

WITH DIGNITY
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CHARACTER LIST

CARLOTTA (LOTTIE), female, mid 60's, Italian-American. A fiercely strong and formidable woman. She's been dealt some lousy hands by life, but she picks up and carries on however she has to.

GEORGIANA (GEORGIE), female, early 60s, Italian-American, sister-in-law to CARLOTTA. Jovial, sweet, and with no filter, you fall in love with her energy and spirit within 5 seconds of meeting her. The rough patches of her life haven't hardened her like they did CARLOTTA. The confidant of the family.

MICHAEL, male, mid-to-late 30s, Italian-American, oldest child to CARLOTTA. Kind, bluntly honest to a fault, he holds nothing back. After falling into the 'man of the house' role at a rather young age, he's become the family protector, especially to his sister.

JENNY, female, mid 30s, NOT Italian-American, wife to MICHAEL. Sweet and slightly aloof, she has the free spirit of a child. It's super hard to get mad at her sweetness and innocence. She consistently gets underestimated - she's a lot sharper than she gets credit for.

MARTINA (MARTI), early 30s, Italian-American, youngest child to CARLOTTA. Strong willed and stubborn as a mule, she takes after her mother. Not one to be told what to do or how to run her life, she marches to the beat of her own drum despite what anyone might think of her choices.

SHAYLEEN, early 30s, NOT Italian-American, wife to MARTINA. Relaxed and easy-going, she is a comfortable presence to be around. Easy-going does not mean pushover. She will stand up and speak her mind when she feels she needs to.

ACT I

Scene 1

A “typical” Italian-American house. Lots of olive green, plastic on the “good” furniture, oddly ornate and comfortable at the same time.

CARLOTTA, mid 60s, a fierce Italian-American woman with a heart full of fire and love moves around the house cleaning, checking on her cooking, and preparing for tomorrow’s Sunday Dinner- the first in a few weeks where the whole family will be together. A landline corded phone (yes, she still has one) rings as LIGHTS come up on CARLOTTA’s oldest, MICHAEL, on the side of the stage, calling his mother. CARLOTTA bustles around and makes no attempt to answer, so it goes to an archaic answering machine.

CARLOTTA’S VOICE

You’ve reached the Antonelli residence. If you’re a telemarketer calling for my husband Vin, he’s been dead for years and you should be ashamed of yourselves. For anyone else, please leave a message, and I’ll get back to you when I can.

BEEP

MICHAEL

Ma, you home? It’s Michael, pick up. Ma?... I know you’re there... you call me three times in a row and then don’t pick up when I call back?

CARLOTTA

You know what, Vin? I should just never answer. Then your son will sit there, sick with worry that his mother could be dead on the floor of the living room and he’d have no way of knowing.

MICHAEL

I’m just gonna assume you’re lecturing the machine and getting mad at me because I didn’t call you yesterday.

CARLOTTA

Like you said you were going to!

MICHAEL

I was just calling because Jenny wanted to make something to bring tomorrow-

CARLOTTA

-Oh, no!

MICHAEL

She found a really great recipe for a vegan bolognese-

CARLOTTA rushes to answer the phone.

CARLOTTA

I swear to your father, if you let that wife of yours bring that crap in my house, I will make her wear it.

MICHAEL

Oh, look who's home! Not dead on the floor of the kitchen?

CARLOTTA

It was the living room. And I mean it, Michael.

MICHAEL

Normally, I'd tell her not to bother, but she's been doing a lot of research on plant-based diets and how they're good for Marti, so I don't think you're gonna talk her out of it.

CARLOTTA

They're good for her?

MICHAEL

Supposedly. I mean... couldn't hurt, right?

Beat.

CARLOTTA

Fine. But not the bolognese. Tell her to make a dessert or something. And bring paper plates. I don't want that stuff touching my dishes.

MICHAEL

You're just gonna wash- fine, Ma. Whatever you say.

CARLOTTA

You and Jenny should get here by 4:30 sharp!

MICHAEL

4:30? I know you're getting up there, Ma, but you're not quite at the early-bird-special age just yet.

CARLOTTA

You're lucky I can't reach through this phone, you smart ass. I figured we'd have cocktails and sit together before dinner.

MICHAEL

Cocktails? You invite the Pope?

CARLOTTA

If the Pope were coming over, you'd be the last person I'd invite.

MICHAEL

I'm your son!

CARLOTTA

Yes, but you inherited your father's table manners. Martina said she had something important she wanted to tell us and it's the first Sunday Dinner she's been well enough to come to in a while. Just humor your apparently old mother, huh?

MICHAEL

Alright, Ma. Alright.

CARLOTTA

Thank you.

MICHAEL

Any idea what Marti wants to tell us?

CARLOTTA

It's gotta be good news.

MICHAEL

Ma...

CARLOTTA

She sounded so much better on the phone than she has in weeks!

MICHAEL

Why do you do this to yourself?

CARLOTTA

Do what?

MICHAEL

You're getting your hopes up too high. It might have nothing to do with that!

CARLOTTA

Well I've been talking to your father about it-

MICHAEL

Not again.

CARLOTTA

I told him to pull some strings up there.

MICHAEL

You're nuts, Ma.

CARLOTTA

We pray to saints, don't we? So what's the difference if I talk to your father?

MICHAEL

First off, Dad was no saint.

CARLOTTA

You're one to talk.

MICHAEL

Second of all, if you wanna get a message to the Big Man, you can just talk to Him yourself.

CARLOTTA

Over my dead body.

MICHAEL

Well, at that point you're gonna have no choice but to talk to Him.

CARLOTTA

We'll see about that. And I want you on your best behavior! No fighting with Shay. You'll just get Martina all upset and that is the last thing she needs.

MICHAEL

I'll behave if Shay does.

GEORGIANA enters. She's all smiles, carrying a multitude of grocery bags.

GEORGIANA

Lottie! I picked up some more stuff from the store!

CARLOTTA

Ok, Michael, Aunt Georgie just got home so I gotta go.

GEORGIANA

Is that Michael? Oh, lemme talk to him!

GEORGIANA doesn't wait for an invitation. She grabs the phone right out of CARLOTTA's hand.

GEORGIANA

Michael! Oh, sweetie! Thank Jenny for me!

MICHAEL

Sure, Aunt Georgie. Why?

GEORGIANA

She gave me this tip on this super edgy new food store called Trader Joe's!

MICHAEL

That's not a new-

GEORGIANA

-They had samples of this thing called cookie butter! I might have orgasmed right there!

CARLOTTA

Georgiana!

MICHAEL

That was... a lot more than I needed. But sure, I will tell Jenny.

GEORGIANA

If you two need to spice things up, I'm telling you. Cookie. Butter.

MICHAEL

OK, now I gotta go, Aunt Georgie. Please tell my mother I'll be there tomorrow.

GEORGIANA

Ok, sweetie. Can't wait to see you!

CARLOTTA shouts at the phone.

CARLOTTA

4:30 sharp!

MICHAEL

Tell the Sarge I said, "Yes, sir!"

GEORGIANA

See you two tomorrow!

*GEORGIANA hangs up and proceeds to help
CARLOTTA with the bags she brought in.*

CARLOTTA

Did my son say 4:30?

GEORGIANA

He said he'd be here at 6- 6:30 at the latest.

CARLOTTA

I said 4:30!

GEORGIANA

I'm joking! You need to learn to relax, Lottie. *(she reaches in one of the grocery bags and pulls out a jar)* Cookie butter?

CARLOTTA

No, thank you. Why do you hang on every word Jenny says?

GEORGIANA

I don't *hang* on everything she says. Why do *you* have such a problem with her?

CARLOTTA

I don't have a problem with her...

GEORGIANA

Oh please, you haven't liked her since she suggested you cut back on the salt in your cooking.

CARLOTTA

Well, she has no taste!

GEORGIANA

She was trying to be helpful. You know she's a health nut.

CARLOTTA

She's lucky I didn't bean her with the ladle.

GEORGIANA

Just promise me you'll be nice to her tomorrow.

CARLOTTA

I'll try. What did you get?

GEORGIANA

Let's see... *(She pulls out at least 3 jars of Cookie Butter before she gets to the real groceries)* I got the meat for the bricole, they had canned tomatoes...

LOTTIE

The canned doesn't taste the same as when I had my garden.

GEORGIANA

It does taste the same.

LOTTIE

It doesn't!

GEORGIANA

Fine. It doesn't. *(Muttering)* But it does taste the same...

LOTTIE

What?

GEORGIANA

I said how long is Marti staying?

LOTTIE

She wasn't specific, she just said a few days. It's been so long since we've had a real Sunday Dinner. I'm so excited for Martina.

GEORGIANA

Excited?

CARLOTTA

For her news!

GEORGIANA

Lottie...

CARLOTTA

What?

Beat.

GEORGIANA

Do you want me to make up Marti's room?

CARLOTTA

Already done. Here help me put some of this stuff away. *Madonna!* How many of these Cookie Butter things did you get?

GEORGIANA

Before you judge me, try it for yourself!

LOTTIE

No, thank you.

GEORGIANA

Your loss.

GEORGIANA takes some of the bags in the kitchen.

CARLOTTA

Vin, you know I love Georgie like she was my own sister, but sometimes she drives me up a wall! What the hell is 'Cookie Butter' anyway?

CARLOTTA ponders for a minute, then opens a jar of Cookie Butter and tries it. She has a visceral reaction while she starts scooping up more.

END OF SCENE.

Scene 2

MARTINA and SHAYLEEN'S home. It's modern and sleek in design, but still comfortable.

MARTINA is pacing while on the phone. She is bald. While she talks on the phone, her wife, SHAYLEEN enters with a few overnight bags. She puts them down and listens.

MARTINA

Yes, Ma... no you don't have to do that... it's really not that big of a deal... I know... I know we haven't been all together in a while... don't worry about that, I'll eat whatever you cook... what time did you tell Michael and Jenny to get there?... Ok... yeah, we can get there around 4:30... Ma, we're not gonna get dressed up... ugh fine! We'll dress nice... nice means nice, Ma... no you're right when I say I'll dress nice I'm gonna wear assless chaps and my Georgia O'Keefe T-shirt... It was a joke... No... No!... I'm gonna tell you what you said when we were kids, if you ask me one more time, I'm not telling you at all... ok... I love you, too... see you tomorrow.

MARTINA hangs up.

SHAYLEEN

(slightly cold) How's Lottie?

MARTINA

Out of her mind, as usual. She's really wound up about dinner tomorrow.

SHAYLEEN

We're pretty much packed.

MARTINA goes to pick up her bag.

MARTINA

Geez, this is heavy! What did you pack? *(She unzips the bag and sees a lot of medication)*
Shay... you packed all of my meds.

SHAYLEEN

Sorry. It's... habit.

MARTINA

Well, at least you didn't forget to pack the weed. If you have a hard time dealing with my family I'll share it with you. Probably the only way to get through this dinner is if we're both high.

SHAYLEEN

It's getting late... I think I might turn in.

MARTINA

Yeah, sure. *(beat)* Is this how it's gonna be the whole time?

SHAYLEEN

What?

MARTINA

Are you gonna be this cold?

SHAYLEEN

I don't know what you want from me, Marti.

MARTINA

Maybe I just want you to not look at me like you hate me.

SHAYLEEN

I don't hate you.

MARTINA

Doesn't feel like it.

SHAYLEEN

I love you too much, that's the fucking problem.

MARTINA

This is going to be a really tough weekend, and it will go a lot easier if I feel like I have you on my side.

SHAYLEEN

I am on your side! I just - you know what, let's not do this now.

MARTINA

When are we gonna do it then?

Beat.

SHAYLEEN

Fine. I get it. I get the awful position you're in and the shitty thing you have to do tomorrow. But I'm human, Marti. I don't know how to do this. I don't know how to support you and be there for you while I'm trying to hold it together and be there for myself. There's no winner here. And before I have to go put on a fucking happy face and a united front for your family, I need to not

have one right now, ok? I'm not getting anything close to what I want out of this situation, so while it's just me and you, please don't make me put on a show.

MARTINA

Ok. I'm sorry.

SHAYLEEN

No... no. I'm sorry. This whole thing just...

MARTINA

Sucks?

SHAYLEEN

To put it mildly.

MARTINA hugs and kisses SHAYLEEN.

MARTINA

I love you.

SHAYLEEN

I love you, too. I'm gonna head to bed. You coming?

MARTINA

Yeah, I'll be there in a minute.

SHAYLEEN

Ok.

SHAYLEEN exits. MARTINA watches her. She then looks around her apartment, taking stock of things- the smell of the couch cushions, the sound the radiator makes, everything. She picks up a photo of her father and looks at it for a bit.

MARTINA

Hey, Pop. I know Ma talks to you all the time. I feel a little silly, but she says you listen so... I'm gonna need your help tomorrow. You know how Ma is and Michael can be... well, Michael. So if there's anything you could do to make any of this easier I'd appreciate it.

END OF SCENE.

Scene 3

Antonelli House, the next day.

Frank Sinatra croons in the background while CARLOTTA buzzes around dusting surfaces and fluffing pillows. She checks her watch.

CARLOTTA

I knew he'd be late. He's just like you, Vin. Only way to get him to be on time is to tell him to be a half hour early!

GEORGIANA enters from the kitchen with a plate of meats and cheeses.

GEORGIANA

Ah! I love this song.

CARLOTTA

Michael is late.

GEORGIANA

What time is it?

CARLOTTA

4:36.

GEORGIANA

I'm sure he's almost here.

CARLOTTA

When I say 4:30, I mean 4:30. *(Beat)* Is that all you're putting out?

GEORGIANA

We have plenty more in the kitchen if we need it.

CARLOTTA

I don't want to be rushing back and forth to the kitchen to refill things! I want to spend time with my family.

GEORGIANA

If you're just going to re-do everything you ask me to do, why even bother asking me in the first place?

CARLOTTA

I ask myself the same thing.

We hear a car honking outside.

GEORGIANA

It's Michael and Jenny. See, I told you. Oh! What did Jenny bring? She's got a big dish with her.

CARLOTTA

Vin, give me strength.

GEORGIANA opens the door for MICHAEL and his wife, JENNY, who has a large covered cake dish in her hands. They greet and kiss each other as they come in the house.

MICHAEL

Hi, Aunt Georgie. Hi, Ma.

CARLOTTA

When I say-

MICHAEL

-4:30 you mean 4:30. I know, Ma. So sorry that I'm (*he checks his watch*) 7 minutes and 23 seconds late. Will you contact the Pope to grant me absolution?

CARLOTTA

We'll see.

CARLOTTA tries to fight the smile, but can't help it. She acquiesces and gives MICHAEL a big hug.

JENNY

Hi, Carlotta!

CARLOTTA

Jenny. What's that you have there?

JENNY

Michael told me you wanted me to bring a dessert. You'll never guess what I made!

CARLOTTA

I'm sure I won't.

JENNY opens the top of the cake dish with a flourish.

JENNY

Vegan Cannolis!

MICHAEL

(Whispering to CARLOTTA) Steady, Ma.

GEORGIANA

They look great! Don't they Lottie?

CARLOTTA

Mmmm.

JENNY

Do you want to try one before dinner? They're really good! They taste almost as good as the original recipe.

CARLOTTA

No, no. I'll be good and wait til after dinner. Why don't you put those in the kitchen, sweetie.

She gently points JENNY towards the kitchen, who quickly drops them off and rejoins the family.

MICHAEL

(Aside to CARLOTTA) That was surprisingly tame, especially for you. You feeling ok?

CARLOTTA

Don't be an ass.

MICHAEL

Can't help it. I take after Pop.

CARLOTTA

That you do.

GEORGIANA

You know, sometimes when I look at you, I swear I'm seeing my brother and not my little nephew.

MICHAEL

That's sweet, Aunt Georgie. Like when?

GEORGIANA

Like, when you make a little joke. Or when you do that little crooked smile like Vinny used to do. Oh, and especially when I see you and Marti together. Reminds me of the way Vin and I used to joke with each other.

CARLOTTA

I know what you mean.

MICHAEL

Oh, yeah?

CARLOTTA

Yeah. You and your father had the same idiotic sense of humor.

MICHAEL

I just love it when you get all sentimental.

GEORGIANA

Would you like anything to drink? Michael? Jenny?

MICHAEL

I'll just take a red wine.

JENNY

Same here.

*GEORGIANA gets wine for everyone while
CARLOTTA wanders to the front window and looks
outside, waiting.*

GEORGIANA

I got this wine from Trader Joe's! Only cost \$6!

MICHAEL

As long as it doesn't taste like it cost \$6.

JENNY

Oh, poo on you. I'm glad you like it, Georgie!

MICHAEL

Ma, staring out the window isn't gonna make Marti get here any faster.

GEORGIANA

Lottie, come join us! Jenny, tell me about this vegan bolognese you were gonna make!

CARLOTTA

I think I'll wait it out over here.

MICHAEL

Come on, Ma.

CARLOTTA

Sorry, Michael. I'm just excited to see Martina.

MICHAEL crosses over to her and puts his arm around her.

MICHAEL

I know.

CARLOTTA

Also, if I have to hear about vegan bolognese, I'm gonna hurt someone.

MICHAEL

I know that, too.

Another car horn is heard. Everyone gets up to welcome the last of the family members.

CARLOTTA

That's them! Michael go out and help them with their bags! Jenny, can you open that bottle of sparkling cider for Marti? Oh, Georgie, she looks good doesn't she?

GEORGIE

She really --

CARLOTTA

-- She's got some color in her cheeks. Well don't dawdle, get in here so I can hug my daughter!

GEORGIANA opens the door. MARTINA and SHAYLEEN enter. MARTINA is wearing a headscarf to cover her bald head. SHAYLEEN follows close behind her, forcing a smile as she greets the family. CARLOTTA envelops MARTINA in a big hug.

MARTINA

Hi, Ma! It smells great in here.

CARLOTTA

Hi, sweetie. You look so good!

GEORGIANA

Don't hog her all night, Lottie! Let me hug my favorite niece!

GEORGIANA pulls MARTINA in for a big hug, letting go of the door and accidentally shutting it on MICHAEL with all the bags. SHAYLEEN notices, and smirks.

MARTINA

Hi, Aunt Georgie.

CARLOTTA

Michael, stop messing around with those bags. Just leave them by the door and come sit.

MICHAEL

How come Marti gets a pass for being late and I don't?

MARTINA

'Cause I'm Ma's favorite.

MICHAEL

Ma?

CARLOTTA

I plead the fifth. Hi, Shayleen, honey. Everything ok?

SHAYLEEN

Yeah, Lottie, just... tired. Long drive.

JENNY

Well, come, sit down, relax. We have sparkling cider!

MARTINA

Sparkling cider? Is the Pope coming?

MICHAEL

I asked the same question.

While they talk, GEORGIE gets two glasses of sparkling cider and offers them to MARTINA and SHAYLEEN. MARTINA accepts, SHAYLEEN turns it down and heads to the drink table to pour herself a LARGE glass of red wine.

CARLOTTA

You act like we've never had drinks before dinner.

MARTINA

We didn't.

MICHAEL

Unless you count Dad's five beers as "cocktail hour."

MARTINA

Is it technically cocktail "hour" if he drank them within 20 minutes?

GEORGIANA

Stop making fun of your mother for wanting to have a nice family dinner.

MARTINA

Alright, we'll give you a break. What'd you make?

CARLOTTA

All your favorites, Nonni's bolognese, my roasted red peppers you like -

JENNY

And I made vegan cannolis for dessert!

MARTINA chokes on her cider.

MARTINA

Ma let you bring that in the house?

CARLOTTA

Well Jenny read something about vegan food--

JENNY

-- Plant-based diets.

CARLOTTA

Right. Plant-whatever. It's supposed to be good for you.

MARTINA

Ma, you're not trying some crazy diet are you?

CARLOTTA

It's not for me, it's for you!

MARTINA

I'm skin and bones! If anything, I need to gain weight.

JENNY

No, plant-based is good for people fighting cancer.

MARTINA

Oh.

SHAYLEEN

(muttering) Shouldn't have bothered then.

CARLOTTA

What did you say, honey?

MARTINA gives SHAYLEEN a look.

SHAYLEEN

I said... you didn't have to go to any extra trouble.

JENNY

It was no trouble! If you like it, I can give you the recipe.

SHAYLEEN

I'm sure we'll love them, Jenny. That was sweet of you to think of it.

CARLOTTA

I'm going to check on dinner. Georgie, can you give me a hand?

GEORGIE

Sure. Jenny! Why don't you come and tell Lottie about this Trader Joe's.

CARLOTTA

Sounds... fun.

CARLOTTA, GEORGIE, and JENNY head to the kitchen.

Can I hug my little sister now?

MICHAEL

I guess so.

MARTINA

They hug each other. SHAYLEEN takes a long drink of her wine.

Shay. How are you?

MICHAEL

Fine.

SHAYLEEN

Awkward beat.

Ok, then. I'll bring your stuff up to your room.

MICHAEL

Thanks, Michael.

MARTINA

Sure thing, Brat.

MICHAEL

MICHAEL grabs their bags and brings them upstairs, leaving MARTINA and SHAYLEEN alone in the living room.

MARTINA

Keep drinking like that and you'll be wasted before the first bowl of pasta hits the table.

SHAYLEEN

Sorry. This is just... a lot.

MARTINA

This isn't exactly easy for me either.

SHAYLEEN

I know.

MARTINA

I could use a hug.

SHAYLEEN hesitates, but walks over to her wife and hugs her tightly.

SHAYLEEN

So, when are you gonna tell them?

MARTINA

Not sure. I just have to feel out when the moment is right.

JENNY enters from the kitchen.

JENNY

Hey Marti, where's the thermostat?

MARTINA

It's next to the kitchen door, why?

JENNY

While Georgie and I were talking I noticed your Mom's face was getting a little red, so I figured I'd come out here and turn the temperature down. I don't want her to get over heated.

MARTINA

Ma's face was getting red?

SHAYLEEN

What were you and Georgie talking about?

JENNY

I was giving her the recipe for the vegan bolognese that I wanted to bring tonight. I tried it at home and I swear it tastes just as good as your Nonni's.

JENNY exits back into the kitchen.

MARTINA

Don't think the moment is right.

SHAYLEEN

Yeah, definitely not yet.

END OF SCENE.

Scene 4

Antonelli House- MARTINA'S childhood bedroom. It remains as it was when MARTINA left for college- band posters cover the walls, the same faded flower print bedding covers the mattress.

MICHAEL enters with the bags. He puts them down and turns to leave. He pauses and goes back to the bed. He reaches between the mattress cushion and pulls out an old diary. As he sits down to start going through it, MARTINA enters.

MARTINA

You know, that's almost twenty years old. I don't know if the writing is really gonna hold up.

MICHAEL

I had to check if it was still here.

MARTINA

You realize that was the fake one I left for you and Ma to find.

MICHAEL

Of course I knew.

MARTINA

You did not!

MICHAEL

Ok, fine. I didn't. I should have though. This was way too tame for what you were actually doing.

MARTINA

Yeah. You were an idiot.

MICHAEL

Shut up! So, where was the real one?

MARTINA

Yeah, right! I'm not telling.

MICHAEL

Worth a shot. Ma's right, you look good.

Thanks. MARTINA

So... MICHAEL

So...? MARTINA

Come on. Don't play dumb. What's this big news? MICHAEL

Nope. MARTINA

Not even a hint? MICHAEL

God, you're just as bad as Ma. MARTINA

It's that whole apple-tree thing. I'm just gonna guess. MICHAEL

You can guess, but I seriously don't think you'll get it. MARTINA

You... won the lottery? MICHAEL

If I did, you think I'd drive two hours in that piece of shit car Shay refuses to get rid of just to stay in a rickety old bed with my wife? MARTINA

Can we not... MICHAEL

Not what? MARTINA

Nothing. Nevermind. MICHAEL

MARTINA

No, Michael. What were you gonna say? Not mention that I sleep in the same bed with my *wife*? It's been 10 years.

MICHAEL

I know, I know. I'm sorry. *(beat)* So not the lottery then.

MARTINA

No.

MICHAEL

You got a promotion?

MARTINA

Nope.

MICHAEL

Then I gotta go with Ma's guess.

MARTINA

Which is?

MICHAEL

You're in remission?

MARTINA

Come on. Stop guessing. You're not gonna get it.

GEORGIANA comes in. MARTINA turns away from MICHAEL trying to hide her emotions.

GEORGIANA

Hey, Michael. I think you better go downstairs...

MICHAEL

Who needs saving? Jenny or my mother?

GEORGIANA

Both.

MICHAEL

Alright. You're lucky Aunt Georgie was here. I would have guessed it!

MARTINA

Yeah, sure.

MICHAEL exits. GEORGIANA watches MARTINA for a minute. She sits next to her on the bed.

GEORGIANA

How you doing, honey?

MARTINA

Oh, I've been better.

GEORGIANA holds out her arms. MARTINA hugs her and breaks down.

GEORGIANA

You're doing a very brave thing, you know that, kiddo?

MARTINA

Doesn't feel like it. It feels so selfish.

GEORGIANA

Do you want to change your mind?

Beat.

MARTINA

No.

GEORGIANA

Ok.

MARTINA

I still feel like shit.

GEORGIANA

You want some Cookie Butter?

MARTINA

No, thank you.

GEORGIANA

Your loss.

*MARTINA continues to hold onto her as
GEORGIANA strokes her hair and rocks her back
and forth like when she was little.*

END OF SCENE.

Scene 5

Antonelli House- The kitchen.

JENNY and CARLOTTA buzz around finishing dishes.

JENNY

... and there are so many easy switches you can make and before you know it you can be completely plant-based!

CARLOTTA

I'm sure it's easy, Jenny, but I don't think --

JENNY

-- I mean, you can't really compromise when it comes to your health, right?

JENNY takes a spoon and tastes some of the sauce on the stove.

CARLOTTA

Mm-hm.

JENNY

Have you heard about that potato trick?

MICHAEL enters the kitchen.

CARLOTTA

What potato trick?

JENNY

If you put half a potato in the sauce, it'll help soak up the excess salt.

CARLOTTA

I put the same amount of salt I always put in.

JENNY

Hmm... it tasted like more.

MICHAEL

Hey, Jen, hun, Shay was asking about your vegan cannoli recipe and I couldn't remember what nut milk you used...

JENNY

It's cashew cream and tofu, did you tell her about the tofu?

MICHAEL

Ah, no! I forgot about the tofu.

JENNY

But that's the key ingredient! Sorry, Lottie, I'll be back in a minute!

CARLOTTA

You just take your time.

JENNY rushes out to the living room. MICHAEL hands his mother a dish towel.

MICHAEL

Go ahead.

CARLOTTA grabs the towel and screams into it.

CARLOTTA

Thank you.

MICHAEL

You're welcome.

CARLOTTA

Fair warning, if she suggests my food is too salty one more time, she's gonna need to drink it through a straw.

MICHAEL

Ease up, Ma. She's always been a health nut and she's just excited you're including her.

CARLOTTA

What is unhealthy about my food?

MICHAEL

The rule with your cooking has always been "when you think you've added enough salt or butter, add more!"

CARLOTTA

Well it's gotta taste good or no one's gonna eat it!

MICHAEL

Right.

CARLOTTA

Where were you just now?

MICHAEL

Upstairs with Marti. Georgie sent me down to save you and Jenny from yourselves.

CARLOTTA

Did Marti--

MICHAEL

--No. She just kept shooting down all my guesses.

CARLOTTA

Doesn't matter.

MICHAEL

I asked her point blank if she was in remission and she just said I'd never guess it.

CARLOTTA

She's just trying to throw you off the trail.

MICHAEL

Ma...

CARLOTTA

Just look at her, Michael! She looks better. She seems more calm, more settled. And I heard Shay say something earlier.

MICHAEL

And what exactly did she say?

CARLOTTA

It was when Jenny said all that junk about plant-based diets being good for fighting cancer, Shay muttered something about not needing it!

MICHAEL

You sure?

CARLOTTA

Why are you so determined to be a Debbie-Downer about everything?

MICHAEL

Look, I know you've been... talking to Dad, and Jenny and I have both been praying like crazy. I just don't want to see you disappointed. God's got His own plan for things. Just try to be realistic, huh?

CARLOTTA

I am being realistic because I know I'm right.

MICHAEL

Thanks for hearing me out, Ma.

MICHAEL shakes his head as he exits the kitchen.

CARLOTTA

He doesn't know what he's talking about, Vin. He's always telling me to be more positive. I'm finally being positive and he's telling me to do the opposite. Reminds me too much of you lately. But, thank you for finally listening to me. It took you long enough, but thank you. And... tell Him thank you, too.

END OF SCENE.

Scene 6

Antonelli House- The living room.

SHAYLEEN is sitting on the couch drinking her wine while JENNY chatters away at her. MICHAEL enters from the kitchen and joins them.

JENNY

... the recipe I found called for firm tofu, but I used soft silken tofu and I found it worked so much better.

SHAYLEEN

That's... interesting.

JENNY

What kind of food do you make at home?

SHAYLEEN

Oh, our kitchen is mostly decorative.

JENNY

Not much of a chef?

SHAYLEEN

Definitely not. And neither is Marti. We survive by being on a first name basis with most of the delivery guys within a 20 block radius of our apartment building.

MICHAEL

Yeah. Ma tried, but my sister likes to do her own thing.

JENNY

She definitely does!

SHAYLEEN

And thanks to her lack of cooking skills, I was completely unprepared when I came to dinner to meet Lottie and Georgie the first time.

JENNY

I don't think I've heard this story!

SHAYLEEN

Well, Marti and I had been dating for a few months and it was the first time I was meeting the family... well some of the family.

MICHAEL shifts a bit uncomfortably in his chair and clears his throat.

SHAYLEEN

The food was so good, I was in shock. I had three helpings of pasta.

JENNY

Oh no! Marti didn't warn you about the full course meals we do around here, huh?

SHAYLEEN

No! Next thing I know, Lottie brings out this huge plate of meatballs and every other meat you could possibly think of with salads and grilled vegetables. You'd think she was feeding an army but it was just the four of us! I didn't want to be rude and say no, but I was so full I thought I was going to explode. I couldn't move for 2 days after that. Marti thought it was hilarious.

MICHAEL

That's Marti for you. She looks great, Shay. So much better than the last time I saw her.

SHAYLEEN

Yeah...

MICHAEL

She really had me worried for a while.

JENNY

She had us all worried.

MICHAEL

I think we broke the record at our church for the longest consecutive prayer requests. So, you gonna spill the beans on Marti's news?

SHAYLEEN takes a big gulp of her wine. JENNY notices this.

SHAYLEEN

I think it's best if I let Marti tell you.

MICHAEL

I won't tell her you told me. Scout's honor.

SHAYLEEN

Michael...

JENNY

Honey, why don't you go see if there's some more wine in the kitchen?

MICHAEL

Alright, alright. I can take a hint.

MICHAEL exits to the kitchen.

SHAYLEEN

Thanks for running interference.

JENNY

Sure. *(beat)* You ok?

SHAYLEEN

I'm fine. Why do you ask?

JENNY

Because you've been here for 20 minutes and you're almost done with your third glass of wine.

SHAYLEEN

I've just... got a lot going on.

JENNY

Last time we saw Marti, she looked like she was not long for this world. Michael's right, she looks so much better now.

SHAYLEEN

She does look better.

JENNY

She's not, though. Is she?

Before SHAYLEEN answers, CARLOTTA enters from the kitchen.

CARLOTTA

GEORGIE! Come help me get food on the table! Dinner is almost ready, so why don't you two move to the dining room table?

CARLOTTA exits to the kitchen. JENNY grabs the red wine and pours the rest in SHAYLEEN's glass.

Thank you, Jenny.

SHAYLEEN

JENNY gives SHAYLEEN a small smile and squeezes her hand.

END OF SCENE.

Scene 7

Dining Room table.

The family is seated at the dining room table at the end of dinner. Everyone is laughing and talking, relaxed and comfortable, except for MARTINA and SHAYLEEN. They are both having a hard time hiding their feelings at this point.

MICHAEL

Good God, Ma! How much did you make? You realize you only had to cook for 6 people, not the entire state of New Jersey.

CARLOTTA

I figured if there were leftovers, you can just take them home.

MARTINA

If? Ma, when have you not had leftovers?

SHAYLEEN

This is amazing, Lottie. You and Georgie have really outdone yourselves.

CARLOTTA

It was a special occasion.

JENNY

It's too bad you didn't have any potatoes to try that trick I told you about.

GEORGIANA

Don't you have that big 10 pound bag under the--

CARLOTTA

-- Those were onions, Georgie.

GEORGIANA

Are you sure? Because I could have sworn--

CARLOTTA reaches over and grabs GEORGIANA'S arm tightly.

CARLOTTA

Onions.

GEORGIANA

Right. Onions. My mistake. Who would like coffee?

Everyone raises their hands. GEORGIANA and CARLOTTA get up to start clearing.

MARTINA

Ma, you and Aunt Georgie spent two days cooking. At least let us clear.

CARLOTTA

No, we're fine. You should just sit and rest, honey.

She continues to gather plates to clear, but then gives MICHAEL a very pointed look.

MICHAEL

What?

CARLOTTA

You're not going to offer to help your old mother?

MICHAEL

You just said you were fine!

CARLOTTA

Yes- to your sister who has been dealing with cancer. You, on the other hand, can get off your lazy butt and help.

CARLOTTA carries the dishes out as she glares at MICHAEL. MICHAEL reluctantly gets up and starts helping.

MICHAEL

Twenty bucks I'll get kicked out of the kitchen in five minutes or less for "doing it wrong."

MARTINA

There's no way I'm taking that bet.

JENNY

Here, honey, let me help you. I need to plate the cannolis before your mother has some "accident" while carrying them and they end up in the trash like last time.

SHAYLEEN

Last time?

JENNY

We had her and Georgie over at our place for dinner one Sunday. I wanted to do something different so I made Thai food. She barely touched any of it.

MICHAEL

When it came time for dessert, Ma offered to help. She “tripped” and the mango sticky rice Jenny made ended up all over the floor.

SHAYLEEN

Maybe it really was an accident?

JENNY

She conveniently had a giant tupperware bin full of fresh biscotti waiting in the trunk of her car.

SHAYLEEN

Ah.

MARTINA

Yeah, that sounds like Ma.

MICHAEL AND JENNY exit to the kitchen with their hands full of dishes. MARTINA and SHAYLEEN just sit in silence while we hear rumblings in the kitchen. SHAYLEEN reaches over and holds MARTINA’s hand. They both fight back tears. We hear bustling offstage in the kitchen. MICHAEL enters with a smug face.

CARLOTTA

(offstage)

Just stay out of the kitchen!

MICHAEL

I think that might be a new record.

MARTINA

What did you do?

MICHAEL

I started to load the dishwasher the wrong way.

MARTINA

I don't think it counts as a record if you sabotage yourself.

MICHAEL

No stipulations. That is a record. Hey, you two ok?

SHAYLEEN

Yeah, we're just tired. Long car ride.

MICHAEL

It's not that long of a ride.

*JENNY enters with the tray of cannolis,
GEORGIANA and CARLOTTA follow with a tray of
biscotti, a coffee carafe, creamer, sugar, etc.*

MICHAEL

Oh, look. Ma also made some biscotti. You knew Jenny was bringing dessert.

CARLOTTA

I made too many last time and these were left over, so I figured we could have them with Jenny's dessert.

MARTINA

Sure, Ma.

GEORGIE

I'm so excited to try these cannolis, Jenny! Aren't you anxious to try them, Lottie?

CARLOTTA

Who wanted coffee, again?

*CARLOTTA pours coffee for everyone while JENNY
passes around the cannoli platter.*

MICHAEL

Here, Ma. Since you're busy with the coffee, I'll get a cannoli for you.

MARTINA

Oh, I think that one is just screaming Ma's name!

*MARTINA points to the biggest cannoli on the plate.
MICHAEL smugly grabs it and puts it down in front
of CARLOTTA.*

CARLOTTA

Thank you... so much.

MICHAEL

Of course.

CARLOTTA

Well, before we start on dessert, I just wanted to say how happy having everyone here has made me. It's been too long since we were all together, and I'm just thrilled that we can start doing Sunday Dinners again!

MARTINA

What are you talking about?

CARLOTTA

I know you wanted to tell everyone yourself, but I can't hold it in anymore! I'm so happy for you, honey!

MARTINA

Happy for me?

GEORGIANA

Lottie, I don't think-

CARLOTTA

I heard Shay mutter earlier that you're better, and I'm just so relieved!

MARTINA

Shay?

SHAYLEEN

I didn't say that.

CARLOTTA

You can stop pretending! I heard you when we were talking about the plant based diets and you said she didn't need it!

SHAYLEEN

I think you misheard me...

CARLOTTA

No I didn't!

SHAYLEEN

Marti...

MARTINA

Yeah... Ma... why don't you sit? Ok...

MARTINA takes a deep breath, stands up, and holds SHAYLEEN's hand.

MICHAEL

Everything ok, Marti?

MARTINA

Yes and no. Um... wow... ok. I can do this. So, as it turns out, my cancer is no longer responding to the chemo. So we've stopped treatment. That's why I look better. I'm not poisoning myself on a regular basis anymore.

MICHAEL

Ok... ok... so chemo isn't working. What's the next option?

MARTINA

There isn't one. The doctors say I have 4 months or so.

*Everyone sits in silence, taking in the news.
SHAYLEEN squeezes MARTINA's hand, urging her to continue.*

MARTINA

And there's something else. Have you guys heard of the death with dignity laws?

MICHAEL

No.

JENNY

I have.

MICHAEL

You have?

JENNY

Yeah, I read that it's um... well Marti, you should-

MARTINA

-Yeah. Well in New Jersey, if you are considered terminal and have a prognosis of less than six months, you can get a prescription to end your life at the time and place of your choice. *(Beat)* So... I've decided to take advantage of it.

Long, uncomfortable silence.

SHAYLEEN

Georgie, now might be a good time to break out the Cookie Butter.

MICHAEL

Jen, where did you read about it?

JENNY

Oh, when I was researching plant-based diets for cancer, one click just led to another and I read that New Jersey passed the law.

MICHAEL

What do you have to do to get the prescription? I'm guessing they don't just hand them out like candy on Halloween.

MARTINA

No, there's a lot you have to do. You need to give two verbal requests over two weeks apart from each other to your doctor. You need to fill out a written form signed by two witnesses. The doctor has to get another doctor to agree with the prognosis and if either of them feel like the patient isn't making a sound decision, you have to submit for a psychological evaluation. The doctor has to inform you of any other treatment options out there. You have to inform your next of kin of the request.

MICHAEL

And that's what you're doing now.

MARTINA

Yeah, pretty much.

CARLOTTA

You said the doctor had to inform you of other options. What are the other options?

MARTINA

I told you, there aren't any that will do anything. Just palliative care and pain management.

CARLOTTA

I don't believe that. There's got to be something.

MARTINA

I know this is tough, Ma. But there isn't.

MICHAEL

Well this is fucking ridiculous!

JENNY

Michael, honey, calm down...

MICHAEL

No! My baby sister just told me she's planning on killing herself! Don't tell me to calm down!

MARTINA

That's not what I'm doing.

MICHAEL

How can you let her do this, Shay?

MARTINA

Don't-

MICHAEL

You're letting your wife commit suicide, and you're just calmly sitting there like nothing is happening!

SHAYLEEN

I get it, you're upset. But you have no idea what I've been dealing with for the past few weeks. So before you bite my head off, you need to take a step back.

JENNY

Michael, honey, this isn't easy for anyone. Just try to take a deep breath here.

CARLOTTA

Who signed?

MARTINA

What?

CARLOTTA

You said you needed witnesses to sign off on this. Who signed?

MARTINA

Well one witness has to be someone not related to me, so my boss agreed to sign.

CARLOTTA

And? (*Beat*) You needed two signatures, right? Who else.

MICHAEL

Obviously Shay. Aren't you even gonna fight for her life? Even a little bit?

SHAYLEEN

Excuse me?

MICHAEL

You heard what I said. You just had to get "married" so badly, and now you won't even fight for Marti's life!

MARTINA

Michael! Stop.

GEORGIANA

That's enough, Michael. Leave Shay alone.

MICHAEL

She's letting Marti kill herself!

SHAYLEEN

I didn't sign!

MICHAEL

Bullshit!

GEORGIANA

She didn't sign. I did.

MICHAEL

Aunt Georgie?

CARLOTTA

You knew about this?

GEORGIANA

When I went to visit Marti and Shay last month, she told me her prognosis and she asked me to sign.

CARLOTTA

How could you say yes?

GEORGIANA

Lottie...

CARLOTTA

Look at me and tell me you didn't do this.

GEORGIANA

It was the right thing to do.

CARLOTTA

The right thing?! How the hell is letting my daughter kill herself the right thing?

GEORGIANA

I don't see it that way, Lottie.

CARLOTTA

What do you mean you don't see it that way? It is what it is, regardless of how you see it. That is *my* child. How *dare* you!

GEORGIANA

Yes, she's your child, but after Vin died I helped raise her! She's not just my niece. She's like a daughter to me, and she turned to me for help!

CARLOTTA

She is *my* daughter. You don't get to make these decisions about my own child that I brought into this world!

MICHAEL

How could you do this? How can any of you be ok with this?

JENNY

Michael...

MICHAEL

Don't 'Michael' me. My wife is telling me to calm down while my little sister just announces she's committing suicide like this happens every day. Her wife is just sitting back like it's nothing. My aunt went ahead and signed off on this. What the FUCK is happening?

SHAYLEEN

Shut the hell up, Michael!

MICHAEL

It's the truth!

SHAYLEEN

You don't think I went through all of this emotional bullshit that you're going through now? You think this is easy for me? Why do you think Georgie was the one to sign off and not me? I couldn't do it. I can't sit there and say it's ok for my wife to die. So stop fucking accusing me of not caring when I've been dealing with this for a hell of a lot longer than you!

MICHAEL

This is not happening. You are not getting put down like you're a pet who's gotten too old to function. You're a human being. I can't believe this is legal.

MARTINA

Don't you think I deserve the right to decide this for myself?

MICHAEL

Last time I checked, suicide was a *sin*, Marti! We don't get to just say, "I'm done fighting, guess I'll just pull the plug!"

MARTINA

I DIDN'T DECIDE! I fought like hell! I did everything I was supposed to do and it wasn't enough. I don't want to go like Dad.

JENNY

I think we all just need to take a deep breath...

CARLOTTA takes the big tray of cannolis and throws it on the floor, then storms out.

JENNY

Ok, I know that she's just upset and that wasn't about the cannolis.

MARTINA

Well, you notice she didn't throw her biscotti on the floor...

MICHAEL

Why are you making jokes? This isn't funny.

MARTINA

No, you're right Michael. Let's just be stereotypically Italian and wallow in grief for the rest of eternity. I'll get the black veils to put over our faces.

MICHAEL

Un-fucking-believable!

MICHAEL smashes a wine glass on the floor.

Beat.

SHAYLEEN

Well, that went better than I thought it would.

END OF ACT.

ACT TWO

Scene 1

Living room, immediately following Act 1.

CARLOTTA storms out of the kitchen. GEORGIANA follows closely behind.

GEORGIANA

Lottie... Lottie, stop!

CARLOTTA

Don't you 'Lottie' me. Don't you dare.

GEORGIANA

What do you want me to say?

CARLOTTA

I want you to tell me you didn't do this!

GEORGIANA

If you want me to lie to you...

CARLOTTA

I am so angry at you that I am actually, physically shaking right now.

GEORGIANA

I did what I thought was the right thing.

CARLOTTA

The right thing? How in the hell is this right? You've betrayed my trust. I can't even look at you.

GEORGIANA

Betrayed is a little far.

CARLOTTA

How many times have I cried to you about Martina? You just lied to my face. Every time I shared a hopeful thought or moment with you, you said *nothing*. So what would you call it?

GEORGIANA

It wasn't my place to tell you. It was Marti's. What was I supposed to do?

CARLOTTA

You are supposed to be my friend! Tell me my daughter is contemplating this psychotic idea. Be on my goddamn side!

GEORGIANA

I am on your side! Do you think I want this for Marti? I don't! But I don't want to watch her suffer when there is a better way out of this. I don't want YOU to watch her suffer.

*MARTINA, MICHAEL, JENNY, and SHAYLEEN
enter from the dining room.*

MARTINA

Ma, stop yelling at Aunt Georgie. This isn't her fault.

CARLOTTA

This isn't happening, Martina. I forbid it.

MARTINA

Forbid me to die? I know you have delusions of grandeur, Ma, but that's a bit much.

CARLOTTA

IT'S NOT FUCKING FUNNY, MARTINA!

Beat.

MARTINA

I know, Ma. I just... I don't.... this isn't Georgie's fault. She was just trying to help me.

CARLOTTA

Well I'm going to call your doctor and contest this.

MARTINA

You can't do that.

GEORGIANA

It doesn't work that way, Lottie.

CARLOTTA

You said it yourself, the doctors have to think you're making a sound decision. Well, you're not. And I will march down there and tell them in person if I have to. But you are not going through with this.

MARTINA

No! You can't do that!

MICHAEL

I'll drive you there myself, Ma.

MARTINA

Shut up, Michael!

JENNY

Michael, sweetheart, you need to take a minute.

MICHAEL

This is *my* family. Just butt out, please!

JENNY

They are my family, too! I get how much you love each other and how much this hurts. But in all honesty, you're the one who needs to butt out.

CARLOTTA

Jenny, you are the last person that should be giving an opinion right now.

GEORGIANA

Leave her alone, Lottie. She's just trying to help.

CARLOTTA

Well this family doesn't need her help. And I don't need yours. You are the last person I thought would ever hurt me like this! How dare you speak for me on what is right for *my* children!

GEORGIANA

I've told you, they're like my own kids!

CARLOTTA

They are not your kids, they're mine! Stop trying to insert yourself as a mother to them just because you want to fill whatever empty void you have in your life.

GEORGIANA

Sure, you're right. I just watched them, took them to daycare, helped them with school projects, taught them to drive, helped you walk Marti down the aisle!

CARLOTTA

And you just helped put the nail in Marti's coffin. Great surrogate mother, you are.

Awkward BEAT as GEORGIANA just stares as CARLOTTA. She slowly turns around and exits to the kitchen. CARLOTTA heads upstairs.

MARTINA

Great job, Ma.

MICHAEL

She's not wrong.

MARTINA

Shut up, Michael! You are making this whole thing so much worse than it has to be!

MICHAEL

No, you are! This is not your decision to make. God has a plan for everything--

MARTINA

Don't fucking start with that bullshit.

MICHAEL

It's not bullshit!

MARTINA

I get that church made you feel better after Dad died, but it didn't for me. So stop trying to shoe-horn your beliefs into this situation.

MICHAEL

I'm not trying to shoe-horn my beliefs into this! God has a plan for everything--

MARTINA

You've gotta be fucking kidding me. Ok, fine. Say it.

MICHAEL

What?

MARTINA

Say it! I want you to look me in the eyes. Look at Ma, look at my wife, and tell us it's God's plan that I die a slow and painful death.

Awkward beat. MICHAEL is at a loss. He looks to JENNY for help.

JENNY

Don't look at me. They're *your* family, remember?

MARTINA

Do it. Fucking say it, Michael.

SHAYLEEN

Marti, honey...

MARTINA

What?

SHAYLEEN

Give Michael a break, ok?

MARTINA

Are you serious? How can you be sticking up for him right now?

SHAYLEEN

It's a shock, babe. Remember how I handled it when you told me you wanted to do this? Not well. In fact, I'm still not handling it all that well.

MARTINA

I'm just so sick and tired of all of this, I-

MARTINA gets really dizzy, she starts to sway. MICHAEL and SHAYLEEN rush to her, but SHAYLEEN gets there first. She catches MARTINA and helps her sit on the couch. Meanwhile, JENNY rushes to get MARTINA some water. MICHAEL watches as SHAYLEEN comforts her wife, as if seeing this whole situation clearly for the first time. MICHAEL walks out towards the back of the house. JENNY sits on the couch to offer help and comfort to MARTINA and SHAYLEEN.

END OF SCENE.

Scene 2

MARTINA's bedroom.

CARLOTTA sits on the bed in a frozen sort of shock. She starts to look around. She then gets up and picks up little items and knick-knacks.

CARLOTTA

What the hell, Vin? You know what, I'm done talking to you right now. Ok! You've got my attention! I am talking to You now. What did I do, huh? What did I do to deserve this? What major offense could I have done to You to deserve all of this? I have done nothing my entire life but try to be a good person. Be there for my family. Why are You punishing me like this? You took my parents from me way too soon. You took my little brother. You took my husband. Is that not enough for You? I'm asking questions and still not getting any goddamn answers. Fucking answer me! Please! Please. Don't do this. I can't lose my little girl, too. Please.

As CARLOTTA yells at Him, JENNY approaches the door, CARLOTTA's cannoli in hand, and listens. When CARLOTTA sounds like she's calming down, JENNY gently knocks.

CARLOTTA

What?

JENNY

Hey, Lottie. I thought you might want something sweet. I know when I'm upset my sweet tooth goes into overdrive.

CARLOTTA

Thank you, Jenny, but I'd really like to be alone right now.

JENNY

Ok. But if you need to vent anything... I'm here to listen.

CARLOTTA

Really that's not necessary.

JENNY

You're going through a lot right now. Can't hurt to talk it out.

CARLOTTA

What will it take for you to leave me alone?

Beat.

JENNY

Eat the cannoli.

CARLOTTA

What?

JENNY

Eat the vegan, plant-based cannoli I made, and I promise I will leave you alone.

CARLOTTA debates herself for a moment. Then she purposefully grabs the cannoli and takes a giant bite.

JENNY

Well?

CARLOTTA

It's... not... terrible.

JENNY

You like it.

CARLOTTA

All I said was it's not terrible. I didn't say I like it.

JENNY

You didn't say you didn't like it, either.

CARLOTTA

That's not proof I like it.

JENNY

Lottie, you're too proud to admit that a vegan version of anything is good. But since I know that, I will take this as a victory.

CARLOTTA

You are a stubborn woman.

JENNY

You know, Marti said the same thing to me the first time Michael brought me home to meet the family.

CARLOTTA

Did she?

JENNY

She did. That's why she said I would fit in perfectly with all the women in his life.

CARLOTTA

She wasn't wrong.

JENNY

I think that may be the first compliment you've ever given me.

CARLOTTA

You're probably right.

JENNY

I couldn't help but overhear your... conversation before I came in. And I don't know what He might be thinking or planning, but I'm pretty certain this isn't happening because He thinks you deserve it. No one does. Life is just messy and it hurts. But without the messiness and the pain, I don't think we'd be able to appreciate the beautiful parts.

CARLOTTA just sits on the bed, staring at the remaining half of the cannoli in her hand. After a moment, JENNY pats CARLOTTA lovingly on the arm, then gets up to leave.

CARLOTTA

Jenny? *(beat)* Thank you.

JENNY smiles, then EXITS. CARLOTTA stares at the cannoli for a moment, then eats the rest of it.

END OF SCENE.

Scene 3

Back porch.

MICHAEL sits outside, smoking a cigarette.

MARTINA comes to the back door and hesitates on whether she should come outside. Ultimately, she does and sits next to him.

MARTINA

Can I get a puff?

MICHAEL hesitates.

MARTINA

Are you serious? I don't think a puff off a cigarette is gonna do any more damage than is already done.

MICHAEL

Alright. Just don't tell anyone in there I smoke.

MARTINA

They already know.

MICHAEL

I know. But I feel better pretending they don't.

He hands MARTINA the cigarette. She takes a puff or two and hands it back to MICHAEL. They sit in silence for a few moments.

MARTINA

So...

MICHAEL

So...

MARTINA

You done yelling?

MICHAEL

Depends.

MARTINA
On?

MICHAEL
Are you gonna keep saying stupid shit?

MARTINA
Come on, Michael...

MICHAEL
What?

MARTINA
Why do you have to be such a dick about all of this?

MICHAEL
Just because I'm right doesn't mean I'm being a dick.

MARTINA
Dear God...

MICHAEL
Go ahead, talk to Him. Maybe if you talked to Him more, you wouldn't be making this decision.

MARTINA
Oh yeah, right. You know damn well how everyone at St. Paul's treated me when I was outed in high school. So why in the hell would I turn to the church now when it's been made pretty fucking clear I'm not welcome?

MICHAEL
Look, people are assholes. I'm not gonna argue with you on that. But it doesn't change the fact that what you are doing is a sin, Marti.

MARTINA
So is cursing, smartass.

MICHAEL
I'm serious, Marti.

MARTINA
Yeah, well, by church definition I'm already fucked so what does it matter?

MICHAEL
You matter! How can you not see that?

MARTINA

I know *I* matter, you idiot. That's why I'm doing this.

MICHAEL

That makes no fucking sense!

MARTINA

Yes it does.

MICHAEL

What you are doing is suicide, Marti!

MARTINA

You think I want to die? You think I want any of this? I am not doing this because I want to die I am doing this because I AM dying.

MICHAEL

We're all dying!

MARTINA

Oh, shut the fuck up!

MICHAEL

What? It's true.

MARTINA

Don't you dare say that to me. I have had to face my mortality every goddamn day since the doctors told me it was cancer. Don't you fucking tell me you know what it's like to feel so sick you can't move. That you can literally look at the test results of your life on a piece of paper and watch it get chipped away, test after test. That you have made your will not because you might "get hit by a bus" tomorrow but because you know you *will* die in a few months. Don't you dare bring up that bullshit.

MICHAEL

It's.. it's just not your right to decide! You didn't decide to begin your life and you don't get to decide when it ends!

MARTINA

Like I said, I didn't decide. He did.

MICHAEL

But the point is you're not trusting in Him.

MARTINA

Fine. Say I don't do this. Then what happens.

MICHAEL

What do you mean?

MARTINA

Say I don't get the prescription and I let Him take the fucking wheel. Then what happens.

MICHAEL

If you trust in Him and you believe, you never know.

MARTINA

For argument's sake, let's just assume He is still gonna go through with this plan to have me go.

MICHAEL

It might happen, but you never know what faith--

MARTINA

But just say that He decided against a miracle cure that day. He was too busy focusing on world hunger or helping whatever sports team prayed to Him the hardest. What then. *(beat)* Come on, Michael. What then?

MICHAEL

Marti...

MARTINA

What is the alternative?

MICHAEL

No-

MARTINA

-No?

MICHAEL

I'm not doing this.

MARTINA

Doing what? I'm just asking-

MICHAEL

FUCKING STOP, MARTII! I'm not doing this! I'm not gonna say that you're gonna-- it's not--- I can't say it. I won't. You're my little sister. I'm supposed to protect you. And I can't. And this is all bullshit. I'm not losing you. I just can't deal with this right now-- I just can't...

MICHAEL sinks to the ground and begins to break down. REALLY break down. MARTINA at first doesn't know how to handle her brother. Eventually, she kneels beside him and cradles him, rocking him gently back and forth while he lets it all out.

END OF SCENE.

Scene 4

The Kitchen.

GEORGIANA is doing dishes and cleaning up, trying to distract herself. Tears still stream silently down her face. CARLOTTA enters. They awkwardly stare at each other for a moment, then GEORGIANA goes back to cleaning. CARLOTTA begins to help. They silently move around the kitchen, cleaning with each other for a little while.

GEORGIANA

Lottie...

CARLOTTA doesn't stop cleaning, she doesn't acknowledge that she's being spoken to at all.

GEORGIANA

You know, I still see Vinny all around this house all the time. Sometimes it's a flashback to him yelling at whatever sport was pissing him off on TV. Or when I see the hallway bathroom door open I remember him telling the kids to keep the door shut like our parents made us do- like we had to pretend bathrooms didn't exist or something. Sometimes, when I walk through the living room and the floor creaks, that squeak sounds like some of the machines he was hooked up to when he was here on hospice. That's what I remember more often than not. Him, wasting away in that hospital bed that didn't fit in the living room but was forced in there. I hate that I remember *that* Vinny more often than I remember my asshole brother who laughed too loud and burped too much. And I remember you. You lost weight because you barely ate or slept, you didn't take care of yourself. I hate it but this is gonna happen. We fought it and we lost. But at least Marti has the chance to go out on her own terms. I want to remember her as she is now. I don't want to be haunted by memories of her as a shell of the niece I know. And I couldn't stand the thought of what that would do to you.

CARLOTTA stops cleaning and listens to GEORGIANA partway through her speech, still not making eye contact with her. When GEORGIANA is finished, CARLOTTA, still silent, exits, leaving GEORGIANA alone.

END OF SCENE.

Scene 5

The living room.

JENNY and SHAYLEEN sit on the couch, each drinking wine.

SHAYLEEN

I can't believe Lottie ate the cannoli.

JENNY

I knew she would like it if she would just give it a chance.

SHAYLEEN

Like vegan food, or like you?

JENNY

Both?

They laugh.

SHAYLEEN

Thank you, Jenny.

JENNY

My pleasure.

MICHAEL enters.

MICHAEL

Jen, it's getting late. We gotta hit the road.

JENNY

Ok. Let me go make sure Georgie is set in the kitchen.

As she goes to exit, she passes by MICHAEL, who grabs her hand gently. As he is about to say something, JENNY caresses his face and gives him a kiss on the cheek. She squeezes his hand, then exits to the kitchen. MICHAEL awkwardly joins SHAYLEEN on the couch. LONG, awkward beat.

SHAYLEEN

You know, this may be the most uncomfortable moment of the night for me.

MICHAEL

You're kidding.

SHAYLEEN

Yeah... sort of.

MICHAEL

Look, I... um... I didn't... I know we don't see eye-to-eye on a lot of things...

SHAYLEEN

That's an understatement.

MICHAEL

Um, yeah... but I just wanted to say I'm sorry. I can't imagine how hard it must be for you to watch the person you love go through this.

Beat.

SHAYLEEN

Thank you.

MICHAEL

You really didn't sign?

SHAYLEEN

Nope. I told her I'd be with her every step of the way, but that's one thing I just couldn't do.

MICHAEL

That can't have been easy.

SHAYLEEN

The look on her face when I said no. I know she understands it, but I still feel like I let her down. I just... don't know how to do this.

MICHAEL

Do what?

SHAYLEEN

Be there for her and do what's right for myself as well. I feel like I'm being selfish, but if I don't protect myself, even just a little bit, I wouldn't be able to be there for her at all.

MARTINA appears on the steps in her pajamas and robe. When she notices MICHAEL and SHAYLEEN on the couch, not killing each other, she stops to watch.

MICHAEL

Well, it looks like you're doing a good job so far.

SHAYLEEN

Thank you.

MARTINA continues into the room.

SHAYLEEN

Oh, hey, hun. Good timing. Jenny and Michael were getting ready to leave.

MARTINA

You're leaving? Already?

MICHAEL

We've got an early day tomorrow.

MARTINA

Oh. It's not that late yet, though.

JENNY exits the kitchen, comforting GEORGIANA.

MICHAEL

Sorry, we have to. *(shouting up the stairs)* Ma! We're leaving.

MARTINA

Are you sure? You can't stay at least a little while longer?

JENNY glances at MICHAEL. CARLOTTA makes her way down the steps.

JENNY

No, we really should go. But I think we can make it back for dinner tomorrow.

MICHAEL opens his mouth to argue, but shuts it seeing the look he is getting from JENNY.

CARLOTTA

That'll be good. Jenny, would you like to help me with dinner?

Everyone freezes, some in shock, others not sure if this is a trick. JENNY is overwhelmed at the gesture.

JENNY

Of course, Lottie. I'd love to.

CARLOTTA

Great. Call me when you can tomorrow and we'll plan it out.

JENNY gives CARLOTTA a huge hug. The whole family starts the Italian goodbye, lots of hugs and kisses with a lot of tension between some. GEORGIE goes to hug MICHAEL but he just gives her a cold, quick kiss on the cheek. He pulls his mother into a big embrace. When they let go, he turns to SHAYLEEN and pats her awkwardly on the arm. Eventually the hugs get around to MICHAEL and MARTINA. After hesitating, MICHAEL hugs her tightly. When he lets go he immediately walks out of the house, not waiting for JENNY. She finishes her goodbyes and follows him.

GEORGIANA

Well, I'm going to head to bed now. I'll see you girls in the morning. Goodnight, Lottie.

CARLOTTA doesn't answer. She ignores GEORGIANA and heads into the kitchen. GEORGIANA tries to hold her emotions back, but she can't.

GEORGIANA

I was just trying to protect you. Protect her... I just...

MARTINA hugs her tightly, trying to calm her down.

MARTINA

I know that, Aunt Georgie. I'm sorry I put you in this position.

GEORGIANA

Don't be. I'd do it again. This just--

SHAYLEEN

Sucks?

GEORGIANA

Yeah. It really does.

SHAYLEEN

Come on, Georgie. Why don't you head upstairs. You should relax. Take a bath, get some rest. Oh! You should eat some cookie butter in the tub! I'll get you a jar...

GEORGIANA

I already have some upstairs. Thanks, girls.

She hugs each of them tightly in turn and heads upstairs.

SHAYLEEN

You gonna come up, hun? You had a long day. You should rest, too.

MARTINA

Yeah, I will. I just wanna wait for Ma.

SHAYLEEN

Ok. Hey... I love you.

MARTINA

I know. I love you, too.

They kiss each other and SHAYLEEN heads upstairs. MARTINA sits on the couch, waiting for her mother to come back. She picks up a picture on the end table- her wedding photo. She takes it in, along with the rest of the house. Finally, CARLOTTA re-enters.

CARLOTTA

What are you still doing up? You need your sleep.

MARTINA

So do you.

CARLOTTA

Eh, I'm old. Sleep for me is tossing and turning just to wake up to use the bathroom every two hours.

MARTINA

You're not that old, Ma.

CARLOTTA

I was just arguing that with your brother yesterday. But since then, I feel like I've aged about a hundred years.

MARTINA

I know. I'm sorry.

CARLOTTA

You're not really gonna go through with this, are you?

MARTINA

Yes.

CARLOTTA

I wasn't joking about contesting this.

MARTINA

I know you weren't. But you do realize that's not gonna stop this.

CARLOTTA

Yeah. I know.

MARTINA

Are you ever gonna forgive me? I don't think I could handle the thought of all of this ending with you mad at me.

CARLOTTA

I'm not mad at you, honey. This is just... too much to take.

MARTINA

What about Georgie?

CARLOTTA

That's different.

MARTINA

Ma, she was only trying to--

CARLOTTA

ENOUGH! I don't want to talk about this anymore.

MARTINA

Ok, Ma. Ok.

CARLOTTA

Good. Let's go to bed.

MARTINA

I think I'm gonna stay up for a little bit. You go up. I'll turn off all the lights.

Beat. CARLOTTA hugs her daughter. They both try to maintain their composure.

CARLOTTA

Goodnight, baby. Love you.

MARTINA

Love you, too, Ma.

CARLOTTA heads upstairs. MARTINA sits on the couch. She reaches into the pocket of her robe and pulls out THE prescription. She puts it on the coffee table and stares at it.

END OF PLAY.