

PLASTIC FORKS

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(Two women in their late fifties, Harriet and Jean, outdoors, at a picnic table on the top of a mountain. Jean lights a cigarette.)

HARRIET

It's just not special to me anymore.

JEAN

I'm sorry?

HARRIET

I just, I wanted to bring you here and tell you that.

(pause)

JEAN

(calmly) What the fuck are you talking about?

HARRIET

And that I love you. I'm sorry I spent all those years hating you.

JEAN

Harriet. What are you talking about?

HARRIET

You want some of that tofu?

JEAN

I'm not eating curry anymore. My doctor thinks it's part of what's giving me this gas problem.

HARRIET

Oh.

JEAN

Where are we?

HARRIET

This was the home of the Chattoqua Empire.

JEAN

What's that – Indians?

HARRIET

Right.

(pause)

HARRIET

I never got to be good at anything, Jean.

JEAN

You're a wonderful person, dear.

HARRIET

No. I never took the time to get good at anything. I think that might have made a difference. I think it takes spending a lot of time alone. You have to be alone and desperate for the success and I never felt that way. I always wanted company. That was my problem.

JEAN

Are you talking about Frank? Is something wrong?

HARRIET

No, I'm not talking about Frank.

JEAN

It's annoying having him at home, right? I went through the same thing, honey. I retired before David, so I got my setup at home for a few years and then all of a sudden, when he retired, this stranger is on my turf the whole day. It was a real problem. I thought I was gonna kill him.

HARRIET

Why didn't you tell me that you're not eating curry anymore?

JEAN

What are you talking about? I just told you.

HARRIET

No, why didn't you tell me when I was preparing the food. I would have made something different.

JEAN

It's okay. I'm not hungry.

HARRIET

It's rude not to tell me, that's the point. It makes me a bad host.

JEAN

Oh, Harriet, fine, I'm sorry. It's my fault, I'm a bad sister. Is that better?

HARRIET

(sarcastic) Well now I feel like a good host.

JEAN

I can't even apologize correctly. I'm sorry for that too. You're so sensitive.

(pause)

HARRIET

I would have made something that you like.

JEAN

What is it Harriet? What are we doing up here? You're gonna tell me something? I'm all ears.

HARRIET

I've already told you.

JEAN

About you and Frank? Honey, it's okay. That's what I'm saying. David and I went through it too. You've worked through 28 years together, you'll work through this too.

HARRIET

I wanted us to have something nice to eat.

JEAN

You're gonna have me apologizing for this forever.

(Harriet laughs)

JEAN

That's funny to you?

(pause)

JEAN

Fine. Look, I'll eat the tofu if it's that important to you, but it's going to be a gassy walk back down.

(Harriet reaches into her bag, pulls out a revolver and places it on the table, keeping her hand on top.)

JEAN

That's a gun.

HARRIET

Frank.

JEAN
It's Frank's?

(Harriet nods.)

HARRIET
I'm leaving half to you and half to Frank. You don't need it, of course, I don't mean it as an insult, you've always done better for yourself than me with money. I hope you'll give it away to something that you believe in. You're better at that too. I had to wait for you to do this. I didn't want to explain it to Frank and the kids. I didn't know how to tell them. I'm not good at confronting people. They'll be sad. I know that. I know they love me. I couldn't explain it to them, but I knew you could handle it. You've always had more skill at things like that than me. I don't know how to tell them, but I know that you can.

(Jean pulls on the gun. Harriet pulls it out from under her and puts it into her mouth. Jean knocks it to the side and it fires over Harriet's shoulder, hurting no one. A beat. Jean slaps Harriet across the face, a reprimand, and grabs the gun. Harriet doesn't fight it, but won't let go.)

JEAN
Give it to me.

HARRIET
No.

JEAN
Give it to me.

HARRIET
No.

JEAN
Now.

HARRIET
It's not different at the bottom of the hill, Jean. I don't know what you're trying to save. What are you gonna do, lock me up?

JEAN
Goddamn right I'll lock you up. Let go.

HARRIET
No!

JEAN
Let go!

HARRIET
No!

(They struggle and stop, both holding on.)

HARRIET
I'm not doing it to you. It won't be on your record – don't worry.

JEAN
Who do you think you're talking to?

HARRIET
I know, I know. You're older and so you've always felt that I'm your responsibility. Because Mom said something to you when we were younger, so you've been looking out for me the whole time.

(pause)

HARRIET
And it's, "To whom." (beat) "To whom do you think you're talking?"

JEAN
I'm not having this fight again! That's not how language works.

HARRIET
That's the rule!

JEAN
Grammar is subject to change in the fashion! Language evolves!

HARRIET
No. You fucking bitch! I'm so tired of this. Yours is incorrect!

JEAN
No language without context – I can say whatever I want in this context.

HARRIET
You have to win. Even now? Even when I'm right? I hate you Jean. I fucking hate you.

JEAN
Harriet. I'm going to march you down to the bottom of this mountain and I'm going to take you to the hospital. I'm going to find a special place for you to live until you're better. We'll come visit you. You'll be very happy.

HARRIET

Plastic knives and forks for the rest of my life, right? An attendant who cuts my food for me and thinks I'm an old woman with a peculiar odor.

JEAN

That's probably right.

HARRIET

It's not the weaponry.

JEAN

I'm sorry?

HARRIET

The Indians could shut themselves off, could turn off their bodies. You don't have to kill yourself, you can just stop yourself from living. It's why the Indians never really became slaves. They would turn themselves off and die – it was a bad investment. They would sit under a tree and make it so their hearts stopped beating.

JEAN

That's the biggest load of crap I've ever heard. You can't control the brainstem functions.

(Harriet quickly tries to pull the gun free. She jerks JEAN around, but doesn't get the gun loose.)

JEAN

Ow, Harriet, Ow. That really hurt. I think you pulled my arm out of the socket.

HARRIET

I hate you for this. If there's a god and I see Him, I'm going to tell him what a shit you are.

JEAN

I love you unconditionally Harriet and I have since the day you were born.

(Harriet brings the gun up and spins her arm around until Jean's grip breaks. Harriet shoots herself in the chest and drops instantly. Harriet coughs and is dead. Short pause. Jean screams once with all her guts. She looks around – is anyone there? Jean is increasingly the only living presence onstage. She goes into Harriet's purse and removes a cell phone. She calls Frank.)

JEAN

(on the phone) Frank. (Jean's mouth is open, but the words are slow to come.)