Auditions for “Other Desert Cities”, The Providence Players winter production, will be held on December 1, 3, 4, 5 2014, at the James Lee Community Center located at 2855 Annandale Rd. Falls Church 22042. Call backs will be held Monday, December 8th by invitation.

There are 5 outstanding roles, 2 men and 3 woman in the cast

ALL ROLES ARE OPEN

Audition Room Locations and Times (Auditions will NOT be held in the theater):

Mon. Dec 1 James Lee Community Center “TR” Room: 6:30 to 9:30 PM

Wed. Dec 3 James Lee Community Center Arts and Crafts Room: 7:15 to 9:30 PM

Thurs. Dec 4 James Lee Community Center “TR” Room: 6:30 to 9:30 PM

Fri. December 5 James Lee Community Center "Urbanites" Room  6:30 – 9:30 PM – NEW DATE ADDED

Call Backs By Invitation – Mon. Dec 8 James Lee Community Center “TR” Room: 6:30 to 9:30 PM

The “TR” Room is located in the main entrance hallway of the community center to the right of the main desk. The Arts and Crafts Room is located down the hall to the left of the main desk. The “Urbanites” room is also located down the hall to the left of the main desk.

BY JOHN ROBIN BAITZ

Directed by Tina Thronson

In this searing comedy-drama, young writer Brooke Wyeth returns home to Palm Springs to celebrate Christmas with her famous and politically-connected parents, brother and aunt. When she announces her plans to publish a tell-it-all memoir of crucial events in the family’s past, she brings to light old wounds, family secrets, scandal and intrigue. “The script crackles with wit, humor and life”. This riveting and humorous play was nominated for a 2012 Tony Award for Best Play and was a finalist for the 2012 Pulitzer Prize.
Performance Dates And Times

Thursday, Friday and Saturday 7:30 p.m.
March 13, 14, 19, 20, 21, 26, 27 & 28
Sunday Matinees 2:00 p.m.
March 15 & 22

Audition Information/Instructions

• **PLEASE RSVP to** providenceplayers@cox.net **with the date you plan on auditioning.**

• **HOW WE WORK:** Please RSVP with the date you plan to audition to help us in our planning. Most PPF auditions have actors up and down to read multiple times in multiple combinations and scenes. Most actors find this fun. As space allows, you will be able to watch all the auditions. You may be asked to go into the hallway with audition partners and work a bit on a scene. We will do our best to get you up multiple times reading for parts you are interested in. You will also be asked to read for other parts you may not be auditioning for. The Providence Players strives to make our productions open to interested and engaged actors & actresses, regardless of their level of experience. We try and make our auditions as relaxing and fun as possible. The director, at her discretion may ask individual auditioners to return for another initial audition evening.

• **AUDITION PROCESS:** Auditions will consist of readings from the script - No separate monologue is required. The audition sides contain some selected monologues which the director may choose to have you read. There is no requirement to memorize these monologues. You are encouraged to familiarize yourself with the play as whole and the audition sides.

• **AUDITION SIDES:** Sides for the audition process will be supplied at auditions and are included in this announcement. Additional sides may be added at the auditions and at call backs.

• **AUDITION FORM:** Resumes and headshots will be accepted, but are not required. Please **ALSO COMPLETE** the attached PPF Other Desert Cities Audition Form and bring it with you to the audition.

• **MEMBERSHIP:** The Providence Players of Fairfax is a membership organization. Membership is not required to audition. If cast, actors in addition to production team members will be asked to become members of the Providence Players ($10) for the season (if they are not already).

• **RSVP:** Please send us an RSVP if you plan to audition to providenceplayers@cox.net (or email us any questions you may have).

Rehearsal Schedule:

_A copy of the preliminary production schedule_ is included with this announcement and will be available online and at auditions. Stage rehearsals begin in February 2014. In addition to the stage rehearsal schedule, additional full cast readings of the play and some selected scene study and character work may be scheduled based on actor availability in January prior to the stage schedule. The schedule for these will be finalized a week or two after the show is cast. Unless indicated otherwise, all rehearsals will happen at the James Lee Community Center. Rehearsals will be held in the evenings roughly from 6:30/6:45 to 9:45 pm and on Saturdays and Sundays as indicated.

**Please come to auditions prepared to list any availability conflicts over this time period.**
All 5 roles (2 men and 3 woman) are open.

Characters:

Lyman Wyeth: (Late 50’s to late 60’s): Kind and gentle patriarch. A Hollywood B actor with some celebrity and charm who turned that into political influence. He is conservative but with a sense of humor about himself and a deep love for his family. “He is sturdy in the way of old Californians of a particular type.” (Baitz)

Polly Wyeth: (Late 50’s to late 60’s) Lyman’s wife. Graceful and acerbic matriarch. She has been active for decades in the Republican Party. She is deeply devoted to the preservation of her social standing, her family and the health of her husband. “Elegant and forthright and whip-smart.” (Baitz)

Brooke Wyeth: (Mid 30’s to 40’s) Lyman and Polly’s adult daughter. She is a professional writer who has been living in New York after a mental breakdown. Her tortured relationship with her family has centered on her opposing Liberal political views. “An attractive and dry woman.” (Baitz)

Trip Wyeth: (Late 20’s to mid 30’s) Brooke’s brother. Witty and self-effacing. He is a TV producer for reality TV – in a family obsessed with his intellectual, older sister’s mental health. He assumes the role of second banana with grace. “A bright, funny man.” (Baitz)

Silda Grauman: (late 50’s to early 70’s) Polly’s sister. Creative, fragile, and funny. A former B movie writer, and the Bohemian, polar opposite of her sister. She is fresh out of rehab and repays the support of the conservative Wyeths by joining Brooke in some liberal needling of her parents. “A mess. No makeup, hair disheveled. She wears a muumuu and carries a pill case marked with the days of the week.” (Baitz)

Other Desert Cities Plot Summary:

It’s December 2004 and Brooke Wyeth returns home to Palm Springs after a six year absence to celebrate Christmas with her parents, her brother and her aunt. Brooke announces that she is about to publish a memoir dredging up a pivotal and tragic event in the family’s history – a wound they don’t want reopened. In effect, she draws a line in the sand and dares them all to cross it.

Every character is smart, quick-witted and deeply flawed. The parents are wealthy, well-connected Republican activists and friends of the Reagans. Lyman Wyeth, an actor known for his death scenes, has been state GOP chair. Polly, his wife and ferocious protector, is a forceful practitioner of tough love – with her children as well as her liberal, alcoholic sister and former screenwriting partner, Silda, now recovering from her latest round of rehab.

Lefty daughter Brooke is a novelist who’s been going through a rough patch of writer’s block and a breakdown that involved a long hospital stint. She’s home for the holidays, as is her younger brother, apolitical TV producer Trip. And she’s brought her manuscript, snapped up by Knopf, which tells the story of her beloved, older brother's involvement in the fatal Vietnam War-era bombing of a military recruitment center, his suicide and their parents’ responsibility for his actions.
PPF is a non-profit community theater troupe and does not compensate actors. PPF is a membership organization (membership costs $10 for a year) and is NOT required to audition but is required if cast.

If you would like to receive audition related emails, please send us your email address to providenceplayers@cox.net

Join our Facebook Group by clicking on the link:
Please fill out each section below
Attach a resume and/or headshot to this form (optional)

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Note: The Providence Players of Fairfax is a membership organization. If you are cast and are not already member, you will be asked to become one. Membership is $10 per season.

*Other Desert Cities – Character Preferences*

__ I wish to be considered for any role.
__ I wish to be considered for any role, but have a strong preference for the roles checked below.
__ I would prefer to only be considered for the following roles (checked):

**MALE ROLES**

___ Lyman Wyeth: (Late 50’s to late 60’s):   ___ Trip Wyeth: (Late 20’s to mid 30’s)

**FEMALE ROLES**

___ Polly Wyeth: (Late 50’s to late 60’s) ___ Brooke Wyeth: (Mid 30’s to 40’s)

___ Silda Grauman: (late 50’s to early 70’s)

Notes about Role Preference:
Scheduling Conflicts?

Please review the audition announcement, show dates, and preliminary production calendar

The Director may schedule read-throughs and table work sessions in January prior to starting the official production schedule. These will be based on actor availability.

Please least January availability conflict dates – dates when you could NOT participate in off stage read throughs and table work. (for our scheduling purposes)

Please list known conflicts for February Rehearsals:

Please list known conflicts for March Rehearsals:
Give us a sketch of your Theater Background
A resume may be attached in lieu of filling out the table below, though it is not required.

Acting Experience:

High School  __Y__ __N - Approx. Number of Productions ______
College       __Y__ __N - Approx. Number of Productions ______
Community    __Y__ __N - Approx. Number of Productions ______
Pro (Paid)    __Y__ __N - Approx. Number of Productions ______

Overall Production Experience:

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Important: Would you be interested in getting involved in the production if you are not cast?

_______ Yes   _______ No   _______ Unsure

Please give us a brief sense of any theater work over the past three years:
Directed by Tina Thronson

This calendar provides approved theater access times for the *Other Desert Cities* production. Call times for rehearsals will be set by the director (times listed are times we have theater access). Additional rehearsals may be scheduled outside the theater when the theater is not available. The Director may schedule table readings and character work during the month of January based on actor availability.
## January 2015

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<td>President’s Day Holiday PPF Board Meeting</td>
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<td>James Lee Black History Month Celebration Providence Players Board Retreat Date</td>
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<td>PPF Theater Use Rehearsal and/or possible Set Build 9:00 Am – 5PM</td>
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Providence Players 2014-2015 Other Desert Cities Theater Use Schedule Approved May 2014
### Providence Players 2014-2015 Other Desert Cities Production Calendar - Subject to Refinement and Change

**March 2015**

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<td>1 PPF Theater Use Set Build Weekend 9 AM – 6 PM</td>
<td>2 PPF Theater Use Rehearsal 6:00 PM –10PM</td>
<td>3 PPF Theater Use Rehearsal 6:00 PM –10PM</td>
<td>4 PPF Theater Use Rehearsal 6:00 PM –10PM</td>
<td>5 PPF Theater Use Rehearsal 6:00 PM –10PM</td>
<td>6 PPF Theater Tech Set Up 6:00 PM –10PM</td>
<td>7 PPF Theater Use Tech Weekend 9:00 AM – 10 PM</td>
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<td>8 PPF Theater Tech Weekend 9 PM – 6 PM</td>
<td>9 PPF Theater Use Dress Rehearsal 5 PM – 10 PM</td>
<td>10 PPF Theater Use Dress Rehearsal 5 PM – 10 PM</td>
<td>11 PPF Theater Use Dress Rehearsal 5 PM – 10 PM</td>
<td>12 PPF Student &amp; Senior Preview Performance 7PM 5:00 PM –11PM</td>
<td>13 PPF Theater Performance 7:30 5:00 PM –11PM</td>
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<td>15 PPF Theater Performance Matinee 2 PM 12 PM-6PM</td>
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<td>19 PPF Thursday Performance 7:30 PM Use 5 PM –11PM</td>
<td>20 Theater Performance 7:30 5:00 PM –11PM</td>
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<td>22 PPF Theater Performance Matinee 2 PM 12 PM-6PM</td>
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<td>26 PPF Thursday Performance 7:30 PM Use 5 PM –11PM</td>
<td>27 PPF Theater Performance 7:30 5:00 PM –11PM</td>
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Other Desert Cities
Audition Sides
Trip plus others Top p5 to Bot p7

NEED: Trip, Lyman Polly, Brooke
BROOKE: Do they? Mom? How many—

POLLY: Most of the club is! Now, Believe me, I should know!

BROOKE: Really, please stop talking about it like it’s temple Beth Shalom.

LYMAN: It’s a great place, and by the way, we heard Colin Powell lecture there last month, and if he’s behind the war, you can trust it’s the right thing to do. He knows a lot more than you do, Brooke. Most trusted man in America.

Brooke is about to counter this statement, and is halted by Trip.

TRIP: Look; we talk politics, it’s only eight in the morning, the whole day will be shot to sh--it, really. It will just dissolve into stiff upper-lipped thermonuclear family war.

LYMAN (grinning): Can’t have that, can we? Look: despite your abhorrent and repugnant lefty politics, we want you to know we’re damn proud of you.

BROOKE: Proud? What did I do?


POLLY: Which is a great relief as you will no longer be known as the girl who had only one novel in her.

BROOKE (busts out laughing): Well, I didn’t realize I was!

POLLY: Oh come on, dear, after six years, everyone was beginning to wonder. You did bring it, didn’t you?

Beat.

BROOKE: Yeah, but I have to make copies in town, I wasn’t going to carry a bunch of copies on the plane.

POLLY: We got the craziest call. Someone’s doing a vulgar little picture book on old Hollywood nightlife, and they heard we had lots of pictures from Chasen’s and the Brown Derby and Ron—

and Nancy. I said I would be saving them in case I decided to do a book of my own, which I can assure you, I will not. (drinking water) This water needs vodka for flavor.

Lyman picks up the Los Angeles Times.

LYMAN (reading): Huh. Look at this: Don Rumsfeld is paying a visit to the troops in Baghdad.

POLLY: Isn’t that a nice thoughtful Christmas present.

BROOKE: Maybe while he’s out in the desert he can dig up some of them weapons of mass destruction—

TRIP (over her): NO! No! No discussion of the war. This is a cardinal goddamn rule—we’ll be here all day, and I want to get back in time so you can see my show.

He has a shy smile on his face. She looks at him, caught.

BROOKE: I told you it won’t really mean anything to me, I don’t watch television—

TRIP: Well, unless you’ve suddenly become Amish, that’s unbelievably pretentious.

LYMAN (grinning): Oh, Brooke, you really have to see it.

POLLY: It’s quite extraordinary really. You’ve never seen anything quite like it.

BROOKE: I don’t understand even the premise. It’s like a court room thing with a—?

POLLY (relishing this): Oh, I can explain. You see—this is what your brother’s talents and education have led him to, Brooke: a fake TV courtroom with fake trials featuring roving litigants out to make a buck.

TRIP: Hey! Jury of Your Peers is a huge hit. It’s not fake!

LYMAN: That man is a real judge?
TRIP He's a retired judge from Encino. It's a regular trial, only, the jury is made up of stars.

POLLY Stars? Those are not stars! Gary Cooper was a star! These are what appear to be some very moth-eaten, down-on-their luck has-beens.

TRIP (to Brooke) Who basically—you know—roast both the—it's very funny—both the defendant and the plaintiff—and render a verdict. And if some of them are midgets, well, why not?

LYMAN Please! This is how the law is conducted in this country now? A freak show with carnie making mock.

TRIP Dad, come on, it's show biz. Everyone signs a waiver, it's civil court, the show pays.

LYMAN Oh, so there's no harm, no foul, no matter how wrong the person is, the show pays! What is the name of the judge?

TRIP (trying not to laugh, looking down) Uhm, Him? He's uh, well, yeah, his name is Judge Myron C. Glimmelman.

The three of them stand there, saying nothing. Polly stifles a derisive snort. Brooke is grinning madly, waiting. Shaking her head.

POLLY (shakes her head) Oh, my people, my people, my people.

TRIP (a smile) He is a great guy! All moral rectitude and good hair.

BROOKE Just like you, Daddy.

LYMAN (playing straight man) I would never sell myself like some common—

BROOKE (laughing over him) Oh really? Mr. Ambassador?

TRIP Respectfully, what was being the spokesman for the California Wine Board?

LYMAN Public service, something you know nothing about—

TRIP (ala his dad, stentorian) “Drink in the wines—

TRIP/LYMAN —of the Golden State, and taste how the west was won.”

There is laughter. This is an old bit.

LYMAN We were trying to promote the state's growing—

BROOKE (over him) And let's not forget some of those movies you were in before you sold out and became a politician.

LYMAN (laughs) I did not sell out, I found a higher calling, you ungrateful little brat!

TRIP Hey. People need to laugh today. It's all so serious and goddamn, you know, horrible out there. We could all get anthraxed any minute—people need a laugh!

POLLY It's our fault, Lyman, we failed at providing normalcy—we had two children, and both of them have entirely abnormal careers . . .

BROOKE (cuts her off, tense) Three, actually.

POLLY Excuse me?

There is a moment.

BROOKE Three children.

Beat.

POLLY Three. Of course.

A slight tension, which Lyman labors to climb over.

LYMAN So, Trip, you're basically saying that being right or wrong matters a lot less than being funny.

TRIP Funny is all we have left. Yes! They flew planes into buildings! People need funny. I can't argue with you about this, if you fail to see the merit in what I do, that's your loss, all of you. We can't all be hopelessly highbrow like Brooke, some of us have to actually make money. I'm gonna take a shower. Breakfast on me.
Lyman and Brooke 10-13

NEED: Lyman and Brooke
BROOKE (laughing, exhausted) Look. It's over, Mom. It's been over since it began, really. We had a decent run, three years in marriage these days is like twenty when you guys were kids.

LYMAN We hate you being alone.

BROOKE I love me being alone.

POLLY If you could just find someone like your brother, funny and fun.

BROOKE (a burst of laughter) Like Trip Wyeth? The ADD riddled, junk-food-addicted porn-surfing Trip Wyeth, my little brother?

POLLY He is not addicted to junk food; he eats very well. The porn, I suppose, I will give you. I mean—someone younger. Cary was too old. Too old and too British, which is the same thing, really. They're all so old, the Brits, even the children. You need someone zippy.

BROOKE (laughing) "Someone zippy?"

POLLY Find someone peppy and youthful. These days, the age difference means nothing. Lyman, apparently it's very hip, very 'with-it' for older women to have younger men. Much younger.

BROOKE Stop worrying! I'm fine. Now I really hungry, can we go? Can we just for the love of God, go get breakfast?

POLLY Yes, yes, fine. I'm going to go get dressed. If you twist my arm, Brooke, we could stop at Saks; because you are never going to meet anyone if you continue to dress like a refugee from a library in Kabul.

BROOKE (looks at herself) I'm wearing tennis clothes! To play tennis in!

POLLY leaves with her glass, leaving Brooke and Lyman alone.

LYMAN Do you have a smoke, we could go outside and sneak?

BROOKE Not on my person, Daddy. I thought you quit?

LYMAN I did, it's fun to sneak them. Your mother sneaks them too, it's a little game we have. We steal each other's smokes. It is amazing really, what you do to entertain yourself in the desert.

BROOKE I have pot for later.

LYMAN Are you allowed to smoke pot with the antidepressants?

BROOKE Oh, sure, but only with a gin chaser.

LYMAN It's not funny, Brooke. It's really not. You're supposed to be careful. Damn it. Really.

BROOKE One of the nice myths about pain is that one apparently can't literally remember it. Which is why women have more than one child. Well, Daddy, I'm here to tell you, I have a very good memory for pain.

LYMAN I wrote you last month offering money.

BROOKE Yes. You did.

LYMAN You have not favored me with the courtesy of a reply.

BROOKE Daddy, I don't need your money—my life works. Just as it is. Simple. Clean.

LYMAN But why not? Given how tenuous things are getting—I want only to make your life at least incrementally—

BROOKE (laughing) Better? Money does that—how? Has it—ever for us? No. We all know that much by now. I am pleading with you, don't make this whole trip about a check from you. Okay?

LYMAN What kind of living do you make? Those magazine pieces? Oh, it's very nice when Gourmet or Travel and Leisure sends you to Sri Lanka, and god knows what you get for an editorial—but at the end of the day? It's hand to mouth.

BROOKE Dad, all my friends who get a check from home—there is not a single one of them—not one—whom it has not crippled
in some fundamental way. I have everything I need. Really, please.
The balance is so delicate, I can’t screw with it.

LYMAN  What if it happens again? A depression? You lost—you lost years—we watched, helpless—that hospital.

BROOKE  Look—I take the lovely little pills, and I see the blessed Doctor Leighton every week, twice a week, and I do yoga, and I eat right, and I have learned optimism just like the magazines told us to. And now I know how to handle it.

LYMAN  I’m sorry.

BROOKE  Daddy, look at me. I’ve had tough times and everything that has happened to me—everything—has made me stronger.
I’m your child. And mom’s. Two old trees. Two old oak trees. And I’m an oak, too. Okay, got it? Oaks.

LYMAN  We all have our ways of coping; mine is to be overprotective late in life. You sometimes seem to fail to understand that I lost a child. Therefore I am unable to relax about my remaining two.

BROOKE  You can’t live like that.

LYMAN  It’s collateral damage. I don’t expect you could know what that feels like, my darling.

BROOKE (quietly)  How can you say that. “I don’t know what it feels like.” I lost my older brother. He was my best friend—you know, I don’t make friends easily, he was—most of my world and—then he was gone—

LYMAN  You still miss him.

BROOKE  Every day, most of the day, all day.

LYMAN (a small, wan smile. An older smile. Plaintive.)  For me it’s the holidays; at Christmas, I think of your brother. I think of Henry. Of what’s left. Of time, and of everything. You’d think it would be forgotten by now.

BROOKE  Just because you moved to the desert does not mean that anybody with a computer couldn’t find out what happened with this family in a matter of moments. It’s part of who we are, we can’t just pretend it never happened.

LYMAN  A lot of people get through the entirety of their lives, pretending; at a certain point, it’s not the worst thing to do.

BROOKE  I’m sorry, Daddy. I tried to live that way, and I just can’t. I need to actually talk about it. Not in code, not obliquely, we have never . . .

LYMAN (Pained. But sharp, shutting this down.)  I can’t. (He stops. Shakes his head. Softens.) Maybe it’s the old actor in me. Maybe I prefer my lines written down. Sometimes I see myself on the TV, late at night, grimacing with a forty-five in my hand, arresting someone. That was so much easier.

BROOKE (a sad smile)  You should have stayed a movie star. You were so handsome.

LYMAN  Yes, but it mortified me. I just looked good in a suit.

Polly appears in the doorway dressed in a bright caftan, and wearing bright jade earrings, a sort of David Hockney subject, posing.

POLLY (calling out)  Well, let’s get moving. I don’t want to be stuck on Palm Canyon Drive in the noonday sun—all that last minute Christmas shopping, and at Saks those people spraying you with perfumes called “Maid’s Night Out” or something. I still have some stuff to get . . . ! My hairdresser needs some Givenchy shower splash and a new wok.

She leaves.

BROOKE  “Shower splash and a new wok.” What else is there to life?

Lyman looks at Brooke, his face in a small very smile, knowing, and melancholy.
Trip and Brooke 14-16

Need Trip and Brook
LYMAN  Oh, Brooke, you think everything is funny. Even when you were blue, the twinkle. But sometimes you can’t help it, little girl and the twinkle isn’t there.

Lyman exits. Brooke sits alone for a moment. Shaken at being seen so clearly by Lyman, despite her good cheer. She goes to her bag, takes out some pills, swallows them with water, and looks out.

Trip comes out, dressed in old Bermuda shorts and faded polo shirt, old tennis shoes, no socks.

TRIP (grinning)  Ohh, you’re already staring off into the desert; that’s not good.

BROOKE (still looking out)  You know that sign on the highway where you can either turn off for Palm Springs or keep going to “Other Desert Cities”? I am always so tempted just to keep on driving, you know. How do they do it? They never even leave anymore. They barely go into L.A.

TRIP  Not barely enough—enough for me though; when they do come, I have to drop whatever I’m doing to meet them for dinner at some awful old restaurant with goddamn swans in Pasadena.

BROOKE  The restaurant serves swan?

TRIP  Shut up. You need tennis lessons, you’ve lost your game and your serve sucks, you used to be good at it.

BROOKE  Well, I used to be good at a lot of things and the trouble with being good at things is that it takes too much work to stay good at them.

TRIP  With that attitude it’s a fucking miracle you finished your book.


TRIP  They’ve never hated anything you’ve written.

BROOKE  I just get the sense that it’s not gonna be so easy—I was kidding myself. It’s so much pressure—

TRIP  Look, it’s not like you’ve written some poor little Hollywood upbringing shit, is it?

BROOKE  No, but it is about Henry Whom we can’t talk about, it’s about our brother, who went to war with our parents, joined a cult, disappeared, and then planted a bomb in an army recruiting station, before killing himself—is what it’s actually about.

Pause. He takes this in.

TRIP  Okay, so maybe it won’t be the recommendation for their Book of the Month Club. (beat) And he didn’t ‘plant’ the bomb.

BROOKE  No. Maybe he didn’t. But he was party to it. (beat) I mean, it’s loving and I love them, and how can they see it as anything other than—

TRIP  Look, if you’re scared of what they might say, I’ll protect you, relax.

BROOKE  You can’t protect me. Not from her. Not from Polly Wyeth.

TRIP  Oh yeah? You know what it takes to produce a TV show five nights a week? You have to have nerves of steel. It’s as though having a show on the air turns people into that little creature with the ring in that stupid movie with those little assholes in the middle ages fighting elves and shit.

BROOKE looks bewildered.

BROOKE  I um, literally have no idea what anything you just said means, literally.

TRIP (flat)  Literally: you don’t know Lord of the Rings?

BROOKE  Literally, I have no idea.

TRIP  Shut up. You pretend to hate pop culture, but secretly you fucking love it. Why do you fight it? It’s in our blood. Look at
us. Look at dad! A gunslinger and a gumshoe at Paramount, and mom and Aunt Silda wrote those crazy-ass _Hilary_ movies.

**BROOKE** (laughing) Oh my God, _Hilary_! Over thanksgiving, I lay in bed, I had the flu or like consumption or something the whole time, I watched the DVD box set of all of them.

**TRIP** There's a box set?

**BROOKE** Yeah. From _Here Comes Hilary_ to _Hasta La Vista Hilary_. They're magnificent.

**TRIP** I never saw that last one.

**BROOKE** Yeah, that's the best, and Mom was, OF COURSE, in a feud with Aunt Silda so Silda wrote it alone, and there's sort of a suggestion of like, free-love and bad-girl shit to come. Surfing nuns? It really goes out with a bang. Hilary is liberated from Pismo Beach and takes off with some Hells Angels.

**TRIP** Silda must have been really bombed when they made that one. Listen, all anybody wants is for you to just—you know—be like, productive and happy and living in the world again, and they're sophisticated people, if you see some stuff differently to them, well, everybody is a grown up here, we all know how to live with that, right?

**BROOKE** (a smile) Trip, Have you actually ever met our parents?

_Polly comes out, sun glasses, very big ones cover her eyes._

**POLLY** Okay, who's ready to go into town? I have to say, it is such a relief not to be cooking Christmas dinner this year. I can't face the idea of slaving over another eighty-pound turkey and a ham the size of a pit bull.

**TRIP** Hey, mom. We were talking about the _Hilary_ movies. Why'd you stop writing pictures? Maybe you should get back in the game.

**POLLY** My full-time job was your father. When he became GOP chair, it didn't seem appropriate. Also, Hollywood stopped being fun. (beat) At first pictures were fun, being a girl, a smart girl in the pictures. Right out of Bryn Mawr, and into the writer's building at MGM. And when your aunt and I didn't want to work together anymore, I never found anyone else to write with. But truly, once it became about drugs and lefties whining, I was out.

**BROOKE** Lefties whining. It always come back to that. Doesn't it? With you?

**POLLY** Well. You do. All of you! You all whine and lecture and preach.

**BROOKE** Yep, that's the downfall of us all, Polly, lefties whining all over the place. (exiting) I gotta go. I don't want to be late for my conference call with Al-Qaeda.

_Trip laughs. Brooke leaves. There is silence. Polly stares at her son. He fiddles with his cell phone or something, keenly aware of being observed._

**TRIP** Stop staring at me. You're giving me hives.

**POLLY** Do you have any cigarettes hidden anywhere, Trip?

**TRIP** No. I am totally smoke free, Mom.

**POLLY** It's all or nothing with your generation. Either vegans or meth addicts or both at the same time, we have meth labs just outside of town, they blow up every now and then. The labs AND the addicts. (beat) How does she seem to you?

**TRIP** A little on edge, a little nervous, but basically you know, fine?

**POLLY** (staffs) "Basically fine?" You have no observational skills, none at all. She's not 'a little nervous'; she's dancing as fast as she can, and something's up. What?

**TRIP** I dunno, don't ask me, Jeez. I'm not like the family goddamn spy.
Trip and Polly .Polly Mono p19-20. Silda Mono p21

Need Trip and Poly
Silda Monologue – Need Silda with Trip Line and Poly Line
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**Polly** (scoffs) “Basically fine?” You have no observational skills, none at all. She’s not ‘a little nervous’; she’s dancing as fast as she can, and something’s up. What?

**Trip** I dunno, don’t ask me. Jeez. I’m not like the family goddamn spy.
POLLY: Something about her book? Did you read it? What is it, I'd really like it if someone gave me some advance warning of what to—

TRIP (over her) I haven't even looked at it yet! Stop interrogating me, I'm not sixteen, god. She's a grown-up person, stop studying her like she's a specimen out of some lab.

POLLY: She's hardly a 'grown-up person', darling, she's naive, she's secretive, very, very private—lots of locked doors in her doll house. No, she's a little kid, honey. A smart, sly one.

TRIP: Well, you make people very nervous!

POLLY (snapping) I do not make people 'very nervous'! (beat) Not when they have nothing to be nervous about! But really, I worry about her. She's tanked the marriage, Cary gave up. Did you know that?

TRIP: Yeah, but she didn't 'tank' anything. That's bullshit and you know it, Polly! Cary was a class-A creep. She just liked him because he looked like Lord Byron's little faggy cousin. That sad wet Brit married her for a fucking green card, Mom. Please. He never loved her: he loved not being fucking English. Why don't you back your daughter instead of that mossy little prick?

POLLY: Well, A: please don't swear so much. And B: it is not out of the question that she has a trace of lesbianism in her, like my sister.

TRIP: Well, A: that would be fine. What's wrong with that? And besides—B: (sweetly) why are we having this talk, Polly?

POLLY: Because you're a moron.

TRIP: Yeah. So what about it?

POLLY (emphatically) Because when we're gone, you're going to have to watch out for her.

TRIP: "Gone"? Where you going? You going somewhere?

POLLY: What if she has another breakdown? And we're gone? It'll be on you! You!

TRIP: She's fine. The meds.

POLLY: And when they stop working? The brain grows used to them, you know, I've read it in the Internet!

TRIP: You read it in the Internet? Oh well, then it must be true! Why are you saying this? She is fine! She just finished writing a book! She sold it! She's back on her feet! God, you never worried about me like that.

POLLY (snapping) Because I didn't have to! Life for you has always been easy, despite the horrific habit you have of putting question marks at the end of so many sentences unnecessarily.

TRIP (grimacing) Thanks?

POLLY: It runs in the family. The despair. Your brother. He couldn't outrun it. It made him crazy. It runs in the family, on Lyman's side, Scots blood, not mine, very cheerful people from my side, Texans, Westerners.

TRIP: You mean rabbis, don't you?

POLLY: Families get terrorized by their weakest member, it's true. Look at me; I've had to take care of Silda ALL my life. She doesn't have a cent, she is alive thanks to us, and she has to live within spitting distance. Please. Now she has to live HERE. Until I get your dad to buy that house next door and stock it with Filipino nurses I can't even go to Europe for fear of her having some sort of catastrophe—whenever we go anywhere she does something absurd like cut her hand off in a mixmaster or something. (beat)

TRIP: She cut off her hand?

POLLY (smiling) You know what I mean. God. She was making a mojito and the blade slipped.

The two of them try not to laugh, but really, they can't help it.
POLLY (cont.) She needed about two thousand stitches. (beat) And I always am propping up your father too! Your sister worries him so badly! He just stares out into the desert and frets.

A pause, and Trip decides to go for it. He is simple and clear.

TRIP Okay, well, Mom, since we're being serious here: you know what I think? You're unbelievably rough on her. You can't handle it when people hit bumps—it totally freaks you out—you want everyone to be a goddamn marine, okay, Polly?

POLLY Yes, I don't like weakness. I've tried to push her, to be hard on her so that she wouldn't sink. I don't know if I've succeeded. You can die from too much sensitivity in this world.

TRIP (a smile) Yeah, well. That's sure not gonna happen to you.

POLLY She has no idea what it means to roll with the punches, to let it ride.

TRIP Yeah? Like you do?

POLLY Please take me seriously.

TRIP Right. Okay. I will.

POLLY I dread reading this thing. It's so much pressure. So much pressure to be fair. I hate being fair.

TRIP (a laugh) They should put that on your tombstone. "Here lies Polly Wyeth. She hated being fair." (Beat. He kisses her.) But you are, Mom.

POLLY I'm just telling you that your sister will be your problem one day, Trip. Okay?

TRIP She won't be. Nobody's anybody's goddamn problem!

SILDA GRAUMAN enters. A mess. No makeup, hair disheveled. She wears a muumuu, and carries a pill case marked with the days of the week, and takes some as she talks. Trip gets her a glass of water.

SILDA (making an entrance) Hey kids! Oh boy! Wooh. Jesus Christ, you know what happens when you don't drink? You have dreams.

Polly and Trip stand smiling at her.

SILDA (cont.) I hate dreams. I have more Nazi dreams than Elie Wiesel! What does that say about me, always being chased by the S.S.? (she takes in Trip) Hello, Trip sweetie, you look like a million bucks, so cute! (beat) Maybe it's the pills they have me on. They gave me this antabuse stuff. You know what it is? If you drink you can't stop throwing up, believe me, I've weighed the options. Jesus, what day is it? I'm taking Tuesday for Thursday. I mean, what kinda doctor invents something like that? Huh? Some goddamn avaricious sadist in the pocket of the drug companies, is who. Where's my niece?

POLLY Hello, Silda. Did you sleep well?

SILDA (scoffs) Sleep well? How do you sleep well on that farkakte tempurpedic? This not drinking is gonna kill me—remember that great Totie Fields joke: "I've been on a diet for fourteen days and all I've lost is two weeks"? That's how I feel about not drinking. Of course, she got so fat I'll bet she didn't think it was funny when they lopped her leg off from the diabetes. I guess there's a cautionary tale in there, isn't there? Oh fuck! I forgot it was Christmas Eve today, isn't it? Trip, I hope you don't mind, I didn't get presents, I can't—I'm not allowed to drive anymore, and—

TRIP No, no presents—

SILDA (a laugh, a bark) And I'm broke, of course, so there's that—

SILDA (cont.) Well, thank Christ I can still swim. I'm gonna jump in the pool and try and do a couple laps before the end of the day here.

She exits. A dervish leaving them slightly undone in her wake.

Polly looks at her son.
Silda and Polly 22-24

Need Silda and Polly
POLLY And there you have it, a preview of coming attractions for you, Trip. And that's as good as it gets, my dear. That's as good as it gets.

Blackout

SCENE TWO

The Wyeth living room, late afternoon. Christmas Eve. The sun is going down, an ochre desert light pervades. The Christmas tree is lit, in all its splendor. Silda and Polly are wrapping a few last presents. Silda wears a Pucci-like top. The fire is lit. Silda is smoking Virginia Slims. Polly is drinking a scotch, rocks.

SILDA Yeah, yeah, yeah, I know I shouldn't smoke, but all these goddamn virtues will just kill us all, really.

POLLY Oh, I know you think that, sis.

SILDA Don't be so smug. Helen Bloom quit a year ago and then got mowed down by a garbage truck on Bob Hope Drive and she could never been more of a hell of a last year. Smokey like a chimney, not being tense, all of it. It was her biggest pleasure and she quit for nothing. A lost year of happiness.

POLLY Silda. Is this your way of saying you want to keep on drinking? Is that what this is?

SILDA (a shrug) Honey—if I wanted to, I would. I don't. So I won't.

POLLY Helen Bloom died? I thought she just dropped us.

SILDA She did drop you. And then she died.

POLLY Maybe they're connected. Why did she drop us?

SILDA Why does anyone drop you? Because you're not an easy person. I'd drop you too if I could. (heat) Do you like the Pucci I'm wearing?

POLLY Do you mean—do I like the quote/unquote "Pucci" you're wearing?

SILDA Please don't start with me! There was a sale. I had to fight off three old vultures for this Pucci! It was like something from National Geographic.

POLLY This Pucci was made in a basement in Rangoon, please! All these phony designer dresses and tacky Hong Kong knock-offs you scrounge for at Loehmann's; they never fool anybody, really.

SILDA This Pucci is quite, quite real!

The gift wrapping ceases.

POLLY Darling, I know when I'm being played. I know what's real and what isn't.

SILDA (dead serious) They don't have fake at Loehmann's!

POLLY Right. They have originals for fourteen ninety-five. It's a miracle!

SILDA (getting angry) Polly! Stop that! That's mean. What's the matter with you?

POLLY I'll tell you what's wrong: the buttons are wrong! The colors are off! Listen—there's no shame in being careful, in having to scrounge for bargains, it's admirable! It's the trying to pass that gets me! (heat) All I am saying is, don't try and pull one over on me, I don't like it when people pretend things are one thing and they're actually clearly another.

My daughter is tap dancing around about this book of hers and we're sitting here waiting like nothing is happening. I mean, I could take it out of her goddamn bag. If I were to sneak it, which is something you would do, that would put me on the defensive, because the discussion would become about that, rather than the thing itself? So no, we can play that game. Oh, I can wait, but let's not pretend that those are real buttons.

Silda stares at her sister, nodding. She then starts to laugh.

SILDA You know, I am going to have to learn how to deal with you now that I'm sober. Because if I were drinking, that train of
thought would make sense to me, but sober, what you just said is
totally incomprehensible.

POLLY Before she died, Helen Bloom quit my book club, you know.

SILDA I know all about it. But that wasn’t a book club; it was a vast
right-wing conspiracy! See, your politics are offensive to normal
people. You good people with them.

POLLY I like to spar.

SILDA That’s what Atilla the Hun said! That’s why you two are so
isolated here! Your only social life is with that blue-hair republican
crowd. All those fund-raisers you do or go to, all those hopeless
squares. You used to be so with-it! When we were kids.

Polly sighs, gets up, pours herself another drink.

POLLY Silda. I love those fund-raisers. I believe in them. I believe
in that ‘crowd’. They’re my people. They have a stake in upholding
the entrepreneurial American spirit. I’m still a Texas girl, Silda. So
are you.

SILDA (looking at her) Honey, News-flash: you’re not a Texan, you’re
a Jew! We’re Jewish girls who lost their accents along the way, but
for you that wasn’t enough; you had to become a goy, too. Talk
about the real thing? Talk about ‘faking it’. Honey, this Pucci is a
lot more real than your Pat Buckley schtick.

POLLY Try not to be disagreeable, Silda, it’s Christmas.

Lyman enters, he’s dressed for dinner; country club casual elegance from
slightly another time.

LYMAN (kissing them both) Hello, my darlings. The two most
beautiful women of the desert!

SILDA (happy to see him) Hey, Lyman, Submarine Captain was on
the Turner channel last night. They’re doing a Christmas of war
pictures from the old days.

LYMAN A Christmas of war pictures?

SILDA What can I say? It cheers people up. This is America, we get
warm and fuzzy about war. It took you about twelve minutes to
die, not including commercials.

LYMAN (a small smile) It’s true. Nobody at Warner’s died like me.
It’s the one thing I had a knack for. (He demonstrates dying in a
fusillade of gunfire, to the delight of his two girls.) (beat) Before the kids
get back, I want to ask that we give Brooke some breathing room
this evening. Palm Springs should be a refuge, where she wants to
come to when life in New York gets unbearable for her.

SILDA Palm Springs isn’t a refuge; it’s King Tut’s tomb. The whole
town is filled with mummies with tans.

LYMAN I don’t want confrontations. First time she’s been here in
six years, and I want her to want to come back. Often. And easily.
To feel safe here.

POLLY (a sigh) Lyman thinks I am too stark with her.

LYMAN (smiling, but pointed) Actually, Lyman thinks his wife doesn’t
take well to constructive criticism, is what Lyman thinks. Okay?
He kisses her. She rebuffs him playfully.

POLLY I just think—The only way to get someone to not be an
invalid is to refuse to treat them as such.

SILDA And there it is, folks: the entire GOP platform in a nutshell.

POLLY If I were to be gentle with you, you’d never get out of bed.

Brooke and Trip enter, laden with shopping bags, Christmas presents.

TRIP Hola and stuff.

SILDA Oh good, you’re back!

BROOKE (cheerful, maybe somewhat manic) My GOD! It’s insane out
there. The Christmas decorations—a papier-mâché reindeer and a
menorah fell onto Palm Canyon Drive and traffic is backed up for
miles—the lights sparked a fire, and the reindeer burnt up like an
ALL mid p 26 thru top p 33

Need All Characters
effigy of George Bush in Baghdad! I forget how hallucinatory it can be here on the West Coast.

SILDA I gotta get out of this place.

BROOKE You can always move east with me. I have room.

SILDA (scoff) Yeah, me in the snow, that'll work.

TRIP Hey, why have we never gone to that Desert Follies thing? Do you realize the world's oldest living show girl is performing nightly?

SILDA (a shrug; they're pals) Sure—Dorothy Dale.

TRIP I wanna—the best Christmas present you could give me, is we go downtown, have funny drinks and watch the hoofers. Please? I mean, she's in the Guinness Book of World Records!

POLLY I think we may have just found the next foreman for Jury of Your Peers.

Brooke puts down her shopping bags. She takes out two boxes, the kind you get from a copy store for manuscripts.

BROOKE Okay, here. Two copies. Freshly printed. I know you've been waiting. Just let's get this over with and go on to enjoy ourselves.

And silence. What to make of her?

TRIP (flat) Merry Christmas. Santa has come early. Yay!

The family stares at Brooke.

BROOKE (brightly) Come on! I don't want there to be any more anxious stares. No more fear, no more dread . . .

Brooke pours herself a drink. Lyman looks at Trip, who shrugs, "I dunno."

LYMAN "Dread!" (slowly) Should we be dreading this novel, darling?

BROOKE No. No, no, no no no, no. Sorry! Wrong word. Not dread, but there is something you should know before you read it.

POLLY Oh, I love it when people say there's something you should know—you can just tell it's something you wish you didn't have to hear.

LYMAN Stop it Polly.

BROOKE (quietly) Well first off, it's not a novel. I know I said it was and it started off as one. But after a few chapters, there was no hiding what it was, no fighting it. It's a memoir.

LYMAN A memoir? Of . . .?

BROOKE Us. The story of everything that happened to us. So I wanted to prepare you for this.

POLLY Ah, I see. So you want us to brace ourselves. And that's why you've been hesitant to tell us earlier. You thought we couldn't handle it?

BROOKE I had to finish writing it to make sure, and to know what I had. To sit with it.

LYMAN (carefully) Well, it's not entirely unexpected. May I ask what's in it?

POLLY Actually probably the more piquant question is—what's not, isn't it, Brooke?

BROOKE Look. (open, clear) Here's what it is: I was blocked. As the entire world knows. And then something clicked. After you sent me all my old diaries, Dad, you know, all those boxes. Something was triggered. About the life we had. The thing of you being old guard Republicans in Hollywood, that odd and very particular subset. What it was like to be the child of an ambassador. And how that affected us, all of us—how it made us.

POLLY In other words, it's all about your brother, of course.

BROOKE Yes. It's mostly Henry. And yes. Yes. Your relationship with him. (beat) What happened to that boy, who loved music, who
made me sit between two speakers and memorize all the lyrics to every Beach Boys song?

**Beat**

**POLLY** *(looks at Brooke)* Brooke, I just want to say this: You may of course write whatever you like, but the ice gets thin, the ice gets thin when it involves WE the living. We, the living, would like to go out gracefully.

**TRIP** *(impatient)* Hey, hey—I have an idea, why don't we all read it before someone, like, says some shit they might want to retract later or something. You're all asking questions—they can all be—let's just have Christmas first please. I mean, can't we try really hard to muster up some normalcy, for me, as like, a Christmas present. Okay? Huh?

**Beat**

**LYMAN** *(deciding)* Well, I don't need to read it. I can give you my stamp, say what you will. I am at peace.

**POLLY** *(astonished)* Peace? Lyman! No, you're not.

**LYMAN** *(clearly)* Polly. No. Sorry. I bow out. Quite simply, I do not wish to adjudicate what our daughter has written.

**BROOKE** You don't want to look at it?

**LYMAN** I will not be put in the position of—

**POLLY** "Decider"? Well, I will. You and I have a son. Who was implicated in a horrific and senseless bombing. In which a homeless veteran of Vietnam was burnt to death. Burnt to a crisp. Supposedly by accident. *And that is the subject of her book!* So, no, I am not at "peace".

**LYMAN** *(a kind of quiet command, not to be contradicted)* Polly. Let it be. That's not how I conduct myself. I never have. It doesn't work.

**BROOKE** Look, I love you. And *nothing* in it contradicts that. Really, I don't think you have anything to be nervous about.

**POLLY** Said the spider to the fly?

**BROOKE** *(a bitter laugh)* I just love how—right off the bat, you assume that it's a hit-and-run job on you, Mom. How little trust there is. Look at you.

**POLLY** "Trust"! Didn't Ronnie say 'trust but verify'? I kind of would like to verify! Before it shows up on the bedside tables of the liberal elite across the land? Before we're reviewed by your pal, Ms. Didion, in *The New York Review of Books*.

**BROOKE** Wow.

**LYMAN** *(another gentleman's smile)* Let's not rush to any conclusions, shall we? If you got a decent advance, we could always give it back. If that's an issue.

**BROOKE** No. Jesus. *(laughing)* Knopf bought it. I'd probably make more money selling cashews in Central Park, but it's something, and it buys me time to do another. This is good! Really, I mean—

**POLLY** That is not in dispute, of course it's good. You're a real writer, you shouldn't have been fulminating in the dark for seven years.

**BROOKE** *(blowing up)* Jesus Christ, 'fulminating'? Is that what you call being hospitalized? Is that what you call what was going on with me?

**POLLY** No. I don't. I know what was going on with you.

*Polly looks strained. She glances at Lyman. Silda lights a smoke.*

**SILDA** Polly, you're being really, and I mean *really*, a hard-ass, even by your standards, which is saying a lot. She's written a new book, she's sold it, she's had tough times, tougher than you understand and—

**POLLY** *(over her)* Oh, I understand. I was there. I fed her when she refused to eat. I sat there in Sag Harbor in that dark little cottage—*don't you dare* tell me I don't understand my daughter? That is one area, the area of having children, where you can not presume to condescend to me, because when I am called, I show up, okay?
In the wake of that, there is silence. Trip sighs, shakes his head and sits down.

**TRIP**  And so much for yuletide cheer.

**Beat**

**POLLY**  A friend of mine's stepson wrote a book, a lovely San Francisco family; all about his shitty childhood and his boarding school horrors, booze and acne, now there are lawsuits for everyone. And it was in all the papers, she had to move to Andorra, Spain, or some crazy goddamn place and hide amongst the Basques. Of course, the book made the little shit's reputation and now he's living it up, you probably know him, you all probably go have tapas together in the fucking Village, right?

**BROOKE**  Is this acting, is this schtick? I can't tell if you're putting on an act or if this is real.

**POLLY**  "Acting or real"? The two are hardly mutually exclusive in this family.

**LYMAN**  Stop, please. Please. You're both giving me a headache. Truce. Okay? Peace.

There is a moment of truce.

**LYMAN (cont.)**  Forget the goddamn book. We can take our time. Right? It takes a while to put out a book. So we can—why don't we not even look at it until after the holidays? After the New Year. And just enjoy this time together. (slightly furious) This discussion can wait. And it will. Is that clear?

There is silence. Lyman knows how to stop a room; he's played lawyers and been an ambassador, so even though its performance, it still is jarred, given his gentleness.

**BROOKE**  Yes. It does take a while to publish a book. Next fall, in fact. Almost a year.

**LYMAN (he's won)**  So WHY are we doing this? There's time. Good, so let's bank our fires. We really don't have to do this now at all.

**BROOKE**  Well.

There is a long silence. Lyman looks around. "What?"

**BROOKE (cont.)**  *The New Yorker.*

**LYMAN**  Yes?

**BROOKE**  Something fell out and there was a slot and my editor gave it to them, and they're going to run it in February.

**LYMAN**  I see. Two months away. Ahhh. I see.

**BROOKE**  They close the issue a bit ahead so there isn't so much time. They have a deadline and it's right before the first of the year, you see, if there's anything you really need to have your say about, it's got to be soon.

There is a stunned silence. Polly lets out a laugh of disbelief.

**POLLY**  *The New Yorker* is publishing sections of a book about us?

**BROOKE**  Yes.

**POLLY (shaking her head, wry as hell)**  And a Happy New Year. (to Lyman) Two seats for Andorra please.

**BROOKE (looks at Trip)**  Sorry.

**TRIP (surprised, annoyed)**  Pretty selective in what we share, aren't we, Brookie? Jesus.

**LYMAN (somewhat hardened)**  I don't know that I entirely like the way this is happening. I don't see why this has to be hurriedly—I appreciate that you're asking us for our blessing, and giving us the opportunity, as scant as it is, to weigh in here but ...

**BROOKE (quietly)**  I don't understand what there is to be afraid of. I am not allowed to—am I not—is there a blanket ban on writing about my life if it involves anyone else?

**POLLY**  I could sue you, but that would make an even bigger splash.

**BROOKE (bursts into laughter)**  You could sue me?
POLLY (good natured) Sure. Families do it all the time. Ask Trip! Half
the goddamn people on his show are families suing each other
over unpaid parking tickets and negligent fratricide or something?
Why shouldn’t we get in on the act? Maybe we could do it on
Trip’s show! We could be part of the freaks!

TRIP Ours is small claims, you’d need the war crimes tribunal in
the Hague, mom.

Polly laughs, she likes it.

POLLY Trip. Let me ask you something: A girl shows up on your
TV show, having exploited for profit a personal tragedy without
consulting the people who were also affected by it; what would
your jury of peers say to that? Would they approve? Or would
they say ‘stone her’?

LYMAN Jesus, please.

BROOKE “Stone her.” That’s great.

TRIP You know what? All of you—there are at least three places
I could have been right now: Cape Town, Punta del Este, or
Bahia. There are girls with fun families in beach-houses where
you can swim and drink and laugh and nobody is trying to
fucking, you know, assassinate each other over a goddamn
book. (beat) Over a BOOK! That is of almost zero-point-one
conceivable percent interest to ANYONE I know! And I know
a lot of people. I have learned so much about families from my
show. (he laughs) The way in which the bored and the damaged
ruin whatever little bit of happiness they happen to have. And
I always want to tell them ‘hey, you schmucks, you have wasted
one more day of living better’.

There is silence.

TRIP (cont.) But me? I’m pretty goddamn happy, and I’m not going
to let you all take that away from me. (beat) I have reservations
on three flights to distant cities for tomorrow and I will only be
cancelling two of them at this rate. (He looks at his mother) So as to

“would I stone her?” See, I’m not asking for peace like Dad is.
Mom, I’m just telling you, I love everyone here, and I won’t be
played. Not by any one of you.

BROOKE I’m so sorry, Trip. I don’t mean for you to be in the
middle of it. This Mess.

TRIP Yeah, well. (beat) You’re a really good writer, Brooke. Seriously.
But you . . .

He stops, shakes his head. He walks out. Brooke sits down, nodding. Silence.

LYMAN (to Silda, gently) Silda, I wonder if you would make me
some tea? Would you mind, please?

SILDA Of course, sweetie. Two sugars? Milk?

LYMAN Lemon. Honey.

SILDA Anybody else?

BROOKE Please. Thank you.

After she gives Brooke a quick look of solidarity, perhaps even a gesture,
Silda exits to the kitchen.

BROOKE (cont.) Okay. So.

POLLY Why is it that children are allowed a sort of endless series
of free passes in this life, you know, and we’re expected to be the
parents of children forever? This is a new phenomenon; once I
was an adult, all of my parents’ indulgence ceased. You all want to
stay children forever, doing whatever mischief you can think of.
All you entitled children of the “me” generation.

BROOKE (delighted) By free-passes you mean “free-will” of course?
And I don’t particularly remember feeling indulged, but that’s
just a matter of point of view I suppose; but let’s really clarify
something—I am not looking for a free-pass from you, or any sort
of pass at all.

POLLY (emphatic) Then what do you want? Tell me exactly what
you want!
Lyman monologue 40-41

Lyman Monologue – Need Lyman and Booke for 2 Lines
Lyman has returned with an armful of firewood. He drops it next to the fireplace.

LYMAN (quiet, dark) He was wonderful. He would have been a movie star.

SILDA Your tea.

She points to the cup and saucer. Lyman nods.

SILDA (cont.) Are you okay?

LYMAN (something distant about him, keeping his own counsel) I think I might be catching a bit of something. A little bug of some sort.

Silda goes to the bar and pours whiskey into his cup.

SILDA This'll help. God knows.

He takes a sip.

LYMAN (beat, quietly) I never wrote my memoir, because it would have hurt our friends, how hard it was, after Henry was implicated the way he was, how they all vanished and your mother refused to accept it. She circled the wagons. Around me. Borne out of thinking I'm easily bruised. I am not easily bruised. (Beat. There is a certain intense, lost quality in his telling of this. It is not easy; a story never shared. It is an illustrative story, meant to draw her in.) But she would not let them off the hook, she's the only woman to have faced down Nancy Reagan, Betsy Bloomingdale, and Mrs. Annenberg at the same lunch and reduced them all to tears. Tears of shame for their unconscionable behavior—(a growl). As though I had placed that bomb. Your mother reminded them all who we really were, and of their obligations to honor loyal friends—Nancy went to Ronnie and sat him down, they had a dinner for us at the L.A. Country Club and everyone came out. Yes. Now they were our friends again. And by the time Ronnie was president, they made me ambassador ...

His eyes well up, he grins through it, the way older men do, when telling these sorts of stories.

BROOKE I didn't know it went down like that. That mom did that.

LYMAN (imploring) Please don't do this, I can not embarrass those people. They're some of them, alive still—! You can do what you like after we're gone! Do you not understand that? It's simply good manners. It's as simple as that!

BROOKE (serious and quiet) Well, let me tell you, good manners have got me into a lot of trouble, Dad. Probably you too. I am past the point of good manners.

LYMAN (and finally, knowing he lost, letting the bitterness come out, unmasked, no longer the diplomat) You have so much of your mother in you. You don't like any weakness, especially in yourself. You can't forgive it. (beat) It is why you ended up in a damn hospital! Well—if you can't forgive yourself, I suppose it's futile to ask that you to forgive me! No. (his voice rises) So you'll publish your book and punish us all, and a reporter will call me for a comment! (his voice choking) And I will say "no comment." (furious) I will keep saying it until I die! "No comment"!

Lyman exits. Silence. Brooke is shaken.

She has not seen this Lyman, this side of him, directed at her.

Silda finally picks up Lyman's empty tea cup, and deeply smells the residual booze in it. She breathes deeply.

SILDA God, I love that smell, that vapor, if I could just live in that scent, I'd be happy. I'd never need to take a drink again, I'd just breathe it in.

Blackout

End of Act One
Brooke Trip 43-48 and Trip monologue p 47
ACT II

SCENE ONE

Some hours have passed.

It is night.

The fireplace glowing. Silda is asleep on the sofa, a throw covering her. Brooke and Trip alone in the living room. They are drinking whiskey. Trip is reading the manuscript, and Brooke is pacing, anxious, making herself known.

TRIP (finally, exasperated with her, stops reading) I could make us a sandwich. You haven’t eaten since breakfast.

BROOKE (brightly) Oh god. Not really very hungry, actually.

TRIP You’re not supposed to not eat, Brooke. (beat, a sigh) I was looking forward to all that strange food at the country club. Crab legs. A whole roast pig. And then there’s suddenly like Pad Thai and rellenos. Crazy mix.

BROOKE I think I have successfully demolished Christmas Eve. (looking toward her parents’ bedroom) They’ve been in there far too long.

TRIP (smiling) Preparing the attack.

BROOKE (a tense smile in return) How can you stay so neutral on this?

TRIP Who said I was neutral? I just said I’m still absorbing it all.

BROOKE So you support me?

TRIP I didn’t say that, did I? Look, I haven’t read the whole thing from start to finish, but enough. You (probably) have the right to publish anything you like, pretty much about anyone, whether it’s decent or cool or not, and they have the right to push back whether that’s decent or cool or not.

BROOKE You’re like Mom. It’s like you learned chess in her womb and are playing against yourself and everyone else is only a pawn.

TRIP (he stares at her, amazed) What do you want? For me to say ‘Oh boy sis—sure—”art” comes before life’?

BROOKE No. That’s the worst kind of oversimplification.

TRIP (grinning) But you sort of think it does. And so, you have to accept the consequences of ‘art over life’, which in this case is likely to be losing the trust of the people you love, for the sake of these opinions, these bewildering portraits of these people who seem totally unrecognizable to me.

BROOKE Well, maybe your powers of observation …

TRIP (over her) Let me finish, since you wanna know. (beat) Opinions: you turn Henry into a saint of the seventies, all patchouli and innocent questioning and reacting to the stultifying oppressiveness of these Waspified GOP zombies in the other room—and it just seems to me that maybe he was really, really sick and fucked up and needed a lot of help, and was hanging out with mad bombers at very least. I mean, Christ, I was five when this happened and reading it made ME feel guilty. But Mom and Dad: you think they don’t blame themselves?

BROOKE They let him go. They weren’t helping him, they kicked him out—

TRIP But—did they let him go? Or did he just fly off in rage and fury. It seems you’re looking for an apology, well, maybe they have apologized and you just haven’t noticed it. (the last is said very emphatically)

BROOKE An apology? You don’t write a book because you want apologies, Trip, you write a book because of who you are—a person who writes books—the only obligation I have is to myself.
To write it. Well, that’s as far as it goes. I am not a publicist, I am not a hagiographer, I am a writer and this is my flawed version of what happened. I did not come here to be emotionally blackmailed and censored by two people who lived very public lives and then hid in the desert.

TRIP (smiling, maybe, but not friendly) A: don’t really need the lecture on what a writer is, and B: it’s just a story! A story you have told yourself and will now share for fame and money and—

BROOKE Please don’t say I’m doing this for money, okay—I have no interest in money, you know that.

TRIP (laughing) Yeah! Because you’re rich. Even if you don’t take a cent from them, which is not strictly true, because they paid for the fancy hospital in Cambridge where you camped out for six months—

BROOKE I wasn’t camping—

TRIP You’re rich, you’re smart, absurdly white, Ivy League, New York, and your parents are rich and you know it—

BROOKE And what about you? What are you, a Zapotec Indian?

TRIP (simple) The difference between us is, I don’t use my sixteen dozen different little sicknesses for gain. (beat) You do, it’s just who you are. You think being a depressive makes you special? Guess what, being depressed makes you banal. And in your case, hard.

Not easy to be with.

BROOKE That’s not fair.

TRIP Fair? Well. Neither is “Love & Mercy: A Memoir”. And I worship you, I totally do, I love you. But this is true. What I am about to say. Suck it up and take it. And don’t interrupt. (serious) Because you had a breakdown, you actually believe you have earned a free-pass here. Because you couldn’t function, you didn’t care to eat or brush your teeth or wash your hair or even pretty much speak, and even at a point looked like you might follow Henry down the trail to off yourself—you think this entitles you to present a picture to the world of two people who failed in every possible context, as citizens, as parents, as humans.

BROOKE (choked, right) You figured all this out, did you? Dr. Wyeth? When you weren’t busy cooking up Jury of Your Goddamn Peers?

TRIP (a smile) You wanna be a little bitch about my TV show, Brooke? At least, at the very least, have the decency to watch it first, okay? You think you’re not like anyone else on Oprah?

BROOKE Don’t talk to me like Mom talks to Silda.

TRIP (very sharp) Mom talks to Silda like she loves her. And—as for my being like Mom—listen, you’re as hard as fucking Stalin, and as good at chess as anyone I’ve ever known, and you didn’t get that from Lyman.

BROOKE Look, I accept that you can’t recognize our parents as I have written them, that time changed them, so why can’t you accept that I’ve been as honest as I could in depicting events that you weren’t really aware of as a little kid?

TRIP (overlap) I never said you were being dishonest. Let me ask you a question: Did you give Silda the manuscript while you were working on it? Because I can smell her tone a mile away. And if I can, you bet that Mom can too.

BROOKE (defensive) Yes, I did. She was there for a lot of it.

TRIP Yeah, she sure was, which she uses like a goddamn baseball bat to hit Mom and Dad with how crappy they were to Henry. What do you think Polly is gonna do to her sister when she realizes that Silda was goddamn Deep Throat for you?

BROOKE I needed someone else’s eye to—
TRIP (over her) Brooke, I'm just saying that you've made the story better and added a lot of very specific detail to show you as the victim. You and Henry. That doesn't mean you're a liar.

BROOKE Then please, please Trip, just back me up. They listen to you before all others. Really. If you just said 'it's okay, it's okay', in that way you have. Because I'm not going to back down, I won't do it and they're going to have to learn to live with it. (beat) Please, Trip.

TRIP (grinning) So, wait. Here are my assignments for Christmas:
I have to get Mom not to send Silda out onto an ice-flow like some Eskimo, which will be her first instinct, and also get them to give you their blessing to publish a book, which paints them as right-wing sociopaths whose ideology destroyed their children's lives. Who am I? Rudolph the goddamn reindeer?

She suddenly laughs. It's that thing where siblings shift out of the real tension they're locked in and become kids again. Trip is grinning.

BROOKE (suddenly laughing) You do have a shiny nose.

TRIP I am sooo rolling a joint.

He proceeds to do this. Expertly.

BROOKE You don't understand this depression thing because you don't have it.

There is a moment. He looks at her. He nods. Expertly rolling the joint through the following.

TRIP Yeah, that's what all depressives say. How would you know what I have and don't have? How? You have your head so far up your own butt, you wouldn't notice if I were covered in killer ants and being stung to death right in front of you.

BROOKE Don't say that.

TRIP I mean, it's true! Oh, we joke about you not watching my show but it's what I do, I make TV shows, it's part of my life, my life.

(laughs, rueful) There are some things you don't know about me; I was impotent for a year, I developed an unhealthy relationship to sleeping pills and kicked it cold turkey. I dated a Russian woman almost twice my age and loved her. I take flying lessons and I happen to have read almost every book written about the Civil War.

BROOKE You take flying lessons?

TRIP Just because I am wasting my goddamn Stanford–Berkeley education making ironic and cheerful TV shows, doesn't mean I'm not very, very much filled with despair. Nobody who takes pleasure as seriously as I do could possibly be happy. Don't you know that? (beat) Look at me: I don't take my romantic life at all seriously. I am probably a sex addict. I don't want kids because it's too easy to fuck them up, and our parents call me every time they need help with their e-mail or cell phones, and I am presiding over them getting older and parts are gonna start falling off of them and you haven't even noticed that Dad has a little invisible hearing aid which he is too vain to discuss—and they are the only people aside from you and Sleeping Beauty over there—(nods toward Silda)—that I have ever really, really loved, and you're half insane and vaguely suicidal. Silda is entirely insane and incapable of taking care of herself, and I can feel myself turning into Hugh Hefner. Welcome to the end of the goddamn Golden State. I am California! And California is not happy! (Beat. Finished rolling, he offers her the joint.) Have some.

BROOKE (taking a hit) Thank you. And I am not 'vaguely suicidal'.

TRIP (suddenly pissed at her) Well you could have fooled me, Brooke! What is it? Isn't it revenge enough that everyone worries about you all the time?

BROOKE I hate that people worry about me—

TRIP (over her, laughing) No, you don't! Come ON! You love it! You had to add this book to it?
BROOKE But you told me I had to get back to work! You said it was up to me, that 'nobody was waiting for the next Brooke Wyeth novel'. And that I had to change that! I had to force myself on the world.

TRIP I said that to get you moving again. To get you writing. But not this. Besides, I thought you should write a nice goddamn play that nobody would ever go see!

BROOKE (snaps) You think I should put it in a drawer, don’t you? Wait until they’re gone! Jesus, just say it if that’s what you think!

TRIP You want me to tell you what to do?

BROOKE God yes. Please! Please tell me what to do, I’ll listen.

TRIP You never listen to anybody, but okay. (flat) If you’re going to go ahead, do it without apology or drama, close your eyes and go for it—and if you’re not, do it with grace and humility, how’s that? I don’t know! (Beat. Suddenly really mad) Just quit torturing everyone and looking at me like a lost border terrier, fuck!

BROOKE Stop trying to make it harder for me.

TRIP Why not? This should be the hardest decision you’ve ever made! (Beat. Quietly, really upset) They’ve been really good to you, Brooke, they’ve—you know they love you, they worship you, they think about you all day, they really love you so fucking much, you know that right?

He really takes her in. He shakes his head.

TRIP (cont.) I mean, this will sort of kill them. Doesn’t that count in this life? Not withstanding whatever may have happened in the past, doesn’t that count?

She looks at him, wishing he could go further, wishing he had something to offer her. But he can’t.

SILDA (suddenly awake, frantic) Jesus, I smell pot! I fell asleep here, oh my god, I’m so groggy! What time is it? Did you go to the club without me, goddamn it?

BROOKE (calming) It’s eight-thirty, nobody’s gone anywhere. Mom and Dad have not emerged from their quarters yet.

SILDA They haven’t?

Silda wraps the throw around her shoulders and gets up from the sofa, stands by the fire, warming herself.

SILDA (cont.) You don’t look so great, what, you’ve been crying?

Did something happen? Did I miss—

BROOKE (over her) No. We’re just sitting here, you know, talking, waiting.

SILDA Waiting for judgement day. Give me that joint.

TRIP Oh yeah, that’ll really help things; you, high.

SILDA (as though he were a moron) I’m not allowed to drink, nobody said anything about drugs! Give it!

BROOKE No. You have to keep your wits about you. Trip thinks Mom is going to make a thing about you looking at the manuscript. It will be construed in a particular way.

SILDA Of course it will! Exactly! That’s why I want the pot! I knew one day it would all come to a head. They’re going to cut me off! Kick me out! Where will I go? There were no royalties for those goddamn stupid Hillary movies! I have social security, that’s it, that’s all. I’ll end up in . . .

She stops. Polly is standing in the doorway.

POLLY Where will you end up my darling? The Actors Home? If you’re lucky, if you’re very lucky. Perhaps some little stucco place in Desert Hot Springs? A retirement hotel? But we can get to that in due course, we can get to that later.
Brooke Monologue 57-58

Need Brooke
There is silence. He is spent and he exits.

POLLY I can't. Not built for it. I know myself.

BROOKE Yeah. Well then.

POLLY I know myself.

SILDA (with a quiet fury) That's right, Polly. You, Know Yourself. Oh, you do. With such unyielding certitude. That's what your daughter has written. Her book is about two true believers. Who never let go.

She looks at her sister.

SILDA (cont.) The zealots who have taken over your party and marinated it in intolerance. You guys let it happen. You are incapable of speaking out, even while finding fault with it in private. (beat) And you live in that complicity every day. A war in which so many people are dying in a desert, thousands of miles away. Because it's a war declared by a man whose father is someone with whom you occasionally dine, you keep silent. That is what true believers do. That, that's what your daughter has written.

POLLY (a slow ironic clapping) Well. That's a good speech. All that liberal sentiment.

SILDA Not liberal. Human.

POLLY But I know that Henry came to you for help. And you were too drunk up there in Laurel Canyon to come down. (beat) I may be a true believer but at least I am not a hypocrite. To moralize, whine and moan, but when push came to shove, you weren't there for Henry. He called you. And you just were too busy in your wallow. And that is the story of Silda Grauman, who spent her life in the cheap seats telling us what shits we were, and who couldn't do anything to help someone she loved more than anyone in the world.

And Silda looks aghast.

BROOKE He came to you, Silda?

SILDA (helpless) I was—it was a very bad time and there was . . . She stops, she can't say anything.

BROOKE He came to you? Why did you not tell me that?

POLLY Because it was not convenient to her fantasy of moral outrage, Brooke. That is why.

BROOKE (almost horrified) But you sat there on the phone with me, giving me notes—

SILDA I know.

BROOKE We poured over those pages together, you sat there telling me what I had right—

SILDA (desperate) But what you have isn't right—you're in a very fragile state, you're—

BROOKE (over her, with rising anger) I'm fine—

SILDA Yes, he called me but don't let her sow doubt with—

BROOKE With what? With a fact?

SILDA I wanted to tell you—I don't care if you—you throw me in with everyone else—I at least know I failed—

POLLY (vicious) Yeah, she didn't feed you that bit of info, did she, for your book, Brooke? Yeah. She left that out. So. You don't know the whole story.

Lyman holds out his hand, trying one last time to walk back this catastrophe.

LYMAN (a hoarse croak) Brooke. Can't you please, please trust us? Wait. Publish it in a few years. Wait. That's all. Just wait 'til we are gone.

POLLY (pouring scotch) Which should only be a matter of hours, the way things are going.

BROOKE (after a moment, ice cold) Yeah. No. I'm not going to do that. You are asking me to shut down something that makes me possible. Your arguments for suppression mean I would die. Well,
I've been dead before and I'm not going back. If it means that we're over, well, then it means we're over, and life will go on, one way or another. (beat) Dad, you're not even against—your only cohesive argument against the book is not that it's meretricious, but that I should wait for you to die before publishing it. Maybe it was crazy of me to try and write it, but I did. So, I owe myself more than that, and I owe Henry a lot more. You are asking that I help you? Henry asked you for help. He made a terrible, brutal, awful mistake and you shunned him. And with that, you have to live. (beat, unyielding) Relationships are hard-earned things; they have a reason and a logic to them. Well, I cannot go backwards into my cave. (beat) Mother, when you criticize and find fault in every last choice I make, for some reason, that's how you were made, and I know you tell yourself that it's because you're pushing me, you only want the best for me. (beat) You make it almost impossible for me to see the love in that. All I see is a bully who has lost touch with gentleness or kindness. That is what I see; there are many other ways of being. And yours, I just fail to understand it.

Brooke looks right at Polly. When Brooke says the next thing, Polly flinches. It is not cold or bitter, just fact.

**Brooke (cont.)** I can't. Beat. You. We have earned that relationship. That is the relationship we have earned, it is entirely organic, so no, I will not wait. I cannot—because I'm just like you: I know who I am. Most people don't have to make a step-by-step decision to stay alive, most people just basically want to live. I am not one of those people, not after Henry. (beat) There will be a book. Maybe it will be the last thing I ever publish, but there will be a book. It is the last six years of my life on those pages. And it's for Henry. I have no choice. What happened to Henry will have been seen. Everything. Everything in life is about being seen, or not seen, and eventually, everything IS seen. I am as sorry I am a writer as you are. I wish I had been made differently. But as it stands, I am ... (beat, a breath) going to pack. And fly back east.

And I will be home ... HOME ... by tomorrow evening. And in a few months, it will be out.

She starts to exit.

**Lyman** Brooke! Don't! You don't understand!

**Brooke**

**Lyman** (a laugh)

Brooke, really, I—

What is there left to say, really?

Dad? Maybe we'll—

He turns to his wife, shaking his head.

**Lyman** (cont.) I can not do this anymore, Polly! I can't. I just can't.

**Polly** Don't. Don't. Really Lyman.

**Lyman** (a great roar from him) You know what, Polly? If I have to go on one more second keeping secrets, I'd rather live alone. I swear to you, I love you, but I would rather live alone. Than have one more second of this—

**Brooke** Of what?

Beat. He stops. He looks at his wife. She is startled. Riven, motionless. She nods. She turns to Brooke.

**Polly** (a whisper) Sit down. Please.

Trip and Brooke comply. Polly thinks for a moment. Lyman looks to Polly and nods.

**Polly** (cont.) I was taught by Nancy, who was like a big sister to me—that to control everything, every bit of information, every gesture, every pose, that was the way to live. Order. Precision. Discipline. Well ... (beat) every few years, someone from the Justice Department will come to see us. After all, he was never found. Suspicions remained and the case of Henry Wyeth remains open. A boy implicated in such a thing; the bombing of a recruiting center, a crime for which three other people are