

FOUR ROSES

By Julia Cameron

ACT I

Scene 1

(DARK STAGE. NIGHT. The SQUEAL of CAR WHEELS, the ROAR of an ENGINE RACING. Suddenly, the STAGE is CRISS-CROSS by WILDLY CAREENING LIGHTS. They are the HEADLIGHTS of a CAR that is out of control. A CRASH. The STAGE GOES BLACK. Into the dead quiet, a WOMAN'S VOICE drips like a chilled martini)

WOMAN (OFFSTAGE)

Son-of-a-bitch!

MAN (OFFSTAGE)

Are you all right?

WOMAN (OFFSTAGE)

Of course I'm all right. You should have never let me drive.

MAN (OFFSTAGE)

Right.

(The LIGHTS COME UP. FROM the WINGS at STAGE LEFT, a very grand drunken WOMAN in a knockout mink lurches on stage. She wraps her mink and her dignity around herself and speaks TO the AUDIENCE. The WOMAN is MARA SCOTT, "The star of stage and screen" -- and life, in general)

MARA

Thank you. Thank you so much. You are probably wondering what I'm doing here... No. You're probably not. All right. I'm wondering what I am doing here. I'm certainly wondering what you --

(She whirls and addresses THREE WOMEN. The WOMEN are in robes and slippers and have just FILED ONSTAGE)

-- three are doing here. Nice girls like you in a place like this --

(She indicates the BARE STAGE with a lofty wave of her hand. As she does so...

A cheesy script NEON SIGN LIGHTS STAGE LEFT REAR.  
It reads: FOUR ROSES

MARA takes in the sign, takes in the WOMEN and then stalks toward them, inspecting them)

MARA

What? They named the joint for a whiskey? Funny. Actually, you girls, you'll pardon me for saying so, do look like drunks. Except for you!

(She points to a YOUNG WOMAN, still in her teens. The young woman is taking in her "act" with snotty amusement. The girl is DAWN HELLMAN, substance abuse specialist with a black belt in speedballing.)

DAWN shoot's out an arm, mimes doing a shot of dope and ends by giving MARA an Italian Salute: "Up yours, lady.")

MARA (continued)

Of course! How stupid of me. You do look like a junkie.

(Satisfied, smirking, DAWN steps back. As she does...

Another woman steps forward. She is SHEILA WATERS, a pretty woman in her mid-thirties)

SHEILA

You look like -- Are You?

MARA

It couldn't be me... right? My sentiments exactly.

DAWN

(DAWN has addressed this remark to the air)  
Who is she?

MARA

(Whirls to answer it)  
Don't you know who I am?

(A fourth woman shifts position. She is a languid beauty with a silken waterfall of blonde hair. Her name is Lily. She is the woman who had everyone, not everything.)

LILY

You mean, who you used to be.

SHEILA

You are, aren't you?

MARA  
I used to be, still am, always will be --

LILY  
Like God.

SHELIA  
But you had everything!

MARA  
Thank you.

LILY  
Except talent.

MARA  
What?

LILY  
Except talent.

MARA  
Of course you drank, you poor jealous darling. Beauty isn't everything.

LILY  
Just ninety percent.

SHEILA  
Come on, you two. Be nice?

MARA  
Nice? I'll bet nice is what got you here.  
(She mimics SHEILA)  
"I'm angry, but I'll just have a nice little drink and forget all about it."

LILY  
Not a bad idea. Why don't you?

SHEILA  
That's not funny.

LILY  
Good.

(After a silence, in which they eye each other like lionesses)

This is it? MARA

“This is it?” DAWN (mimicking)

Unfortunately, this is it. SHEILA

Three meals a day and all the water you can drink. LILY

Water? MARA

You know. Fish fuck in it. DAWN

Evian? Perrier? MARA

That's different, right? LILY

Right. MARA

What do you mean “right”? It's still water. DAWN

She means at least it's expensive. LILY

What did I ever do to you? Step on your foot at the stage door? Beat you to a limo? MARA

George Miller. LILY

George Miller. . . George?! MARA

See? She doesn't even remember him. LILY

MARA

Sure, I do. Actually, George was a very nice man... I think. He was my husband.

LILY

Your fifth husband.

MARA

Who's counting?

LILY

Everyone.

SHEILA

Lily, you knew her husband?

LILY

George was my fiance... at the time she married him.

MARA

You're Lily? Well... he would never have married you.

LILY

Thanks to you.

MARA

You should thank me. Marriage to George was no big deal.

LILY

That's not how I remember him.

MARA (Laughing)

Oh! That! Well! You didn't need to marry him for that!

LILY

Can you think of a better reason?

MARA

For marriage? Money.

DAWN

Great. A greed head. You married her fiance for money. That's like dating a guy 'cause you like his Corvette.

MARA

I did that, too, as I recall. Actually, I didn't marry George for money.

MARA (continued)

He married me for money. I married him for. . . I can't remember why I married George. Well. We were both disappointed.

DAWN

What about your own money? If you're such a big shot.

MARA

I spent it.

SHEILA (To DAWN)

Let her be. I'm sure we've all done things we're ashamed of.

DAWN (To SHEILA)

Like burn dinner?

SHEILA

You listen to me, young lady. I am not your mother!

DAWN

Then stop talking like her.

SHEILA

Is that how she talked?

(Laughs)

No wonder you drank. I hate it when I sound like that!

DAWN

Who says I drank?

THE OTHERS

You didn't?

DAWN

Oh, maybe a little. When I needed a chaser. Booze. The name tells you everything. Boo. Hiss. Thumbs down. It's so inefficient. And besides, it makes you --

THE OTHERS

Fat.

DAWN

Makes you a cliché.

(Singing)

I WORE AN ITSY, BITSY, TEENY, WEENY  
DOUBLE DOSE VODKA MARTINI...

Funny.  
                  (To the others)  
She's funny.

MARA

A saving grace.

LILY

One.

DAWN

You weren't into heroin?

SHEILA

I was into everything.

DAWN

Ladies? Ladies!

NURSE (OFFSTAGE)

Who's that?

MARA

One of your fans.

LILY

(A brisk, large NURSE, who carries herself with a double-barreled energy of a fullback, charges ONSTAGE. She is NURSE ROSIE O'LEARY.)

O'LEARY

Now, ladies, we are up past our curfew. Oh!

(She has spotted MARA.

MARA draws herself up, ready to receive some adulation)

When did you get here?

LILY

On your break... Your lucky break.

O'LEARY

How did you get here?

LILY

The same way all of us did. She crawled through the neck of a bottle.



Speak for yourself. MARA

I was. LILY

Did your family bring you? O ' LEARY

My family? MARA

That's a novel concept. DAWN

Try to remember. Did your family bring you? O'LEARY

I'm -- never mind how old I am -- and you want to know if my family brought me? You mean like my mother? MARA

Family. It's a small group of people, usually related by blood -- DAWN

Like a fan club LILY

I am Mara Scott. My boyfriend brought me. MARA

She means the guy who lives off her. He's her driver. DAWN

(MARA wheels to confront, DAWN)

How did you know that? MARA

I am old enough to read. DAWN

*The National Enquirer* - no one's old enough to read that. MARA

Did you bring your things? O'LEARY

MARA

Of course not! Where would I put them?

O'LEARY

Ladies, this may take a while. If you'd excuse us.

(LILY, SHEILA and DAWN take the hint and move off -- but not very far. They want to listen.)

A PINSPOT ISOLATES NURSE O'LEARY and MARA.)

O'LEARY (Continued)

I have a few questions for you.

MARA

I have a few questions for you!

O'LEARY

Like, when do you get to leave? Who do I think I am? Don't I know who you are? Who, what, where and "why me?"

MARA

Yes.

O'LEARY

The basics

MARA

Basically, then, why me?

O'LEARY

Why not you? One out of ten people who drink develop a problem. You're it.

MARA

Tag.

O'LEARY

I beg your pardon?

MARA

Tag, you're it.

O'LEARY

Oh. You don't think you are an alcoholic?

MARA

I was a social drinker -- a very social drinker. Even when I did drink alone, there were always several people there -- all me, of course, but then I'm an actress.

O'LEARY

Did you turn to lower companions when you drank?

MARA

Sounds like something out of Dickens. Of course not! I drank at the top... with all the lower companions I could find there.

O'LEARY

Did you drink in the mornings?

MARA

Of course.

O'LEARY

Ah-hah ! When?

MARA

In the mornings.

O'LEARY

Did you ever suffer from a blackout?

MARA

Yes, for two years once, but I changed agents.

O'LEARY

Did you ever forget part of an evening?

MARA

Thank God, yes... But never my lines. I can honestly say my drinking never affected my career.

O'LEARY

Do you know why you're here?

MARA

To get to the other side?

O'LEARY

I see. You're special. No garden variety alcoholic. Not you.

MARA

No. Hardly.

O'LEARY

My mistake. Really. I thought you had a drinking problem.

MARA

You were misinformed. I don't know where you would have picked up such a nasty rumor.

O'LEARY

You were stone sober when you stripped and got on that piano, right?

MARA

I sued them for that story

O'LEARY

Doesn't that mean it wasn't true, doesn't it?

MARA

*What do you want from me? You want me to say I drink a little? A little too much? Want me to say I am not a perfect lady?*

MARA

*An autograph. A signed eight-by-ten glossy: "To Nurse. With gratitude. Mara Scott." Is that what you want?*

O'LEARY

Talking to you is like talking to a bottle.

(O' LEARY EXITS.

PINSPOT ON MARA. MARA stands alone, with her thoughts and with her "public" whom she carries with her always. A woman who has lived her life in public, even her private moments are public ones)

MARA

Alcohol bought me a ticket. I picked up a drink and I got on a train and it took me where I wanted to go. I left home with that drink. I became a citizen of the world. I swallowed fire and it burned going down and that light lit the pilot light that I had waiting for it. Drink did not quench my thirst. It ignited it. I went off like one of those missiles in the Florida dawn. I rode booze and booze rode me and we climbed the indigo sky until my back arched space, plummeting back down, knife cutting the air, cutting myself, cutting everything, friends and lovers and life into ribbons, like party streamers... like Ophelia's hair drifting in the current, floating like seaweed, down under. You see, I drowned myself in alcohol. I swam in it. I sucked it into me like I could breathe it, like it was air. I drank with a pure and primal greed. I drank blindly, like a baby. It was milk to me, white and pure and

MARA (continued)

blank and that was what I wanted. Blank. White. Like snow, like sleep. They say they do sleep. That was what I was after. The blank white sheets of sleep to wrap myself in after all the colors were gone, after the fire was ashes and the ashes were scattered on the water and sank to the very bottom which is what this place is to me... Oh, I know I belong here.

(LIGHTS DOWN ON MARA)

Scene 2

(LIGHTS UP STAGE CENTER. DAY.  
Therapy. When the LIGHTS COME UP, it  
is mid-therapy session.  
Six chairs make a rough circle.

LILY, SHEILA and DAWN occupy three of  
its chairs.

The fourth chair stands empty, waiting for  
MARA. The fifth chair holds NURSE  
O'LEARY. She holds a notebook.  
The sixth chair belongs to  
DOCTOR JULIANNA ROSE, owner and  
founder of Four Roses. She is in her  
mid-fifties, a handsome woman, both  
elegant and tough)

DOCTOR ROSE

So, Dawn, your parents will be coming up?

DAWN

Don't bet on it.

DOCTER ROSE

Maybe they'll surprise. You've been here three weeks. You're doing well.

DAWN

They're not coming, I told you. A friend of theirs -- ours -- told them they would  
be disturbing my recovery. They called and cancelled.

DOCTOR ROSE

And what did you tell them?

DAWN

I told them it was a family disease.

DOCTOR ROSE

You didn't! That was hostile.

DAWN

No. I didn't. I told them to do whatever they thought best. After all, doctors are just doctors. What do they know?

DOCTOR ROSE

How did you feel about their not coming?

DAWN

Relieved.

DOCTOR ROSE

Really?

DAWN

Yes, "really."

SHEILA

You don't have to get nasty.

DOCTOR ROSE

Maybe she does have to get nasty. Maybe she's angry. How do you feel, Dawn?

DAWN

How do you think I feel?

SHEILA

I think you feel terrible.

DAWN

Thank you for sharing that. Next time anyone asks me, I'll ask you.

(To DOCTOR ROSE)

Got any lobotomies available?

DOCTOR ROSE

Is that what you really want?

DAWN

What I really want is a handful of downers and a 40, but I hear hospitals don't give those.

SHEILA

There's always Valium.

DAWN  
Valium's a stupid drug. Mom takes Valium. Of course, if it's all you got --

DOCTOR ROSE  
So, you want to get high?

DAWN  
I want to feel better.

DOCTOR ROSE  
Really? I think you want to not feel.

DAWN  
That would feel better than what I'm feeling, wouldn't it, Doctor?

DOCTOR ROSE (Prompting)  
Anger.

DAWN  
Keep interrupting and I'm going to feel that. Yeah.

DOCTOR ROSE  
You're not angry at your parents?

DAWN  
I told you, a friend of theirs told them they'd interrupt my treatment if they came to visit.

DOCTOR ROSE  
And I told you, it's a family disease. They need treatment, too.

DAWN  
Well, they don't think so -- obviously. They think it's my little problem.

SHEILA  
They can't be that bad.

DOCTOR ROSE  
Why not?

SHEILA  
I mean...

DAWN  
Well?

SHEILA

Yes. I mean well. That's my whole problem.

DAWN

Not your whole problem. I understood you drank a little -- unless I was wrong.

(MARA APPEARS at the edge of their circle)

MARA

May I join you?

DOCTOR ROSE

I don't know. Are you an alcoholic?

MARA

I wouldn't go that far, but I did drink, if that's what you mean.

LILY

George said you were a drunk.

MARA

Dear George. I'm sure he only said that to make you feel better.

DOCTOR ROSE

Am I to understand that you two know each other?

LILY

Yes.

MARA

No. She knows me, all about me. I never heard of her.

LILY

We both know George.

DOCTOR ROSE

He gets around, this George.

MARA

To answer your original question... Doctor?

DOCTOR ROSE

Doctor Rose.



MARA

We never had the pleasure.

LILY

And we haven't yet.

SHEILA

Life is just full of these little coincidences, isn't it?

DAWN

They're called "hard knocks," Mary Poppins.

DOCTOR ROSE

Have a seat. We seem to have one available.

LILY

It has your name on it... instead of your fingerprints, like everything else.

DOCTOR ROSE

That's enough.

LILY

Is it? Nothing has ever been enough for me.

DOCTOR ROSE

A little honesty. It's breathtaking. Thank You, Lily. Ladies, today we will work on our First Step.

DAWN

That's the one into the deep end, right?

DOCTOR ROSE

Let's hear it.

ALL

"We admitted we were powerless over alcohol, that our lives had become unmanageable."

DOCTOR ROSE

Who wants to tell us about their First Step?

DAWN

I was nine months old. My mother set me down on the living room floor, turned her back and I walked straight to the bar.

SHEILA

I don't really think this is a laughing matter.

DAWN

You wouldn't.

MARA (To DAWN)

Just out of curiosity, what did she do to you?

DAWN

Remind me of my mother.

SHEILA

I'm not your mother.

DAWN

Then, stop acting like her.

DOCTOR ROSE

We'll go around the room and state our name and disease.

MARA (Clasping her breasts)

What do you mean "disease"?

DOCTOR ROSE

Dawn? -- Dawn.

DAWN

Okay. Okay. I'm Dawn and I'm a drug addict! Boo!

LILY

I'm Lily and I'm a drug addict -- alcohol was my drug of choice.

DAWN

Touche.

MARA

No kidding. Well, I don't need to tell any of you who I am. . .

(She takes in the DOCTOR's look)

I do? All right. I'm Mara and I'm... I can't say it.

LILY

Going up on your lines... as usual?

MARA (Immaculately)

I'm an alcoholic... Bitch.

LILY

You said it.

MARA (To DAWN)

Tell the truth. When I came in, you knew who I was, didn't you?

LILY

The question is, "Did you?"

MARA

Come on. You know who I am, don't you?

LILY

Who you used to be, you mean.

MARA

You'd seen my movies. Tell the truth.

DAWN

I'm not allowed to stay up that late.

DOCTOR ROSE

Sheila?

SHEILA

My name is Sheila and I... I might be an alcoholic. I mean, if you say so, I guess I am.

DOCTOR ROSE

No.

MARA

Oh, good. What a relief! At least somebody's normal.

DOCTOR ROSE

No. I don't say so. It's a self-diagnosed disease. What do you say?

SHEILA

I'm not the expert.

DOCTOR ROSE

You are on drinking.

SHEILA

I didn't drink very much.

DOCTOR ROSE

Somebody thought you did. You're here.

SHEILA

Somebody! My husband. He hated it when I drank. Even one drink.

DOCTOR ROSE

Why was that, do you think?

SHEILA

He said I'd get funny... funny peculiar.

DOCTOR ROSE

It's not how --

OTHERS (Joining in by rote)

-- much you drink or how long you drank or what you drank or when you drank

(Louder)

-- It's what it did to you!

SHEILA

I liked getting peculiar!

DAWN

You liked getting drunk.

SHEILA

I told you! I didn't drink!... I took pills.

DAWN

Pills! You're a drug addict! Just like me! Oh, God! The degradation.

SHEILA

Prescription drugs.

OTHERS (Reciting by rote)

It's not where you get it or how you get it, it's that you get it.

DAWN

Get it? Drugs are drugs.

DOCTOR ROSE

Right.

LILY

I called them "dry martinis."

SHEILA

I'm not an alcoholic. I may be a drug addict, but I'm not an alcoholic! And I hate it when you all chant at me. I don't want to be brainwashed.

DAWN

Maybe your brain needs washing.

DOCTOR ROSE

Alcohol is a drug. It simply wasn't your drug of choice.

SHEILA

You make it sound like an entree.

MARA

When I ate out, it was!

DOCTOR ROSE

Eat, drink and be merry?

MARA

Drink, drink and be merry.

DOCTOR ROSE

Was it merry?

MARA

Oh, very! Silvery little martinis doing a Conga line through my consciousness. Swimming pools of Remy. As long as my life was a goldfish bowl, I might as well fill it with something I liked.

DOCTOR ROSE

And was it merry?

MARA

Yes ! . . . For a while. I certainly preferred it to the alternative.

SHEILA

What was that?

MARA

Reality. Nice place to visit, wouldn't want to live there. I live in New York.

DAWN

Well... You know what they say?... Reality is for people who can't face drugs!

(SHEILA bursts out laughing. Her laughter has an hysterical edge)

SHEILA

I like that! I like that!

DOCTOR ROSE

Of course you do. That's because it's true. You -- at least part of you -- are ready to hear the truth.

SHEILA

Jerry brought me here. He's trying to get me sober.

DOCTOR ROSE

What a pity. Then, it won't work.

Scene 3

(LIGHTS UP CENTER STAGE. DAY.  
STAGE FRONT NURSE O'LEARY and  
DOCTOR ROSE take their ease at the office  
area)

O'LEARY

This batch is something!

DOCTOR ROSE

Garden variety alcoholics.

O'LEARY

The early part always drives me crazy -- the way they carry on and you let them.

DOCTOR ROSE

I like to see what they're up to, how they operate, before I get in and start trying to fix things. Otherwise, I might break something that works.

O 'LEARY

You've got more patience than I do.

DOCTOR ROSE

Not patience. Curiosity. The roles fascinate me. Which one rescues, which one pacifies, who needs to control, who's the clown.

O'LEARY

That kid is pretty funny -- if you like gallows humor.

DOCTOR ROSE

That's what I'm worried about. The gallows part.

O'LEARY (Stunned)

You think? No. I don't think so. You think?

DOCTOR ROSE

When I was still a pediatrician, I had this one kid, Brian, who kept having accidents -- fell off his bike, broke an arm. Jumped off the counter, twisted an ankle. Hit himself in the head with a rake.

O'LEARY

Child abuse?

DOCTOR ROSE

That's what I thought, at first. Too many accidents. Too much real damage. Always a lot of funny bruises, too. The thing I noticed was that I seemed to be the only one it upset. His parents were fond of saying, "Boys will be boys." They almost said the same thing when he killed himself.

O'LEARY

Jesus.

DOCTOR ROSE

I missed the diagnosis... He slipped through my hands.

O'LEARY

Still, I don't think she's the type... do you?

DOCTOR ROSE

I'm not even sure what "the type" is anymore. Sometimes I think suicide is just homicide inside out. If the rage against others is too murderous to admit, then don't admit it. Denial in its most extreme form. Sometimes, I think that is too easy. The least painful way to look at it. I think that some people are so damaged they don't even feel the rage of being mistreated. They don't know they are mistreated. They kill themselves because they think it is appropriate.

O'LEARY

I can't say I care for her much.

DOCTOR ROSE

"Her." You mean our leading lady?

O'LEARY

I always liked her movies, too.

DOCTOR ROSE

I like her. I think she's got a kind heart.

O'LEARY

Heart of gold, I believe. Or platinum. But kind?

DOCTOR ROSE

She's testing us.

O'LEARY

I flunked.

DOCTOR ROSE

I don't think so. If you hadn't gotten mad, how could she ever have trusted you? She's been yessed almost, to death.

O'LEARY

I'll tell you something else. *The National Enquirer* is right.

DOCTOR ROSE

About what?

O'LEARY

About almost everything. They said she was a drunk years ago. Remember when she did that comedy... "Frou Frou"...?

DOCTOR ROSE

Frou Frou LaRue. She was wonderful.

O'LEARY

And pickled enough for anyone in the orchestra seats to get a contact high. She denied everything.

DOCTOR ROSE

Yes! Wasn't it great? That's what made it work.

O'LEARY

About her drinking, I mean. When *The Enquirer* printed that story about her naked on the grand piano -- or under it, as I recall.

DOCTOR ROSE

Didn't we all?... Deny everything, I mean.

O'LEARY

Speak for yourself.



DOCTOR ROSE

I was thinking about the name? There's the whiskey, that's one rose. There's me, another Rose. Henry, a third rose and then there's the run for the roses, the Kentucky Derby. That's in there. I'm running for the roses for Henry, God bless him, for me, God bless me, for the booze we drank together and for all the drunks I hope to see leave this place smelling like a rose.

O'LEARY

My name's Rose, too, don't forget.

DOCTOR ROSE

I never do. You're a wonderful nurse, but your name is half of why I hired you.

O'LEARY

I thought, it was my way with a bedpan.

DOCTOR ROSE

That, too. I like a woman who knows her shit. Henry was the best looking man I ever saw. I caught him looking at me in the smoked glass mirror behind the bar at REDS. It was an appraising look, as if he were taking my measure. When I caught his eye, he smiled -- Henry's smile. Even after all these years, even as a memory, it's like a fish hook reeling me in. I'd noticed him in staff meetings -- all the nurses were gaga about him, too. I didn't expect to like him -- he was too perfect, except for his one fatal flaw, the one he shared with me: we drank a little. We drank a lot. We drank alone. And once we met, we drank together. We were lovers, we were friends, we were soldiers. Side by side, fighting a losing battle with the bottle. It would have won, too, but we didn't want to lose each other. And so, we both tried to save each other, failed, and finally tried to save ourselves. We did for a while. We stopped drinking. Henry's hands stopped shaking -- he could have gone back to surgery. But instead, we opened this place. We thought we'd rescue others like we'd saved ourselves. That was the problem. We hadn't saved ourselves. We'd just gotten a reprieve, a day at a time, the miracle of sobriety -- until the day Henry forgot the miracle and drank again. He scared me to death, in part because I wanted to join him. 'Don't do it' he said. Even after a few days he was bad. 'Save yourself' he said, and so, because he asked me to, I did. 'At least one of us made it,' he told me the night he was dying. He'd been sober in patches, or drunk in patches, for years by then. At the end, it wasn't even a bad drunk -- it was just the drunk that killed him. Booze burns going down, but, it's an anesthetic. He poured his last drink down his throat and blood came back. He died in my arms. *We were* soldiers, you see. And one of us lost the battle. I hate this disease. They say you can't stay sober for anybody else. But the nights I want to drink, I tell Henry I'm staying sober for him like he asked. Goddamnit.

(LIGHTS DOWN)

Scene 4

LIGHTS UP STAGE RIGHT. NIGHT. The room shared by SHEILA and DAWN. DAWN sits on her bed. SHEILA ENTERS)

SHEILA

If you're going to be my roommate, you have to be nice.

DAWN

And how would madam like her eggs?

SHEILA

If you are going to be my roommate, you have to be nice.

DAWN

No, I don't.

SHEILA

You should be nice.

DAWN

"Nice." What a nasty little word. It rhymes with "vice."

SHEILA

I always try to be nice.

DAWN

Good for you. What does it get you?

SHEILA

Migraines.

DAWN

You should have let the bastard have it.

SHEILA

What bastard?

DAWN

The one that makes you mad. What's his name? Jerry.

SHEILA

I never said he made me mad. Jerry's very nice.

DAWN

Terrific. He's very nice, and now you want me to be. If he's nice and I'm nice, what does that leave for you?

SHEILA

I'm nice, too.

DAWN

I don't want to play. My parents are very nice. They hate each other. They hate me, but they're very nice about it.

SHEILA

When I make a boo-boo, Jerry is particularly nice.

DAWN

When you do what?

SHEILA

Make a boo-boo.

DAWN

How old are you?

SHEILA

I'm not telling. A lady never reveals her age. And another lady never asks.

DAWN

Do I look like a lady?

SHEILA

No.

DAWN

What a relief.

SHEILA

You're trying to shock me.

DAWN

My being a dyke has nothing to do with you.

SHEILA

Isn't a dyke a lesbian?

DAWN

The last time I heard.

SHEILA

Oh, my God! You're not old enough.

DAWN

Old enough for what? I've been fucking for four years.

SHEILA

Lesbians do not, fuck. I don't think.

DAWN

Lesbians do fuck. They just don't like doing it.

SHEILA

Lots of people don't like doing it. That does not mean they're lesbian. I'm certainly not a lesbian.

DAWN

I thought Jerry was nice.

SHEILA

What does that have to do with it?

DAWN

Who wouldn't like fucking nice old Jerry?

SHEILA

My point was that you're too young to be a lesbian. You probably don't have any sex drive yet.

DAWN

Got any kids, you and Jerry?

SHEILA

Yes.

DAWN

A daughter my age?

SHEILA

Yes.

DAWN

Do you worry that she's a lesbian?

SHEILA

No. Of course not. But I do wish she'd try dating a little. She's just not very interested.

DAWN

Ah-hah! Which makes her a lesbian?

SHEILA

No. Maybe. I do worry about it. When I was her age, I was dating -- in fact, I was Prom Queen. Twice. It was unheard of. I was chosen as a junior and a senior.

DAWN

I knew it. I am rooming with my mother. My mother thinks that if you're not going to the prom at least once a week and wearing a corsage at all times, you are probably a lesbian.

SHEILA

Then, you're not?

DAWN

How should I know? I'm still in the throes of puberty.

SHEILA

Isn't it past your bedtime?

DAWN

Want a nightcap?

SHEILA

Don't start -- You wouldn't.

DAWN

Not in front of you. Fucking adults. Never met one who wasn't a baby. My father, the big cheese -- Mister Business -- he throws tantrums if he doesn't get his way, if he's not 'respected.' I ask you, how can you respect a grown man who throws tantrums? She does it, though. Somebody should give her an Oscar the way she sucks up to him -- 'Darling, what can I do...' I'll tell you what you can do, Mother, you can shove it. Why the two of you bothered to have me when you were both children... She uses pouts, that gets his attention. 'What's wrong, darling?' You'd think they didn't have names, they're such a *darling* couple. Especially when she's dressed up in whatever new outfit he's bought her just to end the pout. They're a perfect match -- I'd like to throw a little sand in its gears. I'd like to see them dealing with something money can't fix. I'd like to see them dealing with me. But they aren't gonna do that, and I'm not gonna stick around and wait. Here's looking at you, kids.

(She takes the pills.)

LIGHTS Go DOWN ON DAWN and SHEILA's room)

Scene 5

(The STAGE is utterly BLACK. NIGHT.  
From the DARKNESS, a cry)

LILY

No! No! Oh, my God, no!

(A LIGHT SNAPS ON STAGE LEFT. There are two cots that  
mark LILY and MARA's bedroom. It is the middle of the night.  
The women have been sleeping)

MARA

Bad dreams?

LILY

My whole life.

MARA

Bad dreams your whole life?

LILY

I dreamed my whole life.

MARA

Ridiculous.

LILY

I was young and then I was old and I looked exactly the same.

MARA

I should be so lucky.

LILY

I was pickled. In a bottle.

MARA

I certainly was.

LILY

I couldn't get out. It was like a 1950's horror movie.

MARA  
“The Incredible Drinking Woman.”

LILY  
Very funny.

MARA  
I thought so. What a great dream. I’m sure it was healthy.

LILY  
It was terrifying.

MARA  
Pickled in a bottle.

LILY  
I didn't realize it was so literal. It was, wasn't it?

MARA,  
Sounds that way.

LILY  
My sheets are soaking wet.

MARA  
Big deal. So are mine.

LILY  
They are?

MARA  
Of course they are! We're sweating it out!

LILY  
No! I thought it was just an expression!

MARA  
Like getting pickled?

LILY  
Like getting pickled... Like it? I loved it.

MARA  
Me, too. I guess we agree on one thing.

LILY

On two things. Getting pickled and George.

MARA

He never said you were funny.

LILY

He talked about me?

MARA

No.

LILY

Either he talked about me or he didn't.

MARA

What he talked about was your body.

LILY

Most men couldn't tell the difference between me and my body.

MARA

Must have been tough.

LILY

Oh, come on. I had my body. You had your career.

MARA

My career. I should have had it bronzed. Put it right on the mantelpiece. "How's your career?" "Oh, fine... It's right over there. Say 'Hello, darling.'"

LILY

Come on. A career means something.

MARA

"Thing" is the operative word. The best definition I ever heard is "A career is what performers have instead of having a life."

LILY

Men were my career.

MARA

Poor baby.

LILY

If you laid all the men I've laid --



MARA

I probably have --

LILY

-- end to end --

MARA

You might have a really good time! Jesus, I miss them.

LILY

Not me. Booze may nearly have killed us, but men are the hard stuff. Talk about withdrawal! I tried every way I knew to taper off of George. I quit him cold turkey. I only saw him on weekends. I never saw him at my house. I only met him for lunch... That man was an itch I couldn't scratch.

MARA

Your left breast.

LILY

What?

MARA

Evidently, it was slightly more perfect than your right breast.

LILY

They're identical.

MARA

Both perfect?

LILY

If you wanted my breasts, you should have asked George where I got them.

MARA

No!

LILY

Yes! But they were pretty good to begin with. I guess George didn't wax eloquent about my IQ.

MARA

He may not have noticed it. Not with all the roadside attractions. I used to console myself you were beautiful, but dumb. Dumb, wasn't it?

LILY

You are not an unattractive woman.

MARA

Negotiable good looks.

LILY

What?

MARA

Nobody says -- at least, I hope they don't -- "That dog," but no man I was ever with would have missed your entrance into a room.

LILY

George married you.

MARA

Of course he did. George was a starfucker and I was a star.

LILY

Little things like that I drank over.

MARA

Bullshit. You drank because you liked to drink. We all did. My' career being on the rocks and my scotch on the rocks had no connection.

LILY

You can't deny it had a certain cheery effect. Didn't it?

MARA

I always thought a drink worked like a good gauze filter. Things looked prettier a little fuzzy. The guy who shot my last movie -- last before the next one, knock on wood -- I insisted on him because he could make a witch look beautiful told me the whole trick was Vaseline.

LILY

He's right.

MARA

On the lens... You smear it on slowly, gently...

LILY

Ah... I always thought you actresses fucked the camera.

MARA

It's better than sex. To see yourself up there, to know that once you did look that way, that good, to somebody... even if that somebody, is a Panaflex... And it lasts. Which is more than you can say for sex.

LILY

I don't know about that... I think you could say a lot about sex. If I weren't so tired. You'll pardon the expression. I have to get my beauty sleep.

MARA

Come on! You're the one who woke me up!

LILY

I had a nightmare. I'm sorry.

MARA

Didn't we all?

(LIGHTS DOWN on MARA and LILY's room)

Scene 6

(LIGHTS UP ON DAWN and SHEILA's room. DAY. Next morning.)

SHEILA

Wake up.

(She shakes DAWN. DAWN does not respond)

Wake up! Come on! We're going to be late!

(She shakes DAWN still harder)

Will you please wake up? What's wrong with you? Oh, my God! Help!  
Somebody! Please! Help!

(The STAGE GOES TOTALLY BLACK for a long beat

SHEILA'S cries fade)

Scene 7

(DOCTOR ROSE's office. DAY)

DAWN

All I was trying to do was get a good night's sleep. I hate that bitch I'm rooming with. She chatters. You know how those little birds -- chickadees -- chatter?

DOCTOR ROSE

How do they chatter? Like your teeth? You've got your system screwed up real good, don't you?

DAWN

They go, "Cheep, cheep, cheep." They go, "Cheep, cheep -- "

DOCTOR ROSE.

Exactly. So, why let your parents' behavior fuck it up?

(A long silence)

It was a cheap trick.

DAWN

It's my life!

DOCTOR ROSE

And?

DAWN

I wanted to scare them.

DOCTOR ROSE

And?

DAWN

I scared me.

DOCTOR ROSE

Good. You're the only person I'm concerned about. Let's get some air... you okay?

DAWN

Is it true? Don't you have to cure me or something, so they pay your bill?

DOCTOR ROSE

First of all, I can't cure you.

DAWN

That's encouraging.

DOCTOR ROSE

There is no cure.

DAWN

Very encouraging.

DOCTOR ROSE

You can, however, arrest it.

DAWN

I was thirteen-and-a-half years old when I had my first arrest. If anybody can get arrested, I can. And do you know how hard that is where I come from? The cops all act like baby sitters. They don't want to insult your parents by arresting us.

DOCTOR ROSE

It's not easy being young and rich and beautiful.

DAWN

Are you making fun of me?

DOCTOR ROSE

I'm telling you the truth.

DAWN

I should be grateful, my parents say. I'm the only mole on the skin of their happiness.

DOCTOR ROSE

And whose line is that?

DAWN

Nobody ever actually said it.

DOCTOR ROSE

But actions speak louder than words?

DAWN

Yes.

DOCTOR ROSE

I thought that was the theory behind what you did.

DAWN

I figured how could I lose? If I died, I was dead. If they cared, there was something worth living for.

DOCTOR ROSE

And if you lived and they didn't care?

DAWN

Never occurred to me.

DOCTOR ROSE

Determined the dose. What you took should have killed you. If it had, you'd have been killing the wrong person.

DAWN

Are you sure? I must have done something! Or maybe not done something --

DOCTOR ROSE

Stop. You are a child. Their child, but, they are not parents. For all practical purposes, you were abandoned at birth. Like the little girls in Sparta. Left on the mountain to freeze to death.

DAWN

It just wasn't cold enough to kill me --

DOCTOR ROSE

Oh, yes, it was. It almost did.

DAWN

I only took half of what I had.

DOCTOR ROSE

You took more than enough. You were just lucky. And young and strong.

DAWN

I don't feel strong.

DOCTOR ROSE

You're strong.

DAWN

That's what my parents say, "You're a big girl." I've been a big girl ever since I was born. Big girls are tough enough to take it.

DOCTOR ROSE

You needed a home. You needed parents. You needed love. All of us need those things. Some of us are lucky enough to get them.

DAWN

And some of us are unlucky enough not to.

DOCTOR ROSE

No. Some of us are lucky enough to get them. I meant it the way I said it. There are a lot of people in the same boat. You and I are only two of them.

DAWN

Crowded already in this boat.

DOCTOR ROSE

You liked the drama all to yourself? I know I did. For years I was the only little girl in the world whose parents drank, whose parents ignored her, whose parents were children themselves.

DAWN

And then?... Then, you met me.

DOCTOR ROSE

And then, I decided I was sick of having a problem when what I needed was a solution.

DAWN

So, you took out your magic wand and you tapped your parents once on each shoulder...

DOCTOR ROSE

I decided to parent myself. I decided I would never orphan me again.

DAWN

And?

DOCTOR ROSE

And I haven't. I take very good care of myself. I buy myself nice things. I listen when I need to say something. I take myself out to the movies. And never hang out with the mean kids.

DAWN

I get it. You're perfect. You put the plug in the jug and lived happily ever after. Well, some of us are a little more complicated. Some of us aren't so smug.

DOCTOR ROSE

Smug? Is that how I seem to you? Permanently sober? Let me tell you, I think about drinking. I think of it a lot. Some days, that's all I think about. You think I preach at you to save your sorry ass? I preach at you to save my own. I'm the alcoholic who needs to be reminded I loved to drink. I'd still love to drink, except it would kill me. Smug?! I'm about as smug as a grunt in a foxhole.

DAWN

All right. Maybe you're not such a self-righteous jerk.

DOCTOR ROSE

Thank you.

DAWN

What about them?

DOCTOR ROSE

What about them? They are sad, selfish people. I don't have to be. Neither do you. Think about it.

DAWN

Sure. What else am I going to do in here?

DOCTOR ROSE

Since you ask, I would suggest pray.

DAWN

I'm not comfortable with God.

DOCTOR ROSE

Of course not. You're strangers.

(She EXITS)

DAWN

Angel of God, my guardian dear -- are you fuckin' listening, God? It's the only prayer I know, and it's *not* to You. Angel of God, my guardian dear, I could use a fuckin' angel. To whom God's love -now we're out there. Now we're in the part that's pure bullshit -- 'God's love.' Commits me here -- that's accurate, that's fuckin' sure. They just want me out of their way. You hear me, God? Are You *listening*? What's the rest of it? Ever this day be at my side, to light, to love, to rule and guide. I don't want You to guide me, God. I just want to know You're there. I just want to know that somebody's listening. You got that? Great. Fuckin' silence.

(SINGING)

TWINKLE, TWINKLE, LITTLE STAR --  
-- a fuckin' nursery song.

(SINGING)

TWINKLE, TWINKLE, LITTLE SIAR,  
HOW I WONDER WHO YOU ARE.

(LIGHTS DOWN)



Scene 8

(A PINSPOT LIGHT ON SHEILA, who talks on the phone)

SHEILA

Why do you keep asking about her? I'm the one who found her. I'm the one who got traumatized. She's got exactly what she wanted. Attention... What? On the second shelf behind the toaster. Above the spices. For God's sake, ask the maid. Ask my sister. That's what she's there for. I'm not angry. I'm fine. As fine as a woman can be when she is rooming with a psychopath because her husband thought she should go away for a little rest. This place is not restful, Jerry. You'll see. What do you mean? Of course, I remember, I'm the one who sent your reservation in... This weekend? Yes, but I thought, under the circumstances. No, no. It's important. I understand. They need to know your commitment. Especially with me in here, they need to know that you will not let a crazy wife be a deterrent. Have a good time, darling. Is Gladys there? Have her call. I need to talk with her about menus. Oh, and Jerry? Tell your boss to look on the bright side. If I weren't in here, I might have been there with you, telling him all my helpful hints like last time. He seemed very interested until I tucked my nipple back inside my dress. What? Of course I'm sober. How could I be anything else in here? Unless I stole my roommate's pills, which I happen to know she left under the mattress. What? Of course I'll tell the proper authorities. I told you, didn't I?

(WIDEN SPOT TO INCLUDE...)

O'LEARY

Pardon me, Missy.

SHEILA

What? What is it?

O'LEARY

I think you know what it is.

SHEILA

Curfew? For God's sakes, I'm a grown woman! A grown woman, do you hear me? A grown woman!

O'LEARY

I hear you. But you sound *exactly* like a ten-year-old child.

SHEILA

I could report you for that. For insulting me.

O'LEARY

I didn't insult you. I just told you the truth.

SHEILA

Your opinion.

(She flounces OUT)

O'LEARY

She's right, it's my opinion. After all this time, I've got a right to my opinion. Not that I'm a doctor, mind you. I'm not saying that. But I have seen some things, I've seen some terrible things. Some of the nicest people in the world can't get sober. Like my mother. The Irish Virus, I've heard it called, well, she had it. I'd come home from school, find her passed out on the floor, or kneeling at the ivory altar... puking her guts out and praying to God to never drink again. My opinion: you can pray all you want, but you still gotta cooperate. You can't cop an attitude. You can't act like she does, like the world owes her something. You'd think she'd stay sober for the children -- like angels, the two of them. But, no. She needs the bottle herself. She can blame it on that husband, she can blame it on me, me telling her to 'go to beddie-bye.' She can point the finger wherever she wants. There's still three more pointing back at her. Let her report me. You win some, you lose some, and you lose some of the best, like Doctor Henry. I don't know why I took this job, unless I'm still trying to save my mother. My mother was a good woman. Just a drunk. Hell, maybe she's a good woman, too.

(LIGHTS DOWN)

Scene 9

(Then LIGHTS UP ON group in progress.  
DAY.)

DAWN

So? What's everybody looking at me for?

LILY

You jerk.

DAWN

Thanks a lot. I see I've been missing some wonderful spiritual growth.

LILY

You little idiot.

MARA

I'd say, "Dope." Fits the crime.

DAWN

Are you just going to let them do this?

DOCTOR ROSE

Do what?

DAWN

What they're doing to me.

DOCTOR ROSE

What about what you did to them?

LILY

Go on. Say you're sorry.

DAWN

I didn't do anything.

LILY

You call killing yourself nothing? What are you? A bug?

MARA

In her charming way, Lily is trying to say she cares for you.

LILY

Speak for yourself.

MARA

I was. I care for the little bugger, too.

SHEILA

What about me? I found her. She was blue, did I tell you that?

DAWN

Yeah. I was very, very blue. That's why I did it.

LILY

Chicken. "Bwook, bok, bok, bok."

DAWN

Me? Chicken? I've shot dope in my eye! And you call me a chicken.

LILY

Yeah. You were scared you couldn't make it without mommy and daddy. So, you copped out.

SHEILA  
You shot dope in your eye -- you did not!

O'LEARY  
That's not courage. That's insanity.

DOCTOR ROSE  
What do you feel about what Lily said?

DAWN  
She said about four things

DOCTOR ROSE  
Uh-huh. And what were they?

DAWN  
That she was mad. That I was chicken. That I copped out --

DOCTOR ROSE  
Anything else?

DAWN  
That she cared for me.

DOCTOR ROSE  
Ah. And how does that feel?

DAWN  
Weird. I mean, it's okay if she wants to be that way, but --

(DAWN is cut off by LILY hugging her)

LILY  
You stupid little dope.

DAWN  
Dope-er. That's dope-er.

MARA  
Dopey -- if you ask me. Of course, nobody asked me anything.

SHEILA  
So I'm crazy. I am the official crazy lady - she's the official darling.

MARA

If you're crazy, I'd hate to know what they'd call me.

SHEILA

Sexy. I know because he told me on the phone.

MARA

Don't worry. I'll dispel that image the minute he sees my roots -- Bronx or otherwise.

DOCTOR ROSE

Other people's definitions -- always so interesting.

LILY

Promiscuity as defined by my mother -- not married and not a virgin.

MARA

Who wasn't a promiscuous drunk? I was forever waking up with people I didn't know or people I knew all too well.

SHEILA

Me.

MARA

You?

SHEILA

I wasn't promiscuous. . . unfortunately.

DAWN

Don't look at me. I never got asked.

DOCTOR ROSE

I don't know which hurts worse. When they're right, or when they're wrong. Are you crazy, Sheila?

SHEILA

Jerry says I am.

DAWN

That Jerry. So perceptive.

SHEILA

How dare you mock me! How dare you make fun of me!

DAWN

I wasn't making fun of you. I was making fun of him. You're not crazy. You're just devious. Why don't you buy your own cigarettes?

SHEILA

I don't smoke.

DAWN

Officially.

SHEILA

I don't smoke.

DAWN

Then, what were you doing this morning when you thought I was at breakfast?

SHEILA

You little... I don't inhale.

DAWN

Look, Sheila, if you're going to steal my cigarettes, the least you could do is inhale.

SHEILA

I did not steal your cigarettes. I borrowed them.

DAWN

What were you going to do? Return them?

SHEILA

Doctor Rose, I must tell you, I resent this entire procedure. If my husband had any idea the kind of humiliation you people are putting me through --

DAWN

He'd love it. Good old Jerry probably thinks you deserve to be punished.

SHEILA

I did not come here for you to ridicule my family.

DOCTOR ROSE

Why did you come here?

SHEILA

I told you. Jerry thought it would be a good idea. He thought I needed a rest.

DAWN

Or maybe he did.

SHEILA

Doctor Rose, do you have to allow her to talk to me in that manner? Say something!

DOCTOR ROSE

It's my impression you could do that yourself.

SHEILA

You are supposed to keep order. You are supposed to take care of me.

DOCTOR ROSE

No. I am supposed to help you help yourself.

SHEILA

You know, I don't have to take this from you people.

DAWN

Yes, you do. Act like a bitch and take the consequences. Cause and effect.

SHEILA

You are a spoiled brat.

DAWN

Takes one to know one.

SHEILA

No wonder your parents hate you. You say I'm just like your mother and I hate you. You're easy to hate.

DAWN

Maybe you're just good at hating.

DOCTOR ROSE

It strikes me the two of you might try turning your critical attention to yourselves. I think we've done enough for today. By tomorrow I want all of you to have written your drinking and drugging histories.

(LIGHTS DOWN ON CENTER STAGE)

Scene 10

(LIGHTS UP. The STAGE GOES DARK.  
When it LIGHTS AGAIN, it's DOCTOR  
ROSE's office. NIGHT. NURSE O'LEARY  
works on kneading DOCTOR ROSE's  
shoulders)

O'LEARY

Don't wriggle.

DOCTOR ROSE

I hate it when I know, but I don't know.

O'LEARY

Sleep on it.

DOCTOR ROSE

That's the problem. I do. Like the Princess and the pea, it gives me insomnia.

O'LEARY

Look, Princess, you do the best you can.

DOCTOR ROSE

The smoking!

O'LEARY

Where there's smoke, there's fire? You're right. She's too young to smoke  
anyway.

(FOLLOWS DOCTOR ROSE into REC ROOM.  
STOPS STAGE LEFT)

DOCTOR ROSE

No. Not Dawn. I don't care about her smoking. She's doing fine. It's Sheila's  
smoking that bothers me.

O'LEARY

So, she snitches a few cigarettes. You think she's really smoking grass?

DOCTOR ROSE

I don't know what I think, because I don't quite think about it yet. I feel it.

O'LEARY

The Irish witch strikes again.



DOCTOR ROSE

That's what Henry always said.

O'LEARY

Oh my god. It's the anniversary, isn't it?

DOCTOR ROSE

Yesterday.

O'LEARY

Why didn't you say something?

DOCTOR ROSE

You had enough drama.

O'LEARY

I'm sorry.

DOCTOR ROSE

Henry always said, "A sari's what they wear in India."

O'LEARY

I don't know how you stand it without him.

DOCTOR ROSE

I don't feel without him. I feel hers just on the other side. Close as the air outside the window. Just invisible, that's all.

O'LEARY

That's enough?

DOCTOR ROSE

It's got to be, doesn't it?

(O'LEARY EXITS)

DOCTOR ROSE

Henry, are you listening? I'm sorry I didn't talk to you yesterday. Yesterday I was so mad I couldn't speak. Goddammit, Henry, I hate it here without you. It's been years and I still hate it. You're a hard act to follow, Henry. This year I had a dinner date. I got all the way through the appetizers. A nice man, he was -- just not you. Sometimes I think you put a hole in my heart, and I try to fill it, up with prayer and good works, and anything but alcohol. You taught me that. You died for both of us. And you know what? It kills me, Henry.

(She breaks down.)

(LIGHTS Go DOWN ON wall)

END OF ACT ONE

ACT II

Scene 1

(LIGHTS UP ON MARA and LILY's room.  
DAY. DAWN ENTERS like a sudden  
storm)

DAWN

Sheila and her precious Jerry -- what a slime! He brought some things up for her and left them at the desk. Didn't even ask to see her.

MARA

That's cute.

DAWN

There was some other woman waiting for him in the car.

MARA

That's very cute.

LILY

How did you know it was him?

DAWN

You're right. It could have been some other man impersonating her husband.

LILY

You actually saw him?

DAWN

I was sitting in the waiting room, reading *People Magazine*, drawing, minding my own business!

MARA

And everybody else's--

DAWN

And he came in.

So! LILY

She wants the gory details MARA

Tall, dark and handsome? LILY

Compared to an acned dwarf? Yes. DAWN

Why are you mad at him, if you hate Sheila so much? LILY

Just one of my charming little eccentricities, I guess. DAWN

Go to your room. MARA

I can't. She's there. Why do you think I sit in the waiting room? DAWN

I can't wait to hear. MARA

Unless I'm mistaken, we just did. Sheila is driving you crazy, is that it? LILY

Well, I think that's it. The doctor thinks I play a part in it. DAWN

Really... MARA (To LILY)

(LIGHTS DOWN)

Scene 2

(LIGHTS UP STAGE CENTER ON DOCTOR ROSE and LILY)

DOCTOR ROSE

I've read your drinking history, Lily.

LILY

You're going to tell me I was addicted to men and the booze was just a chaser, right? That's how I always saw it.

DOCTOR ROSE

The men were just a band-aid. You were hemorrhaging.

LILY

I did hemorrhage. Did I put that in there? That was the hospitalization six years ago.

DOCTOR ROSE (Reading)

For "exhaustion?"

LILY

Yeah.

DOCTOR ROSE

I'd say hemorrhaging can be pretty exhausting.

LILY

George and I had broken up. I wasn't eating. I had this ulcer and --

DOCTOR ROSE

And you were drinking around the clock?

LILY

Something like that. They said I had malnutrition.

DOCTOR ROSE

They didn't say you had alcoholism?

LILY

I was too young then. I remember the doctor saying that if I didn't watch my drinking I could become one.

DOCTOR ROSE

He didn't say anything else?

LILY

He said I was a sensitive young woman and I had just gone through a traumatic divorce -- George was paying my hospital bills, so we said we were married, used to be married --

DOCTOR ROSE

And so the doctor told you to stop drinking --

LILY

No. He said to stop drinking the way I had been drinking. He thought I would, anyway. After I was feeling better.

DOCTOR ROSE

I love it.

LILY

What?

DOCTOR ROSE

I love the way they act like it's not a disease. Never mind what the AMA says, never mind what the insurance companies are now saying, there are still an incredible number of my colleagues who act like this is a situational problem. So, what did he prescribe for a recovery program? Valium: An incredible number of my colleagues seem to think alcoholism is a valium deficiency.

LILY

It wasn't valium. It was something else... And he told me not to drink on it.

DOCTOR ROSE

I'll bet that worked like a charm. The pills set up the craving.

LILY

It drove me crazy. Every time I took one of them I ended up drinking. I knew I shouldn't mix them. I used to drink and flush them.

DOCTOR ROSE

We flush away anything that gets in the way of our drinking... pills, lovers, friends, families, dreams. We'd lose anything before we give up our right to drink.

LILY

The only thing I ever stood to lose was George. I never really had the rest. I was sixteen. My mother threw me out of the house because her new husband was hitting on me. I met George the very first night. If it hadn't been for him, I'd probably have wound up in the gutter.

DOCTOR ROSE

I could make an argument that George was the gutter for you.

LILY

Who else would have put up with me? I'd have been turning tricks in no time --

DOCTOR ROSE

And what do you consider sleeping with George's friends?

LILY

He was very understanding about that.

DOCTOR ROSE

You told me he encouraged it. You told me he introduced you to them and then looked the other way.

LILY

I could never have been faithful. George knew that about me.

DOCTOR ROSE

Did you know that? Are you sure it wasn't the booze that slept around, not Lily?

LILY

I know what you're driving at. You're saying George used me.

DOCTOR ROSE

I'm saying that you might have used each other.

LILY

George protected me from myself.

DOCTOR ROSE

Very successfully. I don't believe you've even met the real Lily.

LILY

Are you hinting that I have low self-worth?

DOCTOR ROSE

I'm hinting that you might want to take a look at that possibility.

LILY

You don't buy my party girl image?

DOCTOR ROSE

Buy that and I'm buying you your next drink. Sobriety's about reality... reality...

LILY

Reality sucks.

DOCTOR ROSE

And not well?

LILY

Oooh. Spoken like a true party girl.

DOCTOR ROSE

Yeah. Used to think I was one. Came to think differently. Maybe you will, too, Lily.

(DOCTOR ROSE LEAVES)

LILY

They were just men. George, he is just a man. I can see that now, and seeing it's no fun. I always wondered how it was for the blind when someone gave them their eyes, and they could see. Those operations, those miracle cures -- did they really make things better? Darkness is comforting. Not knowing the looks on people's faces when they saw you, the pity in their eyes, or the contempt. I believe that love is blind -- and when I see George the way he really is, just a man, it almost kills me. For this I threw my life away? For you? When George told me he was marrying *her*, he tried to act like a tough guy. But what I saw was his weakness. He needed her the way I needed him. I see that. I hate to see. Is it any wonder I got blind drunk? Bottoms up.

(PANTOMIMES "Down the hatch.")

(LIGHTS DOWN STAGE CENTER)

Scene 3

(LIGHTS UP ON SHEILA and DAWN's room. NIGHT. DAWN kneels on the floor working with her art supplies)

SHEILA

What are you doing?

DAWN

Art therapy.

SHEILA

Must you do it on the floor?

DAWN

I could do it on the wall.

SHEILA

I hate graffiti.

You would. It's an art form. DAWN

I am going to ignore that remark. SHEILA

That's big of you. Are you also going to ignore the acrylic paint you just stepped in? DAWN

Oh, shit! SHEILA

No. But it is brown. DAWN

Excuse me. SHEILA

That's okay. I like brown. DAWN

I said, shit. SHEILA

Well, at least you didn't step in it. DAWN

That looks...? SHEILA

Familiar? DAWN

Is that me? SHEILA

The doctor would say my version of you. DAWN

But it's great. SHEILA

Great? You Look like a monster. DAWN



SHEILA

Of course I look like a monster. I do look like a monster to you -- but the drawing is great. You are really talented.

DAWN

You're only saying that because you didn't see the early ones. In those you looked a lot worse.

SHEILA

I didn't know you could do this.

DAWN

Yeah.

SHEILA

Do you have any more?

DAWN

Think you could handle it?

SHEILA

You do! Here?

DAWN

Under the bed -- I'll get them. I like to maintain a little privacy.  
(She goes under bed)

SHEILA

What else you got under there?

DAWN

None of your business what else I've got under here.

SHEILA

Drugs? A boyfriend?

DAWN

None of your business... Sheila!

(She holds aloft a drawing of SHEILA as a monster.

SHEILA bursts out laughing)

SHEILA

I used to draw -- a little, not like you -- mainly flowers, girl stuff.

DAWN

You could use some of my stuff.

SHEILA

I haven't drawn in years. Not since Emily was born. I always thought I'd go back to it.

DAWN

You're not exactly ancient.

SHEILA

I wanted to be a designer.

DAWN

Who'd have guessed?

SHEILA

Not, clothes. Houses. Like this place. I know exactly how I'd do it.

DAWN

A wet bar. A few stools.

SHEILA

Maybe that is what I designed for myself, instead.

DAWN

But I thought you weren't a drinker -- "not really."

SHEILA

Same difference. I got depressed after the baby was born and they gave me valium and I just stopped drawing --

DAWN

Or you stopped drawing and they gave you valium --

SHEILA

What difference does it, make? One way or another, I just stopped.

DAWN

Like I said. You can use some of my stuff.

SHEILA

I don't think so. I've got the kids and Jerry --

DAWN

Draw them. I draw my parents. I draw everybody.

SHEILA

What else have you got? Do any of the others --?

(SHEILA reaches for the stack of drawings.

DAWN snatches them away)

DAWN

No!

(But SHEILA doesn't let go. She tugs them away and starts leafing through)

SHEILA

Come on... Jerry! How did you know what he looked like?

DAWN

It looks like him?

SHEILA

Did you go in my purse?

DAWN

Thanks a lot. Fuck you.

SHEILA

How did you know what my husband looks like?

DAWN

I saw him when they dropped off your stuff.

SHEILA

They?

DAWN

I was sitting in the waiting room when he came in.

SHEILA

You said "they". Who was he with?

DAWN

How should I know who he was with? He's not my husband.

SHEILA

I'm sorry I said that about the purse.

DAWN

So am I. For a while there, I thought you were human.

SHEILA

A woman?

DAWN

I didn't see her very well... yes.

SHEILA

Thank you for telling me the truth.

DAWN

Who is she? Look, do you want me to leave you alone?

(She EXITS as . . .

SHEILA TURNS TO AUDIENCE)

SHEILA

I knew you were going to fuck him... Surprised? Surprised I knew the word, I bet. I know a little more than the word, baby sister. Take my word for it... You little bitch. Baby sister. Precious. My precious baby sister. Dad even called you that. Precious. Like your tush was made of gold. All because they thought they'd never have you. A miracle baby. What bullshit. I never liked you. Not, when you were born -- I'm told that's normal and you know how normal I am -- not when you were a bratty little tagalong and certainly not when you hit puberty and started your games, chasing all my boyfriends. What a little fool you were. You thought it was special, some kind of big score that they wanted to diddle you. They were boys. Of course they wanted to diddle you! What an idiot you always were. You thought you beat me, fucked your sisters boyfriends. Made you better than me, right? Made you a little slut is what it made you. Of course they fucked you. They were just boys. What boy can resist forbidden fruit? Same goes for Jferry. . . No. Really. I knew when you started chasing him. I saw it. I'm not dumb. And I'm not deaf, either. When you started with your "Sheila's such a saint" routine. I knew you wanted him in your panties. Your dirty little panties. Do you know you pooped in your pants until you were five? That's a really slow learning curve, precious. Of course Jerry fucked you. He had to put something in your mouth to shut you up. What man likes to be told he's fucking Mother Theresa? What man wants to fuck a saint? Not good old Jerry. I hope he bit your nipples off. Or was that just with me? Passive aggressive prick, biting the tit that feeds him. Well, he was boring... Actually? Your fucking him was boring, too. Not nearly as exciting as when you fucked my first boyfriend. You're too self-centered to be a good lay.

SHEILA (CONT'D)

But then, so was Jerry. When I think about it, you two probably deserved each other. Maybe you could share a long, lingering kiss over my grave. Enjoy the scandal and the drama before... I'll tell you before what... before real-life, baby sister. Not the foreplay, anyone could enjoy that. I mean, the other part. Not the fucking, the part where you get fucked. Let's watch you enjoy that, little sister. Forget Jerry's deafening silences. Enjoy those. But you can also enjoy the laundry, the cooking, the office parties, the car pool. The house, the garden and, of course, Little League. Did I leave out PTA, Parent Teacher Conferences? Now there's a good time... What's that? Saint Sheila? Damn right, I am. You want Jerry? Take him. You play the saint. You know how easy it is... And what about me? How touching that you're worried about me! Don't bother. I have a plan. Instead of just a saint, I'll give you a martyr.

(LIGHTS OUT)

Scene 4

(DOCTOR ROSE's office.

LIGHTS UP on therapy, CENTER STAGE.  
NIGHT)

SHEILA

I need to talk to you.

DOCTOR ROSE

You want to go home, right?

SHEILA

Right. How did you know?

DOCTOR ROSE

And you're going to tell me I don't understand. You're right. I don't understand. Why, Sheila? What's wrong?

SHEILA

Nothing's wrong. I'm fine. Everybody overreacted, and I'm in here, but apart from that, I'm fine.

DOCTOR ROSE

It's a disease of denial. It's a disease that tells you you don't have it.

SHEILA

That's very clever. It's self-diagnosed, so if I think I have it, I have it. It's a disease of denial, so that if I don't think I have it, I have it.

DOCTOR ROSE

It's fatal and progressive

SHEILA

Like Communism and aphids. I'm the model patient. I've been a doo-bee. I have done my little inventory for your listing my defects in black and white, listing those I've harmed, I've read all my little spiritual books. It's better if I just go home.

DOCTOR ROSE

And what will you tell Jerry?

SHEILA

Welcome home.

DOCTOR ROSE

Don't you mean that's what he'll tell you -- at least, in fantasy?

SHEILA

I mean what I said. None of you people here ever seem to believe that! I said I didn't drink much. I didn't. I said I'd tell him welcome home. I will.

DOCTOR ROSE

I thought Jerry was home with the children.

SHEILA

So did I. As it turns out, he's in New York with my sister.

DOCTOR ROSE

With your sister?

SHEILA

I think. Actually, I know. They just don't know I know. I think Jerry wants me sober so he can leave me without guilt.

DOCTOR ROSE

Leave you for your sister?

SHEILA

Sordid, isn't it? No wonder I drank. That's the reason.

DOCTOR ROSE

Maybe, maybe not. In my experience there's no real reason, just a lot of excuses. Drinkers drink.

SHEILA

That's what you say.

DOCTOR ROSE

Isn't it true? Isn't that why you came here?

SHEILA

I told you. I came here because my husband wanted me to stop drinking.

DOCTOR ROSE

He had his reasons, I'm sure, but you had yours. I'm not clear what they were. Are you?

SHEILA

My reasons for coming here? My reasons for not wanting to leave? My reasons for staying?

DOCTOR ROSE

All of the above.

SHEILA

I know that I cannot stand the pain.

DOCTOR ROSE

Sober, it stops, eventually.

SHEILA

That's what you say.

DOCTOR ROSE

You have to trust something. Why not trust us?

SHEILA

You don't know anything about me.

DOCTOR ROSE

What? You put babies through the Cuisinart?

SHEILA

Well, I put Jerry through the ringer.

DOCTOR ROSE

How's that?

SHEILA

Lots of little ways. Nothing's ever right.

DOCTOR ROSE

Nothing?

SHEILA

I put the towels away with the fringe out.

DOCTOR ROSE

Oh, my God.

SHEILA

I stack the Teflon.

DOCTOR ROSE

No!

SHEILA

It could scratch!

DOCTOR ROSE

And you could buy more Teflon!

SHEILA

Jerry says it should last a lifetime. Just like marriage.

DOCTOR ROSE

My marriage had quite a few scratches on it, let me tell you.

SHEILA

And it didn't last a lifetime, did it?

DOCTOR ROSE

Oh, yes, it did. His.

SHEILA

I'm sorry. I didn't know.

DOCTOR ROSE

It was not your job to know. Everything is not your job.

SHEILA

Well, Teflon and towels are my job. I'm married.



DOCTOR ROSE

And that was in the vows, "To death do us parE, unless I scratch the Teflon."

SHEILA

You're doing it again. Making me laugh.

DOCTOR ROSE

You've got a good sense of humor.

SHEILA

Jerry never gets my jokes.

DOCTOR ROSE

Fuck him, if he can't take a joke.

SHEILA

That's another thing.

DOCTOR ROSE

S-E-X?

SHEILA

Are you sure that's not a four-letter word?

DOCTOR ROSE

Jerry thinks it is?

SHEILA

Jerry thinks it's a close order drill.

DOCTOR ROSE

Oh, no. Snaps to attention?

SHEILA

Actually, yes. But that's not what I meant. He, I...

DOCTOR ROSE

Yes, it usually does take two. I'm familiar with the logistics.

SHEILA

I'm supposed to "come" first and get it over with. Then, it's his turn.

DOCTOR ROSE

Ladies first?

SHEILA

He says it's boring for him afterwards. He's too tired. He falls asleep. So, I have to go first.

DOCTOR ROSE

I see.

SHEILA

He says I'm inhibited.

DOCTOR ROSE

Seems to me a close order drill is bound to be inhibiting.

SHEILA

Jerry always says he's not angry with me. He's disappointed. He says I drive him crazy.

DOCTOR ROSE

That is not my experience. People drive themselves crazy. With a little help from their friends, but they choose their friends.

SHEILA

He says he thought he could save me.

DOCTOR ROSE

I thought you said his name was Jerry, not Jesus.

SHEILA

Don't make me laugh.

DOCTOR ROSE

It hurts?

SHEILA

Not only when I laugh.

DOCTOR ROSE

I see your pain, Sheila.

SHEILA

You see it. Wonderful. I'm so glad you see it. I feel it, Doctor Rose. And I don't want to feel it anymore. I want it to stop. I want to kill it.

DOCTOR ROSE

You want to kill it and you think it wants to kill you. There's good pain and bad pain, Sheila. Sober pain is to a purpose. It's not for nothing. It's a teacher. A process. It has an end and what is on the other side is freedom.

SHEILA

Freedom. Freedom to do what? What is somebody like me going to do with her freedom? I can't even make my bed. I can't decide what bathrobe to wear. I can't even remember to use a Kleenex when I weep.

DOCTOR ROSE

What you're talking about, is grief. Of course you are grieving. You have lost your best friend, your confidant, your constant companion.

SHEILA

I thought you didn't like Jerry.

DOCTOR ROSE

It's not Jerry you're missing, Sheila. It's your disease.

SHEILA

I'm tired of hearing about my disease. What about my feelings?

DOCTOR ROSE

It will use them. It will use whatever it has to get you back. It's cunning, baffling and powerful, Sheila.

SHEILA

Anything else? Any other news you want to tell me? A parting shot?

DOCTOR ROSE

Yes, Sheila. Jerry may not be waiting for you when you get home, but it will be. The disease is fatal, Sheila, and progressive...and patient.

SHEILA

That's it? That's my send-off speech? What about the Twenty-Third Psalm? "Lo, though I walk into the valley of death..."

DOCTOR ROSE

Not a bad idea. I hope you make it, Sheila.

SHEILA

Don't worry. I'll make it all right.  
(SHEILA EXITS.)

(DOCTOR ROSE remains lost in thought.)

After a beat, O'LEARY ENTERS)

DOCTOR ROSE

I'm exhausted.

O'LEARY

You mean discouraged.

DOCTOR ROSE

You're right. I just don't know. I mean, I try, but I feel so--

O'LEARY

Powerless?

DOCTOR ROSE

I want them to surrender.

O'LEARY

To you?

DOCTOR ROSE

To the disease - stop fighting.

O'LEARY

You stop fighting. Go to bed, Doctor. Let them wrestle their own demons for a while.

DOCTOR ROSE

It's angels. Angels you have to wrestle with to get into heaven -- and they don't even know it's heaven not to drink. They think it's hell.

(LIGHTS DOWN)

Scene 5

(LIGHTS UP ON SHEILA and DAWN's room. EARLY DAY.

SHEILA rummages under DAWN's mattress. She emerges with a bottle of pills)

SHEILA

Librium, Vicadin, Percoset, Xanax, Ambien --  
(Holds one pill aloft)

I don't know what you are. Sucaryl? Tylenol, non-capsule, unfortunately,  
Percoset.

(She hears DAWN approaching and stuffs the pills in her purse.)

DAWN (OFFSTAGE)

(SINGING)

MY COUNTRY 'TIS OF THEE  
SWEET LAND OF LIBERTY--

(She ENTERS)

SHEILA

Didn't know you were patriotic.

DAWN

I'm not. I just like TV at dawn.

SHEILA

You were up all night?

(LIGHTS DOWN)

Scene 6

(DAY. LIGHTS UP ON DAWN  
in her room. DAWN is pulling out her  
drawings, addresses speech to them)

DAWN

Hi, Daddy. Funny. I was just talking about you... Don't be paranoid. I didn't give away the plot of the new novel. I didn't commit Mom to baking brownies for Family Day... Hi, Mom! Somehow, I thought that might be why you were calling. Something came up? You got a new kid? One that doesn't have any emotional upkeep?... Hostile? Do I sound hostile? I'd say hostile is not coming to Family Day. Hostile is preferring a brainchild to a real one. Deadline begins to have a sinister ring to it, Dad. It kills me you're not coming -- ask your goddamn book if it will miss you. Mom, how's your cellulite, Mom? I've got some great new diet pills you can take. You will love these, Mom. Take enough of these and you lose your whole body. Really, Mom. You can have them. I'm not going to be needing them anymore. Quick, Mom. Before I flush them. Your last chance! Where are they?

(DAWN is now rummaging, searching for her pills. She gets very upset.

A KNOCK at the DOOR to her room interrupts her)

Who is it?

O'LEARY

Your conscience.

DAWN

I don't have one.

O'LEARY

Open this door.

DAWN

Why don't you just come in? You don't respect anybody's privacy anyway.

O'LEARY

You call this privacy? I call this a pigsty.

DAWN

What can I say? The cops searched it. They were looking for drugs.

O'LEARY

That's not funny. Clean this mess up.

DAWN

I am an artist. Artists are not known for their cleanliness.

O'LEARY

You are a bullshit artist. That's what you are.

DAWN

This floor is a Picasso.

O'LEARY

This floor is a filthy mess.

DAWN

It's my life.

O'LEARY

Precisely. So, why don't you try cleaning it up?

DAWN

I'm not doing drugs, isn't that enough for you?

O'LEARY

It's the beginning. If it's enough for you, you're selling yourself short.

DAWN

My mother always wants me to clean my room. She says a clean room will make me happy. What a crock. It might make her happy.

O'LEARY

Happiness is not the point. Happiness is a by-product, not a goal.

DAWN

Who told you that? Doctor Rose?

O'LEARY

Yes.

DAWN

I don't idolize her the way you do.

O'LEARY

That's because you lack my good sense.

(O'LEARY EXITS.

LIGHTS DOWN ON DAWN's room)

Scene 7

(DAY. LIGHTS UP IN MARA and LILY's room)

MARA

My agent wants to come on Family Day.

LILY

You mean your ex-agent?

MARA

He doesn't seem to be thinking of himself that way. Or else he's my friend...

LILY

Is he?

MARA

Define "friend".

LILY

The Boy Scout list -- Loyal, honest, brave...

MARA

Lily, please, we are talking about an agent. An agent would die before he would want to be any of those things. Poor Rudy. A Boy Scout.

MARA (Continued)

Actually, in his way, I suppose he is. But it's hardly his self-image.

LILY

Which is what?

MARA

Bon-vivant, man of the world... mensch.

LILY

Sounds nice.

MARA

Not our type. He *is* nice. He fights it, you understand. As an agent, he has to, but he's nice.

LILY

I am willing to be open-minded.

MARA

Among other things. . .

LILY

Ouch! I don't talk about your musical *Lady Macbeth*.

MARA

Nobody does.

LILY

Oh, yes, they do. I say, "Everybody's got their blind spot." Maybe Rudy was standing in yours.

MARA

Me and Rudy? Never.

LILY

So, introduce me.

MARA

You and Rudy? Never. Just because I don't want him doesn't mean that you can have him.

LILY

Greedy guts.



MARA

Absolutely. That's how I got to the top.

LILY

And all this time I thought you had talent.

MARA

Did you?... Really?

LILY

Actually... yes.

MARA

I am so pleased. Thank you.

LILY

Why? Talent's just like beauty. It's a gift. It's what you do with it that counts.

MARA

And I did this wonderful, singing Lady Macbeth.

LILY

True, but you also did a wonderful murderess and a great cripple--

MARA

What can I say? I identified with both parts.

LILY

But I liked you best as Frou Frou LaRue.

MARA

Comedy? You and Rudy.

LILY

My original proposition.

MARA

Comedy! How strange... How lovely.

LILY

The keys on the bidet handle.

MARA

What? I don't remember doing that.

LILY  
Neither did she. It was hilarious.

MARA  
The keys in the Second Act? The ones to the safe deposit box?

LILY  
Right!

MARA  
Oh, my God!

LILY  
What?

LILY  
If the keys aren't in his pocket, the whole act falls apart. I have to have slipped them into his pocket.

LILY  
It did seem odd, the bidet handle.

MARA  
And I said drinking never affected my career!

LILY  
They were supposed to be in his pocket?

MARA  
Never mind.

LILY  
Are you sure? How did they get there?

MARA  
Drop it, would you?

LILY  
You were funny.

MARA  
That's what Rudy always said.

LILY  
Let him come in.

MARA

Only to make you happy.

(The door bursts open.

It is DAWN)

DAWN

I hate her! I hate her! I hate her!

LILY

Sheila?

MARA

Of course, Sheila.

DAWN

Not fucking Sheila. That fucking nurse! She took them! She must have searched the room!

LILY

I've got an extra pack hidden away.

DAWN

Fuck cigarettes! I don't smoke that much anyway. She confiscated my fucking pills!

MARA

You were checking out on us?

DAWN

I was checking in. I was going to flush them. They were at my back door and I didn't need it anymore -- can't believe they didn't call me on them. Confront me. Do something about them.

LILY

They keep saying the choice to recover is ours, not theirs. Jesus! Maybe they mean it.

MARA

We could always ask. It *is* therapy hour.

DAWN

I thought I felt the hair growing on my palms.

(The three walk STAGE CENTER to therapy.

DAWN mimes a chain-gang step.

DOCTOR ROSE and NURSE O'LEARY  
ENTER from the other side.

As everyone is seated, there is an empty chair)

Where's our missing link? MARA

Gone. DAWN

What do you mean "gone"? MARA

Gone. Quit. Left. DAWN

You knew? LILY

Look, it's not like with you two. DAWN

I should hope not. I prefer to think my defection would be noted. MARA

By *Variety*? LILY

Shall we get started? DOCTOR ROSE

(Silence)

Damn her. She could have said goodbye. She could have said something. LILY

She did say something. She said, "Fuck you." Actions speak louder than words. MARA

It's weird. I thought she was getting better. DAWN

DOCTOR ROSE

And feeling worse. She had all the symptoms of impending clarity.

MARA

Ground glass in the stomach, cold sweats, hot flashes of pure rage?

DOCTOR ROSE

Those are the symptoms, all right. Did I ever tell you my definition of an alcoholic? "An alcoholic is someone who drinks five minutes before the miracle."

LILY

You think she'll drink? We could call her. C'mon, let's call her.

MARA

Oh, yes. If she's drinking, she's going to love hearing from a bunch of dry wet blankets like us.

DAWN

Oh, my God.

LILY

What?

DAWN

She took them. Sheila took my pills.

O'LEARY

I told you we should have searched her room. Overdosing right in a treatment center. She made us look like fools.

DAWN

Librium, Valium, Vicadin, Ambien, Percoset --

DOCTOR ROSE

Rope, gas, the automobile in a closed garage, a gun -- she didn't need your help, Dawn. It's a fatal disease. And if it can't kill you directly, it will do it by proxy -- a car accident, a household fire.

O'LEARY

I've never thought it was the dose that did it. I've seen people die after one martini, if they're progressed enough.

MARA

A killer martini.

DOCTOR ROSE

Henry had exactly two drinks the night he died. Two. And a Valium.

LILY

You aren't supposed to mix.

MARA

I did it all the time.

DOCTOR ROSE

So did Henry. A dry martini and a ten milligram Valium. He called it a Russian Roulette.

DAWN

I never thought I'd say this, but I think we should pray. Maybe we can't help Sheila, but we can pray -- "God, grant me..."

ALL TOGETHER

"...the serenity to accept the things I cannot change. The courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

DOCTOR ROSE

Anyone need to talk about anything else?

MARA

I've got a problem. Rudy called and they know I'm here.

LILY

"They"? The press?

MARA

The fucking press. He wants to talk to them. Give my version of events. Left to their own devices, their's is worse.

LILY

What about the truth?

MARA

What about the truth? A novel idea! Of course, "the truth" thrown to a pack of reporters resembles filet mignon thrown to a pack of dogs. If I tell them I'm an alcoholic, I'll never work again. If it comes down to a choice between my career and my sobriety --

DOCTOR ROSE

Aren't you forgetting something? Without sobriety, there is no career.

DOCTOR ROSE (Continued)

Put something else first -- and you'll lose it and your sobriety.

MARA

You're honestly saying I should talk to them about this?

LILY

Could you talk to only one? The President does that, tells a few and they tell the rest.

MARA

I'll suggest it. Although, I may not have the Presidential pull.

(LIGHTS DOWN.

BLACK STAGE)

Scene 8

(LIGHTS UP ON MARA and LILY in day room)

MARA (On pay phone)

How much did I drink? The Mississippi. Why shouldn't I admit, it? It's a disease. A weakness? Meaning you see it as a weakness. You'll make sure everyone does. You wouldn't hate a man for having cancer. Cancer is a relatively kind disease, it only kills the body not the love, not the respect. You need to hate something in somebody? Hate the disease!

LILY

Just like my drinking. I did that inventory about what I drank -- the answer is everything.

MARA

What are you going to do on your pass?

LILY

Call George, if you give me his number.

MARA

You wouldn't.

LILY

No. I've already got his number. I've had it for years, actually. But he made a nice fantasy. You know, the man I didn't marry.

MARA

The girl hated alcoholics.

LILY

What girl? There was another woman?

MARA

The reporter.

LILY

The reporter hated alcoholics? My feelings are hurt.

MARA

So is my career.

LILY

I thought you were ready to give it up, anyway.

MARA

Did I say that? I was lying.

LILY

You said, "For the love of a good man..."

MARA

Sounds like your lying to me. I must have been quoting.

LILY

You talk in your sleep.

MARA

I don't believe you. And if I do, I don't say that. George told me I talked in my sleep once.

LILY

Ouch!

MARA

He said I said, "Waiter, get me another double."

LILY

You said, at dinner a week ago, that a career could not compare to the love of one good man.



MARA

Maybe I did. What I meant is that a man is to a career as a rotten apple is to orange blossoms.

LILY

Denial. You're doing your suffering artist routine again. You want to be loved.

MARA

I want to be adored, not loved.

LILY

Phone me when you come back from being out to lunch.

MARA

Without a man, I'm lonely. Without work, I'm crazy. Lonely, I can live with.

LILY

Lonely, I can live without.

MARA

By George.

LILY

If I had your money, I would have.

MARA

So, you do see him clearly.

LILY

Clear, like a shattered mirror. George was seven years of bad luck for me.

MARA

That's how long you were together? George told me three.

LILY

How long were you married?

MARA

Four.

LILY

Three-plus-four-equals-seven. I would have told you before, but--

MARA

But I would have killed you... You had to wait until I fell for you, too.

LILY

Please -- don't!

MARA

You didn't mean anything. That's right. you're nothing to me. Less than nothing. And you were nothing to George, too. I'm sure of that.

LILY

What did you think he was doing all those nights?

MARA

Working.

LILY

Working? When did you know George to work on anything but a woman?

MARA

I didn't want to pry. I didn't want to be the nagging wife.

LILY

Bullshit. You didn't want to know.

MARA

Who would want to know? You think I wanted to know I was being used? Do you think I wanted to see what a fool I was? That's not the kind of thing a woman wants to know.

LILY

I know.

MARA

So, why'd you have to tell me? I liked you! I liked you very much.

LILY

That's why I told you. I liked you, too. It got to be like ground glass in my guts liking you and knowing you liked me and knowing that you didn't know.

MARA

Whoever said, "The truth will set you free?"

LILY

Some idiot. The D.A. probably -- but he was kidding.

MARA

Plea bargaining. The truth hurts.

LILY

Not as much as the lies.

MARA

I don't know about that. That's what they say when they amputate, too. "This will only hurt a minute, son." Then, swack! They chop off an arm. And you know what? After it's over, the missing arm still hurts. Did you know that? The "phantom limb phenomenon" they call it.

LILY

Maybe you have enough heartbreak they give you a phantom heart.

MARA

Sure. Right. It's like the Jarvis Seven. It never fails you.

LILY

But it's not the failure of your own heart that kills you. It's other people's.

MARA

I'm not sure George has a heart to fail us with. Oh, maybe a phantom heart -- now you see it, now you don't -- made of plastic.

LILY

That's it! Step right up, ladies! Step right in here! Tone your titties, whittle your nose, trim those tubby thighs. All aboard, ladies! All else fails, try the phantom heart. Trade that silly human heart of yours for the kind that beats without breaking.

MARA

You really loved that bastard, didn't you?

LILY

And you didn't?

MARA

He really broke your heart. He didn't, break mine. Not really. Not as bad as yours.

LILY

How would you know? She says booze is an anesthetic.

MARA

You're just full of cheery news tonight.

LILY

I hate him right now. I want to keep hating him. If he costs me you, too, if you hate me now, for telling you, it's one more reason to hate him.

MARA

But I don't hate you. I'm not sure I like you right now, but I don't hate you.

LILY

I never thought, I would like you. I thought you had married my man and I didn't owe you anything and you owed me an apology. I owe you an apology, don't I?

MARA

I don't know. You were the one who was in love with him.

LILY

One of the ones.

MARA

I never roved George. I was fond of George. I liked George. I never loved George.

LILY

Then, why do you carry this?

(She fishes in her pocket and produces a rabbits foot)

MARA

It's a rabbit's foot. I carry it for luck. Where'd you get it?

LILY

You left it by the phone. It's George's rabbit's foot.

MARA

They all look alike.

LILY

I gave it to him. It has one pink nail. "Hyacinth Hush." George just loved "Hyacinth Hush."

MARA

You're better off without him. We both are. Shit. How come you had to tell me about you and George?

LILY

Because they say you can't lie to yourself and stay sober. Because you were lying to yourself about him and I was lying to you, too, and one liar's bad enough.

MARA

Takes one to know one.

LILY

All that crap about not needing a man, all that lonely and the brave routine. You just couldn't admit you were hurt.

MARA

A backup singer with crotchless underpants. I drew the line.

LILY

A drunk movie star. I drew the line. Problem is I erased it again. He told me you were gay, rumors were getting out, he married you to save your career.

MARA

I have to admire the man's creativity. He told me that you had a bad back and couldn't have sex and had really depended on him for companionship.

LILY

The bastard! He will say anything. He will use anything.  
(LILY plunges into silence. She goes still as a rock)

MARA

What? What is it?

(LILY turns her BACK to MARA and TO THE AUDIENCE.  
She pulls up her shirt.

MARA approaches her naked back.  
She traces a finger along the spine)

LILY

Look closely. You won't see his fingerprints, but you will see something. The stitches run straight. When I was young, I lay for two years, unable to move because if I did move, then I would never be able to move again. The operation was very risky then. I was one of the first.

(She pulls down her shirt)

I am fine now. I have been fine for years. It's just that there are times when I still feel crippled. I told George that.

MARA

It all looks different sober.

LILY

George looks the most different of all.

MARA

No. We do. We're the ones who are changing.

(LIGHTS DOWN ON MARA and LILY)

Scene 9

(DAY. LIGHTS UP CENTER STAGE.  
DAWN and DOCTOR ROSE are at  
the RIVER WALL. BOTH sitting  
ON STAGE EDGE STAGE RIGHT)

DAWN

She liked to make me think I was crazy.

DOCTOR ROSE

Give me an example.

DAWN

I'd say, "Mom, remember Parent-Teacher's is Monday." And she'd say,  
"Remember? How can I remember when you never tell me anything? How many  
times have I told you to tell me early if you want me to show up?"

DOCTOR ROSE

Translation?

DAWN

The fuck-ups are your fault.

DOCTOR ROSE

My irresponsibility is your responsibility.

DAWN

She was always big on telling me to be more responsible.

DOCTOR ROSE

Translation?

DAWN

You be responsible so I can be irresponsible.

DOCTOR ROSE

You're okay.

DAWN

Translation?

DOCTOR ROSE

I'm fond of you, a little -- They called, they said they're coming again.

No kidding.

DAWN

No kidding...

DOCTOR ROSE

DAWN

It would be a first. No, a second. They got very drunk one Christmas and came to my class Christmas concert... They sang along.

DOCTOR ROSE

From the sound of it, they'd know the lyrics around here, too.

DAWN

You mean, "Poor me, poor me?"

DOCTOR ROSE

I mean, "Poor me, poor me, pour me a drink." Self-pity is the rim of the glass.

DAWN

They are long on self-pity. You see, they had this terrible child, terrible --

DOCTOR ROSS

Ungrateful? Willful?

DAWN

That's the one.

DOCTOR ROSE

Never met her.

DAWN

What if they do come?

DOCTOR ROSE

What if?

DAWN

I'm afraid I'll cry. I hate crying! It makes me feel so puny.

DOCTOR ROSE

You're thawing out.

DAWN

Are you sure I'm not melting?

DOCTOR ROSE  
Afraid you'll be like those tigers in "Little Black Sambo?"

DAWN  
What tigers?

DOCTOR ROSE  
The children's story. Black Sambo. Those tigers.

DAWN  
Never read it.

DOCTOR ROSE  
What did you like? Doctor Seuss? "Cat In The Hat?"

DAWN  
I don't like to read.

DOCTOR ROSE  
I wouldn't have guessed that.

DAWN  
I'm a slow reader. A real slow reader.

DOCTOR ROSE  
Is it hard for you to read?

DAWN  
No. I just don't like it.

DOCTOR ROSE  
I want to ask you something and I want you to tell me the truth. Do the letters  
move?

DAWN  
They jump up and down and yell, "Boo!"

DOCTOR ROSE  
They jiggle? Trade places?

DAWN  
Only when I'm not looking... Yes.



DOCTOR ROSE

You're dyslexic.

DAWN

Translation "stupid?"

DOCTOR ROSE

It's a learning disorder. Intelligence has nothing to do with it --

DAWN

Or me.

DOCTOR ROSE

A lot of very intelligent people have dyslexia.

DAWN

Sounds like a disease. Another fucking disease. One of my many diseases.

DOCTOR ROSE

They never gave you tests? You were never diagnosed?

DAWN

I think one teacher said something. I remember what Mother said. She said, "We have accepted that Dawn isn't as bright as we might have wished."

DOCTOR ROSE

What she should have accepted was her responsibility to help you. A lot can be done these days.

DAWN

You don't understand. It was unforgivable.

DOCTOR ROSE

Yes, it was. But you'll have to forgive them, anyway -- for your sake.

DAWN

I'm not talking about, them. I'm talking about it -- my dys -- my other disease.

DOCTOR ROSE

Your dyslexia.

DAWN

My problem. You see, my father is a writer.

DOCTOR ROSE

So?

DAWN

So, I was supposed to read. If I could have read his books, we might have shared something.

DOCTOR ROSE

Children are not obliged to be an audience.

DAWN

You'll see. With my parents, everybody's obligated to be an audience.

DOCTOR ROSE

We'll tell them it's not their movie -- they're bit players.

DAWN

They may not be able to fathom that possibility.

DOCTOR ROSE

I'm more concerned that you do. In your life, you star. You decide the plot, the happy ending is up to you.

DAWN

Swell. Do I get popcorn?

DOCTOR ROSE

You get popcorn and my point.

DAWN

I'd like an action-adventure movie -- exotic locales, balconies in the moonlight, the distant sound of waves.

DOCTOR ROSE

Stay sober and you can have it all.

(LIGHTS DOWN ON the RIVER WALL)

Scene 10

(LIGHTS UP ON LILY and MARA's room.  
DAY. LILY and MARA are packing)

LILY

You know, I'm getting a little too old for my rightful occupation.

MARA

Which is? Wife, mother carhop? Microbiologist?

LILY

Love.

MARA

One way of putting it.

LILY

Beauty.

MARA

That's another. Don't rub it in.

LILY

She says I need to start thinking of what, I might do "out there."

MARA

Funny. "Out there" sounds as weird to me as "in there" -- meaning "in here" -- did when I was out there.

LILY

I was thinking I'd try using my looks -- the one thing I can count on.

MARA

Modeling?

LILY

She said an area where I had some experience, where I felt comfortable... I didn't have the nerve to say, "Bed."

MARA

No.

LILY

So, I thought I'd use my looks. What do you think?

MARA

What do I think?

LILY

Never mind. I can see you think it's a bad idea.

MARA

Not bad. Darling. Darling, maybe just outdated. Not to be harsh, but those girls are seventeen... everywhere.

LILY

Oh, dear! Oh, my God!

MARA

What's so funny?

LILY

You! Rudy thought it was a good idea.

MARA

Rudy?

LILY

I called and asked him. I hope you didn't mind.

MARA

No. I saw that you two hit it off at Family Day. Of course, this just proves my theory that a good agent will say anything.

LILY

He said he'd help me.

MARA

My hat's off to him, the little putz.

LILY

It shouldn't be that, hard. All I have to do is smile.

MARA

Maybe if you went to Rio first.

LILY

Darling, Mara. Get a grip. I'm talking about a receptionist's job, not a modeling career. Rudy got me a job at a modeling agency. He said he'd pay for me to study computers on the side.

MARA

Why didn't you say so?

LILY

Actually, I'm very flattered. I should have thought that would have been obvious.

MARA

To you, maybe. You think they have AA meetings in Rio?

LILY

You're not!

MARA

I'm not ready to play character parts yet. For one thing, I don't have any character.

LILY

That's not true. Look what a good sport you're being about me and Rudy.

MARA

I can see what they mean when they tell us to watch out for what you pray for. I asked God to send you a good man and me a good agent. I guess He was just being efficient.

LILY

Rudy says--

MARA

How often do you talk to him?

LILY

Every day.

MARA

Yesterday I couldn't get him on the phone.

LILY

Yesterday I had a pass.

MARA

I see.

LILY

Don't be jealous. All he did was talk about his plans for you.

MARA

I'll bet.

LILY

He's devoted to you. There's this comedy. A sort of Noel Coward vehicle for a very funny, slightly older leading lady -- of course, if you go to Rio --

Slightly older?  
MARA

Slightly.  
LILY

Why haven't I seen a script?  
MARA

I told him I wanted to talk to you first about aging gracefully.  
LILY

Why, you... darling.  
(She has spotted a beautiful young GIRL in the doorway  
and goes to her in her grande dame routine)  
MARA

I'm starting art school.  
DAWN

Art school? When you could go to New York and be a world famous cover girl?  
LILY

I'm short. I'd rather shoot them.  
DAWN

Charming. Our little terrorist.  
MARA

With a camera. Lots of visual artists have dyslexia.  
DAWN

No kidding.  
MARA

Did you pick a school?  
LILY

I think I'm going to go where my friend David goes. If I get in, that is. So, Mara,  
what are your plans?  
DAWN

There's a great sort of Noel Coward -- I'm sorry. You tell her.  
LILY

MARA

There's that -- and I've been writing some songs. I'm thinking of doing a one-woman show.

LILY

Did you tell Rudy?

MARA

Why should I tell Rudy when I know you will?

LILY

I meant, I think it's a great idea.

MARA

You do? I sort of thought it might be. I've got the idea for some songs--

(SINGING)

IT WAS THOSE WHISKY NIGHTS. AND THOSE WHISKEY FIGHTS.  
AND THOSE WHINY, WINEY DAYS

(O'LEARY ENTERS on those lines)

O'LEARY

What's that?

MARA

A song.

O'LEARY

I know that. I meant, what song?

MARA

I haven't named it yet.

O'LEARY

Am I to gather that you wrote that?

LILY

She's thinking of doing a one-woman show.

O'LEARY

I don't see why not. She's always made a spectacle of herself. You really wrote that?

MARA

Want to make something of it?

O'LEARY

I don't know. What about a one-woman show? But no more posing nude on the grand piano.

MARA

Actually, don't tell a soul, but I thought that might be my finale.

O'LEARY

Speaking of finales, the doctor wants to give you something.

DAWN

One for the road?

O'LEARY

I'll give you one for the road -- Don't drink if your ass falls off, don't drink it if turns to gold --

MARA

Or, in my case, platinum?

O'LEARY

Who told you I said that?

MARA

Who had to be told?

O'LEARY

You did.

MARA

You're probably right.

(MARA hugs a startled O'LEARY)

To nurse, with gratitude.

(BLACKOUT)

Scene 11

(LIGHTS UP ON DOCTOR ROSE. DAY)

DOCTOR ROSE sits CENTER STAGE,  
a sheaf of red roses in her arms.

She looks up)



DOCTOR ROSE

Winner's circle. Hopelessly sentimental, I know.

(She stands, walks to each woman, hugs her, hands her a rose)

MARA

We water them with Evian, right?

DOCTOR ROSE

Of course.

LILY

Thank you.

DAWN

Thanks. I hope you treat my folks good when they get here.

Good and hard, I mean.

DOCTOR ROSE

I'm saving their seats -- Meanwhile, keep saving your asses, all of you.

Statistically, one of the four of you will die drunk, but I don't believe in statistics.

I believe in long shots.

(SHEILA walks DOWN AISLE, toting bags and joins the circle)

MARA

Oh, my God! Will you look --?

DAWN

You stole my fucking pills!

LILY

You scared us to death.

SHEILA

Sorry. Sorry. I scared me to death, too.

DAWN

What if I needed them?

MARA

Very funny.

DAWN

I thought so.

LILY

I want the gory details --

MARA

Of course you do. You always want the gory details.

DAWN

So, what happened? What are you doing back?

SHEILA

I need to be back. I need to learn how to stay sober.

O'LEARY

You drank? Oh, I knew it!

SHEILA

I didn't. But I don't know why. I came as close as I ever want to come.

LILY

Was it terrible?

SHEILA

Like staring down a cliff.

DOCTOR ROSE

I know exactly what you mean.

LILY

We'll, I don't.

MARA

We're not leaving until you tell us what happened.

DAWN

Or what didn't happen.

LILY

The facts.

SHEILA

Ah. Those... I'm sitting in the living room, on the couch. The children are arranged all around me like pillows, Gladys, my housekeeper, handing me a cup of coffee and I'm thinking, "What's wrong with this picture? What's wrong with it is Jerry. "Where's Daddy?" I ask. "They had to do shopping," says Emily, my oldest. She looks guilty as hell. She knows something's fishy. I said, "Gladys, I need to look around." I stand, I kiss the kids -- kiss, kiss, kiss, right on their foreheads -- and I rise and climb the stairs... I'm Lady Macbeth, can you see it?

SHEILA (Continued)

High Drama, my big moment. I have my little stash of pills -- I have it all planned -- not necessarily while Jerry and my sister are shopping. I'd've preferred another activity to drive home my point -- but the moment is still finely drawn. I go into the master bathroom. The one with the delphinium wallpaper that I love so. I lock the door. I count out my dose: Valium, Librium, Percodan, Ambien. All of yours, plus all of mine. I note that Jerry has thoughtfully refilled all my prescriptions while I'm gone. Just in case I decide not to stay sober, I presume. I open the medicine cabinet door and there they are. All lined up like little soldiers, ready to do their duty. I picked them up. I put the plug down in the sink. I dump them into it. All together. A sick stew. But pretty! I scoop up a handful and then think, Wait a minute! I like this wallpaper. Jerry may be cheating on me. My sister may be cheating with him, but I picked this wallpaper and I am the lady who picked delphinium for her bathroom. The lady has kids to take care of. That lady has a whole life to plant delphinium in. That's when Emily knocked on the door. "Mommy?" she asked. "Are you all right?" She certainly wasn't. I could hear the terror in her voice. "I'm fine," I told her. "I'll be right out." I scooped those pills in both hands and flushed every damn one down the toilet. When Jerry came home from shopping, we were out in the garden pulling weeds.

DAWN

So, what are you going to do? Divorce him?

SHEILA

Yes. I believe I am.

DAWN

Holy shit!

SHEILA

I could use it in the garden.

DOCTOR ROSE

(Rises)

Exactly. Now, get out of her, you darlings.

DAWN

Get out of here? Us?

DOCTOR ROSE

You're eighty-sixed.

O'LEARY

Mmmm-hmmmm.

LILY

Freedom! ...Within reason.

DOCTOR ROSE

That's right. Sheila and I have some work to do.

(With a "shoo" gesture, she waves them off)

Now, shoo!... Get unpacked.

(Putting an arm around SHEILA,  
she leads her FROM THE STAGE)

DOCTOR ROSE

I didn't drink today. Henry's gone and he looks like he's going to stay that way and I didn't take a drink. Driving in this morning, I spotted a red-tailed hawk. It was all alone, a solitary thing, riding the thermals. I watched it, thinking I'm like that hawk, flying alone since Henry died. That's when I spotted the other one. Just out of nowhere, another one came sailing into view. Now there were a pair of them. I don't know if the hawk was surprised as I was. Maybe I could love someone else, I caught myself thinking Maybe I could if someone just sailed in like that from out of nowhere. Stranger things have happened. I didn't take a drink today.

(BLACKOUT)