

DORRINE: Nuts? Yes, well, I think *nuts* is a very strong word for that.

CAL: Oh wow, you do that? I love that!

DORRINE: But you just said that was completely —

CAL: Shhh. (*Puts his fingers over his lips.*) Look. (*Points to cat.*) She's so friendly.

DORRINE: Oh my God. She's never done that with anyone. (*Shocked.*) Modesty Blaze? Behave yourself.

CAL: I think she likes me, huh?

DORRINE: Well, she certainly seems to like your . . . your muscular leg.

CAL: I didn't say this but I think organizing according to food groups is sexy in a way.

DORRINE: You do?

CAL: Shhh!

DORRINE: (*Whispering.*) So you don't really think it's nuts?

CAL: (*Whispers.*) No, I think it's totally nuts — but in a sexy way. (*Looking down.*) You're kitty seems to like me, isn't that something?

DORRINE: Yes, I, I noticed that, but, but what about my control issues and your rodent problem?

CAL: So you have control issues? Works for me. I'm all about lack of control. You're so tense, Dorrine. Let me help you. (*Massaging her shoulders.*)

DORRINE: Mmmmm. (*Pointing to her shoulder.*) Right there, will ya? (*He moves to that spot.*) Ooh. Ahh. Mmm. Uh — Oooh — that's good.

CAL: You were saying?

DORRINE: (*Moving her shoulder up.*) What? (*Laughs.*) Ha, ha, ha. (*Beat.*) Um, when do you move in?

## THE PINNACLE

*Liz, thirty, and Lincoln, twenty-eight, have been dating for two years now. They met right after law school when they both got jobs working for the Justice Department. The two lawyers are opposites in some respects: Liz is casual, unabashed, and free-spoken; Lincoln is formal, humble, and reserved. Lincoln has planned a lovely getaway to Italy for the two of them. They are currently staying in a hotel in Tuscany. For several months, Lincoln has been planning to ask Liz to marry him, but he wanted a proper setting in which to ask. The only problem is that Lincoln has lost the engagement ring. He suspects the hotel maid of stealing it, so he's been complaining to the management and obsessed with trying to locate this maid. Liz, not knowing his plan, is feeling hurt and fiercely angry because Lincoln has been ignoring her throughout the entire vacation. He is constantly talking to his friends in the nearby villa and acting like an idiot. In this scene, Lincoln has taken Liz to a romantic Italian restaurant to pop the question. Liz wants to break up with him.*

### CHARACTERS

Liz: 30

Lincoln: 28, Liz's boyfriend

### SETTING

A restaurant in Italy

### TIME

The present

LINCOLN: He said he gave away our reservation because we were late. I'm really sorry, Liz.

LIZ: Great. Fine. Let's go someplace else then.

LINCOLN: No, he said he would have a place for us in ten to twenty minutes.

LIZ: Well is it ten minutes or twenty minutes?

LINCOLN: I think it's probably fifteen. *(Beat.)* Or less.

LIZ: Let's go. There was a street café right around the corner.

LINCOLN: Wait. I researched this restaurant for weeks. I chose it. It's a special place, Liz.

LIZ: I researched the café just now. It's special too. It has food. I'm starving. Let's go.

LINCOLN: No! Now, *this* has one of the finest chefs in Lucca and a glorious view.

LIZ: Whoop-dee-do. I've already had great food for days now. That's all we've had is great food. I haven't had one bad meal since we arrived in Italy.

LINCOLN: You sound disappointed.

LIZ: I'm just being realistic. We *will* have one bad meal while we're here. It's statistics. So why don't we plan it?

LINCOLN: Please? Why don't you sit?

LIZ: I don't want to sit.

LINCOLN: Here's a bench. Why don't you sit here and rest?

LIZ: I said I don't want to sit.

LINCOLN: You look beautiful, you know?

*(Liz is slightly annoyed, turns and stars at him with disgust.)*

LINCOLN: That's a remarkable fresco. They have a violinist here as well. Interesting fact: This restaurant has a tradition of being a place where local men often propose marriage.

LIZ: Interesting fact: I'm starving. *(Pointing.)* Café! Café!

LINCOLN: Look, I planned this. I orchestrated this as best I . . . and then — things . . . I chose an incredibly romantic and intimate place to be with you. That café has a boisterous atmosphere. I don't think we'd be able to talk.

LIZ: Talk? Suddenly you want to talk to me now?

LINCOLN: Yes, I do. I told you today. I have wanted to the whole . . . I just . . . things got all . . . here. I know I've seemed a bit preoccupied, Liz. If you only knew.

LIZ: A bit? You spend half the time hanging around with your

friends in the villa from undergrad who obviously aren't the least bit interested in getting to know me.

LINCOLN: No, that's not true. They really, really want to get to know you. Really.

LIZ: They *really really* have a strange way of showing it. Really. They avoid me every time they see us.

LINCOLN: That's because they're afraid. Not of you. I mean, they think I'm going to want to . . .

LIZ: What?

LINCOLN: Talk to you . . . about . . . things — and stuff.

LIZ: Oh. *(Confusion.)* Uh-huh. *(Beat.)* What took you so long at the hotel anyway? We wouldn't have been late. What were you talking to the manager about for all that time?

LINCOLN: Nothing. I just wanted to check on the maid service.

LIZ: Again? That's the fifth time in two days.

LINCOLN: I'm unhappy with their service.

LIZ: The room looks fine. When did you suddenly become obsessed with cleanliness?

LINCOLN: I'm not obsessed. Things were just not to my satisfaction.

LIZ: Not to your satisfaction? We've dated for two years. I've known you for three. I don't think I've ever seen the carpet in your bedroom. In fact, honey, that's what endeared you to me in the first place. This is the one area where you drop the whole pretense thing, the whole formal thing, and act somewhat normal or even flawed. That's why I fell for you, ya know?

LINCOLN: I'm still a messy person, Liz. Really! I am.

LIZ: I'm glad. I'm glad because I don't know who this person is who came with me on this vacation. And the messy guy, that's you, he's the one I want to be with.

LINCOLN: He's still here. He is. And I'm sorry talking to the manager took so long and made us late for dinner. This was supposed to be — well, *will be* a very special night. I hope.

The manager was just having difficulty understanding my Italian. And I was trying to locate the maid from yesterday.

LIZ: The one I saw you talking to in the lobby this morning?

LINCOLN: We weren't talking. She doesn't really understand English.

LIZ: Well, you seemed to be in passionate discussion.

LINCOLN: Because she couldn't understand me.

LIZ: *(Beat.)* Right. Why do you need to talk to her in the first place?

LINCOLN: Well, I —

LIZ: Let's not talk about it. It's pissing me off. Talk about something else.

LINCOLN: OK. *(Thinks. Pause.)* Well, I, I think you look beautiful.

LIZ: You already said that. Are you nervous or something?

LINCOLN: No. I just, I, I've been considering a great many things over the past month, Liz.

LIZ: Have you? OK. Good. *(Beat.)* And?

LINCOLN: I've reached a pinnacle. A pinnacle in my life. I've completed law school, moved on to a position at the justice department. I'm glancing down at the mountain I've scaled and staring up at the ascent ahead. I'm, I'm in a province, a province of change, of transition, of sorts. Waving good-bye to past aspiration and expectations, especially if they are not a foothold to the next plateau. I need to forgo my routine safety and forge forth. Cut loose the excess weight drawing me down and grab for the rope of the future.

LIZ: What are you talking about?

LINCOLN: My, our, my future?

LIZ: Does this mean you want to quit your job?

LINCOLN: I don't know. Maybe, but I was starting to —

LIZ: I know there are a lot of weirdos in the justice department, but it beats corporate hours. You want to quit, hon, quit. No biggie. I'm keeping my cushy situation because I still have delusions I can occasionally do good somewhere. I

swear you should have been born in the eighteenth century. What was that all about?

LINCOLN: I don't know. I was trying to explain . . . launching into . . . Did it sound too lofty?

LIZ: You have to ask? "I've reached a pinnacle in my life. A province of change."

*(Lincoln looks embarrassed.)*

LIZ: Aww. I have too, hon. I've reached a province of change too. I'm changing to decaf. Caffeine gives me the shakes. *(Joking.)* Don't want to be falling off my pinnacle. I'm sorry. Go ahead.

LINCOLN: No, you're right. I do always do that. I'm sorry. I want to say — ask something important, but I think maybe I should wait till after we sit. I'm feeling dizzy. I guess I'm hungry too.

LIZ: Me too. *(Noticing.)* My God that looks good. *(Points to the waiter.)* You flirt with the waiter and distract him. I'll grab the plate.

LINCOLN: Why do I have to be the one to flirt?

LIZ: Trust me. He'll like you better. Smile at him. *(Looks at him and then at the waiter.)* You're not going to follow through?!

LINCOLN: I reread the brochure on Lucca.

LIZ: I know you're not gay. But that's the point of being a couple. Tag-team food stealing.

LINCOLN: It looks like we've done almost everything. We should visit the Villa Garzoni gardens tomorrow and then head over to the Duomo di San Martino.

LIZ: What's that?

LINCOLN: It's the Cathedral of Saint Martin. It's supposed to have, uh, uh, elaborate exterior sculptures and inlaid marble scenes and the Volto Santo — the holy face.

LIZ: We've seen a ton of inlaid marble and sculpted crap, Lincoln.

LINCOLN: It's supposed to be exquisite.

LIZ: I have no doubt it's exquisite. I just don't know how much

culture and beauty a person can take. I don't know how many amazing sculptures, and carvings and frescos a person can look at day after day before you say, "OK, enough! Let me veg with the tube and some cheese balls." I mean, I'm not complaining, honey, believe me. The Sistine Chapel was undeniably the most incredible thing I've ever seen in my entire life. And I'm glad we did it together. I just want to spend a day doing nothing. That's it. Nothing.

LINCOLN: Sure. Maybe we could take a long walk. Follow the rampart promenade making a complete circuit of the city. Parts of Lucca face out toward the rolling hills and vineyards. Other parts are supposed to give really intimate views of backyard verandas.

LIZ: There's only one intimate view I'm really interested in tomorrow. *(She smiles.)*

LINCOLN: *(Smiles. Takes that in and then continues.)* But the Villa Garzoni garden has this cascading water staircase that's supposed to be spec —

LIZ: So does the First National Bank building around the corner from work. Did you not hear me?

LINCOLN: Yes. Of course I heard you. And I love that idea. I just thought we could then get up and walk the circuit of the city.

LIZ: Didn't I just go into a long explanation as to why I don't feel like going all over the place tomorrow?

LINCOLN: I know. You didn't want to go to the Cathedral of Saint Martin. So we won't.

LIZ: Wow. That is all you heard.  
*(He looks at her.)*

LINCOLN: Yeah, and the . . . making love part.

LIZ: Look, honey, no lush hills, no gorgeous gardens, just sleep and whatever else comes to us. We get up whenever we want. Maybe we'll go some place, maybe we won't, but we're not making any plans! Understand?

LINCOLN: Sure. *(Puppy-dog.)* Sure.

LIZ: Oh God. Don't do that.

LINCOLN: What? I'm not doing anything.

LIZ: Yes, you are. You're doing that puppy face of yours.

LINCOLN: It's just . . . we only have two more days.

LIZ: Yes, we have two days. And none of the days did I decide what we do. Besides which, I think this running here and there is just a means to avoid me.

LINCOLN: What? That's not true. No, you don't understand what's been —

LIZ: I'm serious. We go to museums or cathedrals, and you're completely silent. I'm oohing and ahing, and talking about opera, even singing arias and telling you how I want to be Sophia Loren and you, you're not there. I have to pull you back from whatever planet you've been visiting these last few days.

LINCOLN: *(Looking toward the tables.)* Liz, I think those people are getting up.

LIZ: You're not even listening to me!! Do you realize you aren't listening to me? I'm leaving.

LINCOLN: No! Wait. I love you. I mean, I'm totally listening. I'm just — I know you're hungry.

LIZ: Well, I'm suggesting lying in bed, meaning being together all day until we're exhausted and you, you want to go every place else on the planet! So how is that supposed to make me feel?

LINCOLN: No, I want to be with you. I do. Definitely.

LIZ: So why so interested in the first maid then, huh?

LINCOLN: I, I thought — I mean, she —

LIZ: Why, huh? What's going on with her?

LINCOLN: Honestly, it's because I think she may have, this is unethical to say without real knowledge, I think she might have taken something.

LIZ: Did she steal some money from you? *(Beat.)* Wait a minute, I thought you did mostly traveler's checks?

LINCOLN: I did. No, it's not money. It's . . . something. I can't say.

LIZ: What?

LINCOLN: I, I can't say. It's something I was going to talk to you about tonight.

LIZ: Wow. Wow, you really caught me off guard, Lincoln. So how long have you known her?

LINCOLN: What? Who?

LIZ: I wondered why you were spending all those hours on the Internet.

LINCOLN: No! No, you've got the wrong idea.

LIZ: And all those times pretending you were some cool, feminist-interested kind of guy. Impressing my mother by quoting Gloria last Thanksgiving.

LINCOLN: Wait, wait. This is not. You have it all wrong.

LIZ: You didn't want a strong woman after all. You just wanted some little thing who barely speaks your language.

LINCOLN: I'm not seeing the maid, Liz!

LIZ: Have you slept with her?

LINCOLN: No! No! Not at all!

LIZ: Now the whole thing with your friends feeling awkward and the, the pinnacle speech make sense now! I'm the weight you wanted to cut loose!

LINCOLN: No, no you're not the weight! Not the weight! You're the rope! The rope!

LIZ: Right. So what was the weight-thing then, hum?

LINCOLN: My record album collection.

LIZ: Why don't we just break up now, Lincoln? I was going to break up with you when we got home anyway.

LINCOLN: You what? You were? But, but I was going to ask you to marry me tonight.

LIZ: Ha. My God, that is the lowest! I mean, talk about trying to get out of confrontation. We've had a disastrous time all week. You've barely even spoken to me. I know things aren't working. I don't know if it's this maid or what. I know things are bad. And I'm sad, and miserable about it all too, but how dare you try to get out of our breakup by saying you were going to ask me to marry you! That's pathetic!!

LINCOLN: No, no. I was nervous. I was really nervous and going

over and over it in my head — my speech. I was really going to ask me to marry you tonight. Urgh, you to marry me. That's why I was picky about the restaurant. That's why my friends weren't talking to you. They were nervous. They were nervous for me. Didn't know how I was going to ask. See, I kept changing how I was going to ask you, finding better, more beautiful sites. And then the whole ring thing. Who knew that would happen? Her stealing the ring. And then everybody said just ask her tonight — ring or not! And then we're late! God, I love you. *(Sighs.)* That's all I wanted to say. It seems easy. I love you. Will you marry me?

LIZ: Don't play games with me, Lincoln. Don't tread on my heart.

LINCOLN: I don't want to tread on your heart, Liz. I want to take care of it. Protect it forever.

LIZ: Oh, I think I'm gonna cry here. You. *(Beat.)* That witch stole my ring?

LINCOLN: I don't know. But I'll get you another immediately if you say yes.

LIZ: Aren't you supposed to be on your knees?

LINCOLN: Oh. God . . . *(He starts to kneel down.)* I just thought you would think that was too —

LIZ: *(Reaching for him.)* I do. I mean, I do think that's too sappy. *(He starts to stand.)* Kneel. I just need a minute to think about this, Lincoln. You've had a lot of time with this.

LINCOLN: Yeah, sure. Take your time.

LIZ: *(Pause.)* Lincoln, where did you have the ring?

LINCOLN: In a bag in the bottom of my suitcase.

LIZ: Oh. *(Pause.)* Not a Payless shoe bag?

LINCOLN: It was white with — yeah! It was in a box. I put it in that bag to disguise it.

LIZ: Really? Umm. The maid didn't steal the ring then. I never saw it, but I think it's still properly cushioned in the bag, probably stuffed between my dirty underwear and a smelly sock. In the pocket of my suitcase. I used your bag as a dirty laundry thingy.

LINCOLN: You're kidding?!

LIZ: Sorry.

LINCOLN: That's good. I'm mean, I'm glad it wasn't lost or stolen. Really glad. *(Beat.)* So . . . I guess you need a couple of days to think about it then?

LIZ: No.

LINCOLN: No?

LIZ: Yes.

LINCOLN: Yes?

LIZ: Yes!

LINCOLN: Really?

LIZ: Yes!

LINCOLN: *(She nods.)* You just made me the happiest guy in all the world.  
*(They kiss.)*

LIZ: *(She smiles.)* So what are we doing tomorrow?

LINCOLN: *(Smiling slyly.)* Nothing. *(Beat.)* I love you, Liz.

LIZ: I love you too.

## FYI

*Cheryl, twenties, has applied for a new position in a different section of her company. The director of this area, Donald, thirties, has called her in for an interview today. Cheryl has been incredibly nervous all morning. This is exactly the kind of promotion she wants. Donald, whose father owns the entire business, tends to act defensively when asking people about their qualifications because he is less than qualified. To make up for his lack of education and experience, he has made a habit of creating new work-related acronyms in an effort to confound his underlings.*

### CHARACTERS

Cheryl: 20s, a job applicant

Donald: 30s, the potential employer

### SETTING

Donald's chic office

### TIME

The present

DONALD: I'm sorry my office is a mess. Messes breed creativity for me. I'm certainly breeding something in here, right? *(Laughs. Gestures.)* Take a seat wherever you'd like, Cheryl. Any where you'd like! *(Stops her with high pitch.)* Oop. Except there. *(She goes to sit again.)* Oop, or there. *(Points.)* Hup — now, that's my favorite chair.

CHERYL: Sorry.

DONALD: *(He goes to move it.)* No problem. Isn't that goofy? I have a favorite. The fabric's so soft. *(Points to a chair.)* Why don't you sit right there?

CHERYL: Thanks. *(She sits.)*

DONALD: *(He sits, touching the chair.)* I like the pattern too. A lot. *(Abruptly interrupting chair obsession.)* Well now, as