



Bryan Starchman

Norman Maine Publishing

The Feast of Epiphany
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For my mother

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The Feast of Epiphany

COMEDY. Colin McKinney, a successful romance novelist, wants to keep his profession a secret from his ultra-Catholic parents, especially his overbearing, neurotic mother. Colin writes under the pseudonym, Amber Waves, and tells his fans that he is a housewife. Colin also wants to prevent his parents from finding out that his fiancée, Jen, is really a Baptist. With his parents halfway across the country, Colin thinks his secrets are safe until his parents and sister decide to visit him to celebrate the Feast of Epiphany. To ready himself for their visit, Colin hides his romance novels and creates games like "Who Wants to be Canonized," "The Our Father Sing-a-long," and the "Patron Saints Board Game" to help Jen learn enough about Catholicism to pass as a Catholic. This outrageously entertaining comedy offers a blizzard of one-liners and outlandish situations.

Performance Time: Approximately 100 minutes.

Characters

(4 m, 8 f, optional extras)
(With doubling 3 m, 5 f)

COLIN MCKINNEY: 22, romance novel writer who writes under the pseudonym, Amber Waves; wears sweatpants and a torn Sex Pistols T-shirt.

JEN THOMPSON: 21, Colin's Baptist girlfriend; wears a simple but tasteful cotton nightgown; jeans and a sweater.

SEAMUS MCKINNEY: Colin's meek but manly father; second-generation Irish-American; works at a mill in Detroit.

AUDREY MCKINNEY: Colin's ultra-Catholic uptight mother; housewife and second-generation Irish-American.

CAROLINE "RAVEN" MCKINNY: Colin's "baby" sister and a two-faced brat; wears a tartan skirt much too short to be appropriate for a "good" Catholic girl, a tight white shirt, and tiny black leather backpack.

ANGELA STEINLAUF: Colin's uptight literary agent; wears a business suit with her hair up in a bun.

HANK LUGO: Colin's gruff but loveable landlord; an aspiring actor but hasn't had a gig since the 1980s.

POLICE OFFICER: Aspiring actress.

FAN 1: 30, romance novel fan; tired-looking; female.

FAN 2: Romance novel fan; big and beefy; wears a Looney-Tunes sweatshirt and carries a spatula like a weapon; female.

FAN 3: 80; romance novel fan; female.

"YOUR AVERAGE JOE": 50s, romance novel fan; average-looking, trustworthy father figure; wears a ball cap, slacks, and a T-shirt; can be played by Seamus.

EXTRAS (optional): As homeless man, pierced freak.

NOTE: Fan 1, 2, 3 and Your Average Joe can be doubled to accommodate a smaller cast (3 m, 5 f).

Setting

The action takes place in Colin's new West Hollywood studio apartment. There are boxes everywhere, as he is just moving in. The two rooms that we are able to see at all times are the bedroom/family room stage right. There is a dainty yet ornate crimson red chaise lounge. Two sleeping bags are rolled out on the floor. There is also a small writing desk with a chair. On the desk is a typewriter. Book shelves line the back wall next to a door upstage right of the family room that leads to the bathroom. The front door, leading to the apartment complex's foyer, is just offstage right. Through a swinging door center stage, there is a simple kitchen stage left with four chairs and a small dinette covered with a tablecloth.

Synopsis of Scenes

ACT I

Scene 1: 7 a.m., January 6th, The Feast of the Epiphany.

Scene 2: Later that morning.

ACT II: 6 p.m., the same day

Props

| | |
|---|----------------------|
| Red chaise lounge | Boxes |
| Bookshelves | Knick-knacks |
| Dinette set with 4 chairs | Stack of 3 x 5 cards |
| Tablecloth | Large suitcase |
| Paperback romance novels | Coffeemaker |
| Long blonde wig | Bowls |
| Puffy white pirate shirt, for Colin | Manila envelope |
| Black leather pants, for Colin | 2 Sleeping bags |
| Eye patch | Attaché case |
| Ship's wheel | Large sack of mail |
| Curly red wig | Ladies handkerchief |
| Bavarian beer wench costume, for Jen | Small liquor bottles |
| Pack of cigarettes | 2 Large bath towels |
| Lighter or matches | Large plastic knife |
| Framed picture | Dishes |
| Bird puppet | Silverware |
| Bee puppet | Bathroom mirror |
| Small desk and chair | Napkins |
| Typewriter | Bowl of dinner rolls |
| Stack of paper | Ham |
| Car keys | Coffee cup |
| | Toolbox |
| | Radio |

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Sound Effects

Wind
Seagulls
Fanfare
Knock at the door
Shower

Celtic music
Phone ringing
Doorbell
Answering machine "beep"
Phone hanging up

“She wilted in my hands
like a bunch of baby spinach
in a hot oiled skillet.”

-Pirate of Madrid

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Act I

Scene 1

(AT RISE: Spotlight on Colin, who is wearing a long flowing blonde wig, a puffy white pirate shirt, black leather pants, and an eye patch. In his hands, he holds the helm of a ship. If possible, a wind machine blows so that his long "hair" floats behind him as he grins at the audience. Seagulls are heard in the distance as a passionate, heroic fanfare blasts through the theater.)

COLIN: *(Obviously reading lines, he stares out into space.)* "It's all right now, my bosomy bundle of love. I have defeated the evil pirates of Devil's Cove, single handedly! You can come up, ... *(To Audience.)* ...the Pirate of Madrid bellowed into the bowels of his sturdy wooden vessel." *(Pause. Aside.)* Of course he was referring to the ship.

(Jen Thompson appears. She is dressed like a Bavarian beer wench with her corset tied much too tight and a wig of curly red hair.)

JEN: *(Also reading lines, she gazes into Colin's eyes.)* "But there's one thing I don't understand, me lord. How were you able to overcome the temptations of the evil but sensual succubus Esmeralda?" *(To audience.)* Penelope's voice escaped her in breathless little puffs like the gasps of a thousand hummingbirds."

COLIN: *(Still steering the ship as he gazes into her eyes.)* "My sweet, I was not able to resist her temptations, but my passionate love-making was too much for her. She wilted in my hands like a bunch of baby spinach in a hot oiled skillet. But not to worry, her lustful ways meant nothing to me. I did it for us."

JEN: "But..."

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COLIN: (*Pressing his finger against her lips.*) “Shhhh. Enough. I’ve slain 10,000 pirates, defeated the one-eyed sea monster of the Coral Lagoon, traveled through the depths of the underworld in search of the Pulsing Orbs, and destroyed the temptress Esmeralda, all so that I could have you back by my side. I forbid you to waste your precious, pouty lips on talking. There are only seven things I will allow you to do with those lips on our journey home,’ (*To audience.*) he said with a wry smile as his mischievous eyebrow curved in that adorable manner that made her melt like butter on hot corn.”
JEN: “Seven? But I can only think of four.”

(*Colin grabs Jen and holds her close to him.*)

COLIN: “It’s a long way back to Madrid. Let’s start with number one.” (*He kisses her deep and passionately then pulls back and stares at the audience as does Jen. To audience.*) “As the ship disappeared into the orange sherbet horizon, the two lovers held one another, forgetting the evils of the world and forming their nation of two. Danger could be just over the next swell or an adventure might call to them on any of the thousands of unchartered islands, but for now, they were at peace. Of course...it was a long journey home and this was just the calm before the storm. (*Pause.*) The end...for now.” (*The music reaches a crescendo and the lights fade to black as Colin and Jen gaze out at the audience, standing in the overly dramatic pose of two characters you may see on the cover of a romance novel. When the lights fade back up, Colin is wearing a pair of sweat pants and a torn Sex Pistols t-shirt; Jen is wearing a simple but tasteful cotton nightgown. Colin is sitting at his small desk, where his typewriter sits next to a stack of papers. He is holding the last sheet of his latest manuscript “The Pirate of Madrid: Part Five, The Search for the Pulsing Orbs.” Jen is smiling over his shoulder as he finishes reading the manuscript to her.*) “Of course...it was a long way home and this was just the calm before the storm.

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(Pause.) The end...for now." *(Smiles. To Jen.)* So, babe, what do you think?

JEN: *(Grins.)* Colin...it's absolutely atrocious. *(Pause.)* You'll sell millions.

COLIN: Can you believe it? The Pirate of Madrid series is going to be made into a made-for-TV-movie.

JEN: *(Sarcastically.)* No, I can't believe it.

COLIN: I'm serious. Here I am, in L.A., living the dream. You know it looks like they might get Fabio to play the lead?

JEN: Really? I thought his career was sort of dead, you know, after that whole seagull in the face incident.

COLIN: Oh no, he's making a comeback.

JEN: And then some day, after all this romance novel stuff has passed, you'll write something real...right?

COLIN: Hey, what have we got to complain about?

JEN: Nothing, Colin, it's just, your other stuff. It's so good, it's so real, it's so...

COLIN: It so got rejected by every studio on the face of the planet. Besides, these crappy books sell. And this one...this could mean a book deal with Harlequin. *(Reading the title page again.)* "The Pirate of Madrid: Part Five, The Search for the Pulsing Orbs" by Amber Waves.

JEN: Whose idea was the name "Amber Waves"?

COLIN: It was Angela's. She said it sounded smutty yet patriotic at the same time—two characteristics people in Middle America seem to really look for in a romance novelist these days.

(Jen gives Colin a quick kiss as he sets the last page down and then she goes about unpacking one of the many boxes of books, clothes, and knick-knacks stacked around the apartment.)

JEN: So when do I get to meet this great agent of yours?

COLIN: Angela's still in Houston at the Romance Novel Publishers' Convention.

JEN: Don't you find it strange?

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COLIN: Find what strange?

JEN: She knows so much about me, but I don't even know what she looks like.

COLIN: Yes, she knows about your heaving bosom, your pouty lips, your hummingbird breath.

JEN: Stop. You know what I mean. Of course I don't mind that you use my picture on the back of your books, but it is kind of creepy knowing that thousands of readers think a waitress from New York is some trashy romance novelist.

COLIN: *(Playfully defensive.)* I am not trashy.

JEN: Yes, you are.

COLIN: Yes, I am.

JEN: But, baby, you're one of the trashiest.

(Colin crosses to her and holds her in front of the chaise lounge.)

COLIN: You always say the nicest things.

JEN: It just feels like more and more people are looking at me, smiling at me at the restaurant, like they recognize me.

COLIN: You know what I bet it is?

JEN: What?

COLIN: Your giant ego.

JEN: Shut up!

(She pushes him off. He sits on the chaise lounge and then immediately jumps up, as if he just sat on a hot stove.)

COLIN: Oh God!

JEN: *(Concerned.)* What?

COLIN: I sat on it. *(He falls to his knees and starts to brush out the imprint on the chaise lounge.)* There...there...I think it looks normal. Does it look normal to you?

JEN: What are you talking about?

COLIN: My mother. I've told you about how my mother is. Neurotic. Obsessive. Irrational.

JEN: Sounds like you.

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COLIN: I know...what?

JEN: Never mind.

COLIN: This chaise lounge. This...thing...is a symbol...the epitome, if you will...of my slightly twisted and often very stressful upbringing.

(Jen brushes the lounge with her hand.)

JEN: It's a couch, so what?

COLIN: Don't touch it!

JEN: Colin. Are you kidding?

COLIN: You don't understand. This couch is where Grandmother McKinney, my father's mother, passed away. *(Becoming dramatic.)* They say it was the only time in 96 years that she ever sat down for a moment of leisure. She only slept because she had to. She was up at dawn every morning cooking for her 12 children...

JEN: *(Under her breath.)* Crazy Catholics.

COLIN: What?

JEN: Nothing. Go on.

COLIN: The oldest of whom is my father. Then she cleaned, worked in the garden...fed, slaughtered, and cooked the livestock...carried water from the well, which was three miles away...

JEN: Walking barefoot, in the snow, uphill, both ways.

COLIN: All right, I sense your sarcasm.

JEN: Do you? I thought I was being subtle.

COLIN: *(Ignoring her.)* My parents gave this chaise lounge to my grandmother on her 50th wedding anniversary. She never had anything extravagant in her house during her entire life, and so they thought she would be appreciative. Instead, she hated the thing, calling it an object of the devil. It sat in her house untouched, always tempting her to sit down, but she never gave into that temptation.

JEN: Maybe she just didn't like your mother.

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COLIN: Of course she didn't. My mother was the wife of Grandmother McKinney's first born. If Mother had married number seven or eight, big deal. But the first born is sacred... *(Colin pauses, dramatically.)*

JEN: What's your point?

COLIN: The point is, the day after her youngest child was finally married off, Grandma McKinney decided to sit down for a single solitary minute to catch her breath. After all, she was 96. And when she sat down on this chaise lounge, she died. Just like that. My father always believed that with all of her children finally out of the house she didn't have anything left to live for. But when she sat on the chair just before she died she said, "How nice."

(Long pause.)

JEN: So?

COLIN: So? So!?! So she finally accepted my mother.

(Jen stands up and walks away.)

JEN: I don't get that at all. It sounds like the old lady finally got a chance to relax, and if she hated your mother, she hated your mother.

COLIN: Me and my seven brothers and sisters grew up with that couch as a symbol of my grandmother's acceptance. I sat on it once, and I couldn't sit down again for a week, if you catch my drift. Since I am their youngest, my mother sent it along with me as a gift.

JEN: I thought your sister Caroline was the youngest.

COLIN: No, she just acts like it. It goes Patrick, Sharon, Kelly, Catherine, Shawn, Joseph, Caroline, and Colin.

JEN: Wow. Do that again?

(Colin smiles and sighs.)

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COLIN: Patrick, Sharon, Kelly, Catherine, Shawn, Joseph, Caroline, and Colin.

JEN: Amazing. *(Pause.)* Anyway, your mother probably sent this... *(Points to the chaise lounge.)* ...thing along to haunt you and remind you that even in Los Angeles, you better not disobey her. I mean, really, giving you a piece of furniture you're not even allowed to sit down on. It's ridiculous.

COLIN: I can't make any excuses. That's just how my mother is.

JEN: Sounds weird.

COLIN: Come on, you can't tell me growing up as a preacher's kid you didn't have any weird moments.

JEN: Of course I did, but my parents never forced me to believe. They let me experience it for myself. They wanted me to make my own mind up about being a Baptist.

COLIN: And?

JEN: *(Deep breath.)* I like to tell people I'm an atheist.

COLIN: Meaning you just don't care?

JEN: No. Being an atheist means I don't give a damn what you believe, and I don't give a damn, if you know what I believe.

COLIN: Fair enough.

JEN: Oh, but I didn't mean you.

COLIN: I know. It's just...

JEN: What?

COLIN: Well, we're always talking about how Catholics can be a little eccentric at times.

JEN: You mean nutty?

COLIN: Be nice.

JEN: I'm sorry. I shouldn't judge.

COLIN: You can't tell me that Baptists don't do anything weird.

JEN: Are you kidding? Ever been to a revival?

COLIN: You mean church under the big top? No, I haven't had the pleasure. They serve peanuts at those things?

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JEN: Cute. *(Pause.)* There was this one time when a revival came into our small town in Idaho from the South...and I'm talking the Deep South. There was this preacher all decked out in sequins and gold velvet complete with a stage, and backup singers, and smoke machines. He started calling people up to "heal" them. So all these old-timers with their bad hips and cataracts and what not straggled up to the front where the preacher put his hands on them, slapped them in the forehead, and then they'd fall down "healed." They'd drape a purple sheet over them and continue with the next miracle.

COLIN: Did it really work?

JEN: That's what I wanted to find out. I had a blister on my foot from running around barefoot all summer. My daddy always told me to make sure I understood things inside and out before I claimed to truly believe them, so I stood up, all of eight years old, and walked straight up to that preacher. He asked me what my sickness was, and I told him I had a blister on my foot. So he put his hands on me, wailed out "Heal this girl," and smacked me on the forehead.

COLIN: And did you fall down?

JEN: I just staggered backward and stared at the son of a bitch wondering why he smacked me in the face.

COLIN: *(Chuckles.)* The honesty of innocence.

JEN: Something like that. So I'm standing there, all these "healed" old folks lying around me under their purple sheets, and he decides to try it again. He says, "The devil's got a strong hold on this one." He grabs me, prays, and then smacks me again, but I don't fall down. After three or four more smacks in the head, they went on with the show, but they left me standing up there for all the others to see.

COLIN: That must have been horrible.

JEN: It was at the time, but it also made me realize something about Christianity. You can put as much glitz and gold on it as you want, but when it comes right down to it, Jesus didn't have to go around smacking people in the head to make

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them believe. *(They continue to unpack boxes.)* You know, it's been nice these last couple of days.

COLIN: Yeah, just when it felt like we couldn't get any closer, I had to leave. I'm glad you got the time off to fly out.

JEN: *(Hinting.)* You've only been gone for two weeks, and that's been torture. And it's going to be even harder when I have to leave next Saturday to fly back to New York. I don't know when I'll get another chance to come visit.

COLIN: I know...I'm just trying not to think about it.

JEN: Colin, when am I going to get to move out here with you?

COLIN: Well...when we get engaged.

JEN: All right then, when am I going to get a ring?

COLIN: First I need to make sure I'm established, and then...

JEN: Colin, "The Pirate of Madrid" has sold thousands of copies. Amber Waves is becoming a household name. Trust me, you're established. What are you afraid of?

COLIN: We've only been together for ten months.

JEN: Sometimes ten months is more than enough time. Look at my parents, they met one Christmas and by Valentine's Day they were married. Thirty-two years later, they're still going strong.

COLIN: *(Quietly.)* Let's see how things go with my parents.

JEN: Oh. I see. So they have to approve of me before you can even think of marrying me?

COLIN: No...no, of course not. No. I just. I mean, I don't want to spring it on them that we're engaged before they've even met you. I mean, remember when I first met your father? He hated me.

JEN: You ran over our dog.

COLIN: He jumped in front of the car! That dog had a death wish!

JEN: He was 16 years old.

COLIN: Exactly my point. He wanted to be put out of his misery. I did that dog a favor.

JEN: That dog hadn't done any jumping in years.

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COLIN: In any case, your father had to warm up to me before he'd accept me, and now that he loves me, I know he'd be thrilled if we got engaged.

JEN: Of course. *(Pause.)* As long as he got to perform the ceremony.

COLIN: *(Absentmindedly agreeing.)* As long as he...what?

JEN: Well, he is a Baptist minister.

COLIN: Jen, my parents are Catholic. They're not only Catholic, they're Irish Catholic. Really, really Irish Catholic.

JEN: Well, your father isn't a priest – at least I hope he isn't – because from what I understand, that would be incredibly wrong.

COLIN: I mean my parents want to see me married in the Catholic Church.

JEN: But I'm not Catholic.

COLIN: *(Quietly.)* For now.

JEN: For now? What do you mean "for now"!?

COLIN: You'd have to convert, just until after we're married. You know, pretend to be Catholic.

JEN: Pretend to be Catholic?

COLIN: Yeah.

JEN: Colin!

COLIN: What?

JEN: That's not like pretending to like someone's cooking or pretending to like "The Three Amigos."

COLIN: *(Hurt.)* You said you loved that movie.

JEN: Honey, it's a stupid movie.

COLIN: *(Pouting.)* But it's my favorite.

JEN: Forget the movie, you just told me you want me to become Catholic!

COLIN: Pretend to be Catholic, just until my parents get to know you. Besides, I already told my mother that –

JEN: What? You told her what, Colin?

COLIN: Well...uh...

JEN: Told her what!?

COLIN: That you're...

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JEN: Catholic?!

COLIN: *(Sheepishly.)* Uh-huh.

JEN: *(Grabbing him by his collar, growling.)* You did what?!

COLIN: Well...once we're married it won't really matter. But you have to understand, if I told her you were raised Baptist—

JEN: *(Still holding onto him.)* So that's what all the flashcards have been about. "Catholic Feasts Bingo," the "Our Father Sing-a-long," the "Patron Saints Board Game" you made.

COLIN: I thought you enjoyed "Who Wants To Be Canonized?"

(Jen lets go of him and paces nervously.)

JEN: Sure, I was interested in your beliefs, but I didn't know you were preening me so that you could pass me off as a good little Catholic girl.

COLIN: You'll be fine. Besides, most Catholics don't know a tenth of what my mother does about their religion.

JEN: *(Fanning herself.)* Okay. I'm going to be fine. It's only dinner. It's just...you make her sound so intense.

COLIN: *(Without thinking.)* You have no idea. *(She glares at him.)* I mean, she's not intense. You'll see tonight.

JEN: *(Sarcastically.)* I can't wait. *(Pause.)* Tonight?! Are they coming tonight?! I thought it wasn't until tomorrow!

COLIN: It's January the 6th.

(Jen looks at him, trying to figure out why this is significant.)

JEN: Yes...

COLIN: The Feast of the Epiphany.

JEN: Oh...right!

COLIN: Come on, your father's a man of the church.

JEN: Yeah, the Baptist church. A little different. I didn't realize they'd be here so soon. *(Suddenly frantic.)* What if they catch me here in my nightgown?

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COLIN: (*Simply.*) She'd probably kill you.

JEN: Oh, my God!

COLIN: Don't worry, their flight doesn't leave Detroit until noon. You've got nothing to worry about. She'll love you. She's just...quirky.

(Jen points to the forbidden chaise lounge.)

JEN: Giving you a forbidden couch is quirky? Telling you that looking at the underwear ads in the Sears catalog as a kid would make your eyes explode is quirky? Thinking that wearing satin was evil because the spelling is one letter off from "Satan" is quirky? She's going to hate me.

COLIN: She won't hate you. Come on. Let's run through some of the saints.

JEN: Okay. Okay. I can do this. *(Jen calmly starts to sit down on the chaise lounge, but Colin lets out a scream. She smacks him.)* Don't do that!

(Jen sits at his desk. Colin picks up a stack of 3x5 cards and starts quizzing her.)

COLIN: Okay. The Patron Saint of wet nurses.

JEN: Who is Agatha?

COLIN: Good. The Patron Saint of lost articles.

JEN: Who is Anthony of Padua?

COLIN: Excellent! The Patron Saint for the fear of snakes.

JEN: Um. Ohhh. I know this one.

COLIN: Think of a place having to do with snakes.

JEN: The Temple of Doom!

COLIN: No. A real place.

JEN: Sorry. Give me another hint.

COLIN: Lucky Charms. Leprechauns. Riverdance. Where my grandparents are from?

JEN: Oh! Ireland!

COLIN: Yes! And think of a famous Irish man.

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JEN: Michael Flatley!

COLIN: Michael Flatley is not a saint. Come on...Saint....

JEN: Patrick! Saint Patrick!

COLIN: (*Ecstatic.*) High-five!

(*Jen just stares at him.*)

JEN: I'm going to fail miserably. I hate you.

COLIN: Leaving me hanging here. (*Jen walks away, Colin takes his other hand and high-fives himself.*) Listen, Jen. Just relax, just be yourself. I fell for you the first time I talked to you and why? Not because you're Catholic, or know all your Saints, or have any idea that January 6th is the Feast of the Epiphany, but because you are a good, sweet, decent person. And they're going to see that, too.

JEN: Yeah?

COLIN: Yeah. Now we've been up all night working on this piece of crap book, so why don't you go make yourself some breakfast?

JEN: I am kind of hungry.

COLIN: Go on. I'll be there to help out in just a minute. (*Jen gives Colin a quick kiss. She exits into the kitchen, pours herself some cereal, and starts the coffee. Colin takes his manuscript and starts to slide it into a big manila envelope when a knock comes on the door. Colin opens the door to reveal his landlord, Hank Lugo, holding a suitcase.*) Good morning, Mr. Lugo.

HANK: Hey now. Just because I'm the slumlord... (*Grimacing at his own joke.*) ...I mean, landlord, don't mean you have to be all prim and proper with me. Call me Hank.

COLIN: All right, Hank.

HANK: How's the moving in going? Everything all right?

COLIN: Fine, just fine. It's a beautiful apartment. I love the view of Sunset Boulevard.

HANK: Heater working all right?

COLIN: Yep.

HANK: Is that toilet still running?

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COLIN: Well...yes.

HANK: Why didn't you give me a holler?

COLIN: I didn't want to bother you...

HANK: Listen, kid, this is L.A. If you're not assertive, you won't get nothing out here. I'll come by later tonight and see if I can get it fixed.

COLIN: Thanks, I really appreciate it.

(Hank looks past Colin and sees the sleeping bags rolled out.)

HANK: No bed yet, huh?

COLIN: Nope, still got the sleeping bag rolled out on the floor. Store said they'd deliver it sometime tomorrow.

HANK: Oh, speaking of tomorrow, you're gonna want to take that cherry new Mustang of yours you got parked out front and move it over to Fairfax. Thursday is street sweeping day and sometimes those bastards'll spray crap all over the place, not to mention they'll ticket ya.

COLIN: Thanks for looking out for me.

(Hank holds up the suitcase.)

HANK: And...uh...did you know you left one of your suitcases outside?

COLIN: I was wondering where that one went. I was in such a rush to get everything in last night, with that storm and all.

HANK: Well, be more careful. Unattended items have a tendency to walk off in Los Angeles.

COLIN: Hey, I know all about that. I just finished my bachelors at Trinity College in New York. One day I left a sack of garbage in the hallway and went back into my dorm room to grab my keys. By the time I got back, someone had stolen my trash.

HANK: Bunch of weirdoes out there.

COLIN: Tell me about it.

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(Jen starts singing to herself in the kitchen.)

HANK: *(Looks past Colin.)* Oh, I'm sorry. Am I interrupting you?

COLIN: Oh, no, don't worry. That's just my girlfriend.

HANK: *(Grins.)* Girlfriend, huh? Been in Los Angeles for two weeks and already you've got yourself a girlfriend?

COLIN: She's visiting from New York. We met while I was in college. *(Pause. Making excuses.)* Don't worry, though, she's staying in a hotel down the street. She was just helping me move in last night, and with that storm and all...

(Hank puts his hands up.)

HANK: Hey. You don't have to explain anything to Hank. As long as I get the rent, I don't care what you do. Well...within reason.

COLIN: Yes, of course. I mean, I guess it doesn't make sense her staying in a hotel, but my parents aren't real big on the idea of people living together before they get married and they're visiting today.

HANK: They from California?

COLIN: No, Detroit. They're coming into town tonight to see the new place and to meet Jen.

HANK: Introducing her to the future in-laws for the first time, huh? Good luck with that one.

COLIN: Thanks, Hank. See you later.

(Colin starts to close the door. Hank stops the door from closing.)

HANK: Uh...just one more thing there. Uh, you see... *(He pulls out a copy of "The Pirate of Madrid: Part One, Wenches In Heat.")* ...I was wondering if maybe you could sign this for me...I mean, my wife? She's a big fan.

COLIN: Now you know I can't do that. Few people know that I am the true Amber Waves. I only told you because you

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wouldn't have given up this beautiful apartment to some starving artist.

HANK: That's true. You did look a little rough around the edges until your check cleared.

COLIN: Lonely housewives like to read romance novels by other lonely housewives. Like it says on the back... *(Reads.)* "Amber Waves is a 35-year-old mother of two from Cleveland, Ohio. She is divorced from her husband and spends her free time soaking in a hot lavender scented tub, reading the works of her heroine, Danielle Steel." If it said "Amber Waves is really a scruffy 22-year-old Irish-American kid originally from Detroit who writes these pieces of trash to pay off his student loans," I don't think I'd be able to afford this place.

(Hank is still gazing at the back of the book.)

HANK: She sure don't look like a 35-year-old mother of two.

COLIN: She's not. That's Jen.

(Hank points to the kitchen.)

HANK: Oh, the uh...

COLIN: Yeah.

HANK: Ohhhhh. *(Gazing at the back of the book.)* Lucky man.

JEN: *(From the kitchen.)* Colin? Is someone at the door?

COLIN: Yeah, it's just...

(Jen enters, sees Hank with the suitcase next to him, and her eyes get large as she falsely assumes that this is Colin's father.)

JEN: Oh, my God! I mean, oh my...oh my...my. You're here early! *(To Colin, through gritted teeth.)* They're here early. I must look... *(Looking down at her nightgown.)* ...I look...like I spent the night. *(Nervously smiles at Hank.)* Excuse me, Mr. McKinney.

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(Jen crosses to the bathroom, enters, and slams the door.)

HANK: What the...?

COLIN: *(Chuckles.)* She thinks...oh, this is classic.

HANK: You mind letting me in on the joke?

COLIN: You want to get her to sign that book of yours?

HANK: *(Excited.)* Would she do that?

COLIN: Of course, but first you need to do a little favor for me. You see, she thinks you're my father.

HANK: *(Realizing.)* Oh ho! And she's strutting around in her nightie and...

COLIN: Exactly. *(They both start laughing.)* She's nervous as all hell about meeting my parents. Maybe if we play with her a little, she'll loosen up a bit.

HANK: Sounds like fun!

COLIN: All right. Your name is Seamus McKinney. You work at the Hampshire Mill in Detroit, and your wife is Audrey, but we always call her Mother. She is extremely Catholic and neurotic. You're a sweet guy, but kind of simple, and you let your wife walk all over you. Think you can handle this?

HANK: Shoot. I starred in over a dozen different commercials in the 80s. I only took this landlord gig as research for a movie role, but then I threw out my back in a Rollerblading accident and lost the part to Emilio Estevez *[or insert name of another actor]*. I don't care what anybody says, *The Mighty Ducks* *[or insert name of another movie]* sucked!

(The bathroom door opens and Jen re-enters the room, now wearing jeans and a sweater.)

JEN: Mr. McKinney. *(Extending her hand.)* I'm Jen Thompson. It is a pleasure to meet you.

HANK: *(Shaking her hand.)* Call me Seamus.

JEN: Oh, of course. And where is your lovely wife?

HANK: Mother's tipping the cab driver. She'll be right up.

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JEN: Wonderful! I can't wait to meet the dear woman. Colin has told me so much about her, I feel like I already –

HANK: But if she finds you here, at this hour, there will be hell to pay.

JEN: *(Starts giggling.)* Hell to pay. You are a riot!

HANK: Do you see me smiling? We got to get you out of here, hanging around in my son's apartment at 7 in the morning...

JEN: *(Panicking.)* We didn't do anything last night. I mean, ever. We've never...

HANK: She's gonna make assumptions.

JEN: *(Nervous.)* Well, what are we going to do? Where am I going to go?!

HANK: Quick! Out the door! Hide in the bushes! *(Jen bolts for the door, but Hank grabs her at the last minute.)* Wait a minute, here she comes! Into the kitchen!

JEN: But! But!

HANK: There's no time! If you want to survive the wrath of Mother McKinney, you'll come with me! *(Hank grabs Jen by the hand and rushes into the kitchen with her. They frantically look around and then he points under the table, where she'll be hidden by the tablecloth.)* Under there! I'll distract her and send Colin in to get you once it's safe. Whatever you do, don't move! *(Hank returns to the living room, where Colin is trying to control his laughter. Whispers.)* How long should we leave her in there?

COLIN: *(Whispers.)* How long do you think she'd stay?

HANK: *(Cracking up while whispering.)* Until hell freezes over.

(Suddenly Angela Steinlauf enters the apartment. She is carrying a small suitcase and a huge sack of mail.)

COLIN: Angela! I didn't expect you back from Houston until tomorrow.

ANGELA: *(Always pacing.)* Waste of time. I've never seen so many steaming piles of romance crap in my life.

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Well...except for last year's romance novel convention. Anyway, kid, things are looking up for the Pirate of Madrid and Amber Waves. A rep from Harlequin wants to see the first draft of Part Five tonight. Tell me you've got it done.

(Colin hands her the manila envelope.)

COLIN: It's been done for weeks.

ANGELA: Don't lie to me, Colin, it doesn't become you.

COLIN: *(Confesses.)* Finished it this morning.

ANGELA: That's better. Honesty. That's what keeps the bond between an agent and her clients strong. Honesty. Here.

(She hands him the bulging sack of mail.)

COLIN: What's this?

ANGELA: Fan mail. *(Colin starts to sort through it.)* Mostly housewives begging to know what happens next, will you send an autographed picture of Amber Waves, have you ever made love to a pirate. Your typical stuff. Oh...except for these. *(She pulls out a stack with a rubber band around them from the letters Colin is sorting.)* No address, no real name, he just signs them all "Your Average Joe."

COLIN: Postmarked Detroit. Huh, my hometown.

ANGELA: Looks like we're hitting the male and female markets, always good for sales.

COLIN: Oh, Angela, this is my landlord, Hank. Hank Lugo, Angela Steinlauf, my agent.

HANK: Pleased to meet you. You ever seen that deodorant commercial with the talking armpit back in '82?

ANGELA: I don't wear deodorant...blocks the pores.

HANK: Oh. Well. Anyway, I was the French armpit. *(Lifting his arm and speaking with a French accent.)* "If you are smelly and hairy like me, extra strength Bay Breeze Deodorant will

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leave you smelling fresh and bright but also strong and robust." If you know anyone looking for a guy like me...

ANGELA: I'm not that kind of agent, sweetheart. I'm a literary agent. When you write a funny armpit joke, give me a call.

COLIN: Can I get you something to drink? I think Jen just put on a pot of coffee in the kitchen...

(Colin and Hank look at each other.)

ANGELA: No coffee for me, just had my quadruple latté on the taxi ride up from LAX. Speaking of Jen, I'd like to meet her. I tell you, her picture on the back of these books probably sells just as well as the garbage you write inside.

COLIN: Sure...I'd love for you to meet her, too. But first, I need you to do me a favor.

(He grabs her hands.)

ANGELA: Colin, why are you touching me?

COLIN: Your name is Audrey McKinney, but everyone calls you Mother. You're super-Catholic and neurotic. You've just arrived here from Detroit with your husband, my father... *(He points to Hank.)* ...Seamus.

HANK: *(To Angela, shyly waving.)* Hi...how you doing?

ANGELA: I don't have time for games, Colin. I have to be back in New York tomorrow morning.

(Colin snatches the manila envelope away from her.)

COLIN: Do you want part five of The Pirate of Madrid or not?

(Angela lets out a disgusted sigh and rolls her eyes.)

ANGELA: Fine.

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COLIN: Now all you have to say when Jen comes in here is "I know that you sat on my couch."

(Angela touches the chaise lounge.)

ANGELA: What? This couch?

COLIN: Don't touch it! *(He smooths out her finger prints.)* Say your line.

ANGELA: *(With absolutely no feeling whatsoever.)* "I know that you sat on my couch."

COLIN: With spirit. With some attitude!

ANGELA: Do you want me to play your stupid game?

COLIN: Yes.

ANGELA: Then just let me say the damn line my own way.

COLIN: Fair enough. You ready, Hank?

(Hank bobs his head back and forth like a boxer.)

HANK: Let me just get back into character. "Round and round the rugged rocks the ragged rascal ran." *(Clears his throat, claps his hands.)* I'm ready.

(Colin enters the kitchen and lifts up the tablecloth.)

COLIN: Come on out, Jen, they're gone.

JEN: Are you sure? I don't want this to be your mother's first impression of me.

COLIN: It's all clear! Make a run for it, and I'll see you tonight at dinner. *(She gives him a quick kiss and looks uncertainly at the door.)* Go, go, go!

(Jen bursts through the door and stops dead in her tracks when she sees Angela with her suitcase and Hank standing next to her.)

JEN: Jesus Christ!

HANK: What?

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JEN: I mean, God dammit!

HANK: My ears!

JEN: Holy —

HANK: Stop!

(Silence as the three stare at each other. Colin sneaks in behind and watches. Hank stares over at Angela, and after a moment, she feels his glare.)

ANGELA: What? *(Hank clears his throat, looks at the couch.)* Oh right. *(Staccato with dramatic hand gestures.)* I know that you sat on my couch.

(Jen falls to her knees.)

JEN: I didn't. It was Colin! *(She points to him.)* He did it!

HANK: *(Shakes his head.)* Selling out your own boyfriend.

(Angela pulls out a cigarette and lights up.)

ANGELA: Are we done here?

JEN: You...you smoke?

ANGELA: Yeah, I smoke. What are you going to do? Call my old Jewish mother and tell her I'm a lesbian, too?

JEN: You...huh?

ANGELA: Listen, your face sells a lot of books, sweetheart, but you need to loosen up. Colin, honey, I'll call you when I hear back from Harlequin. Should be tomorrow, if not tonight.

(Angela picks up her suitcase, takes the manila envelope, and exits. Jen stares blankly at Hank.)

HANK: Married all this time...you think you know somebody.

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(Colin finally loses it and starts laughing. Hank breaks down as well.)

JEN: What is going on? *(Rises.)* You bastard! These aren't your parents!

(Colin can hardly stand up he's laughing so hard.)

COLIN: The look...the look on your face when Angela said...lesbian!

JEN: That was your agent? *(Points at Hank.)* Then who the hell is this?

COLIN: That's Hank. He's my new landlord.

(Hank waves to Jen.)

HANK: Hi ya. *(Pause.)* I'm also an actor. Did you ever see that deodorant commercial with the talking armpits back in '82?

(Jen pushes Hank out.)

JEN: Get out! I don't want there to be any witnesses when I kill this smug son of a bitch.

(Hank pulls out his book.)

HANK: Wait a minute, Colin said you wouldn't mind signing this if I—

JEN: Out!

(Jen slams the door on Hank and turns around with daggers in her eyes. Colin immediately stops laughing.)

COLIN: Honey, it was only a joke. I was trying to, you know, relieve some of the tension.

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JEN: My heart is racing. I'm sweating. I thought...you knew what I...argh!

(She lunges for Colin and tackles him.)

COLIN: Hey! Hey, it was only a joke!

(Jen starts to tickle him.)

JEN: *(Tickling him.)* You like to laugh? I'll make you laugh, funny boy!

COLIN: *(Giggling.)* Let me up. I'm sorry. All right! I'm sorry!

JEN: *(Not letting up.)* You're gonna be sorry!

COLIN: Uncle! Uncle! *(Jen relaxes and Colin suddenly flips her over and pins her to the floor. Angela re-enters and sees him straddling her.)* Who's your daddy?

JEN: Get off of me!

COLIN: *(Tickles her.)* Say it!

JEN: Never!

COLIN: Come on, I want to hear it!

JEN: You're my daddy!

ANGELA: *(Looks disgusted.)* Sick. *(She picks up her forgotten pack of cigarettes.)* Sick, sick, sick.

(She exits. Jen and Colin look up, embarrassed, and watch Angela leave. Lights fade to black.)

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Scene 2

(AT RISE: One hour later. Colin and Jen are unpacking boxes. She sets books up on a bookshelf as they talk. Colin picks up a picture and grimaces.)

COLIN: God, I don't even know what to do with this. I'd burn it, but I think it's fireproof.

(Jen looks at the picture.)

JEN: Who's that?

COLIN: My sister, Caroline, better known as... *(High-pitched.)*
...Raven: The Princess of Darkness.

JEN: *(Sarcastic.)* Looks like a sweet kid.

COLIN: Yeah, she's the baby of the family.

JEN: I thought you were.

COLIN: Well...technically. She's a year older than me, but mentally she's seven.

JEN: Oh, I'm so sorry. You mean she's "challenged"?

COLIN: No, of course not. She's just an immature little brat. Dyed her hair blue, joined a coven of witches online, has this black cat that stinks to high heaven. It has some sort of Irritable Bowel Syndrome for felines...truly disgusting.

JEN: Hey, at least your parents have someone who they're more disappointed in than you.

COLIN: Are you kidding? They think Caroline is an angel.

JEN: You can't be serious.

COLIN: She's completely two-faced. Acts like the perfect little Catholic girl when they're watching and then threatens to swallow my soul when they're not. God, I wish that one day they would just catch her in the act. Then I could die happy.

JEN: She's not coming with them, is she?

COLIN: And give up a chance to be home alone with her chicken bones and goat's blood? Not likely. I hate to say it,

but the sooner I'm completely financially independent the better because it means I'll only have to visit little miss crazy here when I want to. I mean, if Harlequin picks up the Amber Waves series of books, I'm looking at a long-term contract and that would mean some really decent money.

JEN: Not that you're hurting.

COLIN: Hey, it's not like I'm living in a palace. A studio apartment in West Hollywood isn't exactly a luxury.

JEN: I'm not talking about the apartment; I'm talking about that bright red thing parked out front.

COLIN: So I bought a muscle car? You have to spoil yourself every now and then.

JEN: Boys with toys. Always overcompensating for –

COLIN: For what? (*Jen grins.*) For what?

(Jen pulls out copies of Colin's books.)

JEN: "The Pirate of Madrid, Part One, Wenches in Heat."
"The Pirate of Madrid, Part Two, The Slippery Dock."
Probably should keep these packed away until your mom and dad leave town.

COLIN: Yeah, I'd say that's a good idea.

(He takes the box of romance novels and hides them under his desk. Jen notices the sack full of fan mail.)

JEN: Fan mail?

COLIN: Yep, Amber Waves is becoming a very popular author.

JEN: Don't you want to read some?

COLIN: I have to admit I am a bit curious.

(Jen opens a book and starts to read. The lights fade down. Fan 1 enters. A spotlight illuminates Fan 1.)

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FAN 1: "Dear Amber Waves. I, too, am a single-mother, and I just wanted to write to tell you that your books help me to escape when life gets me down. My husband left when he first found out about the baby; I haven't heard from him since. It took me a long time to realize that maybe it wasn't my fault that he left, that maybe nothing was actually wrong with me, but that he was the one with the problem. I know now that it was actually a blessing in disguise because he would have left me sooner or later, or worse, he would have stuck around and resented our beautiful little boy. I'm a waitress at a local diner and while sometimes it's hard to justify buying the little extras in life, your books are always well worth the money for the entertainment they give me. I'm sorry for rattling on like this. I just wanted you to know how much I appreciate what you do. All the best, Anna Worthington."

(Spotlight off Fan 1. In the darkness, Fan 1 exits and Fan 2 enters. Colin opens a letter in the semi-darkness and the spotlight illuminates Fan 2 on another part of the stage.)

Fan 2: "Dear Amber Waves. The way you describe the Pirate of Madrid reminds of my husband. Have you been cheating with him? I know he's messing around with someone. If I ever catch you, I will give you something to write about. Did you ever see that movie "Misery"? That guy's imprisonment was a day in the park compared to what I could do to the woman who tries to steal my man. First off, I'd..."

(Fan 2 continues to rant in silence.)

COLIN: Wow, it gets very graphic and specific.

(Jen looks over his shoulder.)

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JEN: I didn't know you could do that with a spatula.

COLIN: Only if it was made out of metal.

FAN 2: "And that's when you'd start to beg for mercy. By the way, do you think you could send an autographed picture for my scrapbook? I'm keeping an eye on you, ya skank. Jane Mueller."

(Spotlight off Fan 2. Jen opens a third letter and begins reading. Spotlight illuminates Fan 3.)

FAN 3: "Dear Amber Waves. My child, I'd like to start by saying that I pray for you every chance I get. To be so young and to have such dirty thoughts makes me wonder what is wrong with the world. However, when you get to be my age, you figure that God wants you to be happy, so at the same time I praise the Lord for you and your books. My husband passed on 35 years ago, and I've never gone looking for another man. Instead, I draw myself a nice warm tub, light some candles, put on my glasses, and read romance novels. Few have excited me like yours. When I touch myself I..."

(Spotlight off Fan 3, as Colin rips the letter out of Jen's hands. Lights fade back up.)

COLIN: All right, that's enough.

JEN: What's wrong?

COLIN: I was just getting a little uncomfortable.

JEN: Just think, thousands of little old ladies are reading your words and bringing themselves to new heights.

COLIN: I'm gonna puke. Seriously, I can feel the bile creeping up my throat.

JEN: Wrinkly old flaky skin...

COLIN: I swear, you need to stop.

JEN: *(Laughs.)* All right, but I'm gonna save this letter for the next time you really piss me off.

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COLIN: I promise, I will never piss you off again.

JEN: Sure, we'll see. (*Flips through the letters. Spots the bundle of letters secured with a rubber band.*) What's this stack?

COLIN: Those are from a very devout male fan.

JEN: (*Reads.*) "Your Average Joe." After the brutal honesty of those ladies, I wonder what he has to say.

COLIN: Probably something sick and perverted, you know how guys can be.

JEN: (*Smiles at him.*) Oh, I know.

(*She opens the letter, reading. The lights fade down as the spotlight illuminates Your Average Joe.*)

YOUR AVERAGE JOE: "Dear Amber Waves. I am a man, and I enjoy the adventure stories in your books. However, I am also married and my wife is not very affectionate anymore. I like your books because they give me ideas on how to reignite the flame of our passion. Last night, I blew in my wife's ear, just like you describe the Pirate of Madrid doing on page 67 in "Part 1: Wenches in Heat," but she smacked my face, thinking it was a mosquito. I'll keep reading and maybe something else will work. Sincerely, Your Average Joe." (*Colin picks up another letter, and as he starts to read it, Your Average Joe changes his position slightly and starts to speak.*) "Dear Amber Waves. It's me again. Last night, I tried to slide a cube of ice across my wife's belly in bed, but she screamed at me and made me sleep on the couch. The Pirate of Madrid does this on page 78 in "Part 2: The Slippery Dock," but in the book, Penelope was awake. Maybe I will try it while my wife is filling out the crossword puzzle from the paper tomorrow morning. After raising our many children, she just doesn't seem to have any spark left. Oh well, keep your fingers crossed for me. Sincerely, Your Average Joe." (*Jen picks up a third letter and as she starts to read it, Your Average Joe changes his position once again and starts to speak.*) "Dear Amber Waves. Well, I can't wait to read your fourth

book because I've tried everything in your first three books to get my wife's attention. Penelope seemed to enjoy the thrill of having hot candle wax drizzled on her feet, but my wife kicked me in the face when I tried this. She said that if I ever try that again, she will have me committed. Maybe you could write a book for guys like me who aren't as suave and sophisticated as *The Pirate of Madrid*. Oh well, keep up the great storytelling, and I'll keep trying to make my wife happy, even if it does get me committed. Sincerely, Your Average Joe."

(Spotlight off Your Average Joe. Your Average Joe exits. Lights up.)

COLIN: Sounds like a nice enough guy. Not too bright, but persistent.

(Jen pulls out a bird puppet and a bee puppet from one of the boxes.)

JEN: And what are these?

(Colin covers his face.)

COLIN: *(Embarrassed.)* Oh, no, I forgot all about those.

JEN: Still playing with stuffed animals?

(Colin slips them on his hands.)

COLIN: They're puppets. My mother sent them with me to college to remind me to...stay pure.

JEN: Because they'd make you remember your childhood?

COLIN: No, because these were what she used to explain sex to me... *(Holds them up.)* ...the birds and the bees.

JEN: Ohhhhhh. *(Pause.)* Ewwwww. Didn't that screw you up?

COLIN: Well, whenever I see a Muppet I do get kind of aroused.

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JEN: That's disgusting.

COLIN: Product of my upbringing.

JEN: So did she...you know...show you how to...using the puppets?

COLIN: God no! It was just her way of talking to me about "it" without actually having to look at me. Watch. *(He ducks behind his desk and brings the two puppets up. Bird puppet.)*

Hello, Jen. My name is Bonzo.

JEN: Hello, Bonzo. *(Bonzo looks her up and down.)* Behave.

COLIN: *(Bee puppet.)* And my name is Bee-Bee.

JEN: Hello, Bee-Bee.

COLIN: *(Bee puppet.)* Do you like my stinger?

JEN: You bet I do.

COLIN: *(Bird puppet.)* We're here to tell you all about what happens when a Catholic man and a Catholic woman fall in love. *(Bee puppet.)* That's right. When you grow up, you're going to have some feelings...funny feelings. *(Bee looks down at his "crotch" and back up.)* Down there. You may think that's normal, but it's not. *(Bird puppet.)* Take those urges, and push them deep into the pit of your stomach, then go out for football, and when you start to feel crazy, hit somebody! *(Bee puppet.)* That's called puberty. *(Bird puppet.)* Now you may be tempted to talk to your non-Catholic friends about these feelings, but that's insane because you shouldn't have any friends that aren't Catholic. *(Bee puppet.)* And if you ever date a girl who isn't Catholic, there's a special place in hell, where you'll suffer for the rest of your life. *(Bird puppet.)* Now, who wants chocolate ice cream?!

JEN: *(Playfully raising her hand.)* I do! I do!

(Colin pops up from behind the desk.)

COLIN: And my mother never mentioned the birds and the bees ever again. So you see, she's different.

JEN: Well...what about your dad?

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#1

COLIN: My dad, he's great. Quiet, sort of naïve, but he's a great guy. We used to go fishing together. We never caught anything, but it didn't matter. It was just nice being with him. As we'd eat our sack lunches, he'd let me share a beer with him and we'd enjoy the silence. I mean, after living with my mother, silence can be a beautiful thing. *(Pause.)* My ma's wonderful, too. I mean, I love her, of course I love her, she's my mother, I just...never really got to know her.

JEN: I don't know what she'll think of me. You seem like you want her to approve of you so much.

COLIN: It's like this...I'm the baby. My other brothers and sisters, they've all moved far from home, all except for Caroline, although my parents probably wish she would move away. It seems that once they all moved out, they forgot where they came from. I know my mother wasn't always the warmest and friendliest woman, but she loved us. Patrick, Sharon, Kelly, Catherine, Shawn and Joseph don't see that. I can't imagine what it must feel like to have your children run away from you. No matter how well they're doing with their own families, no matter how much money they're making or how big of a house they live in, it's hard to brag about your kids when they don't even call on Mother's Day. I just want her to feel like she can at least be proud of one of us. *(Jen sits quietly.)* You're gonna be fine. I know you're nervous about tonight, and I'm sorry I played that trick on you before, but I thought it would relieve some of the tension. *(Pause.)* Jen? Come on, say something.

JEN: Didn't you promise me some chocolate ice cream?

(Colin grins and gets up. He peels the puppets off and heads toward the kitchen.)

COLIN: Coming right up.

JEN: What time is it?

COLIN: About 9.

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§2

JEN: You mind if I take a shower? Hotel bathrooms always kind of creep me out. You know, Bates Motel and all that.

COLIN: Be my guest. But hurry up. Your ice cream will melt.

JEN: Thanks.

(Jen enters the bathroom and Colin starts to scoop ice cream into two bowls. Lights fade to black. Spotlight illuminates Seamus and Audrey McKinney. Note: They should either be placed down in the pit if you are using a raised stage, or down center if you are using a black box stage. Whatever the blocking, they need to appear detached from the apartment as they walk in place "around the city." Their daughter, Caroline, lingers behind them in the darkness until her cue.)

AUDREY *(Disgusted.)* Mary, mother of God, this place is filthy.

(Seamus is looking down at the sidewalk, grinning.)

SEAMUS: *(Indicating sidewalk.)* Look at all them stars with the celebrities' names on them.

(Audrey pulls out a handkerchief.)

AUDREY: I can actually smell the debauchery.

SEAMUS: *(Reading the names.)* Jimmy Stewart. Audrey Hepburn.

AUDREY: *(Points down the street.)* Look. Look down there! Bright neon lights flashing "Girls! Girls! Girls!" Tsk, tsk, my Colin can't be living here.

SEAMUS: *(Points up.)* But the sign says "Hollywood Boulevard." This must be the right place.

AUDREY: *(Over her shoulder, shouts.)* Caroline, sweetheart, don't lag behind! These types will take advantage of good Catholic girls.

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(Caroline appears. She hides a lit cigarette behind her back and wears a tiny black leather backpack.)

CAROLINE: Coming, Mother.

(Caroline takes a drag of her cigarette.)

AUDREY: *(Not looking back.)* What are you doing back there?
Do I smell smoke?

(Caroline hides the cigarette behind her back again.)

CAROLINE: Didn't you see the small altar back there for Our Lady of Perpetual Sorrow? I was lighting a candle for all of these heathens.

AUDREY: God bless you, child. I'm so glad you decided to come along to watch over us in this city of sin.

CAROLINE: *(Aside.)* Are you kidding? I wouldn't miss this for the world. *(Notices attractive man. She blows kisses to him.)*
Hey there, stud.

SEAMUS: What was that, sweetheart?

CAROLINE: Nothing, Daddy.

AUDREY: *(As if to homeless man, smacking away invisible hands.)*
Get off me, you filthy beggars. No, I don't have any spare change, not for the likes of you. You'd just spend it on drugs, you filthy hippies.

(Caroline looks at the "beggars" and hisses, then grins. As her parents talk, Caroline continues to smoke her cigarette.)

SEAMUS: Let's not make a scene.

AUDREY: Not make a scene? Let's not make a scene, he says.

Oh, how soon we forget, Seamus.

SEAMUS: Mother, don't start again.

AUDREY: Filth. Absolute filth, those books are.

SEAMUS: If you'd just give them a try, you'd see—

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AUDREY: I don't need to give them a try. I can tell just by the covers that they're filled with sin. Men with their shirts ripped off, and women—I tell you, real women don't look like that, not if they've had eight children at their teet.

SEAMUS: Aw, Mother, would you lower your voice. The locals are staring.

AUDREY: Let them stare! They're the ones living in the zoo. *(Shouting at an unseen passerby.)* Yes, I'm talking about you! Like some animal in a cage, looking for attention with all that metal sticking out of your face. Does your mother know what you did to the beautiful face that God gave you?

(Caroline looks over at the pierced "freak" and licks her lips, winks, and as she continues to walk she looks seductively over her shoulder giving him a little wave.)

SEAMUS: Let him be. Well, the plane ride was comfortable.

AUDREY: All that alcohol. Like a flying pub, nothing worse than a bunch of drunks at 10,000 feet. Can you believe that male stewardess offered our little girl a drink?

(Caroline has a stash of tiny liquor bottles she swiped from the plane. As her parents talk, she pops the top off of three different varieties, slurps them down, and then throws the empty bottles over her shoulder.)

SEAMUS: They prefer to be called "flight attendants." And yes, I can believe it. Caroline's 23 now, Mother.

AUDREY: That may be, but he should have known that she's a good girl and would never put that poison into her body.

SEAMUS: I rather enjoyed my Coors Light.

AUDREY: You would, drinking at 11:30 in the morning!

SEAMUS: I also enjoyed the in-flight movie. That Geoffrey Rush *[or insert another actor]* is one powerful actor.

AUDREY: Don't you go changing the subject on me, Seamus McKinney.

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#5

SEAMUS: I wasn't trying to—

AUDREY: Those books! How do you think it made me feel to take a tinkle in the airport and come out with my husband missing?

SEAMUS: I wasn't missing.

AUDREY: Oh, I know you weren't. You were hiding.

SEAMUS: I wasn't hiding.

AUDREY: When did you think you'd get a chance to read it? Huh? Answer me that, my brilliant husband.

(Caroline pulls out a copy of "Playgirl" from her backpack. As she walks along, she unfolds the male centerfold. She stops dead in her tracks, sees that she is lagging behind, and quickly catches up to them, as she shoves the magazine back into her backpack.)

SEAMUS: Well, I thought maybe if you took a nap on the plane then...

AUDREY: Took a nap?! With all them terrorists around? I don't think so. Especially with that one fellow sitting next to you.

SEAMUS: He was a very pleasant young man. He was an Apache Indian from Toledo.

AUDREY: Apache. That's just what they want you to think.

SEAMUS: His name was Little Running Bear.

AUDREY: And then the second you fall asleep—

SEAMUS: Oh, stop.

AUDREY: But I was ready. I snuck my nail clippers on. I know they said there were forbidden, but I'll be damned if I'm going to fly the not-so-friendly skies without some sort of protection. *(Looks to the sky.)* Forgive me God in heaven, bless me with some patience for this husband of mine.

SEAMUS: I don't know why you had to cause such a scene. I already had my money out.

AUDREY: Yes, hard-earned money that should be going to feed your family, and I had to rip it out of your hands. What

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#6

do you want with fairytales about a pirate from Venice anyway?

SEAMUS: Madrid.

AUDREY: What was that?

SEAMUS: I was just saying, he's from—

AUDREY: Never mind where he's from...like that makes any difference. And I've seen that hussy on the back, that Amber Waves. Sounds like a stripper name, if I ever heard one.

SEAMUS: *(Aside.)* And you haven't.

AUDREY: What was that?

SEAMUS: Nothing, Mother.

AUDREY: Where in the name of Saint Patrick is this apartment complex? My corns are killing me.

SEAMUS: Well, he said about three blocks after we pass the four stars for the Beatles.

AUDREY: The Beatles, how appropriate. A landmark dedicated to that hell-bound lot set in the middle of this cesspool.

SEAMUS: I think their music is rather catchy.

AUDREY: Bite your tongue, Seamus McKinney. More popular than Jesus, holy Mary, mother of God.

SEAMUS: That was over 30 years ago, Audrey. And I believe it was taken out of context.

(Audrey stops walking in place and so does Seamus.)

AUDREY: *(Looks up.)* You see this, Lord? My husband, he wants to make me cry.

SEAMUS: Oh, for the love of Pete.

AUDREY: Why can't he just love me for the faithful, good, charitable woman that I am? Or is he just tired of this ugly old lady?

SEAMUS: Audrey, we will you please just hush up!

(They continue to walk in silence as the lights fade out on them. Lights fade up on Colin sitting at his desk eating a bowl of ice cream.)

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The sound of the shower can be heard in the background. A second bowl of ice cream sits next to him, waiting for Jen. There is a knock on the door. Colin looks at the door, wondering who it could be, and is slow to get up. The knock comes again, this time harder. Colin opens the door to reveal his parents.)

AUDREY: Oh, don't let me inconvenience you, your majesty.

SEAMUS: Audrey, don't you have a kiss for your son?

(Audrey pushes past Colin.)

AUDREY Not if he can't find the time to open a blooming door for his own mother!

(She drops her bag heavily. Colin is stunned.)

SEAMUS: Good to see you, Son. *(He punches Colin in the arm and goes in for an awkward hug. Colin remains stunned.)* Good to see you.

(Audrey looks around.)

AUDREY: So, you're living in a hovel. You moved all the way from that nice Catholic college in New York to live in a flea infested hovel.

SEAMUS: I think it's cozy.

AUDREY: You would.

SEAMUS: What's that supposed to mean?

AUDREY: Well, if I have to explain myself to you every time I say something, then I might just as well crawl in a hole and die.

SEAMUS: She always threatens me with that, but it never happens.

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(Audrey starts inspecting the rest of the house, poking her head in the kitchen. Colin starts to close the door when Caroline pushes through.)

CAROLINE: You were right, Mother, an absolute dump.

AUDREY: Thank you, Caroline, at least someone around here hasn't lost their mind in all the glitz and glamour.

COLIN: *(Snaps out of it.)* What. What are you doing here?!

SEAMUS: Colin! You flew us out here to see your new place and to meet Jen.

AUDREY: He's changed his mind. I knew he didn't want us to come out here; the second he called I knew something was fishy. Bet he was drunk. *(She enters the kitchen.)* Probably has a bottle of Scotch hidden around here somewhere. *(She starts digging through cupboards.)* I can smell it.

COLIN: I mean...I didn't expect you until later.

SEAMUS: Well, you know how it is flying out of Detroit in January. Never know when that freeze is going to let up. We had a window of sun this morning and a storm was rolling in, so we hopped on an earlier flight.

(Audrey bursts back in to the living room.)

AUDREY: Flying on the Feast of the Epiphany! A sin if I ever heard of one. I wanted to get it done as quickly as possible so I could focus on my Lord.

CAROLINE: I tried to stop them, Colin, but you just don't think of anyone but yourself, do you? Can only manage to see your poor dear parents when it's convenient for *you*.

(Audrey enters the kitchen and Seamus follows behind.)

AUDREY: So this is where I'm expected to cook dinner? I'm not a miracle worker, you know.

COLIN: How's the dark side, Raven?

CAROLINE: Shut up, mortal, before I swallow your soul.

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#9

COLIN: Freak.

CAROLINE: My mind is more powerful than you can ever imagine.

COLIN: Great, why don't you use your Jedi force and shut the door.

CAROLINE: Shut it yourself, you little prick.

COLIN: My God, have you been drinking?

CAROLINE: You think I could survive a plane ride with those two sober?

COLIN: Touché.

(Caroline pulls out a little bottle of Jim Beam, cracks it open and starts to chug it when Audrey and Seamus burst back in. Caroline quickly turns and spits the booze out onto Colin, then shoves the little bottle into his hand.)

CAROLINE: No, Colin, I don't want to drink any, and you can't make me.

AUDREY: What's going on in here?

CAROLINE: Nothing, Mother.

SEAMUS: Tell us, Caroline.

CAROLINE: I don't want to get Colin in trouble.

COLIN: What?!

(Audrey sniffs the air.)

SEAMUS: Smells like whiskey.

AUDREY: Bourbon. Definitely bourbon. *(Audrey walks up to Colin.)* What did you do? Bathe in it?

COLIN: No, Caroline was—

CAROLINE: *(Hugging up to her father.)* Colin told me that I had to take a shot with him, but I told him I don't drink, so I spit it out.

SEAMUS: There, there, sweetheart.

COLIN: You can't be serious. *(Holds up the little bottle.)* Where do you think I got this from?

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(Audrey snatches the bottle away.)

AUDREY: Aha! What did I tell you? Bourbon. With 16 alcoholics in the family, I can sniff out booze a mile away.

SEAMUS: Shame on you, Colin, trying to corrupt your little sister.

COLIN: First off, she's older than me. And secondly, why would I keep little bottles of alcohol around my house? I wasn't the one who just got off an airplane.

AUDREY: Don't try to put this off on your poor sister. Just admit that this tiny little bottle is yours. You probably have them hidden all over this place.

COLIN: Yes, tiny little bottles that I give to my tiny little friends when they come over for tiny little parties.

AUDREY: There now, doesn't it feel good to get that off your chest?

COLIN: But... *(Points at Caroline.)* ...she...

CAROLINE: It's all right, Colin, I forgive you. And more importantly, Jesus forgives you.

COLIN: *(Absolutely frustrated. To Caroline.)* Argh! How do you do that?

CAROLINE: What can I say? I've got a gift.

SEAMUS: What's that now? A gift for what?

(Audrey sees the ice cream.)

AUDREY: And what is this? Ice cream? I come to cook for my son, and he fills himself up on ice cream?

COLIN: Well...I...

(Audrey looks toward the bathroom door and hears the water.)

AUDREY: Is someone else here?

COLIN: *(Nervously.)* No. Why? Why would someone else be here?

CAROLINE: It sounds like the shower is running.

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COLIN: Leaky pipes...landlord said he'd fix it tomorrow.

SEAMUS: Well, you keep on top of him. I had a landlord once, promised me a new toilet seat for a month and I never did see it. Finally had to move, got tired of falling in.

(Audrey has been looking around the room and has wandered over to the desk.)

AUDREY: Two bowls of ice cream? Who needs two bowls of ice cream?

COLIN: I was hungry.

AUDREY: Hungry people have some ice cream, get up off their lazy butt, and re-fill their bowl. *(Audrey heads toward the bathroom.)*

COLIN: I don't know, I was... *(Notices that Audrey has wandered over by the bathroom door.)* What are you doing?

(Audrey tries the bathroom door.)

AUDREY Why is this door locked?

COLIN: Came like that. See, the landlord needs to get the door fixed, so that he can turn off the shower. It's all very complicated. *(Suddenly the sound of the shower stops. Colin flashes a look at his mother, then his father, then Caroline, then back to his mother.)* Well, I'm sure you three are all cramped up from that long flight. Let's take a brisk walk, so I can work off that ice cream. *(He starts to push them out the door but Audrey stops.)* But, Mother.

AUDREY: Shhhh. Everybody be quiet.

(The four are lined up, looking at the door, waiting to see who will emerge.)

JEN: *(To Colin, shouts.)* Could you grab me my robe, honey?
(Silence.) Honey?

SEAMUS: *(In a forced whisper.)* And who is that?

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COLIN: She's the old tenant and...

AUDREY: She got herself locked in the bathroom?

COLIN: Not going to buy that?

AUDREY: Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

CAROLINE: Really, Colin, and to think, I used to look up to you.

(The door opens and Jen emerges in a towel with another towel wrapped around her hair.)

JEN: Didn't you hear...? *(She sees Colin, his parents, and Caroline.)* Oh. I see...

AUDREY: So do we!

SEAMUS: Colin, what is going on? Who's this girl?

JEN: Colin, you are too much. Once, I can forgive. But twice? It's not funny anymore.

COLIN: Jen. These are my parents. Audrey and Seamus McKinney.

SEAMUS: *(Very shy.)* A pleasure to meet you, my dear.

AUDREY: Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

JEN: Oh, and they even have the cute Irish accents down. *(Sarcastically clapping.)* Bravo, Colin, bravo.

SEAMUS: Um...I'm Colin's father.

AUDREY: And I am his mother! His very angry and disappointed mother.

JEN: So let me guess...you two live next door and just happen to be struggling actors? Is everyone in this town trying to break into the business? *(Approaches Caroline.)* And how about this little whore? Are they filming a Snoop Dogg video *[or insert another music video]* in the lobby and you got hired to play the part of strung-out hoochie number 2?

(She nonchalantly picks up her bowl of ice cream, sits on the couch, and starts to eat it.)

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COLIN: Jen! You don't understand. These are my parents.
This is my sister. They took an early flight.

AUDREY: She's sitting on the couch! Seamus, she is sitting on
your mother's death couch!

(Jen grinds her butt into the couch.)

JEN: Yes, I am! I sit on it all the time! Naked even! While
eating nachos!

[End of Freeview]