

# **A TINY MIRACLE WITH A FIBEROPTIC UNICORN**

A SOMEWHAT NOSTALGIC, SENTIMENTAL COMEDY IN TWO ACTS BY  
**Don Zolidis**

**Playscripts, Inc.**

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### Cast of Characters

PRESENT-DAY LOUIS, 30s. A rather-normal looking adult.

LOUIS, 13, a rather normal-looking 13 year old boy. That is to say, awkward.

KELLY, 17, Louis' older sister. Big big big unbelievably big hair.

GEORGE, early 40s. A big jokester. Maybe a beer belly.

EMILY, early 40s. Pretty. Nice. A good Mother. Probably wears jeans that are a little out of style, but the kind of person who will clean before a cleaning lady arrives.

CAROLYN, 13, a little weird. Pretty. The object of Louis' affection.

GRANDMA JACOBS, 70ish. Mother of Emily. In between her sixtieth and seventieth year Grandma Jacobs starting swearing like a sailor. Walks with a cane. Speaks rather loudly.

GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI, 70ish. Mother of George. More than slightly demented. Remembers the old country. Never lived there. Has acquired a mysterious British accent from watching Master-piece Theatre.

Finding a way to incorporate a character that was the same person, but different ages (within moments of each other) was a big thought process for us. We had to decide how to make Louis characterized and still recognizable even as a technically different character.

### Setting

Brookfield, Wisconsin, a suburb of Milwaukee. December 19-25, 1986.

This is a real place, and we actually visited the mall mentioned in this script! Look for this type of thing in your scripts!

## Acknowledgments

*A Tiny Miracle with a Fiberoptic Unicorn* was originally presented in a workshop reading January 10, 2008 at Haltom High School in Haltom City, Texas. The original cast was as follows:

LOUIS .....	Richard Stutheit
PRESENT LOUIS.....	Anthony Hernandez
KELLY.....	Rachael Osborne
GEORGE.....	Joseph Tripp
EMILY.....	Stephanie Coss
CAROLYN .....	Bre Gibson
GRANDMA JACOBS.....	Rachel Ybarra
GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI .....	Courtney Clark





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## ACT I

*(The Jacobs home. A modest ranch-style home in a modest ranch-style neighborhood of a modest ranch-style suburb. Built in the 1970s. Still recovering.)*

*(Please be creative with the set. It must function as the house, but also needs to have room for various other locations. Most of these could be delineated with light, but the look of the show should always be somewhat soft.)*

*(At rise, PRESENT LOUIS is sitting on the edge of the stage, outside of the world of the play. He is dressed nicely and looks respectable. He watches as LOUIS, a boy of about thirteen, darts into the living room to check his hair. Christmas music plays.)*

**EMILY.** *(Off-stage:)* I thought we were leaving!

**LOUIS.** Just a minute!

*(LOUIS goes to a closet and pulls out a rather disgusting-looking jean jacket.)*

**KELLY.** *(Off-stage:)* Louis! Let's go!

**LOUIS.** I'm coming!

*(He checks his hair again. He tries to wet it and takes a comb from his back pocket.)*

**KELLY.** *(Off-stage:)* I'm going to murder you if we're late!

**EMILY.** *(Off-stage:)* Don't say that Kelly!

**KELLY.** *(Off-stage:)* I'm going to maim you if we're late!

**PRESENT LOUIS.** Let's freeze this for a moment.

Tyler made a comment about how we wanted to jump right into the action, so we added the music at the beginning.

(LOUIS *freezes.*)

That's me. December 19th, 1986. About six forty-five p.m. I'm on my way to church. In about two minutes my mother is going to disapprove of everything I've done to get ready. The big question of the day was whether or not to feather my hair. I'm torturing myself internally over it. Michael J. Fox did it. Jason Bateman did it. Michael Jackson...well, at this point in time he was still kinda cool.

(PRESENT LOUIS *walks around the set.*)

We're in Brookfield, Wisconsin. A pretty ordinary place. I'm thirteen years old. And this is going to be the worst week of my life. And also the best.

(KELLY, 17, *enters, sporting big hair.* LOUIS *unfreezes.*)

KELLY. Oh my god, what are you doing?

LOUIS. I'm fixing my hair.

(KELLY *snorts.*)

KELLY. Whatever.

LOUIS. Does it look cool?

KELLY. Yeah Louis you look really cool. You're such a reject. Come on.

(*They freeze.*)

PRESENT LOUIS. 1986 was the epicenter of big hair. There was always a faint aroma of Aqua Net in the air, we inhaled the stuff daily, and my sister Kelly, she was the living, breathing, beating heart of the frizzy-haired earthquake. She was personally responsible for a hole in the ozone layer the size of eastern Connecticut. I used to think that you could trap a gerbil in her bangs.

KELLY. Here.

(KELLY *produces a can of hair spray and sprays down Louis' head.*)

LOUIS. Ah! Stop it I'm going to get cancer!

KELLY. You are not, shut up. I'm trying to help you.

(EMILY enters.)

EMILY. What are you doing to him?

KELLY. He's feathering his hair.

EMILY. You are not feathering your hair before we go to church. Where's your coat?

LOUIS. I'm wearing my jacket.

EMILY. You're not wearing that to church.

LOUIS. Why not?

EMILY. Louis, Jesus loves you, but he does not love you in that jacket.

LOUIS. It's not cold out.

EMILY. It's minus seven degrees outside.

LOUIS. I don't like my coat.

KELLY. God you are immature Louis.

(Imitating him in a whine:)

'I don't like my winter coat.' You're such a baby.

LOUIS. Shut up.

KELLY. You shut up.

LOUIS. You shut up.

KELLY. No you shut up first. How bout this?

(She sprays him with hair spray.)

EMILY. Kelly. Not helping. Go sit in the car.

KELLY. I'm gonna take my car to church.

EMILY. Get in the car.

KELLY. Fine. If I'm late to rehearsal, you're dead.

LOUIS. Bite me.

KELLY. What was that?

**EMILY.** KELLY GO SIT IN THE CAR!

**KELLY.** I didn't do anything! GOD!

*(She leaves.)*

**LOUIS.** Mom, can I please just wear my jean jacket?

**EMILY.** Why do you want to wear your jacket, sweetheart? Are you trying to impress a girl?

**LOUIS.** No.

*(A light shines on CAROLYN, 13, looking resplendent in church attire.)*

**PRESENT LOUIS.** One of the conditions of being thirteen is that you are continuously lying. I hadn't told my mother the truth about anything in three months. Of course there was a girl.

**EMILY.** Let me tell you something about the people who go to church, okay pudding?

**LOUIS.** Don't call me that.

**EMILY.** I can't even call you that any more? You used to like that.

**LOUIS.** When I was five.

**EMILY.** I carried you in my stomach for nine months, I changed five thousand diapers, and I can't call you pudding if I want to?

**LOUIS.** No.

**EMILY.** Do you understand what pregnancy does to a woman?

**LOUIS.** Mom. Fine.

**EMILY.** That's all I ask. Let me explain about the people who go to church. They're very judgmental. They see a child sit in a pew wearing a jean jacket and you know what goes through their minds? Oh that poor boy—his father doesn't have a job. I mean it's bad enough they look at Kelly and see that contraception pasted to her forehead. Okay?

**LOUIS.** Fine. I'll wear the stupid coat.

*(He switches coats.)*

**EMILY.** That's all I ask, pudding.

*(They leave.)*

**PRESENT LOUIS.** The girl.

*(Lights shine on CAROLYN. Perhaps a breeze fans her. Something like Peter Cetera's "The Glory of Love" plays.)*

Carolyn Warren was the hottest girl in the eighth grade gifted and talented class. Okay, she was the only hot girl in the eighth grade gifted and talented class. And I loved her. A mad, consuming, devouring, stomach-churning love. I dreamt about her. Carolyn Warren was my secret goddess.

*(KELLY enters with LOUIS in tow.)*

**KELLY.** Okay let's get started. Sorry I'm late I had to wait for retarded over there.

**PRESENT LOUIS.** Due to a trick of fate, Kelly was the leader of our church youth group. I don't know how this happened; I think maybe she was the only high school kid to come around our church. And our activity for December was to put on the nativity play; Kelly was going to be the director. Carolyn was going to be Mary. Therefore I wanted to be Joseph.

*(KELLY addresses CAROLYN, LOUIS, and a group of imaginary kids.)*

**KELLY.** Okay. I don't want to be here. You don't want to be here. But we're supposed to be honoring the birth of Jesus so we're going to get through this thing, Louis. You are going to be an ass.

**LOUIS.** What?

**KELLY.** Shut up. That's what they're called. Get used to it. You live in the manger with the other animals. Now we're supposed to use the Jensen baby for the baby Jesus because they just had a baby but I think their baby is gross. It looks like it got caught in the washing machine, it's got like permanent upturned nostrils. Baby Jesus did not look like that. Plus it smells. Ugh.

**LOUIS.** Hey Kelly can I be Joseph?

**KELLY.** Raise your hand if you want to speak.

*(LOUIS raises his hand.)*

What?

**LOUIS.** Can I be Joseph?

**KELLY.** No. You're an ass.

*(She addresses the group again:)*

All right people let's get to work! Baby Jesus isn't going to birth himself! Hey! Hey Micah! Are you an idiot?! The wise men do not do that!

*(She storms off-stage. LOUIS sees CAROLYN going over her script.)*

**CAROLYN.** Hey Louis.

**LOUIS.** Hi.

**CAROLYN.** Sucks that you're an ass.

**LOUIS.** It's fine. I've got less lines, you know? Just sort of a braying.

**CAROLYN.** Well you should practice. Baaah.

**LOUIS.** That's a sheep.

**CAROLYN.** What does a donkey do?

**LOUIS.** They bray. Like...braaaaay.

**CAROLYN.** That's pretty good.

**LOUIS.** You're awesome by the way. In the play.

**CAROLYN.** Oh. Thanks.

**LOUIS.** Like really...you know like...I bet you're gonna be like a professional actress.

**CAROLYN.** Thanks.

*(They've run out of things to say.)*

Is that your coat?

*(LOUIS is stabbed through the heart.)*

**LOUIS.** Yeah...I uh...my grandmother...she's demented and she just gives me things sometimes.

**CAROLYN.** Huh. I should go work on my lines.

**LOUIS.** Wait um...I got you a Christmas present.

**CAROLYN.** Really? That's sweet.

**LOUIS.** I don't have it on me. Maybe I could um...give it to you sometime.

**CAROLYN.** Okay. See ya.

*(She leaves. LOUIS watches.)*

**PRESENT LOUIS.** Of course I didn't have a present for her. I had five days to get it, and I had to figure out how to deliver it without getting a ride from my Dad. But life was pretty good. Which brings me to the subject of...my Dad.

*(GEORGE appears.)*

He wasn't an orthodox father.

**GEORGE.** Yes, the monsters are coming to get you. They think you look tasty. And they're living in your closet. Go back to sleep. Oh by the way, I may have used some glow-in-the-dark paint to paint some eyes on your walls. But don't worry about that.

**PRESENT LOUIS.** He wasn't a mean man, just...continually amused.

**GEORGE.** You will get a little brother when your Daddy apologizes to Mommy for the Jell-o incident. But that's all I'm gonna say about that.

*(Christmas music. Back to the house. LOUIS is stringing lights on a newly erected Christmas tree. GEORGE, EMILY, and KELLY sit and watch.)*

**EMILY.** No. Those don't go there.

**LOUIS.** I didn't put—

**EMILY.** If you put them too close to the tree it will set it on fire.

GEORGE. Oh it will not. Put them anywhere Louis. In fact, what if we used lighters for Christmas ornaments this year?

EMILY. Don't tell him that.

KELLY. Put 'em higher Louis.

LOUIS. I can't reach any higher.

GEORGE. Try jumping.

EMILY. Why don't you go help him, Kelly?

KELLY. I'm tired.

GEORGE. Kelly. Help out.

KELLY. (*Whine:*) Dad?

GEORGE. Are you really tired?

KELLY. Yes.

GEORGE. Well you just rest then.

LOUIS. What?

EMILY. Concentrate on what you're doing Louis.

LOUIS. Why does she get to sit there and I have to do it?

GEORGE. Life is unfair. It's about time you learned —

EMILY. George, please.

KELLY. You said you wanted to do it.

LOUIS. No I didn't.

KELLY. Well I'm not doing it!

LOUIS. It's not fair that I have to do everything!

EMILY. Oh so no one wants to have Christmas!

LOUIS. That's not what I'm saying —

EMILY. We'll just sit here and twiddle our thumbs until the cows come home because the two kids are too lazy to care about Christmas any more. Just load up a trough of presents and have the two



little piggies gorge themselves on gifts! That's what you want?  
That's what Jesus died for?

**KELLY.** Jesus was born on Christmas.

**EMILY.** Kelly?!

**GEORGE.** Quiet, Kel.

**EMILY.** I guess we won't have any presents then.

**LOUIS.** Fine! I'll decorate the tree.

**EMILY.** I have been slaving away all day cleaning this house; the least you could do is fake a little enthusiasm for trimming the tree. Just fake it Louis. That's all I'm asking of you.

**KELLY.** Yeah, fake it Louis.

**EMILY.** Kelly you can do the dusting.

**KELLY.** What? Dad said I didn't—

**EMILY.** Is your father the boss of this house?

**KELLY.** Yes.

*(GEORGE mouths the word "no.")*

**EMILY.** Oh he is?

*(GEORGE is shaking his head.)*

**KELLY.** I'm going out.

**EMILY.** What did you just say?

**KELLY.** I'm going out.

*(LOUIS and GEORGE merely stare.)*

**GEORGE.** Kelly, maybe um—

**EMILY.** Sit down young lady.

**KELLY.** You're the one who cares about whether the house is clean. I don't give a crap.

**EMILY.** Grandma Jacobs is coming tomorrow—

**KELLY.** She hates us!

**EMILY.** She does not hate you —

**GEORGE.** Don't take it personally Kelly, she hates everyone.

**EMILY.** George!

**KELLY.** She's gonna complain anyway Mom! She's gonna find fault with something. She hates my hair —

**LOUIS.** To be honest, there's a lot a hate about —

**KELLY.** Shut up Louis! I don't like Grandma Jacobs I'm not cleaning the house for her! I hate it when you get like this! You don't care about me! All you want is a maid!

**EMILY.** Fine. Leave. I'll clean the house myself. Louis stop what you're doing.

**LOUIS.** I want to help, Mom.

**EMILY.** No. I'll do it. I'm the only one who cares, apparently.

**LOUIS.** Mom I want to do this.

**EMILY.** Give me the lights Louis.

**LOUIS.** Look see I'm doing a good job now.

**EMILY.** You sure are sweetie, why don't you go live on the streets with your sister?

**LOUIS.** What?

**KELLY.** Oh stop taking it out on him.

**EMILY.** Well I certainly don't want to take it out on the maid. And don't tell me what to do in my house. If you don't want to clean and just make a nuisance of yourself, fine, but don't presume to lecture me on how to be a decent person.

**GEORGE.** Emily — let's go in the other room.

**EMILY.** Not right now.

**GEORGE.** Let's let the kids clean up for once and we'll go in the other room.

EMILY. They won't clean right.

GEORGE. Your mother won't notice—she'll be too busy yelling at me. Let's go in the other room.

EMILY. Fine.

*(EMILY and GEORGE leave. LOUIS hangs a few ornaments in silence. KELLY stews.)*

LOUIS. You know what your problem is?

*(No response.)*

I said do you know what your problem is?

KELLY. Were you anticipating some kind of reaction to that statement?

LOUIS. Well, you and Mom are kinda the same. You're both really stubborn. That's why you fight all the time.

KELLY. Oh really. Thank you. That was genius, Louis. I'll remember that if I'm flushing my head down the toilet.

LOUIS. What?

KELLY. It's an expression.

LOUIS. You don't have to get mad at me. I didn't do anything.

KELLY. Whatever.

*(LOUIS finishes the lights.)*

LOUIS. There. What do you think?

KELLY. Sucks.

LOUIS. Seriously?

KELLY. It's okay.

*(LOUIS turns on the lights. The tree looks good.)*

LOUIS. That looks pretty cool, huh?

KELLY. I guess.

LOUIS. Hey Kelly? Can I ask you a question?

KELLY. No.

LOUIS. Well screw you then.

KELLY. Go ahead, ask your stupid question.

LOUIS. You're a girl—

KELLY. Oh really? You figured that one out? Gold star for you.

LOUIS. No, just—can I ask my question?

KELLY. I'm waiting for you to ask your stupid question!

LOUIS. What do you think would be a good present to get for Christmas? From a guy?

KELLY. Which guy?

LOUIS. A guy who liked you.

KELLY. Like he liked me liked me or just liked me?

LOUIS. Liked you liked you.

KELLY. I don't know. I've never had a guy who actually liked me buy me a present before. Maybe something pretty with a card.

LOUIS. Like a poster?

KELLY. A poster?

LOUIS. There are these posters that have all these dolphins on them and stuff. They look cool.

KELLY. Were you dropped on your head? Actually, I know that, you were dropped on your head. That was my fault. I'm sorry. I probably knocked about 20 IQ points out of your skull. A poster of dolphins? What the heck am I gonna do with a poster of dolphins?

LOUIS. Put it on your wall and then every time you look at it you'll be reminded of the guy and you'll think about the dolphins and how they're free and live in the ocean and stuff.

KELLY. Huh. No. That's lame. You're thinking about lame things. I would want like earrings or something.

LOUIS. Where do you get those?

**KELLY.** At the mall.

**LOUIS.** When are you going to the mall next?

**KELLY.** What do you want, Louis?

**LOUIS.** I told Carolyn I'd get her a present.

**KELLY.** You're such a dork.

**LOUIS.** Can you take me to the mall?

**KELLY.** Have Dad do it.

**LOUIS.** No, I need someone to tell me what to get.

**KELLY.** Look, I have an image, okay? I go to the mall to be seen. And the last thing I need is to have my dorky little brother trailing me around asking me which dolphin poster looks coolest.

**LOUIS.** Please.

**KELLY.** No.

**LOUIS.** Please.

**KELLY.** Shut up.

**LOUIS.** I'll tell Mom what happened to that bottle of Jack Daniel's.

**KELLY.** All right tomorrow. But we're gonna be on separate ends. You don't know me, you have no idea who I am, you cannot speak to me. You buy what you want and I'll let you know if you need to return it. Okay?

*(Lights shift.)*

**PRESENT LOUIS.** My Mom was generally a nice person. And she was usually very sweet to us, except for one specific time: When company was coming over. When company was coming over, she turned into a demon taskmaster from the underworld—all of a sudden we were cleaning areas of the house that we didn't even know existed. We were washing baseboards, we were bleaching the grout in the basement, we were alphabetizing the books on the shelves. In later years, my Mom would hire a cleaning lady and would clean before the cleaning lady showed up because she didn't

want the cleaning lady to think badly of us. And when Grandma was coming to visit...

(EMILY enters.)

EMILY. Why aren't you doing something?

LOUIS. I'm just standing here.

EMILY. Is the drain in the tub clean?

LOUIS. Yes.

EMILY. Let's go check it together.

LOUIS. Okay, fine, I'll go clean it.

(KELLY enters as LOUIS exits.)

KELLY. Why is there a sleeping bag in my room?

GEORGE. (*Off-stage:*) Ah come on!

EMILY. What are you doing, George?

GEORGE. (*Off-stage:*) I'm cleaning the television!

EMILY. The Packers game better not be on!

KELLY. Mom, why is there a sleeping bag in my room?

(LOUIS returns.)

LOUIS. Why is there a weird blanket on my bed?

EMILY. If I come in there and find that game on you're going to be mopping the floor of the garage!

(She turns to LOUIS and KELLY.)

Okay, sweetheart. Grandma Jacobs is staying in your room.

LOUIS. Where am I staying?

EMILY. In Kelly's room.

KELLY. Where am I staying then?

EMILY. In your room.

KELLY. Are you kidding me!? Mom, he's bizarre!

LOUIS. Can I just sleep in the living room?

EMILY. The living room is for living not sleeping.

KELLY. I don't want him looking at me.

EMILY. He's your brother.

KELLY. So? I'm not responsible for the fact that he grew up weird.

LOUIS. Do you know what those aerosol fumes are going to do to my brain? Look what it did to Kelly! She used to be smart!

KELLY. Shut up, retard! Can I stay at a friend's house?

EMILY. No.

GEORGE. (*Off-stage:*) What! That was pass interference! PASS INTERFERENCE!

LOUIS. Can I stay at a friend's house?

EMILY. Both of you are staying here. Both of you are behaving. My God, it's four days.

KELLY. Four days!? Grandma Jacobs is staying four days?! Oh my God my life is over.

EMILY. Kelly. Settle down. Breathe.

GEORGE. (*Off-stage:*) Where is the instant replay!?

(*KELLY heads to the side of the stage.*)

EMILY. That game is going off now!

(*GEORGE enters quickly.*)

GEORGE. Randy Wright is dead to me. 'Hey look at me I'm the quarterback of the NFL's most storied franchise! Ah I'm a total idiot I'll throw the ball up into the air for no reason whatsoever! Oh no look it's my fourth interception of the day I suppose I'll just FALL OVER and PLAY POSSUM and maybe NO ONE WILL STEP ON ME.' Arg. He won't live long. They will hunt him down. This is a state of hunters.

EMILY. You're not going to live long if you don't mop the kitchen.

**GEORGE.** We're mopping the kitchen?!

**EMILY.** Yes we're mopping the kitchen! What do you think, we're not going to mop the kitchen?!

**KELLY.** Dad, Mom wants Louis to stay in my room.

**LOUIS.** Can I take your tent and camp out in the back yard?

**EMILY.** It's freezing outside!

**LOUIS.** I'll kill a ton-ton and climb inside its stomach.

**EMILY.** What the heck does that mean?

**LOUIS.** Didn't you see The Empire Strikes Back?

**KELLY.** Oh my God. Stop referencing that movie.

**GEORGE.** Where's the mop bucket?

**EMILY.** Where it's been for the last fifteen years.

**GEORGE.** Is it in the garage?

**EMILY.** Why don't you go check in the garage and see if that's where it is.

**GEORGE.** Is it in the garage or not?

**EMILY.** Check and see.

**GEORGE.** If you know where it is why don't you tell me?

**KELLY.** Maybe Louis can sleep in the basement!

**LOUIS.** I can't be in Kelly's room I'm allergic to stupid people!

**EMILY.** ALL RIGHT EVERYONE SHUT UP.

*(Everyone is stunned into silence. EMILY tries to get a hold of herself.)*

Kelly. Get over it. Louis. Get over it. George. The laundry room.

**GEORGE.** Oh, the—

**EMILY.** Shut up. We are going to have a wonderful Christmas week with your Grandmother.



*(KELLY is about to say something.)*

Kelly! I know that you do not...enjoy the company of Grandma Jacobs. But you are going to smile and be polite—I don't care if you have to draw a smile on your face with lipstick, you're going to be a sweet wonderful child while she is here. Okay? And you two are going to stop fighting like six year olds and start behaving like human beings or I am going to have a conniption fit and drop dead on the floor of the kitchen and then you people will be forced to figure out how to clean the house without me, which will be a problem BECAUSE YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE THE MOP BUCKET IS!

**GEORGE.** It's in the laundry room.

*(She glares at him.)*

Sorry.

**EMILY.** OKAY?!

*(They freeze.)*

**PRESENT LOUIS.** So she could be a little high-strung. At this point in time, I didn't realize that my Mom and Dad weren't getting along. I just thought that's how adults behaved when they loved each other. I used to daydream about the amazing shouting matches I would have with Carolyn after our inevitable marriage. Boy wouldn't that be wonderful? But I didn't have much time to ponder that because —

*(The doorbell rings.)*

**EMILY.** Oh fudge she's early.

**PRESENT LOUIS.** Except she didn't say fudge.

*(EMILY catches herself.)*

**EMILY.** You didn't hear that. Smiles!

*(Everyone smiles.)*

**GEORGE.** Do you think it would be more festive if we started a Christmas Carol?

*(He begins singing "O Come all Ye Faithful.")*

'O come all ye—'

EMILY. Stop it.

*(EMILY opens the door. GRANDMA JACOBS carries one bag and a cane and shuffles in.)*

Merry Christmas Mom!

GRANDMA JACOBS. Oh dang it look at you all.

*(Lights change.)*

PRESENT LOUIS. Where to begin with her?

*(GRANDMA JACOBS coughs horribly.)*

I have no idea.

*(Lights up on the living room.)*

GRANDMA JACOBS. *(Through a horrible cough, unintelligible:)*  
What happened to your dog?

EMILY. Are you okay Mom?

GRANDMA JACOBS. What?

EMILY. Are you okay?

GRANDMA JACOBS. Why wouldn't I be okay?

EMILY. You were just—you were—never mind.

GRANDMA JACOBS. Well?

EMILY. Well what?

GRANDMA JACOBS. What happened to it?

EMILY. What happened to what?

GRANDMA JACOBS. What's wrong with you? Have you gone deaf or something. Jesus. What happened to your dog. What was his name, Buttercup?

LOUIS. Sparky. He was my dog.

GRANDMA JACOBS. Where is he?

LOUIS. He's dead.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Really?

**LOUIS.** He was electrocuted. It was really kind of an ironic way to go.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Sorry to hear that. Is he buried in the back yard?

**LOUIS.** *(Thrown:)* Yeah?

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Good. Do you remember when we had Peaches?

**EMILY.** I hated Peaches.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Everyone hated Peaches. He was nice to me though.

**EMILY.** He terrorized Danny.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Oh yeah. Your brother. He peed his pants every time that dog came around—didn't know how to deal with him—

**GEORGE.** Peaches was a boy?

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Of course he was a boy.

**GEORGE.** Just seems like a feminine name.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Why does it seem like a feminine name?

**GEORGE.** It's fruity.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** *(Eyeing GEORGE:)* Anyway, your brother was not a dog person. He didn't understand dogs—That's why the dog attacked him whenever it saw him. Peaches once jumped a six foot fence to get at him. Danny ran like the French. I loved that dog. So Kelly...

**KELLY.** Yeah?

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** What the heck's going on with you?

**KELLY.** What do you mean?

*(GRANDMA JACOBS doesn't hear her comment.)*

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** What?

**KELLY.** Huh?

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** What did you say?

**KELLY.** I didn't know what you meant.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** What is wrong with you?

**KELLY.** (*Flabbergasted:*) I don't know.

**LOUIS.** No one does.

**EMILY.** So how was your trip up, Mom?

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Terrible. All right, so. This happened to me three days ago. There was a snake loose in my backyard. A rattler.

**EMILY.** In Wisconsin?

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** I know what the snake sounds like, don't treat me like an idiot. I've been bitten by enough rattlers in my life, okay? Is that okay with you?

**EMILY.** I guess.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** So I call the police.

**GEORGE.** Why did you call the police?

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Because there was a rattler in my back yard.

**GEORGE.** Was it breaking any laws or anything?

**EMILY.** Quiet, dear.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** I've got my handgun underneath my bed just in case.

**EMILY.** You have a handgun?

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** I have two actually.

**KELLY.** Where's the second one?

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** I'm not telling you. Can I actually tell my story? But I know if I go to my room to get my gun —

**LOUIS.** What kind of gun do you have?

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** One that shoots bullets at small children. If I get my gun, the snake is going to run away. Or slither away or whatever. So I can't get my gun. But if I get my gun I can shoot 'em. So I'm faced with a dilemma.

*(Really long pause.)*

**EMILY.** What did you do?

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** You never could shut up. So I get my gun. I come back. No more snake. But I know he's there somewhere—

**LOUIS.** Is your gun loaded?

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Why would I keep an unloaded gun under my bed? The doorbell rings.

**GEORGE.** Was it the snake?

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** It's the police. Well one cop. This lesbian.

**EMILY.** Mom!

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** What? She was a lesbian. It was obvious. I have nothing against them.

**EMILY.** There are children present.

**LOUIS.** We learned about them in school.

**EMILY.** What?!

**KELLY.** Oh yeah. There's a whole class in it.

**GEORGE.** Boy high school sure has changed.

**KELLY.** I'm kidding Mom. God.

**EMILY.** I'm calling your principal.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** All right so this lady police officer is there who happens to enjoy the company of other lady police officers, and she's looking at me. I mean, she's giving me the eye. Real slow. And I'm wondering what's going on in her head. I mean I'm a defenseless old woman.

**KELLY.** With a loaded gun.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** I left that on the counter. Jesus. Why would I open the door with a loaded gun? So she says what seems to be the problem. Like she doesn't know. I *called* 911 and told them there was a snake. Why else would she be here? I tell her, there's a rattler in the backyard and she says, we don't have rattlers in Wisconsin, and I told her that I had been bitten by enough of them to know what one looked like and would she please take care of it. Guess what she said to that?

**GEORGE.** (*Trying not to laugh:*) She said I'm a police officer and that's a snake.

(*EMILY tries to quiet him with a look.*)

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** She said she couldn't do anything about it. So I said why? And she said because the snake hadn't broken any laws by being in my back yard. Why do we even have police? Why am I paying taxes? So I said if you don't shoot him, I'll shoot him. So how about that? And this lesbian—excuse me, lady, says she doesn't have the authority to give me permission to fire my gun. So I said fine, I'll just wait till you leave and then I'm gonna shoot that snake. And this is where the story gets weird. She says, have you registered that firearm? So now I'm living in Nazi Germany where a lesbian cop can bust into my house and not shoot a snake and instead I'm the criminal? There's no law against the snake but I can't have a gun.

**EMILY.** You didn't register it?

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Why do I have to register it?

**EMILY.** Because it's a law.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** So? I'm old.

**KELLY.** So then what happened?

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** She gave me a written warning and then she left. So then I took my gun and I looked for the snake.

**LOUIS.** You went out into the yard?

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Well I can't look for it inside the house. So I'm in the backyard. I look to my left. I look to my right. I turn around. The snake is going inside my house.

**EMILY.** No.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** I left the door open and the snake is going inside my house.

**KELLY.** What did you do?

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** I fired six shots at the snake.

*(GRANDMA JACOBS has a coughing fit while continuing to tell her story. An entire sentence is unintelligible.)*

So. Now I need to replace my screen door. So the next day I go down to Ace Hardware.

**GEORGE.** Whoah, whoah whoah. What happened to the snake?

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** I'm still here aren't I? It's dead. I hit it once.

**PRESENT LOUIS.** Oh yes, it was going to be a festive yuletide season.

*(Lights shift. KELLY and LOUIS are getting ready for bed. LOUIS has an inflatable mattress on the floor. It is quite dark.)*

**KELLY.** If you look at me, I'll kill you.

**LOUIS.** I wasn't looking.

**KELLY.** You better not snore.

**LOUIS.** God you're mean. I don't snore.

**KELLY.** You snore. I've heard it.

**LOUIS.** You snore.

**KELLY.** I do not.

**LOUIS.** It's like a motorcycle.

**KELLY.** You're a moron.

**LOUIS.** I love you too, Kelly.

*(KELLY throws something at him.)*

Ow! What was that?

**KELLY.** My clock radio.

**LOUIS.** That hurt.

**KELLY.** Really? I'm sorry. Let me make it better.

*(She hits him with a pillow.)*

**LOUIS.** Ah!

**KELLY.** Shhhh! Grandma's sleeping!

*(She hits him with a pillow again.)*

Don't make noise. Louis! Don't make noise!

*(She pounds on him with her pillow. LOUIS escapes and fights back.)*

Stop it!

*(LOUIS manages to knock KELLY over with a vicious hit from his pillow.)*

Ow.

**LOUIS.** Take that, wench!

*(She fights back. The lights come on suddenly. EMILY is there.)*

**EMILY.** What is wrong with you two?

**LOUIS.** She threw a clock radio at me.

**KELLY.** You're such a liar.

**EMILY.** Can you please act your age? Okay? People are trying to sleep.

**LOUIS.** Can you tell her not to throw things at me?

**EMILY.** No. I'm not going to tell her that. You have to do it yourself.

**LOUIS.** That's what I was just doing.



KELLY. He's got anger issues, Mom. He said that he's upset because he hasn't undergone puberty yet.

LOUIS. Shut up.

KELLY. See? It's driving him insane.

EMILY. Both of you: be quiet. Go to bed. I don't want to come in here again.

*(She flips off the lights and leaves.)*

LOUIS. God you're a liar.

KELLY. Have you undergone puberty?

LOUIS. Has your hair undergone puberty?

KELLY. Oh good one. Good one, Louis. You really got me there.

LOUIS. One of these days I'm gonna come at you with a match and your whole head is going to ignite.

KELLY. Errr. You're cool, Louis.

LOUIS. Ah! My head's on fire! Ah!

*(KELLY throws something else at LOUIS.)*

Ow!

KELLY. Go to sleep or I'm going to knock you unconscious.

LOUIS. Fine. Good night.

KELLY. Good night.

LOUIS. I hope I don't roll onto you in the middle of the night.

KELLY. I'm not talking to you any more.

LOUIS. Good night.

*(Pause.)*

Hey Kelly?

*(No response.)*

Hey Kelly are you asleep?

KELLY. Yeah I fell asleep in the ten seconds you shut your stupid mouth. I am not talking to you any more. Do not talk to me.

LOUIS. How old were you when you had your first kiss?

KELLY. I'm not telling you.

LOUIS. Was it with that guy from Wilson?

KELLY. Which guy?

LOUIS. The guy with the little mustache and the rat-tail?

KELLY. No. Gross.

LOUIS. You never kissed him?

KELLY. He wasn't my first. Wait a minute, have you kissed anybody?

LOUIS. Define kissed.

KELLY. So you haven't kissed anybody?

LOUIS. I kissed Rachel Marber on the bus in sixth grade. Well...I mean, she kissed me. And then later I found out that Cass Thompson had bet her a dollar she wouldn't do it.

(KELLY *snorts*.)

So do you think that counts?

KELLY. No.

LOUIS. Why not? She kissed me.

KELLY. Yeah, but it was on a dare. Like, I bet you won't kiss the monkey over there. Or, I bet you won't eat a ball of cat fur.

LOUIS. Uck.

KELLY. It's not as gross as it sounds.

LOUIS. You ate a ball of cat fur?

KELLY. I got five bucks for it. Shut up. Like you've never done anything weird.

**LOUIS.** You ate a ball of cat fur and you kiss people and I never ate any cat fur and I never get to kiss anyone.

**KELLY.** Yeah, life sucks that way.

**LOUIS.** I'm gonna kiss Carolyn Warren.

**KELLY.** (*Sarcastic:*) Yeah you are.

**LOUIS.** I am. I made a pact with myself.

**KELLY.** (*Even more sarcastic:*) Oh well in that case then.

**LOUIS.** You don't think I can do it?

**KELLY.** Like, if you tie her up and knock her unconscious then you could do it. Otherwise no.

**LOUIS.** Why not?

**KELLY.** Oh come on. Carolyn Warren?

**LOUIS.** What about her?

**KELLY.** Have you seen Carolyn Warren?

**LOUIS.** Obviously. That's why I want to kiss her.

**KELLY.** Is she like freakishly weird in ways I don't know about?

**LOUIS.** I don't think so.

**KELLY.** Has she called you on the phone or anything?

**LOUIS.** No. I mean, yeah. One time. For math help.

**KELLY.** She doesn't like you, Louis. She's cute, right?

**LOUIS.** Yeah.

**KELLY.** So why would she like you? She's probably got lots of guys that like her. She doesn't have to settle for you. Not to hurt your feelings or anything.

**LOUIS.** (*Obviously hurt:*) You didn't.

**KELLY.** Okay, all right, all right, no need to get sad about it. It's just the way things are. Girls in junior high don't go for the smart guys.

Unless they're tall and good at sports. Smart doesn't really get a girl to like you.

LOUIS. What should I do?

KELLY. You're asking me for advice?

LOUIS. Yeah. I mean you've got like tons of experience with guys. Like. Tons.

KELLY. Thanks Louis.

LOUIS. Every week there's like a new guy. It's like you don't have any standards at all.

KELLY. All right shut up. You want my advice? Give up.

*(Pause.)*

LOUIS. I'm not gonna do that.

KELLY. Well why do you ask me for advice then? You're so rude.

LOUIS. Your advice is lame.

KELLY. Don't ask me then.

LOUIS. I want to know how to make her like me.

KELLY. Either she likes you or she doesn't like you; there's nothing you can do about it.

LOUIS. What if I was like, dangerous or something?

KELLY. It doesn't matter. Go to sleep. God.

LOUIS. Maybe if I—

KELLY. All right, all right. Look: you've got a lot of things stacked up against you—you're a dork, you're ugly, you're stupid, you can't dress yourself, I mean the list goes on and on. But underneath *all* of that, you're a nice guy. So don't try to not be a nice guy because that's the only thing you've got. Okay? And maybe, you know, God will smile on you or something and momentarily paralyze her brain and she'll kiss you. But that's best you can hope for.

LOUIS. I love you, Kelly.

**KELLY.** Shut up.

**LOUIS.** I'm going to hug you at the mall tomorrow.

**KELLY.** I'll knee you in the balls if you try it.

**LOUIS.** You're so sweet. Seriously, though. Thanks.

**KELLY.** Don't mention it.

**LOUIS.** You're the best older sister a guy could ever have.

**KELLY.** Go to sleep before I gouge your eyes out with a spoon.

**LOUIS.** Hey Kelly?

*(Pause.)*

Kelly?

*(Pause.)*

Do you think Mom and Dad are happy anymore?

*(KELLY lies there. Lights change.)*

**PRESENT LOUIS.** My plan for the mall visit hit a serious road bump.

*(GEORGE enters.)*

**GEORGE.** Hey Kelly—why don't you take Grandma Jacobs to the mall with you?

*(GEORGE leaves.)*

**PRESENT LOUIS.** There were many reasons why we didn't want to take Grandma Jacobs to the mall with us. One: she was insane. Two: there were stuffed snakes in the KB Toys that she might mistake for rattlers, and Three: we never did find out where the second gun was. Kelly, genius that she was, wasn't able to articulate any of those reasons in the moment. So, we got to take Grandma Jacobs on a sight-seeing tour of the Brookfield Mall.

*(GRANDMA JACOBS enters.)*

The Brookfield Mall was the center of all social activity for all people aged 10 to 17. In later years I would meet a girl at Aladdin's

Castle, fall in love near the Swiss Colony and break up by the time we reached The Buckle. But at this time I had just one thing on my mind: the perfect present.

*(KELLY and LOUIS enter, chagrined. They walk very slowly.)*

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Okay, can we stop?

**KELLY.** We haven't even made it out of JC Penny's yet. It's not good for me to be seen here.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Well you were the one who parked a million miles away. You should've parked in the handicapped spot.

**KELLY.** I'm not handicapped.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** I am.

**KELLY.** You just have a cane that doesn't make you handicapped.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Oh I'm faking it. I've got degenerative arthritis in my right hip and I'm faking it.

**LOUIS.** Maybe we could get you a wheelchair.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** I don't want a wheelchair I'm not a cripple.

**LOUIS.** Okay.

**KELLY.** Well I'll see you guys later.

*(KELLY gets up.)*

**LOUIS.** Where are you going?

**KELLY.** Like I'd spend time with you here. I've got things to do. Meet me at the Orange Julius when you want to leave. But don't wave at me or anything, okay? No one should know we're related. Bye Grandma.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** You'd leave me to die in a desert, wouldn't you?

**KELLY.** There's plenty to drink in the mall.

*(KELLY leaves.)*

*(GRANDMA JACOBS watches her go, then gets up.)*

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Thank God she left. All right, let's go to a bar.

**LOUIS.** I don't think there is a bar at the mall.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** What the heck kind of mall is this?

**LOUIS.** Besides, I'm thirteen.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Louis, are you wearing girls' underpants? We used to give your mother beer in a bottle when she was one year old. Not a lot, just enough to put her to sleep. Oh she would cry and cry until she got her Stroh's.

**LOUIS.** You gave Mom beer when she was a baby?

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** She was one, she wasn't hardly a baby any more. She loved it. It was the forties, no one knew anything about anything. We didn't have seatbelts, we didn't have warning labels, you took your chances in life. If you gave a kid a present and it was full of nails, well, that's one way they learned. Now you kids are babied all the time. Next thing you know you'll have to wear a helmet to walk out of the house. I mean would it hurt you if you broke a bone doing something stupid?

**LOUIS.** Yeah that would probably hurt.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** God you're a pansy. Fine. We won't go to a bar, we'll go to the baby store and get you a dolly. Let's go.

*(They get up and begin walking.)*

**LOUIS.** No I need to get a present for a girl.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Oh? A girl? Good. I'm sure that'll put your family's mind at ease.

**LOUIS.** About what?

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** I'll explain it to you when I'm drunk sometime. What are you gonna get her?

**LOUIS.** I don't know. It's gotta be the perfect present.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Did you see those talking teddy bears when we came in?

**LOUIS.** Teddy Ruxpin?

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Yeah. How do they get their mouths to move like that?

**LOUIS.** I don't know.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** You should get her one of those. They're fantastic.

**LOUIS.** I don't really think she would like a talking bear.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Have you asked her?

**LOUIS.** No.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Who wouldn't like a talking bear? The mouth moves, Louis.

**LOUIS.** You really think I should get a Teddy Ruxpin?

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** I think if you've got one chance to impress a girl, I don't know if you could do better than a teddy bear with a moving mouth.

**PRESENT LOUIS.** Luckily, Teddy Ruxpin cost twenty-five dollars and I only had eleven. So I managed to avoid that mistake.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** You know what you should get? Chocolate. Girls love chocolate. They'll tear each other's eyes out over it.

**PRESENT LOUIS.** You ever look back on your life and think, there was the piece of advice I should've followed? *There* was the piece of advice I should've followed. I didn't.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** You should be glad you never met your Grandfather. He wouldn't a liked you much. I don't mean that as an insult but old Jake liked things his way or no way at all. He was a bona fide class A prick. As you can imagine we took to fighting just about every night—I used to throw things at him when he turned his back on me. Course in those days it was hard to get a divorce. But that wasn't gonna stop me. You had to prove you had a reason to get divorced. So we went to court, and they said why are you divorcing this man, and I said, "cause he's an a-hole." And this judge says, "you shoulda thought of that before you married him."



*(She sits down.)*

**PRESENT LOUIS.** After two hours, The Brookfield Mall held a fierce deathgrip on my soul and was crushing the life out of me. For eleven dollars you could get the smallest diamond pendant visible to the naked eye or a t-shirt with a cat on it.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** I like the t-shirt.

**PRESENT LOUIS.** I was resigned to utter failure.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** You should get the t-shirt. It's got a cat on it. He's wearing sunglasses.

**PRESENT LOUIS.** The pressure was building—

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Does she even like cats? If she likes cats she'd like a shirt with a cat on it.

**LOUIS.** I'm not getting the stupid cat shirt!!

*(Pause. GRANDMA JACOBS is stunned for a moment.)*

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Why not?

**PRESENT LOUIS.** If I didn't get this present now, I was doomed. She would never love me. But then...out of the corner of my eye, accompanied by a choir of angels...I saw it.

*(Choir of angels begins singing.)*

Heavenly light shone upon it. All that was glorious, good, and divine in the world was contained within it. Perfection itself. What every girl wanted. I would be a hero. She would kiss me on the spot.

*(Light shines on a fiberoptic unicorn figurine.)*

It was a fiberoptic unicorn figurine. They sell them by the basketful at the sharper image, but we didn't have a sharper image in the mall, we just had a mysterious kiosk in the center of the aisle run by a couple of Armenian drug dealers. And they had somehow lucked into a shipment of fiberoptic unicorns. To give you a feeling of my wonder at the sight of this: I had never seen anything fiberoptic before. It cycled through different colors, first green, then blue, et cet-

era...and then back again, always changing. And it was ten ninety nine. With tax that came out to eleven fifty four.

**LOUIS.** Do you have a dollar?

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Why would I have a dollar?

**LOUIS.** I don't know, cause you're an adult?

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** I don't have crap. You wanna piece of gum instead?

**LOUIS.** No, I—wait here.

*(KELLY appears on the other side of the stage.)*

**LOUIS.** Can I borrow a dollar?

*(KELLY ignores him.)*

Kelly. Kelly!

*(KELLY waves at someone else, smile falsely, then instantly switches it to a sneer.)*

Kelly.

**KELLY.** *(A fierce whisper:)* Get away from me. I don't know you.

**LOUIS.** Can I borrow a dollar?

**KELLY.** *(A fierce whisper:)* What did you do with Grandma?

**LOUIS.** She's fine. Do you have fifty cents?

**KELLY.** Where's Grandma?

**LOUIS.** Like you care where Grandma is. Do you have fifty cents?

**KELLY.** Did you ditch Grandma?

**LOUIS.** You don't have fifty cents for me?

**KELLY.** I don't know you—I don't give strangers money. Now get away from me, kid.

*(She smiles at someone else.)*

**LOUIS.** Kelly if you don't give me fifty cents I'm going to hug you.

---

*(Beat. They stare at each other. KELLY reaches into her purse and shows LOUIS that she has no money. LOUIS is about to hug her.)*

**KELLY.** I have mace.

**LOUIS.** I love you.

*(KELLY gets out her can of mace.)*

Fine. I'll get the money elsewhere.

**PRESENT LOUIS.** There was no elsewhere. I checked behind the arcade games. Nothing. My eyes were glued to the floor. There must have been an army of junkies scrounging the floor for loose change when we weren't looking. I would never get the fiberoptic unicorn.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Take the money out of the wishing well in front of the bank. I've seen ten kids throw pennies in there while I've been sitting here.

**LOUIS.** Isn't that stealing?

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** They're throwing the pennies away Louis. I'll cover you.

**LOUIS.** Okay.

*(LOUIS looks shifty. He darts off-stage.)*

**PRESENT LOUIS.** It took me fourteen trips. I got some weird looks—

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** *(Yelling at someone off-stage:)* What are you looking at? I'm an old lady. I'll call security.

*(GRANDMA JACOBS gets up and stands near the edge of the stage, hiding LOUIS.)*

What. Go away. You think I don't have a gun in my purse? You wanna find out?

*(LOUIS returns, soaked, carrying a thick handful of pennies.)*

**PRESENT LOUIS.** And I bought that unicorn.

*(He exchanges it for the unicorn.)*

And I was a hero.

*(The soaked, filthy LOUIS and GRANDMA JACOBS approach KELLY.)*

*(KELLY ignores him.)*

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** All right let's go.

**KELLY.** Oh my God.

*(LOUIS holds up the glowing unicorn figurine.)*

That's what you got?

**LOUIS.** Yeah, isn't it awesome?

*(Beat.)*

**KELLY.** Um...yeah. It's awesome. Let's go.

**PRESENT LOUIS.** She betrayed me.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Merry Christmas.

*(GRANDMA JACOBS reaches into the folds of her dress and produces two boxes of chocolate.)*

**LOUIS.** I thought you said you didn't have any money.

*(She shrugs.)*

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Old people get things for free.

*(Lights shift.)*

**PRESENT LOUIS.** When they steal them.

*(Lights up on GEORGE in the kitchen, putting away dishes. EMILY enters.)*

Meanwhile, the event that was about to change my life forever was unfolding.

**EMILY.** Where's Mom?

**GEORGE.** She went to the mall with the kids.

**EMILY.** Really?

GEORGE. Yeah it was the darndest thing. They all just really wanted to spend some quality time together.

EMILY. Seriously?

GEORGE. No I made Kelly take her.

EMILY. How'd you manage that?

GEORGE. Honestly, I don't know. I think I just behaved as if I had the authority to make your Mom go and then Kelly just sort of accepted it. It was surreal. She actually did something I said. Made me feel like a man.

EMILY. Those bowls don't go there.

GEORGE. They don't?

EMILY. You have to stack them.

GEORGE. Oh.

*(EMILY takes a look in the cabinet.)*

EMILY. George. What have you been doing in here?

GEORGE. Putting dishes away.

EMILY. Why?

GEORGE. Because...when dishes are clean I like to put them away, I don't know I'm crazy that way.

EMILY. Yeah but you do it wrong. Look at this. You see, the little bowls go inside of the big bowls. It's not that hard.

GEORGE. See, I thought it was the other way around. I was trying to bend the laws of physics to make the big bowls go inside of the little bowls.

EMILY. You know, you're not half as funny as you think you are.

GEORGE. That still makes me pretty funny.

*(He goes to get some more dishes.)*

EMILY. Don't. Just let me do it.

GEORGE. Fine.

*(He walks off.)*

EMILY. Where are you going?

GEORGE. I'm going to go recklessly mess up another room.

EMILY. Don't you want to see where they go?

GEORGE. No I don't really give a crap.

EMILY. What is wrong with you?

GEORGE. I can't put dishes away in my own house; I think that's a little messed up that's all.

EMILY. You just don't put them in the right places.

GEORGE. No, I don't put them in your places. Your places are not automatically the right places!

EMILY. Fine, do you want to democratically decide where the dishes go?

GEORGE. No.

EMILY. See! You don't care. I do. That's why my places are the right places.

GEORGE. Fine. Whatever.

EMILY. Why are you being like this?

GEORGE. Does she have to stay for four days?

EMILY. How often do we get to see her?

GEORGE. She probably brought a gun!

EMILY. Oh my God, George—

GEORGE. It's like she's been living on a dock the past ten years learning English from a bunch of sailors.

EMILY. She's not that bad.

GEORGE. Yeah, cause she hasn't been drinking yet, but that'll probably start any minute—

EMILY. Oh and your mother is a saint.

**GEORGE.** We're not talking about my Mom.

**EMILY.** I see, she's off-limits while it's open season on my mother —

**GEORGE.** My Mom is sick.

**EMILY.** So is mine!

**GEORGE.** No your mother is depraved. There's a difference.

**EMILY.** I don't see why you can't be civil for four days. You sit there and you make those stupid sarcastic comments during every story —

**GEORGE.** Cause she's full of it!

**EMILY.** So? She likes telling the stories.

**GEORGE.** You mean lies. She likes telling lies.

**EMILY.** I don't like them either, okay? I want my Mom to be normal! She used to be!

**GEORGE.** She used to ride with the Hell's Angels!

**EMILY.** No she didn't.

**GEORGE.** No, she said that!

**EMILY.** She said she dated a guy who was in the Hell's Angels.

**GEORGE.** What do you think they did on their dates? They rode into town, beat up immigrants, drank a whole bunch of beer and rode off trailing fire. That's your mother! She's still doing that!

**EMILY.** She was fine when I was growing up. She raised me, she was the only one who cared about me, and she deserves respect. And you aren't giving it to her. And the kids follow your lead.

**GEORGE.** Because I'm making sense —

**EMILY.** No because you never do any of the disciplining. They come to you and they can get away with anything and I'm the one who's always cleaning up the mess, so I'm the one that gets blamed for everything. It's not fair.

**GEORGE.** Can we just have an argument about one thing? Is it the dishes, is it your Mom, now it's parenting. I just don't understand how when we get in a fight every single thing I've ever done wrong gets trotted out of that brain of yours and I suddenly have to argue against this entire litany of past wrongdoing. It's impossible!

**EMILY.** It's all the same thing.

**GEORGE.** Which is?

**EMILY.** You're not very considerate. You don't ever think of anyone else but yourself.

**GEORGE.** That is just...I can't even...you're just wrong. Okay? You're wrong.

**EMILY.** Fine.

*(They stand quite a distance apart from each other, still seething.)*

George?

*(Pause.)*

**GEORGE.** Yeah?

**EMILY.** I love you.

*(Pause.)*

**GEORGE.** I love you too.

*(They are still apart.)*

**EMILY.** Do you think...?

**GEORGE.** What?

*(Silence. EMILY can't bring herself to say what's on her mind. A long pause.)*

*(The doorbell rings. GEORGE gets it. GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI, a small, thin, elderly woman enters. Inexplicably, she has an upper-class British accent.)*

**GEORGE.** Mom?!

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** I knew I could find this house. They told me I couldn't but I said I could.



EMILY. What are you doing here?

GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI. Why I've come for Christmas. I'm on holiday.

*(Lights change.)*

PRESENT LOUIS. I have to say a few words here about my Grandma Skolowski. First off, in 1986 she was diagnosed with severe dementia. I have a few memories of how she was before the disease struck, and I remember her as a really neat lady. Here's the thing: she had trouble remembering things, so she just started making things up. It wasn't that she was reliving her childhood, she was somehow imagining a childhood that never happened. My grandmother was born in Pittsburgh in 1916. She was a teenager during the depression. I think she worked as a nanny for a little while in there. Her husband, my grandfather, was a second-generation American who first worked in a butcher shop before branching out and owning his own restaurant, which was eventually put out of business by Denny's, but you never wanted to get him started on that. He went to fight in the Pacific in World War 2 and got some shrapnel in his back which bothered him the rest of his life. Those are the facts of my family. Here's how she would tell it.

*(GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI speaks in a very sweet, very soft voice, with a British accent acquired from Masterpiece Theater.)*

GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI. When I was thirteen years old a man came up to me on the street and asked if he could see my legs. This was a very strange proposition at that time, but I thought I had wonderful legs so I showed him and he said those are some pretty stunning legs. I was quite flattered. In those days, if a man said something nice to you you were obligated to marry him. But I was thirteen so I couldn't marry him and besides he was more attracted to my brother Joseph but I didn't know there were such men at the time. And he said he could get me an audition for the Rockettes. Imagine me, dancing for the Rockettes. So I said I'd love to be in the Rockettes, so he gave me a ticket on the train and I went to New York City, and I went straight to Radio City Music Hall for my audition. And there I was in front of the producer, Howard Shulz and he said how old are you and I said thirteen and he said I was

nineteen and I said no I'm thirteen and he said are you sure you're thirteen? And then I said I might be nineteen and he said you're hired. My parents knew nothing about this. They thought I was in Poland for girl scout camp. So I started dancing and let me tell you it was the best time of my life. Fifty girls—they were my family. We used to go skinny dipping in the East River. That was before the East River was discovered to be poisonous. We had a girl die. Esther was her name and she was from Iowa and she had huge knockers. I used to think everyone in Iowa had huge knockers until I went there one time and discovered it wasn't true, that no one in Iowa looked anything like Esther, which is why she left I suppose. Anyway, she drank some of the water and died which was a shame because she was the girl on my left. For the 1930 Christmas show we decided we were going to release live doves at the end of the dance. Don't ask me why. Well it so happened that someone forgot to feed the doves and they all died in their cages. The cages were over our heads so when they released the doves, we just heard plop plop plop as their carcasses rained from the sky. They were landing on us. I got hit in the shoulder which hurt because it was a rather large bird with talons and a beak. Mary on my right got hit right in the head and it knocked her out cold. I didn't know what to do. I started shouting, Mary's dead! Mary's dead! All the while more birds are dropping from the sky and the other girls are trying to continue the kickline. I thought that was the most absurd thing ever because if a girl is dead no one wants to see live girls dancing any more. Well maybe some people do, but I think those people are wrong. Mary lived. But we didn't use birds any more after that.

*(Lights change. KELLY and LOUIS sit in the car.)*

**KELLY.** Are you going to go to her door or not?

**LOUIS.** Hold on. Do I look all right?

**KELLY.** What do you expect me to answer to that? You look okay for you.

**LOUIS.** Thanks. I think. Do you think she'll like it?

**KELLY.** Ask her. God. Just go and get it over with. I wanna go home.

LOUIS. Okay.

*(Pause. KELLY punches him.)*

Ow.

KELLY. Get out of the car.

LOUIS. Fine.

KELLY. God you're retarded.

*(LOUIS gets out of the car and heads to the opposite side of the stage. He waits for a moment, then looks back at KELLY, who throws up her hands in disgust and mimes strangling herself in frustration. LOUIS looks at his present, then rings the "doorbell.")*

*(Dogs barking loudly. We hear CAROLYN off-stage.)*

CAROLYN. *(Off-stage:)* Shut up! Shut up! JARED! Come and get your stupid dog!

*(LOUIS thinks about running as CAROLYN opens the door.)*

LOUIS. Hi.

CAROLYN. Hey.

*(She turns around and yells off-stage:)*

Oh my God he peed on the floor! Are you kidding me?! JARED!

*(She turns back to LOUIS.)*

LOUIS. Hi. Again.

CAROLYN. Hey Louis. What are you doing here?

LOUIS. I just wanted to wish you good luck before the um...show tomorrow.

CAROLYN. Oh. Okay. You too.

LOUIS. Thanks! Thanks.

*(Pause.)*

CAROLYN. That's all you wanted?

LOUIS. I'm caroling.

**CAROLYN.** By yourself?

**LOUIS.** Yeah. It's um...better this way. Actually, traditionally, one person would do the caroling. They'd like go on ahead as like a scout caroler.

**CAROLYN.** I didn't know that.

**LOUIS.** Oh yeah because of the plague...and robbers. So if the one guy went to a house and they didn't have boils or anything, then the other carolers would know it would be safe, so they'd...go. Yeah. You know, they were crazy back in medieval times. So anyway.

**CAROLYN.** What are you gonna sing?

**LOUIS.** A medley...of Christmas favorites. Kind of my signature. Like um...

*(He tries to think of a song.)*

Deck the halls with balls of holly,  
Fa la la la la la la la  
Tis the season to be jolly  
Fa la la la la la la la

*(She's still watching him – he pauses for a second to remember what comes next.)*

Don we now our gay apparel  
Fa la la la la la la la la

*(Forgetting the next part of it:)*

Sing the happy yuletide carol  
Fa la la la la la la la la

*(CAROLYN claps.)*

**CAROLYN.** That was good! You're so funny.

**LOUIS.** You think so?

**CAROLYN.** Yeah. You're like the funniest donkey in the show.

**LOUIS.** Actually I'm an ass.

**CAROLYN.** Right. Well you're a fine ass.

LOUIS. So what are you doing after the show?

CAROLYN. There'll probably be some kind of hideous scrabble marathon over here. We have these cousins in, and as soon as they get here it's like, 'break out every board game we own and play them till our eyes bleed!' Usually I have to fake a stomach cramp to get out of it.

LOUIS. Oh.

CAROLYN. Why?

LOUIS. We're having people over. You know, like a cast party thing. If you can make it.

CAROLYN. Probably not. I wish I could.

LOUIS. Okay. If you change your mind.

CAROLYN. All right.

*(LOUIS can't think of anything to say.)*

I'll see you later then.

LOUIS. Hey I got you a present.

*(LOUIS produces the present.)*

CAROLYN. Really? That's so sweet.

*(He gives it to her.)*

LOUIS. Open it.

CAROLYN. Shouldn't I wait till Christmas?

LOUIS. No.

CAROLYN. Okay.

*(She unwraps the unicorn.)*

Wow.

LOUIS. It's a unicorn.

CAROLYN. I see that.

LOUIS. It glows different colors and stuff.

**CAROLYN.** Cool. No one's ever gotten me a glowing unicorn before.

**LOUIS.** Yeah. It spoke to me.

**CAROLYN.** It talks? That's so cool!

**LOUIS.** No I mean like, you know 'it *spoke* to me' not that it actually spoke to me. Like I saw it and just thought of you because it's different colors and you have different colors and I thought it was cool.

**CAROLYN.** Oh.

**LOUIS.** It's fiberoptic.

**CAROLYN.** Cool.

*(Pause.)*

**LOUIS.** Do you like it?

**CAROLYN.** Sure.

*(LOUIS is crushed.)*

**LOUIS.** So um...bye.

**CAROLYN.** Bye. Thanks for the present.

**LOUIS.** Yeah.

*(She leaves. LOUIS remains. Barking off-stage.)*

**CAROLYN.** *(Off-stage:)* Shut up! SHUT UP! Shut up! No!

*(Lights fade on her, leaving LOUIS alone on-stage.)*

**PRESENT LOUIS.** I remember it was pretty cold that night, but I was warm until she shut that door. And then all of a sudden it was like I was freezing all over. When you're older you don't quite fall as hard as you once did. I guess you build up armor and cushions and all sorts of defenses to protect yourself against such naked hope. Because my relationship with Carolyn, which I had built in my mind, was all hope. And when it fell apart, when I looked at her and realized that she was never going to like me in the way I wanted, it was like all that hope had just been carved out of me and

I was left hollow and weightless and cold, standing alone in the dark like an idiot. The stars above me were alien and distant and the world was empty.

**KELLY.** Hey come on!

*(No answer.)*

Come on!

*(KELLY comes over.)*

Louis. There'll be other girls.

*(She puts her arm around him and they walk off.)*

**LOUIS.** *(As they are leaving:)* But I wanted this one.

**PRESENT LOUIS.** Hope, though, is not such an easy thing to kill, especially in the face of reality. On the way home my thoughts went like this:

*(LOUIS is alone in a pool of light.)*

**LOUIS.** She's never gonna like me. She's probably gonna go out with some guy in high school who can bench press 400 pounds and has a cleft chin. Maybe if I bench pressed 400 pounds she'd like me. I could probably do it. I'd just have to spend a lot of time in the gym. Like, every day, I'll just go to the gym every day and I won't even go to school any more, I'll just work out all the time and then I'll be huge and no one will make fun of me any more. Who'm I kidding? I got a nosebleed that time I was in the gym. I never shoulda gotten her that unicorn. But she said she liked it. She didn't like it. But why would she say she liked it if she didn't like it? She's not a liar. She's a very honest person. And she was mad at her brother when she opened the door. She even smiled when she opened it. You don't just smile for no reason. She smiled at me and she took the present and she said she liked it. And I'm gonna see her tomorrow after the show. And after the show she's gonna hug me. She hugged me twice this week. I think she likes me. I can tell by the way she hugged me, that wasn't just an ordinary hug. That was like an I like you hug and I was too stupid to pick up on it. I shoulda gone in. I shoulda said, maybe we should get some coffee

or something. I just totally missed my chance. Tomorrow it's gonna be different. I'm gonna kiss her.

**PRESENT LOUIS.** Yeah. I wasn't the brightest kid.

**KELLY.** What are you smiling about?

**LOUIS.** Oh you'll find out.

*(They exit.)*

*(Lights change. Festive music. GEORGE and GRANDMA SKO-  
LOWSKI enter the living room.)*

**GEORGE.** All right, who is ready to open some presents!

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** Oh I am.

*(LOUIS enters.)*

**LOUIS.** I've been ready. Kelly is re-adjusting her hair. Apparently exposure to the outside has damaged its structural integrity.

**GEORGE.** Where's your Mom and Grandma Jacobs?

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** *(Off-stage:)* I'm coming! I'm coming! Hold your horses!

*(She slowly enters.)*

I can't sit on the pot for more than five minutes without someone wondering where the heck I am!

**GEORGE.** Merry Christmas.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Yeah, yeah. Where's Emily?

**GEORGE.** I thought she was with you.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** In the bathroom? Emily? EMILY! WE'RE HAVING CHRISTMAS WITHOUT YOU.

**EMILY.** *(Off-stage:)* Coming!

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** DID YOU HEAR ME?!

**EMILY.** *(Off-stage:)* I'm coming!

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** WELL SAY SOMETHING.



**GEORGE.** She's coming.

(GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI *takes* GEORGE *aside*.)

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** I hope you're not disappointed but I only got one present for you this year.

**GEORGE.** That's okay, Mom. We didn't even know you were going to be here.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** It's for Kelly.

**GEORGE.** Oh.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** I'm giving her everything I own.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** ARE WE GONNA DO THIS OR NOT?!

(*Lights fade.*)

*End of Act I*



## ACT II

*(The action is continuous with the end of Act I.)*

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** ARE WE GONNA DO THIS OR NOT?!

*(EMILY enters, carrying several recently wrapped presents.)*

It's about time.

**EMILY.** Here we go. Santa needed to do a little last-minute work.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** All right let's get started.

**EMILY.** Where's Kelly?

**LOUIS.** Well, there was a problem with the humidity, so her hair deflated and now —

**KELLY.** I'm coming! Shut up Louis!

**LOUIS.** I was just trying to explain —

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** I think you look lovely, Kelly.

**KELLY.** Thank you Grandma. I love your new accent.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** What accent?

**KELLY.** Ri-ight.

**EMILY.** Let's open the presents!

**KELLY.** *(Aside to EMILY:)* Why does Grandma have a British accent?

**EMILY.** Oh look here's one from Santa!

**KELLY.** You actually put from Santa on these?

**EMILY.** I didn't put anything on them. They came that way.

**GEORGE.** And Santa spent a lot of money on these presents so they better be appreciated.

**EMILY.** George.

**GEORGE.** Okay, what gets opened first?

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** I've got one already.

*(She's already opening it.)*

GEORGE. Oh, all right. Just jump right in there.

*(She opens a very large sweater with a cat on it.)*

GRANDMA JACOBS. It's a sweater.

GEORGE. Hey! A sweater! All right.

GRANDMA JACOBS. It's got a cat on it.

EMILY. I know you like cats.

GRANDMA JACOBS. *(Through a coughing fit:)* I like them better than I liked your father.

EMILY. What?

GRANDMA JACOBS. Cause I didn't really like him that much.

GEORGE. O-kay. Kelly, you wanna pick something out?

KELLY. Sure. Let me find Louis' present.

LOUIS. Oh.

KELLY. What?

LOUIS. Um...your present isn't out yet.

KELLY. Why not?

LOUIS. Because it's in the other room.

KELLY. Well go get it.

LOUIS. Um...okay.

*(LOUIS sits there.)*

KELLY. You totally forgot to get me a present, didn't you?

LOUIS. No I'll go get it.

*(LOUIS exits.)*

KELLY. He's just gonna go to his room and grab something. I'm not giving you your present unless it's from the store! I don't want any of your used tapes!

EMILY. Kelly, don't be so hard on your brother.

**KELLY.** What? He didn't get me a present.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** This one's for me.

*(She starts unwrapping another present.)*

**GEORGE.** Here's five bucks.

**KELLY.** What's that for?

**EMILY.** What are you doing?

**GEORGE.** That's for his present.

**KELLY.** Five bucks?!

**GEORGE.** All right fine, here's another ten.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** It's another sweater. Thank you.

**EMILY.** You're going to give her fifteen bucks?

**KELLY.** Thanks, Dad.

**GEORGE.** Louis come on back out.

**LOUIS.** *(Off-stage:)* No I found her present!

**KELLY.** I don't want it!

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** I get so dang cold these days. It's always freezing.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** This is such fun. Christmas was always such a dreary affair back in Poland.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** I didn't know you lived in Poland.

**EMILY.** Kelly, give that money back to your father.

**KELLY.** No.

**GEORGE.** You can keep it Kelly.

**EMILY.** This is ridiculous, giving your own daughter money on Christmas.

**KELLY.** I'm cool with it.

**GEORGE.** Hey *I* got her a present.

*(LOUIS returns with a few tapes wrapped in a plastic bag.)*

**LOUIS.** Here you go, Kelly. Merry Christmas.

**KELLY.** What is that?

**GEORGE.** Guess you'll have to open it and find out.

**EMILY.** George, why don't you open a present?

**GEORGE.** Hold on, the kids are sharing something special.

**KELLY.** You just took two tapes from your room and wrapped them in a plastic bag.

**LOUIS.** Why would I do that?

**KELLY.** Cause you didn't buy me anything you jerk.

**LOUIS.** I don't know that buying things is really in the spirit of Christmas, actually. See? I'm giving you something.

**KELLY.** Hey. Duran Duran. This is my tape!

**LOUIS.** No it's not I found it.

**KELLY.** You stole this from me and now you're giving it back to me as a Christmas present?!

**LOUIS.** Why would I steal Duran Duran? They suck.

**KELLY.** You suck. You can't even give me a decent Christmas present you loser!

**EMILY.** All right all right all right stop! Everyone stop!

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** Stop what?

**EMILY.** Kelly. Louis made a mistake and he will get you another Christmas present.

**KELLY.** If it's a glowing unicorn I'm going to shove it up your —

**EMILY.** Kelly! He will buy you something else. And why don't you give him your present?

**KELLY.** Fine. Just because Louis was too busy buying a stupid little toy for his imaginary girlfriend —

EMILY. You have a girlfriend Louis?

LOUIS. Kelly shut up!

EMILY. That's so great that you have a girlfriend!

KELLY. She shot him down, Mom.

LOUIS. She didn't shoot me down!

KELLY. It was brutal. He was crying.

GRANDMA JACOBS. Are we opening any more presents? Cause I'll open another one if you guys are just gonna sit there and yell at each other.

LOUIS. Fine.

KELLY. I hope you like it.

LOUIS. Me too.

KELLY. And it keeps your mind off the fact that you got totally shot down.

*(LOUIS unwraps his present. It's a set of books.)*

LOUIS. Hey you got me the Lord of the Rings. This is cool.

KELLY. I figured you liked to read.

LOUIS. Thanks. This is a good present.

KELLY. Yeah I know.

LOUIS. I was going to get you something.

GEORGE. And isn't that what Christmas is really about? The intention to get something?

KELLY. No, Dad. Christmas is about getting stuff from a store.

EMILY. How about we go back to opening presents? What did you get me, Mom?

GRANDMA JACOBS. It's under the tree.

GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI. We always used to have pie for dinner. Rhubarb pie, strawberry pie, it was really just those two kinds.

I got quite sick of it actually. Well one day my older brother Viclas said I don't want any more pie, I hate it, and that's when my father beat him with a shovel.

**GEORGE.** Wow, I guess that explains Uncle Viclas.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** Of course that was after he had fallen in the well as a child. He always did things like that. He was quite stupid.

**EMILY.** This looks great Mom, thank you.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Open it already, don't just sit there sniffing it like an idiot.

**LOUIS.** Can I open mine, Grandma?

*(He starts opening it.)*

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Sure. I got you cat food.

**LOUIS.** What?

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** For your new cat.

**LOUIS.** You got me a cat?!

**EMILY.** You got him a cat?

**KELLY.** I'm allergic to cats.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Then don't let him in your room. His name is Schmoopy.

**EMILY.** Where is Schmoopy?

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** He's in the basement right now but don't worry about it. He has leukemia.

**LOUIS.** Oh.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** You're gonna have to give him shots three times a day. I left the syringes in your room. He also only has one eye. But I always say that the more damaged a creature is the more you love it. So what I'm giving you, Louis, is a lesson in love.

**EMILY.** How old is Mooshy?



**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Schmoopy. I don't know.

**LOUIS.** Well thanks, Grandma.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Kelly I also got you a cat. I know, I know, you're allergic. But he doesn't have any fur so that won't be a problem. I'm kidding ya! I'll take the one back that I got.

**KELLY.** Oh. Thanks.

**EMILY.** I can't wait to open my present.

**GEORGE.** I don't know how you fit the cat in there.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** It's not a cat.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** I don't like cats. They always look like they're planning something.

**EMILY.** I don't like them either.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** How can you not like cats?

**GEORGE.** She's crazy like that.

*(EMILY opens her present.)*

**EMILY.** Oh it's...it's...what is it?

*(She takes it out of the package. It's a taser gun.)*

It's a taser gun?

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** It's a taser gun.

**GEORGE.** Oh darn it I got you the same thing.

**EMILY.** Shut up George.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Now you put that in your purse and you carry it with you wherever you go. Cause there are a lot of sickos out there and this way you can hit 'em with twelve thousand volts if they try anything. I was on the bus the other day and this guy tried to start something.

**GEORGE.** Really?

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** And this came in awful handy. He was getting all feely with the hands.

**EMILY.** Did you hit him with this?

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** I just showed it to him and I said, "you wanna dance?" He backed off.

**GEORGE.** Well I think if anything fits with the spirit of Christmas, it's the threat of permanent damage to the brain from high voltage.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** Here it is!

*(She produces an envelope.)*

**GEORGE.** What's that, Mom?

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** It's Kelly's present.

**KELLY.** Oh. Thanks.

**GEORGE.** How did you fit the cat in the envelope?

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** I don't think there is a cat in the envelope. I hope there isn't.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** No one would put a cat in an envelope unless they were sick.

**GEORGE.** It would have to be a really small cat.

**EMILY.** George, would you just—?

**GEORGE.** And flat. A small flat cat.

*(KELLY opens it.)*

**LOUIS.** What'd you get?

**KELLY.** It's papers.

**EMILY.** It's just papers?

**LOUIS.** Is there, like, writing on them, Kelly?

**KELLY.** Shut up, Louis. I don't know, it's like a contract or something. Oh it's a will.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** I wonder what it says.

**GEORGE.** Don't you remember, Mom?

*(Pause.)*

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** I can't say that I do.

**KELLY.** Oh my God.

**EMILY.** What is it dear?

**KELLY.** Whoah.

*(Lights shift.)*

**PRESENT LOUIS.** When my grandparents moved out to Wisconsin from Pittsburgh, they originally had a crazy idea that they were going to be farmers. That didn't last for very long, but they did buy up quite a bit of swamp that someone told them was perfect farming land. It grew mostly mosquitoes, deer ticks, and the occasional Ebola virus. When Kelly and I were fighting, my Mom would take us there for vacation. As the suburbs around Milwaukee expanded, however, the land grew more and more attractive to developers, who would pester my grandmother about it. She was bizarrely sentimentally attached to it, and then later once she was sentimentally attached to Poland, she was attached to the land by inertia. Anyway, she never sold it. And now she was leaving it to Kelly.

**KELLY.** Wow thanks Grandma.

**PRESENT LOUIS.** And it was probably worth something like three million dollars. Merry Christmas.

*(Bright choral Christmas music plays.)*

On Christmas morning I woke up to a dusting of snow and a feeling of absolute dread that I would be forced to perform in the worst Nativity Story play ever seen by God or Man. Kelly's domineering attitude and draconian directing techniques had taken their toll on our cast.

*(KELLY is on the phone.)*

**KELLY.** What do you mean you're not coming?! It's freaking Christmas! You are not sick, you're a liar! You know that! You are lying on Christmas! I'm going to find you! Hello? Hello?

**PRESENT LOUIS.** One by one, our cast members developed allergies to their coats, or had appendicitis, or were mysteriously called away to happier Christmas celebrations at other churches.

**KELLY.** Are you kidding me?! Who's going to play Joseph?!

*(She hangs up. LOUIS enters.)*

**LOUIS.** My stomach hurts.

*(KELLY grabs him.)*

**KELLY.** You are not getting out of this. Do you understand me? I will murder you in your sleep.

**LOUIS.** Merry Christmas.

**KELLY.** Yeah. Merry Christmas. Murder you.

**PRESENT LOUIS.** When we got to the church things weren't much better. Our leading actor, Tommy, was kept home by his mother because she didn't approve of Kelly's biblical interpretation. In the end there were just the three of us; any sane human would have called off the show.

*(KELLY comes downcenter and addresses the audience as if they were a church filled with people. She is sweating bullets.)*

**KELLY.** Okay, so...um...the youth group will now present The Nativity Story for your entertainment and...spiritual fulfillment.

*(KELLY gathers herself.)*

Uh...but first I wanna say that this is kind of an experimental version... We used to have more actors in the show, but certain people, I'm not even going to say their names, but they know who they are, thought that it was more important to fake illnesses than to portray the birth of Jesus. Okay? That's all I'm going to say about that. But God knows who you are and so do I. And one of those people is sitting on the left side of the church in the back row and I can see you, okay? And God sees you. And if you think you can not be in the nativity story and not get eggs thrown at your house then you got another thing coming, all right? Cause I know where you live. Amen.

*(KELLY gathers herself again.)*

I want you all to take a moment to mentally prepare yourself for what you are about to witness. We've all heard this story before. But have we truly seen it? Have we lived it? Think. Believe. Feel.

*(KELLY produces a boombox and presses play. Some horrible cheesy 80s music plays.)*

This is Mary's Story. Imagine yourself in the past. Long ago. Before television or radio. Before fish. There was a girl.

*(KELLY moves off to the side as CAROLYN enters, dressed as Mary. CAROLYN is an excellent actress and does everything quite well.)*

**KELLY.** *(As the holy spirit:)* Mary.

**CAROLYN.** Who's there?

**KELLY.** It is I the holy spirit.

**CAROLYN.** The holy spirit?

**KELLY.** You are to be blessed above all women, Mary.

**CAROLYN.** Me?

**KELLY.** You.

*(KELLY assumes the role of narrator again.)*

Bam! And it was so. Immaculate. And she found herself with child.

*(KELLY puts another tape in the boombox. Madonna's "Papa Don't Preach" plays.)*

But does anyone really know what happened between Mary and her father?

*(KELLY puts on a beard. CAROLYN enters, hugely pregnant now.)*

**CAROLYN.** Papa?

**KELLY.** Whoah! What the heck happened to you?

**CAROLYN.** It was the holy spirit, papa.

**KELLY.** Tell me another one! Now Joseph will never have you as a wife and I'm gonna have to hit you with rocks until you die.

**CAROLYN.** Please, papa, no, you have to believe me.

**KELLY.** And just then —

*(KELLY takes off her beard.)*

It was Joseph.

*(KELLY becomes Joseph:)*

I love you Mary!

**CAROLYN.** I love you Joseph!

**KELLY.** And we'll raise this baby together! We don't need your parents! You see, they don't believe that two crazy teenagers can be in love. They don't believe in our love. Run away with me to Galilee.

**CAROLYN.** I can't. I'm grounded.

**PRESENT LOUIS.** I was waiting in the wings, watching the nightmare unfold. From where I sat I could see the faces of the audience, and I knew what they felt: hate. And they were trying to make up their minds if this was blasphemous, or merely bad.

*(KELLY becomes the father again.)*

**KELLY.** I forbid you to leave this house!

**CAROLYN.** You just don't understand me, Papa! Me and Joseph are running away!

**KELLY.** Never! You're my daughter!

*(She switches back to the narrator.)*

But that night God sent him a message.

*(KELLY becomes God.)*

Eric. ERIC.

**PRESENT LOUIS.** Jesus' grandfather's name was Eric?

**KELLY.** This is GOD. I need to talk to you. You're being a real jerk.

**PRESENT LOUIS.** And that's when I heard it.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** (*Off-stage:*) Boo! Booooo! Booooooooooooo!

**PRESENT LOUIS.** They were booing God. Well, my sister playing God. So what does Kelly do?

(*KELLY switches to Joseph wig and escorts CAROLYN.*)

**KELLY.** (*Speaking louder, over the booing:*) Come on Mary, let's check out that inn!

**CAROLYN.** I'm feeling sick, Joseph!

**KELLY.** (*Patting CAROLYN's belly:*) Hold on, baby! We're gonna make it!

**PRESENT LOUIS.** I couldn't take it any more. I had to do something to save the show. It was okay if they booed Kelly, but Carolyn?

**KELLY.** Help us Jesus! Help us Jesus! Help us Jesus!

(*CAROLYN is in labor. More boos.*)

(*LOUIS enters in a donkey costume. CAROLYN and KELLY stop to look at him.*)

(*Long, uncomfortable pause.*)

**KELLY.** (*A whisper through clenched teeth:*) Get off the stage, it's not your turn yet.

(*Pause.*)

**LOUIS.** BRAAAAAAAAAAY!

(*Lights change.*)

**PRESENT LOUIS.** I saved the show.

(*CAROLYN and LOUIS appear.*)

Okay. Maybe not.

**LOUIS.** So um...you were great!

(*He hugs CAROLYN.*)

**CAROLYN.** Thanks. I thought it kinda sucked.

LOUIS. What? I mean—well, I guess a little. It woulda been better if the other people were here.

CAROLYN. Yeah.

LOUIS. And if Kelly didn't play God.

CAROLYN. Yeah.

LOUIS. And if my grandmother wasn't booing us.

CAROLYN. That was your Grandma?

LOUIS. Yeah. She's kinda evil. I mean I think the booing was actually justified, but still...we're her only grandkids. At least it's over.

CAROLYN. My Dad has this new videocamera and he taped it.

LOUIS. That's not good.

CAROLYN. I don't think I'm ever gonna watch it.

LOUIS. Yeah. No. So...um...did you talk to your parents about tonight?

CAROLYN. What about tonight?

LOUIS. We're having that cast party thing?

CAROLYN. Oh.

LOUIS. You think you can make it?

CAROLYN. Probably not.

LOUIS. Okay.

CAROLYN. Well I'll see you later. Good job.

LOUIS. Oh—um.

CAROLYN. What?

LOUIS. Never mind.

*(Short pause.)*

CAROLYN. Okay.

*(She leaves. LOUIS watches her as KELLY enters.)*



**KELLY.** How does it feel to have ruined Christmas for everybody?

**PRESENT LOUIS.** But the horrible disaster of the Nativity Play could only distract my parents for so long from the other horrible disaster which was my Grandmother's present to Kelly.

*(Lights up on the living room. EMILY and GEORGE pace.)*

**EMILY.** It's not legal.

**GEORGE.** I really don't want to get into it.

**EMILY.** Why not?

**GEORGE.** It's what she wants.

**EMILY.** George, she doesn't know what she wants. She didn't even know what was in her will.

**GEORGE.** She told me earlier.

**EMILY.** She told you she was giving everything she had to Kelly?

**GEORGE.** Yes.

**EMILY.** Why didn't you say anything?

**GEORGE.** It didn't come up.

**EMILY.** What do you mean it didn't come up?

**GEORGE.** It just didn't, okay. I couldn't get a word in edgewise with your Mom handing out diseased cats left and right.

**EMILY.** How much is that land worth?

**GEORGE.** I don't know. A lot.

**EMILY.** She can't do this.

**GEORGE.** I don't think there's anything we can do about it.

**EMILY.** She's not in her right mind.

**GEORGE.** I know that.

**EMILY.** So the will isn't binding. It'll never hold up in court. We can have your Mom declared mentally incompetent.

**GEORGE.** I'm not doing that.

EMILY. So you think —

GEORGE. I'm not doing that, Emily.

EMILY. Why not?

GEORGE. Because it's wrong.

EMILY. It's true, it isn't wrong. Unless you haven't noticed, she didn't grow up in Poland, she wasn't in the Rockettes, and your father wasn't a cross-dresser. She doesn't even remember her life. She hardly knows who Kelly is.

GEORGE. And if she did know, she wouldn't give her the money.

EMILY. Exactly.

GEORGE. I still don't —

EMILY. What do you think Kelly is going to do with that land?

GEORGE. I don't know.

EMILY. She's irresponsible —

GEORGE. She's seventeen —

EMILY. And she's a normal seventeen year old who doesn't understand how to handle this. I wouldn't have known what to do when I was seventeen. Your mother is very sick. She doesn't remember her actions. I don't think it's so out of the question that we challenge this in court. What if she decided to give it all away to a homeless guy she met? What would we do then?

GEORGE. I'm not her guardian.

EMILY. Yet. You're not her guardian yet. But you probably will be.

GEORGE. I am not taking my mother to court.

EMILY. What about Louis? Shouldn't he get something? Do you think it's fair that it all goes to Kelly?

GEORGE. It's not my place to say —

EMILY. Oh grow up! You're so content to sit back and make jokes and never come to a decision about anything —

**GEORGE.** (*Overlapping:*) I came to a decision about it! I'm not challenging this!

**EMILY.** Because you don't want to face what your mother is!

**GEORGE.** I know what she is! Don't sit there and tell me I don't know what's happening to her —

**EMILY.** Well you won't make a decision based on —

**GEORGE.** (*Cutting her off:*) I'm not going to strip her of her dignity! Hauling her in front of some judge so I can sit there and prove to her and the world that she isn't capable of controlling her life! Her only son doing that to her? Her husband dead and her boy fighting her in some airless compartment and laying out the evidence of her dementia?! That's going to make a nice final memory for her.

**EMILY.** She won't remember it. And she doesn't have much need for dignity.

**GEORGE.** That's an ugly thing to say.

**EMILY.** Yeah. It is. But it's also true, isn't it?

*(Lights switch.)*

*(Lights shift. In Kelly's room. LOUIS is reading a book. GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI knocks quietly.)*

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** May I come in?

**LOUIS.** Sure.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** What's that you're reading?

**LOUIS.** Just a book.

*(She looks at it.)*

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** Fantasy adventure? Well, what sort of fantasies are you having?

**LOUIS.** Um...

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** Kelly told me about your little relationship issue.

**LOUIS.** I don't have a relationship issue.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** No I remember it quite well, she said you did.

**LOUIS.** Well Kelly is also known around here as a gigantic liar.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** So I took it upon myself to come give you a little bit of advice.

**LOUIS.** That's okay, Grandma. I'm doing fine.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** Nonsense. I was quite good at this at one point in time. First, you must be tender. Take her hands as if they were made of melting snow.

**LOUIS.** I'm not really in the taking her hands stage.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** Why not?

**LOUIS.** I'm just not.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** Don't worry about the fact that you're short, Louis. You'll grow.

**LOUIS.** I'm not worried —

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** When I was growing up in Poland there was a boy who had a kidney ailment and never...developed.

**LOUIS.** I don't think that's my problem.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** We called him Shrimpy. In Polish, though. He was a wonderful boy. Never married. Hung himself. Quite awful, really. But you're such a handsome boy. A little impish, but I think that's charming.

**LOUIS.** I just made an ass of myself on stage.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** Oh nonsense. When was this?

**LOUIS.** Two hours ago? And she didn't really like my Christmas present.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** What does that have to do with anything? My husband Charles once bought me a meat grinding machine for Christmas, with an attendant package of meat. I think it was mutton. I can't be sure of that, though.

**LOUIS.** But didn't you pretend to like it? For his sake?

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** Why on earth would I pretend to like a package of meat? He was lucky he didn't get his fingers ground up in that device. Love, Louis, is what happens when you stop pretending to care about another person's feelings. You don't have to pretend.

**LOUIS.** Right, but — what?

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** If she truly cared about you she wouldn't care at all about hurting your feelings and would simply tell you the truth. For instance, when Charles gave me the meat I told him that he could take that grinding machine and shove it some place quite personal. And that solved that situation.

**LOUIS.** I don't know.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** Let's do a little role play, shall we? You be you and I'll be this girl.

**LOUIS.** That's kind of weird, Grandma.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** Not at all. Go ahead, tell me...how you feel.

**LOUIS.** Okay...um...I don't know if I can do this —

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** Yes you can. Talk away.

**LOUIS.** Okay...Carolyn.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** Who's Carolyn?

**LOUIS.** You're Carolyn.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** What?

**LOUIS.** You just said that you were going to be her.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** Right.

**LOUIS.** Her name is Carolyn.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** I thought her name was Phyllis.

**LOUIS.** No.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** Phyllis is a lovely name. I knew a girl named Phyllis growing up. Had only one leg. A cow ate the other one.

**LOUIS.** A cow?

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** Oh yes. It just ran out of a field and grabbed her by the leg, tore it clean off. We were all shouting, "Oh no! It's that cow again! Someone kill it!" But then it ran off. It was grotesque.

**LOUIS.** Wow. I didn't know cows were that dangerous.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** If provoked. What were we doing again?

**LOUIS.** We're role playing. I'm going to be me and you're going to be Carolyn.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** Right. Carolyn. I'm sorry, continue please. Oh, wait. We need something for the present you're going to give me.

**LOUIS.** Oh...um...

*(LOUIS grabs a stuffed animal.)*

Is this okay?

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** Excellent. Tell me how you feel.

**LOUIS.** Carolyn. I've known you for a long time.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** And I you.

**LOUIS.** And...there are some things I've always wanted to say to you.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** Such as?

**LOUIS.** I really like you.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** You're just saying that. You don't like me.

**LOUIS.** No no I really do like you —

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** If you liked me you'd talk to me but you never do, do you?

**LOUIS.** I talk to you.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** Not often. You're always over there fidgeting in the corner.

**LOUIS.** Because I'm nervous.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** Whatever for? I'm not going to bite you I don't even have real teeth any more.

**LOUIS.** Well I'm nervous you're not going to like me—

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** I don't like you when you stand in the corner. Why would I like you then? Oh look at that boy standing over there playing with himself he seems like a jolly chap, I suppose I'll pine after him. No I'm sorry I have other things to do with my time. I enjoy the company of young men who are dashing and confident and you don't seem to have either of those qualities. Why don't you take me dancing?

**LOUIS.** I don't dance.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** You don't dance? Well that's a lovely characteristic, isn't it? Well now I'm really going to love the small boy who doesn't dance, doesn't talk and can't seem to find the courage to talk to me even though he's known me for quite some time. Quite the gentleman you make.

**LOUIS.** That's not fair!

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** You know what's not fair? Having babies! If I'm going to be having your babies I want to dance first. I also want flowers. Do you have flowers?

**LOUIS.** Here.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** What's this?

**LOUIS.** It's a glowing unicorn.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** It's a what?

**LOUIS.** It's a symbol of my love.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** As a glowing unicorn?

**LOUIS.** It changes colors.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** Well I think that's the most idiotic thing I've ever heard. What am I supposed to do with it? Look at it?

**LOUIS.** Yeah?

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** But it's not even real. It's imaginary. There are no unicorns.

**LOUIS.** But that's why —

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** So you give me something that doesn't even exist? How absurd.

**LOUIS.** Can we stop?

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** I wasn't aware we had started something.

**LOUIS.** No I mean stop role-playing?

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** I don't know what you're talking about. All I know is that a boy who can't talk to me has given me a statue of something that doesn't exist. And he can't even tell me why he likes me.

**LOUIS.** I like you because...

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** Yes? Am I pretty?

**LOUIS.** You're very pretty.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** So what?

**LOUIS.** And besides that you're...nice and funny, I mean not really all that funny but you're kinda funny, but more than that you're fun. And I mean fun like you've got this energy, you know? Like everything in the world is exciting to you. Like walking home from school and you are practically dancing in the street and I want to be something that makes you excited too. I want to be a part of that world. I want to love everything like you do.

*(Pause.)*



**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** See now that's a reason Louis. If you tell her something like that, it won't matter that you're petite.

**LOUIS.** I prefer the term short.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** Do you understand what I'm saying? She needs to hear something like that.

*(Pause.)*

**LOUIS.** Can I ask you a question, Grandma?

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** I don't think I can stop you.

**LOUIS.** Why do you have a British accent?

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** It's more fun this way. Can I tell you a true story while I have a moment of clarity? I'm aware that I'm a bit daffy.

**LOUIS.** You? No.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** It's true. And I don't think my stories necessarily happened. Occasionally I do, but I mostly I know... I'm having difficulty speaking what I mean. The words don't work so well any more. I'm trying, Louis.

**LOUIS.** It's okay.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** You see I've forgotten most of my life. It's...everywhere inside me. I remember...pieces of things that don't really make sense...and instead of fumbling, which is what I'm doing now because...I want to get at it right—I mean truth—and that makes it hard—the lies come easier—rather than fumbling...invention is easier.

**LOUIS.** Right.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** I like to watch...Masterpiece Theatre on television. Only thing I watch. And I used to play this game...where I would sound like them. Everything seemed more chipper that way. So I did...and I learned it...and then I played the game more and more. And I'm afraid I've forgotten who I was supposed to be. So.

**LOUIS.** It's okay.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** I don't remember you, I don't remember when you were born, I don't know anything about you... When I think about it...when the clouds part long enough...I suppose I should be very sad. All those...disappearances from my life.

*(Pause. LOUIS hugs her.)*

**LOUIS.** It's nice to meet you.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** It is, isn't it?

*(Lights change.)*

**PRESENT LOUIS.** There was a time growing up when my Grandmother was a very vibrant woman. But then, when I thirteen, I remember sitting in Kelly's room and talking to her, and she was a different person. And I loved this new person, she still had that same energy, that same sparkle of life in her eye. But every so often I'd see it waver, as if the shield dropped for a moment, and I'd catch a glimpse of a black fear. Beneath that glow, and beneath all those inventions of Poland and Masterpiece Theater, there was a profoundly terrified woman. Which made what happened next all the more awful.

*(Lights shift. GEORGE is setting the table. GRANDMA JACOBS enters.)*

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** All right I am starving! Where's the turkey?

**EMILY.** *(Off-stage:)* We're having chicken!

*(GEORGE stands awkwardly during this next conversation.)*

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** *(Shouting off-stage:)* WHAT?

**EMILY.** *(Off-stage:)* We're having chicken!

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** WHY ARE WE HAVING SOUP?!

**EMILY** *(Off-stage:)* No. CHICKEN.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** IT'S CHRISTMAS!

**EMILY.** *(Off-stage:)* I KNOW IT'S CHRISTMAS!

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** THERE SHOULDN'T BE SOUP ON CHRISTMAS!

**EMILY.** (*Off-stage, screaming:*) IT'S NOT SOUP IT'S CHICKEN!!!

(*She enters.*)

Mom! Listen! We're having chicken! Deal with it!

(*She stomps off. Pause. GEORGE looks at GRANDMA JACOBS.*)

**GEORGE.** I'm gonna go in the garage.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** For what?

**GEORGE.** I forgot things.

(*He leaves. LOUIS enters.*)

**LOUIS.** Hey.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** How are ya? How's Schmoopy?

**LOUIS.** He's um...good.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Yeah? Where is he?

**LOUIS.** Last I saw him he was in my room. But he bumped into the wall.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Yeah...no depth perception. Happens when you've only got one eye.

**LOUIS.** Yeah. How old is Schmoopy?

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** No idea. I just found him. He's a great cat, though. You're really going to love him before he dies.

**LOUIS.** Yeah.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Sit down Louis let me explain this to you.

**LOUIS.** Okay.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** When I was about your age we had a dog named Sweetie Pie. He was just this big dumb mutt, but I grew up with him and I loved him. Well, one day Sweetie Pie ran into the street—

(*EMILY enters with more dishes for the table.*)

**EMILY.** Are you telling him about that dog?

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** What's wrong with telling him about the dog?

**EMILY.** It's sick, Mom. This is Christmas.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** He needs to learn about life!

**LOUIS.** Did Sweetie Pie get hit by a car?

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Can I tell you the story? Don't you wreck it.

**EMILY.** Fine, tell the stupid story. I'm not listening to it again though.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** You need to hear it again!

*(EMILY leaves.)*

So Sweetie Pie runs into the street. And I'm sitting on our front porch and I say, Sweetie Pie, no, don't run into the street! Course we never had him trained properly. He used to jump up on the kitchen table when we were having dinner. He'd go whoop up on a chair and then bam right onto the table, my father had fits, he wanted the dog dead. So, anyway, he's not trained, he doesn't listen, he's out in the middle of the road—and then I see it—there's a dead dog in the road!

**LOUIS.** There's a dead dog in the road?

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Yeah. So Sweetie Pie runs over to the dead dog, and he starts chewing on the corpse.

**EMILY.** *(Off-stage:)* Oh my God Mom! Christmas!

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** And he's out there gnawing on this other dead dog's leg.

**LOUIS.** Sweetie Pie was a cannibal?

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Most dogs are cannibals if you give 'em the chance. So I'm screaming, no, Sweetie Pie don't eat that dog's leg! And bam a truck runs him over! Sweetie Pie is dead.

**LOUIS.** Wow.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Yeah. I've been trying to make sense of that story my whole life. Basically I think it comes down to this: Don't

laugh at the misfortunes of others, because the truck might be right behind ya.

*(EMILY returns with more dishes and a basket of biscuits.)*

**EMILY.** Are you done?

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Almost. So don't laugh at Schmoopy cause he's only got one eye and leukemia.

**LOUIS.** Because pretty soon I might only have one eye and leukemia?

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Right.

*(GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI and KELLY enter.)*

**KELLY.** Hey Mom.

**EMILY.** Kelly you're sitting over here. And Grandma Skolowski you sit here.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** I'm sitting next to Louis.

**EMILY.** *(Annoyed:)* Okay. Well then we just switch this.

*(She calls out as she exchanges a place setting.)*

George! We're ready! Where did he go?

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Garage.

**EMILY.** What for?

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** I don't know, go get me some scotch on the rocks.

**EMILY.** I'm not getting you that.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** I'm sorry, is there some kind of Christmas rule about scotch?

**KELLY.** There better not be.

**EMILY.** You're not having hard liquor with Christmas dinner and Kelly...cool it.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** My father was quite a drunkard.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** I'm not a drunk, I want a glass of scotch, I think I'm old enough to have a glass of scotch.

(GEORGE *enters.*)

**EMILY.** I don't want you to drink it in the house.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** I guess I'll drink it out on the porch like a homeless person, is that what you want? I'll get it myself.

**GEORGE.** Are we gonna have dinner?

**EMILY.** Yes. Sit.

**GEORGE.** Fine.

**EMILY.** Mom. Stay.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Louis. Fetch. Me scotch.

**EMILY.** He doesn't know what it is.

**KELLY.** I'll get it.

**EMILY.** George! Would you mind saying grace?

**GEORGE.** Okay. Um...let us bow our heads in prayer. Dear Lord: thank you for the many gifts you have given us this holiday season. Thank you for bringing our whole family together. And please let us remember that we love each other despite...difficulties. And...

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Hey God. Thanks for Jesus. And thank you for cats. And please help certain people in this family to respect their elders and get them whatever they want because they might die soon. Amen.

**EMILY.** One more thing, Lord. Please let certain other people in this family not be crazy and mean and make outrageous demands during the holiday season. And let other people come to their senses.

**KELLY.** And could you please punish the people who didn't show up for the nativity play because they were liars?

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** And please find it in your heart, Lord, to prevent the youth of this family from making snide comments.

**EMILY.** And help us remember to set good examples for our children with our behavior and not shoplift from the mall.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** That's what I was talking about with the snide comments, God. And please help certain people in this family remember that it is not polite to rat out their elders to their elders' children.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** Since we're making requests God. I'd like to ask you to help Louis with his courage and please help the special girl that he likes open her eyes to what a wonderful young man he is. Amen.

*(The others mumble "Amen." They sit in silence for a moment.)*

**LOUIS.** Thanks Grandma.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** So did everyone like their Christmas presents? Kelly?

**KELLY.** What?

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Did you like your Christmas present?

**KELLY.** Sure.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** You must really like it.

**EMILY.** Mom stop it. Let's have a nice dinner and be polite.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** I was polite for sixty-two years and look where it got me.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** If you'll excuse me, I need to freshen up.

*(She gets up from the table and exits.)*

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** It's a load of crap, that's what it is.

**GEORGE.** I don't see how it's any of your business.

**KELLY.** What are you talking about?

**EMILY.** Mom. Leave it.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** I just want you to know, Louis, that you are taken care of in my will.

**GEORGE.** I'm sure all those cats are gonna come in handy.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** I wouldn't forget you.

**EMILY.** I don't think it's a matter of forgetting —

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Will you listen to yourself? Earlier today you were going on and on about declaring her incompetent and nullifying the will, and now you sit there —

**KELLY.** What? Mom?

**EMILY.** You don't hear anything else all weekend and that you hear?!

**GEORGE.** We're not going to do that Kelly.

**EMILY.** We haven't decided what we're going to do.

**KELLY.** You'd nullify Grandma's will?

**EMILY.** It's just not fair to everyone else. I mean think about Louis.

**KELLY.** What about Louis?

**EMILY.** Do you think it's fair that you get everything and he gets nothing?

**KELLY.** Yes. Look at Louis!

**LOUIS.** What do you mean, look at me?

**GEORGE.** I'm not going to go against her wishes.

**EMILY.** She couldn't pick Kelly out of a lineup. And what are you gonna do with the money anyway?

**KELLY.** I thought I was getting the swamp.

**EMILY.** It's a very valuable swamp.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** It's probably full of snakes anyway.

**KELLY.** You just want it for yourself!

**EMILY.** Oh please! Well what do you think Louis?



**LOUIS.** Me? Um...I mean isn't a will? So doesn't that mean that no one gets anything until after she dies? So why are we acting like she's already dead?

*(Pause.)*

*(The doorbell rings as GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI enters.)*

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** I'll get it.

**GEORGE.** No I'll get it Mom.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** George I can answer the door.

*(She goes to the door.)*

**EMILY.** Who would stop by on Christmas night?

*(GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI opens the door. CAROLYN is standing there.)*

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** It's the Virgin Mary!

**CAROLYN.** Hi. Um...is Louis here?

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** She's come for Louis!

*(LOUIS gets up.)*

**LOUIS.** Carolyn?

**CAROLYN.** Hey. I stopped by for the...party?

**LOUIS.** Oh. Um. Yeah. Hey everybody—this is Carolyn. She's uh...she's here for the cast party.

*(LOUIS escorts her to the table.)*

**CAROLYN.** Hi.

**KELLY.** Hey.

**EMILY.** Merry Christmas, Carolyn. Have a seat and I'll find myself another chair.

*(EMILY leaves to look for another chair.)*

**CAROLYN.** I'm sorry am I late?

**GEORGE.** Not at all. Sit down.

(CAROLYN *sits gingerly.*)

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Why are you sitting over there? You should sit next to Louis.

**CAROLYN.** I'm fine here.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Here we'll switch.

**CAROLYN.** No that's okay.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Get up we'll switch.

(GRANDMA JACOBS *is out of her chair, rapping on CAROLYN's chair with her cane.*)

**CAROLYN.** Okay.

(*She moves.*)

(EMILY *returns with another chair.*)

**EMILY.** (To CAROLYN:) Oh you moved? You can sit in my seat.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** I told her to switch.

**EMILY.** Mom.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** What? She wants to sit next to Louis.

**CAROLYN.** I'm fine anywhere—

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** (*Continuing:*) The girl came all the way over here to be with Louis and you want to make her sit on the other side of the table! What is wrong with you?

**EMILY.** I was just giving her my seat!

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** So you're not the Virgin Mary?

**CAROLYN.** That was the play I was in.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** What play?

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** The horrible play she was in. This morning? Remember? Kelly was Joseph?

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** Kelly was Joseph?

**KELLY.** It was unorthodox.

**GEORGE.** Remember: you were filled with shame watching it? Not you Carolyn, you were very good.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** Oh right. Yes that play. I'm so sorry for you. But you came at just the most interesting time. It seems that quite a few people at this table feel that I am crazy and would be better off dead.

*(Pause.)*

**EMILY.** Would you like a roll?

**GEORGE.** So what kind of work does your Dad do, Carolyn?

**CAROLYN.** He's a lawyer.

**EMILY.** Oh. A lawyer?

**KELLY.** Don't get any ideas Mom.

**EMILY.** What kind of lawyer?

**CAROLYN.** Divorce lawyer.

*(Pause.)*

But he's not my real Dad. I was adopted.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** It's probably better this way.

**CAROLYN.** I'm sure.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** When I was a little girl, I had a friend who was adopted. Her name was Ludmilla and she was the most adorable little child with a button nose and a hunchback.

**KELLY.** Louis. Here's a thought: Why don't you and Carolyn go somewhere else?

**EMILY.** Don't be ridiculous, Carolyn is welcome at the dinner table.

**GEORGE.** You can go in the basement if you want.

**EMILY.** She's not going in the basement. She's staying right here with us and we're all going to have a wonderful dinner.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Well where is it? I've been sitting here for ten minutes and all I've had is a roll!

**EMILY.** You have not been sitting there for ten minutes!

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** It feels like half an hour! How long does it take to make soup?

**EMILY.** We're having chicken!

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** What are we doing having chicken on Christmas?

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** Oh we used to love chickens.

**EMILY.** We've been over this Mom — there isn't a law that you need to have turkey on Christmas.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** When you were growing up, I made turkey.

**EMILY.** Well you can make turkey all you want I'm making chicken!

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** A chicken isn't even half the size of a turkey!

**EMILY.** What does that have to do with anything?

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Jesus does not want us to have chicken on Christmas.

**EMILY.** Oh I'm sorry did Jesus tell you that?!

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** He did! And he's awfully upset about Kelly's play this morning!

**KELLY.** Don't drag me into it! I just want to eat something!

**GEORGE.** Are there any more rolls?

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** You know what I mean!

**EMILY.** No! No one knows what you mean!

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** (*Overlapping:*) She's the crazy one.

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** Well no one knows what you mean because you mumble all the time!

**EMILY.** You're selectively deaf!

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** When you were four years old you used to throw the worst tantrums that anyone had ever seen—

**EMILY.** *(Continuous:)* What are you talking about?!

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** *(Continuing:)* I remember one time in JC Penny's you threw yourself on the ground so hard you gave yourself a concussion! And this is the same thing right now!

**EMILY.** Just...ag...

*(EMILY pulls the taser gun out of her purse.)*

This is a terrible Christmas present!

**GEORGE.** Put it down, Emily.

*(LOUIS and CAROLYN slowly get up from the table and leave.)*

**EMILY.** You're lucky I don't pull the trigger on this!

**GRANDMA JACOBS.** You don't have the balls!

**EMILY.** I wish you would stop saying that! I'm a woman!

*(Pause. They freeze.)*

**PRESENT LOUIS.** So it was a beautiful introduction to my family. Part of me wanted to stick around to see whether or not my mother would pull the trigger. Part of me wanted a meteor to hit the house. But I took Kelly's advice, and we snuck off to the basement.

*(Lights shift to the basement.)*

My Dad had been quote finishing the basement since before I was born. It was one of those things that my parents fought about when they fought about who was supposed to do the dishes or something, my Dad would say, 'I was going to get to the dishes' and my Mom would say 'like you're going to get to the tile in the basement?' and things would degenerate from there. So the finished part of the basement consisted of one room, a dusty old television, and a couch which had recently been peed on by a one-eyed cat with leukemia. It was the most romantic place on Earth.

**CAROLYN.** This is nice.

**LOUIS.** Really?

CAROLYN. No.

LOUIS. I'm sorry you came over.

CAROLYN. It's okay. My house was going into hour six of the Trivial Pursuit Deathmarch, so this is better. At least my brother's not here.

LOUIS. Is he adopted too?

CAROLYN. Yeah. Once they got me they wanted more and once they got him they stopped.

LOUIS. Have you ever met your real parents?

CAROLYN. No. As I understand it, my Mom was real young. So what'd you get for Christmas?

*(A growling, pathetic "mew" is heard.)*

LOUIS. That.

CAROLYN. What is that?

LOUIS. That's Schmoopy. My Grandmother wanted to teach me about death. So she got me a one-eyed cat with Leukemia. I also got some underwear from my Mom. And...my sister got a swamp. So all in all, it's probably the worst Christmas ever. Oh and my parents have been fighting pretty much constantly.

CAROLYN. I'm sorry.

LOUIS. And I screwed up the nativity play.

CAROLYN. That was probably doomed to failure without you, Louis.

LOUIS. And I forgot to get anyone a present.

CAROLYN. You didn't get anyone a present?

LOUIS. No I was so wrapped up in...other stuff that I forgot about everyone else.

CAROLYN. You got me a present.

LOUIS. That was the other stuff. And you don't even like it.

CAROLYN. I never said I didn't like it.

LOUIS. It's a glowing unicorn, what are you gonna do with that? It's such a stupid idea. I should be shot with my Mom's stun gun.

CAROLYN. Your Mom has a stun gun?

LOUIS. Yeah it was a Christmas present from my Grandma.

CAROLYN. Which one?

LOUIS. The crazy one.

*(Short pause.)*

The crazy one with the cane.

CAROLYN. Oh. Your family is weird.

LOUIS. Yeah.

CAROLYN. It's okay. I like weird people. I'm in theatre after all. But I have something that'll cheer you up. I got you a present.

LOUIS. You got me a present?

CAROLYN. No I'm lying.

LOUIS. Oh.

CAROLYN. No I got you a present. God you're gullible. Yes I got you something. Look.

*(She takes out a nicely wrapped present.)*

Merry Christmas.

*(LOUIS takes it and opens it slowly. It's a glow-in-the-dark skull.)*

LOUIS. It's a skull.

CAROLYN. It glows in the dark.

LOUIS. Seriously?

CAROLYN. I didn't know what to get you so I asked my brother what boys liked and he said anything gruesome that glows so...Merry Christmas.

LOUIS. This is awesome.

**CAROLYN.** You like it?

**LOUIS.** Yes. Thank you! This is the best Christmas present ever.

**CAROLYN.** I mean, it's not an old cat or anything.

*(A petulant growl is heard.)*

**LOUIS.** I think I'll manage.

**PRESENT LOUIS.** Another facet of the unfinished basement was that there was an open vent straight up to the kitchen. You could pretty much hear every word of what happened up there. And as I was sitting there with the love of my life holding the best Christmas present ever, this is what we heard:

*(Lights up dimly on the dining room. EMILY and GEORGE are cleaning up.)*

**GEORGE.** That was pleasant.

*(No response.)*

I think we should make it a Christmas tradition that someone has to pull a gun on someone else before we have turkey.

**EMILY.** Chicken.

**GEORGE.** I think we should probably have turkey from now on. Things might go better.

*(EMILY sits down.)*

What?

*(No response.)*

What.

**EMILY.** Nothing.

**GEORGE.** What is it?

**EMILY.** I don't want to live like this.

**GEORGE.** Can we talk about this later? I'm tired.

*(He leaves with dishes. EMILY sits there, very still. GEORGE re- turns momentarily and watches her.)*



Fine. Talk to me.

EMILY. No, you're tired. Go to bed.

GEORGE. I just said talk to me. Look, I'm sorry that things haven't been that great around here. You know, with my Mom and your Mom and—

EMILY. It's not that.

GEORGE. I just don't think we should challenge the will, that's all.

EMILY. Fine. She's your mother.

GEORGE. Okay. Good. That's it, then?

EMILY. What do you mean, that's it, then?

GEORGE. This...discussion.

EMILY. What?

GEORGE. Never mind.

EMILY. How can you be so dense?

GEORGE. Well you won't fucking tell me what you're upset about!

EMILY. What do you think I'm upset about?!

GEORGE. I don't know! That's why I'm asking you the question!

EMILY. If you had half a brain, you would know!

GEORGE. WHAT! I don't know, are you upset about the food or the—

EMILY. Oh my God!

GEORGE. Just tell me!

EMILY. You're like a child, you know that?

GEORGE. You're insane!

EMILY. I'm not insane, you're just so unobservant it makes my brain hurt.

GEORGE. This conversation makes my brain hurt! I'm trying to figure it out, Emily, I don't know. Every day with you I'm just try-

ing to figure out what I did wrong that pisses you off—I sit there before I make a decision, is this going to piss Emily off? Maybe. And then I think, if I do A, she'll be pissed off because I didn't do B, and if I do B, she'll be pissed off because I didn't do A. It's like I'm walking through a minefield every day around here!

**EMILY.** Well you're stepping on them every day! All throughout dinner—

**GEORGE.** Okay, here we go—

**EMILY.** You know what, forget it.

**GEORGE.** Oh God no! Just tell me!

**EMILY.** I was telling you and you interrupted me.

**GEORGE.** I won't interrupt. Just tell me what I did that was so horribly offensive to you.

**EMILY.** You know, the way you just phrased that question is the whole thing, right there.

**GEORGE.** I don't understand.

**EMILY.** You don't take anything seriously. This is like a big joke to you. Like, we're fighting, and you want to make jokes.

**GEORGE.** I'm sorry I'm funny. I can't help it.

**EMILY.** There you go again! You just did it right now, and that's what I'm upset about!

**GEORGE.** You're upset that I'm funny?

**EMILY.** You're not funny. You think you're funny. And all during dinner, it was just, how can I make someone laugh? You were making snide, sarcastic comments all night long, to me, to my Mom, to the kids. You've been making jokes at my Mom's expense since the minute she got here.

**GEORGE.** Oh come on. She got Louis a one-eyed cat for Christmas! How can I not make a joke about that!?

**EMILY.** Restrain yourself. Act like an adult.

**GEORGE.** You know, I hate this 'act like an adult' crap. All right? I am an adult. And you need to stop treating me like a child —

**EMILY.** Stop acting like a child and I'll stop treating you like a child.

**GEORGE.** I'm your husband, not your kid. I happen to have a sense of humor and a sense of fun, which you used to have, which you have misplaced somewhere, and now, whatever I do, it's "stop it, George, grow up, George, quit it, George. You fell in love with my sense of humor when we were dating —

**EMILY.** I tolerated your sense of humor.

**GEORGE.** So you tolerated me when we were dating? That's what you just said, you tolerated me? Can I tell you something? I've been wanting to get this off my chest for a while. There's this woman at work I have lunch with every day —

**EMILY.** Is this about Sara? Because she's —

**GEORGE.** I'm not having an affair. I would never have an affair. So it's like this...about eleven o'clock I start getting excited — I start getting butterflies in my stomach because I'm going to have lunch with her — and it's like I get this rush of energy, you know? And we go to whatever restaurant, it doesn't matter — and I'm just...it's like I'm the funniest guy in the world whenever she's with me. I mean we both don't stop laughing from the moment I pick her up to the moment I drop her off. And she makes me laugh and I make her laugh and we just have a good time. And I realized the other day that I'm living for lunch. A couple of weeks ago she said, and this really got to me, 'your wife must laugh all the time.' And I said yeah. But I was lying. Because you don't enjoy me any more.

*(Beat. EMILY is near tears.)*

**EMILY.** That's such crap.

**GEORGE.** My sense of humor is me. That's who you married.

**EMILY.** I don't enjoy you? You're sitting there and saying I don't enjoy you?! When was the last time you touched me?

**GEORGE.** I know it's been a while —

**EMILY.** I'm talking a hug, a shoulder rub, holding hands, anything. When was the last time you physically touched me in any way? Do you know?

**GEORGE.** Um...

**EMILY.** It's been twenty-seven days. Do you know why I know that? It was just after Thanksgiving and I remember thinking that you never touch me any more without me touching you first. I was always the one who would hug you, or hold you, or kiss you. You never started anything. So I decided to do this little experiment where I would just not touch you and see how long it took before you noticed. I figured it would be a couple of hours. That first day it was so weird, because I had to make sure I was a couple of inches away from you all the time—like when we watched TV I just sat on the other side of the couch and in the kitchen I made sure I was just a little bit away from you all the time. And I remember that night, when we were lying in bed, and I was on my side, and I remember lying there crying because you hadn't noticed at all. To you everything was okay. You didn't even know what I was doing. So the next day I decided to do the experiment again. And I went the whole day, and then the next day, and then the next day, and it got a little bit easier each day, and I kept thinking, he's gonna notice, he's gonna notice, he's gonna notice it tonight. And you never noticed. You haven't noticed for four weeks. So when I say, I can't live like this, and you don't know what the hell I'm talking about, that's like you're pulling out my heart.

*(Pause. GEORGE is still physically apart from EMILY.)*

Why are we even doing this any more? Why don't you stop pretending that you love me? It is just pretend, isn't it?

**GEORGE.** I don't know.

**EMILY.** I just think you just answered my question. Maybe we should just end this.

**GEORGE.** Maybe we should.

*(Lights up on LOUIS and CAROLYN, listening.)*

**CAROLYN.** I think they're done.

LOUIS. ...yeah.

CAROLYN. I'm sorry, Louis.

*(She takes a hold of his hand.)*

LOUIS. It's okay.

CAROLYN. When I was eleven, my Mom moved out for a little while. It was only for a couple of months, but...I remember being in my room with the lights on the night before she was gonna go, and I thought, 'my Mom's leaving' and I just lay there and cried—I remember I had this little reading lamp right next to my bed, so it was hot right there, and I remember just being face down and hot and crying, and wondering why no one was coming in to see if I was okay. But it was all right, you know? I mean, that night was hard. But I saw my Mom all the time, and maybe that was just what my parents needed, because they got back together again. And that was like Christmas, you know? Like, wow, it was that dream you had that you never thought would come true, and then...there it is, it's really happening.

LOUIS. Thanks.

*(She kisses him, then pulls apart. Freeze.)*

PRESENT LOUIS. I remember shaking all over. And being scared that I was gonna screw it up. Or I was gonna wake up. Or she'd pull back and say 'just kidding I hate you.' I didn't close my eyes, because I figured if I just kept them open the whole time I could make absolutely certain that this was really happening. So I remember seeing her face, all fuzzy and out-of-focus, so close to me. And that was my first kiss. And no one even dared her.

*(Lights up on EMILY and GEORGE, also frozen.)*

My parents got divorced a couple of months later. They didn't get back together. And after hearing what I heard, I understood. Both of them remarried later on to great people, so it wasn't the end of the world.

*(Lights up on GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI, elsewhere on stage, also frozen.)*

Grandma Skolowski died in April of that year. Before she died I finally got to ask her why she left everything to Kelly.

**GRANDMA SKOLOWSKI.** Kelly? Which one's Kelly? Oh yes. I thought she could use it. And she was the only who liked that swamp. I also think her hair is brilliant.

**PRESENT LOUIS.** My Grandma Jacobs —

*(Lights up on GRANDMA JACOBS.)*

Continues to go strong to this day. And she isn't living in any damn group home. Her words. I think she's just too ornery to die. She cares for the occasional stray animal, she makes threats in bars, and basically she's just having a great time.

*(Lights up on KELLY.)*

My sister Kelly did indeed keep the land from my Grandmother — she actually managed to hold on to it for five years, because she did, in fact, like it. But then she sold it to developers for quite a bit of money. She put me through college, bought houses for everyone and invested the rest of it. She probably used it better than anyone could have. She's married and has two kids who are absolute brats. I spoil them rotten. When they turn eighteen I'm telling them everything. As for me and Carolyn:

*(Lights focus on just CAROLYN and LOUIS and fade out on everyone else.)*

We kissed four more times. Our relationship lasted nine days, but they were a pretty spectacular week and almost a half. We got to be good friends, though. You know, part of me wishes I could be that kid again, feel the way I felt that night, when the world was crashing around me, but it didn't matter because I was so...gloriously alive. And maybe you can only feel that way once, with the first person you fall in love with. But boy what I wouldn't give to feel what it was like to have a first kiss again.

*(Lights fade on them, remain only on PRESENT LOUIS.)*

So that's that. My last Christmas with Mom and Dad together, my last Christmas living with my sister, with both my grandmothers alive — my first kiss. Funny how time catches up with you, isn't it?

Seems almost like yesterday and yet it's almost like it happened to someone else. I'm a totally different person now that that nervous, awkward kid, although...I have managed to hold on to one thing.

*(He produces the glow-in-the-dark skull.)*

Because this is still awesome.

*(Lights down.)*

*End of Play*

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## **Is He Dead?**

by Mark Twain

adapted by David Ives

Comedy

105-120 minutes

4 females, 7 males (11-16 actors)

possible: 4-6 females, 7-12 males)

Jean-François Millet, a young painter of genius, is in love with Marie Leroux but in debt to a villainous picture-dealer, Bastien André. André forecloses on Millet, threatening debtor's prison unless Marie marries him. Millet realizes that the only way he can pay his debts and keep Marie from marrying André is to die, as it is only dead painters who achieve fame and fortune. Millet fakes his death and prospers, all while passing himself off as his own sister, the Widow Tillou. Now a rich "widow," he must find a way to get out of a dress, return to life, and marry Marie.

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by Michael Carleton,

James FitzGerald, and John K. Alvarez, music by Will Knapp

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3 males (3 actors possible:

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by Deb Margolin

Drama  
90-105 minutes  
1 female, 6 males

A woman and her son cope with the mother's serious illness by watching basketball, borrowing the physicality of these strong, healthy men in the absence of mother's health and son's maturity. During the course of their obsession with the team, one of the players comes out of the ecology of the television and into the woman's living room, cajoling her back into her body, from which she has been living in exile. Filial love, mortality, the beauty of the body, and the collapsible boundary between Blacks and Jews are all raised by the woman's struggle to come to terms with her son's favorite basketball player having stepped into her life, and with her own ambivalence about the beauty of life in the face of her mortality.

## **The Christmas Foundling**

by Norman Allen

Comedy/Drama  
120 minutes  
1 female, 6 males



When a baby boy is orphaned in the California Sierras on Christmas Eve, 1850, two curmudgeonly miners agree to raise him. A decade later, the boy's idyllic life is interrupted by the arrival of a meddling aunt, who intends to take him back to Boston for a formal education and a life of success. Inspired by the stories of Bret Harte, *The Christmas Foundling* is a heartwarming holiday tale, with the love of a child at its center and an unlikely romance as its driving force.

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*Full-length plays from Playscripts, Inc.*



## **Anna Bella Eema**

by Lisa D'Amour

Drama with music  
75-90 minutes  
3 females (3-6 actors possible)

Ten-year-old Anna Bella and her hermetic mother Irene live in a ratty trailer on the edge of town. When their trailer park is slated for demolition because of interstate highway expansion, Irene refuses to leave. In this moment of crisis, Anna Bella creates a new girl out of the mud behind their trailer home. This mud-girl helps Anna Bella and Irene channel the supernatural and face the life they must live in the world outside their trailer home. A richly imagined tale of a fierce mother/daughter bond, spoken and sung by three women.

## **Natural Selection**

by Eric Coble

Comedy/Drama  
110 minutes  
2 females, 4 males  
(6-9 actors possible)



We're in the very near future, where technology rules supreme and the Culture Fiesta Theme Park needs to restock the natives of the Native American Pavilion. So curator Henry Carson must venture into the wastes of North America to find a genuine Indian. Between his wife's blogging, his son's packed schedule at virtual school, the unearthly rain, and his Indian turning out to be very different than he expected, will Henry have time to notice the world's sliding towards apocalypse?

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## About the Author

**Don Zolidis** is a playwright, screenwriter, and teacher currently residing in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. He received his B.A. in English from Carleton College and holds an M.F.A. in playwriting from the Actors' Studio Drama School. Mr. Zolidis' plays are published by Playscripts, Inc. and Samuel French. His play *White Buffalo* was the recipient of the 2004 Princess Grace Award, and his play *The World's Largest Rodent* will have its world premiere at the Victory Theatre in Burbank. Mr. Zolidis' work has appeared at New Dramatists, Ensemble Studio Theatre, Bloomington Playwright's Project, Mirror Stage Company, and the Dallas Fringe Festival. Mr. Zolidis' plays have had amateur productions in four countries and 47 states. (Come on, Dakotas, get with the program!) His greatest production, his son Michael, debuted in August of last year.

**Playscripts, Inc.**

**A TINY MIRACLE WITH A FIBEROPTIC UNICORN**

by Don Zolidis

GENRE: Comedy/Drama

LENGTH: Full-length, 120-130 minutes

CAST: 5 females, 3 males

SET: Flexible.

In the winter of 1986, thirteen-year-old Louis vows to kiss the love of his life, the quirky theater queen Carolyn, before Christmas. Standing in his way are the forces of puberty, his big-haired vitriolic older sister, his anal-retentive mother, and his eternally amused father. The surprise arrival of both grandmothers, each crazy in their own way, throws the family into turmoil and cracks Louis' world wide open.

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