



**Sample Pages from
Stereotype High**

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STEREOTYPE HIGH

A TEEN COMEDY IN TWO ACTS BY
Jeffrey Harr



Stereotype High

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Cast of Characters

9W+9M+4 Either, Plus onstage crew

- CHUCK:** The stereotypical jersey-and-jeans-wearing jock, the kind of guy who's taken a few too many shots to the head (the same head featuring golden hair, perfect bone structure, and lips every girl in the school wants to test for softness) which may explain why the first word out of his mouth every time he speaks is "uh..."
- JEANIE:** The stereotypical designer-clothes-wearing-over-accessorized mean girl, the kind of girl who can send pictures of her former BFF making out with her *other* former BFF's boyfriend in the school bathroom to half the school while texting the guy with her other hand, *omg—u r so hot!*
- RONALD:** The stereotypical button-down-half-sleeve-shirt-wearing geek, the kind of guy who's going to score a 35 on his ACT (and tell his parents that he's retaking it to get the extra point) and a negative five with the ladies (assuming, of course, that a lack of prowess with the opposite sex is not limited to being measured strictly by whole numbers).
- ANNAROSAROSEMARIE:** The stereotypical unmatched-shirt-pants-and-socks-wearing thespian, the kind of girl everyone refers to as "weird," not so much because of her apparent need to over-inflect everything she says, but because she knows the words to every song from *Rent* and isn't afraid to let you hear them. Like, all day long.
- ALEX:** The stereotypical old-school-rock-concert-black-T-shirt-wearing stoner, the kind of guy whose most important decision of the day is when to smoke his pot—before homeroom in the school parking lot, during school in the bathrooms of the career ed wing, or after school in the basement that his parents converted into his bedroom. Or all three.
- RITA:** The stereotypical wool-sweater-long-skirt-and-wide-glasses-wearing lonely girl, the kind of girl whose hair is bound as tight as her braces, except when she snorts after her friends tell her the one about the blonde who turns the lights on after sex by kicking open the car door—not because it's funny, so much, but because she knows that her chances of ever having such an encounter range somewhere between being voted prom queen (other than as the victim of a cruel joke) and being asked out on a date. By a boy. Any boy.
- ANDREW:** The stereotypical plain-sweatshirt-and-black-sweatpants-with-white-socks-wearing freak, the kind of guy who walks down the hall grazing the lockers as he goes, talking to himself the whole way and whatever voices are calling him that particular day—H.P. Lovecraft, Dr. Demento, or the mother he is almost positive isn't his mother at all, but a hellhound spawned by the evil lord Mesmerizo on planet Crazyasbatcrap.
- SKYE:** The stereotypical miniskirt-low-cut-blouse-too-much-makeup-wearing bad girl, the kind of girl whose three favorite places are dark busses on nighttime school trips, houses hosting parties with plenty of drunk boys, available bedrooms, and no parental supervision, and well, anywhere dark where there's a guy with a free five minutes.
- MRS. SLATTIMORE:** The stereotypical high school guidance counselor, the kind of woman who really wants to help kids but is, herself, so conspicuously hanging on the slippery edge of reality that when she does actually help someone, it's either completely accidental or by an unverifiable act of God.

MISS JOHNSON: The stereotypical first-year teacher, the kind of woman who was blackmailed by administrators to have to advise an extracurricular for which she is completely unqualified, leaving her susceptible to the inevitable doubts that she already has about working with children which she can tack on to the pressure of finding a husband, moving out of her parent's house, and paying off college loans totaling more than she'll make in her first five years of teaching.

DISGRUNTLED MOVIEGOER: (M or F) The stereotypical guy who goes to movies by himself, the kind of guy who thinks the movie theater is his living room and takes it upon himself to crucify other patrons—teens, especially—for every excessively loud popcorn crunch, cell phone vibration, and bathroom break that interrupts his personal movie-going experience.

POWER RANGERS I & 2: (M or F) The stereotypical kids who dress up as cartoon characters and go to Cosplaying conventions to hang out with other socially inept youngsters who watch way too much T.V.

LADY IN A WAITING ROOM: The stereotypical fifty-something lady, the kind of woman who eavesdrops on the conversations of nearby teens, taking everything they say as a sign that the world is, indeed, going straight to hell on a Harley.

LIFEGUARD: The stereotypical guy who got his lifeguard license so he could work at the local water park to sit in the sun, check out girls, and completely abuse the power to sit atop his lumber tower and blow his whistle every time a kid has the audacity to splash someone.

TEEN BOYS I & 2

TEEN GIRLS I & 2

TWEEN BOY

EARLY TWENTIES GUY: The stereotypical guy who went to college to study the ways that constant drug use keeps someone from accomplishing anything worthwhile—like completing a reasonably intelligent sentence.

FRANKENSTEIN: (M or F) The stereotypical retail employee who's seen his share of Joe public—and has been completely horrified.

STAGE CREW: (as many as necessary) dressed like the actors for specific set changes between scenes, a part of the action of the show.

ACT I

Lights up on a lineup of characters spread across the apron of the stage.

CHUCK in a Pittsburgh Steelers jersey with “Chuck Rules” printed on the nameplate on the back and jeans, a large, male puppet in his hand—the kind with a metal bar attached to the hand so CHUCK can move its arm.

JEANIE in an Abercrombie & Fitch shirt about two sizes too small for her and tight jeans, a cell phone in each hand.

RONALD in a sky blue button-down shirt with a pen-filled pocket protector in the pocket, nondescript, khaki slacks and thick, black-frame glasses on his face, a calculator the size of a laptop in his hand.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE in a cowgirl outfit with a brown suede hat, vest, and jeans covered by chaps, a script in her hand.

ALEX in a Bob Marley T-shirt with a gargantuan marijuana leaf and jeans more ripped than a college freshman on St. Patrick’s Day.

RITA in a wool sweater crocheted by her grandmother and a homemade skirt made out of old curtains with fifties-style glasses, a Danielle Steele novel in her hand.

ANDREW in a nondescript black sweatshirt with a pewter pentagram necklace about halfway down, black sweat pants, a button on his sleeve that says, “How dare you assume I’m a Christian.”

SKYE in a halter top the width of a bathrobe tie and a Barbie-sized denim skirt.

In unison, they chant.

ALL: Oh, great teenage high school social scene gods, grant me the serenity to accept the stereotypical label assigned me by a world that can only see me as—

CHUCK: a jock—

JEANIE: a queen bee—

RONALD: a geek—

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: a weirdo—

ALEX: a stoner—

RITA: a head case—

ANDREW: a freak—

SKYE: a bad girl—

ALL: —the courage to try my hardest to change the stereotypical label I'm pretty sure I might be able to change, and the wisdom to know that I may never know the difference between who I am, who everyone *thinks* I am, and who I think I might wanna be.

All but CHUCK exit. He moves center stage. CHUCK uses his puppet to speak for him in a high-pitched voice at odds with his physical prowess, with no attempt not to move his mouth. He knows he's speaking through a puppet, and he just doesn't care. Without the puppet, he'd never be able to do this.

CHUCK'S PUPPET: Hi, everyone. This... (*points to CHUCK*) is Chuck.

CHUCK just stands there. Like a dummy.

CHUCK'S PUPPET: Wave to the nice people, Chuck.

CHUCK waves with his free hand.

CHUCK'S PUPPET: Now, say hi, Chuck.

CHUCK: (*in his regular voice, low and doofus-ish*) Uh... hi.

CHUCK'S PUPPET: Good man, Chuck. Now, you're probably wondering why this hulking mass of teenage manhood, here, is talking through a puppet. You see, while Chuck, in some ways, is the very stereotype of a high school football player—dumb as a bag of sand and wildly popular with every clique in the school—he suffers from... well... why don't you go ahead and tell them, Chuck.

CHUCK: (*grimaces uncomfortably*) Uh... I dunno.

CHUCK'S PUPPET: C'mon, big guy. Confidence. You can do it. I'm right here.

CHUCK: Uh... well... okay.

CHUCK looks at his puppet one last time for moral support. CHUCK'S PUPPET nods and extends his arm toward the audience.

CHUCK: Uh... I'm... uh... Chuck, and... uh... I'm a stereotypical jock.

CHUCK'S PUPPET: Nicely done, buddy. (*extends his arm toward the audience again, urging CHUCK forward*) Now, do the rest.

CHUCK steps back a few feet and shakes his head in short bursts. He can't do it. Won't do it. No way.

CHUCK'S PUPPET: (*puts his hand on CHUCK's shoulder*) C'mon, Chuck. You can do this, man.

CHUCK looks down at the ground, still shaking his head.

CHUCK'S PUPPET: Fine, then. But I'm not going to be here forever to do this stuff for you. Ya know?

CHUCK pushes his puppet forward, toward the audience.

CHUCK'S PUPPET: Chuck's a varsity athlete. He's a linebacker on the football team, first baseman on the baseball team, and holds every kickball record there is to hold on every playground in this county. He runs like a cheetah, crushes running backs like an avalanche, and leaps like a new tennis ball off hot asphalt. There's no sport he can't annihilate you in within ten minutes of trying it for the first time. Other kids look up to him. Get down on their knees and bow to him. And you know what? It was great for awhile—the absolute hero worship. All because he has the hand-eye coordination of a fighter pilot, a better than average face, and a jersey with his name on it.

CHUCK turns to reveal the nameplate on the back of his jersey.

CHUCK'S PUPPET: But what they don't know is that while Chuck's a beast on the field of battle, he's just a little boy, in here— (*pats CHUCK's chest with his hand*) where it counts. He's unbelievably fragile. This behemoth of teen meat has the self-confidence of a toothpick in a windstorm. He's just not real good at sticking up for himself, saying what he wants. And the expectations — everyone expects him to go to college and turn pro before he's even had the chance to flunk basic English. They want Chuck to make all kinds of money, break records, get on ESPN and, with his boyish good looks, parlay his sports career into acting on a highly-rated television series or, why stop there? Why not go for politics? Senator Chuck? Ooh, that sounds good, huh?

CHUCK: (*shakes his head some more*) Uh... I don't think...

CHUCK'S PUPPET: Just kidding, big guy. You don't have to do anything you don't want to.

CHUCK: Uh... thanks.

CHUCK'S PUPPET: No problem. (*turns back to the audience*) Which is why, much to the consternation of his parents, coaches, girlfriends, teachers, and community-at-large, Chuck's not going to college. Chuck's throwing it all away—the thousands of dollars of scholarship money, the echoing screams of hungry fans, the absurd potential of this human commodity—to do... what is it, again, Chuck, that you want to do?

CHUCK: Uh... something with no expectations?

CHUCK'S PUPPET: That's right. Chuck wants to spend some time seeing how the other half lives.

Suddenly, out of nowhere, ANDREW wanders on stage, talking to himself in Klingon. He stops, completely oblivious to the audience, having a rather heated conversation with himself about whether or not the Federation of Planets should merely imprison rogue star commanders or put them to death. Honestly, he's not sure which side he's on.

CHUCK'S PUPPET: Actually, Chuck wants to be— (*suddenly notices ANDREW and points at him*) that guy! That guy right there! Sure. Why not? Let's face it—no one in his right mind is ever going to expect that dude to do anything. No girlfriends, no coaches, no parents. Wait, he couldn't possibly have parents.

CHUCK is smiling big time, now, like he's just figured out how to open his box of Captain Crunch without ripping apart that cardboard flap that makes it easy to close it back up.

ANDREW, no closer to reaching self-consensus on the star commander issue, puts his head down and walks offstage in a huff.

CHUCK'S PUPPET: And hey, you know what? If you just spend another week or so walking around school talking to a puppet, I don't think there's any reason we can't make that dream a reality.

SKYE walks onstage and approaches CHUCK.

SKYE: Hey, Chuck. Sexy man.

CHUCK'S PUPPET: Hi, Skye. What's up?

SKYE: What's up with the puppet, Chuck?

CHUCK'S PUPPET: Nothin'.

SKYE: (*stands there a second and stares at CHUCK, trying to figure out what's wrong with him*) You know what? It's pretty weird. But... (*all sexy*) I kinda like it. (*runs her fingers through CHUCK's hair; then, runs her fingers through the hair of CHUCK'S PUPPET*) Could be interesting.

CHUCK'S PUPPET backs away.

CHUCK'S PUPPET: No thanks, Skye. Chuck's not into that stuff anymore. As a matter of fact, now, he wants to be... uh... hold on a sec. (*turns and yells offstage*) ANDREW? CAN YOU COME OUT HERE FOR A SEC?

ANDREW, still arguing with himself, walks onstage.

CHUCK'S PUPPET: (*points at ANDREW*) That guy!

SKYE: Andrew? What are you talking about?

CHUCK'S PUPPET: Long story.

SKYE: Huh. Well, you keep walkin' around talkin' to a puppet, it ain't gonna take all that long.

CHUCK'S PUPPET: (*nods*) That's what I told him!

SKYE: Riiiiight. So, Chuck... I just heard that you and Jeanie went Splitsville, so I thought I'd take my shot before every other girl in the school tried to snatch you up. By the way, what's the story with that? You two were going out for like, six months, right?

As CHUCK'S PUPPET delivers his next line, the stage crew, every one of whom is wearing the same jersey CHUCK's wearing, bring on stage a desk, a rolling chair on which sits MRS. SLATTIMORE—frozen in place until her first line—and two additional chairs. All but one exit; the one who stays sits on the desk.

CHUCK'S PUPPET: That's right. Six whole months. Might as well have been an eternity. (*notices the set changing behind him*) Oh, hey, we're about to have a big flashback scene if you wanna hang for a few minutes. It explains everything.

SKYE: Watch a play? (*laughs*) Right. I don't wanna know *that* bad. (*strokes his hair again*) So, Chuck... um... if you and little Chuck, here, change your mind... well, you know where to find me.

SKYE exits.

CHUCK'S PUPPET: You wanna preface this scene, big guy?

CHUCK: Uh... pre... face?

CHUCK'S PUPPET: C'mon, Chuck. You can lose the whole stupid routine. Introduce the scene. Set it up. Start it off. Let's go.

CHUCK: Uh... okay. Uh... I remember it as if it was yesterday.

CHUCK'S PUPPET: It was yesterday, Chuck.

CHUCK: Uh... riiiiight.

CHUCK turns, strikes a pose as if he's under center, drops back to pass, and throws the puppet like a football into the arms of the stage crew member sitting on the desk who puts it into the bottom desk drawer before exiting.

JEANIE enters.

JEANIE: Hey, Chuck. We're going to see Mrs. Slattimore.

CHUCK: Uh... Mrs. Slattimore?

JEANIE: Yeah, Chuck. Mrs. Slattimore. Our guidance counselor?

CHUCK: Uh... oh... yeah... her. Why?

JEANIE: Well, since you're having a hard time figuring out where to go to college and you don't want to take my advice, I thought we'd see Mrs. Slattimore and let her help convince you that Kent State is the best place for you.

CHUCK: Uh... isn't that where you're going?

JEANIE: Yes, Chuck, which is why you're going there, too. Because if you don't, we'll never see each other. And do you know what would happen, then?

CHUCK: Uh... I'd miss you?

JEANIE: Right, Chuck. You'd miss me. And then you'd be sad. So sad that you'd be unable to play football. And then, you'd lose your scholarship. And if you lose your scholarship, you'd end up dropping out of school. And if you drop out of school, we can't be together, because there's no way I'm dating a dropout. You don't think I'd waste this— (*points at herself with both hands*) on somebody who has no future financial stability, do you?

CHUCK: Uh...

JEANIE: The answer's no, Chuck. It's no.

CHUCK: Uh... no.

JEANIE: Good. Now let's go.

JEANIE literally drags CHUCK over to the two chairs across from MRS. SLATTIMORE's desk.

MRS. SLATTIMORE: Hey, you two! I'm so glad you decided to come and see me. As the senior counselor I just get so choked up this time of year, with my little babies set to leave the nest and, well, it just breaks my heart so much that I go into my shell and, gosh, sometimes, I don't even have the motivation to get out of bed, you know, forget about coming here to deal with the sad reality that I probably haven't done everything I could to make sure you fine, fine young people that I've grown so close to over these past four years are prepared for the difficulties awaiting you in the next phase of your educational journeys, you know, the big C—college. Right? Ah, but you caught me on a good day, Joanie and Chachi, so what can I—

JEANIE: It's Jeanie, Mrs. Slattimore. Not Joanie. And this is Chuck.

MRS. SLATTIMORE: Oh-ma-god, I am so sorry, you two. I just have so many students I'm responsible for that occasionally the names just slide right by the old noggin and I— (*pulls open her top desk drawer and retrieves a piece of paper and a pen*) I wanna make sure I write this down for future reference just in case you guys need to come in again somewhere down the road. (*she writes, concentrating hard*) Jeeeeeeeeee... and... Chuuuuuck. (*pauses, closes her eyes*) Jeeeeeeeeee... and... Chuuuuuck. (*suddenly pops her eyes open and looks back at the kids*) Jeanie and Chuck. Got it. Okay, then. Now... what in the world can I do for you two crazy kids?

JEANIE: Well, as I'm sure you already know, Mrs. Slattimore, Chuck is one of our star athletes—

MRS. SLATTIMORE: Oh... oh, well, yes. Big fan of basketball. (*reaches across the desk and puts her hand on CHUCK's*) The way you handle the rock, why it's just as graceful as—

JEANIE: Football, Mrs. Slattimore. He plays football.

MRS. SLATTIMORE: Oh, that's right, the old pigskin. Yes, I'm pretty sure I've seen you slam home a few goals there on the, um, yeah, that's great, so you're here because, oh, wait a minute, I get it,

now. Some teacher's putting the hurt on your grades, am I right? And there's an eligibility issue there. Oh, Chuck, these things are so touchy, you know, because everyone thinks they're doing the right thing... the teacher's got standards and you've got the love of the game and—

JEANIE: No, Mrs. Slattimore. That's not it. It's about college.

MRS. SLATTIMORE: Oh, oh, yeah, I get it now. You're worried about scholarship money. Yeah, I see it, now. Will I be able to afford my dreams of higher education or will I have to slum it at a state school, working two jobs, night shifts, drinking whole pots of coffee all day to stay awake just to get through my classes? Actually, I get this all the time.

JEANIE: No, Mrs. Slattimore. Chuck already has scholarship offers from several schools. He's not going to have to pay for school.

MRS. SLATTIMORE: (*excited by this news, leaps to her feet, moves around her desk and sits on top, right in front of CHUCK*) Oh, well, all right, then! My, Chuck, you must be a very talented football player. So, Jeanie, since Chuck's financially set, then, what seems to be the problem?

JEANIE: He's having trouble deciding between two schools, and I want you to help convince him to make the right decision.

MRS. SLATTIMORE: (*very happy to help*) Okay. Good. Sure, Jeanie. This... I'm not ashamed to say... is what I do. Right. Excellent. Okay. Well, then— (*looks at CHUCK*) Chuck, what are the two schools you're considering?

JEANIE: Mount Union and Kent State.

MRS. SLATTIMORE: (*turns her head slowly to face JEANIE*) Thanks, Chuck. Hey, here's a question: Have Chuck's vocal chords been damaged in some gridiron-related accident? One too many shots to the throat, perhaps?

JEANIE: (*chuckles uncomfortably*) That's very funny, Mrs. Slattimore. No. He doesn't say a whole lot. Actually, he likes me to speak for him, most of the time. (*to CHUCK*) Don't you, honey?

CHUCK: Uh... yeah... sure.

MRS. SLATTIMORE: (*back to CHUCK, giving him a look like, What in the hell is wrong with you, son?*) Okey-dokey. (*to CHUCK, talking with her hands in absurdly over-gesticulated sign language and practically shouting*) CON... GRATCH... YOU... LAY... SHUNS, CHUCK. TWO FINE SCHOOLS. (*back to JEANIE*) So, what's the problem?

JEANIE: I'm concerned for him, because I know that he's leaning toward Mount Union and, well, to be honest, Chuck's not the sharpest knife in the drawer, and I'm afraid that if he goes to a small private school he could be in danger of getting into academic trouble.

MRS. SLATTIMORE: Oh, yeah. Of course. You're so right. Besides, who wants to go to some pansy private school with a bunch of sniveling little mama's boys when— (*looks at CHUCK*) you're such a... tough guy. Yeah. I get it, Jeanie. You have Chuck's best interests at heart. Just being a good girlfriend. (*reaches across the desk and pats JEANIE's hand*) Good for you, dear.

JEANIE: (*nods and smiles insincerely at MRS. SLATTIMORE before turning to CHUCK*) See? I told you you should go to Kent State. Good. It's settled.

MRS. SLATTIMORE: Wow. That was easy then, wasn't it? So— (*to JEANIE, leaning in toward her over the desk*) just for skits and giggles, what lucky college campus will be housing little Jeanie next fall?

JEANIE: (*totally taken by surprise*) Me?

MRS. SLATTIMORE: Yeah, you. Chuck's trusty interpreter. Where will you be flexing your academic muscles this time next year?

JEANIE: Well, honestly, I don't think that's—

MRS. SLATTIMORE: Let me guess. I think I know. Oh, yeah. It's gotta be. It's Kent State, right? (*smiles with every tooth in her mouth showing*) Tell me it's Kent State.

JEANIE: (*hesitates*) Maybe.

MRS. SLATTIMORE: Bingo! Score one for old Mrs. Slattimore! I'm goooood. But wait, Mrs. Slattimore, there's more. (*puts her hand to her head like she's getting a psychic message*) I'm guessing that you're not trying to get Chuckles here to go to Kent State because he needs you to attend all of his classes in case he's ever asked to do some sort of oral presentation which, of course, is virtually impossible without you. No, that can't be it. Hm... what then? Oh, I think I know what it is. You, Jeanie, are afraid that if he goes somewhere else, he'll *find* somebody else. Am I right? Huh, am I right? Please tell me I'm right. I love it when I'm right.

JEANIE: (*goes from shallow irritation to deeply pissed*) That is not true! I just want what's best for Chuck. Right, Chuck?

JEANIE looks at CHUCK, who looks like everyone around him is speaking a language he simply does not understand.

JEANIE: RIGHT, CHUCK?!

CHUCK: Uh... right, Jeanie.

JEANIE: See, Mrs. Slattimore? Chuck knows that I'm just looking out for his future. Why? Because I love him. And he loves me. And we're going to stay together which cannot happen if he goes to Mount Union. Plus, at least a few guys from Kent State have gone pro, and Chuck definitely wants to go pro. Right, Chuck?

CHUCK: Uh... I guess.

MRS. SLATTIMORE: Chuck, my spidey sense is tingling, and you know what it's telling me? It's telling me that you're not saying something you wanna say. Am I right?

CHUCK: *(looks at JEANIE before turning back to MRS. SLATTIMORE)* Uh... well... maybe?

MRS. SLATTIMORE: *(leans back in her chair and grins, so happy to be right)* Oh, Chuck. A maybe. Good for you. Now, I hate to pry into the personal lives of students, but believe me, you two, if we don't get this out in the open and deal with it, it'll bite you in the butt at some point down the road.

JEANIE: Mrs. Slattimore, I am not comfortable with this.

MRS. SLATTIMORE: *(reaches across the desk and takes JEANIE's hand in hers)* I know, sweet pea, which is why it's a good thing that your opinion doesn't matter. *(leans in toward CHUCK)* Now, Chuck, you're holding back, and that's not good. In the business, we call it repression.

CHUCK: Uh... repression?

MRS. SLATTIMORE: That's right, dear. It means that you need to tell us what's bothering you so that Jeanie can get whatever fantasies she's got in her head out of her head in time to make plans for post-graduation.

CHUCK looks at JEANIE, trying to dodge the mental javelins flying out of her eyes.

MRS. SLATTIMORE: *(puts her hands to her head again)* Uh-oh. I'm getting another one. I'm sensing that you're afraid to say it in front of Jeanie. Am I right, Chuck? Please, just tell me I'm right.

JEANIE: That's ridiculous. Chuck knows he can tell me anything. (to CHUCK) Right, baby? You know you can tell me anything. I even promise not to get mad and threaten to do terrible things to you... when you're sleeping.

CHUCK: (*concerned*) Uh... when I'm sleeping?

MRS. SLATTIMORE: That's sweet, Jeanie, it really is. But this isn't *communication*—it's *intimidation*.

JEANIE: No, it's not, Mrs. Slattimore. I just told Chuck that he could tell me anything he needs to tell me. (to CHUCK, with the javelins again) So, if he'd just be a man and do it, we can all just deal with it and move on. Right, honey?

MRS. SLATTIMORE: Let me guess, Chuck. You don't wear the pants in this relationship, do you?

CHUCK: Uh... the pants?

MRS. SLATTIMORE: You know. The one who makes the decisions—what you do, where you go.

JEANIE: Are you saying that I boss him around? Is that what this is about?

MRS. SLATTIMORE: (*smiles with a look of pure ecstasy*) Fantastic, Jeanie! Thank you. Now we're getting somewhere. Chuck, does Jeanie boss you around?

JEANIE: That is NOT what I said! (to CHUCK) Don't you dare answer that.

MRS. SLATTIMORE: Yes, Chuck. You *should* answer that. Hey, you guys are on the college prep track, right? Can either of you spell *emasculate*?

JEANIE: He is NOT emasculated! This is ridiculous! (*gets up and grabs CHUCK by the hand, digging her nails into his flesh*) C'mon, Chuck. We're outta here.

MRS. SLATTIMORE: Are you going to let her talk to you like that, Chuck? Tell you what to do? You've already got a mom, right?

CHUCK: Uh... what?

MRS. SLATTIMORE: A mom, Chuck. You've got one already, and Jeanie's not it. Does she ever act like it?

JEANIE levels her javelins at MRS. SLATTIMORE this time.

CHUCK: Well... uh... I guess... ya know... sometimes.

JEANIE: Fine, Chuck. You can stay here and tell Mrs. Slattimore all about your feelings, you big baby, and I'll go back to lunch without you.

JEANIE picks up her purse and stands.

MRS. SLATTIMORE: Oh, well that would be fine, Jeanie. That way, Chuck and I can have some time to analyze this a bit. Talk it out. God knows what other tidbits Chuck could relate without you here to— (*mocking him*) uh... uh... help him.

JEANIE: (*sits back down, puts her purse on her lap, and starts rooting through it*) Fine. Okay. Great. Here we go, then. But if we're going to continue, I'm going to need— (*still rooting*) huh... that's weird. I can't seem to find it.

MRS. SLATTIMORE: What are you looking for, dear?

JEANIE: (*looks up at MRS. SLATTIMORE*) Chuck's manhood, Mrs. S. Every morning, I take it out of my underwear drawer and move it into my purse so that I can shove it in his face all day. (*goes back to looking*) And yet, for some strange reason, it's just not here. Dang it. Well, Chuck— (*to CHUCK*) I suppose you'll just have to tell Mrs. Slattimore why you allow me to keep your manhood in my purse while I keep looking. Let's just get it all out in the open.

CHUCK: Uh... my manhood?

MRS. SLATTIMORE: I think what Jeanie is saying, Chuck, is that you're not a man. That, somehow, it's your fault that she's the one in charge of this relationship.

JEANIE: (*to MRS. SLATTIMORE*) He knows exactly what I'm saying. It's not like he's stupid. (*to CHUCK*) Right, Chuck? You're not stupid, are you? Like, some big, stupid jock?

CHUCK: Uh... no. I'm not.

JEANIE: (*to MRS. SLATTIMORE*) See, Mrs. Slattimore? So, then, just to clarify, he knows what you mean, he knows what I mean, and he hasn't yet said that I boss him around. Which means, then, that I don't boss him around at all.

MRS. SLATTIMORE: Well, I suppose you're right, Jeanie. Although, it's possible that Chuck's holding back—which, again, is why you need to be here. Kinda like how you're not really expressing your apparent distaste for Chuck's... um... lack of intelligence.

JEANIE: Who's holding back? I'm not holding back. Believe me, if I thought he was an idiot, I'd just say it.

CHUCK: (*slightly offended*) Uh... you think I'm an idiot?

JEANIE: (*to CHUCK, patting his knee*) No, sweetheart. You're not an idiot. You're... intellectually challenged.

MRS. SLATTIMORE: See what I mean, Jeanie? Doesn't it feel good to just let it go? To be honest? Seriously—doesn't it ever get old having to explain everything to him like, fifty times? Does he have any idea how annoying that can be? (*to CHUCK*) Do you, Chuck?

CHUCK: Uh... what?

JEANIE: (*feeling better now that it's not about her*) Let's not go there, Mrs. Slattimore. Sure, Chuck's never going to win any awards for his brains, but he's a pretty good boyfriend.

CHUCK: Uh... awards for what?

JEANIE: C'mon, Chuck. We both know you struggle to stay eligible. (*to MRS. SLATTIMORE*) I help him with a lot of his homework so he can be the big star.

CHUCK: Uh... but you said you like to help.

JEANIE: Well, Chuck, I do. But middle-school math isn't as much fun the second time around, ya know?

CHUCK: Uh... are you saying I'm stupid?

JEANIE: Stupid? No. I wouldn't do that. To call you stupid would be an insult to stupid people.

MRS. SLATTIMORE *mouths the word* "Ouch."

CHUCK: Uh... okay. 'Cause that'd be pretty uncool.

JEANIE: Wow, Chuck. *Uncool*. A polysyllabic word. I'm impressed.

CHUCK: (*tries to mock her*) Uh... wow, Chuck, a polyp-symsonic word. I'm impressed.

JEANIE: Please. You can't even repeat it.

CHUCK: Uh... whatever, babe.

JEANIE: Did you just call me *babe*? What do you think I am, some bimbo who just walked in off the street? Let me tell you something, *Chuck*—

MRS. SLATTIMORE: Okay, okay, kids. Now, I'm totally loving the open dialogue and, believe me, we are getting dangerously close to a breakthrough, but things are getting a little personal, so I think we need to find a safer way to express ourselves so no one gets hurt. Opening the lines of communication should free us to learn to accept one another, not reject one another.

Both CHUCK and JEANIE look at MRS. SLATTIMORE. Neither of them knows what she's talking about.

MRS. SLATTIMORE: So here's what we're gonna do.

MRS. SLATTIMORE reaches into the bottom drawer of her desk and pulls out two puppets: a boy and a girl, preferably the sort with arms, one of which is attached to a rod for more options for the puppeteer.

CHUCK: Uh... those are puppets.

MRS. SLATTIMORE: (*condescendingly*) Good, Chuck. Well done. You're right. These are puppets.

JEANIE: What is this, kindergarten?

MRS. SLATTIMORE: No, Jeanie. It's psychology. You see, when one assumes a persona— (*to CHUCK*) that's another personality, kind of like pretending to be someone else, dear— (*back to both of them*) one feels more free to be honest. And, when it's the persona, *the puppet*, saying things that need to be said, well, it's just not as hurtful, because it's not your girlfriend or boyfriend saying it, it's the puppet. Pretty sweet, huh?

JEANIE: That's the stupidest thing I've ever heard. There's no way I'm doing that. Besides, I have no problem being honest. If there's something I want to say I just say it.

MRS. SLATTIMORE: Oh, Jeanie. Dear, sweet Jeanie. Sarcasm, which appears to be your specialty, is not honesty, dear. Look. I'll show you. It's remarkably freeing. (*picks up the female puppet and moves its mouth to reflect her words, using an entirely different voice*) Mrs. Slattimore spent almost a hundred thousand dollars going to school for five years to get a degree in psychology. And then, when she decided to get a job in a high school, her parents told her she was nuts. They said she was wasting all the money they spent on her outrageously expensive and useless education. (*tears up melodramatically, but keeps it under control*) But, you know, since Daddy's an alcoholic mess and Mommy's emotional distances could freeze hot coffee, Mrs. Slattimore sorta takes their words with a grain of salt, right? Let's face it, she certainly didn't go into

the field of psychology because her family's screwed up six ways to Sunday. Nah. That can't be it. Right, Mom? Right, Dad?

MRS. SLATTIMORE makes the puppet put its hand to its head and bends it down, crying for a few seconds before recovering.

JEANIE and CHUCK are stunned into silence; they just sit there staring at her.

MRS. SLATTIMORE: *(puts down the puppet and speaks, again, in her own voice, fighting through the sudden onslaught of mucus to get back to perky)* Whew! See what I mean? It's like a truth serum. Boy, that puppet's got some issues, huh? Because if it were me with those issues—wink, wink, nod, nod—I could get pretty darn depressed, right? So, whaddya say? Ready to give it a shot?

JEANIE: *(grabs the female puppet and holds it up)* Sure, Mrs. Slattimore. *(uses her own voice and moves the puppet's mouth to reflect her words)* You're nuts.

MRS. SLATTIMORE: That's the spirit, Jeanie. But not to me, sweetheart. To Chuck. And remember, the whole idea is to use the puppet to help you find your voice, so try another voice.

MRS. SLATTIMORE grabs the male puppet and hands it to CHUCK.

MRS. SLATTIMORE: Chuck?

CHUCK takes the puppet but can't seem to figure out how to operate it.

MRS. SLATTIMORE: *(leans across the desk to assist him in sticking his hand in the hole and grabbing the metal rod with his other hand)* Like this, dear. Okay, now. Move your chairs out a bit. Give yourselves some space.

CHUCK and JEANIE move their chairs away from the desk in order to face each other.

MRS. SLATTIMORE: *(moves out from behind her desk and sits on top)* Chuck, why don't you begin?

CHUCK: Uh... what am I supposed to do, again?

MRS. SLATTIMORE: I believe you were right on the cusp of explaining to Jeanie how much of a controlling, manipulative, she-devil she is, and how much you hate it.

JEANIE: (*her head about to explode off her body*) Seriously, Mrs. Slattimore!

MRS. SLATTIMORE: I'm so sorry, Jeanie. Normally, I'd have the puppet say it, but, alas, you have my puppet at the moment. So, Chuck?

JEANIE: Mrs. Slattimore!

MRS. SLATTIMORE: Shhhh, Jeanie. Chuck's about to make a breakthrough. Chuck?

CHUCK: Oh... right... I guess I don't... ya know... hate it.

MRS. SLATTIMORE: Not you, Chuck. The puppet. Be the puppet, Chuck. Be the puppet.

JEANIE: This is beyond ridiculous.

MRS. SLATTIMORE: See, Chuck. Controlling. All the time. How can you stand it?

CHUCK takes a few seconds to gather himself, holds the puppet up, and thinks hard.

MRS. SLATTIMORE: That's it, Chuck. Don't be afraid.

CHUCK takes a deep breath, still facing MRS. SLATTIMORE as his puppet turns to face JEANIE.

CHUCK'S PUPPET: (*in the same high-pitched voice as before this flashback scene*) Chuck doesn't like how you tell him what to do all the time.

MRS. SLATTIMORE: Very good, Chuck. Progress. Isn't it fantastic? Okay, now, Jeanie. A response?

JEANIE: I don't tell him what to do all the time.

CHUCK'S PUPPET: Yeah, you do.

JEANIE: (*to CHUCK*) Shut up. I do not.

MRS. SLATTIMORE clears her throat in JEANIE's direction and uses her hand to imitate the action of the puppet.

JEANIE: Oh, for the love of God. Fine! (*grabs the puppet indifferently and throws her hand in the hole, not going to the trouble of altering her voice or making the puppet's mouth move*) I do not tell you what to do all the time.

MRS. SLATTIMORE: (*clears her throat, again, in JEANIE's direction, using a strange, alien voice*) Let... the puppet... talk. (*noticing that JEANIE's*

not having a bit of it, in her regular voice) Think of it as acting, Jeanie. How's that? The puppet is an actor, playing... well... you.

JEANIE: *(suddenly struck dumb, looks off into the distance as if all the world's mysteries have suddenly been revealed to her and her alone)* Act? You... want me to act? *(bites the inside of her lower lip, which she never does)* Did Chuck tell you? Because if he did, I'll— *(stops talking for a few seconds as CHUCK and MRS. SLATTIMORE look at her in total confusion)* It's just that... well... I've always wanted to...

MRS. SLATTIMORE: That's fabulous, dear, really, but let's keep this rolling, okay? Now, you... *your puppet*... was going to respond to Chuck's accusation that you always tell him what to do.

JEANIE'S PUPPET: *(JEANIE, renewed, holds up her puppet with purpose, grabs the metal stick with her other hand and dons a ridiculous voice)* If Jeanie *did* tell you what to do all the time, it would be because you were a total meathead.

MRS. SLATTIMORE: *(baby claps with elation)* That, was fantastic.

CHUCK'S PUPPET: *That, was harsh.*

JEANIE: *That, was acting.*

JEANIE'S PUPPET. But harsh, no. Harsh would be to say that my cat has a better chance of passing algebra. Of course, Fluffy wouldn't have to take it three times, but whatever.

CHUCK'S PUPPET: Your cat couldn't take algebra three times, 'cause you'd never let it out of your house. What would you do without something to boss around? Oh, that's right. *(puppet points at CHUCK)* You've got him.

JEANIE'S PUPPET: If Jeanie didn't boss Chuck around, how would he know when to breathe? To eat? TO DO ANYTHING!

MRS. SLATTIMORE reaches behind her into one of her desk drawers and pulls out a previously popped bag of popcorn. She starts munching as she continues to watch this epic battle.

CHUCK'S PUPPET: Chuck doesn't need to know, because every second of every day, his GIRLFRIEND is right there to make sure he's doing it! AND, if he does it WRONG, she's there to tell him he's DOING it wrong! And, HE'S getting pretty SICK and TIRED of it!

JEANIE'S PUPPET. Well, maybe SHE'S pretty SICK and TIRED of bearing the overbearing bearingdom of the risk of catching STUPID from her BOYFRIEND! (*puppet shakes its head in recognition*) Oh my God! It's... it's already happening!

CHUCK'S PUPPET: Well, maybe HE'S tired of his GIRLFRIEND being such a—

JEANIE'S PUPPET: (*JEANIE leaps to her feet and thrusts her puppet in CHUCK'S PUPPET's face before he can get the word out*) Don't... you... DARE.

CHUCK'S PUPPET: Ya know what? Chuck's pretty tired of being told what to do all the time. Chuck's pretty tired of being the center of attention. So, here's what's going to happen.

MRS. SLATTIMORE reaches into another drawer of her desk and pulls out a movie-theater-sized soda with a straw. She drinks.

CHUCK'S PUPPET: (*puppet moves away from JEANIE'S PUPPET to address JEANIE*) First, he's going to break up with you.

JEANIE'S PUPPET: (*JEANIE, upright, now, stands over CHUCK, so astonished she can't immediately respond*) He's... he's going to break up with Jeanie? You've got to be kidding! That's... just not right!

MRS. SLATTIMORE takes the straw out of her mouth for a second, her jaw dropping a few feet as a little bit of soda dribbles down onto her chin. She wipes it away without taking her eyes off the students.

CHUCK'S PUPPET: Well, too bad. Second, he's going to decide whether or not he's going to college—any college—sometime this summer. If that doesn't work for all the people who've already decided that he's throwing his life away, well, tough crap.

MRS. SLATTIMORE sprays a little soda in a two-foot arc between the kids.

JEANIE'S PUPPET. Well, that's fine, Chuck, but Jeanie thinks that's the stupidest thing you can do. Not that it matters. Because now that Jeanie's not Chuck's girlfriend anymore, she doesn't care what he does. He can... he can... go around school for the next month with that stupid puppet for all I care. Tired of being popular? Fine. Try being a loser for a while and see how that feels.

JEANIE turns her back to CHUCK.

JEANIE'S PUPPET: (*with a little bit more of her own voice than she would like*) Jeanie's been down that road, and it's not that much fun.

CHUCK'S PUPPET: Chuck doesn't care. For the first time in his life, he's going to do what *he* wants.

JEANIE'S PUPPET: Fine.

CHUCK'S PUPPET: Fine. Provided, of course— (*CHUCK gets up, walks over to the desk, and sits down next to MRS. SLATTIMORE as his puppet puts his little puppet mouth up to MRS. SLATTIMORE's ear*) that Mrs. Slattimore lets Chuck keep his puppet.

MRS. SLATTIMORE: (*takes a last, long sip of her soda*) Ahhhhh. Hm. Sure, Chuck, what the heck. We'll call it a graduation present.

CHUCK'S PUPPET: That makes Chuck very, very happy.

MRS. SLATTIMORE: Well, Jeanie, now that Chuck's made the life-affirming choice to throw away the only chance he'll ever have at success so that he can be happy, what about you? Did you get anything out of this?

JEANIE'S PUPPET: Actually, Mrs. Slattimore, yes. Yes, she did.

CHUCK'S PUPPET puts its head on MRS. SLATTIMORE's shoulder.

MRS. SLATTIMORE: (*gently pushes CHUCK'S PUPPET off of her shoulder and smiles at it uncomfortably*) Um... you, Jeanie. You got something out of this. Please. I think it'd be good if at least one of you let go of the puppet.

JEANIE: (*unhands the puppet and hands it to MRS. SLATTIMORE*) To be honest, other than realizing that Chuck's lost his mind and doesn't deserve me—

CHUCK and CHUCK'S PUPPET look at one another in disbelief.

JEANIE: I think I *did* come to a realization. And I think I'm finally ready to talk about it.

Suddenly, a whistle blows from offstage and the stage crew, still dressed like CHUCK, race out to remove the desk and chairs from the stage, CHUCK and MRS. SLATTIMORE with them. As they're going off, JEANIE comes forward to address the audience.

JEANIE: Hi, I'm Jeanie, and I'm a stereotypical mean-girl. Now, if you've seen a teen movie anytime in the last ten years, you know me—I'm the one with the posse of girls walking about a half step behind me, girls who will never be as pretty as me. I'm the one who gets to treat everyone around me like dog crap without any repercussions except that all the girls want to be me and all the guys want to take me to prom. Of course, if you were in this school, I probably would have socially destroyed you already, without you even knowing it was me. I've got a social network that puts Verizon to shame. I can text, paint my nails, shop online, and backstab you all at the same time. I've got at least ten girlfriends who'd beat you with their designer sunglasses if I asked them to. I can get any guy I want, whenever I want, and bend him to my will with a look, and if that doesn't work, my perfectly tanned legs. But... (*staggers for a second and bites the inside of her lower lip*) I guess you saw that whole thing back there, so it's pretty obvious I'm losing my grip a little. (*pauses again*) Normally, right now, I'd be working on damage control, finding a way to make everyone think that dumping Chuck was exactly what I wanted to do. I'd be texting with both hands and before long, Chuck wouldn't be able to walk the halls of this school without every living, breathing thing in it knowing that his IQ isn't the smallest part of his anatomy. Although, if he starts walking around with that puppet, that may be the least of his problems. It's just that, now... I don't know... I mean, all this *meanness*... it's tiring. The question is whether or not I want anyone else knowing it. (*reflective pause*) Ya know?

ALEX strolls onstage, sees JEANIE, and walks over.

ALEX: Hey, Jeanie. I heard about you and Chuck. Too bad, man.

JEANIE: Yeah. For him.

ALEX: Why? You kick him in the crotch or something?

JEANIE: No. Not that I didn't consider it.

ALEX: So, if you two are kaput, whaddya say we...

JEANIE: What? With you? There's no way.

ALEX: Not *that*, man. I was talking about a little partying. Take the edge off. I mean, you're probably pretty bummed out, right?

JEANIE: Thanks, but no thanks.

ALEX: Just tryin' to help, dude.

JEANIE: *(gets her swagger back almost instantly)* First of all, I'm not a dude. Second of all, if I ever need help ruining my life, I'll call you. In the meantime, I think I hear something. *(tilts her head up to the sky and squints as if she's trying to hear something in the far-off distance)* Do you hear it, Alex?

ALEX: Hear what?

JEANIE: It's your weed. Calling you. You better go before someone—oh, I don't know, say, a vice principal—hears it calling from your locker and decides to search. Know what I mean?

ALEX: *(smiles, nods at her)* Fair enough, princess. I'm off to follow my calling. *(starts walking away, but stops and turns back toward JEANIE once he gets to the edge of the stage)* Here's a good question: What's calling you?

ALEX exits. JEANIE pauses, considering it for a second, but her reverie is cut short when one of her cell phones rings. She pulls it out of her right back pocket and answers it.

JEANIE: Hey. What?... You know what, I'm so tired of that snotty little— *(stops herself and takes a deep breath)* I'm sorry, Carli, but I'm just not up to this right now, okay?... Um, I don't know. Maybe. I just... Whatever! Bye. *(closes her phone, stares at it for a second, then puts it back in her pocket before addressing the audience again)* You know what I wanted to do ever since I was a little kid? I wanted to be an actress. Stupid, right? But who doesn't want to be someone else sometimes? *(looks down at her shoes and smiles barely enough for anyone to notice)* I used to dress up and sing Disney songs and stuff, and my dad would videotape me.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE walks onstage and comes up behind JEANIE, who doesn't see her.

JEANIE: I was in a few plays. In middle school. It was fun, but... I don't know... I hung out with the artsy kids and then, when we got to high school, it just wasn't gonna work. Okay... let's be honest. There was this guy. A senior. Not the kind who would want some drama freak. *(reflective pause)* He was really hot. So, I reinvented myself and, in no time at all, I had a reputation... and a new boyfriend.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE is a step behind JEANIE now.

JEANIE: Of course, I had to totally blow off my friends from middle school. *(pauses)* My God, there was this one girl. Anna-something, like, too long to remember. She was something.

Behind JEANIE, ANNAROSAROSEMARIE mimes, dancing around in excitement before lunging toward JEANIE from behind as if to hug her.

JEANIE: Psychotic. Too weird for words. The kind of girl I wouldn't even take the time to socially vaporize.

Behind JEANIE, ANNAROSAROSEMARIE stops just before hugging JEANIE, miming the devastation she feels at having been so rudely shot down. Her hands rise up into the air as if to say, Why, oh Lord? Why?

JEANIE: But a great actress. And nice. Pretty nice to me.

Behind JEANIE, ANNAROSAROSEMARIE puts her hands flat to each side of her face as if she's just been given the greatest compliment in the history of compliments, then reaches out and embraces JEANIE from behind.

JEANIE: *(startled, jumps forward about three feet)* What are you doing!

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: *(comes up beside JEANIE)* Hey there, Jeanie! I heard what you said, and while I'm horribly disappointed to find that you feel as though I'm fit for a straitjacket, strange beyond all recognizable recognition, and in a social standing so deplorably pathetic that it's not even worth the time an It Girl would spend relationally aggressing me, I AM SO HAPPY that, above all that, you consider little-old-me to be a—what was the word?—oh yeah, G-R-E-A-T, GREAT actress!

JEANIE: You scared the crap out of me. Where did you come from?

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: *(in a robotic voice)* I came from your past, Jeanie. *(in her normal voice)* I'm just kidding. *(puts her arm around JEANIE, which, had it been any other day would be ripped from its socket)* Nah, I'm here to take us into the next flashback.

As ANNAROSAROSEMARIE talks, behind them, a member of the stage crew, dressed identically to JEANIE, brings out a folding chair and sets it down center stage. MISS JOHNSON sits in the chair, holding a clipboard in one hand, a pen in the other. The stage crew member pulls out a phone and starts texting.

JEANIE turns, sees the chair and teacher, and looks at ANNAROSAROSEMARIE like she's from another planet.

JEANIE: The what?

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: The flashback, silly. The one that simultaneously shows the audience the girl you deserted to be the you you are today, and, perhaps more importantly, the one that reminds you that there are so many possible yous that if you're not happy with the you you are now, you can always change.

JEANIE: What in the name of God are you talking about?

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: *(leaves JEANIE's side and flashes over to her other side, putting her other arm on JEANIE's shoulder)* Aw, c'mon, buddy. Don't you remember? Your first audition. Or should I say, *our* first audition. Sixth grade. Neither of us had a partner, so we went in together. Actually, looking back, it's amazing, the chemistry we had in there, considering we'd never met until that afternoon. And even though we didn't stay friends, mostly because you went on to become one of the meanest, nastiest, you-know-whats in the school, we had a lot of fun, didn't we?

Before JEANIE gets a chance to answer, MISS JOHNSON starts calling.

MISS JOHNSON: Let's get this show on the road, kids. Who are the first two to audition? Miss Johnson's got places to go, people. We need to get started.

The stage crew member puts her phone away and comes up to JEANIE and ANNAROSAROSEMARIE.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE reaches into JEANIE's back pockets and pulls out both of her cell phones. She opens JEANIE's purse, throws them into it, and hands the purse to the stage crew member who promptly walks offstage with it.

JEANIE: What the—

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: It's symbolic. The shedding of the you you've become so you can get back in touch with the you you were. Now, let's go. We're auditioning today.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE grabs JEANIE and leads her toward MISS JOHNSON.

MISS JOHNSON: Seriously! Is anybody auditioning for a play, today? Just curious.

Suddenly, just as quickly as the set changed, the girls lose six years of maturity: ANNAROSAROSEMARIE ties her hair in pigtails, JEANIE into a ponytail. Their

shoulders hunch ever so slightly. Their voices become a bit squeakier. While ANNAROSAROSEMARIE's personality is still toxically obnoxious, JEANIE's goes from megalomaniacally confident to downright puppyish.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: We are, Miss Johnson!

MISS JOHNSON: Well, hallelujah. First names, please.

JEANIE: Uh... my name's Jeanie... with a J.

MISS JOHNSON: (*writes it down*) That's Jeanie with a J. No lamp, no G. Got it.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Wow, Miss Johnson. That was really cool, the reference to Aladdin, I mean. How cool was that? It's almost like a play on words, the Jeanie/Genie thing, I mean. But since you teach English, you probably—

MISS JOHNSON: Thanks. First name.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Well, Miss Johnson, I have four names, which is funny, really. I mean, you know how most people only have three? Well—

MISS JOHNSON: One. One name. First name. What is it?

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Oh. Oh, yes, Miss Johnson. Of course. My first name is Annarosarosemarie.

MISS JOHNSON: I said one name.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Yes, Miss Johnson. That *is* my first name.

MISS JOHNSON: (*stares at ANNAROSAROSEMARIE for a sec before writing it down*) Have it your way, Annafofanarosannadanna.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Um, Miss Johnson? It's Annarosa—

MISS JOHNSON: Yeah, yeah. Thanks so much. Look, we need to get rollin' here, kids, so whenever you and Jeanie with a J are ready, turn around and let it rip.

JEANIE, extremely nervous, immediately turns around; ANNAROSAROSEMARIE does not.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Turn around? But Miss Johnson, then you won't be able to see our facial emoting.

MISS JOHNSON: That's okay. I'm sure it's fabulous.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: (*grabs JEANIE and pulls her around so their backs are to MISS JOHNSON*) Have it your way, Miss Johnson. After all, you're the director. What you say goes. You have a plan. You have a vision. And you'll see to it that your players mold themselves to suit your—

MISS JOHNSON: Yeah... right. I'm glad we're all on the same page, then.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Absolutely, Miss Johnson. I am SO ready for this. I've been waiting for this opportunity ever since I first saw *Sesame Street* and said to myself, *Annarosarosemarie? You need to be an actor. Reach out with your feelings. Speak to people with your—*

MISS JOHNSON: (*rubs her temples*) That's wonderful. Truly. Now, the audition piece, please. Before we all grow old and die.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: (*laughing like that's the funniest thing she's ever heard*) That's a good one, Miss Johnson. *You* oughta be up here.

MISS JOHNSON: The audition piece, Annalolafalana, if you please.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Yes. Yes, of course. My— (*reaches out and touches JEANIE's arm reassuringly*) our—audition piece. Here it comes. Get ready to feel the pain, Miss Johnson.

MISS JOHNSON: Oh, I'm feelin' the pain. Believe me.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: (*leans in to JEANIE and whispers*) Okay, kid. Here we go. Just follow my lead, and we'll be all right.

JEANIE nods and watches as ANNAROSAROSEMARIE takes what feels like an eternity getting down on the floor in a pose that can only be described as the crash position of one thrown from a plane. MISS JOHNSON tries to be patient but gives up and puts her head in her hands.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: (*whispers from her crash position on the floor*) Wake... me... up.

JEANIE: Uh... what?

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: (*whispers again, loud enough to hear from ten feet away*) Act... like... you're... waking... me... UP.

JEANIE bends down, puts her hand on ANNAROSAROSEMARIE's arm, and pushes a bit.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE jumps straight up from her lying down position and, with the dexterity of a ninja, lands on her feet, shrieking.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Ahhhhhhhh!

MISS JOHNSON's clipboard flies into the air, and JEANIE is blown backwards. While they're composing themselves, ANNAROSAROSEMARIE goes silent just long enough for everyone to think she's done shrieking.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Ahhhhhhhh!

MISS JOHNSON: Oh, for the love of God.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: *(lifts JEANIE off the floor and places her in front of herself, speaking to her in a melodramatic, southern drawl)* Why, Johnny, you desperate desperado of desperation! How dare you awaken me from a perfectly perfect slumber just to tell me that you don't need me anymore!

JEANIE stands there, mortified, with no idea what she's supposed to be doing.

JEANIE: Uh...

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: You *did* just say that, right Johnny?

JEANIE's frozen, looking like she could have a nervous breakdown and die at any moment.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Johnny! Work with me, Johnny!

JEANIE: *(comes out of it, but has no idea what to say, so her voice is completely devoid of emotion)* Oh... uh... right... uh... I... don't need you anymore.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Oh, Johnny! Let's not forget that you're a man, right? Such a man, Johnny! You know, the kind with a low, male-like voice?

JEANIE: *(lowers her voice)* Oh! Uh... that's right.

MISS JOHNSON: Um, girls?

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: *(smiles and winks at JEANIE)* Why, it's all a woman can do not to entirely fall apart at a moment like this! Just utterly fall... to... pieces! *(without any transition whatsoever, goes from heartbroken to angry as a hornet's nest)* But I've got some news, too, Mr. Johnny Ringo. I surely do. You remember that night, at Rosie's Saloon?

JEANIE: Oh... yeah... sure. That night at Rosie's. Of course.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Oh, we danced all night and drank whiskey 'til the dawn? Oh, I know you remember. There's no need to deny it. Those sweet, lovin' feelins you know you once had for me. Because, Johnny, I'm not sure how to say this 'cept to just say it: I'm with child. Your child, Johnny. Little Johnny Junior.

JEANIE: *(as stunned as Johnny would be, comes out of character for a second)* Really? You've gotta be joking.

MISS JOHNSON: Um, yoohoo. Girls?

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Why, there's not a thing funny about pregnancy, Johnny. *(transitions again, this time, to fantastically happy)* Oh, won't it be grand? We'll get married, raise little Johnny Junior at a sprawling ranch we'll build ourselves. Well, I mean, you'll build it, my love, and I'll be inside bakin' pies and tending little Johnny Junior. Oh, Johnny, I love you. *(thrusts herself into JEANIE's arms before transitioning, again, to suicidally depressed)* Why, Johnny, I'm sensing a coldness. A distance. What is it, Johnny? Don't ya love me no more? Haven't I been a good woman to ya, Johnny?

MISS JOHNSON reaches down, pulls up her purse, rifles through it, and pulls out a bottle of Excedrin Migraine. Wrenching the cap off, she slides two of them out and pops them into her mouth.

JEANIE: *(gets better, working into a southern accent)* I'm sorry, darlin', but you're just not doin' it fer me anymore, know whatta mean?

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: *(stops for a second to acknowledge JEANIE with a look that says, You go, girl!)* Why, Johnny! How could you say that after all we've been through?! I mean— *(shoves JEANIE back a few feet and crumples to the floor, shouting)* love 'em and leave 'em, huh? Is that what it is, Johnny? Go away! Just go away! If you don't love me Johnny Ringo, I swear, I'll go find me a man who will!

JEANIE: Fine. That's just fine. I'll find me a womern who's more'n happy ta—

MISS JOHNSON: Girls! That's it. I can't take anymore. I just have one question: Why aren't you doing the packet?

JEANIE & ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: *(both freeze but answer in character)* Packet?

MISS JOHNSON: The one outside the door that says *sixth grade play auditions* on it that has a clipping from the play we're doing?

Which, incidentally, doesn't star Johnny Ringo and his forlorn lover.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: (*stands, comes out of character*) Oh, I'm so sorry, Miss Johnson. I think I speak for the both of us when I say that we had no idea that scripts were available. I mean, this is our first audition, like, ever, and we weren't aware that—

MISS JOHNSON: That's great, Annafolollapoloosa, but—

JEANIE: Her name is Annarosarosemarie.

MISS JOHNSON: Yeah, that's great, Jeanie with a J. Thanks for the tip. So, where'd the western thing come from?

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: That? Oh, I wrote that. I call it *The Love Child of Johnny Ringo*.

JEANIE & MISS JOHNSON: (*JEANIE with a look of shock, MISS JOHNSON with a laugh*) You wrote that?

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Yes, I did. Is... is that bad?

MISS JOHNSON: No. Not at all. It's a really interesting cross between a soap opera and a western. It's sort of a... soap-estern.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: That's what I think, too! I was shooting for something that required the range of emotion I needed to showcase what I believe to be a God-given ability to move people with a ferocious desire to act. (*suddenly remembers JEANIE's there*) Oh, and my friend Jeanie, too, of course.

MISS JOHNSON: It certainly shows a range of emotion. Ludicrously. Obnoxiously. But it does.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: (*suddenly turns to downtrodden*) Ludicrously? Really, Miss Johnson? That's an awfully strong word.

MISS JOHNSON: Look, Annamonalola—

JEANIE: (*digs her hands into her hips and steps forward*) First of all, there's no reason you can't remember her name. Second of all, I can't believe you're making fun of her for writing that. I thought it was awesome. Like you could do any better.

MISS JOHNSON: Okay, now, that's out of line. Look, I'm sorry about the *ludicrous* comment. That may have been a bit harsh. I suppose I—

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: (*starts crying*) I know it's not perfect. I'm well aware that it's certainly not professional quality. But...

but... I worked so hard, blew off my homework for a month and practiced every night until my parents threatened to kill me.

JEANIE: Aw, that's just great. (*puts her arm around her friend*) You made her cry. Way to go.

MISS JOHNSON: (*gets up and walks over to the girls, puts her hand on ANNAROSAROSEMARIE'S shoulder*) Hey... I'm... um...

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: (*wails*) Iiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii SSSUUUCCCKKKKK!

JEANIE looks at MISS JOHNSON with squinted eyes and holds out her hand in ANNAROSAROSEMARIE'S direction as if to say to MISS JOHNSON, Any time you feel like saying something to make this situation better, go right ahead.

MISS JOHNSON: No. No, you don't. You don't suck. You're... you're... actually pretty good.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: NO, I'M NOT! I'M NOT GOOD! I'M TERRIBLE! I'M HORRIBLE!

MISS JOHNSON: (*grabs her shoulders*) Get a hold of yourself!

JEANIE: (*whips out her cell phone like a samurai brandishing his sword*) Touch her again and my mom'll be at this school in a heartbeat. And you DO NOT want my mom down here. Trust me.

MISS JOHNSON: (*yanks her hands away and sticks them straight up in the air*) I'm not touching her! My God, let's not get crazy! (*to ANNAROSAROSEMARIE*) But as I was saying, you're not terrible! You're a fine actress. You are!

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: (*stops blubbing long enough to suck back what sounds like a pint of snot*) REALLY, Miss Johnson? You think I'm good?

MISS JOHNSON reaches out to cup ANNAROSAROSEMARIE'S face in her hands but looks at JEANIE, whose thumb is poised over the buttons of her cell, and snaps her hands back.

MISS JOHNSON: Yes, yes. You're phenomenal. Now, stop crying. Please. Just... stop... crying.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: You're not just saying that?

MISS JOHNSON: Of course not.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: 'Cause if I thought you were just saying that to make me feel better—

MISS JOHNSON: I'm not, Annastimolanana. I'm not.

JEANIE: Okay, that's it. Say it with me. Anna—

MISS JOHNSON: I get it! God. Anna-rosa-rose-marie. Are you trying to get me to break down? Is that your plan? Break the first-year teacher down and laugh at her when she cracks? Huh? They told us you kids weren't human and you— (*points at JEANIE*) you're proof. I'm not afraid to say that you... you're scary. (*starts crying*) Well, there it is, girls. You did it. Congratulations.

MISS JOHNSON walks back to her chair, sits, and puts her head in her hands. JEANIE looks at ANNAROSAROSEMARIE like, What on earth is wrong with her?

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: (*whispers to JEANIE*) Apparently, you're scary. (*goes to MISS JOHNSON and takes a knee right beside her*) Miss Johnson? Are you all right?

MISS JOHNSON: No. I'm not. You have every right to be upset. It's my first time doing this, and I don't know what the heck I'm doing. I applied for this teaching position, which I'm thrilled to get, and then, Principal Thomas goes, "Well, Miss Johnson, I'm sure you're aware, we here at Garfield Middle School encourage our new staff to get involved in extracurriculars," which is code for, "Do this extracurricular or you can forget about teaching here." So I go, "Sure, Mr. Thomas, whatever you need," and bam, just like that, with no previous drama experience, anti-depression medication, or husband prospects I'm the new middle school drama advisor. So here I am doing my best to intimidate you guys when the only thing I know about directing plays I got from yelling at my dog to get off the couch. And she doesn't listen to me, either. And then, Mr. Thomas tells me that he picks the plays to ensure that they're school appropriate, and he hands me what has to be the stupidest play in the history of plays.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: It's okay, Miss Johnson. We'll help. Won't we, Jeanie?

JEANIE just stands there.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Jeanie? Stay with me, Jeanie. We want to help out poor Miss Johnson, right?

JEANIE: (*not completely sold*) Um... sure. Why not?

MISS JOHNSON: Thanks, girls, but—

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: So, what's the name of the play?

MISS JOHNSON: Oh, it's a little ditty called *Darn Tootin': A Hillbilly Wedding*.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE & JEANIE: Seriously?

MISS JOHNSON: Oh, yeah. (*takes on a mocking southern accent*) See, there's a weddin' 'tween old Virgil and Ellie May that goes bad when Ma and Pa get sick on accounta' the roadkill stew that Granny made for the reception, y'all. (*loses the accent*) I'm serious, all right. It was written by some guy named Ima.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Ima?

MISS JOHNSON: Yeah. Ima Moron, I think it is.

Both girls laugh, genuinely, which gets MISS JOHNSON to laugh.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: (*assumes the same ridiculous accent*) Why, I think it sounds positively rivetin'.

MISS JOHNSON: I don't think I can do this. I could just tell Mr. Thomas that I refuse on grounds that the play would insult the intelligence of the chairs the audience is sitting on.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: It's okay, Miss Johnson. Look on the bright side: You've got two female leads who can rock out any part, no matter how stupid.

MISS JOHNSON & JEANIE: Who?

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: (*in accent, again*) Why, Ellie Mae, Missa Johnson. I do declay-er that I'ma gunna get married, 'slong as Granny don't go poisnin' no one with her ol' roadkill stew. (*stares at JEANIE*) Annnnnnnnnnnnnnd...

JEANIE: Oh, right. (*in a less enthusiastic accent*) I suppose that makes me fit fer Granny, then, right?

MISS JOHNSON: That would probably be a good part for you. Granny's kind of a bitter old woman. Seems right up your alley.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Would you like us to go outside and get a packet? We'd be happy to go to the end of the line and audition again.

MISS JOHNSON: No. Don't worry about it. Just make sure you two check the cast list tomorrow morning, okay?

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Sounds like a plan, Miss Johnson.

MISS JOHNSON: (*stands, pulls it together*) And... can you send the next pair in?

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: (*all smiles*) Sure thing.

MISS JOHNSON exits with her chair and clipboard as ANNAROSAROSEMARIE and JEANIE come downstage, center stage, on the apron. As they make their way, they let their hair out, straighten up, and once again, are high schoolers.

JEANIE: That seems like a lifetime ago, doesn't it? Man, you played her like a pro.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Yeah. First-year teachers. Turn on the waterworks, and they melt like butter. It's so easy it's... well... *ludicrous.*

The two of them have a genuine laugh together.

JEANIE: I remember when we walked out of the room and you looked the next two kids in the eyes and went, "I hope you're good, 'cause she is *not* in a good mood in there!"

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: That's right. The one kid looked like she was gonna pee her pants and went, "Really?" And you went up to her and said, "Yup. She even made Annarosarosemarie over here cry."

JEANIE: Classic.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Yeah.

There's an awkward pause as both girls realize they don't really have anything whatsoever to talk about.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: So, Jeanie, if you don't mind me asking, what happened? Between us?

JEANIE: What... do you mean?

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Well, one year we were friends and then, over a summer, you know, you stopped calling and then when I called you always had an excuse for not wanting to get together and—

JEANIE: Things change Anna. And I just... I just got to a point where... I don't know.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Just so you know, I'm aware that everyone thinks I'm a joke. A crazy.

JEANIE: Why do you care what anyone thinks? You've got to have the highest self-esteem of anyone I've ever met.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Everyone cares, Jeanie. Especially when no one wants to be around you... like guys.

JEANIE: Like that's the most important thing in the world.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Coming from the one girl in the school who can have any guy she wants.

JEANIE: (*turns her back to ANNAROSAROSEMARIE*) Yeah... well... I don't know if you heard yet, but Chuck broke up with me.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: (*goes to JEANIE*) Seriously? Why?

JEANIE: (*turns back around*) Oh, I don't know. He's going through something right now. It's really hard to explain.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Doesn't seem like he's the only one.

JEANIE: (*laughs, this time, more at ease*) Yeah.

Dramatic pause.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: So, about that whole one-minute-we're-friends thing and the next—

Suddenly, an obnoxiously loud ringtone explodes out of JEANIE's pants. She pats herself down looking for the one phone not taken from her when the scene started. She finds it wedged into the waistband of her jeans, whips it out, and answers it.

JEANIE: It's me... Yeah?... Seriously?... No!... Look, Sheri, I just don't care anymore, okay?... No, it's not that, I just... Whatever. You know, sometimes you can be such a— What did you just say to me?... Ya know, forget it. I'm tired of this... Yeah, well you too! And everyone who looks like you.

JEANIE shoves the phone in her back pocket.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Everything okay?

JEANIE: (*wipes the tiniest indication of a tear from her eye*) Now that Chuck and I aren't dating anymore some of my... *friends...* are doubting whether or not they want to hang with me. I am so sick of the drama.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Sounds like what you need is a distraction. Something like, oh, I don't know, a part in the spring play?

JEANIE: What?

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Auditions for the spring play are coming up and I know for a fact that one of the girls most likely to get a lead role isn't auditioning this time, so if you're thinking of hanging with a different crowd for a while—taking a break from all the *drama*—you might—

JEANIE: Why aren't you auditioning?

JEANIE's phone rings again. She answers it.

JEANIE: (*into the phone*) Just a sec. (*puts the phone down by her side*) So, why aren't you auditioning?

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Probably the same reason you stopped being my friend after middle school. I'm lookin' for a change... and a man.

JEANIE: (*bursts out laughing, but not in a mocking way*) Seriously?

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Absolutely. You know how hard it is the find a boyfriend in the drama guild.

JEANIE: I can imagine.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: So. Whatcha' gonna do?

JEANIE: (*pulls her phone up, looks at it for a second, and turns it off before putting it back in her pocket*) When did you say those auditions were?

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Next week. Say, why don't you swing by the scene shop and pick up an audition packet?

JEANIE: An audition packet? Are you sure? I thought you were supposed to write your own audition piece.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Good one. You don't wanna go in there without that. You're not in middle school anymore, kiddo.

Dramatic pause.

JEANIE: Well, I'd better get on that, then. One more thing—if I need help practicing, do you think you could... you know...

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Oh my God, no. Are you kidding me? I can't be seen hanging around with a drama loser. Please. Some of us have reputations to protect.

JEANIE: (*laughs*) Tell you what, then. I'll trade you some of my manhandling techniques for acting lessons. What do you say?

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Sounds like a plan.

JEANIE smiles and exits. ANNAROSAROSEMARIE strolls up to the apron and addresses the audience.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Hi, I'm Annarosarosemarie, and I'm a stereotypical thespian. I always dreamed about moving to New York and changing my name to something a bit simpler, like Felicitylicious or something. Do you have any idea how many kids leave Podunk to go to the Big Apple every year in search of finding themselves on the fantastically glittering stages of Broadway? A lot. I always thought I'd be one of them. Why not? I've got mad acting skills. Don't believe me? Okay, then. Check this out. (*turns to do a quick emotional recall, then turns back around*) How about the tear-inspiring Kate Winslet in *Titanic*. (*goes down on one knee and extends both arms*) I'll never let go, Jack! I'll never let go! (*comes out of character for a sec*) Or the righteous indignation of Vivian Leigh in *Gone with the Wind*. (*braces herself against an invisible windstorm and looks up into the heavens*) With God as my witness, I will never go hungry again! (*comes back out of character and moves to the other side of the stage*) Or cuckoo for Coco Puffs like Faye Dunaway in *Mommie Dearest*. (*stands straight as a board, her eyes as wide as they'll go*) No more wire hangers! Ever! (*goes back to being herself*) Ah, what's the use. I've missed out on a lot of fun being the star of every play in this school. You've got weeks of preparing for auditions, daily practices for months on end, running lines at home every night, and let's not forget the week-long post-show depression. I'll tell you one thing I've definitely missed out on: boys.

RONALD walks onstage, sees ANNAROSAROSEMARIE, and suddenly looks like he's about to throw up.

RONALD: (*in a nasal groan*) Uhhhhh...

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: (*sees him and lights up just a little*) Hey, Ronald.

RONALD: (*notices her noticing him*) Uhhhhh... hey, Annarosarosemarie.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: What's up?

RONALD: Oh, nothing. I'm just... walking around, I guess.

RONALD starts walking around the stage, behind her, head down like he's lost something the size of a contact lens, moaning every few seconds.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: (*addresses the audience again*) I dunno. I assume that most guys are simply intimidated by me. The outfits. The singing. The... *theatricality*. It's either that or— (*pauses*) they just don't like me.

RONALD returns to the apron, approaches ANNAROSAROSEMARIE, and stands in front of her like he's proposing.

RONALD: Uhhhhh... Annarosarosemarie?

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Oh, hi again, Ronald. Once again I ask, what is up?

RONALD: I was... I was wondering if... uhhhh...

SKYE enters and walks across the stage, passing RONALD and ANNAROSAROSEMARIE.

SKYE: (*in a kittenish voice*) Hey, Ronnie.

RONALD stops looking at ANNAROSAROSEMARIE and, as SKYE passes, turns as if on an axis, following her until she exits.

SKYE's completely offstage before RONALD speaks.

RONALD: Hi... Skye...

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Hey, Ronald. Earth to Ronald. Were you about to ask me something? It sounded like you were about to ask me something. Is your calculator out of batteries or something?

RONALD: (*has trouble focusing*) Oh, oh yeah. I was... wow, boy, that Skye... she's really something.

RONALD's still staring offstage.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: (*annoyed*) All right. Wait a second. This is a bunch of crap.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE *throws off her cowboy hat, revealing huge, blonde hair that she fluffs out with her hands; her cowgirl vest, revealing a button-down shirt that she proceeds to unbutton three or four buttons before pulling the bottom out of her jeans and tying it up to show a good portion of her bare stomach; and her chaps, like they were designed to be ripped off that way—by a stripper. She yanks a tube of lip gloss from the pocket of her jeans, glides it over her lips, and throws it behind her.*

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: *(in her best Marilyn Monroe voice)* Hey, Ronnie.

RONALD, *still in a trance, does not turn or respond in any way, so ANNAROSAROSEMARIE taps him on the shoulder.*

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: I said, hey, Ronnie.

RONALD: *(turns)* Oh, I'm sorry, Anna. *(suddenly stunned)* Holy love of astronomy! What happened to you?

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: I'm not sure what you mean, Ronnie, but I believe you were going to say something?

RONALD: Oh, oh yeah, as a matter of fact I was, uh... uh...

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Anna, Ron. *(in a throaty purr)* Ah-nnnn-ah.

RONALD: Oh, right. Anna. I'm sorry, I'm just... a bit nervous... but, I was wondering if... well, if maybe... you don't have to, but... if you want... we could—

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: *(grabs him by the hair with both hands)* Ron. Do you know what flavor this lip gloss is?

RONALD: *(goes into stage one of a heart attack)* Uhhhhh...

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Passion fruit, Ron. *(throaty purr, again)* Pash-un frooot.

RONALD: *(gulps)* I was wondering if you wouldn't mind attending a movie with me this evening.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: *(smiles and lets go of his hair)* You know what, Ron? I wouldn't mind at all. Thank you.

RONALD: That... that's outstanding. May I pick you up in a few minutes?

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Sounds good.

RONALD turns away from the audience and heads upstage to meet a member of the stage crew—dressed exactly like him—who hands him two folding chairs. At the same time, DISGRUNTLED MOVIEGOER brings a folding chair onstage, unfolds it center stage and sits. RONALD, chairs in hand, stands with his back turned to the audience until ANNAROSAROSEMARIE is done speaking.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Hm. Maybe there's something to this bad-girl thing. I could look at it as a role. Try it out and see where it goes. What's the worst thing that could happen? It's time to say goodbye to Annarosarosemarie and hello to Ah-nnnn-ah. Ronnie, baby, prepare yourself for a night you'll never forget.

RONALD: *(turns toward the audience, hands one of the two folding chairs to ANNAROSAROSEMARIE, and leads her pretty far stage right, on the apron)* How about here? It's close enough to give you the feeling of being in the movie.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Yeah. Sounds great. Being close sounds really, really good.

They set their chairs down beside one another and sit. RONALD smiles uncomfortably but doesn't really look at ANNAROSAROSEMARIE; instead, he cocks his head up at a ninety-degree angle, looking up toward the screen. ANNAROSAROSEMARIE does the same.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Wow. Close sounded good, but this isn't exactly what I had in mind.

RONALD: Now that we're sitting, I must admit, it does seem rather close. On the positive side, I don't believe I'll need my contacts to see.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Yeah, but then there are the chiropractor bills. I'm really sorry, but I think we should move. It's nice to be close and all, and— *(pushes herself against RONALD, so much that he's a bit uncomfortable at first)* I do want to get close tonight, but my neck hurts already and the previews haven't even started yet.

RONALD: Oh, oh yes. Of course. Absolutely. How about we move back?

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Ooh. The *back*. Now, *that* sounds like a plan.

They pick up their chairs and move back, setting them down again a few feet behind the DISGRUNTLED MOVIEGOER.

RONALD: Now there. That's a lot better, don't you think?

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: *(leans left, leans right, raises her head, but can't see past DISGRUNTLED MOVIEGOER)* Well, actually, Ron, I hate to say this, but— *(whispers)* this guy's the only other person in the theater and we're sitting behind him? I mean, look at the guy—he's a virtual planetoid.

DISGRUNTLED MOVIEGOER furrows his brow and turns his head slightly to the left, indicating that it's almost a sure thing he heard that one. RONALD stands, grabs his chair, and faces DISGRUNTLED MOVIEGOER.

RONALD: Well, sir, we're going to move, now, as we'd most certainly annoy you with our constant chatter. Adolescents. What're ya gonna do?

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE, too, picks up her chair and follows RONALD to the apron, center stage, where he sets down his chair.

RONALD: Okay. How is this? This is good, right? Not too close, and not behind anyone?

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: *(sets her chair down next to his)* This is fine, Ron. I just want to get comfortable before it gets dark in here. You know, 'cause when it gets dark—

RONALD: Yes, of course. Because when it gets dark, the film begins. I've been awaiting the premiere of this film for the longest time.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: *(a little disappointed)* Uh... yeah, that's what I meant.

Suddenly, the lights dim. Spotlight on the teens.

RONALD: Ooh. Marvelous. Previews. I love these.

As RONALD stares straight ahead, watching the screen, ANNAROSAROSEMARIE stands and addresses the audience.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Okay. This isn't working the way I planned. I figured we'd get here, I'd send some pretty clear signals that there was going to be some action and bada-bing bada-boom,

we'd be making out before the previews. That is how it works, right? I mean, I did the *getting comfy* thing and the *I-can't-wait-'til-it-gets-dark* thing. What else am I supposed to do? (*thinks about it a sec*) Wait a minute. This isn't all Ron's fault. He can't be any more experienced than I am. I can't fault him for that. He is kinda cute. Besides, I'm not looking for a soul mate, here. So maybe I need to step it up. It's like I always say: When you're doing your thing up there and the audience isn't laughing, try harder. Take it to the next level. Sounds like a plan.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE sits and looks at RONALD who, when he returns the look, seems about as comfortable as a cheerleader at a science fair. When ANNAROSAROSEMARIE stares straight ahead at the screen, RONALD stands and addresses the audience.

RONALD: Oh... my... gosh. My panic attacks are having panic attacks. I've wanted to go out with this girl since eighth grade after I saw her on stage in the Garfield Middle School production of *Cinderella*. I attended both nights and bought the DVD so I could watch it over and over again. And now, here we are, after I finally mustered the nerve to ask her. So what if it took me four years? I was sitting in Calculus, going on and on about her for the X-to-the-derivative-of-an-infinite-domainth time when Stanley, my math partner in crime slams his mechanical pencil down on the desk and exclaims, "Gosh darn it, Ronald. If you don't ask her out, I swear to Pythagoras, I'm going to ask her out. And when she says yes and sees what I can do with a graphing calculator, causing her to fall madly in love with me, there will be major weirdness between us." Given that very serious threat—I mean, seriously, Stanley works a graphing calculator like Arthur wielded Excalibur—I was forced to rouse all the courage I could and do it. Honestly, I didn't think she'd say yes. I mean, why would she? She's the most beautiful girl in the world, and I'm... well... I'm me. I'm not the guy girls look at and go, "Oh yeah—I've gotta get me some of that." Not to mention the fact that even if they did, I wouldn't know what to do with them anyway. It's pretty pathetic, I know. I'll just have to wait and see if she makes initial contact. Just like in science: Every action has an equal and opposite reaction. I'll be the opposite reaction. Yes. I like that. Sounds like a plan. (*turns to sit down, sees ANNAROSAROSEMARIE patting his chair with a come hither look*) Um... would you like a drink? You seem really, really thirsty.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Oh... well, sure, why not? If you don't mind. I would hate for you to miss any of the movie.

RONALD: Oh no, it's fine. The previews will last quite a while, anyway. If you're thirsty, you should definitely have a drink.

RONALD pauses, gives her a cheesy, aw-shucks smile, and exits.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: *(stands and addresses the audience)* Would I like a drink? Sure. Here's a question: How much soda would it take to kill a person? Maybe if I drink the whole thing in less than five minutes my kidneys will fail, and I can call this night the disaster it's been so far and write it off as not meant to be. But then, you know, there's Ronald. He's been sorta sweet so far. Sure, he's not attacking me like I was hoping, but there's still time. The soda thing's kinda tricky. If I drink the whole thing, I'll have to go to the bathroom, which is not good. What if I actually make some progress and then have to leave? If I don't drink it, he'll feel like he totally wasted his money, and that's not good, either. Oh well. I'm an actor, and I'm to have a prop. I'll just have to do my best to use it to enhance my performance.

RONALD enters with two large sodas and a movie poster. He sits, hands her a soda, and puts the movie poster under his chair.

RONALD: Here you are. They were giving away posters. Hard to say no, right?

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Absolutely. And thanks for the soda, Ronnie. *(takes a huge sip, moaning)* Mmmmmmmmmmmmmmm.

RONALD: *(turns and looks at her)* Wow. I'm guessing you like the soda.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: *(moans right up until the second she speaks)* This... is... soooooo gooooood.

RONALD: It was nothing, really. I just waltzed up there and, you know, the girl at the counter said, "Hi. Would you like the extra-value combo meal with a large popcorn, extra-large soft drink, and complimentary candy selection?" I said, "No thank you. I wholly appreciate the fine offer but am not currently in need of such a wide repertoire of refreshment."

In the background, DISGRUNTLED MOVIEGOER looks like he's losing patience with all the talking. He's moving his head around like he's trying to figure out which moron it is who can't shut up.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: *(giving up on the moaning)* That was... very polite of you.

RONALD: Well, thank you for noticing. I've always believed in being polite. So, then, I said, "I would like two medium sodas, please"—medium, because, as you know, the large is a nearly infinite amount of liquid.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: You are so right about that. (*tries again, slurping up a mouthful of soda, this time, with a moan*) Sooooo good. This may, in fact, be the best soda I've ever had in my entire life.

RONALD: That's wonderful. I'm glad you like it because, as you can see, I ended up with the extra large anyway, because she said, "For just a quarter more you can get the extra large." And, well, I've always been one for a bargain, so I had to say yes.

DISGRUNTLED MOVIEGOER stands, sighs loudly, and puts his arms in the air as if to say, Seriously?

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: There's certainly nothing wrong with being a bargain-hunter.

RONALD: Thanks, but as big as it is, don't feel like you have to drink the whole thing. I have had CPR training but, honestly, I'm not at all sure how to treat a sugar coma.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: (*getting a bit frustrated with him*) Thanks. I'll have to remember that.

DISGRUNTLED MOVIEGOER clears his throat like he's got a loogie the size of an eel in there. RONALD and ANNAROSAROSEMARIE look behind them, then return their attention to each other.

RONALD: No, no. Thank you.

DISGRUNTLED MOVIEGOER: Shhhhhhhhh!

RONALD and ANNAROSAROSEMARIE slink down in their chairs a bit. They whisper.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Oh, look—the movie's starting.

RONALD: Cool. Guess we'd better stop talking, huh?

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: You are so polite. (*leans in toward him*) Not talking's okay... *if you know what I mean.*

RONALD: Oh, I know all right. If we don't, that Neanderthal back there will probably get mad and come up here, and then... I don't want to think about what happens then.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: (*frustrated, louder*) No, Ronald. I mean, if it's dark we can do things. (*puts her lips as close to his ear as she can without touching it*) Thiiiiiiiings. Know what I mean?

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE *pulls back and winks as sexy as she can. RONALD doesn't respond for a second, trying to figure out what she could possibly have gotten in her eye. But then, once it dawns on him, he winks back at her before turning away. Just when she thinks he's hopeless, RONALD's hand makes its way from his lap to the back of her hand. She smiles, and they link fingers, holding hands.*

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: (*after a few seconds, starts showing signs of having to pee*) I am so hungry. How 'bout I get us some popcorn?

RONALD: Oh... well... sure. But why don't you let me get it?

He starts to get up.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: (*grabs him, pushes him down into his seat*) No!

DISGRUNTLED MOVIEGOER: Down... in... front!

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: (*whispers*) I got it this time. My treat.

She runs off with what's left of her soda.

RONALD: (*watches her go, and as soon as she's offstage, pops up to address the audience*) Do you believe this? I'm holding her hand! Holding... her... hand! (*holds out his hand*) With this hand! This is sooo cool. (*pauses, considers*) This sweaty, clammy hand. Oh... my... God. This is the hand of a corpse. A grotesque hand. Wet, stinky, stupid hand! Who, in their right mind, would want to hold this hand?! I mean, seriously! (*slaps himself with the hand and stops*) Thanks. I needed that. Actually, now that I'm thinking about it, she didn't exactly push me away. Yeah. Okay. Everything's all right. Who knows? Maybe there'll be a little more than some handholding tonight. (*suddenly becomes all manly, takes a breath spray out of his pocket and shoots it into his mouth*) Yeah. Now that is what I am talking about.

RONALD puts the spray back in his pocket and feels the slightest hint of a tickle in the back of his throat, initiating a coughing jag only a long-term tuberculosis victim can appreciate.

Getting his cough under control, RONALD sits down as ANNAROSAROSEMARIE reenters with a large tub of

popcorn. She sits down, smiles at RONALD, and puts the tub between them.

RONALD returns her smile before the both of them return their gazes to the screen. Without moving their eyes from the screen, the two of them reach for some popcorn. After eating three or four pieces each, their hands meet in the tub. They stop. There's some goofy giggling as their fingers probe for one another's. In seconds, their fingers are playing footsie in the popcorn tub.

Then, ANNAROSAROSEMARIE breaks her hand free of RONALD's and grabs a piece of popcorn. RONALD suddenly wonders if that's it—if he's done. If, as has been the case his entire life, the love gods have decided to toy with him by putting love just within his reach and then, just as suddenly, yanking it away. RONALD's face turns sour.

But then, as ANNAROSAROSEMARIE holds the piece of popcorn up, readying it for her mouth, she suddenly has an idea. She turns to RONALD, holds the popcorn up, and offers it to him. He puts his hand out to grab it from her, but with her free hand she gently pushes his down. She then puts the popcorn to his lips, pushing it in.

RONALD chews. Finishing it, he grabs another and places it on ANNAROSAROSEMARIE's lips. She eats it, and things are going just swimmingly.

After a three or four rounds, the next time ANNAROSAROSEMARIE puts some popcorn in RONALD's mouth, all is well until he feels a strange tickle in the back of his throat and, suddenly, he's choking.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE hasn't figured it out, yet. But after having not received any popcorn in a few seconds she turns to see RONALD jerking his head back, holding his throat, and stomping his feet on the floor.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: *(shrieking)* Ohmigod! Ohmigod! He's choking!

She stands after RONALD flies out of his chair, acting like an alien is about to rip through the flesh of his throat.

DISGRUNTLED MOVIEGOER: Aw, c'mon. For the love of God, down in front!

RONALD flips himself backward, knocking ANNAROSAROSEMARIE down into her chair. He flops on top of her.

DISGRUNTLED MOVIEGOER: Thank you!

Even after having the wind knocked out of her, ANNAROSAROSEMARIE has the presence of mind to wrap her arms around RONALD's stomach and pull back in a Heimlich-esque maneuver. Bits and pieces of popcorn fly out of RONALD's mouth.

Recovering, RONALD leans back, totally squashing ANNAROSAROSEMARIE. As soon as he realizes this, he leaps to his feet and turns around.

RONALD: I am so sorry, Anna! I—

DISGRUNTLED MOVIEGOER: Hey! What gives up there! Some of us are trying to watch a movie!

RONALD: *(turns to address DISGRUNTLED MOVIEGOER)* I'm very sorry. I was choking on my popcorn, and... I'm so sorry. I'm... I'm just gonna sit back down now.

DISGRUNTLED MOVIEGOER: Well, let me be the first to thank you. Idiot.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: *(gets up, helps him sit back down, stays standing)* Oh my God! Are you okay?

RONALD: *(sits)* I'm good, I'm good. Thank you. I... I don't know what I would have done if you hadn't been here.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: *(faces him, straddles him slightly, reaches down to stroke his hair)* Let's not think about it, okay? I'm just glad you're all right.

DISGRUNTLED MOVIEGOER: D-O-W-N... I-N... F-R-O-N-T!
AHHH!

RONALD: *(ignoring DISGRUNTLED MOVIEGOER completely)* Really?

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Well... yeah... of course.

DISGRUNTLED MOVIEGOER: Hey, we're all super-stoked that you're okay. Now, tell your girlfriend to sit the crap down!

RONALD grabs ANNAROSAROSEMARIE by the hand and gently guides her down to her seat.

RONALD: You probably ought to sit before Cro-Magnon man gets violent.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: *(turns and looks back for a second)* That guy's a jerk.

RONALD: Let's just try to enjoy the rest of the night, okay?

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: *(smiles)* Sounds good.

They settle in. RONALD stretches his arm straight up and, without looking, pulls it down intending to place it gently around her neck. But instead of his arm coming down around the back of her neck, it pummels her on the top of her head.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Ow!

RONALD: Oh my God! I'm so sorry!

DISGRUNTLED MOVIEGOER: We're ALL sorry! Now, shut up!

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE rubs her head.

RONALD: Anna... I... I just... this whole date has been a disaster, and it's all my fault.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: No, Ron. That's not true. We've had some bad luck, sure, but I wouldn't call it a total disaster. Look, there's still plenty of movie and—

DISGRUNTLED MOVIEGOER: I... WILL... KILL... YOU!

RONALD: *(losing it, stands, turns, yells)* Look, man, give me a break, okay? I'm on a first date with the girl of my dreams. A girl I've wanted to go out with since middle school! Do you know that I have seen *Cinderella* at least a thousand times, and it's not because the music's any good. It's because this girl is in it! And since this whole night has been a total disaster, I'd appreciate a little support. An iota of compassion, if you please. Is that too much to ask? That a geek like me get a break for a change? Have you never been on a first date? Are you some kind of robot? Is your heart made of stone?

DISGRUNTLED MOVIEGOER: *(dramatic pause)* Um... wow... um... all right. Hey, look, I'm sorry, kid. I didn't know. Um... all right, then... carry on, man. By all means, carry on.

Pleased with himself, RONALD sits down.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: (*astonished*) Did you really mean that? I'm the girl of your dreams?

RONALD: Actually, yes. Yes, you are.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: That's the sweetest thing I've heard in my entire life.

DISGRUNTLED MOVIEGOER: Now'd be a good time to kiss her, dude.

RONALD stands and looks back.

DISGRUNTLED MOVIEGOER: All right, all right! I'm buttin' out. My bad.

RONALD: (*sits, refocuses*) You *did* save my life and all. Which is pretty cool. I mean, sure, a lot of first dates are rocky, but I don't know anyone who can say—

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE kisses him. When the kiss is over, she grabs RONALD's arm and puts it around her shoulders.

DISGRUNTLED MOVIEGOER: This is so much better than the movie.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE & RONALD: (*get up at the same time, shouting*) Do you mind?! (*turn back and look into each other's eyes*) So much better than the movie.

They are about to start kissing when ANNAROSAROSEMARIE pauses, reaches down, and grabs the movie poster. She grabs one end, RONALD grabs the other and, sporting cheesy smiles, they hold it up in front of them so the audience can't see.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: (*a few seconds later, drops the poster, shrieks*) My God, Ron! You bit my tongue!

RONALD: I'm sorry! I'm sorry! Clearly, I don't know what I'm doing!

He's cut off by being struck by the folding chair ANNAROSAROSEMARIE has already folded up and clipped his shin with on her way out.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: (*storms offstage, chair in tow*) I'm going to the bathroom to see if the tip of my tongue's still attached!

RONALD: (*devastated, sits, droops over the chair*) What have I done?

DISGRUNTLED MOVIEGOER: (*stands, picks up his chair, walks over to RONALD*) Try not to take it too hard. We've all been there.

RONALD: Oh, sure. I'll bet it's never happened to you.

DISGRUNTLED MOVIEGOER: Nineteen-ninety-one, son. Bled for days, she told me later, the same time she told me she never wanted to see my face again. Never got a date after that. Been comin' by myself to the movies ever since.

RONALD: That's the worst thing I think I've ever heard in my entire life.

DISGRUNTLED MOVIEGOER: (*slaps RONALD on the back*) Good luck, Ron. I gotta go feed my cats.

RONALD stands as DISGRUNTLED MOVIEGOER picks up both his and RONALD's chair and exits. RONALD moves center stage, apron, to address the audience.

RONALD: Hi, my name is Ronald, and I'm a stereotypical geek. No physical prowess to speak of but a mind where facts go in and can't get out. Theories, theorems, hypotheses. Without so much as a brain cramp, I can tell you ten facts about the top twenty most important scientists in world history. Would you like to know Galileo's favorite food, perhaps? Of course, you don't. I don't blame you. But for the record, I know what it is. If it's something girls could care less about and has no chance whatsoever of helping you get one to go out with me, I know it. Now, thinking about this problem rationally, I'd suggest that a person like me pursue a girl with similar interests. A wholly logical conclusion. Surely, there are girls in this so-called institution of learning who go to sleep under an Einstein poster and read old science textbooks for the pure love of advancing their knowledge, right? Well, guess what? There are. And I'll let you in on a little secret. They don't want guys like me. They want the same guys that all the other girls want—the athletes, the bad boys, the guys who know how to talk to girls, how to carry themselves like they don't care, how to be cool. Me, I'm girl repellent. Spray me on and you're sure to drive females away. God knows Annarosarosemarie will probably never speak to me again after I nearly bit off her tongue. It's hopeless, I'm afraid. Nice, inexperienced guys like me don't stand a chance.

RITA enters, her face so far in a Star Wars book that her face is completely hidden.

RONALD: (sees her) Oh, here we go. Don't believe me? Allow me the opportunity to prove my theory by completing a simple social experiment. (walks toward RITA, who is completely oblivious to his presence, points to her) Exhibit A, if you will: Rita. A girl lower on the social radar than I am, if that's even possible. For example, she's been wearing a retainer since freshman year causing a lisp that's so irregular as to defy logical plotting on even the most carefully crafted line graph. Now, if I cannot even remotely entice her to at least consider a date with me... well... that seals it. (to RITA) Greetings, Rita. How are you, today?

RITA: (slides her book down just low enough to allow her eyes to make contact with RONALD's) Not too shabby, Ronald. Thank'sh for ashking.

RONALD: May I ask you something? Sort of a social experiment, if you will.

RITA: Sure, Ronald. Anything for... shience.

RONALD: Okay, then. Hypothetically speaking, if I were to ask you on a date, what would be your immediate emotional response?

RITA: (squints, puckers lips in thought) Are you... ashking me out?

RONALD: No, no. Nothing like that. I'm *hypothetically* asking you out, and asking, in the case of such a hypothetical proposition, what your immediate emotional response would be.

RITA: (more intense squinting, puckering) Let me make sure I undershtand. You're not ashking me out.

RONALD: Correct.

RITA: You're *fake* ashking me out?

RONALD: Fake?

RITA: Like, not for real.

RONALD: (squints, too) Like, hypothetical.

RITA: Hypothetical?

RONALD: Yes, Rita. Hypothetical. Fake, not for real, whatever. Are you with me on this or not?

RITA: (stops squinting, puts her book down at her side) I know what hypothetical mean'sh, Ronald. But, jusht to be clear, then: You're definitely NOT ashking me out.

RONALD: (*runs his tongue over his teeth, takes a deep breath*) For the love of God, Rita, no. But if I did, would you say yes? That's all I need to know. If I came up to you, say, tomorrow—

RITA: (*smiles ridiculously wide*) Hypothetically.

RONALD: (*stops, stares at her a sec*) —and asked you out, would you say yes?

RITA: Well, Ronald, I'd have to answer your question with a question. (*yanks a small wooden block with a bright red letter L out of her pocket, thrusts it in his face*) Dush thish block look familiar?

RONALD: I'm not sure what that has to do with anything, but no, it's not ringing any bells.

RITA: (*puts the block back*) Well, then, Ronald, I must decline your offer. Nothin' personal, kid.

RONALD: (*smiles, his theory confirmed*) Thank you, Rita. I appreciate your honesty. That will be all. Again, many thanks.

RITA: Don't you wanna know about the block?

RONALD: (*to RITA*) Actually, no. It's none of my business, really.

RITA: (*ignores him completely*) The man who gave it to me many, many year'sh ago ish my sholemate. I'm on a quesht to find him.

RONALD: That's... that's great, Rita. Good luck with that.

RITA: Nothing lucky about it, buddy boy. I will find him. (*pulls her book back up in front of her face, starts moving offstage*) But, unfortunately, you, my friend—and I truly hate to be the one to tell you thish—are a Jedi. And Jedi are forbidden intimate attachments'sh. Sho... you're pretty much... shrewed.

RITA exits.

RONALD: (*to audience*) See? Told you. It's monumentally unfair. The jocks get all the girls they want, and the rest of us have to suffer. Hm... is it too late to become a jock? Is chess considered a sport? Aw, this is terrible. Where in the world am I going to find a girl whose social status is as negatively integered as mine? A girl who's as desperate for companionship as me? A girl whose experience with the opposite sex has, for whatever inexplicable reason, been as limited as mine? Except, of course, Rita, who's on a quest for a man armed with nothing but a wooden block.

As RONALD is thinking, a stage crew member dressed in the same outfit as SKYE, brings an easel onstage with a sign on it that reads WELCOME TO THE 5th ANNUAL COSPLAYERS CONVENTION and sets it up downstage left, while another stage crew member—dressed the same way—walks out with a costume. She waits for RONALD to have his epiphany before approaching him.

RONALD: Wait a second. Rita, you're a genius. My Jedi instincts are telling me what I must do. Yes... that's it. I'm going to need a costume and a lightsaber.

The stage crew member hands RONALD the costume—a wig of shaggy brown hair, brown leather boots, a long, hooded cloak, and a lightsaber. RONALD removes his shoes, puts on the boots, throws the cloak over his clothes, removes his glasses, and grabs the lightsaber. Just like that, he's Obi-Wan Kenobi. The stage crew member exits with his discarded items.

Suddenly, RONALD holds out his lightsaber and walks about the stage with his back bent and head forward like a Jedi surveying a dangerous new planet, expecting attack at any moment.

RONALD: *(in an overly dramatic voice a little lower than his own)* This is a most dangerous mission for a Jedi. The Omega Quadrant is crawling with the evil eyes and ears of the Dark Lord of the Sith, so I must be careful. I shall use a mass Jedi mind-meld to search for signs of a human female presence. *(stops, puts his free hand to his head in intense concentration)* Hm... Nothing. However, I do sense a grave influence of the Dark Side of the Force. Perhaps I should notify Master Yoda. In the meantime, I shall resume my search of the quadrant.

As RONALD exits one side of the stage, SKYE enters from the other side. The casual observer would never recognize her—she's wearing a flowing white gown with tight sleeves, decorative stitching on all hemmed edges, long enough to very nearly reach the floor. Her dishwasher-blond hair has been erased by a long wig with a never-ending braid. She walks the stage in much the same state as RONALD, alert and ready for danger, holding a small, crystal vial in which a small, battery-operated tea light has been taped with clear packaging tape.

SKYE: (*stalks the stage as RONALD did before, speaks formally, deliberately, un-SKYE-like*) I have traveled far from the safety of Lothlorien.

I vowed, however, to do what must be done to protect the Ringbearer. Part of my mission must, therefore, include finding a strong and trustworthy male of the human species to shepherd me... um... Frodo, I mean... to the most dangerous fires of Mordor. My elfin instincts detect a strong presence of the Dark Lord; Sauron's great eye, it seems, penetrates even the darkest and most remote corners of the known world. It's a good thing I have my vial, the light of Earendil, our most beloved star. Without it, I fear, all hope would be lost.

RONALD reenters and, within seconds, sees the elfin princess. Immediately, he goes into an intensely cautious stance, his lightsaber raised toward her.

Upon seeing RONALD, SKYE, too, goes into a battle stance, her vial raised toward him.

RONALD: Who are you, and what are you doing on Omega Six?

SKYE: I am Galadriel, the Lady of the Wood, queen of the elves of Lothlorien.

RONALD: Elves? There's nothing in the Jedi archives about Elves in the Omega Six quadrant. Everyone knows that the Elves of Mana-Atooee haven't traveled beyond the Centaurus System in thousands of years, afraid to risk retaliation by the Dark Lord of the Sith and his evil apprentice, Darth Vader, who, sadly, was my apprentice many years ago, before he turned to the Dark Side, burned the crap out of himself, and became forced to wear a helmet with a built-in inhaler for the rest of his life.

SKYE: The Omega Six quadrant? Are you mad? We're in the foothills of Mondo-Doom, mere miles from the murky swamps at the foot of the gateway to Mordor. And Elves, if you must know, have ancient alliances with man that you would be wise to honor. In the spirit of maintaining those alliances to save us all from the evil dominion of Sauron, the Dark Lord of Mordor, I seek a male human companion to assist me in helping Frodo of the Shire return the Ring of Power to the fires from which it was forged. What, pray tell, is your mission, fair Jedi?

They're still circling one another.

RONALD: I am on a... a personal mission that need not concern you, elf.

SKYE: A personal mission? And you, a Jedi? I was under the impression that Jedi are not allowed personal missions. That they are bound to a certain code of selflessness and duty to others.

RONALD: All the more reason I may have to engage you in battle—to protect myself. Were you to discover my true intentions, I fear the Jedi Council would have no choice but to strip me of my responsibilities. I'd truly hate to have to hurt you.

Still circling.

SKYE: Hurt me? Really. You and what army of Uruk-hai?

RONALD: No Uruk-hai, fair queen. We both know why they fear to tread in your hallowed Lothlorien forests. The only weapon I need is that of my fathers—my lightsaber—an elegant weapon of a more civilized time.

They stop circling as he thrusts his lightsaber out and waves it around in a most impressive array of moves that indicate not only multiple viewings of the Star Wars films, but hours and hours of practice, humming to mimic the sound of a lightsaber the entire time.

SKYE: That's impressive. But it won't be any match for the Elvin magic of mind control. I can plant images in your mind that will shake the very marrow of your bones and make you whimper like a child for the safety and security of your homeland. If you're not careful, you won't be dealing with a Dark Lord— (*dons an insanely dramatic voice, raises her arms as if casting a spell*) but with a queen, not dark, but beautiful, and terrible as the dawn, treacherous as the sea, stronger than the foundations of the earth! All shall love me... and despair!

RONALD: Equally impressive. But I think I'll take my chances.

RONALD takes a swing at her with his lightsaber—still making the annoying lightsaber humming sounds—and she dodges the blow dramatically, parrying with her vial of light.

Unexpectedly overcome by the intense brightness, RONALD shrieks in mock pain before going to the ground and rolling all the way around her with the dexterity of an experienced break-dancer. Before SKYE even knows what's happening, he jumps up behind her and whacks her in the arm with his lightsaber. Like, really hard. Accidentally, of course.

SKYE falls to the ground, acting for all she's worth like her arm has been nearly severed.

RONALD: *(afraid he might have actually hurt her, goes to her)* Are you... are you hurt? I never meant to—

SKYE: *(suddenly, leaps toward RONALD, her vial outstretched mere inches from his eyes)* Now you'll feel the full force of my power! Stare into the light of Earendil and despair!

RONALD: *(plays along, drops his lightsaber to put his hands to his newly blinded eyes, falls to his knees)* No! Not the... the... light of Earendil! Anything but that!

So SKYE's standing there with the vial, RONALD's on the ground writhing around and, after about ten seconds or so, neither one of them knows where to go next. RONALD's afraid to break character for fear that she'll want nothing to do with him once the game is over; SKYE is afraid to help him up and do what she really wants to do: Say, Hey. My name is Skye. That was fun, but this wig is itching like crazy, and I'd love it if we could go get something to drink... and talk.

Another excruciatingly awkward ten seconds go by before RONALD looks up at her and breaks the silence.

RONALD: Well... actually... if you must know... my Jedi code compels me to be honest.

SKYE: Are you not blinded by the light of Earendil?

RONALD: Make no mistake, my valiant Elvin queen; I *am* blinded. But 'twas not the light that did it. 'Twas your beauty. *(stands, his voice becoming more and more his own with every syllable)* As you already know, the life of a Jedi is a lonely one. We are forbidden from attachments of this sort as they, inevitably, cloud the judgment. And— *(bows his head)* my participation in this lifestyle... doesn't exactly attract the ladies.

SKYE: *(smiles)* I, too, am wary of attachment, although, honestly, I— *(her voice becoming more and more her own with every syllable)* am more interested in the guy than the Jedi, if that makes sense.

RONALD: It does, indeed. I was thinking the same thing. Well... you know... not about the Jedi thing, but—

SKYE: I think I got it. Um... but this particular queen has, let's just say... issues.

RONALD: (*takes a step toward her*) It's okay. We're just role-playing, remember?

RONALD smiles.

SKYE: Well, for starters, as queen I've... um... had many... suitors.

RONALD: Suitors?

SKYE: Men, Obi-Wan. Well, boys, actually. I mean, I'm not one of those girls who dates twenty-five year olds.

RONALD: I'm pretty sure some of them do.

SKYE: Yeah. Not my thing. But, um, we're getting away from what I wanted to say.

RONALD: (*steps toward her*) I'm not at all intimidated by that.

SKYE: Really? That's... that's nice. But... there's more.

RONALD gets close enough to kiss her but not enough to make her feel like he's going to tackle her. He learned a thing or two after the ANNAROSAROSEMARIE debacle. Lesson Number One: Start with a soft, lips-only kiss.

He leans in, and SKYE dips her head. RONALD immediately assumes he's done it again.

RONALD: I'm sorry. I didn't mean to—

SKYE: No. It's fine. It's just that I'd like to take this slow, if that's okay.

RONALD: Oh... oh my God... absolutely. And, uh, since we're being so honest... now, don't laugh at me... but I only kissed a girl... for the first time... not all that long ago.

SKYE: I would never laugh at you for something like that.

RONALD: (*chuckles*) You would if I gave you the details. It was a train wreck.

SKYE: Later, maybe. Names might be a good place to start.

RONALD: I... never gave you my name?

SKYE: No, but I'm pretty sure I know who you are.

RONALD: You... you do?

SKYE: *(smiles big)* Of course. You're Obi-Wan Kenobi.

RONALD: *(smiles big)* Well, of course, yes. I'm glad my costume's authentic enough that you didn't have to ask. My real identity is Ronald. You can call me Ron. *(extends his hand)* Very pleased to meet you.

SKYE: *(extends her hand to shake his)* Ron, I am very pleased to meet you.

RONALD: Assuming you're not really Galadriel, then—

SKYE: Hi, I'm—

Suddenly, two little kids in POWER RANGER costumes burst onstage, one from stage left, one from stage right. Ending up directly in front of SKYE and RONALD they stop, make ridiculously stereotypical fighting ninja sounds, and proceed to go into a routine that is, at times, as graceful as a scene from The Matrix, at others, as graceless as a sorority pillow fight.

RONALD and SKYE stand there, unable to turn away from this display of preteen stupidity until the POWER RANGER wannabes face one another, bow, and appear to be done with their show.

RONALD: Um... I hate to rain on your parade youngsters, but the Disney Channel Character Convention is next door in the Oak Ballroom.

The POWER RANGERS break their bowing positions to turn toward RONALD and cock their heads to the side like a dog hearing a funny noise.

RONALD: You need to go back out the way you came in and take a left at the bathrooms. If you get to the elevators, you know you've gone too far.

The POWER RANGERS gesture in a way that suggests they get it before assuming insanely super-cool ninja poses once more and shooting off stage the way they came. RONALD and SKYE start laughing.

RONALD: Can you believe those get ups?

SKYE: So lame. You can totally tell those are store-bought.

RONALD: I know. What a bunch of losers.

SKYE: Yeah.

RONALD: So. About your true identity.

SKYE: Oh, right. No time like the present.

She bends down and gently removes the wig from her hair. Next, the glasses go. Then, bringing her head back up, she shakes out her long hair.

RONALD: Oh my goodness. You're—

SKYE: I know. And I know what you must be thinking. But—

RONALD: Um... I was about to say... *beautiful*.

SKYE: (*in shock*) Beautiful? I don't get it.

RONALD: I was saying that you were beautiful. Um... *are* beautiful.

SKYE: (*pretty close to crying*) I'm Skye.

RONALD: Hello, Skye.

SKYE: I just... I have to say this. I'm sorry, but I just want you to know that everything you've probably heard about me... well... I'm sure some of it's true, but still... I'm not interested in someone who's going to take advantage of me, in any way, if you know what I'm talking about.

RONALD: Take advantage? Are you kidding me? The only reason I'm even talking to you is because I'm wearing a costume. I've had about five heart attacks since I realized that you were even remotely interested in me. I'm no threat, Skye. Honestly.

SKYE: It's just that... I'm in a very fragile place right now. And I really need a nice guy. (*pauses*) Are you... a nice guy, Ron?

RONALD: (*takes her hands in his, focuses*) Are you kidding? I'm one of the nicest guys on the planet.

SKYE: (*smiles*) In that case, I've got the entire *Lord of the Rings* collection on DVD. What do you say we go back to my place? My mom's out tonight, so no one'll bother us.

RONALD: To... watch the movies, right?

SKYE: Yes, Ron. To watch the movies.

RONALD: Sounds great. Do you mind if we change first? This cloak is hotter than the pencil I used on my SATs.

SKYE: Definitely.

SKYE holds out her hand, RONALD takes it, and they make their way for the apron of the stage, joined by CHUCK—with his puppet; JEANIE, a script in hand; ANNAROSAROSEMARIE, an ice pack on her mouth; and ANDREW, ALEX, and RITA. All of them line up across the apron of the stage. In unison, they chant.

ALL: Oh, great teenage high school social scene gods, grant me the serenity to accept the stereotypical label assigned me by a world that can only see me as they want to see me, and the courage to try my hardest to change the stereotypical label I'm pretty sure I might be able to change, and the wisdom to know that I may never know the difference between who I am, who everyone thinks I am, and who I think I might wanna be.

CHUCK'S PUPPET: *(steps forward)* Because Chuck deserves the opportunity to set his own expectations separate from those imposed on him by others.

JEANIE: *(steps forward)* Because I deserve an opportunity to reinvent myself when I'm not happy with who I've become.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: *(steps forward)* Because I deserve an opportunity to try to get what I want, even if it goes horribly wrong.

RONALD: *(steps forward)* Because I deserve an opportunity to be seen in a different light—different, even, than the light in which I see myself.

SKYE: *(steps forward)* And the rest of us? *(looks at the others)* We're still working on it.

Curtain.

Act II

SKYE: Hi. I'm Skye, and I'm... done being a stereotypical... I don't even want to say the word. (*pauses*) I'm tired. Tired of the rumors, some of which are true. And I'm tired of not being able to just go out with someone without having to worry about his expectations. It's like the whole time we're together I'm waiting for him to go, "So, uh, why don't we go someplace a little more private," which is code for, "Isn't it about time we get down to business?" Which is about the only type of guy I end up going out with because the really nice guys won't have anything to do with me, even if I tried. Reputations are funny that way—mine pushes nice guys away and attracts the scumbags. Almost every guy I've gone out with has been a jerk to me. The ones who stuck around long enough to be a jerk to me. And that's when I figured I needed to start swimming in a different pool, ya know what I mean? A less public pool. A pool fewer people are peeing in. So then, this guy on one of my blogs—the kind of guy I would never, in a million years, even think of dating in any way whatsoever—starts talking about this cosplay convention at the Hilton downtown, and I start thinking about it. I could dress up, no one would know me, and I could meet... well... a whole different kind of guy. (*pauses*) And that's how I met Ron. Which is working out so far. He's got no experience whatsoever, and I have way too much. Actually, it'd make a great line graph. I'm sure Ron would appreciate that. We talk a lot. Talk... imagine that. Of course, the one thing we haven't discussed is...

She's interrupted by the entrance of CHUCK—with puppet—who sees her and stops on a dime. Horrified, he turns to leave.

SKYE: Hey! Chuck! Chuck! I'd like a word.

CHUCK stops but doesn't turn around.

SKYE: Can you come here for a second?

CHUCK still has his back turned but CHUCK'S PUPPET looks over his shoulder.

CHUCK'S PUPPET: What am I, chopped liver? What was all that talk before about, you know, the three of us maybe going out some time, huh?

SKYE: (*walks over to them*) Actually, that's what I wanted to talk to you about. Um... both of you. (*CHUCK turns around*) About what I said earlier... the stuff about... you know. I'm not into that

anymore, just so you know. So, if you could just forget I said anything, that'd be cool.

CHUCK'S PUPPET: Seriously? 'Cause I know we're trying this whole *I'm-a-freaky-kid-so-leave-me-alone* thing now, but man, for a while there, I must say, we were totally considering it.

SKYE: Yeah. Well, unconsider it, okay?

CHUCK'S PUPPET: Is this because of the whole Ronald thing? We heard that you and Ronnie-boy are dating or something. I, for one, can't believe it, but Chuck here—

SKYE: Yes, I'm going out with Ron, and if you have a problem with that—

CHUCK'S PUPPET: No, no, Skye. Hey, live and let live, ya know? Do whatever makes you happy. It's just a bit of a shock, that's all we're saying.

SKYE: Yeah, well, everyone's entitled to a change, right? I mean, look at you—you're a few balloon animals and clown makeup short of working birthday parties for toddlers.

CHUCK: (*smiles, puts the puppet down*) Uh... you know this is just a thing, right? It's like acting?

SKYE: I get it, Chuck. But I'm not acting. From now on, no more talking about me to your friends like I'm some kind of prostitute; matter of fact, don't talk about me at all. Got it?

CHUCK: Uh... okay. And, for the record, I have said some things... uh... in the past. But that's done. No more. And... uh... for whatever it's worth... I'm sorry.

SKYE: (*earnestly*) Thanks, Chuck.

As CHUCK exits, ANDREW enters. Seeing one another, both stop. ANDREW looks concerned for a second, having been abused by CHUCK and his friends in the past. SKYE watches from center stage.

CHUCK'S PUPPET: Hey, Andrew. What's happenin'?

ANDREW looks at him suspiciously. Says nothing. Keeps walking.

CHUCK'S PUPPET: That's cool, man.

ANDREW: (*taking this as sarcasm, ANDREW turns, gets right up in the puppet's face*) Look, you sorry excuse for a sock puppet, I will no

longer be a passive compliant to your repeated abuses. You and your evil jock minions need to stay away from me or risk invoking a pestilence of wrath I'm more than prepared to unleash upon you.

CHUCK and his puppet look at one another like ANDREW just spoke in Chinese.

CHUCK'S PUPPET: Chuck didn't get much of that, but he just wanted to say hi. That's all. No strings, man.

ANDREW: *(eyes them suspiciously)* Well, in that case, good day.

ANDREW walks away, toward SKYE. CHUCK and his puppet simultaneously shrug their shoulders and exit. ANDREW starts talking to himself until he notices SKYE standing there. He approaches her, and she smiles when she sees him.

SKYE: Hey, Andrew. How's it goin'?

ANDREW: Not abysmally. And you?

SKYE: About the same I guess. Oh... I have something for you. *(reaches into her purse, pulls out a handkerchief and hands it to him)* Here you go. All clean.

ANDREW: *(takes it, puts it in his pocket)* Thank you.

SKYE: No. Thank you. It's a good thing that there are still some guys out there who carry handkerchiefs... you know... especially since most people's grandpas aren't around when you need one.

ANDREW: Good one. It's one of a great many quirks I possess, I'm afraid.

SKYE: *(puts her hand on his arm)* I appreciate it. And I appreciate you keeping my secret, too.

ANDREW: Well, once you've been to the gynecologist with someone, a special bond is created, I like to think.

SKYE: You are so right.

As SKYE delivers her last line, the stage crew, dressed exactly like ANDREW, bring on three comfortable chairs, an end table with a lamp, and in front of the chairs, a coffee table with several magazines. Sitting in one of the end chairs is LADY, reading an outdated issue of People magazine.

ANDREW sits down in the chair next to LADY. His back is rigid, feet flat on the ground, and clammy hands securely glued to the tops of his knees. Clearly, he does not want to be there.

The stage crew leaves as SKYE circles around the side and walks in front of the chairs as if she is looking for a seat in a large, crowded waiting room.

SKYE: Wow. Full house. Super.

SKYE heads toward the only empty chair in the room, the one next to ANDREW, and does a total about-face as soon as she sees him.

SKYE: *(to herself)* Oh my God. You've got to be kidding me. What is Andrew doing here? I can't even go to the gyno without seeing someone from school? That's just great.

Searching, again, and not finding any other places to sit, she turns, takes a deep breath, and walks over to the seat next to ANDREW. She sits, her back to him, her face looking in the opposite direction. She crosses her legs. Bites the inside of her lower lip. ANDREW's just as uncomfortable as she is. He's stone. A statue.

An uncomfortable amount of time passes and, suddenly, both of them reach for the same Cosmo magazine on the coffee table in front of them. Just as suddenly, both recoil.

SKYE: Oh, geez, I'm sorry.

ANDREW: No. My apologies.

SKYE: You should take it.

ANDREW: Absolutely not. You should most definitely have it. I don't actually want it. Popular culture is a never-ending abyss of vapid, celebrity watching that I have next to no tolerance for. The fact that I was about to even touch that thing tells you how psychotically bored I am.

LADY lowers the corner of her People for a second; then, just as fast, she raises it back.

SKYE: You're Andrew, right? I know you from school.

ANDREW: Yes. Although, no one really knows me.

SKYE: I didn't mean... well... you know what I meant. (*awkward pause*)
Can I ask what you're doing at the gynecologist?

ANDREW: My mother. She doesn't drive. Her adolescent chauffeur has to take her everywhere. Even to places where he has absolutely no worldly business being—like here—this concentric circle of Hell.

SKYE: Oh. That definitely sucks.

ANDREW: Indeed. I've already been here an hour, so I suspect you'll need the magazine if you're to survive.

SKYE: (*smiles*) Thanks, but I don't mind just talking, if you don't mind.

ANDREW: That would be fine. Perhaps it will make you less anxious.

SKYE: (*pales*) Anxious? Whaddya mean, anxious? Do I look anxious to you?

ANDREW: Yes. You do. And I know anxious. No one on this planet knew about it until I invented it. When you live every day in the shadow of anti-intellectual imbeciles out to get you, you learn a little something about anxiety.

SKYE: Oh... well... I'm sorry about that. I guess I am a little anxious. Nervous. Whatever.

ANDREW: It's only natural.

SKYE: What do you mean? I mean, of course, it's a doctor's office and all, but you don't know why I'm here, right? You didn't hear something at school, did you? No one's supposed to know about this.

ANDREW: I have no idea what you're talking about. I can only assume you're here for the same reason as the rest of these women.

SKYE keeps her body perfectly still but stares at him and squints slightly, asking, And that reason would be? without asking.

ANDREW. I suppose the politically correct thing is to say that periodically, in tune with some sort of lunar calendar devised by a horde of sadistic male gods, the Eye of Horus needs a check up.

LADY's People magazine dips down a few inches.

SKYE: (*squints more intensely*) The Eye of what?

ANDREW: I apologize. This is why, in fact, very few people will talk to me. I was referring to certain lady parts.

SKYE: Parts?

ANDREW: Part, actually. I believe the technical term is va—

LADY's head turns ninety degrees in ANDREW's direction at the exact moment that SKYE interrupts him.

SKYE: Oh! Of course! God, I'm an idiot. Well, there's that, yeah. But that's not the only reason women go to the gyno.

ANDREW: You're referring to impregnation?

SKYE: Somebody's gotta deliver the thing.

ANDREW: You sound about as enthralled with the idea of childbirth as I am about children—otherwise known as heathenish spawns of Satan.

SKYE: I don't know anyone who thinks about having a baby—you know, the actual having the baby part—and goes, “Oh, yeah. Can't wait to get in that delivery room and rip my... lady parts... six ways to Sunday.”

LADY puts her magazine on her lap, now, and pushes her head out around ANDREW so she can give SKYE the hairy eyeball.

SKYE: Did I say that as loud as I think I did? So sorry.

LADY scowls and goes back to her magazine.

ANDREW: You realize, of course, that the only ripping involved is the possibility of a tear of the perineum?

SKYE: The paramecium?

ANDREW: The perineum. It's between your... you-know-what... and your—

SKYE: My *you-know-what*?

ANDREW: Excuse me, but you seemed hung up on Eye of Horus reference, so—

SKYE: Well, at this point, we might as well be adults about it and call it what it is.

ANDREW: Fine. Perineum. The skin between your *lady parts* and your—

SKYE: (*seriously uncomfortable*) Okay, okay. I think I get it. (*pause*) And you say that can tear?

ANDREW: In some cases, yes.

SKYE: (*adjusts herself in her chair, sits on her feet*) Changing the subject for obvious reasons, how do you know so much about all this stuff?

ANDREW: (*grabs a copy of Motherhood magazine from the table, holds it up*) I've been here over an hour. (*puts it back down*) Of course, it's only a problem for the hopelessly foolish who allow themselves to be impregnated.

LADY clears her throat for the next few seconds as SKYE leans toward ANDREW and whispers.

SKYE: You do realize that this room's full of pregnant women, right?

ANDREW: (*stoic*) Again, apologies. My social awareness ranks somewhere between non-existent and shadowy.

SKYE: You're right, though. It is foolish. This whole thing's my fault.

ANDREW: So are you here to confirm a suspicion or follow up?

SKYE: I took one of those home-pregnancy tests and bingo. Here I am.

ANDREW: It's rare, but it does happen that if you did something wrong in the process of testing, it might be inaccurate. Just in case it makes you feel any better.

ANDREWS reaches down, grabs a copy of Redbook from the table and holds it up before putting it back down.

SKYE: Thanks, but I'm pretty sure it's right. Let's just say that certain activities lead to a higher risk of certain other things.

ANDREW: Oh.

There's an awkward pause while SKYE tries to decide if his oh is because he doesn't know what to say to that or because it's a no-brainer that a girl like her would get pregnant.

SKYE: (*turns her body completely in ANDREW's direction*) Can I ask you something?

ANDREW: At your own risk. The way things are going, anything I say may only have the effect of poisoning whatever chances exist of this conversation continuing.

SKYE: Don't worry about it. I need you to be honest.

ANDREW: Very well then.

SKYE: Do you think everyone at school thinks I'm easy?

ANDREW: (*uneasy for the first time this whole time*) Easy... is a strong word.

SKYE: But they do, don't they?

ANDREW: I have heard it said in a few instances, although I am by no means an authority on what the popular people think except on the subject of freaks like me.

ANDREW puts his head down a little.

SKYE: (*notices, puts her hand on his arm*) Do... you think I'm... you know?

ANDREW: I'm quite sure I'm not in a position to judge.

SKYE: You didn't answer the question.

ANDREW: (*grips the armrests of the chair a little tighter*) I have no idea whether you are or not. Nor do I care. Life is enough of a cacophonous maelstrom of doom without treating people like they're inferior because they do what they want to do.

SKYE: (*moves her hand from his arm, moves it to his chin, where she gently forces his face toward her, making eye contact*) So you're saying that if I want to make twenty different guys this year you're totally cool with that?

LADY sighs loud enough for everyone in exam room two to hear.

ANDREW: It wouldn't be any of my business, to be honest, although I would have to say that I can't see why you'd want to. Especially since most of the guys in our school are egocentric, megalomaniacal dictators who would only use you.

SKYE: (*chuckles*) It's funny. I was thinking the same thing.

ANDREW: (*turns away from her*) The question is why anyone would want to do that.

SKYE: (*turns away from him*) That's a great question.

Awkward pause.

ANDREW: You know, it's been written that girls with absentee fathers sometimes seek approval from men to—

SKYE: Let me guess—*Redbook*.

ANDREW: *Cosmo*, actually. Which is ironic since half of the articles in there were about how to achieve a better—

LADY slaps down her magazine and glares at him.

ANDREW: (*glares back, to LADY*) It's a vile publication whose only goal is to shred any intelligence left on this planet.

LADY rolls her eyes, stands up, scans the room for any available seating and, finding none, sits back down with a hmph.

SKYE: I never met my father. Pretty funny, huh?

ANDREW: Purely coincidental, I'm sure.

SKYE: (*stops sitting on her feet and sits back down on her butt*) Yeah.

ANDREW: Assuming, then, that you're pregnant... are you... going to be okay?

SKYE smiles as a tear runs down her cheek, which opens the floodgates for a real cry. ANDREW immediately reaches into his pocket, pulls out his hanky, and thrusts it into SKYE's hands.

She takes it, thanks him—although it comes out unintelligibly—and wipes every pore of her face, doubling it back around to blow her nose.

ANDREW: So that's a no, then?

SKYE: (*still wiping, laughs through the tears*) I honestly don't know yet.

LADY peeks around again to scowl at SKYE.

SKYE: Oh, get a life, lady. This is hard enough as it is.

LADY shakes her head and goes back to reading.

ANDREW: Sorry. I'm all out of sage advice. If I had another hour and this place had some better magazines I probably could offer something worthwhile on the subject.

SKYE: (*laughs out loud*) I'll bet you could.

A nurse's voice is heard from offstage.

NURSE'S VOICE. Skye? Dr. Pettis is ready for you.

SKYE: (*gets up, takes a few steps, turns around, holds the hanky out toward ANDREW*) Um... thanks for this. I'll clean it and get it back to you. I may need it again. (*turns to go but changes her mind*) You won't... say anything about this to anyone at school, will you?

ANDREW: First of all, no one at school talks to me. Secondly, I respect your right to privacy.

After a pause, SKYE leans down and gives ANDREW a hug—one of those light contact, hand-patting-the-back-ever-so-slightly hugs. ANDREW's a little too uncomfortable to fully lean into it.

SKYE: (*pulls back*) First of all, I'll be talking to you. Secondly, thank you.

SKYE exits. LADY lowers her magazine and turns to look at ANDREW.

ANDREW: What did I do this time? For the love of God.

LADY just smiles at him and nods a few times.

ANDREW: Thanks. Coming from you that means a lot. She's probably going to be all right. Me, on the other hand... well... that's another story. (*gets up, to LADY*) It was lovely talking to you. (*turns and walks downstage*) Nutjob.

As ANDREW makes his way center stage to the apron, the stage crew, still dressed as freaks, comes out and removes the furniture.

ANDREW: (*to audience*) Hi, I'm Andrew, and I am a stereotypical freak. I am an anarchist, because anyone who believes that our government is capable of getting anything right is either monumentally ignorant or foolishly optimistic. I am an atheist, because the hallway antics in my high school are daily proof that there cannot possibly be a god. I am a philosopher, because I have a lot of time to think since no one talks to me. I am a metalhead, because heavy metal expresses the general fetidness of life here on planet Freak. Everyone knows these things about me, because I tell them. I am not afraid to speak my mind, which has certainly made me a target for those uncomfortable with the insane ramblings of what's going on in my head. I remember the first day of school, freshman year. The teacher asked, "So, how's everyone?" While everyone sat there like the mindless lemmings they are, I replied, "Actually, I'm in a miasma of darkness that I believe will only intensify as the day drags on." The teacher

came back with, “Andrew, you are a ray of light.” My classmates, the ones not laughing, started whispering, one to another, and I knew exactly what they were saying. While I accept them for the simpletons they are, I wish they could accept that I want nothing to do with them and leave me alone to peacefully burn in the stew of my pained existence.

As ANDREW rants, JEANIE walks in, not paying attention to where she’s going because she’s reading a script. She barrels into ANDREW, nearly knocking him down.

JEANIE: Oh. sorry.

ANDREW: What in the world is wrong with you people?

JEANIE: Chill, Andrew. I said I’m sorry.

ANDREW: Wait a minute. You called me Andrew.

JEANIE: That *is* your name, isn’t it?

ANDREW: I’m simply surprised that you know who I am.

JEANIE: Seriously? Everyone knows who *you* are, buddy.

ANDREW: What’s *that* supposed to mean?

JEANIE: Means what it means. You’re the strangest person in this school.

ANDREW: And you’re the meanest.

JEANIE: (*pauses, then smiles*) Once upon a time, Andrew. Once upon a time. (*gets in close, puts her arm around ANDREW’s shoulder, making him unbelievably uncomfortable*) Let’s talk. Look, guy. I have no idea what all of this anarchist, goth—

ANDREW: Don’t you dare refer to me as goth!

JEANIE: (*looks him up and down*) Right. Fine. You’re not goth. As I was saying, I have no idea what all of this I-hate-everyone-and-everything thing is about, but you have got to chill it out, man. Honestly. Life’s too short.

ANDREW: And I suppose you’ve got all the answers? You and your evil horde of Jeanie-wannabes?

JEANIE: Ah, but today’s a new day, isn’t it? Have you seen Chuck, lately?

ANDREW: Of course. His puppet is almost as annoying as he is.

JEANIE: Here's the point, Andrew: One day you've got it all—a hot girlfriend, all the friends in the world, a free-ride to the college of your choice—and the next, you're walking around school with a puppet.

ANDREW: Is there a point on the way or can I expect to be bound by you for the rest of the day?

ANDREW stares at her arm around him.

JEANIE: (*releases it*) Sorry about that. Didn't know you were so touchy. And yes, there is a point. The way I see it, you're about two feet from leaping off the ledge into Crazytown. Know what I mean? You keep taking yourself so seriously, one of these days, you're going to end up on a table with electrodes attached to your temples. How do you feel about psychiatrists, Andrew?

ANDREW: If you must know, I'm already seeing one.

JEANIE: (*excited*) I knew it! So, Andrew, how 'bout you tell me what it's like? How a typical session goes? What kind of stuff you talk about. You don't mind telling me, do you?

ANDREW: What on earth is wrong with you, woman?

JEANIE: (*holds up her script*) I'm playing a psychiatrist in the play, and I figured you could help give me some perspective on—

ANDREW: You are an abomination.

JEANIE: No, Andrew; I'm an actress, and I'm taking the role very seriously. So, you're either going to help me or—

ANDREW: No thank you, Doctor. This session is over.

ANDREW starts walking away.

JEANIE: Fine. Be that way. But seriously, dude, chill it out. (*chuckles sardonically*) You don't need a head shrinker, you need some drugs.

ANDREW: (*stops, turns, looks intrigued*) And how might I go about procuring such substances?

JEANIE: (*not sure, at first, whether or not he's messing with her*) Uh... well... you know Alex, right?

ANDREW: Alex of the ripped jeans and flip-flops?

JEANIE: That's the one. He's your boy. Let's see... it's Thursday, so I'm pretty sure you'll find him at the waterpark, somewhere over by the lazy river.

ANDREW: How in the world do you know all this?

JEANIE: Well, Andrew, let's see—I'm not a social introvert who talks to himself and purposely avoids people all day, every day. There's a very big world out there that you've somehow managed to avoid. So take about fifty bucks and something with pockets.

ANDREW: Fifty bucks? That's criminal.

JEANIE: Cheap compared to a shrink, I bet. If you have anything to say about that, feel free, by the way.

ANDREW just stares at her.

JEANIE: Okay, fine. Part of that's to get in. I'm assuming you don't have a season pass.

ANDREW: To the waterpark? Of course not.

JEANIE: Well, not that I care, but good luck. And, just in case it works out, the play's not for a month and a half, so if you change your mind, I could really use the insight.

ANDREW: Since when did you become interested in thesbianism?

JEANIE: (*chuckles, walks over to him*) Be careful, Andrew. If word gets out you have an actual sense of humor, it could ruin your reputation.

ANDREW: Won't your time on stage interfere with your ability to destroy social lives and work behind the scenes to make everyone wish they were you?

JEANIE: Ouch, Andrew. That really hurts. Ya know, everyone's entitled to try something different every now and again. You really shouldn't hold it against them. (*starts backing away*) Just tryin' to help. And hey, if Alex helps you, come back and help me, huh? Beats bein' a total jerk, right?

JEANIE smiles, turns, and exits. The stage crew, dressed exactly like ALEX, brings on two chaise lounges, a cooler, and a huge umbrella. Behind them, they place a lifeguard tower with a lifeguard sitting at the top, a whistle in his mouth.

ALEX, wearing shades, enters with a copy of Falling Waters: The Frank Lloyd Wright Story in one hand, a blue raspberry Slushie in the other. He removes his shirt, sets it down next to him, and sits in an upright position on one of the chaises, reading his book. As the set change takes place behind him, ANDREW ponders

his next move. Once the stage crew exits, ANDREW turns, walks over to ALEX, and stands directly in front of him. There's no way he could be missed, yet ALEX does not in any way respond.

ANDREW: Ahem.

ALEX does not respond.

ANDREW: Ahem!

ALEX: (*puts down his book, lowers his shades*) Dude. You're totally in my sun.

ANDREW: You're sitting under an umbrella.

ALEX: (*looks up*) Wow, you're right. Looks like *you* should be under this thing. You know that black absorbs the sun, right? Are you swimming in sweat or what?

ANDREW: Thank you for the science lesson, but that's not why I'm here.

ALEX: Trying to lose weight?

ANDREW: No. I'm not trying to—

ALEX: Spontaneously combust? That'd be kinda cool.

ANDREW: For the last time, I'm not—

ANDREW's interrupted by TEEN BOY 1, dripping water, who walks in front of him, bends down, and flips open the lid of the cooler. The kid reaches in, looks at the contents as if searching for something particular, then pulls out a box containing an ice cream bar. He says, Thanks, man, to ALEX and walks away.

ALEX: So, what's up then? No offense, but you don't seem like the sun and fun type.

ANDREW: I was speaking with Jeanie today, and she told me that I might find you here.

ALEX: Jeanie? Seriously? Does anyone really *speak* with Jeanie?

ANDREW: I'm fairly certain I had a conversation with her, yes.

ALEX: You know what I mean, man; *you* don't speak with Jeanie. It's more like *Jeanie* speaks to *you*.

ANDREW: It seems as though Jeanie has undergone some sort of change. The first sign of which is that she referred to me by name.

ALEX: (*laughs*) That's a good one, man. And your name is?

ANDREW: Andrew.

ALEX: Andrew, right. You're the dude who, you know... the dude who—

ANDREW: Goes to your school.

ALEX: (*doesn't have a clue who he is*) Right, right. That dude. Hey, have a seat. Take a load off. Get out of the sun.

ANDREW sits, but because the chaise is in a fully reclined position, he's unsure how to proceed: lie down or bring it up? He lies down at first, but feels stupid staring up from his back, so he turns his head to the side to try figuring out how the chair may be uprighted. ALEX just sits there, watching with a strange fascination, as ANDREW reaches back and pulls on a few of the bars of the chaise with no results. He reaches around the other side but there's nothing helping over there, either.

ANDREW: This chair will not cooperate.

About to fall over the side of the chair, ANDREW feels himself righted as ALEX, standing behind the chair, pushes it up and locks the back in place.

ALEX: Don't feel stupid. These things are pretty tricky. (*sits back down*) Okay, now that we're all comfy, what's on your mind?

ANDREW's about to tell him when several short blasts of whistle cut through the air like gunfire.

ANDREW: What the—

ALEX: Lifeguard. Has to keep the children safe. Man, you're jumpy. You need to take it down a few notches.

ANDREW: That is precisely why I am here in this ridiculous place.

ALEX: Ah, then you've come to the right place. Feast your eyes on the flesh of a few of our city's finest.

TEEN GIRLS 1 & 2, in bathing suits, walk by.

ALEX: Now, look at that. Wow. Have a Slushie, see the sights, breathe in, breathe out. I totally get it.

ANDREW: The girls are quite attractive, yes. But I am not interested in the girls.

ALEX: Oh, I get it. That's cool. There are plenty of guys here, too, if that's your thing.

ANDREW: No, that's not what I meant. I am not gay; I simply meant that my purpose here has nothing to do with people-watching.

ALEX: Aw, sorry man. My bad.

ANDREW: This inane chatter is entirely irrelevant. Once again, you've managed to derail me from my purpose.

ALEX: It's a gift.

They are approached by TEEN BOY 2 who walks up, says hi to ALEX, pulls an ice cream box out of the cooler, and walks off without saying a word.

ANDREW: I can't help but notice that you seem to be treating random members of the waterpark to ice cream.

ALEX: Yeah. Well, it's hot out, and I'm all about helping out, know what I mean?

ANDREW: That's very philanthropic of you.

ALEX: Thanks. So, why are we having this conversation, again? Sorry. Haven't a little bit of trouble with the old short-term memory these days.

ANDREW: Yes. Of course. I'm not exactly sure how this works, but I need to see you about... aids to relaxation enhancement, if you get my meaning.

ALEX stares at him.

ANDREW: And Jeanie said you could help with that.

ALEX: Andrew. It is Andrew, right? Are you seeing a psychiatrist by any chance?

ANDREW: What is wrong with you people?

ALEX: Hey, man. I'm not the one who's sitting out here in the heat wearing all black and asking me for *relaxation enhancement*,

whatever that means. I'm just not sure why she said to come see me. I'm not qualified to give anybody advice—on anything.

ANDREW: Why are you making this so hard?

ALEX: Why am I making this so hard? With all due respect, I'm not the one who showed up at the waterpark to ask a topless guy he's never met for relaxation enhancement. That's pretty weird, dude.

ANDREW: (*getting frustrated*) I am not sure that I am comfortable just coming out and saying it, especially in public, right under the nose of a lifeguard, of all people.

Suddenly, whistles cut the air, as if on cue.

ANDREW: This is what I'm talking about. It's a sign.

ALEX: It's cool, man. We'll just sit here all evening having a nice chat about I have no idea what. But what really freaks me out is that the longer I talk to you without figuring out what it is you want from me, the better the chance that you'll go psychotic and try to kill me at some point. And, man, I'm not lookin' for trouble; I'm just tryin' to catch some rays.

ANDREW: It's true that you *are* starting to inflame my ire, however—

ALEX: Inflame my ire? Who says stuff like that? (*turns his head around in different directions, searching the crowd*) Are you filming this or something? Am I being punked? Trying to make me look stupid so you can put it on YouTube? That's not cool, dude.

ANDREW: For the love of God, man, I am not filming this, I assure you. I... have money that I would like to spend. Does that help?

ALEX: Help you get a Slushie. More than one, prob'ly. But you don't seem to be a big Slushie guy, so I'm not sure what to tell ya. Although, the pizza here's not bad. I think they have it brought in from Pizza Hut, ya know, which is a lot better than the crap that some places make.

ANDREW: I am not interested in a Slushie or pizza.

ALEX: I know, man. That's what I just said.

ANDREW: On second thought, I think you might be right.

ALEX: Yeah. I get that a lot.

ANDREW: Not about the food— (*stares at ALEX menacingly*) about my murdering you.

ALEX: Dude, dude. Relax. I'm sorry. I've just been messin' with ya, man.

TEEN GIRLS 1 & 2: (enter) Hi!

They reach into ALEX's cooler and pull out three ice cream bar boxes. Giggling, they exit, one of them touching ALEX on the arm like she's his girlfriend or something.

ANDREW: So, then, you know why I'm here?

ALEX: Of course, man. You're here for ice cream.

ANDREW: (tired of this crap, twists his body around, plants his feet on the ground, faces ALEX) I AM NOT HERE FOR ICE CREAM!

LIFEGUARD, his head turned in ANDREW's direction, starts blowing his whistle in stops and starts, a sort of Morse code for Hey! Nobody cares why you're here! Shut up!

ALEX: Dude. You are totally making a scene. Calm down. (to LIFEGUARD, gives him two thumbs up) It's all good. He's fine, now. Thanks for your diligence.

When LIFEGUARD turns back to the lazy river, ALEX turns back to ANDREW.

ALEX: Okay. Here's the deal. You see people getting ice cream bars from the cooler, right?

ANDREW: I am not blind.

ALEX: Right. Here's the thing: They're not hungry for ice cream.

ANDREW: This is madness. If they don't want it, why do they take it?

ALEX: Because each package has a prize, man. Ever had Cracker Jacks, where they put that little plastic square in the box that has some cheap toy or temporary tattoo in it? Well, my boxes have a little baggie inside, not so cheap. A few bills go in the cooler, a box comes out. Got it?

ANDREW: And is there an actual ice cream bar, then, in the box?

ALEX: Of course. How jacked up would that be if you thought you were getting ice cream, so you open the box and bam, no ice cream? You'd be totally bummed, and I'm not about bumming people out. Bad for business.

ANDREW: Wait. I'm confused. Are we still talking about ice cream or are we talking about drugs?

LIFEGUARD turns toward them, again, and blows his whistle for five seconds straight, giving ANDREW plenty of time to figure out that he really shouldn't be saying that out loud.

ANDREW: I apologize if my unfamiliarity with this scene precipitates your getting arrested.

ALEX: Don't worry about it, dude. He's cool. He gets his ice cream after his shift.

ANDREW: That certainly makes me feel better. Not so much that you're safe from prosecution, but that he's not partaking while he's supposed to be keeping children from drowning.

ALEX: That's not my bag, man—worrying about what people do with their ice cream.

ANDREW: That seems pathetically irresponsible on your part, if you don't mind me saying.

ALEX: Look, man. Most of my customers are just hangin' out, having an occasional ice cream, and tryin' to get through high school, ya know? No big deal. I mean, *you're* here, right? Am I supposed to sit here and try to figure out why you want ice cream and then... oh, that's right... you need to take it down a notch. Relax. So, what does that mean? Does it mean that you're going to eat the ice cream and go crossbow hunting for stray cats? 'Cause I'll tell ya—that's somebody's idea of taking it down a notch. Am I supposed to be able to look into my crystal ball and make sure that you're not some sort of ice cream junkie who's going to be a danger to yourself and others? Impossible, man. You can't do what I do and worry about that. I know you're not stupid, so I'm sure you can understand that.

ANDREW: I appreciate your dilemma. And, for the record, I don't own a crossbow.

TWEEN BOY walks up and makes a move for the cooler. ALEX's hand hits the lid like a cobra strike.

ALEX: Sorry, kid. Come back when you have hair on your face.

TWEEN BOY starts to argue.

ALEX: Get outta here before I have my anarchist friend over here introduce you to the gun in his pants pocket.

TWEEN BOY takes a good look at ANDREW, who makes a show of moving his hand to his pocket and moving forward as if to stand. TWEEN BOY runs.

ANDREW: (*sits back again*) So it appears that you *do* have some scruples.

ALEX: Okay, okay. You got me. I don't give ice cream to little kids. Woo-hoo, I'm a saint. Hey, and I'll tell you who else I refuse to sell to: People like you.

ANDREW: And what's that supposed to mean?

ALEX: Why are you here, Andrew?

ANDREW: I told you already; I need an anesthetic to numb the oversensitivity of my daily dealings with humanity.

ALEX: (*stares at ANDREW for a few awkward seconds*) Dude. You know what I think? It's pretty clear you're a head case. That's obvious by lookin' at ya. But, man, the ice cream's not gonna make that any better. It'll make you forget about it for a while, but big deal. The second the stuff wears off, you're still you, the jerks who are mean to you are still jerks, and nothing's going to change.

ANDREW: That's an interesting point, however—

ALEX: (*jumps up from his seated position*) Hey. Do me a favor. Watch the store for a sec, huh? I gotta leak the lizard.

Before ANDREW can say no, ALEX is on his feet and walking offstage.

ANDREW: Alex? I don't think this is a good idea.

Before ANDREW has enough time to flip out about what to do if someone shows up, EARLY TWENTIES GUY with lowrider swim trunks and a facial expression that ANDREW can only describe as vacant strolls up. ANDREW stares at the stranger, one eyebrow raised, and EARLY TWENTIES GUY stands there, staring back.

Neither of them speaks for half a minute.

EARLY TWENTIES GUY: Hey, man. Where's Alex?

ANDREW: He... um... stepped out for a moment.

EARLY TWENTIES GUY: Oh. So, are you the ice cream man until he gets back?

ANDREW: I most certainly am not.

EARLY TWENTIES GUY: Oh. So, I'll wait until Alex gets back?

ANDREW: (*switches eyebrows, lowering the one formerly raised and raising the one formerly lowered*) Are you asking me or telling me?

EARLY TWENTIES GUY: I'm telling you?

ANDREW: Are you completely mental?

EARLY TWENTIES GUY: Mental?

ANDREW: Mental. As in, unstable. As in, not in your right mind.

EARLY TWENTIES GUY: So... in my left mind?

ANDREW: Been coming to Alex for a long time, have we?

EARLY TWENTIES GUY: Yeah. Alex is a good guy. Good, good guy.
Yeah.

ALEX enters, a blue-raspberry Slushie in one hand, a paper plate holding two pieces of pepperoni pizza in the other.

ALEX: (*to EARLY TWENTIES GUY*) Dude! What's happenin'?

EARLY TWENTIES GUY: Alex. Thank God, man. I've been waiting, like, a couple minutes, and I almost started freaking out.

ALEX: (*sits*) Dude, you know the procedure. The ice cream's in the cooler.

EARLY TWENTIES GUY lowers his eyebrows and looks at the cooler like it's some sort of alien contraption.

ALEX: Dude. The ice cream's... in... the... cooler.

Suddenly, a glimmer of brain activity shows in EARLY TWENTIES GUY's eyes as the lifeguard's whistle blows, again.

EARLY TWENTIES GUY: Oh... the cooler. I think I remember now. I just open it and pull out an ice cream.

ANDREW: You've got to be kidding me.

ALEX: Hey, all right man! You got it. So reach in and have at it.

EARLY TWENTIES GUY: (*opens the cooler, takes an ice cream*) See you next week.

EARLY TWENTIES GUY exits.

ANDREW: What is wrong with that guy?

ALEX: (*takes a hit from his Slushie, bites into a piece of pizza*) Really?

ANDREW: Well, there's a good chance he was that stupid before he started eating ice cream, but there's no question that it can't be helping.

ALEX: Got that right.

ANDREW: So, let me ask you this: How can the same substance that has clearly scraped the insides of that guy's brain simply relax you? Does it affect everyone differently?

ALEX: (*still cramming pizza down his throat*) You're assuming that I eat the ice cream too.

ANDREW: You don't?

ALEX: Well, of course I do. Why do you think I'm runnin' off every hour for Slushies and pizza, dude? Oh, crap, I'm sorry, man. Do you want some of this pizza?

ANDREW: No. Thank you. But seriously. I don't understand. If I'm going to end up like that guy, although I find that seemingly impossible, there's no way I would ever touch that stuff. But you—you seem perfectly in control—other than your voracious appetite and narcotic-like addiction to Slushies. It seems as though you manage to do what I simply cannot—just... blend.

ALEX: (*finishes chewing the piece he has in his mouth, looks down at the ground, then back at ANDREW*) Okay, man. Since this isn't *Oprah*, and I'm not nearly high enough to spill my life story to the Grim Reaper, let me just tell you that you're wrong. Not about that guy—he's fried. But about me. This isn't blending, dude; it's disappearing. Sure, that sounds good to you. Why wouldn't it? Every kid in school has got to be giving you crap because you're... um... who you are. But you'll never be invisible, man. Ain't gonna happen. People mess with you, tell 'em off and go on your way. Do your thing. But this... this ain't the way to go, man.

ANDREW: (*stands*) I had no idea there was such a thing as an ice cream man with a conscience and a keen insight into the heart of man. Perhaps you ought to seek a degree in philosophy— (*pause*) should you attend college.

ALEX finishes his second piece of pizza and takes another hit of Slushie. It doesn't dawn on him for

another few seconds what ANDREW's pause was about. As ANDREW turns to walk away, ALEX stops him.

ALEX: Yes, I'm going to college. This is not a career, man—it's a means to an end.

ANDREW: It's a good thing that ice cream's not addictive—otherwise, you may need a trainer as well as a rehab counselor.

When ALEX doesn't say anything for a few seconds and looks a bit on the hurt side, ANDREW starts thinking he went a bit too far.

ANDREW: Apologies. None of my business. I really need to go before I continue.

ANDREW turns and starts walking away.

ALEX: Hey! Dude. One sec.

ANDREW stops and turns around. ALEX opens the cooler, reaches in, and pulls out a box. He holds it out toward ANDREW.

ANDREW: I'm pretty sure we decided that... ice cream... is not a good idea for me. But thanks.

ALEX: *(smiles)* This one's just an ice cream. I swear. Chocolate chip cookie dough. From my personal stash.

ANDREW hasn't moved yet.

ALEX: Seriously, dude. It's a thousand degrees out here. Take the stupid ice cream.

ANDREW steps toward ALEX, reaches out, and takes the ice cream. Ever the skeptic, he opens it up, just to make sure. Inside, there's nothin' but ice cream. ANDREW pulls out the bar, rips open the plastic around it, and takes a bite.

ANDREW: Thanks again.

ALEX: *(earnestly)* No, man. Thank you.

As ANDREW exits, the lifeguard blows his whistle and the stage crew—still dressed as ALEX—comes out to remove the chairs, the lifeguard, and the cooler.



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