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The Evildoers

David Adjmi

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION

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FRENCH**
FOUNDED 1830

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THE EVILDOERS was developed in part by the Sundance Institute Theatre Program in June 2006. It was directed by Rebecca Bayla Taichman. Mame Hunt was the dramaturg. The cast was as follows:

JERRY Geoffrey Nauffts
CAROL Johanna Day
MARTIN Michael Stuhlbarg
JUDY Carla Harting

THE EVILDOERS premiered at Yale Repertory Theatre (James Bundy, Artistic Director; Victoria Nolan, Managing Director) on January 18, 2008. It was directed by Rebecca Bayla Taichman; set design was by Riccardo Hernandez, costume design was by Susan Hilferty, lighting design was by Stephen Strawbridge, sound design was by Bray Poor; the dramaturg was Michael Walkup. The Production Stage Manager was Joanne E. McInernery. The cast was as follows:

JERRY Stephen Barker Turner
CAROL Johanna Day
MARTIN Matt McGrath
JUDY Samantha Soule

CHARACTERS

The Thernstroms:

JERRY THERNSTROM: Possesses the old-world affectations and speech of an older WASP-y type, as well as the glow of narcissism and self-containment that is specific to New York psychoanalysts. Habituated to luxury and privilege – to the extent that he just blends in with it. Outwardly polite, slightly eccentric, nerdishly academic and also a little abstracted, out of touch. Has a true goofy, silly side to him and also a quietly pained detachment that – by the end of the play – opens into chaos and self-loathing. Late thirties to early forties; right before the cusp of middle age.

CAROL THERNSTROM: Jerry's wife. A wedding planner who is intensely cynical about marriage. She is quick-witted, fashionable, controlling, meticulous (i.e., *compulsive*), self-conscious, literate, and wears all this like a kind of breastplate, or armor. But deep down she knows something in her is dying, or has died; her conscience is bothering her. The discomfiture comes out as hostility. There's something childlike and untouched in her that no one sees. A woman in her forties who takes care of herself, or a woman in her mid-thirties who is aging prematurely – either way, the lines are showing.

The Goldstroms:

MARTIN GOLDSTROM: Jerry's best friend from boarding school. An anesthesiologist. Has a warmth, a naifish sweetness and desire to learn. *Intensely* emotional, but tries to conceal this with varying degrees of success. Develops a deep, agonizing, insatiable spiritual longing throughout the course of the play, as well as a profound – and finally *pathological* – need to connect to people, to himself, to something authentic and rooted. Jerry's age, maybe a year younger.

JUDY GOLDSTROM: The fragile, under-confident and somewhat neurotic wife of Martin. She *works* to conceal her obsessiveness and neuroses – she's embarrassed by them; will admit to her "inappropriate" frailties out of both politeness and the need to exhibit "self-awareness." Her respect for decorum is a default. Younger than Martin.

SETTING

New York: A haute restaurant, the Thernstroms' Manhattan penthouse, the Goldstroms' colonial home in Westchester

TIME

Autumn, an unspecified present

NOTE ON STYLE

The tone and style of this play both undergo rather tortuous shifts. This is deliberate and in perfect keeping with the play's content. Certain ideas about Christianity and Christian Fundamentalism I borrowed (all right, stole outright) from the extraordinary Slavoj Žižek – particularly his work in *On Belief* and *The Puppet and the Dwarf*.

Also indispensable to the writing of this play was Stanley Cavell's remarkable book on the Hollywood comedy of remarriage entitled *Pursuits of Happiness*.

I am completely indebted to my conversations with my dear friend Geoffrey McDonald – whose devotion to theology and philosophy has been a touchstone and inspiration to me for the past decade. He is everywhere in this play.

The Evildoers uses several works as intertexts: *Strangers on a Train* (both Highsmith and Hitchcock), Ibsen's *The Wild Duck*, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Carl Dreyer's beautiful and mysterious *Ordet*, and Preston Sturges's *The Lady Eve*, paramount among them.

The Evildoers is in three parts:

One: Strangers on a Train

Two: The Fright of Real Tears

Three: Breaking Up

The play should be performed with an intermission after Act Two, Scene 2, and an additional short break between Acts Two and Three.

NOTE ON TEXT

A double slash (//) indicates either an overlap or a jump – i.e., no break between the end of one character's speech and the beginning of the following speech (thanks Caryl Churchill).

Speech in parentheses indicates either a sidetracked thought – or footnote – within a conversation, or a shift in emphasis with *no* transition.

A [STOP] is a (*Pause*) followed by either a marked shift in tone or tempo (like a cinematic jump-cut or a quantum leap) or *no* change in tempo whatsoever – somewhat like putting a movie on (*Pause*) and then pressing play. These moments in the play are less psychological than energetic. They have a kind of focused yet unpredictable stillness, something akin to martial arts, where there is preparedness in the silence. Where a lunge or a swift kick can be delivered from seemingly out of nowhere: quickly, invisibly. Where the energy can shift dramatically in a nanosecond.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Never say marriage has more joy than pain.

– Euripides, *Alcestis*

We must all hear the universal call to like your neighbor just like you like to be liked yourself.

– George W. Bush

ACT ONE

1.

(The tail end of JERRY and CAROL's anniversary dinner.)

(JERRY is at the same low-level drunkenness that he'll remain at through most of the play.)

(JUDY is wearing CAROL's ring, her arm extended upward.)

(MARTIN is noticeably withdrawn at the opening of the play. The scene begins at a breakneck, rapid-fire speed, lots of overlaps, etc.)

JUDY. Look you can see your // reflection

JERRY. And you *know* Judy the *stones* actually are // from
BURMA

CAROL. *Judy.* //

JERRY. And they have these *caves* //

JUDY. Wait: //

CAROL. No hold it up to the light //

JUDY. *(extending her arm a bit higher)* Wait I think I went to
Burma Is // Burma

JERRY. Oh you did //

JUDY. My father, he traveled a lot on business is Burma – ?
we went to all // these places

JERRY. Well they //

JUDY. Cambodia Laos //

JERRY. *(pouring drinks for himself and CAROL)* they have these
MARvelous caves you see Judy they're just these *treasure*
chests these *troves*, you see // they're, they're

CAROL. (*refusing JERRY's pour*) (no thank you) //

JERRY. (*continued*) like PIrate ships, FILLed with jewels,
brimming,

CAROL. (*to JUDY*) but it's nice isn't it //

JUDY. My arm hurts //

CAROL. If you hold it up to the light you – are you alright
– //you can

JUDY. (I'm fine.)

CAROL. see how the stones are faceted (the cut // I mean:)

JUDY. (*lowering her arm*) I mean my arm hurts but it's OK –
did you – ?

CAROL. Look at the *inset* –

JUDY. what did you get Jerry?

JERRY. She got me one of those high-definition *televisions*
//

JUDY. Oh //

JERRY. which is just a miracle, I mean the *colors*, the *hues* –
those greens, *green* plants – I mean my *god* I've never
seen such *green* plants – it's like a tropical rain forest
right in my *living* room – I mean when I see a plant on
television Judy I feel it photosynthesizing right on my
coffee table!

JUDY. What brand // is it?

JERRY. And she got me some *terrific* – DVDs

JUDY. Really?

JERRY. DVDs, Carl Dreyer, uh-hh yes, with a lot of *extras*,

JUDY. "Extras?"

JERRY. Antonioni (actually I'm delivering a paper in
Geneva you know // on)

JUDY. *When, oh you are?*

JERRY. It's just a little something, a little something I...

CAROL. He's // always

JERRY. Well it's nothing really it's – just some fluff I
scribbled down on a paper napkin...I can't – ha ha – I
can't even read my ha-ha my-my own writing.

JUDY. (*smiling politely*) That sounds fun.

CAROL. Why.

JUDY. It just sounds fun.

CAROL. Really, that sounds fun? a bunch of middle-aged analysts jerking off over Monica Vitti?

JERRY. (Well, it's a bit more than *that* // sweetheart.)

JUDY. Monica Vitti isn't she the one – you know? I'm sorry – can I talk about this?

(*beat*)

MARTIN. About what?

JUDY. It's OK? I don't know if I'm going off topic.

MARTIN. It's OK honey just speak.

JUDY. OK, so, is Monica Vitti – she's that one with the nuclear waste?

(MARTIN *just looks at her.*)

MARTIN. The what?

JUDY. That nuclear waste? With the movie, with the nuclear waste?

JERRY. *Red Desert* //

JUDY. And she sticks her hand out – she does

(JUDY *imitates Monica Vitti's gesture.*)

those – those – *expressive* things with the tendons

(*She accidentally spills a glass – MARTIN gets some of it on his lap.*)

in her (oh I'm sorry – oh let me.)

(*She wipes up a bit of spilled soda with a napkin.*)

I'm sorry I – are you OK honey? I'm so *maladroit*! A – haha – I'm so “*maladroit*” – isn't that funny? Isn't that a funny thing to say. “I'm *maladroit*”?

(MARTIN *says nothing.*)

JERRY. Now nobody's *maladroit* Judy, it's just coke Judy, it's perfectly OK.

JUDY. But – you know – three cans of coke can shut down your immune system for a whole day, did you know that?

(She laughs. No one else does.)

MARTIN. And so the idea was, what, you took your engagement ring –

CAROL. Yes

MARTIN. I didn't finish my sentence. *(beat)* So you took it and you decided to //

JERRY. *(drunk)* We took // it!

JUDY. *(regarding the ring)* I love the color; the red? it's like the kind of red your eyes get when you cry; do you know what I mean?

CAROL. I don't cry.

JUDY. *(taking it as a joke)* everyone cries Carol.

CAROL. *(polite smile)* No, I'm more what the French call um.

[STOP]

Oh-look-it's *late* Look how late it is Jerry Oh // we need the check.

JERRY. *(sings to himself drunkenly)* "You made me love you...I didn't want to do it"

(Dah dah // dah dah dah...)

MARTIN. Can I speak?

JUDY. Of course you can honey. *(to everyone)* He wants to speak.

(beat)

MARTIN. All right: so explain this to me: so you have this idea: you say "alright: let's take this engagement ring" and you // say

CAROL. Like a protective band –

MARTIN. What?

CAROL. *(retracting)* No nothing, go on.

MARTIN. You say alright: "so" //

JERRY. "Darling:"

MARTIN. "So Jerry – OK – let's add these rubies around the diamond?" //

CAROL. But not rubies they're garnets //

MARTIN. All right // garnets

(JERRY attempts to refresh CAROL's drink.)

CAROL. (No thank you darling) – not that it's really of any significance or anything but basically Jerry and I decided, you know we've been married for however many years, seven,

MARTIN. eight

CAROL. eight, that's right eight years and we just thought //

JERRY. (*munching on a petit four*) Eight! //

CAROL. (And you know I think diachronically not –) well whatever, and we thought, we said uh it'll be nice won't it to add some stones around that thing, that diamond, won't that be nice, because it's just sitting there, and it wants protection //

JERRY. "protection"

CAROL. it's lonely, it wants other stones //

JERRY. (*ebullient*) It's a LONELY STONE!!

CAROL. And we wanted to jazz it up (OK well I hate that phrase but you know what I // mean –)

MARTIN. "Jazz it up"?

CAROL. Not – NO not in a *vulgar* way, but in a (well why, you think it's vulgar?)

MARTIN. It's your ring // Carol.

JUDY. (It's lovely)

CAROL. You think it's vulgar.

(MARTIN looks at her.)

What?

MARTIN. Well Carol I mean you wouldn't, say, add *arms* to the Venus de Milo would you?

CAROL. No but how do I have access to the Venus defucking Milo? // and what does

MARTIN. Well //

CAROL. it have to do with – why are you being so cryptic
// and weird

MARTIN. Well I'm just thinking off the top of // my head –

CAROL. This is such a dumb // conversation

MARTIN. Because that would be – it's not dumb //

CAROL. Yes it is!

JUDY. He's stressed out.

MARTIN. I mean, yes, she's armless, but she's somehow –
she's more *lovely* without arms //

JERRY. Who.

MARTIN. Because she's a symbol, she's mutilated but she's
symBOLically “whole” and if you added arms to the
Venus de Milo it would – it would be like – somehow
– cutting off a normal person's arms and mutilating
THEM do you see what I mean?

CAROL. (*cooly*) Don't put pants on the piano legs Martin.

MARTIN. I'm not being clear – I know // that –

CAROL. Why don't you just say “I hate your gauche fucking
ring” do you think that's going to *shatter* me –

MARTIN. That's not what I'm saying,

CAROL. *What* are you saying?

MARTIN. I'm saying – forget it it's not important –

CAROL. What.

MARTIN. You don't want to hear what I'm saying never
mind.

CAROL. No I hear what you're saying you're saying I –
I'm “mutilating” my ring because I added *stones* to it?
That's just dumb, I don't get it //

MARTIN. Well I guess I'm just dumb.

JERRY. He's not *dumb* // darling.

MARTIN. Well for most people marriage is sacred //

CAROL. “Most people”?

MARTIN. Marriage // – *yes* most people

CAROL. For “most people” a marriage license Martin do you realize has all the stature of a *parking* ticket?

MARTIN. But don’t you think that the // *linking of two LIVES*

CAROL (*smiling*) No but do you *realize* that? That it means *nothing*, that nobody gives a *shit*?

(*beat*)

JUDY. But – you’re a wedding planner Carol.

CAROL. So?

MARTIN. So don’t // you

CAROL. NO – do YOU find some deep existential meaning in anesthetizing people all day,

MARTIN. It’s not // the same

CAROL. And what does a marriage contract *do* Martin, historically, huh, what did it do: do you know?

MARTIN. No Carol WHAT did it do?!

CAROL. It gave two members of the opposite sex *permission* to use each others sexual *organs* for pleasure. And then the woman agrees to give the children the man’s name to establish paternity so he can have heirs and she does this in exchange for protection.

MARTIN. You’re just crass.

CAROL. But I’m speaking from an historical vantage –

MARTIN. So //

CAROL. but now who even *wants* kids anymore, they’re they’re just accoutrements or. They’re like little tote bags or something, they’re like little cosmetic – *nuisances* or. Well – not – nuisances – (I – don’t – know.)

JUDY. But you’re trying to get pregnant //

CAROL. I’m just speaking editorially.

(*beat*)

MARTIN. You’re so cynical.

CAROL. Well it’s a cynical age and I’m the zeitgeist Let’s get the check.

JUDY. (Well I want // kids.)

MARTIN. I just think you're full of shit. I do. I think you're full of shit.

(*pause*)

CAROL. (*terse smile*) Well, "charmed."

(*She takes a sip of her drink. It's tense.*)

JUDY. He doesn't really think that – Martin –

CAROL. Well we should really be going anyway, but thank you for dinner even though I'm full of shit and everything.

MARTIN. I'm sorry – I don't know why I'm so //

CAROL. It's OK – forget it,

MARTIN. I'm // sorry

CAROL. Stop apologizing it's redundant –

JUDY. (*damage control*) He's just stressed out.

JERRY. You know what we need old man, a good game of SQUASH.

MARTIN. What?

JERRY. Say, what are you doing *Monday*.

MARTIN. Playing squash with you Jer.

JERRY. Splendid old man I'll reserve a court.

CAROL. Why are you stressed out?

MARTIN. I'm not stressed *out*.

CAROL. From the move?

JUDY. We're both. We're kind of exhausted ha ha ha –

JERRY. (*has been munching on petit fours all the while*) Oh this is GOOD, oh you have to TRY // these

CAROL. (*ignoring him; to MARTIN*) Is the commute bad?

MARTIN. (*a discovery*) No //

CAROL. What do you take the Cross County? //

MARTIN. The Merritt //

CAROL. OH I heard the traffic's *insufferable* //

MARTIN. There's //

CAROL. I told you not to leave the city, I mean I don't want to fingerwag but (well yes I do) HA HA HA (but it's –)

(As she wags her finger, JERRY tries to feed CAROL a *petit four*. She keeps pushing him off.)

JUDY. There's boxes everywhere.

CAROL. Why? – oh with *things* in them? Oh so you're still –

JUDY. We haven't finished unpacking.

CAROL. No THANK you Jerry.

(JERRY eats the *petit four*.)

JERRY. (to MARTIN and JUDY, *mouthful of food*) But you like it?

MARTIN. No.

JUDY. Yes we *do* – you're so *bad* honey. (to JERRY and CAROL)
It's very quiet, it takes time to get used to the quiet.

CAROL. I can't get to sleep without the sound of jackhammers, the construction.

(JERRY is trying to feed CAROL *petit fours* and she keeps pushing him away over the following.)

(to JERRY) No *thank* you I don't like *almonds*.

JERRY. (*drunkenly*) Whatever you say darling.

CAROL. (*as he kisses her hand*) Don't do that.

JERRY. (*waggish*) I'm in your *thrall* darling I'm *helpless*.

(He eats. *Brief pause*.)

MARTIN. (*essaying courage*) You know – and I don't want to belabor the point but in China Carol //

CAROL. Mm //

MARTIN. If you get engaged to someone, in China //

CAROL. Yeah //

MARTIN. And they die before the wedding: you can still marry them.

CAROL. (*sotto voce*) Good for China.

(*beat*)

MARTIN. But don't you think that's interesting //

CAROL. (No) //

MARTIN. You can ask for their hand in death because the Chinese people believe that marriage is eternal, that it goes on forever //

CAROL. Well the Chinese believe in a lot of things going on forever, don't they, like certain forms of *torture*.

JERRY. But we'd like to be Chinese darling.

CAROL. Well I wouldn't like to be Chinese, I'm happy being American.

JERRY. Even though they're *eclipsing* us?

CAROL. Who //

JERRY. The CHINESE!!

CAROL. Oh bullshit.

JERRY. They are Carol, they're the new *empire*.

CAROL (*speaks quickly*) I love all this catastrophizing people do: "new empire" – people //

JERRY. Well //

CAROL. (It's such bullshit) people are so. I mean YES we're sinking – but the sinking can go on for eons and nothing changes, America was *always* middlebrow, it's *always* been vulgar, and people are so //

JUDY. But //

CAROL. And WE hold it up – "we" being the intelligentsia, the cultured elite, progressive thinkers!

JUDY. (*tickled*) Oh Carol, you're so elitist.

CAROL. Oh Judy, you're so annoying; HA HA HA HA. I'm just kidding. (*beat; she takes a sip of wine; then speaking briskly*) No but you know what we're like, we're like *barges*: and we're holding up these big pyramids of *garbage* – and for a couple hundred years it was OK – until one day the garbage started to *multiply*. And it got more fetid, and more awful. And the barges began to *sink* under the weight; and now we're all just SINKING. (*smiles, triumphal*) But sinking can go on for a long time, we can go on like this *indefinitely*.

MARTIN. I don't know about *that*. //

CAROL. (*dismissive*) (Oh you don't know about *anything*.)
//

MARTIN. But isn't this the naive American fantasy – “Oh it'll all be OK” when you know it won't // be

CAROL. (*looking at him*) OK this is what I'm hearing *bluh bluh bluh* –

JUDY. (*plastering a smile*) That's a very negative way to look at things Martin.

MARTIN. Well that's how it is Judy empires rise and fall.

JUDY. I just think you're being *negative*. When you say things you're wishing for them, they're wishes? Or. Like in *Peter Pan*? you know like when that bird dies and all the children say “I believe, I believe.” //

CAROL. What // bird

JUDY. Or no they clap //

CAROL. Tinkerbelle?

JUDY. “I believe.”

CAROL. It's not a bird, it's a // *fairy*.

JUDY. And also, I think it's a political thing.

(*They all just look at her. JUDY turns five shades of purple.*)

CAROL. What.

JUDY. (*slightly unnerved*) What we were saying before about. You know – it's a political thing.

(*They all wait for an explanation. The silence is unbearable.*)

It's like – the climate? You know what I mean?

CAROL. *No*.

JUDY. Well – I can't explain it.

CAROL. Well if you can't explain it then what are you talking about?

JUDY. I just – I know what I'm trying to say but I. I can't put it into words?

CAROL. (*fake, frozen smile*) Well Judy: do you know what thoughts are? Thoughts are little *words* you know that Judy and you *string* the words together and THAT'S how you get THOUGHTS; I mean if you don't have *words* you don't *have* thoughts.

JUDY. I have thoughts.

JERRY. She has thoughts Carol everyone // has

CAROL. I'm not *saying* she doesn't think, I'm saying she has no thoughts on this particular *issue* // as evidenced by.

JERRY. (*to CAROL*) Sometimes thoughts are a bit more nascent darling, a bit more – *unformed*; thoughts are delicate, they need time to gestate, like how the grit of sand inside the oyster becomes the pearl darling – you see? That – *nacreous* shell – right Judy?

(*JUDY just smiles, strained.*)

CAROL. (*mean*) Will you stop smiling! (*breaks out in unexpected, teasing laughter*) I'M JUST KIDDING!

JUDY. Oh.

(*They laugh.*)

You scared me!

(*beat*)

CAROL. I feel like a shell! Ha ha ha.

JUDY. Oh – ha ha // You're so bad. You're so FUNNY.
You're so BAD // Carol

JERRY. "We bad" //

CAROL. I feel like a shell. (*beat*) HA HA HA I'm kidding.

JERRY. "We bad" what's that from

JUDY. ("We bad")

(*She takes a sip of wine.*)

I'm so full. I'm very full from the meal.

MARTIN. You hardly touched your fish.

JUDY. Well I'm on weight watchers.

CAROL. *Weight* watchers?

JUDY. I used up my points, hake is eight points and I had half.

CAROL. You don't need to lose weight.

MARTIN. I tell her that.

JUDY. (*sort of hysterical*) Well – I mean I feel simply *upholstered* in my dress, my clothes are so tight, it's all it's all stretched and – ruined My whole – wardrobe is...

[STOP]

JERRY. (*eating*) Well you know the *nice* thing about thin people Judy is they don't take up much room. And then there's so much *more* room for other *people*. (*He licks his fingers.*) I find them – (*mouthful of food*) very (*CAROL waits for him to finish.*)

CAROL. (*to everyone; a good-bye*) Well it was // fun

JERRY. (*emphatic, drunken slurring*) and I mean – isn't this the WHOLE PROBLEM? I mean...people don't want to *know* each other: I mean – everyone *lurches* around, knocking into each other like little toy *cars*. And that's the problem with the whole world, And they're *lurching* all over the place! Th-Th-Th – Because people aren't *authentic*, that's the problem you know There's no *authenticity*. You know what I mean Martin, I mean *right*? And-nn-Er. you know they're all circling this – terrible abyss of uh uh pain. And – it's *our* job to get *inside* of that you see? because – I mean if we can't *enter* people's suffering then *we* suffer. Because we're disconnected from their lives: and *their* lives *are* our lives – but we don't want to *see* that. And then we *inflict* suffering!

JUDY. But – *whose* lives are our lives?

JERRY. (*gets lost for a moment*) Well just *everyone*, what do you mean *WHO* //

CAROL. "Everyone" //

JERRY. The *Other* //

JUDY. Like, people in other countries? // or

JERRY. in *other* countries, in *this* country – in this *restaurant*, they're suffering but no one wants to *enter* it But what can we do? what can I do What can *any* of us do I don't *know* I just keep *conjugating* the // problem!

CAROL. "enter their suffering" that's such *bullshit* you won't even let me use your *shampoo* //

JERRY. *because* darling // my *scalp*

CAROL. you won't even share your *toilet* articles with // *me*

JERRY. I have my – *flaking* – thing (anyway // it isn't the point)

CAROL. (*More vehement, focused*) and anyway these aren't benign – what do you THINK Jerry, you think the world is peopled with shepherds and milkmaids and they all //

JUDY. But //

CAROL. because in fact some people are evil.

JERRY. "evil"

CAROL. I know that's unfashionable but YEAH: *evil*, yes, they torture, they – look at these Christian Fundamentalists //

JERRY. Well *actually* darling, if I may – because I actually think it would be sort of refreshing to get to experience some *real* fundamentalism here. Because – I'm glad you mention it Carol – because I'm feeling something of a *void* in this area Carol. Because my problem, er, if you want to know the truth...actually I'm glad you brought this up darling – because. (*His mind goes blank for an instant.*) I mean these *Christian* people: (*leaning in, wide-eyed*) they *say* they're fundamentalists but – where *is* the fundamentalism exactly? I mean I'm *looking*: I can't seem to *find* any. Is it under the *bed*? Where is it? Is it in the *cupboard*? Because they just sort of *make* things up – "oh we're fundamentalists" – but they don't actually know the first thing about Christ, or Christian love, not the first *thing*! I mean – where are the *fundaments*?! Right Judy?

JUDY. Well – I'm Jewish // – but I

JERRY. I mean maybe what we should do is go to the fundamentalists and say "Well all right: *you* think *you're* a fundamentalist? *I'll* show you who's the *real* fundamentalist!" (*turns to JUDY*) do you see what I mean Julie?

JUDY. And then what?

(JERRY freezes.)

JERRY. Well... I mean – we just – *stone* all the adulterers – you see and. Then we *execute* the uh. People who mix – *fabrics* – er – together – and // then

CAROL. (*to JERRY*) You don't even go to *church* //

JERRY. because the *pews* darling – my *legs* – //

CAROL. I'm tired //

JERRY. Anyways you're missing the – whole *point* darling: the fundamentalists are *suffering*.

JUDY (*after a beat*) And...how's that?

JERRY. (*sways drunkenly for a bit as a proxy for contemplation*) Well...er – I mean they don't *know* it necessarily – but that's why they inflict it on other *people* – because that's what people do – It's all *unconscious*. (*drinks, shrugs*) It's like analysis. Actually you know It's *just* like analysis I mean these *patients* Julie – do you think I tell them what to *do*? Hmm? I don't tell them *anything*. I don't give any *advice* – I don't *talk*! I don't do *anything* – I just mirror them back to *themselves*. People can't *see* themselves, so you *hold* up the glass, the mirror – no arguments, no resistance... I'm just a little *enzyme* that helps it all along, you see?

(CAROL is looking blankly at JERRY.)

CAROL. And for this you charge two-fifty a session?

JERRY. The money is a guarantor of the *purity*, to not accept *money* darling that would just be *errr confusing* //

CAROL. (*sarcastic nodding*) Keep going maestro //

JERRY. (and I *have* a sliding scale Carol // I'm not)

CAROL. Well get your sliding scale Jerry and let's slide back to the Upper East Side it's getting late *(looks at her watch)* I need the check //

(CAROL begins to retrieve her things, looks around for the waiter. Notices her ring is missing – looks around for it –)

JUDY. No, it's your anniversary We're taking you // out!

CAROL. Where's my ring?

JUDY. Oh – I forgot I was holding it.

(She takes it off and extends it to CAROL. MARTIN intercedes and takes the ring.)

(He doesn't seem to be playing. Beat.)

CAROL. Can I have that.

(He looks at her.)

MARTIN. Why.

CAROL. Come on stop playing around.

MARTIN *(looks at her)* Do you know that you're full of *shit*.

[STOP]

CAROL. Stop playing // around.

MARTIN. I'm not playing around.

(beat)

CAROL. Can I have my ring please.

JUDY. Martin //

MARTIN. Shut up //

CAROL. Don't tell her to shut up.

JUDY. He's burnt // out

MARTIN. I TOLD YOU TO SHUT UP.

[STOP]

CAROL. Can // I

MARTIN. Take it, here.

(He hands her the ring.)

(*pause.*)

You know what Judy?

You're that grit.

Not the pearl.

You're that unformed *thing*. That's what you are.

(JUDY turns slowly to him.)

JUDY (*starting to shake*) OK.

MARTIN. (*brutal*) IT'S NOT OK.

(*beat*)

CAROL. Martin, you're acting insane.

JUDY. I'm sorry // if I

MARTIN. I was promised a pearl and I got grit; now it's time for the *shucking*.

JUDY. We were having such a nice time.

MARTIN. Am I invisible to you? Judy? Am I having a nice time?

JUDY. Honey you're scaring me.

MARTIN. you think I'm going to hit you? Maybe I should – because it's what you want, and I don't want to disappoint you being that we're all in *love* and we're *married* and we're little strumming *lovebirds*, with honey just *dripping* off our beaks, RIGHT?

[STOP]

Because you're obviously a *masochist* Judy, so *why* do (*He shakes her once.*) I try to make things equal when I *love* you *so* much and I deny you – with all this *love* – your truest deepest wish? (*beat*) Why should I deny you Judy when I pledged my *life* to you? How could I do that?

JUDY. (*hysterical*) W-why why are y-you...

(MARTIN leaves.)

JERRY. (*drunk*) Remember Martin: squash next Monday!

JUDY. (*shaking uncontrollably*) Oh no.

CAROL. (*afraid to cause a scene*) It's all right, Judy – just //

JUDY. *(having trouble breathing)* “I believe.”

CAROL. Are you...

JUDY. *(presses her hands to her temples, trying to quell the hysteria)*

I believe

I believe

I believe I believe I believe I bel –

(Loud music. We hear the chords, something punk, a wall of music, it cuts them off.)

[TITLE: “The Evildoers”]

(The space starts to transform; the chaos of the argument is parlayed into the transition. This should all have the tenor of ecstatic ritual – the seams of the play are starting to pull.)

(JERRY and CAROL frantically undress and get into nightclothes.)

(JUDY walks offstage in tears.)

(MARTIN grabs a raincoat and puts it on.)

(Thunder over music. Rain.)

(MARTIN fetches a bucket of ice for champagne. He pours it over his head.)

(Blackout.)

(The title cuts off and music cuts out into a five-second shockingly loud sample of a train speeding dangerously. This should feel rather jerky and unstable.)

[TITLE: “Strangers on a Train”]

(The lights snap on.)

2.

(Three in the morning. A week later.)

(CAROL and MARTIN are standing at the door of the Thernstroms' apartment. MARTIN is sopping wet, removing his coat. There's a frantic nervous energy.)

MARTIN. I know it's late I'm sorry // I

CAROL. It's fine Martin Are you kidding We were worried about you // are you

MARTIN. It's so late it's – what, I don't // have my

CAROL. Three //

MARTIN. *(guilt)* Three!? //

CAROL. No It's FINE I was up I was cleaning the oven //

MARTIN. I'm // so

CAROL. Let me get your – Look at you you're all // wet

MARTIN. Well //

CAROL. Do you think you have a fever?

MARTIN. No –

CAROL. How can you tell?

MARTIN. I just //

(He feels his head – she jerks his hand away, quickly feels his head.)

CAROL. (I don't think you have a fever) Sit DOWN (you need to rest) let me get you a blanket //

MARTIN. *(starts to move)* Alright //

CAROL. Don't track mud! //

MARTIN. Uh //

CAROL. We just had the floors waxed (hold on) *no actually:* (I'm sorry // could)

MARTIN. Oh –

CAROL. you just take your shoes off there's a shoe rack, right // over –

MARTIN. *(flips off shoes)* Sorry I'll clean // that

CAROL. No. NO Stop apologizing no it's just //

MARTIN. Uh. //

CAROL. We just we had the floors – well never mind, there's a blanket *(She gestures.)* yeah put that on. *(He does – he looks rather pitiable.)* Do you want something to drink?

MARTIN. No I'm all set, thanks.

[STOP]

CAROL. We have Coquilles St. Jacques from Fauchon I could reheat it.

MARTIN. Oh, no I'm not // hungry but

CAROL. You sure?

MARTIN. Yeah my stomach // feels

CAROL. *(Do you want tums?)* never // mind

MARTIN. I'm all set, Carol but thank you.

CAROL. Well. Anyway.

(Pause. CAROL takes a pastille, sucks on it. They look out.)

That's a fake Franz Kline you like it?

JERRY. *(offstage)* “Maaaartin?”

(JERRY enters in his pajamas and slippers, holding a pipe. He's still drunk, and still charming.)

Martin old man! *(to CAROL)* You didn't tell me Martin was here, when'd you *get* here?

MARTIN. I didn't mean to wake you Jerry //

JERRY. WAKE me, oh come on I have inSOMnia, *(I have dreadful insomnia)* HEY you know you missed the squash game!

MARTIN. I'm sorry –

JERRY. *(pouts)* I reserved the court and everything!

MARTIN. I know.

JERRY. Well I'm just glad you're OK.

MARTIN. Well thanks old man, I'm alright.

JERRY. “Old man” – you know I AM an old man

MARTIN. I found a gray hair! and not on my head,

JERRY. NOOOOOOOO, you know where you get (JERRY opens a couple of buttons on his pajama top.) them first? look, you see right on the aureole, abutting the NIPPLE, you see?

MARTIN. Uh –

JERRY. You see that: now what do you make of THAT? (He sighs.) Well anyways... (He closes his shirt and a button pops off.) Oh, uh – will you sew this on darling.

CAROL. No //

JERRY. JESUS CHRIST –

(He slips on the floor, nearly – but doesn't fall. He drops his pipe.)

CAROL. We had the floors waxed.

JERRY. Oh the damn floors that's right – oh my GOD – wow – where's my pipe?

(MARTIN finds it, hands it to him.)

CAROL. Do you have to smoke?

(JERRY lights up over the following:)

JERRY. (smiling tensely) Darling, don't you want to go and put on some makeup or something.

CAROL. No.

MARTIN. I'm sorry, I – I feel // like I'm –

CAROL. Where's my virginia slims?

(She roots around for them.)

JERRY (puffs away) This is just like a slumber party.

CAROL. Isn't it.

JERRY. What are you looking for darling.

CAROL. My cigarettes, have you seen them?

JERRY. (to MARTIN) Carol thinks I look very "hung" in these pajamas.

(He looks down, puffing on his pipe, maybe snaps the waistband of his pajama bottoms.)

CAROL (to MARTIN) Have you spoken to Judy?

MARTIN. Well //

JERRY. Judy's fine //

CAROL. No she ISN'T fine, you know she // isn't.

JERRY. Don't you worry about Judy, Martin.

CAROL. She's on medication.

JERRY. She's doing much // better.

CAROL. She's taking fistfuls of pills, she had a breakdown,
she was in bad shape, she isn't FINE.

MARTIN. What do you // mean she

JERRY. (*to CAROL*) She did not have a "breakdown," darling
// she's

CAROL. Well that's what the doctor said.

JERRY. Well he's a hack, he wouldn't know a breakdown if
he had one right in the goddamn mirror brushing his
teeth // in the morning

CAROL. (*to MARTIN*) I told her she could stay with us, but
she insisted on – anyway it's a big mess – but you're
back, and it's fine – why don't you just call her.

MARTIN. I don't want to wake her.

CAROL. She's so distraught, Martin, really.

MARTIN. I don't really want to speak with her yet.

CAROL. But I think //

JERRY. He doesn't want to Carol.

CAROL. Why wouldn't he want to?

JERRY. Carol //

CAROL. I mean what are you doing at our door at three in
the morning – I mean it's FINE, you have *carte fucking
blanche*. Come here whenever you want.

MARTIN. Well I appreciate that.

CAROL. So are you having an affair, what? You're breaking
up with // Judy?

JERRY. He's not having an // affair –

CAROL. Why, how do you know, are you two // colluding?

JERRY. (*disquisitive; holding forth*) Listen: Carol: the male
animal is designed for adventure – he lusts, he is a

creature of lust: this is the *quid pro quo* of the male animal, it's what men DO. It's in our DNA, that's just what we do –

CAROL. No you don't walk out on your wife to have some DNA-sequenced *adventure*.

MARTIN. That isn't it.

CAROL. And don't think I've forgotten what you said to Judy, how you called her grit, and you acted all fucking insane that night.

MARTIN. I apologized to Judy.

CAROL. She never mentioned that.

MARTIN. I apologized. I went through the ministrations of *guilt*; that night, after we got back.

CAROL. Well then.

MARTIN. And Judy felt better. And we went to bed. And Judy was sleeping next to me, she was in her little *fetal* position, with her little *toes* //

JERRY. (*sweet*) Awww //

MARTIN. *Digging* into me //

JERRY. (*awkward*) Oh –

MARTIN. and I couldn't sleep, I was still *upset*, something was *gnawing* at me and I thought: you know what, fuck this Judy, *I can't sleep* – I just thought I'd be gone a few hours – I got on the Metro North, I thought I'll take it a few stops, but then I just kept going...I got into the city and I just sort of...rode around. And this guy came on the subway and he sat across from me – he was staring at me, it was making me uncomfortable. And I didn't feel like getting up, so I thought, fine I'll stare him down.

(*beat*)

So I stared back.

(*beat*)

And then he did something very interesting.

(*beat*)

He reached down
into his pocket
and as he was reaching
he was looking
right at me, as if to...indicate...that this
reaching was
directed *towards*...me.

JERRY. In his pocket.

MARTIN. Yes. That somehow at the end of this seemingly enormous pocket was...me.

(beat)

JERRY. Why would he indicate to you that you were in his pocket?

CAROL. Sweetheart he was jerking off.

JERRY. *Oh.* Oh I *see*.

CAROL. I know all about this, it happens to girls all the time, men are always jerking off at you.

JERRY. On the subway? //

CAROL. (Well I take taxis) //

MARTIN. And then one thing led to another and...we were *kissing*.

JERRY. Were what?

MARTIN. Kissing. *(beat)* French kissing.

JERRY. *French* kissing?

MARTIN. It's something I always wanted to try...with...with another...

CAROL. *(confounded)* Why would you want to try THAT.

MARTIN. Because I. What do you mean "why" – I was curious.

(beat)

CAROL. Was your curiosity *satisfied*?

MARTIN. *(defensive)* No; it wasn't.

(short pause)

CAROL. Meaning //

MARTIN. What do you think.

(*pause*)

I should go.

(*He doesn't move.*)

JERRY. Do you want another blanket, old man?

MARTIN. I'm warm now.

(*beat*)

CAROL. So are you *gay* // or

MARTIN (*a retaliation*) *Yes!*

(*silence*)

CAROL. Why did you lie.

MARTIN. I don't want to talk about it.

JERRY. (*Looks at CAROL*) You don't have to.

(*pause*)

MARTIN. It's stupid to feel ashamed, I know that, but I can't help it.

(*pause*)

CAROL. So you're leaving Judy? This is the *sine qua non* right?

MARTIN. (*quiet*) Yeah.

CAROL. (*no emotion*) That's sad.

[STOP]

(*fillip of anger*) Don't you care about what happens to JUDY?

JERRY. Carol.

(*silence*)

MARTIN. (*very vulnerable here*) He's an architect. He took me back to his brownstone. His wife was at a conference, but she came back today and I had to go. They have an understanding. (*suddenly, irrationally heartbroken*) So we can't be involved in an emotional way, just physical.

(pause)

(He looks up at them, his eyes brimming with tears.)

But I need more.

(Snap blackout.)

3.

(Later the same night. MARTIN is set up with a blanket and sheets on the sofa. He's reading Updike's Couples against the glow of very soft lamplight.)

(JERRY sneakily enters, unseen by MARTIN.)

(He tiptoes drunkenly, until he's right behind MARTIN.)

JERRY. Comfy?

MARTIN. Jesus you –

JERRY. Heh heh heh heh.

MARTIN. You scared me.

JERRY. You want another blanket something with a higher threadcount maybe. Carol's BIG on "threadcount."

MARTIN. I'm OK.

(JERRY takes MARTIN's book from him. Looks at the cover.)

JERRY. *(sloshed)* Updike. Up-dike.

(beat)

He's prolific but that's not tantamount to good. That's not tantamount to SHIT. *(beat)* I don't even know what tantamount means, I just say these things, they issue forth from my lips and I KNOW that they're true, I have an instinct. And we can't dismiss our instincts, don't you agree, because it would be catastrophic – I mean the effect of that, of. *(beat)* And you can accept me can't you Martin, with my flaws, my foibles, my little peccadilloes, my little...my things; can't you?

MARTIN. Of course Jer.

JERRY. HEY – I really feel like a RÉMY you'd like a Rémy wouldn't you alright so I'll SIDLE up to the bar and – GET ONE – how's that I'll just –

(He tries to get up – stumbles.)

MARTIN. Jerry why don't you sit down //

JERRY. Am I keeping you up old man, I //

Martin (*going over to the bar*) You sit *down* and *I'll* get you a drink.

JERRY. Oh, yay, (well you really don't have to) I mean if you're sleepy, I really don't want to trouble you, you're a guest in our home.

MARTIN. It's fine Jer.

JERRY. Well that's kind of you Martin.

(*He watches MARTIN prepare a drink.*)

"Jer" I like that, the shorthand "Jer" but that's what friends are they're people who know each other's minds,

MARTIN. You like it neat right //

JERRY. and they speak in shorthand, glyphs, there's all kinds of – what //

MARTIN. You //

JERRY. That's perfect, that's just how I like it. Thank you Martin.

(*beat*)

She's a darling girl isn't she?

MARTIN. Who?

JERRY. Carol!

MARTIN. Oh.

JERRY. Don't you think?

MARTIN. Sure.

JERRY. And – you know; because we're having a *baby* and everything.

(*beat*)

MARTIN. She's *pregnant*?

JERRY. What? Oh, er – YES – oh you didn't //

MARTIN. When did THIS happen?

JERRY. I thought I //

MARTIN. Congratulations old man!

JERRY. My "issue," yes – You know what Freud says about babies – he compares *babies* you see to *feces*, it's rather

wacky, but he – means it in a good way, he’s very – People misunderSTAND Freud, he’s just a nice – (oh that’s it for me, thanks old man, that’s) – ha ha – oh swell.

(holds up his glass)

“To my little feces!”

MARTIN. *(laughing)* Here here.

JERRY. HA HA HA “my feces”

HA HA HA

Oh

“Oy vey”

HA HA HA

(wiping tears from his eyes)

oh my goodness-I so-love-Freud

(sips drink)

its – it’s pathological

(beat)

MARTIN. When’s she due //

JERRY. I think the fall sometime.

MARTIN. It’s fall now.

JERRY. OH: oh I mean next fall.

MARTIN. *(after a beat)* But, then she’d be pregnant for a year.

JERRY. Oh; well I-I *spring* or something //

(JERRY sips his drink.)

Carol’s a lovely girl really. *(pause)* I mean it’s not all roses, she complains, she has complaints.

MARTIN. About?

JERRY. You know: well for instance about my sperm and everything: she says it’s too *chunky* – I mean *alright*, it’s not so well blended, but I eat avocados!! – I don’t know, something happened to me. But HEY: the stuff works, chunky, smooth, who’s complaining!

(Slaps him in the back. Beat. Sips drink.)

MARTIN (*excitedly*) Jerry. you're going to be a DADDY.

JERRY. (*weird baby voice*) "da da" heheheh //

MARTIN. How do you *feel*?

JERRY. Feel? (*thinks about it*) well I feel – frightened.

MARTIN. Why?

JERRY. Well

I'm not sure.

I feel OK right now Martin, with you here, I'm not frightened at this very moment.

MARTIN. Neither am I //

JERRY. (*screams*) BOO!

MARTIN. (*recoiling in shock*) AH!

JERRY. HAHAAHAH //

MARTIN. HAHAAHHAH //

JERRY. (*loud whisper*) Shhh (ha ha ha) shh let's – ho ho – let's not wake Carol.

MARTIN. All right.

(*Another button on JERRY's pajama top has fallen off.*)

JERRY (*pouty*) Oh, now the other, oh, the *button*, now I'll really have to – and these are my *best pair* of pajamas, they're my favorite, my favorite in the whole world...

(*beat*)

MARTIN. Nice nips Jer.

JERRY. Well thanks old man I like them too. Carol doesn't think they're –

(*MARTIN lunges for JERRY's nipple and tweaks it.*)

OW!

(*MARTIN jumps up, runs, trying to stifle his laughter.*)

You bastard.

(*MARTIN laughs. JERRY tries to go after MARTIN and slips – benignly – on the waxed floor.*)

(*pointing, laughing*) You're a dead man. (*getting himself up again*) Oh these damn FLOORS.

MARTIN. This is just like boarding school all over again! //

JERRY. *Isn't* // it?

MARTIN. Remember when Phil waxed your ass // in the

JERRY. reMEMber? Martin, I felt that in the back of my
throat for god's sake.

(They laugh.)

Oh, my salad days, what happened?

MARTIN. *(after a beat)* They wilted.

JERRY. *(tickled)* Wilted? Oh SHIT –

MARTIN. Ha ha.

JERRY. *(hits him)* Don't shit me!

MARTIN. Ow.

JERRY. Oh – er –

MARTIN. Ha ha ha ha.

(JERRY laughs.)

JERRY. You'll always have me Martin, you know that; I
mean I don't care if you fuck *light fixtures*. Or. (well-
that-sounds-like-a-bad-joke-but-/-you)

MARTIN. Thanks Jerry

JERRY. You keep looking up at the chandelier, I mean –
fuck it if you want, fuck the bookshelf! Just don't
spooj on my Freud seminars other than that ha ha ha
HAHA. *(beat, then very sweetly, intimate)* I'm your friend.
Alright? Truly. *(clutches his hand)* Truly and profoundly.
(Pause) And drunkenly.

(MARTIN removes his hand, smiles awkwardly.)

(long silence)

(MARTIN pulls an argyle sock from his pant's pocket.)

(pause)

MARTIN. Look.

(JERRY regards the sock. A pause.)

JERRY. Is – that for me?

(long pause)

MARTIN. I took it.

(silence)

I'm pathetic, I took it from his – drawer.

(beat)

JERRY. *(drunk)* I need socks. My sock has a hole in it.

(long pause)

MARTIN. He...builds things?

(tiny smile to cover)

(very tiny) There were these...*Models?*...everywhere?

(He looks at JERRY; a deep sadness, a plaintiveness unearthed.)

JERRY. What's the matter old boy?

(pause)

MARTIN. I'm forty – I'm almost *forty*, my life is halfway done, and there's nothing *in it*. And it's too late for me // now

JERRY. It's not // too

MARTIN. *(coming apart here)* Why am I stealing socks from people's drawers, it's so – *stupid* – I'm *stupid*, I – I feel so – And I shouldn't I shouldn't feel this way – It's wrong to feel ashamed, it's *wrong*, but it's *embedded* in me, so deep, it's *lodged* in me – that's why I'm *stunted*. My feelings are – *stunted* – I – at work I walk around – in the cafeteria, everyone's smiling, they're – and I don't know what to do with my *hands*, I don't know how to stand – I'm *numb* –

JERRY. Shhh – now come on //

MARTIN. There are h-h- people – in the world – like *me* – they aren't crippled by – they have some kind of joy, they let themselves but I can't, why?

JERRY. Well, you've always been a little wound up.

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