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The Gift**

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THE GIFT

A DRAMEDY IN TWO ACTS BY
Lindsay Price

INSPIRED BY *THE GIFT OF THE MAGI* BY
O. Henry



The Gift

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Characters

- Kim:** 16. Trying to change. Ex best-friend to Malinda.
- Kymerdee:** 15. A past version of Kim. Best friends with Malinda. Shallow and materialistic.
- Malinda:** 16. The biggest fish star in a very small pond. Shallow – a straw man surrounded by crows. Ex best-friend with Kim.
- Bob:** 17. Brother to Kim. Real name is Killoran, which he hates. Easygoing and very giving.
- Laura:** 17. Cousin to Kim. Has cancer. Facing her situation. Sarcastic.
- Paige:** 16. Girlfriend to Caleb. Grounded.
- Caleb:** 16. Goes by Cal. Boyfriend to Paige. Friendly and more perceptive than he seems.
- Wyatt:** 16. Seems to be a star-struck snob, but really is opportunistic.
- Swan:** 15. A star-struck snob, and will learn that it's not all it's cracked up to be.
- Erica:** 15. Not so secretly desires to be Malinda's friend.
- Dixie:** 15. Not so secretly desires to be Malinda's friend. Has an odd home life.
- Harper:** 15. He is in constant misery because Dixie is sort of blackmailing him.
- Tanner:** 16. A fraternal twin with Taylor.
- Taylor:** 16. A fraternal twin with Tanner. These twins can be two guys, a girl and a guy, or two girls.
- Blue:** 16. A somewhat silent secret weapon.
- Ceecee & Ceelee:** 15. Two girls who are essentially 'crows.' They flock around Malinda, agree with everything she says and constantly croon for shiny things.
- Bal/Gas/ Melchi:** 17. Three foreign exchange students. They sometimes appear to speak very little English and sometimes appear to be quite wise. As in the three wise men. And they always seem to be searching for something...
- Kandace:** Kim's mother. Used to be quite like Kymerdee, but has changed.
- Ms. Gullickson:** Known as Ms. G. The drama teacher.

Character Note

Tanner, Taylor, Bal, Gas and Melchi can be played by either gender or as a mix of genders. Tanner and Taylor are fraternal twins and can be of mixed gender. Because Bal, Gas, Melchi exist in a different space. (Are they real?) Feel free to cast them against type and with girls.

Costume Notes

For most of the play Kim and Kymberdee look very much alike – they both have long, long hair. **This is important.** Halfway through the second act, Kim cuts off her hair. So either the actress playing Kim needs a long wig for the beginning of the play, or a short hair wig for later in the play.

Laura must “lose her hair” as she’s going through chemo. I would suggest a tightly worn scarf that covers up the hair rather than a bald cap.

The play moves quickly from scene to scene. Costume changes for the present characters should be small – a sweater on or off. A change of t-shirt. A scarf.

Keep past characters in the same costume.

Bal, Gas and Melchi should wear robes in their first scene that are removed to reveal modern clothes underneath.

Set

The set is divided into three sections:

Upstage riser. Two levels where the ‘past’ scenes occur. On the lower level there is a bare area and an area with a chair and blanket (for Laura). On the upper level there is a small kitchen table with a couple of chairs.

Downstage left and centre. The classroom. There should be a variety of cubes or chairs in the downstage area.

Downstage right. Kept bare for other ‘present’ scenes.

Lighting

If your facility is capable, think about creating a lighting look that separates past and present – cool blue light for the past, and warm yellow light for the present. But don’t let lighting changes slow the pace. There are some quick shifts in time here and there should be NO BLACKOUTS when moving from past to present. The division of having all the ‘past’ scenes in one location on the stage may be enough.

Consider using spots for the *Gift of the Magi* moments.

Thanks To

Eastdale Secondary School

Governor Simcoe Secondary School

Almaguin Highlands Secondary School

Act One

Lights come up on a number of characters standing about the stage.

ERICA: Jim, before you say anything, don't I look like a Coney Island chorus girl? The tiny curls suit me, don't they? They're still pretty, I think. Oh Jim, darling, don't look at me that way. I had my hair cut off and sold because I couldn't have lived through Christmas without giving you a present. It'll grow out again. You don't mind, do you? Jim?

KANDACE: I need you to fill this box with things to sell. Don't look at me like that. The world is not coming to an end. I will give you something of a break Kymberdee because...well...some of this attitude is my fault. But your life isn't coming back. It's not coming back for any of us. So fill the box or I'll do it for you.

LAURA: I'm not going to make this easy. This isn't about you. The world does not revolve around you. OK?

MALINDA: What?

ERICA: Jim?

KANDACE: Understand?

MALINDA: What do you mean you're not coming to Cabo?

They freeze as BAL, GAS and MELCHI enter. All three wear long robes.

BAL: Are we there yet?

GAS: No.

BAL: Whose bright idea was this?

MELCHI: Which way do we go?

GAS: West, same as before. There's the star.

BAL: Whose bright idea was it to carry these presents across the desert? Why couldn't we have picked up something nice in Bethlehem?

MELCHI: You know why.

BAL: It's stupid.

GAS: You don't mean that.

BAL: Sure I do.

GAS: I know you don't, you're not like that.

BAL: (*sighs*) Sorry. Sand makes me cranky.

MELCHI: Yeah. Gets everywhere.

BAL: This gold is heavy. Are you sure he wouldn't like a nice pen set?

GAS: Let's keep going.

MELCHI: You got the star?

GAS: Big and bright.

BAL: I would kill for a milkshake.

They exit as a school bell rings. Light fills the stage as students enter chattering to each other. There is a group gathered stage right with someone in the middle who the group is clamouring to talk to. That someone is MALINDA and she is holding a large acting award.

PAIGE and CAL enter together, stage left. They stop when they see the clamouring crowd.

PAIGE: Wow. The crows are in a frenzy today.

CAL: I don't want to watch and yet I can't turn my head away.

KIM: (*approaching*) Hey.

PAIGE & CAL: (*still staring across the stage*) Hey...

KIM: Hello? (*holds up small bag in front of their faces*) Chocolate...

CAL: (*grabbing a bag*) Kim you're the best! Only chocolate breaks the stare. (*he takes a huge bite of a cupcake*) Sooooooo good.

PAIGE: Peanut butter fudge?

KIM: (*handing bag to PAIGE*) I had to fight an old lady with a walker for the last piece.

CAL: To the death?

KIM: Sorry.

CAL: (*sighing*) It's never to the death.

KIM: (*gesturing to the other side of the stage*) What's up?

CAL: Did you bring popcorn? We got ourselves a show.

PAIGE: The crows are going nuts.

KIM: Oh. She won, huh? (*not convincing*) Well... good for her. (*she laughs at her effort*)

PAIGE: You can't be tentative, you have to really go for it. Good for her!

KIM: Good for her!

PAIGE: She deserves the win. Her fragile ego could use some boosting.

KIM: She is very vulnerable.

PAIGE: Some people need the positive reinforcement. (*getting an edge*) Steel toed reinforcement. Down some stairs.

KIM: I'm not sure that would be positive.

PAIGE: It would be for me.

CAL: Are you hiding another cupcake?

KIM: Sorry.

TANNER & TAYLOR approach. BLUE hovers in the background, hood up on her hoodie, hands shoved in the pocket.

KIM: Hi guys. (*waving at the hovering BLUE*) Hi Blue. (*very serious, like a ritual*) Tanner, Taylor, I am sorry for those hurtful words.

KIM hands TANNER a punch card, TANNER pulls out a hole punch and punches a hole in the card.

TANNER: There you go.

TAYLOR: I'm going to miss this next semester.

From the other side of the stage MALINDA is heard laughing. TANNER and TAYLOR scowl.

TANNER: Did she win?

KIM: Yep.

TAYLOR: Unacceptable.

TANNER: Unfair.

KIM: Well it's not really "unfair." I hear she was pretty good.

TANNER & TAYLOR: We're not talking about the play.

TAYLOR: She'll get an A plus now for sure.

TANNER: Unsatisfactory.

TAYLOR: Offensive.

TANNER: We must prevent this.

TAYLOR: Come on. (*they storm off*)

BLUE slinks off behind them.

KIM: Bye Blue!

CAL: Drama has really improved their personalities.

BAL, GAS and MELCHI approach. They now appear as a trio of foreign exchange students who barely speak English. They are not wearing the robes from before, they are dressed in jeans and sweatshirts.

NOTE: These are not caricatures, do not mock these characters. Be sincere.

BAL: Excuse me please. Excuse me please.

PAIGE: Hello...?

KIM: (*sincere*) Can we help you?

BAL: Tell me please, where is Meester Staaahr?

KIM: Who?

GAS: We looking for Meester Staaahr?

CAL: Let me guess. Foreign exchange students?

BAL, GAS and MELCHI smile widely and start shaking hands with KIM, CAL and PAIGE. Soon there is quite a tangle of shaking hands.

BAL: Hello.

GAS: Hello.

MELCHI: Hello.

BAL: How are you?

GAS: Good morning.

MELCHI: How it going?

BAL: Pleasing you to meet.

GAS: Much pleasing.

MELCHI: We liking your country.

PAIGE: Thank you...?

KIM: Who are you looking for?

BAL, GAS, MELCHI: Meester Staaahr.

GAS: We have present.

MELCHI: We find him.

BAL: Yes! We give Meester Staaahr.

PAIGE: Who is Mr. Star?

CAL: I don't know but I'm digging the pronunciation. (*imitating*) Meester Staaaahr.

BAL, GAS, MELCHI: Meester Staaahr.

CAL: Meester Staaahr. Got a nice beat, you can dance to it.

BAL, GAS, MELCHI: (*gleeful*) Meester Staaahr.

KIM: Why don't you try the office. (*pointing*) Straight down the hall.

BAL: Thank you very much.

They wander off.

PAIGE: 10 bucks they get lost.

The conversation becomes clear from the other side of the stage.

CEECEE: (*reaching out*) That award is so shiny.

MALINDA: Don't touch it.

CEELEE: When does your commercial come out?

MALINDA: Thursday.

SWAN: I got a sneak peak, it's awesome.

DIXIE: Lucky you.

SWAN: I am her best friend.

CEECEE: (to MALINDA) You're so awesome.

CEELEE: And shiny...

WYATT: What was it like shooting a commercial?

MALINDA: The director says I did so well, Baker's Burgers might make me their spokesperson.

WYATT: No surprise. You are the best.

MALINDA: I know.

SWAN: I was going to say that.

CAL: Yep, that is one fragile ego.

PAIGE: Who's the best friend of the week?

KIM: Swan. Not that I'm paying attention.

PAIGE: (*patting KIM on the shoulder*) You don't have to be a super person all the time, you know.

MS. GULLICKSON (MS. G) enters. She claps her hands to get attention.

MS. G: Out of the hall ladies and gentlemen. I know we have a star in our midst, but let's get class started shall we?

Everyone moves centre stage, arranging themselves on cubes and risers, talking among themselves.

PAIGE: We're having chilli tonight. Who's in?

CAL: (*raising his hand like an excited child*) Me! Me! I'm in! Me like!

KIM: I don't think Cal is all that interested.

PAIGE: I think he's dating me for the food.

CAL: If I was going to date someone for the food, I'd date Kim for the chocolate. Or her mom.

KIM: Ew, gross!

CAL: See, so it's not food. Besides, your mom –

PAIGE: You're not going to try and date my mom are you?

MS. G: Seats, ladies and gentlemen. Find a seat. You are familiar with them?

CEECEE: Ms. G, can't we hear about Malinda's commercial?

CEELEE: And the festival?

CEECEE: Her award is so shiny...

MS. G: Yes, yes, I know, this is a day of celebration. We are in the presence of greatness.

MALINDA: Oh Ms. G.

CAL: Your mom has a heavy hand with the beanage.

PAIGE: What?

CAL: Too many beans in her chilli.

MS. G: A star who deservedly won best actress at the citywide one-act festival this weekend.

MALINDA holds up her award. CEECEE and CEELEE sigh, staring at the award.

CAL: Gives me gas.

PAIGE: What?

CAL: The beans. Pay attention.

MS. G: A star who will be the invited high school student working with Rosemead Regional Theatre for their summer season.

CAL: A gas of a noisy and odorous variety. As you are aware. True?

PAIGE: True.

MS. G: Oh it reminds me of my own high school days when I was the invited student.

CAL: Which is not great for romance. True?

MS. G: *(with a sigh)* Memories.

PAIGE: True.

MS. G: But – there is work to do. We have much to do before our time together must come to an end.

TAYLOR: *(to TANNER)* A plus.

TANNER: *(to TAYLOR)* Getting hives.

CAL: So since I'm willing to eat something that's going to cause me to rip a few good ones, I think that only proves my love. True?

PAIGE: There's something wrong in the middle of that.

MS. G: So, we must remember where we are, we must remember what we are here to do. To the work. The great work!

MALINDA: Ms. G, may I say something?

MS. G: By all means.

DIXIE: (*aside*) She's going to need another girl.

ERICA: (*aside*) She can't play all the parts herself.

CEELEE & CEECEE: (*with a sigh*) So shiny!

MALINDA: I just want to say, Ms. G, your words are so very kind. I couldn't have won this most prestigious award, or act at all without your guiding hand. My talent is only enhanced through your wisdom, your thoughtful direction, and your strength.

PAIGE: Wow.

MS. G: Oh now Malinda, you're going to turn me into a puddle.

MALINDA: (*holding up award*) It is not I who deserves an award, it is our fearless leader. Ms. Gullickson. Our amazing Ms. G.

MS. G: (*reaching out to take MALINDA's award*) Malinda, I am so very –

MALINDA: (*snatching it away*) Not this one! (*she recovers*) I mean, my mom already has a special place picked out for it.

MS. G: Yes, yes, you must place that wonderful example of all your hard work high upon the mantle. Your mantle. At your home. Is it hot in here? (*she clears her throat*) For our final project of the semester which will also be your final exam – a dramatization of the short story, *The Gift of the Magi*. Ladies and gentlemen, I implore you to bring this story, this wonderful story to life. Explore all aspects, all corners, all nooks and crannies. Here it is. (*holds up a folder*) Here. Now you must know, that this (*she claps the folder to her chest*) is my absolute most favourite story of all time. This bittersweet story of a young couple totally in love.

PAIGE: I'll bet he didn't fart in front of his girlfriend.

MS. G: James and Della. Jim and Dell. This is their heart-wrenching, heartbreaking, heartwarming tale of love, of loss, of so many things.

ERICA: *(to self)* Please let me be in Malinda's group.

DIXIE: *(to self)* Please, please, please.

MS. G: As we have worked together so closely this semester, I think I can trust you, I hope I can trust you, my solid stalwart souls, to find suitable working companions to bring out your best performance.

DIXIE: We can choose our own groups?

ERICA: Yes!

CEECEE & CEELEE: *(waving)* Malinda!

TAYLOR: Are you thinking...?

TANNER: I'm way ahead of you.

MS. G: Lift this story off the page. Make us weep. Make us ring the bells of joy. Make us know in our hearts the true meaning of selflessness and giving.

CAL: Eating super bean chilli is very selfless.

PAIGE: You're a saint.

MS. G: *(she gives an over dramatic sob)* That's it. Off you go. Take a folder. Create, young thespians.

MS. G collapses to a chair as various members of the class approach the pile of folders and grab one. There is also a silent commotion around MALINDA.

PAIGE: *(to KIM)* You in for chilli?

KIM: Sorry. Mom got a big cupcake order at the market this weekend and I'm doing the baking.

CAL: That sounds like a dirty double trick.

KIM: I like it. Besides, she's doing night deliveries this week.

PAIGE: Look at the crows.

The silent commotion gets louder.

CEECEE & CEELEE: *(trying to get attention)* Malinda! Malinda!

ERICA: *(overlapping above)* Malinda can I be in your group?

DIXIE: Can I?

ERICA: Please, I can act circles around you.

DIXIE: You don't know what you're talking about.

CEECEE & CEELEE: We want to act with you!

SWAN: She doesn't need more girls, I'm her best friend, I'm in her group!

KIM: (*looking at folder*) Have you read this?

CAL: Guy sells watch to buy girl a scrunchie, girl sells hair to buy guy watch thingee.

KIM: That's it?

CAL: It's pretty short.

PAIGE: You ass, it's the eternal story of pure selflessness. Love triumphing over materialism.

CAL: What did you call me? The love of your life?

PAIGE: I still don't buy your chilli story.

CAL: You have clearly forgotten the full impact of my whoopie cushions. Prepare to be overcome.

PAIGE: Things are meaningless. That's what the story is about. You can't show your love with a thing. Right Kim? Kim?

KIM looks upstage as KYMBERDEE stomps onstage on to the upstage riser. KYMBERDEE is a past version of KIM. Everything that takes place on the upstage riser is in the past.

KYMBERDEE: You ruined everything. You totally ruined my birthday. I can't believe you got me the wrong bag. I can't be seen in public with this. Do you know what people will say? What everyone will say?

She stomps off, KIM watches her go.

KIM: (*murmuring to herself*) They didn't say anything.

PAIGE: Kim?

KIM: Huh? Sorry. I was just thinking.

PAIGE: Out loud.

CAL: My dad talks to himself all the time. He says as long as no one talks back, who cares?

The focus shifts to the group around MALINDA.

MALINDA: Wyatt, welcome to my group.

The students react. WYATT steps forward.

WYATT: (*very expected*) How unexpected. You won't regret this, Malinda.

MALINDA: I better not. I expect you two to pull your weight. We're going to rehearse after school, we're going to rehearse nights –

SWAN: Don't we have enough time in class? (*MALINDA looks at her*) I mean you're right, you're right.

WYATT: I think we should rehearse weekends, too.

MALINDA: Exactly.

WYATT smiles at SWAN, who looks a little worried. ERICA, HARPER and DIXIE huddle together.

DIXIE: OK, if she won't let us in her group, there has to be a reason, right?

ERICA: Right.

HARPER: She doesn't like you?

DIXIE: Shut up, Harper. She doesn't know us, she doesn't know how great we are.

ERICA: That's it! She just doesn't know.

DIXIE: She doesn't know we exist.

HARPER: We've been in the same class all semester.

DIXIE: Shut up, Harper.

ERICA: If we're really awesome on this project...

DIXIE: She'll be impressed and want us around.

ERICA: We will be in her awareness zone.

DIXIE: She'll be begging to be our friend.

HARPER: I'm not sure that's how it works.

DIXIE: Shut up, Harper.

HARPER: (*half rising*) Maybe I should find another group. You guys seem very busy.

DIXIE: Don't you move. We need a guy, and you fit the bill.

HARPER: But –

DIXIE: (*this is a threat*) I'll tell Atwood everything...

HARPER sinks back in his seat with a sigh.

ERICA: OK, so what do we have to do to be really good?

DIXIE: We have to think outside the box, be creative.

ERICA: Yes! What would be really outside the box, like way far out of the box?

DIXIE: Costumes... cool staging...

HARPER: Pyrotechnics.

DIXIE: Yes! Wait, what?

HARPER: Pyrotechnics. My uncle can get us fireworks, if you want. He sells them out of his truck.

ERICA: Oh I don't know...

DIXIE: I like it...

ERICA: Um, fireworks? Inside? Fire?

HARPER: Now that's out of the box.

DIXIE: I love it!

They huddle up. MALINDA and her group walk by KIM.

MALINDA: (*on the move to KIM*) Hey Pizza Face, how's that (*said with disgust*) apartment working out? (*to SWAN*) It's a shoebox with an elevator.

She laughs meanly. SWAN and WYATT join in. KYMBERDEE runs forward on the upstage riser. MALINDA moves to join KYMBERDEE.

KYMBERDEE: You are not going to believe this. You're not going to believe what's happening to me.

MALINDA: You got the Vuitton (*pronounced Veeton*) handbag and the clutch.

KYMBERDEE: No. I did not get the bag and the clutch. I didn't get the bag, the clutch, not even a keychain.

MALINDA: What is wrong with your parents?

KYMBERDEE: They're bankrupt!

MALINDA: What?

KYMBERDEE: My dad lost his business. We have to move. I didn't get anything.

MALINDA: Oh.

KYMBERDEE: Oh? That's all you have to say? My life is over.

MALINDA: You're still coming to Cabo, right?

The focus shifts back to the classroom. KYMBERDEE stays on the upstage riser, turning her back to the audience. MALINDA moves back as KIM speaks.

KIM: (*not fazed*) Congratulations on your award Malinda. I hear you were great.

MALINDA: Of course I was.

MALINDA, SWAN, WYATT laugh as they continue off.

SWAN: Pizza face.

CAL: Such lovely human beings. Brings a tear to my eye. I'm a puddle.

PAIGE: I can't believe you used to be like that.

KIM: I can't believe it either.

The focus shifts to the upstage riser. KYMBERDEE turns to face BOB who storms on.

BOB: People don't like you Kim.

KYMBERDEE: (*whirling around to face BOB*) Don't call me Kim.

BOB: No one likes you. They're all laughing at you.

KYMBERDEE: No they're not. Everyone loves me. They flock to me and Malinda. They want to be my friend.

BOB: They're laughing at you behind your back.

KYMBERDEE: You're a liar.

BOB: Just because you can't see it doesn't mean it's not true.

KYMBERDEE storms off. BOB follows. NOTE: Over the next page, the class groups quietly exit one at a time.

KIM: (watching KYMBERDEE) People change.

CAL: I guess...

PAIGE: Cal! Are you saying Kim hasn't changed?

CAL: Oh you know me. I think it's the most elaborate hoax of all time. You and Malinda are going to wake me up in the middle of the night with cameras and thousands of people laughing at my humiliation. You believed it! You were suckered in! You're a total loser! Bwaha-ha-ha...

KIM: That's well thought out.

CAL: I don't sleep much.

PAIGE: Do you think I'm a sucker too?

CAL: No.

PAIGE: Do you think I would hang out with someone who would pull the most elaborate hoax of all time?

KIM: I'm not that smart. Trust me.

PAIGE: You're plenty smart.

CAL: I'm just saying. It's not even been a year.

KIM: Eleven months.

PAIGE: No-co.

CAL: No-co. Still...

PAIGE: Cal!

CAL: Can you blame me for being nervous?

KIM: Not my best year.

The lights change. KYMBERDEE and MALINDA move forward on the upstage riser. We're back in time to January and we're at KYMBERDEE's house. They hug each other. KIM watches the action. PAIGE and CAL exit.

KYMBERDEE: Happy New Year, Mali!

MALINDA: Happy New Year, Kimmy!

KYMBERDEE: You look amazing.

MALINDA: Your hair is to die for.

KYMBERDEE: Is that your new sweater?

MALINDA: (*she does a model turn*) Do you like? It's an undyed Amanda Wicker. Pure cashmere, Grade A, goats in China starved to make the wool.

KYMBERDEE: (*reaching forward*) It looks so soft.

MALINDA: Don't touch! (*beat*) My dad wouldn't tell me for sure, but they sell for \$700.

KYMBERDEE: Wow.

MALINDA: So, where's yours? You got it didn't you?

KYMBERDEE: (*rolling her eyes*) My dad screwed up, as usual. I got a pashmina scarf.

MALINDA: That's not the same.

KYMBERDEE: Tell me about it. I totally pitched a fit. The sweater's coming 'some time' in February.

MALINDA: Well, I'm not going to wait to wear mine just because your dad's an idiot.

KYMBERDEE: How was skiing?

MALINDA: Horrible. Snow is so... cold. I want the beach, I demanded we go to the beach next year for Christmas. So...we're going to... (*she presents this*) Cabo!

KYMBERDEE: Cool.

MALINDA: And you're coming with me.

KYMBERDEE: Malinda!

MALINDA: My parents drove me mental this trip, I totally need a buffer.

KYMBERDEE: That's awesome.

MALINDA: Sun... sand... cute guys...

KYMBERDEE: I can't wait!

MALINDA: Yeah and it won't cost you much, Mexico is dirt cheap.

KYMBERDEE: (*taken aback*) Oh. (*recovering*) Well, my parents will pay for it. Especially after the Nice (*pronounced Neece*) disaster.

MALINDA: I can't believe your dad screwed that up for us.

KYMBERDEE: I can. He screws up everything. I'm so not surprised he got double booked out of the dates. Oh my God. This year we get Cabo and Nice! This is going to be an awesome year.

MALINDA: The best.

KYMBERDEE: I can't wait to see what else happens.

MALINDA: I know. Obviously, we're going to be awesome.

KYMBERDEE: Totally awesome.

MALINDA: How could we be anything else?

KYMBERDEE: You are the best best-friend a girl could ever have.

As they talk they move to the table and sit. KIM continues to watch the action.

MALINDA: We need to make New Year's resolutions.

KYMBERDEE: Totally. What do we want?

MALINDA: Easy. Have fun. Be cute. Rock it.

LAURA enters. She has heard MALINDA's last line.

LAURA: I'm sure solving world hunger is fourth on your list.

KYMBERDEE: Laura!

LAURA: What? I'm positive you're going to get around to world hunger right after you "rock it." Which is a totally awesome resolution by the way. You go. In fact, you rock.

MALINDA: (*to KYMBERDEE*) Who, is that?

KYMBERDEE: (*rolling her eyes and tossing her hair*) My cousin. She just moved from Vancouver.

LAURA: Would you mind tossing your hair somewhere else?

MALINDA: Laura? What a... common name. Does your mother hate you?

LAURA: Yes. I'm horribly scarred. How will I live through the pain and suffering.

KYMBERDEE: What are you doing here?

BOB: (*entering*) We're going to the movies.

MALINDA: You're going to the movies with your cousin? Gross.

BOB: Why? What's wrong with her? (*to LAURA*) Is there something you're not telling me?

LAURA: I cannot tell a lie. I have six toes on my left foot.

BOB: Gross.

MALINDA: (*to BOB*) Don't you have any friends of your own?

LAURA: Yeah. Me.

BOB: Wait a minute. We're friends?

LAURA: Sorry, did I spring that on you?

BOB: You could have given me a little notice.

KYMBERDEE: (*pulling MALINDA*) Come on, Malinda. They're just being stupid.

LAURA: (*waving*) See you Melinda.

This stops MALINDA in her tracks. She slowly turns.

MALINDA: No.

LAURA: No, what?

MALINDA: Not Me-linda. It's Ma-linda. Get it right. It's special.

LAURA: It is?

MALINDA: I'm the only one with my name. I am special. (*pointing at her and KYMBERDEE*) We are special. That's why we're friends, we're unique.

LAURA: You're friends with Kim,

KYMBERDEE: Kymberdee.

LAURA: Because of her name? That's weird.

KYMBERDEE: (*pulling MALINDA*) Come on.

MALINDA: That's real. That's why you're really hanging out with Killoran. You know his name elevates you, makes people want to –

BOB: Bob.

KYMBERDEE: What?

BOB: It's Bob now.

MALINDA: It is not.

KYMBERDEE: That's not your name.

BOB: I feel like a Bob.

MALINDA: Did you know about this?

KYMBERDEE: No. (to BOB) Don't be stupid.

MALINDA: There's no way your mother would let you change your name.

KYMBERDEE: Mom's going to kill you.

LAURA: I like it.

MALINDA: You would.

LAURA: Come on, Bob, we know where we're not wanted. (*she stands suddenly and wobbles a bit*) Whoa.

BOB: Laura?

LAURA: It's nothing. I'm OK. (*she takes a step*) I'm not OK. (*she faints*)

BOB: Laura!

A spot comes up downstage right.

WYATT: (*sincerely, as James Young*) You cut off your hair? You say your hair's gone? (*shaking head and chuckling*) Don't make any mistake, Dell, about me. I don't think there's anything in the way of a haircut or a shave or a shampoo that could make me like my girl any less. I sold the watch to buy the combs for your hair. (*he smiles*) Let's put our Christmas presents away and keep 'em awhile. They're too nice to use just at present.

That spot goes out and, if possible, a more dramatic spot goes up downstage left. (You could also go with flashlights under the face.) TANNER and TAYLOR

stand in the spot dramatically. Intense dramatic music plays. Off to the side and to the back stands BLUE.

TANNER: Dillingham, located in southwest Alaska.

TAYLOR: Dillingham, early 20th century American politician.

TANNER: Dillingham, English surname.

TAYLOR: Dillingham, middle name of our main character, James Young.

TANNER & TAYLOR: Mr. James Dillingham Young.

TANNER: The “Dillingham” had been flung to the breeze during a former period of prosperity when its possessor was being paid thirty a week.

TAYLOR: Coincidence?

TANNER & TAYLOR: WE don’t think so.

The music cuts off and the lights come up to full. We see that TANNER and TAYLOR had been performing for CAL and PAIGE. PAIGE looks confused. CAL looks like he’s desperately trying not to laugh.

TANNER: That’s what we’ve got so far.

CAL: *(muffled, arm in his mouth)* Good, real good.

TANNER: We need to go deeper.

TAYLOR: Add a power point.

TANNER & TAYLOR: Multimedia.

TANNER: What do you think?

PAIGE: I think that, and this is only my... opinion...

CAL lets out a laugh and turns it into a cough.

CAL: Hairball.

PAIGE: I’m not sure the story, that *The Gift of the Magi* is really, at its heart, I mean... the main theme, uh, I don’t think it revolves around the guy’s middle name.

TAYLOR: On the contrary.

TANNER: Au contraire.

TAYLOR: *(to TANNER)* Nobody likes a show off.

TANNER: The use of the name Dillingham is a symbolic representation—

TAYLOR: —of a previous materialism by main characters James and Della.

TANNER: A preening of egocentric behaviour—

TAYLOR: —and the addition of a, let’s face it, pretentious moniker—

TANNER: —derived from an increase in wages must now be faced head-on with the slash in income.

When TANNER says “slash” TANNER, TAYLOR and BLUE all make a slash gesture in unison.

TAYLOR: The character goes through a para-digem (*misprounced on purpose*) shift from a selfish to a selfless state.

TANNER: It’s pronounced paradime.

TAYLOR: Nobody likes a show off.

CAL can’t help it. He starts to laugh with huge gasping breaths to the point of falling on the floor and pounding the ground in a fit. The others stare at him. He finds a smidgeon of control.

CAL: My cat died.

He runs off stage as KIM enters. She is carrying a couple of small bags.

KIM: (*calling after him*) I’ve got deformed cupcakes!

TANNER: We need 100% on this project.

TAYLOR: This is the only class where we have an A minus.

TANNER: We never get minuses.

TAYLOR: Never.

TANNER & TAYLOR: They give us hives.

TAYLOR: Malinda is wrecking our average.

TANNER: And our complexion.

PAIGE: Huh?

TAYLOR & TANNER: We can’t beat her in drama.

TAYLOR: We told Mom drama was no good for us. It's a waste of our considerable intellect.

TANNER: Communication skills, who needs them?

TAYLOR: Who talks in the real world?

TANNER: Our plan is to stop talking completely.

TAYLOR: (to KIM) Aren't you forgetting something?

KIM: Sorry! Tanner, Taylor, I am sorry for those hurtful words.

KIM hands TANNER a punch card, TANNER pulls out a hole punch and punches a hole in the card.

TANNER: (sighing) I thought that would bring warmth to my emotional core. It doesn't.

KIM: (holding up a bag) Cupcake?

TAYLOR: We don't eat sugar.

TANNER: Or gluten.

TAYLOR: Or eggs.

TANNER: No dairy of any kind. (leaning in) No matter how good it smells...

TAYLOR: Back away, Tanner.

TANNER: No matter how chocolatey... and buttery...

TAYLOR: Tanner.

TANNER: (lunging forward) Give me the bag!

KIM: (caught) Ack!

TAYLOR: (holding back TANNER) You know what sugar does to you.

TANNER: One bite, that's all I ask!

TAYLOR: (struggling with TANNER) Back away! Back away this instant! I will not have a repeat of the Easter candy catastrophe.

TANNER: (struggling) One!

TAYLOR: I will not be the one to explain to little Noriko Hamaguchi why her chocolate bunny is headless! Again! (succeeds in dragging TANNER away)

TANNER: (*backing away*) OK fine.

TAYLOR: Fine.

TANNER: Fine!

The two regain their composure.

TANNER: Excuse me. We're in a state of mental unrest.

TAYLOR: What do think of our presentation?

PAIGE: Well... aside from the lack of acting... or theatre... I can't believe I'm saying this ... I think I agree. I agree. Maybe it's low blood sugar.

KIM: (*handing her a bag*) Here.

PAIGE: I think you're on to something. Go for it.

TANNER: Prime, yo!

TAYLOR: Pythagoras for the win!

TANNER and TAYLOR high five and exit with BLUE strolling after. CAL re-enters.

KIM: (*calling after*) Good luck guys! Can't wait to see it.

PAIGE: (*to CAL*) Are you under control?

CAL: Eating, no talky.

KIM: What's their presentation about?

PAIGE: The importance of names.

CAL: What's in a name? A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.

PAIGE: Mister Shakespeare!

CAL: I saw it in a comic book. (*pointing, and making a point*) I don't think names mean anything.

KYMBERDEE steps on the upstage riser. KIM watches.

KYMBERDEE: It's Kymberdee. With a y and two e's. Not Kimberley. It's totally different. I'm the only one there is. I'm unique. Special. (*she exits*)

CAL: Names don't mean anything. It's just a fancy way of saying, "Hey you!"

PAIGE: Look around this room. All our names mean something. Blue. Ma-linda not Mel-inda. Swan, who names their kid Swan?

CAL: Goose was taken.

PAIGE: Paige is my mom's maiden name, (*gesturing to CAL*) Caleb –

CAL: Just Cal.

PAIGE: Who hates his name and only ever goes by Cal. (*pointing at KIM*) Kymberdee –

KIM: Just Kim.

PAIGE: Who wants to separate from who she used to be. (*beat*) You don't have to bring treats every day, you know.

*On the upstage riser LAURA sits in a chair with a blanket over her. She is in the middle of a chemo treatment. She wears a scarf to cover her head.
NOTE: LAURA should enter quietly during the cupcake fight so that she is in place for this moment. It flows continually from the one before.*

BOB: (*entering*) Hello gorgeous!

PAIGE and CAL freeze. KIM turns to watch.

LAURA: Don't be stupid. I look like Mr. Clean.

BOB: You're right. Saying nice things is stupid. I'll never say anything nice again.

LAURA: OK, I give in. Tell me how good I look.

BOB: You look fantastic. Who does your hair?

LAURA: (*pretending to primp*) Fetching isn't it.

BOB: How do you feel?

LAURA: OK. Not OK. Nervous.

BOB: But it's treatable.

LAURA: That's what they tell me.

BOB: They caught it and now they're going to treat it.

LAURA: Is that a fact, Dr. Bob?

BOB: "Dr. Bob." I like the sound of that.

KYMBERDEE enters with a huge overdramatic sigh as she drops into a chair.

BOB: And speaking of pleasant sounds...

LAURA: Say, it's Kymberdee. Hello Kymberdee. Bob, you brought Kymberdee.

BOB: Isn't that great?

LAURA: It is so great.

BOB: I know. Pretty great.

KYMBERDEE: Don't bother. I'm here under protest.

LAURA: How so?

BOB: *(this is a big deal)* Mom made her come.

LAURA: Aunt Kandace made you do something nice for someone else? What is this world coming to?

KYMBERDEE: What did you say?

LAURA: Whoopsie. Was that out loud? Must be the cancer.

BOB: Handy.

LAURA: Tell me about it. I blame everything on cancer. I get out of so many things.

KYMBERDEE: *(to self)* I can't believe I have to sit here. I can't believe she's making me sit here.

BOB: *(to LAURA)* Is it too much to ask that she grow a sense of humanity?

LAURA: Dream on.

KYMBERDEE: She is totally losing it.

LAURA: Who? Oh Aunt Kandace.

KYMBERDEE: This is just the icing on the cake.

LAURA: *(to BOB)* She's not really losing it, right?

BOB: *(a little coded)* Things are... different.

LAURA: They are? Why?

BOB: Don't worry. It's fine.

LAURA: What's going on?

BOB: Just some stuff.

KYMBERDEE: I'll tell you. I'm not getting a birthday party.

LAURA: You're not? Bob, why didn't you tell me?

KYMBERDEE: They cut me off for no reason.

LAURA: What is it?

BOB: It's fine. (*pig latin*) X-nae in ront-fay of imber-kay.

LAURA: Oh.

KYMBERDEE: I cried and everything.

LAURA: (*to BOB*) Is it bad?

BOB: Not as bad as cancer.

KYMBERDEE: Huh.

LAURA: Did she just say huh? Did she just "huh" you?

BOB: I think she did.

LAURA: I think, she just said she has it worse than someone with cancer. To the face of someone with cancer.

BOB: I think you're right.

KYMBERDEE: You don't look that sick. Aside from the hair.

BOB and LAURA look at each other.

BOB: Have I ever mentioned I must be adopted?

LAURA: Only a couple thousand times.

BOB: Hey. I brought you a treat.

LAURA: Brownies?

BOB: The nurses searched me when I came in. Took my brownie paraphernalia.

LAURA: Nazi nurses.

BOB: Look. (*he pulls out a clown wig*)

LAURA: Awesome. (*she puts it on*) How do I look?

BOB: Stunning.

KYMBERDEE: Can we go? This place gives me the creeps. *(she exits)*

BOB: I'll come back later. You OK?

LAURA: I don't look sick, remember? I want to hear about "the stuff."

BOB: Later. *(exits)*

LAURA: Alligator.

MS. GULLICKSON enters, clapping her hands. The rest of the class also enters and arranges themselves about the stage. LAURA exits.

MS. G: Ladies and gentlemen! Let's get to the work, shall we? You only have a precious few classes to develop and grow deep meaning into your scenes. I am here as your guide and mentor, feel free to envelop me into your thoughts, feelings and insights. Share with me your process. *(beat)* Just as soon as I finish my meditation.

She sits on the floor in the middle of the class with crossed legs – a meditation pose. She places her hands on her knees and closes her eyes. The rest of the class forms into their groups. MALINDA and her group talks loudly.

MALINDA: This story is ridiculous. I would never sell my hair to buy someone a gift.

SWAN: You are right.

WYATT: You don't give presents, you're the one who deserves presents.

SWAN: *(trying to one up)* You should get presents every day.

The focus shifts to ERICA, HARPER and DIXIE.

DIXIE: Did you find out about the fireworks?

HARPER: My uncle's out of town till Thursday. Something about 'laying low' and 'they'll never link it to me.'

DIXIE: He told you all that?

HARPER: I listen through the vent in the bathroom.

ERICA: I have the best idea. I was up all night thinking about this. *(beat)* We need a name.

HARPER: Why?

ERICA: We need a group name, something to focus us. To align our forces. Something so special that when the world hears it, when they hear our name, it makes them interested, curious, makes them want to know what's going on. "What is going on in that group? That group with the awesome name, must be awesome. The people in that group must be awesome, we must know them!" But *no one will know* what's going on in our group because our group is a secret club. We're the only members. People will want in, they'll be dying to get in. They'll slide up to us, want to hear what we're saying, want to know what we're doing, want to be us and then... and then...

DIXIE: What, what?

ERICA: Malinda will want to be our friend! She'll come to us because our secret group with the awesome name is so powerful, so all-knowing, so popular – if she doesn't join with us she'll be out in the back field with the smokers.

HARPER: Shouldn't we just... do a good job with the story?

DIXIE: Dixie's Dominators!

ERICA: What? No.

DIXIE: Why not?

ERICA: I was thinking Erica's Winners.

DIXIE: Why does your name get to be in there?

HARPER: (*rising up*) You guys seem busy, I'm just going to –

DIXIE: Butt in chair, Harper!

HARPER sits back down with a sigh.

ERICA: We need to let people know we're a force to be reckoned with.

DIXIE: Dixie's Dominators, we're dominating the competition.

ERICA: That is not an awesome name.

HARPER: I'm going to start highlighting dialogue.

DIXIE: Erica's Winners is lame. It's desperate.

*The bell rings, everyone gathers up their stuff to exit.
MS. GULLICKSON starts.*

MS. G: What? Where am I? Panda! (*she staggers off*)

DIXIE and ERICA are still arguing as they pass PAIGE, KIM and CAL. HARPER trails behind.

ERICA: OK then... Erica's Eliminators.

DIXIE: That doesn't make any sense.

ERICA: Yes it does, we're going to eliminate the competition.

PAIGE: So, how's it going?

ERICA: (*big smile*) Awesome.

DIXIE: (*bigger smile*) We're doing awesome.

HARPER: (*aside to CAL*) You don't need another guy, do you?

KIM: What are you doing?

ERICA opens her mouth to speak and DIXIE stops her.

DIXIE: Don't tell her. She's the enemy.

PAIGE: Hey.

DIXIE: (*to KIM*) I don't care how many times you apologize. I'll never forgive you for what you said about my hair in front of Lucas Miller last February. Never.

ERICA and DIXIE sweep out.

HARPER: I'm not kidding. I'll pay to switch groups. (*exits*)

MALINDA and her group walk by.

MALINDA: (*to KIM*) Hey Pizza Face. Tell your mom my Hawaiian was totally lacking in pineapple.

KIM: I'll let her know.

SWAN: You better.

MALINDA: (*to KIM*) Get it right or I'll have her fired.

PAIGE: She doesn't make the pizza.

MALINDA: Was I talking to you?

SWAN: Yeah was she talking –

MALINDA: I don't need an echo.

WYATT: Let's go rehearse. I thought we made a real emotional breakthrough today. You are a phenomenon.

MALINDA: I know.

SWAN: (*as they move*) I was going to say that.

They exit. CAL gives an exasperated noise and gestures at KIM.

KIM: What?

CAL: Not one snarky comment?

KIM: What's the point?

CAL: Not a half of one? She is a mountain-sized cow. She's a mountain cow. An awful, vampire mountain cow with boils, bad breath and a poor digestive system.

PAIGE: Really?

CAL: I don't sleep much.

KIM: If I say something snarky, she'll just say something snarky back to me and it'll snowball from there into a huge snarkfest.

CAL: Yes! THAT is the point. A big ole snowball snarkfest. A vampire snowball snarkfest. A vampire mountain –

PAIGE: We get it. Your mom's still doing the pizza thing?

KIM: Yep. Three nights a week.

PAIGE: Does that bother you?

KYMBERDEE steps forward on the upstage riser.

KYMBERDEE: You totally ruined my birthday!

KIM: Not anymore.

KANDACE enters on the upstage riser. KIM watches. CAL and PAIGE exit.

KYMBERDEE: You totally ruined my birthday. First you won't let me have a party and now this? It's not the right bag at all. Take this back and get me the right one. Get me the Louis Vuitton.

KANDACE: No.

KYMBERDEE: What? Get me the bag.

KANDACE: I was going to discuss this with you later, after your birthday, but it looks like we're going to have to do it now. Sit down.

KYMBERDEE: Unless we're talking about you getting me –

KANDACE: (*interrupting*) You can't have the bag. And you aren't going to be able to do a lot of the things you usually do or usually buy.

KYMBERDEE: What are you talking about?

KANDACE: Sit down.

KYMBERDEE: I don't feel like it.

KANDACE: All right. (*she sits and takes a deep breath*) The economy has hit your father's business pretty hard the past couple of years.

KYMBERDEE: So?

KANDACE: So it's now at a point where it affects us. And unfortunately... your dad has tried really hard to keep things going but...

KYMBERDEE: Not hard enough apparently.

KANDACE: He's not able to anymore. We're going to have to make some changes.

KYMBERDEE: What's with the we? Why is my life affected? It's not my fault he doesn't know how to run a business.

KANDACE: Don't say that.

KYMBERDEE: You say it all the time.

KANDACE: Maybe I did in the past, but I don't now.

KYMBERDEE: I don't believe it. There's no way you're going to give up your lifestyle. You want me to suffer.

KANDACE: That's not true.

KYMBERDEE: Are you really going to stop spending? Huh? Gonna give up your weekly mani-pedi? Give up the New York shopping trips? "Gotta look shiny, Kymberdee, shiny shiny. That's how people know you're important." You don't want to shine anymore? You want people to laugh at you, talk behind your back at how dull you look? I bet they already do. You're not keeping up, Mom.

KANDACE: Do you want the bag?

KYMBERDEE: (*crossing her arms*) No.

KANDACE: Things are going to change around here. They've already started. We're moving next month.

KYMBERDEE: What?

KANDACE: Your father and I... I made a choice. We've made some choices together, and I know you don't understand...

KYMBERDEE: Oh I get it. You want to ruin my life.

KANDACE: I've had more time to get used to this. We decided to wait before telling you. Maybe that wasn't a good idea, but whether you like it or not things are going to change.

KYMBERDEE storms off. KANDACE follows. KIM is alone centre stage.

WYATT enters with BAL, GAS and MELCHI following close behind. They don't see KIM.

BAL: Excuse me please.

WYATT: I'm telling you, I don't know any Mr. Star!

WYATT turns quick around, causing BAL, GAS and MELCHI to bump into each other.

WYATT: Don't you guys have class? You just wander around all day. What a waste of time. And what's going to happen if you find who you're looking for? I bet it'll be a huge letdown. This Mr. Star, he'll hate whatever it is you're supposed to give him and all your wandering will have been for nothing. If I landed in another country, you wouldn't see my dust.

GAS: Dust?

MELCHI: The ground.

BAL: Yes, we like the ground. (*he stomps his foot*) Very sturdy.

MELCHI and GAS stomp their feet three times and throw their arms in the air

MELCHI & GAS: (*as in the end of a dance*) Hey!

WYATT: (*shaking his head*) Yeah. (*beat, looks around*) I'm going to tell you guys something. I've been dying to tell someone and you three have no idea what I'm talking about – it's perfect. You'll never be able to rat me out. Lean in. (*he demonstrates*) Come on.

BAL, GAS and MELCHI all look at each other.

WYATT: Lean in.

BAL, GAS and MELCHI all crouch oddly.

WYATT: That'll do. I am getting out of here. I've hitched a ride on a star and she's going to take me places. I don't know where yet, but I've got time. I'm just laying the groundwork and when the right moment hits, I'll be on my way so fast you won't even see my feet. And my ride? I won't think twice about ditching her. Ugh. She's revolting.

BAL: Bad! Very bad!

WYATT: Shh!

GAS & MELCHI: Shh!

KIM has been inching forward during the above, trying to hear. Now BAL sees her.

BAL: Hello!

BAL makes a sudden movement, causing BAL, GAS and MELCHI to fall over each other. WYATT turns sharply and glares at KIM.

KIM: Hey... guys. Hi Wyatt.

WYATT: Eavesdropping now?

KIM: No...

WYATT: Doesn't matter. If you know what's good for you, stay out of my way. *(exits)*

KIM: Bob was right. No one liked us.

BAL: *(still on the ground)* Excuse me please. *(KIM is lost in thought, looking off)* Excuse me please.

KIM: *(turning)* Oh! Oh, let me help you.

KIM helps the three get to their feet.

GAS: Thank you.

MELCHI: Thank you very much.

KIM: How are you getting along?

BAL: Tell me please, where is Meester Staaahr.

KIM: Still can't find him huh? What does he teach? Who is he? And why isn't he looking for you?

GAS: He is Meester Staaahr.

MELCHI: We have present.

BAL: We give Meester Staaahr.

KIM: Yeah. I wonder what happens when you find him. *(she points at herself)* My name is Kim. Kim... *(she points at BAL)*

BAL: *(pointing at self)* Bal!

GAS: *(pointing at self)* Ah! Gas!

MELCHI: *(pointing at self)* Melchi!

KIM: Hello!

The handshaking repeats.

BAL: Hello!

GAS: Hello!

MELCHI: Very pleasing you to meet.

BAL: Very pleasing... Kim!

GAS: Kim! We please, so please.

MELCHI: So wonderful new friend Kim.

BAL: You are nice.

KIM: Yeah, well. I don't think I'm all that nice. But I can do a nice thing. Let's go to the office and get to the bottom of this Mr. Star thing once and for all.

BAL: Meester Staaahr.

KIM: Yeah him.

BAL: Thank you very much.

KIM leads them off. On the other side of the stage PAIGE is in the middle of a conversation with ERICA and DIXIE. CAL and HARPER follow behind. They are sharing earbuds listening to the some thrash metal.

PAIGE: I'm telling you, I don't.

ERICA: You do.

PAIGE: I don't want a present.

ERICA: That's impossible.

DIXIE: You need a present. You have to get a present.

PAIGE: Why?

ERICA: It's Christmas. Boyfriends get their girlfriends a present at Christmas.

PAIGE: Why?

DIXIE: Because. Christmas means you get things. You wake up Christmas morning and there's a line of packages in front of the fireplace. Big ones with shiny bows and all snug in their wrapping. It's the most amazing feeling in the pit of your stomach, you never want it to end. So you gather in front of that line of packages, in front of the fireplace, the whole family from little Rufus to Grammy with her teeth out. And none of the packages have names on them so you have to play rock paper scissors to get a gift. And if you're really good at rock paper scissors you end up with all the packages, even if they're of no use to you whatsoever. What is Cooper going to do with a flat iron? He wouldn't even sudden death overtime me for it. It just sits in his room on the shelf and Mom refuses to interfere. "Cooper won it fair and square. If Cooper plays rock paper scissors better than you then it's not Cooper's fault." And Grammy just sits in the corner with her teeth out laughing, and laughing and... (*the others are staring at her*) Or maybe that's just the way it is at my house.

PAIGE: What does a present show me?

ERICA: That he loves you.

DIXIE: Duh.

PAIGE: How about when he tells me he loves me? Or he hugs me in public?

ERICA: Well, that's OK. I guess.

DIXIE: I'd rather get a present.

PAIGE: He saved six months to buy a guitar and now he's working two jobs so he can buy some recording equipment. I'm going to ask him to stop saving or sell his guitar so he can buy me a stupid bracelet?

DIXIE & ERICA: Yes!

CAL: (*taking out his earbud*) Who's selling their guitar?

PAIGE: Nobody.

CAL: OK. (*he puts the earbud back in*)

DIXIE: Where's Kim?

PAIGE: Helping those foreign exchange students.

ERICA: Good, we don't want her to see this.

PAIGE: Why?

ERICA: She may tell Malinda.

PAIGE: They're not friends anymore.

DIXIE: Exactly. She may see this as an opportunity to get in Malinda's good books and snitch all our ideas.

PAIGE: She's not like that.

DIXIE: She used to be like that. She told everyone about Regina Henry's brother stealing the test scores when he didn't even do it.

PAIGE: You believed her though.

ERICA: Better safe than sorry.

PAIGE: (*to DIXIE*) You told everyone in fourth period.

DIXIE: It's not my fault. I was misled.

ERICA: Harper. (*He's not listening. She pokes him.*) Harper!

HARPER: (*taking out the earbud*) Huh?

DIXIE: Let's do this.

HARPER: Now?

DIXIE: (*don't run these together*) Text. Me. Atwood. About you. Got it?

HARPER: (*to CAL*) Witness my agony.

The three stand side-by-side. They perform a movement piece with gestures that tell an absurd version of "The Gift of the Magi." Think of abstract gestures and movements to show these moments:

Della worried about money, Della selling her hair. Della and James seeing each other. Their reaction to each other's gifts. All three do the actions (remember don't make them realistic). ERICA and DIXIE do the movement all-out with very serious faces. HARPER does them with much less energy and with a pained look on his face. At the end, they all stand at attention with military precision.

DIXIE & ERICA: (very into it) Hair!

HARPER: (not into it) Watch...

DIXIE & ERICA: Hair!

HARPER: Watch...

DIXIE & ERICA: Hair!

HARPER: Watch...

They bow their heads.

DIXIE: And scene.

ERICA: What do you think?

PAIGE looks confused. CAL is doing his best not to laugh.

PAIGE: Wow.

CAL: (muffled) Wow.

ERICA: So?

PAIGE: It's a little... sparse.

CAL turns a laugh into a cough.

CAL: Fleas.

ERICA: It's efficient.

PAIGE: But, I wonder, I wonder if it's final exam efficient? Final exam... worthy? Who's to say.

DIXIE: If only she hadn't vetoed the pyrotechnics.

CAL and PAIGE look at each other.

PAIGE: Will I regret if I ask?

CAL: I'll do it. Pyrotechnics?

ERICA: It was Harper's idea. The love between Jim and Della is represented by a plume of fire shooting up behind them.

DIXIE: Their love is a firebomb bigger than any materialistic urge. Bigger than life.

ERICA: Like the Phoenix, their love rises from the ashes.

Both DIXIE and ERICA do a "rising from the ashes" gesture.

PAIGE: Wow.

ERICA: I know, amazing – right?

DIXIE: Safety issues. As if.

CAL: (to HARPER) That was your idea?

HARPER: Just the fireworks. Not the talking. I had nothing to do with the talking.

DIXIE: Back to the drawing board. Come on, Harper.

ERICA and DIXIE start to move.

CAL: Dude, what does she have on you?

HARPER: It's so –

DIXIE: (calling back) Harper!

HARPER scurries after. KIM enters.

KIM: Hey guys. Wait till you hear this –

MALINDA, SWAN and WYATT enter behind and shove KIM out of the way. At the same time, LAURA enters to sit on the upstage riser.

MALINDA: You're in my way.

PAIGE: Come back here and apologize.

KIM: It's OK.

PAIGE: It's not OK. You can't let her run over you. She treated you like crap, not the other way around.

KIM: And now we're not friends. That's why it's OK. Trust me.

CAL: She's mean to you because you know the true her. Once you raise the blinds, it's hard to lower them.

PAIGE: That was insightful.

CAL: I have my moments. (to KIM) You said no to Cabo. That's all you did.

KIM: I know, I'm just... trying to change.

On the upstage riser KYMBERDEE storms on. This is LAURA's hospital room. She's sitting in the chair with the blanket over her legs. For a second, KYMBERDEE stares at LAURA and LAURA stares at KYMBERDEE.

KYMBERDEE: Where's my brother?

LAURA: Not here.

KYMBERDEE: He's coming, right? He's my ride home.

LAURA: Gee Laura, how are you? Everything OK? Gee Kim, thanks for coming. Thanks for asking about me. You're swell.

KYMBERDEE: OK, OK, how are you?

LAURA: It doesn't count if I have to prompt you.

There is a pause.

KYMBERDEE: So...

LAURA: What?

KYMBERDEE: Mom says you have Leukemia. That's the cancer you got.

LAURA: Yep. Still got it. Lucky me.

KYMBERDEE: But they cure that, right? It's easy.

LAURA: Oh yeah. Cancer is easy. I'm doing backflips in the pool.

KYMBERDEE: You know what I mean. Kids get it all the time.

LAURA: Why don't you wait in the lounge for Bob? OK? OK.

KYMBERDEE: What? Why?

LAURA: Go away. Now.

KYMBERDEE: You can't tell me to leave.

LAURA: I can do whatever I want. It's my room. It's my cancer. It's my bloody cancer that doesn't want to go away, that is supposed to be so easy to cure for everyone except for me. For me it sticks around and feels right at home. So you are not helping.

KYMBERDEE: You're upset.

LAURA: Thanks genius.

KYMBERDEE: You don't have to be mean.

LAURA: Why not? We're mean to each other all the time. We've hated each other since we were in the sandbox. You don't like me, I don't like you. We're even.

KYMBERDEE: You don't like me.

LAURA: Why is that a surprise?

KYMBERDEE: Well I, I figured you were jealous.

LAURA: Of you?

KYMBERDEE: Yeah.

LAURA: Why would I be jealous of you?

KYMBERDEE: Well not now obviously. Now we live in a shoebox. Now Dad stays in his bathrobe and Mom is selling everything we own on eBay. Now I'll never get an undyed Amanda Wicker sweater. Now it sucks. But before –

LAURA: I don't like you because you are rotten hollow human being. That's why I don't like you.

KYMBERDEE: (*this rocks her a little*) I'm... very popular.

LAURA: Great.

KYMBERDEE: Everybody likes me. I'm popular and people like me. They want to be my friend. You've got it wrong.

LAURA: Must be the cancer.

KYMBERDEE: Is it... bad? You've been doing... (*she gestures at the chair*) this for awhile.

LAURA: Another round of chemo. I lost my hair for nothing.

KYMBERDEE: But you'll be OK, right?

LAURA: I don't know.

KYMBERDEE: You'll live. You're not going to die.

LAURA: I don't have any control over that.

KYMBERDEE: Why not? You can't die.

LAURA: Why not?

KYMBERDEE: I don't know anyone who's died.

LAURA: What a piece of work. (*she sighs*) I'm not going to make this easy. This isn't about you. I may die. There it is and you'll just have to deal. The world does not revolve around you. OK?

A bell rings. LAURA and KYMBERDEE exit as MALINDA and SWAN enter.

SWAN: I was just wondering, in the play, when do I get to talk?

MALINDA: You don't.

SWAN: But there's another female part in the story, there's the woman who buys Della's hair. Why can't I be her?

MALINDA: I will be playing both parts in a dazzling and heart wrenching tour de force.

WYATT: It was my suggestion.

SWAN: No kidding.

TAYLOR: (*to TANNER as they enter*) Don't scratch.

TANNER: I need more ointment.

DIXIE: (*to ERICA as they enter*) How about The Awesome Girls Group?

ERICA: What about Harper?

DIXIE: He won't care.

The students break into their groups.

MALINDA: Let's get to work on the end.

WYATT: You got it.

SWAN: How come he gets to talk?

MALINDA: I'm not going to play a guy, Swan.

WYATT: (*to SWAN*) What's the matter with you?

SWAN: So what am I? What do I get to do?

WYATT: You're a cat. A gray cat on a gray fence in a gray backyard.

SWAN: I'm a cat who should say some lines.

WYATT: Cats don't talk.

SWAN: Della should talk to the cat.

WYATT: Cat's don't talk.

SWAN: It's not real, it's a play. And I want some lines in the play.

MS. G enters clapping her hands.

MS. G: Ladies and gentlemen, I have an announcement. An exciting, wonderful announcement. Gather round please, gather round. (*she takes a breath*) I have been sharing this marvellous dramatic undertaking and of course the talents of our class star.

WYATT: Of course.

SWAN: You are such a suck up.

MS. G: And my various conversations with various colleagues has lead to a discussion of presenting our work (*presenting*) at the television level.

MALINDA: What?

ERICA: TV?

WYATT: How unexpected...

CEELEE & CEECEE: Ooooooh shiny...

PAIGE: (*shaking head*) This is going to turn out well.

SWAN: We're going to be on TV?

MALINDA: This changes everything.

WYATT: How so?

TANNER: Are you thinking...?

TAYLOR: I'm already there.

Everyone starts talking at once. MS. G claps her hands sharply.

MS. G: I'm not finished! (*everyone stares at her, she gives a tight little laugh*) Goodness. (*sing song*) Someone needs a reiki treatment.

The winning scene will be showcased on the annual prime time Christmas special –

PAIGE: Miss, why would there be a winning scene in a class exam project?

MS. G: (*she gives a tight laugh*) Right you are, Paige. Right you are. Yes of course there is no winning in class. We are all winners. Just by summoning up the courage to stand on stage before our peers, we have won.

DIXIE: So we're ALL going to be on TV?

Everyone starts talking at once. We hear the following lines in amidst the din.

ERICA: If we're on TV Malinda will want to be our friend.

MALINDA: If we're going to be on TV we need to be more realistic. I can't play two parts like that. We need another girl.

WYATT: Of course.

SWAN: Wait, I'm a girl.

MS. G: Ladies and gentlemen! (*she fans herself and takes a breath*) Is it hot in here? Perhaps I misspoke with my turn of phrase. One scene will be televised on the annual GTV prime time Christmas special. The win – the chosen scene will be the one which exemplifies the spirit, the theatricality, the true essence of the story.

TANNER: We have to win!

TAYLOR: Guaranteed A plus.

TANNER: Simpatico.

CEELEE & CEECEE: Shiny...

MALINDA: (*to WYATT*) We will win.

WYATT: You're the star.

SWAN: I'm a girl.

MALINDA: Miss! Miss! Swan is not working out.

SWAN: What?

MALINDA: I need to make a replacement.

Now everyone really starts talking.

DIXIE: What did she say?

SWAN: You're kicking me out of the group?

WYATT: What a shame.

DIXIE: Swan's out?

CEECEE & CEELEE: (to WYATT) Swan's out?

WYATT: Swan is out.

SWAN: (to MALINDA) We're best friends.

CAL: The crows are going berserk!

MS. G: (*clapping hands*) Ladies and gentlemen...

SWAN: You're kicking me out of the group just because I want to be a talking cat?

ERICA: Malinda needs someone in her group?

CEELEE & CEECEE: Malinda! Malinda!

DIXIE: I can't believe you'd abandon us!

ERICA: You were two seconds away from doing the same thing!

CAL: (to PAIGE) Stay behind me, Paige, I'll protect you.

PAIGE: My hero.

HARPER: If Dixie gets in Malinda's group I'll be free, free!

MS. G: Chaos. Chaos. I am surrounded by chaos! The infinity of space!
Chaos!

MS. G falls to the ground in a huddle with her arms over her head. BLUE steps forward. She speaks quietly.

BLUE: Hey. (*everyone stops talking*) Knock it off.

BLUE goes back into the background. MS. G looks up from her place on the floor.

MS. G: Thank you... Blue. (*she clears her throat*) Now. Malinda, you were saying...

MALINDA: I've made a replacement. In my group.

SWAN: I don't want to be in your group. I wouldn't be in your group if you paid me.

WYATT: No one's doing that.

SWAN: Suck up.

MALINDA: Miss, I want Kymberdee in my group.

This creates a reaction.

KIM: What?

ERICA: Who?

CAL: Kim?

DIXIE: Her?

KIM: Me?

CEECEE & CEELEE: Kim?

WYATT: How unexpected.

ERICA: I told you she'd run to Malinda and spill all our secrets.

CAL: Is this the part where they laugh and humiliate me?

MS. G: Really? Are you sure? I was under the impression – well, if that's what you want.

MALINDA: I want the best actress in the class. After me of course.

PAIGE: Kim?

There is a beat. KIM runs off.

MALINDA: Was it something I said?

END OF ACT ONE.

Act Two

Lights up on MS. G. She acts the part of Della, overdramatically.

MS. G: 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87. 87? That can't be. There has to be more. But I've counted it three times! What on earth am I supposed to do? Months and months of saving and all I've got to show is one dollar and eighty-seven cents. And tomorrow is Christmas. Oh my goodness. (*She flops to the side with an overdramatic cry. She flops to the opposite side with an overdramatic cry, and then rights herself.*) Look at you, gray cat. You don't have to worry about stretching 20 dollars a week. 20 dollars doesn't go very far. If I had my way I would buy all the finest things. Something fine and rare and sterling. Cat, have you ever tried to buy something fine and rare and sterling for a dollar eighty seven? What am I do to? What can I do? (*she ends in a dramatic pose, then comes to neutral, bringing a tissue to her eyes with a sigh*) Such a beautiful story.

The lights change. MS. G exits. On the other side of the stage, KIM enters. She has been crying. She wipes her eyes and gives a sigh.

KIM: OK Kim get a hold of yourself. I can't believe you're crying. I can't believe you're crying over someone as stupid as Malinda. I can't believe you're talking to yourself. As long as no one answers back, right? (*she sighs*) I'm not a bad person. Just because I used to be a bad person, doesn't mean I'm a bad person now. And thinking bad things, doesn't mean... (*she sighs*) When am I going to be a good person?

On the upstage riser, KYMBERDEE enters. She sits and stares out. BOB drags KANDACE in.

BOB: (*pointing at KYMBERDEE*) Look, look! (*aside*) She's been sitting there for an hour. And she doesn't even flinch when I called her Kimberly. Watch. Kimberly. Kimberly!

KANDACE: Oh dear.

BOB: That always drives her mental. Maybe she's actually mental.

KANDACE: Don't say that about your sister.

BOB: Maybe she's hit the wall over all this. Boom.

KYMBERDEE: Why did you do that?

BOB and KANDACE freeze. They look at each other, and then at KYMBERDEE.

KANDACE: Do what?

KYMBERDEE: K-Y-M-B-E-R-D double E. Not Kimberly. You're special. You're unique. Why did you do that?

BOB: (*whispering*) Boom.

KANDACE swats BOB.

KANDACE: Well that's what I wanted for you kids. Wonderfully unique names because I thought you were so special. You're certainly special to me.

KYMBERDEE: Do you hate the Bob thing?

BOB: Ooooh. I like that. Now I want to be known as "The Bob."

KANDACE swats BOB.

KANDACE: Well, a while ago I... a while ago I would have been upset. Before. But now it seems too small to get upset over. Things have changed.

KYMBERDEE: (*turning to them*) Why?

KANDACE: Why what?

KYMBERDEE: Why do things have to change? Why can't everything stay the same forever?

KANDACE: Life doesn't work that way.

KYMBERDEE: I hate it. I hate that we had to move, I hate that you don't care about his name, I hate that Dad won't leave his office. He won't even get dressed! Why isn't he doing anything? (*she looks away from them*)

KANDACE: Change isn't always easy. Your father put his whole life into his work.

KYMBERDEE: I've been thinking about death.

There is a pause. KANDACE clutches her chest and looks at BOB.

BOB: (*whispering*) Boom.

KANDACE: Ah, in what way, specifically, about death?

KYMBERDEE: I don't want Laura to die.

This is out of left field. BOB and KANDACE look at each other and back at KYMBERDEE.

BOB: We have entered the fifth dimension.

KANDACE swats BOB.

KANDACE: You're worried about your cousin?

KYMBERDEE: I don't even like her, she's always so... *(said with distaste)* sarcastic. But I have this thing in my stomach, this ache and it hurts when I think about what she's going through. I can't get rid of this ache, I've had it at least a month. I don't want her to die. I think about her, I worry about her. What is that?

BOB: A miracle.

KANDACE swats BOB.

KANDACE: That's compassion.

KYMBERDEE: Weird. I don't like it.

A buzzer sounds.

KANDACE: Who's that? Are you expecting anyone?

BOB: Uh uh.

KANDACE exits.

KYMBERDEE: Laura doesn't even like me. *(she sighs)* And I am so likeable.

BOB: *(with a short harsh laugh)* That was short-lived.

KYMBERDEE: Did you just laugh at me?

BOB: People don't like you, Kim.

KYMBERDEE: Don't call me Kim.

BOB: You're not so likeable. *(he storms off)*

KYMBERDEE: *(calling after)* Everyone loves me. *(exiting)*

KYMBERDEE follows. The focus shifts back to KIM, who is now sitting with her face in her hands. BAL, GAS and MELCHI enter – this time they act as they do at the beginning of the play. They are also wearing long robes.

MELCHI: My child can you help us?

GAS: We are looking for the King of Kings.

BAL: We have presents for him.

KIM looks up, confused.

KIM: What?

The three look at each other annoyed, and start again, this time a little faster.

MELCHI: My child, can you help us?

GAS: We are looking for the King of Kings.

BAL: We have presents for him.

KIM: I'm not, I'm not a child. Just because I'm crying, and obviously, I'm not really crying. I wouldn't be sitting underneath the bleachers, crying my eyes out for some stupid reason. That's lame.

MELCHI: OK...

GAS: Can we go back in time to the point where we ask a question and you answer it?

KIM: What?

BAL: Let's go ask someone else.

GAS: Roger.

KIM: Wait. Wait a second – You're the foreign exchange students. Aren't you? Sure you are. Mister Star? You have a present for him? When did your English get so good? Meester Staaaaaaahr.

GAS: Seriously?

BAL: She couldn't help us tie our shoes.

GAS: Roger.

They turn to go and KIM scrambles up.

KIM: Hey. Hey. I can help. You need help, I can help. I want to help. Let me help you.

MELCHI: All right.

KIM: What did you say you were looking for? A king? You're not looking for Mr. Star anymore?

GAS: We followed a star.

BAL: To here.

MELCHI: And now we're looking for the stable.

KIM: Stable?

MELCHI: The stable with the Christ child.

KIM: Here? At school?

BAL: Were you dropped as an infant? On your head perhaps?

GAS: Let's go talk to the lunch ladies.

KIM: Let me think! There's a shed out by the football field. You could start there. Does that help?

MELCHI: Thank you, my child.

BAL: Protect your head.

They turn to go.

KIM: Wait. There's three of you and you're looking for a stable? You're following a star. *(singing)* *Star of wonder, star of light, star with royal beauty –*

GAS: Honey, we know the song.

KIM: And you're here, now? Am I dreaming? I'm dreaming right, this isn't real. You're not real. I mean look at what you're wearing. I'm dreaming and this is just a dream.

BAL: How would we know what's going on in your head? Aside from the obvious brain damage.

GAS: Tick Tock.

MELCHI: Yes, we must be going.

KIM: Wait! If you are who I think you are, I have a question. Why did you give presents to a baby you don't even know? Why would you do that?

BAL: Maybe you fell down some stairs as a toddler. Was that it?

KIM: What?

MELCHI: Don't mind him, sand makes him cranky. It doesn't matter if we know the child or not. He is the King of Kings. He is to be celebrated and revered. It is with love in our hearts that we give him gifts. Do you only give when you expect something in return?

KIM: I – no.

BAL: Yes.

KIM: I said no.

GAS: You meant yes.

BAL: Brain damage.

KIM: I liked it better when you didn't speak English.

MELCHI: When you give you must never expect in return.

KIM: What, never? (*she face plants into her palm*) No, that's the old me. Ugh, why can't I get rid of her!

BAL: Brain damage, and a multiple personality.

GAS: Have you not given to express the love in your heart?

KIM: I don't know. I try to be nice, do nice things. I do a lot of nice things.

BAL: But...

KIM: There's no but.

BAL: Pull the other leg.

KIM: OK. But... I mostly do nice things because I haven't been so nice in the past and I want people to forget that part.

GAS: So you do want something in return when you give to others.

KIM: It's not a big thing...

GAS: Just the undying affection of those around you.

BAL: Perhaps you stuck your tongue to a frozen pole as a youth?

KIM: Stop insulting me.

MELCHI: If you give with love in your heart, it is always enough. The satisfaction of giving is what fulfils you. It is enough to give with love. I suspect that's the change you're looking for.

GAS: There must be someone in your life you wish to give something to without expecting in return.

KIM: I –

BAL: Or are you an empty vessel with a gaping hole of constant craving which is never satisfied or filled. *(beat)* Just guessing.

KIM: You rushed me, you didn't give me a chance to say anything.

MELCHI: Let her speak.

KIM: I do a lot. I do the cooking, I help Mom with her market stall...

GAS: Those are things you're supposed to do, you know. Do you want a parade for helping out at home? Whoo. She does dishes. Whoo.

KIM: OK... I wish I could do something for my cousin. Her cancer won't go away. She was in remission and now she's not, now she's...not. *(pause)* Everything I think of is so stupid. I want to give her something meaningful.

MELCHI: If you give her something with love in your heart and without any expectation, she will not think it's stupid.

KIM: Really?

MELCHI: Trust me.

KIM: But I'm afraid.

GAS: Tick tock. Tick tock. *(exits)*

BAL: We're out of here.

KIM: That's it? That's all I get? You're supposed to be the three wise men, say something wise.

BAL: Don't eat yellow snow. *(exits)*

MELCHI: You're going to be fine. *(exits)*

KIM: How do you know? How do I know? Hello?

BOB and LAURA enter with streamers and party hats on the upstage riser. BOB is wailing on a noisemaker. They sit at the table.

BOB: Who's ready to celebrate?

LAURA: I'm not in the clear yet.

BOB: But the doc says it looks good.

LAURA: After two rounds I would hope so.

BOB: Then you're good. We celebrate! Whoo hoo!

KYMBERDEE enters carrying a plate with a couple of cupcakes.

KYMBERDEE: Hey.

LAURA: Oh hi.

KYMBERDEE: (*nervous*) I thought... I thought you'd like a cupcake.

BOB: You're bringing us treats?

KYMBERDEE: They're the disfigured ones we can't sell at the stall.

LAURA: That's more like it. I thought you were being nice for a second.

KYMBERDEE: I was, I am, I – (*she shoves the plate on the table*) Forget it.

LAURA: (*taking one*) Aunt Kandace makes the best cupcakes. I'm so glad she's baking again.

KYMBERDEE: Actually, I made it.

LAURA: You made me something?

BOB: Kim's doing a lot of the baking for Mom.

LAURA: You are? Did you get dropped on your head?

KYMBERDEE: Something like that.

BOB: She said no to Cabo.

LAURA: Really.

KYMBERDEE: (*she takes a deep breath*) I want to apologize.

There is a pause.

LAURA: You put something in the cupcakes.

KYMBERDEE: What?

LAURA: You're trying to poison me and in my delirium I thought I just heard you say, "I want to apologize."

KYMBERDEE: (*turning away*) Forget it.

BOB: (*jumping up and bringing her back*) Kim, you can't get so easily pissed off. You're saying words that have never crossed your lips in fifteen years, cut us some slack.

KYMBERDEE: Sorry, sorry. (*she takes a deep breath*) You're right. This is new.

BOB: Good thing you have all summer.

KYMBERDEE: OK. So. I want to apologize for being a horrible human being.

LAURA: That's it?

KYMBERDEE: Yes. Why was that bad? (to BOB) Did I do it wrong?

LAURA: No, no. I accept your apology.

BOB: I don't think I ever got an apology.

KYMBERDEE: Well, I don't like you.

LAURA: Humour! She gained a sense of humour!

KYMBERDEE: And Bob's a stupid name.

BOB: Laura and I only picked it to drive you mental.

KYMBERDEE: I didn't put anything in her cupcake, but don't be too sure about yours.

BOB: Touché. (*pronounced too-SHAY*)

LAURA: I like this new Kymberdee.

BOB: More cupcakes!

They laugh and exit. CAL approaches KIM.

CAL: Hey. There you are.

KIM: (*turning*) What? Oh Cal. Hey did you see the foreign exchange... (*she shakes her head*) Never mind.

CAL: Everyone is looking for you. Well, Paige and I are looking for you.

KIM: You're the only ones who count.

CAL: What happened? You looked like a deer in the headlights of a bus headed to crazy town.

KIM: That bad, huh? (*she sighs*) I didn't know what to do so...

CAL: Just cause Malinda wants you in her group doesn't mean you have to be. She's not trying to be friendly, she's up to something.

KIM: I know.

CAL: So, you say, "No way Mountain Cow. Go back to the fields with your shiny shiny followers and your caw caw girls."

KIM: Why do all those people want to be around her?

CAL: Because they don't know any better. Because they think being her friend makes them better. Because it's Tuesday. There's always going to be people who go for something shiny. Straw men with the shiny shiny attract crows. And when straw men see the flapping and cawing of a few birds, they think the whole world is at their beck and call. When the fact is, it's just a couple of crows mesmerized by a little bit of sparkle making a lot of noise.

KIM: I never knew.

CAL: You never saw it from the outside. You were only ever getting flapped at by crows. And the thing about crows, once the shiny goes away, so do they. You were replaced pretty quickly.

KIM: You think a lot, don't you Cal.

CAL: It's a curse I must bear. So, why'd you run?

KIM: I heard her say, "I want Kymberdee." And then a little voice in the back of my head spoke. And then... I had to get out.

CAL: And what did the voice say? You didn't answer back, did you?

KIM: For a half second, in the back of my mind I heard a little voice say, "Do it. Hitch onto her star. Be shiny again." And I wanted to do it. I wanted to, after everything she's done to me. I wanted to be in her group, and be in her... *(she gestures)* sphere. She sparkles on stage and it's nice to be with someone like that. She's not always nice but oh she sparkles. She's going places and if I said yes, maybe I could hitch a ride and shine along with her. I could leave all my problems behind. And if I think like that then I haven't changed. I've tried to be a different person but if my brain says, "Yes, yes, be with Malinda" then maybe I haven't changed at all.

CAL: Math class.

KIM: Huh?

CAL: Math class. Grade nine. You and Malinda sat behind me.

KIM: I don't remember that.

CAL: Why would you? I wasn't worth remembering. You and Malinda were thick as thieves. I asked you a question once. Just once.

KYMBERDEE and MALINDA step forward on the upstage riser.

KYMBERDEE: Are you talking to me?

MALINDA: Do you hear something?

KYMBERDEE: I don't hear a thing.

They exit.

KIM: See? I'm awful. I'm a terrible person.

CAL: OK. That has got to stop. Kim. I was trying to prove a point. You have changed. You have changed more in one year than the ordinary person will change in their lifetime. But you have got to stop riding the "poor me" train. All day long you want us to say how great you are, and how terrible you were. You're not the same, you know it. The more you whine about how much you haven't changed the more everyone's going to start agreeing with you. "Yeah, maybe you're right, maybe you're just like Malinda and you always will be." How about you just be yourself OK? Stop talking and just be yourself. *(he starts to storm away but turns back)* But you don't have to stop with the cupcakes. If, of your own free will, you want to bring cupcakes every day, who am I to say no? I really like the cupcakes and I would miss them. The cupcakes have nothing to do with whether you're a good person. Truly. Not that I want you to bribe us. But I like cupcakes. OK? OK.

CAL leaves. KIM turns to the upstage riser. The lights change, and all the drama students crowd onto the upstage riser. This is the first day of Drama class. Everyone is buzzing and talking in small groups.

CEELEE: Did you hear?

CEECEE: What?

ERICA: Big fight over the summer.

DIXIE: Who?

CEELEE: Kymerdee and Malinda.

CEECEE: No!

DIXIE: Them?

CEECEE: Really?

SWAN: What happened?

ERICA: Big fight.

Everyone stops dead as MALINDA enters. She doesn't look at anyone as she crosses. The buzzing and the talking takes up in earnest.

DIXIE: Kymerdee and Malinda?

WYATT: Interesting.

CEECEE: But they're best friends!

CEELEE: She said no to Cabo.

SWAN: No!

WYATT: Huh. You don't say.

ERICA: That means there's an opening. That means there's a best friend opening.

DIXIE: I'll go to Cabo.

MS. G: (*entering*) Ladies and gentlemen, I know we've had a wonderful summer full of frolic. Let us begin our year out of the hall.

WYATT: Hey Malinda. I saw you in *Thoroughly Modern Millie* this summer. You were so much better than the lead.

MALINDA: I know. And now they know too. She folded midway through rehearsal, total choke.

WYATT: You should have taken over.

MALINDA: I know.

MS. G: (*clapping her hands*) Welcome to the dramatic arts. We are going to take a magical journey through theatrical eras old and new, explore techniques steeped in the steps of the Greek Theatron, to Shakespeare's Globe, to Brecht's smashing of the fourth wall. You have much to learn and I have much – so much – to give. Let the adventure begin.

HARPER: Miss! When are we going to do improv?

There is a murmur of excitement in the class. This is what they want to do. KYMBERDEE stumbles into the classroom. Everyone stares at her.

KYMBERDEE: Sorry Ms. G.

MS. G: Not a good start to the year, Ms. Tillman.

KYMBERDEE: Won't happen again.

Everyone starts to whisper as they look between MALINDA and KYMBERDEE. MALINDA is not looking at KYMBERDEE.

MS. G: Settle down, settle down. (to KYMBERDEE) As you've always been an exemplary student, I won't mark you late on the... attendance. I didn't get the attendance sheet. All right everyone, I want you to warm up and I'll be right back. (she hurries off)

There is silence. Everyone stares first at MALINDA and then at KYMBERDEE. Then back at MALINDA. KYMBERDEE marches to the middle of the room.

KYMBERDEE: Hello. Hello everyone, I have a bit of an announcement.

MALINDA: Nice shirt. Salvation Army?

CEELEE and CEECEE giggle. KYMBERDEE plows ahead.

KYMBERDEE: You may know me, I'm sure you know me, but you have known me in a certain way in the past... I just want to re-introduce myself. I'm Kim.

DIXIE: We know who you are.

KYMBERDEE: I'm sure you do. It's just that there have been some changes.

MALINDA: Ask her why her dad stays in his bathrobe all day.

KYMBERDEE: (*not giving up*) There have been some changes and Kymberdee isn't going to be around anymore.

SWAN: You're standing right there.

KYMBERDEE: True. Technically. But go with me for a moment. Kymberdee was last year and this year, I am Kim. Kim is here to stay.

MALINDA: Someone's losing it...

CEECEE and CEELEE giggle.

KYMBERDEE: And while I'm standing here, here to stay, I just want to take this opportunity to generally say, I'm sorry.

PAIGE: For what?

KYMBERDEE: I want to apologize if there's something mean or not so nice I've said or done in the past. And I'm going to come and

personally apologize to everyone, one on one but I thought I'd start big. (*there is a pause*) OK, I'm done, I'm just going to sit over there and if anyone, off the top of their head, can think of something they want an apology for right away, you know where to find me. Over there. OK.

Everyone watches as KYMBERDEE moves over to sit beside PAIGE. They all start talking amongst themselves. Gradually they exit.

KYMBERDEE: Hi Paige.

PAIGE: Hi...

KYMBERDEE: Do you mind if I sit here? I know I didn't ask but right now, I need to sit down.

PAIGE: Sure. Go ahead.

KYMBERDEE: I don't think I've said anything mean specifically to you, have I?

PAIGE: No, not specifically. Just blanket ignoring.

KYMBERDEE: OK, so, I apologize for being a self-centred boob and never even saying Hi. Hi.

PAIGE: Is this some kind of trick?

KYMBERDEE: Nope. It's really not.

PAIGE: You and Malinda had a fight.

KYMBERDEE: I said no to Cabo.

PAIGE: I don't know what that means.

KYMBERDEE: It means we're no longer friends. (*she exhales loudly*) I've never done anything like this before. Make a general announcement. I didn't eat breakfast this morning because I didn't want to puke in the middle. Of the announcement. That would not be good. Am I talking too much?

PAIGE: You're not kidding about this. Kymberdee is dead, long live Kim?

KYMBERDEE: Maybe not as morbid as that. But yeah. I'm kind of done with her.

CAL runs in hiding under a notebook.

CAL: Did she take attendance? Did she take attendance?

PAIGE: How many times did you hit the snooze?

CAL: Twenty-seven. (seeing KYMBERDEE he jumps) Ah! What are you doing here? On this side of the room?

PAIGE: Cal, this is Kim. Kim, Cal.

KYMBERDEE: Hi.

CAL: I know who she is. She sat behind me in math class.

PAIGE: That was Kymberdee, this is Kim.

CAL: What?

KYMBERDEE: Hi.

CAL: Is there a hidden camera somewhere?

KYMBERDEE: Sorry.

CAL: What's going on?

PAIGE: See what happens when you're late?

TANNER and TAYLOR approach.

TANNER & TAYLOR: We want an apology.

CAL: What?

KYMBERDEE: OK.

CAL: What?

TANNER: You called us nerd freaks who would never get a date in a million years.

KYMBERDEE: Wow. That's not nice.

TAYLOR: That was three years ago and we've never forgotten.

CAL: Did I wake up in the right universe?

KYMBERDEE: I'm sorry.

TANNER & TAYLOR: Not good enough.

TANNER: We want an apology every day till the end of the semester.

TAYLOR: Then we'll know you're serious.

KYMBERDEE: OK. You got it.

TANNER & TAYLOR: Really?

KYMBERDEE: Yes.

TAYLOR: You're going to apologize to us every day.

KYMBERDEE: Yes.

TANNER: We'll make you a punch card.

TAYLOR: So we can keep track.

KYMBERDEE: Sounds good.

PAIGE: You're not going to apologize to them every day.

KYMBERDEE: Why not, they remembered it for three years. The least I can do is say I'm sorry for a couple of months. So, Tanner, Taylor, I'm sorry I said those hurtful words.

TANNER and TAYLOR stare at KYMBERDEE for a moment.

TANNER & TAYLOR: OK.

TANNER: We'll see how long this lasts. (*they exit*)

CAL: I am awake, aren't I? (*PAIGE pinches him*) Ow!

PAIGE: You're awake.

The focus shifts back to KIM. Everyone on risers exits.

KIM: OK. I have changed. I have. So how do I give from my heart? What am I going to do? (*she thinks for a moment then twirls her hair then looks at it*) Could I? What do I have to lose? Kim stop talking to yourself and go do it.

She exits one way and on the other side of the stage, CEECEE and CEELEE enter with SWAN following. They pose in a pageant way. They smile. There is a pause. SWAN groans and holds her head.

SWAN: Go, would you go? Please?

CEECEE: Yeah, I don't get it.

SWAN gives a pained whimper like she has explained this a million times.

CEELEE: Yeah me either. You can't even buy gum for a dollar eighty seven.

CEECEE: Yeah.

SWAN: I keep telling you, it's not a dollar eighty seven in today's money. It's a long time ago. The story was written a long, long time ago. Money had a different value.

CEELEE & CEECEE: Oh.

SWAN: Do you get it?

CEECEE: I guess.

CEELEE: But it doesn't make any sense.

CEECEE: Yeah.

SWAN: Like I keep telling you, you can't think about what you can buy with a dollar eighty seven today.

CEELEE: You can't even buy gum for a dollar eighty seven.

CEECEE: Yeah.

SWAN: I know! You've said that about fifty times now.

CEELEE: It's true.

CEECEE: Yeah.

SWAN: For the last time. A dollar eighty seven now is not the same as a dollar eighty seven then. It's not the same at all. And every time you get caught up between now and then, we can't move forward and if we're not moving forward, if we're swimming, swimming, swimming out of control in a whirlpool of now and then, now and then and we're not getting anything done!

CEELEE & CEECEE: Yeah.

CEECEE: That's no good.

SWAN: Are we OK? Are we on the same page?

CEELEE & CEECEE: Yeah...

SWAN: What. What is it?

CEELEE: Maybe we should change the watch chain to a pack of gum.

CEECEE: Yeah!

CEELEE: And instead of combs, hair extensions!

SWAN gives a pained whimper and plants her face in her hands. The lights come up full as HARPER enters on the other side of the stage, he strides on like a new man. DIXIE is following him and ERICA is following her. BLUE strolls in and sits, her hoodie still up, hands in pockets. During the following conversation, PAIGE and CAL also enter, listening to the conversation.

DIXIE: What do you mean you're not in our group?

HARPER: I don't want to be in your group. I don't like your group. I choose not to be in your group. Ha!

DIXIE: No.

HARPER: Yes.

DIXIE: You're in our group till I say you're not in our group.

HARPER: I'm going to do something with Blue.

DIXIE: *(looking at BLUE)* Blue?

HARPER: Blue.

BLUE takes a hand out of her pocket, makes a peace sign.

DIXIE: You can't do something with Blue. You're in our group.

HARPER: Not anymore.

DIXIE: Don't push me, Harper. I'll tell your sister everything. Every last detail.

HARPER: Yeah, you could do that.

DIXIE: I will, believe you me, I will.

HARPER: Except I already did.

DIXIE: What?

HARPER: I told her last night. Every last detail.

DIXIE: What?

HARPER: I spilled the beans on myself. I don't know why I didn't do it months ago.

DIXIE: I don't believe it. She was supposed to beat you into a pulp!

HARPER: Yeah, she didn't. We had a long, long talk. Best talk we had in years. And I owe it all to Blue.

ERICA: Blue?

HARPER: She convinced me to suck it up and I did.

ERICA: You had a conversation? With Blue? With words?

DIXIE: What if we get Ms. G to un-veto the fireworks. Will you stay then? Huh? Will you?

HARPER: Have fun, Dixie. You and Erica will do a great job.

HARPER strolls away. He and CAL hi-five.

CAL: Dude!

HARPER goes over to BLUE and they start silently talking. DIXIE stands, her lip doing a very exaggerated quiver. She starts to whimper, on the verge of a major freak out.

ERICA: Dixie... are you OK, Dixie?

CAL: She's gonna to blow.

PAIGE: We should do something.

CAL: Are you kidding? The shrapnel alone could be killer.

DIXIE starts a slow build to a huge wail. ERICA runs over to PAIGE.

ERICA: You have to help me! She's gonna blow!

ERICA pulls PAIGE over to DIXIE, CAL follows behind.

PAIGE: Dixie, hey Dixie, how are you Dixie?

DIXIE: The worst!

PAIGE: Oh yeah, how come?

CAL: *(aside to PAIGE)* Watch for shrapnel...

DIXIE: Harper just broke up with me!

ERICA: He what?

DIXIE: Harper broke up with me.

PAIGE: Um, Dixie, I didn't think you two were really going out.

DIXIE: We were.

CAL: No you weren't. He wasn't your boyfriend, you've been holding him hostage all semester. You don't get a guy by holding dirt over his head.

DIXIE: (*building*) But, but, but,

CAL: (*ducking*) Take cover!

DIXIE: That's how we do it at my house! (*beat*) That's how Grammy got four husbands!

The stage then fills with students clamouring after MS. G. MS. G seems to be trying to get away from the clamour, but the students continue to chase her around the stage. They look and sound like an overlapping mob.

ALL: Ms. G! Ms. G! Ms. G!

MALINDA: I need another actress, find me someone good.

WYATT: There's no one good in this class.

MALINDA: If Kymberdee is too stupid to know a good thing when she sees it, how is that my fault?

ALL: Ms. G! Ms. G! Ms. G!

SWAN: I need another group, you have to get me in another group.

CEELEE & CEECEE: Ms. G she's so mean.

SWAN: Mean? You're forcing me to explain inflation!

ALL: Ms. G! Ms. G! Ms. G!

TANNER: Tell Blue she can't leave our group.

TAYLOR: We'll be forced to take extra measures.

ERICA: You better not be thinking pyrotechnics. She won't let you do it.

TAYLOR: She won't let you do it.

DIXIE: (*running over*) Ms. G you have to un-veto the fireworks.

ERICA: What are you saying?

TANNER: Some of us need hand holding and some of us don't.

DIXIE: I need fireworks.

ERICA: Are you saying I'm a baby?

TAYLOR: If the onesie fits...

DIXIE: I can't keep him without fireworks!

Now everyone is in on the action, all yelling, all trying to get MS. G to listen to what they want.

ALL: (*syncopated, not unison*) Ms. G! Ms. G! Ms. G! Ms. G! Ms. G!

As everyone clamours, MS. G tries to calm everyone down.

MS. G: (*same time as above*) Now, now. No need to shove. Let's do a group meditation. Perhaps some downward dogs? OK, stop shoving, stop yelling in my ear, if you're not going to stop shoving and yelling I'm going to have to get angry and I don't want to get, OK, now you're really making me –

This builds to a climax at which point MS. G's voice is heard above the others.

MS. G: THIS IS NOT MY HAPPY PLACE!

Everyone freezes.

MS. G: I know yoga death grip moves and I'm not afraid to use them!

CAL: (*to PAIGE*) Yoga death grip?

MS. G: Stop talking! All of you, take a step back. (*they do*) Get back, get back. (*everyone takes two more steps*) Sit down. (*everyone sits on the floor*) That's better. Now breathe.

MALINDA: Ms. G, I think we know how to –

MS. G: Do it! Now, now, now! (*beat, retains cheery voice*) Breathe in... (*everyone does it.*) and breathe out... (*everyone does it*) In... and out... Now we can have a conversation like civilized human beings, or we can do this like animals, (*everyone starts talking*) WE ARE NOT ANIMALS! (*everyone freezes*) As I was saying, (*she takes a breath and lets it out noisily*) I know that you, my stubborn, stubborn, little souls, can participate in our big blue marble like civilized, rational human beings. Because ladies and gentlemen that is what we are, yes? We are a wonderful, advanced society with a love of theatre. That's what this is all about, yes? That's what all this lawless pandemonium is about, yes? Not a mad dash grab for five minutes of media fame. None of you would be so

shallow as that. This maelstrom of unrepentant chaos is about a love of the theatre and presenting the best work possible to me, your favourite teacher. (*everyone looks at each other*) Now would be the time to say, “Yes Ms. G.”

ALL: (*not convincing*) Yes Ms. G...

MS. G: (*she slumps*) I give up. Do what you will.

DIXIE: (*rising up a little*) Yes!

MS. G: Except the pyrotechnics.

DIXIE: (*sinking down*) Oh...

MS. G: I will be in the corner rediscovering my love of teaching through an extended child pose. Disturb me at your peril.

MS. G moves to the side of the stage and arranges herself in a yoga pose. Everyone moves into their groups and confers silently.

CAL: Where’s Kim? I haven’t seen her all day.

PAIGE: I spoke to her last night, she seemed OK. (*across the stage MALINDA and WYATT share a mean laugh*) Speaking of which, I have to do something stupid and unsatisfying.

CAL: Do you need back up? Is this going to turn into a vampire mountain cow snowball snarkfest?

PAIGE: I’ll be fine.

CAL: Watch for shrapnel.

PAIGE crosses over to MALINDA. As she does we hear ERICA and DIXIE.

DIXIE: But I didn’t keep him against his will, right?

ERICA: You were blackmailing him.

DIXIE: But it was a funny blackmail, right? Grammy says it’s all right if it’s funny.

ERICA: You have to stop listening to your Grammy.

PAIGE: (*approaching MALINDA*) What do you think you’re doing?

MALINDA: Are you talking to me?

WYATT: I don’t hear anyone.

MALINDA: No one worth talking to anyway.

PAIGE: What do you think you're doing, picking Kim like that after all you've put her through this semester. It's the meanest thing I've ever seen.

MALINDA: Oh grow up. That's the meanest thing? Please.

WYATT: Please.

PAIGE: You're making fun of her.

MALINDA: I want that television spot. I'm going to get it. It was one thing when this was for a pointless exam, but television? I will not let this opportunity pass me by. Kymberdee is –

PAIGE: Kim.

MALINDA: She's the only other decent actress here so –

PAIGE: So you're using her.

MALINDA: I'm going to have a career and that spot is going to help. I tried to get Ms. G to just make me the winner, but she wouldn't budge.

PAIGE: There is no winning. It's a class.

MALINDA: You keep telling yourself that.

PAIGE: So what you're really saying is... you can't do it without her.

MALINDA: What? No I'm not.

WYATT: No she's not.

MALINDA: I can do it, just not with any of you losers.

PAIGE: You need Kim, and you're not going to get Kim.

MALINDA: She'll come around. Everyone wants to be on TV.

PAIGE: I don't think so. You're not going to get what you want. What does that feel like?

WYATT: Malinda is a star.

PAIGE: What a crazy world.

MALINDA: Of course I can do it by myself, I'd totally rather do it by myself, but I know exactly what's right for TV and that's why –

DIXIE: Kim!

Everyone in the room is distracted by KIM. This is because KIM has cut off all her hair. She enters and sits with CAL. Everyone stares in silence.

HARPER: Whoa.

KIM: Hello everyone. (pause) Nice day, isn't it?

ERICA: What did you do to your hair?

KIM: I needed a change.

DIXIE: But you've been growing your hair for years.

KIM: It's just hair. (beat) That's it, nothing more to see here.

Everyone goes back to working, occasionally glancing back over at KIM. PAIGE comes over.

CAL: Wow.

KIM: I know it's short. I keep feeling my head like there's something missing.

PAIGE: Why did you do it?

KIM: Something different. It was an impulse.

PAIGE: But you never said anything.

CAL: You didn't get gum stuck in there did you?

KIM: Nope.

Hearing this, CEECEE and CEELEE get a bright idea.

CEECEE: Ceelee!

CEELEE: What?

CEECEE: In the story! She gives him gum, it gets stuck in her hair and that's why she needs the extensions.

CEELEE: That makes perfect sense!

They hi-five and exit. MALINDA and WYATT walk by.

MALINDA: Hey Pizza face, I know we're doing *Gift of the Magi* but that's extreme. Psycho extreme.

WYATT: You look like a boy.

MALINDA: I guess you don't have the money to take care of it anymore.

PAIGE: How's your scene coming, Malinda? Need any help?

MALINDA storms off. PAIGE laughs a little.

KIM: What did you do to her? You got the last word!

PAIGE: Oh, that is wrong. It's so mean, stooping to her level. But it felt really good.

KIM: You don't have to be perfect all the time, you know.

PAIGE lets out a laugh.

CAL: I was wondering... should we be working on our scene?

PAIGE and KIM both laugh as the focus shifts to the upstage riser and another scene in the past. KYMBERDEE is at the kitchen table. We see the last bit of a previous conversation between her and BOB.

BOB: *(with a short harsh laugh)* That was short-lived.

KYMBERDEE: Did you just laugh at me?

BOB: People don't like you, Kim.

KYMBERDEE: Don't call me Kim.

BOB: You're not so likeable. *(he storms off)*

KYMBERDEE: *(calling after)* Everyone loves me. They have to. If people don't like me... If I don't have that...

KANDACE enters with MALINDA.

MALINDA: *(cheery demeanour)* Hey!

KYMBERDEE: *(subdued)* Hi.

KANDACE: Are you staying for dinner, Malinda?

MALINDA: No thank you, Mrs. Tillman. I'm expected at home. I just had to speak with Kymberdee for a moment and I'll be on my way. Thank you though.

KANDACE: All right.

As soon as KANDACE leaves MALINDA loses her cheery demeanour. KYMBERDEE is pensive.



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