

Scene One

*A bar. CASSIE is studying a Scrabble game in front of her. EMMA enters, holding two pints.*

CASSIE                    Thanks.

EMMA                    *(referring to the game)* Have you moved yet?

CASSIE                    I'm still thinking. So what's this 'big news' you have to tell me? You're not pregnant are you?

EMMA                    How could I possibly be pregnant?

CASSIE                    Sorry, I'm kidding. Go ahead, tell me.

*EMMA takes a sip of her drink.*

EMMA                    It's finished.

CASSIE                    What is? The book? Are you serious?

EMMA                    It's done, Cassie.

CASSIE                    When did you finish? Just now?

EMMA                    Yesterday.

*EMMA takes an enormous manuscript out of her bag and gives it to Cassie.*

CASSIE                    Emma, that's — my God it's huge isn't it ... How do you feel?

EMMA                    Wonderful. Terrified. Ecstatic. Total panic. For five *years* I've been chained to that desk like a, like a dog tied up in a yard. And now I'm *free*. I feel liberated, like, like I could do anything. I could go *outside* ... I could take a walk through the park ... I could meet *people*, if that was something I wanted to do. Writing isn't healthy. It's a sickness. A *disease*. And for some reason, I believed the only cure was to *write* my way out. Like an addicted gambler who can't leave the tables but just keeps doubling down.

*EMMA drinks, as she continues to do throughout the scene. CASSIE hardly touches her pint, if at all.*

CASSIE Well, I can't wait to read it.

EMMA Alright, but before you do, there are a few things you have got to remember. For one thing, it's extremely personal. I mean, you already know the basic idea, about ... about how abusive dad got after mom left.

CASSIE He never hit us.

EMMA So it was psychological abuse. I know he hated me.

CASSIE He didn't hate you.

EMMA Dad took all the resentment and anger he had towards mom and directed it at me.

CASSIE I did think you got it worse somehow, being the firstborn ...

EMMA He stunted my growth. No, it's true, I never developed as a human being. So I became a writer instead.

CASSIE Which was ... let's face it ... your revenge.

EMMA Maybe it was my way of getting back at him at first. But this, now, this goes way beyond that. All I'm saying is: you were there, you probably have your own version of events ... don't forget a lot of it is fictional, it's completely made up. Like the deathbed scene, that never happened.

CASSIE Okay, don't ruin it.

EMMA You were there when he died, you were with him. So naturally you'll have a better idea ...

CASSIE Emma please. Just let me read it.

EMMA Just don't ... don't be too critical. Not that you need to censor yourself. If you don't like something, just say so. But give me a reason for God's sake. Don't just say 'I didn't like it' without explaining why. Oh God. Maybe this was a mistake.

CASSIE Emma, relax. I'm sure I'll love it.

EMMA                   How soon can you read it? Tonight?

CASSIE                 I can't tonight. I've got laundry to do. I'll start on it tomorrow.

EMMA                   I don't mean to pressure you. What time tomorrow?

CASSIE                 I'll get to it as soon as possible, okay? I have homework to grade.

EMMA                   You're the only person I trust, Cassie.

CASSIE                 That means a lot to me.

EMMA                   Well I haven't got anyone else. The agents and publishers all treat you like you're a thief robbing them of their time. I wouldn't want their job.

CASSIE                 You wouldn't want any job.

EMMA                   I find that an extremely hurtful remark.

CASSIE                 Relax. I'm only saying, you've worked very hard to avoid ... working. Have you given any thought to what you're going to do now?

EMMA                   Now?

CASSIE                 Yes, now that it's finished ... what's the next stage?

EMMA                   Well, I still have to submit the manuscript, secure a publisher ...

CASSIE                 And if someone decides to represent you ... they might actually pay you for it?

EMMA                   I don't know. Probably. Can't you just let me enjoy the moment?

CASSIE                 Emma, relax. I just want you to be realistic. Sometimes I think ... it's like you don't live in the real world.

EMMA                   Thank God for that.

CASSIE                 Emma, please. I'm only looking out for your interests.

EMMA                    I know. Sorry. I'm just nervous.

CASSIE                That's ... understandable. Oh! Got one ...

*CASSIE makes a word on the board.*

EMMA                    Very clever.

*(finishes her drink)*

What do you think? Another round?