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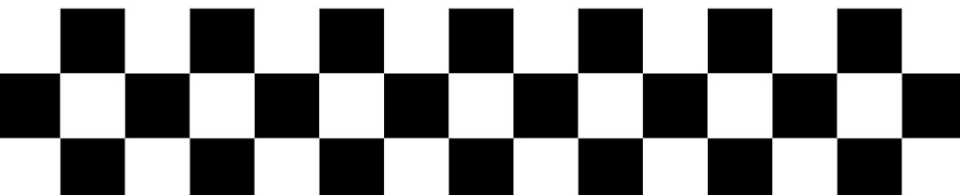
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Dramatic Publishing



Short Order Stories

Comedy/Drama by Renee Calarco



**Winner of the Charles MacArthur
Award for Outstanding New Play**

Short Order Stories

Comedy/Drama. By Renee Calarco. *Cast: 4m., 3w.* It's late August 2001, and Larry's Diner is packed with jangly parents and their poker-faced kids who are making their annual drives to the colleges and universities in southern New York state. Lou and Fran Petrillo, newcomers to this ritual, are smoothing the way for their daughter, Jenn, as best they can—not that Jenn thinks she needs any help. She's desperate to leave her blue-collar roots back in Buffalo and start living a life that neither of her parents can imagine. Also at Larry's are Chuck Feldman and his youngest son, Evan, the Petrillos' wealthy neighbors. With his cellphone seemingly plastered to his ear, Chuck struggles to run his business without further alienating his son—the distant Evan—who sits directly across from him. Through it all, waitress Paula and short-order cook, Peach, serve and clean up after the people who cycle through the diner knowing that, with each passing year, their ability to leave their small New York town dwindles. As Jenn and Evan pick their way through an awkward and thorny goodbye, Fran and Chuck navigate uneasy emotional waters of their own. But it's not until May 2002 when Lou and Fran discover how deeply Jenn's freshman year at college has affected their lives, their marriage and their world. *Short Order Stories* is a time-shifting comic drama—a meditation on familial obligation, social class, friendship and love. *Flexible staging. Approximate running time: 2 hours. Code: S2A.*

Cover Design: John Sergel.

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Short Order Stories

A play in two acts by
RENEE CALARCO

Please Note: This excerpt contains
strong language.



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Short Order Stories received its world premiere on Sept. 22, 2006, at Charter Theatre in Washington, D.C.

Director Joe Calarco
Artistic Director Keith Bridges
Associate Artistic Director Chris Stezin
Dramaturg Richard Washer
Stage Manager Laura Quenzel
Set Design Victor Stezin and Michael Skinner
Lighting Design Emily Lagerquist
Sound Design Keith Bridges
Costume and Props Design Cat Martin.

CAST:

Lou Andy Brownstein
Fran Lee Mikeska Gardner
Jenn Anne Veal
Chuck Timmy Ray James
Evan Michael Grew
Paula Kerrie Seymour
Peach Chris Stezin

There's no vocabulary
For love within a family, love that's lived in
But not looked at, love within the light of which
All else is seen, the love within which
All other love finds speech
This love is silent.

—T.S. Eliot, *The Elder Statesman*

SETTINGS

Act I

Scene 1: Dining room of Larry's Diner, Horseheads, New York, late August, 2001

Scene 2: Fran's car, a few minutes later

Scene 3: Dining room, a few minutes earlier

Act II

Scene 1: Kitchen of Larry's Diner, late August, 2001

Scene 2: Dining room, eight months later, May 2002

PRODUCTION NOTE

The set should be minimalist and easily movable. Fran's car can be represented by two booth seats.

Short Order Stories

CHARACTERS

LOU PETRILLO (m): early to mid-40s. Devoted to, proud of and ultimately puzzled by his family. Bound to his wife; bound up by words.

FRAN PETRILLO (w): early to mid-40s. In love with the drama and imagined misery of her life. The mama bird who kicks her offspring out of the nest with caveats.

PAULA (w): early 30s. Waits on tables as she waits for more. Worn and beautiful.

JENN PETRILLO (w): 17. Lou and Fran's daughter. A reluctant optimist. Raging and compassionate.

PEACH (m): early 30s. Short order cook/busboy. In love with life. Smart and open.

EVAN FELDMAN (m): 17. Awkward and knows it. Inquisitive, solicitous, passionate.

CHUCK FELDMAN (m): 50. Evan's father. A self-made man who's not exactly sure how he made it. Flirtatious, charming, successful, unhappy.

For Richard.

SCENE 2

(A few minutes later. The set has shifted. LOU and FRAN sit at their table, now UL. CHUCK and EVAN sit in their booth, now UR. The doorway to the diner is now DC; below that is FRAN's car.)

LOU. Goddammit, Fran! Lay off Cornell! Maybe if we hadn't blown half our savings on doctors and therapists and that goddamn anorexia hospital, she'd be going to Cornell, too!

(JENN grabs her bag and storms out the door.)

JENN. Fuck!

(She climbs into the front seat of the car and turns on the radio. The pre-set station plays a 1970s soft rock song. JENN turns the dial until she finds a song she likes. She cranks up the volume to a deafening level. She digs in her purse for a cigarette, lights it and then exhales with relief. She climbs into the back seat. She screams.

EVAN appears behind the car, carrying a book. He approaches tentatively, sees her screaming, then retreats.

JENN abruptly climbs back into the front seat, puts out her cigarette, turns off the radio and then returns to the back seat. A beat.

Gathering his courage one last time, EVAN walks back up to JENN's side of the car. JENN suddenly flings open the car door and violently bumps into EVAN.)

EVAN. Ow!

JENN. Evan! Shit. Oh, shit. Are you OK?

EVAN. Jesus, Jenn. Are you trying to kill me?

JENN. It was an accident. I didn't mean it.

EVAN. Right.

(There's an awkward pause.)

JENN. So you can just go and tell them I'm OK.

EVAN. What?

JENN. My fucking parents, all right? You can tell them I'm OK.

EVAN. Jenn—

JENN. I know my mother sent you out here to spy on me—

EVAN. I'm not spying on you!

JENN. Jesus! (*She gets into the driver's seat.*) Get in.

(*EVAN hesitates.*)

JENN (*cont'd*). Get in! Christ, I'm not gonna kidnap you. Sit down and rest your leg.

(*EVAN slowly gets into the back seat.*)

JENN (*cont'd*). OK? (*Under her breath.*) Pussy.

EVAN. I heard that.

JENN. Good. Because I didn't hit you that hard.

EVAN. Jenn, you know sometimes you can be really unpleasant.

JENN. Oooh. Unpleasant.

EVAN. And you swear too much.

JENN. So?

EVAN. Well, it makes me uncomfortable.

JENN. You're right—you're not spying on me for my mother. You *are* my mother.

(*A beat. EVAN awkwardly climbs into the front seat.*)

EVAN. Why were you screaming?

JENN. None of your business, spy boy. (*She climbs into the back seat.*)

EVAN. Look. I just wanted to make sure that you're OK. You know? Because friends do that. They make sure of things.

JENN. Well, I'm just fine.

(*A beat. EVAN turns on the radio. Alternative rock plays from the college station that JENN had just tuned to.*)

JENN (*cont'd*). This sucks.

EVAN. What? (*He turns off the radio.*)

JENN. This. This place.

EVAN. I dunno. I think Horseheads is lovely this time of year. Don't you agree?

JENN (*punching him lightly*). Shut up.

EVAN (*punching her back*). You shut up.

JENN. Horseheads. What is that? Horse. Heads. It's like they ran out of names. Buffalo, Jamestown, Corning, Horseheads.

So ... we're what? Half an hour outside of Ithaca?

EVAN. Something like that. (*He climbs into the back seat.*) I wish ...

JENN. What?

EVAN. Nothing. (*He climbs into the front seat.*) So if we're not far from Ithaca, Binghamton's pretty close, then.

JENN. Fuck you.

EVAN. Jesus Christ, Jenn. What the hell is your problem?

JENN. Nothing.

EVAN. OK.

JENN. My father. He said it's my fault I'm not going to Cornell because he's broke.

EVAN. And that's your fault because ... ? (*Realizing.*) Oh. Yeah.

JENN. Right. My father. Motherfucker.

EVAN (*lamely attempting a joke*). Well, technically he is. I mean ... him and your mom ...

JENN. Shut up. That's disgusting.

EVAN. You brought it up. You said the word.

JENN. What word?

EVAN. You know ...

JENN (*climbs into the front seat*). No. What?

EVAN. Jenn.

JENN. You can't say it, can you? Motherfucker. Go on. Say it.

EVAN. No.

JENN. Motherfucker.

EVAN. No.

JENN. Pussy. *(She climbs into the back seat.)*

EVAN. Well. Binghamton's a really good school.

JENN. Christ. Here it is again.

EVAN. But it is.

JENN. Yeah. But you're not going there, are you, Cornell boy?

EVAN. No.

JENN. Right. So go take your goddamn Ivy League ass someplace where people actually give a shit.

(JENN throws EVAN's book out the car window onto the pavement.)

EVAN. Look, I didn't mean ...

JENN. Because I don't. I don't give a shit where you go.

EVAN. Yes you do.

JENN. Fuck. You. *(She bolts out of the car and heads back towards the diner.)*

EVAN. Jesus. I don't even know why I bother to be your friend.

(JENN storms back to the car to retrieve her bag as EVAN steps out of the car. JENN accidentally smacks into EVAN again.)

EVAN. Ow! Shit, Jenn. You really hurt my leg.

(EVAN gets into the back seat and props up his leg. JENN gets into the front seat.)

JENN. I'm sorry!

Stay here. I think we've got an ice pack in the cooler.

(JENN pulls out a small cooler from under the front passenger seat, removes an ice pack and places it on EVAN's leg. EVAN gazes at her for a long moment while she holds the ice pack on his leg. JENN removes her hand.)

JENN (*cont'd*). My father thinks I'm a lesbian. I told him I'm majoring in women's studies. It's hilarious.

EVAN. I thought you were thinking of art history.

JENN. I am. But women's studies is scarier for him.

EVAN. So ... are you?

JENN. Am I what?

EVAN. A lesbian.

JENN. Jesus, Evan. No!

EVAN. Because a lot of people are wondering.

JENN. What?

EVAN. I mean, you never go out with anyone.

JENN. So?

EVAN. Forget it.

JENN. Why do you care, anyway?

EVAN. Never mind.

JENN. Because I don't care.

EVAN. Well, maybe you should.

JENN. And maybe you should mind your own business. (*She turns on the radio and listens for a bit. She turns off the radio.*) So, who?

EVAN. What?

JENN. Who thinks I'm a lesbian?

EVAN. Jenn—

JENN. You just said “a lot of people are wondering.” So who? Who are these throngs of people obsessed with my sex life?

EVAN. I don't know.

JENN. Bullshit.

EVAN (*abruptly*). I broke up with Marta.

JENN. What? When?

EVAN. Two months ago.

JENN. You never told me.

EVAN. I know.

JENN. Why?

EVAN. Because I didn't want to bother you.

JENN. No, shithead. I mean, why did you break up with her.

EVAN. Oh. Um. Things.

JENN. Well. That's very helpful. Yes it is. I can see why you didn't want to bother me with that.

EVAN. Marta's going to Michigan. And I'm going to Cornell.

JENN. So.

EVAN. That's why.

JENN. Well, there you go.

EVAN. And she thought we were going out.

JENN. What?

EVAN. Marta. She thought you and I were seeing each other.

JENN. You just said that everyone thinks I'm a lesbian!

EVAN. Yeah. Except Marta.

JENN. And so ... what? She thought I was sleeping with you?

EVAN. Uh.

JENN. And you told her I wasn't, right?

EVAN. Not really.

JENN. Evan!

EVAN. I wanted to break up with her anyway!

JENN. Jesus, you're passive-aggressive.

EVAN. I'm not passive-aggressive.

JENN. Are too.

EVAN. You know, I just came out here to say goodbye, and—

JENN. We already said goodbye. At your graduation party.

EVAN. Yeah, but there were like a million people there and we never really got to talk and—

JENN. And Marta was hanging all over you even though you had *apparently* broken up—

EVAN (*on “even”*). She wasn’t hanging all over me.

JENN. She was practically fucking you in the pool!

EVAN. She was not!

JENN. How drunk were you, anyway? Do you remember *anything*?

EVAN. Just—

JENN. Look. Whatever. OK? It’s your business. So let’s say goodbye and go.

EVAN. OK. So. Good luck.

JENN. Thanks. You too.

EVAN. Thanks.

JENN. I’m sorry about your leg.

EVAN. It’s OK.