

## Group

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A new play

By Alex Rubin

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## CAST

LILLA, 17	Reserved, but curious. Small for her age. Pronounced like Lilly, but ending in a.
KARI, 47	The director of the center, following in her mother's footsteps. Very particular. She tries very hard to be nurturing, but a latent nastiness comes out every once in a while. Pronounced CAR-ee.
RACHEL, 46	Struggling in New York City as a waitress, she's forgotten why she moved there.
JANET, 46	Famous author and notorious potty mouth. She's penned a romance series about yhetis that has skyrocketed her to pop culture fame.
JOY, 47	From Georgia. A southern lady with a naughty streak. Wife, mother of four boys. Plenty of fun.
RACH, 17	Rachel as a teenager. She is uncomfortable in her body and unsure of what she says.
METEOROLOGIST	a recorded voice in Act One, Scene Four

## SETTING

Present day, autumn. A shore town in New Jersey.

Finding Center, formerly Deena Boyd's Home for Disturbed Young Women, a house for teenage girls with eating disorders.

Events take place over the course of four days and three nights.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Group* was developed at  
HBMG's National Winter Playwrights Retreat.

ACT ONE  
SCENE ONE

Sunday afternoon. Early autumn in a present day New Jersey shore town.

The living room of an old Victorian house. The front door is stage right. At least a dozen coat hooks are screwed into the wall next to the front door and there are trays for shoes. The furniture in the room is mismatched and from several different time periods, clearly donated or bought at an extremely discounted rate. **The couch seats three and there are two chairs that each seat one, making up five seats in the room.** The seats surround a coffee table.

Instead of family portraits, the walls are adorned with framed inspirational quotes. **There are also four pieces of abstract art that seem somewhat out of place.** They are arranged in a square, with some space between each, on the center of the back wall. A short bookcase has a collection of pamphlets, text books, and young adult novels. A swinging door upstage leads off into the kitchen. French doors on stage left lead to a dining room. There are curtains on the off stage side of the dining room doors, obscuring the view of the room. Stairs upstage start near center and then continue along the upstage wall up to the second floor.

In the middle of the couch sits LILLA. She is clad in jeans and an oversized retro Rod Stewart sweatshirt. The sweatshirt swallows her small frame, falling down to her knees when she stands. Her hair is long and she uses it to partially obscure her face. She wears a knit hat. She picks at her slightly fraying jeans. She doesn't seem bored, just distracted.

A sound at the door as someone slips a key into the lock. LILLA scampers up and onto the stairs. She watches as KARI tries to open the door.

KARI (O.S.)

Come on. Come on, key. You can do it. You locked the door, you can open it. Come on.

The lock clicks.

KARI

Yup! That-a-girl! I knew you could do it.

The door swings open. KARI, balancing several grocery bags, teeters inside. She wears light washed jeans, clogs, a T-shirt and a cardigan that looks hand-knit. She leaves the door open as she makes her way to the kitchen. LILLA watches her squeeze through the swinging door, maneuvering the bags as she goes.

KARI

There we go. There we go. Okay, Easy. Yes. Yes. Okay. And...

KARI gets through the door and disappears into the kitchen.

KARI (O.S.)

Okay. Where does this all go? Where does it go, Kari? You take stuff from this kitchen everyday and you can't remember where they put anything.

LILLA starts to get up, but another woman appears at the door, RACHEL. She wears a loose fitting long sleeved shirt, jean jacket, leggings, and sneakers. LILLA sits back down quickly, watching and trying to stay small.

KARI (O.S.)

Does ketchup go in the cupboard or the fridge? Cupboard or fridge? Better safe than sorry.

Not yet moving from the door, RACHEL looks around the room, taking it in. She's been here before, but things are different. She takes a few steps inside then stops. She spends a few seconds looking at the art on the wall.

KARI (O.S.)

What about peanut butter? How have I never paid attention to whether the peanut butter goes in the fridge or not? Does it say refrigerate? Where would it say it?

RACHEL walks further in and sits on the arm of the couch. LILLA watches her intently.

KARI (O.S.)

And what about mustard??

RACHEL

Depends on the type.

A sound as KARI drops the mustard. She pokes her head out of the swinging door.

KARI

(said as a replacement for “shut the fuck up”)

Shut. The front. Door.

RACHEL

(gesturing to the front door)

You were the one that left it open.

KARI

Rachel!

RACHEL

Hey, Kari.

KARI

Rachel!

RACHEL

Yup. Hi.

KARI

Ra-a-a-chel!

RACHEL

I sincerely hate when you do that.

KARI

Get over here!

KARI holds out her arms and RACHEL grudgingly goes to her for a hug. KARI clearly hugs RACHEL too tight and too long for comfort.

KARI

It has been forever!

RACHEL

It's been thirty years.

KARI

No it hasn't!

RACHEL

Sure has.

KARI

It's been twenty-nine years! Oh my gosh! Twenty-nine years.

RACHEL finally extracts herself from the hug.

RACHEL

It's like The Twilight Zone. The house is the same, but different.

KARI

Well, we got new furniture, new paint, some fun little posters with inspirational quotes. I like the one that says, "Stars can't shine without darkness."

RACHEL

(motioning towards the paintings)

You left the paintings up.

KARI

Yeah. Yeah, it's important, I think. Holding onto a little bit of history.

RACHEL

It looks great. You've done a great job with it, Kari.

KARI

Thank you!

RACHEL

So... should I put my stuff upstairs or...?

LILLA scurries up the stairs and disappears.

KARI

Well, ah...

KARI makes a face.

KARI

You were the last one to RSVP so you actually have the couch.

RACHEL

Oh, that's totally fine.

KARI

I'm so sorry! It's just that the girls are taking up most of the rooms and then we got a new counselor. And we are very serious about respecting everyone's space. Everyone deserves to have a corner of the world that is totally theirs, that no one can disrupt -

RACHEL

No problem. The couch looks comfortable.

KARI

It is! It was my grandmother's. She donated it.

RACHEL

Great.

KARI

Yeah. Yeah, it's great.

The two women have reached a sticky point.  
They are out of niceties, but unwilling or unable  
to delve into deeper conversation.

RACHEL

So... I just have this one bag.

KARI

Oh, good.

RACHEL

Packed light.



KARI

Well, it's just overnight anyway.

RACHEL

Sure, yeah.

More stickiness.

RACHEL

Did you want some help in the kitchen?

KARI

Oh, no! No, no, no! Make yourself comfortable. Unpack. You can put your things... um...

RACHEL

I can probably just keep them in my bag.

KARI

Are you sure?

RACHEL

Totally sure.

KARI

So, just relax. I'm going to finish putting things away and then we'll have dinner when everyone gets here!

RACHEL

Everyone's coming?

KARI

Yes! Isn't that amazing?

RACHEL

It's great. I'm kind of surprised.

KARI

Why?

RACHEL

I... you know, it's just been a long time.

KARI

It sure has. It sure has. Well...

RACHEL

You wanted to finish -

KARI

Finish unpacking the groceries! Yes! Sit down and take a load off. I'll be right back.

KARI bustles back into the kitchen.

KARI (O.S.)

Oh!

KARI pokes her head back in.

KARI

I got Oreos for dessert!

KARI beams and RACHEL can't help but smile back. KARI ducks back into the kitchen. RACHEL wanders the room a little bit. She checks out the books on the shelf. She picks out a "Nancy Drew" book and flips through it, smiling.

There is a creak from upstairs. RACHEL looks up. She starts towards the steps. A third woman appears in the open doorway. She wears dark washed jeans, a leather jacket, motorcycle boots, and aviator sunglasses. She looks cool as hell.

JANET

Dr. Boyd would be appalled. You're letting all the warmth out.

RACHEL whips around and smiles.

RACHEL

Janet.

JANET

Hey, Rach.

They walk towards each other, JANET swaggers more than walks, meeting in the middle of the room and hug. This hug feels familiar and comfortable.

JANET  
How are you?

RACHEL  
I'm okay. You?

JANET  
I'm great. Jet lagged.

RACHEL  
I can't believe you came to this thing.

JANET  
It's for a good cause. And an excuse to get away from it all.

RACHEL  
It's so hard being famous.

JANET  
I'm not famous.

RACHEL  
Every single one of my friends has your books.

JANET  
Well, have them send me the copies and I'll sign them. Or my assistant will. She's getting very good at forging my signature.

RACHEL  
Keep an eye on your checkbook.

KARI enters from the kitchen, propping the swinging door open.

KARI  
Janet!

JANET  
Hey, Kari!

The women hug.

KARI  
Oh my goodness, my most famous friend! No one believes me when I say I know you.

JANET

No one believes me when I say I know you either. Well, no one knows who I'm talking about when I say I know you -

KARI swats JANET's arm.

KARI

You're terrible.

JANET

Well, it's fun to be terrible. Is this going to be it?

KARI

Nope! Everybody is coming.

JANET

Everybody?

RACHEL

Everybody.

JANET

Holy shit.

KARI

Language, please, Janet.

JANET

Are the girls here?

KARI

No, no. The girls are on a camping trip with the rest of the staff this weekend. It's just us until tomorrow.

As KARI says this, LILLA pokes her head out from the kitchen, eating an Oreo. She watches the women.

JANET

So, why do I have to watch my mouth?

KARI

Because we're ladies.

JANET and RACHEL laugh.

KARI

What's so funny?

RACHEL

Kari!

KARI

What?

JANET

You sound just like Dr. Boyd!

KARI

I do not.

JANET

The apple doesn't fall far from the tree.

RACHEL

(mimicking KARI and her mom)

Ladies, do not use foul language. It hardens the heart.

JANET AND RACHEL

(JANET joining in)

And softens the mind!

KARI

Well, it was good advice. I just didn't realize it at the time.

RACHEL

You were too busy doing everything your mom hated. Smoking.

JANET

Drinking.

RACHEL

Cursing.

JANET

You taught me some words I still can't admit I know.

KARI

I'm sure I couldn't even remember them.

RACHEL

I'm sure you could.

KARI

Ants on a log!

RACHEL

Sorry?

KARI

I made ants on a log. Just a second.

KARI turns towards the kitchen and LILLA ducks back into hiding. KARI exits, leaving RACHEL and JANET looking at each other quizzically. KARI reemerges with a plate.

KARI

Ants on a log! It's celery sticks, stuffed with peanut butter with raisins sprinkled on top.

KARI places the plate on the coffee table.

RACHEL

That's very cute, Kari.

KARI

Thank you.

JANET

Do you have any whiskey?

KARI

(darkly)

No.

JANET

I'm kidding. I'm kidding. I brought my own.

KARI opens her mouth to object, but RACHEL takes a bite of a log and cuts her off.

RACHEL

They're really good, Kari.

KARI

Thank you very much, Rachel. The peanut butter is organic.  
(regaining her hospitable demeanor)

Sit! Sit! Everyone sit.

The women all take seats in the room without looking. They know where they're supposed to sit. Throughout the scene, RACHEL eats several logs. KARI takes exactly one and slowly, deliberately takes bites. JANET takes one, but it sits in front of her on a napkin.

JANET

So, Kari. What's new?

KARI

Nothing. The usual.

JANET

Great.

RACHEL

Yeah, that's great.

KARI

Oh! You know who I saw the other day?

RACHEL

Who?

KARI

Kenny Cook!

JANET

Who?

KARI

Joy's old boyfriend. Kenny!

JANET

He still lives here?

KARI

No, he was visiting his dad. He lives in one of the Dakotas now.

Doing what? RACHEL

Accounting. KARI

Huh. Weird. JANET

What? RACHEL

I didn't know he could add. JANET

Yeah. People, right? Who knows how they'll end up. KARI

Where's Joy? RACHEL

She was landing around three so she should be here soon and then that'll be it. KARI

JANET opens her mouth, then closes it. She shakes her head.

What? KARI

Nothing. I was about to say something stupid. JANET

The women sit for a moment. KARI looks up.

Oh! The door is still wide open. We're letting all the warmth out! KARI

JANET and RACHEL smirk at one another as KARI hurries to close the front door.

A creak upstairs. RACHEL looks up.

Are you sure there's no one here? RACHEL



KARI

Of course not.

RACHEL

I just keep hearing creaks upstairs.

KARI

It's an old house, Rachel. It creaks. The lights flicker. Don't you remember that?

RACHEL

I guess. Maybe I was just so used to it then. Or it wasn't so old then.

JANET

Neither were we.

RACHEL takes another ant on a log.

RACHEL

It's weird to be back without Dr. Boyd here.

JANET

How are you getting along, Kari?

KARI

Fine, fine. It really wasn't a shock. Mom had been sick for so long and I had already taken over the center when she got diabetes. And, well, we had plenty of time to plan and say goodbye. It was very peaceful.

RACHEL

It's been three years since?

KARI

Yeah, about three years.

JANET

I'm sorry I couldn't make it.

RACHEL

Me, too.

KARI

Oh, no! You're so busy. It's fine. Joy came down and helped me take care of everything. And, Janet, you sent those gorgeous flowers. And Rachel texted.

RACHEL

That's a big deal. I don't have an unlimited plan.

KARI

And you're here now to honor her. I can't imagine how happy she'd be to see us all together again. You know, she's not gone. She's still here in spirit.

RACHEL

It's crazy. I feel like she could walk through that door at any minute.

The door swings open and the three women jump.

JANET

Shit balls!

KARI

Language!

JOY

(offstage)

Well, I know Janet and Kari are here.

JOY enters with a huge rolling suitcase and oversized tote bag. She is done up from head to toe. Her make up is perfect, her hair is perfect, her outfit is styled by someone like PINK by Victoria Secret, sweatpants and a hoodie that match perfectly are never meant to be worn for a workout.

JOY

Oh, thank god, a house that doesn't smell like hot dogs and puberty.

RACHEL

Well, not like hot dogs anyway.

JOY

Hey, Rachel. Hey, y'all.

Hugs are exchanged.

KARI

How was the flight?

JOY

The flight was fine. It's the drive here from Newark that's murder.

She stretches the kinks out.

JANET

You should have flown in to JFK and come down with me.

RACHEL

You left from New York? Why didn't you pick me up?

JANET

I didn't know you were coming.

KARI

You were the last to RSVP.

JOY

You were the last to RSVP, darlin'.

RACHEL

I've heard.

The four women sit down again as if they have assigned seats. KARI sits in the stage right chair, JOY plops in exhaustion into the stage left chair, RACHEL on the stage right side of the couch, JANET on the stage left side of the couch. The center of the couch is noticeably vacant.

KARI

Well, here we are. The 1988 graduating class of Deena Boyd's Home for Disturbed Young Women. Welcome home, ladies.

ACT ONE  
SCENE TWO

RACHEL and JOY are in the living room.  
RACHEL digs through her bag.

RACHEL  
Joy, can I use your shower? I want to clean up before dinner.

JOY makes an uncomfortable noise.

RACHEL  
What?

JOY  
It's just that I was kind of looking forward to having the bathroom to myself.

RACHEL  
Well, I wasn't proposing we use it at the same time.

JOY  
I know, it's just that I arranged everything the way that I like it.

RACHEL  
What do you think I'm going to do to it?

JOY  
I don't know.

RACHEL  
So, what's the problem?

JOY  
The problem is that I don't know.

RACHEL  
Fine, I'll use Janet's.

JOY  
Thank you so much, darlin'. You're so sweet!

RACHEL trudges up the stairs. JOY sits back  
and takes in the quiet.

KARI (O.S.)  
Joy? Can you help me with something?

JOY jumps up and looks around for a place to escape, but she doesn't know where KARI is coming from. She hits the light switch at the bottom of the stairs, turning the living room lights off and then dives behind the couch. Her head pops back up.

JOY

Hey.

LILLA's head pops out from behind the couch as well.

LILLA

Hi. Who are you?

JOY

Joy. Who are you?

LILLA

Lilla. I'm new.

JOY

Welcome.

LILLA

Thanks.

JOY

How old are you?

LILLA

Fourteen. How old are you?

JOY

Older. What are you doing being the couch?

LILLA

Nothing. What are you doing?

JOY

Hiding.

LILLA

From?

Kari. JOY

Why? LILLA

She's going to make me do things I don't want to do. Why are you hiding? JOY

I didn't say I was. LILLA

Are you in trouble? JOY

No. LILLA

Okay... Then, go find another place to hide. JOY

I was here first. LILLA

I'm older. JOY

I'm smarter. LILLA

How do you know? JOY

I'm omnipotent. LILLA

I don't know what that means. JOY

Exactly. LILLA

You look scared. JOY

LILLA  
No I don't.

JOY  
I know what scared looks like. It's all over your face.

LILLA  
I'm not scared.

JOY  
Are to.

LILLA  
What would I be scared of?

JOY  
I don't know.

LILLA  
So, there. There's nothing to be scared of and I'm not scared of anything.

JOY  
You've got to be scared of something.

LILLA  
I'm not.

JOY  
Liar.

LILLA  
I just like being behind couches. I like small places. I like being able to see everything around me. It makes the world feel smaller and that feels good.

JOY  
How much time do you spend behind a couch?

LILLA  
I don't know. Never thought about it.

JOY  
You do it more than once a week?

LILLA  
Yeah, sure.

JOY

More than once a day?

LILLA

Yeah.

JOY

What are you going to do when you graduate? You can't have a life behind the couch.

LILLA

I don't know. I haven't thought about it.

JOY

You haven't thought about what you'll do with your life?

LILLA

No. I don't want to think about things ending.

JOY

What's ending?

LILLA

My life.

JOY

What?

LILLA

When I turn 18, I'll have to be an adult. I'll have to take care of myself and work at a job I'll probably hate and pay bills and stuff. I'll have to stop doing anything fun and just be a grown up.

JOY

Your life doesn't end when you turn 18, you loon. It starts! You'll get to stay out as late as you want, drink, smoke, vote! Isn't that exciting?

LILLA

I don't know.

JOY

Well, what do you want to do with your life?

LILLA

I said I don't know.



How can you not know?

JOY

Like this: I. Don't. Know.

LILLA

JOY studies LILLA.

You're weird.

JOY

Yeah, I know.

LILLA

Joy!

KARI (O.S.)

Christ on a cracker. I'm making a break for it. Don't tell her you saw me.

JOY

Don't tell her you saw me.

LILLA

Deal.

JOY

They both slink away. LILLA creeps into the kitchen. JOY heads for the dining room.

Hey!

LILLA  
(whispering)

SHHH! What?

JOY  
(whispering)

Thanks for the talk.

LILLA  
(whispering)

JOY!!!

KARI (O.S.)

JOY  
(whispering)

Go!

LILLA disappears through the open kitchen door. JOY reaches for the handle on the dining room door. KARI appears on the landing and flicks on the light switch at the top of the stairs. The lights in the living room go on and KARI sees JOY at the dining room doors.

KARI

Joy!

JOY

Oh, hey, darlin'.

KARI

What are you doing?

JOY

Just... reacquainting myself with the house. Remember when we went into the dining room and... uh... had dinner?

KARI

We're eating at the coffee table tonight. If you go in there you're going to ruin the surprise.

JOY

Right, right the surprise. I was thinking... why?

KARI

Why what?

JOY

Why is this a surprise? We all know why we're here this weekend. I think it's nice you put something together for your mama, but I don't know why you're creating so much pomp and circumstance around -

KARI

I just don't want anyone to see it until we're all together, okay?

JOY

Yeah, okay, honey. Whatever you think is best.

KARI

I need your help in the kitchen.

JOY

Sure.

KARI disappears into the kitchen, JOY follows. Right before she goes into the kitchen, the lights flicker. JOY looks up at them and sees LILLA appear at the top of the stairs. JOY gives her a thumbs up and LILLA returns it. LILLA disappears upstairs and JOY exits into the kitchen.

ACT ONE  
SCENE THREE

A few hours later. The women are cleaning up dinner which they have eaten at the coffee table. JOY stands up from the floor.

JOY

Oh, my legs. Ow, ow, wowie.

KARI

I'm sorry! I'm so sorry!

RACHEL

Kari, stop apologizing. It's fine.

KARI

It's just, if we eat in the dining room, you'll see everything and I want it to be a surprise for the girls and you!

RACHEL

It's seriously okay.

KARI takes plates into the kitchen. RACHEL picks up some plates and starts to follow her.

JOY

Yeah, I don't need to walk anywhere. Except up those very steep stairs...

RACHEL

I'll switch with you.

JOY

No, ma'am. I am not giving up a night alone in a bed.

RACHEL exits to the kitchen. JOY walks over to the paintings on the wall and stares at them.

JOY

I think this one is upside-down.

JANET

You should make your husband sleep on the couch every once in a while. I hear it keeps the romance alive.

JOY turns a painting the other way.

JOY

Oh, he sleeps on the couch plenty. I've got two toddlers and three dogs that don't seem to know they have their own beds.

JANET

God, how do you do it?

JOY

Oh, it's tough work, sweetie, but when I see their little faces smiling up at me, it makes it all worth it.

JANET

That's nice.

JOY

It's bullshit. I get through it with happy pills and romance books on tape.

JANET

Glad things are going well. I'm turning in.

KARI comes running in from the kitchen.

KARI

No no no no no! We have to talk about tomorrow with the girls!

JANET

Can't we talk about it tomorrow morning?

KARI

We have activities planned for tomorrow morning.

RACHEL enters from the kitchen.

RACHEL

We do?

KARI

We sure do!

JOY

Darlin', I am pooped.

KARI

It'll only take a few minutes.

JOY

Then why can't we do it tomorrow morning?

KARI

Because tomorrow morning is already planned!

RACHEL

Okay, okay. Just... it's fine. Okay, Joy? It'll just take a few minutes.

JOY

Famous last words.

JANET

Well, I'm having a drink at least.

JANET pulls out a flask.

KARI

Janet, you can't have that here!

JANET

I'm not sixteen anymore. I can have this pretty much anywhere.

KARI

That is contraband.

JANET

What the hell are you talking about?

KARI

This is a dry household.

JANET

Because it's usually filled with teenage girls. But not tonight. So...

JANET moves the flask to her lips. KARI makes a squeaking sound and JANET stops. She looks at KARI and raises the flask again. KARI again makes a squeaking sound and Janet stops. This continues as is funny until finally:

JANET

Fine!

KARI

Thank you so much, Janet.

JANET

(whispering to RACHEL)

I'm just going to sneak it upstairs like when I was 16.

KARI

So, tomorrow, the girls will get back around noon. They need to do some tutoring, but by 3 P.M., they'll be free to meet you all.

JOY

Great. Great. Question: What are we supposed to say to them?

JANET

Just the "reach for the stars" crap like on the posters.

KARI

The posters aren't - they're not poop. And that's not what I want you to tell them. I want you to talk about your lives. Show them is that there is life beyond the center and their illness. Talk about your triumphs. About how eating disorders don't go away, but they also don't define who we are.

RACHEL

Our triumphs? Should I have won a gold medal before coming here?

KARI

You're perfect the way you are! Ladies, we are the most successful class to ever leave Finding Center.

RACHEL

What?

KARI

We renamed the center. It's not acceptable to use "disturbed young women" in the name of a business anymore. I even created this vision board -

JOY

(doubtful)

We're the most successful -

KARI

Yes! All of us live with eating disorders, but none of us have let it stop us from having full, healthy, successful lives. There is a light at the end of the tunnel for these girls and I want you to show it to them.

JANET

How exactly?

KARI

I'm going to talk to them a little about med school. Janet, you're going to talk about your professional success. They all know about Janet Kushner, the writer of Arctic Circle, but I want you to show them the hardworking woman behind it. Joy, I want you to talk about your family and the success you've had in your personal life. Rachel, you followed your dreams to New York City!

RACHEL

That's a really nice way to say I'm a failure.

KARI

You're not a failure! You are the perfect example of perseverance. Of falling down and getting back up! Again and again!

RACHEL

I don't feel like I come out of this looking as good as you guys.

KARI

Don't do that. Don't put yourself down -

RACHEL

Okay, okay, I know. Thanks.

KARI

In front of the girls. Don't put yourself down in front of the girls. It undermines what we're teaching them.

RACHEL

Ah, of course. So, I'll get all the self-deprecation out while it's just us four.

KARI

That would be great.

RACHEL

Kari, I really don't understand how this fits into a memorial for your mom.



KARI

It's about the work. The work that she did here.

RACHEL

And you consider us to be testaments to that work?

KARI

Of course!

RACHEL

But shouldn't we say something about your mom?

KARI

I'll take care of all that.

JOY

And I'll sing a damned song if you want me to. Are we done? Because I remember there being a claw foot bathtub that I did not appreciate in my youth.

KARI

Just one last thing.

KARI takes a deep breath.

KARI

We have this one girl. She's fourteen. She's... struggling especially hard. I just want you to be prepared to see that... She brings up some memories.

The women are silent for a moment.

KARI

I'm sorry. I know I just put a damper on the whole evening. I just wanted you to be prepared.

JANET

Yes, thank you, Kari.

JOY

You did the right thing, darlin'.

KARI

Rachel?

RACHEL

Yeah, thanks. I'm glad you said something.

KARI

Okay, well, enough talk. Everyone go get some shut eye. Activities in the morning!

Everyone starts to gather themselves. JANET, JOY, and RACHEL smile at each other over KARI's enthusiasm. KARI bounds up the stairs. At the top, she turns back around.

KARI

Breakfast is at six!

She disappears.

JOY

Wait. What??

JANET

She really has become her mother.

JOY

Did she say six?

RACHEL

It's everyone else's biggest fear to turn into their parents, but I feel like Kari kind of aspired to it.

JOY

As in A.M.?

JANET

I like it. It makes it feel less empty in here.

JOY

How are y'all not reacting to this?

RACHEL

I wake up at 4 A.M. to open a restaurant every day, Joy.

JOY

(to JANET)

And you?

JANET

I only sleep about four hours. Life's short. Why waste it in bed? Well, why waste it alone in bed?

A thump is heard from the kitchen.

RACHEL

What was that?

JANET

Sounds like something fell over.

RACHEL looks at the kitchen door anxiously.

JANET

What?

RACHEL

I don't know. I just keep hearing sounds.

JANET walks into the kitchen.

JANET (O.S.)

Oh my god!

RACHEL/JOY

What is it?/Janet?

JANET (O.S.)

What in the name of god!

JANET re-enters, her hand clutched to her chest.

JANET

You won't believe it...

She holds up a ceramic Santa.

JANET

Kari is already decorating for Christmas.

RACHEL

Jesus, Janet.

JANET

It's not even Halloween!



ACT ONE  
SCENE FOUR

A few hours later. RACHEL is asleep on the couch. There is a night light plugged into a socket stage right. It flickers. LILLA creeps down the stairs. She hits a creaky step and RACHEL pops up.

Hi. RACHEL

Hi. LILLA

I'm Rachel. RACHEL

Lilla. What are you doing on the couch? LILLA

There's not a bed for me. RACHEL

Oh... you can share my room if you want. LILLA

Thanks. I'm okay. RACHEL

You just got here today. LILLA

Yeah. RACHEL

I saw you come in. Are you coming from far away? LILLA

Not really. RACHEL

Me neither. Feels like it's far though. LILLA

RACHEL  
How long have you been here?

LILLA  
(thinking)  
Two years.

RACHEL  
Wow.

LILLA  
Yeah. My parents don't know what to do with me.

RACHEL  
What do you mean?

LILLA  
Can I come sit next to you?

RACHEL  
Sure.

LILLA sits next to RACHEL on the couch.

LILLA  
I like your hair.

RACHEL  
Thanks.

LILLA takes off her hat.

LILLA  
Mine's falling out.

RACHEL  
Oh... Are you sick?

LILLA  
It's because of the bulimia.

RACHEL  
You have bulimia?

LILLA  
Don't you?

No. RACHEL

What do you have? LILLA

I don't know. I eat a lot. Like a lot. RACHEL

I guess I kind of do, too. I just puke it up after. LILLA

LILLA giggles.

I don't really like how it feels to have food inside of me. LILLA

Seriously? It's the only time I feel okay. When I'm full, it's like, I'm happy. For a while. I'm like not thinking about the stuff that makes me sad when I'm eating. Then I feel sick and have to stop. RACHEL

Then what? LILLA

Wait until I feel better and eat again. RACHEL

This place is pretty nugatory. Just so you know. LILLA

What? RACHEL

Like it's pointless. LILLA

Oh. I feel like you could have just said pointless. RACHEL

I read a lot. LILLA

Why is it pointless? RACHEL

LILLA

We spend most of our time talking about how we feel. It's dumb. It's like, "I feel like shit. That's why I'm here. Make me not feel like shit." Except no cursing.

RACHEL

Well, it's a program, right? You have to get through all the talking and stuff to get better.

LILLA

I haven't gotten any better.

RACHEL

I like your hair, too.

LILLA

Even though it's falling out?

RACHEL

I like it because it's falling out. It looks artsy. Like some edgy artist took a razor and shaved spots.

LILLA jumps up.

LILLA

I am an artist!

RACHEL

Really?

LILLA

Hold on! I'll be right back.

LILLA starts up the stairs.

RACHEL

Where are you going?

LILLA

I want to show you my sketch book!

LILLA disappears up the stairs. RACHEL looks after her a moment and smiles. The night light flickers. RACHEL thinks of something and the smile melts away. She lays back down. LILLA comes back to the top of the stairs.



She sees that RACHEL has laid back down and stops. She holds her sketchbook and sits down on the landing, watching RACHEL.

ACT ONE  
SCENE FIVE

Morning. RACHEL and JANET are watching the weather channel. KARI and JOY are in the kitchen preparing breakfast.

METEOROLOGIST

(voice heard from the TV)

Thanks, Todd. Breaking news: Hurricane Carly has taken a turn here along the Jersey shore. She's going to head right into our area and then sweep up into New York.

KARI (O.S.)

Do you two want to help with breakfast?

JANET and RACHEL continue watching the news.

METEOROLOGIST

If you're near the coast, you're going to want to get to the grocery store now while the roads are still clear.

KARI (O.S.)

Hellooooooo?

JANET turns the sound up on the television.

METEOROLOGIST

Stock up on bottled water and dry goods. Hurricane Carly is also going to drift inland a bit.

KARI pokes her head out of the kitchen.

KARI

Hey!

JANET and RACHEL look back at her. KARI raises her eyebrows to the television. RACHEL mutes it.

KARI

Do you two want to help Joy and me with breakfast?

JANET

Kari, are you watching this?

KARI

I read about it in the paper this morning.

JANET

The storm is called Carly.

KARI

Yeah?

JANET

It almost has your name.

KARI

Almost.

JANET

It's funny.

KARI

Is it?

JANET

Yeah, Kari. It's funny.

KARI

Okay. Do you want to help carry breakfast out?

JANET thinks for a moment. She looks at the ceiling.

JANET

Do I want to help carry breakfast out...

JANET considers the questions, tilting her head back and forth, milking it.

JOY (O.S.)  
(from the kitchen)

Janet, get in here!

JANET

I guess I do.

KARI disappears into the kitchen. JANET starts after her.

JANET  
(to RACHEL)

Here I go, into the shit, as Hurricane Kari meets Tornado Joy!

RACHEL

I don't think they name tornadoes.

JOY (O.S.)

Janet!

JANET  
(holding her hand to her head)

Do they name migraines?

JANET opens the door and is met by KARI carrying out several plates and coffee cups.

KARI  
(cheerily)

Pardon me!

Once the way is clear, JANET exits to the kitchen. KARI carefully balances everything on her way to the coffee table.

KARI

You got this, Kari. You can do this.

RACHEL

Do you want a hand?

KARI

No, no! Sit! You do enough of this at work, I'm sure.

KARI puts the plates down on the coffee table. She sets things up.

KARI

I'm sorry again that we can't eat in the dining room.

RACHEL

It's fine, Kari.

JOY enters with more plates, cups, and almost everything else.

JOY

Incoming!

JOY sets up her plates. JANET enters holding a tiny pitcher with cream. That's it.

JANET

What would you two would have done without me?

JANET makes a show of very carefully carrying the cream and slowly placing it down on the coffee table.

JOY

Thank you, Janet.

JANET

You know what, Joy? You are welcome.

KARI

Bon appetite! I'm sorry again about the -

JANET/RACHEL/JOY

It's fine, Kari.

They sit around the coffee table like the night before with some in seats and others on the floor or sitting on arm rests. The women begin to eat. The manner in which each eats is distinct. The blocking of this should be casual and comfortable. They've all been doing this for years. JOY slowly makes up her coffee with Splenda. She picks up the milk carafe.

JOY

What kind of milk is this?

KARI

Soy.

JOY considers it, then passes on it. She sips her coffee, but doesn't touch her food. She will never eat and drink at the same time.

Meanwhile, KARI begins by downing a full glass of water. She then separates and carefully begins to eat each bite. It's as if she's measuring her body's reaction each time. She is trying to gauge when she is full.

RACHEL devours her food, eating quickly as if she's late for something.

JANET pushes hers around, taking the occasional bite. She tries to arrange it with large holes to make it look like she's eaten more.

KARI

So, the storm is just ruining everything.

RACHEL

What's up?

KARI

It's right smack dab between us and the girls. They won't be able to come back until it passes on up to New York.

JOY

When do we think that'll be?

KARI

Hopefully tomorrow. Maybe Wednesday.

JANET

I've got to get back, Kari.

RACHEL

Me, too.

JOY

(luxuriating in sipping her coffee)

Oh, I can stay just as long as you like.

JANET

What about your kids?

JOY

As long as you like, Kari.

KARI

It will probably just be one more day. You can stay one more day, can't you?

RACHEL and JANET shrink under KARI's pleading eyes.

RACHEL/JANET

Yeah./Fine, okay.

JOY

(into her coffee)

Let's make it a week.

KARI

Anyway, we can still do all sorts of things today!

JANET

I was hoping to relax. This is kind of the only vacation I get.

KARI

It'll be fun!

JANET

That's what your mom used to say.

KARI

And wasn't it?

JANET/RACHEL/JOY

No./Not really./Just awful.

KARI

You're all joking! Now,

KARI walks over to the bookshelf and pulls out colored construction paper and crayons.

KARI

Who's still got an artistic bug in them? Rachel?

RACHEL

What do I have to do?

KARI

You're going to make us some place mats.

RACHEL

I am?

KARI

With inspirational quotes! Feel free to take from the room. And any of the books on the shelf. They're all inspirational. Except for the Nancy Drews. Those are just fun. Janet, you're going to make some dream catchers for the girls.

JANET

That seems like cultural appropriation. Is that what you're teaching here?

KARI

And Joy, you're going to put together our vision board! It's going to express what we all hope to get out of our time here.

JOY

Janet, honey, could I have a nip of that flask?

KARI

This is going to be so fun!!!

JANET

The girls definitely aren't making it back today?

KARI

Definitely not.

JANET

Okay. I'm in.

KARI

Really?

JANET

Yes. But I want to give you a project, too, Kari.

KARI

I would love that!

JANET

You're going to write down every curse word you used to use when we were kids.



Why?  
KARI

JANET  
It is... a history of teenage vernacular from the 1980's.

KARI  
I'm not buying it.

JANET  
If you don't do your project, we're not doing ours.

JANET crosses her arms, followed by  
RACHEL, followed by JOY.

KARI  
Fine. But I'm not showing it to the girls.

JANET  
Well, of course not! I hardly think your penmanship will be good enough.

KARI  
My penmanship is excellent.

JANET  
Prove it.

The women all begin their projects. After a  
moment, RACHEL leans over to look at KARI's  
list. She giggles.

RACHEL  
That one's not real.

KARI  
Is to.

RACHEL  
I mean, it's a word, but it's not a curse word.

KARI  
It was the way I said it.

JANET  
I have a drinking a game we could play.

KARI

No, Janet.

JANET

We're just going to sit here in silence and do crafts? Come on, we're grown ass women! And the kids won't be home until tomorrow. It's like God thought to himself, "These bitches deserve a drink."

JOY

These bitches deserve to be basic bitches! I learned that from my awful kid's awful girlfriend.

JANET

Yes, we should get some white wine and be basic, basic bitches.

RACHEL

I hate that phrase.

JANET

Why? It's so real.

RACHEL

It's demeaning.

JANET

It isn't. It's empowering.

RACHEL

Calling ourselves bitches is empowering?

JANET

It's a joke!

RACHEL

Not to some people.

KARI

Can we not get all political this weekend?

RACHEL

I just think it's a huge step back for women to A: call ourselves or other women basic bitches and B: to allow men to call us that.

JANET

It's taking back the word.

RACHEL

Is it? Because it seems like men are still perfectly fine using it.

JOY

Well, I think it's appropriate sometimes.

RACHEL

Like when?

JOY

Like, when there's a woman at a regular beach, right? So there are kids and families there. And she decides to take off her top and sunbathe topless. Right next to all these kids and families.

RACHEL

So?

JOY

So, it's her just looking for attention in a really trashy way and so that's kind of a bitch move.

RACHEL

Or it's her showing that she can't be shamed into dressing the way society wants her to dress.

JOY

She's not wearing a tuxedo, Rachel. She's half naked!

RACHEL

So are the men at that beach. Men walk around without shirts on all the time. They go into restaurants without shirts on!

JOY

Okay, fine, she's making a statement. Bless her heart. But do I have to be a part of her statement? Do my awful kids? If I want to bring my awful kids to the beach for the day, I don't expect to get all caught up in a protest.

RACHEL

She's not protesting, she's trying to live her life.

JOY

But she made a choice that effects my life and my kids' lives!

RACHEL

Well, Joy, maybe you and your awful kids need your lives effected! Maybe your white picket fence life needs to be torn the hell down.

KARI

I'm starting to think that wine would be a good idea.

JANET jumps up.

JANET

I'll be right back!

KARI

You can't go out in the storm for wine, Janet.

JANET

I'm not.

JANET runs upstairs.

RACHEL

You know, life isn't some goddamn Sears catalogue, Joy!

JOY

Well, it's not a damned occupy movement either!

RACHEL

So, you're some NRA-loving, bible thumping conservative Christian now?

JOY

I always had the Lord in my heart, yes, ma'am.

RACHEL

And Kenny Cook's dick in your ass.

KARI

WHOA!

JANET (O.S.)

Did I miss something good??

RACHEL

Because that still makes you a virgin. Right, Joy?

JOY

I strayed from the path. But I kept my faith with the Lord. And he forgave me. And he gave me a husband, a home, and four beautiful children.

(small beat)

And you're just a waitress.

The women are quiet. After a moment, JANET appears on the landing holding two bottles of wine.

JANET

Do we want to start with an aromatic pinot grigio or a buttery chardonnay? Just kidding, I don't taste a difference.

JANET notices that something is off.

JANET

Did we change our minds to red? Because I have red.

RACHEL gets up.

RACHEL

Kari, where are those leftover Oreos from last night?

KARI

I don't think you should -

RACHEL

I'm fine. I'm just hungry.

KARI

They're on top of the fridge.

RACHEL exits.

KARI

Janet, why don't you help Rachel find the cookies?

JANET

I'll help myself find a corkscrew.

JANET exits into the kitchen.

KARI

What was the point of that?

JOY

She started it.

KARI

So you had to finish it.

JOY

Okay, Dr. Kari. Lay off. I'll apologize.

KARI

You can apologize, but that doesn't make it unsaid.

JOY

I understand that. I got upset. It happens.

KARI

It didn't have to. You're the only person that controls your actions.

JOY

Lord give me strength, she attacked me, too! Why is it always my fault?

KARI

I didn't say it was.

JOY

You know, I spend my days surrounded by five men telling me what color the sky is, I don't need it from her, too.

KARI

You know what I think?

JOY

What?

KARI

I think we should have group.

JOY

(turning on a dime)

You know what? It was all my fault. I take full responsibility. I'm going to tell Rachel that. No, I'm going to write her a letter. Everything is more meaningful as a letter, right?

KARI gets up.

We're doing this.

KARI

Please no.

JOY

Rachel! Janet!

KARI

I'll be good, I promise! God, I sound like the twins.

JOY

RACHEL and JANET enter. RACHEL is eating from a bag of Oreos and JANET is drinking wine straight from the bottle.

I couldn't find a corkscrew so I just pushed the cork in. It's still good though.

JANET

She takes a sip.

Harder to drink.

JANET

Everyone sit down.

KARI

Don't do it. It's a trap.

JOY

Come on.

KARI

Sounds serious.

RACHEL  
(to JANET)

Sure does.

JANET

Want to go up to your room to eat cookies and drink wine?

RACHEL

Sure do.

JANET

KARI  
(adopting an authoritative voice she clearly  
learned from her mother)

Sit. Down. Now.

Not daring to disobey, RACHEL and JANET  
sit.

Now...  
KARI

KARI walks over to the bookcase and opens a  
box. She takes a decorated stick out of it.

No.  
RACHEL

I'm not doing that.  
JANET

KARI  
We have some things to talk about. And I think the only way we're going to do it is by  
using the stick.

JOY  
To bash our heads in so we forget the whole thing even happened.

RACHEL  
I'd be okay with that.

KARI  
It's been a few years, so here are the rules -

JANET  
We know the rules -

KARI  
Then why are you talking?

JANET buttons her lips.



KARI

Only the person holding the stick may speak. Once she has said her piece, she will say to the group, "Thank you for listening," and then the group will say, "Thank you for sharing." Then the stick will be passed to the person to her right. The only time this passing pattern is interrupted is in the case of a dispute.

KARI looks pointedly at RACHEL and JOY.

KARI

In which case, the person who has said her piece will pass it directly to the person she is in conflict with. Now...

KARI considers the group.

KARI

Who would like to start?

Everyone looks elsewhere: at the ground, the ceiling. JANET pays very close attention to the cork bobbing in the wine bottle.

KARI

Then, I'll choose. Joy.

KARI passes the stick to JOY. JOY looks at it for a while. KARI bumps JOY with her hip to get her going then takes her seat.

JOY

I got a little... frustrated earlier.

KARI

Good language.

JOY

There is some stress at home. And there are some things that have happened in my life that I was not fully prepared for. Like having twins at 43 years old. And I'm in a house surrounded by men of every age and species. Even the dogs are men. And I've got a 12-year-old going through puberty early and 14-year-old going through puberty late so if I'm not mopping up the twin's doody, I'm washing the teenagers' socks. Those boys go through a lot of socks. One by one. Everyday a pile of sticky, crusty single socks. Anyway, if I did not have the lord to guide me and if I did not have faith in his plan, I might well set fire to the whole place and start over. Maybe in France... I love my family. I don't mean to say that I don't. But they test me each ever-lovin' minute of the day and I would really like to spend a few days without any fighting or crying or crusty socks.

I'm very sorry for what I said, Rachel. The truth is that I am very jealous of your life in the city. Even if you're just a waitress. Which you're not. You're... you're your own person. You do what you want, when you want, and you don't have anyone to answer to. That is an enviable existence.

JOY looks down at the stick, moving it in her hands.

JOY

So, um, thank y'all for listening.

KARI

Thank you for...

KARI gestures for JANET and RACHEL to join her.

KARI/JANET/RACHEL

Thank you for sharing.

JOY reaches the stick out to RACHEL.  
RACHEL gingerly takes it. She looks at the stick while she talks.

RACHEL

I meant everything I said.

JOY starts to speak, but KARI holds her hand up.

KARI

Rachel.

RACHEL

I don't mean it in a bad way. I'm just not going to apologize for the way that I feel or the things I believe in. I'm grateful for your apology, Joy. You know how much I respect you.

KARI

Why don't you put it into words for her?

RACHEL

I thought I was the only one that gets to talk.

KARI folds her arms, sits back, and nods her on.

RACHEL

I have always respected your strength. We were all from Jersey and it couldn't have been easy for you to come all the way here from Georgia and not have your family near. But you were always nice and would laugh at my jokes. I miss having a friend like you. People laugh in New York, but it's mostly about living in the boroughs or politics, and I don't really follow politics because it makes me upset and then I want to eat so I just avoid it... And brunch. Everybody jokes about brunch, but they also go to brunch like every Sunday. But, yeah, the thing that hurt wasn't being called a waitress, because A) it's a fact that I'm a waitress and B) lots of people have called me a waitress as an insult before. The thing that hurt was thinking that you thought less of me because I was a waitress. Because I already think pretty low of myself, but I don't want you guys to think of me that way. Thank you for listening.

KARI/JOY/JANET

Thank you for sharing.

RACHEL passes the stick to JANET on her right.

JANET

So, I wasn't fighting. Do I have to do this?

Everyone stares at her.

JANET

Okay, fine. Uh... What to talk about? I have sex a lot. Am I an addict? Well...

She takes a swig from the wine bottle and kicks her feet up on the coffee table.

JANET

Let's break down the word. Add, sex adds to my life. Dic -

RACHEL

Come on, Janet.

JOY

She's not going to let us go until you actually talk about something.

JANET

Look, I wrote a bunch of romance books about sexy yhetis as a joke. And people took it really seriously and they got published and now there are movies coming out and I'm a millionaire. My life is awesome as hell. It just goes to show you if you screw around enough, you'll be rich and successful. Thanks for listening.

JANET tries to hand the stick to KARI, but she doesn't move. JANET waves the stick a little.  
KARI doesn't move.

JANET

I said the thank you thing. Take the stick.

KARI gets up and picks up JANET's plate of uneaten food.

JANET

I wasn't hungry.

KARI stares at her.

JANET

Alright, fine, it tasted awful, but I didn't want to hurt your feelings.

KARI stares at her.

JANET

I ate a lot yesterday.

KARI stares at her.

JANET

Okay, fucking fine. I'm not eating very much. I'm not relapsing, I'm just not eating much. I have to go on a million talk shows and take pictures with these tiny little actresses and there's a lot of pressure for my 46-year-old ass to look like a 26-year-old ass. So I'm also getting butt implants. And yes, I've thought about it a lot and no, I'm not scared of the risk, because it's a bigger risk to go on The Tonight Show with my current ass. I wasn't going to share that with you, but Kari won't take the damn stick. So, there it is. THANK YOU. FOR LISTENING.

RACHEL and JOY look at KARI. She nods.

KARI/RACHEL/JOY

Thank you for sharing.

JANET

You are so fucking welcome.

JANET tosses the stick to KARI.

KARI

You guys, that was really good. That was really, really good. Okay, so I was going to save this until the girls got home, but I think we've really earned it with all of our open, honest conversation.

KARI walks over to the french doors that lead to the dining room.

KARI

Obviously, we aren't all here today. There is someone missing.

JOY

I know, honey. It's a big change to be here without your mom.

KARI

Death is a shadow that darkens the road to recovery. It... obscures the way for awhile and makes us unsure of our footing.

RACHEL looks around.

JANET

(quietly to RACHEL)

What are you looking for?

RACHEL

(quietly to JANET)

Which poster she's quoting.

KARI

Ladies, this is the most successful class to ever graduate from the center, because we overcame the greatest obstacle that any class ever faced!

JANET

Parachute pants?

KARI

The loss of a sister.

RACHEL looks up at KARI in alarm.

Hey, Kari -  
JOY

Just a second.  
KARI

Honey, I don't think -  
JOY

I have the stick, Joy!  
KARI

KARI waves the stick. Everyone keeps quiet, but fidgets nervously.

In the fall of 1987, we lost someone.  
KARI

RACHEL gets up.

I don't want to do this. This isn't why we came.  
RACHEL

But it's why I invited you here!  
KARI

RACHEL starts towards the kitchen. KARI runs to cut her off.

The strength it took to get past this horrific tragedy -  
KARI

RACHEL runs for the stairs, but KARI cuts her off again.

- has marked us for life as survivors of disease and loss.  
KARI

RACHEL runs for the front door. KARI blocks her again.

And if we can survive that, we can survive anything. And so can the girls that are here now.  
KARI

RACHEL

Stop! I don't want to - I - I don't want to talk about this, Kari.

RACHEL runs to the dining room. KARI lets her go. RACHEL swings open the french doors to reveal KARI's surprise: Photos of LILLA are hung all over the walls, on the inside of the doors, everywhere.

KARI

We have to talk about it, Rachel. We have to talk about Lilla's death.

LILLA appears on the landing, looking down at the four women.

END OF ACT ONE.

ACT TWO  
SCENE ONE

Night. The french doors to the dining room are closed again. RACHEL is not on the couch. JANET appears. She has a flashlight. She sneaks down the stairs, trying not to make noise. When she's halfway down, the flashlight flickers and dies.

JANET

Damnit.

JANET shakes the flashlight. LILLA appears.

LILLA

What are you doing?

JANET jumps.

JANET

Jesus! Where'd you come from?

LILLA

Up here.

JANET

No shit. What do you want?

LILLA

I saw you get up. I wanted to see where you were going.

JANET

The bathroom.

LILLA

Why don't you use the one upstairs?

JANET

Because I'm going to take a shit so huge the smell would wake up the whole floor.

LILLA

Ew.



JANET  
Yup, so you better get back to bed.

LILLA  
Are you breaking into the kitchen?

JANET  
No, Malibou Barfy, I don't eat.

LILLA  
Well, then -

JANET  
I'm getting out of here.

LILLA  
You're running away?

JANET  
Just for a couple hours. I'm going to meet Kenny Cook down by the beach.

LILLA  
I though he was hanging out with Joy.

JANET  
They never said they were exclusive. And I haven't had sex with anyone but my own hand since the summer.

JANET makes her way down the stairs, skipping a step. LILLA starts to follow again.

JANET  
What??

LILLA  
Can I come?

JANET  
No.

LILLA  
I won't hang out with you guys. I just want to go put my feet in the water.

JANET

Oh my god. Do you lose brain cells when you puke up your dinner?

LILLA

I've just been feeling kind of numb lately. I feel like the water would help.

JANET

Ugh. Fine. Come on.

LILLA starts down the stairs.

JANET

Stop!

LILLA freezes.

JANET

Skip that step. It squeaks.

LILLA neatly jumps the step and the two head for the door. JANET holds it open for her.

JANET

After you, Barfy.

LILLA exits. As JANET starts to follow her, the door to the dining room opens. JANET looks back as light spills into the living room from the dining room and RACHEL emerges. The photos of LILLA are still up. Very subtly, the sound of rain starts in.

RACHEL

Hey.

JANET

Hey. I was just going out for a smoke. You want?

RACHEL

It's raining.

JANET looks out the door, surprised by the rain. Her mind was elsewhere.

JANET

We can stand in the doorway and blow out.

RACHEL

Okay, sure.

JANET

What were you doing in there?

RACHEL

Thinking.

JANET lights a joint and passes it to RACHEL.  
She takes a drag without looking and coughs.

RACHEL

(coughing)

That's not a cigarette.

JANET

Who said it was?

RACHEL

(coughing)

Oh shit. That's some good weed.

JANET

I've got a guy in L.A. He comes by with it in a suitcase; everything in little plexi boxes with the name and description on it. I don't know the difference, I just ask him what he's smoking. It's always strong.

RACHEL

God, I knew this weekend was going to be fucked up, but I thought it was just going to be regular fucked up. The kind you'd expect from an eating disorder reunion.

JANET

Leave it to Kari. She really knows how to throw a party. I mean...

JANET walks over to the dining room.

JANET

Just check out these homemade decorations! She should - and I mean this, I really do - she should have a show on HGTV. Memorial Makeovers with Kari Boyd!

RACHEL thinks for a moment.

I'd watch that.

RACHEL

Yeah, me, too.

JANET

They smoke a little more. RACHEL looks at the paintings on the wall.

I think that's wrong.

RACHEL

What?

JANET

I think the paintings are in the wrong order.

RACHEL

How can you tell?

JANET

RACHEL walks over and looks at the back of one, the joint pinched between her fingers.

Yeah, they're numbered.

RACHEL

RACHEL starts to move them around. JANET leans against the door and watches. Finished, RACHEL steps back.

See?

RACHEL

Yeah... the shapes are way better this way.

JANET

They make sense like this.

RACHEL

Is that thing dead?

JANET

Almost. Here, you kick it.

RACHEL

RACHEL returns to the door and hands JANET the joint. JANET pinches it and takes the last few little drags.

RACHEL

You really haven't been eating?

JANET

Give me a break, Rach.

RACHEL

You brought it up.

JANET

Because I had Kari staring me down. I'm fine. It's not a big deal.

RACHEL

That's what you used to say in group.

JANET

Well, you know what? I grew up and it turns out, it's really not a big deal. Everyone in Hollywood has an eating disorder. Or some chicks get lucky and have some metabolism disease and can't gain any weight.

RACHEL

Why couldn't we have that problem?

JANET

I know, right?

They laugh darkly.

RACHEL

God, I hate my life.

JANET

Join the club.

RACHEL

I don't think we have the same membership.

JANET

Right. Okay. You feel empty inside, this wasn't how you thought life would be, you can't even think about having a relationship because it seems both unattainable and horrifying, and you still have a pair of pants in your closet that are too small, but you try them on every once in a while just to see if they fit.

RACHEL

Dead on. Now tell me about your life.

JANET

I just did.

RACHEL

You're going to complain about being rich and famous?

JANET

Damn straight. You think I want to be rich and famous off of soft core yheti porn?? I wrote it as a joke. I was making fun of Twilight. I was like, what's going to be hilarious as a supernatural love story? Oh, big, hairy, toothy yhetis living in the freaking Arctic falling in love against all odds! You know who's playing the big, hairy, toothy yheti? Ryan Gosling. They actually have to spend thousands of dollars turning Ryan Gosling into an ugly albino Big Foot for my movie and people are lapping it up like the last drop of vodka in Russia.

RACHEL

Hm, maybe I'll see it.

JANET

Were you not going to see it?

RACHEL

It looked dumb. You just told me how dumb it is.

JANET

That doesn't mean I don't want you to see it! Have you read the books?

RACHEL

I read the first one... The preview of the first one on Amazon.

JANET

Seriously?

RACHEL

It's twenty-nine dollars, Janet! As a kid I got the whole "Boxcar Children" series for twenty bucks. There are 150 of those.

JANET

It just would have been nice to have you support me.

RACHEL

Cut it out, Janet. You're in New York all the time. I tell you when I'm in a show. You never come.

JANET

I'm really busy.

RACHEL

Okay, bullshit. I call bullshit on you. We're going to be doing a lot of lying to some teenage girls tomorrow, so maybe we should save it for them.

JANET

Okay. I don't like seeing you.

RACHEL

Great. See how nice this is?

JANET

It's not about you. I don't like seeing anyone. I spend the whole time wondering what nasty thing they're thinking about me.

RACHEL

Why?

JANET

When everything started happening, there was a lot of stuff on the internet about me. And I looked.

RACHEL

Oh shit.

JANET

People love the books, but they hate me. Like "burn the bitch" hate me. I'm a satanist, I'm an evangelist, I'm a slut, I'm an idiot, I let Sven end up with Inga.

JANET hears the ridiculous thing she has just said.

JANET

I really cannot express to you how much of a joke these books are. So now every dinner, every interview, every meeting or coffee date, I'm just imagining all the horrible things someone could be thinking about me.

RACHEL

But I'm not some rabid fan. I know you.

JANET

Maybe that's what's scariest. You guys know me better than anyone so if I find out what you think and it's bad... then it's true.

RACHEL

I think you're smart and talented and driven. I knew you were going to do something amazing when we were kids. You were the best of us.

JANET looks at the dining room.

JANET

Second best.

RACHEL

Okay, I'm stoned. I'm going to bed.

JANET

I think I'm going to walk down to the beach.

RACHEL

Why?

JANET

I just want to dip my feet into the water.

RACHEL

It's raining and windy.

JANET

I think it's lightened up a bit.

RACHEL

(getting upset)

Don't go down there, Janet.

JANET

I'm okay. I'm going to come back.

RACHEL

I can't stop you. You're an adult. Don't do anything stupid.



Who me?  
JANET

And bring an umbrella.  
RACHEL

RACHEL heads back into the dining room.  
JANET watches after her, concerned, for a moment then reaches for an umbrella. The sound of rain fades out. LILLA pops her head in.

You coming?  
LILLA

Coming.  
JANET

JANET leaves the umbrella. They exit.

ACT TWO  
SCENE TWO

Tuesday morning. The women sit around the coffee table eating pop tarts silently. KARI looks around.

Sorry.

KARI

Kari, please stop apologizing.

JANET

You didn't knock the power out. The storm did.

RACHEL

I should have a hot plate or something.

KARI

Hot plates still need electricity, darlin'.

JOY

What do you use when camping?

KARI

Fire. Would you like to set the coffee table on fire? Then we could cook some bacon.

JANET

I just wish we had coffee.

RACHEL

We could drive down to the Dunkin' Donuts.

JOY

In a hurricane?

KARI

It's just a little weather.

JOY

Thunder cracks loudly.

It's closed on Tuesdays anyway.

KARI

RACHEL

What?

JANET

Why?

KARI

Small shore town during the off-season. Each store kind of chooses a day off. Monday is the diner, Tuesday is Dunkin' Donuts, Wednesday is the dry cleaners, Thursday is the gym, Friday is the market, Saturday is the bank.

RACHEL

What about Sunday?

KARI

Everyone's closed. That's God's day.

JOY

Amen. Except I still think God would want me to have coffee.

RACHEL

Have you heard from the girls?

KARI

Yes, it's, uh... it's going to be one more day.

RACHEL

Kari, I can't.

KARI

Just one more day. You'll be back in the city tomorrow night.

RACHEL

I have to work. I'm losing money every day I'm here.

JANET

What would you make in a shift? I'll just give it to you.

RACHEL

No, thank you. I'm fine.

JANET

Come on, don't be a martyr. Take the money and stay.

KARI

We still need to talk about Lilla -

RACHEL

Nope. Nope. No. Not doing that.

KARI

Please, Rachel. It's such a big part of why we're all here.

RACHEL

But I didn't know that. That's not what I signed on for. It's not what any of us signed on for. Correct me if I'm wrong. Janet? Joy?

JOY

You really did blind-side us with this one, Kar.

KARI

I'm sorry. I thought it would be a good surprise.

RACHEL

H-how could that be a good surprise?

KARI

Well... no one ever... I feel like we never got closure.

RACHEL

That's a big part of someone killing themselves. They don't leave you feeling very fulfilled by it.

KARI

I just mean...

KARI searches for the words.

JANET

You mean that we never really talked about it. All of us.

KARI

It was the only thing mom wouldn't let us talk about in group. Just in our one-to-ones. So, I thought -

JANET

Oh god, she's going to get the stick out again.

KARI

It really helped last time!

JOY

(in a horrifyingly calm and sweet tone)

Kari, darlin', if you get that stick out again, I'm going to put it away right up there where the sun don't shine, sweetheart.

JANET eyes JOY, sensing danger if coffee is not procured.

JANET

I wonder if we could get the water hot enough from the tap and kind of swirl the coffee grounds around in it.

JOY

Do you think that'll work?

JANET

I'm willing to try it if it'll keep Kari from walking around with a literal stick up her ass.

JANET and JOY head to the kitchen. JOY begins to pray along the way.

JOY

Dear Lord, I know you have people in real peril to care for, but if you could find a moment to grant me this one wish...

JANET and JOY exit to the kitchen.

KARI

Rach -

RACHEL

I'm going to need to stop you right there. Because if you think Joy's threat was scary, you do not want to know what I will do to you if you try to talk to me about this again.

KARI is silent. The both look at the remains of the pop-tarts on the table. RACHEL reaches over and takes JANET's. KARI looks at her.

RACHEL

She's not going to eat it.

RACHEL takes a bite and chews, looking into space.

KARI

Can I talk to you about something without getting my head bitten off?

RACHEL

You can try. Are you feeling lucky, Kari?

KARI

How are you doing with your recovery?

RACHEL

I don't remember re-enrolling in the center.

KARI

I just want to make sure you're feeling okay. And check if you need any help coping.

RACHEL squares off to KARI.

RACHEL

I'm fatter than you. Just say it.

KARI

That's not what I'm observing. Everyone's body has a different home.

RACHEL

Do I eat more than you? Yeah. I do. And I bet I eat stuff with more sugar and carbs and butter. I love butter. But I'm not eating 10,000 calories a day. I'm not stopping at Krispy Kreme to buy a dozen doughnuts after eating four Happy Meals. I order in burgers and fries, but it's just one burger and one side of fries. I go out drinking with friends and I don't think about how many calories there are in the beer I'm drinking. Because I don't care enough. I break my back working a shitty job to pay for my shitty apartment and so I don't care enough to not eat a third pop-tart. I know that doesn't fit into your fairytale for the girls, but I told you when you invited me that I wasn't going to be good for this. You're the one that insisted I come.

KARI

I don't think any of that. This is all your own perception, Rachel.

RACHEL

It's just us, Kari. You don't have to lie. You don't have to play doctor.

They stare at one another for a moment.  
RACHEL wins, KARI looks down first. But  
RACHEL instantly feels bad about it.

RACHEL

I'll make you a deal. I'll stay one more night.

KARI looks up, about to say something in  
excitement, but RACHEL continues.

RACHEL

But we don't talk about Lilla. Not to each other and not to the girls.

KARI

It's the whole reason -

RACHEL

You said it was about showing them that there is life after the center. There wasn't for Lilla.  
I will stay and I will tell them about how I preserver in the city and I will put on a great  
show for you, but Lilla isn't a part of it. That's the deal.

KARI thinks this through. She looks at  
RACHEL, seeing as much determination as she  
sees pain.

KARI

Deal.

RACHEL starts to clear up the plates.

RACHEL

Oh, and I'm also taking your bed tonight. Your grandma's couch sucks.

JANET and JOY burst into the room.

JANET

They said it couldn't be done!

JOY

They said all hope was lost!

JANET

They laughed!

JOY

They scoffed!

JANET

But here it is for your caffination and delight!

JOY holds up a pot of what looks like dirty  
water with mud at the bottom.

JOY

Something resembling coffee!



ACT TWO  
SCENE THREE

Tuesday night. The electricity is still out so the women have set up flashlights all over the room. They are putting a freshly delivered (pretty wet) pizza box on the coffee table. KARI is staring at the paintings.

KARI

Did someone move these around?

She starts rearranging them. They don't go back to the original placement.

RACHEL

I can't believe they delivered in this storm.

JANET

Oh yeah, people will do anything if you offer money or sex. And I offered both.

KARI looks appalled.

JANET

Just kidding, Kari. I gave the kid a hundred. I'm not going to play out *The Graduate* with all of you here to witness.

KARI

What does everyone want to drink?

JANET holds up her wine bottle.

JANET

I've got mine.

RACHEL

I'm sharing with Janet.

JOY

Do you have Coke?

KARI

Yup.

Great. JOY

KARI starts towards the kitchen.

I'll have a Sprite. JOY

KARI stops dead. All look at JOY.

What? JOY

Oh my god. RACHEL

I totally forgot about this. JANET

What? JOY

Sprite is not Coke, Joy. KARI

No. No no. Y'all are not gonna gang up on me with this. Yes, there is the Coke brand, but there's also Sprite and Dr. Pepper and such and they're all Cokes. JOY

They're all sodas. All Coke is soda; not all soda is Coke. RACHEL

It is at home. JOY

It's wrong. JANET

It's not wrong, it's regional. JOY

That's like saying, "Do you have lasagna? Great I'll have ravioli." KARI

RACHEL

“I drive a Lambrogini. It’s a Honda Civic.”

JANET

“I screwed George Clooney. He was Rob Schneider.”

JANET, RACHEL, and KARI crack up.

RACHEL

Omigod. Omigod. My stomach! My stomach hurts.

JOY

Serves you right. Y’all are being ugly. Kari’s laughing so hard she’s crying.

KARI

(sniffing)

It’s not that. I just miss this all so much. It makes me cry. Anytime I think too much about this, us sitting around laughing and joking, I get all weepy.

RACHEL

Oh god.

JANET

No, I get it. It’s all the nostalgia of it all. The same thing happens when I watch *Beaches*. I’m just a wreck, but you know what? I keep doing it. I’m a glutton for nostalgic punishment.

RACHEL

Videos of soldiers coming home to their families. Gets me every time.

JANET

Oh, no.

RACHEL

Seeing them surprise their kids or their girlfriends. And they just run to the soldiers and the soldiers pick them up and there’s always a crowd cheering. I just sit there and sob. And I watch them at dumb times, too. Like right before I go to work.

JOY

The ones of people hearing for the first time.

KARI/RACHEL

Yes!/Oh my god. With the implants.

JOY

They start crying and then I start crying and it's just...

RACHEL

Especially when it's kids.

JOY

Oh lord, especially when it's kids!

KARI

Dog funerals.

JOY

What?

KARI

Police dog funerals.

RACHEL

I don't understand.

KARI

It's just like... All these people in uniform, saluting this dog being buried. And they love him so much. And you just know, like, he was such a good dog.

KARI starts to cry again.

RACHEL

Oh, no. Oh no, oh no, oh no.

RACHEL starts to cry. JANET starts to cry.  
JOY Starts to cry.

JOY

Oh, you bitches.

RACHEL

You basic bitches!

Now they're all doing something somewhere between laughing and crying and no one can stop. After a while, KARI sobers.

KARI

I was wrong.

RACHEL

About what?

KARI

About why I asked you all back here. This is why.

They smile at one another.

RACHEL

So... can we eat before the pizza gets cold?

She touches the pizza.

RACHEL

Colder?

JOY

I want a big piece.

They all dive into the pizza. They all take a bite and sigh or moan. Pizza is fucking good. This time, everyone eats. It's not completely free of ticks, but it is much more natural than it's been up until this point. Unnoticed by the other women, KARI pours some of JANET's wine into a coffee mug and drinks from it throughout the rest of the scene.

JANET

God yes.

KARI

Jersey shore pizza. There's nothing like it.

JOY

It's so bad, but it's so good bad.

RACHEL

Like, actually just trash pizza, but you can't stop eating it.

KARI

This is why I've never left. It has nothing to do with the center. It's all about the pizza.

JANET

Holy shit, you've never left here.

KARI

Well, not never. I went to college.

RACHEL

Yeah, but it was less than an hour away.

KARI

It was seventy minutes away, thank you.

JANET

You've really spent your whole life in this town. And this house.

KARI

Not my whole life! Mom didn't buy the center until I was twelve.

JANET

Where were you before that?

KARI

Further north.

JANET

So, wait. What came first: you or the center?

KARI

What do you mean?

JANET

Well, it's weird, right? That your mom would run a center for eating disorders and her daughter would have an eating disorder?

RACHEL

And then she would treat her daughter at that center?

KARI

What's the matter with... It's like... She didn't treat me really. She led group with all of us, but she had someone else do my one-to-ones.

RACHEL

Still.

Still what?  
KARI

It's weird.  
RACHEL

Not weirder than the hospital.  
JOY

What hospital?  
JANET

JOY looks at KARI.

Sorry.  
JOY

KARI  
What the hell. What am I hiding it for, anyway? Before the center, Joy and I were treated in this hospital.

What??  
RACHEL

It was huge. There were hundreds of girls there.  
JOY

KARI  
Not just for eating disorders. There were girls there that were on drugs or suicidal.

JOY  
Or had nervous breakdowns. We were all lumped together.

Did they abuse you?  
RACHEL

KARI  
What? No! It's not Charles Dickens, Rachel!

JOY  
It was just this big machine, you know? And everything was sterile and clinical. You couldn't actually get better there. You were just there to, I don't know, be somewhere. You know, my parents just didn't want me doing what I was doing at home. So, it was better to send me there.

KARI

I'm sure they thought they were doing the best thing for you.

JOY shrugs.

KARI

So, anyway. My mom would come to visit and when she saw nothing was getting better and I was just freaking miserable, she sold our house, bought this place for real cheap, fixed it up, and opened Finding Center.

JANET and RACHEL are gobsmacked.

JANET

Your mom built this place for you?? Last time I went home, my mom forget to pick me up from the airport.

KARI

It's amazing, right? I didn't really appreciate it as a kid. I actually really hated her for it. I think that's why I acted out so much. That's pretty awful, isn't it? My mother literally gives up her life to help me and I act like she ruined mine.

RACHEL

Kari, you were a kid. You wanted Barbie's dream house, not Kari's eating disorder house. Complete with Skips Dinner Skipper and, I don't know, Stay Sick Stacie.

All the women look at her.

RACHEL

Leave me alone. It's not any worse than yheti porn.

JOY

No, it's worse.

JANET

So, Joy. You, what? Followed Kari here?

JOY

Dr. Boyd called my parents, let them know how much nicer it would be for me to be in a house instead of a hospital. She picked me up the same day she got Kari.

JANET

This is blowing my goddamn mind.

RACHEL

I can't believe we never knew this.



KARI

It wasn't something I wanted to share.

JOY

You know, Dr. Boyd wasn't a real doctor, right?

RACHEL/JANET

What??? Liar!/Shut the fuck up.

JOY

Kari? Am I lying?

KARI

I mean she wasn't like an MD.

JANET

I'm suing.

KARI

She never claimed to have gone to medical school!

RACHEL

She called herself Doctor Boyd!

KARI

People assumed.

RACHEL

Because she put the word doctor in front of her name! If I call myself Father Rachel, people are going to expect I'm celibate and can give a sermon. And only one of those things is true.

JANET

I did love your sermon on Christian charity.

JOY

Look, y'all, Dr. Boyd didn't give out drugs. She didn't have us do anything but sit in circles and talk and eat normally. And Dr. Muller and Dr. Rodriguez were here during the day if we needed anything more than that. We were fine, right? Let me ask you, do you feel like you didn't get what you needed out of this place?

RACHEL and JANET look at each other before  
grudgingly responding.

RACHEL  
No, I got what I needed.

JANET  
Okay, but Kari, you really did go to medical school, right?

KARI  
Yes! I have my diploma upstairs.

JANET  
Those can be forged.

KARI  
I still have half of my textbooks.

RACHEL  
Those can be stolen.

KARI  
Joy came to my graduation!

JANET  
Joy can be bought.

JOY  
And for very little.

KARI  
I went to school! I learned... all the things a doctor learns!

JANET  
A likely story.

JOY  
Hell, I'm even starting to doubt it.

KARI  
Ah, screw you all. I'm going to bed.

She tries to get up.

KARI  
I'm full of pizza. I can't move.

Lucky you don't have to.

RACHEL

KARI looks at RACHEL.

I'm still taking your bed.

RACHEL

Fair enough.

KARI

Do you want to go get in your pajamas before I go up?

RACHEL

No, I'm just going to take my pants off and go to sleep.

KARI

That's the Kari I remember.

JANET

I would tell you to shut up, but I'm too full.

KARI

RACHEL gets up.

Okay, goodnight everyone. Kari, where am I going?

RACHEL

Last one on the right.

KARI

RACHEL hesitates.

Really?

RACHEL

Really.

KARI  
(burps)

RACHEL slowly climbs the stairs and disappears down the hall. KARI is now trying to take her pants off. She's not paying much attention to anything else.

Come on, Kari. One leg at a time. KARI  
 Is she going to be okay in there? JOY  
 Yeah, why? KARI  
 It's her old room. JOY  
 So? KARI  
 Kari. It's her and Lilla's old room. JOY  
KARI looks up towards the landing.  
 Oh, fu- KARI  
KARI she trips on her pants and falls. She giggles from the floor.  
 What is going on with you? JOY  
JANET looks next to KARI's chair. She pulls out her bottle of wine. Now empty.  
 Looks like Kari broke a house rule. JANET  
 I just had a couple sips. KARI  
(from the floor)  
 That's all it takes when you haven't been drinking. JANET  
 I drink! I drink... KARI  
 Coke! (pointing at JOY)

KARI busts out laughing.

JANET

Well, goodnight.

JOY

You're just going to leave her like this? Alone?

JANET

No, I'm leaving her with you.

JANET exits upstairs, turning off some flashlights along the way. JOY sits KARI up and joins her on the floor at the coffee table. After a moment, JOY lays the bottle on it's side on the table and starts to spin it. LILLA appears at the top of the stairs. She slowly walks down, watching them.

KARI

What are you doing?

JOY

It's called Spin the Bottle. Kenny taught it to me.

KARI

Goddamn shocking. You're going to get pregnant playing that with him.

JOY

Get bent.

KARI

Is that his favorite position?

JOY

We're not even having real sex.

KARI

What the dick does that mean?

JOY

We're doing it, you know, in god's back door.

KARI

That is the grodiest thing I've ever heard.

LILLA hits the creaky step.

Come on over, you little sneak.

KARI

Hey.

LILLA

What are you doing creeping around?

KARI

Nothing.

LILLA

Are you spying on us?

KARI

No.

LILLA

Gonna tell Dr. Boyd?

KARI

No.

LILLA

Good. Come here.

KARI

LILLA joins them on the floor.

Joy is going to teach us how to play spin the bottle.

KARI

With all girls?

JOY

Do you see any cock around here?

KARI

God, you have the dirtiest mouth, Kari.

JOY

Isn't that what Kenny says to you after -

KARI

JOY  
Okay! Spin the bottle. So, you spin a bottle -

KARI  
No shit, Sherlock.

JOY  
Fuck you, Watson. And whoever the bottle points to when it stops spinning, you have to kiss them.

KARI  
You start, Joy.

JOY spins the bottle. It lands on LILLA.

JOY  
So now I would kiss Lilla.

KARI  
So do it.

JOY  
No.

KARI  
Why not?

JOY  
Because I don't like girls.

KARI  
It's not about liking. It's a game.

JOY  
A game you play with boys.

KARI  
Oh my god, you are such a puss.

LILLA  
I don't mind.

JOY and KARI stare at LILLA.

LILLA  
I've kissed girls... I've kissed a girl.

KARI  
Who?

JOY  
Leave her alone, Kari. This is dumb. Let's go back to bed.

KARI  
Shut up, Joy. Who?

JOY  
I'm tired.

KARI  
You're not tired. You're just being a little bitch. Is it someone we know?

LILLA  
Uh...

KARI  
Is it Rach?

LILLA  
It's not important.

KARI  
Oh my god. It's totally Rach. Are you two like scissor sisters?

LILLA  
What?

JOY  
Cut it out. She doesn't even know what you're talking about.

KARI  
Do you like lick her vag?

LILLA  
No.

JOY  
Quit bein' ugly, Kari.



KARI  
(to JOY)

Shut up.

(to LILLA)

I won't tell anyone.

LILLA

It's not like that.

KARI

But it is Rach?

LILLA

I didn't say -

KARI

But you didn't say it isn't.

LILLA

I don't want to play anymore.

LILLA starts up the stairs.

KARI

Where are you going? To see Rach?

LILLA turns back to say something, but KARI puts her tongue between her two fingers, signing cunnilingus. LILLA runs up the stairs as KARI giggles. JOY gets up.

JOY

I'm going to bed.

KARI

Why? Because I called her on her shit?

JOY

I'm just tired is all.

JOY heads for the stairs. The lights flicker on.

JOY

Oh thank god. I can set my curlers in the morning.

KARI sobers up. We are back in the present.

KARI

Joy, wait. Can you hold on a second? I want to talk to you about Lilla.

JOY

(without turning around)

Nobody wants to talk about it, Kari. Go to sleep.

JOY exits upstairs, leaving KARI alone. She curls up on the couch, but her eyes stay open.

KARI

(whispering to herself)

It's my fault.

ACT TWO  
SCENE FOUR

A vignette appears downstage. It is the first time we are leaving the living room. RACHEL stands in front of KARI'S room, the one she shared with LILLA. She takes a deep breath, opens the door, and takes a step inside. But it is not present day RACHEL that appears on the other side of the door. It is 17-year-old RACH. She is a wonderfully warm young woman, but uncomfortable in her body in a way the adult RACHEL has forgotten. She immediately sees LILLA waiting for her on the bed.

Hey, Rach.	LILLA
Hi.	RACH
I was waiting for you.	LILLA
Yeah, I know.	RACH
Where were you?	LILLA
Talking to Kari.	RACH
Um... what did she have to say?	LILLA
Nothing. Just stupid gossip. You know Kari.	RACH
Yeah. I have to tell you something.	LILLA

RACH  
I have to tell you something, too.

LILLA  
Yeah?

RACH  
Do you want to go first?

LILLA  
Not really.

RACH sits down next to LILLA. They look at each other. LILLA holds RACH's hand.

RACH  
I'm leaving.

LILLA stares at RACH, shocked.

RACH  
Dr. Boyd cleared it today. She says I can go home. It's so dumb that I came back this year, you know? So I can be here like a month. It would have been easier to just not come back.

LILLA gets up and walks away from RACH.

RACH  
I'm sorry. I know we had all of these plans for this year and graduation. But I think it's good -

LILLA whirls back around, putting on a happy face.

LILLA  
Of course it's good! It's amazing. You should be so, so proud of yourself, Rach.

RACH  
I know. I just feel bad leaving you.

LILLA  
You're going to call and stuff, right?

RACH  
Of course.

LILLA

So, it'll be just like you're here. But I have my eyes closed the whole time.

RACH

Yeah. Sure.

LILLA sits back down next to RACH and looks into her eyes.

LILLA

This is really good. This is exactly what's supposed to happen when you come here. You get better and you go home. I just haven't gotten the hang of it yet.

RACH

Your turn.

LILLA

What?

RACH

You had something to say.

LILLA

Oh... no, your thing makes my thing kind of moot.

RACH

Moot?

LILLA

It means it doesn't matter.

RACH

It matters. Anything you have to say matters to me. You're my best friend.

LILLA

Is that what we are?

RACH

What else would we be?

LILLA

I don't know. Do you ever think of us as more than best friends?

RACH

What like mega friends?

LILLA

No... like... like...

LILLA looks into RACH's eyes. She leans in and kisses her. It is quick and soft. After it's over, LILLA doesn't stay too close, but she also doesn't back away.

RACH

Lilla. I met a boy this summer. At home.

Now LILLA recoils.

RACH

I think you'd like him. I really like him. He's from New York City. But he moved into my neighborhood at home. I think we're going to go out when I get back.

LILLA

That's great.

RACH

I'm sorry.

LILLA

Don't be. It's great, Rach. Everything is great. I'm going to take a walk.

RACH

It's after lights out.

LILLA

I'll be quiet.

LILLA heads for the door. She turns back in the frame.

LILLA

I really am so happy for you. You've got your life back.

LILLA exits. RACH watches after her. After a moment, she curls up on the bed in a tiny ball.

RACH

(whispering)

I'll miss you.

ACT TWO  
SCENE FIVE

Wednesday morning. The storm has passed and the sun streams through the windows. Adult RACHEL is waiting by the door. Her bags are packed and she's wearing her coat.

RACHEL  
(yelling up the stairs)

Janet, come on! We're going to hit traffic.

JANET  
(from off)

So?

RACHEL  
So, I don't want to drive in traffic.

JANET  
I'll drive.

RACHEL  
No you won't.

JANET  
Why not?

RACHEL  
Because you had white wine for breakfast.

JANET appears upstairs and trudges down the steps. She wanders over to the paintings.

JANET  
Like I haven't driven drunk before.

RACHEL  
I don't want to hear that.

JANET  
Neither did the cops, but sometimes things get said.

JANET rotates a painting.

Come on!  
RACHEL

Shhhhh. Okay. I just have to pack.  
JANET

You said you already packed!  
RACHEL

JANET accentuates each syllable of the next line as she makes a production going up the stairs.

Some. Times. Things. Get. Said.  
JANET

She finally disappears upstairs. RACHEL plops down on the couch and folds her arms. KARI comes in from the kitchen.

What's going on?  
KARI

I have to get back.  
RACHEL

You said you were going to stay. You promised.  
KARI

I know. I'm sorry.  
RACHEL

The girls are going to be here in an hour. You can't wait an hour?  
KARI

We'll get stuck in traffic.  
RACHEL

Janet!!!  
(up the stairs)

You're taking Janet with you?  
KARI

She wanted to go, too.  
RACHEL



JOY appears on the landing. She is bedraggled.

JOY

Why... are people... yelling?

RACHEL

Sorry, Joy. I'm trying to get Janet to hurry up.

JOY

Are you going out for coffee?

RACHEL

We're leaving.

JOY

What?

KARI

(quietly)

It's fine.

JOY

It's not fine. We all said we'd stay. They don't have to leave right now.

RACHEL

Yes, we do.

JOY

You don't.

RACHEL

Well, I want to. And I'm an adult. And adults do what they want to do, when they want to do it, and I want to leave -

(up the stairs)

NOW, JANET!

JANET (O.S.)

I'm just putting on my shoes!

RACHEL

So, we're going now.

JOY

It's just an hour.

RACHEL

Then do it on your own if it's so easy.

JOY

I didn't say it was easy. I said it was an hour away. An hour away from a commitment you made to Kari.

RACHEL

No, the commitment I made was for 24 hours. My commitment window has come and gone.

JOY

So you're just going to leave your friends -

RACHEL

Joy, I'm not going to sit here and lie to a bunch of sick girls about how their lives are going to be after the center. My life is shit. It was shit when I was here and it's sure as hell shit now. I'm not going to pretend everyone's life is great just because they grow up!

KARI

Jesus Christ, Rachel! It's not about life being great. It's about life being bearable.

That stops RACHEL for a moment.

RACHEL

I'm sorry I'm taking Janet. I needed the ride.

KARI

Maybe we could all sit down -

RACHEL

Janet!

JANET (O.S.)

I'm just putting my shoes on!

RACHEL

I thought you were doing that two minutes ago.

JANET (O.S.)

Nope.

KARI

Rachel, I just want them to know that the pain, any pain, is bearable.

RACHEL

Well, that's a lie.

KARI

No, it isn't.

RACHEL

Failing at life is not bearable. Being alone is not bearable. Having your best friend swim out into the ocean and drown herself is not bearable. And knowing... knowing that it's your fault is not goddamn bearable.

RACHEL hangs her head for a moment. KARI and JOY are dumbstruck. RACHEL raises her head.

RACHEL

JANET!!!!

JANET appears on the landing.

JANET

Geeze, Rach. I'm right here.

RACHEL

Let's go.

RACHEL heads for the door. JANET totters down the stairs with her suitcase.

JANET

What? No bellhop. This hotel is terrible.

KARI

Please, can I talk to you for just a second.

RACHEL

We have to beat the traffic.

KARI

Rachel, it wasn't your fault.

RACHEL

I don't need your sympathy.

KARI

It was mine.

RACHEL stops at the door and turns around to face KARI.

RACHEL

Yeah, I get it. We were all here. We all share the burden. Whatever. You don't know the whole story, okay?

KARI

She was in love with you and I knew it. And I told her I was going to tell everyone she was a lesb- lesbian. Her parents were already ballistic over all the money they paid for her to be here. They would have killed her if she was... And I was so mad back then about my mom trapping me here and... I didn't care about hurting someone else. Because it made me feel better for just a second. And I'm sorry, Rachel, that I tricked you into coming here and made you relive all of this, it's just that... I can't live any longer without telling you all. It's my fault. I killed her. I made her feel like she had no way out. And I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

RACHEL stares at KARI for a moment.

RACHEL

You're so stupid, Kari.

She walks over to the bookcase and takes out the stick. For a moment, KARI flinches like RACHEL might hit her with it. RACHEL sits down in her place on the right side of the sofa. Slowly, each woman takes their place as well. As RACHEL begins speaking, LILLA appears on the landing. Throughout the following, she walks down the stairs. As each woman talks, she rearranges a panel of the art installation.

RACHEL

She told me how she felt. I didn't know what to do. I didn't know how I felt. I made up a story about a boy. I was seventeen and stupid and I let her walk out of the room. I was scared she would ruin my chance to go home.

RACHEL lets out a sad little laugh.

RACHEL

I spend my whole life like this, you know? Shutting down and avoiding. I do it with work, with acting, with relationships. Especially with you guys. Why else would I have sent a goddamn text message to you when your mom died, Kari? I'm too scared to deal. Nothing's changed between seventeen and now. I'm still pulling the same shit. I'm just better at justifying it.

RACHEL's eyes meet JANET's. JANET puts her head in her hands and slowly, without looking, reaches for the stick.

JANET

I was there.

All look to JANET.

JANET

I took her to the beach with me that night. I was going to meet someone and she wanted to come. She said she just wanted to put her feet in the water. And when she was gone, I thought she had come back to the house. I didn't even look for her. I didn't take two fucking minutes to look. Because apparently I don't give a shit about anyone but myself. And, you know, the real fucking kicker is that I don't even like myself.

JOY slides the stick out from JANET's hand. She grips it tightly.

JOY

I can't really remember the day after. I know that afterward I just felt numb. For years after it was like I was putting on a show of feeling, but inside, it was just flat. Then I had the twins and all of a sudden I exploded with feeling. I feel raw from it like every nerve is exposed. I relive every conversation I had with her. I close my eyes and see her walking into the water. Every noise wakes me up because it's her creeping down the stairs. Sometimes my husband finds me behind the couch and I can't move because everywhere else is big and painful. It feels like it's crushing me and I wish I was numb again because I don't know how to keep going like this. I don't know how to go home and try to keep living like this.

JANET reaches for JOY's hand. She passes her the stick so they can hold hands. RACHEL reaches out for KARI.

LILLA moves the last painting. The panels are no longer abstract.

In the correct order, facing the correct way, they form a portrait of five young women. LILLA walks over to the couch, and takes the seat in the center that has remained empty until now.

JANET puts the stick down on the sofa between her and RACHEL which means it ends up in LILLA's lap.

LILLA

It's really nice being back in the house. I hope everyone had a good summer and is excited for senior year! I know soon we're all going to leave and go our separate ways and do some really amazing things and some just regular things, but being in this house for four years, that's like almost a quarter of my life and it's been the most consistent thing in my life. I don't know what I'm going to do when I leave. Leaving seems like a death in some way. The old Lilla will have to die in order for me to have a life outside of here. That's scary. But right now, I'm happy just to be here with you. Thank you for listening.

RACHEL/KARI/JANET/JOY

Thank you for sharing.

END OF PLAY.