

WEIRD LONERS

PILOT

written by

Michael J. Weithorn

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"WEIRD LONERS"

COLD OPENING

INT. LUXURY CRUISE SHIP DINING ROOM - NIGHT

CARYN GOLDFARB - late 30's, smart, high-strung, kind of pretty in an offbeat way - sits at a table in the ship's fancy dining room with MARTY, a very good-looking guy of about 40. Caryn looks at him a moment, shakes her head sadly.

CARYN

How did this happen, Marty? How did we let it slip through our fingers? I mean, wow, we had it. That amazing, magical connection some people wait their whole lives for. But you were always terrified of the intimacy, weren't you? I could see it in your eyes the very first day we met.

MARTY

Which was Wednesday.

CARYN

I tried to make you feel safe, I really did. I tried on Wednesday, I tried yesterday, and I would've tried today but you went off to play in that volleyball game - which I found out later actually was co-ed, but whatever...

MARTY

You just come on too strong, Caryn.

CARYN

Oh, please, you were right there with me. For godsake, you told me you loved me last night. "Jesus Christ, I fucking love you." You said that.

MARTY

You were blowing me!

CARYN

Are you open to couples counseling?

MARTY  
 (to waiter)  
 Check please!

CARYN  
 I was going to order dessert.

FREEZE FRAME. SUPER: "CARYN GOLDFARB. AGE: 37. PROFESSION:  
 DENTAL HYGIENIST. LONGEST RELATIONSHIP EVER: ONE YEAR  
 (ROUNDED UP FROM FIVE MONTHS AT CARYN'S REQUEST)"

INT. NYC CORPORATE OFFICE - DAY

STOSH LEWANDOSKI - early 40's, whip-smart, rakishly handsome,  
 cynical - sits in a chair opposite the desk of his boss,  
 ADAM. Stosh picks up an apple from a fruit bowl, takes a  
 bite.

STOSH  
 'Sup, Chief?

ADAM  
 Got some bad news, Stosh. We're  
 letting you go.

Stosh's chewing slows for a moment, as he stares Adam down.

STOSH  
 You're jerkin' my chain, right?

ADAM  
 No. It was Donald's decision. He  
 asked me to tell you.

STOSH  
 Well, what was Donald's reason,  
 huh? This is complete bullshit,  
 Adam! I've been a top rep here  
 fourteen years! What was his  
 goddamn reason?!

ADAM  
 He says you banged his fiancè.

STOSH  
 That is... possible. But come on -  
 two to tango, right? Is it my  
 fault she's a party animal? Did I  
 give her that hit of Ecstasy?

ADAM  
 He says you did, yes.

STOSH

Hey, she specifically asked me to get some! I can show you all the texts back and forth.

ADAM

It's over, Stosh.  
(takes him in for a beat)  
What is your problem, anyway? At your age, still living the way you do... Are you some kind of... sex addict or something?

STOSH

Fuck you. I have the same sex drive as anyone else. I just don't have the drive to do all that other shit.

ADAM

Clean out your office.

Stosh tosses his bitten apple back into the fruit bowl.

FREEZE FRAME. SUPER: "STOSH LEWANDOSKI. AGE: 42.  
PROFESSION: SALES REP. LONGEST RELATIONSHIP EVER: 11 DAYS  
(THOUGH HE WAS OUT OF TOWN FOR THE LAST 8)"

INT. SOHO LOFT - DAY

ZARA MILLER - late 30's, long hair, ethereal, gorgeous without trying - tiptoes toward the door in this downtown artist's loft, carrying a packed duffle bag and a large art supply tool box.

DAVID (O.C.)

Zara?

Zara quickly drops the things she is carrying and shoves them aside with her foot as her boyfriend, DAVID - early 50's, bearded - enters.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Going out, hon? To get breakfast?

ZARA

Yes. To get breakfast. And then to go live somewhere else. Actually, I'm not getting breakfast.

DAVID

(notices her packed bag)  
 What? What?! You were just going  
 to... vanish? Without saying a  
 word?

ZARA

There definitely would have been an  
 email at some point.

DAVID

Zara, this... this is insane. Can  
 you just sit down and talk to me  
 please? I... I thought everything  
 was so good between us.

Zara reluctantly sits.

ZARA

Yeah, no, it is, it was, it's just,  
 you know, David, every relationship  
 has it's natural lifespan, and  
 we've had three incredible, perfect  
 months together -- although I've  
 been looking for another place for  
 six weeks and haven't found one so  
 if you hear of anything please let  
 me know -- but still, our thing  
 here, you and me, this has been...  
aces.

(does a "thumbs up")

David falls to his knees, starts crying softly into her lap.  
 Zara sort of pats him on the back, but her heart ain't in it.

DAVID

Don't you realize how much I love  
 you? I don't think I can live  
 without you...

ZARA

Hey, you know what? Most of my  
 exes have said the exact same thing  
 and they're all completely fine.  
 Except for one girl who committed  
 suicide, but she was always talking  
 about doing that, even on our first  
 date, so...

(trailing off)

I don't think that's... on me...

DAVID

(through sobs)

What the hell is wrong with you?!  
 What kind of person can be so  
 passionate and loving one day, and  
 then just turn completely cold?!  
 What kind of person is that?!

Zara smiles sheepishly and shrugs as if to say, "Me, I guess."

FREEZE FRAME. SUPER: "ZARA MILLER. AGE: 38. PROFESSION: ARTIST. LONGEST RELATIONSHIP EVER: NO DATA (BUT QUITE POSSIBLY THIS ONE)"

INT. QUEENS TOWNHOUSE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

We HEAR the sounds of a NY Mets game on TV.

ERIC LEWANDOSKI - mid-30's, horn-rimmed glasses, odd, nerdy, though not bad looking - plops down on the middle section of a well-worn couch with a bag of chips. At first glance, Eric could either be brilliant or a complete idiot - as we will learn, he is both.

On the couch next to him sits his father, MELVIN LEWANDOSKI - 78, Polish immigrant - and on the other side of Eric, on the empty seat of the couch, rests a pillow embroidered with the word "Mom". As Eric and his father watch the game...

TV ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

...and with one out in the ninth,  
 Wright steps to the plate as the  
 possible tying run...

ERIC

Look for the curve outside, Davey.  
 Slap it into right.

MELVIN

(thick Polish accent)

No. They won't give him nothing to  
 hit. He should be smart and take  
 the bases on balls.

ERIC

Pop!! You are so completely,  
 totally, amazingly wrong! He  
 should look for the curve. Mom  
 would have agreed with me.

MELVIN

And she would have been wrong too.  
He should take the bases on...  
bases on...

Suddenly, Melvin suddenly slumps over. Eric doesn't notice at first.

TV ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

The pitch -- outside, ball one.  
Wright looked like he was thinking  
about it...

ERIC

See? He was-- Pop?  
(nudges his father)  
Pop? You okay? Pop?

Eric looks at his father with concern, nudges him again. Nothing. He stands, leans over and puts two fingers on his father's neck to take his pulse. As he does:

TV ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

The pitch... *WRIGHT SLICES IT DOWN  
THE LINE!!*

Eric whips his head around to look at the TV, fingers still on his father's neck.

TV ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

And it's... *just foul!*

ERIC

(winces)  
Ah!

Then, remembering, he turns back to his father. Who is dead. Eric stands there for a long moment, then sits back down. Stunned. Sad. Still watching the game.

TV ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Count stands at one-and-one...

FREEZE FRAME. SUPER: "ERIC LEWANDOSKI AGE: 36.  
PROFESSION: TRIBOROUGH BRIDGE TOLL COLLECTOR. LONGEST  
RELATIONSHIP EVER: 14 YEARS (IF YOU COUNT ONCE A MONTH WITH  
THE SAME PROSTITUTE)"

The freeze frame shots of Caryn, Stosh, Zara and Eric fill the screen, one in each quadrant.

TITLE CARD: "WEIRD LONERS"

**END OF COLD OPENING**

ACT ONEINT. TAXI - DAY

Caryn is in the back seat of a taxi, talking to her mother, EVELYN GOLDFARB, on her cell.

CARYN

Hi Mom. Cruise ship just got in.

EVELYN (V.O.)

Welcome back darling. So did you meet anyone?

CARYN

Yeah, I met a great guy the first day, but he didn't like me as much as I liked him. And neither did the two after that.

EVELYN (V.O.)

Honey... Howard is a such a wonderful man. Have you thought any more about--?

CARYN

No.

EVELYN (V.O.)

Oy. You just do not select well, Caryn. Always the "bad boys," with the swagger, and the crooked smiles, and the cocky attitude... You know what I think? I think that's what gets you... "excited."

CARYN

DUH!!!

EVELYN (V.O.)

Well, you need to get over that!

CARYN

I need to get over what turns me on?!

EVELYN (V.O.)

If you ever want to get married, yes!

(then)

So what exactly did you say to Howard, when he proposed?

CARYN

Told him I was overwhelmed, that I needed to take a cruise to think things over.

EVELYN (V.O.)

You didn't tell him it was a singles cruise, did you?

CARYN

No.

EVELYN (V.O.)

Good.

INT. NYC APARTMENT BUILDING HALLWAY - DAY

Stosh walks down the hall, stops at his apartment. There's a red tag on the knob. He pulls it off, looks at it, crumples it up. Puts his key in the lock. Won't turn.

STOSH

That vindictive dick blister...

He thinks for a moment, then steps over to the apartment next door. Knocks.

EXT. APARTMENT BALCONY - DAY - MINUTES LATER

Stosh is in the process of climbing over the rail of his neighbor's balcony, on the side across from the balcony of his own apartment. They're up pretty high. This looks dangerous. He climbs carefully.

Standing on the balcony watching are Stosh's neighbor, SUSAN QUINLAN (40's, bathrobed, life-weary), and her three obnoxious kids.

STOSH

(as he climbs)

Sorry to impose, Sue, but hell - a man has a right to get into his own home, doesn't he? Those bastards can take back their "company-owned condo", but they can't take my dignity. Or my Italian suits. Or my watches. Actually, they can take the dignity and the suits, I want the watches. Fuck it, I'm taking the suits too.

Stosh has now climbed all the way over and stands on the very narrow outer lip, his back to the railing, as he steels himself to make the leap across.

STOSH (CONT'D)  
Gonna wish me luck?

SUSAN  
Hadn't occurred to me.

STOSH  
Come on, Sue, don't you feel at all sentimental...? About our little "thing"...?

SUSAN  
I feel whatever the opposite of sentimental is.

STOSH  
Guess I'll have to treasure the memories by myself. See ya.

Stosh leaps across - and slams into the top of his railing at exactly crotch-level. He grimaces in agony. The kids laugh.

KID #1  
Ohhh! Right in the gonads!

STOSH  
Motherassfuck...

Stosh tips forward, flips head-first over the railing onto his balcony, and lands hard on top of a glass coffee table. He rolls off and crumples to the ground in agony.

SUSAN  
So... we done here?

STOSH  
(still a crumpled heap)  
Got time for a quick drink?

Susan just rolls her eyes and goes back inside her apartment as the kids continue to laugh and hurl insults.

EXT. QUEENSBRIDGE PARK - DAY

A grassy expanse on Queens' western edge, with a beautiful view across the river to Manhattan. We PAN across the backs of a line of amateur artists who have set up their easels facing the city, as they work on their paintings of the skyline with various degrees of skill.

Finally we come to Zara, who faces the opposite way, her back to the city. She paints. Tears run down her face. The people on either side of her steal glances, a bit unsure what to make of her.

EXT. QUEENS TOWNHOUSE - DAY

A block of townhouses in the working class, multi-ethnic neighborhood of Ridgewood, Queens. Eric sits on the steps of the townhouse where he lives, playing a plaintive blues song on the harmonica. He's good.

A taxi pulls up in front of the townhouse next door. Caryn gets out, retrieves her two suitcases from the trunk and starts to pull them up the steps toward her front door. Eric watches from his steps.

ERIC  
Need some help?

CARYN  
Uh, no. I got it, thanks.

ERIC  
I live here. In this one.

CARYN  
Yeah. You're the guy with the sock puppets, right?

ERIC  
(smiles bashfully)  
Yeah, I do puppet shows here on the steps sometimes. For the kids.

CARYN  
I've never seen any kids.

ERIC  
Maybe when word gets around...

CARYN  
I think it already has.  
(re: suitcases)  
Listen, I just got home from a trip, so I should really--

ERIC  
My father died.

CARYN  
What?



CARYN

Molly!! What the hell is happening here please?!

MOLLY

Right, yes, right - I had, like, a tiny party here last night? But I'm cleaning everything up. I was gonna get to these two next.

WHITE GUY

We got wasted and passed out. Sorry.

CARYN

(to the guys, wincing)  
Did you two have... sex?

WHITE GUY

No!  
(to the Black Guy)  
No, right?

BLACK GUY

No.

WHITE GUY

I guess our buddies thought it was funny to take our clothes and split.

MOLLY

So funny. Anyhow - Jason, Steve, this is my roommate-slash-landlady, Caryn.

The guys extend their hands - exposing their genitals in the process.

CARYN

(averting her eyes)  
N-n-n-n-n-no!!!

Caryn quickly grabs two pots from an overhead rack, extends the larger pot to the White Guy and the smaller pot to the Black Guy. Then, realizing, reverses her arms so that the Black Guy gets the large pot and the White Guy the small one. The guys take the pots and cover up.

MOLLY

That was slightly racist.

WHITE GUY

Right?

BLACK GUY  
Not if it's true.

CARYN  
This has to stop being my life.

MONTAGE: UNDERSCORED BY ERIC'S BLUES HARMONICA...

EXT. QUEENSBRIDGE PARK - DUSK

All the other artists are gone, but Zara is still there packing up her supplies. We see her now-completed painting - a deeply compelling abstract human figure, androgynous, haunted, sad.

She loads her supplies and the painting into the back of her beat-up van, gets in and drives away.

INT. SEEDY MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Stosh sits on the bed, idly flipping through a newspaper, eating a meatball hero and washing it down with tequila. A hardcore porn movie plays on the TV, though he pays no attention. Something in the paper catches his eye.

INSERT: of a small item in the obit section: "Melvin Lewandoski, Retired Sanitation Worker, Dead Of Heart Failure At 78."

STOSH  
Uncle Mel. Shit.

EXT. TRIBOROUGH BRIDGE TOLL BOOTH - NIGHT

Eric sits in his booth as the Mets game plays on a transistor radio. An elderly Pakistani woman pulls up in a Toyota, hands him a ten. He gives her change.

ERIC  
Mets up five-one in the eighth.  
Murphy's three-for-three.

She nods politely and drives off.

INT. CARYN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

INSERT: Caryn's iPhone screen, as she types a text - to "Howard". It reads, "I'm back! Wanna come over tmrw nite for an... engagement dinner? 7PM?"

WIDE SHOT: Caryn downs a glass of Chablis, takes a deep breath... and hits "Send".

CARYN

No emoticons, no emoticons, no  
emoticons...

Ten smiley face emoticons appear on the screen.

**END OF ACT ONE****ACT TWO**INT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY

TIGHT SHOT of an elderly MORTICIAN, standing at a podium next to a coffin on a riser, shakily reading from a piece of crumpled paper. He speaks into a microphone, which broadcasts his voice loudly.

MORTICIAN

We gather here today to pay our  
final respects to...  
(strains to read)  
Melvin... Le... Lewando...

WIDE SHOT: showing us the room. The pews are ENTIRELY EMPTY - except for Eric, who sits in the first pew, directly in front of the mortician. It's a bizarre sight - two people, three feet away from each other, one speaking to the other over a loud P.A.

ERIC

(prompting)  
Lewandoski.

MORTICIAN

Lewan...dusty.

As the eulogy continues, Stosh enters through a door in the rear. He takes in this strange scenario for a moment, then slips into the last pew.

MORTICIAN (CONT'D)

(reading)

Melvin was born in 1935 in the  
small Polish town of... Cha-cha...

ERIC

(prompting)

Czestochowa.

MORTICIAN

Chaka...wawa. In 1968 he came to  
America with his lovely wife Irina,  
and began a long, happy career with  
the Department of Sanitation...

As the mortician continues...

STOSH

Psst! Eric!

ERIC

(turns; shocked)

Whoa! Cousin Stosh?!

STOSH

Yeah, it's me. Been a long time,  
man. How you doin'?

ERIC

Great! Except... got some bad news  
for you - my dad died.

STOSH

I know, ya mental case. That's why  
I'm here. I saw the obit in the--

ERIC

Shh, wait, gotta hear this!

Eric turns back toward the mortician.

MORTICIAN

...and then, in 1978, Melvin and  
Irina welcomed into the world their  
one and only child... Eric.

Eric turns to Stosh, points to himself and does a "fist-  
pump." Stosh nods, smiles, rolls his eyes.

EXT. METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART - DAY

We PAN across the booths set up by amateur artists in front  
of the museum, selling their wares.

It's all pretty mediocre stuff - still lifes, nature scenes, puppies, kittens... and then we come to Zara's booth. Dark, tortured, brilliant works - including the one that we saw her painting the previous day.

INT. CARYN'S TOWNHOUSE - DAY

Caryn is on the phone with her mother. Behind her, we see Molly in the process of moving out, crossing past with boxes of her stuff.

CARYN

I'm going to marry Howard.

We HEAR Evelyn erupt with a long, ear-splitting scream of joy. Caryn pulls the phone away from her ear, wincing.

CARYN (CONT'D)

Jesus...

EVELYN (V.O.)

Oh, sweetheart, that is music to my ears! Did you tell him yet?

CARYN

Yeah, I texted him. He's coming over for dinner tonight.

EVELYN (V.O.)

A text? Oy. So, so - what are you cooking?

CARYN

I was gonna order Chinese.

EVELYN (V.O.)

Caryn! The man is going to provide you with a home and security for the rest of your life! Cook him a goddamn meal!! What is wrong with you?!

CARYN

Fine! Okay!

EVELYN (V.O.)

And again, congratulations, dear.

Caryn hangs up. Molly stands there holding a box.

MOLLY

I can slide on this month's rent, right?

INT. ERIC'S TOWNHOUSE - DAY - A LITTLE LATER

Stosh and Eric are there. Eric grabs a soda from the fridge as Stosh peruses the vast multitude of family photos on the walls, *tchotchkes* on the shelves, etc.

ERIC

...then after high school, I got a job and kept living here so I could take care of Mom and Pop. Did that for about three years, and then... just kept doing it.

(then)

So? Is the place kinda like you remember it?

STOSH

Hasn't changed since '89.  
Literally. Not one thing.

ERIC

Last time you were here was that Christmas, remember? When your mom kept hitting your dad in the head with the telephone?

STOSH

(chuckles)

Yeah. Good ol' Mom, with her nutty, kooky alcoholic rage...

ERIC

I missed you, Cousin Stosh.

STOSH

Yeah? You missed having a fat douche put slushballs down your shirt and call you a retard?

ERIC

(shrugs)

Yeah.

Stosh looks at him a moment.

STOSH

Listen, Eric, I was thinking... if you could use some help, y'know, adjusting to the transition and whatnot... I could stay here for a little while. I got my own place of course, in the city, great view, but... I don't mind staying here. Whatdya think?

ERIC  
That. Would. Be. AWESOME!

STOSH  
Yeah? Thanks. I mean, good. This is good. I'll go pick up my stuff.

ERIC  
Want me to come with you?

STOSH  
(stops him)  
No-no-no. Here's what I want you to do, my young *kuzyn*: rejoin the human race. Get out in the sunshine and enjoy your fuckin' life.

ERIC  
Enjoy my fuckin' life, got it.

STOSH  
And hey - buy some new shit for the walls. If I have to sleep with these pictures of you everywhere I'll never jerk off again.

Eric explodes in laughter - like, this is the funniest thing he's ever heard. Stosh observes this, smiles a little.

STOSH (CONT'D)  
Okay. Still a retard.

He grabs Eric's head in the crook of his arm, kisses it, and releases him.

STOSH (CONT'D)  
First day of your new life. Go.

EXT. METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART - DAY

Eric strolls along Fifth Avenue in the sunshine, finishing an ice cream cone. He's nodding, smiling, saying hello to everyone he passes. Not one single response.

He passes along the row of amateur artists' booths, glancing at the art as he passes, and stops... at Zara's booth. She's reading a book.

ERIC  
Ma'am? Are you an official artist?

ZARA  
(looks up)  
Hm? Oh. Hi. Yes. I guess I'm an  
official artist, yes. Hi.

ERIC  
I need to buy some art. What's  
good art to buy?

ZARA  
Huh. Well. Maybe, if there's a  
work that you find... upsetting.  
One that makes you experience an  
emotion that you're deeply  
uncomfortable with.

Eric considers this, then glances over at the booth next to  
Zara's - and selects up a small, cutesy painting of a kitten.

ERIC  
I'll take this.

Zara laughs. Eric laughs too. They laugh together for a few  
moments.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
(as he laughs)  
Why are we laughing?

ZARA  
I don't know, that was just funny.  
Those paintings aren't mine,  
actually. These are.

ERIC  
Oh!

Eric replaces the kitten painting, looks at Zara's paintings  
for a moment and picks up the big one that she painted the  
day before.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
I'll take this one! I like it a  
lot better than that weird kitten.  
(pulls out his wallet)  
Oh shoot, it's probably more than  
sixteen dollars, right?

ZARA  
No, it's sixteen dollars. Exactly.

ERIC  
Whoa, what are the odds?! Awesome!  
Thank you!

Eric gives her the money and starts to walk down the street carrying the large painting. It's a very windy day, and the canvas acts as a "sail" - Eric is pulled violently, forward, back, side to side. He turns back to Zara, smiles and waves as if to say, "It's fine!"

ZARA  
(calling)  
How far do you have to go?

ERIC  
Just across the bridge to Queens!

Just then, a sudden gust of wind blows Eric hard into the side of a parked catering truck. He bounces off and falls to the ground, careful to hold the painting up to protect it. He looks back and gives Zara a "thumbs up." She smiles.

INT. ZARA'S VAN - DAY - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Zara drives, Eric is in the passenger seat. The painting and all of the rest of Zara's art stuff is in the back.

INT. CARYN'S TOWNHOUSE - DAY

Caryn is in the kitchen attempting to cook a meal for Howard, but it's pretty clear she sucks at cooking. Food, pots, pans, cooking implements, etc., are scattered around as if there was an explosion.

While she tries to make sense of a recipe on her open laptop, she turns to see that one of the pots is boiling over, smoke billowing. She stares at it for a moment, frozen, lets out a little whimper, and downs the rest of her glass of wine.

INT. ERIC'S TOWNHOUSE - DAY

Eric is sitting on the floor with Zara. He is playing the *Gadulka* - a Polish fiddle, kind of like a violin, but weirder. Strange but beautiful. Zara leans against the couch, smoking a joint as she enjoys the show. We see that her painting is now hung on the wall above the couch.

Stosh enters, carrying a couple of suitcases. He stops, takes in the sight of Eric with this gorgeous stranger.

STOSH  
Whoa. Nice first day.

SFX: SMOKE ALARM BEEPING. It's distant - not coming from this apartment.

INT. CARYN'S TOWNHOUSE - DAY - A FEW MINUTES LATER

We hear the smoke alarm more loudly now. This is where it's coming from.

Knock on the door. Caryn crosses, opens it - it's Stosh. He's handsome and she's a little bit drunk - a combination that sends her reflexively into "flirty" mode.

STOSH

Hi.

CARYN

Hi. Who are you?

STOSH

I'm staying with my cousin next door. You know him? Glasses? Sort of...

CARYN

...sweet...a little odd...

STOSH

...weird... kinda stupid...

STOSH (CONT'D)

Right. Anyway... is your apartment on fire?

CARYN

No. I mean, maybe. Come on in.

Stosh enters, follows Caryn into the kitchen. The burning pot is now off the stove, but otherwise the place is still a disaster area.

STOSH

Holy shit. What happened in here?

He climbs up onto the counter to reach the smoke alarm.

CARYN

I was trying to cook dinner for my fiancé. Fiancé. Fi-an-cé. Wow. That's one of those words that sounds strange if you say it a lot. Or even once.

Stosh, fiddling with the smoke alarm, smiles a little to himself when he hears "fiancé." He already thought Caryn was kind of hot - now he's all in.

He silences the alarm and jumps down from the counter. He's agile. Caryn notices.

STOSH

(re: food)

So -- need some help salvaging the meal? That's a rhetorical question, by the way.

INT. CARYN'S TOWNHOUSE - EVENING - A LITTLE LATER

The kitchen has been repaired to a respectable state. Stosh is wearing an apron and deftly doing prep work. They're both drinking glasses of wine.

CARYN

You're so good at that. Are you like, a real chef?

STOSH

Professionally? No. I've got a much sexier job than that.

CARYN

Which is...?

STOSH

V.P. of Sales at a dental products firm. I know - like meeting Springsteen, right?

CARYN

I'm in the dental field, too. Hygienist. Small world.

STOSH

Small, incredibly boring world, yes. Here - make yourself useful.

Stosh puts a bell pepper, knife, and cutting board in front of Caryn. She starts to cut the pepper sideways, Stosh turns it so she's cutting it correctly.

As Caryn cuts the pepper, Stosh continues with other aspects of preparing the dinner. He moves past her a few times, always a little closer than necessary, sometimes putting a hand on her shoulder or back as he passes.

STOSH (CONT'D)

So? Tell me about the lucky guy. "Mr. Fiancé."

CARYN

Howard?

STOSH

Yes, tell me about Howard. The love of your life.

CARYN

Howard? Yeah, no, he's... great. He's a widower, a loving father, a wonderful dermatologist... I mean, he's not Ryan Gosling, but I'm not exactly... whatever the female equivalent of Ryan Gosling is...

STOSH

Scarlett Johansson.

CARYN

The main thing is, he loves me. Howard Blatt loves me, he's kind to me, and will take care of me. And I finally realized, that's all I want from a man.

(then)

You single?

STOSH

Ya. Divorced, actually.

CARYN

Ohhh. Divorce is so hard. I'm sorry. How long were you together?

STOSH

Week and a half. Got a girl pregnant, married her, couldn't hack it, ran for the hills.

CARYN

Well, that's not ideal, but you're only human. You probably felt trapped by that one youthful mistake. Had your whole life ahead of you. You were only, what...?

STOSH

Thirty-four.

CARYN

Relationships are hard...

Stosh steps right up behind Caryn, very close, starts to rub her shoulders seductively.

STOSH

You're very sexy...

CARYN

Wow, okay. Do you always hit on engaged women?

STOSH

"Always?" No.

Stosh begins kissing Caryn on the neck and caressing her body with great sensuous skill. She does not resist - in fact, she quickly becomes aroused (while continuing to chop the pepper). As this is happening...

CARYN

I don't even know your name...

STOSH

Stosh.

CARYN

"Stosh?"

STOSH

It's Polish. I was born in Poland.

CARYN

The country?

STOSH

As opposed to what?

CARYN

I don't know.

His hands glide down her torso, he nibbles her ear...

STOSH

And you are...?

CARYN

Jewish.

STOSH

I meant your name.

Stosh's left hand slides below frame - within a moment it's clear that he has begun "pleasuring" Caryn... digitally.

CARYN

Oh! Yeah, no, "Jewish" isn't... my actual... name. Can you imagine...? "Jewish Goldfarb."

STOSH

Redundant.

CARYN  
 Just the "gold"... and the  
 "farb"... are redundant... with...  
 each other... Ohhh, God...  
 (then)  
 Caryn. I'm Caryn.

STOSH  
 Nice to meet you, Caryn.

They are about to drop to the floor to get serious, when...

SFX: FRONT DOOR BUZZER

They freeze in this position - Stosh behind Caryn, his left hand below frame still... "engaged" with her body.

CARYN  
Shit. What time is it?!

Stosh has to crane his head around Caryn and look down to see his watch.

STOSH  
 Quarter to seven.

CARYN  
 Oh God, that's Howard! He's always  
 early. Always. Never not early.

SFX: FRONT DOOR BUZZER

CARYN (CONT'D)  
 Coming!!

STOSH  
 You talking to him or me?

CARYN  
 Could you please--?

STOSH  
 Right.

As Caryn and Stosh awkwardly "disengage"...

STOSH (CONT'D)  
 Just gotta...

CARYN  
 Yeah... okay...

Disengaged now, Caryn quickly straightens her clothing and hair.

CARYN (CONT'D)  
 (to herself)  
 It's gonna be fine, gonna be  
 fine...

HOWARD (O.C.)  
 Caryn?

Caryn and Stosh turn to see HOWARD BLATT - mid-40's balding, affable - as he steps in from the foyer, holding flowers. Howard is naturally a bit thrown to see a strange man there with Caryn.

CARYN  
 Howard. Hiiiiiiii. Hi.

HOWARD  
 Door was open, so I... Who is...?

CARYN  
 He's...

STOSH  
 You caught me red-handed, Howard.

Caryn glares at Stosh - "*What the hell are you saying?!*"

STOSH (CONT'D)  
 I was helping Caryn cook for the  
 engagement party. It was supposed  
 to be a surprise...  
 (picks up a copy of *Fifty  
 Shades Of Grey* from the  
 table)  
 ...so you could meet the whole gang  
 from the book club!

INT. CARYN'S TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT - A LITTLE LATER

Caryn, Howard, Stosh, now plus Eric and Zara, all sit around the coffee table in the living room with plates of food and glasses of wine. Howard, polite to a fault, is nevertheless a bit confused by this odd gathering.

**END OF ACT TWO**

**ACT THREE**INT. CARYN'S TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

The "engagement party" continues. Howard shows the others a picture of his kids on his cellphone.

HOWARD

These are my sons - that's Bartholomew, he's eleven, that's Milton, who just turned eight...

ERIC

And who's this little fella? He looks just like you.

HOWARD

That is me.

ERIC

Ah. That explains the lab coat...

CARYN

Aren't they amazingly cute?

ZARA

They're beautiful. So... pale. Almost translucent.

HOWARD

Only SPF eighty in my house.

STOSH

So, Howard - the boys must be excited about their new stepmom-to-be, huh?

Caryn and Howard look at each other for a moment, then chuckle awkwardly.

CARYN

Yeah, um...

HOWARD

That's a work in progress, at the moment... Milton has some...

HOWARD (CONT'D)  
...minor concerns...

CARYN  
...pretty violent tantrums...

HOWARD (CONT'D)

...but I'm sure he'll be fine once Caryn moves in and he sees what a beautiful, loving person she is.

CARYN

Aww. And medication will help him too, honey. Read the article I gave you. But you're very sweet.

She squeezes Howard's hand and gives him a quick peck on the lips. After which, Stosh catches her eye, smiles a little. Caryn looks away.

HOWARD

Speaking of reading, what's the last book you all read? In your club?

CARYN

*Fifty Shades of Grey.*

ERIC

*The Odyssey by Homer.*

STOSH

We read them both at once. It was a "compare and contrast" kind of thing.

CARYN

Yes. Yes. Turned out they have very little in common.

STOSH

No, not true at all. They both explore themes of lust, and desire. You remember, of course, that the only way Odysseus could resist the call of the sirens was to lash himself to the mast of his ship.

CARYN

Well, it all worked out, right? Sometimes lashing - not such a bad idea! Especially in your late thirties.

ZARA

But it's unnatural. Bodily desire is a primal life force. To suppress it is a form of death.

STOSH

Now there's a sensible gal!

ERIC  
I liked the battle scenes.

CARYN  
Um, Stosh? Can you help me get  
more meatballs? In the kitchen?

STOSH  
Sure.

Caryn picks up a serving bowl, she and Stosh cross into the kitchen.

INT. CARYN'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Caryn and Stosh enter, Caryn pulls the divider closed. She glares at him for a beat.

CARYN  
You're an asshole.

STOSH  
What'd I do?

CARYN  
What did you do? Those little  
"looks," the suggestive references  
to Greek mythology...

STOSH  
Just trying to keep up my end of  
the party.

CARYN  
Listen to me -- what happened in  
here before, that... relationship  
between us... it ended the second  
the doorbell rang. Do you  
understand?

STOSH  
Technically about ten seconds  
after.

CARYN  
My point, Stosh - oy, that name -  
is that it was a fluke. Just a  
moment of weakness on my part.

STOSH  
It was nice, though, right?

CARYN

I'm marrying Howard! Okay? I'm going to marry this fine, decent man, because I've learned that fantasies don't come true in life, they just don't! Would I have preferred that my fantasies be intact when I got married, and then find out later they were bullshit, like most people? Yes. But I missed my window on that, and Howard is a wonderful alternative. So the kind of thing that happened between us before - however nice or very nice it may have been - can never happen again. Not with you, not with any other man! Not tomorrow, not the next day, not ever, ever again!

(a beat, as she considers  
the implications of this)  
Son... of... a... BITCH!

STOSH

Want me to lash you to something?

Caryn sighs deeply.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Eric is in the midst of a puppet show. On one hand is a sock which has been decorated to resemble John F. Kennedy, and the other, Marilyn Monroe.

ERIC

(singing, as Marilyn  
Monroe)

*"...happy birthday, Mr. President,  
happy birthday to you."*

(as Kennedy)

Uh, thank you very much Marilyn.  
I, uh, I believe that you and I  
should now proceed to have sexual  
intercourse with great *vigah*.

Zara explodes in laughter. Howard smiles politely. A moment later, Caryn enters, followed by Stosh.

CARYN

Howard?

HOWARD

Yes?

She beckons Howard a few feet away from the group, to speak more privately.

CARYN

I can't marry you. I thought it was the right thing for me, but it's not. It's not. I'm so truly sorry I put you through all this.

Howard absorbs this for a moment.

HOWARD

Well. If that's how you feel, then... that's how you feel. I suppose I should probably leave.

He takes his jacket from the coat rack, crosses to the door, then turns back.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

Caryn... I'm not blind. I know I wasn't your dream come true. Heck, I wasn't my wife's dream come true either. But every night of our life together, when we'd get under the covers and turn out the light... we'd hold hands. Until we fell asleep. And somehow, just doing that one simple thing seemed to make everything else all right. I hope you find that feeling someday, Caryn. You deserve it.

(opens the door)

Nice meeting you folks.

Howard exits. Caryn stands there for a moment, stunned by what he has said. Then, in a burst, she runs to the door, opens it, and dashes out.

EXT. QUEENS TOWNHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Caryn sprints down the street after Howard.

CARYN

Howard! Howard, wait!

She runs with all her might and finally reaches him just as he is about to get into his car. He stops, turns.

HOWARD

Yes?

Caryn looks at him intensely for a moment. Then:

CARYN

Can you give me, like, one more week to decide? I don't need a big cruise or anything, maybe just a spa, a long weekend, or--

Howard just gets in his car and drives away. Caryn watches him go, welling up with tears. She turns to see that Stosh, Eric, and Zara are in the doorway of her townhouse, watching. She turns back the other way, walks quickly down the street.

EXT. FLUSHING MEADOW PARK - NIGHT - A LITTLE LATER

First built as the site of the 1964 World's Fair, the park is now a beautifully landscaped expanse, with the original Worlds Fair "Unisphere" sculpture as its centerpiece. Families and couples stroll past the Unisphere, enjoying this warm summer evening.

Walking slowly and aimlessly amidst these happy folks is... Caryn. A moment later, Stosh, Eric and Zara catch up and walk with her.

STOSH

Hey. We decided to keep a respectful distance 'til you were done crying and punching trees and trying to steal other people's children.

ZARA

Plus Eric wanted a churro.

ERIC

I'd give you some but Stosh tried to take it so I licked it.

As they walk...

CARYN

Eric? You want to hear something ironic?

ERIC

Hell yeah!

CARYN

Behind your back, I sometimes refer to you as that "weird loner."

ERIC

Yeah, you call me that to my face, too. One time you screamed it at me from your window, remember?

CARYN

Well, you were hopping for no reason. It was disturbing.

(then)

Anyway, turns out you're actually not the weird loner on the block. I am. If I were normal, I'd be satisfied holding hands at night with a dermatologist. But no, I will accept nothing less than Ryan Gosling riding in on a white horse! It used to be cute - now I'm just a freak. How do I make myself accept the fact that Ryan Gosling is never coming?

ZARA

I dated Ryan Gosling.

CARYN

I'm sorry, what?

ZARA

Like, two years ago. He bought a painting from me, then he took me to France for five days.

A beat.

CARYN

What?

ZARA

Yeah, well, it ended badly. He got really upset when I went to Greece with this other guy...

CARYN

Who was the other guy?! Zeus?!  
What are you telling me?! Ryan Gosling?! Seriously?!

ZARA

He's just a person, Caryn.

CARYN

No he's not! I want to be you!  
Make me be you!

ZARA

Why? Because I'm "free-spirited"  
and "live in the moment?" Well,  
living in the moment sucks!  
Moments end, always, and when they  
do I've usually hurt someone and I  
feel like an empty, disconnected,  
lonely piece of crap. You don't  
want to be me, Caryn.

CARYN

Well... I want your hair.

ZARA

I want your idealism.

ERIC

Kiss her! Kiss her! Make out!

Eric cracks up at his own juvenile humor, holds a hand up to Stosh for a high-five. Stosh looks at him blankly for a beat, then shrugs and high-fives.

The group has now wandered into the Queens Zoo, a small zoo within the confines of the larger park.

STOSH

Let's face it, folks, we're all  
weird loners. We've got every  
variety known to man, right here.  
There's Ms. Goldfarb, an otherwise  
normal dental hygienist who  
unfortunately has a love-crazed  
thirteen year-old barricaded inside  
the control room of her brain...

(re: Zara)

Then there's our gorgeous bohemian,  
who floats effortlessly into the  
hearts of men, then bursts out and  
skitters across the table like the  
monster from *Alien*...

ZARA

Not just men. Women too.

ERIC

Yessss!

Eric holds his hands up to Stosh for another high-five.

STOSH

(re: Eric)

We're still trying to figure out what this one is. Probably just a harmless, brain damaged bunny.

He returns the high-five that Eric is still patiently waiting for.

STOSH (CONT'D)

Finally, there's yours truly - who compulsively seduces the confused and vulnerable for whatever meager scraps of self-esteem he can derive from the experience. Commonly know as--

CARYN

An asshole.

STOSH

Uh, excuse me, we prefer the more politically correct term, "assaholic." It's considered a disease, you know.

They have now arrived at the zoo's penguin tank. They stop, lean on the rail, and watch the penguins for a few moments.

ZARA

So how do penguins do it? They have one mate forever, and they're happy, right?

STOSH

You kiddin' me? They're miserable. They spend half their life standing over a goddamn egg, in the dark, freezing their asses off. So they came up with that "happy dance" just to make people like us feel like we're missing out on something.

(yelling at penguins)

Hey! Penguins! FUCK YOU!! We're on to your scam, you tuxedo-ed douchebags! Oh, you wanna discuss it? Come on up! I'm right here!

ERIC

(yelling at penguins)

What's the matter? Afraid to go anywhere without your "partner for life"?!

ZARA  
(yelling at penguins)  
Or are you just late to go stand in  
one spot for six months?!

CARYN  
(yelling at penguins)  
Stop making me feel self-conscious  
when I go to the movies by myself!

They watch for few moments, as the penguins simply continue  
their normal activity.

STOSH  
Yeahhh, I think we've made our  
point.

The four of them start walking again. Caryn with Zara, Stosh  
and Eric behind them.

CARYN  
Um, Zara... what was it you were  
saying earlier tonight, about your  
current living situation...? What  
was the word you used...?

ZARA  
Homeless.

CARYN  
Right. Well, anyway... I've got a  
spare room now, so, you know...

ZARA  
Thanks, Caryn. It would be really  
nice to live with you.

Eric emphatically holds up his hand to Stosh for another high-  
five.

STOSH  
Seriously. Give it a rest.

Stosh grabs Eric's head in the crook of his arm, gives him a  
kiss. The four weird loners walk on into the night.

**END OF ACT THREE**