

DAIRY QUEEN

By Sarah Loucks

CHARACTERS

LEE: 18 years old, an employee at the DQ. Any race.

KAREN: 18 years old, an employee at the DQ. Any race.

SHEILA: Early 30's. Manager of the DQ. Any race.

TIME

2019. The evening of the 4th of July.

PLACE

A Dairy Queen in rural America. The Dairy Queen does not need to be represented realistically, however some basic elements must be present: a counter with a cash register on it, a dining room with some chairs and tables, and at least one exterior wall must be made from a large glass window. Unforgiving fluorescent lights illuminate the 4th of July decorations adorning the dining room, a sad attempt at festivity. The passage of time leaks from unsuspecting places, despite attempts to keep the restaurant shiny and new.

NOTE

A slash / indicates where the next character starts speaking.

A dash -- indicates where a character has been cut off or cut themselves off.

Lack of periods or commas indicate an invitation to play with rhythm. When punctuation is used, it should be observed with diligence.

Utterances such as “uh,” “ah,” “um,” “hah,” “hee,” and especially “blargawoooooooooooo” should be spoken exactly as they are typed.

“Karin” is pronounced “KUH-RIN.”

CASTING

Diverse casting is highly encouraged. That being said, consideration must be put into casting to avoid problematic stereotypes. Lee is the “good kid” and Karen is the “bad kid,” therefore there is no production of this play where Karen is black and Lee is white. Yeah? Sheila should pretty much always be white. But there should never be a production where Sheila is Black, Indigenous, or a person of color and Lee and Karen are white. Yeah? Cast diversely, but consciously.

Inside the DQ. KAREN sits on the counter wearing a drive thru headset. Her uniform is wrinkled and her apron is stained. She holds her arm extended over the trash, emptying the contents of a "Reddi-Whip" whipped cream can. She stares ahead, as if this is a routine, rote activity. A mop bucket and mop sit in the middle of the dining room. Suddenly, the door to the dining room flings open, causing the door chime to jingle loudly. In rushes LEE, pulling on his DQ uniform as if he is late. KAREN does not look at him.

LEE

i was literally on my way to the fireworks and! i was literally IN the car with my family on the way to the fireworks and!

KAREN

alex said he has food poisoning

LEE

he does not HAVE. oh my god

KAREN

that's what he said to sheila on the phone

LEE

alex told sheila he has *food* poisoning?

KAREN

that's what he said

LEE

that's the oldest excuse in the book! the oldest! older than! sheila is the *manager!* how did she fall for? god

LEE crosses to the cash register to clock in.
He notices the open sign.

LEE

why is the open sign turned off

KAREN

it's the fourth of july, who cares

LEE

did you turn it off?

KAREN

it broke

LEE

it was working yesterday

KAREN

maybe it broke in the night

LEE

it's not broken you just didn't want to turn it on

LEE crosses to the open sign. He pulls the chain. It does not turn on. He pulls it again. It does not turn on. He pulls the chain rapidly in quick succession.

KAREN

hahaaaaaa you broooooke it

LEE

FOOD POISONING?

KAREN

listen, i don't want to be working on the fourth of july either, okay?

LEE

it's fine! i'm going to do my job regardless of! (*Regaining composure*) have you stocked the cups yet? i'll stock the cups

LEE crosses to the cups and begins stocking them.

KAREN

why didn't you just tell sheila you had other plans? you didn't have to come in, you weren't scheduled

LEE

because she said she really needed me and. she said she *really* needed me

KAREN

you could have said, listen bitch, i'm literally in the car with my family right now on the way to the fireworks and it wouldn't have even been a lie

LEE

it's fine, this is part of. showing my worth, this is

KAREN

showing your worth? ugh, gross. you should have just told her to go fuck herself

LEE

you can't say that to the manager

KAREN

i do it all the time

LEE stops stocking the cups. He gestures at the whipped cream can.

LEE

what are you doing

KAREN

i heard if you huff the air inside of these things you can get high

LEE

that's an urban legend

KAREN

it is not they're called whippets my older brother told me about them they kill your brain for like five seconds he says it's totally awesome

LEE
karen--

KAREN
it's pronounced karIN now, i've told you a million times

LEE
whatever, just stop. what you're doing and. get off the counter, please?

KAREN lies down on the counter in retaliation.

LEE
oh, come on, what if a customer comes in and--

KAREN
IT'S THE FOURTH OF FUCKING JULY, NO CUSTOMERS ARE COMING IN, THEY'RE ALL GETTING READY FOR THE FIRWORKS, IT'S BEEN DEAD FOR THE LAST THREE HOURS

LEE
okay, well, sheila might come up front and--

KAREN
she's not coming up front, she's watching netflix in the office, she's watching re-runs of friends, i bet, i bet you

LEE resumes stocking the cups. KAREN
squirts a gob of whipped cream into her mouth.
Beat.

LEE
why are you trying to get people to say your name like that?

KAREN
like what?

LEE
you're trying to like. make it into a thing

KAREN

what?

LEE
with the i

KAREN
i don't know what you mean

LEE
instead of the e

KAREN
karin

LEE
right

KAREN
so what's up?

LEE
it's pronounced KA-REN. it's printed on your nametag very clearly

KAREN rips off her nametag.

KAREN
i'm reinventing myself

LEE
how?

KAREN
how am I?

LEE
reinventing yourself?

KAREN
i changed my name!

LEE
you're still the same person

KAREN rips LEE's nametag off.

KAREN
there

LEE
hey!

KAREN
now neither of us have names at all!

LEE
give it back!

KAREN holds the nametags over a grate in the ground.

KAREN
ooooooo i'm gonna throw your name down the pit

LEE
DON'T!

KAREN
nothing comes out of the pit, remember when sheila dropped her brand new phone down the pit

LEE
i remember when sheila / dropped her phone

KAREN
and dave's keys--

LEE
i remember the keys--

KAREN

you'll never get your name back, you'll be nameless...*(dramatically)* forever

KAREN does an evil villain laugh as she moves the nametags closer to the pit.

LEE
please, no!

KAREN
HAPPY FOURTH OF JULY!!!!!!!!!!

KAREN flings the nametags into the air. They nametags disappear into a corner of the restaurant.

LEE
KAREN!

KAREN
IT'S KARIN!

LEE
noooo did they go under a booth, i think they went under a booth

LEE gets down on his hands and knees to look for the nametags. KAREN hops back on the counter.

KAREN
god, i'd give anything to be anywhere else right now!

LEE
you're gonna have to pay for new nametags

KAREN
aleasha's having a house party tonight, she has that big house?

LEE
did you see them go under a booth?

KAREN

her parents are gone to like alaska or something because they're rich

LEE

oh god, it's disgusting down here!

KAREN

it's just not fair. i've worked every holiday since i started here. thanksgiving i had to work, christmas eve i had to work, aleasha's birthday party i had to work--

LEE

aleasha having a birthday party isn't a holiday--

KAREN

it practically is in this town!

LEE stands.

LEE

you know she schedules you for holidays because you show up late to every shift, right?

KAREN

i'm not late to every shift

LEE

yeah, you are

KAREN

well if being scheduled for holidays is punishment, why are you here, employee of the month?

LEE

i'm not here as punishment. i'm here as a favor. to sheila

KAREN

god, i can't believe you fell for that. that is like, grade-a manager manipulation

LEE

sheila wouldn't manipulate me

KAREN

are you kidding me? she's been manipulating you

LEE

can we? can we just shut up and get through this shift?

LEE resumes his search for the nametags.

KAREN observes him.

KAREN

are you actually upset about missing the fireworks?

LEE

i'm *upset* about the name tags

KAREN

fireworks were stolen from the chinese

LEE

great

Beat.

KAREN

oh come on, it's just a bunch of families with crying children sitting in a field getting eaten alive by mosquitoes! what is there to miss

LEE

it's a family tradition

KAREN

traditions are for dead people

LEE

every 4th of july my family goes to the fireworks. and it's really nice and. we've never missed it

KAREN

wow, your family is obsessed

LEE
they're not *obsessed* with

KAREN
are you kidding me? your house is famous! people drive from other towns to see it

LEE
okay, well my dad likes to decorate a little bit. / but it's not

KAREN
a little bit?

LEE
it's not an *obsession*

KAREN
you've got a fifty foot inflatable uncle sam in your front lawn right now

LEE
it's ten foot!

KAREN
oh, it's *ten foot*. where's your dad even buy all that stuff?

LEE
why are you asking me this

KAREN
because i want to know where someone gets thirty plastic elves to put on their roof at christmas! that is a disturbingly large quantity of plastic elves!

LEE
online! at places!

KAREN
what places

LEE
i don't know! i just live there, okay?!

Beat.

KAREN
what's it like?

LEE
what's what *like*?

KAREN
to live in the holiday house!

LEE looks up from his nametag search.

LEE
you wanna know what it's like? it's embarrassing. okay? and it's not just the decorations. my dad makes us celebrate every holiday together, i mean every holiday, even the stupid ones like flag day, even labor day, what even is that! my mom says it's because he grew up poor? so now he has to like, make up for all the shitty holidays of his childhood? and it's messed up cause like, my dad wanted me to get this job, but if i miss a single holiday for work, he gets mad (*pause*) anddddd YEAH, i don't know why i told you any of this, this is totally freaking humiliating, unimportant, and i still can't find the nametags

KAREN
at least he cares

LEE
i love my dad, to be clear i *love* my dad

KAREN
he could not care

LEE
i know. it just feels like. i'm living in a tourist attraction sometimes

KAREN
i don't know. i always thought your house was kind of. cute

LEE

you're making fun of me. i get it

KAREN

i always get excited when your dad changes the decorations. my mom and i live in an apartment and we're not allowed to decorate the outside, it sucks

LEE

not even a pumpkin on halloween?

KAREN

not even a pumpkin

LEE

yeah, i mean i totally help put all those decorations up

KAREN

really?

LEE

yeah, totally

KAREN

i bet you complain about it

LEE

i don't!

KAREN

yeah, you do

LEE

i don't freaking complain!

KAREN

oh my god, you *totally* do

LEE

whatever, at least i don't live in a crappy apartment where they don't allow pumpkins. how can you even call where you live a home if you can't have a pumpkin?

KAREN

what's that supposed to mean

LEE

it's just sad

KAREN

it's not sad

LEE

i mean, i didn't mean it like SAD

KAREN

it's not SAD and just cause i don't have a family that cares about holidays doesn't mean i don't deserve this night off too, okay!?

LEE

oh, that's not what i was. that's not what / i was saying--

KAREN

you know, ever since michelle dumped you, you've been such a little bitch

Silence.

LEE

how did you know we broke up?

KAREN

everyone knows

LEE

cool. everyone knows

KAREN

isn't michelle like. super christian or something?

LEE

you know she's super christian. everyone knows

KAREN

i heard she's gonna be at aleasha's party tonight

LEE
cool. great

KAREN
seems kind of un-christian if you ask me

LEE
it does?

KAREN
do you *know* what happens at aleasha's parties?

LEE
what happens? wait! no. i don't wanna know

LEE crosses toward the mop. Beat.

KAREN
i already did that

LEE
well, you missed a spot

Silence.

KAREN
sorry about you and michelle

LEE
it's fine

KAREN
it doesn't seem fine

LEE
look, it's fine okay?

Beat.

KAREN
wanna know what happened yesterday

LEE
no

KAREN
it'll cheer you up

LEE
it probably won't

KAREN
k, never mind then

LEE
ugh, fine just tell me!

KAREN
(Leaning in)
yesterday alex thought he locked himself in the walk-in

LEE
the walk-in doesn't lock

KAREN
exactly. i held the door shut when he went in to get a box of sprinkles

LEE
no way

KAREN
he started crying

LEE
no

KAREN
yes

LEE

(Abandoning the mop)

tell me everything

KAREN

he *totally* freaked out, started banging on the door with both his fists, yelling, "I DON'T WANNA DIE AT DAIRY QUEEN, I DON'T WANNA DIE AT DAIRY QUEEN!"

LEE

(Laughing)

ohmygod, ohmygod

KAREN

"PLEASE GOD, LET ME OUT, I SWEAR I WON'T EAT ANYMORE BLIZZARDS WITHOUT PAYING FOR THEM EVER AGAIN!"

LEE

(Laughing)

shhhh shhh sheila will hear you!

KAREN

she's not gonna hear shit. anyway, i think alex might have reconsidered his entire future in that moment. i probably did him a favor

LEE

oh my god, he's such an idiot. how has he not gotten fired yet?

KAREN

he's sheila's cousin

LEE

he's sheila's *what*

KAREN

you never heard that? they even look alike, same nose

LEE

i *knew* he was getting special treatment!

KAREN

yeah. it's called nepotism

LEE

what's nepotism

KAREN

it's when alex calls in with obviously fake food poisoning on the night of the fourth of july and doesn't get in trouble because he's sheila's cousin

LEE takes a giant breath in as his entire body tenses. He makes a silent clenching gesture with his fists. We watch him try to suppress intense rage. He swallows it, then returns to mopping.

KAREN

um. are you okay?

LEE

oh yeah, i'm great

KAREN

no, you're not

LEE

look, i'm great, okay? i'm great. (*Abandoning the mop*) help me look for the nametags

KAREN

oh my GOD they're just nametags!

LEE

yeah and losing mine suggests irresponsibility and i am trying to prove that i'm responsible and who will believe i'm responsible if i can't even be responsible for my own nametag! and ANYWAY what am i supposed to say when i ask sheila for a new one, she'll be like, oh, how did you lose it and i'll have to be like oh, *KAREN--*

KAREN

karin!

LEE
threw it on the ground

KAREN
reinventing myself here

LEE
because she doesn't respect work property!

LEE's eyes widen as he realizes something.

LEE
i have to tell sheila

KAREN
about what?

LEE
the nametags!

KAREN
you're gonna *tell* on me?

LEE
i have to. i'm already behind because of nepotism!

KAREN
who cares! those nametags cost like thirty cents! sheila doesn't care

LEE
i care!

KAREN
fine. tell her. i'm quitting anyway

LEE
you are?

KAREN
yup

LEE
when?

KAREN
soon

LEE
are you gonna work at the gas station?

KAREN
no

LEE
are you gonna work at the liberty bar?

KAREN
uh, no

LEE
are you gonna work at mcdonalds?

KAREN
no!

LEE
but there's no where else to work in this town

KAREN
i'm quitting and i've got a plan figured out so don't worry about it

LEE
(Pleased she's quitting)
oh. cool

KAREN
you're not gonna miss me?

LEE
well we've only worked a few shifts together, but you were mostly annoying and lazy each time, so. no

LEE turns abruptly toward the back. KAREN hollers after him.

KAREN
I'M NOT GONNA MISS YOU EITHER!

KAREN turns back toward the lobby. She notices the nametags in a corner of the restaurant, walks toward them, and picks them up. She looks at them, then shoves them in her pocket. Looking around the DQ for something to entertain, she remembers the whipped cream can, grabs it, and attempts to do a whippet. It doesn't work. Disappointed, she throws the can in the trash. Beat. She re-thinks it. She pulls the whipped cream can out of the trash and checks to see if it touched anything disgusting, then huffs the can again. She manages to gets high for about five seconds. Beat. LEE re-enters.

LEE
sheila's gone

KAREN
what?

LEE
sheila's gone

KAREN
what?

LEE
sheila's gone!

KAREN
sheila's gone!

LEE

shut up stop being weird, she's not in the office

KAREN

oh i thought you were kidding what the fuck did you check the walk in?

LEE

yeah

KAREN

give me a sec i might need to puke

KAREN holds her head over the trashcan for 3 seconds.

LEE

ummm are you okay?

KAREN remains over the trashcan for 3 more seconds, then snaps back into it as if nothing happened.

KAREN

yeah whoa i'm fine. did you check the dumpsters?

LEE

yeah

KAREN

did you check the smoking area?

LEE

yeah

KAREN

did you check the dumpsters?

LEE

yeah you already said that...?

KAREN

holy shit this is the best news ever! wait did you check the bathrooms

KAREN and LEE approach the bathrooms cautiously. KAREN knocks gently. No response. She swings the door open abruptly.

KAREN
SHEILA I'M GONNA SEE YOUR PUSSY!

Empty.

KAREN
she's like. really gone

LEE
she can't be gone

KAREN
she's like. physically not here

LEE
where. would she go?

They think. A beat.

KAREN
who cares!

LEE
who cares?!

KAREN
this is / awesome!

LEE
illegal!

KAREN
lee, we could have a party! we could turn out the lights and rename the freezer utopia!
we could cover our naked bodies in whipped cream!

LEE

this must be some kind of test! of our abilities our competence, competency—

KAREN

this is going to be *way* better than aleasha's party

LEE

oh my god. is this how they hire new managers? is this some sort of experimental long form interview?

KAREN

no

LEE

(Sudden fear)

i'm not ready for this

He pulls out his phone and starts looking through the contacts.

LEE

we should call someone

KAREN

we're not calling anyone!

LEE

who's sheila's boss? dave? / i don't have dave's number!

KAREN

i said we're not calling anyone!

KAREN wrestles LEE's cell phone out of his hands.

LEE

give it back!

KAREN sticks LEE's phone down the crotch of her pants.

LEE
awww noo, germs!!

KAREN
listen, if this is some kind of trick interview, which it is not, wouldn't it be more impressive if you got through the shift without asking for help?

LEE
yeah. yeah, i didn't think about it that way

KAREN
seeeeeeeeeeee. it's an opportunity!

LEE
an opportunity

LEE starts furiously mopping the floor. KAREN does a celebratory dance and howls to the ceiling.

KAREN
blargawoooooooooooo! okay, whaddyou wanna do first? ooooo i wanna masturbate in sheila's office. or maybe i'll eat five sundaes and not pay for them! (*Notices LEE*) what are you doing?

LEE
if this is a trick interview, then i need to be showing off my best self

KAREN
noooo, we're gonna have a party!

LEE
this is my opportunity to impress

KAREN
no! uh, today is basically america's birthday! it's kind of rude to america to be working on her birthday don't you think?

LEE

i had to work on my birthday this year, i don't see why i can't work on america's birthday too

KAREN

but you're not even supposed to be here, you're covering for alex!

LEE

being on top of my game when there's no supervision is exactly how to show i'm better than alex. nepotism, remember?

KAREN

lee, nobody will know the difference! no customers are coming in and our manager is GONE!

Pause. LEE considers the temptation.

LEE

i'm not interested

KAREN

yeah, well i bet your *dad* doesn't want you mopping floors all night on the fourth of july

Beat. In the same way as before, LEE's body tenses with rage he attempts to control.

KAREN

ooo, you're mad

LEE

I'M NOT MAD. in fact--

KAREN

you sound mad--

LEE

i am very grateful--

KAREN

your jaw is clenching--

LEE
to have this opportunity--

KAREN
to be sheila's *pawn*?

LEE
to prove my WORTH!

LEE swallows his rage. He breathes out the tension. KAREN watches. Silence.

KAREN
let me rename you

LEE
let you? what?

KAREN
i ripped off your nametag?

LEE
why would i let you rename me?

KAREN
so you can reinvent yourself!

LEE
i *like* being lee

KAREN
come on, it's just for fun, it's just for tonight

LEE
why would i rename myself if i'm still gonna wake up and be the same?

KAREN
exactly

LEE
exactly what?

KAREN
tomorrow morning you're still gonna wake up, and you're still gonna be lee. so, what's to lose?

LEE looks at KAREN.

LEE
i can't, i'm invested in this place, i'm--

LEE abruptly drops the mop and crosses to the utensils. KAREN follows excitedly.

KAREN
in dairy queen?

LEE
i'm gonna stock the spoons

KAREN
what does that mean?

LEE
nothing

KAREN
you wanna work here forever?

LEE
no--

KAREN
you said you're invested in this place

LEE
so what

KAREN
so you're gonna stay here?

Beat.

KAREN
come on, you can tell me

LEE aggressively stocks a handful of spoons.

KAREN
i won't laugh

LEE stocks another handful of spoons.

LEE
i wanna be like--

KAREN
like what

LEE
like the--

KAREN
like the what

LEE
like the. manager one day

Beat. KAREN lets out a laugh, then realizes
LEE is not laughing.

KAREN
wait. are you serious?

LEE crosses back to the mop.

LEE
maybe

KAREN
sheila's the manager

LEE
not for long

KAREN
sheila's gonna work here till she dies

LEE
you don't think she'll be fired for abandoning us?

KAREN
uh, *no*

LEE
but she forgets things, she forgets inventory, i do the inventory

KAREN
sheila drinks at work and dave hasn't fired her

LEE
sheila drinks at work?

KAREN
why do you think she forgets the inventory?

KAREN realizes something.

KAREN
oh, wow. this is like, *really* fucking sad

LEE
yeah, it is sad

KAREN
no, i mean--you want to be sheila

LEE
what? no!

KAREN
wanting to be manager is wanting to *be* sheila

Beat.

LEE
okay, it's not *that* sad

KAREN
you're gonna wear this same uniform your whole life

LEE
not if i become regional manager

KAREN
oh my god, you want to be *dave*?

LEE
dave doesn't wear this uniform. dave wears khakis and a nice collared shirt

KAREN
whoa. khakis. THRILLING

LEE
alright, don't talk down on me when you're not headed for greener pastures!

KAREN
there are no pastures anymore. pastures are not a thing. i don't even know where the animals go, i think they just live in cages until they die

LEE
well then i guess we're both just two animals waiting to die!

LEE takes a breath and sits at one of the tables in the dining room. Silence.

KAREN
what about willow?

LEE
willow?

KAREN
willow, what do you think about being called willow

LEE
i'd rather die than be called willow

Beat.

KAREN
basil?

LEE
no

KAREN
rex. dex!

LEE
i have a perfectly good and reasonable name

KAREN
okay, but like--

LEE
no

KAREN
if you're planning to be *sheila* one day--

LEE
i'm not planning to be *sheila!*

KAREN
all sheilas are managers and all managers are sheilas

LEE
being manager is the first step, regional manager is the--

KAREN

if you're gonna become regional *sheila* one day, don't you want one last hurrah?

Beat.

LEE

i've never even had a hurrah

KAREN

never?

Beat.

LEE

what do you even want to do, anyway? sheila or not, we're still stuck here

KAREN

i want to have fun. like everyone else

LEE considers.

LEE

(Abruptly)

okay, well i just don't want to be called something stupid! *(Pause)* like *badger*

KAREN

ohmygod, you are totally not a badger--

LEE

okay, as long as i don't have to be a badger--

KAREN

no badger!

LEE

OR willow!

KAREN

fuck willow!

LEE
then. (*pause*) okay

KAREN
(*Clapping her hands*)
yayyyyy!!! okay--

LEE
but you have to promise me something!

KAREN
uhhh promise you what

LEE
no property damage no vandalism no running to fast in the lobby

KAREN
that's it?

LEE
just fun. like you said

KAREN
just fun

LEE looks at KAREN suspiciously.

LEE
shake on it

KAREN
uhhh

LEE
it's a sign of agreement

KAREN
too formal. how about a blood pact

LEE
what!

KAREN
it's a sign of agreement!

LEE
unsanitary!

KAREN
okay let's not shake or make blood pacts, lets stare into each other's eyes really intensely without blinking for ten seconds

They stare into each other's eyes. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6...For a brief moment, they see beneath the teenage mask. It is deeply uncomfortable. LEE breaks.

LEE
ah! wow! okay!

KAREN continues to stare at him, enthralled by the experience.

LEE
the pact is! the pact is sealed now! stop. stop staring at me like that

KAREN
tell me your first memory as a child

LEE
my first memory? why?!

KAREN
it's part of the re-naming process

LEE
there's a process?

KAREN

there's always a process

LEE
oh god

KAREN
come on!

LEE
what does my first memory have to do with renaming me

KAREN
we have to get at the *true* you

LEE rolls his eyes and groans.

KAREN
tell me tell me tell me

LEE
okay, shut up!

LEE looks back in his memory. He takes his time.

LEE
okay. i was in the living room with my dad. he was. staring into the tv. he had just. gotten home from work. it was dark outside and

KAREN
i need details

LEE closes his eyes and falls into the memory.

LEE
the tv had a blue glow that touched everything in the room. it made his face blue, so always, in my head, i imagined him with a blue face. he always wore his shirt buttoned right up to his chin. like some kind of blue alien in a plaid work shirt, boots covered in mud-- wait, this can't be my first memory, / i must have been seven at the time—

KAREN

it doesn't matter keep going

LEE

it was like he was looking for some kind of answers in the tv? like looking for life on his home planet, or? so i asked him--why he was always watching tv, and. he said it was because he wanted to go. somewhere else

KAREN

somewhere else? somewhere else like where?

LEE opens his eyes.

LEE

i cannot believe this is my first memory!

KAREN

somewhere else like where!

LEE

i don't know!

KAREN

he didn't say?

LEE

i can't remember

KAREN

you can't remember?! how am i supposed to rename you if you don't remember details!

LEE

also i think he was watching something so boring, like the news and they were talking about the stock market crash and! (*Sudden panic*) this memory is not the true me, okay? this is not the true me!

KAREN

okay! we don't have to use that memory!

LEE

okay. good

KAREN
what's your dad's name, anyway?

Beat.

LEE
lee. *(pause)* lee baxter

KAREN
brutal

LEE
yup

KAREN
that's like--

LEE
i know

KAREN
SO not creative of him

LEE
he does his best, okay

KAREN
(Clapping her hands together)
alright. i'm going to try something and it's going to be weird but just roll with it

KAREN starts silently moving her mouth in a weird way.

KAREN
leeeeeeeeeeeeeeeep

Silence.

Beat. LEE thinks.

LEE
i don't want one

KAREN
what?

LEE
a name

KAREN
you just said you'd!

LEE
no, like. i just want a...blank

KAREN
you don't want a name. at all?

LEE
i wanna see what it's like to not

KAREN
freaky

LEE
for a sec

KAREN
whoa

LEE
uh huh

KAREN
do you feel different? being nameless?

LEE
uh, not yet

KAREN
do you feel scared?

LEE
no

KAREN
do you feel empty?

LEE
no, i just started

KAREN
well what do you feel like?

LEE
i still feel like LEE! give me a sec!

LEE closes his eyes. KAREN waits with anticipation.

KAREN
what do you feel like!

LEE opens his eyes.

LEE
honestly? the same

KAREN
that is so disappointing

Beat.

LEE
do you feel different?

KAREN is silent.

LEE

you don't feel different, either?!

KAREN

okay, probably i haven't found the right name or something!

LEE

you've been yelling at everyone to call you karin for months and now it's not the right name?

KAREN

okay, how about, like. if you think of a better name, you can try it out. i give you permission

LEE

just like, say it?

KAREN

yeah but say it normal, don't be like, oh i think this should be your new name, just be like, oh hey story

LEE

i'm not calling you *story*

KAREN

or whatever you want

LEE

okay--

KAREN

WOO! IT'S A PARTY!

LEE

it's a party...

They wait expectantly for something exciting to happen. It doesn't.

LEE

um, to be honest, i don't really know what people do at parties

KAREN

you know what, i think it's something you just feel out as you go

LEE

okay. so, what's first?

KAREN thinks.

KAREN

i'm gonna go steal all the toilet paper from the storage closet

LEE

what?

KAREN exits to the backroom. LEE watches her go. He tries to imitate her dance from earlier but can't get into it. He crosses towards the open sign. He reaches out his hand to pull the chain, but decides not to. KAREN re-enters with an industrial sized package of toilet paper.

KAREN

ooph! this is a good haul

She heaves the toilet paper on the counter and turns to LEE excitedly.

KAREN

okay so, i'm thinking rachel. what do you think about the name rachel

LEE

why are you stealing toilet paper from the storage closet?

KAREN

because sometimes there's no toilet paper at my house dum dum. oh! what about--

LEE

your mom doesn't buy toilet paper?

KAREN

my mom has a lot of things on her mind, okay

LEE

she forgets to buy toilet paper?

KAREN

my mom is like really busy, okay?

LEE

so's my mom and she still remembers to buy toilet paper

KAREN

so i steal things for fun, okay?

LEE

oh. like kleptomania?

KAREN

yeah, that

KAREN pulls out a bag of weed and begins to roll a joint. LEE's eyes widen with panic.

KAREN

what?

LEE

um. it's just

KAREN

just what

LEE

(pause, pivot)

just that rachel is boring. everyone we know is called rachel

KAREN

you're so right

LEE
we know like six rachels

KAREN
fuck rachel

LEE continues to nervously eye the weed.

KAREN
do you want some? you can just ask

LEE deliberates. *He wants some! But that's illegal! But!*

LEE
uh. do you want to listen to music? i'm going to play some music!

KAREN
oh, yeah. yeah, people play music at parties

LEE reaches in his pocket for his phone, but it's not there. KAREN pulls LEE's phone out of her pants and hands it to him. LEE sprays the phone with bleach and wipes it with a towel, while KAREN continues rolling the joint.

KAREN
sorry about that...

LEE
uh. it's fine. *(Playing a song)* okay, here's a having fun song!

KAREN
oo! i love this song!

LEE
you know this band?

KAREN

yeah!

LEE
nobody *ever* knows this band

KAREN
i know! which is *so wrong*

KAREN sings along ridiculously to prove she knows this band. LEE laughs.

LEE
i think i'll! i think i'll make a sundae!

LEE exits behind the counter to prepare his sundae as KAREN continues singing and rolling her joint. Beat. LEE re-joins KAREN at the table, sundae in hand.

LEE
i kind of love this

KAREN
you do?

LEE
sheila would be so mad

KAREN
you wanna make sheila mad?

LEE
no, of course not!

KAREN
yeah, you do

LEE
okay, i kinda do.

KAREN
it's kinda fun, right?

LEE
oh my god have you ever noticed how sheila talks in the headset?

KAREN
yeah, she does this like, weird porno voice, like

LEE
(Imitating SHEILA's voice)
hello, this shelly, how may i help you

KAREN
ohmygod, ohmygod

LEE
(Imitating SHEILA's voice)
okay, one dilly bar, coming right up

They laugh together.

LEE
it's so weird, right?!

KAREN
but it kind of turns you on, right?

LEE
uh, no

KAREN
it kinda makes you want to...

KAREN does some kind of obscene teenager indication of sex, which maybe betrays that she knows nothing about sex.

LEE
no no ew absolutely no

KAREN
well, i already fucked sheila in the walk-in, so

LEE
WHAT?!

KAREN
you didn't hear?

LEE
you--*SHEILA!*?

KAREN
i can't believe you didn't hear

LEE
but you hate sheila!

KAREN
it's called a hate fuck

LEE
that's a thing?

KAREN
oh, yeah

LEE considers the concept of a 'hate fuck.'

LEE
what was it like?

KAREN
ooooo curiossssss

LEE
okay, you did our boss, obviously i'm curious

KAREN

(Shrugging)
it was average

LEE
just average?

KAREN
yeah

LEE
(Earnestly, without judgement)
oh. does that mean you're like. gay?

KAREN
(Earnestly, without judgement)
i don't know, maybe. probably i'm bi, but i haven't figured it out yet

LEE
well. regardless of whether or not you're. you deserve way better than sheila

KAREN
oh. *(touched)* thank you

LEE
(Reminding)
sheila sucks

KAREN
yeah, sucks dem titties

LEE
gross!

KAREN
it's not gross, it's mature

KAREN finishes rolling the joint and lights it.
She studies LEE.

LEE

what?

KAREN
manager?

LEE
regional manager. eventually

LEE waves the smoke out of his face.

KAREN
we just finished high school, you don't wanna like. live your life for a sec?

LEE
working is a part of living life

KAREN
a part of life that sucks balls

LEE
yeah, well. we graduated. we're done. what else are we supposed to do?

KAREN
drive to california drop acid fuck a stranger on the beach

LEE
uhhh

KAREN
i don't know, go to college like everyone else

LEE
college is for smart kids

KAREN
you're smart

LEE
i am?

KAREN

alex is going to college next year, dum dum

KAREN ashes her joint.

LEE

can you not ash that thing on the ground?

KAREN ashes in the half eaten sundae. LEE rolls his eyes.

KAREN

if alex can go to college, you can go to college

LEE

alex's family has money

KAREN

your family doesn't not have money

LEE

yeah, but we don't *have* money either

KAREN

yeah, but you're not poor

Beat.

LEE

what would i do

KAREN

at college? i don't know. learn how to make money

LEE

it just seems like you have to pay a lot of money to learn how to make money and by the time you're ready to make money you owe a lot of money? i don't know. my dad thinks i should join the military

KAREN

do *not* join the military. my older brother joined the military and now you can only wake him up by shaking his big toe

LEE

why do you care about my future so much?

KAREN

i don't *care* about your

LEE

you're interrogating me about it

KAREN

the world doesn't need anymore sheila's, okay?

LEE

i'm not going to be *sheila*

KAREN

you think sheila's life is good?

Beat.

LEE

what kind of question is that?

KAREN

do you think sheila's life is good

LEE

sheila's going on vacation to disney world this summer

KAREN

you think that means her life is good?

LEE

it means she can afford to go to disney world

KAREN

that doesn't mean anything. she could be going to disney world and still not be able to afford to go to disney world

LEE

sheila bought a house this year--

KAREN

that doesn't mean anything either

LEE challenges KAREN with a look.

LEE

i think you're jealous

KAREN

of sheila?

LEE

of me

KAREN

HAH!

LEE

because i have a plan. for a good life. and you don't

KAREN

i have a plan

LEE

quitting dairy queen is not a plan

KAREN

i have a real plan and just because i don't wave it arond like a flag in your fucking face doesn't mean i don't have one!

LEE

oh really? is it a five year plan?

KAREN

it's non-linear

LEE

what kind of plan then

KAREN

a plan to escape

LEE

dairy queen?

KAREN

this state

LEE

altogether?

KAREN

permanent

LEE

cool

Quick beat.

KAREN

well do you wanna know what it is

LEE

getting blackout drunk at aleasha's every night until you die?

KAREN takes a spoonful of ice cream and flicks it at LEE.

KAREN

fuck you!

LEE

(Looking at his shirt)

seriously!?

KAREN

fuck you! that is not my plan!

LEE

(Wiping his shirt)

awwwww it's sticky

KAREN

i have a plan. a real plan!

LEE

okay, tell me this real, non-linear plan

KAREN

i'm gonna get in my truck--

LEE

do you even own a truck?

KAREN

i'm going to *buy* a truck, a red truck, and then i'm gonna get in my truck, and i'm gonna drive so far away into the distance and i'm never coming back, never to see my family, never to say hi, and i'll never see you ever again. i'll sleep in roadside motels and camp in fields and i'll have everything i need in the back of my truck and i'll get a dog and we'll see the grand canyon together and we'll watch the colors in the sky change at sunset and i'll go to new orleans and listen to jazz, i'll drive through the desert with the radio turned all the way up, i'll visit EVERY SINGLE STATE CAPITAL, and i'll go to the rocky mountains where i'll catch snowflakes on my tongue--

LEE

so you're just gonna drive around

KAREN

it's not just driving around, it's experiencing--

LEE

how are you gonna pay for all this?

KAREN

what?

LEE

how much money do you have saved?

KAREN

plenty of people have done this! it's adventure! it's possibility! it's—

LEE

how are you gonna put gas in your car?

KAREN

truck

LEE

how are you gonna put gas in your truck?

KAREN

i'll figure it the fuck out!

LEE

trucks have bad gas mileage

KAREN

what the fuck do you care?

LEE

it just seems like you haven't actually thought this out

KAREN

i've thought it out, i've thought about it a lot!

LEE

i'm sorry, it just doesn't seem realistic

KAREN

why are you being so mean?

LEE

i'm not being--

KAREN
you're shitting / on my idea!

LEE
i'm not shitting on—

KAREN
HOW ABOUT THIS, YOU RUIN YOUR LIFE THE WAY YOU WANT AND I'LL RUIN
MINE THE WAY I WANT, OK? OK!

KAREN knocks the sundae to the ground and crosses to the counter. LEE takes in KAREN's words, then retrieves paper towels and a spray bottle to clean the sundae mess. KAREN grabs a handful of sprinkles from a container and eats them with her hand. Beat.

KAREN
i'll do it

LEE
i'm already doing it

KAREN
i said i'll do it

KAREN takes the spray bottle from him and cleans. She finishes wiping up the mess and takes the paper towels to the trash.

KAREn
i didn't mean that thing about ruining your life

LEE
i know being manager isn't cool, or even interesting--

KAREN
i said i didn't mean it--

LEE
but it's consistent

Beat.

LEE
this is the way i see it. i'm only a team member now, but if i work hard, in three years, i could become assistant manager. that's eleven dollars an hour. that's eighteen thousand annually after taxes. a pay increase of three twenty-five an hour. that's huge. and if i work hard as assistant manager, in another three or four years, i can become manager. managers make fifteen an hour, a whole four dollar an hour pay increase. that's twenty eight thousand, six hundred dollars annually after taxes. once i'm manager, i'll really have the chance to show my stuff. my leadership skills, my money skills. i'll prove i can run a team of employees. if i do that for another five to seven years, then i could get promoted to regional manager. once i'm regional manger, if i save up for another five years, i could buy a house

KAREN
how much do regional managers make per hour?

LEE
it's salary

KAREN
how much?

LEE
i think dave makes around forty grand. that's a good life, that's a good life, right?

KAREN
(Pause)
but right now you make seven twenty-five an hour

LEE
right now, yeah

KAREN
what's seven twenty-five annually

LEE

um

KAREN

what is it, i know you know it

LEE

it's barely thirteen thousand...

KAREN

yeah. and that's IF they give you forty hours a week

LEE

sheila promised me forty hours a week now that we're graduated

KAREN

you and everyone else she promised forty hours a week

LEE

you asked for forty hours a week?

KAREN

seven twenty-five is an insult. i'm quitting

LEE

...when did you come up with this plan?

KAREN

the plan works just as good if i came up with it yesterday or if i came up with it a year ago

LEE

do you know someone who's done this?

KAREN

i've seen it in the movies

LEE

just wondering if you had like. a model for it or something...

KAREN

my older brother took a road trip once

LEE

where did he go?

KAREN

to florida. he saw alligators. he said the sky is different. he saw the everglades, it's like a big swamp thing

LEE

i *know* what the everglades are

Silence.

LEE

listen, i'm not saying your plan isn't cool, or exciting. because it's both of those things. but there's a reason that this entire town hasn't given up and decided to live in their cars at the grand canyon. there's a reason people buy houses. because it's *nice*. it's nice to *own* something

KAREN

so your life goal is to own something?

LEE

why do you say it like that?

KAREN

cause it's sad

LEE

it's not sad

KAREN

it is sad and i do mean it like SAD

LEE

yeah! well! i want to have a family someday! how am i supposed to have a family someday if i don't have a house for them to live in?

KAREN

i have a solution! don't procreate

LEE

no. the solution is to think two steps ahead. the solution is to to plan. because with a plan you can obtain the things you want in life, no matter who you are (*LEE catches himself*) but sometimes, even when you have a perfect plan, the thing you want just. yeah. slips out of your fingers

Beat.

KAREN

you're still really hung up on michelle, huh

LEE

it's only been two weeks. i'm sure it'll get better

KAREN

it'll totally get better

LEE

it feels like it'll never get better

Beat. They sit in the feeling of it never getting better.

KAREN

what ifffffff

LEE

what if what

KAREN

i have an idea! it's a little weird but just roll with it

LEE

what is it

KAREN

what if we had a ceremony. a break up ceremony

LEE

a break up ceremony?

KAREN

to help you get over michelle! it'll be like--a ritual!

LEE

does that mean it's witchcraft?

KAREN

no

LEE

a break up ceremony does not sound fun

KAREN

you're not having fun anyway

LEE

a break up ceremony would make me uncomfortable

KAREN

we can have a safe word

LEE

like in sex?

KAREN

whoa

LEE

what?

KAREN

how do you know about that?

LEE

sex?

KAREN

kinky sex. dirty sex. freaky sex. the kind that would require a safe word

LEE

uh i don't know i heard it somewhere

KAREN
i thought you were a virgin

LEE
oh come on, michelle and i dated for two years

KAREN
you two were doing it?

LEE
we, uh. explored

KAREN
EXPLORED!?

LEE
shhh!!

KAREN
oh my god, you totally had kinky nasty wild freaky sex with michelle and no one knows about it!!!

LEE
that is an exaggeration!

KAREN
well then what did you do?

LEE
i can't tell you

KAREN
why not?!

LEE
because even though michelle and i are not together anymore we made a very important and sacred pact to not talk about our EXPLORATION for a lot of reasons mainly because her parents would disown her completely so you absolutely cannot. say anything. okay?

KAREN
wow

LEE

okay?

KAREN
wowwwwww

LEE
i didn't even admit anything you're just like deducing and making guesses and--

KAREN
did you do her in the butt

LEE
did i do? karin!

KAREN
ohmygodyoudiddddddd

LEE
alright well she's super christian so it was like morally easier for her!

KAREN
ohmygod, lee-not-lee, this is like. A REVELATION. we've worked together for two years and this whole time you were having nasty butt sex with christian michelle and I NEVER KNEW IT. you have to let me process this. *(She tries to process it. Has a realization)* EW! and she would come in and get ice cream with her mom! and i bet you thought about doing her in the butt when she came in to get ice cream with / her mom!

LEE
stop! we just broke up! i'm sensitive about it!

KAREN
okay, think of it this way, michelle was a distraction to you. that christian-perfect-body would have kept you in this town your entire life

LEE
i like it here

KAREN
oh yeah? tell me one thing you like about it

LEE can't think of a single thing. His body clenches with rage, but maybe in a more subtle way than before.

KAREN
just as i suspected

LEE
it's not that i! it's not that i *don't!*

KAREN
spit it out

LEE
(*Deep frustration*)
i don't know! how to say! what i'm feeling!

KAREN
same. (*pause*) can we do the break up ceremony now?

LEE
why not

KAREN
yayyyyyy!

LEE
ceremonies are supposed to be serious

KAREN
(*Seriously*)
yayyyyyyyyy

KAREN begins collecting random things from the DQ: cups, sprinkles, and other items from behind the counter.

KAREN
kneel down

She sets the cups in a circle around LEE. When she finishes, she hums, does a drum roll, then makes a cymbal crashing sound with her mouth. She begins showering LEE with sprinkles.

KAREN
(*Seriously*)

in this sovereign state of dairy queen, i do declare a cleansing ritual to expel michelle from the mind of this young man before me, who is ceremoniously and ritualistically encircled by 16 oz blizzard cups!

LEE
oh boy

KAREN
(Abrupt shift back to her teenager voice)
okay so likeeeeeee. what is it about michelle that you can't let go of?

LEE
i don't know

KAREN
when you think of her, what do you think of?

LEE
she made me feel. worth something?

KAREN
you don't feel worth on your own?

LEE
honestly? no

KAREN
well, that's fucked up

LEE
(Realizing)
yeah, it is fucked up

KAREN
i need details!

LEE
michelle gave me...purpose. she was the reason i made all these. plans for my future? manager and regional manager and. okay, honestly the biggest issue is that i asked her to marry me

KAREN

what

LEE

i bought a ring...

KAREN

WHAT

LEE

yeah...

KAREN

you BOUGHT a RING? like a real one like a?

LEE

i wanted her to know i was serious!

KAREN

WHOA

LEE

i wanted it to be real! i wanted it to. feel real. a diamond ring means commitment! it means a future!

KAREN

how did you. you bought it yourself?

LEE

um yeah well i literally saved every penny for a whole year and haven't you ever wondered why i always offer to stay late and clean the grease traps?

KAREN

michelle must have some bomb pussy

LEE

stop! her parents are super religious! there was no other way for it to work. i thought i was doing the right thing. i thought it was what i was supposed to do!

KAREN
you're eighteen

LEE
yeah well my dad did it, my dad bought our house when he was twenty-four!

KAREN
did he buy it, or did the bank buy it

LEE
yeah, for a long time it was the bank's but its his now!

KAREN
you need to get a new life goal

LEE
but i had a plan! (*Correcting*) i *have* a plan! regional manager, that's decent money!
enough for a good life!

KAREN
so what, so you proposed and she just said no?

LEE
she said it doesn't seem like i was going anywhere with my life. and that she'd keep me
in her prayers

Beat.

LEE
do you think if i wanted to go to college, she would have said yes?

KAREN
i...

LEE
do you think she would have said yes?

KAREN
you know what? it doesn't matter. because she said no. and i'm glad she said no. you
know why? because you're free now

LEE
she cheated on me with brian

KAREN
WHAT

LEE
yup

KAREN
with *BRIAN*? wait which brian

LEE
brian from gilbert who sells weed

KAREN
oh god, his weed is terrible!

LEE
his dad owns like, all the rental homes in this town! what does he need to sell weed for!

KAREN
god, with *brian*?

LEE
...like, whole time we were together

KAREN
the whole time?

LEE
practically the whole time

KAREN's demeanor darkens.

KAREN
that christian *slut*

LEE

please don't say that

KAREN
that DICK sucking christian SLUT!

LEE
this is really painful, / please stop

KAREN
FUCK THAT CHRISTIAN SLUT ON THE / CROSS!

LEE
no, no, PLEASE!

KAREN
i know just what to do. close your eyes

LEE
what? why?

KAREN
the ceremony won't work otherwise! i won't hurt you, i promise

LEE closes his eyes part way.

KAREN
all the way

LEE closes them all the way.

KAREN
now. i want you to imagine michelle. i want you to imagine you're going to say everything you've wanted to say to her, everything you've been holding back

She pulls out her cellphone.

KAREN
now, as if michelle is standing right here, i want you to start talking

KAREN dials and puts the phone on speaker. She holds the phone as close to LEE as she can get without him sensing her presence.

LEE

(Pause)

um. hi. michelle

KAREN

introduce yourself

LEE

oh um. this is lee. or, i guess i'm not really lee anymore. *(A small realization)* huh. it's a long story. anyway--

He takes a breath.

KAREN

say what you really feel. this is a safe space

LEE

okay, it's not about the fact that you didn't wanna marry me. like, i get it. okay? i got carried away and it was weird and i'm sorry

KAREN

stop being polite! just say what you feel!

LEE

you just. you act like the ring was NOTHING. like all those hours i worked were NOTHING. i went to the jewelry store! i picked it out! i chose one i thought YOU would like!

KAREN

yes get mad get mad

LEE

then i discover--BRIAN? you cheated on me with brian while i stayed late cleaning the grease traps?!

KAREN

mad mad / mad mad mad

LEE

GOD, YOUR SO STUPID AND DUMB AND HYPOCRITICAL AND

KAREN

MADDERMADDERMADDER!!!!

LEE

(The real rage floods out)

AND I HOPE YOU GET PREGNANT AGAIN, AND I HOPE THE LOSER YOU FUCK CAN'T AFFORD AN ABORTION, AND I HOPE YOUR PARENTS FIND OUT WHO YOU REALLY ARE AND I HOPE YOUR DAD TELLS YOU YOU'RE GOING TO HELL AND I HOPE YOU REALLY DO!

Faint crying can heard from the cell phone.
LEE opens his eyes to meet KAREN's, whose eyes reveal a slight horror.

LEE

michelle?

KAREN's horror turns to action. She puts the phone to her ear.

KAREN

hi, michelle, it's karin. lee meant every word he said. / no, he can't talk he's helping a customer. nope we don't care. go fuck yourself. go fuck yourself. goodbye. goodbye

LEE

michelle! michelle! that's not me! that isn't me! MICHELLE!

KAREN ends the call and looks at LEE. Beat.

KAREN

that. was fucking. *awesome*

LEE stares at KAREN, paralyzed by rage and confusion.

KAREN
what's wrong?

LEE
what's *wrong?* that was fucked up! *you're* fucked up!

KAREN
michelle is fucked up. *michelle cheated* on you!

LEE
is this how you have fun?

KAREN
what are you talking about? i was trying to help you!

LEE
we looked in each other's eyes. we made a pact. to have fun. this is not FUN!

Beat.

LEE
i'm going to sit in the back

KAREN
wait--

LEE
i actually! i actually kind of hate you!

KAREN
wait! wait, i think i just wanted to know the true you?

LEE stops.

KAREN
when we made the pact, when i looked in your eyes, it just! seemed like there was someone else in there

LEE knows this is true. He continues to cross.

LEE
i'm still going to sit in the back

KAREN

i'll do anything. to prove that i'm sorry

LEE

it doesn't matter now

KAREN

it matters because i want to be friends with you!

LEE turns.

LEE

you're friends with aleasha! why would you want to be friends with me

KAREN

i'm not friends with aleasha. i wasn't even invited to that party, i was going to crash it

A long silence.

LEE

i want your first memory

KAREN

what?

LEE

in exchange for forgiveness

KAREN

i don't really like thinking about...

LEE

thinking about what!

KAREN

my first memories just kind of blow, okay!?

LEE

your first memory is the only repayment i will accept

KAREN

fuck, okay give me a sec to think

LEE

you just made me say the first one that came to mind!

KAREN

well maybe that was kind of pushy of me and i'm sorry!

LEE

tell me tell me tell me now!

KAREN

a bowling alley. a birthday party. *my* birthday party. i was seven. probably. men smoking. my mom biting her nails. my fourteen year old brother. the bowling shoes were red and blue. someone dropped the ball on their foot but i don't remember who. another girl wore a cuter dress than me and people complimented her and not me and i was mad. i think my mom didn't tip the waitress because when we were leaving they got in a fight in the parking lot and my mom made her cry and then my mom cried on the car ride home. the whole ordeal was just...wrong somehow

LEE

wrong how

KAREN

it wasn't fun. i didn't have fun

Pause.

LEE

that's shit

KAREN

what?

LEE

your memory? is shit

KAREN

are you serious?

LEE

you think you're gonna make me feel bad for you by telling me some vaguely sad story about the *bowling alley*?

KAREN

are you fucking kidding me?

LEE

you wanted to know the true me? well i want to know the true you!

KAREN

fine, fuck! you wanna know something true about me?

LEE

YES!

KAREN

you wanna know why i steal *toilet paper* from *dairy queen*?

LEE

YES! WHY!

KAREN

because my mom is the assistant manager at fucking mcdonald's!

LEE stops.

LEE

she's the?

KAREN

assistant manager! and that's good for her. because most of the time she's not working at all!

KAREN takes a breath.

KAREN

toilet paper is on my list of things to pay for and if i steal it, i have an extra twelve dollars a month. that's one hundred and forty four extra dollars a year, you know?

Beat.

KAREN
you tell anyone and i'll fucking kill you

LEE
i won't! (*Off her look*) i won't, okay?

KAREN
okay

LEE
i've never seen your mom there before

KAREN
she works at the one in carol because she's too embarrassed to work at the one here

Quick beat.

KAREN
you know, this is the longest she's ever held a job since i can remember. and i guess i should congratulate her, or something? but i know it's gonna fall apart again, i know it, because it *always* falls apart. and i don't want to be here when it does

LEE
why can't she, um. why can't she

KAREN
she says she's depressed? and i know i should like, feel bad for her, but i can't. i don't have a single ounce of sympathy for her. in fact, when i look at her, i want to throw up! let's see, what are some other true things? oh! i completely and totally hate myself--

LEE
karin--

KAREN
--i didn't fuck sheila, but i did try to--

LEE

karin, stop!

KAREN

and i broke the open sign on purpose. i'm *sorry*. (*she crumbles*) i'm really sorry

LEE

no, i'm sorry. oh, i'm sorry

KAREN

(*Through tears*)

i tried to fix it! i tried to fix it!

LEE

don't worry, we can fix it. i'll fix it

KAREN

you can't fix it because i broke it. it's broken! like everything else

LEE unwraps a roll of contraband toilet paper and hands it to her. She blows her nose. Beat.

KAREN

did i mess up my makeup?

LEE

no. a little. but it still looks nice

KAREN

like kind of punk rock maybe?

LEE

i don't really know what that means

KAREN heaves out a shuddering sigh. They sit in silence for a moment as KAREN rolls another joint.

KAREN

did michelle really have an abortion?

LEE

what? oh. yeah

KAREN
i'm sorry

LEE
thank you. i guess

KAREN
you paid for it?

LEE
i had to. now that i think about it, maybe it was brian's. (*pause*) do you think it could have been brian's?

KAREN
well. if you were only--

LEE
only what?

KAREN
um, actually. i think it's hard to tell

LEE
is there a way to tell? like um. after the fact?

KAREN
not really i don't think

LEE
it doesn't matter now anyway. (*Re: joint*) hey, can i have some of that?

KAREN
do you know how to smoke it?

LEE
of course I know how to smoke it

KAREN passes the joint to LEE. He doesn't know how to smoke it.

KAREN
you just. i mean you have to. inhale, inhale!

LEE inhales.

KAREN
hold it! hold it!

He exhales and coughs, holding the joint out for KAREN.

LEE
this (*cough*) is (*cough*) terrrrrrribbble

KAREN
you get used to it

LEE inhales again and coughs less this time. He hands the joint back to KAREN.

LEE
wanna see it?

KAREN
see what

LEE
the ring

KAREN
you have it on you?

LEE
i'm afraid my mom will find it...

KAREN
hide it in your underwear drawer

LEE
my mom folds my underwear...

KAREN
oh my god, show it to me

He pulls a small box out of his pocket and opens it hesitantly.

KAREN
wow

LEE
i know it's simple, but

KAREN
no. it's beautiful

LEE
you think so?

KAREN
i've never really seen a. i mean on a strangers hand but. can i wear it?

LEE
the ring?

KAREN
please? i've never seen something so nice up close

LEE
isn't that weird? for you to wear it?

KAREN
you spent all this money on it, don't you want it to make someone feel beautiful? just for a little bit?

LEE
okay. but just for a sec

KAREN puts the ring on gingerly. She hits the joint.

KAREN

ooo look at me smoke a joint with a diamond ring on ooo

KAREN holds the ring up to the light and admires it.

LEE

it looks good on you

KAREN

really?

LEE

it almost looks like a firework

KAREN

oh wow. it does

LEE

yeah, it's like, extra sparkly under the lights

KAREN looks at the ring. She looks at LEE.

KAREN

the ring

LEE

what about it?

KAREN

how much did it cost

LEE

none of your business

KAREN

how much?

LEE

why?

KAREN
just tell me i'm just curious i just wanna know

LEE
that's personal

KAREN
i bet it's cheap

LEE
i mean it was. for a diamond ring! but it was expensive! for me!

KAREN
how much?

LEE
no karin no i know what / you're thinking

KAREN
we could sell it we could use it to leave to go on an adventure

LEE
we?

KAREN
how much did it cost?

LEE
twenty-seven hundred dollars

KAREN
well what are you going to do with it are you going to return it?

LEE
you can't return it!

KAREN
are you going to pawn it?

LEE
who cares, twenty-seven hundred is barely enough to get anywhere anyway!

KAREN
barely enough, but it's a start!

LEE

i want to be regional manager, not live in a van in colorado!

KAREN

you don't want to be regional manager at all, you're just afraid of what else is out there!

LEE

give it back give it back right now!

KAREN jumps on the counter.

KAREN

come and get me come and get me

LEE

KARIN! do not make me fucking chase you

KAREN

ooooooooooooooooo he's getting mad!

LEE lunges at KAREN. She jumps off the counter and runs around the restaurant. LEE chases. KAREN jumps behind the counter and sprays LEE with whipped cream. LEE grabs her arm and pulls the ring off. He walks directly to the pit and drops the ring in. Silence.

KAREN

did you just throw your ring down the pit?

LEE

i just threw my ring down the pit

KAREN looks at LEE, then kneels and tries to pry the grate up with her hands.

KAREN

they say nothing comes out of the pit, but has anyone ever really tried to get anything out of the pit?

LEE

stop

KAREN

i think maybe. i think maybe if we get a big saw thing or

LEE

stop! i want to leave it

KAREN

don't be stupid! that's twenty-seven hundred dollars you just threw away!

LEE

it's my twenty-seven hundred dollars and i can throw it away if i want!

KAREN

well if you're throwing it away then it's anyone's twenty-seven hundred dollars!

LEE

I NEED TO THROW THIS AWAY AND I NEED YOU TO LET ME!

KAREN is silent. LEE approaches the pit and stares into it.

LEE

i understand now. i have to let the pit have my ring. like a sacrifice. this. this is a ritual sacrifice. to appease the pit. to christen my future. to bring blessings upon my family

LEE crosses to the sprinkles, grabs a handful, and crosses back to the pit. He stands before it, mumbles something to himself, then tosses the sprinkles in.

LEE

amen

KAREN joins LEE in peering into the pit.

KAREN

how much money do you think it would take for me to leave. if i kept working here. and saved

LEE

more than twenty-seven hundred dollars

KAREN
how long would it take?

LEE
well, it took me four hundred and thirty-seven hours to buy that ring, so. a long time

Silence. KAREN stands, crosses to a fourth of July decoration, and pulls it down.

LEE
is there anymore pot?

KAREN shakes her head.

LEE
what about the--

LEE pretend squirts whip cream in his mouth.

KAREN
whippets? honestly, it wasn't that great

LEE hangs his head.

KAREN
but you could get the vodka sheila hides in the walk-in

LEE
she??

KAREN
oh my god, do you even work here? behind the cookie dough

LEE exits to the walk in. KAREN sits alone with the decoration. She rips it in half. She crosses to the open sign. She pulls the chain. Nothing. She crosses back toward the counter but stops halfway. Standing in the middle of the dining

room, she pulls the nametags out of her pockets. She looks at them.

KAREN

(Realization)

holy shit, i'm never gonna leave this place. i'm never gonna leave this place

KAREN stands in the center of the Dairy Queen, fighting tears.

LEE

(Offstage)

KARIN IT'S NOT BEHIND THE COOKIE DOUGH

KAREN shoves the nametags back in her pockets.

KAREN

TRY BEHIND THE SPRINKLES

KAREN crosses to the counter. She takes a roll of contraband toilet paper and wipes fresh tears from her face. LEE re-enters holding an open bottle of vodka, wiping his mouth with his hands.

LEE

ugh it's burning it's burning!

KAREN

did you drink it straight?!

LEE

the taste the taste it's still in my mouth!

KAREN

you have to mix it dum dum

KAREN pours soda and vodka into a paper cup as LEE pants with his tongue sticking out. She hands the cup to LEE. He drinks.

LEE
whoa, this is way better

He chugs the entire cup.

KAREN
whoa, slow down!

He throws the cup on the ground and stomps on it.

LEE
i want you to write me postcards

KAREN
what?

LEE
from your adventure! i want one from everywhere. from every state. from new york city, from yellowstone park, from the mojave desert. from new orleans and the grand canyon. from the rocky mountains where you'll catch snowflakes on your tongue. i'll tape them all to the wall right here and when customers come in i'll say those are from karin, she used to work here, and now she's an american adventurer! where are you gonna go first?

KAREN
i don't know

LEE
how could you not know?

KAREN
i haven't planned it out like that yet

LEE
oh come on, tell me

KAREN

no

LEE

what, is it a secret road trip map only for cool kids?

KAREN

will you quit asking me about it?

LEE

what else are we supposed to talk about!

KAREN

there's one million things to talk about

LEE

well out of one million things, i want to talk about *THIS!*

KAREN

i don't know how to drive

Beat.

LEE

what?

KAREN

i don't know. how to drive

LEE

oh

KAREN

that's the last true thing

LEE

how do you get to work?

KAREN

i walk

LEE

is that why you're late all the time?

KAREN

yeah, kinda. i walk by your house on the way to work. it makes the walk a little nicer

LEE

want me to. teach you how to drive?

KAREN

yeah that could be cool

LEE

it's not hard

KAREN

i know

LEE

then lets go!

KAREN

right now?

LEE

yeah in the parking lot, that's where i learned to drive, i mean not in this particular parking lot but in a parking lot similar to this one you know

KAREN

its ok not now

LEE

what? two seconds ago you were smoking a joint on a sanitary food preparation surface and now you wanna follow the rules?

KAREN

i just don't want to right now

LEE

if your goal is to leave, then you have to take concrete steps to make that goal a reality!

KAREN

concrete steps? concrete steps are a luxury!

i tell myself i'm gonna go to the grand canyon, to new orleans, because i need to believe i'll leave this town someday. i repeat these places in my head like a fantasy because otherwise? i have to wake up knowing that this town is the only thing i'm gonna see until i die. and if that's the case, well, then i might as well die right now

LEE

well you can't just give up!

KAREN

it's nice to own something, right? you said that. but not everyone can own something. and that's why my goal was to own nothing, but apparently i'm too poor, even for nothing

LEE

so what then, you're just gonna work at *dairy queen* your entire life?

KAREN

that's what you're doing!

LEE

i don't know if that's what i'm doing!

KAREN

you said that's what you're doing

LEE

well i don't know anymore

KAREN

maybe i should become regional manager

LEE

WHAT!

KAREN

you said it's a nice life!

LEE

you told me it's not a nice life!

KAREN

what about manager? sheila's buying a house. sheila's going to disney world!

LEE

you said those things don't mean anything!

KAREN

(With resounding frustration)

I DON'T KNOW IF THEY MEAN ANYTHING! I JUST WANT TO HAVE A GOOD LIFE!

LEE

(Comforting)

karin

KAREN

my name is karen and it always will be

KAREN stands very still as the gravity of her own words sink in.

KAREN

i'm going home

KAREN begins to gather her things.

KAREN

if sheila comes back, tell her i got sick, tell her anything, i don't care

LEE

you made me promise we were gonna have fun tonight

KAREN

yeah, i say a lot of things

LEE

you said this is our sovereign state! our utopia! blargawooooooooo!

KAREN

(Panicking)

fuck, i can't find my purse--

LEE

um! um! um! i have an idea! let's go!

KAREN

go where?

LEE

to the rocky mountains! the grand canyon! new orleans!

KAREN

i told you! i'm not actually going!

LEE

i can drive. i have a car!

KAREN

lee, be serious!

LEE

I'M NOT LEE!

KAREN pulls the nametags from her pocket
and fumbles to put hers on.

KAREN

yes you are--

LEE

give me that!

KAREN

and i am karen and this is all pretend--

LEE snatches the nametags from her hands.

LEE
where were they?

KAREN
i kept them

He looks up.

LEE
let's burn them

KAREN
we can't burn them!

LEE
to reinvent ourselves. to complete the ritual

KAREN
but you said no property damage!

LEE
fuck that, let's burn them!!!

KAREN
okay!!! let's burn them!!!

LEE
where's your lighter?

KAREN
oh no

LEE
you don't remember where it is?

KAREN
i'm really bad about losing lighters

LEE

let's put them in the blender!

KAREN
yes!!!

They run toward the blender and drop their names in.

KAREN
GOODBYE KAREN!

LEE
GOODBYE LEE!

The blender roars. They laugh over the sound.

KAREN
i think we're actually having fun!

LEE
WHAT'S THAT?

KAREN
FUN, THIS IS FUN!

LEE stops the blender and flings its contents into the air, screaming.

LEE
AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!

With screams of teenage primal joy, LEE and KAREN start laughing and pushing each other and jumping around. It's sort of like they're moshing, but with no one and each other at the same time. They pull down every single fourth of july decoration in the restaurant. They tip over the trash cans. A container of sprinkles is flung into the air. Every fork, spoon, and cup LEE stocked earlier goes flying. They throw the

contraband toilet paper over the beams in the ceiling of the restaurant, causing it to hang down in long strips that drift in the breeze of the fan.

When everything is destroyed, KAREN takes the blender and throws it through the dining room window victoriously, causing it to shatter, as LEE, high on this new version of himself, shifts into imagination.

KAREN
AHHHHH!!!!!!

LEE
WOOOOOOOOOOO!!!!

KAREN
HAPPY FOURTH OF JULY!!!

LEE
FUCK THIS TOWN!

KAREN
FUCK DAIRY QUEEN!

LEE
WE'RE LEAVING AND WE'RE NEVER COMING BACK!

KAREN
AND WE'RE NEVER GONNA SEE ANY OF YOU EVER AGAIN!

LEE
OKAY! WE'RE AT THE GRAND CANYON RIGHT NOW

KAREN
WAIT WHAT?

LEE

IT MIGHT BE WEIRD BUT JUST JUST ROLL WITH IT, ROLL WITH IT! OK, WE'RE LOOKING ACROSS THE CANYON AND THE COLORS ARE. AMAZING. RED AND ORANGE AND PINK AND GOLD AND PURPLE

KAREN
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

LEE
THERE'S A HAWK, THERE'S A HAWK SEE IT SEE IT SEE IT ALSO THERE IS A WIND IT'S A WARM WIND UM, IT'S BLOWING AND I CAN SMELL

KAREN
HOLY SHIT I CAN ACTUALLY SMELL THE SMELL THE

LEE
SAGE BRUSH! OK! NOW WE'RE IN NEW ORLEANS, AND WE'RE LISTENING TO JAZZ AND THERE'S

KAREN
OLD BEAUTIFUL BUILDINGS

LEE
AND PALM TREES!

KAREN
AND THE AIR SMELLS LIKE, IT SMELLS LIKE WATER

LEE
NOW WE'RE IN THE DESERT

KAREN
DRIVING WITH THE WINDOWS ROLLED DOWN

LEE
AND THE WIND BLOWING IN OUR HAIR

KAREN
AND THE RADIO PLAYS MY FAVORITE SONG!

LEE

NOW WE'RE IN EVERY SINGLE STATE CAPITAL IN AMERICA ALL AT THE SAME TIME!

KAREN

DES MOINES, LITTLE ROCK, TOPEKA, ALBANY, SACRAMENTO, I DON'T REMEMBER ANY OTHERS!

LEE

OKAY, NOW WE'RE IN THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS

KAREN

THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS AND THERE'S SNOW

LEE

AND IT'S SO SOFT AND WHITE

KAREN

AND THE FIR TREES

LEE

ARE LIKE HUGE ANCIENT GIANTS

KAREN

AND EVERYTHING SMELLS CRISP, AND ALIVE, AND

LEE

YOU CAN CATCH THE SNOWFLAKES ON YOUR TONGUE

With their eyes closed, they spin in slow circles, catching imagined snow flakes on their tongues. The toilet paper hanging from the overhead beams drifts like snow. They stay in this moment together, savoring the world they have created. Then, the door chime rings. KAREN and LEE, lost in their fantasy, do not hear it. Through the front door enters SHEILA, drunk. She stands, taking in the sight of the trashed DQ and the two spinning teenagers. Very long silence.

SHEILA
you wrecked the dq

KAREN and LEE turn to see SHEILA.

LEE
sheila!

Long pause.

SHEILA
you wrecked. the dq

SHEILA steps further into the building, taking in the destruction.

KAREN
sheila, please don't fire me, please

SHEILA slips on some debris. She totters. She steadies herself.

KAREN
sheila, please--

SHEILA
(Dreamily)
did you see the fireworks?

KAREN
did i? no--

SHEILA
you should have seen the fireworks

LEE
sheila, if you. if you. if you have to fire someone fire me

SHEILA turns, strangely.

SHEILA
i just came by to lock up

SHEILA thrusts her store keys toward him and jingles them.

SHEILA
it's closing time

SHEILA begins to cross toward the mop.

LEE
...so, you're not going to. to. fire / us?

SHEILA
i'm on track! to become regional manager. did you know that? i've done trainings. read packets. i went to a seminar at headquarters where someone told me about secret parties, where all regional managers from all regions converge in a special, secret conference room and there are gift baskets to be taken home. perks, they call them--

She pauses, reaches for the nearby mop to steady herself.

SHEILA
and i am not. *not* going to let my perks be taken away. so you know what we're going to do? we are going to clean

She begins to mop the floor, doing nothing but pushing trash and debris around. KAREN and LEE remain still. SHEILA looks up.

SHEILA
CLEAN WITH ME!

KAREN rushes to grab a spray bottle. LEE stops her. He looks toward SHEILA.

LEE
sheila? is your life good?

SHEILA looks up.

SHEILA
what?

LEE
is your life good?

SHEILA processes LEE's question.

SHEILA
my life? my life is *great*. because i work. see? so i have things. *i* bought a house this year. *i* hung an american flag on the front porch. my house is on 24th street and the mailbox is painted *red*. i bought a new tv this year, 65 inches! and next year? i'm gonna take my nephew to disneyworld. at disneyworld, they have special places that look like other places in the world. did you know that? places that look just like france, *france!* and you can eat things like in france and it basically is france. all you have to do is go to disneyworld and you can go anywhere in the world. did you know you can get a credit card with the disneyworld castle on it, limited edition? i would like that. did you know you can also get credit cards with flowers on them and sometimes puppies? a nice life, that's when you have paper towels in the pantry, also, i have one weeks' vacation saved up--

Suddenly, the open sign turns on. All three stare.

END OF PLAY