

Falling Off the Edge

A play in two acts

by

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Cast of Characters

Belinda Morris, mid-30's, a recovering alcoholic with a veneer of confidence over a fragile core. A once and future realtor.

Carly Howe, mid-30's, Good-hearted, with a deeply ingrained frugality. Also a recovering alcoholic. She would be the first to refer to Belinda as "the pretty one."

Matt Ballard, mid-30's, a swimmer who is afraid of the ocean. Mormon. If Matt heard most people's inner monologues as they first meet him, he would think his name was "Oh my god!" He is aware of, but neither embarrassed by nor vain about his looks.

Setting

A beach resort in Costa Rica. Recently.

For Frank

"... but not as much as tomorrow."

Women have been taught that, for us, the earth is flat, and that if we venture out, we will fall off the edge. -- Andrea Dworkin

FALLING OFF THE EDGE

ACT I

Scene 1

Setting: Tuesday. The poolside at a resort in Costa Rica. At least four comfortable chaise lounges are visible facing downstage. Other tropical décor as budgets permit.

At rise: Early morning. Bright sun. The play of lights downstage suggests a pool running the length of the playing area with a lone swimmer completing regular laps. A single towel sits on chaise longue farthest R.

The peace is broken by the unmistakable thwack-thwack-thwack of flip-flops against bare feet.

BELINDA enters. She is not wearing flip-flops. She wears smart and silent little sandals and a flattering but not showy swimsuit with a matching beach cover. She is carrying a darling little summer bag. BELINDA is reasonably nice-looking, but she carries herself with a confidence that makes her seem more attractive.

BELINDA stands and waits, but does not look behind her.

After a beat CARLY is heard from off.

CARLY

I'm coming. ... I'm coming ...

CARLY bursts on, flip-flops thwacking. She is wearing cut-offs over her bikini. She's struggling with a beach satchel of epic proportions and doesn't seem willing to use her hands. She is also wearing, most incongruously, a pair of huge round "Jackie O" sunglasses.

CARLY

I have to tell you; this is not how I dreamt of starting this vacation.

BELINDA

You have mentioned that. In passing.

CARLY

Nothing on a vacation should start before 10.

BELINDA (proceeding to a chaise)

I told you, three hours of sun before ten is less damaging than half an hour of sun between ten and two.

CARLY

Is that true?

BELINDA

Have you ever seen me with a burn?

CARLY

It's just not natural. We're up before the coffee shop is even open!

BELINDA has been giving CARLY an appraising look.

CARLY

What?

BELINDA

You know ...

CARLY

What?

BELINDA

You know I would put out my own eyes with a ballpoint pen before I'd say a word in judgment...

CARLY

I have several ballpoint pens right here.

BELINDA

No doubt.

BELINDA takes a few steps. CARLY doesn't move.

BELINDA

What?

CARLY

I am not budging until you spit it out.

BELINDA

Are you sure?

CARLY

Belinda ...

BELINDA

Well, if you insist ...

CARLY waits.

BELINDA

It's two things, really.

CARLY waits.

BELINDA

There's a mirror in our room.

CARLY

One of our "four-star amenities."

BELINDA

So you must be able to see that the Daisy Mae thing was old before you finished high school.

CARLY

I told you I was not going to go out and spend ... whatever you spent ... on a new swimsuit ... when I have one that fits just fine.

BELINDA

That was probably debatable ten years ago.

CARLY

And what was number two?

BELINDA

It doesn't matter ... really...

CARLY

It matters more than you will ever know.

BELINDA

You swore to me you'd leave those damn glasses at home.

CARLY

I didn't swear.

BELINDA

You promised...

CARLY

I don't think so...

BELINDA

You lead me to believe...

CARLY

I may have done that.

BELINDA

Then why?

CARLY

I tried ... I wanted to ... for you. But I just couldn't face the waste. These are a perfectly good pair of sunglasses. I don't need a second pair. And I paid \$40 for these. Forty dollars.

BELINDA

And I know it must have killed you, but it was also a dozen years ago. If you amortize, it means they cost you \$3.34 a year. Inexpensive even to you!

CARLY

Do I begrudge you your extravagance?

BELINDA

I don't see living in comfort I can afford as extravagance.

CARLY

Could anyone possibly need \$800 sheets?

BELINDA

They were on sale. I saved \$1200 on the set. How could that be extravagant?

CARLY

Shall we proceed?

How about right here?

BELINDA (spotting the towel)

Here?

CARLY

Here?

BELINDA nods.

We're not going to the beach?

CARLY

The beach isn't open yet.

BELINDA

It's a beach. It never closes.

CARLY

They don't start giving out chairs until nine.

BELINDA

And god forbid you should lie on a towel on the sand.

CARLY

BELINDA looks at CARLY as though her statement had been in Esperanto.

CARLY

Right. How about, why couldn't we wait until 9? Wouldn't want an extra ninety minutes of sleep to keep these alluring bags from developing under our eyes? Wasn't that in last month's Cosmo? How to Get Those Dark and Swollen Eyes Men Are Mad For!

BELINDA

Have you ever even held a Cosmo?

CARLY

Of course not. It's a point of honor.

CARLY struggles awkwardly trying to carry her bag without using her hands.

BELINDA

What are you do ... oh for god's sake! It's a manicure. Your hands weren't suddenly transformed into glass yesterday.

CARLY

For \$80 – plus tip! – this is going to last until Christmas.

BELINDA

It was my \$80.

CARLY

It was still \$80.

BELINDA

People go every week, y'know.

CARLY

Not this person! It would give me hives to throw away money like that.

BELINDA

"I'm worth it." "I'm worth it." "I'm worth it."

CARLY

Sometimes good common sense isn't a self-esteem issue!

BELINDA laughs and settles in a chaise, funnily enough nearest the one with a towel.

CARLY

Sixty chairs and you had to pick the one ... (the coin drops) ... oh. (she looks toward the pool) Three hours of sun before ten?

BELINDA

Tipping well has it rewards. Those girls in the spa know everyone and everything that happens here.

CARLY

Down to when he'd be swimming?

BELINDA

Angela said you could set your clock by him.

CARLY

How much did this fount of information cost you?

BELINDA

You really must get beyond this obsession with my spending.

CARLY

20%?

BELINDA shakes her head.

25%?
CARLY

Big up?
BELINDA gestures up.
CARLY

Not 50...
BELINDA nods.
CARLY

Of course not.
BELINDA

Oh good...
CARLY

Double it.
BELINDA

What? ... You're kidding? ... 100% ... You tipped ... There's just no way ... 100%?
CARLY

I didn't want gossip, I wanted the truth.
BELINDA

I hope you get your money's worth.
CARLY

You make it sound like I'm paying for him.
BELINDA

A gigolo might have been cheaper. And a sure thing.
CARLY

We are supposed to be putting our histories behind us.
BELINDA

I trust you'll cough demurely when it's time for me to go book a day tour to the volcano.
CARLY (after a beat)

I'm not planning to sleep with him this morning.
BELINDA

CARLY

Your restraint is heroic. You should be addressing Christian Youth groups.

BELINDA

Are you familiar with the parable of the glass house and the stones?

CARLY

This trip is not about histories, remember? It's about moving forward...

BELINDA

This from a woman wearing a 10-year-old bikini and 12-year-old sunglasses.

CARLY

Think of them as vintage. Like Scotch.

BELINDA

Neither one of us needs to be thinking of Scotch.

CARLY

True dat.

BELINDA

Do you have the sunscreen?

CARLY

Like it was going to fit in your little evening bag. (rifling through her tote) Do you want 30 or 45?

BELINDA

Do you have any of the 15?

CARLY

You are not ready for 15.

BELINDA

We're not going to be here long and it smells so much better.

CARLY

Right. (handing her the 15) The Shalimar of tanning products. Want me to get your back?

BELINDA (posing ala Rita Hayworth)

I'm not planning to lie on my stomach this morning.

CARLY

Do you know him? Have you even met him?

BELINDA

If I had met him we wouldn't need to be out here at 7:30 in the morning.

CARLY

In your extensive research, did his name come up?

BELINDA

Matt. So there.

CARLY

Can you do my back?

BELINDA

Sure. Do you mind 15? I don't want to get the other smells on my hands.

CARLY

Perish the thought. (looking toward the water). He's steady.

BELINDA

You know there's no reason on this earth you can't meet someone for yourself.

CARLY

Oh, I could never do that. Now that I've cleaned up my act, I'm saving myself for Lil' Abner.

BELINDA

Do you have my magazine?

CARLY tosses it disdainfully to BELINDA.

BELINDA

Hey, it's not Cosmo!

CARLY

The New York Review of Books, I presume.

BELINDA

Of course not. It's a point of honor.

BELINDA begins glancing lightly through her magazine.

CARLY surreptitiously extracts a hardbound copy of John Gardner's *Grendel* from her canvas sack.

CARLY is almost immediately absorbed in her book.

BELINDA

There's something just wrong about a hardcover at the pool

CARLY

Think of me as intellectually diabetic. Mind candy would put me in a coma.

BELINDA (gazing toward the water)

He really is focused, isn't he?

CARLY

Just hypothetically ...

BELINDA

Uh-oh.

CARLY

If two guys came down first thing in the morning to watch an attractive woman swim alone in a pool, wouldn't you find it a little creepy? Or would that just be another form of meeting cute?

BELINDA

Why must you always be such a ray of sunshine? And it's an idiotic analogy. We're not guys. He's not a girl. It's not the same. Larry Summers wasn't wrong about everything.

CARLY

Dear god, that's the last time I let you near the New York Times.

BELINDA

Did Elle Woods teach you nothing? It's possible to be beautiful, shallow, spoiled and still aware of the world around you. ... Good lord, how many times can he swim back and forth and back and forth without going crazy? At least when you run you can wear a Walkman.

CARLY

That could be our fortune!

BELINDA

What?

CARLY

Well, if women didn't lack the genetic wiring necessary to function in basic science and engineering we could invent the Waterman and be rich.

BELINDA

Where would he tuck it? (They giggle) Have you got a sketchpad and pencil in that thing? I want to get to work.

CARLY

Sorry.

BELINDA

You've got everything else in the world in there. Check beneath Jimmy Hoffa.

TOGETHER they watch MATT swim a lap up and a lap back. And a lap up and a lap back.

CARLY

Walk me through the difference between this and stalking.

BELINDA

Read your book.

CARLY

That's the best you can do?

BELINDA

It's not stalking. It's staging. I'm taking the principles that kept me a platinum achiever seven years running and applying them to my less successful personal life. Besides, he's not a celebrity. Now read your book.

CARLY picks up *Grendel* and is almost immediately engrossed. BELINDA flips through her *Vogue*. She glances toward the water and back to *Vogue*. And over toward CARLY and back to *Vogue*. And again to the water. Finally, she sets the *Vogue* on MATT's chair and lowers the back of her chaise.

Lights fade to black.

End Act I, scene 1.

FALLING OFF THE EDGE

ACT I

Scene 2

Setting: The same. 20 minutes later.

At rise: BELINDA's chaise is flat, she is asleep on her stomach. Her contortion is not especially erotic or appealing.

CARLY is upright and still absorbed in her book. She has made measurable progress.

The sense of motion from the pool abates.

MATT enters from R. MATT is indeed gorgeous. He is wearing a somewhat worn, but still serviceable Speedo.

HE stops, puzzled, when he sees CARLY and BELINDA. As he crosses to his towel, CARLY lowers her book and follows him with her gaze.

MATT collects his towel and dries his hair, back and legs while facing away from CARLY. HE turns as he mops his chest.

CARLY drops her book loudly next to BELINDA's chaise. She shakes the chaise. BELINDA stirs but doesn't waken.

CARLY

What's that hon? A little more sun block? Sure thing.

CARLY straddles BELINDA with a tube of sun block in her hand. She shakes BELINDA vigorously.

CARLY (sotto voce)

Belinda! ... Come on. ...

MATT (picking up the Vogue)

Your friend's?

CARLY nods.

CARLY (one more shake)
I thought she might need a little more sun block.

MATT
She's not in much danger before ten.

CARLY
You know, I've heard that.

She kicks BELINDA as she crosses off the chaise.

BELINDA (groggily)
What the hell ... Jesus, Carly what time...

CARLY gestures with her head toward MATT.

BELINDA
What??? ... Oh. (She turns slowly toward him) Good Morning.

MATT
Hello.

BELINDA
Good swim?

MATT
There aren't many bad ones.

THEY are all silent.

MATT
I wasn't expecting company this early.

BELINDA
Our time here is so short we didn't want to waste a minute of it, did we Carly?

CARLY
Nope. Not a second.

THEY are all silent.

CARLY
I'm going to go see if the coffee shop is open yet. Can I bring anybody anything?

MATT

No thanks. I'm going to head back to my room.

CARLY and BELINDA exchange a look.

CARLY

Your roommate's not a swimmer?

MATT

I've got a single.

BELINDA

Don't rush off.

MATT

I don't drink coffee.

CARLY

Tea?

MATT shakes his head.

CARLY

How about a water? You must be parched. All the difference in the world between being in the water and being able to drink it...

MATT

That's true.

CARLY (to BELINDA)

Skim milk? Three Splenda?

BELINDA

You're a doll. Thanks.

MATT

I should really ...

CARLY (exiting quickly)

I'll be right back!

MATT spreads his towel across his chaise and lies out. BELINDA moves slowly and with surprising subtlety into an approximation of her "Rita Hayworth" pose.

So, you're here by yourself?

BELINDA

MATT nods.

That's unusual.

BELINDA

MATT
I figured it was the best way to really unwind. No one to be polite to. No one else's schedule to consider.

Where is home?

BELINDA

Park City.

MATT

Utah?

BELINDA

Yup.

MATT

This must make quite a change.

BELINDA

That was the point.

MATT

Do you ski?

BELINDA

Do you?

MATT

No. But I don't live at a ski resort.

BELINDA

Where do you...

MATT

Bethesda.

BELINDA

Like the angel?

MATT

BELINDA looks at him quizzically.

Never mind.

MATT

BELINDA
Bethesda, Maryland. Just outside of Washington, DC. And tiny Costa Rica brings us together.

MATT
They really lay on the chlorine here. I should go grab a shower.

BELINDA
Am I keeping you from a breakfast date?

MATT
No ... It's not that...

BELINDA
Then doesn't it seem kind of mean to send Carly off for water and then not be here when she returns?

MATT
I suppose ,,,

THEY are both silent.

BELINDA
Is this your first time here?

MATT
Yeah. It's basically my second time outside of Utah since I was three.

BELINDA
You traveled so much in your early years that now you're a homebody?

MATT
Something like that.

BELINDA
Why Costa Rica?

MATT

My little brother came here on his honeymoon last year and really liked it. What brings you and ...

BELINDA

Carly.

MATT

What brings you and Carly here?

BELINDA

Just two girlfriends looking for a little adventure.

MATT

That's nice.

BELINDA

Not "girlfriends" of course. But women friends would sound even dykier, don't you think? You have to be so careful these days. I started calling Patty Moran my "girlfriend" in junior high. Then sophomore year in college she came out. The girlfriend business had to come to an abrupt halt!

MATT

You could just say friends.

BELINDA

Well aren't you solution oriented!

MATT

How did you and Carly meet? Work?

BELINDA

Mutual friends. My name is Belinda.

MATT

Matt. (shaking her hand) Pleased to meet you. ... I wonder if Carly needs a hand...

BELINDA (sharply)

She'll be fine. (recovering) She's wonderfully competent ... at so many things ... and has years of experience waitressing. ... Do you swim every morning?

MATT

I've been swimming as long as I can remember. I'm actually not so good at it. Was never a star at meets, but I love it. I can't imagine starting a day without it. It helps me focus. It's the best, most peaceful time of the day.

BELINDA

I do better in the air. Tennis, biking, skating. No one thing for too long. I get bored. ... Of sports. Not with people, of course. ... Not that I'm clingy or demanding with people ... Why don't you get out of Utah more often?

MATT

Never see a reason to.

BELINDA

And what was the reason now?

MATT

My staff kept razzing me about never taking a vacation, never going anywhere. They threatened to go on a vacation strike themselves. Utah's a right to work state, but I didn't want them to make it a right to overwork. So, I decided to show 'em.

BELINDA

Your staff?

MATT

I have a ski equipment company.

BELINDA

You seem so young...

MATT

It's a small ski equipment company.

BELINDA

So you make miniature ski equipment?

MATT (laughing)

No.

BELINDA

And you don't have to travel to promote your company?

MATT

Our customers generally come to us. We're right on the cusp of being big enough to hire traveling sales reps.

CARLY bustles on from L. She has a bottled water tucked under her arm and two cardboard coffee cups trapped oddly between her hands. Her fingers are still splayed, protecting her manicure.

CARLY

The coffee shop was open, thank god!

MATT (racing to her)

Here, let me help ...

BELINDA

Oh, for heaven's sake.

CARLY

Thanks. Take the water, please.

MATT

Sure. (takes the water from under her arm) How about one of those coffees?

CARLY

Okay. Take the one in front. That's Belinda's. (He takes the cup and takes it to Belinda.)
Four-star service doesn't include skim milk, I'm afraid.

BELINDA

That's fine.

MATT

Here you go.

BELINDA

Thanks.

CARLY

Oddly they did have Splenda.

MATT (taking CARLY's cup as she sits)

Did you hurt your hand?

BELINDA smirks.

CARLY

Oh. No. No. It's nothing. I'm fine. Really. Fine.

MATT (returning her cup)

Okay.

CARLY makes herself grasp the coffee cup normally.

MATT (sitting)

Thanks for the water.

CARLY

You're welcome.

All three sit staring at the empty pool.

CARLY

This was much more entertaining when you were in there.

BELINDA

Doesn't she have the most unique sense of humor?

MATT (standing and picking up his towel)

I would offer to let you come watch me shower, but I'm afraid you'd accept.

CARLY

Do you have plans for lunch?

MATT (caught off guard)

No. I don't think I do. No.

CARLY

Belinda, didn't Angela tell you about a wonderful little place in the village? Authentic, but inexpensive. With fabulous food - fresh fish and local fruits and vegetables. Didn't she say it was so good you'd hardly know it was healthy?

BELINDA

No. Not that I ... (ka-ching!) ... Of course. That little place in the village that we've been dying to try.

CARLY

Since you don't have other plans, will you come along? Please?

MATT (trapped)

Sure. (realizing he is being surly) I'd be glad to. What time did you have in mind?

CARLY

How does 12:30 sound? Meet in the front driveway at 12:30?

BELINDA

Perfect.

MATT

Sure. That sounds great. ... I'm going to head up. See you at 12:30.

See you then.

BELINDA

MATT exits L.

BELINDA

When the three of us have lunch.

CARLY

Don't be an idiot.

BELINDA

What?

CARLY

I'm not going to lunch.

BELINDA

He thinks you are.

CARLY

Then he wasn't listening. I never said I was going. You'll meet him at 12:30 and tell him I decided I had to go to the volcano or that Quaker settlement or that my hands were hurting too badly ... You've gotten through the awkward introductions, lunch will be a breeze.

BELINDA

I don't know ...

CARLY

Just don't push too hard. You don't have pose like a porn star to get a man's attention

BELINDA

Why can't it be as easy for me as it is for you?

CARLY

Was.

BELINDA

You have so many funny stories.

CARLY

Funny in retrospect.

BELINDA

I can't help but feel that I didn't even drink as colorfully as you.

CARLY

We got here the same way. A drink at a time. Being drunk made me think I was catnip to men. But you don't want that. I did what I did. For stupid reasons. No point in regretting it, but I'd rather drink lye than relive it. Chlamydia is much less glamorous than it sounds.

BELINDA

Doesn't it sometimes feel like we're trying to trade places? Could be the next big reality show: Trading Personalities.

CARLY

More like Trading Defects

BELINDA

You want to learn to settle down and I want to learn to cut loose a little.

CARLY

He seems like nice way to start.

BELINDA

He's not interested in me.

CARLY

Oh now. Maybe you weren't the only pretty, but shy one out here. It may take him some time to warm up.

BELINDA

I could sell him a condo in a heartbeat, but I have no idea how to sell him on me.

CARLY

It always comes down to plumbing, doesn't it?

BELINDA

I want to go home. This was a stupid idea.

CARLY

Don't make me sing the song from *The Wiz*.

BELINDA

Anything but that.

CARLY (wretchedly off key)

Believe in yourself ... whooooh oooooh ... Believe in yourself as I believe in
YOOOOOOOOOOOOUUUUUUUUUUUUUU!

BELINDA

Okay, okay, I'll drink the Kool-Aid.

CARLY

Just don't spike it.

BELINDA

No man is worth that.

CARLY

It's good to hear you say that.

BELINDA

You want to head out the beach for a little bit.

CARLY

I'll catch up with you. I'm going inside to reserve me a tour.

BELINDA

You're the best.

CARLY

Trust me, I'm charging it to you. (tossing her the 45 sun block) Here, take some smelly
sun block. A burn won't improve your chances at lunch.

BELINDA

Thanks.

BELINDA crosses off R, as CARLY crosses off L.
and lights fade to black.

End Act I, scene 2.

FALLING OFF THE EDGE

ACT I

Scene 3

Setting: The same. 1:30. Wednesday afternoon.

At rise: MATT is lying on a chaise. Since he has the chaise flat, all we really see are the soles of his feet.

CARLY enters from R. She is carrying her flip-flops so as to make a stealthy approach. She approaches him slowly. When she sees that he's asleep, she drops the back of the neighboring chaise loudly, plunks herself on the chaise with as much commotion as she can muster and lies on her side facing him.

Finally, in that unmistakable off-key way of hers, CARLY begins to hum. If one listened really hard one might come to realize that she is humming Fleetwood Mac's "Say You Love Me." CARLY means nothing by the melody, it's just what came into her head.

MATT wakens suddenly, sees CARLY and sits bolt upright. He is wearing a conspicuously new pair of brightly colored board shorts. He is also glazed in sun block.

Can I help you? MATT

Nope. CARLY

You just happened by. MATT

CARLY
I was coming back in from the beach and I couldn't help but wonder ...

MATT
Yes?

CARLY

Well, here we are yards from one of the most beautiful beaches on the whole Pacific and here you are sitting alone by the pool.

MATT

Just looking for a little piece and quiet.

CARLY

Yes, but you haven't been to the ocean in the five days you've been here.

MATT

What?

CARLY

Don't bother to deny it. I have impeccable sources.

MATT (standing)

Okay.

CARLY

You don't have to be defensive about it.

MATT

About what?

CARLY

Being afraid of the ocean.

MATT turns toward her with a wordless mix of fury and humiliation.

CARLY

Oh my god! I didn't really think ... I was teasing ... but you're such a good swimmer ...

MATT

In a pool. With walls. With boundaries. I had never seen the ocean before ... I don't know what I expected, but I didn't expect it to look so ... endless ... so infinite. Okay, yes. It spooks me. I don't understand why and I feel like an idiot. I know children play in it. I've seen them. Happy now?

CARLY

No ... I didn't mean ... I would never ...

MATT

You have a real gift. Setting me up yesterday, humiliating me today ... (grabbing his towel) What were you doing during the lunch disaster? Stealing the coins out of beggars' cups in the village square?

CARLY

Wait. Please. Please believe me, I would never, ever make fun of someone else's fears. I'm dumb and I'm tacky, but I don't have a mean bone in my body. Honestly.

MATT (after a beat)

Anyone reading John Gardner couldn't be dumb.

CARLY

Did you go to college?

MATT

Yes.

CARLY

And you didn't know anyone who was well read, but stupid?

MATT

Who told you putting yourself down was attractive?

CARLY

Who told you I was trying to be attractive?

MATT (sits)

So how did you know my complete schedule?

CARLY

Belinda bribed the manicurist and the chair attendant.

MATT

So, I'm under 24-hour surveillance?

CARLY

Only 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Feel free to indulge in murder and mayhem from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. Although she was going to talk to the bartender in the lounge tonight.

MATT

He's never seen me. This is too weird. I'm outta here tomorrow. I don't care what it costs to change my ticket.

CARLY

It's a free country. ... Did you know that it really is? They don't even have an army!

MATT

Your trip to Monteverde was educational then?

CARLY

I knew about the no army bit before we came here. I admit that I didn't know American Quakers founded Monteverde.

MATT

Conscientious objectors to the Korean War, I believe.

CARLY

Well. Can't wait to see you on Final Jeopardy.

MATT

Although I'm sure they prefer Society of Friends or Friends to "Quakers." Just as some people prefer "Latter Day Saints" to Mormons.

CARLY

Right. ... Are you a Mormon?

MATT

Is that a problem?

CARLY

Are you surrounded by invisible barbed wire? Something can be a surprise without being a problem.

MATT

But why should it be a surprise?

CARLY

No horns, no cloven hooves ...

MATT

Isn't that an older denomination?

CARLY

Darlin', in my mother's house there were two kinds of people, the ones we saw at the First Church of the Flame of the Holy Spirit and the damned. Didn't really matter what kind of damned you were. You and the Catholics could split those hairs in the eternal fires.

MATT

Sounds like a difficult childhood.

CARLY

She did the best she could. Granted that wasn't good at all.

MATT

You do a nice job of keeping the scars hidden.

CARLY

You can only be a victim 'til you're 21. After that you're a volunteer. I finally stopped volunteering a little over a year ago.

MATT

That's better than most people.

CARLY

How much do you know about the volcano?

MATT

Arenal? After 400 years of dormancy, it erupted in 1968 and has been active since.

CARLY

Have you seen it? (MATT shakes his head) Let me tell you, they're not kidding about the active part. I saw all that lava spewing and I thought, "Been there. Done that."

MATT stares uncomprehendingly.

CARLY

Not much of a drinker?

MATT

We generally don't ...

CARLY

That's why no coffee or tea ... (MATT nods) The caffeine thing. (MATT nods) So you're still active ... in the ... LDS ...

MATT

Yes.

CARLY

Wow. I couldn't run fast enough ... What was it like?

MATT

What?

CARLY

A happy childhood?

MATT

For one thing, I was taught that speaking about my own good fortune is unseemly.

CARLY

Oh, go ahead, live large.

MATT

I was raised by two people I loved and who loved me. I still love them and still respect the way they live.

CARLY

Any brothers and sisters?

MATT

Four younger brothers.

CARLY

Good lord.

MATT

We give him credit, but we're all old enough to know it was really my father.

CARLY laughs and, after a beat, so does MATT.

MATT

What about you? Any sibs?

CARLY

Nope. Just me and my mom. Do you know that saying, "Never mix, never worry"?

MATT nods.

CARLY

Well from 15 to 32 I never mixed. It was fifth of vodka pretty much every day. And I never worried except for the times my period was late.

MATT

You didn't really ...

CARLY

I am not exaggerating even slightly.

MATT

I can't imagine.

CARLY

As they say, there are two kinds of people ... the ones who can't imagine and the ones who do it. I wish I couldn't imagine. ... Can you keep a secret? Why am I asking? Why do I feel like I can trust you so much?

MATT

I don't know. Why am I still sitting here? After what you did yesterday...

CARLY

Belinda didn't feel lunch went well either.

MATT.

Thank god. At least neither one of us will have to go through that again.

CARLY

Well ...

MATT

There's no possible way!

CARLY

Couldn't you just be a little bit nicer to her?

MATT

Why are you trying to push her on me. She seems quite capable of going after what she wants for herself.

CARLY

That's where you're wrong.

MATT

If she'd been a little subtler and little less desperate, lunch would have been a whole lot less depressing.

CARLY

She's had a bad time of it. She so desperate because she has no confidence. Façade, sure but no real faith in herself. She just needs an attractive, straight man to be nice to her. Poor thing has a worse gaydar than Liza Minnelli.

MATT stares, not comprehending.

CARLY

Liza Minnelli?

MATT shrugs and shakes his head.

CARLY

Praise be and Hallelujah! You really are straight.

MATT

That has never been in play.

CARLY (again, awful)

“What good is sitting alone in your room...”

MATT

All that vodka really tore up your vocal cords, didn't it?

CARLY laughs. Again, after a beat, MATT joins in.

MATT

What was that song you were humming to wake me?

CARLY shrugs.

MATT

Fleetwood Mac, wasn't it?

MATT tentatively hums a few bars of “Landslide” and shakes his head. He tries “Don't Stop,” but that isn't it either. As soon as he starts to hum “Say You Love Me” he smiles and Carly nods. He gestures for her to join in. She shakes her head. He keeps gesturing and begins to chase her across the deck. She is giggling. She slows down to let him catch her. He puts his arms around her from behind, holds her arms and begins to dance her rather exuberantly around the deck.

Gradually they slow and HE turns her to face him and they slow dance for a few beats. Eventually, he kisses her lips gently. They continue dancing. She kisses him with a similar gentle, tentativeness. They continue dancing. They stop. Their eyes meet for a moment and they kiss more heatedly.

BELINDA enters from R. She starts to run off and then makes the decision to stay.

BELINDA walks past them to the middle of the deck.

BELINDA

Who would think ... at a beach resort ... that the action would be poolside.

CARLY starts to step away from MATT. He holds her. She looks at him, but stops resisting.

BELINDA exits R.

CARLY and MATT take a moment to look at one another.

CARLY

I should ...

MATT

Why?

CARLY

She's my friend. We've seen each other through some things. I owe her a hell of a lot more than I owe you.

MATT

I'm sorry.

CARLY

It's all right, just so you know.

CARLY begins to exit R.

MATT

Carly ...

CARLY

Yeah?

MATT

I'd like to see you again.

CARLY

You can always find me on the beach.

After a beat, CARLY exits R.

MATT sits on a chaise and watches CARLY exit. He stares after her long after she's gone. He turns front, bunches his towel in front of his face and screams into it as he falls back on the chaise.

Lights fade to black.

End Act I, scene 3.

FALLING OFF THE EDGE

ACT I

Scene 4

Setting: The beach. Thursday, late morning.

The change in locale may be suggested by angling the chaises to face R and using light to suggest water off R. Or the change can be as elaborate as design and budget resources and directorial vision allow.

At rise: CARLY is lying on her stomach reading a paperback copy of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. SHE is wearing her old faithful bikini.

BELINDA's beach gear sits on another chaise.

BELINDA enters from right, she has been swimming. SHE is wearing a different, well-cut swimsuit that is part of a different smart little beach ensemble. SHE grabs a towel and dries off as CARLY closes her book, rolls over and sits up.

BELINDA

The surf's quite a bit rougher today.

CARLY

Could there be a storm coming?

BELINDA

Won't change much for you, will it? As long as the lights stay on you can read in the room.

CARLY

Hey! I've done stuff. I've been to the volcano!

BELINDA shoots her a look.

CARLY

We could go this afternoon. I wouldn't mind going again.

BELINDA

I should have gone with you the first time. Instead of letting you push me into that awful lunch.

CARLY

Yeah. Y'know, I can turn over my will for my own life, but I still can't stop myself from trying to be "helpful" to other people. My worst amends tend to start with "I meant well ..."

BELINDA

Jesus. You even have a better program! I can't even pick a fight with you. Your side of the street is so clean it sparkles.

CARLY

I get it. If I was the one who was disappointed, I'd be lashing out at you.

BELINDA (after a long, long beat)

No, you wouldn't. And that's what makes me really want to scream. You really wouldn't. But I can't help myself. It's just so frustrating. I can build a career, flush it away, and build it back again.

CARLY

I know.

BELINDA

But can I meet a man? Why is something so basic so hard? And why does it never get easier?

CARLY (after a beat)

I don't have an answer. And if I tried a slogan, you'd be justified in beating me to death with my book.

BELINDA

That would have been easier with the hardcover.

BELINDA spreads out a second blanket on her chaise and prepare to lie on her stomach.

CARLY

Want some sun screen?

BELINDA

Sure. Thanks.

CARLY begins to apply sunscreen to BELINDA's back.

CARLY

Wow. You are really tight. All over.

BELINDA

Yeah. Probably.

CARLY begins to massage BELINDA's shoulders more vigorously.

CARLY

Well, I'm not as good as the girls in the spa and this isn't quite as good as on a real table, but let's see if I can't loosen you up a little.

BELINDA

You don't have to ...

CARLY

Shh...

BELINDA

Really ...

CARLY

Really, shh.

BELINDA relents and CARLY begins a thorough massage. After a few moments of CARLY's ministrations, BELINDA begins to cry.

CARLY

Oh god! Am I hurting you?

BELINDA

No.

CARLY

Should I stop?

BELINDA

No.

CARLY

Are you sure?

BELINDA

It's not you. This happens every time I let go even a little ... might as well get it out ...

CARLY

Okay.

CARLY continues the massage as BELINDA continues weeping. Ultimately CARLY begins to cry.

BELINDA

What?

CARLY

I can't do anything to help you ...

BELINDA

No.

CARLY continues the massage as both women continue crying.

MATT enters from L.

MATT

I ... Oh. ... Is everything okay?

CARLY and BELINDA stare at him, both still crying.

MATT

I guess not. Of course not. Is there anything I can ...?

CARLY

No.

MATT

I guess I should ...

CARLY nods.

BELINDA shakes CARLY from her chaise and composes herself a bit more quickly.

BELINDA

No. Please ... Don't let us scare you off the beach for good!

MATT is startled.

BELINDA
Carly mentioned your anxiety.

CARLY looks away.

MATT
Oh.

BELINDA
And you came down to give it shot today ...

MATT
Well

BELINDA
That's really the way, isn't it? Just keep trying ...

MATT
I thought maybe I could do it if Carly came in with me.

BELINDA
A man who can ask for help? Don't let this one get away, Carly.

CARLY has still not turned back to face them.

BELINDA
I'm not used to being the third wheel, but this must be what it feels like.

MATT
No ...

BELINDA (standing)
That's very sweet. But I really, really need to cool off.

BELINDA exits R.

MATT
Sorry.

CARLY (turning back to him)
Why?

MATT
My timing ...

CARLY
I did tell you I'd be at the beach.

MATT
And here we are.

CARLY (miserably)
I'm glad.

MATT
Do I believe your words or your look?

CARLY
Both?

MATT
That's not going to scare me off.

CARLY
What?

MATT
I can do complicated. I've done it all my life.

CARLY
Mr. Perfect Family? Mr. Perfect Childhood?

MATT
My birth parents died when I was three. I remember a little of my mother. She had brown hair that was kind of blown back and her smell. A few years ago, I learned the smell was a perfume called "Charlie."

CARLY
She must have been young.

MATT
They were just about our age when they died.

CARLY
Is that hard for you?

MATT

It's weird to think of. I used to wonder how my life would be different if they hadn't died.

CARLY

Car wreck?

MATT

My mother killed my father then my father's girlfriend killed her in self-defense.

CARLY

You're joking, right?

MATT

Why would I joke about that? I've seen the police reports.

CARLY

Wow.

MATT

I grew up Mormon in Salt Lake City. I have access to every possible piece of information about them ...

CARLY

How do the parents who raised you feel about that?

MATT

It was their idea. They have very generous spirits. They adopted me when I was three and a half. It was tough enough for them not to have kids of their own, but to adopt a toddler instead of an infant made them even greater outliers.

CARLY

How many did they adopt?

MATT

Just me.

CARLY

I thought you said you had brothers.

MATT

Yup. The four fireplugs.

CARLY

Fireplugs?

MATT

My brothers are all short and stocky and fair and very, very blonde. Like my father. They all played football and wrestled. Successfully. While I always swam. Earnestly. I started calling them the blonde fireplugs when there were only two, but it fits them all.

CARLY

I recall that the church puts a premium on large families.

MATT

Yeah. But in Utah, five isn't large.

CARLY

No offense, but I'm glad I'm not an LDS woman.

MATT

My parents had been told they couldn't have children. Hence the adoption. So when Joseph came along they were shocked, but thrilled. Somehow I got some of the credit. It was never articulated, but the sense that there was some cause and effect thing between adopting me and having Joseph permeated the house. I got as many smiles as the baby did! After Ian, brother number three, was born my father said to me, only semi-facetiously, "Hey buddy, think you could arrange for a sister next time?"

CARLY

I feel sorry for your last brother.

MATT

Oh don't. Joseph, Ephraim, Ian and I all say that John got off lucky because by the time he came along the rest of us had exhausted our parents so that they didn't have the energy to discipline him. I mean, they let him drink *regular* diet Coke *in the house*.

CARLY

I can't even imagine. My mother's house was full of rules, but there wasn't much affection or laughter. I felt like I was always wearing a choke chain.

MATT

What about your father? Your mother doesn't sound like someone who would cotton to divorce.

CARLY

I'm still trying to figure out how she cottoned to conception. She told me my father was a soldier who died before I was born. Now I was born in December 1983. What war was there for him to die in? She was always weak on specifics but there was a clear implication that he had died heroically in combat. Unlike your parents, she didn't answer questions any more readily than she volunteered information.

MATT

Have you been able to learn anything on your own?

CARLY

I've learned that what she told me isn't true, but nothing that is. When I was about 7, she made this very reverent presentation of small box of medals that she said he had been awarded. I was only too happy to buy into the "my daddy, the hero" myth.

MATT

Well sure ...

CARLY

About the time I started junior high, I figured out they were bogus. They weren't all from the same time. One was from the Korean War. I figured he must have died a really, really slow death.

MATT is not sure how to take this.

CARLY

Think of the jokes as life preservers in quotation marks.

MATT

Irony is not my first language.

CARLY

Lucky bastard.

MATT

I know.

CARLY

The vodka started not long after the medals discovery. It was a way of easing the pain. I didn't feel pain for almost two decades.

MATT

I bet that's not true.

CARLY

Don't bet a lot. ... Not that there weren't challenges. Her endless and ever-changing rules and her hostility toward everything and everyone that made me even slightly happy. There was an inviolable rule against riding in cars with boys. Or dating. Or going out at night for any reason other than to attend church with her. Okay. I wasn't looking for trouble. I obeyed every rule. So I didn't ride in a car with a boy the whole time I lived in her house. I didn't date. I didn't go out at night for any reason other than to attend church with her.

MATT

That does sound pretty constrained.

CARLY

But there was no rule against giving blowjobs under the bleachers at lunch. So that's how I got to spend time with boys. And, in exchange, the boys made sure I had my supply of vodka.

MATT

That sounds really sad.

CARLY

It didn't seem sad at the time. It was just life. What's sad is how long the vodka continued to flow and how I never learned to relate to men on any other level ... and, god in heaven, I can't believe I'm saying this to you!! You're a sane, attractive man and I'm telling you things I wouldn't tell a therapist.

MATT

Thank you, I think. It's okay, I think.

CARLY

No, it's not. It's self-sabotage beyond even my usual high standard.

MATT

Well, we've had somewhat different life-experiences on the surface.

CARLY

"On the surface"?

MATT

You grew up feeling you didn't belong in the hell you were stuck in and I grew up feeling like an imposter in the heaven I was given.

CARLY

You think there's common ground?

MATT

I do. Absolutely. Don't you?

CARLY doesn't respond.

MATT

Carly?

CARLY

I'm afraid to believe that there is.

MATT takes her hand

CARLY (looking off R)

And I hate the timing.

MATT

You can't be happy if it makes your friend unhappy?

CARLY

See you don't want to get mixed up with a nutcase!

MATT

Apparently, I do.

CARLY

She has really swum out pretty far.

MATT

No danger she'll be back too soon this time.

MATT pulls her gently into an embrace. They kiss.

CARLY

Why me?

MATT

I have no idea. But you have been my every waking thought for two days.

Another kiss.

CARLY

Okay. Let's take a breath.

SHE sits. HE sits behind her and SHE nestles against him. THEY are facing off R.

CARLY

My head is going to explode ...

MATT

Let's not analyze ... let the moment be.

CARLY

Why does that always sound so reasonable, yet so impossible.

HE holds her gently. SHE relaxes a little.

CARLY

I see your point about the ocean. It really is freakin' endless.

HE nuzzles her hair happily. SHE sits up suddenly.

CARLY

Matt ...

MATT

Yes?

CARLY

She's out there too far.

MATT

Now Carly ...

CARLY

Really. She hasn't moved in a while. (stands) It really looks like she's trying to come back in and can't make it.

MATT (standing behind her)

Do you really think ...

THEY continue peering off R.

MATT

You could be right. She looks stuck somehow ...

CARLY (panic rising)

We have to do something!

MATT looks off left.

CARLY

Those guys just put out the chairs! They aren't lifeguards!!

MATT looks at her his own panic rising.

CARLY

I can't swim at all! I never learned ...

MATT (shaking)

Oh god.

You have to ...

CARLY

MATT sits on a chaise.

Matt!

CARLY

I don't know if I can.

MATT

Matt, please!

CARLY

MATT bows his head.

What are you doing?

CARLY

Praying.

MATT (softly)

Matt, come on ...

CARLY

MATT stands and peels off his shirt. HE starts R and then turns back to look at her. He is nauseous with fear.

I ...

MATT

Go! Just GO!

CARLY

MATT turns and runs off R.

CARLY watches for a few moments with increasing agitation. She sits with her hands over her mouth and begins to rock, still watching. She stands and takes a few steps R.

CARLY

Come on. Come on. ... Oh Jesus, bring them both back. Please, bring them both back.

SHE sits again. SHE picks up MATT's t-shirt and crushes it against her chest. More rocking. SHE looks away.

CARLY

I can't watch.

After several beats SHE looks R. again.

CARLY

Oh god. Come on, Matt. Come on!

SHE jumps to her feet and steps R, again.

CARLY

Please god, bring him back. I swear I'll never ask for anything again.

CARLY can't watch. SHE looks away. SHE can't not watch. SHE looks back.

CARLY

Almost there. Almost there. Almost there. (SHE kneels.) Almost. Almost there. Please. Please. ... YES! Oh, thank God. ... Don't fight him. ... Come on. Come on ...

SHE leans back, kneading and balling the shirt frantically. SHE is nearly hyperventilating. SHE catches herself and attempts to slow her breathing.

SHE jumps to her feet and begins waving the t-shirt above her head.

CARLY

Come on! Come on! You can do it. ... Come on, Matt! You can do it ... No, don't slow down. Come ON!

SHE wraps her head in the t-shirt and dances frantic circles around the beach. She stops, lowers the t-shirt and looks R.

CARLY

Please, please, please, please, please, please ... Oh Matt, please ...

SHE watches in absolute stillness for several beats,

SHE tosses the t-shirt onto a chaise, grabs a towel and runs off R.

CARLY (from off)

Here you guys. Here! Oh Matt. Oh, thank God! Thank God! ... Oh, you did it. Here. Oh, thank God!

CARLY, MATT and BELINDA enter from right. CARLY and MATT are on either side of BELINDA as they walk her on. BELINDA is disheveled and disoriented, but not unconscious. Both MATT and BELINDA are struggling for breath. CARLY has managed to drape the towel around BELINDA's shoulders.

THEY stumble toward the row of chaises. CARLY quickly spreads a towel and SHE and MATT help BELINDA get seated.

CARLY hands MATT a towel which HE accepts but holds at his side without using. His breathing is still quite labored.

SHE turns her attention back to BELINDA.

CARLY

Are you okay?

BELINDA (still struggling for breath)

Fine. ... Now. (to MATT) Thank you.

CARLY

God yes, thank you.

MATT doesn't respond.

CARLY (to BELINDA)

Should we get you to a hospital? A doctor?

BELINDA

No. I. Will. Be. ... Fine.

CARLY (to MATT)

Should we?

MATT shrugs uncertainly.

Here. Lay back.

CARLY

CARLY helps BELINDA recline and covers her torso and legs with towels. BELINDA rolls to her side and, facing upstage, begins to retch. No production, just heaves.

MATT drops the towel he has been holding and dashes off R. HE begins to vomit.

CARLY is sitting with her hand on BELINDA's back, but looking R, after MATT, with concern.

BELINDA's retching tapers off.

Go.

BELINDA (weakly)

CARLY crosses off R, stopping to pick up the towel on her way.

BELINDA rolls on her back and moans involuntarily.

CARLY returns guiding MATT who has the towel over his shoulders but is shivering. SHE helps him sit on the side of a chaise facing downstage.

Here.

CARLY

SHE helps him put on his t-shirt and wraps the towel around his legs.

Damn. I wish we had more towels.

CARLY

BELINDA moans softly and coughs.

CARLY crosses to her and lifts the back of her chaise so that she is on a slight incline, rather than lying flat.

Better?

CARLY

BELINDA nods.

CARLY

I'm afraid there are no pillows.

BELINDA

It's okay. I'll be okay.

CARLY (squeezing her hand)

You freaking well better be! ... Rest.

CARLY crosses back to MATT and sits at his side.

CARLY (taking his hand)

Are you okay?

MATT nods.

CARLY

You did a great, brave thing.

MATT squeezes her hand, but doesn't otherwise respond.

Lights fade to BLACK.

End of Act 1.

Falling Off the Edge

ACT II

Scene 1

Setting: The beach. Night. The chaises have been removed.

At Rise: The beach is quiet and empty.

CARLY and MATT enter from L.

She is dressed for a date. The outfit is new, purchased in town for this occasion.

In his pressed khakis and short-sleeved button-down shirt, it might almost be possible to imagine the Elder Ballard badge above his pocket.

MATT stops.

CARLY waits for him to say something. HE does not.

Is this really the best idea?
CARLY

MATT can't find the words.

I didn't think you'd ever want to come back here.
CARLY

MATT can't find the words.

I was surprised when ...
CARLY

A moonlight stroll?
MATT

But here?
CARLY

It just seemed ...
MATT

Why? CARLY

Romantic? MATT

There are places in town where it would have been safe to walk. CARLY

It just seemed ... I didn't want to let ... MATT

This afternoon? CARLY

MATT nods.

That was huge CARLY

We can't be stuck ... MATT

We can't pretend that isn't going to ... matter ... CARLY

No. MATT

Haunt ... CARLY

Well ... MATT

Overwhelm us ... coming back here. CARLY

Sure. Clearly. But avoiding ... MATT

Well sure. Come back in the morning, maybe ... CARLY

MATT can't find the words.

CARLY

I'm sorry. Dinner was nice.

MATT

Yes!

CARLY

But coming back here is just weird.

MATT can't find words.

CARLY

And your being weird isn't helping.

MATT

I'm no good at this.

CARLY

This?

MATT gestures between them.

CARLY

News flash: No one is. No one.

MATT looks at her skeptically

CARLY

No one. Ever. Since the beginning of time.

MATT

I'll have to take your word for it.

CARLY is unsure how to take this.

MATT

What?

CARLY (after a beat)

Nothing.

MATT

Please. ... See, I'm more hopeless than most ...

CARLY falls silent.

MATT

I'm sorry. How can I ... What can I

CARLY (after a long beat)

You could take my hand.

MATT

Oh.

HE does. The awkwardness subsides a little.

MATT

See? What could be more natural than a moonlight stroll on the beach with my girl?

CARLY can't find the words.

MATT

I guess ...

CARLY waits.

MATT

It's just ...

CARLY waits.

MATT

Well, it's not like I was going to suggest we go in ...

CARLY (smiling)

No. (a beat) Not even for you would I go in the ocean in a brand-new skirt.

MATT kisses her lightly.

CARLY

And you're not one for skinny dipping, I'll just bet.

MATT

You might have to give me a little more time.

CARLY laughs.

MATT

Anyway, we wouldn't want the story of our first date to end with an arrest.

CARLY

Especially not by cops whose language I don't speak.

MATT

Habla por ti, señora bonita.

CARLY

That was handy back at the restaurant.

MATT

Una educación de Brigham Young prepara un tipo para el mundo.

CARLY

I guess if I ever want to finish college I'm going to have to learn a language.

MATT

Yo sería feliz para dar clases.

CARLY

I really want to go back to school for real. Accredited and all. Not just some online boondoggle for the paper.

MATT

That sounds great. *Mientras tanto, mi español puede venir en muy útil!*

CARLY

Whoever told you that was romantic was wrong.

MATT

De ningún modo! De esta manera puedo probar te amo sin asustar a cualquiera de nosotros. Te quiero, Carly. Te amo. Hago.

CARLY takes a step away from him.

MATT

What?

CARLY

I've seen enough Univision to know what "Te amo" means.

MATT

Good.

You can't possibly.

CARLY

I do.

MATT

No.

CARLY

I have never ... this is the only thing it can be ... you.

MATT

No.

CARLY

Can you tell me you don't feel ...

MATT

Well ...

CARLY

Well?

MATT

I don't

CARLY

You don't feel anything?

MATT

Well sure. You're very attractive ...

CARLY

And that's it?

MATT

Look ... You can't go by me ... I am the world's worst judge ... Well, no, Belinda is the world's worst judge ... I'm the first runner up and Miss Congeniality ...

CARLY

Don't do that.

MATT

You don't know me. I don't know you. It's just not possible ...

CARLY

MATT

I know what I feel. I am getting a pretty good sense of what you feel.

CARLY (angry)

Well that makes one of us!

MATT

Carly?

CARLY

This is nuts.

MATT

I'm sorry. We can go sit by the pool ...

CARLY

I don't mean coming to the beach

MATT

Do you believe in God?

CARLY

Are you serious?

MATT

Or fate? Or destiny?

CARLY

Are you trying to seduce me or convert me?

MATT

Neither. Exactly.

CARLY

What does that mean?

MATT

Not seduce in the sense of ...

CARLY

Sex?

MATT

Not for a while.

CARLY

Good. Cause I can't. I truly can't.

MATT

That's fine.

CARLY

You are so perfect, it's unnerving.

MATT

I'm not perfect. I'm flawed in many, many ways. What kind of man is afraid of the ocean? Not a man of perfect faith, that's for sure.

CARLY

As flaws go, I'm afraid that's pretty minor league.

MATT

Now as for convert...

CARLY

Uh oh. I don't suppose you'd consider just leaving a pamphlet?

MATT

If seeing what my faith means to me ... has done for me ... does for me ... would ever lead you to consider the church, I wouldn't object ... but it's not a necessary condition.

CARLY

For what?

A wave of fear and nausea washes over MATT and he can't speak.

CARLY

Are you okay? ... You look worse than you did this afternoon.

MATT

This is harder. ... (To himself) Deep breath and jump ...

CARLY

What are you talking about?

MATT

Okay. I'm going to ask you something. Please don't respond right away. Give it a minute.

Okay ...

CARLY

And know I'm not kidding. At all. There isn't a trace of irony in this question.

MATT

I wouldn't expect ...

CARLY

Carly, will you marry me?

MATT (goes down on one knee)

CARLY stares for a few beats. Walks away. Looks back at him. Stares. Walks back to him.

CARLY

Is my minute up?

MATT

Close enough.

CARLY

What ... How ...

MATT

I wasn't planning to propose until later in the week.

CARLY

Why would you propose at all?

MATT

Because I love you and I believe you love me.

CARLY

You are certifiable.

MATT

Maybe.

CARLY

Let me suggest a more likely end to this. At the end of the week you will go back to Utah and I will go back to Maryland. Maybe we'll exchange email addresses and phone numbers and it could take months to dribble away from one another completely ...

MATT

That doesn't have to happen.

CARLY

And if you're not too much of an ass about it, we can be left with pleasant little memories of a vacation fling where so little got flung that we have no regrets.

MATT

Or you can accept what you're feeling and take the leap of faith and marry me.

CARLY

The second biggest problem in my life is that for the past 18 years I have been leaping and leaping and leaping and leaping ...

MATT

I get your point.

CARLY

And leaping. Although not marrying.

MATT

And I'm offering that difference.

CARLY

And I'm not ready for it. I'm not. I will always be grateful to you for not pressuring me for sex. Because I need some time off to get my head straight, or at least straighter, and you are very, very leappable ...

MATT

Thanks.

CARLY

Have you ever ...

MATT

What?

CARLY

Leapt.

MATT

Did you not see me this afternoon?

CARLY

I meant have you ever had sex?

MATT

I'm thirty-four years old, what do you think?

That isn't an answer.

CARLY

Yes, Yes, I have.

MATT

Isn't that a sin?

CARLY

Only outside of marriage.

MATT

So you've been married?

CARLY (after a beat)

MATT nods.

CARLY

When were you going to mention that fun fact ... Oh My God! Are you still married? Are you asking me to become some sort of sister-wife?

MATT (after a long beat)

I'm sorry. I have clearly made a terrible mistake.

CARLY

Matt ...

MATT

May I walk you back to the hotel?

CARLY

Matt ...

MATT

I was not raised to leave a woman alone on a deserted beach at night.

CARLY

Matt ...

MATT

I am going back to the hotel. Are you coming?

CARLY

Please ...

MATT

What?

CARLY

I didn't mean ...

MATT

Yes, you did. You certainly did. I don't expect you to embrace my faith, or even understand it. But I will not allow you to mock my faith to my face.

CARLY

I'm sorry.

MATT

I'm sorry to have troubled you. I hadn't taken you for someone who would subject me to that sort of ignorant and unfounded belittling.

CARLY

Matt, wait. Please wait. ... I am truly sorry.

MATT stops.

CARLY

It's hard for me to believe. I'm not ready ... I don't know myself well enough to know what I feel. Or trust myself enough to trust what I feel. I can't say that I love you, yet. But I sure can't say that I don't. Okay?

MATT

I think that getting to know one another crap is ... well ... crap. I think love is like a lightning strike. If you don't know in the first ten minutes it isn't love.

CARLY

It's also possible to lie to yourself pretty convincingly in the first ten minutes and for a long time after.

MATT

My parents are the happiest two people I know. They have a true partnership. Growing up, seeing that every day, how could I not want it for myself? I got the lightning strike line from my mom. She said when she met Dad when she was 17 and he was 20, she knew the minute she saw him that he was going to be the one.

CARLY

That's very sweet. But, as you know, that's not the vision I grew up with.

MATT

Wouldn't you rather live with mine?

CARLY

Of course. But there's a long road from thinking it's lovely to believing it's possible.

MATT

Believing it's possible is what keeps me going.

CARLY

You say you have a happy, loving family. You're fit and healthy. You make good money. I'm not seeing the struggle.

MATT

I don't feel I deserve any of it.

CARLY nods.

MATT

And I'm always a beat off the band. ... Just this far from perfect. ... I'm adopted. I'm divorced.

CARLY

I think we need to talk about that.

MATT (after a beat)

Go ahead.

CARLY

No. You need to talk about it.

MATT

I don't have a divorce elevator speech. You have to ask questions.

CARLY

Did you experience the lightning strike with your wife? First wife?

MATT

First and only. And no.

CARLY

Why did you marry her?

MATT

It felt like the thing I was supposed to do. And I did want to have a family. And I did want ... physical intimacy.

CARLY
How long were you married?

MATT
Four years. A little more than four years. We got married between freshman and sophomore year of college and were divorced about a year and a half after we got out. I was about to turn 26.

CARLY
Eight years ago?

MATT
Yeah.

CARLY
And you haven't ...

MATT
No.

CARLY
Not for eight years?

MATT shakes his head.

CARLY
Wow. Maybe I do need your church.

MATT (smiling)
I wouldn't argue.

CARLY
Why didn't you marry someone else? Surely in eight years ...

MATT
I figured the second time I should wait for the lightning to strike.

CARLY
How did it end?

MATT
Painfully. How else would a marriage end?

CARLY looks at him expectantly.

MATT

What's funny is I'm the only one who doesn't hate her. My parents? Hooo-weee! She was excommunicated, of course. Our temple sealing was even cancelled.

CARLY

What happened?

MATT

She came out.

CARLY

Ouch.

MATT

I don't blame her.

CARLY

You don't feel lied to?

MATT

She thought she was fighting the sin within herself. She wasn't lying, she was struggling. We were both doing what we thought we were supposed to do. But she couldn't keep denying the truth. We get along better now than we did for most of our marriage. She never enjoyed sex with me. It was kind of a relief to discover it wasn't entirely my fault. But we sure never had anything like what my parents have and we were testy and short with each other most of the time.

CARLY

Sounds idyllic.

MATT

I don't get why you would say that.

CARLY

Because real feelings make me uncomfortable.

MATT

Is that why you can't admit your feelings for me?

SHE tries to respond and can't.

MATT

Carly?

CARLY

Possibly. It's also possible that I honestly don't know what I'm feeling. Or trust what I'm feeling. Or trust myself to know what I'm feeling ... Or believe that it could possibly be this simple.

MATT

I don't think it's simple at all. I'm asking you to move three thousand miles to live among people you've never met. People who are going to be polite, even cordial ... and who are going to be every bit as suspicious and distrustful of you as you are uncomfortable and uncertain around them.

CARLY

When you put it that way, how can I think about refusing?

MATT

Just want you to know that I understand what I'm asking.

CARLY

How about if I reversed the question?

MATT

Meaning?

CARLY

What if I said, sure I'll marry you...? Or even, yes, I love you and want to marry you ... Which sounds a little less like I think I'm doing you some kind of favor ...

MATT

Sure. Go ahead. Say exactly that ...

CARLY

But what if I said, sure, under one condition ...

MATT

That being?

CARLY

I want you to come to Maryland. I want you to be the one to put your life behind you to begin a new life with me.

MATT

Hmm.

CARLY

Yes?

I hadn't considered ...

MATT

Clearly.

CARLY

I'm not saying "no."

MATT

Okay.

CARLY

Wow. There's a lot to think about ...

MATT

And that may not be a good idea. At all. But we need to look at a lot of issues ... no matter what our feelings are.

CARLY

Okay. Are you a list maker? I'm big on making lists.

MATT

Somehow that does not surprise me.

CARLY

MATT grins sheepishly.

CARLY

How about we leave it like this for tonight: I'm not saying no.

MATT

I'll take that.

CARLY

And we go back to our corners ...

MATT

Rooms.

CARLY

And start our lists.

MATT is beaming.

CARLY

What?

MATT
Anything that isn't no ... is fine. Is golden.

CARLY
If you say so.

MATT
Carly ...

CARLY
Yes?

MATT
The lists can't just be negatives and objections.

CARLY
Okay. That's fair.

MATT
Carly ...

CARLY
Yes?

MATT takes her hand and pulls her gently toward him. SHE does not resist. THEY kiss.

CARLY
For the record, that did not clarify my thinking.

MATT (smiling broadly)
To the lists.

HE takes her hand and they begin to cross off L.

CARLY
Thanks.

MATT
For what?

CARLY
I'm not going to sleep a wink tonight.

MATT (almost giddy with joy)
Neither am I.

CARLY

You don't have to sound so happy about it.

MATT

Sorry. Can't help it.

And they are off.

Lights fade to Black.

End Act 2, scene 1.

Falling Off the Edge

ACT II

Scene 2

Setting:

Poolside. The next morning. Early. The chaises are empty. The water is still.

BELINDA enters. She is not slovenly or unkempt, but this should be the least “put together” we have seen her. She is carrying a magazine, the Mexico/Latin America edition of Vogue, perhaps. Although she does not read a word of Spanish. She is disappointed to find the pool empty. And maybe a little relieved. Then anxious. After a little pacing, she perches on the end of a chaise. She fiddles with, but does not even pretend to read the magazine.

MATT enters carrying a towel. He is wearing a t-shirt and shorts over his speedo. If ever a man was looking forward to a peaceful, vigorous and solitary morning swim, he would be that man.

BELINDA is wound so tight she can't even get out a greeting. HE can't get his usual mannerly façade in place. They acknowledge one another with cursory nods, but neither can manage a greeting.

MATT sits, but does not undress.

SILENCE.

MATT (finally, without looking at her)

I would rather not be the floor show this morning.

BELINDA

No ... that's not ...

MATT

Is there something ...

BELINDA

First ... I want to thank you for yesterday.

MATT
That's not necessary. Really...

BELINDA
You did save my life.

MATT
It's what anyone would have done.

BELINDA
Everyone couldn't have done it. You did.

MATT
There wasn't anyone else around...

BELINDA
I really, really do appreciate it.

MATT
I couldn't let you drown ...

BELINDA
I was lucky you were there.

MATT shrugs.
SILENCE.

BELINDA
It wasn't deliberate. It wasn't calculated.

MATT
I didn't ...

BELINDA
I will admit I was unhappy ... upset ... and I was trying to swim that out.

MATT
I know that urge.

BELINDA
I thought I was swimming parallel to the shore. I didn't realize I had drifted so far out.

MATT
You don't have to defend yourself against an accusation no one has made.

BELINDA

No. Well. I just didn't want you to think ...

MATT

I didn't. I don't.

SILENCE.

MATT

And second?

BELINDA

Excuse me?

MATT

You said, "First ... I want to thank you for yesterday." You did that. You're still here. There must be a second ...

BELINDA

Yes. But before I started, I wanted you to know that I do appreciate what you did for me yesterday.

MATT

May I be honest?

BELINDA

Go ahead.

MATT

If you really want to show appreciation ... please just go away and let me have my swim.

BELINDA

We need to talk.

MATT

No, we don't.

BELINDA

Listen ...

MATT

We proved at lunch that we have very little to say to one another.

BELINDA

What's your game?

MATT

If I'm not going to be allowed to swim in peace, I'm going back to my room.

BELINDA

Go ahead. Run away. Make my point for me.

MATT

What point?

BELINDA

What's your game?

MATT (peeling off his t-shirt)

I guess I have to hope you won't follow me into the pool.

BELINDA

Who proposes after knowing someone three days?

MATT ignores her and removes and folds his shorts

BELINDA

Barely knowing them.

MATT does not respond.

BELINDA

She doesn't have money.

MATT

I do.

BELINDA

So what's your scam?

MATT

My proposal wasn't a scam.

BELINDA

If you say so. But I'm concerned for Carly, as a friend. I'm watching out for her, as a friend.

MATT

My feelings are real. My proposal is real. And I don't see what you need to know beyond that, as a friend.

BELINDA

See, you're just too good to be true. And too good to be true might be okay for a vacation fling, but friends don't let friends marry too good to be true.

MATT

Would you be so indignant if I had proposed to you?

BELINDA

That's not ...

MATT

If I had found you attractive?

BELINDA (after a beat)

You're not going to put me off by insulting me.

MATT

That doesn't answer my question. You want me to answer yours, you have to answer mine. I won't put up with a one-way grilling.

BELINDA

I would have been suspicious.

MATT

But not so incredulous?

BELINDA

Something's just not right.

MATT

Because it doesn't make sense that I would fall for Carly?

BELINDA

Don't try to make this out to be some kind of cat-fight!

MATT

It's certainly not that. I don't see Carly fighting. And you can be sure that she did not throw herself at me.

BELINDA

You're a Mormon, right?

MATT

Oh for heaven's sake!

BELINDA

So you went on a mission, right? Don't you guys all go on missions? Kinda like the draft?

MATT

I did receive a call, yes. But not all LDS men go on mission. It is not like the draft!

BELINDA

But you did?

MATT

Yes.

BELINDA

And yet you said you had never seen the ocean before coming here?

MATT is perplexed by the question, but does not respond.

BELINDA

How could you get to Africa or Asia or South America or wherever without flying over the ocean?

MATT does not respond.

BELINDA

Or even France, I remember reading that Mitt Romney did his mission in France. Maybe you didn't have the connections to get France ...

MATT

It's not about connections.

BELINDS shoots him an incredulous look.

MATT

I was called to St. Louis.

BELINDA

Missouri?

MATT (nods)

So there were no oceans to cross. And the Mississippi wasn't especially intimidating. I could always see the other shore.

BELINDA

St. Louis?

MATT

And East St. Louis. It wasn't fun, exactly. Or often. But it did me a world of good.

BELINDA

I'm sure.

MATT

I don't know how many of the people we baptized actually stayed in the church, but it helped me with my faith. I realized about the 80th time I was asked "Do you really believe this ...sh ... crap?" that I truly did. And do. And that is very sustaining.

BELINDA

Carly grew up with a really different sense of what faith means and she had to get beyond it to survive.

MATT

I will always hope that seeing what my faith means to me and does for me will bring her to her own faith.

BELINDA

You hope that by trapping her in the cult, she'll eventually surrender and drink the Kool-Aid.

MATT

That is an inaccurate characterization of the church and a stale, trite metaphor.

BELINDA

Look, maybe you are a good guy ...

MATT

I don't care what you think of me. If Carly agrees to marry me that will be between us. I am waiting for Carly's decision. Hers is the only opinion that I care about. I'm not looking for your approval or permission,

BELINDA

How is your family going to feel about Carly?

MATT hesitates.

BELINDA

Your mother? Your father? All those little brothers?

MATT

I'm sure they'll be surprised at first.

BELINDA

I'll just bet.

MATT

They would never be rude. Things might be a little stiff at first.

BELINDA

How nice for Carly.

MATT

But I'm also sure they'll come to accept and love her.

BELINDA

How? How can you be sure?

MATT

Because I know how much they love me and when they see that we are truly happy, they will love her. It's how we operate.

BELINDA

When you talk about your family it sounds like a fairy tale.

MATT

It's not.

BELINDA

But it's so far from what Carly or I grew up with that it's hard to imagine, never mind to believe that it's real.

MATT

I'm sorry for that.

BELINDA

But ... see ... what you have to understand is that we have built different families now. We don't have the luxury of history; we've had to build our bond deliberately, brick by brick. So you can't think of me as just the pushy friend. You have to see that I'm her version of the parents and the little brothers and she's mine. And I'm going to protect her just like you'd protect them.

MATT

You don't have to protect her from me.

BELINDA

I wish I could believe that.

MATT

So you spent the night trying to talk her into saying no to me?

BELINDA

When she came back to the room and told me you had asked her to marry you ... I raised a few concerns.

MATT

But you couldn't get her to say a flat out no?

BELINDA shakes her head.

MATT smiles the smile of a man who is suddenly sure his dearest wish is about to come true.

BELINDA

Would you really come east to marry her?

MATT hesitates.

BELINDA

Would you?

MATT

I don't know.

BELINDA

You told her you'd consider it.

MATT

I have my lists. I need to see hers.

BELINDA

You'd be giving up your business and that ideal family, right? She could easily get a retail job in Utah, right? And there's no family for her to leave, right?

MATT

She wouldn't have to work if she didn't want to.

BELINDA

She could stay home and raise those Mormon babies?

MATT

She could go to school full-time. Get her degree.

BELINDA (after a beat)

You're quick on your feet. I'll give you that.

MATT (after a beat)

I'm adding your meddling to my con list. The idea of having you around to constantly stick your nose in ... it doesn't make moving east seem very appealing.

CARLY enters from L. SHE has thrown on jeans and t-shirt, but hasn't bothered with her hair.

BELINDA has seen her approach and pivots masterfully.

BELINDA (taking MATT's hand)

So if you do decide to come east, I hope you'll let me help you find the right house.

MATT

What?

CARLY

Don't even.

MATT (face lighting up)

Hi.

CARLY (smiling despite herself)

Hi.

MATT just grins and grins.

BELINDA starts to speak and CARLY shoots her a look.

MATT

Did you sleep well?

CARLY

Are you kidding me?

MATT (still with the goofy grin)

Me neither.

BELINDA

I should ...

CARLY

What were you ... Why would you ...

BELINDA

I didn't want to wake you fumbling around the room ...

CARLY

Right.

BELINDA

And I happened to run into ...

CARLY

Stop.

BELINDA

I don't think my concern is unreasonable.

CARLY

Not when you express it to me. Not even when you express it for three hours. In the middle of the night.

BELINDA

Wouldn't you have spoken up if I had told you I was thinking about marrying a man I've only known for three days?

CARLY

I can honestly say I would have waited until morning. We weren't going to elope.

MATT

That's a thought ...

CARLY

No it's not.

MATT

Okay.

BELINDA

You're not considering ...

CARLY

Yes. I am.

If MATT were any happier, he'd pass out.

Still only considering ...

CARLY (to MATT)

MATT's fires are not even slightly banked.

CARLY

But there's more to this than lists ...

MATT

The lists are only about where to live once you've said yes.

BELINDA

That's presumptuous.

MATT

I didn't ask hoping for "no."

CARLY

I can't say I don't feel ... I'm not ... I'm more than just flattered by your proposal. You are ... and I do ... and I can't deny ... but it doesn't make sense somehow ...

MATT

Is it supposed to make sense?

CARLY

What?

MATT

Love.

CARLY looks from MATT to BELINDA and back to MATT.

CARLY

I ... I ... I ...

MATT

It's not rational. It's also not complicated. It's a great and simple truth. Blam! I love you. I know it with all my heart. I can't tell you why. But I know it.

BELINDA

How do you know it will last?

MATT

I don't.

CARLY
What?

MATT
I can't. You can't.

CARLY
Well that's encouraging ...

MATT
You can't say it will last ... you can only look back and say it has lasted. It's a leap of faith I'm willing to take. (HE pulls on his shorts) I'll do what I can ... what I have to ... to make it last ... but I know from experience I can't make it work alone. (HE puts on his shirt) Shall we compare lists over breakfast?

CARLY
I'm not ready for the lists. And I couldn't look at you and eat ...

MATT shoots her quizzical look.

CARLY
I mean you've got my stomach tied up in knots and seeing you only makes it worse. Gazing into your eyes ... watching your lips ... your arms that vein in your neck ... I wouldn't be able to keep down a bite.

MATT
Well ... I mean ... I suppose I guess ... in a way that's good. You're feeling something ... and it's strong.

CARLY
But it may not be what you're feeling ...

MATT
Sounds pretty similar.

CARLY
Does it?

MATT
I'm a mess. I'm overwhelmed. I'm living for your answer

CARLY
But you don't have any doubts ...

MATT
No.

CARLY

No?

MATT

No. I honestly don't. I love you. I definitely and without question know that. I love you. Of course I know everything about this is crazy. But what the heck? When does anything about love ever make sense? Who said it's a rational thing? This is nuts! How could a Mormon swimmer who's afraid of the ocean meet the love of his life at a beach in Costa Rica? I don't know, but I know it just happened. I live in a very ordered way in a very ordered world, a moment of this kind of magic is pretty alien to me ... but I recognize it for what it is and I sure as heck am going to seize it with both hands. ... I love you.

SILENCE.

BELINDA

Okay. I'm sold.

BELINDA and MATT both look to CARLY.

CARLY (softly, after a long, long beat)

I'm not.

BELINDA

What?!?

MATT

Hush.

CARLY

I do feel ... You are It's not that ...

BELINDA

For Christ's sake ...

MATT

Don't ...

BELINDA

Do you love him?

CARLY (to MATT)

Yes. I do. Or something like it.

MATT

Oh thank God. You had me scared there ...

CARLY

But I'm not going to marry you.

BELINDA

What?

MATT

Maybe you should take a little more time ...

CARLY

You are ... and I am very attracted to you ... And, at a different moment in my life ... Earlier, certainly. ... Later, maybe ...

BELINDA

What are you talking about?

CARLY

It's all very romantic ... swept off my feet by gorgeous man, who also happens to be a good guy, at a tropical beach! Eat your heart out Nora Roberts. But it's not right for me. Not now.

BELINDA

God in heaven! What's not right about it?

CARLY

I'm not ready. I just can't imagine being able to plan a wedding and work my eighth and ninth steps at the same time.

BELINDA

Stop. Just stop.

CARLY

I would think that you of all people would get it. I'm not ready to make this kind of commitment. I don't know myself well enough to say "Here, take me. I pledge my troth." (to MATT) It's not you I doubt.

BELINDA

And sometimes you have to seize the moment, ready or not!

CARLY

Not me. Not this moment. I don't buy the One Great Love myth. Who knows, maybe I will never have another chance like this again ... I can live with that easier than living with something that I know feels wrong to me.

BELINDA makes several attempts to speak before she can finally get out the words.

BELINDA

Bite me. Just bite me!

MATT

Wait a minute.

CARLY stares at BELINDA.

BELINDA

You make me sick. No, it makes me sick.

CARLY

Easy now. Take a breath.

BELINDA

No, YOU make me sick!!

MATT

Please ...

BELINDA

I don't get what I want – the thing we came here for -- fine. I can live with that. You get the thing I want. He wants you, not me. I can even live with that. But I can't live with ... I can't stand that you get offered the thing I want most in this world and you reject it. You just turn it down flat. How am I supposed to feel when I see you get offered my dream and your reaction is "No thanks"? Like the very thing I dream of isn't quite good enough for you!

CARLY

That's ridiculous.

BELINDA

What?

CARLY

Your idea of friendship is to tell me that I'm hurting you by not marrying some random dude you have a crush on? (A beat. Then to MATT) Sorry. You're much more than some random dude,

MATT

Thanks. But that's not much comfort.

I can't ... I just can't ...

BELINDA

BELINDA storms off L.

SILENCE.

CARLY

It's a shame you don't want to marry her.

MATT

Don't. Don't make this a joke.

CARLY

No. It's not. I'm sorry.

SILENCE

MATT

I want to beg.

CARLY

Don't ...

MATT

I want to argue. I want there to be some way to make my case.

CARLY

You have.

MATT

I want to find the words ...

CARLY

I believe you.

MATT

Or hold you ...

CARLY

No. I'm sorry. No.

SILENCE

CARLY

That would ...

MATT

I understand.

CARLY

It would be so easy ... or so familiar. A guy wants me. Okay. Sure. Let's.

MATT

That's not what I meant.

CARLY

I know. And I'm not saying never again. Good lord. But not now. And, sadly, not you.

MATT

I want to share more than that.

CARLY

I can't. I'm at a point in my life where I can see my mistakes. And I'm figuring out how to stop making them. But I have no idea what I actually want and only the vaguest sense of who I want to be. (a beat) I am absolutely sure I have to be a little closer to knowing who I am and what I want before I try to form the sort of partnership you're offering.

MATT makes several unsuccessful attempts to speak, then bursts into tears.

CARLY

Oh Matt ...

MATT waves her off.

MATT

No. ... It's just ... (the tears come harder)

CARLY

Please ...

MATT attempts to compose himself. He is not successful.

CARLY

Is there ... can I ... Oh my god, I get why guys hate this. ... There's nothing ... Wait ...

CARLY runs off L.

This does not settle MATT. His sobbing escalates, then finally tapers off. By the time CARLY returns, he is just sniffing.

CARLY returns with a fist full of napkins which she hands to MATT.

MATT

Thanks.

CARLY (still shaken)

I have never in my life been in such a blind panic to DO SOMETHING. Anything.

MATT (nods)

Glad you came back.

CARLY

Really?

MATT

Yeah. I'd feel like a real idiot ... (starts to choke up, catches himself) ... a real idiot if I had fallen in love with a woman who could just walk out like that ... while I was ...

CARLY

I'm close to being that kind of woman.

MATT

No, you're not.

CARLY

No. ... I'm not.

SILENCE

MATT

Let me tell you. Knowing who you are and what you want may not be the answer, either.

CARLY waits for him to continue.

MATT

I'm pretty clear about my place in the world and the things I value. And I know the thing I want most is a family of my own. I tried it the logical, planned out way. Met a girl in college. Married her at the right age. Kablooeey!!! Boy did that ever not work out. Waited for love and waited for love. Found love. Found it in an unexpected way in an unexpected place at an unexpected time. Threw caution to the wind. Trusted my instincts. Kablooeey again! A smaller, less public, less humiliating Kablooeey ... but I'm still alone at the end of it all.

CARLY

I'm sorry.

MATT

It's almost enough to make me question my faith. Fortunately, I'm still at almost.

CARLY

I'm glad. You are a good guy ... ack ... and you deserve better than that kind of a brush off from me. You are ... well one of the funny things is ... Here you are ... this stunningly attractive ... oh let's just say it ... beautiful man.

MATT

Which means very little.

CARLY

My ultimate fantasy ... a gorgeous guy who I could teach and lead ... who would come to my bed with no bad habits to break ... and I have to walk away.

MATT (gently)

Well ... you don't have to ...

CARLY

Yes. I do. I have to be as true to my uncertainty as you are to your certainty. A man isn't my answer right now. Not even a man as wonderful as you seem..

MATT

And my life lesson is that I need to work on my timing.

CARLY

I am sorry.

MATT shrugs.

SILENCE

MATT

I think it's time for me to try the ocean on my own.

MATT begins to walk slowly off R.

CARLY

Matt ... You're not ... You're okay ...

MATT

I'm just going to the beach.

CARLY

You're sure.

MATT

Yes. My people don't do suicide. I may be miserable and alone until I'm ninety, but I'll make the whole journey.

CARLY

I hope you find the happiness you deserve long before ninety.

MATT

Thanks.

MATT walks off R.

CARLY watches him walk off and watches after him for a moment. She turns and begins to walk L. She stops. She is not ready to deal with BELINDA.

CARLY sits on a chaise and picks up the magazine BELINDA left behind. She flips through it and laughs.

CARLY

This is what I get for coming out without a book.

CARLY sets down the magazine and looks toward the pool. After a flash of doubt or regret, contentment settles over her.

Lights fade on a woman at peace with the choice she has made.

End of *Falling Off the Edge*.