

IN THE JUNGLE

A Play in Two Acts
by

Andrea AA Rassler

160 Edgewater Drive
Concord, NC 28027
Phone: (704) 782-7218
Email: arassler@ctc.net

Dedicated to Annette

My sister

For you...and all you are

Character List:

Emily: 18-19 years old and is Autistic (with all that implies). She is not severely Autistic and can tolerate some human contact. She also is fairly social, there are just things that set her off. She is new to the home and is resistant.

Diane: Emily's mother, in her mid-40's. She is polished, articulate, a career woman, and her life was truly thrown off-course when she was faced with an Autistic daughter. She has been fighting the good fight, but she is tired and needs to give the fight over to someone else.

Elaine: Has Cerebral Palsy. She doesn't have full use of her right hand, it stays folded in the crook of her armpit. She tries to use it because she does have use of her shoulder and can bend her elbow. She walks with a limp. Mild-mannered and often the one who cheers everyone up, although gets stressed in tense situations. A very gentle and sweet soul.

DOT (Dot): OCD with a focus on numbers. When she hears a number, she has to count up to the next logical number, usually an even 10. For example, if she hears, "7," then she'll count, "8, 9, 10." (sometimes referred to as 'Dot') Is the leader of the girls in the home and can be volatile. Quickly recovers, though.

Maggie: Has multiple personalities. She takes on different characters from the Bible, the most famous ones. So, she may be Mary, the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdelene, or Eve (from the garden). She has suffered abuse in the past and cowers whenever there is physical altercation near her.

Beth: The social worker who works with these women. She is hard-working, a good person, and genuinely feels love for her clients. She and husband Gabe are having trouble getting pregnant.

Gabe: The social worker's husband. Caring, understanding, and supportive. He's got a great sense of humor and relates well to the clients.

Blaine: Emily's "boyfriend". He is polite, clean, gentle, and loving. He is Autistic (like Emily) but also does fairly well.

Chloe Danvers: A well-to-do neighbor who doesn't have any sympathy for the home or the girls.

Gloria: Maggie's mother. She is self-centered and abusive. When she first enters the scene, she has her "game face" on, but her abusive tendencies quickly surface.

Becca: Maggie's sister. A college student. She truly loves and wants to be close to Maggie, but time and life get in the way. She is wary of the meeting between Maggie and Gloria and protective.

Connie and Theresa: neighbors

Various neighbors. (as the casting allows)

Setting

Home for vulnerable adults in "Small Town," USA

Time

Present

ACT I

Scene 1

SETTING: The central room of a home for vulnerable adults in Small Town, USA. There is an exit to the exterior SR and exit to the kitchen SL. There should also be a stairway to the upstairs, either through an archway or off to SR. On stage is a couch and a small table, big enough for cards.

AT RISE: ELAINE, DOT, MAGGIE sit at the table playing cards. BETH and GABE are placed somewhere logical for the theatre space at the director's discretion.

BETH

We opened this home for vulnerable female adults almost five years ago. The whole adventure just kind of fell into our laps. The house was being auctioned, I had a counseling degree, and it seemed like a good idea. And so far, it's been really great. I mean, it has its moments.

GABE

I knew the financial part of it would be challenging, to say the least. Closer to impossible. But Beth seemed very determined, and I just couldn't say no. (BETH gives him a look) Okay, the real truth is I didn't want to say no. Although Beth is the one with the degree, I find myself really enjoying my time with these girls. They're just so much more open and, well, life is just simpler with them. I mean, it would be if people would just mind their own business.

BETH

OCD, cerebral palsy, autism...it seems that it would all be too much to handle under one roof. But they all get along. They are such loving people. I'm supposed to be taking care of them, but a lot of the time it seems like they're taking care of me. Giving me perspective. And it makes me want to protect them. I wish—I wish a lot of things, but I mostly wish that they could all just peel off their

disabilities like a snake skin. And live normal lives.
But then...I'd lose them.

GABE

We toss around the word 'normal' a lot, thinking that it's a real word and real thing. But looking at a lot of the things going on around this place lately, I'm not sure I understand the concept of normal. I don't really think there is such a thing.

Lights shift to the girls playing cards at the table. Each is struggling with the game in her own way; for example, MAGGIE is not sure she should be playing cards because "good people" wouldn't do that. ELAINE just has trouble understanding games and numbers but completely enjoys being with people and playing games, and DOT struggles with everything because if one thing is out of place in her hand or on the table, she is set off. There is a calmness about the scene, even though there are seemingly a lot of things going on. In other words, this is a happy home for the girls to live in. They love each other in their own way and are being well cared for.

ELAINE

Do you have any sevens?

DOT

Seven, eight, nine, ten.

MAGGIE

I don't think we should be playing this.

DOT

Why not? We're just playing cards.

MAGGIE

God wouldn't like this.

ELAINE

Is this wrong to do?

DOT

I don't remember it in the ten commandments. "Thou Shalt Not Play Cards." Nope.

MAGGIE

I still don't think we should be gambling.

DOT

We're not gambling, we're just playing cards.

MAGGIE

Do you think Beth would think it's okay?

DOT

Of course, dingleberry! We're just playing cards!

MAGGIE (looking hurt)

You don't have to resort to name-calling.

ELAINE

Beth has never asked us to stop before. We've played 'Go Fish', like, a million times.

(BETH enters from outside. She is cheerful, supportive, and loving.)

BETH

Good afternoon, girls. Hmm...cards is usually an evening activity. You're playing in the afternoon today.

ELAINE

Except Maggie thinks we shouldn't be playing at all.

BETH

Why shouldn't you play, Maggie?

MAGGIE

God wouldn't like it.

DOT

Oh, here we go again...

ELAINE

Is that in the Bible?

DOT

Will you please tell her, Beth?

BETH

I can't think of a single passage in the Bible condemning "Go Fish" players to fire and brimstone.

MAGGIE (hesitantly)

Well, okay. If you're sure.

BETH

I'm sure.

MAGGIE

Okay, then. Whose turn is it?

BETH

I trust you all had a good sleep last night?

ELAINE

I slept all night long like a log.

MAGGIE

I dreamed about Heaven...St. Peter was greeting me at the gates...

DOT

Yeah, yeah, yeah...We all did fine. It's Elaine's turn. Elaine, what did you ask for?

ELAINE

Do you have any nines?

DOT

Nine, ten. You asked for sevens before. Seven, eight, nine, ten.

ELAINE

Oh...okay. Sevens.

DOT

Seven, eight, nine, ten. You don't have to stick with your first one, one, two, three, four, five, you can switch it to nines. Nine, ten.

ELAINE

Oh...um...Do you have any sevens?

DOT

Seven, eight, nine, ten. Are you sure that's what you want to ask for?

ELAINE

I guess...

MAGGIE

Which one of us are you asking?

DOT

One, two, three, four, five. You're holding your cards upside down, Elaine.

ELAINE

Upside down?

BETH

You can't hold cards upside down, Dot. They're the same both ways.

DOT

No, they're not. I can tell the difference.

ELAINE

I can't tell how to fix it. How do I turn them all right-side up?

(MAGGIE and ELAINE are working hard to fix their cards. ELAINE has an especially hard time with this because of her one hand being uncooperative.)

DOT

You just turn them all the same.

ELAINE

They are the same.

MAGGIE

I think they're the same, Dot.

DOT

No, they're not!

BETH

DOT...

DOT

Don't lecture me! I know there's a right way! I know there is!! Give me your cards.

MAGGIE

I don't think you're supposed to see what we have, Dot!

ELAINE

Dot, what are you doing??

DOT

(trying to gather the cards)

They need to be turned the same way!

MAGGIE

Dot, don't take our cards!

ELAINE

Dot, please stop.

DOT

I have to fix them. I have to...

BETH

DOT?!

DOT

I'm okay...I'm okay...I don't need a time out.

MAGGIE

(trying to gather her cards again)

I'll try to fix my cards.

DOT

(tries to take them back)

You don't know how!

ELAINE

They look the same to me!

DOT

The numbers may look the same to you on your side, but I can see the difference on my side.

ELAINE

I'm looking on this side and I don't see a difference, Dot.
(ELAINE shows her)

See?

DOT

Oh, for crying out loud! Don't show me your cards!
(reaching for the cards)
Just turn them all the same!

ELAINE

I'm trying!

DOT

Let me do it! Just let me fix them! Let me fix them!!!
Fix them!

MAGGIE

Dot, don't!!

(MAGGIE is frightened by DOT's
outburst and covers her head and
goes to a corner, cowering.
During the course of the next
few lines, she gets out her
rosary and prays.)

BETH

Oh, no...Dot?

DOT

I'm okay...
(breathing deeply)
I'm okay...it's all okay...

BETH

Dot??? Just breathe...

DOT

I'm okay...I'm better. All better.

BETH

(to MAGGIE)

Maggie? Maggie, are you okay?

(MAGGIE is in her prayer trance
and doesn't respond. BETH puts
her hand on her head, but
doesn't try to stop her from her
praying.)

ELAINE

Can we still play? Would you like to play Maggie's cards, Beth?

BETH

Thanks, Elaine, but I've got to get ready for Emily. That's why I came over today.

ELAINE

Who's Emily?

DOT

Our new resident, do-do. Don't you remember?

BETH

Watch the name-calling, Dot.

ELAINE

Our new resident, Emily...

BETH

Who was supposed to be here exactly twelve minutes ago.

DOT

Twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen. Traffic is often unpredictable.

BETH

Yup. I'm sure it's nothing to be concerned about. Please, go on and play.

ELAINE

Play with two people??

DOT

Two, three, four, five...

BETH

Maybe Maggie's ready to play again...

(BETH crosses to MAGGIE and
kneels next to her.)

BETH

Maggie??

MAGGIE

Mary...

BETH

Oh...Mary, do you think you'd like to play cards with Dot and Elaine?

MAGGIE

I haven't finished my prayers, child of God.

BETH

Maybe you can pray while you play cards??

MAGGIE

I'm not sure that's what God would like me to do...

BETH

The girls could use a third hand...wouldn't you like to treat others as you would like to have them treat you?

MAGGIE

A compelling argument, my child...I shall play...

(MAGGIE crosses to the table.)

BETH

Now you three play nice!

DOT

Three, four, five...

BETH

Dot, do you have all the cards fixed now?

DOT

I'm fine. We're all fine. Right, girls?

ELAINE

I'm fine...

MAGGIE

I'm fine, sisters...

BETH

Okay...I'm going to check the laundry...

MAGGIE

Godspeed, my child. Bless you on your chore.

BETH

Thank you, Mary.

(BETH exits to get laundry.)

DOT

Okay, then...Do you have any fours? Four, five.

MAGGIE

Are you asking for fours or fives?

DOT

Fours. Four, five.

ELAINE

I think it's my turn.

MAGGIE

Oh, that's right, it was Elaine's turn.

DOT

She already had her turn. She asked for sevens. Seven, eight, nine, ten.

MAGGIE

But she didn't finish. Neither of us answered her.

DOT

Okay, okay. Elaine?

ELAINE

Do you have any sevens?

DOT

Seven, eight, nine, ten.

MAGGIE

Who are you asking?

ELAINE

I just ask anybody, don't I?

DOT

No, you have to ask a certain person. Haven't you ever played this game before, ding-dong?

(BETH re-enters from the kitchen
with laundry to fold.)

BETH

Did I hear a door bell?

MAGGIE

No...Dot just called Elaine a bad name!

BETH

Mary, we shouldn't tell on people.

MAGGIE

Well, she did. She called her a ding-dong.

DOT

I'm sorry, Elaine.

ELAINE

It's okay. I just forget the rules a lot. Sorry.

BETH

Good. See? You all can work those things out on your own.

(BETH begins to fold laundry.)

MAGGIE

Now, who were you asking?

(DOT drops a card and must lean
over to get it.)

ELAINE

I have to ask just one of you?

DOT

One, two, three, four, five.

MAGGIE

Yes, that's part of the game, my child.

ELAINE

Hey, Dot's looking at your cards!

DOT

I wouldn't do that! I don't look at people's cards!

ELAINE

Please don't get upset again, Dot...I just saw you...

DOT

I don't look at people's cards!! I am NOT a cheater! I don't I don't I don't I don't!!

(DOT is having a melt-down and BETH drops her laundry to escort DOT to the corner where her "time out" chair is. ELAINE is upset, but doesn't move from the table, and MAGGIE covers her head at the table and readies herself with her rosary.)

BETH

Dot, you know you can't do this when you move to your new apartment. This is twice in one morning! We've been working on this...Dot? I'm going to give you your headphones so you can calm yourself.

(BETH gives her an iPod, CD player, whatever is easiest and best for the show. DOT is listening, then, to her headphones and it is that that calms her down.)

MAGGIE

(with sudden grandiosity and in all seriousness)

We must all pray for the sinner.

(makes the sign of the cross over her)

You are forgiven for your anger. I'll pray for your soul.

(MAGGIE gets on her knees and prays her rosary. ELAINE is a little lost and feels a little guilty for possibly causing all of this, so she drifts toward BETH for direction.)

ELAINE

What'cha doin', Beth?

BETH

I guess I'm going to fold laundry.

ELAINE

Is it time for a folding lesson?

BETH

Elaine, honey, don't feel bad. Dot losing control is not your fault.

ELAINE

I am really sorry, though.

BETH

(gives her a hug)

I know, sweetheart. She's just got her own issues to work through. Would you like to continue with our folding lessons?

ELAINE

I think I remember a lot!

(ELAINE bustles over right to the basket and stands eagerly. She has her cards still in her hand, but doesn't realize this right away.)

ELAINE

Towels are easiest. I'll start with a towel.

BETH

You might want to drop the cards. It makes folding easier.

ELAINE

Oh, right!

(ELAINE bustles back to the table, drops her cards, and then returns to fold. DOT has been humming along behind the last scene to her headphones. At this point, she starts singing out loud... "In the Jungle, the mighty jungle, the lion sleeps tonight...")

ELAINE

Fold in half...then half again...

(BETH sees a car pull in out the front window.)

BETH

Oh, Emily's here. I have to run and get her paperwork...Elaine, will you greet our new-comer?

(ELAINE doesn't answer, as she is all involved in her folding. So the scene is: DOT singing, MAGGIE praying, and ELAINE folding. As DOT's volume increases, MAGGIE joins in the singing, but still is in the posture of prayer with her beads. ELAINE starts singing, too, as she folds. They are singing, and the fervor of the song increases until they're all having a blast, singing, folding, praying...MAGGIE even crawls along the floor as if she were in the jungle. They are all doing this as EMILY and her mom, DIANE, come in the front door. They stand and stare, not believing what they're seeing. BETH re-enters, sees the scene, and rushes to the door.)

BETH

You must be Emily. And Diane? Welcome...it's not usually like this...

(The phone rings and BETH momentarily hesitates, not sure whether to go over and answer it or ignore it. She decides to answer it. The song continues, the residents not aware of anyone else in the room.)

BETH

I'm sorry. Excuse me one minute. Hello? I'm sorry...I can't hear...Oh, Gabe. Honey, I'm going to have to call you back. I know, I said that last time, but I really, really can't talk right now. Love you!

(BETH hangs up quickly and scurries back to the door. She looks back at the residents.)

BETH

Dot? Maggie? Elaine?

(no answer, the girls are still singing)

GIRLS!!!

(THE GIRLS stop and look,
surprised that there are other
people there.)

BETH

Girls, I'm going to have to ask you to take your cards and
go to your rooms, okay? I need to get Emily settled.
Proper introductions on your way out: Emily, this is DOT,
Elaine, and Maggie.

MAGGIE

Mary.

BETH

Sorry. Mary. They're going to be your housemates,
although DOT is only going to be here for a few more weeks.

ELAINE

Nice to meet you, Emily.

EMILY (to DIANE)

I want to go home now.

(The DOORBELL rings.)

BETH

Oh, for goodness sakes...who could that be? Excuse me for
one second, please. Make yourself at home.

DOT

One, two, three, four, five...

(DIANE and EMILY look at the
girls awkwardly and there is no
dialogue. ELAINE and MAGGIE try
to smile at them, but that only
adds to the awkwardness. From
off-stage--)

BETH

Oh, Ms. Danvers! I didn't expect you. Please come in.

CHLOE

I hate to barge in...I don't intend to stay long.
(looks at all the people
standing awkwardly in the living
room)

Did I catch you at a bad time?

BETH

Not exactly a bad time...we were just meeting a new resident.
This is Ms. Danvers, our neighbor. This is Diane Gershwin
and her daughter, Emily.

CHLOE (with false politeness)

You can call me Chloe...Please to meet you, Diane.
(she shakes hands with Diane)

Emily.

(She does not shake hands with
Emily—more awkwardness.)

BETH

Is there something I can help you with, Ms. Danvers?

CHLOE

Oh...well, it seems a piece of your mail mistakenly ended up
in my mailbox. Again. I don't understand the ineptitude
of the mail service these days...

BETH

So...you've got some of our mail?

ELAINE

Is it for me?

CHLOE

Oh, I'm afraid not...I brought it right over when I saw it.
It looks like something awfully official from some
financial institution...with one of those nasty little
windows in the envelope.

DOT

One, two, three, four, five...

BETH

Well, thank you so much for bringing it over.

CHLOE

I'm not one to pry, Beth, but I thought this looked awfully
important. Of course, it's none of my business...

DOT
One, two, three, four, five...

BETH
I appreciate your concern...

CHLOE
It can be so distressing to fall behind on your bills...Our
boat payments are just killing us. Well, that and the
condo at the beach...

BETH
I imagine it's very stressful for you...

CHLOE
You have no idea!

(CHLOE rolls her eyes and head
around to see the girls still
standing looking at her and she
suddenly becomes very self-
conscious and awkward.)

BETH (more to herself)
No, I guess I don't...

CHLOE
Well, I don't want to wear out my welcome...

BETH
Well, we really do appreciate it.

CHLOE
Don't mention it. Nice to meet you, Ms. Gershwin.
(to BETH while she leaves)
Hope my little visit didn't ruin your day!

BETH
Don't be silly...Thanks for stopping by.

(CHLOE exits. BETH looks at the
envelope, sighs and puts it on
the table. She re-engages with
the scene.)

BETH

So...sorry for the interruption. Welcome to your new home, Emily.

EMILY

Please take me home...Please?

DIANE (with false cheer)

She's a little nervous. Emily, this is your new home now. You'll love it here!

BETH

Girls, I think we need some time out here. Will you all go to your rooms now for me, please? You'll have time with Emily later. Go on...

(The GIRLS all exit, but reluctantly and looking carefully at EMILY.)

BETH

Well, Emily, would you like to come and sit down?

EMILY

Not really...

DIANE

Of course she would. She needs to get settled...

EMILY

I don't want to get settled!! You're not leaving me here! You can't!!

DIANE

Honey...we talked about this...

BETH

(sees the playing cards on the table and gets an idea)

Emily, I forgot to give something to Elaine. Will you please bring these to her room and give them to her for me?

(BETH picks up playing cards left by the girls and gives them to EMILY)

BETH (cont.)

Their names are on the doors, so you should have no problem finding her room. It's right through those doors. Here...take your bags with you and one of the girls can show

you your room. You can come right back in here if you'd like.

EMILY (hesitates)

Okay.

BETH

Thanks, Emily.

(EMILY exits the room.)

DIANE

Do you think it's okay for her to go in on her own like that?

BETH

The residents here aren't dangerous. I sent her on purpose. The girls wouldn't even notice if they were missing a card, probably. Well, maybe Dot would, but...anyway, usually if the residents get to talking one-on-one like that, it makes an easier transition.

DIANE

If you say so...

BETH

Listen, I'm sorry your first view of us was like that. It's usually much quieter around here.

DIANE

It could be the San Diego Zoo, I wouldn't really care...

BETH

I see...

DIANE

Don't misunderstand me, Miss...

BETH

Beth.

DIANE

Beth. I see that look in your eye. Well, you've read her file, so judge me all you want. I just don't know what to do with her. She's out of school now and no one wants to hire her...She's got to go somewhere. I can't keep her.

BETH

Of course not...

DIANE

Oh, here we go.

BETH

Did I say something?

(EMILY appears at the doorway,
but neither DIANE nor BETH see
her standing there. She quietly
listens to the following.)

DIANE

You don't really have to say anything, I can see it on your
face. You're judging me.

BETH

I'm not judging you.

DIANE

I think you are.

BETH

Ms. Gershwins, I've been working here a long time. Taking
care of these girls a long time...

DIANE

And I'm sure you think the parents should be doing it, not
you.

BETH

That's not how I...

DIANE

Well, let me tell you something...

BETH

Beth.

DIANE

Yes, let me tell you something, Beth. I've raised Emily
from a baby telling her she was just the same as anyone
else. That she was normal. She could handle anything that
any other "normal" person in the world could handle.

BETH

That's a good way to approach it. She is very high-functioning...

DIANE

Oh, here we go! There it is!

BETH

There what is??

DIANE

Do you know how many times I've heard those words? Do you have any idea? "High functioning" means that she does very well *for a handicapped person*. It doesn't mean that she's normal. Because she's not. I've lied to her for eighteen years, Beth. She is handicapped. She's *retarded* and I've never had the heart to tell her.

BETH

She's not "retarded"...

DIANE

You may not like the word but that's exactly what she is. Her father spends most of his days skating around the word, the issue... her. This has all been dumped in my lap. She can't balance her own checkbook, she doesn't remember to bathe regularly, she wouldn't know how to make herself toast if I didn't have a little reminder chart next to the toaster.

BETH

She can be taught...

DIANE

What do you think I've been doing for eighteen years? Sitting on my hands, waiting for a magic fairy to come along?? I've been working *daily* with her for what seems like forever...and what has it gotten me?

BETH

Listen, I'm really...

DIANE

Oh, please don't say you're sorry!

BETH

I was going to say I'm really excited to work with Emily.

DIANE

Oh...

(Pause)

Do you have any children, Beth?

BETH

None of my own...yet...

DIANE

Well, then, you can't possibly know what I've gone through.

BETH

These girls are my daughters, Ms. Gershwin. I love them all like daughters.

DIANE

Oh, you love them all *like* daughters? But they're not your actual daughters, are they?

BETH

I don't see what difference that makes...

DIANE

Well, let me tell you what difference it makes. When something goes wrong here, you can leave it behind you when you go home. You get to *go home*. This...thing...has been my home for eighteen years. I can't leave it behind me; I have nowhere to go. Because she's MY daughter, it is my responsibility when she can't keep up in school. It's me they come to when they have no answers. When she fails another test, gets picked on by another student, accidentally throws away her lunch because she forgets what's in the brown paper bag. I get all of those calls, Beth. And you know what? It's not what I signed up for when I got pregnant. She didn't come with a manual, you know.

BETH

I imagine not...

DIANE

When they call me, they all expect me to be the expert, to know how to deal with whatever ridiculous situation has come up. But I don't know! I don't have any answers and it just keeps getting harder. I'm tired, Beth. I don't know what else to do.

BETH

I'm sure we can...

DIANE

You know what? It doesn't matter. That was a long time ago. And no one cares.

(looks at watch)

Oh, honestly... I've got to go. I'm late already.

(EMILY leaves the doorway and goes back to her room.)

BETH

Would you like to say goodbye to Emily?

DIANE

I'm not good at goodbyes. It's better this way. I'll be back to visit, it's not like I'm dropping her here forever. You'll explain to her?

BETH

Sure.

DIANE

Look, I unloaded a lot of stuff on you. Just forget I said anything. Take good care of her, okay?

(DIANE leaves abruptly. As DIANE leaves, GABE enters. He has to get out of DIANE's way, as she is not really aware of anyone around her in her hurry to leave.)

BETH

Sure...no problem at all.

GABE

Oh...excuse me...

BETH

Gabe, honey, what are you doing here?

GABE (with a smile)

Nice to see you, too. What was that??

BETH

(goes over to hug GABE)

A very embittered person...Of course it's nice to see you, but you just called.

GABE

And didn't get a chance to talk to you. So I'm here. I wanted to...

(DOT and ELAINE re-enter in a frenzy. EMILY follows after them, sullen and withdrawn.)

DOT

Beth! Beth! Maggie is naked!

ELAINE

She's naked! She has no clothes on at all!!

BETH

Why is she naked? What's going on back there?

DOT

She's Eve, she said.

ELAINE

In the Garden of Eden.

BETH

I thought she was Mary this time.

DOT

Well, she's not now...she's Eve. And naked.

BETH

Well, for goodness sake, please run back there and ask her to get some clothes on!

DOT

Will do.

(DOT exits quickly.)

ELAINE

I should go, too?

BETH

I'm sure Dot could use all the help she can get.

(ELAINE rushes back into the back hallway. EMILY stays huddled in the corner, not

knowing if she should go or not.
BETH notices her and goes to
her.)

BETH

Emily, are you okay?

(MAGGIE sticks her head into the
room, all we see is her naked
shoulders.)

MAGGIE

I can't wear clothes! I haven't eaten the fruit yet!

DOT

Please just put this robe on!

(DOT manages to get a robe
around MAGGIE's shoulders and
holds her tight as she runs into
the room. They are locked
together, DOT holding the robe
on.)

ELAINE

Come back, Maggie!

MAGGIE

My name is Eve!

GABE (to BETH)

Do you want me to help?

BETH

I think they've got her cornered. Stand by.

(MAGGIE has been "herded" into
the corner by DOT and ELAINE and
BETH. DOT is holding onto
MAGGIE and the robe so she stays
dressed. They all act as though
she were a person on a ledge
about to jump.)

MAGGIE

I won't wear this! I can't!

BETH

Just calm down, Mag...Eve. Just calm down.

MAGGIE

The garden is supposed to be a happy place.

ELAINE

This is a happy place!

MAGGIE

You're all looking so upset.

DOT

We just want you to put some clothes on, Maggie.

MAGGIE

Eve!!

DOT

Sorry!

BETH

Can't you be Eve and wear clothes, too?

MAGGIE

How can I do that? Adam and Eve didn't wear clothes. They were perfect.

BETH

Historically, that's true. I guess...

(looks to GABE for moral support)

Well...if that's where we are, then I guess we'll all have to take our clothes off.

MAGGIE

What?

DOT and ELAINE

What??

EMILY

(from her corner)

What did she say?

BETH

She said...if this is truly the Garden of Eden and we're in it, then we can't possibly stand here with clothes on, now can we?

(pause)

Can we?

DOT

I guess not...

ELAINE

What is she saying??

GABE

(understanding BETH's tactic here)
She's saying...off with your clothes!!

(GABE begins to undress, as does
BETH. The rest are very
hesitant and only watch at
first.)

MAGGIE

What are you doing?

(A DOORBELL or KNOCK is heard
here, but only by EMILY. The
rest are too involved in the
scene, so EMILY goes to the door
to let the person in.)

BETH

God doesn't want to see us ashamed of our bodies and in
clothes! We have to take them off! Just like you, Eve!!

MAGGIE

But he's a man!

DOT

We can't see his...! We're not supposed to see his...

(GABE really gets into his
"strip" number, but at this
point only has shoes and socks
off. He twirls the socks above
his head.)

GABE

Whoo-eeee!! This is very freeing! Take them off, girls!
We're going commando tonight!!

BETH

We sure are, buckaroo.

ELAINE

Only our socks??

GABE

Well, you have to start somewhere, don't you??

(DOT and ELAINE see no harm in just socks, so they go to work to take their socks off. There can certainly be ad-libbing here and should be noise during the scene. MAGGIE is confused and a little rattled, so she mostly watches, unconsciously clutching the robe to her body. EMILY is standing by the door with the visitor, BLAINE. They watch with obvious surprise at the proceedings; BETH and GABE haven't yet seen the visitor.)

BETH

That's right, girls, take them off! Feel the breeze hit your skin!! Run through the garden!!

(BETH begins to run around the room and DOT and ELAINE follow, along with GABE. (**Note: The actors should only take off a little clothing...this is not a "naked" scene. They take a full loop and then are brought to a halt seeing BLAINE near the door.)

BETH

Oh, my God.

GABE

A visitor, I see.

DOT

Feel the breeze!

ELAINE

I love the garden!!

BETH

Girls, girls, girls...

(They all settle down and stand,
not sure what to do next.
MAGGIE runs into the back
hallway.)

BETH

Maggie...Eve...Oh, Lord...Dot, Elaine, could you please make sure
Maggie's okay for me?

(DOT and ELAINE exit.)

BETH

(as she's getting her clothes
back on)

I don't think we've been introduced...Did you knock?

BLAINE

Umm...Emily let me in.

BETH

Oh, you know Emily?

EMILY

Yes, he knows me.

BETH

I'm so sorry. I'm Beth and this is Gabe, my husband.

GABE

Nice to meet you...

(GABE crosses to BLAINE to do a
manly handshake, but BLAINE
pulls away awkwardly.)

BLAINE

I'm Blaine.

(pause)

EMILY

My friend.

BETH

Oh, your friend. I don't think your mom told me about Blaine.

EMILY

Oh.

(pause)

BLAINE

Is it okay that I'm here?? Emily said I could come visit when she got here. I live right over there.

(He points in some direction.)

459 Livingston Court, 14578. Phone number 9884114321.

BETH

Oh, of course, Blaine. It's fine.

EMILY

Can he come to my room?

BETH

Actually, we have rules against having opposite gender visitors in your room, but you can visit all you'd like out here.

GABE

You really think that's necessary?

BETH

There are rules here, Gabe.

GABE

Okay, okay...I just thought...

BETH

I'm sorry. Can I get you two anything? Something to drink?

BLAINE

I would love a root beer with some cashew nuts.

EMILY

And a banana split.

BETH

Well, I don't think we have all those things...but I know we have root beer and vanilla ice cream. How about some root beer floats?

BLAINE

Oh, no thank you. If you don't have root beer and cashews, I'll just not have anything, thank you.

EMILY

Yeah...I'm okay, too.

(awkward pause)

BETH

I have root beer, I just...Well, okay...if you two want to sit here in the living room, Gabe and I will be right over there, all right?

EMILY

Sure...I guess.

BLAINE

Thank you very much.

(EMILY and BLAINE go silently to sit on the sofa while BETH and GABE retreat to the far end of the room. For the first dialogue exchange here, EMILY and BLAINE sit awkwardly without talking...)

GABE

Wow, there's a lot going on here tonight.

BETH

Now you can see why I had to hang up earlier.

GABE

Yeah...sorry. But I really wanted to know what happened today.

BETH

Nothing happened, Gabe.

GABE

Nothing??

BETH

No...I'm not...

GABE

They're pretty sure?

BETH

Yeah, I asked a few times...

(MAGGIE re-enters and crosses to
BETH.)

MAGGIE

Beth?

BETH

Yes, Eve?

MAGGIE

I'm Maggie again...Is this a bad time?

GABE

Actually...

BETH

No, Maggie, what is it?

MAGGIE

I'm sorry for earlier. You know, I don't always...well...if I
could control these things...I'm really sorry.

BETH

It's fine, Mags. You are a great person. I know you want
to keep your clothes on.

MAGGIE

(smiles)

Thanks. I...well...can you...absolve me?

BETH

We've talked about this Maggie. I don't have the power to
absolve you of your sins.

MAGGIE

Oh...

DOT and ELAINE rush in from the
back.

DOT

She escaped again!

ELAINE

But she does have her clothes on this time...

BETH

She's fine, Dot. Elaine, thanks for keeping such a close eye on her.

BLAINE

(a little too loudly, taking
over the scene)

May we go to the front porch for some privacy, please?

ELAINE

Oh, I'm so sorry! I didn't know they wanted privacy, Beth.

BETH

It's okay, Elaine. We didn't know, either. Oh, girls,
this is Blaine, Emily's friend.

The GIRLS just stand and stare
at him.

BLAINE

Hi.

BETH

Listen, why don't the rest of us take a nice walk around
the block and you two can have some time together? Would
you all like that?

DOT

(says 'Two, three, four, five"
as BETH finishes her last line)

I'd have to put on my walking shoes.

ELAINE

And my sunscreen.

BETH

I don't think you'll need sunscreen; it's almost dark
outside. But go get your stuff real quick and we'll go.

MAGGIE

I'm going to need my rosary.

BETH

Of course...Maggie.

(DOT, MAGGIE and ELAINE exit to
get their stuff for the walk.)

GABE
We're not going to have any time alone, are we?

BETH
Well, probably not completely alone until maybe later..

GABE
Beth, I really want to talk about all of this...

BETH
I do, too. We can walk along behind them...I'm sorry, it's
the best I can do.

(DOT, MAGGIE and ELAINE re-enter
with stuff to bring.)

ELAINE
I have my bird-watching notebook!

DOT
And I have my ledger to count the red cars I see.

(MAGGIE merely holds up her
rosary.)

BETH
Great...

GABE
Red cars??

BETH
Long story. Have fun you two! Be good!

DOT
Two, three, four, five...

MAGGIE
You have to say three "Hail Mary"s before every trip to
protect you from harm!!

(BETH, GABE, DOT, MAGGIE and
ELAINE all exit to take a walk.
There is an awkward silence as

EMILY and BLAINE stand and
transition from there being
people there to being alone.)

BLAINE

They all left.

EMILY

I know...

BLAINE

I found your new house.

EMILY

I know. You're here.

BLAINE

It's not that far. I didn't even need a map!

EMILY

That's nice, Blaine.

BLAINE

I had to cross two roads, though.

EMILY

Oh...

BLAINE

But they both have stop signs, so I should be okay.

EMILY

Good.

BLAINE

Do you like it here?

EMILY

I don't know.

BLAINE

You don't know?

EMILY

I just got here, Blaine!

BLAINE

I'm sorry, Emily. I was just asking if you like it.

EMILY

I know...

BLAINE

You know, I mean...so far...

EMILY

I know...

BLAINE

Emily, are you okay?

EMILY

I'm okay...I guess...

BLAINE

You seem very sad tonight.

EMILY

I...I don't know...

BLAINE

Is it what we did the other night?

EMILY

No...

BLAINE

If it is, I'm very sorry, Emily. I thought...

EMILY

It's not that.

BLAINE

What is it? Why are you sad? Is it your new house?

EMILY

I don't know...I don't think so...it's just...

BLAINE

It's just what?

EMILY

It's just...I just...I don't know.

BLAINE

What is it, Emily? Did something happen?

EMILY

Not really.

BLAINE

Why are you so sad? Please tell me!

EMILY

I heard...

BLAINE

You heard what?

EMILY

I heard my mom talking to Ms. Beth...earlier...

BLAINE

What did she say?

EMILY

I...

BLAINE

Was she mean to you?

EMILY

I don't know.

BLAINE

You don't know?

EMILY

She said something about me.

BLAINE

Okay...

EMILY

She said I wasn't...normal.

BLAINE

What do you mean?

EMILY

She said she lied to me.

BLAINE

Emily, I don't understand.

EMILY

For eighteen years, she's been telling me I'm normal.

BLAINE

You are normal.

EMILY

But I'm not.

BLAINE

You're not?

EMILY

My mom says that I'm not.

BLAINE

Emily, are you sad about that?

EMILY

I guess so...

BLAINE

That's dumb.

EMILY

What?

BLAINE

That's dumb.

EMILY

I'm dumb?

BLAINE

Not you...but you're sad about something your mom said. And she only said it one time. And she didn't even say it to you.

EMILY

But it was about me.

BLAINE

You're normal. Just like me.

EMILY

What makes you so sure?

BLAINE

(with a little snort)

I think I would know if I wasn't normal, Emily. Look at these.

(holds up his hands)

Count them...

EMILY

One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten.

BLAINE

Now hold yours up.

EMILY

(she holds them up and BLAINE
puts his hands against hers)

They're the same, silly.

BLAINE

Yup. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten.

EMILY

So...?

BLAINE

When my little brother was born, my mom counted his fingers and toes. She said, "Yup, there are ten finger and ten toes! He's perfect!"

EMILY

So we've got ten!

BLAINE

Do we have to count our toes?

EMILY

No, I have ten.

BLAINE

Me, too!

EMILY

Oh, Blaine! We're normal!!

BLAINE

I could have told you that, silly.

EMILY

But what about my mom?

BLAINE

What about her?

EMILY

She said I wasn't normal.

BLAINE

What does she know about normal? She doesn't even drink root beer. At all.

EMILY

(holds up her hands again)

Put your hands up again...

(BLAINE puts his up against hers. They look at each other happily just holding their hands together.)

BLAINE

I want some root beer.

EMILY

They don't have any cashews.

BLAINE

(reaches into his pocket)

That's okay. I've got some from home.

(Just then ELAINE and DOT rush in the door, excited from all their finds on their walk.)

ELAINE

Five birds!! That's the most ever!!

DOT

Five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten.

MAGGIE

I barely had time to finish my prayers! That was a quick walk, alright.

DOT

Enough for me to record three red cars. Three, four, five.

ELAINE

I think you missed one.

DOT

One, two, three, four, five. No, I told you, I've counted that car before! I can't count them twice.

ELAINE

Right. Sorry.

(BETH and GABE enter, holding hands.)

BETH

You guys got ahead of us! Well, did you two have some time alone??

DOT

Two, three, four, five.

EMILY

Yes. I have ten fingers and toes.

DOT

Ten.

BETH

(confused, but amused)

Yes, I guess you do. I think it's all time for clean up and bedtime!

BLAINE

That means I have to leave now.

BETH

Sorry, Blaine. You can come back any time.

EMILY

I'll walk you to the door.

MAGGIE

Everyone must join in a nighttime prayer before we separate.

(This, apparently, is routine, so they all gather C stage, join hands, and bow their heads.)

MAGGIE

Gabe, will you please say our prayer tonight?

GABE

Me??

BETH

You can do it.

GABE

Ummmm...okay. Dear Lord, please watch over this house of wonderful people. Continue to grant their prayers when it is your will. Keep them from harm and help them to live happy and healthy lives. Amen.

ALL

Amen.

BETH

(surprised by the tenderness of the prayer)

Amen.

DOT

I get the bathroom first!!

(DOT begins the exit to the back, followed by the other clients. As they exit...)

ELAINE

You always do that! I think we should take numbers!

MAGGIE

You went first this morning, so the last shall be first!

DOT

Maybe it should be alphabetical!

ELAINE

You'd still be first!

DOT

Of course I would!!

EMILY

(leading BLAINE quickly to the door)

Goodbye, Blaine. See you tomorrow.

(EMILY rushes back toward the hallway to race for the bathroom. BLAINE looks a little surprised, but waves goodbye to BETH and GABE.)

BLAINE

'Bye.

BETH

(going to close the door behind him)

See you tomorrow, Blaine. Be careful walking home.

(she closes the door and turns back to GABE)

Well...that was an evening, wasn't it?

GABE

You know, you're really good with them. I'm proud of you.

BETH

I love you, you know that?

GABE

Yeah...it's going to be okay.

BETH

Yeah. I loved your prayer, by the way.

GABE

Not bad for pulling it out of my ass, was it?

BETH

You know what I prayed for?

GABE

Yes. Me, too. It'll happen, Beth. And if it doesn't...well, we'll figure something out...not bad for pulling it out of my ass...

BETH

Not bad at all...listen, I think maybe I should stay here tonight.

GABE

Why would you do that?

BETH

It's Emily's first night. She might need something...

GABE

Beth, she's going to be fine. Did you see her just race for the bathroom? Dot will take care of her.

BETH

I don't know...

GABE

Beth, you can't stay here all the time. They'll get along.

BETH

Are you sure?

GABE

You can stop by right away in the morning if you're worried. They're in there getting ready for bed. All you'll be doing is sleeping here.

BETH

Well...

GABE

Wouldn't you rather sleep next to this hunk of a man??

BETH

Of course...

GABE

Our phone number is on the fridge. They can call if they need anything. It could be really important for Emily to stay here with the girls tonight.

BETH

Oh, you're right. Of course. I'm just being silly. I'll just straighten up a little and then I'll be home.

GABE

I love you.

BETH

I love you, too.

GABE

And don't worry. About anything.

BETH

Right...now get out of here.

(GABE leaves and BETH watches him go. She sighs, looks around the room, grabs the laundry, picks up a few things, and exits into the kitchen. After a beat or two, EMILY peeks out from the back hallway, looks both ways, goes back to pick up her suitcase and tip-toes to the door. She sneaks out as BETH re-enters from the kitchen.)

BETH

(calling into the hallway)

Ladies, I'll be back first thing in the morning to check on you! Lights out and to bed.

(We hear a collective "good night" and an "I love you" from ELAINE from the back bedrooms. BETH smiles to herself and exits.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT IScene 2

AT RISE:

We find the room empty in the fairly early morning. It is the next morning. ELAINE enters from the kitchen (her night shirt is backwards) with a heap of donuts in a bowl. She has poured milk over them. She sits down at the table, realizes she doesn't have a spoon. She holds up a donut, dripping with milk, and takes a bite. The donut is soggy, so it's hard to handle and she drops it in the bowl.

ELAINE

I'm going to need a spoon for this I think...

(ELAINE exits into the kitchen as DOT enters from the back hallway. She looks at the table where the bowl is and inspects. ELAINE re-enters from the kitchen with her spoon. She silently takes the bowl from DOT and heads for the table to eat.)

DOT

Is that your breakfast, Elaine?

ELAINE

Yes, it's my breakfast. I'll share with you if you want.

DOT

Beth says we're not supposed to have donuts for breakfast all the time.

ELAINE

Oh, it's okay. I didn't have any yesterday.

DOT

(pause as DOT inspects the back of ELAINE'S shirt)

Elaine, your shirt is backwards.

ELAINE
(keeps eating)
Ooops...sorry.

DOT
Elaine?

ELAINE
Yes, Dot?

DOT
Your shirt is on backwards.

ELAINE
You just told me that.

DOT
But you didn't fix it.

ELAINE
I'm going to change in a minute anyway. It's okay.

DOT (agitation growing)
It's not okay...you have to fix it...

ELAINE
It feels the same, Dot. And I'm hungry.

DOT
You can't eat until you fix your shirt!! You have to fix it!!

(DOT crosses to ELAINE and tries to fix her shirt for her. She is not meaning for it to be an attack, but they end up on the floor rolling around, DOT trying to turn the shirt around.)

ELAINE
Dot, stop it, please! Ouch!! You're hurting me!!

DOT
Fix it, Elaine! You have to! You have to!!

(As the "attack" is happening, MAGGIE enters from the back hallway. She is clearly upset

by what she sees and covers her head, crossing to the couch and rolling into the fetal position.)

MAGGIE

Stop! Please stop!! Please, please, please, please, please, please.....

(BETH enters at this opportune moment and sprints into action. She crosses immediately to the girls on the floor.)

BETH

DOT...Elaine...What is going on here? Stop it right now! Stop it!! SEPARATE!!!

(BETH gets the girls separated and stands between them. They are sitting on the floor. ELAINE quietly and quickly turns her shirt around, not an easy task with her one good hand.)

ELAINE

Sorry, Beth.

BETH

What is going on here?

ELAINE

My shirt was inside out.

(A beat as BETH drinks in this explanation.)

BETH

Your shirt was inside out?

DOT

Actually, it was backwards.

BETH

Her shirt was backwards? That's it?

DOT

It was...backwards...and she wasn't going to fix it until later, so...

BETH

So...you tried to fix it for her.

DOT

Yes...

BETH

Elaine, are you okay?

ELAINE

I'm fine...I should have fixed it right away. I'm very sorry, DOT.

DOT

I'm sorry...

BETH

Dot, you can't do these kinds of things if you're going to do okay on your own! You're only weeks away from moving out on your own, becoming independent, and you just can't behave like this!

DOT

I know...

MAGGIE

We have to get the animals! It's starting to rain!! We have to save them!!

(MAGGIE runs into the back hallway to her room.)

BETH

Oh, Lord...here begins another day! So...whose breakfast might this be??

(Nobody answers but, of course, ELAINE looks very guilty, indeed.)

BETH

Looks like donuts...in milk...I'm going to take a wild guess here...Elaine, is this yours?

ELAINE

Yes, ma'am.

BETH

I don't see the four food groups represented here. Do you?

DOT

Four, five.

ELAINE

No, ma'am.

BETH

Elaine, will you please throw this mush away for me? I'll be in to help you fix up a nice healthy breakfast in just one minute, okay? And then we have to get you ready for your interview.

DOT

One, two, three, four, five.

ELAINE

Interview??

BETH

Don't tell me you forgot...you're interviewing for the position with the phone solicitors just over on Greenley. We're supposed to be there in two hours. Remember?

DOT

Two, three, four, five...

ELAINE

Sure, I do...

BETH

Elaine, sweetie, you don't remember, do you?

ELAINE

Ummm...well...

DOT

You remember, Elaine. We did a pretend interview to get you ready. Remember?

(DOT goes into 'pretend
interview' mode)

Please come in, Ms. Conrad. Have a seat.

BETH

You did a practice interview??

DOT

We want her to get the job, don't we??

(ELAINE crosses to couch or seat
and sits, ready for interview.)

ELAINE

Thank you, Mr. Franklin.

DOT

So...tell me about yourself, Ms. Conrad.

ELAINE

You can call me Elaine.

DOT

All right...Elaine.

BETH

That's a good start, Elaine. Makes it more personal.

DOT

Okay...Elaine. Tell me about yourself.

ELAINE

Well...I'm twenty-two years old

(you may change age if cast
differently)

I live in a home with two other women, I like to sing and
dance, and...

DOT

(breaking the "boss" role)

Don't forget the part about how hard you work.

ELAINE

Oh! And...I'm a very hard worker.

BETH

That's really good, girls!

DOT

Wait! There's more...So, Elaine, why should I hire you for
this position?

ELAINE

Because I need a job?

DOT
(as DOT, urging her on)

Elaine...

ELAINE
Oh! Because...because I am very reliable, honest, and good looking.

DOT
Hard working, not good looking.

ELAINE
Ooops...

BETH
But you are good looking, too, Elaine.

ELAINE
Oh...thank you, Beth!!

BETH
I am so proud of both of you for preparing so well. But time is growing short, so, let's go get a good breakfast in your stomach and get you looking all spiffy.

ELAINE
Okay...

BETH
(as ELAINE exits)
So...how did our new girl survive the night?

ELAINE
We haven't seen her this morning yet.

BETH
She slept through all the noise we've been making?

DOT
Maybe she's a late sleeper.

ELAINE
Or a heavy sleeper.

BETH

Maybe she was afraid to come out with all this nonsense going on.

(BETH exits into the back hallway as MAGGIE re-enters with an armful of items that are in pairs. She can have two of just about anything: stuffed animals, toothbrushes, pillows, slippers...etc...She busies herself putting the pairs of things along the floor. ELAINE stands by the kitchen door, waiting for more instruction.)

MAGGIE
Two by two...they gathered two by two...

DOT
Two, three, four, five...

ELAINE
Should I go to throw this away?

BETH (from backstage)
Oh, my God!!

DOT
(crossing to door)
Beth, what's wrong??

(BETH re-enters, looking shaken, indeed.)

BETH
She's not in her room.

ELAINE
Who?

BETH
Emily! Emily! She's not in her room!

DOT
Where is she?

BETH
I don't know, DOT! Elaine, did you see her in the kitchen?

ELAINE

No...

BETH

Elaine, go look in the kitchen again. Dot, go check the rooms back there and don't forget the bathroom...

DOT

I'll look everywhere...

BETH

Maggie...

(she gets on the floor at eye level with MAGGIE)

Maggie, listen to me.

MAGGIE

Noah's wife...I'm Noah's wife...

BETH

(taking her face in her hands)

Maggie, you need to focus. I need you to be here with me right now...Look at me, Maggie.

MAGGIE

Noah's wife...

BETH

Maggie...look at me...focus! Focus!! Okay...Maggie, I need you to help me with this. I need you to be YOU. Think...think...

MAGGIE

Noah's wife...Noah!!

BETH

Okay, fine. I can work with this. Listen...Noah's wife...We have one Emily to put on the ark...but you're putting everything on in twos...so I need you to walk around the house, both front and back yards, and see if there is a second Emily out there so the pair can be saved. Can you do that? Are you hearing me? Try to look everywhere, okay? Are you with me??

MAGGIE

Okay. I can look for her. Okay. I'll get the second Emily...

(MAGGIE exits, chanting "second Emily" as she goes. BETH crosses to the phone and dials. She's very jittery and nervous.)

BETH

Come on, Gabe...come on, come on, come on....Oh, thank God!! Gabe, listen...I don't know what to do here...I think I need your help...It looks like Emily might be missing. I don't know, I just got here and we just found out. I've got the other girls searching the logical places...

(ELAINE reenters from kitchen.)

ELAINE

She's not in the kitchen. I even looked in the oven.

(DOT re-enters from the back hallway.)

DOT

She's not anywhere back there.

(MAGGIE re-enters with two of various outdoor items.)

MAGGIE

I couldn't find a second Emily...but I can save these...

BETH

Okay, hon, she's not anywhere here. I'm going to try to find her boyfriend's house. He lives near here...Oh, my God...I have to call Diane...What? Okay. Okay. I'll wait until you get here. I'm so sorry you have to leave work. Thanks, Gabe. Please hurry.

(She hangs up. At a loss, she looks around the room, runs her fingers through her hair, and stands for a moment, nonplussed. After a moment's pause)

ELAINE

What is that? What is that?

MAGGIE

What is what? What I brought in?? What?

DOT

Maggie, what did you bring in? My Lord in capital "H" Holy Heaven, what is that smell?

BETH

Mag...Noah's wife...What did you bring in to save?

MAGGIE

Nothing...I...

(MAGGIE rifles through the outside stuff and holds up two pieces of dog poo.)

BETH

Is that what I think it is??

DOT

Oh, my Lord...

ELAINE

That is dog poo.

BETH

Where did you get that??

MAGGIE

It was in the back yard.

BETH

I may be wrong, but I don't think dog poo needs to go on the ark. I can't believe I just said that.

DOT

You should be saving living things. Isn't that what Noah did?

ELAINE

Yes, I think he did.

BETH

(escorting MAGGIE toward the door)

Can you please just take this to the curb and throw it in the trash can?? Preferably wrap it in a plastic bag first, okay?

MAGGIE

Okay...

(As MAGGIE exits, we see BLAINE enter. He is surprised at the exit and stands looking a little scared.)

BETH

Blaine!! Oh, Blaine, thank God you're here...is Emily with you?

BLAINE

Emily? With me???

BETH

Yes, Emily, with you. Have you seen her?

BLAINE

(looking and sounding very hesitant)

No...I haven't seen her...

BETH

I'm sorry to attack you...please come in and sit down. Elaine, will you please finish up with breakfast dishes and get yourself ready for your interview?

ELAINE

Do I get breakfast? I didn't eat the donuts.

BETH

Just have some juice and toast in the kitchen...or maybe just some plain donuts without the milk...just anything, okay??

ELAINE

Okay...

DOT

How about me, Beth?

BETH

I am so sorry, Dot. You haven't eaten either, have you? Why don't you go with Elaine and the two of you can help each other...Blaine, have you had breakfast?

DOT

Two, three, four, five...

BLAINE

Well...kind of...

BETH

What did you have, Blaine?

BLAINE

(pause)

Cashews?

BETH

Dot, when you're putting something together for you and Elaine, will you bring something for Blaine, too, please?

DOT

Two, three, four, five...My pleasure, captain!

ELAINE

My pleasure, too, captain!

DOT

Two, three, four, five...

BETH

Just go, you crazy kids...

(ELAINE and DOT exit into the kitchen, leaving BLAINE and BETH by themselves.)

BLAINE

Ummm...why were you asking about Emily?

BETH

Listen, Blaine. I got here this morning and Emily wasn't here.

BLAINE

Wasn't here?

BETH

No...nobody's seen her since last night when we all went to bed. Actually, I thought she might have run to you.

BLAINE

Run to me?

BETH

Yes...Blaine, have you seen Emily since last night?

BLAINE

Since last night?

BETH

Yes, since last night...have you seen her?

BLAINE

Seen her?

BETH

Blaine, answer me! Stop repeating my questions and answer me!

GABE

(from off stage)

Knock, knock!!

BETH

Oh, please, please come in!

(GABE and MAGGIE enter together.
GABE has an eviction notice in
his back pocket but does not
want to discuss it at this
time.)

MAGGIE

The poo is in the can.

BETH

Great, Maggie. I appreciate that. Please go and wash your hands.

MAGGIE

Okay...

(MAGGIE exits.)

GABE

The poo is in the can? Is that some kind of code??

BETH

Very funny. I'm in the middle of something here, okay??

GABE

Sorry. Sorry. What can I do, hon?

BETH

Can you go in the kitchen and look over what the girls are doing? Help them with breakfast?

GABE

Sure thing, sweets...Have you called Diane yet?

BETH

No...not yet...

(BETH suddenly thinks it may be
easier for GABE to get through
to BLAINE)

Wait, on second thought...why don't you stay here with Blaine and have a little chat with him and I'll help the girls?

GABE

Ummm...okay...

BETH

Thanks...What's that in your pocket?

GABE

My pocket? What pocket? Oh, that...hey, that's nothing. We can definitely discuss that later.

BETH

You sure??

GABE

Sure I'm sure. Get going before the toast burns...

BETH

Okay...

(BETH exits. A moment of
awkward silence. GABE
understands his job, but isn't
quite sure how to talk to BLAINE
or what tactic to use.)

BLAINE

Are you Beth's boyfriend?

GABE

Well, kind of...we're married. I'm her husband.

BLAINE

Oh...

GABE

Yup...Do you need anything? Juice? Water?

BLAINE

I think the girls are making something...and I have cashews.

GABE

Right...So...is Emily your girlfriend?

BLAINE

Yeah...

GABE

Great...she's cute...

BLAINE

Yeah...I like her. She has ten fingers and ten toes.

GABE

Sure...Blaine, listen...there are a lot of people looking for Emily right now. We really need to find her, okay?

BLAINE

I can't help you...

GABE

Blaine, did you see her last night?

BLAINE

See her last night??

GABE

Yes, see her last night...

BLAINE

See her last night??

GABE

You did, didn't you? Blaine, you did, didn't you?

BLAINE

Yes, I saw her...I saw her, but she didn't stay. I swear! She didn't stay!

GABE

When was she there, Blaine?

BLAINE

Last night...before bedtime...but I walked her right back to the front door...right back here...I left...

(THE GIRLS come in from the kitchen with a breakfast spread.)

GABE

Beth, Emily was at Blaine's last night.

BETH

I knew it! I knew it! Where is she?

BLAINE

Where is she?

BETH

Yes, Blaine! Where is Emily?

BLAINE

I don't know! I promise I don't know...I left her here...

(The DOORBELL rings.)

BETH

Who could that be?

(BETH goes to answer door.)

ELAINE

Can we go ahead and eat?

DOT

Just wait a minute, egg-head.

MAGGIE

Please do not call names.

DIANE

(as she enters)

I know you weren't expecting me, but I just thought I'd drop by on my way to work and see how Emily's first night was.

BETH

This certainly is a surprise...

DIANE

I know, I'm just being silly, but it's sort of on my way.

BETH

You're not being silly...actually, we were just going to call you.

DIANE

(starting to sense something's wrong)

You were going to call me? Is something wrong?

BETH

Not exactly wrong...really...

DIANE

Where is Emily?

ELAINE

Would you like a toaster pastry?

DOT

Not now, Elaine...

DIANE

Where is Emily? Where is she?

BETH

Diane, I am so sorry about this...

DIANE

So sorry about what?? Is she okay?? Where is she???

BETH

Diane, Emily...Well, Emily...

GABE

(trying to help)

Diane, Beth came over this morning to check on things and Emily wasn't here. She apparently didn't sleep here last night.

DIANE

What? She apparently didn't sleep here last night? What the hell is going on here!?! Where is she??

BETH

We're trying to find that out right now.

DIANE

You had her for one night! One night and you couldn't even keep track of her!! I am going to sue you so fast...

DOT

One, two, three, four, five...

MAGGIE

(cowering, hands over head again)

Oh, my God! Someone save him! He's up there on the cross and no one's doing anything!!

BETH

Magg...I mean, Mary...Please...

GABE

Let's just all calm down here...

DIANE

I don't need you to tell me anything! Find my daughter! I need you to find my daughter!!!

BETH

We're working on that right now...

DIANE

(spies BLAINE and re-focuses her attack)

You! I knew she'd go to you...Where is she? Where is she???

BLAINE

I...I...

ELAINE

(going to BLAINE's defense)

Please don't hurt him! Please!!

MAGGIE

Please stop...save him!

BETH

Please, everyone...please calm down!!

DIANE

(a complete melt-down)

I just want my little girl back! Please bring her back!!!

BETH

Oh, Lord, please help us! Emily, where the hell are
you???

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF ACT)

ACT II

Scene 1

AT RISE:

It is a few minutes later. Things have calmed down some; DIANE is sitting drinking some water. BETH is sitting with her, but isn't sure what more she can say or do. GABE is across the stage with BLAINE and on the phone. The girls are outside; they aren't on stage.

GABE

Well...we're not sure when she actually disappeared...She was here last night and now she's not...I see...yes, I understand what you're saying, but don't you think these circumstances change the rules just a little? No...I'm not asking for...no, I just think...Okay. Yes, I understand. Thanks for your time.

DIANE

What did they say?

GABE

It hasn't been 24 hours yet. They can't really do anything until 24 hours have passed.

DIANE

Are you serious??

GABE

Well, that's what he said...

DIANE

This is unbelievable!!

BETH

It's not going to do us any good to get upset all over again...Diane, maybe you should go home in case she shows up there...

DIANE

Why would she do that?

BETH

Well, she wasn't overjoyed to be coming here. Maybe she just went home.

DIANE

And it would take her an entire evening to get there?

BLAINE

Maybe she got lost...

BETH

(cutting him off)

I'm sure we will find her...Diane and Blaine, I think maybe the two of you should go home in case she shows up there. We will call you the minute we know anything, I promise.

BLAINE

(turns to GABE)

Do you think I should do that?

GABE

Well, we're not getting anywhere here...

BLAINE

Okay, Gabe. If you think so, I'll go home and wait for Emily.

GABE

And you call us right away if she shows up. Do you understand?

BLAINE

I will call you if Emily comes to my house. I will do that, Gabe.

GABE

Great. We're going to find her, Blaine.

BLAINE

I know we will. We will find her.

(BLAINE exits. DIANE rises to leave also.)

DIANE

I know you're just trying to get rid of me. But since I can't stand it here anymore, I'll go. Please call me?

BETH

First thing. I promise. I'm...

DIANE

Please don't say you're sorry...Just...don't say anything.

(An awkward silence as DIANE leaves. BETH and GABE look at each other with "What do we do now?" looks...they cross to each other and hug.)

GABE

This is about all we need right now...

BETH

I know...I am so sorry...

GABE

Hey, wait a minute. You're not blaming yourself, are you? Beth, this isn't your fault...

BETH

No, I suppose not...but it sure feels like it...I just wish I would have stayed here last night.

GABE

Hey, I'm the one who talked you out of that. Your job is not to stay here 24-7 and watch these girls. They need some independence.

BETH

It was her first night.

GABE

Beth, stop it!

BETH

I can't help it!

GABE

You're just going to drive yourself crazy...You would have been sleeping anyway. She could just as easily have run away while you were here. Beth? How about something to drink? Or eat? I haven't seen you eat anything.

BETH

I'm not hungry...

GABE

I'm getting you something...

(GABE crosses toward the kitchen
and BETH sees the envelope in
his pocket again. She crosses
to him and snatches the
envelope.)

GABE

Beth, not now...Beth...give that back.

BETH

What is this?

GABE

It's nothing...

BETH

If it's nothing, why aren't you letting me see it?

GABE

You don't need to know! This isn't the time, Beth. It's
just a letter...

BETH

Yes, I can see that. It looks like the letter Chloe
brought over.

GABE

Chloe brought it over?

BETH

It got in her mailbox by mistake. What is it, Gabe?

GABE

Why are you doing this right now? We need to focus on
Emily...

BETH

It'll only take you a second to tell me...Or do I need to
read it?

GABE

You're not going to let this rest, are you?

BETH

What is it, Gabe?

GABE

Beth...Okay, but for the record, I tried to spare you this until later ...It's a letter from the bank.

BETH

Our bank?

GABE

Yes, our bank.

BETH

Well???

GABE

Beth, it's a foreclosure notice.

BETH

A foreclosure? On our house?

GABE

Not on our house...on this house.

BETH

What?

GABE

They're giving us our final notice, Beth. I didn't want to tell you.

BETH

We have to close this house?

GABE

Beth, I told you we were having problems paying for both houses...All the girls are on rental assistance and we're just not getting enough from them to make it. I've been trying...I didn't think this would happen so fast...

BETH

Oh, my God, Gabe...

GABE

Beth, we can deal with this. We'll figure something out. Can you let me worry about this?

BETH

I can't...Oh, my God...the girls...

GABE

Beth...

(The GIRLS burst in from outside.)

MAGGIE

She's back!!

ELAINE

Emily's back!! Emily's back!

DOT

She slept the night in a garage!

ELAINE

Like a car!!

BETH

What??

(EMILY comes in with CHLOE.
CHLOE is definitely not happy.)

BETH

(rushes to EMILY)

Oh, my God! Thank God you're safe! Where have you been?

CHLOE

Where's she's been is in my garage.

GABE

Your garage?

CHLOE

That's what I said...I went to get in my Lexus this morning
and here she was sleeping in the back seat. I was
terrified!

BETH

Gabe, will you please call Diane and Blaine and let them
know she's okay?? Oh, and, Elaine, you need to get ready
for your interview...okay?

ELAINE

Okay, Beth.

(ELAINE exits.)

GABE (to EMILY)
We're sure glad you showed up, kiddo.

(GABE exits into the kitchen.)

BETH
Emily, you scared us to death! What happened??

MAGGIE
Yes, you scared us to death! Where were you?

BETH
Thanks, Maggie, I'll handle this...

MAGGIE
Oh, okay...

EMILY
Blaine walked me back here...And I didn't want to stay here,
so I left...I walked...and I knew I couldn't go to Blaine's...and
I couldn't go home...and I just walked. And then I got
tired...

CHLOE
And...she ended up in my garage.

(GABE re-enters from the
kitchen.)

CHLOE
Listen, Beth, I appreciate what you're trying to do here,
but I just can't have this happening all the time.

BETH
All the time? What are you talking about?

CHLOE
Well...there was that other incident when one of your
residents went into my mailbox and took my mail...

DOT
One, two, three, four, five...

(CHLOE glares at DOT, who stops
abruptly and goes to GABE for
comfort.)

BETH

That was a misunderstanding, Ms. Danvers. Your address is very similar to this one, and I made sure you got your mail back...

DOT

One, two, three, four, five.

CHLOE

Okay! Let's bottom-line this thing, Beth. With these trespassing incidents...

BETH

Trespassing!

CHLOE

...and your financial issues...

GABE (interrupting)

How do you know about that?

CHLOE

Oh, please, Gabe. It's a small town. You can't keep any secrets here. Between your financial problems and my influence in the neighborhood, your days here are numbered.

DOT

Beth...what is she talking about??

MAGGIE

Do we have to move?

(BETH can't answer that question and there is a painful silence on stage. MAGGIE is upset and goes to her corner. During this awkward pause, ELAINE enters, ready for her interview.)

ELAINE

What's going on?

BETH (to CHLOE)

Thank you for discussing this in front of the girls. (to GIRLS) Nothing you need to worry about, Elaine. You know where to go for the interview, right? (ELAINE nods) Good, let's get you going, then.

(BETH walks ELAINE to door,
fixing things about her
appearance before she goes)

BETH

You look really nice, Elaine. Do you remember how to get there?

ELAINE

I sure do.

BETH

It's just a few blocks away. Do you have copies of your references for a back-up?

ELAINE

Right here!

BETH

And you know what to say?

ELAINE

I'm good looking!

BETH (amused)

Right...you're good looking.

ELAINE

I'm ready, Beth. I'm going to do good.

BETH

And you don't need me to come with you??

ELAINE

I can do it, Beth. I want to do this by myself.

BETH

I'm so proud of you. Go get 'em.

(ELAINE exits. BETH turns back
to the room.)

BETH (takes a deep breath)

DOT, Maggie, Emily...Listen, I'm not going to lie to you about this. We are having some financial problems, some trouble affording this house. But I don't want you to worry about it. Gabe and I will figure this all out. I don't want you to worry, okay?

GABE

We'll figure it out, girls.

DOT

What can we do, Beth?

MAGGIE

Yes, Beth, what can we do?

BETH

At this point, there really isn't anything...

(BLAINE knocks and enters
immediately before anyone has a
chance to answer the door. He
is almost frantic.)

BLAINE

You found Emily?? (sees Emily) Emily!! You're back!!

(BLAINE and EMILY hug...CHLOE
backs up slightly, not sure how
to react to this display.)

BETH

She just came back, Blaine...

DOT

But, Blaine, we're going to move...

BLAINE

Move??

BETH

Let's not jump to conclusions here, DOT...Blaine, there's
nothing for you to worry about right now...

CHLOE

No, there certainly isn't...Not just now. But it might not
be too long...(to BETH) Just so you know...when I leave here,
I'm sending around a petition to make it clear this home
doesn't need to be here...I'm really sorry, Beth, but I just
can't live like this.

BETH

Girls, listen, I need you to get washed up for lunch. Can
you do that for me? Just wash up and then come out here

and we'll figure out lunch...Blaine, would you like to join us?

BLAINE

Do you have root beer and cashews?

BETH

Well...we have root beer...

BLAINE (reaching in his pocket)

And I have cashews...I would be honored to stay, Ms. Beth.

BETH

Great...You can go on and wash up, too, then...

(The GIRLS and BLAINE exit.)

CHLOE

I don't how you deal with them everyday.

BETH

Do you have to threaten us in front of them? Do you have to talk about our financial situation and the petition in front of them?

CHLOE

Are you trying to keep secrets?

GABE

They don't need to know about everything. They've got enough to worry about.

CHLOE

Oh, and I don't?? If they can't handle reality, maybe they should be...

BETH

In a home? What do you think this is?

CHLOE

That's fine to have this...just...

GABE

Oh, please don't say it...

CHLOE (pointedly saying it)

Not in my neighborhood. I have small children and they don't need to be exposed to this.

BETH

Your children aren't in any danger.

CHLOE

You don't know that.

BETH

I do know that...

CHLOE

They take walks nearly every night. My children see them around every night.

BETH

What's wrong with that?

CHLOE

They don't know how to handle them! They don't know what to say!

BETH

These girls are real people, Ms. Danvers. They are real people with real feelings. You don't have to know what to say, you just need to treat them like you would anyone else!

GABE

Beth, settle down...

BETH

I won't!! These girls would do just fine if they could just be people! Just people!!

CHLOE

But they're not, really. Beth, you're so close to this, you can't see it. They're just not like us...

BETH

Don't lump me in with you. I'm not like you...

CHLOE

Oh, come on, Beth. You're not all that different than I am.

(BETH is about to answer when
DIANE bursts through the front
door. She is, as you might
imagine, highly charged.)

DIANE

Where is she? Where is Emily?

BETH

Diane, I'm so glad you could come so quickly...

DIANE

I'm not here for a social call...Where is she?

GABE

In the kitchen...

(DIANE exits into the kitchen.)

CHLOE

I guess Mommy isn't too happy, is she?

(DIANE comes back out of the kitchen with EMILY in tow. She is dragging her, and the others follow.)

EMILY

Mom, what are you doing? Mom!!

DIANE

You're coming home with me. I can't leave you here.

EMILY

Mom, stop it!

(EMILY stops short and tries to disentangle herself from her Mom's grip. DIANE holds in tight and there is a tug-of-war going on.)

DIANE

You disappeared, Emily! You don't want to be here!!

BLAINE

Stop pulling her! You're hurting her!

DIANE

You keep out of this!

GABE

Diane, settle down...

MAGGIE

Oh, my God!! Oh, my God!

(MAGGIE is distressed and begins to pull off her clothes. She is EVE again and truly distressed by the violence she is seeing. DOT struggles with her and succeeds in making her keep her clothes on.)

BETH

Maggie...Oh, no...Can we all calm down, please??

DIANE

She's not staying here! I won't let her!

EMILY

Mom, stop it! Just stop it!!

(EMILY is strong enough to tear herself away from her mom. All activity is suspended here as they are all surprised at how strong EMILY has spoken. They wait for her to speak. MAGGIE sits with DOT and rocks on the ground.)

EMILY

I heard what you said. I don't want to go home with you.

DIANE

You heard what I said? What do you mean?

BETH

Oh, my God...

EMILY

Blaine says I have ten fingers and toes but I can't stay with him...

DOT

Ten...

DIANE

Ten fingers and toes??

DOT

Ten.

BETH

Diane, she heard our conversation. Earlier.

DIANE

Oh, Emily...I didn't mean...

EMILY

Don't lie to me again...I'm staying here. I want to stay here.

DIANE

You just ran away, Emily.

EMILY

I got lost. After Blaine. I won't run again.

CHLOE

Well, I've seen enough of this spectacle...Besides, I have a petition to write...

BETH

Ms. Danvers...do you have to??

DIANE

What is she talking about?

BETH

She intends to send around a petition to get rid of the residents in this home...

DIANE

What??

CHLOE

That's a little simplified, Beth. You don't live in this neighborhood. You don't have any idea...

DIANE

I don't have any idea??!! I don't have any idea?? How dare you!!!!

CHLOE

I will not give up protecting my own children!

DIANE

What about my child??

CHLOE

Your child is none of my concern...

DIANE

No, of course she's not...Where is she supposed to go??

CHLOE

Again...not really my problem...

DIANE

How can you be like that??

CHLOE

This is all a moot point anyway...they can't even afford to keep this house open.

GABE

Ms. Danvers, it really isn't your place to share that information...

DIANE

You're closing the home?

BETH

No, we're not closing it...

CHLOE

You most certainly are. Soon you'll have no choice.

BETH

There's always a choice...

CHLOE

Oh, take off your rose-colored glasses, Mary Poppins!
You're out of options here!

DOT

Beth?

BETH

Yes, Dot?

DOT

(she pulls out a wad of money
from her pocket...it is mostly
ones and change)

I want to help with the house. You can have this.

BETH

Oh, Dot.

DOT

I don't need it. I want to give it to you.

BETH

Keep your money, Dot. You might need it. But I love you
for wanting to help.

(BETH gives DOT a big hug. As
this is going on ELAINE enters.
She stands near the door,
looking embarrassed and in tears.
BETH sees her and crosses to her
immediately.)

BETH

Elaine, what happened?

ELAINE

I'm sorry, Beth. I really tried.

DOT (crossing to ELAINE)

What happened, Elaine?

ELAINE

I went to the interview...I was on time...

BETH

That's good.

ELAINE

I walked in the door and the woman looked up...

BETH

Elaine, let's go sit down and you can tell us.

(BETH escorts ELAINE to the
couch with DOT right behind
them. The rest are paying
attention as well.)

ELAINE

Okay...Well, the woman looked up and saw me and she told me to sit down and wait.

DOT

Then what?

ELAINE

She went in a door, then she came back out. And then she said, "Thank you but we don't need anyone right now." So I left.

BETH

They didn't even interview you?

ELAINE

No...

(BETH absorbs this and appears to be in thought. After a beat or two, she turns to CHLOE with new resolve. She crosses to her.)

BETH

Give us one month.

CHLOE

Give you one month for what??

BETH

Give us one month to get our act together here...to figure out the money thing...to straighten this thing out. Wait with your petition for one month...

CHLOE

Why should I wait?

BETH

Because somewhere in there there's a heart...and I'm asking you...

CHLOE

I don't have to do anything you ask me...

GABE

Please, Ms. Danvers...just one month??

BETH

This time next month, I'll hold a neighborhood meeting myself. We'll meet, discuss the home situation, and you can do what you will then. You can pass around the petition right at the meeting if that's what you want to do. But it'll give you a month to think about what you're doing, and you can go forward with it then. Please??

CHLOE

(after a long pause with
everyone looking at her)

I'm not making any promises...I'll think about it. But I'll be at that meeting with bells on.

BETH

I wouldn't be surprised...and thank you...

CHLOE

Don't presume anything...I'll see you next month.

(CHLOE exits. They all look at
each other. DIANE tries to take
her daughter's hand, but EMILY
pulls away.)

DIANE

Are you sure you want to stay?

EMILY

I'm staying here...

DIANE

Emily, I'm so sorry...I do think you're normal, honey...

EMILY

Please go home.

DIANE

Emily...I can't leave like this.

EMILY

I don't want to live with you...Please go home.

DIANE

Emily, please.

(DIANE reaches for EMILY's hand,
but EMILY pulls away and goes to

BLAINE and clutches his arm.
She won't look at DIANE anymore.
DIANE is defeated. We see a
moment of sadness and loss, then
she re-collects herself, puts on
her "game face" and heads for
the door. She turns back once...)

DIANE

Take good care of her.

(DIANE exits. Long pause,
everyone looking gloomy. GABE,
sensing that everyone needs a
break from this whole thing...)

GABE

What's that sound?? What is that sound??

BETH

What sound?

DOT

What sound?? What do you hear??

BLAINE

A fire? Do you hear a fire?

GABE

Ice cream! I hear ice cream screaming at us from the
freezer! You know what it's saying??

ELAINE

I don't know!!

GABE

It's saying, (silly voice) "Eat me!! Somebody please
rescue me from this cold freezer and eat me!!" Do you hear
it??

BETH

I hear it! I hear it!!

DOT

So do I!!

MAGGIE

I hear it, too!

(Ad-libbing as they all go into
the kitchen to eat ice cream.)

(BLACKOUT)
(END OF SCENE)

ACT II

Scene 2

AT RISE: As lights come up, it is two weeks later and Maggie's birthday. BETH and GABE are in their monologue positions.

BETH

Well, in the midst of all of the neighborhood chaos and the house situation, we found ourselves with a little light, Maggie's 21st birthday. The girls loved celebrating each other's birthdays, and it was just what we all needed to get our minds off the other issues.

GABE

I hadn't made any progress with the bank. It was looking pretty grim, and I felt helpless—and angry that with all the worry we had just about the money, that our neighbor Chloe had to add to it all with her ignorance and stupidity.

BETH

(reaching to hold his hand)
She doesn't really know what she's doing, Gabe.

GABE

You know the sad thing? I think she really does.

BETH

Anyway, I was a little on edge with this particular party because Maggie decided, after 5 years of being apart, that she wanted her mom and sister to come for the party. There were a lot of issues between Maggie and her mom—too many to go into here—but we all thought that maybe, after 5 years, things might be okay.

GABE

And there's nothing I like more than birthday cake. Especially Beth's. This girl makes one mean birthday cake.

Lights shift. There is no one on stage and the lights are dim. In the dim light, DOT enters and gives some sort of signal to girls off stage that the coast is clear. ELAINE and EMILY come tip-toeing

out of the bedroom hallway, all
headed for the kitchen.

ELAINE

Do you think she heard us?

DOT

If she heard us, she'd have come out, Dodo-bird.

EMILY

Aren't those extinct?

DOT

I'm not actually calling her a Dodo-bird, dingy. I'm just
calling her a name.

ELAINE

And now she called you one, dingy.

DOT

One, two, three, four, five.

EMILY

I'd rather be a dingy than a dodo bird.

ELAINE

I'm very happy being a Dodo bird, actually.

DOT

Are you two, two, three, four, five, actually having this
conversation? Now, listen...Elaine, you stand here on lookout
and Emily and I will get Maggie's birthday waffles in the
toaster. Okay? She's supposed to have birthday breakfast
in bed, so give us the signal if she shows up and try to
get her to go back to bed.

ELAINE

The signal? What signal??

DOT

Okay...the easiest thing to do is to whistle.

ELAINE

If Maggie shows up, I whistle.

DOT

Exactly.

ELAINE

Okay...

EMILY

What do I do, Dot?

DOT

You're going to be in the kitchen with me. It's your job to get the juice, syrup and butter on the tray. Got it?

EMILY and ELAINE

Got it!

DOT

Shhhh!! You'll wake her up!

(to EMILY)

Come on...

(to ELAINE)

Watch close...

ELAINE

(a little louder than she should...)

We're so sneaky!

(ELAINE giggles and quickly covers her mouth with her hand.)

DOT

Shhhh!!! I'm surprised the whole neighborhood hasn't come to the door by now!

(DOT and EMILY exit into the kitchen. ELAINE waits nervously near the hallway exit and looks for Maggie. She is very agitated, but excited, and in her nervousness, she tries to whistle, but finds she can't. She heads toward the kitchen to tell DOT.)

ELAINE

(In a stage whisper as she heads toward the kitchen)

Dot! Dot! I can't whistle!

(ELAINE gets a few feet from the hallway opening and MAGGIE

appears in her robe, sleepy and disheveled.)

MAGGIE

Elaine, what are you doing?

ELAINE

Whoa!! Maggie...you're up!

(ELAINE tries to whistle again, but really can't, so she is visibly struggling with what to do.)

MAGGIE

Elaine, is something wrong??

ELAINE

(In a much louder voice than is needed...she is clearly trying to signal her friends in the kitchen)

Something wrong? Why, no, *Maggie*...why do you think something's wrong??

MAGGIE

Elaine, why are you talking so loud?

ELAINE

Talking loud? Am I talking loud? I guess...I'm just happy to be awake today!

MAGGIE

Okay...

(MAGGIE tries to cross past her to go to the kitchen, but ELAINE cuts her off.)

ELAINE

Ummm...Maggie...Maggie...don't you think it's a little early to be up this morning?

MAGGIE

This is when I always get up.

ELAINE

But the sun has barely come up. And...oh...I'm feeling pretty sleepy myself. Why don't we go back to bed for awhile?

MAGGIE

But I'm up now.

ELAINE

Silly...just because you're up doesn't mean you have to stay up.

MAGGIE

What is going on here? Where are Dot and Emily?

ELAINE

Dot...and...Emily...are....taking a shower.

MAGGIE

Together?

ELAINE

Um...not exactly...I think one is doing potty time while the other is showering...I think...

(DOT and EMILY enter from the kitchen with the tray. DOT sees the situation and is visibly irritated.)

DOT

Oh, bird biscuits, Elaine, you were supposed to give us a signal!

ELAINE

I don't know how to whistle!

DOT

Well, you could have thought of something else...

ELAINE

I tried to be loud...

EMILY

Happy Birthday, Maggie!!

DOT

Oh, fine...Happy Birthday, Maggie!

MAGGIE

Dot, why are you so upset?

DOT

Because, genius, you're supposed to get breakfast in bed on your birthday.

MAGGIE

My birthday? You all remembered my birthday?

ELAINE

Of course we remembered. We love you.

DOT

And you put the "Happy Birthday" poster up on your door before you went to bed last night.

EMILY

So, are you going back to bed or do we have to feed you here?

ELAINE

Why don't you just go back to bed in the couch?

MAGGIE

What?

EMILY

That's a good idea! You go to bed in the couch and we'll pretend to give you breakfast in bed!

ELAINE

Dot? Is that okay?

DOT

(pause)

Of course it's okay. It's Maggie's birthday!!! Get in bed, you marshmallow head, and we'll feed you.

MAGGIE

This is great!

(MAGGIE gets in the couch, they cover her with a blanket and they all go ceremoniously to the kitchen door and "enter" together.)

ALL

Happy Birthday, Maggie!!

(ALL sing the "Birthday" song. Better if they have a special song that isn't the norm.)

MAGGIE

Oh, what a surprise!! And breakfast in bed! I never expected this!!!

ELAINE

And...you get to have a party later.

MAGGIE

A party!!

DOT

There goes the surprise...

EMILY

It wasn't a surprise. Remember, Maggie? You invited your mom to come.

DOT

Why doesn't anyone understand my sense of humor?

MAGGIE

Is she here yet?

ELAINE

I haven't seen her.

DOT

If she were here, we would have let you know. She's not supposed to come until a little later. Come on, eat your birthday waffles before they get cold.

MAGGIE

They're lukewarm already.

EMILY

So eat them!!

(MAGGIE gets ready to pour syrup on her waffles and realizes that all the girls are just watching her. She looks around at them...)

MAGGIE

What are you all having for breakfast?

ELAINE

What are we having for breakfast, Dot?

DOT

How should I know? I made the waffles and that's all the further I got.

EMILY

We could have ice cream.

ELAINE

Yeah!

DOT

Not for breakfast...

ELAINE

Well...Maggie's got, like, a hundred waffles there.

MAGGIE

Oh, my goodness! I should be sharing! I'm so sorry.

EMILY

We can't eat your breakfast waffles, Maggie! They're yours.

ELAINE

Yeah...they're yours. Even though Dot made the whole box and gave them to you.

MAGGIE

Well, if they're mine, I can do what I want with them. So...I'm going to share. That's the Christian thing to do.

ELAINE

I'm sure glad you're a Christian, Maggie. Those waffles look great!

EMILY

But...we don't have any plates.

ELAINE

Or silverware.

DOT

Well...then we'll just have to have.....frisbee waffles!!!!

ELAINE

Frisbee waffles?

EMILY

What's that?

MAGGIE

I don't know, Dot. Remember last time??

DOT

Beth's not even here...and she wasn't that mad. They don't even have syrup on them yet!

ELAINE

She's right, Maggie...I'm awfully hungry.

MAGGIE

Do you really think so, Dot?

DOT (beginning a chant)

Frisbee...waffles...frisbee...waffles...

(DOT, EMILY and ELAINE all join
in the chant. MAGGIE is still a
little unsure...)

MAGGIE (while the chant continues)

Why can't we just get plates from the kitchen? Can't I
just go in and get some silverware? Are you sure?

(After this hesitation, MAGGIE
throws caution to the wind and
starts frisbee throwing the
waffles to the girls. The
girls, caught up in the fun,
throw the frisbee waffles to
each other and it's just a fun
game of frisbee waffles. They
can take bites of the waffles as
they catch them...director choice.
Of course, as they are loving
every minute of it, in comes
BETH with the birthday cake--and
maybe gets beamed with a
waffle??)

BETH

What is going on here?

ELAINE

Ooops.

(There is a silence in the room,
everyone waiting to see what
BETH does. ELAINE continues
chewing on her waffle in the
silence.)

DOT

Good morning, Beth.

BETH

Frisbee waffles? Haven't we talked about this before?

(silence)

Haven't we? What did we discuss?

EMILY

Sorry, Beth...We just got carried away...

ELAINE

It's Maggie's birthday!!

BETH

Yes, I know it's her birthday. That's why I came over here
with this beautiful cake. I just wasn't aware that a
birthday changed the rules around here.

DOT

I'm sorry. It was my idea.

BETH

So...what had we talked about before??

DOT

Ummm...that throwing food is a waste?

BETH

And...you have to use more wrist! You'll never get it across
the whole room the way you girls are throwing them!! It
has to snap!

(BETH throws a waffle across the
room and the girls are

flabbergasted. They stare at her and at each other.)

BETH

Oh, it's Maggie's birthday! Lighten up and throw some waffles!!

(They all have a little waffle party--ad lib fun dialogue here--and, in the midst, the phone rings.)

BETH

Fun's over for now, girls. I'm going to get the phone and you all need to get some decent clothes on for the party. Hello? Oh, hello!...can you hang on for one second? (holds phone to chest) Do you all have something to wear? Dot, have you packed your clothes for the move?

DOT

No, not yet.

ELAINE

But we haven't had breakfast!

BETH

Go, go, go...you'll have plenty to eat today, I promise. With parties come food. Now go!

(The GIRLS all exit into the bedroom hallway as BETH answers the phone.)

BETH

Hello? Oh, Gloria!! You've landed, I assume? Good...I hope you had a pleasant flight. That's great. Well, Maggie is really looking forward to having you here for her birthday. I know, the two of you haven't seen each other for awhile...no, she definitely wants you here. Absolutely. You've got the address? Well, we're not very far from the airport...are you sure you don't want me to come and get you? I know they have cabs for a reason, but it's really no trouble...well, if you insist. Okay...well, we're all really looking forward to meeting you. She's excited, too. Okay. See you soon, Gloria. Thanks, 'bye.

(MAGGIE enters from the hallway.)

MAGGIE

Was that my mom?

BETH

Yes, it was, Maggie. Are you still okay with her coming here?

MAGGIE

I think so...

BETH

Maggie, there's a lot that's happened between the two of you. I know you wanted to invite her...I'm just making sure you're ready.

MAGGIE

I think so, Beth.

BETH

Are you okay?

MAGGIE

I really want to see her. I think she might be better...

BETH

I'm sure it's going to be a great day, Maggie.

MAGGIE

It has to be...it's my birthday. I'm going to back and get the girls.

MAGGIE exits while EMILY enters.

BETH

Oh, Emily! Are you all ready for the party? You look very nice.

EMILY

I was hoping you could do my hair?

BETH

(takes a moment—this is a big deal, since most of the time Emily does not like to be touched [Autism])
I'd be delighted, Emily.

They begin the hair doing.

BETH

How would you like it done?

EMILY

I don't know. I trust you.

BETH

Thank you, Emily.

EMILY

Beth?

BETH

Yes, Emily?

EMILY

I'm worried about something for Maggie's party.

BETH

Are you? What is it?

EMILY

I...well, I don't know Maggie very well yet and I don't know if what I got her is a good present.

BETH

Oh, Emily. You're very sweet. You want to tell me what you got her?

EMILY

I don't know.

BETH

I won't tell. And I promise not to laugh.

EMILY

Well...okay...I got her Reece's cups.

BETH laughs, but nicely.

EMILY

You're laughing! You promised!

BETH

No, Emily, no...I'm not really laughing.

EMILY

That sounds like laughing!

BETH

No, Emily. I'm sorry. Listen, I think candy is a very nice present. She loves candy.

EMILY

No, it's not just candy. It's Reese's cups.

BETH

Okay. Why Reese's cups?

EMILY

When she's Noah's wife, when she has her spells, she likes to collect things by twos to put them on the ark. Reese's cups come in twos, so I thought...

BETH

Oh, Emily! That's very thoughtful!

EMILY

It is???

BETH

Of course it is!

EMILY

Then you think she'll like it?

BETH

Well, if she doesn't, you take it from her and give it to me. I love Reese's cups!

EMILY

Thanks, Beth.

BETH

Is it okay if I give you a hug?

EMILY

Yes. I would like that.

BETH and EMILY hug. As they do, ELAINE, DOT and MAGGIE come out from the hallway.

DOT

We're all fixed up and ready to party!

ELAINE

We apologized and Maggie forgave us and we're ready to party!

DOT

Ready to birthday party!

(The DOORBELL rings.)

MAGGIE

Oh, my gosh...is she here already?

(MAGGIE heads to her prayer corner, a little freaked out...)

BETH

(as she heads to answer the door)

That can't be her, Mags. I just talked to her on the phone and she's still at the airport.

(stops her from going to the corner)

Are you sure you're okay??

MAGGIE

I'm okay, Beth. I'll just clean up the waffles.

BETH

Okay...

DOT

Oops, Maggie! You don't have your "Happy Birthday" pin on.

ELAINE

Or your hat, either.

BETH

You'd all better go and help Maggie. She's the birthday girl and she needs to have it all together.

DOT

Come on, Dingle-berry...

MAGGIE

No name-calling on my birthday!

DOT

Okay...sorry...monkey face!

MAGGIE

Dot!!

DOT

I'm just kidding!

MAGGIE chases DOT offstage
into the back hallway and
ELAINE and EMILY follow after
them.

ELAINE (as she exits)

Am I still a Dodo bird??

EMILY

Hey, guys! Beth did my hair!!

(BETH answers the door. It is
DIANE and BETH escorts her into
the room.)

DIANE

Thanks for inviting me, Beth. I don't know if Emily really
wants me here, though.

BETH

Well, she may not right now, but you want to be here.
She'll come around eventually. At least that's my hope.

DIANE

Well, I appreciate...

(EMILY appears and the bedroom
hallway. She sees her mom and
stops in her tracks.)

EMILY

Mom, what are you doing here?

DIANE

It's good to see you...I like your hair.

EMILY

Beth did it. Why are you here?

BETH

I invited her to Maggie's party, Emily. I hope you don't
mind.

EMILY

Oh...I guess not. I guess that's okay...

BETH

You know what? I just realized that we're very close to party time and I have nothing ready. Diane, I'm hoping you can kind of supervise in the kitchen?

DIANE

Sure...if that's what you need...

BETH

Yes, it is. We have ingredients in the kitchen for Maggie's favorite punch, and I would love for you and Emily to make it for us. What do you think, Emily?

EMILY

I guess so...If you want...

BETH

Super. You two get busy...Call if you need any help or have any questions.

EMILY

Okay...

(EMILY goes into the kitchen and DIANE follows her. ELAINE comes out of the bedroom hallway, followed closely by DOT.)

DOT

Elaine, you've got your shirt on backwards.

ELAINE

Oh, not again!!

DOT

Let me...

ELAINE

Stop!! I'd be happy to fix my shirt, Dot.

(ELAINE proceeds to fix her shirt right there in front of DOT. DOT is smiling and enjoying her responding so

differently from the first encounter.)

DOT

And don't forget to fix your sock.

ELAINE

Don't push it, Dot...

(The DOORBELL rings again. BETH starts for the door, but MAGGIE comes barreling out of the kitchen.)

MAGGIE

Is it my mom? Is it my mom???

(MAGGIE makes a beeline for the door and when she returns, she has a rather shocked BLAINE with her.)

MAGGIE

It wasn't my mom.

BETH

Maggie, I think you scared him. Blaine, are you okay??

BLAINE

I guess...she just...I guess so...

BETH

Poor Blaine! Emily's in the kitchen making the punch. Would you like to help with that?

BLAINE

Is Gabe in there?

BETH

No...sorry. Gabe has to work today.

BLAINE

Oh. I will go and help with the punch.

(BLAINE exits into the kitchen. MAGGIE, DOT, ELAINE and BETH all kind of look at each other.)

BETH

Well...it looks like we're about ready for a party!

MAGGIE

My birthday party!

ELAINE

I think I have to go potty before the party.

DOT

You always have to go potty.

ELAINE

Don't you have to go?

BETH

Why don't you all go so we don't have to worry about it later?

GIRLS

Aye, aye, captain!

(The DOORBELL rings again. BETH takes a moment to look to Heaven, then goes to the door. She escorts in GLORIA and BECCA. They are clearly uncomfortable here but eager.)

GLORIA

Well...Beth. We're here.

BETH

You sure are...and you must be Becca?

BECCA

Nice to meet you, Beth.

BETH

Yes, after all these years! Oh, I didn't mean that the way it sounded...Do you have bags I can put in a room?

GLORIA

(quickly)

We're not staying.

BECCA

(with embarrassment)

Mom!

GLORIA

Oh, I mean...we travel pretty light. We just have what we brought for the party.

BETH

Oh...Well, I'm sure you must be tired from the flight...Would you like to sit down?

GLORIA

Sure...why not? We can sit down. Becca?

BECCA

Sure!

They sit and so does BETH.
There is an uncomfortable
pause, then...

GLORIA

So, where is Maggie?

BETH

Oh, she just had to get changed before the party started. She should be back with the girls any second now.

(EMILY, DIANE, and BLAINE come
in from the kitchen with the
punch, some cups, etc...)

EMILY

The punch is done!

GLORIA

Oh, you startled me!

BETH

Sorry, Gloria...are you okay?

GLORIA

Oh, I'm fine...I just didn't expect that. I'm fine.

BETH

The punch looks wonderful! Maggie will love it.

DIANE

Where do you want it, Beth?

BETH

Oh, probably on the table over there, I guess.

BECCA

Is there anything I can do to help?

GLORIA

Yes, can we help?

BETH

I think we've got things pretty much under control.
Thanks, though.

GLORIA

Sure...

(GLORIA and BECCA fidget on the
couch, clearly anxious to see
MAGGIE, but not knowing how to
expedite that situation.)

BLAINE

This is a lot of cups.

EMILY

There are going to be a lot of people here.

BLAINE

Okay...

BETH

Oh, introductions! I'm so sorry...Gloria, this is Emily, one
of our new residents. And this is her friend, Blaine, and
her mother, Diane. This is Gloria, Maggie's mom and Becca,
Maggie's sister.

DIANE

Nice to meet you, Gloria, Becca.

GLORIA

Same here...

EMILY

You're Maggie's mom??

GLORIA

In the flesh.

BLAINE

In the flesh?

GLORIA

It's...just an expression...

BLAINE

Oh...

BETH

Why don't you all get comfortable? I need to get some napkins from the kitchen...

(BETH exits. All look at each other. EMILY leads BLAINE to sit on the couch next to GLORIA and BECCA. DIANE finds a chair as well...)

DIANE

So, Gloria, did you fly here?

GLORIA

I sure did. And boy are my arms tired...

(DIANE and GLORIA laugh a little too loud for such a lame joke and the others just sit. They don't get it. There is a loud crash from the kitchen.)

DIANE

Oh, dear. I think I should go check that out. Excuse me, please.

GLORIA

Of course.

EMILY

I'm going, too.

BLAINE

Me, too!

(They all exit except GLORIA and BECCA.)

GLORIA

This feels very awkward. I don't think we should have made this trip.

BECCA

Don't be ridiculous. We just got here. Of course it's going to feel awkward.

GLORIA

I mean really awkward. Creepy awkward. That weird girl just bursting in like that and staring.

BECCA

I don't think she was staring.

GLORIA

She doesn't even know what 'in the flesh' means.

BECCA

Will you relax? I really want to see Maggie, Mom. I've missed her.

GLORIA

Have you?

BECCA

Of course! Does that surprise you?

GLORIA

I guess I hadn't really thought about it. (re-stating it because she's surprised) You miss your sister.

BECCA

I really do. I've got a lot going on with school and all, and I've got friends, but it's not really the same. She's my only sister. Mom, she's all I've got.

GLORIA

She's all you've got?

BECCA

You know what I mean.

GLORIA

I guess I do.

BECCA

Don't make this about you, okay? She's my sister. And I really do love her.

GLORIA

I'm not making this about me! Why would you accuse me of that?

BECCA

I'm not accusing you, I'm just warning you.

GLORIA

You're warning me?? My daughter is warning me??

BECCA

I didn't mean warning...

GLORIA

How dare you!

BECCA

Mom, stop. (pause) Just breathe for a minute. I don't want to fight with you. We've been civil the whole trip here, let's just focus on what we're here for. I just want to see my sister and enjoy our time together. I miss her.

GLORIA

Well, you have a strange way of showing it. You haven't even seen her in years.

BECCA

Well, I hate to state the obvious, but neither have you.

GLORIA

There's a reason for that!

BECCA

Oh, I am well aware of that!

GLORIA

We're not going to discuss this here. This is neither the time nor the place.

BECCA

Is there a time to discuss it, Mom? We've never really...

GLORIA

I refuse to do this here.

BECCA

You refuse to do this anywhere! You never talk about anything! How's the weather, Mom? You want to talk about the weather?? Are you willing to talk about the weather?

GLORIA

I thought you wanted to focus on Maggie.

BECCA

I do, you're right. This is about Maggie. (pause)
You'll be okay with her, right?

GLORIA

Of course I will, don't be ridiculous.

BECCA

Mom, you'll be good, right?

GLORIA

(defensive behavior)

Don't question me like a child! I am your mother!

BECCA

You're not really better, are you? (no answer) I thought when I left for college you were going to straighten this all out. You said you were getting help.

GLORIA

You think things are that easy? You leave me and I can just fix it all with the wave of a magic wand?

BECCA

You haven't even tried! You wallow and brood like some pathetic Tennessee Williams character.

GLORIA

I can see college has improved your insults. How well-bred of you to throw Tennessee at me.

BECCA

Oh, and an expert deflection, Mother! Suddenly we're talking about me again instead of you. (starts applauding)
Bravo!

GLORIA

You stop that! Someone will hear us!

BECCA

(she continues to applaud)
But isn't this what you want, Mom? A captive
audience to hear all your woes? What a
terrible burden you've had to bear all these
years??

(MAGGIE, DOT, and ELAINE all
appear from the bedroom hallway.
GLORIA and BECCA don't see them
right away.)

BECCA
You're in your element here, Mom! (keeps clapping) Bow
for your well-earned applause!!

GLORIA
You will not make a spectacle of us in front of
these strange people!

(GLORIA sees MAGGIE, DOT and
ELAINE and abruptly stops the
scene.)

MAGGIE
Mom...Becca! You're here!

BECCA
Maggie!

MAGGIE
Becca, you're here! I missed you!

(BECCA runs to give her a big hug.
They have a big sister hug.
GLORIA watches, approaches, and
goes in to get her hug. When
GLORIA gets close, MAGGIE reacts
as though there is going to be
some sort of physical contact and
cringes, but quickly recovers and
there is possibly the world's most
awkward welcome hug.)

MAGGIE
You're here!

GLORIA
Wouldn't miss my baby's birthday party!

ELAINE

But...haven't you missed a lot of them?

(Huge awkward silence as no one
knows how to answer that...)

MAGGIE (hesitantly)

It's good to see you. Mom.

GLORIA

You look different.

MAGGIE

I grew my hair a little.

BECCA

I love your place! This is really nice!

MAGGIE

I'm so happy to see you.

(BETH, DIANE, and EMILY re-enter
from the kitchen with napkins
and BETH sees the awkward
situation.)

BETH

Well, we're all here! Has everyone met?

GLORIA

Oh, I think so. I believe we have, yes.

(Awkward pause. ELAINE burps.)

DOT

Excuse you.

BETH

Let the festivities begin!! I believe presents are in
order??

MAGGIE

Presents!!

GLORIA

Presents...of course...

BETH

Maggie, why don't you sit here on the couch and everyone will give you their presents?

MAGGIE

Oh, boy...presents.

(GLORIA steps forward to give
MAGGIE her gift, but BECCA jumps
in ahead of her.)

BECCA

Here you go, sis.

MAGGIE

Becca, you got me a present??

BECCA

Of course I did, silly! Open it!

MAGGIE opens the gift.

MAGGIE

Is it...paper?

BECCA

It's stationery. You write letters on it. Hopefully to me! We can be pen pals. There are envelopes and stamps and everything.

MAGGIE

We'll be pen pals?

BECCA

It's the best I can do right now being so far away.

MAGGIE

It's pink. The walls of our room were pink. When we were little.

BECCA

They were?

GLORIA

I don't remember. How do I know?

MAGGIE

They were pink. I remember. I love it. Thanks, Beccs.

(They share a sister hug.
BECCA really hugs MAGGIE very
hard and it is clear that
BECCA has really missed her.)

BECCA
I'm sorry it's been so long, Maggie. I'm sorry..

GLORIA
Let's not get all maudlin here. This is a
party!

BLAINE
Mine next!!

MAGGIE
Blaine, you got me a present??

BLAINE
(snorts a little)
Of course I did. (digs in his pockets) Cashews.

GLORIA
That's disgusting.

BECCA
Mom...

MAGGIE
(as she takes them gingerly)
I love cashews. Thank you.

BLAINE
You are very welcome, Maggie.

BETH
Emily, would you like to go next?

EMILY
Okay. Ummmm...here you go, Maggie.

(EMILY comes forward with a
small package. As she comes
forward, she looks back at BETH
for reassurance, which BETH
gives. MAGGIE opens it.)

MAGGIE

A Reese's peanut butter cup?

EMILY

Yeah, It comes in twos...

DOT

Two, three, four, five...

MAGGIE

Comes in twos?

BLAINE

Yeah, like the animals. On the...

MAGGIE

On the ark! Oh, there are two cups in each package! I love it! Thank you, Emily!

DOT

Two, three, four, five...

EMILY

You're welcome.

GLORIA

(as an aside to BECCA but she's a poor whisperer)
Cashews from his pocket and a candy bar? Stellar birthday.

BECCA

Mother, stop being rude.

BETH

(over the top)
That was very nice you two. Who's next?

DOT

Two, three, four, five...

(GLORIA steps forward again, but
is not quick enough again.)

BLAINE

Diane, go next!!

DIANE

Well, I just got Maggie a little something...it's not much.

EMILY

You got Maggie a present?

DIANE

Like I said...it's not really much...

MAGGIE

A bookmark! With Mary on it.

DIANE

For your Bible.

BETH

That was very thoughtful, Diane.

MAGGIE

Thank you so much!!

(MAGGIE unexpectedly gives DIANE
a hug for her gift. DIANE is
touched and appreciates it.)

DIANE

You're welcome, Maggie.

DOT

Me next! Pick me...Please???

BETH

Go ahead, Dot.

DOT

Here you are, Maggie...

MAGGIE

It's a pillow...

DOT

For your prayer corner. Your knees must be killing you by
now. You can kneel on it. I made it myself. It only took
2025 latches (or stitches) to finish.

MAGGIE

It's beautiful, Dot. Thank you!

(DOT and MAGGIE hug. ELAINE
walks forward with her present.)

ELAINE

I have something for you, too, Maggie.

GLORIA

Oh, I can't wait to see this...

BECCA

Mom...

GLORIA

Oh, relax. I'll be good.

MAGGIE

What is it?

ELAINE

I just put it in a bag...

(MAGGIE opens it and it is a
rosary. MAGGIE is very
impressed.)

MAGGIE

Elaine, it's beautiful!

ELAINE

Don't you recognize it?

MAGGIE

Recognize it? Should I?

ELAINE

You lost this a long time ago.

MAGGIE

I lost this rosary? But...

ELAINE

I found it a while ago when I was cleaning the bathroom. I
thought you would want it back, so I saved it for your
birthday.

GLORIA

Oh, you've GOT to be kidding me!

BETH

Elaine, that was so nice!

MAGGIE

Thank you, Elaine. I love having it back.

BETH

Gloria? Would you like to give Maggie her gift?

GLORIA

Oh, no. You go ahead, Beth.

BETH

I didn't have a lot of time to shop, Maggie, but here's a gift from me.

(MAGGIE opens it. It is a music box that plays a religious song.)

MAGGIE

A music box! It's so pretty!

BETH

I thought you might like it.

MAGGIE

I love you, Beth. It's wonderful...

(When MAGGIE tells BETH she loves her, it clearly takes GLORIA a little by surprise...but she puts her game face on and comes back into the scene, a little too eagerly again.)

GLORIA

Well...I guess it's my turn...Here you are, honey.

(MAGGIE opens a Lite Brite...she is confused by the gift and doesn't know what to say. There is an awkward pause...)

MAGGIE

Thanks, Mom...It's very...nice.

GLORIA

You...always said you wanted a Lite Brite. And...I finally got you one.

MAGGIE

I wanted a Lite Brite?

GLORIA (looks around awkwardly)

Of course you did.

BECCA

Mom, I think that was me.

GLORIA

Well, how am I supposed to remember things like that?

MAGGIE

Thanks, Mom. It's...great.

(A very awkward hug for both.)

BETH

Well...I guess that's it for the gifts. They were all wonderful! I think it's time for charades.

GLORIA

Charades?

BETH

Maggie wanted to play charades at her party..

GLORIA (again, the over-eagerness)

I am a charades expert!! Stand back everyone!!

BETH

Okay...two teams. We'll have Maggie, Gloria, Elaine, and me against Blaine, Emily, Diane, Becca and Dot. Sound good?

DOT

Great, Beth. Let's get started. I'm the timer.

ELAINE

Of course you are.

BETH

Okay...Maggie's team gets to go first since it's her birthday. Who wants to go first?

GLORIA

Why don't you go first, Beth?

MAGGIE

Yes, Beth, you go first!!

(BETH takes the "stage" and stands momentarily thinking of a title to act out. She comes up with one and begins. She does a charade for 'Young Frankenstein.' She goes through the motions for movie, two words, second word and then does a monster walk.)

MAGGIE

A mummy!

ELAINE

A zombie!

GLORIA

Sleepwalking??

ELAINE

A mummy!

MAGGIE

I just said that...

ELAINE

Oooops....

GLORIA

Frankenstein?

(BETH goes nuts and indicates she's right.)

GLORIA

Young Frankenstein!

BETH

Yes! Yay! Wonderful! One point for us!

DOT

One, two, three, four, five. And you got it in 20 seconds. Twenty. Pretty good.

DIANE (rising to the occasion)

Okay. Our turn. Becca, why don't you go first?

BECCA

Me?

EMILY

Go on, Becca.

BECCA

Okay...

(BECCA takes her place and goes through the motions for 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs.' She starts by doing movie, six words. She starts with the first word, Snow, and pantomimes coldness and precipitation coming down. As people guess the wrong answers, she starts to get flustered and looks as though she is on the verge of stopping the game. Finally, though, DIANE guesses the right first word.)

DIANE

Snow!

MAGGIE (lightning-fast)

Snow White and the Seven Dwarves!!

GLORIA (very severely)

Why did you do that? You're not supposed to give the other team the answer!

MAGGIE

I'm sorry...I just...

(ALL stare at GLORIA, surprised at this outburst during such a fun game. GLORIA senses all eyes on her and retreats quickly.)

GLORIA

I'm sorry, it doesn't matter...it doesn't matter. Sorry.
I'm just very...competitive...sorry.

DOT

Thirty-five seconds. Not bad...

BETH (diffusing)

Our turn! Our turn...Ummm...Gloria? Would you like to go next?

GLORIA

Of course...Okay...Let's get some lovin' from my team!!

(GLORIA's team starts a chant:
Gloria, Gloria, Gloria,
Gloria...She loves it and eats it
up. GLORIA thinks a minute,
then goes into charade. Her
title is 'The Sound of Music.'
She goes through the movie/play,
four words, etc... She then
focuses on "music." [*Note:
Don't forget during all this
that DOT should still count when
numbers are used. For example,
when GLORIA mimes 'Four words'
and someone guesses that, DOT
should be counting.]

MAGGIE

Singing?

ELAINE

Guitar...

BETH

Instruments...

ELAINE

Fingerpainting??

MAGGIE

(getting physically closer to
her mom in her excitement)

Singing...instruments...opera...orchestra...angels...choir...violin...parade...band...The Music Man?

(She yells "The Music Man" many
times in her Mom's face and
GLORIA loses it. She smacks
MAGGIE hard while she says...)

GLORIA

The Music Man only has three words in it, you idiot!!!

(MAGGIE slumps holding her face,
and is in a heap on the floor.
The rest of the party watches in
silence and horror, stunned at
the quick turn of events. BECCA
rushes to MAGGIE's side and
holds her while she's rocking.
GLORIA slowly backs away from
the scene...)

GLORIA

Oh, Maggie...I'm sor...I never should have come...

(GLORIA runs out of the house.
BETH follows GLORIA to the door,
then re-enters the scene. There
is a hugely monstrous pause here
as everyone tries to understand
what just happened. During this
pause, MAGGIE has transformed
again, this time into MIRIAM,
Moses' sister.)

MAGGIE

Join me in joyous song, brothers and sisters...Moses has led
us through the Red Sea! Pharoah and his men have drowned
in the Red Sea. Join me, brothers and sisters!!

(MAGGIE begins singins "I'll Fly
Away" and attempting to be
joyous. All others try to join
her, but find it just too sad
and awkward. To transition from
this scene to the next, you may
want to fade in the recording of
'I'll Fly Away.')

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT II

Scene 3

AT RISE: Two weeks later, morning. There are a number of folding chairs set up in the room. As the scene opens, MAGGIE, ELAINE, and EMILY are all sitting at the table playing "Go fish."

MAGGIE

Do you have any fours?

ELAINE

Me?

MAGGIE

No, Emily...sorry. Emily, do you have any fours?

EMILY

Go fish...

ELAINE

I have a four!

MAGGIE

Elaine, you're not supposed to tell me unless I ask you...

ELAINE

Oops...you told me that already, didn't you?

EMILY

It's okay, Elaine. You were just trying to be nice...Why don't you give her your four anyway?

MAGGIE

No, no...I'll draw. I asked you and you said no.

EMILY

But now we know she's got a four.

MAGGIE

Yeah, and I know you have a ten.

EMILY

How do you know that?

ELAINE

And I know you have a king.

EMILY

How do you know that?

MAGGIE

We just know...

ELAINE

Yeah, we just know...and, some of the cards have bends in them.

MAGGIE

We've been playing with this deck for a long time.

ELAINE

Dot had all the bends memorized...

MAGGIE

Yeah...I miss her.

ELAINE

Me, too.

(Pause as they all have their own thoughts. EMILY wants them all to cheer up some.)

EMILY

Well, I think it's my turn...Maggie, do you have a ten?

MAGGIE (with a smile)

No...go fish.

EMILY

Go fish, huh?? Go fish, go fish, go fish, go fish...

ELAINE

My turn, my turn. Emily, do you have a three?

MAGGIE

Why didn't you ask her if she has a ten?? Or a king?

ELAINE

Oh...I forgot.

(BETH and DOT enter during this exchange without anyone seeing them. DOT sneaks close to the game so that by the time she has a line, she is right next to ELAINE's ear.)

ELAINE

Emily, do you have ten?

EMILY

Well, you can't change what you're asking now?
(to MAGGIE)

Can she?

MAGGIE

Well, she shouldn't. Elaine? What do you think?

ELAINE

Oh, okay. Emily, do you have a three?

DOT

Three, four, five...

ALL

Dot!!!

(Ad libbing as they all greet DOT and all give her hugs. EMILY does, too, showing that she truly is one of the group as this month has gone by. BETH is somewhat agitated, but is trying to put on her "game face" for the girls.)

BETH

You're all acting like you haven't seen her for a year!
It's only been two weeks since she's moved out and you see her almost every day!

MAGGIE

Still...

ELAINE

Yeah, still...

EMILY

Yeah, still...

DOT (with a cheesy grin)
They miss me.

BETH (smiling, too)
Okay, okay...

ELAINE
Do you want to play Go Fish with us, Dot??

BETH
I'm afraid Go Fish time is over for this morning...it's almost time for the meeting.

ELAINE
I'm so glad you came for the meeting, Dot.

DOT
Wouldn't miss it. Oh, I got the mail on the way in. This one's for you, Maggie.

MAGGIE
For me?

DOT
It's pink!

MAGGIE
Becca! (she opens it and starts to read)

EMILY
What are you going to say at the meeting, Beth?

BETH
I'm really not sure, Emily.

EMILY
You've got it figured out, though...right, Beth?

BETH (hesitates)
Sure, Emily...Let's get some stuff together...Is Blaine coming to the meeting, Emily?

EMILY
I asked him to come...I don't know for sure...

BETH

Okay, girls. Will you all go in the kitchen and get the munchies ready? I've got everything in the refrigerator that you need, and the instructions are on a piece of paper on the fridge with a magnet.

ELAINE

Okay, Beth. We'll go set up.

(ALL the GIRLS head toward the kitchen.)

BETH

DOT, could you stay out here and help me, please?

DOT

Sure, Beth.

(BETH makes sure the girls have left, then takes DOT aside.)

BETH

Dot, I don't want the girls to know, but I need to tell someone...I couldn't get anywhere with the bank...I don't really have anything to say at the meeting. I think I've let them down...

DOT

You mean you have to close the home after all?

BETH

I don't see any other way, DOT...I don't know what to do...I don't know what to do...

DOT

Oh, no...Where's Gabe?

BETH

He had some work to finish...he said he'd be here as soon as he could.

DOT

But...we're still having the meeting?

BETH

I guess I'm still waiting for a miracle. Well, we can at least say goodbye to our neighbors. Dot, I'm sorry I told you...let's just set up some things here.

(A knock on the door.)

BETH

Dot, will you get that, please?

DOT

Sure, Beth.

(DOT peeks through the hole.)

It's some women...

BETH

They're here for the meeting...you can let them in.

DOT

Okay...

(CHLOE leads a group of people from the neighborhood into the room. Most of them hover near the door, but CHLOE enters the room, goes right to BETH, ready for the fight.)

CHLOE

So...Beth...Ready for the big meeting?

BETH

Did you bring the petition?

CHLOE

(holds up an envelope)

Actually, I took the liberty of distributing the petition around the neighborhood before today to expedite things at this meeting. I know how valuable everyone's time is.

BETH

How thoughtful of you.

CHLOE

Isn't it, though? It's a quality a lot of people say I have...thoughtfulness.

BETH

Is that a fact?

CHLOE (to the neighbors)

Come on in, neighbors...don't be shy. The faster we start this, the faster we can get it over with. Sit! Sit!

(CHLOE ushers people to chairs.)

BETH

DOT, will you please help the girls in the kitchen and get the refreshments?

DOT

With pleasure, Beth.

(DOT exits into the kitchen to get the refreshments.)

CHLOE

Oh, you didn't have to serve us anything...we shouldn't be here long.

BETH

You know, you don't have to enjoy this quite so much, Ms. Danvers.

CHLOE

Am I enjoying this? I'm sorry, Beth. It's just very gratifying to see something happen that's supposed to happen.

BETH

Right...

(The GIRLS come in from the kitchen with a mess of food. They clearly haven't followed the instructions on whatever it is they're supposed to make, but they come out happily, bringing it to the table. CHLOE sees this and can't control her amusement.)

CHLOE

Oh, this is just perfect! Just perfect!! Look at these hors d'oeuvres. What exactly is this supposed to be??

BETH

Do you have to do this??

MAGGIE

You don't have to have any.

CHLOE

Oh...I wouldn't worry about that...

THERESA

I'll have a little plate...

CONNIE

Me, too...

CHLOE

Oh, for God's sake...Well, go ahead...

BETH

Why don't we all settle for the meeting...I just need to get my notes and some information. Make yourselves comfortable and I'll be right with you.

(an aside)

And maybe climb out the kitchen window while I'm in there...

(BETH exits into the kitchen.
CHLOE takes over.)

CHLOE

Well, before Beth comes back, Connie, you can go ahead and make sure everyone signs the petition. For those of you unaware, I've started this petition to try to rid this neighborhood of this home for our own safety. I think it would behoove each and every one of you to sign this. It's for our children. For our future.

DOT

One, two, three, four, five...

(CHLOE starts the petition around. When they take it out of the envelope, they are clearly shaken, confused, but go through the motion of distributing it around. BETH reenters from the kitchen and quickly sees what's going on.)

BETH

Wow...you don't waste any time, do you?

CHLOE

Why prolong the inevitable?

BETH

Right...why prolong it??

(BETH stands and watches the petition go around for a minute and gathers her thoughts. She then looks over at the girls. She takes a deep breath and begins.)

BETH

Neighbors, I'm so glad you could all come today. This is a fairly unusual situation and I'm hoping that seeing you here is a show of your support for these wonderful women in this room. I've been working with them for quite some time now...and...

(she starts to get a little emotional, but controls it)

I just want to provide a safe place for them to live. To be safe and happy, and have a warm place to call their own. My husband, Gabe, and I have had simple wishes for this whole thing, but it hasn't been easy. We've had some struggles, especially lately, and...well...I'm afraid that this whole meeting might be a waste of all of our time. You see...

CHLOE

Oh, my God! You didn't get the money, did you? Oh, this is rich!! This is priceless!!

ELAINE

You didn't fix it, Beth??

MAGGIE

Beth...you didn't find the money?

EMILY

We have to move out?

BETH

I'm so sorry, girls....I'm so, so sorry...

(BETH breaks down and the girls surround her to support her. There is a beat or two where the rest of the neighbors don't quite know how to react to this

whole scene...the petition
continues to circulate...)

CHLOE

Oh, what a sad scene, ladies and gentlemen...Let's get the
tears over with so we can get this house on the market,
shall we??

(At this moment, GABE, BLAINE,
and DIANE burst through the
door.)

GABE

Beth, Beth!! You won't believe this! You won't believe
it!!!

BETH

Gabe...where have you been?? What's going on?

GABE

Beth, listen to me...listen to this. Beth, Diane bought the
house.

BETH

What??

GABE

Diane...Emily's mom...we just came from the bank, and she
bought this house. They're not foreclosing..

BETH (to DIANE)

You...you bought the house?

GABE

She called me and told me to meet her at the bank...I didn't
even know why I was going there! I got there and she had
the check in her hand, Beth. Beth, she saved us.

BETH

Oh, my God.

EMILY

Mom...you saved the house??

DIANE

I couldn't let this thing happen. And I need this place
for my daughter...

EMILY

Mom...I love you!!

(EMILY gives her MOM a long
over-due hug.)

BETH

I don't know what to say...

CHLOE

Well, this is all well and good, but there's still the
matter of public opinion...

GABE

Public opinion??

BETH

She sent around a petition...

CHLOE

Yes, the petition...

(CHLOE grabs the envelope and
petition from whichever neighbor
has it and hands it over to BETH
without looking at it. She is
more smug than ever.)

CHLOE

You may be able to pay the bills, but you'll never survive
here without the support of the neighborhood. Read it and
weep.

(BETH looks at the petition and
breaks down.)

GABE

Beth? Beth....

CHLOE

It's sad when you see the truth of how people feel, isn't
it?

DOT

(comes over and looks at the
petition)

Nobody signed it. Nobody signed the petition!

CHLOE

What? There must be some mistake!! Give me that!!

(CHLOE rips the petition out of
DOT's hand and looks at it. She
is livid.)

CHLOE

What is the meaning of this? What happened here? You all
have no idea what you're doing! This is a giant mistake!
The biggest mistake of your lives!! You will regret this!!
You will all regret this! Think of your children!!

THERESA

We are thinking of our children. We want the home here...

CHLOE

You can't possibly want this here! You can't possibly...

CONNIE

Chloe...shutup. For once in your Lexus-driving,
accessorized, spoiled, high-heeled life...just keep those
perfectly painted lips closed.

CHLOE

What did you say to me?

THERESA

She said be quiet, you overblown hot air balloon. We want
the home here!

BLAINE

We certainly do!!

(Other NEIGHBORS chime in with
"Amen!", "We sure do.", etc...The
last person who speaks gets a
monster glare from CHLOE and
sits back down in her seat.)

CHLOE

You haven't heard the last of this...I will fight this home
with every fiber of my being...

CONNIE

I wouldn't do that if I were you, Chloe...

CHLOE

What are you talking about??

CONNIE

I could make life very, very ugly for you, darling...you know
I can do it, too...

CHLOE

What???

CONNIE

Remember our last neighborhood Christmas party??? I
promised on my mother's grave I wouldn't tell?

CHLOE

You wouldn't...

CONNIE

I most certainly would...my mother isn't dead.

CHLOE

Fine...if you want to take their side, that's just fine with
me. That's just fine...Enjoy your little lives here. I'm
through with all of this.

GABE

That's what we hoped you'd say!!

(escorting her to the door)

You have a nice day now, Ms. Danvers. Thanks for
everything...

(CHLOE leaves and GABE quickly
closes the door. GABE sees the
petition and picks it up.)

GABE

Don't forget your petition!!

(GABE chucks the petition out
the door. He turns to the room
and they all cheer and
celebrate...)

CONNIE

I don't think she'll be bothering you anymore.

BETH

I can't thank you enough...

CONNIE

Glad to do it. I've been waiting to put that gas bag in her place for years.

GABE

Just out of curiosity...what do you have on her anyway?

CONNIE

Oh, no...I don't reveal my secrets...

BETH

Fair enough...

CONNIE

Well, I've got laundry in the dryer and vacuuming to do...back to reality.

BETH

I can't thank you enough, Connie...but, why?

CONNIE

Why? Because people are people. And they are far better neighbors than Chloe Danvers ever was.

THERESA

Amen!

BETH

Thanks, everyone!

(ALL NEIGHBORS say goodbye to the girls and the girls thank them...ad libs...MAGGIE saying 'God Bless You' to everyone. Through the ad-libbing, the neighbors are escorted out.)

GABE

Well...we can finally relax.

DIANE

I'm so happy to see the home will have a secure future...

BETH

Well...I guess now's the time to tell you...I'm going to have to take a little leave of absence...

DIANE

Now? After all this???

BETH

Well, not exactly now...actually, about eight months from now.

DOT

Eight, nine, ten.

GABE

What's happening in eight months?

DOT

Eight, nine, ten.

(BETH just looks at GABE with a very, very happy smile on her face.)

GABE

Beth...what's happening in eight months???

DOT

Eight, nine, ten.

BETH

You're going to be a daddy.

GABE

Are you serious??? Are you serious??? OH, MY GOD!! I'm gonna be a daddy!!!

(GABE gives BETH a huge hug and then goes around hugging and kissing everyone. They all celebrate...)

DOT

Wait a minute, wait a minute!! What about us??

EMILY

Yeah, what about us?

BLAINE (with a mouthful of food)

Yeah!

DIANE

Don't worry about that. I'll take care of Beth's maternity leave...

BETH

And then I'll be back. I couldn't ever leave my family...I love you guys.

GIRLS

We love you, too, Beth!!

(DOT begins singing the "In the Jungle" song and they all join in. They are singing at the top of their lungs.)

(BLACKOUT)

(CURTAIN)

(THE END)