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The Chalk Boy
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More Great Plays from OWP

Gloriana **by Chuck Spoler**

2 Males, 2 Females
(some playing multiple roles.)

Synopsis: A drama with plenty of comedy, Gloriana tells the story of Beth Cromwell, a disturbed teenager who believes that she is Elizabeth I. Consumed by "court intrigue", she spends her days speaking in Elizabethan English to her imaginary court jester, Trigolid. For two years Beth has refused to take anti-psychotic medication, as it would destroy her delusions. In order to manipulate Beth into taking her medicine, Dr. Burger, her psychiatrist, inserts himself and her parents into Beth's fantasy, as historical characters. The mystery deepens as Burger begins to suspect that a dark family secret is at the root of Beth's psychosis. If she finally takes the medication, she will lose the defense mechanism that has protected her, but if she doesn't, others may fall prey to the shadow that has encompassed her life.

Canned Peaches in Syrup **by Alex Jones**

5 Males, 3 Females

Synopsis: The timely post-apocalyptic comedy Canned Peaches In Syrup is set in a seemingly absurd and inconvenient future where global warming has reduced the planet to a desert wasteland, peopled by dwindling tribes of vegetarians and cannibals. Ma, Pa and Julie wander the blighted landscape in search of vegetable sustenance; but when the malicious prophet, Blind Bastard shows up and discovers they are the guardians of the very last can of fruit known to mankind, his greed sends cannibal Rog into their camp, triggering a Romeo and Juliet journey that spirals dangerously into passion, mayhem and destruction beneath the fractured sky of a doomed world.

The Chalk Boy
By
Joshua Conkel

The Chalk Boy opened on September 4th, 2008 in simultaneous productions in New York and Los Angeles. The New York production was produced by The Management at UNDER St. Mark's and had the following cast:

Penelope (Penny) Lauder..... Jennifer Harder
Breanna Stark..... Kate Huisentruit
Lauren Radley..... Mary Catherine Donnelly
Trisha Sorensen..... Marguerite French

Directed by Joshua Conkel
Stage Managed by Kelsi Welter

The Los Angeles production was produced by Company of Angels at The Alexandria. The cast was as follows:

Penelope (Penny) Lauder.....Sarah Rosenberg
Breanna Stark..... Sonora Chase*
Lauren Radley..... Amy Golden
Trisha Sorensen..... Claire Bocking

Directed by Courtney Sale
Stage Managed by Ricki McKissock

*Jennifer Harder flew to Los Angeles and filled in as Breanna Stark for several of the last performances.

Cast of Characters

PENELOPE (PENNY) LAUDER:

15, maladjusted, melancholy, and on a search for meaning.

BREANNA STARK:

15, Penny's best friend. Introspective and masculine. Wears her heart on her sleeve.

LAUREN RADLEY:

15, a nice Christian girl. Also plays MOM, GILL, and MRS. CHALK.

TRISHA SORENSEN:

15, an athlete and Breanna's best friend.

Also plays MISS MURKOWSKI, JEFF CHALK, and DOCTOR SALISBURY.

Scene

The playing space is defined by several chalkboards of varying sizes that are drawn or moved about to suggest various locations. There should be lots of shadow around the playing space for the actors to move in and out of. Also, there may be a small prop table onstage to hold odd and ends. In general, a few chairs and small props, coupled with sound design, should indicate setting when needed. The play is written to be performed without interruption or blackouts and with actors transforming onstage whenever possible. Let us not be trapped by literalism.

Time

Clear Creek, Washington. The present-ish.

THE CHALK BOY

ACT ONE

(As the audience enters the space there is pop music playing. Two teenage girls are drawing on the chalkboards. They occasionally giggle, dance a little, make a comment to one another, but they pay little attention to us. LAUREN RADLEY is a perky girl-next-door in designer jeans. TRISHA SORENSEN, her friend, is in sportswear and a t-shirt that reads, "Christian Athletes". They are drawing feverishly on the chalkboards now, as if a time limit is upon them. They draw houses, pine trees, roads, a school, a football field, a McDonald's, and, finally, a long creek. As the audience is seated and the music comes down, the girls quickly fix their hair and adjust their clothes one last time. Lauren nods to Trisha as if to say, "let's go" and the play begins. They speak directly to the audience.)

LAUREN: Hello. First of all, we want to thank you all for coming to this event. My name is Lauren Radley and this is Trisha Sorensen and we're here representing the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, of which I am the President. Even though I no longer play Volleyball because it conflicts with the Spring musical.

TRISHA: You all look really nice. I hope you enjoyed the Orangeade in the lobby. I made it.

LAUREN: So before we begin, we wanted to start with a prayer, so let's all of us join hands. Go ahead don't be shy. *(Lauren and Trisha link hands and bow their heads.)* Hi, God. It's me, Lauren Radley. I hope you're well. Please look over me and my family as well as Trisha and her family, lord. Please forgive us our trespasses, lord. We care not what we do. Please look over all the awesome people in the world, lord, and take pity on the not-so-awesome. Last of all, please help us to understand recent events and gain wisdom from them, lord. Let us reach catharsis through your love or what have you. Okay, thanks. Bye, God.

TRISHA: Bye. Amen.

LAUREN: *(Back to audience)* Okay, so... we're here to tell you about Clear Creek, Washington and the events that unfolded there.

(Trisha writes, "Clear Creek, WA" on the board. As the presentation continues, Trisha hurriedly tries to point out everything that is being discussed on the chalkboards. It is exhausting.)

LAUREN: This is Clear Creek High School, where we go.

TRISHA: There's our football field. GOOOOOOOO Vikings! And there's our McDonald's.

LAUREN: How do you describe a town like Clear Creek?

TRISHA: It's a shit hole.

LAUREN: Trisha!

TRISHA: Well, it is.

LAUREN: Have you ever been to Disney World? It's totally magical, which is why it's called the magical kingdom. But then you leave Disney World and you're in Orlando. Orlando is not magical. Orlando is strip malls and chain restaurants. Clear Creek is kind of like that, but smaller and in Washington instead of Florida.

TRISHA: And there aren't any beaches.

LAUREN: Right. No beaches. We have a creek though. Clear Creek. Which is sort of a misnomer, really, because it's actually full of cheeseburger wrappers and old tires.

TRISHA: Yeah, I guess it used to be different, like there were all these farms and stuff. My grandma can remember when there were no highways here. She keeps a candy dish of pills on her table and drinks a twelve pack of Bud Light every day so...

LAUREN: One thing that's awesome about Clear Creek is we have every restaurant you could ever imagine. They just opened up a Taco Bell slash Pizza Hut on Piney Street, which was really exciting.

TRISHA: Oh. I forgot to draw Taco Bell.

(Trisha begins to frantically draw it.)

LAUREN: You're embarrassing me.

TRISHA: I wish we were there right now! I want a grilled stuffed burrito!

LAUREN: We'll go after, now shh! *(Trisha freezes. They continue the presentation.)* Anyway, where was I? Oh yeah. Clear Creek is one of *those* towns. You know the ones. They all look exactly alike from the highway at night, forming a dotted line across America's grossly obese belly.

TRISHA: Wow. That's really poetical.

LAUREN: Thanks, Trish. (*To audience*) Clear Creek is where the events you are about to witness took place and it's these events that make Clear Creek a little different than other towns. Beneath its banal exterior, this town hides a nasty secret. Part One. *The Town That Dreaded Sundown*.

(*Trisha writes "Part One" on the board and keeps tally marks for the passing days.*)

LAUREN & TRISHA: Day one.

TRISHA: No big deal. Probably nobody noticed except for, like, his mom.

LAUREN & TRISHA: Day two.

TRISHA: The police are called.

LAUREN: People start looking. The mall. The woods. Police dogs sniff at the wet grass.

LAUREN & TRISHA: Day five.

TRISHA: By this time it's all over the news. People start to walk quicker on the street.

LAUREN: And lose sleep. I haven't slept.

TRISHA: Me neither.

LAUREN & TRISHA: Day seven.

TRISHA: I heard the football players telling faggot jokes on my way to the girls' locker room. I think they're just trying to forget that they could be next, the chickens.

LAUREN: My mother goes bananas. It's like she thinks that somebody is watching her. She's like Jamie Lee Curtis in her own personal *Halloween*.

TRISHA: Right, like your mother could ever wear high wasted bell bottoms.

LAUREN: I know, right?

LAUREN & TRISHA: Day eight.

LAUREN: Paranoia, paranoia, paranoia. The town is on total lock-down.

TRISHA: So much for our youth group trip to Orcas Island.

LAUREN: We'll start on day eight. This is our English teacher, Miss Murkowski, who we think is a paranoid schizo.

(Lauren looks to Trisha expectantly.)

TRISHA: Um. What?

LAUREN: Do your Murkowski for them.

TRISHA: You do it. You're the actress.

LAUREN: Yes, but your Murkowski is funnier.

TRISHA: I think you're being modest. *(To audience)* Lauren played Emily Webb in last year's production of *Our Town* and she was SO good. You don't even know.

LAUREN: Come on.

TRISHA: Ugh. Fine.

(Trisha procures the ugliest pair of glasses ever made and transforms into MISS MURKOWSKI. Lights shift. We are suddenly in a classroom full of teenage chattering. She addresses her class.)

MISS MURKOWSKI: Eyes here, class. Eyes on me. Okey-dokey. I have a very important announcement to read on behalf of the Sheriff's Department, so listen closely. *(She reads from an invisible piece of paper in her hand.)* In light of recent events all persons under the age of eighteen are to go home immediately after school. *(Groans. Murkowski shushes them.)* No, none of that. This is for your protection. *(Reading)* A strict curfew will be in place from sundown to sun up until further notice. Any persons not adhering to the curfew will be subject to disciplinary action including, but not limited to, a two-hundred dollar fine. The curfew is in effect immediately. Thank you. Sheriff Dick Sparks. Sheriff's Department. Clear Creek County. *(She is finished reading.)* Boys and girls, it is imperative that you be careful out there. These are such dangerous times. As immortal as you might feel, you could be taken just like that. *(Snaps her fingers for emphasis.)* When I was your age I knew a girl, Erica Morielli, and she disappeared. They looked and looked but eventually gave up. She ran away, we told ourselves, girls run away all the time. Two months later they found her in an abandoned freezer. HER FACE HAD BEEN SCRAPED OFF. That's when I learned that these things happen all the time and could happen to any of us. Even me, dear old Miss Murkowski. Why, I could be scooped off the street and thrown into a van. It could happen. Somebody could drive me to a secluded

MISS MURKOWSKI (cont'd): location, like by the old abandoned drive-in off Route 9 perhaps, and they could tie me up and abuse me in more ways than you could possibly imagine. It's a simple fact. I could be abused... sexually. I could be stabbed, starved, frozen, dismembered, thrown into an old well... anything. Ah, but I know how to defend myself. I know a trick. Everybody take out your keys. *(She takes out a set of keys.)* Now, you place a key between two fingers like so. See how sharp and jagged that is? You can use that to gouge out the eyes of an attacker. Now, I want you to shout while you do it. *(She punches at the air and shouts as if in a self-defense class.)* No! *(the teens shout "no" in unison.)* NO! *(Again, the teens echo her.)* NOOOOOOOOOO! *(Silence. Murkowski recovers.)* That's right, boys and girls. If a stranger ever comes up to you, somebody that makes you feel uncomfortable or lays a hand on you, I want you to pop their eye out. POP! Just like a cork. These are our times, boys and girls. These are our times. *(Beat)* Okey-dokey. Mark Temple will now grace us with his oral presentation on Lord of the Flies. Mark, whenever you're ready.

(The lights go back to normal. Lauren applauds as Trisha removes the glasses and becomes herself.)

LAUREN: That was really good! And scary accurate.

TRISHA: Thanks, Lauren.

LAUREN: Moving on. Ladies and gentlemen, we now have the slight displeasure of introducing you to Penny Lauder and Breanna Stark who are-

TRISHA: Total fucking bitches.

LAUREN: Trisha! Try not to curse so much. You are here representing the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, don't forget.

TRISHA: I'm sorry.

LAUREN: *(To audience)* Trish is just upset because Penny-

TRISHA: Shut up, Lauren!

LAUREN: Okay, fine. Anyway, let's just say these are not the most popular girls in school.

TRISHA: They worship the devil!

LAUREN: So this is Penny. (PENNY *appears. Her look is sort of punky promiscuous. She has a backpack.*) Penny is a little white trash and sort of an s-l-u-t, or so I'm told. She doesn't have a dad that I know of but her mom is, like, really young. She teaches my mom's Pilates class at that gym for fat ladies in the mall. This is Breanna. (BREANNA *appears dressed in baggy boy's clothes. She has a backpack too.*) Breanna's family is sort of loaded, but nobody likes her because people say she's a lesbian.

TRISHA: It's true. We were always on the same soccer team when we were little and that's how I know. Breanna Stark used to be my best friend but then she tried to grab my tit at an eighth grade sleep-over.

LAUREN: You never told me that.

TRISHA: It was before we were friends and I before I made Christ my personal lord and savior.

LAUREN: Oh. (To Audience) Anyway, that's enough exposition. We'll be back in a bit.

TRISHA: Kisses, bitches.

(Lauren and Trisha exit. The lights shift as Penny and Breanna begin their scene. A clearing in the woods at dusk. Each girl holds a bottle of cough syrup in their hands. They are in a stare down.)

PENNY: One, two, three... GO.

(Breanna doesn't move.)

BREANNA: Will this work?

PENNY: Yes, I told you it would, now drink it. God! One, two, three... GO.

(They chug their entire bottles. They gag.)

BREANNA: It's hard to drink. Harder than Vodka.

PENNY: John Stratton said it, like, totally fucked him up. Like he couldn't even walk.

BREANNA: Wow.

PENNY: I know, right?

BREANNA: Should we have done that? I have a quiz tomorrow.

PENNY: What quiz?

BREANNA: In Algebra II.

PENNY: There's no quiz in Algebra II.

BREANNA: Yeah, there is.

PENNY: Shut up. No there isn't.

BREANNA: Yeah, there is. I told you like twenty times.

PENNY: When?

BREANNA: Like twenty times. Plus we have a curfew.

PENNY: Like I give a wet shit about quizzes and curfews.

BREANNA: You should listen to me more often.

PENNY: You should be less boring. You know all the guys at school said they'd never even talk to you if you didn't give oral?

BREANNA: Who said that?

PENNY: Lots of guys.

BREANNA: Which guys?

PENNY: I can't say.

BREANNA: I don't give oral.

PENNY: Yes huh.

BREANNA: I do not.

PENNY: Do too.

BREANNA: Who?

PENNY: Mark Temple.

BREANNA: Just once.

PENNY: So?

BREANNA: So what?

PENNY: So you give oral, that's what.

BREANNA: Only once!

PENNY: But if you didn't then no guys would talk to you and that's my point. You're boring and sometimes I don't even know why I'm friends with you.

BREANNA: So don't be.

PENNY: Maybe I won't. Maybe I'll go hang out with Trisha Sorensen like you used to.

BREANNA: Go ahead. Everybody would just make fun of you because everybody knows that Trisha pooped her pants at the Hot Springs and wiped her butt with a newspaper.

PENNY: That's just a rumor.

BREANNA: How would you know?

PENNY: Because I'm the one who made it up.

BREANNA: Penny!

PENNY: What? She's a bitch.

BREANNA: You are such a whore.

(Penny gives Breanna a Charlie horse.)

PENNY: Don't ever call me that!

BREANNA: Sorry! God. *(Rubbing the spot.)* That really hurt.

PENNY: I meant it to.

BREANNA: God.

PENNY: Well...

BREANNA: What?

PENNY: You shouldn't have called me that. And stop saying "god" after everything. It's so annoying.

BREANNA: Sorry. *(Beat)* People threw food at her in the cafeteria. We all called her "shit stain."

PENNY: What do you care? I thought you hated her.

BREANNA: I do, but what did Trisha Sorensen ever do to you?

PENNY: Nothing. I don't know. Shut up.

BREANNA: Tell me.

PENNY: Okay, okay. Stop giving me the third degree. God! So remember when you and me and stubby and Trisha and Jeff were at The Olive Garden last Spring?

BREANNA: Uh huh. What?

PENNY: I let Jeff Chalk finger me under the table and-

BREANNA: Oh my god, gross!

PENNY: And I didn't want Trisha to tell anybody! She was the only one who knew.

BREANNA: Penny, I've known her, like, my whole life. She wouldn't tell anybody.

PENNY: Now she won't.

BREANNA: Gross.

PENNY: Shut up, Breanna.

BREANNA: You are nasty.

PENNY: I said shut up!

BREANNA: Fine, jeez. I don't see why you let Jeff do that. Do you like him or something?

PENNY: I don't know.

BREANNA: You deserve better. Somebody who laughs at your jokes. Somebody who likes you for you. (*The cough syrup high kicks in at this precise moment.*) Somebody who likes the way the setting sun bounces off your golden hair. (*Beat*) I feel dizzy.

PENNY: Yeah, well you just drank a whole bottle of cough syrup. Dizzy is the goal, I guess.

BREANNA: I can see everything breathing.

PENNY: You retard.

BREANNA: Why are you so mean to people?

(*Penny's high kicks in.*)

PENNY: Who knows why anybody does anything?

BREANNA: Do you see that? Everything is breathing.

PENNY: Yeah. Wow! Breanna?

BREANNA: Uh huh?

PENNY: I think we should do it now.

BREANNA: Okay.

PENNY: Do you have the stuff?

BREANNA: Yeah.

PENNY: Then let us begin. *(Something strange is happening with the lights. Eerie music. Penny pulls an ornate dagger from her bag.)* We start by drawing a pentagram in the earth with the sacred dagger. *(She hands the dagger to Breanna who uses it to carve a pentagram into the ground as Penny retrieves five white candles from her own bag. She sees Breanna's work.)* That's a Star of David, dummy. Do it over!

(Breanna erases the circle with her sneaker and quickly draws it again as penny lights each candle and places it at each of the star's points. Breanna unfolds a purple cloth and they kneel on it.)

BREANNA: *(Chanting)* This purple cloth is for protection.

PENNY: This purple cloth is for protection. *(She lights a black candle.)* Visit us, spirits. Bless us with your patronage.

PENNY & BREANNA: With this candle we invoke thee. *(Penny pulls a metal bowl from her bag. Breanna pulls a plastic bag full of garlic from hers.)* We offer you this bowl of garlic.

BREANNA: Speak with us.

(Penny pulls a goblet from her bag. She looks to Breanna.)

PENNY: Did you bring the ceremonial wine? *(Breanna pulls a box of wine from her bag and pours some into the goblet. Penny uses a needle to prick her finger and then squeezes it into the goblet.)* Breanna, give me your finger. *(Breanna timidly offers her finger and lets out a tiny yelp as Penny pricks it. She lets it drip into the goblet.)* Okay. Lie down. *(Breanna lies with her head in Penny's lap. Penny calls to the heavens while the music reaches a crescendo.)* We call the spirit of Jeff Chalk. Speak through this girl, Jeff. If you have left this mortal coil, enter our circle! Speak through his girl, Jeff Chalk! So mote it be! So mote it be! SO MOTE IT BE!

(The music stops. Pause.)

BREANNA: I don't feel good.

PENNY: Be serious.

BREANNA: I am serious. I think I'm gonna barf.

(Breanna crawls to the edge of the stage and vomits.)

PENNY: Idiot. You broke the circle. God!

BREANNA: Sorry. It's all that cough syrup.

PENNY: You can't handle your drugs. The cough syrup was supposed to enhance it.

BREANNA: I'm sorry.

PENNY: This sucks.

BREANNA: We can try again.

PENNY: It's no use. We're not powerful enough. We need four so we can call the corners.

BREANNA: Call the what now?

PENNY: CORNERS. Don't you read any of the books I give you? I swear... You have to call upon the powers of the North, South, East and West. Like in *The Craft*.

BREANNA: Right. *(Pause. Penny turns from Breanna and sulks.)* Penny, you hardly knew him.

PENNY: It seems that way but you don't know everything. Ever since that time at The Olive Garden I just... I love Jeff Chalk. I mean, I think I love him, kind of.

BREANNA: Wow.

PENNY: Right? And now I might not ever... I mean, I might not ever be able to talk to him again. If he ran away he might not come back. And if he's...

BREANNA: Don't.

PENNY: Well, he's been missing for over a week.

BREANNA: Search and Rescue is looking.

PENNY: So? Did they ever find me all those times I ran away? Search and Rescue didn't find me and I was just at Foot Locker. What if he's dead?

BREANNA: You're better off without him. Guys are shit. I hate how girls are supposed to be these, like, flavorless non-people, these meek little things, just so we can be some dude's cum bucket and squirt out his awful babies.

PENNY: You've never been in love.

BREANNA: Maybe I haven't. But anyway, I'll never wear high heels.

PENNY: Don't be stupid. God!

BREANNA: Sorry. What will make you feel better?

PENNY: I don't know. I think my high wore off.

BREANNA: I know what we can do-

PENNY: I'm just gonna go home.

BREANNA: We can go to Albertson's and do whippets!

PENNY: I don't wanna.

BREANNA: Come on.

PENNY: Who are you taking to the Harvest Dance?

(Breanna gives Penny an incredulous look.)

BREANNA: What? I'm not going to that.

PENNY: If Jeff is alive... I mean, do you think if he comes back he'll ask me to the Harvest Dance? You're right. He's alive. Everything is gonna be fine. I'm gonna marry him some day.

BREANNA: It's dark. We should leave.

PENNY: Penelope Chalk...

BREANNA: I'm barfing to death.

PENNY: Mrs. Jeffrey Chalk...

BREANNA: LET'S GO.

PENNY: All right, already. God!

BREANNA: *(As they exit.)* I think you're still high.

(They are gone. Lauren and Trisha enter. They continue their presentation.)

TRISHA: See? Total freak show.

LAUREN: Okay, now I don't want you to think I'm a b.i.t.c.h. because I would never make fun of somebody for being poor, but Penny Lauder lives in one of those manufactured homes they advertise on television.

TRISHA: It's so sordid.

LAUREN: You don't have to be mean.

TRISHA: She makes my skin crawl.

LAUREN: *(While retrieving a pair of sweat pants and a remote control.)* I know. Here. Help me get into these sweat pants. *(Trisha opens the sweat pants and helps Lauren step into them. Lauren puts a scrunchy into her hair.)* Penny's mom always wears sweat pants. Like, always. And her hair is always pulled back into a scrunchy. She'd actually be really pretty if she'd only try. She's really young for a mom. Like, thirty-one or thirty-two. She went to Clear creek High School with my second cousin Rachel who said she was actually really popular.

TRISHA: Who knew?

LAUREN: Here is a picture of what life is like in the Lauder household. Part Two.

(Trisha writes "Part Two" on the board. Dance music and lights shift. We are in the Lauder's living room. Lauren has transformed into MOM, who is furiously doing Pilates before the blue glow of the television. She hears a noise and stops exercising.)

MOM: Hello? *(She turns off the music with the remote control. A floorboard creaks.)* Is somebody there? Penelope is that you? Hello?

(Penny enters with Breanna. Mom is frightened and jumps.)

PENNY: Yes, it's me. God!

MOM: You scared the shit out of me. I almost bludgeoned you with the remote control.

PENNY: Sorry.

MOM: Hello, Breanna. How is your mother?

BREANNA: She's sort of been-

MOM: Penelope, do you know what time it is? What the hell were you thinking?

PENNY: It's just eight.

MOM: There's a curfew. You think I don't know? Let me tell you something, I know everything. I got eyes on the back of my head and ears like a fox so don't you try anything.

BREANNA: Sorry, Mrs. Lauder. We were just doing one of our spells and lost track of time. Won't happen again.

MOM: You see that it doesn't. And I don't like this witch stuff, Penelope, not at all. I told you that already.

PENNY: Wicca is my religion, mother.

MOM: You're a Lutheran and you know it. Witchcraft or whatever is a, I don't know, a hobby.

PENNY: I'm not a Lutheran and neither are you.

MOM: I am so a Lutheran!

PENNY: Oh yeah? When do you ever got to church?

MOM: I go plenty.

PENNY: Like when?

MOM: PLENTY.

PENNY: And when exactly did you decide to become a Lutheran again? When did you have that great epiphany that you should be a Lutheran?

MOM: You think you're *so* cute.

PENNY: Well?

MOM: You know that Grandma and Grandpa are Lutherans and their parents before them. Don't change the subject.

PENNY: I can't remember what the subject is.

MOM: I'll tell you, miss smarty pants. You just waltzed through my front door after curfew when something absolutely bonkers is happening in this town. That's the subject. And what if you'd been caught? Picked up by the police? They'd fine me. Deem meet an unfit mother and take you away maybe. You want that? And don't call me "mother". It's passive aggressive the way you say it and I don't like it. My name is mom.

PENNY: I'll call you mom if you call me Penny.

MOM: Fine. Have it your way. But I'll have you know Penelope was married to Odysseus. I mean, she was only a queen for Christ's sake.

PENNY: I know, I know. Jesus! What's for dinner?

MOM: I didn't cook. (*Penny glares at her.*) I was too nervous! You had me biting my nails, girly. Anyway, from the looks of that gut I'd say you've had enough. If I've told you once, I've told you a thousand times. If you don't stop gaining weight no boys will ever ask you out.

PENNY: Mom, please...

MOM: I say these things out of love. Do you want to die alone? Hmm? If you keep eating garbage do you know what will happen? One day you'll put on that special little black dress and you'll take a look at yourself in the mirror and it'll look like you're trash bag full of hamburger meat. I promise you that.

PENNY: Stop nagging, please. I'm hungry and so is Breanna.

MOM: Well, Breanna lives in that great big house up on Hillcrest so I'd bet she's got food there. In a two thousand dollar stainless steel fridge!

BREANNA: (*Quietly.*) They bought it at Sears.

MOM: As for you... microwave some popcorn. NOT the Butter Lover's.

PENNY: Breanna is staying the night here.

MOM: I didn't say she could do that.

PENNY: Please?

BREANNA: If it's okay.

PENNY: You can't send her home in the dark. Kids are dropping like flies.

MOM: That's not funny.

PENNY: I didn't mean it to be.

MOM: That poor boy is out there in the dark somewhere tonight. Think about that.

BREANNA: We're really sad about Jeff.

MOM: Bless your heart. See, Penelope? Why can't you be more like your friend here? At least she knows how to act like a lady.

BREANNA: Wow.

PENNY: Can she stay the night or not?

MOM: I'm sorry, girls, but it's a school night. I'll drive you home, Breanna. I have to go out anyway. I'm all out of Crystal Light. Just let me get cleaned up.

(Lauren, as Mom, exits.)

PENNY: Brown noser.

BREANNA: Stop.

PENNY: Well, you are.

BREANNA: I was being polite. You want her to like me, don't you?

PENNY: Like you, not hump you. She practically gets wet every time you come here.

BREANNA: Gross!

PENNY: Tell me about it.

(Pause)

BREANNA: I don't want to go home.

PENNY: I know. This sucks.

BREANNA: I don't want to be alone. I want to sleep with you. I hear noises at night. A man. When I'm lying in bed I can hear his footsteps in the driveway. Footsteps in the gravel.

PENNY: There's no man in your driveway.

BREANNA: I know what I hear.

PENNY: Look, I wish you could stay too, but you can't. Anyway, we need to think of a way that we can help find Jeff. Like something nobody's thought of.

BREANNA: I don't really think he's alive.

PENNY: What?

BREANNA: I'm sorry, but I don't. I was trying to make you feel better, but I don't believe it. Not anymore.

PENNY: God, Breanna!

BREANNA: Well, you know what happens to people who disappear around here just as well as I do.

PENNY: Shut up.

BREANNA: Are you mad?

PENNY: Yes.

BREANNA: Do you hate me?

PENNY: Yes.

BREANNA: I'm sorry.

PENNY: It's fine.

BREANNA: Maybe I'm wrong and he's okay.

PENNY: No. You don't get to do that. You don't get to take things back when you upset somebody.

BREANNA: Okay. Then I think Jeff Chalk is dead. I think something really shitty happened to him and now he's dead. Happy? Man, I let you walk all over me and I never say anything just because I want you to like me, or whatever.

PENNY: Dumb bitch.

(Lauren, as Mom, enters with her car keys.)

MOM: Okay. Let's go. Penelope, I want you to lock the doors behind us, all right?

PENNY: Okay.

MOM: And I want your homework started by the time I get back. Do you understand? *(Penny and Breanna are locking eyes.)* Look at me. HEY! Grades are important. I don't want you to ruin your life the way I ruined mine.

PENNY: Okay, okay.

MOM: I'll be back in a half an hour. Love you! *(Lauren, as Mom, exits.)*

PENNY: *(Quietly.)* Get. Out. Of. My. House.

(Breanna sheepishly leaves. Penny paces back and forth slowly thinking.)

PENNY: Mrs. Chalk. Mrs. Penelope Chalk. Penelope Louis Chalk. Penelope Lauder Chalk.

(She continues to pace and talk to herself as Trisha enters and observes her. Penny doesn't see her.)

TRISHA: *(To audience.)* Charming. *(During the next few lines she sets up for the next scene, placing a television and chair. She puts on a men's track jacket and baseball cap, but does not transform.)* So this is sort of a sub section of Part Two. Let's call it Part Two A. *(She adds an A next to where "Part Two" is written.)* Around this time it's pretty common for us girls to sleep over at each others houses in big groups. Even on school nights. Not because we're all bull dykes like Breanna Stark, but because it just feels safer. Fun fact. The noise that Breanna heard was actually her own eyelashes brushing against her pillow case and not a man's footsteps in the gravel like she thought. She never figured that one out. I know this because I'm the narrator and I'm whatchamacallit... omniscient. *(She sits down in the chair with the television in her lap.)* Anyways, this is the dream that Penny had that night.

(LIGHTS SHIFT TO: We are somewhere dark and surreal. Strange noises drift quietly from the shadows. Trisha has transformed into JEFF CHALK. Jeff Chalk sits in the chair with the television in his lap. He dully flips through the channels, transfixed. Penny, who has been pacing through all of this, notices him.)

PENNY: Jeff?

JEFF CHALK: I can't get ESPN down here. It totally sucks.

PENNY: Where are we?

JEFF CHALK: A hole. A basement?

PENNY: Are you hurt? Something is different about you.

JEFF CHALK: I'm bored. I've been spending most of my days asleep. Waiting for something to happen. Nothing ever happens around here. I guess this is something though, isn't it?

PENNY: I don't understand. Is someone holding you here or--

JEFF CHALK: He gave me this tv to watch. No cable though. I've been watching a lot of *M.A.S.H.* That shit is always on.

PENNY: You know, you're more popular than ever. Suddenly everybody thinks you're like the greatest guy who ever lived. I got called into the principal's office to talk to the police. They don't have a fucking clue.

JEFF CHALK: I'm kind of lucky when you think about it. When I get out of here I'll be like a total celebrity. In the papers and shit.

PENNY: You're already in the papers. Listen, I was wondering... do you like me?

JEFF CHALK: You seem sad a lot of the time.

PENNY: I am. Aren't you?

JEFF CHALK: Not really. Wanna watch *The Price is Right*?

PENNY: Sure. (*She watches television with him.*) When it happened the first time I couldn't tell if you really liked me at all. I'm still not sure.

JEFF CHALK: Ssh.

PENNY: What you did, I've never let anybody do that to me. And I really like it when we meet by the creek but I don't know why we have to keep it a secret.

JEFF CHALK: This dude comes down here sometimes. He's okay. At first I thought this was all some kind of gay thing because he asks to touch my face all the time. That's it. Just touch my face. I thought it was creepy at first, but now I'm used to it. I mean, as long as he doesn't do anything else. It's funny, I'm so used to being told what to do. I guess I was used to it. Down here though... I mean, at least he asks me first. The guy loves me. Not in a gay way. I think he's just lonely. Anyway, he gets me whatever I want as long as I let him touch my face and I talk to him when he wants, and like that. (*He smacks the side of the television.*) I'm thinking of asking for cable. Man, it's gonna be awesome when I go back. Things will be different because I'm different. Something different finally happened to me.

PENNY: I wish you'd touch me like that. I'd like it.

JEFF CHALK: I'm watching my show.

PENNY: Come back with me.

JEFF CHALK: I can't. Everything is gonna be different now.

(*Penny exits. LIGHTS SHIFT TO: Trisha gets out of Jeff drag as Lauren enters and joins her. They continue speaking to the audience.*)

LAUREN: So here's the 411 on Jeff Chalk. He's not especially smart.

TRISHA: Or very interesting.

LAUREN: He's athletic.

TRISHA: He's all body.

LAUREN: Yeah. That body is... wow.

TRISHA: He's cute.

LAUREN: He's gorgeous.

TRISHA: Tell them about the horse girls.

LAUREN: There are these girls at school we call the horse girls. They're girls who live on farms, usually. They have greasy hair and Target jeans and are really quiet. Thing is, they all love horses. They sit there and draw horses in their notebook all day long, never talking to anybody.

TRISHA: There's five or six of them. Kelly Sanders is one.

LAUREN: I'm secretly kind of one of them. I mean, I love horses. My grandparents have this ranch in California. It's amazing there. When I was twelve I fell in love with this horse named Foggy. I'd, like, groom him and ride him and whisper all my stupid secrets to him. I felt so close to him, even though he was sort of quiet and aloof as horses tend to be. He was my best friend that summer, which must sound totally queer.

TRISHA: Horses are a metaphor! (*Lauren glares at her.*) Sorry. Sheesh.

LAUREN: Anyway, one day I was leading Foggy through a field when I slipped in mud and fell. It was quick as lighting and I guess the impact of my little body hitting the dirt must have spooked him. He reared up his front legs and came down on me. Hard. His hoof hit me right on the ear. And I was wearing these really cute earrings I got for my birthday too. It was shocking because I'd trusted him so much, you know? I was like, F you, Foggy! I didn't go near him for the rest of the summer. But I wanted to. Because he was so beautiful. And the fact that he was all aloof and dangerous made me want to be near him even more. And, really, that is sort of how Jeff Chalk is.

TRISHA: He's also a shoe-in for Prom King in a couple of years.