

The Sweet Abyss

The house and I are all he remembers.
Next month how will he guess that it is winter
And not just entropy, the universe
Plunging at last into its cold decline?
I cannot think of him without a pang.

--Randall Jarrell
"The Happy Cat"

SETTING: The present, in the American south, primarily a lower-middle-class home suggested by a couch and a table, with one exit to the kitchen, another to the bedrooms. Other venues—a hospital room, a veterinarian’s office, a farmhouse porch—are minimally suggested.

The passing of time—hours, days or weeks—is indicated in the script by quick shifts or changes in lighting. These may also be accompanied by tableaux—the actors freezing for just a moment—and/or a sound cue, for instance a single note on the piano.

CHARACTERS

Cass 40’s. Desperately pretty, maybe. Fading, probably. Clingy, a bit.

Dori Her daughter, 20ish. Fragile, sort of goth, a little heavy.

Roger Middle-aged.

Izzy A cat. Yes. A live cat. The script refers to him as white with blue eyes, but he can of course be any color.

David Middle-aged, quirky, opaque, uncomfortable.

a Priest Catholic, any age.

Caroline Middle-aged, earthy, flowy, genteel.

Elias Older, blind, scary, maybe wheelchair-bound.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: Whatever one might make of it, the work of Rita Reynolds, Temple Grandin and Elizabeth Severino was important to the writing of this play. Thanks also to my brother Jeff, who gets it, to my wife Cheryl, who gets me.

THE SWEET ABYSS premiered at the Trustus Theatre in Columbia, South Carolina, on August 14, 2009. It was directed by Dewey Scott-Wiley. Cast and crew were as follows.

Cass	Elena Martinez-Vidal
Dori/Caroline	Elisabeth Gray Heard
Izzy	Holly
Roger/David/Priest/Elias	Joe Morales

Artistic Director	Jim Thigpen
Managing Director	Kay Thigpen
Technical Director	Larry McMullen
Assistant Technical Director	Brandon McIver
Prod. Manager	Chad Henderson
Set and Light Design	Chet Longley
Costumes/Makeup	Robin Gottlieb
Props Master	Nate Herring
Stage Manager	Jane Hearn
Assistant Stage Manager	Liz Brownlee
Sound Board Operator	Tyler Jones
Videographer/Photographer.	Jason Stellman

THE SWEET ABYSS

ACT ONE

Scene 1

At rise. area lighting up on Cass, lying on a hospital gurney, covered by a sheet. She's in her 40's and reasonably attractive--but too made-up for a colonoscopy. She lies on her side, facing us, groggy. Long pause as she looks out blankly—and somewhat scared. Finally a doctor, Roger, enters wearing a white lab coat and snapping on latex gloves. He passes in front, stops, then bends to look at her.)

ROGER. ...Well. You're still awake.

CASS. *(She has a slight southern accent.)* ...Hello.

ROGER. Helllooo. Hasn't she started the drip?

CASS. ...I think so.

ROGER. You're not fighting it, are you?

CASS. Umm.

ROGER. You can't win, and you'll only give yourself a hangover.

CASS. I—

ROGER. I'm Doctor Roger Bush. I'll be your spelunker. I do about a thousand of these a day, so I don't want you to worry. And you are... *(He consults a clipboard.)* Cassandra.... Cassandra.... Hey! I know you! You work at uh, at at at, uh, Fujiyama! The uh, yeah! With the, with the, and the— *(he means a kimono and a wig).* You're a, you're a, a, a Geisha girl! Yeah!

CASS. *(Pleasantly.)* Hostess.

ROGER. Hostess, sure! I've seen you there! My wife and I go there all the time! Well. my ex-wife. My *future* ex-wife. Actually we haven't been there in a quite a while. We finalize in fifty-three days. But. back in the saddle, right?

CASS. *(Weakly.)* Uh-huh.

ROGER. I think Japanese gals are sexy as hell.

CASS. *(Flattered, but.)* Uh-huh-huh.

ROGER. *(Back to the clipboard.)* Severe cramping, constipation and bloody diarrhea. that's no fun. We get this a lot in women your age. Usually it's something obvious, like a dead gerbil or a bag of heroin, but in your case, it might just be a pearl.

(He has lifted the sheet to look at her.)

CASS. I—a—!

ROGER. Colonoscopy jokes. Got a buttload. “Louisiana tag—looks like this one swam up from the gulf.” A gastroenterologist has got to have a sense of humor. What does *your* husband do?

CASS. ...My husb...?

ROGER. Probably a big shot senator or something, right? I was going to run for office but nobody would shake my hand. Will he be taking you home? ...Cassandra. ...Hello? ...Cassandra?

(Pause. he looks at her—admiringly. Then the lights abruptly change. time has passed. He removes his gloves.)

ROGER. ...Cassandra? ...Wake up. ...Wake up, Cassandra.

CASS. *(Groggy.)* ...Hmm?

ROGER. We're all done.

CASS. ...What?

ROGER. We're all done. You had two polyps—and your colon's a big bloody tube sock. Laxatives are the very worst way to burn the fat young lady.

CASS. Um, pol...poly...?

ROGER. Polyps. Fleishy outgrowths that attach themselves to the epithelium—like barnacles on a sperm whale. You'll want to stay off your feet for the rest of the day, get plenty of fluids, and for God's sake lay off

the Ex-Lax. You'll wind up with osteomalacia. (*Roger has removed her sheet; Cass wears clothes under-neath—a sexy outfit, in fact, or something too young for her. He presses a foil pill sampler into her hand and escorts her from the table.*) And here. If the pain gets too bad, take one of these. Who's taking you home?

CASS. Oste...?

ROGER. Osteomalacia. Your bones get spongy, gotta ride around in a scooter. But I don't want you to worry. Is your husband taking you home?

CASS. ...Umm. Dori.

ROGER. Dori. Is that your friend or—?

CASS. How can I be done?

ROGER. Will she be taking care of you?

CASS. *Dori.*

ROGER. Soooo...you don't have a husband?

CASS. ...My husband?

ROGER. Yes.

CASS. ...Michael.

ROGER. Michael? That's his name?

CASS. (*Trying to recall.*) ...No, no, he...he's...gone now.

ROGER. You're husband is....

CASS. ...Yes.

ROGER. Okay then! Lovely meeting you! I'll call in a few days with that lab report. Maybe I'll come see you at work! How about that? Ho-ho-hokay! And now. "once more into the breach, dear friends."

(With that, Roger waves/salutes and is gone. The lights narrow around Cass, who stands dazed, in a void. Pause.)

CASS. ...He's gone....

(Pause. Then, in the darkness, we hear Dori's voice.)

DORI. (*Off.*) ...Mama? ...Mama? (*The lights return and Dori enters. She's 20ish, kind of Goth, a little heavy and wears a*

garish crucifix. She'll collect Cass and steady her.) ...Mama?
...Are you coming?

CASS. ...Oh. Dori. Hi.

DORI. Come on. You're almost there.

CASS. How did I...how long was I in there? ...Dori?

DORI. Hm?

CASS. I asked you a question.

DORI. No you didn't.

CASS. I asked you how long I was in there.

DORI. Over an hour. And no you didn't.

CASS. ...What a strange feeling. Like...like when a...a record skips, and you think..."I missed that song," but...you didn't—or, or there was no song. It was just a, like a...a hole. Do you know what I mean? ...Dori? ...Dori?

DORI. What?

(The lights change. they are now in their home—a couch with a table in front of it. On the table is a plate covered with foil. It will remain on the table and yield a variety of dessert items.)

CASS. Would you listen please?

DORI. To what?

CASS. I was trying to tell you. It's as if everything was... was just gone. But then it was the same again, except for that...that *hole*. How did we get home?

DORI. How do you think we got home?

CASS. ...I feel like I'm drunk.

(Dori places Cass on the couch.)

DORI. You want a Mountain Dew?

CASS. Where's Izzy?

(Dori sees the pill sampler—and takes it.)

DORI. What's this?

CASS. I don't know.

DORI. Vicodin?

CASS. I can't drink Mountain Dew.

DORI. He gave you Vicodin?

CASS. I'm gonna be sick.

DORI. Just sit down.

CASS. --Izzy?

DORI. I made you some brownies.

CASS. Where is he? *(Dori pockets the Vicodin and exits to the kitchen. Pause.)* ...Dori? ...Where are you? *(Cass takes a brownie, eats it and tries to get her bearings.)* I can't eat these. Get these away from me. *(She puts it down and looks around, mostly on the couch.)* ...Dori? ...Izzy? ...Hello?

(Then, still dazed and somewhat troubled, she rediscovers the brownie, picks it up and finishes it. Dori returns—but from the bedrooms—with a cat—Izzy—and hands him to Cass.)

DORI. He was in your closet.

CASS. Izzy! There you are! Why are you hiding? Why is he hiding?

(Cass cuddles up with Izzy and a bra.)

DORI. He bit a hole in your Water Bra so now one boob is flat.

CASS. Where's my Mountain Dew?

DORI. You didn't want any.

CASS. Yes I do.

DORI. You said you—

CASS. May I please just this one time have one Mountain Dew please!

(Dori buffs off to the kitchen.)

CASS. ...And some ice, please.

DORI. *(Off.)* We're out of ice.

CASS. Can't you buy some?

DORI. *(Off.)* I don't have any money.

CASS. Look in my kimono.

DORI. *(Off.)* I did. You're broke.

CASS. God. We can't even afford ice. What are we gonna do? *(To Izzy.)* What are we gonna do, punkin'? Hmm? I need you right here. I need you right here on the couch. With me. That's right. Right here.

(Pause. DORI returns with a glass of Mountain Dew.)

DORI. Here.

CASS. What's this?

DORI. It's Mountain Dew.

CASS. I can't drink this.

DORI. You just asked for it.

CASS. Dori, it's fattening.

DORI. It's caffeine. You're supposed to. Doctor said.

CASS. ...He did?

DORI. Yes. Room temperature. With brownies.

CASS. ...Oh. Well all right. *(Dori exits to the bedrooms. Cass discovers Izzy there in her arms.)* ...Well hello, Izzy. Hello. Hello, punkin'. *(And who knows what will happen in this moment? It's live theatre—with a cat. Perhaps Cass will sing a few lilting bars of "You Are My Sunshine." Probably she'll produce a pipe cleaner from between the cushions and tantalize Izzy with it.)* Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Look what I've got. Uh-huh. Oh! Oh! You want it? You want that, don't you. Hmm? Can't have it. Can't have it. I'm so glad you're here. Uh-huh. You stay here with me. You stay here with me.

(And so on. The moment continues blissfully, the actor improvising as necessary, the lights settling in around Cass and her cat to create a portrait of timeless happiness. Finally,

offstage, a phone starts ringing. The lights change. time has passed. Dori returns—this time from the kitchen—with a phone.)

DORI. Mama?

CASS. ...Hmm?

DORI. ...It's him.

CASS. Who.

DORI. The doctor.

CASS. What doctor?

DORI. The butt doctor.

CASS. ...Dori! Jesus! *(Cass takes the phone. Elsewhere, special comes up on Roger, on his phone.)* –Hello?

ROGER. Cassandra? Roger Bush. Good news. You've got Irritable Bowel Syndrome.

CASS. ...Now what now?

ROGER. Both polyps were benign.

CASS. Polyps?

ROGER. IBS is a common reaction to bacterial infection and irregular levels of serotonin in the gastrointestinal tract and can lead to complications like Crohn's disease. But I don't want you to worry. I'm going to prescribe some Lotronex, you'll want to minimize your glutens, and I'd like to see you again, if that's okay.

CASS. ...Um. ...Okay.

ROGER. Great! How's Thursday? Around sixish.

CASS. Sixish?

ROGER. I have your address. You wouldn't happen to own a Hibachi, would you?

CASS. A—?

ROGER. That's all right—I've got a wok. I make a mean vegetable mushu.

CASS. Wait...are you...?

ROGER. I can't go out in public until my divorce is final.

CASS. But.

ROGER. I hope that's okay.

CASS. Umm...uh...okay.

ROGER. Terrific! Terrific! Okay! See you then! Thanks!
This is terrific!

(Special out on Roger as he hangs up. Cass thinks...sorting it out.)

DORI. ...Polyps?

CASS. ...Oh. Umm. Yes. They're...benign, though.

DORI. ...And that's...good, right?

CASS. ...He's...coming here.

DORI. Here? What for?

CASS. *(Smiles.)* ...For dinner.

DORI. ...What?

CASS. On Thursday.

DORI. What, like a, like a date?

CASS. *(Almost beaming.)* At sixish!

DORI. But...I mean...can he do that? I mean, he's a doctor, aren't there like rules or, or—

CASS. I don't know, Dori! How would I know! I don't even know what a mushu is!

DORI. Well.... *(Can't figure that one out.)* ...What about Richard?

CASS. Richard?

DORI. Richard! Richard! Won't he get mad?

CASS. Oh. Pfff. He went back to his thing.

DORI. Just like Bruce.

CASS. Just like Bruce.

DORI. I liked Bruce.

CASS. I didn't.

DORI. Bruce was the one with the tattoos.

CASS. That was Donald. Bruce was fat one that smelled like ham.

DORI. So what happened to Donald

CASS. *(Sarcastically.)* Gosh, Dori, who knows.

DORI. *(Hearing her tone.)* ...What's that supposed to mean?

CASS. Don't get defensive.

DORI. What's *that* supposed—

CASS. You know what I'm talking about! ...Dori, look. I don't know how much longer I can do this. I'm not...I'm not so young anymore. You're going to have to...be *good*.

DORI. I try to be good.

CASS. Try harder. Please. Swear to God, Dori, please, just this once, promise me you'll help me.

DORI. I don't swear to God.

CASS. Oh for Christ's--

DORI. Maybe God would help you if you stopped—

CASS. Knock it off! Just stop it! (*Pause. She composes herself.*) ...I need you to cut my hair. Nothing drastic, just the ends. Can you do that for me? And I need to borrow some eye-liner. I can't have him see me like this.

DORI. Like *this*?

CASS. And look at this place.

DORI. He stuck a telescope up—

CASS. This is all your stuff. Where's the vacuum? We need to vacuum. There's hair everywhere. Why is there hair everywhere?

DORI. You're pulling it out of him!

CASS. Look at it! It's just coming right out.

DORI. Here.

(Dori takes Izzy, and the lights change. It's another evening. Cass starts primping—maybe pulling perfume and lipstick from her pockets—and Dori tries to help.)

CASS. Oh! And one of your desserts! No. Yes. Something yummy, but low-cal, like, like--

DORI. Truffles.

CASS. No, no, that, that mousse thing, with the layers, or no! I know. those, those--

DORI. Truffles.

CASS. Yes! Good! But small. And, oh, that coffee, that hazelnut stuff that Michael brought—

DORI. Daddy?

CASS. No, I mean, what's his name. The, the—

DORI. Richard.

CASS. No.

DORI. Reggie. Javier. Jean-Claude.

CASS. *(Un-amused.)* Just make the coffee and go to your room.

DORI. What?

CASS. Go—do your internet thing. But please don't burn that incense.

DORI. Why?

CASS. Because it smells bad.

DORI. You don't want him to see me. *(Cass heaves an epic sigh.)* You don't want him to even know I exist. You want to hide me from the world like Emily Dickins—

CASS. Dammit, Dori, please! Just this once! Just this once! Please—!

(Cass is seized by a stomach pain. Pause.)

DORI. ...Bad one? ...Maybe you should cancel.

CASS. *(Meaning 'no'.)* Mm-mmm!

DORI. Want your Ex-Lax?

CASS. Yes. No! What else have we got?

DORI. Vicodin.

CASS. We have Vicodin?

DORI. He gave you some

(A doorbell rings. Cass holds out her palm; Dori gives her a pill. Cass pops it, washes it down with the Mountain Dew, buffs a few times and pulls herself together.)

CASS. ...Too much perfume?

DORI. Way.

CASS. ...Damn right. Okay. Here we go.

(Cass smooths her outfit and glides somewhat painfully offstage—in the direction of the bedrooms. Dori holds Izzy.)

The lights change; time passes. From offstage, we hear the sounds of lovemaking, a squeaking bed, groans—especially Roger’s. Dori listens, at first disgusted. She looks at the pills in her hand—and pops one, washing it down with some Mountain Dew. She continues to listen, by turns intrigued, then frustrated, so she pops another, sits and cuddles with Izzy.

Pause. The lights change. it’s the next morning. Roger marches in from the bedrooms wearing a crisp white undershirt and shorts and a prominent wristwatch, drinking coffee. He stops when he sees Dori, who immediately stands and backs away. This is a different Dori; she’s woozy—and nervous.

ROGER. Oh. Hey. Sorry.

DORI. ...Hi. Um.

ROGER. ...You all right?

DORI. ...Uh-huh.

ROGER. I’m uh, I’m Doctor Roger Bush.

(He extends a hand—which she doesn’t take.)

DORI. Hello.

ROGER. And you are...?

DORI. ...I’m what.

ROGER. Your name. *(Longish pause.)* ...Is what.

(Now, oddly, Dori effects an English accent. She becomes juvenile, dramatic, pouty, inappropriate—and is still woozy.)

DORI. ...I was named after a small boat.

ROGER. Really.

DORI. A type of flat-bottomed fishing vessel.

ROGER. This is a riddle.

DORI. With high sides and a sharp prow.

ROGER. ...Then you must beeee...Dori! *(She smiles, delightedly.)* I figured it was either that or Dinghy.

DORI. *(Doesn't get it.)* ...Would you like a truffle, Richard?

ROGER. No thanks. And it's Roger.

DORI. What's Roger?

ROGER. I'm Roger. You called me Richard.

DORI. Oh. Um. Sorry. Would you like a truffle, Richard?

(Cass enters from the bedroom in a kimono and cock-eyed Geisha wig. It's been a long night. Her southern accent is a bit more pronounced, somehow—more charming, really.)

CASS. *(To Dori, sweetly but not.)* ...Well. Sweetie. You're up early.

DORI. *(No accent now.)* Izzy wanted out. Then he wanted in.

CASS. Why don't you take him to your room.

DORI. What are you going to do?

CASS. *(For Roger.)* I thought I might poach us some eggs.

ROGER. Actually....

DORI. I love poached eggs.

ROGER. I'm just having coffee, thanks.

DORI. I need some coffee.

CASS. *(Meaningfully.)* Dori, dear? ...Hmm? *(Pause. Then Dori exits dejectedly to the bedrooms, carrying Izzy. Cass gives Roger a peck.)* ...I'm sorry. I should have told you about her.

ROGER. Well at least that explains the smell.

CASS. I know. She's going through some...phase, I think. I'm letting her stay here, just for a while, until she—

ROGER. I meant the cat. The whole house reeks of urine.

CASS. ...Oh, no, that's...incense.

ROGER. I think I know what urine smells like.

CASS. May I tempt you with a truffle?

ROGER. Way too rich. Woman your age, you'll get a diverticulum.

CASS. I'm sorry.

ROGER. A diverticulum is a pouch or a sac bulging out from your intestinal wall, like a bubble on a garden hose. Cooked vegetables, whole grain rice, lots of fiber. And somebody's drinking way too much Mountain Dew.

CASS. Dori.

ROGER. She'll regret it when her urethra kinks up and she's peeing in three directions.

CASS. I—

ROGER. Come here. *(She approaches on command, and he nuzzles/fondles her.)* ...You were fantastic.

CASS. ...Was I?

ROGER. You've got a terrific body. For a woman your age.

CASS. I don't usually...*do* that, on the--

ROGER. And what an appetite!

CASS. *(Silly.)* Rowrr! *(They "mmm" and giggle as they make out. Finally, Cass sneaks a peek at his wristwatch.)* ...Oh no, look how late.

ROGER. Hup! Better get my clothes.

CASS. I'll get them! I can get them!

ROGER. Thanks, babe.

(Cass exits to the bedroom. Roger sips his coffee, steps forward and looks out a downstage 'window,' filled with a sense of triumph.)

Lights change. it's another morning. Dori enters from the kitchen, woozy again.)

DORI. Oh. I'm sorry. I didn't know you—

ROGER. Dori! Good morning! I haven't seen you for a few weeks.

DORI. Oh. No. I... *(Again with the English accent.)* ...Mummy hides me in the attic.

ROGER. Ha! Right. Are you not feeling well?

DORI. ...It's my medication.

ROGER. Oh? Which?

DORI. All of them. So you and Mummy are an item now.

ROGER. Well, let's just say I saw something in her I admired.

DORI. Care for an éclair?

ROGER. Colonoscopy joke.

DORI. What?

ROGER. "I saw something in her I admired."

DORI. *(No clue.)* ...Care for an éclair?

ROGER. No thanks. And you shouldn't eat so much crap.

DORI. Oh, I'm supposed to. It's comfort food. For all the... discomfort.

ROGER. Which discomfort.

DORI. All of it. ...Go ahead. Try one. You'll see. *(She offers the plate. Roger hesitates—but then takes one and eats. Dori takes a bite. It's a very sensuous bite. She luxuriates in it. He watches her.)* ...See? Delicious, aren't they.

ROGER. *(His mouth full.)* ...Mmmm!

DORI. Don't you feel better?

ROGER. ...Mm-hmm.

(Dori finishes hers, popping the last bit in her mouth and licking her fingers.)

DORI. Mmmm! ...Well. Um. Goodbye then, Donald.

(Dori finger-waves and wanders off to the kitchen as Cass returns from the bedroom, still in her kimono, with Roger's neatly-folded clothes and a lint brush.)

CASS. *(Accent intact.)* Izzy slept on them. I'm so sorry.

ROGER. They're covered in hair.

CASS. It'll come right off. I'm so sorry. I can have it dry-cleaned.

(He begins dressing while she lint-brushes his clothes.)

ROGER. No time for that.

CASS. He's not used to sharing our bed.

ROGER. Yes uh...may I um...I have a question about that.

CASS. Okay.

ROGER. Do you consider me to be a complete moron?

CASS. ...No. Why?

ROGER. Do I look like someone who's easily taken advantage of. Who enjoys being used. For my money. Or my body. Or whatever.

CASS. I don't understand what you're saying.

ROGER. How many men are you seeing?

CASS. What? ...You! One! What do you mean, how—?

ROGER. Because if you're seeing other men I have—

CASS. No, no! Where did you get such a—

ROGER. So who is Richard?

CASS. ...Richard.

ROGER. Or Donald.

CASS. *(She realizes—and loses the accent.)* ...Alright. ...Alright. ...I need to tell you something. There's something I need to tell you. *(Pause.)* ...Dori has...she has... some...severe—

ROGER. You're changing the subject.

CASS. No, no. something happened to her! Those men, there are no other men, they're gone, she gets them all mixed up or...I don't know, I don't know what's wrong with her, she's—

ROGER. She's stoned out of her gourd.

CASS. ...She is?

ROGER. You mean can't smell it? *(Cass sighs. she gets it now.)* ...I'm...sorry if I—

CASS. She was such a sweet little girl, Roger. So gentle and...trusting and.... She would smile in her sleep, I used to sit beside her and watch her sleep and...imagine her whole life for her. It was nothing like this.

ROGER. Hey.

CASS. I keep waiting for her to show up, my *real* daughter, the one with a...a ponytail and a tan and boyfriends and...tennis bracelets or a job at the mall or—

ROGER. We'll take her to a shrink. I know a few. Serious gastroenterologists always know a—

CASS. I *did* that. After Michael...her father...ran off. It...

ROGER. ...What.

CASS. ...He was this tall Englishman, and she fell in love with him. I mean she *threw* herself at him, she was nine years old, it was the most bizarre—

ROGER. Sure. It's what they call transference. He was taking the place of her father. She was trying to win back his affection.

CASS. But she fawned over him! Shamelessly! We had to stop going. After that it was one guy after another. the cable guy, the carpet cleaner, and some...fantasy person named Mr. Little. She'd talk to him, all the time, she'd carry on long conversations like he was right here with us. I used to have to set a place for Mr. Little.

ROGER. An invisible friend. A coping mechanism for poor social skills.

CASS. Yeah well, one day Mr. Little got decapitated by the mailman. What do they call that? When a child chops the head off her invisible friend? ...She cried so hard I couldn't send her to school. And last year, she had a—an incident, which started this... whole... stupid...religious...thing.

(She has a twinge in her gut. He comes to her.)

ROGER. ...You okay?

CASS. She says she wants to be a nun! She goes on the internet and confesses all her sins about three times a day!

ROGER. Cass?

CASS. And mine too!

ROGER. Cass. It's all right.

CASS. I can't do this, Roger. I can't...!

ROGER. It's okay. It's okay. ...Does it hurt?

(He gently probes her abdomen.)

CASS. Ooooh!

ROGER. ...C'mere. C'mere. *(He hugs her, consoles her.)*

...Do you know what you need?

CASS. What.

ROGER. I know what you need.

CASS. What.

ROGER. ...You need a good esophago-gastro-duo-
endoscopy.

CASS. A—?

ROGER. I snake a hose down your throat, take a gander at
your duodenum. Ten bucks says peptic ulcer.

CASS. A—?

ROGER. A hole in your gut. Not uncommon in women
your age. Usually they're benign, so I don't want you
to worry. Call my office. They'll set it up. *(Now
dressed, he gives her a peck and a pat and starts off, but then.)*
Oh, um. Here.

(He pulls some cash out of his wallet and hands it to her.)

CASS. What's this for?

ROGER. You said you were, you know.

CASS. ...Oh. Thank you.

ROGER. That's all right, babe. You tell me if you need any
more.

(He exits to the kitchen. Cass straightens...and smiles.)

*Lights change. time passes. Dori comes storming in from the
bedroom holding a broken rosary.)*

DORI. You smashed my rosary!

CASS. Hmm?

DORI. You did this on purpose!

CASS. Did what.

DORI. You *smashed* my rosary!

CASS. It was on your floor.

DORI. It wasn't on my floor, it was on my altar! These are *sacred beads!*

CASS. So we'll go to Hobby Lobby.

DORI. You can't get these at...*Hobby Lobby!* These are religious artifacts! You can't get religious artifacts at Hobby Lobby!

CASS. You're not even Catholic, Dori, you're a Methodist!

DORI. I am no Methodist! Methodists are *concubines!*

CASS. Excuse me?

DORI. I have a *soul!* I'm a deeply spiritual person! I need my life to *mean* something! I need *love* and compassion in my life!

(Dori runs off to the bedroom, hyperventilating.)

CASS. Well so do I! How about that! Did you ever think of that? So do I!

(Lights change. it's another evening. Roger enters from the kitchen, carrying a small gift box. He removes his tie and starts stripping down.)

ROGER. Technically, she makes a valid point. Being a Catholic requires much more commitment than being a Protestant. The Catechism provides a better sense of structure than they sell at vacation bible school. And you never hear the term Baptist Intellectual.

CASS. But she's not Catholic! She's a...fanatic!

ROGER. Want me to talk to her?

CASS. Huh!

ROGER. I have a natural rapport with kids. They see me as an authority figure.

CASS. No, I don't want her talking to *you*. God knows what she'll say. (*From behind, he presents her with a small gift box.*) ...What's this?

ROGER. Open it.

(She does—and withdraws a pearl necklace.)

CASS. (*Accent on.*) Oh my God! Oh my—it's gorgeous! Roger!

ROGER. You like it?

CASS. I love it! I don't know what to—!

(Cass will rub them against her teeth.)

ROGER. They're real.

CASS. This must have cost a fortune.

ROGER. Three polyps and a peri-anal cyst.

CASS. What?

ROGER. Our little secret.

CASS. What is?

ROGER. A little game we play with the insurance companies. Lab gets a kickback, nobody's the wiser.

CASS. I don't know what you mean.

ROGER. That's okay. Come on.

(Down to his underwear or thereabouts, he begins towing her back to the bedroom.)

CASS. (*The accent fades.*) You mean you...lie to your patients?

ROGER. It's not lying. It's a dividend I pay myself for sticking my head up people's butts. Come on.

CASS. Where are we going?

ROGER. Where do you think?

CASS. Shouldn't we have dinner first, or, or—

ROGER. Don't you like the necklace?

CASS. I...well yes, but—

ROGER. So okay.

(And they're gone. The small box remains on the couch.)

The lights change. time passes. From offstage, we hear the sounds of love making again. Dori enters tentatively from the kitchen, and listens. She seems fascinated—and then lonely, and maybe sits on the couch. Eventually—but suddenly—we hear Roger yell—)

ROGER. ...Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ! Get that—!

(—and he sweeps back in from the bedroom and starts getting dressed. Cass follows in her kimono, holding Izzy.)

CASS. Roger, wait, please, I'm sorry.

ROGER. I told you I don't approve of that cat. I've told you that many times.

CASS. He wasn't hurting anything.

ROGER. He was watching me. I can't do it with him watching me. It's like he's *judging* me.

CASS. I put him on the floor.

ROGER. Where he sat...*glopping* himself with his—! *(Cass is trying not to smile.)* You know what? Just forget it. Forget it.

CASS. Oh, come on! You're being ridiculous. Come back to bed!

ROGER. Do you see what he's done to your drapes? Or your couch? You let him destroy everything and then you ask *me* for *money*.

DORI. What's going on?

CASS. Dori, go to your room.

ROGER. Your whole house smells like ammonia.

DORI. That's the cat.

CASS. Would you please—!

DORI. I think he's sick. He's walking funny. Like his legs give out.

ROGER. I don't like animals, Cass, I'm sorry. They're filthy, they spread diseases, and it's unhealthy when people form attachments to them.

CASS. You're not leaving.

ROGER. The evening is ruined. Thank you very much.

(Pause. Cass gets misty. Her accent comes back.)

CASS. ...All right. I understand.

ROGER. ...Well don't cry.

CASS. *(Pathetically submissive.)* No, you're right. You're always right about these things. I'll take him to the vet in the morning. And from now on, I'll lock him in the bathroom. And I'll...I'll mop and vacuum and polish everything. So that it will be clean. For you. When you come back.

ROGER. ...Well all right.

CASS. So you'll...come back?

ROGER. ...We'll see.

(Cass exits somberly to the bedroom with Izzy. Roger finishes getting dressed. Dori suddenly grabs her gut.)

DORI. ...Oooooo!

ROGER. What is it?

DORI. ...Nothing.

ROGER. Your stomach? *(Dori nods.)* It's all that crap you eat.

DORI. No. It always does this...when I'm upset.

ROGER. Are you upset? *(Dori shakes her head no.)*

...Come here.

DORI. ...I can't.

ROGER. I'm a doctor. Come here. *(He probes her gut gently through the following.)* ...Just relax. ...Can you feel this?

DORI. Oooo.Mmm.

ROGER. ... What are you upset about. Hm?

DORI. ...I can't say.

ROGER. You can trust me.

DORI. Ow. ...I'm fine. ...Ow.

ROGER. ...I don't think your stomach hurts, Dori. I think you're just pretending. I think you're just looking for a reason to tell me something. And that's all right. I understand. ...You're worried that your mother and I are fighting, aren't you. ...You're worried that I might leave.

DORI. ...Ow!

ROGER. Ah. See...? It reminds you of something. Doesn't it. Of someone in your life, long ago.

DORI. (*Flinching.*) Oooo!

ROGER. ...You okay? (*Dori nods. He probes a bit more deeply.*)
...Who? ...Who does it remind you of, Dori?
...Hmmm? Your father maybe?

(Dori pulls away, and then changes to her chipper British persona and chirps.)

DORI. Why are you getting divorced?

ROGER. Hey.

DORI. Catholics can't get divorced. Once we're married we're married forever. Mormons too, but.

ROGER. ...All right. I'll tell you mine if you tell me yours. Okay?

DORI. ...Okay.

ROGER. ...I don't know why. She.... I don't really understand.

DORI. (*Accent off.*) ...I'm sorry.

ROGER. Your turn.

DORI. ...All right. (*Accent on.*) ...He...he...he made a big pile of wood. And then he...covered it with leaves and pinecones and old newspapers. And...and he put a lawn chair on top and poured gasoline all over himself and...sat down and...lit a cigar.

ROGER. ...Very funny.

DORI. Actually, he drank one bottle of antifreeze and six bottles of beer, taped himself to a lawn chair and sat there foaming at the mouth until his liver collapsed.

ROGER. Your mother says he left. She says he abandoned you.

DORI. ...Well she would, wouldn't she. That's how she copes. She's a very fragile person. She needs me to take care of her.

ROGER. I think you're very sad inside, Dori. You're trying to fill up a very big empty space. You should try to make some friends, maybe join the Rotary or something.

DORI. ...I can't have friends.

ROGER. Everyone needs friends.

DORI. I can't.

ROGER. Why not? ...Tell me.

DORI. ...I don't get it.

ROGER. ...What.

DORI. (*Accent off.*) ...Any of it. All of it. I don't know how...to be.

ROGER. Be what.

DORI. Just...(be).

(*Pause.*)

ROGER. ...You could go to school. You could try that. There's a good little community college right up the—

DORI. I know. I went there last year. I had to quit.

ROGER. What for.

DORI. (*Accent on.*) ...I got knocked up.

ROGER. Right.

DORI. So I had to come home.

ROGER. So where's the kid.

DORI. She made me...give him away.

ROGER. Adoption.

DORI. Whatever.

ROGER. Best thing, probably.

DORI (*Accent off.*) I don't think so. Not a day goes by I don't think about him. And he doesn't even know I'm here. That's the worst thing. He doesn't know I'm thinking about him, all the time. (*She moves to the downstage window. She is far away.*) ...Or maybe he does. Maybe there's this thing, like with mothers and children, this magnetic field or something, he can sense I'm here, just like I know he's...somewhere. (*A long, uncomfortable pause. Then she snaps back, accent on.*) ...Just kidding!

(Dori runs off to the kitchen. Roger, dressed by now, puts on thick glasses and a blue lab coat and as the lights change crosses to a metal table where Cass—now dressed, of course—awaits with Izzy. He is now David, a rather quirky veterinarian, and this is his office.)

DAVID. ...Yes. Well. Diabetes. I'll have to run a curve. But...diabetes, probably.

CASS. That's like...too much sugar.

DAVID. Too little. He's starving.

CASS. I feed him. Every day.

DAVID. His body can't metabolize it.

CASS. Oh. So...a curve. What's that?

DAVID. Blood tests. To monitor his glucose. He'll have to stay overnight.

CASS. ...Diabetes is like...you...you take the shots.

DAVID. Insulin.

CASS. So...can't you just—

DAVID. The wrong dose could kill him. I have to run a curve.

CASS. ...I don't know how to ask this.

DAVID. One hundred and sixty dollars.

CASS. ...God. ...And...and then you, you, you give him a shot.

ROGER. Four to six units, twice a day. Depending.

CASS. Twice a day?

DAVID. Depending. You'll need syringes, a box of 31-gauge needles and a glucometer. *(Pause. She tries to calculate that.)* ...For everything...maybe eighty dollars a month.

CASS. ...What happens if we. What if...

DAVID. Liver disease, ketoacidosis, any number of secondary infections.

CASS. ...How long.

DAVID. ...Not very.

CASS. ...Isn't there something else? Some other....

(She looks at him. He considers, then sighs.)

DAVID. ...Wait here.

(David exits, leaving Cass with Izzy.)

CASS. ...Oh Izzy. ...Izzy. ...What are we going to do?

(The moment lingers. Then she crosses back to her home, carrying Izzy, and the lights change. Dori enters from the kitchen. She'll take a cookie from the plate.)

DORI. Hey. What's that bag in the kitchen?

CASS. ...Hm?

DORI. That big bag of catfood.

CASS. It's for Izzy.

DORI. Duh.

CASS. He's diabetic. The vet gave it to me. It's some special low-carb or something. Get that away from me.

(She means a cookie Dori has offered. Dori notices the gift box on the couch.)

DORI. What's this?

CASS. ...A gift.

DORI. From the vet?

CASS. No. He was weird. From Rrrroger.

DORI. What is it? Was it good? *(Cass removes the necklace—or takes it from a pocket—and hands it to Dori.)* ...Whoa.

CASS. I know.

DORI. *(Admiring the necklace.)* ...I like Roger.

CASS. He tries.

DORI. When's his divorce?

CASS. *(In his voice.)* "Two weeks, six days."

DORI. ...And then what.

CASS. God knows.

DORI. Are you going to marry him?

CASS. ...I'm trying.

(Pause. Dori watches Cass nuzzling Izzy.)

DORI. ...And then what, after that? *(Cass isn't listening.)* ...I mean, when you get married, what am I going—

CASS. Dori.

DORI. --to do? I mean, what's going to happen to—

CASS. You know what'll happen. I keep telling you.

DORI. ...Nobody's going to want me, Mama.

CASS. *(Cass hands Izzy to Dori and puts the necklace around Dori's neck.)* ...Yes they will. I promise. Someday. Someday, you're going to meet a...really... really...screwed up guy. And you'll...get married, maybe. Or maybe you'll just shack up for a while. And go into debt. And start fighting. A lot. And he won't have to be handsome or anything. He'll probably get fat. Or he'll drink too much. And you'll turn into a bitch. And your butt will get huge. And you'll both get neurotic and sleep in separate rooms, until he fools around with a stripper and you beat him in his sleep with a crowbar. *(Now Cass takes Izzy back and directs some of the following to him.)* ...But you'll love

each other, most of the time. That's the important thing. You'll have someone to grow old with. And someone who'll sit next to you on the couch. ...There's somebody out there Dori. You just have to...be what they want you to be.

DORI. I'm trying.

CASS. I know you are.

DORI. I'm trying hard. ...I'll...go back to school. Or get a job, even. I'll...I'll be a Methodist again. I'll be whatever you want me to be. And I won't leave a mess. ...I promise.

(Dori exits—pouting and pathetic—to the bedrooms. Pause. Cass sighs.)

CASS. *(To Izzy.)* ...What are we going to do? Hmm...? *(Pause. She thinks—and strokes Izzy. Then she notices a pipe cleaner, picks it up, looks at it—and begins teasing Izzy with it, ad libbing as necessary.)* ...Look at that. Look what I've got. You want it? You want it, hmm? You want it, don'tcha. ...Can't have it. ...Can't have it. Hmm? Why is your hair falling out? Hmm? Why is your hair falling out? ...Okay. There you go. There you go. ...I'm so glad you're here. I'm so glad. I'm so glad. Yes I am.

(And so on, the lights narrowing around them, as before. A short refrain plays on the piano—perhaps "You Are My Sunshine," or whatever song Cass sang to Izzy. Then, lights to black. End scene.)

SCENE TWO

In darkness. we hear Roger's voice.

ROGER. ...Cass? ...Cassandra? ...Cassaaandra? *(At rise. Cass is on the gurney, lying on her back and covered by a sheet. Roger stands beside her, smiling. Obviously, she's just awakening from anesthesia.)* ...Wake uuu-uup. Cassaaaaan-draaaa. ...Helloooo.

CASS. ...Ooooooh.

ROGER. Welcome back. How's your throat?

CASS. Uughh.

ROGER. I got down in there pretty deep. *(A manly voice.)* "But enough about me." There's going to be some swelling, so I sprayed your oropharynx with lignocaine. I had a punchline for that one but I had to stop using it. You shouldn't eat anything too tough for the rest of the day. Stick to yogurt or applesauce, don't take any more laxatives, and try not to talk much.

CASS. We're done?

ROGER. Up we go.

(He helps her to her feet.)

CASS. ...It's so weird.

ROGER. I was right about the ulcer. You owe me ten bucks.

CASS. It's so *weird*. How long was I--

ROGER. I'm going to start you on some Amoxicillin and some sucralfate to coat the lesion. Do you like oysters?

(He jots down a quick prescription while she teeters.)

CASS. Oysters?

ROGER. Smooth as snot. *Aaand* they're an aphrodisiac. So is foie gras, but I don't know how to make foie gras. How's tonight, say sixish?

CASS. Sixish?

ROGER. Terrific! Take two of these twice a day, get plenty of fluids, and try to rest up. I'll see you at six!

CASS. But...but wait! I...I.... *(But he's gone, perhaps rolling the gurney off as he goes. Pause. Cass stands in a daze, holding the prescription. The lights narrow around her as before.)* ...Where did you go? ...Hello? ...Where did...where did I go?

(From the darkness, Dori calls.)

DORI. *(Off.)* ...Mama.

CASS. Are you—hello?

DORI. *(Off.)* Mama? *(Dori enters, holding the kimono, and the lights shift back.)* ...Well? Are you going to put it on or not?

CASS. Hm?

DORI. Your kimono. You wanted your kimono.

CASS. I did?

DORI. You just told me to bring it to you.

(We're back at home. Dori helps Cass into the kimono.)

CASS. ...Oh. Ooooh. Yes, he uh...he likes it. He—

DORI. Hold your arm up.

CASS. Where is he?

DORI. In the kitchen. Steaming oysters.

CASS. What?

DORI. Oysters. He's got a big pot and he's steaming them.

CASS. ...Wait.

DORI. I've never had oysters.

CASS. ...No. Please, no, not, not—

DORI. But I've--

CASS. No. Not tonight. I can't do this tonight. Can you...here. here. find my keys and...get this filled for me.

(She hands the prescription to Dori.)

DORI. I don't have any money.

CASS. Ask your father.

DORI. My father?

CASS. I mean...Richard.

DORI. Roger.

CASS. Roger. Roger. Jesus.

DORI. You don't look so good.

CASS. ...I'm just...a little foggy. Everything's just...going so fast. *(Dori exits to bedrooms.)* ...I keep finding...holes. ...Where are you? ...Oh. Oh.

(She remembers where she is, shakes the cobwebs out, smooths her kimono, puts on a smile and prepares to exit to the kitchen. But Dori returns, holding Izzy. He is limp and perhaps wrapped in a towel.)

DORI. ...Mama? ...There's something wrong. ...He's really weak.

CASS. ...Oh no. Oh God. Give him to me. *(Cass removes her kimono and takes Izzy.)* ...Oh no. Oh Izzy. No no no. —Roger?

DORI. He can't stand up. His legs are—

CASS. Roger!

DORI. I'll go with you.

CASS. No. You—stay here. Try to...I don't know, keep him occupied. But don't...do anything. *(Dori gets defensive.)* Don't let him leave. Please, just—Roger!

(Roger enters from kitchen—maybe in a stupid chef's apron.)

ROGER. What's up, babe?

CASS. (*Of Izzy.*) There's something wrong with him.

ROGER. They're almost ready.

CASS. I have to go.

ROGER. They'll get rubbery and smell like mildew.

CASS. I'll hurry. I'll be right back. I promise. I'm sorry!
Stay here! I'm sorry!

(Cass exits through the kitchen with Izzy. Pause.)

DORI. ...He's sick.

ROGER. I know. Diabetes, probably.

DORI. You knew?

ROGER. Polyuria and polydipsia. Laps up water and pisses it out. The smell is ketones in his urine. The weakness in his legs is neuropathy. That's diabetes.

DORI. ...Oh. Is he...?

ROGER. Probably. This is why it's unhealthy to form attachments with animals. This is precisely why. When I was a kid, my mom made us have cats, and it was a disaster.

DORI. Why?

ROGER. All kinds of reasons. Our first cat, Matilda, she had four kittens. My mom gave three of them away and said I could keep the runt. I named him Runt. He had sleepy eyes and was really skinny, but I loved him. I was five years old but I still remember this. I'd pick him up and hold him up to my face so he could suck on my nose. I used to carry him around in my coat pocket. So one night I'm watching TV, and I hear this...this crying and crunching sound, and I look over at the box, and Runt's not there. Matilda has carried him into the closet. So I open the door, and there's blood all over her face. She killed him. Then she licked his body clean and hid him in my galoshes.

DORI. ...But...but *why*?

ROGER. That's what mother cats do. If one of her kittens is sick or hurt or whatever, she'll kill it. Or just take it out to the woods and leave it.

DORI. (*Horried.*) ...God.

ROGER. A few years later, Matilda got hit by the garbage truck. Right in front of me. Her brains squirt right of out her mouth, right in front of my shoe. The driver gets outa the truck, comes around and looks down at her. Then he looks up at me—I'm standing there like ("*holy crap*"). He shrugs, picks her up, throws her over the side, gets back in the truck and drives away.

DORI. ...That's so awful!

ROGER. I know!

(Pause. From the plate on the table Dori takes a piece of fudge and begins to eat it.)

DORI. ...One summer, when I was at Girl Scouts, there was this mama cat, I mean she was like, pregnant? And she crawled up under this car, and when they started the engine, we heard this, this like, like *shriek* and when they opened it up the fan thing had practically ripped her head off. So they took her out, and her like...her belly was moving, her kittens, it was like they were trying to *escape*.

ROGER. Whoa.

DORI. I know. And nobody knew what to do. So one of the counselors said we should kill them, so he raised up this shovel, but we all started screaming, so instead we all just stood around and...and like watched her until...you know...one by one...they all...stopped.

ROGER. ...Wow. That's *really* awful.

DORI. I *know*.

(Pause. Roger takes a piece of fudge and begins to eat.)

ROGER. ...When I was about thirteen, there was this yellow tomcat that lived behind our house. We called him Bob. Real nice guy. One day my mom brought home this younger cat, and she worried they'd fight, but actually they got along really well. Like they were brothers who hadn't seen each other. They would sleep together and eat together and chase each other around. Stuff like that. So one day—this is the bad part—one day, Bob gets killed by a stray dog and the younger one, he—he *drags* Bob's body to the back porch and keeps *yelling* through the screen until my mom finally comes.

DORI. Tsk—God!

(She closes her eyes and tries to shake the image from her head—and takes another bite of fudge.)

ROGER. And when we buried him, listen to this. when we *buried* him, the younger one watched us. And he slept on his grave. Every. *Day*.

(Pause. Dori chews fudge and tries to absorb that. She thinks. She begins this next tale with no accent, but as it goes on, she regresses into her giddy British persona.)

DORI. One night, it was really late, just before my ninth birthday...my father came into my room and woke me up. He brought me some chocolate milk and one of those lemon cookie-cake things and when I finished eating he said that, when I woke up, he'd be gone forever. He was going away. And that I had to tell my mother because he couldn't do it.... And I said, "why Daddy?" And I asked if he was mad at us, or if he didn't love us anymore, and he...thought about it, and he said, "no, not really." And I said "but why?" And he said...that someday I'd understand. *(She takes a bit of fudge.)* ...And I do.

ROGER. ...Huh.

(Long pause. Roger takes a bite of fudge. Finally.)

DORI. *(No accent.)* ...Just kidding!

(She skips off to the bedrooms. Roger ponders—and then exits to kitchen.)

Lights change. it is now night. Long pause. Then Cass enters—with Izzy in her arms. He is limp. She looks stricken, weak. She sits on the couch, places him on her lap, and strokes his back for a long time. Finally Dori enters in a robe or night shirt.)

DORI. ...Mama? ...Hey. *(Cass smiles weakly at her.)* What are you doing?

CASS. Is Roger here?

DORI. What happened?

CASS. Is he here.

DORI. ...No. He ate all his oysters and fell asleep and woke back up and got all pissed off because you wouldn't answer your phone.... Where were you?

CASS. ...I wrecked the car.

DORI. *What?*

CASS. I hit something. I don't know.

DORI. Are you hurt? ...Mama? ...Mama, answer me, are you—?

CASS. I need some...some. Um—.

DORI. ...Mountain Dew. Ex-Lax. Vicodin. Fudge.

CASS. No, just some...just some water. *(Dori hurries off to the kitchen. Cass places Izzy on the couch next to her, curled up as if he's asleep, pets him a few times, and then...the dam bursts. her grief floods forth in gasps and backing moans.)*
No no no no no no! No no no no!

(Dori returns quickly with some water.)

DORI. Mama? Mama!

CASS. No! No. No. Noooo! *(Cass is almost wheezing. She catches her breath eventually, then turns to Dori, says simply:)*
...He's gone.

(She exits to the bedrooms. Pause. Dori goes to Izzy, looks at him and mutters to herself.)

DORI. ...Oh, Mama.

(Dori crosses herself rather clumsily, perhaps clasps her rosary and takes a shot at earnest prayer.)

Lights change. it's the next day. Dori stands, and Roger enters from the bedrooms, carrying a small pill bottle.)

ROGER. She'll be pretty sore for a few days. But I don't see anything permanent. Apparently she jumped a curb and took out a street sign. She didn't even have her lights on. They cited her for careless operation. You know how much money that is?

DORI. It doesn't matter.

ROGER. Yeah well, I'm the one who's got—

DORI. She was upset. Obviously.

ROGER. She was in the next county. Headed in the wrong direction. Why was she on some back road, at night, headed in the—

DORI. I don't know! ...Can she hear you?

ROGER. I gave her some Xanax. She'll be out for a while.
(He puts the pill bottle on the table.) Her car is pretty shot. Radiator, steering column—guess who's gotta pay the deductible.

DORI. ...Thank you, Roger.

ROGER. Yeah well. They're fixing her up with a rental. I'll pick it up tomorrow.

(The lights change. time passes. Cass enters from the kitchen with an opaque Tupperware bowl. She will move to Izzy, cradle him, place him in it and seal it.)

DORI. ...Mama?

CASS. Oh. David. I didn't know you were here.

ROGER. ...How are you this morning?

CASS. I'm okay. My legs are stiff. I'm a little tired.

DORI. She's still not sleeping.

ROGER. Looks like you've lost some weight.

CASS. Thank you.

DORI. She's starving herself.

CASS. Did you see the car they gave me? It's bright yellow. It looks like a, I don't know what.

(Cass exits with the bowl back to the kitchen.)

ROGER. ...Who is David.

CASS. I don't know. Last night she put on her blue sweater and then wandered around looking for it. This morning she stood by the toaster like a zombie holding a piece of bread, like she didn't know how to make toast.

ROGER. Probably just the trauma.

DORI. She can't stop crying.

ROGER. She'll snap out of it. I mean, you know, life goes on. It's just a cat.

DORI. This is how she is. She can't cope. This is what she does. *(She has moved to the downstage window, and now waves him over.)* See what she's doing? Look. ...That's his grave. She buried him in a Tupperware bowl and visits him about three times a day, like she's having his funeral over and over again.

(They look out the window.)

ROGER. ...What's that thing?

DORI. A pipe cleaner. She makes shapes with them and puts them on his grave. ...Last week she went to church.

(Pause. They watch out the window. The lights change again, and behind them, from the bedroom, Cass enters with a laptop. She will sit on the couch and begin to work on the laptop. Dori and Roger won't register her presence.)

ROGER. Well I think she's making real progress.

DORI. She's been Googling him. On my computer. I check. She types in "Izzy" or "Izzy plus cat" and tries to find his picture. Or she visits these websites, the "Pet Loss Network," the "Animal Bereavement Society." And this woman, some sort of hippie guru lady, she runs this—Sadie's Farm—refuge thing. They've been e-mailing.

ROGER. Nothing wrong with that.

DORI. You have to help her.

ROGER. I'm getting her car fixed.

DORI. Roger! You have to help me! I don't know what to do! ...She was up all night again. I could hear her walking around, calling to him. I came in and found her sitting here. Like a child.

ROGER. I'm really no good at this sort of—

DORI. Please. Go out there. Talk to her. Try.

ROGER. ...I can't. *(He produces an envelope with a card inside.)*
...I think she's seeing someone else.

DORI. What?

ROGER. ...This was on her dresser. It's from this...David person. He's a moron.

DORI. You read her mail?

ROGER. You read her e-mail.

DORI. (*Reads the card.*) “Just this side of heaven is a place called Rainbow Bridge. When an animal dies that has been especially close to someone here, he goes to Rainbow Bridge.”

ROGER. See? Moron.

DORI. “There are meadows and hills for all our special friends to run and play together. They are all happy and content, except they miss someone special, someone they had to leave behind. Finally the day comes when one of them stops and looks into the distance. His bright eyes are intent, his eager body quivers. Suddenly he runs from the group, flying over the green grass, his legs carrying--”

ROGER. It’s not something you send to a grown woman.

DORI. “—him faster and faster. You have been spotted, and when you and your special friend finally meet, you cling together in joyous reunion, never to be parted again.”

ROGER. It’s giving *me* diabetes.

DORI. “The happy kisses rain upon your face, and you look once more into the trusting eyes of your pet, and then you cross the Rainbow Bridge together.”

(Cass sighs, puts the laptop aside and leans back into the couch.)

ROGER. You know who this guy is?

DORI. Did you look on the back? (*She has done just that, and now hands it to Roger.*) ...It’s the veterinarian.

ROGER. You’ve got to be kidding.

DORI. He sent her a *card*.

ROGER. This is so unprofessional.

DORI. It’s the sweetest thing I ever heard.

ROGER. ...Geez. All right. I’ll *try*.

(Roger exits to the kitchen. Dori turns back to the window and looks out. The lights change—narrowing around Cass. it is night.)

CASS. *(Softly, to herself.)* ...Izzy? ...Izzy? ...Why are you hiding? ...I need you here. Izzy...where are you?

(The lights change back again. Dori turns to Cass...and tentatively approaches her.)

DORI. ...Hey.

CASS. ...Hey.

DORI. ...What are you doing?

CASS. ...I don't know what's wrong with me.

(Dori sits with her, but Cass moves away to the window.)

DORI. ...Do you want to pray with me?

CASS. No.

DORI. ...It helps me. *(Pause. No answer.)* ...He was my cat too, you know.

CASS. No. He wasn't.

(Pause.)

DORI. ...Well maybe we could...pretend he went away. He used to do that sometimes. He'd be gone overnight, or a few days even—

CASS. *(Softly.)* Dori.

DORI. --and he wouldn't come in when you called him. He would do that. We could pretend he's just gone away, and in a few days—

CASS. Dori. ...No.

DORI. ...You can get another one, then. Or, or, we could go to Hobby Lobby and learn how to macramé. We used to do lots of stuff like that, remember? Like, like, flower arrangements, or origami, or scrap-

booking, we used to do that, remember when we made my scrapbook? Or, or we could learn a foreign language, or we could go somewhere, to like, Canada, or....

(Dori's voice fades, as do the lights on her, as Cass crosses the stage, returning in her mind to the vet's office. David is there with Izzy, lying still on the table. He wears a surgical mask around his neck and holds an electric razor.)

CASS. ...Can I hold him? *(David nods. She takes Izzy in her arms.)* ...His eyes are open.

DAVID. I don't think he can see very much.

CASS. ...What will happen?

DAVID. ...I'm going to shave his leg. He won't feel anything.

CASS. Izzy?

DAVID. And then I'll give him the injection. He'll just...go to sleep.

CASS. ...He won't know.

DAVID. No.

(Cass nods. David starts to shave Izzy's leg, but stops when.)

CASS. ...What happens then?

DAVID. ...What do you mean.

CASS. ...I mean...I don't know.

DAVID. ...I can dispose of him for you. If that's what—

CASS. No. I—

DAVID. There's cremation. A lot of people do that. I can have the ashes delivered to you.

CASS. ...No, I'm. ...I'll take him home with me.

DAVID. ...Do you want some more time? *(Cass can't think of what to say, shakes her head no.)* ...He won't feel this. *(David pulls the mask up so it covers his mouth and nose. Then he shaves the inside of Izzy's leg.)* ...You see his

veins here. They're collapsed. He's in a...pretty advanced state.

(David picks up the syringe.)

CASS. I'm doing the right thing. Aren't I. I'm doing the right thing. *(He waits for her to decide again.)* ...I don't want him to suffer.

(He sniffs, and will sniff more throughout the following.)

DAVID. ...If there's anything you want to say....

(Cass buffs mightily against the tears, and thinks.)

CASS. ...I found him when...when he was a kitten, you know. I was driving home, it was pouring rain, and I saw him, I saw this...kitten sitting there, right in the road. He was soaked and he was all alone. ...And I don't know why, I don't know why, I didn't even like cats, but I got out and I chased him, he ran across the street to this playground, and I kept calling to him, and then suddenly he stopped and he...he was frightened, but he...he...stood up, into my hands...he stood up so I could hold him. And he lay in my lap all the way home. *(Pause.)* ...He held onto me. He held onto me.

(Long pause. David sniffs.)

DAVID. ...You tell me when you're ready.

(Pause. She nods her assent. He bends to the task.)

CASS. Look at me, Izzy. You look at me. ...You look at me. *(Pause. David presses the syringe. Cass whispers softly.)* ...Look at me, Izzy. ...Look at me.

(Long pause. The cat dies. David sniffs. The moment settles. Then he checks the cat with his stethoscope.)

DAVID. ...That's all.

(Cass nods. Then she cradles Izzy closely and wanders away from the vet's office, back to Dori. David removes his mask and watches her—until the lights come down on him.)

DORI. ...Mama? Mama? Are you even listening to me?

CASS. Hm?

DORI. You didn't hear one word.

CASS. ...I'm sorry. ...I don't know what's wrong with me.

DORI. Why don't you go to bed. ...Mama, why don't you go to bed.

CASS. ...I don't know where he is.

DORI. ...He's dead.

CASS. ...But I don't know where he *is*.

DORI. ...Go to sleep, Mama.

CASS. I can't.

DORI. Look. You have some Xanax.

(Dori shakes a pill out of the bottle.)

CASS. I had a dream. ...I was putting him in his grave... and he was talking to me, he was telling me he was sorry, he thought I was angry at him, that I was punishing him. ...He doesn't understand. *(Pause.)* ...And I put him in his grave, and I'm crying. And I can hear him, in the ground, calling to me. He doesn't know he's dead and I...I.... I don't want to go to sleep.

(Cass wanders away to the bedrooms, with Izzy in her arms. Dori sighs, considers the pill—and swallows it. Pause. She blinks hard, and puts her face in her hands.)

The lights change. time passes. We hear Roger's voice approaching.)

ROGER. *(Off.)* ...Dori. Dori? *(Dori looks up. Roger enters from the kitchen.)* ...Dori! ...Where is she?

DORI. Who.

ROGER. Your mother. I can't find her.

DORI. ...What?

ROGER. The rental car's gone. I think she left. And I think she took the cat.

DORI. *(Dazed.)* ...What are you talking about?

ROGER. She dug him up. Look! *(Dori rushes to the window, places her palms against it and looks out, horrified.)* ...She's gone.

(Pause. Tableau. A short refrain on the piano, then. lights to black. End Act I.)

ACT TWO
Scene One

At rise. David is working in his garden. Presently, Cass enters and approaches, carrying the dusty Tupperware "coffin."

CASS. ...Excuse me. ...Do you remember me? *(Pause. David looks at her blankly.)* ...I brought my cat to you. Izzy. He was sick. He had—

DAVID. I remember.

CASS. Yes, well. I've...I've changed my mind. *(She holds forth the coffin. He is baffled.)* ...I've changed my mind. So I was...wondering if...you could...do something.

DAVID. ...This is my house.

CASS. You weren't at your office.

DAVID. It's Sunday.

CASS. I couldn't wait until tomorrow. I can't do this. This is not right. You have to do something.

(Pause.)

DAVID. You want me...to have him cremated. *(Pause.)* ...You've decided to have—

CASS. No. *(Long pause.)* ...Yes. I...yes. I would like to tell you something. May I please tell you something? *(Pause. He's still baffled.)* ...I thought it was unprofessional. ...That card you sent. I appreciated the card but not the poem. It's not something you send to a grown woman. Is there somewhere we can sit?

DAVID. ...No.

CASS. And when Izzy died. You cried. At a time like that a medical professional has got to be stronger. I'm not a doctor but that's just what I think. Do you have any Mountain Dew?

DAVID. No.

CASS. Do you have any carbonated beverages?

DAVID. No.

CASS. Coffee?

DAVID. I can't drink caffeine.

CASS. Oh.... Do you have water?

DAVID. *(Pause. no escape.)* ...Yes.

(David moves across the stage into the living room of his small house—not knowing Cass is following him. The lights follow them. David exits to what is presumably his kitchen; Cass puts the coffin down and looks around. She sees a picture and picks it up. David returns empty handed—and surprised to see her there.)

CASS. Is this your wife?

DAVID. No.

CASS. ...I'll bet you think I'm a loon. ...I say you must think I'm a loon.

DAVID. That's my...my girlfriend.

CASS. You could be here with your whole family and it wouldn't even occur to me.

DAVID. I don't have a family.

CASS. I'm not a loon.

DAVID. I wasn't crying.

CASS. ...Well, you were.

DAVID. No.

CASS. You were...weeping, you were openly weeping with me, which I appreciate, but it was very upsetting.

DAVID. I'm allergic.

(Pause.)

CASS. ...You're.

DAVID. To cats. And most dogs. ...I have an inhaler.

(To prove it, he produces the inhaler.)

CASS. ...You're a *veternarian*. ...I mean, I know veterinarians can have allergies. But. ...You *weren't* crying.

DAVID. No.

CASS. ...I feel like an idiot. (*Pause. He's no help.*) ...Where is my water?

DAVID. It's coming.

(*Pause.*)

CASS. ...I've been having some difficulty. Your name is David, is that right? I looked it up. It's David.

DAVID. Yes.

CASS. May I sit down?

DAVID. ...Yes.

(*She does. David keeps his distance.*)

CASS. I've been having some difficulty. Since Izzy died. David. Every time something moves. Every time I hear a squirrel. And then it rained yesterday, and I went to let him in, he hated the rain--that's how I found him, when he was a kitten, he was—

DAVID. He held onto you.

CASS. Yes. ...He—

DAVID. You told me.

(*He takes a short hit off his inhaler.*)

CASS. ...Yes. So, when it rained that's all I could think of...the rain falling on his grave... and I thought...he could hear it and was afraid...so I went out and covered it with my coat. And I sat by him. In the rain. ...Do you see?

DAVID. ...I. I can....

CASS. ...What.

DAVID. ...I can give you an antidepressant.

CASS. You can do that?

DAVID. No. I mean. I can give you one of mine.

CASS. But...I don't want an anti-depressant. I *want* it to hurt. I mean, life goes on, I know that, it goes on and on, that's what, that's what people say but—

DAVID. I know.

CASS. --but I don't *want* it to. I think it should all just *stop*. Right now. (*David just sits wordlessly. Cass looks again at the picture.*) ...Where was this taken?

(We hear a "ding" from offstage.)

DAVID. Coast Rica.

(David exits to his kitchen.)

CASS. ...It's not a very good picture, really. I mean, the trees are nice, but you can hardly see her. ...What's this?

(David has returned with tea for them both.)

DAVID. Tea.

CASS. ...Oh. Thank you. ...So you've been to Costa Rica.

DAVID. No.

CASS. Oh.

DAVID. (*Indicating other pictures.*) This one...this one is from Taiwan. Those up there are from Thailand and, I think, Cambodia. ...She's going to Greenland next.

CASS. Are you going with her?

DAVID. I don't travel.

CASS. Mm.... And where does she live?

DAVID. New Zealand, I think.

CASS. ...Oh. So...how did you meet her?

DAVID. E-harmony.

(Another awkward pause.)

CASS. ...I feel so ridiculous. I sit there and pet him, I pretend to, when I'm sitting on my couch. That's where we sat. I sit and pet him, like he's still there and...I thought you were crying. *(Pause. David is having some slight difficulties.)* ...Doesn't tea have caffeine?

DAVID. It's green tea.

CASS. ...Ah. *(Pause.)* ...So. how often do you get to see her?

DAVID. When she sends pictures.

(Long pause. She nods. He sips his tea.)

CASS. ...All right, well. Have you ever heard of a Caroline Waldhauer?

DAVID. No.

CASS. She's a spiritualist.

DAVID. I don't know her.

CASS. She wrote a book. *Our Absent Friends.* It's about when animals die.

DAVID. I haven't read that.

CASS. She lives on a farm. Sadie's Farm. She's like a holy woman.

DAVID. I don't know her.

CASS. ...Well. I was thinking of going to see her. To talk to her. *(Pause. David nods.)* ...David?

DAVID. Yes?

CASS. *(She starts twice, then stops, but then finds the words.)* It must be very hard for you.... I mean...it must get so...difficult. All those little...all that suffering, I don't know how you...because I know there's so much of it, there's so much of it, that.... *(Pause. She can't quite finish, and David can't answer. Finally, Cass takes up the coffin and stands.)* ...Well.

DAVID. Yes. All right. ...Yes.

CASS. Yes what.

DAVID. I'll take care of him.

CASS. No, I'm sorry, I've...changed my mind.

DAVID. No.

CASS. I've made a mistake.

DAVID. In the morning. I'll take him myself. You can come back on Wednesday. Or...when you're ready. He'll be here. *(He places his hand on the coffin and waits. Cass assesses him. He is almost shaking. She smiles slightly and releases the coffin gingerly.)* I'll take...good care of him. ...I promise.

(Cass slowly leaves his area; lights come to black on David. Elsewhere, lights come up on Caroline, a woman with a genteel southern accent and a young face but long, graying hair. She is feeding some chickens. Nearby is a porch with two rocking chairs, maybe a small table and a bushel of corn. Cass crosses to her.)

CAROLINE. *(Recollecting.)* ...Cassandra.

CASS. Yes.

CAROLINE. ...Cassandra. ...You're the one having dreams.

CASS. Yes. About my cat. Izzy.

CAROLINE. Mm. How far did you drive?

CASS. Four hours. I should have called, I know, but I was...in my car already and I just kept—

CAROLINE. It's all right. They never do. People find it strange when they react so strongly to the death of a pet, but I don't know why. They're the most un-complex relationships we will ever have. You would probably say Izzy was your best friend.

CASS. ...Yes.

CAROLINE. I don't mean figuratively. I don't even mean probably. I mean he really was the truest companion you've ever known.

CASS. ...He was.

CAROLINE. You're grieving, Cassandra.

CASS. I know, but—

CAROLINE. Grief is how we heal.

CASS. I know but...I feel like I'm disappearing.

CAROLINE. Then you must not be doing it right. (*Pause. Cass doesn't know what to say.*) You're being selfish. You're making it about you.

CASS. ...I don't understand.

CAROLINE. I know.

CASS. ...So...I mean...how do I—?

CAROLINE. It's simple. You loved him. Be happy for him. Be proud of him. Celebrate every moment you spent together, thank him whenever you feel weak and talk about him, tell his story, as cheerfully as you can, to someone who will really listen.

CASS. ...That's why I came here.

CAROLINE. ...Huh. (*She stops feeding the chickens and wipes her hands.*) ...All right. Let's hear it.

CASS. Well. He was...mostly white, with blue eyes, and sort of a— (*or whatever color the cat was*).

CAROLINE. No, Cassandra. tell me about *him*. Just one thing. Your favorite thing.

CASS. ...Oh. Well. He...he used to chase my car. There's an empty lot down the street, with bushes and trees, where he liked to hang out, and...and when I drove past, he would see my car and come running after me. I could see him in my rearview, running and running. He'd take a shortcut so when I got home he'd be waiting for me in my driveway.

CAROLINE. Good. So—

CASS. And when I held him, he would cling to my shirt and touch my face and lick my fingers, he loved fingers, he'd grab my hand and like—

CAROLINE. Good.

CASS. —gnaw on them. He followed me everywhere. Out to the mailbox. He'd sit and wait by my shower. He liked pipe cleaners, we played fetch with pipe

cleaners. And when I ate I had to feed him too, or he'd yell at me. *(Pause.)* ...He'd cock his head when he was curious. ...He had bad breath.

(Pause.)

CAROLINE. ...Cassandra, with the death of every animal comes a gift. You just have to know how to see it. Last week I found a young mockingbird that had been mauled. I knew at once there was no saving it, so I sat down and kept it company during its passage. I spoke aloud to it, helping it on its way, so it would know it wasn't alone. It shuddered in my palm, and for a moment it spread open its wings and fanned its tail. It stretched forth its beak as if were about to cry out, but then, with an elegance and deliberation I'll never forget, it folded its wings to its body and lay down its head. And suddenly there was a...an inexplicable lightness to it. A lightness I've felt a hundred times.

CASS. ...The soul.

CAROLINE. The soul, the prawna, the chi—there's a word for it in every language. It's the light that flows through all living things, and when we die, whatever it is becomes the air.... *(Pause. Cass nods.)* Or perhaps I'm insane.

CASS. ...No, no, I don't—

CAROLINE. You don't buy that hooley for one second. Or you wouldn't be here. Would you.

CASS. ...I don't know.

CAROLINE. ...What?

CASS. I don't know.

CAROLINE. ...Good girl. That's step one. There's hope for you. Keep repeating that and maybe you'll be able to open yourself to the world for once. And to

understand that... that it's not our loved ones we grieve for, Cassandra. Their suffering is over. It's our own lives we mourn.

CASS. ...Yes. ...Yes!

CAROLINE. Step two is spare me the bullshit. I've been at this a long time, and one thing I know is there's nothing I can teach you. But there are things I can show you. If you're willing to look.

CASS. ...I don't have much money.

CAROLINE. Are you afraid of work?

CASS. No.

CAROLINE. Good. You'll start in the morning.

CASS. ...Well, I wasn't expecting to--

CAROLINE. And when you go, you can make a tax-deductible contribution in any amount you choose.

CASS. I didn't bring any clothes or--

CAROLINE. They never do. Step three is to count the ducks.

CASS. Um.

CAROLINE. Short necks. Wood ducks. Beautiful colors. Then meet me on the porch.

(Caroline heads toward the porch and exits. Cass turns, looks around the farm and marvels at it, thrilled and surprised to find herself here. She locates the ducks—and counts them. Then she moves across stage to the porch. Caroline returns with two glasses of wine. She'll knock hers back quickly.)

CASS. ...There's seven.

CAROLINE. Good. When there're six you need to tell me. Your room is upstairs. There's some overalls in the closet. Here.

CASS. What's this?

CAROLINE. Pomegranate wine. I always begin with a toast. Namaste! "I honor the place where you and I are the same." *(They toast and may sit at some point during the following.)* Tonight I'll introduce you to Sasha and

Pasha, the horses. Pascha loves everybody but Sascha's a little skittery so you'll want to praise her.

CASS. For what.

CAROLINE. Anything you can think of. That fern there, there's a family of chickadees nesting, so try to go around. But watch your step. These chickens lay wherever they want. I cook one meal in the morning, one in the evening, usually a vegetable quiche or soufflé. You'll be responsible for cleanup.

CASS. Who is Sadie?

CAROLINE. ...What a wonderful question. Thank you for that, Cassandra. Sadie was *my* best friend. A Golden Retriever, with a white spot on her nose. She and I were together for sixteen years—longer than all of my husbands combined. She died not quite three years ago.

CASS. I'm sorry.

CAROLINE. No. No, listen, Cassandra.... Sadie gave me all of this. She and I...we shared a sense of...of knowing that I've never felt with anyone else. When I was pregnant, she started to lactate, and when she got cancer, I grew weak with her. For sixteen years, Cassandra, for sixteen *years* I could...look into the very eyes of love, I could hold love in my hands and speak to it. And love would smile back at me and wag its tail.

CASS. Mmm.

CAROLINE. But it wasn't until I finally put her to rest that I began to truly understand love. That was the first time I could almost grasp The Mystery.... And as Izzy was passing, maybe you could too.

CASS. ...I could?

CAROLINE. ...In that moment...that one moment of, of deliverance, of extasis...you felt your hearts converging. Didn't you. (*Cass thinks about that—wants it badly.*) Remember carefully now. just for that moment, you could see, through his eyes, what was

there, beyond the veil. And you could hear him. In the language of compassion you shared, you could hear him whispering....

CASS. ...Yes.

CAROLINE. And what was it he was telling you, Cassandra? As he was departing. What did he want you to know?

CASS. ...I...I don't--

CAROLINE. He was thanking you. Wasn't he. For his life. For yours. For the whole world. ...Isn't that true.

CASS. *(Convincing herself.)* ...Yes.

CAROLINE. And he was telling you it was all right. That everything was all right. And you could be grateful too.

CASS. ...But...how do I *know* that? How...how do I know he's not angry? In my dream, he doesn't know he's dead. How do I tell him, how do I—

CAROLINE. Listen. Do you hear? It's all about you again. No wonder you can't hear him. You're filled with your own anxiety. Beginning tonight, I want you to be still, and open yourself and...and listen to him. *(Pause. Caroline squeezes Cass's arm, perhaps brushes the hair from her eyes.)* ...More wine wouldn't hurt, either.

(Caroline takes both glasses and exits. Pause. Cass rises and comes to the edge of the porch, closes her eyes, and listens. Pause.)

The lights change. She opens her eyes. Now it is the next morning. Caroline enters with two cups of coffee.)

CAROLINE. Good morning!

CASS. Good morning. I hope I didn't wake you.

CAROLINE. I heard you get up. You didn't sleep very well.

CASS. No. I don't know why.

CAROLINE. Of course you do. Coffee?

CASS. Thank you.

CAROLINE. How many ducks this morning?

CASS. Seven.

CAROLINE. Good.

CASS. What are we watching for?

CAROLINE. Sophie. One morning you'll look out and you won't see her, so we'll have to go find her.

CASS. Which one's Sophie?

CAROLINE. You'll see. I'm going to make breakfast. You want to shuck some corn? It's very simple. (*She demonstrates.*) You just grab it here—and tear. Can you do that?

CASS. I think so.

CAROLINE. A couple from town comes by at noon and buys most of it, I like to have it ready.

CASS. Okay.

CAROLINE. Any word from Izzy?

CASS. ...I don't know.

CAROLINE. Good girl. Sometimes it takes a while. If you want, try calling to him. Out loud. Tell him you're still in pain. He'll hear you. He might even show up.

CASS. Show up?

CAROLINE. Sure. Until I was healed Sadie used to come hang out with me. The first time, I was sitting in the back, and she came around the corner and just...sat down in front of me. I saw her, clear as day. It happened three more times. Until I told her I was okay.

CASS. ...Mm.

CAROLINE. ...Or maybe I'm full of shit.

CASS. Oh, no I—

CAROLINE. I hold a Doctorate in Spiritual Healing from the Universal Life Church and another in Prayerful Science from the University of Global Faith. At present I am a teaching Reiki master and study under a fully accredited Roshi. (*Cass doesn't know what to say.*)

...I am also a beautician, a ninja and a Jedi. *(Pause. Cass doesn't get it. Caroline presses on.)* ...The point is, I know she was there. We sat and looked at one another, and when she stood and walked back around the corner I knew what she was telling me. ...She was saying, nothing ever dies. Not really. *(This news moves tangibly through Cass like a wave.)* ...Behind this life is another one, Cassandra. There just is. And that's what I want you to think about now. Where life goes when it leaves us...and watches us...and waits. *(Cass nods, smiling. Caroline kisses her on the head.)* ...I expect a full report at breakfast.

(Caroline exits. Cass sits and shucks an ear of corn. She thinks. Lights come up elsewhere on a confessional booth. A Catholic priest sits waiting. Cass stands with an ear of corn and considers going to him.)

CASS. ...Father?

PRIEST. Yes, my child.

CASS. ...My name is Cassandra.

PRIEST. You don't have to tell me that. Just when your last confession was.

(She approaches and sits.)

CASS. Oh. I'm a Methodist.

PRIEST. Well. This must be a whopper.

CASS. I have some questions. I thought you might be able to help me. Unless this violates some rule or something.

PRIEST. Have you asked your pastor?

CASS. ...I'm a terrible person, father.

PRIEST. Ah now. Never too late. I'm happy to help if I can.

CASS. Well. My...um. My daughter. Had a cat. That died. And she...my daughter...wants to know if animals go to heaven. If there's an afterlife. For cats.

PRIEST. Well that's an excellent question. What have you told her?

CASS. I said...yes. If heaven is perfect. Then. Yes. That...God will let her see him.

PRIEST. I'll bet that made her happy.

CASS. Yes. It did.

PRIEST. So, then, maybe you should leave it at that.

CASS. ...What do you mean?

PRIEST. Well, as I recall, you Protestants don't believe that animals have a soul. Which is what we're really talking about.

CASS. But...is that true? That...that animals—

PRIEST. Of course not. We Catholics know that all living things have a soul. The only difference between us and the animals is our capacity for reason. We can choose to act in such a way that we are rewarded with heaven. But animals can't. And the fact that they are unable to reason makes *this* world their heaven.

CASS. ...*This* is their heaven.

PRIEST. Yes. And I think the same is also true of plants.

CASS. ...So, okay, when they die, the animals, if they don't, if they can't—

PRIEST. The Catechism tells us that when our pets die, their souls go out of existence.

CASS. ...Which means what.

PRIEST. Well. Whereas you and I, our souls, will proceed onward, our animal friends will...simply be no more.

CASS. So Izzy...the cat...he won't remember.

PRIEST. ...There will *be* no more Izzy. He will be...gone. (*Pause. Cass is horrified.*) ...God gave us our pets to comfort us in this world. In the next world we'll not be concerned with cats or dogs or...jewelry or what have you. The blessed will have better things to do than to play with animals.

CASS. ...So what's the point?

PRIEST. The point of what?

CASS. Of having a soul? If, if Catholic cats have a soul, but they cease to exist, and Methodist cats don't have a soul, what's the—

PRIEST. Oh, yes, well, that—

CASS. And animals *do* have reason. They understand words and they, they give affection and withhold affection, they make choices—

PRIEST. I think animals give us their affection because we care for them. They seem attached to us because we, we feed them and pay them attention.

CASS. But that makes them no different from men.

PRIEST. ...Well you've got me there.

CASS. Have you ever had a colonoscopy, Father?

PRIEST. ...I feel we've changed the subject. (*Pause. no answer.*) ...Cassandra? ...Cassandra, are you—?

CASS. What if that's what it feels like? ...To be dead. Just...nothing. What if...what if I'm dead now—like I died, on the table, like in that Bruce Willis movie.

PRIEST. Well, I—

CASSANDRA. Or what if...what if this is hell. This world. For us. Maybe this is our punishment. Because everything is so awful here. Nothing is the way it should be. Nobody *has* anybody, there isn't anyone to love. Not really. Just for a short time, maybe. And then it's gone.

PRIEST. ...God loves you, Cassandra. Always. As I'm sure your daughter does too.

CASS. ...I don't have the slightest idea who God is. ...And I don't really like my daughter.

PRIEST. Now I know you don't mean that.

CASS. Yes I do. ...She ruins everything. On her last birthday, she said...she said. "thanks for not giving up on me Mama." And I thought. oh my darling, I give up on you every, every day.

PRIEST. ...We have a family counseling service for our members. I can give you a pamphlet.

CAROLINE. *(Calling, distantly, from off.)* Cassandra?

CASS. ...I'm sorry, Father.

PRIEST. And if you'd like to know who God is, you could join us for Mass sometime. Some of our adults have formed a study group—

(Cass moves away, back toward the porch, and the lights on the Priest start to fade.)

CAROLINE. *(Off.)* Cassandra?

PRIEST. --and I'm sure they wouldn't mind having you along. ...Cassandra?

CASS. ...I'm so sorry.

CAROLINE. *(Off.)* Cassandra?

PRIEST. *(From the darkness.)* ...Cassandra?

(Cass is in her void, clutching the ear of corn.)

CASS. *(Almost whispering.)* ...I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry.

(The lights return as Caroline enters the porch holding something wrapped in a blue towel. She places it on the table.)

CAROLINE. There's a CD player in the den and a bottle of wine in the kitchen. Can you get them for me?

CASS. What's that?

CAROLINE. This is Sophie.

(Cass exits. Caroline unwraps what's in the towel: a duck that appears to be asleep. Cass enters with a CD player and bottle of wine.)

CASS. What's wrong with her?

CAROLINE. She's dying.

CASS. Of what.

CAROLINE. A broken heart. Her husband, her mate, he was by struck by a car. His name was Chuck.

CASS. How do you know?

CAROLINE. Well, I don't know, I just called him Chuck. I thought it sounded right. Chuck the Duck.

CASS. I mean, how do you know she's dying?

CAROLINE. Oh. Ducks mate for life, and the females take it very seriously. When their man dies, they just...curl up and go away. She's already stopped eating.

CASS. But...you're not going to, I mean, can't you help her or—?

CAROLINE. I *am* helping her. Do you see this towel? For an animal in pain the best color is always blue or gray, and cotton is always better than rayon.

CASS. But—

CAROLINE. This is what she wants, Cassandra. Animals know how to die. I've been trying to tell you this. They know intuitively what awaits them on the other side. If we pay attention, she can help us to find the way ourselves. *(Caroline turns on the CD player. We hear soft chanting.)* ...These are Gregorian chants. Birds find them very soothing. Classical is good too, or soft rock like the Eagles, but never the blues or anything with bongos. My roshi has also been teaching me sutras. The *(over-pronouncing these.)* Prajnaparamita or the Mandukya, the Taittiriya, the Chandogya and of course the Svetasvatara. For a time like this though, the Avalokitsvara is best.

(Caroline hands Cass a sheet of paper.)

CASS. ...You want me to read this.

CAROLINE. Softly. Melodically. So she can breathe it in.

CASS. Um... *(Reading.)* "Gate?...gate...paragate'... parasamagate'... bodi...svaha...gate'..."

CAROLINE. *(Overlapping, translating.)* “Gone, gone, all the way over, everyone is gone to enlightenment.” Good. Good. And with it the Phowa, the ancient Buddhist ritual of transition, whereby we visualize Sophie’s chi taking wing into the light of eternity. So. *(Her gesture means. starts chanting again. Cass does. Caroline closes her eyes and gently strokes the air just above the duck.)* ...I want you see her...to watch her...to behold her going deeper into The Mystery, joining all the energies of all the ages of the world. *(Pause. Cass chants; Caroline luxuriates.)* ... Can you feel her? Can you see her?

CASS. ...Yes.

CAROLINE. Go to him, Sophie! Go to him! We love you and want you to be free. Joy to you, Sophie! Joy to us all! *(Caroline breathes deeply, rhythmically, and beams. she is most earnest about all this. Cass watches her.)* Be free, my sweet girl. Come visit us when you like, but leave us now and go into love.... Go into love.... Go into love.... *(Et cetera, as necessary. Caroline slows down, then places her hands on Sophie. Pause.)*

CASS. ...Is she...?

CAROLINE. ...No. It may take a while. *(Caroline sits, uncorks the wine bottle, takes a big gulp, says “aaaah,” and then hands the bottle to Cass, who sips it and passes it back. Caroline takes another snort.)* ...Izzy show up yet?

CASS. ...I don’t know, Caroline. I’m. I’m afraid.

CAROLINE. Good. Of what.

CASS. ...I...I think about him, I...see him, I try to see him.... But it’s getting harder. I’m afraid...that I’m going to forget him, that he’s already slipping away. And I don’t want him to. Even if it means feeling this way forever, that’s okay. I don’t want him to go away.

CAROLINE. Healing doesn’t have to mean forgetting.

CASS. Yes it does. That’s how it feels. To go on living is to forget. To keep forgetting. ...And I don’t want that to be true. ...Maybe I should go home.

CAROLINE. I think it's too soon.

CASS. And I don't want to go home. This has been the best week of my life. I'm starting to sleep again. My stomach doesn't hurt—I'll bet I've put on five pounds. ...But I think I have to go home.

CAROLINE. ...Why?

(Pause. Cass sighs, takes the bottle and drinks deeply. The lights change. time passes. They lean into one another.)

CASS. ...I'm so drunk.

CAROLINE. Isn't it fantastic?

CASS. Yes!

CAROLINE. Isn't it wonderful to...to have, to have wine, and music, and, and, and...Chinese food and Indian food and...dark chocolate and...wood furniture, and kangaroos and cirrus clouds and words like balustrade and rhapsody and—

CASS. *(Nodding throughout.)* Yes. ...Yes.

CAROLINE. --internet pornography. I'd really love to get laid again someday.

CASS. I can't believe how kind you've been. I wish I'd always known you. I don't know how you—

CAROLINE. I can't listen to this.

CASS. I don't mean to embarrass you.

CAROLINE. No.... Listen. the Japanese have a saying. "a good person is never aware of her goodness." I try every day of my life to be that person. But then, of course, as long as you're *trying*....

CASS. Ohhh. Right.

CAROLINE. So you can't say these things or you'll throw my zen out of whack.

CASS. But don't you ever...run out? Of. Of.

CAROLINE. Yes. Of course. Every day. *(Pause. Caroline thinks about that. She rises and goes to Sophie, gently stroking her.)* ...And no. Never. We must never run out. There must always be more. There is so much

sorrow, Cassandra. So much pain. It's the price we pay for love.... To truly live is to hold open your hands to all of it, to hold dearly to everything the world puts in them and then to let it all go. ...Because there is only life. ...Only life.

(Perhaps she has taken Cass' hand and with it has begun stroking Sophie. At any rate, Cass now understands that Sophie is dead.)

CASS. ...Oh.

(Long pause. Then Caroline covers Sophie in the towel, picks her up and starts off.)

CAROLINE. ...I'll be back in a few hours.

CASS. Where are you going?

CAROLINE. ...To tell the others.

(Caroline exits the porch. Cass comes to edge of the porch and watches her go. She is obviously drunk—and in the grip of The Mystery. She holds open her arms and calls softly.)

CASS. ...Izzy...? ...Punkin'...? ...Oh Izzy....

(The light changes—and changes again. time passes. It is evening, we hear crickets. Caroline enters with a saucepan and spoon.)

CASS. ...Ready?

CAROLINE. Almost. The rolls aren't finished. Try this. Tell me if I put in too much curry.

(She spoon-feeds Cass.)

CASS. ...Well it's delicious.

CAROLINE. Isn't it? It's a Malaysian satay.

(Cass tries some more.)

CASS. ...Mmm. Mmm. This is meat.

CAROLINE. Special occasion.

CASS. It's incredible. Chicken?

CAROLINE. No.

CASS. Turkey?

CAROLINE. No. *(Cass suddenly realizes and stops chewing.)*
...I also put in some ginger and a little orange peel.
Can you taste it?

CASS. ...Is this?

CAROLINE. Sophie. Of course! *(Caroline takes a bite and speaks with her mouth full.)* It's called mortuary feasting. Our culture is very uncomfortable with the idea of death. As you already know. But there are other cultures—Venezuela, ancient Crete—they ate the bodies of their dead as a way of cementing their kinship. There's a tribe in the Amazon who actually wait for the bodies to decay. It shows the intensity of their grief.

CASS. ...Well I...I guess I'm just surprised.

CAROLINE. Jesus, at the last supper: this is my body, take and eat. What do you think he meant?

CASS. I never figured that out.

CAROLINE. See? Time well spent! *(Caroline smiles warmly at Cass—but also sadly.)* ...You can come back and see me, you know. I'd like that.

CASS. Thank you. Me too. *(A moment. Then Cass produces a check.)* ...I've written you a check. I know it's not enough. *(Caroline scoffs—but takes the check and perhaps sneaks a peek at it.)* ...I mean really. For all your kindness.

CAROLINE. It's not kindness if you have to pay. And besides, I haven't helped you.

CASS. You have, though.

CAROLINE. No. I knew you probably wouldn't let me. When you lied to me, that first morning. ...When you told me, about Izzy. That you knew he was grateful. You didn't really hear him at all.

CASS. ...Yes I did.

CAROLINE. When I asked—

CASS. No, I know.... His eyes, I could see in his eyes, he was frightened. He...knew that...something was happening and he told me...he was telling me "no." ...He was frightened. ...He was frightened...and I killed him.

CAROLINE. ...Oh Cassandra.

CASS. ...All of this you do, I understand it, I admire it, I admire you, I really do, but I want to know—I want *him* to know—I want to say to him...that I love him. That's all. That's all I want. ...Can you do that?

CAROLINE. ...No. ...But I know someone. (*Cass looks at her hopefully.*) ...It's a long drive.

CASS. Where.

CAROLINE. He's very unusual. I don't know him very well, and I don't know if I trust him.

CASS. Who is he?

CAROLINE. His name is Elias. He calls himself a Communicator. I'd have to call and get permission.

CASS. Could you?

CAROLINE. There are things you need to know first.

CASS. Like what?

(Elsewhere. lights up on Elias. He is an older blind man and sits perhaps in a wheelchair. Cass will move toward him, and the lights will follow her there.)

CAROLINE. He can be difficult. He's blind. He's probably autistic, too, but that's his gift. He sees pictures, in his head. He can't speak to animals, it doesn't work that way. But he...he thinks in images, like they do. And he'll want money.

CASS. How much.

CAROLINE. It changes. And he only takes cash.

CASS. How do I get there.

CAROLINE. I'll draw you a map.

CASS. You'll call ahead for me.

CAROLINE. Are you sure about this? ...Cassandra?

CASS. Yes. Please!

CAROLINE. Are you sure?

(The lights go to black on Caroline. Cass is now with Elias.)

CASS. ...Hello. ...Are you—?

ELIAS. You're the woman sent by the other woman.

CASS. Yes. Caroline. Her name is—

ELIAS. Caroline.

CASS. ...Yes.

ELIAS. ...She's a very strange woman. I don't like her.

CASS. Well. I don't know.

ELIAS. I do. *(Pause.)* ...You've lost your friend.

CASS. I did, yes. ...Yes. *(Pause. No response. Elias smiles cryptically.)* ...Yes, and I was hoping, I was wondering if you...she told me that you could—

ELIAS. *(Abrupt, almost derisive.)* You didn't have to come here.

CASS. ...Well, I, I wanted to.

ELIAS. But you didn't *have* to come here, you didn't *have* to.

CASS. ...I won't stay long.

ELIAS. No. You didn't *have* to come here.

CASS. I'm willing to pay. If that's what you mean.

ELIAS. Lawyers charge twenty dollars for an hour.

CASS. I think they charge much more than that.

ELIAS. Doctors charge more than that.

CASS. Tell me what you want. *(Pause. Then she goes through her wallet.)* ...I went to the bank...I've got...two hundred and twenty five dollars. It's all I have left. *(She holds it out. He doesn't take it. Then she remembers*

he's blind and puts it in his hand. He feels it—as if counting it.) ...His name was Izzy. He was my cat. (Elias smiles, chuckles, and closes his eyes.) ...What. ...What is it. (No answer.) ...He was white and gray, kind of, with blue eyes. ...He liked to follow me. In my car. ...He had bad breath. (Elias shakes his head, snorts derisively. she doesn't get something.) ...What.

ELIAS. There was a boy who hit his head. He lay in the hospital for days. When he awoke he smelled everything. He could smell food in rooms above his. He could smell blood on the floors below. And he could hear things. He could hear people whispering in rooms down the hall. Why.

CASS. Why what.

ELIAS. Why! Why!

CASS. I don't know, because—

ELIAS. Because he hit his head! ...Hitting his head awoke in him the abilities he had always had. Hitting his head made him forget that he could *not* smell everything and he could *not* hear everything. For two weeks he could smell everything and hear everything. And then his head got better and it went away, and he was crippled again.

CASS. ...Do you want me to hit my head? I don't understand, I can't do what—

(Elias suddenly stiffens—or something gets his attention.)

ELIAS. ...He's here. With you. He followed you here. *(Cass looks around.)* He sees...he sees your...foot. Your ankle. He is at your ankle. *(A wave rushes over Cass. She looks about her ankles.)* ...He goes where you go. Always.

CASS. I know! Yes! He goes where I go!

ELIAS. He sees your hair.

CASS. ...Oh, he! Yes! I used to...he would ride on my shoulder. I used to carry him on my shoulder.

ELIAS. This is the sensation of love. This is what he feels when he feels love. He sees...I don't know what it is.

CASS. What.

ELIAS. It's long, and, and...white, it's—

CASS. Long and—

ELIAS. He plays with it, he carries it, I don't—it's soft, he's—

CASS. Pipe cleaner! Oh my God! It's a pipe cleaner! My daughter made some project and they--if you'd throw them he'd—

ELIAS. Yes.

CASS. --he'd bring them back to you and paw at your leg until you—oh God! Can he—can he hear me?

ELIAS. Tell me what you see.

CASS. ...I—

ELIAS. Tell me what you see!

(She remembers.)

CASS. ...When he wants in he...sits and waits on the windowsill. He just sits there, and when he sees me, he calls to me. He walks back and forth on the windowsill and calls to me.

ELIAS. ...Yes.

CASS. ...We...we dance together. I hold him and we dance, and he licks my cheek. He kisses me and puts his paw on my face. *(Elias is in utter ecstasy. Cass wells up, touches her cheek.)* ...I can't put him down. He won't let me put him down. ...He touches my face!

ELIAS. With his hand, yes.

CASS. Yes. He holds onto me. He holds onto me and won't let me go! ...Can he hear me?

ELIAS. Always. Always.

CASS. He's at my feet, isn't he.

ELIAS. Always.

CASS. He's looking at me.

ELIAS. Always.

CASS. ...Oh my God. Oh God. Izzy.

(Overcome now, she walks slowly about, dances even, but careful of where she steps, aware of the presence near her. Elias' manner changes again.)

ELIAS. ...But he is afraid. ...He's afraid to be alone. Where he is...he knows that he is...away from you. He doesn't want to be away from you. He is afraid you will...forget.

CASS. Oh...no.

ELIAS. He wants you to stay.

CASS. I will. I can! I...can I come back?

ELIAS. You don't *have* to come back.

CASS. I understand that. I can't *do* what you do. I *want* to come back.

ELIAS. You don't have to.

CASS. I need to. I need you to help me. ...I need you to help me.

ELIAS. ...Five hundred dollars.

(Pause.)

CASS. ...I. I don't.

ELIAS. You don't *have* to come here.

CASS. ...I can do work for you, I could clean your house or--

ELIAS. Six hundred dollars.

CASS. I don't have that!

ELIAS. He is running. On a road, he is running on a road, there is a car.

CASS. I can't pay that much.

ELIAS. He is following you, in your car.

CASS. Stop.

ELIAS. A yellow car, he knows that it's you, he follows you. To a house.

CASS. ...My.

ELIAS. To a house, it's your house. Yes. Always. He waits for you there. Always.

CASS. ...How do you know it's yellow? *(Long pause.)* ...I don't even have a yellow car. That's a rental. My car is blue.

ELIAS. ...He followed you here. In the yellow car. He follows you always. *(Pause. Cass realizes—with a gasp.)* ...He rode with you. He rode in your lap! On your shoulder! He is here now. With you. He sees you. He is looking at you.

(Pause. Cass is overwhelmed with humiliation and anger, and almost speaks it. But she composes herself. Then.)

CASS. *(Softly.)* ...Shame on you.

ELIAS. ...I—

CASS. Shame on you. ...Shame on you both.

(The lights on Elias fade and, as she moves away, narrow around her. She stands with her arms empty, hanging at her side. The piano plays a few bars. She strokes her shoulder, as if Izzy were there, and tries to cry. Cannot. Tries again. Cannot. She looks at her empty hands. Lights to black. End scene.)

Scene Two

In darkness. We hear Cass' voice.

CASS. *(Softly.)* ...Dori? ...Dori? *(At rise, we are back at Cass' home. The foil-covered plate is on the table. Dori, dressed in the kimono, is asleep on the couch—and smiling. Cass stands over her, holding a small box. She watches Dori sleeping for a few moments—then gently shakes her.)* ...Dori. ...Wake up, sweetie. I'm home. ...Dori. ...Wake

up. ...Dori. *(Pause. No response. Cass puts the box aside and tries again.)* ...Dori. ...Sweetie. ...Dori. *(She sees the pill bottle on the table. She reads the label and shakes the bottle. She panics and tries again.)* ...Dori. ...Dori, wake up! ...Dori! Dori! *(Dori finally opens her eyes and looks up—then throws her arm around Cass and hugs her tightly. Cass, much relieved, hugs her back.)* ...It's okay. It's okay, baby. I'm home. ...Dori. I'm home. *(Dori won't let go.)* ...You're hurting my neck. ...Sweetie. You're hurting my neck. *(Dori loosens her grip. Cass shows her the bottle.)* How many did you take?

DORI. *(Weakly.)* Where were you?

CASS. Dori, listen.

DORI. I thought you were gone.

CASS. Did you take these? Dori? Did you take these pills?

DORI. No.

CASS. How many?

DORI. Two. No. One. When?

CASS. Just one.

DORI. Or. I don't know.

CASS. Jesus. Stand up. Come on.

DORI. Where did you go?

CASS. Can you stand up?

(She pulls Dori to her feet.)

DORI. I tried to call you.

CASS. Stay there. My phone was dead. Stand up. I'll be right back.

DORI. Wait.

CASS. I'll be right back!

(Cass exits to kitchen. Dori looks around, dazed.)

DORI. ...What day is it. ...Mama? ...Where are...? Mama?

(She plops back down on the couch. Cass returns with a Mountain Dew.)

CASS. I'm here, I'm right here. Here. Come on. ...Drink.

(Cass joins Dori on the couch and gives her the drink. Dori takes a big gulp—then another, then more. Between gulps.)

DORI. ...'s good.

CASS. I know. ...More. ...More. *(Dori chugs it. This takes a while. Then she signals for a break. She smiles blearily.)*
...Have you had anything to eat?

DORI. Uh-huh. ...Today?

CASS. You're thin.

(Cass removes the foil from the plate and sees that it's empty.)

DORI. I'm losing weight.

CASS. You don't need to lose weight.

DORI. Yes I do.

CASS. Here. Finish this, then take a shower. *(Cass pours more Mountain Dew down Dori's throat until Dori signals for another break.)* ...Better?

DORI. I took a shower.

CASS. You smell like...you smell like my perfume.

DORI. I sprayed the whole house.

CASS. With my perfume.

DORI. It smells good now.

(Cass sighs. Dori drinks.)

CASS. ...You want another one?

(Dori shakes her head no. She looks like a baby with a bottle.)

DORI. ...Where were you?

CASS. I had to go.

DORI. Why?

CASS. I just...had to go.

DORI. Were you mad at me?

CASS. Noooo.

DORI. Why didn't you tell me?

CASS. I don't know.

DORI. ...I thought you were never coming home.

(She hugs Cass again. Cass hugs her back. They have a moment—during which Cass notices a stain on the kimono.)

CASS. ...You ruined my kimono.

DORI. ...Oh! I'm sorry! I was—it got cold and—I'm sorry—

CASS. No, it's all right. I don't care. You can have it. I've probably been fired by now anyway.

DORI. You were. They called. So did Roger. You missed his divorce.

CASS. I know.

DORI. He's really mad.

CASS. I know.

(Dori sees the small box.)

DORI. ...What's this?

CASS. ...Oh. A gift.

DORI. From him?

CASS. No.

DORI. ...Somebody new?

CASS. ...Go get cleaned up and I'll show you.

DORI. ...Okay. ...You won't forget.

(Cass shakes her head 'no,' and Dori exits. Pause. Cass surveys her household, then looks at the box and picks it up. David enters. He holds a small jar.)

DAVID ...Well. (*Cass looks up at him. The lights change and she crosses to him with the box. We're in his house now.*) ...I was beginning to wonder. ...I thought something had happened to you.

CASS. ...I thought so too. (*She smiles, puts down the box and picks up the picture.*) ...I see you have a new picture.

DAVID. Oh. Yes. She went to Greenland.

CASS. ...You can hardly see her at all.

DAVID. She wanted to get the...the whole glacier, or—

CASS. Oh well yes. It's a great glacier.

(*Pause. She looks at the picture.*)

DAVID. ...Would you like some tea?

CASS. No, I've put you out enough. Is that...?

DAVID. ...Yes.

(*He holds the jar out, but she doesn't take it.*)

CASS. ...It's so small. (*No answer. She won't take it.*) ...I don't have any money.

DAVID. Um...that's---I uh, have something else for you. In that box there. You should sit down. (*Cass sits and picks up the box.*) ...Go ahead. (*Cass opens the box and withdraws a life-size fake cat, curled up asleep. It looks a bit like Izzy.*)

CASS. ...Oh.

DAVID. It looks like him, doesn't it?

CASS. ...Yes it does.

DAVID. And if you push this button, on the bottom, look.

CASS. ...He's breathing.

DAVID. He's asleep. ...You can, uh, sit with him. And, and, uh, pet him. Or I thought. Leave him on the couch. So. When you come in. ...He looks real. Doesn't he?

(*Cass considers it for a while, puts it on her lap and strokes it.*)

CASS. ...I don't know what to say. *(Pause. She seems gone for a few seconds...then puts the fake cat back in the box, and stands.)* ...This is a very lovely thing you've done, David. *(Now she takes the jar—and with it his hand.)* ...Thank you.

(David smiles shyly and averts his eyes. They hold hands like that for a long, awkward moment...until he withdraws his diplomatically.)

DAVID. ...I have a girlfriend.

CASS. ...Good for you. *(Pause. She clutches the jar and then collects the box.)* ...Well. ...Goodbye, then.

(From the darkness, and in the distance, we hear a phone ringing. David smiles, and the lights on him fade to black and change.. We're now back in Cass' living room. Dori enters, still in the kimono—but with a blue towel on her head and carrying a phone.)

DORI. ...Mama? *(Cass puts the box on the couch and turns to her.)* ...It's him.

CASS. ...Who. Oh. ...Tell him I'll...tell him I'll call him back.

DORI. *(Into the phone.)* She says she'll call you back. ...No. ...No ...Okay. *(To Cass.)* He says he needs to talk to you right now.

CASS. Take a message.

DORI. *(Into the phone.)* I can take—. ...I can't tell her that. ...I can't say that, Roger. ...Okay. *(To Cass.)* He would like to please speak with you please.

(Cass sighs and takes the phone. Elsewhere, special comes up on Roger, on the phone.)

CASS. ...Hello, Roger.

ROGER. Who is he, Cass.

CASS. Roger.

ROGER. I think I have a right to know.

CASS. It's not like that.

ROGER. Then where were you.

CASS. I just.... I was...beginning to wonder.

ROGER. ...What does that mean. You were "beginning to wonder."

CASS. Can I ask you a question?

ROGER. What does that mean?

CASS. Why are we together?

ROGER. ...What does *that* mean?

CASS. Why. Why did you even ask me out.

ROGER. ...Well. ...Because. Obviously. I thought...you were a woman of real substance.

CASS. Colonoscopy joke.

ROGER. No! No! I don't know! We have a good time together, don't we. ...Cass? (*Cass sighs.*) ...I take care of you, don't I?

CASS. Roger.

ROGER. Just tell me there's no one else. (*Pause. Cass looks at the jar.*) Please. Tell me there's no one else, and I'll forget everything. We'll start all over. Just tell me. Just....

CASS. ...There isn't anyone.

ROGER. See? That wasn't so hard. Right? ...So can I come over tonight? ...Cass?

CASS. ...Roger.

ROGER. Tomorrow then. You tell me. I know you're probably short on cash right now. Whenever you want. (*Long pause.*) ...Please, Cassandra. (*Long pause.*) ...Please. ...Please.

CASS. ...We'll see.

ROGER. ...Okay. ...Okay. Thank you. Thank—

(Cass has hung up. the lights go immediately to black on Roger. Pause. Cass holds her stomach and winces slightly.)

DORI. ...You okay?

CASS. ...Mm-hmm.

(Cass comes downstage and looks out the window, clutching the jar. She looks first on the windowsill and holds her hand to the pane.)

DORI. ...I was going to fill it up.

CASS. Hmm?

DORI. The hole. I was going to fill it up. But.

CASS. *(Now looking out at the yard.)* ...We'll get to it.

DORI. ...I could make some truffles. If you want. Or, or that mousse stuff. With the layers. That you like. You want some?

CASS. *(Thinks about it first, then.)* ...Yes. *(Dori starts off, and Cass watches her go, then stops her with.)* ...Do you know you're a good person, Dori?

DORI. ...I am? *(Cass nods.)* ...I thought you'd given up on me.

(Cass shakes her head no. Dori smiles and exits to the kitchen. Cass stands alone, looking out the window, clutching the jar. Now she moves across stage—perhaps following a light that leads her there and narrows around and behind her, on the little box on the couch. We hear the sound of children laughing. She is on a playground. She looks up. The sun is bright. She holds the jar. Finally she twists it open and looks inside. A short refrain plays on the piano. She holds one hand out and slowly pours the ashes into it...then lightly tosses them into the air. Again. Then she pours out what remains...and blows it gently from her open hands. She whispers.)

CASS. ...Goodbye.

(Pause. Then, a note or two on the piano. The lights on Cass fade to black, and she's gone. Pause. Another note or two on the piano.

The lights narrow on the box; time passes. Pause. Another note or two on the piano. The lights narrow on the box; time passes. Pause.

One last refrain on the piano. The lights on the box fade to black. End play.)