Life Lessons

by

Aaron Dias
INT. MARY’S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

ELIZABETH, a pretty girl in her early twenties sits vegged out on the coach, channel surfing. She can’t seem to find anything worth watching. MARY, her older sister, appears to be getting ready for work.

ELIZABETH
God daytime TV sucks. It’s talk shows or court shows that wanna be talk shows.

MARY
Shouldn’t you be studying or something.

ELIZABETH
You kidding? Community college is easier than high school. I haven’t even opened my books yet.

MARY
Have you seen my name tag? I can’t find it.

Elizabeth is picking at her nails with the sharp end of Mary’s name tag.

ELIZABETH
Working tonight?

MARY
Sadly, but maybe I can get out early.

Mary rifles through a pile of clothing.

MARY (CONT’D)
What do you got planned?

ELIZABETH
Seeing Roger. He’s taking me to a movie.

MARY
Ugh... Roger still? I thought you were breaking up with him.

ELIZABETH
Well, it’s not like I have anyone else lined up. No point in being single if I don’t have to.
MARY  
Great philosophy.

Mary notices that Elizabeth is picking at her cuticles with her name tag.

MARY (CONT'D)  
Is that my name tag?

Elizabeth notices what she’s doing.

ELIZABETH  
Oh... sorry.

MARY  
That’s disgusting.

ELIZABETH  
Whatever, mom.

MARY  
You’re lucky I’m not mom. She’d never let you live like this.

The camera reveals Elizabeth is surrounded by trash, wrappers and other post consumer waste that cover the couch and table in front of her.

ELIZABETH  
Like what?

MARY  
I gotta’ go. Just pick up if Roger’s coming okay?

ELIZABETH  
He doesn’t care, trust me.

Mary grabs her coat and makes for the door.

MARY  
And please break up with the poor guy.

ELIZABETH  
Goodbye mom.

INT. MEIJER STORE - DAY

Gene is helping a CUSTOMER with a DVD player.
CUSTOMER
But if I get this now, how do I know that they won’t just make a bigger and better one in a few years?

GENE
Because they have a bigger and better one right now. It’s not like you’re getting the Porsche of DVD players. You’re getting the bottom of the barrel, tide ya’ over until hi-def is this cheap player. And when hi-def is this cheap, there’ll be a super expensive ultra high definition player on the market. See, your thinking ahead by staying behind.

CUSTOMER
I guess you’re right, where do I check out?

GENE
Head right down that aisle and Tisha will help you out.

CUSTOMER
Thanks a lot.

The customer takes the player and walks away. Mary, dressed like a manager, enters holding a clipboard.

MARY
Excellent work Gene. You know you’re our best salesman?

GENE
Proud to feed the corporate beast.

MARY
I can tell you think highly of your job.

GENE
 Wouldn’t trade it for a doughnut.

MARY
Good to know, it’s probably a good thing you hate it here... I’d hate to see you like Larry.
LARRY a bright-eyed teenager with red hair and freckles smiles from ear to ear, talking with a customer.

LARRY
Thank you so much for shopping here. You have a super day!

The camera returns to Mary and Gene.

GENE
Are you kidding? He hates this place more than me. He’s only like that when you’re around.

MARY
Might explain why he takes his coffee with two creams and a prozac.

GENE
Hell, who needs the coffee and cream?

She giggles flirtatiously.

MARY
So anyway, it looks like it’s dying down cause of the game tonight, I’m taking off early, so you can too if you want to.

GENE
Oh thank God. If I had to explain the difference between full screen and wide screen one more time, I was going to shoot myself.

MARY
(shouting to Larry)
Larry, could you go ahead and close up tonight?

LARRY
I’d love to!

Mary an Gene start walking toward the back of the store.

MARY
So, what are you gonna’ do with your night off?
GENE
I dunno’, probably gonna’ go to the rink and shoot a few pucks.

MARY
No kidding? You play hockey?

GENE
Used to. Now I just mess around from time to time. I have a friend that lets me in to the rink at night.

MARY
That’s so cool. I’d love to do that. I used to figure skate when I was young and now I’m kind of missing it.

GENE
Oh, that’s interesting.

A moment of pause passes between them.

MARY
Um, yeah, I can’t believe you’re not going to catch the Piston’s game.

GENE
Piston’s... that’s... basketball?

MARY
Please tell me you’re joking.

GENE
It is basketball right?

Mary punches out.

MARY
Yes, my God, they’re in the final four!

GENE
The final four?

MARY
Man, you need a sports education.

Gene punches out.
GENE
I’m sorry, but basketball’s so boring. It only gets interesting in the last two minutes, and that takes friggin an hour to play because of all the fowls. And don’t even get me started on that. I mean, you can’t even touch another player without getting a penalty.

They start walking towards the store’s entrance.

MARY
As opposed to hockey, where you can knock a guy over without even a whistle.

GENE
Damn right. As long as they have the puck anyway.

MARY
Well it’s unfortunate that you take a sport, loved by millions of people across the world and completely dismiss it as boring.

GENE
Sorry, it’s only interesting if it’s on ice.

MARY
Oh, so you’re into curling then.

GENE
Actually, yeah, I kind of dig it.

MARY
God and you think basketball is boring.

GENE
I know what I like. Sue me.

MARY
Anyway, I think it’s cool that you have a friend that can get you into the rink. I kind of have a friend that can get me into the theatre for free.

GENE
Oh? Really?
MARY
Yeah, she even lets me bring a
date... well if the guy is cute
enough.

GENE
Oh. That’s interesting.

Another awkward pause passes as he walks on. She stops, a
little annoyed.

MARY
Okay, what’s the deal?

GENE
What? What are you talking about?

MARY
Okay, like, I’ve been trying to
flirt with you for like the past
week, dropping hints, giggling all
cute and stuff. And whenever I
present the perfect opening, you
always get all monosyllabic.

GENE
Huh?

MARY
See! And by the way, this-

She pushes on her chest, showing off cleavage.

MARY (CONT’D)
It’s called cleavage, would it kill
you to notice? I mean, do you think
I like wearing shirts like this?

GENE
Uh.

MARY
Look, I know I’m not a supermodel,
but I’m confident enough about my
looks to know I’m at least a 7. Are
you just not attracted to me?

GENE
No, it’s not that. I think you’re
really beautiful actually.

Still trying to stay mad, she tries to hold back a smile, but
then fails miserably.
MARY
Really?

GENE
Yeah, you’re gorgeous. Your looks go up to 11.

MARY
Stop teasing me.

GENE
I’m not even joking.

MARY
Aww... Then what is it? I know you don’t have a girlfriend.

GENE
Would you believe that it’s because you’re my manager and I don’t want to get fired?

MARY
No, but nice try.

GENE
What would you believe then?

MARY
How about the truth? C’mon, it’s not easy for girls to do the pursuing, I deserve at least that.

GENE
But you’re really not going to like the truth.

MARY
Geeze, do you like secretly hate me or something.

GENE
No, it’s nothing to do with you.

MARY
Oh, are you... gay? I mean, you don’t look gay, I thought I had a pretty good gaydar.

GENE
No, I’m not gay, although I am a firm supporter of gay marriage.
MARY
Then what is it?

GENE
Do I really have to tell you?

MARY
I don’t see any way out of it at this point.

GENE
It’s because I’m going to be dead in two weeks.

Gene starts walking again. Mary tries to absorb what she just heard.

MARY
Wait, what?

She rushes to catch up.

MARY (CONT'D)
What do you mean you’re going to be dead in two weeks; how could you possibly know that?

GENE
Because I’m going to kill myself.

MARY
Don’t joke about that.

GENE
Who says I’m joking?

MARY
Who says they’re going to kill themselves so nonchalantly?

GENE
I told you you weren’t going to like it.

MARY
You’re serious?

GENE
Serious as cancer.

MARY
But I don’t get it, you don’t seem like you’re depressed or anything.
GENE
I am.

MARY
But you’re always so funny and carefree.

GENE
Yeah, it’s an image.

MARY
Now I know you’re not being serious.

GENE
Believe what you want.

Mary stops him, holding him by the shoulders, she looks into his eyes, he smiles weakly at her.

MARY
Don’t smile.

His smile disappears.

GENE
You won’t like me if I don’t smile.

She continues looking.

MARY
You are serious aren’t you?

GENE
I wouldn’t joke about something like that.

MARY
Why are you going to kill yourself?

GENE
It’s complicated.

Gene resumes walking, Mary follows him.

MARY
Wait, why in two weeks. What happens in two weeks?

GENE
When you leave a job, you have to give two weeks notice.
MARY
I don’t think that applies when your reason for leaving is suicide.

GENE
I figure it’s polite; I don’t want to be remembered as rude.

MARY
What?

GENE
Yeah, I gave notice today.

Gene has reached his car, which is a Volkswagon Beetle, and is opening the door.

MARY
Where are you going?

GENE
Um... home?

MARY
Hell no you’re not. You don’t just drop something like that on me and just head on home.

GENE
Well, where should I go?

MARY
You just told me I have two weeks to convince you not to kill yourself.

GENE
No I didn’t. I didn’t even want to tell you to begin with.

MARY
Well too bad, you’re stuck with me now. I’m not leaving you to sulk by yourself. I’m taking you out for coffee.

GENE
I’m not sure you can force me to go.

MARY
You want to bet?
GENE
It’s a bet you’ll lose.

He gets in the car, which is backed into the parking space. Behind the car is a patch of grass and then the road.

MARY
You might be suicidal, but I bet you’re not homicidal.

She stands in front of his car, arms spread.

GENE
(out his window)
I guess we’ll see.

He starts up his car and revs the engine; Mary closes her eyes. He backs his car over the grass and onto the road, flinging dirt into the air and a little on Mart. She opens her eyes to see this and runs over to his car.

GENE (CONT’D)
Almost made it.

MARY
I’m not taking ‘no’ for an answer. In fact, I’m not going to settle for anything less than at least an hour of pleasant conversation, and you’re paying for the coffee.

GENE
Me? Why am I paying?

MARY
Because since you’re going to be dead in two weeks, money shouldn’t be an issue. Plus I got my shirt dirty standing in front of your stupid car.

GENE
Hey, don’t call my car stupid.

MARY
I’m sure it’ll get over it, and hey, if not, maybe it can just kill itself!

A car speeds past them, honking its horn.

GENE
So coffee then?
MARY
Yes!
She gets into the passenger seat.

GENE
Where at?

MARY
How about the Starbucks on Jefferson?

GENE
God, not the Starbucks, I’ve only got two weeks left, I’m not going to spend it drinking dirt.

MARY
I don’t know, what about a restaurant. Like IHOP?

GENE
I guess that’s a little better, not much, but a little.

MARY
God, I don’t know, I don’t even drink coffee.

GENE
Neither do I.

INT. RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS
Gene and Mary are seated at a table. Gene takes a sip of coffee.

GENE
God this stuff is nasty.

MARY
Well, yeah, you’re not supposed to take it black.

GENE
That’s what I don’t get about coffee drinkers. At some time, some point in their life, they had to have their first cup. Now it’s a well documented fact that nobody likes their first cup of coffee.
MARY
Oh is it?

GENE
Of course. Now if their first experience with coffee is this nasty, bitter, vomit-inducing bile, why on Earth would anybody want a second go at it?

MARY
You’re not supposed to take it black. Most people starting out on coffee mix it with sugar or hot chocolate or something.

GENE
I don’t know, I feel like covering camel crap with cocoa doesn’t make it suddenly more edible. Why would it work with coffee?

MARY
I think it’s the texture.

He takes another sip, gagging it down. As he finishes, the WAITRESS greets them.

WAITRESS
You guys ready to order.

MARY
No thanks.

GENE
Could I get a hot chocolate?

WAITRESS
Sure thing.

She leaves quickly.

MARY
So are you gonna’ tell me?

GENE
Right, about the suicide?

MARY
Possible suicide, yes.
GENE
I would call it inevitable, but for the sake of argument, let’s compromise with probable.

MARY
Well if I knew this was a negotiation I would have started with “unlikely.”

GENE
Are you sure you really want to talk about this? Suicide is just so damn depressing, and we were having such pleasant conversation.

MARY
That is true. Especially that part about the vomit-inducing bile.

GENE
Okay, not the most pleasant adjectives I admit, but it made the point.

MARY
In all seriousness though, I really do want to know what’s bothering you so much. Why is it you want to die so badly?

GENE
Why do you want me to live?

MARY
Gene, are you serious? Why do you think I want you to live? I want everyone to live.

GENE
Yeah, but I already told you I’m depressed. By staying alive, I continue suffering... so it sounds like to me, you just want me to suffer.

MARY
What? No! You’re twisting my words.

GENE
I don’t think so. You did say that-
MARY
(Interrupting)
I want you to live. I don’t want you to suffer. You’re the one that’s making the two synonymous.

GENE
So you’re saying that there might be a way to live, without it being such a miserable experience?

MARY
Oh come on. Don’t tell me there’s nothing that brings you happiness.

GENE
Of course. There’s plenty that brings me happiness, but there’s also plenty more that does the opposite.

MARY
So you’d just throw away all the good things life has to offer, just because there are a few bad things along the way?

GENE
The way I see it, if I’m dead, I eliminate all the bad things, and I’m no longer around to miss the good. It’s a win-win. Or at least a win-draw, which is marginally better than the win-lose I’m currently dealing with.

MARY
But by that argument, the very existence of anything bad in life makes the whole thing not worth living.

GENE
Right.

A pause passes.

MARY
But-

The waitress brings his hot cocoa.
WAITRESS
Here you go... Do you guys want any food or anything?

GENE
I’ve got to be honest with you. I haven’t even looked at the menu yet. I’m probably not going to order anything else. Are you?

MARY
No thank you.

GENE
I’m sorry, we’re lame customers.

WAITRESS
No it’s okay. Don’t worry about it.

GENE
No I do feel kind of bad taking up a table and not ordering much. I promise I’ll give you a really good tip though.

WAITRESS
Oh, um...

GENE
Oh, should I not be discussing the tip with you? Is that supposed to be a surprise or something.

WAITRESS
No, it’s fine. You can give me whatever you want. I mean, of course I’d like a big tip, but seeing as how you guys are only ordering like three beverages, I wouldn’t expect much.

GENE
Okay. Well, I’ll keep it a surprise then.

WAITRESS
Whatever you like. I’m here to serve.

GENE
Hey when you give people their food, do you ever get the urge to say “you just got served.”
MARY
My God, let the poor woman do her job.

GENE
Oh right, I’m sorry.

WAITRESS
I’ll be by to check on you in a bit.

GENE
Okay, thanks.

She walks away.

GENE (CONT’D)
She was cute.

Mary gives Gene a look.

INT. ROGER’S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

ROGER watches American Idol as Elizabeth sits bored on the couch next to him. He has his arm around her, but his heart doesn’t seem to be in it.

ELIZABETH
Let’s go do something.

ROGER
Oh, but Simon’s on.

ELIZABETH
So what. This is just the same thing it’s been for the past five seasons. A lot of people sing, most of them suck, none of them become famous.

ROGER
Yeah, but it’s still pretty sweet.

ELIZABETH
Whatever.

ROGER
C’mon, don’t be like that.

ELIZABETH
Can’t we just, I don’t know, do something else?
ROGER
Fine, I’ll see what else is on.

Elizabeth sighs as he grabs for the remote. She tackles him, kissing him on the forehead.

ROGER (CONT’D)
Oh, you mean sex! That works too.

EXT. BOARDWALK – SUNSET

Gene and Mary walk along a quiet boardwalk. Waves of a river splash along the rocks past a metal railing. Walking toward them is a BUM dressed much like you’d expect a bum to look.

BUM
Excuse me.

He makes his way closer.

BUM (CONT’D)
I’m not going to give you a line, I just need 90 cents to get a pint. Could you help me out?

Mary answers awkwardly.

MARY
Sorry I don’t have anything.

Gene pulls a slip of paper out of his wallet and hands it to the man.

BUM
What’s this?

GENE
It’s a lotto ticket. I buy them every week.

BUM
You ever win anything?

GENE
Not really. I just buy them because it allows me to dream about what I’d do if I did win. I’m giving that opportunity to you now.

BUM
Well thank you.
GENE
Yeah, jackpot’s at 42 million. Just think of all the booze you could buy with that kind of money.

BUM
Hell, I’d be wasted til Christmas. Thanks man.

GENE
No problem.

The bum moves on down the boardwalk.

MARY
Wow, that was something.

GENE
Hey at least he was honest. I respect that.

MARY
So you buy the tickets... hoping you’ll win?

GENE
That’s the idea.

MARY
Well I guess that means you have some hope. That’s a good sign.

GENE
And as you can see, I just gave that hope away.

MARY
There’s no budging with you is there.

GENE
Not really, no.

MARY
I still don’t see how you can just discount all the great things life has to offer, just because there’s a few bad things along the way.

GENE
Because if I’m dead, I won’t miss the good things anymore. They have zero value. It doesn’t matter.
MARY
And at the same time, all the bad in life is eliminated. I see your point, but you’re also making the assumption that there’s no afterlife. What if suicide buys you a straight ticket to hell.

GENE
I’ve thought a lot about that actually.

MARY
And?

GENE
Well, do you believe in God?

MARY
I’m a Catholic.

GENE
Not my question.

MARY
Catholics generally believe in God, yes.

GENE
Do you believe in free will? That God grants us a choice to do what we want?

MARY
Wow this brings me back to my cathedism days. I used to think a lot about this sort of stuff and yeah, I mean, I think so... It wouldn’t make sense to me that God predestines people to kill or rape others. I think that humans make the choice to be evil.

GENE
I agree. I think God allows us the choice to do what we want to.

MARY
Wait, are you religious?

GENE
Agnostic, but I was raised in a baptist church.
MARY
My brother is agnostic. He likes the freedom to be religious without the burden of having to follow any moral code.

GENE
It’s great isn’t it.

MARY
Probably one of the better ways of going to hell. At least that’s what my dad would say.

GENE
Anyway, where was I. Oh yeah, no matter how much free will we have, there is still one thing we have no choice over: whether or not we are born.

MARY
I guess not.

GENE
So my theory is that since we get no choice in whether or not we want life to begin with, we should be allowed to decide whether or not we want to keep it.

MARY
Well of course you do. You have the option to commit suicide just like you have the option to commit any other sin.

GENE
Yes, but we are also told that if you commit suicide, you’ll go straight to hell... at least according to Catholicism, right?

MARY
It’s a mortal sin, yeah.

GENE
Well I would argue, that if the choice to commit suicide will automatically lead to eternal torment, then it’s not really a choice at all. (MORE)
GENE (CONT'D)
We are forced to keep living, even though we don’t want to because the alternative is so much worse.

MARY
So you’re saying that—

GENE
I’m saying that suicide can’t possibly lead to hell, because that would deny free will, and no free will means that God predestines everything. And if God is predestining everything, then my suicide would be just another part of God’s plan.

MARY
(frustrated)
You have an answer for everything, don’t you?

She begins to tear up, and takes a seat, resting her arms on the railings, and letting her forehead sink into them. Gene looks a little confused, then takes a seat next to her.

GENE
Oh, I’m sorry...

She rubs her eyes, trying to look strong.

MARY
No, I’m sorry, I just feel really bad for you.

GENE
I told you I didn’t want to talk about this.

MARY
I know. I’m sorry, I just get really involved and it hurts to see someone in so much pain.

GENE
I’m sorry, I didn’t want to hurt you. I always hate it when I bring more pain to this already painful world.
MARY
No, it’s okay... It’s just like, I don’t know, a few hours ago I was all ready to ask you out on a date, now I’m unsuccessfully trying to keep you alive... it’s a lot to take in.

GENE
I understand.

They look out onto the water as the sun sets and waves crash against the rocks.

GENE (CONT'D)
So do you want to make out then?

Mary playfully hits Gene.

INT. MEIJER - THE NEXT DAY

Gene is stocking a DVD player on a shelf just out of reach. Mary, holding a step stool, sneaks up behind him.

MARY
Don’t worry, I’m here to save you.

GENE
Huh?

She puts down the stool and gestures to it.

MARY
Do I need to refer you to our safety training video?

GENE
I don’t know. I think I can get it.

She watches as Gene continues to fail at stocking the DVD player.

MARY
Quit being so stubborn.

GENE
Just a little more...

Mary sighs and stands on the stool herself, grabbing onto the box and pushing it the rest of the way up the shelf. Gene notices as her breasts brush against his arm.
He continues to look at her as she climbs down. She notices him noticing her, and looks away quickly.

MARY
I know it’s your last two weeks and all, but could you at least pretend to not half-ass it.

GENE
I can pretend yes, but I make no promises to how well I’ll manage.

MARY
Fair enough. So anyway, what were we going to do today?

GENE
Well, I was planning on going home.

MARY
Sounds great, I want to see where you live.

GENE
Um...

She looks at him with the cutest look she can muster.

GENE (CONT'D)
It’s kind of messy.

MARY
Ha! You haven’t seen my place.

GENE
Okay fine. I guess there’s no point in resisting.

MARY
Good boy...

She begins to walk away, but then turns back

MARY (CONT'D)
Oh, and thanks!

GENE
For what?

She pushes up on her breasts, showing off her cleavage again.

MARY
For noticing!
INT. GENE’S BEDROOM

Gene and Mary are playing Smash Brothers Brawl for the Nintendo Wii.

MARY
So how are you gonna’ do it?

GENE
Not sure yet.

MARY
Well, there’s always the classics, wrist cutting, pills.

GENE
Too cliche.

MARY
Shot to the head?

GENE
Too messy. Don’t want somebody to have to clean it up.

MARY
You could always lay down plastic, or do it in the bathtub.

GENE
Too much work, and I don’t want to have to buy a bullet anyway.

MARY
There’s always hanging. That hasn’t been done in a while.

GENE
Too slow.

MARY
Drowning? I hear it’s peaceful.

GENE
According to who? The drowning victims they ask afterwards? Have you ever choked on water? It’s one of the most violent reactions the body can make. I don’t see how it could possibly be peaceful. And I’m not going to risk it.
MARY
What about falling from a large building? Then at least you get a cool free fall before you go.

GENE
Yeah, but with all that adrenaline, I think I’d be having fun. And then I might regret my decision seconds before impact.

MARY
Definitely not worth the risk. But what else is there?

GENE
I dunno, I think it’d be kind of cool to get ripped apart by some kind of wild animal. Problem is there’s not a lot of killer animals in the greater Grand Rapids area.

MARY
Yeah, I guess maybe you’ll just have to give up on the whole suicide thing then?

GENE
I’ll come up with something.

MARY
You better think fast, cause I don’t know how you’re going to live with the shame of getting your ass kicked by a noob.

GENE
And double shame cause you’re a girl. I want a rematch.

MARY
If you think that’ll help.

They play for a bit.

GENE
The John Ball zoo has penguins... think I could get them to peck me to death?
EXT. MEIJER PARKING LOT - EVENING

Mary sits on top of Gene’s car, wearing a snow hat, an adorably cute sweater, and a set of pig tails. Gene walks up, he fights a smile as she beams up at him.

MARY
Hi!

GENE
You’re stalking me aren’t you.

MARY
What ever do you mean? My being here is completely random chance. Nice to see you too, by the way.

GENE
You’re looking cute today. I’ve never seen you in pig tails.

MARY
You like?

GENE
I do. You’re adorable.

MARY
So take me ice skating.

GENE
Ice skating?

MARY
Yeah, didn’t you say you have a friend that can get you in?

GENE
Oh, yeah, you wanna go?

MARY
Duh.

GENE
Does this mean you’re done trying to persuade me not to kill myself?
MARY
Well, it’s pretty much pointless arguing with you, so I figure I might as well spend as much time with you as I can before you’re gone... you know, it’ll help with writing your eulogy.

GENE
You’re giving my eulogy now?

MARY
Can I?

GENE
That depends. I want to hear a sample first.

MARY
Okay, give me some time, I’ll get on that.

GENE
Can’t wait.

MARY
So we going?

GENE
Yeah, just let me get my stick.

INT. ICE RINK - CONTINUOUS

A pair of skates approach the red line. A puck drops. A stick circles slowly around it like a vulture waiting for it’s prey. Gene skates in a circle, stopping next to the puck. Mary appears in focus, stopped on the blue line, poised for battle.

MARY
Alright! Bring it!

GENE
Tie game. Seconds left on the clock. Gene, cherry picking on the red line.

He skates again in a circle.

MARY
Alright Gretzki.
GENE

Goaltender passes back, it clears the zone.

Gene skates along with the puck.

GENE (CONT'D)

Here it is one on one.

Gene easily dekes around Mary. As he passes her, the camera lingers on Mary, who watches passionately with a smile on her face.

GENE (CONT'D)

Gene, barrels past the defender.

He skates to the net, deking back and forth.

GENE (CONT'D)

He’s all alone; open net. He shoots and...

Gene shoots the puck at an empty net, and almost as if in slow motion, the puck clangs against a sidebar.

MARY

He MISSES! Oh my God, what an upset! Mary wins it!

Mary starts to spin like a figure skater might.

GENE

I thought the game was tied? How did you win it.

She stops gracefully.

MARY

C’mon, isn’t it obvious? Wide open net and you still miss it. Your team obviously forfeited out of embarrassment.

Gene skates toward her slowly.

GENE

Okay, I’ll grant you it was a bad shot, but your team has to be equally embarrassed by your defense skills.
MARY
Hey, which one of us is the hockey player here?

GENE
Okay, so I played like when I was ten... I was never any good.

MARY
But you still come down and practice?

GENE
Every now and then, it’s good exercise.

MARY
You should take me out here more often. It’s been forever since I’ve been on the rink.

GENE
Yeah, let’s see some figure skating.

MARY
Okay, but I’m going to suck in these skates.

GENE
Don’t worry, if you fall it’ll be hilarious.

Mary hands Gene her hockey stick and starts skating.

MARY
(lightheartedly)
In that case I hope I hit you on the way down.

Mary performs a single salchow and lands it flawlessly.

GENE
Wow.

MARY
Like riding a bike.

She continues performing complicated moves as Gene stares at her with longing in his eyes. She transitions into a spin and a skate slides out from under her, making her fall. Gene skates over to her.
GENE
A bike eh?

MARY
Okay, these skates don’t have toe picks, I’m not used to it.

Gene extends his hand to help her up.

MARY (CONT'D)
Now you know if I take that hand you might just fall into my arms... And maybe, just maybe... we might share a cute moment.

Gene helps her up, she gets up with no problems. She looks disappointed.

MARY (CONT'D)
Aww.

Gene kisses her passionately.

INT. HOCKEY RINK - BLEACHERS - CONTINUOUS

Gene and Mary sit on the bleachers, watching the zamboni clear the ice.

GENE
When I was young I used to love playing. Unfortunately I was really small, like freakishly... I was so small I had to take growth hormones to get to the freakish height I am now. Anyway I couldn’t do much on the ice, but I put my heart into it and tried my best.

MARY
Like a Mighty Duck.

GENE
Yes, like a Disney character. And my last year of playing was in the pee-wees, where they finally allow players to hit each other. This was also the year, unfortunately, that everybody but me hit puberty.

MARY
Were you scared?
Actually no. I’ve never really been afraid of injury, but it didn’t matter anyway because I had a mass of pads that could have blocked a farm animal. Oddly enough, everyone else on the team was really afraid to start getting in and hitting people for some reason. Anyway, one of the guys on an opposing team must have hit puberty really early cause he was huge and had gigantic muscles. I can’t remember his first name, but on the back of his Jersey it read Armstrong, and I remember thinking it was an appropriate name.

MARY
Lance?

GENE
Yeah, it was probably Lance Armstrong. Anyway, Lance knew he was huge and made a point to knock down anyone in his way. So he ruled the ice in a sense. Anyway, one time Lance was carrying the puck behind the net, and I, as the left wing, was in the perfect position to stop him. So I skated as hard as I could, ducked down, and crashed right into him. We hit each other so hard that he actually flipped over before landing on top of me, crushing me under his weight.

MARY
(Laughing)
Oh my God. Were you okay?

GENE
I was fine, but this dude was pissed. He couldn’t pull himself up, so he resorted to half kicking me with his skates and calling me a jerk. But whatever, screw him. He had it coming. Heh. The coaches actually had to run out on the ice pull him off of me he was that big.

MARY
That’s so cool.
GENE
Yeah, later in the locker room the coach addressed the team, he said “raise your hand if you’re bigger than Gene here.” They all raised their hands. He continued, “so if you’re all bigger than him, how come he’s the only one here with the balls to pull something like that off.” It was pretty funny.

Mary laughs, a pause passes as the zamboni continues circling the ice.

MARY
So why are you depressed?

GENE
Do we really have to go there?

MARY
Oh yes, let’s do. Let’s play the I hate my life game.

GENE
The what?

MARY
I’ll start. I hate my life because I’m middle management at Meijer.

GENE
Understandable.

MARY
Your turn.

GENE
Fine, I’ll play along. I hate my life because my parents never loved me.

MARY
Oh... that’s sad...

GENE
I’m just messing, my parents were pretty sweet actually.

Mary hits Gene.
MARY
God, you had my heart breaking in pieces for you you jerk. Give me a real one.

GENE
Fine. How’s this? I hate my life because I watch Deal or No Deal from time to time.

MARY
You do?

GENE
Sadly.

MARY
Okay, I hate my life because my car’s falling apart... and now it’s making a really annoying squeaking noise without cause or origin.

GENE
I hate my life because I work grunt level at Meijer.

MARY
Hey, way to copy mine.

GENE
Sorry, it’s a good one.

MARY
Well, you won’t have to worry about working there much longer.

GENE
True.

MARY
I hate my life because I’m 24 and I feel like I haven’t accomplished anything.

GENE
You know, most people consider that young.

MARY
I don’t feel young, and it doesn’t help that my parents keep bugging me about getting married and getting a “real” job.
GENE
Meh, don’t worry about it, that can wait until your thirties.

MARY
God I hope it doesn’t take that long for my life to get started.

GENE
Nah, a cute girl like you will be married in no time.

Mary smiles a little.

MARY
It’s your turn.

GENE
I hate my life because I can never open really tight lids with my bare hands.

MARY
I hate my life because I once forgot my lines in a school play.

GENE
I hate my life because I can never remember people’s names.

MARY
Do you remember mine?

GENE
Not a chance.

MARY
I’ll make it easy then, you can just call me “Cutie.”

GENE
I’ll never remember that.

Mary fake laughs.

MARY
I hate my life because I... Oh my dog got hit by a car a few years back.

GENE
That’s sad, what was it’s name?
MARY
Obi.

GENE
Don’t tell me it’s short for Obi-Wan?

MARY
It was; my sister’s a Star Wars geek. Sadly, the force wasn’t with little Obi.

GENE
Well the force of that car hitting him.

Mary gets angry.

MARY
Hey, that’s not nice.

GENE
Too soon?

MARY
A little, but I’ll forgive you because that dog was a jerk. It wouldn’t let you pet it without the risk of losing a finger. Wouldn’t be surprised to find someone put a hit out on the mongrel.

GENE
I hate my life because every day feels like the same thing.

MARY
You’re bored?

GENE
That’s one way of putting it.

MARY
I hate my life because I’m lonely.

Gene says nothing.

MARY (CONT'D)
I’m lonely, and the only person on this earth that’s making me not so lonely is going to be dead by weeks end.
Gene is silent; the zamboni clears the last bit of ice and exits the rink.

GENE
I hate my life because, well because a lot of reasons. I guess it just feels like there’s no point to any of it. Almost everything sucks and the few things that don’t will just turn around and hurt you later. I hate my life because I can’t form meaningful, lasting attachments to anything or anyone. I’m told that love is the answer, love is all you need, love love etc. Etc. Well you know what? I’ve tried love and it’s more like a drug. It makes you feel good for a little while but it lets you down just when you’re the most addicted. And you’ll friggin’ do anything just for another high.

MARY
Maybe the problem is you just haven’t found the right person.

GENE
See, that’s what everyone says, but... I don’t know, I look at old married couples and they look downright miserable. Yeah, maybe they might have found a high that lasts them a few years, but it seems like that high just goes away eventually. Is that what I have to look forward to? And you know, it’s not just love that’s let me down, it seems like everything... I hate how everything I’ve ever believed in: school, friends, girlfriends, work, and God has let me down.

Gene takes a breath.

MARY
Even God?

GENE
Especially God. You know I used to be a pretty hard core Christian?
MARY
Well, you said you were Baptist right?

GENE
Yeah, but you know, most of the people at my church just showed up because they felt like they had to. I was a true believer...

MARY
And now you’re agnostic.

GENE
It took years for it to happen, but I slowly realized something: God never answered my prayers, He never listened to me. My church always used to talk about a “personal relationship” with God... that you can connect with God on a personal level.

MARY
I’m familiar with the concept.

GENE
Well for a guy I’m supposed to have a personal relationship with, God really sucks. I have a better relationship with my friggin’ desk lamp, and it’s just a man-made object, not the creator of all existence.

MARY
You couldn’t have always felt that way though.

GENE
No I mean, when I first converted, I felt like I really did have a personal relationship with the almighty. And it felt great, but that’s all it was, a feeling. A feeling generated by faith... just another drug that’ll let you down like everything else.

MARY
There are people that will argue that your faith wasn’t real.

(MORE)
MARY (CONT'D)
That if you truly believed, it would never go away.

GENE
Well screw them. I believed. I believed and worshipped with my whole heart. Whoever says that real faith will never fade are either too delusional to face the reality that it has, or just got the drug of faith to last a little longer for them.

MARY
So you believe there is no God?

GENE
See, that’s what’s messed up. I believe, almost absolutely that there is a God, I mean if I go back to origin of life I think I have to. I just believe that God doesn’t give a shit about us anymore.

MARY
Easy to believe considering the shape of things in the world.

GENE
Yeah, that’s exactly my point. I mean, imagine you, with your limited human amount of grace and mercy. If you were given omnipotence, and could make the world a better place, hell, make it a perfect place, end all the war, famine, disease, and suffering, wouldn’t you do it?

MARY
Yes, I would, but I don’t have the wisdom of God.

GENE
See, but that’s no excuse. The Bible says we were given the mind of God and the Spirit to discern. Why do we see injustice and do our best to fight it and He sees injustice and completely ignores it?
MARY
Maybe there’s a good reason for it that we don’t know. Maybe it’s to make us appreciate heaven more. Or maybe it’s just because to stop it would mean to deny free will.

GENE
Yeah, okay, so what do we need free will for anyway. The only thing it seems to accomplish is making us miserable.

MARY
Yeah, but it’s what makes life life. I mean, would you rather be a mindless robot?

GENE
Yes, actually. If it made me happy then yes, I would rather be a mindless robot, because the only thing I use free will for is to make myself happy, or to make others happy. If I could get rid of free will and make the whole world happy and peaceful, I’d do it in a heartbeat.

MARY
I’ve always believed that God gives us free will so that we can choose whether to believe in him or not.

GENE
I’ve heard that argument before and if that’s the real reason we have free will, then how messed up is God? God creates a bunch of stupid, uninformed people so that He can have the ego trip of people choosing to believe in him without any good reason to. Then, when they choose not to believe in him, he gets the added pleasure of sending them to hell to suffer for all eternity. I mean, that argument makes God look like an egomaniacal tyrant with a hell of a lot of insecurity.

Mary doesn’t respond right away. She looks at him and gives a weak smile. Gene smiles back at her.
MARY
You’ve got some issues.

GENE
I know.

She puts her arm around him and hugs him.

MARY
You know. I’ve thought about that before. Actually, a lot of that... and I used to spend hours on it. I actually did research... for instance did you know that research shows that prayer has no effect on recovery rates for dying patients?

GENE
I did, actually.

MARY
I looked it up because... well my aunt was diagnosed with breast cancer some time ago. I prayed every day for a year for God to heal her, believing it would happen. And for a year, I watched her get worse and worse until chemo was too much for her and she inevitably died. We were really close too.

GENE
I’m sorry.

MARY
I blamed God... I mean didn’t he say he’d hear our prayers? But my prayers fell on deaf ears, or perhaps, no ears at all. And I lost faith.

GENE
You seem to believe now though.

MARY
Well, it’s because my lack of faith made me miserable. Everything seemed pointless, and I grew bitter because of it. So I made a conscious choice to stop worrying about the details and just believe.
GENE
Willful ignorance.

MARY
It’s cliche but true, ignorance is bliss. And blind faith has given me a certain amount of peace. I’m not a model catholic by any stretch of the imagination, but I believe enough to go to mass and be bored out of my mind once a week.

GENE
Well if it works for you... are you suggesting that I should just stop asking questions and just believe?

MARY
Well, maybe not in God, but you have to believe in something.

GENE
Not if I’m dead.

MARY
Okay, you’ve convinced me. I’m committing suicide too.

GENE
Hell yeah! Let’s do it together!

MARY
Oh man, I’ve gotta’ put in my two weeks notice.

GENE
Shut up, I know you don’t really want to do it.

MARY
No, I think you’ve made a great argument for it, and I don’t see any reason why I shouldn’t do it too.

Gene ponders this for a bit.

GENE
Because you love life.

MARY
No, I hate my life... didn’t we just go over this?
GENE
You hate things about your life... a lot about it. But deep inside under all the pain and misery, you have hope. And that’s what’ll make it so that no matter how depressed you get, no matter how much you want to die, you’ll never even come close to committing the act.

MARY
And what makes you say that.

GENE
Because even I have hope.

Mary smiles.

MARY
Well, I do believe we’re making progress.

INT. MARY’S APARTMENT - LATER
Mary enters her apartment, turns on the light and closes the door. She walks past her sister’s room... the door is closed, the light is on and sexy noises are seeping out of the bedroom. Mary sighs in disgust, goes into her own bedroom, and puts a pillow over her head. She lays on the bed, still holding the pillow, looks at the wall and watches the shelf shake. She sets the pillow down, pulls out her phone, and calls Gene.

GENE
Hey, what’s up?

MARY
Okay, so you know that scene in Jurassic Park where they’re sitting in the Jeep and the glass of water vibrates?

GENE
Yeah, T-Rex coming to jack them up. Awesome scene.

MARY
Well imagine replacing the dinosaur with your little sister losing her virginity for the tenth time, and you’ll know what I’m going through right now.
GENE
God that’s disgusting.

MARY
Yeah, imagine if that was your sister, what would you do?

GENE
My sister is twelve, so I’d murder her boyfriend.

MARY
God I gotta’ get my own place.

GENE
Don’t be hating. She’s got to do something with all those hormones.

MARY
I know... she’s what some might consider an adult now. It’s just... I don’t know, I’m a few years older than her and all I can think about is all the sex I’m not having.

GENE
I don’t know, I think a pretty girl like you could do something about that.

MARY
Maybe. Any chance you could be over here in 10 minutes?

A silence passes on the phone.

MARY (CONT’D)
Gene?

TITLE: Nine Minutes Later

INT. MARY’S APARTMENT (LIVING ROOM)

Mary opens the door to see Gene standing there holding a rose. They instantly start making out.

MARY
What took you so long?

GENE
Had to get the flower.
They start taking each other’s clothing off. She takes the rose and smells it.

MARY
It’s fake.

GENE
Like my desire to take things slow.

They kiss some more as they make their way toward Mary’s bedroom.

MARY
Fine by me.

She tosses the flower in with the mess that is her living room. They continue on her bed... both managing to get a few more articles of clothing off.

MARY (CONT'D)
Hey... stop for a second.

GENE
What’s wrong?

MARY
Nothing... I just don’t want you to think I’m easy.

GENE
Wouldn’t dream of it.

MARY
I’m serious though. I don’t really like a whole lot of guys... but I’ve liked you for a while now and I feel like I’ve wasted so much of my life. I don’t want to waste another second.

GENE
Then let’s not.

They start kissing again.

INT. MARY’S APARTMENT - BEDROOM

The both lay on Mary’s bed, looking happy and satisfied.

MARY
I’ve never been good at pillow talk.
GENE
Don’t worry about it.

Gene is still pawing at her.

MARY
You’re not done are you?

GENE
What can I say, you’re just really sexy.

MARY
Well I can’t say as I mind hearing that.

GENE
This is weird. I was planning on using these last two weeks trying to detach myself from everything in this world... So that I’d feel like I was leaving nothing behind.

MARY
You’re not still thinking of committing suicide are you?

GENE
Of course not. I know moments like these don’t last, and that eventually my life will just go back to the crapfest it was... but I don’t know. It’s the moments like these that make us want to keep living... as irrational as it is to do so.

MARY
But sir, you quit your job. How could you possibly go on living without that $7.50 an hour?

GENE
I don’t know. I think that job was killing me far more than suicide ever could.

MARY
They should include that in the training video.
INT. MARY’S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Elizabeth is sprawled on the couch, eating a bag of potato chips. She’s watching Iron Chef. The faint flicker of the T.V. lights her face. Gene exits Mary’s room, only to see Elizabeth for the first time. She is topless. Noticing who has entered the room, she quickly grabs a blanket and covers up.

GENE
Um... hi.

ELIZABETH
Who are you?

GENE
I’m Gene... I’m a friend of your sister.

ELIZABETH
Well I should hope you’re more than just friends with her... considering the noise you were making earlier.

GENE
You should talk. You and your boyfriend were shaking the walls.

ELIZABETH
(pauses)
This is weird.

GENE
Yeah, I’m good at first impressions.

ELIZABETH
Sorry about my nakedness. I’m not used to Mary having guys over.

GENE
Sorry about barging in on you... I couldn’t sleep and was going to get a glass of water.

ELIZABETH
No worry’s. Glasses are in the cupboard over the sink. Oh, I’m Elizabeth by the way.
She extends one hand to shake Gene’s. Her blanket falls a little as she lets go of it, but she remains mostly covered. They shake hands.

    GENE
    Nice to meet you.

He heads toward the kitchen and grabs a glass. Elizabeth heads toward the dirty clothes hamper and finds a tank top to put on.

    ELIZABETH
    (to Gene)
    There’s cold water in the fridge.

    GENE
    Oh, tap’s fine thank you.

Elizabeth returns to the couch, looks back at Gene as he’s filling the glass, then quickly returns to watching Iron Chef. Gene wanders back over to the couch, standing beside it.

    GENE (CONT’D)
    So, Iron Chef? That’s a little old school.

    ELIZABETH
    Yeah, it’s like the only thing on at 3 in the morning.

    GENE
    I used to love this show. Always made me want to be a chef.

    ELIZABETH
    Yeah, but this is the crappy American version.

    GENE
    That sucks... half the charm is the bad English dubbing.

    ELIZABETH
    Oh, I totally agree. You can sit you know.

She clears off a space for him next to her. He takes a seat.

    GENE
    Okay, only for a bit though.
ELIZABETH
So how did you and Mary meet?

GENE
I took her hostage once. She developed Stockholm syndrome and we sort of just hit it off.

ELIZABETH
Shut up. How’d you really meet?

GENE
Ugh... you’re going to make me admit to working at Meijer, aren’t you?

ELIZABETH
Don’t be ashamed. I used to work there back in high school.

GENE
Why’d you leave?

ELIZABETH
You kidding? That job sucks. I’m a weekend secretary at the admissions office at CC now. It’s basically the easiest job in the world... spend 8 hours getting my homework done one day a week.

GENE
Sounds cool. I’m actually leaving Meijer though. I’ve already put in my two weeks.

ELIZABETH
Good for you. What’s next for you?

GENE
(pauses to think)
I don’t know actually.

ELIZABETH
Good plan.

GENE
I thought so.

ELIZABETH
You know, we’re hiring another secretary for the weekdays.
(MORE)
ELIZABETH (CONT'D)  
It’s a little more work, but it’s still a cake job.

GENE  
That’s an option. Maybe I’ll look into it.

ELIZABETH  
I could probably put in a word for you if you apply.

GENE  
Sounds good.

A pause passes as something interesting happens on the TV.

GENE (CONT'D)  
So maybe you could answer me something. Mary’s like one of the hottest girls I know-

ELIZABETH  
Present company excluded of course.

GENE  
Don’t we have a high opinion of ourselves.

ELIZABETH  
C’mon. Do I need to show you my boobs again?

GENE  
No, I’ve got a fairly good memory thanks.

She hits him.

ELIZABETH  
You perv.

GENE  
So anyway, I was wondering how she could possibly be single. And the way she talks, she sounds like she doesn’t really date a lot.

ELIZABETH  
Between you and me, she doesn’t get out much.

GENE  
Hmm.
ELIZABETH
She once was madly in love with
this one guy from her high school.
They were a couple for years,
engaged to be married even. But
then he went off and joined the
military. Got shipped to Iraq.

GENE
Did he die?

ELIZABETH
As far as we know he’s still alive.
They said they were going to stay
together, but only a few months
after he left he broke things off
with no explanation at all.

GENE
What a douche.

ELIZABETH
Yeah, no kidding. Mary was
devastated. She hasn’t dated anyone
since.

GENE
Er... maybe I shouldn’t be hearing
all this.

ELIZABETH
Oh yeah, this is probably stuff
Mary should tell you, but I’ve got
plenty of gossip if you want to
hear it.

GENE
Maybe some other time.

ELIZABETH
So he’s not my boyfriend.

GENE
Huh? Who?

ELIZABETH
The guy I was banging walls with
earlier. He’s not my boyfriend. You
called him my boyfriend earlier.

GENE
Oh, him?
ELIZABETH
Yeah. Well. I mean, he used to be my boyfriend. I broke up with him today.

GENE
That’s odd, it sounded like things were going great between you two.

ELIZABETH
Oh yeah, I just wanted to give him a good send-off. He deserved that much, at least... I’ve been leading him on for weeks.

GENE
So how’d he take being dumped.

ELIZABETH
Pretty well actually. I mean, he didn’t cry.

GENE
Well that’s good. Hate to see them cry.

ELIZABETH
Yeah, no kidding.

GENE
Why do I get the feeling you’re a bit of a heartbreaker.

ELIZABETH
Hey, not my fault no guy can satisfy me for long.

Gene finishes his water.

GENE
Well, I should probably get back to Mary now.

ELIZABETH
Leave the glass, I’ll take care of it.

GENE
You sure?
ELIZABETH
Yeah, it’s no biggy. Just... don’t
tell Mary I told you all those
things about her.

GENE
My lips are sealed.

He goes back into Mary’s room. Mary is asleep on the bed.
Gene cuddles up next to her.

MARY
Where’d you go?

GENE
To get a glass of water.

MARY
Mmm.

She closes her eyes and goes back to sleep.

GENE
Oh, and I saw your sister naked.

Mary jolts up in her bed.

MARY
What?

INT. MEIJER STORE - THE NEXT DAY

Mary sees Gene sorting some CDs on the shelf. She pulls him
behind a nearby aisle, kissing him passionately.

MARY
Sorry, I’ve always wanted to do
that.

GENE
Personally, I don’t give a crap if
we get caught, but you still have a
job here.

MARY
I don’t care.

GENE
Fair enough.

She kisses him again.
MARY
What do you want to do tonight?

GENE
Sorry. Can’t hang out. I’ve got job hunting to do.

MARY
Really?

GENE
Yeah, I figure I’d better.

MARY
(glumly)
Okay...

GENE
But I’ll stop by later tonight if you don’t mind.

MARY
Of course I don’t, just stop by whenever, I’ll be home all night.

She kisses him again. As their lips part, we see Larry in the background.

LARRY
Awesome, totally awesome!

INT. CC OFFICES - LATER THAT DAY

Elizabeth sits at a desk in an empty office building. She’s filling in a Suduko puzzle. Gene approaches the desk without her noticing. He clears his throat.

ELIZABETH
Oh! Hey, sorry. I was in the zone. ‘bout to finish a four star puzzle here.

Gene notices what she’s working on.

GENE
Ugh... suduko.

ELIZABETH
You don’t like suduko?
GENE
I don’t like homework. And that’s basically all suduko is... homework problems disguised as fun.

ELIZABETH
Maybe for me homework is fun.

GENE
Right...

She starts filling in boxes until she gets to the last number.

ELIZABETH
Wait, that’s not right... dammit, quit distracting me.

GENE
Uh... my bad?

ELIZABETH
So what can I do for you?

GENE
Thought I’d take you up on that job here... could I get an application.

ELIZABETH
No.

GENE
Well, by all means if suduko is more important to you, don’t let me keep you.

ELIZABETH
Okay, thanks... okay I’m kidding. But I really can’t get you an application. This is a big boy job... you know, the kind that requires a resume.

GENE
A resume. God I thought I’d go my whole life without having to write one.

ELIZABETH
You don’t have a resume? God, even I have a resume, how pathetic is that?
GENE
Really pathetic it seems.

ELIZABETH
No kidding. Well do you have an hour to spare?

GENE
I guess so... why?

ELIZABETH
Because lucky for you, this office doubles as a help center for resume building. Would you like me to help you with that?

GENE
Well, only if you wouldn’t mind doing your job.

ELIZABETH
Normally I would actually, but you’re cute so I’ll make an exception.

INT. CC OFFICES – LATER
Gene sits at a computer, Elizabeth is eagerly leaning toward him as she sits at his side.

GENE
Okay, so what do I do?

ELIZABETH
Okay, this computer is equipped with special resume building software called M Sword. So double click on M Sword.

GENE
M sword? I don’t see– Oh MS Word. Cute.

He double clicks

ELIZABETH
Loading... loading... I hate how slow these things are. Okay first click on “document.”

GENE
Where?
ELIZABETH
At the top, next to format.

GENE
I don’t see...

ELIZABETH
Ugh...

She leans past him, grabbing the mouse over his hand, pushing the cursor to the right spot.

GENE
Ooh...

ELIZABETH
(condescendingly)
There you go.

GENE
Sorry, I grew up on macs... I’m still getting used to the second mouse button.

ELIZABETH
This is gonna’ take a while.

INT. CC OFFICES - LATER

It’s a little darker outside as they seem to be finishing up on the resume. They are standing by the printer.

GENE
Still can’t believe you claim to be into sci-fi, but have never seen Firefly.

ELIZABETH
I’ve been avoiding it, God it’s been hyped so much there’s no way it can possibly live up to it.

GENE
Trust me it’s good. One of those Fox shows that was too good to stay on the air.
ELIZABETH
You know, one day television will evolve to the point where lasers scan our eyes, and three dimensional images will be downloaded directly into our brains, and even that far in the future, there will still be nerds whining about Firefly getting cancelled.

GENE
All I’m saying is don’t knock it until you’ve seen it.

A paper is vomited out of the printer.

GENE (CONT’D)
So what now?

ELIZABETH
Leave it with me and give Sherry a call on Monday. I’ll put in a word for you.

GENE
Thanks, I’ll owe you one.

ELIZABETH
You already do. How do you feel about letting me come over and watch Firefly?

GENE
Sorry, hanging out with Mary tonight.

ELIZABETH
Oh I get it, you’d rather have wild premarital sex than watch TV?

GENE
Yes, actually... but raincheck?

ELIZABETH
How about tomorrow after I get out of class. Mary works tomorrow night so you have no excuses.

GENE
Yes, because my whole life revolves around your sister.
ELIZABETH
Give it time, it will.

GENE
That sounds ominous.

She laughs the evil laugh of a mad scientist.

INT. MARY’S APARTMENT – MARY’S BEDROOM

Gene and Mary lie naked next to each other on the bed, sheets covering them.

GENE
So I saw your sister today.

MARY
Oh really? Did she have clothes on this time?

GENE
For a bit she did.

Pauses, then realizes he’s joking

MARY
Don’t be crude, that’s my sister.

GENE
I’m sorry. But your sister’s actually pretty cool. She helped me get a resume together, and she’s gonna’ try and get me a job at her work.

MARY
That’s cool. You really want an office job?

GENE
Of course. I’ve always wanted to work in an office... Getting to sit on my ass all day.

MARY
It’s harder than you think you know.

GENE
Anyway, she said she wanted to come by and watch Firefly with me tomorrow. Said she’s never seen it.
MARY
She did? Huh.

GENE
What?

MARY
I can’t believe it. She’s totally trying to seduce you.

GENE
What? No way.

MARY
Trust me, you don’t know her like I do.

GENE
I don’t know, it seemed innocent enough, I mean she knows I’m with you.

MARY
That she does.

GENE
Are you getting insecure? Cause seriously, regardless of what she’s thinking, which I seriously wouldn’t read too much into, I know at least from my end that nothing’s gonna’ happen.

MARY
We’ll see.

GENE
Good to know you have faith in me.

MARY
It’s not you, it’s her. She has a way with guys... and she’s just broken up, so she’s on the prowl.

GENE
Well, I’ll tell her not to bother.

MARY
Don’t get me wrong, I do trust you, and I hate to be the jealous girlfriend, but honestly I feel really weird about it. I mean, don’t you?
GENE
Not really. She’s like the female version of an old friend of mine. It’d be a little like hooking up with a dude.

MARY
I don’t know, maybe we could all hang out together some time. I don’t want to stop you from being friends with her. She doesn’t exactly have a lot of normal friends.

GENE
You think I’m normal?

MARY
Normalish.

GENE
I’m glad I used you as a reference.

INT. MARY’S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

Elizabeth is once again sprawled on the couch watching TV. The phone rings and Mary is heard off screen answering it. She hands the phone to Elizabeth.

MARY
It’s for you... it’s a boy.

ELIZABETH
Ooh, I hope he’s cute.

MARY
He is, trust me.

Elizabeth takes the phone

ELIZABETH
Hello? Oh hey, how’s it going... Yeah I’m good too... No, it’s cool, I understand... Yeah, do you mind if I pick them up after my yoga class? That’s fine, where do you live? Oh, that’s just down the street from my class... Okay, cool see ya’.

Mary pretends like she wasn’t extremely interested in that phone call.
MARY
What was that about.

ELIZABETH
Oh, he was gonna’ let me borrow some DVDs. I’m stopping by later to get them.

MARY
Oh, cool.

ELIZABETH
Hey, did you say anything to him about me?

MARY
No, why?

ELIZABETH
Nothing, he just sounded a little funny, that’s all.

MARY
Wait, did you ever tell him anything about me?

ELIZABETH
Nothing he wouldn’t know anyway.

MARY
Okay, just curious.

They stand in silence for a bit.

INT. GENE’S APARTMENT – DAY

A knock at the door prompts Gene to get up from playing the Wii and open it. It is Elizabeth. She’s dressed in typical sexyish yoga attire.

ELIZABETH
Hey, cool place.

GENE
Come in. I’ve got the DVDs in my room.

She enters. He retreats into his room to grab the DVDs.

ELIZABETH
Cool place.
She notices his television.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
How can you afford something like that.

GENE
Well if you combine my employee discount with my advanced knowledge of Meijer pricing loopholes... well a lot of expensive stuff becomes affordable.

She notices his MSU banner.

ELIZABETH
You into sports?

GENE
Just hockey. Why?

ELIZABETH
The MSU banner.

GENE
Oh, my parents are fans. I think they want me to go to college so they get me stuff like that.

He emerges from his room with the DVDs in hand. Elizabeth nods towards the Wii.

ELIZABETH
So you any good?

GENE
Pretty sweet actually.

ELIZABETH
Bet you can’t beat my jigglypuff though.

Gene pauses to think. He hands her a wiimote.

GENE
Well, I hope I don’t have to let you win like I did with Mary.

ELIZABETH
Ha! Not likely.
INT. MEIJER STORE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Mary is going over a checklist on her clipboard. Behind her is Gene holding a fake flower. He grabs her shoulders, scaring her.

GENE
Hi there!

MARY
God you scared me. Don’t do that.

GENE
Sorry. I have that effect sometimes.

MARY
(cheerful)
What are you doing here on your day off.

GENE
I’m giving you this flower to help alleviate my guilt.

MARY
Guilt?

GENE
Yeah your sister came over, she seduced me and I gave in.

Mary scowls at him.

GENE (CONT’D)
(overdramatically)
I’m sorry.

He hand her the rose.

MARY
Not funny.

GENE
Okay, I’m kidding. But she did hang out for a bit... we played some brawl. It really wasn’t a big deal.

MARY
You know, you might be way more honest than you have to be.

(MORE)
MARY (CONT'D)
I thought about it, and I really
don’t mind... too much.

GENE
That’s good... cause damn your
sister’s hot and I don’t want you
going in the way.

Mary smells the rose.

MARY
Fake... like your chances of
getting any tonight.

GENE
Might have to just take some right
now then.

He grabs for her butt, she playfully screams and swats his
hand away.

INT. MARY’S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM

Elizabeth stares at the T.V. catatonically, though it seems
to be off.

MARY
Hey, I want to make an attempt at
cleaning up the place tonight.
Gene’s coming over.

Elizabeth doesn’t respond.

MARY (CONT'D)
Is something wrong?

Elizabeth hesitates for a moment.

ELIZABETH
Er, well, it seems... I’m sort
of... pregnant.

MARY
What? What do you mean sort of
pregnant.

She holds up what appears to be a home pregnancy test.

ELIZABETH
Well, this line is sort of blue.

MARY
What?
Mary grabs the thing out of her hands.

MARY (CONT'D)
Let me see that.

She looks over it.

MARY (CONT'D)
Okay, that’s really blue.

ELIZABETH
I thought it looked more light blue.

MARY
Oh wait, it says here on the box that it has to be cyan to be positive. I think you’re okay.

ELIZABETH
Really?

MARY
No! Of course not. Blue is blue.

ELIZABETH
Oh.

They’re both silent for a bit.

MARY
So... you’re pregnant.

ELIZABETH
I peed on that you know.

Mary sets the pregnancy test down.

MARY
This is big.

She sits on the couch next to Elizabeth.

MARY (CONT'D)
How’d you know to check?

ELIZABETH
It just occured to me that I’m like two weeks late... and I don’t know, I just saw like three movies about unwanted pregnancies and I panicked. Bought a test, and next thing I know, I’m a walking cliche.
MARY
So what are you gonna’ do? Are you gonna’ marry Roger?

ELIZABETH
God no. I just broke up with him.

MARY
Then what? Adoption?

ELIZABETH
I don’t know, maybe. I was kind of thinking I’d just get rid of it.

MARY
You’re not serious. You’re one of the most pro-life people I know.

ELIZABETH
Not anymore, it seems.

MARY
I can’t believe what I’m hearing... that’s a baby inside you.

ELIZABETH
It’s just a cluster of cells right now.

MARY
You gotta’ tell mom and dad.

ELIZABETH
You kidding? They’d flip! They’d be planning my wedding before Roger even found out about it.

MARY
Well you gotta’ tell Roger. It’s his kid too. It is his kid right?

ELIZABETH
Of course it’s his kid! What kind of slut do you think I am?

MARY
Well I don’t know, which one of us is pregnant?

ELIZABETH
Well eff you too.

Mary is silent for a bit.
MARY
I’m sorry. It’s just, this is a lot to take in.

ELIZABETH
This must be tough for you huh?

MARY
That’s not fair. I really don’t know what to say. You know I’m pro-life. I thought you were too.

ELIZABETH
God Mary, this isn’t politics. This is your sister... with a problem. A problem that’s going to get a lot bigger really soon.

MARY
I’m sorry, I really am, but don’t get mad at me because you’re irresponsible.

ELIZABETH
I gotta’ get out of here.

She makes for the door.

MARY
Where are you going?

ELIZABETH
Out. Don’t even think about telling mom and dad.

MARY
I won’t, I swear. Where are you going?

ELIZABETH
I just need some air. I’ll be back later.

She leaves.

INT. GENE’S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Knocks summon Gene from the couch. It’s Elizabeth.

GENE
Uh... hi?
ELIZABETH
Um... do you mind if I come in?

He gestures for her to enter and she does.

GENE
Is something wrong?

ELIZABETH
Kind of... I’m sort of... I mean... I’m really pregnant.

GENE
Woah. How’d that happen?

ELIZABETH
You really want the details?

GENE
God no.

She takes a seat on his couch. He sits next to her.

GENE (CONT'D)
Did you tell Mary?

ELIZABETH
Yeah, I did actually. That’s kind of why I’m here.

GENE
Didn’t go over to well, huh?

ELIZABETH
To say the least.

GENE
I can see her overreacting to this sort of thing.

ELIZABETH
She is really passionate, I’ll give her that.

GENE
Obnoxiously so sometimes.

ELIZABETH
I don’t know. I’m overreacting too. I don’t know what the heck I’m gonna’ do.
GENE
Well, I guess you have four options really. You could raise the baby yourself. You could raise it with your ex. You could put it up for adoption, or you could get it taken care of.

ELIZABETH
I’m not raising this baby myself. I’d be the worst mother ever.

GENE
You’d learn.

ELIZABETH
Chances are I’d screw it up. I don’t want my baby to turn into a sociopath.

GENE
Okay, raising it with your ex...

ELIZABETH
Roger? God no. He’s too much of a dumbass to raise a kid, and I’m not getting back with him.

GENE
Okay, adoption.

ELIZABETH
I guess that’s a possibility. But who’s to say the parents I give him to will be any better than me.

GENE
I think they’d be a little better. At the very least they’d want the baby.

ELIZABETH
Yeah, but how do you know they won’t be like super strict religious types you know. The kind of parents that punish their kids so much that they’re just waiting for a chance to act out... do something stupid.

GENE
Like get pregnant?
ELIZABETH

Exactly.

GENE

That is a possibility.

ELIZABETH

And how do I know they won’t be like child molesters or something.

GENE

I think they run background checks.

ELIZABETH

It’s still a possibility though. And I don’t want to lug this thing around for nine months anyway.

GENE

So then get it taken care of. It’s not too expensive, and it’s pretty simple this early in the game.

ELIZABETH

I thought about that actually. I mentioned it to Mary and she flipped.

GENE

Somehow that doesn’t surprise me.

ELIZABETH

Yeah, she’s pro-life. I mean, I’m pro-life too, or at least I was. Suddenly my stance doesn’t seem so black and white anymore.

GENE

Why were you pro-life?

ELIZABETH

I don’t know. That’s how I was raised I guess. It just seemed kind of wrong to kill babies.

GENE

But it’s not a baby right now. It’s not really anything right now.

ELIZABETH

I know. Just a bunch of cells... But I was just a bunch of cells once. What if I had been aborted?
GENE
Then you wouldn’t be having this problem right now, that’s for sure.

ELIZABETH
I don’t know. It still feels kind of wrong to me. But it also doesn’t feel right for me to have the kid.

GENE
You’re worried that it’s life will suck, hell I don’t blame you. But if you have it, and his life does suck, then he will blame you. But when was the last time you heard a fetus complain about being aborted?

ELIZABETH
I guess that’s something to think about.

Gene’s cell phone rings. He looks at it.

GENE
It’s Mary.

ELIZABETH
For the love of God I’m not here.

GENE
Of course your not. I haven’t seen you all night.

He answers.

GENE (CONT’D)
Hello? What’s wrong? No I haven’t seen her... Yeah, I can meet you there... Okay, I’ll see you in a little bit... see ya.

He hangs up.

GENE (CONT’D)
Er, I need to go. Maybe I can calm her down a bit.

ELIZABETH
That’s fine... do you mind if I crash here for a while?
GENE
Fine by me... just stay out of my porn.

ELIZABETH
I make no promises. Just don’t tell her we spoke please.

GENE
Not a problem. I’ll be back in a bit.

ELIZABETH
See ya.

He leaves.

EXT. GIANT TIRE SWING – EVENING

A giant tire swing hangs from a large girder. Mary sits on the swing, flustered. Gene twists her back and forth.

GENE
Pregnant?

MARY
Yeah, pregnant. Can you believe it?

GENE
Yeah, actually.

MARY
What’s that supposed to mean. Do you think she’s some kind of a slut or something?

GENE
A little, yeah.

MARY
Oh God, she is a slut isn’t she?

GENE
The first time I heard her, she was getting the sex on. The first time I saw her, she was topless, not that I’m complaining.

MARY
(getting angry)
Don’t joke about that.
GENE
She’s not a slut, really. Just has an active sex drive... apparently too active.

MARY
And she won’t tell our parents.

GENE
Can you blame her?

MARY
I guess not. God, I don’t know what to do.

Gene spins the swing and hops on.

GENE
Well, try not worrying about it. It’s her problem.

MARY
How can you say that? I’m her sister.

GENE
Yeah, but she’s an adult. She’ll figure out what to do.

MARY
Yeah right, she wants to just get rid of it... Like it’s a piece of trash.

GENE
Well maybe she should.

Mary sighs deeply.

MARY
I guess it shouldn’t be surprising that you’re pro-choice.

GENE
The hell I am.

MARY
Huh?

GENE
I don’t think there should be a choice... I think abortion should be mandatory.
MARY
That’s sick, don’t joke about that.

GENE
Who’s joking? What makes parents arrogant enough to think they have the right to bring someone into this world.

MARY
You know, you might not think so, but this world can actually be a pretty cool place.

GENE
That’s irrelevant. As long as it has the potential to be bad, it’s not worth the risk.

MARY
You might think so, but I for one am glad I was born.

GENE
Yes, but only because you were born. If you were never born, you wouldn’t have anything to miss.

MARY
But I have to be born first before I can know whether or not life will be bad. Your logic is circular.

GENE
No it’s not. Try to imagine that your life is so bad, you wish you were never born.

MARY
But no matter how bad my life gets, I’ll never wish that.

GENE
Maybe, maybe not... but for any given person, for every unborn fetus, there is the potential that they will grow up to have a life so bad that they would rather not have been born.

MARY
I suppose.
GENE
And that is a wish they will never get, because their parents were selfish enough to ignore this possibility. Everyone talks about whether they want kids or not, but they never even stop to consider how immoral it is to reproduce if their kids end up not wanting life.

MARY
Well most people do want life, and if they don’t they can...

She stops herself.

GENE
They can what? Commit suicide? Are you saying you support suicide now?

MARY
They can get help.

GENE
Some can, yes, the lucky ones. But as long as some can’t, my point still stands.

MARY
But you’re just totally ignoring all the good things life has to offer.

GENE
Yes, because if you’re not born, you won’t ever miss all those good things life brings, and you’ll additionally be spared of the bad things.

MARY
I’m never going to just discount how great life is because it might be bad. Sorry.

GENE
(pauses)
Do you believe incest is wrong?

MARY
What does that have to do with anything?
GENE
Nothing. I’m just curious.

MARY
Yeah, I bet... yes. I believe incest is wrong.

GENE
Why?

MARY
Because it is. It’s... gross.

GENE
But the people committing the incestuous act don’t think it’s gross, so then why is it wrong?

MARY
Because, I mean, incest causes lots of birth defects and genetic diseases.

GENE
So you’re saying that children of incestuous relationships would be better off not being born?

MARY
No, that’s kind of an extreme case.

GENE
But you are saying that there should be a certain quality of life, before reproduction is even attempted... otherwise incest wouldn’t be wrong.

MARY
I guess so.

GENE
But with any pregnancy, there is the potential to be birth defects or genetic diseases. What is it about regular couples that makes it okay for them to decide that their genes are good enough for their spawn? Because the odds are a bit better?
MARY
I don’t know... clearly you’ve thought a lot more about this than I have. Why don’t you tell me?

GENE
As long as the potential exists, it should make no difference whether the couples are related or not. And not just birth defects, you have no idea what kind of horrors can befall a perfectly healthy child. Until you can guarantee that the child will have a great life, all reproduction should be considered immoral.

MARY
So what, you just want life on earth to stop?

GENE
Well, that’s not my goal, but that would be a biproduct of mandatory abortion. I think the world would be a lot better in the long run without humans making each other miserable and destroying the place in the meantime.

MARY
I can’t talk to you about this.

She gets up and begins walking away.

GENE
Mary, this is just like you trying to convince me to not kill myself. You want life at all costs, but you don’t give a damn about the quality of it. With how crappy this world can be, with how much worse it’s getting, and considering the peaceful alternative of non-life, Elizabeth’s baby would be better off terminated... I’m sorry if that’s hard for you to hear.

She stops, and turns around.

MARY
Did Elizabeth tell you about the baby?
GENE
(hesitates)
No.

MARY
She did didn’t she.

Gene frowns.

MARY (CONT'D)
What did you tell her?

GENE
What she needed to hear.

MARY
What’s that? To just kill an innocent baby?

GENE
She needed someone to be supportive. Not someone to shove their beliefs down her throat.

MARY
(caught off guard)
She’s my sister. Stay out of it.

GENE
Fine. Don’t worry about it.

MARY
Fine.

She walks away, as she leaves, the song “Have You Ever Seen the Rain” by Creedence Clearwater Revival or something cheaper begins to play.

MONTAGE
A) Gene gets off tire swing, starts walking the opposite way.
B) Mary walks toward the camera
C) Elizabeth looks at her cell phone in her hand.
D) Elizabeth dials Roger and get’s his voicemail.
E) Mary tries to make a call from her car. She hangs up looking frustrated.
F) Gene walks by himself into the zoo.
G) Mary arrives home and runs into Elizabeth’s room. It is empty.

H) Elizabeth is watching the news through tears, there’s a story about global warming on.

I) Gene enters the Penguin Tank.

J) Gene watches as a Penguin repeatedly swims up and down against the glass in the tank.

K) Mary is making a sandwich, she looks across the counter at her cell phone.

INT. ROGER’S APARTMENT – CONTINUOUS

Roger sits at his couch listening as Elizabeth paces back and forth, it is raining in the background.

ELIZABETH
And I told Mary and she totally flipped, but she said I should probably tell you and I agree, so here I am, and I’m telling you.

ROGER
Wow.

ELIZABETH
You’re telling me.

ROGER
Well I know I’m not ready for this at all, but maybe this is a good thing.

ELIZABETH
What! You can’t be serious. How could this possibly be a good thing?

ROGER
Well, I don’t know. Maybe it’s fate. Like this is what brings us back together. Maybe we were meant to raise this baby together.

ELIZABETH
Roger, there’s no us. What we have is over.
ROGER
But this kind of changes things, doesn’t it?

ELIZABETH
Yes, this changes things. This changes a hell of a lot. But it doesn’t change anything about us. I know this hurts to hear, but I don’t love you. It’d be no good for us or the baby... being born into a loveless marriage.

ROGER
It wouldn’t be entirely loveless... I still love you.

Elizabeth sighs and sits down, holding her forehead.

ELIZABETH
Roger, have you looked at this world. We’ve got war, unemployment, Global Warming... Is this something you even really want for your child?

ROGER
I think they deserve the chance.

She is silent for a really long time. Slinking her head further into her hands.

ELIZABETH
Roger, the only reason I’m even coming to you is because I believe this child is half yours. I know it’s my body, but I still feel you have equal rights to the kid. If you want it, and I mean really want it, I will choose to have this baby for you, but I want you to remember, that whatever it’s fate, there will be no us. It’s over between us.

Roger looks at her, clearly hurt.

INT. MARY’S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Mary, sitting on the couch watches as Elizabeth comes through the door. She stands to meet her.
MARY
Hey, sorry about overreacting earlier.

ELIZABETH
Don’t worry about it.

MARY
Can we try this again, this time with my supportive face?

ELIZABETH
Seriously don’t worry about it. I overreacted too.

MARY
Okay.

ELIZABETH
I talked to Roger.

MARY
How’d he take the news?

ELIZABETH
Not well... but I talked to him and he was eventually a little more supportive.

MARY
What does he want to do?

ELIZABETH
He wants me to have an abortion.

MARY
Oh.

ELIZABETH
And I thought about it... and that’s what I’m going to do.

MARY
Oh.

ELIZABETH
And I know you’re against it... that you think it’s murder, but I’ve made my decision and I’m going to go through with it.

Mary is silent.
ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
And I hope that this won’t change things between us, because I really need my sister right now.

MARY
I’ll always be your sister, no matter what you do.

ELIZABETH
Your cool with this?

MARY
Well, no, but it is your decision. And though I won’t be driving you to the clinic or anything. I won’t get in your way either.

ELIZABETH
You won’t tell mom and dad?

MARY
No. They’d be even less cool with your decision.

ELIZABETH
(sincerely)
Thanks. I really appreciate this.

MARY
Can I have a hug?

ELIZABETH
Of course.

They hug each other as the picture fades to black.

INT. MEIJER STORE - DAY

Mary in work attire watches as Larry comically fails to stock a DVD player above his head. He drops it on the floor with a clatter. He looks around and sees Mary.

LARRY
Oops.

MARY
That’s coming out of your paycheck you know.

LARRY
I’m really sorry, I didn’t mean to.
Mary picks up the DVD player and shakes it. It rattles.

MARY
Don’t worry about it. We’ll just ship it back to the manufacturer.

LARRY
So what’s up with Gene? Isn’t he supposed to be here today?

MARY
(upset)
Yeah. It’s supposed to be his last day actually.

LARRY
Probably just skipping. It’s tradition to skip your last day.

MARY
I don’t know. I feel like he would have called in at least.

LARRY
Did you try calling?

MARY
Yeah, his phone’s off. You’re probably right, he’s probably just skipping.

LARRY
Oh well, at least it’s slow.

MARY
Yeah.

EXT. MEIJER PARKING LOT - LATER THAT DAY

Mary gets in her car and goes to turn on the ignition. When she looks up, she sees Gene standing in front of her car. He is holding a bouquet of fake flowers. She turns off her car and gestures for him to enter. He smiles and gets inside.

GENE
These are for you.

He hands her the flowers.

MARY
Fake, all fake.
GENE
Like your chances of forgiving me.

MARY
Forgiving you for what? You were just being you. I shouldn’t expect you to be anything different.

GENE
I was being an ass. When your sister came to me in distress, I was as supportive as I could be.

MARY
She told me about it. You’re always there for people more than you’ll ever know.

GENE
But when you came to me the same way, I wasn’t supportive. I attacked you when you needed someone the most. And that’s why you should be mad, and that’s why I’m sorry.

MARY
I forgive you.

GENE
Thank you.

MARY
You know, when you didn’t show up for work today, it crossed my mind that maybe you...

GENE
That I killed myself? What would ever make you think that?

She gives him a look.

GENE (CONT'D)
I wanted to. I wanted to so badly. But I wasn’t even close to actually committing the act.

MARY
Maybe something I said actually stuck with you.
GENE
Maybe. I guess just sitting around the penguin tank had an effect on me.

MARY
Oh?

GENE
Yeah, well most of the penguins in the tank were just resigned to their fate... just lying around and waiting to die.

MARY
God, everything is death with you.

GENE
But there was this one penguin swimming around in the water. It swam until it ran into the glass. When it realized it hit a wall, it just kept swimming down until it reached the bottom. Once it reached the bottom, it just floated back to the top, then swam back down to the bottom. I was there for at least a half hour and it never stopped doing that.

MARY
Huh.

GENE
Well, sometimes I kind of feel like that penguin. Like I’m the one person discontent with life. The one person trying to find something better.

MARY
I don’t think your the only person that’s discontent with this life.

GENE
But it sure feels that way, especially since nobody seems to have any problems with bringing more people into this world. We’re like penguins in a cage, so resigned to the fate we have, we don’t try to challenge it. Don’t try to make it better.
MARY
What are you saying?

GENE
I don’t know... probably just pretentious psychobabble... but I do know this. I still wish I was never born, and I still think that we’d be better off not bringing more people into this world, but no matter how much I want that, there will still be millions of babies each year, and the human race will keep going. And I guess I can either kill myself and not worry about it, or I can actually spend the rest of my life trying to make the world a better place. That way, maybe this big penguin tank won’t feel like such a cage, and maybe future penguins like me won’t beat their heads against the wall trying to escape it. I guess I’m choosing the latter.

MARY
So maybe I won’t have to spend the rest of my life trying to save yours then?

GENE
No you won’t. I promise you that. But if you can forgive me, I’d like to keep pursuing whatever it is we have.

Mary looks at him with sadness in her eyes.

MARY
Of course I can forgive you Gene, and I really love you. But what we have... we can’t keep it going. I believe that despite its problems, the world is a fundamentally good place... a place worth bringing a life into. And one day, certainly not immediately, but one day I’m going to want to have a child and show them the beauty of this life.

GENE
Even though that’s a beauty they’ll never miss if never conceived?
MARY
I don’t want to debate this. I’m just telling you how I feel.

GENE
I understand. But don’t you think it’s a little early in the relationship to be talking about kids anyway? I mean, who’s to say that one day down the line one of us doesn’t change our minds about things?

MARY
You mean what if one day I change my mind? Cause do you really see yourself changing your opinion?

GENE
I guess not. But I don’t know. I’m not opposed to adopting. Considering how many unwanted kids are born each year, maybe that makes more sense anyway.

MARY
(pondering)
That’s a solution, I guess.

GENE
But?

MARY
But I don’t think it works that way. It’s more than just the issue of having kids. It’s a fundamental difference in basic views on life. We were stupid to ignore it before.

GENE
It can work that way if we don’t let it get to us... I mean, we haven’t even given us a chance.

MARY
Think about it, do you honestly see this working? Maybe immediately, but what about in a year, in five years, in ten. Don’t answer, just think about it
GENE
(thinking)
... I don’t think any permanent
happiness can be found with
anybody... but I want to squeeze as
much happiness out of this as we
can.

MARY
And that’s the problem. I still
believe that there’s somebody out
there that’s perfect for me. That I
can be 90 and happy with.

GENE
I understand.

MARY
And though it kills me to end what
we have, I need to be with someone
that feels the same way. I hope you
understand.

GENE
I do. I hate it and I wish you’d
change your mind, but I agree. It
doesn’t make sense for us to pursue
a relationship where we want two
separate things.

He sighs and droops his head. She rubs him on the back. After
a moment he opens the door and exits the vehicle.

GENE (CONT'D)
We can still be friends though,
right.

MARY
Of course.

GENE
With benefits?

MARY
Ugh... You perv.

TITLE: ONE WEEK LATER

INT. GENE’S APARTMENT - DAY

Gene and Elizabeth are on the couch, watching TV together.
ELIZABETH
(Outraged)
That was it?

GENE
Well there’s a movie that finished up some of the plot lines, but yeah, that’s it for the TV show.

ELIZABETH
God, I can’t believe this was cancelled. This could’ve been like the next Star Trek, only good.

GENE
The cynic is converted.

ELIZABETH
I’m glad you convinced me to watch it.

GENE
No problem... Hey so I never asked, how did the operation go?

Elizabeth doesn’t answer immediate. She looks away from Gene.

ELIZABETH
I guess about as well as can be expected. Surprised they can take a life so quickly.

GENE
Are you regretting it?

ELIZABETH
No, I think it had to be done it’s just... I don’t know. I wish my sister didn’t look at me the way she does... I guess it’s to be expected.

GENE
Give her time. Pretty soon things will go back to the status quo.

ELIZABETH
Hey, if you don’t mind my asking, did you guys end up breaking up because of me.
GENE
Well, yes and no, really. Your situation just brought out a lot of stuff that probably should have been revealed sooner, rather than later is all. The very reason we came together is the same reason we couldn't stay together.

ELIZABETH
Yeah... you know, I probably shouldn't be telling you this, but she's still a little heartbroken over you. I miss you two being together... I liked seeing her happy.

GENE
In honesty, I still miss her too. It was like we always worked together, and then it was a whole lot more... and now it's nothing. How come the “let’s be friends” line never seems to have meaning?

ELIZABETH
Probably because it’s hard to be friends when you’re thinking about each other naked.

GENE
Damn, I’m gonna’ miss that.

ELIZABETH
I don’t blame you. I’ve seen her naked, she’s got a kicking body.

GENE
(sighing)
Sigh... Sometimes I wonder if it’ll be this way with everyone I meet.

ELIZABETH
Oh, cheer up emo kid. I’m sure someone else will come around.

GENE
Yeah, maybe.

He smiles at her. She smiles back. He keeps smiling at her. A look of horror crosses her face.
ELIZABETH
Hey, don’t look at me! I’m not gonna’ be your rebound!

GENE
Oh, sorry, I just kind of thought we were sharing a moment there.

ELIZABETH
Yeah, I know. We totally were. But then all of a sudden, I remembered, oh yeah, your my sister’s ex. And oh yeah, I just had an abortion. I’m gonna’ see if I can learn from my mistakes this once. Starting anything now would be awful.

GENE
Now?

She smiles. A look of relief covers his face. He smiles. She smiles back.

FADE TO BLACK

CREDITS