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Mutually Assured Destruction

10 plays about Brothers and Sisters

By Don Zolidis

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Full-length drama/comedy
11F 9M, or any size group from 4-20

A century's worth of sibling squabbles is boiled down into ten vignettes in this era-hopping tribute to family. Each short play explores a distinct facet of brother and sisterhood, from fights over who caused mom and dad to split (1985 - I'm Pretty Sure This Is Your Fault) to daring escape plots that only two sisters could pull off (1922 - Very Very Cold Feet). No matter the decade, audiences will see themselves in these ten distinct shorts about the undeniable bond between siblings through the ages.

Cast of Characters

1. JULIAN
   TARA

2. JOE
   SAM

3. MEGAN
   APRIL

4. CHAD
   RACHEL

5. CAROL
   TIM

6. ANDREA
   JESSICA

7. RICHARD
   MARY

8. JIMMY
   CHARLIE

9. JOHNNY
   MAGGIE

10. EVELYN
    VIRGINIA

Scenes

1. 2015 – Mutually Assured Destruction
2. 2002 – 15 Minutes of Clown Fame
3. 1993 – The Fount of Inspiration
4. 1985 – I'm Pretty Sure it's Your Fault
5. 1977 – A New Hopeless
6. 1968 – Coming Home
7. 1955 – Lassoing an Angel
8. 1944 – A love letter to Ma
9. 1936 – A Star is almost Born
10. 1922 – Very, Very Cold Feet

Setting: A living room. You may wish to change furniture in between scenes, but it's not necessary.

Production Notes: I've designed this play to be flexible in regards to casting. It's possible to do the play with a cast of 6, (it might be doable with 4 if the actors are particularly quick at changing costumes) – A cast size of six allows everyone one scene in-between appearances to do costume changes, though. Or the play may be played with different actors in every role, allowing for a cast of 20.

Gender: There are several roles that could be played by either gender. Both roles in 2002 and 1985 could be played by male or female actors without losing too much.

Race/Ethnicity: Any actor of any race or ethnicity may play any role in this play.

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Dedicated to John Zolidis

1. 2015. Mutually Assured Destruction

(The living room. JULIAN is playing a video game. He has a headset on and is talking into it.)

JULIAN, 15
TARA, 17

JULIAN
Oh I'm coming for you, Anu. You and all your little friends. I speak with the voice of the great warrior kings of – oh come on! Oh come on not fair! Whoah. Whoah. Time out. I thought we agreed there were no snipers! Well we said it! I said it!
(TARA enters, enraged.)

TARA
Hey.
(JULIAN holds up his hand to tell her to wait a second.)
Hey. HEY AGAIN.

JULIAN
One moment please.
(TARA rips the power cord out of the television.)
Whoah!

TARA
I need to talk to you, dorkface.

JULIAN
Dorkface? Dorkface? That's a nice way to begin/ a conversation –

TARA
Did you comment on James' Instagram?

JULIAN
What?

TARA
DID YOU COMMENT ON JAMES' INSTAGRAM!

JULIAN
What are you talking about? I don't even know who you're talking about –

TARA
James. James. You know James. The guy who I'm in love with.

JULIAN

Oh yes. Now it is ringing a bell.

TARA

Did you comment on his feed?

JULIAN

I may have said something. Possibly. But then I deleted it.

TARA

What did you say?

JULIAN

I don't remember. I erased it from my mind

TARA

What did you say?

JULIAN

I'm not sure I like this new rage thing you've got going on.

TARA

It's going to get worse if you don't tell me what you said.

JULIAN

I made a comment and then I erased it.

TARA

You will die a thousand deaths!

JULIAN

What?

TARA

What did you say?

JULIAN

I don't remember! Maybe, okay – maybe I said something like how my sister would really like to see him in bike shorts.

TARA

What?

JULIAN

He had a picture of his bike –

TARA

Bike shorts?!

JULIAN

Yeah, you know –

TARA

I don't want to see him in bike shorts! I don't want to see anyone in bike shorts!

JULIAN

That's why I erased it.

TARA

WHY WOULD YOU SAY SOMETHING LIKE THAT!

JULIAN

Just sort of an impulse.

TARA

You're dead. You are dead. I am going to pour acid on you in your sleep. I am going to fill your underwear drawer with snakes.

JULIAN

Don't you think you're overreacting –

TARA

No I'm not –

(She takes out her smartphone.)

JULIAN

What are you doing?

TARA

I'm going to comment on Samantha's Instagram.

JULIAN

What?

TARA

Yep. Oh it's on right now. You messed with the wrong chick.

(She takes a picture of JULIAN.)

This is a picture of the dork that is in love with you.

JULIAN

You can't do that!

TARA

I'm going to upload it right now.

(JULIAN takes out his own phone.)

JULIAN

Stop right there.

TARA

What are you gonna do?

JULIAN

You want me to hit record? I'll just start uploading this whole thing right now.

TARA

I'm not scared of you.

(JULIAN hits record.)

JULIAN

Dear James – welcome to your own private tour of Tara's life.

TARA

Uploading photo now.

JULIAN

This is my sister, who is in love with you.

TARA

Would you turn that thing off?

JULIAN

She's also full of rage.

TARA

Turn the dang thing off!

JULIAN

You are wise to steer clear of her, as she has been known to make disgusting smells in the bathroom.

TARA

What!

JULIAN

Let's go check out her room.

(TARA runs to get in his way, holding up her phone in defense. She begins recording JULIAN.)

TARA
Samantha – behold the creature that is my brother in his natural habitat. He is foul –

JULIAN
I bet she left her underwear on the floor again, let's go find out. You might think she has attractive underwear, but you would be horribly, horribly wrong.

TARA
He eats his boogers!

JULIAN
I do not!

TARA
I've seen him do it! I've seen him do it! He's going to deny it, but he still does it!

JULIAN
Lies! My sister is a fountain of lies!

TARA
I've seen him pee in a jar!

JULIAN
What!

TARA
One time you were playing video games for like a hundred hours in a row and you peed in a jar!

JULIAN
That's preposterous!

TARA
It was like four in the morning and you thought no one was looking –

JULIAN
What are you doing looking at me at four in the morning?

TARA
Why are you peeing in jar?

JULIAN
Why are you watching me pee in a jar?!

TARA
So you admit it!

JULIAN
It was a very important moment in the game! You just can't leave the game!

TARA
A ha! Samantha, if you think that –

JULIAN
James you should know she wears a girdle.

TARA
Those are Spanx!

JULIAN
Also, she totally made out with Christian Demarco like last week.

TARA
That was an accident!

JULIAN
Uh huh.

TARA
Let's go look at Julian's underwear drawer, shall we?

JULIAN
No! No stop!

TARA
Too late!
(TARA and JULIAN rush to block each other from getting out of the room, phones in one hand.)

JULIAN
STOP! STOP! THIS IS CRAZY!
(TARA stops, still holding her phone.)
You press pause I'll press pause.

TARA
It's a trick.

JULIAN
It's not a trick. Press pause. One… two… three…
(They both press pause simultaneously.)
Now let's talk this out.

TARA

Delete your video first, then I'll talk.

JULIAN

No way. You delete your video first.

TARA

Never.

JULIAN

All right look. We don't need to destroy each other.

TARA

We don't?

JULIAN

Hear me out.

TARA

I'm listening.

JULIAN

I give you the password to my twitter account –

TARA

Who cares? You have like six followers –

JULIAN

Listen to me… and… you give me the password to your twitter. And then… if anyone does anything – swift and total revenge. It'll be just like the Cold War.

TARA

Mutually assured Destruction.

JULIAN

Yep.

(Pause.)

TARA

Okay.

JULIAN

I'm going to write my password down on this piece of paper. You write yours down and we trade them. Slowly.

TARA

Okay.

(They write their passwords down.)

JULIAN

One. Two. Three.

(They hand over each other's password.)

JULIAN

Your password is one two three password?

TARA

What? Oh and "I love Samantha question mark" is so awesome?

JULIAN

You couldn't guess it. 123password is like the easiest password in the world.

TARA

Why is there a question mark? Are you like, posing the question to yourself or something? And by the way, I didn't want to say this earlier, but she is wayyyy out of your league.

JULIAN

Like you have a shot with James.

TARA

I do have a shot with James. He's madly in love with me.

JULIAN

He's madly in love with his own abs, which is why he posts pictures of them so many times a day. Like, dude, we saw them yesterday, you don't need to post them again. They're the same freaking muscles.

TARA

At least he's hot. Samantha has like spiders in her hair.

JULIAN

She's got her own style!

TARA

Creepy vampire girl is not a style, it's a mental problem.

JULIAN

She's original!

TARA

She's probably dating a thirty-year old tattoo artist named Weasel!

JULIAN

That's it! I'm posting the video!

TARA

You wouldn't dare!

(He posts the video)

JULIAN

Done!

(She posts her own video.)

TARA

I posted yours too!

(Pause. They both look at their phones.)

JULIAN

So that wasn't good.

TARA

Yeah.

JULIAN

So when we like someone again…

TARA

Yeah… no telling.

JULIAN

Okay.

TARA

You should probably get a new twitter account by the way.

JULIAN

Yeah.

(Lights change.)

II. 2002. Fifteen Minutes of Clown Fame

JOE, 18
SAM, 20
(JOE is at a computer.)

JOE

Gonna fire up the ol' MySpace… Yeah, baby. When this loads, I'm gonna be connected to all my friends. Here we go.

(Crashing, beeping, popping noise of a dial-up modem.)

I don't think I'll ever get tired of that sound.

(SAM enters, dressed in a full clown costume, with makeup and everything. He walks through the room, terribly distraught, then exits. Perhaps slams a door.)

Hey Sam? Sam? Sam you okay?

SAM *(off-stage)*

I don't want to talk about it!

JOE

What was that about Sam?

SAM *(off-stage)*

I said I don't want to talk about it!

JOE

All right.

(JOE gets back to his computer.)

(SAM returns momentarily, with cordless phone.)

SAM

Can you please get off the internet, I need to use the phone.

JOE

No way. I've been waiting all day for this – I'm not gonna – what the heck is going on with you?

SAM

Today was my audition.

JOE

What audition?

SAM

You never pay attention to me!

(SAM turns and starts to storm out.)

JOE

Dude. What are you talking about?

SAM

My American Idol audition.

JOE

Oh. You're um… you're dressed like a clown.

SAM

Oh am I? Am I really? How amazingly observant of you! For your information, okay, this is to STAND OUT. I'm just an ordinary guy, but in this outfit, I am memorable.

JOE

Uh-huh. Did you do any clown type stuff?

SAM

No I didn't do any clown type stuff! It's a singing competition! Okay? I sang in a clown costume, why is this so hard for you to understand?!

JOE

I just don't get –

SAM

SO I WOULD BE NOTICED!

JOE

Well how did it go?

SAM

Eh.

JOE

How did it go?

SAM

I'm not gonna let my dream die, I can tell you that much.

JOE

So it didn't go well?

SAM

I didn't say it didn't go well. It went amazing. Some people are just not ready for me, that's all.

JOE

Oh.

SAM

So if you don't mind – get off MySpace and let me use the phone.

JOE

Who are you calling?

SAM

None of your business! Get off the computer!

JOE

Are you calling a clown college?

SAM

Oh this is funny to you? This is *really* funny to you, isn't it?

JOE

You are dressed like a clown.

SAM

Some clowns are serious, okay? And some clowns cry. And some other clowns blow away the competition with their amazing singing. I am the last kind of clown. In fact, I'm not even a clown, I'm masquerading as a clown.

JOE

So did it work?

SAM

What work?

JOE

Being a clown?

SAM

I worry about you, Joe. I really do. Sometimes I think my little brother has some brains – but then you come out with a comment like that.

JOE

I'm just saying I wouldn't have dressed like a clown –

SAM

Oh really? Well what do you suggest Mr. Expert-at-getting-on-American Idol? Should I have been in a Shark Costume? How the heck am I supposed to sing in a Shark Costume?! There would be teeth right in front of my face! Have you thought that through?

JOE

Maybe just go as yourself.

SAM

This is why you're not a star.

JOE

Okay.

SAM

Well you're not.

JOE

I know that.

SAM

And I'm going to be.

JOE

Great. Have fun. I'm still not getting off MySpace.

SAM

You don't think I'm going to be a star?

JOE

I didn't say that.

SAM

Well?

JOE

What?

SAM

Do you think I'm going to be a star?

JOE

I don't really know. What did the judges say?

SAM

They were cruel. There were very… there is a lot of boiling resentment in that room, you know? Like, they see talent, and right – so okay I had to sign a thing where I couldn't discuss the results until they air the show, but… so there's three of them, right? This horribly cruel British guy who's like – he's a like robot, you know? He's like an evil robot? And then there's another guy and Paula Abdul.

JOE

Paula Abdul?

SAM

Yeah well she's not all that nice anymore. Anyway, so I do my thing – and I nail it, right? Just – like… I haven't even sung like that in the shower, you know? It's like spectacular. I don't even think there's a word describing how awesome I was.

JOE

Wow.

Skipping Forward

BECAUSE YOU HAVE NO SOUL.

JOE

Sam.

SAM

You have betrayed me! You've betrayed me!

JOE

Stop singing! Never sing again!

SAM

No one can stop me! You're just making my inspirational story all the more inspirational right now. `They were all against him. They all told him he couldn't sing. But he wouldn't listen."

JOE

Give up! Give up your dream!

SAM

And then cut to me in slow-motion walking. Towards the camera.

JOE

There's no camera, Sam. There's no camera here!

SAM

There could be.

JOE

There isn't.

SAM

The bright lights come on. Blinding. He looks out at the crowd.

JOE

Sam, listen to me. Please.

SAM

Cue the dramatic music.

JOE

It's just us – you're not actually –

SAM

Hold on.

(SAM starts dramatic music.)

This is where it gets awesome.

(He takes something to be a microphone.)
(He starts singing -)
(It is not good. He finishes something. Stares about as if he's just "nailed it.")
(Mic drop. Or whatever is filling in for the mic.)

JOE

Wow.

SAM

Yeah. *Yeah*. That's what I'm talking about.

JOE

It was pitchy.

SAM

It was?

JOE

Really really bad. Like some kind of animal.

SAM

Oh.

JOE

In heat. Also dying. Probably it's been hit by a car and these are its last dying sounds.

SAM

Oh.

JOE

I mean, can't you hear yourself?

SAM

I always figured it sounds different to other people.

JOE

No. It sounds the same.

SAM

Oh. I thought it was good.

JOE

No. It was the opposite of that.

SAM

So I guess my inner demons have been correct all along.

JOE

What?

SAM

You know that inner voice that says, "you suck, you're no good at anything. Everyone hates you. Stop singing." It just does that on repeat? That voice. That voice was right.

JOE

Well it wasn't that bad -

SAM

All this time I've been living a lie –

JOE

I don't know that –

SAM

I mean, look at me, man! I'm a freaking clown and I can't sing!

JOE

There are people that are probably worse than you. Like those Neanderthals that get unfrozen or whatever – they're probably worse singers.

SAM

I'm horrible.

(He turns on JOE)

Why didn't you tell me before?

JOE

What?

SAM

You never told me I was awful before!

JOE

I just did.

SAM

After I went on American Idol and made a fool of myself!

JOE

I didn't want to hurt your feelings –

SAM

Good job, Joe! Now I've dressed up like a clown and sounded like a goat in front of 25 million people! Good thing my feelings weren't hurt! Why didn't you stop me!

JOE
You said you were unstoppable! You literally used that word!

SAM
You betrayed me again! You double-betrayed me!

JOE
No I didn't!

SAM
Oh man I'm hyperventilating now! My life is a joke!

JOE
Good thing you're dressed like a clown.

SAM
Oh now you're really funny. Now you're making jokes! You couldn't possibly have mentioned to me in passing, by the way Sam – you can't sing, please adjust your dream accordingly.

JOE
You just did that whole movie thing with `he didn't listen to the critics'.

SAM
Sometimes you need to listen to the critics!

JOE
That's my whole point!
(SAM breaks down.)
Hey man. Hey. Hey. It's all right. Some people aren't singers.
(JOE pats SAM on the back.)

SAM
I'm okay.

JOE
You sure?

SAM
I'll just have to get a new dream. Maybe I'll play in the NBA or something.

JOE
I don't know if that's going to work either.

SAM
Well you're just an explosion of realism today, aren't you?

JOE
Well, I mean – you just have to have skills to play in the NBA –

SAM
I could develop those skills.

JOE
Sam. How about being a veterinarian or something? You like cats.

SAM
I know. I'll be a computer programmer.

JOE
That's my dream.

SAM
Yeah, I know, it's realistic.

JOE
You can't just take my dream.

SAM
Sorry I didn't realize you *owned* that.

JOE
How about a flight attendant? That's a nice job.

SAM
Wait a minute.

JOE
What?

SAM
Mom and Dad.

JOE
What about them?

SAM
I'm gonna have to break the news to them.

JOE
About what?

SAM

That I can't sing. They've been telling me I'm awesome since birth. Oh jeez. Ohhh… this is going to crush them. They're really invested in me.

JOE

Yeah.

SAM

They'll probably cry a lot. Some people just can't handle the truth.

(Lights down.)

III. 1993. The Fount of Inspiration

(MEGAN is at a desk by herself, with a college application.)

(She writes something.)

MEGAN, 17
APRIL, 16

MEGAN

No.
(She crosses it off.)
(She gets up, paces back and forth, then comes back and sits down quickly.)
(She's about to write something, then tears at her hair and puts her head on the table.)
Okay. I can do this. I can do this.
(She's about to write something.)
Aarrrrrrrrgh.
(She bangs her head against the table.)
Ow. Okay. I can do this. It's not that hard.
(APRIL enters upstage, unconcerned about her sister. She throws her bookbag down and finds a remote control.)
Do you mind?

APRIL

What?

MEGAN

I'm working here.

APRIL

Okay.
(APRIL turns on the television.)

MEGAN

Can you not do that?

APRIL

90210 is on.

MEGAN

Put in a tape and record it.

APRIL

90210 is on right now.

MEGAN

I heard you the first time and I'm telling you that I'm working out here.

APRIL

Work in our room.

MEGAN

There's no room in our room. Your stuff is everywhere.

APRIL

Move it.

MEGAN

April – turn off the TV!

APRIL

Fine! Fine! That's what you want!

MEGAN

Yes.

(APRIL turns off the TV.)

Thank you.

(MEGAN goes back to looking at her paper. Tearing at her hair.)
(APRIL stares forward on the couch.)
(She takes a deep breath. MEGAN does not notice.)
(APRIL takes another deep breath.)

APRIL

Sigh. I suppose that annoys you. My breathing.

MEGAN

Nope.

APRIL

Okay. I'll just sit here breathing and staring into space then.

MEGAN

Why don't you read a book?

APRIL

Ew. No.

MEGAN

Okay then.

APRIL

I'll just stare into space, breathe, and be bored. Since that's what you want me for me.

MEGAN

I need to work on this.

APRIL

What is it?

MEGAN

My college application essay.

APRIL

Oh. How's it going?

MEGAN

It's the worst thing ever.

(APRIL comes over.)

APRIL

What's the question?

MEGAN

`What inspires you?'

APRIL

Oh man.

MEGAN

Yeah.

(APRIL picks up a crumpled up rough draft. She reads it in a sing-song voice.)

APRIL

`Inspiration can come from many places.' Ooh that's deep. That's really deep. I bet the people reading this will be like, `wow, that's amazing. Really? *Many* places. I never thought of that before.'

MEGAN

I didn't say it was good.

APRIL

`For example, some may have been inspired by the American Revolution. Others may have been inspired by a family member.' Oh this is really great here. This is like the most awesome admissions essay ever.

MEGAN

Would you shut up?

APRIL

`Still others may have been inspired by an actor or action hero, such as Chuck Norris.'

MEGAN

I didn't say it was good.

APRIL

Chuck Norris?

MEGAN

When he fights people he's inspiration. He's usually outnumbered.

APRIL

Okay.

MEGAN

Shut up. He's all I could think of.

APRIL

All right look. This is awful.

MEGAN

I know that!

APRIL

`For me personally' – First of all, this is a stupid way to begin a sentence. For me, personally. Like, who else does that relate to?

MEGAN

Like you're an English teacher or something –

APRIL

I haven't gotten a B in English since like the beginning of time, okay? `For me, personally, I am inspired by my grandfather, who was a humble coal miner.' He's a *humble* coal miner?

MEGAN

Shut up.

APRIL

Like, what's the alternative? An *arrogant* coal miner? Like – the Muhammad Ali of coal miners? `I am the greatest coal miner ever! Y'all are going down!' Plus, have you met Grandpa? He ain't humble. He's always "I used to be a coal miner and now look at me!" Total jerk.

MEGAN

I know that.

APRIL

How are you inspired by a total jerk?

MEGAN

I'm not using that essay!

APRIL

But this is like a total lie.

MEGAN

That's they want. They want lies.

APRIL

No they don't.

MEGAN

So you're the expert on college admissions?

APRIL

Look, these guys are getting like ten million essays from people lying, right? Like stupidly lying. I spend my time caring for disadvantaged youth. I work hard at school. I want to be the first woman astronaut. Whatever.

MEGAN

There's already been a woman astronaut –

APRIL

Not my point. My point is you should tell like the total truth. About your inspiration. That way you'll stand out.

MEGAN

Skipping Forward

(short pause)
So that's my inspiration.

(Lights down.)

IV. 1985. I'm Pretty Sure This is Your Fault

CHAD, 14
RACHEL, 16

(Late at night. RACHEL enters, in pajamas. Her hair is a mess.)
(CHAD enters quietly.)
(RACHEL shushes him.)

CHAD

I didn't say anything.

RACHEL

Shush!

CHAD

You're the one making noise!

RACHEL

Shut up!

CHAD

Fine.
(short pause)
Is Dad still here?

RACHEL

He left.

CHAD

Then what am I being quiet for?

RACHEL

I'm listening for Mom, shut up.

CHAD

Is she still up?

RACHEL

I don't know, I'm trying to figure that out.

(Pause.)

CHAD

She's asleep.

RACHEL

She's probably asleep.

CHAD

She's definitely asleep. I can hear her snoring.

RACHEL

You would say that.

CHAD

What does that mean?

RACHEL

You're taking Dad's side.

CHAD

I just said she snores, how is that taking Dad's side?

RACHEL

It just is. I see how things are going. They're going to split us up. Boys on one side, girls on the other.

CHAD

They are not. We're both going with Mom.

RACHEL

I don't know.

CHAD

They are. Do you see us surviving with Dad in charge?

RACHEL

Good point. This is all your fault, by the way.

CHAD

What is?

RACHEL

The divorce, idiot. What the heck do you think we're talking about?

CHAD

I know we're /talking about –

RACHEL

It's your fault they're getting divorced.

CHAD

No it's not.

RACHEL

Think about it: Remember that time you made them that anniversary dinner? Your beef stroganoff, you remember that?

CHAD

Yes I remember that –

RACHEL

Your beef stroganoff? Dad had to have his stomach pumped.

CHAD

That brought them closer together. The pain.

RACHEL

He was never the same after that.

CHAD

Oh come on –

RACHEL

He wasn't – he was a broken shell of a man after your dinner. You know it's true! He used to, like, run places, and jump up and down – and then after that night he was a broken, broken man. Because of your stroganoff!

CHAD

He was already on a downward spiral way before my dinner.

RACHEL

Well you pushed him over the edge!

CHAD

No it wasn't! It was your Valentine's card from the year before! That's what poisoned their love!

RACHEL

You're one to talk about poison you stroganoff murderer.

CHAD

Happy Valentine's Day Mom! P.S. If I don't get what I want for my birthday, I can make life very difficult for you.

RACHEL

So?

CHAD

That's a threat! You were threatening Mom!

RACHEL

I don't see what that has to do with breaking them up.

CHAD

Because it destroyed Mom's fantasy that she had nice kids, that's why!

RACHEL

If anything, that would push Mom and Dad closer together because they would need to provide a united front against us.

CHAD

But it didn't!

RACHEL

And I think she was quite aware of that fact that we weren't nice kids after Babysitting Event numbers one, two, three, four, and five.

CHAD

None of those were my fault!

RACHEL

All of those were your fault!

CHAD

I can't help if it Dad hires dangerous criminals to babysit us!

RACHEL

They weren't dangerous criminals! They were normal high school kids.

CHAD

Well I don't know that. They were waiting until I was unconscious –

RACHEL

How are Mom and Dad supposed to go on dates when you keep dialing 911 when we get a babysitter?

CHAD

It was an emergency.

RACHEL

No it wasn't! They couldn't have a single nice dinner because the police were always storming our house and hauling away babysitters.

CHAD

I stand by those actions. Those babysitters were sketchy. Yeah, well what about your presentation to Mom?

RACHEL

That wasn't a presentation – I had to write a persuasive paper for school, moron. You'd know that if you actually spent any time doing work for classes, which is probably what split Mom and Dad up – they're ashamed of your failures and are trying to escape. You'll probably be sent to an orphanage for underachievers.

CHAD

There's no orphanage for underachievers!

RACHEL

I'm pretty sure there is one – when one kid fails so much and parents pretend they're not related. How are Mom and Dad supposed to live out their dreams through us if you fail so much?

CHAD

You did the presentation!

RACHEL

It was a persuasive paper!

CHAD

On how Mom could do better than Dad!

RACHEL

I had to be persuasive!

CHAD

I guess you were successful then, weren't you?

RACHEL

How would you know? You've never been successful at anything your whole life!

CHAD

Well you were successful at breaking up our parents!

RACHEL

I was just making a case for an upgrade at father, that's all.

CHAD

How is this not your fault then?!

RACHEL

What about the time you sent Dad on a blind date with the Choir Teacher!

CHAD

She's nice!

RACHEL

So's Mom!

CHAD

What about the time you called and pretended to be Dad's other wife!

RACHEL

You planted evidence framing Mom for white collar crimes!

CHAD

I hope you're happy!

RACHEL

I hope you're happy!

CHAD

I'm not!

RACHEL

Neither am I!

(Pause.)

You know, I'm beginning to think this might be both of our fault.

CHAD

Yeah. A little bit.

RACHEL

Maybe we shouldn't have done those things.

CHAD

Yeah. I probably shouldn't have called the police all those times.

RACHEL

And I shouldn't have dropped hints that Dad had four wives in four different countries.

CHAD

And I shouldn't have suggested that Mom had changed her identity and was a wanted fugitive in Guatemala.

RACHEL

That probably put a strain on their marriage.

CHAD

It couldn't have been easy to raise us.

RACHEL

It's not their fault we turned out so lousy.

CHAD

Well, it probably is.

RACHEL

Yeah that's true. But still – we made a few mistakes.

CHAD

I feel bad.

RACHEL

Me too.

CHAD

Maybe we should – maybe we should get them back together.

RACHEL

Yeah.

CHAD

Yeah.

RACHEL

I could tell Mom that I made up the other wives.

CHAD

That would help. And I could admit that I planted the evidence.

RACHEL

Yeah.

CHAD

You think that's enough?

RACHEL

No.

CHAD

Oh. I know. What if we wrote a song?

RACHEL

What?

CHAD

Like a – love is good song. And then we sang it for them. And it would inspire them to get back together. Ooh ooh I know! What if we changed the lyrics to that If you like Pina Coladas song!

RACHEL

What song?

CHAD

The Pina Coladas song! The Pina Coladas song you idiot!

RACHEL

I don't know any Pina Coladas song.

CHAD *(singing)*

If you like Pina Coladas, and getting caught in the rain

RACHEL

It sounds horrible.

CHAD

Not when the guy sings it –

RACHEL

But why would that matter?

CHAD

Because it's about a blind date, they both go on a blind date, and it turns out they're going on a blind date with each other! Surprise!

RACHEL

Well now you've ruined the song for me!

CHAD

You've heard it before!

RACHEL

Oh so you're in my brain now? You know what I've heard and what I haven't heard – I didn't realize you shrank to the size of an art and were LIVING INSIDE MY EAR!

CHAD

I HATE YOU!

RACHEL

I HATE YOU MORE!

CHAD

Stop! We have to work together here!

RACHEL

I don't know that I can do it.

CHAD

Try. Forget the Pina Coladas song.

RACHEL

Good. It sounds horrible. And you ruined it.

CHAD

We'll do something else.

RACHEL

I could make them a don't get divorced card. With no threats in it at all.

CHAD

I could cook dinner.

RACHEL

No.

CHAD

You're right.

RACHEL

Or – we could promise to be well-behaved kids.

CHAD

That's it!

RACHEL

Mom – Dad, from now on, we will stop trying to ruin your marriage.

CHAD

I will try in school.

RACHEL

We will be so happy if you stay together.

CHAD

Yes.

RACHEL

We can do it. I love you, Chad.

CHAD

I love you, Rachel.

(They hug.)

RACHEL

Oh also – we say, I promise you – if you get divorced… we will be so much worse.

(Lights down.)

V. 1977 – A New Hopeless

(No one is on-stage.)

(CAROL, off stage, shouting.)

CAROL *(off-stage)*

Are you ready yet?

(TIM calls from the opposite side of the stage)

TIM *(off-stage)*

No!

CAROL *(off-stage)*

You better be getting ready!

TIM *(off-stage)*

Quit telling me what to do, Carol!

CAROL *(off-stage)*

I'm not going to be late!

TIM *(off-stage)*

Don't worry about it!

(CAROL enters. She is dressed to resemble Luke Skywalker, but has the bun-hair of Princess Leia.)

CAROL

Tim! Come on! Come on come on come on *come on!*

(TIM saunters in, with hairbrush. He checks his hair in the mirror. Brushes it.)

What are you doing? Come on!

TIM

Hold on.

(He brushes his hair some more.)

CAROL

Are you kidding me right now? Are you kidding me with this? The movie starts at 7:15! Seven Fifteeen!

TIM

I have to maintain a certain look, man.

CAROL

You look horrible. You look like death. Come on!

(TIM finishes with the hairbrush.)

(Sniffs his armpits.)

No one cares, Tim! This is Star Wars! This is the greatest event of my life!

TIM

You need a new life.

(TIM gets an aerosol bottle of deodorant and spray himself down.)

CAROL

Seriously? This is what you're doing right now? WE MUST LEAVE.

TIM

You don't care if you smell –

CAROL

I don't smell –

TIM

But I do. There might be babes there.

CAROL

There aren't. There's no chance of you meeting a babe.

(TIM gets his cologne.)

What? What is that?

TIM

My scent.

Skipping Forward

CAROL

Jedi mind-trick. You will take me to Star Wars.

TIM

Not when you're wearing that.

CAROL

I'm not changing!

TIM

I'm not going!

(They stare at each other, rage building in CAROL.)

CAROL

Tim. I'm going to talk slowly now. So your tiny brain can understand me.

TIM

I'm not going, Carol.

CAROL

I will burn down your life if you go back on this now. You think I can't do it? You think I can't tell Mom and Dad about the party you had when they were in the Bahamas? You think I can't explain to them how all the chairs got broken in the basement? You think I can't tell them about the party you had last summer when Dad was at work?

TIM

You wouldn't dare.

CAROL

Or how about the party you had two weeks ago when they were sleeping upstairs? Or the party you had when Dad was visiting Grandma in the hospital?

TIM

You don't want to do that, Carol.

CAROL

Don't I? You don't think I took pictures of you and your friends at each and every one of those parties? How would you like it if I released them one at a time, over a series of weeks, to prolong your punishment as much as possible?

(short pause)

Are you ready to go?

TIM

I want the negatives.

CAROL

Get me to Star Wars in ten minutes and you can have them.

TIM

Deal.

CAROL

Woo!
(CAROL runs for the door.)
Let's go let's go let's go!

TIM

Wait.

CAROL

What?

TIM

Where are my keys?

CAROL

What?

TIM

Do you have my keys?

CAROL

Why would I have your keys?

TIM

Have you seen them?

CAROL

No! Tim! Don't do this to me. Don't do this to me, Tim.

TIM

I don't know where they are!

CAROL

Where did you leave them?

TIM

If I know where I left them, I'd know where they are! Don't ask stupid questions!

CAROL

I'm stupid? I'm the stupid one! You don't have your stupid keys for your stupid car!

TIM

My car's not stupid, it's boss! It's a corvette it is the most awesome machine ever created!

CAROL

Shut up and look!

(TIM and CAROL begin frantically searching the room for his keys.)

TIM

Did you find them?

CAROL

Do you think I would say something if I found them? Do you think maybe a sound would come out of my mouth if I find your keys? Maybe? Maybe is that a possibility?

TIM

Quit complaining and keep looking!

CAROL

I can complain and look at the same time! I can do two things at once! I'm amazing.

TIM

You're an amazing nerd in –

CAROL

Keep talking Tim and those photos are going to Mom.

TIM

Where are they? Where did I put them?

CAROL

Do you expect an answer to that question! Retrace your steps!

TIM

From when?

CAROL

From when you last had your keys!

TIM

Oh.

(He heads off-stage)
(CAROL keeps searching frantically.)
(TIM comes back.)

Shoot.

CAROL

What?

TIM

We have a problem.

CAROL

What? Speak!

TIM

They're in the car.

CAROL

Okay, great –

TIM

The car's locked.

CAROL

What did you say?

TIM

They're locked in the car.

CAROL

The car's in our garage! Why would the car be locked?

TIM

So you can't get it into it.

CAROL

Well you've succeeded, congratulations!

TIM

They're playing the movie tomorrow right –

CAROL

I'm going tonight!

TIM

Not in my car, you're not. I have to wait for –

CAROL

I told you that if you didn't get me –

TIM

Are you kidding me? Whoah. You can't just –

CAROL

I'm telling Mom and Dad everything! I'm sending the pictures! You're doomed. Your life is about to be burned to ashes!

TIM

Carol, it's not my fault!

CAROL

Oh really Mr.-I-lock-my-car-in-my-own-garage to keep my little sister from getting into it for no apparent reason because I WOULD NEVER WANT TO BE IN YOUR STUPID CAR IN THE FIRST PLACE!

TIM

IT'S NOT STUPID, IT'S BOSS!

CAROL

I DON'T KNOW WHAT BOSS MEANS!

TIM

BECAUSE YOU'RE A NERD!

CAROL

Okay. I have a solution. I have a solution.

(She starts heading off.)

TIM

What are you doing?

CAROL

I'm getting a hammer.

TIM

What?

CAROL

I'm getting a hammer, Tim! It's a common object! You probably learned about it when you were two!

TIM

What do you need a hammer for?

(CAROL is off-stage.)

What do you need a hammer for? Carol! What do you need a hammer for! Wait! Stop! Stop!

(Glass breaking off-stage.)

(TIM stands there, stunned.)

(CAROL returns, holding hammer.)

CAROL

Okay. We can go.

(Pause.)

TIM

I just remembered I have a spare set of keys in my dresser.

(TIM holds up spare keys.)

CAROL

Oh. I may have made a mistake then. Whoops.

TIM

Did you break my window?

CAROL

So we're still going, right?

TIM

Did you break my window?

CAROL

I still have the negatives.

TIM

All right fine, let's go.

CAROL

Yay!

(She pulls TIM off-stage.)

(Lights down.)

VI. 1968 – Coming home

ANDREA, 16
JESSICA, 18

(ANDREA, dressed fairly conservatively, is watching television.)

(JESSICA, dressed like a hippie, wearing beads, tie-dye, the whole bit, knocks on the window, then ducks.)*

**If you don't have a window, she can use the front door.*

(ANDREA hears it, turns around, doesn't see JESSICA, and goes back to watching television.)

(Another knock.)

(ANDREA hears it this time. Another knock.)

(She opens the door.)

ANDREA

Jessica?!
(Big hug.)
What are you doing here, I thought you joined a commune!

JESSICA

No I didn't join a – are Mom and Dad home?

ANDREA

What?

JESSICA

Are Mom and Dad home?

ANDREA

No they're out to dinner.

JESSICA

Okay good.
(JESSICA darts into the room.)

ANDREA

Are you home for good?

JESSICA

No I'm just here to get a few things and then I'm out.

ANDREA

What?

JESSICA

I'm going to San Francisco.

ANDREA

What's in San Francisco?

JESSICA

Everything, man. Everything. There's the most groovy scene happening there.

ANDREA

Are you kidding me?

JESSICA

I'm not asking you to understand.

ANDREA

I do understand. You've become a complete lunatic.

(JESSICA heads to her room.)

Did aliens steal your brain on the road? Did they?

(JESSICA comes back quickly.)

JESSICA

Andy – there's a whole world out there – right now your mind is like encapsulated in this little illusion of normalcy, okay? That's not even reality, man. That's like – a dollhouse reality.

ANDREA

Okay, aliens did steal your brain. I'll alert the authorities.

JESSICA

No cops!

ANDREA

I'm kidding you idiot! Listen to you – dollhouse reality – what the heck is that?

JESSICA

Reality is like an onion, man. You start peeling back layers of consciousness – layer after layer after layer – I don't have time to explain my philosophy to you but I have a reading list that you should look at, and I'm gonna leave it on the counter. You can't show it to Mom though. She'll flip.

ANDREA

Jess – you're not allowed to run away for two months and then show up to give me homework.

JESSICA

It's not homework. It's consciousness expansion. It's your duty as a thinking human being.

ANDREA

No thanks. I'm cool with my own reality.

JESSICA

That's your problem.

ANDREA

Okay, great. I can accept that. Hey you know what your problem is? Body odor. When was the last time you took a shower?

JESSICA

There are more important things in life –

ANDREA

You wouldn't say that if you were standing over here. Are showers for the man, or something?

JESSICA

You really need to read the books.
(She leaves again)

ANDREA

What are you looking for, anyway?

JESSICA *(off-stage)*

What?

ANDREA

What are you looking for?

JESSICA *(off-stage)*

Some things.

ANDREA

What things?

JESSICA

Man you're nosy. Clean underwear for one.
(JESSICA returns with a backpack.)

ANDREA

You're really selling me on the romance of the open road, by the way.

JESSICA

How much money you got on you?

ANDREA

Like five bucks.

JESSICA

Is it like five bucks or is it like more than five bucks?

ANDREA

Five bucks.

JESSICA

Can I have it?

ANDREA

Jess –

JESSICA

What? What are you gonna spend it on?

ANDREA

I don't know. It's my money. I'll probably spend it on what I want to. Crazy concept. That's because I'm selling out to the man.

JESSICA

Let me have it.

ANDREA

No. I think you're having mental problems.

JESSICA

Mental problems?!

ANDREA

Yes! Look at you! This is not how a rational human being dresses!

JESSICA

Rationality is a disease, man.

ANDREA

Well that's probably the only one you don't have.

JESSICA

Andy – give me your money.

ANDREA

No.

JESSICA

Then come with me.

ANDREA

What?

JESSICA

To San Francisco. It'll be incredible. You need to get out of here anyway –

ANDREA

Are you insane?

JESSICA

Think about your life. Mom and Dad are under this delusion that they're perfect, right?

ANDREA

No they aren't! Have you met Mom and Dad?

JESSICA

Don't you want adventure?

ANDREA

I want to smell nice. You smell like a goat farm.

JESSICA

That's patchouli.

ANDREA

Is it made from frisky goats?

JESSICA

I don't know what it's made from, but it's pretty great.

ANDREA

It's goats. Pretty sure it's goats. Maybe a goat wearing a dead rodent coat.

JESSICA

Andy –

ANDREA

What?

JESSICA

I'm not gonna steer you wrong. Life is better out there.

ANDREA

Then why are you here begging for underwear and five bucks?

JESSICA

Love. Sisterly love.

ANDREA

Sounds like you're homeless.

JESSICA
Whatever, man. When are Mom and Dad gonna be home?

ANDREA
Any second.

JESSICA
I gotta jet.

ANDREA
Oh come on you just got here –

JESSICA
I don't want to be a part of that scene.

ANDREA
Our family, you mean?

JESSICA
I gotta go, Andy.

ANDREA
I'll give you the five bucks.

JESSICA
Okay.

ANDREA
If you talk to me for three minutes.

JESSICA
I've been talking to you –

ANDREA
If you keep talking to me.

JESSICA
So Mom and Dad can catch me –

ANDREA
Will you listen to yourself? They're not the CIA. They're ordinary parents. They're also not insane dictator cult leaders either.

JESSICA
Fine. Two minutes.

ANDREA

Okay. And you have to tell me the truth.

JESSICA

No problem.

ANDREA

All right. Are you happy out there?

JESSICA

Yes.

ANDREA

Are you?

JESSICA

I said yes.

ANDREA

Really?

JESSICA

This conversation is really amazing, by the way.

ANDREA

Answer the question.

JESSICA

I already answered it twice.

ANDREA

Answer it a third time. Are you happy? And this time don't give me a one word answer.

JESSICA

You should have a job as a CIA interrogator, by the way.

ANDREA

Answer the question.

JESSICA

I'm perfectly happy. I have everything I need. I'm having a great time.

ANDREA

Okay.

JESSICA

Okay?

ANDREA

Just wanted to make sure.

JESSICA

That's it?

ANDREA

Take your five bucks.

JESSICA

All right.

ANDREA

We all miss you, by the way.

JESSICA

I know. I miss you too.
(JESSICA gets her stuff and takes the money.)

ANDREA

Whenever you want, you can come home.

JESSICA

I don't think Mom and Dad would go for that.

ANDREA

Of course they would.

JESSICA

No, man.

ANDREA

They love you. You think they're going to turn you away?

JESSICA

Yeah.

ANDREA

Why would they do that?
(short pause)

JESSICA

I'm sure they're embarrassed.

ANDREA

No they're not. Jess – Jess – they're worried sick. They can't hardly sleep. They hired a private investigator –

JESSICA

No way.

ANDREA

They did. And he was the worst private investigator in the world. He mostly sat outside our house 'cause he thought I had you in the attic.

JESSICA

We don't even have an attic!

ANDREA

I know! That's how bad he was! He couldn't even figure that out! But Dad paid him anyway –

JESSICA

Wow.

ANDREA

Stay here. Wait for them. Just talk to them.

(pause)

Is it really so great out there?

(pause)

Jess. Stay.

(JESSICA sets down her bag.)

JESSICA

Okay.

(She hugs ANDREA.)

ANDREA

But take a shower before they get here or they'll kick you out anyway.

JESSICA

All right.

(short pause)

Thanks.

Lights down.

VII. 1955 – Lassoing an Angel

Skipping Forward

It's not so much your hair as your entire persona right now. Good luck with whatever it is you're trying to do. If you're trying to make new friends, I'd bet money that you're going to get trashcanned.

RICHARD

Okay. You promise not to tell?

MARY

Tell what?

RICHARD

You promise not to tell?

MARY

I don't even know what it is, how can I promise not to tell it?

RICHARD

Mary.

MARY

Fine. I won't tell.

RICHARD

You know Susan DeVito?

MARY

Yes.

RICHARD

I'm gonna ask her to go steady.

(MARY bursts out into laughter and leaves the room.)

Hey! Hey what gives!

MARY

Susan DeVito?

RICHARD

What about her?

MARY

She's a senior. You're a sophomore.

RICHARD

I know what grade she's in.

MARY

But that's not even the beginning of your nightmare – wait wait wait – that's what this look is for? Susan DeVito?

RICHARD

No. Okay yes.

MARY

You think that looking like that is going to persuade her to go steady with you? With *you*?

RICHARD

You don't have to say it like I was a poisonous fungus or something.

MARY

You might as well be a poisonous fungus.

RICHARD

Help me then!

MARY

I'm not a miracle worker.

RICHARD

Yes you are. You're great at this stuff. You've got so much girl knowledge – you're practically one of them!

MARY

You're not really helping your cause.

RICHARD

See? I don't even know the right things to say!

MARY

All right I'll help you. You're like a lost little puppy desperately begging for some scraps of food.

RICHARD

Exactly! Except instead of food it's Susan DeVito.

MARY

Let's keep those comments to yourself, okay? All right – I'm going to be Susan –

RICHARD

You're going to be Susan?

MARY

Yes. We're going to walk through an encounter with her.

RICHARD

You're no Susan. Susan's an angel.

MARY

Use your imagination.

RICHARD

You know what she looks like, right?

MARY

Use your imagination.

RICHARD

She even smells beautiful. She smells like sunshine and flowers and baked goods.

MARY

Richard. Focus.

RICHARD

Okay. I will use my imagination a lot to pretend that you are Susan DeVito, when the reality could not be more different. I wrote some poems for her –

MARY

Don't show them to anyone.

RICHARD

You haven't even seen them!

MARY

Yes, but I'm familiar with your work. Can we begin?

RICHARD

What do you want me to do?

MARY

Imagine I'm Susan. Talk to me. That's the gist of it.

(MARY moves away a minute and assumes a role.)

Oh I know! Isn't he the most! See ya Betty! Call me later?

(She walks past RICHARD, who does nothing but stand there.)

(MARY becomes herself again.)

What was that? You just stood there.

RICHARD

I'm cultivating an aura of mystery.

MARY

You're as mysterious as a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, goober. You have to say something. Make a noise. Anything.

RICHARD

Let's try again.

(MARY becomes SUSAN again, except she is even more SUSANish this time.)

MARY

You are so right, Betty! You are so right! He's a dream!

(She walks past RICHARD)

(RICHARD whistles.)

Fresh!

(MARY slaps him.)

RICHARD

Ow! What's the big idea?

MARY

What kind of girl do you take me for?

RICHARD

I was just showing interest. You said make a noise.

MARY

Not a wolf call!

RICHARD

THIS IS HARD!

MARY

Do you want her to fall in love with you, do you? You want to ride off into the sunset with little miss Susan DeVito and have little Susan Devito children and live in a sky kingdom? Do you?

RICHARD

She lives in a sky kingdom?

MARY

Quiet! It's a metaphor. You have to hit this perfectly. No wolf whistles. No cultivating an aura of stupid mystery. You need to speak. Words must leave your mouth and implant themselves into her brain and, marvelously, create a positive impression there. Can you do that?

RICHARD

Yes.

MARY

I CAN'T HEAR YOU!

RICHARD

What has gotten into you?

MARY

I'm running this show now! Let's try it again. This time: Speak!

RICHARD

You frighten me, Mary. You really frighten me sometimes.

MARY

Good.

(She becomes SUSAN again.)

Oh you really are swell, Betty! You're my best friend and we're going to be friends forever and ever!

(RICHARD approaches her.)

RICHARD

Hello.

MARY

Hello.

(short pause)

Betty can you talk me home there's a weirdo here.

RICHARD

I'm not a weirdo. My name's Richard.

MARY

Wonderful. I need to go. I have things to do.

RICHARD

Would you like to go steady with me?

MARY

Fresh!

(MARY slaps him.)

RICHARD

Whoah! Hey! That wouldn't be her reaction!

MARY

You don't know her! I do! If you waste a minute of her time, you know what she's going to do? She's going to destroy you! This is Susan DeVito we're talking about, okay? She's an angel goddess from heaven. She will kill you if you mess up.

RICHARD

I didn't think I messed up.

MARY

Oh please! `Hello' HELLO?! What's that supposed to mean! You can't begin a conversation with a girl like this with hello. Who do you think you are?

RICHARD

What should I say then? I thought it was a common greeting.

MARY

Common. Listen to the word you just used. Common. You need an uncommon greeting if you're going to catch her attention.

RICHARD

What's an uncommon greeting?

MARY

Figure it out.

RICHARD

I can't. I don't have a lot of original ideas.

MARY

Then this entire episode will lead to heartbreak and disaster.

RICHARD

I thought you were supposed to be giving me advice –

MARY

Here's some: Set your sights lower. Find a girl who isn't as pretty. Maybe one with an eye-patch or a lisp. Actually, if she's got both you might have a chance.

RICHARD

Never! It's Susan DeVito or no one! Mary, I don't know how to tell you this, but she is the greatest girl in the history of girls.

MARY

Really. That's amazing.

RICHARD

If you and her were standing next to each other it would be like putting a ugly homeless muskrat next to a beautiful muskrat.

MARY

Boy you're really sweet, Richard, but -

RICHARD

Can we try again please? I want to keep doing this until I get it right.

MARY

Very well.

RICHARD

And maybe you could not slap me this time? My face hurts.

MARY

Don't make me slap you and I won't slap you.

RICHARD

But I don't know what makes you slap me.

MARY

The slap is to help you learn not to get slapped. Okay!

(She becomes SUSAN again)

Oh gee Betty that sweater is fabu! You must tell me where you got it! Well, I've got to be going! Toodles!

(She walks past RICHARD)

RICHARD

Excuse me, do you um…

MARY

Yes?

RICHARD

I just wanted to say that you're really pretty. A lot pretty. Very much.

MARY

What's your name?

RICHARD

Richard.

MARY

Fresh!

(She slaps him)

RICHARD
WHOAH! YOU'RE MAKING THIS IMPOSSIBLE MARY!

MARY
YOU'RE THE WORST BOY EVER!

RICHARD
WHAT DID I DO WRONG?!

MARY
You spoke to her! That's what you did wrong!

RICHARD
Wait a minute! First I didn't do anything and you said that was wrong, then I made a noise and you said that was wrong, and now I said something uncommon and that was wrong!

MARY
Exactly!

RICHARD
What?

MARY
Listen to me, little brother. There are some games you will always lose. It's better that you learn this lesson now. There is no way you can get her to go steady with you. None. Accept your fate.

RICHARD
That's ridiculous. I'm going to woo her, and I'm going to write love notes, and I'm going to stand around and look mysterious and I will look cool and one day she's going to go steady with me. With God as my witness, I will go to the prom with Susan DeVito!

MARY
Oh you want to go to the prom with her?

RICHARD
Yes!

MARY
I thought you wanted to go steady.

RICHARD
That too. But Prom first!

MARY
Ohhhh…

RICHARD

Does that change things?

MARY

Yes.

RICHARD

Really?

MARY

Yes. That changes a lot.

RICHARD

So I should mention the prom then? Don't slap me this time.

MARY

I promise not to slap you. All right.
(She becomes SUSAN again)
See you later Betty! Call me and we'll dish!

RICHARD

Susan?

MARY

What.

RICHARD

I'm not sure how to say this because I keep doing it wrong, but my name's Richard. That's probably not important to you, but I just wanted to let you know that I think you're an angel, and I would be honored – I would be really honored – if you would consider going to the prom with me. Before you answer, I can't really buy you a fancy dinner or anything, and I'm not a very good dancer, but I'm sincere, and I would be a gentleman, and I think we would have a wonderful time.

MARY

Wow. That really touched my heart.

RICHARD

Really?

MARY

Yes. I'm going to have to tell my boyfriend, John MacGregor what you said. You know John right? He's extremely large, jealous, and violent. He spends most of his time lifting weights and hurting people who ask me to prom. Oh here he comes now!

RICHARD

All right all right time out!

MARY

What?

RICHARD

She's really going to the prom with John?

MARY

Yes she is.

RICHARD

Huh.
(short pause)
So can you help me ask out Jennifer Caldecott?

(Lights down.)

VII. 1944 – A Love Letter to Ma

JIMMY, 19
CHARLIE, 18

(This play is probably more fun if it takes place in Boston. But it doesn't have to.)

(JIMMY enters with duffel bag, dressed somewhat nice.)

JIMMY

Charlie! Let's go! You ready?

CHARLIE

Yeah, yeah. Hold your horses.
(CHARLIE enters with duffel bag.)

JIMMY

All right then.

CHARLIE

Hold on. One last look around.
(CHARLIE looks around the living room.)
Hope I see this again someday.

JIMMY

I think we get a couple a days off after basic.

CHARLIE

Yeah.

JIMMY

You'll be back.

CHARLIE

Jimmy. I love ya.

JIMMY

I love ya too Charlie.
(They hug.)

(CHARLIE takes out a letter and puts it on the table.)

JIMMY

What's that for?

CHARLIE

That's for Ma.

JIMMY

What is it?

CHARLIE

It's a letter. I was hoping that was obvious.

JIMMY

Oh. What's in the letter?

CHARLIE

Oh just – you know, thanking her for being our mother, saying how much I love her and I'm gonna miss her overseas and all that.

JIMMY

Pretty thick.

CHARLIE

Yeah. I had a lot to say.

JIMMY

Ma's great.

CHARLIE

Yeah.

JIMMY

Funny. I wrote a letter too.

CHARLIE

Oh. What's it say?

JIMMY

You know. Squishy stuff. The kind she likes.

(JIMMY sets down his much thinner letter next to CHARLIE's letter.)

CHARLIE

Oh that's nice. She's gonna like that. It'll really touch her heart.

JIMMY

Hey uh – you mind if uh – can I just take a look at your letter?

CHARLIE

What for?

JIMMY

Just curious.

CHARLIE

Can I look at yours?

JIMMY

You don't need to look at mine.

CHARLIE

If you're gonna look at mine I get to look at yours.

JIMMY

Okay. All right.

(They switch places. JIMMY removes a long, three-page handwritten letter from Charlie's envelope first.)

Wow.

(Charlie removes a single sheet of paper with just a few words written on it from Jimmy's envelope.)

CHARLIE

Huh.

JIMMY

You kinda… you elaborated a lot in here.

CHARLIE

Dear Ma. I'm gonna miss you when I'm fighting the Nazis. I love you. Love, James.
(He turns the paper over. Nothing more.)

JIMMY
I was gonna add some more.

CHARLIE
Like what?

JIMMY
I was gonna put `take care' on there.

CHARLIE
Oh. Yeah that woulda really punched this up.

JIMMY
Yeah. You really used some vocabulary in here.

CHARLIE
Yeah.

JIMMY
These are like dictionary words in here. Really went above and beyond. There's like imagery in here. You're using imagery.

CHARLIE
Couldn't sleep. You know how it is.
(CHARLIE sets down JIMMY's letter.)

JIMMY
So uh… what do ya say if I just add my name here at the end?

CHARLIE
What?

JIMMY
You know where it says I love you with the light of a thousand suns, you are my stars, you are my moon, you are my everything. What if we just put Charlie… and Jimmy? Like it was from both of us.

CHARLIE
But it's my letter.

JIMMY
Right. And I feel like you have really described exactly what both of us are feeling right now.

CHARLIE

You wrote your own letter!

JIMMY

Nobody needs to see that. I'll just put that, you know, in the garbage.

CHARLIE

No.

JIMMY

Well this is unfair! We gotta leave in five minutes!

CHARLIE

So?

JIMMY

So I can't write a comparable letter in five minutes! You wrote like War and Peace here!

CHARLIE

I can't help it if you don't love Ma enough to write a good letter.

JIMMY

I did write a good letter!

CHARLIE

A four-year old coulda wrote that letter!

JIMMY

It was simple and direct.

CHARLIE

Then leave it for Ma! I'm sure she'll appreciate simple and direct!

JIMMY

Oh sure! She'll see one boy wrote five million words comparing her to daisies! You had to go with daisies!

CHARLIE

It's Ma's favorite flower!

JIMMY

I know that!

CHARLIE

Well you coulda put something about daisies in your letter, but ya didn't. You were too busy talking about killing Nazis.

JIMMY

That's what we're gonna go do!

CHARLIE

Okay!

JIMMY

Charlie. Charlie you gotta let me sign your letter too.

CHARLIE

It's personal.

JIMMY

Let me sign it.

CHARLIE

No.

JIMMY

You're better with words than me, it's not fair you get to use your words to write your letter, and I gotta use my words to write mine.

CHARLIE

That's so stupid my brain can't even figure that out.

JIMMY

You always did better in school! You got book smarts! That ain't fair!

CHARLIE

Cause I worked hard!

JIMMY

And I didn't! So what?

CHARLIE

So I worked hard because I love Ma –

JIMMY

You're saying I don't love Ma?

CHARLIE

You coulda worked harder in school to prove it!

JIMMY

I had better things to do!

CHARLIE
Well now you can't write a decent letter, can you? You gotta live with the consequences of being a moron.

JIMMY
I'm a moron, am I?

CHARLIE *(holding up JIMMY's letter)*
This ain't the work of Shakespeare here.

JIMMY
I'll show you what a moron is!
(JIMMY snatches CHARLIE's letter off the table.)

CHARLIE
Hey!

JIMMY
Now who's the moron!

CHARLIE
You're trying to steal a love letter to Ma you idiot.

JIMMY
I'm not stealing it! I'm crossing off your name and putting mine on here!

CHARLIE
She's ain't stupid Jimmy! That ain't gonna fool her!

JIMMY
She ain't Sherlock Holmes neither! I coulda wrote this.
(CHARLIE grabs the pens on the table.)

CHARLIE
I got the pen! You ain't writing nothing!

JIMMY
Gimme the pen.

CHARLIE
Drop the letter.

JIMMY
This ain't gonna end well for you.

CHARLIE

Drop the letter, Jimmy.

(JIMMY holds it up like he's going to rip up the letter.)

What are you doing?

JIMMY

Nothing. I'm feeling real… twitchy though. Maybe one of these moments I'll just…

(he fakes like's going to rip up the letter, but doesn't.)

CHARLIE

No!

JIMMY

Oh not feeling so confident now are ya Mr. writer man?

CHARLIE

That ain't your letter, Jimmy. That expresses my profound and sincere love for Ma.

JIMMY

I got profound and sincere love too! Like a million shoes or whatever.

CHARLIE

The light of a million suns!

JIMMY

WHATEVER! GIMME THE PEN.

CHARLIE

NEVER!

JIMMY

THEN SAY GOODBYE TO WAR AND PEACE!

(JIMMY makes to tear up the letter – CHARLIE charges him.)

(CHARLIE grabs JIMMY's arms and they start wrestling.)

CHARLIE

DROP THE LETTER!

JIMMY

IT PERFECTLY EXPRESSES MY FEELINGS!

CHARLIE

YOU HAVE NO FEELINGS YOU'RE LIKE A HUMAN SQUID!

(JIMMY gets on top of CHARLIE and grabs CHARLIE's wrists.)

Let go.

JIMMY

No. You're hitting yourself.

(JIMMY starts making CHARLIE hit himself.)

CHARLIE

Stop it.

JIMMY

Why are you hitting yourself? Don't you have no respect for yourself? Why are you hitting yourself?

CHARLIE

Cut it out, Jimmy.

JIMMY

What am I doing? I'm not doing nothing. I'm just sitting here – you're the one hitting yourself cause you got no self-respect.

(CHARLIE bucks JIMMY off and makes a mad dash for the letter.)

CHARLIE

Ha ha ha! Mine! It's mine!

(CHARLIE runs away from JIMMY, with the letter.)

JIMMY

What are you gonna do? What are you gonna do? We gotta get to base, Charlie. Sooner or later you gotta walk out that door.

CHARLIE

I'll mail it.

JIMMY

No!

(CHARLIE breaks for the door, JIMMY gets there first and tackles him.)

CHARLIE

Noo! No!

JIMMY

You sound like bulldog! No no no no!

(He starts barking)

CHARLIE

You're like a Chihuahua!

(he starts barking like a Chihuahua)

Ruff ruff ruff ruff!

JIMMY

Nonononononon!

CHARLIE

Ruff ruff ruff ruff! THIS IS STUPID THIS IS STUPID STOP! We're brothers.

JIMMY

Yeah.

CHARLIE

We shouldn't be fighting each other.

JIMMY

No.

CHARLIE

I'll let you sign your name on the letter.

JIMMY

Thank you. See, that wasn't so hard.

CHARLIE

Here.

(He gives JIMMY the pen. JIMMY signs the letter.)

All right give gimme back the pen.

(JIMMY gives back the pen.)

JIMMY

Thank you.

CHARLIE

You ain't sore?

JIMMY

Nope.

CHARLIE

Good. I'm gonna miss you.

JIMMY

I'll write to you.

CHARLIE

I'll write to you too.

(short pause)

On second thought I'll draw you a picture.

JIMMY

Okay.

(They exit. Lights down.)

1936 – A Star is Almost Born

MAGGIE, 17
JOHNNY, 19

(Night.
(JOHNNY has the radio on. Something like "Pennies from Heaven" by Bing Crosby is playing.)

(JOHNNY is finishing his dinner. There isn't much of it.)

(MAGGIE, dressed as a maid, enters sheepishly)

JOHNNY

Where you been?

MAGGIE

Don't be cross, Johnny.

JOHNNY

It's almost eight o'clock. I was waiting round for you to eat.

MAGGIE

I'm not hungry.

JOHNNY

Good cause there ain't nothing left.

MAGGIE

You ate everything?

JOHNNY

What everything? I ate what we had.

MAGGIE

It doesn't matter. I've had the most brilliant day! I want you to guess what happened to me today!

JOHNNY

You fell down, hit your head, and now you're delusional.

MAGGIE

No.

JOHNNY

You feel down, hit your head, and wandered through the darkness for a couple of hours. Jeez Lousie, Maggie, I was worried sick about you. There's crazy people out there.

MAGGIE

I know –

JOHNNY

Have you seen the crazy people? There's five of `em on our street! All they do is walk around and look for single girls to bop on the head.

MAGGIE

I can take care of myself. That's not why I'm late.

JOHNNY

I was about to go find a Police Officer. `You seen a girl about this tall? Nuts. Kind of looks like a frightened deer."

MAGGIE

Will you shut up for one second so I can tell you the brilliant thing!

JOHNNY

All right. Tell.

MAGGIE

What if I told you… I was going to be a movie star!

JOHNNY

Oh so you did get hit in the head.

End of Excerpt
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