

CHARACTERS

KIMBERLY, a 16-year-old girl, played by a woman in her 60s or 70s

BUDDY, a man in his mid-30s, Kimberly's dad

PATTIE, a very pregnant woman in her mid-30s, Buddy's wife

JEFF, an awkward, unpopular 16-year-old boy

DEBRA, a woman in her early 30s, an ex-con, Pattie's sister

PLACE

Bogota, New Jersey.
(Pronounced buh-GO-da.)

TIME

The present.

SET

The set, with its multiple locations, should be simple and somewhat representational. Nothing should stop the flow of the play.

KIMBERLY AKIMBO

ACT ONE

Scene 1

A blast of cold wind, sounds of winter, wind howling, maybe snow on a scrim.

Lights come up on a bench outside. An old woman sits, shivering. She looks at her watch. She wears a hooded parka and boots. She has ice skates, tied at the laces, slung over her shoulder. Kimberly is sixteen, but she's played by an actress in her sixties or seventies. She looks at her watch again.

Far upstage, Buddy, mid-thirties, runs through the snow like a kid. He spots Kim.

BUDDY. Hey, Kimmy! How crazy is this?! (*Jogs down to the bench.*) Can you believe it's April?! It's like a Christmas card out here! It's pretty though right?! Maybe tomorrow'll be a snow day! Look at it coming down! You didn't wanna wait inside?

KIMBERLY. It closed at eight.

BUDDY. The rink closed? (*Looks at watch.*) What time is it?

KIMBERLY. Ten-thirty.

BUDDY. Really? (*Looks at watch, taps it.*)

KIMBERLY. I can't feel my feet.

BUDDY. I told you to wear extra socks.

KIMBERLY. Where were you?

BUDDY. I got caught up. I'm sorry.
 KIMBERLY. You suck.
 BUDDY. Hey, don't be like that. You wanna make a snow angel?
 KIMBERLY. You said you'd pick me up at eight and you didn't and that sucks.
 BUDDY. Now come on. You've got gloves.
 KIMBERLY. Two and a half hours. It's like four degrees out here. I could've died.
 BUDDY. How ya gonna die with that big fluffy parka?
 KIMBERLY. The zipper's busted.
 BUDDY. I had some trouble with the car.
 KIMBERLY. Yeah, right.
 BUDDY. You couldn't get a ride with someone else?
 KIMBERLY. You said you'd pick me up.
 BUDDY. Did you eat?
 KIMBERLY. You said we'd get drive-through.
 BUDDY. You must be hungry.
 KIMBERLY. Oh, you think *maybe*? You suck.
 BUDDY. Why didn't you call Pattie?
 KIMBERLY. The buttons on the pay phone are frozen.
 BUDDY. You should've breathed on them. Heated them up.
 KIMBERLY. She can't answer the phone anyway.
 BUDDY. Right.
 KIMBERLY. Her bandages are too big.
 BUDDY. I know. I'm sorry.
 KIMBERLY. Everybody else got picked up.
 BUDDY. You're not getting any warmer sitting there.
 KIMBERLY. Well, I'd love to move, but my ass is frozen to the bench.
 BUDDY. Let's go, we'll drive-by the Zippy Burger.
 KIMBERLY. I don't want to.
 BUDDY. Come on, Kimberly. You gonna be difficult now?
 KIMBERLY. I don't know. You gonna be concerned now?
 BUDDY. Fine, you wanna sit, we'll sit. (*He sits.*) How was ice skating?
 KIMBERLY. Are you okay to drive? (*No response.*) Dad? (*No response.*) Are you okay to drive?
 BUDDY. Yes.

KIMBERLY. Because I know where you were.
 BUDDY. If your mom asks, we'll explain about the car trouble. (*The lights change.*)

Scene 2

The bench turns into a car. Buddy is driving.

BUDDY. Do me a favor and play it cool. Don't make trouble with your mother. She's very anxious about the baby.
 KIMBERLY. Uh-huh.
 BUDDY. She says it's kicking too much. I explained that's what babies do, but you know your mother. I remember you kicked a lot too.
 KIMBERLY. Maybe that's what she's anxious about.
 BUDDY. No, that has nothing to do with — She's still adjusting. Getting used to Bogota.
 KIMBERLY. Whatever.
 BUDDY. Just don't rile her up, 'cause she'll take it out on me. (*The car pulls into a Zippy Burger drive-through. Buddy rolls down his window.*)
 JEFF. (*Over speaker.*) Welcome to Zippy Burger. My name is Jeff. Can I take your order?
 BUDDY. Two Cheezy Burgers, two Frenchy Fries and one large Coke. (*To Kimberly.*) It's okay if we share the soda?
 KIMBERLY. Fine.
 JEFF. (*Over the speaker.*) Anything else, sir?
 BUDDY. No. That's it. (*To Kimberly.*) You look a little better. Color's coming back into your face. You feel thawed out?
 JEFF. (*Over the speaker.*) Is that Kimberly Levaco? (*Buddy looks from the speaker to Kimberly.*) I can see you in the camera. Is that Kimberly Levaco?
 BUDDY. Who wants to know?
 JEFF. (*Over speaker.*) Jeff.

BUDDY. *(To Kimberly.)* Do you know a Jeff?
 JEFF. *(Over speaker.)* Jeff McCracken.
 BUDDY. Do you know a Jeff McCracken?
 JEFF. *(Over speaker.)* I'm in her biology class. Are you her father?
 BUDDY. Yes I am. Can I help you?
 JEFF. *(Over speaker.)* I have a question to ask her.
 BUDDY. *(To Kimberly.)* What's this numbnuts want?
 JEFF. *(Over speaker.)* I can still hear you, sir.
 KIMBERLY. I don't know.
 JEFF. *(Over speaker.)* I just want to ask her something.
 BUDDY. Sounds like a jackass.
 JEFF. *(Over speaker.)* Still listening, sir.
 BUDDY. Get my Cheezy Burgers.
 JEFF. *(Over speaker.)* You can pull around and pay at the window.
 I'll see you there. *(Buddy pulls around.)*
 BUDDY. I'll tell you what. If you don't upset your mom tonight,
 I'll take you to Six Flags Great Adventure.
 KIMBERLY. Dad, you've been saying that since forever, and we've
 never gone, so give it up. 'Cause it's a lame-ass bribe. *(Jeff appears
 at the drive-through window in a Zippy Burger uniform. He's sixteen,
 not the most popular kid.)*
 JEFF. Hi.
 BUDDY. Hello.
 JEFF. That'll be five sixty-three, please. Hi, Kimberly.
 KIMBERLY. Hi.
 BUDDY. Do you take food stamps?
 KIMBERLY. Dad —
 BUDDY. What?
 JEFF. I'm sorry, sir, we don't.
 BUDDY. *(To Kimberly.)* I was kidding. *(To Jeff.)* Gimme a second.
(Gets money together.)
 KIMBERLY. What were you gonna ask me?
 JEFF. It's about that bio assignment.
 KIMBERLY. What about it?
 JEFF. You know how we have to write a paper about a disease?
 KIMBERLY. Yeah.
 JEFF. Well, I wanted to know if I could talk to you. About yours.
 Your disease. You know, how you look old and everything but real-

ly you're not.
 BUDDY. *(Pays him.)* Here, that's exact change. Gimme the food.
 JEFF. Because I thought not too many people would pick that
 one. Could I talk to you about it?
 BUDDY. Kimberly's busy this week. Pick another disease.
 JEFF. *(Hands food to Buddy.)* Oh. Because, I thought I could just
 talk to her about it. It wouldn't take long —
 BUDDY. Thanks, but no. Have a good night now. *(Buddy peels
 away. Jeff disappears.)* That kid's a weirdo. I don't like him. We'll go
 to the B.K. next time. *(Looks over at her.)* Sorry about that, honey.
 KIMBERLY. I don't care.
 BUDDY. What are you gonna write about?
 KIMBERLY. Glaucoma.
 BUDDY. Oh, that's a good one.
 KIMBERLY. I guess.
 BUDDY. Hey, you know what else? They have a safari at Six Flags
 now. A big one. You drive through and all these wild animals shit
 on your car. Giraffes and gorillas. All right here in New Jersey. You
 wanna do that?
 KIMBERLY. Sure.
 BUDDY. *(Pause.)* That boy wasn't being very sensitive.
 KIMBERLY. I said I didn't care.
 BUDDY. Okay. *(Pause.)* I almost thought he was gonna ask you
 out. *(Lights crossfade to ...)*

Scene 3

*Lights up on a tape recorder on a kitchen table. Pattie, in her
 mid-thirties, sits at the table. She wears a housecoat, slippers
 and is very pregnant. Her hands are wrapped in bandages.
 Except for the light over the table, the kitchen is dark. It's
 late. Pattie looks at the tape recorder.*

PATTIE. Okay, here we go. Let's see. Record. *(She tries to press*

record, but her bandages are too big. She tries again.) Jesus. How am I supposed to — ? *(She tries with her elbow, her knee, her head, her nose, etc. Trying with her chin.)* Ow — I can't — Stupid piece of crap — *(Click. Pattie sits up in disbelief. It's recording. She's winded but pleasantly surprised. She leans over and speaks into the recorder sweetly.)* Hello, darling. This is your mother speaking. You're in my belly right now. And sometimes you kick me. Isn't that precious? Now listen to me, sweetheart, because people are going to tell you awful things about me. You mustn't believe them. People lie. They are hateful cocksuckers. All of them. People spread vicious lies when their victims aren't around to defend themselves. Remember that when I'm dead and someone tells you I was a demonic bitch. You stand up and tell them that I was sweet and funny and you have the tapes to prove it. It's always good to have evidence, sweetheart. That's why I'm making you this tape. I wanna make sure you get your info from the horse's mouth, because I'm gonna drop dead any second. *(Beat.)* On the bright side, I just got my carpal tunnel operation, so I may be able to use my hands before I die. We'll see. All those years in Secaucus took their toll. Sixteen years I worked in the Sunshine Cupcake Factory, pumping cream into those Ding-Dong knockoffs. Sixteen years of squeezing that god-damn cream gun. That's one of the reasons we moved away from Secaucus. Not the *main* reason, but one of them. *(Beat.)* I hope I get to breast-feed. That's my one wish. If I give birth to you and they let me breast-feed, then I can die happily. I didn't get to do that with your sister. She was so bad off when she came out that they took her straight to I.C.U. They say that mother-child bond is so important, and it starts that very first moment. But she was never placed on my chest, and I never cooed over her, and she was never breast-fed, so I think we never had that. The bond thing. *(A door slams. Buddy and Kimberly enter. Buddy clicks on the kitchen lights and hangs the car keys on a little hook on the wall of the kitchen. Kim sets up to start her homework at the table.)* Where the hell were you?

BUDDY. Car problems. We had to get a jump.

PATTIE. I'm starving. You bring me a Zippy Fish?

BUDDY. Did you want one?

PATTIE. Son of a bitch.

BUDDY. I'm sorry.

PATTIE. I've gotta eat, Buddy! I'm pregnant!

BUDDY. I know.

PATTIE. Kim's in charge of my meals from now on. Okay, Kim?

KIMBERLY. Whatever.

PATTIE. I'll starve if I have to rely on your father one more day.

KIMBERLY. What's with the tape recorder?

PATTIE. I'm creating an oral history for the baby. This kid's gonna know me better than any of you. *(Beat.)* Now tell the truth, Kim. Why were you late?

KIMBERLY. *(Pause.)* The battery died. We had to get a jump.

PATTIE. From who?

KIMBERLY. Just a guy in a truck.

PATTIE. What kind of truck?

KIMBERLY. A ... chicken truck.

PATTIE. A chicken truck?

KIMBERLY. Yeah. It was filled with chickens.

PATTIE. I *know* what a chicken truck is. Kinda cold to be transporting poultry isn't it?

KIMBERLY. I don't know.

PATTIE. Huh. Maybe a chicken truck'll pull over for *me* some day. Maybe chicken-guy will give me a jump when *I* die.

BUDDY. You're not gonna die, Pattie. We were just a little late.

PATTIE. You smell like gasoline.

BUDDY. I work at a gas station, honey.

PATTIE. Do you also work in a barroom? Because I smell a little bit of that too.

BUDDY. Pattie —

KIMBERLY. Maybe we could have a real dinner tomorrow. *(They look at her as if she's speaking Greek.)* Instead of take-out. A sit-down dinner.

PATTIE. Is that a dig?

KIMBERLY. No.

PATTIE. You know I can't cook meals in this condition.

KIMBERLY. Dad can do it. After work. He'll cook something healthy. It'll be good for the baby.

PATTIE. Oh. Well, that's alright then. It's a nice idea, isn't it, Bud?

BUDDY. *(Beat.)* Sure. I could do that.

KIMBERLY. A roast maybe. Vegetables. Some cake for dessert.
 BUDDY. I'll decide what to cook. Don't push it, Kim.
 PATTIE. Did I mention I met one of the neighbors today?
 BUDDY. *(Suddenly on edge.)* No, what neighbor?
 PATTIE. Relax, Buddy. They're nice people. You need to work on your social skills. *(To Kimberly.)* He's so suspicious about neighbors.
 BUDDY. Yeah, I wonder why?
 PATTIE. You leave me alone for hours, I'm gonna talk to people. I need to do *something* to occupy my time! For fucksake, Buddy ...
 KIMBERLY. Do you guys wanna try an experiment?
 BUDDY. What?
 PATTIE. Ooo, she's a mad scientist.
 BUDDY. What experiment? For school?
 KIMBERLY. No, just for fun. I had an idea. *(Goes to a cabinet.)*
 BUDDY. You're full of ideas tonight, aren't ya? *(Kim takes an empty jar from the cabinet and places it in the middle of the table.)*
 PATTIE. *(Beat.)* I hope you don't expect me to piss in that.
 KIMBERLY. This family swears too much.
 PATTIE. Says who? I don't swear.
 KIMBERLY. You just said piss and fucksake.
 PATTIE. Hey! Watch your mouth!
 KIMBERLY. I propose that every time one of us swears, we have to put a nickel in the jar as a punishment.
 BUDDY. Like a challenge. That's good. I love a challenge.
 PATTIE. Yeah *right*. You love to *run away* from a challenge, you mean. *(Turns to Kim and chuckles.)* Ya hear that? He loves a challenge.
 BUDDY. I married you didn't I?
 PATTIE. You coulda done a lot worse than me. Hell, I'm no challenge. I'm a straightforward, easy ride. I'm the Kansas of wives.
 KIMBERLY. So yes to the jar?
 PATTIE. Who gets the money when we're done?
 KIMBERLY. The baby. We'll buy a Jolly Jumper.
 PATTIE. Well that sounds fair.
 KIMBERLY. Dad?
 BUDDY. Okay.
 KIMBERLY. Alright then. Let's start ... *now.* *(The three of them stare at the jar in silence. After a pause ...)*
 BUDDY. I don't understand what we're supposed to do.

KIMBERLY. Nothing. Just ... do whatever, but don't swear while you do it.
 BUDDY. Oh. *(Kimberly goes back to her homework.)* So what neighbor did you meet?
 PATTIE. Mrs. Gigante.
 BUDDY. How'd you meet her?
 PATTIE. I called to her from the window. I said "Howdy, neighbor. What's your name?"
 BUDDY. What'd she say?
 PATTIE. She said "Mrs. Gigante." Whaddaya think she said? Do you even listen to me? *(Turns to Kim.)* Is it *me*? Am *I* the crazy one?
 KIMBERLY. Honestly, it's a flip of the coin.
 PATTIE. What?
 KIMBERLY. Nothing.
 PATTIE. Don't mumble, Kimmy. I may be going deaf.
 BUDDY. Lucky you.
 PATTIE. Mrs. Gigante's daughter, Bonnie, is in a dance recital on Sunday.
 BUDDY. The blonde girl? Isn't she in your class, Kim?
 PATTIE. She takes lessons at the Miss Maxie Studio in town.
 BUDDY. Remember when Kim did ballet?
 PATTIE. Yeah, what a waste of money that was. *(Beat.)* The tutu was cute though. Remember the tutu, Kimmy?
 KIMBERLY. It chafed.
 PATTIE. Mrs. Gigante says if I ever want the baby to take lessons at the Studio, I need to reserve a spot now because Miss Maxie is very popular.
 KIMBERLY. It could be a boy, you know.
 PATTIE. Boys take ballet.
 BUDDY. Aw geez, you're gonna make him gay.
 PATTIE. Oh shut up, you homophobe. I think *you're* gay.
 BUDDY. I wish I was.
 PATTIE. That's very nice. You wish you were gay, you wish you were deaf. Do you ever wish you were sober?
 BUDDY. Eat shit, Pattie.
 PATTIE. Oh! That's a nickel! Ya hear him, Kim? He said shit!
 KIMBERLY. So did you.
 PATTIE. What? Oh damnit! Wait, does damnit count?

KIMBERLY. Yeah.

PATTIE. *Fuck. (Catches herself.)* Damnit! *(Again.)* Shit!

BUDDY. Geez, it's like you've got Tourette's, Pattie. Chill out.

PATTIE. How many nickels *was* that?

KIMBERLY. One for Dad. Six for you.

BUDDY. Good goin'. We'll have that Jolly Jumper by Thursday.

PATTIE. Put in for me, I don't have any money. *(Buddy digs in his pockets and puts seven nickels in the jar. Suddenly Pattie gets a jolt. She sits up, worried.)*

BUDDY. What's the matter?

PATTIE. The baby kicked again.

BUDDY. That's okay. You *want* the baby to kick. Means it's active and healthy. It's a good thing.

PATTIE. Right. Okay. *(Beat.)* This one's gonna be perfect, Bud. I can tell just by people's reactions to me. Do you remember in the grocery store last week? People would just look at me and smile. They love to see a pregnant woman. Especially the ladies. Why do you think they were all smiling?

KIMBERLY. Because you're fatter than they are. *(Kimberly gets up, goes to phone book and looks up a number.)*

PATTIE. *(To Buddy.)* They were smiling because they sense there's something special in here. *(Pats her stomach.)* Isn't that right, baby? *(Kimberly dials phone number.)*

BUDDY. I'll make some pasta. You want some bow-tie pasta?

PATTIE. Alright then, if I can't have a Zippy Fish.

BUDDY. Where my chef's hat? I can't cook without my hat.

PATTIE. It's in the cabinet, next to my Thorazine.

KIMBERLY. *(Into the phone.)* Hi. Is Jeff McCracken there? ... Kimberly Levaco.

BUDDY. I hope you're not calling that bonehead from the burger joint.

KIMBERLY. I'm on the phone! *(Blackout.)*

Scene 4

Lights up in a library. Kimberly and Jeff talk over a table littered with their school bags, notebooks and pencils.

JEFF. And I'm a member of the Junior Wordsmiths of America, an organization dedicated to the puzzleistic arts.

KIMBERLY. Oh. The puzzleistic arts.

JEFF. Yeah. You know, word-play games. Palindrome challenges. Spoonerisms. Anagrams are my specialty.

KIMBERLY. Which one's an anagram again?

JEFF. You scramble all the letters of something to spell out something else. Like the letters in George Washington can be rearranged to spell out Sweet Groaning Hog.

KIMBERLY. Huh. You figured that out yourself?

JEFF. Yes I did. Some come in my monthly newsletter. Like Federal Government can be rearranged to spell out Large Fervent Demon.

KIMBERLY. Right.

JEFF. And Mother-in-Law turns into Woman Hitler. My dad loves that one. *(Kim notices that Jeff wears a ring on a chain around his neck.)*

KIMBERLY. What's on that chain?

JEFF. A ring.

KIMBERLY. It's kinda girly.

JEFF. It's my mom's.

KIMBERLY. She lets you wear it?

JEFF. She left it to me.

KIMBERLY. Oh. *(Kimberly takes this in.)*

JEFF. *(Reads from his notes.)* So your disease is like progeria without the dwarfism, the beaked nose and the receded chin.

KIMBERLY. Yeah.

JEFF. And your body ages four times as fast as it should.

KIMBERLY. Four and a half.

JEFF. Right, so when you were four, you looked eighteen. And when you're twenty you'll look ninety.

KIMBERLY. Crazy, right?
 JEFF. (*In books.*) And the average life expectancy is sixteen. (*Beat.*) Is that right?
 KIMBERLY. Uh-huh.
 JEFF. How old are *you*?
 KIMBERLY. Can you do my name?
 JEFF. What?
 KIMBERLY. My name. Can you do an anagram of it?
 JEFF. Oh ... sure. I just wanna make sure I get the chromosome thing first.
 KIMBERLY. Right. Okay, watch. (*Draws a diagram.*) You inherit an A or a B chromosome from Dad. And an A or a B from Mom. A's are good, B's are bad. If you get two A's that's great. If you get one A and one B, you're just a carrier. But if you get two B's, you're screwed.
 JEFF. You got two B's.
 KIMBERLY. Correct.
 JEFF. So if your parents ever have a baby there's always a twenty-five percent chance the kid will have it.
 KIMBERLY. Right.
 JEFF. Guess they aren't gonna try *that* again.
 KIMBERLY. (*Beat.*) Now can you do it? (*He doesn't remember.*) The anagram of my name.
 JEFF. Oh right. Yeah. But only if you time me.
 KIMBERLY. All right. (*Jeff grabs some paper and a pencil.*)
 JEFF. (*Writing her name down.*) Kimberly ... and Levaco is L-E-V-A-C-O?
 KIMBERLY. Yeah. Ready?
 JEFF. Hold on. (*Gets set.*) Okay.
 KIMBERLY. (*Looks at watch.*) Go!
 JEFF. (*Working on the anagram.*) One C, right?
 KIMBERLY. Yes. (*Jeff works on the anagram through most of the following dialogue, barely looking up at Kim.*)
 JEFF. I like to pull out the K's first because that's one of the hardest letters to use.
 KIMBERLY. Oh yeah?
 JEFF. Yeah. K's, J's and Q's are the hardest. (*Pause as he works.*) You know, when I first saw you in the cafeteria, I thought you were a new lunch lady. Isn't that funny? (*No response.*) Sorry. Are you sensitive?

KIMBERLY. No.
 JEFF. That's good. (*Pause while he works.*) So you glad you moved to Bogota?
 KIMBERLY. It's okay.
 JEFF. And it's not weird for you?
 KIMBERLY. Is what not weird for me?
 JEFF. To be in high school?
 KIMBERLY. No. Why would that be weird?
 JEFF. I mean ... since the other kids ignore you?
 KIMBERLY. I could ask you the same question.
 JEFF. They don't ignore me. I *wish* they ignored me.
 KIMBERLY. Oh yeah?
 JEFF. (*Slams down pencil proudly.*) Done!
 KIMBERLY. Really?
 JEFF. How fast was I?
 KIMBERLY. (*Checks watch.*) Fifty-six seconds.
 JEFF. It would've been faster but I was carrying on a conversation at the same time.
 KIMBERLY. What'd you get?
 JEFF. Kimberly Levaco turns into ... Cleverly Akimbo. (*Pause. She's not impressed.*) What's the matter?
 KIMBERLY. What's akimbo?
 JEFF. It's ... bent. You know, when your hands are on your hips, then your arms are *akimbo*.
 KIMBERLY. (*Still mulling it over.*) Cleverly akimbo.
 JEFF. It's good. You should be happy. I did my grandmother's name and she got Arabian Beard. (*Debra, a woman in her early thirties, approaches suspiciously. She's somewhat disheveled and rough around the edges. She carries a garbage bag filled with her belongings.*)
 DEBRA. (*Whispers.*) Kim. Hey. (*They look over at the strange woman.*) How you doin', beautiful?
 KIMBERLY. I'm fine.
 DEBRA. God, I'm glad to see ya.
 KIMBERLY. Where have you been?
 DEBRA. You won't believe it. I was actually in a squat for a couple months, in Trenton.
 KIMBERLY. A squat? What's a squat?
 DEBRA. It's a terrible place, Kim. But the people are nice. And

after that, I was living in the woods for a few weeks, but then my tent caught on fire, so I went back to Secaucus, but you guys weren't there anymore, so I called Aunt Helen, and she wouldn't let me stay with her, but she told me you all took off to Bogota. *(To Jeff.)* How you doin'?

JEFF. Good.

DEBRA. And so I came here, but you're not listed in the phone book, so I figured I'd wait in the library until you came by. And I knew you'd come by because I remembered you like to read so much. And so I've been here for ten days.

KIMBERLY. You've been living in the library?

DEBRA. Yeah, keep it down though. They're real strict about the noise. It's comfortable. I sleep in the pillow room. At closing time I hide under the pile of beanbag chairs. Haven't been caught yet. *(To Jeff.)* What's your name?

JEFF. Jeff McCracken.

DEBRA. Nice to meet you. I'm Debra Watts. You gonna eat that cookie?

JEFF. *(Looks at his snack.)* I guess not.

DEBRA. *(Takes it.)* You don't mind, do ya? I haven't eaten in a couple days. *(Takes a bite and looks to Kimberly.)* I missed ya, kiddo. *(To Jeff.)* Kimmy ever mention her Aunt Debra?

JEFF. No.

DEBRA. We're best buds, right Kimber? *(To Jeff.)* If you ever do anything to hurt her, I will fuck you up *big time!* *(Beat, turns to Kim.)* I think your friend just shit his pants.

KIMBERLY. Debra, come on ...

DEBRA. What? I'm sorry. *(To Jeff.)* You know I was just messin' with your head, right? You're a good kid. You want a handjob? I'm just kidding. I'm a dyke so I don't actually do that anymore. Unless ya got twenty bucks. You're not underage are ya?

JEFF. Yes.

DEBRA. Well the deal's off then. I've spent enough time in jail. You'll have to pleasure yourself, Dexter.

KIMBERLY. What are you *doing*?

DEBRA. I'm just playin' around. What happened, you don't like my jokes anymore? Wait, this isn't a date is it?

KIMBERLY. No.

DEBRA. Oh good, 'cause this kid's kinda freaky. *(To Jeff.)* Don't take offense though. I was a total outcast myself.

JEFF. That doesn't surprise me.

DEBRA. Hey, there ya go! Rising to the occasion! *(To Kim.)* He's a keeper.

KIMBERLY. Could I maybe meet you out front in a few minutes?

DEBRA. Hell no. I gotta go see a guy about something. Hey, how come you guys didn't tell me you were moving?

KIMBERLY. You disappeared.

DEBRA. You coulda left a note or something.

KIMBERLY. Dad seemed anxious to leave.

DEBRA. Yeah, me too. I understand. *(Suddenly notices someone nearby.)* Shit. *(Grabs a book and pretends to read.)*

KIMBERLY. What's the matter?

DEBRA. That old lady's been giving me the stink-eye all day.

KIMBERLY. The librarian?

DEBRA. Yeah, she might be on to me. She caught me giving myself a splash-bath in the ladies' room this morning.

KIMBERLY. A what?

DEBRA. You know, just the vitals: the pits, the snatch.

JEFF. Ew.

DEBRA. *(Turns on Jeff.)* Hey kid, you have no idea how hard it is to be homeless!

JEFF. Sorry. *(With the librarian out of sight, Debra starts rummaging through her garbage bag.)*

DEBRA. Hold on, I got ya somethin', Kimmy. For your birthday.

KIMBERLY. You did?

DEBRA. Don't sound so surprised.

JEFF. When's your birthday?

KIMBERLY. Today.

DEBRA. I found ya just in time.

JEFF. Why didn't you say anything?

DEBRA. *(Hands her a badly gift-wrapped present.)* Sweet sixteen and never been kissed, right?

KIMBERLY. Shut up.

DEBRA. I wrapped it myself.

KIMBERLY. *(Unwraps a conch shell.)* It's a shell.

JEFF. A conch shell.

KIMBERLY. What's it do?
 DEBRA. You blow in it. See the hole in the end? It's like a horn.
 KIMBERLY. Right.
 DEBRA. I got it in Trenton off this crackhead Winnie. She used to own a hotel in Miami Beach.
 JEFF. And now she lives in a squat?
 DEBRA. Life takes awful turns, kid. *(To Kim.)* That shell came all the way from Florida.
 KIMBERLY. It's nice. Thank you.
 DEBRA. You're welcome. *(Beat.)* So. I'm gonna need the address.
 KIMBERLY. What address?
 DEBRA. To the house.
 KIMBERLY. *Our* house?
 DEBRA. Come on, Kimmy. Don't play with me.
 KIMBERLY. I can't. I'm not supposed to.
 DEBRA. Why not? Because of your dad? I'm family. You think he wants me to sleep on the streets?
 KIMBERLY. Probably.
 DEBRA. But *you* don't. You've got heart, right? Which reminds me, I'm gonna need your help, Kim. Can you help me with something?
 KIMBERLY. I don't know.
 DEBRA. It's something I've been thinking about. Something good for us both. You'll like it. Maybe we can work your friend in.
 JEFF. No thanks.
 DEBRA. Gimme the address wouldja? *(Kimberly reluctantly writes it down.)* Thanks, gorgeous. Leave the front door unlocked and I'll talk to ya tonight.
 KIMBERLY. Okay.
 DEBRA. In the meantime, if anyone asks, you didn't see me. *(Turns to Jeff.)* You neither.
 JEFF. Alright.
 DEBRA. Peace out, y'all. *(Debra slips away suddenly. The kids look after her.)*
 KIMBERLY. I am *so* sorry.
 JEFF. That's okay, my aunt's a lesbian too.
 KIMBERLY. Really?
 JEFF. Really. She's not nearly as inappropriate as your aunt though.
 KIMBERLY. Yeah, that's kinda her thing.

JEFF. She used to live with you?
 KIMBERLY. Yeah, in Secaucus. She slept in our basement. But then she did something so we had to move.
 JEFF. What'd she do?
 KIMBERLY. I don't know. They don't really talk about it.
 JEFF. Huh. I have cousins in Secaucus.
 KIMBERLY. *(Beat.)* Oh. You do? *(Pause.)* You know what? I should be going. *(Starts to gather her stuff together.)*
 JEFF. What's the matter?
 KIMBERLY. I have to feed my mom.
 JEFF. Your mom?
 KIMBERLY. She has carpal tunnel. I'll call you though.
 JEFF. I'm not gonna say anything. I never even see them. They're very distant cousins.
 KIMBERLY. Well that's good. I really gotta go though.
 JEFF. Alright.
 KIMBERLY. I'll see you tomorrow. *(Kimberly exits with her book bag.)*

Scene 5

Lights up on the kitchen table. It's late at night. Pattie is talking into the tape recorder again. The jar on the table is already half-filled with nickels. The table is set for dinner.

PATTIE. And one of my best friends was Mr. Hicks. He lived next door to us in Secaucus. He brought me cabbage from his garden. You would've liked Mr. Hicks. When I wasn't feeling well, he'd run to the corner and buy my cigarettes for me. He was kind like that. He'd do whatever you asked him to. *(A conch shell blows loudly offstage.)* What in God's name ... *(Again, the conch shell blows offstage.)* Kim, what are you *doing*?
 KIMBERLY. *(Off.)* I'm blowing my conch shell.
 PATTIE. Well cut it out, you'll wake the neighbors! *(To tape.)* I

don't know about you, baby, but I'm so hungry I could chew off my own arm. (*Calls off to Kim.*) Kim! Me and the baby need some food!

KIMBERLY. (*Off.*) I'll be there in a second!

PATTIE. Where'd you get a conch shell?!

KIMBERLY. (*Off.*) Don Ho. He spoke at our school today.

PATTIE. That is a lie. You better not have stolen that thing.

(*Kimberly enters wearing pajamas. She's been trying on makeup.*)

KIMBERLY. I didn't steal it.

PATTIE. Make us some cereal.

KIMBERLY. You can't wait for Dad?

PATTIE. It's ten o'clock. I'll get a long white beard waiting for that no-show. I don't know why you bothered setting the table.

KIMBERLY. (*Goes to make a bowl of Frosted Flakes.*) He said he'd make dinner.

PATTIE. Yeah well, he-said-he-said. He's said a lot of things over the years, and ninety percent of it was bullshit.

KIMBERLY. Jar.

PATTIE. *Shit.*

KIMBERLY. *Mom.*

PATTIE. I'm sorry. I'm trying. Your dad put some nickels aside. Pop 'em in. (*Kim tosses a couple nickels in the jar, then looks up at the clock.*)

KIMBERLY. Where do you think he is? (*Pours milk over the cereal.*)

PATTIE. Oh he's probably face down in a bowl of peanuts somewhere. (*Kimberly sits down with the cereal bowl and feeds her mother like one might feed a baby.*) I love Don Ho. Your father used to say he was gonna take me to Hawaii to meet him. Of course that never happened.

KIMBERLY. Maybe he'll surprise you someday. You never know.

PATTIE. Yeah you do. Sometimes, Kim, you actually *do* know. I'm never seeing Hawaii. (*Beat.*) Hey, I did that spinning needle on a string trick. It said I'm having another girl. Exciting, right?

KIMBERLY. How'd you thread a needle?

PATTIE. It took an hour and a half, but I did it. (*Into the tape recorder.*) Persevere in life, baby girl. That's another good lesson I'm passing onto you. (*Back to Kimberly.*) I was just telling your sister about Mr. Hicks. Remember that nice old man?

KIMBERLY. Dad said he was a pervert who kept stacks of dirty

magazines in his basement.

PATTIE. Kimberly, don't say — ! (*Hits stop on tape recorder and then rewinds.*) Now I have to rewind and record over that. You are not gonna say mean things about Mr. Hicks on *my* tape. He brought me cabbage! (*Hits record again.*) As I was saying ... Do you remember Mr. Hicks, Kimberly?

KIMBERLY. Vaguely.

PATTIE. Wasn't it funny how he called you The Duchess?

KIMBERLY. It wasn't that funny.

PATTIE. Yes, he called you The Duchess, and me Hiawatha. He was such a comical little man. (*Sounds of someone sneaking in the front.*)

KIMBERLY. Is that him?

PATTIE. He better have his shoes in his hand. (*Giggles.*) Like in the cartoons, you know?

DEBRA. (*Sneaks in.*) Anyone home?

PATTIE. Aw hell.

DEBRA. Hey, sista. Ya miss me?

PATTIE. Not at all. Go away, Debra.

DEBRA. Aw come on, you don't mean it.

PATTIE. Yes I do. Things have been very quiet around here. You have to leave.

DEBRA. Nice place. Except for that wallpaper. Yikes. It's like you live in a giant thermos.

PATTIE. I mean it, Deb, you cannot stay here.

DEBRA. Don't worry, it won't be for long.

PATTIE. That's what you said the last time, and you stayed for six years.

DEBRA. I got a few things out front to bring in.

PATTIE. What things?

DEBRA. I'll keep 'em in the basement with me, relax.

PATTIE. Buddy's head is gonna explode.

DEBRA. Don't even tell him I'm here. I'll be like a mouse. (*Goes back out front.*)

PATTIE. How'd she even find us?

KIMBERLY. Who knows?

PATTIE. Stay away from her, Kim. Do me that favor. We'll just pretend she doesn't exist, okay? (*Suddenly notices.*) Are you wearing lipstick?

KIMBERLY. Yeah.
 PATTIE. Why?
 KIMBERLY. I was just trying it on. I wanted to see what it'd look like.
 PATTIE. And rouge?
 KIMBERLY. A little bit.
 PATTIE. I don't like it. You look like a made-up corpse. *(Debra enters with large cans of chemicals. She crosses to the basement.)* What are those?
 DEBRA. They're just chemicals I need.
 PATTIE. Chemicals? Why do you need chemicals?
 DEBRA. Which way's the basement?
 KIMBERLY. That way.
 PATTIE. You better not be building a bomb down there.
 DEBRA. *(Exiting to basement.)* I'm not building a bomb.
 PATTIE. *(Into the tape recorder.)* That's your Aunt Debra. Never loan her money.
 KIMBERLY. *(Looks up at the clock again.)* Think he'll be home by midnight?
 PATTIE. Why, he gonna turn into a pumpkin? What's with you?
 KIMBERLY. *(Holds up cereal spoon.)* Another bite.
 PATTIE. Another bite for the baby girl. *(Baby talk.)* Da widdle baby eats it up wid a gweat big spoon and poops in her pants like a good baby should.
 KIMBERLY. Mom?
 PATTIE. Yes?
 KIMBERLY. Can we just be normal for a few minutes? *(Beat.)* Can you just ask me how school was or something?
 PATTIE. You're such a stick-in-the-mud, ya know it? Criticizing my mothering skills. *(Into tape recorder.)* That buzzkill you hear is your sister Kimberly. I can't wait for you to come out and tell her to lighten up. *(Debra crosses from basement.)* Remember Kim had such a sour puss when she was born?
 DEBRA. I was incarcerated the last time you gave birth. *(Exits.)*
 PATTIE. Oh that's right. Well she *did*. We called her Grumpy Face. *(To Kim.)* Cute, right? *(Off her reaction.)* Hey, I know what'll cheer you up. You wanna name the baby?
 KIMBERLY. No, I don't wanna name the baby.

PATTIE. Aw, come on, it'll be fun. You have such a good imagination. Remember that Don Ho thing you said? That was clever. *Pleeease.*
 KIMBERLY. God, okay. How about ...
 PATTIE. Pick something good.
 KIMBERLY. I'm feeling like she's a ... Carmelita?
 PATTIE. *(Pleased.)* Oh yes. That's a pretty name. I'm gonna have me a Spanish baby. Little Carmelita. My bonita baby.
 KIMBERLY. You like it?
 PATTIE. Very much. Thank you. *(Debra crosses to basement carrying stacks of glue traps.)* Hey, Kim just named the baby!
 DEBRA. Did you show her the shell I got for your birthday, Kimmy? *(Pattie looks over to Kim. Silence.)* What'd your mom get ya? Something lame I'll bet. *(Off Pattie's look.)* What?
 PATTIE. I forgot.
 DEBRA. You forgot her birthday?
 PATTIE. Don't start with me, Debra!
 DEBRA. You didn't forget. *(Heads into basement.)*
 PATTIE. I did so! *(The phone rings. Pattie and Kim freeze. They look at each other. The phone continues to ring. Kim goes over and answers it.)*
 KIMBERLY. *(Answers phone.)* Hello? ... Uh-huh ... Uh-huh ... Fine. *(Hangs up.)*
 PATTIE. *(Beat.)* Car problems? *(Kimberly starts putting the dishes from the table back into the cabinet. She spends much of the following dialogue quietly clearing the table.)* I'm sorry I forgot, honey. I think the cancer's spread to my memory cells.
 KIMBERLY. You don't have cancer.
 PATTIE. Are you a doctor?
 KIMBERLY. No Mom, I'm not a doctor.
 PATTIE. Then don't tell me what I do or don't have. *(Beat.)* I'm gonna die, Kim. It's sad, but you need to be prepared. People pass away, you know. Suddenly they're gone forever. Look at Mr. Hicks. One day he's bringing me cabbages from his garden, the next day he drops dead. *(To Debra who passes from basement to exit house.)* Remember when Mr. Hicks dropped dead, Debra?
 DEBRA. Jesus, Pattie, give it a rest. Your mouth is like a lawn mower.
 PATTIE. You'll miss my mouth when I'm dead.

DEBRA. I don't think so. *(Exits.)*

PATTIE. *(To Kimberly.)* You'll miss me too. Because I'm a fixture in your life. You'll have to actually remind yourself I'm gone. That's how it was when your Nana died. I kept forgetting she was dead. I'd see a sale at the supermarket and think, "Oh Ma should get down there for those pork chops." And then I'd remember, "Oh yeah, she's dead." You get so used to someone being there, it takes your body a long time to adjust. *(Kimberly continues to clear the table.)* Like when you move a lamp, and you keep going to the same place to turn it on in the dark, even though you moved it across the room weeks ago. Or do you remember when Cinnamon died, and we still kept going to put the table scraps into his dog bowl? We were just so used to it? That's how it's gonna be when I'm gone. You'll have to keep reminding yourself that I'm not here anymore.

KIMBERLY. Or vice versa.

PATTIE. *(Pause.)* You take that back.

KIMBERLY. Sixteen is just an average, Mom. Just because it's my birthday doesn't mean —

PATTIE. *(Stops her.)* I was not talking about *you*. I was talking about *myself*.

KIMBERLY. As always.

PATTIE. I'm the one who's falling apart after all. You're so self-involved. *(Debra enters dragging a mailbox.)* What is that?

DEBRA. It's a mailbox, Pattie.

PATTIE. I know it's a mailbox! Jesus Christ!

DEBRA. You wanna help me with this, Kim?

KIMBERLY. Sure. *(Kim goes to mailbox.)*

PATTIE. You can't steal mailboxes. That is a federal offense. *(Debra and Kimberly cross to basement with the mailbox.)*

DEBRA. How was school?

KIMBERLY. Good. We had a mock debate.

PATTIE. Hey, we decided to ignore Debra, remember Kim?

KIMBERLY. I lobbied for animal rights.

PATTIE. I'm sorry I forgot your birthday.

DEBRA. Did your side win?

KIMBERLY. Yeah. We won. *(They've gone to the basement.)*

PATTIE. I'll make your father get a cake! Kim, you didn't wipe my mouth! ... Kim?! ... Fine! *(Wipes her mouth with her bandages.)*

Come back! I'll try to be normal! Kim?! *(Pause.)* You see how they treat me, Carmelita? You have the evidence right there. All of it, *caught on tape! (Lights crossfade to ...)*

Scene 6

Buddy's car. He's driving. Kimberly is in the passenger's seat. Jeff is in the back.

JEFF. Thanks for the ride to school, Mr. Levaco.

BUDDY. Uh-huh.

JEFF. You really didn't have to offer.

BUDDY. You were standing in front of my car.

JEFF. Yeah, I was just gonna ask Kimberly a couple more questions before I presented my paper today.

BUDDY. You shouldn't stand in people's driveways like that. You're gonna get yourself run over.

JEFF. Thanks for the tip, Mr. L.

BUDDY. *(Notices Kim.)* What's the matter?

KIMBERLY. My back is sore. My shoulders too.

BUDDY. Huh. Those are new. Maybe we can go to the clinic tomorrow.

JEFF. This is a nice car.

BUDDY. What are you talking about? It's a total wreck.

JEFF. Yeah but I usually take the bus to school. This is much more comfortable. No one's spitting at me.

BUDDY. It's early yet. *(Jeff laughs nervously.)*

JEFF. Do you have your license yet, Kim?

KIMBERLY. No.

JEFF. I got mine two months ago. But my dad won't let me touch the car. Says I'm accident-prone. I think I'm a pretty good driver though. Want me to take the wheel for a couple blocks, Mr. Levaco?

BUDDY. No, just keep quiet.

JEFF. My dad would drive me to school himself but he works the night shift. He gets home real late and then sleeps in.
 KIMBERLY. Yeah my dad gets in real late too sometimes. Last night it was almost three, wasn't it?
 JEFF. You work the night shift too, Mr. Levaco?
 BUDDY. No, I don't.
 KIMBERLY. Musta been hard getting up this morning.
 BUDDY. I managed.
 JEFF. You know, if you rearrange all the letters in snooze alarms, you come up with Alas, No More Z's.
 BUDDY. Huh. That's weird.
 JEFF. Where do you work, Mr. Levaco?
 BUDDY. The Chevron Station on Palisades Ave. *(Jeff writes something in his notebook.)*
 JEFF. Are you the guy in the booth?
 BUDDY. Yeah, I'm the guy in the booth.
 JEFF. My dad works in a booth too. He collects tolls on the turnpike.
 BUDDY. That's a lousy job. Breathing in those fumes all day.
 JEFF. He likes it.
 KIMBERLY. *(Under her breath.)* "Oh sure I can cook dinner. That's a great idea."
 BUDDY. What?
 KIMBERLY. Forget it.
 BUDDY. If you have something to say, Kim —
 KIMBERLY. I don't. Just go faster. You drive like an old man.
 BUDDY. *(To Jeff.)* Kim's upset because I went out for a few beers after work instead of making dinner.
 KIMBERLY. Dad, shut up.
 BUDDY. She thinks I should stay home and smoke pipes and wear sweaters.
 KIMBERLY. That's not what I think.
 BUDDY. Then why are you being all pissy?
 KIMBERLY. I'm not. Drop it.
 BUDDY. Don't worry about what time I get in. I'm the grown-up, not you. So mind your own business.
 KIMBERLY. I didn't even say anything.
 BUDDY. Yeah, you kinda did actually. Are you showing off for

your boyfriend?
 KIMBERLY. Dad —
 BUDDY. Kim — *(Beat.)* Just cut it out.
 JEFF. *(Looking up from his notebook.)* Oh No, Vast Cretin. *(Buddy and Kimberly look at him blankly.)* Chevron Station. Its anagram. Oh No, Vast Cretin.
 BUDDY. Alright, enough with the jumbles.
 JEFF. Sorry. Once you start, it's hard to stop. It's like heroin.
 BUDDY. Heroin?
 JEFF. A.K.A. smack, brown, junk, "H." My older brother's in rehab. He crashed my dad's moped.
 BUDDY. *(To Kim.)* You finish that glaucoma paper?
 KIMBERLY. Yes.
 JEFF. You know, Bonnie Gigante picked glaucoma too.
 KIMBERLY. So?
 JEFF. I'm just saying.
 BUDDY. Hey, can you get us free burgers?
 JEFF. Free burgers?
 BUDDY. Yeah. Since you work at Zippy Burger? Seeing as I gave you a ride?
 JEFF. Oh ... I ... I'm not really allowed to do that.
 BUDDY. You can't slip us a vanilla shake on the sly?
 JEFF. Well, they count the cups, so ... They'd know one was missing.
 BUDDY. Oh, I see how it is. Okay then.
 JEFF. Hey Kimberly, you ever play Dungeons & Dragons?
 KIMBERLY. No.
 JEFF. Do you wanna though? I could be the Dungeon Master.
 KIMBERLY. It's a game?
 JEFF. Yeah, you go on an adventure and you could be like an Elvin Cleric or a Paladin or something. Wanna see my dice? *(Holds up velvet pouch.)*
 KIMBERLY. Sure. *(Kimberly takes the bag and looks at the multi-colored dice inside.)*
 JEFF. They're for rolling hit point damage and stuff, like if you get attacked by a hobgoblin.
 BUDDY. That game's for devil worshippers. You're not roping her into that shit.

JEFF. What? It's not for devil worshippers.
 BUDDY. You go to graveyards and sacrifice cats and whatnot. I've seen it on the news. It makes kids crazy, and they kill themselves.
 JEFF. You've got it mixed up with something else, Mr. Levaco. This is just a fantasy roleplaying game.
 BUDDY. Try those Pop-O-Matic games instead. Good clean fun.
 KIMBERLY. These dice are so cool.
 JEFF. You wanna play?
 BUDDY. She's not playing.
 KIMBERLY. (*Holds up a die.*) Look at this dice, Dad.
 JEFF. The singular of dice is die. It's a die.
 KIMBERLY. Look at this die, Dad.
 JEFF. It's twelve-sided.
 BUDDY. See, it's like a pentagram or something.
 KIMBERLY. It's just a die.
 JEFF. You could play D&D too, Mr. Levaco.
 BUDDY. No. No one is playing D&D! (*Pause.*) I'm sorry to yell, Jeff, but I feel strongly about this issue.
 JEFF. Not a problem. My dad yells too. So does my brother when he needs more methadone. So I've gotten used to yelling.
 BUDDY. Good for you.
 JEFF. (*Beat.*) I do get a discount.
 BUDDY. A discount?
 JEFF. At the Zippy Burger. So, if you wanted that, I could probably say I was buying the food for myself.
 BUDDY. Well now you're talkin'. Maybe I'll take you up on that offer.
 JEFF. If you do, can I have a ride tomorrow too?
 BUDDY. I don't see why not. So long as you keep quiet. Discounted burgers. I bet they taste better when you're not paying full price. Right, Kim?
 KIMBERLY. You missed my birthday.
 BUDDY. (*Beat.*) I know. I talked to your mother. I'm getting a cake over at Lambert's tonight.
 KIMBERLY. (*Beat.*) That's it?
 BUDDY. Whaddaya want me to say? This stuff happens. I don't think my old man *ever* remembered my birthday.
 KIMBERLY. How comforting.

BUDDY. I'm sorry, honey. But you know how crazy it's been with the move and the new job and the baby and everything.
 KIMBERLY. (*Peeved.*) Uh-huh.
 BUDDY. Oh for God'sakes you're gettin' your freakin' cake, now cut me some slack! (*Beat.*) Between you and your mother ...
 JEFF. (*After a pause.*) So, did you work at a gas station in Secaucus too, Mr. Levaco?
 BUDDY. What?
 JEFF. When you lived in Secaucus? Was there a Chevron there too?
 BUDDY. Who said we lived in Secaucus?
 JEFF. Kimberly did. (*Buddy shoots her a look.*)
 KIMBERLY. It just came up.
 BUDDY. Right, it just came up.
 KIMBERLY. I didn't say anything. I just said we lived there.
 JEFF. Don't worry, she didn't give away any family secrets, Mr. Levaco.
 BUDDY. What are you talking about?
 JEFF. Nothing.
 BUDDY. We don't have any family secrets.
 JEFF. I didn't say you did.
 BUDDY. What'd you say to him?
 KIMBERLY. Nothing.
 BUDDY. Are you punishing me?
 KIMBERLY. No, Dad —
 BUDDY. What'd I say about talking to people?
 JEFF. We *had* to talk, for my paper.
 BUDDY. And I thought I told *you* Kim was busy?
 JEFF. You did but then —
 BUDDY. I thought I told you to pick another disease?
 JEFF. Kimberly called *me*.
 BUDDY. No one needs to know my family business.
 JEFF. I didn't ask about the family, it was just —
 BUDDY. I'm gonna tell you something, Jeff, because I was a boy and I was sixteen once, and I know what's going on here.
 KIMBERLY. Dad, cut it out.
 BUDDY. You are not gonna get all chatty with Kim and start feeling her tits.
 KIMBERLY. Oh my *God*.

JEFF. Mr. Levaco — !
 BUDDY. I know how the hormones work.
 KIMBERLY. Shut *up*.
 BUDDY. I know what this *discount burger* business is about.
 JEFF. I just wanted a ride to school.
 BUDDY. I knew how to warm up the dads. I knew how to make conversation and be the nice kid.
 JEFF. That's not what I'm doing.
 BUDDY. But I was bright enough to talk about baseball and not some Satanic roleplaying game!
 JEFF. It's not Satanic.
 BUDDY. I knew the *right* way to get into a girl's pants.
 JEFF. I'm not getting into anyone's pants.
 BUDDY. You've got *that* right, Jeffrey! Now not another word about Secaucus! No Secaucus, no D&D and no tit-touching! I mean it!
 KIMBERLY. I hate you. I hope you drink yourself sick and crash this fucking car! I hope you swerve off a cliff and this shit-box explodes and you die, you motherfucker! (*Silence.*)
 JEFF. (*Looking out the window.*) Oh look. We're here. (*Blackout.*)

Scene 7

Lights up in the library. Debra hustles Jeff into the room.

DEBRA. Kim didn't tell you about the meeting?
 JEFF. No. And really, I don't think I should be attending any *meetings* with you people.
 DEBRA. Oh yeah? Why's that?
 JEFF. Because Mr. Levaco got mad at me this morning and I don't even know what I did. But the main thing he said was I shouldn't know too much about his family, so I think I should just stay away.
 DEBRA. You know what your problem is? You worry too much. Anyone ever tell you that?

JEFF. Yes. That's why I take anxiety medication. (*Kimberly enters.*)
 DEBRA. You're late. And I thought I told you to fill the kid in?
 KIMBERLY. (*Surprised to see Jeff.*) Oh. Actually ...
 DEBRA. Why is it always up to me to be the responsible one? (*Motions Kim to a chair.*) Sit. I got some stuff in the Xerox machine. Don't move until I get back. Neither of ya. (*Exits.*)
 KIMBERLY. You should probably escape while you can.
 JEFF. That's okay. She'll just catch me and drag me back here. (*They sit in silence. After an awkward pause ...*) I liked your glaucoma paper by the way. It was way better than Bonnie Gigante's.
 KIMBERLY. You think?
 JEFF. Yeah, you had that eyeball diagram and everything. It was very thorough.
 KIMBERLY. Thanks.
 JEFF. (*Another pause.*) So, are you like ... mad at me?
 KIMBERLY. No.
 JEFF. About my paper?
 KIMBERLY. No, it was good.
 JEFF. Because you looked weird after I read it in class.
 KIMBERLY. No, it was a good paper.
 JEFF. Then how come you ate lunch by yourself?
 KIMBERLY. I was just reading.
 JEFF. I thought you were mad at me.
 KIMBERLY. I wasn't. I just ... I thought you were done, so ...
 JEFF. Done? With lunch?
 KIMBERLY. With the paper. Since you were done writing it, I thought ...
 JEFF. You thought I wouldn't have lunch with you?
 KIMBERLY. I don't know.
 JEFF. I thought you were mad about the paper, or your dad or something.
 KIMBERLY. My dad?
 JEFF. Or embarrassed. Since he told me not to touch you and kiss you and stuff.
 KIMBERLY. Oh, no I wasn't — I don't really wanna talk about that.
 JEFF. Because I was thinking that if you wanted me to, I'd do it anyway.
 KIMBERLY. What?

JEFF. I know it's his job to be protective and everything, but you might want to do something that he thinks you don't want to do. So if you wanted to like be kissed or whatever, then I would do it. *(Beat.)* As a friend, you know? *(Silence.)* Like if you just wanted someone to practice on. *(Beat.)* But not if you didn't want to, obviously. I'm just saying. I'm not afraid of your dad. I mean I *am*, but I'm assuming you wouldn't tell him, so in that case I wouldn't be. Afraid of him, I mean. *(Kimberly is too overwhelmed to speak. She has a giddy, mortified, thrilled expression on her face.)* Are you mad? KIMBERLY. No.

JEFF. Because that's not why I've been hanging out with you or anything. I wasn't even thinking about it until your dad brought it up. So ... I don't know. I guess ... if you ever want to, just let me know.

KIMBERLY. Okay.

JEFF. *(Beat.)* Okay, you'll let me know? Or okay, right now?

KIMBERLY. Okay, I'll let you know.

JEFF. Okay.

KIMBERLY. It's just ... She's gonna come back, so ...

JEFF. Oh right. I see. Cool. *(Debra reenters with checks and Xeroxes.)*

DEBRA. All set. Now listen up, because the plan's genius. You know what check-washing is?

JEFF. This is the sort of thing I think Mr. Levaco was talking about. I really shouldn't get involved with any kind of *check-washing plans*.

KIMBERLY. He doesn't wanna do it.

DEBRA. Just hear me out. It's the end of month, right? So everyone's paying bills, popping 'em in the mail. Gas, cable, whatever. So last night, I unbolted the mailbox outside Krapp's Liquor Store and dragged it home.

JEFF. You stole a mailbox?

DEBRA. Cool, right? And then Kim and I got these glue traps, you know, for mice ...

KIMBERLY. *(To Jeff.)* I just helped a little.

DEBRA. And we tied strings through them and lowered them into the mailbox, you know, like we were fishing, and we pulled up all these envelopes. And guess what was inside most of 'em.

JEFF. Checks?

DEBRA. Exactly. Checks I just Xeroxed on that machine over there

with a roll of dimes I stole out of ol' Stink-eye's purse. *(Points.)*

JEFF. I'm getting acid-stomach.

DEBRA. And in our basement is a solution I made with a recipe I got off the Internet. It said I mix this amount of Clorox with a splash of so and so, and when I drop the checks into the solution, guess what's gonna happen?

JEFF. The ink will come off?

DEBRA. Right! Whatever people wrote in will magically disappear, and I'll have a stack of blank checks. And since I Xeroxed the checks before I washed them ...

JEFF. You still have the signatures.

DEBRA. And I've always been a first class forger. Did two years in the Georgia Pen thanks to my outstanding forgeries.

KIMBERLY. She has this plan to rewrite all the checks.

DEBRA. And they'll look totally believable.

KIMBERLY. But she wants to make them out to you.

JEFF. To me?

KIMBERLY. I told her you probably didn't wanna do it.

JEFF. Why would the checks be made out to me?

DEBRA. You have a bank account, don't you?

JEFF. Yeah at First National but there's only forty bucks in it.

DEBRA. Right now there's forty bucks, but how about we fill that puppy up?

KIMBERLY. She said we'd get a cut of the money.

DEBRA. I give you the new checks tomorrow, you go in with Kimberly. Kim pretends to be your grandmother —

KIMBERLY. I haven't agreed to all this. It's still hypothetical.

DEBRA. She says, "This is my grandson and he's just had a birthday and he'd like to cash some of his birthday checks." And they make sure you have an account, which you do, and they hand you all the cash. They won't even blink. Grandmother, little kid. Piece of cake. I take my half of the dough and hop a bus to Miami. My friend Winnie the crackhead says it's paradise down there.

JEFF. Can't we get in trouble?

DEBRA. No, you're kids. You can't get into trouble.

JEFF. But my brother was in a Juvenile Detention Center and —

DEBRA. Look, this is very safe.

JEFF. I can't do it. My dad'd kill me.

DEBRA. Ya buy him a tie.
 JEFF. He doesn't wear ties.
 DEBRA. Some tube socks then. Whatever he needs, you buy it. He'll love ya for it.
 JEFF. (*Considering it.*) He *does* need a new moped.
 DEBRA. There ya go, a moped then!
 KIMBERLY. I don't know, Aunt Debra.
 DEBRA. Don't go backing out on me, Kim. He's starting to come 'round. And you promised.
 KIMBERLY. I said maybe.
 DEBRA. (*To Jeff.*) See what you're doing?! You're scaring Kim! Tell her it's a good idea!
 JEFF. Well I'll do it if she wants me to, but I don't think she does.
 KIMBERLY. He's right, I don't. It's too much.
 DEBRA. It's not too much! You owe me this! Who brought you to that bowling alley all those times? And the roller rink?! I did for *you*, now you do for *me*. That's how life works!
 KIMBERLY. I know, but —
 DEBRA. I've had it rough, Kim, you *know* that. You're gonna begrudge me a bus ticket? Because that's all I need. And I'll be good once I'm there, I promise. I'll start a new life. I'll get a straight job on the beach, selling slushies or something.
 KIMBERLY. You can get a job *here* and earn a little money, go to Miami later.
 DEBRA. I don't have time for later! My whole life has been later! I'm gonna get some crap job at Wal-Mart and *wait* for things to get good? While years go by, and I get fat, and never get to Miami? That ain't me, Kimmy. I'm sorry.
 KIMBERLY. It wouldn't be years.
 DEBRA. Yes it would! For me, it would. I get trapped.
 KIMBERLY. You get arrested, it's not the same thing.
 DEBRA. I don't wanna wait anymore. I'm not a kid. I know what life does now. It flies right by ya. And the good things go with it. They don't stop to land in your lap. You gotta *grab* the good stuff, otherwise it's gone. And when it's gone, it don't come back, believe me. (*Beat.*) Come on, Kimmy. Help me out. Please.
 KIMBERLY. (*Pause.*) Okay. (*Turns to Jeff.*) I think we should do it. (*The lights change.*)

Scene 8

In the dark, sounds of Buddy sneaking into the house, drunk. He knocks stuff over.

BUDDY. Shit ... oopsy ... another nickel. (*Giggles. Lights come up on him at Kim's bedroom door with a cake box and a shopping bag. Kim pretends to be asleep in her bed. Buddy whispers.*) Kim? ... pssst ... Kim honey ... (*Edges into her room.*) You awake?
 KIMBERLY. No.
 BUDDY. Kim ... (*Sits on the edge of Kim's bed.*) I'm sorry, sweetie. (*Pause.*) Kim.
 KIMBERLY. What?
 BUDDY. I'm sorry. (*Holds up box.*) I got your cake. It's a little smooshed on the side. But I bet it still tastes good.
 KIMBERLY. Dad, go to bed.
 BUDDY. (*Holds up bag.*) Plus I brought a present.
 KIMBERLY. You're drunk. (*Buddy pulls a Trouble game from the bag.*)
 BUDDY. It's a board game. Wanna play?
 KIMBERLY. No.
 BUDDY. It's the game of Trouble. It's a Pop-O-Matic game.
 KIMBERLY. Dad —
 BUDDY. Come on, Kimmy. Get up and play Trouble. (*Starts setting up the game board on the floor.*) Your mom and I used to play this when we first got married. It's a good game.
 KIMBERLY. I'm tired.
 BUDDY. You're always tired. Now come sit here and help me set up. (*Kimberly moves to the floor and helps him set up the Trouble board. Debra appears in the doorway. She clicks on the light.*)
 DEBRA. Oh thank Christ, I thought the Feds found my mailbox.
 BUDDY. (*Beat.*) What is this?
 DEBRA. How ya doin', Buddy?
 BUDDY. What are you doing here?

DEBRA. You look good. Ya been workin' out?
 BUDDY. Look, I don't know how you found us —
 DEBRA. It *was* a challenge.
 BUDDY. You gotta leave. I'm not kidding, Debra.
 DEBRA. Now don't have a conniption.
 BUDDY. And what the hell did you do to — You know what? I don't even wanna know. Just get out of here. You're gonna get us thrown in the pokey.
 DEBRA. Pattie said I could stay. Didn't she, Kim?
 BUDDY. Well Pattie's not paying the rent, now screw.
 DEBRA. (*Suddenly notices.*) Ooo, a Pop-O-Matic game. Can I play?
 BUDDY. Shhh, you'll wake her up!
 KIMBERLY. (*Referring to Trouble game.*) I'm the blue guys. What are you, Dad?
 BUDDY. (*To Debra.*) You owe me a stereo by the way.
 DEBRA. Kim, you should be asleep. We have a big day tomorrow.
 BUDDY. What big day?
 DEBRA. Hey, what's that? Cake? About time.
 BUDDY. Okay, get out, Debra. I'm serious.
 DEBRA. I love cake. I'll get the forks. (*Rushes off.*)
 BUDDY. Why do I bother? I'm like the guy on the hill pushin' the rock.
 KIMBERLY. Was he drunk too?
 BUDDY. Hey, that's not ... You shouldn't say things like that. (*Beat.*) Besides ... Tonight was my last hurrah.
 KIMBERLY. Oh yeah?
 BUDDY. Yeah. I was thinking ... you know, about how you wished I would die. Remember you said that, about the car exploding? And I thought, "Well, that can't be a good thing for a daughter to say." So if you want me to stop, I promise to stop.
 KIMBERLY. Uh-huh.
 BUDDY. Have I ever promised before?
 KIMBERLY. No.
 BUDDY. All right then. See? How about Saturday we go to Six Flags Safari?
 KIMBERLY. Okay. (*Debra comes back in with forks, plates and a knife.*)
 DEBRA. This reminds me of the old days. My dad staggering in

loaded, waking me up to play Parcheesi over a slice of cake. I'm green. I'm always green in these games. (*Debra cuts into the cake.*)
 BUDDY. Debra, we didn't even sing. (*Pattie appears in a night-gown.*)
 DEBRA. Uh-oh.
 PATTIE. (*Looks up at the clock.*) What time is it?
 BUDDY. Oh. Hi, honey. Did we wake you?
 PATTIE. You're playing a game?
 BUDDY. I know it's late but —
 PATTIE. How come no one asked me to play? (*No response.*) I like games too, you know.
 KIMBERLY. You wanna play, Mom?
 PATTIE. (*Pause.*) May I be yellow?
 KIMBERLY. BUDDY. DEBRA.
 Yeah, sure. No one's Have a seat right One more ass to
 picked yellow yet. here next to our kick. Like when
 guest of honor. we were kids.
 PATTIE. (*Joins them.*) Oh, and you got the cake.
 DEBRA. It's lopsided.
 BUDDY. I hit a pothole.
 KIMBERLY. You want a piece?
 PATTIE. I better not. My diabetes.
 DEBRA. What diabetes?
 BUDDY. Debra showed up again.
 PATTIE. I know. She's like a bad rash.
 BUDDY. I bought you a gift. Look, an electric toothbrush. (*Pulls electric toothbrush from bag.*) I thought this might be easier to manage. Better than the regular toothbrush. Since you have the bandages.
 DEBRA. You know what we need? Music. (*Debra gets up to put on the radio. Kimberly and Buddy eat their cake.*)
 PATTIE. Thank you for the toothbrush, Buddy.
 BUDDY. I also got something for the baby. I just gotta plug it in.
 PATTIE. Isn't that sweet?
 DEBRA. How come I didn't get a gift? You got everybody something except me?
 BUDDY. You got my stereo. That's gift enough. (*Debra tunes in to a zippy swing era song.*)

DEBRA. How's that for music?
 PATTIE. No, that's too old.
 KIMBERLY. I like it. Keep it on, Aunt Debra.
 DEBRA. *(To Pattie.)* Kim and I have the same taste in music.
(Pattie sneers at Debra. Buddy has taken a small light-box out of the bag. He goes to plug it in.)
 PATTIE. *(Trying to be normal.)* How was school, Kim?
 KIMBERLY. *(Confused.)* What?
 PATTIE. How was school?
 KIMBERLY. Fine. *(Pops the Trouble bubble.)*
 DEBRA. *(Returning to game.)* You need a six to get out of Home Base. *(Pops Trouble bubble.)* Damn. Four. Your turn, Pattie.
 PATTIE. What'd you do at school?
 KIMBERLY. We had a discussion about the Holocaust. *(Pattie can't pop the Pop-O-Matic bubble with her bandaged hands, so she leans over and tries to push it with her chin.)*
 PATTIE. *(Struggling with popper.)* Oh, the Holocaust. That sounds very interesting. You know, some people say it didn't actually happen.
 DEBRA. What people say the Holocaust didn't happen?
 PATTIE. Just some people I know. Mind your own business, Debra. *(She presses the bubble.)* Six! I'm out. Move my man, Kim. I go again. *(Pattie leans over and tries to press the Pop-O-Matic bubble again.)* Isn't this nice? Playing games, chatting about the Holocaust. *(Pops the popper.)* Two! Move me two! *(Buddy turns off the overhead light and clicks on the baby's light-box. Colorful animals are projected onto the walls, spinning around the room.)*
 BUDDY. How about that, huh?
 PATTIE. Oh, isn't that the cutest thing?
 BUDDY. They're animals.
 DEBRA. Oh yeah.
 PATTIE. Carmelita's gonna love it.
 BUDDY. Who's Carmelita?
 PATTIE. Our baby. Kimberly named her.
 DEBRA. It's your roll, Buddy. You're red.
 KIMBERLY. I almost suggested Tashanda.
 PATTIE. Ooo! That can be her *middle* name! Carmelita Tashanda Levaco!

DEBRA. What the hell kinda name is that?
 BUDDY. *(Pops the popper.)* I got a three.
 KIMBERLY. *(Pops the popper.)* I got a five.
 BUDDY. *(Pulls Kimberly to her feet.)* You know how to swing dance, honey?
 KIMBERLY. I don't know.
 PATTIE. Hey, I thought we were playing this game?
 BUDDY. We're taking a dance break.
 DEBRA. *(Pops the popper.)* You know, they have all sorts of dance clubs in Miami.
 PATTIE. Miami? What do you know about Miami?
 DEBRA. I know they have dance clubs and palm trees, and it's a lot nicer than New Jersey. *(Buddy and Kimberly kind of dance to the swing music, but not very well. The animals spin around on the walls.)*
 BUDDY. *(Dancing with Kim.)* Remember we would dance like this, Pattie?
 PATTIE. No I do not.
 BUDDY. At Kukla's Underage Club? When I was courtin' ya?
 KIMBERLY. I didn't know you were courted, Mom.
 PATTIE. *(Pops popper.)* I got another six. Move my guy out. *(Debra moves Pattie's piece. Pattie pops the popper again. Buddy and Kimberly dance.)* Now four. Move the other guy. *(Debra does.)*
 KIMBERLY. Were you ever courted, Aunt Debra?
 DEBRA. Yeah, in a different way I was.
 PATTIE. *(Watches Buddy.)* He's such a ham. Remember he played *The Music Man* in high school?
 DEBRA. He was good.
 PATTIE. Yeah. I always thought he was gonna be somebody.
 BUDDY. Did I mention a Catholic school kid popped by my booth today? She sold me five raffle tickets. Grand prize is a family trip to the Alamo.
 PATTIE. The Alamo? She didn't have any tickets to Hawaii?
 DEBRA. I'm popping for you, Bud. *(She does.)* You got a two. Now you Kim. *(She pops.)* You got a four.
 BUDDY. You know, Davy Crockett fought at the Alamo.
 KIMBERLY. Remember when Dad was Davy Crockett for Halloween?
 PATTIE. Yeah, he went trick-or-treating three sheets to the wind

and took a header off the Dooleys' porch.

BUDDY. Never did find that coonskin cap.

DEBRA. I missed this. Living under a roof like this. When I was in the woods, I could hear the coyotes sniffing at the flap of my tent. That was some scary shit.

PATTIE. Buddy, go get my tape recorder. I want the baby to know how much fun her family had.

DEBRA. Leave them alone. They're dancing. *(Pops the popper.)* I got a six! *(Pops again.)* Another six! *(Pops again.)* And a one! And you're out, Pattie. *(Lands on Pattie's piece, sends it home.)*

PATTIE. You bitch.

DEBRA. Am I in *Trouble*?

PATTIE. Damn straight you're in trouble, you whore.

DEBRA. Now-now. *(Kimberly's face suddenly drops. She's breathing hard. She stops dancing.)*

BUDDY. Are you okay honey?

PATTIE. Of course she is. We're having a good time here. *(Kim is wincing in pain.)*

BUDDY. Kim?

KIMBERLY. Oww. Dad — *(Kim grabs her chest in pain.)*

BUDDY. What's the matter?

PATTIE. You see, you had to get her worked up.

DEBRA. Is it your chest, honey? *(Kimberly nods and slips to the floor.)*

BUDDY. Hold on, sweetie.

PATTIE. What's the matter with her?

BUDDY. Debra, call an ambulance.

KIMBERLY. Mom ... *(The colorful animals spin around the room. The music blares. Blackout.)*

ACT TWO

Scene 1

Lights up on Buddy with the tape recorder. He's somewhere outside. It's snowing.

BUDDY. And the thing is, I don't think I'm very good with kids. I mean I *like* kids, I just never pictured myself as a father. I'm more of a bachelor uncle type, you know? Which isn't to say I regret anything. I love Kim, and I'm happy you're coming but ... when you're young you imagine doin' a bunch of different things. Just ... crazy, unrealistic stuff but ... And then when Pattie got pregnant with Kim, it was like, "Oh, okay, I guess I do *this* then." Which was fine. Made things easier in some ways, you know, to not have any ... choices I guess. I mean, most guys in the world are just guys who go to work, right? Guys with kids. So there's no shame in that. Just being a regular person. *(Beat.)* Although I would still like to travel someday. That's something I'd like to do. I'll see these countries on TV and think, "Wow, that's a weird place. I'd like to see that in person maybe." Like Pamplona. That's in Spain, and the bulls run through the streets chasing everybody, and the guys scramble up the sides of buildings and jump in doorways and some people get gored. It looks fun. I'd like that. But you need money to see things, so ... *(Pause.)* Your mom and I spent a few days on the Jersey Shore once. Right after we got married. Well not *right* after, but when we saved enough. That was nice. And you know what's funny? When we decided to leave Seacucus, I was like, "Alright, we're finally going somewhere." But then we came to Bogota. Which isn't really the someplace I had in mind but ... What are ya gonna do? *(Beat.)* Those Alamo raffle tickets didn't work out either. It was in the paper. Some retired gardener

won. Like *he* needed a vacation. *(Beat.)* See the world, Carmelita. That's my advice to you. *(Beat.)* Pattie's gonna be mad I'm using her tape recorder but ... I got nothin' else to do. Haven't had a drink in eight days. I promised Kim. See that? I'm a good guy. I don't know what Pattie's been saying on these things, but I'm tellin' you straight. I'm a good guy. *(Crossfade to ...)*

Scene 2

Lights up in Kimberly's bedroom. Kim is in her bed. Her hair has turned a shock of white. She's recovering. Pattie, Debra and Jeff are all here playing Dungeons & Dragons with Kim. Jeff, the Dungeon Master, has a module screen propped up in front of him. Behind the screen, he rolls a multitude of dice, reads from a module and refers to maps. The others all have character sheets that they refer to during the game, which is heated and energetic. There are a couple D & D books lying around. Pattie's hands are still bandaged. Also, one of her legs is now in a cast.

JEFF. The passageway divides east or west.
 KIMBERLY. West.
 JEFF. You head west for twenty feet and you reach a door.
 DEBRA. Gandrella, the Half-Elvin Thief, listens at the door.
 JEFF. *(Rolls dice.)* You hear nothing.
 DEBRA. I check for traps.
 JEFF. *(Rolls dice.)* Gandrella finds no traps.
 PATTIE. Weslocke draws her sword.
 DEBRA. Gandrella draws her dagger.
 KIMBERLY. Polenta draws her staff.
 PATTIE. I open the door.
 JEFF. The door opens with a creak. Beyond it is a room cluttered with mangled pieces of armor. On a pedestal in the center of the room appears to be a gold statuette in the shape of a Manticore.
 PATTIE. What's a Manticore?

KIMBERLY. I'll look it up in the *Monster Manual*. *(Looks through one of the books.)*

PATTIE. Let's go to another room.

DEBRA. No, it's a gold statue. It's treasure.

PATTIE. That's what you said at the cauldron, then those Troglodytes jumped out and pummeled us with clubs.

KIMBERLY. *(Holds out Monster Manual.)* Look. That's a Manticore.

PATTIE. I'm leaving.

KIMBERLY. I'm going inside.

PATTIE. Kim, what are you doing?!

KIMBERLY. Be brave, Mom.

DEBRA. I'll go with Kim.

PATTIE. Look at the book! It has claws and wings and a lion's body!

DEBRA. You have to come with us, Pattie. Weslocke is the Fighter!

KIMBERLY. We need your eighteen Strength.

PATTIE. Aww, fine.

JEFF. You enter the room. The door slams shut behind you.

PATTIE. I *knew* it!

JEFF. Four Manticores swoop down from the ceiling and begin attacking you. *(The women start screaming heatedly.)*

PATTIE.	DEBRA.	KIMBERLY.
I hack the	I attack with my	I whack one really
motherfuckers with	dagger! I aim for the	hard with my
my sword! I behead	throat. Remember I	wooden staff and
as many as I can!	have plus three on	then jump out
I knew there wasn't	attacks because	of the way and
free treasure!	I have an eighteen	start chanting
	dexterity!	a spell!

JEFF. Hold on! They get the initiative because they surprised *you*.

DEBRA. PATTIE.

Don't get excited, Kim. You're supposed to be recovering. Didn't I tell you we'd get attacked?!

JEFF. *(Rolling dice.)* Two of the Manticores go for Gandrella and two for Weslocke.

DEBRA. What about Polenta?

JEFF. They ignore Kim for now.

PATTIE. You're playing favorites!

JEFF. It's all in the dice, ladies. Live with it.

PATTIE. How much hit point damage?

JEFF. (*Rolling dice.*) Let's see ... claws, teeth, spikes ... That's twenty-nine for Gandrella. And ... forty-three for Weslocke.

PATTIE. Aw, gimme a fucking break!

JEFF. Mrs. Levaco, please.

PATTIE. I'm negative eleven!

DEBRA. I'm negative nine.

JEFF. You're both dead.

PATTIE. This game sucks!

DEBRA. Can Polenta resurrect us with magic?

JEFF. Kim, you're surrounded by Manticores. What are you gonna do?

KIMBERLY. (*Looking at her list of spells.*) I cast a ... Teleport spell, so we're transported back to that magic fountain of healing.

JEFF. (*Rolls dice, pause.*) Before the incantation is out of your mouth, the Manticores descend upon you. One tears off your arm, another digs its claws into your back. Iron spikes shoot into you from all sides. Another rips your throat out. Essentially you're torn to shreds.

DEBRA. (*Beat.*) Is she dead?

JEFF. Yeah.

PATTIE. Is this supposed to be a kids' game? This is *sick*.

KIMBERLY. They tore out my throat? Cool.

DEBRA. That's it? We've been playing this stupid game for three and a half days and just like that we're all dead?!

JEFF. It was very careless of you to jump into the room like that.

DEBRA. Well, do over.

JEFF. I'm afraid I can't do that.

DEBRA. This is bullshit!

JEFF. A valiant attempt on your noble journey. But the gods were not with our adventurers today.

DEBRA. This kid's a geek.

KIMBERLY. We thank you Dungeon Master for your time and patience.

JEFF. Not a problem, Wise and Decomposing Sage.

KIMBERLY. That was fun.

PATTIE. (*Suddenly.*) Oh my gosh, it's time for my pills. Kim, it's

time for your pills too. Isn't this fun? We all take pills.

DEBRA. I don't take no pills.

JEFF. I'm on Ritalin.

PATTIE. Ooo, Ritalin. Can I try one of those?

JEFF. I'm not really allowed to hand them out.

PATTIE. Fuck ya then. Greedy prick.

KIMBERLY. Mom ...

PATTIE. (*Grabs crutches and pulls herself up.*) I-know-I-know, nickels in the jar.

JEFF. I never asked. What happened to your leg, Mrs. Levaco?

PATTIE. When Kim was staying at the hospital with her heart attack, I snuck out back for a quick smoke and I fell off the loading dock.

JEFF. Oh. You probably shouldn't have been smoking anyway.

PATTIE. Hey, I smoked when I was pregnant with Kim and nothin' happened to *her*! (*Pattie exits.*)

JEFF. I'd like to put your mom in a room with my dad and conduct experiments.

DEBRA. How you feeling, Kim?

KIMBERLY. Good.

DEBRA. Doing your exercises? Eating right?

KIMBERLY. Uh-huh.

JEFF. She goes back to school tomorrow.

DEBRA. Is that right?

KIMBERLY. Dad says I can.

DEBRA. That's great. I'm real proud of you. Fightin' back, stayin' strong. Get back up on that horse, right?

KIMBERLY. I guess.

DEBRA. That's terrific. So ... maybe we can go back to our plan then?

KIMBERLY. Yeah, I'd like that. How 'bout we do it tomorrow? Right after school.

DEBRA. Hey, wow, alright. That's what I like. Raring to go.

JEFF. I think it's too soon though. If Kim —

DEBRA. She said she was okay.

JEFF. I know, but she's supposed to rest. What's a couple days?

KIMBERLY. In Kimberly Time, it's about a week and a half. It's like dog years.

DEBRA. (*Amused.*) Dog years, that's good.
 KIMBERLY. You said we get half the money, right?
 DEBRA. Right. Just like we said.
 KIMBERLY. Because I was thinking maybe that wasn't so fair.
 DEBRA. (*Beat.*) What do you mean?
 KIMBERLY. Me and Jeff having to split half, and you getting the whole other half to yourself. That's a little wonky.
 DEBRA. Wonky? It's *my* idea.
 KIMBERLY. But *we're* doing all the work.
 DEBRA. Work?! I dragged a mailbox eight blocks in the dead of night!
 KIMBERLY. I think it should be an even split. Three ways.
 DEBRA. What are you talkin' about? This ain't a friggin' hoagie we're cuttin' up.
 KIMBERLY. But you can't do it without us. I just think an even split would be more fair.
 DEBRA. Did you talk her into this?
 JEFF. No, I didn't say anything.
 KIMBERLY. You wanna do it or not?
 DEBRA. What's going on, Kim? You don't need money.
 KIMBERLY. Yes I do.
 DEBRA. For what?
 KIMBERLY. For family stuff.
 DEBRA. What family stuff?
 KIMBERLY. None of your business. I didn't ask you what you were gonna do with *your* money.
 DEBRA. I told you, I'm going to Miami.
 KIMBERLY. Good for you. One third of the money is plenty to get there. So we'll go to the bank after school then?
 DEBRA. I don't frickin' believe this. You're rolling me.
 KIMBERLY. What's fair is fair, Aunt Debra. Don't you wanna be fair?
 DEBRA. Screw you, Kim. You play this injured little twerp and — You're *hustling* me.
 KIMBERLY. Fine then, forget it. It's off.
 DEBRA. Kim — !
 KIMBERLY. No, Jeff's right, I'm not one hundred percent. (*Feigns faintness, lies down.*)

DEBRA. Jesus! Fine! Three-way split! Goddamnit.
 KIMBERLY. (*Sits back up.*) So we'll meet at the library tomorrow, get ready and head over to the bank. (*To Jeff.*) You okay with that?
 JEFF. I guess.
 KIMBERLY. Alright then.
 DEBRA. A shake-down. My own flesh and blood. That's rotten. (*Pattie enters with pill bottles.*)
 PATTIE. Can someone help me open these? I just cracked a tooth. (*Blackout.*)

Scene 3

Lights up in the kitchen. The jar on the table is now overflowing with nickels. Buddy, in his chef's hat, sets up cereal bowls and bran flakes for breakfast. Kimberly comes in, markedly slower.

BUDDY. The kid is up and about. Look at her go. So excited to get back to school. The anxious scholar. Racing to the breakfast table.
 KIMBERLY. Don't be a dick, Dad.
 BUDDY. We've got a healthy breakfast. Startin' the day off right.
 KIMBERLY. Where's the Cap'n Crunch?
 BUDDY. Doctor Cavanaugh said fiber-fiber-fiber.
 KIMBERLY. But I'm better now. Can't we switch back?
 BUDDY. Here's some milk. You also need calcium he said. We don't want you breaking a hip.
 KIMBERLY. I don't want any milk.
 BUDDY. If *I* can drink it, *you* can drink it. (*He holds his glass of milk up. Kimberly, sitting, holds hers up. They both drink the milk.*)
 How you feeling?
 KIMBERLY. How *you* feeling?
 BUDDY. I feel great.
 KIMBERLY. Me too. You look well-rested.
 BUDDY. Thank you. It's the calcium.

KIMBERLY. Uh-huh. (*Notices a book on the table.*) What is this?

BUDDY. Oh, I uh —

KIMBERLY. A Bible?

BUDDY. I know we've never been religious people, but I thought you might wanna take a look at —

KIMBERLY. Is this because we played D&D?

BUDDY. I'm trying to give you your space, Kim. If you wanna play that game, that's your choice, but I wanna present an alternative to —

KIMBERLY. Geez Dad, let it go.

BUDDY. Your mother said you were all murdered by winged demons.

KIMBERLY. They weren't demons. They were Manticores.

BUDDY. I was flipping through Leviticus this morning. Some of it's pretty racy. You might like it. (*Kimberly eats her cereal.*) You know, we used to go to church when you were a baby. Your mom played the organ. (*Pattie enters in a nightgown. She's still on her crutches.*)

PATTIE. Morning.

BUDDY. Hey Pattie, remember you used to play the organ? If those bandages come off soon, maybe you can get back to that.

PATTIE. Forget the organ, I'll be happy when I can wipe my own ass.

BUDDY. (*Beat.*) Yeah me too. (*Pattie has crossed to the bathroom.*)

KIMBERLY. (*Looks up at the clock, then asks ...*) Was Aunt Debra up yet?

BUDDY. No. She sleeps to noon every day. Why would she be up?

KIMBERLY. I don't know. I thought she said something about going for a jog.

BUDDY. A jog? Debra?

KIMBERLY. I don't know. Maybe I misheard her.

BUDDY. (*Pause.*) Kim, I don't want you spending too much time with her.

KIMBERLY. Aunt Debra?

BUDDY. She's got a lot of problems.

KIMBERLY. Compared to who?

BUDDY. Just do me a favor and don't get involved in any of her shenanigans.

KIMBERLY. *Shenanigans?* Nice word, Dad.

BUDDY. (*Calls to Pattie.*) Your daughter's making fun of me.

PATTIE. (*Off.*) Don't do that, Kim. Your father's sensitive.

BUDDY. How's your friend, by the way?

KIMBERLY. My friend?

BUDDY. Yeah, the kid. From Zippy Burger.

KIMBERLY. Jeff?

BUDDY. Yeah. How's Jeff?

KIMBERLY. He's fine.

BUDDY. Good. (*Pause.*) So you like that boy?

KIMBERLY. Dad —

BUDDY. I know, I handled it all wrong in the car, but I'm your father so — And I'm sure he's a nice kid but ... you like him?

KIMBERLY. Yeah, Dad. What are you —

BUDDY. I just don't know him at all, so I wanna ask questions, make sure he has only good intentions.

KIMBERLY. What are you worried about? I went through menopause four years ago.

BUDDY. Aw geez, Kim —

KIMBERLY. He's not gonna get me pregnant.

BUDDY. Come on, that's not what I —

PATTIE. (*Off.*) Buddy, I'm finished! Come wipe me!

BUDDY. I'll be right back. (*Buddy runs into the bathroom. Kimberly eats her cereal. Aunt Debra enters in a nightgown, exhausted. She carries a duffle bag.*)

DEBRA. Where's the coffee?

KIMBERLY. It's about time. You said you'd be up.

DEBRA. I *am* up.

KIMBERLY. You're late. Did you get my stuff?

DEBRA. It's right here. (*Hands her duffle bag.*)

KIMBERLY. Where'd you get it?

DEBRA. (*Pours herself some coffee.*) Salvation Army. They've got a nice selection.

KIMBERLY. (*Opens bag and looks inside.*) God, it's ugly.

DEBRA. It's supposed to be ugly, now put it away. Save it for later.

KIMBERLY. (*Puts dress back, zips bag.*) Jeff wanted to know if he needed to wear anything special.

DEBRA. What's he mean special? He's playing himself. There's

nothing to — If that kid messes this up — (*Sound of toilet flushing.*) Alright, keep quiet about it. (*Buddy reenters.*)

BUDDY. That was a lovely way to start the day. (*Sees Debra, looks up at clock then back at her.*) Got some plans for the day?

DEBRA. What, I can't get up early?

BUDDY. What's in the duffle bag?

KIMBERLY. That's mine. School project.

BUDDY. Huh. Awful lot of school projects. (*Sound of the electric toothbrush whirring. Buddy prepares a bowl of cereal for Pattie. To Debra:*) You *could* look for a job today. Earn some money to pay me back for that stereo.

DEBRA. Again with that stereo. It's too early, Buddy. And the fact is, you owed it to me. So shut up about it.

BUDDY. What *owed* you?

DEBRA. You agreed to give it to me.

BUDDY. Agreed? I didn't agree to — (*Stops himself.*) You know what? Forget it.

DEBRA. No, you've been forgetting it all week. You throw out these little digs and then retreat back to your corner and it's starting to tick me off.

BUDDY. It's a good day, Debra, don't go pissing on it.

DEBRA. Who brought up the stereo? Was it *me*? Did I bring up the stereo, Kim?

BUDDY. (*Calls off.*) What kind of cereal you want, Pattie?

PATTIE. (*Off.*) Whatever, so long as you put the berries on!

DEBRA. You've obviously got something on your mind. You got something on your mind?

BUDDY. No.

DEBRA. Whaddaya wanna know, Buddy?

BUDDY. Nothin'. I know more than enough. I don't wanna know anymore. You'll implicate me.

DEBRA. Implicate you? You're implicated already. I wasn't the one who —

BUDDY. I don't wanna talk about this, Debra.

DEBRA. Then why do you keep bringing up that piece of junk stereo?

BUDDY. It wasn't a piece of junk! It was vintage!

DEBRA. Did you or did you not agree to give it to me?

BUDDY. Yeah, I did, if you did what you said you would do, which you didn't.

DEBRA. I tried to.

BUDDY. But you *didn't*. Trying isn't *doing*.

DEBRA. But I went to *do* it. It's not my fault it *didn't happen*.

BUDDY. (*Notices Kim's listening.*) Alright, drop it.

KIMBERLY. Don't drop it on my account. (*Pattie reenters.*)

PATTIE. I love that electric toothbrush.

DEBRA. We had an agreement.

BUDDY. The agreement — Block your ears, Kim — The agreement was I'd give you the stereo if you went next door and slapped the guy around.

KIMBERLY. What guy?

PATTIE. Mr. Hicks.

BUDDY. Which you did not do.

KIMBERLY. You hired Aunt Debra to beat up Mr. Hicks?

PATTIE. My gums feel so clean.

KIMBERLY. Why would you do that?

BUDDY. Because of his goddamn cabbages. They kept spreading into our yard, and I told him to cut them back. How many times did I tell him, Pattie?

PATTIE. Many times.

BUDDY. And he would just wave his hand, like *I* was the crazy one.

KIMBERLY. So why didn't you beat him up yourself?

BUDDY. He was my neighbor. I can't beat up my own neighbor.

KIMBERLY. You people are freaks.

PATTIE. I had nothing to do with this episode.

DEBRA. You did so. Come on, Pattie, you know damn well what —

BUDDY. Mrs. Denton said she saw a masked intruder crawl in his window. Did you wear a mask?

DEBRA. Yes. A pig mask.

BUDDY. A pig mask? What the hell's the matter with you?

DEBRA. I didn't wanna be identified. You told me to scare him.

BUDDY. I didn't tell you to *kill* him.

DEBRA. I didn't know he had a weak heart. I didn't even do anything. He just took one look at me and dropped dead.

BUDDY. You were wearing a pig mask! If a pig lady crawled in

my window, I'd drop dead too!

KIMBERLY. That's why we left Secaucus? Because you killed Mr. Hicks?

DEBRA. Nobody killed anybody.

BUDDY. Kim, go wait in the car.

DEBRA. The guy just died.

KIMBERLY. With a little help.

PATTIE. He was very old, honey.

DEBRA. I didn't even touch him. It wouldn't hold up in court, I'll tell ya that much.

BUDDY. He shoulda cut those cabbages back like I told him.

DEBRA. It wasn't just cabbages, Buddy —

KIMBERLY. This is so wrong. Don't you even feel bad? *(They all consider this for a couple beats. Then a little too late they say:)*

BUDDY. DEBRA. PATTIE.

Of course I feel bad. I feel just terrible. An awful way to go.

KIMBERLY. I'll be in the car.

BUDDY. Now don't go telling your friends about this, Kim. It's family business. Keep it that way. *(Kim grabs the keys from the hook and exits with the duffle bag.)* Why'd you say anything in front of her?

DEBRA. You brought it up.

BUDDY. Jesus, Debra —

DEBRA. Hey, none of it woulda happened if Pattie hadn't done what she did, so don't go blaming me, Buddy!

PATTIE. Debra, I'm pregnant and easily upset, so don't start in on me!

BUDDY. Alright, now calm down —

DEBRA. If I hear another fuckin' word about that stereo —!

BUDDY. Alright, forget it! You got the stereo, that's it! I'm sorry I ever brought the damn thing up!

DEBRA. I can't wait to get away from you goddamn animals! *(Storms off and slams a door.)*

BUDDY. *(Rummaging in his pocket for nickels.)* Who let her in the house? I never invited her back in. *(Pulls out handful of nickels.)* I lost count of the — I don't even know how much we owe here. *(Buddy adds a few nickels to the pile, then picks up Pattie's cereal bowl and feeds her with a spoon.)*

PATTIE. They don't care about me. Neither of them. I'm preg-

nant, and my leg's broken, I have carpal tunnel and cancer.

BUDDY. You don't have cancer.

PATTIE. Yes I do, plus diabetes and a chipped tooth.

BUDDY. Come on, relax. *(Holds out spoon.)* Take a bite.

PATTIE. *(Mouthful.)* And I do feel bad about Mr. Hicks. He was very sweet.

BUDDY. I know.

PATTIE. I'm gonna miss him.

BUDDY. Alright.

PATTIE. More berries. *(He scoops more berries onto her cereal.)*

BUDDY. She was so upset.

PATTIE. She was born upset. *(They lock eyes.)* What?

BUDDY. It's our fault, isn't it?

PATTIE. Mr. Hicks?

BUDDY. Kimberly. You put our genes together and it comes out poison.

PATTIE. Kim isn't poison.

BUDDY. That's not what I meant.

PATTIE. I know what ya meant, Buddy, and I don't wanna hear it. She's sixteen, we're not gonna start blaming people now. Things get passed on all the time. I got my mother's ass. You think I blame my mother for my ass?

BUDDY. It's not the same, Pattie.

PATTIE. Can you stop? Please? *(She takes another bite of cereal, chews and swallows.)* You're a lot more bearable when you're on the sauce, ya know it? *(Lights crossfade to ...)*

Scene 4

The library. Debra and Jeff are waiting for Kim. Jeff, with a pad and pencil, has been working on another anagram.

JEFF. Debra Watts, right? And Watts is W-A-T-T-S?

DEBRA. Uh-huh.

JEFF. (*Small talk while working on anagram.*) You ever been in rehab?

DEBRA. None of your business.

JEFF. 'Cause my brother's in rehab, and my dad visits him like every day. But me, the old guy barely speaks to. Can you explain that to me?

DEBRA. No I can't.

JEFF. I think he just likes screw-ups, that's what I think. Hey, maybe if we get caught and thrown in jail, he'll come visit me, and then he'll *have* to talk to me.

DEBRA. Listen, you little whine-bag, if you get caught nobody's coming to visit you because you'll be in the morgue with my shoe up your ass.

JEFF. (*Puts down pencil.*) Finished. For Debra Watts, I've come up with Basted Wart, Wasted Brat and Wet Bastard.

DEBRA. Thanks. Those are cute. Where's Kim?

JEFF. In the bathroom.

DEBRA. Taking her time, ain't she? What is she *doing* anyway?

JEFF. Just getting changed.

DEBRA. I mean later. With the money. Why'd she suddenly want more money?

JEFF. She just thought you should be fair.

DEBRA. Come on, is she buying something?

JEFF. I don't know.

DEBRA. I hope you lie better than that at the bank.

JEFF. Really, she didn't —

DEBRA. Because they are gonna see right through you. Those tellers are tricky. Very perceptive. (*Looks up at the clock.*) What is taking her so long?

JEFF. Can I ask you something?

DEBRA. Do you have to?

JEFF. How much longer is she gonna live?

DEBRA. (*Pause.*) Why you asking me? How am I supposed to know something like —

JEFF. Because I wrote a paper, and everything said the life expectancy is sixteen. And Kim's *already* sixteen so —

DEBRA. Look, I don't know. You asked me a question and I don't know the answer, so drop it.

JEFF. (*Pause.*) You think Carmelita will be like her?

DEBRA. No chance.

JEFF. Why no chance? Kim said the Levacos always have a one in four chance of —

DEBRA. It's a non-issue, kid. Don't sweat it. The baby'll be fine. (*Kim enters dressed in old lady clothes. She has the makeup of an old lady, and an old lady hat and purse. The transformation is stunning. No one can speak for a couple beats.*) Jesus.

KIMBERLY. It's okay?

DEBRA. You look like Rose Kennedy.

KIMBERLY. It's okay though?

DEBRA. It's perfect. God. I had no idea it'd be so ... you look so *old*.

KIMBERLY. So it'll work then?

DEBRA. Yeah. If the kid can keep a straight face, we're golden.

KIMBERLY. (*To Jeff.*) I look okay? (*Jeff looks at her, ill-at-ease.*)

DEBRA. It's not a beauty contest.

KIMBERLY. It's just for a little while.

JEFF. I know. Yeah, it looks good.

DEBRA. Alright, you gotta get over there before they close. You wanna run through it once?

KIMBERLY. I think we got it.

DEBRA. And you got the checks?

JEFF. Right here.

DEBRA. And the duffle bag? Keep the money in the duffle bag.

KIMBERLY. Got it.

DEBRA. Okay then. Now I don't wanna be spotted on the camera, so I'm gonna wait here. You come right back afterwards. I'll be waiting.

KIMBERLY. Just one final thing though.

DEBRA. What?

KIMBERLY. Why is Carmelita a non-issue?

DEBRA. (*Pause.*) Carmelita?

KIMBERLY. You just told Jeff there was no chance of her being like me.

DEBRA. You heard that?

KIMBERLY. How is it a non-issue?

DEBRA. Kim, the bank closes at four, so —

KIMBERLY. It's because of Mr. Hicks, right?

DEBRA. Hey, I'm not supposed to —

KIMBERLY. That's why my father wanted you to slap him around, right? It wasn't just the cabbages.

DEBRA. You gotta understand, your mother's baby-crazy. It's all she ever wanted. Even as a kid. You should've seen her with the dolls.

KIMBERLY. I knew it didn't make sense.

DEBRA. She was miserable in Secaucus. You should be glad she has something that makes her happy. I said "Pattie, if you're so miserable, do something about it."

KIMBERLY. You told her to do it?

DEBRA. I didn't tell her to screw Hicks! I just said — She had options. She could've adopted. Or kidnapped. Or ... I know a guy who sells 'em. You all don't have that kinda money, but I bet he'd work some sort of barter system. He's a friend of mine.

KIMBERLY. *(To Jeff.)* You ready?

JEFF. Yeah.

DEBRA. When Cinnamon died, I bought you a gerbil, right? Same difference, Kim, so don't start pulling an attitude.

KIMBERLY. Same difference?

DEBRA. Well maybe not technically, but it's the same idea.

KIMBERLY. Okay, Aunt Debra. You're gonna wait here, right?

DEBRA. Right.

KIMBERLY. *(To Jeff.)* Let's go.

DEBRA. Don't say I said anything. Your dad's real sensitive about it.

KIMBERLY. We'll be back. *(Kim and Jeff head for the exit. It takes Kim awhile to get there.)*

DEBRA. *(Trying to make light.)* Hey, you better step livelier than that. I'd like to be in Miami sometime this century. *(Beat.)* The tortoise doesn't always win the race, you know. *(Kim keeps walking.)* Kidding. *(Beat.)* You know I'm kidding, right? Beautiful? *(No response.)* I'll be waiting. *(Kimberly and Jeff exit. Lights fade on Debra.)*

Scene 5

Lights up in the kitchen. There are now two overflowing jars of nickels on the table. Buddy and Pattie are walking around. Pattie, between contractions, isn't really in pain at the moment.

BUDDY. Just keep moving. There you go.

PATTIE. How long's it been?

BUDDY. Fifteen minutes.

PATTIE. I'm scared, Buddy. I think we should go.

BUDDY. They said not until they're five to seven minutes apart. This could go on. You wanna wait around a hospital for six hours?

PATTIE. No. Too many germs.

BUDDY. Alright then. It's a quick drive. We're fine.

PATTIE. Well then distract me. You're supposed to distract me! Did you pick up the paint swatches?

BUDDY. Yeah, right here. *(Hands her a paint swatch.)*

PATTIE. What's this?

BUDDY. It's slate. Everything matches slate.

PATTIE. That's all they had?

BUDDY. That's all they had on sale.

PATTIE. Who cares about sales?! It's a *baby's* room! Mrs. Gigante says Bonnie's room is pink! Why didn't you bring me any pink swatches?

BUDDY. The pink wasn't on sale.

PATTIE. If you had half a brain you'd be dangerous. *(Kimberly enters with the dufflebag and crosses to her room.)* Oh hi, honey. I'm in labor.

BUDDY. Where were you?

KIMBERLY. *(Crossing to bedroom.)* At the bank.

BUDDY. What were you doing at the bank?

KIMBERLY. *(Exits into her bedroom.)* Nothing.

PATTIE. *(Beat.)* What is she wearing?

BUDDY. I don't know.

PATTIE. (*Calls off.*) Was there a costume party at school, honey? (*To Buddy.*) She likes when we ask her about school.

BUDDY. Why are you wearing those clothes?

KIMBERLY. (*Off.*) I'm trying a new style.

PATTIE. (*To Buddy.*) That's how teens are. Remember senior year? You walked around in that pirate hat?

BUDDY. Two days. That's all I wore it. Don't start in on me.

PATTIE. (*Getting a contraction.*) Uh-oh. Uh-oh! Here it comes again.

BUDDY. (*Timing her.*) Okay ...

PATTIE. Ow-ow-ow-Ow-OW-OW!

BUDDY. Breathe through it.

PATTIE. Slate! I can't believe you bring home *slate*!

BUDDY. Focus, Pattie.

PATTIE. They paint *prisons* slate!

BUDDY. Keep breathing.

PATTIE. I ask you to do *one* thing! Get a couple swatches and —

OW, Mother of God!

BUDDY. (*Looking at watch.*) It should be coming down now.

PATTIE. (*The pain fades.*) Okay ... okay ... okay ...

BUDDY. There you go. Aaaand ... walk it off.

PATTIE. (*The contraction has passed.*) Walk it off? I didn't twist an ankle! It's a fucking contraction! Walk it off he says, like I'm in little league. You think I'm in little league, ya asshole?!

BUDDY. (*Sighs, takes her in.*) No, I don't think you're in little league. (*He tosses a couple more nickels onto the pile, then moves to the fridge.*)

PATTIE. Where are you going?

BUDDY. I'm getting a beer.

PATTIE. Oo, get me one too.

BUDDY. Pattie ...

PATTIE. It'll soothe me! (*Makes her way to a seat.*) Hey Kimmy, did you hear my contraction?

KIMBERLY. (*Off.*) Yeah, it set off the Gigantes' car alarm.

PATTIE. What can I say? My voice carries. (*Beat.*) Did ya notice the snow started melting today? I take that as a good omen. Whaddaya think?

BUDDY. (*Hands her beer.*) Sure. Whatever.

PATTIE. (*Gently.*) I think the room should be pink, Buddy. It's

important to me. I want it to be perfect.

BUDDY. (*Pause.*) I know you do. (*Beat. Pattie swigs her beer.*)

PATTIE. (*Calls off.*) Hey Kim, your dad and I were talking, and when your sister comes you're gonna have to sleep on the couch for a little while. You don't mind, do you? (*Kimberly reenters in her regular clothes.*) Oh, nice of you to make an appearance.

KIMBERLY. Why do I have to sleep on the couch?

PATTIE. Because the baby needs her own room.

KIMBERLY. Why?

PATTIE. Because she does. It's important. For the development. It helps them be independent.

BUDDY. I can sleep on the couch, if you'd rather sleep with mom.

KIMBERLY. Why can't the baby sleep with Mom?

PATTIE. Because babies cry. And I need my sleep. (*Kimberly notices Buddy's beer.*)

BUDDY. (*Off her look.*) It's one beer, Kimmy. I'm under a lot of pressure at the moment. (*Kim goes back into her room.*) I have been very good! It's not easy, you know! (*Under his breath.*) Goddamnit.

PATTIE. They say a new sibling can be hard on the firstborn.

BUDDY. Maybe she can share the room.

PATTIE. She doesn't need to. That's a very comfortable couch. (*Calls off.*) You were conceived on that couch!

BUDDY. Don't tell her that. For God's sake, Pattie —

KIMBERLY. (*Off.*) Was Carmelita?

PATTIE. Was Carmelita what?

KIMBERLY. (*Off.*) Conceived on that couch?

PATTIE. That is none of your business. (*To Buddy.*) You hear this sass? She gets that from you.

KIMBERLY. (*Enters with a suitcase and the duffle bag.*) Because she was conceived in Mr. Hicks' basement?

BUDDY. Kim — ! (*SPLASH.*)

PATTIE. Goddamnit. My water broke.

BUDDY. (*To Kim.*) What'd Aunt Debra say to you?!

KIMBERLY. You tell me.

PATTIE. I'm soaked! You see what she did?!

KIMBERLY. Is it true?

PATTIE. Get me some towels, Buddy!

KIMBERLY. Is it?

BUDDY. Kim, we're a little busy at the moment. (*Searches for towels.*)

KIMBERLY. Aunt Debra said the baby's a non-issue.

PATTIE. Aunt Debra's a psychopath.

BUDDY. Non-issue? What's that mean?

KIMBERLY. It means she won't be like me.

PATTIE. I don't even know what you're talking about.

BUDDY. Didn't I tell you to stay away from Debra?! (*To Pattie.*) That is *your* sister! *You* let her back in here!

KIMBERLY. Is that why Mr. Hicks kept visiting? You didn't like Dad's odds?

BUDDY. (*To Pattie.*) You see?! Didn't I tell you this was gonna happen?

PATTIE. Mr. Hicks brought me cabbages. That's all! Now go to your room!

KIMBERLY. Oh is it my room again? I thought I'd been evicted.

BUDDY. This is a very complicated issue that doesn't involve you. (*Buddy runs over to Pattie with a roll of paper towels.*)

PATTIE. Not *paper* towels! *Real* towels! This isn't Kool-Aid, you moron! (*Buddy searches for real towels.*)

KIMBERLY. Shouldn't Mr. Hicks be doing that?

PATTIE. Now you know darn well Mr. Hicks is dead.

BUDDY. Kim, you are walking on thin ice here.

PATTIE. And even if he *wasn't* dead, he'd hardly have the stamina to run around looking for towels. He was very frail.

BUDDY. Hicks was just a neighbor, now drop it. He meant nothing to us.

KIMBERLY. Then why did you hire Aunt Debra to kill him?

BUDDY. I didn't hire her to *kill* him! Come on — (*Brings towels to Pattie.*) The agreement was beat him up. I was very upset at the time. But I never wanted the guy killed.

KIMBERLY. And yet he died.

BUDDY. Okay, you wanna talk about this, we'll talk about it. Later. But right now your mother's having a baby. And that's a little more important than your hissy fit!

KIMBERLY. Of course it is.

BUDDY. Your timing is *way* off.

KIMBERLY. That's the understatement of the century.

PATTIE. Don't get smart with your father.

KIMBERLY. Oh I'm sorry to get smart. And I'm sorry my timing is off. And I'm sorry I'm not Bonnie Gigante.

PATTIE. What does *she* have to do with anything?

KIMBERLY. But for the record, Bonnie Gigante sells pot and doles out blowjobs like they were handshakes!

PATTIE. That is filthy talk! I don't know where you get that sewer-mouth.

BUDDY. Kim, I don't know what this is about, but you're being naïve and spiteful, and you need to toughen up.

KIMBERLY. Toughen up?

PATTIE. None of this is gonna matter anyway. You're gonna have a beautiful baby sister. Who cares how we got her?

KIMBERLY. *I* do!

BUDDY. Too bad! It's none of your business!

KIMBERLY. I can't believe you bought into this.

BUDDY. Hey —

KIMBERLY. Did you *ever* have a backbone?

PATTIE. That is your father you're talking to.

KIMBERLY. Are you sure?! One never knows in this house!

PATTIE. You apologize!

KIMBERLY. (*To Buddy.*) *You're* the one who needs to toughen up!

PATTIE. Okay, yes it happened! Alright?! So what?! It was a thing that was done! That's all it was! It served a purpose! Can we let it go now?! (*Silence.*) You know what, Kim? You win. We're not perfect. Okay? And we have been trying our damndest to make you happy, but we obviously can't be whatever it is you want us to be.

KIMBERLY. Well that makes it unanimous then.

PATTIE. This has nothing to do with you. I wanted a baby. It's that simple.

KIMBERLY. You *had* a baby.

PATTIE. I wanted another baby.

KIMBERLY. You wanted a *different* baby.

BUDDY. Kim — !

KIMBERLY. And you made real sure she'd be nothing like me.

PATTIE. What choice did I have?! Soon I won't be able to have babies anymore, and then you'll die and I'll be alone! And I didn't want to be alone! (*Beat.*) I meant, *I'll* die. I was making a sister for

you, so you would have someone to talk to when I died. Not you!

BUDDY. Alright Pattie, relax.

PATTIE. (*Notices Kim's suitcase.*) What's that? My suitcase for the hospital?

KIMBERLY. No. I'm staying at a friend's house. (*Buddy grabs a towel and wipes Pattie's forehead.*)

BUDDY. What friend? You didn't ask if you could — It better not be that boy's house. His family's a mess and I don't want you staying in that environment.

PATTIE. Help me, Buddy. It's getting hot in here. (*Buddy fans Pattie.*)

KIMBERLY. You know what I wanted to do? What I was gonna do? With the money?

BUDDY. What money?

KIMBERLY. I wanted to walk in and say, "Hey, guess what? We're going to the Alamo!"

PATTIE. The Alamo?

KIMBERLY. Or Pamplona. Or Hawaii. One of those places Dad is always talking about. And I wanted to say, "Pack a bag, we're going right now!" And you'd be confused but I'd explain it, and you'd be really happy, and you'd jump up and start packing. But then ... Debra and Hicks, and I come home and then you with the room —

PATTIE. I can't understand a word she's saying.

KIMBERLY. And I'm thinking, "Why bother?" You did a good job *pretending* for a little while I guess, but really you gave up a long time ago.

PATTIE. Gave up *what*?

KIMBERLY. A whole mess of stuff. I can't even — It's like you're just sitting around *waiting* or something. And I know it's hard for you, and you have to prepare and cope and whatever but ...

BUDDY. But what?

KIMBERLY. I'm not dead yet! (*Beat.*) I'm not dead. (*Silence. Then Pattie gets another contraction.*)

PATTIE. Oh-oh-ow-ow-Ow-OW ... here's another one!

BUDDY. Nobody thinks you're dead.

PATTIE. (*In pain.*) What's this, Bud?! How long since the last one?

BUDDY. (*Looking at watch.*) I'm not sure. Fourteen minutes maybe?

PATTIE. It hurts.

BUDDY. Do the breathing.

PATTIE. Get my suitcase. And my special pillow.

BUDDY. Okay. (*Buddy turns around and catches Kim taking the car keys off the hook. A moment passes between them. They say nothing. She puts the keys in her pocket, and he doesn't stop her. Pattie talks over this exchange, unaware that it's even happening.*)

PATTIE. Also my search-a-words. I'll need something to occupy my time. And the camera. And my bathrobe, I forgot to pack my bathrobe. Plus the lip balm in my purse. Actually, just grab the whole purse. (*Turns around.*) Are you listening to me?

BUDDY. Yeah. Suitcase, pillow, search-a-words, camera ...

PATTIE. Bathrobe and purse.

BUDDY. Bathrobe and purse. (*Exits into bedroom.*)

PATTIE. Hurry up, Buddy! (*Huffing and puffing.*) It's two weeks early.

BUDDY. (*Off.*) That's alright. Babies come early sometimes.

PATTIE. Kim came early. Remember? Almost did me in. (*Kim slips out the front door with her suitcase. The pain subsides.*) Oh there it goes. I think it's fading. (*Breathes easier.*) You know what Mrs. Gigante said to me this morning? She said, "Pattie, you oughta get out and get some sun. You look like a ghost." Well I thought, if I spent all the money she spends at that tanning salon I'd look all brown and crunchy too. Only I didn't say that. I just said, "There's been some unseasonable weather as of late." But maybe that Alamo thing ain't such a bad idea. It's awful sunny in Texas, right Kimmy? We'll have to buy the baby a car seat, but that can't cost so much. You think that crap-heap of a car can make it to Texas, Buddy? (*Beat.*) Kim honey, wipe my brow. (*Reaches back for her, but Kim isn't there.*) Kim? Where'd she go? (*Debra enters the house, harried and out of breath.*)

DEBRA. Where's Kim?

PATTIE. I don't know.

DEBRA. Was she here?!

PATTIE. The baby's coming, Debra!

DEBRA. She was supposed to meet me with the money!

PATTIE. What money? (*Buddy reenters with stuff for the hospital.*)

BUDDY. I'm gonna call a cab.

PATTIE. *Cab? Why would we take a — (Huge contraction.)*
Owwwwwwww! *(Blackout.)*

Scene 6

Lights up on Kim and Jeff in the car. Jeff drives.

KIMBERLY. Where are we now?

JEFF. Check the map.

KIMBERLY. It says "The Wilds of Africa."

JEFF. *(He sees something run by.)* Whoa! Did you see that gazelle?

KIMBERLY. *(Reads from safari guide.)* "In this section of the Six Flags Wild Safari, you will notice a variety of exotic and rare birds, from the common guinea fowl to our storks and cranes."

JEFF. What's that? An antelope?

KIMBERLY. *(Refers to her safari guide.)* That's a ... I believe it's a Bontebok ... *(Reading from the guide.)* "Characterized by its long face and horns that twist backwards, this endangered species is difficult to breed in captivity, but seems to do well in a free-roaming environment."

JEFF. I wonder if my dad misses me.

KIMBERLY. We've only been gone two hours.

JEFF. Still, I wonder if he does.

KIMBERLY. *(Pulls out tape recorder and presses record.)* Hey Carmelita, this safari place is unreal.

JEFF. Your mom's gonna be pissed you stole that.

KIMBERLY. We've seen black bears and camels, and now we're in Africa. You gotta see this place, only don't wait for Dad to bring you because it'll never happen. *(Hits stop.)* This way she'll know. *(Sound of an animal on top of the car.)* What is that?

JEFF. There's a little monkey on the roof. *(We hear the monkey banging on the roof. It screeches.)*

KIMBERLY. Sounds mad. *(The sound fades.)*

JEFF. There it goes, scrambled up that tree.

KIMBERLY. Look at it though. It's staring at me. My mother had that face sometimes. Remember?

JEFF. Oh yeah. Look at that. *(Beat.)* Hey, there's a whole mess of them up there. Up in the branches?

KIMBERLY. Keep driving. They're kinda weird looking. *(Hits record again.)* Hey Carm, there's a bunch of monkeys here that look like Mom. I wish I had a camera. *(Hits stop.)* She's gonna like these, when she's old enough to understand them. You'll make sure she gets them, right?

JEFF. The tapes?

KIMBERLY. Because if I mail them, my mom might just throw them out. I wanna make sure she gets them.

JEFF. She'll get them.

KIMBERLY. You'll make sure though, right?

JEFF. Yeah.

KIMBERLY. God, this place reeks. You smell that?

JEFF. There's a hippo in the road.

KIMBERLY. Look at that. *(Presses record.)* You won't believe this, little sister, we've got a hippo in front of us.

JEFF. *(Also into recorder.)* And it ain't moving. *(Stops the car.)*

KIMBERLY. Hey. We're not supposed to stop.

JEFF. What else can I do?

KIMBERLY. Go around it.

JEFF. There's a ravine.

KIMBERLY. The pamphlet says to keep rolling along, otherwise we hold up traffic.

JEFF. It's closing time. We were the last ones in.

KIMBERLY. Still, I don't want those monkeys coming back here.

JEFF. *(Into the recorder.)* Kim's afraid of the monkeys.

KIMBERLY. We're just supposed to sit here?

JEFF. I can do an anagram.

KIMBERLY. No thanks. *(They sit in silence. After a couple beats, Jeff looks over at Kim. She looks over at him. They look away. An uncomfortable pause. They look at each other again, and eventually, after much tension, lean in and kiss. They separate and sit in silence for a couple more beats, happy but petrified. Kim notices the tape recorder, embarrassed.)* I left the tape recorder on.

JEFF. Really?

KIMBERLY. We can save it for posterity. *(Hits stop.)*
 JEFF. Cool. *(Pause.)* Where do you wanna go next?
 KIMBERLY. Colonial Williamsburg.
 JEFF. Very nice choice.
 KIMBERLY. And then Busch Gardens. Sea World. Universal.
 We'll spend at least a week in Florida. We've got enough money
 for that, right?
 JEFF. More than enough.
 KIMBERLY. I hear they have nice dance clubs in Miami.
 JEFF. Oh yeah?
 KIMBERLY. Then we'll head west.
 JEFF. The hippo's moving.
 KIMBERLY. Grand Canyon, Mount Rushmore — *(Jeff turns the
 key in the ignition, but the engine just whirs without turning over.)*
 What's the matter? *(He tries again, but the car won't start.)*
 JEFF. Your dad was right about this piece of junk car.
 KIMBERLY. Where are those guys in the Jeeps?
 JEFF. I hope they didn't go home early.
 KIMBERLY. Honk the horn. *(He does.)*
 JEFF. You see anyone?
 KIMBERLY. No. *(He honks some more.)* Alright, stop honking.
 You're pissing off that hippo.
 JEFF. Screw him. If he hadn't stopped in the middle of the road
 — *(Honks some more.)*
 KIMBERLY. Now it's coming over here. *(Jeff tries to start the car.)*
 You see what you did? *(Faintly we hear the sound of the monkey.)*
 And there's that monkey again. *(The sound of the monkey on the
 roof, only it's multiplied.)*
 JEFF. Sounds like more than one.
 KIMBERLY. Why'd you have to honk?! *(We hear a lion roar.)*
 JEFF. What the hell is that?!
 KIMBERLY. Start the car!
 JEFF. This doesn't seem safe! *(The car still won't start.)* It won't go!
 KIMBERLY. Try it again!
 JEFF. What kind of family entertainment is this?!
 KIMBERLY. Stay calm! *(Jeff tries to restart the car, but to no avail. The
 swirling animal shapes from the end of Act One return, the projections
 spinning around them as we hear various animals descending upon*

*them, clawing at the car, roaring, screeching. The sound is overwhelm-
 ing. It goes on for several beats, until — the engine finally turns over.)*
 JEFF. There she goes!
 KIMBERLY. Go! Go! *(And they pull away. The sounds fade, the
 spinning animals fade, and they are on their way. Kimberly looks
 behind her. They drive in silence for a couple beats. Then they get sort
 of punch-drunk from the thrilling experience.)* That was so weird.
 JEFF. They still back there?
 KIMBERLY. Just keep going.
 JEFF. They running after us?
 KIMBERLY. Turn here. That was insane.
 JEFF. Are they gone?
 KIMBERLY. Won't have that problem in Colonial Williamsburg.
 JEFF. They gone though?
 KIMBERLY. Yeah, they're gone.
 JEFF. You sure?
 KIMBERLY. We're good. Relax. *(Clicks on the radio.)* Just keep
 driving. *(The radio plays swing music as the lights slowly fade on the
 giddy teens.)*

End of Play

PROPERTY LIST

Dinner place settings
Radio
Dungeons & Dragons game and paraphernalia (dice, maps, character sheets, etc.)
Two jars full of nickels
Ice skates (KIMBERLY)
Money (BUDDY)
Burgers, fries (JEFF)
Tape recorder (PATTIE, BUDDY, KIMBERLY)
Car keys (BUDDY, KIMBERLY)
Homework (KIMBERLY)
Jar (KIMBERLY)
Nickels (BUDDY, KIMBERLY)
Phone book, phone (KIMBERLY)
School bags, notebooks, pencils (KIMBERLY and JEFF)
Garbage bag with conch shell (DEBRA)
Cookie (JEFF)
Bowl, milk, Frosted Flakes (KIMBERLY)
Cans of chemicals (DEBRA)
Glue traps (DEBRA)
Mailbox (DEBRA)
Notebook, pen (JEFF)
Velvet pouch of dice (JEFF)
Checks and Xeroxes (DEBRA)
Cake box, shopping bag with Trouble game, electric toothbrush and light-box (BUDDY)
Forks, plates and knife (DEBRA)
Cereal bowls, bran flakes, glasses of milk, berries (BUDDY)
Bible (BUDDY)
Duffel bag with clothes (DEBRA, KIMBERLY)
Coffee, cup (DEBRA)
Paint swatch (BUDDY)
Two beers (BUDDY)
Suitcase (KIMBERLY)
Paper towels, towels (BUDDY)
Safari guide (KIMBERLY)

SOUND EFFECTS

Wind howling
Car driving
Door slam
Conch shell blowing
Sneaking into the house
Phone ringing
Swing music
Toilet flushing
Electric toothbrush
Monkey jumping on car, screeching
Car honking
Engine turning over
Lion roaring
Animal sounds
Engine starting