

# *Rosenthal & Gerstenzang Are Dead!*

A play by Michael Descy

Produced March 18, 19, 20, 1999

Pollack Auditorium, Brandeis University

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## **Dramatis Personae**

DANA	Our hero, a morbid and lovelorn English major
MARK	DANA's zany roommate and best friend
AMY	DANA's older, hometown friend
PHIL	DANA's RA
EXOTIC RAOUL	An International student with an accent
The FEMME FATALE	DANA's lust interest
SARAH	DANA's ex-girlfriend
MIKE	
DOM	
DAVE	
GREG	DANA's hallmates
TOUR GUIDE	
FRAT BOY	The FEMME FATALE's boyfriend
ZEKE	
PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS	
RANDOM PARENTS	

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# Act 1

—Scene 1—

*(DANA is hunched over his desk, working quietly.)*

TOUR GUIDE Mind if we take a peek at your room?

DANA Wha...?

*(A small group of bewildered kids and parents enter. The TOUR GUIDE enters—walking backwards—at the end of the train.)*

ZEKE *(to DANA)* So, dude, lotta parties here?

*(DANA turns around slowly, says nothing.)*

RANDOM PARENT So, Ezekiel, seems like a nice place, huh?

ZEKE Umm...

MARK *(jumps out of hiding, screaming)* Don't come here! You pre-freshmen. You think college is all about booze and getting booty, and *Animal House* and I'm going to be the next Abbie Hoffman. Well save yourselves you miserable wretches!

TOUR GUIDE *(somewhere in the middle of MARK's speech)* Maybe it would be best to leave.

*(Exit TOUR GUIDE, still walking backwards, leading the others out.)*

MARK Omigod! That was great! High five!

DANA I can't believe you did that.

MARK You loved it so much you barely know what to *do* with your bad self.

DANA Okay, Mark. This is a little too much.

*(PHIL, the RA, enters, in response to the tour guide commotion. The TOUR GUIDE is with him. She is crying. He is holding her. He is not amused.)*

DANA I think I'm going to step out for this one. *(DANA scampers out.)*

TOUR GUIDE *(babbling)* Those nice people will never come here!

PHIL Mark, look what you've done to this poor creature.

TOUR GUIDE I'm going to lose my job.

PHIL Mark. I was in my room, sitting full lotus, and I heard you screaming at her tour group. I almost fell off my meditation cushion.

MARK I was just having a little fun, Phil.

TOUR GUIDE I'll have to walk forwards from now on. *(Breaks down.)*

PHIL You know, Mark, I once hated it here, too. But—

MARK I don't hate it here, Phil.

PHIL We can get through this, Mark.

MARK I was joking. No need to write me up or anything.

PHIL You've hurt her. You've hurt me. Apologize, Mark.

MARK *(Giving them both a hug.)* I'm sorry, Tour Guide Girl. I'm sorry, RA Phil.

PHIL That was really beautiful, man.

*(DANA enters, frazzled looking. MARK and PHIL turn.)*

DANA Not only do I have to call Pal9 tonight, come out Thursday, and admit that I'm an alcoholic, I've got to join the Most Dynamic Martial Arts on Campus, Chung Do Kwan!

MARK Back from the bathroom, eh?

DANA Why do they all put their signs up in there? Are they *trying* to shorten my life?

MARK *(turning to an authority)* Yeah, Phil. What's the connection between one of our most natural acts and the reconstruction of our shattered modern lives through therapy and ritual violence?

PHIL That's a question to ponder at another time. *(PHIL leaves, leading the TOUR GUIDE away. DANA walks over to his desk and extracts a red book. MARK sticks around. DANA is impatient.)*

MARK Man, you're still reading that book?

DANA Sarah gave it to me.

MARK I thought she dumped you months ago!

DANA (*escorting MARK to the door*) She did, Mark.

MARK Hey, it's my room, too.

DANA I need some privacy.

(*DANA strides over to his desk. He begins composing a love note to his femme fatale.*)

DANA Dearest Jessica, or is it Julie...? Ah! To whom it may concern:

My heart lies open. Four chambers, empty. Red walls, pulsing.

My heart lies waiting. Waiting for your lips to graze it.

(*Hours pass.*)

My heart lies. I flip its pages, and they are blank, they are blotted. Your lipstick is smeared across them, a child's scrawl. Red on red walls, you rewrite me from the inside out.

My heart lies. Lies...lies...

(*A young woman's orgasmic gasp erupts, interrupting DANA. He tries to compose himself, then recommence writing. MARK bursts in.*)

MARK Holy shit! Did you hear that?!

DANA Who didn't?

MARK I can't believe it's 12:45 *already!*

DANA You mean...?

MARK You could set your watch by those two. But usually not this far away.

DANA Must be quite a night then?

MARK It's like this *every* night. 12:44: nothing. 12:45... (*The girl moans, interrupting him. MARK walks in mad circles.*) Omigod, omigod, omigod! Maintain. Maintain.

DANA You were saying?

MARK This, every night like a blessed event.

*(Another moan, louder than the last, is heard.)*

MARK I wonder what they're doing.

DANA Pretty obvious, isn't it?

MARK They can't be having sex. They just *can't*. Sex isn't *that* good!

DANA Like you would know.

MARK Like *you* would know.

*(She goes again.)*

DANA I know I've never heard *that* before! Ugh.

MARK Jealous.

DANA You *like* this?

MARK Who wouldn't? Besides, I used to think that no one ever had sex at Brandeis.

*(Again, and louder.)*

DANA Yeah, well now you know it happens. Has your life changed?

MARK There's still hope for us. Someday even *we* might get laid.

DANA Don't even get me started on that!

MARK This is too funny to let go to waste. I wonder if the boys down the hall can hear this.

DANA Like they care.

MARK Jeez, Dana. You really have an aversion to all this.

DANA Of course I do! It's no one else's business. *(MARK runs out. DANA calls after him)* So what if she's a screamer? *(DANA follows him.)*

—Scene 2—

*(They go and find MIKE, DOM, DAVE, and GREG in their room. DAVE is struggling to adjust the TV antenna. The rest are transfixed on the TV. The moaning is farther away,*

*and therefore muffled a bit, but it is still going on, a not-too subtle but constant presence.)*

MARK Hey, guys. Do you hear all that?

DAVE *(DAVE is standing in front of the TV, fiddling with the antenna.)* All I know is the signal's messed up.

MIKE Left! *(As DAVE and the others move, the moans change in volume, quality, and duration.)*

DANA That wasn't interference you heard, guys...

MIKE Your other left!

*(No one appears to be listening.)*

MARK It was Exotic Raoul having sex!

*(They all stop and stare at him in momentary awe.)*

MARK *(trying to translate)* Bangin' the gong?

DOM Well, that explains why it never stopped.

MIKE Wait, Wait! *(The noise stops.)* Perfect! *(Silence, except for TV reception, that is.)*

MARK Well, I guess my work here is done. *(MARK starts to walk off. The noise starts again.)*

MIKE Don't move! *(MARK freezes. The noise stops again.)* You're ruining the signal!

MARK What do you mean?

GREG Stay still!

MARK *(Mark shivers. The noise starts when he moves, and stops when he stops. He starts to hop around, then pausing, enjoying how they start and stop.)* I like it! *(He stops because they are all eyeing him. The noise stops too.)*

GREG My arms are getting tired. *(He goes to sit down. The noise starts again.)*

DANA This can't be happening! Who are we to control what happens in that room?

*(EXOTIC RAOUL enters, wearing a towel. He looks around the room.)*

DOM Holy shit! It's Exotic Raoul!

MIKE Then who's having sex out there?

MARK *(eyes wide, following EXOTIC RAOUL around the room)* He's that good!

*(DANA makes a face in disgust. EXOTIC RAOUL exits, throwing the towel onstage as he leaves. DANA shudders and runs out.)*

MARK It's a strange and wonderful world, Dana. *(DANA is gone. Everyone else is watching TV as if nothing happened.)* Dana? *(MARK exits.)*

—Scene 3—

*(DANA is walking back to his room. He walks right past the FEMME FATALE, a girl in a red dress. Knees weak, he brushes past her in the hallway. As she walks brusquely past him, he turns around, bites his hand, and sinks nearly to his knees. This is the girl he is chasing.)*

DANA It's her... Jessica... Or, Jennifer... Whoever she is she's gorgeous.

*(DANA makes sure no one saw him and walks away.)*

—Scene 4—

*(DANA is alone in his room.)*

DANA The Tree of Knowledge. I am a cell riding its outer ring, grafted onto thousands of other cells, all dead. Life, clinging to death. It gives us strength. It props us above ourselves.

*(MARK enters and applauds sarcastically.)*

MARK You morbid creature!

DANA I'm an English major!

MARK You're a freak!

DANA Think so? Maybe I *am* a freak! I feel like I'm the only one who sees that this—*this!*—is the time of our lives.

MARK Gee, thanks, *dad*. Is it "Miller Time" already?

DANA I'm serious, Mark. This is our time. But even now we're wasting away: look at my hairline—look at your gut! (*DANA pokes MARK in the stomach.*)

MARK Hey!

DANA We're getting older, but we haven't grown. Eighteen years, Mark. Why are we here?

MARK To propagate human culture?

DANA Fine. We learn, then pass on knowledge to our children. So tell me, what have *you* learned?

MARK Well, I can balance oxi— (*saying "oxidation reactions"*)

DANA About *life*, Mark! *Life!*

MARK Wisdom.

DANA *You?!*

MARK I'm wise enough to know not to moan about getting older.

DANA But not wise enough not to gloat about your own wisdom.

MARK *Touché*. Maybe wisdom's everywhere, scattered like seeds. Ever think of that?

DANA As long as you don't scatter your seed, then there's hope yet.

MARK Girl troubles, Dana?

DANA (*producing the book*) Sarah's book was a little tip-off, huh?

MARK Certainly a coincidence. Who is she.

DANA I don't know. But there's something about her.

MARK Looks like Sarah, huh?

DANA It isn't that simple. (*MARK gives him a look.*) I was talking to Amy about it awhile ago.

(*Flashback. MARK is cast in darkness. DANA goes over to another side of the room. AMY is there, sitting at a table.*)

DANA I don't understand, Amy. Back in high school, I was open. I could talk. I used to open my mouth, and words *spilled* out. Just like that. Remember?

AMY Who's the girl?

DANA Who said anything about a girl?

AMY Who can't you talk to? It's a girl. Otherwise you wouldn't care.

DANA Am I just an open book to you?

AMY You've never been in love.

DANA I was, too. Once.

*(SARAH enters.)*

DANA Sarah... What we once were... *(DANA walks over to SARAH.)*

SARAH We once were.

DANA *(He touches her face.)* I love you.

SARAH *(She takes the hand.)* That used to be enough. Things have come between us.

DANA Time and distance? *(SARAH does not respond.)* I pay your phone bill. Don't give me up so easily.

SARAH *(She drops the hand.)* It isn't easy.

*(SARAH drifts off and exits. DANA returns to AMY.)*

AMY Love isn't easy.

DANA That's it, Amy. It used to be. Look at this. *(He gives her his book.)*

AMY An encyclopedia? How romantic.

DANA No: look. She wrote down everything that made her happy. She documented every touch, every gesture. It reads like a roadmap to her soul.

AMY *(Flipping through its pages.)* Wow, did she do all this?

DANA We both did. See, there's her lipstick. There's my thumbprint.

AMY On her photo. Why are you carrying this thing around?

DANA This is an encyclopedia of Sarah's heart, sort of a spiritual Kama Sutra. She said she'd give me one volume every year we shared together. One volume was all I got.

AMY That's more than you usually get.

DANA There's a piece of me lost in her, Amy, like a splinter in her thumb.

AMY So that's why you spend all your time in that book.

DANA What does it take to get it back?

AMY Some things you never get back.

DANA So what do I do?

AMY You loved a girl. You love another.

DANA What if it isn't in me anymore?

AMY If you have to ask, it isn't. You'll find it. The minute you stop searching, you'll find it.

*(The mood changes again. Lights brighten. MARK is seen again. DANA has been relating the past scene as a story.)*

MARK Amy's right. You find that girl and ask her out.

DANA I'm not sure I'm ready for that yet.

MARK That's ridiculous. Of course you are.

DANA I'm not sure that's what she meant...

*(They are interrupted by people outside chanting enthusiastically: "Look at us / We're in the know / Listen to us / Before we go!" and "Awareness! Awareness!" over and over.)*

MARK What the hell is that?

DANA Didn't you see the flyers? *(DANA produces one.)* It's "Awareness Week."

MARK Oh, thank God. I thought it was another of those damn a cappella groups!

DANA Nope, not this time. It's just *(he reads the flyer)* "the Student Senate's groundbreaking effort to unite and galvanize our disparate student body."

MARK You mean Holocaust Awareness week, right? Asian Awareness week? Women's Month? Groundhog's Day?

DANA No, Mark. Just "Awareness Week." It says so right on the calendar.

MARK Huh. I had no clue I missed it. Pretty ironic, I'd say.

DANA You should be ashamed of yourself, Mark. Really ashamed.

MARK *(pacing)* Well, you're right. I feel like a total jerk. What are we supposed to be aware of, anyway?

DANA Hmm. Doesn't say.

MARK Maybe the guys at the Senate Office know.

DANA Maybe. *(DANA picks up and dials the phone. He adopts a prissy phone voice.)* Hi, this is Dana Feldman. I'm wondering if you could tell me anything about the "Awareness Week" events. My friend and I would like to attend them. *(pause)* Uh, okay. Okay, sure. *(aside to MARK)* There getting someone for me. *(back on phone)* Oh, hi. So what's going on this "Awareness Week?" *(pause)* No, "Awareness Week." You guys are putting it on, *remember?* *(pause)* Yeah, I'll hold. *(aside to MARK)* Man, these people are *fucking* clueless!

MARK *(chuckling)* Give it up.

DANA It really is a shame, Mark. A damn shame. *(hangs up phone)*

MARK I'm ashamed for you, if that helps. And I'm ashamed you haven't gotten up the balls to ask that girl out.

DANA Give me a break, Mark!

MARK You have no excuse and you know it. *(MARK practically pushes DANA out of the room.)* Go and get her, Dana!

*(DANA exits.)*

—Scene 5—

*(DANA enters. He sees the FEMME FATALE standing on the other side of the stage, radiant in a red dress. Guys are on her like leeches. They are talking. She pretends to laugh at stupid jokes. She eyes DANA. He is trembling. He eventually composes himself*

*and proceeds to walk over, his broad stride parting the way before him. A frat boy comes out and puts his arm around the FEMME FATALE, and DANA's spirit drops, his shoulders slump, and he skulks away.)*

—Scene 6—

*(Lights up. DANA is in his room, banging his head gently on his desk in despair. AMY enters.)*

DANA Amy...

AMY What's with you, Dana? You haven't been to film class in days. I could see if it was a nine o'clock class, but we're talking *three PM* here! What are you? Narcoleptic or something?

DANA No!

AMY You're up now. Whatcha been doin'?

DANA Oh, just struggling in vain to derive meaning from the senselessness around me.

AMY No, really: what were you trying to do?

DANA You don't believe me?

AMY What's troublin' you, kiddo?

DANA Just because you're the big, bad senior doesn't mean you can call me "kiddo!"

AMY I kinda think it does. What's up, hon?

DANA Ugh! You wanna know what's up? I'm trapped, okay. In one path, one career, one life. I'm going to grow old and be dull and die alone and there's nothing I can do about it.

AMY Girl problems, Dana?

DANA I went to ask this girl out, and...and...I couldn't do it! *(small pause)* Listen, Amy. Where am I, right now? Hassenfeld, in my room, entombed. I go outside and what's there? Buildings. Bland edifices...towering to the left of me, teetering to the right of me.

AMY Wow. Entrapment. You're quite a case study. I wish I had my notebook.

DANA You're an architect, not a psychologist!

AMY Eh, it's all pretty much the same.

DANA Well, maybe I *am* entrapped, confined in all these buildings named after dead men, testaments to stale hope and old money. Bequeathments, afterthoughts. Rosenthal, Gerstenzang, Hassenfeld. All dead. Are there any buildings here named after anyone who's still alive?

AMY Well, actually—

DANA Don't help! The doomsday list goes on. And someday, if I'm fortunate, I'll be on it, too. Imagine, students living in Feldman, fifth floor. (*shivers*) I can't even look at this place! (*DANA exits.*)

AMY Dana...

—Scene 7—

*(DANA enters. PHIL is leading MIKE, DOM, DAVE, and GREG in an a cappella version of "Lady In Red." Everyone else spreads out and tries to act as if they weren't singing.)*

DANA Omigod! You guys are a closet a cappella group!

*(DANA shrieks, circles, and faints. We hear EXOTIC RAOUL's girl shriek at the exact same time. PHIL rushes to DANA's side, picks up his hand as if he's going to check his pulse, but checks DANA's wristwatch instead.)*

PHIL 12:45: right on time.

*(A dream. DANA is sitting down in class. The FEMME FATALE walks in, accompanied by her hangers-on, MIKE, DAVE, DOM, and GREG. She sits down next to DANA, leaving the others behind. DANA is excited. AMY sits down on DANA's other side. DANA is, well, still excited. EXOTIC RAOUL enters.)*

*(DANA tries to start hitting on the FEMME FATALE, but is interrupted by EXOTIC RAOUL, who portrays the professor.)*

EXOTIC RAOUL Now some might think that sexual behavior is determined by a complicated set of physical, psychological, and social interactions. That is bullshit. This is Human Reproductive Biology. Here we study the root of the matter. I give to you figure one. (*He uncovers a chalk board. Drawn on it is the equation hammer + gong = human reproductive biology*) In this, the essence of what you are studying: you bang the gong.

DANA Excuse me, professor? Is there going to be any field work?

EXOTIC RAOUL For you, no. For me, of course.

FEMME FATALE *(to DANA)* I heard something about an oral exam.

EXOTIC RAOUL Come to my office hours. Now, for our first lesson, I'd like you all to partner up. *(Everyone stands. The FEMME FATALE yawns and stretches her arms, pushing out her breasts. AMY rolls her shoulders..)*

DANA There seems to be an odd number of people.

EXOTIC RAOUL Ah, I fix. Someone come to me.

*(Both girls skitter over to EXOTIC RAOUL and clamp onto him.)*

DANA What's this supposed to teach me?

EXOTIC RAOUL *(Arms around both girls.)* That it is good to be the professor. No, no. *(laughs mechanically)* Just joking. You, go. *(He sends the FEMME FATALE off into DANA's arms.)* Now, first step in sexual encounter: You kiss the girl.

DANA Shouldn't we talk first?

EXOTIC RAOUL *(sternly)* You kiss the girl. *(DANA closes in. EXOTIC RAOUL corrects him.)* No, you sissy! You don't press lips like dead fish. You take her lips as if you'll never give them back. *(He kisses AMY. This lasts a fairly long time. They look like they're wrestling. She has trouble standing up.)* Now you.

*(DANA's eyes are wide. He looks at the FEMME FATALE. She closes her eyes, leans forward, and presents puckered lips. DANA moves closer and closer until...Blackout.)*

*(Back to reality. DANA is sprawled out on the floor. PHIL is leaning beside him. MIKE, DAVE, DOM, and GREG are circled around. PHIL waves smelling salts under DANA's nose. DANA awakens with a jerk. Kicking, he scrambles to his feet and bounces away from the others.)*

DANA You stay away from me! To think that all this time you guys were an a cappella group behind my back!

PHIL It's not what it looks like, Dana.

MIKE *(suspiciously)* No... It's very... different...

DANA And you! You're the RA.

PHIL     *(moving closer to DANA)* Dana...

DANA     Stand back! Are you supposed to be condoning this sort of behavior?

PHIL     Actually...

DANA     I don't want to hear it!

*(DANA exits. MIKE and PHIL exchange looks. DOM shrugs and they resume singing.)*

—Scene 8—

*(DANA charges back to his room. MARK has been waiting; he thinks DANA successfully asked out the FEMME FATALE.)*

MARK     So what's her name, Doctor Love?

DANA     Well, we didn't really get to that.

MARK     Did you even talk to this girl?

DANA     Did you know the guys down the hall are secretly an a cappella group?

MARK     What?! Are you delusional or something?

DANA     Kind of.

MARK     What about the *girl!* Did you talk to her?

DANA     *(pacing)* Um... no. Not *specifically*. *(MARK gives him a look, DANA stops dead.)* Okay, not at all.

PHIL     So you walked up to her and...?

DANA     I kinda veered off...

MARK     Chicken!

DANA     She's just so perfect, Mark! Across the room she's a beautiful woman and I am a normal guy. Next to her, she's a goddess and I'm a troll. I didn't want to ruin that. *(pause)* And some frat guy put his arm around her, too.

MARK     Slipped through your fingers, eh?

DANA     Life sucks. Why am I stuck in the same old story? Boy meets girl. Boy runs away from girl.

MARK Boy has delusions about secret a cappella groups.

DANA Spooky.

MARK Look on the bright side: you're not alone.

DANA *(dryly)* Really reassuring.

MARK Look, there's sitting here whining about how pathetic you are, and there's going out there and getting the girl. It could be great.

DANA Yeah, I guess so.

MARK If I was in your shoes, I'd make it great.

*(MARK snaps his fingers. Lights change. A table on the opposite end of stage appears.)*

*(DANA and MARK imagine possible encounters, possible dates. DANA envisions his friends in his place with the FEMME FATALE.)*

*(The FEMME FATALE enters. She sits down at a table. MARK enters and sits with her.)*

MARK I heard you like Romantic poetry.

FEMME FATALE *(sultry, she is eating a strawberry)* I love Romantic poetry.

MARK I'm a bit of a poet myself.

FEMME FATALE *(sexually charged)* Oh, really?

MARK Yeah, I read at Chum's all the time. *(Making shit up.)* They call me The Golden Tongue.

FEMME FATALE I love a man who's good with his tongue. *(MARK beams.)*  
Show me your stuff.

MARK *(Begins to recite his poetry.)* Wings beat. Furiously. I am. Falling. I am. Swooping. I dive. And catch you. You are. My prey. You are. Red meat. Love is. A pterodactyl. *(MARK shrieks, approximating a pterodactyl. The FEMME FATALE scampers off.)*

*(Blackout. Scene changes. Now MIKE takes DANA's place. Lights up. The FEMME FATALE is back at the table. She is waiting for her date to arrive. She checks her watch. People walk in and surround the table in a semi-circle. They start to sing the background vocals for "In the Still of the Night." Suddenly, MIKE bursts from*

*underneath the table, singing “In the Still of the Night.” The FEMME FATALE is confused and disoriented. She breaks through the a cappella group and runs away. Blackout.)*

*(Lights up. The FEMME FATALE is back at the table. GREG sits on the other side.)*

FEMME FATALE        Are you going to say anything tonight? *(GREG shrugs.)*  
Aren't you supposed to be in an a cappella group or something? *(GREG puts his hand up, shakes it, signifying not really. The FEMME FATALE checks her watch and leaves. Blackout.)*

*(Lights up. The FEMME FATALE is walking. EXOTIC RAOUL enters, walking toward her. They meet.)*

FEMME FATALE    Hey.

EXOTIC RAOUL    Hey.

*(They jump on each other. Blackout.)*

*(Lights focus once again on DANA and MARK. The dream is over.)*

MARK    Exotic Raoul's got the idea. No bullshit.

DANA    No bullshit.

*(DANA and MARK exit.)*

—Scene 8—

*(DANA and MARK visit EXOTIC RAOUL for...social guidance, if you will.)*

DANA    Raoul, we'd like to ask you something...well, personal. You seem to never be in want of a, uh, lady friend...

EXOTIC RAOUL        *(laughs)* Ahh... You like her, no?

DANA    Uh, no. Not really.

EXOTIC RAOUL        She's got a powerful set of lungs.

DANA    We've noticed.

MARK    What my untoward friend means to ask is: *(his voice cracks)* How do you get laid so much?

EXOTIC RAOUL           Huh? I am sorry—my English. I am not understanding of this,  
“get laid.”

MARK    You know, make the beast with two backs? Jump the monkey? Hide the  
salami?

DANA    Sexual intercourse? (*Both MARK and EXOTIC RAOUL eye him strangely.*)

MARK    Bang the gong?

EXOTIC RAOUL           Aha! Bang the gong! (*He nods and laughs.*) Ah...

DANA    Well. How do you do it?

(*EXOTIC RAOUL makes a sour face.*)

MARK    Not “do it,” Raoul: get the girl to do it with you.

EXOTIC RAOUL           Well, in my country, there is an old saying. In English—and  
this is a loose translation—it goes, “He who will not compromise does not...” uh...get  
laid, as you say.

DANA    Wow. That makes so much sense!

MARK    (*after a slight pause*) So you're saying go after the fat chicks, right?

DANA    Mark!

MARK    That’s what it sounded like! You've got to admit that!

EXOTIC RAOUL           (*aside to DANA*) Can you not do something about him?

MARK    What, am I the only one that saw that?

EXOTIC RAOUL           Don’t go after the fat chicks.

DANA    That’s—

EXOTIC RAOUL           Let them come to you.

DANA    Raoul!

EXOTIC RAOUL           No, no. That was joke. (*He laughs stiltedly.*)

(*MARK and DANA look at each other, shrug, and face EXOTIC RAOUL again.*)

EXOTIC RAOUL            You want a girl, you take the girl. You don't ask the girl!

DANA    I don't know, Raoul...

MARK    Come on, Dana. He's right. No hesitation.

EXOTIC RAOUL            You are cool, and the women respect you.

DANA    Where's the compromise?

MARK    No bullshit, Dana. That's the compromise. (*EXOTIC RAOUL nods. DANA says nothing.*) Now get out there and don't come back till you've got a date! (*MARK pushes DANA away. DANA exits.*)

—Scene 9—

*(DANA enters. He sees the FEMME FATALE standing on the other side of the stage, still radiant in her red dress. Her entourage—MIKE, DAVE, DOM, and GREG—surrounds her. She doesn't seem to notice DANA at all. He stares at her with determined eyes.)*

DANA    Enough bullshit, Dana. Nothing's stopping me this time.

*(DANA moves toward the girl. He busts through the hangers-on.)*

DANA    Hi, I'm Dana. I was hoping you'd like to go out sometime.

FEMME FATALE            *(detached)* I'd like to go out a lot. *(She pauses.)*

DANA    *(misunderstanding her)* But not necessarily with me. Is that what you're trying to tell me?

*(The FEMME FATALE is momentarily confused. A FRAT BOY comes out and puts his arm around the FEMME FATALE.)*

FRAT BOY    Hey, baby.

*(DANA might as well be transparent. He turns around, defeated once again. But he regroups and spins around to address the FEMME FATALE once more. He grabs her hand and extricates her from the FRAT BOY.)*

DANA    *(They are face to face.)* Look. I don't even know your name. And you probably can't even see me through your cloud of admirers.

FRAT BOY            *(Pulling the girl away.)* You can't just assault my girlfriend!

DANA    Step off! I'm trying to have a conversation here!

FEMME FATALE           *(Resists the FRAT BOY. To DANA.)* I'm not his girlfriend.

*(The FRAT BOY steams off.)*

DANA     All these guys around you watch you, fawn over you. You don't need another drone. I can talk to you like a human being. I can understand the depths of your heart. *(She smiles.)* I can see more in your eyes than my own reflection. *(She blinks. He takes her hands.)* Once again, I'm Dana, and you are...whoever you are. And we're going out tomorrow night.

FEMME FATALE           Okay. Nine o'clock. Chum's. *(She holds up her hand to be kissed.)*

*(DANA kisses her hand, then moves away.)*

DANA     Yes!

*(DANA exits.)*

—Scene 10—

*(Lights fade in. "Lady in Red" is playing. DANA and the FEMME FATALE enter from opposite sides of the stage. They dance. DANA spins the FEMME FATALE, and lets go. She spins off stage. Lights fade out.)*

*(A table is brought in. DANA sits at the table. Lights fade in. DANA is waiting for the FEMME FATALE to arrive. She never shows. Lights go down as he checks his watch.)*

## End of Act 1

# Act 2

## —Scene 1—

(MARK is in his room, “reading” a girly magazine. He hides the magazine when DANA enters.)

MARK So, Dana. How’d the big date go?

DANA Oh, it *went*: she never showed.

MARK What happened?

DANA Look, Mark. I follow your advice—I stick my head out—and I’m stuck here at the beginning. No girl. No life. Nothing.

MARK Don’t sweat it. Look at that sign on your wall. (*He points to a sign saying, in bold capitals, “DON’T BASE HAPPINESS AROUND A WOMAN!”*) Yeah, Dana. You wrote that yourself, remember? and you were right.

DANA I know. I shouldn’t base happiness around a woman.

MARK Yeah. Try to base it roundabout the middle.

DANA You’re not helping!

MARK Made ya laugh, didn’t I?

DANA I wrote that after I lost Sarah. It isn’t funny.

MARK Everything’s funny. That’s Life’s biggest prank, Mr. Sourpuss. (*DANA gives him a quizzical look.*) Okay. I understand this is a world with bars, with boundaries, with obstacles. It can be your prison, if you like. But I swear to you, it’s going to be my jungle gym.

DANA It can’t be. Life is not for you to climb all over. It’s too big, too important.

MARK I never said sometimes I don’t slip and fall, getting a good whack in the head, or a metal bar buried in my back. But that’s part of the game, too.

DANA I’m tired of the game.

MARK But that’s all there is... (*aside*) This is not good. I’m getting RA Phil on the case. (*MARK exits.*)

*(MARK and PHIL enter DANA's room. DANA is lying on the bed. MARK sits. PHIL begins acting like a psychotherapist.)*

PHIL     What's the matter, Dana?

DANA     That girl I told you about...I asked her out.

PHIL     And she turned you down, huh?

DANA     That's it. She said yes, but didn't show.

MARK     You didn't need her, anyway.

DANA     If I didn't need her, why is there a hole where my heart used to be?

PHIL     Are you sure it was there to begin with?

DANA     What?!

PHIL     Was your heart in it?

DANA     My heart was the whole damn thing. Don't you understand? I don't get it, Phil. I'm looking for wisdom here—something to live on, something to push me forward.

MARK     He's trying, Dana.

PHIL     Ok. Tell me: where are you now, Dana? Close your eyes, and what do you see?

DANA     The Tree of Life. I wait. Like a cell on its outer ring, to be sucked in or sloughed off. I wait. In college, I tread water, I tread the boards. I wait. *(a pause)* Phil, when does college end and life begin?

PHIL     Life began eighteen years ago—

DANA     Eighteen years...

PHIL     —At least for you.

DANA     Then is college just an interruption?

PHIL     You get what you expect.

DANA I expected a hell of a lot. I expected. I sought. I tried. There's an impenetrable barrier here between me and all these expectations. You know my parents met at eighteen. In college.

PHIL It doesn't mean you have to.

DANA The clock ticks and nothing happens.

PHIL This is going to take time, Dana. We'll talk again soon. In the meantime, just have some fun with your friends, okay? Take it easy. Things will get better on their own. Time heals all wounds.

DANA It's the clichés that hurt most, Phil.

MARK Thanks for trying, Phil! (*PHIL exits.*) We should go out with the boys tonight. That'll brighten your spirits.

DANA I guess.

(*MARK and DANA exit.*)

—Scene 2—

(*DANA and MARK visit MIKE, DOM, and DAVE, who are playing video games on one TV and watching another.*)

MARK Hey, guys. What's up?

MIKE (*philosophizing*) Yes. What is...up?

DAVE When I think of "up," I— (*GREG eyes him, and DAVE shuts up.*)

DOM Time's up for you! My turn on Mortal Kombat!

MIKE So why have you come? *Speak!*

(*DANA backs away, raising his arms in an "I don't know" gesture.*)

MARK Dana's pretty bummed out guys. His girl just ditched him.

MIKE (*to DANA*) Girl, huh?

DOM (*playing video games*) Don't give in, Mike: "Homicide" is on at 10!

DAVE It's taped.

MIKE Wait a minute. "Homicide" hasn't even started yet.

DAVE So? I programmed the VCR.

MIKE But if the show hasn't come on yet, there is no possible way that it can already be taped.

DAVE I *said* I programmed the VCR. I inserted a *genuine* VHS videocassette tape myself. Therefore, it is taped.

MIKE Dave, that makes no sense! Tell me: how, short of transportation through a time portal can we have it on tape? It isn't even in the process of being taped.

DAVE Of course it is! You're not listening to what I'm saying!

MIKE There you're wrong. Right now, we're just sitting here waiting for "Homicide" to be on tape once the VCR that you programmed decides to get around to it. Who knows what could happen between now and then? We could lose power, and thus, lose "Homicide." Someone could come by and stealthily extract the tape from said VCR, and thus we lose "Homicide."

MARK You guys could suddenly develop social lives, and thus lose "Homicide."  
(DANA tries to hide laughter. Everybody else eyes MARK.) Uh...I meant, um...gotta go! (MARK exits.)

MIKE Can't you do something about him?

DANA Hey, the kid's pre-med. You're lucky he still knows how to walk.

DAVE I'm pre-med...

MIKE You could barely walk to begin with!

DAVE I could too!

DANA Anyway, guys. Sorry to spoil the party, but I was wondering if you guys wanted to go out tonight.

DOM Uh, I gotta study.

DAVE Yeah, me too. Big chem test. *Big*.

MIKE Isn't Homicide on tonight?

DANA Yeah. We just got through all that. Come on, guys. This is a dark day for me, here. Can't you show me some sympathy, some good will, and help me out here?

MIKE The VCR could break at any moment. Somebody's gotta keep an eye on it.

*(DANA exits, shoulders slumped.)*

—Scene 3—

*(DANA and MARK enter EXOTIC RAOUL's room.)*

DANA Raoul... I need some advice.

EXOTIC RAOUL Ah, it is good you've come. Here, step into my office...I mean, my bedroom. What is of the matter?

DANA You told me to compromise in order to get laid.

EXOTIC RAOUL *(nodding)* Ah! Compromise. Yes. *(A girl scurries out of his bed and exits.)*

DANA You never compromise, do you, Exotic Raoul?

MARK Hey, Dana, lay off the guy!

EXOTIC RAOUL No, this I can take. *(Turns to DANA.)* I have compromised. Back in my country, I was like you, Dana. I loved, but could not have, a girl. I had, as they say, no luck, no charm, no chance at love.

MARK And you changed all that?

EXOTIC RAOUL I found I could not have the girl I wanted. So I chose another, and another...and another...and then three at one time, but that's another story. The point is, I learned how to woo and fascinate the female sex.

DANA But the girl you loved?

EXOTIC RAOUL I found happiness elsewhere.

MARK With another? You went against your feelings?

DANA So you compromised yourself?

EXOTIC RAOUL Have not you compromised of yourself, Dana?

DANA Differently. You compromise in order to get laid, Exotic Raoul. What do you do if you don't want to get laid?

EXOTIC RAOUL            Not bang of the gong?

DANA    What's the compromise, Exotic Raoul? I once had the love that eluded you.  
It's written in these pages. (*DANA holds up the book, and hands it to EXOTIC  
RAOUL.*) How do I get that again?

EXOTIC RAOUL            (*Leafing through the book, as if he can't understand its pages.*)  
I cannot be of help.

MARK    (*Grabbing DANA by the wrist. Aside to DANA.*) You just dethroned the king.  
What's wrong with you? (*DANA doesn't answer.*) We're getting out of here.

*(MARK pulls DANA away. EXOTIC RAOUL reads the book, dumbfounded. DANA  
breaks away from MARK, swings by and swipes the book from EXOTIC RAOUL's hands.  
MARK and DANA exit.)*

—Scene 4—

*(AMY is sitting at a table. DANA enters and sits with her.)*

DANA    You said if I loved one girl, I could love another. (*AMY nods.*) I tried that,  
Amy. I reached out and grabbed her, and my arms slipped right through.

AMY    What did you expect?

DANA    I was brave. I spoke my heart. To get what I wanted, I stepped out of myself,  
I rose above myself.

AMY    You weren't yourself. Maybe that's the problem.

DANA    I gave her my heart. Like you said.

AMY    You didn't give her your heart, you gave it away to her.

DANA    No more double-talk, Amy. Make sense!

AMY    You love or you're in love. You give your heart away or you give away your  
heart. There's a difference there. Who has your heart?

DANA    Sarah does. That other girl does. This book of mine...I look inside and find  
their words, their faces.

AMY    You're nowhere to be found.

DANA    I'm in there. Somewhere.

AMY You sure?

DANA Amy, why would a girl say she'd go out with you but not even show?

AMY She may have her reasons.

DANA I'll bet she does. Some guy had his arm around her.

AMY See? She had a boyfriend.

DANA But why say yes? She was probably unhappy with him.

AMY You don't know that.

DANA *(not listening)* He bugs her. She sees me. I ask her out. She accepts a date with me to make him jealous.

AMY Dana, you're getting carried away here!

DANA Her boyfriend finds out. They get into a big fight, then that vindictive vixen takes him back.

AMY You were mad in love with this girl a second ago!

DANA That was a second ago. *(DANA exits.)*

AMY Hey, get back here! Don't do anything stupid.

—Scene 5—

*(The FEMME FATALE is with her entourage. DANA enters, carrying his book.)*

DANA You...

FEMME FATALE What? *(She waves her hand, and her entourage scatters.)*  
Oh...Dana. I want to explain—

DANA I don't want to hear it! I thought you were one of the beautiful people. I thought you were special. Too special for me.

FEMME FATALE You don't understand. *(starts to walk away)*

DANA *(stops her)* I thought I loved you.

FEMME FATALE You don't even know my name.

DANA Does that matter? I saw you and my heart fluttered open, its pages filled with poetry, music, life. I just wanted to share it with you.

FEMME FATALE Of course you did.

DANA I look at it now and it's nonsense.

FEMME FATALE You sure get high strung.

DANA (*grabs her arm*) I'm a poet, not a freak.

FEMME FATALE (*struggling*) And I'm a human being! I'm accustomed to being treated as such.

DANA So am I. (*He releases her. He produces the book.*) This is what you've done to me. (*He tears a page from his book and crumples it in his hand.*)

FEMME FATALE You want an apology?

DANA (*Throws the crumpled wad at her.*) I was something when I loved you. Even sick and blind and mute, I was something more than I am now.

FEMME FATALE I'm sorry. You're taking this all too seriously! Now please get away from me!

(*DANA exits. The FEMME FATALE picks up the wad of paper, uncrumples it, and reads it as she walks away. Lights down.*)

—Scene 6—

(*DANA enters, looking at the cover of his book.*)

DANA The Tree of Knowledge, the Tree of Life... Which one are you, covering these pages? (*DANA laughs.*) An encyclopedia of the heart... What I need is an encyclopedia of the brain. Why did I say those things?

PHIL (*from offstage*) Munchies!

(*DANA droops. PHIL, MIKE, DAVE, DOM, and GREG enter. They sit in a semicircle.*)

PHIL You know, guys, when I first got here, I thought of college as a period of transience. Think about it: new courses, new majors, new friends. But after a couple semesters, it hit me: Life is transience. People come and go, you love and you lose.

GREG Huh?

*(DANA starts a soliloquy that extends throughout the munchies conversation.)*

DANA *(aside)* Why did I say those things?

PHIL *(Turning to one of them.)* I say, no more small talk. Who knows if I'll ever see you again?

MARK But Phil, we see you every day. You're the RA for crissakes!

DAVE Yeah, we can barely get rid of you!

DANA *(aside)* I lost myself.

PHIL No, guys. I'm talking about getting to the pith of the matter, the marrow of every human being. How do you do this? *(No one understands.)*

DANA *(aside)* Where was I?

PHIL I'll demonstrate. *(Looking around for a victim.)* Mark, could you tell me one of your hopes, dreams, or secret fears?

MARK *(Pauses a long time.)* Sex. *(Everyone laughs)*

DANA *(aside)* Lost in her? In the situation?

PHIL Okay. Which category does that fall under?

MARK *(Weakly)* All three. *(All but PHIL eye MARK.)*

DANA *(aside)* Some dismiss infatuation.

DOM Actually, Phil, we gotta go. We're missing some good video game time.

GREG And what about "Homicide?"

DANA *(aside)* But love is infatuation.

DAVE It's being taped on deck two.

DANA *(aside)* It's needing, wanting, even beyond having.

MIKE Can you be sure of that?

PHIL Guys, no. I'm sorry I'm going to have to resort to this, but... *(PHIL produces a plate of brownies and starts to pass them out.)*

DAVE Big deal!

MIKE We had brownies last week.

PHIL These are *special* brownies, guys. We're going to expand our minds tonight.

GREG Expand our minds?

DANA (*Snapping back to reality, after having eaten the brownie.*) You can't do that!

PHIL Sure I can. What do you think goes on in RA training, anyway?

DOM He showed you!

DANA This is ridiculous! What's in these brownies?

MARK Who's that! (*Turns to DANA and screams.*) Stay away!

PHIL Oh, nuthin' special.

(*MARK is rolling on the floor. GREG is rocking back and forth. The others are twitching.*)

MIKE One might conjecture that the cannabis predicates this feeling, while another might assume that our brownies were laced with a more potent hallucinogen.

DAVE Stop talking philosophic-like!

DANA (*aside*) I tried to show her...

DOM These brownies are laced, man!

DANA (*aside*) ...what madness feeling is.

PHIL Weird.

(*They all start going crazy, moving around zanily, twitching, and dancing. Lights go down. AMY and EXOTIC RAOUL enter. Lights come up again for a hallucination. All pace around DANA in a menacing swirl.*)

PHIL There's no excuse for treating her the way you did.

AMY You had a crush on a girl. A simple crush!

DANA Wanting her made me alive.

MARK You're out of your skull!

EXOTIC RAOUL You don't ask the girl...

AMY You got turned down.

MARK It's not the end of the world!

PHIL It's time to face your fears.

EXOTIC RAOUL ...You take the girl.

MIKE It's time for "Homicide."

*(SARAH appears in a flash of light. All but DANA scatter and exit.)*

DANA You sent me your heart, Sarah, volume one, postage paid, like you didn't need it anymore. I hand-delivered mine, but I need it back. *(Coolly.)* Let us make a trade.

SARAH Get over me.

DANA I am over you. I carry no torch. It's the feeling I crave. Love. Not sex. Not companionship. Not your skin against my skin. But love. Loving you was more than memorizing the pulse of your breath, the texture of your tongue, steaming up car windows. I loved you through every mistake. Loving you was the mistakes. The fights. The fears. The wild heart running like a rabbit and roaring like a lion.

SARAH It wasn't easy keeping up.

DANA What made it great was that it was so damn hard!

SARAH My heart tired. Why are you so angry?

DANA We've written the story of each other's hearts—

SARAH We *began* the story of each other's hearts.

DANA But you took the pen from my hand and snapped it in two.

SARAH You see your heart as a book of love. There's more than that. It's the clichés that hurt most, Dana.

DANA "Time and distance," Sarah?! I based my life around you, and that wasn't enough! I leave for school and you're gone in weeks.

SARAH Dana... I said to you, I can't base happiness around a man. That's you, Dana. There's a world out there, and it isn't waiting for me. I don't know if I'm right, but I tried to be fair. I had to put myself first. I'm sorry. *(SARAH exits.)*

DANA *(To himself.)* Every time I kissed your cheek I tasted your concealer. Tell me that love does not lie. *(He tosses a page, folded into a paper airplane, after her.)*

*(AMY enters.)*

AMY Love doesn't lie, Dana.

DANA How can you say that, Amy? The heart lies. Unfurnished, unprepared. The pages written before the language learned.

AMY Love is sometimes the only thing you can trust in a relationship.

DANA Then why am I scarred?

AMY Your heart lied. You didn't love her.

DANA I loved Sarah. That love was all I trusted. And she left me anyway! Tell me my heart lied then.

AMY It didn't.

DANA I know that even idyllic romances are far from idyllic. Every feeling dies, every romance crumbles. I believed in love, in substance, and got burnt. Why bother?

AMY There is love and substance. Even here.

DANA Prove it.

AMY If you make me, fine. *(Produces a photograph and hands it to DANA.)*  
That's me and my boyfriend, Chuck.

DANA Chuck? How come you never told me about this before?

AMY My life revolves around me, not him.

DANA But you love this guy, right?

AMY Of course I do. But he isn't all I love.

DANA That's what Sarah tried to tell me.

AMY That's how we make love work.

—Scene 7—

*(DANA enters. MARK is there, sitting with MIKE, DOM, DAVE, and GREG.)*

DANA Mark?

MARK You back to yourself, yet?

DANA I get it now. I know to center life around me.

MARK Life revolves around you, eh?

DANA My life does. Or at least it will.

MARK No more Sarah? No more Femme Fatale? No more gut-wrenching stories of betrayal and lust?

DANA No, Mark.

MARK I'm going to have to get used to this.

DANA It's great, isn't it?

MARK So... What else do we talk about, again?

MIKE Time for "Homicide."

MARK I thought you watched that while it was taping.

MIKE I'd like to relive it. It was good.

*(GREG slides the tape into the VCR. Porno music erupts from the television. The screen flickers on their faces. DANA sits down.)*

DANA This is "Homicide"?

MIKE I don't remember this part.

MARK Wow! It's a porno. *(They eye him.)* Cool! *(He watches intently.)*

DAVE Wow, Mike. No "Homicide."

DOM I guess you were right all along.

MIKE This is just another example of the supremacy of my mind.

MARK Wait a minute. That guy looks a lot like Exotic Raoul.

DOM Spooky...

DANA Him, a porn star? *(Everyone eyes him.)*

DAVE Fast forward.

MARK Pause a sec. Look at that.

DAVE Is that a birthmark?

DOM Looks like a tattoo.

GREG On his ass?

DANA *(In disbelief.)* Looks like a map of New Jersey.

MARK Uncanny.

MIKE Go to the credits.

*(The tape fast forwards a few seconds.)*

DAVE There it is. "12:45." Good title.

DOM Starring, "Dan Axelrod."

MARK What's that? A stage name?

DANA Perhaps we're onto something here. What time is it?

MIKE Twelve-forty.

MARK *(Glancing at DANA.)* We haven't a minute to lose. *(He runs out. DANA follows. The rest exit, following them.)*

—Scene 8—

*(DANA, MARK, MIKE, DOM, DAVE, and GREG arrive at EXOTIC RAOUL's room.)*

MARK Raoul!

*(They knock on the door to EXOTIC RAOUL's room. EXOTIC RAOUL answers.)*

EXOTIC RAOUL            I am sorry, I have appointment to make. This is bad time.

DANA    We'd like to talk to you—

MARK    *(imitating EXOTIC RAOUL's accent)* About banging of the gong.

EXOTIC RAOUL            *(smiles)* Ah! That reminds me. I must go.

DAVE    Exotic Raoul?

MARK    Or should we say, “Dan Axelrod”?

EXOTIC RAOUL            What it is you say?

MARK    Well, Dan, we'd like to say a thing or two about...

GREG    New Jersey!

EXOTIC RAOUL            *(He laughs stiltedly. His accent slips.)* I dunno what you're talking about!

DAVE    *(imitating a swooning female)* Ooh! He's so exotic!

*(MARK imitates a girl's orgasmic shriek.)*

DANA    I see you compromised something else, Exotic Raoul.

EXOTIC RAOUL            Listen. I am... It's like... the accent...

DAVE    Not so exotic now, huh, chump?!

MARK    How many, Exotic Raoul—how many did you coerce, seduce?!

EXOTIC RAOUL            *(trying to run away)* I am finished.

DAVE    *(rushing towards EXOTIC RAOUL)* Show us that map of New Jersey!

DOM    Yeah!

*(They chase EXOTIC RAOUL around, attempting to defrock him.)*

DANA    *(holding the crowd back)* No, Exotic Raoul—Dan Axelrod—whoever you are. It doesn't matter. It's over now.

EXOTIC RAOUL            I really do have an appointment.

MARK It's 12:46.

*(EXOTIC RAOUL gives MARK a look of disbelief.)*

EXOTIC RAOUL *(to DANA)* Why'd you do this to me?

DANA You're better than this. You know it. *(DANA extends a hand. EXOTIC RAOUL takes it.)* You're free now.

MARK Well this is just great!

MIKE Just when I thought we'd have some fun.

DAVE Now they're going to bond or something—this makes me sick!

*(DANA gives them a look. MIKE, DAVE, DOM, and GREG get bored. They drift away and exit. MARK follows.)*

*(The FEMME FATALE enters, presumably emerging from EXOTIC RAOUL's bed.)*

DANA You again?

FEMME FATALE *(producing the crumpled page)* Why did you give me this?

DANA I don't know.

FEMME FATALE You were so cruel to me. But this—

DANA A page from my heart.

FEMME FATALE —makes me understand.

DANA Great.

FEMME FATALE I was cruel to you. I made a mistake.

DANA So did I.

FEMME FATALE We could...

DANA That's not what it's all about.

FEMME FATALE You didn't love me, you know.

DANA Across the room, I loved you: the idea of you; the image in my mind. That was enough. I should have known that.

FEMME FATALE You'll want this back.

DANA No.

FEMME FATALE It moved me. Take it.

DANA It means more to me if you have it.

*(DANA and the FEMME FATALE exit, separately.)*

—Scene 9—

*(DANA and MARK are in their room.)*

DANA *(writing in his book)* Sarah was right. I saw my heart as a book of love. But it's a book of life, of knowledge. Truth muddled with dreams and misperceptions.

*(The TOUR GUIDE enters.)*

TOUR GUIDE Mind if we take a peek at your room?

*(A small group of bewildered kids and parents enter. The TOUR GUIDE enters—walking backwards—at the end of the train.)*

RANDOM KID *(to MARK)* So, dude. Lotta parties here?

MARK *(looking at a centerfold)* Can't you see I'm trying to write a paper?

*(PHIL enters with a plate of brownies.)*

TOUR GUIDE Oh! Here's one of our resident advisors.

PHIL Hey, guys! Welcome to Brandeis! I just thought I'd give everyone a treat!

*(Everyone but DANA takes a brownie, and files out as they eat.)*

RANDOM PARENT Nice, friendly people at this school.

ANOTHER PARENT And fat scholarships, too.

RANDOM KID *(after eating a brownie)* I feel kinda funny.

*(PHIL flashes a broad smile, and guides the RANDOM KID out of the room.)*

DANA    (*sighs deeply, looking at his book.*) Sarah. The past. This book. What to do with it now? I could toss it, but memories, like newsprint, stain my fingers, unintelligible. Am I doomed to live within its binding? to walk its margins the rest of my life? (*He sighs again.*) Volume one... (*He fans its pages without looking at them.*) It begs me to start another.

*(Dana shelves the book and exits.)*

## End of Act 2

Finis