

A CREATIVE PROJECT: RESEARCHING, WRITING,
AND EVALUATING THE PLAY: WOODEN NICKELS

TRACEY VANCE

A CREATIVE PROJECT: RESEARCHING, WRITING, AND EVALUATING
THE PLAY: WOODEN NICKELS

A Thesis Presented to the Graduate and Research Council of
Austin Peay State University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

By

Tracey Vance

December 2007

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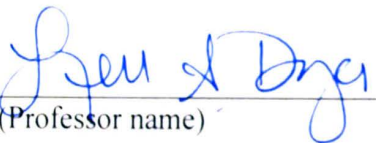
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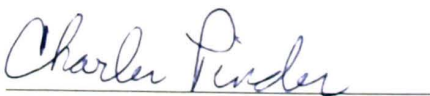
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DEDICATION

Wooden Nickels is dedicated to the following loved ones who have passed on: my uncle Athan Gibbs Sr., who believed in me and challenged me to never give up on my dreams no matter what I have to go through;

James D. McBride, my hard-working grandfather, who worked his land and protected his family;

My beautiful grandmother Alexine Vance who was a trailblazer in her day and who always reminded me that the heart is what matters the most;

And finally, to my precious baby nephew Kerry Hall Jr. Although you graced us with your angelic presence for only seven days, you have inspired us for a lifetime. You will never be forgotten.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank my Heavenly Father for putting the idea in my heart to write this script, his wisdom and guidance along the way, and my Savior Jesus Christ, whose unwavering love for all mankind inspired this project. I thank Pastor David Wesner for his guidance and support as my first Thesis Chair. I give a special thanks to Dr. Sara Gotcher for assuming responsibility as my Thesis Chair after Wesner moved on to another field. Her insight and wisdom have been a tremendous help to me. I am forever grateful. Similarly, Dr. Frank Parcells and Leni Dyer are greatly appreciated for serving on my committee.

Although mentors, friends and family are too numerous to mention, I am indebted to: Dr. Ellen Kanervo; my grandparents, Prolla McBride and Isaiah Vance Sr.; my parents, Prince Vance Sr. and Emma Vance; my church family; my extended family; and Patricia Zettle for selecting a one-act version of my script to direct for her Senior Directing class. Her dedication to the direction of the one-act allowed me to experience my work onstage for the first time. Finally, I would like to thank Michael Faradie for inspiring me to reach for the stars.

ABSTRACT

Summary of Playwriting Option-in-Lieu of a Research Paper Presented to the Graduate Council of Austin Peay State University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

A CREATIVE PROJECT: RESEARCHING, WRITING AND EVALUATING THE PLAY: WOODEN NICKELS

By

Tracey Vance

December 2007

Chairperson: Dr. Sara Gotcher
Major Department: Communication Arts

The purpose of this report is to describe the research, writing, and evaluation of the play, Wooden Nickels. The author divides the report into three chapters. Chapter one describes the process of selecting research material for writing the play, and the author's process of analyzing the material. The chapter includes an analysis of the eleven characters. Chapter two consists of the two-act play script. Chapter three provides an evaluation of the process of writing the play, along with a discussion of what the playwright learned by witnessing a portion of her play in production.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sara Gotcher", is written over a horizontal line.

Chairperson

INTRODUCTION

As the student began her second year of graduate school, she began to think of a topic for her Thesis Project. She wracked her brain for ideas until one day the notion to write a play instead of a research paper came up. Why not? Theatre had been a major part of her life ever since she was 8-years-old, when she played the role of Dorothy, in The Wizard of Oz, in her third year of elementary school. She became excited about the prospect of writing a play.

Initially, the student felt intimidated by the prospect of writing a play. She had taken a playwriting course at Tennessee State University during her undergraduate study, and an independent study playwriting course at Austin Peay State University during her graduate study; but, she did not consider herself primarily, a playwright. However, when she asked the Department of Communication and Theatre Chair, Dr. Mike Gotcher, for permission to write a play in-lieu- of- a research paper, Dr. Gotcher gave his consent, stating that in addition to the script she would be required to write character analyses, and a description of the writing process. The student turned into a playwright and began to devise a plot.

For the next two-to-three-years, the playwright brainstormed and wrote her thoughts and ideas down in a journal. She wanted to write about someone of low social standing who overcame his/her obstacles. The basis of the story would concern ordinary people doing extraordinary things through the power of God. The playwright could have chosen to write about a number of subjects, but she chose prostitution because it was a topic that touched her heart in an emotional and spiritual

manner. She began researching various materials which included scholarly articles, books, movies, and documentaries. The combination of information and visualization gave her the foundation needed to write the play.

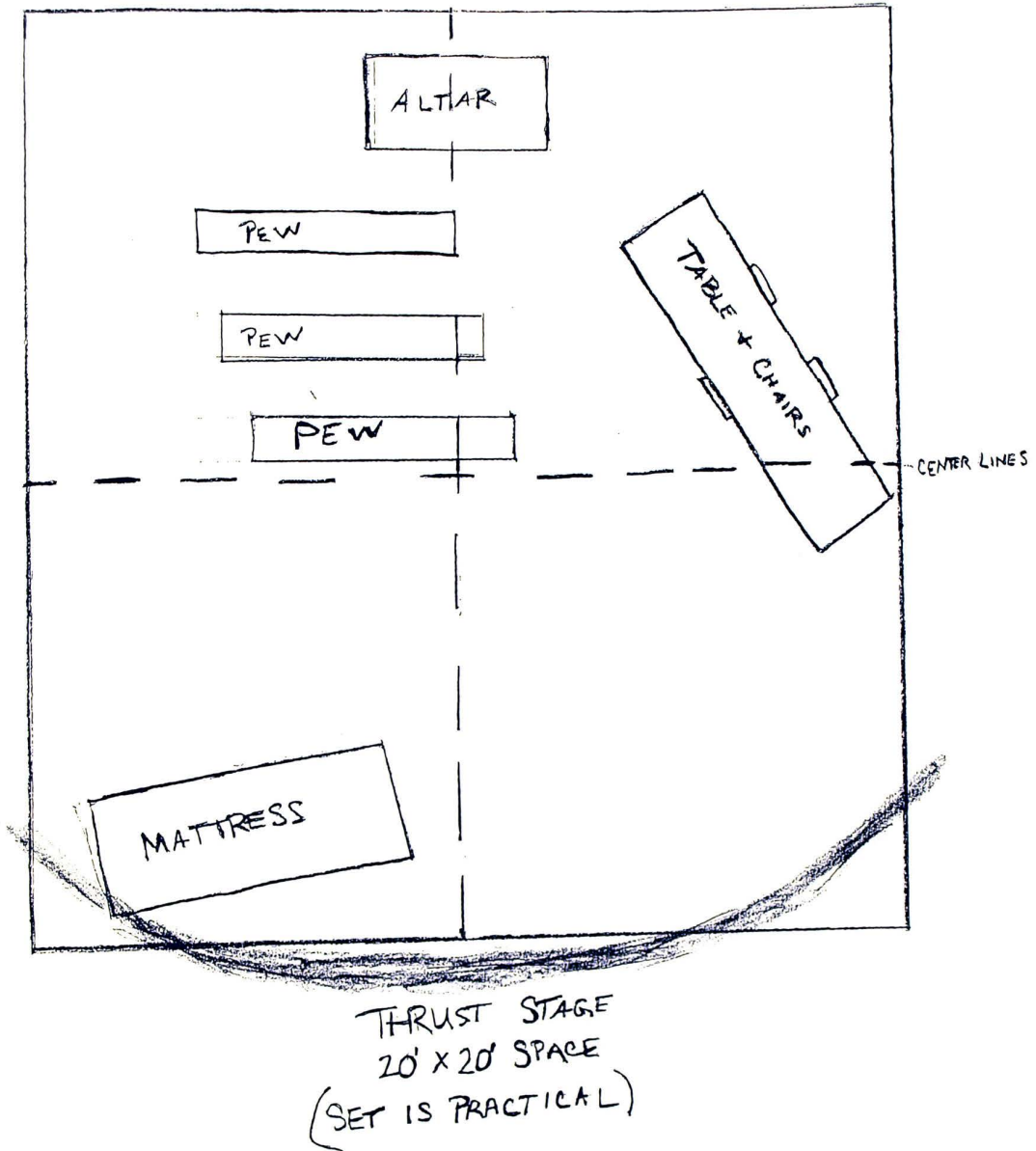
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Figure 1: Floor plan of Set



APSA TRAHERN THEATRE
PATRICIA SEAY
WOODEN NICKELS
GROUND PLAN
1/4" SCALE

Figure 2: Pictures of Cast & Director



The Cast (from left): Dustin Kramer (Shakespeare), Joseph Wojtkiewicz (Joe Cain a.k.a. Spider), Jamie Farmer (Agnes Smith), Rebecca Beasley (Jessica Rutherford), Jolie Hausman (Delilah Simpson), Ricky Young (Jamie Rutherford), Fonte Chapman (Rebekah Rutherford), and Nichole Boyer (Sandra Buchanan)

Figure 2: Pictures of Cast & Director (continued)



The Director: Patricia Zettle

CHAPTER I

RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

Selection of Material

In an effort to understand the lifestyle of a prostitute and the psychological/socio-economic circumstances that can lead a person into this profession, the playwright investigated numerous research materials, including books, academic journals, newspaper articles, and films. The playwright also contacted the Mary Magdalene House (a shelter for former prostitutes) with the goal of interviewing a former prostitute. The attempts proved unsuccessful, as the interviewee did not show up for our scheduled appointment. Nevertheless, the playwright attempted to find someone to interview through both the Magdalene House and the Metro Nashville Police Department Narcotics Division, but met with no success.

The student selected research materials which would give her an informed understanding of the profession. During her undergraduate studies she had read Merry Bloch Jones' book entitled Birthmothers: Women Who Have Relinquished Babies For Adoption Tell Their Stories. Birthmothers is a collection of interviews with mothers who placed their babies up for adoption between the 1950's and the 1980's. Each mother participated in lengthy interviews and questionnaires with Merry Bloch Jones. The text proved important for the playwright as it provided emotional and psychological insight for the main character, Delilah. The playwright discovered Ann Bromfields' From Pimpstick to Pulpit-"It's Magic": The Life Story of Don "Magic" Juan, which helped her partially understand how a person, who might seem destined for a short and tragic life

on the street, can change and find a new life through his belief in God. Although a fictional account, Summer Island, by Kirstin Hannah aided the playwright in her understanding of how a mother and wife could abandon her marriage and child, and the ramifications the mother faced years later. The novel relates the story of Nora, a radio talk-show host, who is desperate to reconcile with the daughter she left years ago.

Sisterhood of the Night: a True Story is the autobiography of Becky Usry, a social worker who founded Project New Life, an organization dedicated to helping prostitutes leave the profession. Usry introduced the playwright to the underworld of prostitution, drugs, and gang-banging in locations that included streets, parks, back alleys, hotel/motel rooms, and any other place in a red-light district that one could imagine. The information gathered from these books gave the playwright a clear understanding of selected mother/daughter relationships, adoption, prostitution, and the lifestyle of pimps and prostitutes. The personal accounts related in the texts provided the playwright with insight into the multifarious pressures women face when dealing with the option of prostitution.

The student discovered a variety of articles that approach prostitution from different perspectives and subject areas. Although numerous articles were read, the below proved the most valuable. In "Prostitution in Nevada," Richard Symanski explores the legal and environmental aspects of operating a brothel in Nevada. He examines the regulations that govern brothels, provides an historical background of the profession in the early West, and the effects the business has had on the environment. Unlike the prostitutes who voluntarily work at these brothels, Rhoda Kershaw shares a different

story in The Tennessean article entitled “Once Enslaved, Shamed, Now Uplifted”.

Kershaw is a sex slave survivor who shares her experience of being kidnapped and forced into sex slavery. Her story is one of trial and triumph as her Christian faith enabled her to not only survive, but to help other victims. On one hand many, who assume prostitution will exist no matter what, believe that legalized prostitution keeps it off the streets, and it decreases rape and other violent crimes. In contrast, prostitution opens the door to STDs, psychological and emotional scars, as in the case of those victims of sex slavery. The research gathered from these articles was both objective and subjective, and provided a good balance.

The playwright incorporated films into her research after she saw Craig Brewer’s film Hustle & Flow. The film, centered on a pimp turned rapper who lives with his "stable" of prostitutes, enabled the playwright to visualize the living conditions of a prostitute. The playwright found two films, and a documentary which furthered her visual and psychological insight into the living conditions of prostitutes. They include: Monster , directed by Patty Jenkins; Human Trafficking, directed by Christian Duguay; and the PBS Frontline documentary entitled Sex Slaves, directed by Ric Esther Bienstock. Monster is based on the true story of Aileen Wuornos, a prostitute who was executed for the brutal murders of at least six men in Florida. Human Trafficking is a film about two government officials, who are on a mission to expose and bring an end to the sex slave trade. In Sex Slaves, Frontline takes an in-depth look at the world of sexual slavery through the lens of a hidden camera. The playwright selected these films and the documentary in order to compare and contrast both fiction and non-

fiction portrayals of prostitution onscreen. They aided the playwright in her visualization process of writing her play.

The story of Rahab in the Holy Bible inspired the playwright.

She was a prostitute who lived in the walled-city of Jericho. Rahab is revered as a woman of vision and faith (Hebrews 11.31; James 2.25 New International Version). She defied the king of Jericho's orders to hand over the two Israelite spies that she had hidden in her house. Rahab risked her life to help the Israelites capture the city of Jericho (Joshua 2.1-21). As a result of her faith and heroism, the Israelites made sure that she and her entire family survived the assault (Joshua 6.17-25). Despite her previous social position as a prostitute, she became a direct ancestor of Jesus Christ through marriage which made her the great-great-grandmother of King David of Israel (Matthew 1.5).

Process of Analyzing the Material

The playwright had three main questions when she began her research: 1) Beyond the need to survive, what leads a woman into prostitution? 2) What keeps some women from leaving the lifestyle? 3) What emotional impact does the lifestyle have on prostitutes and former prostitutes? The playwright will describe her evaluation process through each question.

What leads a woman into prostitution? Several factors lead a woman into the lifestyle, survival being perhaps the most significant. According to Becky Usry, in Sisterhood of the Night, “Ninety percent of runaway juveniles will be forced to turn to prostitution to survive within six weeks of living on the street” (284). Many times youth run away from violent or abusive homes and end up making a living as a prostitute.

In other cases, women are drawn to the occupation through deceptive means, as in the case of Rhoda Kershaw in The Tennessean article entitled “Once Enslaved, Shamed, Now Uplifted.” The young woman traveled to Japan where she had been promised a recording contract. When she arrived, she was drugged, kidnapped, and sexually assaulted for three days. Well-organized groups often earn money by forcing captive women to have sex. Sources indicated that the sex slave trade is worldwide, in fact, it is a “9.5 billion-a-year trade according to the U. S. Department of State, with as many as 800,000 new slaves believed to be taken each year” (Taylor 3B). A September 2004 report by the University of California-Berkeley, and Free the Slaves, estimates that “as many as 10,000 people are forced to work against their will in America in areas such

as the sex trade, farming and domestic help. This year's State Department report estimates that the number is as high as 17,500" (Taylor 3B).

Some women are psychologically lured into the profession.

The playwright read about naïve women who most often had low self-esteem. Like the serpent in the Garden of Eden, (Gen. 3.1-16) a deceptive man seeks to seduce her with false flattery, promises and lies. She eventually becomes hooked, as he gives her just the emotional security she needs. She follows him, wants to please him to the delight of the serpent, which now possesses her heart. He then turns his seductive words into a request for her to engage in sexual intercourse with a stranger as a favor to him. Of course, the woman is hesitant and a bit confused at first, but she loves the man and believes with all of her heart that he loves her too. Therefore, she grants his request. Then everything changes, as his requests become more frequent and suddenly the man of her dreams is now her pimp.

What keeps some women from leaving the lifestyle? According to Richard Symanski, "Where it was possible to discuss reasons for entering the houses, money or quick financial gain was often expressed as the main motive. Some simply said they liked what they were doing or that they could not hold a steady job in the "straight world", a fact attested to by the high turnover in the houses" (368). A place to live and a steady income are perhaps the number one reasons why some women choose to stay in the profession. We live in an age where most high-paying jobs require a degree or at least some type of formal training. When a woman has worked as a prostitute for most of her life, she often has a hard time finding a stable job outside of the profession, as in

Aileen's case in the film Monster. She could not find stable employment because she lacked skills and previous experience in the job market. Other reasons for staying included, but were not limited to: feelings for and threats from their pimps, low self-esteem, and no outside support. "People in the life are mostly victim, criminal, desperate choice, or adult choice prostitutes" (Usry 286). Victim prostitutes are in the lifestyle out of need because their families failure to provide for them. Criminal prostitutes only use the lifestyle to get drugs. Desperate choice prostitutes are people who cannot get money elsewhere, thus they enter the profession out of desperation. Adult choice prostitutes are people who have made a decision to enter the lifestyle. Their decision is usually based on financial reasons that are not based out of desperation.

Adult female prostitutes tend to be concerned about the role of women in society. Streetwalkers often believe that they are preventing rape and incest, yet statistics do not bear out this hypothesis. All forms of street crime diminish when streetwalkers leave the area: armed robbery, rape, strong-arm robbery, burglary, drug dealing, grand theft auto, and even murder drop dramatically, according to information from police departments in San Diego, Portland, and Seattle (Usry 286-287).

Another significant, yet odd, idea is that women who work in groups feel like they would be abandoning the "cause of women's liberation" if they left the profession. One reason is that high-paying call girls "feel they are helping the women's movement by out-earning men" (Usry 287).

What emotional impact does the lifestyle have on prostitutes and former prostitutes? Aside from monetary gain, the playwright found one universal theme in her research, which concerns control. "It is a matter of power wherein those that are strong use those who are weak" (Usry 290). Control consequently hurts the prostitute

emotionally and in some cases physically. In Brewer's film Hustle and Flow, there were three prostitutes living with their pimp played by actor Terrance Howard. Each woman has her own unique personality, which adds depth to each character. However, they are all at the will and mercy of their pimp. Howard's character was like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. He was soft one minute and then belligerent the next, as he invoked fear in his women. Yet, they were still loyal to him. Pimps are often idolized and in many cases, female streetwalkers vie for their attention and affection. Some even have children with their pimps, which they sometimes covet more than the children they have with johns. Not only are these women affected psychologically, they are exposed to STDs, HIV and AIDS. For women who leave the profession, they have to deal with the emotional and physical scars while trying to start a new life. The playwright read about women who left the lifestyle for promising careers and families, only to discover they had HIV or sometimes AIDS. She also read about many who had overcome their past and who now work with those wanting to leave the profession. These women are happy and no longer let the past control them, as they use it as a tool to help others.

The research expanded the playwright's knowledge of the subject as she discovered prostitutes are not the stereotypical glamorized and or satirized depictions seen in many commercial films. They are real women who are either victim, criminal, desperate choice or adult choice prostitutes based on their individual experiences. Her findings also revealed that financial stability, emotional security and a threatening pimp were some of the reasons why it was not always easy for a woman to leave the lifestyle.

Character Analysis

List of Characters:

Delilah Simpson
Jessica Rutherford
Dr. Rebekah Rutherford
Sandra Buchanan
Jamie Rutherford
Shakespeare
Agnes Smith
Jackson (a.k.a. Lance Jackson)
Joe Cain (a.k.a. Spider)

Delilah Simpson: Delilah was actually named Rachel at birth. She was born to a beautiful young singer/high class call girl named Leila. Her mother left her with friends Kaye and Robert Simpson, who became the only real parents she ever knew. The Simpsons loved the little girl and adopted her. When she was 5-years-old, they felt it was time to tell her the truth about her adoption. This did not take away from Delilah having a happy childhood while being brought up by Kaye and Robert. Her happiness was short-lived when at the age of seven Delilah's stepfather was killed in an automobile accident. Her stepmother died a few months later of a broken heart. Neither Robert nor Kaye had any relatives to take the little girl in so she was placed in foster care.

Foster care was hard on Delilah because: 1) she never stayed in a home for longer than six months to a year; and, 2) she was often mistreated. Delilah endured some traumatic experiences while in foster care only to seek refuge elsewhere at the age of 16. Her foster father secretly ran a prostitution ring out of his auto-mechanical business. As Delilah physically matured, she began getting unwanted attention from his "clients". The frightened girl ran away to another town with very little money. She stayed in a run

down motel and got a job working as a waitress in a small diner. She got a new hairdo, fake id, (with the help of a co-worker), and a new last name to hide her identity until she turned 18.

Delilah managed her life well, with the help of friends, until she met the mysterious Joe Cain. The tall and handsome young man had his sights set on Delilah. He never allowed her to wait on him, but he would always sit in “his spot” and watch her in silence. The other waitresses were jealous of Joe’s fondness of her. He was so charming and good-looking that many people were drawn to him. She began having a relationship with him. Joe manipulated Delilah into sleeping with men for money. He changed her name from Rachel to Delilah as it sounded more seductive. Delilah was the most popular prostitute in Joe’s stable (term for a pimp’s group of prostitutes) and he planned to keep it that way for a long time. However, that does not happen, because of Delilah’s past family history which has made her a defensive person. She has the capability to love, but she is afraid of losing the people she loves.

Jessica Rutherford: Jessica Marie Rutherford is a by-product of love and affection. The only child of both James and Rebekah, she is the apple of her parents eyes. Jessica is thoughtful, considerate and very intelligent. She has a good heart and is very compassionate. Jessica has a strong bond with her mother, who dotes on her almost to the point of controlling her life. This is part of the reason why Jessica chose to go out of state for college. Her mother always wanted her to become a medical doctor, although Jessica had no interest in that particular profession. The other reason why she chose to go out of town for college is that when she was just 12-years-old, she accidentally found

out that her mother had abandoned a baby girl in Michigan. From that day forward Jessica vowed to find her sister and unite her family. She did lots of research until she left for college.

Jessica's relationship with her family and friends is that of love and respect. She is respected by all who know her, including Delilah who may not always show it. Jessica is also the character that attempts to unite everyone. She always looks at the big picture rather than getting caught up in a situation. Although she is not as complex as Delilah, she is a very interesting character to play, because she represents the inner Delilah. Jessica and Delilah are contrasting characters, whereas Jessica was born into a safe and secure environment filled with love, while Delilah had to struggle all of her life. Delilah was once Jessica until her young life was changed forever and as a result, her experiences made her put on the tough girl exterior she is so well known for in the play.

Rebekah Rutherford: Her birth name is Leila Whitmore, born to well-educated upper-class parents. Rebekah had a very interesting childhood as she was brought up in high society, but had a passion to sing. Of course, her parents were strongly against their daughter making a living as a singer, believing that all of her formal education would go down the drain. The headstrong Rebekah was determined to follow her dreams, secretly singing in nightclubs while in college. This is where she met Sonny Cain, the classy and debonair businessman. Sonny was an unhappily married man who fell for the beautiful singer. Rebekah began having an affair with him after he promised to land her a big recording contract. What she didn't know was that Sonny was a compulsive gambler. He deceived and used Rebekah to pay off his debt by asking her to have intercourse with

one of his friends in exchange for a recording contract. Rebekah soon ended up being Sonny's high-class call girl. When her family found out, they disowned her. Rebekah had no one to turn to when she became pregnant. She didn't even know who the father was but when she told Sonny, he had an abortion. Rebekah wanted to keep her baby; so one night she fled. She ended up staying with a nice couple named Robert and Kaye Simpson who made sure Sonny never found her. Rebekah's plan was to have her baby and leave the state; however, shortly after Delilah's birth, she left in the middle-of-the-night leaving only a note.

Rebekah was scared that she couldn't take care of a baby but she knew she had to leave the state in fear of Sonny. She wanted to make a new life and come back for her child. Rebekah eventually got her life together, changed her name and married the love of her life, Pastor James Rutherford. James was the only person in her new hometown that knew about her past. She also adopted his young son, who was two years older than her abandoned child. James and Rebekah had only one child together. She never forgot about Delilah, but she silently beat herself up for not going back for her child. Rebekah felt the girl was too old to understand by the time she was ready to go back for her.

She spent her life doting on and being overprotective of Jessica because of her abandonment of Delilah. Rebekah is seen as a pillar of strength, yet she uses her status and titles to cover up her past. She comes across as judgmental and patronizing but she really is a loving and compassionate person. Like Delilah, she thinks she is protecting herself and her family by appearing to have it all together.

Kat Farr: Katherine Renee Farr was adopted by the Rutherford family after a tragic accident claimed the life of her parents while on a missionary trip. Kat, as everyone calls her, happened to be traveling with her parents on her first missionary trip. After surviving the accident, the 10-year-old girl was paralyzed from the waist down.

The Rutherfords immediately took the child into their home and adopted her as their own. Kat is forever grateful to them and thinks of them as her parents, although she will never forget her biological mother and father. Although she is a victim of circumstance, Kat doesn't let it keep her from pursuing her goals and dreams in life. She is very intelligent and studious, having traveled on several missionary trips while in high school. Kat attends the local seminary college with dreams of becoming a minister and a teacher. She loves community service and is always trying to reach out to others, as she does with Delilah. Kat is wise beyond her years and she is well loved by her family and friends.

Sandra Buchanan: She is the society gossip but well loved by all, except Delilah during the first act. Sandra's tendency to gossip and her greediness are a result of her need to feel important and accepted. Although she belongs to many society and church organizations, deep down inside she is lonely. Sandra was once married but the marriage ended in bitter divorce. She never had any children--the reason behind her obsession with her grandniece, Leah. Her objective is to impress and gain positions in society. She also expects the same of her grandniece.

Sandra loves the Rutherford family, but she craves the attention they get, which is why she is always around them. If she could, she would most definitely take Rebekah's position. Sandra is jealous of Rebekah but she also respects and admires her. Moreover, her greatest desire is for Leah and Jamie to marry so that she can be an official member of the Rutherford family.

Sandra does have a soft side as she is helpful, caring, and would never intentionally harm anyone. She is comical, fun and most of all dramatic.

Jamie Rutherford: Jamie is every woman's dream man. The golden boy of the community; he is intelligent, considerate, caring, kind, and a protector. Jamie is also a very talented artist. He is a gentleman, always trying to make things easier for others. Jamie lost his mother at a very young age, but gained a stepmother when his father married Rebekah. He is Rebekah's only son and the apple of her eye as she raised him as her very own. Jamie, Jessica and Kat are very close as they are the 'dynamic trio' of the family. Jamie works for the church while pursuing his gospel music career. He lives in a condominium and is best friends with his music partner Jackson.

Jamie was in a serious relationship some years before he met Delilah but things didn't work out. The young lady he was seeing didn't want him to pursue his musical aspirations, but instead she wanted him to marry and settle down. Jamie wanted to do both but he wanted to secure an album or two before settling down. He tried to compromise but could not accept abandoning his dream. The young lady left him and he suffered a great deal, only to realize that she was not the woman for him. He started to pursue his dream again, focusing on hardly anything else for years until he met Delilah.

Just one look into her eyes and he knew she was his soul mate. Delilah is the woman he had been waiting for all of his life. Jamie vowed never to let her go. Jamie is a wise young man who is not influenced nor impressed by frivolity and narcissism. He is attracted to what is genuine.

Leah Buchanan: Leah has a great personality, yet she allows her insecurities to shroud her ability to see them. She is lovable but is easy to offend, which has hurt some past relationships, including her friendship with Jessica. Leah's insecurities are a result of her childhood. Her mother and great aunt Sandra always expected her to be the prettiest, most talented and best-dressed girl in town. Leah always felt like she had something to prove to everyone because she was never taught to love herself, but to be the best and stay the best. Leah is a perfectionist and always has to appear perfect. Although she and Jessica grew up as best friends, she always felt like Jessica was prettier and smarter. Leah is hurting deep down inside because all of her life she has been taught that her value or self worth is based on what she has and does. She really comes into her own in the second act as she stops trying to please her aunt and others, and starts to enjoy her life.

Leah always had a schoolgirl crush on Jamie Rutherford. She realizes her crush on him was a result of her aunt Sandra's influence. She is a passionate and loving person who, although she is not the main character, grows into a confident woman throughout the course of the play.

Shakespeare: Perhaps the most misunderstood and yet lovable character in the play, Shakespeare represents everybody's father, brother and friend. He is totally a symbolic

character as he is homeless and wise. He is an example of unconditional love and sacrifice. The name Shakespeare is symbolic of his poetic wisdom.

Shakespeare and Delilah have a bond. Both know what it's like to be homeless and misunderstood. He imparts his wisdom on her throughout the play because he sees in her greatness and potential. Shakespeare's joyful nature and humility, despite homelessness, represents a purpose-centered versus materialistic life.

Agnes: She's everyone's grandmother, fun loving and wise. Agnes tells it like it is in a way that only she can. She represents the matriarch of the church and the comic relief. Agnes is well respected as an elder in the church and the secretary, for which she will not retire until "they put me in the grave" as she would put it. She has a soft spot for Shakespeare as she watches over him. Her friendship with Shakespeare has spanned decades. Agnes knows him better than any of the other characters does. She is the type of woman who can keep a secret. Agnes is a role model as she is genuine and loyal to her family and friends. She loves to reminisce about the past and tell funny stories.

In general, Agnes has a soft spot for all who are disadvantaged, which is why she is so fond of Delilah. Agnes is non-judgmental, but she will call a person out as she believes in respect for all people.

Jackson (a.k.a. Lance Jackson): The handsome gentleman is a devoted friend and active member of the church. He is nice-looking and thoughtful, but always in Jamie's shadow. Jackson is Jamie's best friend and business partner. He is loyal to Jamie, although he is a bit jealous of him because of Leah, which is a result of his competitive nature. Although Jackson is a smooth talker, he is not manipulative or vindictive. He is in love with Leah,

but chooses not to pursue her because of her fondness for Jamie. It is when another man enters the picture, that he exposes his feelings for her. He is a patient man, but will fight and defend when threatened.

For the most part, he loves to joke around but he can be serious. Jackson is a responsible and dedicated individual. The other's pick on him because they love him, as he is a unique character.

Joe Cain (a.k.a. Spider): The son of the notorious businessman and pimp Sonny Cain, Joe Cain is a very angry young man. He blames all of his problems on Rebekah because of her relationship with his father. A brilliant businessman like his late father, Joe sets out to become a pimp with his main target being Delilah. He pursues finding the daughter of his father's mistress and bringing her down before seeking revenge on Rebekah. Joe's objective is to inflict the same pain on Rebekah and her family, as he believes she did to his mother and himself. Heart broken, Joe's mother died when he was a child. She had tried to please her husband and be a good mother to her two sons, but she could not handle the painful truth of her husband's affair. She begged and fought for her marriage, but Sonny refused to let go of his mistress. Joe grew up watching his mother go through serious bouts of depression until she died.

Joe is motivated by the bitterness and anger of his painful childhood, which is why he seeks revenge on Rebekah and her family.

CHAPTER II

THE PLAYSRIPT

Setting: It is mid-October in a small town. Jessica Rutherford and Delilah Simpson have just arrived at the Rutherford residence at 3:00 a.m. The women fled to Chicago from Detroit, and caught a greyhound bus to Jessica's hometown. Jessica is dressed in beige slacks, a white blouse and a beige jacket. She has on a trendy beige hat that matches her outfit, and she is carrying a nice beige tote bag. Jessica is educated and classy. Delilah, who is a street prostitute, has on a pair of tight black leather pants, black heels and a snug long-sleeved red body shirt. She is also wearing a nice black leather blazer, at Jessica's insistence, due to the cool weather. Delilah is carrying a black bag with the word S-P-O-I-L-E-D in big red letters. Jessica is 23 and Delilah is 28 years old.

ACT I, Scene I (*Early Saturday morning, the Rutherford's living room*):

They have just quietly entered the dark and spacious living room of the Rutherford residence. Jessica, who unlocked the door, is in front of Delilah. They have just closed the front door and are standing in between the doorway and the bottom of the stairs. Delilah drops her bag on the floor, which makes a loud thud before she sighs and yawns. Jessica tries to silence her.

Delilah: (*Stretching her arms during the middle of her yawn*). I sure am glad we finally got to this old lady's house...

Jessica: (*Pulling Delilah's arm she whispers*) You're going to wake her up! Stop making all of that noise.

Delilah: That old broad is probably in a dead sleep, besides, old ladies can't even hear that well. Hey, you think she got a man up there. (*Between yawns, she plops on the floor*) I could nod off right here.

Jessica: Delilah get up! I mean it, remember what I said...

Delilah: (*Stretching out on the ground*) Ah Jazz why do ya always haveta make a big deal about everything! We're here now, there ain't no danger, I'm tired and I just wanna go to sleep.

Jessica: We're not in Detroit anymore so don't call me Jazz. You know that no one here knows me by that name.

Delilah: (*Slowly getting up and chuckling*) Yeah but I do, and I know you as a lotta other things too.

Jessica: (*Losing patience as she tries to pull her friend up*) Delilah please, we've already discussed this.

No one knows what happened and I want to keep it that way, so we've got to stick to the story.

Delilah: And that's just what it is...a story!! Are you sure we ain't breakin' into this lady's house? I would hate to get shot at tonight.

Jessica: Didn't I just unlock the door? You know me better than that. Just trust me, and don't forget to...

Delilah: I know, I know, the *story*; (*They both say the next line simultaneously*) we met at school and became the best of friends...(back to Delilah) blah, blah, blah. Why do you care what that old broad thinks anyway? She probably won't even recognize ya after two years.

Jessica: And *please* act like you have some manners. Come on.

Jessica slowly begins to lead Delilah to the stairs. She is keeping a close watch on her groggy and clumsy friend, who slips on the first stair and stumbles backwards.

Delilah: Oops I'm sorry J...!

Jessica: (*Goes to her to try and help her up*) Shhh!! Hold on to me and be quiet. The quicker we get upstairs, the sooner we can get to bed.

Just as they are about to sneak upstairs for the second time, a flashlight shines down on the living room area, but not on them. Dr. Rebekah Rutherford is at the top of the stairs. She is a beautiful, intelligent and passionate woman in her late 40s to early 50s. Rebekah has a graceful and elegant presence. She is well respected in her community and at the church where her husband is the senior pastor.

Rebekah: Who is there? Is that you Kat, Jamie, James?

Jessica and Delilah freeze as Rebekah continues to call out.

Delilah: (*In a loud whisper*) She don't sound like no old lady to me. (*Jessica pinches her*) Ouch!

Rebekah: (*Shining the flashlight around the room below her*) Answer me, who is there! I'm calling the police...

Delilah: Don't do that! I mean...(*In a deep voice, attempting to imitate God*) it is I my child. You are dreamin', and I have come to tell you...

Jessica (*Horrificed and in a hushed tone*) Shut up Delilah!

Delilah: (*Still in a deep voice*) To tell you, uh, that the time has come...

Rebekah: (*Running down the stairs carrying a bat*) Oh the time has come alright! I may be a preacher's wife but that won't stop me from whipping...

Delilah: Oh no, I'm outta here (*she starts running towards the front door as Jessica grabs her. Rebekah, realizing that they are at the bottom of the stairs, tackles Jessica causing Delilah to go down. This creates a huge tug of war as Jessica and Rebekah struggle for the bat, and Delilah just struggles to break free. Rebekah maintains control of the bat as she corners them in front of the main entrance.*

Rebekah: (*She shines her flashlight on them as a frightened Jessica is hiding behind Delilah*) Who are you and what are you doing in my house?

Jessica: (*Nervously*) Please...

Delilah: Don't hit! I can't afford another operation, because you know they cost a lotta money...

Rebekah: What? (*She comes closer*)

Delilah: Hey look lady, get that thing outta my face! This was none of my idea. You got the wrong girl. Stop being a wuss Jessica...at least so I can get to bed.

Rebekah: (*Drops her bat and flashlight*) Jessica? Jessica is that you?

Rebekah quickly flips the light switch, located on the wall next to the main entrance.

Jessica: (*Softly*) Mother.

Delilah: *Mother*? Hey you lied to me! I thought this was some old church lady's house. (*Beat*) This is some joint.

Jessica: Oh hush up Li (*She runs into her mother's arms*).

Rebekah: (*Surprised, hugging her hard*). Jessica, why on earth did you not tell me that you were coming? Why did you come at this hour? Why...

Jessica: (*Laughing*) So many questions mother? I wanted to surprise you.

Rebekah: Well this is quite a surprise. You scared me half to death! I'm glad I decided not to call the police after I realized you both were just as scared as I was.

Delilah: Yeah I'll say. Why didn't ya tell me this was your mama's house?

Jessica: (*Nervously looking at Delilah*) Long story.

Rebekah: (*Puzzled but too happy to see her daughter to care*) And who is this young lady? I don't think I've ever met her before.

Jessica: Oh, um mom this is Delilah, my best friend from college.

Rebekah: You better not let Leah hear you say that. You know how she can get. (*Turning to Delilah and extending her hand*) It is a pleasure to meet you Delilah. Any friend of my daughter's is a friend of mine.

Delilah (*Reluctantly shakes her hand*) Thanks. (*To Jessica*) Who's Leah?

Rebekah: Friends for how long, you never told her about Leah?

Jessica: (*Quickly*) Oh well um you know how busy I got at school. (*To Delilah*) Yeah Leah, she's been my best friend since childhood. We've been practically joined at the hip since birth, even though we haven't talked much lately, with our busy lives...

Delilah: (*Yawning*) Oh, well it's been fun, but I wanna go to sleep.

Rebekah: Of course you do! I know that you two must be fatigued and chilly after such a long trip. I'm just glad you both made it in before the big storm. We can definitely play catch up later.

Delilah: (*Dryly*) Thanks. I'll be lookin' forward to it.

Jessica: (*Quickly after Delilah's rude remark*) We can sleep in my old room...that is if I still have one.

Rebekah: I never had the heart to change your room after you left for college. I guess I just didn't want your being away from home to seem real. (*There is a pause as she gives her daughter a meaningful look*) Anyways, you two better go on up, and Delilah please make yourself at home.

Delilah: Oh don't you worry Miz (*to Jessica*) What's your last name again?

Rebekah: (*Chuckling*) Please call me Rebekah.

Delilah: Uh yeah, Rebekah...I will do just that.

Jessica: And *that* she will! Good night mom. (*pause*) And thanks.

Rebekah: Goodnight girls. I'll see you two a little later today.

Delilah: A lot later for me! (*Jessica and Delilah go upstairs as Rebekah watches them. After they leave, she takes a slight pause, looks up and whispers "thank you", then turns off the lights and goes upstairs.* **-Blackout-**

Act I, Scene II (*An hour and a half later*):

Delilah has made her way downstairs. She is barefoot and wearing a pair of Jessica's silk pajamas. She is drinking a warm cup of milk as she is pacing around the living room. It is storming outside as we hear thunder and rain. Note the side table lamp is turned on.*

Delilah: These crazy nightmares have to stop! I can't live like this anymore. (*Looking up at the ceiling*) Hey you up there, why is this happenin' to me? (*Silence*) Yeah, I'm talkin' to you. Why am I even here? Why didn't you just let me die? Did you hear me oh Great One! (*Thunder strikes as she jumps*) You think that's gonna scare me! Hahaha, you don't scare me, I scare you. You're nothin' but a big old bully! (*She screams as an even louder thunder interrupts her*) Just like him. You're just like him. (*Pause*) I hate this place, these nightmares. (*She paces the room in thought before she stops*) I hate myself. And you know what (*Pause*) I...I...(*Frustrated sigh*) hate you. You hear that? I hate you! (*The light goes out as an even louder thunder strikes. Delilah screams and falls to the floor in tears. She then makes her way to the side table and plays with the lamp to see if it will come back on. Delilah is unable to turn it on, so she crawls back to center stage and starts beating the floor in frustration*). Why me? Why does he want me? I just want a normal life! (*The light suddenly comes on and she looks up in hope, but it soon goes out again. She then gets up, throws the pillows off the couch in an attempt to release her anger. There is a pause as there is a light thunder, then rain. Delilah falls to her knees, looks up, and speaks softly*). What if he finds me? (*She drops her head as she repeats "Why me, why me..., then the light suddenly comes on and she looks up slowly*). What does he want from me? I'm just a nobody. And I'm scared. You hear me? I'm scared of him! (*She starts yawning and looking around the room as she falls back on a pillow*). I'm scared. (*She yawns again and slowly closes her eyes as she falls asleep. There is a pause and then the light goes out again, followed by another sound of thunder as the rain falls harder*). Note* when the lamp goes out the stage lights are dim so that the audience can see her. She begins to dream about a masked man, who enters from stage left. He stands over her

facing the audience as she sleeps and the following happens: The masked man pulls out a knife from his pocket. He then brings the knife close to her neck as he repeatedly says in a dark voice, "I'm going to get you" until Delilah shakes her head and says "No". He then kneels down before pulling her up and says, "you can't get away from me, you can run but you can't hide!" Delilah, whose eyes are still closed, starts struggling to get away from him, "Stop it! Get away from me!" He then puts the knife under her chin and says "You can run from me but you can't hide". Delilah who is tossing and turning screams "No!", until she falls back on the pillow. The masked man then lets out a loud, sinister laugh. Delilah screams one last time before the man exits stage left. She suddenly sits up, realizing where she is; she rushes to turn on the lamp. When the lamp doesn't come on, a frightened and panicked Delilah quickly runs upstairs.

-Blackout-

It's around 10:00 AM and Jessica is coming downstairs. She is wearing silk pajamas and a nice robe. She walks around and studies the objects in the living room, finally resting on a picture of the family. She picks the picture up and stares at it, as Rebekah enters through the front door carrying a few grocery bags. Jessica puts the picture down when she sees her mother.

Jessica: (*Approaching Rebekah, she gives her a kiss*) Good morning mother, are there any more groceries out in the car?

Rebekah: Oh no sweetheart, I just bought a few things. Did you by chance camp out down here earlier?

Jessica: (*Puzzled*) No, why?

Rebekah: Then it must have been Kat. Pillows were strewn everywhere when I came down this morning, and this lamp was turned on.

Jessica: Really? That's weird.

Rebekah: Oh well the storm probably woke her, speaking of which did you sleep well?

Jessica: I slept like a baby, thanks. And thanks again for letting Delilah and I stay.

Rebekah: This is your home, please stop thanking me. You know that you are always welcome here.

Jessica: (*Looking down*) I know, it's just that it has been so long...

Rebekah: About two years too long. We need to catch up, but first let me put these groceries away and get settled.

Jessica: Let me help you.

Rebekah: No dear you just rest. I'll be right back.

Jessica: Okay (*The phone rings as Rebekah exits into the kitchen*). I'll get it!

Rebekah: (*Calling out*) Thanks sweetheart!

Jessica: (*Answering the phone*) Hello, Rutherford residence. (*pause*) Daddy! Yes it's me, I'm home and I've missed you so much! (*pause*) I don't know how long I'm staying, I just don't know. (*pause*) Okay I promise to stay put until you come back. I can't wait to see you! I'll get her. Love you too. (*Calling out to Rebekah*) Mom, it's dad. You didn't tell me he was in Atlanta...

Rebekah: Oh yes I'll tell you all about his trip, I have it sweetheart, thanks!

Jessica is in deep thought as she hangs up the phone. A loud thud breaks her reverie as we hear Kat Farr yelp out in pain. Jessica calls out to her and gets up to go into the hallway, but before she gets there, Kat enters the main room. She is a 20-year-old paraplegic. Kat is pretty and she wears glasses.

Jessica: (*Hurrying towards Kat*) Kat! Hey, are you alright?

Kat: Jessica, it's really you! I can't believe you're home. I'm okay. You know how I bump into walls when I'm in a hurry. I guess I was just so excited to see if that was really your voice I heard a few minutes ago.

Jessica: I'm surprised you didn't hear us at three in the morning.

Kat: You know I can sleep through almost anything. What happened?

Jessica: (*Hugging Kat*) Long story. I've missed you kid.

Kat: Don't you start with that kiddie crap again. I am a fully-grown woman you know.

Jessica: But you will always be my kid sister, no matter how grown you *think* you are. How have you been? How have things been going here? Hey how is...

Kat: Whoa big sis, you can't just come in here and ask me all of these questions. If you had returned at least half of my phone calls, then you'd know how we were doing.

Jessica: I'm sorry Kat. I'll be able to explain...

Kat: (*Interrupting her*) It's just not like you Jess to not return phone calls, especially one from me. I was worried about you and so was your mom. You didn't sound like yourself the few times you did pick up or call back. Do you know your parents almost took a trip up there to check on you, but Jamie talked them out of it? He said that you were entitled to mature on your own and that a person as responsible as you are will call if needed.

Jessica: Good old Jamie always puts everything into perspective. Where is my handsome brother anyway?

Kat: He's in the studio working on his album as usual.

Jessica: Jamie is working on an album?

Kat: See what I mean? You've totally been out of the loop.

Jessica: Oh Kat a lot has happened and I want to tell you so badly but...

Rebekah re-enters from the kitchen. Hearing her daughter's last comment, she looks from Jessica to Kat.

Rebekah: Tell her what Jessica? Good morning Katherine, oh Jessica your dad is so happy that you are home! He even wanted to cut his trip short and fly in tonight but, I told him not to. I had to assure him that you'd still be here when he returns.

Kat: Good morning Bek.

Jessica: I was just telling Kat about school. So why is dad in Atlanta?

Rebekah: He was invited to preach at a dear friend's fall revival this past week, but he decided to extend his stay. (*Beat*) You graduated over a year ago. What could you possibly have to tell her about school?

Jessica: Well I was thinking about going back. I forgot to ask dad when he'd be back. How long is he staying?

Rebekah: (*Rushing to Jessica*) Finally, you've come to your senses! I knew you were going to change your mind about attending medical school.

Kat: I thought you didn't want to be a doctor.

Rebekah: Oh yes she does, it's in her blood! She just didn't realize it until now. Honey have you picked out a school yet? You can go to *my* alma mater. I can pick you up an application Monday, what do you say?

Jessica: What about Dad?

Rebekah: Your dad will be thrilled to know you are applying to medical school!

Jessica: That's not what I meant; I mean when will he be home?

Rebekah: Oh he'll be home in about three weeks. He needed a vacation. You know how hard your father works. And I urged him to stay down there since his friend extended the invitation. I was supposed to be joining him but now I'm glad I didn't.

Jessica: (*Dropping her head*) Oh.

Kat: Well don't look so sad. It will take about three weeks for you to get reacquainted with everyone.

Rebekah: (*Observing her daughter*) Kat's right. Did you need to talk to your father about something? I can call him up...

Jessica: Oh no, no you don't have to do that. I can wait.

Rebekah: (*Curious*) Can you? Perhaps I can be of some assistance. (*Quick Pause*) Until he gets home.

Jessica: Everything's fine. You know what? I better go and check on Delilah.

Kat: Who's Delilah?

As if on cue, Delilah makes her grand entrance down the stairs. Her hair is a bit wild and she now wearing fuzzy bunny slippers.

Delilah: Yoo hoo! Does anyone cook breakfast around here? Cause I ain't smellin' no bacon n' eggs.

Rebekah: And good morning to you too. We certainly don't have a maid service around here...

Jessica (*Interrupting her*) Uh Li good morning, I hope you slept well. We can go out if you'd like. Or we can fix something.

Rebekah: You girls can just cook something, no need to go out and spend any money.

Delilah: (*Looking around the living room again*) Why not? It sure looks like you got a lot of it. Upstairs is even bigger. Ya didn't tell me your moms and pops was loaded!

Rebekah: Are you always this blunt?

Delilah: Blunt is my middle name. I never shoot...

Jessica: (*Giving Delilah the look*) Oh forgive my manners, Delilah this is my little sister Katherine, but we call her Kat for short. She's a college student. Isn't she cute!

Kat: *Cute?*

Delilah: Yeah as a button. Is this some kinda trick? Cause she don't look nothin' like you two.

Jessica: Oh that's because Kat is my stepsister.

Kat: Yes, my parents and I were in an awful car wreck. They didn't make it so the Rutherfords adopted me. It was going to be my first missionary trip with mom and dad. My parents finally realized that a 10-year-old was old enough to travel to another country. I never expected to lose them and end up a paraplegic.

Delilah: Say what?

Kat: A para-ple-gic.

Delilah: What is a pearlegit?

Kat: (*Chuckling*) A para-ple-gic is a person who is paralyzed from the waist down like me. I am blessed to still have the use of my arms.

Delilah: Oh, well thanks for the science lesson. So whatdayah say girlz, breakfast or not? I can become a real monster when I don't have no food in my stomach.

Kat: Aren't you a feisty one?

Delilah: (*Smiles*) I try.

Rebekah: (*Sarcastic*) Kat why don't you escort our hungry guest to the kitchen and show her our breakfast menu.

Kat: Yes ma'am, follow me.

Delilah: About time!

Rebekah and Jessica stare at them as they leave the room. Rebekah is clearly frustrated with Delilah's attitude and rude behavior.

Jessica: (*Looking at the expensive antique clock on the mantle piece*) Wow it's so late, I want to surprise Leah before she leaves for class, assuming that she is still a schoolteacher...

Rebekah (*As Jessica turns to go upstairs, Rebekah grabs her arm*) Not so fast young lady. We need to talk, and there is no school on Saturdays.

Jessica: Oh, can we play catch up later? I really need to go.

Rebekah: I'm not talking about playing catch up. We need to discuss this Delilah character.

Jessica: She is not a character, she is a real person.

Rebekah: Jessica how can you bring someone as rude as she is into this house?

Jessica: (*Sensing her mother's frustration*) I really can't talk to you about this right now.

Rebekah: Right now? Sweetheart you don't have a choice. I am your mother.

Jessica: How can I forget? You've reminded me my whole life.

Rebekah: Don't get smart with me Jessica. I have a right to know who that girl is and why you brought her here.

Jessica: *That girl?* You didn't seem to feel that way about her last night!

Rebekah: Last night I took into consideration how tired you both were. You can't see how rude she is? Jessica, surely a person as intelligent as you should know better!

Jessica: (*Covers her ears in protest*) There you go again mother. Please stop doing this to me.

Rebekah: Doing what? Teaching you?

Jessica: No, patronizing me! Talking to me as if I were still a child.

Rebekah: You are a child; *my* child, and if you are going to be sleeping under this roof, then I have a right to know who you want to bring over to *my* house.

Jessica: (*Out of a sudden burst of anger*) You mean dad's house!

Rebekah: Excuse me, did you just say what I think you said?

Jessica: (*Quietly*) Yes.

Rebekah: I don't know what has gotten into you these past few years, but you certainly don't sound like the young woman I raised.

Jessica: Maybe I don't want to be some prim and proper person who only cares about what others think.

Rebekah: Is that the kind of person you think I am?

There is a long pause as Jessica is contemplating her answer.

Rebekah: (*Obviously hurt*) I never realized that you thought of me in that way. (*Turning to go upstairs*) I don't want to make you late, besides I have chores of my own today.

Jessica: (*Going to her*) Mother please, I don't want to fight. I don't think badly of you, it's just that sometimes you can be so...so...

Rebekah: (*Facing her daughter*) What?

Jessica: Sometimes you can be so aggressive.

Rebekah: *Aggressive?*

Jessica: Well, kind of.

Rebekah: Haven't I always been gentle with you? Haven't I shown you love?

Jessica: Yes! All of the time, but I am a grown woman now. You have to let me go and let me figure things out for myself. You and dad taught me well and I respect you both, and if I ever need you for anything, I know where to find you.

Rebekah: I'm not questioning your common sense or ability to take care of yourself. As a parent, and you will one day understand where I am coming from, I worry about my children.

Jessica: You don't have to worry about me anymore mother, I am home now.

Rebekah: For good?

Jessica: (*Changing the subject*) Let's sit. I might as well tell you about Delilah.

Rebekah: (*Moving to the sofa*) Okay, I'm all ears.

Jessica: (*Sitting next to her*) Okay, well, first I need to know that you trust me.

Rebekah: Of course I trust you! Didn't we, in so many words, just cover this?

Jessica: Yes, but I really need you to try to understand what I'm about to tell you. You have always taught me to be open-minded and embrace others, especially those in need, right?

Rebekah: Yes I did.

Jessica: Well that's what I've been doing.

Rebekah: What does this have to do with Delilah's rudeness? Anyone with a mouth like hers can change.

Jessica: Right, but mother you are missing the point. The richest man in the world can be rude. Appearances don't mean a thing and you know that.

Rebekah: (*Pondering this for a moment*) Okay, I think I am now following you. Did Delilah come from a rough neighborhood? Dysfunctional family? What?

Jessica: You're somewhat close, but that's not quite it; it's much deeper than that.

Rebekah: How deep can it be...oh no, don't tell me she's a drug user! Do you know what all she's been exposed to? She can be infected...

Jessica: See! I knew it...I just can't talk to you!

Rebekah: Well you better say something because I need to know how serious this is!

Jessica: How can you be a respectable doctor and a preacher's wife, and yet be so judgmental?

Rebekah: I am not being judgmental. I have a duty to protect my family!

Jessica: Is shutting the world out protecting your family? Teaching us to embrace people, then when we do, you have a fit about it?

Rebekah: Putting your family in direct danger is not the same as embracing somebody. When you become a mother you'll understand.

Jessica: When I become a mother I won't be a walking contradiction.

Rebekah: *(She snatches her up)* How dare you speak to me that way!

Jessica: *(Shocked and angry)* Delilah! *(She moves toward the kitchen)* Delilah, come on and get your things, we're leaving!

Rebekah: *(Following her)* You better answer me! What has that girl been into?

Jessica: Delilah! *(Jessica opens the kitchen door and Delilah immediately falls to the floor. She and Kat were obviously listening to their argument)* Let's go now.

Delilah: *(Getting up)* Hey, I gotta right to defend myself.

Jessica: Not this time, let's go.

Kat: What's going on?

Rebekah: That is exactly what I'd like to find out.

(Jessica grabs Delilah's arm and starts leading her upstairs to gather their things, but Rebekah runs and stands in front of them)

Rebekah: Hold it! I guess I need to repeat myself. Neither of you are leaving this house until I find out the truth.

Delilah: *(To Rebekah)* I ain't ashamed of who I am.

Jessica: Delilah no....

Delilah: You think you're all high and mighty talkin' down to me....

Jessica: Don't say anymore, I'll explain later....

Rebekah: Young lady you have been rubbing me the wrong way since you marched downstairs demanding breakfast this morning. Who are you?

Jessica: *(Boiling with anger)* Okay I'll come back and get our things later. *(She leads Delilah to the front door, opens it and starts pushing her outside. Rebekah runs to the door and shuts it; trapping them both inside.)*

Rebekah: Who is she!

Jessica: She's a prostitute!

Rebekah: A what?

Jessica: A prostitute, you know a hooker, a whore; one who sleeps around for money.

Rebekah puts her hand to her mouth and then her head. She starts staggering toward the sofa. Jessica and Kat rush to her immediately as Delilah mocks her.

Jessica: Mom? Mom what's wrong.

Kat: Rebekah, are you okay?

Rebekah: A...prostitute...I...I...did you...

Delilah: (*Sarcastic*) Yeah at least forty a day!

Jessica: (*Suddenly noticing her mock Rebekah*) Stop it Delilah! I mean it...

(*Rebekah looks sick as she places a hand on one of the lamp tables to keep her balance. Then she suddenly passes out and Jessica yells out "Mom!"*).

-Blackout-

Act I, Scene III:

A light-headed Rebekah just came out of a fainting spell. She is sitting on the sofa and Jessica is sitting next to her while Kat is on the opposite side. There is a glass of water on the coffee table. An obviously irritated Delilah is still standing in front of the door with her arms folded and patting her foot between occasional yawns.

Jessica: (*Patting her mother with a damp cloth*) Do you feel okay?

Rebekah: Yes baby. I'm sorry I scared you both. (*Pause, taking Jessica's hand*) And I'm sorry I got carried away with you, but...

Jessica: (*Squeezing her mother's hand*) Shh, it's okay mom. I guess we both got a little carried away.

Kat: And don't worry about us, we're just glad you're okay.

Rebekah: (*She smiles at them both as she tries to stand up and move around; she locks eyes with Delilah*) I suppose you're getting a kick out of this.

Delilah: Does it look like I care

Jessica: (*Immediately stands up in defense of her mother*) Delilah I ask that you respect our... me and Kat's mom please.

Rebekah: (*Obviously upset by Delilah's remark but she contains herself*) It's okay Jessica. I'm sorry but I have to do this for all of our sakes. Delilah please get your belongings and leave. Jessica can show you to a motel.

Jessica: Mom please! She didn't mean it. Can't you just give her a second chance?

Delilah: Oh honey please! People like me don't get a second chance. I was kinda sick of this joint anyhow. (*She exits upstairs to get her things*).

Jessica: (*Calling after her*) Delilah...

Rebekah: Let her go. She's caused enough trouble already. You and Kat can visit her. I just don't want her here.

Kat: And the verdict is in. I guess I'll go and help Delilah pack. (*She exits through the hallway to go up the ramp that leads upstairs*).

Jessica: Then I guess I'll go and pack too.

Rebekah: So you're going to abandon your family for a stranger.

Jessica: She's not a stranger to me, and do I have a choice? I brought her here, I can't abandon her. She doesn't even know her way around town. She doesn't have a job...

Rebekah: (*Sarcastic*) Well I'm sure she won't have any trouble finding one.

Jessica: (*She stares at her mother for a long time in silence*) I need some space. I will be spending a few nights with Delilah. I'll call you then. (*She turns to leave*).

Rebekah: Well I guess I can't stop you. I have no choice but to wait for your call.

Jessica: Trust me, it's for the best. (*She exits upstairs*).

Rebekah walks back to the sofa and sits. She is obviously hurt by the prospect of her daughter leaving for a few days. She stares out blankly for a moment before weeping softly.

-Blackout-

Act I, Scene IV:

Just then, there is a distinct dainty but audible knock at the front door during the blackout, lights up before the doorbell and back to the unique knock. Rebekah reluctantly goes to the door and opens it as Ms. Sandra Dale Buchanan makes her grand entrance into the living room. Sandra is 63 years old. She is wearing an elegant navy blue suit with a matching handbag and hat. Sandra loves to indulge in money, extravagant things, food and gossip. She is a very nosy person.

Sandra: Why did it take you so long to answer the door? I heard Jessica was home, where is she?

Rebekah: How did you know that Jessica was back?

Sandra: Haven't you learned by now that I know everything. Well almost everything. Tell that child to come here so I can see her.

Rebekah: She's upstairs with her *friend*.

Sandra: Oh. She brought a friend with her?

Rebekah: Unfortunately.

Sandra: Sounds like you don't like this friend of hers very much. Who is he?

Rebekah: She's not someone I care to know that's for sure.

Sandra: Oh I see, a 'she', hmmm. Well, *I* must meet this person.

Rebekah: I'm sure you will soon enough.

Sandra: Are you feeling well today? You seem a bit down. Is everything okay with you and Jessica?

Rebekah is too upset to be bothered by Sandra's questions. She livens up a bit in order to throw Sandra off.

Rebekah: Oh you know I haven't *eaten* a thing all morning! Would you like some breakfast? Coffee?

Sandra: (*Excitedly*) Pancakes, croissants, bacon, eggs, sausage links, jam and coffee all sound wonderful!

Rebekah: And fattening! I'll go start the coffee. I think toast and eggs will suffice, would you care to join me or do you want to wait for her to come down?

Sandra: If you don't mind I'll wait for Jessica. After all, I'm dying to see her.

Rebekah: (*Under her breath*) I'm sure you are.

Sandra: What was that?

Rebekah: That's fine with me, I'll be right back. (*She exits into the kitchen*)

Sandra walks around the living room inspecting the furniture. She looks for dust and anything new or unusual. Jessica and Delilah enter; they are both dressed and carrying their bags.

Jessica: Ms. Buchanan? I didn't expect to see you here.

Sandra: (*Immediately rushes over to Jessica and looks her up and down before grabbing her for a hard hug*) Jessica, it's so good to see you! Where have you been? I see you haven't gained a pound. Is this your friend? Your mother told me that you brought someone home. Now you and Leah can get together like old times. You two haven't talked in ages. I remember...

Jessica: You didn't tell her that I was home did you?

Sandra: Of course I did! Don't any of you people know me by now? Where's Kat?

Jessica: She's upstairs.

Sandra: Doing what?

Jessica: How did you even know I was home?

Sandra: Your father of course! I'm not the chairman of the Ladies Auxiliary Board, the Annual Mother's Scholarship Tea, and seasoned member of the Senior Choir for nothing. A member with such responsibilities has to keep in touch with her pastor. He's overjoyed that you're home. He was so happy that I had to talk him out of...(*She continues to ramble on while Delilah comments to Jessica*).

Delilah: (*To Jessica*) Does she ever shut up?

Sandra: (*Suddenly pauses to look Delilah up and down and with much sarcasm*) And who might this creature be again?

Delilah: The only creature I see is you.

Sandra: No wonder Rebekah doesn't like you, and you're this close to making that two of us.

Jessica: (*Interrupting their confrontation*) Where is my mother?

Sandra: She's in the kitchen. Can't you smell the food?

Delilah: I'm sure you can.

Jessica: (*To Delilah*) Please. I need to see her before we go. I'll be right back. (*She exits to the kitchen*)

Delilah goes to the sofa to sit and wait on Jessica. Sandra observes her by walking around few times.

Sandra: I don't believe I caught your name.

Delilah: Delilah.

Sandra: How do you know Jessica?

Delilah: School.

Sandra: (*Gives her a skeptical glance*) You must have attended a different school. Well you know that she and my grand niece Leah have been best friends since birth. Where are you from?

Delilah: Detroit. Any more questions?

Sandra: (*Upset at the remark*) Yes, who inspired your taste in clothing?

Delilah: As if you could shop in the same store as me.

Sandra: I didn't realize your clothes came from a store.

Delilah: Jealous?

Sandra: Of junk? Of course not.

Delilah: I guess you think your clothes are better?

Sandra: Exquisite to be exact.

Delilah: I wouldn't be caught dead in the same store as you.

Sandra: Don't worry, you can't afford it.

(Delilah stands up to go to the kitchen as Jessica followed by Rebekah re-enters the living room. They are in another small but intense argument).

Jessica: Mother I have made my decision. Let me go in peace...

Sandra: Well well...

Rebekah: What do you want me to do Jessica? I'll pay for her room, I'll even give her money for food and transportation. Look, I'll go and write a check right now. I'll make it out to you so that you can cash it for her. My bank closes at noon...

Jessica: Mother!! You are not listening to me. Delilah, let's go.

Sandra: I knew there was something I forgot to ask you, where are you going with those bags?

Jessica: I need some fresh air. Are you ready Li?

Sandra: What?

Delilah: I been ready to blow this joint.

They both head towards the front door. Rebekah follows Jessica while Sandra stands back and enjoys the show.

Rebekah: Okay Delilah you can stay here. Jessica, she can stay okay?

Jessica: No mother, I can't deal with this. It's just too much.

Delilah: Who is she kiddin'? I'd rather sleep on the ground.

Rebekah: *(To Jessica)* Are you coming back?

Jessica: I don't know. I need time to think.

Rebekah: Okay.

Rebekah drops her head in silence as Delilah opens the door to leave.

Delilah: So long suckas. *(She exits)*

Jessica stands in the doorway facing her mother. She pauses before speaking.

Jessica: I'll call you.

Rebekah: I'll be waiting.

She turns to leave but stops.

Jessica: Mom.

Rebekah: Yes.

Jessica: You'll understand soon. *(She exits as Rebekah stares at her)*

Rebekah slowly turns to go back into the kitchen as Sandra approaches her. There is a slight pause as they look at each other.

Sandra: Well I guess you can tell me all about it over breakfast. I'm starving!

-Blackout-

Act I, Scene V:

Jessica and Delilah have just entered their motel room. It has two Queen-sized beds facing the audience and a nightstand with a lamp in between the beds. The door to the bathroom is located in the far right corner of the room as is the air conditioner/heater. Above the cooling unit is a huge window with closed curtains. There is a small round table with two chairs down stage right. The closet is located near the entrance downstage left. The dresser and television are located next to the closet.

Jessica: Here we are. *(She places her bag on the first bed and immediately starts unpacking, placing her clothes in a dresser drawer. Delilah doesn't answer, but just flings her bag on the bed closest to the window and uses it as a pillow as she lies down.*

Jessica: You can at least put your things away.

Delilah: I don't need you to tell me what to do.

Jessica: Look, I'm sorry about the way mom and Ms. Buchanan treated you, but you brought that on yourself.

Delilah: You think I care about them? Honey I've been dealin' with broads like them all my life.

Jessica: Then why do you have an attitude?

Delilah: Leave me alone I'm going to sleep.

Jessica: Fine.

There is silence between them as Jessica continues to unpack and Delilah tries to go to sleep. They occasionally look at each other as Delilah tosses and turns. Finally, Delilah sits up and confronts Jessica.

Delilah: Why didn't you tell your mom that you're a whore too?

Jessica: Oh, so that's what this is about.

Delilah: Yeah, it is. Ya sat there and defended me like you're some saint, but ya wouldn't tell the truth about yourself.

Jessica: I um, well, okay...

Delilah: *(Mimicking Jessica as she waits for her response)* Okay.

Jessica: I can explain. You see um...

(There is a knock on the door. Jessica looks puzzled and relieved at the same time as she opens the door to her brother Jamie Rutherford. Jamie is 30 years old, tall, with a medium build. He is a very spiritual, handsome, and intelligent young man. Jamie is a family man, devoted to helping people.)

Jamie: I knew I would find you.

Jessica: *(She goes into his arms)* Jamie, you're just in time! How did you know where I was staying?

Jamie: Mom told me, so I called every motel in town until I found you.

Jessica: I'm glad you did, I missed you so much. Come in, I want you to meet Delilah.

Jessica steps aside to let Jamie walk into the room. As he walks in, he comes face to face with Delilah as she stands up. They stare at each other for a second before Jamie extends his hand out to her.

Jamie: Hi Delilah, I'm Jessica's brother.

Delilah: (*Obviously affected by his presence, she shakes his hand*) Hi yourself, Jamie is it?

Jamie: (*Equally affected*) Yes. (*He holds her hand a little longer as they stare at each other. Jessica finally interrupts them*)

Jessica: Well big brother, why don't you sit down and tell me what's going on with you?

Delilah: I'm going to get some ice. It was nice meetin' you.

Jessica: But we don't need any ice...

Delilah: Yes we do. See ya. (*She exits*).

Jamie: (*Calling after her*) Nice meeting you too. (*To Jessica*) Was it something I said?

Jessica: One can never tell with Delilah. Sit.

Jamie: (*He finds a chair and sits*) Mom's upset Jessica. I think you should call her.

Jessica: (*Sits on the bed*) I can't call her right now, I'm still trying to cool off. Did she tell you everything?

Jamie: (*Chuckles*) No, not with Ms. Buchanan around, but she did say that you two had a disagreement. You should at least let her know that you are okay.

Jessica: I'll think about it.

Jamie: Okay, but first try to place yourself in her shoes. Parents do worry.

Jessica: And their children don't?

Jamie: I'm not following you. Are you worried about something sis?

Jessica: (*Answers quickly*) No, I'm not. (*Quick pause*) So, what is going on with you? I heard you've been working on an album.

Jamie: Yeah I've been working on a gospel album for some time now.

Jessica: Wow, my brother the gospel artist! Tell me about it.

Jamie: Well you know Jackson and I have been collaborating on this project. I wrote most of the tracks, but I do need a female singer for one special song, are you interested?

Jessica: Jamie you know I can't sing. Jackson as in Brother Jackson?

Jamie: Who else? Jackson is the man.

Jessica: Is he still sweet on Leah?

Jamie: Now you know I don't listen to gossip. If I didn't hear it from the horses' mouth, then I don't know.

Jessica: James Rutherford Jr., if you never noticed how Bro Jack acts around Leah, then you really are in your own world. Everybody knows he likes her.

Jamie: That's everybody excluding me.

Jessica: (Teasingly) Maybe that's because she's sweet on you...

Jamie: I didn't come here to talk about that sis. Why don't you ask Leah about that stuff?

Jessica: Because I already know her answer. Okay I'll let you off the hook for now big brother. (Pause) So, how would you like to join two foxy ladies for pizza and a movie?

Jamie: (He gives her a sheepish grin) Speaking of a fox, tell me more about your mysterious friend.

Jessica: Mysterious? Delilah? She's anything but that.

Jamie: Well it looks as if you two are very close, and since we've never heard you mention her before....

Jessica: (Quickly) Oh well she is just a good friend that I met at school. So, what do you say...

Jamie: Hold up little sis. What's going on here? Why are you trying to change the subject?

Jessica: I'm not trying to change the subject; I'm just uh hungry. Why don't I find Delilah so we can order?

Delilah re-enters the motel room empty-handed. She suddenly becomes a bit timid and uncomfortable around Jamie, who just stares at her.

Delilah: Did I hear the word "eat"?

Jessica: There you are! I was just trying to coax my brother into staying for pizza. I don't know about you but I'm starving.

Delilah: I'm a little hungry.

Jessica: A *little* hungry? What happened to you? You were dying to eat at the house. (*Realizes that she didn't get any ice*) And where is the ice?

Delilah: Oh, it melted on the way back. (*To Jamie*) I didn't think you'd still be here.

Jamie is obviously amused as Jessica gives Delilah a strange look.

Delilah: I'm tired. Why don't you two go out and bring me somethin' back?

Jamie: Oh come on Delilah, I don't bite.

Delilah: Yeah right. That's what they all say.

Jamie: You're not one of those man-haters are you? I'm a laid back person; at least that's what they all tell me.

Delilah: I know all the games you tricks play.

Jessica: Delilah!

Jamie: (*Puzzled*) Trick? That's a pretty strong name to call someone you just met.

Jessica: Jamie I apologize for that. (*Leading him towards the door*) On second thought, I'm a little tired too. I think we'll grab something out of the vending machine before taking a nap. I'll call you okay?

Jamie: (*Staring at Delilah*) Dinner? How about dinner tonight?

Jessica: I don't think that's a good idea...

Jamie: (*Goes to Delilah*) I won't take no for an answer. I haven't seen my little sister in a long time so why don't you join us for dinner. (*Beat*) No strings attached.

Delilah: That's a first.

Jamie: Look I'm not a bad guy. You just met me and all I want to do is spend some time with my sis and her friend.

Jessica: I give up! You might as well say yes because he won't leave until you do.

Delilah: I guess it won't hurt since we're all going.

Jamie: *(Smiles at her)* Cool. So I'll pick you ladies up at 7:00.

Jessica: That's fine with us bro, even better than ordering pizza. *(She kisses her brother on the cheek)*. That will give us plenty of time to get ready.

Jamie: Alright, make sure you call mom.

Jessica: I will.

Jamie: *(Standing in the doorway, he looks at Delilah who slightly turns her head)* I'll see you later.

Jessica: We'll be waiting!

-Blackout-

Act I, Scene VI:

*Jessica, Delilah and Jamie are seated at a nice round table in a simple, but nice restaurant. They are all dressed in nice casual clothing. Delilah is wearing form-fitting black slacks with a nice sweater. The table has a red tablecloth with a simple floral centerpiece. There are other tables with a few couples seated. Delilah carefully sits next to Jessica. *Note: There can be three tables set up in front of closed curtains, for this scene.*

Jessica: I haven't been here in so long. Things haven't changed a bit.

Jamie: Yep, still same old place with great food and a relaxing atmosphere.

Delilah: *(Looking around)* Looks like a dump to me.

Jamie: Are you always this negative?

Delilah: I ain't negative. I tell it like it is.

Jessica: *(Giving her a hard cold stare)* Yeah real rude is more like it. Thanks again for taking us out to dinner.

Jamie: No problem sis. By the way, did you call mom?

Jessica: Did you have to ask, especially since you already know the answer?

Jamie: Jess, she sat around all afternoon waiting for your call. I even had to stop her from going to the motel. You know you can't avoid her forever.

Jessica: I know that, and I'm sorry, but I just need a little more time. Now can we please just enjoy dinner?

Jamie: Okay little sis, I trust that you'll come around soon. I'm just glad we're able to spend some quality time together.

Jessica: Me too. I missed you so much Jamie.

Jamie: I missed you too, which brings me to my next question. Why didn't you call as much after you graduated? I mean, why were you so distant? It was like you were hiding from us.

Jessica: Well I...

Delilah: Oh enough of this garbage! We came here to eat, so lets eat. *(She stands up and begins to look around for a waiter/waitress)* Waiter, waitress...somebody!

Jamie: Whoa, slow your roll missy. You're going to get us kicked out of here.

Delilah: And you two are going to make me throw up with this "Oh brother, oh sis. I love you, I miss you so much" crap.

Jamie: You don't like me very much do you?

Delilah: I don't know you.

Jamie: Why don't you get to know me?

Delilah: You can't afford me lover boy.

Jamie: Afford you? I didn't take you for the high maintenance type.

Delilah: Well I charge by the hour....

Jessica: *(She stands up, deliberately cutting in)* Oh look. I think our waiter is coming.

Jamie: *(Ignoring Jessica's remark)* You make yourself sound like a prostitute.

Jessica: Leah? Hey it's Leah!

Leah Buchanan, who has just entered the restaurant, turns as when hears her name. She is the epitome of a good girl, as she is conservatively dressed in a long skirt, blouse and sensible shoes. She is 23-years-old, and although semi-attractive, she is very sensitive, insecure, needy, and has a jealous streak, but she is a very sweet person. Leah has had a crush on Jamie since she was a child.

Leah: *(Coming towards their table)* Jess is that you?

Jessica: *(They embrace in a warm hug)* Of course it's me! What are you doing here?

Leah: What am I doing here? I should ask the same of you, especially since you've been in town for more than a day without calling me.

Jessica: Actually I was going to call you after dinner. So much has been going on since I've been back. How have you been?

Leah: Well I should hope you would call soon, because I was beginning to think you had forgotten about me. I've been well. *(She turns to Jamie and Delilah)* Hi Jamie, aren't you going to introduce me to your date?

Delilah: He ain't my date honey.

Leah: *(Extending her hand)* Oh, I don't believe we've ever met. I'm Leah Buchanan, Jessica's best friend.

Delilah: *(Barely gripping her hand, she shakes it quickly)* Name's Delilah. So you're the broad they told me about when we got here...

Leah: *(Offended)* Excuse me?

Jessica: *(Interrupting them)* Hey why don't you join us for dinner?

Leah: I just came to place a take-out order, plus you all obviously look busy...

Jessica: Leah I'm sorry that I haven't called you yet but we'd love to have you pull up a chair and join us.

Leah looks at Jamie to see his reaction before responding.

Jamie: You might as well stay now that you're here. Take my chair and I'll get another one.

Leah: (*Smiling brightly*) Thank you Jamie, I'd love to dine with you.

Leah takes Jamie's seat while he gets another one.

Jessica: Great! I'm so glad that you're here.

Leah: I'm glad I finally got to see you. We haven't talked in so long. What have you been up to?

Jessica: I hope you are not too mad at me for staying out of touch. I've been, well I've been busy since graduation.

Delilah: I'll say.

Leah: What?

Jessica: Don't mind her. I'll fill you in later. So what's new with you? Are you seeing anybody special?

Leah: Well I, uh...

Jamie: (*Changing the subject*) Didn't you and Bro. Jack go out a few weeks ago to finish....

Leah: (*She quickly becomes defensive*) That was not a date! We just wanted a change of scenery while we finished up on the Homecoming program.

Jamie: I wasn't implying anything by it. I know you both work together and are just good friends.

Leah: It's okay, I'm glad you recognize that Jackson and I are *just* friends.

Jamie: Hey, that's what friends are for right? I don't like to assume anything.

Leah: (*Slight Pause*) Then why did you mention our outing?

Jamie: It was an off-the subject remark. I really didn't mean anything by it.

Leah: No problem. I'm just so tired of people thinking that we're an item.

Delilah: You look like you're scared of men.

Leah: And who asked for your opinion?

Delilah: Don't get your panties all twisted.

Leah: I can't believe this stranger just insulted me.

Delilah: I ain't no stranger. Me and Jazz...Jessica are cool.

Leah: *(To Jessica)* Where did she come from?

Jessica: *(Raises her hand to get a waiter/waitress)* I think we're ready to order.

-Blackout-

Act I, Scene VII:

It is Sunday morning and both Jessica and Delilah are standing in front of the church. Jessica is wearing a nice navy blue suit and a black wool coat, while Delilah is wearing a red and black suit that she borrowed from Jessica. She is also wearing a black wool coat. As the two approach the steps, they meet an elderly homeless man called Shakespeare. He sits next to the front door wearing old slacks and a long sleeved shirt. Shakespeare wears a red snow cap. He is now asleep with his head leaning to one side. Shakespeare is covered in a beautiful white quilt.

Delilah: Why are you so nervous? It's your church. Besides, you know everybody here.

Jessica: You wouldn't understand.

Delilah: What's that supposed to mean?

Jessica: Don't tell me you're getting sensitive too.

Delilah: Whatever, all I'm sayin' is....

Shakespeare: *(Waking up)* Ah, I knew you would come back.

Jessica: Shakespeare! Still sitting on the pavement every Sunday? You haven't changed a bit.

Delilah: Shakespeare? Like that writer guy, I read about in school.

Jessica: I'd like you to meet my dear friend Delilah.

Shakespeare: *(Tips his hat off to her)* Why the pleasure is all mine. And what brings you to our little town?

Delilah: For all you know I could be from around here, just never met you before.

Shakespeare: Oh no, you're not from around here.

Delilah: How do you know?

Shakespeare: I just do.

Delilah: Whatever.

Jessica: It is great seeing you Shakespeare. It's so cool out, why don't you come inside with us?

Shakespeare: Sweet Jessica, always so kind and loving you are. Pure is your heart. I thank you for your invitation, but I'll be enjoying the service from out here.

Jessica: (*She bends over and gives the old man a kiss*) Alright, but one of these days, we're going to get you inside.

Shakespeare: Yep, one of these days.

Jessica opens the door and walks in front of Delilah. Shakespeare grabs Delilah's arm as she is about to enter.

Delilah: Hey watch it, what are you doing?

Shakespeare: Don't take no wooden nickels and never overlook a penny.

Delilah: I don't take fake money.

Delilah and Shakespeare look at each other for a moment as he releases her arm. The lights go out on Shakespeare as Jessica and Delilah enter the church. The church is a quaint structure, with a small choir stand, piano, and three seats in the pulpit. There is one aisle between two pews on each side.

Jessica: Oh it's just as I remembered! Nothing has changed.

Delilah: You act like you been gone for five years or somethin'.

Jessica: Being away from this place for even a week makes me feel like I've been gone forever.

Delilah: Well I don't see nothin' special about a little cracker box church.

Jessica: Li it's what lives inside, not the building itself.

Delilah: I don't see what a few seats and a microphone can do for me.

Jessica: Those things don't count either, but one day you'll understand.

Delilah: Whatever you say. Does this place have a little girl's room cause I gotta go?

Jessica: It's not that small. Come on I'll show you.

They start to exit UL when Agnes Smith enters from UR. Agnes is 80 years old, short with thick glasses. She is the beloved church secretary, affectionately known as Aggie to some. Aggie is blunt but lovable and she is famous for her offbeat singing and sudden outbursts particularly due to her "lack of hearing". Aggie is a character in both looks and personality.

Agnes: (*Humming some unknown tune, she screams when she sees them*) Ahhh!!!!!!!

Jessica: (*She and Delilah suddenly jump and face the elderly woman*) Aggie! It's just me.

Jessica: Please don't scream like that again. I don't want to have to call the paramedics.

Agnes: Jessica? Whew! For a minute there I thought you two were robbers or something.
(*Beat*) You got fat!

Jessica: (*Embracing her*) Well some things never change. Hello Agnes, how are you doing?

Agnes: (*She grabs Jessica's behind as Delilah laughs*). What have they been feeding you in Michigan? You got too much junk in your trunk.

Jessica: I haven't gained a pound, at least that's what Ms. Buchanan said. Are you sure you're wearing the right pair of glasses? And I wouldn't laugh too much Delilah, especially since you borrowed that suit from me.

Agnes: You listened to Sandra? Hah! Honey I may be old but I know a little extra rump roast when I see it, and you've got it. And ain't nothin' wrong with it, now come on over here and give me a kiss. I missed you girl!

Jessica: (*Kisses her on the cheek*) I missed you too. I want you to meet my friend here.
Agnes this is Delilah.

Agnes: (*Looking Delilah up and down*). You're too pretty to be from around here.
Where did you come from?

Delilah: Michigan.

Agnes: What town?

Delilah: They said I was born in Detroit.

Agnes: Huh?

Delilah: My parents.

Agnes: Your parents did what?

Delilah: Never mind, they ain't important right now.

Jessica: You never told me about your parents.

Delilah: Never felt like it. I really gotta pee.

Agnes: I can show you to the potty dear. Follow me.

Jessica: Thanks Aggie.

Jessica watches them exit UL. She walks around the church in deep thought. After a few moments, she is interrupted by her mother and Jamie, who have entered the church from the front entrance. Rebekah watches her daughter for a moment before approaching her. She puts her hands on Jessica's shoulders as Jamie stands by.

Jessica: (Startled) Mom, How are you?

Rebekah: I'm much better now.

Rebekah opens her arms and Jessica, after a slight pause, goes to her.

Jessica: I'm so sorry mother. I don't ever want us to argue again.

Rebekah: (Softly) I know baby, its okay. Mother's here.

Jessica: I just wanted you to listen to me.

Rebekah: And I should have at least done that before making assumptions. I'm sorry.

Jessica: Can we talk later?

Rebekah: I'd be very disappointed if we didn't. Maybe you both can come back to the house...

Jessica: I'd rather us talk alone.

Rebekah: But we can go to another room.

Jessica: No mother, please just trust me.

Rebekah: Okay, okay. I certainly don't want a repeat of last time, so we'll talk later...alone.

Jessica: You're the greatest!

Rebekah: Only after you.

Jamie: Don't forget about me!

They all embrace as Delilah re-enters the sanctuary.

Delilah: Is that all you people do in this town?

Jessica: Mom and I just made up, and I am hoping that you two can be friends.

Rebekah: Delilah I apologize for my behavior earlier. I over-reacted as any concerned parent would. I would very much like to get to know you.

Jamie: Me too.

Delilah: There ain't much to know.

Jamie: Only the person getting to know you can be judge of that.

Rebekah: Amen! Listen, I'll see you all after service. I have to go and get my choir robe on. *(She turns to leave but Delilah's questions stops her)*.

Delilah: *(Curiously)* You sing in the choir?

Jessica: Are you kidding? She has the voice of an angel.

Jamie: Mom can blow!

Rebekah: I suppose I can hum a tune or two.

Jessica: You'll get a chance to hear her for yourself.

Agnes re-enters from UL. She is wearing her choir robe.

Agnes: (*To Rebekah*) Becky you better get ready. We're up in 7 minutes.

Rebekah: Dinner at my house afterwards. Thanks Agnes! *She exits UL.*

Agnes: (*To Jamie*) Hey handsome. Have you met this pretty lady yet?

Jamie: I met her last night.

Agnes: You should take her out to dinner or something.

Delilah: What?

Jamie: We all went out to eat last night.

Agnes: Who's "all"?

Jamie: Jessica, Delilah and myself. And Leah joined us later.

Agnes: I betcha that was a sight alright.

Jessica: Why do you say that?

Delilah: Yeah?

Agnes: Honey I ain't no gossip or nothin' like that but Leah would fight a pit bull over Jamie boy. So you be careful.

Delilah: I don't even know him...

Jamie: Leah and I are just friends.

Agnes: Don't tell me you didn't know she was sweet on you?

Jessica: Leah just has an innocent crush on Jamie.

Agnes: Innocent? The Lord above knows that I love that child but I know her and she has and still does have her heart set on you Jamie. (*To Delilah and Jamie*) And any ding ding can see the chemistry between you two.

Soft piano music is playing.

Agnes: Oops I gotta go. Last time I was late; I tripped over a chair on the way to my seat! Nearly cracked all the bones I have left...*She exits UL.*

Delilah: What next? You people are weird.

Jamie: Speaking of seats, we should all get to ours.

Jessica: You won't be directing the choir?

Jamie: The ladies chorus is singing today.

Jessica: Oh well I guess we have you all to ourselves.

Jamie: (*He looks at Delilah*) Yes you do.

-Blackout-

Act I, Scene VIII (Sunday afternoon):

The Sunday church service is over and everyone has assembled at the Rutherford residence for dinner. Jessica, Delilah, Jamie, Kat and Rebekah are all seated in the living room.

Jessica: The service was so good and mom, your singing blows me away every time! I just wish dad could have been up there preaching today.

Delilah: Yeah you sounded good up there.

Rebekah: Why thank you both. The service was wonderful, but you did enjoy the associate pastor didn't you?

Jessica: Oh yes, he was great but I miss dad.

Rebekah: And he can't wait to see you. Just hold on, he'll be home soon.

Kat: Hey we should have a welcome home party for him, and Bek you could sing. Too bad you answered the phone Jessica, or we could throw him a surprise party.

Jessica: Maybe he could still be surprised.

Kat: How? I'm not quite sure I follow you.

Jessica: Don't mind me, I'm just rambling. You know how I am.

Kat: Yes I do and I'm so glad you're back. Everyone was so glad to see you this morning.

Jamie: They sure were. My little sis sure knows how to draw a crowd.

Rebekah: Speaking of a crowd, I invited some others over for dinner.

Jessica: Who?

Rebekah: Well you know Agnes, who can't come; Leah, Jackson and Ms. Buchanan invited herself of course.

Delilah: You ain't talkin' about that nosy big mouth lady are you? Oh no I ain't stayin' if she's comin'. *Delilah starts to leave but Rebekah blocks her.*

Rebekah: Now wait a minute. Ms. Buchanan is a good woman; she just gets carried away sometimes. Besides, Leah and Jackson will be here so we'll all have a good time. Now sit and enjoy yourself.

Delilah: *(Reluctantly sits)* Who's Jackson anyways?

Jessica: He was at church today. The "stalker"?

Kat: *(Delilah)* Yeah I think Jackson thought you were cute. He couldn't keep his eyes off you. Too bad we left before he was able to meet you.

Delilah: Great, another weirdo. At least he ain't like that crazy old man I met today.

Kat: Who Shakespeare? Oh he's harmless but so hard to figure out. I've never met anyone like him. We always try to get him to come inside but he won't. He's there bright and early, every Sunday rain or shine, hot or cold.

Jamie: And don't forget wise. That man is super intelligent.

Delilah: Super dumb if you ask me, callin' himself Shakespeare.

Jessica: You'll have to give him a chance Delilah. He's one of the good ones.

Jamie: Yes, you'll have to give us all a chance.

The doorbell rings and Jessica goes to answer it. It is Brother Lance Jackson and Ms. Buchanan. Bro. Jackson, who is around the same age as Jamie, is dressed in a sharp black suit and coat while Ms. Buchanan is wearing a fall suit with matching hat, and a brown fur coat. Rebekah stands to greet them as Jessica takes their coats.

Rebekah: Sandra and Lance I'm glad you two could make it. Where is Leah?

Sandra: She had some business to attend to, but she'll be here shortly. Hello everyone! Wasn't service brilliant today?

Rebekah: *(Interrupting Delilah with a hard stare)* Yes it was and we were all just talking about it.

Sandra: Well that's wonderful indeed. What's for dinner?

Delilah: *(Letting out a loud snort)* It figures!

Rebekah: I was just about to check on the chicken before I serve some hors d'oeuvres. Why don't you come along and help.

Sandra: *(Eyeing Delilah after her remark)* Thank you Rebekah, I think I will. *(Pausing next to Delilah as she speaks)* I see you must have borrowed that suit from Jessica this morning.

Delilah: And I see you must have jumped a bear to get that coat.

Kat starts laughing, Jamie covers her mouth, and Sandra gives her the stare.

Rebekah: Ladies please! I didn't ask everyone over for Sunday dinner to insult one another. *(Beat)* Come on Sandra.

Rebekah and Sandra exit into the kitchen while Jackson crosses over to Delilah.

Jackson: *(Extending his hand to Delilah)* Well, well and how are you doing pretty lady?

Delilah: I'd be better if I didn't have to look at you.

Jackson: Ouch! The beautiful ones always have sassy mouths. I guess beauty really does go to the head.

Jessica: *(Sarcastic)* It's nice to see you too Bro. Jackson. Delilah Simpson, Bro. Lance Jackson. I think Delilah is just in a bad mood.

Jackson: No problem. Ms. Sandra seems to have that effect on most people that is until you get to know her. (*Taking a slight bow*) The pleasure is all mine.

Jamie: (*Obviously a little jealous, he changes the subject*) Hey have you talked to the engineers yet? We need to set up a time to record some more...

Jackson: James, James, James. Why should we discuss business in the company of such fine women? Let's just enjoy the pleasure of her, I mean their company.

Jamie: Alright man but we do need to stay on track. I've got a lot riding on this album.

Delilah: Album? What album?

Kat: Oh that's right, you were upstairs when I told Jessica about Jamie's upcoming album.

Delilah: (*To Jessica*) Why didn't you tell me?

Jessica: Honestly Li, I didn't think Jamie's album, or much of anything about anyone around here would interest you.

Jamie: (*Excited*) I'd be more than happy to tell you about it!

Jackson: (*To Delilah*) So where are you from?

Rebekah and Sandra re-enter laughing and carrying a tray of appetizers. They continue to laugh as Jackson re-states his question.

Jackson: Go ahead sweetheart; don't let the noise stop you. Where are you from?

Sandra: Yes, where are you from again?

Delilah: Why do you care?

Sandra: Maybe I was trying to make friendly conversation.

Delilah: Or maybe you were tryin' to be nosy again. I told you where I was from.

Jackson: But you didn't tell me.

Delilah: Alright, I'll say it one more time so that everybody can hear: MI-CHI-GAN.

Rebekah: Oh. (*Interested*) I didn't think you were from Michigan? What city?

Delilah: Detroit by way of Lansing.

Rebekah: Oh.

Kat: Bek are you okay? You look like you've just seen a ghost.

Rebekah: I'm fine. *(Staring at Delilah)* Everyone please enjoy some of these delicious hors d'oeuvres.

Jessica notices her mother staring at Delilah. She gets up and approaches her mother with the intent of asking her upstairs for a private talk. As she touches Rebekah on the shoulder, the doorbell rings. It is Leah, who is very excited.

Jessica: I'll get it.

Leah: Ohmigosh Jessica! *(She rushes past Jessica and into the living room facing everyone).*

Jessica: Whoa, slow down Leah...

Leah: I just met the most wonderful guy!

Delilah: Whopty Doo!

Leah: *(To Delilah)* Not even you can ruin this moment for me.

Jackson: *(Stands up)* What guy?

Sandra: Yes you must sit and tell us just how wonderful he is.

Leah: He was so gentle and nice to me.

Delilah: That's how they all are at first.

Jamie: Well I think that's great Leah. Maybe we all can meet him soon.

Jessica: I better get to meet him, but first tell us about him.

Leah: Okay, well you know I stayed after church to meet with Agnes and the associate pastor about my new proposal to reform our children's church, and...

Sandra: For goodness sake, please get on with it girl!

Leah: I'm trying to get it out as fast as I can Aunt Sandra. Anyways, I was the last to leave, and even Shakespeare was gone, so as I was locking the front doors this handsome man came right up to me!

Delilah: Was he drunk?

Leah: (*Ignoring her comment*) He came right up to me and asked if he could walk me to my car. He didn't think a "pretty young lady" should be locking up the church all by herself, even in broad daylight.

Jessica: Well he sure sounds interesting. What is his name?

Sandra: And what does he do for a living?

Leah: Oh his name is Joseph, and we didn't talk long enough for me to find out his occupation. I don't even think he's from around here.

Jackson: I'm just glad you're safe.

Leah: What do you mean by that?

Jackson: Leah you can't trust some stranger just because you think he's handsome and nice.

Delilah: Somebody's being real for once.

Jessica: It sounds like somebody is jealous.

Jackson: I don't know what you're talking about. I'm just trying to talk some sense into my good friend here. We are friends right?

Leah: I always thought so. (*Beat*) He was harmless, and oh so charming. And he was dressed so sharp in his black suit!

Sandra: Well I like the sound of that. I hope you exchanged phone numbers or something because you need to find out more about this mysterious gentleman.

Jackson: Women. Always thinking about what a man drives, owns and how much money he makes.

Delilah: And you dogs are always thinkin' about what you can get!

All eyes are on Delilah, as Rebekah interrupts.

Rebekah: (*Standing*) I'm so glad you all could join us this afternoon. Sunday dinners have always been special in our family. It is a time where we can all come together and share a wonderful meal in love and unity. With that being said, shall we eat?

Everyone stands and begins to exit upstage left into the dining room area. Jamie escorts Kat. Jessica stays behind to get a word with her mother alone before joining everyone else.

Jessica: Mom.

Rebekah: Yes.

Jessica: I was wondering if...

Rebekah: This has been a long time coming Jessica.

Jessica: Our talk.

Rebekah: Yes, after dinner.

Jessica: I'm glad we'll finally get the chance.

Rebekah: (*Pause*) Me too.

They both exit upstage left the dining room.

-Blackout-

Act I, Scene IX:

Dinner is over and everyone has left except Jessica and Rebekah. Jessica is nervously pacing the living room as Rebekah enters from the kitchen.

Rebekah: (*Surprised to see Jessica alone*) Where is Delilah? She and Jamie were just here a minute ago.

Jessica: They went to get our things and check out.

Rebekah: Oh.

Jessica: I thought you'd be happier than that.

Rebekah: I am sweetheart, (*Pause*) well where's Kat?

Jessica: Mother she's upstairs. I told her that I needed some time alone with you.

Rebekah: I know Sandra just didn't eat and run...

Jessica: You were the one who told her to go and help Leah find a cute outfit in case she runs into that guy again.

Rebekah: Was that before or after dinner?

Jessica: It was towards the end of dinner. Why are you doing this?

Rebekah: Jackson usually stays and chats awhile...

Jessica: You know he went with Ms. Buchanan and Leah to be nosy. (*She stands in front of her mother*) You can't keep avoiding me.

Rebekah: I know, I know. We have to talk; it's just that I'm kind of dreading it.

Jessica: I am too. But it has to be done. I'm sure you've figured it all out by now.

Rebekah: I...I don't know what you mean. Figured out what?

Jessica: You mean you still don't know?

Rebekah: How can I not know if you do?

Jessica: Wait a minute, hold on. I'm so confused!

Rebekah: There is nothing to be confused about. You brought her here to avoid facing me, but you went through too much trouble.

Jessica: How can you say that? Is that why you were so mean to her at first?

Rebekah: Jessica I was not mean to her that night. I extended my hand and my home to her. She was, no, is a very rude young lady.

Jessica: You're right. I was just thinking that perhaps you got angry with her because you had somehow figured it out.

Rebekah: There is nothing to figure out. You are the one who obviously figured it out, which is why you brought her here.

Jessica: You are one of the greatest people that I know and I'm not just saying that because you are my mother. I grew up watching you not only love and protect your family, but open your heart to others.

Rebekah: And...

Jessica: And I just...I just don't understand why it is so hard for you to look beyond the fact that Delilah is, no was a prostitute.

Rebekah: And what makes you so sure that she still isn't one?

Jessica: Because if I can help it, she is never going back to that life again.

Rebekah: Either this is a joke or we are not on the same page. *(Pause)* Okay, I have a question for you. Why couldn't you just come to me in the first place, if you wanted to know more about it?

Jessica: Can't you see that I wanted to surprise you.

Rebekah: Surprise me? Bringing her here was certainly not a surprise! How could you even think that opening this can of worms would surprise me?

Jessica: I'm sorry you don't see it that way. Maybe Delilah and I should remain at the motel.

Rebekah: *(Obviously hurt)* It would probably be for the best. I'll give you some money.

Jessica: Don't worry about it. We have more than enough.

Rebekah: Well if you will excuse me, I need to check on your sister and retire for the evening. I have a long day at the office tomorrow.

Jessica: No problem mom. Good night.

Rebekah: Good night to you too.

They stare at each other for a moment before Jessica exits out of the front door. Rebekah slowly makes her way to the closed door where she pauses there for a moment.

-Blackout-

Act I, Scene X:

Jamie and Delilah have just entered the motel room. Jessica's bed is neat and tidy, while Delilah's is filled with clothes, shoes, etc.

Jamie: Now I see why you didn't want to stay in the car.

Delilah: I can get my own stuff.

Jamie: *(Pulls Jessica's suitcase out and starts packing her things)* I'll get Jessica's things, while you sort through yours.

Delilah: Ain't gotta do no sortin', I know where all my stuff is.

Jamie: Well just let me know if you need help.

Delilah: *(Sarcastic)* Yeah okay.

Jamie: *(Playfully)* Don't get smart now or I'll put you in a headlock.

Delilah: *(Approaching him)* Oh yeah. Well you don't know who you messin' with cause I'll put the crane on you!

She throws some of her clothes at him before demonstrating the crane. He grabs her foot and she tumbles to the floor. He then, still holding her foot, pulls or slides her gently towards him. She takes her other foot and pushes his leg so that he falls down too. They both start laughing.

Jamie: *(As they both sit up)* I guess your crane didn't work huh?

Delilah: You just caught me off guard that's all. I'll be ready next time. *(She starts to get up but he stops her).*

Jamie: No, stay. I like this side of you.

Delilah: There ain't but one side to me.

Jamie: You're wrong. You play the tough girl role well, but you are as sweet and delicate as a flower.

Delilah: Don't give me that bull. I'm tired of hearin' it.

Jamie: Listen Delilah, I don't know who hurt you in the past but I'm not like that.

Delilah: (*Pause*) Nah, you ain't like them others but you don't know me. If you did, you wouldn't want to.

Jamie: Why do you say that?

Delilah: Cause I'm bad news man, and that's all I gotta say. (*She gets up, but stumbles as Jamie catches her in his arms. Delilah gets very nervous, as Jamie doesn't take his eyes off of her. She finally breaks free as he slowly gets*).

Delilah: (*Starts gathering her things*) We been here too long. We better hurry before Jessica and your mom comes up here. They might think I did somethin' to you.

Jamie: You did do something to me. (*He stops her from working*) I just have to say this one last thing and I will leave you alone okay? (*She turns her head in an effort to continue gathering her things, but he stops her*) Look at me. I don't know what it is about you, but I haven't been able to get you out of my head since the first time I met you. There is just something about you. Delilah, I...

There is a knock on the door. Jamie pauses as Delilah goes to answer it. Jessica enters and immediately puts her arms around Delilah as she continues sobbing. A blank and emotionless Delilah just stands there as Jamie crosses over to Jessica and pulls her into his arms.

Jamie: (*Holds her for a moment before looking at her*) Sis, what's wrong?

Jessica: M...mo...mom hates me Jamie.

Jamie: What? Mom could never hate anyone, especially her baby girl. Why would you say something like that?

Jessica: (*Between sobs*) Because it's true!

Jamie: Come on, let's sit so you can calm down and then you can tell me what happened.

Jessica: Okay, but Delilah can you excuse us? I need to talk to Jamie alone.

Delilah: What, you want me to go and sit in the car like some little kid? You can say it in front of me, cause I know it's about me.

Jamie: It's okay Jessica; you can say it in front of her because I know what kind of a woman mom is.

Jessica: I don't want to hurt you Delilah.

Delilah: As if anything could hurt me...

Jessica: Stop pretending! I'm so tired of everyone pretending!

Jamie: Calm down sis, its okay.

Delilah: Spit it out!

Jessica: Mom thinks I brought you here to hurt her so she doesn't want us at the house. She just doesn't understand but I tried to make her...

Delilah: (*Feigning nonchalance*) That's it? You're crying cause mommy dearest don't want me in her precious house?

Jamie: Now wait a minute...

Delilah: No you both wait a hot minute! Ever since I got here I been catchin' it from your momma, and your weird church friends. If I'm that much trouble gladly get outta your way. I don't go nowhere I ain't wanted!

She turns to leave as Jessica grabs her arm. Jamie quickly stands in front of the door to block her.

Jessica: (*She grabs her arm*) Delilah no! You can't leave.

Jamie: You are not going anywhere, at least not tonight. We all need to come together and resolve this thing.

Jessica: That's why I didn't want to say anything in front of you.

Delilah: Didn't hurt me none. I just don't know why you want me to stay if everyone feels that way about me.

Jessica: It's not everyone Li...just my mom, because she doesn't understand. I need you here. I know you don't understand right now but we are going to fix that.

Jamie: One thing I hate is a lot of confusion. Jessica is right. We are going to fix this thing once and for all.

Jessica: What do you propose we do big brother? I'm out of ideas and emotions.

Jamie: Come and stay with me. That is if you don't mind.

Jessica: Mind? We'd love too! That will save us a lot of money, although we are going to give you something...

Jamie: You are family. Don't worry about anything. *(He looks at Delilah)* I'm going to take care of you. *(Pause)* Of you both.

-Blackout-

Act I, Scene XI *(A week later)*:

It is Sunday afternoon after church. Delilah and Jamie are alone in the church. Agnes is in the back office and everyone else has left. Delilah is looking around while Jamie is sitting in a chair up front writing something.

Delilah: Why did Jessica have to go to the house? If your mom don't feel good, then she should leave her alone.

Jamie: *(Looking up from his writing)* That's just it. She usually doesn't get migraines.

Delilah: You mean she lied to miss church?

Jamie: Mom's not a liar. She probably worried herself into a headache because she was afraid to face us, particularly Jessica, today. Although it's been a week.

Delilah: Hey, what happened to you fixin' everything?

Jamie: Don't worry, I've got it all figured out which is why I haven't made my move yet. *(Pause)* Besides, I've been able to spend some time with you.

Delilah puts her head down as Jamie smiles.

Jamie: One day I'm going to get you out of your shyness.

Delilah: I ain't shy.

Jamie: You are towards me.

Delilah: Whatever.

Jamie: Then prove it.

Delilah: What?

Jamie: Prove to me that you aren't shy around me. Do something you've never done around me before.

Delilah: Honey, if you want me to do that then you will have to put me outta this church.

Jamie: There you go again. I'm being serious.

Delilah: Me too. (*Under her breath*) If you only knew. (*Changing the subject*) What are you writin' anyway?

Jamie: (*Playfully*) I'm not telling you.

Delilah: Fine, see if I care.

She continues to pace around acting as if she is ignoring Jamie, who pretends to be focused on his writing. After a few moments, she finally walks right up to him and snatches his papers.

Jamie: Hey wait a minute miz thing, and what do you think you're doing?

Delilah: Answerin' my own question.

She stands there reading it for a second until he approaches her. She starts backing up and puts the paper behind her. He eventually starts chasing her.

Jamie: Oh, so now you want to play?

Delilah: You told me to do somethin' I never done before.

Jamie: True, but you know you are going to get it.

Delilah: Is that so? And what are you gonna do choir boy?

Jamie: It's a surprise, now give me those papers back.

Delilah: You gotta say please first.

Jamie: Ok, please.

Delilah: Nope! (*She giggles and goes around another pew*)

Jamie: What does a man have to do?

Delilah: Tell me what this is.

Jamie: I thought you just read some of it.

Delilah: I did, but I still don't know what it is.

Jamie: Okay I'll tell you if you let me come closer.

Delilah: Alright, but not too close.

He moves closer to her. As soon as he gets close enough, she starts backing up slowly. Both of them are staring at each other until Jamie suddenly reaches behind her back and grabs the papers. Delilah tries to get them back but he grabs her and pulls her into his arms. They look at each other before she turns away and pulls herself out of his embrace.

Jamie: Now do you know what I'm writing?

Delilah: Looks like some mushy words to me.

Jamie: I wouldn't exactly classify this song as mushy.

Delilah: What song are you writin'?

Jamie: It's a love song.

Delilah: That ain't gonna go far.

Jamie: How do you figure that?

Delilah: Cause everybody ain't in love.

Jamie: This song is not about male/female love. It's about a love that anyone can have if he or she wants it.

Delilah: And what's that?

Jamie: A love with Jesus Christ.

Delilah: Jesus Christ? *(She laughs)* How can you love someone you ain't never seen, if He was even real?

Jamie: The same way a pregnant woman loves the child in her womb. She hasn't seen that child yet, but she prepares for that great day she will see him or her with love and care. And when that child is born she nurtures that little one even after he or she is grown. *(Pause)* Do you like music?

Delilah: It's okay.

Jamie: Just okay? Here come and sit with me at the piano. *(They sit next to each other at the piano as Jamie begins to play and sing, "Jesus Loves Me". Delilah eventually joins in, softly at first, but then as she gets louder, a shocked Jamie stops singing and playing to listen to her. He realizes how much of a beautiful voice she has).*

Jamie: *(After she stops singing, he stands in amazement)* Wow! I...I didn't know you could sing! Especially like that.

Delilah: It ain't no big deal.

Jamie: Oh yes it is! You've got a beautiful gift. In fact, you know who you remind me of...lets see, that's it, Rebekah! Your voice reminds me of mom.

Delilah: I don't know about all that...

Suddenly Agnes interrupts them. She has been standing there for some time.

Agnes: *(Enters from upstage right)* He's right, you do sound like Becky. Was just sayin' the same thing to myself.

Delilah: How long you been standin' there?

Agnes: Long enough dear. For a minute there I thought you two were gonna do the hanky panky. Thought I was gonna have to get my broom out.

Jamie: *(Laughing to himself at her remark)* Agnes what are you still doing here?

Agnes: I could ask you two the same thing. I was just finishin' my paperwork. Then I heard y'all in here titterin'.

Delilah: Titterin'?

Agnes: Laughin' and goffin' off. It's somethin' we did in my day. You know when I was somewhere around your age once, I had lots of fellas tryin' to court me...

Jamie: Oh no.

Delilah: What?

Agnes: Lord, forgive me for sayin' so but I was one fine, sexy momma!

Jamie: Okay Agnes...

Agnes: They're into girls lookin' like a bag of bones these days, but not in my day. Honey, I had shapely legs, hips, a nice waistline and a not to mention a nice rack. They both laugh as she begins to strut around them.

Jamie: (*Puts his hands on her arms to get her attention*) Agnes!

Agnes: And the men just adored me! Of course, I'm as flat as a pancake now...

Jamie: (*Quickly*) Did Jessica call?

Agnes: Don't you young people carry those little phones around? She didn't call while I was in the office, but I'll go and check the answering machine.

Jamie: I appreciate it, I left my cell phone at home.

Agnes: All right, but you both remember that men have always and will always like curves.

Agnes struts off stage right.

Delilah: Wow, that old lady is a trip!

Jamie: Yeah, she is something else, and we don't know what we'd do without her.

Delilah: I kinda like her.

Jamie: I know.

Delilah: How do you know what I like and don't like?

Jamie: You'll understand it one day, soon I hope.

Delilah: Understand what?

Jamie: Us.

Delilah: I don't think I know what you mean.

Jamie: And that's okay. Sometimes we have things inside of us that we didn't know we had. But whatever is on the inside eventually comes out.

Delilah: Oh.

Agnes re-enters from upstage right.

Agnes: Well there were no messages and nothin' new on the id box.

Jamie: *(Gives her a kiss on the cheek)* Thanks Agnes.

Agnes: You're welcome, everything alright?

Jamie: Yeah, not to worry. Listen, I need to run by mom's house right quick.

Agnes: Oh that's right since she is under the weather. Tell her I'll be by tomorrow to see her.

Jamie: I will. Can Delilah stay here until I come back?

Delilah: Why do I need to stay here?

Jamie: To keep Agnes company.

Agnes: Sure she can stay here with me. I can tell you the funny story about how I met my husband.

Delilah: Oh I just can't wait.

Agnes: Hope I didn't offend you too much.

Jamie: You two have fun, and I'll be right back.

Delilah: *(Looking at Agnes)* You better.

-Blackout-

Act I, Scene XII *(Front porch of the church, a few hours later):*

Agnes is gone and Delilah has just come out of the front doors and onto the porch. She is waiting for Jamie to pick her up as she notices Shakespeare fast asleep in his spot. He is still wearing his Santa Claus hat and covered in his white quilt.

Delilah: Pst, pst, hey old man.

Shakespeare doesn't move.

Delilah: Old man get up!

Shakespeare: (*Waking up*) Huh? Oh, hey there it's you.

Delilah: Get up you lazy bum.

Shakespeare: (*Still groggy*) I'm glad to see you.

Delilah: You and every other man.

Shakespeare: What was that?

Delilah: Nothin'. Whatcha still doing here anyway?

Shakespeare: I'm catching up on my rest, and you?

Delilah: Rest? That's all you do is sleep!

Shakespeare: Peace be still, peace be still.

Delilah: You're a psycho.

Shakespeare: And you are an angel my dear.

Delilah: I ain't no angel. Far from it.

Shakespeare: What makes you think that you're not?

Delilah: Angels are sweet and innocent. I'm a bad girl. I don't know nothin' about no angels.

Shakespeare: Come here and sit with me. Let me cover you with my quilt.

Delilah: (*She stands still for a moment looking at him before eventually going to sit. He then covers her with his quilt*) Ain't you afraid I'll get this dirty?

Shakespeare: I'd be honored if your hands held my quilt.

Delilah: Is this a joke man?

Shakespeare: Is life a joke? (*Beat*) Waiting for Jamie, huh? He's been waiting for you.

Delilah: Where? I don't see him nowhere.

Shakespeare: It's what you can't see that matters most. A man looks at the ocean and

sees water. Waves overlapping each other. Whoosh, whoosh. Sometimes the water is blue, sometimes it's dirty and, oh yes, sometimes it is even as clear as a glass. That's what a man sees. That's all he sees, until he goes into the water. Underneath all of that beauty are schools of fish, and other sea creatures. There are rocks, shells, and even beautiful plants. Then there are sharks, and other venomous creatures. But the man doesn't find out until he goes in. Otherwise, all he knows are those waves.

Delilah: What are you talkin' about?

Shakespeare: Nothing is as it seems, and if you want to know the truth, you'll have to look on the inside. That is where you'll find the true essence of anything.

Delilah: That ain't got nothin' to do with me.

Shakespeare: Oh, but, it does. You see that bird up there?

Delilah: Yeah, so.

Shakespeare: He's lost.

Delilah: And how do you know?

Shakespeare: Because he won't sit still on that branch. And he will never do so until he finds his home.

Delilah: Well I ain't like that bird. I know who I am because of what I do.

Shakespeare: Ah, but that is just it. It is not what a man has, does, or what he has done, but who he really is. That is the truth of a man.

Delilah: Well you outta luck, cause I'm a wo-man.

Shakespeare: But a hu-man none-the-less.

Delilah: Whatever. (*Beat*) Where is he!

Shakespeare: Jamie is a part of you. You can't deny it.

Delilah: That's it, I'm waitin' in the parkin' lot.

She gets up to leave but he pulls her back down.

Shakespeare: I have something to tell you.

Delilah: I don't wanna hear nothin' else.

Shakespeare: Yes you do, because you woke me up. (Pause) Be who you are, not what you think you are. Live to please no man, but set out to find your purpose. There is wisdom in silence, truth in knowledge, and understanding in pain. Let no one steal your joy.

Delilah looks at him thoughtfully before slowly getting up to leave.

Delilah: I think that's my ride. I gotta go.

She begins to leave, stops and looks and Shakespeare for a second.

Shakespeare: And remember that His eye is on the sparrow.

He exits stage left as she stares at him.

-Blackout-

Act I, Scene XIII (*Shakespeare is gone and Delilah is sitting on the stump by herself waiting for Jamie*):

Jamie enters from stage left. He is rushing towards Delilah, who immediately stands up when she sees him.

Delilah: What happened? I been sittin' here forever!

Jamie: I'm so sorry, let's go. I'll fill you in on the way home.

Delilah: You might as well tell me now.

Jamie: It's complicated. I don't even think I quite understand it all.

Delilah: Where's Jessica?

Jamie: She's at my place, and hopefully asleep.

Delilah: What happened?

Jamie: When I got to the house I found Jessica crying. Both mom and Kat were gone. We waited for almost two hours and they never came home.

Delilah: Then there was nothin' to cry about.

Jamie: Considering that mom wasn't feeling well, I think it hurt Jessica that she wasn't home. We even called her cell phone number several times, but she didn't answer. Kat's phone was turned off as usual.

Delilah: Oh well, there goes that reunion.

Jamie: Actually I think it's time to put my plan into action, and I'm going to need your help.

Delilah: Me? Ain't I the problem?

Jamie: You more than anyone can resolve this thing.

Delilah: How?

Jamie: *(Takes her hands)* Delilah, you just don't know how special you are. When you walk into a room, people stop what they're doing and watch you. And that's not just because you're beautiful. You have a strong presence, and people know it, some without realizing it. That's why they always want to know more about you. I know that your being here is to serve a purpose.

Delilah: Don't say that!

Jamie: What? Delilah what's wrong?

Delilah: Nothin'. I'm sorry. Listen what do you want me to do?

Jamie: *(Pause)* I want you and Jessica to meet me at bible study on Wednesday night. Remember she didn't go last week because of this mess. I will make sure that mom is there, and afterwards, we are all going to sit down and work this thing out. Surely we can resolve this in the house of worship.

Delilah: *(Pause)* Fine.

She turns to leave, but he stops her.

Jamie: Are you sure you're okay?

Delilah: Yes. Now let's go.

Delilah turns to leave as Jamie stares at her. She exits upstage left as the lights begin to fade on him. -Blackout-

Act I, Scene XIV (*Wednesday evening*):

It is an hour and a half before bible study. Delilah and Jessica have just arrived at the front entrance of the church. They are both dressed casually, Jessica more conservative than Delilah.

Jessica: Tell me again, why are we here so early? Jamie and mom won't be here for another thirty minutes.

Delilah: I told you that I wanted to talk.

Jessica: Li, we talk to each other every day.

Delilah: Yeah but since we got here, it's been like a class reunion for you.

Jessica: That's true, and I apologize for that. We do need to talk.

Delilah: Yeah I still demand an answer.

Jessica: What are you talking about?

Delilah: You know what I'm talkin' about.

Jessica: No I don't.

Delilah: Why didn't you tell them that you're a whore too?

Jessica: Oh no, not this again on top of everything else.

Delilah: This ain't fair and you know it. I been treated like dirt by your family and weirdo friends since we got here, while you get to play a saint!

Jessica: First of all not all of my "weirdo" friends know that you...

Delilah: WE!

Jessica: (*She hesitates for a moment*) Okay, we are prostitutes...

Delilah: Whatever. Your mom and that chick in the wheelchair know about me, so I know the others gotta know too.

Jessica: That "chick" has a name! And furthermore, my little sister is not a gossip. She respects everyone and doesn't go around running her mouth. Neither does mom. No one else knows, not even Jamie.

Both women are upset. They both stare at each other in anger for a moment before Jessica breaks the silence.

Jessica: (*Calmer*) Look, I don't want to fight. I'm tired of fighting and you are the very last person I'd want to hate me. (*Pause*) Kat and I had a talk and she would never tell anyone. That's not in her nature.

Delilah: All I can say is that I'll have my things packed and ready to go tomorrow.

Jessica: What do you mean, and why tomorrow?

Delilah: It's too late to leave tonight.

Jessica: That never stopped you before.

Delilah: I'm just ready to blow this joint.

Jessica: And go where? Back to your pimp? Back to that type of life?

Delilah: I don't haveta go back to him, I can go somewhere else.

Jessica: Oh why did I think this could work? Why?

Delilah: What are you talkin' about?

Jessica: All I wanted to do was unite my family! I never thought I'd cause everyone so much pain.

Delilah: WHAT ARE YOU TALKIN' ABOUT?

Jessica: I'm not a prostitute, okay!

Delilah: Yes you are, I met your pimp.

Jessica: He wasn't my pimp. That guy you met was just a friend helping me out.

Delilah: You ain't makin' sense.

Jessica: I lied to you Delilah. I made up being a prostitute so that I could get close to you. I made up the name Jazz, the clothes, everything.

Delilah: What? Is this a joke?

Jessica: No, it's not a joke. I lied to you on purpose, for a purpose. Maybe I shouldn't have done it. Maybe it wasn't the right way to do it, but I did it for you. For all of us.

Delilah: (*She starts to leave*) You're crazy, you know that! I'm outta here.

Jessica: Oh no you're not. I'm not finished telling you everything, and I won't finish until we can all sit down and talk.

Delilah: At this point, I don't care no more...

Jessica: (*Frustrated*) And since when did you ever care about anything or anyone besides yourself?

Delilah: You don't know nothin' about me. I never should have come here in the first place.

She turns to leave but runs into Jamie. Behind him are Rebekah and Kat. Rebekah immediately goes to Jessica's side.

Jamie: Whoa. What's wrong? We thought you two looked like you were in an intense argument.

Jessica: Delilah is doing what she does best, which is to run away when she doesn't want to face something.

Delilah: Look who's talkin'...

Rebekah: Delilah you have caused nothing but confusion since you came here.

Jessica: Mother, how could you say such a thing?

Delilah: Nah it's all good. Just keep talkin' cause I'm walkin' outta this place.

Jamie: No you're not going anywhere. We all need to go inside and talk.

Kat: Amen to that.

Delilah: Well I don't wanna talk!

Jessica: It's not all about you...

Rebekah: Oh but this is. You came here to stir up confusion in my family.

Jamie: What?

Jessica: That is not true!

Delilah: (*To Rebekah*) Lady, you're crazy!

Jessica: (*To Delilah*) Mom is not crazy, you take that back!

Delilah: I don't have to do nothin'.

Jessica: You need to grow up for once and stop running off at the mouth.

Delilah: And you can go to...

Rebekah: I beg your pardon? Don't you dare speak to my daughter that way!

Kat: Stop it.

Delilah: You should tell your daughter to shut her big mouth and stop acting like she's better than everybody else.

Jessica: I don't think I'm better than anyone else.

Delilah: Yes you do. You always walk around like you're all high and mighty, sweet little Jessica this and that.

Kat: Please stop.

Jessica: Well thanks for telling me how you really feel.

Delilah: Yeah ditto.

Rebekah: Jessica, I'll give her money so that she can go home. Then we can finally clear up this mess.

Delilah: I don't want your money!

Rebekah: (*Grabbing her arms*) You listen here girl, I'm tired of your rude outbursts. Now you shut your big mouth or I'll put you on the first bus out of here, without your stuff! Do you understand?

Delilah: Get your hands off me...

Rebekah: (*Tightening her grip and moving closer*) Did I make myself clear?

Delilah: (*Shaking herself free*) I'm leavin' and there's nothin' you can do about it.

Rebekah: That's fine. Perhaps that is the best choice for you.

Jessica: No, you don't understand...

Rebekah: Jessica let her go. Why are you so attached to this girl?

Jessica: If we can just go inside, I can explain everything.

Rebekah: Why would you want to bring this up in front of everyone?

Jessica: Mom the only way we can resolve this issue is if I tell the truth.

Rebekah: What if I'm not ready to talk about it?

Jessica: What? This affects all of us. We all have to talk about it. Now please, let's go inside.

Rebekah: (*Pause*) Alright, fine, I give up. I knew I would have to face this sooner or later.

They all begin to follow Jessica into the church when they suddenly hear laughter. The laughter gets louder as Jackson, Sandra and Agnes enter from stage right.

Jackson: (*To Agnes*) Was your husband ever able to stop?

Sandra: Yes, was he?

Agnes: Sure. After I made him take some of those gas pills!

They all go for another round of laughter.

Jackson: Hey everybody, what are you all doing here so early?

Jamie: We could ask you three the same question.

Sandra: (*Still catching her breath from laughing so hard*) Well, we decided to catch a bite to eat before service...

Delilah: Always stuffin' the face.

Sandra: (*Giving Delilah a cold hard stare*) That's our excuse. What's yours?

Jessica: We just wanted to get here early so that we could...sit together.

Sandra: Jessica darling, it's not like we have a huge congregation. You are so kind, always thinking of others. Well, at least nothing is wrong. For a minute there...

Jessica: (*Interrupting her*) Where is Leah?

Sandra: Oh, I forgot to tell you! She's bringing her friend tonight. They should be pulling up any minute now.

Kat: So they've been going out huh?

Jackson: I wouldn't call it that...

Sandra: Oh hush up, you're just jealous. (*Beat*) Jackson doesn't particularly care for the young man.

Jackson: Jealous? Maybe, or maybe not; but you're right I don't like him. Something's not right about that guy, but I can't put my finger on it. At any rate, Leah's protection is my only concern.

Rebekah: Well, let us see for ourselves. (*Looking over at Delilah*) I'm usually a good judge of character.

Jessica: Okay. Listen everyone; the Rutherford family would like a moment alone inside. Since you all were having such a great time, can you stay out here for a moment? We won't be that long, and I'll come and get you once we're done?

Sandra: What's going on? Is there anything I can do to help?

Jessica: No thanks Ms. Buchanan. This is a private family matter. Everything is okay, we just have something to discuss.

Sandra: (*Looking at Delilah*) She's not a member of the family.

Delilah: We agree on something for once. Yeah, I'm not a family member, so I'll stay out here with them.

Jessica: No, you are coming inside with us.

Jessica pulls Delilah inside as Jamie, Kat and Rebekah all follow.

Sandra: Well, it must be about them staying in that motel room. Rebekah doesn't like that girl anyway. I certainly don't. She's trash.

Agnes: Now Sandra that's not a kind thing to say.

Sandra: Maybe, but it's true.

Agnes: You don't even know her. I think the poor dear has had a hard life.

Sandra: No I don't know her, but I'm going to find out.

Sandra tries to sneak inside.

Jackson: Sandra, have you lost your mind? Jessica said they wanted some time alone.

Sandra: Oh Jackson don't act like a saint now! As nosy as you are, you know you want to listen just as much as I do.

Jackson: Well...

Agnes: (*Standing in front of him*) Don't you even think about it. (*To Sandra*) You make the Body look bad by sneaking around like some thief.

Sandra: I'm not stealing anything.

Agnes: You're stealing their privacy!

Leah and her friend walk up. Joe Cain is in his mid-30s. He is tall, has a lean athletic build and is handsome. He is wearing slacks, a nice black dress shirt and a blazer. Although he is nice looking, he has a dark air about him, as he is very quiet and observant of everything and everyone. Joe also has a deep, baritone voice.

Leah: Aunt Sandy what are you doing?

Sandra: (*She jumps at the sound of her name*) Leah, sweetheart you finally made it.

Agnes: Your aunt Sandy was trying to convince Jackson to eavesdrop on the Rutherfords.

Leah: Why?

Jackson: They are having some private family meeting, although Delilah is allowed to join them.

Leah: Well, Jessica is going to make sure she's included in everything. Anyways, that doesn't faze me anymore. Agnes I want you to meet Joe. (*Beat*) Joe this is Agnes, our beloved church secretary.

Joe: (*Gives Agnes a slight bow*) Pleased to meet you.

Agnes: Oh my. Well it's very nice to meet you too. I've heard some good things about you. Now I'll get the chance to see if they're all true.

Leah: Aggie!

Agnes: Honey you know that what you hear and what you see are not always the same.

Sandra: I'm glad you get to visit our wonderful church.

Joe: Me too.

Jackson: What's the matter Joe, cat got your tongue?

Leah: How rude Jackson. *(To Joe)* Don't mind him.

Joe gives Jackson a long and hard stare.

Jackson: Hey, no problem, it's just that every time I see him, he never has more than two words to say to anyone. How long have you all been seeing each other? I just thought old Joey would have loosened up a little by now.

Leah: Well some people don't have to constantly be heard in order to appear important.

Joe lets out a deep menacing laugh.

Joe: No problem man. No problem at all.

Agnes: I'm too old to be standin' out here in this cool weather. I'll go in and ask them if they're ready. Folks will be drivin' up soon. Don't want to make the whole congregation wait outside...

Delilah suddenly sprints out of the church with Jamie and Jessica behind her. She runs right into Joe and falls back into Jamie's arms. When she looks up at Joe, she becomes terrified and begins to scream. Jessica jumps in between them.

Jessica: What are you doing here?

Leah: What are you talking about Jessica? This is my friend Joe.

Jessica: His name is not Joe.

Leah: What...

Jackson pulls Leah back.

Leah: No let go of me! I demand an answer Joe, or whatever your name is.

Joe: (He pushes her back) Shut up! I've had enough of your ugly face. Now I can get what I came for.

Jackson: Hey man don't talk to her like that, and don't you ever put your hands on her again...

Jamie: (*Trying to hold him back*) Jackson no! .

Joe: (*Moving Jessica out of the way and snatching Delilah up by her collars*) Did you think you could get away from me you filthy whore!! He spits on her and slaps her. She falls to the ground and he snatches her up again.

Delilah: Spider, I...I can explain, please stop, you're hurtin' me!

Joe: Baby this is only the beginning of the pain you're gonna feel. Do you know how much money I've lost because of you? You stupid, lazy, and good for nothing...

Jamie grabs Delilah and pushes Spider to the ground. He stands in front of Delilah to protect her but Spider gets up and lunges for Jamie, knocking him to the ground. After they wrestle, Spider gets up grabs Delilah and pulls a knife out of his jacket. Rebekah and Kat come out of the church. Rebekah freezes when she sees Spider holding Delilah at knifepoint.

Joe: Don't nobody move! You move and I'll slit her throat.

Jessica: (*She falls to her knees*) Please don't Spider, please! You can take me instead.

Rebekah: No Jessica!

Joe: (*Sarcastic*) Oh how sweet. But I don't want you, because my men don't like church girls!! Right mama? Hows about a kiss for daddy.

He grabs Delilah's hair, pulling her back and giving her a long and hard kiss. "Um you still taste so sweet..." (He laughs).

Jamie: (*Quickly*) Enough! Man, let's try and talk okay?

Joe: I'm takin' my girl and leavin', and if you try to stop me I'll kill you and your dumb sister too. Isn't that right Leila? (*Looking at Rebekah*)

Rebekah: W..w...what did you call me?

Joe: You heard me. Didn't know if I'd ever see you again.

Rebekah: I don't know you.

Joe: You don't remember me? How can you forget Sonny Cain's boy?

Rebekah is obviously shocked as she places her hands over her mouth. Jessica gets up and goes to her mother.

Rebekah: S..Sonny C..Cain.

Joe: Yeah Sonny Cain, the man you used for money.

Rebekah: (*Choking up*) I didn't use him. He used me.

Joe: Liar, you liar!! You're all alike. And now I get my revenge.

Rebekah: I don't know what you're talking about.

Joe: (*Laughing*) Why do you think I turned your daughter into a whore?

Rebekah: Jessica is NOT a whore!

Joe: I'm not talking about little Miss Sunshine. I'm talking about whore number two, like mother like daughter. (*He licks Delilah on her cheek and gives a sinister laugh*)

The crowd gasps as Rebekah looks at Delilah and clutches her chest.

Rebekah: Wh..what?

Joe: Don't 'what' me. This is your little girl, the one you gave up before you skipped town 28 years ago. Now do you think you're too good to admit that one?

Rebekah: I..I..

Joe: The perfect little doctor is speechless, imagine that! Don't you see the resemblance?

Rebekah: Let her go, and take me instead.

Joe: Your heyday is over. (*Referring to Agnes who slipped inside the church*) Right granny? Where's the old fart?

Everyone is quiet as Spider looks around for an answer. He becomes angry and starts to threaten them as he tightens his grip on Delilah. She squeals in pain.

Joe: She better not be callin' the police! If no one tells me where she went then I'm going to snap this whore's neck and...!!

Rebekah: Please don't do that, I'll go and find her, Agnes!

Joe: You don't go nowhere. I'm not finished with you. *(He looks around and rests his eyes on Sandra)*. You, go inside and find granny. Send her out here to me. You got three minutes, startin' now!

Sandra: *(She begins to scramble towards the door)* Oh Lord, please save us.

Joe: Shut up and move!! I don't have time for your religious bull!!

Sandra goes inside the church. Jamie holds up his hands and tries to reason with Spider.

Jamie: Hey man listen. Let's talk. I take it you're angry with my mother...

Joe: Angry? I'd have a mother if it wasn't for yours. She's the reason why mine is gone. And I'm gonna make sure she pays for it.

Rebekah: I didn't even know your mother.

Joe: She knew you and you're the very reason why my family was torn apart! You had my father lusting after you like some sick dog. He put all of his money into you, gave up his business and became obsessed with YOU!! It broke my mother's heart. She was never the same, and I suffered for it.

Rebekah: Please try to understand! I was naïve and he used me!

Joe: He became a pimp after he met you! He was a good man until you came along, callin' yourself a singer, when you were nothin' more than a good time whore.

Rebekah: I'm sorry I caused you so much pain! Plea...please let Delilah go and we can talk about this.

Joe: What's talkin' gonna to do? It ain't gonna bring my mother back!! I didn't come to talk, I came to claim what's mine and take out the trash. *(Beat)* But, first I wanna thank Mary Sunshine here for leadin' me to you. None of this would be possible if it weren't for her.

Jessica begins to sob as Rebekah consoles her while Jamie moves closer to Spider in an attempt to free Delilah.

Joe: Back up fool. *(Beat)* Hey, where is grandma? *(Loudly)* You got one minute left!

Shakespeare suddenly appears behind everyone. He walks towards Spider.

Joe: I said grandma, not grandpa. *(Snatching Shakespeare's hat off his head and tossing it)* What's this?

Shakespeare: I think it'd be wise if you let the young lady go.

Joe: *(Laughing)* Lady? *(Mocking him)* Well I think it'd be wise if you shut up and get outta my face before I blow an even bigger hole in yours!

Shakespeare: *(He looks up)* I've lived a pleasing life. Take my hand Delilah, it's okay, nothing will harm you.

The others begin to tell Shakespeare "No", as Jamie tries to gently push him back so he won't be harmed. Shakespeare holds up his hands to silence them. He then proceeds to hold out his right hand to Delilah.

Shakespeare: It's okay dear, no harm will come upon you.

Delilah: Please get back! I...I don't want you to get hurt.

Shakespeare: Take my hand child. I promise, no harm will come upon you.

Joe: You're even crazier than you look!

Delilah slowly starts to reach for Shakespeare's hand.

Shakespeare: That's it. Always remember that what is ahead of you is far greater than what is behind you.

Joe: *(To Shakespeare)* Man you are crazy! Didn't I tell you to get outta my face?

Nobody disobeys me and gets away with it.

Spider grabs Shakespeare, as Jamie pulls Delilah out of his grasp.

Jessica: Let him go!!

Spider starts choking Shakespeare out of anger and drops his knife in the process. Jamie, who has pushed Delilah behind him, immediately tries to get the knife as Spider suddenly realizes that he dropped it. He throws Shakespeare to the ground and jumps on Jamie in an attempt to get the knife back. Both men scramble to get up as Jamie finally gets his hands on the knife. Then Spider punches Jamie before he gets up and grabs the knife.

Jessica: Jamie he has the knife!

The lights go black as blue lights start flashing. Sandra and Agnes rush out onto the porch.

Agnes: The police are here!

A weak Jamie gets up, preparing to fight to get the knife back as Spider knocks him out. The women scream as Jackson tries to jump him from behind. Spider also gives him a blow to the head and knocks him out cold. Spider then takes the knife and prepares to cut Delilah as the lights go dim. At this point, the audience can only see shadows as the characters are moving about.

Rebekah and Jessica: NO!!!!!!!

There is a loud thud, silence, then a blood-curdling scream.

Delilah: Shakespeare!!!!

- Blackout- End of Act I

Act II, Scene I (*One week later*):

Rebekah, Jessica, Jamie, Kat and Agnes have gathered at the Rutherford house after Shakespeare's funeral. Everyone is dressed in white.

Rebekah: Delilah shouldn't be alone.

Jamie: She needs some time to herself.

Kat: He's right Bek.

Rebekah: But she hasn't said one word to me since the incident. She wouldn't even look at me at the service. Not that I deserved it.

Jessica: Me either.

Jamie: Don't beat yourselves up. She'll come around.

Kat: I've been trying to imagine how she must be feeling right now. To find out that your only friend is really your sister, meet the mother you never knew, be held up and humiliated at knifepoint only to watch someone take the wound that was meant for you.

Rebekah: Oh Shakespeare! Things will never be the same without him. And Spider, God rest his soul, he was such a bitter an angry young man.

Jessica: I actually feel sorry for him. I'm glad they put him away so that he can never hurt Delilah or any of us again.

Agnes: I think we all agree on that. *(Pause)* I got a feeling Shakespeare knew it was his time to go.

Kat: How do you figure that?

Agnes: Old Shakespeare and I had an understanding, a bond. We were kindred spirits, if you will. I knew he was prepared to go when he said that he had lived a pleasing life.

Jessica: He was so hard to figure out, yet so loved, even by those who made fun of him. I'm really going to miss him.

Agnes: Yep. *(Silence)* Well I gotta go. I'm sure my old man is starvin' by now. He sure wanted to see his old friend one last time. But he was just too weak to make it.

Rebekah: I know Shakespeare would have understood. Please give Fred our love. I'll be by there to see visit him this week.

Agnes: Thanks Becky, I'll let him know that. Evening all. *(She opens the door, stops and then turns to face everyone)* Cherish the time you have with one another. We don't know how long we have each other *(She exits out the front door)*.

(Beat)

Jessica: So what next?

Jamie: Does anyone feel up to seeing a movie?

Rebekah: Son you always know how to lift my spirits but no thanks. I have some things to do around the house.

Jessica: I'm tired, but thanks anyway.

Kat: I'd like to get out of reality for a few hours. Let's catch a comedy.

Jamie: My treat baby girl, you ready?

Kat: I suppose you don't want to change clothes.

Jamie: (*Looking at Rebekah and Jessica*) Nah.

Kat: (*Catching the hint*) Oh yeah, we don't want to be late.

Rebekah: Jamie, are you going to continue to stay with Jackson for a while?

Jamie: Until he drives me crazy. Oh, and I'll get her home before it gets too late.

Kat: I wish everyone would stop treating me like a little kid.

Jamie teases her as they exit out the front door. Rebekah paces the floor, as Jessica remains seated on the couch. They look at each other a few times before one of them speaks.

Jessica: You're worried.

Rebekah: (*She stops pacing and sits next to Jessica*) Yes.

Jessica: We've been so busy with funeral arrangements, the police, and calming everyone down that we haven't had a chance to talk.

Rebekah: Or think.

They both turn to face each other as they quickly say these next two lines at the simultaneously.

Jessica: Why did you think I brought her here?

Rebekah: How long have you known the truth?

Jessica: I guess I should go first. (*Beat*) Remember that summer when I was 12 and you told me to clean up the attic?

Rebekah: I vaguely remember, but yes.

Jessica: Well, I kind of did more than just re-arranged it. I sort of stumbled...

Rebekah: You found the box.

Jessica: Yes I did.

Rebekah: I thought I had that thing hidden in a secret place up there.

Jessica: I guess you didn't think a 12-year-old would find it, much less take an interest in it.

Rebekah: No I didn't. It's just a rusty old box. *(Beat)* Why didn't you say anything?

Jessica: I was only 12, what could I say? I was in shock after seeing those photos, reading the letters, and finding her birth certificate. I cried for days because I felt so bad for her, and I must admit that I was angry with you, although I never showed it.

Rebekah: I'm so sorry.

Jessica: No need to apologize to me. I have a better understanding of the situation now that I'm an adult. You did what you had to do for her. I just hope she will understand and forgive you. Besides, when I was a little girl I used to pray for a sister, and God gave me two.

Rebekah: I remember and oh how I wanted to tell you so badly, but I just kept thinking about my being a...a...

Jessica: You don't have to be ashamed to say the word prostitute.

Rebekah: That's easy for you to say.

Jessica: Just because I've never been one doesn't mean that I'm perfect. No one's perfect mom, not even you. That's what I've been trying to get you to see.

Rebekah: I know that nobody's perfect but I have a responsibility as First Lady of our church...

Jessica: Can you just forget about titles and image for one minute! You are judging yourself based on what you used to do. You are no longer a prostitute! You're a doctor! And most importantly, my mother.

Rebekah: I know, I know. *(Pause)* So, you don't hate me because of my past?

Jessica: Mother no! Please don't ever think that. I've known for a long time, and I brought her here for you. Every year on her birthday, I would see the look in your eyes and I knew you were thinking of her. She is the missing piece in your heart, and in our family. *(Beat)*

Rebekah: You are really something special.

Jessica: Does daddy know?

Rebekah: Yes I told him when we met, and he has kept my secret all of these years.

Jessica: Will you share your story with me?

Rebekah: I...

Jessica: (*Quickly*) No rush. I just think you should talk about it, especially now that Delilah is back in your life.

Rebekah: If she'll even talk to me again. What a mess I've made!

Jessica: Well if there is one thing I know, you're a champion of confrontation.

Rebekah: (*Laughing*) I guess you're right about that. (*Beat*) I have an idea! Why don't you call her?

Jessica: Me? You do remember that I am also the last person she wants to see right now.

Rebekah: I just want to make sure she's okay.

Jessica: We can get Jamie to find out.

Rebekah: No. I won't be able to get any sleep unless I know something tonight. You'll understand...

Jessica: I know, "I'll understand when I have children." I'm worried about her too, so I'll call, but first I really want you to tell me what happened. (*Quickly*) Only if you want to.

Rebekah: (*Pause*) Okay. Let's go upstairs.

Rebekah crosses over to the staircase as Jessica follows. She then turns and looks at Jessica.

Rebekah: Are you sure you're ready to hear all of it?

Jessica: (*Taking her mother's hand*) Yes I am.

Rebekah takes her free hand and touches Jessica's face. She then leads her daughter upstairs.

-Blackout-

Act II. Scene II (*Early Thursday morning*):

Delilah is standing beside Shakespeare's stump with her hands in her pocket. She is wearing jeans and a gray sweatshirt with the hood over her head.

Delilah: I coulda gone to your grave but this is where I met you. I didn't know you very well, but you were nice to me. There ain't that many people who are nice to me. And I was kinda mean to you. I'm sorry. You were still nice to me even-though I mouthed off at you. Beat. You know I still can't believe Jessica is my sister! It's funny cause I always wanted a sister. Never told nobody. Didn't care if she was older or younger than I am. I guess I got me two little sisters now. It's a shame they can't look up to me for nothin' cause I ain't a good example. Beat. You know all my life I been a nothin'? And most people reminded me of just that. I don't know, I feel like I can say anything out here. (*Soft laugh*) I do that anyway. What I mean, is talk about me. Nobody knows about me, not even Jessica. I never knew I had real parents until now. The only mom and pop I ever knew died a long time ago. I...I was happiest with them. But he went first and then she died not long after. Broken heart. (*Beat*) Why did you have to die, why did you have to jump in front of me? It's all my fault! (*Long pause as she puts her head in her hands*) She starts remembering what Shakespeare told her, as the audience hears these memories in her head. Shakespeare's voice: "Nothing is as it seems, if you want to know the truth, you'll have to look on the inside. That is where you'll find the true essence of anything." Delilah: (*Looking up*) The true essence of anything... Shakespeare's voice: "There is wisdom in silence, truth in knowledge, and understanding in pain." Delilah: Understanding in pain, truth in knowledge. (*Pause*) Alright, alright old man. (*She looks up*) Thank you.

Jamie appears.

Jamie: There you are. I've been looking for you.

Delilah: (*In deep thought*) Huh?

Jamie: (*Staring at her with concern*) Are you okay? I was worried...

Delilah: I'm okay. Didn't expect you.

Jamie: I wanted to check on you.

Delilah: I'm fine.

Jamie: (*He walks toward her, but she steps back*) No you're not. What was that for?

Delilah: I ain't never had a brother before.

Jamie: Delilah I'm not your biological brother! Remember I'm two years older than you are.

Delilah: But you call her mom. I thought you were her son.

Jamie: No! I mean yes. I am her son, but she didn't give birth to me. I thought Jessica had told you.

Delilah: No, and I never asked.

Jamie: I know this is all new to you. Although I am a few years older, I guess it would seem logical to think I was her son by a previous relationship.

Delilah: I never knew nothin' about my...my, I can't even say it!

Jamie: It's okay, I know what you're trying to say. So you never knew anything about her until you came here?

Delilah: No, nothin'. (Pause) And you? What happened to your real mother?

Jamie: She died when I was four. I have her picture tucked away. Take it out sometimes to look at it. Don't remember much about her, but I do remember her sweet voice and her smell. I'll never forget mom's smell. She always smelled like fresh flowers. (Pause) She's been dead for 26 years and I still miss her as much, if not more, than I did when she passed away.

Delilah: Yeah I know the feelin'...

Delilah: What did she die of?

Jamie: Cancer. (Pause) She was too young to die. My mother had just turned 25 when she passed away.

Delilah: Oh.

Jamie: Dad was devastated and I remember him just staring off into deep space for hours every day. No one, not even I was allowed to sit in mom's favorite chair. Then two years later, he met Rebekah and sparks flew. Then along came Jessica.

Delilah: Did they have a big wedding?

Jamie: No. They married six months after they met. People thought they were crazy and some thought two years was just too short for dad. But they both knew they were meant for each other. They had a small ceremony at the church and a family dinner afterwards, which consisted of dad's side of the family.

Delilah: (*Beat*) What's she like?

Jamie: Your mom or mine?

Delilah: (*Softly*) Mine.

Jamie: She was and still is the best mother a kid could ever ask for. I remember when I first met her. I had just turned six and was running all over the place. I thought Rebekah was a real angel because she was so beautiful! And she treated me like I was her very own son. She worked hard in medical school and was still there for Jessica and me.

Delilah: Well she wasn't there for me!

Jamie: I don't know what to say...

Delilah: I don't wanna talk about this anymore.

Jamie: But how long are going to keep avoiding her? You have got to open up sometime...

Jamie's cell phone rings and he answers on the third ring.

Jamie: Hello. Hey sis. Yeah she's with me. We're out getting some fresh air. (*Pause*) Yeah. Where's mom? (*Pause*) Okay, do you want to speak to her? (*Pause*) Hold on a second.

Jamie: It's Jessica.

Delilah turns her head.

Jamie: Don't be that way. All she wants to do is say hello, nothing else. (*Beat*)

Delilah: Alright. (*He gives her the phone*). Hi. (*Pause*) Yeah I'm cool. (*Pause*) I don't know. (*Pause*) I said I don't know. (*Pause*) I'll think about it. (*Pause*) Bye.

She hands the phone back to him.

Jamie: Do you want to share?

Delilah: Not really.

Jamie: Don't act like that. You were short with Jessica.

Delilah: Don't have much to say right now, and she wants me to come over.

Jamie: Today?

Delilah: Whenever I'm ready.

Jamie: Are you ready?

Delilah: I don't know...

Jamie: We shouldn't let emotions be the sole dictator of our decisions.

Delilah: Don't preach to me! Why are you even here? Don't tell me you still care now that you know how I've been makin' a livin'. I'm not exactly the little church girl you're lookin' for.

Jamie: I'll admit that I was disappointed, confused and upset. But it doesn't change the way I feel.

Delilah: And how can that be?

Jamie: Because I can't change the way I feel about you. *(Pause)* Come with me.

Delilah: Don't you have to be at work or somethin'?

Jamie: *(Extending his hand)* I'm on a two-week vacation. *(Pause)* Just trust me.

She eventually takes his hand. They exit stage left.

-Blackout-

Act II, Scene III *(Saturday morning)*:

It is around noon and both Jessica and Leah are asleep in the Rutherford living room. Jessica is sleeping on the couch and Leah is in the chair with a blanket over her. There are two pizza boxes scattered on the coffee table, along with drinks, popcorn and napkins. Someone rings the doorbell. No one gets up to answer the door. Sandra says, "Hello, anybody home?" She then rings the doorbell again in her signature style. Jessica then wakes up as Leah stirs around.

Jessica: Okay I'm coming!

She drags herself to the door and opens it.

Sandra: (*Enters immediately*) Good heavens girl, what are you doing still asleep at this hour? And Leah!! (*Leah jumps*) I know I taught you better manners than this. I can't believe you are sleeping on Lady Rutherford's chair like that, and look at this filth in the living room.

Jessica: (*She starts cleaning up*) We must have fallen asleep after we ate.

Leah: Yeah we talked all night.

Sandra: You both could have at least gone upstairs to the nice big cozy bedrooms.

Leah: Actually this chair is quite comfy and simple.

Sandra: Don't you comfy and simple me Miss Leah Esther Ruth Buchanan. We need to clean this mess up right now! I have to set up and you're in the way.

Jessica: But I thought you weren't talking to mom anymore. Does she even know you're here?

Sandra: Jessica how can you even think such a thing! Of course I still talk to your mother, I've just been busy that's all.

Leah sighs and Sandra gives her a sharp look.

Sandra: Anyways, I cleared this with her two months ago. You know how I like to plan ahead.

Leah: And which annual tea meeting is this?

Sandra: The sophisticated and exceptional ladies of the Auxiliary Board. And you were supposed to be helping me.

Leah: Oh, I must have forgotten.

Sandra: You're still quite young, but one day you will understand the importance of belonging to these organizations, isn't that right Jessica?

Jessica: Mom and I are not members.

Sandra: Oh well Lady Rutherford...

Just then Rebekah enters through the front door. She is dressed in slacks, a blouse and comfortable shoes. Her hair is down and she is carrying a nice brown purse.

Rebekah: I haven't heard anyone call me Lady Rutherford in a long time. Hello to you Sandra. I see you got my message. Hi girls!

Sandra: What message?

Leah: Oh, I forgot to tell you that Mrs. Rutherford said hello the other night. *(To Rebekah)* Sorry about that.

Rebekah: It's okay. *(Beat)* So what brings you by today?

Sandra: You didn't forget did you? Today is the annual ladies Auxiliary Board Tea. You told me I could have everyone over here two months ago.

Rebekah: That's right! I thought you would have forgotten since you've been avoiding me.

Sandra: *(Shocked)* I haven't been avoiding you. I've just been a little busy that's all.

Rebekah: I haven't seen nor heard from you since the incident. You usually come over at least every other day. I'm surprised your ladies still want to have their tea here.

Sandra: *(Quickly)* Well you do have one of the largest houses in town. Uh I mean...

Rebekah: I know what you mean Sandra. You can have your tea here today, but this may be the last time for a while.

Sandra: What do you mean?

Rebekah: What I mean is that I used to let you have your socials here because I wanted people to come by my big house. I wanted them to know that I am the First Lady, and a doctor with the best medical practice in town. I wasn't like that when James and I first married. Last week's incident has opened my eyes to many things and meeting Delilah has changed my life. I no longer want to be self-absorbed and pretentious.

Sandra: Oh.

Rebekah: It's not you. I just took a good hard look at myself.

Sandra: Well, I guess I should go gather the ladies and get started. She quickly exits through the front door.

Jessica: Way to go mom!

Leah: Yeah you ran my aunt right out of here. That's a first.

Rebekah: That wasn't my motive, but I hope it gives her food for thought. *(Beat)* I see you girls had fun last night.

Jessica: Yeah, we did and I thought you were upstairs the whole time. I hope you didn't go to the office on a Saturday.

Rebekah: No. Actually, I went to see your sister.

Jessica: *(Surprised)* You did? What did she say? Was she surprised to see you? Was Jamie there? Was...

Rebekah: No to all of your questions because I didn't get to see her.

Jessica: What happened?

Rebekah: She wouldn't answer the door. So I sat in my car and wrote her a note.

Jessica: What did you say?

Rebekah: That I just want to talk.

Jessica gives her mother a reassuring hug.

Jessica: I know her best, and I know that she will eventually come to you.

Rebekah: I hope so. I must admit that my faith is running low.

Just then, someone rings the doorbell as a hopeful Rebekah quickly answers it but is somewhat down when Jackson enters. Leah is mortified because of the way she looks.

Jackson: *(To Rebekah)* Well don't get too excited.

Rebekah: No it's just that I thought you were someone else.

Jackson: Oh I see. *(Beat)* Hello ladies. And how are you all doing on this fine morning?
(To Leah) Jamie told me I would find you here.

Leah: *(Wrapping the blanket around her)* Uh, I gotta go upstairs.

She starts to run upstairs but he catches her arm.

Jackson: Take your time sweet thang. I'll be here.

Rebekah: Sweet thang?

Jessica: Long story. I'll fill you in later.

Leah: (*Nervously*) Okay...(*She walks up the stairs and when Jackson looks away, she runs*).

Jackson: We're going for a long drive, so wear something comfortable.

Leah: (*From upstairs*) Okay!

Jackson: She's something else isn't she?

Rebekah: Apparently you think so, sweet thang.

Jackson: Took long enough.

Jessica: I'll say!

Jackson: And just how do you know?

Jessica: Jackson duh. Last night was girls night remember?

Jackson: Yeah, yeah. What did she say?

Jessica: As if I'd tell!

Jackson: That's alright, I know it was all good.

Rebekah: Since you're here, why don't you help us clean up before Sandra's tea party?

Jackson: Sandra is having a party over here?

Rebekah: She asked me a few months ago.

Jackson: I see. Then we better get going. Those women are ferocious!

Leah re-enters, wearing jeans, boots and a nice sweater.

Leah: They sure are. I get sick of them fussing over me all of the time.

Jackson smiles at her as she comes down the stairs.

Leah: What? You don't think it's too casual? I can change if you want me too...

Jackson: No, no sweet thang you look great! I like you just the way you are.

Leah: Really? Thank you.

He extends his hand and she takes it. He then kisses her hand and holds it. Rebekah and Jessica look at each other and smile. As Leah and Jackson leave, Sandra suddenly opens the door. She runs right into them.

Sandra: *(To Rebekah)* Did you know your front door was not closed all the way? *(Suddenly noticing Leah and Jackson)* Leah! What in the world are you wearing? That outfit is certainly not appropriate! Martha Banks is outside and I don't want her to see you dressed like that...

Leah: That's just too bad, auntie, because the new me doesn't care what others think anymore. Now if you will excuse me, Jackson and I have a date. Enjoy your party.

They exit as a shocked Sandra watches them out the front door. She then turns to Rebekah and Jessica.

Sandra: DATE! What is going on here? Is she with him?

Jessica: *(She and Rebekah look at each other before she turns to Sandra)* I guess I'll have to fill you in too.

Sandra: Oh. Well I didn't authorize her to go out with him. I mean he's nice and all, but the very thought of my grandniece...

Rebekah and Jessica: Shut up Sandra!

-Blackout-

Act II, Scene IV *(Saturday evening)*:

Kat is in the living room of the Rutherford house. She is positioned on stage left beside the couch and chair. Kat is spending some leisure time flipping through a magazine when the doorbell rings. She puts the magazine down and crosses stage right to open the door to Delilah, who is a bit nervous.

Kat: *(Opening the door and surprised)* Hi! What a surprise. Please come in.

Delilah: (*Reluctant to enter at first, she looks around to see if anyone else is home*) Thanks.

Delilah walks into the living room area but she doesn't sit down. Kat, who is both surprised and excited, crosses back over to her spot and immediately starts a conversation.

Kat: (*Observing her*) No one's home. (*Beat*) I'm glad to see you. Please sit. Would you care for something to drink or eat?

Delilah: (*Hesitant, she sits*) No thanks.

Kat: You are welcome to look through any of these magazines.

Delilah: I ain't in a reading mood.

Kat: Okay. (*Quickly changing the subject*) So, how have you been?

Delilah: Okay, I guess. You?

Kat: (*Surprised that she asked*) Well. I've been very well considering that I have three midterms back to back on Monday and I haven't done nearly enough studying.

Delilah: What are you studying?

Kat: Oh, I never told you did I? I'm studying the bible.

Delilah: You gotta go to school for that?

Kat: (*Chuckling*) Well, I study more than just the bible. I study ancient history as well, events that took place during the bible days and how it relates to scripture. I've been called to teach.

Delilah: Who called you?

Kat: God.

Delilah: (*Laughing*) Yeah, right!

Kat: He did call me...

Delilah: Whatever. I don't see why you'd wanna do anything for God anyway. Looks like all He did for you was let your parents die and put you in a wheelchair for the rest of your life.

Kat: That's not true. He gave me a beautiful family who loves me. And although I may be physically bound, my soul is set free.

Delilah sits up straight and stares at Kat. She is silent because she didn't expect Kat's response. Kat soon breaks the silence.

Kat: Delilah we were sisters before the truth came out, but now you are blood-bound family, even to me. Because I love you, I need to tell you that you're going to have to stop having a pity-party.

Delilah: I ain't havin' no pity-party!

Kat: Yes, you are, and you won't let it go. Things could be much worse, and sadly enough, for many people they are. You've been given another chance with the family you never knew. Believe it or not people do love you! I know you were a victim of circumstance, but out of your pain, you can triumph and help someone else along the way.

Delilah: You don't understand...

Kat: You don't think I understand? Just look at me! I've been crippled for half of my life. And believe me, I didn't always have a positive attitude. I was just ten-years-old when I lost my parents and my ability to walk! My whole life was turned upside down. I wouldn't talk to anyone and all I did was cry in therapy. I couldn't sleep, and when I did, I had nightmares about the accident. I wanted my mother to hold me so badly, just at least one more time. I wanted my daddy to tuck me in at night like he used to, but that was never going to happen again.

Delilah: I can't listen to this!

Kat: Yes you can. This is my testimony. It may be different from yours, but we do have some things in common. *(Pause)* You know what God did for me through my pain? He surrounded me with all of these great people and He touched the Rutherford's hearts to take me in, and adopt me. They were patient and loving to me. I've never been treated no less than a daughter and sister by them. I have a family, a mom and a dad that love me, a sister, now two. And the greatest big brother a girl could ask for. No I'll never forget my biological parents, but now I have siblings! My mother and father had decided not to have any more children before they were killed. The point is that I've been given double for my trouble. Remember, two negatives equal a positive.

Delilah: I'm sorry. I didn't think about what you went through.

Kat: It's okay. I know you've suffered a great deal too, but scars do heal after a while. And when they do, you become even stronger than before.

(Beat)

Delilah: You're a kid and you make me look like an idiot.

Kat: Don't say that! You have a lot of greatness inside of you, and one day you'll realize it. Besides, you're not that much older than me, sis.

They both pause as Delilah realizes that Kat just called her sis. They then burst into laughter as the front door suddenly opens. It is Rebekah and Jessica, who have just returned from dinner and shopping. They are laughing and all four women freeze as they stare at each other. Delilah stands immediately as Rebekah is in shock. Jessica closes the door and takes her mother's bags.

Rebekah: Did...did you come to see me?

Delilah: Yeah.

Rebekah: Are you ready to talk?

Delilah: I ain't leaving until I get the answers I came for.

Kat: Jessica I need to study some more for my midterms on Monday, will you quiz me?

Jessica: Sure.

They exit upstage left to Kat's room.

Rebekah: Let's sit.

Delilah: Okay.

They both sit down on the couch. Delilah is seated stage right and Rebekah is seated on stage left closest to the front door.

Rebekah: First I want to begin by saying that I was very young when I had you. I was barely out of my teens...

Delilah: What difference does that make? A lot of chicks have babies young.

Rebekah: Yes, but my situation was different.

Delilah: What could be so different that you left me and never came back?

Rebekah: I understand your resentment towards me...

Delilah: No, you don't.

Rebekah: Just let me explain and then you can ask me anything you want, okay?

Delilah: Fine.

Rebekah: I was an only child so my parents had high expectations for me. My father was a respectable history professor. He ran for a few local public offices. Mother taught school for a while but retired early. Oh, she was high society, nothing but the best for her and hers. She was the head of several organizations and involved in many others.

Delilah: And you?

Rebekah: Me? Well, I was expected to tag-along of course, one day be her successor, but honestly I hated it. I hated every second of it.

Delilah: Why?

Rebekah: It was all a show to me. Sure they raised money for this cause and that, but it was all about their image. They looked down on people who didn't have their kind of money and clothes. I always promised myself that I wouldn't be like them; but I guess it happened anyhow. At least now I know it's not too late to reverse it.

Delilah: So you grew up rollin' in dough and you still left me?

Rebekah: That's not how it happened. I got tangled into something that I couldn't get out of and I had to protect you, even if it meant leaving you.

Rebekah tries to hold Delilah's hands but she pushes her away. A hurt Rebekah continues her story.

Rebekah: I loved singing so of course I wanted to study voice in college. My father expected me to major in something more practical such as business or education. I also loved medicine and helping people so I decided on a pre-med major, although I took music electives. Mom and I would argue all of the time because she wanted me to concentrate on medicine. It was okay to take up singing for a hobby and to show off in front of her friends but not as a serious vocation. I got so tired of the pressure that I secretly got a job singing in a nightclub. That's where I met Sonny, Joe's father. He was

a charming businessman and so very handsome! I was eager to launch a successful singing career in order to prove to my parents that I could be a respectable performer. We used each other, he promised to get me a record deal and I promised him unconditional love, although I never loved him the way he wanted me to. He began drinking and gambling and he got into so much debt that he became desperate for money. And I was desperate for a way out of my parents' high society environment, so out of our desperation I gave him permission to sell my body to the highest bidder. He told me I wouldn't have to do it long, just long enough to help get him out of debt and secure me a recording contract with one of his "music business friends". He just used me to get money out of them. When my parents found out they disowned me, and worse, Sonny started selling drugs to pay off his debts. I had no one and nothing. That's when I found out I was pregnant. Sonny told me to get an abortion but I wouldn't. I pretended like I did, and I knew I wouldn't be able to hide my pregnancy for long. I also knew that if he found out, he would just about kill me. Sonny was not the same man I first met. He became obsessed with me and he threatened me all of the time.

Delilah: Why didn't you just have the abortion?

Rebekah: I wanted to keep my baby no matter what. I named you Rachel before you were born. And I was determined to find a way out of that mess and make a new start for you and I. Sonny didn't know this but I would sometimes go to prayer meetings at this church close to where I lived. I would always sit in the back and reminisce about growing up and singing in my church at home. I missed my parents so much even though I was banned from their lives. Then one day I met this nice woman named Kay...

Delilah: Kay and Robert.

Rebekah: Yes, Kay and her husband Robert were so good to me. They became my surrogate parents.

Delilah: (*She stands and turns her back on Rebekah*) They were the only parents I ever knew.

Rebekah: (*Standing, she reaches out to touch her but stops herself*) Were?

Delilah: (*Turns to face her*) They died when I was 7.

Rebekah: (*Shocked, she covers her mouth*) How? How did it happen, where did you go...

Delilah: (*Sitting*) I don't wanna talk about it.

Rebekah: I didn't know...

Delilah: Of course you didn't. Are you finished yet?

Rebekah: (*Pause*) Almost, you see Kay and Robert were very active in that church. She noticed me and would always offer me a ride home and dinner. I began going to their house for prayer and one day I opened up to her about my life. When I got pregnant, they offered to help me. Since I had nowhere else to go, I stayed with them until I gave birth to you. I had to change my look and everything because Sonny had threatened to break my ankles when I left him. I was supposed to go and stay with one of their friends in another state after you were born but...

Delilah: But what?

Rebekah: I took off without you and left them a note.

Delilah: You did what?

Rebekah: I had to protect you.

Delilah: Here I thought you had no choice but to leave me, but you took off on your own? Why didn't you try to take me with you!

Rebekah: I wanted to pull myself together and make a home for you. I didn't want you to spend the first years of your life running from a madman. Sonny found out about Kay and Robert and he threatened them. That's why they had to move.

Delilah: Did you even try to come back for me years later?

Rebekah: I wanted to, I really wanted to...

Delilah: So is that when you met the man of your dreams, got married and forgot that you had a child?

Rebekah: I lost touch with Kay and Robert and it took me a while to rebuild my life. By the time I was ready to come for you, you were about 5 or 6 years old and I felt that was

too old to take you away from them. They loved you so much and they never had any children of their own...

Delilah: So that's why you just walked away and never came back?

Rebekah: I wasn't good enough to be your mother! I was so messed up and confused at the time.

Delilah: (*Referring to a picture of Jamie, Jessica and Kat*) You were good enough to be their momma. Did you think Kay and Robert would live forever? Do you know what I went through after they died?

Rebekah: You're so angry with me...

Delilah: If you look up the word orphan in the dictionary, you'll find my name.

Rebekah: Rachel...

Delilah: My name is Delilah. (*Beat*) So who was the lucky sperm donor?

Rebekah: I don't think this is the time...

Delilah: You know I deserve to know who he is. Is it Sonny?

Rebekah: Please, I don't want to hurt you...

Delilah: It's too late for that, I need to know now.

Rebekah: I...I...don't know who your father is.

Delilah: What!

Rebekah: Honestly, I don't know.

Delilah is very hurt. She crosses to the front door. Rebekah grabs her arm.

Rebekah: Don't leave!

Delilah: (*Turning to face her*) Would you do it all over again?

Rebekah: What do you mean?

Delilah: Knowing what you know now, would you have left me if you had to do it all over again?

Rebekah: Rach...Delilah that's not an easy question to...

Delilah: Just answer the question.

Rebekah: If that was the only option I had to protect you then yes. Your safety was my main concern.

Delilah: *(She opens the door to leave)* At least I finally know the truth.

Rebekah: Wait. Can you give me another chance?

Delilah: *(At the front door, turns to face her)* How can I when all my life nobody ever gave me one.

Delilah quickly exits. Rebekah cries as she sits on the bottom step.

-Blackout-

Act II, Scene V *(Early Sunday morning):*

Jessica, Kat and Rebekah are in the living room. They are trying to console Rebekah.

Jessica: You'll feel much better after the service.

Rebekah: Thanks sweetheart, I know I will. I always do.

Kat: Are you still going to sing this morning?

Rebekah: Oh yes.

Jessica: Mom, I can make some phone calls and try to find her...

Rebekah: No, I don't want you to do that. I've hurt her enough.

Jamie enters through the front door.

Kat: It's going to be okay, we promise.

Jamie: Never make a promise you can't keep lil sis. How are three of my favorite ladies doing?

They all say hello as he greets each woman with a kiss.

Jessica: Have you by chance seen or spoken to Delilah?

Rebekah: Jessica don't.

Jamie: No I haven't because I was going to surprise her today. Why, what's up?

Rebekah: Nothing son. Listen, did I hear you mention some time ago that you wanted me to sing on your album?

Jamie: Jessica what's going on with Delilah?

Jessica: Um...

Kat: (*Quickly*) She's not here that's all.

Jamie: I can see that, and I honestly would be surprised to see her here. Okay, what's going on?

Rebekah: She finally knows the whole truth.

Jamie: What are you trying to say?

Jessica: She probably just needed a break...

Jamie: A break? As in leaving?

Kat: We might as well tell him.

Jamie: Tell me what? Where is she?

Jessica: Delilah finally talked to mom last night and...

Jamie: And...

Rebekah: She left...for good.

Jamie: What! Did she say where she was going?

He rushes to the front door.

Rebekah: Where are you going?

Jamie: I'm going after her.

Rebekah: No Jamie, I've caused her enough pain. Let her go, maybe she'll return to us one day.

Jamie: I can't do that. You don't understand. I've been waiting for her all of my life and I'm not going to let her go.

There is a knock on the front door as he is about exit. He opens it and it is Delilah. Everyone stands.

Jamie: *(Grabbing her)* I was coming after you.

Rebekah: We thought you had left for good.

Delilah: I was going to but something stopped me.

Kat: What was that?

Delilah: All of you did. *(Beat)* The truth is that I'm tired of running! I been running all my life. I know I ain't been no picnic but I remembered the things you all said. And Shakespeare's words keep coming back to me. I guess it took something big to happen in order for me to see it.

Jessica: I'm so glad you came back! *(Hugging her)* I'm sorry...

Delilah: I'm the one who's sorry. I'm sorry for the hurtful things I said and did. *(Pause)* *(She looks up and then at each of them)* I'd like to start over.

Rebekah: Of course we forgive you. *(Pause)* Can you forgive us?

Delilah: Yes, but I still need time to sort things out.

Rebekah: Sweetheart time is all that we have. Friends?

Rebekah extends her hand to Delilah.

Delilah: *(Shaking her hand)* Friends.

Rebekah: I feel like singing!

Jamie: Speaking of singing, have you heard Delilah sing? She sounds just like you.

Jessica: You never told me you can sing.

Delilah: I guess it's not something I think about every day.

Kat: Maybe mom and daughter can sing together.

Rebekah: Yes, that would be nice. I'm willing if you are.

Delilah: *(Pause)* It's a start.

Jamie: Ladies this is only the beginning of many things to come.

Jamie puts his arm around Delilah as he ushers them all out the front door for church. Rebekah lags behind, as the others are gone. She faces the audience, looks up and says, "thank you" before exiting.

-Blackout-

Epilogue (*Rutherford living room; Jamie and Delilah's wedding day, a year and a half later*):

Delilah is standing in front of a long mirror wearing a beautiful wedding gown in the Rutherford living room as she prepares for her wedding. She is surrounded by Rebekah, Jessica, Kat, Agnes, Leah and Sandra. Jessica is her maid of honor, while Kat and Leah are her bridesmaids.

Sandra: You look exquisite my dear!

Agnes: Yes, she is a beautiful bride. Shakespeare would be so proud of you honey.

Delilah: Thank you, I miss him so much. I feel like the happiest girl in the world!

Jessica: (*Kisses her on the cheek and gives her a gentle nudge*) You should be, you're marrying my brother, sis!

Leah: Looks like you're marrying the whole family.

Kat: Yep, you marry one Rutherford, you marry us all. Are you ready for that sister dear?

Delilah: It's a good thing I already belong to this family. I want to thank you all for sharing in the happiest day of my life.

Jessica seeing the emotion in her mother's face nudges Kat.

Kat: Calling all bridesmaids and wedding planners, let's go check on the guys. I think Bek can handle it from here. We'll see you out there.

Delilah: Okay, I'll see you all in a bit.

They all catch the hint and pat Delilah as they exit out the front door. Rebekah, who has been quietly observing in the background, approaches her daughter.

Delilah: I hope Jamie is not too nervous, because I sure am. It won't do us both good to be real nervous.

Rebekah: (*Sentimental*) I remember the day you were born as if it were just yesterday. My firstborn, my angel. You were so beautiful and so perfect.

Delilah: Mom you're going to make me cry. (*Beat*) Hey, are you okay?

Rebekah: I've waited 29 years for you to call me that! I want you to know how proud I am of you.

Delilah: Who would have thought of me going back to school and getting married?

Rebekah: You are an extraordinary young lady, my beautiful and precious daughter. I am proud to be your mother. *(Beat)* I want you to have something.

She pulls out a small box and gives it to Delilah, who opens it.

Delilah: It's beautiful. Where did you get this?

Rebekah: I've always had it. It was your grandmothers. I saved it, hoping that I would be able to give it to you one day. I have something else for Jessica.

Delilah: *(She pulls the beautiful necklace out of the box and reads the inscription)*
"MOTHER AND DAUGHTER".

Rebekah: I added something else. Read the engraving on the back.

Delilah: She turns the heart over and reads. "LEILA AND RACHEL". Our names.

Rebekah: Those are the people we used to be, but look at us now. We have started over and our present is much better than the past.

Delilah: I would be honored to wear this. I...I love you mom.

Rebekah: And I love you. *(Beat)* Before we go there is one more thing. I hope you always know that I never would have left you if...

Delilah: *(Interrupts her)* No. But if not for the pain, I wouldn't have found my purpose. I just thank God for bringing us back together.

Rebekah: I'm afraid I won't have any tears left for the ceremony, now let's get this necklace on you so that we can get you married. One daughter down and two to go! She fastens the necklace around Delilah's neck. You are the most beautiful bride I've ever seen. *She then gently kisses her daughter on the head and takes her hand as she leads her out the door and to her wedding. Delilah grabs her bouquet as they exit.*

-Blackout-

The End

CHAPTER III

EVALUATION

When the playwright began the writing process, she attended a lecture given by Pastor Dave Wesner during her independent playwriting study class on January 7, 2003. During the lecture, the student answered questions about the theme of the play and the main character. Through this brainstorming session, the playwright focused her ideas concerning a two-act play about a prostitute who finds the mother she never knew and the soul mate she never thought she could have. The theme of the play became "God can use anyone, that He turns sinners into saints."

Delilah, the main character, was to become an evangelist only to suffer persecution about her sordid past from some people in her new church family. The playwright decided to add choir and other church members to the cast for a confrontational scene between those who condemn Delilah, and those who support her.

During Wesner's lecture, several questions about Delilah's inner struggle were:

1) What am I giving up? 2) Am I worthy? 3) Do I need to leave everything, and everyone behind? The third question is a result of criticism. The playwright decided to have Delilah to face these questions as she started her new life.

The playwright had to decide if she wanted the play to start before, during or after Delilah's spiritual change. Two additional questions to consider became: What motivated Delilah's change? And, what brought her to the church? Wesner advised the playwright to find articles and books on prostitution and to create a detailed biography for the main character for every ten years of her life up until her current age. Initially, the

playwright viewed Delilah as 33-years-old, the age of Christ at the crucifixion. This symbolized the re-birth of her character. Dr. Ellen Kanervo advised the student that perhaps the age should be reduced five years to make the character more believable as a college student. The playwright then changed her age to 28 instead. Wesner also advised the playwright to create biographies for the other characters. The playwright struggled to create these biographies, only to discover that writing the play would produce each character's story.

During the next couple of years, the playwright began to develop several scenarios while compiling information on prostitution. She also read a number of books about women who had put their children up for adoption. The writer learned that a playwright must lay the foundation of research before he or she can build or write a play; only then can the theme of the play, the main character's objective or purpose, and the conflict(s) that present challenges to the main character be established.

Certainly, there is a great deal of brainstorming, strategizing, and of course writing involved in the process of creating a play. The playwright learned a great deal about the art and craft of playwriting. She discovered that there were days when she wanted to write all of the time, and days when she didn't want to write at all. She even went through periods of not writing anything for weeks, as she began to understand the concept of writer's block. The playwright, on a few occasions when she had writer's block, would try to force herself to write--to no avail. However, the most important thing the playwright learned was that not every playwright has the same

process. Some writers need to outline every minute detail, while other writers use a different technique. Each writer must develop his or her own style.

The playwright was very fortunate to not only have the chance to write the play, but to see pages 42-70 of the play performed. This opportunity opened the door to a few, but significant ideas about the characters and the play as a whole. During the production of Wooden Nickels, the actor who portrayed Shakespeare wore a red snow cap instead of the Santa hat mentioned in the play. The playwright liked the idea of the character wearing a red snow cap instead, so she made that change in the script. She realized that the Santa hat would perhaps be too distracting. Another major lesson the playwright learned during this experience is that both the writer and director don't always share the same vision or interpret the script in the same manner. No one should expect another person to interpret a script in the same way. In this case, the director said she found a few sexual overtones that the playwright did not intentionally write or interpret in the same manner. As a result, the writer altered the script in order to eliminate any implications the director perceived to be sexual. During production the playwright also witnessed the audience laugh at certain places in the script that were not written for laughs. This could have been a combination of the acting and the audience's perception of the moment. Staging also plays a major role in a production. The director opted to use a thrust stage for the one-act performance. The idea was for the audience to be up close and personal with the actors, especially during the final scene. The playwright was not pleased with the idea at first, because she had visualized proscenium staging. However, she felt the thrust stage worked for Wooden Nickels, because of the intensity of some of

the dialogue, especially during the final scene. The only downside to using this particular thrust stage was its lack of space as it limited actor movement and cramped scenes with numerous characters.

As a result of being able to witness a portion of the play performed onstage, the playwright would like to see the entire production of Wooden Nickels. She would like to experience diverse casts and stage settings for the play. It will be interesting to note the differences and similarities in the character portrayals, set design, and directing choices of future performances.

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VITA

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