Acting Edition

The Lights Are On

by Owen Panettieri

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SAMUEL FRENCH

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THE LIGHTS ARE ON received its world premiere on October 13, 2023, at Theatre Row in New York City, produced by New Light Theater Project and Embeleco Unlimited. The production was directed by Sarah Norris, with scenic design by Brian Dudkiewicz, costume design by Kara Branch, lighting design by Kelley Shih, and sound design by The Roly Polys (Jan Bentley & Andy Evan Cohen). The Property Master was Danielle Pecchioli, the Wardrobe Supervisor was Krista Grevas, the Master Electrician/Assistant LD was Hayley Garcia Parnell and the Technical Directors were ToniAnne and Jordan Cavanaugh. The Producing Associate was Kleo Mitrokostas, with casting by Gamma Valle and press representation by Charlie Guadano. The Production Stage Manager was Josh Blye. The Assistant Stage Managers were Jessica Kemp and Hugo Wehe. The House Managers were Caroline Mack and Sam Tuschinski. The cast was as follows:

LIZ . . . . . Danielle Ferland
TRISH . . . . . Jenny Bacon
NATHAN . . . . . Marquis Rodriguez
LIZ/TRISH UNDERSTUDY . . . . . Carolyn Baeumler
NATHAN UNDERSTUDY . . . . . Hugo Wehe

CHARACTERS

LIZ – Disaster supply enthusiast, widow, 40s/50s, Female.

TRISH – Comes from wealth, divorced, 40s/50s, Female.

NATHAN – Liz's gay adult son, Relationship status: it's complicated, 20s, Male.

While Liz and Trish can be played by actresses of any race/ethnicity, it is the playwright's original intent that Nathan be portrayed by an artist of color that does not physically resemble his mother. Nathan looks like his father, whose race/ethnicity is never expressly stated.

SETTING

A Suburban Ranch House.

TIME

A Little Further On From Now.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

My journey with *The Lights Are On* started in 2017. At the time, it felt like we were living in a world of perpetual chaos and instability, and I wanted to explore the sense of anxiety and isolation people were experiencing at the time. And this was pre-pandemic! We had no idea what was coming around the corner. Many people are still experiencing a high level of anxiety, manifested in new ways. We strive to connect with our family members and with our neighbors, while navigating what often feels like fractured realities. Forget about having differences of opinions; people can't even agree on the same set of facts on which to base those opinions. The act of disagreeing and the embrace of distrust seem to be more important than facing our collective challenges.

The world of *The Lights Are On* is a little bit further down the road from us. Liz, Trish and Nathan find themselves having to determine whether everything around them is as it seems or if nothing is as it seems. I have great compassion for Liz, Trish and Nathan. They are funny, deep-feeling fighters who unfortunately lie to themselves even more than they do to each other – or to the audience. Are the roots of their grievances truly as they remember them? I'm excited for audiences to go on this journey with them and to reach their own conclusions as to who and what on stage can be trusted.

I think there is a lot of room for interpretation with the design elements of the play, including the representation of the Grey Man, who is not a listed character, but certainly has a presence in the show. In our premiere production, he was physicalized as a shrouded figure portrayed by our assistant stage manager, Hugo Wehe. In terms of costumes, there is again room for interpretation, but the choice of Nathan appearing in a jockstrap when he briefly changes clothes onstage is intentional and meant to convey his comfort with his sexual power as a queer person.

This play is dedicated to KC, always inspiring.

First Escalation

(A suburban ranch-style house. We can see the kitchen/eat-in dining area, back door entrance, and a hallway leading to the rest of the house. It looks like the kitchen you might have once seen in a 90s sitcom, that could now benefit from a modern facelift. If you didn't look too closely, it wouldn't seem so bad. In truth, this heart-of-the-house is a diseased organ. While it is not a disaster area, someone here is planning for disasters. Storage containers and cardboard boxes are stacked high in corners. An old portable radio sits on top of one box, turned off. Cleaning supplies are stockpiled around and under the sink, paper towels and toilet paper fill the space above the cabinets. Folded laundry is piled neatly in a basket on a chair by the kitchen table. There is a chessboard on the table, with red and white armies ready for battle. Heavy-duty gas masks have recently arrived in the mail and sit in an unmarked box on the floor. By the wall nearest the table is a shelving unit where a 9mm handgun rests, unsecured, on top of more traditional kitchen items. Battery-powered lanterns line the room, should the electricity fail. Blackout curtains are drawn on the kitchen's only window. The back door is adorned with multiple locks. **LIZ**, *a middle-aged woman, stands at the kitchen peninsula, going through a large plastic bin holding emergency food supplies. She is*

dressed casually, without shoes. She inspects the expiration dates on the canned food. If the date is far off, it goes back in the bin. If not, it goes in a pile for the cupboard. She enjoys this task. There are piles of batteries, bottled water, and first aid materials on the counters. As **LIZ** *sorts, she hums a happy tune. There is a quick knock at the back door.* **LIZ** *stops. She's left the latch off the door, expecting her son. Another knock, quicker, longer.* **LIZ** *looks toward the gun, but decides not to go for it. A third quick knock.* **LIZ** *stands, picks up a knife from the counter, goes to the door and quickly latches it.)*

TRISH. *(Offstage.)* Oh, Liz. Please, if you're there. Come to the door!

*(***LIZ** *recognizes the voice. She is baffled by who must be standing at her doorstep. It's someone she hasn't seen in years. She peeks through the peep hole.)*

LIZ. *Trish?*

TRISH. Oh, thank god! Please open up!

*(***LIZ** *takes a breath, unlocks the door and opens it to reveal* **TRISH**, *a woman of Liz's age, dressed fashionably, breathing as if she just ran for a distance. She looks at* **LIZ**, *and seeing her, loses her nerve and smiles.)*

Hi, *neighbor*! How are you?

LIZ. I'm fine.

TRISH. Good! Good… I know it's late. I'm embarrassed to be doing this, but –

LIZ. What's wrong?

TRISH. Can you come with me for a minute?

LIZ. Outside?

TRISH. I need to show you something. Just down the driveway. It'll only take a minute.

LIZ. Why? What is it?

TRISH. It's easier if I show you. Would you just come with me to the end of your driveway?

LIZ. Trish, you don't look right…

TRISH. Please?

LIZ. I have nothing on my feet!

TRISH. Just slip on whatever's closest.

LIZ. Stop and explain to me what's wrong. Is someone hurt?

(With rising dread.) Is it *Nathan*?

TRISH. Oh, no no! I didn't mean to scare you like that.

LIZ. Did someone hurt *you*?

TRISH. No. But I think someone might be planning to…

*(***LIZ** *considers* **TRISH** *for a moment. She can't imagine what would bring* **TRISH** *over here, but likes the idea of being the bigger person.)*

LIZ. Come inside. Come on.

*(***TRISH** *enters.* **LIZ** *shuts and locks the door without the latch. The lights flicker.* **TRISH** *notices it, but* **LIZ** *does not.)*

TRISH. Oh, it's nice and warm in here!

LIZ. Well, I've got food on the stove.

(There is, in fact, no food on the stove. A pie is baking in the oven. **LIZ** *puts the knife back on the counter.)*

TRISH. It got cold out tonight. I'm sorry to barge in on you –

LIZ. Just tell me what's happened. You can say it. It's just you and me.

TRISH. I need you to come look at my house.

LIZ. Why?

TRISH. I was driving home from seeing my sister. I'd been out most of the day, and as I turned the corner onto our block I saw...the lights are on in my house.

LIZ. All of them?

TRISH. No. Just one on the second floor. The one in my bedroom.

LIZ. Okay, so?

TRISH. So I never leave that light on when I go out, Liz.

LIZ. Oh, you just didn't notice it was on because the sun was up when you left your house!

TRISH. No! I mean, *maybe,* but –

LIZ. That's all it took to get you this wound up?

TRISH. No... I think someone was looking out at me from my bedroom window. It was a silhouette. Behind the curtain. The shape of a body, I think.

*(***LIZ** *laughs it off. Typical Trish!)*

LIZ. Trish, it's probably nothing!

TRISH. That's why I want you to tell me if I'm being crazy or if it really looks like someone –

LIZ. I can't leave right now.

TRISH. You won't have a look with me?

LIZ. I've got food on the stove, Nathan's not home yet –

TRISH. It'll take two minutes.

LIZ. If it's *nothing*, two minutes. But if it *is* something –

TRISH. So you do think it could be something?

LIZ. Did you set your alarm when you went out?

TRISH. Of course!

LIZ. Then I'm sure it's nothing. Why don't you sit for a minute? You want some iced tea?

*(***LIZ** *goes to the fridge without waiting for an answer, pulls out an open bottle of white wine.)*

TRISH. I don't want to be trouble.

LIZ. Yeah, well. Excuse the state of the house. It's chore day, so now I'm halfway through everything and finished with nothing.

(She gets a mug from the drying rack by the sink.)

TRISH. It's fine. I really am sorry to bother you with this. I know this must seem –

LIZ. That's why we have neighbors, right? Heh. To think, after all this time, *this* is what finally gets you down that hill and back over here. Drink this.

*(***LIZ** *hands* **TRISH** *the mug of wine.)*

TRISH. It's just that when I drove up and saw the light on in the upstairs window... I couldn't make myself turn into the driveway. I had to keep going. And then I saw your light on –

LIZ. From the street?

(This seems like a physical impossibility to **LIZ**. *She checks how much light could be spilling out from the window.)*

TRISH. Yeah! And I thought, "Let me check with Liz. She'll tell me if I'm being crazy."

LIZ. You're being crazy.

TRISH. Am I?

LIZ. I think it's much more likely you left your light on without realizing it. You're letting yourself be scared about nothing.

TRISH. If I just had someone to walk back with me so I didn't feel so –

LIZ. I'm in for the night. You can stay here as long as you need until your bad feeling passes.

TRISH. Where's Nathan tonight that you're still expecting him?

LIZ. I asked him to go to the store after work. I'm restocking this thing.

TRISH. Where's he working now?

LIZ. A pool supplies store. Out in Helen's Bay.

TRISH. Oh! That's a nice area. Heck of a drive from here though.

LIZ. That's where they were hiring. He doesn't mind. And the pay's not bad for his age, so… He should be home any minute.

TRISH. Oh! Would you call him?

LIZ. Why?

TRISH. He could look at my house as he drives by to see if there's someone in the upstairs window.

LIZ. He's not allowed to use his phone while driving.

TRISH. And you think he follows that? He's technically an adult now. I'm sure he does what he wants.

LIZ. That's the rule.

TRISH. You put a lot of trust in him.

LIZ. I do. Did you lock up your car?

*(***TRISH** *takes a sip of her wine.)*

TRISH. When?

LIZ. Before you came up to the house. Did you forget and leave it unlocked?

TRISH. No, I locked it.

(Or did she? **TRISH** *shifts uncomfortably.* **LIZ** *notices.)*

LIZ. Do you keep a gun in the car?

*(***TRISH** *laughs nervously.)*

TRISH. Liz!

LIZ. Well, do you?

TRISH. No, I don't drive with a gun in the car.

(Or does she?)

LIZ. Plenty of people do.

TRISH. Well, not me! Do you?

LIZ. I avoid driving altogether, if I can help it.

TRISH. But when you do?

LIZ. Depends on where I'm heading.

TRISH. Would you let *Nathan* drive with a gun in the car?

LIZ. Of course not! Could you imagine if he got stopped for something and they found a gun on him?

*(***TRISH** *takes a sip from her cup.)*

TRISH. Where is it now?

LIZ. My car? Nathan has it.

TRISH. No, your gun!

LIZ. Locked up and that's where it's staying. I am *not* lending it to you.

TRISH. I wasn't asking you to!

LIZ. You're too jumpy. You'd shoot at anything that moved right now.

TRISH. I don't want a gun. I just want someone to take a look at my house with me. You know, if there's someone over there robbing me, they could just as easily come over here next.

LIZ. Heh. No one's getting in over here.

TRISH. What would stop them?

LIZ. They'd be making a big mistake to try. I'll tell you that. Try and relax, will you? Do you mind if I go back to straightening some of this stuff out?

TRISH. No, of course.

*(***LIZ** *goes back to sorting.* **TRISH** *looks around.)*

Your place looks nice.

LIZ. Trish, it's obvious the house is a mess. There's no need to tell me otherwise.

TRISH. I meant…you've changed some things up! I haven't been over in a while, I guess.

LIZ. Seven years. Not since Joe's funeral.

TRISH. Not *that* long.

LIZ. Name another time since.

*(***TRISH** *thinks. She cannot remember a more recent time.)*

TRISH. That was a difficult day. But a nice remembrance.

LIZ. I mostly remember how quiet it was.

(This is a pointed statement from **LIZ***, but* **TRISH** *does not acknowledge it.)*

TRISH. This furniture's different now, yes?

LIZ. We had to replace a lot of it after the flooding from Prudence.

TRISH. Can you believe it'll be the five-year anniversary of Hurricane Prudence this Saturday? When you can remember the date a storm hit, you know it was a monster.

LIZ. No way to forget that one. Afterwards, there wasn't a lot worth saving. It all had to go.

*(***TRISH** *sits at the table and watches* **LIZ** *repack the emergency food.)*

TRISH. Are you alright, Liz?

LIZ. Me? I'm fine. Why?

TRISH. I feel like we used to talk all the time and now I'm realizing just how long it's been.

LIZ. Life gets busy for everybody.

TRISH. It's tough living on your own, huh?

LIZ. I'm not on my own. I have Nathan.

TRISH. I meant without Joe.

LIZ. It's hard at times, but we're used to it.

(Feeling obligated to ask.) And you? How are you?

TRISH. It's been rough lately. I don't like living alone. I wasn't built for it. I mean, obviously! Look at me. I'm scared to go home by myself.

LIZ. Have you heard from Richard lately?

TRISH. Only through his lawyer. Which is sort of fine. His lawyer's always been very nice to me. He's kind. He has a kind voice for a lawyer.

*(**LIZ** softens a bit toward **TRISH** and moves toward her.)*

LIZ. If someone was robbing your house, do you really think they'd sit and wait by your window? Wouldn't it be more likely they'd hide someplace, so you didn't know? Then they could jump out at you when you weren't suspecting or – you know, I meant for this to be reassuring, and it completely got away from me somehow, but you get what I mean.

TRISH. That's just the thing. When I looked up and saw that figure in the window, I felt like he *wanted* me to see him. He *wanted* me to know he was waiting. It felt like he was pleased with himself that he'd gotten in and he was claiming my house as his space. He was daring me to enter.

LIZ. You felt all that just as you were pulling up to your house?

TRISH. Yes. Immediately. All at once.

LIZ. Do you want to call the police?

TRISH. No, I don't want to involve them. I don't need them in my house. They'll turn the place upside down and then I'll have to try to put it together again on my own.

LIZ. Yeah, you're better off handling it yourself.

*(**LIZ** gets up and goes back to repacking the food.)*

TRISH. Can we watch some TV? That might calm me down.

LIZ. Well, I got rid of cable.

TRISH. You did?

LIZ. I was sick of paying for it. And sick of watching it, quite frankly. It's all garbage lately. Especially the news.

TRISH. Oh, I can't stomach the news.

*(**TRISH** starts to play herself at chess. She is sitting at the white side but gradually starts losing to the moves she is making against herself as red.)*

LIZ. But it was really the cost. My monthly bill used to be an already-insane $140 for cable and internet. Well, last month they had that merger, and Trionics became Meglamax, you know? So I look at my new bill. It's $230 for the month. For the same service!

TRISH. No!

LIZ. Mmhmm. So I call them up and this *lady,* starts trying to gaslight me about the new price in this disgustingly saccharine tone –

TRISH. Ugh, I hate that fake nice tone!

LIZ. Oh, I know! And I say to Miss Meglabitch, "No. This bill is insane. I'm dropping the cable. Just leave me the internet," because Nathan would lose his mind without the internet, and there's no other service in town. And I tell you, it feels so much better to be done with it. You don't realize how much time you waste sitting there in front of a screen, sucked in.

TRISH. Outstanding! And Nathan doesn't mind?

LIZ. He minds, but he's still got his computer and his phone. He can watch stuff that way.

TRISH. That's true. And that's not the same thing, right? It's different! Different…screens!

LIZ. Yeah! You feeling better? You're looking better. Let me get you some more tea.

*(**LIZ** takes the mug from **TRISH** and brings it back to the fridge. She refills it with white wine.)*

TRISH. I think you gave me wine.

LIZ. Yes, of course, wine. That's what I said.

*(They give each other a look, but **TRISH** lets it go.)*

TRISH. I have my cable bill on auto-pay. I haven't even thought about how much I'm spending on it. It's probably the same situation as yours.

LIZ. Yeah, but you can afford it no problem, right?

TRISH. But it's the principle of it!

LIZ. So look into it.

TRISH. I will. I'll look into my sister's too.

LIZ. *(With veiled skepticism.)* Which sister is this now?

TRISH. Gladys. You met her a while back. She lives twenty minutes away now, out in Memmorack.

LIZ. Oh. How is she?

TRISH. Not great. The last few years, she's been having major mobility issues. It's not easy.

LIZ. I'm sorry to hear that… Gladys is the one you had that big falling out with, right?

TRISH. Over my mom's estate. You remember that?

LIZ. Oh, sure! You were pissed.

TRISH. I was! And we didn't speak for years. But when her health started to go, she reached out again, and I'm so glad she did. These past few years have been really healing for us. Still, she can't do much for herself and I'm the only family she has left, so a lot falls on me. I spent the whole day over there just cleaning.

LIZ. That does sound like a lot.

(This story does not match up with what **LIZ** *remembers about* **TRISH** *and her sister, but she is not ready to call* **TRISH** *out on it.* **LIZ** *wants to see* **TRISH***'s whole show.)*

TRISH. It is. I'm trying to convince her to move in with me. I mean, I've got nothing but space. But she doesn't want to give up her house. I can't blame her. It's her home. I wouldn't want to give up my house.

LIZ. Provided you can bring yourself to go back inside of it at some point.

TRISH. You make fun, but have you ever had your house broken into before?

LIZ. No.

TRISH. Well, let me tell you – it's the *worst*.

LIZ. Wait, you've had this happen before?

TRISH. Yes!

LIZ. In *that house*? When?

TRISH. No, it was before we moved here. Richard and I had a house up in Everly. A cute little ranch-style. A little bit like yours, actually. I'll never forget – we'd been out all day at a wedding. I'd just found out I was pregnant a few days before, and we were both over the moon. So we pull into the driveway that night, and... *I just knew*. Richard and I *both* knew. Something was off. Sure enough, someone had broken in through our back porch.

LIZ. You're kidding! What did they walk away with?

TRISH. No theft. They just came in and smashed everything. From our wedding china down to the bathroom mirrors – they trashed the entire house. We never found who did it either. Could've been one person. Could've been a group. Cops came up with nothing.

LIZ. That's terrible!

TRISH. It was. I had all these little hand-painted porcelain figurines that my mother gave me. A friend of hers used to make them, and my mom helped her with the orders. They were beautiful. I had them all set out in a glass display cabinet. Whoever broke in stomped on every single one. The clean up took forever. We tried to make a go of it there after, but with Jeremy on the way? I could never relax thinking about it. So we moved here.

LIZ. I had no idea! Did any of your neighbors have the same thing hap–

TRISH. No, it was just us.

LIZ. Well, that seems very targeted. Did the police question –

TRISH. You're missing my point. I *know* that feeling when something's not right. I've lived through it before. And as I drove up to my house just now, it was so… I cannot go through it again. I had Richard with me back then. I have nobody now. I can't walk into my house and see it vandalized, defiled, and with someone still waiting –

*(***LIZ** *grabs the red king from the board and lies him down in checkmate. The overhead light flickers. Only* **TRISH** *notices.)*

LIZ. Trish, you just left the lights on.

Second Escalation

(The sound of keys in the door. **NATHAN**, *a man in his early twenties, enters wearing a shirt that says "Poolside." He carries a heavy bag of groceries in his arms and has an extra set of keys in his hand.)*

NATHAN. Mom?

LIZ. Here, sweetie! Let me help you with that. *Trish* has stopped by.

TRISH. Hello, Nathan. Look at you! It's been a while!

NATHAN. Yeah, hi… Is everything alright?

(He hands **LIZ** *the groceries.)*

LIZ. We're just catching up.

*(***NATHAN** *looks* **TRISH** *over. He's got questions.)*

NATHAN. Um, I saw your car outside. You left your door open.

TRISH. I did?

NATHAN. Yeah, you did.

(He kicks his shoes off by the door.)

LIZ. Trish, you said you locked it!

TRISH. I thought I had. I mustn't have closed it hard enough when I got out.

NATHAN. It was the front *passenger* door that was open.

TRISH. The *passenger* door?

NATHAN. Yeah, I closed it for you. You left the keys inside too. Here.

(He hands **TRISH** *her car keys. She is flustered.)*

TRISH. Thank you.

NATHAN. You're sure everything's okay? Is there –

LIZ. We're fine. Trish had a bit of a scare earlier, but things have calmed down and we just got to talking.

*(***NATHAN** *gives his mom a look.)*

Is that so surprising? Moms swap stories!

NATHAN. Some moms do.

LIZ. Don't be fresh. Did you find everything on the list?

NATHAN. Yeah, they actually had everything tonight.

LIZ. That's a nice change! And no one gave you any trouble? No one –

NATHAN. I was *fine*. It was okay out there tonight.

LIZ. You're later than I expected.

NATHAN. There was a bunch of outstanding paperwork I wanted to get done at the store, so I stayed late to finish it.

TRISH. Nathan, you didn't happen to notice if I left the lights on in my house while you were driving home, did you?

NATHAN. No, I came down from the opposite direction. I saw your car on the side of the street ahead of me as I pulled up to the house.

TRISH. Would you mind –

LIZ. Let's let Nathan get settled in first, Trish. He's had a long day.

NATHAN. Pie smells good. You put it in when I said?

LIZ. Yes, it's in the oven. Almost done.

TRISH. You're baking?

LIZ. I told you I had a pie in the oven.

TRISH. You said, "Food on the stove."

LIZ. You can smell it, can't you?

TRISH. Oh. Yes…

*(***TRISH** *sniffs the air. She can't smell the pie.)*

LIZ. In this house, pies are a team effort. Nathan makes 'em. Mom bakes 'em. Sweetie, if you want to take a shower, you've got time before it's ready.

NATHAN. No, I just want to get out of these clothes.

LIZ. There's fresh laundry over there.

NATHAN. Okay.

*(**NATHAN** walks over and picks out shorts and a top. **LIZ** puts the bag down in the kitchen and starts taking out cans of food and inspecting them.)*

TRISH. Nathan, your mom tells me you're working at a pool supplies store in Helen's Bay.

NATHAN. That's right.

*(**NATHAN** takes off his shirt and drops it on the floor.)*

TRISH. Is it busy this time of year?

NATHAN. Very.

TRISH. Really? It's not off-season yet?

NATHAN. It should be. People don't seem to be treating it that way.

*(**NATHAN** unbuckles his pants and pulls them off, revealing he is wearing a sexy jockstrap. **TRISH** is surprised by his lack of modesty and looks away while trying to maintain the conversation. **NATHAN** puts on his shirt and shorts. He exhibits no embarrassment about changing in front of **TRISH**, or being seen in such intimate underwear. He dives into his pants pocket for his phone. Turns it on.)*

TRISH. And you'll work there all year?

NATHAN. That's the plan.

TRISH. What do they do in the winter? Do they have to reduce staff?

NATHAN. I don't know. This is my first season at the store.

TRISH. Well I guess it's always summer someplace, right? Maybe they do online orders!

NATHAN. Maybe. Still feels like summer here. It's been over eighty and humid all week.

TRISH. It's chilly tonight.

NATHAN. If we had a pool, I'd go swimming right now.

TRISH. Really? Working around pool stuff all day doesn't make you sick of it?

NATHAN. No. Swimming's always made me feel good.

(They smile awkwardly, but sincerely, and then **NATHAN** *turns his attention to his phone. His smile fades.)*

TRISH. Well, you're looking really great.

NATHAN. Yeah. If you don't mind, I have to…

(He turns away, focusing on typing a message.)

TRISH. Liz, can I help you with anything in there?

LIZ. No, I've got it. You relax.

TRISH. You sure? Okay…

(She takes a long sip from her mug. Finishing, she turns back to **NATHAN**.*)*

So, do you guys sell those big pool floats? The ones shaped like swans and unicorns? I saw on TV those were very popular this year.

NATHAN. We sell them. They're cool.

TRISH. They're so big! The toys and things weren't so creative when I kept my pool up. We had those gray rectangular rafts! Remember? Mine had a cup holder. I thought that was a wonder at the time. Now they're these *creatures*!

NATHAN. You had that alligator too. I liked that one.

TRISH. Oh, I guess we did!

NATHAN. I just saw the catalog with the ones coming next year. There's this one company that makes them. Next year's theme is, "Monsters of The Sea."

TRISH. Monsters? Oh that's funny!

NATHAN. They're pretty dope. There's a Loch Ness Monster, a creepy crab, a giant squid –

TRISH. Oh, a squid! I don't like those. I wouldn't want to float around on that!

*(**LIZ** perks up at hearing this.)*

NATHAN. Really?

TRISH. Nope. Not for me. They're awful.

LIZ. You don't eat fried squid?

TRISH. No! I think about those little suction cups on the legs-arms-ugh!

LIZ. Richard used to serve calamari all the time at your parties.

TRISH. I know, but I never ate it. He did it to torture me!

NATHAN. The squid raft is cool. The head is sort of in the middle of it and the legs raise up and create the back and the sides. It's like a throne.

TRISH. To think of looking out my window and seeing a giant squid floating around in my pool! No way.

NATHAN. Lots of people have it on pre-order.

TRISH. People are crazy... So you're all done with school now, I assume?

NATHAN. School's done with me.

LIZ. Do you want a beer, honey?

NATHAN. Okay.

(**LIZ** *gets a bottle of soda from the fridge. A timer rings.)*

LIZ. That's the pie!

(She takes it out of the oven and sets it on the stove.)

TRISH. Maybe I should be going.

LIZ. No. Stay for pie. *We're happy to share.*

NATHAN. It still needs to cool, Mom. That's another hour or so –

LIZ. You like eating it hot.

(**LIZ** *hands him the soda.)*

TRISH. You made it, huh? That's impressive!

NATHAN. Not from scratch. It's pre-made ingredients. I just mix 'em together.

LIZ. It always tastes better than it should the way he does it.

NATHAN. Fresh stuff would be better, but where you gonna get it, right?

(**NATHAN** *takes a swig of his soda.)*

TRISH. Right… well it should cool. I'll go. Nathan, would you mind walking me back to my car?

NATHAN. Down the driveway?

TRISH. It's dark. I'm a little on edge tonight.

LIZ. Tell you what: You stay for pie and he'll walk you all the way home after.

TRISH. But I'm sure you both have –

LIZ. C'mon, Trish. Stay. Let's really catch up.

TRISH. Sure. Okay.

*(***NATHAN** *gives* **LIZ** *a look, but has his own shit to deal with on his phone. He puts the soda down on the counter and sits at the table as* **LIZ** *goes back to work at the peninsula.* **TRISH** *stands between them.)*

LIZ. Doesn't Trish look nice today, Nathan? You'd think she was coming straight from Sunday services!

TRISH. Ha! Maybe I do look like that in this.

LIZ. I haven't gone to mass in a long time. Do you know who's the pastor there now? Is it still Father Mateo?

TRISH. Oh, no. It *has* been a long time for you if Mateo was still there. No, he was reassigned a few years back. Which was too bad. I liked him.

LIZ. They didn't give it to Father Daniel, did they?

TRISH. No. Father Daniel got reassigned too. There isn't a permanent pastor right now.

LIZ. I never liked Father Daniel. I always found his eulogies were so self-serving.

TRISH. You thought his *eulogies* were self-serving?

LIZ. No, not "eulogies." What word am I looking for?

NATHAN. *Homilies.*

LIZ. That's right! The homilies. I just couldn't – You remember how he'd never sing with the choir at mass? He'd sing his own song every week, but never include them.

NATHAN. Because they were terrible and he wanted to sound good.

LIZ. Yes, it was more important that he sound good than it was for him to connect with the faithful in the room. I just thought, "Why am I sitting here listening to this guy?" So we stopped going.

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