Life Is Like a Double Cheeseburger

By Flip Kobler and Finn Kobler

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LIFE IS LIKE A DOUBLE CHEESEBURGER
By Flip Kobler and Finn Kobler

CAST OF CHARACTERS

The Tomato
DAD ...................................considers the cheeseburger a 38
  metaphor for major life changes
MOM ..................................pragmatic but humorous 18
FRANKLIN ...........................begrudging son; doesn’t want 33
to move
LILLY .................................unfazed younger daughter; 12
  just wants a trampoline

Restaurant Lingo
WAITRESS ..........................deciphers the diners’ dialect 29
HUSBAND ...........................lost in translation 24
WIFE .................................understands all too well 16
COOK .................................likes to keep the job interesting 7
DAUGHTER ............................appalled by how thoughtless 8
  boys can be
SON .................................hungry for pancakes 3

Salad Days, Part One
EVAN ..................................carefree new high school grad; 14
  celebrates life with cheeseburgers
JACKSON ............................another 10
DALE ..................................another, but more ambitious and 9
  prudent than his friends
CARLA .................................waitress in her mid-twenties with 3
  her own story

The Girl Filter
CLARK .................................hears what he wants to hear 13
AMY .................................reads too much into things 10
HOSTESS .............................warns about the acoustics 5
Life
STEVE .......................eager to take a bite out of Life 24
JANET ...................Steve’s wife 30
KAREN .....................offers serving suggestions 25

Salad Days, Part Two
EVAN* ......................relieved to be a college grad; still 11
celebrates life with cheeseburgers
JACKSON* ...................another 7
DALE* ......................ready to start his first career job 9
CARLA* ......................knows all her regulars 3

Food for Thought
FIONA ......................moving up in the world 7
VICTOR ......................has a lot to think about 25
EMOTIONAL ...............heartfelt 7
INQUISITIVE ................asks a lot of questions 5
CRITICAL .....................cynical and exacting 7
CREATIVE .....................offers inventive perspective 3
CONCRETE .....................interested in just the facts 9
FORE .........................thinks in the future 7
TRIVIAL .......................full of immaterial information 4
CONSULTANT ................rep for the Devil’s Advocates 2

A More Perfect Union
SERVER ......................prepared to take an order 17
GIRL ......................waiting in vain for a blind date 41
BOY .........................another 36
COUPLE ......................waiting for a table n/a

No Reservations
HOST .......................gatekeeper of the reservations 7
WAITPERSON ................overworked but underqualified 15
to handle hold-ups
AMBROSE ......................an imposter eager to eat 34
FELICITY ......................another 32
ROBBER .......................stopping by for a quick burglary 21
URSULA..............................Korpelistanese ambassador and hostage

DINERS ..............................caught up in the chaos n/a

Salad Days, Part Three
EVAN* ..............................33 years old and getting married 9
JACKSON* ............................the best man 8
DALE* .................................already married; more mature 13
CARLA* ..............................things don’t change with her except that she’s now 40 years old 3

Memory Lane
FRANKLIN* ............................son from “The Tomato”; now in his 40s 34
DAD* .................................also from “The Tomato”; now 75 40

The Price You Pay
DELANEY .............................seeks to be popular at any cost 13
JAMIE .................................backstabbing but beguiling 4
LORNA .................................another 6
VIOLET .................................another 4
BRIAN .................................likes Delaney for who she really is 2

Decision Day
OWNER .................................a motherly voice of reason 19
RIVER .................................nervously awaiting news 19
WOMAN .................................wants what River’s having 1

Salad Days, Part Four
EVAN* .................................five years older and much wiser than in the past 11
DALE* .................................successful in all aspects of his life 12
CARLA* .................................her life doesn’t change 1

Why I Work at a Diner
CARLA* .................................from “Salad Days” 1
Life Is Like a Double Cheeseburger

VOICE........................................speed-dating emcee  2
LIZ ...........................................seeks a different kind of love  38
DONALD .................................decidedly different  38
MAMA ................................Donald’s mother  4
MATTHEW ...............................new to the speed-dating scene  1

*Characters who have appeared in previous scenes

SETTING

TIME:  Present day.
PLACE:  Various restaurant settings, such as a fast-food joint, a diner, a café, and a fancier establishment.

SET DESCRIPTION
The stage is bare other than tables and chairs, which are dressed up or down to match the location of each scene.
LIFE IS LIKE A DOUBLE CHEESEBURGER

“The Tomato”

LIGHTS UP on a fast-food joint. MOM is sitting at the table with her son, FRANKLIN, and daughter, LILLY, sipping on drinks. That’s when DAD arrives with a tray loaded with burgers and fries.

DAD: Okay, here we go. (Passes them out.) Double cheeseburger for me. Cheeseburger for you, cheeseburger for you, cheeseburger for you. And fries, fries, fries.

LILLY: You didn’t get any fries, Daddy.

DAD: I don’t like fries.

FRANKLIN: You always eat mine.

DAD: (Playfully dramatic.) That’s a lie. You should stop lying. Your parents should’ve taught you better than that.

MOM: (Clucks her tongue disapprovingly.) We have failed as parents.

DAD: So I suppose you’re all wondering why we called you here today.

LILLY: Are we getting a puppy?

MOM: (To DAD.) Maybe you better just tell them before she gets really bumbled out.

DAD: Okay, gang, here’s the deal. I have been offered a new job. Which is a big promotion for me, and it means more money.

LILLY: But it does mean that… (Braces himself.) …we have to move.

DAD: We have to move. It’s in New York.

LILLY: Yay!

FRANKLIN: No, I don’t want to move.

DAD: I know this is going to be tough—

FRANKLIN: I’m not moving! That’s not fair.

DAD: I know.

FRANKLIN: You don’t know! Why are you doing this?

DAD: I have to.

FRANKLIN: You don’t have to. You’re just doing this to be mean.
DAD: Yes, I have to be mean. That’s my job description as Dad. I thought this would meet my quota for the year, all my meanness all at once.

FRANKLIN: It’s not a joke. You’re telling me I have to leave all my friends and be the pathetic “new kid” at some other stupid school? I’m not going.

MOM: Well, that’s not really up to you to decide.

FRANKLIN: I don’t get a vote?

MOM: Not in this.

FRANKLIN: How is that fair?

MOM: It’s not. But when you become an adult, you can make all the choices for your life that you want. That’s the cool thing. You have your whole life ahead of you to do what you want.

DAD: But this is my life, and I have to do what’s best for my family.

FRANKLIN: You mean what’s best for you.

DAD: Yes. And at this time, in this place, what’s best for me and and what’s best for my family happen to be the same thing. I hope you can understand.

FRANKLIN: You can’t make me move. I’ll just run away.

MOM: Well, we’ll miss you deeply.

DAD: We’ll send postcards.

LILLY: And pictures of my new trampoline.

FRANKLIN: I hate this. I hate all of this. It’s not fair. You are just a big, old, stupid, mean, stinky, jerk-butt!

DAD: (Hard.) Hey now! We don’t use that kind of language. We do not say “old.” (MOM and LILLY laugh. FRANKLIN does not.)

FRANKLIN: That’s not funny.

LILLY: Is too.

MOM: It’s a little bit funny.

FRANKLIN: No, it’s no amount of funny. Zero funniness, so quit it!

DAD: You’re right, son. You’re upset. I know this won’t be funny to you right now.

FRANKLIN: It’ll never be funny.

MOM: You’re right. We know you well enough to know that this will never be funny.

FRANKLIN: You don’t know that. You don’t know everything. You don’t know me. It could be funny. I’ll show you it could be funny. Say it again.

DAD: Come on, now—
FRANKLIN: Say it again.
DAD: We don’t say “old.”
FRANKLIN: (Laughs way too hard just to prove DAD wrong.) Hahahahahaha! That’s funny! That’s so funny! Hahahahahaha! (OTHERS just look at each other.)
MOM: I’m not sure what argument you’re trying to make here.
FRANKLIN: (Laughter morphs into tears.) I don’t want to move.
DAD: (Changes tactics, soft and sincere.) I know, kiddo.
FRANKLIN: All my friends are here. My school is here. Soccer is here. Everything I am is right here. If we move, then I’m just a big nobody.
DAD: That’s just not true.
FRANKLIN: Yes, it is.
DAD: No, see, life is like a double cheeseburger.
FRANKLIN: What?
MOM: Really?
DAD: Stay with me on this. (Gestures to his burger.) Life is like this double cheeseburger. And you are the pickle.
FRANKLIN: I don’t want to be the pickle.
LILLY: Can I be the pickle?
MOM: Can you make a sour face? (LILLY does.) Boom, pickle.
DAD: (To FRANKLIN.) Okay, you’re the meat, then.
FRANKLIN: I don’t want to be the meat.
DAD: Then the tomato.
FRANKLIN: I don’t want to—
DAD: For now, you’re the tomato! Just be the tomato.
FRANKLIN: Fine, I’m a tomato.
LILLY: I’m the pickle. (Makes another sour face.)
DAD: (To FRANKLIN.) And your home is here in this cheeseburger. You make this burger so much better by being a part of it. The whole thing is better because you’re here. But if we move the tomato... (Takes the tomato out of the burger and holds it up, moving it around the table like a game piece,) ...you may not be home anymore, but you’re still a tomato. And you’ll find a new home.
FRANKLIN: Won’t be the same.
DAD: No, it won’t. Maybe it’s another burger, or maybe you’re part of a salad. Completely different home, but you’re still a major part of it. You fit in. You belong.
FRANKLIN: Not everybody like tomatoes in their salad.
DAD: Of course not. Not everybody likes cheese or raisins or anchovies.
LILLY: Yuck!

DAD: But a lot of people do. And if the salad doesn’t work, maybe you’ll meet a nice Italian girl and become part of a spaghetti sauce. Or maybe in high school you join a salsa and become the life of the fiesta.

MOM: In college, you’ll probably be part of a few bloody Marys.

DAD: (Gives MOM a look.) Really? Now?

MOM: They grow up fast. Just sayin’.

DAD: What I’m saying is that you will always be you. Wherever you go. And you will always find a way to fit in.

FRANKLIN: I still hate this.

MOM: We know, son. You’re allowed to for a while.

FRANKLIN: I still don’t want to be a tomato.

DAD: You’re not a tomato. You are my sunshine. (Reaches over and steals a fry.)

FRANKLIN: Hey, those are my fries.

DAD: Tomatoes can’t talk.

FRANKLIN: I’m not a tomato. I’m sunshine.

DAD: Sunshine doesn’t talk either. It just beams happily, radiating joy. (Steals a few more fries.)

LILLY: (Sings.) You are my sunshine. My only sunshine.

LILLY/MOM: (Sing.) You make me happy. When skies are gray. (DAD snags a few more fries from the others.)

LILLY/MOM/DAD: (Sing.) You’ll never know—

DAD: Tomato—

LILLY/MOM/DAD: (Sing.) How much I love you…

ALL: (Sing.) Please don’t take my—

DAD: Tomato.

FRANKLIN: Sunshine.

ALL: (Sing.) Away… (DAD snags more fries, and they sit contentedly as the LIGHTS slowly FADE to BLACK.)

“Restaurant Lingo”

LIGHTS UP on a family restaurant. HUSBAND, WIFE, DAUGHTER, and SON sit at a table, CENTER, holding menus. A COOK is working UPSTAGE, barely visible. WAITRESS approaches, carrying a pen and pad.

WAITRESS: Hi, is everyone ready to order?
HUSBAND: Yes, I’ll have Harry’s Breakfast Combination. Blueberry syrup with the French toast, no honey in the Greek yogurt, and eggs over easy.

WAITRESS: (Scribbles quickly on pad.) Gotcha. (Calls to COOK.) I need three orthopedists from Belarus parasailing over the Rockies carrying a rusty kitchen sink!

COOK: Coming up!

WAITRESS: (To SON.) And for you, big guy?

HUSBAND: Um, pardon. I actually think you misheard me. All I wanted was the breakfast combo—no honey, blueberry, over easy.

WAITRESS: I heard you just fine. Although the plain Greek yogurt can be a little bland, and it is morning happy hour, so you can add gluten-free granola for no extra cost. Would you like to?

HUSBAND: Um… yeah, actually. That sounds nice.

WAITRESS: (Makes note on pad and calls to COOK.) Make sure one of them has a handlebar mustache!

COOK: One step ahead of you! You said Slovenia?

WAITRESS: No, Belarus!

COOK: Belarus, coming at you!

WAITRESS: (To FAMILY.) Sorry about that. The cooks here want their egg instructions very specific. Anyways—

HUSBAND: Wait a second… what?

WAITRESS: Did you need to change your order, sir?

HUSBAND: No. It’s just… how did the cook get “eggs over easy” from what you said?

WAITRESS: Oh, that? It’s just restaurant lingo.

WIFE: Restaurant lingo?

WAITRESS: Yeah. Like nicknames for our orders. Forty hours a week on your feet shouting complex requests like this can get exhausting, so sometimes we like to shrink them down. For example, whole-wheat Belgian waffles with hazelnut spread and a strawberry passionfruit smoothie can be a mouthful so instead we say—

COOK: (Calls out.) Two centaurs in a stretch limo!

WAITRESS: Exactly.

WIFE: Oh. That makes sense.

HUSBAND: Why don’t you just number them?

WAITRESS: That’s for cheap fast food franchises. We’re a cut above. (To SON.) All right, what can I get you?

SON: Two pancakes with syrup, please.
WAITRESS: (Makes quick note of this on pad.) All yours, champ! (To COOK.) I need three bronze trophies sinking into the Caspian Sea at four p.m. on an autumn afternoon. (To MOM.) What about you? What can I—

HUSBAND: Okay, but wait.

WAITRESS: What is it, sir?

HUSBAND: You said this lingo made things easier.

WAITRESS: Right.

HUSBAND: How did what you just said shorten his order? He asked for pancakes with syrup, not the answer to the square root of pi.

COOK: (Calls to WAITRESS.) Did that guy just say he wanted turkey bacon, too?

WAITRESS: (Calls back.) No! He was being facetious. (To HUSBAND.) Look, I don’t write the jargon. It’s existed here for years. It’s just easier to say for us.

HUSBAND: Right, but you’re actually making these orders longer and more complex than they need—

COOK: Is that guy ordering breakfast or asking for stock shares? Come on!

WIFE: Sweetie, it’s not worth the fight.

HUSBAND: Fine.

WIFE: I’ll have the yogurt parfait with a decaf latte.

WAITRESS: (Jots this down and calls to COOK.) A porcelain-crusted mirror has just shattered and there’s shards in your leg. It hasn’t hit the femoral vein, but it’s going to require major surgery. The doctor used to play running back for Boise State back when it was still Division Two, and he likes the Raiders.

COOK: Do I have insurance?

WAITRESS: (To WIFE.) Cream?

WIFE: No, thank you.

WAITRESS: (Back to COOK.) Out of pocket! (To DAUGHTER.) And for you?

HUSBAND: That… that… (Counts in his head.) …that was fifty-six more syllables than her order! Why did you need fifty-six more syllables?

WAITRESS: You counted?

HUSBAND: I did. (WAITRESS snickers.) What’s so funny?

WAITRESS: I don’t know. It just seems like a waste of time.

HUSBAND: You’re one to talk!

WIFE: Honey, calm down.

HUSBAND: I will not calm down! This is ridiculous and inconvenient!
WAITRESS: (To WIFE.) Is he like this at home?
WIFE: More than a mouse with a dairy-free egg muffin breakfast sandwich.
HUSBAND: Wait... I’m what?
WAITRESS: Same here with my guy. They never listen! They keep hanging yarn on the monkeys when all we really want—
WAITRESS/WIFE: Is for them to water the ficus and make sure the Tibetan singing bowl doesn’t crack!
WIFE: Exactly!
HUSBAND: I’m so confused.
WIFE: (Angry.) Of course you are.
WAITRESS: That’s what they all say!
HUSBAND: What who all say? Men? Is this some kind of female secret language?
DAUGHTER: (Growing embarrassed.) Dad, what’s wrong with you?
WIFE: There’s no need to be sexist.
HUSBAND: I’m not! I just want to understand!
DAUGHTER: Ugh. And now you’re raising your voice!
WIFE: You tell him, sweetie!
WAITRESS: Preach! (To DAUGHTER.) You’re getting to that age. Do you have any guys in your life like this?
DAUGHTER: Eww, yeah. When my date for winter formal, Brandon, came over and my dad took pictures, Brandon told me the lipstick on the elephant could barely even fit into the leather satchel.
WIFE: (Along with WAITRESS, looks horrified.) And your father didn’t say anything to him? (To HUSBAND.) You didn’t say anything to him? Do you understand what example you’re setting for your children by not saying anything about that?!
HUSBAND: I don’t understand what that is! Or what this is!
WIFE: Apologize to your daughter!
HUSBAND: Courtney, I’m sorry, truly, for whatever it is I did.
WIFE: Whatever it is you did? You don’t even know what you did wrong? I can’t believe you! (They sit in silence for a moment, angry. HUSBAND looks like a deer in the headlights.)
HUSBAND: (Sotto voce to SON.) Do you understand what’s going on?
SON: (Whispers back.) I think you should just play along.
HUSBAND: (Pauses to consider his options. After gaining composure, gambles with a phrase.) Courtney, I’m sorry... for not letting... the clothes hanger?... play its... jazz solo?... with... the mafia boss? (Gains confidence as DAUGHTER’S expression changes.) And in the
future… I, as your father, will never let… stone golems steal the… autumn leaves in Jackson Hole, Wyoming.

DAUGHTER: (Beat. Truly touched.) Thanks, Dad!

HUSBAND: (Confused by the whole transaction, but recognizing that it’s working, turns to WIFE.) And you, my sun and moon… I will pour cherry Kool-Aid on any… mongoose?... with a 401(k) from now until the... thirsty spring solstice of the eternal pyramid scheme.

WAITRESS/DAUGHTER: Aww!

WIFE: (Kisses HUSBAND, grateful.) Thank you. That’s all I needed to hear.

SON: Nice job, Dad! (Sotto voce.) What’d you say? (HUSBAND shrugs.)

WAITRESS: Well, okay then, I’ll get those orders out as soon as I can. (Briskly turns away and starts toward COOK.)

DAUGHTER: Oh, real quick!

WAITRESS: (Stops and turns back to the table.) Oh, yeah, I didn’t get your order yet. I’m so sorry!

DAUGHTER: No worries, I’ll just have what my mom’s having.

WAITRESS: (Makes a note as she calls out.) Now there’s a shard in the other leg!

DAUGHTER: Can I also get an alternative scenario to the 1713 European Treaty of Utrecht when Hapsburg King Charles II doesn’t fail, and in this universe can he, after victory, give up sovereignty to become a belly dancer in one of the former Asian dynasties?

WAITRESS: Of course! (Calls to COOK.) One water! (BLACKOUT.)

“Salad Days”

Part One

LIGHTS UP on a diner. New high school graduates EVAN, JACKSON, and DALE sit at a table together, still wearing their graduation gowns and mortarboards. They are beaming. They have menus in front of them.

EVAN: Dudes, today is a good day!

JACKSON: A great day!

EVAN: Sweet!

JACKSON: Awesome!

EVAN: Rad!

JACKSON: Amazing!

EVAN: In...? Su...? Ba...? Shoot! I’ve run out of positive adjectives.

JACKSON: No wonder you got such a low SAT score. That’s all the synonyms in your vocab?
Evan: Hey, I bombed the test because I didn’t want to study. And you didn’t do much better, so don’t act so tall and mighty. Your horse is an inch above mine, not a mile.

Dale: High and mighty.

Jackson: What?

Dale: The phrase is “high and mighty,” not tall and mighty.

Evan: Does everyone talk like that at Columbia?

Dale: I don’t know. I’ll get back to you at fall break.

Carla: Why, hello, former Tritons! A hearty congratulations to you boys! I’m Carla, your waitress. Can I start you off with some drinks?

Evan: Just a water for me.

Evan: I’ll have a Coke. The real thing. Diet’s for vegans and cowards.

Jackson: (Gestures to Evan.) I’ll have the same as him. Hey, how’d you figure out the Triton thing?

Carla: I was one of you, just seven years ago. “Rulers of the sea, we’ll always be!” I’ll be right back. (Smiles and Exits.)

Evan: (Stares at Carla as she leaves.) Sad.

Dale: What?

Evan: Could you imagine being like that?

Dale: Like what?

Evan: You know, someone who stays in this tiny town, working a job at the local burger joint until retirement, not striving to do any better in life. That’ll never be me. I’m getting out of here as soon as I can.

Dale: Oh, yeah? Then, why’d you turn down going to Boston College, man?

Jackson: Yeah. Now that’s a city.

Evan: I’d have to do work-study to cover tuition there. And I don’t want to have to work in college. College is a time to party, relax, explore… A job is too much responsibility.

Jackson: Well, at least you’ll have me with you at State!

Evan: Dude, totally! And once we graduate, we’re getting out of here! The world is ours! (Evan and Jackson high-five.)

Carla: (Enters with drinks and passes them out.) Two Cokes and a water. Are we ready for our post-grad meal orders? (Takes out pen and pad.)


Jackson: Same!
DALE: Just a house salad, thanks.

JACKSON: Come on, dude, live a little.


EVAN: Hey, man, even churches have socials. Today is not a day to be good. It's a day to eat, drink, and be merry. (Lifts his Coke.) To life! (They clink glasses in a toast. LIGHTS FADE to BLACK.)

“The Girl Filter”

LIGHTS UP on a café. CLARK and AMY ENTER. They take a moment to look around.

CLARK: Here we are.

AMY: Wow, this place is amazing. (To AUDIENCE.) He asked me on a date. I think he likes me.

HOSTESS: (ENTERS.) Hi, guys. Welcome. Where would you like to sit?

CLARK: Um, where do you want to sit?

AMY: (To CLARK.) Anywhere is fine. (To AUDIENCE.) He cares where I want to sit. I think he likes me.

HOSTESS: How's this table right here? (Seats them.) Gloria will be your server tonight. She'll be right with you. And I apologize, but we're having a little trouble with the acoustics in here.

CLARK: I'm sorry, I didn't hear that.

AMY: (To AUDIENCE.) He made a joke. He's trying to be funny. I think he likes me.

HOSTESS: We just had a new sound system put in, and they're still working out the bugs.

CLARK: What kind of bugs?

HOSTESS: There's a problem with the filter. What boys say and what girls hear are sometimes two different things. I'll send Gloria right over.

CLARK: I hope this restaurant is okay. You come here a lot already.

AMY: Okay? Are you kidding? This is my favorite!

CLARK: I know.

AMY: (To AUDIENCE.) He knows it's my favorite. I think he likes me. (Beat.) Wait... how did he know? Has he been stalking me? (To CLARK.) How did you know it was my favorite?

CLARK: I asked Veronica. She said you come here all the time.

AMY: (To AUDIENCE.) He asked my best friend. I think he likes me. But why was he talking to Veronica? Does he want to ask Veronica out?
CLARK:  I wanted this date to go perfect. I've wanted to ask you out for months. I guess I was just nervous.

AMY:  (To AUDIENCE.) He wanted to ask me out for, like, months. He must really, really like me! Wait. Why was he nervous to ask me out? (To CLARK.) Why were you nervous? Am I intimidating or something?

CLARK:  No, not at all.

AMY:  (To AUDIENCE.) He doesn’t find me intimidating? What’s up with that? (To CLARK.) You think I’m weak? You think I’m some kind of pushover?

CLARK:  No, not at all.

AMY:  Oh, so what, some kind of harpy, then?

CLARK:  (Jolts as though he’s just received a phone notification.) Just a sec, let me check this text. (Pulls out his phone.)

AMY:  (To AUDIENCE.) He’s looking at his texts? Who’d be texting him now? Unless it’s his buddies, checking up on how the date’s going. He must really… But look at his face. He’s not smiling. Why is he so serious? Am I not fun? Did he just say I’m not fun? Maybe it’s not his friends. Maybe it’s his ex-girlfriend. They broke up, like, three months ago. Maybe that’s the three-month thing where he was trying to work it out with her and couldn’t and moved on to his second choice. Well, nobody calls me “second choice.” What if I’m not second choice? What if he only went out with me to make her jealous? Then I’m just a pawn. A tool. (CLARK laughs lightly and sends a text.) He’s laughing now? It’s a secret joke? I’m just some sort of secret joke? I don’t have to sit here and listen to this! Forget it, I never liked him that much anyway. (Gets up and storms OFF.)

CLARK:  (Still stares at his phone.) Hey, my sister just had her baby. Want to see some pictures? (Looks up and realizes she’s gone.) Hello? Amy?

HOSTESS:  (ENTERS.) Okay, we finally got the sound system fixed.

CLARK:  I’m sorry, did you say something? (BLACKOUT.)

“Life”

LIGHTS UP on a nice restaurant. STEVE and JANET sit at the table, looking around in awe.

STEVE:  Wow, this place is even nicer than everyone said.

JANET:  I can’t believe you got a reservation here.

STEVE:  I know.

JANET:  It’s, like, a six-month waiting list.
STEVE: I planned ahead.
JANET: I heard they have, like, everything here. Thank you for this. I love you so much for bringing me here.
STEVE: This place is going to change everything.
JANET: Everything?
STEVE: Everything.
KAREN: (ENTERS carrying two giant menus with “Life” in big, legible letters on the front. She’s all smiles.) Hi. Welcome to Life.
STEVE: (Excited.) Life.
JANET: (More excited.) Life!
KAREN: I’m Karen, I’ll be taking care of you tonight.
STEVE: Hi, Karen.
KAREN: Have you two been here before?
JANET: No, this is our first time.
STEVE: Been waiting for over six months.
KAREN: I know, it’s crazy! Seems everybody wants to come here. (Hands them the menus.) Why don’t you take a moment to look at our menus, and I’ll answer any questions you might have.
JANET: (Eagerly flips through menu.) Oh, I told you they have everything.
STEVE: I don’t even know where to start.
KAREN: Yes, it can be a little overwhelming at first. We like to suggest you start small. Something like Seasonal Good Health or A Good Night’s Rest. You know, just as an appetizer.
JANET: (Points to the menu.) Steve, look! They have Purity and Innocence.
STEVE: Oh, you totally have to have Purity and Innocence.
JANET: I haven’t had that in, like, forever. Ooh, and it’s not too expensive.
STEVE: Money is no object tonight.
JANET: I love you. (To KAREN.) I’ll start with the Purity and Innocence.
KAREN: I’m sorry. That’s part of our children’s menu. (Points to the menu.) You have to be under seven years old to order that.
JANET: Aww. Really?
KAREN: I’m afraid so. The chef says it just doesn’t keep.
JANET: Well, I don’t know what I want then. Steve, you go ahead.
STEVE: (Points to the menu.) Janet, look! They have Ambition.
JANET: Ooh, I’d like that. One order of Ambition, please.
KAREN: Good choice.
JANET: But I’d like to change the sides. Instead of Selfishness and Cynicism, can I get Altruism and Optimism?
KAREN: Sorry. We have a strict “no substitutes” policy.
JANET: Really?
KAREN: Yeah, do you still want it?
JANET: Gee, I’m not sure now.
STEVE: This is tougher than I thought.
JANET: I know, right?
KAREN: Do you need some time? I can come back. Or I can tell you about our special.
JANET: Ooh, the special, please.
KAREN: Well, you came on a good night. We don’t present this very often. It’s our chef’s signature dish.
STEVE: Sounds exciting.
KAREN: Yes. We’re very proud of it. It’s A Life Without Fear.
JANET: No way.
STEVE: Seriously? A Life Without Fear?
KAREN: And it’s exactly what it sounds like. You get to experience zero fear from this day forward.
STEVE: (Looks to JANET to confirm. To KAREN.) Two of those, please.
KAREN: Well, before you order, I have to tell you it’s our most expensive dish.
STEVE: Well, you only live once, right? We’ll splurge. Just put it on my credit card.
KAREN: Oh, gosh, I’m sorry. I should’ve explained. This is our special. You can’t pay for that with cash or credit. We require another form of payment.
JANET: Like what?
KAREN: This dish requires all of your compassion and half of your love.
JANET: What?!
JANET: Half our love?
STEVE: Our love for each other? Or can it just be like, “my love for matching ties and socks”?
KAREN: All love, I’m afraid.
JANET: I don’t know, Steve. We’ve been best friends since we were children. I don’t want to lose any of that.
STEVE: Me neither. Think we’ll pass.
JANET: (Pores over the menu.) Now I don’t know what to get.
STEVE: Me either. (Continues looking.) Let’s see... Let’s see... Ooh. Contentment? They have Contentment.
JANET: Where do you see that?
STEVE: It’s on the dessert menu.
KAREN: You can have it as a main dish if you’d like.
JANET: Really?
KAREN: Lots of people do. But can I tell you a secret? (Looks around, then leans in confidentially.) I shouldn’t tell you this, but you can make that at home.
JANET: How do you make it?
KAREN: You go home, open the cupboard and take out whatever you have. Throw it in a pot over medium heat for about an hour, and then just be grateful for what you have.
JANET: That sounds deceptively easy.
KAREN: I know. That’s why most people don’t even try it at home.
STEVE: Well, we will.
JANET: We’ll try that tonight.
KAREN: Excellent.
STEVE: Thank you for your help.
KAREN: Sure. So, have you made up your minds?
JANET: (Shares a look and a nod with STEVE.) I think I’ll just have a double cheeseburger and fries.
KAREN: Excellent choice. (BLACKOUT.)

“Salad Days”
Part Two

LIGHTS UP on the “Salad Days” diner. EVAN, DALE, and JACKSON sit in the same places at the same table, now four years older. JACKSON and EVAN have glasses of Coke and finished plates in front of them. DALE chomps contently on a half-eaten salad. He has a glass of water.

JACKSON: Dale, I think I speak for both of us when I say I don’t know how you do it.
EVAN: Amen.
DALE: Do what?

JACKSON: Eat that.
DALE: This? Usually with my fork. Although there was this one time at the Chinese restaurant—
EVAN: That’s not what I mean! Why the heck would you want a salad right now? We’re celebrating finishing college and you getting your first real job! You’re moving up in life! Don’t you want something that rightfully honors that?
1 DALE: I think goat cheese and romaine do it justice.
EVAN: Liar! Those Ivy League health nuts infected your brain these past four years. Got you hooked on expensive diet foods.
DALE: This was my choice. Columbia had nothing to do with it.

5 JACKSON: Pssh! Likely story.
EVAN: But, I mean, come on! Do you think the people at that fancy new job you just got are going to like the guy who brings his own vegetables for lunch?
DALE: I don’t think they’ll find it relevant. I think they’ll like me for me.

10 JACKSON: Keep that spirit up. Construction guys give you crap just for eating fruit. They say guys in their twenties shouldn’t worry about their diet.
EVAN: And they’re right. My metabolism is at its peak. Why would I make it step down from the top of the hill before it needs to?

15 DALE: So why’d you go into that career anyway?
EVAN: Construction?
DALE: No, undercover birthday clowning. Yes, of course, construction. Last time I was here you said it was boring, and only part-time. You’ve both got degrees in economics now. Didn’t you want your first jobs to be something you could rise up the ranks with? And what about moving to Boston?
EVAN: Eh, we just finished undergrad. There will always be time for that. Construction’s easy money. When it stops being easy, I’ll look for something else.

20 DALE: It’s here, though. Don’t you want to move away?
EVAN: Eventually. No real reason to right now. Especially while my parents are paying my rent.
JACKSON: (Nods.) Couldn’t have said it better myself.
CARLA: (ENTERS.) How are we doing over here?
EVAN: Man, those triple cheeseburgers were great! Can we get two chili fries now, please?
CARLA: You boys came with quite an appetite today!
JACKSON: Some of us did.
EVAN: Go big or go home!

30 JACKSON: And refills on the Coke, please.
CARLA: (To DALE.) Do you want anything else?
DALE: Nah, I’m good with my salad.
EVAN: (Teases.) You are such a wuss. (Lifts his glass.) Hey, to life! (They clink glasses in a toast. BLACKOUT.)
“Food For Thought”

LIGHTS UP on a nice restaurant. VICTOR and FIONA sit across from each other at a table over a barely eaten piece of chocolate cake. They’re loving each other’s presence, but both seem lost in thought.

VICTOR: I can’t believe it. Only five days left.

FIONA: I know, it’s coming so quickly. Less than a week. The next time you watch Throne of Shadows will be without me. And vice versa.

VICTOR: You’re going to watch Throne of Shadows without me?!

FIONA: That’s what you’re disappointed by? I’m moving thousands of miles away, and your trauma is that I’m not going to be next to you on the couch when Kelvin Steel dies?

VICTOR: Kelvin Steel dies?!

FIONA: Shoot! I forgot you haven’t read the books.

VICTOR: (Awkward pause.) I just wish I could come with you.

FIONA: (After sitting in silence for a moment, takes a visibly warm beat.) Why don’t you? I’ll book the plane ticket.

VICTOR: Fiona!

FIONA: I’m serious. Do it! The division I’m transferring to has plenty of openings. You have connections through me. You’d be guaranteed at least an entry- to mid-level spot. Best of all, you’d be with me. And, honestly, I’m not sure that’s something I’ll be able to live without.

VICTOR: Me either. You know I love you. (Beat.) It’s just—

FIONA: I know.

VICTOR: I—

FIONA: I know. (The two share a glance, trying to get a read. Finally.) I don’t want to create a life without you if I don’t have to. Some food for thought is all.

VICTOR: (Checks her vibrating phone.) I gotta go. I have that meeting with the movers. You’ll think about it?

FIONA: I’ll think about it.

(The two kiss and FIONA EXITS. As she does, CONCRETE, CREATIVE, CRITICAL, EMOTIONAL, FORE, INQUISITIVE, and TRIVIAL ENTER, wearing labeled T-shirts. These are literally VICTOR’S THOUGHTS, and they gather around VICTOR.)

EMOTIONAL: Oh, Victor, baby! How you feeling?

INQUISITIVE: Why the long face? Did you miss us? How was the salmon?

CRITICAL: It looked drier than British comedy.

CREATIVE: He should have tried it with the balsamic. That would have added flavor.

VICTOR: (Shocked.) Who are—

ROBBER: What?!

(Panics, looks around, and grabs URSULA from where she was sitting. URSULA screams. Holds her like a human shield.)

Stay away from me, copper, or the lady gets hurt!

URSULA: Ahhh!

Hobben globben istu fornot.

ROBBER: What did she say?

URSULA: Ribbo tolick verra mika florn!

ROBBER: What is she talking about?

WAITPERSON: (To FELICITY.) Please, Mrs. Dufrane. You've got to help.

FELICITY: Me?

AMBROSE: Her?

WAITPERSON: (Indicates URSULA.) That's the ambassador to Korpelistan.

FELICITY: What?

WAITPERSON: You speak fluent Korpelistanese.

FELICITY: I do? Oh. Right, that's me. Um, I'm a little rusty. Doesn't she have a translator?

WAITPERSON: What do we need a translator for? We have you!

(Shoves FELICITY into the situation.)

FELICITY: Um, hi.

URSULA: Ahhh!

ROBBER: What did she say?

FELICITY: She said, "Hiii!"

URSULA: Diddum silter yabban ve.

ROBBER: What did she say?

FELICITY: Uh, she said, "Try the croutons, they're amazing!"

AMBROSE: Listen, if you let the ambassador go, I can give you sixteen dollars, a punch card for a free yogurt… and a Bed Bath & Beyond coupon.

ROBBER: (Notices URSULA’S earrings.) These are nice earrings. Tell her to take them off and give them to me.

FELICITY: Um—

ROBBER: Tell her!

FELICITY: (Makes up gibberish.) Urgin polive stata nonga.

URSULA: Zeg?

FELICITY: Stata nonga.

URSULA: Zeg?!

AMBROSE/FELICITY: Stata nonga!

(URSULA takes off her shoe.)

ROBBER: Not the shoe. The earrings!
FORE: —we? We’re your thoughts.

VICTOR: My thoughts?

CONCRETE: Yes, the actual cognitive processes of your brain.

CRITICAL: (Looks harshly at EMOTIONAL.) Well, most of us are.

FORE: We were called upon just a moment ago. We’re here to help you navigate this tough decision with Fiona. Plus, we could use the promised free meal.

VICTOR: Free meal? I never—

FORE: —promised us a free meal? Fiona did.

INQUISITIVE: Food for thought was mentioned, was it not?

VICTOR: Oh, um, yeah, I guess Fiona said that. She meant her idea was something for me to think about. It was a metaphor.

TRIVIAL: Actually, it was an idiom. See, a metaphor requires a comparison—

CRITICAL: Shut up! No one wants to listen to you. Your voice is scratchy, and you smell weird.

VICTOR: Pardon me. What—

FORE: —is it we do? Exactly what any person’s thoughts do. We banter back and forth with each other to help you make all life’s toughest choices. We try to keep away the devil’s advocates.

CONCRETE: We cover all the important stuff. Moving out to Los Angeles to be with your long-term girlfriend is potentially life-changing. So trust me, you’re going to want all of us here to hash that out.

EMOTIONAL: So here we go… (To other THOUGHTS, ignoring VICTOR.) Remember a few months ago when Victor promised to build a life with Fiona? Not moving with her would be a betrayal!

CONCRETE: Yes, but the likelihood of him getting a job in L.A. immediately is incredibly slim. And it’s an expensive city to live in.

TRIVIAL: Don’t get so caught up in the job stuff. It’s impermanent.

According to recent U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data, retirement fund values have decreased by over twelve percent in just the past decade.

FORE: (To TRIVIAL.) But funds and unemployment are going to fluctuate heavily between now and the time Victor retires.

EMOTIONAL: On the other hand, Victor can’t leave his friends here. They love him!

VICTOR: Aww, they do?

CRITICAL: Shh! Nobody likes someone who speaks out of turn.
PRODUCTION NOTES

PROPERTIES ONSTAGE

The Tomato
   Table, four chairs, four fast food soft drink cups.

Restaurant Lingo
   Table, four chairs, four menus.

Salad Days, Part One
   Table, three chairs, three menus.

The Girl Filter
   Table, tablecloth, two chairs.

Life
   Table, tablecloth, two chairs.

Salad Days, Part Two
   Table, three chairs, two half-full glasses of Coke, glass of water, two empty plates, plate of half-eaten salad, silverware.

Food for Thought
   Table, tablecloth, two chairs, plate with a barely eaten piece of chocolate cake, two forks, two cloth napkins.

A More Perfect Union
   Two tables, four chairs, four water glasses, four napkins.

No Reservations
   At least five tables, tablecloths, ten or more chairs.

Salad Days, Part Three
   Table, three chairs, two half-full glasses of Coke, glass of water.

Memory Lane
   Table, two chairs.

The Price You Pay
   Table, four or more chairs.

Decision Day
   Two tables, two chairs, two drink glasses, menu.

Salad Days, Part Four
   Table, three chairs, one glass of Coke, one glass of water.

Life Is Like a Double Cheeseburger
   Table, two chairs.
PROPERTIES BROUGHT ON

The Tomato
   Tray with four burgers and three fries (DAD)

Restaurant Lingo
   Pen, pad (WAITRESS)

Salad Days Part One
   Menus (HUSBAND, WIFE, DAUGHTER, SON)
   Pen, pad, drink glasses (CARLA)

The Girl Filter
   Phone (CLARK)

Life
   Large menus with “Life” written prominently on the front (KAREN)

Food for Thought
   Phones (VICTOR, FIONA)
   Briefcase (CONSULTANT)

A More Perfect Union
   Pen, pad (SERVER)
   Phones (BOY, GIRL)

No Reservations
   Two glasses of water (WAITPERSON)
   Two menus (HOST)
   Bag, weapon (ROBBER)
   Wallets, jewelry, phones, watches (DINERS)

Salad Days Part Three
   Pen, pad (CARLA)

Memory Lane
   Tray with burger, fries and drink, phone, envelope full of documents,
      pen (FRANKLIN)

Decision Day
   Phone (RIVER)

Sandwich on a plate (RESTAURANT OWNER)

Salad Days Part Four
   Pen, pad (CARLA)
COSTUMES

Characters wear modern attire appropriate for their situation, whether a formal night out or a casual dinner with the family. Some specific needs are as follows:

EVAN, JACKSON, and DALE wear mortar boards and graduation robes in “Salad Days, Part One.” In Part Three, they wear tuxedos. The trio, as well as CARLA, should appear to have aged some through the progression of scenes.

THOUGHTS in “Food for Thought” all wear T-shirts that clearly label which thought they represent. CONSULTANT wears a business suit. URSULA in “No Reservations” wears jewel-studded earrings.

FLEXIBLE CASTING and CAST SIZE

Several characters can be played by either male or female actors, including COOK in “Restaurant Lingo,” all THOUGHTS in “Food for Thought,” SERVER in “A More Perfect Union,” HOST and WAITPERSON in “No Reservations,” and RIVER in “Decision Day.”

With extensive doubling, this show can be done with as few as fourteen actors (seven males, seven females), or as many as fifty-one if all speaking parts are played individually. Extras diners can be added as desired to any scene.
We hope you’ve enjoyed this script sample.

We encourage you to read the entire script before making your final decision.

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