**My Family Tackles the Big Questions**

**COMPASSION: DAD**

My dad was turning into a traffic circle when a green VW bug ran through a stop sign and almost side swiped him. My dad followed this car, riding his bumper, for five miles. The car has a sticker of Buddha on the back, and after a quarter hour of stewing, my dad said,

“These fucking Buddhists” \*

\*muster energy to correct him

\*use it to laugh uncontrollably

**INDEPENDENCE: MOM**

I am in the kitchen, and Mom makes my lunch likes she's mad at it. Out of nowhere she says, “Men are fucking idiots. If you want to do anything in this life, you better be prepared to do it yourself.” I wonder if my mom was talking to me, or if she was just liked to think aloud, and I just happened to be there.

**FEMINISM: MOM**

I watched a show about female heart attacks, and it said 80% of women don't go to the hospital when they have a heart attack, while 90%of men call an ambulance at the first sign of chest pains. My suspicions were that this certainly had something to do with the patriarchy, until I brought it up to my mother. She interpreted it thusly: “No, it's because men are a bunch of babies.”

**SOLITUDE: JOSIAH**

I twist my engagement ring around my finger and Josiah keeps talking. He could talk through a goddamn steel girder when he thinks he’s right.

“I bet you can't even tell me why you want to get married”

“You know what, I don't need to tell you anything. All you need to know is that I want to do it, and I would like for you to respect that”.

Josiah makes a smug kind of sound,

“Exactly”.

**REVENGE: JED**

I have my head in my hands at the kitchen table, and Jed is raging across the living room. He is a caged tiger, all pacing, all teeth. I told Jed about The Incident, The Incident that brought me to the present. My ring is thankfully fingerless.

“No!”, he rips his arm out of my mom's grip,

“no, I don't care, I don’t care if I go to jail. I could kill him *tonight* and I wouldn’t lose a night's sleep over it”

**LOVE: MOM**

My mom took me out for breakfast on my 22nd birthday, because she knows breakfast is my favorite meal. She takes a bite of her farmers omelet and talks about the day I was born.

“The church prayed for you for days. Sometimes I think that's why you never got sick until you were 10 or older.” my mom sips her green juice. “all those doctors said both of us weren’t going to make it. That you might, or I might, but not both of us:; but, we made it, didn't we baby?

**SELF-ESTEEM: MY AUNT MEGAN**

We spent Christmas with dad's family in Missouri, and Missouri is a frigid shit hole. I was 14, and the cake was the only enjoyable part of the trip: because if Missouri knows one thing, it's how to make food that will help you forget you are in Missouri. I went for another slice, when I heard my Aunt Megan comment on the phone to a friend that “...and Sarah here, is as skinny as a string bean, and just went for her *third* slice of cake.”

Needless to say, I had a few questions.

1: why are you talking shit?

2: if we're not supposed to eat them, why are you baking cakes?

3: Are you mad because you know I get to leave Missouri?

**PURPOSE: JED**

“It's all a game: everything. Everything in life is part of a great game. There are those who don't even know there is a game; this is most people, and they fail automatically. There are those who know there is a game and play it poorly. There are those who play the game decently; and, there are those who play the game better than anyone.

I nod my head.

“Bill Clinton, he’s a great player. I hate him, I think he’s evil; but, he plays it well. He’s from Arkansas, fucking Arkansas! Nothing good comes out of Arkansas. Even Mississippi, mention Mississippi and people are like, ‘alright, I know a few cool people from Mississippi; but, when you say Arkansas, people just go ‘Eee, that's rough buddy’. He came out of fucking Arkansas, and he becomes a *billionaire*. He changed the way people approach politics. He exerted his will on the world, and said ‘fuck you, it's my way’.”

I think of a question. I'm confused.

“But what's the point? Of the game?”

He leans forward, too intense,

“Will you be remembered after you die?”