

# CARLA/ VIVIAN SIDE 1

## SCENE 1

(When lights come up on Vivian's apartment, Di and Val have disappeared. Vivian and Carla, who is wearing a lanyard with a nametag, stand where they were placed, facing each other in awkward silence.)

I brought a few jokes.

CARLA

Jokes.

VIVIAN

If you like jokes. What kind of bagel can fly?

CARLA

Pass.

VIVIAN

Why did the scarecrow—

CARLA

I'll pass on the jokes. You say you're from hospice.

VIVIAN

Yes.

CARLA

Because I'm dying.

VIVIAN

(Pause, glancing at notes)  
Yes.

CARLA

Why did you hesitate?

VIVIAN

Well...sometimes families don't want us to say that outright. But not in your case.

CARLA

VIVIAN

So Jim thought it was fine. To acknowledge that I'm dying.

CARLA

I don't know Jim—

VIVIAN

My brother.

CARLA

He probably figured it was kinder to be open about—

VIVIAN

He once embezzled from the Girl Scouts. So he's not some saint.

CARLA

Okay. Well, I'm your volunteer, so I can do anything you need.

VIVIAN

Anything?

CARLA

Well, not anything. I'm not a nurse. But we can play a game. I heard you were really into bridge in your younger days.

VIVIAN

What?

CARLA

Jim must have told them. I mean, I don't know bridge, and I don't know if you feel up to it, with the cancer, but if your energy isn't too low, we could play something else.

VIVIAN

Ah-huh. Did they tell you about my dog?

CARLA

Yes! A pug, right? Where is he?—she?

VIVIAN

Dead.

CARLA

Oh!

VIVIAN

Unfortunately hospice wasn't in time for her.

CARLA

I'm I'm I'm so sorry.

VIVIAN

You seem very young to be doing this.

CARLA

I'm nineteen.

VIVIAN

And what do you think you can do for me?

CARLA

I could just help you with stuff around the house. Unload the dishwasher, go get your mail—

VIVIAN

All I get is crap anyway. Ads, catalogues. Offers for fixing gutters, roofs, furnaces. I clearly got on some list for decrepitude.

CARLA

You know I just learned that you can cancel catalogs!

VIVIAN

You did?

CARLA

we're supposed to follow your lead. We're not supposed to be forceful, or try to steer. And I think that's all I've been doing.

VIVIAN

How much training did they give you for this?

CARLA

Eight hours.

VIVIAN

That's it?

CARLA

Not all at once—wait, you don't think that's a lot?

VIVIAN

What did they teach you?

CARLA

To leave our baggage outside the door. Once you come in, it's all about the person's wishes, and bringing them comfort.

VIVIAN

It's about my wishes.

CARLA

Yeah. Whatever you need to feel better right now. Help with light housework, look at old photos...even just sitting.

VIVIAN

You know what I miss? Running.

CARLA

Really?

VIVIAN

See that treadmill? Can you turn it on?

CARLA

Sure. I can help you walk on it. Where's the switch?

(CARLA gets on to the treadmill, starts hitting buttons and knobs.)

VIVIAN

I never remember those kinds of things anymore.

CARLA

I can make a post-it for—okay!

(It turns on, moving so slowly that it's difficult for her to walk on it.)

If you come over, I can help you get on.

VIVIAN

I'd rather watch you. Watching a young person run makes me so happy.

(CARLA tries to figure out the controls.)

CARLA

I'm not really a runner but—okay, here we go!

(VIVIAN settles into a chair while CARLA starts to jog.)

CARLA

Is this good?

VIVIAN

You could go a little faster.

(CARLA does.)

CARLA

Does it remind you of being younger?

VIVIAN

Yes. It reminds me of having no boundaries.

CARLA

Well this rectangle is a boundary, in a way.

VIVIAN

It's really helping me. It's good for both of us, I think.

(She picks up a book and reads.)

CARLA

Wait...you're messing with me.

(She turns the treadmill off.)

That was mean.

VIVIAN

Dying doesn't make you nice.

(CARLA is out of breath. Gets off the treadmill.)

CARLA

You probably have regrets.

VIVIAN

Did your training tell you to say that?

CARLA

No, but if you don't want my services, then I don't have to follow the training.

VIVIAN

Thank god.

CARLA

Yeah, thank god I don't have to come back to an unhappy old lady who treats people like crap.

VIVIAN  
(smirking)

Such language! I'm in shock.

(CARLA sits down in a huff.)

CARLA

Now you're probably going to give me a bad rating.

VIVIAN

What rating?

CARLA

They'll follow up with a survey, asking you to review my services.

VIVIAN

I guess I'll just have to be honest.

CARLA

I shouldn't have lost my temper.

VIVIAN

You were mad. It was a little mean of me.

..... And how many dying people have you "helped"?

CARLA

Well...two.

VIVIAN

I guess there's no way to get any references. Tell me about them.

CARLA

Unfortunately they both passed after my first visit. But they seemed really...one was a woman and one was a man.

VIVIAN

Sounds like you made a real connection.

CARLA

The first one couldn't speak anymore, so I read to her. The second had cancer, but he was asleep the whole time, so I helped his daughter fold the laundry.

VIVIAN

So you basically have no experience talking with a dying person.

CARLA

Oh I do.

VIVIAN

Really.

VIVIAN

Nope, sorry. Don't buy it.

CARLA

Why?

VIVIAN

You're not being honest with me, or yourself. No teenager hangs out with dying old people out of altruism. Do you know what that means? It's the act of being—

CARLA

I KNOW WHAT IT MEANS! I got a really high score on my SATs!

VIVIAN

You know what? Let's do jokes.

CARLA

Okay.

VIVIAN

Knock knock.

CARLA

Who's there?

VIVIAN

"I want to help dying people."

CARLA

(rolling her eyes)

I want to help dying people who?

VIVIAN

I want to help dying people who aren't actually dying.

CARLA

What?

VIVIAN

Knock knock.

CARLA

Who's there?

VIVIAN

Confused volunteer.

CARLA

Confused volunteer who?

VIVIAN

Confused volunteer who should have checked the address.

(Carla scrambles for her paperwork and the phone.)

VIVIAN

Knock knock.

(waits)

Who's there?

Two doors down.

Two doors down who?

CARLA

You're not Lois Richmond??

VIVIAN

Two doors down lives Lois Richmond and her pug.

CARLA

Shit!!! Why didn't you tell me???

(CARLA angrily gets her coat on, gathers her stuff.)



VIVIAN

Honestly, maybe you're not cut out for this. I mean, both of your patients died after your first visit, and then you go to the wrong house?

CARLA

You are such an asshole!

VIVIAN

It comforts me to be an asshole.

CARLA

I'm not here to comfort you!

VIVIAN

Clearly not! I'm going to give you a bad rating.

CARLA

You're not my patient. They won't even ask you.

VIVIAN

Still, I think Last Horizons will want to know about this traumatizing mix-up.

(Carla stops and turns.)

CARLA

I'm sorry that I made you think you were dying.

VIVIAN

Yeah, why did you have to get my hopes up like that?

CARLA

Please don't report me.

VIVIAN

Answer me one question and I won't.

CARLA

Okay.

VIVIAN

Is today Monday?

CARLA

Yes.

VIVIAN

Good.

CARLA

That's it?

VIVIAN

No. Your joke. Uhh...What kind of bagel can fly, right?  
(Carla nods.)

Well?

CARLA

Plain.

(Carla weakly indicates an airplane taking off. Vivian stays deadpan.)

VIVIAN

You're really going to kill with that one.