

MONOLOGUES

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From *THE LAST SEDER*

Michelle, late 20s, early 30s, approaches a man in Penn Station.

MICHELLE

Ummm, excuse me - hi? - look, I know you don't know me, but you look like someone who might...might be open to a complete stranger asking you...I'm not some psycho-chick, in case you're thinking I am which I'm sure you are - here's my license, so you know I'm me... here...Library card, museum membership, prescription card - so at least you know I'm a semi-cultured literate insured psycho, I guess - Thank you for not running away. It's just that for months I've known this was coming, there's been this impending dread which was only exacerbated by the Hallmark store across from me - its windows a mad succession of hoblins goblins witches and candy accented by Happy Jewish New Year and Day of Atonement cards and Halloween wasn't even over before they added Indians and Pilgrims decorating Christmas trees sprouting out of Plymouth Rock, of which I doubt the historical accuracy and then Valentine's day, hearts everywhere since New Years and now they have Easter Barbie, Easter Barbie for Christ's sake which really gets me up in arms even though I'm not religious - really, it's more of a cultural thing I have to admit, but all they'd have to do is stick a jar of gefilte fish and a Haggadah in the leftover Easter Barbie's hands and we'd make all the little girls with mezuzzahs on their Malibu dream houses very (*she catches herself in the rant*) happy...

Right. Well - every day...every day some relative calls me to confirm whether I'm bringing flourless chocolate cake this year to Seder - with my family Passover is a big hulabaloo-- not so much in a do everything-according-to-the rules sense but more in a digging-horribly-and-obsessively-into-every-detail -of -your-life-between-appetizers-and-desserts sense - and since it's the last time...well... it's all much more...that.

But they're really not calling to find out what I'm bringing, but who I'm bringing and I couldn't put up with hearing Aunt Mabel say, "So Michelle, why don't you have a man yet?" in her frog voice. Again. I'm tired of making excuses and I'm tired of sympathetic "I've-got-a-friend's. And this, this is the last year so it becomes important in a way I can't explain. So I'm walking up to you, and you must think I'm crazy and I know you don't know me but you're wearing a nice suit and you looked somehow...right...and that's a step in the right direction anyhow. Do you like matzah?

From ... *and the Two Romeos*

Stacy, 14, the only survivor of a suicide pact with two boys, is a pariah in her small town. She tells her guidance counselor how she manages to get through the day.

STACY

This is what it takes me to get home - I have two choices, wait until the last locker is slammed shut and the halls catch the echo of choir rehearsal or detention or Mr. Barnes sweeping with the long cloth-looped broom pushing wide circles with the tinny sound of his discman reaching beyond his ears.

That's one way. And maybe they've gotten bored lying in wait or they've got too much homework to bother and it's dark and dinner time and then I go. I'd rather be prepared. I don't stop by my locker at three. I get right out the door of the history room and turn left so I can cut through the gym. If I go out the back way I have a head start to Sycamore and if I'm fast, if I'm lucky, today I'm out onto Sycamore and at Lennox before they drift along in their gaggles. I've been known to hide in the bushes on Ross. They've been known to hide in the bushes on Kent. Whichever way one moves faster than the pack unless the pack catches sight of the prey.

I can dodge easily but they surround faster. They strategize telepathically and close in with a bloodthirst emanating from their letter sweaters. If I cross the tracks alone, I am often ok. By that time they've lost interest or they know chances are I'll catch sight of the slate path and the faded blue shingle in time enough to give me a burst of speed to reach the white screen door. They've stopped standing outside waiting, although some Saturdays are still spent rubbing the spray paint off the garage door.

So this is why I can't stay after school. Debate team. Yearbook? You're fucking kidding me.

I have to reach home. I have my key in my hand - my weapon, my savior and I open the door and slide through the atmosphere until my feet struggle to stay on the chalky gray surface and my skin begins to chill to preserve me because I get to live a long long time.

So...I can't stay after school.

From ...*and the Two Romeos*

Ms. Hampton, the school guidance counselor, tries to welcome the only survivor of a suicide pact back to school.

MS. HAMPTON

Right on time - now that's an improvement. No...no...don't close the door. Come in. Leave it open, I said. Can't have an open door policy without an open door, now can I? I think it's very important that someone in my position be seen as one who keeps her word. Trust. I must engender trust, don't you think? Without trust in me not one person would come walking through that open door all day and then where would I be? I wouldn't be here very long, I tell you that. I want to commend you, Stacy, for promptness because that can engender trust too. So that's a good start, a good start - keep it up and it will be noticed that you are - reli - prompt. (smiles - waits)

So...

Don't - don't don't sit like that. Did your mother ever - oh well, it's not good manners to sit like that on other peoples' furniture. Do me a favor, honey, and sit up straight - feet on the floor or close to it. I just see the sole of your shoe precariously close to the upholstery and I have to admit I can't think of much else until it's out of danger. Thank you. I do appreciate it. You see, with the way you listen so considerately we'll have you back in the swing in no time.

So... it is policy that after a...long absence we set up a little meeting to see how you're doing -

I have to say you're looking well. Those earrings are precious, though I would say not so heavy on the black eyeliner, it makes your eyes kind of ghoulish and what with everything that's...gone on... I think that your looking as presentable and sweet and friendly as possible is to your distinct advantage -

The shoes, darling, the shoes...try crossing your feet at the ankles and here, here, close your eyes.

There. There. Much better.

A mini-makeover always perks me up too. And you'll have beautiful skin in a few years - mark my words. I had skin exactly like yours - those pus-y little pimples at the hairline and on my chin that would just spring up during class so I always had to dart into the bathroom between periods and force my way up to the mirror to pop them. I cried too - every morning I was in absolute despair after I'd wash away that smelly white stuff to find even more of them - I was so convinced that no boy would ever love me with these

pustules - that's what my mama called them. Can you think of an uglier word in the human language than pustules?

Pustules. Pustules.

No wonder I was ready to end it right there and then - a face full pustules and no romantic prospects and hmmm, but then at nineteen I had the sweetest skin that the boys could not keep their hands off of, and I was well aware that if I had not waited I would have missed out on Mr. Hampton and Winona who as soon as she hits puberty is heading straight for the dermatologist since that is an advantage I can give her and will. My daughter won't be crying in front of mirrors every morning over boys not liking her if I can help it and I'd hate to think of you doing that either. Well, I guess you don't need me to tell you about boys - hmmm - no -

Such pretty hair too.

Don't you look all ready to make new friends - not dangerous at all. Now that the injunction has been dismissed I think things will calm down around here and I'll tell you that at the parent teacher meeting the air did not seem to be filled with such...such vehemence as the ones' prior and if nobody else manages to...damage themselves in the next few months this business might fade right out of peoples' minds.

Oh...there was a book I was reading last night in preparation for our little meeting - where is it - oh, stupid me, I left it right on the mail table in the foyer where I put it expressly so I would not forget to bring it to you today. Braindead. I will write the title down for you - it gives the most wonderful advice and while I was reading it I could not stop thinking about you so that usually means to me that it is the right advice for you. So clever when it comes to handling difficult situations - you take the actual events and then retell the situations around it to make the whole thing seem less...less like what it was. For example Mr. Hampton was very late for dinner the other night - so late I sent Winona off to bed and read her her story myself and I could have been mad or even thought up so many evil things he could possibly have been doing but instead I just created a new story, one that had to do with him still being so dreamily in love with me that he dreamed right past his stop on the train and by the time he realized...etc. So you could picture Richard and Carlton as two knights dueling to the death over their princess and then it doesn't seem quite the same thing. Or that when people are whispering in the halls, it is because you are such an interesting person and they'd like to get to know you better but are slightly in awe of you because they respect you so much...because...you're...a survivor. It's a matter of changing the perspective and I think that as we grow up we forget to do that.

It's good to have specific things to shake up your life because if you get into a routine there are things you'll never see. I mean I found the most soothing thing the other day... my...umm...back went out after I helped Ms. Magid move her things out of this office and I moved my things in. I needed a flat hard surface and I thought this monstrosity - it takes up more floor space than the floor practically and

suddenly it was a different way of seeing this ceiling that I'd complained to the school board should be fixed. Craters. And dust. And a kind of ever-changing landscape since the plaster isn't holding at all. And I thought, I'm floating above the moon. Zero gravity.

If you'd lie down next to me, you'd see it. And if it gives you the same kind of...solace that I feel you can come in any time and just float above the moon for a few moments. There's plenty of room on this desk - we could have three or four students on here, no problem.

Hmmm. It's all how you choose to see it.

From ...*and the Two Romeos*

Stacy, 30s, lies to her boyfriend Nick about ending her pregnancy

STACY

I...did it, I went to the clinic today and there was this really nice nurse and she held my hand the whole time and I noticed her nails were blue, which I thought was an odd choice for a health professional, but y'know, whatever. And I ask her about the color and she tells me her adventures with the Vietnamese nail ladies down the block and how they do acrylics cheap and well and she wrote it all down for me, so I went. After.

I've never done that before, let some women scrape the disgusting gack off my feet, pare down the rough parts to smooth skin, have someone hold my hands and rub lotion into them. "Sometimes you do good things for yourself, yes? Feel good, look good. Nothing better than soft feet, yes? You pay now before nail polish wet, yes?" Yes.

I'm probably not the first woman the nurse referred there. She probably keeps a stack of cards in her desk and the little Vietnamese ladies are probably used to hollow women waiting for the next available manicurist to take the dead skin away. "Feel good, look good."

From *Mad Love*

Jace, 13.

JACE

Last night I dreamt there were all these bubbles in the air. And Mom was in one of them, asleep. This little mom. And I'm trying to catch the bubble -- you know how that's impossible to do -- the wind's blowing her all over the place and she's getting too close to the sun. She's got these tiny little hands and a barbie doll hospital smock on....and she wakes up and she's scared because she's floating around in this bubble and it's so fragile but she doesn't realize that and she starts banging her hands against the side of the bubble and I'm screaming at her not to, but she looks right through me and hits her hands against the side once more and it pops.

I thought she'd come tumbling out but instead she just dissolved.

From *Mad Love*

JACE

I am waiting for you to come to me at night. I am waiting for you to come to me at night. I won't be able to fall asleep until you do. I hear noises; my body hears the noises. House sounds. Attuned to the noises. Part of the creaks and groans. And when I finally hear you coming to me, I realize that none of those noises could possibly have been you. What could I have been thinking? I don't want you to wake me up in the middle of my dreams. Those dreams are mine. They're the only thing that's mine. So I'm not going to sleep until you get it over with. Sometimes I wake up in the morning with the light still burning because you never came.

From *Mad Love*

Colt, 30s.

COLT

I am not what you would call a social person. I like it out at my place in the woods. No sounds that aren't real sounds, natural sounds, not manmade sounds. I am not into the scene. Any scene. I go to a bar because I want a beer, maybe, some t.v., some music, calamity around me, but then I get my fill and that's it for weeks. I used to think I needed to touch someone a lot. Used to think there was a minimum daily requirement on fucking. I am not that way anymore. Just like the noise. I'll go out one night and get my fill for a long time to come. I am not the way I was anymore. I am not into that public display of affection thing, but I

like being able to look across the room at her and know. Just know. I am not into the marriage thing. Not that type of guy -- be around people so long and that's it. I am not into this emotional stuff either. Doesn't get you anywhere. The last time I cried, I said that's it, no more. This takes up time, energy....Working. That's the way to handle life, improving your mind. Read books. I don't even masturbate as much anymore. Started feeling silly. I am not what you might call, a good guy.

From *Mad Love*

Diane, 40s.

DIANE(Alone)

There are things I wanted to do to him that simply weren't done. I wanted him face down into the mattress. I wanted him flattened under my weight. I wanted him spread-eagled, not able to move and I wanted to pierce him with part of my body and flood him with seed that might take root as a nine month memory of the experience. I wanted him to hold back his cries because they distracted me. I wanted him to breathe back his own breath mingled with sheet sweat and must and clorox. And I wanted him to wait carefully, feigning sleep until he's quite sure I'm snoring in his ear and extract himself - careful - from my heavy limbs trapping his body. I want him to wipe away the semen and the tears in the bathroom and vow to leave me for good and I want to wake up to him the next morning with breakfast on the table and coffee in the air and the most genuine smile in the world on his face.

From *Mad Love*

Jace, 13,

JACE

I sometimes think I made it all up. He did not touch me. He never came into my room. He never pulled the sheets away. He never whispered "Jace". Our secret. Sometimes I think I live in another world and in the real world, his world, he's been just a regular dad. (She rises, Wrapping herself in his robe.) Maybe he takes me to movies, something...and has a hard time with single parent things. I bet that in the real world, he is a great father, blessed with a daughter with an active imagination. I bet that's it. I bet I made it up.... I wish I made it up.

From *Mad Love*

TED

This is not the life I was supposed to have. You only get one chance at this stuff. Everything's going along as planned. You work to fulfill expectations. And there it is, lying out in front of you like the next stretch of highway you're about to cover. Road signs. Motel 6's. Detours. They're all supposed to lead you to the same destination.

Adam -- He was the first thing I did right in the world. According to plan. I was afraid to touch him when he was born. Afraid I might slip up and he'd be lost, so quickly. I would have liked to think it was an accident. I would have liked to think I was one of those fathers he could have confided in. I would have liked to think that I would have seen the warning signs, that his life was tinged with happiness and hope. Remember Dad, he said the night before he did it, remember the hill of death? Remembering that moment when he wasn't sure his bike would make it down the hill unscathed...It's a lot smaller now, he said. It doesn't give that rush of life anymore, he said. He didn't understand we outgrow that.

I heard her scream and I found them. I couldn't stop thinking that the last time I saw his body that mottled blue color was the day he was born.

I would have liked to hope that he'd never know the black days of being alive.

Nobody gives a shit about how I feel.

There must be a way to do these things right.

This was not the way my life was supposed to happen.

From *Mad Love*

Ken, 16,

KEN

Track. Long distance runner. Look at my legs. I screwed up my knee last week doing hurdles. I thought I could start training early but it's still too icy out. I'm hoping for a scholarship.

You're getting shy. How could you be getting shy after the way you came here. I'll never do algebra again without hoping you'll ring my doorbell. I thought after you didn't come New Years, you didn't like me. My mom doesn't think it's right to have girls up in my room.

Why don't you stay for dinner? Why don't you stay? We'll be downstairs when they get home and you'll sit next to me at the table. And they won't know. They won't know anything. They won't know anything at all. And we'll have this afternoon lying at the top of our skin. And they won't know anything at all.

Can I touch you again?
I want to touch you again....

Are you shy now? Is that it? Are you shy?

Did I do something wrong?
Is that it? I did it wrong. Did I not know what to do? Did I hurt you or something? Tell me what to do.

I won't tell anyone, Jace, you know that.

You're really pretty. Really nice to be with. I wouldn't want you to think...

What did I do wrong Jace?

Just tell me. Tell me what to do.

From *MALLBABY*

Michelle, 16, wanna-be Olympic skater, talks to a reporter about a newborn infant found in the mall.

MICHELLE

Oh, right, bleep, yeah. I'm sorry. I think it's messed up. You know, pregnancy anyway. There ought to be a law or something that doesn't let you get pregnant 'til you pass a test or something that proves you won't take off or not show up for your kids ice pageant, like maybe it should be mandatory dinner most nights of the week and stuff. So maybe the parent did the baby a big favor by leaving him in the movie theatre - but if you'd seen *Bloodsuckers III* - I thought about that. I thought about what movie I would have wanted my parents to have left me in and I think...I think "Ice Castles". I think I would have been glad of that. You know the blond girl who skates and no one knows she's blind and the roses - if it weren't for the roses they throw in tribute to her they never would have known and she did the whole last skate thing for her mom, so I think it could have been like significant. So I think the movie she chose could have been better thought out but still, maybe the gesture, maybe it was the right thing.

From *MALLBABY*
Solya, 16, explains her relationship

SOLYA

Last summer I told my folks that Scott and I were going to the movies - and we did, but the early show and then after he took me over to the video place because they got this new virtual reality driving thing and I hadn't even gotten my learners permit and he thought it was so funny, the way I was crashing into the police car the first time I tried. So he squeezes into the seat behind me so I'm kind of on his lap and he steers with his hands over mine so he could like show me how and this time we didn't crash until the second level. At first I liked it. The getting there part. It's just later, later I felt like my body was in an R rated movie when it really belonged in PG 13? It's like there's what I think I want in my head but that's not always the same thing that I think in my body. And I thought if I kept trying it would get better. Eventually. But I just keep thinking and thinking and my body keeps feeling and feeling but they don't connect, really. Labor day weekend Scott held me under the waves a minute too long and he felt so bad it was worth it. And then at Michelle's Halloween party I got over the him and Rachel thing when I saw how he looked when he saw how I looked. I mean I got over it for the night because you know the next day I felt, I don't know, like I didn't know him if he said things that sounded like they might be true so I walked by his locker without noticing him. He crashed my birthday party. And that made me feel good even if I hated the way I looked in that dress. And Christmas, my mom was so annoyed I had to return everything she got me because none of it fit so she started buying lowfat egg nog as if that doesn't make me want to retch and she bought me some workout tapes from an infomercial. After Christmas vacation I saw that Scott wouldn't even sit near Rachel in the cafeteria but I didn't let him see that I saw and Valentines' day he sent me eight of those anonymous pinkdyed carnations the cheerleaders sell. One to every class. Today I went to see Bloodsuckers 3. It really sucked.

from *MALLBABY*

Maggie, five months pregnant and fearing she's lost the baby, speaks to her doctor.

MAGGIE

First we thought it was the normal hard time conceiving - everyone keeps telling you to relax or it'll happen when you stop thinking about it but when you try to stop thinking about something you've just added a whole new level of thinking about it, a layer of trying to dismiss or thinking you have to stop thinking of thoughts running through your head that you haven't stopped thinking and you're doing it all wrong and it's your fault because you're so tense and relax, damnit, relax.

So we did all the testing at Dr. Baum's before the insurance switched me here - I'm sure it's there in my chart - and Mark passed with flying colors and we did the whole test tube thing which made me think - What do you tell your kid about the night they were conceived - do you maybe have a pamphlet about that somewhere? Because I can't seem to come up with a plausible romantic memory about weeks of fertility shots and my legs up in stirrups as a way to start this

whole damn thing as well as finishing - a pamphlet would be a good idea, don't you think? and then I realize it doesn't matter very much because the miracle of life is manifesting itself in the very cliched throwing up and sleeping all the time ways, so it's a done thing and my kid will just have to deal with the fact that his parents didn't have sex to make him, Dr. Freud.

And while Mark might think it's cute, I'm not finding any of this pregnancy thing romantic and I don't believe in any fucking glow that's for sure and I look fat, I look really fat which bugs me because we haven't told anyone yet so I can tell in their eyes they think I'm not going to the gym anymore which I'm not doing, actually, because I'm too busy sleeping and throwing up but still.

And my breasts have gotten really big which Mark likes and I like and the fat is now obviously enlarged uterus and the ultrasound - the heartbeat - and I know I am mother potential on the brink.

Saturday morning I woke up and I felt different - just different. My breasts - I mean the cleavage was gone and I didn't need the saltines for the first time in weeks and I felt disconnected unplugged somehow - un...Mark tried to jolly me out of it and he convinced me of my very own paranoia and the consequences of raging hormones but I kept saying, that's it, my hormones aren't raging, are not stampeding, aren't controlling. They have been subdued.

I called the service. I left a message - Saturday night, I bet you doctors love that. Is this an emergency?

An emergency implies something that has to be taken care of right away. Something that action can determine the outcome of like this - which has not been decided. So yes...yes this is an emergency. An emergency implies....

I went to "Your Future Is Ours To See" on the third level and she gave me this affirmation and a little crystal to promote my fertility. My body is the perfect home for my child. My body is the perfect home for my child. My body is the perfect home for my child. But it doesn't seem...I can't... I want to...

I don't think we ever thought a baby would be something we'd have to work for.

We tried so hard.