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Cast of Characters

Modern Folk:

TELLY, a spunky little girl, 9

TARA, her bookish older sister, 11

LOLA, their beautiful, but forlorn mother

ANTHONY, a slimy, good ol' boy with the hots for Lola

PAULA, his toady, a pig-farmer, secretly has the hots for him

JACK THE MAILMAN, a mailman, also has the hots for Lola

LOUISE, an old lady, a fire-cracker

HAM HOCKS, a pig wearing a saddle

NECESSITA VASQUEZ, a real live cowgirl and soldier, recently
back from war

MANNY, another soldier recently back from war, throwing a party

HELEN, Manny's wife

THEO, a wandering soldier recently back from war

A FRENCH WAITER, has the hots for Lola

A VIOLINIST, also has the hots for Lola

A FRENCH CHEF, interested in Ham Hocks

VARIOUS MALE SUITORS, all of them with the hots for Lola

JULIAN, Telly's and Tara's Dad

Greeks:

CALYPSO, a beautiful sea nymph

ODYSSEUS, a great Greek hero

POSEIDON, God of the Sea

INO, a marine Goddess

GREEK SOLDIERS 1, 2 and 3

CICONES 1 and 2

EURYLOCHUS, an annoying, nerdy Greek on Odysseus' ship

SEVERAL LOTUS EATERS

POLYPHEMOS, a Cyclops

AN OLDER CYCLOPS COUPLE

AEOLUS, Keeper of the Wind

CIRCE, a sorceress

HERMES, messenger of the Gods

TIREISIAS, the blind prophet of Hades

SISYPHUS, the guy with the rock

THE SIRENS

NAUSICAA, the Phaecian Princess

MAIDEN 1 and 2

THE PHAECIAN KING, Nausicaa's father

THE PHAECIAN QUEEN, Nausicaa's mother

DEMODOCUS, a blind bard

WRESTLERS 1 and 2

BROADSEE, a boxer

The opportunities for double and triple casting are too numerous to list here and the permutations far too complex for this playwright's brain to comprehend. The original production used 15 young actors some of whom played upwards of 5 roles. They appeared to be having a lot of fun.

Acknowledgments

Home At Last: An Odd Little Odyssey was commissioned by the McCarter Theatre Education Department, Winter 2008.

HOME AT LAST: AN ODD LITTLE ODYSSEY

by Edith Freni

A play not so loosely based on Homer's *The Odyssey*

(Lights rise on a country kitchen. Afternoon. At the table sits TELLY, 9, tomboyish, scrappy and adorable; and TARA, 11, reserved, book-wormy and sweet. They read.)

TELLY. "When morning came, Odysseus dressed, while Calypso set herself to think how she could speed him on his way."

(The sound of waves as lights rise on the opposite side of the stage. A sandy beach. Sunny. ODYSSEUS, a handsome, but slightly-worn down man of Mediterranean origin stands with CALYPSO a beautiful sea nymph.)

CALYPSO. I'm gonna give you this. But only because I don't want you to go and do something stupid like drown.

TARA. "She gave him a great bronze axe that suited his hands; it was very sharp, and had a beautiful olive-wood handle."

CALYPSO. Follow me.

TELLY. "She led the way to the far end of the island where the largest trees grew. They were very dry and would make a great boat, so as to sail light for him in the water. Then, when she had shown him the best trees, Calypso went home."

ODYSSEUS. You're just going to leave?

CALYPSO. What would you like me to do?

ODYSSEUS. You could help me build the boat.

CALYPSO. I don't think so. I've got seaweed to gather. But I will give you a little friendly advice. Be careful out there. And watch out for the wind. It's liable to force you straight down to Hades.

(Lights down on ODYSSEUS and CALYPSO as they rise to full on TELLY, TARA, and the kitchen. Behind them, a large picture win-

dow looking out onto a cornfield. Red checked curtains hang. LOLA, their mother, a natural beauty, is making a sandwich.)

LOLA. Keep going.

TELLY. It's boring.

LOLA. How could it be boring? Already you've got angry Gods, a shipwrecked hero and his son out for vengeance.

TELLY. I'm not interested.

LOLA. Well you'd both better get interested because you're already behind and you need to finish it by Monday.

TARA. Thanks for the reminder.

LOLA. Something bothering you, girls? Something aside from all your homework.

TELLY. Yeah we wish you weren't going out with Anthony today.

LOLA. How else I'm supposed to get to the Mega-Mart with our car all busted up? I have to take the favors that are offered these days.

TELLY. Yeah but you don't actually *like* him though. Do you?

LOLA. He's not that bad. He and your daddy grew up together. Known each other since they were boys. That counts for something.

TARA. Doesn't mean Daddy liked him.

TELLY. And it doesn't mean *we* have to like him *now*.

LOLA. Maybe not but you *do* have to be polite.

TELLY. I don't trust him.

TARA. Yeah, neither do I.

LOLA. I can assure you both that Anthony is only being nice. Doing what any good neighbor would do for a family in our...position.

TELLY. And when Daddy gets back Anthony doesn't have to come around here anymore?

LOLA. Well that wouldn't be very neighborly of us now would it? I'll be down in a minute. I want to *hear* you two reading. Understood?

(LOLA exits.)

TARA. You heard her, Telly. Back to the book.

TELLY. Ugh. Whatever.

(TELLY sighs and opens the book.)

TARA. "He completed the boat in four days and on the fifth, Calypso sent him forth from the island. He sailed away."

(Lights on ODYSSEUS in his boat, sailing. He sails and sails. Night changes to day. And day to night.)

TELLY. "Many days did he sail over the sea, and on the eighteenth the dim outlines of the mountains on the nearest part of the Phaeacian coast appeared on the horizon."

ODYSSEUS. LAND HO!

(Suddenly, the girls hear cackling from off. It's crazy laughter, evil and slightly insane. TELLY closes the book and lights go out on ODYSSEUS rather abruptly.)

ODYSSEUS. HEY!

(TELLY rises and sticks her head out the window.)

TELLY. It's Anthony. Commear!

(TARA rises and goes to the window as lights rise just outside the house. The girls watch as ANTHONY, a tall, thin, dark-haired man with impeccable posture walks up the drive. He wears a pristine white, three-piece suit, white cowboy boots and a white ten-gallon hat. His hair is greased back. He walks with PAULA, a short, red-cheeked little lady in coveralls. She is the source of the insane laughter. She has a little red flower in her hair.)

PAULA. That's a right handsome suit you got on there, Anthony.

ANTHONY. Thank you, Paula. I picked her up at the old church swap meet last weekend. Buck ninety-nine down from \$3.

PAULA. You sure know how to haggle. And look handsome.

ANTHONY. What I *know* is how to woo. Can't be dressed like a shabby pig farmer now can I?

PAULA. *I'm* dressed like a shabby pig farmer.

ANTHONY. Good thing you're not trying to woo nobody.

PAULA. Right, good thing.

ANTHONY. There is, after all, a dress code at Chez Fromage.

PAULA. I thought you was taking Lola to the Mega-Mart.

ANTHONY. I am. First. But then to dinner.

PAULA. What for?

ANTHONY. Why, to proclaim my intentions, Silly. Today is The Day.

PAULA. Today is Sunday.

ANTHONY. Yes, but it is also the day that Lola Otis starts a new life. With me.

PAULA. I hate to break it to you, Anthony, but that little lady is waiting for her husband to come home from the war.

ANTHONY. Don't be insane, woman! Julian isn't coming home. He's lost! Lost out in the desert. For all we know the man is—

PAULA. —Don't say it!

ANTHONY. Dead and gone. And the sooner this household comes to terms with that, the better it'll be for everybody.

PAULA. You're not the only man in this county interested in wooing her. If she ain't waiting for Julian, why don't she go out with some of them?

ANTHONY. Cuz she obviously has standards. She obviously has yet to find a proper replacement. Well today she will find that replacement sittin' right across from her eatin' slugs in butter at Chez Fromage.

PAULA. That's disgustin'.

(Just as ANTHONY is about to knock, JACK the mailman comes walking up the drive.)

JACK. Not so fast there, lady and gentleman. If I can call you such.

ANTHONY. Why mailman Jack. I was under the impression that the United States Postal Service does not make Sunday deliveries.

(PAULA snorts.)

JACK. And I was under the impression that you knew nothing at all.

ANTHONY. Touché. Now here, why don't you let me unburden you?

JACK. That's fine, thank you. I will do my civic duty and deliver this here mail into the hands of its rightful recipient.

ANTHONY. Don't think I'm not on to you, Jack the Mailman. Don't think I'm not on to all ya'll.

JACK. I've got just as much right to Lola as you do, Anthony.

ANTHONY. You gimme that mail or I'll sick Paula here on you. She's got lockjaw like no dog you've ever run from.

(PAULA growls. JACK sneers and hands over the mail. He turns to leave and ANTHONY kicks him in the butt. Jack shakes his fist at ANTHONY but PAULA barks at him, sending JACK running in the opposite direction. ANTHONY laughs, flips through the mail. He finds something disturbing.)

ANTHONY. Oh no.

PAULA. What is it?

(ANTHONY tears the letter open. He pulls PAULA away from the house and whispers.)

ANTHONY. It's from Julian.

PAULA. He's alive!

ANTHONY. SHHHH! Appears so.

PAULA. What're you gonna do?

ANTHONY. Act fast.

PAULA. What am I gonna do?

ANTHONY. Keep an eye on the kids for me. I don't need them mucking up my plans and they have a way of doing just that. You go find yourself a nice hiding place.

(PAULA runs off as the front door opens and the girls appears. They clear their throats.)

ANTHONY. Well...Afternoon there Telly, Tara. Your mama ready?

TELLY. Was that mailman Jack out here with you?

ANTHONY. Was indeed.

TARA. He bring anything for us?

ANTHONY. Sure did.

(ANTHONY hands TELLY a few envelopes.)

TELLY. These are bills.

ANTHONY. What? You girls don't have jobs yet?

TARA. You know we don't. We're in school.

ANTHONY. Good for you. Stay there.

TARA. We're reading *The Odyssey*.

ANTHONY. Never heard of it.

TARA. It's a big long story-poem about this hero Odysseus who goes away to fight a war. Sorta like my dad. But twenty years go by and he doesn't come home. His wife and son are really worried about him cuz they don't know if he's dead or not.

ANTHONY. I'm sure he is.

TELLY. But he's not. And the son knows it. Deep down.

ANTHONY. Allow me to give you some advice, child. If you keep your head buried in books, you won't ever see the plain facts of the real world happenin' around you. If a man is gone, twenty years, even twenty months, it's a safe bet he's gone for good.

TELLY. And let me give you some advice, Anthony.

ANTHONY. Oh please, child, do.

TARA. Hush up now, Telly.

TELLY. Mama won't ever wanna marry you. Cuz she still loves my daddy.

ANTHONY. We'll see about that, won't we?

(LOLA exits the house.)

LOLA. I'm all ready. Sorry to keep you waiting.

ANTHONY. That's quite all right.

LOLA. Why you all dressed up?

ANTHONY. What this old thing? Just...a suit is all.

LOLA. I appreciate the lift.

ANTHONY. I'll take a look at that lemon when we get back.

TELLY. Didn't you take a look at it last week?

ANTHONY. Such a cute kid.

(LOUISE, an old woman with a beehive hairdo, a walking stick and pipe comes hobbling up the walkway.)

LOUISE. I'm here, I'm here. Call off the cavalry.

LOLA. How ya' doin' Louise?

LOUISE. Well, let's see, my teeth are removable, everything hurts and I've been told I smell like feet. But I suppose I'm happy to be alive.

LOLA. Thanks for watching them. They've got reading to do so no television.

(ANTHONY and LOLA leave. TELLY watches them go.)

LOUISE. So what's the good word, girls?

TARA. Louise, can you keep a secret?

LOUISE. Only thing I can keep. Everything else falls outta my pockets.

TARA. We think Anthony's planning something.

LOUISE. What exactly?

TARA. I'm not entirely sure but I know it involves Mama. I heard him talking outside. I couldn't make out everything but I know he likes her.

LOUISE. That he does.

TARA. And he knows we haven't heard anything in a long time. From daddy. We used to get letters every week then suddenly they just stopped coming.

LOUISE. Maybe your father's on some kinda secret mission and he can't write you.

TELLY. Or maybe he's gone missing in action. Either way, Mama's losing hope.

LOUISE. Are *you*?

TARA. Not one bit. We know he's coming home. But she's not as strong as us. Hope isn't enough for her. She needs to *know* it.

LOUISE. Of course, knowing things is always better than wondering about 'em. Why you think all the great thinkers were so worried all the time? Thinking is the hard part.

TELLY. I'm tired of thinking! I don't wanna stay here and read this stupid book. I wanna go out and DO something.

LOUISE. Well then let's. How's about we have ourselves a little adventure today?

TELLY. YES!

TARA. (*To TELLY:*) We can't, Telly. If we don't finish the Odyssey, Mama's gonna flip her top.

LOUISE. I can catch you up.

TARA. *You know The Odyssey?*

LOUISE. I have been on this earth for a while, little one.

TELLY. Does he come home in the end?

LOUISE. All in good time. Now grab your jackets.

TARA. Well...OK but where are we going?

LOUISE. To find ourselves a little knowledge.

(TELLY and TARA and LOUISE exit. PAULA pops up from behind a bush, covered in leaves.)

PAULA. Knowledge, huh? I think I could use me a little knowledge too. HAM HOCKS!

(A giant HOG in a saddle saunters on. PAULA jumps onto him.)

Giddyap!

(Lights cross-fade to reveal LOUISE and the girls in a car.)

TARA. OK, Odysseus just left Calypso's island.

(Lights rise on ODYSSEUS in his boat.)

LOUISE. Ah ha! Odysseus was so close to the Phaecian coast he could just about make it out.

ODYSSEUS. Land ho!

TELLY. But wait, Louise. I still don't even know how did he got there in the first place.

TARA. She told you we find that out later.

TELLY. But shouldn't that be where the story starts?

TARA. The story starts where it starts.

TELLY. It should start at the beginning.

LOUISE. Hush up, both of you. So he's on the boat and he can see land. That's when Poseidon showed up.

(POSEIDON appears. He is magnificent and covered in seaweed. He carries a large trident and wears a crown.)

POSEIDON. Just like my brothers and sisters to make plans without me. So, Odysseus is to make it safely to the Phaecian coast is he? Not if I have anything to say about it. Come clouds, come rain, come wind and waves. Big Daddy Poseidon commands you!

(The wind begins to stir. The waves lash against the side of the boat. POSEIDON laughs. Big, booming, God-like.)

ODYSSEUS. I've never heard a storm laugh before.

(A giant wave knocks at the boat.)

LOUISE. Poseidon continued to laugh and create wind and waves so powerful that Odysseus was quickly washed overboard.

ODYSSEUS. HERO OVERBOARD!

POSEIDON. Nobody makes a sea-monkey out of Poseidon!

(POSEIDON disappears into the sea with a flourish.)

LOUISE. But Odysseus, I hear, was quite popular with the ladies and just as all seemed lost, the marine goddess Ino, appeared to him on this raft in the form of a seagull.

(INO, a woman in the form of a seagull perches on Odysseus' raft.)

INO. What in Gods names did you do to make Poseidon so angry with you? KA-KAW!

ODYSSEUS. I have no idea, Talking Bird, but I'm not surprised this happened. And I'll be even less surprised when the angry God decides to suck me down into his murky depths for good.

INO. Oh come on now, Odysseus, you're smarter than that. If he wanted to kill you he'd have done it already. Chin up, I can help. Ditch the raft. KAW!

ODYSSEUS. Oh that's fantastic advice, thank you.

INO. Seriously, ditch the raft and swim like Hades over to the Phaecian coast. You'll be much safer there. And here, take this. My veil. Tie it around your...giant, muscular...manly chest. It's magic so...you know, no harm will come to you. KAW KAW!

(ODYSSEUS takes the veil and ties it around his neck. INO dives into the water and disappears.)

ODYSSEUS. Hmmmm...could be a trick. I'll make my way to the coast but I am NOT leaving this raft.

(A giant wave comes and knocks ODYSSEUS off his raft.)

So much for that plan.

LOUISE. And so Odysseus swam and floated and swam and floated and things were rough but after three days or so he made his way to a little stream that led into the island from the sea and he followed it. At last, he found a grassy bank where he rested.

ODYSSEUS. Sweet merciful solid ground! Well, won't be needing this anymore.

LOUISE. He tore Ino's veil off of his neck and tossed it back into the stream.

TARA. So he was finally safe.

LOUISE. For the moment. But he needed to make a decision.

ODYSSEUS. My Gods, it's cold. And I need a nap. I've never been so miserable. I can't stay here, with the wind coming off the water. I'll freeze to death in no time. I could move on into the forest there. It will surely be warmer but what if some savage beast decides it's dinnertime and that he has a taste for Grecian Warrior? I don't know what to do. *(Weighing his options:)* Freeze to death. Be eaten. Freeze to death. Be eaten.

LOUISE. In the end, Odysseus decided to take his chances in the forest. Now the next day—

TELLY. —I wanna know how he got to Calypso's island.

LOUISE. All in good time.

TELLY. This isn't working for me.

TARA. You're impossible.

TELLY. It's why I was bored in the first place.

LOUISE. Well I'm sorry but Homer wasn't trying to appeal to your short attention span. But OK. I'll alter his genius to suit your needs.

TELLY. Thank you.

LOUISE. It all started right after they won the Trojan War.

(ODYSSEUS, dressed in armor, and surrounded by many Greek soldiers stand on their boat. They all cheer.)

ODYSSEUS. Men, we've done it! We've defeated the Trojans!

SOLDIER 1. I wanna go home.

ODYSSEUS. We *are* going home. Now let's get back to rowing.

(EURYLOCHUS, a loud-mouth, nerd steps forward.)

EURYLOCHUS. Yeah, hi, Eurylochus, I'm in constellations and navigation. Pardon me if I'm speaking out of turn but it seems like we're just kinda, oh I dunno, FLOATING AROUND AIMLESSLY!

SOLDIER 2. Yeah, we've been drifting for nine days now!

ODYSSEUS. I told you I'd get you home safe, that's what I intend to do.

SOLDIER 2. Hey look! We're coming up on another island! Let's go check it out.

ODYSSEUS. All right men, but just long enough to see if there's any booty. I'm serious, we've got a schedule to keep.

LOUISE. So Odysseus and his men went ashore on the Island of the Lotus Eaters.

(Three LOTUS EATERS appear. They wear grass skirts and big smiles. They speak very slowly and in unison.)

LOTUS EATER. Hi there.

ODYSSEUS. Hello. Is there treasure here?

LOTUS EATER. No. Just Lotus Flowers. Want some?

ODYSSEUS. No thank you.

SOLDIER 1. I'll try some. I'm hungry.

SOLDER 2. Me too.

(They eat of the LOTUS PLANT and suddenly become very woozy and silly.)

LOTUS EATERS. What do you think? You likey?

SOLDIER 1. Is that tree breathing?

SOLDIER 2. *(To SOLDIER 1:)* I never realized how pretty you are. You're so pretty. PRETTY.

ODYSSEUS. OK men, let's get outta here, this place makes me nervous.

SOLDIER 1. Nah, I think I'll stay.

SOLDIER 2. I just need to lie down for a minute.

ODYSSEUS. You were just in such a rush to get home.

SOLDIER 1. Eh, home isn't going anywhere.

LOUISE. With that, Odysseus dragged his men back to the boat and locked them up. From there, they set sail to the wild and untamed land of the Cyclops where they ate lots of goat.

(ODYSSEUS and his men eat.)

SOLDIER 1. Oh Gods, I'd forgotten how much I loved goat.

EURYLOCHUS. Really, cuz I find it a little gamey?

SOLDIER 2. I'm still hungry. Hey, Odysseus, can we kill another?

ODYSSEUS. No. Dinner's over.

SOLDIER 1. It's not like they're scarce, Odysseus. We should kill a couple more for the voyage home.

SOLDIER 2. Hey guys I found a cave. And it's full of cheese!

EURYLOCHUS. OOH CHEVRE! My favorite.

SOLDIER 1. And milk! Oh please, Odysseus, let's grab some and take it back to the boat.

ODYSSEUS. Hang on a second. This is actually a pretty nice cave. Spacious. Good air flow. Break down this wall over there. Open it all up. Maybe knock a hole through the top get a little natural light in here. Are you feeling me?

(A gruff, booming VOICE from off.)

VOICE. (*Off Stage:*) I'm flattered but it's not on the market.

(POLYPHEMOS, a Cyclops, enters with many sheep that "baah" incessantly. He's large and has one eye and is generally pretty grotesque and frightening.)

SOLDIER 2. This isn't good.

POLYPHEMOS. Please, sit down. Drink of my milk. Eat of my cheese. Rest your heads on my sheep and goats. They are woolly and soft. Relaaaax. Seriously, take a load off. Mi casa es totally su casa.

ODYSSEUS. Um...OK. Thank you. Much obliged...

POLYPHEMOS. ...Polyphemos. And you? Who are you, Sir?

ODYSSEUS. I am...Nobody.

POLYPHEMOS. And your men? Are they anybody?

ODYSSEUS. Not particularly.

POLYPHEMOS. THEN YOU WON'T MIND ME EATING ONE!

(POLYPHEMOS grabs a man and devours him.)

SOLDIER 2. Sweet Mother of Zeus that's disgusting.

ODYSSEUS. We'd like to go now.

POLYPHEMOS. Too bad. There's a giant boulder blocking the entrance and only I, Polyphemos, son of the sea god, am strong enough to move it. You and your tasty little soldier men are stuck.

EURYLOCHUS. Are the walls shrinking? The walls are shrinking. I can't breathe. I am in a happy place. I am in a happy place.

SOLDIER 2. Now what, Odysseus??

ODYSSEUS. I have to think. (*Beat.*) Got it. Say, Polyphemos old chap, care to join in a little drink? I've brought some wonderful wine with me from the boat.

POLYPHEMOS. Don't mind if I do.

(ODYSSEUS snaps his fingers and EURYLOCHUS comes over with a cask of wine.)

EURYLOCHUS. It's a delightful red, really, from the 1194 vintage. Fresh and fruity with a round mouth feel and an aroma of wild cherries—

POLYPHEMOS. —POUR.

EURYLOCHUS. It's got quite a high alcohol content for a red.

POLYPHEMOS. Look at me! I'm huge. Takes more than a stupid cask of fruity wine to get me drunk. I'll prove it to you.

(POLYPHEMOS drinks the wine down in one gulp. He starts to sway and slur his words and hiccup.)

POLYPHEMOS. Hey, when'd all your friends get here?

ODYSSEUS. NOW MEN!

(ODYSSEUS and his men grab Polyphemos' staff and plunge it into his eye. POLYPHEMOS screams! He runs out of the cave and ODYSSEUS and his men run out after him. An older CYCLOPS couple appears in their nightclothes wondering what all the racket is about.)

POLYPHEMOS. HELP! HELP!

CYCLOPS 1. What's all this racket?

POLYPHEMOS. NOBODY'S KILLING ME!

CYCLOPS 1. Then shaddap already!

CYCLOPS 2. If you ask me, he spends entirely too much time alone with those sheep.

(ODYSSEUS and his men get onto the ship and set sail.)

ODYSSEUS. The name is Odysseus! And don't you forget it. So long sucka!

(ODYSSEUS laughs. POLYPHEMOS shakes his fist in rage.)

POLYPHEMOS. I WILL HAVE VENGEANCE! *(Beat.)* DADDY!

LOUISE. And so Odysseus and his remaining men set sail from the land of the Cyclops and next they met Aeolus, keeper of the winds.

(AEOLUS is a real sales-man type. Good natured but sheisty.)

AEOLUS. I hear you're in need of some wind.

ODYSSEUS. We've been without for quite some time.

AEOLUS. I've got just the thing. Here. A bag of all the winds you'll need to get you wherever you're going. And as an added bonus, I'll even stir you up a nice westerly gust to get you started. Don't forget your friends, huh, buddy? Arrivaderci!

LOUISE. And wouldn't you know it, within ten days they could see Ithaca from the lookout.

ODYSSEUS. I can't believe it was this easy! We're actually almost there! All thanks to the wonderful bag of wind Aeolus gave to us. Hang on to it for a second, will you? I'm going to get a better look from the bow.

(ODYSSEUS walks off. The SOLDIERS look at the bag.)

SOLDIER 1. What do you think is really in the bag?

SOLDIER 2. He says it's wind.

SOLDIER 1. Nah, I think it's gold.

ODYSSEUS. *(Off Stage:)* It's wind. It's getting us closer to Ithaca. Look, I can see it.

SOLDIER 1. Must be gold.

SOLDIER 2. I suppose it could be silver.

ODYSSEUS. *(Off Stage:)* It's wind, guys!

SOLDIER 1. I want some gold.

SOLDIER 2. I want some gold.

(They tear open the bag and all the wind escapes. The ship blows off course and suddenly ODYSSEUS finds himself back in front of AEOLUS.)

ODYSSEUS. So, you're not gonna believe this.

AEOLUS. They let the wind out.

ODYSSEUS. I can't control them, they're like animals.

AEOLUS. You want more wind, don't you?

ODYSSEUS. If you wouldn't mind.

AEOLUS. Sure thing, we're selling at four fifty a knot. Fill up the bag for you?

ODYSSEUS. Four fifty?!? That's insanity.

AEOLUS. My hands are tied. We're in the middle of a wind crisis. Take your outrage to the Gods and leave me out of it.

ODYSSEUS. All right you fools, time to row.

LOUISE. Time to stop.

TELLY. Finish the story.

LOUISE. I will but we have to stop for a minute.

TARA. Why?

LOUISE. Cuz we've reached our first destination.

(Horse hooves. A great stallion whinnies from off as LOUISE stops the car.)

TELLY. Where are we?

(NECESSITA VASQUEZ, a cowgirl on a horse appears driving a herd of cattle. The cows moo and run about.)

NECESSITA. Well hello there, friends. Welcome to The Pillows Ranch.

LOUISE. Girls, meet Necessita Vasquez, one of the only true cow-girls still driving cattle.

NECESSITA. By golly, if it ain't Louise Mentorini!

LOUISE. Howdy do, Necessita?

NECESSITA. Doin' better if I could get these here cows to cooperate. There's one out there driving the whole bunch batty. But no bother. Who're these pretty little ladies you got riding shot-gun with you?

LOUISE. This here is Telly and Tara Otis.

NECESSITA. No, it ain't!

TELLY. It sure is.

NECESSITA. Well I'll be. Of course. Why you both look just like your daddy.

TARA. You know our dad?

NECESSITA. Know him? Why we parachuted out of planes together! Ate together, worked together, served together.

TELLY. Then you know if he's still alive.

NECESSITA. Well now...I...can't say that I do know *that*, Lemon Pop.

TELLY. What *do* you know?

NECESSITA. I know he's a great man. Brave and fulla' heart and I know I hope to see him again some day.

TARA. When was the last time you saw him?

NECESSITA. I...don't recall.

LOUISE. 'Sita, anything at all that you can remember would be an awful big help here.

NECESSITA. You really think this is such a good idea, Louise? Givin' the girls a whole lotta false hope about their daddy?

TELLY. It's not false. He's still alive.

NECESSITA. Then why you need me to tell you anything?

TARA. It would be proof.

NECESSITA. OK look, alls I can tell you is that the last time I saw your daddy he *was* alive. But that was months and months ago. Good friend of mine, Manny, just came back and told me he heard Julian had been wounded—but he was ok—and was hiding out with a local family. One night Julian up and left and that was the last of it. Now I suggest, if you're looking for more information than that, you head out west just past the pickle shack and go see Manny and his wife Helen at their place. He might just have more proof for you. As for me, I got cows to tend.

TELLY. Thanks. I'll make sure to have daddy call when he gets back.

NECESSITA. I hope you can do, Apple Crisp.

(LOUISE and the girls exit.)

NECESSITA. All right, ladies, let's move along!

(NECESSITA rides off and all but two of the cows follow. One of them is PAULA, dressed as a cow and the other is HAM HOCKS the pig dressed as a cow.)

PAULA. Well Ham Hocks, we're not learning anything we don't already know. 'Spose we could just go home and watch the ball game. What do you think?

(HAM HOCKS snorts.)

Yeah, yer right, Anthony would be mad. But then again, who cares? He's been so busy wooing Lola lately he hasn't had any time to spend with me. Why, I have the mind to drop this sneaking business right now and go bust up his dinner myself.

(HAM HOCKS snorts.)

Yes, I do know what he's capable of. All right, I'm with you. Let's go.

(Lights cross-fade to ODYSSEUS and his men in the boat.)

ODYSSEUS. All right you fools, we've got no wind. Time to row.

SOLIDER 1. Heave!

SOLDIER 2. Ho!

SOLIDER 1. Heave!

SOLIDER 2. Ho!

(Meanwhile, back in the car:)

LOUISE. And so they rowed. They rowed and rowed and rowed eventually rowing right into Circe, a witch Goddess who turned his men into pigs.

(CIRCE appears.)

CIRCE. Men are swine!

(The pig-men snort.)

ODYSSEUS. *(Approaching CIRCE:)* Circe, you evil witch!

(HERMES, a pretty youth with winged feet appears.)

HERMES. WAIT!

ODYSSEUS. Who're you?

HERMES. I'm Hermes. Eat this.

ODYSSEUS. No thanks.

HERMES. EAT IT.

(HERMES stuffs something in ODYSSEUS' mouth.)

HERMES. Now, you're not one of those fellas who doesn't like hurting girls, are you?

ODYSSEUS. Why?

(CIRCE flies at ODYSSEUS with her sword. ODYSSEUS overpowers her and grabs the sword.)

CIRCE. OH MAN!

ODYSSEUS. You turn my men back into men.

CIRCE. What's in it for me?

ODYSSEUS. I won't smite you.

CIRCE. Will you stay for dinner?

ODYSSEUS. Deal.

LOUISE. Dinner turned into a whole year on Circe's island and then the men got restless. So Circe sent them to hell.

TELLY. She killed them?!?

LOUISE. Sorry, no, she sent them to the underworld. To find out how to get home.

(Many GHOSTS appear tugging at ODYSSEUS.)

ODYSSEUS. Can anybody tell me where to find Tiresias the blind prophet?

(TIREISIAS, the blind prophet appears, facing the wrong direction.)

TIREISIAS. Odysseus!

ODYSSEUS. Uh, over here!

TIREISIAS. You have angered the great god of the sea by blinding his one-eyed son. In other words, you've made a right mess of things.

ODYSSEUS. I'm never going to get home am I, Tiresias?

TIREISIAS. No, you'll make it home. You'll reunite with your wife, take back your throne and restore order to your troubled land. Then you'll settle the score with Poseidon. But not just yet.

ODYSSEUS. I can't do it anymore!

TIREISIAS. Oh quit whining. You're doing good, you're almost there but you gotta make sure of one more thing.

ODYSSEUS. One more thing. It's always, "One more thing and then you're home free, Odysseus." You'll forgive me if I don't buy it anymore.

TIREISIAS. Just try to keep your silly men under control and don't let them near the cattle when you get to Thrinacia, please. If *I* can manage to blindly navigate the fiery pits Hades for all of eternity, I think maybe you can manage *that*.

(TIREISIAS departs.)

ODYSSEUS. All right. You heard him. Let's go.

(A large rock rolls on stage. SISYPHUS, a bedraggled man in rags runs on panting. ODYSSEUS and his men stare.)

SISYPHUS. Little help?

LOUISE. Odysseus and his men sailed on, passing the Sirens.

ODYSSEUS. Plug your ears and bind me tight!

(They do so. The SIRENS appear. They sing.)

SIRENS. Odysseus we love you and we want you to come play with us. We will tell you things. All the things you want to know. We will sing and sing and we will love you so. Odysseus we love you, come and play with us. And let us sing to you forever more.

ODYSSEUS. So pretty. So...pretty. I must...go to...them.

(The SIRENS continue to sing.)

ODYSSEUS. Must... keep...rowing men!

LOUISE. He made it past the Sirens but then he had to navigate between Scylla, a six-headed man-eating monster, and Charybdis, a giant whirlpool with the power to suck the whole ship down in one gulp.

ODYSSEUS. Let's see. Six men? Whole ship? Six men? Whole ship. Hmm. Say um, Sypius, Lupius, Thorax, Mandible, Agon and Jax. Can you go stand on the bow for a second please? That's right. A little closer...closer.

(The men scream as they are devoured by Scylla off stage.)

All right, well, crisis avoided.

LOUISE. Finally, they came to Thrinacia, the island of the Sun. Odysseus, remembering Tiresias' warning, wanted to avoid it entirely but the men protested.

EURYLOCHUS. I was wondering...would it be SO terrible if MAYBE the men could have, oh I don't know, a REST for a couple of days?!?

ODYSSEUS. Fine. But do not, under any circumstances, touch the cattle.

EURYLOCHUS. I don't even eat red meat.

SOLDIER 1. WHO WANTS BARBEQUE?

(The men descend upon the cattle. A cacophony of moos. The wind begins to pick up again, the waves to lap once more upon the boat.)

ODYSSEUS. That's it! I can't take it anymore. You're all a bunch of insolent fools and I wish I were rid of you!

LOUISE. And with that, another great storm carried the boat back out to sea. The boat was finally destroyed and all the men perished, except for Odysseus, of course, who managed to make it past Charybdis before washing ashore on Calypso's island. And that was the end of that. Or rather the beginning.

TELLY. Then what?

TARA. You know then what. Odysseus leaves and makes his way to the Phaecian coast.

TELLY. And after that?

LOUISE. After that will have to wait.

TELLY. Why?

LOUISE. Cuz we're going to a party.

(A party erupts around them. Dancing and singing and music and food and drinks and a giant crowd of revelers. MANNY and HELEN, both red-faced and jovial appear in the middle of the crowd.)

MANNY. Welcome friends. I'm not sure who you are but I always say the more the merrier. We're celebrating my return. My return from the war!

(Lights out on them and up on Chez Fromage where LOLA and ANTHONY are seated at a romantic table.)

LOLA. You didn't have to do this.

ANTHONY. But I wanted to, Buttercup. See there's something I need to talk to you about.

(A French WAITER appears.)

WAITER. Bon soir, madame et monsieur, may I please to be taking your order?

ANTHONY. We need a few more minutes. Thank you.

(The WAITER turns to go.)

Now, where was I?

WAITER. *(Turning back:)* I am back. May I take your order now?

ANTHONY. Sir, we are not ready.

WAITER. Perhaps a cocktail. Or an hors d'oeuvres.

LOLA. I wouldn't mind some water.

WAITER. Oui oui, mon cheri. Un carafe d'eau, tout suite, for ze beautiful lady!

(The WAITER leaves.)

ANTHONY. I have...some feelings—

(A VIOLINIST appears.)

VIOLINIST. Allow me to play a mellifluous tune for the marvelous femme.

ANTHONY. We don't need any music, thank you.

LOLA. Music would be nice.

(A VIOLINIST plays. Loud. ANTHONY has to scream over it.)

ANTHONY. I have these...feelings for you, LOLA! And I need you to know about them because—

LOLA. —WHAT?!?

ANTHONY. Feelings?

LOLA. What's peeling?

ANTHONY. NO, FEELINGS! I LOVE YOU.

(The WAITER returns with the water.)

WAITER. Here we are with ze water!

(The WAITER spills the water all over ANTHONY, who screams.)

Sacre bleu! Monsieur, je regret!

ANTHONY. You FOOL!

WAITER. Ze bathroom is to ze right.

ANTHONY. I'll be right back.

(ANTHONY leaves and the WAITER and VIOLINIST waste no time professing their love for LOLA.)

WAITER. Lola, my darling, I have worshipped you from afar.

VIOLINIST. Get away from her! She is my one true love.

WAITER. This is a vile lie!

VIOLINIST. I will prove it.

WAITER. I will fight you!

(ANTHONY returns and breaks them up.)

VIOLINIST. She is mine!

WAITER. She is mine!

ANTHONY. The woman is not property! You should both be ashamed of yourselves. Back to work with you.

(They scurry off and ANTHONY sits.)

LOLA. I think I'd like to go.

ANTHONY. No. Now don't do that. We're here we might as well eat.

(LOLA sits. Lights dim on them and rise on the party where LOUISE and the girls are being led inside.)

LOUISE. We're coming from the Pillows Ranch.

HELEN. Any friend of Necessita's is a friend of ours. Hungry? Thirsty? Wanna dance?

TELLY. Are you Manny?

MANNY. That's what my mother calls me so I must be.

TELLY. This is Louise, I'm Telly and this is my sister Tara.

TARA. Tara Otis.

MANNY. STOP THE MUSIC!

(The music stops abruptly. All heads turn towards them. MANNY throws his arms around the girls and hugs them tight.)

MANNY. Telly and Tara. I should have known.

HELEN. Manny, get off the poor girls you'll smother them!

(MANNY releases his grip.)

TELLY. Necessita told us you might know something certain about our dad.

HELEN. Wouldn't you like a soda first, hon? Some cake?

TARA. No ma'am thank you, I don't want any cake.

TELLY. We wanna know what you know about our dad.

MANNY. Nothing much, truth be told.

TELLY. Then tell me nothing much!

TARA. Telly, don't be rude.

HELEN. What's the rush, girls?

TELLY. The rush is I think my mom's about to make a huge mistake and any information you can give me about my dad will help me keep her out of trouble.

MANNY. What kind of trouble?

TARA. The Anthony kind.

HELEN. You mean that greasy vacuum cleaner salesman from over the mountain?

TARA. That's him.

(MANNY pauses. Everyone waits.)

MANNY. I was three weeks lost in the desert before I had the dumb luck to stumble across an old fishmonger. I was all done up in rags and sand so he didn't know what I was. Duped him out of his fishing boat and set sail into the gulf itself. Through the Strait of Hormuz then out into the Arabian sea. I didn't know where I was headed I was so sun-sick and delirious. A few days out, I was picked up by a merchant marine ship and...that's where I heard it from a crewman who heard from one of the captains who heard from a brigadier general who heard it from a psychic nomad that

Julian, missing in action for too many months to be believed, had made his way back to camp. Worse for wear and dispirited but very much alive.

(THEO, a young man with a giant bag slung over his shoulder steps forward.)

THEO. And you know what tends to happen in those cases.

MANNY. Who're you, friend?

THEO. Names Theo. Army man like yourself. Was passing by hoping ya'll might have a spare plate, something to drink.

HELEN. That can be arranged if you tell us a little more about yourself.

THEO. When a soldier returns from a mission gone awry, battle weary, wounded and wild they tend to send him home. That's what happened to me. Not but three hours ago I got off a transport plane headed back from the dessert and I have mind to believe that my seat-mate was the man you are looking for.

(A collective gasp!)

And when I asked him where he was headed, alls he said was home.

TARA. Did you hear that, Telly? Daddy's alive. And he's coming home!

MANNY. Now, don't you go quoting him on that.

THEO. Swear on the grave of my grand-daddy, I am telling the truth.

TELLY. We gotta go. We gotta go now. We gotta go and tell mom. Thanks Manny. Thanks Helen. Thanks Theo.

THEO. Not at all, Sunshine. Now how's about that plate?

(TELLY runs off. PAULA reveals herself as one of the revelers. HAM HOCKS, as well wears a party hat and eats a slice of cake.)

PAULA. This is deep, Ham Hocks. Let's go find, Anthony.

(HAM HOCKS snorts.)

You're the one who said he'd kill us if we didn't stick to the plan. I do hate how he treats me though and boy-o I wouldn't mind sticking it to him. But well, I love him. That's the truth.

(HAM HOCKS *snorts again.*)

Maybe I *am* a fool but ain't no sense in love, is there? (*Beat.*) Let's go. If we're fast, we can beat them back.

(*The pig takes off with PAULA astride. LOUISE and TELLY get back in the car.*)

TELLY / TARA. We believed and we believed and we hoped and we prayed and now we know. We know he's alive, Louise.

LOUISE. All right now, Girls. Calm yourself. We've got a bit of a drive. I'll finish the story.

TELLY. Oh who cares about the stupid Odyssey anymore. Our dad's coming home.

LOUISE. After Odysseus made his way into the forest on the island of Scheria, after his long sleep, he came across some maidens, among them the Phaecian Princess Nausicaa.

(*NAUSICAA, a snotty princess who is just so over it, and her maidens wash their clothes in the river as ODYSSEUS approaches.*)

ODYSSEUS. Hi there.

(*All the LADIES shriek.*)

LADY 1. Who is he?

LADY 2. What's he doing here?

LADY 1. He can't see us like this it's indecent.

ODYSSEUS. I was wondering if you might point me in the direction of the Phaecian court?

NAUSICAA. Possibly. Who are you?

ODYSSEUS. Nobody.

NAUSICAA. Well *Nobody*, why don't you clean some of that dirt off yourself and put some of these clothes on and make yourself presentable. Then maybe I'll take you there myself.

(ODYSSEUS puts on the clothes; they are cut for a lady.)

LOUISE. Odysseus did what she said and when he finished, he didn't look half bad.

ODYSSEUS. I look like an idiot.

NAUSICAA. No. It's hot. Totes.

ODYSSEUS. You'll accompany me to the palace then?

NAUSICAA. I don't think so.

ODYSSEUS. Why not?

NAUSICAA. I'm a princess. I have a reputation to uphold. If I were seen walking about with some stranger from the forest, no matter how pretty he looked, it would be the absolute END of my social standing. But...I'll draw you a map.

LOUISE. Nausicaa gave Odysseus directions and off he went to the Palace, where he met the King and Queen.

KING. You're not a god, you say?

ODYSSEUS. I am very mortal.

KING. Are you sure, because we've been through this before.

ODYSSEUS. I am just a man, your highness. Lost and looking for home.

KING. Very well then, stranger. I will give you a boat. In the morning. Until then, sleep.

QUEEN. Wait one minute. Those are my clothes.

ODYSSEUS. They are not. They were a gift.

QUEEN. He's lying.

ODYSSEUS. OK look. I came from Calypso's Island. The sea god has it out for me and I'd probably be dead if it weren't for the bird-girl giving me her magical veil. I made it to this island by the grace

of Gods and when I met your daughter this morning she took pity on me. But it was my idea to come to the palace alone. I told her to stay away. She didn't have anything to do with it.

KING. Your honesty impresses me.

QUEEN. I still wanna know who he is.

KING. Not important. You married?

ODYSSEUS. Well...it's complicated.

KING. You want complicated? I got a spoiled princess of a daughter who isn't happy with any of the suitors at her beck and call. She'll be an old maid if she doesn't marry soon. You seem like a good guy. My daughter's beautiful. Right, right?

ODYSSEUS. Sure.

KING. Marry her. Where's the harm?

ODYSSEUS. Well—

KING. —Good, it's settled. (*Calling out:*) GOOD PHAECIAN PEOPLE!

(From near and far the Phaeacians come.)

ODYSSEUS. Here we go again.

KING. Our godlike visitor has agreed to marry my daughter!

(Cheers.)

First he must return home to settle his affairs so tomorrow we will provide him with a fabulous boat for his journey.

(Cheers.)

Until then...WE FEAST.

(They sit and start to eat. DEMODOCUS, a blind bard, appears.)

KING. Oh Demodocus! Demodocus! Entertain us with a song.

DEMODOCUS. Have you heard the one about Odysseus and Achilles at Troy?

ODYSSEUS. That one's very old. And not funny. Move on.

KING. I haven't heard it!

ODYSSEUS. I think I'm going to be sick.

KING. I was told the goat was fresh.

ODYSSEUS. It's not the goat.

KING. The olives then. They must be rancid. **DINNER'S OVER.** Let the games begin.

(A bunch of BOXERS and WRESTLERS enter and begin boxing and wrestling.)

WRESTLER 1. *(Calling to ODYSSEUS:)* Hey friend, why not come join us?

WRESTLER 2. Yeah, it's good sport.

ODYSSEUS. No thank you I'm rather tired.

(BROADSEE, a smack-talking boxer steps forward.)

BROADSEE. Whatsamatter, God-man? You too good to take on a mere mortal?

ODYSSEUS. I'm not a God man.

BROADSEE. Don't seem to be much of a man at all. Oh snap! I'll crush you! I am the greatest.

(ODYSSEUS lunges at BROADSEE and they box. ODYSSEUS bests BROADSEE easily and all cheer. He sits by the KING.)

KING. OK, enough. Broadsee has knocked out his last ten opponents in under three rounds. He's got a massive right hand and very good footwork for a heavyweight. Now, you just lost me ten goats, a gallon of honey-wine and three slaves so I wanna know, who in Hades are you?

LOUISE. And that's when Odysseus told his story. The one *you already* heard.

TELLY. And does the king get angry and hold him prisoner?

LOUISE. Nope, he keeps his promise. Gives him a boat and the next morning, Odysseus makes his way home.

TARA. And he and his son and his wife live happily ever after?

LOUISE. ...Eventually. First of course he has to show up in disguise, trick a few people, reveal himself to his son, trick a few more people, make his way to the palace, trick some suitors who are trying to woo his wife, then trick his wife, then kill a few folks, and eventually reveal himself to all and take back what is rightfully his.

TELLY. That's complicated.

LOUISE. That's mythology.

(Back in the restaurant, ANTHONY is picking up where he left off.)

ANTHONY. What's wrong? Don't like your snails?

LOLA. Anthony, you've been a good friend to me. I'd hate to think all this time you've just been waiting for your chance to become something more.

ANTHONY. Lola, let's just be rational here. Eventually, you're gonna need a man around.

LOLA. I can take care of myself.

ANTHONY. You can't even get your car to start.

LOLA. *You* can't even get my car to start.

ANTHONY. I'm working on it.

LOLA. And when you do? What then? I'm supposed to feel indebted? I'm supposed to fall madly in love and want to marry you?

ANTHONY. I hope you'd do that without me fixing the car.

LOLA. I don't know.

ANTHONY. Don't you get lonely?

LOLA. I guess. Sometimes.

ANTHONY. Wouldn't it be better if you had somebody around?

LOLA. I have the girls.

ANTHONY. Not the same though, is it?

LOLA. It's just hard...not knowing anything for certain.

ANTHONY. But deep down you do know don't you. Julian isn't coming back.

LOLA. I've been hoping for so long. For something. Anything. A word. But you're right, eventually I gotta get real.

ANTHONY. So...what do you say? Can we give it a shot?

LOLA. Well...I guess...

(Just as LOLA is about to finish her thought, PAULA and HAM HOCKS bust into the dining room, screaming. The WAITER, the VIOLINIST, a French CHEF, and other diners gather round to see what all the commotion is about.)

PAULA. ANTHONY! ANTHONY!

ANTHONY. What in the lord's name are you doing here?

PAULA. I gotta talk to you!

ANTHONY. Can't it wait?

PAULA. NO! It as-hay oo-tay oo-day ith-way the id-kay.

LOLA. What's she saying?

PAULA. *(To ANTHONY:)* It's pig Latin.

ANTHONY. Oh is it?

PAULA. Yeah. Y'understand?

ANTHONY. No I don't. And maybe that's because I'm not a pig. Don't consort with pigs. Don't call a pig my friend like you do. You wanna talk Pig Latin, I suggest you go get a table for you and Ham Hocks over there before the chef gets smart and puts him on the menu.

(The French CHEF sharpens his knife.)

CHEF. Me venir, le petit cochon.

(HAM HOCKS shrieks and runs away. The CHEF runs after him. A chase through the restaurant a la Benny Hill. It is chaos.)

ANTHONY. Look what you've done, you short, stupid, lazy, pig-farming fool!

PAULA. I can't help that I'm short but I can certainly do something about the foolish part. I'm never gonna listen to you again. From this moment on, I've stopped loving you.

ANTHONY. LOVING ME?

PAULA. That's right. I'm leaving.

ANTHONY. Well...good-bye then.

LOLA. Maybe we should go too.

ANTHONY. NO! We are going to sit down and finish our conversation!

PAULA. I think you should go, Lola. Might just be a surprise waiting for you at home.

LOLA. What kinda surprise?

ANTHONY. You shut up.

PAULA. Or what? I'm not scared of you anymore. *(To LOLA:)* Telly and Louise went on a little trip, Lola, and they're coming back with news. They found out the truth.

LOLA. About what?

PAULA. They found out that—

(From off, HAM HOCKS SCREAMS!)

HAM HOCKS! MY ONLY FRIEND!

(PAULA takes off into the kitchen. LOLA grabs her things.)

ANTHONY. Wait! Where you going?

LOLA. To find out what exactly is going on.

ANTHONY. How you gonna get home without a ride?

LOLA. I guess I'll have to walk won't I?

(She exits.)

ANTHONY. Lola wait!

(ANTHONY runs after her. The VIOLINIST looks up.)

VIOLINIST. LOLA WAIT!

(He runs after her. The WAITER looks up.)

WAITER. Lola, attente!

(He runs after her. Black out.)

(Back at the house TELLY and TARA bust in.)

TELLY. Dad are you here? Are you home? DAD?!?

(They begin to run about looking for him. LOUISE comes in.)

TARA. Where is he? He should be here already?

LOUISE. Now, Girls, nobody knew anything for certain.

TELLY. They all sounded pretty certain.

TARA. Or were they just trying to make us feel better?

LOUISE. Maybe.

TELLY. What would make me feel better if people didn't lie to my face. What would make me feel better is if my dad came home.

LOUISE. I know it would.

TARA. So? When's that gonna happen? Odysseus came home. He braved gods and monsters and storms and hell and he made it back. So it's possible.

(TELLY hears a key turn in the lock.)

Daddy?!?

(LOLA appears. TELLY looks crestfallen.)

LOLA. There you are. I heard you two went on a little field trip.

TARA. We did.

LOLA. Well where to? Where'd you have to get to so fast you couldn't wait for me to take you there?

TELLY. Nowhere. We just wanted to go for a ride.

LOLA. Telly, I'm not kidding. Now you tell me what's going on.

TELLY. We wanted to get some proof for you. That Daddy was still alive. That he was coming home.

TARA. We thought if we knew something for sure it might help you get your faith back.

LOLA. Oh. *(Beat.)* Well what'd you find out?

TARA. Doesn't matter. It was all a bunch of nonsense.

(ANTHONY enters, panting and out of breath.)

ANTHONY. Of course it was.

LOLA. Oh drat, I thought I lost you.

ANTHONY. You're never gonna lose me, Lola. So quit trying. I love you and I want you to quit messing around and be my wife.

(The WAITER, the CHEF, the VIOLINIST, JACK the Mailman, and assorted other MALE SUITORS run in.)

WAITER. STOP! Lola, be my wife.

VIOLINIST. Out of the way. Lola, *I* love you most. Be my wife.

JACK. You're all a buncha dang fools to think she'd be interested in you. Lola, darlin', I've loved you since the day we met. Be my wife.

ALL THE SUITORS. Be my wife, Lola. Lola, I love you, let's get married. Forget about Julian. Love me forever.

LOLA. QUIET! *(Beat.)* All of you just be quiet. I don't even know half of you. Which means you don't know me so how can you be in love? Can't love someone you don't know. That's just infatuation.

ALL THE SUITORS. No no, it's true love!

LOLA. True love is never giving up. True love is never forgetting. True love is faith. True love...is being able to fix a dang car for a lady!

(From outside, the sound of a car starting up. All heads turn to the sound.)

My engine. My engine is running. Who did that?!?

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!

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