

FINDING MIDDLE C

by

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CHARACTER	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	AGE	GENDER
RACHEL GOLD	NON-VERBAL DAUGHTER	6	FEMALE
SHELBY GOLD	SINGLE MOTHER	21	FEMALE
BRENDA CARLISLE	SHELTER FRIEND	38	FEMALE
MAGS MUELLER	SHELTER SUPERVISOR	60	FEMALE
MARK MATER	HIGH SCHOOL FRIEND	22	MALE
JACKSON JONES	BENEFACTOR OF SHELTER	32	MALE

ACT ONE

SCENE 1: "GIMME SHELTER"

SETTING: HOMELESS SHELTER

The shelter is very basic: There's a kitchen down front, stage-left, along with a dinette set with three chairs.

Four wooden cots in the middle, separated by a walkway, two cots on the left [stacked front and back] and two on the right [stacked front and back].

There's a white door labeled "Storage Room", on the other side of the room, down front stage-right.

AT RISE:

SHELBY GOLD (22), white female, sits on the front cot stage-right, her daughter RACHEL GOLD (6) sits close, right next to her.

Both of them sit for an extended minute, looking forward, lost in thought, without expression.

And then SHELBY speaks.

SHELBY

How did I get here? ... If you measured it in terms of time, it would feel like a fraction of a blink...

(SHELBY slowly shakes her head.)

SHELBY (CONT'D)

On the front end of that blink is me, a sophomore at the reputable Alan Gregory High School in Middleton, PA.

(SHELBY stands and walks away from Rachel.)

SHELBY (CONT'D)

And on the back end of that blink is me, a 22-year-old single mom, of a 6-year-old, non-verbal, autistic girl, sitting in a homeless shelter, in Middleton, PA.

(RACHEL stands up, goes to SHELBY, and takes her arm.)

SHELBY (CONT'D)

My daughter... Rachel... Not high or low... Not one way or the other... Just straight down the middle... Rachel.

(SHELBY demonstrates by walking away again.)

2.

SHELBY (CONT'D)

3, 2, 1.

(RACHEL goes to SHELBY and takes her arm.)

(A moment passes.)

SHELBY (CONT'D)

(singing slowly)

WHEN YOU TRY YOUR BEST, BUT YOU
DON'T SUCCEED

(RACHEL smiles.)

WHEN YOU GET WHAT YOU WANT, BUT NOT
WHAT YOU NEED

(RACHEL gets more excited and moves back and forth.)

WHEN YOU FEEL SO TIRED, BUT YOU
CAN'T SLEEP

(RACHEL gets amped up. SHELBY gets fed up.)

SHELBY (CONT'D)

Oh, come on.

(SHELBY pushes RACHEL away and RACHEL goes to the ground and ends up on her bottom.)

SHELBY (CONT'D)

Fuck! Knock it off!

(SHELBY walks back to the cot and sits down.)

(RACHEL gets to her feet, centerstage. Inside, she wants to communicate but she can't.)

(RACHEL returns to SHELBY'S cot and sits right next to her.)

(BRENDA CARLISLE (38), black woman, enters with a limp, looks around, stands behind the cot opposite SHELBY'S, right across the center walkway. She sets down her large duffel bag on the cot.)

BRENDA

Greetings.

(SHELBY turns her head away.)

BRENDA (CONT'D)

(to Rachel)

Greetings.

(No response from RACHEL.)

BRENDA (CONT'D)

Wow, you're a friendly bunch,
aren't ya.

(SHELBY turns back to BRENDA.)

SHELBY
She's autistic. She doesn't talk.

BRENDA
Yeah?... And what's your excuse.

SHELBY
Yeah, sorry about that. You caught me at an awkward moment.

BRENDA
No worries... My name is Brenda.

SHELBY
Shelby... This is Rachel.

BRENDA
Nice to meet you guys.

(BRENDA unzips her duffel, but only about 8 inches. She sticks her hand in and digs around.)

BRENDA (CONT'D)
First time?

SHELBY
Sorry?

BRENDA
In a shelter. Is this your first time?

SHELBY
Yeah. Is it that obvious?

(BRENDA pulls out an e-Tablet and headphones.)

BRENDA
I say, when a mom brings her child to a boring place, she better have some entertainment ready to dole out... Ha! ... Is YouTube ok with you?

(SHELBY thinks twice.)

SHELBY
Well, actually, I've always kept her away from the internet.

BRENDA
Oh.

(BRENDA starts to put them back in the duffel.)

SHELBY
But, No. I mean, yes. Sure. I think that would be good. Ok.

(Both women nod.)

(Never having interacted with a person with autism, BRENDA comically hunches over, and slowly approaches RACHEL, like she was a wild animal that might attack her, if cornered.)

(SHELBY laughs.)

SHELBY (CONT'D)

Ha! She's not gonna bite you. Ha!
Ha!

(BRENDA recovers, straightens up, clears her throat.)

(BRENDA demonstrates for RACHEL and calmly attempts to put the headphones on her.)

(Sensitive to touching her head, RACHEL recoils.)

SHELBY (CONT'D)

Hey! Those go on your head, dummy.
Over your ears, so you can hear the
video.

(BRENDA stands wide-eyed and speechless, reacting to SHELBY'S cruel remark.)

(SHELBY violently grabs the headphones and jams them on RACHEL'S head.)

SHELBY (CONT'D)

Fuck! Like that! Got it?

(Rachel is forced to get used to the headphones.)

BRENDA

Hey, I didn't mean to ---

SHELBY

You didn't. She's fine.

(RACHEL points at the screen with her index finger. And then pushes a link. And then another. A couple moments pass.)

(Suddenly, RACHEL stands up, walks around to her own cot, and sits down with her back to SHELBY and BRENDA.)

(SHELBY comically perks up, her eyes open up wide, her jaw drops open, and then backs away, stage-right, looking, in amazement, at RACHEL. She looks back at BRENDA... and then back at RACHEL.)

(SHELBY is overwhelmed with joy.)

SHELBY (CONT'D)
 Yyyyyes! Oh. My God! Can I give you
 a hug?

(SHELBY doesn't wait for a reply. She stands. She hugs. She returns to her cot, but remains standing. She dances in celebration.)

(BRENDA is confused.)

BRENDA
 Glad I could help... Wait. What?

SHELBY
 No. You have to understand. Her form of autism is laced with dependence on me. I mean, twenty-four-hours a day kinda dependence... You know wha' I'm sayin'?

BRENDA
 Ah!

SHELBY
 For her to be sitting THERE and for me to be standing HERE for longer than 30 seconds is a MIRACLE!

(BRENDA'S headphones fall off.)

(SHELBY stops dancing.)

(RACHEL looks at SHELBY.)

(SHELBY is frozen with an comical look on her face.)

(RACHEL stands up.)

(SHELBY winces and recoils.)

(RACHEL picks up the headphones, puts them back on, and sits back down, her back to SHELBY.)

(SHELBY smiles and raises her hands over her head in victory!)

SHELBY (CONT'D)
 Yyyeeeeesssss!!!!

(SHELBY starts to dance again.)

BRENDA
 Wow. You've must-a really been deprived of some personal space.

SHELBY
 Yeah. For six YEARS!

(SHELBY continues to celebrate, but eventually realizes that BRENDA'S enthusiasm is starting to fade.)

(BRENDA drops a sock from her duffel.)

(SHELBY notices a limp as BRENDA walks around her cot to pick it up.)

SHELBY (CONT'D)
How'd you hurt your leg?

(BRENDA snaps her head at SHELBY and looks at her straight in the eyes.)

BRENDA
What do you mean by that?

(SHELBY pulls her hands up and backs off.)

SHELBY
Whoa. Didn't mean anything by it.
Just being friendly.

(Stares and Silence.)

(MAGS MUELLER, the Shelter Supervisor enters. She has a keyring on a chain around her neck.)

MAGS
What's goin' on here?

(MAGS looks at BRENDA.)

MAGS (CONT'D)
You makin' trouble already? Huh?

BRENDA
No. No ma'am.

MAGS
Good. I should hope not... Shelby,
you've met our newest guest? The
late night arrival?

SHELBY
Yes. Yes. It's a pleasure to meet
Brenda.

MAGS
Oh. I'm sure it is... Huh... Ok.

(MAGS walks to the "Storage Room", bends over, sticks the key in the lock.)

SHELBY
Oh, what's in there.

(MAGS, still bent over, has to swing her but around in order to see SHELBY, in order to answer her.)

MAGS

Just you never mind. This is all private supply stuff.

(MAGS, still bent over, swings her but around again.)

SHELBY

Ooh. Supplies. Sounds interesting.

(MAGS, still bent over, swings her but around again.)

MAGS

Now, you stop that. Ain't nothing in here for you. Just a bunch of paper towels and an old upright I have to get rid of one day.

(MAGS finally opens the "Storage Room" door. But, the key doesn't come out and the opening door, pulls MAGS in.)

(MAGS Comes out of the "Storage Room" with a multi-roll pack of toilet paper.)

MAGS (CONT'D)

Lights out in 5 minutes.

(MAGS leaves.)

(SHELBY notices that RACHEL has fallen asleep.)

(SHELBY carefully removes the Headphones off RACHEL'S head and slowly slides the e-tablet from RACHEL'S hands.)

(SHELBY steps toward BRENDA into the center walkway and BRENDA does as well. SHELBY hands them back to BRENDA.)

SHELBY

Here you go. Thank you. She really enjoyed that. We both did.

BRENDA

Anytime... Anytime.

(The two stare at each other.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

SCENE 2: "GIMME MONEY"

SETTING: MAJOR U.S. BANK

There's a bank in the far corner of the parking lot of the Eastport Center, a Mall in Middleton, PA. One of the walls, the red brick one, faces the parking lot.

AT RISE:

SHELBY sits on the walkway in front of the red wall. RACHEL sits next to her, naturally. On the other side sits a sign, eloquently explaining everything: "Autistic Child. Stuck. Please help."

It's a cold day.

(SHELBY takes a hand out.)

SHELBY
(smiles)
Thank you. I appreciate that.

(Another one.)

SHELBY (CONT'D)
(smiles)
Thank you. I appreciate that.

SHELBY sees BRENDA approaching.

SHELBY (CONT'D)
(to herself.)
Huh.

BRENDA
Hi there.

(BRENDA sits.)

SHELBY
Hi there.

(RACHEL sees BRENDA and does nothing.)

BRENDA
How is it here? Good spot?

SHELBY
Yeah. This morning was good. But like in the last hour it totally died.

(SHELBY takes a hand out.)

SHELBY (CONT'D)
 (smiles)
 Thank you. I appreciate that.

(Another one.)

SHELBY (CONT'D)
 (smiles)
 Thank you. I appreciate that.

(BRENDA notices how good this spot is for SHELBY.)

BRENDA
 Oh, that sucks.

SHELBY
 Yeah, well. Apparently they tell me
 I can't be a chooser.

(BRENDA is emotional and clams up for a moment.)

BRENDA
 (emotional)
 Oh, you know what? I'm gonna get
 out of your hair. I'll see you back
 at our place later? Ok?

(SHELBY smiles and nods.)

SHELBY
 Yeah. See you then.

(BRENDA walks off bumping into MARK MATER (22).)

MARK
 Hey... Watch where you're going ya
 fuckin' bitch. Damn!

(BRENDA just walks away. She know better.)

(MARK sees SHELBY and he comes down. Way down.)

MARK (CONT'D)
 (solemnly surprised)
 Shelby?

SHELBY
 Oh.... Hi Mark.

MARK
 Shelby, what... How are you?

SHELBY
 (to the point)
 Hey, Mark, do you think maybe we
 could do the "catching up" thing,
 maybe another time? I'm a bit busy
 at the moment.

(MARK reads the sign.)

MARK
(slowly)
Sure.

(MARK can't help but linger. He catches RACHEL'S eye.)

(Apropos, RACHEL doesn't do anything. No nod. No smile. No talking. No response.)

(MARK peels away and goes inside the bank.)

SHELBY
(to Rachel)
Let's get outta here.

(SHELBY and RACHEL stand up, collect their money, and quickly walk off.)

(A few moments later, MARK comes out of the bank and around the corner, holding a handful of \$100 bills. But no Shelby. No Rachel.)

MARK
Damn.

(MARK looks around.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

SCENE 3: "GIMME A BREAK"

SETTING: HOMELESS SHELTER

AT RISE:

SHELBY and RACHEL come in out of the cold and shake it off.

SHELBY
Hey, turtle, give me your jacket.

(RACHEL hands her mom her jacket.)

(RACHEL walks to BRENDA'S cot, finds NRENDA'S duffel bag, and begins to unzip it. Just as BRENDA comes in, removing her jacket.)

SHELBY (CONT'D)
Rachel, no!

BRENDA
(wincing)
What the fuck?

SHELBY
We're seeing this at the same time.
I'm so sorry, Brenda. She doesn't
understand... RACHEL! NO!

(Shelby quickly goes to RACHEL.)

BRENDA
No. No. Wait... I over-reacted.

(BRENDA takes the e-tablet and headphones and gives them to RACHEL.)

(RACHEL puts the headphones on herself and looks for a video on YouTube.)

SHELBY
Brenda, you didn't over-react. I
have to teach her a lesson, so she
knows not to do that again.

(SHELBY spins RACHEL around and winds up for a whoopin'.)

BRENDA
(Yells)
NO!

(SHELBY stops mid-whoop.)

(BRENDA approaches her and slowly guides her hand back down and to her side.)

BRENDA (CONT'D)
Please. Please. Don't do that.

(Shelby just powers on.)

SHELBY
No. I have to. She's got to...

(SHELBY winds up for another pass at whoopin'.)

BRENDA
(screams)
NO! PLEASE!

(BRENDA begins to tremble. She sits on her cot. Shaking.)

(SHELBY delays immediate gratification and pulls her arm back down.)

(RACHEL is oblivious in her Headphones and YouTube.)

SHELBY
 (comforting)
 Oh, girl. Hey. What's that all about?

(Shelby, slowly, and oh so gently, reaches out to comfort BRENDA. And the MOMENT her hand comes in contact with her upper arm.)

BRENDA
 (SCSREAMING!)
 NO! NO!

(BRENDA looks up and sees SHELBY looking empathetically into her eyes.)

SHELBY
 Hey, it's me. It's only me.

(Brenda nods.)

(MAGS enters, a chicken leg in her hand.)

MAGS
 (commanding)
 WHAT is all the noise in here?

(SHELBY thinks twice.)

SHELBY
 Oh, I am so sorry, was I being too loud? I'll keep it down. You know, sometimes when I tell a joke, I lose all sense of volume.

MAGS
 (nods)
 Must have been a funny one.

SHELBY
 Oh, it is... It is a real funny... one. Some would even call it a "Knee-Slapper".

MAGS
 (smiles)
 Well, let's hear it then.

SHELBY
 Pardon.

MAGS
The joke. Let me here your funny ha
ha joke.

SHELBY
The joke.

MAGS
Yes.

SHELBY
Well, ma'am... Yeah... I'm gonna
have to decline, as it is "not fit"
for such a lady as yourself... No.
It's far too crude. Only suitable
for ruffians like the two of us.

MAGS
Whatever. Keep it down. Or
somebody's sleeping outside
tonight. Got it?

(MAGS walks to the door.)

MAGS (CONT'D)
Oh, by the way, someone donated KFC
tonight. I already put what was
left over, in the kitchen. Don't
let it go to waist.

(MAGS leaves.)

BRENDA
Wait. Did she just say---

BRENDA (CONT'D)
Not a chooser. Not a chooser.

SHELBY
Yes. Yes. You're right... Brenda?

BRENDA
Yeah.

SHELBY
Brenda, talk to me... Please.

(BRENDA sits glossy-eyed. Introspective for a moment.)

*(Brenda unbuttons her blouse, one button, two buttons, three
buttons...)*

(SHELBY looks away, but can't look away. She looks back.)

*(BRENDA gets to the bottom of her buttons and unbuttons the
last.)*

(SHELBY has a concerned look on her face.)

(BRENDA opens half of her blouse and lifts it over her shoulder and pulls it half way down her back, revealing severe bruising, scars, and recent cuts.)

(SHELBY shakes her head. Her eyes fill with tears. She frowns. Her voice cracks.)

SHELBY (CONT'D)
Oh, Brenda... Oh, Brenda.

(SHELBY steps closer. Next to BRENDA. She gently takes the corner of her blouse lifts it up back over her shoulder and slowly closes it around her breasts, covering her.)

SHELBY (CONT'D)
Oh, Brenda. I'm so sorry that happened to you. I'm so sorry.

(Brenda can only nod.)

(SHELBY is trying to comfort her. She's being delicate. She reaches out one hand and then pulls it back. Not wanting to hurt her. She sees Brenda as something fragile.)

(BRENDA picks up on the compassionate gesture. She's touched. And all of a sudden, BRENDA desperately wraps both arms around SHELBY and hugs her intensely.)

BRENDA
(through tears)
I can't go back... I can never go back... He'll kill me...

(SHELBY gently wraps her arms around her new friend.)

SHELBY
SHhhh... No... No... Sweetheart.
You are never going back. It's no good. He's no good. You stay. You stay right here. Shhhh. It's ok.
You're ok. Everything is gonna be ok.

(BRENDA lifts her head up and comes nose to nose with a smiling SHELBY.)

(The two women look deep into the scars within each other's eyes. SHELBY'S smile fades to sincerity.)

(SHELBY leans in and kisses BRENDA on the lips.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF ACT ONE)

ACT TWO

SCENE 1: "I GOT SHELTER"

SETTING: HOMELESS SHELTER

AT RISE:

RACHEL is sitting on SHELBY' cot, headphones on watching YouTube. She's looking around. Is the coast clear. She is behaving suspiciously.

(BRENDA walks in, still dressed in cold weather clothes.)

BRENDA
Hey, Rachel.

(RACHEL is a bit startled. And a bit disappointed.)

(SHELBY pokes her head in.)

SHELBY
Hey beautiful, can you give me a hand, please.

BRENDA
(super cheesy)
Sure thing, beautiful.

(BRENDA leaves.)

(RACHEL sees her opportunity. She stands and comes center stage, headphones and YouTube in place.)

YOUTUBE
This word starts with the tip of the tongue pressed firmly against the roof of the mouth, right behind the upper front teeth. We push some air behind it, drop the tongue, and finish with OH.

(RACHEL tries to get sound to come out of her.)

RACHEL
...

(Next try, nothing. Just a lot of inflating and deflating.)

RACHEL (CONT'D)
...

(To use an instrument that's never been used before.)

(SHELBY comes in.)

SHELBY
Rachel, what are you doing?

RACHEL
(trying)
...

SHELBY
Rachel, honey. What is it?

RACHEL
(frustrated)
...

SHELBY
Rachel, are you choking?

(RACHEL looks at her mom with one raised eyebrow.)

SHELBY (CONT'D)
Honey, I think maybe you've had a
little too much YouTube today.

RACHEL
(emotional)
...

(BRENDA comes in.)

BRENDA
That's ok, beautiful. I got it.

SHELBY
Oh, I'm sorry. I got tied up with
Rachel. I think she may have had a
little bit too---

BRENDA
Shelby. Stop. Let it go. It's good
for her.

SHELBY
Excuse me, beautiful. With all due
respect, I think I know what she
needs here.

*(SHELBY takes the e-Tablet out of Rachel's hand but can't get
the headphones off before...)*

*(RACHEL becomes FURIOUS. She stares down SHELBY, with a
furrowed brow and the intensity of life support.)*

SHELBY (CONT'D)
Rachel give me the headphones.

BRENDA
(smiling)
Oh, I can't watch this.

(Brenda walks out to get the last of it.)

SHELBY
Rachel! Give me the headphones.

(RACHEL thinks twice. And then she erupts.)

RACHEL
(screams)
NOOOOOO!

(The hair on the back of SHELBY'S every body part stood up.)

(BRENDA comes back through the door, with eyes wide open.)

SHELBY
Rachel? Baby? Did you just...

BRENDA
Oh, my God.

(BRENDA comes closer next to RACHEL.)

SHELBY
(emotional)
I know. Right? I feel like I just
witnessed a miracle.

RACHEL
No.

SHELBY
(emotional)
Yes.

RACHEL
No.

SHELBY
(crying)
Yes.

RACHEL
No.

(SHELBY grabs her daughter and hugs her tightly.)

(Rachel not used to that behavior, feels like she is being choked.)

RACHEL (CONT'D)
Uh, Uh, Uh!, Uh!...

(SHELBY stops.)

SHELBY
Yes.

RACHEL
Yes.

SHELBY
WHAT!

BRENDA
(to Rachel)
You are AMAZING!

SHELBY
Oh, my God. It's like you're talking!

(RACHEL smiles and then puts her hands out, like 'gimme ten'.)

(Sure enough, SHELBY gives her TEN.)

(RACHEL shakes her head and keeps her hands in place.)

RACHEL
EYEP!

SHELBY
(can't understand)
Honey?

RACHEL
EYEP...

(SHELBY goes to give her 10. But RACHEL pulls her hands away.)

SHELBY
What is it, babe? What do you want?

RACHEL
EYEP-AAHD!

SHELBY
Say Please...

BRENDA

Shelby!

(SHELBY chuckles.)

SHELBY

Just kidding. Yes, darling, you can have the iPad. Rachel I am so proud of you.

(RACHEL peels off and takes the iPad to her cot.)

BRENDA

That was simply amazing.

SHELBY

Yeah. That was special. I'm glad you were here to witness that.

BRENDA

Yeah... Me too.

(MAGS enters.)

MAGS

Hey, Shelby. You've got a visitor. And you know how I hate visitors. Take it outside.

(MAGS peels off and leaves, revealing MARK standing in the doorway.)

BRENDA

What the fuck? You know this guy?

SHELBY

Bren, honey. I'll handle it.

(MARK comes all the way in.)

(BRENDA walks out, bumping into MARK.)

SHELBY (CONT'D)

Mark, what are you doing here?

MARK

Well... I don't know... What are you doing here?

SHELBY

Mark, I live here.

MARK

Yeah, but why? What happened to you?

SHELBY

Fuck, bro... You know what happened. I got knocked up at fifteen. Remember? ... My parents kicked me out. The guy ran off. Is that enough detail for ya? Fuck.

MARK

(shakes his head)
Yeah, Shelby, I just can't stand seein' you live like this. I mean.

SHELBY

Just go away. Please, go away.

MARK

Alright... Alright... At least let me help out a little.

SHELBY

Mark, I don't need...

(MARK hands SHELBY four \$100 bills.)

(SHELBY stands there with the bills in her hand.)

(SHELBY slowly shakes her head.)

SHELBY (CONT'D)

I can't take this.

(BRENDA is back, in the doorway.)

MARK

Yeah, well. Just take it. It'll make me feel better.

SHELBY

Mar, you better go. I can't get in trouble. Just go.

MARK

Alright.

(MARK walks up and recognizes BRENDA. He points at her. And then remembers what he said.)

MARK (CONT'D)

(to Brenda)

Hey, ah.

(demeanor changes)

Oh.

(Mark leaves. Brenda comes down.)

BRENDA

Shelby, I'm so prou...

(Brenda sees the four \$100 still in Shelby's hand.)

SHELBY
 (in a trance)
 I couldn't.... I couldn't let go...

BRENDA
 Oh, fuck.

(BRENDA shakes her head and walks toward the entrance.)

SHELBY
 What?

(BRENDA stops.)

SHELBY (CONT'D)
 What? What did you expect me to do?
 I think about Rachel and what?

BRENDA
 No. You're right. You guys need
 it... Just be careful when he comes
 around again, lookin' to call in a
 favor.

(BRENDA leaves.)

(SHELBY is emotional imagining that.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

SCENE 2: "I CAN'T GET NO."

SETTING: HOMELESS SHELTER

AT RISE:

SHELBY is sitting on her cot, wrestling with something in her head. RACHEL and BRENDA are asleep.

(BRENDA wakes up and sees SHELBY.)

BRENDA
 (hushed)
 Hey, what are you doing up? It's
 2:00 AM.

SHELBY
 (worried)
 I gotta get rid of this money.
 Damn. I always do this. I think
 about what is right in front of me.
 Never long term, never down the
 road. I'm an IDIOT!"

(SHELBY hits herself in the head.)

BRENDA

Hey, knock that off... So, it slipped by this time. No big deal. If you feel that strongly about it, just give it back and be free again.

(SHELBY looks to BRENDA.)

SHELBY

Yeah. Yeah. I'm gonna do that.

BRENDA

Go to sleep.

(There's some slurred voice coming from outside.)

MARK

Hey, Shelby.

(Shelby and Brenda are quite.)

MARK (CONT'D)

(louder)

SHELBY! Come out. Let's go get a drink.

(MARK starts banging on the door.)

(BRENDA stands up.)

BRENDA

I'm gonna smoke this mutherf---

(SHELBY gets up.)

SHELBY

No. No. It's my problem. I'll handle it.

(BRENDA raises one eyebrow.)

BRENDA

If you're gonna handle it, then Handle It.

(Shelby nods. And walks up up the center walkway and to the entrance.)

SHELBY

Mark! Go away! You can't be here.

MARK

Shell, open the door.

SHELBY

No. Go away.

MARK
SHELBY! OPEN THE DAMN DOOR!

SHELBY
No!

MARK
OPEN THE FUCKING DOOR OR I WILL
BREAK IT IN.

BRENDA
(to herself)
Do not.

(Suddenly, MARK falls in through the entrance and down the center walkway with SHELBY running behind him.)

MARK
(drunk)
That's better. Ha! Ha!

SHELBY
Mark. Get out of here. And here!

(SHELBY puts the money back in his hand.)

SHELBY (CONT'D)
Take this. I can't accept it.

(MARK lifts the money up as if he is inspecting it.)

MARK
(smiling)
Feels a little light, Shell-Shell.
I gave you \$600. You're missing a
couple of bills.

SHELBY
Fuck you. You gave me \$400. Now get
the fuck out of here.

MARK
I don't know. You're down \$200.
There must be something I can get
for \$200.

SHELBY
I'm calling the cops.

(MARK throws his arm around SHELBY.)

MARK
Come on now. Give me a little kiss
and we'll call it even.

(BRENDA is behind MARK, baseball bat in her hand.)

BRENDA
Hey, motherfucker. I think it's
time you left.

(MARK sees the bat.)

(SHELBY stands behind BRENDA and pulls out her phone.)

MARK

Oh, you gonna hit me with that. Ha!

BRENDA

No, man. I'm gonna stand here,
while my friend behind me, calls
the cops.

MARK

Yeah? I wouldn't do that.

911 OPERATOR

(speakerphone)

911 what is your emergency.

SHELBY

We are in the Homeless Shelter over
on Girard and there is a man who
broke in here and is trying to
assault us.

MARK

Ok. Ok. I'm leaving. Fine.

(BRENDA follows him to the door. And the door closes.)

(RACHEL wakes up and stands in the center walkway)

RACHEL

Mom?

(BRENDA walks back in.)

BRENDA

I hate that guy.

(MARK is right behind BRENDA with a 2 X 4.)

SHELBY

BRENDA!

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

SCENE 3: "SATISFACTION"

SETTING: "HOMELESS SHELTER"

AT RISE:

RACHEL is on the floor, blood running from her head.

SHELBY
(screams)
HELP!

(BLACKOUT)

(LIGHTS UP)

SETTING: "HOMELESS SHELTER"

AT RISE:

*RACHEL is being wheeled out of the entrance on a gurney,
SHELBY in tow.*

MARK is being handcuffed by a cop.

BRENDA sits on her cot, audibly crying.

(A few moments pass.)

(BLACKOUT)

(LIGHTS UP)

SETTING: "HOMELESS SHELTER"

AT RISE:

*RACHEL is being wheeled in through the entrance in a
wheelchair, SHELBY pushing it.*

BRENDA's bags are gone.

SHELBY notices.

The iPad and headphones are on her cot.

SHELBY notices and stands still, lost in her thoughts.

A few moments pass.

SHELBY
Baby, you wanna watch the YouTube?

(RACHEL does not respond.)

(SHELBY sits on the cot next to the wheelchair.)

SHELBY (CONT'D)

(sings)

SPEND ALL YOUR TIME WAITING
FOR THAT SECOND CHANCE
FOR A BREAK THAT WOULD MAKE IT OKAY

THERE'S ALWAYS SOME REASON
TO FEEL NOT GOOD ENOUGH
AND IT'S HARD AT THE END OF THE DAY

I NEED SOME DISTRACTION
OH A BEAUTIFUL RELEASE
MEMORIES SEEP FROM MY VEINS

LET ME BE EMPTY
OH AND WEIGHTLESS AND MAYBE
I'LL FIND SOME PEACE TONIGHT

IN THE ARMS OF THE ANGEL
FLY AWAY FROM HERE

FROM THIS DARK COLD HOTEL ROOM
AND THE ENDLESSNESS THAT YOU FEAR

YOU ARE PULLED FROM THE WRECKAGE
OF YOUR SILENT REVERIE

YOU'RE IN THE ARMS OF THE ANGEL
MAY YOU FIND SOME COMFORT HERE

(RACHEL reaches out to SHELBY.)

SHELBY (CONT'D)

Hi, babe.

(MAGS comes in.)

MAGS

How's our little pumpkin' doin'?

SHELBY

Hi, Mags. Yes, she's been through a lot. But she's holdin' up like a champ.

MAGS

That's good... Listen, I am going to be away for a couple of weeks. Can I trust you with the "Storage Room" key? You know. Just in case you run out of paper towels or whatever.

SHELBY

Yes. Of course.

(SHELBY reaches out for the key, but MAGS has a different idea.)

MAGS
I'll just hang it here, on this
hook, by the door. That way you
won't lose it.

SHELBY
(smiles)
That sounds like a good plan.

(MAGS hangs the key and the chain on a hook next to the door.)

MAGS
Ok. Well, you two stay outta
trouble. I'll see ya.

(Shelby turns to RACHEL)

SHELBY
Honey, are you hungry?

(RACHEL shakes her head, "no".)

SHELBY (CONT'D)
You gotta eat something. Let me fix
you a sandwich.

(No response.)

(SHELBY steps away into the kitchen and starts prepping the sandwiches.)

(RACHEL is staring at the key hanging next to the door.)

(RACHEL looks to the audience and back to the key.)

(RACHEL stands up out of the wheelchair and walks to the key.)

(RACHEL unlocks the door and hangs the key back up.)

(She takes a deep breath and then walks into the "Storage Room".)

(The door stays open.)

(SHELBY has her back to the "Storage Room" door.)

(The sound of a piano stool moving is heard.)

MUSIC CUE: "OISEAUX TRISTES" BY MAURICE RAVEL.

SHELBY

Rachel, use your headphones. That's too loud.

(More piano, more beautiful.)

SHELBY (CONT'D)

Rachel! I'm talking to you.

(Piano chords. A song. A beautiful song.)

SHELBY (CONT'D)

Rachel!

(SHELBY turns with a sandwich on a plate for RACHEL.)

(No RACHEL. Empty wheelchair.)

(Beautiful music coming out of the "Storage Room".)

(SHELBY is entranced.)

(She slowly walks the sandwich plate to the door.)

(SHELBY's body is trembling.)

(SHELBY looks inside and sees RACHEL playing piano.)

(SHELBY drop the sandwich plate. It breaks.)

(SHELBY covers her mouth. She's crying.)

(SHELBY gasps for air.)

(BRENDA enters, puts her bags on her cot.)

(SHELBY sees her and waves her over.)

(BRENDA can hardly believe it.)

(BRENDA and SHELBY hug each other.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF ACT 2)

ACT THREE

SCENE 1. "I SHOT THE SHERRIF."

SETTING: HOMELESS SHELTER

AT RISE:

The piano is now just outside the Storage Room door, on the wall. RACHEL sits on the bench about to play.

SHELBY is in the kitchen, preparing sandwiches.

BRENDA is sitting at the dinette.

SHELBY

Rachel, lunch.

(RACHEL hops off the piano and joins BRENDA centerstage at the dinette set.)

(SHELBY joins them.)

(MAGS enters with JACKSON JONES (32).)

MAGS

And this is the main shelter area.

(BRENDA stands up out of respect.)

(SHELBY notices the very handsome JACKSON JONES.)

(Following her reflexes, SHELBY stands up.)

(RACHEL rolls her eyes and stands up, but does not look at them. She's comically merely waiting to sit down.)

MAGS (CONT'D)

Good morning ladies. Please allow me to introduce, Mr. Jackson Jones.

(SHELBY and JACKSON have an immediate connection and both nod at each other.)

SHELBY

Good morning.

JACKSON

Good morning.

(BRENDA notices the electricity as does RACHEL.)

BRENDA
Good morning.

JACKSON
Hi.

(The quota has been met, RACHEL sits back down.)

JACKSON (CONT'D)
(addressing Rachel)
And who do we have here?

(RACHEL rolls her eyes again and stands back up.)

MAGS
Oh, this little one doesn't talk.
Do pay her any attention.

BRENDA
Mags!

MAGS
What? She doesn't.

JACKSON
Well, I bet she has a lot to say.

(JACKSON looks for SHELBY'S approval.)

(JACKSON reaches for RACHEL'S chin. RACHEL avoids it)

SHELBY
No. No. Rachel doesn't like anyone
touching her head.

(RACHEL sits back down.)

*(MAGS walks toward the storage room, continuing the tour
without a following.)*

MAGS
So, over here...

(JACKSON steps toward SHELBY and extends his hand.)

(SHELBY accepts.)

JACKSON
Hi.

SHELBY
(acting shy)
Hi.

MAGS
Mr. Jackson, this is the storage
room.

JACKSON
(to Shelby)
See you later.

SHELBY
Yes.

(JACKSON joins MAGS)

MAGS
And this is an old upright that I
have been meaning to get rid of.

*(Almost choreographed, JACKSON and SHELBY say the same thing
at the same time.)*

JACKSON
Don't you dare!

SHELBY
Don't you dare!

(MAGS recoils.)

SHELBY (CONT'D)
(to Mags)
Rachel plays that every day.

JACKSON
(to Shelby)
That was my grandmother's. She
passed it down to me.

MAGS
Ok. Whatever. We'll do with it
whatever you say to, Mr. Jones.

JACKSON
(looking at Shelby)
Let's leave it right her, so little
Rhonda can play it whenever she
wants.

(RACHEL and BRENDA look at each other.)

(MAGS leads JACKSON out of the room.)

(SHELBY is in her own world, smiling.)

(BRENDA stars at SHELBY.)

(SHELBY doesn't initially notice.)

BRENDA
Interesting guy.

RACHEL

Eh.

SHELBY

Yes. Interesting.

BRENDA

Oh, please.

(BRENDA gets up and throws her napkin on the table.)

SHELBY

What?

BRENDA

I'm gonna go look for work.

(RACHEL jumps up from the table and grabs BRENDA. She hugs her.)

(SHELBY is still in her own world.)

(BRENDA leaves.)

(RACHEL goes to the piano, sits down, and opens the cover.)

(SHELBY is picking up the items from the table.)

(RACHEL looks at SHELBY, trying to get her to join in, and plays the opening to "FIX YOU" by Coldplay.)

(SHELBY, smiling, is enjoying the piano sounds as part of her own world.)

(RACHEL BANGS on the lower keys, jarring SHELBY'S trance.)

SHELBY

What? What?

(RACHEL uses her head to indicate that SHELBY should join her.)

SHELBY (CONT'D)

What? No. Just Go. Play.

(RACHEL plays the song.)

SHELBY (CONT'D)

(sings)

WHEN YOU TRY YOUR BEST, BUT YOU
DON'T SUCCEED
WHEN YOU GET WHAT YOU WANT, BUT NOT
WHAT YOU NEED
WHEN YOU FEEL SO TIRED, BUT YOU
CAN'T SLEEP

STUCK IN REVERSE

AND THE TEARS COME STREAMING DOWN
YOUR FACE
WHEN YOU LOSE SOMETHING YOU CAN'T
REPLACE
WHEN YOU LOVE SOMEONE, BUT IT GOES
TO WASTE
COULD IT BE WORSE?

LIGHTS WILL GUIDE YOU HOME
AND IGNITE YOUR BONES
AND I WILL TRY TO FIX YOU

(RACHEL claps.)

SHELBY (CONT'D)
(smiling)
That was pretty, Rachey. Do another
one.

(RACHEL plays "CLOUD ON MY TONGUE" by Tori Amos.)

SHELBY (CONT'D)
(sings)
SOMEONE'S KNOCKIN' ON MY KITCHEN
DOOR
LEAVE THE WOOD OUTSIDE WHAT
ALL THE GIRLS HERE ARE FREEZING
COLD

(JACKSON is at the entrance with MAGS.)

(JACKSON sees SHELBY singing and "shushes" MAGS.)

SHELBY (CONT'D)
LEAVE ME WITH YOUR BORNEO
I SAID I DON'T NEED MUCH TO KEEP ME
WARM

(JACKSON comes closer, but out of sight.)

(MAGS stays back and looks on with distain.)

SHELBY (CONT'D)
DON'T STOP NOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING
WHAT YOU'RE DOING MY UGLY ONE

BRING THEM ALL HERE
HARD TO HIDE A HUNDRED GIRLS IN
YOUR HAIR

(JACKSON looks on in awe of her beauty.)

IT WON'T BE FAIR IF I HATE HER
IF I HATE HER

YOU CAN GO NOW
YOU CAN GO NOW

I'LL BE WEARING YOUR TATTOO
YOU'RE ALREADY IN THERE

(JACKSON claps loudly.)

JACKSON
Oh, my God. That was beautiful,
Shelby.

(SHELBY makes a head motion toward RACHEL.)

JACKSON (CONT'D)
Oh. Oh. Yes. And good playing too,
Ruby.

(RACHEL looks at the audience, one eyebrow raised)

SHELBY
I thought you had left. I didn't
realize you were still here.

JACKSON
We just finished up.

(MAGS rolls her eyes and leaves.)

JACKSON (CONT'D)
Are you... busy tonight? I'd like
to take you to dinner.

(SHELBY looks flattered.)

SHELBY
Oh. Thank you. That's very kind.
But, I have my daughter.

JACKSON
Well. Maybe... you could get a
sitter.

(RACHEL perks up.)

SHELBY
It sounds lovely. But, no. Jackson,
I am in a relationship.

JACKSON
(chuckling)
Ha! With whom?

(SHELBY'S not happy with the chuckling.)

SHELBY
Brenda and I are together.

JACKSON
Oh. Oh. I see... And where is
Brenda, now?

SHELBY

(RACHEL comes over and stands in front of her mom.)

(RACHEL is intent on distracting SHELBY and protecting her at the same time.)

JACKSON
Ok. Maybe tomorrow then.

(RACHEL smiles.)

(JACKSON tries to log another entry in the nice guy book by patting RACHEL'S head.)

(RACHEL recoils violently.)

RACHEL
NO!

(JACKSON snaps his hand back, like he's afraid it'll get bit.)

SHELBY
Oh. No. Remember, I said---

JACKSON
(fearful)
What the hell?

SHELBY
No. Yeah, no one can touch RACHEL'S head...

(SHELBY's gaze fades off, thinking about..)

SHELBY (CONT'D)
Except Brenda... Brenda is the only one that Rachel allows.

JACKSON
(dismissive)
Huh. Well. Interesting. Ok. I gotta go. See you soon?

SHELBY
Ok. Bye.

(JACKSON exits.)

(SHELBY looks into the mischievous eyes of her six-year-old.)

SHELBY (CONT'D)
Ok, little lady. You've got some 'splainin' to do.

RACHEL
(grunts)
Uh!

SHELBY
Rachel, be nice. That man means
well.

RACHEL
(grunts)
Uh!

SHELBY
Rachel, stop.

(SHELBY wipes off the table.)

(RACHEL goes to her cot and lays down.)

(BLACKOUT)

SCENE 2. "THE DEPUTY"

SETTING: HOMELESS SHELTER

AT RISE:

RACHEL lays on her cot, sleeping.

*SHELBY stands in the kitchen, against the counter,
introspective.*

BRENDA enters from her job search.

*(BRENDA slowly and lovingly comes up behind SHELBY and wraps
her arms around SHELBY'S waist.)*

BRENDA
I'm sorry about earlier.

(SHELBY is utilitarian in her response.)

(SHELBY breaks free from BRENDA'S embrace.)

SHELBY
What? That? Oh, it's nothing.
You're good. No biggie.

(BRENDA is taken aback.)

BRENDA
Shell, is something wrong?

SHELBY
No. Why? Nothing's wrong.

BRENDA
You seem a little distant.

SHELBY
Me? No? I'm normal.

BRENDA
Yeah, normal? Ok. Come here and
give me a hug.

(SHELBY thinks twice.)

BRENDA (CONT'D)
Yeah. Real normal.

(BRENDA's phone rings.)

BRENDA (CONT'D)
(to herself)
Who the hell at this hour?

(BRENDA takes the call.)

BRENDA (CONT'D)
Hello... Ahuh... Yes. Yes, of
course.

(BRENDA rolls her eyes.)

BRENDA (CONT'D)
(flippant)
Yes. I remember you from earlier
today....

(BRENDA's attitude suddenly changes to one of attention and hope.)

BRENDA (CONT'D)
Yeah. I mean 'Yes'.... Ahuh...
Really?... Oh, that is awesome....
Thank you. ... Yes. Yes. I'll be
there.... Ok... Goodnight.)

(Now it's BRENDA's turn.)

*(BRENDA stands in the kitchen, against the counter,
introspective.)*

*(SHELBY thinks again. She humbles herself. Her shoulders come
down.)*

*(SHELBY slowly and lovingly comes up behind BRENDA and wraps
her arms around BRENDA'S waist.)*

SHELBY
I'm sorry about that. I was being
rude.

(BRENDA is utilitarian in her response.)

(BRENDA breaks free from SHELBY'S embrace.)

BRENDA
What? That? Oh, it's nothing.
You're good. No biggie.

(SHELBY is taken aback.)

SHELBY
Bren, what's going on?

BRENDA
Nothing. What? No. Nothing's going
on... Oh, that man is an angel.

SHELBY
Man! What Man?

BRENDA
Jackson.

SHELBY
What?

BRENDA
(smiling)
Yeah.

*(BRENDA turns sincerely to SHELBY, lovingly puts her arms
around her.)*

BRENDA (CONT'D)
He gave me a job.

SHELBY
WHAT! That's Great!

BRENDA
I know. Right!

SHELBY
What is it? What is it?

BRENDA
Well, he owns a security company.
And he needs guards, with
experience.

(BRENDA gets emotional.)

BRENDA (CONT'D)
But, what he really needs is
another Supervisor.

SHELBY
Get the "F" word outta here!

BRENDA
 (nodding emotionally)
 I start tomorrow.

(This time it's a mutually consenting hug of happiness.)

(BRENDA lifts up and the two are nose-to-nose.)

SHELBY
 I think that's great. I'm proud of
 you.

(SHELBY kisses BRENDA on the lips.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

SCENE 3. "NO SHINING ARMOUR"

SETTING: HOMELESS SHELTER

AT RISE:

RACHEL is at the piano.

MUSIC CUE: "The Room Upstairs" by Alstad.

SHELBY sits at the dinette, lost, introspective.

JACKSON enters with MAGS in tow.

(JACKSON fails to read the room.)

JACKSON
 (bold)
 Well, hello there.

(SHELBY springs into action.)

(RACHEL stops playing.)

JACKSON (CONT'D)
 (to Rachel)
 Hi, Riley.... I got it right this
 time. Didn't I?

SHELBY
 Well, what a surprise.

JACKSON
 A pleasant one, I hope.

MAGS

Hi girls.

SHELBY

Hi, Mags... What brings the two of you here?

JACKSON

Well, I need to bring in some cots and, well, Mags is complaining of a sore back.

(MAGS fakes some back pain.)

SHELBY

Oh, I can help.

JACKSON

Great. Mags has agreed to watch Riley.

SHELBY

Oh.... Ok.

(MAGS sits down at the dinette.)

(Jackson walks to the entrance.)

(SHELBY scrambles for her things.)

(SHELBY looks to RACHEL.)

SHELBY (CONT'D)

You ok.

(RACHEL winces.)

SHELBY (CONT'D)

I'll be back soon.

(On her way to the entrance, SHELBY looks back to RACHEL like five times.)

(At the entrance, SHELBY thinks twice, looks back at RACHEL, and then turns and leaves.)

(Moments pass in awkward silence.)

(RACHEL sits wide-eyed looking at MAGS.)

(RACHEL makes a facial expression like: "Huh, I wonder what MAGS likes.")

(RACHEL plays the opening to "Scrubs" by TLC.)

MAGS

What the hell is that?

(RACHEL reacts like "Oops".)

(RACHEL plays the opening to "Gangsters Paradise" by Coolio, LV.)

MAGS (CONT'D)

Yuck!

(RACHEL reacts like "Oops".)

(RACHEL plays the opening to "La Vida Loca" by Ricky Martin.)

MAGS (CONT'D)

No. No. Nothing in a foreign
language.

(RACHEL reacts like "Oops".)

*(RACHEL plays a downtempo version of the opening to
"Californication" by Red Hot Chili Peppers.)*

(MAGS perks up. She likes.)

(MAGS stands up. She's drawn to come centerstage.)

*(MAGS remembers that time in LA, what she went through, what
it did to her, and how long it took to get over it.)*

*(MAGS sings from a place of remembering and forgetting and
finally accepting.)*

MAGS (CONT'D)

(sings)

PSYCHIC SPIES FROM CHINA TRY TO
STEAL YOUR MIND'S ELATION
LITTLE GIRLS FROM SWEDEN DREAM OF
SILVER SCREEN QUOTATION
IF YOU WANT THESE KIND OF DREAMS
IT'S CALIFORNICATION

IT'S THE EDGE OF THE WORLD AND ALL
OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION
THE SUN MAY RISE IN THE EAST, AT
LEAST IT SETTLED IN A FINAL
LOCATION
IT'S UNDERSTOOD THAT HOLLYWOOD
SELLS CALIFORNICATION

PAY YOUR SURGEON VERY WELL TO BREAK
THE SPELL OF AGING
CELEBRITY SKIN, IS THIS YOUR CHIN,
OR IS THAT WAR YOU'RE WAGING?

FIRST BORN UNICORN
HARDCORE SOFT PORN

DREAM OF CALIFORNICATION
DREAM OF CALIFORNICATION

(MAGS waves off the piano.)

(RACHEL stops playing.)

(MAGS stands centerstage. Crying.)

(RACHEL comes out to comfort her.)

(Initially, MAGS ignores RACHEL.)

(Eventually, she puts her arm on her shoulder.)

(END OF SCENE)

SCENE 4. "LESS THAN SHINING ARMOUR"

SETTING: (CONTINUE FROM PRIOR)

AT OPEN: (CONTINUE FROM PRIOR)

(BRENDA enters, dressed in a Security Guard Uniform and a smile.)

(BRENDA sees MAGS and RACHEL and is surprised and curious.)

(MAGS turns, sees BRENDA, pats RACHEL twice, and exits.)

(BRENDA laughs.)

BRENDA

Oh, my God. What was that?

RACHEL

CRY.

(BRENDA is surprised.)

BRENDA

Wow, Scooter. You just talked. Are you talking again?

RACHEL

Yeah.

BRENDA

Where's your mom?

(RACHEL'S Deer Eyes got caught in some headlights.)

(No response. It worked before.)

(BRENDA navigates all the way around and squares up with RACHEL.)

(BRENDA reaches out and takes RACHEL'S shoulders.)

BRENDA (CONT'D)
Where's your mom?

RACHEL
Ah... DICKSON.

BRENDA
Dickson... You mean Jackson.

RACHEL
Yeah.

(RACHEL throws her arms around BRENDA and doesn't let go. Even dragging her doesn't cause her to let go.)

RACHEL (CONT'D)
Sorry. Sorry. Sorry. Sorry. Sorry.

BRENDA
What? No. Why are you sorry? You didn't do anything. It was that Bitch---

RACHEL
HEY!

(RACHEL stands up and puts her index finger up. Like watch your mouth.)

BRENDA
(backing off)
Ok. Ok. Surry. You're right. That wasn't nice. My bad.

RACHEL
She. Help. Him.

BRENDA
(cynically)
Yes. And He. Help. Her.

(BRENDA wishes she could walk that back.)

BRENDA (CONT'D)
No. No. I didn't mean that. For get I said that.

(RACHEL gives BRENDA a disapproving look.)

BRENDA (CONT'D)
Well, it's getting late. What time are they gonna be back?

(SHELBY bubbles in the entrance, a tad too tipsy.)

SHELBY
 (to Jackson)
 Sh.. No. No. You can't come in.
 (she laughs)
 Go home.

(The door closes.)

(BRENDA has a disappointed look on her face.)

(RACHEL looks PISSED-OFF.)

(SHELBY drips into the room and approaches RACHEL.)

(RACHEL rejects her and continues to stare at her.)

(RACHEL shakes her head.)

SHELBY (CONT'D)
 What's your fuckin' problem?

(SHELBY walks away from her.)

(RACHEL is STEAMING!)

RACHEL
 FUCK YOU!

(SHELBY with one smooth motion, like a professional, give RACHEL a jolting open-handed SLAP across the face, knocking her to the floor.)

BRENDA
 HEY!

(BRENDA gets in between.)

BRENDA (CONT'D)
 Knock that shit off. Right now.

SHELBY
 Or what?

(BRENDA picks RACHEL up off the floor.)

BRENDA
 (to Rachel)
 Go lay down sweetheart. I got this.

(RACHEL runs to her cot and dives face down.)

SHELBY

What? What'r you gonna do?

(BRENDA calms down.)

BRENDA

What is wrong with you, woman?

SHELBY

What is wrong with you? ... Woman.

BRENDA

(shaking her head)

You are unbelievable. Just when you're about to get everything you want, everything that I want, everything your daughter wants, and you go and screw it up.

SHELBY

What? What did I...

BRENDA

You're such a piece of work.

SHELBY

What? It wasn't... He said it wasn't even a date. It was an errand... Yeah. Just an errand.

BRENDA

Yeah, what was the errand?

SHELBY

Pick up new cocks. Ahhh. Cots.

BRENDA

Yeah? Where are they.

SHELBY

We... We couldn't .. find them.

BRENDA

Wow. And that took five hours?

SHELBY

No. No. Of course not. That shit was done in like fifteen minutes.

BRENDA

Yeah, so what'd you do the rest of the time?

SHELBY

Wait.. Wait.. Go back. What I messed up? To get everything Rachel wanted.

BRENDA
I applied for a New Homeowners
Program today.

SHELBY
You don't have a new home. You have
a new Home? ... What?... I'm
confused.

BRENDA
(over the top)
I applied for assistance with the
down-payment and first 90 days
mortgage payments... and I was
approved.

SHELBY
That's great, Bren. That's great.
Congrats.

(BRENDA can't hold back.)

BRENDA
Did you sleep with him?

(SHELBY is (comically) slowly falling over.)

SHELBY
What?

BRENDA
(angry)
DID YOU SLEEP WITH HIM?

SHELBY
(indignant and offended)
No. What are you thinking?

BRENDA
Did you kiss him?

SHELBY
(triggered)
NO!... I TOLD HIM NO!...
(melting)
He didn't like that. But I told him
no. I'm in a relationship with a
wonderful person, who happens to be
a woman.

BRENDA
You didn't?

SHELBY
(still continuing with the
last train of thought)
And her name is Brenda. And I love
her. I love Brenda.
I love you.

(BRENDA stands eyes-wide and surprised. Pleasantly.)

47.

BRENDA
(through tears)
Come on. You're drunk. We'll talk
about this in the morning. You
crazy girl.

(SHELBY has a serious look on her face.)

SHELBY
What did you say? ... No. No. We're
gonna talk about this right now.

*(SHELBY walks up and violently grabs BRENDA's face with her
open hand.)*

BRENDA
Hey.

(BRENDA puts her hand on the outside of SHELBY's.)

SHELBY
No. No. Look at me... I love you,
you fuckin' bitch. .. AND after all
that we've been through together,
don't you DARE tell me that you
don't love me.

*(BRENDA starts to cry. SHELBY's grip on her face loosens.
Both of there hands slide down and off of BRENDA's face.)*

(BRENDA nods.)

BRENDA
I do. I always have. Every day. I
love you.

(The girls hug.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

SCENE 4: "EPILOGUE"

SETTING: HOMELESS SHELTER

*Most everything is swept, cleaned, packed up, and moved off
to the side.*

AT RISE:

(SHELBY stands silent, reflective in her thought.)

(BRENDA and RACHEL enter playfully.)

BRENDA
Is that it?

SHELBY
Yeah. That's it.

(The three of them stand together as a family in this place that has helped shape them.)

(There's a silhouette on the wall where the piano used to be.)

SHELBY (CONT'D)
You ready?

RACHEL
YES.

(SHELBY looks at BRENDA.)

BRENDA
(nodding)
Yeah.

(The three of them walk out the entrance.)

(The door slams closed.)

(Hold for 5 seconds.)

(BLACKOUT)

END OF ACT THREE