

# The Versatility Of Bacon Fat

By

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FADE IN: An old sepia toned photograph of a street scene. It is main street in a nondescript town circa 1927. Music of the time plays underneath - something which calls to mind the innocence of the era rather than the excess of flappers and gin joints. A standard of the time.

OPENING SEQUENCE - MONTAGE OF PHOTOS AND FILM WITH VOICE OVER

\*At right margin, preceding each line is a suggestion for the montage images.

Hospital/Mother holding baby

GRAHAM (VO)

I was born just a few years before the Great Depression. I have no memory of those happier times, the days when my parents didn't worry about every last dime. Only a few photographs.

Bread line/Newsies

My first memories of childhood come from right smack dab in the middle of the depression. We struggled like everyone else, I sold newspapers, we did whatever it took to get by.

Freud/Couch

Psychiatrists make a fortune off that phrase, "dysfunctional childhood." All of my friends had dysfunctional childhoods, it was the Depression! Guess what, we're fine. It was rough, yeah, but we made the best of it.

Money/garbage

My parents taught me the value of a dollar. I learned that anything and everything could be used again. We didn't waste because we didn't dare.

Bacon/lard

I know more ways to make use of bacon fat than you'll ever want to know.

Street c.1940/Boy being spanked

Anyhow, eventually things got better ya know, but all the same, my parents made sure I never forgot the lessons learned.

\*Montage is no longer just photos, now include stock footage, TV show clips, super 8 and video home movies, etc - as appropriate to the year.

the 60's, 70's/Kids playing

GRAHAM (VO)

My children, my grandchildren, they grew up in different times. Not better, mind, different. They got all they needed without having to worry too much. Oh sure, it's been tight sometimes, but not like then.

Commercials/tossing out bacon grease

No, those who came after never learned the real value of a dollar. They never learned the versatility of bacon fat.

Family photo taken 1960

This here, this is my family. Not bad, huh? Two boys, three girls and my wife Josephine sitting there holding Daniel. This was, why, just weeks after he was born. Lord, getting this picture taken was a big deal. Glad we did it though. Josephine had declared "no more kids" and so this is the first, and maybe even the only picture with all of us together. Worth every scream and moan from the kids.

Graham in navy dress blues

Oh, pardon, I never did make a proper introduction, just rambling on I suppose. My

name is Graham Edward Christiansen. Or it was.

FADE TO:

INT. - GRAHAM & JOSEPHINE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Wide shot - The bedroom. The bed is neatly made. Rx bottles sit on the both nightstands along with a few other photos which can be clearly seen; most are of Graham and Josephine together, but one which stands out is a portrait photo of Josephine from the early 1950's when she was most radiantly attractive in her early to mid 20's. It is on the left side nightstand. Slowly we draw closer and closer to the bed, and the impression of a head is clear in the pillow.

GRAHAM (VO)

They said I died peacefully in my sleep. What the hell do they know. They tell that to folks who's loved ones have gone on to make THEM feel better, but I'm here to tell ya, it hurt like my nastiest kidney stone. Maybe worse! But if it makes folks feel a little better about the inevitable, I suppose it's not such a bad lie to tell. If you want to believe it's painless, go right ahead, but don't come cryin' to me when you find out it hurts like the dickens.

See that picture of Josephine? It watched over me while I slept ever since the evening I proposed. Watched me every night until the very end. Really, every night, even when I was in the service I'd set it by my head every night. I'm pretty sure it was the last thing I saw. Took the edge off the hurt a little. Still, I'm tellin' you, it hurt. "Peacefully in his sleep." My ass!

FADE TO:

INT. - FUNERAL HOME - DAY

Looking down the center aisle between chairs set in rows to the front of the room where a casket is in place with the lid open for viewing. Again, slowly drawing closer and closer to the coffin.

GRAHAM (VO)

One of the advantages of bein' dead, you can finally tell the God's honest truth without worrying about what folks'll think. I never really told everyone the truth in life, though I suppose who really does? But there are some truths I wish I hadn't left unsaid.

PAN TO:

Down into the casket where Graham is lain out for viewing.

So, yeah, I died. No need to dwell on it. It happened... and it's my funeral.

FADE OUT.

INT. EDDIE & JEN'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

The late morning sun is streaming in through the bay windows of the living room which is nicely decorated without the perfection or sterility of a professional decorator. It is middle-American suburbia, a family home and one that is lived in. There is a warmth here. There are a few chatchky-cabinets with collectibles, plates, and the like set up for display, some items potentially valuable, most only sentimental or cheesy. A sofa, two big comfortable chairs, coffee and end tables - all the usual elements. Eddie, 29, handsome but just starting to let himself go, stands in the center of the space looking very concerned, he rotates slowly surveying every inch of the room bit by bit with a careful eye. He's clearly not searching for a specific item, rather he is performing an inspection and looking for something out of place.

EDDIE

Hon, did you do the office?

Jen enters the living room holding their 8 month old son Grady who is slurping hungrily at his bottle.

JEN

I did the office.

She settles into a comfortable chair for Grady's feeding while

Eddie tests the door to a cabinet which holds several glass sculptures, collectibles, etc. He is satisfied that the door is indeed locked.

EDDIE

Where did you secure the keys?

JEN

Oh, you'll like this one. I'm actually pretty proud of myself. I unzipped the cushion cover for the chair in our bedroom and put them inside the cushion.

EDDIE

Seat cushion or back cushion?

JEN

Seat. The underside.

EDDIE

Good, Very resourceful! The back might get adjusted or fluffed and then she's got the keys. Keep thinking like that. It's all a matter of staying one step ahead of her.

JEN

Carol and Frank are storing a few boxes of likely booty in their attic, I dropped off some valuables at our safe deposit box... I think it's all been taken care of.

EDDIE

We're forgetting something. I can feel it. Something obvious.

JEN

I think we've pretty much done all we can. Really Eddie, it's not like it's an ex-con coming to stay with us, it's your Mother, coming for her Father's funeral!

EDDIE

No, no, no. If you let your guard down like that, you'll give her the opportunity she

needs. Don't think of her like a normal person who feels loss or ... or emotions. She'll be watching us, waiting for that moment when we aren't thinking of guarding our possessions. That's when she'll strike and the next thing you know - no more throw pillow, and the next time we go to her place, there is YOUR throw pillow on HER couch! OK, so the throw pillow was a bad example, but she starts small, next thing you know she's wearing your diamond tennis bracelet.

JEN

I don't have a diamond tennis bracelet.

EDDIE

OK, that's not the point.

JEN

I'd like one!

EDDIE

I'll see what I can do, but again, not the point! The point is, my mother... It's not so much that she's a kleptomaniac, it's just that she likes to have things that belong to other people. And babe, we are other people.

JEN

This is so stupid. Has she seen a therapist about this? Cause, God, Eddie, she's your mother, I hate feeling as though we can't trust her!

EDDIE

Jen, yes, she is my Mother, and I love her dearly, but no, we can't trust her for a heartbeat. She's like ... Rasputin ... that Russian Monk. The Czar trusted him, took him into his home, trusted him like a brother then WHAM, no more Czar. No more family, all dead ... except mom hasn't shown any homicidal tendencies, just the stealing so far.

JEN

OK, no more History Channel for you.

EDDIE

Right. But my point is valid. If you trust her, she'll take our stuff. And it's only friends, family, never Macy's. Just people she cares about. It's her own twisted way of saying "I love you." I only pray I take after my father.

JEN

OK, clearly you're nervous. So she's taken a few things in the past, big deal. Maybe she's gotten over it. Maybe she discovered Hallmark has a better way of saying "I Love You." I'll bet you things will be fine. In fact I bet you she won't steal a thing.

EDDIE

Oh - ho-ho-ho! You would lose that bet!

JEN

Oh yeah? Fine. Let's make it an official bet. I mean, we'll still safeguard the place in case I'm wrong, I'm not crazy, but yeah - I bet you she doesn't take so much as a dust bunny.

EDDIE

Are you serious? If she could, she'd pull a van up to our front door and leave us with nothing BUT Dust Bunnies.

JEN

I'm just going to have a little faith in my mother-in-law, the woman who gave birth to the man I love, the grandmother to my son.

EDDIE

OK, look, there's a reason I always insist on us visiting her instead of having her come here. She visited my college apartment once. I went to class and when I got back... no

toaster oven! She put it in a box, took it to the Post Office and mailed it to herself!

JEN

I stand by my offer, I'll bet you she doesn't steal from us on this visit. Do you accept the bet?

EDDIE

So now we're gambling in front of our son? A fine example we set. I can see him twenty years from now on some sleazy talk show - My Gambling Parents and Kleptomaniac Grandma!

JEN

It's just a friendly wager.

EDDIE

You really want to do this? If our son grows up to have a gambling problem I'll know where it comes from. You are as bad an influence as my mother is!

JEN

They say men look for a woman who embodies some aspect of their mother. I'm bad baby. That's what caught your eye in the first place. So? Do we have a bet, or are you chicken?

EDDIE

Wait, what's the bet for? What will I win? Money? Hello, joint account, sole provider. Are you going to give me my own money? I mean, it's OUR money, but ... well...

JEN

Sleep.

EDDIE

Sleep?

JEN

One week where the winner is on vacation from

Grady duty at night. One week the loser gets out of bed every time he cries, no taking turns. Winner sleeps uninterrupted for one full week.

EDDIE

But honey...

JEN

Scared? Scared that your mother, in her bereaved state, mourning her father's death, will forget to loot and pillage her son's home?

EDDIE

No, no, just the opposite, that'll make her even more prone to lift stuff. It'll make her think about losing us and want our stuff that much more! No, I hesitate because I'm concerned for you, how exhausted you'll be after a week of sleep deprivation.

JEN

It's a risk I'll accept. Are we on?

EDDIE

Son, what I'm about to do is wrong. Gambling is wrong, even when it's a sure thing like this. I shouldn't take advantage of your mother's naiveté ... and your Mommy, well, she's showing you the risks involved in gambling. Never bet more than you're willing to lose.

JEN

Oh, please.

EDDIE

Jen, my love, my life, my everything... you're on.

They shake on it and seal the bet.

JEN

You'll see. Even if she tries to steal something, the house is prepared, she won't be able to take anything anyway. And, hey, that's got to be what decides the bet.

EDDIE

What?

JEN

If, even with your preparations, securing our junk like national treasures, she still manages to take something beyond a bar of soap or a towel, you win.

EDDIE

Fine.

JEN

And no fair sabotaging something so sticky-fingers can get it. Don't you go leaving keys in a cabinet door or on her nightstand...

EDDIE

Darling, trust me, the last thing I'll do is give her an advantage. I paid for most of this, I like our things, I enjoy having stuff, I'm not giving them up to win a bet!

JEN

All right, I trust you. Even though you come from a seedy background and despite your own mother's alleged criminal tendencies ... I trust you.

EDDIE

And I trust you, and I love you. Are you going to the store later?

JEN

As soon as Grady's done with his bottle. Why - something for the list?

EDDIE

Just be sure there's enough coffee, you'll be

needing it.

JEN

Daddy is so sure of himself, isn't daddy?

EDDIE

OK, eleven thirty. Just a few more hours. I'm going up to do another sweep through the house. I'm forgetting something, and she'll find it, I can feel it. The garage! I didn't check the garage.

JEN

He's so silly! Gramma wouldn't do that, would she? No!

INT. FUNERAL PARLOR, OFFICE - DAY

Josephine, the widow, and her middle child, Larry, are seated in moderately comfortable, but far from cozy chairs on one side of a fairly large and imposing desk in the Funeral Parlor's office. Josephine, while aged 74, still has a hint of her past beauty and a quiet grace infuses her movements. A black skirt, blouse and sweater are worn out of duty, though she's clearly uncomfortable in the ensemble. Rather than deal with what is before her, she looks out the window at the small garden enclosure beyond. Larry is 49 years old and looks exactly that age, not that he looks particularly bad or good, but he wears his age. Larry was always known as the responsible one, the one to rely upon and it was a role he took on easily. He wears an appropriately dark suit, though not true black which he's reserved for the actual funeral. He looks expectantly at The Funeral Director seated in a far more comfortable looking chair behind the massive desk. The Director is sorting through the various paperwork laid out before him, ultimately selecting a few forms then sliding them gently across the desk. The Funeral Director is a man who uses movement efficiently and only as needed, he rises only slightly to gesture and point out items on the papers as necessary.

DIRECTOR

I believe I have everything in order here. The death certificate is here and been verified and of course we've already taken care of the initial restoration, we'll proceed

with the final steps once we tie up all these details. To start, I need your signature on these forms. I've noted the lines for you with a blue X.

There is a long pause. Josephine doesn't respond to the request and neither the Director nor Larry want to seem impatient at a time like this. Finally after the Funeral Director coughs twice, to no effect, Larry leans in.

LARRY

Mom?

JOSEPHINE

I hope he liked that suit.

LARRY

It's fine Mom.

JOSEPHINE

I can't remember if he ever said he liked that suit. I won't have him spend eternity in something he didn't like.

LARRY

I'm sorry, but do these documents finalize anything in terms of the clothing that will be used?

DIRECTOR

No, not at all. In fact if you so desire you may change the burial garments nearly up until the last hour or so before interment. I have also had ... clients, who've had their loved one in one set of clothing at the ceremony - clothing which was more flattering or dignified, and selected a different outfit, one which the deceased was particularly fond of for their eternal rest. However anything worn must be either interned with the body or destroyed and there is a small fee involved each time a change of clothes is made. It's a service we're happy to provide. Would you be interested in exploring that route?

JOSEPHINE

He always wore the grey cashmere sweater. Hot or cold, he wore that sweater.

LARRY

You think we should use that instead?

JOSEPHINE

I remember, just after we were married and I washed his favorite grey cashmere sweater and I ruined it. My family hadn't ever been able to afford cashmere of course, so what did I know about taking care of it. Oh, I was mortified. I ran out to replace it, I took money from our vacation fund we kept in a Mason Jar then I spent the next three months cutting corners with the house money and grocery shopping to pay it back to the jar. He never said a thing... not about the way the sweater fit differently, not the money missing from the Jar or even the cheap pasta we had nearly every night. He knew though. He knew that I'd ruined the other one and then covered it up like a bad child. So he wore that sweater every single day to remind me.

LARRY

We'll bring the sweater over later.

JOSEPHINE

No, we'll leave him in the suit. The sweater is important to me, you think I'm going to let it rot in the ground? Besides, it always fit me better than it did him.

LARRY

Whatever makes you happy.

JOSEPHINE

I'm sorry. I was lost in thought. Where did you need me to sign?

Josephine proceeds to sign wherever indicated by the Director.

GRAHAM (VO)

I knew the minute I touched the sweater that it was different. My old one didn't feel anywhere near as soft, and I still wonder if the one she wrecked was even real cashmere. I picked it up in China Town during a trip to New York with a couple buddies. It could have been Dog Hair for all I knew, but for her to go through all that trouble for me, I knew I'd picked the right lady.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREETS OF TOWN - DAY

Larry behind the wheel of a nice sedan, nothing in the Lexus category, but stylish nonetheless with Josephine in the passenger seat. They have left the Funeral Parlor and are headed home.

GRAHAM (VO)

Larry was our first son and my pride and joy. Out of five children, he's the only one who stayed in our hometown, the others moved without even a glance back, some sooner than others.

JOSEPHINE

Have you heard from your sisters?

LARRY

Two of them. I haven't been able to reach Deb.

JOSEPHINE

I've been trying to reach her since she was born. I wish she could find somewhere she felt she could settle down for a while.

LARRY

Someday.

JOSEPHINE

Will Paula stay with Eddie?

LARRY

As I understand it.

JOSEPHINE

And Lorraine?

LARRY

She and Kenneth got a room and their boys will be up tomorrow sometime.

JOSEPHINE

That's good. And what about Danny?

LARRY

Driving up. They'll be here around seven tonight. Sam is going to meet them at the house. We're putting them up there.

JOSEPHINE

You're a good boy.

LARRY

It's no trouble. Listen Mom, I'm going to drop you off then run some errands to firm up a few more details for ... Dad, but I'll be in my office after four or so if you need anything, call me there. I'll be home at about eight or so. Is that OK with you.

JOSEPHINE

I doubt I'll need anything tonight, and don't you work yourself too hard. This will be a rough weekend for everyone, you'll need your strength.

LARRY

That's why I'm going in tonight. Get it all out of the way so I don't have anything to worry about but the ceremony.

JOSEPHINE

Thank you. Such a good son.

A brief pause.

LARRY

It will be good to have the family together.

JOSEPHINE

Most of them anyway. Most of them.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Deb is driving a beaten up Nova, smoking, and crying. She looks up to the rear view mirror where a newspaper clipping is taped. It is her father's obituary. Deb's face is clearly a younger version of her mother. She got the beauty, however she also has put her body to the test over the years and it shows. Her somewhat reddish, blondish, bad-home-dye-job hair is pulled back in a pony tail but a few annoying strands keep getting in the way.

Through the course of Graham's V.O. is a montage of Deb's journey. Eating in diners. Washing up in rest stops. Sleeping in the back seat.

GRAHAM (VO)

The prodigal daughter returns. My baby girl Deborah. Once Larry was born he got all the attention, his two older sisters, Paula and Lorraine, they got an allowance. They didn't have a Dad, they had a bank. Well, I was just so darn happy to have a son, I forgot I had two daughters in need of a little guidance along the way. So I guess that helped make them into the crazy women they are. But Deb ... Deb came after Larry. By then I'd pretty much ruined it with Paula and Lorr and swore not to do the same to Deb, you know, make up for my failure with them, but with my expert fathering to help her out, she may be the most screwed up one of the lot. Moved to California to be an actress at 17, and since then we've maybe seen her four times in nearly 30 years. I never was sure how to raise the girls, I didn't know what to do or say, where the boys and me always had great times. I let

the girls fend for themselves. I suppose that makes me a bad parent. I did what I could do.

INT. HOTEL REGISTRATION DESK - EVE

Lorraine, the second daughter, is at the front desk of the hotel dressed in anything designer and stylish, hair perfect in every way, face lifted, made up, breasts implanted, clutching a Chanel handbag with manicured nails and pissed off. In the background Kenneth, her husband, is off talking business on his cel phone. She leans toward the desk clerk, with one sharpened nail aimed ready to sink her venom into the girl before her. The clerk, named Suzy apparently for it is emblazoned on a golden nametag, stands dispassionate to the tirade. She's been through it before with other women of Lorraine's ilk.

LORRAINE

I called yesterday to verify the rooms which I reserved. One for today through Monday, and there were to be two more set aside on the same floor, the same floor I said, for my two boys who will be arriving tomorrow afternoon. Last name is Carsondale. First names Lorraine and Kenneth. The boys are James and Richard. I was assured by the nice gentleman on the phone that everything was in the computer exactly as specified. Now you are telling me... Suzy ... you are telling me that's not what you have? You're telling me there's a problem with my reservation?

SUZY

I'm sorry ma'am but...

LORRAINE

Do not...Do not...Do not call me ma'am. I am Mrs. Carsondale. Can you say that for me?

SUZY

Mrs. Carsondale, The room for you and your husband is ready. There just seems to have been a mix up about the two rooms for tomorrow, but I'm sure it won't be a problem for me to...

LORRAINE

Could you be a little less vague please? What is the mix up. I asked for two rooms on the same floor as ours... you see my father has... My daddy is... I have come home for my father's funeral so I would like very much to have my family nearby this weekend, is that so fucking much to ask, Suzy!

SUZY

I'm sorry to hear that ma'... Mrs. Carsondale, however if I may finish? I appreciate that this is a difficult time, so rather than keep you here while I go about resolving this to your satisfaction I thought you would prefer to make yourself comfortable in the room, which as I said is ready for you immediately.

LORRAINE

I'm supposed to rely on you to fix this?

SUZY

I'm the best you've got, Lady. I can find the rooms for you, however I'm sure you understand how much easier it would be if I didn't have a woman yelling in my lobby. Could I offer you a complimentary drink in our lounge?

Suzy seems to know Lorraine's weakness and holds out a card which says:

One on the House!

Complimentary Ale, Vino or Cocktail

which Lorraine snaps from midair then whispers.

LORRAINE

You fix this. You fix this Suzy, or I will ruin you!

Kenneth saunters over closing up his cel phone.

KENNETH

Sorry, I just had to take that. So, are we set... um ... Suzy? What a cute name.

SUZY

Your room is ready, and we are locating the best rooms available so ... James and Richard will be as near as possible tomorrow evening.

KENNETH

You are a peach. See there? You were worrying all last night about something going wrong. Let's go... which way to the room?

SUZY

Elevator is straight ahead, thirty-fourth floor. Left off the elevator, room number thirty-four thirty-four.

KENNETH

Can't forget that, can we?

LORRAINE

Shall we love? I'm tired.

KENNETH

After you.

Lorraine starts toward the elevators, Kenneth hangs back.

KENNETH

Could you have a bottle of the finest chablis and a fresh fruit platter sent up in about forty minutes or so?

SUZY

Of course Mr. Carsondale.

KENNETH

Please, call me Kenneth... or Ken. I'm not your boss. Thanks again cutie.

He hands her a tip and walks to the elevator. When she looks down and her eyes grow large it is apparent that the tip was more than she's used to receiving.

LORRAINE

Oh, silly, I left my bag at the desk. Hold the elevator dear.

Lorraine runs quickly to the desk, and leans in and whispers sharply and slowly.

LORRAINE

You fix it!

She picks up her handbag and runs toward where Kenneth is holding the elevator, her heels echoing in the lobby.

LORRAINE

Coming dear!

GRAHAM (VO)

I don't understand how the little girl Josephine and I raised ended up like that. Let this be a lesson, you may think that your child marrying into money is a good thing, after all everyone wants their children to do well, but there goes a prime example of what can happen.

EXT. LARRY & SAMANTHA'S HOUSE, STREET - EVE

A station wagon is coming down the street and pulls up in front of the house.

GRAHAM (VO)

Now, my boy Danny, the youngest has ended up fairly normal. I had good luck with the boys is all. Oh, he hasn't become as successful in his career as Larry, but he's got a good wife, two good children who never caused trouble...

The car comes to a stop and immediately Charlie, a collegiate looking young man of 21 is out of the back seat driver side, not going anywhere just getting out of the car. Within seconds from the other side his sister Joleen comes out after him. She's seventeen and somehow free of most hang-ups.

JOLEEN

Charlie, it was a joke! I was making a stupid

joke. Come on.

Charlie refuses to respond.

GRAHAM (VO)

Well, things change I suppose. That's the nature of the world.

Joleen throws up her arms in frustration and then turns to knock on the windshield of the car.

JOLEEN

He's your son!

Inside Gloria and Daniel sit in silence, clearly not looking forward to whatever will follow. They look to each other and with a sigh of resignation they unbuckle their seat belts and get out slowly. If they could stay in that car til doomsday, they would.

JOLEEN

Charlie, you know I could give a shit ... sorry, mom ... I could give a rats ass?

DANIEL

Charlie, c'mere.

CHARLIE

Forget it.

DANIEL

No, son, come here. Gloria, why don't you and Joleen go let them know we're here.

GLORIA

Oh, good. Good idea. Let's go.

JOLEEN

I don't see any lights on.

The girls walk up the sidewalk to the front door and ring the bell.

CHARLIE

OK, what?

DANIEL

Son, I appreciate you're having a hard time right now, but this has to take precedence. We'll have plenty of time to sort things out once the funeral is over.

CHARLIE

I know.

DANIEL

If I could put this off, believe me, I would, but unfortunately funerals have a habit of happening at the most inopportune times. I don't suppose there's really a ... ah ... a good time. But - well, I'm just asking you to try and understand. Do you?

CHARLIE

I guess. No, I mean, I do. I know your family is nuts. I'll be fine.

DANIEL

That's my man! Er... my son.

Gloria and Joleen return.

GLORIA

You guys done with ... talking?

CHARLIE

I'll start unloading.

GLORIA

Um, hold off on that a sec. Honey, do you have the right address?

DANIEL

This is Larry's house. I know my brother's house. Why? What, isn't anyone there? Are we early?

GLORIA

Well, we made pretty good time. Only one

stop. We told them we'd be here around seven and I guess we're a good... fifteen minutes late. Were we supposed to meet someplace else first?

DANIEL

I don't think so. No. No. This is crazy. Larry is the responsible one.

Daniel starts up the walk to the door.

CHARLIE

So, where are we staying if they aren't home?

JOLEEN

Uncle Larry isn't gonna miss grandpa's funeral. He's probably just hung up somewhere taking care of Grandma or something. He's the family lap dog for chrissakes.

GLORIA

That's for sure... and watch that tongue this weekend. OK, great, now your dad is peeking in the windows. I sure hope there's no neighborhood watch here.

CHARLIE

Oh, this is gonna be a fun weekend.

GLORIA

Funerals aren't fun Charles. No one said this would be a fun weekend.

JOLEEN

Hey mom, what happens once we all start having to go to the bathroom?

GLORIA

Well, we'll just ... Oh, you had to ask. Now I need to go. There must be a neighbor at home who'll let us in. This is the heartland where people do favors for strangers right?

CHARLIE

Or shoot em. Sorry, but they do!

Daniel returns from his prowling.

DANIEL

Well, there's no one home.

GLORIA

You're brilliant dear. I need to get to a restroom quickly. Should we go someplace for dinner then come back?

DANIEL

Oh, let me try calling them on my cel.

GLORIA

I saw a few places that weren't grease pits back that way, does that sound good to you kids?

JOLEEN

Whatever.

CHARLIE

I guess I could eat something.

JOLEEN

There's a shock.

GLORIA

Honey? Danny? Baby?

DANIEL

It's ringing. It's... Shoot.

GLORIA

Let me guess, answering machine?

DANIEL

Yeah... how did...? Hey, we're here, where are you? Call my cel. Bye. How did you know I'd get the machine?

GLORIA

You called them at home, correct? The house behind me that I believe you'd already established as unoccupied? Get in the car and drive Inspector, we're going to get food.

DANIEL

Oh. Good idea.

INT. EDDIE & JEN'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - EVE

Paula, Eddie's mother, has arrived. Paula is a widow at fifty-three. They are sitting around the dining room table just finishing dinner.

GRAHAM (VO)

Paula's the last of my clan, the eldest. She hasn't had an easy go of things, and while I wasn't really there for her like I should have been, I don't think all her difficulties came because I spent time playing ball with Larry instead of making sure her escort to the prom was respectable. She married young, had two children and did a fine job raising them both, but she became a widow too soon. She refuses to tell anyone how he died, if she even knows herself, though many an evening has been passed in speculation. Most guesses revolve around illegal acts. Well, there are a couple international-spy theories, but I have to say those tend to come from people who'd never met Ralph. After she lost Ralph she had to raise the kids alone and then the cherry on top, breast cancer. Lost 'em both in the end. Life can be cruel, but at least I can rest knowing her problems aren't all because of poor fathering. Besides, even through all that hell, she raised good kids.

PAULA

Jennifer, that was lovely. Everything was just lovely.

JEN

Thank you, I'm glad you enjoyed it.

PAULA

Oh yes. Now I know why Eddie's packed on those extra pounds, you feed him too well.

EDDIE

Mother!

PAULA

You're getting a gut.

JEN

I guess you only get a sliver of cake then Eddie. Mother, can I tempt you?

PAULA

Maybe in an hour or so. Right now just a cup of coffee would be perfect.

Jen nods and goes to the kitchen with a few of the serving dishes while Eddie busies himself stacking and clearing away the rest. Paula opens her handbag which is kept in her lap at all times taking out a pack of cigarettes. It goes unnoticed by Eddie until he hears the spark of the lighter.

EDDIE

Mom! What the ... No!

PAULA

Oh, you aren't going to make your own mother step outside are you?

EDDIE

You ain't lighting it in here! So it's out there or do without.

PAULA

Be reasonable ...

EDDIE

You've already lost both your... your...

PAULA

They were called tits at one time.

EDDIE

Why would you start again, you've been off of them for years.

PAULA

Eddie, what are they going to do? They can't cut them off again. Unless you've read something ground breaking in some medical journal. Besides, that wasn't from the smoking anyway. It's my body.

EDDIE

Not in the house. We don't want Grady exposed to smoke.

PAULA

I see. I'm not welcome here.

EDDIE

OK, that's a leap!

PAULA

Don't think I didn't notice. I clearly don't rate the fine place settings. The first time you've had your Mother to your home is an event unworthy of a well laid table.

EDDIE

I knew you'd ask about that. Mother... we had the silver out in the garage in a box we hadn't unpacked yet, Jen came across it and the tarnish was so bad we dropped the it off with a jeweler to be cleaned, then the very same day Grampa passed away. We didn't anticipate needing it this weekend. Of course you rate the good silver.

PAULA

And the plates? Those aren't even Pottery Barn stoneware, they're thrift store clay.

EDDIE

Oh... the china...

Just then Jen returns from the kitchen.

JEN

The coffee is brewing. How do you take it?

EDDIE

Mother is upset. I explained why we didn't use the silver ... because it's out being cleaned, but honey, why didn't you use the good china?

JEN

I had it out... on the table... but when I looked down at the good china next to the everyday flatware, well, it just made it look even worse. I thought it would be better if the table matched somewhat instead of making the flatware stand out so much. I was going for rustic... I guess I went too far.

PAULA

I see. I understand. Well, now I feel silly.

EDDIE

You still can't smoke in the house.

PAULA

Jennifer, I appeal to your kindness...

JEN

Oh, no, no smoking. When did you start to smoke? No. Sorry, but we're together on that one.

PAULA

I'll just step out back for a bit then I suppose. I hope it's not too cold.

Paula takes her handbag and starts toward the back door.

PAULA

Where did you hang my wrap? Oh, never mind, I'll be quick about it. Just you wait dear,

he'll have one of his poker nights here and those friends of his won't be stepping outside. He'll be smoking a big fat cigar right along with them too. You'll see. Oh, what a lovely frame.

Paula disappears around a corner and the frame which had been sitting on a buffet table is gone as if by magic. Eddie turns to Jen.

EDDIE

Double or nothing?

JEN

No. Thank you. How did she do that? I gotta learn that trick!

EDDIE

No, you really don't. Hey, nice cover on the china though. I was dyin' there.

JEN

Yeah. Not to shabby was I? Only, what ... three days to go?

INT. PERKIN'S (OR DENNY'S) RESTAURANT - EVE

Daniel's family is seated in a booth. Charlie is finishing off a burger and fries, Gloria has a club sandwich, Daniel has a half-consumed omelette before him and Joleen sits staring at a sandwich and fries looking none too pleased. She picks up a french fry which falls limp before her eyes. She drops it to the plate.

JOLEEN

I can't eat this. Look, there is a pool of bacon grease under the sandwich. Does it even have bacon in it? I can't believe you people are actually ... Did we take a wrong turn somewhere and end up in Purgatory. I don't remember this town being so stifling before.

DANIEL

Oh no, it's the same. You're just old enough to see it for what it is this time around.

Before it was tinted with childlike innocence.

CHARLIE

Yeah, you were like twelve years old last time. All we had to do was give you batteries for your CD player so you could play the theme for Titanic over and over and over... are you eating those fries?

GLORIA

Oh, and we bought the Backstreet Boys CD while we were here too. Remember? We went to the mall with Samantha and her girls. We got to the record store and you kids, well except for Christine, she was maybe 5, you screamed and went running at the Backstreet Boys display and begged and swore you would do anything I ever wanted if only...

JOLEEN

I was not a Backstreet Boys fan mother.

GLORIA

I'm afraid I beg to differ.

JOLEEN

They were all excited about it. I didn't want them to think I was weird or something.

GLORIA

Yes, I'm sure it was the peer pressure that got to you. You just got swept up in that mob mentality of your two younger cousins...

JOLEEN

OK, I think you've embarrassed me enough.

GLORIA

Are you sure?

JOLEEN

I'm sure.

GLORIA

No doubt another opportunity will present itself.

A slight lull in the conversation begins to settle so Charlie takes a chance and seizes the opportunity.

CHARLIE

So, since the immediate pressure of Grandpa's funeral is off for a couple hours, I don't suppose ... um ... we could talk about the other matter?

Daniel and Gloria look at each other exchanging the silent conversation that comes from years together.

DANIEL

If you're comfortable talking about it here.

CHARLIE

It's not as if we're likely to see anyone we know.

GLORIA

You're right... and this is important. Besides, its not like you need to hide it.

JOLEEN

Hey, personally, I think the fact that you're gay is a mark in the plus column for you. Not that anyone asked for my input.

CHARLIE

Thanks... I think.

DANIEL

Son, I don't have a problem with it, and I don't think your mother has a problem. You're still Charlie.

GLORIA

You know, I had a gay uncle. Maybe you got it from my side of the family.

CHARLIE

So, you're fine with it?

DANIEL

Yes. We are. I don't know how much fatherly advice I can offer you, I can't really help you out with a birds and ... well, birds and birds talk, but you're twenty-one, I'm guessing you probably know most of it.

GLORIA

Just be safe, that's all.

JOLEEN

Do you have a boyfriend? Is he hot?

DANIEL

And we didn't mean to put you off, but you call the family meeting saying you've got this big announcement, you say you're gay then ten seconds later Larry's phone call and suddenly we have to rush to come here. It just took control of our attention.

GLORIA

And really hon, I've known for a few months. It wasn't a big revelation for me.

CHARLIE

In all the stories and magazine articles I read about coming out to your parents, this wasn't covered. I thought I was prepared.

As the exchange continues someone or something catches Daniel's eye, He attempts to focus a little better, make sure he's seeing what he thinks.

GLORIA

Would it help if I asked if there was something we did to make you this way? Should I try to blame myself a little more. I could blame your father for working so much and not spending enough time at home, that could be good. Whatever makes this easier.

CHARLIE

No, no, that's fine.

JOLEEN

You didn't answer my question. Are you seeing anyone?

CHARLIE

Um ... kind of ... I don't know.

JOLEEN

You like him, but you don't know how he feels about you, right? I can tell. That's so typical of a guy. Anthony Patella, remember? We kind of flirted at each other, but I could never tell if it was just fun, or if he really liked me.

DANIEL

My God.

GLORIA

What dear? What are you looking at?

DANIEL

I ... just one second, I'll be right back.

Daniel gets up and moves slowly, still trying to make sure the person is who he thinks it is.

GLORIA

Honey? Where are you...? Honey, where...? Where is your father going? Could you see what he was looking at.

JOLEEN

Some lady.

GLORIA

Your father's looking at a lady?

JOLEEN

Kind of pretty, but all ratty. I don't think he's hitting on her Mom. Relax.

GLORIA

Stupid plant is in my way, trade places.

Charlie, Gloria and Joleen shift as Daniel steps closer to the woman - it is Deborah. She's sitting with a half empty bowl of soup in front of her and a mostly full ashtray beside her.

DANIEL

I...sorry to bother you... Deb?

DEBORAH

Hmm?

She looks up. Tear tracks run down her face, she looks like hell.

DANIEL

Deb, oh my God!

DEBORAH

Danny? Holy Jesus fuck!

DANIEL

How did you ...? Where ...? Oh my God!

They throw themselves into an emotional and intense hug.

DEBORAH

Dad...

DANIEL

Yeah, yeah, how did you hear? Larry's been trying to reach you, he said he couldn't find you anywhere... unless, did I just ruin a big surprise?

DEBORAH

No, no, he didn't find me. He couldn't find a cow pie in a pasture.

DANIEL

I'm so glad you're here. Come over here and sit with the family.

DEBORAH

I don't want to intrude...

DANIEL

You gotta be kidding, right? You're my big sis!

DEBORAH

Little Danny ... just ... we'll go over there in a minute. I need to ease in. I wasn't really expecting to see anyone just yet.

DANIEL

Does anyone else know you're here?

DEBORAH

No. I mean, I don't think they do. No.

DANIEL

This is amazing. So you were just going to show up?

DEB

Hadn't really gotten that far in the planning.

DANIEL

Well, where are you staying? I'm sure you can stay at Larry's. He's putting us up, one more won't matter.

DEB

Yeah, I figured he was still living in town, but I didn't have the address.

DANIEL

Are you OK?

DEB

I can't believe he's gone. The fuck.

DANIEL

Yeah. It kind of came as a shock to all of us. He'd been on the decline, but nothing, you know, nothing scary. I guess he died

peacefully though, in his sleep.

DEB

There's no such thing as a peaceful death.

DANIEL

No, I suppose not.

DEB

Especially in this family, we haven't even figured out peaceful living. So is everyone going to be there?

DANIEL

At the funeral? Yeah, I think so. Far as I know you were the only one who was MIA.

DEB

Man. What the fuck was I thinking? I should have just tossed it and forgotten all about him.

DANIEL

I don't follow...

DEB

Nothing. Nothing. Hey, I look like shit right?

DANIEL

No! Sorry, Yes. Yeah, you look pretty road weary.

DEBORAH

Think your wife can help me out with some make-up or something? If I'm gonna see all my demons again and stir things up I don't need to look like I've already been through hell from minute one.

DANIEL

Let me get Gloria.

DEBORAH

K, thanks.

Daniel dashes over to get Gloria and her purse. Deborah runs her hands through her hair and draws a deep breath.

DEBORAH

Sorry dad, but your baby girl is back, and she ain't pretty.

Daniel comes back with Gloria and Deborah rises and walks off to the restroom with her.

INT. - LARRY AND SAMANTHA'S HOUSE, BATHROOM - EVE

The shower is running and through the shower curtain or door the figure of an attractive woman is vaguely visible. A cordless phone rests as near as possible to the shower and begins to ring. The water comes to an abrupt halt and a hand bolts out to answer the phone.

SAM

Danny? Oh thank you sweet merciful Jesus. Where are you? Perkin's? I am a terrible sister in law, that you should be eating ... no, no, you... that's the address. Yes. With the two ceramic fauns out front. I talked him out of the family of gnomes. Well, I was supposed to... I had an appointment that went on much longer than it should have and... please don't tell Larry. He'll have a fit. You know everything has to be under control and go smoothly ... Oh yes. Graham's funeral is his Sistine Chapel so if... just tell him ... I mean I don't want to tell you to lie to your brother and after all... Oh Danny, I will make it up to you!

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. PERKIN'S - EVE

Danny on his cel phone.

DANNY

It so happens, you may be able to even that

score. Could you find room in the house for one more guest? Female. Adult.

SAM

What, did Charlie bring a girlfriend to the funeral?

DANNY

(semi laughs/chokes)

No... no...

SAM

Good, I can think of better ways to meet the family, and he's of an age where he needs to keep them around, start thinking about a girl to settle...

DANNY

That's not an issue.

SAM

Who is it then? Did you run into a long lost cousin on the way?

DANNY

You might say that.

SAM

We'll find the room. The girls will just double up or something.

DANNY

Great. Thanks Samantha, and trust me, Larry will only hear about what a gracious host you've been all evening.

SAM

Oh, you are the best. You're getting pancakes in the morning. See you soon!

INT. - PERKIN'S - EVE

Danny hangs up the cel.

DANNY

Swell. Back with the family for hardly two hours and so far I've promised to lie to my brother and basically lied about Deb being our mystery guest.

JOLEEN

All coming back to you?

DANNY

A little too easily.

CHARLIE

At least I've been honest.

DANNY

Now that's a comfort.

Gloria returns from the bathroom alone and looking beat.

GLORIA

Well...

JOLEEN

Hey Dad, think you got a "you look great" lie left in ya?

DANNY

Not the kind of support we need right now darling. So? Could you help at all?

GLORIA

What? Oh, she's got your mom's looks. She's fine. I'm just emotionally drained! She's not exactly a night at the Ice Capades.

Joleen leans in and hugs her mom.

GLORIA

Even when she's cheerful she's depressing.

DANNY

But she looks all right? It's OK if she's depressed, everyone expects that. It is after

all a funeral, but she's got to look good.

GLORIA

Yes dear. Cross my heart. She'll be the most beautiful mourner in 3 states. Excuse me, miss, coffee please?

Deborah comes out of the bathroom as a man goes toward the men's room. As she exits he watches her, stumbling as a result. She makes her way through the dining room toward the family. A waiter drops something. A busboy puts his hand in a plate of mashed potatoes and gravy but doesn't seem to notice - he is frozen, staring at her. Deborah is oblivious. Joleen is in awe, not just from how pretty Deb is but also at the reaction she elicits from the men around the room. Gloria, while worn out, looks a little smug and pleased with herself. Charlie and Danny are equally shocked. Deborah arrives at the table.

DEBORAH

Tell the truth, I still look like three day old crap.

GLORIA

Oh for...

DANNY

Deb, I swear ... I mean ... Gloria ... wow ... I'd forgotten.

JOLEEN

Fuck, my aunt is hot!

DEBORAH

Don't lie. We always lie, it's the family business. We need lies like air.

CHARLIE

No, Dad told a few already, we're good for now.

DEBORAH

I like the kids Dan. Smush in. What're the names again?

DANNY

That's right, last time you saw them Charlie was... oh, this is Charlie.

DEBORAH

No kiddin'.

DANNY

He was maybe seven or eight, so Joleen was ... well, that'd make her...

JOLEEN

Three or four. I'm the smart one you see.

DEBORAH

What does that make Charlie, the pretty one?

CHARLIE

I'm the gay one.

DEBORAH

Oh man! Way to take the pressure off of me! I love it! All right, I'm ready. Let's shake the family tree and see what falls out.

Deborah gets out, the rest follow. Gloria drags behind a bit, but clearly their attitudes toward the events ahead have changed.

CHARLIE

Mom?

GLORIA

Oh, what?

CHARLIE

I was wrong, this is gonna be a great weekend.

GLORIA

Dear... just try to avoid injury. There are more of them you know.

They head out to the parking lot.

DEB

So I'll follow you?