

WHO GETS THE PARENTS

"Pilot"

by

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3rd Rev. Network Draft
01/21/10

COLD OPEN

FADE IN:

INT. MOMMA LENA'S ITALIAN RESTAURANT - AFTERNOON

AN UNPRETENTIOUS SUBURBAN PHILLY EATERY. GENE FIDDLEMAN (54, GRUFF, ACERBIC, DREAMS OF JUST BEING LEFT ALONE) AND HIS WIFE PHYLLIS (52, OUTGOING, BOUNDARYLESS, THE BIGGEST CRITIC AND BIGGEST DEFENDER OF HER KIDS) ARE HAVING LUNCH WITH THEIR THREE ADULT CHILDREN: MITCH (26, SUPER SMART BUT LOST AND UNMOTIVATED), NEIL (28, SENSITIVE MIDDLE CHILD, ALWAYS CAUGHT BETWEEN HIS WIFE AND MOTHER), AND CASS (30, CUTE, SUCCESSFUL ONLY DAUGHTER WHO GETS TOO MUCH FOCUS FROM HER MOTHER). NEIL'S WIFE BRENDA (28, LOVING BUT SLIGHTLY SPOILED HOUSEWIFE) IS ALSO THERE.

GENE

Neil, Cass, thanks for meeting us
in the middle of the day like this.
We know you guys are busy with
work.

NEIL / CASS

Of course. / No problem.

GENE

Mitch, thanks for putting on pants
and leaving the house.

MITCH

You got it.

PHYLLIS

We have an important family matter
to discuss. Brenda, you're welcome
to stay.

BRENDA

Oh, um -- should I not be here?

NEIL

Honey, of course you can be here.
You're my wife. (CHECKING) I mean
if it's cool with you, Mom.

PHYLLIS NODS THAT IT'S OK.

PHYLLIS

This is something that affects the
entire family. And to a lesser
degree Brenda.

GENE

Your mother and I... are getting
divorced.

MITCH/ CASS/ NEIL

What? / Oh my God. / WHAT?!?!

PHYLLIS

(TO GENE) I wanted to say it.

GENE

I paused, I thought you'd jump in.

PHYLLIS

(ANNOYED) You call that a pause?

GENE

(TO KIDS, "AS YOU CAN SEE") We've
been having some problems.

NEIL

Is this for real?

PHYLLIS

I know this isn't easy to hear.

NEIL

But why? Just like that? No
counseling? No family sessions??
You guys can work this out!

GENE

Neil, buddy, public place. (TO
PHYLLIS) You said he wouldn't do
this here.

PHYLLIS

I didn't think he would.

NEIL

This can't be happening! (LOSING
IT) Noooo! NOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!

NEIL THROWS DOWN HIS NAPKIN AND CROSSES OFF, EMOTIONAL. BIG
REACTIONS FROM NEIL ARE CLEARLY NOT UNUSUAL, AS THEY ALL
WATCH HIM EXIT THEN TURN BACK TO THE TABLE, MOVING ON.

MITCH

(TO BRENDA) Could you hand me his
roll?

CASS

I don't understand. When did you
guys decide this?

GENE

Honestly, we haven't been happy for
some time now. We wanted to wait
till you kids were all out of the
house. Unfortunately your brother
Mitch outlasted us.

PHYLLIS

The truth is we just grew apart.
People change. Well I did, your
father is incapable of change.
(THEN) I wanted to take advantage
of this stage in our lives. Take
classes, eat out, travel. Do all
the things we'd always said we'd do
when we finally had the time.

GENE

And in my defense when we made
those plans the Discovery Channel
did not exist. (THEN) But your
mother and I both agree this is the
right move. This is the rare case
where it really is mutual.

PHYLLIS

Though if you must know, I
technically floated the idea out
there first.

GENE

Why must they know that?

PHYLLIS

Just painting a picture for them,
Gene.

MITCH

Look if this is what you guys need,
I'm sad but I support you. (TO
GENE) I know you and I have had
our battles, but I'm going to miss
you, Big Guy. Feel free to stop by
and visit me and Mom anytime.

PHYLLIS

Um, Mitch--

MITCH

(TO PHYLLIS) You're right. (TO
GENE) Maybe call first.

PHYLLIS

Your father's going to be staying
in the house. I'm actually getting
a place downtown.

MITCH

(WORRIED) Dad's staying in the
house?

CASS

(WORRIED) You're moving downtown?

PHYLLIS

What's the matter? Center City
ain't big enough to handle two hot
and single Fiddleman girls?

PHYLLIS LAUGHS. CASS WEAKLY JOINS HER, CONCERNED.

BRENDA

Gene, Phyllis, I don't know if this
is my place, but if there's
anything I can do just let me know.

GENE

Thank you.

PHYLLIS

(ASIDE, TO GENE) You know, it is
kind of weird that she's here now.

AND WE...

CUT TO MAIN TITLES.

END OF COLD OPEN

ACT ONE

SCENE A

FADE IN:

INT. GENE AND MITCH'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

PHYLLIS IS PACKING UP. GENE IS WATCHING FOOTBALL.

PHYLLIS

Thirty two years, Gene. Have we
failed? Should we feel bad?

GENE

(RE: TV) Kind of a big play here.

PHYLLIS

We're doing the right thing.

MITCH ENTERS WITH A LAW BOOK AND A HEAD OF STEAM.

MITCH

Okay, I can't sit by. Mom has as
much right to this house as you do.
Pennsylvania is an equitable
distribution state. Or did you
forget your son went to law school?

GENE

The thing I paid ninety grand for?
Yeah, rings a bell.

MITCH

And though I made the bold choice
to stop practicing, the degree
still comes in handy.

(MORE)

MITCH (CONT'D)

(ENUMERATING) When filling out certain forms, during some episodes of *Jeopardy*, or whenever I see an injustice.

PHYLLIS

Mitch, I want to move downtown. I'm ready to get out there, start making life happen. And I think this might be good for you. In a way, maybe I coddled you too much.

GENE

Wait -- did you just admit that?

PHYLLIS

Yes, Gene, you win that one. I'm also not allergic to Chinese food, I can tell you that now. I just don't like it.

GENE

Son of a bitch.

THE DOORBELL RINGS. AS GENE CROSSES TO GET IT:

GENE (CONT'D)

(ANNOYED) I haven't had an egg roll since '79.

GENE OPENS THE DOOR. IT'S CAROL, A 49 YEAR OLD DIVORCEE FROM AROUND THE NEIGHBORHOOD, WITH A TRAY OF COOKIES.

CAROL

(WARMLY) Gene.

GENE

(A LITTLE CONFUSED) Carol.

PHYLLIS

Carol?

CAROL

(CAUGHT) Phyllis? (THEN) This
isn't what it looks like.

PHYLLIS GRABS A CARD THAT IS WITH THE COOKIES.

PHYLLIS

(READING) "Dearest, Gene. I'm
here for you in your time of need."

MITCH

(ASIDE, TO GENE) Catfight.

CAROL

(RE: GENE) You can't expect this
kind of merchandise to stay on the
shelves for long.

PHYLLIS

We've been friends for thirty
years. We went to each other's
weddings. (THE TOPPER) We power
walk together.

CAROL

That's how rough it is out there.

AND WE...

DISSOLVE TO:

SCENE B

INT. NEIL AND BRENDA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

BRENDA IS THERE. NEIL IS PACING.

NEIL

How could Mom do this?? A guy organizes his entire life around her, worships the ground she walks on. And she just walks out on him.

BRENDA

I think your Dad wanted this too.

NEIL

I'm not talking about my Dad, I'm talking about me! I've done everything that woman ever asked. I bought the house next door. I even became a veterinarian.

BRENDA

You love animals.

NEIL

("KINDA") Yeah.

CASS ENTERS THROUGH THE FRONT DOOR, HOT.

CASS

Okay, I cannot have mom living downtown. Why do you think I moved downtown? I need that buffer.

NEIL

I hate the buffer.

CASS

She's going to be over at my place
all the time.

NEIL

I'm hardly going to see her
anymore.

CASS

She'll be meddling and interfering
in my life, telling me what to do.

NEIL

I'll be like a rudderless ship,
lost at sea.

CASS

And the constant criticism.

NEIL

I'm gonna miss her helpful advice.

BRENDA

I'll criticize you, honey.

NEIL

It won't be the same.

NEIL SITS, CONTEMPLATIVE.

NEIL (CONT'D)

(TO CASS) Can you believe they're
actually getting divorced?

CASS

Well they fought like all the time.

NEIL

Not all the time. Sometimes they
just weren't talking to each other.
(THEN) Okay so maybe this is a
healthy move.

SFX: CAR HORN HONKING.

CASS

That's Mom. I'm helping her move
some of her things.

BRENDA HANDS CASS A BIG PLASTIC CONTAINER.

BRENDA

Here. It's a giant tub of low
sodium pretzels. Phyllis keeps
them over here because I "have a
bunch of crap in my kitchen." And
now I pass them on to you.

SFX: SUSTAINED CAR HORN.

BRENDA (CONT'D)

Good luck, Cass.

CASS EXITS.

NEIL

(HURT) I offered to help Mom move.
(THEN) You know what, this is
bull. I'm through doing everything
for my Mom. She doesn't want to
live next door to us - fine.

(MORE)

NEIL (CONT'D)

We don't need to run everything by her.

BRENDA

Okay, I like this.

NEIL

From now on, we run this show. Remember how we were talking about maybe redoing the kitchen?

BRENDA

But then you ran the idea by your mother, she said no and started telling everyone I'm a "spender"?

NEIL

If it helps, she's kind of always thought that. I guess you ordered an appetizer at some dinner. She talks about it a lot.

BRENDA

Neil, what's your point? Are you saying we can redo the kitchen?

NEIL

Not the whole kitchen, Brenda. Those dog testicles I remove aren't made out of gold. But how would you like to put in (DRAMATIC) new backsplash!

BRENDA

The right backsplash can add a
contemporary feel to any kitchen.

NEIL

Oh, I know it, baby. And we're
picking it out on our own. We're
not even going to ask her opinion.

BRENDA

Neil, this is kind of exciting.

NEIL

You a little turned on?

BRENDA

I am.

HE GRABS HER AND PULLS HER CLOSE.

NEIL

Get used to it. This guy is about
to start doing a lot of things his
mom doesn't need to know about.

BRENDA

Okay, now I lost it.

AND WE...

DISSOLVE TO:

SCENE C

INT. CASS'S APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY - THE NEXT DAY

CASS GOES TO PUT HER KEY IN THE LOCK, ONLY TO FIND HER FRONT DOOR ALREADY SLIGHTLY AJAR. FROM INSIDE, SHE HEARS NOISE - RUSTLING, SOMETHING CLANKING - INDICATING AN INTRUDER.

CASS

(RE: DOOR, CONCERNED) What the--?

PANICKED, CASS PULLS OUT SOME MACE. PHYLLIS STICKS HER HEAD OUT THE DOOR.

PHYLLIS

Pop in.

CASS

Darnit, Mom.

THEY EXIT INTO CASSANDRA'S APARTMENT.

RESET TO:

INT. CASS'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

THEY ENTER.

PHYLLIS

It was so thrilling to see you at your work today. My little VP of Marketing. I'm very proud, Cass.

CASS

Yes, thank you for stopping by. And hanging out for so long. And sitting in on that meeting.

PHYLLIS

It was very exciting.

CASS

(SOFTENING) Hey, how are you doing
with this whole divorce, Mom?

PHYLLIS

It's hard. Your father was my life
for thirty years. But it's also
exciting. (AWFUL) Your father was
my life for thirty years.

CASS LAUGHS.

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)

I've missed out on a lot. I'm
ready to make life happen. (PROUD)
I had a taco today. That I bought
off the street.

CASS

How was it?

PHYLLIS

Not that good. (THEN) So what do
you have on tap tonight? Hot date?

CASS

Uch, no. (THEN) You know how
those models always complain no one
asks them out? Yeah, that's not my
problem. I must fall into some
cute but approachable sweet spot.

(MORE)

CASS (CONT'D)

Whatever I'm putting out there is just filling these guys with confidence. Weird, creepy, emotionally damaged. "Hey, there's Cass! She'll want some of this." Of course the ones I want to approach me can't take a hint.

PHYLLIS

Well all it takes is one.
(REALIZING) Or one for thirty years and then another one, you get my point. (THEN) I'll come out tonight. See if I can't help out.

CASS

What? Mom, no. I'm going to Happy Hour with Jenna and Steph.

PHYLLIS

Cass, one of the reasons I'm excited about living downtown, besides just trying new things, is getting to reconnect with you.

CASS

I know it's just I have my own life.

PHYLLIS

And I respect that. I just want to help fix it.

CASS

Fix it?

PHYLLIS

Your life. Whatever needs fixing.
For years your brothers have
benefited from having me nearby.
Now it's your turn. You say your
love life is in the gutter--

CASS

I didn't say that.

PHYLLIS

-- we'll work on that first. Then
we'll move on to the next thing,
(EYES LOVESEAT) possibly decorating
choices. I've got the time now,
Cass. I'm here to finish the job.
(THEN) What do you say? Can I
come out with you and your friends?

CASS

No. It's not a good idea.

PHYLLIS

Cass, either you can invite me
along, or I do the thing where I
pretend to show up by coincidence.
It's up to you, I enjoy both.

OFF CASS'S REACTION, WE...

DISSOLVE TO:

SCENE D

INT. FRANK AND MITCH'S HOUSE - MITCH'S BASEMENT - LATER

A FULLY FINISHED COMFY KICKBACK AREA WITH A SEPARATE ENTRANCE, THE BASEMENT IS MITCH'S AUTONOMOUS ZONE. MITCH WATCHES A MOVIE ON HIS GIANT FLAT SCREEN, WITH HIS HOT GIRLFRIEND OF THE WEEK, AMY. GENE ENTERS FROM A BACK STAIRCASE WEARING NOTHING BUT BROWN - BROWN SHOES, BROWN PANTS, BROWN TURTLENECK.

GENE

I've made a decision.

MITCH

To protest the use of all colors
other than brown? Odd but bold
stance. You have my respect, Sir.

GENE

I want you to get your own place.
You have thirty days.

MITCH

What, I was kidding. Don't get mad
at me just because Mom's not around
to pick out your outfits anymore.

GENE

This isn't a punishment. It's time
to grow up, get a job.

AMY

Hey, he has a job. ("OBVIOUSLY")
Playing for the Philllies.

GENE

(TO AMY) Okay, you, out.

AMY

Why is the old guy who rents your
upstairs being so mean?

MITCH

Call you after batting practice.

SHE EXITS OUT THE SIDE DOOR.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Dad, I'm trying. It's just this
recession... and interest rates...
something about the dollar...
(FRUSTRATED) Rrrrr. (THEN) I
need a little time to figure out
what I was born to do.

GENE

Yeah, I struggled for years before
I realized, "you know what'll be
fulfilling - purchasing light bulbs
for the city of Philadelphia." You
get a job, work thirty years, hate
it and you're done.

MITCH

You're an inspiration, Big Guy.

GENE

You have a law degree. Use it.

NEIL ENTERS FROM THE SIDE DOOR.

NEIL

I don't want to alarm you, but
there's a woman power walking back
and forth in front of your house.

GENE

Uch. She's still out there?!

MITCH

Dad has a suitor. A suitress? An
old chick that's into him.

GENE

Carol Bogdanoff. Your mother's
weird friend who celebrates
Christmas year round and wears
those spandexy athletic shirts.

MITCH

Not the image the good people at
Under Armor had in mind, I'm
guessing. (THEN) Hey, Neil, you
still have that pullout in your
basement?

NEIL

Yes. (CUTTING MITCH OFF) And no.

AND WE...

DISSOLVE TO:

SCENE E

INT. THE CONTINENTAL - LATER

DOWNTOWN BAR/RESTAURANT. YOUNG PROFESSIONAL CROWD. CASS AND PHYLLIS ARE WITH CASS'S TWO FRIENDS, STEPH AND JENNA.

PHYLLIS

So no, the bedroom was one area
Gene and I never had a problem. To
make a long story short.

CASS

... It didn't feel that short.

JENNA SPOTS A GOOD-LOOKING GUY BY THE BAR.

JENNA

Cass, there he is. Vodka soda.

PHYLLIS

Who?

CASS

No one.

PHYLLIS

Cass, if I'm going to help you I
need all the information. Now
obviously this Vodka Soda is
important enough to warrant a
nickname. What's the story?

CASS

Nothing. He's just this guy we see
here. And I don't want your help.

JENNA

Cass is in love with him.

CASS

I am not in love with him. Do I think he's shaving cream commercial cute? Yes. But I don't know anything about him. Although in my mind he's a doctor who works at an inner city clinic, drives a pickup and has a golden retriever.

STEPH

It's fun before you meet them.

PHYLLIS

Cass, go talk to him.

JENNA

No, he'll come by. You're looking good and we're near the bathroom. If you go up to him you lose the upper hand.

PHYLLIS

You were just complaining that the ones you want weren't approaching. So why leave it up to them? You have to make life happen.

CASS

This is going to be the new annoying mantra isn't it?

PHYLLIS

I ordered us T-shirts.

CASS

I know it's been a while since
you've been out there, but this is
how it's done.

OVER THE FOLLOWING, UNBEKNOWNST TO CASS, PHYLLIS CROSSES OFF:

CASS (CONT'D)

Obviously I'd love to just go right
up to him. But I have to play this
one cool. Can't be too aggressive.
This is the way the dance is done.
Nothing more pathetic than a girl
approaching a guy at a bar.

JENNA

Except maybe a girl's mom
approaching him and dragging him
over here.

JENNA POINTS AND WE SEE PHYLLIS MAKING HER WAY THROUGH THE
CROWD, PULLING A SLIGHTLY CONFUSED "VODKA SODA" IN HER WAKE.

CASS

Oh no.

PHYLLIS

Cass, honey! Wave!! Is this him??

OFF CASS'S HORRIFIED REACTION, WE...

DISSOLVE TO:

SCENE H

INT. GENE'S MICROWAVE - THE NEXT DAY

FROM INSIDE THE MICROWAVE WE SEE THREE EGGS STILL IN THEIR SHELLS ROTATING ON A PLATE. STARING AT THEM THROUGH THE GLASS IS GENE. HIS EXPRESSION IS CAUTIOUSLY HOPEFUL ("THIS ISN'T SO HARD"). AFTER A BEAT THE EGGS EXPLODE.

DISSOLVE TO:

SCENE J

INT. TILE STORE - LATER

NEIL AND BRENDA WALK THROUGH THE STORE, MID-CONVERSATION.

BRENDA

I am not a spender. I contribute.
I have my own homemade jewelry
business. I just had an order for
five bracelets for Christmas.

NEIL

Actually I only need four now. One
of the women at the office quit.

THEY ARRIVE AT THE BACKSPLASH AISLE.

NEIL (CONT'D)

Picking out backsplash without my
mom. This is big. Take a picture
of me in front of these tiles for
my therapist.

SHE DOES.

BRENDA

Okay, let's see. White could be
good, or blue. Of course then
there's glass or ceramic. Do we go
big, small? What do you think?

NEIL

You're asking me? I don't know.
These are nice.

BRENDA

You're right, shouldn't have asked.

(RE: TILES) Man, there are a lot.

NEIL

Well how do you normally do this?

Like how'd you pick out the couch?

BRENDA

Well, your mom insisted on coming along. I narrowed it down to four or five options. Your mom hated one and that's the one I went with.

NEIL

Why didn't you just pick the one you liked?

BRENDA

(REALIZING) I didn't know I liked it till I heard she hated it.

(GASPS) That's how I base most of my decisions.

NEIL

So you only like what she hates.

BRENDA

I'm starting to feel like she was more integral to the process than we'd realized.

AND WE...

DISSOLVE TO:

SCENE K

INT. GENE AND MITCH'S HOUSE - LATER

MITCH IS THERE WITH CASS, WHO IS FINISHING UP A STORY.

CASS

And then Mom just brought him over!
And it worked!

MITCH

Vodka Soda?

CASS

His real name is Brad. Turns out
he doesn't even drink Vodka Soda.
He was ordering it for his friend,
Captain Morgan. (OFF CONFUSED LOOK)
His friend's in the Army. The
point is we're going out tonight
and I have Mom to thank!
(IMPRESSED) Maybe the woman knows
what she's talking about.

MITCH

So what are you doing out here?

CASS

I had to get away from her. She's
driving me crazy. How's Dad?

MITCH

I don't know. He can't dress
himself, he can't feed himself.

(MORE)

MITCH (CONT'D)

He's like a giant mean baby who complains about the government a lot. (THEN) Hey, Cass, do you still have that sofa-bed in your home office?

CASS

Yes. (CUTTING MITCH OFF) And no.

GENE ENTERS THROUGH THE FRONT. HE'S ACTUALLY DRESSED WELL.

GENE

Hey, kids, just grabbing a jacket.

CASS AND MITCH EXCHANGE A LOOK.

CASS

(A LITTLE SURPRISED) Dad, you look great. Is that a new sportcoat?

GENE

Little something I picked up.

MITCH

You went shopping? (NOTICING) And did you get a haircut?

GENE

I got 'em all cut! Heh. (OFF NO REACTION) Hey, I'm a dad. I'm allowed one of those a day.

MITCH

(RE: GENE, HEAD TO TOE) How did this whole thing happen?

GENE

(RE: MITCH, DERISIVE) How did that
whole thing happen?

CAROL, FROM EARLIER, POPS HER HEAD IN THE FRONT DOOR.

CAROL

Gene, we're going to miss the
previews. (THEN) Oh, hey, kids.
(TO GENE) No, the khaki jacket.
It goes better with those shoes.

GENE

I'll meet you in the car.

CAROL LICKS HER THUMB AND CLEANS SOMETHING OFF GENE'S FACE.

CAROL

Smudge.

GENE

(WINCING) Thank you.

CAROL STARTS SINGING THE CHRISTMAS STANDARD "SLEIGHRIDE" AS
SHE CROSSES OUT. GENE CLOSES THE DOOR ON HER. HE TURNS TO
SEE CASS AND MITCH STARING AT HIM IN DISBELIEF.

GENE (CONT'D)

What?

MITCH

What are you doing?

CASS

You're already sleeping with
someone else?

GENE

("THAT'S NUTS") What? Come on.

CASS

Well that's what it looks like.

MITCH

Dad, if I may. (TO CASS) What's going on here, Cass, is far, far sicker than any mere carnal desire. No, if I'm right -- and I believe I am -- he's using that woman not for sex, but for outfit selection, food preparation and other basic skills any normal human being should be able to do on their own.

CASS

Is that true, Dad?

GENE

I'm doing what I have to do!

CASS

(DISAPPOINTED) Oh, Dad...

GENE

I don't have to listen to this.

GENE EXITS. WHILE THE DOOR'S OPEN AS HE EXITS, WE HEAR:

CAROL (O.S.)

... had a very shi-ny nose--

DOOR SLAMS SHUT. OFF MITCH AND CASS'S LOOK, WE...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

SCENE L

FADE IN:

INT. CASS'S APARTMENT - LATER

STEPH, JENNA AND PHYLLIS ARE THERE. CASS ENTERS. THE GIRLS ARE ON THE EDGE OF THEIR SEATS, THEN:

CASS

It was amazing!!!

THEY ALL AD-LIB EXCITED CONGRATULATIONS.

CASS (CONT'D)

He's not a doctor. And he doesn't
have a golden retriever. (REVEALS)
Dentist. Cat.

PHYLLIS

(ENCOURAGING) Not bad.

CASS

But he's funny. And smart. At one
point he used the word "diffident".
I didn't even know what it meant.
God, it felt good to not be the
smart one on a date for once!
Not to get ahead of myself but I
love him and want his babies.

STEPH

Let's gameplan. If he calls
tomorrow, you call him back on
Tuesday. Earliest.

PHYLLIS

What? This is ridiculous. You
call this young man right now and
tell him you had a good time.

CASS

Mom.

PHYLLIS

He's probably sitting home worrying
whether you had fun. This is the
father of your children.

CASS

Yeah, but--

PHYLLIS

Deep down don't you want to talk to
him?

CASS

Well yeah.

PHYLLIS

Then go with your gut. Remember
when I just went up and grabbed him
at the bar? If I was right then,
why can't I be right now?

CASS

It shouldn't be making sense...

FOR CASS'S BENEFIT, PHYLLIS UNZIPS HER SWEATER TO REVEAL A T-SHIRT THAT READS "MAKE LIFE HAPPEN".

STEPH

It doesn't make sense.

PHYLLIS

Fine. Listen to your boyfriend-less friends.

STEPH / JENNA

Hey. / I have a regular hookup.

CASS

Screw it. Mom, give me the phone.

PHYLLIS

You're doing the right thing.

CASS

(DIALS, PANICKED) Voicemail.

JENNA

Hang up! Hang up!

CASS

(INTO PHONE) IT BEEPED! And I just said it beeped to you, Brad. Um, it's Cass, from the date. I wanted to let you know that I... "diffidently" had a great time.

JENNA

No, not the wordplay.

PHYLLIS

(PROUDLY) That's my daughter.

AND WE...

DISSOLVE TO:

SCENE M

INT. GENE AND MITCH'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - THE NEXT DAY

GENE IS THERE WITH MITCH. MITCH IS ON THE PHONE.

MITCH

(INTO PHONE, SOMBERLY) I see...

Okay... if that's how you feel...

MITCH HANGS UP.

GENE

Everything okay? What was that?

MITCH

A firm I interviewed with. (SIGHS)

They want me to start Monday. Man

I thought I blew that interview.

GENE

Mitch, I know law isn't your dream.

MITCH

Dad, I spent two years as a lawyer.

If I go back, I'm afraid I'll be

there for the rest of my life.

GENE

You know what the trouble with your
generation is?

MITCH

Besides video games, MTV and no one
being able to drive stick?

GENE

You're obsessed with being happy.

CAROL SNEAKS UP BEHIND GENE HOLDING A MISTLETOE.

CAROL

Dinner at the Greensteins tonight!

SHE KISSES HIM ON THE CHEEK AND DUCKS BACK IN THE KITCHEN.

GENE

(WITH MEANING) Sometimes you have
to do things you don't want to do.

BRENDA AND NEIL ENTER HOLDING TILE SAMPLES.

NEIL

Hey, guys. Which of these tiles do
you think Mom would hate more?

GENE

The red one. She didn't like red.

BRENDA

She didn't like it or she hated it?

NEIL

This is important for my growth.

GENE

Or wait, maybe she loved red.

NEIL

You were married thirty two years.

GENE

I know she talked about it a lot.

MITCH

This may have been part of the problem.

AND WE...

DISSOLVE TO:

SCENE P

INT. CASS'S APARTMENT BUILDING - A FEW DAYS LATER

CASS AND PHYLLIS ARE ON THE COUCH, THE PHONE BETWEEN THEM.

PHYLLIS

And the batteries in the phone, we
checked those?

CASS

(ANNOYED) Yes, Mom. It's been
five days. He's not calling.

(DESPONDENT) I scared him off.
I really thought he liked me.

PHYLLIS

Well call him again. So he didn't
return our phone calls.

CASS

You mean my one phone call.

(WORRIED) Mom?

PHYLLIS

I may have left a couple messages
as well. (THEN) We didn't hear
from him. I was concerned!

CASS

I can't believe I did this. I
can't believe I listened to you.

PHYLLIS

Don't beat yourself up, honey.

CASS

I'm not. See - this is why I was
worried about you moving downtown.
I don't want you fixing my life.

PHYLLIS

I was just trying to help.

CASS

Well, you didn't. You never do.
You make things worse. I'm your
daughter, not your best friend.
Okay? I need a little space!

PHYLLIS IS TAKEN ABACK.

PHYLLIS

Well, sorry I make your life worse.
You know what - it's a big city.
Maybe we'll see each other around.

PHYLLIS EXITS, CASS STANDS IN THE DOORWAY WATCHING HER GO.

RESET TO:

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

PHYLLIS WALKS ACROSS THE HALL AND USES A KEY TO OPEN THE
DOOR TO THE APARTMENT DIRECTLY ACROSS FROM CASS'S. PHYLLIS
ENTERS THAT APARTMENT AND CLOSES THE DOOR. CASS LOOKS ON
FROM HER OWN DOORWAY. A BEAT. PHYLLIS OPENS THE DOOR.

PHYLLIS

Oh, by the way, I'm out of the
hotel. I found an apartment.

PHYLLIS DUCKS BACK INSIDE. OFF CASS'S REACTION, WE...

DISSOLVE TO:

SCENE Q

INT. GENE AND MITCH'S HOUSE - LATER

GENE IS THERE. MITCH ENTERS, DRESSED IN A SUIT.

MITCH

Well, here I go. First day of the
rest of my life as a lawyer.
Giving up my dreams. Checking my
soul at the door.

GENE

Knock 'em dead, Champ.

MITCH

Fine, if you're not going to save
me, then I will at least save you.
You gotta break it off with Carol.

GENE

Mitch...

MITCH

What is so mystifying? The
dishwasher? The washing machine?
Let me talk you through it.

GENE

You don't think your mother's tried
to talk me through it? That
dishwasher may as well be a space
shuttle as far as I'm concerned.

MITCH

It's not that difficult.

GENE

There's like twenty buttons.

MITCH

You just hit start!

GENE

No there's cycles! I heard
something about cycles! And then
you have your fabric softener.

MITCH

No, that's the washing machine.
We're talking about the dishwasher.

GENE

What?

MITCH

Huh?

GENE

(ANGRILY WAVES HIM OFF) AAaahh!

MITCH

(FRUSTRATED) Rrrrr!

GENE

(BEAT) It's just hard when you've
had someone special there your
whole life and then suddenly you
have to do everything on your own.

MITCH

I miss having Mom here too.

GENE

This divorce is for the best, but
that doesn't make it easy.

MITCH

Well, I'm here for you.

GENE

Thanks, Mitch.

MITCH

Wait a second, *I'm here for you.*

GENE

Yes, you keep saying that.

MITCH

Dad, if all you need is someone to
run the dishwasher and pick out
your clothes, I can do that stuff.

GENE

What are you saying?

MITCH

I can be your wife.

GENE

Say it a different way.

MITCH

I'm serious. But I have terms. I
keep living here. I don't have to
be a lawyer. And I get your Volvo.

GENE

What?

MITCH

Okay, not your Volvo. I sensed I had leverage. It was the lawyer in me. (RIPPING TIE OFF) This tie makes you do evil things. (THEN) What do you say?

GENE

I'm still going to be on you about getting your life together.

MITCH

Okay.

GENE

And this is just for a little while. I mean hopefully soon I'll meet another special lady. One who doesn't dress like Adrian Peterson.

MITCH

I want that for you, too.

GENE

(BEAT) You really want to stay?

MITCH

(TAKES GENE'S HAND) I do.

GENE

Stop that.

AND WE...

DISSOLVE TO:

SCENE R

INT. NEIL AND BRENDA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

BRENDA AND NEIL ARE IN THEIR "DO IT YOURSELF" GEAR, HAVING JUST INSTALLED NEW BACKSPLASH (THEY WENT WITH A BRUSHED STEEL LOOK). THEY STAND BACK AND ADMIRE THEIR HANDIWORK.

NEIL

Well, it's done. Do you like it?

BRENDA

I have no idea.

A KNOCK AT THE BACK DOOR. NEIL ANSWERS. IT'S PHYLLIS.

PHYLLIS

Hi, guys. (LOW ENERGY) Pop in.

NEIL

Mom, why the sad pop in?

PHYLLIS

It's your sister. (NOTICING) Is something different in here?

NEIL

Yes, Mom, we're adults and we decided to do something... that Brenda will now tell you about.

BRENDA

We put in new backsplash, Phyllis.

SHE STUDIES IT FOR A LONG, TENSE BEAT.

PHYLLIS

I like it. Nice work.

BRENDA THROWS UP HER ARMS AND EXITS TO THE LIVING ROOM, EXASPERATED. CASS ENTERS THROUGH THE BACK DOOR.

CASS

(TO PHYLLIS) There you are. (TO
NEIL) Can I talk to Mom alone?

NEIL EXITS TO THE LIVING ROOM.

CASS (CONT'D)

I feel awful about what I said.
I'm glad you're in my life. I was
upset about Brad and taking it out
on you. Can we just move past it?

PHYLLIS

You know what the worst part about
what you said was?

CASS

Or we could delve deeper into this,
that also works.

PHYLLIS

The worst part is that you were
right. I did make a mess of things
for you. I should have just minded
my own business. Who am I to give
dating advice? Look at my life.

CASS

Mom...

PHYLLIS

No, it's true. As a parent all you
want to do is make your kids' lives
better. I can't even do that.

CASS SEES HOW HURT PHYLLIS IS.

CASS

Maybe I gave up on you too soon.

SHE PULLS OUT HER PHONE.

PHYLLIS

What are you doing?

CASS

The last advice you gave me was to
call him one more time.

WE HEAR THE SPEAKERPHONE RINGING, THEN:

BRAD

(OVER PHONE) Hello?

PHYLLIS

(EXCITEDLY) Is that Brad??

BRAD (O.S.)

(OVER PHONE) Am I on speakerphone?

CASS QUICKLY CLICKS OFF THE SPEAKERPHONE.

CASS

I'm "making life happen." (THEN)
See what I did there?

PHYLLIS SMILES.

CASS (CONT'D)

(INTO PHONE) Hi, Brad, it's Cass.
Again. Society says I shouldn't be
calling. But a wise woman says
otherwise. And that woman is my
mother.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. BRAD'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

BRAD IS SCREAMING INTO THE PHONE.

BRAD

(INTO PHONE) I'm serious!! Stop
calling!! What is wrong with you
people??

INT. NEIL AND BRENDA'S - KITCHEN - BACK TO SCENE

PHYLLIS AND CASS ARE THERE.

CASS

(INTO PHONE) So did you just lose
my number? Did you not get my
message?... Oh my God. (TO
PHYLLIS) You were right, Mom!

INT. BRAD'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

BRAD JUST LISTENS ON THE PHONE IN DISBELIEF. WE HEAR:

PHYLLIS (O.S.)

(OVER PHONE) I was right??

CASS (O.S.)

(OVER PHONE) He wants to see me!

INT. NEIL AND BRENDA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - BACK TO SCENE

PHYLLIS LOOKS TOUCHED AND HAPPY.

CASS

(INTO PHONE) I'm glad I called,
too. (WHY NOT) I love you, too,
Brad.

PHYLLIS SQUEALS. CASS HANGS UP.

CASS (CONT'D)

I guess you know what you're
talking about after all.

IT'S A NICE MOMENT. THEY HUG.

PHYLLIS

There's no way that phone call
worked. That would have freaked
even me out. (TENDER) But thanks
for making me feel better.

CASS LAUGHS. NEIL CROSSES BACK IN FROM THE LIVING ROOM.

CASS

Hey, is that new backslash? Nice.

PHYLLIS

(GRIMACING) Really?

NEIL

You said you liked it.

PHYLLIS

Don't tell Brenda, I was just being
nice. (TO CASS) Let's call the
girls, hit the town. (SCOFFS) New
backslash. Typical of her whole
high-flying appetizer attitude.

THEY EXIT. A BEAT.

NEIL

Brenda! I have good news!

AS HE CROSSES TO THE LIVING ROOM, WE...

DISSOLVE TO:

SCENE S

INT. THE CONTINENTAL BAR - LATER

MITCH IS THERE WITH CASS AND NEIL.

CASS

So how did Carol take the breakup?

MITCH

Not bad. She's already dating Dr.
Phillips from down the street.

NEIL

But isn't there a Mrs. Phillips?

MITCH

She died. Really sad. Anyway,
Carol went right from Dad's house
to the funeral and called dibs.
She can really move when she wants
to in those shirts.

NEIL

Can you believe Mom and Dad are
actually divorced? I guess they
really weren't happy.

CASS / MITCH

Yeah. / I guess not.

NEIL

And isn't their happiness really
the only thing that matters here?

CASS / MITCH / NEIL

No. / No, it's not. / Yeah, this is
annoying.

MITCH

We're not selfish and immature for
reacting this way, are we?

NEIL

No, no, we're good.

CASS

This is not going to be easy.
We're going to have to hang out
with them all the time and play
these active roles in their lives.
(BEAT) It really is the children
who suffer most in divorce.

MITCH

(TOASTING) To Mom and Dad. May
they find what they're looking for.
And maybe in some weird way the
three of us will grow up a little
in the process. (DRINKS, THEN)
Although if I manage to stay with
Dad for just five more years I'm
legally entitled to half the house.

AS MITCH CONSIDERS THIS PLAN, WE...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

TAG

CHYRON: "A FEW WEEKS LATER"

FOLLOWED BY ANOTHER CHYRON: "DATE NIGHT"

INT. CASS'S APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY - A FEW WEEKS LATER

CASS IS DRESSED FOR A NIGHT OUT. SHE EXITS HER APARTMENT, GENTLY CLOSING THE DOOR AND STARTS TO SLOWLY TIPTOE TOWARD THE ELEVATOR WHEN SHE MAKES THE SLIGHTEST CREAKING SOUND WITH HER STEP. PHYLLIS'S APARTMENT DOOR BURSTS OPEN.

PHYLLIS

Hey, whatcha doing?

INT. GENE AND MITCH'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

GENE IS WATCHING TV. MITCH ENTERS FROM THE KITCHEN.

MITCH

Dad, it's Saturday night. (ANNOYED)

We don't do anything anymore.

GENE

(RE: TV) I'm learning about the
Mayans here.

INT. NEIL AND BRENDA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

NEIL AND BRENDA ARE THERE.

NEIL

No more hanging out with my mom.
The world is our oyster.

BRENDA

(EXCITED) What do you have in mind?

NEIL

(STILL UPBEAT) I have no idea.

INT. CASS'S APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

PHYLLIS

Go, go. I'll stay here and try not
to be sad about the divorce.

CASS

This guilt thing is going to stop
working in a few months.

PHYLLIS

(AS THEY EXIT TOGETHER) I have
other bullets in the chamber.

INT. NEIL AND BRENDA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

BRENDA

("GOT IT!") Your mother thinks
movies are kind of a rip off.

NEIL

And she'd have a heart attack if
she heard we bought popcorn.

BRENDA

I'll get my coat.

INT. GENE AND MITCH'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

MITCH IS PHYSICALLY ATTEMPTING TO PULL GENE OUT THE DOOR.

MITCH

This is happening, we're going out!
AND WE'RE GOING TO HAVE FUN!!

GENE

NO!!!!.....

AS THEY CONTINUE TO STRUGGLE, WE... FADE OUT.

END OF SHOW