

IT COULD BE ME

A One-act Play

by

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CHARACTERS

MITCH.....Seventy years old, suffering from debilitating back pain. Needs to walk with a cane. But he is strong emotionally.

CARRIE.....Sixty years old. Feisty.

SETTING

Berkeley, CA

TIME

Present

NOTES

/ Slash indicates next speaker interrupts.

IHSS = In-Home Supportive Services:

A county program that pays caregivers, like Carrie, to work for low-income, disabled clients like Mitch.

(Mitch's studio apartment. Bedroom area and kitchen are partially separated by a screen.)

CARRIE

(Sound of the Temptations' "Ain't Too Proud to Beg," emanates from her cell phone as she enters front door into the kitchen carrying two bags of groceries. Places bags and phone on the table, takes off her coat, and starts to put food away.)

MITCH

(Smoking, using a cane, slowly enters kitchen. He is in obvious pain.)

Hey.

(Louder.)

Hey, Carrie.

CARRIE

(Turns.)

MITCH

Could you turn it down?

CARRIE

Say what?

MITCH

(Louder.)

Turn it down.

CARRIE

(She lowers the volume.)

MITCH

All the way please.

CARRIE

(Shuts it off.)

I thought you love the Temptations.

MITCH

I never said that. I like 'em. Just like I like Smokey Robinson and The Miracles. Ray Charles is the one I love... Y'know, when I used to live in Philadelphia years ago, I met Ray Charles at this bar with my girlfriend.

CARRIE

And he shake *your* hand. But he take hers in both hands and slowly be feeling up her arm.

MITCH
I told you that?

CARRIE
An' you mad 'cause she seem to like it.

MITCH
Yeah, I was jealous.

(Carrie starts to put bag of avocados inside refrigerator.)

Just because the guy's blind and famous he gets away with... Wait!

CARRIE
What?

MITCH
Don't put the avocados in the refrigerator! It's too soon.

(Feels them.)

Yeah. Yeah... These are really hard.

CARRIE
I keep forgetting.

MITCH
I'll stick 'em in a paper bag with a banana.

(Pause.)

What's the look for? Supposed to ripen them quicker. Haven't you ever heard that?

CARRIE
No. I told you, I don't do avocados. Got no taste.

MITCH
(Picks up a small plastic-wrapped cake.)

What happened? I asked for two chocolate-orange cakes.

CARRIE
One's enough.

MITCH
Whattaya mean?

CARRIE
The doctor say you shouldn't have too much sugar.

MITCH

So?

CARRIE

Chocolate your weakness. You can't stop eating it. It's for your own good.

MITCH

Cigarettes are one thing. I understand why you won't buy 'em since you quit.

(With an edge.)

But I don't like this.

CARRIE

Okay.

MITCH

I'm serious, Carrie. It's not your decision. When I say two, get me two.

CARRIE

I said okay. Damn! It only a cake.

MITCH

No, no. It's not just that. It's 10:30... What the hell happened?

CARRIE

Don't start!

MITCH

Whattaya mean?

CARRIE

Don't start with me. I/

MITCH

You were supposed to be here hours ago.

CARRIE

I know.

MITCH

Eight o'clock!

CARRIE

I don't like your tone.

MITCH

I thought we had an agreement.

Don't raise your voice.

CARRIE

I'm not.

MITCH

Yes, you are.

CARRIE

All of a sudden you're offended by my voice? How many times have I heard you scream on the phone? Or in the car?

MITCH

That's different.

CARRIE

You promised me you'd be here at 8, after taking care of Jolene! Didn't you?

MITCH

That don't give you the right to yell!

CARRIE

I'm pissed!

MITCH

I don't care what you are. I ain't let nobody yell at me.

CARRIE

(Phone rings.)

Nobody!

(Picks up phone.)

What is it *now*?

MITCH

(Stares at her a moment.)

CARRIE

(Irritated.)

Where am I at?

MITCH

(Recognizes who it is, turns and goes into the bathroom.)

CARRIE

Where am I at? I'm at work, Gina. Where else?

(Pause.)

Same time as always... No, no, change that. It gonna be later today. What you want?

(Pause.)

For what?

(Pause.)

Why can't *you* do it?

(Pause.)

And I ain't? I just told you, I'm... Okay, okay. I'll go. After I'm through here... But this shit ain't gonna fly no more. You gots to get up earlier. No wonder JJ don't feel part the class. He get there way too late. An' stop givin' the boy donuts. A.D.D. my ass! He ain't have no A.D.D. when he be with me.

(Hangs up.)

Lord, Lord, I done give all of me away.

(Resumes putting away food in refrigerator and on shelves.)

MITCH

(Comes out of bathroom.)

That's gotta be Gina.

(A little louder.)

Carrie!

CARRIE

(Turns around.)

What?

MITCH

I said that's gotta be Gina.

CARRIE

How can you tell?

MITCH

The way your voice changes.

CARRIE

She tries my patience.

MITCH

That's for sure.

CARRIE

Soon as I hear her voice, I tense up. It always be that way. Of all the kids, she the one I worry about. 'Cause when I have her I way too messed up to be anyone's mom.

MITCH

That was a long time ago.

CARRIE

I know.

MITCH

Seems like you've more than made up for it all these years.

CARRIE

Somethin' about that girl. That's why I told all of 'em, if anythin' happen to me, look after her.

MITCH

Well, at least she's started working again.

CARRIE

Yeah. But too often she Capital "S" period! Capital "O" period! Capital "S" period!

MITCH

What does that mean?

CARRIE

Stuck. On. Stupid!... She drive me up the wall. I loves her and I always have her back. But I'm stressed enough. Like now, I feel a migraine comin' on.

MITCH

Uh huh.

CARRIE

That's why I don't need no attitude from you.

MITCH

Attitude?

CARRIE

It's bad enough I ain't have a moment's peace this weekend.

MITCH

Attitude?

(Raising his voice.)

You walk in here two and half hours late. And you're talkin' *attitude*?... Dammit Carrie!

CARRIE

(Gets her coat, starts to go.)

What're you doing?

CARRIE

You see my backside walkin' away. I ain't gonna listen to this shit!

(Storms out the door.)

MITCH

Hey, Carrie!

(Goes to doorway.)

Carrie, wait!

(Pause.)

Carrie!... Oh fuck it. Go on then.

(Closes door. Pauses. Takes out his cell phone, dials.)

Rachel? Hi, it's Mitch

(Pause.)

Oh, I'm okay...I... I'm calling 'cause it looks like things may be changing since the last time we talked... I realize it's short notice, but are you still available?

(Pause.)

You are?

(Pause.)

Oh good, good...It's not definite. I, uh, um...I'm just checking.

(Pause.)

Thanks. First, I've gotta talk to Carrie. But either way I'll get back to you.

(Carrie returns.)

Oh, sorry, I've got to go.

MITCH (CONT'D)

(Pause.)

I'll be in touch.

(To Carrie.)

I thought you were gone.

CARRIE

(Hands Mitch bills, coins, and a receipt.)

Here your change.

MITCH

Thanks.

CARRIE

Oh, they ain't have no rye crackers.

MITCH

(Upset.)

Again? Jesus/

CARRIE

I ain't playing Mitch, if you wanna say somethin'!

MITCH

Okay, okay...

(Calmly.)

Okay, I'll try.

CARRIE

Thank you.

(Takes off her coat again.)

MITCH

But I am pissed.

CARRIE

(Continues to put away food.)

MITCH

You not only came late, you didn't even have the decency to say anything. What about our arrangement? You broke your word.

CARRIE

Couldn't help it. The woman done quit Jolene.

MITCH

The latest one?

CARRIE

Uh-huh.

MITCH

She's only been there, what, a week?

CARRIE

Four days.

MITCH

You said she was great. Even asked for more hours.

CARRIE

She did. She done talk 'bout how she want the job so bad. Then the heffa ain't show. What am I spozed to do?

MITCH

You could've called. Tell me what's going on.

CARRIE

Jolene wake me at 6:00, begging me to come over.

MITCH

You could've at least given me a heads up. I tried your cell five times.

CARRIE

It be off.

MITCH

When you're here the phone never stops ringing. Same thing in the car.

CARRIE

I told you, it off.

MITCH

How come?

CARRIE

I forget to turn it back on.

Bullshit!

MITCH

Well/

CARRIE

Don't give me that.

MITCH

Well, okay. Okay, you right.

CARRIE

I know I am/

MITCH

'Cause I don't wanna hear any shit. Like you be doing now.

CARRIE

So, it's my fault for getting upset? You don't have anything to...

MITCH

(Catching himself.)

...Anyway, anyway. You still could've been here by 9:00.

CARRIE

Say what?

CARRIE

You got to Jolene's by 7:00, right?

MITCH

7:30.

CARRIE

So that gave you enough time to/

MITCH

What you talkin' 'bout? You don't know how long it takes.

CARRIE

I have a pretty good idea.

MITCH

No, you don't. There's a lot more goin' on than you think... I'll show you.

CARRIE

Nah. MITCH

I'll show you. CARRIE

No. MITCH

(Grabs his hand and moves toward the bed.) CARRIE

Sit down. So once and for all you'll/

(Going along reluctantly.) MITCH

Nah, nah, there's no need/

C'mon, Mitch. CARRIE

Just tell me! And make it quick 'cuz I, I... we've gotta talk. And we still have a bunch of stuff to do. You're gonna have to stay late to make up the time. MITCH

Yeah. CARRIE

I'm really serious about talking. MITCH

(Thinking about what she is going to say about Jolene.) CARRIE

Yeah, yeah, okay... So, when I get to Jolene's she lyin' in the bed... She wiggle herself toward the chair.

Okay. MITCH

When she close, she rise up on one elbow an' reach out with her other hand. I grab it an' pull an' she scoots into the chair... It ain't easy. CARRIE

I never said/ MITCH

CARRIE

Then I grab her pants an' lift her so she sit up straight... Stick out your hand. I show you.

MITCH

I don't want to.

CARRIE

I have to help her 'cuz she can't stand up by herself. She can raise her legs up just enough so I can pull her. But it ain't easy.

MITCH

You told me she was heavy.

CARRIE

She definitely a load. 'Specially the way my shoulder be hurtin'.

MITCH

Damn.

CARRIE

Once that's done, she rolls to the bathroom, an' then I wrap my arms 'round her, swing her onto the toilet/

MITCH

Okay. I get it.

CARRIE

After she do her business, I have to wash her, put her back in her chair. The whole thing take 45 minutes. Sometime more.

MITCH

I get it. You're right.

CARRIE

Like I tell you, I'm seldom wrong.

MITCH

Even so, you still could've gotten here earlier.

CARRIE

I was goin' fast as I could. And maybe 'cuz I was rushin' she, she slip outta my hands and land on the floor.

MITCH

Jesus Christ!

CARRIE

I couldn't get her up. Had to get two neighbors. An' lemme tell you, they be huffin' and puffin'. So, you should be glad I'm here at all.

MITCH

Glad?

CARRIE

Yeah. An' already done the shopping.

MITCH

That's what you get paid for.

CARRIE

I'm tryin' my best.

MITCH

I know.

CARRIE

I got a lot on my plate.

MITCH

I don't doubt that. But this is supposed to be a job and you promised... I mean, I appreciate the groceries. But there's still laundry, you haven't washed the sheets in three weeks. I've gotta get a new tea kettle and go to Target for a pair of jeans 'cuz the sale ends today.

CARRIE

Okay.

MITCH

The vacuuming and the bathroom too.

CARRIE

Okay.

MITCH

It was supposed to be done last week. But there was your uncle's dialysis. I keep thinking things are gonna change but they only get worse.

CARRIE

I'll do it. I'll do it...

(Pointing to bag of groceries.)

Soon as I put this stuff away. But I'm not scrubbin' the bathtub.

MITCH
Your shoulder?

CARRIE
Yeah. It's killing me. I done pushed that sucker to the limit... I'll do the rest of the bathroom an' vacuum an' then we can go.

MITCH
Okay.

CARRIE
You comin' with me, right?

MITCH
Unless you wanna try on the pants for me.

CARRIE
You gots to be kidding.

MITCH
I'm just sayin' ... Where are you parked?

CARRIE
Right outside.

MITCH
(Distracted.)
Y'know, y'know, on second thought, after you finish the groceries. We should talk.

CARRIE
One minute.
(Takes two cans of tuna out of the bag, puts them on the shelf, then folds up bag, puts it away.)

MITCH
Thanks, Carrie.

CARRIE
You welcome.
(Pause.)
Hey, I'm sorry 'bout today.

MITCH
Sorry?... Sorry's too easy.

CARRIE

It an emergency.

MITCH

It's always an emergency. I thought when you sent Gina to sub for you, it was gonna be the last time. The last fuckin' time. Isn't that what you said?

(Catches himself, speaks slower.)

Look, look, look, I know it's hard with Jolene. It's impossible... The pressure you're under... And, in some ways I can identify with her... Like I told you, my back was so bad, I was bedridden for years. And people had to help me do the simplest tasks.

CARRIE

Yeah...

MITCH

So, this morning, I probably would've done the same thing you did. How can you say no to someone in that kinda shape? How can you not feel guilty?

CARRIE

I don't feel guilty.

MITCH

You don't?

CARRIE

No.

MITCH

Well, I would... I do. I do. I feel it even when I get upset at you. I feel like I'm being selfish, uncaring. Here you are, hanging in there with her, and I'm getting on your case... Why do you think I haven't been more curious? 'Cuz I didn't wanna know. That's why when she wanted us to get together to change the schedule, I, I said no. I was afraid I'd have to agree to whatever she wanted. How can I ask for anything, let alone hold the line, when she's so much worse off? My needs pale in comparison.

CARRIE

No one think that.

MITCH

I do. And from the way you act, so do you. Why else would/

CARRIE

I told you, she don't have no one else. Her dad always be her back up. But now it too hard, he can't be lifting her.

MITCH

But you told me she was gonna get another worker.

CARRIE

She did. The one what just left.

MITCH

Besides her. I'm talking about someone to back up her dad.

CARRIE

She try. Most women ain't strong enough.

MITCH

Then how about a man?

CARRIE

She don't want one.

MITCH

A sensitive gay man... Those times I was in the hospital, the gay guys were the most caring nurses I've ever had. Especially/

CARRIE

I know, I know. You done told me all about the Pakistani.

MITCH

Pakistani?

CARRIE

With the gold earring. The one what sat by your bed an'/'

MITCH

He was Indian. Sat there looking at me with such kindness. I'll never forget it.

CARRIE

No, no. Jolene ain't trust no man... When I suggest it/

MITCH

You did?

CARRIE

When I suggest it, she start to tremble. 'Cause she was abused.

MITCH

Damn! That's horrible. By a caregiver?

CARRIE

No, a cousin. When she four... I likes to kill that motherfucker. Since then, the only man Jolene let near her is her dad. But I tell her, anyone try to touch her, grab a pen, a key, whatever, and ram it into his throat.

MITCH

That ever happen to you?

CARRIE

No. No... My mama's boyfriend try one day when she at work and I home sick. But soon as my dog Wolfee start barking, he haul his fat ass outta there.

MITCH

Was it a real wolf?

CARRIE

No, German Shepherd... Jolene have a dog, Shelly. But she a service dog, y'know, gentle. If she ask her to bring the leash, she will. If she ask her to bring shoes closer to the bed, she do that too. And she always be watching over Jolene when people be around. 'Cept with me, she go to sleep.

MITCH

That means she trusts you.

CARRIE

Because I'm the only one who take her out. So she can smell stuff, like a dog spozed to.

MITCH

Uh-huh... Uh-huh.

(Pause.)

Well, if it can't be a man, you've gotta get a woman with muscles. A body builder type.

CARRIE

True that. But IHSS don't help you much. They have this list/

MITCH

That's how I found you.

CARRIE

But come to find out, most of the ones we call, don't call back. And the rest, when they see what it's like, they don't stay. The job too hard and the pay too low.

MITCH

Yeah. It's messed up.

CARRIE

But we gotta keep trying. Whatcha gonna do? 'Cause if Jolene can't get anyone, they gonna put her in Assisted Living. She have her own apartment now. She independent. She don't have to follow someone else's rules and regulations, y'know what I'm sayin'?

MITCH

What makes you think you're gonna find someone when you haven't after all this time? Let alone a sub... And more and more you tell me how much you're hurting.

CARRIE

I know.

MITCH

I'm worried. I'm not just saying this for selfish reasons, though that's part of it. I'm worried you might seriously injure yourself. End up like me. With your own caregiver list.

CARRIE

I don't want no one takin' care of me.

MITCH

I don't blame you. How many times have you said you can't keep doing this? That you were gonna tell her if she doesn't hire someone by the end of the month, you're gone. But you never stick to it. Then soon as you get better, you forget. December, then February. And now it's April!

CARRIE

What I spozed to do, leave her stranded?

MITCH

All I'm saying/

CARRIE

I can't do that.

MITCH

I know.

CARRIE

I can't! 'Cause it could be me.

MITCH

It could be any of us. You're one of the few people I know who doesn't just say that. Which impresses the hell out of me. Not that you need an ego boost... But there's gotta be a limit Carrie. I mean/

(Phone rings.)

CARRIE

(Picks up her phone.)

H'lo?

(Pause.)

Where else? Gonna be here a while. Later on, I gotta deal with JJ's principal 'cause Gina's gotta work late. What you want?

(Pause.)

What's wrong with the Nissan?

(Pause.)

Dang! How many times I tell you to keep up the payments?... What time the interview?

(Pause.)

You sure BART don't go there?

(Pause.)

Okay, okay. I'll get you.

(Pause.)

I know it's important! I may be a fool, but I ain't no damn fool. But *you* gonna pay for the gas. I been running here, running there for everyone.

(Puts phone down. Speaks to Mitch.)

It always somethin'. They repossess Reggie's car.

MITCH

No, no, you can't! You're not going!

CARRIE

What?

MITCH

Not this time. If you leave now that's it.

CARRIE

Who said I was? What you talkin' 'bout?

MITCH

I thought you/

CARRIE

You thinks too much. You gots to chill.

MITCH

But you just told him/

CARRIE

Tomorrow! The interview's tomorrow Mitch! After I finish with you.

MITCH

Oh, oh... I guess I jumped the gun.

CARRIE

He bust his butt the past three months looking for work. He can't pass this up.

MITCH

I know how you feel about your family. I respect you for it. Just like I respect, I admire how you've hung in there with Jolene. Most people would've left long ago. She's lucky. I dunno what she would've done without you... That's why I uh, why I've tried to work with you... Why I've bent over backwards... If you had another client, you couldn't keep helping her and still get paid. You know that, right?

CARRIE

Say what?

MITCH

You know that.

CARRIE

Yeah... I know...

MITCH

You don't acknowledge it though... The times I give you leeway. You never say anything when I sign your timecard for all those hours you haven't worked. I mean, you end up getting almost double... You make more than me. And now you act like it's your right.

CARRIE

I ain't ask you to do it, did I?

MITCH

No. You never ask for anything.

CARRIE

Right.

MITCH

But you didn't say *no* either. Or, God forbid, say *thanks*. Not that I expect you to kiss my ass.

(Pause.)

MITCH (CONT'D)

What I'm trying to get at is, everyone needs to feel, y'know, to feel appreciated... Just like when Jolene wouldn't give you those hours when she went to Colorado.

Ain't that a bitch. CARRIE

You were hurt. MITCH

Yeah. CARRIE

Pissed off. MITCH

Still am. CARRIE

I know. MITCH

And it ain't the money. She can keep her damn money. After all I done/ CARRIE

You'd like to feel it means something to her. MITCH

Right. Right. CARRIE

I feel the same... I know it's not your style, but every now and then it wouldn't hurt to hear, y'know, I was a good guy. MITCH

You okay. CARRIE

What? MITCH

You heard me. CARRIE

Whoa!... That must've taken a lot out of you. MITCH

CARRIE

You got that right.

MITCH

I wouldn't want you to strain yourself.

CARRIE

But I can't stand your yelling. I love me some Carrie too much for that.

MITCH

I don't wanna yell... You probably don't believe me, but I keep telling myself, y'know, to stay calm. But then something happens and I,... I guess you can't teach an old dog new tricks.

CARRIE

I heard that... But I got's to admit, the time you went off on that guy trip me out.

MITCH

What guy?

CARRIE

The stalker. On the phone.

MITCH

Oh, oh... Yeah.

CARRIE

He really got to me.

MITCH

You looked so shook up, I didn't know what to think.

CARRIE

The man be in my head like nobody ever have. For real.

MITCH

You were shaking. Why the hell did you give him your phone number? You're the one always giving me advice about women.

CARRIE

It was a mistake. I was getting gas and he start talkin' to me... It be the day after my aunt pass.

MITCH

I remember.

CARRIE

He have a nice smile.

MITCH

Then why not take *his* number?

CARRIE

I don't know.

MITCH

That way/

CARRIE

I don't know, I didn't realize he crazy. The dude call me twenty, thirty times that night. I done told him no, no I don't wanna see him. It creep me out. I ain't been so scared since I little.

MITCH

Yeah, you were like a kid. Made me wanna protect you. One of the few times I've ever felt that way. That's why the next time he called, I told you to give me the phone.

CARRIE

Damn, the shit what come out your mouth.

(Speaks and acts as if she's Mitch.)

"Don't you ever call my wife again, muthafucka! You hear? Do it and I will stomp a mud hole in your ass and walk it dry! And don't think I'm playin'!"

MITCH

(Laughing.)

Your eyes were popping out of your head.

CARRIE

(Laughing.)

No lie! I knew you had a temper, but all of a sudden, you Godzilla. Godzilla!... I told my kids, and they all fall out laughing.

MITCH

You liked it 'cuz it was your line!

CARRIE

(Still laughing.)

Godzilla!

MITCH

It was fun.

CARRIE

I owe you.

MITCH

No... No. If anyone owes anything, it's me.

CARRIE

What for?

MITCH

For helping me with my brother. It meant a lot. Y'know, the stuff you said, but also badgering me every day to call him.

CARRIE

He the only brother you got.

MITCH

Before you started working, I talked to him maybe four, five times a year. Two of those, our birthdays. Now, he's thinking of coming out here this summer.

CARRIE

Really?

MITCH

Hard to believe.

CARRIE

You done good.

MITCH

Like I said, it meant a lot to me. More than... and that's not the only thing, there's other stuff... that's why...

(Tearing up.)

...that's why, why/

CARRIE

You starting to boo-hoo?

MITCH

No.

CARRIE

You are.

MITCH

(Wiping his eyes.)

No, I'm not.

CARRIE

What you boo-hoo-ing for?

MITCH

Hey, I'm tearing up for a second. That's a crime?... It's, it's uh, it's been hard to draw the line, y'know, between employer and employee... Though the county pays, I'm the one who hired you and I can fire you... But we see each other every day. You're in my room, where I don't invite most people. And we talk about stuff I don't usually talk about. Y'know, all kinds of...

(Pause.)

So, for me, after a year and a half, what's been going on between us is more, is more than, y'know... You probably don't feel the same way. Whenever we meet someone, I introduce you as my friend. You call me your client.

CARRIE

You are.

MITCH

That's what I'm saying... After work we don't see each other, except that night we went to the barbecue place for your birthday. It'd be easier if I looked at it like you do. I wouldn't have given up so much of my own needs... I'm not saying it's your fault. It's not. It's mine! My problem. It's pathetic how hard it's been for me to stand up for myself... Especially the last couple of weeks... But I gotta... I, I can't keep doing this.

CARRIE

What you saying?

MITCH

Let's face it, you're not the greatest caregiver in the world. My clothes disappear after you do the laundry. There's food stains on the dishes. There's dust all over the apartment. Some of it still here from the first day you arrived. Not to mention the bathroom.

CARRIE

Shoot! You ain't the greatest client neither. It ain't just the yellin'. You always tense, impatient. And you absent-minded, which give me hella more work. How many times you burn the carrots and I have to scrub the pot? That day you forget to turn off the water? Hours cleaning up.

MITCH

Yeah, I did fuck up.

CARRIE

You sure did... And those stories you always tellin'.

MITCH

I thought you liked 'em. I thought/

CARRIE

They all right, but the fifth time around gets old. I know 'em by heart.

MITCH

Why don't you tell me when I repeat myself?

CARRIE

I do. But the next day you do it again.

I ain't sayin' I'm the best worker, but I damn sure ain't the worst. I gets the job done. Don't I?

MITCH

Barely... *Barely*... and not always when I need it. You do laundry Thursdays instead of Fridays, shop on Wednesdays 'stead of Mondays, come late, leave early, sometimes you don't come at all.

CARRIE

Shit happens.

MITCH

But you don't ask if it's alright. You tell me... It's like I'm working on your time. You know as well as I do, no other client would stand for that! I have. I have. 'Cuz I like you/

CARRIE

I like you, too/

MITCH

And 'cuz I could always count on you to take me to the doctor on shot days... But that's changed the past few weeks. I told you if I don't get the shots, I won't be able to move, let alone sit up.

CARRIE

I know they important.

MITCH

You say that, but recently, 'cuz of Jolene, I'm never sure you're gonna show up. Without telling me, you started sending subs. Your cousin from Fresno. Then Reggie. And then of all people, Gina. Gina! Not only came late, she almost got us killed driving so fast. And had the nerve to tell me I had no right to say shit to her. 'Cuz she was doing me a favor... I was so pissed, I decided then and there to let you go. And I should've. I should've! But I gave you one more chance because you gave me your word it would never happen again.

CARRIE

And it hasn't.

MITCH

Whattaya call this morning?

CARRIE

It ain't no doctor day.

MITCH

So what! Jolene could've called you just as easily tomorrow. Or the next time I was supposed to go to the doctor... It's not working, Carrie. I've been struggling with this for a long while now. But something snapped when you didn't come. Why should I have to worry you might not show? Why should I take such a risk?... No, it's unacceptable. Unacceptable!

CARRIE

(Pause.)

So, you firing me?

MITCH

I, I don't want to. But it looks like I have to... 'Cuz you can't stick to the schedule we agreed on. To work from eight AM to one PM everyday.

CARRIE

Everything gonna be alright, soon as Jolene finds someone. Just give me a little more time.

MITCH

I've given you too much already. Way too much.

CARRIE

Okay then.

MITCH

Okay then, what?

CARRIE

I'll only work weekend evenings for her.

MITCH

What about weekdays?

CARRIE

I'll stop. I'll tell her/

MITCH

Just like that?

CARRIE

I'll tell her the truth. My body can't take no more.

MITCH

You won't be able to go through with it.

CARRIE

I will. I'll give her 'til the end of the month to get a replacement.

MITCH

What if she can't get someone?

CARRIE

That's on her.

MITCH

No... this doesn't sound like you.

CARRIE

I'll change.

MITCH

People don't change.

CARRIE

I stop smoking. Didn't I?

MITCH

Jolene has a stronger hold on you than cigarettes ever did.

CARRIE

I will. Give me a chance.

MITCH

Come on, Carrie...

CARRIE

You know I hate askin'.

(Pause.)

Maybe you right 'bout me not always thinking of you.

MITCH

Maybe? I don't think you realize how scared I am of missing the shots. Scared out of my mind... You told me sometimes your migraines were so bad, you had to lie on the bathroom floor with the lights out.

CARRIE

Yeah.

MITCH

Well, I was in that kind of pain. All the time. I can't stand going back there.

I understand.

CARRIE

(Pause.)

I don't wanna lose this job. Lemme prove it to you.

MITCH

(Struggling.)

Don't do this.

CARRIE

You owe me.

MITCH

Owe you?

CARRIE

After all these months.

MITCH

Look at you. Pulling out all the stops.

CARRIE

They worth something, ain't they?

MITCH

You're serious?

(Pause.)

You're not playing me?

CARRIE

No.

MITCH

You'll just work weekend evenings?

CARRIE

Uh-huh.

MITCH

(Pause.)

I don't know. I/

CARRIE

I'll tell her that's the way it/

(Phone rings. Picks it up.)

What you want now, Gina?

(Pause.)

Oh, I'm sorry Jolene, I thought it was...

(Pause.)

Yeah. I'm still at Mitch's. What you want?

MITCH

That's Jolene?

CARRIE

At least four more hours. Why?

(Pause.)

Stop! I can't understand/

MITCH

What's going on?

CARRIE

Quit cryin'. I ain't in the mood for no pity party. Just tell me what...

(Pause.)

No, no, I can't. I'm already in enough trouble for this morning.

(Pause.)

I'm sorry.

MITCH

Go.

CARRIE

Listen to me, Jolene. You just gonna have to wait 'til I get there tonight.

MITCH

Oh... go to her.

CARRIE

It's not the first time you/

MITCH
(Firmer.)

You hear me. Go, Carrie!

CARRIE
One second.
(Turns to Mitch.)

Say what?

MITCH
Might as well. She needs you.

CARRIE
She alright. Her stomach. She think it food poisoning.

MITCH
I don't need the details. Go ahead!

CARRIE
But you said/

MITCH
I know what I said.

CARRIE
What about all the stuff we have to do?

MITCH
Don't worry.

CARRIE
You sure?

MITCH
Yeah.

CARRIE
(Stares at Mitch a moment, then returns to phone.)

Okay, okay. Be there soon as I can.

(Hangs up. Addresses Mitch.)

So, when do you want me to do it?

MITCH
Tomorrow.

CARRIE
After your shots?

MITCH
No.

CARRIE
Then when?

MITCH
You're not gonna have to take me to the doctor.

CARRIE
Whattaya mean?

MITCH
Someone else'll do it.

CARRIE
Who?

MITCH
I uh, um, you don't know her... Rachel.

CARRIE
Rachel who?

MITCH
She was my caregiver years ago. She contacted me again, y'know, and I told her I had someone... But earlier, when you left, I called her to see if/

CARRIE
But I thought... I told you from now on...An' you just seen me tell Jolene no.

MITCH
Yeah. But it's only one time. I just don't think you... I'm sorry. Deep down, I don't believe you'll keep to it.

CARRIE
I will.

MITCH

'Cuz no matter what you say, you can't abandon her. Not for me or anyone else, including yourself. The only way you'd do it is if it was your family. If God forbid, one of them was seriously sick or hurt.

CARRIE

You don't know that!

MITCH

Look at me, Carrie. Tell me I'm wrong!

(Pause.)

You can't!

CARRIE

That don't make what you done right. You backstab me.

MITCH

No, I didn't.

CARRIE

What you call this then?

MITCH

I uh, I didn't tell you about Rachel calling me. That's my business.

CARRIE

I'm talkin' 'bout the job.

MITCH

I didn't backstab you. I wouldn't do that... I told her I had to talk to you first before making a decision... that I wasn't a hundred percent sure. I wanted to give you the chance to, y'know... and for a moment there, before Jolene called, I started to weaken like I always do... and I almost... but, but I think it's best if... I'm sorry... I am, Carrie.

CARRIE

(Pause.)

What about my two-week notice?

MITCH

Whattaya mean?

(Pause.)

Well, let's say, this is it... You'll work the next two weeks, and Rachel will take me to the doctor.

CARRIE

She gonna replace me for good?

MITCH

I guess...I don't know what is going to happen. But no one can replace you... you know how I feel about you.

(Pause.)

I'm gonna miss you.

CARRIE

I ain't left yet.

MITCH

I miss you already.

CARRIE

Well then, treat it like a cold. You'll soon be over it.

MITCH

Yeah... right...

CARRIE

It ain't like I never thought about quittin' you.

MITCH

Me?

(Joking.)

Hard to imagine.

CARRIE

No it ain't.

MITCH

I know... I know.

CARRIE

Don't mean I can't drop by.

MITCH

No... But you won't.

CARRIE

Why you say that ?

MITCH

'Cuz you've never done it. Carrie don't do "dropping by". It's not your way.

CARRIE

True. I likes my private time.

MITCH

I know.

CARRIE

But that don't mean... that don't mean...

MITCH

Yeah...

CARRIE

Well, I best be going...

MITCH

Yeah...

CARRIE

(Opens door.)

...before Jolene have a heart attack.

MITCH

Okay... okay then.

CARRIE

(Exits.)

MITCH

(Stands there a moment, takes out a cigarette as lights slowly fade.)

The End.