

## Chester

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A full-length play  
By Kym Fraher

Five girls are hopelessly lost in the woods, trying to find their bus after an afternoon match in the nearby town of Chester. Facing a wavering timeline and a cast of bizarre citizens, they must learn to recognize their individual gifts and work as a team to escape Chester alive and intact.  
Loosely based on the Iliad and the Odyssey.

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## CHARACTERS

ANGIE

Smart. Cute. Painfully insecure but overcompensates through acting over confident. Emotionally neglected at home. Hyper involved in extracurriculars to pad the application to future ivy league schools.

AMY

Solid. Naturally athletic. Under ambitious. Nontraditional upbringing but not without love. Less bothered by traditional teenage worries than most. Few friends but intensely loyal.

OLIVIA

Ambitious. Smart. Capable. Clever. Does not feel the need to constantly prove her worth but it tends to be revealed anyway. Confident with peers but secretly questions her value. Aims to be helpful

NELLY

Sweet. Slightly overweight. Perpetual outsider. Stutters but has something to say. Recently moved to the area. Large family in which she tends to get lost. Tries but never quite good enough. Easily gets lost in a crowd.

SOPHIA

Quiet. Kind. Passive. Tries to be a peace-maker. Unsure of herself and constantly apologizes for her ideas. Wants to be a part of something larger than herself but almost never gets picked. Studious. Average cognitive intelligence but high emotional intelligence.

FEMUS

Domineering. Bold. Toxic masculinity but sees himself as a "ladies man." Momma's boy at heart. Sees the world as existing for him. Used to getting his way. Willing to use violence if it gets him what he wants.

LADY CICI

Sexy. Cunning. Intelligent. Sees herself as a feminist but willing to dominate other women to get what she wants. Not a team player. Understands human needs deeply and uses this knowledge for her own purposes.

HELEN

Mysterious. A blank canvas. Curious. Becomes what others want/need her to be. Willing to be passive in order to be included.

MINERVA

Observant. Stays in the shadows. Cautious. Vessel of knowledge that she rarely shares with others. Judgmental, but not without reason.

3 SYRENS

Beautiful. Otherworldly. Talented. Young women who know how to use their assets for personal gain. Exploiting their talents while they still have them.

2 YOUNG BOYS

Feral. Selfish. Afraid. Attacks everything they don't understand, which includes all outsiders. Uses violence as a first resort.

MISS CALLIE

Elderly. Grandmotherly. Self-centered. Loyal to her own. Judgmental and dominant. Thinks she knows what's right for everyone. Conservative. Willing to do what it takes to live in the world she thinks should exist.

CASSANDRA

Town rebel. Independent. Daddy's girl. Over confident in her abilities, but not without reason. Feels superior to almost everyone. Resourceful.

Note that many of the characters can be doubled up with a single actor. Playwright encourages diversity casting when possible.

(-) dashed line with letters before indicate a stuttered sound. Actor should voice this like she is pushing the sound over an obstacle in her throat. Other times, the actor should place a pregnant pause before saying the word. It's about disfluency and not necessarily repetition of the letter sound.

## SCENE 1

Scene opens on a group of 5 young girls, ages 17-18 years old, all dressed in team jerseys as if they'd just come off a playing field (exact sport ambiguous). They also are wearing black armbands. All are carrying brown paper lunch bags. ANGIE is holding a map and looking intently at it. Besides the black armband, AMY is also wearing a chain bracelet that is fairly chunky that she periodically messes with throughout the scene.

ANGIE

Wait. I'm not sure this is right.

OLIVIA

It's not. I told you guys we'd been here before. I think I remember that tree over there.

AMY

The tree? What are you talking about? It's a TREE. We are surrounded by trees. And every one of them looks exactly alike!

OLIVIA

No they don't. Look--that one is an elm, over there is a silver maple..

(She bends down and picks up a leaf.)

And there must be an oak around here somewhere because this is an oak leaf.

AMY

Are we done with the biology lesson? Can we just find the fucking bus? Here, let me see the map.

AMY reaches for the map but ANGIE dodges her.

ANGIE

No, I got this. I'm the captain so I keep the map.

AMY

Being the captain of the team on the field does not mean you are in charge everywhere Angie.

ANGIE

It means that I was chosen to have the best strategies, and that's a skill that can be applied anywhere.

OLIVIA

Even in the woods in the middle of, where are we exactly?

SOPHIA

I think it's called Chester? Chesterton? Something like that. Or at least that was where we were when we started out.

AMY

(to ANGIE)

Well, I'm the high scorer so I should have the map, because it means that I am the most skilled.

ANGIE

How does that make any sense for being lost in the woods?

AMY

It makes just as much sense as claiming the map because you're the captain.

SOPHIA

Guys, excuse me, I'm sorry, but can we just stop fighting so we can get back to the bus? I don't like this place. It's really, ah....it's creepy. To me.

OLIVIA

To me too.

NELLY

Can we just sit for a minute? I-I-I have a...

NELLY sits to dump a stone out of her shoe.

ANGIE

Nelly, why do you always have to sit? The rest of us are tired too, you know, but I don't see anyone else sitting down.

AMY

Shut up Angie. She's got something in her shoe. Leave her alone.

ANGIE removes her black arm band and throws it.

SOPHIA

Okay friends, I think we need to be sensitive to what each of us needs. We're in this together.

ANGIE

You're not my friends--you're my teammates, my colleagues, that's all. I'm taking this off. Why are we wearing these anyway?

NELLY

It's for Th...Thysia.

ANGIE

How does it make sense to wear a very uncomfortable arm band (air quotes) to "honor" a dead person? I don't get it.

OLIVIA

It's a gesture--a symbol--to mark her absence, y'know, to honor her.

ANGIE

Well it doesn't make any sense to me, and I'm not wearing it.

SOPHIA

I don't really need an armband to remember her. I was thinking about her like all the time during the game today. Sorry.

OLIVIA

Don't apologize Sophia, I was too. When the score was getting tight, I thought about that time when we played, who was it, the Spartans or something like that, and it went into overtime? Thysia went so wild! Do you guys remember that?

As the girls share their memories of Thysia, they get more and more animated and manic, shouting over each other and laughing, all except for AMY, who stands somewhat apart from the rest of them.

ANGIE

I almost forgot about that--she was jumping and screaming her head off--I was so afraid that they were going to kick her out and we'd get penalized for disturbing the play or something.

OLIVIA

Total berserker. Loved it.

SOPHIA

/And her laugh!/  
/

OLIVIA

/Oh my god, how she'd just get in that spasm where it looked like she couldn't breathe/  
/

NELLY

/I thought she was going to k...k...keel right over every time/  
/

ANGIE

/Then she'd take that huge breath in and start snorting/  
/

OLIVIA

/Her snorts!/  
/

NELLY

/And those end-of-season p-p-parties at her house--Her mom was always trying to f-feed us, while she was singing and dancing, sp-spilling her drink all over the place/  
/

SOPHIA

/And making sure we all had a turn choosing the songs/  
/

OLIVIA

/Remember when her grandma came in and we all thought she was going to yell at us to turn the music down/  
/

ANGIE

/And she started dancing all raunchy instead--I think it was supposed to be twerking! That was hilarious!/  
/

NELLY

/I was really worried she was going to throw her back, out and we'd have to call the ambulance!/  
/

OLIVIA

/And Thysia would be not breathing and then snort-laughing/  
/

ANGIE

/And along with her grandma's crazy dance/  
/

SOPHIA

/Totally! I swear to god I had my finger over the 9, ready to punch in the 1-1! Wasn't sure if I was going to be calling for grandma's thrown-out back or because Thysia was about to pass out from doing her weird, sorry, not-breathing laugh snort/  
/

NELLY

/I swear to you, I thought soda was going to sq-squirt out my n-nose!

OLIVIA

And she'd start giggling every time she had something she didn't want to tell you.

ANGIE

Bad news or whatever.

SOPHIA

Her "tell" was so obvious, to me, anyway.

NELLY

I miss her.

Their laughter turns thoughtful, basking in the memories. AMY looks away uncomfortably.

ANGIE

She was complicated though.

NELLY

What do you m-mean? She seemed p-pretty regular to me.

ANGIE

Then you didn't know her that well. She had this way of, like, turning a discussion on you. Like, she'd, um, reflect back on you what you were saying about something and then/

OLIVIA

/And then you'd start to defend the opposite of that. Oh yea, I really liked when she did that. Cuz it made you start to defend the opposite.

ANGIE

Yea, she could tell that you didn't really mean what you were saying the first time, and she'd turn it on you and make you feel stupid for having thought that...but in a good way.

SOPHIA

I wish I had a chance to know her better, I didn't know her very long. It sounds like she was really insightful.

Beat.



NELLY

I wish she was here now, with us.

Beat.

AMY

Why? So there'd just be *six* of us lost in the woods? We need to keep going so we can get to somewhere there're actual, real people, not just stupid memories.

SOPHIA

(quietly, to herself)

Memories aren't stupid.

OLIVIA

Maybe we can ask to use a phone once we find someone.

ANGIE

If coach had let us have our phones back after the game, we wouldn't be in this mess. I could've put a ping on the location of the bus, and we'd be there by now.

AMY

How could we have gotten so lost? I mean, who puts a sports field so far away from the bus parking lot?

SOPHIA

They gave us the map...

AMY

That's what I mean! Who needs a map to get from they playing field to where the buses are parked!

ANGIE

It didn't seem so far when we came in.

SOPHIA

There were a lot of cars parked for the game by the time we got here though...I think.

OLIVIA

And we got dropped off near the field, remember?

NELLY

Doesn't anybody else think th-that it was s-so weird that all of the spectators just \*zip\* disappeared after the game?

AMY

What were they supposed to do? Stick around and celebrate with us? Their team lost-- They scooped up their players and went home, tails between their legs. Makes sense to me.

SOPHIA

I don't know why they'd feel ashamed about how they played. I thought it was a good match, until the end. They almost had us until coach put Amy back in the game. Right?

NELLY, OLIVIA, and SOPHIA make appreciative sounds at AMY. ANGIE ignores them.

AMY

Well, Olivia came up with the game plan, so it wasn't all me.

AMY and OLIVIA give fist bumps and vocalize mutual approval.

SOPHIA

I really love those moments when we are all able to work as a team and not just rely on a few superstars to carry us. I mean, I think that's great and everything, but...

NELLY

I'm still waiting for that moment to h-happen...

ANGIE

Guys, we've got to focus. I think I figured out where we are. It looks like we are walking westward--

OLIVIA

The sun looks like it's going to go down over there.

She points behind them.

ANGIE

I know, I know, but hear me out--

OLIVIA

(to self)

/That's weird--I could've sworn the sun was over there a minute ago./

She points in the opposite direction, lost in her analysis.

NELLY

/That means we are not g-going west, we are g-going east./

ANGIE references the map.

ANGIE

/No, but see, if you follow this path over this hill/

AMY

/It'll still be east, hills don't matter/

ANGIE

/it turns to the left sharply/

SOPHIA

/Wouldn't that be north then?/

ANGIE

/and there is what looks like a stream/

NELLY

/How does a stream help us?/

ANGIE

/GUYS! I am trying my best to help you. I don't know if I've told you but I've been a highly-decorated Girl Scouts for almost 10 years now-

The girls all give each other a rolling eye glance. They've heard this kind of speech before from ANGIE. NELLY begins to explore in her paper bag. She takes out a cheese sandwich and eats it.

And I know what to do when one is lost in the woods. And, as your team captain, you need to respect what I know and follow my lead.

SOPHIA

Angie, it's not that we don't respect you, we're just...sorry, it's just that we are lost right now, and what you are saying doesn't make any sense. To me. I don't know, I mean, I don't really know how to do maps so...

ANGIE

No, you don't. And you barely know how to execute the plays on the field, so maybe just stay in your lane, okay?

SOPHIA

Okay, yea, sorry.

AMY

Angie!

ANGIE

What?!

OLIVIA

Guys! I say we take a break. We've been wandering around in a circle for the past 40 minutes, and we were all tired when we started out.

NELLY

I don't know what it is--these l-late afternoon g-games always make me super tired.

AMY

Sounds good to me.

AMY plops down with her back to a large rock and produces a baggie of rolled weed from inside her shorts.

ANGIE

Ouch, there are too many rocks here/

OLIVIA

It's the woods, Angie, these rocks belong here more than we do.

ANGIE

I know but,--What is that?

AMY

What do you think it is?

ANGIE

You are NOT smoking drugs right now. May I remind you that drug use is forbidden when participating in any team sport for our school? As the captain of the team, I have an obligation to report you to Coach. You'll be kicked off the team permanently.

AMY

Are you sure you want to do that?

ANGIE

What do you mean?

NELLY

She means that if Amy's k-kicked off the team, we have pretty much z-z...*no* chance at the playoffs.

ANGIE

Sure we do. We can do it without her!

OLIVIA

No we can't, and today proved it. That team today were starting to beat our butts until Coach got over herself and put Amy back in the game.

SOPHIA

I don't know, I think they're right Angie. Amy totally won it for us. There's no way we're getting to the finals without her.

ANGIE looks around at all of the girls and then at AMY who blows a puff of smoke in her direction. She knows she's been beaten so scrambles to maintain some semblance of authority.

ANGIE

Okay. Just this once. What happens in the woods of Chester or wherever this is, stays in the woods of Chester. But once we're back at home, if I hear about anybody doing drugs, I WILL report you.

ANGIE sits on the other side of the rock where AMY is sitting and places the map carelessly on top of the rock. The map falls to the ground on the opposite side.

OLIVIA

In that case, pass it!

OLIVIA beckons AMY to share the joint. NELLY joins them. ANGIE huffs in disgust but does not partake. SOPHIA does not partake.

NELLY

Sophie, do you w-want some?

SOPHIA

No thanks. I'm going to find a spot to pee. I'll be right back.

NELLY

I gotta go too.

NELLY and SOPHIA start to go the same direction but stop and look at each other, in a stalemate about who should head in which direction to pee. SOPHIA gives in.

SOPHIA

Oh, sorry. I'll just...go...over...here. Excuse me. Sorry

SOPHIA and NELLY go in separate directions to find a place to pee.

ANGIE

(whispered)

Not that I mind, but why isn't Sophia smoking? What's her deal?

AMY

Not that it's any of your business, but her mom's in recovery. Again. So Sophie doesn't go near the stuff. Don't tell her I told you guys.

ANGIE

Recovery? You mean from drugs?

AMY

Drugs, alcohol, I don't know. Addiction of some kind.

ANGIE

How do you know that?

AMY

Her mom and my mom were friends when we were little. A bunch of times, I'd wake up and come out to the living room in the morning, and Sophia would be asleep on our couch. When her mom was on a bender. Her mom would drop her off until her aunt could come and get her. We never knew how long she'd be staying.

OLIVIA

Wait. I remember she was out of school for a couple of weeks last year. Was that because of her mom?

AMY

I'm not sure but, I think so, yeah. She doesn't like to talk about it. Obviously.

ANGIE

Is her mom still taking drugs or drinking or whatever?

AMY

No...yea...I don't know. It's complicated. Look, I really shouldn't've said anything. Just forget I told you guys that. She and I are not as close as we used to be when we were little, but I don't want her to feel bad, you know?

Cut to spotlight on where NELLY is standing up from a squat in the tall weeds. She is pulling her pants up when she notices HELEN standing nearby, watching her.

NELLY

Whoa! Hey...uh. Hi. Um, I was j-just...uh...

NELLY begins to "recognize" her. NELLY is nervous, obviously smitten. HELEN stands and smiles pleasantly the entire time. She makes no movements nor does she change her countenance.

NELLY

Wait a minute--aren't you in my th-third period Trig class? You sit in the s-second row, thr-three chairs in? I'm in the fourth. Row. The f-fourth row. I'm Nelly, by the way. I've...I've noticed you--you've g-got that really cool backpack, with all the, uhh, all the p-pins on it. Wow, it's really weird, you being out here, but, whatever, right? I've wanted to t-tell you that I-I-I really, uh, like your, uh, the c-color of your hair. It reminds me of the wood paneling in my grandparents' house when I was g-growing up. I've got g-g-good memories of that place. It always smelled like whatever my abuela was c-cooking. Hey--do you think you'd like to h-h-h-hang out sometime? I mean, we could g-go get something to eat after school sometime or something. I think that'd be really fu-fu-fu...I'd like that--if you wanna...

Shouts of alarm from Sophia from where the other girls are. NELLY looks toward the other girls briefly and when she looks back, HELEN is gone. NELLY shakes her head, as if she is awakening from a dream and returns to the others.

SOPHIA

I'm not sure but, I think I heard something over there.

ANGIE

It was probably a squirrel or something.

SOPHIA

It sounded much bigger. I don't know, I could just be hearing things.

AMY

(ignoring SOPHIA's concerns, weed is  
kicking in)

So what's everyone going to do next year?

OLIVIA

What do you mean?

AMY

I mean, Nelly, you and Amy are the only seniors here, right?

NELLY

Yep.

AMY

Are you planning to go to college?

ANGIE

Of course she is planning to go to college--what else would she do--(to NELLY) you'd better get your applications in now, early decision is the way to go, that way they know you really want it.

The girls look at NELLY, who is staring off into space, still in a trance from her experience in the weeds.

OLIVIA

Nelly?

NELLY

What? Oh, actually, I was th-thinking of taking a year off.

SOPHIA

Ooo, like a gap year?



ANGIE

I'd love to take a gap year. I'd travel to Greece or Turkey or somewhere. Just hang out on the beach and eat goat meat and sip juice and get a great tan. I think that'd put me in a great mental space for college. I'm hoping to get into Syracuse for pre-law. Then when I make partner, it'd be Roy and Roy Associates--my dad said that I could work for his firm. Are you going to travel Nelly?

NELLY

No, I'm going to w-work for my parents in their flower shop. I was p-p-planning to help them out some while I s-save up for college, maybe take a f-few classes at the community college.

ANGIE

You can maybe take the time to work on your stammer.

OLIVIA

Hey, Angie!

SOPHIA

Wow.

AMY

What a rude thing to say!

OLIVIA

That's so mean!

ANGIE

I don't mean it in a mean way. It's just that when you go to college, you have to be able to sound confident and speak with authority. And not make people anxious when you speak.

NELLY

I c-can't help it. It has n-nothing to do with how sm-smart I am or what I know.

ANGIE

I'm just saying that when you talk, it's hard to pay attention to what you are saying because I keep getting distracted by how you're saying it.

AMY

That's on you.

ANGIE

I think if you ask most people--and they're being honest--they'll say the same thing.

AMY  
(to NELLY)

I'm sorry Angie's such an ass.

NELLY  
It's okay. I've h-heard this before. I'm used to it.

SOPHIA  
(quietly)  
Doesn't make it right though.

ANGIE  
Well anyway, you don't want to go to community college--you'll miss out on the whole college experience.

SOPHIA  
That sounds like a sensible plan to me.

ANGIE  
I don't understand why you just don't go to college right away. Don't you want to go?

NELLY  
Yea, sure, but I n-need to save up some m-money. College is expensive yo.

ANGIE  
Yea, I guess. But still.

AMY  
Not everyone is loaded like your family, Angie. You are so rude.

ANGIE  
That's really racist Amy.

AMY  
What? To who?

ANGIE  
What you said--it was racist toward me.

AMY  
How was that racist?

ANGIE  
It was racist against wealthy people.

AMY

You can't be racist against rich people Angie. Rich isn't a *race*.

ANGIE

Whatever. Bigoted. Just because I'm rich, you think you can tell me I'm rude.

AMY

Because you are rude/

SOPHIA

Guys--Can we just stop it right now? This isn't helping anything. We should be working together to get out of this place.

NELLY

I wish I could go to c-college right away, and not a c-c-community college, but this makes sense for me and my f-family. That's all.

OLIVIA

(distracting the conversation)

What about you, Amy? Are you hoping to get an athletic scholarship?

ANGIE

Yea, right--

AMY

Well, that's probably the one way it'll happen. And actually, I've been approached by a recruiter from Ithaca College.

OLIVIA

Ithaca? That's awesome--that's a really good school too. Strong academics.

AMY

Yea, I guess. I'm not sure I'm going to go to college though.

ANGIE

What do you mean "you're not sure you're going to go to college?" What else would you do? You'd be wasting your life if you don't go to college.

SOPHIA

Guys, we shouldn't be/

AMY

/My mom didn't go to college and she's doing alright.

ANGIE

Your mom works at a surf shop--

AMY  
(getting angry)

--one that she co-owns/

ANGIE  
/Listen. I'm not trying to disrespect your mom, it's just that when you waste your talents/

AMY  
/My mom is probably the SMARTEST woman I know, and she decided that she doesn't want a life that's full of deadlines and all the bullshit that comes with that, which makes her smarter in my eyes than someone who works 20 hours a day to have a hideous McMansion, a wife who is cheating on him and would probably rather kill her husband than looks at him, and a couple of fucked-up kids.

Silence as everyone looks away. AMY's description of ANGIE's domestic status hits uncomfortably close.

ANGIE  
Well. I guess we'll see what your life is like when you're an adult, won't we?

AMY  
I guess we will...(softer) If I ever get that far.

SOPHIA  
Amy, don't say that.

OLIVIA pulls AMY aside.

OLIVIA  
Put the stuff away.

AMY  
It's a free country. If Angie doesn't like it, she can get bent.

OLIVIA  
I know, she can be obnoxious, but I think it's really getting on her nerves and you made your point. Just put it away for now, okay?

AMY glares but places the joint on top of the rock and puts the rolled remains in the baggie in her shorts pocket. As she does this, an ash from the joint falls on the map on the ground. It catches on the paper map on the ground and starts to smolder.

OLIVIA

(changing the subject)

Weed makes me hungry. I say we eat the lunches Coach gave us.

NELLY

(quietly)

I already ate mine. It was g-good.

They all unpack their lunches. All, except NELLY who sits quietly and watches. She notices the smoke from the now-burning map.

NELLY

Hey...Hey g-guys?

Everyone else is paying attention to the contents of their lunch bags.

AMY

What?

NELLY

Do you smell that? Like something's b-burning?

The girls look up in alarm and see that there is a small fire next to the rock. The map is now engulfed in fire.

AMY

Shit!/  
/

ANGIE

/Somebody do something!/  
/

OLIVIA

/Stomp it out!  
/

AMY pivots to stomp out the fire just as ANGIE uses her juice box to try to douse it. AMY's efforts to put out the fire destroy what was left of the map.

SOPHIA

What was that?

ANGIE looks closer.

ANGIE

Oh my god, you imbecile! That was my map!

SOPHIA

(quietly)

*Your* map?

AMY

What? Why's that my fault?

ANGIE

Your stupid joint caught the map on fire! Now we don't even have that to help us figure out where the fudge we are!

AMY

(unrepentant)

That map wasn't helping us anyway.

ANGIE approaches AMY aggressively and pushes her over. Her bracelet falls off in the struggle. OLIVIA grabs ANGIE before she can advance more. AMY gets up to charge ANGIE but NELLY holds her back.

ANGIE

Now we have no idea where we are or how to get back to the bus! Because you couldn't not do drugs for a few minutes longer!

AMY

Don't push me, you bitch!

SOPHIA

(more forceful than we've seen her)

Stop it! This isn't helping us find the bus at all! We need to work together if we're going to find the bus and get out of here. Accidents happen--we all know this too well. Amy didn't catch the map on fire on purpose, I'm sure.

She turns to AMY.

Amy, maybe you could apologize to Angie...?

AMY

I'm not apologizing to *her*--it wasn't her fucking map! And she broke the clasp on my bracelet.

AMY struggles to try to fix the clasp.

SOPHIA

We all know it wasn't *Angie's* map, but Amy, you should take responsibility for your part in what happened.

SOPHIA turns to ANGIE.

And you, Angie, should apologize to Amy for breaking her bracelet.

AMY

No. Fucking forget it. I'm not apologizing for shit.

ANGIE

Me neither. She had it coming.

OLIVIA

(sighs)

Listen, guys. Let's eat something. It sucks about the map, but it's done now. And I'm not sure what good it was doing us anyway. Like Sophia said, no one destroyed it on purpose, so let's move on.

SOPHIA

Amy, here, can I help you with that?

AMY glares at ANGIE but lets SOPHIA try to refasten her bracelet.

SOPHIA

(to AMY)

It's kinda broken but I got it closed, sort of. I think it'll be okay for a little bit--Just don't do anything rough with it until you get home. Maybe put it in your pocket instead or something.

AMY doesn't hear that last part because she's too busy glaring at ANGIE.

OLIVIA

Okay--We're all hungry and it's not helping our mood. So let's just sit down and eat the food that we have, and then we can decide what to do next, when we're not all so hangry.

SOPHIA

I agree.

NELLY

That's a g-good idea.

OLIVIA

Amy, you sit back down where you were, and Angie, you come over here. There's some space by me.

OLIVIA directs ANGIE out of range of AMY. AMY, ANGIE, SOPHIA, and OLIVIA open their brown paper bags and begin to explore their contents. NELLY stares off toward the weeds where she saw HELEN.

AMY

Let's see here. Tiny cheese sandwich, check; gogurt, check; pack of almonds, check; juice box-slash-fire retardant? The fuck. How old does Coach think we are?

OLIVIA

Twelve. Coach thinks we are twelve.

SOPHIA

I think these were provided by the school. Coach didn't pack them.

AMY, OLIVIA, and ANGIE begin to eat their lunches. SOPHIA and NELLY sit and watch them. There is a rustle in the bushes. The tension mounts as the unseen animal is perceived to come steadily closer. ANGIE is closest to where the "dog" is.

SOPHIA

What is that?

ANGIE

What is what?

SOPHIA

Over there, behind that bush! Oh my god!

NELLY

Wh-what is it?



AMY

It's a dog. I think.

NELLY  
(alarmed now)

Or a w-wolf.

OLIVIA

No, definitely a dog. Wolves are a little bigger...I think.

SOPHIA

What does it want?

OLIVIA

Someone throw your sandwich. Maybe it just wants something to eat./

NELLY

/Maybe it w-wants to eat one of us./

ANGIE

/Nelly, throw the dog your sandwich.

NELLY

I told you ah-already ate it.

ANGIE  
(angry)

Why did you eat it?

NELLY

It was a s-sandwich, and I was hungry--wh-what do you mean WHY did I eat it??

SOPHIA

Somebody do something!

ANGIE

Oh for Heaven's sake!

The tension and hysteria grows to a fevered pitch as ANGIE throws her sandwich far into the bushes. There is a crashing as the "dog" chases it, away from the scene.

OLIVIA

Wow. That was intense.

SOPHIA

Good job Angie--good thinking Olivia.

ANGIE

(recovering her wits)

Well, I guess as the leader of this group, it was my job to take care of it.

She looks around.

But that leaves me without a sandwich. And since we don't know when we are going to have another chance to eat, I think someone else should give me their sandwich. Amy?

AMY

(does not look up as she chews)

No way, bitch. That was your choice to throw it. This is *my* sandwich.

ANGIE

Real mature. So you would've let the wild beast attack us all so you could avoid having an empty stomach, is that it? Some leader you'd make.

AMY

If I was the leader, I wouldn't have gotten us lost in these freaky woods in the first place.

ANGIE

You have no idea what you'd have done as leader because you never step up to lead. You're too busy getting high and avoiding responsibility!

AMY

Up yours Angie. Too bad you don't have a de-li-cious cheese sandwich.

She stuffs it in her mouth and feigns enjoying it,  
chewing dramatically.

Ummm, so so good!

SOPHIA

Guys please stop it--Here, Angie, you can have mine. As a matter of fact, take the whole thing. I'm vegan and have a nut allergy, so I can't eat anything that coached pack for us anyway.

AMY

But Soph, what about the bread from the sandwich? And the juice--you can drink the juice.

SOPHIA

It's okay, I--

ANGIE

--Stay out of it Amy. If Sophie wants to give me her food, she can. Thank you Sophia. I accept.

AMY

So as a *leader*, you're going to let Sophie walk around without any food OR drink? After that game back there, where she gave 100%--You're going to take what food she *can* eat and keep it for yourself?

SOPHIA

Really, Amy, I don't m-/

ANGIE

/You got a problem with how I'm leading Amy? You've been on me since before the game. You think that because you're some kind of savant on the field that you can criticize my decisions as captain?

AMY

You're not the captain out here, Angie! You're just some bossy girl who pretends to have it all together. But I have news for you, you don't! None of us do! We are all 18-year-old kids/

SOPHIA

I'm 17.

OLIVIA

Me too. And Angie/

AMY

/Whatever--My point is that none of us has never been on our own, not really, in our whole entire lives. So yea, we're lost. With any of us leading, sure, we'd still be lost probably, but the rest of us would have had the humility to admit it, but you never will. That's what's bugging me--not that we're lost but that you refuse to admit it!

ANGIE stares directly at AMY as she addresses the group.

ANGIE

Okay, everyone, get up. We're getting out of here. Amy may think we are lost, but I don't--we just don't know where we are temporarily. And there's a difference. So grab your stuff and let's get going.

ANGIE stomps off stage left. The other girls look at each other and then follow her. NELLY hangs behind and searches toward the place where she saw HELEN. She sees nothing and follows her friends.

END OF SCENE 1

SCENE 2

The girls continue to trek forward, this time in more rocky terrain.

ANGIE

I'm sorry you guys but I have to stop here.

OLIVIA

(plopping down)

Sounds good to me!

AMY

The sun's going to go down soon. We need to power through so we can find someone to help us by nightfall.

ANGIE

I'm sure there're loads of people around here who are willing to help us--it's just a matter of finding them.

SOPHIA

Hey guys--Do you hear that? Someone is coming this way...

The girls' attention is directed toward a very tall man coming slowly but steadily from stage left. FEMUS is walking a small poodle-like dog, although it might not be visible to the audience. He is holding a leash and wearing very distinctive fashion sunglasses. He walks with a limp, obviously not able to move any faster than he is currently going.

FEMUS

Well what do my eyes present here? Looks like a few delicious young ladies along my trail, Shelly. What's the good word, ladies? Are you a couple of lost lambs?

ANGIE

How do you do? We are so happy that you've come along. You see, we're a little bit lost trying to find our way back to our bus.

FEMUS

Your bus?

ANGIE

That's right. We just played against your local team, the Mustangs--have you heard of them?

FEMUS

I can't say that I have.

ANGIE

Well, that's likely because they're the *girls'* team. Most communities don't pay much attention to their female sports teams.

FEMUS

That's probably true young lady, that's probably true.

AMY

I like your glasses.

FEMUS

Thank you very much. They help me see the wonderful world around me, even when the blessed sun is most abundant.

OLIVIA

We are just trying to find our way to someplace where we can use a phone.

FEMUS

(takes off his sun glasses and switches to a pair of very thick reading glasses from his shirt pocket, so he can get a better look at OLIVIA. As he does this, his fancy sunglasses fall out of his pocket. He does not notice this, but Olivia does.)

And who might you be?

OLIVIA

Me? I'm nobody. We just need some directions. We'll go and you can continue your walk, with your, uh, dog.

FEMUS

Unfortunately, I don't carry a telephone on my person during my late afternoon constitutionals, but if you ladies want, I could provide some refreshments and a snack or two back at my dwelling. I know this sun can beat down mightily, and a tall glass of lemonade might cure your worry.

ANGIE

I'd/

OLIVIA

/No. Thank you. Just direct us to a store or gas station or something near by.

FEMUS

Ah, now see, the problem is that ours is very intimate community, so we don't have any stores, per say--just a road house or two and the homes of some peculiar and singular inhabitants. The lone gas station is some distance away from here.

The girls are getting increasingly creeped out by FEMUS, who continually leers hungrily at each one in turn.

SOPHIA

Sir, if you don't mind, please just point us to whatever direction you recommend we go in, and we'll leave you to walk your, uh, dog.

FEMUS

Well now, that wouldn't be very hospitable, now would it? You ladies are guests in our humble town. That means that I'm obliged to offer you refreshments and rest. A succor to your weary souls, as it were.

NELLY

We're okay sir, just a l-l-little, y'know, hot.

FEMUS

I can see that you are.

There is an uncomfortable silence hanging over his last statement.

I'd bring you all some ice from my home but you ladies are so far from my house, or any other for that matter, that by the time I got back here to present it to you, it would have all melted away from the heat of Apollo's love. I have a feeling though that this humidity's gonna break soon, and likely in a way that won't be comfortable for man nor beast.

Bound to sometime--can't keep on like this forever. You'll get your liquid refreshment then, that's for sure.

OLIVIA  
(points stage left)

What is that way?

As FEMUS looks in the direction that OLIVIA pointed in, OLIVIA leans down and surreptitiously pockets FEMUS's glasses. AMY is the only one who sees her do this, and is more impressed than outraged.

FEMUS  
That way, if you go far enough, you're likely to run into Miss Cici's girls. Woo-wee, if you hear them sing, you gonna wanna stay there all day listenin' to them. Sound like angels would sound if they deigned to plant their feet on Earth, but between you and me, I reckon those girls come from the opposite direction, if you know what I mean.

ANGIE  
So that's some sort of, what, concert place?

FEMUS  
It's a barbecue joint, a nightclub, a speak easy--not for young ladies such as yourselves. Miss Cici and her girls mean to attract men, but sometimes, they'll take what they can get.

AMY  
But will someone there be able to help us?

FEMUS  
(shrugs)  
If they feel like it, I suppose they might, but they'd be just as likely to draw you in for some nefarious business.

ANGIE  
Okay, great, thanks, we'll be on our way now. Thank you so much for your help sir.

FEMUS  
I'm not aware that I provided much help.

OLIVIA  
(first to leave, over her shoulder)  
Oh, you did.

SOPHIA

Thank you for your time.

NELLY

Yea. We g-gotta g-go.

FEMUS

Well, I can't very well kidnap you all and keep you for myself, now can I?

ANGIE

No, you can't. C'mon girls.

The team starts walking away, at first slowly  
and then with much haste.

FEMUS

(as they're running away from him)

Watch out for that rain ladies. The water coming down around here can be ferocious. It comes and it goes, but mostly it comes, and after that, the darkness. Don't let that sun go down on you, sweet little lambs--Not unless you like it here and want to stay, forever. (to self) Unfortunate to let tasties get away. C'mon Shelly, let us continue our walk.

He reaches for his glasses.

FEMUS

Where're my shades?

He pats his pockets, looks around the ground,  
looks in the direction of where the girls went  
and growls.

END OF SCENE 2

SCENE 3

Thunder clap. All the girls come running from  
stage right toward stage left, where there is an  
overhang from a tree. A moderate rain has  
begun to fall, and the girls are taking shelter  
under the tree, huddled together.

OLIVIA

Everybody, this is the singularly worst place to be during a storm.



ANGIE

What, do you want to be out in that rain?

OLIVIA

No, but it's really dangerous to be near a tall tree during a lightning storm. Didn't you know that?

ANGIE

(covering)

Yea, of course I know that. But we are in the middle of a forest--we can't be anywhere except under a tree.

OLIVIA

Okay, that's true but let's just stay away from all of the bigger trees then, okay?

AMY

(to Sophia)

How are you feeling. Do you want to sit down?

SOPHIA

Yea, thanks.

ANGIE

It's not a good idea to stop. What if that Femus guy comes after us? He really gave me the creeps.

OLIVIA

He won't.

ANGIE

He might.

OLIVIA

No, he won't.

ANGIE

How do you know?

OLIVIA

Because I got these.

She puts FEMUS's glasses on.

AMY

You klepto!

AMY and OLIVIA fist bump.

SOPHIA

Olivia, I don't think you should've taken those.

OLIVIA

Why not? He'd have taken more than that from us if we'd given him half a chance. It was pre-emptive.

NELLY

What if he c-comes after us?

OLIVIA

He won't. Did you see how he needed his other glasses to see us up close? I think there was something wrong with his eyes. I don't think he could see more than 3 feet in front of him.

SOPHIA

Hold up--Do you guys smell that?

ANGIE

What?

SOPHIA

That smell. In the air.

They all inhale deeply.

NELLY

Is that...?

AMY

What is that?

OLIVIA

Diesel.

SOPHIA and OLIVIA look at each other, both realizing what it is at the same time.

OLIVIA/SOPHIA

The bus!

ANGIE  
What?

AMY  
(catching on)  
That's the smell of a bus, idling.

SOPHIA  
It's got to be around here somewhere!

NELLY  
We're cl-close!

ANGIE  
Get up everyone--let's go find it!

As they all rise, there is a thump near NELLY.

NELLY  
What was that?

AMY  
What?

NELLY  
Something heavy just f-fell near me.

ANGIE  
Who knows--probably a pinecone.

OLIVIA  
These are deciduous trees.

ANGIE  
A deciduous pine cone.

OLIVIA  
That's not--Oww!

OLIVIA gets hit.  
That was no pine cone!

AMY  
(suddenly alert, in battle stance, ready)  
Those aren't pine cone, those are rocks. Someone is throwing rocks at us.

NELLY

Over there!

More rocks come toward them from all sides. AMY races into the brush and grabs a young boy, who writhes and squirms desperately to get away.

AMY

Got one!

He bites her.

Owww! You little sh/

NELLY

/Look out!

SOPHIA grabs at another young boy as he dives toward AMY to help his friend. He bites her and they both get away. OLIVIA tries to hold AMY and SOPHIA back from charging after the boys, but is unable to.

OLIVIA

Come back here! No, don't/

ANGIE

/Let them go--we don't know what those wild kids are trying to lead us toward.

NELLY

But we have to st-stay together!

ANGIE

No we don't. Amy and Sophia made their choice to chase those degenerates--that wasn't my choice.

OLIVIA

(incredulously)

Are you seriously suggesting that we let Amy and Sophia go off by themselves?

ANGIE

I'm seriously suggesting that we need to find the bus. Once we get to where our people are, then we can get them to help us find Amy and Sophia...Besides, it's called *consequences*, for their impulsivity. I'm tired of Amy, especially, always diving into situations without thinking.

NELLY

I admire that about Amy--she's d-d-decisive. That's what makes her such a gr-great player. She doesn't waste time with h-himming and hawing about "what if this" and "yea but what if that." She s-sees s-something that needs to be d-done and just does it.

OLIVIA

I agree with you, Nelly. It seems like everybody makes such a big deal about firemen and the police because they run toward stuff that most people run away from, and everybody calls that bravery--and I guess it is--but if that's how we're defining bravery, then Amy qualifies too, because she sees what needs to be done and goes for it, every time. I could use some of that.

ANGIE

But we're not on a playing field right now, are we? And we aren't first responders. Amy has got to learn that impulsive behavior isn't appropriate in every moment in real life. There are consequences that come with acting on impulse. Actions or inactions cause things to happen, even if we don't intend for those things to happen. Like with Thysia.

OLIVIA

Hey, whoa. Stop right there. Amy is just as devastated about what happened to Thysia as we are, don't think that she's not.

ANGIE

I'm not saying that Amy doesn't feel guilty, I mean she should feel a little guilty/

OLIVIA

/I didn't say that she feels guilty, because she shouldn't feel guilty. She did nothing wrong.

ANGIE

That's not exactly true. *I* didn't give up my seat on that van, *you* didn't give up your seat, but Amy did. If she'd have stayed in the seat that coach had worked out in the first place, Thysia would be here today.

NELLY

And Amy w-wouldn't.

OLIVIA

(to ANGIE)

Would that be better, in your opinion?

ANGIE

No, I'm not saying "better," I'm just saying things would be different. Amy was the active agent in that situation--she switched seats with Thysia, so Amy bears some of the responsibility for what happened, and as we all saw back there, she *hates* taking responsibility when things go bad.

NELLY

No, Angie, that d-drunk driver bears 100% of the responsibility. Amy is innocent. She's a v-victim, just as much as Thysia was, as much as we are all victims of that guy's d-decision to get behind that wheel and dr-drive drunk that afternoon.

ANGIE

Whatever--I don't even know how we got on this topic. I'm only saying that Amy often acts like there are no consequences to her behavior, and there are. That's all I'm saying.

OLIVIA

And you're the one who's going to teach her that?

ANGIE

Not necessarily. I think life will find a way to teach her what she needs to learn. I'm just watching the horror show from the bleachers.

NELLY

She's your fr-friend. You should be rooting for her.

ANGIE

She's not my friend. I thought that at least was clear. I don't want to talk about this anymore. C'mon, we have to get going. You both can stand here, extolling Amy's heroics, or you can come with me to find that idling bus.

ANGIE turns and walks off stage left. NELLY and OLIVIA look at each other and then follow her.

END OF SCENE 3

SCENE 4

ANGIE, NELLY, and OLIVIA emerge from the weeds onto a road, on the other side of which is a shabbily-built shack with a hand painted sign “Sirens and Sauce.” Neon beer signs in the windows. From where they stand, they can hear blues and overtop, the sounds of beautiful and intricate music sung by women. They look up and down the road--no bus.

OLIVIA

(disappointed)

What?? It’s just a road. We were smelling the diesel from trucks on the road.

NELLY

I’m so hungry.

ANGIE

We’re all hungry, Nelly. Those tiny sandwiches didn’t do much for my hunger either. But don’t get it into your mind that that’s a reason to go barging into a bar in the middle of nowhere. We don’t even know what those people inside are like.

OLIVIA

I agree. As much as I’d like to believe that people are mostly good, we’ve encountered too much crazy in this god-forsaken place today to support the theory that they’d want to help us.

NELLY

So what do we do?

ANGIE

See? This is what I mean. Amy says that I try to take over all the time, but the truth is, everyone is always asking *me* what we do next. You guys obviously are looking for someone to lead you and make decisions and stuff, so why’s it my fault that I step in to help?

NELLY

I didn’t m-mean for you to take it as a c-command.

OLIVIA

Listen, why don’t we just sit here for a little while, kind of watch the door, see who is going in and out, get a feel for what this place is all about. I could use the rest, what about you guys?

NELLY

Yes, that sounds g-good.

The girls sit. Nelly looks around at the sky.

NELLY

Doesn't it seem like it should be d-dark by now? I mean, it's like it's constantly on the v-  
erge of night without actually becoming night.

OLIVIA takes this in and thoughtfully looks at  
the sky but ANGIE is on her own mind trip.

ANGIE

You know, Sybil said this was going to be a disaster.

OLIVIA

What? Who? Sybil Delfini? What does she know? That girl always has something  
negative to say about everything.

ANGIE

Yea. But when she said to be *extra careful* today, I thought she was talking about the  
game, that we were going to lose, which of course didn't happen. So now I'm starting to  
wonder what she actually meant--if she somehow knew we were going to get lost like  
this.

OLIVIA

If you're negative about everything, you'll be right a lot of the time. That's just the odds.

ANGIE

I guess.

The girls sit for a beat, no one knows what to do  
and is waiting for someone else to come up with  
a plan. There is a loud squawking sound.

NELLY

(alarmed)

What was that?

OLIVIA

Probably just a bird.

ANGIE

I'll be glad when we finally get back to the city. All this weird...wildlife is freaking me  
out.

ANGIE slaps a mosquito on her arm.



NELLY

I hope Amy and Sophie are alright.

OLIVIA

Yea, me too.

ANGIE

It'd be really useful to have Amy here for sure.

NELLY

Because she's usually so b-brave and probably have ideas about h-how we can do this...

ANGIE

I meant because she's probably used to going into bars.

OLIVIA

Angie!

NELLY

What do you m-mean?

ANGIE

Because of her mom.

OLIVIA

(groans)

Angie.

ANGIE

I'm serious. You guys don't know this, but we used to be best friends in 4th grade--well, close friends anyway--and I can't even tell you about some of the stuff her mom put her through, even back then.

OLIVIA

Angie you need to stop/

ANGIE

/No, I know what I'm talking about. It was pretty messed up. Her mom's like a completely different creature. Emotional abuse stuff, all worried that Amy was going to die young, shoving supplements down her throat every second, doing really wacky things to try to keep her "safe." Really. It's like that mental illness, man- or munch- something.

OLIVIA

Munchausen Syndrome.

ANGIE

Yes! It's like she has that. Her mom's out of this world.

OLIVIA

Seriously, you really need to shut up about Amy's mother.

ANGIE

Or what?

OLIVIA

Or we'll tell Amy that you've been talking smack about her mother and let her deal with you, one-on-one.

NELLY

Besides, she's n-not the only one with a m-messed up family.

OLIVIA

Yea, that's for sure.

ANGIE

(faint)

Yea.

Beat.

OLIVIA

(tentative)

Angie?

ANGIE

What?

OLIVIA

(carefully)

How's your family holding up--I mean, since your sister...

ANGIE

(overcompensating)

We're great. We're more than great. We are doing wonderful. Effie's passing has really, y'know, brought the rest of us together as a family. My dad is home more, for dinners and stuff, so now we have a regular movie night, which is great.

We are planning to go somewhere really exotic in a couple of months, which I'm so excited about--I'm going to come back from winter break with a tan! That kind of stuff didn't happen when Effie was around.

OLIVIA and NELLY give each other a "look."

ANGIE

(to self)

Of course, I'm not saying I don't miss her--I do. Every day...It's just, you can't dwell on that kind of thing. It's like you were saying about Sybil--a person might start to develop a reputation for being a drag to be around, and that's not what I want for myself. I've been so busy with managing the team, and once the season is over, next thing you know, it'll be spring and time to take SAT's and that's so important! I mean you can't be distracted by things that you can't do anything about. Even if you...even if you wish you could. That's why I don't like wearing those stupid black arm bands. It's morbid. I just don't think it's healthy to dwell, y'know?

NELLY, shakes her head and turns away from the others. She reaches into her pocket and pulls out a set of ear buds and places them in her ears. ANGIE sees this.

ANGIE

Nelly?

NELLY does not hear her.

ANGIE

Nelly? NELLY!

NELLY

What?

OLIVIA

You have ear buds!

NELLY

Yea, s-so?

ANGIE

How are you listening on your ear buds--Nelly, do you have your phone with you...have you had your phone with you this entire time??

NELLY

N-no.

OLIVIA

Then what are your earbuds hooked up to?

NELLY

Nothing.

OLIVIA

What do you mean “nothing”?

NELLY

Sometimes I p-put them in to block sounds around me. So I can enjoy a little quiet. I have sensory issues.

OLIVIA and ANGIE sigh--they had gotten their hopes up. NELLY takes the ear buds out and puts them into her pocket. OLIVIA watches her.

NELLY

(startled)

Look! Somebody is coming out!

As the girls watch, several men enter the club. Right after, a striking woman emerges from the nightclub and approaches a smoking grill, lifts the top and adjusts the meat inside.

NELLY

Oh my god, it's barbeque--it smells so freakin' good!!

OLIVIA

It does.

NELLY

I can't stand it--I'm g-g-going down there.

ANGIE

Nelly/

NELLY

/I don't care. I'm s-starving, we don't know where we are, and we d-don't know where our friends are, and none of that will be solved by hiding up here in the rocks. You c-can come if you want to, but I'm g-going.

NELLY crawls over the rocks and approaches the woman.

OLIVIA  
(whispers)

Nelly! Come back!

ANGIE  
(urgent whisper)

Be quiet!

LADY CICI  
Ooo, what do we have here? Hello young traveler.

NELLY  
Hi. My name is Nelly. Um, Some friends and I, we just, uh, just played a g-g-game not far from here--actually, I'm not sure how f-far away it was, but anyway, we're trying to find our way back to our b-bus. At the parking lot. For the b-buses.

LADY CICI  
You're not from around here then.

NELLY  
No Ma'am, we're n-not.

ANGIE  
(to OLIVIA)  
What the devil is she doing? Why is she telling that stranger all about us?

OLIVIA  
(loud whisper)  
She's hungry--She's thinking with her stomach. And apparently her stomach has no filter.

LADY CICI  
Well, child, you must be hungry.

NELLY  
Yes ma'am, I sure am.

LADY CICI  
Well why don't you come on in, sit down, I'll give you something to eat, you get a little rest, and then we can talk about what I can do for you.

NELLY  
That would be so g-great.

LADY CICI leads NELLY into the club.  
NELLY is holding a plate full of barbeque.

ANGIE

What?? She's just going to go in there without us?

OLIVIA

You said you didn't want to go in there.

ANGIE

But it's important that we stick together.

OLIVIA

That wasn't your philosophy when Amy and Sophia went running after those wild boys.

ANGIE

(waving her off)

*They* can handle themselves just fine. It's Nelly I'm worried about.

OLIVIA

So what do you want to do? Do you want to follow her?

ANGIE

Do YOU want to follow her?

OLIVIA

Yes, I think we should.

ANGIE

Fine. But if something happens, I'm blaming you.

OLIVIA

Okay, whatever.

ANGIE and OLIVIA go to the club door.

ANGIE

Do we knock?

Just as ANGIE asks, the door opens by itself.  
The girls look at each other and go inside.

END OF SCENE 4

SCENE 5

The inside of the club--there are neon lights and heavy bass sounds over several empty tables and stools. There are poles but no dancers. ANGIE and OLIVIA squint to try to see what's around.

ANGIE

This doesn't look so bad.

OLIVIA

Yea, I don't trust it. Where did those men coming in here go? The place looks empty--maybe it's not open for business yet?

ANGIE

Hey--there's Nelly!

NELLY is sitting alone at a table on a stool in the corner, absorbed in eating ribs and barbeque. ANGIE pulls OLIVIA to where NELLY is sitting. Both girls are visibly relieved to have found her, but NELLY barely notices them.

ANGIE

Nelly! Oh my gosh, you about gave us a heart attack!

NELLY

These ribs!!! You have g-got to try these--they are ah-mazing! Here, want a b-bite?

OLIVIA

No, thanks, I'm vegetarian.

ANGIE

(to OLIVIA)

Since when?

OLIVIA

(under her breath to ANGIE)

Since I'm in a place where I don't know who these people are, and since I'm not really keen on eating food from strangers--particularly and especially meat.

ANGIE

Well I'm starving, so yes, I'd love a bite. Thank you Nelly.

NELLY holds out a rib and ANGIE takes a bite. She is immediately smitten.

ANGIE

Oh. My. God. Olivia--you have GOT to taste this. I've never had ribs this good. What am I saying, "good," these are PHENOMENAL!

ANGIE sits down beside NELLY and begins to eat ravenously from her plate.

OLIVIA

Guys. Slow down. You're going to choke or something.

NELLY

Olivia, aren't you hungry?

OLIVIA

Sure I am, but I don't think this is a great idea/

LADY CICI

/Hello, what's this? Nelly, you brought guests.

NELLY

(mouth full of food)

They just got here Ms Cici. I offered them a little of mine.

LADY CICI

Girls. I'm happy to share our bounty. Let me get you your own plates...

She sees that OLIVIA is not eating.

LADY CICI

Would you like me to fetch you a plate of food?

OLIVIA

Oh, no ma'am. I'm good.

LADY CICI

But if you've been traveling with Nelly here, then you certainly must be at least as hungry as she was. (She sees ANGIE) And your friend here seems hungry as well.

ANGIE

(mouth full)

I'm Angie.

LADY CICI

Hello Angie. It's a pleasure to make your acquaintance. I'm Lady Cici.

LADY CICI turns back to OLIVIA.



LADY CICI

Do you like ribs or pulled pork best?

OLIVIA

Neither ma'am, really. I couldn't possibly/

NELLY

/She's v-vegetarian.

LADY CICI

You're kidding. Oh honey, protein is an important part of how our bodies transform and change, and meat is the easiest way to access this very important nutrient. I certainly won't lecture you about your dietary choices, but a young woman as fit as you are needs to be careful about what, if any restrictions she imposes on herself. Life is meant to be lived without constraints. You should reject limitations, not embrace them. Heavens know that there plenty of those trying to restrict us without our helping them.

OLIVIA

It's just, y'know, I love animals and I'm just not a fan of eating things I love.

LADY CICI just looks at her blankly, not understanding.

OLIVIA

And the planet too--you've got to consider the damage that raising livestock does to the environment, greenhouse gases from all the waste, and the carbon cost for all the feed for the animals before slaughter. It's a lot.

Beat. LADY CICI still doesn't get it.

OLIVIA

Plus it gives me diarrhea.

LADY CICI

Oh, well, in that case, I can look to see if we have anymore slaw or potato salad, some chips maybe?

OLIVIA

No, I'm totally good. As a matter of fact, we should be going now.

LADY CICI

I understand. You young women are so busy these days, running from one obligation to another. But I was hoping that you could stick around for just a few minutes more.

My girls, the Sirens, have a new song that they've been so nervous about incorporating into the show. They wrote it themselves, and I was hoping you wouldn't mind hanging out just a few minutes more, to give them the pleasure of an audience as they warm up for the show later on this evening.

ANGIE

Sure.

NELLY

Mmmhmmm.

OLIVIA

(sighs)

Okay, but just a few moments. We for real need to get going to find our friends.

LADY CICI

I promise it'll be like time has no meaning when you hear these gals.

LADY CICI goes to a door upstage, opens it, and shouts inside. OLIVIA grabs the ear buds out of NELLY's pocket without her noticing and puts them in her ears.

C'mon girls. I found you a few pairs of eager ears, ready and willing to hear your new song.

Three women emerge from the rear door. Each one is a vision, dressed as if they are about to perform at Carnegie Hall, bedecked in sparkling formal gowns. They are beautiful, sparkling, and completely alluring--otherworldly.

LADY CICI

(to NELLY, ANGIE, and OLIVIA)

Girls, these here are my star attractions: Amelia, Gertrude, and Fanny, the Singing Sirens!

The three women look at each other as they fall into a humming harmony that swerves and flows in graceful dips and peaks. NELLY, ANGIE, and OLIVIA stare, slack jawed and utterly stilled, at the singers as their voices soar and tumble for 1-2 minutes. It's mesmerizing. When their song ends, the 3 singers turn and leave the room without another sound.

During this time, LADY CICI is watching the 3 younger girls' reactions to the singers intensely and looks pleased. OLIVIA takes the ear buds out of her ears without LADY CICI noticing. ANGIE notices OLIVIA remove the ear buds but says nothing. OLIVIA does not see that she's been seen.

OLIVIA

I...I need to use the bathroom.

LADY CICI

It's right back there, sugar.

OLIVIA stumbles down from her stool and heads toward stage right, where there is a hallway that leads to the bathrooms. LADY CICI takes the opportunity to sit where OLIVIA was sitting, to be closer to NELLY and ANGIE.

LADY CICI

(to NELLY and ANGIE)

What do you girls think? Are the Sirens ready for the big audience?

NELLY

(still recovering, trance-like)

Oh my god, they were soooo good! I've never heard anything like that!

ANGIE

Can we hear them again?

LADY CICI

Of course! They'll be singing later tonight, once the place begins to fill up with customers. Y'all are welcome to stay so you can hear them again then.

ANGIE

That would be incredible!

NELLY

Yea, I wanna stay, I definitely wanna stay.

OLIVIA is in the bathroom, splashing water on her face. Her back is to the audience.

She looks up, into the mirror and is staring at her “reflection”--she is staring directly at HELEN in the mirror.

OLIVIA

This is not good. This is not good. Okay, Olivia, THINK. It’s what you do, it’s your super power. You need to find a way to get you and your friends out of here...Okay, so that woman out there is mighty sus. And she obviously wields some amount of power in this town, but damn, this is a very creepy place, so first thing’s first--get us out of here. We’ll figure out where to go from here, after we’re clear of this place. (She looks directly at her reflection/HELEN.) Okay, Olivia, you can do this. Oh god, I just wish we had some help!

OLIVIA turns from the mirror, collects herself and emerges from the bathroom into the hallway. She almost collides with a small, older woman with a mop and a bucket, busy cleaning the hallway.

OLIVIA

Sorry, excuse me. I didn’t see you there.

MINERVA

You and your friends need to be getting on now.

OLIVIA

I’m sorry, what?

MINERVA

Lady Cici, she’d like nothing more than to have you girls stay forever here, but you best be getting on.

OLIVIA

And you are...?

MINERVA

Name’s Minerva. I do all the cleaning up around here--Folks don’t pay much attention to the cleaning lady, so I see *a lot*. And I’m telling you, for the last time girl, you need to collect your friends over there and get on. Go and forget about this place.

MINERVA gathers her bucket and mop and begins to walk away.

OLIVIA

Wait a minute, are you saying that we're in danger here?

MINERVA

This is no place for you. Go back to where you came from so you don't get hurt. And don't come back here. Ever. Turn left once you leave this place and go awhile up the road until you find a young girl named Cassandra. You'll know her by all the gold chains she wears, which she can't get enough of, but which, I don't mind tellin' ya, the rest of us find to be gaudy as hell. Anyways, this girl Cassandra has use of her father's car. Convince her to take you to the bus lot off highway 10. There's a big storm comin' so you want to get there quicker more than slow. You need to make sure e'ry body is out and gone by nightfall.

MINERVA turns to go but remembers something.

MINERVA

And one more thing, whatever you do, don't stop by Miss Callie's house as you pass by, no matter how lit up and welcoming it may seem. Lord, that woman is so lonely, if she gets to talking to ya, she'll never let you leave. Do. Not. Stop. There. It's not really my department, but I'll do what I can to buy you a few extra hours of daylight...

MINERVA shuffles away, behind where LADY CICI and the 2 other girls are sitting and off stage. They do not see her.

OLIVIA

What do you mean you'll "buy us a few extra hours of daylight"? Why is everybody here so weird?

But MINERVA is gone. OLIVIA returns to the table with her friends.

OLIVIA

Hey guys, it's time we get going if we want to find the bus before it's pitch black outside.

She turns to LADY CICI.

Thank you very much for your hospitality--For the ribs and the entertainment, but we have to go.

LADY CICI

Now Honey, that doesn't sound like a very democratic decision. It seems your two friends here have different ideas about what they want to do, don't you girls?

ANGIE

Yea, Olivia, I'm the captain of the team and I/

OLIVIA, fully alarmed now, grabs her friends and hoists them from their stools, dragging them forcefully toward the door.

OLIVIA

(over her shoulder)

Thanks again!

LADY CICI

Can I at least ask what changed your mind?

OLIVIA

Your cleaning lady, Minerva. She gave me some good advice, and I think I'll heed it.

LADY CICI

(shouting after them as the door slams shut)

There's no one named Minerva here! Damn!

END OF SCENE 5

SCENE 6

AMY and SOPHIA are both on hands and knees at the crest of a small hill, desperately searching the floor of the forest, slightly out of breath. It's clear that they've only recently stopped running.. It's been steadily getting darker, but it's not yet fully night. AMY's bracelet is no longer on her arm.

AMY

(frustrated)

Where is it?

SOPHIA

Are you sure you dropped it around here and not back there, as we were chasing those boys?

AMY

No, I know it was along here somewhere. I felt it slip off.

SOPHIA

We almost had those guys too--until you stopped because of your bracelet.

AMY

(sounding more vulnerable than she has yet)

Just keep looking....please.

SOPHIA is taken aback with the level of vulnerability in AMY's voice--She's not used to that.

SOPHIA

I...I can look over there, it might've fallen before you noticed that you lost it or something.

She points to the other side of the hill.

AMY

Yes...whatever...please. I, I need to find it...

SOPHIA walks to the other side of the hill-- AMY cannot see her from there--and SOPHIA begins to search the forest floor. Unseen, HELEN steps out from behind a bush. SOPHIA hears a stick break and looks up. HELEN remains still, with her enigmatic smile, looking at SOPHIA the whole time, just like she did with NELLY & OLIVIA. Note: the level of anger in SOPHIA's words to HELEN should seem very out of place to who she's been so far in the play. She becomes steadily more emotional as she speaks.

SOPHIA

(startled)

Oh my god! (suddenly annoyed) What are *you* doing here? I told you I didn't want to see you anymore. Are you following me? Did you follow us to our game? You're just lucky I didn't see you on the sidelines, because if I had seen you, I...well, I don't know what I would've done...I'm just, I'm tired. Of being hurt by you. Of being disappointed by you. The psychiatrist says I have trust issues, you know. *I wonder why.*

All my life, you've been a source of pain and disappointment, and so I'm sick of it...I know I'm not supposed to say this, I feel bad for even *thinking* this,...but I wish you'd died, or, I'd died, last year. At least then, either way, all these feelings of loss and hurt and betrayal, they'd have someplace to go. But it's hard--how can people understand that I feel like I lost my mother when you're still *fucking alive*??

Beat, as she tries to get a handle on her emotions. She speaks the following line with her head down.

I don't hate you...maybe I do. I just don't understand why I had to have *you* as my mother. And that thought makes me so...ashamed.

SOPHIA looks up but HELEN is gone. The spell is broken. She glances around, confused and walks to where HELEN had been standing. She is suddenly spooked. She walks back to rejoin AMY, who is still searching the forest floor on the other side of the hill. SOPHIA stands and watches AMY for a moment, then looks at the sky.

SOPHIA

Don't you think it should be dark by now? It feels like it's been *almost dark* for like, a while.

AMY doesn't answer. She is lost in her desperate searching.

SOPHIA

Why do you even wear that bracelet? I mean, it's cool and everything but doesn't it get in the way when you're playing? It seemed kind of...bulky. I mean, I know I like to keep my limbs free for balance when I play. Anything on my arms would interfere with my running. I mean, normally Coach tells us "no jewelry," so I don't understand why she allows you to wear that/

AMY

/Thysia gave it to me. Before she...

SOPHIA

Oh...sh-. I'm sorry, Amy. I didn't know/

AMY

/No, it's okay.



AMY begins looking around again. SOPHIA joins her once again, and they continue searching as they talk.

AMY

Hey, thanks for coming with me by the way. I mean, no one else moved a damn muscle to help me back there.

SOPHIA

Yea. No problem. I mean, it was sort of exciting actually, just doing something without thinking about it. It made me feel kinda, I don't know...alive? That energy--I haven't felt like that in awhile.

AMY

Watch out, I might be rubbing off on you. Now we're good and lost though.

SOPHIA

At least we're lost together.

AMY

(looks up at this, grateful)

True.

SOPHIA

Hey do you mind if we stop for a minute? My head sort of hurts. I need to close my eyes for a second. It helps to do that at the beginning when I get these kinds of headaches.

AMY

Okay, sure, you rest for a minute. I'm gonna keep looking though...Are you still getting those headaches, from the crash?

SOPHIA

Sometimes. They're getting better though. For the first couple of weeks afterward, I had a hard time getting out of bed, they were so bad, but the doctor said they would happen less and less often, and he's been right, so far. How about you?

AMY

How about me what?

SOPHIA

Are you still getting headaches?

AMY

No, I uh, I didn't have those kinds of injuries.

SOPHIA

Oh yea, it was your ankle, right? I mean, you are running great. You're super fast.

AMY

(confessing)

Actually, I went to PT for a while but they said that there wasn't anything wrong with my ankle, that it was up here.

She taps her head.

SOPHIA

Head injury?

AMY

No.

SOPHIA

(realizing)

They thought you were faking being injured?

AMY

(shrugs)

Yea, they said that my ankle, my whole body for that matter, was fine. I was in the back of the van, so...

SOPHIA

(realizing the sensitive emotional territory they are in)

Oh, yea. I forgot. Sorry...Nelly was kind of lucky though. I mean, she was sitting right next to...and her injuries really weren't all that bad.

AMY looks away. It's clear she doesn't want to talk about it and that SOPHIA's efforts to find the bright side are falling flat.

SOPHIA

Should we, uh, get going you think?

AMY does not respond.

SOPHIA

Do you want to talk about it?

No response.

SOPHIA

Amy?

Still nothing.

Y'know, it bothers me that everyone avoids talking about it, the crash I mean. I don't know why--I mean, I *know* why, but I don't think that's the right way to handle it. Of course you feel sad that Thysia died, but Amy, it wasn't your fault that she was sitting in that seat. And it's definitely not your fault that she died. There was no way any of us could know what was going to happen when we got in the van that day. They even said in the police report about how it was a freak thing that so many of us walked away without hardly a scratch even though Thysia didn't make it. My aunt got ahold of the report and told me what it said...Amy? Are you hearing me?

AMY

I have nightmares. Almost every night. About the crash. I can hear the crunch of the metal but then I wake up and...that's it for the night. I'm getting like, I don't know, 2 or 3 hours of sleep. Total. Each night. I know everyone thinks I'm being a spaz and that I'm impulsive--Like running after those kids just now or being extra berserker on the field during a game or whatever--but I do those things because I'm not like...I'm not thinking straight, cuz of the lack of sleep. I can't...I can't think past my next step, like the future doesn't exist for me. Because maybe it wasn't supposed to? Maybe I was supposed to die in that crash, not Thysia. That was *my* seat. Coach put me in that seat and I, I... (fades)

SOPHIA

(gently)

You what?

AMY

(angry)

She was always so damned agreeable, y'know? If you needed water, a sweater, a snack, she'd always be the one to get it for you, like she didn't have anything better to do with her time--Like she was there to make sure everyone else was taken care of. I once told her that I liked her bracelet and that Christmas, she wrapped it up and gave the damned thing to me. Just cuz I told her it was nice once. And I didn't even think to get *her* anything for Christmas. I didn't think we were that good of friends. She was such a *pure* person and she agreed, she *agreed* to trade seats, even though I knew she rather sit in the back, and even though she knew, she knew why I wanted to trade and instead of ratted me out, she *traded*--she did it. She was a fucking FRIEND and because of that...she's dead.

SOPHIA

What do you mean “she knew”? Why did you want to trade seats with her?

AMY

I’d been smoking weed that day, before we got in the van, and I didn’t want to sit near Coach, in case she smelled it on me, so I asked Thysia to trade seats with me. And Thysia did, because she was kind and sweet and all the things I’ll never be. And the world is a little less good because I asked her to trade seats with me.

AMY puts her head in her hands and sobs.

SOPHIA tentatively puts her hands on AMY’s back.

SOPHIA

I don’t know what to tell you, Ams. I don’t believe you’re a bad person just because you were unbelievably *lucky*. You’re the one making yourself responsible for Thysia’s death, so you’re going to have to find a way to forgive yourself and move on. All I can do is be here for your while you work that out. And I don’t think Thysia would’ve wanted you to beat yourself up for surviving. I’m just saying.

AMY looks up with swollen eyes at SOPHIA, perhaps seeing who she “is” for the first time.

AMY

Where’d you get your psychology degree, Dr. Sophia? You sound like you’ve read too many books.

SOPHIA

Believe me, if you had the mom I have, you’d be very familiar with the lingo of how to let that shit go.

AMY

(teasing gently)

Glad I could provide you an opportunity to use your skills.

SOPHIA

I’ll send you a bill.

The girls smile at each other and both look away. SOPHIA looks toward the hill where she saw HELEN. AMY’s attention is drawn to a gold shine on the ground as lightning flashes and there is an almost simultaneous crack of thunder.

AMY  
(she gasps)

My bracelet!!

She grabs for it.

SOPHIA  
(looking upward)  
Amy? I think we need to go. *Now.*

Another flash of lightning as the stage goes black.

END OF SCENE 6

SCENE 7

In a modest living room, decorated era 1970's. AMY and SOPHIA sit awkwardly, looking around the sparse and worn furnishings and decorations. A few sheep skins are over furniture or on the floor. There are religious pictures and crosses all over the place, including a large framed photo of FEMUS wearing his fancy sun glasses. There is clean, white carpeting on the floor. Neither girl is wearing her shoes. An older woman, MS. CALLIE, enters from a door upstage with 2 cups (with saucers) of tea. She walks slowly and carefully, presenting as somewhat frail but has a menacing edge. It is getting noticeably darker outside.

MS. CALLIE  
(sweetly)

Now isn't this so much better than being lost in the woods, with the coming weather and nightfall and all? It's a good thing I was out taking my dailies so I could run into you two.

MS. CALLIE looks around, from AMY to SOPHIA with a pleased look on her face.

Now, I thought I had some cocoa, but it looks like the bugs got there first, so I hope you two like tea. I don't have any sugar--I'm diabetic--but I think I might have some honey around somewhere, if you'd like.

AMY

This is fine, thank you, I don't need any...

SOPHIA

Yea, I'm good. Thank you ma'am.

MS. CALLIE distributes the tea and then shuffles over to sit in the chair next to SOPHIA. She is clearly thrilled to have visitors and looks at them expectantly.

MS. CALLIE

It was a blessing that I found you girls when I did. It's about to get fierce out there. Storm of the century some on the news is saying. But of course, half the time, those news people don't know what they're talking about.

AMY

Ma'am, you don't happen to have a phone or some/

MS. CALLIE speaks while arranging her belongings around her and her clothes, making sure everything is "just so."

MS. CALLIE

/Lord no, not in this house darlin'. I've had about enough battle with cancer without bringing it to me on a platter. I know I seem fit as a fiddle but did you know that I won a war with cancer last year? What am I sayin'--of course you don't know--You don't know me from hullabaloo. But I did. I took on That Old Silly--that's what we girls down at the hospital called it to show that we weren't afraid, *That Old Silly*. There was a whole gaggle of us girls that would meet every 2 days for months down at Cherry Hill Hospital to get our chemo. Called it the sip and drip club. But of course we were all afraid, but none of us wanted to be the one to show it. Especially when it reached in and got 3 of our club members--they didn't see That Old Silly coming. I mean, of course we knew what might happen--we weren't there just for the company after all--but without warning, (violently) BAM!!

Both girls jump, almost spilling their tea.

One of our friends would quit coming to get her chemo, and we all guessed why. Grabbed and gone. Out of nowhere.

As much as that chemo caused it's own kind of storm in our bodies, we didn't want to get got neither, not at all. It was a kind of dance between 2 monsters--the chemo storm on our left and *That Old Silly* on our right, ready to take us to our maker.

Beat.

Oh, I know what we need! I think I have some cookies from last Christmas in one of my kitchen drawers, tucked away. I so rarely get guests, but I save them for when I do--and here you are! I'll be just a minute.

MS. CALLIE shuffles off to the kitchen.

AMY

(loud whisper)

What are we doing here?

SOPHIA

I don't know. It looked like the sky was going to open up any second. And I thought you wanted to come with her.

AMY

I though *you did*.

SOPHIA

No way. I'm sorry, but she kind of creeps me out. I'm starving though, and this tea tastes pretty good.

AMY

I'm not drinking it.

SOPHIA

Why, don't you like tea?

AMY

I like tea fine. But I think it's a bad idea to eat or drink something from someone I don't know. Especially from *her*.

SOPHIA

(to self)

That's surprising.

AMY

Why's that surprising.

SOPHIA

Oh, no, I mean, it was just that Angie had said/

AMY

/What did Angie say about me?

SOPHIA

Nothing...She just mentioned that you used to/

AMY

/Whatever I “used to do” is not necessarily what I’m doing *now*. And Angie had no right to be talking about me. To anyone.

SOPHIA

Yea, no, you’re right. I didn’t...She didn’t...Sorry.

AMY

I don’t even know why I’m fighting it. If everyone wants to see me as the fuckup of the school, then I should just embrace it, right? At least that way, they all see me how I see myself.

SOPHIA

You’re not a fuckup.

AMY

Oh really?

SOPHIA

Yes, really. I wouldn’t follow you, on the field and into the woods, if I thought you were anything but what you are, which to me isn’t a fuckup. I’m sorry but you’re braver than anyone else on our team, including Olivia, and definitely including Angie. You don’t *pretend* to be the best player on the team, you ARE the best player on the team. You don’t *pretend* to be fearless, you ARE fearless/

AMY

/phhf/

SOPHIA

/What? You are!

AMY

I thought I explained all that in the woods...

SOPHIA

It doesn’t matter *why* you’re fearless, it just matters that you are.



AMY

No, it *does* matter why, if you're brave only because of a weakness/

SOPHIA

/Sometimes a person's weakness *is* their strength.

AMY

Ahh, you're psychobabbling again. And that doesn't even make any sense.

SOPHIA

Shhh...here she comes.

The girls are interrupted as MS. CALLIE re-enters with a plate of cookies that she puts on the coffee table by AMY and SOPHIA.

MS. CALLIE

Here we are. Some nice cookies. Probably just dip them into your tea. I'm afraid they've gotten a little hard in the tin, but they're still edible. Mostly.

She sits back down and casts an intense stare at each girl in turn.

Now, where was I...?

There is a knock on the window by the door and NELLY's, OLIVIA's, and ANGIE's faces appear in the glass.

(Angrily, with a disturbing edge to her voice) Who's that knocking out there, in this weather, this time of day, so close to nightfall? I don't normally get so many visitors--

AMY

Those are our friends. We got separated from them.

MS. CALLIE

(sweetly now)

Well for Heaven's sake, it's been quite an exciting day for everyone, now hasn't it!

MS CALLIE shuffles to the door and unlocks the multiple locks to open it.

MS. CALLIE

Come on in here girls. Just come on over here to the chairs and find yourselves someplace to sit while I go put the kettle back on. Take off your shoes though please.

The three girls enter tentatively as AMY and SOPHIA wave to them as a warning to not come in. Only NELLY sees them do this and waves a friendly “hello” in response before looking confused. ANGIE, OLIVIA, and NELLY remove their shoes as MS. CALLIE gathers them up and takes them with her as she goes off toward the kitchen. ANGIE and NELLY sit down. OLIVIA remains standing.

Where have you guys been?

ANGIE

We chased those boys off/

AMY

/Yea, I saw *that*/

ANGIE

/It doesn't matter. Here we are. Where were you guys?

AMY

ANGIE, NELLY, and OLIVIA look at each other, each hoping the others will answer the question, as none of them are sure where to start.

We found a place for some food and then came here.

NELLY

We were actually told not to stop here.

OLIVIA

Who told you that? Why not?

SOPHIA

I/

OLIVIA

/I have no idea why not. I mean, look at this place, not the latest style, but it's warm, it's dry, and look--cookies!

ANGIE

ANGIE grabs a cookie and stuffs it in her mouth and immediately regrets it. She looks around for someplace to spit it out but finds nowhere. She raises her hand to her mouth in a mock cough and spits the cookie into her hand then deposits it in the “dirt” of a nearby fake potted plant.

ANGIE

No matter what anybody says, those are NOT cookies.

SOPHIA and AMY share a “look” and a smile. OLIVIA looks around the room and spots the framed photo of FEMUS wearing the pilfered glasses. She picks it up and holds it out for the others to see.

OLIVIA

Oh. My god, you guys, look at this!

OLIVIA hears MS. CALLIE returning from the kitchen and hastily replaces the photo back on the mantle, where she found it.

MS. CALLIE

The water’s just about ready. Again.

OLIVIA

We really can’t stay. We were just passing and saw our friends in the window, but we have to/

MS. CALLIE

/Where are you headed off to this time of day?

NELLY

We were told to go find someone called Cassandra?

MS. CALLIE

(scoffs)

You don’t want anything to do with that one! She’s a heathen and a drug addict for sure. I’ve smelled her marijuana smoke myself! If there’s one thing I cannot stand to be around, it’s someone who takes drugs. Nothing good can come from mingling with her. I could tell you stories...But where are my manners--(to OLIVIA) Sit, sit.

OLIVIA

No, thank you. We really need to go.

She waves for the others to stand up--they do.

MS. CALLIE

Nonsense. (A tone of menace and power) You'll sit for a minute and rest your weary bones.

She waves for the others to sit down--they do. OLIVIA remains standing, it takes all she has to remain upright, and she is clearly stressed about how to handle the situation. MS. CALLIE sits and glares for a moment at OLIVIA, the lone stander.

MS. CALLIE

It's just so nice to have people around to talk to. This is such a small community--We all know each other, but like with a lot of people who know each other too well, (loud whisper for effect) *we don't much like each other*. Maybe it's me, but all they want to do is talk about themselves all the time...Now, what was I saying before? Oh yes, my can--*That Old Silly*. A lot of the girls in the sip and drip club had it their women parts, but mine was of my lungs, which makes me very sensitive to air that is especially noxious or polluted.

NELLY

(looking around)

Did you used to smoke? I mean I see a f-few ash trays around.

MS. CALLIE

Aren't you observant. My late husband was a smoker. The doctors said that there's no way to know for sure if that's how I got can--*That Old Silly*--but I suspect his dirty habit had something to do with it. Second hand smoke is almost as bad as if you smoke yourself. But I keep the ashtrays around to remind me of him. But I've cleaned them, of course.

The tea kettle whistles from the other room.

There's the kettle now--I'll be back with your teas.

MS CALLIE turns to OLIVIA threateningly. Despite her size and age, MS CALLIE seems distinctly dangerous.

*You* need to find a seat and sit in it.

MS CALLIE exits.

ANGIE

Let's go!

AMY

She has our shoes. Everybody's.

NELLY

I think I see now why we weren't s-supposed to s-stop here.

SOPHIA

C'mon guys, she's just a lonely old lady.

ANGIE

Listen. *Whatever* she is, she is in the way of us getting out of here while it's still light outside so we can go find Cassandra. The storm is going to start any second now-- Cassandra's not going to be hanging around outside in all that, and then we won't be able to find her at all.

AMY

We'll lose our one chance to get out of this stupid town.

OLIVIA

Okay, guys, I think I have a plan.

ANGIE

What is it?

OLIVIA

Amy, do you still have a little of that weed from earlier?

ANGIE

What?? This is NOT the time to get high!

OLIVIA

No, this is the perfect time to get high. Just trust me.

AMY

Yea, I still have it. What do you need me to do?

OLIVIA

Quick, before she comes back in here, light it up.

NELLY

(realizing)

You're getting her to k-kick us out!

OLIVIA

That's right. If we do this right, and if she gets as upset as I think she's going to be, we'll be out of here, with our shoes quicker than you can say, "These cookies taste like butt."

AMY quickly gets the remaining half-smoked joint out of her pocket and poises to light it.

AMY

So I get to be my naughty, naughty self to save us?

OLIVIA

Yes. I get to join you.

OLIVIA takes out FEMUS's glasses and puts them on.

NELLY

I d-d-don't like this. She scares me.

OLIVIA

She's creepy all right, but we gotta do what we gotta do to get out of here.

ANGIE

And get our shoes back.

AMY

Oooo, I like this plan.

NELLY rushes back to her seat from beside the kitchen door, where she'd been keeping watch.

NELLY

Here she c-comes!

AMY lights the joint and takes a huge puff, letting the smoke flow out of her mouth in a long cloud just as MS. CALLIE enters the room with a tray with 3 teacups and saucers and a plate with more of the stale cookies. OLIVIA poses next to the photo of FEMUS wearing his glasses.

MS. CALLIE

I was just telling the others that I don't have anymore sugar--(terrifying voice) YOUNG LADY, WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU ARE DOING!

AMY  
(feigning innocence)

What?

MS. CALLIE

That there! In your hand. Is that drugs? Are you smoking drugs in my home? And with my lungs being as delicate as they are. I just sat here, telling you all about my travails and trials only to have you mock me and do the very thing that I told you, explicitly, that I would not tolerate in my home!

She turns and stares straight into the face of  
OLIVIA, frozen in an identical pose to  
FEMUS's in the picture.

Those glasses! Why those are Femus's glasses! You girls are the ones who stole from my boy! HOW DARE YOU! You will all leave now or...(She struggles to gain control over her temper.) I will retrieve your shoes and you will quit my home immediately *before* I really get angry because *you. Don't want. To see. That!*

At first, no one knows what to say.

AMY

Uh, okay.

MS. CALLIE spins around, still holding the tray, and stomps back through the door that she just emerged through.

ANGIE  
(quietly)

Nice job Olivia. And Amy.

SOPHIA

Yea, you guys took one for the team.

OLIVIA gives AMY a thumbs up as NELLY silently claps. MS. CALLIE reenters with her arms full of shoes, which she drops in the middle of the group. Each girl scrambles to find her own pair of shoes as AMY looks around for a place to put out her still-smoking joint. She sees one of the clean ashtrays behind MS. CALLIE and, carefully so that MS. CALLIE does not see, leans around the older woman to stub it out.

MS. CALLIE moves suddenly, spooking AMY and causing her to drop what remains of the joint in the ashtray. She scrambles to put her shoes on and rushes out the door with the others.

SOPHIA

(weakly)

Thanks for the tea!

MS. CALLIE

Foolish girls! Go, go, get out!

MS. CALLIE shuts the door and looks back at the room. The chairs are all disarranged and a few are almost knocked over--quite different from the orderly set up we saw at the beginning of the scene. She takes a breath, adjusts back to the sweet old lady composure, and walks over, rearranging the furniture back to how it was when she notices the still smoking joint. She looks around self-consciously, picks it up, and smells it tentatively. Slowly, she puts it to her lips and takes a small drag from it. She immediately begins to cough and sputter, frowns at the joint and crushes it in the ashtray.

MS. CALLIE

(once again in a violent, monster voice)

Ugh. Dirty girls.

END OF SCENE 7

SCENE 8

There sits a Ford Mustang, with a willowy young woman in her 20's leaning over it. Something about her is almost spooky, witch-like, with gold chains all over her wrists and around her neck. She is polishing the car meticulously and leans in frequently to get a closer look. The girls approach her cautiously. She does not see them.



Throughout the scene, the lighting dims gradually until it is almost fully “night” by the end.

ANGIE  
(clears her throat)

Um, excuse me?

CASSANDRA looks up, through her long bangs and seems to have difficulty initially focusing on ANGIE. She does not acknowledge the other girls at first.

CASSANDRA  
Huh?

ANGIE  
Are you...we’re looking for Cassandra?

On the word, “we,” CASSANDRA notes the others.

CASSANDRA  
Who are you?

ANGIE  
I’m Angie. This is Nelly, Amy, Olivia, and Sophia.

Unimpressed, CASSANDRA returns her attention to the car.

CASSANDRA  
What do you want?

AMY  
We were told you could help us.

CASSANDRA  
Help you do what?

ANGIE  
Well, you see/

CASSANDRA

/Hold up--lemme guess: You need a ride somewhere.

ANGIE

(confused)

Uh, yes, actually. How did you know?

CASSANDRA

That's my lot--That's who I am--I have access to a car, and I know stuff. Ask me anything and I'll probably be able to guess what's going to happen.

NELLY

Really?

CASSANDRA

(matter of fact)

Yes.

ANGIE

We didn't come here for our palms to be read--thanks though. We were told that you might be able to take us to our bus. You see, earlier today--(to the team) Wow, was that *today?*--we had a scrimmage with your local team and/

CASSANDRA

/Who won?

ANGIE

What?

CASSANDRA

Who won the game?

OLIVIA

You don't know? I thought you knew stuff.

CASSANDRA examines OLIVIA more closely.

CASSANDRA

I do know. Or I *suspect*. I just want to hear you say it.

NELLY

Your team p-played valiantly but/

CASSANDRA

*/valiantly?* What is this? Ancient Greece? Don't bullshit me. Our team sucked, didn't we? We always suck with team sports. Now, give us a chance to excel with an individual sport, we can do that, no problem, but team sports, nah, can't be bothered.

OLIVIA

We were told that you might be able to give us a ride over to where they park the buses. We tried to get there ourselves, on foot, but we keep getting lost for some reason.

CASSANDRA

If you're not from here, you're almost guaranteed to get lost, and it's getting dark, so that's a problem. For you. (Looks at OLIVIA closer) You're the clever one, aren't you?

OLIVIA

What'd'ya mean?

CASSANDRA

You know how to be sneaky.

CASSANDRA spies the sunglasses sticking out of OLIVIA's pocket.

Are those Femus's glasses? Oooh, I'll bet he's spittin' mad! I was right--You ARE the clever one!

OLIVIA quickly tucks the glasses further into her pocket.

CASSANDRA

How'd'ya get them? Nevermind, I'll find out all the stories soon enough. He'll be telling everyone what happened, or at least his version of what happened, and, as we all know, the *male* version of events is how things actually were, amirite?

ANGIE

We are willing to pay you for your time and gas/

CASSANDRA

How're'a gonna do that, Luv? You don't have any money.

SOPHIA

(to self)

How'd she know that?/

ANGIE

/Well, okay, not on me right now, that's true, but as soon as we get to the bus, I'll ask Coach to stand me a couple of dollars. She knows I'm good for it./

CASSANDRA

/Does money usually get you what you want? I'd say no. Money is no substitute for a happy home, is it?

ANGIE

I/

CASSANDRA

/Don't bother trying to contradict me--I know your type. Besides, I don't deal in credit--Bird in the hand and all that.

NELLY

You have our word--We're good for it. It's supposed to start storming soon, and we need to find the bus by nightfall. We'd just like to go home.

CASSANDRA turns her focus on NELLY.

CASSANDRA

You worry too much. I'm aware of the forecast--it's another one of my specialties--this kind of thing happens whenever there are strangers in our town. But we have a little while til it all breaks loose and comes down. Which of course raises the question as to why I would want to take my father's car, that I've ever so carefully washed and waxed, into an impending rainstorm to deliver 5 strangers, who are likely to ruin the genuine cowhide seats, to some place that I don't care about. Especially after they've made a point to vanquish our local team. See? I can use old timey words too.

SOPHIA

It was just a game.

CASSANDRA

Just a game? To you maybe. You come into our community and use "the game" as you call it to dominate other people, and we get to experience just one more thrashing from the outside world. It'd be humiliating if it wasn't so routine.

OLIVIA

I thought you didn't care about your local sports teams. You said so yourself.

CASSANDRA

I said I was used to them losing, not that I don't care, Clever One.

CASSANDRA stops and visually examines every person in front of her slowly and thoroughly. She takes it all in.

## CASSANDRA

Okay. I'll tell you what. I will agree to take you back to your bus under one condition. Each of you will give me something that you have on you right now as your price for your transportation. And I'm not accepting just any old thing--Nope. I want you to give me what you value most. Something on your present person that is most precious to you. And you get to decide what that is. But believe me, I have an innate sense of people--I will know if you're holding out on me. And I won't give you a second chance with this. If one of you offers me something less-than, then none of you ride. One shot to offer your best. One.

OLIVIA starts to pull the sunglasses out of her pocket but CASSANDRA catches her eye.

One.

OLIVIA slowly puts the glasses back in her pocket. The girls all look at one another and form a huddle to discuss. CASSANDRA leans on her father's car, ready to watch what happens.

## AMY

I don't know who this bitch thinks she is, but she's not getting anything from me.

## ANGIE

Amy, that's completely not helpful. If any one of us refuses, then we're all screwed.

They all pause, considering what they might have to offer.

## SOPHIA

This one's easy for me.

SOPHIA turns from the huddle to face CASSANDRA. She takes off her sneakers.

## SOPHIA

(with passion)

My most precious possession is my shoes. And you can have them. Here me out: They're fairly new--I've only worn them for 2 games, plus stomping around these woods today, of course. I bought them myself, and I saved up for 4 months to buy them, working weekends at the pizza place near my house. Every penny was put aside for these shoes, because they weren't cheap. Now I don't know what size shoe you wear, but these are size 7, and they fit me like they were made for me.

So, you wanted the most valued possession that we have on us right here, right now and for me, these are that. So here you are.

SOPHIA hands the sneakers to CASSANDRA who accepts them in silence. The girls stand, staring at CASSANDRA, holding their breath.

CASSANDRA

I'll accept this. That's one. Now only four more to go.

Everyone lets out a sigh. SOPHIA goes and stands near the car. The remaining 4 girls turn back to the huddle.

ANGIE

Okay. Let's just agree that we are going to discuss whatever we have to offer, as a group, before it gets offered up, okay? I mean, just in case it's not enough or something, and it completely ruins our chances to get out of here.

OLIVIA

But if she's asking for what *each* of us hold d-dear, then how can any of the other of us veto it? I mean, it's a p-personal choice--that's how she set it up.

ANGIE

Because, if, like, you want to give, I don't know, your jersey or something, then there's, like, more to consider, like it's not even yours to give away, anyway. It belongs to the team, y'know?

AMY

No one thinks their team jersey is the most prized possession they have Angie.

ANGIE

I just used that as an example, that's all. Like, Sophia giving her shoes away--I would've said no to that.

NELLY

Then you would've been wrong because apparently C-Cassandra, thought it was l-legit.

ANGIE

And we're lucky she thought that way because otherwise we would've been screwed right away. No, since we are all impacted by how great she thinks the trade is, we all should have a say in what we offer.

But that's not how/  
AMY

CASSANDRA glances at the sky.

/Girls. We don't have all day.  
CASSANDRA

I'm g-going.  
NELLY

Why? What do you have/  
ANGIE

NELLY breaks out of the huddle, ignoring  
ANGIE, and approaches CASSANDRA.

NELLY  
I have this thing that I c-c-c-carry with me to every g-game--it's my g-good luck charm. My g-grandparents, when they came from Mexico, they didn't have much of anything, they literally owned only what they were w-wearing and what they c-c-could carry, which wasn't much. But one thing my g-grandmother did bring with her was this ne-, this n-necklace of her mother's. My grandmother told me that on the night she left to come to the s-s-states, her mother took off her n-necklace and put it around my grandmother's neck. She said it was for g-good luck and would protect her during the dangerous crossing, and it did. And she gave it to me. The chain broke a while ago, and I don't know how to fix it, so I just put it in my shorts pocket for g-, for games. It's p-probably not worth anything, but you can have it for our ride. Here.

CASSANDRA reaches out for the necklace and  
NELLY reluctantly places it in her hand.  
CASSANDRA takes a moment to examine it.  
She nods.

CASSANDRA  
I accept your gift. Three more to go Ladies.

NELLY goes to stand with SOPHIA and the  
three remaining girls return to the huddle.

ANGIE  
Ugh. Guys. Do you not understand what I'm saying here? We. Need. To. Work.  
Together. We need to run this by/

OLIVIA

/By committee? Nothing's going to get done that way. I don't really have anything to offer her anyway, unless...

OLIVIA pauses, mid-thought. AMY and ANGIE look at each other puzzled. OLIVIA breaks from the huddle and approaches CASSANDRA.

ANGIE

Olivia!

CASSANDRA

Yes, Clever One?

OLIVIA

I don't have any objects to give you, because nothing that I'm carrying or wearing is all that important to me. But what I can offer to you, as something that I value above all else, are my words. I promise not to speak until we arrive back at the buses. I swear it.

Beat.

CASSANDRA

I was right--such a cunning fox you are.

CASSANDRA turns to AMY and ANGIE.

This is out-of-the-box thinking. *This* is the kind of reasoning that keeps things fresh. I accept your offer, Clever One.

AMY and ANGIE turn back to each other as OLIVIA joins the others by the car.

ANGIE

Have I lost all authority here? Can anybody hear my voice?...And I'm not even sure what I'm going to give her. I could offer this ring that my dad gave me, but I don't really care about it that much. I mean, it's probably worth a lot of money, but weirdly, that doesn't seem to be her thing.

AMY

Are you serious?

ANGIE

What?



AMY

You don't know what you're going to offer her?

ANGIE

Yes, I'm serious. Why? Do you have an idea of what you're going to give?

AMY

No, not yet. But I can see clear as day what *you* need to give her./

SOPHIA

/We need to hurry! Please./

ANGIE

/Clear as day? What?

AMY

What is the one thing, during this entire fiasco, that you've insisted upon. And even now, what you think you're entitled to?

ANGIE

Stop talking in riddles. I have no idea what you're getting at!

AMY

Control! You have issues with control, Angie--jeez, how can a person be so self-unaware!/  
/We're running out of time!/  
/I do not have issues with control! I like an orderly world, and if that's not what I see happening, I'm empowered enough to try to bring order to it, that's all. If you see chaos, situations spinning out of control, what do you do? You'd surely do *something*, right? Or what? You'd go get high?

NELLY

That's not fair./

ANGIE

That's not fair./

AMY

That's not fair./

OLIVIA

/Hey guys! It's getting really dark!/  
/But is it accurate?

ANGIE

AMY

We're not talking about me, Angie. I can decide for myself what I want to offer and what I need to work on. We were discussing you/

ANGIE

/You were attacking me.

AMY

You asked for help to figure out what to offer. And like you said, it matters to us all what each of us decides.

ANGIE

You said I am a power hungry bitch.

AMY

No I didn't!

ANGIE

You inferred it!

AMY

I said you like to be in control, whether by barking out directions or by controlling the narrative.

ANGIE

I told you, I like order/

AMY

/relax. I understand *why* you like it.

ANGIE

Oh yea, why?

AMY

It's your sister, right? And maybe your dad too?

ANGIE

(sarcastic)

Oh, I didn't know you had your psychiatry license.

AMY

Stop. You make it pretty obvious, you know. That you're hurting. Well I'm hurting too. We all are...So maybe you should go offer that thing you're holding onto that you most prize. What'd'ya think?

ANGIE  
(tentative)

But that leaves you.

AMY nods.

Do you know what *you're* offering?

AMY shakes her head.

Do you want me to stay here and help you figure it out?

AMY

No. Thanks though.

ANGIE

Okay.

ANGIE sighs and turns to CASSANDRA.

ANGIE

Okay, I'm ready.

CASSANDRA

Yeah? Whacha got?

ANGIE

I know...I've been made aware that I have some, uh, issues, with control and wanting to be in charge of stuff a lot.

ANGIE glances over to the rest of the girls and they all nod encouragingly to her.

CASSANDRA

So what? What's that mean to me?

ANGIE

I...I'm willing to let you decide everything. When we are leaving, who sits where, whatever. And I'll just, I don't know...follow. And keep my mouth shut. Like Olivia.

CASSANDRA

Wow. Seems like it's going to be one quiet ride to the bus parking lot then.  
Hmmm...Okay, I accept. One more to go...

The team lets out a collective sigh of relief as  
ANGIE joins them.

They slap her on the back and give her words of encouragement, except for OLIVIA, who does not speak but joins in the congratulations nonetheless.

CASSANDRA

(To AMY) Okay Hot Shot--Your turn. Whacha got for me? And make it quick--when the street lights come on, it's over.

AMY looks around at everyone, conspicuously alone and feeling it. She holds her head in her hands as the lights dim around everyone but her. HELEN emerges from the background and approaches AMY but stops just short of her. AMY looks up and sees her.

AMY

Thysia.

HELEN/THYSIA

Hi Ames.

AMY

Oh my god, I'm losing it...

HELEN/THYSIA

Well? What do ya got?

AMY

Wait, what do you/

HELEN/THYSIA

/What are you prepared to give to Cassandra, Amy? Your friends are waiting--OUR friends are waiting. And they've been waiting for a long time.

AMY

I don't know...I don't know what to give her.

THYSIA

Oh, come on Ams--you do. You've been carrying it around for 6 months now, nurturing it, coddling it, protecting it. You've gotta let it go, girl.

AMY

(starting to cry)

If it wasn't for me, you'd still be alive, with us, right now.

HELEN/THYSIA

That's true. You were the lynch pin of my fate. You are who I blame, 100%. Not that idiot who drank 8 beers and 3 whiskeys and decided it'd be a great idea to drive himself home. Not him--you. You are so guilty. Guilty of wanting to sit in the back seat instead of the second row--Changing seats in a van is a hanging offense, didn't you know that? I mean, you *had* to have seen what was coming. You can see the future, right?

AMY

No, I didn't know/

HELEN/THYSIA

No, I don't want to hear your excuses. You clearly knew that changing seats in the van was writing my death sentence but you did it anyway.

AMY

(sobbing)

You know that's not true. It was an accident. I'm not to blame. I didn't do anything wrong!

Beat.

HELEN/THYSIA

That's right, Amy. You didn't do anything wrong. So stop beating yourself up.

AMY

But...but you're dead.

HELEN/THYSIA

/Yes...okay, yes, that's true, but listen, I know what you went through was traumatic, and I know that you miss me, but I'm asking you--no, I'm telling you--it's finished. Today. Now. Make your offering so you can go home. So everyone can go home.

AMY

(still sobbing)

But the pain, that's all I got left of you.

HELEN/THYSIA

(gently)

Amy, I don't want you to be in pain when you think of me. I would never have wanted that.

AMY

Thys, are...are you happy where you are now?

HELEN/THYSIA hesitates.

HELEN/THYSIA

Yea.

She begins to giggle, uncontrollably, but then struggles to regain her composure.

AMY

Thys...?/

HELEN/THYSIA waves her away.

HELEN/THYSIA

/Give your offering. (Gently) Go.

AMY

(sighs deeply)

Alright. I'm ready.

AMY bows her head, readying herself to unload her burden as the lights come back up full stage. HELEN runs upstage, disappears in the scenery. CASSANDRA catches sight of her but the other girls do not.

CASSANDRA

Get out of here Helen! God! What a pest.

NELLY looks around, confused as to whom CASSANDRA is speaking.

NELLY

Who's a pest? Who're you talking to?

CASSANDRA

That was just Helen. She's always up in everybody's business, causing all kinds of trouble around here. Just her nature I guess. (She turns back to AMY) Anyway, you ready or what?

AMY

I think so.

CASSANDRA

Well, let's go then--the dark ain't gonna hold off forever.

AMY

Okay, so, I had this friend, Thysia/

CASSANDRA

/Wait. I don't want another epic story/

AMY

/You have to get the background here. What I'm going to give you has no value if you don't understand this part.

CASSANDRA

Okay. Whatever. Go.

AMY

Um, yea...Thysia. She was a good friend.

AMY pauses, considering whether she wants to share this information with CASSANDRA.

AMY

Anyway, long story short, she died. Six months ago. And I thought...I carried with me, every day since then, the guilt that I'd caused her death, that something I'd done had made it so that she died instead of me. But I'm done with that now. I can't anymore. I've held on to this sense of responsibility for her death for 6 months and during that time, you could say that this hurt, this pain, has been my most cherished possession I guess. But now, you've given each of us a chance to present to you what we treasure most on us today and for me it's this. I'll give you this albatross I've been wearing around my neck, this guilt. Congratulations. It's yours now.

The girls look sympathetically from AMY to CASSANDRA, waiting to see if she'll accept AMY's offering.

CASSANDRA

(sarcastically)

Great. I always wanted a repressed sense of culpability in the demise of somebody I don't even know. Give me that chain on your arm, and I'll call it even.

AMY

You can have it. I don't need this to remember her.

AMY takes it off and hands it to  
CASSANDRA's outstretched hand.

CASSANDRA

Well what are we standing around here for? Hop in the horse--Let's go find your bus!

The girls all screech in delight as they pile into  
the car. NELLY and SOPHIA give AMY a  
quick hug and OLIVIA gives her a thumbs up.

CASSANDRA

What did I say about the cow hide seats? If you guys mess them up, you'll have my dad  
to answer to, and you won't be liking that!

END OF SCENE 8

SCENE 9

The 5 girls enter from stage left, through a  
wooded area. SOPHIA waves off stage, as if to  
CASSANDRA. The sound of a car peeling  
away is heard.

NELLY

(to SOPHIA)

You don't n-need to w-wave to her. She's not our friend--we all paid for that ride.

SOPHIA

I know but she was nice, in the end. She just as easily could've dropped us off in the  
middle of nowhere and still taken our offerings.

NELLY

How do you know she d-didn't?

SOPHIA

She said the buses are just beyond this hill, and I chose to trust her.

SOPHIA walks in her socks with NELLY up the  
hill. NELLY stops, and she and OLIVIA both  
look thoughtfully skyward.



NELLY

It's so weird--it looks like it's g-getting lighter out. I could've sworn it was way d-darker than this an hour ago.

OLIVIA

Yea, I was noticing that too.

SOPHIA looks up.

SOPHIA

Huh. You guys are right. That *is* weird. Whatever. This whole day has been one long bizarre roller coaster ride, so why should the passage of time be any different? Let's go.

SOPHIA and NELLY crest the hill and disappear from view.

AMY

(to OLIVIA)

Hey, Olivia--I wanted to tell you. I think that was really smart what you did back there.

OLIVIA

What was?

AMY

Nelly and Sophia both had objects, stuff, to give to that girl, and I was freaking out that I didn't have anything like that on me. Then you stepped up, and it was like you built something that we could all use to do what we had to do. And all Angie and I had to do was get on board. So, yea, thanks.

OLIVIA

No problem.

NELLY reappears at the top of the hill.

NELLY

You guys! We saw the bus! We made it!

NELLY and OLIVIA race over the hill, out of sight, toward the bus parking lot as ANGIE catches up to AMY.

ANGIE

Hey Amy--

AMY

Yea?

ANGIE

What you did, back there with Cassandra/

AMY

/I know I should've done it a while/

ANGIE

/It took a lot of guts to recognize your feelings and then to say them out loud--anyway, I think it was a brave thing to do. I just thought I'd tell you that.

AMY

(taken aback)

...thanks. Thanks for saying that, really. I...didn't expect that from you.

ANGIE

I know. I haven't been very nice to you lately. But I'm over that now--I gave it all to that girl, Cassandra. So do you think we could, I don't know, start over?

AMY

Yea...I think that'd be alright.

OLIVIA appears at the crest of the hill.

OLIVIA

You guys, come on! I need you to come help me talk to Coach--she seems to think we've only been gone 20 minutes, not all day. I'm not entirely sure what's going on here, but I need your help. Besides, I didn't know you loved Chester so much that you'd want to stay--let's goooo!

AMY

(to ANGIE)

Shall we?

ANGIE

Go ahead. I'm coming.

AMY, revitalized, climbs the hill and disappears over it. ANGIE looks around casually as HELEN emerges from the greenery. She stands a short distance from ANGIE.

ANGIE

Effie. There you are. I knew you were around here somewhere--I could feel you with me this whole, entire time, especially when I was a little bit scared.

HELEN continues to stand there, looking at ANGIE and smiling.

ANGIE

Did you know that for a long time I resented you, when you were at home--You were always sucking up all the attention in the room--not always good attention, but hey, negative attention's better than no attention at all, right? Mom and Dad, they went a little nuts for a while when you left. So I worked hard to make a place for myself, outside of the family--just like you'd always encouraged me to do. (proudly) I'm team captain, (realizing that she's bragging) for what that's worth. I miss you so much. Listen, I uh, I gotta go. My friends are waiting for me. (to self) Huh. *Friends*. I guess they are my friends...

ANGIE begins to walk away. HELEN turns to dart back into the weeds, like she'd done so many times before, but then ANGIE turns and looks back at HELEN.

ANGIE

I'll see you around Sis. Take care.

HELEN turns to face ANGIE. ANGIE waves at HELEN and then turns and disappears over the crest of the hill. HELEN watches her go. Sunshine breaks through the trees. HELEN's eyes scan the shining beauty of the forest as she slowly begins to take in the 4th wall. HELEN's countenance changes as she takes in the sight of the audience and she gasps in fright.

LIGHTS OUT

END OF PLAY