

BECAUSE OF BETH

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A full length play

by

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Cast of Characters  
(in order of appearance)

- CARA:** Female, 23 years old. Angry, self-involved, irresponsible, soft spot for her sister that she rarely shows, emotionally volatile.
- PENNY:** Female, 15 years old. Cara's younger sister. Ambitious, loves music, lost, confused by recent events, craves a better relationship with her sister, wants to be independent.
- STANLEY:** Male. 40's/50's. Beth's fiancé and the would be step-father of Cara and Penny. Caring, distraught, deeply sorrowful which clouds his usual clear and grounded judgment.
- ROBERT:** Male. 40's/50's. Long-lost father of Penny and Cara. Emotionally volatile, manipulative, selfish, unable to heal old wounds.
- WAITRESS:** Written as female, this can also be played by a male, any age.

Setting:

An apartment in Chestertown, Maryland

Time:

Present Day

Scene Breakdown:

Act I, Scene 1: Cara's bedroom, morning.  
Act I, Scene 2: Livingroom, late night.  
Act I, Scene 3: Graveyard at Beth's gravesite, late night.  
Act I, Scene 4: Coffeeshop, morning  
Act I, Scene 5: Livingroom, morning.  
Act I, Scene 6: Graveyard at Beth's gravesite, late  
afternoon.

Act II, Scene 1: Livingroom, night.  
Act II, Scene 2: Cara's bedroom, same night.  
Act II, Scene 3: Penny's bedroom, same night.  
Act II, Scene 4: Cara's bedroom, same night.  
Act II, Scene 5: Livingroom, afternoon.

Act I

Scene 1

SETTING:

It is a bedroom. CARA is asleep in bed. Strewn about her, on the floor and on the bed, are old papers, stacks of things, and a box. There is a suitcase in one corner, open. The room is bright with daylight from a window.

AT RISE:

There is sudden loud shouting from off-stage and the slam of a door. CARA bolts upright.

PENNY (OS)

Cara! Cara!

STANLEY (OS)

Penny...

PENNY (OS)

Leave me alone! Cara, where are you?!

(CARA shoves the papers into the box and pushes it under the bed. SHE gets back in bed)

STANLEY

Penny, we're all going through a lot! Just...

PENNY (OS)

Get away from me! You don't understand! She left me ALONE! Cara! Cara!

(Enter PENNY, crying.)

You LEFT me ALONE!

CARA

Haven't you ever heard of knocking?

PENNY

And you're still in bed! I can't believe you!

CARA

Oh, for God's sake, Penny. Did you have another bad dream? Look, if you want to get in bed, here.

PENNY

A bad dream? You're my bad dream, Cara!

CARA

What the hell is wrong with you?

PENNY

Mom's funeral! You left me ALONE at Mom's funeral!

CARA

I didn't leave you anywhere! The funeral hasn't happened yet!

PENNY

Cara, do you know what time it is?

(CARA stares at her, then  
leaps out of bed, looking for  
her watch)

It's one o'clock, Cara.

CARA

One o'clock? How can it be one o'clock? Oh, my God! I must have overslept! I was up with the boxes!

PENNY

What boxes?

CARA

The boxes...Mom's boxes...I was up until five thirty looking for...Stanley asked me to...Stanley! Stanley! I asked him to wake me up! Stanley!!!

PENNY

Wait, what do you mean? You mean, you wanted to go?

CARA

What are you, dense? Of course I wanted to go! It was Mom!

PENNY

So, you didn't mean to leave me alone?

CARA

Oh, my God! Oh, my God! I can't believe I missed it! I can't believe he let me miss it! Oh, my God!

(enter STANLEY. He looks exhausted)

Are you fucking kidding me? Why the fuck wouldn't you wake me up for Mom's funeral?

STANLEY

Didn't you hear the phone this morning? It didn't stop ringing.

PENNY

Yeah, we tried calling you from the funeral home, too.

CARA

Do you see a phone in this room? Obviously I didn't hear the phone! God, I told you last night, Stanley! I told you that the alarm on that clock isn't working and that I needed you to wake me up! Especially because I was going to be up finding all that shit for you for the funeral and the lawyers and shit in those boxes. Goddammit, Stanley! I specifically asked you to wake me up!

STANLEY

Hey, don't try pinning this on me! You're twenty three years old! You should be able to wake yourself up by now! I was so busy this morning that Penny had to go with Georgia and her mother! Okay? So, don't try pinning this on me!

CARA

Wake me up for my mother's funeral, you fuck! How hard is that? My mother! It's not enough that I couldn't be here with the hospital and when she died?

PENNY

Stop fighting.

STANLEY

Couldn't be here, Cara? Couldn't? You could have shown up more, you could have been here.

CARA

Fuck you! I was here every single time I could be!

STANLEY

I am tired of doing everything around here!

STANLEY

The hospital, the paperwork,  
the funeral arrangements,  
the hospital bills,  
contacting people, taking  
care of the two of you.

CARA

The pity card? You're  
playing the pity card and  
NOW? You've got to be  
kidding me!

STANLEY

I don't know how Beth did everything...she...I'm so tired of  
doing everything for you. You're an adult, too, you know.  
You're supposed to be acting more responsibly than this!

CARA

Don't you fucking start! I am so SICK of this lecture. What  
IS it with you? Every fucking time I see you!

(mimics him)

Responsibility. Responsibility. Why can't you be more  
responsible?

STANLEY

Well, let's think about the times I see you.

(counts on fingers)

When you show up to ask for money, when you've lost a job,  
when I'm helping you pack to get out of your boyfriend's  
apartment because he's stealing from you...

CARA

I didn't ask you to do that!

STANLEY

That's right. You didn't. But your mom did. Because she was  
so worried about you. Maybe you'll stop hearing the lecture  
when you start acting more responsibly. Maybe then you'll  
be treated like an adult.

PENNY

Stop fighting!

CARA

I'm responsible enough to take care of Penny now that Mom's  
gone.

(looks at PENNY. Smugly)

And now you're even trying to take Penny away from me.

PENNY

What do you mean?

STANLEY

Cara, can't you keep your mouth shut?

CARA

I'm just being responsible.

PENNY

But Cara's supposed to have custody.

STANLEY

I was going to talk to you about it when we were all calmer.

(glares at CARA)

When it wasn't the day of the funeral.

PENNY

Mom said I should live with Cara.

STANLEY

Cara, I really wish you hadn't brought this up.

CARA

(sarcastically)

Oh, I'm sorry. Is my timing bad? I'll really try work on that personality flaw of mine.

STANLEY

Yes, Cara, your timing is bad. Everyone is on their way over here from the funeral.

CARA

People are coming here right now?

STANLEY

Yes.

(CARA grabs clothing and exits to the bathroom to get dressed)

PENNY

If something's going on with my custody, I want to know about it. Why would you think that you would get custody?



STANLEY

This is not a good discussion to have now. There are people coming and...

PENNY

I'm not a baby! I'm fifteen years old! Wasn't anybody going to talk to me about this? People keep talking like I'm not here! Why am I always the last one to find things out? I hate it!

STANLEY

Penny, you and I will talk about this another time. I'm really tired and....It's been a very long day...Can't we just talk about this tomorrow?

CARA (OS)

Don't worry, Penny, I'm sure it'll be a nice long lecture, too.

STANLEY

All right, Cara. Is this it? You're just going to hate me for the rest of your life? Is that it? Just find new ways to be angry at me? Is that how you want things? Because it's not how I want things.

CARA

I don't care how you want things anymore, Stanley.

STANLEY

It wasn't supposed to be this way. I didn't mean for it to happen this way...I just...

CARA

Well, what did you think was going to happen? Did it occur to you that my not being at Mom's funeral would fuck Penny up, too? That she'd come in here, screaming at me about how I abandoned her?

STANLEY

No. I don't know. I wasn't thinking...I just...I wasn't thinking clearly.

(beat)

I'm so tired.

CARA

Yeah, cry me a river, Stanley. I bet you got to go to your mother's funeral.

STANLEY

Cara, enough, okay? Enough! You're not the only one here who is sad or angry! And you want the truth? It wouldn't have been good for you to go to the funeral, anyway!

CARA

You motherfucking son-of-a-bitch. How the hell do you know what's good for me? You're not my mother! You're not even a blood relative! You're just the last asshole my mother was with before she died. And it just happened to be you. So don't think you're special or anything. You got it, Stanley?

STANLEY

(very quietly)

You know that's not all I am.

CARA

That's all you are to me. Some guy my mother fucked.

STANLEY

That's not who I am. I was her fiancé! I was at your graduation from college! I've been living here... How could you even...? And I remember...when I told you that I was going to propose to your mother...I remember what you said...

CARA

I'm not playing some fucking sentimental game with you, Stanley.

STANLEY

You said I was the nicest boyfriend she ever had! You said it! Now, look, there were plenty of guys there today who were just some guy your mother fucked. That's just not who I am!

CARA

(long beat. To Penny)

What does he mean? Who was there?

PENNY

I don't know. Lots of people.

CARA

Who?

PENNY

Niko...

(CARA makes a face)

...Victor...

CARA

What hole did he crawl out of?

PENNY

Luiz...

CARA

Mom could have had better taste in men.

PENNY

...and Dad.

CARA

(long beat)

What?

PENNY

Dad. He was there.

STANLEY

You see, I told you it wouldn't have been good for you.

CARA

You shut the fuck up. You don't know what's good for me, so just shut the fuck up!

(to PENNY)

How did he know?

PENNY

I don't know. I guess someone called him.

CARA

Called him where?

PENNY

I don't know.

CARA

You didn't talk to him, did you?

PENNY

No. He...

(beat)

He didn't recognize me.

CARA

Well, we always had Mom's brains, not his. I can't believe he actually went to the funeral.

PENNY

Well, he didn't really.

CARA

What do you mean?

PENNY

He was hanging out outside the funeral home but he never went inside. I saw him when I went out to the car.

CARA

And he didn't recognize you.

PENNY

No.

CARA

(to STANLEY)

Did you see him?

PENNY

Stanley wouldn't know what he looks like. He only knows him from pictures.

CARA

So do you.

PENNY

I knew him when I was a baby. And I've seen that picture of him that Mom used to keep in her room.

CARA

God, what the hell is he showing up for NOW?

PENNY

I don't know.

(Beat. Very suddenly)

Do you think he has a big house?

CARA

Who cares?

PENNY

I was just wondering. It would be nice to have a house, don't you think?

CARA

I can't believe he showed up.

(doorbell rings. There is  
silence. Nobody moves)

STANLEY

Penny, would you get the door?

PENNY

Why me?

STANLEY

Just do it, Penny!

PENNY

I have to do everything alone!

(PENNY exits)

CARA

I can't believe my father showed up.

STANLEY

Yeah, well, look, he could be here for anything. Money, custody, anything. So you should really go with me to the lawyers' tomorrow morning and make sure everything is safe.

CARA

Don't talk to me, okay?

STANLEY

Look, I've barely slept in three days... I'm trying hard. I'm really serious about your dad being here. Don't you understand? This is to protect Penny's custody.

CARA

Well, Stanley, I have custody of Penny, so he's not getting her.

(glares at STANLEY)  
And neither is anyone else.

(CARA exits. STANLEY looks  
down, frustrated. He  
collapses on the bed in  
tears, rocking back and  
forth. BLACKOUT)

Act I:

Scene 2:

SETTING:

The livingroom. A table is laden with fruit baskets and food. A photograph of a middle-aged woman is on the table as well as several photo albums. There is a door leading to PENNY's room, another for the front door and an exit to the hallway for the rest of the bedrooms.

AT RISE:

CARA is cleaning up the dishes.  
PENNY is on the phone on the couch.

PENNY

I don't know. It's weird. Yeah, Cara and Stanley say I have to go. Why? Was the test hard? I'll figure it out. I don't KNOW, Georgia, I said I'd figure it out! Yeah. No, I'm sorry. I just...yeah. Thanks for going with me today. I know...it's just...well, thank your mom for me. Yeah, okay. G'night.

(SHE hangs up the phone)

CARA

Why were you yelling at Georgia?

PENNY

I wasn't yelling. Mind your own business. God, if that phone rings one more time, I think I'll die, too.

CARA

Penny, don't say things like that.

(beat)

I didn't know that Ginny and Ted had come in.

PENNY

I don't even remember them. Who are they again?

CARA

Mom's first cousin's kids. There's a picture of them in one of these albums.

(CARA opens an album. She  
points to a picture)  
See? That was taken at Ginny's wedding.

PENNY  
Who's that kid in the picture?

CARA  
That's me.

PENNY  
I never got to go to anyone's wedding. I don't remember any  
of these people. How come I don't remember them?

CARA  
A lot of them are distant family that we didn't really see  
after we moved here.

(points to a picture)  
That's Grandma and her sister, Elizabeth. That's who Mom  
was named after. Elizabeth died in a car accident when she  
was a teenager.

PENNY  
I didn't know that. I mean, I knew Grandma had a sister but  
she didn't talk about her much. That's really sad. I can't  
imagine losing your sister like that. They look a  
lot alike. It's kinda creepy. I don't remember much about  
Grandma. I wish we hadn't moved away from her.

CARA  
Well, you know we had to move when we did.

PENNY  
Yeah.  
(beat)  
Do I have to go home with you when you go?

CARA  
Well, I'm not letting Stanley get custody of you and Mom  
wants you to stay with me.

(SHE starts putting the  
albums away)

PENNY  
But I don't know anybody in Arlington! What about my  
friends here?



CARA

Well, they'll come visit. You guys can have sleepovers and stay up all night, stuff your faces with hot chocolate and marshmallows, and watch scary movies.

PENNY

I don't do that.

CARA

Do what?

PENNY

Everything you just said; watch scary movies and have hot chocolate with marshmallows.

CARA

Really? Why not?

PENNY

I don't like scary movies.

CARA

Well, whatever you watch. I'm just saying, they'll come visit.

PENNY

Yeah, sure. It's two whole hours away. And Arlington's so boring. It's just all people that do government jobs. Nobody's going to want to come visit.

CARA

Your friends will visit. They'll think it's cool to go somewhere else to see you. Besides, they'll be getting licenses soon. They'll want to drive places, right?

PENNY

They won't want to drive there. They'll think it sucks that I'm not at school with them. And they'll think Arlington is boring. There's nothing to do. And you need a car to drive everywhere. You think it's cool because you have a car and all of your friends from college are there and whatever. But me? What am I going to do until I get my driver's license and a car? I'm never going to have a life, Cara!

CARA

All right, Penny, first of all, there's plenty of busses to get around. In fact, it's probably easier to get around there than it is here. You're just used to Chestertown.

PENNY

It IS easy to get around here. I have my bike.

CARA

Okay, so you'll have your bike. Did you think you were going to leave it here?

PENNY

It's not like there's anywhere to bike TO in Arlington.

CARA

Yes, there is! There's plenty of strip malls where you can go hang out and shop and go to the movies.

PENNY

Is that what you think I do?

CARA

That's what I did.

PENNY

Yeah, but you also went to college and almost dropped out, like, three times and went to live that drummer guy...

CARA

Hey, you liked Brett!

PENNY

He had a nose ring!

CARA

So?

PENNY

So, that's gross!

CARA

Well, whatever, I'm not living with Brett anymore and I have a job so you don't have to worry about nose rings, okay?

PENNY

For now.

CARA

All right, fine, you want to be a brat? You just sit at home for the rest of your life and sulk. Waste away. What do I care?

PENNY

You don't care.

CARA

Yeah, I'm a big old fat meanie and I don't care.

PENNY

You don't.

(beat)

Do I, at least, get my own room?

CARA

No. We're going to have to share for a while.

PENNY

Aw, man! So does that mean I have to hear you having sex?

CARA

Penny!

PENNY

What? It's not like I don't know about sex.

CARA

I am NOT talking about this with you.

PENNY

Mom talks to me about sex.

CARA

Well, I'm not Mom.

PENNY

You're not kidding.

(beat)

I don't eat that vegetarian stuff you eat, you know. I need meat.

CARA  
Penny, would you just shut up?

PENNY  
Where do I have to go to school?

CARA  
Oh, my God! What are you, deaf? I said stop it! I don't want to talk about it.

PENNY  
(picks up picture of woman)  
It feels weird to have Mom gone.

CARA  
(uncomfortable)  
Yeah. I know.

PENNY  
I miss her.

CARA  
I know. At least you got to say goodbye to her.

PENNY  
Yeah. I'm really sorry you missed the funeral.  
(beat)  
Mom always says...said...it was good to talk about things when you're upset.  
(beat)  
I saw Mom in the coffin. She looked...waxy. Like in that museum.

CARA  
(suddenly)  
I'm going out.

PENNY  
But it's eleven o'clock.

CARA  
You're not my mom.  
(PENNY sticks her tongue out)  
I just need to get some air.

(SHE gets her coat. Starts  
for the door and then  
purposefully turns around)  
Do the dishes before you go to bed, okay?

PENNY  
Can't we leave them till morning?

CARA  
No. Mom says this apartment has mice.

PENNY  
We haven't had mice in three years!

CARA  
Do the dishes.

PENNY  
(mimicking CARA)  
You're not my mom.  
(CARA looks at her sternly)  
Fine.  
(CARA exits)  
Stupid dishes.

(SHE clearing dishes. STANLEY  
enters in sweats, looking  
ruffled and exhausted)

STANLEY  
Where's Cara?

PENNY  
She just went out. What are you doing up?

STANLEY  
I thought I heard the door slam.

PENNY  
Yeah. It was just Cara. You can go back to sleep.

STANLEY  
No, I can't. I haven't been able to. It's just... I never  
thought it was going to be like this. All those months...I  
mean, we knew. It's not like everybody else...they don't  
know. But we knew. And then when it happens, it's just...it's

not like I expected at all. We weren't ready. Things weren't done. She didn't finish.

(HE is completely unaware of PENNY at this point)

She wasn't ready to go.

PENNY

I think she was ready to go.

STANLEY

What?

PENNY

Mom. I think she was ready to go. If she wasn't ready, she wouldn't have gone. That's what the priest said.

STANLEY

Right. You're really growing up, Penny.

PENNY

Yeah. Where've you been?

STANLEY

It's just sort of startling. I mean, one minute you're this cute little kid who's running around and playing hide-and-seek with me, and the next minute you're helping me at the hospital and with your mom's death. It's just...it's a big change.

PENNY

You make it sound like it happened overnight. We haven't played hide-and-seek in years. I mean, I play hide-and-seek with the kids I baby-sit for now.

STANLEY

I know. I guess all of this is just making me nostalgic. Both of you have grown up so much. Cara never used to wash the dishes when she was your age.

PENNY

I know.

STANLEY

She's so angry with me.

PENNY

Can you blame her?

STANLEY

No. It was stupid. I don't know what I was thinking. It's just that...she's just SO angry. I don't want to spend this time fighting with her. Or you. Or anyone, for that matter. But especially you two. I mean, we're all we've got now. We shouldn't be fighting. I hate this.

PENNY

Yeah, well, so do I.

STANLEY

Isn't tomorrow trash day?

PENNY

Yes.

STANLEY

Would you take the trash out when you're done with the dishes?

PENNY

Why don't you take it out? You're the one who can't sleep. Why don't you be useful?

STANLEY

Sorry. I'm just really tired. And I'm worried about this lawyers' meeting tomorrow morning...It's nothing. Never mind. I'll take the trash out.

(starts tying it up. The doorbell rings)

God, it's late. Who's coming by now to pay their condolences?

PENNY

Chill out. Cara probably just forgot her keys. Besides, you're up. What do you care if more mourners come by?

STANLEY

I'd like to be sleeping.

PENNY

(SHE opens the door. ROBERT stands in the doorway)

Oh, my God!

ROBERT

I'm sorry...I was looking for Stanley Martin. Does he still live here?

STANLEY

Who is it?

(HE sees who it is and drops the trash)

ROBERT

Stanley!

(throws his arms around STANLEY)

I thought it was you today.

STANLEY

(slight gasp)

Robert. Oh, my God.

(HE looks quickly at PENNY and then back)

What are you doing here?

ROBERT

Beth. Her funeral. I came for her funeral. I...

(HE looks at PENNY and back at STANLEY)

I saw you there and I...I really wanted to say hi...I wanted to talk to you...her death has been so hard for me...but when I turned around, you were gone. I had no idea where you lived or anything so I eventually called information. The phone was busy all night so I just decided to come over.

STANLEY

This isn't a good time.

ROBERT

Stanley, I really need your help.

PENNY

Do you want some fruit?

ROBERT

What?

PENNY

Fruit. We have lots of fruit.



(STANLEY quickly turns over  
the photograph on the coffee  
table)

Do you want some?

ROBERT

Oh, no...no.

(to PENNY)

Was it your birthday? It looks like you had a party.

PENNY

No...

ROBERT

I'm Robert. You must be Stanley's daughter.

(HE offers his hand)

PENNY

No...

STANLEY

She's my friend's daughter.

ROBERT

Oh. A special friend?

STANLEY

(to PENNY)

Why don't you go and get some sleep?

PENNY

I don't want to.

ROBERT

Really. We need to talk about some things.

PENNY

Where do you live?

ROBERT

Look, I'd really like to talk to Stanley.

PENNY

Well, you might as well talk to him with me here because  
he's just going to tell me later. We talk about everything.  
So you might as well tell me. Where do you live?

ROBERT  
Chicago. Who the hell is this?

STANLEY  
Maybe we should talk tomorrow.

PENNY  
What do you do in Chicago?

ROBERT  
Look, I came to find Stanley because I'm very upset about something. Do you understand that?

PENNY  
Do you have kids?

ROBERT  
Yes! Yes! I have kids! All right?  
(STANLEY looks surprised.  
ROBERT notices)  
Three. I have three kids.  
(to PENNY)  
What are you, the Inquisitor?

PENNY  
Three kids! So I guess you're married, huh?

ROBERT  
I guess so.

STANLEY  
Why don't we have breakfast tomorrow?

PENNY  
I like kids. I baby-sit a lot. How old are your kids?

ROBERT  
Breakfast tomorrow is fine. What time?

PENNY  
If I came to Chicago, I could baby-sit for your kids, couldn't I?

ROBERT  
Yeah, sure.

STANLEY

I have an appointment at 8am tomorrow morning. But maybe we can have breakfast before I go to work. Say, maybe nine? There's a great little diner right under my office called Tiny's. It's on the corner of Garrett and Young Streets. How does that sound?

PENNY

But you guys didn't even catch up! I mean, it seems like you haven't seen each other in a really, really long time. I mean, aren't you curious what you guys have been doing?

STANLEY

That's enough!

ROBERT

Well, it's true...I did just sort of barge in and...I haven't even heard what you're up to, Stanley...

(STANLEY glares at PENNY who looks pleased. Uncomfortably)

What...what do you do now? I think you were working on some master's in science or something...?

STANLEY

Political science.

ROBERT

So I guess you finished that, huh?

STANLEY

Yes, I did. But, I'm in real estate now. But, look, we'll...we'll talk about it all tomorrow morning at breakfast.

ROBERT

Yeah, yeah, right. Oh, this is the number that I'm staying at.

(he searches his pockets)

I know it's really sudden, me showing up like this. I didn't know who else to turn to, you know. And, even though we haven't been in touch since college, I figured you'd understand...you know, about Beth and all...

PENNY

Beth...the lady whose funeral we went to today?

(ROBERT nods)

Why would he understand?

ROBERT

Well, Stanley was my best friend when I was dating her in college.

(finds the paper)

Ah! Here it is.

PENNY

(Surprised. As ROBERT writes the number down)

Best friends, really? Like you hung out all the time? What was Stanley like in college?

ROBERT

You ask a lot of questions, you know that?

PENNY

I'm inquisitive. So, what was he like?

ROBERT

(handing the number to STANLEY)

Ummmm, he was...a lady's man.

PENNY

Really?

STANLEY

I was not.

ROBERT

Sure you were. All the girls wanted to be with you.

PENNY

Hard to imagine.

ROBERT

Well, except Beth, of course. She was my girlfriend.

STANLEY

I'll see you tomorrow, Robert.

PENNY

Wow. College girlfriend. When was the last time you saw her?

ROBERT

Why do you ask so many questions?

STANLEY

I think we all need to get some sleep. I'll see you tomorrow, Robert.

PENNY

It just seems like a long way to fly from Chicago for a funeral, don't you think?

ROBERT

(suddenly uncomfortable)

I was planning to be in town on business anyway.

PENNY

What do you do again?

STANLEY

Stop it!

(to ROBERT)

I'll see you at Tiny's tomorrow, Robert.

ROBERT

Nine thirty, right?

STANLEY

No, nine o'clock. I have to be at work at nine thirty.

ROBERT

Right, right. Nine o'clock. Sounds good. You have my number in case there are any changes.

(HE moves towards the door)

PENNY

(jumping in front of him and sticking out her hand)

Very interesting to meet you.

(ROBERT shakes her hand and exits. PENNY whirls around to face STANLEY, triumphantly)

So. You know my father?

(BLACKOUT)

Act I:Scene 3:SETTING:

Graveyard. There is a fresh grave without a headstone. Same night.

AT RISE:

CARA enters, carrying a six pack of beer. She sits down next to the fresh grave, takes out a pack of cigarettes and lights one.

CARA

I'm really sorry, Mom.

(long beat)

I know I should have been there. I had so many chances to say goodbye to you and you kept telling me...say goodbye now, you never know...and I didn't want to. Well, so, are you happy? You were right. You were fucking right. All that time and I never said goodbye to you.

(SHE opens a beer)

And let's get something clear: I'm not saying goodbye to you now. That's not why I'm here. I came to talk to you. Just talk. You and me. So let's talk... I always wanted you to listen to me...now that I have your attention, I don't know what to... Aaaaauuuuuughhhh! This fucking sucks! I can't believe how much this sucks! You're not supposed to be gone yet, Mom! This whole fucking mess sucks! Penny? She's so fucking whiny! It's like she has no other way to relate to me except to sob on me. And who do I have? No one! My friends aren't here.

(beat)

None of those people today cared about you, Mom. I did. I cared about you.

(beat)

It's worse than when Dad left because at least then I had you. Now I don't have anyone. Oh, and what's with him showing up at the funeral? I mean, what the fuck is that, Mom? Since when does Dad even have a clue what the hell is going on in our lives? Do you think maybe you could tell me that? It's sick, you know. It's like I only get to have one parent surfacing at a time. Well, luckily, he's gone again. What a bastard! This is so fucking unreal. You have to come home! You have to! You didn't even wait for me to show up so I could say goodbye to you! It wasn't my fault! I couldn't get here any faster! Couldn't you have waited just another fifteen minutes? And now Stanley wants to take

Penny, the only family that I have left. It's not going to happen. Penny's my sister, not his daughter. Stanley wants me to go with him to the lawyers' tomorrow. He said he thinks Dad's going to try to take Penny.

(nervously)

Dad can't do that, can he? He hasn't been here in forever. He can't just come and take custody, right?

(beat)

He won't. He won't get custody. I'll go to the lawyers' and make sure. I'll have to be in the grave next to you for him to get custody, Mom!

(Quietly)

I'm the only one left who actually knows, who remembers everything about you... I do. Even Penny doesn't. I remember the night Dad left. No one else knows about that. Remember how you came into my room and you were crying...and you couldn't tell me what was wrong, but you just crawled into my bed and asked me to give you huggies to make Mommy better. And I did. I gave you huggies. But it didn't get better. And I started crying and we fell asleep crying.

(long beat as SHE chokes back  
tears)

Mommy, I need huggies to make it better. I need huggies. Make it better.

(SHE starts sobbing and  
shaking. Rocks herself in her  
sobs. BLACKOUT)

Act I:

Scene 4:

SETTING:

A coffee shop. The customers are primarily businesspeople who work nearby.

AT RISE:

Enter PENNY. She is dressed up but has a scarf over her head and big sunglasses. She looks around quickly. The WAITRESS enters.

WAITRESS

Who are you supposed to be? Marilyn Monroe?

PENNY

Can I just have a table for one?

(WAITRESS takes her to a table CS)

Could I possibly get one over there?

(PENNY points to another table to the side)

I get cold really easily.

(The WAITRESS leads her to another table. PENNY sits down with her back to the door and opens her menu.)

WAITRESS

We have a few specials today. We have...

PENNY

That's okay. I don't need to hear the specials.

(WAITRESS walks away. Enter ROBERT)

ROBERT

Table for two please.

(The WAITRESS takes two menus and leads him to the CS table. ROBERT takes off his coat and sits.)



WAITRESS

Would you like to hear the specials now or would you like to wait?

ROBERT

(nervously looking at the door)

The specials...the specials now are fine.

WAITRESS

Today we have a special omelet with salmon and capers. The salmon was just caught yesterday. And we have pancakes with peaches. Can I get you something to drink to start?

ROBERT

No. I'm fine. I'll just wait for my friend.

(WAITRESS exits. PENNY sees ROBERT reading his menu and starts to get up but sees STANLEY entering hurriedly. PENNY gasps and sits down again with her menu open. Neither man notices her)

STANLEY

Sorry I'm late. My meeting took longer than I thought.

ROBERT

No, that's fine. I just got here myself. I really appreciate this, Stanley. It's been so hard..

STANLEY

Really? Has it? Because you haven't been around at all, Robert. How could it possibly be hard for you?

ROBERT

You remember how much I loved Beth. We were very close. Even after we broke up.

STANLEY

No, you weren't. And it was called a divorce not a break-up. Are you expecting some pay out from her estate or something?

ROBERT

I need to find her lawyer, Stanley.

(WAITRESS comes to the table)

WAITRESS

Good morning, gentlemen. Are you ready to order?

ROBERT

Yes. Yes...I forget what I wanted...I'm so sorry.

(looks at the menu again)

Cheese omelet and black coffee. Side of grits.

WAITRESS

And for you? Sir?

ROBERT

Stanley, are you going to order something?

STANLEY

Coffee. Coffee with milk.

WAITRESS

Okay, I'll be right back with your order.

(SHE takes the menus and  
exits)

STANLEY

Why?

ROBERT

Why what?

STANLEY

Why do you need to find Beth's lawyers?

ROBERT

She kept calling me right before she died. I never called her back...I just...I didn't know that she was sick. But, now...I think she must have been calling to tell me that I'm in her will.

STANLEY

You think Beth left you something?

ROBERT

She was my ex-wife! You don't have to make it sound so unbelievable.

STANLEY

I'm just...I'm just thinking that...well, hasn't it been a long time since you've seen her?

ROBERT

So? Hasn't it been a long time since you last saw her, too?

STANLEY

(beat)

We spent a lot of time together in the past few years.

ROBERT

So, you saw each other for coffee every once in a while or you hung out regularly?

STANLEY

Why does that matter?

ROBERT

It doesn't.

(Beat)

What was she like?

STANLEY

What?

ROBERT

How did things turn out for her?

STANLEY

Robert, I can't do this.

ROBERT

Do what?

STANLEY

I don't want to sit here and assure you that everything was great for Beth so you can go on with your life. I think you already feel guilty about whatever happened with the two of you. I don't think that has anything to do with me.

ROBERT

Okay, okay. Fine. But will you help me find her lawyers? You're the only person who I can trust about this. I can't do this alone.

STANLEY

Why me?

ROBERT

We were best friends.

(tries to smile and looks  
down)

Things are bad, Stanley. My wife and I are just barely making it through. I mean, we've got kids.

(beat)

Three! Three kids! And Lizzie has to go to some special school next year...My boss told me that they might make a bunch of cuts at Christmas if we don't reach our quota. I could be cut! I could lose my job! What am I going to do? I don't have the money to support them.

STANLEY

Don't you have any savings?

(STANLEY's cell phone rings)

Excuse me.

(HE answers the phone)

Hello? But I gave them copies of...

(HE looks up at ROBERT)

Okay, hold on. Hold on. Let me go outside where I can get better signal.

(to ROBERT)

Excuse me for a moment.

(HE gets up and exits. PENNY checks that STANLEY is gone and then takes off her scarf and sunglasses. SHE approaches ROBERT)

PENNY

Fancy meeting you here!

ROBERT

What...what are you doing here?!

PENNY

I was hungry.

(enter WAITRESS with food)

WAITRESS

One omelet and black coffee. And one coffee with milk.

(looking at PENNY, confused)  
Can I get you something?

PENNY  
I'd like the French toast with cherry jam and a hot  
chocolate.

(SHE seats herself at the  
table. WAITRESS exits)

ROBERT  
What are you doing?

PENNY  
Actually, I'm kind of glad that I ran into you again.

ROBERT  
Look, I'm having breakfast with someone.

PENNY  
Don't worry, I'll move when he comes back. Have you ever  
been to any classical concerts in Chicago?

ROBERT  
Do you think maybe I could have my table back?

PENNY  
Well, have you?

ROBERT  
Have I what?

PENNY  
Been to any classical concerts in Chicago?

ROBERT  
I'm not really into the whole music scene.

PENNY  
That's too bad. See, I play the violin and I was thinking  
about moving to Chicago because there are a lot of great  
symphonies and orchestras out there. I'm really good. I got  
an award last year from the state. What are the  
neighborhoods like there?

ROBERT  
The neighborhoods?

PENNY

Yeah. I have family out there. I would live with them. So, I'm thinking about the neighborhoods. Like where you live. What's that like?

ROBERT

I don't know.

(HE turns around)

Where did he go?

PENNY

Where did who go?

ROBERT

I told you! I'm having breakfast with someone.

PENNY

Oh, right, with Stanley, right? Did he go to the bathroom?

ROBERT

No, he got a phone call.

PENNY

Oh, I don't know. So, tell me more about what Stanley was like in college.

ROBERT

Look, who are you? What do you want?

PENNY

I just wanted to get to know you better.

(enter STANLEY. HE watches,  
unnoticed by PENNY and  
ROBERT)

ROBERT

That's very nice but I'm going through a very hard time. I'm very upset. I'm having breakfast with someone and...

PENNY

With Stanley.

ROBERT

Yes. Stanley. I don't know who you are. You've just sat down and started asking me all of these questions. Now, just leave me alone. Go back to your table.

PENNY

No.

ROBERT

What?

PENNY

No! I'm not going to leave. Leaving is not the answer to everything. Sometimes staying and working through things is the answer. My mom taught me that. Wouldn't you teach your kids that?

ROBERT

My kids aren't old enough to be taught things like that.

PENNY

Some of us are.

ROBERT

But you're not...

(Realizing what she is saying, ROBERT stands up and starts backing away. PENNY stands, too. ROBERT takes a step closer to her. Very quietly, almost a whisper)

Cara?

PENNY

No. I'm Penny.

ROBERT

(still whispering, slightly terrified)

Penelope?

PENNY

Not many people know that that's my full name.

(ROBERT grabs his coat)

Wait, wait...

ROBERT

You don't have any relatives in Chicago!

PENNY

Yes, I do! You!

ROBERT

I already have children at home. I don't need any more kids.

(he starts for the door.  
STANLEY blocks him. ROBERT  
looks from STANLEY to PENNY  
and back)

You knew that Beth and I had children!

STANLEY

Yes.

ROBERT

I have to go. Don't worry about helping me, Stanley. I'll do it on my own.

STANLEY

You need to admit that you had another life.

ROBERT

No, I don't. That life is dead now.

STANLEY

She is that life, Robert.

ROBERT

Well, I don't want it!

PENNY

I don't believe you.

ROBERT

Believe what you want.

PENNY

Why did come to Mom's funeral if you didn't want anything to do with us?

ROBERT

(long beat)

I don't have to answer to you.



STANLEY

Go on. Tell her.

ROBERT

I'm not explaining myself to some teenager. And you keep out of it, Stanley! You have nothing to do with this.

PENNY

Actually, Dad, he does.

(STANLEY shakes his head at  
PENNY)

He was engaged to Mom.

ROBERT

You were what?!

(enter WAITRESS)

WAITRESS

Okay, one French toast with cherry jam and a hot chocolate.

(WAITRESS exits)

ROBERT

You were engaged to her?

STANLEY

Yes.

ROBERT

You are unbelievable!

STANLEY

It's not like she was your wife anymore, Robert. You left her a long time ago.

ROBERT

You always wanted her, Stanley. Because she was the only one you couldn't have.

STANLEY

It doesn't matter how we ended up together. Why should you care so much? It's not like you ever showed up for family holidays or anything.

ROBERT

But...if you were her fiancé...You know who the lawyers are.  
And you know when the will reading is.

STANLEY

Forget it, Robert. I'm not helping you. And Penny's custody  
is all settled.

PENNY

Wait a minute, I don't want to live with Cara! And I don't  
want to live with you! I want to live in Chicago with him!

STANLEY

Penny...

PENNY

Come on, Dad, you don't want me living with Stanley, do  
you?

STANLEY

Penny, it's not that simple.

PENNY

It IS that simple. I want to live with my father. It is  
that simple.

(to ROBERT)

And you don't want him to be my dad, right?

ROBERT

Right. I don't want him to be your dad.

PENNY

See?

ROBERT

And I don't want to be your dad either.

STANLEY

(beat)

Robert, you don't say things like that to her! You just  
don't say things like that! Don't you have any sensitivity  
AT ALL?

ROBERT

Oh, come on! She's been going on and on about moving to  
Chicago to live with her FAMILY ever since she walked in.  
I'm not her family.

STANLEY

You are her family and you don't say that to a fifteen year old girl! She's fifteen!

PENNY

Don't talk about me as though I'm not here. I hate you. I hate you both!

(enter CARA, carrying a stack  
of folders. To ROBERT)

How can you stand there and say that you're not my family?

CARA

(To ROBERT)

You fucking ass.

(BLACKOUT)

Act I:

Scene 5:

SETTING: The livingroom.

AT RISE: PENNY enters from front door, crying, and exits to her bedroom. She slams the door. CARA enters from front door and STANLEY follows.

CARA

Penny!

(SHE knocks on PENNY's door)

Penny, let me in!

PENNY (OS)

Go away! I hate you!

CARA

Penny, I know you don't hate me! Open up!

PENNY

(opens the door)

Did that feel good to you, yelling at him the way you did in the middle of the restaurant? Did it? All those years of hating him? I hope it did! Because now he's never coming back! You made him go away! And now I'm never going to get to live with him!

CARA

Live with him? Is that what you thought?

(PENNY slams the door)

He's an asshole, Penny!! You should feel lucky that I saw Stanley through the window and came in when I did! God, he just couldn't fucking leave well enough alone

PENNY (OS)

Cara, you were angry at him before you even showed up!

CARA

So?! Look, Penny, Dad isn't... I know you wanted Dad to be this superhero who was going to come back and be wonderful... but... He just isn't that person.

(beat)

I wish he was. I wish that he was the dad that showed up for our birthdays or for your violin concerts or my softball games. I wish...I wish that Dad acted like a dad. And that he didn't... But he's not that guy. He was done with us long ago, Penny! He just left us! Don't you remember? He made that choice! He actually decided to leave us and not look back!

(more to herself than anyone else)

I didn't know dads could do that. I didn't know they could just stop caring.

(PENNY opens the door)

And now I wish we had a mom, too.

(beat)

Penny, what were you even doing at that coffee shop? You were supposed to be at school.

(PENNY slams the door)

Penny!

STANLEY

Robert showed up here last night asking me for help.

CARA

You? You don't even know him.

STANLEY

We went to college together.

CARA

What?!

STANLEY

Your mom and I...we went to college together with your dad. That's how we really met. Your dad was a good friend of mine...my best friend.

CARA

You've been lying to us?

(Accusingly)

So, you were the one who told him about the funeral!

STANLEY

Me? What, are you kidding? No, absolutely not. We USED to be best friends. We're not anymore.

(beat)

But I did know he was going to be there.

CARA  
(starting to bang on PENNY's  
door)

Penny!!

STANLEY  
But I didn't tell him, I swear!

CARA  
You're a fucking lying son-of-a bitch!

STANLEY  
Cara. It's true that I deliberately didn't wake you up for  
the funeral.

CARA  
You fucking asshole.

STANLEY  
I know. I know. I don't know what I was thinking. But I  
panicked. I knew your dad would be there and I know how you  
feel...

CARA  
Stop talking! Stop talking! Stop it! Stop it! You! You  
don't know anything! Do you hear me? Nothing! You  
don't know! You have no fucking idea how I feel! You...! Get  
away from me!

(banging on PENNY's door)  
Penny! Penny!

(STANLEY reaches out to  
console her)

Don't touch me!

(enter PENNY from her room)  
Penny...Penny, Stanley knew. He knew...that's why.

PENNY  
I heard. I'm going out.

(SHE pulls a full backpack  
and her violin case out of  
her room)

CARA  
Where? Where are you going?

PENNY

I don't have to tell you.  
(to STANLEY)  
And I don't have to tell you either.

STANLEY

Full backpack for just going out, don't you think?

PENNY

I have a lot to do.

STANLEY

And your violin?

PENNY

I might want to practice.

STANLEY

Didn't you just tell your father that running away wasn't the answer?

CARA

Stanley!

PENNY

I am not running away! I am going out! God, doesn't anyone listen to me around here?

STANLEY

Fine, but be back by dinner.

PENNY

My curfew isn't until ten.

STANLEY

I said dinner. The will reading is tomorrow morning at nine and I don't want to be responsible for waking anyone up ever again.

PENNY

Don't worry, Stanley. You're so sick of being responsible for me? I'll be responsible for myself, okay?

(SHE starts for the door)

CARA

Penny, come on. Be mad at Stanley. Fine. You should be. He's done enough. And be mad at me, too, if you want to be. But at least talk to me.

PENNY

Now. Now you want me to talk to you. You didn't want me to talk to you when I was having my nightmares. You didn't want me to call you and interrupt your important life to tell you how Mom was doing with her treatments. But now you want me to talk to you?

(with courage)

Fuck you, Cara!

STANLEY

Penny!

PENNY

You've been fighting with me and Stanley ever since you got here! And now you seem to be under the delusion that you've saved me from my big bad daddy. Do you even have a clue? I have NO family! Mom's gone, you left and now I don't even have Dad! Stanley's not even family! And I have to break up my whole life to go live in some ridiculous place and pretend that you and I have a relationship! Well, we don't, Cara! So, don't think I'm gonna talk to you now!

(SHE exits through the front door. Stunned silence. STANLEY starts to exit to the hall)

CARA

She didn't mean that, Stanley. You know she didn't. She's just angry.

STANLEY

(turns around. Quietly)

She meant most of it, Cara. Even if she is angry.

(STANLEY exits. BLACKOUT)



Act I:Scene 6:SETTING:

The graveyard. Later that afternoon.

AT RISE:

PENNY enters with her bike, backpack and violin case. She puts her bike and violin case down and goes to the grave. She looks at it a moment, then leans down, picks up a handful of dirt and throws it at the grave angrily.

## PENNY

Well, Mom, it looks like we have a few things to talk about! I don't know how things are in that nice coffin of yours, but out here, they kind of suck a lot! How could you give Cara custody of me? Don't you think you could have talked to me about it? I mean, it's about me, don't you think you could have asked what I wanted? All anyone ever says is that I have to be older. Well, when do I get old enough for you to discuss these kinds of things with me? Is there some age limit like drinking and voting? Suddenly you can talk to me about what would happen to me if you died? I am always the last one to know about what happens to me! It's not fair! You make decisions! Cara makes decisions! Stanley makes decisions! And Stanley wants custody! Yeah, he wants custody! He's not my father. He just wants custody because I'm your daughter.

(beat)

You told me that you would always be there. You're not. Where are you now? Oh, and just so you know, no matter how many people tell me, I'm not going to believe that mumbo jumbo crap about you being with me all the time. It's not the same. Who am I going to talk to about Peter? You were the only one who knew about him. God, I'm never going to go out with Peter because I have to move to Arlington!! You are wrecking my life! Cara fights with Stanley all the time. Stanley's so out of it he can barely make it through the day. He didn't wake Cara up to go to your funeral because he knew Dad was going to be there. Oh, and keeping a few secrets about him, huh?

(SHE takes out something from  
her bag)

You're really lucky that Cara didn't find this when we were going through the boxes.

(SHE opens a T-shirt that  
says "Proud dad of a George  
Mason grad")

So what the hell is this? I know this wasn't for Stanley. Cara would have flipped out if you ever called Stanley her dad. So I'm thinking this was supposed to be for DAD. What the hell were you thinking, Mom?

(SHE shoves it in her bag)

What's up with you lying about how you met Stanley? You and Dad and Stanley being friends in college? You know, we used to tell each other everything, Mom! Everything! Or at least I told you everything. All of my friends thought you were so cool because they could come and talk to you when they couldn't talk to their own moms! And you know what's so stupid? They still think that! Georgia calls me, crying and shit because you're gone and I'm finding out all this stuff about who you really were! You were my mom! When Dad left, it was you and me and Cara! And then when Cara left, it was just you and me! It was always us. Even when Stanley moved in. You weren't supposed to keep secrets from me! You were still supposed to be my mom! Because of you, I spent my whole life thinking Dad was this awful person. Well, I met him, Mom! And you know what? He's not an awful person; he's just hard to get to know. I hate Cara! She sent him away! She doesn't understand that I never knew him. I never got the chance to make my own decision about whether or not to hate him. I had to get that decision from you and her, too. I'm tired of this. You were supposed to be different. But you were like every other mom who makes choices for their kids. You told me that you weren't like that but you were. And I never realized how much until you died.

(long beat)

I came here to tell you that I'm leaving. I don't care what you said about my custody and I don't care if you left me stuff. I'm going to Chicago or somewhere else where nobody can find me. I'm going to be a musician. I'm going to start making my own decisions.

(Long beat. SHE stomps away  
defiantly to her bike. ROBERT  
enters. THEY freeze at the  
sight of one another.  
BLACKOUT. END ACT I)

Act II:

Scene 1:

SETTING: The livingroom. Very late that night.

AT RISE: CARA is sitting on the couch talking on the phone.

CARA

I don't know, she could be anywhere. No, we haven't called the police yet. She didn't run away. Penny's not like that. She's never run away. Well, I'm sure she's in town somewhere. Stanley's out looking for her now. Call who? Oh, that's a good idea. I think I have that number in my mom's phone book. Yeah, thanks. I'm really sorry to have woken you. Give us a call if you hear from her. Bye.

(SHE hangs up and exits into the hall with the phone.  
Beat. Enter ROBERT and PENNY)

PENNY

My friend, Georgia, and I started learning the guitar together but I didn't like it and that's when I started taking violin lessons. Mom liked classical music a lot so..

ROBERT

Right. I remember. She made me listen to it on the radio all the time.

PENNY

Yeah, me, too.

ROBERT

You look a lot like her, you know?

PENNY

Really? I think Cara looks more like her.

ROBERT

You have her cheeks and eyes.

PENNY

Cara has her nose. And her cheeks. We all have the same cheeks. I guess Cara has your eyes. So, if I look so much like Mom, how come you didn't recognize me at the funeral?

ROBERT

I don't know. There were lots of relatives. They all kind of have similar qualities...you could have been anyone's kid.

PENNY

Well, I wasn't.

ROBERT

Right.

PENNY

(beat)

Well, I guess I'll go pack.

ROBERT

You know, I don't think you need to do that yet. I mean, my flight isn't until tomorrow afternoon.

PENNY

You mean our flight.

ROBERT

Yeah, our flight. That's what I meant.

PENNY

You are taking me, right?

ROBERT

I told you that I owed your mom, right? I told you I'd make sure you were taken care of.

PENNY

Okay, great. Then I'll go pack. We can leave right after the will reading tomorrow.

ROBERT

(looking around)

Yeah, I kind of still need that address, Penel...

(PENNY glares at him)

Penny. And I don't really want to run into Cara or Stanley before tomorrow. I mean, I don't think they're really happy with me right now.

PENNY

Well, that's because you were a big jerk.

ROBERT

Hey, I said I was sorry.

PENNY

To me. Not to them. Besides, Stanley has the address anyhow. I don't have it.

ROBERT

But I thought you said...

(PENNY smiles and shrugs)

Well, I can't stand here waiting for him while you're packing.

PENNY

You know what, Dad? We've been sitting around waiting for you to show up for years and the first thing you do when you get here is piss everyone off. Chill out. And if they show up, just deal. I think you owe me that much, don't you? You owe *Mom* that much, don't you?

(beat)

I'll be right back.

(SHE exits into her room.

Beat. SHE immediately re-emerges with two CD's. NOTE

TO DIRECTOR: This can also be an i-pod.)

Hey, which one do you want to listen to? I have Rachmaninoff or Stravinsky.

(enter STANLEY)

STANLEY

(not seeing PENNY and ROBERT)

I couldn't find her anywhere. I... Penny! How long have you been here? Cara didn't call me...

PENNY

Well, Cara's not here.

STANLEY

(alarmed)

You were with *him*?

ROBERT

(to PENNY)

You see? I told you.

PENNY

Yes, I was.

STANLEY

Are you okay?

PENNY

Yes, I'm fine. Why are you so spazzy?

STANLEY

It's midnight, Penny! Do you know how long we've been looking for you? I told you to be home by dinner. We had things to discuss. This is not dinner.

(calling OS)

Cara! Cara!

(CARA enters from the hallway)

CARA

Did you find her?

(sees PENNY)

Penny!

(sees ROBERT)

You were with *him*?

(CARA exits with PENNY into PENNY's bedroom)

STANLEY

So. She went looking for you.

ROBERT

No. She didn't. We bumped into each other.

STANLEY

Just...*bumped* into each other. I know this town is small, but it's not that small!

ROBERT

We were at Beth's grave, Stanley.

STANLEY

(to himself)

But I looked there!

(to ROBERT)

Is she okay?

ROBERT

I don't know. I guess so.

STANLEY

(starting to raise his voice)

Is she hurt? Was she bleeding? Can't you even tell that?  
What are you made of, stone?

ROBERT

No, she's fine.

STANLEY

You...you were at Beth's grave.

ROBERT

Yes.

STANLEY

(long beat)

How did you know Beth died?

ROBERT

Bernadette called me.

STANLEY

Bernadette...Bernadette Simon?

ROBERT

Well, she's married now. Her name is Bernadette Walker, but  
yeah. Tracy and Stuart called her.

STANLEY

Right. Of course.

ROBERT

I guess Bernadette didn't know about you.

STANLEY

I guess not. I didn't even know that anyone from college  
still knew where you were.

(beat)

I can't believe Bernadette still wants to talk to you after all those papers you had her edit.

ROBERT

She volunteered. Not everyone can be Mr. Grammar.

STANLEY

I wasn't Mr. Grammar. I just knew how to open a dictionary. And that's not why Bernadette was working on your papers and you know it.

(beat. Sudden thought)

My God! Was she happy that Beth died?

ROBERT

Of course not.

(beat)

I swear I didn't know it was so bad. If I'd known, I would have called Beth back.

STANLEY

She left you about ten messages. It's not like you didn't care about her! I know you did!

ROBERT

And apparently you took careful notes and lessons on it.

(Beat)

So when was the big day supposed to be?

STANLEY

(uncomfortable)

We never set a date.

ROBERT

So you proposed to her in the hospital? How romantic.

STANLEY

It was romantic! And it wasn't in the hospital! I proposed to her a long time ago!

ROBERT

(beat)

A long time ago? She didn't accept?

STANLEY

She accepted. Look, I don't want to...



ROBERT

I know that look. You're not telling me something. You always looked away like that when you didn't want to tell me something. You still do it!

STANLEY

We're not friends anymore, Robert! Maybe I'm not telling you things because I don't have to tell you things anymore! We're not friends, okay?

ROBERT

(beat)

So I guess we both messed up with her.

STANLEY

Messed up? I didn't mess up!

ROBERT

(quickly)

Then why didn't you marry her?

STANLEY

(just as quickly)

Because she...

(stops short. Frustrated)

Stop doing that! You can't do that to me anymore. We're not twenty one!

ROBERT

I'm not doing anything!

STANLEY

You are! Just stop it!

ROBERT

(beat)

I talked to Penny, you know.

STANLEY

It's about time.

ROBERT

You're treating my kids like crap!

STANLEY

I'm doing what??!!

ROBERT

Penny told me you didn't wake Cara up for Beth's funeral...

STANLEY

Because of you, you jerk! I knew you were going to be there!

ROBERT

You knew that I was going to...

STANLEY

I was trying to protect her! I screwed up! I didn't do it right. I take responsibility for that. That's more than I can say for you. But I'm not treating your kids like crap! Don't think you can come in here and start criticizing my parenting skills because I made one mistake!

ROBERT

Cara's not your daughter!! She's mine! And how did you know I was going to be there?

STANLEY

There's one hotel in this town, Robert! You think Beth's relatives didn't call me when they saw you?

ROBERT

Oh.

STANLEY

You know, even though I made mistakes with Cara, the only real mistake I made with Beth was not telling her to go ahead with the paperwork without you!

ROBERT

What paperwork?

STANLEY

About Penny's custody!

(HE lowers his voice)

She was changing her will. When the doctors told her how long...she...she wanted to tell you that she was going to switch over custody from Cara to me.

ROBERT

You? YOU? You're going to get custody of Penny?

STANLEY

(moving away from PENNY's  
door)

Cara's not a good guardian for Penny. She's got a very full life and doesn't stay in one place for very long. She just hasn't found her niche in life yet. We had all the paperwork to change the will but Beth wouldn't complete it until she had contacted you. Now that she's gone...I have the papers in the other room. I'll show you.

(STANLEY starts to exit to  
the hall)

ROBERT

But why would Beth call to tell me that? She always had custody of the kids.

STANLEY

Because I was going to have custody of Penny and it meant that she would have to tell you about our relationship. She wanted to tell you herself. Until the custody issue, it never mattered. Now it does.

ROBERT

But she never wanted me to know anything about the girls. Why now?

STANLEY

I think she always hoped you would do right by them some day.

ROBERT

So that's it. You get my life. You get Beth, you get my kids...you get what I should have!

STANLEY

Hey, you left. It's hardly like you've acknowledged your kids even now, Robert.

ROBERT

Cara hates me.

STANLEY

Well, you work hard at getting people to hate you, Robert. Penny was ready to love you when you walked in and all you've done is turn your back on her.

ROBERT

No, things are different now. We talked. At the grave. I'm trying to... Never mind, you wouldn't understand.

STANLEY

I understand just fine. Now, look, let me go get the papers for you. Because Beth didn't do it, you or Cara needs to sign off on them.

ROBERT

I see. So that's really what's going on. You need me because Cara won't do it.

STANLEY

I haven't even discussed it with Cara yet. Beth wanted to tell you. She didn't get a chance to do it. Legally speaking, your signature or Cara's signature will carry out her wishes.

ROBERT

You know, Penny said the will reading is tomorrow morning. Maybe I should go to make sure all of this is legitimate.

STANLEY

She didn't leave you any money, Robert.

ROBERT

Penny wants to come live with me, Stanley.

STANLEY

So what? I thought you could barely support the kids you already have.

(beat)

You didn't tell her she could go, did you?

PENNY (OS)

Get out of my ROOM!

(PENNY's door opens, CARA is pushed onstage and the door is slammed shut.)

CARA

This isn't over!

PENNY (OS)

Yes, it is!

CARA

(to ROBERT)

What the hell are you still doing here?

STANLEY

How is she?

CARA

Who knows? She's such a brat.

STANLEY

Yeah. Well, maybe I should go talk to her. Couple things...you know...

CARA

Huh?

(STANLEY exits into PENNY's  
room. To ROBERT)

You just couldn't leave well enough alone, could you?

(SHE starts to exit into  
hallway)

ROBERT

(catches her arm)

Look, Cara, maybe we can talk...

(CARA turns around slowly and  
removes his hand from her  
arm)

CARA

We don't have anything to talk about.

ROBERT

No, we do. Look, I've changed, okay? I know I messed up with you.

CARA

We're not talking about this.

ROBERT

Don't you ever want to get past it?

CARA

You know what, Dad? I was past it. I had a whole life that didn't include you. I was past it all. And then you fucking showed up again. You want me to get past it? Then just get out. I'm serious. Get out. Don't come near me or Penny ever again.

ROBERT

I don't want you to hate me.

CARA

You have some fucking nerve.

(starts to laugh maniacally)

You have some fucking nerve. Showing up when my mother fucking dies to beg for some kind of forgiveness for... You're fucking twisted!

(STANLEY and PENNY enter,  
unnoticed)

Fucking nerve!

ROBERT

I'm serious, Cara.

CARA

(immediately sobering up)

Then you are stupider than I thought. I could never...

PENNY

You're not even giving him a chance to talk. He is standing here, trying to be our father and you're just walking away.

CARA

Our *father*?! Our...

(to ROBERT)

Are you happy? Are you fucking happy? You're fucking deluding her! She's thinks you're trying to be our *father*. Isn't that brilliant? Wow, you must have really cooked her up good to get her to reach that one.

STANLEY

All right, I know there's a lot going on here, but we all have a few things to talk about so can we just agree to sit down like civil people for a few minutes?

CARA

What's there to discuss?

STANLEY

If we could all just sit down...

CARA

No. No way. I'm not sitting down with him.

PENNY

He's our dad, Cara!

CARA

Apparently that has never mattered.

ROBERT

Cara. Come on...

STANLEY

Look, we need him for our conversation about Penny's custody.

CARA

No, we do not! I have custody and he, of all people, will never get it.

PENNY

You can't decide that!

CARA

I didn't! Mom did!

ROBERT

But what if I want to be in her life?

CARA

(looking him in the eye)

You and I both know that that will never happen and we both know why. Do *not* bring this up again, do you understand me? That is my sister and I don't want you in her life. Period.

PENNY

You're being so mean! What's wrong with you? Just stop it!

ROBERT

No, Penny, it's okay.

PENNY

Stop trying to play the mommy role! The protective mommy role! Oh, what a good sister you are to protect me! Like

hell! It's not like you're any good at it anyway! It's just that no one will say it! Well, there it is! I'll say it!

STANLEY

Penny, stop it right now!

PENNY

You can't keep a job, you can't keep a boyfriend, you can't keep an apartment! You're always asking for money! How the hell are you supposed to take care of me? And you know what, Cara...you keep saying how Dad hasn't been here for fifteen years and how he abandoned us. The truth is that you were never there either. You're so selfish! You haven't been to a concert of mine in years. You still treat me like I'm eight years old. And you weren't there for Mom, either. Not even when she was dying. Not even when I called you to ask you to come. You weren't there for me and you weren't there for Mom. Even when she died! So you're just as bad as you think Dad is!

(Long beat. CARA exits,  
upset, into the hallway)

ROBERT

Penny, you have no idea what you've just done.

PENNY

Oh, come on! You're gonna defend her now?

ROBERT

No, Penny...there are just some things...that Cara and I never worked out...

PENNY

Don't defend her! She needed to hear that for a long time. I mean, Cara as my guardian. I mean, come on! Besides we already decided that you should be my guardian.

STANLEY

Right. About that, Penny, what if, instead of changing the guardianship to your dad, we changed your guardianship to me? You can stay here and be with your friends?

PENNY

(sarcastic)

Because staying with you is so much better.



ROBERT

Penny, maybe you should listen to him for a minute.

(STANLEY is surprised)

PENNY

Now you guys are buddy-buddy? Has the whole world gone crazy?

STANLEY

Penny, I'm serious. Please listen to me. Your mother wanted me to have custody of you. She had the papers in the works. She wanted to tell your father before completing them but she...wasn't able to. This is what she wanted. Penny, please.

PENNY

How come everyone seems to know what Mom wanted but me?

(SHE exits into her room)

STANLEY

You know you can't have custody, don't you?

(ROBERT starts to protest.

Firmly)

Robert. I know why you really left.

(ROBERT looks horrified)

So let's just get this straight: you know you can't have custody, don't you?

(ROBERT nods)

Okay, then. I'll get Beth's papers and you go get that idea about moving in with you out of Penny's head.

(BLACKOUT)

Act II:

Scene 2:

SETTING: The bedroom from Scene 1.

AT RISE: CARA is angrily throwing clothing into a bag. She is crying. There is a knock on the door.

CARA

Go away!

STANLEY (OS)

Cara, I want to talk to you.

CARA

Not interested.

STANLEY (OS)

Listen, there's some stuff that I need to talk to you about.

CARA

Did you hear me? I don't want to talk. I'm packing.

STANLEY (OS)

I want to explain some things to you about some decisions your mom made.

CARA

Fine.

(STANLEY enters)

Close the door behind you. I don't want anyone else coming in.

STANLEY

I know you were really worried about Penny when she didn't come home.

CARA

I wasn't worried. I had better things to do with my night than look for her.

STANLEY

So, I guess you're pretty upset with her, then.

CARA

Just say what you need to say and get out. I'm leaving this house as soon as I'm packed.

STANLEY

You have to be here for the will reading tomorrow morning.

CARA

Fine. I'll leave after that. I'll leave straight from the lawyers' office.

STANLEY

Penny didn't mean what she said, Cara.

CARA

Yes, she did. She meant to say exactly that.

(Long beat)

Well, are you going to talk to me or just stare?

STANLEY

What if Penny stayed with me?

CARA

We talked about this already. Is that what you wanted to talk about? You could have saved yourself the trip down the hall.

STANLEY

Look, Cara, I am not in this for the satisfaction of taking Penny away from you.

CARA

Are you going to sit there and tell me that you weren't absolutely delighted by what Penny just said?

STANLEY

No, I'm not. I think that's a really crappy thing to say to your sister. Cara, I'm not trying to hurt you. There are just some things that your mom wanted done and...

CARA

How can you stand there and tell me that? How can you do it? This isn't about my mother; this is about you and your greed!

STANLEY

My what? My greed? Cara, do you realize that my best friend, my fiancée, is gone? I haven't been sleeping or eating or...I don't even know what I'm going to do without her. She was going to be my wife! Greed. Is it greedy to want to complete your fiancée's dying wish for her daughters?

CARA

Aren't you being just a little dramatic? I'm sure my mother was not thinking about this when she was dying.

(STANLEY takes out the papers)

STANLEY

Actually, she was.

(CARA looks at the papers)

CARA

What's this?

STANLEY

These are the papers to change Penny's guardianship to me. The only reason your mother didn't complete this paperwork was because she wanted to tell your father and he never returned her calls. But, now, I need...

CARA

Mom called DAD? Of all the fucking people in the world, she called DAD? Why the hell would she do that?

(realization)

She was the one who told him she was dying, wasn't she? That's why he knew to come to her funeral.

STANLEY

No. They never spoke.

CARA

Then what the hell is he doing here?

STANLEY

He's saying goodbye.

CARA

He did that fifteen years ago.

STANLEY

A college friend of ours told him that she died. That's why he came.

(beat)

Cara, your mom and I never wanted you to become Penny's guardian under any false pretenses. We never wanted it to get to that point. That's why she was trying to finish the paperwork. But now, the only way that the custody can be changed in the will is with your signature.

CARA

(long beat)

She was such a fucking sucker for him.

STANLEY

What?

CARA

Mom. She was such a fucking sucker.

(SHE reaches under her bed  
and pulls out the box)

Look at this! Letters upon letters! Love letters from when they were dating and then...this is what really fucking gets me! Look at this!

*(SHE pulls out a stack of letters)*

She wrote him Father's Day cards every single year after he left!

STANLEY

What?!

(HE takes the stack and  
starts looking through it)

Where did you find this?

CARA

In some box. I had already found the love letters and the divorce papers and then I came across this...and, man! I was sick to my stomach.

STANLEY

Why didn't you tell me?

CARA

I always knew she had this fantasy about him coming back; I just didn't realize it was a crazy fantasy.

(beat)

Yeah, there's a stamp on each one, too. Just no addresses.

STANLEY

I can't believe that she did this. I mean, I knew about the birthday cards...but I can't believe she did this.

CARA

What birthday cards?

STANLEY

Oh, right, I guess you wouldn't know. I mean, it makes sense now. She always wanted to buy father/daughter birthday cards when we were shopping for you guys.

CARA

Oh, my God.

STANLEY

Yeah. I convinced her not to buy them. I mean, I certainly wasn't going to give you guys cards that said "Daddy's little girl". But I never knew about these. Wow, she even had one from this year.

CARA

Yeah, well, I never had that delusion. I knew he was gone long ago and that he wasn't coming back.

(beat)

I guess that kinda sucked for you, her thinking he was gonna come back.

(Beat. CARA picks up the papers again)

So Mom didn't trust me.

STANLEY

I don't think that's true.

CARA

Stanley, she still hoped Dad would come back to be our dad, even after fifteen years. And she knew, if I was in charge of Penny, that would never have happened, would it?

STANLEY

Cara, it's not going to happen if I have custody of her, either. I promise.

(beat)

Look, the lawyers prepared all the papers to change the custody over. They need to have you sign by tomorrow, though.

(beat)

Are you okay?

CARA

Well, my sister hates me, my dead mother didn't trust me and she was insane and before she died she called the father that I hate. And you want me to sign over custody of my sister...the one who hates me. How do you think I am?

STANLEY

Is there anything I can do to help?

CARA

Just leave me alone. I want to be alone.

STANLEY

Okay. I'll leave the papers here.

(HE puts the papers down.

Beat)

Will you, at least, stay and help me get everything straightened out? I need your help with some of the estate stuff. And I know that once Penny gets over being angry, she's really going to need you.

CARA

I'll think about it.

(STANLEY exits. CARA picks up the Father's Day cards and custody papers. She curls up in a corner of the bed and rocks back and forth, starting to cry. Whispers)

I need huggies.

(BLACKOUT)

Act II:

Scene 3:

SETTING:

PENNY's bedroom.

AT RISE:

She is blasting a loud part of a classical piece (preferably with horns and drums) and scribbling in a notebook. There is a knock on the door.

PENNY

I hate you! Go away!

ROBERT (OS)

Penny, it's...uh...it's me.

(PENNY hides the book)

PENNY

What do you want?

ROBERT (OS)

Can we just...talk...or something?

PENNY

What about?

ROBERT (OS)

Look, if you don't want to talk, that's fine.

PENNY

No, wait!

(SHE opens the door. ROBERT enters and winces at the music)

ROBERT

Do you think you could turn that off?

PENNY

Fine.

(SHE turns off the music)

So. Didn't bring anyone with you?



ROBERT

No. Why?

PENNY

I figured you'd all be ganging up on me at this point.

ROBERT

Why?

PENNY

Cause you're all mad at me.

ROBERT

You shouldn't have said that to Cara.

PENNY

Cara had that coming. Is that why you came in here? Cause if it is, forget it.

ROBERT

Okay, why don't we talk about other stuff?

PENNY

Like what?

ROBERT

(long beat)

Tell me about your mom. We didn't really talk about what she was like the last few years.

PENNY

I don't know. She was nice. She was in a hospital. What do you mean?

ROBERT

Well, I mean, I didn't really know her, like you did...and I was just wondering what she was like.

PENNY

That's a weird question.

ROBERT

What's weird about it?

PENNY

I don't know. It just is. Let's talk about something else.

ROBERT

Okay, like what?

PENNY

(beat)

Why did you leave?

ROBERT

What?

PENNY

Come on, you went on and on in the cemetery about how much you loved Mom. So I know it's not because you didn't love Mom. So maybe you didn't love me and Cara?

ROBERT

Oh...no, I loved you. I loved you all very much.

PENNY

Then how come you left?

ROBERT

Penny, these things...they're not...I don't...it's... I need some water.

PENNY

(stands in front of the door)

Are you running away again? You know what? All my life I've been hearing crap about you from Mom and from Cara. Real crap. But when you came back, I gave you a chance, anyway. Dumb move, right? Cause you were...

(defiantly)

An asshole! And then you convinced me that you weren't an... asshole. That you were just upset and missing Mom. And I gave you another chance...

ROBERT

I'm so sorry.

PENNY

What for?

ROBERT

For coming back. For messing up your life again.

PENNY

Well, you're only going to mess it up if you don't tell me what happened.

(ROBERT shakes his head)

Don't you get it? No one else around here wants to listen to you at all. Just me! Don't you think I should get something for that? Doesn't that mean anything to you?

ROBERT

I never wanted you to listen to me. I didn't come back here to be your dad.

(long beat. PENNY throws the George Mason t-shirt at him. He picks it up but doesn't look at it)

PENNY

How could you?! How could you come all the way back here and not care? How can you be such a jerk? You're my father! Don't you get it? Didn't you have a father? Did you know what that was like? Well, I never knew what that was like! And do you know why? Because you ran out on us when I was a baby! And I'm standing here, trying to be all nice and give you a chance to tell me why, to somehow make you look like a good person, even if you weren't a good father, and you're throwing it away! Do you have any idea how that makes me feel? Like shit! That's how it makes me feel! Like fucking shit! Cara and Mom were right about you! You're a jerk! You never loved us and you never loved Mom!

ROBERT

(suddenly yelling)

I loved your mother and don't you EVER tell me that I didn't!!

(PENNY shrinks to the ground)

Oh, come on. Get up! Finish yelling at me! You know you want to! Yell at me! Do it! I deserve it, right?

(kneeling next to her, still holding the T-shirt)

You can say whatever the hell you want but NEVER tell me that I didn't love your mother, do you understand me? I may have screwed up a lot of things in this life, but loving Beth was one of the things I did best and you can't take that away from me!

PENNY

I didn't take it away from you! You did!

(ROBERT raises his fist to punch her and PENNY screams. She scrambles away from him as he looks at his hand)

What the hell are you doing?!

(enter STANLEY)

STANLEY

What's going on?

ROBERT

Penny, I'm so sorry. I don't know what...

PENNY

That's why, isn't it?

ROBERT

You just...you're so much like her...I didn't mean to...

PENNY

Yes, you did. At least now I know why you left. Get out.

ROBERT

It's not what you think...

PENNY

It doesn't matter what I think, does it? You never wanted me to listen to you anyway.

(SHE grabs the T-shirt out of his hand and exits)

STANLEY

What did you do?

ROBERT

Lay off, all right?

STANLEY

I will not lay off! What did you do?

ROBERT

I didn't mean to...I just...she...

STANLEY

You hit her?

ROBERT

No, I...

STANLEY

What then?

ROBERT

I can't believe it. I thought I was over this.

STANLEY

You hit her.

ROBERT

Almost.

STANLEY

What the hell were you thinking, Robert?

(ROBERT sobs)

God, what the hell was I thinking? I was trying so hard to believe Beth's faith in you...just long enough to convince Penny to stay here. Just that long! But nothing's changed, has it, Robert? You're the same person you were fifteen years ago. You didn't get help!

ROBERT

I...I...did...

STANLEY

Then you want to tell me why you just tried to hit your daughter? Do you hit your other kids, too? Do you hit your other wife?

ROBERT

Beth is my wife!

STANLEY

Beth is not your wife, do you hear me? She was going to be my wife!

ROBERT

I love her. She's my wife. She's my wife...

STANLEY

You have a wife! In Chicago!

ROBERT

She's my wife. She's my wife...

STANLEY

What's her name? What's your wife's name?

ROBERT

Beth. My wife is Beth.

STANLEY

The one in Chicago. What's her name?

ROBERT

Deirdre.

STANLEY

Deirdre. And do you beat Deirdre, too?

ROBERT

No! She's not Beth!

STANLEY

So it was just Beth you wanted to hurt?

ROBERT

I didn't want to...

STANLEY

Your kids. Do you hit your kids?

ROBERT

No. I'm past this. You don't understand.

STANLEY

You're not, Robert! You tried to hit Penny!

ROBERT

She's so much like her. When she got angry...she looked just like her. You don't understand.

STANLEY

I've never understood! I've never understood how Beth could marry someone who beat her!

ROBERT

I didn't...! It didn't happen then! Later! Much later! It happened after!

STANLEY

After? After what?

ROBERT

It wasn't the same. We didn't get to...she was always with her.

STANLEY

With who?

ROBERT

She was supposed to be with her. But she was supposed to be with me, too. And she wasn't. She wasn't with me.

STANLEY

What are you talking about?

ROBERT

And I got so angry. I just wanted her back. She never came back. She left me. I didn't leave her.

STANLEY

Robert. She didn't leave you.

ROBERT

Yes, she did! She did! She left me when Cara was born!

STANLEY

Do you think Deirdre left you, too, when your other kids were born?

ROBERT

No, it's different!

STANLEY

What's different?! Wife. Kids. What's different?!

ROBERT

Deirdre's not Beth! Beth is my wife!

STANLEY

Not anymore, Robert. Beth is dead.

(BLACKOUT)

Act II:

Scene 4:

SETTING: CARA's bedroom.

AT RISE: CARA is sleeping. PENNY enters.  
She closes the door loudly. CARA  
is startled awake.

CARA  
Haven't you ever heard of knocking?

PENNY  
(long beat)  
You never told me.

CARA  
What? What are you talking about?

PENNY  
Why didn't you tell me that Dad punched us?

CARA  
How did you know?

PENNY  
He tried to punch me.

CARA  
What?!! Are you okay? I'm gonna kill him!

(SHE starts for the door)

PENNY  
Stanley threw him out already. Why didn't you tell me?

CARA  
I'm so sorry. I'm... He never punched you, right?

PENNY  
No. I got away.  
(CARA breathes a sigh of  
relief)  
How come you and Mom didn't tell me?



CARA

We didn't want you to know. You never saw it happening. He didn't hit you when we were kids; just me and Mom.

PENNY

So he didn't leave us? Mom threw him out?

CARA

No, he left. It was...it was horrible. It was just this one day...I don't even know what happened...I was eating breakfast and watching TV. The Smurfs. I even remember the episode. I never saw the end of it. I don't think I ever watched the Smurfs again. And Mom and Dad were in the bedroom and all of a sudden Mom was screaming and Dad was hitting her. And I ran in...and...I told him to stop...and he started hitting me and then...I don't know. He just stopped and started crying and hugging Mom and he ran out of the bedroom...Mom sent me to my room with you...I remember I got blood on your favorite blankie...I kept trying to get it out. I heard them crying and shouting and Dad was pacing up and down the hall...really upset...I looked out...he was shaking...I couldn't believe it...and Mom...Mom was telling him how it was okay...and she forgave him. I had bruises on my arms and a split lip but she forgave him! And then...I don't know...he just...he just left. I don't think he even took anything, he just left somewhere in the middle of their screaming.

PENNY

Wow. Mom really kept a lot of secrets.

CARA

Yeah, she did. But this is the one she really wanted to protect you from the most.

PENNY

(beat)

He just really seemed to be in love with Mom when I was talking with him in the cemetery.

CARA

He sure had a fucked up way of showing it.

PENNY

Stanley knows.

CARA

(surprised)

Really? There seems to be a lot that Stanley knows that he hasn't been letting on.

PENNY

Like what?

CARA

Mom wanted you to live with Stanley.

(SHE points to papers)

I'm supposed to sign that. It's supposed to give Stanley custody.

PENNY

I know.

CARA

You know?

PENNY

Stanley told me.

CARA

Oh. Figures. So what do you think?

PENNY

I don't know.

(beat)

Cara?

CARA

Yeah?

PENNY

Why do you think Dad hits people?

CARA

I don't know. He's an angry person. I don't why else. I never really talked to Mom about it.

PENNY

Didn't she ever say anything?

CARA

Not really. She was just very sad. She cried a lot after he left. She cried a lot before he left, too. I'm sure you

don't remember this but there were a lot of times when Mom would suddenly tell me to put you in a stroller and take you for a walk.

PENNY

She did? How come?

CARA

Because she didn't want us to see them fight and watch her get hit. She got hurt worse than me. He broke her arm once when he threw her into a wall. And you know scar on her shoulder that she said was from a dog?

(PENNY nods)

That was the corner of a vase that he threw at her.

PENNY

Oh, my God. I can't imagine Mom letting anyone doing that to her.

CARA

She did a lot of recovery after Dad left. Groups and therapists and all that crap. That's how come you don't remember her like that.

PENNY

So that's why you guys always said such horrible things about him?

CARA

Yeah. He was a horrible person.

PENNY

Do you think he loved you?

CARA

I don't know. It doesn't really matter.

PENNY

I can't believe you guys didn't tell me.

CARA

Mom never wanted me to. But it was so hard. You were always insisting that maybe he was a good guy and maybe he'd show up. And I had to just listen to you and not say anything. Then today and yesterday when you kept trying to tell me that he wasn't so terrible..

PENNY

He didn't seem it.

CARA

I know. That's one of the scary parts about him; he never seemed it. And Mom didn't want to tell you herself because she didn't want to hurt you.

PENNY

Well, I almost got really hurt because I didn't know.

CARA

I know. I'm sorry.

(beat)

And I'm sorry he's not the dad you thought he was. Or wanted him to be.

PENNY

I'm sorry he's not the dad you wanted him to be, either.

(beat)

Sorry about what I said before. You know...out there.

CARA

Yeah. Don't worry about it.

(Picks up custody papers)

I think you should live with Stanley, Penny.

PENNY

What about you?

CARA

I'll stick around for a little while but then I'm going back to Arlington.

PENNY

No, I mean, what about living with you?

CARA

You don't really want to live with me. You said it yourself. Your friends are here, your teachers are here...your life is here. You can visit me whenever you want to.

PENNY

Are you mad?

CARA

About what?

PENNY

That Mom wanted me to live with Stanley?

CARA

(long beat)

It doesn't matter. It's the right thing for you.

(SHE gets a pen and signs the  
custody papers. SHE hands  
them to PENNY)

PENNY

Yeah?

CARA

Yeah.

PENNY

Okay.

(PENNY reaches out and hugs  
CARA, who looks surprised, at  
first, and then relieved.  
Slow fade to BLACKOUT)

Act II:

Scene V:

SETTING:

The livingroom. A week later.

AT RISE:

CARA enters from the hall with bags. SHE picks up the photo of her mother. Enter STANLEY from the front door.

STANLEY

Hey.

CARA

Hey.

STANLEY

I called the county's office today and the death certificate should be sent soon. How were things here?

CARA

Good. I was able to reach most of her magazines today and cancel her subscriptions.

STANLEY

Thanks.

CARA

Yeah.

STANLEY

I think we can probably get a liquidator to take a lot of the stuff in storage. I mean, you don't want it and Penny doesn't want it. I don't think...

CARA

Right, no sense keeping it in storage. I never knew she was such a packrat.

STANLEY

Yeah. Yeah, she was. Thanks for all your help, Cara. No, I mean it. And...especially about Penny. Her custody and all. I really appreciate it. It seems like things got a lot better, don't you think?

CARA

With Penny?

STANLEY

Yeah...

CARA

I guess. It's strange...having her know now...

STANLEY

Yeah? I think she understands you better. So you're all packed?

CARA

Yeah. It's gonna be weird to be home. I mean, after being here for so long.

STANLEY

Well, you can always come back next weekend.

CARA

Yeah, I mean...just being here.

STANLEY

Well, you could always move back.

CARA

There is NOT enough space in this apartment for the three of us. We'd kill each other. We almost already have.

STANLEY

Not here...in the town. You could be near us.

CARA

I don't know. I do have a life in Arlington, you know. Friends and a job.

STANLEY

Well, you can just think about it. Both of us would really like having you around again.

(Enter PENNY from the front door, excited)

PENNY

Oh, my God! Oh, my God! I have the best news!

STANLEY

What? What is it?

PENNY

I'm playing the first chair in the community orchestra!

STANLEY

Oh, my God! That's so great!

(HE hugs her)

CARA

That's really great, Penny. Well. I guess... I guess I should get going.

STANLEY

I'll take the bags down to the car.

CARA

Thanks.

(STANLEY exits with a couple bags)

PENNY

(makes sure that STANLEY is gone. Excited whisper)

Guess what else happened today?

CARA

What?

PENNY

Peter asked me out!!

CARA

Who's Peter?

PENNY

A boy I really like. I told Mom all about him. Don't tell Stanley.

CARA

Of course not! I'm sure you guys will have an awesome time.

PENNY

But...Cara...I don't know what to wear.



CARA

You'll be fine. You've gone on dates before, Penny. It's not like it's new. Georgia can help you, right?

PENNY

Yeah...I guess...I was just kind of hoping...maybe...I really only went on three dates and...and Mom helped me then.

CARA

Oh.

PENNY

Well, you're all the way in Arlington so I guess it doesn't make sense.

CARA

What doesn't?

PENNY

If you helped me get ready for my date...

CARA

Oh!

PENNY

You're probably too busy. It's okay. I'll just get Georgia to help me.

CARA

No, no...I...um...I can do it...

PENNY

Yeah?

CARA

Sure. I guess. I mean, the first date is important, right? Georgia can do the second date.

PENNY

Thank you! Thank you! I have to go call Georgia right now and tell her!

(SHE exits into her room.  
CARA picks up the photo of  
her mother.)

CARA

Bye, Mom. I'll miss you...so much.

(Enter STANLEY)

STANLEY

I thought you'd be right behind me. I was waiting down at the car.

CARA

Yeah, I had to... I had to help Penny...with something.

STANLEY

Is everything okay?

CARA

Yeah, I think it actually is.

(CARA and STANLEY exit with the bags as the lights slowly fade to BLACKOUT)