

Politically Erect
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CHARACTERS

- JIM** A retired firefighter/paramedic, fifty-something. Separated from LORI due to an incident relating to his PTSD. Eric's and Jen's father.
- LORI** Late forties. Here to tell JIM's mom about the divorce.
- DAVID A** Late forties. LORI's coworker. One of two suspects as to the man LORI is currently dating.
- DAVID B** Late forties. LORI's coworker. One of two suspects as to the man LORI is currently dating. Blissfully unaware of the situation. Wearing goggles on his forehead for some reason.
- IDA** Late 70s/early 80s. Judgy and very religious. JIM's mother.
- ERIC** 17/18. Just graduated high school. Here to tell his family that he's poli-sexual.
- JEN** Eric's older sister, 19/20. A sophomore in college. College has been a liberating experience... she has come out as a hyper-liberal, self-described "raging feminist." Here to share that she failed out of school.

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SYNOPSIS: Ten years ago, a marriage burnt out – that of retired firefighter Jim and ex-wife Lori. Fearing upsetting his deeply religious mother Ida, Jim convinced Lori to keep the divorce a secret, going so far as to host Thanksgiving dinner together every year for the last decade. On the morning of this year’s Thanksgiving dinner, Lori faces Jim with an ultimatum: either he will tell his mother about the divorce, or she will. Meanwhile, Jim’s and Lori’s kids are keeping secrets of their own. Jen just failed out of college, and Eric has come to a startling realization regarding his sexuality – he can’t discuss politics of any kind without getting a hard-on. The heat turns up when Lori invites two of her co-workers to the dinner: one the man she replaced Jim with, the other a clueless red herring for Jim. Despite its title, this farce is more about family than politics.

SETTING: Anytown, USA, a fictionalized version. Present.

TIME: Present.

(“/” indicates interrupting lines. A character’s NAME with a blank space underneath indicates a silent beat.)

Scene 1

(Blank deck.)

(ERIC walks out, minding his own business, and spots the audience.)

ERIC

Oh. Hey.

(As he speaks, the other characters enter from both sides, bringing with them a dining room table, fine china, napkins, glasses, wine, etc. (But not the turkey yet).)

Yeah, this, uh... this sucks. This whole situation.

I mean, Mom and Dad have been lying about the separation to Grandma for years, sure, but my family's been lying to each other for longer than that. It's what we do, man. It's who we are.

Dad about being right when he's wrong. Mom about Dad being wrong when he's right. Dad about his PTSD. Mom about taking the separation out on us. Dad about the drinking. Mom about the drinking. Grandma about the drinking.

Thing is, my parents aren't the only ones keeping a secret.

The first person I came out to was a lesbian friend of mine. Which seemed like a safe move, right? That I'm poli-sexual. Who'd be more accepting of me than someone in a similar club?

And all she told me was, "Well you're just bi, it's not like you're gay." So I said no, I'm not bi, I'm poli. And she asked, do you mean pan? And I said, no, poli-sexual. And she said, well isn't that basically the same thing as being pan? And I said no, not p-o-l-y, poly, p-o-l-i, poli. Politically sexual. Any time someone debates politics I get hard. Is that so wrong?

Compared to my folks, you know, I'm an honest guy. I'm not perfect. I stole a candy bar once. You know? I have flaws. I failed Government 103 because -- I kept getting distracted. Not that I know shit about the U.S. I mean, let's be honest, there's like ten states I know for sure exist and the rest I'm only taking people's word for it. Iowa? Exists, probably. They have, what, corn? Isn't there like, corn in Iowa? And caucuses, I know that. Iowa's two main exports: corn and Presidential candidates pretending they care about Iowa.

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(At the thought of Presidential candidates, he adjusts his pants slightly.)

I admit it: I don't know a goddamn thing about Iowa or corn. But I digress.

Do you see the way bi guys are treated by their straight friends sometimes? Like they're "unclean" or something? Just because I'm not straight doesn't mean I'm into my guy friends.

(speaking to male audience member, preferably sitting next to a girl)

I mean, think about it this way: do you want to fuck all your female friends?

Long pause. (Cut him off if he tries to answer):

Bad example, never mind.

Every time I try to bring it up with family, it's like... how do I even? With my Dad? How does that conversation even... I don't know how to do this. He's kind of an asshole, but he's my asshole. I know he'd try to understand. For me. He would. But then he'd say weird things like, "Your dating pool is so huge now!" or "So-and-so friend is cute when he's talking about comprehensive tax reform, don't you think?" And it'd be so weird, I feel like he'd judge me, and like...

I just don't want to ruin Thanksgiving. Every political discussion in this house is already a dick-measuring contest, I don't need to make it literal.

(Everyone leaves, ERIC included, except for LORI and JIM, both drinking out of mugs.)

SCENE 2

(LORI takes a long sip of her drink. It's not very tasty.

JIM can't stand this silence. He smacks his lips, drums on the table.

LORI sips. JIM whistles quietly.)

LORI

Jesus, you even need to make silence about yourself?

JIM

What?

LORI

You can't handle it. Silence.

JIM

I don't like it very much, no. Thought you might understand that by now.

LORI

Well, silence is better than meaningless noise. Don't you think?

JIM

It's kind of a moot point to fight about this now, isn't it?

LORI

I am just trying to enjoy my coffee.

(She sips.

Silence.

JIM clears his throat, maybe about to say something else, but LORI interrupts him.)

LORI

Listen, I need to be honest.

JIM

You. Are going to be honest.

LORI

Jim.

JIM

Just think it's funny.

LORI

I'm going to tell her if you won't.

JIM

Jen? Tell her what?

LORI

Ida.

(JIM chokes. Spits out his drink.)

JIM

Excuse me?

LORI

I didn't say I want to tell her/

JIM

Then why would you?/

LORI

But if you don't, I'll have to.

JIM

No.

LORI

If not today, when? When would you tell her?

JIM

It's a difficult subject.

LORI

I understand that.

JIM

She wouldn't get it.

LORI

Yes, I know. We've had this conversation.

JIM

Okay, so then why are we having it again?

LORI

Jesus, relax.

JIM

Relax?

LORI

You know I'm right.

JIM

You are the opposite of right. You are wrong.

LORI

So, then if not today, what's the plan? Are you just waiting for her to die?

JIM

No!

LORI

So then you are planning on telling her.

JIM

Eventually!

LORI

Well, it's either wait for her to die or tell her, it's one or the other!

JIM

I will tell her.

LORI

No you won't.

JIM

I will.

LORI

You said that ten years ago. And nine. And eight. And seven...

JIM

I know!

LORI

Okay, well, I'm noticing a pattern here/

JIM

She is *my* mother!

LORI

Which makes me think she'd want to know.

JIM

Then let me tell her!

LORI

Tonight?

JIM

Why tonight, all of a sudden?

LORI

Because I'm sick of you, and I'm sick of your mother.

JIM

Likewise.

LORI

So we're in agreement.

JIM

That we hate each other?

LORI

That you're going to tell her. Tonight.

JIM

Or, I could be a rational human being and wait until after Thanksgiving.

LORI

When are you going to see her?

JIM

I don't know!

LORI

What, are you going to tell her over the phone?

JIM

No!

LORI

Then it has to be tonight!

JIM

Why not Christmas?

LORI

You think. It would be better to tell your obsessively Catholic mother that you've been lying to her, for ten years, about your *divorce*, on / Christmas?

JIM

Okay, okay, okay, not Christmas.

LORI

Then when?

JIM

Maybe I'll see her this summer. That could work.

LORI

No, that doesn't make sense.

JIM

Why not? You won't even have to be there.

LORI

Just bite the bullet, Jim.

JIM

We can fly her up for Eric's graduation, or something.

LORI

No!

JIM

Is this a power thing for you?

LORI

I am trying to make the best decision for our family.

JIM

It's a power thing. Power move. Unbelievable.

LORI

Can you get it through your thick, fucking skull that / I am just trying to do what's best for all of us?

JIM

Can you get it through your thick fucking skull that maybe for once, you should be a little less selfish and not destroy / a perfectly good family dinner?

LORI

I'm getting married!

JIM

LORI

JIM

Wow.

LORI

He asked me last week.

JIM

LORI

And I am not starting my next chapter in life without finishing this one. This has to be the end. You have to tell her. Tonight.

Or I will do it for you.

JIM

Okay. Tonight. I will tell her.

LORI

Don't make me.

JIM

I won't.

(LORI shakes her head.)

JIM

Believe me.

LORI

It's not that I don't believe you, it's that you're lying.

JIM

Yeah, I'm a liar. Pot calling the kettle black, don't you think?

Is that racial? Everything's about race nowadays.

LORI

No, I don't think so.

JIM

You don't think so?

LORI

I don't think it's racial.

JIM

Alright. Good. Don't want anybody getting "offended."

LORI

So considerate.

JIM

Everything's offensive.

LORI

Look, are you going to tell her or not?

JIM

Yes, I told you that.

LORI

But you didn't make me believe it. I need you to make me believe.

JIM

I don't want to ruin dinner.

LORI

Make me believe.

JIM

Believe whatever stupid shit you want to, you and your liberal snowflake friends already do/

LORI

Just stop lying to your mother, alright? Just tell your mother we're separated. Just do that! I don't need your political views, I stopped caring about those *before* we were married, I just need you to tell your mother the truth.

And help me with the damn salad?

JIM

I will.

LORI

Okay. Great.

JIM

...help you with the salad.

LORI

Jim.

JIM

What?

LORI

I invited David.

JIM

LORI

JIM

To... dinner?

LORI

Yes.

JIM

David?

LORI

Yes.

JIM

Why the fuck?

LORI

To get me through this.

JIM

I see.

LORI

And you are going to let this be a nice thing for me, and you are going to respect this, and you are not going to ruin this.

JIM

Me?

LORI

Correct.

JIM

You think I'm the one? Who should be responsible? For this?

LORI

Yes.

JIM

You invite the two of us to the same meal? *You* do this. Purposefully. It's not a chance encounter, it's not an accident, it's, you invite us to the same meal, and it will now be my fault if things get heated?

LORI

Thing will not get heated.

JIM

Things may very well get fucking heated, Lori!

IDA

(from off)

Hello?

SCENE 3

(ERIC and JEN in the car. ERIC driving.)

JEN

Then around the end of the semester, like finals week, this old preacher dude comes back.

ERIC

Okay.

JEN

And Brian still has the the Spider-Man costume from Halloweekend.

ERIC

Okay.

JEN

We're all in the dorm just chilling, hanging out, and the shot glasses come out, and I'm like, it's barely past noon guys, but my last final's not til like 3 the next day and I don't really care.

ERIC

Oh, I mean, okay.

JEN

Yeah, judge me, whatever. So he's not even really that drunk, he's like three shots in, and he gets this idea. You could see the light bulb appear over his head.

ERIC

Sure.

JEN

Makes a mad dash across the hall, we have no idea why. Come to find out this boy was running for a Spider-Man costume.

ERIC

Sure.

JEN

He comes back and he's like, guess what I got? And he runs down to the Campus Center with a bunch of silly string.

ERIC

Oh my God.

JEN

And he just blasts this guy with the silly string, he's mid-sentence about to yell something else homophobic, and he blasts him full force. Like he really gets this guy, in his eyes and his mouth.

ERIC

Holy shit! That's hilarious!

JEN

Oh yeah.

ERIC

Damn.

Did he come back after that?

JEN

Oh yeah. The next time he brought a friend.

ERIC

Huh. Didn't really dissuade him, then.

JEN

No, but it was like, I had to do something! Fuck those people! You can't say that shit anymore.

ERIC

Sure.

I just...

JEN

What?

ERIC

Nevermind.

JEN

ERIC

JEN

How's senior year been so far?

ERIC

Alright. How's being a sophomore again?

JEN

It's... great.

ERIC

Yeah?

JEN

Yup.

ERIC

JEN

ERIC

That didn't sound great.

JEN

I'm just tired, that's all. Why, what's new with you?

ERIC

Uh... not... much.

JEN

ERIC

JEN

That didn't sound like not much.

ERIC

You know, senior year, not a lot going on.

JEN

Senior year has a lot of things going on.

ERIC

So does sophomore year.

JEN

We're both hiding things.

Yup. **ERIC**

On three? **JEN**

(They clasp hands.)

One... two... three/ **BOTH**

JEN
I flunked out!

ERIC
I kissed a dude!

(They whip around to stare at each other.)

What!? **JEN**

Jen! **ERIC**

Eric! That's... wonderful! **JEN**

Jen, that's awful! **ERIC**

Why is your thing so much happier than my thing? **JEN**

I didn't pick my thing! **ERIC**

Neither did I! I'm so happy for you! **JEN**

Thanks, I, I'm not happy for you? **ERIC**

You shouldn't be! My thing sucks! **JEN**

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ERIC

Are you sure? Could you, appeal, or get another chance at coming back?

JEN

It's not happening. I'm done. But who cares about that, I just want to, I'm so happy for you!

ERIC

Yeah.

JEN

I mean I always knew, but now we can stop pretending.

ERIC

Oh, okay.

JEN

I mean it was always so obvious there was something there.

ERIC

Yeah okay/

JEN

No way were you straight/

ERIC

Okay, yeah, thank you. Thanks.

JEN

What?

ERIC

This is something new for me. I've always thought of myself as straight. Always.

JEN

Okay.

ERIC

Just, having people make jokes about how everyone clearly knew all this, it... it makes me really uncomfortable, actually. It doesn't really help.

JEN

I'm sorry.

ERIC

It's fine.

JEN

I'm just proud of my bi big brother, that's all.

ERIC

Well I'm not bi.

JEN

Gay? Pan?

ERIC

I'm poli.

JEN

Oh.

What's that?

Scene 4

(LORI and JIM, in the kitchen.)

JIM and LORI rush to an affectionate position, LORI more slowly. Maybe pretending to prepare dinner together.

IDA walks in.)

LORI

Hand me that spoon, won't you honey?

(JIM hands LORI the spoon. She kisses him on the cheek.)

IDA

Lori, are you sure you don't need any help?

LORI

No, Ida, we'll be fine! You go relax, do whatever.

IDA

Can't I at least help with the salad?

JIM

Don't think I can be trusted with putting together some lettuce and a few tomatoes, Mom?

IDA

It's just that last year it came out... well, fine, it turned out fine. Of course the cucumbers were... well, fine. Fine.

LORI

(trying desperately to be pleasant)

Good thing I've got Jim on the case this year.

IDA

What?

LORI

I said, good thing I've got Jim on the case.

IDA

What?

LORI

I said/

IDA

I don't have bling on my face. Well, these are new earrings.

LORI

That's great, Ida.

IDA

Yes, well. About the cranberry sauce/

LORI

We've got it covered.

IDA

Of course you need to be mothered! I always like to add a little extra sugar at Thanksgiving. Otherwise it tastes a little too raw. ...Are you paying attention, Lori?

LORI

Yes.

IDA

Just a little extra sugar. When you get to it!

LORI

IDA

LORI

IDA

Have you peeled the squash yet?

LORI

Y'know, Ida, Jim and I were just discussing a fascinating new revelation.

IDA

Oh, what's that?

LORI

Yes, what was it, Jim?

JIM

Mom, ha ha, why don't you go relax on the couch?

IDA

Doesn't sound as interesting as what's going on in here!

LORI

Oh, it's spicy.

JIM

Really, Mom. Put your feet up.

IDA

What were you discussing?

LORI

Tell her, *sweetie*.

JIM

Uh, we were talking about the election.

IDA

Excuse me?

JIM

What?

IDA

Don't be disgusting.

JIM

(putting emphasis on the "L")

The election, Mom! The election!

IDA

Oh. What about it?

JIM

It was... hard-fought. High stakes.

IDA

And?

JIM

Uh, you know what, I think it would be better to share over dinner. To get everyone's take on it.

IDA

Sounds serious!

JIM

It is, it is. Well! Back to the salad.

IDA

Lori, what dressing are you pairing with the raisins?

LORI

Actually, I think we should have this particular conversation right now.

JIM

No no, dinner is best! I'm sure Eric and Jen will have plenty / to say about it.

IDA

Did something new happen?

LORI

Actually, it's a new revelation about something that happened some time ago.

IDA

Oh-ho! I haven't heard anything about this.

LORI

No, you haven't.

IDA

Well what happened?

JIM

Nothing that important.

LORI

I can tell it if you want!

IDA

Please! What is it?

JIM

Oh, well, I'm just surprised you haven't heard about it.

LORI

Me too.

IDA

Well come on, spit it out! What's the news?

JIM

The news is that we got a brand-new couch, and I would love for you to test it for us.

IDA

But that doesn't have anything to do with the election?

LORI

The truth is, Ida, that we're not married.

(IDA is stunned and confused.)

IDA

What?

LORI

I'm so sorry you had to find out this way. I wanted your son to be the one to tell you, but he refused. We're no longer married.

JIM

Mom, I/

IDA

I'm so confused.

You never looked particularly hairy to me, dear. Have you been using a new razor?

LORI

What?

JIM

Yes! Yes! And it has been doing wonders for us!

LORI

No, Ida, I said we split up.

IDA

Sit ups? How many?

LORI

What?

JIM

25 a day, usually! Gotta start somewhere!

IDA

That is wonderful for your health! Your father still worked his core far into his 80s.

LORI

No, Ida, we got a divorce!

IDA

Well now you're just being silly.

LORI

No, it's true. Ten years ago. We got a divorce!

IDA

Lori. Where would you keep it?

LORI

Aghhhh!

(LORI exhales sharply.)

IDA

You're a hoot, Lori. Since when were you funny?

JIM

Mom. I love you. Please sit on the couch.

IDA

Okay, okay. You let me know if I can be of any help. I'm not as old as I look, you know!

JIM

You look fantastic, Mom.

IDA

(laughing as she leaves)

Giraffe stick.

(IDA leaves. Back to business.)

JIM

(sarcastic)

Nice.

LORI

Thanks.

JIM

For the record, I am definitely going to ruin David now.

LORI

You will not! You will not! Things will not get heated, things will not get awkward, you will not so much as take a drumstick without asking if he's had enough first/

JIM

What are you gonna do, kick me out of the house?

LORI

Jim, come on, think about the kids.

JIM

What, do you think they forgot?

LORI

How do you think they'd react to you making a raging fool of yourself?

JIM

Eric would be indifferent. Jen can't hate me anymore than she already does. College has ruined her. She's a whore now.

LORI

What do you mean by that?

JIM

Now she is a whore?

LORI

She can always hate you more.

JIM

Oh, okay, very subtle, glad I could read through the lines on this one.

LORI

Between.

JIM

Between?

LORI

Between the lines. The expression is, read between the lines.

JIM

Oh, sorry, my parents didn't pay for my expensive "liberal arts" education, so I don't really think so good.

LORI

That is... not even close to what I said. I'm sorry you can't handle even light criticism.

JIM

Am I just supposed to accept that you've stuck me in yet another situation where if I do one thing I'm fucked but if I do another I'm even more fucked?

LORI

There's a phrase for that, you know/

JIM

Yeah, oh, educate me, please!/

LORI

A Catch-22/

JIM

Great! Very educational today, that's great. I love it. This is great. This is great! If I give a shit about my children, then I'm supposed to do whatever you want here, but if I don't do whatever you want, if I try to do what's right, I don't give a shit about my children. It's like we're still married.

LORI

I'm just suggesting that ruining Thanksgiving could potentially have the effect of adding even more tension to your relationship.

JIM

Cool. Very cool.

LORI

I think she would officially disown you as her father. Then again you could just tell her you voted Trappe.

JIM

That's what you're going to hold over my head? Trappe?

LORI

Yes.

JIM

Trappe. Wow. I voted Bush, too, I think we could get past it.

LORI

I can only hope so.

JIM

Half the country voted Trappe, it's not that big a surprise.

LORI

Okay, good.

JIM

I bet your little office fuckboy voted Trappe.

LORI

He did not vote Trappe, I'll tell you that much. He's got a head on his shoulders.

JIM

You so sure? Maybe I'll ask him when he gets here.

(The doorbell rings. The two rush to the door.)

And there he is.

LORI

David!?

(JIM beats LORI. Panting, he rips the door open to reveal: ERIC and JEN.)

ERIC

Hi... Dad...

JIM

Oh. Eric. Jen. I- hey. How's my boy? Welcome home.

JEN

Thanks.

LORI

It is so good to see you!

ERIC

Thanks, Mom. So, we're still... doing this?

LORI

Sweetie.

JIM

It would appear so.

(LORI rolls her eyes. ERIC hugs LORI and JIM. JEN hugs LORI.)

LORI

How's sophomore year treating you, sweetie?

JEN

Pretty alright.

JIM

Getting into trouble? But not too much?

JEN

Yup.

ERIC

Good to see you, Dad.

JIM

You too. Mmm.

(They share a second hug.)

JEN

By the way, whose “Tripping” bumper-sticker? I fucking love it.

JIM

Tripping?

JEN

You wouldn’t get it.

JIM

Hey, give me a chance. I might surprise you.

ERIC

A couple late night guys did a bit where they said people should call Daniel Trappe “Daniel Tripping” because /

JEN

Wait! No. It’s... Wait, is it... is...?

(LORI tries to avoid eye contact.)

Did you invite...? David? That’s his car.

JIM

Is it.

JEN

Yeah, for sure.

JIM

(suddenly realizing)

He's here already.

LORI

No, Jim, he/

(JIM runs upstairs, searching the house.)

JEN

Dad, what the hell?

(Doors opening and slamming.)

JEN

Dad!

ERIC

What are you doing?

(A few moments of this. DAVID (A) and DAVID (B) enter from outside and notice the noise.)

DAVID (A)

Are we good to...

(LORI motions for them to leave, but JIM comes roaring down the stairs first.)

JIM

I've got a few choice words for you...

(He stops. Confused.)

What?

LORI

Jim. This is my coworker, David.

DAVID (A)

Hey, nice to meet you.

JIM

Mmhmm.

(He looks to LORI.)

LORI

And this is also my coworker, David.

DAVID (B)

Hey, I'm David!

JIM

Really.

DAVID (B)

We get confused around the office all the time. 'Specially around the printer, when there's two printing jobs and they're both for, y'know, David! Oh, man. Put 'er there, pal. So nice to finally meet you.

JIM

So you're both... coworkers. Of my... Lori's.

DAVID (B)

Yepperoo!

JIM

And you're both named David.

DAVID (B)

Yeah, think 'a that!

JIM

Funny. I've heard... a lot. About a coworker of hers. Named David.

DAVID (B)

Oh yeah? Might be this guy, he's a real kidder!

JIM

Mmhmm.

DAVID (B)

Real office clown! Class clown? Office clown?

JIM

Yeah. Might be.

DAVID (B)

Oh man, Davey, what was that joke you were telling the other day? The Trappe one?

DAVID (A)

The Trappe one?

DAVID (B)

Oh yeah, dude you roasted him!

ERIC

Oh, let's... not get political, here, yeah? The night's a little too young, and I'm a little too sober.

LORI

Yes, let's try to shy away from that topic. Anyone thirsty?

DAVID (A)

Three things, right? That you're not supposed to talk about in good company. Religion, politics, and money.

JIM

Oh come on, we're all Americans, right? Can't we have a little healthy political discourse?

ERIC

Come on... Dad...

LORI

Jim, you're being rude.

JIM

What, why not?

DAVID (B)

I'm with ya, Jimbo, I think that's what we need around here. I mean, listen, I know you're not supposed to talk politics at Thanksgiving, but, I mean, come on, the way things are?

JIM

The way things are.

DAVID (B)

Where to start? What do you think about... uh... the... ban?

ERIC

Oh, God.

JIM

The ban.

DAVID (B)

Yeah.

(JEN cocks her head, staring at her father, waiting for him to let her down. He takes notice.)

JIM

The ban.

DAVID (B)

Uh... yeah, yeah! Yeah.

JIM

Oh, it's... mmm.

DAVID (B)

Shame the ban had to even be brought up in the first place.

JIM

Oh, absolutely. Deep shame.

DAVID (B)

Shame. Yeah, yeah. For sure.

JIM

Mmm.

And the state of... discourse. These days.

DAVID (B)

Honestly. I mean, the way these people talk!

JIM

It's like, can you even string a sentence together? With any real meaning? (*Gesturing to DAVID (A)*) Right, David?

DAVID (A)

It... certainly would be nice if everyone could be as articulate as they mean to be.

DAVID (B)

How do we have a government that can't even communicate?

JIM

Or the lies. All the lies.

DAVID (B)

I'm sick of the lying, man. I am. I gotta tell ya.

JIM

That's exactly why I have a nice big "Fuck Trappe" bumper sticker on my pickup.

DAVID (B)

Wow!!

JEN

What?

LORI

Oh, Jim, I think the turkey's burning in the oven, come help me!

JIM

I don't smell anything.

JEN

You do not have a "Fuck Trappe" bumper sticker.

JIM

I do! I really do.

JEN

You didn't vote for Trappe?

JIM

No I did not.

JEN

You share his bullshit on Facebook all the time!

JIM

Yeah, sarcastically. I don't actually mean it when I say that strong borders are a good idea.

JEN

That... that sounded sarcastic.

JIM

Nope.

JEN

So what, did you vote for Clancy?

JIM

I did! I love free shit, who doesn't love being promised free shit?

JEN

You did not.

JIM

I didn't vote for lies, I'll tell you that much!

DAVID (B)

Me too, me too! I knew there would be lies like this. I just knew it.

JIM

And it's just... it's getting to this point where people aren't even talking anymore. About who we vote for. Which is a shame, it's like... you should be able to put a bumper sticker on your car, and not be shamed for it! Don't you think?

DAVID (A)

Sounds nice.

LORI

Okay, we all agree, let's eat! Let's eat early! I think everything's just about ready, if I could get help with the silverware/

DAVID (B)

There's no discussion!

JIM

Back in the day, you could call things out for what they were. You can't do that anymore.

DAVID (B)

Oh my God, I just want people to be honest about what's happening!

JIM

But these people, David, these people just pick their emotions over facts. They don't care about facts! They just don't care!

DAVID (B)

Facts should trump all else.

JIM

And if you can't get on board with that, you shouldn't be in a position of power. I just

JIM (cont'd)

don't get it. It's that simple.

B

Seriously.

JIM

I mean... I think Daniel Trappe should be ashamed, don't you?

A

I don't understand what's going on here.

JIM

Well agree or disagree, David? We're all in good company here.

IDA

Did I hear Jen down there?

LORI

Oh, Ida! Ida! Eric and Jen are here!

(LORI leaps to JIM's side. Gently pushes him away from the DAVIDs.)

IDA

(regarding JEN and ERIC, facetious)

Hi! Oh, who are these two?

JEN

Hey grandma.

ERIC

Hey there.

(Warm hugs.)

IDA

(regarding the DAVIDs, genuinely confused)

Oh, and... who... are these two?

LORI

Mom, David.

DAVID (A)

Hi, nice to meet you.

IDA

Nice to meet you...

DAVID (B)

Hi, David.

IDA

(attempt at a joke)

Your families not want you this year?

DAVID (B)

Nope. They're still mad at me for a thing I did.

IDA

I... oh.

DAVID (A)

I'm just saving on travel expenses.

IDA

Oh. Well.

LORI

Let's... here, I have some cheese and crackers. And things. Come in, come in.

*(They follow LORI inside, DAVID (A) stays behind.
LORI sneaks out.)*

Scene 7

(LORI and DAVID (A) embrace.)

LORI

Oh, God, David, I'm so sorry I'm putting you through this, this was a mistake, I should never have/

(He kisses her.)

DAVID (A)

Lori. I love you. I would spend Thanksgiving with ten of your asshole ex-husbands if it made you happy.

LORI

I should've known he'd be like this. Really, I should have.

DAVID (A)

Well that's why you invited David, right?

LORI

Yes.

DAVID (A)

So we just need to keep who's who on the down low and everything will be alright.

LORI

Oh. I hope so.

DAVID (A)

It will be.

LORI

Mmm.

DAVID (A)

I have to ask, though, why is he such a Trappe nut?

LORI

Jen mentioned you have the... whatever it is, the bumper sticker on your car, and/

DAVID (A)

Jen!

LORI

I know, no filter, Jen. But I'm gonna steer him clear of the topic. I promise.

DAVID (A)

You don't have to do that.

LORI

Well otherwise he'll find out who you are and God knows, he gets so angry out of nowhere, I couldn't bare if something happened to you.

DAVID (A)

Nothing will. I promise. You enjoy the fruits of your labor and leave Jim up to me, okay?

LORI

Okay.

Scene 8

(LORI and DAVID (A) enter the dining room, where the rest of the family is already bringing in the turkey and the finishing touches of the meal.)

JIM

Smells delicious, honey.

LORI

Thanks sweetie.

IDA

Salad looks good, Jim!

JIM

Hey, I tried. Cucumbers slipped me up at the end, though.

IDA

Oh, they'll do that.

(Awkward silence as everyone piles food onto their plates.)

IDA

Alright Jen, I'll start my interrogation with you. How's school?

JEN

It's... good! Really good!

IDA

Classes are going well?

JEN

They're great.

IDA

What's your favorite one?

JEN

I... love, I love all of them.

IDA

I love that. What's your best grade in, you think?

Politically Erect

JEN

Oh, uh, all of them!

IDA

My granddaughter, such a star student. All set to graduate on time?

JEN

(stuffing her mouth with food)

Huh, Grandma, let me eat something.

(JEN finishes chewing.)

IDA

So all set to graduate?

(JEN shoves more food in her mouth.)

JEN

(mouth full)

Mmhmm!

IDA

What?

JEN

Mmmmmm.

IDA

Ginger snap, I'm having trouble hearing you.

JEN

Mmhmm, hmm hmmm mhmmm.

IDA

Wonderful! How is Monica?

JEN

Monica is good.

IDA

When are you going to bring her to a family function so I can finally meet her?

JEN

Oh my God, Grandma/

IDA

Well I have to ask!

DAVID (B)

Who's this, a friend? Girlfriend?

JEN

My best friend.

IDA

I *just* think it would be nice.

JIM

I've gotta second that, Mom, she's always been invited.

JEN

Well, maybe tonight will go well enough that it'll trick me into thinking I can bring her to next year's.

LORI

(eyeing JIM)

Maybe it will.

DAVID (B)

College lesbian type deal?

(All turn to face DAVID (B).)

B

What, I'm just askin'!

JIM

Would that be okay with you, David?

DAVID (A)

With me?

JIM

Yeah. Would you consider yourself progressive?

DAVID (A)

You sure are interested in what I think.

JIM

It's all about starting a conversation.

DAVID (A)

Well... if you want to know what I think...

LORI

Oh, David, would you pass me the/

DAVID (A)

I think that gay marriage? Wrong.

JIM

What?

JEN

What the hell?

DAVID (A)

You know, Jim, as an *avid* Trappe supporter, I am an avid supporter of traditional marriage. Just think it's the right thing.

JIM

You are?

LORI

Hmm, David, can you pass me the stop, please?

JEN

What are you talking about?

(ERIC starts squirming in his seat.)

DAVID (A)

That is, if we're really as open as you say we are for discussion.

JIM

I don't understand.

DAVID (A)

Well I don't strike you as a liberal do I?

JIM

You're starting to strike me as something.

LORI
Jim!

JIM
...uh, politically, that is.

DAVID (A)
A political asshole?

JIM
Well you did vote for Trappe.

DAVID (A)
And that makes me an asshole?

JIM
Well, of course. Haven't you turned on the news lately?

DAVID (A)
Oh, it's everywhere. Fake news.

JIM
I wouldn't call it fake, maybe exaggerated unfairly.

DAVID (A)
Oh, it's fake, Jim! Just like every Democrat-thinking shithead in goddamn D.C.

LORI
This really isn't an appropriate conversation for dinner, don't you think?

ERIC
Can we talk about something else, please? Literally anything else?

DAVID (A)
Why should we? I thought this was an open discussion!

IDA
Hard to have an open discussion when you're so close-minded.

DAVID (A)
Close-minded? Have you even read the Bible?

IDA
Not once, sir, not once does Jesus Christ mention homosexuality. Not one time. How many times does he mention divorce? How many people get divorced every day? It's a

IDA (cont'd)

disgrace.

LORI

Well it's not... so bad, is it Ida?

IDA

Bigotry?

LORI

Um, divorce.

JIM

Back to politics!

IDA

I stuck with my husband for fifty years before he passed. We had our squabbles, but we figured it out because that's what you did back then. Failure is not an option.

JEN

Failure is... sometimes an option, don't you think?

IDA

Failure?

ERIC

So uh, ants. Ants are getting a lot these days.

JIM

I have to say, David, a lot of what you're saying strikes me as remarkably fitting the stereotypes we see on "fake news."

ERIC

So uh, ants. Ants are getting a lot these days.

DAVID (A)

We're not all monsters, you know.

JIM

Yeah. And we're not all idiots.

DAVID (A)

I knew we could find some common ground.

ERIC

I saw a dog today, that was nice/

JIM

Yeah I saw a bitch or two myself.

IDA

Jim!

LORI

Honey, if you're going to be so rude to David, maybe we should change the subject.

ERIC

Yes, I agree.

JIM

Me rude?

LORI

There are plenty. Of other things. You could be discussing right now.

DAVID (B)

I liked what Eric said about ants. There's a whole lot of them. We can all agree on that, right?

ERIC

That's true!

DAVID (B)

Where do they even come from?

DAVID (A)

Probably the same fiery pit as... well, I'll stop myself.

JIM

As what?

DAVID (A)

We've decided we're not going there anymore.

JIM

The queen doth protest... a lot. Me think.

DAVID (A)

Is that so?

LORI

David.

DAVID (A)

And don't get me started on this impeachment hoax.

ERIC

Jen. Help!

JEN

(realizing the situation ERIC is in)

Grandma, how did you meet Grandpa again?

IDA

Oh-ho-ho-ho, it's quite the long story...

JIM

Hoax? The evidence is iron-clad! Surely Congress can impeach on hearsay!

IDA

We met on the beach some fifty years ago. It was... Babson beach?

DAVID (A)

They've got nothing on him! It's not like he, say, violated his oath the second he stepped into the Oval Office!

IDA

Bowers Beach? Bethany Beach? I think it started with a B...

ERIC

Wow Grandma, that's really interesting! Is everyone hearing this?

IDA

Oh, he was wearing the most handsome swimsuit. People had modesty back then.

DAVID (A)

He's the greatest goddamn President our nations' ever seen!

JIM

I don't think anyone's claiming that/

DAVID (A)

I am! Right now! U-S-A! U-S-A!

IDA

Now, back then you could walk to the county store and buy brand-new shoes for a shiny nickel.

JIM

He's done nothing to improve the economy! Down! With! Trappe!

IDA

I used to ride my bike to the beach and stop for ice cream. Oh, in my day they made it just right with a little bit of swirl!

DAVID (A)

Finally, our allies respect us with such a strong leader at the helm! Who cares who's good with words when you have a big stick?

ERIC

Wow Grandma, that's super interesting! What kind of ice cream?

IDA

What, dear?

ERIC

What kind of ice cream?

JIM

Surely the nuclear launch codes should only go to a career politician and never a political outsider!

ERIC

What kind of ice cream?

IDA

My word! What do you mean you're going to slice me!?

ERIC

No, Grandma/

DAVID (A)

He's a maverick! Says just what he means!

ERIC

Grandma, *ice cream!*

IDA

What?

JIM

What is it about his policies that so engaged you?

DAVID (A)

I just don't like the Mexicans. That's pretty much it.

JIM

Really.

DAVID (A)

Yeah, I'm pretty much just unapologetically racist.

DAVID (B)

Jesus, Davey, I didn't know you were like this. What about your bumper sticker?

DAVID (A)

My...

(DAVID (A) kicks DAVID (B) under the table.)

I don't know what you're talking about.

DAVID (B)

Ow, why'd you kick me under the table?

JIM

What bumper sticker?

DAVID (A)

My Trappe bumper sticker. America Strong!

JIM

Well I'd love to see it, which car is yours?

ERIC

Maybe we can all take a break, try dinner again next year?

LORI

How about some music?

DAVID (A)

My car's not here. David drove.

DAVID (B)

No I didn't. Did I?

DAVID (A)

(handing DAVID (B) his keys under the table)

Yes. You're the one with the keys.

DAVID (B)

Why are you handing me your keys?

JIM

Yeah, that seems odd.

IDA

Lori, who are these men?

LORI

(pouring herself way too much wine)

Ida, I told you, they're some friends from work/

JIM

You're a Democrat, that's your car, that's your bumper sticker!

ERIC

Dad.

DAVID (A)

I wouldn't be caught dead voting blue!

JIM

Bullshit.

ERIC

Dad!

JIM

You don't have a red bone in your body. You think all we need to do is tax the rich and it'll magically fix everyone's problems!

DAVID (A)

Well why can't they pay their fair share, Jim?

ERIC

Dad!!!

JIM

Well maybe if you looked up from CNN every once in a while you'd have a clue about / what you're talking about!

DAVID (A)

Ah yes, much better to get my information from Fox News, the / mothership of

ERIC

Jen flunked out of school!

(The table goes quiet.)

JEN

Eric!

LORI

What?

JIM

Is that true?

JEN

No!

LORI

Is that true?

JEN

...Yes.

JIM

Oh my God.

LORI

Honey.

(IDA grabs the wine from LORI.)

JEN

Yes, yes, I flunked out. Thank you, Eric. Thank you for that. Not like I wanted to tell them on my own time.

LORI

Honey, how did this happen?

JIM

Is it said and done? If you get your grades up next semester?

JEN

This has been happening for a long time. My warning was last semester. The dean said I can't come back in the spring.

DAVID (B)

I flunked out of college too. The squirrels started to get to me.

JEN

And I was hoping to find a better way to share this, but I guess Eric decided he needed to do it for me. Are you happy? Notice how I'm not painting your secret on the wall in bright big letters?

ERIC

I'm sorry. They, they wouldn't stop!

(Beat.)

JIM

Well what's your secret?

ERIC

LORI

(to ERIC)

Are you going to graduate?

ERIC

Yes.

JIM

So then what is it?

ERIC

I don't know, Dad, what's your secret?

Hmm? **JIM**

Jim? **IDA**

I don't have a secret, Eric. **JIM**

I guess it's more shared between the two of you. **ERIC**

Jim, is there something you're hiding from me? **IDA**

No! **JIM**
(hilariously bad at lying)

Jim. **IDA**

Come on Jim, you might as well say it now. **LORI**

Eric, what's your thing? **JIM**

What's yours? **ERIC**

Well maybe Lori should explain who David is! **JIM**

Oh, was that not clear? We're her coworkers! **DAVID (B)**

Are they? **IDA**

Eric, what do you have to tell us? **LORI**

ERIC

Do I need to spell it out for Grandma? Is that what I need to do?

JIM

No!

IDA

Spell out what?

ERIC

D-I-V-O/

JIM

You're, you're grounded! Up to your room!

IDA

Dino? Dino-what? Dinosaur?

ERIC

D-I- V -O-R/

JIM

Double-grounded! Up to your room!

JEN

Grandma! D-I-V... a div, they got a/

IDA

A what?

JIM

Because she cheated on me with that man!

LORI

That's not why, that has nothing to do with why!

IDA

D-I-V-Y?

DAVID (B)

Everyone!

(They turn to DAVID (B).)

DAVID (B) (cont'd)

This isn't what today should be about! Today is about love and honesty. How can you love and be honest with each other if all you know how to do is lie? How can you be honest if you can't even listen to each other?

You have to listen to each other. You have to. Even if you hate each other, even if you think everyone is wrong, you have to *listen*. My family didn't know how to do that, and now nobody will speak with each other. I haven't talked to my brothers in years because all my family knows how to do is talk, not listen.

It doesn't matter how wrong they are if they don't see it. You have to convince them. And if all you can think to do is scream at them, call them a cuck or a Nazi, they're going to retreat back into their holes and their bubbles. There are cucks. There are Nazis. But they're not everyone. Most of us are caught in the middle. Between a rock and a hard place.

It doesn't matter if you think Trappe is a racist or just tone deaf. It doesn't matter if you think he's evil or negligent. It doesn't matter if you want a flat tax and think anyone who disagrees is an idiot or if you want a more progressive tax rate. Progressive taxation is often suggested as a way to mitigate the societal ills associated with higher income inequality, as the tax structure reduces inequality, but economists disagree on the tax policy's economic and long-term effects/

(ERIC leaps across the table, knocking over a candle, and passionately kisses him. The table catches fire.)

LORI

(at the fire)

Oh my God!

IDA

(at the fire)

Oh my God!

JIM

(at ERIC and B)

Oh my God!

LORI

(trying to fan out the fire)

Ida, we're divorced!

IDA

You're getting a divorce?

LORI

No, we have been! For a decade now! I wanted Jim to tell you, but he just wouldn't!

IDA

You... you what? Jim, is this true?

JIM

(still stunned)

I divorced her because she cheated on me with David!

DAVID (B)

No she didn't!

LORI

I divorced him because he turned into an asshole!

IDA

How could you?

(The flames spread.)

JIM

You need to get out!

IDA

You are not my son!

JIM

Go!

(Everyone rushes out of the dining room except for JIM and ERIC, who are still trying to put out the fire.)

ERIC

(yelling over the fire)

Dad, I'm not straight!

JIM

You're gay?

ERIC

No, I'm, I'm sometimes attracted to women, and sometimes men!

So you're bi? **JIM**

No, I'm -- I don't know how to/ **ERIC**

What are you? **JIM**

I'm polisexual! **ERIC**

Isn't that just bi? **JIM**

It's -- kind of, I'll, I'll explain later! **ERIC**

Your dating pool is so huge now! **JIM**

Goddamnit. **ERIC**

I'm proud of you! **JIM**

You're not mad? **ERIC**

I hate a lot of things, Eric, but not my son. **JIM**

I love you, Dad! **ERIC**

I love you, Eric! **JIM**

(The sound of flame rises as lights fade out.)

Scene 9

(The dining room, charred and burnt.

The cast re-enters and begins breaking down the set. Enter ERIC, holding hands with DAVID (B).)

ERIC

(to the audience)

Oh. Hey.

DAVID (B)

Hoo-boy! What a fiasco!

ERIC

What a shitshow.

DAVID (B)

Reminds me of my 20s.

ERIC

What part?

DAVID (B)

All the screaming.

(Beat.)

ERIC

Welllll anyway, I just wanted to let everyone know that, in the end, things turned out alright.

DAVID (B)

They did?

ERIC

They did!

DAVID (B)

Oh. I thought everything went to shit.

ERIC

Oh no, not at all. It took a little soul-searching, but Grandma was ultimately able to forgive Dad after all those years of lying.

DAVID (B)

Oh, really? I thought you said she cut him out of her will and disowned him forever as her son.

ERIC

Well, yeah, but. She put him in her church's prayer requests. At least once. I think.

DAVID (B)

Oh. Well. That's good.

ERIC

Jen found an internship with a civil rights firm to advocate for the LGBT community, no degree needed. She performed crucial work on high-profile cases, and she's even considering running for office one day.

DAVID (B)

That's right! But... wasn't the president of the firm indicted on embezzlement charges?

ERIC

David, I'm...

(taking him aside and whispering)

I'm trying to end things on a happy note.

DAVID (B)

(whispering)

But didn't everything go to shit?

ERIC

Yes! Everything went straight to shit! But I don't want them to know that.

DAVID (B)

Okay, okay.

ERIC

Ahem. Mom and David were married on a beautiful farm on a stunning afternoon in late June.

DAVID (B)

But didn't-?

(ERIC glares at him.)

ERIC

A stunning afternoon in late June.

Politically Erect

DAVID (B)

(whispering to the audience)

Lori tripped on her wedding dress and landed in cow shit.

ERIC

David!

DAVID (B)

Sorry, sorry.

ERIC

Anyway. *After* the wedding, they enjoyed a romantic honeymoon in a place where Mom always dreamed of vacationing, the awe-inspiring islands of Hawaii.

DAVID (B)

She got food poisoning and threw up on a class of second graders/

ERIC

David!

DAVID (B)

What? I'm just telling the truth!

ERIC

Yes! Okay, fine, everything went to shit. Mom fell in cowshit. Jen started dating a soundcloud rapper named "Tevin" who texts me twice a week asking if I've listened to his mixtape yet.

DAVID (B)

Hallelujah!

ERIC

But you know what? I found love.

DAVID (B)

You did?

ERIC

I did!

DAVID (B)

Aww, I love you too, my little squid-biscuit!

ERIC

I was afraid to say it! I didn't want you to think we're moving too fast.

Politically Erect

DAVID (B)

The perfect speed, love-muffin. But, before we take the next step, there's something I need to tell you.

ERIC

What is it?

DAVID (B)

Well, I'm... and this is hard to say. Come on, David, you can do this. I'm... Polly-sexual.

ERIC

You are?

DAVID (B)

Yes! I've known my entire life!

ERIC

David, that's wonderful! So am I!

DAVID (B)

No, I, I don't think you're understanding me. Not polysexual, like, I'm attracted to men and women.

ERIC

No, I know, poli-sexual, like, you're attracted to people talking about politics!

DAVID (B)

No, no, Eric, Polly-sexual, like, I can only get off when I'm listening to... You know what, maybe a demonstration would be better. Polly?

(The SQUAWK of a parrot is heard. "Vote for Trappe!")

Both ERIC and DAVID (B) let out a moan.

JAZZ MUSIC.)

BLACKOUT.

END OF PLAY.