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Karen: OK I know that you don't want to hear this, and I know you think I am a complete idiot, and I know that the last thing in the world you want to do is have a conversation with me.

Jeremy: Knowledge is power.

Karen: But I feel obligated to tell you-

Jeremy: Obligated to who?

Karen: To myself.

Jeremy: Oh.

Karen: I feel obligated to tell you that I am sick of the way you're acting towards me. I haven't done anything to have to listen to you call me stupid a thousand different ways every day.

Jeremy: I'm not calling-

Karen: Yes, you are.

Jeremy: I'm not-

Karen: Jeremy, you are. Now there's no need for it. I'm not taking sides with anybody against you. I'm just trying to stay out of all this.

Jeremy: All what?

Karen: Let me finish, you can ask questions when I'm through. Now this may come as some surprise to you, but I don't like living here any more than you do. I cannot wait to get away from here and live on my own. But I can't afford it right now. So while I am here, I am trying as best I can to get along with everybody.

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Jeremy: I think that's very nice of you.

Karen: Would you please not interrupt me for about one more minute please?

Jeremy: Sorry.

Karen: I try to get along. I don't want to argue with you. I don't want you to argue with me. I don't want to sneer at you. I don't want you to sneer at me. We don't have to be friends if you don't want to be friends. I think it's sad. I think someday you'll be sorry about it. But that's your problem now, not mine. All I want is nice noncommittal, non-confrontational, polite distance. Just until I can get out of here. Believe me, I am working on it as hard as I can.

Jeremy: All right. You got it.

Karen: Thank you very much. And one more thing.

Jeremy: Yes.

Karen: Insofar as possible, and this is the last time I'll say anything about it, when you are going to pull a stunt like the one you are presently pulling, would you please give me some advance notice so that I can be mentally prepared or physically absent?

Jeremy: What are you talking about?

Karen: Oh, don't play innocent with me, Jeremy.

Jeremy: I see. You're talking about my clothes.

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Karen: Don't get confused. For all the difference it makes to me you can run naked down the street with your hair on fire.

Jeremy: Thank you. I may do that.

Karen: I wouldn't even be surprised. But the simple fact of the matter is that every time you do something like this, it creates hysterics.

Jeremy: There is nothing wrong with what I have on.

Karen: Did I say there was something wrong with what you had on? Hmmm? Did I? I don't think that's what I said. No, I didn't say that at all. But you know that the usual procedure here is to dress nicely for Thanksgiving. I think lots of people do that, but even if they don't, we do it here. It's expected. It's called social responsibility.

Jeremy: It's called social responsibility.

Karen: That's right.

Jeremy: Are you, and correct me if I'm wrong, because, I mean I know you're studying psychology and all that, but are you equating social responsibility with double-knit clothing?

Karen: You hate me, don't you?

Jeremy: Is that what you think?

Karen: Most of the time.

Jeremy: And other times.

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Karen: Other times I don't care.

Jeremy: And today you care.

Karen: Maybe.

Jeremy: Because it's Thanksgiving and you don't want a scene.

Karen: I don't want it for everybody's sake. (*Maurine enters*)

Maurine: Jeremy, did you ever go and pick up those gray wool slacks of yours from the cleaners?

Jeremy: Yes, ma'am.

Maurine: Oh, you did.

Jeremy: Yes, I did.

Maurine: You know, I was just thinking about how well they go with that shirt Gerald sent you. You know the one I'm talking about?

Jeremy: Uh-huh.

Maurine: The blue one.

Jeremy: Right.

Maurine: With the long sleeves.

Jeremy: Right.

Maurine: well. You just look so good in 'em is all.
(*Maurine exits*)

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Karen: Mother is going to have a nervous breakdown. You know that, don't you?

Jeremy: I know she wants one.

Karen: That's not funny.

Jeremy: And she won't be really happy until she has it.

Karen: God-I just-I just can't understand what happened to you. I mean. What has happened to you?

Jeremy: You know exactly what happened to me, Karen. You and everybody else here. You want to know what the trouble is? You all want to pretend that nothing happened. But because I'm here, you can't.

Karen: Oh, like woowow, that is really deep. I shoulda figured that out ages ago. I mean, it's so real.

Jeremy: This is part of your trying to get along with everybody, I guess.

Karen: No, it's just a gut reaction to being told that you can't dress for dinner because you fought in Vietnam.

Jeremy: OK. That's enough. It's time for you to leave me alone now.

Karen: All right. I'll leave you alone. And if it's any comfort to you, while you sit here feeling sorry for yourself, I'm feeling sorry for you too. (*she starts to exit.*)

Jeremy: Why don't you just go to hell.

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Karen: I may do that, Jeremy. Who knows? But I'll tell you one thing. I'm going to wait until I'm dead to do it. I'm not going to spend my whole life making hell for myself here. And hell for everybody else.

Jeremy: Good for you.

Karen: I'm going to care about people.

Jeremy: Good for you, little Miss Noble Heart. And I'm going to care about myself.

Karen: You're so pathetic. Just to hell with everybody, that's you, isn't that right?

Jeremy: You got it.

Karen: Because you don't care.

Jeremy: That's right.

Karen: With the exception of you, there is not a single person in the entire universe that you care about.

Jeremy: That's right.

Karen: You just don't give a damn.

Jeremy: I don't give a damn. I don't give a shit. I don't give a flying fortified fuck about any of it. And do you know why? Because for nineteen years I did. And I did because I thought it made a difference. Well, it doesn't make a difference. It doesn't even make sense.

Karen: All right, if this is the way you're going to-

Jeremy: Wait a minute. Wait a minute. Wait! You're so goddamn concerned.

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Karen: Don't you dare hit me Jeremy Collier.

Jeremy: I wouldn't hit you. I wouldn't give you the satisfaction. I listened to you, now you're going to listen to me. You have friends, don't you?

Karen: Yes.

Jeremy: Good friends?

Karen: Of course, I do.

Jeremy: Well, I have some too.

Karen: You do?

Jeremy: Yes, I do. One of them was named Brady. Brady was my friend. From Mobile, Alabama. We were a lot alike, Brady and me. He was drafted, just like I was. Came from the same kind of family, I think, nice people. We were both getting ready to come home about the same time. And a month before we were supposed to get out, Brady got wounded. And when he left the hospital, he called his parents, you know, to say he was on his way and would they mind if he brought a friend home with him. He had met him in the hospital or something, I don't know. And his mother said fine. Then Brady, he said, this guy's gonna need a little help because he doesn't move around very well yet, and his mother asked what was wrong with him, and Brady said he's lost an arm and a leg, he's probably going to need a little help. Well. His mother just lost it. I mean, she couldn't handle that at all. So she put his father on the phone and his father really gave it to him. How could you do something like this to us? That's what he said. His father. Don't you know how much we've been looking forward to this? Why you are you trying to ruin

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everything for us? Brady apologized and when he got off the phone, he went and checked into a Holiday Inn and hung himself in the bathroom. They shipped the body to Mobile. I've tried to picture the expression on his parents' faces when they saw their little soldier boy was missing an arm and a leg. So. I don't go along. I don't care about any of it anymore. And you can take your social responsibility and your traditional values and shove them up your ass. I'm a survivor. And I got that way by not giving a shit over things that are not worth giving a shit over. And if that's too much for you to handle, then too fucking bad.

Karen: Do you know how you sound when you talk that way?

Jeremy: How?

Karen: Bitter.

Jeremy: No shit?

Karen: Very, very bitter.

Jeremy: Yeah, well.

Karen: If that's the way you feel, I mean, I can't even understand why you came back home.

Jeremy: I had to go somewhere. Where else should I have gone?

Karen: I don't know. Wherever it is people like you go. Russia or someplace. Or maybe some park bench. From the way you talk it's where you're headed, isn't it?

Jeremy: You'd just really like that, wouldn't you? Then, after I was all washed up, not just half-assed out of it like I am now, but a total bum, well, then you could go

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right back to being the only child you were while I was gone.

Karen: What, only child? Me an only child? You are telling me that I want to be an only child.

Jeremy: Yeah.

Karen: I'm sorry, but that's the stupidest thing I have ever heard in my entire life. I cannot believe you have the nerve to say that to me. Where on earth do you think you get off saying that to me? (*suddenly furious.*) No. No, I am not going to lose my temper. All right. If you think I got all the attention while you were gone, and I could see how that might bother you, me having all of Mother's affections lavished on me, I could see where that might really upset you, but if that's what you think happened you are wrong. Sorry.

Jeremy: Oh.

Karen: Every other word that was spoken in this house was Jeremy. "I wonder where Jeremy is," "I wonder what the weather is like where Jeremy is?" "I wonder what Jeremy's doing right now?"

Jeremy: Oh, I'm moved.

Karen: I just bet you are. Maybe you would have been moved more by watching Mother call up every relative we have and every friend we have so she could read your letters over the phone. And cry. Or maybe you would have found it moving to see Daddy passing around your pictures at work to all the cashiers and then having to go and sit in his office for an hour or so. Or maybe you would have been moved by hearing the cassette you sent home coming out of their bedroom at three o'clock in the morning, because they couldn't sleep. But, on the other

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hand, I suppose you suffered too much to have anything but contempt for what anybody else felt. We weren't there, right? So we're not affected.

Jeremy: You're so right.

Karen: Ohhhhhhhhhhhh. You are such-Ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhh.

Jeremy: Go on. What am I?

Karen: (*exiting.*) I am not going to subject myself to this.

Jeremy: All right.

Karen: You know what? Huh? You know what?

Jeremy: What?

Karen: I'm sorry I prayed for you. I never thought it would be possible for someone to be sorry for something like that, but I am. I apologize to myself for all those times I got down on my hands and knees and begged God to bring you home safe. I've never been sorrier for anything in my life.

Jeremy: You're such a self-righteous little bitch.

Karen: I'm not going to listen to this, not from you especially. You're disgusting and everybody knows it. You're a weirdo. You hear what I'm saying? Friends stop me on the street and ask about my brother, the weirdo. You make me ashamed. You make everybody in this family ashamed. I hate you. Hate-hate-hate. I don't ever want to be connected to you in any way. Because you are nothing. You're an absolute zero human being. You're a weak, ungrateful bastard, and you're not my brother anymore.