

CANCELLED
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CANCELLED

CHARACTERS

CLARA	40s
LAURA	40s, Clara's best friend

SETTING

Clara's living room.

TIME

Present day, early Saturday afternoon

(Lights up on a comfortable living room.
There is a knock at the door and Clara goes
to answer it and lets Laura in.)

LAURA

Hey! I can't wait to show you what I found!

CLARA

(subdued, sad)

What?

LAURA

My instamatic camera that I lost 20 years ago.

CLARA

Oh. Uh-huh...

LAURA

Well, I had the film developed and it was from that party at Michelle Parker's birthday that one time when we all got stupid drunk and we all did the chicken dance polka and laughed so hard I actually did pee my pants and had to borrow a pair of Michelle's jeans.

CLARA

(on the verge of tears)

Oh, yeah. I remember

LAURA

C'mon! Let's dance it!

(Clara sits on the couch.)

CLARA

Nah. I don't want to.

LAURA

Come. On!

(Laura pulls Clara up and fakes the chicken dance music and they start dancing.)

LAURA

Da da da da da DA!
Da da da da da DA!
Da da da da da DA!
Da. Da. Da. Da.

(Clara pulls away and sits back down.)

CLARA

Stop it!

LAURA

Jesus, what is wrong?

CLARA

I just didn't feel like hanging out.

LAURA

Are you mad?

CLARA

You just won't ever take no for an answer.

LAURA

That's not true. I took "no" for an answer the last three or four times I've asked you to hang out.

CLARA

Okay. You're right. That wasn't fair.

LAURA

Jesus. You really ARE mad at me.

CLARA

I don't know what to say.

LAURA

Is it about Mark?

CLARA

Kinda... I just can't talk to you about things to do with him.

LAURA

That's because he's MARRIED.

CLARA

We're not DOING anything. We're FRIENDS.

LAURA

You dated him before though.

CLARA

Yeah, when we were like 18. A thousand years ago.

LAURA

You've had sex. Does not matter how long ago it was... and since you ran into each other last year, you "hang out" and "go to lunch."

CLARA

So WHAT?!!!

LAURA

If Paul were hanging out and having lunch with a woman he used to sleep with? Oh. No. no. no. no. NO. That shit would not fly.

CLARA

We're not doing anything WRONG. He's a good guy! He's honorable. I would not have him be any other way. We're friends. FRIENDS! But you shit all over it.

LAURA

Sweetie... I'm just afraid you'll get hurt.

CLARA

Spoken like someone who's been happily married for, what? 17? 18 years? I've been divorced for 13 years and can't find ANYone.

LAURA

I know, but you'll find someone.

CLARA

How do YOU know? Either I like someone and he doesn't like me back. Or someone likes me and I don't like them back.

LAURA

Just don't give up.

CLARA

Again! Spoken like a happily married woman. Spoken like someone who doesn't have *to worry* about *any* of it any more. I don't have a mate. I don't have kids. I don't have a double income. I don't have a house that's paid off. I don't have siblings. But YOU have all of that. ALL of it. Just imagine losing one of those things. Just *one*. Now imagine losing ALL of it. All of it gone. And then you'll have MY life. When I'm old I'm going to be alone, alone and broke... But you can't even be happy for me for my one little friendship with Mark just because he's a man even though it makes me happy.

LAURA

HE. IS. MARRIED.

CLARA

Oh, God. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Look, just go okay.

LAURA

Oh honey. My marriage isn't *always* happy.

CLARA

I know.

LAURA

Remember about ten years ago when Paul was staying out til 9:00 or 10:00 two or three nights a week?

CLARA

Yeah....

LAURA

I was SO afraid he was having an affair. But I finally asked him and thank God he swore that he wasn't, that he was just losing track of time at the sports bars during basketball season. Remember?

CLARA

Yeah....

LAURA

He PROMISED and he kept his promise and we've been okay ever since.

CLARA

You mean after two days he kept his promise and you were okay.

LAURA

What?

CLARA

The VERY next night he stayed out til 4:00 a.m. I remember you called me at 3:00 a.m. in tears....

LAURA

(over her)

He said he wanted one more night with the guys.

CLARA

(over her)

...and I *knew*.

LAURA

I forgave him.

CLARA

(over her)

I KNEW he was having an affair. That you called him out and that he went over the next night to end it. I knew.

LAURA

No! He was with his pals. I forgave him.

CLARA

...that he went over to her place to end it and to fuck her brains out one last time til 4:00 a.m.

LAURA

No!

CLARA
(over her)

Or maybe after he ended it, he had to talk her off a ledge til 4:00 a.m.

LAURA

STOP IT!

CLARA

But I NEVER, not ONCE, let you know that I thought that. I never told you how I REALLY felt. How worried I was about you. How angry I was at him. I let you have your happiness.

(mimicking herself)

“Of COURSE he wasn’t cheating.”

“Paul would never cheat.”

“He is a SUCH a good guy, your Paul.”

LAURA

I’m leaving.

CLARA

I let you have your *happiness*. But you couldn't let me have mine. You with the husband and kids and paid-off house and double income. You have all that. But you wouldn't let me have one lousy male friend.

LAURA

(after a long pause, three beats)

There's something you should know. Something I never told you.

CLARA

What?

LAURA

After you and David divorced, I took out a life insurance policy just for you. Because you have no family, kids, siblings, etc. *Because* you have a crappy state job with your crappy undergraduate degree in history.

CLARA

You did?

LAURA

For 100,000 dollars.

CLARA

Why didn't you tell me?

LAURA

And GET this. My husband? Paul? The one you just maligned and basically accused of not really loving me? The insurance policy for you was *his* idea.

CLARA

Why didn't you *tell* me?

LAURA

HIS idea. So you would have *something*. So you wouldn't end up eating cold cans of beans in a freezing roach-infested hovel when you were 80.

CLARA

Oh my God.

LAURA

We didn't tell you because we were planning on cancelling it if you were to remarry. But if something happened to me and you *hadn't* remarried, you would have some money. Paul was going to make sure that you got it. This man who you think is such an asshole. Because I had told him so many times you were more like family to me than just a friend.

CLARA

It wasn't *your* idea?

LAURA

No.

CLARA

Why not?

LAURA

I don't *know*. What are you getting at?

CLARA

Look. I know I'm not at my best these days. I'm small and scared and broke and lonely. I know my smallness gets the best of me an awful lot.

LAURA

What are you *getting* at?

CLARA

You don't love me.

LAURA

Of *course* I do.

CLARA

No. If you could pick: Clara gets to be happy or Mark's wife gets to be happy knowing he has no female friends...no threats, no dangers? You'd pick Mark's wife. You'd pick giving a complete stranger numb security and blind faith over my happiness in my friendship with him. Because that's what you're afraid of. That Paul doesn't love you. Not really.

LAURA

That's not true!

CLARA

AND....it wasn't *your* idea to help me. To get me that insurance. Never *would've* been your idea. I'm not on your radar... You feel sorry for me... are contemptuous of me. But contempt is just fear of being found out and rejected in disguise.

LAURA

Sorry for you? *YOU* feel sorry for you.

CLARA

(over her)

You just don't love me.

LAURA

Fine. Guess I'll go ahead and cancel it then if that's how you feel.

CLARA

The insurance? You're going to cancel it?

LAURA

As soon as I get home. Good-bye Clara.

(Laura exits and quietly shuts the door behind her.)

CLARA

Of course you are.

(two beats)

Good-bye Laura.

END OF PLAY