

**AN EPIDEMIC OF
TEMPORARY LUNACY
(or The Mexico Plan)**

by
Brian James Polak

AN EPIDEMIC OF TEMPORARY LUNACY

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AN EPIDEMIC OF TEMPORARY LUNACY

An Epidemic of Temporary Lunacy was originally presented in a workshop by The Blank Theatre in Los Angeles, CA directed by Jer Adrienne Lelliott, featuring the following cast:

Oliver.....Daniel Rashid
Julie.....Hannah Mae Sturges
Charlie, Man and Unseen Man..... Tim Cummings
Jane, Mom.....Rebekah Tripp

CAST: 2m, 2w

OLIVER 14-year-old boy. Oliver and Julie are siblings.
JULIE 12-year-old girl.
CHARLIE 40-year-old man. Charlie and Jane are siblings.
JANE 38-year-old woman.
MOM (doubled with Jane)
MAN (doubled with Charlie)
UNSEEN MAN (doubled with Charlie)

Casting note: There are dramaturgical reasons why these characters should share physical characteristics. With that said, please be open and conscientious with casting.

TIME: Present, or a time when the future has become the past.

PLACE: An apartment of lesser means.

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SCENE 1

The lights rise to reveal a small apartment. On one side is a kitchen with a small table and chairs. There is a door leading to a bathroom. Beyond that is bedroom offstage. On the other side of the kitchen is a bedroom. There are two twin beds, each pushed up against opposite sides of the room. One side of the room is decorated with pictures of dolphins. The other side of the room has a poster of William Shakespeare pinned to the wall. When the lights go dark a glow-in-the-dark universe can be seen on the walls. Music blares from a small stereo. JULIE, a twelve-year-old girl with bottle-rocket energy, dances on her bed. OLIVER, her fourteen-year-old brother, sits on his bed, studying with laser-focus.

JULIE. Dance with me. Dance with me. Dance with me. Jump on my bed. Come on. *(Julie jumps off the bed, takes a huge gulp of water, then resumes jumping)*. Hop up here. Come on. Come on. Oliver. Dance with me. Stop studying. Stop. Studying. Dance. With. Me. Come on! *(Oliver refuses to acknowledge her)*. What time is it? I'm so excited. What time is it? I wanna make sure I leave myself enough time to get ready. What time is it? *(Without looking up from his book, Oliver points to the clock. Julie looks at the clock. It blinks 12:00)*. That's no help at all. Stupid clock. *(Julie grabs Oliver's glass of water and chugs it down)*.

OLIVER. Stop chugging my water.

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JULIE. ‘Scuse me. I get thirsty when I’m excited. What am I gonna wear? What should I wear? I don’t wanna look too fancy. But I wanna look girlie. What would you wear to a dance? What would you want a girl to wear?

OLIVER. I wouldn’t wear anything because I’d never go to a stupid dance.

JULIE. Yes you would if Rudy Tomagain asked you to go with him.

OLIVER. He didn’t ask you to go with him.

JULIE. Yes he did.

OLIVER. No he didn’t. He asked you if you were going. That’s a totally different thing.

JULIE. Same thing. He wants to be there when I am there and that is what’s important. And if anybody ever wanted to be at a dance at the same time you’re at the dance then you would feel the same way I’m feeling. *(Julie turns up the volume on the stereo. She dances on the floor between the two beds. Oliver gets up and turns the volume way down).*

OLIVER. I’m trying to get homework done, assface.

JULIE. Mom would be mad if she knew you were spending so much time on science class homework and like zero time on the play.

OLIVER. So don’t tell her.

JULIE. Ugh. You’re the most boring brother in the universe. *(Oliver finally actually looks at Julie).*

OLIVER. In the universe?

JULIE. Yes. The UNI-VERSE!

OLIVER. You are so naïve.

JULIE. Am not.

OLIVER. Do you have any idea how vast the universe is? How many billions of planets there are out there? How time and space are so big they can’t even be measured?

JULIE. Well I know it now.

OLIVER. The universe is boundless. Just like your ignorance.

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Does a boring person know space and time are a single interwoven continuum—

JULIE. Your face is a continentalyum.

OLIVER. Continuum, dummy.

JULIE. Whatever. Space and time aren't the same thing.

OLIVER. I'm not going to explain the space-time continuum because I know after five seconds you're going to start thinking about what to wear to the dance.

JULIE. You can't explain 'cuz you don't know what it means. You just read about it and think you know everything.

OLIVER. You're so feeble-minded you think I'm going to take your bait. I know better than to succumb to your simple, reverse-psychology tricks.

JULIE. Whatever. Pretend-pretend-scientist-who-has-no-original-thoughts.

OLIVER. Whatever yourself, skinny, ignorant brat.

JULIE. And it's too late for you. By the time Einstein was fourteen, he already invented light bulbs and time travel.

OLIVER. No he didn't.

JULIE. And Isaac Newton invented gravity when he was seven. So you might as well become a cab driver.

OLIVER. Newton didn't invent anything. He discovered gravity, dummy. And Einstein wasn't even famous for anything at my age. He failed entrance exams to get into college when he was sixteen. And that is something that'll never happen to me. So you're wrong. As usual. Way wrong. (*Julie is perusing her clothes*). Physicists believe space is three dimensions and time is the fourth dimension. It means they aren't separate from each other. You can't have one without the other. Scientists *used* to believe time was independent—

JULIE. Pleeeeeeeeeeease help me pick out something to wear to the dance. Please please please please please.

OLIVER. I'm so done with you. (*Oliver dives back into his books*).

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JULIE. Will Rudy Tomagain like a dress like this with the stripes or should I wear a skirt with my Power-puff t-shirt? Shawna said she's wearing jeans, but I think that is way too plain for a dance. But maybe I could wear jeans too so I don't look like some weirdo if that's what everybody else is wearing. What do you think?

OLIVER. I think you are some weirdo.

JULIE. Come on, Ollie. Be serious for like the first two seconds in your life.

OLIVER. Julie, mom's not gonna let you go to the dance. You know that. I don't know how many times we have to go over this.

JULIE. She said I could go to dances when I'm a teenager.

OLIVER. And you're twelve.

JULIE. I'm twelve and four months which rounds up to twelve and a half which rounds up to thirteen which means I am a teenager so I'm going. And now I need something to wear.

OLIVER. Whatever. *(Julie keeps looking at her clothes. Is this futile? She drops her dresses and collapses next to Oliver on his bed).*

JULIE. Mom needs to realize I'm gonna grow up no matter what she does.

OLIVER. You can't blame her, Jules.

JULIE. Can to.

OLIVER. She's been through a lot. All she's trying to do is keep history from repeating itself.

JULIE. What's that even supposed to mean?

OLIVER. She doesn't want what happened to her, happen to us. So chill. It's not gonna be this way forever. There'll always be dances and dresses and boys and all that shit.

JULIE. You're not supposed to say shit.

OLIVER. I can say whatever I want.

JULIE. Then so can I.

OLIVER. I don't care.

JULIE. Shit. Balls. Ass. Asshole. Penis. No! Cock-sucker. If I'm not going to the dance tonight, will you at least hang out with me? Play a game. Watch a movie. Burn some popcorn.

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OLIVER. I got a lot of homework to do.

JULIE. You're just gonna be a nerd and do nerd things.

OLIVER. I don't want to be cooped up in this house for the rest of my life. Being a nerd is how I get out...

JULIE. Aren't you supposed to be practicing your lines for the play?

OLIVER. I will.

JULIE. If you work on the play more you could maybe become a rich and famous actor one day.

OLIVER. It's not like I'm the star. I just follow Hamlet around saying "my lord" this and "my lord" that.

JULIE. My Lord? Hamlet's about Jesus?

OLIVER. Different kind of lord, but Seth Bowman is playing Hamlet and everybody does treat him like Jesus. So.

JULIE. Seth Bowman isn't skinny enough to be Jesus.

OLIVER. I have like two speeches, but they cut the whole first part. So now all I do is follow Jesus Seth Bowman with a lot of yes lord's and then at the end I am basically the only character who lives. So that's kinda good. Then I have one speech and the play ends.

JULIE. Ohhhh... say it, say it, say it!

OLIVER. I don't have it memorized yet.

JULIE. Umm... use your script!

OLIVER. Okay. But then you have to promise to leave me alone.
(Oliver grabs the script then stands up on his bed).

Not from his mouth,

Had it the ability of life to thank... umm... to thank you.

He never gave commandment for their death.

But since, so jump upon this bloody question,

You from the Polack wars...

that means war in Poland and you from England,

Are here arrived give order that these bodies...

that means everybody's dead and laying on the floor.

JULIE. How'd they die?

OLIVER. They all got poisoned.

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JULIE. Everybody? Even Jesus Hamlet?

OLIVER. Yeah. He tried to only poison the one bad guy, but he ends up poisoning everybody.

JULIE. Why?

OLIVER. Mr. Kirkpatrick says because he's young and stupid and doesn't think things through.

JULIE. Ohhh.

OLIVER. Here's the rest of it... give me some space...

High on a stage be placed to the view;
And let me speak to the yet unknowing world
How these things came about: so shall you hear
Of carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts,
Of accidental judgments, casual slaughters,
Of deaths put on by cunning and forced cause,
And, in this upshot, purposes mistook
Fall'n on the inventors' reads: all this can I
Truly deliver.

That means it's his job to tell the story so people know what happened.

JULIE. Why doesn't he just say stupid Hamlet poisoned everybody, My Lord? It would make more sense.

OLIVER. I don't know.

JULIE. They totally should have made you Hamlet so you could become the star.

OLIVER. I don't need a stupid play to become rich and famous.

JULIE. What are you gonna do to get rich and famous?

OLIVER. I'm going to invent something nobody ever believed was possible.

JULIE. Like a microwave oven?

OLIVER. That is already a thing.

JULIE. I mean before it was a real thing nobody thought it was ever possible. Then somebody made it and now everybody has one so whoever invented it is wicked rich now.

OLIVER. I guess. Yeah, like that.

JULIE. Who invented the microwave?

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OLIVER. I don't know.

JULIE. Will you take me with you when you get out of here?

OLIVER. I can't take you to college. Boys and girls have to sleep in different dorms anyway.

JULIE. I don't want you to go. I don't want to sleep alone.

OLIVER. Even if I didn't go away to school we couldn't sleep in the same room forever.

JULIE. Why not?

OLIVER. Because it's weird.

JULIE. Why?

OLIVER. I don't know. Because. I. I can't explain it. You'll figure it out yourself eventually.

JULIE. But I can't be in here all by myself. I really can't.

OLIVER. Believe me, in a year or two you'll wish you had your own space.

JULIE. But if you leave and and and I'm alone sleeping here at night. What if. What if bad things happen?

OLIVER. I don't know. I guess. Mom will be here to protect you.

JULIE. What if she isn't? What if she goes out with some new boyfriend? What if she's riding on the back of some man's motorcycle and I'm here all by myself 'cuz you're at some college somewhere, what happens then?

OLIVER. Maybe Uncle Charlie will be around.

JULIE. But *you* won't be.

OLIVER. You gotta figure your own shit out eventually. (*Julie's very sad... perhaps teary-eyed*). Jules. Julie. I. Listen, I'll never let anything happen to you. You can count on me, okay?

Even if I'm not here, I'll still be here.

JULIE. Promise?

OLIVER. Promise.

JULIE. Okay. I'll never let anything bad happen to you either.

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SCENE 2

JANE sits in the small eat-in kitchen. She's dressed in a raggedy bathrobe. She swirls a bad cup of coffee. Around and around. She watches the coffee spin in her cup. A few moments later, Oliver enters with a schoolbook under his arm. He opens up cabinets and the refrigerator looking for food. He doesn't find much. He sits at the table and opens his book.

JANE. Charlie built you a desk so you didn't have to use the table anymore.

OLIVER. I know.

JANE. What are you studying?

OLIVER. U.S. History.

JANE. Oh.

OLIVER. Emancipation proclamation.

JANE. Oh.

OLIVER. Don't fret. I'm running my lines for the play too.

JANE. I'm going out tonight.

OLIVER. I figured.

JANE. What's that supposed to mean?

OLIVER. Why else would you be drinking coffee this time of day? (*Jane gazes at her coffee*).

JANE. I'll figure something out for dinner.

OLIVER. Julie still thinks she might be able to go to the dance.

JANE. Yeah. Well. She's better off avoiding it. Believe me.

OLIVER. Tell her that. I really don't have time to deal with it. I have a ton of homework. The play is next month. The science fair. The stupid history test—

JANE. The science what?

OLIVER. Just a stupid science fair. I know you are always telling me to not waste my time with science classes, but—

JANE. It's a gateway to you being a total nerd nobody will like.

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OLIVER. But if I win then I get a scholarship to this camp. And if I get into that then it helps me get into the AP science track next year and—

JANE. And you end up alone in some lab wasting away your days when you could be having fun with friends. You could spend all this time and not even win that silly fair. And then you've got nothing. So.

OLIVER. There are no meaningless events. That's chaos theory.

JANE. Do theater. Learn the piano.

OLIVER. We don't have a piano.

JANE. Play sports. Whatever. That's normal teenager theory. One day you'll thank me for keeping you from being a total dork. Uncle Charlie's coming over to hang out. That'll keep Julie out of your hair so you can keep studying your lines.

OLIVER. Speaking of social outcast...

JANE. Hey, that's your Uncle.

OLIVER. He's like fifty and has nothing better to do but play games with Julie?

JANE. He's not fifty. He's forty.

OLIVER. Big difference. (*Jane throws back the rest of her coffee. Oliver returns to his book*). Are you going out with that guy Ryan again?

JANE. No. He was a jerk.

OLIVER. I thought you liked his motorcycle.

JANE. I did.

OLIVER. So what was wrong with him?

JANE. Everything except the motorcycle. (*Jane puts her empty coffee mug in the sink*). I'm gonna take a shower. (*Oliver continues to study. After a moment Jane peeks out from the bathroom*). Ollie!

OLIVER. What?

JANE. I need you to fix the shower thingy. It's stuck again. (*Oliver opens a drawer and pulls out a pizza slicer. He walks over to the bathroom and hands it to Jane*).

OLIVER. Jam it with this.

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JANE. Thanks. (*Jane closes the door. The shower starts running. Julie enters*).

JULIE. Did you talk to mom?

OLIVER. I'm trying to study, buttmuncher.

JULIE. You said you'd ask her for me. I told you I'd leave you alone if you asked.

OLIVER. I asked. She said no. (*Julie sits at the table, defeated*).

JULIE. Did she tell you why?

OLIVER. She said you're too much of a little baby who doesn't know when to keep your mouth shut so you should be locked in the closet for the next six years.

JULIE. She didn't say that.

OLIVER. I talked her out of it. You won't have to be locked in the closet, but you can't go to the dance. You're welcome.

JULIE. This sucks. Where is she?

OLIVER. Taking a shower.

JULIE. Really? Hmm. (*Julie runs over to the kitchen sink and puts the water on. Jane screams from the shower*).

JULIE. Sorry about that! (*She smirks*).

OLIVER. I'm going to tell her you did that on purpose.

JULIE. I don't care. When are you gonna be done with homework so we can watch a movie?

OLIVER. I'm not watching a movie tonight.

JULIE. Are you gonna play with me at all?

OLIVER. Nope.

JULIE. What the heck am I supposed to do?

OLIVER. Uncle Charlie's coming over. You can have a little tea party or something.

JULIE. Uncle Charlie's coming over?

OLIVER. Yup.

JULIE. I guess that's better than nothing. I kinda feel bad for him. He doesn't have kids or a family or a girlfriend.

OLIVER. Not everybody needs to have girlfriends and boyfriends.

JULIE. He just seems sad.

OLIVER. He's depressed. Big whoop.

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JULIE. Will you at least play a game with us if we need a third person?

OLIVER. No.

JULIE. Pleeeeeeeease?

OLIVER. No.

JULIE. Pretty, pretty, pretty, please?

OLIVER. Julie. Cut it out. I came in here to get away from you.

JULIE. Fine! (*Julie swipes Oliver's book off the table and storms out. Oliver calmly picks up the book and gets back to studying.*)

SCENE 3

Oliver has packed up his stuff and moved out of the kitchen. Julie is in the bedroom looking at herself in the mirror. In the kitchen, Jane and UNCLE CHARLIE. stand on opposite sides of the table. Charlie's dressed in a button up flannel shirt, sleeves rolled up. His grungy jeans have probably not been washed in weeks. He has scruffy hair and beard to match. Time has not served him well.

JANE. I ordered a pizza. It should be here... I don't know how late I'm gonna be. You don't have to stay over. Just late enough until Julie's asleep.

CHARLIE. I have no other place to be.

JANE. Well. Okay. But. You know. If some last minute thing pops up. And. You feel like you have to get out of here. That's cool. Just wait until Julie's asleep.

CHARLIE. Got it. (*Jane picks her keys up off the table. She seems ready to go.*)

JANE. How are you?

CHARLIE. Fine.

JANE. Yeah?

CHARLIE. Yeah. I'm fine. I'm good.

JANE. Good. We haven't talked as much lately. So.

CHARLIE. I know. Best friends should talk more often.

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JANE. Big brothers should tell long boring stories to help little sisters fall asleep.

CHARLIE. Are you having trouble falling asleep again?

JANE. Not lately... Soooo. I'm outta here. I'll call later if my plans change.

CHARLIE. Go. (*Jane gives Charlie an awkward half-hug*). Have fun.

JANE. Do you have any cigarettes? *He pulls out his pack and hands her one. She takes it and puts it behind her ear*. Thanks. (*She exits. Charlie looks around the kitchen. He takes a seat at the table. He pulls out a cigarette for himself and lights it. Julie finishes dressing. She leaves the bedroom and enters the kitchen*).

JULIE. You can't smoke in here.

CHARLIE. I won't tell if you don't.

JULIE. I will tell.

CHARLIE. I'll just smoke this one.

JULIE. Fine. It's a compromise. (*Julie sits at the table opposite Charlie*).

CHARLIE. What's on the agenda tonight?

JULIE. We're going to play trivial pursuit. Then we're going to watch the first twenty minutes of Jaws. Then we're gonna order pizza because Mom forgot to make anything for dinner.

CHARLIE. Already ordered it.

JULIE. You're paying for it 'cuz I only have four dollars. But I can contribute the tip. Then we'll play Uno. And if I'm not too scared, we'll watch twenty more minutes of Jaws.

CHARLIE. Sounds like a plan.

JULIE. And I'll be changing my wardrobe for each thing we do tonight. Because I am the guest of honor during tonight's festivities.

CHARLIE. You got it.

JULIE. Where's Oliver?

CHARLIE. Studying in the bathroom. (*Julie walks over to the bathroom door and bangs on it*).

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JULIE. Ollie, Uncle Charlie's here and I'm going over tonight's agenda. So come out. (*She bangs on the door again*). Get out here now! (*Oliver opens the door and lets out a wild roar right in Julie's face. She screams*).

JULIE. Don't do that! You know that scares the crap out of me! (*Oliver slams the bathroom door*).

CHARLIE. I think he might want to be left alone.

JULIE. We're just going to have to stay on our toes and improvise these plans based on Ollie's participation. He always wins at trivial pursuit anyways.

CHARLIE. He's never played against me.

JULIE. That's true! You can help me win.

CHARLIE. Or I can help myself win.

JULIE. It's my night. You can win when it's your night.

CHARLIE. I'll bet you can win on your own.

JULIE. Not against Oliver! All he does is study. Every time I look at him I see the top of his head staring back at me because his face is in a book.

CHARLIE. The thing about a trivia game is, you don't need to be an expert in anything specific. You can win by learning a little about a lot of things.

JULIE. But Oliver knows everything about everything. And he's going to invent stuff nobody imagined possible ever. I don't care what you say. And I don't care if he knows about history or plants or or baseball or whatever. He's going to be the most brilliant scientist ever.

CHARLIE. The most brilliant, EVER?

JULIE. Yeah. EVER. But don't tell mom. She's afraid he'll end up with no friends if he wastes his time on that stuff.

CHARLIE. Isn't everything sort of a waste of time? (*Julie shrugs her shoulders*).

JULIE. She's a control freak.

CHARLIE. Maybe she doesn't want him to waste his time because he doesn't have what it takes.

JULIE. Shut up!

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CHARLIE. Okay, okay. Man. I didn't know you were so protective of him.

JULIE. I just don't like that you're calling him stupid.

CHARLIE. Oh, he's not stupid.

JULIE. Then don't say he is.

CHARLIE. I didn't... I'm sorry. Let's start over.

JULIE. I'm gonna change my wardrobe so we can move onto the next phase of the evening. *(Julie exits into the bedroom and begins changing. Charlie lights a cigarette and takes a drag. Oliver exits the bathroom. He enters the kitchen and pours himself a glass of water. Oliver and Charlie stand looking at each other for a moment).*

CHARLIE. Hey.

OLIVER. Hey.

CHARLIE. What are you studying now?

OLIVER. Hamlet and stuff.

CHARLIE. Alas, poor Yorick. That looks more like stuff than Hamlet.

OLIVER. It's called Chaos Theory.

CHARLIE. The old butterfly effect.

OLIVER. Deterministic chaos, actually.

CHARLIE. What do you think of it?

OLIVER. It's a little complicated. I don't want to bore you.

CHARLIE. Try me.

OLIVER. Well. If you really want to know. I think the outcome of anything can be predicted. Any event, action, whatever you want to call it. I think the outcome can be known with certainty. There is no actual chaos. Chaos is simply an easy way of saying it's complicated.

CHARLIE. Isn't saying "it's complicated" the easy way to say it's complicated?

OLIVER. I knew you wouldn't understand.

CHARLIE. I know Lorenz said the present determines the future, but the approximate present does not approximately determine the future.

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OLIVER. You know who Lorenz is?

CHARLIE. I've read a couple books.

OLIVER. I think he was wrong. I think anything with a fixed starting point can be predicted absolutely.

CHARLIE. Nothing's absolute.

OLIVER. Time is absolute.

CHARLIE. Time is relative.

OLIVER. What would you know? All you do is pick through garbage for a living.

CHARLIE. Not anymore. I got a promotion. Now I stand around with the Mexicans outside the lumber yard.

OLIVER. You can't say Mexicans.

CHARLIE. Why not?

OLIVER. It's dehumanizing. They're Mexican people.

CHARLIE. Oh My apologies.

OLIVER. And you don't really know they're all Mexican. (*Oliver leaves his glass of water on the table and exits the kitchen, toward the bedroom*).

CHARLIE. Your sister's changing in there.

OLIVER. She doesn't care. (*Oliver enters the room. Julie is half dressed. Neither pays any attention to the other. In the kitchen, Charlie stubs out his cigarette*).

JULIE. Do you think I should—

OLIVER. Not right now, please.

JULIE. Gawd. I wasn't gonna bother you.

OLIVER. You were asking me a question. That's the definition of bothering me.

JULIE. I was just gonna say if you wanna play trivial pursuit, you better bring your A-game because Charlie's gonna kick your ass.

OLIVER. Look at me. This is my extremely concerned face. (*Julie finishes getting dressed*).

JULIE. Your concerned face looks just like your ugly brother face. (*Julie exits into the kitchen. Oliver returns to his books. Julie grabs a board game from a cabinet and lays it on the table. Oliver lays his books open on the floor so he can stand above and see*

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them all at once. Julie and Charlie set up the trivial pursuit game. Oliver feverishly writes notes on his notebook. The notebook won't do. He tears pages out and starts to put them on the wall. That won't do. He pulls down his Shakespeare poster and begins to write notes directly on the wall. Julie and Charlie begin playing trivial pursuit).

JULIE. Let's not even use the board. I don't like it.

CHARLIE. Isn't that the point of the game?

JULIE. I don't like it. I get sick of going around and around in the circle.

CHARLIE. So how do we play then?

JULIE. We just ask questions. And whoever answers the most wins. *(Charlie pulls a card).*

CHARLIE. What nationality was Frederick Chopin?

JULIE. Who?

CHARLIE. Chopin. He's a famous pianist.

JULIE. Never heard of him. Probably French.

CHARLIE. Polish.

JULIE. That doesn't count. Ask me another.

CHARLIE. What's the capital of Ecuador?

JULIE. I know this one. Kweetow.

CHARLIE. Quito. It's pronounced *Keetow*.

JULIE. Same thing!

CHARLIE. I'll give it to you.

JULIE. One to nothing! I'm winning. My turn. *(Julie pulls a card from the stack).* What is the most common non con-tay-gee-us disease on the world. I mean *in* the world.

CHARLIE. Ah. Good question. Non contagious. In the world.

Hmm. Most common... everybody can get it. What does... I'd say it involves the feet? Hmm... maybe mouth and teeth...

Gum disease, periodontal, gingivitis.

JULIE. What?! How do you know this stuff? This is a dumb question because I don't know how to pronounce half these words. I'm choosing another. *(Julie pulls another card).* What mammals travel with yellowfin tuna?

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CHARLIE. Dolphins.

JULIE. Yes! I heart dolphins. I really do. You should see the posters on my wall. Okay. You go. You get like three turns because I just took two. (*Charlie picks a card. Oliver is now pacing back and forth in the bedroom. Meanwhile, the pizza arrives*).

OLIVER. Speed of light. Relativity. Einstein. The speed of light it 186,000 miles per second. Nothing can travel faster than the speed of light. Nothing can approach it. Or can it? Can it? It can. It can't. Can I? I can... (*Oliver moves his hand back and forth in front of his face. He imitates Einstein*). Vith leespect to any eenertial frame, zee speed ov light is independent of zee motion of zee light source... In a vacuum. In a vacuum. In space. Space travel. If it takes seven thousand years for light from Eagle Nebula... One eighty six thousand miles.... Seven years... A long ass time to get from here to there. Unless... Star Trek. Warp drive. Worm hole. (*He writes "Wormhole" and "Warp Drive" on the wall*). Warp drive. Worm hole. Warp hole. Worm drive. (*Oliver continues to pace back and forth, while staring at the wall. Julie and Charlie continue the game*).

CHARLIE. What is the sixth largest city in the United States?

JULIE. Give me a hint.

CHARLIE. It's the capital of a southwestern state.

JULIE. Give me another hint.

CHARLIE. It rises from the ashes.

JULIE. The capital of a state rises from ashes? It burned down?

CHARLIE. No. This capital city is named after a... thing that is known for rising from ashes.

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

CHARLIE. It sorta rhymes with Kleenex.

JULIE. Kleenex? Umm. Phoenix?

CHARLIE. You got it. (*Oliver continues to write notes and equations on his wall*).

JULIE. Woo! Now we're tied. I'm wicked thirsty. (*Julie chugs the glass of water Oliver left on the table*).

AN EPIDEMIC OF TEMPORARY LUNACY

CHARLIE. Thirsty? (*She places the water glass down*).

JULIE. Okay. So I won that game. Next phase—

CHARLIE. How about we take a little break and just chill here for a second? Julie considers this...

JULIE. Okay. I can work chilling into the agenda, but only for one minute. (*Charlie lights a cigarette*). You're gonna die if you keep smoking those.

CHARLIE. Eventually.

JULIE. Can I have one?

CHARLIE. Hell no. Jane would kill me.

JULIE. She smokes all the time.

CHARLIE. No.

JULIE. I thought you were the cool uncle. I guess you're just a lame-oh-potato like mom.

CHARLIE. I'm not a whatever-potato.

JULIE. Okay. Relax time is over.

CHARLIE. Already? That was like two seconds.

JULIE. I have a new game. Truth or dare. I go first.

CHARLIE. Truth or dare? Haven't played that in for—

JULIE. I'll go first. Truth or dare?

CHARLIE. Truth.

JULIE. Okay. Umm. What's your middle name?

CHARLIE. My middle name?

JULIE. Yeah.

CHARLIE. Oliver.

JULIE. Huh. Charlie Oliver. Oliver Charlie. You guys are flip-flopped.

CHARLIE. Our parents are not very imaginative I guess.

JULIE. I got another one. Why don't you have a girlfriend?

CHARLIE. You can't ask two questions.

JULIE. The first one didn't count. Tell me about your girlfriend.

CHARLIE. What makes you think I'm into girls?

JULIE. Omigod, omigod... are you gay? (*Julie is sure to whisper "gay."*)

AN EPIDEMIC OF TEMPORARY LUNACY

CHARLIE. What if I was (*he playfully whispers*) gay? Would that make a difference to you?

JULIE. Heck yes! That would be so cool. I wish I had a gay uncle. Everybody at school would be so jealous.

CHARLIE. Really?

JULIE. Sure. Tonya has a gay cousin and she's always coming to school with stories about him. Are you are you are you? You have to say 'cuz truth or dare. (*Charlie takes a dramatic drag from his cigarette*).

CHARLIE. I'm not great at meeting people. I've liked some people. I guess a couple have liked me back. But nothing has ever worked out. That's how it goes sometimes.

JULIE. So you're not gay?

CHARLIE. Sorry.

JULIE. Dangit!

CHARLIE. Maybe Ollie will grow up to be gay and then you'll have a gay brother, which should be even cooler than a gay uncle.

JULIE. He doesn't like boys or girls. He's gay for homework.

CHARLIE. I guess it's my turn. Umm. Truth or dare?

JULIE. Truth.

CHARLIE. Okay. Umm. What's your favorite subject in school? (*Julie makes a loud buzzer noise*).

JULIE. Wrong! You can't ask a question that anybody could just ask any old time. It has to be a real question.

CHARLIE. Umm. Okay. A real question. Have you ever kissed a boy?

JULIE. Uncle Charlie!

CHARLIE. What?! You told me to ask you—

JULIE. Just kidding. Haha. Yes. I kissed a boy twice. Once was my brother on the cheek when I was like seven and I can't remember why. The other time was at school when they made us learn CPR. It was not with the boy I really wanted to kiss, but whatever.

CHARLIE. Who's the boy you really want to kiss?

AN EPIDEMIC OF TEMPORARY LUNACY

JULIE. His name is Rudy Tomagain. He's beautiful. And skinny. And thirteen.

CHARLIE. Ohh. An older man?

JULIE. I really like his eyes. I wanna pull them out of his face and hold them in my hand.

CHARLIE. You know that's weird, right?

JULIE. I don't care. I thought that might be tonight at the dance, but mom wouldn't let me go.

CHARLIE. Well, if it's a dance you're missing, maybe I could call some friends. We can get our own little dance going right here.

JULIE. Do you have a lot of friends?

CHARLIE. Yeah. I don't know. A few.

JULIE. Hmm. Maybe. I'll see if that can fit into tonight's agenda. Next question. My turn. Truth or dare.

CHARLIE. Let's kick this game up a notch. Dare me.

JULIE. Alrighty then. I dare you to let me smoke a cigarette.

CHARLIE. Jules. Come on.

JULIE. Sorry, potato-head. The game's the game.

CHARLIE. If your mother finds out...

JULIE. I'll never tell.

CHARLIE. I won't let you have one of your own, but you can try mine. One drag. *(He hands her the cigarette he's been smoking).* Put your lips around the end. Breath in a little bit, but not too fast. *(Julie tries to smoke and predictably coughs like crazy).*

JULIE. That's really gross. Like really gross. I can't believe you do that all the time.

CHARLIE. You get used to it after a while.

JULIE. I need to get this taste out of my mouth. *(Julie grabs a slice of pizza and rubs it on her tongue. Then she chomps down and takes a bite).* Ack! *(She chugs more water).* I think we should move on to the next phase of the evening.

CHARLIE. I agree.

JULIE. Movie time. But I need to change again first. *(Julie rises and runs into the bedroom).*

OLIVER. What the hell, Julie?!

AN EPIDEMIC OF TEMPORARY LUNACY

JULIE. Language, Oliver! I need to change.

OLIVER. I told you to leave me alone. I need to work.

JULIE. I'm only gonna be a minute.

OLIVER. Then you have to stay out the rest of the night.

JULIE. Fine. *(She pulls off one dress and slides on another).* How does this look? *(Oliver doesn't respond. He simply grabs his books and exits. Julie shrugs her shoulders. Oliver walks through the kitchen).*

CHARLIE. Pizza, Einstein? *(Oliver continues walking, enters the bathroom, and slams the door. Charlie stubs out his cigarette. He looks toward the bathroom and sees the door is closed. He rises and walks to the bedroom. He stands in the doorway gazing at Oliver's writing on the wall. Julie's back is facing him as she looks at herself in the mirror. She doesn't like this dress so she pulls it off. She stands in front of her closet in only her underwear. Julie picks a new dress from the closet. She catches Charlie from the corner of her eye. It's weird and awkward).*

JULIE. Uncle Charlie?

CHARLIE. Oh hey. I just wanted to see... uhh... the dolphin poster you were talking about.

JULIE. Oh. Well. I'm just getting dressed.

CHARLIE. Okay. No problem. I'll just wait for you in the kitchen. *(He exits to the kitchen. Julie looks at her dress then hangs it up in the closet. She sits on her bed...)*

SCENE 4

Night. Julie and Oliver are in their beds. Oliver holds a flashlight to his face. Julie might already be sound asleep.

OLIVER. So then he unlocks his space-seatbelt. He looks around through the window and thinks he's back home after his long journey through many universes. He opens the hatch and steps outside onto the ground. He takes in a deep breath. It's the first breath of earth air he's breathed in a long time. It smells like home.

AN EPIDEMIC OF TEMPORARY LUNACY

But suddenly, out of nowhere, these beings appear. They are all six feet tall, have no hair, and big beautiful eyes. One of them says Welcome home. We've been expecting you for a very long time. He looks around, confused, because this seems like home, but it seems like another planet at the same time. Another being says You've been gone for six thousand years. (*Oliver shines his flashlight on Julie*). Are you awake? (*Julie doesn't answer. He clicks the flashlight off and goes to sleep. Charlie is face down at the kitchen table, asleep. Jane enters. She turns the lights on and is startled to find Charlie there*).

JANE. I thought I said you could leave?

CHARLIE. You did. How was the date? (*Jane shrugs her shoulders*).

CHARLIE. I guess if it went really well you'd still be there.

JANE. He was a good one. I think I might see him again.

CHARLIE. Good for you. Good for him.

JANE. One weird thing. He's Rudy Tomagain's dad.

CHARLIE. I thought you said you wouldn't date parents of friends anymore?

JANE. I know. It's weird. But. I always thought Stevie was cute. Even when we were kids.

CHARLIE. Ew.

JANE. But he really is a sweet man. He's so lonely.

CHARLIE. Every guy you date is lonely.

JANE. But Stevie doesn't allow himself to wallow in it.

CHARLIE. Stevie? Really?

JANE. And he doesn't talk about how sad and lonely he is, like other guys. He just talks. And you can tell he's sad. And it's endearing. And he cooked for me, and the food wasn't that bad. And. He was just plain nice, which is rare. This one might last a while.

CHARLIE. You're sounding more and more like mom every day.

JANE. Take that back.

AN EPIDEMIC OF TEMPORARY LUNACY

CHARLIE. The more you act like a mom, you look like a mom, and slowly over time you start to morph into a mom. You can't even see it.

JANE. Ew. Don't say that. Take it back.

CHARLIE. In two weeks you'll come home with a black eye and some guy will be hiding in the girl's closet.

JANE. I never bring my dates home. I won't even let the girl go out to her friends' houses. I learned my lessons. I'll never be like mom. And Julie'll never be like me.

CHARLIE. Yeah. Well. The lesson I learned is it doesn't matter what you learn. The universe wills to happen what it wants to happen.

JANE. Ohhh. A greater power in the universe? Sounds like somebody's losing his edge.

CHARLIE. There are few universal truths. The earth will one day be absorbed by the sun. And you're a magnet for the pathologically sad.

JANE. Maybe I am. But that doesn't mean everybody I meet is terrible. And you know things change, or else you and I wouldn't even be here.

CHARLIE. Maybe.

JANE. I met a nice guy. You could be happy for me without raining down doom and gloom.

CHARLIE. This is my really happy for you face.

JANE. You're jealous.

CHARLIE. It's weird. Maybe he's nice. But. That's Rudy's dad. And. I mean. Given our situation I think you should want to... I don't know... This is just fucked up.

JANE. What would be the harm if you just let me go and be happy without trying to squash it with your... I don't want to roam around the rest of my life like you. All sad and broken.

CHARLIE. I just know there's no point to anything. We've wasted our lives for nothing.

JANE. Why are you saying that?

CHARLIE. Because it's the truth.

AN EPIDEMIC OF TEMPORARY LUNACY

JANE. Did something happen tonight?

CHARLIE. Nothing happened, Jules. (*Jane gives him the side-eye*). Jane. I mean Jane. Today I awoke to the realization that in the eternal battle of nature versus nurture, nature will always win and nothing will change. We are powerless to do anything about it.

JANE. Ugh. I hate when you get this way. You should just go home. Let's talk... tomorrow or... whenever... (*Charlie stubs out his half-smoked cigarette, grabs his jacket, and exits. Jane sits in silence. She grabs the half smoked cigarette, lights it, takes a drag, coughs, and stubs it out. She gets up, turns the lights off and exits*).

SCENE 5

It's morning. Oliver is still sound asleep in his bed. Julie is sitting upright. She looks over at Oliver. She gets up and crosses to his bed, slithers under the covers and snuggles beside him. After a moment...

OLIVER. What are you doing?

JULIE. I couldn't sleep any more. My bed felt cold.

OLIVER. I told you we can't do this any more. We're too old.

JULIE. What's the big deal?

OLIVER. It's not a big deal. It's just. I'm fourteen. You're twelve.

JULIE. You're my brother.

OLIVER. You're my sister.

JULIE. No duh.

OLIVER. Just get out. No more sleeping in my bed when I'm in it. Period. The end. (*Julie jumps out of bed and yanks his blanket*).

JULIE. Fine. But I'm taking this blanket.

OLIVER. I don't care. I have to get up anyway. (*Julie climbs back into her own bed*).

JULIE. Did you hear Mom and Uncle Charlie arguing last night?

OLIVER. No. I didn't even know she came home. I was passed out.

JULIE. They were arguing about something.

AN EPIDEMIC OF TEMPORARY LUNACY

OLIVER. They're always arguing about something.

JULIE. I think he ratted you out for not studying your lines.

OLIVER. She's the only mother in the world who gets mad when her kid does homework.

JULIE. I won trivial pursuit last night.

OLIVER. Good for you.

JULIE. Uncle Charlie is pretty smart. He could probably give you a run for your money.

OLIVER. He just thinks he knows everything.

JULIE. He said smart people know more about a lot of things instead of knowing a lot about one thing.

OLIVER. I don't understand how we can be related to a guy like that.

JULIE. What's so wrong with him?

OLIVER. He is exactly what happens when you don't have a purpose in life.

JULIE. Purpose, porpoise, purpose, porpoise. Will you brush my hair?

OLIVER. No.

JULIE. I can't get the back good.

OLIVER. Ask mom.

JULIE. She's still sleeping.

OLIVER. I'm not brushing your hair.

JULIE. You won't sleep in the same bed with me, you won't brush my hair, you won't play games, you're nothing but a giant ball of no.

OLIVER. I'm trying to grow up and you're stuck in suspended animation.

JULIE. I'm not a cartoon.

OLIVER. Not that kind of animation, goober. You're like a two-year-old.

JULIE. I just wanna go back to when you cared about stuff.

OLIVER. I don't have time. (*Oliver gathers his study materials and books. He places his Shakespeare poster over the stuff he wrote on the wall.*)

AN EPIDEMIC OF TEMPORARY LUNACY

JULIE. Just so you know, it's normal for a sister to want to play with her brother. Or take a nap. We used to take baths together!

OLIVER. You aren't my responsibility. (*Oliver exits*).

JULIE. ... (*Jane enters the kitchen in her bathrobe as Oliver passes through*).

JANE. Good morning. (*Oliver grunts and exits. Jane turns on the coffee maker. Julie climbs into Oliver's bed and covers herself with the blankets. Jane enters the bedroom. She doesn't notice Julie right away. She looks at Julie's clothes. She grabs a dress and holds it in front of herself. She looks in the mirror*).

JULIE. That won't fit you. (*Jane hangs the dress up in the closet. She looks over at the lump on Oliver's bed*).

JANE. That can't be Ollie because I just saw him nerd his way out the door.

JULIE. He won't let me sleep with him in his bed anymore, so I'm doing it when he's gone.

JANE. Both of you are growing up.

JULIE. That's what he said.

JANE. Teenage boys aren't that interested in hanging out with their little sisters.

JULIE. When did you and Uncle Charlie stop sleeping in the same bed?

JANE. Same age as you are now.

JULIE. Did that bother you at all?

JANE. I got over it eventually. I grew up. We both changed. That's what growing up is. But. Charlie never abandoned me. And Oliver won't abandon you. It's like. I guess. The best way to say it is the one constant thing in your life is that everything always changes. You haven't been alive that long so you haven't noticed it yet. Even you have changed so much. There was a time when you were little when you didn't want to be picked up. Every time I had to feed you I had to do it on the floor because you wouldn't let me put you in your high chair.

JULIE. I don't remember that.

AN EPIDEMIC OF TEMPORARY LUNACY

JANE. Your brother will do anything for you. He might seem cranky from time to time. But just know deep down, he loves you. And you might need him one day. So try and give him a little space.

JULIE. I need him today and he doesn't give a crap.

JANE. Julie.

JULIE. I can say crap. I'm twelve, not two. And what am I supposed to do if I need somebody to talk to and he's yelling at me, you're out with some guy, and I can't even go to a dance?

JANE. I get it. That dance seemed like the most important thing to ever happen. But believe me. It's not something... the dance was going to suck. Just take my word for it.

JULIE. How would you know? Maybe it was going to be the greatest thing to ever happen? Maybe they were handing out lottery tickets and I coulda won... Or I coulda been voted Queen.

JANE. I'm sorry I wouldn't let you go. Maybe the next one, okay?

JULIE. Promise?

JANE. Maybe.

JULIE. Promise!

JANE. I promise.

JULIE. Because at the end of the year there's an end-of-the-year dance and I'm not going to be the only one to miss it.

JANE. Okay. Just. Don't dwell on the things that already happened. Look forward to what can happen. That's all the motherly crap I have for today.

JULIE. Okay. I won't dwell. Are you going out again tonight?

JANE. No.

JULIE. How about. How about. Can me and you go out on another girl date like we did on my birthday? That'll give me a thing to look forward to.

JANE. That's a good idea. Ladies night. Just me and you. (*Jane and Julie snuggle in bed together.*)

AN EPIDEMIC OF TEMPORARY LUNACY

SCENE 6

Oliver is sitting alone at the kitchen table. Several books are open. Papers are everywhere. The bedroom is empty. Nobody seems to be home. Oliver is clearly on to something as he pounds away on a calculator. Charlie enters drinking from a can of beer.

CHARLIE. This above all: to thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.

OLIVER. Mom and Julie are out.

CHARLIE. I read Hamlet again last night. (*Oliver ignores Charlie. You aren't impressed? Charlie sighs, then starts looking through the cabinets.*)

OLIVER. There's nothing to eat.

CHARLIE. No leftover pizza?

OLIVER. Breakfast. (*Charlie sits at the table and chugs the rest of his beer.*) You don't have to try so hard.

CHARLIE. What am I trying so hard to do?

OLIVER. I don't really know. But you seem like a cliché.

CHARLIE. That's exactly what I always wanted to be when I grew up.

OLIVER. Please, Uncle Charlie. I need to work.

CHARLIE. Go ahead and work... What are you working on?

OLIVER. U.S. History, specifically the post-Civil War era, obviously Hamlet, and I have to present the results of Higgs boson to my physics class. So, yeah, I'm pretty busy. Thanks.

CHARLIE. Do you believe in supersymmetry or do you believe in the multiverse? (*Oliver desperately wants to focus on his work, but the opportunity of talking nerdy science things is too much to pass up.*)

OLIVER. I want to believe in multiverse because I think it would be pretty cool to imagine there are universes and universes and universes out there with their own laws of physics. But....

CHARLIE. But there's no proof.

AN EPIDEMIC OF TEMPORARY LUNACY

OLIVER. How do *you* know?

CHARLIE. Do you mean how does a cliché jobless loser like me know anything about particle physics?

OLIVER. Yeah.

CHARLIE. Like I said, I read. So tell me this, what's your big idea?

OLIVER. My big idea?

CHARLIE. Every scientist has their one obsession motivating them. What is it you want to spend your life trying to prove?

OLIVER. I want to prove Einstein wrong.

CHARLIE. Everybody wants to do that. Many people have. What's your big idea? (*Charlie searches through the refrigerator and under the sink*).

OLIVER. Einstein says the speed of light is unreachable. He theorizes an object can approach, but never attain the speed of light. I want to prove an object can travel the speed of light and even faster. And if an object can travel faster than light, then maybe it can travel faster than time.

CHARLIE. Faster than time? Is there really nothing to drink here?

OLIVER. Yeah. Faster than light, faster than time. So. Basically. Time travel. (*Charlie laughs*). It's simple physics.

CHARLIE. Oh yeah. It's physics alright. But it ain't simple. How'd you get so hung up on this scientific bullshit anyway? Your mom's been pushing you into the arts since you were two.

OLIVER. Because everything else is too easy.

CHARLIE. Theater is easy?

OLIVER. Uh, yeah. (*Oliver tries to get back into his studies*).

CHARLIE. Time travel is junk food for the scientifically inclined. Scientists can't keep from studying it; writers can't keep from writing about it. It's nothing but a distraction. And it's unhealthy. Like junk food. (*Charlie lights a cigarette*).

CHARLIE. You want to go after your pal Einstein... it's all about tachyons. They exist faster than the speed of light. Harness them. You can travel through space in ways never imagined.

OLIVER. They aren't real.

AN EPIDEMIC OF TEMPORARY LUNACY

CHARLIE. They're theoretical. Everything is theoretical until it's real.

OLIVER. I guess that's true.

CHARLIE. One day you'll see how it's all connected. And then you'll really be able to make some magic. You're so fucking lucky.

OLIVER. Why am I so lucky?

CHARLIE. Because you have the future to look forward to. *(Oliver gets back into his book. Charlie looks way up top in cabinet and finds a bottle of gin).* Ahhh. There it is.

OLIVER. Why do you pretend to be such a dumb jerk all the time?

CHARLIE. I'm not pretending.

OLIVER. Your life seems so messed up. No offense.

CHARLIE. It can happen to you too, pal. It can. It will. *(Charlie pours himself a glass of gin).* You could discover something incredible. I mean, like, change-the-fucking-world level of incredible. But if you do, and you test it, and it works. Well. Then you've really done something, haven't you? You'll be awfully proud of yourself. But what's the point of discovery? What good does it actually serve? Oppenheimer made a bomb. Gee thanks. Otto made the auto. Bye bye ozone. Europeans invented America. Indigenous peoples are just thrilled with that outcome. That British bloke made the internet and look at the vile, repugnant scum rising out of that cesspool. You get my point.

OLIVER. What are people supposed to do? Just sit around and not find ways to make the world better?

CHARLIE. Yes! Stay in your little fucking boxes and leave the world alone. Nothing makes the world better. Nothing. Just enjoy what you got and leave it alone.

OLIVER. I can't. I can't not do something just because my drunk uncle is cynical.

CHARLIE. That's right. Nothing's really gonna stop you. So maybe you can channel your efforts elsewhere.

OLIVER. By drinking, like you?

AN EPIDEMIC OF TEMPORARY LUNACY

CHARLIE. Absolutely. Drinking smoking snorting shooting. Use your brains for good for you. Find just the right this and that. Mix and match. Discover the line between enjoyment and addiction. Know your own limitations. Then never step beyond them. If you're smart enough you can make your own poison. It's simple math.

OLIVER. Only a junkie would suggest cooking meth at home is better than being a scientist.

CHARLIE. With your DNA, it's likely you'll become a junkie too one day.

OLIVER. Just by the simple fact that you're telling me means I'll never let it happen.

CHARLIE. It's in your nature, pal. No point in fighting it.

OLIVER. Some of who we are is determined by our DNA. So I agree with you there. But we're humans. And our actions are always a choice.

CHARLIE. You're wrong. And I'll prove it to you.

OLIVER. How?

CHARLIE. See this bottle of gin?

OLIVER. Yes.

CHARLIE. You will drink from this bottle. And you'll love it.

OLIVER. I will never drink from that bottle. (*Charlie places the bottle on the table. He nudges it closer toward Oliver*). If mom knew you were trying to get me to drink, she'd kick your ass.

CHARLIE. She knows it's inevitable. Our daddy was an abusive drunk. Your daddy. And I'm not that different from him. It's the genetic code, little man. You're next.

OLIVER. You can take it away. I'm not going to touch it.

CHARLIE. Just take a sip.

OLIVER. I'm never going to be like you. Or your dad. Or my dad. I'm smarter than all of you.

CHARLIE. Since you're so smart you can try it. It looks just like water. You'll probably hate it. And then my theory will be proven wrong.

OLIVER. Nope.

AN EPIDEMIC OF TEMPORARY LUNACY

CHARLIE. I'm just messing with you. I wouldn't make you do anything you don't want to do. (*Charlie moves toward Oliver. He messes Oliver's hair... then. Charlie grabs Oliver around the neck, putting him in a headlock. He takes the bottle and tries to pour it into Oliver's mouth*). Drink it you little shit. You know you want to. (*Oliver is spiting and kicking and trying to break free from Charlie's hold. Oliver's papers are falling to the floor. Gin is spilling everywhere*). Drink the fucking gin! Drink it! Swallow it already. Stupid ignorant kid. Just give in. (*The bottle is now empty. Charlie releases his hold on Oliver. He looks at the mess*). That was a good waste of bad gin. (*Oliver catches his breath*). Are you okay? (*Oliver nods his head "yes."*) We should probably clean this up before your— (*Oliver rushes over to Charlie and slaps him hard across the face*). Whoa. Whoa. That. Oww. That stings. (*Charlie rubs his cheek*). I did not see that coming. (*Oliver is crying*). God. I forgot how sensitive... I'm uhh. I'm gonna clean this up. (*Oliver wipes his tears. He grabs his books. He exits into the bedroom where he collapses, face first, onto his bed. Charlie enters the bathroom. Jane and Julie enter with leftovers from dinner in their hands. Charlie exits the bathroom drying his hands on a small towel*).

JANE. What are you doing here?

JULIE. Hi Uncle Charlie.

CHARLIE. I was bored. So I came over to hang out with the kid. (*Jane notices the mess on the floor*).

JANE. What's this all about?

CHARLIE. I was just about to...uhh... (*Charlie wipes up the spilled gin*).

JANE. I see you found the gin.

CHARLIE. Only so many places you can hide things around here.

JULIE. Want my leftover spaghetti?

CHARLIE. Nah. I'm good. (*Julie yells—*)

JULIE. Ollie, want spaghetti?!

AN EPIDEMIC OF TEMPORARY LUNACY

JANE. Jules. Do you have to? Julie exits the kitchen and enters the bedroom. Charlie continues cleaning up the mess. Jane puts leftovers away.

JULIE. Rudy Tomagain and his dad were at the restaurant. Mom went over and talked to them for like twenty hours. They invited us both to come over. I ended up eating all the bread. Like a pigeon. Got so full I barely ate my spaghetti. Want my leftovers? I got it with extra sauce. The way you like it. If you don't take them, I'm giving them to Uncle Charlie.

OLIVER. Screw that guy. I hate him. He's always been cruel to me and I don't know why. I never did anything. He's just a jerk and an idiot and an asshole... *(Julie sits on the edge of Oliver's bed. He ignores her. She flips through one of Oliver's books. Charlie and Jane sit at the table in the kitchen).*

CHARLIE. Why is it you ended up with the real life? Why do you get the job and the kids and boyfriends?

JANE. It's not like I have a real job. I clean houses.

CHARLIE. I can do practically anything. What the hell happened?

JANE. You know what? Screw you, Charlie. You act like you're all by yourself in this little wounded cocoon you've constructed. Poor Charlie! I'm not happy, but at least I'm trying.

CHARLIE. You used to like me.

JANE. You should clean yourself up.

CHARLIE. Clean myself up? Getting blasted is the only thing I have left that lets me sail away far off in the distant future. Travel forward in time thirty years. Live that life. Put some distance between us and this—

JANE. I meant, like, take a shower. You're gross. *(Julie is still sitting on Oliver's bed, flipping through a book. Oliver's face is stuffed into a pillow. Julie places the book down).*

JULIE. What do you think we'll be doing in twenty years? I think I'll probably be married. Maybe to Rudy. We'll have one kid. Two if they're twins. And we'll take cruises all the time. Will you babysit the twins when we go on cruises?

AN EPIDEMIC OF TEMPORARY LUNACY

OLIVER. I'll be busy. Maybe I'll have my own family. And kids.

JULIE. Do you think our kids will be friends?

OLIVER. If you move to San Francisco. That's where I'm gonna live. Or Houston if I end up working for NASA.

JULIE. Where's Houston?

OLIVER. Texas.

JULIE. Ew. Let's move to San Francisco.

OLIVER. I don't care. I just want to get away from here.

JULIE. Do you know what you're doing for the science fair?

OLIVER. Not yet.

JULIE. I'm sure whatever it is, it'll be awesome. I can't wait to see you in the play. It's gonna be so cool to see you on the stage, even if you aren't the star. Do you want me to run lines with you?

OLIVER. No.

JULIE. Do you mind if... can I lay here just for a minute? (*Oliver moves to make some space. Julie snuggles up next to Oliver*). I think you should invent something nobody imagined could even be a thing.

OLIVER. What are you talking about?

JULIE. For the science fair. (*Julie puts her arm around her brother. In the kitchen, Charlie is picking through Jane's leftovers*).

CHARLIE. What if we moved? We could start over. Change our names. You always hated being called Jane.

JANE. I've gotten pretty used to it.

CHARLIE. Lucky that you and mom were spitting images. So you could use her ID. Too bad dad and I looked nothing alike. Some of the vatos at the lumber yard said they know a guy south of the border who could hook me up. Full package. License. Passport. Social.

JANE. What are you saying?

CHARLIE. After they get out of school. We could do the Mexico plan.

JANE. I thought that was our break glass in case of emergency plan.

AN EPIDEMIC OF TEMPORARY LUNACY

CHARLIE. Yes. Let's break the glass and get out of here.

JANE. How does making them move help at all?

CHARLIE. I just want something to look forward to.

JANE. Then you should go.

CHARLIE. Alone?

JANE. I can't. Maybe I meet somebody. Maybe I wanna get married or something.

CHARLIE. You aren't marrying anybody.

JANE. You don't know. Somebody could fall in love with me. And if that happens, maybe they'll want me to live with them.

CHARLIE. At your age? I doubt it.

JANE. Asshole.

CHARLIE. Men like women who remind them of their youth. No offense. You're almost forty.

JANE. I'm not talking about having kids. But. Maybe I meet somebody who's normal...

CHARLIE. There's no such thing as normal.

JANE. In science. What do you call it? The normal things. Like the not-tested...

CHARLIE. You always confuse me when you try to talk science.

JANE. Control group! The ones part of the experiment who aren't part of the experiment. They are the normal ones. That's who we can be one day.

CHARLIE. Whatever, goober.

JANE. Stevie is the closest to normal I've ever known.

CHARLIE. Mr. Tomagain?

JANE. And what if things get better and... you know. Rudy is the same age as Julie and Oliver. He's so kind. And he cares about me.

CHARLIE. I care about you.

JANE. That's not what I mean.

CHARLIE. You can't let me go.

JANE. You're the one who needs to let go.

CHARLIE. I don't want to feel this way forever, Jules. (*Jane walks over to Charlie. She takes his cigarette pack and pulls one*

AN EPIDEMIC OF TEMPORARY LUNACY

out. She lights it and hands it to Charlie. She lights another and smokes it. She exits, leaving Charlie alone at the table).

SCENE 7

Jane enters the kitchen, dressed to clean houses. She drinks from a cup of coffee. She enters the kids' room. Oliver is getting ready for school. Julie is sick. Jane takes her temperature. Oliver grabs his school things and exits. Julie stays in bed. Jane grabs her things for work and exits.

SCENE 8

Julie is alone. She sleeps. Charlie enters. He makes his way through the kitchen. He peeks into the bathroom. He enters the bedroom. He looks around the room. He sees writing on the wall next to Oliver's bed. He pulls the Shakespeare poster back to reveal an equation. Charlie grabs a marker and fixes part of the equation.

JULIE. That's Ollie's homework. (*Charlie sits down on Oliver's bed*).

CHARLIE. Your mom told me you were home sick. So I came to check on you.

JULIE. I was sleeping.

CHARLIE. Sorry. Go back to sleep. I'll just be sitting here. Staring at you like a creep.

JULIE. Ew. That's weird. (*Charlie picks through some of Oliver's books*). What are you doing? (*Charlie does his best impression of Oliver*).

CHARLIE. I'm studying. I got a big test coming up. You need to stop blahblahblah and wahwahwah.

JULIE. Haha. You sound just like my brother.

CHARLIE. One of my many talents.

AN EPIDEMIC OF TEMPORARY LUNACY

JULIE. Don't you have to work today?

CHARLIE. Nope.

JULIE. Nobody needs their house painted today?

CHARLIE. Is that what I am? A house painter?

JULIE. I don't know what you are. You just have paint on you all the time.

CHARLIE. I do a lot of painting. Fixing things. Building stuff. I stand outside the lumberyard with a bunch of illegals—I mean "undocumented workers." People pull up and pay me to do whatever they need around the house. Yesterday I was planting bushes in this guy's backyard. Who knows what I'll be doing tomorrow.

JULIE. That's a pretty good job to have.

CHARLIE. It's the last gasp for the lowly and downtrodden.

JULIE. But you're so smart. I bet you could do a million things.

CHARLIE. Yeah. Well. Life being what it is, sometimes you don't have a choice.

JULIE. I don't know what I wanna do when I'm your age.

CHARLIE. By the time you're my age, you'll probably have done a hundred things.

JULIE. Ollie says I'll end up cleaning houses. Like mom. Because I'm not a genius like him.

CHARLIE. Oliver can be a bit of a jerk when he wants to be.

JULIE. I don't mind.

CHARLIE. Why do you let him treat you like that? You should fight back.

JULIE. I don't want him to hate me.

CHARLIE. He'll never hate you. One day he'll wish he wasn't so mean to his little sister. He'll wish he was still close to her. That the two of you could still nap in the same bed and not have it be weird. Staying up really late telling stories... Falling asleep before they end.

JULIE. Did you and mom do that too?

CHARLIE. A long time ago.

AN EPIDEMIC OF TEMPORARY LUNACY

JULIE. I hope me and Ollie are still close like you guys are when we're old.

CHARLIE. We aren't that close. And we aren't that old.

JULIE. You seem it. Close I mean.

CHARLIE. I don't know when it happened, but there came a time when I ended up needing her more than she needed me.

JULIE. Like me and Ollie now. It's probably because she's always dating people. Like Ollie is always studying. They both have something to occupy their time. And we're just bored 'cuz we don't have anything like that. Good thing we have each other.

CHARLIE. What about Rudy?

JULIE. He doesn't pay enough attention to me.

CHARLIE. You crack me up. I guess I'll let you go back to sleep. You are sick after all...

JULIE. I'm not really sick. I pretended so I could stay home. I didn't want to be there listening to everybody talk about the stupid dance I didn't go to. Julie climbs out of bed and drops her blanket on the floor. She's dressed in a t-shirt and underwear.

CHARLIE. You should put some clothes on.

JULIE. Why?

CHARLIE. Because it's cold in here.

JULIE. I'm just going to jump in the shower. (*Julie starts to leave the room*). Are you gonna still be here when I get out?

CHARLIE. I guess... I'll... look for some breakfast or something.

JULIE. We have cereal in there somewhere, but no milk. (*Julie exits the bedroom, walks through the kitchen and enters the bathroom. Charlie exits the bedroom and enters the kitchen. He finds a box of cereal. The water can be heard running from the bathroom. Julie peeks her head out form the bathroom door*).

Uncle Charlie?

CHARLIE. Yeah.

JULIE. I can't get the shower thing to go on.

CHARLIE. You have to be forceful with that switch. Jam it.

JULIE. I tried that. It won't work. Will you help? (*Charlie grabs the pizza slicer out of the kitchen drawer*).

AN EPIDEMIC OF TEMPORARY LUNACY

CHARLIE. You gotta use this. (*He hands it to Julie*). Slam it in there. It should work.

JULIE. I'm not strong enough. Will you do it?

CHARLIE. You can do it.

JULIE. Please? (*Julie pulls her head back into the bathroom. She leaves the door open a crack. Charlie tentatively enters the bathroom. The door closes behind him. Oliver enters and dramatically throws his books down. He falls into a chair at the kitchen table. Charlie exits the bathroom, looking frazzled. He's still holding the pizza slicer. The shower can be heard running. Oliver watches as he closes the door behind him*).

OLIVER. Where's Julie?

CHARLIE. What are you doing here?

OLIVER. Where's Julie?

CHARLIE. She's... uhh... she's in there. In the shower. I was just. The shower wasn't working so I had to. I had to fiddle with the thing. (*Oliver approaches the bathroom door*).

OLIVER. Get out of my way. (*Charlie steps aside. Oliver knocks on the door*). Jules? Hey Jules. It's Ollie. (*Oliver opens the door a crack and pokes his head in. Charlie puts the pizza slicer down on the table*). Are you okay? (*Julie screams in his face. He closes the door*). Why is she crying?

CHARLIE. I don't know. (*Oliver closes the door*).

OLIVER. What were you doing in there?

CHARLIE. Nothing. Relax, buddy. (*Oliver runs into the kitchen and tries to find something sharp. He quickly grabs the pizza slicer and runs at Charlie*). Whoa. Chill out.

OLIVER. Whatdidyoudotomysister?!

CHARLIE. Hey, hey, hey. Put that thing down. (*Oliver swings the slicer at Charlie*).

OLIVER. I knew there was something wrong with you. (*Charlie grabs Oliver's wrist and easily pries the slicer out of his hand. He throws it in the sink*).

CHARLIE. Relax. You don't know what's going on here.

AN EPIDEMIC OF TEMPORARY LUNACY

OLIVER. I know I saw you come out from that bathroom. I know my little sister is in there wrapped in a towel and crying. I know you're an asshole and a creep. The math is pretty simple.

CHARLIE. Yeah. Sure. That looks bad. I get it. Things aren't what they seem.

OLIVER. Get out of this house.

CHARLIE. Let's talk for a second, Ollie.

OLIVER. My name is Oliver. Get the fuck out of here.

CHARLIE. I'm the adult here. Sit down and I'll explain this to you.

OLIVER. I'll call the police and tell them a child rapist is in my kitchen. Knowing you, I'm sure there's something on your record. They'll arrest you in a second.

CHARLIE. God dammit. I can't talk to the fucking cops. I don't have a. Sonofabitch.

OLIVER. Go.

CHARLIE. Let's reason this out.

OLIVER. No.

CHARLIE. This is ridiculous. You have no idea... (*Oliver stands with his arms folded*). Fine. I'll go. And Jane can sort this all out. (*Charlie exits. Oliver knocks on the bathroom door*).

OLIVER. Jules? Are you okay in there? He's gone. Charlie's gone. (*Oliver backs away from the door. He sits at the kitchen table. Julie exits the bathroom in her mother's robe with a towel on her head*).

JULIE. Why did you yell at him?

OLIVER. What did he do to you?

JULIE. You are so mean.

OLIVER. I asked you a question.

JULIE. You're not my daddy. I don't have to answer anything. And and and you aren't even supposed to be here. You're supposed to be at play practice.

OLIVER. I quit the stupid play. Jules. Talk to me. What happened?

AN EPIDEMIC OF TEMPORARY LUNACY

JULIE. What do you care? You just ignore me all the time and just because Uncle Charlie is nice to me you have to get angry. You're jealous. (*Julie walks through the kitchen and into the bedroom*).

OLIVER. Jealous? No. No. Wait a second. I saw him. He was in the bathroom with you. And... What did he do to you? (*Oliver walks into the bedroom*). Tell me what happened. I won't tell mom if you don't want me to.

JULIE. Get out! I'm trying to get dressed!

OLIVER. Sorry. Julie sits on her bed. Oliver sits at the kitchen table. Julie takes the towel off her head and throws it on the floor.

JULIE. You don't understand, Ollie. Uncle Charlie's nice. Nobody else listens to me. And. Mom said everything changes. And. I don't want things to change any more. I just want. I just want. To. I want everything to be the same. From like two years ago. I want you to be a kid with me. Back to the time when it was just me and you. And trivial pursuit. And telling stories. And falling asleep together. I want to go back in time, Ollie.

OLIVER. Can I come in there? I just want to talk. (*Oliver approaches the bedroom*). Can I come in? I won't yell any more. (*Oliver peeks into the room. He sees Julie sitting on her bed in the robe*). Can I come in?

JULIE. I don't care. (*Oliver enters and sits on his bed*).

OLIVER. So. Umm. Are you okay?

JULIE. I'm fine, not that you care.

OLIVER. I care.

JULIE. If you cared you wouldn't have barged in like a hippo and started yelling and screaming.

OLIVER. I didn't mean to yell... Wanna hear about what happened at the dance?

JULIE. No... what happened at the dance?

OLIVER. Bunch of kids were playing with a gun. It went off. They're all in trouble now.

JULIE. Did anybody get killed?

OLIVER. No. But it's good you missed it.

AN EPIDEMIC OF TEMPORARY LUNACY

JULIE. I guess.

OLIVER. Jules, I just want to know what happened. Did Uncle Charlie do something to you? I won't tell mom. I just want to know.

JULIE. So you can try to kill him?

OLIVER. I wasn't trying to kill him.

JULIE. That's what it sounded like.

OLIVER. Tell me what happened.

JULIE. Nothing happened you big fat dummy. Nothing happened. Nothing happened. Nothing happened. Okay?!

OLIVER. I've had a funny feeling about Uncle Charlie for a while now. You may not have noticed, but I have. He's creepy.

JULIE. He's not creepy.

OLIVER. He looks at you. I see him watch you when you walk out of a room. It's creepy.

JULIE. Stop saying he's creepy! He's nice to me.

OLIVER. He's not nice to me. Ever. He wants to hurt me.

JULIE. Uncle Charlie loves you.

OLIVER. He really doesn't. I'm afraid of him. And I'm afraid he's gonna hurt you.

JULIE. He's the only person in the world who cares about me.

OLIVER. I wish you understood... I want to go back to the way things were too. But that's not possible. It doesn't mean we aren't always gonna be close. Like friends.

JULIE. Best friends?

OLIVER. Forever.

JULIE. If we're best friends, you can't kick me out and ignore me and make me play alone.

OLIVER. If we're best friends we can't keep secrets from each other. We have to tell each other everything. If we don't tell each other everything, then we'll never be friends.

JULIE. Okay.

OLIVER. Tell me why Charlie was in the bathroom with you.

JULIE. I don't know what to tell you.

OLIVER. Tell me the truth.

AN EPIDEMIC OF TEMPORARY LUNACY

JULIE. I don't want you to get mad.

OLIVER. I won't get mad at you. I promise.

JULIE. Okay. I'll tell you. The truth. The truth is. You love me, right?

OLIVER. Of course. You're my favorite.

JULIE. You're my favorite too...

Okay. Okay. Umm. I was staying home sick today. Uncle Charlie came over. He was sitting on your bed. And. I just went to take a shower. And. I was in there. In the bathroom. And. I was gonna take a shower. And. And. He barged in. He. Umm. Came into the bathroom and said he'd help me.

OLIVER. Why would he do that?

JULIE. I dunno. Don't be mad.

OLIVER. I saw you crying. Why were you crying?

JULIE. I don't remember. I think I was standing there. And he was standing there. And. I don't know. I started crying. And he...

OLIVER. Did he do something?

JULIE. I don't know. I really don't know. I can't remember. Please don't tell mom.

OLIVER. I won't tell her. I promise.

JULIE. He told me I looked beautiful.

OLIVER. Did he put his hands on you?

JULIE. Umm. He touched my hair. He said I'm a beautiful woman. And he told me not to tell you or mom or anybody.

OLIVER. What happened next?

JULIE. Umm. Nothing. Because I started crying. And he left. And then you came home. (*Oliver tears his Shakespeare poster off the wall and tears it into pieces*).

OLIVER. That sonofabitch. I'm gonna kill him. I'm totally gonna kill him. I swear.

JULIE. No no no no no no. Ollie. Please. You can't tell him I told you. It's a secret.

OLIVER. I can't let him get away with this, Julie.

JULIE. Just this once. Please. It's okay. I didn't get hurt. I'm okay.

AN EPIDEMIC OF TEMPORARY LUNACY

Please don't do anything. He is so much bigger and stronger than you. I don't want him to hurt you.

OLIVER. He's bigger than me now. But when I get older. When I can stand up and look him right in the eye. One day. I'll take care of him once and for all. (*Oliver looks at the notes written on his wall. He notices something...*)

JULIE. Please don't do anything. Okay? Promise me. It was just a one-time thing. And nobody meant anything. And. Promise you won't do anything and we can just go back to being best friends and pretend none of this happened. (*Oliver begins gather his books*). What are you doing?

OLIVER. I got an idea for my science fair project.

JULIE. Can I help you with it?

OLIVER. You already did.

JULIE. How'd I do that?

OLIVER. You gave me the idea.

JULIE. Ummm... That's cool. What's the idea?

OLIVER. It's a surprise. (*Oliver takes his books and exits into the kitchen. He drops his books onto the table. Julie begins to look through the clothes in her closet*).

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