

GIFTED

By Natalie Dulka

Characters

BRANDON CAULFIELD: The vaguely egotistical first-born of the Irish Catholic Caulfield family; age 34; a married businessman

ERIN CAULFIELD: The life-of-the-party youngest child of the Caulfield family; age 30; a sometimes employed actress

MEGAN FRANZ: The fickle, forgiving type, sensible goody-two-shoes middle child of the Caulfield family; age 32; a housewife

Prop List

2 cell phone

3 drink glasses

SCENE

Lights up. In the living room of their parents' house sit BRANDON CAULFIELD, ERIN CAULFIELD, and MEGAN FRANZ, their married sister. BRANDON sits in an armchair, fiddling on his phone. ERIN and MEGAN sit on opposite ends of the couch, engaged in conversation.

ERIN

Why couldn't Adam join us for Christmas, Meg? He missed Labor Day and Thanksgiving and now he's missing Christmas? Is it because he hates Brandon? I get it, Brandon's an acquired taste.

BRANDON

Without looking up from his phone.

Hey now.

MEGAN

His work has him traveling again.

ERIN

On Christmas?

MEGAN

He only gets two weeks of vacation time, Erin.

ERIN

So why doesn't he get a job that lets him spend more time with his family?

MEGAN

Adam loves his job.

ERIN

More than he loves his family?

MEGAN

Well, I asked him to quit back when Hannah was born, but he makes a great living at his company and he comes home happy from work. There's really no need for him to quit and move to a company where he hates his job. He's the one bringing home the bacon. He should enjoy himself doing it.

She sighs.

And it's not like I can really complain. He makes enough for me to stay at home with the girls and enough for me to have nice things.

ERIN

So it's nice things at the cost of what? Your independence? An equal marriage? Because it sounds a lot like you've traded your voice for a pair of Louboutins, Meg. It seems a lot like you're a trophy wife sitting on the shelf in Adam's office with no say in what goes on in your household.

MEGAN

I'm not a trophy wife, Erin. I have plenty of say in my marriage.

ERIN

You just said you couldn't complain.

MEGAN

Yeah, I can't. I have nothing to complain about. My life and my marriage are wonderful, thank you very much. I don't mind that he's not here for Christmas because he makes up for it in other ways.

ERIN

Even so, you really need to make him come to the next family gathering. We miss him. And I'm sure Ella and Hannah miss him, too. They can't see him much at home because he's traveling all the time, right? And then he goes and misses Christmas? What kind of father misses his daughters' Christmas? What kind of man--

MEGAN

They see him plenty at home, Erin.

ERIN

Sure they do, Meg. He gets home at what? Nine? Ten at night? And by then they're in bed and you're halfway to the bottom of a bottle of merlot.

MEGAN

Could we just postpone this particular argument to a day when I haven't had a massive fight with my husband and driven five hours up the interstate with two bickering little girls only to be critiqued on my physique and my parenting by Mom? I just really don't have the energy for this right now, Erin.

ERIN

The drive would've been easier had Adam been a proper husband and come with.

MEGAN

I need a drink.

She EXITS and there is a brief and awkward silence before BRANDON puts his phone away and clears his throat.

BRANDON

What the hell was that?

ERIN flips him off.

BRANDON

Sensitive, are we? What's your concern with Adam anyway, E? Why do you care?

ERIN

I don't care. I just think Megan deserves better is all.

BRANDON

So that had nothing to do with your little crush? (Beat) Oh don't look so innocent. You've had a thing for Adam since Megan brought him home from college for Christmas, what, ten years ago?

ERIN

I have no idea what you're talking about.

BRANDON

Bullshit. I see the way you look at him, Erin.

ERIN

In what way do I look at Adam?

BRANDON

Like you've seen him naked.

ERIN

Whatever, Brandon.

BRANDON

Don't even try to brush this off, Erin. I know it's true.

ERIN

You know what's true?

BRANDON

I know you're sleeping with Adam.

ERIN

Brandon! Keep your voice down.

She looks towards where MEGAN exited from.

I'd prefer this not to get out. (Beat) How the fuck did you know anyway?

BRANDON

I happened to see a message when it popped up on your screen that may or may not have had some... incriminating content. I also may have opened your phone and read your texts back and forth with him.

ERIN

You went through my phone? Does privacy mean nothing to you?

BRANDON

You should probably put a passcode on it.

MEGAN ENTERS, drink in hand, and crashes down onto the couch where she had previously been seated. BRANDON and ERIN go silent for an awkward period of time.

MEGAN

Who died?

BRANDON

So, Meg. What was the massive fight with Adam about?

MEGAN

What massive fight?

BRANDON

You said you had a massive fight with Adam before you left to get a drink. What was it about? Is he sleeping around or something?

ERIN kicks his shin.

MEGAN

No, no. He'd never. It was about money. My credit card got turned down when I was picking up some Christmas presents the other day so I went and looked at the bank statements and there's a whole bunch of transactions for, like, hotel rooms and jewelry and fancy restaurants and shit. So I go and ask Adam about it and he tells me "It's not your concern." So I'm like "Not my concern? It's my money!" And you know what that fucker says? He says I don't have money because I don't have a job.

She finishes her drink.

Like raising his children isn't a job. You know, I pour my heart and soul into providing a happy, healthy home for my girls and for Adam and what thanks do I get? Some misogynistic bullshit about how I can't know about our financial situation because I'm just the wife. I'm just the fucking trophy wife. I'm a porcelain doll made for cooking and cleaning and sitting on his goddamn office shelf. God, I need another drink.

She EXITS.

BRANDON

You know, I love Megan but she's just not that bright, is she?

ERIN

This isn't good, Brandon.

BRANDON

I'm curious as to why that golden little nugget of wisdom didn't go through your pretty blonde head when you started sleeping with your brother-in-law. You know, you're not very bright, either, are you? (Beat) You'll be fine, Erin. She's thinks the fight was just about who wears what articles of clothing in their marriage.

ERIN

Could you just stop mentioning affairs to her? You're throwing me under the bus. Try being supportive, see what happens.

BRANDON

But wouldn't it be better for you if Meg thinks- correctly, I might add- that Adam's sleeping around on her? She might ditch him at the next rest stop and then you can have him all to yourself. Really, Erin, I'm just looking out for you.

ERIN

God, you're fucked up.

BRANDON

And you're not?

ERIN

I'm not trying to break up my sister's marriage.

BRANDON

Well, for not trying, you're doing a pretty bang up job.

MEGAN ENTERS with a drink in hand and sits back down with a heavy sigh.

What else happened with the fight, Meg? Any resolution?

MEGAN

So we're talking about money and I ask him why my card got turned down. I've never had that issue. So Adam starts saying he was moving some money around and he emptied the account my card was tied to. Logically, I ask him why he was moving money around and he tells me that he didn't get a holiday bonus and that we might need to settle down on the spending, and then he tells me to "not worry about it" because it's "not a woman's issue." I swear, if I had known he was a misogynist when I met him...

MEGAN finishes her drink, raises her empty glass to her siblings, stands, wobbles, and EXITS.

ERIN

Shit. They're having money problems because of me. All those hotel rooms and restaurants and shopping sprees are for me. I'm a terrible sister.

BRANDON

Um... actually, it's not all your fault.

ERIN

And what, exactly, is that supposed to mean?

BRANDON

My company might have recently taken over Adam's company in a possibly hostile manner a month ago.

ERIN

What?

BRANDON

It may or may not have been my brain child.

ERIN

Holy shit.

BRANDON

Adam may or may not have been laid off along with a large portion of his company.

ERIN

Brandon, you are the worst kind of person. You know that, right?

BRANDON

That's what I hear.

MEGAN ENTERS with another drink in her hand
and sits on the couch.

ERIN

That looks refreshing. I think I'll get myself one.

ERIN EXITS

BRANDON

So how's our friendly neighborhood trophy wife doing?

MEGAN flips him off.

Sensitive, are we? Why do you care what Erin thinks, anyway, Meg? It's not like she has the moral standing to judge you.

MEGAN

What do you mean?

BRANDON

I really shouldn't say anything.

MEGAN

Say anything about what? Come on, Brando! Don't leave me hanging!

BRANDON

Well, I don't know all the gory details but Erin's been sleeping—

ERIN ENTERS with a drink in hand, hearing BRANDON, she rushes to sit down and interrupt him.

ERIN

What are you guys talking about?

BRANDON

Just about that married man you've been sleeping with.

MEGAN

What? You're sleeping with a married man? That's awful! Haven't you thought of how this affects his wife?

ERIN

Don't worry, Meg, I'm sure she's completely unaware.

BRANDON

But, Erin, that particular cat could come slinking out of the bag at any moment.

ERIN finishes her drink.

How long has it been going on, Erin? Eight years? Ten years?

ERIN

Get off your moral high horse, you shark.

BRANDON

Little old me?

ERIN

Yes you. You got Adam fired.

MEGAN

Trying to play catch up with the conversation

What? Adam? My Adam? Fired?

BRANDON

Alright, maybe I did. Maybe I stepped on Adam's Italian leather-clad toes in order to get ahead in the dog-eat-dog world of investments but that's just how it goes.

MEGAN

I'm so confused.

ERIN

Looking directly at BRANDON.

Oh it's really quite simple, Meg. Brandon spearheaded a project at his company to stage a hostile takeover of Adam's company. And, once his company owned Adam's company, Brandon approved the dismissal of Adam and the majority of his peers.

MEGAN

What? Why would you sabotage my family like that?

BRANDON

Greed.

BRANDON rises and EXITS.

ERIN

Well that explains the money problems you've been having.

MEGAN

Not helpful.

There is a pause. BRANDON ENTERS with a drink in hand. MEGAN turns away from him to face ERIN with her entire body.

So... tell me about this married man. How'd you meet him?

ERIN

We really don't have to talk about this.

BRANDON

Who is he?

ERIN

It's none of your business, Brandon.

MEGAN

Oh come on, Erin! We won't tell anybody.

BRANDON

Oh! What if we guess it?

MEGAN

If we guess right, will you tell us?

ERIN

What are you? Twelve?

BRANDON

This sounds fun! Let's play twenty questions!

ERIN

Stop it.

MEGAN

I'll start! When did you meet him?

BRANDON

Throws his hand in the air like a child at school.

Ooh! I know this one! She met him ten years ago to the day, didn't you? It was Christmas, right?

MEGAN

Have you had a thing with him for ten whole years?

ERIN

Eight.

MEGAN

How'd the... affair start?

BRANDON

I know this one too! It was at your wedding, Meg. They started sleeping together at your wedding!

MEGAN

So it was someone who came to my wedding? Is it Lilly's husband? Tom?

ERIN

No.

BRANDON

Jenna's man? What's his name, Meg?

MEGAN

Henry.

BRANDON

Is it Henry?

ERIN

No.

BRANDON

Is it one of Adam's groomsmen?

ERIN

Stop.

MEGAN

Kieran? No, he's not married, is he? Ian?

ERIN

Stop it.

BRANDON

Max?

ERIN

Knock it off, you guys.

MEGAN

Luke?

BRANDON

Oliver?

MEGAN

Is it Adam's brother, Jake? Are you sleeping with Adam's brother? Oh my god! You are!

ERIN

That's enough! Stop it!

BRANDON

So touchy.

ERIN

I'm not sleeping with Adam's brother.

BRANDON

No, you're sleeping with Adam.

ERIN

Brandon!

There is a pause.

MEGAN

Erin?

BRANDON

I'm gonna go get another drink. Erin, can I get you one? (Beat.) No? Alright.

He EXITS. There is a pause.

MEGAN

Erin?

ERIN

I can explain.

MEGAN

I don't think I want you to. Can you just... go, please?

ERIN

Meg... I know what I've done is despicable but--

MEGAN

Get out!

ERIN EXITS. BRANDON ENTERS

MEGAN

You knew.

BRANDON

I suspected for a while. I knew when I saw some of their texts.

MEGAN

They started on my wedding day?

BRANDON

At the reception. You were on the dance floor with me and Dad. She had given her speech and the two of them snuck off to a room in the hotel somewhere. At least, that's what I've gathered from their texting conversations.

MEGAN

How could she? Why would she do this to me?

BRANDON

Greed. The same reason I got him fired.

MEGAN

So all those business trips have been to go see Erin?

BRANDON

Yeah... Today's just not your day, is it, Champ?

MEGAN

Whatever. At least I didn't fuck our cousin.

Lights down.

END PLAY