

“The Best of Us

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ELLIOT: Elder millennial. Husband. Thinks he’s cool but hasn’t changed since freshman year of college. Libertarian. Big heart. Smart, rich, not used to speaking out; a doormat learning how to stand up.

JAN: Elder millennial. Wife. Cindy McCain style republican. Smart, rich, over analytical, hyper-focused and runs this shit. Judges others with the relish of a prosecutor making a final argument.

Inspired by the article:

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/article/2024/may/25/american-pronatalists-malcolm-and-simon-e-collins>

BACKYARD

(The roar of a busy city in the background. Children SCREAMING BLOODY MURDER inside. ELLIOT, dressed incredibly well, throws down a HUGE, old school picnic-blanket on the ground. JAN-dressed almost identically- works outside, swiping behind a VR headset. ELLIOT steps onto the blanket- the mood changes, the city sounds disappear, like we are in a new world. “Circle Back” by Lawrence plays, or the equivalent, either way its chill and adventurously ROMANTIC. Elliot pulls out a fancy bottle of wine from nowhere. Then, he pulls out two wine glasses from nowhere, MAGIC SHIT. JAN takes off her VR headset...)

JAN

This is-

ELLIOT

Wait for it-

JAN

Well wait for what / “wait for it” really-

ELLIOT

Almoooooooooost done-

JAN

Elliot-

ELLIOT

Jan, you said “my way my play”; this is the way

JAN

(fine)

ELLIOT

What?!

JAN

-I said “Fine.”

ELLIOT

Oh. That was- much easier than I thought *I’m sorry*, I yelled uh, please:

(She steps onto the blanket- suddenly all the outside sounds are SUCKED out; MAGIC.)

JAN

Nuh-uh.

ELLIOT

Yeah-huh. When you step onto this blanket, Jan, we are no longer in our backyard;
no traffic-

JAN

No children, *screaming*, no neighbors-

ELLIOT

No huge clumps of fresh dog shit-

JAN

Wait what-

ELLIOT

Look at my eyes Jan not at the dog shit *look into my eyes-* on this blanket- we are in Atlantis.

JAN

“Atlantis.”.....*Bonjour.*

(He hands her a full glass of wine.)

Oh. Oh Elliot this is *heavy*.

ELLIOT

Escargot Merlot from the Naperville Costco.

JAN

-You went all the way to Nap Valley? *For me.*

ELLIOT

For us; / the fine print, the crisp taste of the great escape-

JAN

Mmmmmm; it’s so full bodied, Elliot it’s so oakey / it’s just this aroma of oakiness

ELLIOT

Incredibly oakey stuff here-

JAN

Lemme get a straw-

*(She stands, one foot off the blanket- suddenly the city returns, loud, **PIERCING-**
She sits- instantly, nothing. Atlantis.)*

ELLIOT

...Let’s explore the mouthfeel.

(They take a big sip. It’s great. A sigh of release..)

JAN

The glasses...Did you get from the cabinet / or the-

ELLIOT

Dishwasher

JAN

Yeah, so these are not *clean*-

ELLIOT

God damnit-

JAN

No....No I like it dirty.

*(ELLIOT and JAN get close...about to kiss...
From offstage, a nerf toy SHOOTS, hitting them. Jan stands off of Atlantis-)*

JAN

Ok get OFF the roof, Mommy and Daddy are having secret private funfun time Jebbidah get off the roof or I WILL SHIT SO MANY BRICKS ILL BUILD MOUNT OLYMPUS **JEBBIDAHHHH!!!!!!**

(Back on Atlantis. Trying to sink back into the sexy...)

Now, what were you saying about mouthfeel?

ELLIOT

(it's dead)

-Yea, so no, actually / uhhhh-

JAN

Oh here / we go-

ELLIOT

Yeaaaaah, we need to *talk*, Jan we really need / to just have a sit down-

JAN

You're setting a trap-

ELLIOT

This is not a trap, this is not a fight-

it's just an invitation to change our situation and build a foundation for the implementation of a better creation within communication.

JAN

(Angry and horny)

... Ok Elliot?

You know I fucking *love it* when you go Lin Manuel Miranda on me, but using it in this context?

Tarnishes that joy.

ELLIOT

(final)

Janet. We need to talk about Jebbidah. We we need to be radical andand honest.

We need to talk about the party, the park, the-

Janet: we need to talk about *our son*.

JAN and ELLIOT

.....

JAN

I did what anybody would do, *any Mother*, would do, and it sounds crazy but you ask anybody every-single-mother-who-actually-fucks with mothering ask any *motherfucker* about what I did and they'd all say "Yes girl, Ok, it is giving."

I did what had to be done.

ELLIOT

....Jan, you slapped our son. In front of everybody. At his birthday party.
Janet you slapped the shit out of a 7 year old.

JAN

8.

ELLIOT

What?

JAN

He’s 8. *Now*. “Happy Birthday”, remember / look “I’m just being radical and honest” Elliot I’m just playing by the rules!

ELLIOT

Ohhhh, no, God, (no, this is)“hahaha, hahaha”, Jan, *this is big*.
You slapped out son in front of our fr- *my*- Jan. *Everybody’s* talking about it.

JAN

Mmm, really, who? Your bi-curious cabal of childless millennials?

ELLIOT

-Oh my God / what?!

JAN

Oh yeah I’ve been cookin’ up that one for months; *it’s good*.

ELLIOT

Jan, someone *filmed it*.

JAN

.....Are people-

ELLIOT

Yup.

JAN

But they’re, they’re not, like-

ELLIOT

Yup.

JAN

Well-

ELLIOT

Nope. *Yup*.

JAN

-*Got it*, but on a scale of 1 to-

ELLIOT

17.

JAN

Ohhhhh-

ELLIOT

17 YUP

JAN

fuck me yup-

ELLIOT

Fuck *us*, that’s what everybody’s saying Jan they’re saying “fuck them”

JAN

(half kidding)

I agree “fuck them” fuck / them all-

ELLIOT

Noooo not “fuck us” *them* “fuck us” / US see

JAN

OhhhhK

ELLIOT

No see WE are the fuckers in the story who need to get fucked not “fuck us” *them* it’s “fuck us US” *fuck us Jan* fucking fuckity fuck US us, FUCKing F-...

(He suddenly gets it.)

-Fuck me.

JAN

No not fuck / you-

ELLIOT

(realizing the nightmare)

Oh yeah *fuck me*, Jan, oh fuck me *yeah*.

Jebbidah wanted a party, begged for a party....You were non responsive and aloof but I was supportive and instrumental, *fuck you to me*: a big honking fuck you to me.

...Elon Musk lied. To me, specifically. He said after your 5th kid “they just start taking care of themselves”.

JAN

“Like cats that can talk.”

ELLIOT

But they *talk too much*

JAN

Meow meow “I’m hungry” *meow meow* “test me for polio” *meow / meow*

ELLIOT

Way too much. Remember when it was just you, and me, and Smithsonian?

JAN

Smithsonian was low maintenance, no hassle, / in and out-

ELLIOT

No hassle with Smithsonian, and Lockheed Maybell- *was easy as fuck-*

JAN

She was, we don’t tell her that / enough-

ELLIOT

SO CHILL-

JAN

Lockheed Maybell did not draw excess attention to herself as an adolescent at all-

ELLIOT

Look, half the time I didn’t know *she was even there!*

JAN

Immaculate vibes!

ELLIOT

The vibes were imperial! Andand I’m not blaming Jebbidah / but-

JAN

(Something *is up* with / Jebbidah)

ELLIOT

Something is up and it’s *not just* the weird thing with all the *hugs-*

JAN

“I had a nightmare” don’t wake *me* up, don’t bring me into it, / My God

ELLIOT

Not my business!

JAN and ELLIOT

“They not like us, They not like us”

ELLIOT

This is great / hahaha, hahaha,

JAN

I *love* just *dragging* our children, fuck them / (amiright), hahahaha-

ELLIOT

Right, fuck those, fuck those whores; uh but *still*:

Monday morning everybody goes back to normal- *but me*. The kids go back to school. The maid’s go back to the basement. You put on the VR mixed reality helmet and work from home, butbutbut *me-* I go back to work. And I deal with- I’m the one that’s gotta deal with what people think of our family.

JAN

-You should talk to that Vince, the guy that works next / to the-

ELLIOT

Ohhh, Vince only has 2 kids, we have, uh, 8 children, Jan, not the same.

JAN

Well *he should* have more. He went to Yale, he’s still got a hairline and he’s smart enough to stand by RFK Jr to this day boy howdy does Vince need to start *pushing ‘em out*; lazy, at that point, selfish-

(Elliot is going THROUGH it; breathing hard, near tears-)

...Oh Daddy, no-

ELLIOT

Sorry pussybaby it’s just...I’m, I’m *scared* of monday morning and *I, / I, I-*

JAN

Come to me, *shhh, shhh*, come to me, come to pussybaby Daddy, *shhh*...I know...*I / know-*

ELLIOT

Just...Can you...baby can you just do *that that* thing?

JAN

What thing?

ELLIOT

The thing, the thing you did at my parents, after that big fight with my Dad?

JAN
-Lie to you?

ELLIOT
Yes / (please), -ohhhhh thank you.....

(She instantly takes his head into her lap, comforting)

JAN
Oh everything is gonna be Ok, Daddy, shhh, everything is fine, and people love you....and you did absolutely nothing wrong for bringing this up, shh...
Besides, what are they gonna do? “Put it online?” They don’t even pay for twitter.

ELLIOT
(hahahaha)

JAN
Right? Weirdos! And who’s gonna post it?! Hmm?
Amy the She/They/It?

ELLIOT
Jaaaaaaan-

JAN
“Oh I’m Amy, SO WOKE, Free Palestine” excuse me no, Amy, Israel has a right to exist because now *corporations are people* you runny egg bitch fuck her, and *fuck* your friend Jason the secret democrat-

ELLIOT
Independent progressive-

JAN
At the end of the day they all worship the ‘D’ but worst of the worst, king of the cocksuckers, Elliot your friend Vivo is the *Hillary Clinton of men* / I hate his look, I hate his hair-

ELLIOT
“Haha” I’m laughing but I’m so frustrated right now / “haha”, *oh-*

JAN
And I HATE how Vivo and his little girlfriend do that thing, that thing where instead of kissing like normal people they just put their foreheads together and close their eyes-

ELLIOT
It’s well its it’s *intimate-*

JAN
It makes me think they don’t know *how to fuck-*

ELLIOT
Ok-

JAN
I HATE IT, I hate Vivo and Jason and Apartheid Amy
and I hate how *they all think they’re sooo autistic* but nobody’s getting tested for it *I don’t think* they’re even on the spectrum *oh no* I think they all just watch too much anime and need to learn how to make direct eye contact and stop smoking Delta 9 *I hate* these libtards Daddy *I Hate Your Fucked Up Friends.*

ELLIOT
-They, *nope* uh, *coworkers, ok, aaand* they just came out to support uh support-support *us.*

JAN

And you are choosing their discomfort over the beliefs of our prontalist family and that’s- baby? Daddy?
Elliot. That’s *not* what friends are for.

ELLIOT

(venom slip)

Yeah well you wouldn’t know anything about that.

...Sorry. I just...sorry, that, that was me, again, that was *wrong*, again, and-

JAN

I *have* friends-

ELLIOT

Then where are they? Jan, your friends didn’t come. To your kid’s birthday. Just mine. And as- as libtarded as they can be, they are...*maaaaaaybe* correct about....some things.

JAN

-Go on.

ELLIOT

Ok. “I’m scared!” Uh....They’re right about, uh, maybe letting the kids use *nicknames*. For / one.

JAN

Our children have powerful names of attraction and purpose.

ELLIOT

-*Yes and-* at school maybe it’s time to let them use *less of them*; I don’t know-

JAN

There is nothing wrong with Jebbidah-

ELLIOT

Ok sure but tell that to Samsung Encarta I mean, come on, *NICKNAMES-*

Can, uh cancan be “an empowering gift for the world to see our children manifest their own desirability”.

JAN

(she likes the Lin-Manuel shit he just did)

...Ok.

ELLIOT

Ok. Ok? *Oh*, K, Ok, / uh, Ok-

JAN

(getting sexy)

What else are they right about, before we leave the island of lost Atlantis, / what-else-

ELLIOT

Ok, sure, thank you, uhhhh how about: the shaming!

JAN

The what’ing?

ELLIOT

The shaming thatthat *you* do, to to others who you do not see as worthy-

JAN

-Ok-

ELLIOT

Ok, easy, /

- (damnit)

JAN

No, “ok BUT”: how will others know that they are living horrible toxic lives unless I explain that *to them?*

ELLIOT

-Let it be a mystery.

JAN

....*Oh*. Oh like: I stay quiet *now*...and it bites them in the ass later. Like a trap.

ELLIOT

I, it, n- YES, actually yes, / *mmhm*, “oh, oh that’s it baby”

JAN

See now *I can do that*, I’ll just say it with my eyes, just my eyes Ok I’ll be all like- *. See!

ELLIOT

“Uh-oh!”

JAN

I’ll do it silent, with my eyes, oh I’ve got it *oh yeah*, / it’s on-

ELLIOT

Last thing-

JAN

And then maybe we can *explore the mouthfeel-*

ELLIOT

Last thing and then the mouthfeel-

JAN

Oh *bonjour*, yes, bring it:

ELLIOT

Jan, you will never strike our children again.

JAN

...Understandable. When we’re out of the house-

ELLIOT

Janet, inside, outside. Today. *No*. That? That- That *was it*.

JAN

-Corporal punishment is legal-

ELLIOT

So’s letting your kids eat sugar. We don’t. That’s why we’re better than everybody else, we don’t go with the curve, we SET the / curve-

JAN

So your little woke friends had a lot to say in the group chat today, huh, lots of feedback for those with children from those without / children, interesting-

ELLIOT

Ok Jan, please, stop bringing them into this just because they’re the the one thing in my life that you can’t control they’re *mine*, and they’re good people, strong people-

JAN

Who don’t have mouths to feed so they can “chill about” and just be sooo interesting with all their *time*; *you’re jealous* of them, aren’t you-

ELLIOT

Jealous of what?!

JAN

(venom)

Exactly, they are childless, they are selfish, Elliot who *gives a shit!*

When they die, they will leave nothing behind, no legacy nothing but loans and asian ramen and homeless cats, *useless!*

-Hang out with *whoever you have to* for work but at the end of the day,

they are doing *nothing* to save this world WE are raising the future WE are taking all the lumps “juSt

LiVe yoUr lIfE, dO yoU” oh nonono *pipe dreams burst*

fuck your boss fuck your bros *I fight*

for the better tomorrow

every other 9 months *I fight* with my body and I push

my heart breaks for all it takes while your top one percent buddies refuse to replenish the stock as the

dirty basement maids of the world respawn and pushpushpush until they’re replacing us *ohhhh I will do*

whatever it takes so that when we retire this place won’t look like the planet of the fucking apes, God as

my witness *they will NOT replace us* so if your found-family-homies wanna whisper how they hate me

for saving the world I say bring it on-

ELLIOT

(calm)

It’s not about what other people say,

It’s about our son growing up to hate you more than he does right now.

JAN AND ELLIOT

.....

ELLIOT

We wanna save the world. *We are.*

But- *but*, if you could do one thing to save our family- One thing to save *our world*,

Jan, will you *do it?* Or- or is that, uh, not, not “within your calculations”, is that just completely fucking out of...

...I’m....I shouldn’t-.....I’m sorry.

JAN

(means it)

You said that 4 times tonight. I counted.

...Keep one....Take mine:

Elliot: *I am sorry.*

I....I refused to lead with intelligence. And science. I chose emotion. And I put us in jeopardy.

...That was the *last time.*

I’m sorry. To you. And Jebbidah. And I will tell him before he goes to bed I will make sure he does not sleep *without knowing* how much I-

...I will never strike our children again.

ELLIOT

Ever. Janet-

JAN

Yes, ever, ok, I / just

ELLIOT

(ripping off a band-aid)

Ever, Janet, ever, ever,

ever; ever, ever, ever, ever, ever, ever again....

JAN

I promise.

...Do one thing for me?

When *you change*- when they open your eyes to something new...take me with you?

ELLIOT

-I'm- they're not *changing me*, / Jan-

JAN

I can *feel it*...it's not all bad...and-

I might fall, but I will get up, I am good at getting back up *let-me-try*...to grow with you.

(She sticks out her hand. Elliot takes it.)

...Besides. We're gonna need new godparents to choose from.

ELLIOT

Ha. Uh- I thought you rejected the philosophy-

JAN

Until your friend Sara told me that godparents are indebted to provide our children with gifts, Elliot, *think* of the untapped re-sell market on strollers, the swaddles, oh Daddy we could rock this town.

ELLIOT

-Ok! But, see the gifts, Jan; that's only when a child is born-

JAN

And you know I like to plan ahead.

...Your friends are- *Here*...and that's ok.

But their astute sense of self observation means they will never settle down. And since we can't get rid of them... We have to repopulate *for them*. And by the time they're pushing 60, our children will be their *ruling class*- and they will gladly accept their new overlords without revolt because while they only thought about themselves, we thought about everybody else.

We're not "weird". We're warriors.

ELLIOT

(cautious)

.....Let me *think about*- it's, it's...it's just been / a-

JAN

(hiding the pain)

Got it.. I...I know we said 8 (was the,) the limit / butbut, I just , at the same time you know I just-

ELLIOT

Lemme think...lemme *think*, Jan, please, just-

(Awkward....ELLIOT starts clearing up the blanket....Steps off ATLANTIS-

Sound returns....He breathes, weathered, going THROUGH it, looking OFF.....Back turned...

JAN silently gets her wine, leaves Atlantis: We hear the sound of a child, SCREEEEEEAAAAAAMING.)

JAN

I swear to GOD JEBBIDAH C-

*(She stops herself. Calm....
She picks up ELLIOT's flashing phone. A text. She reads...)*

JAN

Uh- It's Vivo....at the bar...again.....Looks- “very cool, very intense...”

(A “joke”)

”You think they're jealous?

ELLIOT

-Of us?

*(JAN let's that hit her. Takes a breath, starts inside-
ELLIOT, without looking, sticks out a hand....JAN turns, takes it.)*

ELLIOT

You wanna just fuck on the lawn?

JAN

(sincere)

...That's the nicest thing anyones ever said to me.

*(Music returns. They step back onto Atlantis.
They lean in to kiss...But something is happening between them, a discomfort....Uncertainty.....
They look away from each other....Then, slowly, their foreheads come together to touch.)*

END of PLAY