

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHREYER HONORS COLLEGE

SCHOOL OF THEATRE

PLAYS FOR AMERICAN DAUGHTERS

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Spring 2011

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements
for baccalaureate degrees
in Theatre and English
with honors in Theatre

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Abstract

Plays for American Daughters is a collection of plays written to examine, celebrate, and multiply young women's voices and bodies on the stage. Two ten-minute plays and two one-act plays invite young people to pronounce themselves proudly in the face of twenty-first century silence.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to Dr. Susan Russell, who advised my thesis and undergraduate education, taught me how to write plays, and set me on fire. Thanks to the many actors who helped with readings of my plays in Cultural Conversations 2010 and 2011. Thanks to the Schreyer Honors College for providing grants and programs which allowed me to go to some amazing places, and thanks to the Penn State School of Theatre for hosting a reading of *Plays for American Daughters* on April 30th, 2011.

These plays are for my mother, Mary Copeland, who taught me to talk to myself.

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Personal Statement

I wrote these *Plays for American Daughters* because the version of the young female voice performed in American plays, movies, and television has often disappointed me. When I used to audition for plays, I always hated that I couldn't find a good monologue about something other than yearning for a guy or being raped. There are certainly playwrights, heroes of mine, whose plays feature fully-fleshed characters both male and female. The characters of theirs I love most possess idiosyncratic voices, and behave according to their needs rather than according to type. In my plays, I use the most specific dialogue I can build, with diction and punctuation and typography, to craft characters who are individuals that defy stereotypes of gender, age, class, culture, race, and sexuality. My daughters live for themselves and not for a relationship, romantic or family or otherwise. They get to have their own personal journeys, and they don't need a chaperone.

The first play, "Slay with Me!" was first drafted in Spring 2009, and reflected my earliest impulse to indulge in the absurd. Writing absurd characters who reveled in excruciating violence provided an escape from the potential boredom of the dialogue-based scene (serious talk, which I feared). Little's fanatical brutality against a creepy molester comes from a pet fantasy of mine, and writing her was a delicious way to exorcise some of my own demons. She is one of my favorite daughters.

In the second play, "SERIOUS ROMANTIC DEAD," read at Cultural Conversations new play festival in 2010, I tried to tackle the age-old philosophical mind-body problem in my own way. Dr. Walter and Nina's relationship evolved from a romantic encounter into a friendship as I developed a more poetic voice for Nina. She is her own daughter.

The third play, "First World Problems," which was performed as a staged reading in Cultural Conversations 2011, explores a relationship between two sisters and the surrogate mother they pick up off the street. In my life, I have been fortunate enough to have first-world problems, crises that seem absolutely diabolical up close, but with perspective, may pale. This play pays respect to that complicated art of whining. I grew up with two older brothers, but if I had sisters, I imagine we would talk fast and argue as tartly as Dana and Kelly do.

The fourth play, "Bed of Losers," shows a movement in my writing from the absurd and fantastical to the everyday. It is a conversation in which a mother tries to comfort her daughter after a bad day. As I grow older, I crave the intimacy of hiding in my parent's bed, beneath the enormous dark blankets, and talking and watching television with my mom.

In writing and rewriting *Plays for American Daughters*, I was always thinking about what it means to be someone's daughter, and what I am to my mother, who is someone's daughter, too. I was thinking about how frustrated the women in romantic comedies made me, and how I would love to see more plays with mothers and daughters who don't want to murder each other. Most of all, I wanted to write plays that would make women proud to see fellow women portrayed onstage in all their complexity and quirks. I want to see more daughters on the stage, speaking their experiences and living in their bodies, uninhibited by fear and convention.

Slay with Me!

A Play in Ten Minutes

Characters

LITTLE

A little girl with a pet axe. A highly trained and efficient killer.

FAIRY

A hired assassin-thug dressed up in a fairy costume.

FATHER

Your standard charming 1950s patriarch who wants his daughter dead.

Setting

A parallel universe, in LITTLE's room, a fluffy, pink place.

Slay with Me!

LITTLE

Guns...that's a whole new amendment. Dammit!

MR. SPARKLES, a large thug in a tutu and tattoos, is seated on LITTLE's beanbag chair in the corner. She just notices him for the first time.

MR. SPARKLES

Watch your mouth, kid.

LITTLE

What the fuck?!

MR. SPARKLES

You better watch that mouth. Cause it sure is pretty.

LITTLE

Why are you in my room?

MR. SPARKLES

I'm Mr. Sparkles. Your father hired me to teach you some manners.

LITTLE

That's unsettling.

MR. SPARKLES

I'm an entrepreneur.

LITTLE

How do you explain the tutu?

MR. SPARKLES

People trust a fairy.

LITTLE

I need to speak with my father.

MR. SPARKLES

He left.

LITTLE

Alright then, my lawyer.

MR. SPARKLES

Sit down, missy. No harm in talking.

LITTLE

I don't talk to strangers.

MR. SPARKLES

That's what they all say, but you whip out the candy and bam!

LITTLE

Creepy.

MR. SPARKLES

Give me your hand. (*MR. SPARKLES ties LITTLE to the chair with her arms behind her back.*)

LITTLE

Owch! Chair Rodeo, direct violation! Is that a slip knot? Weak.

MR. SPARKLES

Cram it.

LITTLE

You're bumping me off, doing me in, taking me out... sleep with the fishes.

MR. SPARKLES

Exactly.

LITTLE

You'd kill a cute little girl like me?

MR. SPARKLES

Not before I have a little fun.

LITTLE

Oh hell.

MR. SPARKLES

Let's see what we can do with this sock. (*He removes her socks:*) Hewwo, widdle piggies! One little piggy- schlurp! (*while sucking her toes*) Two tasty piggies – sclurrrp!

LITTLE

You're one of these foot guys, huh.

MR. SPARKLES

This is the part where you scream.

LITTLE

You'd like that, wouldn't you?

MR. SPARKLES

Take off your dress.

LITTLE

Gee, I'd love to, but you tied me up, Tinky Winky.

MR. SPARKLES

Shit. You got a shiv?

LITTLE

You've never done this before.

MR. SPARKLES

Yes, I have.

LITTLE

Let me tell you a thing or two: it takes planning. Organization. You can't just charge headlong into these things.

MR. SPARKLES

I know how to rape and murder a little girl, I've done it a million times.

LITTLE

Assault is art.

MR. SPARKLES

What do you know?

LITTLE

I know The Code. And your approach is all wrong. No immediate kill. You drag it out, you make it hurt. If I were you, I'd kill me by night.

MR. SPARKLES

Why?

LITTLE

What, are you afraid of the dark?

You get a ransom note written in someone else's crayons.

You crawl in through my window, hit me with the chloroform, tear off my jammies, and have your way.

MR. SPARKLES

And then the kill.

LITTLE

No! What is this, *Blue's Clues*? You abduct first, then get the money, then you strangle me with a vacuum cord and dump my body in the Susquehanna.

MR. SPARKLES

That is so good. I would never think of that!

LITTLE

You ought to write your own code. It really helps with precision.

My father's afraid of it. Doesn't like to think too hard about his daily violence. Me, I get off on it.

MR. SPARKLES

It's hard to be a single dad. He can't be that bad.

LITTLE

HELLO, HE HIRED A TWO-BIT TUTU TWINKIE TO KILL ME.

MR. SPARKLES

Don't you call me a Twinkie, you bitchy—

LITTLE

How much is he paying you, anyway?

MR. SPARKLES

Twenty grand.

LITTLE

Probably my college fund. The fucker.

MR. SPARKLES

I bet he hates that you're smarter than him.

LITTLE

Than he. Smarter than he. Is. Smart.

MR. SPARKLES

Oh, fuck. Enough talk.

LITTLE

Yeah, that's it! Finish the job.

MR. SPARKLES

I am.

LITTLE

Well do it already.

MR. SPARKLES

If you would just shut up for a minute I would.

LITTLE

I'm giving you until the count of three.

MR. SPARKLES

What are you gonna do to me?

LITTLE

One, two, two and a half, two and three quarters...

MR. SPARKLES

You're all tied up like a wimpy little girl-piggy.

LITTLE

What did you call me?

MR. SPARKLES

A piggy.

LITTLE

No, the other part.

MR. SPARKLES

A wimpy little girl?

LITTLE

That's what I thought you said.

MR. SPARKLES

What are you gonna do about it? Wimpy little giiirrrrl, weak whiny little PUSSY!
(*He baby-talk taunts her:*) A-blubber-wubble-boo-boo-wah-wah-baby-waby-poopy-pants.

LITTLE

You'd better stop.

MR. SPARKLES

Are you threatening me?

LITTLE

I don't make threats. I make promises.
Article One: She slyly slips through the shoddy tie-job.

MR. SPARKLES

Bring it OWCH!! Get off!

(*LITTLE has slipped out from the ropes and kicked MR. SPARKLES from behind the knees. She ties him to the chair, reciting:*)

LITTLE

Article Two: Restraining the rapist! Gagging the goon! Thwarting the thug!
Rabbit goes in the hole,
Rabbit comes around the corner,
Rabbit ties around the solar plexus,
Rabbit anchors to the scrotum,
Rabbit goes home!

MR. SPARKLES

I... can't... breathe...

LITTLE

Maybe you shouldn't talk so much. Article Three: BALL-POPPIN!! (*She jumps on his testicles.*)

MR. SPARKLES

UNNNGHHHHHH!!

LITTLE

HA! If it's in The Code, it's allowed. Knifing knee-caps, scratching, stabbing, starvation, testicular tweaking, all in The Code!

MR. SPARKLES

Ohhhhhh.

LITTLE

Article Four! Humiliate and dismember with your lucky hidden hatchet!

This is for all ten sins.

One piggy-wiggie. Wrath. (*With each new "piggy," LITTLE lobs off one of MR. SPARKLE's toes.*)

MR. SPARKLES

AHH!

LITTLE

Two tasty piggies. Pride.

MR. SPARKLES

OHHH!

LITTLE

Greed,
gluttony,
envy,
sloth,
PORN,
poor table manners,
speaking out of turn,
and most grievous of all,

MR. SPARKLES

OH!
AH!
OW!
AH!
AUGH!
EEH!
AWGH!

MR. SPARKLES

NNNAGHHH!

LITTLE

Independent thought!

Now sit up straight. Chop-chop!

(LITTLE sits him up and beheads him with her hatchet. It takes three swings:)

LITTLE

MIND.
YOUR.
MANNERS.

MR. SPARKLES

MNGHHHhhhhh
Mmmmhhh(*gurgle gurgle*)
kklmmmmnnuuh.

FATHER

(From offstage:) Duke? You here?

FATHER enters LITTLE's room.

LITTLE

DADDY!

FATHER

For fuck's sake! You've soiled the carpet.

LITTLE

Daddy! You watch that mouth. Or I'll have to cut it right off.

FATHER

What did you do, you little shit?! We agreed no weapons in the house.

LITTLE

Wrong! Weapons are approved in The Code. You'd know that if you read it.

FATHER

You can't make me follow your code. I make the code, I'm the Father.

LITTLE

I just wanted to keep things organized. Fair. Why can't you respect that?

FATHER

See, Little, the problem with that paper—

LITTLE

CODE. Four letters, not hard. Cooood. There's no problem as my logic is flawless.

FATHER

Bitch all you want. You know I'm going to get you in the end, anyway.

LITTLE

Says who?

FATHER

I'm an adult, we always win.

LITTLE

I'm not going to argue with you this time. We'll sit down and have a nice, civilized conversation. Please, sit. Can I get you anything? Tea? Coloring book? Playdough? Polly Pocket? My Little Pony?

FATHER

Cut the shit.

LITTLE

Marlboro Menthol?

FATHER

Thanks. That's a nice Zippo.

LITTLE

Thanks, mom sent it to me for Easter.

FATHER

Little, I came here to finish what I started.

LITTLE
A compromise.

FATHER
No. A body.

LITTLE
Daddy dearest, the first thing I would like to address is that you did not pick me up when soccer got rained out last night.

FATHER
I was hoping the lightning would take care of you. That or the walk along the interstate.

LITTLE
Not very artful of you, Daddy. Besides, it's Domestic Warfare—Domestic! In the home!

FATHER
The game is coming on in ten minutes.

LITTLE
But I want to watch *Tomb Raider*.

FATHER
Then I'll have to kill you now.

LITTLE
Good, Daddy. The feeling is mutual.

FATHER
Get back here! Why can't you be a good little girl and die?

LITTLE
Silly, Daddy. That's not in The Code. (*LITTLE retrieves her trusty axe from under the bed.*)

FATHER
I thought I hid that.

LITTLE
You know Harold, Daddy! Harold is my vewy hungwy hatchet!

Daddy
Little, put it down. I'm not armed, The Code said something about, something about--

LITTLE
Harold has to EAT, DADDY!
EAT DADDY!!!! (*LITTLE flies at him and hacks off his left leg.*)

FATHER
AHHHHHH!!! AUUUUUUUUGHH!!

LITTLE

(Eating noises in Harold's voice:) Nom nom nom mmmmm! Yummy!
(She shoves him off balance onto his leg-stump.)

FATHER

ARRRRGHHH! CHRIST!

LITTLE

What next?

HEAAAAD, SHOULDERS, KNEES AND TOES. Knees and toes?
 HICKORY DICKORY DOCK, LET'S CUT OFF DADDY'S—eeew.
 I'll just go for the whole leg. *(LITTLE chops off the right leg.)*

FATHER

OWWWWWWGH! You little bitch!

LITTLE

(A huge gasp) Ohhh! You said the B-word! You know what they say about sharp tongues.

FATHER

AHHHHH...

LITTLE

Daddy, this is the fun part!

FATHER

Stay back! Ohhh....

LITTLE

Sharp tongues cut throats.
(She cuts out his tongue.)

FATHER

AHHH EUGHHH MMM!!!

LITTLE

There, now you have to listen. I'm going to finish reading The Code, and you're going to like it. How does that sound, Daddy?

FATHER

Mmmnnngggggghauuuugh.

LITTLE

Good. Ahem. Article Six. When LITTLE has a good idea, you better SHUT UP and listen.

[End.]

SERIOUS ROMANTIC DEAD

A Play in One Act

MENS SANA IN CORPORE SANO – A healthy mind in a healthy body/a sound mind in a sound body/a sound mind in a healthy body.

Characters

NINA

A 23-year old woman with a bad brain, a storyteller, a liar, our hero.

WALTER

A 30-something male, a technically brilliant bumbler, a clumsy-hearted nerd, our hero.

Setting

Walter’s private office of decorporeology, light brightly and decorated with informative posters, brains floating in jars , and a model skeleton.

Language

Captive Bolt Stunner – A weapon used to kill cattle via a bolt fired directly into the skull through the brain cavity. Large, heavy, resembles a nail gun.

Decorporeologist (“*de-corp-OR-ee-OL-oh-jist*”) – A highly trained physician who specializes in separating the brain and the body through an advanced surgical procedure.

Music

“And Then He Kissed Me” by The Crystals (Phil Spector, 1963).

“And Then He Kissed Me” cover by Asobi Seksu (Gigantic Music, 2007).

Original Reading

Performed as a reading in Cultural Conversations 2010, within the theme of “The Able, Disabled, and Disappearing Body.”

Nina.....Catherine DeLuce

Walter.....Michael Ross

DirectorJesse Cramer

Technical Assistance.....Emma Futhey

Artistic Director Susan Russell

SERIOUS ROMANTIC DEAD

(Asobi Seksu's cover of "And Then He Kissed Me" plays. Then, a crystalline crash! NINA has knocked one of WALTER's certificates off the wall, and it lays smashed on the floor.)

NINA

Crap! Clumsy klutzy klutzy dumb dumb dumb! Pick it up!

WALTER

Good afternoon Miss... Lowe. Oh. I can back in a minute if you're--

NINA

No! Let me pick up—

WALTER

Is that my--

NINA

I don't think it broke! I hope it didn't break.

WALTER

Just leave it, Nurse Frock will get it later.

NINA

I can buy you a new frame, I'm sorry.

WALTER

Don't worry about it.

NINA

I'm sorry.

WALTER

We have a lot to cover.

NINA

I know, and I am sorry I was late, the traffic was just a hairball—

WALTER

Not to worry, we'll knock this out in fifteen minutes.

NINA

I'm a nitwit.

WALTER

Nonsense.

NINA

You're sensitive. I like that.

WALTER

We aim to please. You're in good health?

NINA

Mmmmmmediocre health.

WALTER

We say you are either in a state of health or a state of illness. You are not ill, correct?

NINA

I guess not ill-ill.

WALTER

But not quite "up to snuff?"

NINA

Well, whose snuff are we talking about here?

WALTER

... A general snuff? Let me rephrase—you're not suffering from long term, short term or intermediate illness.

NINA

Nope. Not really. No sneezing, no wheezing, no bleeding, no funny smells.

WALTER

Good. So what brings you in today?

NINA

You know.

WALTER

I know what you're here for, but you need to tell me why.

NINA

Personal reasons?

WALTER

I can't bubble that in.

NINA

Bubble what?

WALTER

Intake form B, beyond vitals but before detailed analysis. There are choices. Pick a bubble.

NINA

Read them off.

WALTER

"A," terminal illness. "B," long-term illness. "C," religious slash political views, and "D," other.

Other! I'm the other.

NINA

There's a little line after it. What do I write on the line?

WALTER

Personal preferences.

NINA

Per protocol, we can't put "personal preferences."

WALTER

Well I would personally prefer that you did.

NINA

Is there another reason?

WALTER

We'll go back to it. Like a standardized test. You don't know it, you skip it.

NINA

We are in a bit of a rush.

WALTER

Right. In the name of economy.

NINA

Efficiency.

WALTER

I get it. Screw the details!

NINA

Not exactly.

WALTER

What then?

NINA

I need to know the date of your last PAP smear.

WALTER

Oh. Just January 2nd.

NINA

Alright.

WALTER

Happy New Year!

NINA

WALTER
Happy New Year. Any cavities?

NINA
Can I lie? I always feel so guilty about those.

WALTER
We just need to ensure that your fillings are all kosher.

NINA
Kosher cavities?

WALTER
No lead fillings.

NINA
I swear I never had a cavity.

WALTER
If you're sure.

NINA
Don't doubt my dental acuity.

WALTER
Miss Lowe, I'm on a tight schedule here.

NINA
I understand. Let's talk shop here, technical jumbo only please.

WALTER
Patience. We're still building your biography.

NINA
Here's what you need to know.

WALTER
Go ahead.

NINA
It's like this:
I'm all grey.

WALTER
All. Grey.

NINA
But everything else is too vivid anyway, so the most I can do is hold my breath and—

WALTER
Hold on, I'm getting this down. Too vivid. Shortness of breath.

NINA

And I don't know it's just
it's so wonderful to get tipsy and high and read and sit out on the porch looking at the weeds in the
lawn!

WALTER

So you do enjoy yourself, Miss Lowe.

NINA

I get thrills.

WALTER

It's good that you can look for the good in the world around you. That's a sign of strength.

NINA

Did you write that down, did you write down, "I. Get. Thrills?"

WALTER

What I write is for our office. There's no need to worry.

NINA

Do I keep talking now.

WALTER

I think I have a good idea of what is going on in there.

NINA

I know what you're thinking.

WALTER

I'd guess not.

NINA

I am not here to seek treatment for depression, I am here to have my consciousness forcibly removed
from my head. That is what you do.

WALTER

That is what we do here.

NINA

Yeehaw!

WALTER

But it's also my goal to have a wider understanding. Paint a bigger picture and develop a deeper
comprehension of the way the mind operates.

NINA

And then you take an X-ray and fry the sucker.

WALTER

Not exactly. We pride ourselves in precision.

NINA

So you can just, BZZZT, zap the bad parts out.

WALTER

Not without destruction of the whole mind.

NINA

You can't just take a little laser and bleep the tired parts?

WALTER

I'm afraid not.

NINA

Are you sure?

WALTER

There's a standard procedure we follow.

NINA

Can you improvise, get some wiggle room?

WALTER

Miss Lowe, there's no wiggle room in experimental medicine.

NINA

It's all wiggle! And it's Nina.

WALTER

Do you have any further questions?

NINA

Where do you keep the brain?

WALTER

The brain remains in the head which remains with the body.

NINA

Where does the body go?

WALTER

We have off-premises storage facilities.

NINA

Let's do this thing.

WALTER

You have not met the minimum required amount of pre-procedural consultation sessions.

NINA

They told me you could squeeze me in this afternoon.

WALTER

They meant for an overview session.

NINA

What are we over-viewing?

WALTER

It's a discussion of the procedure and its outcomes.

NINA

I know the procedure well. I'm very well read.

WALTER

Tell me what you know.

NINA

A mind is a terrible thing to waste. We waste less time with the body. We rescue the mind. (*NINA picks up a pickled brain and observes it.*)

WALTER

Please don't touch that.

NINA

Is it real?

WALTER

Yes, and if you break it the formaldehyde's not good for the skin. Please, put it down.

NINA

So you definitely don't want me to balance it like this— (*NINA balances the jar on her head or hand.*)

WALTER

PLEASE, that's mine, that's my

NINA

Your what.

WALTER

My brain. I mean, not my brain. A brain which belongs to me personally.

NINA

I got your brain, I got it I got it I got it HEY! (*WALTER grabs back his brain.*)

WALTER

GIVE THAT TO ME.

NINA

... Angry face.

WALTER
Yes, angry face.

NINA
It's pretty heavy. But it looks so small.

WALTER
Yes, but a surface area of almost 1.3 square feet.

NINA
You sound proud.

WALTER
Back on the shelf if you would.

NINA
It's neat. It's gross but it's neat. (*NINA replaces the brain on the shelf.*)

WALTER
Just wondering, why are you in a rush for the procedure.

NINA
Who me?

WALTER
Of course.

NINA
I guess... I have always been a curious girl?

WALTER
The curiosity is killing you.

NINA
I wouldn't say that.

WALTER
Not in a literal way.

NINA
NO. Not at all.

WALTER
I got it. I see.

NINA
Something has been bothering me so badly I want to ram a steel rod through my temple and call it a day.

WALTER

Have you often been bothered?

NINA

Yes, life is so obnoxious.

WALTER

Many things can happen in life that effect the emotional health of the body, and lead to strong feelings of anxiety and sadness, including a change in your job or a death in the family romantic changes changes in well being being unexpectedly successful or fulfilled fulfilling prophecies relocating recalling recoiling

NINA

Experimentation with illicit drugs! Sexual relations with strangers! Public nudity! Sex with strangers!

WALTER

You mentioned that already.

NINA

The novelty does not wear off.

WALTER

There's something.

NINA

What.

WALTER

There's something you might miss without a body.

NINA

No, please, I've had enough.

WALTER

Isn't there anything you enjoy.

NINA

Yes. I like to listen to the radio!

WALTER

That's good.

NINA

I imagine where everyone is who's listening to that song with me. Who's headbobbing to The Police. Who's driving with Keb Mo. Who's diddling with Bach in the background.

WALTER

I like to imagine music videos to the songs in my head.

NINA

I don't really do that ever.

WALTER

Oh.

NINA

I could, though.

WALTER

I'm sure. Let's get going with these questions, this consultation is a short one.

NINA

Whatever your pleasure.

WALTER

Have you recently experienced romantic changes?

NINA

No. God. NO. No.

WALTER

Don't get upset, it's just part of the questionnaire.

NINA

Not upset, just. Klutzy.

WALTER

I don't understand.

NINA

Neither do I! Romance is like that.

WALTER

Right.

NINA

You are not a shrink.

WALTER

No, I am a decorporealologist. ("de-corp-OR-ee-OL-oh-jist")

NINA

So you don't have to shrink me.

WALTER

No one is shrinking you.

I feel probed.

NINA

We have to build your background.

WALTER

No, it's okay, I don't mind.

NINA

Alright. Then, anesthesia is generally administered, although if you opt to have the mind transited in sleep--

WALTER

EVER SINCE PUBERTY
If you want me to be honest.

NINA

Of course.

WALTER

Do you want me to be honest?

NINA

Yes.

WALTER

I guess
I guess I missed grieving.
I guess I'm having trouble dealing with my grief.
I am having trouble grief-ing.
I am having some troubles!

NINA

I am not going to shrink you, but I think we need to specify.

WALTER

So specify.

NINA

What are you having trouble with?

WALTER

I lost something, somewhere.

NINA

It feels like you lost something.

WALTER

No, I lost my old body.

NINA

WALTER

... have you had a prior mind relocating procedure done?

NINA

No. No. Puberty.

WALTER

That can certainly be a confusing time. But you are.... How old are you?

NINA

Twenty-three.

WALTER

So, this was a while ago.

NINA

I used to have a body that was small and dark and ran fast and laughed loud, swimming deep and always sweating, dripping and humming.
And then something changed and I started bleeding.

WALTER

Oh.

NINA

And then I became tall soft white and pale like ashes, like a burnt out leaf and now I am cold all the time. When I was younger I sang out loud.

WALTER

So you don't like to sing.

NINA

I began talking to myself out loud in public to prove I am not afraid. I keep talking to myself in private to prove I am still here.

WALTER

So you talk to yourself? Is that it?

NINA

What do you think, doc?

WALTER

That's a powerful coping technique.

NINA

A powerful?! FUCK YOU.

WALTER

I'm sorry, Miss Lowe?

NINA

Polite is ugly.

Polite is necessary.

WALTER

I'm gonna spew.

NINA

Gonna what?

WALTER

Spew! Fountains of vomit! Gallons of bile!

NINA

Oh, oh god, in here. (*WALTER proffers a bed pan.*)

WALTER

Reeeeeeeh.
Oh no false alarm. False alarm.
Everything makes me nauseous.

NINA

Have you spoken to your doctor on the subject?

WALTER

He thinks I'm celiac. I'm not a celiac, I'm just feel like I'm going to constantly throw up

NINA

So liberating your mind from your body would alleviate the nausea.

WALTER

But that's not all.

NINA

What else.

WALTER

A powerful and beautiful personal presence is what I have always wanted!

NINA

I think... that you are beautiful and powerful.

WALTER

But not very present.

NINA

You are certainly, you are here with me, mind and body, in this examination room.

WALTER

My mind and body are in this exam room, but my mind is also in the seventh grade history classroom where I burst into tears because I couldn't remember who was Great.

WALTER

Who was great?

NINA

Alexander. He was Great. He was just a really great guy!

WALTER

Oh.

Well, in that sense I am in the room, mind and body, and I am also at home playing with my dog.

NINA

What kind of dog?

WALTER

A cocker spaniel.

NINA

That's cute. That's nice.
That's not what I mean.

WALTER

Have you read the book on the subject?

NINA

Of cocker spaniels?

WALTER

Returning to the procedure, I have authored a book called MindSpace: The Attachment of the Detached Body.

NINA

No, do I need to read the book before I get the procedure?

WALTER

No, but I think it would answer many of these questions you have.

NINA

I want you to answer the questions.

WALTER

I think it would ease your mind.

NINA

You answer them. My questions. See right there you weren't in the room

WALTER

I was, that was just a segue.

NINA

No, we were talking about your cocker spaniel and I have neither bought nor read your book!

Okay. Sorry.

WALTER

How much does this cost.

NINA

In an effort to expand our knowledge of the procedure and

WALTER

How much.

NINA

You will be compensated.

WALTER

Paid?

NINA

Of course you will have no need for money but you can put it wherever you feel it belongs.

WALTER

So I will be a test subject.

NINA

Not exactly, the results have been proven.

WALTER

On what?

NINA

Mice and primates.

WALTER

I'm not a mice or a monkey.

NINA

But these tests are conclusive

WALTER

On mice and monkeys.

NINA

Primates.

WALTER

Whatever monkey primate privates whatever!

NINA

All prior tests show conclusive evidence that the procedure is successful.

WALTER

So who will hear me. NINA

... WALTER

Who will hear my thoughts. How will you know. NINA

It has been proven that the consciousness continues, that electrical impulses from WALTER

But how do I share my thoughts. NINA

We don't know. WALTER

YOU don't know. NINA

No. I don't. WALTER

Where does my mind rest. NINA

Nowhere, I suppose. WALTER

A restless mind. Check. NINA

(WALTER laughs.) Heee. WALTER

Ha. You laughed. NINA

I did. WALTER

Your laugh sounds like a kitten wheezing. NINA

It does? WALTER

Yeah, like a little kitten with asthma. NINA

Yeah, I get that a lot. WALTER

HA! You are funny! What's your name? NINA

Walter Williams. WALTER

Good. Tell me more. NINA

Uhh, I am from Michigan. Kalamazoo. WALTER

That's awesome! NINA

What? WALTER

Kalamazoo! It's. It's a good name. NINA

Yeah, it is. WALTER

Tell me more. NINA

I don't know what to say WALTER

Tell me about your father. NINA

Are you shrinking me? WALTER

I would never! NINA

Because it sounds like you're shrinking me. WALTER

Okay maybe a little. NINA

WALTER

Why.

NINA

I just want to establish trust. I told you. Now you tell me.

WALTER

What.

NINA

What do you mean, what. You mean puberty wasn't weird for you. You weren't always a doctor. You grew pubes!

WALTER

...

NINA

Huh?!!

WALTER

That's kind of out of left field.

NINA

You did!

WALTER

I did. Could you stop, I'm not supposed to discuss. Things like that.

NINA

You're not a shrink, I've been to shrinks before, you don't clear your throat enough.

WALTER

I didn't tell you I was a shrink in fact I said I wasn't a shrink.

NINA

So stop looking at me like you're one.

WALTER

Alright but that's not how I was looking at you. Miss Lowe.

NINA

Nina Nina Nina
My name is Nina.

WALTER

Alright Nina.

NINA

Yes Doctor Walter Williams.

WALTER

Nina.

Yes.

NINA

I think we should reschedule you with another doctor here at our office this is becoming increasingly difficult--

WALTER

NO, I CAN'T! WHY?!!

NINA

Please understand, it's as if, it's almost inappropriate

WALTER

This always happens to me.

NINA

No, it's not you, its... ah...

WALTER

The things I say.

NINA

Those things. Yes.

WALTER

Here sit. SIT. Sit next to me. Next to me.

NINA

You are making me so nervous.

WALTER

You are making me feel rejected

NINA

I don't want to make you feel rejected

WALTER

Yet somehow I always do.

NINA

Have you ever considered therapy? You don't have to be some superpsychotic, like, person, it just helps some people feel better

WALTER

Do you ever get angry? Like this guy.

NINA

What about him.

WALTER

NINA

He's got no skull. And I'm stroking his brainstem and there's nothing he can do about it.

WALTER

It's a mannequin.

NINA

I'm not three, I know it's a mannequin. But you can't be so sure.

WALTER

I'm pretty sure.

NINA

That's pretty boring. Pretty hateful.

WALTER

It's plastic.

NINA

Look, he's waving.

WALTER

I need you to confirm your social security number.

NINA

Say hello to him.

WALTER

No. Your social?

NINA

You won't even try.

WALTER

No, I won't. Social!

NINA

DOC!!

WALTER

What?!

NINA

I just get angry like everyone's an asshole and I can't escape this planet full of assholes!
Assholes in cars assholes in planes

WALTER

I suppose there are a lot of assholes.

NINA

And AWFUL lot of assholes.

Asshole doctors. Asshole patients... WALTER

Yes just ASSHOLES all of them! NINA

I know what you mean. WALTER

You know. NINA

Yeah! WALTER

I used to get *so* angry and profane. NINA

Yes. WALTER

So *ANGRY!* But I am in a better place now. NINA

That's good work. WALTER

I am thinking happy thoughts. I am doing my affirmations every day. I am doing sun salutations, I am staying on the sunny side!!!! NINA

That's good!
I myself do affirmations. WALTER

Get out of town. NINA

No, I read it in a journal. Positive thoughts perpetuate positive action. WALTER

Bullshit.
And what is that thing supposed to be? NINA

That's a rendering of the male sacrum. Part of the pelvis. WALTER

It looks like a stingray. NINA

Yeah, it kind of does. WALTER

So what. NINA

What? WALTER

What are these positive vibey affirmations you affirm. NINA

That's different for everyone. WALTER

Come on, Walter, from one head case to another. NINA

I am not a head case and neither are you. WALTER

You talk to yourself. So do I.
Does it help? NINA

You should try. WALTER

What do I say? NINA

You say what you need to hear. WALTER

That's too easy. NINA

It's not supposed to be hard. It's a like a psychic pat on the back. What do you want to be today. WALTER

To be? Dead I guess. NINA

Open the mind. WALTER

I'm being honest here. NINA

WALTER

Close your eyes and envision yourself—doing things. Anything. Picture whatever it is you're after, and when you speak it you believe it.

NINA

I am... I don't know. I don't want to do this.

WALTER

Try. Expand yourself a little here.

NINA

I don't wanna expand, I wanna explode.

WALTER

Shh—just try. Say anything, say it and you'll believe it.

NINA

Well I will believe anything.

WALTER

Go on.

NINA

Ii... ammmm...

WALTER

Eyes closed.

NINA

They are!

WALTER

Closing the eyes opens the left prefrontal cortex

NINA

Oooh, Vortex of the cortex...

WALTER

Say something. Say anything.

NINA

I'm at a loss here, I really am.

WALTER

Okay, try this.
People LIKE me.

NINA

People like me.

WALTER

I am important!

I. Am. Important!

NINA

What I do, it MATTERS in this world!!

WALTER

Aw put a sock in it, doc!

NINA

What, what? You were doing so well!

WALTER

It doesn't matter, my brain and my mouth just don't get along.

NINA

You're not trying.

WALTER

Can we scoop my skull now?

NINA

Nina.

WALTER

... Walter?

NINA

I don't see it.

WALTER

What.

NINA

This thing you're trying to get rid of. This tumor you're excising.

WALTER

What tumor?!

NINA

Stop stalling and answer.

WALTER

No.

NINA

This is a mistake! You have all your limbs, you sound pretty smart, you're on the up and up. This all seems like a step backward. Or like you're hiding.

WALTER

NINA

I like to think of it as ascending.
What is that look?

WALTER

You're just a bad liar.

NINA

You'd be surprised.

WALTER

I don't think so.

NINA

Dr. Williams. Can I just say.

WALTER

I'm here.

NINA

I just wanna do this, I just wanna get this over with I don't want to talk anymore.

WALTER

We need to finish the intake. A few more questions.

NINA

Grill me, grill me, doc.

WALTER

Are you allergic to any medications?

NINA

Wine makes my cheeks all red.

WALTHER

That's not. Okay. Moving on. Family history?

NINA

Of?

WALTER

Illnesses, cancer, etcetera?

NINA

My brother has Chlamydia.

WALTER

Work with me here. If you want it so badly then work with me.

NINA

Doc means business!

You don't really want this done, do you? WALTER

I do! Yes I really do! NINA

You're stalling pretty badly. WALTER

I'm building suspense. NINA

You're stalling. WALTER

You're Stalin! Alexander the Great! NINA

What? WALTER

You ask a lot of questions. NINA

I'm going to have you removed. WALTER

Fascist! NINA

You have no business on my exam table. WALTER

I'm here for mind relocation. NINA

You have no need for the procedure. Only the most qualified applicants receive the surgery. You just don't qualify. WALTER

Walter! Gimme a second chance. I'll be better. NINA

You can't change your brain. WALTER

Or worse! Whatever you want! NINA

Tell me why you need the procedure. WALTER

NINA

I know! I've known the whole time but I don't see why you get to know.

WALTER

I have to determine you fit. I okay you, I give the go, I give the green light.

NINA

You can see how bad I want it, just give it.

WALTER

It's up to me—

NINA

Oh doctor dearest!

WALTER

—and I play fair.

NINA

I play desperate.

WALTER

Desperate is ugly.

NINA

Say yes.

WALTER

Absolutely not.

NINA

You're not going to buy it.

WALTER

Try me.

NINA

You won't get it.

WALTER

Trust me. Enlighten me.

NINA

I want to be God.

WALTER

Excuse me.

NINA

I'm gonna be God, I've been thinking hard, I'm gonna be a deity!

I'm calling your bluff. WALTER

No I mean it. NINA

Nurse? Nurse FROCK! WALTER

Cop-out doc-out! I am not crazy, I just want out. NINA

We've wasted enough time here. WALTER

You think I'm jerking you around. NINA

Goodbye, Miss Lowe. WALTER

You said you would call me Nina. NINA

Get off. WALTER

Like me, like me, support me, say yes! JESUS! (*NINA tackles WALTER.*) NINA

Get off my leg!! WALTER

I'm a holy barnacle! NINA

Holy shit! WALTER

The spirit that just won't quit! NINA

FROOOCK!!! WALTER

What do I have to do to get some approval around here? NINA

Give me back my leg. WALTER

NINA

That's fair. (*She releases him.*)

WALTER

Wow. God, huh.

NINA

Not God. Not The God, per se, just a god. Just omnipresent and omnipotent and all-seeing and all being.

WALTER

I'd imagine

NINA

How beautiful would that be? And how perfect.
The non-sleeping, non-eating, non-sexing, asexual
Streetwalker who doesn't walk
Streetfloater. That's me.

WALTER

...Jesus.

NINA

Right! There's a man who people admired.

WALTER

You just want to be admired.

NINA

Is that a crime?

WALTER

A crime of desperation.

NINA

Told you. Guilty as charged.

WALTER

You have any friends, Nina? Any real-live friends to talk to?

NINA

Sure I have friends.

WALTER

I mean it. Out here, in reality. With the rest of us schlubs.

NINA

What's this for? (*NINA finds and fingers a scalpel.*)

WALTER

Nina.

NINA

It looks pretty sharp for something so tiny.

WALTER

Nina.

NINA

I meannn one could really do some damage with this thing

WALTER

What are you not saying?

NINA

Nothing. Everything.

WALTER

What's so bad.

NINA

I just.

WALTER

I bet I can relate.

NINA

I bet you can't.

WALTER

Try me.

NINA

Oh Walter not you.

WALTER

Trial one. If anyone, then try me.

NINA

I think I'm the loneliest person in the world and no one understands the magic in me.

WALTER

That's it?

NINA

Don't sound so disappointed.

WALTER

Nina, everyone feels like that.

NINA

NO! You don't get it.

WALTER

I do. It's completely normal.

NINA

I don't know how to fix it.

WALTER

Why not just kill yourself?

NINA

I know right.

WALTER

No. I'm asking, why not? You're hanging around for a reason.

NINA

I blame my spirit of adventure.

WALTER

That's enough.

NINA

For cross country skiers.

WALTER

Yes, for them, and for you, and for me.

NINA

That seems like a stupid reason.

WALTER

You said it.

NINA

I didn't mean it.

WALTER

You should really only say exactly what you mean.

NINA

No one does that.

WALTER

I do.

NINA

I'm big on intentions.

WALTER

You ought to be big on action. On movement.

NINA

Huh.

WALTER

Yeah, you ought to do something with yourself.

NINA

I do plenty, I'm extremely busy, I got hobbies coming out my ears.

WALTER

What.

NINA

Radio!

WALTER

And.

NINA

Dreams?

WALTER

Nope.

NINA

And... and... window staring.

WALTER

I can run a mile in ten and a half minutes.

NINA

That's not that good.

WALTER

It is for me. It took a lot of work for me to get down to ten and a half minutes.

NINA

Well, good for you.

WALTER

Thanks.

NINA

... I HAVE hobbies, OKAY.

WALTER

Okay.

NINA

I have a job.

WALTER

Really.

NINA

Don't look so shocked.

WALTER

I just can't image what would... could possibly absorb you.

NINA

I'm a writer.

WALTER

What do you write?

NINA

Stories. Real stories. About real people.

WALTER

Am I going to be in your story?

NINA

No. It leads up to today. The manuscript is printed and on my editor's desk as we speak.

WALTER

I don't know whether or not to believe you.

NINA

Do.

WALTER

I don't.

NINA

Good. That was a lie.

WALTER

It was.

NINA

No.

WALTER

Ahhhhh!! Okay okay okay okay... I will perform the procedure today if you want.

NINA

Really?

WALTER

I mentioned my slight time crunch. It will only take two minutes.

NINA

But I still have so many questions.

WALTER

What's the difference.

NINA

Inquiring minds. My mind goes on, remember.

WALTER

I'm not so sure of that.

NINA

Excuse me?

WALTER

I don't know evidence to take to heart.

NINA

I don't want to hear that from my doctor.

WALTER

I don't have all the answers.

NINA

Would you lie to me, then? Please? Wear your white coat and say you'll fix it.

WALTER

I'd like to think you keep thinking, but I don't know.

NINA

I don't want you to erase my brain, just put it somewhere else. Remember? Procedure procedure procedure.

WALTER

You level with it, it's basically assisted suicide.

NINA

That makes you a killer.

WALTER

That makes me a medical professional.

NINA

Call a spade a spade.

WALTER

A corpse is a corpse!

I don't feel very better anymore.

NINA

I can feel you spooking.

WALTER

I just have a few more questions.

NINA

You'd stall all day if I let you.

WALTER

Probably.

NINA

Sterile calipers.

WALTER

There should be a nurse here.

NINA

Circumference noted, larger than average. (*WALTER examines NINA's head.*)

WALTER

Nurse Frock, right, it's Frock. Where's the Frock?

NINA

We shouldn't interrupt her lunch break, she gets nasty. You have swollen nodes.

WALTER

Owch! Don't poke.

NINA

Hush.

WALTER

There should be numbers and calculations and a computer model rendering thing!

NINA

And then light markings to indicate the mandibular cavity— (*He marks up her head.*)

WALTER

Don't draw on my face.

NINA

You need to be still.

WALTER

I'll come back later. Hey, QUACK, quit touching my face!!

NINA

Did you just call me a quack?

WALTER

No means no!

NINA

The diplomas are on the wall, Nina. The suma cum laude, the doctor's doctorates, it's all there.

WALTER

I got a BA in psychology, that doesn't make me a psychic.

NINA

Open your mouth.

WALTER

Hands off!

NINA

We administer the local before the general

WALTER

Don't shoot things into my—
Oh. Oh I can't feel my face.

NINA

Good. Patient has readily accepted local.

WALTER

It feels good.

NINA

Patient totally enjoying local.

WALTER

This is like drugsh or something.

NINA

It is drugs. Patient on a happy spaceship trip.

WALTER

Wait Shtop!
You can't shedushe me with brain juishe.

NINA

Sit down.

WALTER

Unnh!!

NINA

WALTER

Sit.

NINA

Unlock this doooooor!

WALTER

It's awfully hard to hit a moving target in the bloodstream, HAVE A SEAT.

NINA

No!

WALTER

Get on the table, get on the exam table.

NINA

I'm warning you!

WALTER

Shhh Nina!

NINA

I warned you!

WALTER

hUUUUUUUUUUUH let go! AH *let go letgoletgoletgo!* (etc., as NINA is twisting WALTER's testicles)

NINA

Learned this one in shelf defenshe, down at the Y!

WALTER

HA-AH HEY. Stopping. I stopped I stopped. Okay?

NINA

Not okay.

WALTER

Ahh ow. Ow. Ow.

NINA

Bad doctor!

WALTER

I think you popped one

NINA

Good. How'sh it feel.

WALTER

Tender.

NINA

Don't you have an ische pack or shomething.

WALTER

Not. Helping.

NINA

You can't force a lobotomy, you gotta finesse it. (She can talk again.) Oh. That was quick.

WALTER

It was only 5CC. I was just doing that to give you a sensation of what it will be like. Aghh.

NINA

Do you do that for everyone?

WALTER

No, I thought you would appreciate it. All—arty and experiential and shit.

NINA

Now I feel bad.

WALTER

I don't want you to make a choice you'll regret.

NINA

That's kind.

WALTER

I think we're done for now. Oh, ow.

NINA

Hey I'm hurting too, you know.

WALTER

Sorry. I just thought. I don't know what I thought, I thought you needed convincing.

NINA

That's not how it's done. That was scary.

WALTER

I frightened you?

NINA

Yeah.

WALTER

That's something.

NINA

That's something? STOP being so objective and just APOLOGIZE!

WALTER

Sorry. Sorry. I am. All polite and ugly.

NINA

But honest.

WALTER

This is exactly like when I lost my... the first time I tried to have sex.

NINA

This is what it was like? Oh Walter.

WALTER

No, it was like. I'm just thinking about it. She wanted it and then she didn't it and I didn't and then I thought I could macho my way through it and before I know it I'm at home with a heating pad on my groin thinking about my life.

NINA

Told you so.

WALTER

Friends don't say that to friends.

NINA

I can't believe you're squeezing pity out of me right now! Pitiful bastard.

WALTER

I'm going to go. Just limp on out.
You can get rescheduled at the front desk.

NINA

Wait.

WALTER

If you want. Or don't. I don't care. I don't care.

NINA

Wait, doc. (*She reaches for him.*)

WALTER

Don't touch me.

NINA

Walter. That's what I'm talking about.

WALTER

What.

NINA

That's the only thing about living that's okay. The extremely uncomfortable parts. When you are exposed and they are exposed and everyone is equally humiliated, there is this tremendous LOVE.

WALTER

It's probably not love, it's probably just hormones.

NINA

Like steroid chicken.

WALTER

That's not funny.

NINA

I'm not being funny! I'm being romantic! I am DEAD, SERIOUS, ROMANTIC here.

WALTER

Not with me.

NINA

No. Just generally.

WALTER

Jesus.

NINA

Yeah?

WALTER

...

NINA

... hey.

WALTER

Hey?

NINA

What would you do with your last day on earth.

WALTER

I would...

I would start walking and see how far I could get.

I would take Marcus and go.

NINA

Marcus.

WALTER

That's my cocker spaniel.

NINA

Oh.

WALTER

I can't think of anything too exciting to do. That's not living.

NINA

Sure it is.

WALTER

Life can be exciting, but that's not every day. What we do is move.

NINA

I guess so.

WALTER

That's the best you can do. So I would put on sneakers and see how far I can get, one direction, one day until it's over. I hope that's not boring.

NINA

It's not.

WALTER

...

NINA

Really.

WALTER

I never thought I would talk to anyone about anything at all.

NINA

It's not so hard.

WALTER

The best I get is conferences. Really eloquent speakers. Really interesting topics. Really boring people.

NINA

Signs you need to get out and make trouble more often.

WALTER

I'm a little old for trouble.

NINA

Ridiculous.

WALTER

A little tied down for trouble.

NINA

That's honestly very impossible.

Here. Throw this. *(NINA hands him the preserved brain in its labeled, glass jar.)*

I can't.

WALTER

Throw it, Walter.

NINA

But that's my prize brain.

WALTER

If you like it, you don't have to do it.

NINA

I don't like it.

WALTER

But it's your prize brain.

NINA

It's just a rubber model.

WALTER

You said it was formaldehyde and—

NINA

No. It's just rubber in water. It's a fake.

WALTER

Decor.

NINA

Yeah. Ambience.

WALTER

Walter.

NINA

Give it to me.

WALTER

ggrrrrrAAAAAAAAAAAAUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUGHHH!!! (He flings it at the wall and it explodes, a big wet firework.)

NINA

YEAH!!!

WALTER

TAKE THAT, FAKE BRAIN!

NINA

FAKE BRAIN!

WALTER

Yeah!

NINA

Yes Walter, yes!

WALTER

I feel so...

NINA

Yeah?

WALTER

Damp. And optimistic. And nauseous.

NINA

Barf pan?

WALTER

No I'm good.
I really like you.

NINA

That was a good brain-splosion.

WALTER

Stay around.

NINA

Do it again!

WALTER

Hey.

NINA

...I don't know.

WALTER

Am I worth it?

NINA

Sure.

WALTER

You have an answer for everything.

NINA

I can't write you.

WALTER

You answer all of it, answer me.

I told you, I'm not bound for this place.

NINA

Good! You'll reconsider.

WALTER

I'm not bound for the earth. I'm a celestial girl.

NINA

You won't reconsider.

WALTER

I could float away right now.

NINA

No, you couldn't. Come down.

WALTER

I'm here.

NINA

I'm serious! I'm dead serious! I like you.

WALTER

You're nice, Walter.

NINA

Thank you.

WALTER

But I have to.

NINA

Yeah.

WALTER

I'm going to make it out of this body-cave one way or another!

NINA

You have marker on your temples.

WALTER

It's the divine mark.

NINA

Let me wipe it off.

WALTER

Leave it.

NINA

I'll write you poems. WALTER

I'm tired of poems. NINA

They'll be nice. Descriptive. Wordy words. WALTER

Like: NINA
*There once was a girl with a brain
 Whose feelings she couldn't contain.*

Nina. WALTER

Yes. NINA

Let's dance. WALTER

Dance. NINA

Yeah, let's dance right here. WALTER

We need music. NINA

No we don't. WALTER

I can sing. NINA

No. They'll hear us in the waiting room. WALTER

You might just be crazy IF... your skull doctor sings! NINA

Decorporealologist.
 Move with me. WALTER

You got to help. NINA

Here, like this. WALTER

(She's not dancing.) I can't stay in this thing. NINA

I know it. WALTER

You have to get me out of here. NINA

Be my friend. WALTER

You be my friend. NINA

Okay. WALTER

Okay. Okay. NINA

I get it. WALTER

You do. NINA

I get you. WALTER

Do you? NINA

I do. WALTER

I thought so. You had that gleam in your eye. NINA

That spark. WALTER

No, that perfect fear. NINA

I'll dance with you. WALTER

Change your mind. NINA

Change of heart, I can dance for you. (*WALTER dances a little.*) WALTER

That's a very strange dance. NINA

I'm doing the best I can! WALTER

That's all you can do. NINA

It's hard in this coat! WALTER

Take off the coat! NINA

I will! WALTER

And the stethoscope! (*She's dancing with him now.*) NINA

The tie! (*He strips off his doctor gear.*) WALTER

Your shoes. NINA

Cut a rug, cut the sterile linoleum tile! WALTER

We really need music! NINA

I like "Bernadette" by the Four Tops! WALTER

Or some Lou Reed NINA

We need you Lou! WALTER

We need the chase music from Predator! NINA

WALTER
We need "The Waltz of the Sugar Plum Fairy!"

NINA
We need a hymn for euthanasia!

WALTER
We need some Aretha!

NINA
We need music, baby!

WALTER
"I love music!"

NINA
And FASTER

WALTER
I want to spin!

NINA
Make me happy.

WALTER
Spin with me.

NINA
Make it end.

WALTER
Spin

NINA
I can spin

WALTER
I can spin too

WALTER
Make it sing.

NINA
Make it end.

WALTER
Let it end.

NINA
Let me go

Kneel. WALTER

(*As she kneels*) Will it hurt? NINA

Gods don't feel a thing. WALTER

Goodbye, then. NINA

I'll see you around. WALTER

Thanks. NINA

I'm just doing my job. WALTER

Thanks. NINA

Any last words? WALTER

Yes. Haberdasher! And pustule! And oysters oysters oysters! NINA

Kalamazoo? WALTER

Yes, and Kalamazoo! NINA

Close your eyes.
Close your eyes and pray. WALTER

Prayer maker and taker. NINA

Word worker. WALTER

Work of the World. NINA

Time to work. WALTER

NINA

See you around.

WALTER

I see you.

(A captive-bolt stunner is lowered from the ceiling, the type used for slaughtering large cattle, attached by a rubber air hose. Music plays; "And Then He Kissed Me" by The Crystals).

[End.]

First World Problems

A Play in One Act

Characters

KELLY

A bubbly, budding young film artist who is painfully naïve and clumsy in every way; Dana’s younger sister.

DANA

The older sister, hardened by something and a victim of her own postmodern postgraduate malaise.

BELLE

A homeless woman, in her fifties, with a bad attitude and a surprising aptitude for words.

Setting

Dana’s studio apartment in the outer boroughs of a city, packed with crap and not very clean. A futon, some milk crates, peeling paint, and a stained kitchen. Dana and Kelly will run down a flight of stairs to Belle’s street corner, set with her cart and blankie, and back up to the apartment again.

Language

If it’s in capital letters, it’s loud. Kelly is an expert at speaking in the languages of her people, texting and facebook and blogs and youtube videos. She lives in the run-on sentence, while Dana and Belle can declare themselves with periods. Revel in everyone’s profanity.

Original Production

Performed as a staged reading in Cultural Conversations 2011, as a part of the discussion on “The Global War Against Women.”

Kelly..... Sara Costantino
Dana..... Anastasia Sunnergren
Belle..... Julia Albertson

Director Hali Russell
Stage ManagerDavid Charles Jesukiewicz
Lighting Design Jennifer E. Griffin
Artistic Director / Project Advisor..... Susan Russell

First World Problems

Kelly and Dana's apartment. DANA enters with a door slam! and she's off to a rushing start. Kelly is on her laptop.

DANA

Gonna be late—

KELLY

(typing) "And as usual, my ROOMMATE is running around like a TOTAL. CRAZY PERSON."

DANA

No time for this, already late!

KELLY

How was your shift?

DANA

I got nothing to wear.

KELLY

What was today's special? Douche du jour?

DANA

Where's that red thing?

KELLY

What?

DANA

The red thing, the red sweater dress thing!

KELLY

Over there.

DANA

Where.

KELLY

On the floor.

DANA

Bra. Come on, bra!

KELLY

Which bra?

DANA

The bra that doesn't show under it, the tan one.

KELLY

I think I'm wearing it.

Take it off!

DANA

No.

KELLY

KELLY, I NEED THE BRA. I SWEAR TO GOD.

DANA

It's drenched in my boob sweat.

KELLY

I'm desperate. Give it here.

DANA

Nasty.

KELLY

And whatever shoes you're wearing.

DANA

I'm not wearing any.

KELLY

Find me shoes.

DANA

Here.

KELLY

These are Crocs.

DANA

Yes. They are shoes.

KELLY

THEY ARE NOT SHOES, THEY ARE CROCS.

DANA

Fine! Wouldn't want to keep your fuck buddy waiting...

KELLY

Hey, do not judge me.

DANA

No judge. I'm just saying... fuck buddy.

KELLY

There is nothing wrong with getting a little dick on demand.

DANA

KELLY

Ugh... that sounds like a food delivery service. "Dicks on demand."

DANA

Hot 'n ready for ya!

KELLY

Oh eww, that's awesome! I have to post that.

DANA

Don't.

KELLY

(typing:) "Dicks on Demand: Does Easy Sex Cheapen Love?"

DANA

GOD! STOP BLOGGING EVERYTHING I SAY!

KELLY

Get them hits.

DANA

I hope you get hit. What about the Prada pumps?

KELLY

Well, I was cleaning up the other day...

DANA

How about the Doc Martin's? So I can kick your ass.

KELLY

It was actually right after I was writing this post.

DANA

You tell me where. I swear to God.

KELLY

It's not too late to start living with purpose.

DANA

My purpose is FINE. How's the blog-o-sphere treating you? You living with PURPOSE?

KELLY

Don't rag on me, okay. I've been working really hard on this post, and it's gonna be part of my movie.

DANA

Did it, like, totally change your life?

KELLY

As a matter of fact, yeah. It did.

DANA

I don't want to know.

KELLY

Altruism is our only defense left against the crushing capital system.

DANA

Using your mascara.

KELLY

I don't have any mascara.

DANA

Then I'm using my mascara.

KELLY

LISTEN to me.

DANA

Kelly. You're killing me.

KELLY

"French philosopher Auguste Comte coined the word *altruisme* in 1851..."

DANA

Laaaaa la la la LEAVING.

KELLY

That's from Wikipedia but I'm working on it.

DANA

(*a scream of frustration:*) AGGGGHHHH!!!!!!

DANA runs out the open door, SLAM.

KELLY

Shoes.

DANA

DANA runs back in.

SHOES.

KELLY

"...to love another as you love yourself."

DANA

LISTEN, you LOSER! No one CARES. I need to get LAID.

KELLY

Tell me what you think of this for the voice over:

DANA

I hate you.

KELLY

“Kindness is the basis of human interaction. When there is no kindness, the human network fails.”
You should text him.

DANA

I already did.

KELLY

“...The purpose of living is to serve others.”

DANA

You’re telling me. A world of waitresses.

KELLY

Do you know how to create a gift economy?

DANA

Here we go.

KELLY

Shut up, you don’t know what I’m gonna say.

DANA

Sure I do, “the milk of human kindness,” and No Impact Man and urban gardening and all that shit.

KELLY

That’s not what I’m talking about.

DANA

You think anyone has time for that bullshit?

KELLY

It’s not bullshit.

DANA

Nah. It’s garbage bull-shit. It’s Barney ho-ho purple dinosaur bullshit.

KELLY

Oooh, you’re really tough Dana.

DANA

And nobody wants to hear a bunch of bullshit.

KELLY

Everybody thinks you’re really *hard*.

DANA
I am hard. I'm more real than you'll ever be. Gimme my shoes.

KELLY
What does that even mean?

DANA
What?

KELLY
What is "real?" I'm "real."

DANA
Chh, please. Tough? Experienced? A hustler. Gimme my shoes.

KELLY
I am all of those things.

DANA
Really? You. My Jimmy Choos?

KELLY
Yeah, really! For reals!

DANA
Move.

KELLY
No.

DANA
Move your legs, I'm trying to look under the couch.

KELLY
... Your fuck buddy is not going to meet you.

DANA
Yeah he is, and I'm mad late.

KELLY
No, I mean, I saw it.

DANA
Where?

KELLY
He posted on your wall.

DANA
When?

While you were at work. KELLY

What did he say? DANA

I don't know. Go read it. KELLY

Gimme your computer. DANA

Say please. KELLY

Now. DANA
(DANA checks her facebook, reads his post on her facebook wall, a cancellation.)
Why wouldn't he text? Why didn't he text me?

He wrote on your wall instead. KELLY

You would think it would be important enough for him to text me. DANA

It's not really that big of a deal. KELLY

It IS, because I've been planning to see him all WEEK, and I NEEDED to SEE him. DANA

Ha. Read it to me. KELLY

No. DANA

I want to hear it again, it's hilarious. KELLY

It's not hilarious. Bitch. DANA

Here, I'll just pull it up on my phone. KELLY

Stop! DANA

KELLY

Oh here, here. Okay. “SUP GIRL I GOT 2 CANCEL 2NIGHT, THAT RASH I TOLD YOU ABOUT IS LOOKING BAD SO MY GRANDMA’S TAKING ME 2 HOSPITAL. I CALL U L8TR” – with an 8!— MAD LOVE. YO.” Ha ha ha ha ha...

DANA

He’s close with his grandmother.

KELLY

...ha ha oh man, RASH? What rash?

DANA

He has sensitive skin.

KELLY

Nice choice, girl-friend.

DANA

God you know, I just. You’re just. You’re jealous.

KELLY

Oh yeah definitely. STDs really do it for me.

DANA

Cuz you’re MARRIED to your BLOG.

KELLY

Hey hey hey hey, don’t be mad at me, I didn’t dump you.

DANA

He can’t dump me if we’re not dating.

KELLY

Don’t get pissy with me. I’m here for you. Mostly out of obligation, BUT I’m here for you.

DANA

Thank you. You’re a nosy bitch, BUT thank you.

KELLY

It’s out there! It’s public!

DANA

It’s none of your business what I do.

KELLY

Would you rather be stood up at a crappy bar? I am helping you.

DANA

Stay out of my business.

KELLY

Fine.

DANA

Thank you.

KELLY

You're welcome.
And you're also welcome for the shoes. Which I gave away. To a homeless woman.

DANA

I'm sorry?

KELLY

Yeah, I gave them to that lady that's always down at the corner.

DANA

To—you what? To what? What?

KELLY

When I was cleaning up the other day, I sorted them out and lined them up, and I realized that you and I together had too many shoes. Of course you had like twenty more pairs than I did, so I donated them. See that's what I discovered, when I was researching, that before I can tell anyone else what to do, I have to experience it myself. So I liveblogged the experience of it.

DANA

You liveblogged it.

KELLY

Yeah. It was really sweet. I'll read it to you.

DANA

No. Let me.

KELLY

Here. Scroll down. I took a photo of her.

KELLY gives Dana the laptop. DANA is boiling over with rage as she reads the post and sees the photo:

DANA

“She looked at me with an ancient wisdom, her eyes watering with grateful tears. I realized that I wasn't just helping someone who was less fortunate, someone who had lost their way and needed to be saved... I was also helping myself.”

KELLY

It's getting a ton of hits. There's a video too. I interviewed her.

DANA

Someone... less... fortunate?

KELLY

What do you think?

DANA

What do I think?

KELLY

Yeah. Do you feel liberated?

DANA

Do I feel... liberated?

KELLY

Yeah.

DANA takes the laptop with her to the window and dangles it out.

DANA

I'll liberate you, you prissy snot!

KELLY

NO! No, please! Don't drop it!

DANA

I'LL DROP IT, SO HELP ME GOD.

KELLY

No!

DANA

GIVE ME ONE GOOD REASON NOT TO DO IT.

We hear Belle from down at her corner.

BELLE

HEY! HEY YOU GIRLS!

DANA

WHAT?!

BELLE

SHUT UP!!

DANA

AHH, PISS OFF.

BELLE

I SAID SHUT THE HELL UP! THIS IS MY NEIGHBORHOOD!

DANA

AHH, BLOW IT OUT YOUR ASS.

Be careful!!	KELLY
Oh my God.	DANA
Oh God, oh God. Dana, don't look out there.	KELLY
ARE THOSE MY UGGS?	DANA
WHAT?	BELLE
YOU'RE WEARING MY UGGS.	DANA
I DON'T KNOW WHAT AN "UGG" IS, GIRLY.	BELLE
Give me my laptop.	KELLY
Shut up! It's <i>her</i> . HEY. HEY FUCK YOU!	DANA
EH, FUCK YOU.	BELLE
NO FUCK YOU!	DANA
EHH, GO SCREW YOURSELF.	BELLE
NO, YOU!	DANA
NO YOU!	BELLE
DON'T YOU MOVE, LADY. I DON'T WANNA MISS YOUR HEAD.	DANA
No no NO! My BABY, DON'T you THROW it. Give it to me. Give it to me.	KELLY
Let go of me!	DANA

No!

 KELLY

 BELLE

 I SAID, SHUT THE HELL UP.

 DANA

 I'M COMING DOWN THERE, YOU OLD CUNT.

 BELLE

 I DON'T GIVE A SHIT WHAT YOU DO, YA LITTLE TWAT.

 DANA

 (To Kelly, mostly:) Oh wow. Oh, it's 'bout to go *down*.

 KELLY

 I'll push you out if you don't give me my laptop!

 DANA

 I'm going down there. I'M COMING DOWN THERE AND I AM GONNA FUCK YOU UP, LADY.

 KELLY

 Wait. SHE DIDN'T MEAN THAT. Please oh please give it here.

 DANA

 (to Kelly:) Move over. (To Belle:) I AM GONNA RIP YOUR LEGS OFF.

 BELLE

 EHH. I'D LIKE TO SEE YOU TRY, YA WIMP.

 DANA

 YOU TOOK MY SHOES.

 BELLE

 WHAT?

 DANA

 I SAID, YOU TOOK MY SHOES!

 BELLE

 I HEARD YOU, I JUST DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT.

 DANA

 WHAT?

 BELLE

 WHAT SHOES ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

 DANA

Kelly, is that the right hobo?

KELLY

Yeah that's the right hobo, now give. Give.

DANA

No!

KELLY

Give.

DANA

No!

KELLY

Give it to me!!!! *(She grabs the laptop back and hides it safely in the apartment.)*

DANA and KELLY race down a flight of stairs during the following lines to get to BELLE at the corner.

DANA

Screw your movie and SCREW YOU.

KELLY

You threatened me. You endangered my life.

DANA

Dried up windbag skank bag lady...

KELLY

I don't think I can ever trust you again.

DANA

WHO. CARES.

The girls make it to the corner where BELLE is set up by her cart.

DANA (cont'd)

HEY. HEY YOU. STREET LADY.

KELLY

Don't call her that.

DANA

STREET LADY, I'M TALKIN TO YOU.

BELLE

Eh?

DANA

YEAH, YOU WITH THE SHOES.

BELLE

I don't have any shoes.

KELLY

(*speaking to her like she's deaf and foreign:*) HELLO MA'AM. GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN. HOW ARE YOU DOING TODAY?

BELLE

EH! Stop yelling! I'm homeless, not retarded.

KELLY

Oh. Sorry.

BELLE

I remember you. You were waving a camera around in my face for an hour.

KELLY

Yeah!

BELLE

That is really annoying, you know that?

DANA

Yeah she's *annoying*, she's fucking super annoying!!

KELLY

I had to get footage!

DANA

Hey! I came for the shoes.

BELLE

What shoes.

DANA

The big bag of my favorite shoes that she stole from me and gave to you. Jeffrey Campbell, Jimmy Choo, Betsey Johnson, ring a bell?

BELLE

I don't know any of those people.

DANA

YOU LIE!

KELLY

DANA, treat her with respect. I'm so sorry, ma'am, we were leaving.

DANA

YOU LYING BITCH! (DANA shoves at BELLE a little.)

BELLE
Oh help me! I am being harassed by these two crazy girls!

KELLY
Shhh, shhh, ma'am. Here, um, here, take this dollar.

BELLE
...I don't want it.

KELLY
I'm sorry, we bothered you, we're leaving now.

DANA
Kelly, don't give her a dime. She's already a shoe-stealing thief and she knows it.

BELLE
I'm not a thief, no one calls me a thief.

DANA
YOU ARE A LYING, DISGUSTING, HOMELESS THIEF.

BELLE
I never stole anything in my life! She gave them to me.

DANA
AH HAH!!

BELLE
Alright, alright. She gave me a bag of shoes.

DANA
You old bitch.

KELLY
DANA. That's enough.

DANA
I'm not leaving until you give 'em up. (*DANA sits down right where she is.*)

BELLE
Get up offa my sidewalk.

DANA
Make me.

KELLY
Let's just ask for them back and then we can get out of here and forget this ever happened.

DANA
You'd love that. To forget the way you double crossed me.

I was tryyng to help you. KELLY

So let's go. Give 'em up, lady. DANA

I can't. BELLE

You will. DANA

No, I gave them away to kids in the neighborhood who needed shoes worse than I did. BELLE

Huh. KELLY

(*As she stands up:*) Oh my god. DANA

Perfect. This. Is what my film needs. I'll call it, "*A Chain Reaction of Hope...*" KELLY

Chain of what? BELLE

I'm in hell. This is what hell feels like and I am in it. DANA

Where are the children? Can I talk to them, can I ask them questions? You see what I'm talking about Dana? It's community building, it's about solidarity. KELLY

I'm gonna kill myself. DANA

Girls, girls. I'm just fucking with you. BELLE

... you have them? DANA

Nah, I sold 'em. BELLE

No. DANA

BELLE

Yep, sold all of ‘em. Nice haul. Pawned ‘em down at Crazy Pete’s.

DANA

Crazy... Pete’s?...

KELLY

Who’s “Crazy Pete?”

DANA

It’s a pawn shop. A pawn shop. A pawn...

KELLY

Oh. That was... that was not what I expected you to do with the shoes, ma’am.

BELLE

It’s Belle.

DANA

...shop... (*DANA’s full-blown crying and wailing begins.*)

KELLY

Belle, that was not a good thing to do.

BELLE

Why not?

DANA

waahhhh haaaaaaa haaaaa it’s not true no no no whyyyyy

BELLE

My mother always told me, never accept moral lessons from strangers.

KELLY

Ma’am...

BELLE

Belle.

DANA

waaaaahhhhhhhhhhhhh

KELLY

Belle.

DANA

The only things I had just for me...

KELLY

QUIT YOUR BLUBBERING. See, let me explain. I thought that by giving you these shoes, in an act of good will, I would inspire you to give to others, promoting sharing and...

Yeah... no. I didn't do that.

BELLE

She didn't do that, Kelly.

DANA

I know that, Dana. Maybe we could learn something from this interaction.

KELLY

Yeah, I got almost a hundred bucks for all those.

BELLE

How much?

DANA

Just under a hundred bucks.

BELLE

What, per pair?

DANA

No, I put the bag on the counter, he put the bag on a scale, he told me he'd pay me like... ninety-two dollars and some change.

BELLE

You got hosed, you clueless, smelly...

DANA

Well how much were they worth?

BELLE

I don't know, good condition, designer, at least a hundred per pair? A FUCK TON.

DANA

Oh. That's a drag, isn't it.

BELLE

What did you do with the cash?

DANA

That's none of our business. Our part of the transaction is over.

KELLY

You spent it already.

DANA

Yep.

BELLE

What did you spend it on??

DANA

BELLE

Ahh, some whiskey, some cigarettes, a bar of soap, a couple jars of peanut butter... some duct tape?
Mostly just the whiskey.

KELLY

Oh, Belle...

BELLE

Do not judge me.

KELLY

No judge. Just, I mean, come on Belle.

DANA

We basically just bought an alcoholic a bunch of alcohol.

KELLY

We don't know if she's an alcoholic and it's not nice to say that about people you don't know so...

BELLE

I'm not an alcoholic.

KELLY

See? So don't say that.

BELLE

I just like to drink.

DANA

She's a drunk and a thief.

KELLY

You held my laptop out a window

DANA

You deserved it!

KELLY

You are malicious.

DANA

You're damned right I am, and you're an idiot.

KELLY

I bet you all those shoes that you've never done one nice thing for anyone in your life.

DANA

And I'm proud of it.

KELLY

I challenge you to repent.

DANA

Repent!

KELLY

Yeah, undo some of the damage from your wasted life.

DANA

This is hard to take coming from you, you... human sponge.

KELLY

That's... pretty poetic for you. I'm surprised.

DANA

Don't you condescend to me, you spoiled, bitchy, art-school twat.

BELLE

You tell her!

DANA

You shut up

KELLY

No you shut up!

BELLE

You two are sisters. Aren't you.

DANA & KELLY (together)

Ugh, yes.

DANA

Lissen, here's a project for you. Why don't you take your new friend up to our apartment and give her some TLC. Let her flea-bitten ass sleep in your bed, wear your shoes, eat your food.

KELLY

Well, technically it's your food.

DANA

GOD DAMMIT! Put your money where your mouth is for once.

KELLY

Okay... okay. Yeah I'll do that. I'll go there. Belle, would you like to come to our apartment, take a shower, rest a bit?

BELLE

No, I feel fine here.

KELLY

Come on, you're making me look bad here.

BELLE

No. I'm good. I got my cart, my blankets, some peanut butter. This is my place. I like it here.

KELLY

I'll... I'll... I'll pay you a hundred dollars.

DANA

WHAT?

BELLE

Yeah?

KELLY

Yeah, sure, I'll give you a hundred dollars if you just answer a few questions.

DANA

WHOSE hundred dollars, Kelly? You're broke as shit!

KELLY

Shhhhhhh we'll figure it out when we get her up there.

DANA

I'm not giving you another cent, if you even ask me I'll wring your little neck...

KELLY

I know I know, God you don't have to be so mean to me!

BELLE

HEY. Shut up already. I'll do it.

KELLY

You will?

BELLE

Yeah. You got cable?

KELLY

Yeah!

BELLE

Because I can't remember the last time I saw my shows.

DANA

Sure, sure, you can watch your shows. As long as Kelly can interview you. Her film's gonna be a HIT. A HIT. Lots of awards. She's gonna meet Matt Damon.

KELLY

And Ben Affleck. And I mean we're making a movie that will change the face of American art and media. And Ben Affleck is gonna be there.

...I'll have to pray over it. BELLE

Alright... take your time, I guess? KELLY

Heavenly father..... (a long pause)..... nah I'm just fuckin with you. Let's go. BELLE

The following lines exchanged as KELLY leads BELLE and finally DANA up the stairs.

AWESOME! Right this way, Belle. I feel really good about this. The Green Light Festival is gonna freak out when I send this film. I'm gonna do for the homeless what Supersize Me did for fast food. Except maybe less vomit. KELLY

These stairs are killin' me. BELLE

I hope so. DANA

They make it up to the apartment.

Welcome to the place. KELLY

This is it, the Playmate Mansion. DANA

It's not much. KELLY

Yeah, it really 'aint. BELLE

But it's home. KELLY

My home. Kelly is couchsurfing until she gets a real job. DANA

Just until I can get my entry submitted to the festival. KELLY

God willing. DANA

I'm gonna go global at Green Light. KELLY

What kind of films do you make? BELLE

Kind of... ah... well I'm inspired by Michael Moore, a lot of radical documentaries. Some noir, ummmm, anything foreign really.... KELLY

Basically anyone famous really. DANA

No. KELLY

Sounds kind of passé. BELLE

What do you know about film? KELLY

I know a lot about a lot of things. BELLE

Uh huh. KELLY

So how about a drink. BELLE

How about we finish that interview first. KELLY

Ahh, we'll finish it eventually. You got a bathroom? BELLE

Through there. (*KELLY indicates a crappy door.*) KELLY

Thanks. BELLE

BELLE exits to the bathroom.

Really charming lady. DANA

She's had such a hard life. KELLY

Everyone's had such a hard life. DANA

That's true...

KELLY

Ugh, you bleeding heart.

DANA

I feel for people, I can't help it.

KELLY

Here, let me get you your Oscar.

DANA

I'm not out for Oscars. I'm out for information.

KELLY

So what are you going to ask her?

DANA

I don't know yet.

KELLY

Good planning there.

DANA

You can't control these things. It's more my style to point the camera at the truth and just let it... do its thing.

KELLY

The mouth of genius.

DANA

Exactly.

KELLY

Christ. I'm hungry.

DANA

Do you hear the shower?

KELLY

What?

DANA

Did she just turn the shower on?

KELLY

I don't know.

DANA

I think she's in the shower.

KELLY

DANA
I don't care. You invited her in. You take care of her.

KELLY
This was your idea.

DANA
It's your genius film blog thing.

KELLY
I don't care if she takes a shower, it's her prerogative. Our home is her home now.

DANA
You mean my home is your home is also her home.

KELLY
Whatever.

DANA
"Whatever."

KELLY
Bitch.

DANA
I'm hungry.

KELLY
Go eat!

DANA
I can't, my hands smell like chicken wings.

KELLY
So wash them.

DANA
The smell never comes out.

From the shower we hear BELLE singing "I Got You Babe," softly, half the words mumbled and missing.

KELLY
You know.

DANA
What.

KELLY

THIS. Is the *moment*.

DANA

What?

KELLY

This is a moment for us. Here we have a special person in our house who has left her comfort zone. We can learn from this.

DANA

I hate when you talk.

KELLY

No, listen. You whine about your date. You whine about your job. You should be thankful you have a place to stay.

DANA

Hold this.

KELLY

What are all these?

DANA

Loans. These are my student loans.

KELLY

See, you can't see past your own need to see the needs of others.

DANA

My needs are the needs of others. Having you around is like having a child.

KELLY

Nuh-uhh!

KELLY

She's in there *right now*! And what do you know about her? Nothing!

DANA

Where are the Froot Loops?

KELLY

I don't know.

DANA

Did you finish my fucking Froot Loops?

KELLY

No.

DANA

Because if there were one thing that would really rip me apart and ruin my life right now it would be if I couldn't have a goddamned bowl of Froot Loops.

KELLY

You know I don't eat processed shit like that.

DANA

Did you donate them? You donated them. You bitch.

(BELLE exits the bathroom in bathrobe with her hair in a towel eating the Froot Loops.)

DANA

HOW DID YOU GET THOSE?

BELLE

I found 'em.

DANA

GIVE THEM HERE.

KELLY

Dana, you pig, let her eat them.

BELLE

No, please, take em. This processed stuff's bad for my gout anyway.

DANA

Don't. Touch. My food.

BELLE

Okay, okay, jeez. Your tub's clogged.

KELLY

Yeah, I'm sorry. I know.

BELLE

I smell like a fruit.

DANA

That's my body scrub.

BELLE

Like a big mango.

KELLY

Let me just set my camera up and we'll get started.

BELLE

Can I put some clothes on?

KELLY

Oh yes, of course. You want to wear what you were wearing before?

BELLE

It smells. I got splashed.

KELLY

You can take something out of our closet.

DANA

NO.

KELLY

Anything you like. Take it, it's yours.

BELLE

Well thanks. (*BELLE roots through the shared closet.*)

DANA

Nothing that's mine.

BELLE

You know I was never really a clothes horse. You guys have a lot of clothes.

KELLY

I just gave away a lot.

DANA

She gives til it hurts.

BELLE

That's a dumb thing to do.

KELLY

We're rolling. (*KELLY starts filming.*)

BELLE

I say, if you got something, hold onto it.

DANA

That's what I always say.

KELLY

So Belle. Dana and I were having a discussion earlier—

DANA

It was more of a brawl.

KELLY

Shut up Dana, you're not in the film.

DANA

I think I would add to the discussion.

KELLY

Well, if you wanna be in the film, chew with your mouth shut.

DANA

Mmmm nom nom nom crunch crunch mmmmm om nom nom.

KELLY

That's really attractive.

BELLE

How's this.

DANA

That's my mother's mu mu.

BELLE

I just want to look bright and cheery on camera.

KELLY

Take it, Belle.

DANA

Take it off!

BELLE

I feel good. I feel better than I felt in a long time.

KELLY

So how have you been, Belle.

BELLE

I'm doin okay, I guess.

KELLY

Talk to the lens.

BELLE

I'm doing okay, I guess.

KELLY

...and?

BELLE

And good?

DANA

This is awful.

KELLY

Shut up Dana. Belle, tell us about life on the streets.

BELLE

Well, it's like anything else I guess.

KELLY

Tell us about your daily grind.

BELLE

I, uh... I'm not used to doing this.

KELLY

It's okay.

BELLE

Um, well, a typical day... I wake up, I get ready, I go do my work.

KELLY

You work?

BELLE

Yeah, I work, I'm alive, I work.

KELLY

What kind of work?

BELLE

... I'm a spoken word artist.

KELLY

I knew it. I knew you were an artist. I could sense it about you.

DANA

Oh you liar, you looked at her once and you saw youtube-ready material.

KELLY

No! We found each other. I could hear her calling to me, from her heart.

DANA

So a spoken word artist. So do something.

BELLE

I'm not mentally prepared, you can't spring these things on me.

DANA

You're full of shit.

KELLY

Dana, I would like to speak to you in private.

DANA

Okay.

KELLY

In the hall maybe?

DANA

Make her go in the hall.

KELLY

Don't be the stubborn one. Be an *enabler*.
(*KELLY pulls DANA by the ear/hair out into the hall.*)

DANA

Ow ow ow let go okay okay okay okay I'm coming.

KELLY and DANA go to stand in the hall, but the door sags open, so maybe BELLE can hear and maybe she can't.

KELLY

This is a moment, Dana.

DANA

A moment.

KELLY

My moment, and it can be your moment, too. We can make a real impact here.

DANA

I'm not with you on this.

KELLY

Be my girl, have my back for once, please.

DANA

I always have your back.

KELLY

No you don't.

DANA

I know you have good intentions. I have never doubted you.

KELLY

This is what I've wanted to do forever. My whole life I wanted to be that person who could make that film that would change everything forever.

DANA

You're really sensitive, Kelly, and people like that about you. I appreciate that about you. I guess.

KELLY

Thank you.

DANA

But I will not be dragged into another one of your pipe dreams.

KELLY

This is my moment and I want you to be here for it. Let's change a life.

DANA

Do you hear yourself talking?

KELLY

I believe in you.

DANA

Stop *saying* that, you sound like a Feed the Children commercial. This is the way things work. She has a life. We have a life. Different spheres here. Different universes. It's not for lack of love, or hope, or energy. You don't understand: People fall like leaves. They belong where they lie. It's not any easier or harder than that.

KELLY

Try. For once. For me.

DANA

...fine.

KELLY

Thank you.

DANA

What do you want me to do?

KELLY

You can interview her.

DANA

I thought the story was gonna unfold.

KELLY

This will be your contribution.

DANA

Fine. Fine fine fine. I swear to God.

DANA and KELLY go back into the apartment to the sofa with BELLE.

DANA

So. You uh...

Use her name. KELLY

Belle. You uh, you come here often? DANA

Heh heh heh. BELLE

... uh... DANA

Go on. KELLY

I don't know what to say. DANA

She's an artist. KELLY

They say you're an artist. DANA

Who told you that? BELLE

You said so! DANA

Dana, be patient. KELLY

I swear to God. DANA

(*Falling back on her deaf/dumb voice:*) WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO FOR FUN, BELLE? KELLY

I heckle people. BELLE

Nice. DANA

I really give it to 'em. You get these young people, party people, puking all over your side of the street, throwing shit on the ground, these people who don't even look at you. These goddamn young girls with music jammed in their eardrums. I really hate that, iPods and earplugs and all that shit. BELLE

KELLY

Earbuds.

BELLE

I don't give a shit what you call 'em. What, walking around with your own personal soundtrack too boring for you?

DANA

It breaks up the monotony.

BELLE

Monotony? Monotony. I'll tell you about monotony. All day, every day, same corner – *my* corner – my cart, my arms and legs, my tongue, my words. Same body, same street, same city, every single day. That's what it is: Monotony. I sit on a blanket. I watch the people walk by, people in their patterns, routines, shifts. That's what I try to do... (a realization:) Yeah. I'm there to break up the monotony.

DANA

So... you heckle.

BELLE

Yeah. I let 'em know.

DANA

Sounds nice.

KELLY

Shut up, Dana, you're so insensitive!

DANA

You shut up, Kelly, I'm bonding here.

BELLE

Girls. You waste a lot of words. There's a kind of economy you have to worry about. When you're born, there's a certain number of things you get to say. There's not a lot of material out there. You have to claim it for yourself. Here, I got a good one. Listen to this: EAT MY ASS.

KELLY

Oh! That's... that's a good one for sure.

BELLE

You try it. Say, "EAT MY ASS."

DANA

EAT MY ASS!!

BELLE

Good!

DANA

Say it Kelly. It feels good on the tongue.

Maybe later.

KELLY

Do it!

DANA

Come on, you WEAKLING. YOU DISGUST ME WITH YOUR PLANS AND BULLSHIT. YOU CALL THIS A LIFE?? I'm demonstrating, work with me here.

BELLE

I don't want to.

KELLY

Come here.

BELLE

BELLE goes to the window.

I don't want to.

KELLY

Come here! Come on. Just pick someone. Find someone stupid and call them out.

BELLE

I don't see anyone who deserves to be mocked.

KELLY

I'm making *corrections*, I'm giving *notes*. Think of me as a life coach. That one, you see him?

BELLE

Yeah.

KELLY

Tell him to pull his pants up.

BELLE

No!

KELLY

HEY, HEY YOU RAT! YEAH! UP HERE! PULL UP YOUR GODDAMN PANTS BEFORE I COME DOWN THERE AND STRANGLE YOU WITH 'EM. YOU LOOK LIKE A DROWNED NUTSACK

BELLE

--oh my GOD!—

KELLY

See, it's easy. EH, SHOVE IT. THIS IS MY NEIGHBORHOOD.

BELLE

DANA

YEAH, WE RUN THIS PLACE! Do it Kelly, it feels really good. YEAH, YOU KEEP WALKING, YOU HUMAN SHIT HEAP.

...really? KELLY

Yeah! DANA

I don't know. I don't know. What about—okay. EXCUSE ME. YOU THERE. KELLY

Go for it. Let it rip. BELLE

HEY FUCKTARD! KELLY

Yeah! BELLE

Do it! DANA

HEY, HEY YOU SHIT-ASS! YEAH.... *(a really long pause, She is thinking)*... .. DON'T EVEN LOOK AT ME! DID I SAY YOU COULD LOOK AT ME? DON'T LOOK AT ME!! KELLY

(To Kelly:) That was okay. That was good. DANA

It's a start. BELLE

That felt good! I feel so, in-control. So threatening. I like it. KELLY

See you, two can get along. BELLE

We get along most of the time. DANA

We do. KELLY

Kelly has just overstayed her welcome a little bit. DANA

Hey. You said I can stay as long as I want. KELLY

I didn't mean it. DANA

Ah, your words. You gotta watch your words. BELLE

Yeah. DANA

Makes all the difference in the world. BELLE

I'm just crashing here until I can find a job in the city. I couldn't move back to Lansdale. KELLY

Ugh... Nobody deserves to live in Lansdale. DANA

How bad could it be? BELLE

It's real bad. DANA

So, this blog was to promote my first film... KELLY

...which doesn't exist yet.... DANA

Which is where you come in... KELLY

So she can win the festival and meet Ben Affleck. DANA

Dana, shut your mouth. KELLY

You shut your mouth, Kelly. DANA

Christ, enough! One second it's fine, the next it's war. If you were my daughters I'd slap the mouths off your ugly little faces. BELLE

Wow...sorry. KELLY

DANA

Jesus.

BELLE

And don't throw His name around.

DANA

Sorry.

BELLE

So. More questions?

KELLY

Let's take a break. How about some dinner.

BELLE

How about something to drink.

DANA

Yes!

KELLY

No... let's wait on that.

BELLE

You said you'd give me a drink.

KELLY

I never said that.

BELLE

Out on the street, you said so.

KELLY

I would never say that.

BELLE

I think you did.

KELLY

Let's keep this... professional. It's *my* film, after all.

BELLE

And *my* hundred dollars?

KELLY

Okay I lied.

BELLE

You don't have it.

KELLY

I don't have that much. But there must be something we can do.

DANA

For free.

KELLY

We can... We can... do your hair.

DANA

We can?

KELLY

Yeah, we can give you a beauty treatment! Like a... spa day?

BELLE

I don't know.

KELLY

It'll make you feel good again.

BELLE

I guess so. You could try.

KELLY

Sit back. I'm gonna roll again. Dana, go get your makeup.

DANA

Um...

KELLY

Please?

DANA

But... it's mine.

KELLY

For Belle?

DANA

Ungh... oh... okay.

KELLY

Let's change the angle.

BELLE sits back on the couch and the girls surround her and fix her hair and makeup.

DANA

You have a lot of dry skin.

BELLE

I know.

DANA

I have something for that I think.

KELLY

We'll do purples. To soften you a little.

DANA

Oh your teeth. Oh my God, do you walk around like this?

BELLE

It's not exactly a priority for me.

DANA

Yeah. But I feel bad, it looks like it hurts.

KELLY

I can start with primer, it will smooth you out.

BELLE

Impossible. I cannot be smoothed.

KELLY

And if you go with liquid foundation instead of powder it will make you look fresh.

DANA

I can get my curling iron.

KELLY

No, we'll scrunch it.

BELLE

Scrunch?

KELLY

Yeah, like a Kardashian.

BELLE

What.

KELLY

Don't worry about it. Let me pluck you.

BELLE

This is okay I guess. Don't make me look like a tart.

KELLY

No way.

BELLE

Diana, I want to tell you something.

DANA

It's Dana.

BELLE

Diana is stronger. The goddess of the hunt.

DANA

And not my name.

BELLE

I'm stickin with Diana.

KELLY

(to DANA)... humor her. Diana.

DANA

Okay, fine. Fine.

BELLE

(An eyebrow is plucked) Owch!

KELLY

Sorry.

BELLE

I have a daughter just like you.

DANA

Like me?

BELLE

She's your age and she's a lot like you.

DANA

Oh. What's her name? And how old do you think I am?

BELLE

She's thirty two.

DANA

I'm twenty six.

BELLE

Well she's thirty two and you remind me of her.

DANA

How?

BELLE

Hard exterior, practical, fast hands. Nasty streak a mile wide.

DANA

I don't have a nasty streak.

BELLE

Yeah okay. And I'm a Kardashian.

KELLY

Sit still.

BELLE

(A pluck:) Owch! The difference though, is that my girl speaks her mind. I taught her so.

DANA

So do I.

BELLE

You don't say what needs to be said.

DANA

Like what? What am I supposed to be saying?

BELLE

That you two have a love for one another, a sisterly bond, that scares you.

DANA

Me and Kelly are not the lovey type.

KELLY

Right. We don't need to say all that stuff.

BELLE

You think so, but what happens when all the convenient parts of love and family disappear. The silent, lived-in parts. You live next to each other every day, but you're living completely apart.

DANA

You don't know that. You don't know how we are.

BELLE

Tell your sister you love her.

DANA

Ugh...

KELLY

Come on.

DANA

I've said it before.

Say it again. BELLE

Yeah. Tell me again, Diana. KELLY

I... love you, Kelly. DANA

Thank you. KELLY

You say it too. BELLE

Sure. I don't have a problem showing my love. You are my sister and I love you. KELLY

Great. DANA

Good. It's a start. BELLE

I'll drink to that. DANA

Dana, no. KELLY

Yeah, let's toast. BELLE

To sisters. DANA grabs a liquor bottle from the kitchen.
BELLE

To sisters. DANA

Alright. To us. KELLY

I always wanted a sister. I had five older brothers. BELLE

Wow. KELLY

Sheesh. DANA

Here, to brothers. BELLE

To brothers. (*DANA drinks.*) DANA

Whatever. (*KELLY drinks.*) KELLY

To happy families. (*BELLE drinks.*) You got to stick together. And young girls have to stick together because as soon as we don't, we get fucked over. BELLE

Totally fucked over. DANA

Yeah I don't know I never really bought into that girl power stuff. KELLY

That's just unrealized potential. BELLE

Nah, it seems so... exclusive. KELLY

What? BELLE

It's just sexism in the other direction. KELLY

That doesn't make any sense. DANA

Yeah it does. We're in a post-gender era. I appreciate that the women before me fought for their rights. Now the playing field is level. We're equal. KELLY

Oh JESUS. DANA

Watch it. BELLE

Sorry. You're so naïve, Kelly. DANA

Okay. When was the last time you couldn't get a job because you're a woman. KELLY

DANA

The problem is way deeper than that.

KELLY

I know that the salaries are uneven and shit, I just mean on basic level. I think all people know that we're pretty equal now.

DANA

Please stop talking. This is so embarrassing.

BELLE

That's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about the quality of being sisters, about the blood we all share, about standing up to the fear in the atmosphere by gathering together.

KELLY

Rah. Rah.

DANA

No, I feel that. There's still a secret pact of hate against every woman.

KELLY

I don't know what that is.

DANA

Ok, now turn the camera on.

KELLY

This is not what the film is about.

DANA

Give me the damn thing. (*DANA grabs the camera and films.*) Talk Belle.

BELLE

This is something dark and disgusting we are born into, where self defense is expected and fear is status quo and they can rip the life out of you or stuff you full of it when you don't want it.

KELLY

I'm gonna order a pizza.

DANA

Sit down.

BELLE

Yeah I'm talking to you.

KELLY

I think you two are bitter.

DANA

I think you're frigid.

KELLY

I'm frigid, Im cold. This one is the one who names guys in her phone, "Dick Number One. Dick Number Two."

DANA

That's a joke.

BELLE

Heh heh heh.

KELLY

Don't side with her, it's sick.

BELLE

I'm not siding with anyone.

KELLY

I'm gonna go down the block and get a pizza.

DANA

Fine, run Kelly, run when you get awkward.

KELLY

I'm not AWKWARD. You guys are being JERKS and I just want some PIZZA.

KELLY leaves the apartment to go get a pizza. Dana gradually puts the camera down.

BELLE

Touchy.

DANA

Yeah, she's kind of temperamental.

BELLE

The life of the artist.

DANA

Hah.

BELLE

Don't laugh.

DANA

I'm sorry. I live with it.

BELLE

She's your little sister, you don't laugh when she says she's an artist.

DANA

Sorry.

Don't apologize to me. BELLE

Right. Sorry. Can I ask you about your daughter? DANA

Her name is Joy. BELLE

Ha, nice name. DANA

You mock, but she was my joy. BELLE

Hah, come on. DANA

Wait until you have a daughter, you'll understand. BELLE

Oh no, not me. DANA

How do you know? BELLE

I feel it. DANA

Don't be so sure. BELLE

No way. What you are looking at with me and Kelly is an entire generation of people who are absolutely turned off to the idea of producing more people. Just the thought of making more people to walk around and make more horrible messes, more crap. DANA

Oh? BELLE

I'm voluntarily barren. DANA

That's awful. BELLE

But not without sex. Obviously. Except Kelly. DANA

What do you mean?
 BELLE

I shouldn't have said anything. I shouldn't have said that.
 DANA

Big deal.
 BELLE

She would be really pissed if she knew I told you that. She doesn't like people to know. She's sensitive about it.
 DANA

So Kelly doesn't like to have sex.
 BELLE

Kelly's a virgin.
 DANA

That word doesn't mean anything to me.
 BELLE

What do you mean. She's never had sex with anyone. She won't let a guy have sex with her. She's a virgin.
 DANA

I don't put any stock in the word "virgin."
 BELLE

That's what she is.
 DANA

The idea doesn't make any sense. You can't be something that isn't anything.
 BELLE

I don't follow.
 DANA

Un-sexed. Un-screwed. Before God created the world, there was nothing.
 BELLE

It's just a word.
 DANA

You must learn to be careful with your words. Besides, I never had the opportunity to be a virgin so I don't believe in it.
 BELLE

What?
 DANA

BELLE
As long as I've been alive I don't remember not getting screwed.

DANA
Noooo, not like, metaphorically screwed.

BELLE
No, no, from the first. My earliest memory is of someone taking me into a room and wounding me.

DANA
Oh Jesus.

BELLE
Yes, oh my Jesus, son of God, with me when I first was wounded.

DANA
Belle, I don't know what to say. I'm sorry.

BELLE
What's an apology gonna do?

DANA
I don't. What am I supposed to say?

BELLE
...do you feel for me?

DANA
I do. Of course I do.

BELLE
Say, "I feel for you."

DANA
I feel for you.

BELLE
Thank you.

DANA
Is that why you're homeless?

BELLE
No. Oh, excuse me. (*She goes to the window to look out and check her cart:*) Good. There's either squirrels or kids out there, I can never leave my cart alone.

DANA
Why are you homeless?

BELLE

Because I chose it. I got all turned around. I have done things I shouldn't do. You can't let it eat you alive. I had a life before this and this is part of that life too.

DANA

Well what's your plan?

BELLE

For what?

DANA

To get your life back together, to turn it around, to rejoin society?

BELLE

My baby. I am society. Hang on. (*She hears a noise out the window and runs to it:*) DON'T TOUCH THAT PEANUT BUTTER, THAT'S MY LUNCH. I KNOW WHERE YOU LIVE. (*Back to Dana:*) Everyone's got problems that are smaller than yours and everyone's got problems that are bigger than yours.

DANA

I guess.

BELLE

You know this. *Everyone's* got problems.

DANA

Yeah, I know.

BELLE

So what's yours?

DANA

I can't even tell you anything.

BELLE

What's this ball of rage you keep in your lungs? And you throw it at her (*re: Kelly*) and she doesn't deserve it. And you know that.

DANA

I know. Look, I can't tell you, you don't even live in a house, what am I gonna tell you that will make any difference at all? I just never really got what I wanted but it's fine and I'm not gonna talk about it.

BELLE

Fine. Pretend I never asked. You want me to brush your hair?

DANA

Do I *want* you to?

BELLE

Will you let me brush your hair? Just let me do it.

DANA

....Ok.
 (BELLE brushes DANA's hair.)

DANA
 You, uh. You make me miss my mom.

BELLE
 Oh yeah. Your mom a bag lady?

DANA
 No, my mom is not a bag lady. My mom is a dental hygienist. She lives in Lansdale. Her name is Eileen. You don't remind me of her, I just said you make me miss her.

BELLE
 I heard.

DANA
 Well. Anyway.

BELLE
 Don't fuck it up.

DANA
 What?

BELLE
 I haven't seen my daughter in thirteen years, and I haven't talked to her in nine. Don't fuck it up.

DANA
 Yeah, I'm trying not to.

BELLE
 Don't be so resentful. Be forgiving. Tell her you love her often, and be careful what you say. And if you got that love, hold onto it.

DANA
 You make it sound easy.

BELLE
 People *are* easy. You're overthinking it. People are very simple.

DANA
 Kelly is.

BELLE
 Not just Kelly. All people are very simple; they need few things to survive. Look at me. (*Rushing up to the window:*) HEY YOU KIDS. DON'T TOUCH MY SHIT.

DANA

The one thing I always wanted was to feel like I was doing something for me. Instead of someone else.

BELLE

Yeah I hear you. WAIT'LL I GET DOWN THERE YOU PUKE POCKETS. What is it that you want? For you. Not for anyone else.

DANA

I just want to be happy, I guess.

BELLE

So start your life.

DANA

I did. I am.

BELLE

For yourself. Ultimately, people only care about themselves. So no one is gonna give you a prize for your martyrdom. No one cares.

DANA

People need me. There are people who would die without me.

BELLE

She would be fine.

DANA

Who?

BELLE

“Who? Who?” Who do you think? Don't play dumb, you are not a dumb girl.

DANA

She's just real sensitive.

BELLE

So either love her and love the help you give her, or leave her alone and let her go.

DANA

I'm the only one who gets her.

BELLE

Let it go, Dana. No one likes to see you suffer except you.

DANA

How do you live the way you do?

BELLE

How do you?

DANA

I don't think too hard about it, I guess.

BELLE

I have discovered a real love for myself. In spite of all of my accidents.

DANA

How do you do it?

BELLE

How do you not? When I realized that no one was watching me, I became invisible to everyone in this place. It allowed me to bloom.

(BELLE stands to leave, pulling on her coat and possibly pocketing the Froot Loops.)

DANA

I don't even want anything that extreme, I just want to feel happy.

BELLE

What would that feel like?

DANA

I just want to feel peace.

BELLE

That's not what you want.

DANA

Then what?

BELLE

I don't know, brave Diana. What *do* you want?

DANA

Tell me.

BELLE

(Looking out the window:) She's coming back.

DANA

Belle, tell me.

BELLE

Shit, girl. I can't do that.

DANA

Belle.

BELLE

You need something that will light you on fire.

DANA

Don't go. I feel better when I talk to you. I feel calmer.

BELLE

You need to learn to speak yourself.

DANA

Stay here. Stay here with me. Stay.

BELLE

You know where I live.

BELLE exits through and door and walks down to the street. DANA has a moment on stage alone and then she goes to the window:

DANA

'Bye.

KELLY re-enters the apartment.

KELLY

The pizza place was closed.

DANA

What time is it?

KELLY

It's after midnight. Where is she?

DANA

She left.

KELLY

She left?

DANA

Yeah.

KELLY

Oh. I guess I can find her tomorrow.

DANA

For what?

KELLY

For the film.

DANA

Oh. Cool.

KELLY

You want to watch Hulu?

DANA

Do you think she's out there right now?

KELLY

Yes. Where else would she be?

DANA

Yeah, I know, I just.

KELLY

What did she say to you?

DANA

Nothing. Really. Just, shootin' the shit, talkin about life and stuff. And shit.

KELLY

You know I was thinking it was really ironic that she's homeless and, like, I'm kind of homeless. Cuz I'm staying with you, right?

DANA

You're not homeless.

KELLY

No, not really, I just thought it was funny. Cuz she and I had that connection, you know. Like I kind of know what it feels like.

DANA

Kelly.

KELLY

Don't jump down my throat, I'm not saying my situation is exactly the same as hers but –

DANA

Kelly.

KELLY

What?

DANA

You don't hate me, right?

BELLE

(From down at the corner:)
... HEEYY.

KELLY

No. I don't hate you.

DANA

Good.

BELLE

HEY YOU GIRLS.

(DANA and KELLY remain frozen with each other for a long moment on the couch.)

DANA

(Eventually:) ‘Cause that would upset me.

(One last moment of silence.)

BELLE

KELLY, DIANA. YOUNG GODDESSES OF THE HUNT.

KELLY goes to the window.

KELLY

WHAT?

BELLE

ASK YOUR SISTER IF SHE WANTS THESE UGGS BACK.

KELLY

Do you want the Uggs back?

DANA

No, she can have them.

KELLY

NO, IT'S OKAY, YOU CAN HAVE THEM.

BELLE

I WANT HER TO HAVE HER SHOES.

DANA

I want her to have them.

KELLY

SHE WANTS YOU TO HAVE THEM.

BELLE

THEY LOOK LIKE ASS.

KELLY

She says they look like ass.

DANA

I heard her, I heard her.

DANA goes to the window.

DANA (cont'd)
KEEP THE FUCKING SHOES, FREAK LADY.

BELLE
I DON'T WANT 'EM.

KELLY
NO YOU KEEP THEM!!

BELLE
TAKE 'EM BACK.

DANA
COME UP HERE AND MAKE ME.

BELLE
EH, NO WAY! YOU GIRLS ARE FUCKING CRAZY!

[End.]

Bed of Losers

A Ten-Minute Play

Characters

FAITH

A 12-year old middle school student with some growing pains.

DEB

Her well-meaning mother.

Setting

Late Monday afternoon in Deb's unmade bed in her gloomy bedroom. There is a large bed and a bedside table with a lamp, a cup of water, some books and pens, a cell phone, a jewelry tray, etc.

Bed of Losers

FAITH is lying in her mother DEB's bed.

DEB

Do you feel better?

FAITH

I wanna die.

DEB

Do not say that.

FAITH

Thanks for letting me stay.

DEB

Everyone needs a mental health day.

FAITH

I think I might fall asleep again.

DEB

You should wake up, splash some cold water on your face, go check your email.

FAITH

I can't move.

DEB

Stop.

FAITH

My legs weigh a million pounds, I can't get up.

DEB

Baby. Behave.

FAITH

I don't want to. I wanna die.

DEB

No you don't.

FAITH

I feel so embarrassed. Everyone thinks I'm an idiot.

DEB

Your real friends probably miss you.

FAITH

No! I can't go back there. I'm a complete outcast.

DEB

Well, you lost. But one year from now, nobody will remember this. You turn thirteen and mark my words everything changes.

FAITH

I'm the biggest loser in the whole school.

DEB

I bet there are lots of bigger losers than you.

FAITH

Yeah, like who?

DEB

What about that girl?

FAITH

What girl?

DEB

Anne.

FAITH

Who?

DEB

Annie. Annie. The one who threw up green Jell-o across the cafeteria table?

FAITH

Amber?

DEB

Yeah, she's got to be less popular than you.

FAITH

Mom, it's not about popularity. It's about humiliation.

DEB

Well you had the weekend, and you can stay today. Tomorrow, you will have to go back to school.

FAITH

Do you know what David said?

DEB

About you?

FAITH

For his campaign speech.

DEB

What did he say?

FAITH

He said he had a rough childhood.

DEB

How so?

FAITH

He had a “rough childhood.” He said his parents kept him in his room, that they fed him through a slot in the door, that they hit him.

DEB

That’s terrible!

FAITH

It’s a lie! It’s a big, horrible lie he told to get everyone’s sympathy.

DEB

How do you know?

FAITH

Mom. Look at him and look at his house and tell me he had a “rough childhood.”

DEB

You never know what happens behind closed doors.

FAITH

I do! I can’t believe everyone fell for it.

DEB

You have no idea what he has experienced—

FAITH

How does that make him a better president than me?! Even if he was raised by wolves, how does that make him smarter or more fair or nicer than me?

DEB

That’s not how you win.

FAITH

That’s not fair.

DEB

I know. You should try to get out of bed.

FAITH

I can’t move.

DEB

I love you but you’re starting to smell.

FAITH

He had a rough childhood. A rough childhood. Can we watch the Cooking Network?

DEB

You've been watching too much TV.

FAITH

I'm going back to sleep.

DEB

Why don't you get up and take a nice shower and we'll make some dinner?

FAITH

(silence)

(silence)

DEB

Your father called and said he wanted to see you this weekend.

FAITH

(silence)

DEB

He said he would take you to see the last *Twilight* movie.

FAITH

I hate *Twilight*.

DEB

Well I hate your father but I deal with it.

FAITH

Don't say that in front of me.

DEB

I'm sorry.

FAITH

You're giving me a rough childhood.

DEB

Please baby, you've got to get out of bed.

FAITH

(silence)

(silence)

DEB

Are you awake?

(*silence*)

Lay down with me.

(*DEB climbs into bed with her daughter.*)

Why is that your side?

The light is too bright over there in the morning. It wakes me up.

Why don't you get darker curtains?

The sheer ones balance the room.

Oh. Hey, Mom?

Yeah.

Do you think we could kill David Glass?

That's not funny. That's not funny at all.

Maybe I'm not kidding.

You've always been a sore loser. I gave you more grace than that.

I'm about as graceful as a duck.

No you're not. And I don't remember you ever being this negative before, where's the bounce-back?

I'm going to die here.

Close your eyes.

FAITH

DEB

FAITH

DEB

FAITH

DEB

FAITH

DEB

FAITH

DEB

FAITH

DEB

FAITH

DEB

FAITH

DEB

FAITH

Why?

DEB

Close your eyes, it's a big surprise.

FAITH

Really? Okay. I'm ready.

DEB

Close your mouth.

(DEB dumps a glass of water from the bedside table over FAITH's head.)

FAITH

COLD! Mom! Oh my GOD!

DEB

Are you awake now?

FAITH

That's abuse! That's abusive! God Mom!

DEB

Quiet down.

FAITH

GOD Mom! I'm gonna get pneumonia!

DEB

Stop with the histrionics, please. It was a joke.

FAITH

IT WASN'T FUNNY.

DEB

I thought it was funny.

FAITH

I'm literally dying right here and you don't even care.

DEB

What is wrong with you?

FAITH

I'm never gonna leave your bed. I will stay here and pee in that cup if I have to.

DEB

Am I supposed to take care of you?

FAITH

Yes.

I don't know if I love you that much. DEB

Mom, I mean it. FAITH

Fine, then we'll both stay here. I'm not just going to wait on you all day. DEB

Then we'll both just have to die here. And they'll find our bodies and say it was a mother-daughter suicide. FAITH

Fine then. DEB

Fine. FAITH

(silence)
(silence)

I'll last longer than you will. DEB

Fine, then you can eat my body if I go first. FAITH

Oh, that's too far. DEB

You have my official permission. FAITH

Get out of bed, Faith. DEB

... no. FAITH

What can I do for you. What can I do for you that I haven't already done? DEB

Leave me alone. FAITH

Alright. DEB

I'm going back to sleep. FAITH

DEB
Then at least turn over, looking at you is pissing me off.

FAITH
Then go!

DEB
I don't trust you here alone.

FAITH
How come?

DEB
I don't know, you might strangle yourself in the sheets.

FAITH
You would love that.

DEB
What is wrong with you? Why would you say that?

FAITH
I'm SICK!

DEB
No you're not!

FAITH
I'm sick / I'm sick / I'm sick / I'm sick / I'm sick / I'm sick / I'm sick

DEB
You are not you're perfectly fine / You're lazy / You're mentally lazy / I've spoiled you, is that it?

FAITH
No.

DEB
Did I spoil you? Did you get nice and spoiled just you and me all the time?

FAITH
Mom, don't be mean.

DEB
I was too easy on you.

FAITH
Mom.

DEB
I shouldn't have let you sleep with me the first time.

No I needed you then
 FAITH
 Made you weak and soft. And I should have made you take the bus more often.
 DEB
 I need you now.
 FAITH
 I should have left you crying in your crib.
 DEB
 Mom, hug me.
 FAITH
 I didn't read the child psychoanalytics book your father's mother gave me, is that it? Is this, is this...
revenge?
 DEB
 You're so weird.
 FAITH
 No, it was this big thing, all the young moms were reading it.
 DEB
 Moooooom....
 FAITH
 I will push you off the edge of this bed, Faith Angela, stop whining.
 DEB
 You dumped water on my head.
 FAITH
 It was a joke!
 DEB
 I hate you.
 FAITH
 (silence)
 (silence)
 DEB
 FAITH
 The whole election was humiliating. People drew stuff on my posters, they drew mustaches on my face. And scratched out my eyes with pushpins. My campaign was a joke. Do you know what David Glass did for his campaign?
 (DEB is in shock from the "I hate you" and will not respond.)

He gave everyone a five-dollar giftcard for iTunes, and a free mp3 of his campaign song. He had a campaign song, he got Young Jeezy to record the chorus! How does an eighth grader even get in contact with Young Jeezy? It's probably because his dad is loaded. I could have had that if you bought me friends and a nice campaign. You know what I had? I had hand-drawn stickers! That said "HAVE A LITTLE FAITH IN FAITH HOPKINS." You told me to write that! That was a terrible slogan! I looked like a spaz! Oh, have a little faith in Faith. Gag.

(DEB takes her time in giving FAITH the silent treatment.)

Mom.
Mom.

FAITH

(silence)

DEB

I didn't even want to be president that bad, I just wanted my friends to vote for me.

FAITH

(silence)

DEB

But I don't think any of them did. Melissa said she voted for David. Everyone voted for David Glass.

FAITH

You should get better friends.

DEB

My friends are awesome, it's cheaters like David who make my life horrible.

FAITH

You hate me, huh.

DEB

What? No, mom, I was kidding.

FAITH

Oh, well as long as it was a joke, as long as you didn't mean it.

DEB

I'm sorry. I say it to all my friends.

FAITH

That's a funny way to show you care about someone.

DEB

It's what we say.

FAITH

No wonder no one voted for you.

DEB

FAITH

Uh! How could you even... you are not allowed to say that to me, I am your daughter.

DEB

I'm trying my best to cheer you up! That's all! I'm not trying to ruin your life! Jesus. Now get your ass out of bed and get a smile on, dammit, you're going to school tomorrow.

FAITH

But tomorrow is Tuesday.

DEB

Exactly.

FAITH

I have gym.

DEB

Right.

FAITH

(silence)

DEB

What did you do.

FAITH

I didn't do anything!

DEB

What now?

FAITH

Nothing!

DEB

Tell me right now.

FAITH

I don't wanna.

DEB

WHAT DID YOU DO, FAITH ANGELA?

FAITH

It's not what I did! It's just something that happened to me!

DEB

Did you get into a fight? Did you steal something? Did you cheat on a test?

In gym? FAITH

You've cheated before, you'll do it again. DEB

I didn't cheat! FAITH

I'm getting to the bottom of this. DEB

Where are you going? FAITH

I'm calling Mr. Tomczykiewicz. DEB

Oh don't call him, he doesn't even teach gym, please! FAITH

I've got to do something. You're probably in some kind of mess with drug dealers. Are you on drugs? DEB

Mom, please! FAITH

Are you on drugs? DEB

Mom! FAITH

Where is your directory? Nevermind, I'll email him. DEB

MOM! I farted in the pool! During swim class! I made bubbles and everyone saw and now they're calling me Old Faithful. FAITH

Old Faithful. DEB

That's not even all of it! FAITH

Mother of Mary. DEB

FAITH

I forgot my suit on Thursday and I had to wear the school suit, that thick, black one piece, and it was a size too big... and the bubbles got stuck in the suit. And David Glass pointed at me and said, "Old Faithful blew up!!"

DEB

(silence)

That's... that's bad.

FAITH

It's real bad.

DEB

But, it's not the worst thing in the world.

FAITH

Mom. Last week completely ruined me. My reputation is in tatters. I have been made the laughing stock of the universe. I am destroyed!

DEB

You're being a little dramatic.

FAITH

No. I can't go back there. Find me a new school. Find me a new country. I quit.

DEB

Listen. Baby.

FAITH

And don't call me baby. I'm not a baby anymore, I'm not even a cute kid. I'm a huge, fucking freak.

DEB

Don't say fuck.

FAITH

Sorry. I'm a huge freak and I'll never recover.

DEB

Listen, all I can tell you is this: Next year, you will be in high school, and everything will be better. High school is a new world, with new friends and new opportunities. You will be fabulous and everything will be so much easier.

FAITH

...Really?

DEB

Absolutely.

FAITH

I can start over.

DEB

Yes.

FAITH

Thank God. I'm so sick of the insecurity, the rumors, the backstabbing.

DEB

...Sure, baby.

FAITH

It's good to know that people grow up and change.

DEB

Shhh, there now.

FAITH

It does get better.

DEB

Shhh, Faith, shut up.

FAITH

Fine.

(DEB hugs and holds FAITH.)

FAITH (cont'd)

So... I'm excused for the rest of the year, right. Free and clear.

DEB

I know what we can do for you.

FAITH

Homeschool?

DEB

No, no. No I don't think so.

FAITH

Boarding school.

DEB

Oh no no no no. You need a makeover.

FAITH

Can I get contacts?

DEB

A personality makeover.

FAITH

That is so incredibly "mom."

DEB

You need to reinvent yourself. Like Madonna.

FAITH

Ew! She's all stringy and boney and nasty. No thanks.

DEB

No, no, back when... nevermind Madonna. You need to walk into that school and own the woman you are.

FAITH

You're right. That's it. I need to own it. Except, there's one thing.

DEB

What.

FAITH

Everyone hates who I am.

DEB

Then screw them, Faith Angela!!

FAITH

Mom!

DEB

Screw them, and their zitty faces, and their thousand dollar test prep programs, and their passive aggressive mothers with their crudités and their smart blazers at Active Parents Forums! We are too good for them! We are too cool. We are rebels. We're punks. Bad-asses. We're the Ke\$has and we're gonna ROCK... THEIR... WORLDS!

FAITH

Mom. Nobody. Likes. Ke\$ha.

DEB

Sure you do, you love her. (*DEB sings horribly:*) "Don't stop / make it drop / Mister DJ make it bop..."

FAITH

Those aren't the words.

DEB

"Uh oh uh oh! Uh oh uh oh!"

FAITH

We are a family of losers.

DEB

We. Are. Not.

You weren't cool in school, were you? FAITH

I had friends! DEB

You were a big freak. I've seen your yearbook, I've seen you. Drama club president. FAITH

You guys don't perm, you wouldn't understand. DEB

It's not your hair. It's not even being a theatre geek. FAITH

Hey, we put on an amazing production of *Romeo and Juliet*. No one knew Romeo was a girl until my wig fell off during curtain call. DEB

That's exactly it! We don't get to be Juliet in this family, we don't get to do the suffering lady thing. FAITH

Romeo is a more challenging role. DEB

Don't care. Don't care. Huge freak. FAITH

I wore that costume to prom. DEB

Mom, I don't want to hear that. FAITH

Juliet was my best friend so we went together. DEB

Mom. Look at me. Hug me. FAITH

I love you. (*FAITH and DEB hug.*) DEB

We are losers. FAITH

I know. DEB

I love you too. FAITH

You have to go back there. DEB

I know. I've accepted that. FAITH

I can't believe you have to go back there. DEB

I'll be a rebel. We're punks. We're the bad girls, right? FAITH

Yeah. God, middle school sucks. DEB

[End.]

April 2011

ACADEMIC VITA OF REAGAN COPELAND

811 North Allen Street, State College, PA 16803
610-248-1697 reagancopeland@yahoo.com

EDUCATION

The Pennsylvania State University
Schreyer Honors College
Spring 2011
Bachelor of Arts in English
Bachelor of Arts in Theatre, Honors in Theatre
Thesis title: Plays for American Daughters
Thesis supervisor: Dr. Susan Russell
Additional reader: Robert W. Schneider

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Cultural Conversations New Play Festival
2009 - 2011, State College, PA
Supervisor: Susan Russell
Artistic associate for a theatre festival devoted to the development of new works
which provoke community discussion of cultural diversity.

The Studio Theatre
Summer 2009, Washington, DC
Supervisor: Sarah Wallace
Intern in the literary department and assistant to the production dramaturg at a non-
profit theatre.

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

HOINA (Homes of the Indian Nation)
Summer 2008, Chennai, India
Supervisor: Laura Spess
Service-learning work teaching English language, theatre, and music at youth
orphanages in India.

HONORS AND GRANTS

Featured Student Playwright in Cultural Conversations Theatre Festival, 2010 and 2011.
Penn State School of Theatre Undergraduate Academic Excellence Award, 2010.
School of Liberal Arts Enrichment Scholarship, 2009.
Schreyer Summer Enrichment Grant, 2009.
Schreyer Society of Distinguished Alumnae mentee, 2008.
Schreyer Ambassador Travel Grant, 2008.
Deans List, All Semesters.
Schreyer Honors College Enrichment Scholarship, 2007 - 2011.