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Cast of Characters

DIANA

CORDELIA

Acknowledgments

All production groups performing this play are required to include the following credits on the title page of every program:

Squall was originally produced under the title *Star Dust* at the Tiffany Theatre in Los Angeles. The director was Ron Link, and the cast was as follows:

DIANA.....Joan van Ark
CORDELIA Vanessa Marshall

SQUALL

by Elizabeth Hemmerdinger

(Maine, Labor Day weekend. A summer storm worries in the distance. The lights come up on a combined kitchen and family room in a farmhouse, an ancient affair. The contents of the house are packed away, except for a dated armchair and couch. An old painting of a beautiful young woman still hangs in a prominent position. A hallway leads to the rest of the house. Golden Oldies play on a vintage radio.)

(In jeans and a big old flannel shirt, DIANA BRISTOL is sorting three generations of mementos in cartons labeled “Trash,” “Perpetual Care,” “Remains To Be Seen.” Tossing items back and forth, box to box, DIANA is defeating her own best intentions—and distracting herself by responding to the music.)

(DIANA picks up an old music box, opens it to hear the tune, shuffles it from one carton to another and finally leaves it on the top of “Remains To Be Seen.”)

(A young woman’s face materializes momentarily, as she tries to peer in the kitchen window. DIANA does not notice. She stretches her back, and picks the next item to sort.)

(The doorbell rings.)

(DIANA looks up.)

DIANA. Bob?

(The doorbell again.)

(DIANA springs to her feet, conflicted about this distraction from the packing chores.)

(It rings again.)

Coming! You guys! Are you back again?

(DIANA flings open the door, revealing, to her surprise CORDELLIA MAYBROOKE, appealing and engagingly sympathetic.)

Oh. Can I help you?

CORDELIA. Hi! My car stopped. Before the bridge. I left it there—and ran. Gosh! Sorry I'm late.

(DIANA stands firm.)

DIANA. Excuse me?

CORDELIA. I'm here to meet Millie. I hope she didn't leave. I hope I didn't mess up your day.

DIANA. Not a problem. You couldn't be meeting Millie. Not here.

CORDELIA. But this is the house! Dirt road. Long drive. Slate roof.

DIANA. Look, I'm...busy. Involved.

CORDELIA. It's for sale, isn't it?

DIANA. I've got about a million things to do.

(DIANA starts to close the door.)

CORDELIA. Oh! You're Diana Bristol!

DIANA. Ah-ha!

CORDELIA. This is *your* house? Oh, my God! I didn't recognize you.

DIANA. Small wonder.

CORDELIA. You look so...different...ordinary...I mean average.

DIANA. Thanks. Bye bye.

CORDELIA. You remember. I'm Cordelia Maybrooke.

(DIANA takes a good look at CORDELIA.)

DIANA. Nnno. Not really. Sorry.

CORDELIA. I'm here to see your house.

DIANA. No. I'm packing.

CORDELIA. Packing!

DIANA. Not showing the house.

CORDELIA. But I have an appointment.

DIANA. With who?

CORDELIA. That broker.

DIANA. Millie Brunswick?

CORDELIA. That's it!

DIANA. Impossible!

CORDELIA. Don't you remember? She made the appointment.

DIANA. With you?

CORDELIA. With you.

DIANA. Impossible.

CORDELIA. You're busy. That's all. You forgot.

DIANA. I don't think so.

CORDELIA. Well, then. Okay. I'm sorry. Maybe *I* goofed. Oh, my God! Maybe she's waiting for me at some other house. Can I use your phone?

DIANA. I don't think so.

CORDELIA. What if she's wasting her whole afternoon—and it's my fault!

DIANA. I can't...

CORDELIA. Please?

DIANA. Oh, all right.

(DIANA allows CORDELIA to enter. CORDELIA takes in the room.)

But be quick about it.

CORDELIA. Jeez! It's empty!

DIANA. Just about.

CORDELIA. Sorry! I didn't mean any offense, Miss Bristol. It's just not what I expected.

(DIANA hands her the phone and indicates that she should hurry up.)

DIANA. Anyway, the phone's still here.

(CORDELIA fishes around in her huge purse for a business card. She consults the card and then dials. DIANA crosses to the radio to turn it off and then deposit it in one of the boxes. CORDELIA dials as she speaks.)

CORDELIA. I can't believe I'm having a conversation with Diana Bristol! Here I am in her own house, and oh, my God, I'm holding Diana Bristol's phone! This is so huge!

DIANA. Whatever.

(CORDELIA hangs up and starts to cry.)

CORDELIA. You should never meet anybody you really admire!

DIANA. Oh, this is perfect!

CORDELIA. You're supposed to hand me the tissue box.

DIANA. Sweetheart, that's television.

CORDELIA. Then you say, "When we face these things, we evolve." Go on, say it.

DIANA. Oh, this is so transparent. What next? An autograph book?

CORDELIA. Jeez, on the show, you're so nice to everyone. Hchk.

DIANA. Sorry, but as you pointed out, this is real life.

(CORDELIA chokes on her tears. DIANA stands her ground. CORDELIA chokes again. DIANA hands her a box of tissues.)

CORDELIA. When they cry, you give them tissues. This is choking. Never mind. Hkchh. You're busy.

DIANA. Yes. I am.

(DIANA opens the door.)

CORDELIA. Hkccchhh...I...sorry...hkccchhh... Could I please... Hkcchhhh... Bug or dust...or...I can't...they were right... hkcchhh...water, please...you really are cold... gghhchcgghh!

DIANA. Oh, hell.

(DIANA goes to the kitchen to get a glass of water.)

Busy. In a big mess here...

CORDELIA. Hhcchhh. Choking!

DIANA. ...I mean, clearly! I've got a timetable...a commitment. It's not about being cold. And I don't believe you're choking.

(DIANA gives her the glass of water. CORDELIA sips.)

CORDELIA. Hkccchhh...I was...my response was...a little too big, I guess.

(No response from DIANA.)

I guess you hear this all the time, but when you opened the door and I finally met THE Diana Bristol I was so knocked out by how beautiful—how powerful—you are in person, that I was...that I blew it, didn't I?

DIANA. It happens.

CORDELIA. I mean, you *were* being nice, and I just...

(CORDELIA savors the rest of the water.)

No fluorides, no poisons! Well water! Pristine!

DIANA. All better? Good! Thanks for stopping by.

CORDELIA. Please, can we just clear this up? Otherwise, I might leave you with a very bad impression.

DIANA. Totally impossible.

CORDELIA. Because I *have* been looking for this house—up and down the entire coast of Maine. I mean, when I saw the picture in the broker's office window, well, I just knew...

DIANA. Let me make myself perfectly clear. The house will not be shown while I'm in it.

CORDELIA. Understood!

DIANA. There we are then!

(DIANA moves CORDELIA's bag to the door.)

CORDELIA. Let me rinse the glass for you.

DIANA. You'll really have to excuse me.

CORDELIA. Absolutely! I'm gone! And thanks. I'm really grateful. Wait! Those are gunstock posts!

DIANA. Hmh?

CORDELIA. Very, very old. Very solid.

DIANA. How would you know that?

CORDELIA. Some people read. And retain information. I didn't stop off in your town just for a frozen yogurt! No, I have a mission to be in this old house...Of course, I would have to see the rest of it before I make an offer. But you've got to get back to that packing.

(CORDELIA examines the contents of a packing box. DIANA blocks her.)

DIANA. Millie can show you the house—next week.

CORDELIA. If I can get back up this way.

DIANA. Next week.

CORDELIA. If she doesn't sell the house to someone else in the meantime. Oh, say, you know this stuff called "bubble wrap"? I just love that stuff! It's been an honor to meet you.

(CORDELIA exits. DIANA shuts the door and approaches the portrait.)

DIANA. What was that? One of your little mothering touches? You know, get me off course? Drifting into chatter with that girl? I don't think so. It's the end of summer and *The Last Of The Summers*.

(DIANA takes the portrait off the wall.)

And now, dammit, what *about* you? Storage or the junk heap. Or the car? Into the city. To the bosom of the family...

(DIANA deliberates about which box will get the portrait, finally propping it against "*Remains To Be Seen.*")

Remains to be seen.

(Then DIANA attacks a half-closed packing box, furiously wrapping and cutting twine with large scissors. DIANA is surprised how easily it cuts.)

Meanwhile, back to work. No more distractions, no more visitors. No more phone calls. Whatsoever... Just one decision at a time...

(DIANA picks up the phone and dials.)

A few hours of solitude and concentrated effort...Hello? Lorraine?... Let me talk to Millie, will you...? Went to Boston?... Yesterday?... Because somebody came by...yes, blue skirt... Yes, weird... No, no big deal...said she'd seen Millie... No, it wasn't possible, was it?... Look, you didn't send her way out here, did you, for comic relief? Because if you think five minutes with her was funny, you should see this headless hen routine I've been doing... Only kidding... No, don't come... The kids? Help? You know teenagers: they stop progress. Lorraine, please! You've all been making such a big deal about this when all I really needed was to focus. I've been an absolute wiz here... Finished? Oh! Well. Done. Almost. Really...one or two things to decide... I will be finished. I have to be, don't I?... No, thank you, I'm fine. Take care, Lorraine.

(DIANA hangs up and tries packing. She notices the storm approaching, and welcoming this new diversion, DIANA goes out the French doors to check the sky. She folds up the deck chairs. CORDELIA lets herself back in the door through which she had exited. She sits in the armchair and runs her hands between the cushions and arms of the chair.)

(DIANA re-enters.)

Oh, my God!

CORDELIA. Are you all alone here?

DIANA. What is this...?

CORDELIA. I mean, is that a good lock? I guess I forgot to say...I needed some water...

DIANA. You can't just walk in here...

CORDELIA. ...for my car?

DIANA. ...and invade my privacy!

CORDELIA. I'm so sorry. But it stopped, down by your little bridge. Probably a leak. Don't you think?

DIANA. Wouldn't know.

CORDELIA. It's a great old car, just sort of high strung. Austin Healy. Old. '73. Red.

DIANA. That I do know. I just talked to *Millie*. She told me. All about it.

CORDELIA. She did?

DIANA. Millie called—from her office—said she made a mistake about this appointment, apologized profusely. Millie said she's got a bunch of other houses to show you. And time next week to show you this one. Millie said she's waiting for you. At her office.

(DIANA opens the door.)

CORDELIA. Anyway, *I* wasn't the one who made the mistake. That's good. Great! Did I scare you?

DIANA. Absolutely not.

CORDELIA. Then why are you holding those scissors, like you need a weapon?

DIANA. I was tying up that box. I was... Why would I justify myself...?

CORDELIA. You know what? The little button on the door, when I was leaving, I must have popped it out. I'll push it back in for you. Wait! The car. The water! I almost left without it. Nutty as a fruit-cake.

DIANA. What?

CORDELIA. The water? I can't get back to town. Should I get it myself?

DIANA. Stay right there.

(DIANA returns to the kitchen area and pours the contents of a milk container down the drain.)

CORDELIA. Whatever you put the water in, I can bring it back.

DIANA. No need.

(DIANA gives CORDELIA the milk container. CORDELIA puts it in her bag.)

CORDELIA. I can keep it?

DIANA. There's a spigot on the far side of the garage. On your way. Back to Town. Bye bye.

(DIANA moves CORDELIA towards the door.)

CORDELIA. Look, I'm really sorry I imposed. I mean, we all find ourselves in a mess now and then, right? This must be so hard for you...packing up a house, strangers carting off your stuff... Where's it all going? You have to decide, don't you?

DIANA. Wait a minute. Wait a minute. Have we met before? Were you the one writing about my show?

CORDELIA. Hey, wait...!

DIANA. You came snooping around with that photographer.

CORDELIA. You're upsetting yourself.

DIANA. You were the one hanging around on the set, weren't you, for weeks...?

CORDELIA. Try this, "Breathe out, breathe in..."

(CORDELIA demonstrates.)

DIANA. I don't need to breathe.

CORDELIA. "...Breathing is your friend."

DIANA. I need answers. You write for that supermarket tabloid!

CORDELIA. I don't like supermarkets.

DIANA. You can take yourself right back to your editors and tell them they get nothing from Diana Bristol!

CORDELIA. My car is broken.

DIANA. Get out!

CORDELIA. I wouldn't work for those magazines! I swear it.

(DIANA crosses to the phone.)

DIANA. I'm calling the police.

CORDELIA. Oh, Jeez, DeeDee! I've upset you, and you're keeping yourself all controlled, contained. Even famous people are entitled to human responses.

(DIANA stops dialing, as a light begins to dawn.)

DIANA. What?

CORDELIA. Anyone would be upset about selling a home steeped in childhood memories.

DIANA. That is not the problem. You just called me "DeeDee."

CORDELIA. Then it's soil erosion?

DIANA. What are you up to?

CORDELIA. Bad roof? Failed cesspools?

DIANA. You don't want to buy this house.

CORDELIA. But I do.

DIANA. Wait a second...

CORDELIA. Time to have shelves, closets, pots and pans...

DIANA. I *have* seen you before.

CORDELIA. ...A key to the front door. My own address.

DIANA. Payne Whitney. That's it!

CORDELIA. Payne Whitney...?

DIANA. ...Clinic! You know precisely what I'm talking about. The psychiatric hospital.

CORDELIA. Loony bin?

DIANA. Upstairs, orange sweatshirt. Your hair, it was different.

CORDELIA. I don't have an orange sweatshirt.

DIANA. Was it de-tox?

CORDELIA. What's that stain on the ceiling? Right over there.

DIANA. Not de-tox, no. Too organic.

CORDELIA. Is it a leak? Do you see a bull shape or a uterus? I don't.

DIANA. Schizophrenia?

CORDELIA. You never saw me.

DIANA. Neither one of us has anything to worry about. You've been suffering from an illness, that's all. I've had lots of experience.

CORDELIA. Back to the show, again. Always pulling the focus back to your external accomplishments.

DIANA. See? Non-sequitorial denial.

CORDELIA. I'll just have to ask for a concession on the price. Maintenance, maintenance, maintenance!

DIANA. Bipolar disorder? Come on, the truth.

CORDELIA. What are you doing?

DIANA. Getting to know you.

CORDELIA. You know, I was always impressed with how you got folks to spill their stories on TV. Does somebody write the script for you? 'Cause, honestly, I'm sort of disappointed by your real-life approach. Relax.

DIANA. You barge into my house and I'm supposed to relax?

CORDELIA. What do you think I am? Some kind of serial killer? One of those freaks we see on your show?

DIANA. Borderline Personality Disorder. I'm right, aren't I?

CORDELIA. Oh, like, what? You're an expert?

DIANA. You're in the manic phase now. Thought we'd have a little fun, didn't you?

CORDELIA. Fun? Like Spanish-Inquisition-type fun?

DIANA. How could I have missed the damn signals! The signs were there the moment you walked in, an almost palpable aura.

CORDELIA. Ease off, Clark Kent. I'm not shaking. Check the pupils. Do I look bad? You're waaay too hard on yourself...

DIANA. Near the window. In a blue vinyl armchair.

CORDELIA. For a second, just.

DIANA. Ah-ha!

CORDELIA. Okay, I'm going!

DIANA. No, you're not. I have some things I want to ask you.

CORDELIA. I've watched all your shows. Sometimes you talk about your house—this house—the garden and the asylum—oops—I mean safety zone. I wanted one, too. That's all there is to know. Then the brokers said the one in the picture—this one—was yours... I mean, how perfect is that...not one like yours, but *yours*. You get it, right?

(DIANA does not respond.)

I don't see why I can't have an old house, too. Never mind. I'm outta here...

DIANA. There's no car. There's no appointment. You wanted something and now...

CORDELIA. ...so do you.

DIANA. Yes. Information.

(DIANA hesitates.)

CORDELIA. Well, I haven't got all day.

DIANA. You knew someone called Rose. Brighton.

CORDELIA. No.

(DIANA indicates the portrait.)

DIANA. My mother.

CORDELIA. No kidding? She really was a beautiful woman.

DIANA. Did you know she died?

(No response from CORDELIA.)

Did you know my mother died?

CORDELIA. This is great! Like you're interviewing me and I'm the difficult subject who keeps leaving you with dead air.

DIANA. Did you know it was... Did you ever talk to her? You must have seen her. At meals? Group therapy? Little outings. If you try, you can remember.

CORDELIA. Maybe.

DIANA. Good. We'll have tea. Relaxing. Chinese. Herbal. And you will tell me about Rose Brighton.

(DIANA goes to the kitchen area, where she clatters around, making tea.)

CORDELIA. I wish I could... I really want to help. But I have to get to...Kennebunkport.

(CORDELIA paces as if she were measuring the dimensions of the room. DIANA turns on the charm.)

DIANA. Do you? Why? You know me, I love a little intrigue—and, for myself, I've never had an interesting day in Kennebunkport—including those six dinners with George and Barbara.

CORDELIA. Bush? Who else was there? Little George Double-ya? How was the food?

DIANA. Come on, Cordelia, how well did you know my mother? How often did you talk? How long were you together? How long were you in for?

CORDELIA. Two minutes. How long does it take you to get a frozen yogurt?

DIANA. You said you didn't stop for a frozen yogurt.

CORDELIA. "Just." I said, "Just for a frozen yogurt."

DIANA. How long, Cordelia, were you in Payne Whitney.

CORDELIA. Which time?

DIANA. The time you were in there with my mother.

CORDELIA. Rose Bristol?

(DIANA slams down the kettle. CORDELIA jumps, then recovers.)

Plain, please, no sugar.

DIANA. How long, dammit?

CORDELIA. You changed your name. A network decision?

DIANA. Sit down.

CORDELIA. That time I met her? Six months.

DIANA. Long time.

CORDELIA. You bet. See, we're doing fine now. You know, well, I shouldn't say...but today's my birthday.

DIANA. A landmark!

(DIANA brings a teapot and two old mugs from the kitchen area.)

CORDELIA. I'm twenty-seven. Well, -nine...well, who cares? Did she make you birthday cakes?

DIANA. Answer my question and I'll sing "Happy Birthday" and put twenty-however-many candles on a Twinkie.

CORDELIA. No thanks, no wheat.

DIANA. You came here because you know that I'm Rose Brighton's daughter, didn't you?

CORDELIA. I'm getting this money from my Aunt, who died.

DIANA. What do you really want?

CORDELIA. What's a safer bet than a wonderful old house?

DIANA. Snowballs in Hell. Enough!

CORDELIA. I really love it when you say: (*Imitating DIANA*) “It’s been a remarkable visit. This is Diana Bristol...and goodnight world.”

DIANA. Not bad.

CORDELIA. Could I ask *you* one question? It’s a little technical, but on the reverse shots in that Osama Bin Laden interview, isn’t that a Patriot missile exploding a SCUD just above the bunker, just behind your head, and *you don’t flinch*? How do you stop an involuntary reflex? I mean, you should have won the Peabody!

DIANA. You’re an observant young woman.

CORDELIA. See how these floorboards are different, as if they were finished by a left-handed carpenter while these are clearly the work of a right-handed person?

DIANA. Drink up.

CORDELIA. Hot! Not too hot. Perfect. Good job. Or did someone, years later, make a hiding place with new wood! What do you think?

DIANA. That you know an awful lot about wood.

(CORDELIA really wants to look around. The storm is upon them.)

CORDELIA. I told you, I love old houses. Back there, that’s where the old birthing room is. Right?

DIANA. My mother told you, didn’t she? She talked about this house.

CORDELIA. Can I see what it’s like?

DIANA. No.

CORDELIA. Probably a million boxes. I’m taking up your time. I better go.

(CORDELIA gets up. DIANA has other plans for her.)

DIANA. In the rain? Go out now, and you’ll be soaked.

CORDELIA. (*Winces:*) Uh-oh, not good!

(Rain fills the silence. DIANA closes the French doors. CORDELIA breathes in, breathes out.)

DIANA. Trust me, when that old bridge gets wet, it's a little scary. When it's slippery underfoot, when you can't count on the earth's stability. A slippery little bridge, so close to the water...

CORDELIA. That's a very serious rain.

DIANA. You could stay in here...

CORDELIA. If I tell you what you want to know.

DIANA. Bingo! The last time you saw my mother, were you both still in the hospital?

CORDELIA. It was after we'd been discharged.

DIANA. What was she like? "Nutty as a fruitcake"? That's what Mom used to say. Or quiet, determined?

(CORDELIA's attention is drawn to the window.)

CORDELIA. What was that? Out the window? A raccoon? They carry rabies, you know.

DIANA. You're scared of them.

CORDELIA. No.

DIANA. We've got raccoons, all right. Only some have rabies, but they all bite. Particularly when they're scared. Particularly when the bear's on the property. Why he wanders way over here, we can't ever figure out...oh, and we have field mice.

CORDELIA. They're just little guys.

(CORDELIA breathes in, breathes out. DIANA notes her fear.)

DIANA. Rats. Field rats. Bats get most of them.

CORDELIA. Bats!

(CORDELIA recoils, anxiety mounting.)

DIANA. Not to worry. We're inside. Now, where were we?

(To cover her anxiety, CORDELIA searches among the packed goods and picks up the music box from the “Remains To Be Seen” pile. When she opens it, music plays.)

CORDELIA. It sounds like your theme song.

DIANA. It does.

(DIANA takes the music box from CORDELIA and puts it in the carton marked “Perpetual Care.”)

CORDELIA. Your shows? I can run them—commercials and all—in my head!

DIANA. God, now that’s scary!

CORDELIA. What about that one with Wendy Burnes: *(Imitating DIANA)* “And life on death row, Wendy, how do you find it?” Or what about Mother Theresa? That was classic! *(As DIANA:)* “The path to asceticism, where does it lead?”

DIANA. So that one wasn’t Peabody material.

CORDELIA. How about that show on pastries with Julia Child? *(As Julia Child:)* “My life with Napoleon.” Okay, now, you can be you. And I... Who’s your first guest of the season?

DIANA. No more riffs, Cordelia.

CORDELIA. Oh, right, you went on hiatus? Why? Did they cancel you? Because of what you did with the Cardinal? You know, trying that new confrontational, insulting stuff? So you’d get him to lose it, too, and scream back at you about this guy who’d shot his kids? *I* thought it was great, really authentic; just a little confusing—maybe—not knowing if you were worried about the nature of evil or if you walked off television. Literally. Permanently. Because you haven’t been back. In a year. But, God! Who am I to question your choices?

DIANA. Tea all gone?

CORDELIA. Okay, never mind the show. Can we talk about the house?

DIANA. No.

CORDELIA. Well, I want to know things, too. Like, what possessed you to buy this house? It's so isolated.

DIANA. It's entirely possible that my father won this house in a gin game. Satisfied? Your turn.

CORDELIA. Then why do you want to sell it?

DIANA. Your turn.

CORDELIA. But I really want to know. What was it like spending summers here. Was it like being in "The Summer of '42"?

DIANA. This is when you ask how I liked going to school with Eleanor Roosevelt.

CORDELIA. Oh, no! I didn't mean you're old. I meant was it all glamorous and poodle skirts? July 4th? And Christmas! What was Christmas like?

DIANA. I had a fine childhood, nothing out of the ordinary. I didn't exactly gambol carefree in the fen or glen or whatever the hell they call it in a fairy tale...

CORDELIA. You never curse on TV. Maybe I hit a nerve or something. Sorry.

(CORDELIA rummages around in her bag.)

DIANA. I had fun. What do you want me to tell you? That I had a "clubhouse" in those big pines? Where I played with our mutual friend, Millie Brunswick? That we collected fireflies on July nights? Did Hamlet and Yorick in the backyard? Baked Christmas cookies in a clunky old stove? Well, I'm not going to.

(CORDELIA lights a cigarette, inhaling deeply. The exhale captures DIANA's attention.)

Okay, that's it!

CORDELIA. What?

DIANA. Get that cigarette out of here!

CORDELIA. Jeez! You were beginning to, you know, open up, and wham!

(CORDELIA opens the French doors, fanning air into the house.)

DIANA. It's taken the entire summer to get the house free of the smoke smell.

CORDELIA. I bet your mother was smoking right here when you took those first little steps.

DIANA. No one buys a house that reeks! Go on!

CORDELIA. Okay, okay.

(CORDELIA takes a greedy draw, then goes out on the deck to exhale. She takes several deep draws, looks around as if searching for someone in the dark, then throws the cigarette over the rail, and leans over to peer down into the sea.)

Smoke smell's all gone. See? Oooh. Long way down. No steps.

DIANA. Fifty feet down. Fifteen feet of boulders. Too steep.

(DIANA yanks CORDELIA back inside and closes the French doors.)

CORDELIA. You're so mean, DeeDee!

DIANA. You're the one who wanted to play. I play hard. And that's the second time you've called me "DeeDee."

CORDELIA. It's a nickname. Don't get mad.

DIANA. You don't want to see me really mad. Sit down.

CORDELIA. You invite your guests to take a seat, you introduce them to the audience, referring to those little pink note cards...a color you can't find in a stationery store.

DIANA. I'm only going to ask you once more: the last time you spoke to my mother, what did she talk about? Anyone in particular?

(Thunder and lightning.)

(CORDELIA reacts.)

CORDELIA. Lightning! It's as big as Nature gets!

(Heavy rain. Lightning.)

(CORDELIA reacts again.)

DIANA. You're not going to tell me.

(CORDELIA reacts more strongly.)

CORDELIA. I'm getting all kinds of interference.

DIANA. You'd better go.

CORDELIA. I lied, okay? I've got no car. And I really hate storms.

DIANA. We'll use my car. But—I am getting you out of here.

(DIANA digs in her purse for the car keys.)

CORDELIA. Thunderstorms are caused by those sun spots, where an explosion of hydrogen rips the sun's surface. Unchannelled electricity, that's what. An erupting sun spot causes all kinds of bad reactions. Have you ever known people who thought this could be their last night on earth? Well, have you?

(DIANA jiggles the car keys.)

DIANA. This encounter: it's history. It's Yalta.

CORDELIA. Did I forget to tell you? I noticed just before, but I guess I forgot to say: your tires are flat. Terrible.

(DIANA studies CORDELIA. Resisting the impulse to rush, DIANA goes to look out the door. Protected from the rain by an eave, she steps out, then steps back inside. She closes the door.)

DIANA. You slashed the tires? All four of them. You did that! Mutilated!

(Lightning and thunder.)

CORDELIA. No, I didn't. And I didn't wreck the car phone, either.

DIANA. What the hell do you want?

CORDELIA. One thing and another...

(CORDELIA grabs the scissors.)

Let's start with Diana Bristol's scissors.

DIANA. Now, see, that was a really unfortunate move. You don't want anybody to catch you threatening me.

CORDELIA. We're on an island. Together. Alone.

DIANA. All those things, piled in the middle of the garage? They're about to be picked up. Today. Now. Any second. By the...Police Partners...local community group. Did you see the story I did on them? Of course you did. How would it look to them, how would you explain, a stranger pointing a sharp instrument at me?

CORDELIA. Not good.

(CORDELIA puts the scissors in her bag. DIANA makes a bee-line for the phone. CORDELIA blocks her.)

Don't touch the phone! We've got a thunderstorm. You know what happens when you mix water and electricity: positives and negatives collide. Big danger. Something to be really scared of.

DIANA. I want you out of here. By the time I count to ten.

CORDELIA. You're jumping to conclusions.

DIANA. The only acceptable conclusion is that when I look again you will be gone. One...two...three...

CORDELIA. What could I possibly gain by vandalizing your car, DeeDee?

(DIANA stiffens.)

DIANA. ...Four...

CORDELIA. Your mother called you that.

DIANA. Five...six...seven...

CORDELIA. Every kid's supposed to have a nickname.

DIANA. ...eight, nine, ten! Ten. *Ten.* TEN!

(Thunder and lightning.)

(CORDELIA reacts.)

CORDELIA. It's a State secret?

DIANA. Fuck you!

CORDELIA. “Fuck!” Good for you!

DIANA. I’m going to find the snow tires. And you can do what the fuck you want.

(DIANA starts toward the door. The phone rings. DIANA rushes to answer it.)

Yes!

CORDELIA. *(Overlapping:)* Don’t touch the phone!

(The phone rings. After DIANA picks it up, CORDELIA attempts, though mindful not to touch the phone herself, to get DIANA to hang up. DIANA dodges and weaves with the cordless phone.)

DIANA. Hello? Hello? Bob! Is that you?

(CORDELIA grabs the phone base, and rips the cord from the wall.)

You cut us off!

CORDELIA. What’s the big deal. You people have got phones up the wazoo.

(CORDELIA puts the broken phone parts in her bag, then holds the open bag to DIANA.)

Where are the rest of your phones? Let’s have ’em, DeeDee, before this gets ugly.

DIANA. “Rest”? They don’t even have call waiting out here. This is the only phone I had.

CORDELIA. I know somebody who’s dead. She was talking on the phone when lightning struck. It was a really big funeral.

DIANA. *(Brandishing the phone:)* Good thing they didn’t count on us for flowers!

CORDELIA. She was *fried*. Thanks to me, you were very lucky just now. So get a grip on that hostility. **DON’T TOUCH THE PHONE!**

DIANA. Bob has already sent the police.

CORDELIA. Bob will think the storm wrecked the phone.

DIANA. And he'll be right behind them.

CORDELIA. You better give *that* line another reading. I *know* they all went camping. Eighty miles from here. That's two mountain-road hours even in your over-accessorized Range Rover.

DIANA. You don't know anything.

CORDELIA. They stopped in the deli, they bought bug repellent at Vera's, and really thick socks in that fancy running store... You can practically smell their trail all over town.

DIANA. Stay away from my kids!

CORDELIA. They're way at the end of high school. They should be able to take care of themselves.

DIANA. You follow my children one more step and I'll have you killed!

CORDELIA. Relax, will you? Lorraine in the real estate office? She's got a mouth like a limb chipper. Everybody in this town talks about Diana Bristol, The Famous. You're the currency, the wampum.

(The wind kicks up and creates a repetitive banging outside.)

What's that?

DIANA. That? Oh, the...bear! Yes! Trying to open the shed door. He comes around for food. He gets a little crazy in this kind of a squall.

(DIANA inches toward the kitchen area.)

Better get out there with some scraps—appease him... Otherwise we could be stuck in here for, who knows? hours... Ooh, you're scared. I'll take care of it.

(The banging continues. DIANA goes toward the door, but CORDELIA pulls her away, hurting DIANA's shoulder. Then CORDELIA locks the door.)

CORDELIA. Like I'm going to let you leave me here? Have you got a screw loose?

DIANA. Don't do this!

CORDELIA. Why shouldn't I?

DIANA. Do you want to hurt me?

(The banging continues. CORDELIA winces.)

CORDELIA. *(Laughs:)* Why would I?

DIANA. I've never hurt you. Have I? Where do you come from?

CORDELIA. The star where Rose is must be the place where I was germinated and I can't get back there because I cannot get my signals. That's my entire problem in a nutshell. Oh, "nutshell," get it?

DIANA. I'll give you all my cash. And there's a bike in the garage. Take that, why don't you?

CORDELIA. The bridge is out.

DIANA. Impossible!

(DIANA scans the empty room, looking for a weapon or a way to escape.)

CORDELIA. This is one of those extra-high tide days. The tide was up to the bridge when I came out. I barely made it across. Scared? You were right about that one. And with this rain. And the full moon. Can't lower the water, hon, so you should have raised your private little bridge. Just how amphibious is a Range Rover? Do police cars swim? Anyway, your police are irrelevant. Someone else is already after me. She knows what I am and what I know, and so I'm asking you to help me. How about Bob's guns. Where are they?

DIANA. There are no guns in this house.

CORDELIA. He hunts.

DIANA. *Used* to hunt. No more. No guns.

CORDELIA. How are we gonna get out of this mess? How do you think without a cigarette?

DIANA. Go ahead, smoke.

CORDELIA. *(Acidly:)* Do you think I don't know how to behave?

DIANA. Just for a moment, I must have been in a coma.

CORDELIA. Aren't those eyes, glinting near the car? Raccoon eyes? Bear eyes? No! That's her out there! Those are her eyes.

DIANA. Okay, Cordelia, let's go and see if there really is anything out there.

(DIANA starts toward the door. CORDELIA flings her away.)

CORDELIA. I'm not delusional. If all this static stops and I can get the signals I'll be able to find the stuff Rose left for me in this house—and then I can complete my mission.

DIANA. My mother promised you something?

CORDELIA. Rose guided me. She told me that I'd find what I needed—*here*. She hid it from you and saved it for me.

DIANA. Here, in this house?

CORDELIA. But you got rid of everything!

DIANA. Maybe they didn't take it away. Maybe it's in one of these boxes. Tell me what to look for.

CORDELIA. She swore me to secrecy.

DIANA. Come on, Cordelia.

CORDELIA. I've never told.

DIANA. You want to get this done?

CORDELIA. Yeah, but...

DIANA. Don't "yabut" me!

CORDELIA. Okay. Okay. Rose left her Seconal for me.

DIANA. You have a sleeping disorder?

CORDELIA. It's how I get to be with her.

DIANA. You came here to commit suicide? You want to overdose on my mother's sleeping pills? In my house?

CORDELIA. You're not even supposed to be here.

DIANA. It's my house.

CORDELIA. Yeah, but...

DIANA. Agh!

CORDELIA. Okay, okay, another "yabut." God, you're strict! Anyway, Rose's house.

DIANA. Not any more.

CORDELIA. Rose is waiting for me on her star. She wanted to make absolutely sure I get there.

DIANA. And you fell for that?

CORDELIA. You said you'd help.

DIANA. Not help you kill yourself.

CORDELIA. I have to find the Seconal before that bitch storms into this place and ruins everything!

DIANA. Who are you talking about?

CORDELIA. *You* want information, *she* wants to snatch the stuff right out of my hands. Look out there. What do you see?

DIANA. Nothing. Nobody.

CORDELIA. I can see her. Shining out there like the big dipper.

DIANA. Who?

CORDELIA. And she's not alone, either.

DIANA. *Who* is out there?

CORDELIA. You can bet she's got FBI agents with her.

DIANA. WHO IS OUT THERE?

CORDELIA. Paloma Picasso.

DIANA. Paloma...

CORDELIA. ...Picasso.

DIANA. She makes jewelry for Tiffany's.

CORDELIA. You bought Paloma's pins and a necklace, all kinds of shit, for your mother. Your mother and Paloma had an understanding and she wants to stop me, to torture me.

DIANA. Paid *her* one of these little visits, too?

CORDELIA. Picasso and her people, they've been on my trail for days. They're armed! They're dangerous!

DIANA. Jesus, Cordelia, that is so grandiose—and paranoid!

CORDELIA. Paranoid to the max!

DIANA. Let's get a little focus here. Are there people following you?

CORDELIA. Life would be so much easier for you media people if reality was ever enough!

DIANA. Or are you running away from some two-bit drug dealer?

CORDELIA. Honey, I don't even take lithium any more.

(Lightning reveals the porch furniture buffeted by the wind and rain.)

I need to find Rose's stuff now!

DIANA. I told you, anything of value's on a truck going to New York. There's only junk left here. I'm sorry, but we're not going to find any Seconal.

CORDELIA. I don't feel well. Dizzy.

DIANA. Sure, you get yourself all psyched up for something and it then...disappointment is very draining. How about a sandwich?

CORDELIA. Packaged meat and processed flour? Poison me for sure! *(Politely:)* No thanks.

DIANA. I've got whole-wheat bread.

CORDELIA. I said, "No wheat"!

DIANA. Absolutely! No wheat.

CORDELIA. You're in on the conspiracy with Paloma.

DIANA. Look, Cordelia, this is not clear thinking...

CORDELIA. This is the best thinking I've ever done in my life. I've got the perfect plan to take away my pain. I don't want any more pain.

(CORDELIA taps the walls and floor, trying to find a hollow place where the Seconal might be hidden. She grows increasingly anxious.)

DIANA. There's nothing here. Just you and me and a bunch of lint-free junk. Do your breathing thing. In...out...

(DIANA slowly backs up towards her own purse.)

(CORDELIA breathes out, breathes in to no good effect. Agitation rising, CORDELIA grabs her bag and clutches it to her chest.)

CORDELIA. The only thing that ever works is looking at my collection.

DIANA. There you are! Why don't you do that, then. Look at your...collection. Good idea.

CORDELIA. You're looking for something!

DIANA. No, no! I'll be in here, fixing..."no wheat"...more tea... You like tea. So do I. You stay here. You know, get started...

CORDELIA. You're not paying attention.

DIANA. I'm riveted. See?

CORDELIA. Okay.

(CORDELIA rummages around in the bag, savoring things, but not removing them from the bag.)

Everything's got a story.

DIANA. Good. A story.

CORDELIA. Oh, look. The Bette Midler leopard belt story...the Elvis Presley sequined comb story, but I'm not 100 percent sure he really used it...the, no...not that...how about...the oooooh, my favorite! The Glenn Close meat cleaver story! It's not just a movie prop, either. Glenn used it for picnics between takes. When I got it, it still had fake blood and brie cheese on it. But I've used it so much,

that shit's all worn away. It's got excellent balance—you could do lobotomies with it. Okay. You go.

DIANA. Hm?

CORDELIA. You tell a story now, about someone famous you worked with.

DIANA. What for?

CORDELIA. That's how it goes. And that's how you get calm.

DIANA. Brilliant!

CORDELIA. And it's got to have a lump of matter. Something I can take away with the story. Something we can trade for that will fit in my collection. Something like that box of music there.

DIANA. Why do you want that old thing?

CORDELIA. What's valuable is the story. Just go!

DIANA. That has no story!

CORDELIA. Don't lie to me! Everything's got a story.

DIANA. I'll give you...an "item"...a really good one.

CORDELIA. I don't want anything else.

(DIANA searches in the box marked "Trash.")

DIANA. How about this figurine? Look, he's a cute little farmer boy. He's got a great story.

CORDELIA. He's too alone. It's got to be about something I want. And when I get what I want, I give you something.

DIANA. I couldn't break up your collection.

(CORDELIA remains stubborn.)

That's my offer, take it or leave it.

(CORDELIA is silent, expectant and very fidgety, eyes never leaving DIANA; then she taps her fingers on the couch.)

All right! How about this frog? It's beautifully carved.

CORDELIA. And about someone I know!

DIANA. It's got a great story. You know Jimmy Coco, right?

CORDELIA. He's dead.

DIANA. Not Jimmy Coco. That was in Portofino. No, it was—Geraldo!

(CORDELIA takes the frog. DIANA, relieved, goes with the improvisation.)

Good! We were on location in Panama City, during that war.

CORDELIA. In the jungle?

DIANA. Unbelievable heat.

CORDELIA. Sweat pouring off your face?

DIANA. It was a Sunday afternoon, and we had the day off.

(CORDELIA settles down.)

Geraldo convinced the man who owned the hotel we were staying in to lend us his truck for the day—he said we were going to elope!—So here I am, in one of these floppy straw hats and there's Geraldo in his Hawaiian shirt and everyone's throwing rice at us. You have to accept that Geraldo is a very funny man...

(CORDELIA seems to be dozing, while DIANA watches her intently. As the story progresses, CORDELIA relaxes further.)

...pretending to kiss me and swooning... So we come upon this very old fellow, carving frogs from dry tree fungus. The most amazing thing, really. His hands were all gnarled and he was practically blind...

(DIANA checks—CORDELIA is certainly asleep—then tiptoes away from CORDELIA, heading for the cellular phone in her purse.)

...But he was creating these wonderful little creatures. Anyway, Geraldo picks up this frog and kisses it and...

(The cell phone rings.)

CORDELIA / DIANA. DON'T TOUCH THE PHONE!

(CORDELIA shoots upright, totally alert. In a flash, she jumps between DIANA and the cell phone in the purse, brandishing the Glenn Close cleaver.)

CORDELIA. A person needs U.N. observers just to be in the same room with DeeDee Bristol. And don't think I believe the shit about Geraldo for one second. Liar, liar, burning in the fire!

(The cell phone continues to ring.)

DIANA. Okay, Cordelia.

CORDELIA. Does Barbara Walters lie? Does Ted Koppel lie? And what about Oprah Winfrey? You people have a responsibility to tell the truth.

(CORDELIA grabs DIANA's purse, throws it on the floor, and whacks at it with the broad side of the cleaver. The cell phone stops ringing.)

Damn AT&T! Damn Verizon! Damn Cingular and all those happy fucking phone families! All of you waste too much time on the phone, anyway.

DIANA. You could have killed me!

CORDELIA. If I wanted. If I...

(CORDELIA notices that she's brandishing the cleaver.)

Oops!

DIANA. Do you know how close you came?

CORDELIA. Glenn Close. Get it? Oh, wow! You're really scared! I was only protecting you from erratic ions—and look how buzzed you are! Okay! No problem.

(CORDELIA opens the French doors and tosses the cleaver into the sea.)

You'll be better in a minute. See, it's times like this when the collection really helps.

(CORDELIA turns to the items in her bag.)

So, all right: I'll trade you for that stupid old phone. There's lots of choices in my collection. We'll get around to the box of music later.

(DIANA dumps the remaining contents of Cordelia's bag on the floor, searching for more weapons.)

Hey!

DIANA. No scissors! No cleavers! No more!

(DIANA and CORDELIA scramble among the items. DIANA retrieves the scissors and walks away with them. CORDELIA arranges her collection.)

CORDELIA. Now they're out of order. It's going to take hours to... Oh, look! The Dolly Parton Bra. I traded with Ramona, the transvestite I met in Venice Beach. A museum-quality piece, "rilly." Mint condition.

DIANA. And Ramona was willing to part with it! Imagine.

CORDELIA. O—kay, she's not interested in lingerie. Big mistake. I have some memories of yours in here, too, DeeDee.

DIANA. What are you talking about?

CORDELIA. We waited every day. You'd come swooping in, briefly, rarely, dazzling everyone—every now and then. While we waited on the other side of that door, sometimes all day, sometimes all week. Why didn't you visit us more often?

DIANA. I visited.

CORDELIA. Not enough.

DIANA. Not enough for you.

CORDELIA. Not enough for anyone.

DIANA. Bang! The door closes, and you're locked in a box. Elevator door at your back, green plaster walls you can reach out and touch, a locked door in front. Visiting rules taped near the buzzer.

CORDELIA. Yeah, idiots thought we didn't know the rules.

DIANA. ...roaches scraping stupidly along the floor. I visited. You can't breathe in that damned elevator hall. Waiting to see how bad

it is on the other side of the door... Can't...think...that's when you know you're helpless, when you can't think... And what are you waiting for? To be let in. I am very claustrophobic. But I visited. Millions of times. You were in there with her once...but it was her eleventh incident. And the stays got longer each time. She was up to six, seven weeks. And I visited five times a week. Anyway, she died.

CORDELIA. One year, three days, eleven hours, and nine—oops—ten minutes ago. I know everything.

DIANA. *How* do you know? Were you here with her? Were you talking...? There were phone calls...huge bills when she died. Phone calls from *Venice Beach*, collect...that was you, wasn't it? You were calling my mother. What did she tell you? Did she say that I...that I didn't...wasn't...

CORDELIA. Why does everybody want something from *me*?

(CORDELIA finds a ring in her collection and addresses it, lovingly.)

There you are.

DIANA. That's my mother's ring. Those are her initials.

CORDELIA. Duh! This ring is my guide. Rose gave it to me.

DIANA. Why?

CORDELIA. She said it would help me find what she left here for me.

(CORDELIA circles away, taunting DIANA with the ring.)

DIANA. I had that made for her. For her birthday... Give it!

CORDELIA. You can have the ring back if you get me the Seconal.

DIANA. What else did she give you?

CORDELIA. We're two electrons, trapped together in the inner circle!

(CORDELIA puts the ring on her finger. DIANA searches through the items again.)

DIANA. I want all my mother's things.

CORDELIA. I am having *the best* time!

DIANA. What else did she give you? What did she tell you?

CORDELIA. Rose said the dead stay nearby, watching us, protecting us, guiding us. Isn't that what the stars are really for? Isn't that where people really go when they die?

DIANA. I'm sorry, Cordelia, but you're not terribly well. What about your family, your friends? Can't they help you?

CORDELIA. I never talk to loonies. I got a tight ship, too. But I kept in touch with Rose. 'Cause Rose was special. And you let her die!

(DIANA heads for the door. CORDELIA blocks her path by pushing the armchair against the door.)

You are going *nowhere*.

(Thunder and lightning.)

These streams of electricity, they leave you so exposed!

(DIANA tries to push aside the chair. CORDELIA drops into the chair seat, whips out a pistol from the chair cushions and aims the gun at DIANA.)

Cross that threshold, and you are dead.

DIANA. That gun's no more real than your other crap.

CORDELIA. Crap? Crap! This is the highlight of my collection!

(CORDELIA pulls back the hammer.)

Which happens to be the gun that killed John Lennon!

DIANA. How...?

CORDELIA. I put it there—in case—when you were chasing those junky chairs before. Hardly worth the effort, are they?

DIANA. Okay, take it easy.

CORDELIA. *Now* you're scared! Yes! Move away from the door.

DIANA. You look for the Seconal. I'll just walk down that road, nice and easy. I never saw you. I swear.

CORDELIA. You're not turning me over to your pal, Paloma.

DIANA. Paloma Picasso doesn't know we exist.

CORDELIA. Look—behind that tree—on both sides—don't you see those big lips? You're not looking because you *know* she's there.

DIANA. Nothing's out there.

(DIANA moves toward the door. CORDELIA pushes her away and flings opens the door.)

CORDELIA. No, you don't! No one's going to manipulate me. And I'm not scared any more. Of anything!

(CORDELIA indicates her gun.)

'Cause I have a little friend, here.

(Lightning.)

(CORDELIA recoils reflexively so the gun fires out the door. She slams the door shut.)

DIANA. Oh, my God!

CORDELIA. Bullets! Wow, this is good! Rose got me bullets! *Very* tidy! She changed the plan and forgot to tell me. That's okay, we forget sometimes.

DIANA. Cordelia, let me see that gun.

CORDELIA. And you— You can be my birthday present. Star light, star bright, first star I shoot tonight! I'll be famous. Like Joan of Arc. You fix yourself up, I'll call the media and then I'll shoot myself. Can we make the eleven o'clock news? Hurry up! Primp! Rouge, mascara...

(DIANA is frozen.)

CORDELIA. Teasing comb...

(DIANA does not respond.)

Fix your hair!

DIANA. (*As Rose, with a rich Memphis accent:*) “Or I won’t take you anywhere.”

CORDELIA. Awesome! That was like Rose was right in this room! Rose! You must have been devastated. Unable to work. Unable to love. Is that why your two specials were canceled? What’d it feel like when you found out she shot herself?

(*DIANA is silent.*)

On your birthday.

(*DIANA is stunned.*)

Your secret! Ta-da! You kept it out of the papers. That’s all that mattered to you. Not her death. Not the recognition of her death. But the silence—as if she’d never lived at all. You thought you could keep it secret—but *someone knew all along*. Rose told me her plan.

DIANA. No.

CORDELIA. She talked about you all the time, showed everybody your picture in the papers and magazines. But you kept everything about her, even her death, quiet, quiet, quiet. As if she’d never even existed. That wasn’t fair.

DIANA. Before she shot herself, she *told* you?

CORDELIA. “Happy birthday to me, happy birthday to me...” Oh, don’t you just love birthdays? She used to tell *you* everything, didn’t she?

(*DIANA turns to the portrait. CORDELIA and DIANA overlap.*)

DIANA. Then you...

CORDELIA. Did you see her afterward?

DIANA. ...Hated me...

CORDELIA. Was there a coffin?

DIANA. Planned it? Called her? This...?

CORDELIA. How did you feel?

DIANA. ...stranger!

CORDELIA. Was there a face left?

DIANA. All the years, all the times...

CORDELIA. Did you think about her when she was living?

DIANA. ...And then, this perfect stranger?

CORDELIA. "Perfect"? Gee...no... But now that she's dead, you think about her a lot?

DIANA. Always.

CORDELIA. Excellent! Then you'll think about me.

(CORDELIA puts the gun to her head.)

DIANA. Don't!

CORDELIA. See, the mission's back on track. But, you know what? It's better if *you* live. Because then Diana Bristol will know I walked on this earth.

DIANA. Please. Give me the gun.

CORDELIA. I want you to remember me.

DIANA. Cordelia Maybrooke, it is Friday, September 3rd, Labor Day weekend. I will never forget you. Brown eyes, brown hair, quick wit; and a great personality!

CORDELIA. And today's...?

DIANA. And today's your birthday.

CORDELIA. And your mother loved me.

DIANA. Clearly.

CORDELIA. Like a mother.

DIANA. Give me the gun.

CORDELIA. I picked the best mother in the whole world. Did the bullet go in here?

DIANA. Please. Before you hurt yourself...

CORDELIA. I can go out with a Big Bang. She's waiting for me and I'm gonna shoot right up. Will you really remember me? Rose figured you'd always remember the day she gave birth to you and she wanted you to remember her...and all her regrets...

DIANA. God! That's the woman you chose? That's the woman you'd kill yourself to be with?

(CORDELIA points the gun at DIANA.)

CORDELIA. You shut up about Rose!

DIANA. When you could have picked anyone on the earth?

CORDELIA. She was a great mother. All I had ever known was being shuffled around like toxic waste. Nine foster homes, nine addresses to try to remember. Rose was there, always there. You didn't want her. You didn't love her. I did.

DIANA. The "Memphis Charmer." She manipulated you!

CORDELIA. She combed my hair, put rouge on my cheeks. She loved me, soothed me, sang to me.

(CORDELIA points the gun at her head again.)

And I won't listen to any more of your shit about my Rose. She's pulling me right up to her. Who needs Seconal, anyway? Flexibility, that's the ticket! And you'll remember me. So the mission's complete. Because all that matters is not being alone any more.

DIANA. You've got to try getting better. That's what the rest of us do, every day. We try!

CORDELIA. *(Laughs:)* What do you think we were doing in that hospital? Trying to get worse? Nothing works! You feel so sorry for yourself, for those visits you had to endure. *We* were the ones locked in there, me and Rose and the others, so many others, with the roaches and the serial killers, and the asshole interns with their poisoned pills. I know. I was there. Seven times. I'm slipping again and I won't go back!

DIANA. Okay, yes, Cordelia, I understand. Of course, you don't want to go back to Payne Whitney. I don't ever want to go back there, myself. It's a very scary place. And you were doing the best

you could, all on your own. We all want someone who can care for us in someplace safe, someplace like a star, where everyone loves you and comforts you and understands you. We all need to feel understood, protected.

(As if to provide comfort, DIANA puts her hand on CORDELIA's arm. When CORDELIA relaxes, DIANA grabs for the gun. They struggle.)

Let go! Let go!

(DIANA gets the gun.)

Yes! The game's over. Right now. Out of my house. Walk.

(CORDELIA lies down on the couch.)

I'm in charge now, I've got the gun. I mean it. March.

(CORDELIA laughs.)

What's so funny?

CORDELIA. Go ahead. Shoot.

DIANA. Shit.

CORDELIA. Shoot.

DIANA. You insignificant little...

CORDELIA. Shit?

DIANA. After all the times I saved her, shoot you? Not in this house.

CORDELIA. Come on, DeeDee. You can be the shooting star.

DIANA. I'm not doing your dirty work. Get up.

CORDELIA. You hate guns.

DIANA. I like this one.

CORDELIA. You're threatening *not* to kill me with a gun? Where are we going with this, Annie Oakley?

DIANA. You are going to jail. Where you cannot do whatever you want to do whenever you want to do it. By now the tide is going

out, soon the bridge will be passable and when Bob drives up that driveway you will be put away, out of my life, forever. Locked up. Locked out.

CORDELIA. What if Bob's car breaks down? What if one of the kids stepped on a dirty nail? What if your mother saw you doing this to me? She's watching.

DIANA. According to your version, if she's watching, it's you she's protecting. Not me. What could possibly make you choose a mother who would kill herself to hurt her own—her only—child? Unless you turned her against me.

CORDELIA. (*Headlines:*) "Innocent Waif Whined To Death By Whacked Out Wonder Woman." Not a terribly good concept for your tabloid to get its teeth into. You'll never use that gun.

DIANA. Just when I'd put it all to rest, you arrive. Burning and slashing—let's not forget that part, Miss Innocent—and armed to the teeth. Would I use the gun? (*Headlines:*) "Armed Terrorist Murdered in Bungled Attempt." Even I'd buy that!

CORDELIA. You're going to take death right out of my hands. What a relief!

DIANA. (*Changed:*) It *is* a relief, isn't it, the freedom that comes with insanity?

CORDELIA. It's got its moments.

DIANA. Just do what you want. Just be in the moment. A moment so close to the end of time.

CORDELIA. Yeah, yeah, like, who is that, Thoreau?

DIANA. No tap class, no ballet shoes, no elocution lessons.

CORDELIA. Like some literary friend cavorting with you in the woods. Can we get on with this?

DIANA. No pathetic attempts to change the hair, smooth the skin, move the teeth, cut the nose, learn the walk, talk, gawk, become someone you're not.

CORDELIA. All I wanted was what Rose left for me so I could complete the mission. What do I get? Your ridiculous interference!

DIANA. (*A manic riff:*) Become someone you become, someone who becomes someone who is who, You? Too. Or three. Four...

CORDELIA. Come on, DeeDee, I'm the target. I've got the flesh, you've got the blood; now let's see who's got the guts.

DIANA. Blood is thicker; blood is richer; blood is everywhere but in the heart and it sure beats packing.

(*DIANA suddenly puts the gun to her own head.*)

CORDELIA. Hey, wait! What are you doing?

DIANA. Gliding through time...free and present...

CORDELIA. You're supposed to be grounded.

DIANA. The brain is no longer contained, strained...

CORDELIA. Oh, dear. Your amps are way up, off the scale.

DIANA. ...against the pressure of sanity or the need to please.

CORDELIA. What's going on here?

DIANA. My mother hated me and I'm going to join her, take your place. She'll be stuck with *me* for eternity. She won't get you at all. Won't that be fun! Gun fun. Surprise! Then her little star will be all full up. No room at the inn for you.

CORDELIA. Listen, I'm not all there sometimes. Not the person you want to count on in a crisis...

DIANA. I'm gonna find her, get an explanation. How did *your* plan go? It was all a matter of getting in here, and messing with my head and munching on Seconals—and laughing hysterically at my pain. Well, my friend, I didn't flinch. I'm still here. All here. All there. And I have the way to follow in the family business. I can do my own suicide.

CORDELIA. Excuse me. This is my suicide.

DIANA. Ours.

CORDELIA. Mine.

DIANA. Ours.

CORDELIA. Mine. Mine.

DIANA. Ours. Ours. Ours.

CORDELIA. Anyway, I didn't die.

(DIANA takes the gun away from her head.)

DIANA. I can't believe you came into my house, locked me in, threatened me, tyrannized me, and scared the shit out of me...

CORDELIA. I did?

DIANA. ...And I let you do it to me. Play with my mind. Just like I let my mother. Hopeless.

(DIANA puts the gun to her own head.)

CORDELIA. Let's just take a few minutes here, settle down...in, out...see me...in, out, I'm feeling much better. In, out...see...it'll work for you.

(No response.)

How about we try something else? Something constructive. How about I help you pack?

DIANA. Don't have to, anymore.

CORDELIA. Want to go in the garden? We could do some weeding?

DIANA. Thunder. Lightning. Bears. Bees. Bugs.

CORDELIA. We could...cook! How about home made spaghetti sauce, like what you get in a really good diner? Or something fancy. Like when you sautéed with Paul Bocuse. I can do that. "Bonjour, chérie." First you cut these pretty vegetables into the tiniest little sticks...we call this "julienne." Come on, Diana, let's julienne. Look in the fridge. You must have a carrot, an onion.

DIANA. You're thinking there must be a nine-inch knife in the kitchen, aren't you? Every knife in this house is on a goddamned truck on its way to New York. I'd have slivered you into coleslaw if I'd had so much as a caviar spoon!

(Just a beat for CORDELIA to come up with a possible solution.)

CORDELIA. Do you nap?

DIANA. Never.

CORDELIA. Okay.

DIANA. And I haven't slept in months, either.

CORDELIA. I don't want you to get hurt. And besides, Rose won't want me if my gun kills you. What am I supposed to do? I don't know how to fix things. I don't feel well. I'm dizzy. I'm gonna throw up. I've got to use your bathroom.

(CORDELIA starts for the bathroom. She stops. She makes a U-turn.)

I just can't do jail. You know that. Please, give me the gun.

DIANA. I don't think so.

CORDELIA. Want to hurt yourself? That's up to you. But not with my gun. Look, this was a really bad idea. I'll go...

DIANA. And I'll be alone.

CORDELIA. Totally. But just for a little while. Bob'll be here soon. And I'll be waaay gone. You know us—our memory is so bad I'll never find my way back here. I won't watch your show, ever again. Throw away the gun, and I'll do whatever you say, tell you whatever you want. On your mother's ring. I swear.

(CORDELIA hands DIANA Rose's ring.)

DIANA. No tricks?

CORDELIA. No tricks.

(DIANA throws the gun out the French doors. The storm is abating.)

DIANA. There.

CORDELIA. Yes!

(DIANA collapses on the couch. CORDELIA tries to make her comfortable, then rushes to pour DIANA a mug of tea.)

There you go. Good? Comfy? Wow! Some zip-trip you were on! Ever see one of those in the loony bin? Sirens sound. Lights flash. White coats swarm. And do they zap you! Big time. Stun gun. Gazillions of gallons of goodnight juice. You wouldn't have woke up for a month!

(CORDELIA *hands* DIANA *a cup of tea.*)

Here, drink this. Lucky it happened here. Better, now?

DIANA. Fine. Thanks.

(CORDELIA *takes a deep breath. She relaxes a bit.*)

That was fun.

CORDELIA. What?

DIANA. No wonder you do it all the time.

CORDELIA. Fun?

DIANA. You bought it.

CORDELIA. Excuse me. You're *fine*?

DIANA. Had you going, didn't I?

CORDELIA. You were *kidding*?

DIANA. Acting.

CORDELIA. "Acting"???

DIANA. Not bad, hunh?

CORDELIA. I came for something so simple and you have complicated the shit out of it.

DIANA. Suicide is not simple.

CORDELIA. It is if no one fucks it up.

DIANA. Say suicide to my family and we think of a coffin and my mother's exploded head in a pink tulle halo. That's how they hide the wound, you know. Nice little factoid for your collection.

CORDELIA. Here's a little factoid for *your* collection: *anyone* can drown in deep water. So get off my boat.

DIANA. Look, Cordelia, there's this place near Portland, about an hour from here, called Devon Hills. I'm going to call right now and... Never mind. We'll get the snow tires on the car and just show up.

CORDELIA. Putting me back inside? No way.

DIANA. They teach sculpting, weaving, all kinds of skills.

CORDELIA. Baskets and clay play. Done that.

DIANA. You can go to college—study astronomy, get this star thing sorted out. I got them to say they'd take Mom, but she wouldn't go. Maybe they can help you.

CORDELIA. No wonder she was pissed.

DIANA. Why?

CORDELIA. "Intervention equals disapproval."

DIANA. What kind of claptrap are you quoting?

CORDELIA. Non-acceptance never feels like help. It just pisses people off. And that's no crap-trap.

DIANA. We're leaving. Somebody has to take care of you, that's obvious.

CORDELIA. Nobody can. When I was little I found this caterpillar. It was late summer and I got put with these people—they were better than the last family where I couldn't have any kind of pet. I named her Ethel and put her in a box with sticks and parsley and plastic wrap on top. She never even rippled, but still I took her with me when I got moved. One day in the middle of February, there was Ethel, turned into this beautiful yellow butterfly, straining at the plastic wrap. What was I supposed to do? Let her out in this new lady's apartment? Open the window and let her fly out into the coldest day of the year? I flushed her down the toilet. Well, at least she was out of her misery. I'm just like Ethel. I can't live in the box, and I can't live in the outside world.

DIANA. Not the world you know, I agree. But there are other worlds. I'm going to help you find them.

CORDELIA. There you go: Redemption! One more thing she left for you.

DIANA. She left me nothing.

CORDELIA. Liar! She left you this whole house and one tiny little thing for me! And where is it? Swept away like garbage.

DIANA. I bought this house and every last thing in it from her—*for* her—years ago. When my father died he left her broke. A Ford dealer for thirty-five years, and not a penny saved. She wanted to keep the house, she needed cash. I did it for her—so she'd be independent. I did everything she ever wanted. She spent every summer here digging up that damned garden like a demented terrier...

CORDELIA. No! She left you the house in her will...

DIANA. She didn't tell you about Virginia Carney, did she? Did she?

CORDELIA. She told me everything.

DIANA. A month before she died, she wrote a new will—leaving everything, all of this junk, to her new “Flavor of the Month,” named Virginia Carney. A total stranger—to me, anyway. Guess where we met? In the morgue.

CORDELIA. Shut up!

DIANA. Virginia was very disappointed. See, Mom forgot to tell her, I already owned the house.

(DIANA rummages in the boxes.)

CORDELIA. “Shut up's” not nice. I'm sorry. No social graces for me, just a hopeless mess. You think I'll check into this place and they'll wave a magic wand and poof! I'll be normal. I've had enough trouble just living, and never mind living up to your expectations. Rose never could; none of us can...including you... What are you doing?

(DIANA finds two foul-weather jackets and hands one to CORDELIA.)

DIANA. Put this on.

CORDELIA. No touching! Where's the bathroom?

DIANA. First door on the left—down the hall.

(CORDELIA hesitates.)

Go on, please. Then the coat.

CORDELIA. Bless you, Mother Theresa. Do I get a hair shirt just like yours?

(CORDELIA exits to the bathroom. DIANA tidies the family room. She speaks loud enough for CORDELIA to hear.)

DIANA. We'll wait at the bridge 'til we can walk across. I'll phone for a cab from the road. It's about an hour drive... You'll see. You're going to love it at Devon Hills. The doctors are really sharp. No white coats. There's music and laughing and a sense of optimism that's, well, infectious. I've been there several times, doing research for an in-depth piece. Maybe you can help me out. You know, insider stuff. If you want. I wish Mom could have tried it...who knows...?

(CORDELIA, re-enters wearing a Fifties' couture gown. She deposits a pile of vintage clothing on the couch before DIANA sees her.)

CORDELIA. *(As Rose in the rich Memphis accent:)* "Nobody catches cold on my watch."

(DIANA is befuddled, then turns.)

DIANA. Get out of her things!

CORDELIA. That room, it's absolutely full of this stuff.

DIANA. Damn you! Take that off! Now.

CORDELIA. Rose loved you to play dress up with her.

DIANA. You just couldn't leave well enough alone...

CORDELIA. She said she was happy then. You'd act out these little scenes...

DIANA. Stupid games...

CORDELIA. ...And stories. Stuff you'd made up. She loved that.

(CORDELIA drapes a boa on DIANA. DIANA discards it.)

DIANA. I left them in there...for Millie to deal with. I couldn't...look at her clothes.

CORDELIA. But you were happy, too. Just a mother and daughter, playing dress-up...

(DIANA surveys the clothes.)

...For hours and hours... She loved her clothes. She loved playing with you.

DIANA. I used to think so...

CORDELIA. She did. She told me.

DIANA. She told you all kinds of stuff.

CORDELIA. Let me feel what it was like, playing the game. Please.

DIANA. There's no going back to that. She's...gone.

CORDELIA. There's memory in her things. Good memories. That's why my heart's stopped pounding. And the static's gone. Maybe it'll help you, too.

DIANA. I'm so...I don't know...tired...

CORDELIA. I was, too. But not now. Playing dress-up, it really does work. When we were in the hospital, Rose told us that's what would happen. Look, I'm better! Putting on these old clothes, doing the happy times, it works.

DIANA. Occasionally. Momentarily.

(CORDELIA puts a beautiful suit jacket on DIANA's shoulders. DIANA tries to resist, but this item brings a happy memory.)

CORDELIA. Please. Just to be in Rose's clothes. One chance. It'll be good, I swear. You're the one who said I deserved a chance.

(Throughout the following, CORDELIA dresses and re-dresses herself as she searches through the clothes. Outside raindrops gently drip from the eaves of the house.)

DIANA. The lightest drizzle, sometimes just a cloud, and we'd bolt for that room... We just waited for those rainy days... (*Rose's accent:*) "What'll we be today?" (*Young DIANA:*) "Fred and Ginger?" "How about 'Nick and Nora?'" (*As Rose:*) "Think we can get the dog to play?" She'd dress up our compliant old poodle to look like Asta...

(*DIANA picks up a dress.*)

Mom saved every dress she ever wore.

CORDELIA. Rose really wore this? Both of you, all happy...like a Christmas pageant...

DIANA. Not even Millie was allowed in there with us. Somehow in there, with her, I felt free. And—beautiful. Her friend. And when she wasn't home—when she was marketing or away in...that place...I'd wait in there...breathing her...just...waiting for her to come back...

CORDELIA. Rose's collection! How's the hat?

DIANA. Askew.

(*DIANA fixes the hat for CORDELIA. DIANA begins to enjoy looking through the clothes. There is no mirror, so they will count on each other for straightening and approval. CORDELIA finds a wonderful piece of vintage apparel.*)

CORDELIA. Okay, your turn. Put this on.

DIANA. No.

CORDELIA. Please.

DIANA. We're going. To get you help.

CORDELIA. This *is* help. Sometimes you think you're slipping way down, and then snap! you get better. You know that can happen. You've had experience. Wrapped up in her stuff, I feel better. Maybe there's a chance. Maybe I'm getting better right now. This is the best I've felt. Ever in my life. You loved doing dress up. You said so. Please. For me.

DIANA. You get three.

CORDELIA. What!

DIANA. Minutes. Then Devon Hill.

CORDELIA. Peacefully. Peaceably.

(CORDELIA dives back into the clothes, delighting in the textures and colors. She enjoys a feather boa.)

Inside, no one ever could stand to see me happy. Where did she wear this?

DIANA. Valentine's Day, 1954.

CORDELIA. You were just a little girl with your feet dangling down through the banister. She turned and waved...

DIANA. More silly myth. It was winter, in the apartment. In the city.

CORDELIA. Anyway, you had fun.

DIANA. Fun? Ecstasy! The undivided attention of a grownup playing games. Better than seeing her go out, in that room I was with her...totally...totally happy.

(CORDELIA pulls a sarong from the pile, tries to put it on, but is baffled by its mechanics.)

CORDELIA. When did she wear this?

DIANA. Miami, 1957.

CORDELIA. Cool!

DIANA. You're doing it all wrong.

CORDELIA. Show me.

(DIANA puts on the sarong and models it.)

DIANA. It's a sarong. You know, Dorothy Lamour.

CORDELIA. Oh, yeah! "Moonlight and Shadows." Great song.

DIANA. Mom wore sarongs to the beach club, with platform shoes that had huge soles made of cork.

(DIANA puts on platform shoes.)

She'd strut down that wooden walkway...right past those ocean-front cabanas. I'd walk behind her, watching every head turn. She cast an awfully big shadow—with a beautiful silhouette. And what was I? A pimple farm!

(DIANA puts on a hat, then sunglasses.)

She had a great face for hats.

CORDELIA. She had a great face.

(DIANA picks out an article of clothing and caresses her way into it.)

DIANA. And so we'd practice the walk, right here. She'd tell me about a party she'd been to, or how she worked the lounges in the early days of the Catskills. How she'd romance the microphone—and the men in the room. Only at a distance. Always at a distance... I never did get it right. That thing she could do with her eyes...

CORDELIA. Is that how they looked when they went out? Rose and Runaround Mel.

(CORDELIA changes to another outfit, or adds accessories to change this one.)

DIANA. My father loved the way she looked.

(DIANA adds to or changes her own attire, then helps CORDELIA.)

CORDELIA. Didn't she laugh a lot, throwing her head way back? Which story goes with this?

DIANA. 1961. Big "do" at the Waldorf. Suzi's wedding. I was sixteen.

CORDELIA. Okay, okay! I remember. Rose walks over to you, and bends down. The music is very loud, and you won't hear her otherwise. She says that handsome boy you've had a crush on, Suzi's cousin Stanley, wants to dance with you. And what do you do? *You* jump up out of your chair and scream at her. *(Her idea of a teenage DIANA:)* "Standley! Standley is ugly! Standley has pimples! I don't have a crush on Standley."

DIANA. What!

CORDELIA. And you are backing your mother across the room, knocking down chairs! (*As DIANA.*) “I don’t want your help.”

DIANA. That’s not what happened!

CORDELIA. Your mother bought you this beautiful dress, gave you her favorite pearls, had your hair done, your nose fixed, even found someone to dance with you. What more could a kid want?

DIANA. My mother dragged me across the dance floor to this geek in a military outfit.

CORDELIA. He was very handsome.

DIANA. There *was* one handsome guy at the wedding. And I was talking to him. Cute. Funny. Good dancer, too. He got me a punch. With some liquor in it. I was in heaven. Suddenly, my mother appeared from out of nowhere, whipped the little cup right out of my hand and pushed me into the arms of a flagpole with flaming acne and size-fifteen boots. His uniform collar stood away from his neck so far he had his hat tucked in there. Or it might have been his hump. Please!

CORDELIA. (*As DIANA.*) “Don’t make me touch Standley.”

DIANA. I didn’t even know his name.

CORDELIA. (*As DIANA.*) “I’ll never speak to you as long as I live!”

DIANA. And I never had a problem with my adenoids!

CORDELIA. You left her standing there with that boy.

DIANA. I quietly retrieved my punch, located the cute guy in the crowd, and then what I whispered, what I actually whispered with my usual control—which, come to think of it, was a pretty weird response for a furious teenager—was, “Later, alligator.”

CORDELIA. *I* say your part. I get to be you.

DIANA. Not if you don’t get it right.

CORDELIA. That’s the way I always did it with Rose.

DIANA. You acted out my life with my mother?

CORDELIA. Her life.

DIANA. My part in her life?

CORDELIA. Lots of times.

DIANA. You played me?

CORDELIA. It wasn't "Gone With The Wind." We were just entertaining ourselves.

DIANA. Using my life?

CORDELIA. Just a way of keeping you in the room.

DIANA. She let you be me? They'd all watch you playing me?

CORDELIA. That's when it was most lonely, just after you left.

DIANA. Like what parts? Tell me.

CORDELIA. You know what: forget it. This is light-years away from being the kind of fun I expected.

(CORDELIA starts to take off her outfit.)

DIANA. Wait! What about the time she pushed the pie in my face? Who played me in that one?

CORDELIA. At "The 21"! One of our standards. You only wanted to talk about yourself.

DIANA. Another lie!

CORDELIA. Okay. Let's find the right clothes, DeeDee. We'll just see who's got it right.

DIANA. Don't call me DeeDee!

(CORDELIA and DIANA plow through—and compete for—Rose's clothes.)

(CORDELIA dresses in a glamorous outfit.)

CORDELIA. "If we face these things, we evolve." How many times have you said that to your TV victims?

DIANA. Leave me alone.

CORDELIA. You're the one who's always delving into everyone else's secrets. Why should you be spared?

DIANA. Some asshole kid on the bus tormented me, called me "DeeDee." Okay? Things are very big to kids. You ought to know.

CORDELIA. As big as group homes on burnt-out blocks? As big as, "Hi, call me Dad, stay still and this won't hurt"?

DIANA. Oh, God, Cordelia!

CORDELIA. As if your pathetic pissant pity could fix Armageddon!

DIANA. I'll match your foster parents with maternal suicide attempts and raise you one life-long feeling of inadequacy.

CORDELIA. Who cares if you had no good times with your parents? At least you had them!

DIANA. Did she say we never had fun? Is that what she said? We used to skate together in the park. We went to museums and movies. And we'd sing with the top down on the 59th Street Bridge. We sang, all the time. "First you put your two knees close up tight..."

(DIANA sings, deep in her own memory. CORDELIA joins in, and they move together, making identical gestures, until DIANA notices.)

DIANA / CORDELIA. "Swing 'em to the left, swing 'em to the right, strut around the floor kinda..."

(DIANA notices they are in sync, and she stops.)

CORDELIA. "...nice and light..." We practiced—a little.

DIANA. What other songs did you do with her? "Mack The Knife"?

CORDELIA. It was no big deal.

DIANA. "Alexander's Rag Time Band"? All my favorites?

CORDELIA. It was just singing. We did lots of things together. And she finished my macramé necklace in Recreation Therapy

when I was too sick and couldn't. And she picked me to hold hands with on outings.

DIANA. She was great on outings.

(CORDELIA finishes dressing.)

CORDELIA. There! Do I look like a big star?

DIANA. What, "big star"?

CORDELIA. You, "the New Edward R. Murrow." That's what the papers said. She showed me the clippings.

DIANA. But she expected Broadway.

CORDELIA. Will you quit beefing! Okay, let's go. I'm gonna be you at the "21." I'm ready.

(DIANA sets up two chairs, and pushes CORDELIA off the imaginary "set.")

DIANA. *(Rose's Memphis accent:)* "Stand up straight. Twinkle those eyes. Or you'll never be a star. Fluff that hair. Give me the lips, the shoulders." O—kay. We were sitting exactly like this, me here, you here.

CORDELIA. Okay, okay. You're your mother. I'm you. I'll start where Diana comes into "The 21."

(CORDELIA enters as DIANA.)

DIANA. Don't slouch yourself in. The entire restaurant is watching, hushed. You're a celebrity. Head high, confident stride, you learned to do this as a child. *(As Rose:)* "More Bristol with those shoulders!"

CORDELIA. *(As DIANA:)* "I've had a fabulous day and I want to tell you all about it. Barfel Tweedybird offered me the evening news—network anchor—provided I supply him with a few salacious favors..."

DIANA. With Brian! I never said that.

CORDELIA. Rose said that's how you got your show...first Barfel, then the anchor, then the show.

DIANA. She'd say anything! Everything. I was bursting with the news, Bob wanted to hear, even my father was vaguely interested, but she would not let me get a word in.

CORDELIA. (*As DIANA:*) "Mom! You never listen?"

DIANA. Well, she didn't.

CORDELIA. Couldn't. Your mind is concentrated. Ours is like...low-fat yogurt that was left on the counter overnight.

DIANA. And then the photo opportunity of the millennium.

(CORDELIA mimes the pick-up and fierce delivery of a pie into DIANA's face.)

CORDELIA. Oh, yeah! You picked up a huge mountain of meringue from the pastry cart and pushed it in her face.

DIANA. She pushed it in *my* face, rubbed it around and then walked out, leaving me with meringue in my hair, in my eyes, up my nose. And everyone was looking at me: the new network anchor. My mother did that to me. In "The 21." On an otherwise uneventful Easter Sunday. Get dressed.

CORDELIA. That's not the way Rose did it.

DIANA. Get dressed.

CORDELIA. You can't face the way things really were.

DIANA. You want to know the way things really were?

CORDELIA. I know.

DIANA. No, you don't. We're doing *Tempest* in the Tubwater!

CORDELIA. There's no bathtub story!

(DIANA roots around in the "Trash" box and finds an old toaster.)

DIANA. Yes, indeedy, and it comes with an item: an old toaster... Here it is! It's winter. In the city you see the Third Avenue fire station from the bedroom window. Not much of an apartment even though we lived there most of the year, because *this* place was really "home." You can be me. You're trying like stink to get yourself into a good college, to get yourself out. But she wants to talk.

For—you don't remember—the fourth time that day. For—it's impossible to say how long—for at least an hour. You tell her you're busy. She insists. You say you've got to study. It gets quiet. Suddenly, she streaks past your door... And you realize there's been water running in the tub. And that she's naked...except, of course, for her pearls. She's sprinting for the tub with a toaster in her arms. Without actually thinking, reacting like when you're driving and a car swerves in front of you, you just know what she's up to. See: there you are, running after her. She jumps into the tub! Leans over to put the plug in the outlet, and you get to grab the toaster out of her hands!

CORDELIA. Where do you think we are? In Gullible's Travels?

DIANA. This...

CORDELIA. What a crock!

DIANA. This...this is the toaster. This is really the real toaster! It was upstairs in her closet. She *saved* it. Like a trophy! She was ready to fry in front of her child. And then afterwards, she kept the damned thing all wrapped up in a blanket. Like it was the thing that needed protecting.

CORDELIA. Let go of screwy concepts.

DIANA. "Letting go"? That was her thing. She even let go of me. How many times? Do you have any idea how many ways she tried to leave me?

CORDELIA. That wasn't about you.

DIANA. Who do you think suicide is about?

CORDELIA. The losers. The baggage. Not you independents who swerve around potholes, who keep your distance no matter what.

DIANA. "Keep my distance"? Always there, always entertaining her. Crazy mother wailing her fears from the bedroom window. Still in her nightgown at three in the afternoon. I was afraid to go home, afraid to stay away; afraid to sleep, afraid to get up, afraid to go into her room. There was never any time for my stuff. That's *my* version, anyway. Agh, you wouldn't understand.

CORDELIA. You want to know if I knew what it felt like to be you. No, I have no idea what it feels like to have two parents, one school, two homes, a husband, children, and even a stupid refrigerator. Want to know what real security feels like? You can find the bathroom in the dark. Pampered pain in the ass sounds about right for you.

DIANA. If you loved her so goddamned much, why didn't you stop her?

CORDELIA. Why in the world would I do that?

(DIANA is jolted by CORDELIA's words. She walks over to the music box and opens it. It has wound down and the melody plays very slowly.)

DIANA. Why? Because every night we'd play this little game. "Mommy readme, Mommy tellme." That's what I'd say. And she'd wind up the music box and race through a story—funny when she did it with a Dr. Seuss, but truly hilarious with one of her own stories—trying to finish before the music stopped. She'd kiss me goodnight and tiptoe out. And then I'd wind it up again...

CORDELIA. Just to hear her voice. I know.

DIANA. She'd have to come back in, wouldn't she? To start over. Because that was the game. Even, when I was older. Even when it was more of a joke than a bedtime story. There was this Christmas Eve.

CORDELIA. Okay, here it comes.

DIANA. She liked to be here. The tree I decorated was over there. Dad was dozing over there. I must have been about ten, grateful for the day to be over. Mom had been ranting for hours about electronic bugs crawling in the walls, and about an overwhelming longing to die.

CORDELIA. This isn't going to be easy, come sit down.

(DIANA is lost in her own thoughts.)

DIANA. She couldn't even swallow the pathetic Christmas dinner I tried to prepare. I said, "Merry Christmas, Mommy. You'll feel better in the morning," and I went upstairs.

CORDELIA. There are ground rules, you know, for a thing like this.

DIANA. I opened the music box...and got into bed with this big pile of Christmas cookies she'd almost helped me make...

CORDELIA. You know what? How about you do that swerving thing? Maybe that would be better, after all.

DIANA. And a Thomas Hardy novel..."Tess," I think it was. And my eyes are growing heavy... And then I...I must have...gone to sleep. And then...and I...then...I open my eyes. Mom is there with me. Suddenly.

CORDELIA. Yeah. Okay, here we are.

DIANA. (*Rose's accent:*) "I won't leave you here, baby. No one else can care for you like your mama." (*Sings:*) 'Come on along, come on along, to Alexander's Rag Time Band...'"

CORDELIA. How about if you just hold my hand...

DIANA. (*As Rose:*) "I need you with me, Baby..." But now I can't breathe. I'm struggling. My head is...tossing...I'm...kicking... Oh, God, gasping for air! In a huge, black...blanket...smothering... (*As Rose:*) "There's a place where special people go..."

CORDELIA. (*As Rose:*) "...Full of candies and cake...and a million candles shining in the sky... And everyday is your birthday."

(*DIANA is choking.*)

Uh-oh. Uh-oh. Breathe! Come on, now. You are *not* choking. Or drowning or even gagging on lint. That's panic, that's all. Just memory. Or maybe you're doing that acting thing. Yeah. Good job. No. Okay... The important thing is, you're not really choking! Come on, you know what to do...in...out...

(*CORDELIA breathes.*)

In. Out. In. Out. In. Out.

(DIANA's breathing begins to regulate. DIANA and CORDELIA both draw in a deep breath and then exhale.)

Breathing is our friend.

DIANA. She tried to kill me...

CORDELIA. No, that wasn't it.

DIANA. I was just a little girl, in my bed...waiting for my mother to say goodnight to me, to turn up the cool side of my pillow, to tuck me in. And she was trying to suffocate me. With the blanket she hid in the closet next to the toaster. She kept these things. Souvenirs.

CORDELIA. The things we keep, sometimes they're warnings.

DIANA. I had it all buried. Way, deep down. Who's the crazy one?

CORDELIA. *(As DIANA:)* "If we face these things, we evolve." It sounds good on TV. When *you* say it.

DIANA. It's plain idiotic. Forgetting, that's what saves the mind. What have I been doing?

CORDELIA. Whatever it takes.

DIANA. In the back of a closet in my old room—that's where I found the music box. I did just what she did...

CORDELIA. No...

DIANA. We never played Mommy Readme again... I just..."forgot"! But all that dressing up... Wow. Keeping secrets from myself.

CORDELIA. Forgetting contains the uncontainable.

DIANA. Keeping secrets from everyone. And my whole life's been about getting people to unbury things. It's monstrous!

CORDELIA. She never forgot that she wanted to take you with her and she never forgave herself. She kept trying to save you by killing herself...

DIANA. And I kept saving her. Is that why was she always so angry at me?

CORDELIA. She wasn't really angry.

DIANA. I talked to her, three times a day. No matter where I was. No matter where she was. The last time we spoke she talked about suicide. I told her I couldn't hear any more threats. She bought the gun, left the receipt, and blew her brains out. We never said, "goodbye." It was so cruel! *You* did, though, say goodbye. From Venice Beach. How did she sound?

CORDELIA. Not good. Worn out. Really bad.

DIANA. Why wouldn't she talk to me? Did she tell you? Tell me, Cordelia, please.

(CORDELIA starts to tremble.)

CORDELIA. Me and Sally Battlecreek, we were up on Mount Shasta and there were these tiny lights, thousands of them, that's how the people of Mu make themselves known to you.

DIANA. You're cold.

(DIANA crosses to the pile of clothes, searching for a warm piece of clothing.)

CORDELIA. They swore us to secrecy.

(DIANA finds an old chenille robe and covers CORDELIA.)

DIANA. It's okay, Cordelia. You don't have to tell me.

CORDELIA. It backfired, didn't it? She finally outfoxed you and now you hate her.

DIANA. No. I love her. Still. And I want her back, just like you do.

CORDELIA. Oh, no. I want my own mother. For a whole lifetime.

DIANA. Not exactly how you expected this to turn out. Are you okay?

CORDELIA. Not entirely.

DIANA. I guess I haven't been terribly well, either. Not...thinking—not acting—clearly. I guess I thought I could just...file away her suicide. Forget!

CORDELIA. Diana, do you get it?

DIANA. I have to get you out of here. Get you away from all your stuff.

CORDELIA. I *am* my stuff. You couldn't save her and you can't save me because our kind, we can't be saved. There's this terrible emptiness, going 'way deep in my soul.

DIANA. (*As Rose:*) "But your time will come, Baby..."

CORDELIA. (*As Rose:*) "...And you will dazzle like a butterfly and float carefree on the breeze..."

DIANA. "...And wherever you go people will love you with all their soul." So please, get dressed.

CORDELIA. I'm not going!

(*DIANA is in gear. She looks for the car keys. DIANA bundles CORDELIA into the robe.*)

DIANA. Okay, you don't have to get all dressed. This'll be fine. If you don't like Devon Hills, I'll find some other place. But give it a try. This robe was one of her favorites.

(*CORDELIA eases into the comfort of the robe.*)

We'll get a whole bunch of her stuff—make a new collection for you. Take it with us. To the hospital. Just for a while. Please.

CORDELIA. It's nice. Soft. And warm.

DIANA. Yes.

(*CORDELIA sinks her hands in the robe's pockets.*)

CORDELIA. Oh.

DIANA. What?

CORDELIA. The secret! I found Rose's secret!

(*CORDELIA removes a large syringe that is filled with chalky liquid. The needle is protected by a cork.*)

DIANA. Oh, no!

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!

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