Yes. *(There is a knock on the door.)* I'll be right back. *(She exits.)*

MARY. Is this what you all do all the time?

STACEY. What?

MARY. Have wine and cheese parties?

STACEY. Lesbians? No, we usually prefer Pabst Blue Ribbon out of the can and nachos.

MARY. No. I didn't mean...them. I meant Jane's group.

STACEY. Is that what we're calling ourselves?

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MARY. No. Oh, Lord. I don't know what I'm talking about. I'm sorry for coming off like some ancient prude.

STACEY. That's okay.

MARY. It's just...I don't know how to act. I've actually never met a...

STACEY. Muff diver?

MARY. Before.

STACEY. Mary, I hate to break it to you. I've been at your family functions. You've known some lesbians and gays your whole life.

MARY. What?

STACEY. You have three homosexuals in your family, Mary, and Jane is not one of them.

MARY. Who?

STACEY. I won't out them if they are not out of the closet.

MARY. Who?

STACEY. I'm not telling, you old gossip.

SARAH. *(Off.)* I'd better hear some corks popping soon! *(SARAH and Jane enter.)*

JANE. Sarah's here, gang.

SARAH. Hey.

JANE. Mother, you remember Sarah, one of my standardized patients?

MARY. Hello. How are you, dear?

SARAH. Awful.

STACEY. Hello, Sa... *(Sarah points at the bottle from across the room.)*

SARAH. What kind of wine is that?

STACEY. It's a buttery Chardonnay from the Niagara Re...

SARAH. Is it white or red?

STACEY. White.

SARAH. I like red.

STACEY. We'll be having red later in the evening. Right now, I'm letting...

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SARAH. Can I have some red?

JANE. Well, Sarah, it's just that...

SARAH. Ohmygod, you won't believe what I've been through today. This has been one of the worst days of my life. Hands down.

JANE. Oh? Why don't you sit down and relax?

SARAH. Can I smoke in here?

MARY. Actually...

JANE. You can smoke out on the balcony?

SARAH. Maybe I'll just take a xanax...or a valium...I can't believe I'm out of vicodin on a day like this. *(She sits and goes through an oversized purse.)*

STACEY. May I pour you some of this Chardonnay?

SARAH. The white?

STACEY. Yes.

SARAH. Can I have the red?

JANE. Sure. Sure. Of course.

STACEY. Very well. Can I interest you in either a spicy Cabernet from Chile or a very fruity Pinot Noir from the Napa Valley?

SARAH. Whichever is the reddest.

STACEY. Definitely the Cabernet.

SARAH. Thanks, hon.

STACEY. No problemo. *(She exits.)*

SARAH. Got any water? I need to take this valium right fucking now. Never mind. *(Sarah grabs Jane's glass and takes the pill, slugging the wine.)*

MARY. Oh.

SARAH. Yuck! I hate white.

JANE. Help yourself.

SARAH. That won't kick in for half an hour.

JANE. How about a snack?

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SARAH. I'm too frazzled to eat right now.

MARY. What's wrong?

SARAH. I don't know if I can talk about it. I really don't think I should talk about it. I'll be okay in about half an hour when the valium kicks in and then I can talk about it. Just go ahead with your conversation. Just go ahead with whatever you were talking about.

JANE. Okay. Okay. So...

SARAH. Benny's kidneys are failing. *(Sarah starts to cry, pacing across the room and fanning herself.)*

JANE. Oh, honey, I'm sorry.

SARAH. His numbers are so low he might go at any time.

MARY. Is Benny your father?

SARAH. He's my little sweetie.

MARY. Your boyfriend?

SARAH. He's my cat! *(She gets more hysterical.)*

JANE. It's going to be alright.

SARAH. If he dies, what's Jennifer going to do?

MARY. Jennifer? Who's Jennifer?

SARAH. His sister! She's going to be devastated. I've had them since they were kittens! She'll be depressed. Have you ever seen a depressed cat? It's pathetic. Do they have kitty Prozac?

JANE. Relax.

SARAH. Do they have kitty Prozac, Jane?

JANE. How should I know?

SARAH. You work in a hospital.

JANE. I teach doctors how to communicate with patients.

SARAH. Can you call one?

JANE. A doctor.

SARAH. Yeah.

SARAH. Can you?

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JANE. Call a doctor on a Saturday night for kitty Prozac?

STACEY. *(Entering.)* I have the Caber...

SARAH. Would you?

JANE. Hell no!

SARAH. She might have depression.

STACEY. Wine?

SARAH. *(Taking the wine from Stacey's hand.)* Jane, if you do this favor for me, I'll never ask you for another thing as long as I live.

JANE. You say that all the time.

SARAH. I think I'd rather die than go through this.

STACEY. What the hell are we talking about?

MARY. Prozac.

SARAH. Please.

JANE. Stop asking, please. Let's have some wine and some snacks and pretty soon...

SARAH. What am I going to do?

JANE. Sarah...

STACEY. Why are we talking about Prozac?

SARAH. Maybe I could give her a fourth of one of mine. *(Running for her purse.)*

MARY. Benny has kidney failure.

STACEY. Who's Benny?

JANE. Why don't we all sit down and...

MARY. Benny is Jennifer's brother.

SARAH. Do you think a half would be too much?

STACEY. Oh God, that's horrible.

SARAH. I know. It's the worst thing that's ever happened to me. I don't know what I'm going to do if he dies on me.

JANE. For the love of Christ, can we drop the subject for a while?

STACEY. Jane! What's wrong with you?

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JANE. What?

STACEY. How can you be so insensitive?

JANE. I'm being insensitive?

STACEY. Yes.

SARAH. Thank you, Stacey, I agree. Jane was being incredibly insensitive about Benny.

STACEY. *(Sitting next to Sarah and holding her hand.)* I'm so, so sorry.

SARAH. This is the worst thing that has ever happened to me!

STACEY. There, there.

SARAH. I just feel like putting a bullet in my brain.

STACEY. Don't talk like that.

SARAH. I'll be lost without him.

JANE. Ask her about Benny's identity, Stacey.

STACEY. Is Benny your new boyfriend?

SARAH. He's my cat, Stacey! You met Benny six years ago at my birthday party. Remember, he had the little party hat on his head.

STACEY. Jesus, we're talking about your fucking cat?

MARY. Such language!

STACEY. You had my stomach twisting over a goddamned cat?

MARY. Oh!

SARAH. You know how I feel about my cats.

STACEY. Jesus Christ. Now I need a glass of wine.

MARY. Ladies, could we please stop taking the Lord's name in vain?

STACEY. What?

JANE. Stacey, please...

MARY. You were taking the Lord's name in vain, dear. I'm a Catholic and I find your language offensive.

STACEY. Which time? The Jesus Christ or the goddamn?

MARY. I find both offensive.

STACEY. How do you feel about cocksucking motherfucker?

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MARY. Oh!

JANE. Both of you! Play nice! *(Mary turns away from the group, embarrassed. JANETTE enters with a young woman right behind her.)*

JANETTE. Did I just hear someone say cocksucking motherfucker? Somebody is speaking my motherfucking language!

MARY. Oh!

JANE. Janette, that's not helping the situation. *(To the strange woman).* Can I help you?

YOUNG WOMAN. Hello. I'm not...uh...

JANE. Janette, who's your friend?

JANETTE. I don't know.

YOUNG WOMAN. I'm not sure I'm at the right party.

JANETTE. Hey, Stacey, I brought some fucking Yellowtail.

JANE. You, too! No more fucking, Jesus Christs, goddamns, cocksuckers, motherfuckers, or motherfucking! *(Pause.)*

JANETTE. Then what are we going to talk about? Our vaginas?

MARY. Oh!

JANETTE. What, I didn't say pussy!

MARY. Oh!

STACEY. Or cunt.

MARY and YOUNG WOMAN: Oh!

JANETTE. Who the hell are you, anyway?

MARY. This is Elizabeth from my congregation at St. John's. I invited her over to pray for you, Jane.

SARAH. Oh shit. *(Blackout.)*

COMMUNION

SCENE 2

One hour later.

SARAH. Tell us all about him.

JANE. Yes. Do.

SARAH. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

JANETTE. Okay, okay, okay. He's about six feet tall, or so, and, and dark brown hair, big blue eyes...

JANE. Wow.

JANETTE. And he has muscles.

SARAH. Wow.

JANETTE. I know.

JANE. He sounds...

JANETTE. He is.

JANE. He sounds great.

JANETTE. He is.

SARAH. Next thing you're going to tell us is he's rich.

JANE. Yeah.

JANETTE. No, he's not rich, but he is a painter.

JANE. A house painter?

JANETTE. Oh no.

SARAH. That's a good job. My bro...

JANETTE. He's an artist. You know, he paints...pictures. You know? Like on canvas.

JANE. And that's his job.

JANETTE. No, that's not his job.

JANE. I was gonna say.

JANETTE. He's a professor.

JANE. Oh.

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JANETTE. He teaches painting.

JANE. Oh.

SARAH. Cool.

JANE. I was going to say that's not a steady job.

JANETTE. No.

SARAH. Does he still paint?

JANETTE. Yeah.

SARAH. Oh. Cool. Have you seen his stuff?

JANETTE. Yeah. It's neat.

JANE. Neat?

JANETTE. Yeah, neat. Paintings can be neat.

JANE. When you don't understand them.

JANETTE. I'm not a complete moron.

JANE. Do you understand them?

JANETTE. Of course not. They're really deep.

JANE. Deep? How are they deep?

JANETTE. He paints stuff that doesn't look like what they look like in real life.

SARAH. Cool.

JANE. You mean he doesn't do realism?

JANETTE. Yeah. It's not realism.

JANE. He's an abstract artist?

JANETTE. Yeah. Abstract. Colors and lines and stuff. It's really neat.

JANE. Sounds neat.

SARAH. That's cool.

JANETTE. Isn't it though?

JANE. How nice.

SARAH. Yeah.

JANE. Are you guys serious?

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JANETTE. Oh, hell no. He's gotta be like forty or something. We're just knocking boots. No big thing.

SARAH. Why not? He sounds great.

JANETTE. Who are you to talk? You're in two committed relationships.

JANE. You can't be in two committed relationships, by definition. You mean she's in an open relationship with two men.

SARAH. Jesus, Jane.

JANE. What?

SARAH. I'm in the room.

JANE. I'm not judging you, sweetheart.

SARAH. That sounded a little judgey.

JANETTE. Yeah.

JANE. It did not.

SARAH. It did.

JANE. Oh, come on.

SARAH. Sorry we can't be like you.

JANE. What does that mean?

SARAH. Perfect body, perfect career, perfect house, perfect relationship.

JANE. Barry left.

JANETTE. What?

JANE. He left.

JANETTE. When?

JANE. A month ago.

SARAH. Why?

JANE. I don't want to talk about it in front of my mother.

SARAH. Then talk quickly before she comes back in the room.

JANE. This is not the time.

JANETTE. How the hell could he leave you?

JANE. He couldn't deal with it.

JANETTE. Since when?

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JANE. Since the beginning. Hell, he couldn't deal with it before we knew about it. He'd left me before. I should've never taken him back last year. I should've...

SARAH. I'm so sorry, Janie.

JANETTE. Yeah.

JANE. Don't say anything in front of my mother.

JANETTE. When are you going to tell Mom?

JANE. Hopefully never.

SARAH. She's bound to ask.

JANE. Hopefully, at the end of the night, like General Douglas MacArthur, she'll just fade away...

STACEY. (*Entering with Elizabeth and Mary. Loud enough for the other women to hear.*) That was such an interesting story about your pastor, Mary. Genuflecting in front of the keg of beer at the church carnival...priceless.

MARY. Yes, he's quite the character.

ELIZABETH. Yes. We're very thankful for him.

JANE. I'm glad you two are finally playing nicely.

STACEY. I apologized for my potty mouth.

MARY. And I apologized for being such an ancient prude.

ELIZABETH. Oh, you are not ancient, hon.

MARY. You see this sweater? I bought this in 1978. When were you born?

ELIZABETH. 1984.

MARY. I rest my case.

ELIZABETH. You're like a fine wine, getting better with age.

STACEY. What a perfect segue. Are we ready for our next pairing?

JANETTE. It's about time.

SARAH. Yes, please.

COMMUNION

STACEY. Ladies, make yourselves comfortable. We have a spicy Cabernet from Chile which would pair nicely with the almonds, dates, and smoked gouda; a light Pinot Grigio from New York which would go well with the fruits, especially the apples and cheddar; and a very fruity Pinot Noir from the Napa Valley which would go with all of it.

JANETTE. I'm getting hungry, let's go with the pinot.

JANE. You always want pinot.

JANETTE. Oh, I almost forgot! The Yellowtail! *(Running to retrieve her forgotten bottle.)*

STACEY. Oh, for the love of God, no!

JANETTE. What, it's good.

SARAH. I kinda like it.

JANE. Girls, you came here to sample good wine.

JANETTE. Yellowtail is good.

SARAH. I kinda like it.

STACEY. We know you kinda like it. It's 4.99 a bottle.

SARAH. Are you saying I'm cheap?

JANE. Of course she's not saying you're cheap.

STACEY. I'm not saying you are cheap, Sarah. We came here to taste wines we have not tasted before. Everyone has had Yellowtail.

ELIZABETH. Well, I haven't.

STACEY. *(Touching her affectionately.)* Oh, that's because you're a virgin, dear.

ELIZABETH. Stacey, I'll have you know I'm no virgin. I was married for six years.

STACEY. That's not what I meant. I meant that as far as...

ELIZABETH. And the bastard is divorcing me! The dirty, two-timing son of a bitch! I mean that exactly! His mother is a total, castrating bitch!

(Pause.)

SARAH. Oh shit.

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ELIZABETH. I'm so sorry. (*Running into the kitchen.*)

MARY. Oh, Lord. I was afraid of that.

JANETTE. At least we've got a live one.

SARAH. Yeah, I thought we were going to have to pull out the old defibrillator.

MARY. Her husband left her for a younger woman.

JANE. Younger than twenty-six? Where did he find her? At a day care center?

MARY. I'll go talk to her.

STACEY. Actually, Mary, I'd like to take this one. Spend some time with your daughter. (*The women sharing a knowing look as Stacey grabs the bottle of Yellowtail before exiting.*)

STACEY. Be right back in two shakes of a lamb's tail. (*Exiting.*)

JANETTE. Oh boy. This should be good.

MARY. What?

JANE. Nothing, mother.

SARAH. So what wine should we try next, now that the expert has left?

JANETTE. She took my pinot, let's take her pinot.

JANE. Fine. I'll do the honors.

SARAH. That's red, right? I like red.

JANETTE. What's this? A smoked cheddar?

JANE. Yup.

JANETTE. It fucking rocks.

MARY. Janette. I raised you better than that.

JANETTE. What?

MARY. Your language.

JANETTE. I'm thirty-five years old, Mary.

MARY. I'm your mother, call me mother.

JANETTE. Yes, *mother*, as long as you get off my fucking back. You're getting pretty heavy.

COMMUNION

JANE. Can't we all play nice for one evening? Just for one evening?
That's all I ask.

JANETTE. Tell her to get...

MARY. Well, I'm sorry if I just don't like...

JANETTE. Off my back for one Saturday....

SARAH. Guys.

MARY. That kind of language spoken in my presence.

JANETTE. Just one Saturday night I'd like a little wine...

MARY. There is no need to talk like that when...

JANETTE. Without my mother treating me like I'm thirteen...

SARAH. GUYS!

JANE. That's it! I'm going for a walk and I'm going to smoke a fucking
cigarette and I'm going to LOVE it! (*Heading for the front door.*)

MARY. You shouldn't smoke, Jane.

JANE. I know it!

MARY. Let me come with you.

JANE. I walk too fast.

MARY. I've been doing senior aerobics.

(*Mary and Jane exit.*)

JANETTE. For the love of God, sometimes I want to strangle her with her
own rosary beads.

SARAH. Why rosary beads?

JANETTE. For poetic fucking irony.

SARAH. Let's drink Stacey's pinot. I bet it's expensive. I'll show her
who's fucking cheap.

JANETTE. Oh, sweet mystery of life, at last I've found you.

SARAH. Mmm. I like red. I don't like the white.

JANETTE. Let's do some damage to this buffet. I'm so hungry I'd eat a
turd if it had a nut in it.

SARAH. Wait.

COMMUNION

JANETTE. (*Mouth full*). Hmm?

SARAH. Before we hit the buffet. How about a like appetite stimulation?
(*Pulling a joint out of her purse.*)

JANETTE. This looks like the beginning of a beautiful relationship.

SARAH. This stuff will make your toes curl.

JANETTE. My mother will smell it in here. She'd smell a match from a hundred yards away.

SARAH. Let's go to Jane's room.

JANETTE. What are we waiting for?

SARAH. Take the bottle. (*They grab the pinot and run off, giggling.*)
(*Pause. Then, Stacey and Elizabeth enter with two glasses of wine.*)

STACEY. You finish that and you'll feel better.

ELIZABETH. Where is everybody?

STACEY. Huh. I don't know.

ELIZABETH. I really don't drink. Bill never drank, so I never drank.

STACEY. Good thing he didn't jump off a cliff.

ELIZABETH. What do you mean?

STACEY. Never mind. Just drink up. (*Pouring them both more wine.*)

ELIZABETH. Oh. If I drink more than one glass, it'll go to my head.

STACEY. That's the whole point.

ELIZABETH. I have to drive later.

STACEY. Don't worry about it. I'll make sure you get home safe.

ELIZABETH. Yeah? Thanks.

STACEY. You're part of the group, now.

ELIZABETH. How so?

STACEY. Didn't you know this is a group of divorced women?

ELIZABETH. No. Mary just asked me to meet Jane.

STACEY. We started meeting here once a month about three years ago. We were all recently divorced, Jane was separated, and we wanted some fun on a Saturday night. None of us felt like going through the hassle of

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dating, so we started meeting here for good wine, fattening gourmet food, and girl talk.

ELIZABETH. I could use a little girl talk.

STACEY. What do you think this is?

ELIZABETH. You are definitely a woman, Stacey, not a girl.

STACEY. I'm not that old. How old do you think I am?

ELIZABETH. Forty?

STACEY. Ouch! I'm thirty-nine. Always guess low, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH. Sorry. You can call me Liz.

STACEY. Thanks, Liz. (*Touching her hand.*)

ELIZABETH. Thanks for taking care of me. I'm sorry I had a meltdown.

STACEY. That's what these nights are for, sweetheart. Whenever one of us has had a bad day, we tell the others we need a night, we go through four or five bottles of wine, and we get a little crazy.

ELIZABETH. I've never done that, I guess.

STACEY. What, did you grow up in a convent, Agnes?

ELIZABETH. What?

STACEY. Agnes of God. It's a theatre reference.

ELIZABETH. Oh.

STACEY. Never mind.

ELIZABETH. I didn't grow up in a convent. I grew up in Skokie.

STACEY. It's the same thing, isn't it?

ELIZABETH. What do you mean?

STACEY. Forget it.

ELIZABETH. Skokie is more Jewish than Catholic.

STACEY. I'm joking with you, Liz. It's called humor. I was saying there isn't much to do in Skokie; it might as well be a convent.

ELIZABETH. Oh. I get it.

STACEY. A joke kind of loses its punch when you have to explain it.

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ELIZABETH. Yeah. Sorry. Bill was so literal minded. I guess we didn't do a lot of joking around.

STACEY. Sounds like a fun guy. What did you do for fun?

ELIZABETH. I don't know. We watched a lot of television. Thursday was bingo night. I was always too busy with the housework: ironing, cooking, cleaning, doing the laundry...

STACEY. And Bill didn't help?

ELIZABETH. No, he thought housework was women's work.

STACEY. You've got to be kidding me.

ELIZABETH. No. I don't think he even knows how to balance the checkbook. Or turn on the oven.

STACEY. And this is the relationship you're bemoaning the loss of?

ELIZABETH. I take...I took my marriage very seriously.

STACEY. As you should. However, this does not sound like a marriage. It sounds like indentured servitude.

ELIZABETH. I guess I was brought up believing that having a successful marriage was what God wanted us to do.

STACEY. Oh, Jesus.

ELIZABETH. What?

STACEY. I know it's the twenty-first century but when you open your mouth, I feel like it's the Middle Ages or something.

ELIZABETH. Don't you think God wants us to have successful marriages?

STACEY. Do you really want to know?

ELIZABETH. Yes.

STACEY. Elizabeth, I think that if there really is some omnipotent, beneficent God up there in the heaven, looking down, I think the very least of his worries would be about your marriage to a sexist troglodyte.

ELIZABETH. Oh?

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STACEY. In fact, if He really is up there, watching us, I think he'd be pretty fucking ecstatic about your divorce.

ELIZABETH. You think? You don't think he'd be mad?

STACEY. You were the man's slave and he traded you in for a younger model and you're twenty-six years old! Twenty-six!

ELIZABETH. You know...

STACEY. Seriously!

ELIZABETH. That's kind of what I think.

STACEY. Of course.

ELIZABETH. And you know what? Bill is bald.

STACEY. (*Laughing loudly.*) That's priceless.

ELIZABETH. And he could lose some weight. He's getting a little bit of a spare tire around the middle.

STACEY. You've got to be kidding me!

ELIZABETH. I have a picture of him on my phone.

STACEY. Oh, this I have to see.

ELIZABETH. Just a sec...

STACEY. This story just keeps getting better.

ELIZABETH. Here, look...

STACEY. Oh, sweet Jesus. He looks like a young Ernest Borgnine. This is who you were married to? What was the attraction?

ELIZABETH. He's very well-respected at our church.

STACEY. I have to ask: What is wrong with you, child?

ELIZABETH. You know what's worse than that?

STACEY. What?

ELIZABETH. I shouldn't say it. It's personal.

STACEY. Now I have to know.

ELIZABETH. He has a small penis.

STACEY. Awesome!

ELIZABETH. Look. I took a picture of it.

COMMUNION

STACEY. Oh! Oh! That just makes my day! (*Janette and Sarah enter, high.*)

SARAH. Hey guys! What's up?

STACEY. Guys! You're going to love this!

ELIZABETH. Oh, no, don't...

JANETTE. What's going on?

STACEY. Come here! You've got to see this!

ELIZABETH. I don't think I'm comfortable...

SARAH. What is it?

JANETTE. What do you...

ELIZABETH. Stacey, I don't feel comfortable.

STACEY. You're part of the group now, yes or no? (*Stacey, Janette, and Sarah all look at Elizabeth.*)

ELIZABETH. Yes.

STACEY. Elizabeth here took a photo of her two-timing husband's teeny little dick.

SARAH. Epic!

JANETTE. That's awesome! (*Stacey shows them the photo. They all scream for an extended period of time. Janette grabs Elizabeth and jumps up and down. Elizabeth screams along with them.*)

ELIZABETH. This is fun! (*Jane and Mary enter.*)

JANE. What's going on?

JANETTE. We're looking at Elizabeth's hubby's tiny prick.

JANE. What are you talking about? (*Sarah grabs the phone and shows it to Jane. Jane screams.*) It looks like a thumb.

MARY. Ladies, ladies, ladies! Volume! You're hurting my ears! (*Jane shows her the photo. Mary screams and falls back onto the couch. Blackout.*)

COMMUNION

SCENE 3

Sarah and Janette are piling food onto plates and just eating off the table. Jane is giving Mary a glass of water. Stacey is sitting close to Elizabeth.

JANE. Drink that, mother, you'll feel better.

MARY. Thank you, honey.

JANE. You took quite a spill.

MARY. That came as quite a shock.

SARAH. It was only a small dick, it couldn't hurt you.

JANETTE. If it tried. *(They all giggle.)*

MARY. Oh, I know it was only...

JANETTE. I can't get enough of this cheese. I feel like a big mouse.

SARAH. This Swiss cheese is awesome on these garlic Triscuits.

MARY. Something I've never seen before.

JANE. You've seen a penis before, mother, I know.

JANETTE. Try the grapes and cashews at the same time.

MARY. I had only seen your father's....your father's....

STACEY. Cock.

MARY. Before.

JANETTE. What?

MARY. Don't talk with your mouth full, dear.

JANETTE. You've only seen a single one-eyed trouser snake in your life?

MARY. Dear, don't go making up words to shock me.

JANETTE. Dad has been dead since the late nineties.

MARY. March 28th, 1998.

JANE. We know, mom.

SARAH. I love these crackers!

STACEY. Slow down, Sarah.

ELIZABETH. I'm sorry I showed that photo.

COMMUNION

JANETTE. Mom, haven't you ever watched porn?

MARY. Of course not.

JANETTE. You and Dad never watched porn together?

MARY. Oh, no.

JANE. How are they going to find it, Janette? Both were computer illiterate. Mom won't even get a cell phone no matter how much I beg.

JANETTE. Magazines?

MARY. Never.

JANETTE. Dad had a stack this high out in the garage. You had to know about that.

MARY. Of course I knew about that. Nobody changes their oil that often.

SARAH. That's hilarious!

JANETTE. Isn't it?

SARAH. I just got a really vivid mental picture. You got any more of the white cheese?

STACEY. The smoked gouda?

SARAH. It's very good-ah. *(Janette and Sarah giggle.)*

JANE. What's gotten into you?

JANETTE. Oh. Sarah and I had a brief...telephone...conversation with our old friend M.J....Mary J...

STACEY. Ohhhhh.....

JANE. When?

JANETTE. While you were outside.

STACEY. Of course.

MARY. Who's this?

JANE. Just a friend of ours.

STACEY. Where, pray tell, did you speak with M.J.?

MARY. Is she coming over?

SARAH. We spoke to her briefly in your bedroom. She said that...

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(Janette giggles.) Shh. She said that if you found yourself alone in the bedroom with a few minutes on your hands... *(Janette giggles.)* Shh. You should give her a call. I think I left my 'cell phone' in your room. On top of your dresser. Away from prying eyes.

STACEY. I want to talk to her, too!

ELIZABETH. How do you know her?

JANE. Oh. She's an old friend we met in college for the first time.

(Stacey begins whispering to Elizabeth.)

MARY. I don't remember you talking about her.

JANE. I don't know if you would approve of her.

MARY. Heavens, why not?

JANETTE. Mary Jane is kind of an old hippie.

ELIZABETH. Oh! I want to meet her...talk to her, too.

MARY. I'm not all that judgmental.

JANETTE. Oh, come on, mother.

MARY. What?

JANETTE. It's your full-time job.

MARY. How can you say that?

JANETTE. We still love you.

MARY. Am I judgmental?

JANETTE. Does the Pope shit in the woods? *(Sarah laughs uncontrollably.)* What?

SARAH. You mixed the two.

JANETTE. The two what?

SARAH. Does the Pope wear a funny hat and does a bear shit in the...

JANETTE. Woods! *(They laugh.)*

MARY. It's not really that funny. You two act just like you've been smoking that wacky weed. *(They all stare at her.)* You know, marijuana.

JANE. What do you know about it, mom?

MARY. I lived through the sixties you know.

COMMUNION

JANETTE. Did you poke smot?

SARAH. She means, did you smoke pot? *(They laugh.)*

MARY. Oh, sure, all the time.

JANE. Mother!

MARY. What, Jane?

JANE. You smoked pot?

MARY. It was the *sixties*, Jane. I mean, get with it.

JANE. I can't believe it.

MARY. I'm sure you don't know what it's like, dear, but it makes you act just like these two. You get the munchies uncontrollably and you giggle at just about everything. It used to make me really...

JANE. What?

MARY. I shouldn't say it.

JANETTE. Come on, mom.

MARY. It used to make me horny.

JANETTE. Mom!

SARAH. That's so epic!

MARY. It was the *sixties*.

JANETTE. We get it. Why didn't you ever get high with me?

MARY. Why would I do that?

JANETTE. Because it would be awesome.

SARAH. It would be the coolest thing ever.

MARY. Oh, I outgrew all that.

JANETTE. Outgrew what?

MARY. You know, going out to parties, smoking pot, getting involved with politics, all that.

JANETTE. Why? Why did you outgrow all that?

MARY. Well, I got married and I had Jane, and I grew up.

JANE. What do you mean, you grew up? Why did you have to change so much when I was born?

COMMUNION

MARY. Of course I did. That's what you do. You get married, you settle down, you have kids. You grow up.

JANETTE. That sounds so depressing.

MARY. It's reality. You can't be young and single your whole life. I mean, by the time you're forty, you gotta realize, you're not young anymore. You need to grab the nearest man and settle before it's too late. It's time to put those childish things away.

SARAH. I wish you hadn't said that. That totally killed my buzz. And now I feel fat.

JANETTE. She wasn't talking about you.

SARAH. She wasn't, like, me specifically she was talking about, but...

JANE. She wasn't talking about *you*, Sarah.

SARAH. I'm going to be forty soon. Next month. I live with one man who I can tolerate, who's got a decent amount of money, and I'm comfortable, and I'm desperately in love with another man who I can never be with. He wants me to commit to him but that would mean moving to Cleveland, and getting, like, a real job, which I'm just not going to do. I don't know which one would be worse. I'm still trying to be an actress and I'm going to be...fffff....fffff...forty. (*Begining to cry.*)

JANETTE. It's okay. She wasn't talking about you.

SARAH. But it's true. My life is a complete mess. And if something happens to Benny, I think I'll put a bullet in my head.

STACEY. God, we're back to the cat.

SARAH. I love my cat, Stacey!

STACEY. I know. I just get tired of hearing about it, is all.

SARAH. Well, you'd think a rug muncher like you couldn't get enough talk about pussy.

JANETTE and **JANE.** Sarah!

ELIZABETH. What?

SARAH. And I am not fucking financially CHEAP, Stacey.

COMMUNION

STACEY. I meant you were cheap MORALLY, Sarah.

SARAH. Fuck you!

JANE. Hey!

STACEY. You wish.

JANETTE. Guys!

STACEY. No, this is fun. The woman who is in two open relationships calls me a rug muncher. This is wonderful.

MARY. Rug muncher?

ELIZABETH. Really?

JANE. She means lesbian, mother.

MARY. Why would she munch on rugs?

JANETTE. She means she licks vaginas.

MARY. Oh, Lord!

JANE. Let's all relax. Let's settle down.

STACEY. I don't want to settle down. Okay, gang. I prefer the company of women. Big, fucking deal! I tried the whole marriage thing. I tried to be committed to a man who had the emotional capacity of a clam. I tried to make things work for eight long years. We did couples therapy, we tried medication, we tried swinging; we tried everything. It just didn't work. I need someone who is not afraid to share her emotions with me. I need someone emotionally available. And I'm sorry, but men just don't cut the mustard with me anymore. I need someone who can talk about more than just the Bulls, the Bears, or the fucking Cubs. I mean, they haven't won the World Series since 1908. Really? Do we really gotta believe this year is any different? I need someone who is vulnerable. I need someone who talks to me and who listens to me in return. That's what I need. Why does it matter that I think I can find that with a woman?

ELIZABETH. You tried swinging?

STACEY. Yes.

JANETTE. What was it like?

COMMUNION

STACEY. I got herpes.

MARY. This is getting...

JANE. Okay, gang, once we bring up herpes, we might be going too far.

SARAH. At least I'm herpes free, Stacey.

STACEY. Do you get cold sores, Sarah?

SARAH. Yeah.

STACEY. Then you have herpes.

ELIZABETH. Do we have to talk about herpes?

SARAH. I might have herpes, but at least it's on my mouth, not my crotch.

STACEY. You could give your herpes to one of your boyfriends' crotch, have you thought of that? Then they would have crotch herpes.

JANETTE. You know I don't edit myself, gang, but my mother's in the room.

MARY. I've gotten cold sores before.

JANETTE. Now my mother has herpes, great.

MARY. I didn't know I had herpes.

JANE. I think it's time for a change in topic. Stacey, why don't you tell us about our next pairing?

STACEY. I think the stoner twins have ruined that at this point.

JANE. How about for us who haven't partaken?

ELIZABETH. Let's all get high.

MARY. Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH. C'mon, Mary. Let's all toke a little doobage.

JANETTE. I really like this one.

STACEY. Me, too.

MARY. It's not the sixties anymore for me, thank you.

JANETTE. Okay, gang. All ladies who want to toke a little doobage, poke a little smot, ride the red eye express; let's reconvene in Jane's room.

JANE. When did my room become the Hookah Lounge?

COMMUNION

ELIZABETH. I can't wait! *(They begin to file out, eventually leaving Mary and Jane.)*

SARAH. Have you ever gotten high before?

ELIZABETH. Nope.

JANETTE. A virgin.

ELIZABETH. Yea!

STACEY. This should be interesting. *(They are gone.)*

JANE. I feel this evening has gotten out of hand.

MARY. It is a little wilder than usual. *(Pause.)*

JANE. Mom?

MARY. Huh?

JANE. Did you mean all that about growing up, or were you just trying to get a rise out of Janette?

MARY. Oh, your sister has long since stopped listening to me.

JANE. Why do you want her to get married again?

MARY. She's not getting any younger.

JANE. So she doesn't want to get married again. So one divorce was enough for her. What's the big deal?

MARY. I just don't want her to be alone.

JANE. She'll never be alone. She goes through boyfriends like toilet paper.

MARY. She sleeps around because she's lonely, Jane.

JANE. We're all lonely, Mom. You're lonely.

MARY. I'm a widow.

JANE. What's that supposed to mean?

MARY. Nothing.

JANE. No, seriously. What's that supposed to mean?

MARY. It wasn't my choice.

JANE. Jesus, mom. Barry left me.

MARY. But he smartened up. He came back, because you are married.

COMMUNION

JANE. Barry left again.

MARY. What?

JANE. He's been gone for a month.

MARY. Why didn't you...

JANE. So was that my choice, mother?

MARY. Why did he leave?

JANE. I don't know, mother. Why don't you ask him, instead of blaming me for choosing a weak, fickle husband?

MARY. There has got to be a reason.

JANE. What do you think it is?

MARY. How would I know?

JANE. How do you think my body looks at this point? Do you want to see the scars, mother?

MARY. No, I don't want to see the scars.

JANE. Do you think my plumbing works the same way it did?

MARY. Oh, Jane.

JANE. It's very painful to have sex, mother. But I'd let him do it to me. I would take some pain meds and I would grin and bear it. But that wasn't enough for Barry, I guess. I had to enjoy it, even though it was agonizing. So, I guess he waited for the worst of the disease to run its course before leaving because he didn't want to look like a bad guy. And, as soon as it looked like I may be out of the woods, he's off like a prom dress, looking for someone who's whole. Looking for someone's whose body isn't broken. Looking for anyone else but me. Now, you tell me, is that my fault? Was this my choice?

MARY. Of course not. What are you going to do now?

JANE. Look, Mom, having a successful romantic relationship was such an important thing to me for most of my adult life. In fact, I might go so far as to say it went pretty far in defining to myself who I was or how successful I was as a person. I'm not going to do that anymore. I was seeing this

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great guy for a while after Barry left the first time. As soon as Barry asked if I'd have him back, I dropped this guy the next day. And he was really nice, and young. It was hard, but I was married.

MARY. You did the right thing. You need to fight for your marriage.

JANE. This last event has changed that for me. It just isn't important to me anymore, Mom. Mostly because, I think, of the time I have left. There is so much that I need to...want to spend my energy on, and that has just fallen way down the list. *(The group re-enters, laughing.)*

ELIZABETH. Oh boy! The room is spinning.

STACEY. Here, have a seat over here.

ELIZABETH. It's kind of like being on a roller coaster.

STACEY. Just relax.

JANETTE. How do you feel?

ELIZABETH. Hungry. *(Stumbling over to the table of food.)*

SARAH. Me, too.

JANETTE. Hey fatty.

SARAH. I know. I'll stop. I don't want the bulimia to come back. Eight years of puking was enough. You know how bad stomach acid rots your teeth? I need another root canal. I don't know where I'll find the money. Go ahead and say it, Stacey.

STACEY. I didn't say anything.

SARAH. Have my sugar daddy pay for it, just like my boobs. He didn't pay for these. I used my inheritance from my grandmother.

STACEY. I did not say anything about you. I don't want to fight anymore, Sarah. I'm sorry. I apologize for my behavior.

SARAH. No, it's me. I'm being cunt. Sometimes pot makes me paranoid. Sorry. It's just that I've been under a lot of stress with the cats.

STACEY. Friends?

SARAH. Yes. *(They hug. Stacey gives her behind a squeeze.)*

SARAH. Oh! Hey!

COMMUNION

STACEY. Just kidding!

JANETTE. You can't be feeling any stress right now.

SARAH. No. I'm feeling pretty good. I'm feeling warm and toasty.

STACEY. Feeling no pain.

ELIZABETH. Oh my God, I'm hungry.

MARY. Girls, now you gave Elizabeth the munchies.

ELIZABETH. I could really go for a steak right now.

STACEY. We still have all these hors d'oeuvres.

ELIZABETH. Can we make some spaghetti?

JANE. You know what? Let's make some pasta. That's not a bad idea. I haven't eaten anything.

SARAH. None for me. I'm so stuffed full of cheese, I'm going to be constipated like a son of a bitch tomorrow...

JANETTE. Instead of taking all that hydrocodone, you should be smoking the ganga. It would so help with your appetite during chemo.

ELIZABETH. What?

JANETTE. Have you talked to your oncologist about medical marijuana? That would be awesome if we could get a prescription. That stuff would blow this shit out of the water.

SARAH. Hey!

JANETTE. Oh, this is good pot, hon, but have you tried that medical stuff? It would knock even a pro dooper like you on her ass.

ELIZABETH. Do you have cancer? *(Pause.)*

JANE. Yes, Elizabeth. I have cancer.

ELIZABETH. Oh my God. I'm sorry.

JANE. I'm sorry, I assumed you knew.

MARY. I didn't know how to bring it up.

ELIZABETH. I'm so sorry.

JANE. It's really okay. I've been living with it for two years now.

ELIZABETH. What kind?

COMMUNION

MARY. Let's talk about something else.

JANE. No. It's okay. I went in for a routine colonoscopy because I thought I might have hemorrhoids. Nope. Stage three rectal cancer. At that time, they told me the five-year survival rate is thirty-five to sixty percent.

ELIZABETH. Stage three?

JANE. That means it has started to spread to your lymph nodes.

ELIZABETH. Oh. What does that mean?

JANE. It means they have to start cutting if you want to live. I feel like a giant pin cushion at this point.

ELIZABETH. What do they do?

MARY. Jane...

JANE. Without getting too graphic, they open you up. They pull out your intestines. They cut out the bad parts. Then they connect the healthy tissue and make you a new pathway.

ELIZABETH. Wow. That...

JANE. It sucks.

ELIZABETH. Yes, it does.

JANE. And you have to stay in the hospital until you fart.

ELIZABETH. What?

MARY. Jane.

JANE. What, I can tell her about my ass cancer, but I can't talk about farting?

MARY. And don't say ass cancer.

JANETTE. We waited by her bed for a couple days waiting for her to push out the squeaker.

SARAH. I was there!

JANETTE. She said, "I think it's coming." Then we all got quiet.

SARAH. It went phhhhht.

JANETTE. And we all screamed!

SARAH. The nurses told us to keep it down.

COMMUNION

JANETTE. And I yelled, “My sister just farted!”

JANE. It was the most satisfying toot of my life, I can tell you that much.

STACEY. It was a big day for all of us.

JANE. Barry was too busy to be there, of course. But my girls were there for me. And my Mom.

JANETTE. That son of...never mind.

JANE. It’s okay. I told Mom he left again.

JANETTE. I gotta say it: Barry is an asshole.

STACEY. Hear, hear!

JANETTE. I have never liked Barry.

MARY. It’s not Christian to talk about someone when he isn’t there to defend himself.

JANETTE. You are going to defend your daughter’s husband who leaves her while she’s in the hospital taking chemotherapy? Really?

MARY. Well...no.

JANETTE. Talk about one of the lowest things you can do to another human being.

STACEY. It says a lot about his character.

JANE. It’s my fault.

JANETTE. Jane!

JANE. I should have never taken him back. I should have stayed with David.

SARAH. David the actor? He was cute! And young!

JANE. Yeah. I have to admit that was fun.

STACEY. He had nice, blue eyes.

SARAH. Yeah. And a tight little ass.

JANE. And a great, big...

MARY. Jane!

JANE. I was going to say a great, big smile!

MARY. Sure you were.

COMMUNION

STACEY. Do you still have his number?

JANETTE. You should give him a call.

JANE. Yeah right.

JANETTE. You should.

JANE. Don't be ridiculous.

JANETTE. You look great. I'm sure he'd be happy to hear from you.

JANE. Yeah. "Hey, David, I know I haven't called you since I dumped you to go back to my husband, but do you want to date again? Oh yeah, you should know I have this raging case of ass cancer and I've had several surgeries reorganizing my guts. If they have to cut anymore it means I'll have to have a colostomy bag. I know, isn't that sexy?"

JANETTE. C'mon, sis.

JANE. No, you c'mon. "I know you said you were falling in love with me, and I know I said I was falling in love with you. Yeah, sorry about all that. Sorry I went back to my loser husband who I did not love at the time, but with whom I was familiar. Comfortable. So, now I'm looking for a commitment. Now, two years later. I want you to commit to me and sit by my side while you watch me die. You up for that?" *(Pause.)*

MARY. Jane...*(Pause.)*

JANETTE. Jane?

JANE. I wasn't going...*(Pause.)*

STACEY. We're here for you, Jane. Just like we have been. Just like we will be.

JANE. Sorry, guys. I didn't want to spoil ladies' night. I had a checkup today.

MARY. Oh no.

JANE. Sorry, Mom. I wasn't going to tell you, yet. I haven't even processed it. Well, I'm stage four. *(Pause.)* That means it has escaped containment. It's in my lungs. Approximately seven percent of people at this stage are alive after five years. *(Blackout.)*

COMMUNION

***THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS—
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