

A Nip in the Autumn Air

A Play in One Act

Characters:

Barry Dorsett: 76 affluent husband of Dorothy

Dorothy Dorsett: 75, affluent wife of Barry

Setting:

The Dining Room of an exclusive golf country club on the Main Line, an affluent suburban area of Philadelphia. Barry and Dorothy sit, formally, having dinner and drinks in the early evening of an autumn day.

Time:

The Present

Playwright: Jeffrey M. Brown

Address: 7989 Walden Lane

Bainbridge Island, WA 98110

(206) 890-3758

Jmbrown33@msn.com

A NIP IN THE AUTUMN AIR

BARRY:

So, you ordered the soup.

DOROTHY:

(beat). (patiently) Yes, you heard me order the soup.

BARRY:

(beat. Looks around) I just can't remember the last time you ordered soup. You usually order salad before the entrée.

DOROTHY:

(looks around the room). We haven't seen the Balmers here recently. Do you think everything's alright with them?

BARRY

Last I heard, he had retired. The last person I would think *would* retire. Not that he loved the insurance business, but he loved the *routine* of it all. I guess I just pictured him keeling over one day in his office, shoes shined, suit nicely tailored – and then, poof! No fuss, no muss. *(beat)* Well, we would have heard if anything had happened, wouldn't we?

DOROTHY

They were private people after all.

BARRY

Private yes, but *other* people do talk. Didn't she have some kind of – cancer?

DOROTHY

That's how rumors start. She had a bit of heart condition as I understand.

BARRY

Well, you brought it up – what were you thinking?

DOROTHY

I simply remarked that I hadn't seen the Balmers. Nothing more than that.

BARRY

(beat). "Nothing more than that". So why make the remark at all?

A NIP IN THE AUTUMN AIR

DOROTHY

Very well. I won't make remarks in the future.

BARRY

So, you'll be very content being even more distant than you've been?

DOROTHY

(beat) You've asked me to try some conversation. That's all I was doing.

BARRY

(beat). (looks around). Haven't seen the Wiffords around much lately. Have you heard anything about *them*?

DOROTHY

Now we're talking about the Wiffords? Who's "making conversation"? Yes, as a matter of fact I *had* heard that Jim Wifford isn't doing well. Seems that car accident was more than an "accident" if you get my meaning.

BARRY

I don't.

DOROTHY

Seems he was driving around one night and couldn't find his way home.

BARRY

Well, their property *is* way out there, and it's very dark down their lane.

DOROTHY

That's very charitable of you, Barry.

BARRY

What do you mean?

DOROTHY

Just that you're taking a very generous approach with Jim. Last time we saw him I don't think he recognized me.

A NIP IN THE AUTUMN AIR

BARRY

Really?

DOROTHY

Don't tell me you didn't notice.

BARRY

Notice what? Jim must be close to eighty. The man might be getting a little forgetful, but -

DOROTHY

"A little forgetful"? – we played bridge with them for twenty years!

BARRY

(beat). What do you think about getting a new car?

DOROTHY

What's wrong with the one we have?

BARRY

Well, it's getting a little shabby, don't you think? And with 100,000 miles on it, maybe it's not as reliable as it once was.

DOROTHY

Seems reliable to me.

BARRY

Thrifty, until the end. *(beat)* Robert would have approved.

DOROTHY

Well, he thanked us when he was around.

BARRY

He thanked *you*, my dear. Hadn't heard him thank *me* for much.

DOROTHY

What should he have thanked you for?

A NIP IN THE AUTUMN AIR

BARRY

(*thoughtful*) Not that I was looking for much. Or *anything*. But a recognition – an acknowledgment. Just an acknowledgment might’ve been nice once in a while.

DOROTHY

You might’ve acknowledged *him* as well. Just for who he was, what he had *done*. What he *believed* in.

BARRY

“What he believed in” – for heaven’s sake, what *did* he believe in?

DOROTHY

Well, if you don’t know at this point –

BARRY

And all that running around, moving to LA, moving to Mexico, moving to Miami – what was *that* all about?

DOROTHY

That was his *career*, dear.

BARRY

If that’s what you call it.

DOROTHY

(*looks around*). Lunch here is not what it used to be.

BARRY

Just because Melanie has left – you *loved* Melanie – but the rest of the staff seem fine to me.

DOROTHY

You can’t find – or train – good staff today.

BARRY

You can be very hard to please.

DOROTHY

Says who?

A NIP IN THE AUTUMN AIR

BARRY

(beat) I don't see the Addises. Curt was a regular here for so long. *(beat)*. Maybe the poor service drove him away?

DOROTHY

(suppresses a laugh) Good one. But where else would he go? And anyway, I don't think it was the service.

BARRY

(intrigued). Really?

DOROTHY

Yes, apparently, he and that new wife of his –

BARRY

New? – they were married 10 years ago –

DOROTHY

And she was half his age –

BARRY

Maybe 15 years younger –

DOROTHY

Well, from what I hear, things dissolved with wife number two the way they did with wife number one. So, Curt's been a little preoccupied, I guess.

BARRY

With wife-to-be number three?

DOROTHY

You said it, not me.

BARRY

(beat, and looking around the room) We have to see Mitch next week.

DOROTHY

I really hate that little man. Always talking about *money*.

A NIP IN THE AUTUMN AIR

BARRY

Well, he *is* our financial planner.

DOROTHY

But it's all in the approach, isn't it? The *manner*. He's so *forward* about everything.

BARRY

Yes, "little Mitch" – the man who has made us a bundle over the years.

DOROTHY

And *charged* us a bundle in the process.

BARRY

A man is entitled to make a living.

DOROTHY

Maybe so. Entitled to make a *living*, not a *killing*.

BARRY

Well, if he's making a killing, so are we.

DOROTHY

He's making it *from* us, Barry. We're supporting *him*.

BARRY

It's a professional *service* for goodness' sake! He charges a fee for what he does, and from what I can tell he's been worth every penny.

DOROTHY

(*beat, looking at her soup, suspiciously*). Speaking of penny, have you seen Penny Spencer lately? Rumor has it that they've fallen on hard times.

BARRY

Because they haven't been with "little Mitch" ...

DOROTHY

It's more than that. I've always wondered about that house, and the summer place, all those cars, and those *vacations*. It just didn't seem to add up.

A NIP IN THE AUTUMN AIR

BARRY

Not really any of our business, is it?

DOROTHY

No, but when you see people flaunting what they don't have, it does make one wonder.

BARRY

I must admit I never wondered.

DOROTHY

I guess you're a saint. Or blind. Or just not noticing what's in front of your eyes.

BARRY

(beat. Quiet, then:) Well, let's see. You're in front of my eyes. And I think I'm in front of *your* eyes. But it seems like we've been discussing the Balmers, and the Wiffords, and the Addises, and-

DOROTHY

Yes, yes, we have. *(long pause and a deep breath)* God, I miss him.

BARRY

Who, Mitch?

DOROTHY

Are you kidding? – no, not Mitch.

BARRY

Then who?

DOROTHY

It's this time of year – the days getting shorter, the nip in the air *(she shivers a little)*

BARRY

Ah, yes, that little nip.

DOROTHY

(agitated and cross) Go ahead, Barry. Laugh at me. Laugh it off. Try to ignore it – try to embalm your feelings in another round.

A NIP IN THE AUTUMN AIR

BARRY

(looks around the dining room). Keep your voice down, *please*! No need to make a scene!

DOROTHY

How can I make a scene when everyone we knew is either dead or missing? And the ones in here are barely alive, or embalming themselves in liquor...

BARRY

It was hard for both of us, Dot.

DOROTHY

But you think a little harder for me, no?

BARRY

The two of you *were* closer –

DOROTHY

He *wanted* to be close to you, Bar. He really did. He tried. *(beat)* All he wanted was what every boy wants – a father.

BARRY

I acted as his father.

DOROTHY

Is that what you were doing, play-acting a role? Well, congratulations for your half-acted achievement. *(beat)* You fooled no one.

BARRY

(raises his voice) But you – you fooled everyone, right? You had the last laugh, right?

DOROTHY

(now whispering) Please! Lower your voice!

BARRY

Why, so the recently departed, the soon-to-be- departed, and the self-embalmed in this, this *wax museum* of memories that passes for a country club dining room won't be offended by

A NIP IN THE AUTUMN AIR

BARRY (*continued*)

hearing what they probably already know? – or *knew*, since some of them have clearly forgotten most of what they ever *did* know...

DOROTHY

What are you insinuating?

BARRY

I don't have to *insinuate* anything. I don't have to hint, or imply, or intimate, or suggest, or indicate, or adumbrate--

DOROTHY

Adumbrate?

BARRY

Sorry. That last one was a bit off.

DOROTHY

But I still don't know what you are referring to.

BARRY

"To what you are referring".

DOROTHY

Just like you. Diversions and distractions. Grammatical correction is the lowest form of discourse.

BARRY

(*long pause and a breath. Rattles the ice in his drink. Now self-pitying*) I have a feeling Robert *always* knew about you and my brother. Or suspected. Or perhaps that you told him – one of the little intimacies the two of you shared. I don't begrudge a mother and her son a close relationship, but when it is built on the deliberate humiliation of the father. And I don't know which betrayal was worse – yours or my brother's.

DOROTHY

Now whose embalming? Do you really believe that I would do that? Betray you to Robert –

A NIP IN THE AUTUMN AIR

BARRY

(beat). Honestly, I don't. Admitting something like that to Robert would have meant revealing that truth about yourself as well. I've come to accept what *you* did. It was so long ago. But Robert? How could a young man who had everything just - throw it away? He seemed to have so much to *live* for. What goes on in someone else's mind is a mystery to me. I guess I'll never understand.

DOROTHY

When he was little, we all loved going to the beach. The sound, the surf, the salty taste and smell, the sand getting into every crevice...He was so happy, and he made *us* happy. (beat) How long has he been gone now?

BARRY

Funny, I don't measure it in years. It's more in seasons for me. When the days get shorter, and there's that -- "nip in the air" (now he notices an older couple across the room in a booth, points to their table, and whispers conspiratorially to DOROTHY) Look at that couple - I actually think those folks have kicked the bucket -- between courses. They played their final round of golf, came in here, had a shrimp cocktail, and departed from this world!

DOROTHY

(beat) Wonder if the club will charge them for the shrimp?

BARRY

(beat) Have you heard anything about the Benningtons -- Dave and Molly?

END

Be Batman

A Ten Minute Play

Written by Willow McLaughlin

Not for print or production without playwright permission.
NW10 Audition Perusal Copy
All Rights Reserved

Contact
Willow McLaughlin
12533 Wedgewood Drive
Burlington, WA 98233
willow.mclaughlin@gmail.com
360-395-8107

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MAY, an experienced mom with four children. She is laid back and easy going.

LEA, a new mom with just one child. She is hyper aware of her daughter at all times.

SETTING

A park playground. The only set piece on stage is a bench at the park.

At Rise: In a park. A bench sits on stage. May walks in with a bag full of snacks and toys. She is looking out at the audience, as if the playground is in that direction. She is calling to her son.

MAY

One hand on the ladder at all times. And don't pee off the top of the slide this time, OK?

(May sits on the bench and reaches into her bag, trying to find something.)

What, Buddy? You bet! Be Superman!

(She suddenly realizes what was just said.

She looks up quickly and jumps up)

No! Not Superman! No flying off the top of the slide. Be Batman and take a secret slide down to the ground. Be Batman.

(to herself)

Always be Batman. Then, you can be a millionaire and support mama in her old age.

May sits down and starts digging in her bag. Lea enters. She's holding out a plastic cup with a straw.

LEA

Sweetie, do you want any more of your smoothie? Use your words. No frownie faces. Smoothie first, then fruit snacks. Honey, not the merry go round. It goes too fast.

Lea runs offstage.

MAY

Batman, have you seen the bat phone? Again? Seriously? No, keep playing. You and I are going to have a chat about that later.

(To herself)

Meanwhile, Bat Mom has no protective shield.

Lea reenters.

LEA

Both hands on the ladder, Sweetie.

Lea stands to one side. May and Lea glance at each other, and then catch each other's eye.

MAY

How old is she?

LEA

Four.

MAY

Mine too.

LEA

It's such a fun age.

MAY

Yeah, way better than thirteen.

LEA

Oh, do you have a thirteen year old?

MAY

Yep. And a nine year old and a seven year old.

LEA

Four! Wow. I just have the one. She keeps me on my toes. I don't know how you do four.

MAY

Lots of coffee and lots of wine.

LEA

(too distracted to hear May's answer)

Both hands, Sweetie!

(to May)

I'm sorry. What did you say?

MAY

I read instructional manuals. All the time.

LEA

Oh, I just got this book from a friend of mine. It's called *Raising Human Beings*. It's about how to cultivate a better parent-child relationship while also nurturing empathy, honesty, resilience, and independence. Have you read it?

MAY

No, I've been reading a lot of *Series of Unfortunate Events*.

LEA

Is that a book on raising children?

MAY

So to speak.

May starts to look through her bag again. Lea moves towards to playground again and calls out.

LEA

No pushing. Just ask him nicely to move out of the way. Well, if that little boy won't move then just come back down the ladder. You can do something else.

(back to May)

It just makes me crazy when parents let their kids completely take over the equipment.

MAY

(half amused)

I always figured it's good practice for life. Sometimes kids need to work things out on their own.

LEA

Well, that little boy in the superhero cape won't let her get on the slide. I mean, who lets their kids out in public like that anyway. It's not Halloween.

May stands and walks towards the playground to call out to her son.

MAY

Batman! I don't think she knows the secret password. Why don't you tell it to her and let her through. Batman helps people, remember?

May smiles at Lea and sits back down. There is an awkward silence.

LEA

What was the password?

MAY

Please.

LEA

(to her daughter)

Are you going to swing now, Honey? Hold on, let me clean off the chains.

Lea grabs some wipes and exits.

MAY

(calling off to her son)

Batman doesn't eat dirt. Says me! Because Alfred told me.

(holding up a snack)

Did you want this? Last chance!

(May shrugs and starts to eat it)

Sure, you can fly on the swings. Of course. Mama always give the best big pushes.

May exits as Lea re-enters.

LEA

Both hands on the chains, Sweetie.

May runs on.

MAY

Fly, Little Man!

LEA

Is that safe?

MAY

Swinging on his stomach? He does it all the time. I'm not sure he's ever actually sat on a swing seat. I don't blame him. They're so uncomfortable.

LEA

I don't really remember. It's been a long time. No standing! I said sit. 1 - 2-

They sit in silence for awhile. May digs around in her bag.

LEA

Did you lose something?

MAY

No, I left my book at home, and Batman over there put my phone in Joker's briefcase to track him so he can catch him later.

LEA

Joker?

MAY

My husband. It's a thing they do. Which sounds odd, but that sums up our life pretty much, so... Do you know what time it is?

LEA

Sorry. My phone got lost in the move, and I haven't had a chance to get a new one.

MAY

I just feel weird without my phone.

May looks through her bag some more.

LEA

I try not to have mine out at the playground anyway. I've just heard so many stories about kids disappearing as soon as their parent looks away. Or get distracted.

MAY

(looking up from her bag)

Right.

LEA

(standing and calling out)

She's fine. She doesn't like to be pushed too high! What's your little boy's name?

MAY

He's only answering to Batman this week.

LEA

And you're letting him get away with that?

MAY

If you can be Batman, why wouldn't you be?

LEA

(calling out)

OK. Um, Batman? Can you please not push her so high?

MAY

(calling out)

She's good, Batman. Nice job!

Lea backs up reluctantly.

MAY

So you just moved here?

LEA

Yes, last week. This is our first trip to the park. Um, I'm sorry, but should your little boy be climbing to the top of the swing set like that?

MAY

Probably not.

LEA

Are you going to tell him to get down?

MAY

No.

LEA

Why not?

MAY

If I yell at him to get down, he'll take me very literally and jump.

LEA

From up there?

MAY

But, if I don't say anything, he'll wave at me from the top and then climb right back down.

(waving)

See, here he comes.

LEA

(to her daughter)

No, Sweetie, you can't climb up there.

(taking a step towards the playground)

I said no. Come down now. We'll leave and go home!

MAY

She probably wouldn't get all the way to the top. Mine's been climbing things since he was born. One time I found him on top of this-

LEA

(not paying attention to May)

Just because that little boy is doing something dangerous, it doesn't mean it's OK for you to do it.

(small gasp)

Oh no.

(calling as she goes off)

Are you OK? I'm coming.

Lea runs off, but May just watches calmly. Lea comes back on almost immediately.

MAY

Any blood?

LEA

No. She could have gotten really hurt.

MAY

Wood chips are remarkably soft. Especially if you land on your butt. I know from experience.

LEA

Well, she wouldn't have fallen if she hadn't been copying your son. That's the problem with letting children do whatever they want. They set a bad example for others.

MAY

(standing)

Right.

LEA

I didn't actually mean to say that out loud.

MAY

(calling out)

Batman, two minutes

LEA

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to offend you.

MAY

It takes more than that to offend me. I have four boys.

Lea starts eating her daughter's fruit snacks.

LEA

I'm a horrible person.

MAY

Yep.

(Lea looks up startled at May's agreement)

Only horrible people eat their kid's snacks.

LEA

(realizing what she's done)

Oh, no. I didn't bring any other snacks. She's going to freak out.

MAY

Here, you can have one of mine. I have years worth of supplies in this bag.

May holds out a fruit snack bag.

LEA

Oh, no thanks, they're not organic.

MAY

(with a forced smile)

Have a great day.

May starts to leave.

LEA

No, I'm sorry. That came out wrong. My daughter is allergic to everything. The organic ones are the only ones that she's doesn't have a reaction to.

MAY

Do you have allergies?

LEA

No.

MAY

(hands Lea the fruit snacks)

I like the ones shaped like strawberries. They taste like pink. See ya.

LEA

I'm sorry if I ruined your afternoon.

MAY

Really, It's not you. School gets out soon and my olders have soccer.

(Calling out to the playground)

C'mon Batman! The Batmobile's ready to roll!

Lea stands and crosses to May.

LEA

(in a rush)

Wait, wait. I'm going to feel horrible about this whole thing if I don't apologize. I've just been a mess the last couple of weeks, since we got here. I haven't had time to unpack, we're living out of boxes, and I can't concentrate on anything.

I feel like I'm going insane, and we don't know anyone and my husband shipped out yesterday and won't be back for three months, and I just overshared to a total stranger on the playground, but you just seemed like you had everything together, and I feel like a wreck, and I'm sorry. I know you have to go.

MAY

It's all good. And honestly none of us have it all together. But, I really do have to run.

(May starts to walk off, but comes back.)

OK, listen, we have soccer today, but are you free tomorrow afternoon? My thirteen year old could watch all of the kids and I could help you unpack a few boxes.

(Lea seems hesitant.)

He's actually really good at watching littles, when he's not rolling his eyes that is.

LEA

That's so much trouble for you.

MAY

If you can help, you should.

LEA

Like Batman?

MAY

Always be Batman.

(Holding out her hand)

I'm May.

LEA

(Lea shakes it.)

Lea.

MAY

Tomorrow?

LEA

That would be great. I could make dinner?

MAY

Perfect. But, be warned, you have no idea how much four boys can eat. Um, neither of us have phones right now, so why don't you write your address down on this.

May pulls something random out of her purse and hands to it to Lea with a pen.

LEA

I don't want to make you late.

MAY

It's fine. I'd hate to interrupt the flying lesson anyway.

Lea starts to step forward as she sees looks out at the playground. May puts a hand on her arm to stop her.

MAY

They'll really be OK. That merry go round doesn't actually go that fast. It just feels like it when you're four.

Lea fills out her address and hands the paper back to May.

LEA

She looks like she's having a blast.

MAY

(calling out)

C'mon Batman. You can play with your new friend tomorrow. It's all planned out. What's your daughter's name?

LEA

Robin.

LIGHTS OUT

BREATH

By Nancy West

CHARACTERS

Sue	Joe's daughter, middle-aged, mid 40s to 50s.
Joe	Sue's father, 60s to 70s.

SETTING

The outdoor smoking area of a nursing home.

TIME

Present day.

(LIGHTS UP on the clean but shabby outdoor smoking area of a nursing home. JOE puts his extinguished cigarette in the ashtray. SUE, not pleased, takes out her phone, glances at it, then puts it away.)

JOE

Anything new?

SUE

Since the last time I was here?

JOE

Since you last looked at your phone.

SUE

Nope to both. *(Looking around)* Nice spot.

JOE

I know you don't like smoking much, but I like it.

SUE

I looked in your room first.

JOE

I was here.

SUE

Well, I know that now. That one nurse, Diane, she introduced herself. Acted like she'd never met me before.

JOE

It's been a few weeks since you visited.

SUE

I told her I visit at lunch, and maybe she wasn't working.

JOE

If you came by more regular, she'd remember you.

SUE

Work's been crazy, I told you. *(Pause)* How long can you stay unhooked from the oxygen?

JOE

About 10 minutes. But it takes an hour before they can round us all up. *(JOE sees a friend offstage, waves)* Hey! Gary! This is my daughter, Sue!

(SUE waves half-heartedly.)

SUE

Round you up?

JOE

We can only smoke three times a day. They go from ward to ward to round us up. Have to unlock our smokes from behind the nurses' station. Takes a while. They're never on time.

SUE

(Gesturing across the smoking area to JOE's friend Gary, offstage)
Still buying friends with your cigarettes?

JOE

No.

SUE

How'd the meeting with the nursing staff go?

JOE

I told them my coffee is always cold.

SUE

I asked them to fix that.

JOE

I want it warm. How hard is that?

SUE

I told them.

JOE

Then why is it still cold?

SUE

Did they talk about physical therapy?

JOE

No.

SUE

No? But I asked them —

JOE

They didn't say anything new.

SUE

You refused again.

JOE

Don't need it. I get along fine.

SUE

Dad, you creep along the walls like a spider.

JOE

That's flattering.

SUE

You won't use a cane, you won't use a walker, you grab onto chairs and whatever's handy. You've fallen twice —

JOE

Don't want what they're selling. Did it before. Never again.

SUE

Fine. Your decision.

JOE

Those meetings are a waste of time. They never talk about what they're going to do.

SUE

Do about...?

JOE

I say, "what's the plan, medicine or what?", and they keep putting me off.

SUE

They aren't putting you off, Dad. They can give you oxygen and morphine. They can't fix your lungs.

JOE

Bunk. You said I had six months left. I should sign up for hospice, you said.

SUE

Yup, I did say that.

JOE

(Triumphantly)

It's been almost six months, and I'm still here. Bunk.

SUE

You like the morphine, right?

JOE

Sure.

SUE

Well, that's thanks to hospice. *(Pause)* Why did you call?

JOE

Eh?

SUE

You said you needed to see me.

JOE

Oh, right. I got something for you.

(JOE takes out paper from his pocket, carefully unfolds it, and hands it to SUE.)

SUE

Is this a copy of the print that hung in our living room? *(JOE nods)* You made me store the original in my garage.

JOE

Right. Look at the back. That's the ad I ordered it from. See, they said it would "appreciate in value 30%" every year, and I bought it in 1977. It's gotta be worth a lot now. You need to find out what we can sell it for.

SUE

The ad was designed to get you to buy, it doesn't mean the print is worth anything now. *(SUE gets out her phone and begins to search)* This was the emergency?

JOE

I didn't say it was an emergency, I asked you to stop by. Will you find the value or not?

SUE

I'm looking. But I can't read the signature. Do you have the artist's name?

JOE

No. *(Impatient. Gesturing to SUE's phone)* I thought you were good at that stuff.

SUE

I *am* pretty good at it.

JOE

It's a limited edition. It has a number on it.

SUE

I understand, but you don't have the name of the artist—

JOE

It's worth something. The money from selling my car went to the doctors, but I want you to have this.

SUE

Are you sure you're not just looking to buy more cigarettes?

JOE

Maybe. So?

SUE

This company's been out of business for years.

JOE

It wasn't a scam.

SUE

Look, here's a website for artist signatures. I put in the letters I can make out, but I can't find any matches. There's not much to go on.

JOE

You have the original ad. That should be enough.

SUE

I'll keep trying. Okay?

JOE

Don't put yourself out for me.

SUE

Look, I'll do my best.

JOE

I don't want to be a bother.

SUE

(sarcastically)
I'm sorry I couldn't find it for you!

JOE

I don't need your help.

SUE

Ha. You always need my help. Getting kicked out of your fleabag hotel—

JOE

It was a *downtown* hotel.

SUE

—because you drank and gambled away your social security check every month—

JOE

No, because I got hurt working a temp construction job, and went broke from the emergency room bill.

SUE

Because you quit your job when you were 50. Because you bought a vintage Corvette and drank instead of working and blew through your retirement. So now there's no money.

JOE

YOU MAKE ME PAY FOR MY CIGARETTES! Who makes their father beg for cigarettes? I worked so you could go to college. But when I have a rough patch, you say, "Oh, no, sorry!"

SUE

I'm the reason you have a roof over your head. But are you grateful? No. All you can do is complain about the stupid cigarettes. They're killing you!

JOE

I just needed a little cash to tide me over.

SUE

You didn't pay for my drugs in college, and I don't want to pay for yours now.

JOE

I would have paid you back.

SUE

Don't make me the bad guy. I told you the truth. We had to sell your precious car and move you here, because you do need help, Dad. You do.

JOE

I can take care of myself.

SUE

You can't. Or won't. You didn't have to end up here. It was a choice.

(JOE begins coughing, at first softly, then more violently. SUE is alarmed)

Should I get the nurse?

(JOE vehemently shakes his head. The coughing lessens.)

Do you want me to get the oxygen tank?

JOE

No.

(Pause)

SUE

Why did you quit your job?

JOE

Don't know.

SUE

C'mon. You never said.

JOE

Yeah, well.

SUE

So?

JOE

You were gone, then your mother left. The retirement money should have lasted. And I wanted to have some fun, for once. I've been working since I was ten. I did my research, I bought the right stocks, but ... it all evaporated when the market took a dive. Not my fault.

SUE

Sounds a lot like gambling to me.

JOE

It was investing. Not gambling.

SUE

Well. You didn't have to put it *all* in stocks.

JOE

Thanks for the tip. A little late. When the money ran out, I got a job. I've never been afraid to work.

SUE

Getting jobs. Then DUIs. Then losing jobs.

JOE

How would you know? You weren't around.

SUE

I couldn't visit.

JOE

Well, that was *your* choice.

SUE

I'm allergic to smoke, it makes me sick.

JOE

Back to the smoking. That's my business.

SUE

Maybe. Ever hear of epigenetics?

JOE

Epi – what?

SUE

Epigenetics. I saw it on a TV show. Things your grandparents or great-grandparents did or ate, how they lived, can affect your kids and your kids kids and on and on.

JOE

Sounds like science fiction.

SUE

It does, a little.

JOE

If you can blame my grandparents instead of me, I guess that's progress.

SUE

I don't blame you.

JOE

(Shrugs)
Doesn't matter.

SUE

Seriously. I'm grateful you helped me with college.

JOE

You did that on your own.

SUE

You covered tuition, that was huge. And you told me I could do it.

JOE

First college graduate in the family.

SUE

Because I'm stubborn.

JOE

Yeah.

SUE

Like when I was about 14, I was sunbathing in the side yard. This creepy guy showed up and started taking pictures of me.

JOE

Police said it was the neighbor's nephew.

SUE

Really? *(JOE nods)* I didn't remember that. Anyway, I ran for the house, and he yelled at me to stop. Said he was a photographer, that he'd pay me. But I wouldn't listen, I kept going. I called you at work. I could've called Mom, but I called you.

JOE

I told you to lock the doors, then called the police. That felt like the longest drive home of my life. But you were okay. Right?

SUE

Yes. *(pause)* I knew I could count on you.

JOE

Yeah.

(Pause)

SUE

Time to get back to work.

JOE

Sure.

SUE

Well. I'll try to come next week.

JOE

Whatever works for you.

(SUE begins to leave, stops, comes back, awkwardly pulls out a pack of cigarettes from her pocket, and hands them to JOE.)

SUE

To share with your friend.

JOE

Thanks.

(SUE EXITS. JOE holds the pack tightly in both hands, looking straight ahead.)

LIGHTS OUT.

END

Not for print or production without playwright permission.
NW 10 Audition Perusal Copy
All Rights Reserved

BUT WHO'S COUNTING?

Connie Bennett

NW10 Audition Perusal Copy
Not for print or production without playwright permission.
All Rights Reserved

Connie J. Bennett
2650 Bowmont Drive
Eugene, OR 97405
541-729-2364
warmikani@gmail.com

BUT WHO'S COUNTING?

CHARACTERS

NIX	A Sasquatch.
MISSY	A census worker, young, petite, female.
JAX	A Sasquatch, NIX's partner.

SETTING

A pleasant living room, home of NIX and JAX

TIME

Early evening, April 2020

(In the darkness, a doorbell rings. Lights up on a pleasant living room. As the bell rings again, JAX, a Sasquatch, enters to answer the door. Simultaneously, NIX, another Sasquatch, unlocks the door from the outside, holding it open for MISSY, who is armed with a briefcase and badge. It is an awkward, three-way mess in the doorway.)

JAX

(to NIX) So you finally decided to show up...

(NIX gestures incomprehensibly to JAX about MISSY's presence.)

What, you forgot your ke –?

(Noticing MISSY, JAX breaks off.)

MISSY

Good evening, uh, sir? I'm Missy Dorland with the Census –

NIX

Good evening.

MISSY

(holding up her ID badge)

Uh, yes, good evening to you both. I'm with the Census Bureau. May I come –

JAX

With the...?

MISSY

May I come in? I'm, um, I'm with the Census... just, uh, just following up on an incomplete self-reported, um...

JAX

Wait, um, wait. The Census? "Incomplete forms"?

MISSY

Or sometimes it's just random, you know, statistical. Maybe your forms were absolutely perfect – complete – and you just got the lucky draw to be the long form interview. You know, the in-person follow-up? I'm not actually totally sure, I'm new. This is my very first interview.

NIX

(to JAX, *soto voce*) I'm not sure I trust her.

MISSY

(*taking out an iPad or clipboard*)

So, anyway, let me just pull up the data, see what we have...

JAX

(to NIX, *soto voce*) Look who's talking. Where were you last night?

MISSY

Actually, the only, uh, all that shows for this address – 122B? right? – is that it's a rental. Um, a duplex.

NIX

(to JAX) Did *you* send in any forms?

MISSY

Nothing about the actual residents.

JAX

(to NIX) I don't remember any forms.

MISSY

So, uh, let's start with, well, have you lived here very long?

NIX

(to JAX) Well, *I* sure didn't see any forms.

MISSY

Look, you can forget about the forms, I'll just collect your data now.

NIX

(to JAX) You're the one who's always tossing mail!

JAX

(to NIX) Just junk mail! Publisher's Clearing House and more requests from some charity we already –

NIX

(to JAX) And form letters? Like from the government!?

MISSY

You're actually living here, right? Not just visiting or –

JAX

(to NIX) Some of those donation requests pretend to be surveys, you know!

MISSY

And it's just the two of you?

NIX

Yes!

MISSY

Children? Snow-birds? Um, another roommate? I mean, does anyone else "live and sleep here most of the time"?

JAX

Most of the time? (to NIX) Maybe she should just be interviewing me!

MISSY

(to NIX) You live somewhere else? I mean, more than here?

NIX

You can count me. (to JAX) Why would you say that?

MISSY

We're not supposed to count temporary visitors, they're counted at their –

JAX

(to NIX) You took the cactus.

MISSY

So, uh, who's head of household?

NIX

(to JAX) You're overwatering the cactus.

MISSY

(checking her instructions) Okay, here we are... *(reading)* pick one of the adults...

JAX

(to NIX) You have to take care of, of things, if you neglect them, they die.

MISSY

(to NIX) Can you tell me your full name?

NIX

Nix.

MISSY

I'd really appreciate it if you would... um, cooperate? Mr, uh, Ms, uh...?

JAX

Their name's Nix.

NIX

Nix. N – I – X.

MISSY

And, your surname? Or, um, is this your – uh, which name is this? Um, "Nix"?

NIX

Nix is my full name.

MISSY

Oh, dear. Let me check the guidelines on... um, you're sure you don't have a – ?
Well of course you're sure. And your age?

NIX

I can't answer that.

MISSY

But this is the, the Census, you have to answer. To not answer is against the law.

JAX

I think we would qualify for the personal belief exemption.

MISSY

My training didn't – Er, well, *(to JAX)* your name?

JAX

Jax. J, A, X. Only name, no first, last, whatever. Like Prince.

MISSY

And, uh, Jax, you were born in... what year?

NIX

I think we've spent enough time on –

MISSY

Just a few more questions!

NIX

Here's your briefcase –

MISSY

Please! I don't want you to get into trouble. For that matter, *I* don't want to get into trouble. But seriously, it's against the law to not answer the Census questions. There's a \$100 fine.

JAX

Nix, uh, maybe we just answer – ?

MISSY

And you two are, uh, roommates? Oops, let's do this one at a time. Um, Nix, what's your current marital status?

NIX

What are my choices?

MISSY

Married, Unmarried Partner, Widowed, Divorced, Separated, or Never Married.

JAX

(jumping in) Unmarried Partner.

NIX

(overlapping, but clearly heard) Married.

MISSY

One at a time, there's several questions about –

JAX

(to NIX) Marri – ? Oh, Nix – !

MISSY

Um, Jax, do you have an Opposite-Sex-Married Husband/Wife/Spouse or a Same-Sex-Married – wait, I knew I would screw this up!

NIX

(to JAX) I know I've been hard to –

MISSY

I am such a – Why didn't I just take that cashier job at Safeway?

JAX

(to NIX) It depends how you define it –

MISSY

Maybe we'll come back to that one...?

NIX

(to JAX) Don't worry, the cactus is just fine.

MISSY

Okay, next question. "What is this person's race?"

NIX

Sasquatch.

MISSY

Wow! Really?!? I've never – I'm from California...

JAX

(To NIX) That's just your Canadian bias showing, Nix...

MISSY

This is so exciting!

JAX

(continuing) ...the proper Pacific Northwestern term is Big Foot!

MISSY

(checking instructions) Got it! I find the right box and then fill in the blank about origin! See, their example is you mark the box for "White" and then you write in "German" or "Irish" or... whatever...

NIX

So, tell us the boxes.

JAX

Yeah, what are our choices?

MISSY

Well, White, of course. I mean, like I already said. "Black or African Am." American Indian or Alaska Native...

NIX

Keep going.

MISSY

There's a bunch, uh... Chinese, Vietnamese, Filipino, Korean, Asian Indian, Japanese, Other Asian, uh, like um, Pakistani, Cambodian, Hmong –

NIX

Maybe Other Asian? I love Thai food, would that count?

MISSY

You aren't taking this seriously! It's important! Federal dollars and congressional seats hang in – !

JAX

(to JAX) Are you sure there's no Yeti strain in your – ?

NIX

(to NIX) Are you trying to offend me?

MISSY

Oh, wait, I skipped the question on gender!

JAX

Let's hear your list for that one.

MISSY

List? Well, it's pretty short. Male or Female.

NIX

But what about other options?

MISSY

There are no other options.

JAX

But, but –

NIX

Recognized, you mean, by the US government...

MISSY

So, um, Jax... what gender do I put for you?

JAX

No gender.

NIX

The fine for not answering is \$100?

MISSY

It's even worse if you give a false answer, then it's a \$500 fine!

NIX

So... you save \$400 by refusing to answer?

JAX

Wait, we never finished the race question. You got stuck on Thai...?

MISSY

Right, right. Let's see, Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Chamorro – Or, uh, last choice: "Some other race."

NIX

Clearly our box!

JAX

Yes! Mark the "X" there!

MISSY

Okay. And now, "print race or origin"?

NIX

S – A – S

JAX

Q – U – A

NIX AND JAX

T – C – H

MISSY

Okay, whew! One down!

NIX

(to JAX) I thought you preferred Big Foot?

JAX

(to NIX) We "married" people need to stick together!

MISSY

But we do need to go back, there are a few questions we kind of skipped over... um, Age, uh, Gender, Same-Sex-Unmarried-Partner...?

NIX

"Same-Sex"? You mean the US government only cares about sexual orientation if you're partnered!?

JAX

Wait a minute! Did you say "Unmarried" Partner?

MISSY

Why, yes, Jax, I have you down as an unmarried partner to, uh, married to – This doesn't make sense!

NIX

We need to match.

JAX

Change my answer to "Married"! I don't care if the cactus dies!

MISSY

(marking madly) And, and Gender?

NIX

Religious exemption.

MISSY

Wait a minute, you can't have a religious exemption to Gender! It just isn't – I mean, you can't refuse or willfully neglect to answer, it's –

NIX

But if we stop now, it'll save us \$400. Let's call this done! Where do we sign?

MISSY

(As JAX escorts her to the door.) That Safeway job is looking better by the minute!

JAX

You should stick with the Census, Missy, you'll love our neighbors in 122A.

NIX

Oh, yes. *(As the door closes behind MISSY.)* The unicorns next door.

(End of play.)

Chicken Burger with a Side of Awkward

by

Deborah Chava Singer

NW10 Audition Perusal Copy
Not for print or production without playwright permission.
All Rights Reserved

1413 NE 93rd Ct.
Vancouver, WA 98664

Tel 360-254-4681
dcsinger@latenightawake.com

www.latenightawake.com

CHARACTERS:

Corky - teenage gay male and Chicken Store employee
Rog - (short for Roger), teenage gay male, Corky's ex
Terri - woman, late twenties or older, Chicken Store customer

SETTING:

The Chicken Store, fast food style restaurant, owned by Corky's parents.

NW10 Audition Perusal Copy
Not for print or production without playwright permission.
All Rights Reserved

Chicken Burger with a Side of Awkward, 1.

At Rise: Corky is behind the counter at his parents' restaurant, The Chicken Store.

Terri enters the restaurant and approaches the counter.

CORKY

(rote)

Welcome to The Chicken Store what can I get for you today?

TERRI

Um, I haven't decided yet.

CORKY

Kay. Let me know when you do.

TERRI

What's good here?

CORKY

The chicken.

TERRI

Isn't it all chicken?

CORKY

Yes. It's all good, I guess.

TERRI

Well, which is your favorite?

CORKY

I work here. I haven't eaten chicken in years.

Rog enters the restaurant, approaches the counter.

ROG

Can we talk for a second?

CORKY

I'm with another customer.

TERRI

Oh, that's okay, I haven't decided yet.

ROG

Corky-

CORKY

If you aren't here for chicken, then you can go.

Chicken Burger with a Side of Awkward, 2.

ROG

You know I'm vegan.

CORKY

Yes. I know. You've mentioned that, a lot.

TERRI

Oh. I was leaning towards the fried chicken burger, but now I'm not sure I should.

CORKY

Ignore him. You want the chicken burger, get the chicken burger.

TERRI

Um, okay.

(apologizing to Rog)

Sorry. With bacon. I'm so sorry. And the melted cheese. I'm so, so, sor-

ROG

Sorry, I get it.

CORKY

Don't snap at my customer. At least she knows how to apologize. Drink?

TERRI

Um, yes. Diet cola.

CORKY

Sides?

TERRI

Yes. Um, which has fewer calories the macaroni or the potato salad?

CORKY

Both combined are less than the burger. At this point you should just run with it.

TERRI

Um ...

CORKY

Rog, I'm serious, if you aren't here for chicken then you have no business being here.

ROG

I'll have an iced tea.

CORKY

I'm helping another customer.

Chicken Burger with a Side of Awkward, 3.

ROG

Just give her a potato salad.

CORKY

That might not be what she wants. You are so pushy.

ROG

I am not.

CORKY

Yes, you are. And it's so annoying.

TERRI

I can get the potato salad.

CORKY

Ma'am, you wait until you have decided what to order, ignore him.

TERRI

Um, no, I think the potato salad is okay.

CORKY

He doesn't care which side you get, they all have dairy. But don't you worry about that, no one can ever really make him happy.

ROG

Just ring up the salad, they're the same price.

CORKY

No. Will you go? I don't want to talk to you. You're going to get me in trouble with my boss.

ROG

You work for your parents.

CORKY

Ma'am, which side?

TERRI

Uh, macaroni salad. I'm so sorry.

ROG

We have to talk about-

CORKY

No, we don't.

ROG

Prom.

CORKY

Twelve forty-five please.

Chicken Burger with a Side of Awkward, 4.

Terri pays him.

ROG

I think it's important that people see us at prom together.

Corky exits to the kitchen.

CORKY

(yelling offstage)

Fried chicken burger with bacon and cheese. And a macaroni salad.

He returns with Terri's diet cola.

CORKY (cont'd)

And that's why you want me to go to prom with you?

TERRI

You didn't do the thing?

CORKY

What thing?

TERRI

You didn't use, you know, restaurant-speak on the order.

CORKY

Nepotism. Rog, will you get out of here? Annoying me is a privilege for paying customers only.

ROG

I'll have an iced tea.

CORKY

We're out of ice. And tea.

ROG

This is our big chance to be an out gay couple at prom.

TERRI

Awww, that's sweet.

ROG

Thanks.

CORKY

You want that chicken burger for here or to go?

TERRI

To go, please.

CORKY

(yelling towards the kitchen)

To go. What? TO GO. NO. GO. GO.

(MORE)

Chicken Burger with a Side of Awkward, 5.

CORKY (cont'd)

(to Rog)

Why haven't you gone yet?

ROG

Our friends who have supported us will want to see us at prom together and we'll get to annoy the assholes who haven't.

CORKY

Rog, you're the biggest asshole who broke us up. Will it annoy you if I go to prom with you? Go with Jason.

ROG

We aren't a couple.

CORKY

No, we aren't. Not anymore.

ROG

No, Jason and I aren't a couple. Please, you have to do this with me, to show that gay relationships are just as strong as straight ones. It sends the wrong message if we don't go together.

CORKY

Your cock in his-

Terri gasps loudly.

CORKY (cont'd)

Ma'am, it's a poultry term. Your, rooster, in his mouth while we were dating sends the wrong message.

TERRI

You know, straight people cheat too.

CORKY

Yeah, and then they break up, don't they? And they don't have to go to stupid prom with their cheater ex!

TERRI

Sometimes they do if, you know, they don't have time to find ... and they already have tickets and ...

ROG

You don't want to be at prom alone.

CORKY

I won't be. I have friends.

ROG

So, who are you going with then?

Chicken Burger with a Side of Awkward, 6.

CORKY

Emily, Kayla, Austin and Brooke. We're going as a group.

ROG

Kayla and Austin are a couple.

CORKY

So.

ROG

Going with the group isn't the same as going with a special someone.

CORKY

Well, I don't have one of those right now, do I?

ROG

It was only the one time.

CORKY

Well, you could have done it more, maybe you should have, cheating is cheating, you could have gotten the destruction of our love's worth out of it.

ROG

Maybe you could give me a second chance.

CORKY

Maybe I could keep my self-respect.

ROG

I made a mistake.

CORKY

Yeah, you did.

ROG

And you've never made a mistake before?

CORKY

I don't see the point of the question.

ROG

The point is everybody makes mistakes.

(to Terri)

What about you? Have you ever made a mistake before that you wish you could take back?

TERRI

Maybe I should have tried the new fish taco place today?

ROG

Everybody deserves at least one second chance, don't they?

Chicken Burger with a Side of Awkward, 7.

CORKY

Well, I think your second chance will be if you start dating someone else then you can try not lying and cheating in that relationship.

ROG

I just wasn't used to someone being into me that I was also into. I didn't have that before you. And then Jason liked me too and I, it was-

CORKY

Are you really trying to make excuses?

Slight pause.

ROG

Yes.

CORKY

Well, you can't, okay. Just go, Rog. Just go already and take Jason to prom with you.

ROG

He won't go-

CORKY

I don't care. You're upsetting me, is that what you want? Me losing it. And then this woman doesn't get her chicken. She goes hungry and it's your fault.

TERRI

Well, if he's vegan he probably would prefer I not get the chicken. I'm so sorry about that, by the way.

ROG

I don't care about the chicken! I mean, I do, a little. That's not why I'm here. I'm sorry I hurt you. I didn't mean to. I love you. I wanted to say that.

CORKY

Just go before I cry onto this woman's chicken, my parents add enough salt to everything as it is.

ROG

I'm going, but please just think about giving me a second chance.

Rog exits the restaurant.

TERRI

Do you still love him?

CORKY

No. I don't know. Yes. But I shouldn't.

Chicken Burger with a Side of Awkward, 8.

TERRI

You don't really want him to go to the prom with Jason, do you?

CORKY

No.

TERRI

Then you'll spend the whole night watching them dance together instead of the two of you.

CORKY

And if I go with him, it's still not the same romantic night it should have been, is it?

TERRI

Prom's overrated, at least I hope. Mine sucked. And I turned out okay.

CORKY

He should have to grovel more. I mean I'm not saying I'll go with him. But I'm not saying never. Either way, he should have to grovel more. I mean he didn't even bring flowers, you know?

TERRI

He never got you apology flowers?

CORKY

No.

TERRI

Well, that's just wrong. So was the cheating, but it's like the law, the aggrieved party gets flowers.

CORKY

He never got me any flowers, and you know I would have liked some. Maybe not all guys, or people even, would have, but I would have. Your chicken burger's ready.

Corky exits to the kitchen. Rog enters the restaurant.

ROG

Can I just say one more-

TERRI

No, no, no. Look, I don't know if you deserve this or not, but do not try to talk to him again until you've brought him proper apology flowers.

ROG

But he wouldn't want flowers.

Chicken Burger with a Side of Awkward, 9.

TERRI

Oh, sweetie, you remind me so much of my high school boyfriends. Trust me, flowers. Worth a try, right?

Rog exits the restaurant. Corky returns with Terri's food.

CORKY

Here you go. Hope you enjoy your meal, and you know, come back soon, or whatever.

TERRI

Thanks.

Terri starts to leave, but stops.

TERRI (cont'd)

You know, it's just prom. That's it, it's just prom. Everyone says "oh, it's prom," like it means the world and is supposed to define the rest of your life or whatever. Now as a rule, you should be allowed to go with whomever you love - any gender, that's one thing. But sometimes life steps in and you don't have that at the time people-wise. So maybe you'll go and you'll have fun, maybe it will be special, or maybe it will suck. And I hope for you that you have great prom. But even more than that, my hope for you is that ten, fifteen years from now you're the kind of person who doesn't give a fuck how your prom went.

Terri exits the restaurant.

End.

EGG IN SPOON

By Rachael Carnes

CHARACTERS

Leah	A mother, in her 40's
Sophie	A girl of 15
Janet	A grandma, in her 60's
Eleanor	A great-grandmother

SETTING

In a public park, on a pleasant spring day.

TIME

Late afternoon

Rachael Carnes, member:
Dramatists Guild, National New Play Network, Playwrights Center, AWP
1050 W 17th Ave, Eugene OR 97402, 541-221-5792
www.rachaelcarnes.com
carnes.rachael@gmail.com
© 2017, All Rights Reserved.

*At rise, SOPHIE is sitting behind
the picnic table, on her phone.*

LEAH

Will you please put your phone down?

SOPHIE

In a minute.

LEAH

There are people here who want to talk to you.

SOPHIE

I'm in the middle of making plans for later!

LEAH

Put it away or I'll take it away.

SOPHIE

You're not taking my phone away.

LEAH

I'm counting down.

SOPHIE

I'm 15 years old! You can't 'count down' on me. (snorts)

LEAH

(To Eleanor) Grandma, can I get you anything more to eat?

ELEANOR

What's that dear?

SOPHIE

(To Leah) And I don't think you know how rude that would be!

LEAH

(To Eleanor) Are you through with your plate? May I take it for you?

ELEANOR

Why thank you, honey.

LEAH

(To Sophie) How rude *what* would be?

SOPHIE

I can't just leave someone waiting for me to text them back.

JANET

Now look, Sophie, listen to your mom.

SOPHIE

Grandma, I'm sorry, but you just wouldn't understand.

JANET

(Looking across the field.) What are they doing?

ELEANOR

It's a game. You carry an egg in a spoon.

JANET

Well, someone's going to get hurt.

LEAH

Mom, no one's going to get hurt, okay? It's like a game for preschoolers.

JANET

I don't like how boisterous they're all being.

LEAH

They're frolicking in the sunshine. Listen; did you maybe want to take a seat?

SOPHIE

Grandma, nothing's going to happen.

JANET

(Looking at the baby blue balloons on the table.) But I suppose boys are boisterous, aren't they?

SOPHIE

Do you have to be so binary?

ELEANOR

At my Baby Shower, they kidnapped me and wheeled me in a cart to the edge of town.
(To JANET) Your daddy had to come and find me.

LEAH

Sophie, don't speak to your grandma that way.

ELEANOR

And we didn't have sex education or anything like that back then.

SOPHIE

Oh my god, kill me.

JANET

Mother, how about some cake?

ELEANOR

It just seems like red-blooded American teenagers, with all their glands and things, should just be able to figure it out.

LEAH

Yeah, that's the problem, grandma.

SOPHIE

(Picks up phone again, types.) The *problem*.

LEAH

I don't mean, it's just. Well, when I was your age –

SOPHIE

Can you please just not?

JANET

Sophie! Your mom is a smart lady.

SOPHIE

Not really interested in *wisdom* today, okay?

ELEANOR

Who was that nice colored woman who said kids should just masturbate?

LEAH

Grandma, we don't say that!

ELEANOR

What? Masturbate? They taught us all about it at the Assisted Living center.

JANET

No, mom. "Colored". We don't say, "Colored".

ELEANOR

Well, I am sorry, but it is an admittedly good idea. But why does it need to be taught?

LEAH

And why are they teaching *you* about masturbation?

ELEANOR

We don't say that!

JANET

Mom, 'masturbation' is fine, 'colored' is not.

ELEANOR

Well, come now, Janet. I believe *all* are welcome in God's Kingdom.

SOPHIE

Does Jesus masturbate?

LEAH and JANET

Sophie!

SOPHIE

Sorry. (Types on phone.)

ELEANOR

They taught us a workshop to stop the spread of disease.

JANET

Excuse me, what?

ELEANOR

It's an elective they offer.

LEAH

An elective?

ELEANOR

Right after chair yoga. I like chair yoga.

LEAH

Back up a second. What disease?

ELEANOR

Well, people get lonely. Most of us, our husbands and wives are long gone.

SOPHIE

(Sticks fingers in ears.) La, la, la, la, la!

JANET

Mom, what is going on over in the home?

ELEANOR

Just a lot of electives!

LEAH

Jesus Christ.

ELEANOR

Now I'll thank you not to take the Lord's name in vain.

LEAH

Jesus Fucking Christ.

JANET

Well, why don't we open some presents? Here, Sophie, this one's from me.

SOPHIE

(Stands, revealing a pregnant belly under a tight midriff t-shirt. She takes the gift from JANET, and pulls out a floppy baby sling, which she fumbles with awkwardly.)

Thanks, grandma. What is it?

JANET

It's a traditional Incan baby sling, for baby-wearing.

SOPHIE

Thank you?

JANET

It's really important that you and Baby form a close bond through constant and uninterrupted contact.

ELEANOR

You're never going to take another shit by yourself again!

JANET

Mother!

LEAH

Grandma!

ELEANOR

Open mine next.

SOPHIE

Which one's yours?

ELEANOR

It's the yellow one, with the ducks.

SOPHIE

(Opens gift bag, pulls out enormous flowered maternity shirt.) Oh. Thanks.

ELEANOR

I thought it might be nice for you to have some clothes to flatter your new shape.

(SOPHIE folds the shirt and puts it back in the bag.)

JANET

(To SOPHIE) Stretch marks were revered by the Mesopotamians!

LEAH

Thanks, grandma. I'm sure that will come in very handy. Right Sophie?

ELEANOR

And there's a couple of nursing bras at the bottom of the bag, too. Not the most flattering, but you're gonna need 'em.

LEAH

That's probably enough, grandma.

JANET

Okay, mom, let's think about getting you back home for your nap.

ELEANOR

When my Jimmy was born, my bosoms swelled up like two human heads.

JANET

Let's open another present!

LEAH

(Looking to the field.) What are they playing now?

JANET

Why, it looks like a three-legged race! Sophie, would you like to join them?

ELEANOR

Now Sophie, I don't want you to be scared about giving birth.

SOPHIE

I'm not.

ELEANOR

Or about finishing High School. I didn't, and your grandma's daddy didn't either.

SOPHIE

I'm going to get my GED.

LEAH

(Handing SOPHIE another present.) Here honey, this one's from my aunt and uncle.

ELEANOR

My water broke at the Piggly Wiggly, right in front of a display of canned peaches.

JANET

Okay, thanks for the wonderful party, Leah...

ELEANOR

Sophie, they're gonna give you twilight sleep, so you won't need to worry about a thing. But don't be surprised if your Down-South feels like it's been through a meat grinder for a few days, that's just the forceps.

SOPHIE

I'm having my baby naturally.

LEAH

(Hushed) Honey, they don't do that anymore. We talked about this.

JANET

(Clucks) Such a shame. In my day, we did Lamaze. And the fathers were in the room! Your father was *in the room*.

LEAH

Your day is over, mom, okay?

SOPHIE

Well, then I'm having the baby at home. They can't stop me from doing that.

LEAH

Sweetie, you can't. Remember, when we went to the doctor, he said —

JANET

Here's your sweater, mom.

LEAH

(Whispering to Sophie) Remember, he said that because of the, um, the —

SOPHIE

Just fucking say it, mom!

JANET

Sophie!

ELEANOR

I like her spirit!

SOPHIE

Say it. Say I have a disease. Say I have fucking blisters on my —

LEAH

Honey —

SOPHIE

And if the baby passes through my vaginal canal, he'll get the disease, too. That's what you want to say, right mom?

LEAH

I'm sorry —

SOPHIE

And you want to say I should finish High School and study hard and learn things and go to college and be somebody, well guess what?

LEAH

What?

SOPHIE

Wanna see the future? Here's the future!

(SOPHIE pulls the maternity shirt, several sizes too big, out of the bag again and puts it on.)

SOPHIE (con't)

Are you happy now?

ELEANOR

Well, I think you're going to make a wonderful mother.

JANET

But I think she wants to be more than that, mom.

ELEANOR

Being a mother is the most beautiful work there is.

SOPHIE

You know what else is beautiful? Math. Math is beautiful. Equations are beautiful. Science is fucking beautiful —

LEAH

Well, maybe you could have thought about that a few months ago.

SOPHIE

Really? Really mom? What choice did I have? Where was I supposed to go?

LEAH

You could have come to me.

SOPHIE

And what could you have done?

JANET

She's right, you know. They've rolled back all the rules. The only way to even buy a condom now is to show your marriage license.

ELEANOR

That happened on "Downton Abbey"!"

LEAH

Grandma —

ELEANOR

Lady Mary wanted to have an affair with that man, to see if she and him were a good match, but she didn't want to run the risk of pregnancy, so she sent Anna to the shop in London to get her much-needed supplies.

JANET

Mother —

ELEANOR

I miss "Downton Abbey". Lord Grantham was so sad when his Labrador died, and I knew just how he felt.

SOPHIE

Well I miss school! And I miss the idea that I could become something.

JANET

Now, look, honey —

SOPHIE

Now all I'm ever going to be is a mom to this little boy, I don't even want.

LEAH

Sophie —

SOPHIE

No, mom. I don't want him. But I can't not have him. You did this.

LEAH

I —

SOPHIE

(To Janet) And you (To Eleanor) and you. You were supposed to protect me. You were supposed to keep me safe.

- pause-

ELEANOR

(Looking to the field.) What are they playing now?

INEVITABLE
A Ten Minute Play
by Mindy Roll

Synopsis: During a bank robbery, an engaged couple finds themselves locked in a vault with a locally famous couples therapist.

Cast of Characters

<u>Aaron:</u>	male fiance, 30s
<u>Bea:</u>	female fiance, 30s
<u>Florence:</u>	therapist, 60s or 70s

Scene

In a bank vault (empty stage), three characters standing, one (Aaron) cupping his ear toward the audience, as if trying to listen, one (Bea) standing immediately behind him looking over his shoulder, and the third (Florence) a few feet away from them.

Time

The Present

Bea:

Can you hear anything? What's happening out there?

Aaron:

I don't know. It's hard to hear anything. But we're safe. Right? I mean, we're literally locked in a safe.

Bea:

That was so scary. A bank robbery! I mean, here we are, minding our own business, on our way to get our marriage license, opening our first joint account -

(Smiles sweetly)

Aaron:

(Smiles back)

So awesome.

Bea:

And a bank robbery! I've never been this close to an actual crime before.

Aaron:

Me either! We were right there!

Bea:

I swear, I thought he was going to take you hostage! He kept looking at us, at you.

Aaron:

Yes! That totally freaked me out. Why was he looking at me?

Bea:

I don't know. Maybe he thought you were going to do something heroic, jump in to save me or something.

Aaron:

Well, I do have that brave look about me.

(Both laugh)

Aaron:

But we are safe now. I'm sure the police are on their way. Everything's ok. I'm glad we're together.

Bea:

Me, too. I feel so safe with you.

(AARON and BEA embrace. They are being watched by the third person in the vault, FLORENCE, who then rolls her eyes.)

Aaron:

Um, did you just roll your eyes at us?

Florence:

Excuse me?

Aaron:

It looked like you were rolling your eyes at us.

Florence:

Hmm.

Bea:

Uh, were you? Rolling your eyes?

Florence:

I'm sure I wasn't.

Aaron:

But I saw you!

Bea:

He says he saw you!

(Awkward silence)

Florence:

I'm Florence.

Bea:

Florence?

Aaron:

You're introducing yourself after rolling-

Bea:

Wait, Florence Spade? THE Florence Spade?

Aaron:

Who-?

Bea:

Like the most famous couples therapist on the planet! I listen to your podcast every week. I would know your voice anywhere.

(Turning quickly to Aaron)

I can't believe we are in here with THE Florence Spade. Her waiting list is like SIX years or something!

(Turning back to Florence)

That's you, right?

Florence:

(Wryly)

The one and only.

Bea:

I knew it! I can't believe we're in here with you. You're like my hero.

(Turning to Aaron)

She knows SO MUCH about relationships.

(Back to Florence)

Like, your theory about how addictive personalities ALWAYS pair up with, like, avoidant - or whatever - like people who can't make a commitment, and how they're always chasing and avoiding each other until something dramatic happens to end it because they can't end it without something dramatic happening because neither one can actually stand to end it so they have to stage something big, then one picks a dramatic fight, otherwise it will never end - that totally changed my life. Because it's so true - something dramatic has always happened!

Florence:

(Annoyed, checking watch)

Is that right?

Bea:

Like my last boyfriend. Actually, last two. Maybe last three. Or four. Hmm, maybe since middle school, to be honest. All of those relationships ended in a crazy way. Like, outlandish-you-wouldn't-believe endings. Ugh, they were so unable to commit.

Aaron:

They were?

Bea:

I told you all this. And, of course, as the addictive one...

Aaron:

You're the addictive one?

Bea:

Yeah. I mean, sort of. I told you that. I-

Aaron:

What are you addicted to?

Bea:

(Pause)

Well, men. Relationships. Being in a relationship.

Aaron:

What does that mean?

Bea:

Like, I always have to be in a relationship. Like my self-worth comes from being in a relationship. My security. I'm a *clinger*. Even when I know I should end a relationship, even when all the signs are there that it has turned south, even when the outlandish dramatic thing is *actually* happening, still I hang around.

(Turning to Florence)

That's the theory, right?

Florence:

(Vaguely)

Something like that.

Aaron:

Wait. So am I like your stand-in or something?

Bea:

What?

Aaron:

Your stand-in. Your current addiction. Are you marrying me because you need an addiction, and I happen to fill that spot?

Bea:

No! Don't be silly. I love you...

(Pause)

Bea:
... but you are a little avoidant.

Aaron:
I'm what?

Bea:
You are a little scared of commitment. Like, how long have we been dating? Eight years? And engaged? Three years? That's kind of a long time.

Aaron:
According to who? We agreed to take it slow-

Bea:
According to everyone! Your mom, my mom, your friends, my friends - it's kind of a joke.

Aaron:
I'm kind of a joke?

Bea:
Uhhh, "pulling an Aaron" - what do you think that means?

Aaron:
(Flabbergasted)
It means doing something well, slowly, with attention to detail. It means being very careful about a decision.

Bea:
It means pretending like you are going to do something when you have actually have no intention of following through.

Aaron:
No, it doesn't!
(Pause)
Really? That's ridiculous! And insulting. People say that? About me?

Bea:
I thought you knew. People joke about it all the time. It's not to hurt you. It's just who you are. You are who you are.

(Shrugs)
All of us - we are who we are.

Aaron:

I can't believe that. I can't believe you are just now telling me that - we're getting married on *Saturday*. Are you saying all this to break up with me?

Bea:

What? Where did that come from? No! Aaron-

Aaron:

I need a moment, Bea.

Bea:

We're in a vault!

(AARON glares at the two of them, then moves to the back of the vault to sulk, pulling out his phone and popping in ear buds)

Bea:

So, as you can see, you've been massively helpful. I feel like I know myself so much better thanks to you. I've changed so much. Like, I'll never repeat *those* mistakes again. Aaron might still be a little avoidant, but he's made the commitment to me. I can see all those things now. I give him a hard time, but he's finally moved past all that stuff.

Florence:

I see.

(Pause)

Bea:

But the eye-rolling. It's killing me. What was that about?

Florence:

Why are you so concerned with the eye-rolling?

Bea:

Because! You are a couple's therapist. *THE* couple's therapist. You should be excited about us. Everyone is excited about us. You should be rooting for us, giving us advice.

Florence:

(Sighing)

My dear, I have worked with many, many couples over the years.

Bea:

(Eagerly)

Yes?

Florence:

And not one has so inconvenienced my Thursday morning.

Bea:

(Confused)

I don't understand. How are we inconveniencing you?

Florence:

You didn't see what everyone else in that bank lobby saw.

Bea:

(More confused)

No.

Florence:

(Sigh)

When is your wedding?

Bea:

On Saturday! Three days away!

Florence:

And this bank robbery? When you came to - as you say - *finally* open a joint account? On your way to get your marriage license? Which if you don't apply for today means you can't *have* a wedding in three days?

Bea:

(Confused)

Yes?

Florence:

(Pause)

Don't you think the timing is a little suspicious?

Bea:

(Frowning)

Suspicious? How so?

Florence:

You said the robber kept looking at you, kept looking at your fiancé? As if he maybe knew you?

Bea:

Yes... So?

(Pause)

Florence:

Any bells ringing?

Bea:

...No

Florence:

None?

Bea:

...No.

Florence:

Does this seem like an outlandish, to use your word, way to avoid opening a joint checking account? An *outlandish* way to avoid getting a marriage license in time for your wedding?

Bea:

What?

Florence:

Did the bank robber seem familiar at all?

Bea:

What? No! Wait...

(thoughtfully)

...maybe a little. No! Why are you asking me that?

Florence:

What seemed familiar about him?

Bea:

Hmmm... his voice, I guess. I'm good with voices.

Florence:

And who did his voice remind you of?

Bea:

Well, and this is going to sound strange... but of Aaron's brother. But that doesn't make any sense.

Florence:

You're a clinger, as you said. Who hangs on even when the outlandish thing is actually happening. So my question to you -- Do you still have a habit of seeing past the glaring faults of men you are addicted to?

Bea:

No! I've changed. I know who I am now. And Aaron, too. I know who he is. And Aaron doesn't have *glaring* faults.

Florence:

Not Avoidant Aaron? Who might do *anything* to avoid making a commitment?

Bea gasps as they both turn to look at Aaron.

End Scene

NW10 Audition Perusal Copy
Not for print or production without playwright permission.
All Rights Reserved

THE APPOINTMENT

By Jennifer Chaney

NW10 Audition Perusal Copy
Not for print or production without playwright permission.
All Rights Reserved

Jennifer Chaney
P.O. Box 1583
Florence, OR 97439
541-961-5562
Jconnor7@uoregon.edu

Cast of Characters

<u>EMMA HILL</u>	14 (female)
<u>KELSEY</u> (Voice over)	14 (female)
<u>RECEPTIONIST</u>	30's / 40's (male or female)
<u>LOUISE</u>	70's (female)

Place

Typical waiting room.

Time

Modern day. Late July.

NW10 Audition Perusal Copy
All Rights Reserved
Not for print or production without playwright permission.

Prologue

In the darkness we hear the sounds of ocean waves, seagulls, a dog bark, and teenagers laughing and playing in the water. A conversation blends with the sounds of the ocean atmosphere.

EMMA

Here, take my picture.

KELSEY

(Laughing)

Oh my God, like you are so funny! Do the Charlie's Angels thing.

EMMA

Wait, my hair. Does it look okay?

KELSEY

Yeah, totally. Smile!

EMMA

Did you get it?

(SOUNDS of rushing waves.)

Shit!

(EMMA screams.)

KELSEY

Emma!

(SOUNDS of water, underwater voices and a faint dog bark is heard. SOUNDS slowly fade out. Tacky Muzak quickly fades in. Lights up on waiting room)

A receptionist's desk with a computer monitor. Chairs in opposite rows and a table with magazines, and a stack of clipboards. On the wall is a monitor with the projected wait time, the number "64" currently being served, flowers and other pleasant images are intermittent. A door for entrances marked "Intake, Room 718" on the outside.

(EMMA cautiously enters)

She is wearing a comfy hooded sweatshirt, jean shorts and is barefoot. She takes a number from the dispenser. The monitor on the wall says the average wait time is 6 minutes and "Now serving #65." A spunky receptionist, perhaps some ink

showing and wearing colorful scrubs. Chair swivels.

LOUISE

(She stands at desk and hands clip board to RECEPTIONIST)

Here you go.

RECEPTIONIST

Thank you.

(Reviews form)

Wait, wait. Louise? You skipped one. Right there.

LOUISE

Oh?

(Looks at line on form)

Agnostic, of course.

RECEPTIONIST

Of course.

(Enters information in computer)

Great, thanks. Have a seat, it should be about 15 minutes.

The clock on the wall says 6 minutes.

LOUISE

(She glances at the clock)

RECEPTIONIST

Give or take... yesterday we had a power surge and the whole system went down, all the intakes were delayed by at least an hour. Just keepin' it real.

LOUISE

Okay then.

(She sits and takes book, "Reviving Ophelia" out of tote bag. Begins Reading)

(EMMA slowly approaches the receptionist desk with #65 in hand.)

RECEPTIONIST

Do you have an appointment?

EMMA

I'm not sure. Guess so...

RECEPTIONIST

Name please?

EMMA

Emma Hill.

RECEPTIONIST

Emma Hill. H-I-L-L? Like a hill?

EMMA

Yeah.

(Searching pockets for cell phone)

RECEPTIONIST

Middle name?

EMMA

Louise.

RECEPTIONIST

Okay, well, I don't see you listed in my confirmed appointments today.

LOUISE

Missing something?

EMMA

I can't find my phone.

RECEPTIONIST

Hmm. Let me try one more thing. Birth date?

EMMA

July 18th. I just turned 14.

RECEPTIONIST

Okay, one moment. Chh... chh... chh... finally!

(Typing on keyboard and reading screen).

Okay, Emma Louise Hill, seems you're in a holding pattern! Due to circumstances beyond our control, you will experience a 4 to 6 minute delay in processing. You can take a seat. Might as well start filling this out, just in case.

(Hands over a clipboard.)

EMMA

Aw, yeeaaaah. Can I ask a question?

RECEPTIONIST

Shoot.

EMMA

Where's Kelsey? I'm pretty sure she has my phone. I need to call my Mom.

RECEPTIONIST

Unless Kelsey has an appointment this year, I couldn't tell you. And sorry, no phone calls.

EMMA

What? My Mom is going to want to know where I'm at.

RECEPTIONIST

She knows.

(Notices monitor has changed to 66)

EMMA

What? How does she know? / Like, I can't just stay here, / I'll get in trouble!

RECEPTIONIST

/ Number 66? / 66? Hmm.

EMMA

(Eye roll)

You have got to be kidding me right now.

(Plops down in a chair on other side of LOUISE)

LOUISE

14, huh? Well, happy birthday!

EMMA

(Annoyed)

Aww, thanks.

RECEPTIONIST

I'm actually surprised they added the holding pattern. I would think you were a one and done after the log rolled on you.

EMMA

Huh?

RECEPTIONIST

I can see the drowning was scheduled with the beach vacation and all, but the standing on the log in combination with the sneaker wave was a surprise.

EMMA

(Stares forward in shock)

Fuuu... oh my God, I remember now. Wait, what do you mean "scheduled drowning?"

RECEPTIONIST

When they reviewed your records last month, they put you in for a termination. Perfect option really, since you already wanted to, you know.

(Makes gesture at throat and clicking noise.)

EMMA

Whoa, wait - who reviewed my records?

RECEPTIONIST

The Recondite Agency. They work on these types of cases. Looks like you had a rating of... let's see... 520.

EMMA

520? Is that good or what?

RECEPTIONIST

No, that's not a number to really be proud of... looks like you have had a couple of high qualifying incidents - they ding you a hundred points each time.

EMMA

Incidents? / What does that even mean - incidents? / You mean the deal with my Mom's pills?

RECEPTIONIST

/ Yep, two of 'em. / Looks like it was pills? That's one.

LOUISE

Sounds pretty serious. What did your Mom do?

EMMA

(Shrugs her shoulders)

Pshh. Nothing. I told her I had the flu and she didn't even notice that like I'd been crying for two days straight.

LOUISE

Was there another time?

EMMA

Yea, like so dumb of me, I tried to drown myself in the bathtub but then I realized they would find me naked.

LOUISE

That *would* be embarrassing!

EMMA

I know right? Then I got some rope from the garage and my Mom's boyfriend, "idiot head" saw it in my room - they thought Kelsey had something to do with it. Kelsey wasn't even there! I wasn't really gonna do anything.

RECEPTIONIST

Looks like you have about 4 minutes. Has your brother done resuscitation before? Could get interesting.

(Pulls up live feed on the receptionist's computer screen. SOUNDS of chaos from the those at the beach as Emma is being resuscitated)

KELSEY

(In the distance a panicked voice)

Oh my God, Emma – you gotta wake up!

EMMA

Bradley's doing CPR on me?

(Runs over to look at screen)

That's just gross!

RECEPTIONIST

Well he's trying anyway.

(All three look at the screen)

EMMA

You have got to be kidding me right now! I look horrible!

(Walks away - can't look)

That's so embarrassing!

LOUISE

(Looking at computer screen over shoulder of RECEPTIONIST)

The EMTs are probably on their way.

RECEPTIONIST

You know what they say, "Bad CPR is better than no CPR!"

(RECEPTIONIST and LOUISE laugh.)

EMMA

(Disgusted.)

What kind of people are you?

(They exchange a look and shrug.)

LOUISE

So Emma, did your Mom ever find out her pills were missing?

EMMA

Mmm-no. All she cares about is idiot head.

HELEN

Perhaps she's been busy lately.

EMMA

Yea, well, you don't understand.

LOUISE

Maybe you don't know all the details.

EMMA

Here's what I WANT to know, why is it that like they always think you must be doing drugs or partying or something instead of just trying to... figure out what's really going on? Like no one really talks about the real shit, like the panic attacks and head crap. Maybe moving was really hard and our family being splintered into a million pieces really sucks! It's always, "Are you using drugs?" So lame. "No mom, I'm not doing drugs. But you are."

LOUISE

It seems you're pretty hard on her, I imagine she is doing the best she can since the divorce.

EMMA

(Gives LOUISE a strange look)

Whose side are you on Lady?

LOUISE

I'm just pointing out that everyone has their "cross to bear." Everybody has something. That's what makes us human. Might try a little more forgiveness.

EMMA

Yeah, well that's why I decided not to come out. My Dad would totally freak and his whole congregation would disown him if I did. It doesn't matter anyway - Bradley is the golden child - he'll go off to Baptist College and continue to be perfect.

LOUISE

Wow. Harsh. Here's a secret - it will get better. Your brother has his own demons, so to speak, and he is going through his own personal hell. It's not easy being perfect and even though he'll end up in med school, he won't be happy. He secretly wants to be a professional video gamer.

EMMA

Huh. I guess I could see that...not very realistic, though.

LOUISE

You see, everybody always wants the life they don't have and the dream they always think they had the right to have. You're not alone.

(Beat)

RECEPTIONIST

(Computer makes cheerful ping noise.)

Oh wow, I haven't seen one of these in ages. Looks like Bradley may have just saved your life. As soon as we can get an escort from Recondite, you'll be returning.

(She types in an order)

LOUISE

Well, that is good news!

EMMA

What the? Assuming I want to live. You guys act like I'm some kind of puppet. You can't have me stay and then push me out! Since you seem to know everything - and I have no idea how you do - you probably know about the Dakota thing. And my Dad hates me now and... oh great, Bradley gets to be the hero. Again! And, and... don't I have a choice?

RECEPTIONIST -

Yea, you always have a choice.

EMMA

No I don't.

LOUISE

She does?

RECEPTIONIST -

Sure, ultimately you always have a choice. That is, until your confirmed appointment... then it's a one and done... But if you're not going to go - I have to let the Recondite reps know right away, they don't like to be jacked around... Just keepin' it real.

EMMA

Would you stop with that! Seriously.

LOUISE

Now come on, don't you want to at least go back to Kelsey and your friends?

EMMA

Are you kidding? Honestly, Kelsey is just friends with me to be near Bradley. I know that. I also know she like started saying all that shit about me and Dakota Ray on Hangouts, telling everyone that Dakota and I did it at the party. Which is not like what went down at all... And she went along with it! Why would Kelsey do that if she is supposed to be my friend?

RECEPTIONIST

Hangouts? You mean that group thing on Google? What ever happened to just passing notes?

LOUISE

Seems to me that this will all pass. The teen years are hard, but then you grow up, go off to college and eventually make peace with yourself. Someday you'll look back at all of this and realize it's just a blip in the screen of your life. You really do have a bright future ahead. Don't you want to study oceanography?

EMMA

Look, it's all really complicated, With moving last year, my parents always fighting and it's hideous to be the new kid - again! My Young Life friends turned into a bunch of hypocrites, and God, I just feel like my skin is crawling most of the time. At that the end of the day ... there's no one I can trust.

LOUISE

Everyone struggles at some point, it's part of finding out who you are. Sometimes its really ridiculously hard and you feel like you're drowning... Sorry bad choice of words... but it's the human condition, ya know? We all gotta work through it. Of course you're going to make mistakes, but you'll learn some really important crap along the way. And the God thing - you'll figure out whether it's for you r not.. Sometimes hope is the only prayer people have got. Then there's love - what a great motivator... nothing quite like the feeling of being in love... sometimes it's not worth it, but sometimes it's all that keeps you going. But you know what Emma? Most of the time you just have to trust in the unknown. Trust in yourself and trust your instincts. Half of the work is just trusting that it's all going to work out. And sometimes the other half is just having the courage to show up!

RECEPTIONIST

(computer pings again)

Looks like your accompaniment is here, you have 30 seconds to go back to the main terminal. What's it gonna be Emma?

Clock begins 30 second countdown on wall monitor

EMMA

I'm not going back! It's too painful! I spend half my time humiliated and the other half wishing I was someone else.

(starts coughing)

I don't want to go back - don't you get it? Oh God, why do I feel like I'm choking!

LOUISE

Okay, I wasn't going to tell you this but you need to know. You have to go back - because... because... of the sea turtles!

EMMA

Sea turtles?

LOUISE

(Talking rapidly)

Yes, you will go on to receive a full ride to study Marine Biology at Duke and you end up working for World Wildlife saving sea turtle hatchlings! You'll be the lead scientist on a project that helps keep the sea turtles from extinction!

10 seconds is now counting down on the clock.

EMMA

(Rapid breathing)

I do? That's crazy!

(Looks towards door)

I have to know - do I fall in love?

LOUISE

Yes, you certainly do. More than once. Trust me! Now go! Go!

Clock is ticking 3, 2, 1. EMMA goes back through the Intake door. Muzak comes up again and a picture of wildflowers is on the monitor.

RECEPTIONIST

(Light laugh)

Sea turtles? Wow Louise, that's pretty random. After that whole spiel on trust – you just lied to yourself?

LOUISE

Yea well, maybe I'll follow that dream now.

(Goes back to reading book)

LIGHTS FADE. We hear Muzak fading in the darkness.