

empty

by

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SCENE ONE.

*New York City, 1980.*

*Karen in the studio, standing in front of a microphone, wearing headphones over one ear.*

KAREN

Hey, can we stop?

Sorry,

I,

uh,

I don't think that line is orchestrated right.

...

Yeah, it's just-

It's too-

...

Yeah.

And it makes it hard to hear,

to hear my pitch coming out of the instrumental.

...

What do you think, Bob?

...

No, no, I'm fine,

I'm-

It's, it's, it's not-

...

I'm not out of breath.

...

I'm not flat, Bob,

it's the

the piano there-

it clashes with the- with the-

...

Well, I don't want to take a break- I don't need a break,  
we've only been working a couple hours.

...

If I say I'm good for it, then I'm good for it, alright?

...

No- Hey, they can't take ten unless I say so-

I'm producing this thing.

KAREN (cont'd)

...

Don't talk to me like I'm a-

...

Phil, are you in there?

What do you think of the-

...

No, I'm good.

...

I said I don't want anything,

now will you look at the piano right before the-

...

Yeah, I did,

this morning.

...

Well, I'm not gonna-

I'm not-

...

Will you-

Just-

*She grabs her hair and screams.*

## SCENE TWO.

*New York City, 1989.*

*Marc-Pierre, a nice-but-not-chic restaurant on the Upper West Side.*

*Table for two. Michael (an almost classy entree, like grilled salmon) and Catherine (a cheeseburger).*

MICHAEL

Jesus, I love how you eat...

I love other things about you too.

A lot of things.

CATHERINE

...

MICHAEL

I love how you smile,

how you snort when you laugh.

I love that you read Dostoyevsky for fun.

I love how you passionately,

vociferously hate The Smiths.

I love how you sleep in the middle of the bed...

Boy,

you're really scarfing that down.

CATHERINE

I'm hungry.

MICHAEL

Sure.

Well,

I was just saying that I-

I love how you can

fart in front of me-

CATHERINE

Stop!

MICHAEL

-how you can fart in front of me,

MICHAEL (cont'd)

but you still use the bathroom at the end of the hall,  
even though there's a perfectly good bathroom in our apartment-

CATHERINE

I don't shit where I eat.

MICHAEL

I love how you'll swear in front of me like it's nothing,  
but you still pretend you're a freaking Mennonite-

CATHERINE

Methodist.

MICHAEL

*Evangelical* Methodist when you're on the phone with your dad.

I love that we've lived together for two years,  
and you still haven't told him.

But...

I think it's time to change that.

CATHERINE

Michael, no-no-no-no-no.

My parents would honestly disinherit me.

I know your family are liberated

Westchesterers, but if my father knew, or  
even thought, that I had sex before getting  
married-

You don't get it.

MICHAEL

If you could just-

I love how you are pathologically unable to  
let me finish a sentence without interrupting  
me.

No, you don't get it!

*Michael reaches into his jacket pocket and takes out a ring box and gets down on one knee. Before he even gets to say the words, Catherine gets out of her chair and gets down on her knee too.*

CATHERINE

Ohfuckfuckfuckfuck-

Yes, yes, yes, yes,

YES!

MICHAEL

See, I love everything about you,  
and I think it's time for us-

*She throws her arms around Michael and kisses him.*

## SCENE THREE.

*Karen in the recording booth. Later.*

KAREN

Hey, fellas,

I just

want to say...

...

I wasn't

feeling so great earlier,

but

I'm okay now.

*puts on the headphones again*

So.

...

Sorry if I...

You know.

I'd really just like to-

Steve, if you could

take the piano out

when we get to that part

coming out of the break?

It's not you, it's just-

I can't hear it right now.

You can lay down a separate track

later.

So, yeah,

if we could just

take it from-

...

Gimme a four count.

*She closes her eyes and takes a deep breath.*

SCENE FOUR.

*Marc-Pierre. Dessert. Him: chocolate cake. Her: vanilla ice cream.*

*A visitor.*

JO

Excuse me?

I just wanted to say  
congratulations to you both-

MICHAEL

Thank you!

JO

-and

I'd like to buy your meal.

MICHAEL

Oh! You don't have to do that-

JO

My husband proposed to me  
in a restaurant like this in Milwaukee-  
where we're from-  
and that night  
a very nice older couple paid for our dinner.  
So,  
I'd just like to return the favor  
and do the same for you.

*Michael stands to shake her hand.*

MICHAEL

Well, thank you very, very much!

JO

It's my pleasure.

MICHAEL

*putting a hand on Catherine's shoulder*  
We should get engaged more often, huh, Cathie?

*Catherine continues eating her ice cream, not looking up.*

MICHAEL

*to Jo*

Is your husband here with you? I'd love to say thank you.

JO

Oh no,

I'm just in town for the weekend,  
moving my daughter into her dorm.

*Jo points to another table across the restaurant. Michael waves to the unseen person occupying it.*

MICHAEL

Where's she go to school?

JO

She's a sophomore at Columbia.

MICHAEL

Too bad. I teach Comp Lit at NYU.

JO

I'd never have guessed you were old enough to be a professor.

MICHAEL

Well, you don't look old enough to have a daughter in college.

JO

Oh, aren't you the charmer.

*turning to Catherine*

You're a lucky, young lady.

*Catherine quickly swallows the last bite of vanilla ice cream. She wipes her mouth and stands up. Now they're all standing. No one knows what to do.*

CATHERINE

Yes.

...



MICHAEL

Well...

JO

Well,

MICHAEL

Thank you again.

CATHERINE

Yes.

Thank you.

JO

Like I said,  
congratulations.

CATHERINE

Excuse me.

*Catherine steps around Jo and heads for the restroom.*

## SCENE FIVE.

*Karen sitting on the toilet in the bathroom of her extravagant hotel suite. Her head is in her hands. A bottle of laxatives sits on the counter next to her, and two magazines (already read cover to cover) lie on the floor at her feet.*

*We hear her loudly taking a shit. Or rather, we hear air, liquid, and what little waste is left being expelled from her body. Loudly. Maybe it's funny at first, but then... it keeps going. And going.*

*Karen sits up on the toilet and starts thumping her stomach with her fist. To no avail.*

*The phone rings.*

*She nearly leaps off the seat. It rings again. With one hand, she grabs the countertop, with the other, she accidentally grabs the toilet handle, flushing by mistake. She gasps, then sees that there is a phone on the wall right next to the toilet. She answers it.*

KAREN

Hello?

...

Oh my God,

Richard, hi!

Can you hear me alright?

...

Fine, fine,

I didn't know there was a phone in here.

...

Oh, I'm-

I'm in the bedroom

of

the suite.

I guess there's a phone in every room.

...

You didn't wake me, don't be silly.

I'm just

catching my breath.

It's so good to hear your voice.

*Her stomach rumbles. Loudly:*

KAREN

How-

how you holding up?

KAREN (cont'd)

...

Oh, do I?

Well, I was in the studio all day,

I guess I'm just

pooped.

*We hear more gas and liquid coming out. It catches Karen by surprise. And it hurts.*

KAREN

But, listen, don't worry about me.

I want to hear all about you,

tell me about everything.

Is the staff good there?

...

Uh-huh.

...

Uh-huh.

*More gas. Karen nearly doubles over, clutching her stomach. She maintains a more or less happy demeanor as she continues talking to Richard on the phone.*

KAREN

Well, that all sounds just-

Good.

You sound

good.

*Karen is crying. She just can't let Richard hear it.*

KAREN

...

I am good.

We're both good.

SCENE SIX.

*Marc-Pierre. The ladies' room.*

*Catherine emerges from a stall. Jo waits for her, standing with her arms crossed.*

JO

You're out of control.

CATHERINE

What?

JO

I heard you in there.

What you're doing,  
no self-control.

CATHERINE

What I'm doing?

JO

I  
heard  
you.

*Catherine pushes past Jo to the sink. She starts washing her hands.*

CATHERINE

That's really strange.  
That you were listening.

JO

I saw the way you got up from that table.  
I knew something was wrong.

CATHERINE

Yes, I felt sick.

JO

Don't lie to me, I can see right through it.

CATHERINE

E-excuse me?

JO

I did pay for that meal, remember?

CATHERINE

Nobody asked you to.

In fact, I'm pretty sure we told you  
you didn't have to-

JO

Who taught you that trick with the vanilla ice cream?  
One of the girls in ballet class?

CATHERINE

I'm not comfortable with this conversation.

*Jo takes one of Catherine's hands. Catherine doesn't recoil.*

JO

That ring looks really beautiful on you.  
*rubbing her thumb over Catherine's knuckles*  
It really stands out against those bruised knuckles.

CATHERINE

*pulling her hand away*  
Don't touch me.

JO

Once you put something in your body, it's in.  
What you're doing to get it back out is making everything worse.  
It makes your face and neck blow up.  
And you think you can't stop now,  
because you look more and more like a chipmunk,  
and maybe if you just keep doing it,  
your face'll finally thin out.  
It's a vicious cycle.

*Catherine steps away, heading for the door. Jo cuts her off.*

CATHERINE

You're sick.

JO

I was.

But I'm in control now.

You can be too,  
if you want to be.

*Jo opens her clutch and takes out a tube of lipstick. She takes a paper towel from next to the sink and starts writing.*

JO

I'd say let's get together and talk,  
but I fly back to Wisconsin first thing Monday morning.  
Here's my home address.  
Write me anytime you want.  
Here.

*Catherine takes it.*

JO

I'm not a lunatic, by the way.  
This is really out of character for me.  
I only-  
I saw you at dinner and...  
A beautiful, young girl like you-  
you've only just begun,  
you shouldn't be harming yourself like this.  
You deserve to have the life you want.  
All that is to say,  
I know what you're going through,  
and it's dangerous,  
and  
I can help you.  
*taking Catherine's hand again*  
Good luck, Catherine.

*Jo exits, leaving Catherine stupefied and alone, looking at the address.*

## SCENE SEVEN.

*Karen, still on the toilet. It is the next morning. She's fallen asleep there. In another room, we can faintly hear an alarm clock ringing. The phone rings, waking her with a start.*

*Karen answers it, groggy and dehydrated.*

KAREN

He-Hello?

...

What time is it?

...

Oh, gosh,

I didn't hear the alarm go off,

I fell asleep in the other room.

...

Yeah, I'm in the  
sitting room.

...

I'm not- I-

I don't feel well.

...

I just-

Listen, Phil, you're gonna hear me say something you've never heard me say before,  
and I just want to get it over with:

I'm not gonna make it today, I'm not up to it,

tell the boys I'm sorry,

and have them lay down a track I'll do the vocals tomorrow.

...

No, don't send a doctor,

just

leave me alone for today,

and I'll rest up.

...

Did you hear me?

I said

just leave me

alone.

*Karen slams the phone down. She sits up and pushes with all her might. We hear the quiet hiss of the last pitiful pocket of air as she expels it. Suddenly satisfied, Karen wipes and flushes.*

SCENE EIGHT.

*A compact, mid-level bridal shop.*

*Catherine is in last season's dress.*

SALESWOMAN

Breathtaking, absolutely breathtaking.  
Isn't she breathtaking?

SEAMSTRESS

Very beautiful.

SALESWOMAN

Just *breathtaking*.

SEAMSTRESS

How's it feel?

CATHERINE

Better.  
Than the last one.  
More  
comfortable.

SALESWOMAN

Good! That's good.

*The seamstress picks up a few more pins and approaches Catherine.*

SEAMSTRESS

I won't hurt you.

SALESWOMAN

I'm so sorry nobody else is here to see this!

CATHERINE

Oh.  
My family's all in Indiana, so...

*The seamstress places a pin.*



SEAMSTRESS

Happy?

CATHERINE

Mhm.

SALESWOMAN

Do you want me to take a Polaroid?

CATHERINE

That's okay.

SEAMSTRESS

*placing another pin*

Happy?

CATHERINE

I'm fine.

*turning quickly; urgently back to the saleswoman.*

I don't like taking pictures.

SEAMSTRESS

Hold still just one second, please!

*placing one final pin*

There we go!

SALESWOMAN

Gosh, it really is breathtaking.

*to the seamstress*

What do you think?

SEAMSTRESS

I need to fix this sleeve.

SALESWOMAN

Since it's just us, I'm going to be completely and totally honest with you, okay?

I have to play mommy for a minute.

CATHERINE

Oh...

kay.

SALESWOMAN

This is a dress that really breathes,  
which is terrific for comfort,  
but it doesn't do anything for you in terms of waist-defining.  
So you've got a little bit of a belly here,  
and we don't want anyone to think this is a shotgun wedding!

*The seamstress begins re-pinning the sleeve.*

SEAMSTRESS

Happy?

CATHERINE

Um-

SALESWOMAN

See, they don't make this dress for a  
real  
woman's body,  
and you're a  
real woman!  
So, I think we should try the other dress again.  
What do you say?

...

SEAMSTRESS

*placing one more pin.*

Happy?

CATHERINE

Get it off me.

SALESWOMAN

What?

CATHERINE

Get it off.

I

am not

HAPPY!