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JESSE

Well, I'd like to propose a toast ...

He stands, wine glass in hand.

JESSE (Cont'd)

This year, what we have to be thankful for is kind of a no-brainer. I mean, it's nothing short of a miracle that we're even sitting here tonight. God was with us on that mountain. So let's raise our glasses—to good friends, good health, and life-changing experiences.

RAINA

Hear, hear.

They clink glasses.

HAL

(awkward but polite)

Yeah, that's—that was—glad you're okay.

They drink.

KAREN won't make eye contact with  
JESSE.

JESSE

You all right?

KAREN

Fine.

JESSE

You sure?

KAREN

Yeah, I'm good.

JESSE

Come on, babe. What's the matter?

KAREN

No, it's—nothing, it's just—you've never mentioned *God* before. In one of your toasts.

JESSE

Well, if ever the time was right ...

RAINA takes a sip of HAL's wine.

RAINA

That champagne is fantastic. Where'd you get it?

KAREN

It's not champagne, it's prosecco.

It is? RAINA

Yeah. KAREN

I thought so. HAL

Since when were you a wine expert? RAINA

They use prosecco in ubriaco. HAL

In what? RAINA

Ubriaco. It's an Italian cheese. HAL

Is it good? JESSE

It's great. It's unpasteurized. HAL

Is that legal? KAREN

Sure, if it's been aged more than sixty days. HAL

Speaking of pasteurization, you've heard that story about Louis Pasteur? How he induced a coma to save that kid with rabies? JESSE

That wasn't Pasteur. That was the Milwaukee protocol. KAREN

It was? JESSE

A girl named Jeanna Giese. She was American. It was ten, fifteen years ago. The thing with Pasteur was in the 1880s—*and*—he vaccinated the kid. Jeanna Giese was already symptomatic. The vaccine wouldn't have worked. KAREN

Okay, whatever it was. This kid, the French kid— JESSE

Joseph Meister. KAREN

JESSE  
Right, Joseph Mei—Was *that* his name?

KAREN  
Uh huh.

JESSE  
Sounds German.

KAREN shrugs.

JESSE (Cont'd)  
Well, anyway—Meister. When he was nine, he was bitten by a rabid dog. And he's facing certain death, right? But Pasteur comes along and vaccinates him—first kid ever to get a rabies vaccine—and saves his life. Isn't that something?

RAINA  
Well, yeah, it had to start somewhere.

JESSE  
But that's not the whole story!

KAREN  
Okay. Jess—

JESSE  
Some fifty-five years later—when the Nazis invaded *France*—this kid, Joseph Meister, he's now an old man and he's guarding Pasteur's tomb.

HAL  
What do you mean? He was a security guard?

JESSE  
No, he—I mean, *I* don't know. He was guarding it. But when the Nazis arrived to plunder it or destroy it or whatever, Meister says *No*. You can't come in. He stood his ground and the Nazis backed off. All because he'd had a rabies vaccination half a century before. Isn't that something? He owed his life to Pasteur, and he risked it to protect Pasteur's legacy.

RAINA  
I thought he died.

JESSE  
What?

RAINA  
I've heard that story. I thought the Nazis killed him.

JESSE  
Did they? No. I'm pretty sure they backed off.

KAREN  
No, he died. He killed himself.

JESSE  
That's crazy.

KAREN  
Well—

JESSE  
Why would he have killed himself? He had a second lease on life.

KAREN  
He killed himself because he couldn't bear to see Pasteur's tomb desecrated by the Nazis.

RAINA  
Wait, really?

KAREN  
No, not really. He was depressed. His wife and kids left because the Germans were coming, and he got lonely.

JESSE  
Well, it's a great story.

KAREN  
What, his suicide?

JESSE  
No! The thing about Pasteur's tomb!  
(to HAL and RAINA)  
Whether it's true or not, it's—

KAREN  
It's not.

JESSE  
But it *rings* true. This kid who owes his life to Pasteur was willing to defend his tomb.

KAREN  
Like an idiot.

JESSE  
What?

KAREN  
Dying to protect a guy who's already dead?

JESSE  
But that's the beauty of it! It's about standing for something higher than yourself. Higher than your own life.

KAREN  
But by that rationale, you're saying that your life isn't so important. That surviving a brush with death doesn't matter—because your *life* doesn't matter.

JESSE  
I'm not saying that.

KAREN  
Sounds like it.

JESSE  
I'm saying he *learned* something.

KAREN  
What did he learn? Exactly?

JESSE  
Would you st—Honey, come on. He learned what mattered. You know? What was most important.

KAREN  
He committed suicide.

JESSE  
In the *story*, Karen. Come on.

KAREN  
Which isn't true.

JESSE  
Well, neither is *The Great Gatsby*.

KAREN  
*The Great Gatsby*? What does that—

RAINA  
Oh, I love that book.

HAL  
Me too.

JESSE  
It's autobiographical fiction.

KAREN  
*Semi*. It's inspired by true events.

JESSE  
So is *this* story.

KAREN  
No, this one's a bald-faced lie. And for what? To make us feel good about something? It's like religion: we get scared and go running to church. Or synagogue. Or mosque. And believe whatever they tell us. It's not the Crusades—nobody's willing to put their lives on the line.

JESSE  
The Crusades? Really?

KAREN  
Sure. They were murderers, but at least they had balls.

RAINA chokes on her water.

JESSE  
I don't believe this conversation.

HAL  
Well, I think what Karen is saying is that maybe there's been a decline in social responsibility.

JESSE  
How were the Crusades socially responsible?

HAL  
They weren't. Not really.

KAREN  
But their beliefs actually got them to take risks. Not hide in a church.  
(turns to the others)

I mean, we all try so desperately to hold onto our lives. But the people willing to *risk* their lives—the people who are actually willing to *die* for something—have to let *go* of their lives. Decide their lives don't matter.

RAINA  
Who does *that*?

KAREN  
Um ... I don't know ... Suicide bombers?

JESSE  
Oh, for Christ's sake.

HAL  
What happened to the coma girl?

JESSE  
Huh?

HAL  
The girl. Who was in the coma. How's she doing?

JESSE  
Um ...

KAREN  
She's fine, I think.

HAL  
She is?

KAREN  
Yep. Rabies free.