



Sample Pages from
Skid Marks: A Play About Driving

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SKID MARKS: A PLAY ABOUT DRIVING

A VIGNETTE PLAY IN ONE ACT BY
Lindsay Price



Skid Marks: A Play About Driving
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Characters

There are 15 female parts and 9 male parts. You can cast each part individually or in the following doubling configuration:

MAN ONE

Fast Boy, Byron, Mr. Z, Murray

MAN TWO

Gabe, Irate Two

MAN THREE

Mr. Y, Dad, Greg

WOMAN ONE

Tess, Myrna, Megan, Irate One

WOMAN TWO

Natalie, Vivian, Fran

WOMAN THREE

Jillian, Annalee, Mom

WOMAN FOUR

Ms. Motts, Irate Three

WOMAN FIVE

Petra, Ashley, Prissy Girl

There are three areas on the stage. Each of these areas represents a car. These areas can be delineated by cubes, benches, or chairs. The areas stage left and right need enough space for two people to sit side by side: the driver and front passenger seat. The centre stage area needs two rows for a front seat and a back seat.

The lights come up. A 7-year-old FAST BOY zooms around the stage pretending to drive a car making all the appropriate noises.

FAST BOY: Vrooooooooooom. Vrooooooooooom, (he slams on the brakes as he rounds a corner) Errrrrrrrrrrrrr. Vrooooooooooom.

FAST BOY zooms off as JILLIAN enters. She walks cautiously up to the stage left car and talks to it.

NOTE: Use a light tone with this monologue.

JILLIAN: Herman, I want you to listen up and listen good. We're going for a drive and you're not going to give me any grief. You're going to start properly. You're not going to stall. You're not going to make those knock, knock, cha-ping noises like last time. I know you were just doing it to spite me cause I took you to the mechanic and the mechanic said there was nothing wrong! So there's no point in making knock, knock, cha-ping noises. I'm on to you now. I know the little game you're trying to play. But who's in charge here Herman? Who's got the keys? Is it Jillian or Herman? Jillian or Herman? JillianHerman? I could put you in a no-park zone, let you get towed and never collect you. How'd you like that huh? I could take you to the wrong side of town and leave you all alone with the windows down and the keys in the ignition. That wouldn't be nice would it? Would it? So you just better behave yourself from now on. No more knock, knock, cha-ping noises. No more chugha-ka-sloughing. No more wheeza, wheeza, humpa humpa znack znack znack when we're going up hills. No more flashing the oil light when the oil is full and fine. I HATE that. And absolutely no more spitting gas when I'm filling the tank. Oh I can hear you snickering Herman, when I'm standing there covered in gas but it is so not funny. Not funny. Repeat after me please. I will not spit gas on Jillian when she is trying to fill the tank. (she listens) Don't mumble! (she listens) Thank you. There. I'm glad we had this little talk. I hope we can continue working on our relationship and put this little difficulty behind us. All right then. Let's drive.

ALL the actors enter making driving noises and zooming around the stage to create a cacophony of moving bodies and sound.

TESS and NATALIE sit in the stage left car. MS. MOTTS and GABE LEVENSON end up stage right. Everyone else exits.

NOTE: When actors are not in a scene but on stage, they sit with their hands in their laps and their heads bowed.

MS. MOTTS has a clipboard. She is a driving instructor. GABE is bubbling over with excitement.

MS. MOTTS: So Mr. Levenson. Are you ready?

GABE: Am I ever! Let's go! Whoo-hoo! I've been waiting forever for this!

MS. MOTTS: Easy does it Mr. Levenson. We must treat the car with respect. Never with reckless abandon or unnecessary impetuosity. First, we enter the car gently and carefully.

GABE: Whoo-hoo!

MS. MOTTS: Gently and carefully Mr. Levenson.

GABE: (*gently and carefully*) Whoo-hoo.

MS. MOTTS and GABE get into the stage right car. On stage left, TESS is in the driver's seat and NATALIE is in the passenger seat. She looks somewhat terrified at TESS's behaviour.

TESS: (*yelling out the window*) Where'd you learn to drive you moron! Did you get your license out of a Cracker Jack box? Didn't your mother ever tell you it's not nice to cut in front? I'm giving you the hard look jacko! I'm giving you the evil eye! (*she turns to NATALIE with a completely different demeanour*) Oh my God Nat, I'm so excited about prom. Did you get your dress yet?

NATALIE stares at TESS. The focus shifts back to MS. MOTTS and GABE.

MS. MOTTS: Welcome to the automobile Mr. Levenson.

GABE: I'm excited to be here Ms. Motts. Whoo –

MS. MOTTS: So I see. First off, let us review. Hands in the 10 and 2 position?

GABE: Check.

MS. MOTTS: Seat belt securely fastened?

GABE: Check.

MS. MOTTS: Mirrors adjusted properly?

GABE: Check. Check. Check. Looks like we're ready to go! Whoo-hoo!

MS. MOTTS: Not so fast Mr. Levenson. We are far from ready to go, whoo-hoo.

The focus shifts back to TESS and NATALIE.

TESS: Did you see that? Did you see that? (*yelling out the window*) What are you doing eating a donut, drinking a coffee and adjusting the radio at the same freaking time! Haven't you heard that cars are for driving! Where'd you get your license, from a vending machine? Menace to the road! Menace to the road! (*to NATALIE, changing her tone*) Oh look at the puppy in the back seat. He is so cute.

The focus shifts back to MS. MOTTS and GABE.

MS. MOTTS: Mr. Levenson, we won't be starting the car today.

GABE: Why not, why not, why not! (*he realizes he's gone too far and clears his throat*) Sorry. Could you please communicate to me "why not" Ms. Motts?

MS. MOTTS: The first driving lesson never has any actual driving.

GABE: It doesn't?

MS. MOTTS: Oh no.

GABE: Isn't it easier to learn to drive, when you're actually driving?

MS. MOTTS: One would think that. But first we must get the feel of the car under our belts. The car is an animal Mr. Levenson. It leaps. It bucks. It does the unexpected if we let our guard down. The car is a beast that must be tamed. We must know the beast before we take the beast for a walk. Or a drive as the case may be.

GABE: So what am I supposed to do?

MS. MOTTS: Absorb the automobile. Experience the surroundings. Inhale the vehicle. Breathe in. (*they both do so*) Breathe out. (*they*

both do so) Breathe in. *(they both do so)* Breathe out. *(they both do so)* Excellent. Well done. So. Tell me. What have we learned?

GABE: The beast smells funny.

MS. MOTTS: Please Mr. Levenson. You must take this seriously. I think that's enough for today.

GABE: OK, OK, OK! I'll take it seriously. All I want to do is learn how to drive, so I'll do whatever you say Ms. Motts. Just, please, could you tell me when I'll actually do any actual driving?

MS. MOTTS: Well, it all depends on the individual. In your case... *(she sizes him up)* Let me see... I think... Lesson Seven would be appropriate for your first on road experience.

GABE: Seven? AGH!!!!!!!

The focus shifts back to TESS and NATALIE.

TESS: AGH!!!!!!! I hate it when people use cell phones on the road. I hate, hate, hate it! *(to NATALIE, completely changing her tone)* So do you need a ride after school?

NATALIE: I think I'll just go home with my sister.

TESS: But you hate your sister.

NATALIE: I know. But... you... you're kind of an aggressive driver.

TESS: Oh I am not.

NATALIE: You have serious road rage.

TESS: I do not. *(yelling)* Signal, punk, signal!

NATALIE: Tess, you scare the crap out of me.

TESS: All I'm doing is driving.

NATALIE: Exactly.

TESS: It's not real road rage. It's just a form of expression.

NATALIE: You're going to express yourself into a heart attack.

TESS: I am a sweet, kind, and considerate human being. Who organized the food drive at Christmas time?

NATALIE: You did.

TESS: Who volunteers at the children's hospital on weekends?

NATALIE: You do.

TESS: And who has Mr. Langston and Sister Katherine entrusted with running the peer mediation group for three years straight?

NATALIE: OK, OK, I'm sorry. You're right. You're sweet, kind and considerate.

TESS: Thank you. (*yelling*) Hey lady where'd you get your license, from a comic book? Stay in your lane and stop weaving you pea-brained butterball!

NATALIE: You might want to scratch peer mediation from your "I'm a sweet human being" list.

TESS: Why?

NATALIE: That was Sister Katherine.

FAST BOY zooms across the stage. NATALIE and TESS exit stage left. GABE and MS. MOTTS exit stage right.

PETRA runs onstage and quickly polishes the centre stage car.

PETRA: Beautiful. (*calling out*) OK. Here I come.

PETRA runs off and re-enters, leading BYRON and ANNALEE, who have their eyes closed. PETRA positions them around the car. This is PETRA's first car. She is extremely proud.

PETRA: (*guiding them in*) A little more... A little more... Open your eyes. (*they do*) So... what do you think?

ANNALEE and BYRON look horrified.

ANNALEE: Well... It's something.

BYRON: Is that duct tape?

PETRA: Just a little. The bumper's a bit wobbly. Isn't it great?

ANNALEE: It's... something.

BYRON: Is it certified?

PETRA: I love it so much. I can't believe I own a red car.

BYRON: Red being the colour of well made cars.

PETRA: Would you stop being such a killjoy?

BYRON: You should have let me come with you.

PETRA: I didn't want you to come with me.

ANNALEE: But honey, he might have been able to help. Maybe get you a car without duct tape.

PETRA: I'm perfectly fine with the duct tape. It's quirky.

BYRON: Cars aren't supposed to be quirky.

PETRA: I think it's perfectly fine to have a quirky first car.

BYRON: And what makes you think the transmission isn't going to fall out of your quirky first car?

ANNALEE: Petra, who sold this to you?

PETRA: (*quietly*) Jambalaya.

ANNALEE: Jambalaya?

BYRON: You went to Jambalaya's Jalopies?

PETRA: It was perfectly fine. Jambalaya was a perfect gentleman. He bent over backwards to help me find the absolutely right car and I was happy to buy Pierre from him.

ANNALEE: You named your car Pierre? Petra and Pierre?

BYRON: You bought a car from a guy who's named after soup?

ANNALEE: Actually, Jambalaya's more of a stew.

PETRA: Have you had it?

ANNALEE: It's really good. My mom makes it with sausage and shrimp.

PETRA: It's too spicy for me.

BYRON: Hello? Can we get back to the car please?

ANNALEE: Honey, you got hosed.

PETRA: I did not.

ANNALEE: Jambalaya turned the hose on you big time.

BYRON: This lemon is a hunk of junk.

PETRA: Why can't you be happy for me? This is the first thing I've ever done on my own. I wanted a car, I worked two jobs and I didn't

want anyone's help. I especially didn't want my boyfriend coming in and taking over like I know he would.

BYRON: I wouldn't have.

PETRA: Yes you would. And I might have come away with something better, but I'm very proud of what I've done. So either you can be happy for me, or you can go home.

ANNALEE: OK, you got it. We're behind you a hundred percent.

There is silence from BYRON. ANNALEE elbows him.

ANNALEE: Byron?

BYRON: Yeah, yeah, hundred percent.

PETRA: Good. Now let's go for a ride.

They get in the car.

PETRA: OK. Now, before I start it, everyone has to bounce up and down.

BYRON: Why?

PETRA: Jambalaya says you need to get the car warmed up so that the gas flows properly. Oh, and we need to shift the weight on the chassis, so everyone lean to the left. Lean and bounce people, lean and bounce!

The others look skeptically at each other as they lean and bounce.

Bad elevator music plays. On the other side of the stage, MYRNA enters and stands as if at a counter. She is a Department of Motor Vehicles Clerk. VIVIAN enters and stands as if she's at the back of a line. BYRON, PETRA and ANNALEE exit.

MYRNA: Next!

VIVIAN moves forward one place. She bops and sways to the elevator music as she continues to move forward in line. It's like a game to her.

MYRNA: Next! (VIVIAN steps up) May I help you?

VIVIAN: Good morning. My name is Vivian Gray. How are you today, (she looks at MYRNA's name tag) Myrna?

MYRNA: Peaches and cream. May I help you?

VIVIAN: Yes you may. I'd like to give this back. (*she hands over her driver's license*)

MYRNA: What – Your license?

VIVIAN: Yes.

MYRNA: You can't give it back. You earned it. You get to keep it. (*calling out*) Next!

VIVIAN: But Myrna, I've decided I don't want to drive anymore.

MYRNA: So don't. Next!

VIVIAN: But Myrna, I can't keep the license. It wouldn't be right. It's the principle of the thing.

MYRNA: We only give out the licenses. We don't take them back.

VIVIAN: I think you should make an exception. It's very important to me that I give you my license.

MYRNA: Look. Ms. Gray.

VIVIAN: Vivian.

MYRNA: Ms. Gray. Are you pulling my leg?

VIVIAN: No.

MYRNA: Is there a camera crew in your purse or something?

VIVIAN: Not at all.

MYRNA: Then what's your problem?

VIVIAN: I've discovered I hate driving. I'm uncomfortable. I drift. I daydream. I'm tentative when I should be aggressive. I'm aggressive when I should be gentle. Really, I'm a danger to the road and other drivers. You should demand the license from me. Snatch it warm from my hand.

MYRNA: Ms. Gray. Do you see that line behind you? All those people "like to drive" and they have "like to drive" problems. I don't have time for people who don't like to drive. Next!

VIVIAN: I have no idea how I got my license in the first place. It's this thing we're supposed to do, right? We're supposed to want our license from the time we're born and the instant we turn sixteen that's supposed to be the only thing on our minds. It's like a homing beacon. It's a wonder anyone passes any classes.

MYRNA: Next!

VIVIAN: So that's what I did. I followed the homing beacon. Sixteen – *(as if focused on a single goal)* Boing! License! But it turns out I have a lot of other things on my mind, more important things than driving.

MYRNA: Next!

VIVIAN: Like quantum physics.

MYRNA: Next!

VIVIAN: And decoupage.

MYRNA: Neeeeeeeext!

VIVIAN: And pasta: fettuccine, fettucelle, fusilli, farfel –

MYRNA: Will somebody please butt in line and put me out of my misery?

VIVIAN: I'm sorry Myrna. The last thing I want to do is make you miserable.

MYRNA: So you'll go away?

VIVIAN: Yes. But I'll be back. It's the principle of the thing. *(she turns to go)*

MYRNA: *(calling after VIVIAN)* Ms. Gray – I just had a thought, which I'm loathe to verbalize but since you've already shot my day, why not? How did you get here? We're pretty out of the way if you don't drive.

VIVIAN: Oh I drove.

MYRNA: You did.

VIVIAN: Oh yeah. After here I have to go across town to the dentist and then I have to come back across town to pick up my mom's dry cleaning and then I do this dog-walking job in the afternoon and I need the space for the fifteen dogs and of course I have to go to the grocery store and then I'm taking my brother's little league team to the movies tonight and – Gee, I guess it's a good thing you didn't take my license away. Bye Myrna!

MYRNA: NEXT!!!!

FAST BOY zooms across the stage. VIVIAN and MYRNA join him. They circle the stage and exit.

MR. Y and MR. Z enter to sit in the stage left car. GABE and MS. MOTTS enter to sit in the stage right car. MR. Y and MR. Z are in bumper-to-bumper traffic. They sit with pouty looks on their faces.

MR. Y: I hate traffic.

MR. Z: Traffic sucks.

MR. Y: It's a drag.

MR. Z: Draining.

MR. Y: Bumper to bumper.

MR. Z: All those fumes.

MR. Y: It's not good for us.

MR. Z: Breathing fumes day in,

MR. Y: Day out.

MR. Z: It could kill us.

MR. Y: It certainly could.

MR. Z: Why do we do this?

MR. Y: Why do we?

MR. Z: Are we crazy?

MR. Y: Are we nuts?

MR. Z: Could be.

MR. Y: I think it's everyone else. It's not us. It's them.

MR. Z: They're the crazy ones. They're the crazy drivers. They're the crazy crazies.

MR. Y: We're surrounded by crazies.

MR. Z: And we're not moving. We're sitting ducks.

MR. Y: *(yelling out the window)* Come on!

MR. Z: *(yelling out the window)* Go!

MR. Y: Move!

MR. Z: We don't have all day!

MR. Y: I could walk faster!

MR. Z: I know!

MR. Y: (*yelling out the window*) Same to you buddy!

MR. Z: Same to you!

They both sigh.

MR. Y: So. How long have we been sitting here?

MR. Z: (*looking at his watch*) Two minutes.

MR. Y: I hate traffic.

MR. Z: Traffic sucks.

The focus shifts to the stage right car. MR. Y and MR. Z exit. GABE sits in the driver's seat and MS. MOTTS in the passenger seat. GABE looks exhilarated. MS. MOTTS looks dishevelled. Her clipboard is in great disarray.

GABE: Whoo-hoo! Whoo-hoo! That was awesome!

MS. MOTTS: Perhaps we should have waited till Lesson 8. Or 9. Or 27.

GABE: Come on Ms. Motts. I'm a great driver aren't I? I knew I'd be a great driver.

MS. MOTTS: I'm not sure. Let me check my notes.

GABE: Did I tame the beast, or did I tame the beast! I tamed the beast. I took the beast for a drive and I showed him who's behind the wheel! Whoo-hoo!

MS. MOTTS: Perhaps we could cut down on the whoo-hooing for just a moment.

GABE: Sorry. Sorry. How'd I do? Did I do wicked cool or what?

MS. MOTTS: Well, aside from backing over your mother's garbage cans, taking out numerous flower beds, cutting off not one but three Senior's Jamboree buses because of your innate inability to remember to check your blind spots, and your exasperating habit of swerving in order to scope the "hotties," I suppose one might refer to your driving as wicked cool.

GABE: I'm not following the train on your track. Did I do good or bad?

MS. MOTTS: Terribly, horribly, dreadfully, bad.

GABE: Not good then?

MS. MOTTS: Quite.

GABE: Oh.

MS. MOTTS: Cheer up Mr. Levenson. It's your first go at it.

GABE: I thought it was going to be easier. You just get in and you can drive. Who knew you'd have to watch out for buses filled with old people?

MS. MOTTS: Yes it's a shame how "old people" tend to get in the way of things.

GABE: Do you think I'll get better?

MS. MOTTS: For the sake of your mother's garbage cans I hope so.

GABE: I'll bet you were perfect the first time you got in a car.

MS. MOTTS: Not exactly.

GABE: Right.

MS. MOTTS: It's true.

GABE: Uh huh. Tell me another one.

MS. MOTTS: Everyone starts at the same place Mr. Levenson and besides I wasn't very... well... oh never mind.

GABE: What?

MS. MOTTS: Well... let's just say that scoping "hotties" is not limited to your gender. But you never heard that from me.

GABE: My lips are sealed.

GABE and MS. MOTTS exit stage right. MOM, DAD, ASHLEY and MEGAN enter to sit in the centre stage car.

MOM and DAD are in the front seat. ASHLEY (13) and MEGAN (10) are in the back. A few moments pass as the car radio plays. ASHLEY and MEGAN seem bored, MOM is happily looking at the scenery, DAD is focused (extremely focused) on driving.

ASHLEY slowly eases her fingers towards MEGAN without MEGAN seeing. With a quick motion ASHLEY jabs MEGAN and retreats to her side of the car.

MEGAN: Mom! Ashley touched me.

ASHLEY: I'm not doing anything.

MEGAN: She's on my side.

ASHLEY: I am not.

MOM: Girls please.

DAD: Do I have to stop the car?

There is silence for a moment. ASHLEY sighs as if terribly bored. She turns and stares at MEGAN.

MEGAN: Mom! Ashley's bugging me.

MOM: What is she doing?

MEGAN: She's bugging me.

MOM: How is she bugging you?

MEGAN: She's looking at me.

MOM: Ashley stop looking at your sister.

ASHLEY: I'm not doing anything.

MOM: Just sit and be quiet. Look at the breathtaking scenery.

ASHLEY: Gas stations and fast food joints. Breathtaking.

MOM: Look out the window and stop being sarcastic.

ASHLEY: You do realize that if we had flown, we'd be there by now.

MOM: But we wouldn't have all this wonderful family time together.

ASHLEY/MEGAN/DAD: Family time. Great.

The three realize they have spoken aloud and look anywhere but at MOM.

MOM: I happen to think it is great. We never get to spend time as a family. Everyone's so busy busy with work and school and run me here mom and take me there mom and I have a meeting Delores and no one's home for dinner anymore and we're always rush, rush, rush when we fly to Grandmas. I thought this was a perfect solution. Don't you think this is a perfect solution, Carl?

DAD: Yes dear.

MOM: So here we are with a ten-hour drive at our disposal. Nothing to do but enjoy the scenery, and enjoy each other's company. And that's what we're going to do. We're going to enjoy the drive, enjoy each other's company and it's going to be great.

ASHLEY pokes MEGAN.

MEGAN: Mom, Ashley poked me!

ASHLEY: You're delusional.

MEGAN: Mom, she called me delusional!

DAD: Do I have to stop the car?

MOM: Really, really great.

MEGAN: Are we there yet?

ASHLEY: If we weren't there a minute ago when you asked, and we weren't there a minute before that, and the minute before that, what makes you think we'd be there now?

MEGAN: I was just asking.

ASHLEY: Well don't ask. You only prove how completely stupid you are. *(she starts blowing on MEGAN)*

MEGAN: Stop it! Mom!

MOM: Girls please.

DAD: Do I have to stop the car?

MEGAN: She's blowing on me.

ASHLEY: It's your imagination.

MEGAN: Stop it! *(she hits ASHLEY)*

ASHLEY: Ow! Mom! Megan hit me.

MEGAN: Did not.

ASHLEY: You did to.

MEGAN: Did not.

ASHLEY: Did to.

MEGAN: Mom! Ashley's on my side. She's on my side. Get off my side!

ASHLEY: Make me.



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