

Tornado, 1973
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DRAFT 3
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CHARACTERS

Annette - 32 and 57

Matthew - 8 and 33

Liza - 15 and 40

Frank - 45

Annie - 35

Louisa - 28

PLACE

Up north. Cold.

Trailer park.

Interior of Annette's.

Interior of Louisa's

Exterior. Shared front yard.

Car parts.

Old trunk.

TIME

1974

and

1999

NOTES

*Actors play older/younger versions of characters.

*Flashbacks take place in the memories of the character's minds.

At times, they reflect on their recollection of the memory and step out of the scene.

There's an accepted awareness that the play-world permits the "playing out" of trauma.

11. 1999

*Back to Matthew and Liza.
They're their adult selves.
Stuck in the old memory.
Living presently in the flashback.
They look at Annette.
Who has begun to drool.*

LIZA:

Sometimes you stand in a memory. People do it all the time. Reach out right in front of you. Catch it blindly. But, that's not what this is. There's nothing separating me from this moment. I turned forty last December. I'm pregnant with my second child. Actually, my third child. But, we don't talk about that. And we don't talk about this. It just lives somewhat. Lives strangled. Undying. I go to sleep next to my husband who has no reference point as to — I don't remember her drooling like that. Do you?

*Matthew rolls up his sleeve.
Bites.*

LIZA:

Stop that.

Matthew stops.

LIZA:

We're older now. We don't do that kind of thing.

*Liza cleans herself up.
Puts on her "adult" costume.*

LIZA:

I hold images of this day and forget the details. And forget. Forget her drooling. Did she always drool? I can't remember. Sometimes you stand in it. Right? And I - sometimes I stand in it, and I can reach out and touch the wounds. Touch Dad's face. The pavement gouging into my barefoot. I stand in it. The muck of it all. But, this time, it's standing in me. Matthew?

Matthew looks at her.

LIZA:

Please don't make me stand alone.

*Matthew laughs.
Walks outside.
She follows.*

MATTHEW:

Don't.

LIZA:

We have to -

MATTHEW:

We don't.

LIZA:

Just trying to -

MATTHEW:

You're trying to make sense of something that has no sense.

You're trying to drag me into this corrupt nostalgia.

You're trying to diminish and degrade and -

I don't fucking know what you're trying to do Liza, but I don't want a part of it.

LIZA:

We have to clean out the house.

MATTHEW:

I know we have to clean out the house. I'm here to clean out the house.

But, instead of cleaning the house. You're pulling me into this sick replay of our -

LIZA:

It's not sick, it's what happened.

MATTHEW:

Look, I'm not interested in being your family. I'm sorry if that hurts. But, we both know it's the truth. We came out of here different people. Why are we trying to pretend to be something we're -

LIZA:

You're my brother.

MATTHEW:

By blood, but blood doesn't mean much now-a-days.

LIZA:

What does that mean?

MATTHEW:

I just find it kind of interesting that you're all up in arms about biological bereavement when you literally -

LIZA:

You know what? Fuck -

MATTHEW:

Yeah, yeah. Fuck me. I'm always so cynical and -

LIZA:

I was just a kid.

MATTHEW:

We were both just kids, christ, Liza. It's all about you all the time. This has nothing to do with you.

LIZA:

How could you say that?

MATTHEW:

Because it's true! What happened that day, you know, I don't remember a lot of it, but it had nothing to do with us. People get angry sometimes. Some people don't know how to -

LIZA:

This isn't about anger management, are you kidding me? "People get angry sometimes". Is that how you justify? Christ, what the fuck's wrong with you?

MATTHEW:

What the fuck IS wrong with me, that's the question we all have been asking for years, isn't it?

LIZA:

You know what, you do this all the time. Since we were young. You'll say some jackass comment, and somehow swindle your way into your mental superiority like you're really the victim here.

MATTHEW:

I am so sorry, Liza. You're right. You are the victim. You are totally so wronged. Poor you. Poor you ditching your baby on the neighbor's porch step.

*Liza hits him. Over and over.
Not hard. But, enough to surprise them both.*

MATTHEW:

Stop. Shh. Just stop.

A moment of still.

LIZA:

You don't know what it's like to have created something so beautiful. To love something so much. And have it ruined for you.

MATTHEW:

Look, whatever, all right.

LIZA:

I got pregnant two weeks later. Mom was in ICU. You were - I don't fucking know where.

MATTHEW:

The neighbor's.

LIZA:

I was living in Tommy's car. I was just running. I was just - no one told me what it would be like. Or what to do or. I felt less alone. Yeah. So I wanted to keep it. But, I didn't want it to be born, you know? I just wanted to have it inside me. So I'd never be alone. I didn't. I had just become a woman in that sense, and I didn't know what it meant. I left with no expectations of returning, and yet somehow, I circled back here. And I had her. And I. I looked at her and all I saw was the pain. Mom's pain. My pain. Your pain. Just the whole fucked up thing. And she was so beautiful, you know. Some babies. Believe me, I deliver babies. Some of those things. From out of this world, and not in a good way. But, my baby. My first one? God. She was out of this world. She put us all to shame. And it's as if - If. I would look at her, and she would slowly just configure into this disturbing mess. Like somehow in making her, all the horror of that day, got imprinted. And every time I looked at her I just would wind up back here again. And I want to leave here. For good, I mean. So, forgive me, Matthew, for trying to be family to you. I guess you're right. I don't know what it means.

MATTHEW:

Thank you.

LIZA:

Thank you? God you're so fucked up. I just can't. Forget the whole thing. Alright. When are the movers coming?

MATTHEW:

What movers?

LIZA:

I asked you to hire movers. To clean out the house.

MATTHEW:

I thought we would just do it.

LIZA:

I'm pregnant.

MATTHEW:

So?

LIZA:
I'm ten weeks pregnant I can't move anything.

MATTHEW:
Fine. I'll just do it.

LIZA:
And put it where?

MATTHEW:
In my car.

LIZA:
You don't have a trunk.

MATTHEW:
I have a trunk.

LIZA:
I asked you to call the moving company. They hold everything in pods until we can find -

MATTHEW:
Pod? What the fuck is that.

LIZA:
Christ, I asked you to do one thing. One fucking thing.

MATTHEW:
Well, sorry.

LIZA:
You know what? I thought this was going to be a good day. I really had high hopes. That we could I don't know somehow come out on the other side of this and be okay. I tried to be nice and you know offer you something, offer you some time to express how you feel. Because you just bottle that shit up and look at you. I mean, I tried. To help. In some way. Do the right thing. But, you're just so -

MATTHEW:
Depressing, right? Well, go ahead and leave, Liza. I don't care. This entire family has turned away from me since I was a kid because I was a little out of the box. So what? You don't see me pissing and moaning about it. I came here for practical reasons. 1. I need to get my baseball cards. 2. I have some sort of yada yada legal obligation to decipher dad's will. And 3. Mom's about to die and I need a place to live.

LIZA:

Sounds like you got it all figured out.

MATTHEW:

I just don't have patience for sentimental stuff. Why dwell, you -

LIZA:

It's not dwelling.

MATTHEW:

You know what I mean.

LIZA:

I don't. I don't want to come here. In my mind, I mean. I just can't help it. And maybe after it dies. After the house is sold. And Mom dies. And her house is sold. Maybe, I'll start to forget to live or —

MATTHEW:

Sometimes when I'm in there, I remember the sounds. But, that's it. Makes a weird sound. Not like how you'd think. More like tearing. But, smaller. And it smells strange. Like metal. I used to like it. Got nosebleeds and would suck the tissue. People think that's gross, but I didn't care. It was just me. Parts of me, coming out. I couldn't help it.

Liza goes on her phone.

Matthew watches her.

Takes a photo.

Turns away.

Liza doesn't notice.

MATTHEW:

Christ. I think I've seen a ghost.

12. 1974 + 1999.

Frank sets a small fire.

FRANK:

Of my household
 My wife and I
 The baby and I
 My son and I
 And I
 lonely
 And I
 grotesquely
 And I
 flame
 And I the flame
 of my household
 Above my household
 Not my wife
 Not my arms, face
 My face is drawn
 Waving
 When my wife is sleeping
 I am best lonely
 The flame
 I am not the flame of my household

*Matthew looks at him.
 They see each other.
 Frank takes out a gun.
 Matthew doesn't react.
 Frank takes out an axe.
 Matthew doesn't react.
 Frank takes out a pocket knife.
 Matthew is still.
 Frank looks at it.
 He begins to cry.
 Matthew goes to take a picture.
 He freezes.
 He drops his camera.
 He runs.
 Liza hangs up the phone.
 Picks up his camera.
 Looks through his photos.*