

MAGUS PARK: THE CURIOUS GIFTS OF THE GEOCACHE

by Jim & Jane Jeffries

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ISBN: 978-1-64479-208-7

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MAGUS PARK: THE CURIOUS GIFTS OF THE GEOCACHE

A Full Length Dramatic-Comedic Play Collection

by Jim & Jane Jeffries

SYNOPSIS: We are all connected in ways we don't realize. And there's something about the geocache in Magus Park that bridges the ordinary to the extraordinary. Whatever has been left in the cache seems to be exactly what the next person needs. This script has twelve stand-alone stories that are connected by the prop left in the cache in the previous scene. As in life, stories range from serious to funny to poignant. This play includes many strong roles for women.

DURATION: 100 minutes

SETTING: A park.

TIME: Present.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(6-13 females, 3-6 males, 2-3 either, 1 extra)

MORGAN (m/f).....	Any age, the magical caretaker for Magus Park. <i>(57 lines)</i>
AIDEN (m/f).....	Any age, a geocacher who stumbles onto an adventure. <i>(106 lines)</i>
DAVE (m).....	17-18 years old, the star athlete and socialite of his school. <i>(57 lines)</i>
JON (m)	17-18 years old, ordinary teen living in Dave's shadow. <i>(57 lines)</i>
MARY (f).....	40 - 60 years old, a respectable woman. <i>(33 lines)</i>
ANNA (f).....	18 – 40 years old, a homeless chalk artist. <i>(22 lines)</i>
GENA (f)	Any age, collects movie props because they're magic. <i>(60 lines)</i>
ARABELLA (f)	Any age, collects movie props as an investment. <i>(63 lines)</i>

NILES (m)	14 – 18 years old, a shy film nerd who transforms into Valentino whenever he wears the turban. (51 lines)
JODY (f)	14 – 18 years old, a friend of Lorna and Niles since childhood. She uses sarcasm as a defense. (52 lines)
LORNA (f).....	14 – 18 years old, in love with love, she loves modern romance movies and love songs. (33 lines)
DOLORES (f)	60 + years old, suffers from dementia. Actress must be agile enough to jump rope. (40 lines)
JOANNIE (f).....	10 -14 years old, the childhood friend of Dolores. (38 lines)
LINDA (f).....	25 – 60 years old, the daughter of Dolores. (7 lines)
CHARLIE (f)	Any age, a hairstylist who is meeting someone through the website, <i>Just Friends</i> . (62 lines)
LESLIE (m)	Any age, a widower looking for a male friend through <i>Just Friends</i> . (61 lines)
MOLLY (f)	28 – 40 years old, baby sister to Maggie, very lucky in life. (56 lines)
MAGGIE (f).....	28 – 40 years old, she is lucky, but in an unlucky way. (102 lines)
ASH (m/f)	Any age, a busking poet who will write a poem to spec. (38 lines)
AMY (f)	17 – 18 years old, had a bad relationship with her teacher, Denise Black, who was killed in a school shooting. (28 lines)
JUDE (m).....	25 – 40 years old, Denise Black's ex-husband. (28 lines)
JULIA (f)	Any age, she has MS and walks with a cane. (36 lines)
HUGO (m)	Any age, he balances stones as a hobby. (35 lines)
PARKER (m/f).....	Maggie's son/daughter, 4 - 7 years old. (Non-Speaking)

CASTING NOTE: If this is a high school production, Parker can become a younger sibling Maggie had to watch that day. It gives a bit more flexibility.

OPTIONAL DOUBLING

NOTE: Each scene requires only 2-3 actors at a time, so actors can play multiple roles. For minimal actors, use this casting.

- DAVE and JUDE can double
- JON, NILES, and HUGO can double
- LESLIE and ASH can double
- MARY and DOLORES can double
- ANNA, JODY, and JULIA can double
- GENA, LINDA, and MOLLY can double
- ARABELLA and CHARLIE can double
- LORNA and AMY can double

SET

Though the set is one place in the park, there is a lot of flexibility on how characters can use the stage space. You can be as creative as you wish to be. A park bench is located at CSR. A group of wildflowers are DS.

SOUND EFFECTS

BUZZING: Use judiciously to help orient the audience, but watch that it doesn't become farcical.

COSTUMES

Most characters wear regular street clothes that reflect their personalities. Some characters are more specific.

MORGAN – As the mysterious caretaker, the costume should reflect that there's something unusual about the character.

AIDEN – Casual dress

DAVE – Casual dress

JON – Casual dress

MARY – Mary should dress in frumpy fashion.

ANNA – Clothes should reflect an alternative lifestyle and should be worn and wrinkled since she's been couch surfing.

ARABELLA – As someone who's worried about keeping things pristine, her clothing should reflect that personality trait.

GENA – As a contrast, her clothes should reflect someone who's a free spirit.

NILES – Casual dress. The tricky costuming is the turban. It must be easy to put on, but not easy to fall off, since Niles does a lot of dancing. You might want to try the Hmong turban.

JODY – Casual dress.

LORNA – Casual dress.

DOLORES – Casual dress.

JOANNIE – Casual dress.

LINDA – Casual dress.

CHARLIE – Casual dress.

LESLIE – His hair should be very disheveled, but his clothes should also reflect that he needs some overall care.

MOLLY – Casual dress.

MAGGIE – Casual dress.

MORGAN – Casual dress.

ASH – Casual dress.

AIDEN – Casual dress.

AMY – Casual dress.

JUDE – Casual dress.

JULIA – Casual dress.

HUGO – Casual dress.

PARKER – Casual dress for child.

PROPS

ACT ONE, SCENE 1: OURBOROS

- Cell phone
- Acorn
- A large stone

ACT ONE, SCENE 2: BROMANCE

- Acorn
- Cell phone
- 2 half-heart necklaces
- \$.60
- Ice cream coupon

ACT ONE, SCENE 3: PRODIGAL

- 2 half-heart necklaces
- Full set of sidewalk chalk

ACT ONE, SCENE 4: MAGICAL PROPERTIES

- 2 sets latex gloves
- Turban, spinning top
- 2 doorknobs connected (one doorknob gray, the other bright brass)
- Black sidewalk chalk
- Ziplock bag full of mud
- Concrete chip

ACT ONE, SCENE 5: THE GHOST OF VALENTINO

- Turban
- Cell phone
- Jump rope

ACT ONE, SCENE 6: IN HER RIGHT MIND

- Purse
- Scissors
- Jump rope
- Yarn for cat's cradle

ACT ONE, SCENE 7: JUST FRIENDS

- Cell phone
- Scarf
- Scissors

ACT TWO, SCENE 1: LUCKY

- Scarf
- Lucky penny
- A quarter
- Two scratch-off lottery tickets

ACT TWO, SCENE 2: ELEGY FOR A HONEY BEE

- Easel
- Sign that says, "Poet for Hire"
- Writing pad
- Pen
- Penny

ACT TWO, SCENE 3: SHOES

- Sheet of paper with a poem on it
- Gift-wrapped shoebox
- High-heeled shoes
- Note

ACT TWO, SCENE 4: FALLING

- Cane
- Smooth round rock
- Shoebox with high-heels
- Rocks for stacking
- Backpack
- Keystone

ACT TWO, SCENE 5: REPRISE

- Backpack
- Stones for stacking
- Acorn (Maggie)
- Keystone
- 2 Acorns (Parker)

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

GENERAL: The geocache should be behind a bush, tree, or other concealing set piece. Or, if you want to be very creative, it can be a camouflaged geocache hidden in a stump.

ACT ONE, SCENE 1: OURBOROS – It's important that Aiden gives Morgan a second look upon meeting her, like Morgan tugs on Aiden's memory. If you have underlying music, for transitions or anything else, you might want to try royalty free Celtic music.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2: BROMANCE – Men, high school men in particular, express affection with a high degree of physicality. During the contest for finding the geocache, have them push and shove. While being chased by the bee, have Dave shield himself with Jon. Have your actors experiment until it feels natural.

ACT ONE, SCENE 3: PRODIGAL – To help with realism, have Anna actually draw the sketch on the stage floor. If this is not possible, have an art student draw the sketch on butcher block paper and have Anna practice tracing that sketch until her movements are realistic.

ACT ONE, SCENE 4: MAGICAL PROPERTIES – To oversimplify, Gena should look like she's a Fine Arts major and Arabella should look like an Accounting Major. It is important that Gena influences Arabella slowly, so that Arabella's change is not too abrupt.

ACT ONE, SCENE 5: THE GHOST OF VALENTINO – There are websites on how to make turbans. The "Quick and Easy" turban you find online is indeed quick and easy... and adequate.

ACT ONE, SCENE 6: IN HER RIGHT MIND – If you have an older actress playing Dolores, it's "safety first" on the jump rope scene. Just have her step over it carefully. If it is a younger actress playing an older woman, go for fast rope jumping, because that feeds into her fantasy of going back to childhood.

ACT ONE, SCENE 7: JUST FRIENDS – For the haircutting scene, have Leslie put his back to the audience and bend forward for Charlie to cut the lock of hair. That way Charlie can get away with only pretending to cut Leslie's hair. Otherwise, if you do it for real and have 3-5 performances, Leslie is going to have a serious bald spot.

ACT TWO, SCENE 1: LUCKY – It's a good idea to really rehearse the "two-card monte" until it is elaborate and fast. Also, the devastation of the wildflowers by Maggie should be very maniacal and dramatic to feed the later jokes.

ACT TWO, SCENE 2: ELEGY FOR A HONEY BEE – At the start of the scene, Ash should close the distance between her and Aiden in three different movements as Aiden turns her head to show Ash's eagerness and for comic effect. The fade out as Ash reads the elegy is very important for the lead-in to the next scene. Soft music in minor keys could help the fade-out.

ACT TWO, SCENE 3: SHOES – The fade-out as Amy reads the elegy should be a reflection of the ending of "Elegy for a Honey Bee," with the same music. Have more of a pause between the ending of this scene and the start of the next scene.

ACT TWO, SCENE 4: FALLING – I know this is going to sound sooo method acting, but Hugo should be good at rock balancing. You might also have him do a rock arch before he does the rock balancing, so he has a visual reference for later lines.

ACT TWO, SCENE 5: REPRISE – It's always tricky working with small children. The audience loves the cuteness factor, but young kids can be... unpredictable. As directors, we've tended to err on the side of predictability, especially on a very important last scene. So go with an older child actor on this one.

ACT ONE, SCENE 1
OURBOROS

AT START: *Present day, late summer or early fall. Lights up on a secluded spot in Magus Park. DS are flowers; MORGAN hums while she tends the flowers.*

AIDEN enters, referencing her cell phone while she looks around for a geocache. SFX of buzzing. AIDEN shoos a bee from her head and continues searching. SFX of buzzing. AIDEN shoos the bee again.

AIDEN: Go away.

SFX of buzzing. MORGAN looks quizzically toward the bee then returns to tending the flowers. SFX of buzzing.

AIDEN: *(Shooing the bee more dramatically this time.)* Aaaah! What is it with you?

MORGAN looks toward AIDEN and observes. SFX of buzzing.

AIDEN: *(AIDEN shoos the bee very dramatically and maniacally.)*
AAAAAHHHH! You stupid bee. Leave me alone!

MORGAN: Beatrix.

SFX of buzzing stops.

AIDEN: *(Looks around suspiciously.)* Finally.

SFX of buzzing.

MORGAN: *(MORGAN looks at the bee, then to AIDEN.)* Beatrix was dancing for you.

AIDEN: Excuse me?

MORGAN: The honeybee you keep shooing away. She was dancing for you.

AIDEN: Right. *(Beat.)* Look, I'm just looking for the geocache. I don't want to interrupt, um, dancing bees. So, I'll just waltz on out of here.

AIDEN starts to exit. SFX of buzzing; AIDEN backs away from exit.

MORGAN: It's important that you listen.

AIDEN: Look, I don't know who you are—

AIDEN starts to exit again. SFX of buzzing; AIDEN backs away from exit.

MORGAN: Are you sure you don't know me?

AIDEN: *(Turns to look at MORGAN.)* I... don't know.

MORGAN: Well, it has been a long time. The first time we met was here in Magus Park.

AIDEN: I haven't been here since I was a kid. *(Looks more closely at MORGAN.)* Wait. You... showed me a beehive, right?

MORGAN: No, we ran away from a beehive... that you knocked over.

AIDEN: We planted some flowers.

MORGAN: You destroyed the wildflowers!

AIDEN: And we planted an acorn.

MORGAN: You threw the acorn... at my head! We buried that acorn.

AIDEN: Yeah, I remember now. That was a great day.

MORGAN: That acorn is an oak tree now. *(Points offstage.)* It's over there.

AIDEN: *(Stares offstage.)* Wow. *(Pause.)* And you told me some great stories.

MORGAN: You remember the stories? You even listened to the stories?

AIDEN: Something about adventures. And piling rocks up.

MORGAN: We were making an arch. For a bridge.

AIDEN: If you say so. It's all kind of fuzzy. But I certainly don't remember you talking to bees.

MORGAN: I was only a Caretaker-in-Training then.

AIDEN: This is just getting weirder.

MORGAN: Curiouser and curiouser?

AIDEN: *(Smiles.)* So, I'm Alice?

MORGAN: Alice had to fall asleep to travel to Wonderland. You need to wake up.

AIDEN: What do you mean by that?

MORGAN: When's the last time you knocked over a beehive?

AIDEN: Um, there's this little thing called learning from experience?

MORGAN: I was being metaphorical. When's the last time you had an adventure?

AIDEN: Adventure? So, my vandalism and assault were an adventure?

MORGAN: No, you were just so, so intent on looking at the bees and the flowers. You wanted to really know them. You were just... clumsy.

AIDEN: And the acorn?

MORGAN: Okay, you were a brat, too. But now you're an adult. So, when was the last time you opened your eyes and ears to really see? To really know. To have an adventure. You need an adventure. And it starts right there. *(Points to wildflowers.)*

AIDEN crosses toward the flowers. MORGAN holds her back.

MORGAN: Don't get too close to the wildflowers. She's very protective.

AIDEN: Who's very protective?

MORGAN: Beatrix.

AIDEN: *(Pause.)* An ordinary honeybee? That's my adventure?

MORGAN: Adventure is finding the extraordinary in the ordinary. And she's a lovely honeybee.

AIDEN: Really? She's been harassing me the whole time I've been here.

MORGAN: I told you, she's dancing. Bees dance to show you where treasure is. When you learn the dance, you understand the miracle. When you finally understand the smallest of miracles, you realize that there are no small miracles.

AIDEN: Small miracles or large miracles, I don't... *(Confused, AIDEN stops and looks offstage.)* Huh.

MORGAN: What?

AIDEN: Nothing. Just a white squirrel.

MORGAN: I suppose that Alice thought "just a white rabbit."

AIDEN: So?

MORGAN stares at AIDEN. AIDEN shrugs, walks offstage then re-enters.

MORGAN: What did the squirrel want?

AIDEN: Nothing. *(Holds out an acorn.)* He just dropped an acorn.

MORGAN: She gave you an acorn.

AIDEN: How do you know... *(MORGAN stares at AIDEN.)* Right. I need to listen. So... an acorn?

MORGAN: From your tree.

AIDEN: My tree? Oh. That's right. *(Looks offstage. Long pause.)*

MORGAN: You said you were looking for something?

AIDEN: Yeah. I came here looking for the geocache.

MORGAN: Do you have something to put in the geocache?

AIDEN: What?

MORGAN: You need to put something in the geocache if you take something out.

AIDEN: Oh... no, I didn't bring anything.

MORGAN: But you do have something to put in the geocache.

AIDEN: *(Looks at the acorn in her hand.)* Right. I guess I do, but I'll have to find it first. I don't know where the geocache is.

MORGAN: Start by listening.

AIDEN: *(AIDEN stills herself and listens. She listens for the buzzing of the bee and follows it to the geocache.)* Thank you... Beatrix. *(AIDEN opens the geocache, puts in the acorn, and pulls out a large stone.)* A rock?

MORGAN: A keystone.

AIDEN: So, we need to pile a bunch of rocks again?

MORGAN: It's not just a piling up rocks—

AIDEN: I was speaking metaphorically. We are building an arch.

MORGAN: For a bridge.

AIDEN: An adventure.

MORGAN: To know and be known. Come, we'll gather more stones as we work.

AIDEN: Wait, what?

MORGAN: We'll start with the beehive. But don't try to talk to the bees. Just listen for a while.

AIDEN: So... you're making me a Caretaker of Magus Park?

MORGAN: Of course not. (*Beat.*) You'll be a Caretaker-in-Training. That's why you only listen for now.

AIDEN: Only listen? But—

MORGAN: Only listen for now. Do you understand? (*AIDEN nods.*) If you watch and listen to what happens in Magus Park, you'll gather that "pile of stones."

Lights down. MORGAN and AIDEN exit.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2 BROMANCE

AT START: *DAVE dashes on stage and frantically searches for the geocache. Moments later, JON dashes on stage.*

DAVE: I beat you here.

JON: But you haven't found the geocache yet.

Both start searching. DAVE stops, looks offstage.

DAVE: Did you see that?

JON: You mean that albino— (*DAVE exits quickly.*) Squirrel.

DAVE: (*Re-enters.*) Well, that was weird.

JON: An albino squirrel isn't that weird.

DAVE: (*Starts searching again.*) Yeah, but this albino squirrel was gesturing, like he was pointing toward something.

JON: Okay, that's... odd.

DAVE: I know, right?

JON searches near the flowers. He waves his hand to shoo a bee then crazily starts running and shouting as he is attacked by the bee. He stops near DAVE. Both track the attacking bee with their heads. They shout and crazily run around the stage, then exit. They re-enter, out of breath.

DAVE: Man, that was one aggressive bee.

JON: Fast, too.

DAVE: What did you do to set him off?

JON: I was searching near those wildflowers, and it just...

JON sees the geocache; DAVE follows JON'S line of sight. Both race toward it. DAVE beats JON and taps the geocache.

DAVE: I win! I win!

JON: Again.

DAVE: Let's see what's in the treasure chest.

JON: Geocache.

DAVE: *(Opens geocache.)* One man's geocache is another man's treasure.... Well, well, well. What have we here?

JON: What is it?

DAVE: *(Pulls out the acorn.)* An acorn.

JON: Who would leave an acorn in a geocache?

JON and DAVE: *(Look offstage toward the albino squirrel then look at each other.)* Nah.

JON: Well, you won, so you get to keep the prize. What are you going to do with an acorn?

DAVE: Oh, ye of little imagination. I could use this acorn in a sling to kill giants. I could use the cap as a teacup for fairies. But I'm thinking too small. *(Dramatic pause while he thinks.)* I'm going to make an oak tree!

JON: Really? You've never struck me as the patient type.

DAVE: What do you mean by that?

JON: You're just naturally good at everything.

DAVE: Like how?

JON: For example, you decide to pick up the cello and in two years, you are in Symphony Orchestra. Second chair! I've been playing for six years, and I'm still just in Marching Band.

DAVE: You are not just in Marching Band. You, my friend, dot the "i" in "Huskies" at halftime. You always get a standing ovation.

JON: That's laughter. They are laughing at me.

DAVE: That's part of it, Jon. It's supposed to be funny. I mean, you're all but hidden by the tuba you carry. It's like a big, brass toilet darting around the field. *(Laughs, then notices JON'S expression.)* It shows great strength and stamina on your part.

JON: It's not funny, Dave. I wanted to play the flute. But in Middle School, Mr. Schwartz said that I had the lips of a tuba player.

DAVE: You do have impressive lips.

JON: Nobody takes you seriously if you play tuba.

DAVE: Oh, come on—

JON: There are no tubas in rock bands.

DAVE: Sure, there are. Blood, Sweat, and Tears had a tuba player.

JON: And that!

DAVE: And what?

JON: You know everything. I'm the tuba player, but you're the one who knows about a tuba-playing rock musician.

DAVE: I just try to stay informed on pertinent trends.

JON: I guess.

DAVE: What's wrong, Jon? Did I say something wrong?

JON: Nah. It's nothing.

DAVE: What's up, bro? You can tell me; I'm your best friend.

JON: That's just it. Sometimes, it's hard to be your friend.

DAVE: Why's that?

JON: You're a starting guard on Varsity; I'm a manager on the Junior Varsity team. You get the lead in the musical, and I'm in the chorus. You were prom king.

DAVE: Co-prom King. Stan the Man ran a really good campaign.

JON: (*Glares at DAVE.*) You're President of the Student Council and Class President. You're President of the Lego Club, for Pete's sake!

DAVE: We stay connected. (*Glare from JON.*) It's a snap?

JON: Do you know what my name is at school?

DAVE: Uh... Jon?

JON: No. "Dave's friend"! I'm your sidekick. No one knows me as Jon. I am sick of constantly living in your shadow!

DAVE: (*Long pause as DAVE absorbs this. Then he rushes over and crushes JON in a massive hug.*) I love you! (*DAVE rocks as he hugs JON, and the audience can see growing dismay on JON'S face.*)

JON: Um, you, uh, what?

DAVE: I love you! I've loved you ever since third grade, when you came into class with those Wolverine claws. Mrs. Dickson was alarmed.

JON: Wait. You love me?

DAVE: So much.

JON: (*Pushes himself from DAVE'S embrace.*) But I'm straight!

DAVE: Okay. It's very brave of you to speak frankly about your sexuality. See? This is what I'm talking about.

JON: What?

DAVE: I'm your best friend. You can tell me anything.

JON: I don't think you understand me. I don't think of you... that way.

DAVE: What way?

JON: Dave! I don't want to date you!

DAVE: (*Pause as DAVE processes this.*) Oh. I could see how you would think... But I didn't mean... Um, Jon I wasn't thinking about dating you. What I'm trying to tell you is that you're the person I admire most in the whole world.

JON: Me?

DAVE: Yes, you. I want to be more like you.

JON: Why?

DAVE: Well, take last week's Orchestra Concert. I saw you sitting next to Sam Snyder.

JON: So?

DAVE: Jon, he scares me. He is always wearing that trench coat. And he smells... interesting.

JON: He can't help the way he smells. His dad kicked him out, and he's been couch surfing. (*Beat. JON points.*) He planted those wildflowers over there.

DAVE: That!

JON: What?

DAVE: You know that about Sam because you take the time to talk to him. What you said about me being impatient is true. I don't have the time. (*Beat.*) No, I don't make the time. You helped Don Wilson when he performed in the Special Ed All-Stars Show, you pick up trash in the hallway between classes, and you even hug your mom in public! I love that! And I love you.

JON: I, uh, ...

DAVE: Come on, you can say it.

JON: Um.

DAVE: No worries, Jon. You don't have to say. I can feel it. (*Tosses acorn up in the air.*) I've got two wishes, Jon. The first is to be more like you. The second is that you will always be my best friend.

JON: Thanks, Dave. I, really...

DAVE: Just so you know. *(Puts acorn in his pocket.)* Ready to get out of here?

JON: Not yet.

DAVE: Why not?

JON: We haven't put anything in the geocache.

DAVE: Right. Uh, got anything in your pockets?

JON: *(Checks pockets.)* I've got 60 cents and an ice cream coupon. You?

DAVE: *(Checks pockets, pulls out cell phone.)* Just my cell phone.

JON: You could put that in.

DAVE: I'd rather put in my kidney. *(Distracted, looks offstage.)*

JON: What is it?

DAVE: It's that albino squirrel again, staring at me. I think the squirrel wants something. *(Exits.)*

JON: If he wants his acorn back, tell him no take-backs.

DAVE: *(From offstage.)* Her. The squirrel's a girl.

JON: Again, how do you even know that?

DAVE: *(Enters and reveals two half-heart necklaces.)* I know it because she was standing by these before she scampered off. Two half-heart necklaces, can you believe it?

JON: Only you would get necklaces from a squirrel.

DAVE: *(Teasing.)* If you're feeling left out, I could give one of them to you. We could each wear one so that when we walk down the hall, everyone will know that we are besties. *(Holds up necklaces to take a selfie with JON.)*

JON: *(Moves away from DAVE.)* No, Dave. Just, no.

DAVE: It could symbolize our friendship.

JON: We've got something better. Show me that acorn. *(DAVE pulls out the acorn and hands it to JON. JON takes the cap off and hands the nut to DAVE.)* We can be parts of the acorn. I'll be the cap and you'll be... the crazy nut.

DAVE: That sounds about right.

JON: And these... *(Takes the necklaces from DAVE.)* Go in the geocache. *(JON crosses to geocache and puts in the necklaces.)*

DAVE: *(Looks at the nut.)* You know, I'm the part that becomes the mighty oak.

JON: I know.

DAVE: Do you think I'll get my wish?

JON: That we'll always be best friends?

DAVE: That I'll become more like you.

JON: Let's talk about that. We'll start with your ridiculously-low goals in life.

DAVE: I love you, Jon.

JON: You're growing on me, Dave.

Lights down.

ACT ONE, SCENE 3 PRODIGAL

AT START: ANNA enters wearing a hoodie with a large backpack and crosses to geocache. She pulls out the half-heart necklaces and smiles broadly. She crosses to a place near the park bench and sets her backpack down. She holds up the necklaces for a better look then puts them in her pocket. She pulls out a pack of sidewalk chalk, picks out several colors, and slowly starts drawing. MARY enters, stops, then looks over ANNA'S shoulder.

MARY: What is that? A stained-glass window?

ANNA stops drawing then moves her body over the picture.

MARY: I'm sorry, I'm sorry. I know I hate it when Dan looks over my shoulder when I cook. He'll say, "You're putting peanut butter and an egg on a burger? Are you crazy?" He loves the results; he just doesn't understand the process. He just judges it a little too early. *(Pause as she remembers.)* Don't mind me, just keep drawing.

ANNA switches to black chalk and goes back to drawing.

MARY: *(Shifts to a different angle and looks over ANNA'S shoulder.)* I don't get modern art. That's what you're drawing, right? Modern art?

ANNA moves her body over the picture from this new angle, then continues drawing.

MARY: All of those colors, going every which way. It makes my head spin.

ANNA stops drawing.

MARY: I'm sorry. I didn't mean to make you mad. Your drawing isn't bad. It's just... I don't get it. I mean, it looks like stained glass. But not church stained glass.

ANNA draws more aggressively.

MARY: I mean, that stained glass heart.... It is a heart, isn't it? It's breaking. Or even... shattering. I can't quite figure out all of those jagged edges that you've got going there with that heart. And all that black. I think stained glass should be pretty. Yours is ...

ANNA stops drawing.

MARY: I'm sorry. I did it again. Looking over your shoulder. But I was wondering... *(Takes picture out of her purse and hands it to ANNA over ANNA'S shoulder.)* Have you seen this girl? She's my daughter, Anna. This is her self-portrait for an art project. It's really good, right? It looks just like her. And I was thinking, since you're an artist, and she's an artist and you... you seem to know the streets? Maybe you've seen her?

ANNA looks at picture, then crumples it up and tosses it aside.

MARY: Why did you do that? *(Picks up crumpled paper and smooths it out.)* There's no call for that. What is wrong with you?

ANNA: *(Points to the drawing.)* That is not her.

MARY: What? How can you say... *(MARY looks shocked. She crosses to face ANNA and takes down ANNA'S hood. ANNA shakes MARY off and turns away. ANNA starts drawing again.)* Anna? I... didn't even recognize you!

ANNA: You never did.

MARY: Where have you been?

ANNA: Around.

MARY: Have you been out on the streets this whole time? Are you crazy?

ANNA: That's what you've been telling me.

MARY: I never said you were crazy. Just, just... you aren't yourself right now.

ANNA: I'd jump at the chance to not be myself right now. I'd love to be somebody else. Anybody else. Sleeping Beauty, for example. All of my problems solved with one little kiss.

MARY: Do you have to make a joke of everything? (*ANNA keeps drawing, and MARY gets more frustrated.*) Would you stop that and look at me? Listen to me!

ANNA: (*Stops drawing and looks directly at MARY for the first time.*) You first.

MARY: (*Taken aback.*) I always listen to you!

ANNA: No, you only wait to talk. When I—

MARY: I do not just wait to talk.

ANNA: (*ANNA laughs and goes back to her drawing.*) See?

MARY: All right. You made your point. (*Pause.*) So, where have you been staying?

ANNA: I was couch-surfing for a while. You made it clear I couldn't stay with you.

MARY: Try to understand: I didn't know what to do. Your father is a church elder. And a church elder must be above reproach. In 1 Timothy it says, "He must manage his own family well and see that his children—"

ANNA: (*Stops drawing. Angry.*) "Obey him." You think I don't know that verse? It was drilled into my head at Sunday school, church camp... even when we played Bible Verse Jeopardy.

MARY: Then you should have known that we couldn't let you... We couldn't just...

ANNA: Love me?

MARY: (*Beat.*) We never stopped loving you. It's just not that simple. We are supposed to be witnesses. People look at us to see what Christians are like.

ANNA: Do they look at you to see what Christ is like?

MARY doesn't know what to say. She crosses, sits on the bench, and thinks.

MARY: I didn't really know what to do. I don't know what to do. The Bible says it's wrong.

ANNA: Oh, trust me. That's all I hear. I can recite chapter and verse.

MARY: I just thought if you had consequences, you'd change. I didn't think you'd really leave.

ANNA: You told me to leave, remember? *(Resumes angrily drawing.)*

MARY: I remember. Every day I remember. I thought that's what I was supposed to do. I just want to do what's right.

ANNA: Do you think I want to do what's wrong? I am doing what I think is right. So now here we are. You're right, and I'm right, and everything's just all right!

MARY: *(Long pause.)* You're right. *(ANNA looks at MARY.)* And I'm tired of being right. My heart broke when you left, Anna.

ANNA: My heart's been broken for awhile, Mom. It hurts.

MARY: It hurts a lot. *(Pulls out ANNA'S self-portrait.)* I know this girl is never coming home. This girl never was... home. *(Points to chalk art.)* I want to understand this.

ANNA: *(Continues drawing.)* You could never understand this, Mom. Just leave.

MARY: You're kicking me out now? I guess I deserve that.

ANNA: Don't turn this back on me. I'm not you.

MARY: I know. Finally. But I want to get to know you.

ANNA: Mom, you just... you just can't see it.

MARY: I've been blind. I know that, Anna. But Jesus opened the eyes of a blind man with some dirt and spit.

ANNA: Well, we've definitely got the dirt.

MARY: In fact, Jesus got into the dirt quite a bit. If you'll remember, one time, he stooped down and wrote on the ground to get his message across. I always wondered what he wrote. Or drew.

ANNA stops drawing but looks at the ground.

MARY: *(Crosses back to ANNA.)* My world is so black and white. But your world... *(Gestures to the drawing.)* Is not black and white. I feel like I've missed something. *(Beat.)* I can't pretend that I understand. Or that I know what you're going through, Anna. *(Looks at chalk heart drawing and points to it.)* But I want to know your heart. *(Long pause.)* I hope you can forgive me. *(ANNA begins to draw.)* I guess I can't expect you to trust me right away. But you should know that I look out the window every day hoping you'll come home. *(Beat.)* I love you, Anna. *(Beat.)* You know where the key is.

ANNA stands and takes out the half-heart necklaces. Holds one out to MARY, never making eye contact.

MARY: Is this for me?

ANNA doesn't answer but puts on the other half-heart necklace.

MARY: Oh, Anna. *(Grips the necklace and holds it to her chest.)*

ANNA: *(Starts to gather her things.)* Mom?

MARY: Yes?

ANNA: I usually come here in the afternoons.

MARY: Then I'll be back tomorrow. *(Pauses then exits.)*

ANNA takes some white chalk and finishes her drawing. She takes the black chalk, considers it then crosses to the geocache and puts it in the box. She rubs the necklace, picks up her things, and exits. Lights down.

ACT ONE, SCENE 4

MAGICAL PROPERTIES

AT START: *ARABELLA enters and stops to look at the chalk drawing. GENA enters from the opposite side and meets ARABELLA at the chalk drawing.*

ARABELLA: *(Looking at the drawing from the wrong perspective.)*

What is that? Some sort of Cubist drawing?

GENA: *(Shifts ARABELLA to the right perspective.)* It's a prophecy.

ARABELLA: Prophecy? It's just a heart shattering.

GENA: Or being mended. Depends on the movement.

ARABELLA: Gena?

GENA: Right. And you're Arabella. I am so pumped to meet you. It is so cool to have another prop fan in town.

ARABELLA: I prefer Movie Memorabilia Collector. "Prop fan" sounds like something from an airplane maintenance manual.

GENA: Right. ...So, you got some good stuff?

ARABELLA: Indeed, I have "good stuff." And once again, I object to meeting in such an inhospitable environment.

GENA: We're in a park.

ARABELLA: Precisely. Completely exposed to the elements and opportunists with larceny in their hearts.

GENA: You certainly like your three-dollar words.

ARABELLA: I like precision in communication, just as I like meticulousness in my business negotiations. So, if you could better justify your insistence on meeting in this contaminant-ridden—

GENA: It's magical. This park, it's magical. Over there (*Points offstage.*) is a white squirrel that will grant you one wish if you can tell her where she hid last autumn's acorn. Over there (*Points to flowers.*) is a flower that fell in love with a honey bee. The flower opens only when her bee visits. And over there (*Points toward geocache.*) is a magic box that has a new treasure every day. You just have to give it your own treasure in exchange.

ARABELLA: You are unhinged. You live in a fantasy world. (*Starts to gather her things.*)

GENA: (*Gently holds ARABELLA'S arm.*) You love movies, right?

ARABELLA: Yes.

GENA: Then you, at least for two hours, like to live in a fantasy world. (*ARABELLA hesitates, then sits on the bench.*) Now, show me what you've got.

ARABELLA: All right. (*Pulls out two sets of latex gloves and gives one set to GENA. ARABELLA puts on latex gloves.*)

GENA: What are these for?

ARABELLA: I have just come from the sale, and I haven't had time to encase the properties in glass.

GENA: You encase the props in glass?

ARABELLA: It's bad enough that these were stored in a trunk. I want to restore and preserve them so that they appreciate in value.

GENA: I don't think you—

ARABELLA: (*Carefully holds up turban.*) Take this, for example. I think this is the turban Rudolph Valentino wore in the movie *The Sheik*.

GENA: Cool!

GENA reaches for the turban but ARABELLA holds it out of reach.

ARABELLA: Gloves, remember? (*GENA puts on gloves.*) This turban could be worth a lot of money, so be careful.

ARABELLA carefully hands the turban to GENA.

GENA: This turban is priceless!

ARABELLA: I didn't say that. I said it might be worth—

GENA: Can't you feel the magic in it? The romance? It just vibrates with star-crossed love! I bet if you put it on—(*Starts to put the turban on.*)

ARABELLA: Don't even think about it.

GENA: But you have to wear it to get the magic.

ARABELLA: You will do no such thing.

ARABELLA gestures for GENA to give the turban back. GENA gives the turban back reluctantly. ARABELLA carefully returns the turban to her bag.

ARABELLA: You do not appreciate the value of this piece.

GENA: I know its value. But... What else have you got?

ARABELLA: (*Reaches in bag and pulls out a top.*) This might be one of the spinning tops that they used in the movie *Inception*. (*GENA gestures for it and ARABELLA reluctantly hands it over.*) Be careful with this.

GENA: This is incredible! Can I have it?

ARABELLA: What are you willing to pay for it?

GENA: I am willing to let you give it to me.

ARABELLA: What?

GENA: Accepting a gift comes with a lot of responsibility. You've got to share that gift in the best way possible. This is a huge gift, so the responsibility—

ARABELLA: I am not giving you that top!

GENA: I'll share it wisely.

ARABELLA: You must be dreaming.

GENA: (*Smiles impishly.*) Well, since this top is from Inception, I'll have to spin it to find out. (*Prepares to spin top.*)

ARABELLA: Don't you dare!

GENA: What good is magic if you don't touch it or use it?

ARABELLA: (*Takes the top back.*) If you touch or use properties, they lose their value.

GENA: Touching and using are the only properties they have.

ARABELLA: Oh. I never thought...

GENA: What else do you have?

ARABELLA: (*Pulls out doorknob.*) I have this doorknob—

GENA: Give it to me.

ARABELLA: No.

GENA: But I want to show you—

ARABELLA: No.

GENA: (*Sighs in frustration then looks at the doorknob.*) Why is one side gray and the other brass?

ARABELLA: I think it's from the Wizard of Oz. The gray doorknob was in the scene of a black-and-white Kansas and—

GENA: The brass doorknob was in the technicolor world of Oz. (*Beat.*) Wow. What are you going to do with it?

ARABELLA: I will add it to my personal collection, unless I get the price I'm asking for it.

GENA: Your personal collection?

ARABELLA: I have a climate-controlled storage unit on my property. All of my movie memorabilia are encased in airtight containers and protected from ultraviolet light.

GENA: You keep them in a cold, dark void?

ARABELLA: I... I guess I do. I never thought of it that way before.

GENA: There's a better way. (*Beat.*) Want to see my stuff now?

ARABELLA: Yes.

GENA: Good. Now, take off those gloves.

ARABELLA: Take them off? But the oil from our fingertips will—

GENA: To appreciate the value of this property you must feel it with your skin. *(Pulls out a large Ziploc bag with mud in it.)*

ARABELLA: Is that—

GENA shoves ARABELLA'S hand into the bag. ARABELLA feels the mud for a while.

ARABELLA: This... is mud.

GENA: Nope. It's filth.

ARABELLA: What? *(Starts to remove her hand.)*

GENA: *(Shoves her hand back in.)* What do you feel?

ARABELLA: It's just mud!

GENA: No. What do you feel?

ARABELLA: I feel...

GENA: Yes?

ARABELLA: Repressed. I feel repressed.

GENA: Yes! Yes! I knew you could feel the magic.

ARABELLA: What are you talking about? I feel repressed because you shoved my hand in some mud.

GENA: No, it's filth. Filth, as in, *(In Monty Python voice.)* "Dennis, there's some lovely filth over here."

ARABELLA: That's from Monty Python and the Holy Grail.

GENA: And what does Dennis say as King Arthur is man-handling him?

ARABELLA: "Help, help I'm being repressed!" *(Pause as ARABELLA digests the implications.)* Oh. Coincidence?

GENA: Right. You just happen to realize that you are being repressed by your life just as you are gripping Monty Python filth? I don't think so.

ARABELLA: That is odd. *(Beat.)* But I've never thought of myself as being repressed.

GENA: Then you need another test. *(Pulls out a chip of concrete.)* Hold this—

ARABELLA: But my hands are filthy.

GENA: Yes. Isn't it terrific? Now hold this bit of concrete. *(ARABELLA holds concrete.)* What do you feel?

ARABELLA: I feel... *(ARABELLA gets startled and drops the concrete.)*

GENA: What? What's wrong?

ARABELLA: It was so claustrophobic. I was closed in. I couldn't breathe. The stench—

GENA: (*GENA picks up concrete and puts it back in ARABELLA'S hand.*) You have to keep holding on. Now, what do you feel?

ARABELLA: I see light. It's flashing. It's... lightning?

GENA: That's it. That's where you go!

ARABELLA: (*Drops concrete.*) What is that?

GENA: It's a chip of concrete from Shawshank Redemption. When Andy chipped through the wall. And then he crawled through the sewer to get to freedom. (*Picks up the concrete and holds it toward ARABELLA.*) Take it. Take your freedom.

ARABELLA: I... I'm scared.

GENA: "Get busy living or get busy dying." Andy says that in the movie.

ARABELLA: So does Red.

GENA: Right. So, what's it gonna be?

ARABELLA: (*Takes out towel and thoughtfully cleans her hands.*) I love props. The very first prop I got was Gandalf's staff when our children's theater did *The Hobbit*. I could feel the magic in it. But I broke the staff smiting an ash tree that looked just like a goblin. I lost the magic. I wanted to be more careful in the future.

GENA: Did being careful help you keep the magic?

ARABELLA: No.

GENA: But you want the magic, don't you? (*Holds up the chip of concrete.*) Sometimes you've got to smash things.

ARABELLA: So, I've been going about this all wrong?

GENA: Well, you're not going to get the magic by locking them away.

ARABELLA: (*Takes the chip of concrete.*) You know, I've never liked crawling through sewer drains. (*Looks at GENA then pulls out the doorknob.*) Why crawl when you can probably just walk through a door?

GENA: We're off to see the wizard?

ARABELLA: Maybe kill a witch or two.

GENA: We're gonna need a door to go with that.

ARABELLA: (*Looks around.*) Where would you find a door in this park?

GENA: *(Crosses over to the chalk drawing and ponders it.)* I wonder. *(Looks around, sees geocache, crosses to it, and opens it... pulls out the black chalk.)* See? I told you this park was magic.

ARABELLA: But that's sidewalk chalk.

GENA: Not just any sidewalk chalk. I bet Bert used this chalk in Mary Poppins! He drew a park scene that they all jumped into.

ARABELLA: So now we can draw a door to go with this doorknob.

GENA: But first, we have to leave something in the magic box.

ARABELLA: *(Pulls out turban.)* How about this?

GENA: But isn't Valentino's turban worth a lot of money?

ARABELLA: It's worth a lot more than that. Can't you feel the magic in it? The romance? It just vibrates with star-crossed love! I bet if someone puts it on, they'll become the Sheik. *(ARABELLA crosses to the geocache and puts the turban in. She crosses back to GENA.)* And now, we have a magical adventure before us.

GENA: *(Holds up the chalk.)* To Oz?

ARABELLA: To Oz!

ARABELLA and GENA smile at each other. Lights down.

ACT ONE, SCENE 5

THE GHOST OF VALENTINO

AT START: *LORNA and JODY enter; NILES trails behind, in the middle of telling a joke.*

NILES: Did you know that the band Toto used to belong to another band? They had hits like "Carry on my Wayward Son." But they got kicked out. That's why one of them said, *(In best Judy Garland voice.)* "Toto, I've a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore."

JODY: That was... so, so bad.

LORNA: I don't get it. Who's Toto?

NILES: You've never seen The Wizard of Oz? It's a classic.

JODY: Stop right there, Niles. You know Lorna only watches—

LORNA: *(Ignores JODY.)* Twilight! Twilight: Breaking Dawn! Twilight: Breaking Dawn Part II!

NILES: Those are classics?

LORNA: Yes! I love romantic love stories.

JODY: It disturbs me that your love stories are about undead bloodsuckers.

LORNA: That's not the point of those movies. The point is—

NILES: Okay, let me try one more. There was this guy who wanted to be a prison guard but ended up working on the waterfront. He shouted in regret, "I coulda been a con-tender." (*LORNA and JODY stare blankly.*) Get it? A con-tender? On the Waterfront? Marlon Brando?

JODY: Stop. Please. I'm the only one who gets your old movie references, and I hate puns. Lorna, are we there yet?

LORNA: (*Checks cell phone.*) We're in the area. The geocache is around here somewhere. (*ALL look around the area.*)

JODY: How did I ever let you talk me into this?

NILES: Yeah. I don't even know why I'm here.

JODY: Right. (*Looks significantly at LORNA.*) Like you don't know why you're here.

LORNA: (*Doesn't notice JODY'S look.*) Jody, don't start. Sarcasm is lost on Niles.

NILES: (*Sarcastically.*) Yeah, like I'm all about sarcasm.

LORNA: What?

NILES: (*Sarcastically.*) Sarcasm is sooo my forte.

JODY: You keep using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means.

NILES: Hey, I know that line.

JODY: I'm surprised. I mean, *The Princess Bride* was in color after all.

LORNA: Stop! I brought you two out here to broaden your horizons. Fresh air, sunshine, and no movie references. So, keep looking for that geocache.

NILES: (*Starts looking around.*) I think my allergies are acting up.

JODY: I'm getting sun poisoning.

LORNA: I apologize for dragging you two into nature. Why do I bother?

JODY: Well, geocaching doesn't exactly sound like something on your bucket list. What made you decide this was a good thing to do?

NILES: Because last week, Mitch Jackson gave a speech on geocaching.

LORNA: And he made it sound so interesting that I thought it would be fun to try.

JODY: No, I think you find Mitch Jackson so interesting. You think it would be fun to bump into Mitch.

LORNA: I totally regret bringing you two. Let's find that stupid geocache, swap some knickknacks, and get out of here.

JODY: What have you got to swap?

LORNA: My old jump rope.

JODY: *(Takes jump rope from LORNA.)* You don't use it anymore?

LORNA: Why would I use a jump rope?

JODY: *(Recites as she jumps.)*

I like coffee

I like tea

I'd like for Lorna

To jump in with me

JODY looks expectantly at LORNA. LORNA gives JODY a disgusted look. JODY stops jumping.

LORNA: I'm too old for that.

JODY: Too bad. Well, I can't force you to live a little.

NILES: Found the geocache.

LORNA: What did you find, Niles? Anything interesting?

NILES: *(Pulls out turban.)* Cool!

JODY places jump rope in geocache.

LORNA: What is it?

NILES: It's a turban.

LORNA: I thought you said, "Cool."

NILES: It looks just like the turban Rudolph Valentino wore in the movie *The Sheik*.

LORNA: Who?

JODY: Rudolph Valentino: known as the world's greatest lover during the silent film era.

LORNA: Great. Another old movie reference.

NILES: You don't understand— *(Puts on turban and freezes.)*

LORNA: *(Pause.)* What? ...I don't understand what?

NILES: (*NILES glides to LORNA, holds her hand, and looks into her eyes.*)

Our meeting was but destiny
In the first blush of twilight;
I choose you for eternity
And so embrace the night.

JODY: (*Snatches turban from NILES' head.*) What are you doing?

NILES and LORNA: (*Shake their heads, as if coming out of a dream.*)
What?

JODY: What are you doing?

NILES and LORNA realize that they are holding hands and move apart, embarrassed.

NILES: What just happened?

JODY: You put on that turban and started reciting poetry in a husky voice. (*To LORNA.*) And you swooned.

LORNA: I did not swoon!

JODY: What, Niles, are you trying to be Valentino?

NILES: I don't know what happened.

LORNA: Well, put the turban back on and let's see what happens.

NILES: (*Hesitantly puts on the turban and looks at JODY.*)

A knight has his shield,
A castle its chasm;
My lady she wields
Gobs and gobs of sarcasm.

JODY: (*Snatches the turban from NILES' head.*) Are you kidding me?

NILES: (*Shakes his head and snaps out of the trance.*) What?

JODY: Lorna gets a husky voice, googly eyes, and a mushy poem, and I get... whatever that was.

LORNA: Maybe the hat had a spell that wore off?

NILES: It's not really a hat, it's a—

JODY: Yeah, we know! It's a turban!

LORNA: Well, the only way to be sure is for you to try it again.
(*Positions herself directly in front of NILES.*) Well? Go on, put it on.

NILES: I don't know—

LORNA: Oh, go on.

NILES: Okay... here goes. (*Puts on the turban, glides to LORNA, gathers her into his arms, and tangoes with her as he speaks.*)

Two lovers fought to make you his bride

The werewolf earthy and the vampire aloof

Whom would you spend eternity beside?

You chose the vampire but still got the... (*In a sexy growl.*) "woof"

NILES dips LORNA and holds her in that position until JODY snatches off the turban. NILES drops LORNA.

LORNA: Hey!

JODY: Why is that turban working for Lorna but not for me?

NILES: I don't know, Jody. I don't even know what's going on.

JODY: (*Stands directly in front of NILES.*) I'm going to give you one more chance to try that turban.

LORNA: (*Snatches the turban and turns to NILES.*) Yeah, one more chance.

JODY: (*Snatches turban and shoves LORNA back.*) It's my turn. Go ahead, Niles. One more time.

NILES: (*Looks at LORNA and JODY dubiously.*) I think I'm really going to regret this.

JODY: Just do it.

NILES: Okay... (*Puts on the turban and does a very simple line dance with JODY as he recites the poem.*)

A quirk of her lip,

A raise of her brow,

A field of words,

Her pen a plow.

JODY: (*Snatches turban and throws it violently offstage.*) Aaaahhhh!

LORNA: What did you do that for? It's stuck way up in that pine. (*Looks at NILES.*) Don't worry, Niles. I'll get it. (*LORNA rushes offstage.*)

NILES: What's the matter with you, Jody?

JODY: What's the matter? Really?

NILES: Why are you so angry?

JODY: Because you recite great poetry to Lorna but recite drivel to me. I know you've had a thing for her since sixth grade, but—

NILES: I recited poetry? What did I say?

JODY: Something about a quirky lip and plowing.

NILES: “Her pen a plow”? How do you know those lines?

JODY: You just said them. To me. In your normal, non-husky, voice.

NILES: You weren’t supposed to hear that. It’s that stupid turban.

JODY: And what about that dance?

NILES: I danced?

JODY: A rather good tango with Lorna and a stupid line dance with me. Where did you learn to tango?

NILES: I don’t know how to tango!

JODY: You most certainly do. And what about that line dance?

NILES: What line dance?

JODY: It sorta went— *(Does a few steps of the line dance.)*

NILES: I did that? *(JODY nods.)* Really?

JODY: Yeah.

NILES: That’s the dance you did.

JODY: Yeah, I did it with you, but—

NILES: No, it was after you read those comments from Mr. Patrie about your poems.

JODY: Huh?

NILES: When you read the comments, you did a little dance.

JODY: Oh. You noticed?

NILES: Well, yeah.

JODY: So, the poem. A quirk of the lip, a raise of the brow?

NILES: Um, yeah. That’s the look on your face when you’re writing poetry.

JODY: You noticed that, too?

NILES: When it’s you, I notice—but how do you know that I wrote you a poem?

JODY: You did?

LORNA: *(Enters, bedraggled from climbing the tree.)* Wow, that was way up there. You’ve got an arm on you, Jody. Here’s the hat, Niles. Put it on. *(Stands expectantly, holding out the turban.)*

NILES: *(Starts to reach for it, then looks at JODY.)* No, I’m good. *(JODY smiles at NILES.)*

LORNA: What?

NILES: *(Points offstage.)* Hey, isn’t that Mitch Jackson?

JODY: Yeah, I hear he likes to collect souvenirs from geocaches.

LORNA: He does? (*Looks at the turban in her hands.*) Then do I have a souvenir for Mitch! (*LORNA rushes off stage with turban.*)

JODY: That was almost too easy. (*Awkward silence.*) “My lady she wields gobs and gobs of sarcasm”? You wrote that, too?

NILES: I know it’s no good. It’s just that I noticed that you use sarcasm a lot and—

JODY: I got the metaphor, Niles. But... “My lady”?

NILES: I, um, was sorta speaking in the hopeful future tense about this girl I know.

JODY: But I thought that Lorna...

NILES: Nah.

JODY: I didn’t know.... Look, I’m sorry I called your poem drivel.

NILES: Nope, it’s drivel. That’s why I never showed it to you.

JODY: You know, I could help you with your poetry.

NILES: I would like that.

JODY and NILES start to exit.

JODY: (*Stops.*) Hey, I made up a joke I think you’d like. How did Marlon Brando rate his performance in *A Streetcar Named Desire*? Stellar!

NILES: And I can help you with your jokes. And your imitations, too.

JODY: I would like that.

JODY and NILES hold hands as they exit.

NILES: So, you really like my jokes?

JODY: I wouldn’t go that far.

LORNA: (*From offstage.*) Mitch, it’s not a hat, it’s a turban. Just try it on. Trust me, I’ll... you’ll love it!

Lights down.

ACT ONE, SCENE 6
IN HER RIGHT MIND

AT START: *DOLORES enters, wild-eyed and out of breath. She sits on the park bench to catch her breath, settles then gets a far-away look. JOANNIE enters and checks out the geocache. She takes the jump rope then sits on the bench next to DOLORES, who doesn't notice JOANNIE. Silence. Finally, JOANNIE stands, takes the rope, and starts jumping.*

JOANNIE: *(Recites as she jumps.)*

I like coffee

I like tea

I'd like for Deedee

To jump in with me

JOANNIE looks expectantly at DOLORES. DOLORES doesn't even notice. JOANNIE stops jumping.

JOANNIE: Hello? Hello!

DOLORES slowly turns her head to look at JOANNIE. JOANNIE begins jumping again.

JOANNIE: I like coffee

I like tea

I'd like for Deedee

To jump in with me

JOANNIE looks expectantly at DOLORES.

DOLORES: I'm... too old for that.

JOANNIE: *(JOANNIE stops jumping.)* Too bad. Well, I can't force you to live a little. *(JOANNIE crosses to bench, sits, takes DOLORES' hand, and pats it gently. JOANNIE suddenly grabs DOLORES' arm and pulls her to her feet.)* Wake up!

DOLORES: *(DOLORES teeters around; JOANNIE provides support when she seems near to falling. When DOLORES is finally stable, they both breathe a sigh of relief. JOANNIE hands DOLORES the jump rope. DOLORES stares at JOANNIE in disbelief.)* I... can't.

JOANNIE: Deedee, we don't have all day. Quit goofing around.

DOLORES: Who are you?

JOANNIE: Seriously? I've been your best friend since third grade. And you've been my best friend since fifth grade. Good thing for you Ginny Shoemaker moved away.

DOLORES: No, you're lucky. Ginny was just a boy-crazy, gum-popping... *(Pause.)* Joannie? Joannie Link?

JOANNIE: The one and only.

DOLORES: But you're—

JOANNIE: Getting really impatient. Come on. You're slower than the last ten minutes of school. *(JOANNIE looks pointedly at the jump rope in DOLORES' hand.)* Let's get a move on.

DOLORES: You want me to jump rope?

JOANNIE: No, I want you to knit a really bulky dog sweater. Of course, I want you to jump rope. What else are you going to do with a jump rope?

DOLORES stares at the rope and then at JOANNIE.

JOANNIE: Come on!

DOLORES gets in the jump rope position then slowly and unsteadily steps over the rope.

JOANNIE: Seriously? That's the best you can do? I've seen dead armadillos jump higher than that. Try it again.

DOLORES slowly steps over jump rope again. She goes faster and steadier until she is finally jumping rope.

JOANNIE: That's what I'm talking about.

DOLORES: *(Recites as she jumps.)*

I like coffee

I like tea

I'd like for Joannie

To jump in with me

*JOANNIE tries to jump in, but the rope hits her. They laugh and stop.
DOLORES begins to talk in JOANNIE'S age.*

DOLORES: Joannie, how did you get here?

JOANNIE: I took the Number 5 to the transfer center, then I—

DOLORES: You know what I mean.

JOANNIE: You needed your best friend, right?

DOLORES: Yes.

JOANNIE: And I'm here, just like you were there for me when I needed my best friend.

DOLORES: I've finally lost it. You're just in my head.

JOANNIE: I've always been in your head. I know how you think. You've never been able to beat me in rock, paper, scissors. I own you.

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