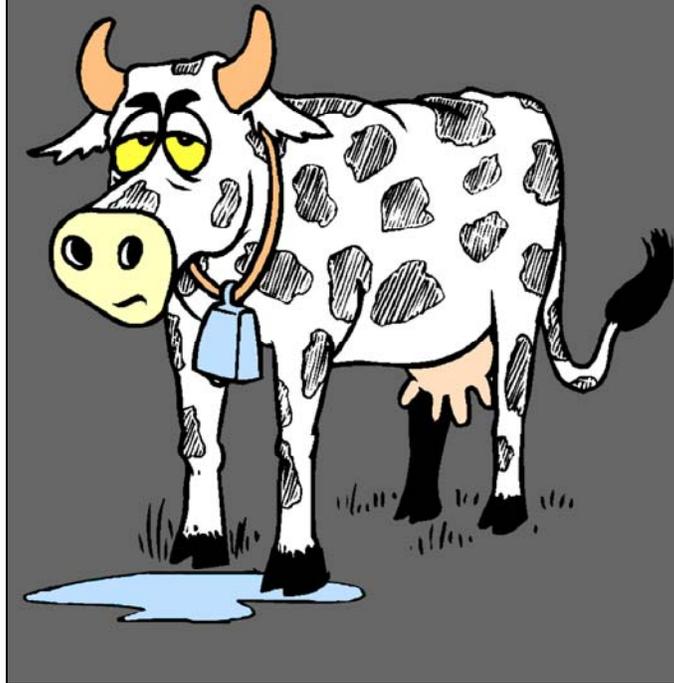


THESE DAYS



Greg Elsassser

Norman Maine Publishing

THESE DAYS
2

Copyright © 2007, Greg Elsasser

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

THESE DAYS is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America, and all of the countries covered by the Universal Copyright Convention and countries with which the United States has bilateral copyright relations including Canada, Mexico, Australia, and all nations of the United Kingdom.

Copying or reproducing all or any part of this book in any manner is strictly forbidden by law. No part of this book may be stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form by any means including mechanical, electronic, photocopying, recording, or videotaping without written permission from the publisher.

A royalty is due for every performance of this play whether admission is charged or not. A "performance" is any presentation in which an audience of any size is admitted.

The name of the author must appear on all programs, printing, and advertising for the play. The program must also contain the following notice: "Produced by special arrangement with Norman Maine Publishing Company, Sarasota, FL."

All rights including professional, amateur, radio broadcasting, television, motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved by Norman Maine Publishing Company, www.NormanMainePlays.com, to whom all inquiries should be addressed.

Norman Maine Publishing
P.O. Box 1400
Tallevast, FL 34270

THESE DAYS
3

For Aaron James

THESE DAYS
4

THESE DAYS premiered at Griffiths Middle School in Downey, CA, May 1998: Greg Elsasser, director.

JASON WILDER: Chris Bruner
REBECCA WILDER: Crystal Lacey
SAMANTHA WILDER: Kelly Richart
TRISTAN WILDER: Steven Desalernos
MRS. RIDLEY: Christina Cho
MRS. BENNETT: Vanessa Reneau
EMILY BENNETT: Ria Andrews
SANDY ELDRIDGE: Katie Barnes
HAROLD: Andrew Santana
BRAD: Matt Niapas
JOHN: Doug Hickman
LUKE: Chris Greaney
MIKE: Brett Scarr
TIM: C.J. Bonzon
VALERIE: LaShawn Davis
HELEN: Michelle Farina

THESE DAYS

COMEDY. The Wilder kids' home is fairly ordinary except for one thing—they have no parents. Their mother has abandoned them and run off with her boyfriend to start a new life in Pakistan, and they do not know who or where their father is. Afraid the family will be broken up and sent to separate foster homes, the Wilder kids ask their 24-year-old cousin, Tristan, to come and live with them for one year to serve as their legal guardian until the eldest turns 18 years old. Going against his fiancée's wishes, Tristan moves into the Wilder's house and all goes smoothly at first. But the household soon erupts into mayhem when the kids bring home an assortment of homeless animals and a busybody neighbor suffers an "unfortunate event" with a stale sheet cake just as a social worker arrives to check up on the kids!

Performance Time: Approximately 90 minutes.

CHARACTERS

(3 M, 8 F, 5 flexible, opt. extras)

- JASON WILDER:** 14, irresponsible, unruly, and the epitome of fun and craziness.
- REBECCA WILDER:** 14, Jason's twin sister; goofy, sensitive and more mature than Jason.
- SAMANTHA WILDER:** 17, determined to achieve goals; has watched "Evita" one too many times.
- TRISTAN WILDER:** 24, older cousin, responsible and mature; works for the Argentina Trucking Company.
- MRS. RIDLEY:** 30s, social worker; professional.
- MRS. BENNETT:** Nosy neighbor; big and bold and walks like she is commander in chief.
- EMILY BENNETT:** 14, Mrs. Bennett's daughter; looks like a porcelain doll but has a bad attitude; wears a colorful party dress and has her hair is done up perfectly with little bows intertwined.
- SANDY ELDRIDGE:** 23, Tristan's fiancée; pretty but more on the plain side; patient with a good heart.
- HAROLD:** Argentina Trucking Company worker; likes to eat chip dip with his fingers; flexible.
- BRAD:** Argentina Trucking Company worker; flexible.
- JOHN PERON:** Has eyes for Samantha; Argentina Trucking Company worker; male.
- LUKE:** Argentina Trucking Company worker; flexible.
- MIKE:** Argentina Trucking Company worker; flexible.
- TIM:** Argentina Trucking Company worker; flexible.
- VALERIE:** Argentina Trucking Company worker; female.
- HELEN:** Truck driver for Argentina Trucking Company worker; female.
- EXTRAS (optional):** As Argentina Trucking Company workers.
- NOTE:** For flexible roles, change names accordingly to reflect gender.

SETTING

The Wilder's living room in Sacramento, CA. The living room is spacious yet cluttered. At CS is a couch that looks like it has seen better days. A coffee table littered with magazines sits in front of the couch. There is a round table DSR, and the mismatched chairs surrounding it look as though they have come from garage sales. A solitary desk sits against the DSR wall with an old CD/stereo system on top of it. For the most part, the walls are bare; in fact, if it weren't for the clothing and kid stuff lying all over the room, the house would seem empty. There are three main entrances/exits into the room: USR is a swinging door that leads to the kitchen; USC is a 5-step staircase that disappears to the second floor; and CSL is a hallway entrance that eventually leads offstage to the front door.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I

Scene 1: Wilder's living room in Sacramento, CA, early evening.

Scene 2: Wilder's living room, three weeks later, 3 p.m.

Scene 3: Wilder's living room, the next night, early evening.

ACT II

Scene 1: Wilder's living room, three weeks later, 5:45 p.m.

Scene 2: Wilder's living room, ten months later.

PROPS

Dining table	6 Bowls covered with tinfoil
Pictionary game	2 Tupperware bowls
Pieces of chocolate fudge	Stuffed dog
Small hourglass	Leash
Tablet	Formal gown, for Samantha
Dice	Beautiful dangling earrings, for Samantha
Screen door	Blond wig styled like Eva Peron's hair
Tin of brownies	Stuffed chicken
Napkin	Stuffed rabbit
Diana Ross CD	Set of keys
"Young Ms" magazine	Curling iron
Magazines, misc.	Indiana Jones type clothing, for Jason
Note	Dust rag
Phone	Vacuum cleaner
Screwdriver	Lipstick
Brown box	Charred hat
Jacket, for Tristan	Bottle of Formula 409
Sheets of paper	Clipboard
Crystal bowl	Cake pan
Oreo cookie	Rope
Folding chairs	Boxes
Homework	
Pencil	
Coats, for Rebecca and Jason	

SOUND EFFECTS

Sound of a screen door opening and then falling down	"The Money Kept Rolling In"
Phone ringing	Sound of vacuuming
Sound of shattering glass	Exploding sound
Doorbell	Sound of spatula hitting floor
"A New Argentina"	Loud clattering sound
	Diana Ross song

NOTE: Permission to perform copyrighted material must be obtained from the publisher of that work. Royalties paid to perform this play do not include other copyrighted material such as songs that aren't in the public domain.

THESE DAYS
11

"ALL RIGHT,
SO WE HAVE A FLAKE
FOR A MOTHER."

-REBECCA

ACT I
SCENE 1

AT RISE: The Wilder's living room, early evening. Seated around the table are Jason, Rebecca, and Samantha Wilder. They are playing the popular game Pictionary. Rebecca is seated in between the others, acting as the "artist" for the two players. Two old pieces of chocolate fudge are being used as markers. The small game hourglass has already been flipped over, and Rebecca looks stressed as she furiously draws on her tablet. It is Samantha's turn, and she is puzzled trying to figure out Rebecca's drawing. Jason leans over and watches.)

SAMANTHA: What is that, Rebecca?

(Rebecca draws, squinting with concentration.)

REBECCA: I can't draw a—

JASON: Hey, no! No talking. No cheating!

REBECCA: Both of you, be quiet. This is hard enough as it is!

SAMANTHA: *(Staring at the drawing from different angles.)*

Okay...a dog...dog with spots...Spot the dog...

REBECCA: No, no, no!

JASON: *(To Rebecca.)* Hey, keep the mouth closed!

SAMANTHA: All right, um, is that a...is that a cow?

REBECCA: Yes!

(Jason puts his hand over Rebecca's mouth.)

JASON: Time's almost up!

SAMANTHA: Okay, it's a cow...what's it doing?

JASON: *(To Samantha, still covering Rebecca's mouth as she draws and tries to mumble an answer.)* Don't ask questions you're not getting answers to.

SAMANTHA: What is that? He's speaking! It's a talking cow...oh my gosh, Mr. Ed! It's Mr. Ed!

JASON: Mr. Ed wasn't a cow.

SAMANTHA: I know that. I was just throwing out guesses.

(Rebecca pulls away from Jason.)

REBECCA: Does this look like a car to you?

SAMANTHA: A car?

REBECCA: Why would you say Mr. Ed? I know I can't draw, but this is the farthest thing from a car!

JASON: Mr. Ed wasn't a car! You're thinking of that one show, "My Mother the Bus."

SAMANTHA: *(Getting confused.)* No, it was "My Mother the Car."

JASON: Mr. Ed was that dog who saved people from fires.

REBECCA: That was Lassie! Geez, even I knew that one.

JASON: I'm talking about the black dog.

SAMANTHA: That was Rin Tin Tin.

JASON: No, it wasn't!

REBECCA: *(Has forgotten about the drawing.)* Yeah, and they shot him at the end, huh?

JASON: Right!

SAMANTHA: *(Getting really frustrated.)* That was "Old Yeller," and it wasn't even a TV show!

JASON: "Old Yeller"? Use your brain, Samantha! Old Yeller was yellow; you know, yellow and yeller? This dog was black. Geez!

SAMANTHA: Forget it! Look, you're wasting all my time!

JASON: Maybe it was "My Mother the Dog."

SAMANTHA: Shut up already!

(Jason looks at the hourglass.)

JASON: Time!

SAMANTHA: Talk about cheating, Jason!

JASON: What? You didn't have to join in on the conversation.
I've always been completely happy talking to myself.

REBECCA: You guys, if we're going to play this type of game,
get out Trivial Pursuit, but don't expect me to answer
questions about old movies like "My Mother the Bus."

SAMANTHA: Car! Car, car, *car*! It's "My Mother the Car"!

JASON: Stephen King wrote that movie, didn't he?

(Samantha gets up.)

SAMANTHA: I can't do this anymore. I can't believe I stayed
home on a Friday night to play children's games with the
two of you. I could have gone out.

JASON: Doesn't the library close at six, though?

REBECCA: You can't leave the game yet. Jason has to have
his turn in order for it to be fair.

(Samantha sits down and grabs Rebecca's drawing.)

SAMANTHA: And would you like to tell me what this is,
Rebecca? What am I supposed to make out of a picture that
has a dog puking all over itself?

REBECCA: *(Offended.)* That isn't a dog! I told you it was a
cow!

SAMANTHA: Oh, that's right.

(Jason grabs the card containing Rebecca's word.)

JASON: Why would you use a cow to draw the word
"maneuver"?

SAMANTHA: "Maneuver"?

REBECCA: *(Looking surprised.)* "Maneuver"?

(Jason shows her the card.)

JASON: Right here next to the letter "D." "Maneuver."

REBECCA: Oh, "maneuver."

JASON: Yeah, what did you think it said?

REBECCA: *(Looking at card and talking to herself.)* "Maneuver."

SAMANTHA: *(Still looking at the picture.)* Rebecca, I hate to ask this now, but why is this cow throwing up on itself?

(Rebecca grabs the card, puts it back into the box, and crumples up the drawing.)

REBECCA: He wasn't throwing up. Look, I didn't think it was "maneuver." Let's just move on.

SAMANTHA: I can't tell you how glad I am that picture was in black and white.

JASON: My turn. *(He rolls the die and moves his marker up to the "D" space.)* These are starting to crumble.

REBECCA: Maybe we should put them back in the freezer so they can get hard again.

SAMANTHA: If Mrs. Bennett knew we were using her fudge as playing pieces, she'd never make anything for us again.

JASON: And you see a problem with that?

SAMANTHA: At least she was thinking of us.

(Jason holds up his piece of the fudge.)

JASON: I wish she wouldn't think of us so much. We've got a chicken salad of hers in the refrigerator that even the Donner party wouldn't touch. Look at these things! *(He picks up his fudge and raps it on the table. It sounds like a rock.)* Besides, she doesn't make these things for us to be nice. She's doing it to check up on us. Go, Rebecca.

(Rebecca looks at the card intently for a moment.)

REBECCA: Oh, brother. *(To Jason. Indicating timer.)* Okay, flip it over.

(Jason flips the timer over. Both Jason and Samantha lean over as Jason tries to decipher Rebecca's "art.")

JASON: String...string bean...skinny...thin...several skinny things...Kate Moss!

REBECCA: Just wait. It's going to take a minute for you to understand what I'm doing.

JASON: I can only have a minute? Okay, wires...a dish. A dish? What does that—?

REBECCA: Forget it! This is too hard!

JASON: Do a "sounds like"!

SAMANTHA: Hey, you talk about me cheating!

JASON: Don't distract her! *(He takes the timer and flips it over in an effort to cheat.)* Wind? Air? Blowing? What does wind, a plate, and string have in common, Rebecca?

REBECCA: Shut up, shut up!

JASON: Oh wait, wait! Is that spaghetti?

REBECCA: Yes!

SAMANTHA: Hey cut it out!

(Jason flips over the timer again.)

JASON: Okay...pasta... *(Rebecca signals with her hand for him to keep going. He's close.)* Not spaghetti? Linguini? Oregano? Pasta...shells...cheese... *(He flips the timer again, but this time he is caught.)*

SAMANTHA: Hey, I saw that! Give me that! *(She grabs the timer.)* No, forget it! You cheated. You lose your turn. Quit scribbling, Rebecca.

JASON: Ah, come on!

SAMANTHA: No! What was it, Rebecca?

REBECCA: You were so close, Jason, you would have had it.

JASON: Was it a pasta?

REBECCA: Yeah, I thought you had it when you said "linguini."

JASON: Well, what was it?

(Rebecca grabs the card and reads from it.)

REBECCA: Testosteroni!

JASON: Testosto-what?

REBECCA: Testosteroni! It's a pasta. *(Pause.)* You know, like angel hair and rigatoni?

(Samantha gently takes the card away from Rebecca.)

SAMANTHA: Let's see, honey. *(She reads the card and breathes a sigh.)* Okay, sweetheart. This is what I thought. It's not

"testosterone" [tes TOS ter own nee]. It's "testosterone."

REBECCA: Testosterone? Huh? What's that?

JASON: Let me tell her!

SAMANTHA: No!

REBECCA: You mean I'm mixed up?

JASON: Like a margarita.

REBECCA: Look, don't patronize me! I didn't even get to play. You guys made me draw for the both of you!

SAMANTHA: All right. You're right. Here, let's do one more. We'll make it an "all play." Whichever one of us gets this one is the winner. *(She hands Rebecca a card.)* Okay, look at the pink one.

(Rebecca thinks for a second.)

REBECCA: Okay, this is an easy one. I can do this.

JASON: It isn't a barfing testosterone cow, is it?

REBECCA: I swear I won't play!

SAMANTHA: Just go. We won't even use the timer. *(Rebecca starts drawing quickly. Again, all three are huddled together.)* Okay...a man? *(Rebecca shakes her head.)* A woman? *(A furious nod.)*

JASON: She's...what is she doing? Singing? A dancer?

SAMANTHA: Give her a second. A string? Is that a whip? *(Nod.)* A woman with a whip.

JASON: And she's singing?

(Rebecca shakes her head.)

SAMANTHA: What are those? Little beans...no. Oh! Those are children...children all over, right?

JASON: *(Getting excited.)* I know! A woman with a whip who sings and has children all around!

SAMANTHA: What? Who?

JASON: It's Kathi Lee! Kathi Lee Philbin!

SAMANTHA: *(Getting excited.)* No, Kathi Lee Gifford! Is that it? *(Rebecca slowly puts her pen down and glares at them.)* Rebecca? Are we right?

REBECCA: *(Quietly.)* Kathi Lee Gifford?

JASON: Well, you know, she's a slave driver and she sings—

REBECCA: *(Blows up.)* It's Catwoman! Catwoman! Are you people idiots? *(Picks up the paper and thrusts it in their faces.)* Look! She has a whip.

JASON: Yeah, we got that part. But why is she singing?

REBECCA: She's not singing! She's meowing! Those are cat meows! And these "children" are little cats swarming around her!

SAMANTHA: All right, that's enough of this game. Let's put it away.

REBECCA: *(Mutters to herself.)* Kathi Lee?

SAMANTHA: All right, let's not start a fight.

MRS. BENNETT: *(From off left.)* Knock, knock!

(There is a sound of a screen door opening and then falling down.)

JASON: Uh-oh.

SAMANTHA: Oh, my gosh! She's here! We can't let her see us using her fudge as part of a game!

JASON: What are we supposed to do with them?

(They hustle around, trying to clean up the game and the fudge game pieces.)

SAMANTHA: Put them in your pocket!

JASON: No way! They'll melt in there!

SAMANTHA: They're petrified Jason – they'll never melt!

MRS. BENNETT: *(Still off left.)* All right if I come in?

SAMANTHA: *(Yells.)* Sure come on in! *(To Jason.)* Then shove them in your mouth!

JASON: Gross!

(Jason stops and looks over at Rebecca.)

REBECCA: Don't look at – *(Jason shoves them in her mouth. Rebecca mumbles.)* Hey!

JASON: Just keep your mouth closed!

(Mrs. Bennett enters, holding the Wilder's screen door with both hands. She is bold and big and she walks in like a commander in chief. Her daughter, Emily, 14, is in tow, carrying a tin of brownies. Emily wears a colorful party dress, and her hair is done up perfectly with little bows intertwined. She looks like a porcelain doll but she has a scowl on her face.)

MRS. BENNETT: Kids, I'm afraid I'm a klutz and knocked your screen door off! I don't know how it happened.

SAMANTHA: Hello, Mrs. Bennett. It's okay. It's come off before, remember? Hi, Emily.

EMILY: Hello.

SAMANTHA: You're dressed up really nice. Are you going to a party?

EMILY: No.

SAMANTHA: Oh. *(Waits for an answer.)* A dance or something?

EMILY: No.

JASON: How about a speech meet?

THESE DAYS
20

EMILY: No.

MRS. BENNETT: Emily and I are just spending a mother/daughter evening at home tonight. *(Looks at Emily and touches her head in a warm gesture. Rebecca spits the fudge into a napkin.)* Emily just wanted to dress up for her date with mama. *(Pause.)* I didn't see your mother.

(Jason looks around.)

JASON: That's funny. Neither did we.

REBECCA: She just went out a while ago. She'll be back.

MRS. BENNETT: Really? Well, I haven't seen her car in the garage...driveway...in the last several days.

SAMANTHA: Well...she went on a trip.

MRS. BENNETT: Ohhhhhh. *(Pause.)* Where?

(An uncomfortable pause.)

JASON: Pakistan.

MRS. BENNETT: Pakistan?

(Jason's sisters give him a look.)

JASON: We...we have relatives there. *(Pause.)* She took a cruise.

SAMANTHA: Okay, Jason.

MRS. BENNETT: So you won't be expecting her anytime soon?

SAMANTHA: We don't know where she went, Mrs. Bennett, but I'm sure she's not planning on staying gone for very long this time. It was sort of a spur-of-the-moment trip.

MRS. BENNETT: *(Mockingly.)* I'll make sure and mention that in my report.

REBECCA: Oh, great.

SAMANTHA: Mrs. Bennett, Doris has been home more often these days; it's just that she works all the time and

occasionally she likes to go on vacations. It's only natural. She deserves the break. Actually our relationship with Doris has grown a lot, you know, since she's been around more often.

MRS. BENNETT: Yes, I can tell. It must warm a mother's heart when her daughter calls her by her first name. *(Pause. Serious.)* Samantha, how many days do you go to school each week?

SAMANTHA: *(Cautiously.)* Five.

MRS. BENNETT: And approximately how many hours are in a school day?

SAMANTHA: Around eight, I guess. Why?

MRS. BENNETT: Do you ever feel like you're in school all the time?

JASON: Yes!

MRS. BENNETT: *(To Jason.)* Really? And how many spur-of-the-moment Pakistanian vacations have you taken without your mother in the last few years, Jason?

JASON: *(Starts to count on his fingers.)* Let's see...one, two, three...oh no, no, no, no, the third one was when we went to Bangladesh, not Pakistan. *(To Mrs. Bennett.)* That third one didn't count because Bangladesh is its own country now.

MRS. BENNETT: *(Halfhumoring him.)* Really?

JASON: Well, I didn't want you to think I was lying to you.

SAMANTHA: Please, Mrs. Bennett, don't call social services anymore. We can handle it. Honestly.

MRS. BENNETT: Kids...how do I say this? Let's see...not everyone can be as...fortunate...as I am. Fortunate to have such a wonderful husband like Mr. Bennett and a wonderful daughter like Emily. *(She looks at Emily lovingly.)* And not every child can be fortunate enough to have a wonderful mother like I am, I'm sure.

(Pause. Emily has not gotten her cue, and her mother's gentle prodding wakes her up.)

EMILY: Yes.

MRS. BENNETT: Our family is a family because we communicate together. Together, as a family should. A family can't have this type of communication when their mother is off in Pakistan for several weeks each month.

REBECCA: All right, so we have a flake for a mother. We all know this, and since you live in this neighborhood everybody on this street knows. But why do we have to suffer? We can take care of ourselves. Keep the social services out of it.

MRS. BENNETT: But then I wouldn't be doing my job, now would I? I need to see the three of you taken care of, and you need an authority figure in your life—a consistent adult.

REBECCA: Thank you for stopping by, Mrs. Bennett.

MRS. BENNETT: Are you asking me to leave?

JASON: *(A bit of courage.)* Don't let the screen door hit you on your way out!

SAMANTHA: Jason. *(She glances at the screen door laying against the wall.)*

MRS. BENNETT: I know I may seem like the bad person in this situation. But someday you'll—

REBECCA: Thank you. Yeah, we know.

(Mrs. Bennett turns to go.)

MRS. BENNETT: Oh, I made you some brownies. I wasn't sure if you had...well, here they are anyway.

(She hands Samantha the tin.)

SAMANTHA: Thank you.

MRS. BENNETT: I'd let Emily stay a bit longer and visit, but she's all, well... *(She looks around the room.)* ...clean. Goodnight!

(Mrs. Bennett and Emily exit.)

REBECCA: I don't know why you are so nice to her, Samantha.

SAMANTHA: Well, how else am I supposed to act? I was hoping she wouldn't call social services on us again.

JASON: She'd do that anyway, no matter how nice you were to her.

REBECCA: You're not going to get anywhere if you are respectful to those types of people, Samantha. You've got to stand up for yourself. Geez, you got to stand up for this family. You're the oldest.

SAMANTHA: I know, I know. I just don't know how to stand up and speak out. I'd rather be quiet and just let people say what they want to say and then leave. I shouldn't have been the oldest. I can't debate with people, and I certainly can't be a leader. *(Pause.)* I wish Mom would come around more often.

REBECCA: Well, she's not, Samantha.

SAMANTHA: Think we should call Tristan?

REBECCA: Why? There's nothing he can do.

JASON: He said he was coming over here after work.

REBECCA: He is. He was getting off at six and then meeting Sandy over here. They're going to the movies.

JASON: To see what? I wanna go.

REBECCA: Why would he want to take his fiancée and his cousin to the movies?

JASON: What's wrong with that? We're family. We're blood. Sandy's only considered water.

REBECCA: You make sure and tell her that.

SAMANTHA: He spends enough time with us as it is. He doesn't need us tagging along with him to the movies, too. Come on, you guys, let's pick this place up.

(They start to pick up the messy room.)

JASON: Speaking of blood, guess who fainted today because Randy Slauson had a bloody nose?

SAMANTHA: From a bloody nose, Rebecca? You're getting worse. You need to see a doctor or something.

REBECCA: Like it's my fault!

SAMANTHA: I didn't say it was your fault, but it's getting to the point where you can't even look at the color red without swooning.

JASON: Remember when we went and saw ["Scream,"] and the usher finally brought her a cot? [*Or insert the name of another horror movie.*]

REBECCA: I don't want to talk about my phobias or problems anymore. You guys are plenty messed up, too.

SAMANTHA: How'd you talk the school into not calling her and asking for Mom?

REBECCA: They didn't even try. This is the third time in two months. They're used to me by now.

SAMANTHA: Well, I'm still going to have Tristan set you up with his doctor.

REBECCA: We shouldn't bug Tristan too much over the next few days. He told me the other day that Sandy was getting mad because he was working a lot of overtime and she hadn't got to see him that much.

SAMANTHA: I knew it! He's trying to juggle a job, a fiancée, and a dysfunctional family all at the same time. I don't blame her for getting mad. How are they supposed to plan a wedding when he's here all the time, paying our bills, taking us to the doctor, keeping up the house, and signing all of Jason's unsatisfactory notices?

JASON: Hey.

SAMANTHA: Well, it's true and you know it. I mean, I know we're his family and everything, but come on, you guys, we're not a charity case. We really can take care of things ourselves.

REBECCA: See, you should have said that to Mrs. Bennett.

SAMANTHA: It wouldn't have made a difference anyway, Rebecca. (*Pause. Shamefully.*) We should be used to the fact that we only see Mom maybe a couple times a month.

JASON: And when she's here, it's hard to get her out of her drunken stupor.

REBECCA: Oh, Jason!

JASON: What? Don't act surprised. You know how she is.

REBECCA: No, it's not that. I didn't realize you knew what "stupor" meant. *(She hugs him mockingly.)* I'm so proud of you and your big words.

(Jason shoves her away.)

JASON: Get off me.

SAMANTHA: Yeah, and where in the heck did you get that information about Bangladesh? Is it even true?

JASON: I had to write it 500 times because I couldn't stop talking in social studies. I'm assuming it's true.

REBECCA: Hey, let's listen to some music or something.

(Rebecca goes over to the desk to turn on the CD system. Jason stops what he's doing to yell at her.)

JASON: I swear, if you put on "Evita" one more time, I will run away from home!

REBECCA: Oh good! Where is it?

JASON: My gosh, aren't you guys sick of that CD?

SAMANTHA: Jason, you hated it the moment Sandy bought it for us.

JASON: *(Groans.)* I wish the radio worked on that thing.

REBECCA: Well, you broke the antenna.

SAMANTHA: Remember when Mom bought us the player at that garage sale? How long ago was that?

JASON: Like four months ago.

SAMANTHA: I think that was the last nice thing she did for us.

JASON: I also think it was the last time she bought us anything. That includes food.

SAMANTHA: She didn't buy it.

REBECCA: Then where'd she get it?

SAMANTHA: She got it at the garage sale. She just didn't buy it.

REBECCA: No way! How do you know?

SAMANTHA: Because I was with her. She was actually up one morning around nine, and she asked me if I wanted to go to a garage sale she saw advertised the day before. We walked over there, and we were looking around and she asked me if I liked the CD player. Of course I told her yes. So she just picked it up and walked home. I followed a few seconds later. I guess I should have told her I didn't want it. I was just excited she was home and awake at the same time.

REBECCA: Why didn't you say anything?

SAMANTHA: I don't know. I couldn't believe she actually did it.

REBECCA: You should have done something about it.

SAMANTHA: Like what, Rebecca? We can't even turn her in for child neglect. Do you think I'm going to call the Sacramento Police Department and tell them she stole a radio? *(Pause.)* Besides, I was kind of happy that she wanted to give us something.

REBECCA: I remember that weekend she brought it home. She was home that whole weekend.

JASON: That was right after she broke up with Hank, huh?

SAMANTHA: No, it was after Frank.

REBECCA: You're both wrong. It was after Stanky Steve's trailer burned down and she had to stay with us.

JASON: No, I'm telling you, it was right after the breakup with Frank!

SAMANTHA: Who cares? They're all Franks.

JASON: *(Quietly.)* Do you think our dads might have been a Frank?

SAMANTHA: How can we be sure who are fathers are? *She* doesn't even know.

JASON: You know what, Samantha, I've always wondered if Mom lied to us and maybe all three of us have the same dad.

THESE DAYS
27

SAMANTHA: Why would she lie, Jason? She seems proud of the fact that she had four boyfriends in between the time I was born and you two were.

JASON: I wonder if mine and Rebecca's dad knew that he had twins.

SAMANTHA: I wonder if your dad even knew Mom was pregnant in the first place.

(Uncomfortable pause.)

REBECCA: Well, it's either "Evita" or nothing.

JASON: Nothing then!

SAMANTHA: Oh, Jason, why don't you put on that CD you bought a couple weeks ago? What was it?

JASON: No. I'm saving it.

SAMANTHA: For what?

(Rebecca opens the desk drawer and grabs a CD, still wrapped in its packaging. She shows it to Samantha.)

REBECCA: For his future woman.

JASON: Shut up, Rebecca.

SAMANTHA: What are you guys talking about?

(Jason goes over and tries to grab the CD and to shut her mouth. They sort of wrestle while Rebecca speaks.)

REBECCA: Jason bought this Diana Ross CD awhile ago, but he refuses to listen to it until he can play it for him and his girlfriend.

SAMANTHA: You don't have a girlfriend!

REBECCA: I know. That's why it's still in its packaging. He won't open it until "that special day."

JASON: *(Getting angry.)* Stop snooping around my room, Becca.

REBECCA: I wasn't. I heard you and Roman talking about it the other day when he was here. *(To Samantha.)* It was Roman's idea. He said, and I quote, "When a woman hears any song from Diana Ross, she'll instantly be yours, even if you're a complete loser." And understanding Roman the way I do, I can see why he needs the CD.

JASON: You're a jerk, Rebecca.

SAMANTHA: You shouldn't have listened in on them, Becca.

REBECCA: Oh, he knows I'm just kidding. *(She puts the CD back in the drawer.)*

SAMANTHA: Who's Diana Ross anyway?

REBECCA: She was a famous singer for about five minutes in the 70s.

JASON: It's true, though. Roman said he met some people over the Internet who swear by any song by her. They said you could even put it on and women would sense it and come from miles around.

SAMANTHA: And you believed this?

JASON: No, it's just an exaggeration. The point is, women hear a song by Diana Ross and they become yours. So I'm saving it for someone special.

REBECCA: Then it's "Evita" or we listen to each other breathe.

SAMANTHA: Put it on. I can listen to it over and over. *(She stops and thinks for a second as Rebecca puts the CD in the player.)* We can actually learn a lot from "Evita."

JASON: Oh my gosh, like what?

SAMANTHA: Well, like the fact that she came from nothing and she became something. That sort of thing can happen to us. We basically came from nothing, but what's to stop us from doing something with our lives?

REBECCA: Don't over-dramatize everything, Samantha, my gosh.

SAMANTHA: I'm serious. I admire her. She was everything I'm not. A motivator. Ambitious. A leader.

JASON: If we put it on, will you cut out the hero worshipping?

SAMANTHA: *(Sighs.)* Put it on. *(Rebecca presses the "play" button, and they continue to clean up. In the opening track of "Evita," an Argentinean couple speak in dramatic, hushed tones. It is in Spanish, and Jason—knowing the CD by heart—grabs Rebecca in one swooping motion and lip syncs the male's part. Rebecca joins in. They're a couple of goofs at this point. While they are doing this, Samantha is laughing and straightening up the magazines. That is when she finds a note smashed between two issues of "Young Ms." She slowly reads the note, and her face changes from smiling to shock.)* Oh my gosh.

REBECCA: What is it?

SAMANTHA: Turn off the radio.

(Rebecca turns off the radio.)

REBECCA: What is it?

TRISTAN: *(From off left.)* Hey, did the screen fall off again?

REBECCA: Samantha, what are you reading?

(Tristan enters.)

TRISTAN: Hey.

JASON: Hey. What's wrong, Samantha?

TRISTAN: Problem?

SAMANTHA: Jason, Rebecca, go to your rooms.

JASON: No! What are you reading?

SAMANTHA: Tristan?

(Tristan approaches Samantha.)

TRISTAN: What's wrong?

(Samantha hands him the note.)

SAMANTHA: Read this. It's self-explanatory.

(Jason and Rebecca gather around the note and read silently. Their reactions are the same as Samantha's.)

TRISTAN: *(As he finishes reading.)* Oh geez.

REBECCA: She's gone for good? Is that what she means?

JASON: "Goodbye forever" usually implies that.

REBECCA: Samantha?

SAMANTHA: Tristan?

TRISTAN: I'm sorry, you guys. I am really sorry.

REBECCA: That's it! I officially hate her. I really do, I swear!

(Jason takes back the note.)

JASON: Who's Trevor?

SAMANTHA: *(Resigned.)* He's just another Frank. *(Pause.)*

But this one took her away for good.

REBECCA: Well, that's fine with me! Who cares, anyway?

JASON: I can't believe he lives in Pakistan. That is so weird.

SAMANTHA: I can't believe she left a note. And it's been smashed between these magazines for who knows how long. Why? Why did she bother having kids anyway?

TRISTAN: Samantha...

JASON: *(Still looking at the letter.)* Hey. Hey, oh my gosh, look at this!

TRISTAN: What?

JASON: She spelled my name... *(Spells.)* ...E-R-I-N. That's the girl's way! She thinks I'm a girl!

TRISTAN: That's got to be a mistake, Jason.

JASON: I'm a girl.

SAMANTHA: No, Jason...

JASON: I'm a girl. She thinks she had three girls.

SAMANTHA: No, she didn't, she was just confused, that's all.

JASON: Who changed my diaper? Didn't she ever look?

TRISTAN: Listen, let's deal with one thing at a time, okay?

JASON: I am a woman.

TRISTAN: Give me that. (*Grabs the letter.*) Look, come on, man, let's think for a minute. We need to figure out what this all means.

REBECCA: Let me tell you what this means. Here. (*She grabs the letter. Reads.*) "Samantha, Rebecca and Erin..." That would mean we three girls. "...I cannot apologize enough for what I have done to you, so I won't try. I have never been the world's greatest mother, and to come straight to the point, I would do more harm by staying around and knowing that you expect me to come to terms with my responsibilities. I haven't been around very much the last few years, and I've watched you become young adults...and you've done this on your own. Trevor has asked me to move to Pakistan with him and start my life over. I can't tell you how attractive that sounded. I now have a chance to go to a place where no one knows me. I can become the person I know I started out to be. You've raised yourselves and Samantha has only a year before she's 18. The house is paid off, and Mrs. Anderson will give you the money that she always gave me each month. She's always been good to us and for no reason. Just ask her for it. Explain to her that I had to go. She won't be surprised. In the meantime, I know Tristan will be around to check up on you. He was always a better mother than I was anyway."

JASON: (*To Tristan.*) She thinks you're a woman, too. Great.

REBECCA: (*Reads.*) "Tristan's father was always a better brother than I was a sister. These qualities were passed down to his son. He'll take care of you. Goodbye forever, Doris."

JASON: Mrs. Anderson won't give us any money, though.

TRISTAN: Why? Is she broke, too?

REBECCA: No, she's dead. She died two years ago.

SAMANTHA: Mrs. Anderson was a neighbor a couple blocks down. She used to take care of us when Mom was gone.

TRISTAN: I think she meant Aunt Grace would give you money. She's always been generous that way. (*Looks at the letter.*) Man, I wonder how drunk Doris was when she wrote this. When my father finds out about this note, he's going to leap out of the grave and beat the crap out of her.

REBECCA: Should we call the police?

SAMANTHA: No, are you crazy? Social services would be down here in an hour and we'd all be separated.

TRISTAN: Oh, come on, this is Sacramento. I'm sure there are a lot of families like yours in this city.

SAMANTHA: Tristan, I'm under 18. Be realistic. We'll be separated.

JASON: No way, I'm not leaving this house.

REBECCA: We could move Aunt Grace in here! She could be our legal guardian!

TRISTAN: Grace is 95 years old. She can't raise three teenagers.

REBECCA: But she raised Mom and your dad, Tristan!

TRISTAN: You guys, she was their aunt, and she had no choice. She can't do it. She's too old.

SAMANTHA: (*Slowly.*) Then why can't you do it, Tristan?

TRISTAN: Do what?

SAMANTHA: Move in with us. You know, be our legal guardian.

TRISTAN: Oh, I don't know.

SAMANTHA: Yeah! Mom said it herself—we are practically grown and we take care of ourselves! We'd just need you for legal purposes! To be in the house, be the adult present, etc.

REBECCA: We'll even talk to Aunt Grace about the finances. She has so much money—that's how Mom managed to pay off the house and buy us food.

TRISTAN: Well, I guess I could. I would be saving money by not paying rent. (*Starts to think and pace.*) Let's see, Sandy and I are getting married in nine months, and if I don't have a rent payment, I could roughly save...

JASON: A ton of money! Yeah! Do it, Tristan, it'll be fun!

TRISTAN: Fun?

SAMANTHA: I'll drop the newspaper and yearbook staff, so I
can be home more often...

REBECCA: I can give up cheerleading...

JASON: I'll give up school and homework.

TRISTAN: Very funny.

JASON: I wasn't joking.

TRISTAN: No, everything has to go along like a regular,
normal family. Everybody is in school, we'll go to church
together, we'll eat meals together...

SAMANTHA: So you'll do it?

TRISTAN: Of course. You're my cousins. Of course I'll do it.

SAMANTHA: *(To everybody.)* We can do this, you guys. We
can really do it.

(Sandy enters SL.)

SANDY: Hi, guys. I thought you fixed the screen door,
Tristan?

TRISTAN: Hey, Sandy. I did. It must have fallen off again.

REBECCA: Mrs. Bennett knocked it off earlier.

TRISTAN: She was here? Does she know?

SANDY: Know what?

(Tristan looks at the kids and then at Sandy.)

TRISTAN: Hey, you guys, I need to talk to Sandy for a
minute.

SAMANTHA: Oh, yeah. Come on, you guys, let's go into the
kitchen.

(They exit SR, taking the tin of brownies with them.)

SANDY: Know what? What's going on?

(Tristan hands her the letter.)

TRISTAN: Read this.

(Sandy reads the note. She reacts.)

SANDY: Of all the nerve. I can't believe this! *(She drops the letter on the table.)* Did you call the police?

TRISTAN: No.

SANDY: No? Then call them!

(She goes over to the phone but Tristan stops her.)

TRISTAN: Sandy, we can't.

SANDY: Why not? This is child abandonment. I mean, we suspected this might happen, but we still have to call the police.

TRISTAN: Sandy, if the police get involved, the kids will be split up.

SANDY: What else can we do? This is against the law, Tristan.

TRISTAN: I know. But I don't want them in three different foster homes, Sandy.

SANDY: That may not happen.

TRISTAN: But it could, Sandy, it could. I don't want to take that chance.

SANDY: So what are you proposing?

TRISTAN: Well, I think I'll move in here, and you know, sort of take care of things...for a while.

SANDY: *(Thinks.)* Oh.

(Rebecca enters. She is holding the tin of brownies and a screwdriver is stuck upright in the middle of them.)

REBECCA: Sorry to interrupt. I have to go to the garage for a hammer. *(She exits SL.)*

TRISTAN: Sandy, don't freak out. The wedding's still on. Everything will go on as planned. There will just have to be some changes, that's all.

SANDY: I would say so.

TRISTAN: Look, I'll move out of my apartment and move in here. Think about how much money I'll be saving.

SANDY: How much money *you'll* be saving? Tristan, have you thought about how much it's going to cost to raise these kids?

TRISTAN: They don't need to be raised. They're already grown up. I just have to oversee things here.

SANDY: You've already made this decision? All by yourself?

TRISTAN: Well, I didn't give it much thought. They're my family. I have to do it. Who was I supposed to consult with?

SANDY: Well, it would have been nice if we would have talked about this first.

TRISTAN: (*Confused.*) You mean you and I?

SANDY: Yeah.

TRISTAN: But Sandy...they're not your family.

SANDY: (*Appalled.*) Excuse me? In nine months they will be. I just figured since you were taking on a life-altering event, you might want to discuss it with me first.

TRISTAN: I'm sorry, I didn't think about it.

SANDY: Great. That's just—

TRISTAN: Look, I did think about you. I just didn't think you cared what I did.

SANDY: Tristan, don't say anything more, okay?

TRISTAN: Why?

SANDY: Just don't.

(*Tristan goes to her.*)

TRISTAN: Sandy, I swear, I didn't mean anything by it, okay? I heard my family was in serious trouble, and I just acted quickly and naturally.

SANDY: What about me? Am I your family?

(Pause.)

TRISTAN: Well...not yet, but you will be.

SANDY: Okay, you know what? Let's forget about us for a second. Do you even know the half of what you are getting yourself into? This is not as easy as you seem to think it is.

TRISTAN: How hard can it be? Samantha will be 18 in a year and then she can take over...legally.

SANDY: And you think that once she's 18, she'll be ready to just take the responsibility of raising a family and they won't need you anymore?

TRISTAN: No, they'll always need me, I guess. But they've been doing it on their own for so long, they know basically what to do. I'm just here for –

SANDY: For legal purposes. Yeah, I figured you felt that way.

(Pause.) But, Tristan, what if I need you?

TRISTAN: You've got me! I'm here for you! You'll always have me. They just need me for the next few months, that's all. I swear to you, nobody will be hurt or inconvenienced. Everything will go on as planned. I promise.

SANDY: You've already made the decision, so I guess you need me to support you.

TRISTAN: Yes! Yes, that's what I need right now more than anything. And the girls! The girls really look up to you and they could use a woman figure around the house every now and then.

SANDY: And the wedding will happen when we discussed it, right?

TRISTAN: Yes! I swear! *(Pause.)* And even if it got pushed back a few weeks or a few months, that's okay! We have the rest of our lives to live out.

SANDY: See, I knew it.

TRISTAN: I'm not saying it is, I'm not. But you've talked to married couples before. The first two years or so are great,

and then the resentment and the problems come marching in. Just think, if we have to push back the wedding a few months, the problems and the resentments are pushed back, too! We have a lot of time to be miserable after we're married. Let's enjoy the before-marriage bliss.

SANDY: Boy, you are one sweet-talker.

TRISTAN: That's not what I meant.

SANDY: Look, I'm gonna go. *(She starts to exit SL.)*

TRISTAN: I thought we were going to go to the movies.

SANDY: No, not tonight. I want to save some of this "before-marital bliss." You have other things you need to take care of, I'm sure.

TRISTAN: Will I see you tomorrow?

SANDY: Probably...I don't know...I've got a couple of things to do for our wedding – that's now in two years. Aren't you working tomorrow?

TRISTAN: Tomorrow's Saturday.

SANDY: You've been working on Saturdays for the last several weeks.

TRISTAN: Look, Sandy, I can't help it. We've been really busy at the warehouse. I think Jack's going to have to buy a new truck and hire a new driver.

SANDY: Yeah, I know, I know.

TRISTAN: Sandy, we should be glad Jack likes me as much as he does. He relies on me for everything. I think it's only a matter of time before he makes me his assistant. *(He takes her hands.)* Maybe we can hang out here tomorrow night...watch a movie or something.

SANDY: We'll see. I gotta go, Tristan, really. *(Looks around the place.)* The first thing you might do is clean this place up a little. Bye.

(She exits SL. Tristan stands there, watching her go. He finally lets out a much needed breath of air and goes over to the table and sits down. He glances down at the Pictionary game and picks up Rebecca's drawing.)

TRISTAN: Geez, who had to draw Kathi Lee?

(Blackout.)

SCENE 2

(AT RISE: *Three weeks later, 3 p.m. The living room looks the same, only neater. The stage is empty except for a brown box on the table. The phone rings three times. Then we hear voices coming from off left.*)

TRISTAN: (*From off left.*) Oh shoot, the phone! (*Sound of the screen door opening and then falling.*) Oh, man, dang it! Somebody grab the phone! (*Tristan enters, carrying the screen door. He lays it against the wall, puts his jacket on the end of the couch, and picks up the phone.*) Hello. (*Pause.*) No, John, I cannot deal with this right now, okay...I'm sure it can wait until I get there...Hopefully around six...No, do not open your mouth. Just wait until I get there, and don't call me anymore today. Was that you beeping me about a hundred times?...I was at the school meeting with Jason's teacher...What do you care, John?...All right, goodbye. (*He slams down the phone. Jason walks in, looking dejected. He's in trouble.*) Sit down, we need to talk about this.

JASON: This is so stupid.

TRISTAN: Really? Well, your teacher doesn't seem to think so.

JASON: We had to have a parent-teacher conference because I talk too much? I haven't even been sent to the office yet.

TRISTAN: Did you listen to her? That is what she is trying to avoid by meeting with me now, so you don't end up getting a referral.

JASON: I'll just learn not to talk so much.

TRISTAN: It isn't a matter of you talking so much Jason; it's what you say that is making her mad!

JASON: She just can't handle the fact that I'm funny.

TRISTAN: That isn't true, either! She admitted you were funny...sometimes. But when you get the entire class laughing at you, it takes the leadership out of her hands and into yours.

JASON: What's wrong with me being a leader?

TRISTAN: Nothing! Absolutely nothing! But there is a time and a place for opening your mouth and making comments. You are interfering with her teaching, and that isn't fair to the rest of the class, even if they don't think so.

JASON: I don't smart off that much.

(Tristan pulls out sheets of paper from his coat pocket.)

TRISTAN: Really? This is a list she gave me after I sent you out to the car. She has been writing down everything you've said in class, so she'd have a record for when she sent you up on a referral. She was planning on sending you on a referral, Jason!

JASON: I bet there isn't that much on that list.

TRISTAN: She blames her tendonitis on you, Jason. She actually told me that.

JASON: She probably made half that stuff up. She's out to get me, I swear.

TRISTAN: *(Reads from the list.)* "October 19: We were talking about famous teen authors today. I asked the class if they had ever read 'The Diary of Anne Frank.' Jason stood up in class and asked, 'I don't know. Does she go to this school?' It took me seven minutes to calm the class down. Jason loved the attention."

JASON: That was a legitimate question!

TRISTAN: *(Reads.)* "November 1: Today our discussion was about famous children's book authors. I asked the class if they knew that the most famous children's author and illustrator, Dr. Seuss, had passed away several years ago. Jason stood up and said, 'How sad. I feel real bad.' I lost the rest of the period."

JASON: You have to admit that was funny.

TRISTAN: Do you see me laughing?

JASON: Okay, okay, so I make a few cracks. We need a little laughter in English.

(Tristan puts the paper away.)

TRISTAN: Jason. *(Pause.)* I'm serious here. Mrs. Davis seems to think you might not be getting enough attention here at home. Do you think that's true? *(The phone rings.)* Hang on. *(He answers the phone.)* Hello...Yes, Valerie, what do you need?...Uh-huh...Listen, I'm coming in, in about three hours. Can't this wait until then?...I will bring that issue up in our meeting...I have to go...Uh-huh....I will. Goodbye. *(He hangs up.)* Now, where were we?

JASON: Still more problems at work?

TRISTAN: Yes...no, we're not talking about me, we're talking about you. Now, answer my question. Do you feel like you're getting enough attention at home?

JASON: Come on, Tristan, don't try and psychoanalyze everything. So, I smart off in class. I'll stop. I just needed to be told. I'll be good, I swear.

TRISTAN: Mrs. Davis seems to think you might need some counseling.

JASON: Oh give me a—

TRISTAN: I think it might be a good idea.

JASON: I need a shrink because I have a sense of humor, and I like to show off a little bit? What kid doesn't?

TRISTAN: *(Really serious.)* Jason, is there something bothering you? Has something been going on since I've moved in? Are you angry with your mother for everything?

JASON: Tristan, please. You sit there and look at me, and you are searching for a problem that doesn't— *(He stops and gets a gleam in his eye.)* Well, actually, now that you mention it, Tristan, I've been having some bad dreams the last couple of weeks.

TRISTAN: *(Really interested.)* You have? See, I knew that there was something. Can you talk about them to me? I'd like to be able to help if I could. Are they about your mom?

JASON: *(Looks like he's going to cry.)* Well, I guess...yeah.

TRISTAN: Tell me, Jason, come on, I won't say a word to anybody.

JASON: Promise?

TRISTAN: I swear it.

JASON: Okay. Well, I've been having these nightmares about my mom.

TRISTAN: *(Trying to look the part of a therapist.)* Uh-huh...

JASON: Well, I'm dreaming that I'm sitting alone in my room and it's really dark. All of a sudden, the light goes on and my mom is standing there with a suitcase, ready to come home.

TRISTAN: *(Sympathetic.)* Oh, Jason, man.

JASON: And she says to me, "Jason, have you been sleeping well? Have you been eating enough? I'm sorry I left you. I want to come home now and be a good mom to you and Samantha and Rebecca..."

TRISTAN: Keep going Jason, keep going.

JASON: *(Voice starts to crack.)* And then she says, "I have a present for you. I brought it all the way from Pakistan." And then she slowly opens the suitcase, and I'm scared, you know, to look in at first, but I stand up and I do look in.

TRISTAN: And what's inside the suitcase?

JASON: I look inside, my eyes filling with tears, and all of a sudden... *(He jumps up from the couch.)* ...[The Spice Girls] jump out from the suitcase! And they all have snakes in their hair...with the exception of the [Spice Girl] who has the short hair, she has worms instead. And they start screaming at me: "One of us, one of us, one of us!" I realize they want me to be the next [Spice Girl]. And that's when they bring out a bag full of Pop Tarts and they ask me, "Are you a strawberry man, or a cherry man?" And I start screaming, "Help, help!" *(Now really getting into it.)* Then my window opens and my saviors come crashing in. But I start screaming even more because it's the [Hanson brothers]! And instead of helping me, they start singing an old song by [New Kids on the Block] at the top of their lungs! So I start

running down the hallway, begging for anyone's help, and they all start chasing me, and they catch up to me. And as they bring me down, smacking me with pickles and two unsalted pretzels, the little one grabs his makeup kit and starts to apply lipstick all over my eyebrows. And then I wake up screaming. *(Long pause as he struggles to catch his breath.)* So, what do you think? *[Note: You may insert the names of other suitable music groups.]*

TRISTAN: *(Slowly.)* I think I'm wasting my time.

JASON: So how much, doctor?

(The phone rings. Tristan calmly walks over to it, picks it up, and bangs it down three times in fast, furious motions. He then looks over at Jason.)

TRISTAN: Go to your room.

(Jason doesn't argue. He goes up to his room, laughing to himself all the way. Samantha enters SL.)

SAMANTHA: Hey.

TRISTAN: *(On the edge.)* Hello.

SAMANTHA: What's the matter with you?

TRISTAN: It's been a bad day.

SAMANTHA: What happened?

TRISTAN: Never mind.

SAMANTHA: No, seriously, what's the matter? Come on, you're always listening to us moan and groan. What happened?

TRISTAN: Well, to start off with, I got to work today and realized that everybody is about to blow, and so they start to scream at me.

SAMANTHA: Why? You're not the boss.

TRISTAN: You're right. They're not really screaming at me. They just voice their grievances to me instead of the boss. And I can't take it anymore.

SAMANTHA: I wonder why they picked you.

TRISTAN: Huh?

SAMANTHA: There's like ten truckers and 15 warehouse workers who work for Argentina, right? Why'd they pick you to complain to?

TRISTAN: Probably because I put up with it.

SAMANTHA: No...well, maybe...but I think there's something more to it than that.

TRISTAN: Yeah? Like what?

SAMANTHA: In all the time that you've been there, have you ever voiced a complaint out loud to anybody?

TRISTAN: No.

SAMANTHA: Why?

TRISTAN: I don't know...probably because I have nothing to complain about.

SAMANTHA: Exactly! You're completely satisfied with your job. I think you even like it! All the other workers are dissatisfied—for reasons that are too diverse to mention, I'm sure—and they see you...Mr. Happy-Go-Lucky. So they come to you and complain because you have a positive perspective on things, and they probably unconsciously think you can help them in some way.

TRISTAN: Help them how?

SAMANTHA: They want to be happy about their work, too. They think you can make them be happy people.

TRISTAN: Oh, I don't—

SAMANTHA: You're close to your boss, right?

TRISTAN: He's a good man.

SAMANTHA: The workers probably think your influence can make changes in the workplace.

(Tristan thinks for a second.)

TRISTAN: Hmm. Maybe you're right.

SAMANTHA: Look, when is the next time you're going to get together with all the employees for a meeting?

TRISTAN: We're supposed to meet with the boss tonight at six to "get it all out."

SAMANTHA: *(Gets an idea.)* Wait.

TRISTAN: What?

SAMANTHA: Cancel the meeting tonight.

TRISTAN: Why?

SAMANTHA: Reschedule a meeting with everybody but your boss. Actually, you can have it here! Yeah! Schedule a meeting for everybody to "get it all out" and then after everybody's done that, figure out ways to make things better at work. Are people complaining about the common things like little pay, too many hours, no overtime?

TRISTAN: Actually, yeah.

SAMANTHA: Well, let them complain a little then, but then stop and work on ways to improve the morale around the place. I'm telling you, Argentina Trucking Company will be a better place to work at if everybody works to improve things. People spend too much time complaining and not improving things. There needs to be a balance.

TRISTAN: A meeting without the boss? I don't know. It sounds underhanded.

SAMANTHA: Actually, it isn't. If you can solve things yourself, he will owe everything to you. Believe me, he isn't happy knowing the employees aren't happy.

(Rebecca rushes in SL.)

REBECCA: Have you heard about Potsie?

SAMANTHA: Oh yeah, did the vet call?

TRISTAN: Haven't heard yet. Listen, you guys, that was another thing I wanted to talk to you all about.

REBECCA: *(Sensing doom.)* I don't want to talk about it.

TRISTAN: I know you don't Becca, but it is something we have to face. Just in case.

REBECCA: It's easy for you to talk because she's not your dog.

TRISTAN: Hey, that's not fair! I've been around Potsie as long as you guys have! I've loved her and helped raised her too, you know. (*Serious.*) But we just have to face it that she's 15 years old and that the doctor might recommend that she –

REBECCA: Don't say it! Don't even think it! (*She rushes off SR, obviously upset.*)

TRISTAN: I handled that one really well, didn't I?

SAMANTHA: She'll be okay. Actually, I've been bummed about it myself all day, too.

TRISTAN: Well, no one's asked about Aunt Grace yet!

SAMANTHA: Oh my gosh. That's right! Have you heard from the doctor?

TRISTAN: Not him, either.

SAMANTHA: That is so weird that both Potsie and Aunt Grace had a stroke yesterday.

TRISTAN: Grace loved that dog too, didn't she?

SAMANTHA: Loves! Loves that dog. They're both still okay for the moment.

TRISTAN: Let's hope so.

SAMANTHA: Oh! Getting back to what we were saying...

TRISTAN: Oh, yeah.

SAMANTHA: You need to have everybody over. They can come here for appetizers, or whatever, just make it a relaxed meeting. Then after all that, you can lead the meeting and discuss a new direction for The Argentina Trucking Company.

TRISTAN: Maybe I should have you lead it! You're the one with all the ideas.

SAMANTHA: (*Modestly.*) Me? (*Blush.*) Oh, I couldn't. I might be able to stand behind the sidelines, but I can't speak in front of people.

TRISTAN: Well, you should reconsider. Seriously.

SAMANTHA: How about I'll stand by you for support? I could probably learn things from you. Come on, call everybody and reschedule for tomorrow night. That'll give me time to prepare your speech.

TRISTAN: You're going to prepare my speech?
SAMANTHA: Yeah, sure, why not? You said I had good ideas!
TRISTAN: You're right...okay, you can do it!
SAMANTHA: Great! You won't regret it! (*Noticing the brown box on the table.*) Oh, hey, is this for me?
TRISTAN: No, it's Sandy's. You expecting something?
SAMANTHA: Just some videos.
TRISTAN: What videos?
SAMANTHA: I joined [The Columbia House Video Club]. I got seven videos for a penny! [*Or insert the name of another video club.*]
TRISTAN: Really? Although I hate to ask, what movies did you order?
SAMANTHA: "Evita."
TRISTAN: (*Waiting for more.*) And?
SAMANTHA: That's it. "Evita."
TRISTAN: You ordered seven copies of "Evita"?
SAMANTHA: Yeah.
TRISTAN: You're kidding right? Seven "Evitas"?
SAMANTHA: Right.
TRISTAN: Why in the heck would you order seven copies of the same movie?
SAMANTHA: Why not? They're only costing me a penny! I ordered seven, so when I watch one over and over and it goes bad, I can just open another one.
TRISTAN: Do you know how many times you have to watch a movie in order for it to go bad?
SAMANTHA: Yep.
TRISTAN: Geez, aren't you sick of "Evita" yet? You've listened to it I don't know how many times!
SAMANTHA: I know, I know.
TRISTAN: Seriously, the other two are about to kill you, you know that.
SAMANTHA: Oh who cares? I put up with enough of their junk. Don't worry, it won't cost you anything, Tristan. I

only have to buy six movies in the next five years. I'll pay for them.

TRISTAN: Well, I certainly am not paying for seven copies of "Evita," that's for sure.

SAMANTHA: So what's in the package then?

TRISTAN: It's a surprise for Sandy. She's supposed to stop by here any minute. It's a crystal bowl she wanted really bad for our house. She registered for it, but it's so expensive I'm sure no one will buy it, so I did.

SAMANTHA: You're so sweet!

TRISTAN: Yeah, well. *(Looks at the screen door.)* Listen, I'm not speaking to your brother right now. Can you go upstairs and tell him to put the screen door back on? *(Sandy enters SL.)* Hey! *(To Samantha.)* Now is a good time. I need to talk to Sandy. And go check on your sister, will you?

SAMANTHA: Sure. Hi, Sandy!

SANDY: Hey, Samantha.

(Samantha exits up the stairs. Tristan goes over to Sandy and gives her a big hug.)

TRISTAN: Hey, how was your day?

SANDY: Okay, how was yours?

TRISTAN: Well, it started off bad, but I have a feeling things are going to turn around real soon.

SANDY: *(A bit hopeful.)* Really?

TRISTAN: Yeah, I mean, you know all the problems I've been having at work lately...?

SANDY: No, actually, I don't know.

TRISTAN: *(Quietly.)* Oh, yeah, I guess you're right. We haven't talked much lately, have we?

SANDY: No, not really. I've called you several times. Haven't you gotten the messages I've left?

TRISTAN: Yeah, actually, I have. I was gonna call you back, but I knew you were coming over for a few minutes tonight.

SANDY: (*Cynically.*) Just for a few minutes, though. I know you're busy.

TRISTAN: But I have a surprise for you!

SANDY: Yeah, I do, too. My mother and I found a reception hall today.

TRISTAN: Oh, really? That's great. I wish I could have been with you to help pick it out. I feel really bad.

SANDY: Yeah, well, I know how hard it is for you to get off work. (*Pause.*) Do you want to go get something to eat?

TRISTAN: (*Carefully.*) Oh, I can't. I have to work on a speech with Samantha tonight.

SANDY: A speech?

TRISTAN: I'm having a sort of "positive rally" for the employees tomorrow, and I have to prepare something to say.

SANDY: Fine.

(*Pause.*)

TRISTAN: Are you mad?

SANDY: No actually. You would think I would be, but I guess I'm used to it. I've seen you for a whole five minutes in the last week.

TRISTAN: You're right, and I'm sorry. You have a right to be mad.

SANDY: But I'm not.

(*Tristan thinks.*)

TRISTAN: Well, maybe you should get mad.

SANDY: Excuse me?

TRISTAN: Look, I've been a jerk! You have every right to be angry with me! So maybe you should get mad and start yelling or something.

SANDY: (*Bitterly.*) Gee, Tristan, what would that accomplish?

TRISTAN: Or get sarcastic. That's just as good.

SANDY: (*Getting mad.*) What? What should I do? I plead, I beg, I get sarcastic! But nothing I do makes you see how much I need you right now! I shouldn't even have to beg or plead, should I? (*Starts to yell.*) What's wrong with you? Or what's wrong with me? Why don't you want to see me these days?

TRISTAN: See, you're getting angry. That's good! Don't you feel better?

SANDY: (*Now she's really mad.*) No, actually I am feeling worse now! It's been bottled up, and now I'm exploding! I feel pretty hostile right now!

TRISTAN: (*Getting nervous.*) Well, you don't have to scream at me.

SANDY: Oh my gosh, what do you want from me? Huh? First you tell me to yell and get mad, and now you want me to calm down?

TRISTAN: (*Pathetically.*) I said you could yell, not scream.

SANDY: You are a piece of work, you know that?

(*Jason comes down the stairs. Tristan sees him.*)

TRISTAN: (*Frustrated.*) Jason, did your sister tell you to fix the screen?

JASON: I'm not speaking to you right now! (*He grabs the screen door and exits SL.*)

TRISTAN: Sandy, please.

SANDY: No, you wanted me to get mad, so now I'm mad. I'm furious!

TRISTAN: Well, maybe it's good. Let it out, honey! Let it out if you have to.

SANDY: Don't play all nice with me, Tristan! I really am mad at you right now! I could just shake you!

(*Tristan goes to her.*)

TRISTAN: Then why don't you? Shake me if that would make you feel better. Or better yet, kick something, or throw something. You'll feel better, I swear!

SANDY: No, I think I'd rather shake you.

TRISTAN: Then go ahead, I'm serious! I'm right here! Come on, Sandy, you'll feel great! I swear!

SANDY: I'm too mad at you to even touch you right now!

TRISTAN: (*Egging her anger on to appease her.*) Then do what I suggested! Break something! There isn't anything in this house you can't harm!

SANDY: (*Now on the edge.*) Fine! Fine, if that's what you want. I'll start being destructive!

(*She wildly looks around the house. She sees the box on the table, picks it up, and throws it on the ground. There is a shattering sound.*)

TRISTAN: Ooooh. All except that.

SANDY: (*Appalled.*) What did I break?

TRISTAN: (*Sighs.*) Oh, it wasn't important. (*The phone rings.*) Hang on a second, Sandy. (*Into the phone.*) Hello...What?...Tim, geez, you guys have got to stop calling. What do you want?...No, forget the meeting...I can't listen to you right now, Tim...I want you to call everybody except Jack and tell them to meet at my house tomorrow night for a meeting...Just do it, Tim. I think we can wait one more day to deal with things...Tim...Tim...Hold on, the other line's ringing... (*He clicks a button on the phone.*) Hello...Oh, Dr. Shultz, I'm glad you called... (*Pause.*) Now, which doctor are you?...The vet, oh, okay. How is Potsie? A second stroke?...Oh shoot, the other line, Tim must have hung up...Tim...No, he's, he's—just hold on a second, okay... (*He clicks the same button.*) Hello...Dr. Ridley...How weird...No, it's just that...Nothing...I have another doctor on the phone...

(*Jason enters.*)

JASON: I fixed it, master!

SANDY: Tristan, I'm going to go.

TRISTAN: No, Sandy, wait a second, will you? *(Into phone.)*
Doctor, can you hang on a second...A second stroke for her,
too. How long ago?...Just hang on. *(He clicks the button*
again.) Sandy, don't leave. Jason, you sit there. We still
have to talk.

SANDY: I'm leaving.

JASON: Me too!

TRISTAN: *(Frazzled.)* No, now both of you wait, okay? *(He*
clicks the phone again, absentmindedly.) Dr., listen...two strokes
isn't good, I know that. *(Rebecca enters SR, eating an Oreo*
cookie.) As much as this hurts to do, I think you should go
ahead and put her to sleep.

REBECCA: I can't believe you!

(Rebecca throws the Oreo at Tristan and it hits him square in the
forehead. She storms off SR.)

TRISTAN: Rebecca, wait! All of you wait!... *(Into phone.)*
Doctor, you'll have to...pull the plug, or whatever it is you
do...No, doctor, please don't you argue with me, too. I know
what I have to do here...No, I'm not confused. I'm thinking
of her suffering, and she shouldn't have to suffer anymore.
Just please don't make this harder on us and do it,
okay?...No, do not try to tell me my business. That's the end
of this discussion! Please put her down gently. Goodbye.
(He clicks on the phone again.) Doctor Ridley, I'm sorry to
keep you waiting. How's my Aunt Grace? Is she— ...Excuse
me?...What?...Then who is this?...The veterinarian?...Wait a
minute. Are you sure? *(Long pause.)* Oh my gosh, oh my
gosh, oh my gosh.

JASON: What did you do?

TRISTAN: *(Panicky.)* Doctor, don't touch the dog! I will be
there to pick her up tomorrow, okay? *(He slams down the*

phone. He grabs his coat from the back of the couch.) Come on,
Jason!

(Jason jumps up.)

JASON: Where are we going?

TRISTAN: *(Boldly.)* We've go to go save Aunt Grace.

(Tristan storms off SL with Jason trailing behind. Sandy is left alone.)

SANDY: *(Yells after him.)* Hey, what about me?!

(Blackout.)

SCENE 3

(AT RISE: The next night, early evening. The place looks clean and picked up. There are a couple of extra folding chairs set up around the room for the guests. Jason is sitting at the table with his homework open, but the school work is unattended to at the moment. He is throwing a pencil up into the air. Rebecca enters SL, running.)

REBECCA: Where is everybody?

JASON: They're around.

REBECCA: I need you to help me.

(Jason thinks for a second.)

JASON: No.

REBECCA: You haven't even heard what I'm going to ask you yet.

JASON: What do you want?

REBECCA: Larson's Animals and Feed went out of business.

JASON: I know. I've only walked by there every morning for the last two years.

REBECCA: Yeah, but today is the absolute last day they will be open and—

JASON: Is there a point coming?

REBECCA: There are still animals left. I asked Mr. Larson what he was going to do with them if he couldn't get rid of them, and you know what he's going to do? He's gonna take them to the pound! And you know what they do to them there!

JASON: What do you want me to do about it?

REBECCA: Mr. Larson said I could have them all as far as he was concerned.

JASON: What are you going to do with them? Tristan won't let any more animals in the house.

REBECCA: I don't care what Tristan thinks after what he almost did to Potsie. You should see Potsie out there. She's fine!

JASON: So you're saying we should just waltz over there and take all the leftover animals and bring them here?

REBECCA: There aren't that many left, Jason. It won't take that long to sneak them over here.

JASON: How are we supposed to sneak them into the house? Tristan has that big meeting here tonight.

REBECCA: *(Getting anxious.)* We'll worry about that when the time comes. We have to hurry. They close at seven.

JASON: And what do I get out of it?

(Rebecca looks around and sees his pencil.)

REBECCA: I'll tell you what...if you do it, I won't take this pencil and stab you right in the eye.

JASON: Works for me. *(He gets up.)*

REBECCA: Let's go then.

(They grab their coats and start to exit SL. Tristan enters SR.)

TRISTAN: Where are you guys going?

REBECCA: Don't worry about it, animal killer!

(Rebecca and Jason exit SL.)

TRISTAN: No one respects me around here. *(Calls upstairs.)*
Samantha, hurry up! They're gonna be here.

SAMANTHA: *(Yells down the stairs.)* Start without me. I'm still getting ready.

(The doorbell rings and Tristan goes off left to answer it.)

TRISTAN: *(From off left.)* Hey, John, come on in.

(John and Tristan enter. John is carrying a bowl covered with tinfoil.)

JOHN: Nice place.

TRISTAN: Thanks. What's in the bowl?

JOHN: Dip. Here, you want to put this in the kitchen?

TRISTAN: No chips?

JOHN: Look, it was hard enough making the dip. I can't do everything, you know.

(Tristan takes the bowl.)

TRISTAN: I'll put this in the kitchen. Open the door if anybody else comes.

(Tristan exits SR. John looks around. After making sure no one is looking, he puts his hand under the cushion and checks for loose change. The doorbell rings and John jumps. He goes off left to answer it.)

JOHN: *(From off left.)* Hey, Helen. Hey, Valerie. Come on—
(There is the sound of the screen door opening and then falling.)

Whoops, how did that happen?

HELEN: Oh my gosh, I did that, didn't I? I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry.

JOHN: Don't apologize to me. It's not my house.

VALERIE: I'll bet it goes right back on, Helen. Don't worry about it.

(Helen, Valerie and John enter. John is carrying the screen door. Helen and Valerie each carry a Tupperware bowl. John sets the door against the wall. The doorbell rings.)

JOHN: *(Yells toward the front door.)* Come in! *(To the Valerie and Helen.)* There's no door anyway.

(Tristan enters SR.)

TRISTAN: Hey, everybody. *(Indicating Tupperware bowls. To Helen and Valerie.)* Can I take those from you?

VALERIE: Sure.

(Helen and Valerie hand him their bowls.)

TRISTAN: What are these?

VALERIE: Helen and I are so stupid. We both brought guacamole dip.

TRISTAN: Oh.

HELEN: And I broke your screen door.

TRISTAN: That's okay. It's been doing that.

HELEN: I feel bad. You can break my bowl.

TRISTAN: What?

HELEN: No, I'm serious. Please break it. I'd feel better.

TRISTAN: It's Tupperware.

HELEN: Oh. *(Pause.)* Then please put it in the microwave for at least 20 minutes. It'll be ruined.

TRISTAN: It's fine, Helen, don't worry about it.

(Tristan exits SR with the dip. Brad, Harold, Luke, Mike and Tim enter SL. They each carry a covered bowl. If Extras are used, they enter as well and all carry covered bowls.)

JOHN: Did you all come together?

MIKE: Luke's van broke down. We had to borrow one of the trucks.

JOHN: Is everybody here?

HAROLD: This is it. No one else is coming. They said we could speak on their behalf.

VALERIE: Shouldn't we get all this in writing?

HAROLD: I don't know, ask Tristan.

(Tristan enters.)

TRISTAN: Hey, everybody. *(He looks at the bowls.)* Don't tell me...

BRAD: Yeah, isn't that weird? The four of us brought dip.

TRISTAN: And no one thought to bring any other food, like, let's say...chips?

HAROLD: Oh, yeah, huh? Oh, well, I like dip.

(Harold uncovers his bowl and he sits down at the table. He uses his fingers to scoop up the dip.)

TRISTAN: *(Disgusted.)* Well, maybe we should get started. Everybody grab a chair or the couch. *(Helen and Valerie sit on the couch. Tristan stands by the table. The others sit in chairs that have been set out.)* I've been thinking long and hard for the last couple of days...or actually weeks—

HAROLD: *(While licking his fingers.)* Hey, Tristan, do you have any napkins?

TRISTAN: *(Annoyed.)* No, I don't. I asked Helen to—

HELEN: Oh my gosh, I feel terrible. I was supposed to bring napkins, not guacamole. Valerie, why didn't you remind me?

VALERIE: I did, Helen. You told me to put it on a Post-It.

HELEN: And did you?

VALERIE: *(Patiently.)* Yes, I did, Helen.

HELEN: Oh yes, oh yes, I remember now. It was on that pink Post-It. I'm sorry. I remember now.

VALERIE: No, it wasn't, Helen. It was a blue one. You had written something on the pink Post-It.

HELEN: Oh, that's right, that's right. You're right. *(Tristan tries to go on.)* What did I say to myself?

VALERIE: You wrote, "Helen: Reminder to turn off conveyor belts all this week since Jeff is out."

HELEN: Yep, that is what it said. *(Pause.)* Oh no.

VALERIE: What's wrong now?

HELEN: Tristan, are there going to be any breaks during this meeting? And, Valerie, can I borrow your car?

TRISTAN: Helen, we'll get it later, okay? Now where was I?
BRAD: Can someone please get Harold a napkin? He's making me sick.
TIM: Luke's got a handkerchief you can use.
LUKE: I don't want his disgusting fingers and mouth all over my handkerchief!
TIM: Why not? There's no difference than when you put your disgusting nose in it!
LUKE: Well, he can't use it. I haven't even washed it lately.
HAROLD: Do you guys mind? I'm trying to eat.
MIKE: Do you have any chips, Tristan? Maybe he could eat with those instead.
TRISTAN: I don't have any chips! I told all of you to bring everything!
MIKE: (*Admonishing.*) And what were you supposed to bring?
TRISTAN: (*Incredulously.*) I brought the house! Isn't that enough?
HAROLD: (*Still eating dip.*) Yeah, some house. You don't even have any napkins.
HELEN: I sense everyone is somehow blaming me.
TIM: It's not your fault, Helen.
TRISTAN: But she forgot the napkins!
LUKE: And you forgot the chips!
TRISTAN: (*Frustrated.*) Aahhhhh!
VALERIE: Look, chips and dip and napkins are not the issue here.
TRISTAN: That's right.
VALERIE: But, Tristan, did you get meat for the barbecue at least?
HELEN: Oh, darn it! Coals, coals! I was supposed to bring coals for the barbecue!
VALERIE: That was on the green Post-It I wrote you.
TRISTAN: Listen to me, people! This is not about food! We are here to discuss business. Business, remember?

THESE DAYS
60

BRAD: He's right, you guys. Let's get down to business. We can always point the finger later.

TRISTAN: That's right. Now, are we going to discuss business, or not?

HAROLD: Yes. Tristan, we had a meeting last night even though we had planned this. Under the direction of Jim, we've decided to strike.

TRISTAN: Strike? *(Pause.)* Who's Jim?

TIM: He's a new employee. Jack hired him two days ago.

TRISTAN: A 2-day-old employee led you guys to strike? I don't believe this.

VALERIE: He made a lot of sense, Tristan. He had a very good perspective on things.

LUKE: Well, I don't know if "sense" is the right word, Valerie. But he makes a good first impression, that's for sure.

HAROLD: Let's just be honest, Luke. The guy's one sandwich short of a picnic, okay? But I bet even he would remember to buy chips.

TRISTAN: We can't strike, you guys. No way!

JOHN: Why not?

TRISTAN: Because there's only 20-some employees! Jack could replace us all in a second!

VALERIE: But nobody knows our routes! Tristan and Jack know this.

(Tristan looks through his jacket pocket.)

TRISTAN: No, everybody, just hold it a second. I have a great speech that my cousin wrote for me. It's very inspirational. Let me read it to you, and I know you will all reconsider. *(Reads.)* "When Carlos Argentina first came to America, he had several goals in mind. First—"

BRAD: Your cousin wrote a speech for you?

TRISTAN: Yes, my cousin Samantha. She's only 17, but she is very intelligent about these types of things. In fact... *(Calls up the stairs.)* Samantha, are you coming down? *(To*

THESE DAYS
61

Workers.) In fact, she should be down here any minute. *(He points to the CD system.)* She has her own presentation ready for you to listen to.

TIM: We're going to listen to a speech by a 17 year old?

BRAD: This is more absurd than forgetting to buy napkins at a dinner party!

MIKE: Well, let's be fair. He never said anything about dinner. Just chips and dip.

TRISTAN: Shut up, shut up, shut up!

(Luke gets up.)

LUKE: Well, I'm not about to sit here and listen to a speech written and performed by a 17 year old!

TIM: That's right! We need a real leader to represent the workers of Argentina!

JOHN: Yeah, someone who cares about the future of their workers!

LUKE: And their families!

(Everybody loudly ad-libs agreement, "Yeah," "That's right," etc.)

MIKE: I don't know about the rest of you, but I'm tired of working overtime and not getting paid for it!

LUKE: And if we don't work overtime, we have the fear of losing our jobs!

BRAD: I'm tired of the fact that I'm only scheduled 39 hours a week. I don't getting any benefits at all!

TIM: And the job is so physically demanding, I need to go to a doctor. But I can't because I'm working overtime that I don't get paid for!

HAROLD: *(Still eating.)* Just last week, I was hauling a bag of "maneuver" off the conveyor belt, and I'm sure I sprained my back!

TRISTAN: A bag of what?

(Helen timidly stands up.)

HELEN: I'm not one to usually complain, but I don't know how many times I've requested that they give me a booster seat for my semi. I can barely see over the wheel!

(Everybody loudly reacts to this injustice. They stand up, yell at each other, and yell at Tristan. In fact, they've gathered around Tristan in a semi-circle, and he is trying to calm everybody down. Just then, Jason and Rebecca poke their heads in the room from SL. They see that no one is paying any attention, so they decide to make a run for it. Jason and Rebecca run across the stage. Jason is holding a stuffed dog by its leash. They dash SR into the kitchen. Nobody sees them due to the chaos.)

TRISTAN: All right, you guys, all right! *(Just then, Samantha comes walking slowly down the stairs. She is dressed in a formal gown, her makeup is perfect, and she is wearing beautiful earrings that dangle from her lobes. But it's her hair that makes Tristan react. She sports a blonde wig that has been styled not unlike the same way Eva Peron wore her hair. She is glamorous looking. Tristan gasps, but no one else notices her. They are still yelling.)* What the—?

SAMANTHA: *(Halfway down the stairs.)* Ladies and gentlemen, ladies and gentlemen, please!

(Samantha starts to get the crowd's attention with the use of her now powerful voice and her Evita-like hand movements. The crowd calms down.)

LUKE: Who is this?

TRISTAN: I think...I think, it's Eva Peron.

SAMANTHA: No, Tristan. Everyone, my name is Samantha Wilder. *(Pause.)* And I hear your grievances.

(Samantha walks among the Workers and stands next to Tristan.)

TRISTAN: What are you doing, Samantha?

SAMANTHA: *(To the Workers.)* Workers of the Argentina Trucking Company, nothing will be accomplished if you scream and yell. We must come up with a solution for your problems and work for that goal.

VALERIE: What do you suggest?

(Jason and Rebecca enter running SL and exit SR.)

SAMANTHA: You have no leader.

LUKE: That's right!

TIM: We need a boss who will take care of us!

(Again, Workers react loudly. Samantha calms them down again with her Eva Peron hand movements.)

SAMANTHA: No! No! *(She pauses to let them calm down.)*
Forget your boss. *(Pause.)* You need a leader.

HAROLD: And who's going to be our leader if it isn't a boss?

SAMANTHA: *(Aside to Tristan.)* It's your cue.

TRISTAN: *(Confused.)* Huh? Oh, right!

(Tristan hits a button on the CD system. The instrumental portion of the song "A New Argentina" from "Evita" begins to play and Samantha steps out in front of the Workers to begin her speech.)

SAMANTHA: Are you tired, people? Tired of low wages and too much work?

WORKERS: Yes!

SAMANTHA: Do you miss your wives and husbands?

WORKERS: Yes!

SAMANTHA: Do you miss your children, your pets, your homes?

(Samantha is now in full Evita character, her body imitating every famous move, including Peron's well-known hand gestures.)

WORKERS: Yes!

SAMANTHA: Do you miss your mothers?

HAROLD: Yes!

(Tristan never responds and just stands there in amazement.)

SAMANTHA: Then what do you do when you have a boss who doesn't care about his people? His workers! There is only one answer to your troubles, my Argentina workers! You must unionize!

(Long pause.)

TIM: She's right! We need a union!

(Workers react wildly.)

TRISTAN: A union?

SAMANTHA: *(Ignoring him.)* A union guarantees workers' rights and gives them the respect and the pay they deserve! You must gather as a people and fight for justice in the workplace! There, you will find a satisfactory career! *(More reactions from the Workers.)* And there is only one man who can lead any workers' regime! He lives for your problems and shares your ideas and your dreams! He supports you, for he loves you, understands you, *is one of you!* *(Turns toward Tristan and holds his arm up high.)* If not, how could he love me?! *(The wildest reactions now! The Workers sing.)*

"A new Argentina the chains of the masses untied!

A new Argentina, the voice of the people."

(Jason enters SL, holding a chicken in his arms. Rebecca holds a rabbit in hers. They try to sneak past the melee, but the Workers have now clamored around together in a unity chain, singing at the top of their lungs. The Workers mistakenly pull Rebecca and

Jason into their group. Samantha sings as loud as anyone, yet Tristan just stands there amazed.)

*"Cannot be and will not be
And must not be denied!"*

(All hands are now clasped together and are raised to the ceiling. Samantha is still holding onto Tristan's arm. Jason and Rebecca look at each other, shrug their shoulders, and lift their animals into the air. Blackout.)

[END OF FREEVIEW]