

Red Light, Green Light

Part Two of:

An American Family Trilogy

by

Erik Patterson

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

ELLIOT, thirty, a high school teacher.

LITTLE B, his sister, fifteen. Thinks she's Bjork: the Icelandic pop singer.

BECKY, their older sister, thirty-one. A stripper.

MOM, in her fifties, the mother of Elliot, Little B, and Becky. Named Rose Silverstein.

ROSE, Becky's daughter, fifteen. Pregnant. Goth.

KRISTEN, Becky's girlfriend, in her thirties. A stripper.

AVI, twenty-five, Israeli. A student of Philosophy.

CALEB, thirties. A professional clown.

DAMIEN, Rose's ex-boyfriend, sixteen. Also a Goth.

KENNY, a man in his forties.

RUTH, mother of Caleb, in her sixties. A housewife.

BARRY, a hustler, in his thirties.

FRANK, a man in his forties.

PROLOGUE

In darkness, we hear the wail of a siren approaching. The siren's scream grows louder and louder until it's almost unbearable. Suddenly, the sound is sucked away, as if into a vacuum, and silence fills the air. Then: we hear the steady beat of a heart monitor, tick tick ticking like a metronome. Lights up on BECKY, alone, in a strip club cubicle.

BECKY

(to the audience)

Hi. Hello. Hi.

I'm sorry: I haven't talked about this much, so it might come out awkward. I'm just trying to make sense, and sometimes it's hard to find the right words. My brother—

(Lights up on ELLIOT, unconscious in a hospital bed. Becky looks at him.)

My brother isn't doing well. Jesus, my *brother*. I don't understand how this happened.

(Becky looks away. Lights fade out on Elliot.)

The thing is, just when you think you've gotten control of—
a handle on—

your life...When you think you've gotten...

I'm sorry. I can't go on. I think I'm gonna throw up. You came to see me work. All right, okay, all right. Focus, Becky, focus.

(She snaps her fingers. The sound of the heart monitor morphs into the throbbing base beat of the strip club. Becky makes provocative poses: slowly, steadily, deliberately.)

Hi, handsome. What's your name? Ever been here before? You have, I can tell. Don't be shy. I can tell by the way you tilted your head, just a hair, and then you kind of blushed a little bit in your neck. Don't be ashamed. It's okay. No one has to know. Just you and me.

(She stops posing. To herself.)

This isn't working.

(She snaps her fingers. The base beat cuts out.)

I don't know how to talk to guys anymore. Ever since I fell in love, I don't know how to talk to them. The last time I even fucked a guy was the night I met Kristen. That was six months ago.

(She snaps again and suddenly it's six months earlier. FRANK enters the cubicle. Becky glances at him, quickly takes him in.)

I'm Frank.

FRANK

Hi, Frank.

BECKY

What's your name?

FRANK

Hunter.

BECKY

I was wondering if...

FRANK

What?

BECKY

If instead of just dancing, if you could...if we...if I...

FRANK

Spit it out, Frank.

BECKY

If I could...hold you?

FRANK

You wanna hold me, Frank?

BECKY

Yeah.

FRANK

"Holding me" is gonna cost you more than thirty dollars.

BECKY

Okay.

FRANK

(He opens his wallet, hands Becky all of his cash. He sits down, undoes his pants. Becky hands him a condom,

straddles him as he puts it on. They start fucking. She turns her head away from Frank and resumes her conversation with the audience.) (Note: When she talks to the audience, she's back in the present. Frank is barely a memory. It's as if he's not there.)

BECKY

(to the audience)

Last night, I was at the hospital with—

(Lights up on Elliot in the hospital bed again. MOM, LITTLE B, and KRISTEN sit at his side, waiting for some sort of sign.)

(pointing them out)

my mother, my sister, and my girlfriend.

And I was just sitting there, thinking:

'He's not gonna make it. He's not gonna make it.'

The thought kept running through my head: 'He's not gonna make it.'

And I almost had to slap myself because I believe in positive thinking.

And I believe that when you put a thought out there it can come true.

And I believe I might be feeding you a whole lot of bullshit right now.

Just stop. He's gonna make it.

Okay, okay, okay, okay, it's okay, okay. Okay.

(Lights fade out on the hospital room. Becky continues to fuck Frank.)

FRANK

Do you believe in love?

(The sound of his voice draws her attention back to him.)

BECKY

Sure.

FRANK

Have you ever been in love?

BECKY

All the time.

FRANK

Stop that.

BECKY

Stop what?

FRANK

Saying what you think I want to hear. Have you? Have you ever been in love?

BECKY

Shut up, Frank. I want you to relax and just shut up.

(She continues to fuck him, but turns her attention back to the audience.)

BECKY

(to the audience)

I just became a grandmother. I know you think that's impossible: I'm 31 years old. You think I'm barely old enough to be a mother, let alone a grandmother, but my daughter Rose and I, we're making it work. My daughter Rose—

(Lights come up on ROSE and DAMIEN DEMETER, making-out feverishly in one of the linoleum-tiled hallways of Chatsworth High School. They're both dressed from head-to-toe in black.)

There she is. Before she was pregnant. Before she was including me in her life. Before *the thing* happened. The thing that happened to my brother.

(Lights fade out on Rose and Damien.)

(Becky starts to fake an orgasm for Frank, while continuing to talk to us.)

I'm trying to get out of this place. To get me and my girlfriend out. Because we're in love. And it's just time, you know? I want out, I need out, it's just that I've been saying that for fifteen years, you know? Hearing girls say that for fifteen years. And it's tough.

(Frank starts to moan.)

FRANK

Ohhh...I'm gonna...

(Becky stops fucking him. She finishes him off with her hand.)

(As Frank buttons up his pants, puts himself back together, Becky steps away from him to finish her conversation with the audience.)

BECKY

(to the audience)

The thing is, just when you think you've gotten control of—
a handle on—

your life...something will happen.

Like what happened to my brother.

A random, senseless, unspeakable thing.

And then you'll realize that you don't have control

and you don't have a handle

and then your whole world will begin to unravel.

Wait.

I'm trying to test out my whole positive thinking theory, so let me rephrase that:

Maybe you'll realize that you don't have control

and you don't have a handle

and then maybe it'll make you stronger.

FRANK

I'm sorry that was so—

BECKY

(to Frank again)

It was perfect.

(Beat.)

You have a gorgeous cock, Frank.

(No one's ever said that to him before.)

FRANK

Thanks.

(Frank gets up to go.)

FRANK

That was really...

(he decides not to finish the thought)

...You know, I'm not just some loser guy.

BECKY

I didn't say that you were.

FRANK

I used to have a family. I have a kid.

BECKY

You do?

FRANK

Yeah, but I'm not very good at it. I don't know how to talk to him.

BECKY

You just talk.

FRANK

I'm bad at it. He lives with his mom, I don't really see him. Okay, well...

(He starts to go. Becky stops him.)

BECKY

You know, Frank?

FRANK

Yeah?

BECKY

I do believe in love. I have a kid too. And I love her.

FRANK

Yeah.

BECKY

You know, you should try to see your son. You should try to see him and talk to him.

FRANK

Yeah, I will. Okay.

BECKY

Bye, Frank.

FRANK

Thanks.

(Frank exits. Becky leans back in her chair.)

(After a beat, Kristen pokes her head into the cubicle.)

KRISTEN

Excuse me?

BECKY

Yeah?

KRISTEN

Hi, I'm Kristen.

BECKY

Hi Kristen. Nice to meet you.

KRISTEN

I saw you dancing out there. You're really good.

BECKY

Thanks.

KRISTEN

And I was wondering if I could get a lap dance?

BECKY

Let's hit it.

(Becky snaps her fingers, a dance groove starts playing, and the lap dance begins.)

(Lights stay on Becky and Kristen, as they continue to dance, slowly, tenderly.)

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