

Performance rights must be obtained before production. For contact information, please [see the Myth of Summer information page](#).

THE MYTH OF SUMMER

A comedy in two acts

By Conni Massing

©August 14, 2017

**Represented by: Michael Petrsek
Kensington Literary Agency
Email: kensingtonlit@rogers.caom
Phone: (416) 848-9648**

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MELANIE	mid-twenties
DACIA	forty-ish
BRENDA	mid-thirties
KEVIN	early thirties
JESSICA	sixteen years old
WERNER	late twenties
JACKIE	early thirties
MORDRED	late teens

The Myth of Summer was first produced by Alberta Theatre Projects at the Enbridge playRites Festival of New Canadian Plays (January 28 – March 6, 2005) and subsequently published by Playwright Canada Press in 2008.

The action takes place on and around an artificial-looking beach, which represents several locations: the beach in front of Brenda and Jessica's home, the Waterpark at a large shopping mall, and the studio of Dacia's special events company. Other locales may be played on the periphery of the beach.

JESSICA, 16, enters. She stares up at the sky.

JESSICA: Joan? If you're a saint does that automatically make you an angel? So you could hear me if you wanted to? Maybe even see me. But maybe you're busy. *(beat)* Doing what? Herding goats? Sorry. Dumb question. *(beat)* I just played - I just pretended to be you in a play at school. I spent so much time imagining you that I... got infected with your spirit. *(embarrassed)* Oh, man... Not like germs. Like faith or something. I'm not religious - but I think about you all the time. If you're out there, maybe you could give me a sign?

SCENE - BEACH

BRENDA sits on the beach, wearing a brightly coloured bathing suit plus cover-up. JACKIE, in business wear, paces as she talks on her cell.

JACKIE: Listen, you stupid little jerk! I'm not as happy as I should be. Now what are you going to do about it?

She covers her phone and turns to BRENDA, who is unpacking a picnic.

JACKIE: I'm not hungry. *(back to her call)* Okay, you should know I'm feeling a little homicidal. I could twist the head off a kitten or- *(staring at her cell)* Little bastard hung up.

BRENDA: What was that?

JACKIE: The Tomorrow Store. They sold me a laptop and now they won't take responsibility for the fact that that it's a hunk of junk!

BRENDA: Shhh - have a sandwich.

JACKIE: I can't - I think I might have a wheat intolerance thing.

BRENDA: Don't be ridiculous. Here -

JACKIE: Brenda -

BRENDA'S cell rings. She passes the sandwich to JACKIE and answers.

BRENDA: Hello? Hi sweetheart - (beat) No. No, you can't go. No! (beat) I'm at the beach with Auntie Jack. Listen, I wanted to know if I could sign you up for swimming. Orienteering? Jessica?

BRENDA stares at the phone - JESSICA'S gone.

JACKIE: What's our little charmer up to now?

BRENDA: She's dating this horrible little dark cloud. I can never remember his name - Mordred, Morbid - something that means death in Welsh. He skulks around the house like he's going to break into the chicken coop or something.

JACKIE: He's obviously been chosen for maximum shock value.

BRENDA: I think they're having sex.

JACKIE: Have you asked her?

BRENDA: She won't tell me what she had for lunch. I thought you could talk to her.

JACKIE: And say what?

BRENDA: She's just like you were at that age. Like you still are at your age.

JACKIE: Hey -

BRENDA: We've lived here almost a year and she's never even dipped a toe in the water. She says it smells like bleach.

JACKIE: It is pretty sanitized.

BRENDA: It's clean - what's wrong with that?

JACKIE: Nothing. (*looking around*) But there's a lot of pink.

BRENDA: It's terra cotta. And it's a leisure community not a wilderness preserve.

JACKIE: That's for sure - didn't all the fish in the lake die? It was in the paper. All the fish baked to death in the sun because the water was too shallow or something-

BRENDA: (*notes JACKIE'S pacing*) Will you relax?

JACKIE: I'm freezing.

BRENDA: It's lovely out. Now sit. Eat.

JACKIE reluctantly takes a bite.

JACKIE: That's a pretty big cloud. You wanna pack up and go to a matinee?

BRENDA: I have a meeting with a party planner. Tom wants a fundraiser before the end of the summer.

JACKIE: What, now you're his campaign manager?

BRENDA: Yes. We could go to a movie tonight, after my scrapbooking class -

JACKIE: I can't.

BRENDA: You still seeing...the step dancer?

JACKIE: No. I'm going to...a course.

BRENDA: You're taking a course?! That's great! What is it?

JACKIE: Just...anger management.

BRENDA: Oh. Sounds...

JACKIE: Fun? Maybe we'll make anger management scrapbooks.

BRENDA: Now, Jackie -

JACKIE: It's probably going to be a big old wank-fest-

BRENDA: No, I think it's great.

JACKIE: Oh, come on! Just because I won't put up with crap -

BRENDA: But sweetie...

JACKIE: Look - I was going to quit the McMurtry account anyway. Just because I'm in marketing doesn't mean I'm morally bankrupt! The thing with the car dealership wasn't so much being fired as acknowledging how completely incompatible-

BRENDA: *(suspicious)* Is everything okay at work?

A beeping noise. JACKIE frantically paws through her purse looking for her phone.

BRENDA: Jackie?

JACKIE finds her phone just in time to hear -

VOICE: Remember to breathe.

BRENDA: Remember to breathe?

JACKIE: *(defensive)* It's a yoga thing.

BRENDA: Okay...

JACKIE: I swear - if one more person tells me to breathe- like I need to be reminded - like I'll forget -

BRENDA: Breathe!

JACKIE: Okay, okay. You're right - I'm changing my attitude.

JACKIE closes her eyes very tightly, bunches her hands into white knuckle fists and grimaces.

BRENDA: Jackie?

JACKIE: Shhht! *(ferociously)* I'm meditating!

BRENDA: Don't you need a mantra or something?

JACKIE: Yes. I say - this time...I let go. (*gritting her teeth*)
This summer...I'm going to let go. (*a burst of rage*)
After I bring the Tomorrow Store to their knees!

JACKIE charges off in a different direction, then:

JACKIE: (*speaking to the Anger Management class*) Hi. My name's Jackie. I'm here because...I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to take it anymore. (*an embarrassed silence*) Alrighty, then. No jokes. Just do the assignment. Uhh...one thing that really makes me mad?

BRENDA: (*on her cell*) Jessica, pick up!

JACKIE: Okay - summer. I know what you're thinking - it's your favourite time of year. The sky's so blue, the grass is so green - blah, blah, blah. I hate it. Bad hair, bug bites, Winnebegos clogging up the roads. The whole thing gives me a rash. Seriously, I think I might be allergic to the sun. The only thing that gets me through the summer is hockey.

BRENDA: Jessica! You are not going to a bush party!

BRENDA and JACKIE move off.

JESSICA: I'm at a bush party with Mordred. I leave the bonfire and walk across the field toward the house because there's no way I'm peeing outside. It's like...pitch black. I'm kind of stoned and there's all these ruts and gopher holes. I'm thinking - this is what you dealt with all the time when you were on the road with your army. That must have been so cool! To be inspired to do something, like, huge. To be given a mission! If I had a mission I wouldn't have to worry about getting a summer job, right? (*beat*) I trip on a big clod of dirt and suddenly the sky lights up. Maybe the moon exploded - it's that bright out. Then I see the lightning. A huge zig-zag-zig. I'm the Goddess in charge of storms. I point - very imperious - I say "Kapow"! (*stops, stunned*) And now...it's chasing me! Lightning! Lightning - ripping across the field - chasing me!

The lightning strikes.

JESSICA: Hot light. I pee my pants. I faint. When I wake up I have burn holes in the bottom of my combat boots. Mom freaks.

BLACK-OUT.

SCENE - DACIA'S STUDIO

Vivaldi's "Summer" suite and lights fade up on MELANIE, wearing a Carmen Miranda-style head dress. KEVIN fusses with her hat.

MELANIE: I just think...that the French know how to live. They have long lunches. They eat quite a lot of butter on everything and yet they're still skinny and elegant and hardly ever have heart attacks. In the summer - they flee Paris and rent old stone country houses. They eat goose liver and drink wine - they French kiss!

KEVIN: It just wants more, doesn't it? I'm thinking...bananas.

MELANIE: Uh...are you sure that's French?

KEVIN: Tahitian. I think they were colonized by the French.

KEVIN moves off just as DACIA enters.

DACIA: Lovely! Let's rehearse, shall we?

MELANIE: Fall...golden preamble to winter's harsh...

MELANIE freezes.

DACIA: Harsh peril. Per-il. And then you start down the aisle...

MELANIE: Fall - golden preamble to winter's harsh peril. Which yields to...

DACIA: Rebirth! Rebirth!

MELANIE: Sorry.

DACIA: Do you want to go back to the script?

MELANIE looks away, intimidated by DACIA.

MELANIE: *(squeaky voice)* Minnie's not comfortable.

DACIA: What?

MELANIE: *(back to her own voice)* I'm getting nervous about doing this in front of people. And I don't want to say "afterbirth" in my wedding ceremony.

DACIA: It's re-birth-

MELANIE: It's gross.

DACIA: You wanted something different.

MELANIE: I did - I do! I just don't know what Leon's going to think.

DACIA: He'll be over the moon.

MELANIE: He'd be just as happy getting married in Vegas -

DACIA: *(horrified)* Vegas!

MELANIE: He says he's going along with this for me. Isn't that sweet?

DACIA: I don't know why in the world I bother.

MELANIE: What's wrong?

KEVIN enters with WERNER in tow.

KEVIN: Uh...Dacia.

DACIA: Kevin, before I forget - the colours for the political fundraiser for Tom what's-his-face are orange and green. And his wife - what's-her-name -

KEVIN: Dacia -

DACIA: Brenda! Her name's Brenda - she wants balloons.
(bitterly) Everyone wants balloons.

KEVIN: This is Werner Klopenhauer.

DACIA wheels around.

WERNER: *(German accent)* Six months ago I am immigrating. I am here to heal bodies - I am massage therapist - and to learn wilderness. But I do not understand so many things. I need to be touching the wild.

DACIA: *(intrigued)* And how can I help you?

WERNER: I am reading your advertisement. *(carefully unfolding it from his wallet, reading)* "Getting the Most Out of Your Summer."

WERNER carefully refolds the advertisement and stares at DACIA expectantly.

KEVIN: Oh, that's an ad for party / supplies-

DACIA: *(cutting KEVIN off, taking WERNER by the hands)*
You...have come to exactly the right place.

MELANIE: Oh, absolutely. "Bells and Bows" is the very best special events company in the city -

DACIA: Thank you Melanie-

MELANIE: Dacia's helping me pick out colours and-

DACIA: Only a very small part of what I do.

WERNER: I am not wanting a colour -

DACIA: No, indeed. You want...significance.

KEVIN rolls his eyes.

WERNER: Yes.

DACIA: Just let me get my appointment book.

DACIA charges off. WERNER stares at MELANIE - love at first sight? - and KEVIN stares at WERNER - love at first sight?

WERNER: *(to MELANIE)* You are here to...learn the summer?

MELANIE: No, I'm-

WERNER: You are already knowing about summer.

MELANIE: Oh, I'm no expert.

KEVIN: I am!

WERNER: Yes?

KEVIN: Touching the wild. Right up my alley.

WERNER: (to MELANIE) Where do you go to have the summer?

MELANIE: I go to the big mall. They have a beach there - in the Waterpark? I burn so easily it's better if I stay inside.

KEVIN: Oh, please.

WERNER: Ahhh...yes. Because your skin is very...

MELANIE: Very white.

WERNER: (German) "Delicat".

KEVIN sees DACIA about to enter, heads her off at the pass.

KEVIN: Let me handle this. He just needs someone to take him to a beach or something -

DACIA: Aren't we perhaps barking up the wrong tree?

KEVIN: No -

DACIA: Again?

KEVIN: No! What are you up to?

DACIA: It's a perfect opportunity for me to manifest my destiny as a...spiritual guide.

KEVIN: Wow. Just like that.

DACIA: I've been thinking about this for a long time.

KEVIN: You mean since the Winchester wedding?

DACIA: They're incredibly dull -

KEVIN: You rode a pony into their reception!

DACIA: You know I can do so much more than pick out matching balloons and tablecloths!

KEVIN: I'm sick of balloons too -

DACIA: I want to restore meaning to people's lives!

KEVIN: What about me?

DACIA: You can restore meaning to people's...hats.

KEVIN: Every summer it's the same -

DACIA: You should talk -

KEVIN: Last year it was aromatherapy - for inner city kids -

DACIA: Remember Labour Day! So Werner - we may begin immediately.

KEVIN charges after DACIA, smiles at WERNER.

KEVIN: Werner!

Latin American salsa music fades up. DACIA dances to the music. WERNER, KEVIN and MELANIE make somewhat lame attempts to dance as they speak.

MELANIE: I try not to worry -

KEVIN: What about Labour Day?

DACIA: Pounding on my door at four in the morning. "Summer's over - and what have I got to show for it. He's gone - he's like, so gone."

MELANIE: The French never worry -

WERNER: Testing, testing. One,two,three. Now I am beginning my Canadian summer.

DACIA dances off.

KEVIN: Dacia's being melodramatic - there were so many other factors. I was overtired. My blood sugar was low - I'm hypoglycemic - and, well - there might have been just a teensy little bit of some mood-altering substance left in my system.

WERNER: Land of the silver birch...home of the beaver.

MELANIE: I'm from a town in New Brunswick and although the Francophone population there is quite huge I am not. French. But this summer I have decided to follow the Gallic example.

WERNER: This summer...no more weltschmerz.

SCENE -

JACKIE enters, pushing JESSICA in a wheelchair.

JESSICA: I spend the night in the hospital eating chocolate and generally amazing the nurses. Even the cleaning staff comes into my room to see the miraculous holes in the soles of my boots. I don't tell them what I really think - that my saint has spoken to me - that Joan of Arc has burned holes in my boots.

JACKIE: You'll do practically anything to get attention won't you?

JESSICA: What?

JACKIE: You're lucky you weren't killed!

JESSICA: And that makes you mad?

JACKIE: Your mother doesn't need this.

JESSICA: *(rolling her eyes)* Oh please - I bet she's already made a scrapbook about it.

JACKIE: She was hysterical!

JESSICA: I didn't do it on purpose!

JACKIE: I think you're having the time of your life.

JESSICA: No, I'm not-

JACKIE: I know I would be.

JESSICA stares at JACKIE, then grins.

JESSICA: Okay, but I'm sick of it now. Can't you get me out of here?

JACKIE: And then what?

JESSICA: I dunno. Go somewhere and get some decent food?

JACKIE: No, I mean - promise me you'll hang out with your mother, okay? On the beach?

JESSICA: Oh man - it's so creepy - everyone stares out their window at you and -

JACKIE: Okay, okay. Just spend some time with her.

JESSICA: I have to get a job.

JACKIE: I'll give you a job - stop being such a little shit and just be a member of your family.

JESSICA: I need to work -

JACKIE: There'll be plenty of time to work later on in your life-

JESSICA: I need money!

JACKIE: What for?

JESSICA: This thing...

JACKIE: What?

JESSICA: A trip.

JACKIE: A trip.

JESSICA: *(an excited burst)* It's this festival in Nevada on the last weekend of summer! Hundreds of people go to the desert - and people go and do art and they burn this huge man -

JACKIE: Hold it - hold it - they burn a man?

JESSICA: He's like three stories high and he's made of wood - and when he burns it's like everything bad about your life burns with it. It's really - what's that word -

JACKIE: Toxic?

JESSICA: The whole experience - it changes you forever.

JACKIE: And you want to go.

JESSICA: I am going - with Mordred. He's going to perform his music. You can't tell mom, okay?

JACKIE: Jess, don't do this to me.

JESSICA: You're not going to tell her, are you?

JACKIE: No, you're going to tell her.

JESSICA: Are you kidding?

JACKIE just looks at her.

JESSICA: Okay. Are you taking me home or what?

JACKIE: I'm scared to go anywhere with you - you've already attracted the wrath of God once.

JESSICA: No - I attracted her attention - that's different.

JACKIE: Oh yeah?

JESSICA: Just before it happened, we were standing around the fire and Mordred was talking about Burning Man. Of course that made me think of Joan -

JACKIE: Are you still obsessed -

JESSICA: And then boom - I get hit by lightning. Freaky, huh?

JACKIE: Jess...

JESSICA gets out of the wheelchair.

JESSICA: Come on! You could take me out for dinner.

JACKIE: Can't. I have to go to a - thing.

JESSICA: What?

JACKIE: A class.

JESSICA exits, pushing the wheelchair.

JACKIE: (to the anger class) When I've had a bad day, I can always head to the rink and watch my boys. Yell my lungs out, throw a few punches - it's fantastic. (the group leader reacts) Come on - nobody gets hurt. Except for that blonde bitch who was cheering for Dallas - (another reaction from the leader) What "dark side" - I find hockey therapeutic! Especially the play-offs - they just go on and on and on. It's July now and they've been playing the same overtime period for a month. Even I had to admit that's just bad...officiating.

SCENE - WATERPARK

MELANIE sets down a wicker basket and proceeds to unpack: blanket, a bottle of wine, a large hardcover edition of Proust's "Remembrance of Things Past". She's wearing a gauzy dress and a sun hat. She meticulously arranges everything. Pours herself a glass of wine. Breaks off a piece of bread from the longest baguette in history and slathers butter on it. Takes a sip of the wine. Chokes a little. Soldiers on bravely. Starts to read the book. Immediately comes upon a sentence she doesn't understand.

MELANIE: That which is remembered is past. That which is past needs not be remembered. (thinking) Disremembered? That which is past is dismembered..?

MELANIE takes a small hand puppet - MINNIE - out of her bag. MINNIE'S wearing a French beret.

MELANIE: Is Minnie just a teensy bit bored? (*MINNIE makes a groaning noise*) Does Minnie like the wine?

MINNIE: (*bad ventriloquism*) The wine is icky.

MELANIE: Minnie! This is very good French Bordeaux.

MINNIE: That cheese is smelly.

MELANIE: It's the very best Brie there is. Brie is French.

MINNIE: It looks like snot.

MELANIE: Stop it!

MINNIE: You can't make me!

MELANIE: (*shocked*) Minnie!

MINNIE: Snot! Snotty-snot!

MELANIE stuffs MINNIE in her hand bag.

MELANIE: Shush!

MELANIE stares at her hand bag, frightened. WERNER approaches.

WERNER: (*bowing slightly*) Good afternoon.

MELANIE: Hi. Werner?

WERNER: And you are Melancholy.

MELANIE: Actually it's Melanie.

WERNER: (*disappointed*) I thought that it was Melancholy. Such beautiful sadness.

MELANIE: You can call me that if you like. It sounds...French.

WERNER: May I join you for a moment?

MELANIE: Oh yes - please. What brings you here? I mean - you should be watching birds or mountaineering or something.

WERNER sits, stares off mournfully.

WERNER: Yes. I am planning a trip. But I cannot go until holiday time. I say to Dacia I want to see the animals. She said that there was the zoo here - in the mall.

MELANIE: Oh...no. You didn't -

WERNER: *(shaking his head sadly)* Yes I did. I have seen now the penguins. They stare into space, picking off their own feathers. I am trying to see dolphins but the pool is closed. Because one of them died.

MELANIE: Oh no - I'm so sorry.

MELANIE stares off, uncomfortable. WERNER looks around at the Water Park.

WERNER: All this swimming, sunbathing, pointless laughter - what does it mean?

MELANIE: I...don't know. I don't believe the French spend their summers like this, I can tell you that much.

WERNER: In a mall?

MELANIE: Well I wouldn't be here either except...if you look just over there...on the other side of that sign...

WERNER: *(peering off)* The Tomorrow...Store. Yes..?

MELANIE: On the other side of that, it's the Champs Elysées. I mean, not really - it's all fake store fronts. It's just their "Taste of Paris" shopping area. But from here it feels French.

WERNER: And I see you have a round of Brie.

MELANIE: Yes - and French wine. Would you like some?

WERNER: I couldn't possibly -

MELANIE: Please!

WERNER: If you insist.

MELANIE pours some wine into a paper cup, serves WERNER some cheese.

WERNER: I am curious. Who were you talking to just as I arrived?

MELANIE: Uh...no one. I was - reading aloud.

WERNER: It's just - I do not want you to think that I disapprove. When the thoughts go around like the rodents on the wheel - it is good to let something out.

MELANIE: I've tried - but it doesn't help! (*noticing WERNER'S sad expression*) I've said the wrong thing. I've made you unhappy.

WERNER: Oh no! I have been feeling the weltschmerz but today... (*unecstatically*) I am ecstatic.

MELANIE: Oh. Well I want to be happy too. So I'm just trying to... surround myself with beauty.

WERNER: It is good to set goals.

MELANIE: When I was little we always went to the cabin in the summer. There was an outdoor toilet. My dad was always bringing home disgusting dead fish. It was awful. I think I was meant to experience finer things - I really do.

WERNER: I also think you were meant to have fine things.

MELANIE: Never too late, right?

WERNER: Never too late.

MELANIE: More cheese?

SCENE - BEACH OUTSIDE BRENDA'S HOUSE

BRENDA runs on with a cooler, drops it on the ground.

BRENDA: Jessica! Tom!

JESSICA appears, tries to sneak away.

BRENDA: Jessica! Where do you think you're going?

JESSICA: Out.

BRENDA: I thought we agreed to spend the afternoon at the beach.

JESSICA: It's like, so not a beach.

BRENDA: The whole family -

JESSICA: That's funny - I just saw old Tommy drive away.

BRENDA: Stop calling him that - it hurts his feelings.

JESSICA: Every time I talk to him I get a headache.

BRENDA: I'm sure he'll be right back.

JESSICA: I don't think he likes this place any more than I do.

BRENDA: Come on - it was your dad's idea to move here.

JESSICA: Hello - so he could run for office - not cause he likes the view.

BRENDA: It's beautiful -

JESSICA presses her fingers to her temples.

JESSICA: You...don't like the neighbours.

BRENDA: *(taken aback)* What makes you say that?

BRENDA peers off.

BRENDA: Is that Mordred over there? Can't he just come with you into the yard like a normal person?

JESSICA rolls her eyes and waves. After a moment, MORDRED enters, slouching sulkily.

BRENDA: Mordred, do you want to come to the beach?

JESSICA: Mom!

MORDRED: Uh...no thanks.

BRENDA: That's fine. (to JESSICA) You and I can still spend time together.

JESSICA: And do what?

BRENDA: Well I don't know! The whole point is to be together. I don't have an agenda.

JESSICA: You've got the biggest, fattest agenda -

BRENDA: The point isn't to "do" something -

JESSICA: What - do you think I'm going to build a sand castle or something?

BRENDA: Why not? You used to love that, at the cabin -

JESSICA: A thousand years ago -

BRENDA: Mordred, do you have any special summer memories?

JESSICA: Oh God...

MORDRED: I grew up in kind of a tough neighbourhood.

BRENDA: So you had to be creative - I mean to find things to do for free.

MORDRED: Oh, I had money. The older guys used to pay us to deliver their stuff -

JESSICA holds her head.

JESSICA: I have to leave - this place is toxic!

BRENDA: What do you mean -

JESSICA: I mean I'm getting a headache.

BRENDA: Because you should be resting! You were hit by lightning!

JESSICA: I gotta go.

BRENDA. Jessica! I just want us to have a little summer.

JESSICA: What's that?

BRENDA: We could have nice picnic lunches or - go canoeing!
We could take a course together. They teach that -
hip-hop dancing over at the community centre you know.

JESSICA: Mom...you need to get a life.

JESSICA stomps off. MORDRED shrugs and follows her.

SCENE - OUTSIDE THE TOMORROW STORE

JACKIE writes on a sign.

JACKIE: Buyer beware - these assholes - these assholes will
sell you shit! *(gets an idea, adds a phrase)* These
assholes will sell you shit and call it butter!

*Pleased with herself, JACKIE walks back and forth with
her sign and calls out to passersby.*

JACKIE: Uh...these guys ripped me off. Tomorrow Store sells
defective crap!

*MORDRED, dressed in a Tomorrow Store shirt, comes out
of the store.*

MORDRED: Oh great - it's you again.

JACKIE: Look. I paid one thousand smackeroos for a laptop.
It's a lemon, a junker, the electronic equivalent of
the Titanic -

MORDRED: Yeah, yeah.

JACKIE: I want my money back.

MORDRED: I told you - there's a re-packaging charge.

JACKIE: What's to re-package? Just throw it away.

MORDRED: Do what you want - just get out of my face.

MORDRED starts to leave. JACKIE puts the sign down and whips a little hand-held video camera out of her purse.

JACKIE: Stop right there! What did you say? "Get out of my face." Could you say that again?

JACKIE points the camera at MORDRED.

MORDRED: (to camera) Hey, are you stealing my soul?

JACKIE: Let's see some of that famous customer service.

MORDRED picks up JACKIE'S sign and reads it.

MORDRED: Wow. This is like poetry. I wish I had my guitar with me. (singing) Oooh, talking 'bout the man! Sells you shit and calls it butter! Oooh-oooh...

MORDRED giggles. JACKIE moves in for a close-up.

JACKIE: Look... at those pupils. You're stoned out of your gourd.

SCENE -

WERNER: A list I am making. Ten things to do in summer. Photograph elk, moose, mountain goat, grizzly bear...

JACKIE: I don't mind setting goals. How about - (recording on her phone) I will take down the Tomorrow Store, Impark, and that bitchy clerk at the dry-cleaners -

MORDRED: (a screaming punk guitar riff, accompanied by a musical howl. Note: he's quite good.)

WERNER: Canadian goose -

MORDRED: (finishes the guitar riff with a flourish, then launches into a highly energetic, punked-up version of :) You are my sunshine! My only sunshine -

KEVIN: Werner, Werner, Werner...

We hear the Hockey Night in Canada chord progression used to work the crowd up into a frenzy.

JACKIE: *(squeezes her eyes shut)* Cool waterfall. Green trees.
Warm breezes. *(opens her eyes)* Move the puck you
moron!

KEVIN: Klopenhauer, Werner and Kevin Klopenhauer...

MORDRED: *(singing)* When skies are grey!

BRENDA: It was raining and I said to the neighbour "time for
the animals to go two by two!" She didn't laugh. I
said - you know, like Noah's Ark. Nothing. I smiled,
nice as pie and asked her if she was involved with
community league. And she said - "some of us have to
work for a living". Do you believe it? I said I'm
raising a family in case you hadn't noticed.

MORDRED: *(another guitar riff then :)* I ROCK!

WERNER: The great Canadian Rockies Mountains. Die Bergen...

MELANIE: Read five classic French novels - improve vocabulary.

KEVIN: I'd like to make a massage appointment with Werner
Klopenhauer.

MELANIE: Photocopy list of commonly mispronounced words and
carry in wallet. Oh - and enjoy my own wedding...

BRENDA: Today the sky cleared and I asked Tom if he would come
to the beach. Even for an hour. He said no. I said for
heaven's sake - how will we have another child if we
never spend time together. He looked at me like I'd
dropped in from Mars. Then he tells me he's hired a
campaign manager!

SCENE - DACIA'S STUDIO

*WERNER sits on a chair, taking notes. DACIA walks
around him, reciting as music plays in the b.g. She
may punctuate her speech with sudden and dramatic
dance moves.*

DACIA: Fertile fields and green valleys, I salute you. I am a
cool vessel waiting for your heat. Waiting for the

touch of your fevered fingers. I am a vessel - fill me! Fill me up!

WERNER looks extremely startled, then claps. But DACIA'S clearly not finished her presentation.

DACIA: *(continuing with her expressive movements)* Summer! Summmmm-mer. When we think of summer we think of...sun. So... round and yellow and hot. It burns - and so do we! Literally, yes. But in a spiritual sense, too. You see... we long for a... tan but sometimes we get peeling and itching and even a rash! A spiritual...rash. And we don't want that.

WERNER: No. We want -

DACIA: *(cutting him off with a dramatic gesture)* Albert Camus once said -"in the depths of winter, I finally realized that deep within me there lay an invincible summer." You see?

WERNER raises his hand.

WERNER: I would make a comment?

DACIA: Of course.

WERNER: That is...beautiful. And I have enjoyed these sessions talking with you and seeing your dances. But perhaps I need something more practical. Activities.

DACIA: Activities.

WERNER nods solemnly. A long beat - DACIA'S at a bit of a loss. She picks up a BEACH BALL and tosses it at WERNER.

DACIA: Quickly. A word or phrase you associate with summer, then toss it back.

WERNER: Melancholy.

WERNER politely tosses the ball back. Sits down.

DACIA: Sun-warmed flesh, a blooming rose...

WERNER: Melancholy.

DACIA: No...happy summer memories?

WERNER: Ahhh. When I was a child we had the magical summers. Mama would pack a huge basket full of sausage and brown bread and beer. We children would be having so much excitement we could not speak. Then Papa would blow the horn. All of us would gather in front of the house and stand very still to show what good little mice we could be. Then...into the boat! We would paddle while Papa called out the count. And finally - just before lunch - we had the drills and recitations! Oh...those magical summers. But now I feel only the weltschmerz.

DACIA: Weltschmerz? Isn't that some kind of sausage?

SCENE - BEACH

Late at night. JESSICA sits on the beach. MORDRED crouches beside her and draws in the sand.

MORDRED: So we make a giant adobe egg. We'll sleep in it. The clay absorbs the sun all day and keeps you warm all night -

JESSICA: We're taking a giant egg to the desert?

MORDRED: No - we'll build it there! Or - no - maybe build an egg and bust it open on the last night of the festival. Like a piñata!

JESSICA: Yeah! We could fill it with ice cream sandwiches!

MORDRED: Or popsicles.

JESSICA: Cool!

They laugh for a moment then fall into awkward silence. MORDRED lights a joint, inhales deeply.

MORDRED: Did I tell you this crazy lady pointed a camera at me the other day when I was really baked? Hey, I wonder if there's some kind of eye drop to like, un-dilate your pupils. They should totally have that for when you're at work.

JESSICA: Yeah. There's a job at the Waterpark in the mall. They want someone to wear a funny outfit and pick up garbage and rake the fake sand.

MORDRED: You going to apply?

JESSICA: You don't see how, like, ironic that would be?

MORDRED: I guess. But hey - we could take our lunch breaks together.

JESSICA: I just couldn't. Besides, it's shit money. It'll take ages to save for our trip.

MORDRED: Don't worry.

JESSICA: I've got, like, sixty dollars!

MORDRED: Jess! The motorbike's cheap to run, we just need money for food -

JESSICA: Hotels -

MORDRED: We'll sleep in the egg!

JESSICA: The egg thing is cool but... I thought we were doing something sort of medieval. You know -

MORDRED: Well the whole thing's kind of medieval, don't you think? Or like, primitive. People painting their naked bodies. Drumming. Dancing. A giant man burning -

JESSICA: Like Joan. Can you imagine dying like that - in horrible pain - betrayed by everyone -

MORDRED: No I can't ...

JESSICA: But she knew the truth would survive the fire!

MORDRED: Right.

JESSICA: And I think she wants us to - I don't know...

MORDRED: Okay - how about I make you some armor?

JESSICA: And a sword!

MORDRED: Out of ice!

JESSICA: Yeah! Mordred...

MORDRED: Yeah?

JESSICA: I think I - I love you!

MORDRED: I love you too!

They kiss passionately for a moment.

JESSICA: Wow...

MORDRED: Yeah...

JESSICA: I mean - you've had experience -

MORDRED: Not like this -

JESSICA: But for me it's like / this whole new -

MORDRED: Nothing like this - / no one like you -

JESSICA: Honestly. Do you think anyone else feels like this?

MORDRED: No.

JESSICA: Seriously. They couldn't - if even half the people felt like this half the time - the world would spin off it's - you know - that peg in the middle of the globe -

MORDRED: We'd go flying into space -

MORDRED leans in to kiss JESSICA. JESSICA pulls away suddenly.

JESSICA: You hear that?

MORDRED: What?

JESSICA: Thunder.

MORDRED: *(kissing Jessica, teasing)* Oohh baby - I feel the earth move -

JESSICA: Really - there it is again.

MORDRED: (*shrugs*) Nope.

JESSICA: Weird.

MORDRED: Do you wanna hear the song I wrote for you?

A clap of THUNDER.

JESSICA: There!

MORDRED darts a nervous glance heavenward.

MORDRED: Holy shit.

JESSICA: (*peering into MORDRED'S face*) You're...scared.

MORDRED: No! Did you really hear the thunder - before?

A loud CRACK-CRASH of thunder. MORDRED jumps.

JESSICA: Okay, you are really scared -

MORDRED: We're like - sitting ducks - out here by the water.

JESSICA presses her hands to her temples.

JESSICA: (*a stab of headache pain*) Ouch. (*staring at MORDRED*)
Shoes - big black boots - your boots - with holes!

MORDRED: What?

JESSICA: That's what you're thinking!

Another crack of thunder.

MORDRED: Jess - what are you -

JESSICA: Cows - horses - standing in a field - tell me!

MORDRED: I was wondering what they do during storms-they're
like trapped out there - in the open!

JESSICA: And you - (*getting another image*) Blanket? What's
that? You want to put your head under this blanket.

MORDRED: I do not! Okay, I do.

JESSICA'S headache subsides.

JESSICA: Wow.

MORDRED: What the hell was that?

JESSICA: I *knew* what you were thinking.

*JESSICA slowly stands, raises her arms to the sky.
MORDRED looks freaked out.*

SCENE - WERNER'S MASSAGE TABLE

WERNER gives KEVIN a massage. A cheesy "North America birdcalls" tape plays in the background.

WERNER: Really, I cannot see a problem in your back. Have you experienced a problem?

KEVIN: Uh...yeah. Yeah.

WERNER: Where is the hurting?

KEVIN: Uh... (*as WERNER presses experimentally*) Oooh, there. And there. There, too.

WERNER: How curious. The muscles are malleable, toned and resting. Und yet - you -

KEVIN: Maybe it's like... psychic pain.

WERNER: It is...in your head.

KEVIN: Sort of. But then what's the difference if it's real or not? It's real to me.

WERNER: Like...nostalgia. Memory. No longer happening but so much... with us.

KEVIN: Yeah. Yeah - like that.

WERNER: Weltschmerz...

KEVIN: Yeah. You know I think my aunt had that. Maybe it runs in the family.

SCENE -

MELANIE is back at the beach. A little more frantically than the last time, she lays out her perfect French picnic - wine/cheese/bread. She takes deep breaths, trying to relax. She can't.

A NOISE from MELANIE'S handbag. She tries to ignore it. More deep breaths. She starts to panic. Pulls out the puppet from her handbag.

MINNIE: Relax!

MELANIE: (to MINNIE) You relax! You shush!

MELANIE glowers at the puppet, then stuffs it back in the bag.

MINNIE: (from the bag) Whatsa matter - scared?

MELANIE: Stop it!

MELANIE stares tearfully at the picnic arrayed around her. Gulps some wine. Chokes a little. Chokes back a sob. Picks up her book. Makes a noble attempt to read.

MELANIE: (reading) "And then she realized that...in French, the word for bread is pain." What?

WERNER: (off) Melancholy?

MELANIE hurriedly swipes at her face as WERNER enters.

WERNER: Melancholy?

MELANIE: Yes! Isn't it obvious?

WERNER: I am so sorry. I only think - when I see you -

MELANIE: I'm sorry! I'm sorry - please sit down. Please.

WERNER perches awkwardly on MELANIE'S blanket.

MELANIE: Want some wine?

WERNER: I have intruded.

MELANIE: No, you haven't -

WERNER: I intrude!

MELANIE: We're in a shopping mall - it's not a private place. I was just... (*emotional*) trying to enjoy myself.

WERNER: Ahh...you are experiencing stress.

MELANIE: Yes. Because I can't - the French know how to live and that's why they don't have heart attacks!

Pause.

WERNER: I see you are reading. That is...relaxing.

MELANIE: No! This book is just depressing. It's full of people you know could be happy if they'd just admit they loved each other. But instead they're just going to die of consumption, whatever that is. It's worse than Jane Austen.

WERNER: You know the French are very fond of comedy. I understand they are being large fans of Jerry Lewis.

MELANIE: Jerry Lewis? Like the nutty professor?

WERNER nods solemnly.

MELANIE: Oh, that can't be right. No, I don't think I'd like that. Maybe I just need to take more baths.

WERNER: Ahh. Have you ever experienced the benefits of a therapeutic massage?

MELANIE: Well, no. But sometimes my fiancé gives me backrubs.

WERNER: Your...fiancé?

MELANIE: Yes, his name is Leon. He's a very good accountant but not a very good back rubber -

WERNER attempts to hide his distress at this news.

WERNER: Well then. Perhaps I could recommend someone.

MELANIE: But aren't you a massage therapist?

WERNER: Uhhh...I am...unfortunately not accepting the new clients.

MELANIE: Why not?

WERNER turns away.

WERNER: Melancholy...I have the feelings for you.

MELANIE: The...weltschmerz?

WERNER: No. I am sad because ...you are promised to another.

MELANIE: I'm sorry.

MELANIE: Werner, have you ever been to France?

WERNER: Yes, of course. Many times...

MELANIE: (awed) Really?

SCENE -

BRENDA, JACKIE and JESSICA walk along the mall.

JESSICA: I'm not doing it.

BRENDA: You're going to walk into that store and apologize for stealing -

JESSICA: It's not like that -

BRENDA: What in the world do you plan on doing with hiking boots and a knapsack?

JACKIE: Yeah, Jessie.

BRENDA: If you needed something, why didn't you ask me?

JESSICA: Oh, you would have just given them to me?

BRENDA: Look, I know you think your auntie is cooler than I am but I'm pretty sure she doesn't approve of this either.

JACKIE: I don't. What the hell were you doing?

JESSICA shrugs.

JACKIE: Come on!

JESSICA: Okay, okay. I... asked them first -

BRENDA: You asked if you could steal?

JESSICA: No! I asked if they wanted to sponsor me.

BRENDA: Oh - they should donate the boots because you were hit by lightning?

JESSICA shrugs.

BRENDA: But that doesn't explain the knapsack.

JACKIE: And they didn't give you anything. You stole-

JESSICA: It was just a split second thing!

JACKIE: And you don't think the store has any rights -

JESSICA: Have you ever stolen anything?

JACKIE: No, of course not!

JESSICA: (*touching her temples*) You're lying -

JACKIE: Oh, right. Some penny candy.

JESSICA: More -

JACKIE: I was eight - got in with the wrong crowd -

JESSICA: I know there's more -

JACKIE: A bad tricycle gang -

JESSICA: I'm not kidding! I know you stole other stuff- a what's it called - a Cowichan sweater.

JACKIE: (to *BRENDA*) You told her?

BRENDA: What? No -

JACKIE: How would she know -

JESSICA: I know when people are lying.

JACKIE: Ahh...the lightning passed through you and left behind a messiah complex?

BRENDA: Jessie, I know the accident made you feel special. You are special -

JESSICA: When Joan of Arc needed armor and a sword -

JACKIE: Oh here we go -

JESSICA: They just appeared -

BRENDA: So now you're Joan of Arc?

JESSICA: No!

BRENDA: I still don't understand why you would do this. Please - please just talk to me.

JESSICA: Sometimes... I get this headache and it's like - things pop into my head or I just know-

JACKIE: You just "know" -

JESSICA: Yes! (to *BRENDA*) Like where was Dad last night?

BRENDA: He was at some kind of community forum -

JESSICA: That's what he told me too but he was lying -

BRENDA: Jessica -

JESSICA: He has a campaign manager now, right? A woman.

JACKIE: (to BRENDA) I thought you were the campaign manager.

JESSICA: They go out -

BRENDA: Naturally they're going to spend a lot of time together-

JESSICA: Mom! He's cheating on you!

BRENDA: Jessica, I know you're angry with him but -
JESSICA gives a frustrated yell-

BRENDA: Honey...
- and charges off.

BRENDA: Jessie! (turning to JACKIE) Do you know what's going on?

JACKIE: She wants to go to some festival - it's sort of a performance art thing -

BRENDA: Performance art - I don't even know -

JACKIE: It's called the Burning Man Festival. I think it's in Nevada. She wants to go.

BRENDA: With Mordred.

JACKIE: And the knapsack - and the boots.

BRENDA: Over my dead body.

JACKIE: Brenda, is it true? About Tom?

BRENDA: I'm dealing with it.

JACKIE: He's screwing the campaign manager, isn't he?
BRENDA looks away, then moves off.

BRENDA: Eggs, cereal, call about family photo.

SCENE -

MELANIE: Go to library - A Summer in Provence.

JACKIE: Breathe deeply. Imagine cool waterfalls -

WERNER: Ten smells of summer. Grass cuttings -

JACKIE: Remember to breathe. Cool waterfalls, clear pools -

MORDRED: Water. Tent. Dried food.

DACIA: And now we will move to the music!

WERNER: Wood smoke, flowers...

BRENDA: Phone Mordred's mother, Jessica's psychologist, party planner...

DACIA: Dance!

MORDRED: Water, condoms... stuff to make paper mache.

WERNER: Only four smells! There must be more!

DACIA: The dance of summer smells!

JACKIE: Clear pools of cool - fucking SUV's, slow drivers in the fast lane, grocery cheaters in the express lane-

MELANIE: Camembert. Perrier. Look up "insouciance." And weltschmerz.

KEVIN: Hello, I'd like to make a massage appointment with Werner Klopenhauer.

JACKIE: Cretinous assholes who talk in movies!

KEVIN: Yes, I'm aware of that but I'd like to see him again today.

MELANIE: Weltschmerz is...world sickness. World...weariness. Werner is weary of the world - how awful.

JACKIE: Sorry! This wasn't my idea!

BRENDA: That's it - a party. A beach party!

KEVIN: I happen to be in real agony here!

JACKIE: My boss suggested - he made me come to this stupid course.

JESSICA: Close your eyes - let me see if I can guess what you're thinking.

JACKIE: Yes - stupid-head, dumb-ass, wanky!

BRENDA: I'll invite all of Jessica's school friends!

JACKIE: Sorry.

Everyone exits except JESSICA and MORDRED.

MORDRED: Jess! This is creepy.

JESSICA: Oh wait! I got something. But it's... just garble, white noise-

MORDRED: (*giggling, stoned*) Ha-ha! You - you can't get through my marijuana shield! (*beat*) But I can tell you what I was thinking...

MORDRED kisses JESSICA.

SCENE - DACIA'S STUDIO

KEVIN follows DACIA in, carrying a hat he's working on.

DACIA: (*to KEVIN*) More. Much more.

KEVIN: (*examining the hat*) It already seems a little over the top for a bat mitzvah.

DACIA: The Lauterman's daughter is extremely dramatic.

JESSICA enters.

DACIA: Hello. How can I help you?

JESSICA: I'm Jessica Evans. My mom sent me to get a sample of the colours you're using for my dad's fundraiser thing. She wants to get a dress to match.

DACIA: Isn't that sweet?

JESSICA: She also wondered if you still had the sale on...summer party supplies?

DACIA: Yes indeed. Kevin, do you have any fabric left over from the back drop?

KEVIN: Uhh...I need to talk to you about that. I'm not finished yet.

DACIA: What?

KEVIN: I haven't started yet.

DACIA: Kevin!

KEVIN: I haven't got the fabric. I didn't buy it.

DACIA: You cashed the cheque!

KEVIN: I had to make rent!

JESSICA presses her fingers to her temples - she's in pain.

DACIA: What happened to your paycheck?

KEVIN: I... had to send money to my sister.

JESSICA lets out a little moan. Neither KEVIN nor DACIA notice.

DACIA: You might have said something -

KEVIN: My sister's got three kids - one of them needs a brace on her leg -

DACIA: Since when?!

JESSICA: No!

DACIA: What's wrong with you?

JESSICA: (*gasping*) Drugs - vodka - tower of Pisa?

KEVIN: Get her some water or something! Go - go - go!

KEVIN hustles DACIA off.

JESSICA: (*between painful gasps*) You bought - a massage. Maybe two. Vodka - beer - Ecstasy?

KEVIN: You are freaking me out.

JESSICA: More! Your rent money! I don't know - it's like - this enormous phallic symbol -

KEVIN: I've never paid for sex in my life.

JESSICA: A tower? The Space Needle!

KEVIN: Okay, okay! This client asked me to check out some fabric. In Seattle. And then I stayed for the weekend.

JESSICA: (*the headache easing off*) Yeah...yeah, that's right.

KEVIN: What the hell was that?

JESSICA: All the things I saw - I was right?

KEVIN: More or less.

JESSICA: The money thing - you gotta work that out.

KEVIN darts a nervous glance offstage, pulls out his wallet and stuffs a twenty dollar bill in JESSICA'S hand.

KEVIN: Here, take this.

JESSICA: What for?

KEVIN: I appreciate the advice. You're looking kinda pale - why don't you go?

JESSICA: But -

KEVIN: Go on. Tell your mother we'll call when we have the fabric.

*KEVIN hustles JESSICA out of the space and exits.
JESSICA stares thoughtfully at the money in her hand.*

SCENE - TOMORROW STORE

JACKIE faces off with MORDRED.

JACKIE: I want... an apology. I want it in writing.

MORDRED: Never happen.

JACKIE: Why not?

MORDRED: Gee I dunno. Cause nobody's sorry?

JACKIE: I can make you sorry. I know you're stoned again.

MORDRED: *(leaning in toward JACKIE)* You got me there. I had to take a coupla painkillers. Because your story's so sad.

JACKIE: Where's the manager?

MORDRED: He's on a break.

JACKIE: Screw the manager. Who's the owner? Sounds like something out of a fairy tale, doesn't it? Who owns Tomorrow?

MORDRED: Oh, man...

JACKIE turns to unseen CUSTOMERS.

JACKIE: Tomorrow Store does not stand behind their product. They do not care about Tomorrow!

MORDRED: Do I have to call security again?

JACKIE: You call security and I'll give them the tape of our little interview.

MORDRED: Go ahead.

JACKIE and MORDRED glower at each other. MORDRED finally looks away.

MORDRED: Okay, look. If you meet me at the loading dock in five minutes...I'll give you a brand new computer.

JACKIE: What?

MORDRED: The next model up from the one you had. Fully loaded.

JACKIE: No thanks -

MORDRED: I don't get it. What do you want?

JACKIE: What do I want?! What do I want?!

MORDRED: Yes! What - am I speaking Klingon?

JACKIE: I want someone to take responsibility! I want you to take responsibility!

MORDRED: For what?

JACKIE almost boils over but tries to breathe her way through the rage. After a few panting breaths -

JACKIE: Okay, I'm going to try - healing breath - healing breath! Peace - peace - peaceful! (*a long moment of regaining control*) When you treat me with disrespect it makes me feel... Oh fuck it, I'd like to smack that little grin off your face and then have you fired.

MORDRED: Okay! Security can haul away your crazy ass -

MORDRED charges off.

JACKIE: You wanna see crazy? Rent-a-cop lays a hand on me - you'll see crazy!

JESSICA enters in time to hear this last outburst.

JESSICA: Auntie Jack?

JACKIE: Jess -

JESSICA: Who are you yelling at?

JACKIE: This little asshole who works here.

JESSICA: Uh...

MORDRED enters, spots JESSICA.

MORDRED: Hey - Jess!

JESSICA: Mordred...this is my aunt.

JACKIE and MORDRED both look stunned.

MORDRED: No way...

JACKIE: No...

MORDRED: Here comes security.

JACKIE starts to say something, then decides against it. She exits.

JESSICA: I need to talk to you - I've got a really freaky feeling-

MORDRED: Oh man, now what?

SCENE - DACIA'S STUDIO

KEVIN works on a hat. MELANIE and WERNER enter, oblivious to Kevin's presence.

WERNER: Small restaurant by the side of a country road. Run by husband and wife.

MELANIE: Fresh butter and lots of it. Fresh herbs. Cheese. And wine.

WERNER: That's it. That is it.

MELANIE: Sometimes...things are just as you imagine.

KEVIN makes a face, coughs.

WERNER: Ahh, Kevin.

MELANIE: I was just asking Werner about France - he's been there many times.

KEVIN: I hear you can get red wine with your Big Mac in France. Is that true?

MELANIE: That's revolting.

WERNER: Red wine - I do not know -

KEVIN: My friend just got back from there - he said the Champs Elysées is solid golden arches.

MELANIE: No!

KEVIN: Hello?

MELANIE: Werner? On the Champs-D'Elysées...

WERNER: (*reluctantly*) Yes, perhaps one or two.

MELANIE: No...no...

WERNER: Melanie!

MELANIE runs out. WERNER stares at KEVIN accusingly.

KEVIN: What? What?

WERNER: It was not necessary to say.

KEVIN: Who doesn't know there's a McDonald's everywhere on the planet? Come on...

WERNER: And what about you Kevin - would you like to hang on to your illusions? Yes?

KEVIN: Sure, why not?

WERNER: That is good. Then perhaps you will be permitting the same to others.

KEVIN: Whoa, I just didn't think -

WERNER: Nein. You did not think.

KEVIN: You're right. I'm sorry. Really sorry. You here for a meeting with Dacia?

WERNER nods.

KEVIN: How's that going? I mean, I was wondering...if you've actually been out of the city yet.

WERNER: Nein.

KEVIN: I've been planning a little trip for the long weekend in August...to the mountains.

WERNER: Ahh, die bergen...

SCENE -

Night. MORDRED and JESSICA sit on the beach.

JESSICA: I knew before the results came back. I just knew.

MORDRED: *(stunned)* No...way.

JESSICA: I can read my own mind. My own body.

MORDRED: A baby.

JESSICA: A baby.

MORDRED: Wow...now what?

JESSICA: I don't know.

MORDRED: Do you need some money...or something?

JESSICA: I don't know!

JESSICA moves off.

JESSICA: I don't know...what you would do. I don't think you ever even had a boyfriend. God! It's just stupid even saying that - thinking that! You had more important things to worry about! People depending on you - life and death! *(beat)* I just have - suddenly I'm supposed to be responsible for someone? *(beat)* Joan? I never said I was as brave as you - I never promised anything. But if you want me to keep going - please tell me - please tell me what to do! I'm going to stand out here and wait - for a shooting star - a meteor - another bolt of lightning! Maybe I'll burst into flames and that's how I'll know... you remember me. Are you still there?

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

SCENE -

JESSICA and MORDRED stand on a street corner. MORDRED strums his electric guitar.

JESSICA: I think it should be something sort of quiet.

MORDRED: I don't know anything quiet.

JESSICA: Maybe just chords?

MORDRED: Okay.

JESSICA: I don't know how to start. At least Joan of Arc had clear instructions - beat the English, put Charles on the throne.

MORDRED throws some change in his guitar case.

JESSICA: What are you doing?

MORDRED: It's so people know it's okay to like, show their appreciation.

JESSICA: We're not begging.

MORDRED: No, we're busking!

JESSICA: Busking? I'm helping people.

MORDRED: This was your idea!

JESSICA: I know - I know - it's just now that we're out here, I feel sort of freakish. It'll be different at Burning Man. We'll have costumes -

MORDRED: But we have to get there first -

JESSICA: It feels weird asking people to pay for-

MORDRED: We need the dough, Jess. There's the trip and stuff for the baby and we need an apartment-

JESSICA: You could come and stay with me at Jackie's.

MORDRED: Are you kidding? We need our own place.

JESSICA: Okay, okay.

MORDRED: I was thinking I could lift some stuff from the store.

JESSICA: If you want.

MORDRED: Of course I could get arrested - for sure I'd get fired.

JESSICA: So - you're always talking about how much you hate that place.

MORDRED: It's not that bad.

JESSICA: So keep the job.

MORDRED: What about you? I mean what are we doing out here?

JESSICA: I don't know! I don't know about anything!

MORDRED: (*stricken*) Are we still going?

JESSICA: What do you mean?

MORDRED: Are we still going to the desert?

JESSICA: Yeah! I think it's even more important now that we're having a baby.

MORDRED: Yeah.

They kiss.

MORDRED: We just had a fight. Cool.

JESSICA: Then we made up. Wow, we're good at this.

They kiss again.

MORDRED: The best. So?

MORDRED experiments with a chord progression.

JESSICA: That sounds great.

JESSICA pulls a sign out of her knapsack, leans it against Mordred's guitar case.

MORDRED: (reading) "The truth survives the fire." Uh, that's ...intriguing.

JESSICA: Yeah, maybe people will stop just to -

MORDRED: Find out what the hell that means?

JESSICA: Do you think it's dumb or something?

MORDRED: No. I guess not. I mean, I know what you mean but -

JESSICA: Just...play.

MORDRED strums uncertainly. JESSICA stares at passersby. Ventures a smile here and there.

MORDRED: Look - maybe you need to be talking to people as they go by or something. Like - "Hey you" or "step right up"-

JESSICA: What is this - the circus?

MORDRED: Pretty much.

JESSICA: What's that supposed to mean?

MORDRED: Well for one thing - the sign makes you sound religious or something.

JESSICA: It is sort of religious -

MORDRED: Jess - it's wild and it's totally real but-

JESSICA: It's a circus.

MORDRED: No! Just -

JESSICA: Okay, you're the big expert. What should I do?

MORDRED: I don't know. I think it's like a marketing thing.

JESSICA: (appalled) Marketing? What - should I give out balloons or candies or -

MORDRED: Don't get mad. I was just trying to help -

JESSICA: Okay - fine. Tell me. You're supposed to be the experienced one - six months in Vancouver - living on the street. Tell me. (*as MORDRED turns away*) Mordred?

MORDRED: Look...

JESSICA: Oh God - don't tell me...

MORDRED: I can explain. I was in Vancouver -

JESSICA: But you were... (*seeing it*)...with a band? (*puzzled*) You and Jimmy and the guys?

MORDRED: No. (*a beat*) The high school marching band.

JESSICA: Oh man...

MORDRED: That was before we met. It was before - before it mattered -

JESSICA: It always matters -

MORDRED: I was trying to impress you. You were doing this big Joan of Arc Goth thing and I thought you were hot -

JESSICA: You played the French horn?

MORDRED: It - it was a tuba. Look, I'm sorry -

JESSICA: I love you. I thought you loved me.

MORDRED: I do - it's just -

JESSICA: Oh my God! Your name isn't even Mordred! Who are you?

MORDRED: Morris. My name is Morris.

JESSICA stares at MORDRED.

MORDRED: Mordred... is a character in a King Arthur comic book.

MORDRED throws some change into the guitar case.

MORDRED: There. Your first customer.

JESSICA: Is there anything else I should know?

MORDRED: Okay. At first I just pretended to be interested in Joan of Arc -

JESSICA: So you could get laid?

MORDRED: No! Okay, yes! But now I really do think she's cool -

JESSICA: "Cool"?

MORDRED: Jess - you're living in some kind of dream world if you think people tell the truth all the time -

JESSICA: Anything else?

MORDRED: I don't know - you tell me.

MORDRED exits.

JESSICA: I guess there's such a thing as too much truth. Like too much rain. A shower is refreshing but a flood destroys everything in its path.

SCENE -

JACKIE: I go to the movies. I choose my seat carefully, far away from everyone else. Just as the lights dim a couple slides into the row behind me. I have a bad feeling. I turn around - I say politely - "Are you two going to talk during the movie"? They look guilty as hell. "Just tell me - I'll move." No response. She takes a big noisy slurp of her drink. A defiant slurp. He offers her a Junior Mint. She giggles. The movie starts - that stuns them into silence for about thirty seconds. Then she turns to him and says "Do you think I should get my hair done like that?" I whisper - politely - "I think you should shave yourself bald. Now please be quiet." She says fuck you - I pour Coke on her head! I run to the front of the theatre! I yell - "Is there one person in this theatre who can promise me they'll be quiet? Just one!" *(after a beat)* The police report called it "creating a public

disturbance". I disagree. I mean, you're always saying - you can't change the situation but you can change the way you react to it. That's what I did, right?

BRENDA: When Jessica was a baby we lived in this horrible walk-up. It was like an oven in the summer. I used to fill up the little plastic wading pool - we used to sit in it and pretend we were floating on the Pacific Ocean. Look, it's Hawaii, Tonga, Tahiti...and there's Daddy on shore...waving goodbye. *(beat, determined)* Well now is not the time to wave goodbye. I have invested half my life in this marriage and I know we're in some kind of trough right now but I, for one, am willing to ride it out. I - forgive you!

JACKIE: Then it hits me. Why do movie-talkers choose to sit behind me? The question of the ages - and I finally have the answer. They don't choose me - I choose them. I expect to be infuriated - I set the table and wait. I suck bad things into my sphere like the heart of a tropical storm. Hurricane Jackie. And that's...not good.

SCENE - WATERPARK

MELANIE sits on the beach, looking rather slovenly in a large, stained T-shirt and baggy shorts. A discarded McDonald's bag lies nearby. MELANIE listlessly pages through a magazine. She hears a rustling noise in her handbag, glances over, then looks away. Determinedly reads her magazine. Another noise from the bag.

MELANIE: Leave...me...alone.

Whimpering noises from the bag. MELANIE hauls out the puppet.

MELANIE: Minnie, shush.

MINNIE: Mellie mad at Leon?

MELANIE: No! It's just - this wedding has been so hard on our relationship.

MINNIE: *(a harsh bark of laughter)*

MELANIE: I mean it's stressful - all the planning.

MINNIE: Leon always gets his way!

MELANIE: Does not.

MINNIE: Tell Leon about Minnie.

MELANIE: There's nothing to tell.

MINNIE: Ha!

MELANIE stares at MINNIE suspiciously. Then stuffs her back in the bag.

MINNIE: *(muffled)* Tell Leon about Werner.

MELANIE: Look. I do have feelings for Werner, alright. So what? It doesn't change anything.

MINNIE makes high-pitched squealing noises.

MELANIE: I almost left you at home today, you know! You better behave!

WERNER enters, spots MELANIE.

MELANIE: Werner!

MELANIE sits on her bag. One last groan from MINNIE. MELANIE waves at WERNER.

WERNER: So. Today you are having no Brie cheese.

MELANIE: What do I know about French people? What do I know about French anything? I know they don't have as many heart attacks as we do. And I thought maybe if I lived like them...

WERNER: *(helpfully)* You would not have a heart attack?

MELANIE: Yes! And the harder I try...

WERNER: Once again, I am saying the wrong thing.

MELANIE: No! You are saying the right thing! It's a relief to talk to someone about it.

WERNER: There is a problem with your heart?

MELANIE: Yes. I don't know. Probably.

WERNER: Probably?

MELANIE: I mean my mother died of a heart attack. I've always been careful -

WERNER: I am certain you are doing all the right things.

MELANIE: But I'm not!

WERNER: Melancholy, please try to be calm.

MELANIE: But I know something's wrong!

WERNER: What - the doctor has told you -

MELANIE: I haven't gone to see her yet. I'm scared - my heart hurts. I have pains in my chest.

WERNER: When do you get the pains? During exercise?

MELANIE: No. It's like...a pang. When I feel sad.

WERNER: Ahh...you are "heartsick."

MELANIE is struck by this term.

WERNER: That is good. Don't you see? That is very good. There's nothing wrong with being sad.

MELANIE: Do you still have your ...world sickness?

WERNER: Sometimes I feel that it is improving. And other times...

MELANIE: Yes?

WERNER: It is a feeling of...I am looking for something, longing for something, and I am not sure that I can ever have it.

MELANIE: I think I understand.

WERNER: It is like summer. It is all around me but I am still looking. *(beat)* Ah! But I am forgetting - I am seeing a deer in the river valley yesterday! Back in Horstmar they would never believe it.

MELANIE: That's wonderful.

WERNER: Tomorrow I am going to the mountains and I expect to see all the other animals on my list!

MELANIE: Good for you!

WERNER: Melancholy - please don't worry about your heart.

MELANIE: I have to. I'm trying to be happy. I'm trying to...beat the odds.

WERNER: Regarding the arches. This is troubling, I know. But many of the French still go for very long lunches. And even if they eat the Large Mac, they still have a certain attitude.

MELANIE: No. Thank you, Werner. But maybe it just wasn't me.

WERNER: May I make a suggestion?

MELANIE: Sure.

WERNER: I do not know how familiar you are with German culture. But I believe you might have more - how you say - affinity for that. If you would permit me to tell you a little about it...

MELANIE: I think...I think I'd like that very much.

WERNER: Ahh...good! It will be good medicine, I think! Ahhh...when I was a boy, Mama would pack a basket...

SCENE -

JACKIE and BRENDA sit on the beach in front of Brenda's house. There's a TOM EVANS FOR CITY COUNCIL sign in the b.g.

A long beat.

JACKIE: Bren...

BRENDA: I made a cheese ball.

BRENDA starts to rustle around in her picnic basket.

JACKIE: What?

BRENDA: Nothing says "celebrate" like a cheese ball.

JACKIE: What are we celebrating? Ninety-eight shots on goal last night and we still didn't win the game.

BRENDA: Just eat.

JACKIE: No! *(beat)* She promised she'd phone you yesterday. She...?

BRENDA shakes her head.

BRENDA: Is she - how's she feeling?

JACKIE: She's doing great. I know so many middle-aged pregnant women dragging their sorry old asses around - puking, sleeping all the time. Jessica will sail through this. I mean, she's sixteen.

BRENDA: I talked to Tom about the baby. About adopting the baby.

JACKIE: What?

BRENDA: Why not? We've always wanted a second child.

JACKIE: What did he say?

BRENDA: I think he needs a while to get used to the idea -

JACKIE: He completely flipped out, didn't he?

BRENDA: He's very preoccupied -

JACKIE: With his campaign manager. Honestly, Brenda -

BRENDA: We need to get away together after the election is over - we can talk about the baby then.

JACKIE: Look, Brenda - she might still keep it herself. Even without what's his name -

BRENDA: She can't -

JACKIE: You mean you hope she doesn't try. But -

BRENDA: I mean she can't do it on her own.

JACKIE: Honestly - I wouldn't put anything past her.

BRENDA: I want to raise another child. I want to get it right this time.

JACKIE: What are you talking about - you "got it right". Jessica's great.

BRENDA: She won't even talk to me.

JACKIE: They all get like that eventually don't they?

BRENDA: Not necessarily.

JACKIE: Bren, come on - you don't really want to start all over at your age, do you? You always said you were going back to work if you weren't pregnant again by the time you were thirty- -

BRENDA: That was an arbitrary number -

JACKIE: You're thirty-eight.

BRENDA: So? Lots of people are just getting started on families at this age.

JACKIE: But what about Tom?

BRENDA: He just needs -

JACKIE: I could tell you what Tom needs - but I won't. I've reformed.

BRENDA: Have you?

JACKIE: Can't you tell?

BRENDA slowly shakes her head.

JACKIE: Am I the only person in history to be kicked out of an anger management class?

BRENDA: Oh sweetie...

JACKIE: This thing happened. At a movie. I sort of scared myself.

BRENDA: You just need to relax -

JACKIE: I can't - and neither can you.

BRENDA: What are you talking about?

JACKIE: All your courses and clubs and seminars and circles -

BRENDA: I enjoy being busy!

JACKIE: Bren, I think it's more complicated -

BRENDA: More complicated than anger management?

JACKIE: I think you're just as mad as me - you just don't know how mad you are!

BRENDA: Do you know how ridiculous that sounds?

JACKIE: You know what I mean!

A pause.

BRENDA: You know I'd still like to have a beach party. Some nice tropical drinks and a little samba music. I bought the cutest little patio lanterns at the party planner's.

JACKIE: Brenda, are you alright? Honestly -

BRENDA: Come on - when was the last time you had some fun?

SCENE - DACIA'S STUDIO

MELANIE enters.

MELANIE: The wedding's in days. And I still can't decide!
(beat) Roast beef or chicken.

DACIA: (entering) Ahh, Melanie. What do you want now - more
"simplifying"?

MELANIE: Uh, sort of. Leon really wants someone to recite this
at the reception...

MELANIE hands DACIA a sheaf of papers.

DACIA: The Cremation of Sam McGee?

KEVIN runs in.

KEVIN: Dacia!

DACIA: Where the hell have you been?

KEVIN: Can I have a word?

DACIA: You can deconstruct Melanie's floral bonnet of new
beginnings. And my nymph costume.

KEVIN: Dacia -

A MOOSE CALL is heard off stage. KEVIN looks panicky.

DACIA: No - wait. Maybe I'll choreograph a dance for Werner.

KEVIN: I...don't know if a dance is going to do it.

DACIA: (suspicious) What do you mean?

MELANIE: Did something happen to Werner?

KEVIN: Sometimes people just don't have the right attitude.
You know? I mean don't you find Werner a bit negative?

Another MOOSE CALL.

DACIA: What's that horrible noise?

MELANIE: That's just his weltschmerz - but it's getting better.

WERNER enters wearing lederhosen, blows moose call.

MELANIE: Werner!

WERNER: Die bergen...die bergen...

MELANIE: Werner - what's wrong?

WERNER: The mountains!

KEVIN: That part was just like you imagined, right? Right?

DACIA: Werner, what happened?

MELANIE: Did you see the animals on your list?

WERNER: The animals. They are building a bridge over the highway for the animals. Their natural paths are destroyed - and now they are afraid to go on the bridge because of the noise of the cars.

DACIA: Is that what's upsetting you?

WERNER: The animals who go off the path are killed for breaking the rules! There are no rules for the Winnebagos - or the big-belly tourist with the video camera who throws himself in the path of the elk. We are not in nature - we are in DISNEY WORLD?!

MELANIE: Werner...not all our parks are like that.

WERNER: Und the elk - the noble elk. The town is built on his home. For hundreds of years he walks through woods to the river. Now on the same spot there is... a Baby Gap! It is abomination! Murder!

DACIA: (*confused*) Someone was murdered?

WERNER: All of nature! I will go back to Horstmar. I will stand in the middle of Autobahn and use the moose call. If the moose comes - it can only be a ghost and I will die of fright. If the moose does not come perhaps I will be killed by a Mercedes.

ALL THREE: Werner - please - it's not all like that - Werner!

WERNER: I want to be alone.

DACIA: But Werner - I know I can help you with this.

WERNER: Why did you not warn me?

DACIA: I didn't realize you were actually going to the mountains -

WERNER: I am coming here to tell you - I think I do not need anymore of your summer.

DACIA: Werner! Please!

WERNER leaves.

KEVIN: We never did do the hike.

MELANIE: I guess I should have known there was fast food in France. But a national park...how awful for him.

KEVIN: He liked the mountains. But all the billboards sort of did him in.

MELANIE: *(running after WERNER)* Werner!

DACIA: I hope you're happy.

JESSICA enters.

JESSICA: Hi. I'd like to participate in the program for my dad's fundraiser. I think it's probably best if it's a surprise.

KEVIN: Oh boy.

DACIA: I'm sure Kevin can help you.

DACIA exits. KEVIN groans.

JESSICA: Kevin? What's wrong?

KEVIN: Let's see - I just helped someone destroy all their dreams and illusions.

JESSICA: Who was this - your boyfriend?

KEVIN: Oh no - just a guy I know. I mean - I'm crazy about him. And...I can tell he really likes me.

JESSICA: Ouch.

KEVIN: Oh give me a break! He likes me!

JESSICA shakes her head.

KEVIN: *(with a sigh)* Only not...that way.

JESSICA: Sorry.

KEVIN: I really wanted him to like me.

JESSICA: Are you sure?

KEVIN: What do you mean? Of course I did -

JESSICA moves to KEVIN and squeezes his temples - a kind of Vulcan mind meld.

KEVIN: I wanted a summer romance. I really, really wanted...to want someone. I wanted to - wanted to-

JESSICA: You wanted to fall for someone completely unavailable.

KEVIN: I don't know what you're talking about. I think Werner plays on my team. At the very least, he's bi. Or gay-curious. Or...

JESSICA: None of the above.

KEVIN: Who asked you?

JESSICA: It's like... my summer job.

KEVIN: You think you can just walk up to people and tell them these things and they're going to thank you?

JESSICA: I don't know. Maybe.

KEVIN: No - hardly ever. And now you want to do your thing at your dad's rally. A little truth-telling? *(wanders off)* I don't even know what kind of hat I'd make you for that little performance. A beret? A tiara? A bag?

SCENE - WERNER'S MASSAGE STUDIO

MELANIE runs in and finds WERNER.

MELANIE: Werner...

WERNER: Ahh...Melanie. I'm sorry I cannot see you. I am finished.

MELANIE: Oh Werner - don't say that. You had a bad experience, I know but -

WERNER: I feel sad. And foolish. I am so - how you say - small town - Horstmar is not Berlin. And it is so European, no? Coming here with my head full of dreams about the new country. How did I imagine it would remain innocent for my benefit?

MELANIE: Well at least you came here to find out for yourself. I've just been reading about French people - in another century. They just seemed so... confident.

WERNER: They still are.

MELANIE: I guess I just wanted to be someone else.

WERNER: Oh no - Melancholy - you should never wish that.

MELANIE: Did you ...want to be someone else?

WERNER: No but perhaps I was too much a foolish idealist. I wanted...authentic wilderness. Authentic...feeling.

MELANIE: And you can only have authentic feeling in the mountains?

WERNER: *(with a long smoldering look at Melanie)* Nein. ("you are my authentic feeling") Du bist meine echte gefühl.

A long pause. MINNIE starts to thrash about in MELANIE'S bag and make mewling noises. WERNER stares at MELANIE'S handbag.

WERNER: What is...?

MELANIE: *(loudly, to cover the sound of MINNIE)* It's a bath toy! No! Uh, something - something I ate for lunch!

Melanie sticks her hand in her bag and tries to gag Minnie. What follows is a Herculean struggle - squealing noises emitting from the bag, Melanie falling to the floor as she tries to keep Minnie from escaping.

Minnie's head pops out a couple of times but Melanie manages to stuff her back in the purse. The fight culminates with Melanie flinging her handbag offstage. A small SCREAM and a SPLAT noise as the purse hits a wall. Werner just stares, horrified.

MELANIE: Sorry!

She exits running.

SCENE - BEACH

JESSICA runs out toward the beach, followed by BRENDA, who is dressed in a Hawaiian muumuu costume complete with plastic leis.

BRENDA: Just try it!

JESSICA: Mom! I don't want a virgin Mai Tai - I don't want to play Hawaiian hopscotch!

MORDRED enters carrying a small portable stereo. He's more or less dropped his Goth costume and now wears glasses.

MORDRED: Where do you want this?

BRENDA: Everyone gets a drink first and -

JESSICA: Meanwhile Tom's locked in the den.

BRENDA: He's practicing his speech for the fundraiser. He'll be out soon -

JESSICA: I'm going to make a speech at his fundraiser too, you know. About Joan of Arc -

BRENDA: Mordred, where's your Mai Tai?

JESSICA: His name is Morris -

BRENDA: Where's Jackie with the pineapple!

JESSICA: Mom -

BRENDA: (to MORDRED) Turn on the music.

MORDRED shoots JESSICA a helpless look and hits play. Sappy Hawaiian music fades up. BRENDA beams.

JESSICA: Mom, you're freaking me out.

JESSICA turns off the music.

JESSICA: What's going on?

BRENDA: The photographer's coming at three to take a family photo.

JESSICA: I thought we were going to talk.

BRENDA: Yes!

JESSICA: So...

BRENDA: Your father and I...would like to adopt the baby.

A stunned silence.

JESSICA: Are you serious?

BRENDA: That way, we can all pitch in -

JESSICA: No...no!

MORDRED: Do I get any say in this?

JESSICA: Does Dad even know about this?

BRENDA: Of course!

JESSICA: Do you really think I'd let you two anywhere near -

BRENDA: We're trying to help - you haven't even finished high school -

JESSICA: You're living in some kind of ancient past - and Tom's just, like, completely pathological!

BRENDA: You need help -

MORDRED: Excuse me - I never said I wouldn't help -

JESSICA: Mom - he's cheating on you - he's lying -

BRENDA: No, he's not, sweetheart. He was, but he's not anymore-

JESSICA: You are so pathetic!

MORDRED: You can't just take it away -

JESSICA: Are you going to raise the baby?

MORDRED: You won't even talk to me -

JESSICA: You know why -

MORDRED: How many times do I have to apologize?

JESSICA: Look, everything's messed up.

BRENDA turns on the music again. JACKIE enters carrying a platter of pineapple. She looks a little disheveled (mussed hair? a torn blouse?).

BRENDA: There you are! Come on now everyone -

MORDRED: *(yelling over the music)* I guess I keep hoping-

JESSICA: Turn that off -

MORDRED: The motorbike's running great -

BRENDA: Smile! The neighbours are watching!

JACKIE: Oh boy.

BRENDA dances over to JACKIE and picks up a piece of pineapple.

JACKIE: I wouldn't eat that - it's been on the floor.

BRENDA: What?

MORDRED: We made a big plan, Jess. A really beautiful plan -

JACKIE: I think I have to leave -

BRENDA: No you don't-

JESSICA: Everything's changed - don't you get it?

MORDRED: Yeah. And I'm still going. (to BRENDA) Great party.

MORDRED exits.

BRENDA: Mordred...

JESSICA: Let him go!

BRENDA: I'll go get your father -

JACKIE: Oh I wouldn't do that -

BRENDA: We all need to talk -

JACKIE: He's not going to come out here -

BRENDA: He certainly is! Do you know he's never set foot on this beach the whole time we've lived here?

JACKIE: Like I said, he's not going to...

*BRENDA exits. JESSICA sinks down onto the beach.
JACKIE turns to go.*

JESSICA: Don't go! Don't leave me here with her.

JACKIE: Jess...

JESSICA: Is she going crazy or something?

JACKIE: A little.

JESSICA: I can't believe she made Mordred come here.

JACKIE: You ever gonna tell me what happened between you two?

JESSICA: He...lied to me.

JACKIE: Like what? A whopper - a white lie? A slight misrepresentation?

JESSICA stares at JACKIE thoughtfully.

JESSICA: Sounds like you have experience.

JACKIE: Oh yeah.

JESSICA: Yeah? Is that why you're not married? Cause you have high standards?

JACKIE: Nothing that noble.

JESSICA: Tell me.

JACKIE: I think it's something to do with me not going so placidly amidst the noise and haste.

JESSICA: That's on the ceiling at my dentist's office. What does it mean?

JACKIE: I thought we were talking about your problems.

JESSICA: Don't get all frosty. I think it's fine that you're not married. I mean at least you're not like, trapped or something. I just wondered why...

JACKIE: Just lucky, I guess.

JESSICA: Lucky?

JACKIE: What about you? Now that Morbid Millhouse is out of the picture -

JESSICA: I actually do have a plan -

JACKIE: Yeah?

JESSICA: I thought I'd give up the baby for adoption.

JACKIE: Sure - find some rich couple.

JESSICA: Not necessarily. A single mother would be fine. She doesn't have to be rich - she just has to be able to hang on to a job.

JESSICA stares at JACKIE. JACKIE looks away.

JACKIE: Fair enough.

JESSICA: I was going to keep the baby but I'm trying to be realistic. I don't really want to be 25 and on welfare when I finish high school.

JACKIE: I hardly think -

JESSICA: The point is - I don't want to do it by myself. But I don't really want to give the baby away to some stranger either.

JACKIE: You know your mom wants to help.

JESSICA: What about you?

JACKIE: I want to help too.

JESSICA: I want you to adopt the baby.

JACKIE: Uh...no.

JESSICA: You don't want kids?

JACKIE: No.

JESSICA: You do - I know you do. You'd be great -

JACKIE: I doubt that.

JESSICA: You're worried you couldn't do it.

JACKIE: I'm unemployed, for one thing. I just quit my job -

JESSICA: You got fired -

JACKIE: Okay, so that doesn't exactly make me parent material either, does it?

JESSICA: You...wanted to get fired. Why?

JACKIE: Okay, that's enough. I don't want the baby - I didn't want to be fired -

JESSICA holds her head.

JESSICA: Youch!

JACKIE: What's the matter?

JESSICA: You know what's the matter!

JACKIE: Look - there's a big difference between being an aunt and actually being responsible for someone -

JESSICA: But you've been thinking about it, haven't you?

JACKIE: Never crossed my mind.

JESSICA: (*surprised*) I always thought you were fearless. But you're scared -

JACKIE: Okay, stop this -

JESSICA: Scared of everything. Mad at everything. And scared because you're mad all the time and you don't even know why!

BRENDA comes charging out to the beach.

BRENDA: Tom says you punched him!

JACKIE: Maybe just a little -

BRENDA: Jackie!

JACKIE: That's why I dropped the pineapple -

BRENDA: Why would you hit him?

JACKIE: No reason.

JESSICA: You know why, Mom -

BRENDA: Honestly, you need help!

JACKIE: He says he asked you for a divorce!

BRENDA: He didn't mean it -

JESSICA doubles over with pain in her abdomen.

JACKIE: I figured if anybody should be asking /for a divorce -

BRENDA: It's going to blow over -

JESSICA: I hope you said yes -

BRENDA: How could you say that -

JESSICA: You don't love him! *(between painful gasps)* And it's not / the first time -

JACKIE: I didn't mean to - I asked him about the baby. He said-

JESSICA: He said it's not the first time he's asked for a divorce -

BRENDA: *(turning on JESSICA)* That's enough!

JACKIE: And that's when I punched him.

JESSICA collapses.

JACKIE: Jess!

BRENDA and JACKIE run to JESSICA.

BRENDA: Oh my God - Jessica!

SCENE - DACIA'S STUDIO

DACIA is dressed up in a bizarre combination of costume pieces from her various events. She's also quite drunk. She staggers around her studio space trying to do a dance but her Carmen Miranda hat keeps slipping off her head. KEVIN hovers.

KEVIN: Maybe you just should sit down.

DACIA: I feel fantastic. Went into a very nice sushi bar and drank five of those cute little jars of sake -

KEVIN: What brought this on?

DACIA: That tiresome German man says I ruined his summer. I told him I couldn't help it if he was a gloomy Gus. A gloomy gussy fussy Gus. (*giggles drunkenly, then stops suddenly*) I'm a failure.

KEVIN: Don't be silly.

DACIA: I was burping up salmon roe so I had to get a different taste in my mouth. Scotch. And a teensy bit of peppermint schnapps.

KEVIN: Oh honey, nothing's so terrible that you have to mix your drinks.

DACIA: Everything...is in ruins. This is the end of the company.

KEVIN: Come on -

DACIA: No - no. I'll finish up the election fundraiser and then it's all over.

KEVIN: Dacia, the fundraiser's cancelled, remember?

DACIA: Oh now what -

KEVIN: His daughter's in the hospital -

DACIA: Oh, there's always some excuse!

KEVIN: Things'll turn around - you'll see. They always do. You're the best party planner in the city.

DACIA: What's the point of planning when things never turn out?

KEVIN: The point is - the anticipation is always a thousand times better than the reality anyway. Like having a crush - it's no fun when it actually turns into a relationship!

DACIA: I should know - I'm the one who's been divorced four times.

KEVIN: You always say - the only thing better than a good entrance -

DACIA: Is a funeral.

KEVIN: Yes!

DACIA: To mark the end of summer and the end of Bells and Bows.

KEVIN: Exactly! You could invite all your old clients. We could auction off the party supplies.

DACIA: I...will write a eulogy.

KEVIN: Or you could dance the eulogy.

DACIA: Yes! Yes, that's it.

KEVIN: There, you see - better already!

DACIA: Oh, Kevin...

KEVIN: *(as he helps her off)* How about I make you a nice caftan? With a matching turban...

SCENE -

The hospital. BRENDA paces. JACKIE rushes in.

JACKIE: How is she?

BRENDA: Sleeping. She...doesn't seem to want to wake up.

JACKIE: Maybe it's something to do with the lightning strike. Some kind of delayed reaction.

BRENDA: Oh I don't think it has anything to do with the lightning strike.

JACKIE: Bren, I'm so sorry -

JESSICA wanders in, wearing a hospital gown.

JESSICA: Everything here is blue. Like I'm in an artificial landscape for some computer game. I walk but I don't leave any footprints.

BRENDA: It wasn't always like this. We used to spend the summers sailing.

*JACKIE closes her eyes and clasps her hands in prayer.
JESSICA watches.*

JESSICA: Oh-oh...

JACKIE: Okay. *(long beat as she composes)* If there's a higher power...

JESSICA: Oh, that's a great start.

JACKIE: I mean, of course there's a higher power. I just don't know what to call you. *(beat)* Oh higher power...

JACKIE stops, at a loss.

BRENDA: We sold the boat after you were born but we still had summers at Half Moon Lake. At the cabin.

JESSICA: That's it?

JACKIE drops to her knees.

JACKIE: I remember when you were little. We used to have tea parties at my apartment. We'd both dress up in frilly outfits and eat lemon squares. Sometimes you brought your dolls and stuffed crumbs into their little plastic mouths.

JESSICA: I used to call you Auntie Yack.

BRENDA: We never did anything in particular - that was what I liked about it. Tom was happy. You were perfectly content making sandcastles.

JACKIE: Uhh...Amen. *(starts to get up then changes her mind)* Okay, wait... I swear to God - I'll apologize to the Tomorrow Store! I'll apologize to everyone! I'll start a religious order! I will be a different person!

JESSICA: Jackie? Joan of Arc went through something like this. She was tortured by the English - they made her sign a confession saying it was all a lie - that she'd never heard her voices.

JACKIE: From now on...I'll be a goddamn saint.

JESSICA: But three days later she took it all back! She just couldn't deny her true character, even though it meant being burned at the stake. Even though -

JACKIE: I think I'm dehydrated.

JACKIE wanders off.

JESSICA: She was deserted by everyone - even her saints.

BRENDA: Is it possible that I was never a very good mother? I loved you when it was easy. I still love you but sometimes I don't like you very much.

SCENE - BEACH

Classical music fades up. WERNER and MELANIE enter - MELANIE is blindfolded.

MELANIE: What beautiful music. Are we in heaven?

WERNER: No...but we are with the gods.

He whips off Melanie's blindfold with a flourish. She looks around in amazement.

MELANIE: It looks so different!

WERNER: We are in the German quarter. *(pointing)* Over there, on the other side of the wave pool?

MELANIE: Yes?

WERNER: Ernst und Gretel's Sensational Schnitzel House. Now we can be having a picnic.

WERNER spreads a cloth on the sand and gestures to MELANIE to sit. She does. WERNER carefully sets up the music then unpacks a picnic.

WERNER: Home-cured wurst, sauerkraut...

MELANIE: Mmmm - it sounds so...Teutonic.

WERNER: A glass of Riesling for Fraulein Newton?

MELANIE: (*giggling*) Yeah!

WERNER pours the wine, then -

WERNER: We are very different than the French. I like to think we find happiness in productivity. In order. In...symmetry. That is when we are relaxing. When we know everything is in order.

MELANIE: I think you're right, you know. I think I am more Germanic.

They listen to the music for a few seconds.

WERNER: Now you must close your eyes and imagine...the banks of the Rhine River. The sun is beaming down. You are surrounded by lush green grass and the sounds of children playing nearby. You are with friends. And it is time to eat.

MELANIE: Gee, you've gone to so much trouble.

WERNER: (*preparing a sandwich*) Mustard?

MELANIE: I shouldn't be here.

WERNER: I am so glad you called -

MELANIE: But -

WERNER: We are friends. I cannot bear to think that we are not being friends.

MELANIE: Yes of course.

MELANIE watches WERNER as he swoons to the music.

MELANIE: Are you still...going home?

WERNER: I have been thinking, since I last saw you. The nature...is everywhere. I am remembering the deer in the river valley. Everyday a rabbit comes to eat the lettuce in my neighbour's back yard. But there is nature in Germany, too. It grows up between the cracks

in the cement. It survives (*pointing to his head*)
here. (*a beat, then*) Yes, I will go back to Germany,
after I have satisfied the lease at the clinic.

MELANIE: (*stricken*) But I thought -

WERNER: Ahhh - but I will go back with new attitude about what
is true. This bread. And you. Your...friendship.

MELANIE: (*nodding sadly*) Uh-huh.

WERNER: What is it?

MELANIE: Nothing.

An indignant whimper from her bag.

WERNER: About the other day -

MELANIE: Uhhh...the thing in my purse -

WERNER: You don't have to explain.

MINNIE: Oh yes - I do.

*MELANIE suddenly whips the puppet out of her purse.
MINNIE'S head is bandaged.*

MELANIE: This is...Minnie.

WERNER slowly reaches out and shakes MINNIE'S hand.

WERNER: Good evening...Minnie.

MELANIE: Minnie...doesn't want you to leave.

*The music soars - a beautiful soprano voice. WERNER
and MELANIE look into each other's eyes.*

MELANIE: Neither do I.

*WERNER kisses his finger and lightly brushes MINNIE'S
nose. Then leans in to kiss MELANIE.*

SCENE -

*BRENDA hovers over JESSICA'S bed. JACKIE enters.
BRENDA shakes her head - no change. JESSICA hovers.*

JACKIE: Okay, now she's just being stubborn.

JESSICA: Ha.

JACKIE: Can I get you some coffee? Sandwich?

BRENDA shakes her head.

BRENDA: I had it out with Tom.

JESSICA: Wow. Really?

BRENDA: I thought you'd be pleased. Of course you knew all along -

JACKIE: No, no I didn't -

BRENDA: What did you say before - that I was mad only I didn't know it -

JACKIE: Forget it. I just want you to be happy.

BRENDA: Tom...wants us to stay together until after the election.

JESSICA: Mom, no...

JACKIE: And how do you feel?

BRENDA: I don't know.

JESSICA: It's okay - you're going to be okay.

JACKIE: I just want you to know that whatever you do I'm supportive. Totally Zen. Peaceful as... an old cow. I've been doing a lot of breathing. And I might have a job.

BRENDA: Really?

JACKIE: Writing greeting cards. You know, like... "you're older today but you still make the sun shine." Or "Your dad was great, too bad he's dead."

JESSICA: You're kidding, right?

BRENDA: I'm sure you'll be wonderful.

JESSICA: No she won't!

JACKIE: And another thing - no more hockey. I'm going to cancel my season tickets.

JESSICA: (to JOAN) She just doesn't get it.

JACKIE: No more yelling.

BRENDA: Maybe...we just need to sell the house.

JESSICA: They're never going to get it.

BRENDA: Do you think she can hear us?

JACKIE: Jess?! Okay, I stole the sweater and a couple of cassettes and a bra-

BRENDA: Jess! We can move if you want -

JESSICA: But I guess they're trying...

BRENDA: I wonder if she's...lonely.

JESSICA: Yeah.

BRENDA: Jessie, I miss you so much -

JACKIE: Hey, she's blinking -

BRENDA: Honey...

JACKIE and BRENDA crowd around as JESSICA stirs.

JESSICA: Mom...

BRENDA: Sweetheart!

JACKIE: Jessie!

They embrace.

BRENDA: You're back...oh my love, my love -

JESSICA: Mom - mom, don't cry. I feel great - and the baby's fine -

BRENDA: I hope so, honey -

JESSICA: She's fine. I know it.

JACKIE: I believe you.

SCENE -

MELANIE, wearing a traditional white wedding dress, enters carrying MINNIE, who is also dressed in a white dress.

MELANIE: Hi everybody - thank you so much for coming. As some of you may have heard...there's been a change of plans. Um...there's still going to be a wedding. Only...I'm not marrying Leon. *(some rugga-rugga noise from the guests)* Now hold on - auntie Lynn! Sit down! Just listen - it's all going to work out!

MORDRED: The motorbike broke down in Montana. In a heat wave. With no water. Finally I just crawled into the ditch and laid there panting like a dog. I think I was hallucinating.

WERNER: Honeymoon. A most beautiful word. In Hawaii the air smells like perfume. The drinks taste like fruit. Oh how I am loving the Tai Mai.

MORDRED: I know I was hallucinating. This bird - a seagull - was talking to me. He said... you know I couldn't understand what the hell he said. But it sounded like "go home."

WERNER: Last night we are having the luau - they cooked a whole pig on the beach!

MORDRED: Over the border and suddenly I had the most amazing idea.

SCENE - THE BEACH

JESSICA and MORDRED enter with some wood for a fire. MORDRED arranges the wood while JESSICA sorts through some items in a bag.

MORDRED: What have you got there?

JESSICA: One of dad's campaign signs. And...

MORDRED: A Barbie doll -

JESSICA: The burning Barbie festival. Oh and...

JESSICA pulls her "The Truth survives the Fire" sign out of a bag. She and MORDRED exchange a smile. BRENDA and JACKIE enter.

JESSICA: You brought something to throw into the fire?

JACKIE: Yeah.

She displays her Tomorrow Store sign and throws some paper on to the fire.

JACKIE: This - and all my letters to Don Cherry.

JESSICA looks at MORDRED.

JESSICA: Ready?

MORDRED "lights" the fire. JESSICA moves off.

JESSICA: It was scary - like being hit by lightning again - all that power passing through me - and out the other side, leaving forever...

JESSICA closes her eyes.

BRENDA: I ran into the house and got Tom's golf clubs and his entire collection of Ottmar Liebert CDs. I almost added them to the pile then I decided to put them into the rowboat instead. I set the whole thing on fire and set it adrift on our lake. It looked so beautiful. (beat) It's true - I do hate the neighbours.

JACKIE: I broke my promise. I went to my very last hockey game and there was kind of a thing afterwards. Sort of a

little...riot. I think people just needed to blow off some steam after we finally won. I figured what the hell - like Jessica's going to slip back into a coma because I did a little yelling and threw a few bottles and shoved a guy into the fountain in front of City Hall?

JESSICA: Mordred had a whole bag of things to burn - some model cars and King Arthur comic books. One of his old action figures. When he threw it into the fire and it started to melt I thought he was going to cry.

JACKIE: At 3:30 AM I lost my voice so I turned myself into the police. One of the hookers in my cell gave me a throat lozenge. I threw up on myself and then fell asleep. It was the most fun I've ever had in my entire life. And it felt like...a fresh start.

JESSICA: We could still do anything. We're so young, too young to be parents.

JACKIE: We made a list of names. Fern, Felicity, Fanny...but I think we'll call the baby Grace.

JACKIE moves off, leaving JESSICA alone.

JESSICA: Last night we had another freak storm. I stood out in the middle of a field staring at the same sky you looked at hundreds of years ago. Maybe I was even hoping to be hit by lightning again. It felt great out there - the sky lighting up just for me.

END OF PLAY

Performance rights must be obtained before production. For contact information, please [see the Myth of Summer information page](#).