

MRS. JENNINGS' SITTER

Ellen Struve
2/17/10
1522 South 96th Street
Omaha, NE 68124
402.391-2746
ellenstruve@yahoo.com

Characters:

Jennifer Jennings Mid-thirties to early forties, slender, attractive, wealthy. She often wears a ponytail.

McKenna Schneider: 15, chubby, dressed like a high school student—whatever that means at the moment. Right now it means she wears jeans, a hoodie, and flip-flops.

Scene

Wealthy suburban America.

Scene 1

SETTING: The set is the living area of Jenny's kitchen. There is a counter stage left. There is a couch center stage. The place is Pottery Barn meets Real Simple. Neat, soulless. A cordless phone kiosk is on the island counter. Next to the phone kiosk is a large very expensive purse and a small, regularly expensive purse.

AT RISE: Jenny is on the phone center stage. Two cafeteria style trays and cups with lids and straws sit on the counter. Blue tv glow radiates from exit stage left

JENNY

(while talking on the phone Jenny collects child debris from floor, putting it in woven basket next to loveseat. She is cordial, casual)

And she's late so I might not make cocktails.... I was lucky to get anybody last minute, the pretty one has some kind of church thing, apparently the mute plays volleyball..

(McKenna enters unseen)

I got the klepto... I know I swore I'd never get her again, but then Julie goes and gets mono and here we are on a Thursday night with no advance notice, thank you very much, and you say Client Dinner Out. Well.. what am I supposed to do? Please, I am sure she stole Gregory's Magic Mr. Mondo.. It was practically poking out of her backpack... add obvious to her list of crimes.

JENNY cont'd

Don't you go all outraged on me now. Remember you're the one who needs spousal support tonight. Her mother is in goddamn Junior League. What was I supposed to do?

At least the klepto can spell. Whatever they're teaching these girls it isn't I before E because they can't spell for shit. It takes a rosetta stone to decipher Julie's messages... It's just dinner. Two-hours with a moral reprobate isn't going to kill anybody.

(JENNY begins switching purses)

Is Marie coming? I don't know, I might switch purses if she is.

(JENNY sees McKenna, acknowledges her.)

I have a new bag. No. No. It's not that kind of new. Hey, no need to Jenny, Jenny me. I really was listening and I agree it's a problem. No. I completely scaled back. Not expensive. Inexpensive. It's not even real. It's a knockoff, okay. I got it at Target. Seriously, but Marie wouldn't know the difference. More like an experiment. Hey look, the sitter just came in. I'll see you in a bit.

(JENNY hangs up the phone.)

Hi McKenna. Aren't you a stealthy one? I didn't even hear you come in. The kids are watching Big Red Dog, but no tv after this. Bedtime is at eight. There's dinner in the kitchen. Help yourself to whatever—I mean to the food. My cell and Steve's cell are both on the board. We'll be at Vintoro's. It shouldn't be that late.

MCKENNA

What you said is completely unfair?

(JENNY is taken aback.)

What you said about me is completely unfair?

JENNY

Oh, you...I..

MCKENNA

I mean, for you to just stand there. And say that. And, like, you don't know. There's no way you could know. I mean, for sure know.

JENNY

Look, McKenna. I'm sorry if I said something to upset you, but we've got a late start here and I really have to get going.

McKENNA

I mean. Like who are you? To judge me? Because I'm not who you say I am.

JENNY

I saw Mr. Mondo in your backpack.

McKENNA

You don't know why he was there. I could have been bringing him home to repair him. Gregory could have given him to me as a present for being a fun babysitter. And even if I took him, you don't know why. I could have been taking him for like the poor. I could have stolen him for sick kids. For some sick, poor kid you don't even know who just wanted a Magical Mr. Mondo more than anything and it's not like you even would've noticed.

JENNY

I noticed. I saw Mr. Mondo in your backpack.

McKENNA

I mean, like, if you hadn't seen it you wouldn't have noticed.

JENNY

I noticed. You stole Mr. Mondo.

McKENNA

So what? So now I'm some moral reprobate. According to who? According to you?

JENNY

You stole Mr. Mondo. Admit it. Did you or did you not steal Mr. Mondo?

McKENNA

I did.

JENNY

Fine, look. We both know stealing is wrong and I don't condone what you did, but don't worry, I'm not going to tell your mother. Our reservations are at seven and I just really need to get out of here...

McKENNA

You don't know anything about me. You lie.

JENNY

Excuse me. You just admitted you stole Mr. Mondo.

McKENNA

You are such a liar

JENNY

You are calling me a liar? I'm the liar?

McKENNA

That is no knockoff.

JENNY

How would you know?

McKENNA

Moral reprobates know these things.

JENNY

I don't know what you think you are doing here, but I need to get to dinner.

(JENNY picks up car keys.)

McKENNA

And I need a steady babysitting job.

JENNY

You what?

McKENNA

I do. I need you to give me a steady babysitting job.

JENNY

You're mother needs to adjust your medication.

McKENNA

I mean it. Just something steady. Just something so I can make \$500 before June.

JENNY

If this is about money, if this is why you're stealing things...

McKENNA

No, that's.. that's unrelated. I just need the job. I need it. And if you don't give it to me...

JENNY

You'll what?

I'll tell your husband.

McKENNA

You'll tell my husband.

JENNY

About the purse.

McKENNA

(JENNY looks at her watch.)

Fine

JENNY

Okay?

McKENNA

Okay.

JENNY

(JENNY turns to go)

Jenny, I...

McKENNA

Oh no. It's Mrs. Jennings now.

JENNY

(JENNY exits. Stage lights out.)

Scene 2

(JENNINGS' kitchen. JENNY wears a fashionable track suit. Her uniform until Scene 10)

You're late. The kids are in the playroom

JENNY

Where are you going?

McKENNA

Yoga.

JENNY

You're not staying?

McKENNA

No

JENNY

McKENNA

Is that fair?

JENNY

Fair? It's how babysitting works. I leave, you sit.

McKENNA

It's not fair.

JENNY

You said you needed a job.

McKENNA

Not for real. I mean I do. But I'm not sure I.. I need something that looks like a job to my mom.

JENNY

I'm not paying you to stay here while I'm here. That's stupid. Why are you here if I have to stay? Why should I stay?

McKENNA

Why should I have to babysit?

JENNY

Then why are you here?

McKENNA

Where should I be?

JENNY

I don't know. Doing whatever unsupervised teenagers do. Go hang out on a streetcorner, try scoring drugs, meet an online sexual predator or, I don't know, go to the mall and steal stuff. You like stealing stuff.

McKENNA

The mall sucks. Besides, I need to save my money, Duh?

JENNY

You are a troubled youth.

McKENNA

Where do you go?

JENNY

I'm going to Yoga.

McKENNA

No, like, where else do you go? Besides yoga?

JENNY

Pilates.

McKENNA

You do yoga and pilates?

JENNY

I try new things.

McKENNA

Okay, so, besides the gym, where do you go alone?

JENNY

Oh, I don't know. The mall.

McKENNA

The mall sucks.

JENNY

I'm going to yoga now.

McKENNA

No. I don't want you..I..No. It's just not fair.

JENNY

You know what, tell Steve whatever you like. Email him. Call him at the office, whatever. This isn't working. You need to leave. We're done.

McKENNA (quiet)

I took pictures of the shoes.

JENNY

What shoes?

McKENNA

The ones in your closet. Not with the other shoes. The shoes in the wrong place.

I took some pictures of them. With my phone.

(JENNY sits on the arm of the couch. Thinking)

MCKENNA

They're cute. They're cute shoes. All of them. Where'd you get them? Did you get them at the mall?

(JENNY stands and puts her car keys on the counter)

JENNY

(not looking at McKenna)

Online catalog. The mall sucks.

(JENNY exits into the invisible Family Room.)

Scene 3

(JENNINGS' kitchen. JENNY is happy, reading magazines on the couch. There is a bottled water and a prescription bottle on top of a stack of magazines on the coffee table. Jenny wears an eye mask like a headband. MCKENNA enters)

JENNY

You're here. I'm so glad.

MCKENNA

Yeah. Hi. Hey. Uh? Where?

JENNY

In the playroom. They can't wait to see you.

MCKENNA (surprised)

Oh. Good.

JENNY

They've been sucking high fructose corn syrup out of aluminum bags for the last half hour. So they might be a little wild. There are some Ding Dongs on the counter if you want one. I know, Real Ding Dongs with gluten and everything. I'm not sure how many are left. They've had a few.

(JENNY takes a swig of water and four pills)

MCKENNA

Uh.

JENNY

I'm probably going to be a little out of commission
 (JENNY motions to pills)
 Pain meds. Cause drowsiness.

MCKENNA

Are you okay?

JENNY

Steve's always had a bad back. A real bad back. Anyway. Try
 not to let them hurt each other. They have these new foam
 swords. And also, I hope you know magic.

MCKENNA

Magic?

JENNY

(Lies down on couch)

You know. Tricks. I've been promising them all day that you
 were going to teach them magic tricks. Mind reading,
 disappearing, levitating, that kind of thing. It seemed to me to
 be the kind of thing you'd be interested in. (yawns) I hope I
 wasn't wrong about you knowing tricks. Brianna and Gregory
 don't handle disappointment very well. What children do?

(Offstage sound escalates into
 crying. Jenny slips mask over her
 eyes. McKenna is stuck center
 stage.)

SCENE 4

(JENNINGS' kitchen. JENNY is
 rooting around in the kitchen
 throughout scene. MCKENNA sits on
 the couch text messaging, drinking
 a Diet Coke from a can.)

JENNY

Just tell me where they are.

MCKENNA

I told you.

JENNY

Tell me specifically where they are.
 So help me god, you had better not have pocketed them.

MCKENNA

I don't do drugs.

JENNY

You better be telling the truth. There were twenty-seven pills in that bottle. Twenty-seven of My pills. My pills. And if you so much as sucked on one of them, I will rip in through your throat, go straight for your gullet and dig it out with my freshly manicured hand.

MCKENNA

You really shouldn't do drugs.

JENNY

They aren't drugs. They're pills.

MCKENNA

I mean, you're a mom.

JENNY

Stop being dramatic. They aren't even those kind of pills. The other day was an... anomaly. A lark. Listen, I've had that same goddamn bottle of pills for the last six years, and it's mine ok? So just tell me where my goddamn pills are.

MCKENNA

You said they were Mr. Jennings's pills. You said they were for his back.

JENNY

Mr. Jennings's back is beside the point. Tell me where my pills are.

MCKENNA

I told you. They're in the kitchen. I'm not telling you any more.

JENNY

What area of the kitchen are they in?

MCKENNA

I'm not telling you.

(JENNY starts digging in her purse on the kitchen counter and pulls out her checkbook.)

JENNY

I will write you a check for five hundred dollars today.

McKENNA

What?

JENNY

Lump sum.

McKENNA

What do you mean?

JENNY

Don't you need the money?

McKENNA

Yeah, but I mean. I still need a job.. My mom...

JENNY

You need something that looks like a job to your mom-- Keep on coming. Hang out. Watch E! in high def. Five hundred dollars today and all you have to do is tell me where you put my pills.

McKENNA

No.

JENNY

How much?

McKENNA

What?

JENNY

How much more?

McKENNA

No.

JENNY

No?

McKENNA

No.

JENNY

Why not?

McKENNA

Because.

JENNY

Because?

McKENNA

Because I'm not a drug dealer.

JENNY

They're my drugs to begin with. You can't deal me my drugs.

McKENNA

And I don't take bribes.

JENNY

But extortion, that's okay.

McKENNA

I told you where they were.

JENNY

Please, just... Please.

McKENNA

It's not right.

JENNY

I'm pretty sure you don't have the authority to define that territory.

McKENNA

I'm not gonna tell you.

JENNY

Then put them back where they belong. When I'm not looking, put them back in the medicine cabinet. So when I wake up in the morning, I know they're behind the mirror. Behind the me in the mirror.

McKENNA

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

JENNY

Please.

McKENNA
I can't

JENNY
Did you take them?

McKENNA
I won't

JENNY
Swear to me you didn't take them.

McKENNA
I promise.

JENNY
Swear to me on your mother's grave you didn't take my drugs and you're telling me the truth.

McKENNA
My mom's not dead.

JENNY
I don't care.

McKENNA
I swear on my mother's grave, your pills are somewhere in your kitchen.

JENNY
You swear.

McKENNA
I just did.

JENNY
And you really won't take the money?

McKENNA
(McKENNA shakes her head.)
I'm not.. I mean..I didn't mean..

JENNY
Why?

McKENNA
Why what?

JENNY

Why everything. Why do you need the money then?

MCKENNA

I need to go to yearbook camp.

JENNY

Yearbook.. Camp?

MCKENNA

Or else I won't be associate editor my junior year. And then there's like no hope for being editor senior year. And I have to do something, because, well, I can't not do anything. It's not that I can't do anything, because I can. I'm not like, no good. It's just that with almost everything else there's elections, you know, where kids vote. Or there's tryouts. And I did that once with choir and you know that was awful. And I don't want to do anything that has meets, you know, like in-state and out-of-state, where you've heard of the school, but you don't ever know where it is, like on a map. And if I go to camp, then I can show that I'm really serious. And if I go to camp, I'll probably be associate editor. So I can be serious about that.

JENNY

Your mom won't pay for yearbook camp?

MCKENNA

Oh. Yeah. She would. It's not that she wouldn't if she had too. It's just kinda like complicated. Like ever since she's been serious with Ted, she's been really, you know, weird about stuff. About us or not even really about us, but just that. She's really, really trying and my mom, she means well. She thinks it's you know important to be independent and all and that's kind of her thing right now and this is sort of her, you know, misguided attempt to try and encourage me. It's just that she's really stupid about it, and doesn't understand anything. Because normally, normally I would just call my dad. And it would totally be taken care of. Which in the past, she would have been all over and she would have been like "the least he can do." Whatever. But now, now things are just weird. And I feel like, if I don't do it, whatever it is she's trying right now, we'll always be weird, even though she's just being stupid. You know.

JENNY

Can you tell me if I'm hot or cold?

Scene 5

(McKenna is procrastinating from doing her homework. Both phone and book have failed to engage. JENNY is standing behind the kitchen counter, facing the audience and looking at catalogues. Blue tv glow)

McKENNA

Is this what you do all day?

JENNY(not looking up)

No.

McKENNA

What do you do all day?

JENNY

Other things.

McKENNA

Like what?

JENNY

Errands. Appointments. Activities. Other things.

McKENNA

Can you like, I don't know, be more specific.

JENNY

Why?

McKENNA

I'm bored.

JENNY

Fine. McKenna, are you currently remodeling a room in your home?

McKENNA

No.

JENNY

Are you contemplating remodeling a room in your home?

McKENNA

I don't think so. No.

JENNY

(sighs) Fine. Are you in anyway dissatisfied with the service people in your life?

McKENNA

Service people?

JENNY

The people that cut hair, cut lawns or dry clean. People that clean houses. People that clean teeth or cure cancer or teach or create. Those people.

McKENNA

Oh.

JENNY

Are you in anyway dissatisfied with them?

McKENNA

I don't know. No?

JENNY

Are you cleansing? Are you training? Are you maintaining?

McKENNA

What?

(JENNY eyes McKenna critically)

JENNY

You don't have to answer. That was rhetorical.

McKENNA

Oh.

JENNY

We have nothing to talk about. Trust me.

McKENNA

I don't think that's true.

JENNY

Really? What is it you want to say?

McKENNA

I...

JENNY

Easier. What's important to you?

McKENNA

Lots of stuff. A whole lot. My friends, my mom, I don't know.

JENNY

Yes, you have a lot going on. Clearly that's true.

McKENNA

There's other stuff. You have to talk about other stuff with your friends.

JENNY

You already know where I buy my shoes.

McKENNA

Seriously?

JENNY

And what do you talk about with your friends?

McKENNA

Everything. Like what we believe or think about what's going on. Everything. Religion, family, stuff on t.v., each other, our boyfriends. All that.

JENNY

You have a boyfriend?

McKENNA

Yeah.

JENNY

Really?

McKENNA

Yeah.

JENNY

That's nice.

McKENNA

You're surprised.

JENNY

A little.

McKENNA

Why shouldn't I have a boyfriend?

JENNY

No reason. I think it's nice. When I was in high school, girls like you didn't usually.

McKENNA

Girls like me.

JENNY

You know.

McKENNA

No.

JENNY

Forget I said it.

McKENNA

I am not fat.

JENNY

Maybe not by today's standard.

McKENNA

I am not fat.

JENNY

You're not exactly walking home with the presidential fitness award.

McKENNA

No.

JENNY

But your boyfriend doesn't think you're too fat, so that's nice.

McKENNA

That is not the problem.

JENNY

There's a problem?

McKENNA

Not really. Just complicated boy stuff.

JENNY

It can't be that complicated. Believe me, at your age, there is no problem an "I like you" and a hand job can't solve.

McKENNA

You really don't talk about boys anymore? I mean, my mom still won't shut up about Ted and it's been like three years.

JENNY

He's not a husband. Husbands are purely anecdotal. Stupid, funny, brief. Anything else is too much information. Everything about someone else's marriage is too much information.

McKENNA

I can get that. Divorced kids totally get that. Like, I was nine and she would not let it go. "You've got to understand... it's not your fault." "We couldn't make it work." "Our relationship" "Our commitment" "Our communication" (lots of eyerolling) And suddenly there was this whole private, crappy world I didn't know about that was supposed to make me feel better. But I don't know, it just made me feel like 'outside', you know.

JENNY

Everybody's got a crappy mother.

McKENNA

My mom's a good mom.

(JENNY does not believe her, visually)

You're the crappy mom.

JENNY

Huh

McKENNA

All that stuff you talk about with your friends, and you totally never once even mention your kids.

(JENNY turns her back on McKENNA and engages in some kind of tidying. Followed by terse magazine flipping.)

McKENNA

I'm just saying it's not like you're, you know, very maternal.

JENNY

I am a good mother.

McKENNA

Yeah, I know, I'm just saying.

JENNY

No, what you said is that I was a crappy mother. I'll have you know Gregory and Brianna want for nothing.

McKENNA

No.

JENNY

I do a lot for my kids. There is nothing other people's kids do that my kids don't do.

McKENNA

Yeah, but, you're still not like, like Mrs. Fletcher or anything.

JENNY

Are you talking about Diana Fletcher?

McKENNA

Yeah. Eva's mom.

JENNY

How do you even know her?

McKENNA

I babysat for them a couple times.

JENNY

So, Diana Fletcher is a really good mom.

McKENNA

Yeah.

JENNY

Diana Fletcher is the gold standard of suburban mom. Name one thing that Diana Fletcher does that I don't do.

McKENNA

She lets her kids use real paint.

JENNY

My kids have paints.

MCKENNA

Those aren't paints. Those are clear chemicals that react to specially treated papers.

JENNY

Real paint stains. Fake paint counts. Give me another reason.

MCKENNA

Her kids have these cool scrapbooks, with like, everything they've done all year in them. Each kid has his own. And they write stuff in it. And there are pictures and mementos and stickers and stuff.

JENNY

Scrapbooking is for the damned. Nobody should remember everything from their childhood. I'm here everyday. It should all be recorded? Oh, I'm sure Diana Fletcher's books are full of happy uniformed and costumed children going to zoos and museums and the goddamn pumpkin patch. But you can't edit everything. The vomit, the fighting, the crying are all right there on the other side of those pictures. Because for every happy memory, for every picnic, there is the bee sting and the blood stain and the insults and disappointment.. Because I'm telling you right now there are things you don't want to remember. And you can't tell what they are when they are happening.

Two weeks ago was a perfectly good day. A perfectly normal day. A goddamn soccer game coffee in paper sleeves day. Gregory quelled Steve's greatest fear by actually kicking the ball. And then, when the game is over..then in the elation of sunshine and caffeine and impending freedom, I slam the back of the truck.

But I don't see Brianna, I feel her once the door smashes into her head.

And she's silent at first, blood flowing down her temple. Blood everywhere and I'm screaming "Are you okay and I'm so sorry and stop bleeding, people are staring" But then she's not silent. She's hysterical. And I can't make it stop. The blood comes right through the hard brown napkins and so on top of everything we have to go to the emergency room. It takes all my strength just to get her strapped in the car. Not to mention Gregory is having a total conniption. And I'm not even close to the goddamn hospital.

Have you ever been in the children's emergency room? Because it's awful. The same god-terrible lighting and industrial smell and silent suffering as the regular emergency room, except painted in bright colors and covered in art so you know how wrong it is.

But we're nothing there. Everyone at the hospital is business as usual. It's still just Saturday morning there. Not "the day I slammed the door on Brianna." The nurse or the intern or the resident or the goddamn doctor that looks ten years younger than me comes to examine her head. But she's, like, fused to my sternum now and has to be physically restrained. And there I am in the tiny white room pinning her little body to the gurney while she fights me, screaming. Until some fat lady puts her hand on my shoulder and says "Sometimes they do better on their own." I leave my frightened, bloody baby crying "mommy" in a room alone with some stranger.

And you know, that's the hell of it. Because children, probably some of them waiting in the emergency room with cigarette burns on their arms and bruises on their backs, children love you. They love you like you can't imagine. They love you even when you slam a thick metal door on their heads, they love you even when you leave, even when you're grateful to be gone.

So what should I have done? When Brianna was sitting up, grape stick in her mouth, four stitches sticking out of her forehead. Should I have snapped my digital photo, saved a piece of gauze and put together a sheet with a bubbled letter headline reading Emergency exclamation point. Is that what Diane Fletcher would have done?

You don't know anything about being a mom. Your mom screwed up and you don't know.

McKENNA

My mom didn't screw me up. She's a good mom.

JENNY

Really? What did you take from Diana Fletcher's house?

McKENNA

It still doesn't make you a good mom.

Scene 6

(SPLIT McKenna is in her bedroom, playing with Mondo while arguing with her mother on her cell phone. JENNY is waiting.)

McKENNA

No... like, that's not the point... The point is that we all go. That's the point... Well, like, if I don't get to go, that, like, ruins it and also I don't get to go. Because we're all going.

No, that's exactly what you're saying. You're saying I can't go. "If you go" You already told me I could and now you're saying if. What do you mean you talked 'if' over with Mr. Bulgar? Did he email you first? Or did you email him? Because you promised me. You promised me as part of this whole take responsibility for yourself McKenna program you were not going to go on PowerSchool anymore. And now you're talking to my teachers behind my back like, like I'm some kind of child. You promised you were going to cut it out. You promised. You know what. I don't even want to talk to you right now.

JENNY calls McKENNA

Oh now you have a solution to let me go when you already told me I could. We had a bargain. If we're all open and honest and not Big Brother and invasive why didn't you cc me on your reply. Wait.

JENNY

Are you coming or are you not coming?

McKENNA

What do you care? You're not going anywhere Hold a sec.

McKENNA switches to her mom.

You know what, never mind. No. I don't want to talk about it. You just work it out with Mr. Bulgar and I don't even care. You just do what you always do and go ahead and undermine me and take over because that's what you do. Because you don't think I can do anything. Yes it is what you think. No, I don't want to talk about it. HOLD on.

McKENNA switches back to JENNY

I'll get there when I get there.

McKENNA switches back to her mom.

I have to go. Because I have to be at work. Because I have to work. Because I know how to hold up my part of the bargain.

McKENNA hangs up her cell, stands up, put Mondo on the shrine.

Scene 7
(Jenny's kitchen)
McKENNA

I take back what I said.

JENNY

What you said about me?

McKENNA

No. What I said about my mom. She sucks. She's so stupid and she always thinks she knows. And now she's just screwing up everything, so I probably won't even be able to go on retreat. Which sucks and now even if I do, I'll have to spend the whole time studying because of stupid Mr. Bulgar and World Religion and it's not even like an important grade. I mean, like it's just World Religion. Which means practically nothing anyway. And it wouldn't have mattered because I just would have just gotten my answers from Shauna, but now, thank you Mom, I'll have to do the stupid take home test ahead of time, when I really need to be working on my journal because you're supposed to write something everyday, and I'm like a month behind and my PreCalc extension is running out.

Like, what does she want from me?

So I totally take back what I said about her being a good mom. She sucks.

JENNY

I'll do it.

McKENNA

What?

JENNY

The test, I'll do it.

McKENNA

What do you mean?

JENNY

I'll take the test for you.

McKENNA

I don't know..

JENNY
It's a take-home test right?

McKENNA
Right.

JENNY
Open book?

McKENNA
Yeah, but...

JENNY
But what?

McKENNA
Well, you can't screw it up, because, you know, as it is my grade is kind of rocky and I can't get anything at all less than a B.

JENNY
I was good at school. I was really good at school.

McKENNA
Besides, it'd be like cheating.

JENNY
Yeah, it would.

McKENNA
But why?

JENNY
Why not? Your call.

McKENNA
Okay, but...

JENNY
But what?

McKENNA
It's due next week. Do you have the time?

JENNY
I'll manage. Give me the book.

(McKENNA rummages around in her bag and hands Jenny her text book.)

McKENNA

What did you do before?

JENNY(not looking up)

Before what?

McKENNA

You had a job right?

JENNY(looking up)

Oh. I see. I see, where you're going with this. Teenagers should not watch Oprah. No one should watch Oprah.

McKENNA

Did you have a job before?

JENNY

(sarcastic) No, I went to finishing school and lived with my parents and wore cashmere cardigans like Nancy Drew. Of course I worked.

McKENNA

Well, what did you do?

JENNY

I did what adults do. I sold stuff.

McKENNA

Did you like it?

JENNY

I didn't dislike it.

McKENNA

What did you sell?

JENNY

Accounts

McKENNA

What?

JENNY

I sold viable, home equity and HMS loans.

McKENNA

You worked at a bank?

JENNY

No. I brokered accounts between banks. I was the Senior Regional Accounts Representative at KPM Investments.

McKENNA

That sounds impressive. And kind of boring.

JENNY

It is. And it isn't. It's what it is. Working is what it is.

McKENNA

I'd always work. I think it's important. Sorry. I mean, my mom did. But I don't want, like, a job, job.

JENNY

What's a job, job?

McKENNA

Like what you had.

JENNY

Okay then... what?

McKENNA

I don't know. Something exciting. That I'm really interested in. That I'm good at.

JENNY

Uh huh.

McKENNA

Maybe a graphic designer. That'd be cool.

JENNY

That's not a real job.

McKENNA

Yeah it is. It's a real job.

JENNY

That's a t.v. job. That's a job you can get a degree from the University of Phoenix.

McKENNA

I'm sure they have programs at other colleges.

JENNY

Why graphic design?

McKENNA

Well, I like yearbook.

JENNY

I thought you were just doing yearbook to have something on your résumé. Besides graphic designers make no money. Seriously, less than teachers.

McKENNA

Yeah. I suppose. But still, I think you should do something you care about. And it's important to be independent. So I don't know, maybe I'd go to law school.

JENNY

Oh my god you sound just like my mother.

McKENNA

How?

JENNY

Because, despite her complete and utter lack of interest in the world, and having me, oh, eight and a half months after getting married, she too could have gone to law school.

McKENNA

Really?

JENNY

No, she just says that. I don't even know why she says it. She just says it every time I complain. You know, sacrifices, however exaggerated, were made. Ugh. It's annoying.

McKENNA

My mom never talks about law school.

JENNY

That's because she is a lawyer. My mom talks about it because she isn't. Because she plays bridge and winters in Arizona. Because that woman can sing all the words to "I've been to paradise but I've never been to me." For someone who claims to have spent the balance of her life attending to the needs of

JENNY cont'd

others, you'd be surprised how often the conversation turns back to her. But Freud, Faludi, and aromatherapy have all failed, leaving only the satisfaction of dissatisfaction and the ability to annoy the hell out of her daughter across two time zones.

McKENNA

That's like kinda sad. About her and about you.

JENNY

No, it's just, everything with my mother is like the apartment.

When I had my own apartment, she was into it. "I never had my own apartment" "Your own apartment, La la." But then it was. The kitchen is so small and What's that I smell? Steve and I move into this really nice place. And ever since then it's been, "I never had my own apartment."

McKENNA

I wish I had my own apartment.

JENNY

Don't go into graphic design then.

McKENNA

Why not?

JENNY

You'll never not have roommates.

Scene 8

(JENNINGS' KITCHEN. McKENNA cleans the kitchen, picks stuff up, looks bored, reads magazines at the counter. JENNY is sitting on the couch reading McKenna's textbook.)

McKENNA

Do you want a snack?

JENNY

No.

(McKENNA gets JENNY a water.)

McKENNA(looking over JENNY's shoulder)

You know, you didn't have to read the whole book or anything. That's kinda overkill. All you have to do is look up the answers.

JENNY

I liked it.

McKENNA

That's weird.

JENNY

It's interesting.

McKENNA

You must be so bored.

JENNY

Like, with you.

McKENNA

No, like in general. You do need a job.

JENNY

Maybe I just need something that looks like a job to my mom.

McKENNA

You wouldn't think it was interesting if Mr. Bulgar explained it to you. You'd think you'd never heard anything so boring in your life. And then you'd look out the window and see the trees and think about playing outside and how you can't ever really remember what you did even though you know you did it and then you'd look back at old Mr. Bulgar with his button-down plaid shirt and his mustache and just go back to being bored.

McKENNA

So what's interesting?

JENNY

I don't know. I like the Egyptians.

McKENNA

They're gross. All that disemboweling and pickling.

JENNY

True, but you have to admire them.

McKENNA

I don't see what's to admire.

JENNY

They thought they could be immortal. They could take it all with them and be gods.

McKENNA

And goddesses.

JENNY

Yeah, but who wants to be a goddess?

McKENNA

Goddesses are cool.

JENNY

Being a goddess is pantywaist. If I'm going to all the trouble of having my brains sucked out through my nose, make me the Sun-Ra or whatever. Don't make me a goddess.

McKENNA

There's nothing wrong with being a goddess. You have powers and special relationships with stuff, you know, like poetry or nature, and people revere you for something.

JENNY

Still, it's not exactly an out is it? Even Kali in all her glory and destruction is still a consort. Mostly it's please and favors—a good harvest, a fat baby boy, some retribution here and there, but the Mother of the World still suffers. Isis fills the Nile with her tears. Demeter scorches the earth in her grief. Being a goddess sucks. You want to be immortal? You want to leave human behind? Kill your only son and not look back? Be a god. Be the sun.

McKENNA

I don't want any of it. Besides, the whole system is warped. You only got to be a god if you had the money for a proper burial. Only rich people had a shot.

JENNY

Big deal.

McKENNA

Also, they were wrong and you totally wasted your time since we've already been tested on them.

JENNY

Just give it to me.

(McKENNA gives JENNY the take home test. JENNY starts working on it. McKENNA cleans the kitchen. Looks bored. Starts reading magazines at the counter. Blue tv glow.)

McKENNA

Do you have any questions about the test?

JENNY

No.

McKENNA

If you need help...

JENNY

Leave me alone.

McKENNA

I took some notes in class.

JENNY

Your handwriting is illegible.

McKENNA

Okay. But. You know, if you need anything.

(Pause in time. McKENNA flips through magazines.)

McKENNA

Do you want a snack?

JENNY

No.

(McKENNA gets her a water.)

McKENNA (looking over her shoulder again.)

How's it going?

JENNY

Fine

McKENNA

Are you sure you aren't going to have any problems with it?

JENNY

You know, I am having some trouble concentrating, but I'm pretty sure it's because I keep getting interrupted

(McKENNA goes back to the magazines.)

McKENNA

Do you think the kids are hungry?

JENNY

No. It's TV time, they aren't even self-aware, let them watch their show.

McKENNA

Okay.

(JENNY continues working on test. McKENNA opens a kitchen counter, gets out the Ding Dong box.)

McKENNA

Ding dong?

(JENNY starts to say no, but then just holds out her hand. McKENNA throws it to her, goes back to magazines. A few moments pass.)

McKENNA

Holy crap!

(JENNY does not respond)

McKENNA

Holy crap!

JENNY (looking up)

Fine.

McKENNA

Your purse. Kylie Mason is holding your purse in InStyle. It's a Style Essential.

JENNY(disinterested)

Uh huh

McKENNA

(holds up the magazine.)

Look

JENNY

Hmm.

McKENNA

It says your purse cost two thousand seven hundred and forty-five dollars. That can't be right.

(JENNY goes back to working on the test.)

McKENNA

Is that true? Oh my god, that purse cost you two thousand, seven hundred dollars and forty five dollars?

JENNY

(Jenny puts down her pencil.)

Yes.

McKENNA

Oh my god, what's wrong with you?

JENNY

There's nothing wrong with me.

McKENNA

Yeah there is. There's like two thousand and seven hundred and forty-five dollars worth of stuff wrong with you. No wonder you don't want your husband to know. My mom would like freak out forever if she found out that I had spent two thousand seven hundred and forty-five dollars on a purse.

Holy crap! How much did you pay for all those shoes?

JENNY

That's none of your business.

McKENNA

I bet I could find out. I bet I could go online and find out. How much were the shoes?

JENNY

I'm not telling you.

McKENNA

I bet they cost like five hundred dollars a pair. Maybe more. Maybe a thousand. A thousand dollars a pair. That's insane. That's like, totally insane.

JENNY

It's not insane. It's the open market.

McKENNA

Do you have any idea how much stuff I could buy with that kind of money?

JENNY

I'm guessing more.

McKENNA

Yeah. A lot more. A ton more. A whole lot more. Like a car more. Like college more. It's insane.

JENNY

It's not insane.

McKENNA

What is it then?

JENNY

Sometimes nice things cost money.

McKENNA

I'm not saying it's not nice, but..

JENNY

It's nice. It's Versace. It's..

McKENNA

Yeah, but still. Two thousand seven hundred and forty-five dollars. Why do you need something that expensive?

JENNY

I don't. Look. You don't understand.

McKENNA

Explain it.

JENNY

No. I don't have to. I don't have to explain it to you.

McKENNA

Come on. Why not?

JENNY

No. I don't have to.

McKENNA

Why not?

JENNY

Because I am the female head of household.

McKENNA

So? So that's why you have a two thousand seven hundred and forty-five dollar purse.

JENNY

No. I am the female head of household of a household for which annual household income exceeds two hundred and fifty thousand a year. That's why I don't have to explain myself to you.

McKENNA

So, do all of your friends have really expensive purses?

JENNY

No. That's not my point.

McKENNA

Then what do you need one for?

JENNY

My point is that, I don't know, that as the female head of household of a household with total household income exceeding two-hundred and fifty thousand dollars a year, I shouldn't have to explain it to you.

McKENNA

That doesn't make any sense.

JENNY

Okay. Let me put it this way. When it comes to consumption. I'm at the top of the food chain. I'm the alpha. Okay, maybe not until my kids have gotten through college and the word discretionary takes on a whole new meaning, but still I'm way up there. So, why I want what I want almost doesn't matter. It's just part of everything. Everything you see and everything you buy. But it doesn't really mean anything, to me, to me, except that I'm the female head of household. And if I want something, that makes it desirable. Even if it doesn't mean anything.

McKENNA

So you bought the purse because you want to be desirable?

JENNY

No.

McKENNA
Because it's meaningful?

JENNY
No.

McKENNA
Then..

JENNY
Then I don't know and it doesn't matter.

McKENNA
But

JENNY
But it doesn't matter.

McKENNA
It's still insane.

JENNY
Just leave me alone okay.

McKENNA
Why?

JENNY
Because I'm taking your test.

Scene 9

(JENNINGS' KITCHEN. McKENNA enters with backpack on. JENNY is in kitchen making a blended drink. Blue tv glow.)

McKENNA
Why did you say you were going to do it?

JENNY
Hi, McKenna.

McKENNA
Why did you say you were going to do it if you were just going to screw it up?

(JENNY concentrates on stirring.)
I got my test back today.

JENNY(Not looking up)

Oh. How'd you do?

MCKENNA

How do you think I did? I trusted you.

JENNY

Really? You trusted me. The person you're blackmailing? The person whose drugs you stole? The person who is insane? And a bad mother? You trusted me?

MCKENNA

Well, not entirely?

JENNY

You didn't check my answers.

MCKENNA

I did. At least I started checking them. And they were right. Like the first two pages were perfect.

JENNY

And the third?

MCKENNA

That started out right. And then...

JENNY

You got lazy and you didn't follow through. Gee, where have we heard that before?

You got a 78% right. Because I calculated it. A 78%. Right?

MCKENNA

I don't know.

JENNY

I should have gotten a 78 percent. Was it lower? Did I miss any more? It should be a 78 percent.

MCKENNA

Look, what you did is really bad. Really bad. Like, you didn't just screw up, okay. You made it look like I was cheating. All your answers were one off from the right answer. You made it look like I was copying. You made me look like a cheater.

JENNY

McKenna, you are a cheater.

McKENNA

I'm just saying it was really bad. What you did. It was a bad thing.

(McKENNA sits on couch and curls up knees and wraps her arms around them.)

JENNY

So what? Are you suspended? Did he call your mom? What?

McKENNA

I don't know.

JENNY

How can you not know?

McKENNA

Because there was something else, okay? Because something else bad happened.

JENNY

What?

McKENNA

I don't think I want to talk about it.

JENNY

What?

McKENNA

I don't even know for sure really.

JENNY

Just tell me.

McKENNA

I think I gave Mr. Bulgar a hand job.

JENNY

What!

McKENNA

I don't know. It all just happened you know, like almost, kind of by accident.

JENNY

An accidental hand job? No. Tell me.

McKENNA

Well, like, after class Mr. Bulgar asked me to stay, you know, to talk about the test and about how the last part, my answers, your answers, were wrong, and, like, suspiciously wrong. And I don't know. I just kind of panicked. Because I knew if I didn't do anything I'd have to tell my mom and if I told my mom she'd think it was because of something else. Like because of not letting me go on retreat or because she hasn't been paying attention or because of her and dad or because of her and Ted. And it would get all stupid and complicated and then, like all I could think of was what you'd said.

JENNY

What I said?

McKENNA

You know, about how at my age there wasn't any problem so complicated that it couldn't be fixed with a hand job.

JENNY

I'm pretty sure I didn't mean it that way.

McKENNA

I know. I just. There I was with Mr. Bulgar, sitting together at the table, next to each other, looking at how the answers on the test line up wrong, and Mr. Bulgar with his ugly weird mustache and his old speckly skin sitting right next to me and I thought, well, like so he's old, but probably he's still a kind of a boy you know so I just sort of reached over and..

JENNY

Oh my god

(JENNY begins to laugh)

McKENNA

Touched it.

JENNY

Oh my god McKenna. Oh my god you didn't.

McKENNA

I wasn't thinking. I just.

JENNY

What did he do?

McKENNA

At first he just kind of froze. You know, like a rabbit. And then I don't know. I started moving my hand and I don't know, I don't know. And then he stood up.

JENNY

Stood up how?

McKENNA

No. Like on his feet. In a hurry.

JENNY

Was he?

McKENNA

I'm not sure, cause my hand kind of got slammed against the table and there was a lot of noise with the chair falling over and I think, but I mean, I don't know.

JENNY

How can you not know?

McKENNA

Because it all happened so fast and also, like, he looked so scared and I saw on CSI one time that if a guy is really scared he can be, you know?

JENNY

Scared stiff?

(beat. Then JENNY starts laughing)

McKENNA

It's not funny.

JENNY

Oh but it is.

McKENNA

No, it's really bad. Really bad.

JENNY

Yes, it's that too.

McKENNA

What am I gonna do?

JENNY

Don't look at me. Believe it or not, this wasn't my idea.

McKENNA

Oh my god. I totally sexually harassed boring old Mr. Bulgar.

JENNY

I'm pretty sure if you touch it, that makes it sexual assault.

McKENNA

Oh my god, I touched Vulgar Bulgar's thing.
I want to die.

JENNY

Wait a sec. Did you call him Vulgar Bulgar?

McKENNA

It's just a nickname.

JENNY

(Laughing. JENNY sits down on the
sofa next to McKENNA)

Oh my god

McKENNA

It's just what the kids at school call him.

JENNY

Why?

McKENNA

Because he's so boring and ugly and old and pathetic. You know
in that way teachers are sometimes when they want you to learn?
what am I going to do

(McKENNA curls up in a fetal
position on her side)

JENNY

So he's not actually a perv?

McKENNA

No. I don't think so.

Do you think he's gonna call my mom. Do you think I'm gonna
have to tell anybody else, like Mr. Hinder or Mrs. Green?

JENNY

That depends.

McKENNA
On what?

JENNY
How old is he?

McKENNA
I don't know. Old.

JENNY
Like, dad old or grandpa old.

McKENNA
He's older than my dad.

JENNY (grimaces)
Is he married?

McKENNA
I don't know. Probably. Yeah.

JENNY
Okay. So, what happened after?

McKENNA
After?

JENNY
After the sexual assault.

McKENNA
Oh. After. Well, it was kind of awkward.
(Jenny reaction)
He just stood on the other side of the classroom, looking out
the window.

JENNY
He didn't say anything.

McKENNA
No. He just stood there. Not looking at me. Looking out. And
I wanted to say something like, I'm sorry, or it was an accident
or please don't tell anyone this happened. But he looked so sad
and helpless. Like he really didn't know what to do, except
watch this kid cross the street to smoke. This kid, he kept his
hands in his pockets to whole way across, took these really long
steps, like he knew it was cold and he knew he should have a

jacket on, but also, like he didn't give a shit, cause he was happy to be out of class and going over to smoke, maybe not exactly happy because that's not cool. We sat there for a second, I think both of us wishing we were that boy, crossing against the light. Then Mr. Bulgar put his forehead on the window. And I left.

JENNY

Jesus McKenna.

McKENNA

I know. I feel really bad. Do you think I hurt him? When I?

JENNY

Trust me, it's not that fragile an organ.

McKENNA

I can't believe I'm having this conversation.

JENNY

That makes two of us. (laughing again) Oh my god, McKenna.

McKENNA

It's not funny.

JENNY

Come on. You gave a hand job to Vulgar Bulgar

(McKENNA puts her pillow over her ears.)

You... primed his pump. Said howdy do and shake hands.

(McKENNA puts her pillow over her face.)

McKENNA

It's not funny

JENNY

I bet he forgets about the cheating.

McKENNA (face out of pillow)

Really?

JENNY

Not really. But he's not telling anybody.

McKENNA

No?

JENNY

No. Definitely not. He's been looking forward to that pension for god knows how long now. Nothing happened. NOTHING HAPPENED. You're fine. I bet he gives you a B minus.

McKENNA

Really?

JENNY

Really.

McKENNA

A b minus.

JENNY

But, if he gives you an A you're in trouble.

McKENNA

B minus. That still kind of sucks. What do you think I'd have to do to get an A?

Scene 10

(JENNINGS' KITCHEN. McKENNA enters happy.)

McKENNA

What are you making?

JENNY

Wheatgrass protein something.

McKENNA

Why?

(JENNY shrugs)

McKENNA

Can I have some?

JENNY

It's pretty disgusting.

McKENNA

So's giving Vulgar Bulgar a handjob.

(They both laugh a little)

JENNY

How'd class go

McKENNA

Um... you know. I sat in the back. Tried never to make eye contact, just waiting for the bell to ring. In a weird way it was kind of like normal.

JENNY

I'll pour you a glass

(JENNY gets up to go pour
McKENNA's glass)

McKENNA

What would happen to you if Mr. Jennings found out, about the purse and everything?

JENNY

Nothing.

McKENNA

Seriously.

JENNY

Seriously.

McKENNA

Then why don't you want him to know?

JENNY

Why don't you want your mom to know that you steal children's playthings from friends and neighbors?

McKENNA

Because she'd flip, and I'd be grounded forever and have to listen to her talk all the time and then we'd have to go to therapy and talk some more and then she'd blame herself for all of it anyway. Do you think Mr. Jennings would make you go to therapy?

JENNY

No.

McKENNA

So what would happen if he found out?

JENNY

Nothing.

McKENNA

Nothing?

JENNY
Nothing.

McKENNA
Something would happen.

JENNY
Sure. We'd have a conversation.

McKENNA
That's it.

JENNY
Yeah, that's it.

McKENNA
What kind of conversation?

JENNY
An expensive one.

McKENNA
How do you mean?

JENNY
I don't know. There are things you know you can afford and then there are things that you just know are expensive. They cost and you don't know how much.

McKENNA
You aren't worried he'll find out?

JENNY
Steve?

McKENNA
You aren't worried someday he'll figure it out. Like he'll go to Target and see the purses and put two and two together.

JENNY
I'm not worried.

McKENNA
What if he reads InStyle.

JENNY
That's another thing I'm not worried about.

McKENNA

How do you afford it?

JENNY

You know how much money my 401K lost this year? So I buy a purse.

McKENNA

What are you going to do with it?

JENNY

(JENNY points to purse on counter)

Uh...

McKENNA

Like, how long are you going to use it?

JENNY

Until I buy a new one.

McKENNA

Then what? What are you going to do with it? You can't consign it.

JENNY

I could.

McKENNA

You won't. You could donate.

JENNY

Yeah right, a twenty five hundred dollar purse at Goodwill.

McKENNA

So where does it go.

JENNY

Back in the closet I guess.

McKENNA

For how long?

JENNY

Enough with the twenty questions already. I'll keep it for how long I keep it. I'll keep it until I die, okay. Until death do us part. Are you satisfied with that? I'll keep it in the back of my closet until I'm dead. And when I'm being scooped out and

JENNY cont'd

dolled up for eternal life, you can stick my liver in it. Wrap my heart in a Hermes scarf. Stuff my intestines in my Jimmy Choos. After that we can see what happens.

McKENNA

And you won't tell Mr. Jennings

JENNY

What?

McKENNA

You should tell him.

JENNY

And you should also tell your mother?

McKENNA

No. She wouldn't understand. I'm different. My situation is totally different from yours. Like, Mr. Jennings knows about you, sort of. Enough to lie about. I'm not not telling my mom. I'm doing what she asked. I don't have to lie about it because she doesn't know. It's not like, as wrong.

JENNY

Yeah, you're just plain lying to your mom. You're blackmailing me and lying to your mom. How is that not as wrong?

McKENNA

It's just not. I'm not doing anything to her. Anything she doesn't want me to do. I'm doing what she wants me to do. That's the truth.

JENNY

You couldn't tell the truth if it reached over and grabbed you by the crotch.

SCENE 11

(JENNINGS' KITCHEN. McKENNA is doing homework. Jenny has a directory out and is looking up a number. Blue tv glow)

McKENNA

Hey, I got a B on my test.

JENNY

A B?

McKENNA

A B.

JENNY

Vulgar Bulgar is one generous bastard. A B is almost respectable, considering the cheating and molesting.

(JENNY picks up the phone and dials.)

JENNY

Hello. May I please have Mrs. Rondeau's mailbox?

(McKENNA looks up)

McKENNA

Hey, I had Mrs. Rondeau

(JENNY shushes her.)

JENNY

Yes. Mrs. Rondeau? Mrs. Rondeau.? Oh, you're there. You're there late. Sorry, this is Mrs. Jennings, (louder) Gregory Jennings's Mother. Yes, Greg's Mom. Hello. Yes. I was calling, because we have a conflict with the fifteenth. No the fifteenth, and I was wondering if there was any way we could change it. Is anything available during the day? The seventeenth maybe. Yes, that'll work. 12:30 Yes. 12:30, we'll see you then.

(JENNY hangs up)

McKENNA

Gregory has Mrs. Rondeau? I had her. She taught first grade when I was in first grade. She's still teaching?

JENNY

Yeah. She's antique. Could she hear anything when you had her?

McKENNA

What?

JENNY

I suppose it's a mercy. When you've taught as long as that woman losing your hearing is probably like getting a bonus.

McKENNA

I liked Mrs. Rondeau. Does she still wear that bright orange lipstick?

JENNY

Yes.

McKENNA

That's cool.

JENNY

Uh huh

(JENNY comes around the counter and puts on her gym shoes)

McKENNA

Where are you going?

JENNY

There's a new PiYo class at the gym and in light of recent events, I think it's only-to use a word you are so fond of-fair.

McKENNA

But.. that's not part of

JENNY

The deal? Come on, are you actually going to turn me in?

McKENNA

I guess not.

JENNY

I'll be back in a bit. You know the drill. No sugar snacks. One hour screen and markers do not exist on the main floor. I am not scheduling the carpet cleaners again this month. Later.

McKENNA

Later.

(JENNY exits. McKenna sits up at the couch. Rearranges her homework. Gets up goes into the kitchen. Phone rings. McKENNA picks up)

McKENNA

Jenning's residence. Mrs. Rondeau? Hi, Mrs. Rondeau. It's McKenna Schnieder. McKenna Schneider? I was in your class.

McKENNA cont'd

McKenna Schnieder. No. You have the right number. Yes, this is Mrs. Jennings' house. I had you for first grade. I'm Mrs. Jennings' sitter. Yeah. I babysit for Gregory and Brianna. Okay. Let me check her calendar. 12:30? I don't know. I can ask. 2:30 right. 2:30 on the seventeenth. I'm writing it down. (McKENNA doesn't write it down) Oh, yeah, high school's fine. I like babysitting. I like it fine. The kids are pretty nice, and Mrs. Jennings is okay too, when she isn't popping pills or slamming her kids head in car doors. Okay, well, I have the message. I'll give her the message. Thanks. Thanks Mrs. Rondeau.

(McKENNA hangs up the phone, gets out the blender, goes to the fridge, gets out the wheatgrass.)

SCENE 12

(JENNINGS' KITCHEN. JENNY is sitting on the arm of the sofa. She is not wearing her zip front track suit. She is wearing something businesslike in neutral colors. A trenchcoat is folded over the back of the sofa. She is waiting, nervous. She fidgets. McKENNA enters as usual.)

McKENNA

Whoa. What happened to PiYo?

(no response)

Hey, where are the kids?

JENNY

Julie took them to the park.

McKENNA

Julie has mono.

JENNY

She's not contagious.

McKENNA

What is she doing taking the kids to the park?

(starts taking off her jacket)

JENNY

Keep your coat on.

McKENNA

(McKENNA drops her jacket on the floor)

What's going on? Why are you so dressed up?

JENNY

Because at 8:52 this morning I got a goddamned phone call from a government agency. They wanted my help arranging a convenient time for our goddamn appointment. And then later, at 10:46 when the goddamn social worker arrived with her manila folders, spiral perm and obvious embarrassment, I sat on that goddamned couch listening to my parental rights regarding the complaint. My goddamned parental rights, McKenna.

McKENNA

I don't..

JENNY

Don't say it. Don't say it. If I have to listen to your explanations or denials about what we both know, I will lose it.

McKENNA

I still don't...

JENNY

I mean it, McKenna. I didn't spend all afternoon pulling Steve out of meetings and getting our real lawyer to refer some reject Family Court attorney with experience in Child Protective Services so that I could hear your excuses, okay? I am done, McKenna, done. This is done. The only thing left is to march you to your mother's office so you can revoke whatever statement you made in the presence of your legal guardian and a witness. And after that it is over and I don't care what happens.

McKENNA

I didn't mean to .. I didn't say any

JENNY

Your intentions mean nothing. I don't care what you thought you were doing. It's done. This is done. Just put your coat on, pick up your bag, and let's get it over with.

McKENNA (small voice)

I won't go.

JENNY

That's not an option McKenna. You're going.

McKENNA

I won't go.

JENNY

You're going.

McKENNA

They won't take your kids away. They wouldn't take your kids away. Not for what.. Not for that. This is no big deal. Why are you making such a big deal out of this?

JENNY

Pick up your things.

McKENNA

I said I'm not going. This is stupid. You have a lawyer. You're rich. This doesn't mean anything. This is nothing.

JENNY

This is my goddamn kids, McKenna. Pick up your things.

McKENNA

They won't take them away.

JENNY

No. But what if? What if Brianna spikes a fever after midnight, sometimes they do, and I hesitate because of that goddamned manila folder. What if Gregory falls? What if the cut doesn't heal? What if I'm not looking? I wasn't looking. What if?

McKENNA

Like you care? Like you care about your kids.

JENNY

I don't care that you're afraid, McKenna. I don't care you're afraid your mother will find out what kind of a lying, cheating, screw up she's raised. It doesn't matter. Because I guarantee you she already knows. She knows, McKenna, and it makes her sick inside, but it's nothing new. She's your mother for god's sake. So put on your goddamn coat.

McKENNA

I'm not a liar.
I am not a liar.
I didn't tell a lie about you.
Every word I said was true.

JENNY (steps in closer to her)
 You lie every single goddamned day.

MCKENNA
 I told the truth about you.

JENNY
 You lie to yourself.

MCKENNA
 I didn't..

JENNY
 Tell me another.

MCKENNA
 You don't care about anything. About any of this. You're just mad because the jokes on you. Because it'll make you look bad. Because you had to pull your husband out of a meeting. You don't care about your kids. You don't care about anyone. You're the selfish one.

(MCKENNA goes into the kitchen, starts rummaging through the kitchen, pulls out the Ding Dong box, reaches into the bottom and pulls out Jenny's pills)
 The only single thing I ever saw you care about were these pills.

JENNY
 Give me those.

MCKENNA
 No. I won't. You can't make me.

JENNY
 Give me my pills.

(JENNY makes a lunge for MCKENNA, McKenna grabs a paring knife off the counter. JENNY stays back.)

MCKENNA
 See. It's the only thing that really motivates you. You don't care about anything but this stupid bottle of pills. You don't give a crap about your kids. You're like not even human. You're a monster.

JENNY

Monster? I'm a monster. A fucking plus for you McKenna. You're right, but still so stupid.

(JENNY takes step toward McKenna,
McKenna holds tighter to knife)

Please, you're not going to stab me with a paring knife. Put that thing down and listen to me.

(McKENNA puts down the knife)

We're who we are. That's all. So cover your ass. You're stupid. You're selfish. You're lazy. You're venal. Big fucking deal, so am I, so's everybody else. It's the whole goddamned race. Not caring is what makes us human.

But love, McKenna, love is something different. I love my children. Believe it or not, so help me. I love them. And they love me in spite of it, in spite of everything. I am theirs and they are mine. So here we are, tethered, together. Here in this godforsaken world. No matter what. I love them. You think you're miserable and misunderstood and alone. Lucky you. Unconditional love, McKenna. Love. It's fucking unbearable. It's inhuman. It's monstrous.

Now give me my pills.

McKENNA

You can't make me go. (starts opening the jar)

JENNY

I'll do what it takes. If I have to, I'll do it. I'll tell the whole goddamn truth McKenna.

McKENNA

You couldn't if you tried.

JENNY

You're a troubled youth. You're having a difficult time at home. No yearbook camp. Your mother's impending nuptials. A difficult time at school. Late assignments. I'll get Vulgar Bulgar to testify. Force my hand McKenna and so help me.

(McKENNA swallows a handful of
JENNY's pills.)

McKENNA

I can't go. Pain meds. Cause drowsiness.

(JENNY takes another lunge at
McKENNA and tries to wrest the
pills away from her. They

struggle. McKENNA holds tight to the bottle and JENNY holds onto her arms.)

JENNY

How many did you take?

McKENNA

A handful.

JENNY

Give me that bottle.

McKENNA

See. You don't care about anything but this bottle of pills.

JENNY

I don't care.

McKENNA

I'm done with you.

JENNY

You want out? You want to leave yourself and everything else behind?

McKENNA

Yes.

JENNY

Like it never happened?

McKENNA

Yes

JENNY

Like it doesn't matter?

McKENNA

Yes.

(JENNY pushes McKENNA backwards, grabs the bottle, and pours a glass of water, slams it on the counter, splashing it.)

JENNY

Then take them all. (puts the pills down next to the glass)

JENNY cont'd

That's what they're here for. I haven't been hoarding these for migraines and muscle pains sweetheart, so go ahead, you want to experience difficulty breathing--take the rest. Take them all.

McKENNA

You don't care about anything. You're life doesn't mean anything. You're nothing but a liar.

JENNY

Finish it. Finish something. Follow through. For once, follow through.

McKENNA

You cheat. You steal. You're selfish. You're a terrible mother.

JENNY

Go on. Get out of jail free. Make it not matter. You can do it. I know you can. Save yourself.

(McKENNA swallows all the pills.)

McKENNA

I'm done. I'm done with you. (doubling over)

JENNY

McKenna? McKenna? McKenna?

Now take it back. Take it back.

(The two struggle. Jenny sticks her hand down McKenna's throat. McKenna vomits. JENNY holds onto her, so that when she is through both women are on the floor. JENNY is holding McKENNA, gently rocking her back and forth. McKENNA buries her face into JENNY's shoulder, crying audibly. The rock back and forth until McKENNA stops crying and a moment after that)

SCENE 12

(McKENNA's bedroom as suggested by seating, dresser and night stand. The dresser has a curious assortment of children's toys arranged in a specific fashion. The place is a mess. McKENNA

sits, plugged into something.
JENNY enters hesitantly,
unobserved.)

JENNY

Jesus McKenna, I knew you'd be a slob, but...
(gestures to the room).

McKENNA

Oh. Hey. What? (unplugs) What are you doing here.

JENNY

I have a little something for you. Your mom said I could bring
it by.

McKENNA

Oh. Okay.

(Jenny looks around the room.
Sits down on at the foot of the
bed, puts her purse on the floor,
not facing McKenna. Long pause.)

How... How are the kids?

JENNY

Good. They're good.

McKENNA

You know, I really, about the kids, I didn't mean..

JENNY

Don't worry about it. It's taken care of. Your mom took care
of it. You know, she's a good lawyer.

McKENNA

Yeah. Yeah, I guess she is.

JENNY

She was really worried about you at the hospital.

McKENNA

I know.

JENNY

Did you tell her? what happened?

McKENNA

Not really. I mean, I don't know. I figured, what's the point?

JENNY
I told Steve.

McKENNA
About what?

JENNY
Everything. I told him everything.

McKENNA
Everything? (Pause) What'd he say?

JENNY
Nothing.

McKENNA
He can't have said nothing.

JENNY
I suppose not.

McKENNA
Then what exactly did he say?

JENNY
He said we have a good life.
(JENNY stays still for a moment
and then stands up to walk around
McKenna's room.)

McKENNA
Then what happened?

JENNY
We have a good life.
(JENNY walks around the room.
Stops in front of the dresser with
the menagerie on it.)

Mr. Mondo
(reaches out to touch the
doll/figure, picks him up.)

McKENNA
(Sits up cross-legged)
Yeah. I'm sorry. I should've brought him back. I mean I meant
to, but...

McKENNA cont'd

Jenny, what's matter with me? Why would I do that? Take all those pills.

JENNY

(Sits on the bed facing McKenna.
Holding Mr. Mondo in both hands.)

Because I told you to.

McKENNA

I don't think so. I don't think that's it. I mean, not entirely. I didn't want to die. Really. I just did it. I don't know, like I do everything, you know? Like Bulgar and the blackmail and I don't know, all that stuff? Why would I do that? Any of it? I just..it doesn't make sense. It's just.. Do you think there's something wrong with me, really wrong with me?

(JENNY leans towards McKENNA,
close enough so that she can reach
out and smooth the hair off her
forehead.)

JENNY

I don't know. Maybe.

McKENNA

I mean I take all that stuff and there isn't even any system, you know. Like, it's all random. I'm at these people's houses and there's all this stuff. You know, rooms and rooms and rooms of it. Toys and toys and tiny naked plastic dolls and tea sets and game pieces and guns and tiny painted metal cars and fake food and all that. I don't ever plan it. It's.. I see something, maybe it's lying on the floor and I think it's gonna get stepped on, and then I pick it up. I just do it. And once it's in my hand, if I look at my hand, it's done. Just like that. I take it. And it doesn't even get missed. And I bring it home and put it on the dresser with the rest of the stuff that I've stolen from other people's houses. Who does that? What the hell is wrong with me that I do that?

JENNY

Don't you know?

(JENNY stands up and faces the dresser)

It's a shrine.

(She puts Mr. Mondo back in his place)

McKenna, you built a shrine.

(JENNY stands touching the edge of the dressertop. McKENNA is looking at JENNY. JENNY turns to look at McKENNA)

MCKENNA

To what?

JENNY

Who cares. It's beautiful.

(long pause)

Here, we're forgetting your present.

(circles round to get her purse, sits at foot of bed, facing McKENNA.

Reaches into purse, pulls out binder.)

I made it myself.

(McKENNA opens the package.)

It's a scrapbook. It's for you.

McKENNA

There's like one page.

JENNY

I know. It was a pain in the ass. I don't know. I thought maybe you'd do the rest.

McKENNA

Its... (small laugh) It says "Too

JENNY and McKENNA

"too many pills"

JENNY

I couldn't decide on Suicide Attempt exclamation mark Or Attempted Murder exclamation mark. So I went with it. Look. I used the prescription label too.

McKENNA

Thanks.

JENNY

I should go.

(Gets out her keys)

I'm going to be late picking up the kids from whoever the hell's birthday party it is today. (stands) You were right you know, about me being a crappy mom.

McKENNA

I've got a great mom, and look how I turned out.

JENNY

(JENNY starts to leave, touches McKenna on the shoulder on her way out)

Later.

(starts walking out the door.)

McKENNA

You really think it's beautiful?

(JENNY turns around in the doorway)

JENNY

See for yourself.

(While McKENNA is looking at the shrine, JENNY lifts a figurine-type item off of McKenna's nightstand, slips it in her purse and leaves).

END OF PLAY