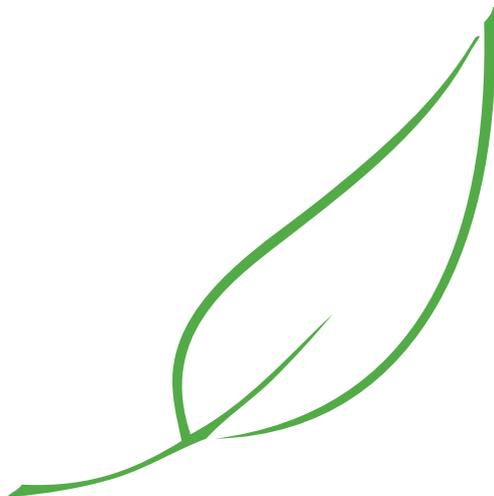


A Young Man In Pieces

By William Nedved



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A YOUNG MAN IN PIECES

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SYNOPSIS: When Craig returns home after a year abroad, he must navigate through the female relationships that terrify him in order to decide the sort of man he wants to become. Funny, moving, and full of drama, Craig's story is vividly depicted from start to finish.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(6 female, 4 male)

In Order of Appearance:

CRAIG (M).....	25 years old. <i>(571 lines)</i>
ZOE (F).....	30 years old, Craig's brother's ex-girlfriend. <i>(91 lines)</i>
MERLE (F).....	In her 50s, Craig's mother. <i>(173 lines)</i>
BRIAN (M).....	30 years old, Craig's brother. <i>(100 lines)</i>
LANCE (M).....	25 years old, Craig's ex- roommate. <i>(85 lines)</i>
JENNY (F).....	26 years old, Lance's wife. <i>(53 lines)</i>
DANE (M).....	In his 40s. <i>(95 lines)</i>
MOLLY (F).....	30 years old, Craig and Brian's cousin. <i>(112 lines)</i>
AMANDA (F).....	20 years old, Craig's ex- girlfriend. <i>(135 lines)</i>
VICTORIA (F).....	In her late 20s, Spanish. <i>(21 lines)</i>

SETTING: Craig's studio, a vast space with hardwood floors and exposed brick walls. Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A. Scenes should end with blackouts.

TIME: A summer night.

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

AT RISE: *ZOE enters. CRAIG follows carrying a backpack.*

CRAIG: Here it is!

ZOE: I love the exposed brick.

CRAIG: Can I take your coat or sweatercoat or sweater - - ?

ZOE: Take off my sweater?!

CRAIG: Can I show you around?

ZOE: Umm . . .

CRAIG: The bed and bath are around the corner - -

ZOE: Empty rooms kind of creep me out, Craig.

CRAIG: It was a steal.

ZOE: And this is an enormous empty room.

CRAIG: Totally talked them down. I was like, "Buddy, it's a buyer's market. I can walk away right now." 'Cause my dad says you should always enter a relationship with the ability to walk away, to walk away from it all. So I was like, "I'm looking at other places." And he's like, "This is my final offer." So I'm like, "If you can't even grasp the concept of negotiation - - "

ZOE: It's the vastness.

CRAIG: - - *negotiation.*

ZOE: That's what it is.

CRAIG: And since the renovation was way behind schedule, I had them prorate me three months rent. And I took that money for the plane ticket. So it all worked out to my advantage.

ZOE: It's just you in here?

CRAIG: Oh, yeah.

ZOE: All - -

CRAIG: I'm at that point.

ZOE: All - -

CRAIG: I need to be living on my own.

ZOE: - - of this . . .

CRAIG: Roommates - -

ZOE: For what reason?

CRAIG: - - are a thing of the past. For what reason? I'm an adult now.

ZOE: All that I'm saying is - -

CRAIG: Once I get moved in here, get some furniture. Once the furniture is in here - -

ZOE: - - *Come on*, Craig.

CRAIG: - - It will appear much - -

ZOE: Maybe.

CRAIG: - - more - -

ZOE: Maybe.

CRAIG: - - more . . .

ZOE: Yeah.

CRAIG: Yeah, with the furniture in here. I see what you're saying.

ZOE: Perhaps. I just don't see why a . . . young man, such as yourself - -

CRAIG: "Young man?"

ZOE: Needs a place like - -

CRAIG: I'm finally - -

ZOE: Never mind.

CRAIG: No, listen.

ZOE: Scratch that from the record.

CRAIG: I got tired of it. I got tired of apologizing for being American.

ZOE: Me, I'd have stayed in Europe.

CRAIG: Europe got old.

ZOE: Europe *is* old.

CRAIG: Europe isn't for me.

ZOE: Then Asia. Or Australia. Or Antarctica.

CRAIG: Too bad, - -

ZOE: Like I said on the plane, you're young and you can travel; you should travel.

CRAIG: - - threw away the passport.

ZOE: I mean, if you have the means, you should - -

CRAIG: "The means?" What does that mean?

ZOE: I saw your passport at customs. You haven't thrown it away, Craig.

CRAIG: No. And yes, I have the ability to travel, but I'm choosing - -

ZOE: And what happened to that Amanda girl? Never mind. It's not my place to comment, as I have been told.

CRAIG: I'm not my brother.

ZOE: How is he?

CRAIG: I've been gone all summer.

ZOE: Of course.

CRAIG: But I'm sure Brian is fine. Brian is Brian.

ZOE: I should go.

CRAIG: Are you sure?

ZOE: I need a cigarette.

CRAIG: No - -

ZOE: Yes, I need a cigarette. I, we, just suffered through a transatlantic flight, and I need a cigarette. Now excuse me.

CRAIG: No, - -

ZOE: YES! Heathrow to O'Hare. Non-smoking flight!

CRAIG: - - What I was saying was, you should smoke in here.

ZOE: I know that smoking is bad. I'm not a complete imbecile. And I also know it's my choice to smoke. And I opt to smoke. We all have choices. Like your idiotic choice to stop backpacking across Europe! But I would never smoke in here.

CRAIG: But it's new.

ZOE: Exactly, Craig, it's new.

CRAIG: So smoke out that obnoxious smell.

ZOE: True. The smell of new.

CRAIG: I'll open up the window.

ZOE: Craig, - -

CRAIG: You can ash out the window.

ZOE: - - I need to smoke. But I also just need to generally get going. It's a long haul to Old Town. I'm glad I could give you a lift, but I need to get back to . . . I mean, aren't you jet-lagged? I just want to climb into my own bed and - -

CRAIG: Sleep? No, I'm wired.

ZOE: And it was so wonderful having you there to catch up. God, what a coincidence. And I'm so glad to see your new place. So enjoy it.

CRAIG: I don't believe in coincidences. I believe there's this path we're on. And mine has lead me to - -

ZOE: Enjoy your new home.

CRAIG: Are you sure - -

ZOE: Sure?

CRAIG: I could open a bottle of - -

ZOE: I'm sure.

CRAIG: I found this amazing port at Duty Free. It could be the first drink in my new home. Just one drink?

ZOE: Craig . . .

CRAIG: I'm not my brother.

BLACKOUT.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

SCENE:

The next afternoon. The room is semi-furnished.

AT RISE:

MERLE puts art on the brick walls.

MERLE: *Love's the same old sad sensation
Lately I've not slept a wink
Since this silly situation
Has me on the blink*

CRAIG enters.

MERLE: At long last, he arises.

CRAIG: Ughh.

MERLE: So I unpacked.

CRAIG: Yeah.

MERLE: Is this too low? I mean, it's a crime when it's hung too high.

But is this
too - - ?

CRAIG: Hi, Mom.

MERLE: I moved the light stuff.

CRAIG: What time is it?

MERLE: Just keep things how they are. I think it looks absolutely perfect in here.

CRAIG: Must have slept for - -

MERLE: Don't you agree?

CRAIG: . . . jetlagged.

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MERLE: What's that, dear?

CRAIG: I must be jetlagged.

MERLE: So I was on my way over here this morning, and I was utterly exhausted. I mean, I was so tired from it all. But I knew I had to come over because you were getting back late last night and coming straight here. Here: so fabulous, but so empty. And I had to get to work, you know, making your house, you know, a home. But I was so tired . . . on the prowl for a latte, as it were. And Craig, my dear, this must be the sole block in Chicago without a Starbucks. I mean, *really*. But it's going to change. The Starbuck-less-ness of your neighborhood. But I was *sooo* desperately in need of my chai. And on a whim, a true, "Where am I going?" moment, I strolled into this boutique hotel on the corner of whatever and, you know . . . I walked into this quaint little hotel on the corner of . . . and . . . And it just so happened that the hotel had a barista in its downstairs lobby. And so I ordered my chai latte from this gorgeous Latino. I would have gotten you something, dear, but I knew you'd be sleeping. But César. That's his name. He saw me lost in this hotel lobby and said, César said, "You look lovely. But you look lost." And that made me blush. César did. So I ordered my chai latte. I am so sorry I didn't bring anything for you. And César smiled and asked, "Are you here on business?" And I told him what I did. And that I lived over at, you know, the house. And his response? "That's good to know." I tipped him. I tipped him *good*. Then I walked over here. And arranged your place. Doesn't it look great? I think it works. What is it dear? You're mad I didn't get you - -

CRAIG: Mom?

MERLE: Here's some money.

CRAIG: Mom - -

MERLE: The hotel is on the corner of - -

CRAIG: What is it?

MERLE: Oh, you were gone. You were gone when it happened.

CRAIG: What happened?

MERLE: Oh, nothing.

CRAIG: What happened?

MERLE: Nothing happened, per se. Things altered. Not things. People. Your father and I.

CRAIG: You're - - ?

MERLE: Not divorced. Yet. But my-oh-my, God speed the process.

CRAIG: - - and Dad?

MERLE: We're separated. And it's going splendidly. I mean when you get a chai latte from César, who can complain?

CRAIG: Who decided?

MERLE: Who what?

CRAIG: Was it you or - -

MERLE: Oh, who remembers those things? Now, don't you j'adore this? (*Points to an invisible painting on the fourth wall.*)

CRAIG: Huh?

MERLE: It's a work by a young New Zealand artist I've been following for some time. He's *Maori*, which is like their version of -
-

CRAIG: Where are you living?

MERLE: Where am I living? Where I've always lived.

CRAIG: Still?

MERLE: LSD. LSD 'till the day I die.

CRAIG: And dad?

MERLE: He's in Lake Forest, which is fine by me. I'm not one for the country.

CRAIG: How is he?

MERLE: But this young artist, his name is Lyonel Bailey. Isn't it just divine?

CRAIG: It's a painting of a naked dude.

MERLE: I know. How he expresses solitude is so - -

CRAIG: No.

MERLE: - - So uniquely perceptive. Like you.

CRAIG: No.

MERLE: I had you in mind.

CRAIG: Absolutely not. There is no way that a naked guy is going on the wall of my first - -

MERLE: Let me straighten it so we can - -

CRAIG: Are you OK?

MERLE: - - you know, get a sense of it all. I mean, the canvas alone nearly brings me to tears.

CRAIG: Are you?

MERLE: He's widely considered a master of representative - -

CRAIG: Why didn't you call?

MERLE: Because he captures the penis . . . so *justly*. This is even, isn't it?

CRAIG: I was only in . . . I mean, I wasn't in the Amazon!

MERLE: Of course it is. Oh, my . . . oh my . . . oh my.

CRAIG: Mom?!

MERLE: Have you seen your *brother* yet?

CRAIG: No, what?

MERLE: Him. This year. I worry . . . have you seen him yet?

CRAIG: I flew in last night.

MERLE: And have you seen your girlfriend?

CRAIG: Are you OK?

MERLE: Despite your protests, this painting will, without any further discussion, stay on your wall.

CRAIG: No.

MERLE: But look at it.

CRAIG: No!

MERLE: Look . . . it's you.

CRAIG: It's gross.

MERLE: It's perfect.

CRAIG: What happened with you and Dad?

MERLE: So tell me, dear. How was Barcelona?

BLACKOUT.

ACT ONE, SCENE 3

SCENE:

The next afternoon. The room is furnished.

AT RISE:

BRIAN and CRAIG move an amazing '70s couch into view.

CRAIG: What?

BRIAN: More to the left.

CRAIG: No, what did you say?

BRIAN: The left. Not your right, your left.

CRAIG: About Zoe.

BRIAN: I only think it's a tad - -

CRAIG: What?!

BRIAN: Disrespectful.

CRAIG: How so?

BRIAN: I said, the *left*.

CRAIG: I mean - -

BRIAN: There.

CRAIG: - - it's not like - -

BRIAN: Perfect.

CRAIG: - - you're still with her. And if I remember, you broke up with her.

BRIAN: So?

CRAIG: So, all's fair in - -

BRIAN: Craig. Craig? Craig?!

CRAIG: You dated her for - -

BRIAN: I know how long.

CRAIG: And that was way back - -

BRIAN: Look, it doesn't really matter, does it? She's not the least bit interested.

CRAIG: I like the couch where it is now.

BRIAN: See, I disagree. I disagree, Craig. I think you're almost there. I mean, I didn't agree to assist you in reverting it to some sort of collegiate bachelor pad. This is your first home and it's important that it conveys your adulthood.

CRAIG: It's a condo, Brian.

BRIAN: So we move this chair over there.

CRAIG: By we you mean me, of course.

BRIAN: Just in the corner. You are aware that my back is in pain.

CRAIG: I was not.

BRIAN: It's work-related. New intern.

CRAIG: (*Long pause.*) Is everything alright? Is it Mom and Dad?

BRIAN: It's, you know, Dad. And the job. And Dad and the job. And Dad and, you know. I mean, one day it's Mom, and the next day it's Tara.

CRAIG: Tara?

BRIAN: No, *Tara*.

CRAIG: Your Tara? *Tara*?

BRIAN: She's hardly *my* Tara.

CRAIG: We're talking about Dad's Pilates instructor?

BRIAN: I mean, she sucked me off at the Christmas party. That hardly makes her mine.

CRAIG: Is Tara - -

BRIAN: I mean, - -

CRAIG: - - why - -

BRIAN: Good for Dad.

CRAIG: - - they're divorcing?

BRIAN: They're not divorcing. It's a separation. Why are you standing like that?

CRAIG: Huh?

BRIAN: Nothing. It's natural. I mean, I was only waiting for it to happen.

CRAIG: It's like . . .

BRIAN: Huh?

CRAIG: . . . I don't know.

BRIAN: God, you're so immature. Get over it. Why are you standing like that?

CRAIG: Like - - ?

BRIAN: Just so weird. God. Sit down. Sit down on the chair. You know, it looks so much better in the corner. I don't know why you thought it would stay over there.

CRAIG: So you think they're going to work things out?

BRIAN: Yes. Probably. I mean, they may not. She never signed a pre-nup. So who knows. Thank you for sitting down.

CRAIG: And what about you? Who was the lucky woman this summer?

BRIAN: Oh sweet Jesus! That's it.

CRAIG: Huh?

BRIAN: That's you!

CRAIG: What?

BRIAN: Mother said she bought a painting that reminded her - -

CRAIG: Yeah, - -

BRIAN: - - of you.

CRAIG: Can we take it down?

BRIAN: My oh my!

CRAIG: Please say we can take it down.

BRIAN: Does she think - -

CRAIG: Please veto her decision.

BRIAN: - - you're gay?

CRAIG: Or depressed.

BRIAN: What is she thinking?!

CRAIG: She may just think I'm depressed.

BRIAN: Are you?

CRAIG: I - -

BRIAN: Are you gay?

CRAIG: Ha ha ha. I'm in love with Zoe.

BRIAN: . . . No, you were dating that jailbait.

CRAIG: I'm in love with Zoe.

BRIAN: . . . And there's that creepy thing going on with you and Molly. No. No, you are not gay.

CRAIG: Can we please take down the painting?

BRIAN: I think it would upset Mother.

CRAIG: But - -

BRIAN: And Mother is on the verge . . . of something.

CRAIG: Is she? She seemed really fine - -

BRIAN: Well, she's not really fine. She's been calling up to Lake Forest at all hours of the night. Calling on Dad. Calling Tara. Calling them names. Screaming obscenities, Pilates positions. And sometimes just calling and crying. Dad told me when we were fishing.

CRAIG: Crying?

BRIAN: Trout fishing.

CRAIG: You and Dad went on vacation?

BRIAN: It was probably two or three weeks after you left.

CRAIG: Just you two?

BRIAN: Yeah. Right when they broke the news. Dad thought it would be good for the men to get away on a trip. So we went up to northern Minnesota. It was amazing. We rented a fishing boat. And we fished. And ate. And we drank. We drank a lot. And we talked. It was amazing. I think it changed my life. Just Dad and I on Lake Superior. It was one of those weeks a man will never forget. You know? Don't look at me like that. And stop sitting like that.

CRAIG: Yeah, well, maybe he'll take me next summer.

BRIAN: Doubt it.

CRAIG: Well, maybe.

BRIAN: The man is still bitching about the time he lost from the office. And Christ, I nearly lost a client. But I wouldn't have traded that week for anything.

CRAIG: No, I didn't know about your trip.

BRIAN: But Dad called you from the boat.

CRAIG: Called me?

BRIAN: From his cell phone.

CRAIG: Did he leave a message?

BRIAN: From his cell phone on the boat.

CRAIG: Because I didn't - -

BRIAN: No, wait. Oh my God, that was hilarious. He was going to call you. Then this old fisherman. This old fisherman passed us, just as Dad was going to . . . oh my God, this was unbelievable. This old man said . . . Oh, you'd have to have been there.

CRAIG: No, he never called me.

BRIAN: So Zoe was on your flight?

CRAIG: London Heathrow, busiest international airport in the world -
- and don't say O'Hare, because - -

BRIAN: But Atlanta is - -

CRAIG: I said "busiest international airport," as in handles the most international passengers.

BRIAN: What's your point?

CRAIG: My point is, I'm at the busiest international airport in the world. Thousands of passengers. Hundreds of flights. Dozens of airlines. British Airways alone has three flights to Chicago daily. I'm on a 747 with, I don't know, four hundred or five hundred seats, and who's sitting next to me?

BRIAN: Yeah, whatever. I can see how you'd want to go fishing. But you were gone. You wanted to go, so you left. Why are you sitting like that? God, you can be such a weird fuck sometimes.

CRAIG: Brian?

BRIAN: See? You're totally bizarre right now.

CRAIG: Brian . . .

BRIAN: Be normal.

CRAIG: I love her.

BRIAN: Huh?

CRAIG: I do.

BRIAN: This coffee tastes like dirt.

CRAIG: I love Zoe.

BRIAN: GROW UP.

BLACKOUT.

ACT ONE, SCENE 4

AT RISE:

CRAIG pours LANCE and JENNY the remainder of a bottle of wine.

JENNY: . . . and *that* we've carpeted in, for lack of a better word, what I suppose you would call a brother or sister of a beige. That's the color. And that carpet leads you to the back door. And the back door is antique. And if it isn't antique, it looks it. And then you walk outside. And you're outside. And that's the house. It's wood. All wood. Woody. That's our house.

LANCE: That's our house. You're not the only one with property, buddy.

JENNY: But I think this place is just perfect. Just perfect for you. Can you show me around? Can I take the tour?

CRAIG: Go ahead.

JENNY: So I can wander?

CRAIG: Wander.

JENNY: I'm going to wander, then.

JENNY exits.

CRAIG: Dude.

LANCE: What's up?

CRAIG: Dude, you are so serious.

LANCE: Thanks.

CRAIG: Married life must stress you out.

LANCE: I love being married.

JENNY: (*Off.*) Craig! No, wait. I was going to say you should move your bed, but that's so my mother: to walk into someone's home and immediately begin rearranging.

CRAIG: Can't believe you guys eloped.

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LANCE: It was - -

JENNY: (*Off.*) Craig!

LANCE: - - the best decision of my life.

CRAIG: Married.

LANCE: I just had to do it.

CRAIG: You two are married.

LANCE: For life. What about you and Amanda?

CRAIG: My parents are getting a divorce.

JENNY: (*Entering.*) What's with the chick all over your bedroom?

CRAIG: Um, she's hot?

JENNY: She's like some Playmate. From the '70s or something.

CRAIG: Pardon me, Mrs. Martin, but you are referring to Karen Black, currently gracing the screen at the Gene Siskel Film Center.

LANCE: Who?

CRAIG: Karen.

JENNY: Posters on the wall?

CRAIG: Black.

JENNY: How old are you?

LANCE: Never heard of her.

CRAIG: She's in "Five Easy Pieces." Jack Nicholson's "Five Easy Pieces"?

LANCE: Never saw it.

CRAIG: But I owned it. I had it at our place on - -

LANCE: Never saw it.

JENNY: Saw what?

CRAIG: Lost it in the move. "Five Easy Pieces." It's required viewing. Karen Black is smoking!

JENNY: Your bedroom said enough.

CRAIG: And she's really good. I think she won an Oscar for it or something. She's really good in it. And the movie has Nicholson. And it's just a great story. So how about it?

LANCE: How about what?

CRAIG: The Gene Siskel. Let's go.

LANCE: You were joking about your parents, right?

CRAIG: I'll see it again. And again and again and again. It's great. Let's go.

LANCE: Not tonight.

JENNY: Thank you.

CRAIG: Of course tonight! Come on, let's hop in a cab.

LANCE: Not now.

CRAIG: Come on!

JENNY: Are you joking?

LANCE: We'll have to - -

CRAIG: We've just killed a bottle of wine.

JENNY: Exactly.

CRAIG: So I've got two more Calvarios in the kitchen. We'll sneak them in. We love doing that.

LANCE: I used to love doing that.

CRAIG: I knew it! I knew I could get you to go.

LANCE: But we have other things now.

JENNY: Like teaching. We teach tomorrow. The kids can't learn Latin on their own, now can they?

CRAIG: Oh, come on. It's only - -

LANCE: We know what time it is.

JENNY: I know. We've gotten really boring.

LANCE: If you lived all the way out in - -

JENNY: *(To LANCE.)* God, I can't imagine *him* up there. He'd die of boredom. Glencoe would kill him.

LANCE: It's just such a long commute. And we're both back in the city tomorrow morning. Early morning.

JENNY: *School days, School days . . .*

CRAIG: You know there was a time when the two of you used to crash on this couch.

JENNY: *Mortgage Payments . . .* This couch? This very - -

CRAIG: There's a reason I keep this pillow turned over.

JENNY: Too funny. Well, we've got a Cali King now. Which you'll see when you come out to visit. It's just enormous. Gift from Daddy. Mommy, on the other hand, was a little bitter that we didn't do the ceremony thing.

CRAIG: After all those insinuations . . .

JENNY: I know.

CRAIG: You went and did it.

LANCE: And I couldn't be happier.

JENNY: Is that right?

LANCE: I love her more than anyone or anything else on earth.

JENNY: He's still on the honeymoon.

LANCE: Hey!

JENNY: Hey what?!

CRAIG: Wow.

LANCE: You!!!

JENNY: What about me?!

LANCE: Da mi basia mille, deinde centum,
Dein mille altera, dein secunda centum,

JENNY: Deinde usque altera mille, deinde centum, Dein, cum milia
multa fecerimus,

LANCE: Conturbabimus illa, ne sciamus,
Aut ne quis malus inuidere possit,
Cum tantum sciat esse basiorum.

LANCE kisses JENNY. CRAIG is disgusted.

JENNY: Well, sorry about the movie.

LANCE: Yeah, thanks for tonight, buddy.

CRAIG: No problem.

JENNY: What about Amanda?

CRAIG: What about her?

JENNY: *(Pause.)* We had a great time.

LANCE: Next time you'll have to come out to our place.

CRAIG: Sure. Goodnight, then.

JENNY: *(Pause.)* I'm sure Karen White is a good actress. *(To the painting.)* Is that you up there?

BLACKOUT.

ACT ONE, SCENE 5

AT RISE:

The housewarming party. CRAIG, ZOE, and DANE.

DANE: This guy grows up in this small town that's called Forward, Indiana. But the town is, like, totally backwards. And, like, the opening shot of the film is this teenage guy, like, pacing in front of these white walls. And he's totally cramped. And this teenager is completely alienated in this town. And the sad thing is he's

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talented and everything. Like a good painter. He's an artist. But he's grounded and has this girlfriend. And they're in high school and they're like witty and it's funny and all that. But he one day decides to quit school and he goes on this road adventure. He leaves the town, the white walls. He leaves Forward. And his journey takes him cross-country and eventually takes him to New York. And he, like, gets a scholarship to some school. Like a major art school in New York. I mean, I haven't written the screenplay yet. But it's all in my head. And he is really successful at school. And he breezes through it. Like, he graduates in a year. He's huge. And he does really well. And he's opening shows. He's the toast of galleries in New York and shit. And he's the shit. And he's messed up on drugs and parties and trashy girls. And it's the life. And then, like, his hometown. You know, Forward. Forward, Indiana. They commission him to do a show there. And they're willing to pay him shitloads of money. And throughout this time there's, like, this character journey and this, you know, subplot about his agent. And all that moving stuff. But Forward asks him to do this showing at their new gallery. And he's all condescending. And doesn't want to do it. But . . . now here's the twist . . . he really wants to do it but secretly can't because he's scared his girlfriend, or I guess ex-girlfriend, might see it and call him on it. So he's panicked. And he's in Forward. And it's all really tense. But, like, you know, funny. Like he's tripping over easels and shit. It's all very physical. Like, the dialogue will be spare. But the visuals will be really over the top but, like, filmed in a *cinéma vérité* style. And then he sees his girlfriend, or his ex or, well, she's the woman of his dreams. And he decides to stay there. But the big climax is that he doesn't do the gallery show he's supposed to do. Instead he goes and paints the white walls in Forward. That's the last image of the film. It's called . . . get this . . . "Painting Forward."

CRAIG: Wow.

DANE: Thanks.

CRAIG: Wow. That could be an awesome . . .

DANE: Cool, man, cool.

CRAIG: I mean, when I was in Barcelona, this guy told me the same story.

DANE: Really?

CRAIG: He told me this story how he was this installation artist from outside Madrid, from this small village - -

DANE: So it's plausible? It's a go?

CRAIG: Totally plausible.

DANE: Now where's that?

CRAIG: Where's what? Spain?

DANE: Oh, Spain.

CRAIG: Barcelona, Spain.

DANE: Oh, yeah, right.

CRAIG: *(To ZOE.)* Doesn't it sound awesome? *(Pause.)* I mean, it totally could make a killing.

DANE: You think?

CRAIG: Oh my God, yes.

DANE: Thanks.

CRAIG: What do you think?

ZOE: I don't know. I mean, I should read it . . . I mean, you should write it first.

DANE: It's all up here.

ZOE: OK, but it's hard for me to have an opinion when - -

DANE: I didn't ask your opinion.

CRAIG: I did, though.

ZOE: Let me guess: You're from Indiana.

DANE: No.

ZOE: Southside? Way Southside?

DANE: No. I mean, I was born there. But no.

ZOE: And it's, like, what you wanted to do. But didn't. And that girl?

The girl he goes back to? That's the girl you want to go back to.

But you don't. Because you live in a city. Am I right, or am I right?

DANE: I'm sorry, I didn't catch your name.

ZOE: And she's probably some housewife with two kids.

DANE: Three.

ZOE: I'd much rather hear about some Chicago filmmaker who shows up at some guy's condo and pitches film scripts than some fake schmuck from "Forward, Indiana."

DANE: I got you.

ZOE: "Forward, Indiana."

DANE: A real place.

ZOE: I'm not surprised.

DANE: I don't really feel like my life, or the lives of those around me, are really that interesting.

ZOE: Huh.

DANE: So I've decided to focus on my past. And play out different endings. I'm sure you've reflected on your life. The things you could have done. The choices you made. And you look happy where you are, I mean, you look great. And you're not crying into your martini. Still, you would probably enjoy experiencing the, you know, "road not traveled."

ZOE: It's natural to be interested in what one could have done.

DANE: OK, then.

ZOE: OK, but I still think your hypothetical screenplay sounds pretty -
-

CRAIG: It does sound pretty, doesn't it?

ZOE: - - formulaic.

CRAIG: Oh, OK. Guess I agree with her, Dane. I mean, I just don't get how a guy could - -

DANE: Could what?

CRAIG: Give up what he has to move back - -

DANE: But he's realizing that - -

CRAIG: That what? I mean, he escaped.

DANE: How old are you?

CRAIG: Me? I'm 25.

DANE: Exactly.

ZOE: Exactly.

CRAIG: And what's that supposed to mean?

DANE: Only that at that age - -

CRAIG: "That age"?

DANE: Look, I just turned 40. And everything is not what I wanted it to be. But what do I know? I'm just a punk from Canaryville.

ZOE: I hope your brother isn't coming.

CRAIG: No, he's not.

ZOE: I should get going.

CRAIG: Going where?

ZOE: Going home.

CRAIG: But you just got here.

ZOE: Great party. Lots of people and everything.

CRAIG: My buddies from school will be here soon. I promise. And there will be Lance. And there will be Jenny. And - -

ZOE: And there will be the gym tomorrow.

CRAIG: I'm sure more people are on their way. And, yeah. Yeah, I was hoping you could stay.

ZOE: Well, I can't stay forever.

CRAIG: Do you wanna smoke?

ZOE: I'm on the patch. Thanks for reminding me.

CRAIG: Well, I wanted you to . . .

ZOE: To what?

CRAIG: You know, stay. And have a good time. And stay.

ZOE: Yeah, I oughta go.

CRAIG: So you're not going to stay?

ZOE: No, I'm not going to stay overnight.

CRAIG: No, that's not what I'm - -

ZOE: Sure, Craig.

CRAIG: I'm sorry if I . . . look, maybe we should . . . can we go talk in my bedroom?

ZOE: In your bedroom? Good God no.

CRAIG: That's not what I - -

ZOE: What about Amanda?!

CRAIG: Let's go talk out on the balcony.

ZOE: No, I can tell you right here. I'm not interested in you, Craig. I mean, you're cute and nice and all. But you know how, you know, weird - -

DANE: What's weird?

ZOE: This has been a fun night.

CRAIG: You're really going to go?

ZOE: 'Night.

ZOE leaves.

DANE: What was wrong with her?

CRAIG: Nothing. I hope.

DANE: Buh-bye!

CRAIG: No kidding.

DANE: Who was she?

CRAIG: The woman I love.

DANE: So you've been there.

CRAIG: I wish.

DANE: So you've never been there.

CRAIG: There? No.

DANE: So get over it. Where's that one girl? She was next to that cousin of yours? Wherever she went, she was just with your hot cousin. Anyway, she'll do it. With you.

CRAIG: Cool.

DANE: Yeah.

CRAIG: Coolio.

DANE: Your cousin has something in her hair.

CRAIG: I was just going to say that. She's walking over here.

MOLLY enters. She has nachos in her hair.

MOLLY: Were you staring at me?

DANE & CRAIG: No.

MOLLY: You know, I hate couches. Couches blow.

CRAIG: I think you have some . . . nachos? . . . in your hair.

MOLLY: No shit.

BLACKOUT.

ACT ONE, SCENE 6

AT RISE:

A few weeks later. MOLLY waits for CRAIG to put on his fall clothing.

MOLLY: And you took me to Disneyland. That was so sweet of you. Remember that?

CRAIG: No.

MOLLY: I can't believe you don't remember that! Merle called up one day after school. We were supposed to be at Goldstar an hour ago! "Craig has requested his cousin to join him at DISNEYLAND!"

CRAIG: Are you taking me to Disneyland?

MOLLY: No, I'm taking you to Goldstar. Don't - -

CRAIG: Don't what?

MOLLY: You've stopped! Mother and I were discussing Aunt Merle and your dad, and whatever. Like the divorce and inevitability and familial patterns and . . . And Mother was going on about the annulment of her marriage from the man I refuse to call my father. And we were recalling all the events that happened to said man I no longer acknowledge. And she reminded me about Disneyland, how Aunt Merle took us to California so I could escape it for a while. God, could you be any slower?

CRAIG: How old were we when - - ?

MOLLY: I was 15, so you must have been . . . Jesus Christ, you're so - -

CRAIG: I barely remember that. It was just us, right?

MOLLY: Yeah, Brian had camp or something.

CRAIG: Math camp.

MOLLY: Or something.

CRAIG: I think I was 10. I think we had fun. I think that was one of my favorite vacations.

MOLLY: I doubt it beat Spain.

CRAIG: Spain was nice.

MOLLY: You lived on the beach. Your jpegs made me barf.

CRAIG: Spain was nice. But I'm done traveling.

MOLLY: But you're still going to the islands.

CRAIG: I'll still go with everyone to the islands.

MOLLY: Because that's tradition. In a way, I'm glad my parents did the big D when I was that young.

CRAIG: What does this have to do with Disneyland?

MOLLY: You're obviously a mess.

CRAIG: Am I?

MOLLY: You are. And that's what we do for each other . . . for family or friends or both or whatever . . . It's really cold in here . . . Though I must admit I was a tad bitter when Mother told me. Here I'd spent the last 15 years thinking the warmest moment of my childhood was when my little cousin invited me to Disneyland. Turns out you didn't even want me to go. You wanted to take Lance. But I was the mercy choice. It was all a big ruse to get me out of the house for the weekend, so that Man could move his stuff out. It was all a big lie. I must admit, however, that it worked like a charm. And I got a Cinderella dress out of the deal. Still, you never even wanted to go with me. And I thought you did. Oh, it's not your fault. It was that Man's fault, really. But I won't make a big deal out of it. I mean, just look at the state you're in!

CRAIG: I'm actually really - -

MOLLY: It's what you do. You took me to Mickey. I take you to my girls. It's what you do.

CRAIG: Which girls will be there?

MOLLY: None if you don't get your shoes on.

CRAIG: You better not have told them some sob story about me.

MOLLY: What sob story?

CRAIG: I think I loved Disneyland.

MOLLY: I think I loved Disneyland, too. You know, I hate that your couch is in the middle of the room. And it's sooo old. It's older than Dane.

CRAIG: So which girls did you invite?

MOLLY: I hated Disneyland. Disney World is way better. I mean, it all kind of sucks. Finally, finally we can go. Were you always this slow? Or is it just your depression? Brian told me you were depressed.

CRAIG: That's so kind of him to diagnose me like that.

MOLLY: Milk it. It's cute. Of course I told them your sob story. But I'm gonna tell you now: We're going to a bar. They won't be underage like - -

CRAIG: I'm actually into this other girl.

MOLLY: Who? Zoe? Don't tell me Zoe. Oh my God, Brian told me. How casebook. It's not like you emulate your brother the way it is.

CRAIG: Brian? I hate Brian.

MOLLY: Of course you do. Because you're so him. And now you want to pork - -

CRAIG: No - -

MOLLY: Oink!

CRAIG: No - -

MOLLY: Oink!!

CRAIG: No! - -

MOLLY: Oink!!!

CRAIG: Like you have any room to talk.

MOLLY: How is it autumn outside and winter in here?

CRAIG: Bringing that Dane guy to my party.

MOLLY: I've recycled Dane. Hopefully some other girl can find a use for him.

CRAIG: Well you can tell my brother - -

MOLLY: Tell him yourself.

MOLLY and CRAIG exit.

BLACKOUT.

ACT ONE, SCENE 7

SCENE:

Thanksgiving afternoon.

AT RISE:

CRAIG and BRIAN are drunk, watching football.

CRAIG: Remember Castle Grayskull? And Lego Land Space Station? Remember when I got all four TMNTs? And when you got a Speak and Spell and made me trade for my Nerf Golf? And when you stole my skateboard? Or the Schwinn bicycle? The Schwinn bicycle was the best. No, the moped was the best. Which was your favorite? You always said yours was Intellivision. Did you like the turkey? Some Thanksgiving. I wonder if we'll have turkey for Christmas. Will you even be around for Christmas? What are we going to do? What's going to happen, Brian?

BRIAN: Not sure.

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CRAIG: Wonder what we'll get for Christmas.

BRIAN: Not sure where I'll be.

CRAIG: Yeah, yeah, it's not all about getting. But it's still fun to wonder.

BRIAN: Aspen.

CRAIG: I gave Mom a long list of things. Practical things. Things for
--

BRIAN: Aspen, most likely.

CRAIG: What did you ask for?

BRIAN: Shut up, halftime is over.

CRAIG: Right, right. Wow. The holidays are going to be so different
--

BRIAN: Get over it.

CRAIG: Right. Right. I don't know. No. It's fine. Right. Right. I
just don't
know . . .

BRIAN: Who *are* you?

CRAIG: Huh?

BRIAN: I don't even know who you are.

CRAIG: (*Beat.*) Ha ha ha.

BRIAN: I said, shut up.

BLACKOUT.

ACT ONE, SCENE 8

SCENE:

Late Christmas Eve.

AT RISE:

MERLE wraps a present. CRAIG wears a Santa hat.

CRAIG: More eggnog?

MERLE: Nah.

CRAIG: Music?

MERLE: Nah.

CRAIG: Christmas music?

MERLE: Let me wrap this present.

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CRAIG: Thank you.

MERLE: He'll love it.

CRAIG: Thank you for dinner.

MERLE: Oh, please. "Thank you for dinner." We're not business associates. You're my son. Of course I will feed you on Christmas Eve. Dear God. Do you want the card addressed Father? Or Dad? Or Daddy?

CRAIG: I don't know.

MERLE: How can you not know? I'm almost finished wrapping. I'll need to know what you call your daddy.

CRAIG: Dad. Dad is fine.

MERLE: I think this is an adequate gift for him. Was I supposed to get anything for Amanda?

CRAIG: What are you going to do tomorrow?

MERLE: Jerry and Jeannie are having me over.

CRAIG: That will be fun.

MERLE: Oh, yeah. I can't imagine spending Christmas any other way.

CRAIG: They're fun people. They can be funny.

MERLE: Sign your name to this card.

CRAIG: Sure you don't want to hear any music?

MERLE: I'm so glad you were free tonight. *(Pause.)* It's all I wanted.

CRAIG: Too bad Brian had - -

MERLE: No, it's not too bad. Brian had to ski. And I'm sure he's having a lovely time with what's her name. And that he's finally gotten over Zoe. I think it's all just fabulous. No, in a way it's lovely that Brian couldn't join us. Brian is Brian. And you are you. And you are my baby boy. You are my baby boy, Craig. And I count my lucky stars that you're here. Now I'm going to tell you something, my baby boy. And you have to promise not to tell Brian. Because Brian isn't like us. Brian does not get it. So not a word to Brian. And as for anyone else, I would hope this remains between us. You'll understand. And most of all do not tell your father.

CRAIG: What is it?

MERLE: Just hold this last crease. There.

CRAIG: There where?

MERLE: There, it's wrapped.

CRAIG: Mother?

MERLE: And it looks splendid.

CRAIG: What happened?

MERLE: This summer, while you were gone, it was a very odd time.

CRAIG: Yeah.

MERLE: It was a very dark time.

CRAIG: Yeah?

MERLE: And I was low. Particularly around the Fourth. The Fourth of July was the lowest of the low. And Jeannie and I were trading books back and forth. And Jean had lent me this novel. It was a modern novel, by some, you know, someone or, Richard something. Richard so-and-so-son was the author. And it was a Booker finalist. And I was very . . . alone. And your Father had decided

to . . . and I was on my own at that point. And I was spending the week reading this Booker . . . book . . . oh, the novel was so well-written. It should have won that goddamn award. And in the novel, this man . . . this man living in London. The man was Pakistani, but he was a sort of an everyman. And the characterization in the novel was so spot-on, this author, Richard What-Have-You, he's a real up-and-comer. And in the novel, this Pakistani man, he journeys down to the tube, down to his local tube station. The tube is the subway. But you know that. And the man decides to throw himself in front of the train. And the rest of the novel is what happens to his friends and his family. How they are affected. So I decide that it's, for some reason, a good idea to throw myself in front of the train. Not in London, but Chicago. So I walked over to the train stop. The one down at, you know, the one down the street. You know I had never been on any public transportation in Chicago? The need had never arisen. So it's early Monday morning, the morning after the Fourth, and I'm down in the train station. The train stop. And I walk up to the turnstile. And I see the slot, and I put my credit card in the slot. And nothing happens. And the officer, the train officer, asks me what I'm doing. And I tell her that I'm trying to get down to the train tracks. And she tells me that I need to pay. And I reply: "What does it look like I'm doing?" And she directs me over to this machine.

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And I guess you're supposed to pay for some sort of token or something at this machine. So I put my credit card in the slot. And nothing happens. And then this officer, who's had her eye on me . . . for good reason, I now realize . . . tells me that I can't pay for a token or whatever with a credit card. And I ask, "What sort of train is this?" And she informs me that it's cash or nothing. So I tell her that I've been on trains all over Europe and not once have I been given this ultimatum. But this is futile, as I'm afraid she misunderstood me and thought I was from Europe. As if I didn't live at the end of the block. And I didn't have any cash! I only had my credit card! So the officer tells me, she tells me, "There's no money at this station." That the nearest place to get any money is at this White Turkey. This gas station down the block. It's a gas station that doesn't sell gas. I didn't quite understand. But I walk to this White Chicken. And I ask them for cash. But they tell me I have to buy something. So I'm searching the aisles. And I find some tortilla chips. So place the bag at the counter and ask for twenty dollars. Surely this pass is under twenty dollars. In the Booker book, it's three pounds. But the White Bird attendant, he's Pakistani, he's a real Pakistani, tells me that my purchase has to be over ten dollars. And so I think to myself: I could buy salsa. So I pick up some salsa. I've purchased chips, salsa, and have received an additional twenty dollars. Then I REALLY think to myself: I don't even want these chips and salsa. What I really want to eat is the leftover miso soup in my fridge. That's what I really want. So I walk back home. And I warm up my miso soup. And it's great. Then I ate the chips and salsa. I suppose I wanted them as well. I ate the entire bag. I loved it. I was so full that I simply had to go lay down on the bed. And I started to doze off. And I slept. When I awoke, it was Tuesday . . . I started to cry. I was only hungry. And tired. That's all. Suppose that makes sense. I hadn't eaten since Saturday afternoon. And hadn't slept all weekend. So that's what happened. You really must read this novel. Richard Something. It was robbed of the Booker Prize.

BLACKOUT.

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ACT ONE, SCENE 9**SCENE:**

New Years Eve, early in the evening.

AT RISE:

CRAIG opens a bottle of champagne. AMANDA holds her hands over her ears.

CRAIG: Amanda!

AMANDA: Where did that come from?!

CRAIG: *(Checking the label.)* Good question.

AMANDA: We agreed to *coffee*.

CRAIG: It's New Year's, what can you do?

AMANDA: I will enjoy *one* glass. And that's it. I mean, who am I to refuse champagne?

CRAIG: It's the good stuff.

AMANDA: From Spain?

CRAIG: No. Not *cava*. I got it for the pre-production meeting for this film - -

AMANDA: Alright.

CRAIG: - - For this film I'm making. I'm making a movie. Why did you look at your watch?

AMANDA: Huh?

CRAIG: You just looked at your watch.

AMANDA: 'Cause you said "time." You said "time" and I thought to look at my watch. It's nothing.

CRAIG: Of course.

AMANDA: I'm sure you've heard this before, but you live in a really nice place.

CRAIG: Thank you. Thank you so much.

AMANDA: Lucky Craig.

CRAIG: Lucky Amanda.

AMANDA: I'm still living on campus.

CRAIG: Have I told you how great it is to see you?

AMANDA: It's good to see you.

CRAIG: Ditto.

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AMANDA: Good to see you back in town.

CRAIG: I love Chicago. Can I make you dinner?

AMANDA: You know I have plans. The agreement was - -

CRAIG: But will you get a proper meal at these so-called parties? Or will it be salsa and a hummus platter? Let's be honest with ourselves, Amanda.

AMANDA: I'm not hungry.

CRAIG: But you should eat.

AMANDA: I don't want to be full.

CRAIG: We should eat.

AMANDA: I don't want to feel fat in . . . *(Taking off coat to reveal a cocktail dress.)* this.

CRAIG: I got to take you out! I love Chicago! There! There you go! You're looking at your watch again.

AMANDA: I do have other things to do this evening.

CRAIG: I'm sorry. I must apologize. I'm rushing things. Big shocker there. I was the one who made the phone call. And you were the one who agreed. I wanted to start my year right. I wanted to see you face-to-face.

AMANDA: Oh my God, so did I! So did I!

CRAIG: Don't you love this champagne?

AMANDA: It's seasonal or something. Or holiday-ish. You want to say goodbye or hello or let things go and start new things.

CRAIG: I've had my time away. And it was . . . indescribable. But now I'm here. And I've had a few months to sort myself out. And settle into a life. And it's winter, and it's cold and difficult. I want to share this all with you. Don't worry, I'm not going to spring a ring on you. But I do want you know I've thought about you all along. Even though I may or may not have known. I know now. Know how much you've meant to me. And continue to mean to my life. Look, it wasn't right for you before. And I'm fine with that. I was hurt, I was out there . . . snowed out, blown over. I was away. But last year, it wasn't meant to be. But now I'm back. And I want to make things work. I've changed. Can I come in from the cold?

AMANDA: What are you asking?

CRAIG: I'm asking if you'll consider taking me back.

AMANDA: Back where? Back to what? I don't get what you're saying. I understand what you're saying; I don't get why you're saying it like that. It's like you're talking all flowery.

CRAIG: I've changed.

AMANDA: Congratulations.

CRAIG: I'm better for you.

AMANDA: Better for?

CRAIG: I'm a better person for you.

AMANDA: Now you're just talking . . .

CRAIG: A better boyfriend for you.

AMANDA: You think so?

CRAIG: I want you more than anything. I've always wanted you.

AMANDA: Now you're blatantly lying.

CRAIG: Anything.

AMANDA: It was you who decided to . . . No. Not tonight. We're not going to have this conversation now. Happy New Year's.

CRAIG: So?

AMANDA: So Auld Lang Syne.

CRAIG: So what?

AMANDA: So I have no response because I refuse to talk about the past tonight. This evening is all about the future. About possibility.

CRAIG: Precisely!

AMANDA: *(Pause.)* Interesting art. You've got interesting art in here. Merle had a hand in it, I assume? She's done quite a job. That painting on the wall. How interesting.

CRAIG: What do you mean by that?

AMANDA: It's so refreshing. In a morbid way. And what a bony little man. And with that tiny little . . . Oh my God. That's you, isn't it?

CRAIG: It's not me.

AMANDA: Sorry.

CRAIG: She bought it when she went to - -

AMANDA: He's gorgeous.

CRAIG: It's not me!

AMANDA: It's art.

CRAIG: Let's watch VH1. Remember how we used to spend hours, hours upon hours watching *I Love the . . .* what year was it?

AMANDA: And biographies on the Hilton Sisters. And the Olsen Twins. And the Barbie twins.

CRAIG: And remember that weekend where we started watching Friday afternoon and just, remember, slept on the couch all weekend, always watching VH1 and, you know?! VH1 and you-know-what?! And remember how we just kept ordering in food and then fighting about who had to walk downstairs to pick it up? That was like the laziest time in my life. God, to live that life again. And remember how at the end of - -

AMANDA: Yes! I remember!

CRAIG: So you remember.

AMANDA: It was only last year!

CRAIG: Seems like - -

AMANDA: It's not like it's ancient - -

CRAIG: Let's watch VH1.

AMANDA: You're going to hate me.

CRAIG: Don't say you have to go to that party.

AMANDA: OK. *(Walks toward the door.)*

CRAIG: Where are you going?

AMANDA: That party!

CRAIG: But you haven't even finished your glass! Here give it to me.
(Takes glass out of her hand.)

AMANDA: Christ, what is wrong with you?

CRAIG: Excuse me?

AMANDA: Sorry, you seem a little on edge.

CRAIG: WELL, I'M NOT!

AMANDA: That's good to hear.

CRAIG: No, you're absolutely right. I'm on edge. Please stay. Finish your glass.

AMANDA whistles "Auld Lang Syne."

CRAIG: Have one more. Isn't the champagne perfect? I love it. Don't you love it? *(Smashes the bottle against the wall.)* Me neither. Not to worry. I've got a better one in the fridge. And if you don't like that, have another label. And I've got a case of that stuff. I've got everything: I have it all. And I'm in love with you, Amanda!



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