

WITHIN REASON

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Setting

Thanksgiving weekend, 1984. The Reason Center in Sonoma County, California.

Cast of Characters

Caroline	28. Smith College alumna. Workshop coordinator and head instructor for the Reason Center, Sonoma.
Cameron	29. Caroline's brother—a Brown grad—and workshop coordinator.
Janet	27. Caroline's and Cameron's assistant. Wears lots of purple. Bailed on Portland State to do her own thing in San Francisco.
Elizabeth	24. Janet's sister. Recently graduated law school (Boalt).
Will	29. Cameron's college pal. Taking over his father's publishing house any day now.

Act 1

Scene 1. The communal dining room at the Reason Workshop Center, Sonoma County, California.

ELIZABETH leans against the wall with a glass of wine. JANET enters with a turkey on a platter and sets it on the already-full table.

JANET

This bird had a better life than most *people*. The farmer dude said there's this free range recreation area.

ELIZABETH

Smells good.

JANET

You will eat some, yeah? Everybody's so into macrobiotics, and I can't remember if this friend of Cameron's is vegetarian or not.

ELIZABETH

For once we won't have to fight for the drumsticks.

JANET

I'm not—the macrobiotics.

JANET rushes offstage and returns with a bowl of brown rice pilaf.

ELIZABETH

Not even a bite?

JANET

No. Poultry's totally as bad as red meat in the life pyramid.

ELIZABETH

They made you go macrobiotic?

JANET

They didn't make me do anything.

ELIZABETH

Right. Sorry.

JANET exits.

ELIZABETH

Look, Mom wanted me—well, actually, last time we talked she said she didn't want me to bring this up, but it's just that you've got—someone from US Bank called the house.

JANET returns with a bowl of mashed potatoes.

JANET

Oh, them. Guess they haven't found me here.

ELIZABETH

They told Mom they'd turned things over to their lawyer.

JANET

It's not like I have some bank account they can take from me. Or a car even.

ELIZABETH

How can you not have a car? You hadn't even paid it—

JANET

I guess technically I still own it. But there was this retreat in Taos. Steven Cranshaw. A whole month. I came back. The Datsun didn't.

ELIZABETH

What if you have to go somewhere?

JANET

Where? I work here. I live here.

ELIZABETH

If you want to clear this up formally, I could draft something. Most people don't know it, but with a bankruptcy plan, you can arrange to pay most everyone back.

JANET

You drove all the way here to tell me about bankruptcy?

ELIZABETH

Of course not.

JANET

Because you could have just sent a letter or something.

JANET exits.

ELIZABETH

I didn't, okay?

JANET returns with a loaf of bread.

JANET

Good. I'm glad you're here, anyhow. I want you to meet Cameron.

ELIZABETH

Your boyfriend?

JANET

Well, "boyfriend"—that's not really— He and I are just kind of...I don't know. But he's... God, I feel like I'm fifteen talking about him.

ELIZABETH

Is that a good idea? A coworker?

JANET

What?

ELIZABETH

You know what they say: don't shit where you eat.

JANET

That's a gross way to put it.

Aren't you dating one of your professors or something?

ELIZABETH

What? No.

JANET

Last I heard, Mom thought... Oh! I just flashed on this professor dude from the interpolation workshop who would be perfect. He's cute in a forty-year-old kind of way. I think he does yoga. Could be a little complicated, I guess, ten years from now, when he was really old and you weren't. You're just getting around to thinking about kids, and he's ready for retirement. But he could hang out with Dad—

ELIZABETH

You know your collection agency badgered Mom and Dad until they cashed in Dad's life insurance?

JANET

They're not my collection agency.

ELIZABETH

Convinced Mom you'd be in jail if she didn't find three thousand dollars.

JANET

Shit.

ELIZABETH

Yeah. Scared her so bad she paid no attention to my advice.

JANET

Let them arrest me?

ELIZABETH

They were bluffing.

JANET

So I owe Dad three thousand bucks.

ELIZABETH

And there's the car. Given your fact situation...

Sorry. It's terminology from the practice Bar. Everything boils down to "fact situations."

Like Oscar and Harold own Shelter Oaks as a tenancy by the entirety. If Oscar transfers his interest by quitclaim to Marjorie without informing Harold...well, you get the point.

JANET

Not really.

ELIZABETH

Real property's a big chunk of the Bar.

JANET

I'm not sure you should go on about too much legal stuff. Everyone's still kind of freaked out.

ELIZABETH

Yeah, I read about the suit. Suits. We all did. Of course. Since you're here. And everything.

JANET

All these people trying to sue Paul Schwarz just because they know he's got a lot of money.

ELIZABETH

From running this place?

JANET

No way. Paul is this amazing scientist. He basically invented the radar detector.

Beat

ELIZABETH

Did you bake that yourself? Are you the chef?

JANET

Oh, no. Willow's gone home for the weekend.

ELIZABETH

I should be helping, shouldn't I?

JANET

Never mind. The pie's the only thing left. It needs ten more minutes.

ELIZABETH

Oh. Could have jumped on that earlier.

JANET

It's fine. But I could use some of this... [*pours herself a glass of wine*] My personal integration is high enough. I can afford a couple subcontractors.

ELIZABETH

See, this terminology— No wonder the papers pick up on—

JANET

We are not a— This is the best job I've ever had.

ELIZABETH

What do you do anyhow?

JANET

Whatever Cameron and Caroline need for the workshops.

ELIZABETH

You teach?

JANET

Well... It's kind of like whatever they need right then.

ELIZABETH

Oh.

JANET

Working here, I get to stay here. Sometimes it's right to just *be somewhere*.

ELIZABETH

Do you need help? You would tell me if you did, right? Because I could get someone to represent you. Or—

CAROLINE enters.

CAROLINE

Janet's lucky enough to be completely out of the lawsuit loop. For now anyhow. But if she ever did need a lawyer, our team would have her covered.

JANET

Caroline, this is my sister.

CAROLINE

Elizabeth, how do you do?

ELIZABETH

Um, great. This is some place you've got.

CAROLINE

We've done what we can with the rustic charm.

JANET

Cam's friend is supposed to get here before the high tide, right?

ELIZABETH

What happens then?

CAROLINE

The highway. The sky opens up, the waters rush forth. What could be more rustic than that?

JANET

Wine? It is our weekend off.

CAROLINE

Why not?

JANET pours more wine.

CAROLINE

Oh, you went with the turkey.

JANET

I thought maybe Cameron's friend...

CAROLINE

There is something to be said for tradition. From Newman's Farm?

JANET

Totally.

CAROLINE

At least we're supporting local business. Are you worried it'll get cold?

JANET

I should cover them, no?

CAROLINE

Will could be stuck in traffic.

JANET runs off and returns with a stack of lids and aluminum foil. She covers each dish on the table.

ELIZABETH

So, you run this place?

CAROLINE

Reason is a collective. There is no leader here, per se.

JANET

Caroline teaches with Cameron. The sessions are awesome. Cam's like this visionary, and Caroline's so good at getting people to face their subtractors.

ELIZABETH

What is a subtractor anyhow?

CAROLINE

Maybe Elizabeth can come back for our next group of phase A's?

JANET

Third week in December.

ELIZABETH

I'm booked through February. The Bar.

CAROLINE

Janet said you studied law. At Berkeley?

ELIZABETH

Boalt. Yes. Hope that's okay.

CAROLINE

Of course. We had three lawyers in our last workshop. You're specializing in civil rights?

ELIZABETH

No.

CAROLINE

Right, it's public policy.

ELIZABETH

Patent law.

CAROLINE

So many opportunities to work for the greater good.

ELIZABETH

I'd just like the opportunity to pay back my student loans.

JANET

Libby's always making jokes. Even when they're totally unnecessary.

CAROLINE

I suppose that's what's so special about the law. There's always room later in your career to make a change and refocus on personal ideals.

ELIZABETH

Twenty-seven grand in debt's plenty focus for now.

CAROLINE

Maybe later, then.

Beat.

Janet, would you be a dear tonight and pin Cam down to the December schedule? This flitting in and out has got to stop.

JANET

Sure. I mean, I'll try.

CAROLINE

That's all anyone can do, I suppose.

JANET

He just has a new interest in everything, like taking interpolation to a new level. This morning, the whole time I was doing the sweet potatoes, he saw all this stuff in the countertop. Like the patterns in the wood and how they flow.

CAROLINE

Let's just take him off the phase B schedule.

JANET

You think?

CAROLINE

Just take him off. I'll take extrapolation, and Warren can do morning reception.

JANET

Okay...

CAROLINE

We can't have a repeat of Sunday.

JANET

[to Elizabeth] He forgot about the extrapolation session. Caroline stepped in and totally did awesome. Off the cuff.

CAROLINE

But there's no need for this impromptu bullshit. Let's tell him tomorrow, after you get a chance to type up a revised schedule. It'll be more official that way.

Sorry, Elizabeth, this must be awfully boring.

ELIZABETH

On the contrary.

JANET

She's taking notes for her report back to Mom and Dad. Now that they've read about us in the papers, they think I've joined a cult.

CAROLINE

You have set everyone straight, haven't you?

JANET

I tried.

CAROLINE

Reason is a set of tools to help people use their own brains to examine their lives and reach their goals. There's nothing cultish about what we do.

ELIZABETH

Nothing?

CAROLINE

Cults are religious, and employ economic or sexual exploitation of their members.

ELIZABETH

I know what the dictionary says...

CAROLINE

Oh, good. It so irks me when people jump to "cult" without understanding the term. Why does your family think this is a cult?

ELIZABETH

Apart from the stories in the papers—

CAROLINE

All of the allegations were in L.A.

ELIZABETH

The primary objection is that they never hear from Janet.

JANET

I just, like, forget to call.

CAROLINE

Janet.

JANET

I know, parental investment, and all that. I'll call, I promise.

CAROLINE

But surely with your training, you understand the concept of innocent until proven guilty.

ELIZABETH

Our family does believe lots of things I don't.

CAROLINE

I hear you. *[raising her glass for a toast]* To thought before indictment.

JANET

To thought.

ELIZABETH raises her glass and clinks with the other two, just as CAMERON saunters in.

CAMERON

I just flashed on the funkiest idea— What's this, toasting without me?

CAROLINE drinks from her glass. JANET and ELIZABETH follow suit.

JANET

Well, we can—

CAROLINE

Propose your own toast. Now that you're here.

CAMERON

I will.

JANET

Oh, good.

CAMERON pours himself a glass of wine.

CAMERON

Wow, this stuff is *red*. You can almost see the grapes—

CAROLINE clears her throat.

CAMERON

To Turkey Day!

They all raise their glasses and drink. CAMERON checks out ELIZABETH over the rim of his wine glass.