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EDEN

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ABSTRACT NUDE

by Gwydion Suilebhan

4 Males, 3 Females

Synopsis: Abstract Nude is an enigmatic, erotically-charged portrait that seems to reveal more about the people who view it than it reveals about itself. As the painting moves backward in time, it passes from owner to owner, exploding the lives of everyone who encounters it. In one home, the portrait tips the balance in a barely-suppressed power struggle among the members of a well-to-do family. In another, it awakens a great deal of confusion – and passion – between two former fraternity brothers. In the home of the portrait's subject, it inspires nothing but unrequited love and alienation between two dear friends. And finally, back in the moment of its creation, where the story both ends and begins, the painting incites a terrible violence... the tragedy that haunts it wherever it travels, and that cannot be escaped.

COMMENCEMENT

by Clay McLeod Chapman

1 Female

Synopsis: One actress plays three women drawn together in the grim aftermath of a high school shooting - the mother of the shooter (*staph infection*), one of the shooter's victims (*early release*), and the mother of that victim (*keynote speaker*). It is a deep exploration of the lives of three women that, according to SEE Magazine "... will leave you wringing your hands in helpless empathy."

EDEN

by

Jennifer Maisel

CHARACTERS:

CECELIA -- early 30s, HIV positive, former dancer/current waitress

MAURA -- Cecelia's mother, slight accent, a Survivor

HARVEY -- Ageless

REBECCA -- early 30s, Cecelia and Kate's best friend from childhood.
Architect.

FRANKLIN -- Rebecca's fiancée. Architect.

L. -- Franklin's sister, divorced

KATE -- early 30s, Cecelia and Rebecca's best friend from childhood,
gay, burgeoning performance artist

MAN/NEAL -- early 30s, also doubles as HOMELESS MAN, SILENT
POLICE MAN

SETTING:

The late 1990s.

A unit set. A metal and mirrored jungle that transforms into whatever it
needs to be.

The action is continuous.

EDEN won South Coast Repertory's California Playwrights Competition and was given a reading at SCR, directed by Bill Rauch.

EDEN premiered at THEATRE OF NOTE, Los Angeles, California in July of 1999, produced by Kiff Scholl with Sarah Phemister & April Van-off. It was directed by Dan Oliverio.

The Cast was as follows:

CECELIA – Lisa Anne Morrison

MAURA – Pamela Gordon

HARVEY – David Conner

REBECCA -- Alina Phelan

FRANKLIN – Jonathan Klein

L. – Michelle Welk

KATE -- Mika Walden

MAN/NEAL -- Chris DeWan

Lighting Design: Jonathan Klein

Set Design: Dan Mailley

Costume Design: Trace Turville

Prop Design: Thomas Prisco

Sound Design and Original Music: Corby Gallegos

Choreographer: Jessica Wallenfels

EDEN is dedicated to Barbra Frey and John Cook.

It is true that these mysteries are dreadful, and people have always drawn away from them. But where can we find anything sweet and glorious that would never wear this mask of the dreadful? Whoever does not, sometime or other, give his full and joyous consent to the dreadfulness of life, can never take possession of the unutterable abundance and power of our existence; can only walk on its edge, and one day, when the judgment is given, will have neither been alive nor dead.

-Rainer Maria Rilke

EDEN

Nighttime

Maura speaks to the audience.

Cecelia echoes her and takes over in some places

She has heard this story so often it has become her own.

MAURA: Once, a very long time ago, I was a small girl. Small for my age even and young, younger than you are now.

MAURA/CECELIA: I think of you as so young, I want to protect you from this story, I want to keep you from the nightmares, the imaginings, but I was even younger than you then.

MAURA: I was a small child as well, so I didn't look old enough to understand what was happening.

MAURA/CECELIA: I wanted to comfort my mother

MAURA: sitting at the window most of the night because during sleep, that is the time when our defenses are down. I was ashamed

CECELIA: I thought the yellow star looked so pretty against my black coat

MAURA: because to wear it -- I somehow knew to wear it was wrong. It happened in the time it takes for you to rearrange the covers or to tie your shoe -- but it lives crystal clear in my head. The trance of walking -- so far past tired -- and my name called, shouted out I thought, but I was the only one who heard the man at the edge of the woods.

MAURA/CECELIA: He called my name-

MAURA: I can't say he was beautiful because you don't call men beautiful. I thought he had his own light coming from inside.

CECELIA: He called your name.

MAURA/CECELIA: He beckoned to me with his hand

MAURA: and the guard

CECELIA: the guard

MAURA: turned his own head away towards

MAURA/CECELIA: someone falling

MAURA: to the ground. I ran. I ran to this man. I ran so hard I had to close my eyes. I opened them and the man was gone but I was safe.

MAURA/CECELIA: Someone turned his head

MAURA: and I became free.

I saw the man again the day I met your father, but not until then. I lived alone in the woods for some time. When the partisans found me I was animal with the faint memory of girl.

I know what I lived for. I lived for the moment I saw your head push between my legs. I lived for seeing you extend your arm and your leg and rise on one toe to be a swan.

MAURA/CECELIA: I tell you this so you can think your mother is a little crazy, so you can pass it down to your children and tell them -- to think of how our history changed in a moment. Someone turned his head, a vision beckoned and future generations were saved.

MAURA: I lived for telling you this story.

A nightclub called EDEN.

The bowels of New York City.

Pulsing music.

Light filtering through the smoke of the room.

Bodies moving against each other.

(CECELIA dances alone, looking not lonely, but singular.

She holds a drink tray, she's got a money bag around her waist.

When HARVEY appears, it is as if from nowhere.

He watches her.)

CECELIA: What do you want from me?

HARVEY: Love.

Well, that's what you want. In love, in dangerous, right before we jump off the cliff into love. That feeling, that. I'm here only to oblige.

CECELIA: Not a chance.

HARVEY: Oh, that feeling you long to remember those days when you look at your love-er and don't see perfect anywhere anymore. That's what you're looking for. That.

CECELIA: Order a drink.

HARVEY: Twelve steps.

CECELIA: A soda.

HARVEY: I'm not permitted worldly goods.

CECELIA: No cash. (*he shrugs*) Pretend.

HARVEY: Nobody here cares if you look suspicious. Everyone comes to Eden to lose themselves in the possibility.

CECELIA: Of?

HARVEY: (*snake-charmer*) -of something that's not the life they have right now.

CECELIA: (*trancelike*) In too deep?

HARVEY: (*drawing her in*) Over our heads.

CECELIA: Drowning?

HARVEY: In the sameness.

CECELIA: In the utter monotony.

HARVEY: Of the every day.

CECELIA: When will it ever change?

HARVEY: It used to be-

CECELIA: It used to be-

HARVEY: So good-

CECELIA: Oh I remember that. That feeling. It's delicious.

HARVEY: You don't have to remember. You could have it again.

(*-the moment is broken-*)

CECELIA: It fades.

(*silence*)

HARVEY: (*trying again*) You're beautiful.

CECELIA: That won't last.

HARVEY: You never give in. I like that you never give in.

CECELIA: So?

HARVEY: With me around, I guarantee you will.

CECELIA: I don't know you.

HARVEY: But I'm kind of familiar. Like someone you've been waiting for your whole life finally standing right in front of you.

CECELIA: Let me warn you right now - you don't want to pick me up.
The way you assume I want to know you...you're so wrong.

(She turns to go)

HARVEY: I've been told you're wanting this.

*(He takes the gun out of his inside pocket. A special gun.
It GLEAMS.)*

HARVEY: It's exactly what you've been thinking of - am I right?

CECELIA: That's beauty.

(He shows it off - it catches the light. Tempting.)
How did you know?

HARVEY: Words, wishes...they get around. You'll find if you stick with
me things like this will happen to you all the time. If you stick with
me coincidence will not be coincidental at all anymore.

(She takes the gun from him.)

CECELIA: Show me.

HARVEY: Bullets are right here. *(Pats another pocket.)*
We'll go someplace a little more private.

CECELIA: *(taken aback, slightly surprised)* No bullets.

HARVEY: No bullets. It won't be much use.

CECELIA: I'm creating something here. And I'm sure - No bullets.

(Takes measure of the gun in her hands.)

It's forming in the back of my head. The pieces are coming together.
The next thing is suddenly there, like I've actually got a plan. Soon
I'll know exactly what I'm about to do.

HARVEY: Uh huh. I'll keep the bullets. Just in case.

(Cecelia points the gun at the mirrored ball hanging from the ceiling.)

CECELIA: I hate this place.

HARVEY: You want to dance? I dance, you know, not like some guys.
It'll give you a chance to see what you're missing.

CECELIA: I see exactly what I'm missing.

HARVEY: There it is again. Feisty. Or is this a front?

CECELIA: You never give up. I hate that you never give up.

HARVEY: I'm always here. Right where I'm needed. Just turn around, you'll see me.

We're going to have a special relationship. One dance, come on. I love this song.

(He pulls her closer. At his touch she pulls away.)

CECELIA: I need you for the gun, to learn a few tricks. That's all. Hands off.

HARVEY: No where in the rule book did it say we couldn't have any fun.

I checked. I'm very careful about these things. I have integrity, you know. Don't muck with things that are beyond my reach... however tempting... I know my limits very well.

You think I don't know what you're shying away from. But one dance couldn't hurt anyone.

One interim of movement. One awakening to the beat. One blood warming to feelings you haven't let yourself have in a long time

(He dances a few gliding steps.)

Don't make this hard on me. It would be a lot easier if you'd let yourself give in...

C'mon.

CECELIA: I'll figure it out myself.

(-as she disappears into the smoke-)

HARVEY: Hey! Hey! *(-she turns-)* My money.

The Bridal Store

(REBECCA and L. stand before a three way mirror.

L. wears a bridesmaid dress.)

REBECCA: You look fine.

L.: I look fat. From all angles.

REBECCA: You look fine.

L.: Look. Really look.

REBECCA: It's fine.

L.: You're just saying that.

REBECCA: Yeah. I am.

(silence)

L.: You don't have to ask me, you know.

REBECCA: Don't start that.

L.: We're not even friends yet. I mean, you're marrying my brother. We'll be family. We'll see each other at holidays and occasional weekends and send birthday cards. You'll fix me up on blind dates with your fellow architects when I'm in town and warn me not to spend the whole time badmouthing my ex.

REBECCA: Don't do this.

L.: We'll become friends.

REBECCA: If you don't want to--

L.: I'm not saying I don't want to.

REBECCA: - You should have told me before then - because I ordered these dresses months ago and Franklin's got one best man and one usher and I have my maid of honor and you and had I known then I could have -- we'll be unbalanced.

L.: Rebecca-

REBECCA: I knew we should have had a small, unassuming wedding. We should have borrowed someone's backyard. Found a justice of the peace. I knew we should have just gone to city hall and gotten it over with. Getting married. What was I thinking?

L.: I just mean you don't have to ask me to. I won't be hurt. Our relationship is ahead of us. And I know -

REBECCA: I asked you. (*explodes*) Why is it that everybody is so sure that they know what I want? Don't you think I know what I want?

(*silence*)

L.: I thought you should know I know I'm not really first choice.
I just want you to have the wedding you've always wanted to have.

The Dressing Room at a department store.

(*CECELIA stands in her bra and underwear, trying on outfits.*
MAURA enters the small room, with clothes in hand.)

MAURA: How about this?

CECELIA: I won't wear it.

MAURA: It would look cute on you. That looks nice.

CECELIA: I won't wear it.

MAURA: It looks good. Let me get it for you.

CECELIA: It's too nice.

MAURA: You might need it.

CECELIA: I don't have any place to wear it to.

MAURA: Who knows?

CECELIA: I know. I don't go anywhere, Mom. I don't do anything.

MAURA: I'll take you someplace nice. You can wear it for me. Two ladies out on the town.

CECELIA: It's red.

MAURA: You dress like you're in mourning.

CECELIA: Black is my color.

(silence)

MAURA: Here, put this one on. *(Cecelia starts to change)*

Oh...oh. *(Maura rummages through her cavernous pocketbook)*

Hmmm...no...no...there...no! Ah Ha! *(pulls out a newspaper clipping)*

The New York Times.

CECELIA: Don't show me that.

MAURA: Two noted young architects.

CECELIA: I know.

MAURA: She is the last one I would have thought to get married first.

CECELIA: I know.

MAURA: And the picture - such a nice looking boy. A few days away -

CECELIA: I know.

MAURA: Well, I just thought you might want me to tell you -

CECELIA: I know Mom. And I still don't want you to tell them where I am and I still don't want to know about them. I know all I want to know. Got it?

(silence)

MAURA: You've got a hole in your tights -

MAURA: *(overlapping)* You know.

CECELIA: *(overlapping)* I know.

(silence)

(Cecelia grabs the clipping, looks at it, crumples it)

CECELIA: His face is all smudged.

(silence)

MAURA: Have you met anyone?

CECELIA: Please.

MAURA: It's not impossible.

CECELIA: It is impossible. Nobody wants anyone like me. It scares them away. People are scared to breathe my air. They can't bring themselves to share my soda. You think they want to "meet" me? I wish you would understand this - I scare them away.

(Cecelia pulls a bottle of pills out of her bag, shakes the bottle at Maura, pops two defiantly. Beat.

Maura starts rummaging through her own purse.)

MAURA: There's this service -

(Cecelia looks at her)

CECELIA: A dating service?

MAURA: Paula told me.

(stop)

CECELIA: You told Paula.

MAURA: She gave me a form. You fill in the bubbles with a number two pencil and they run it through the computer -
You need to get out more.

(She keeps rummaging)

CECELIA: You told Paula.

MAURA: You need to be with people.

(Maura finds the form and offers it to Cecelia, who bats it away)

CECELIA: You told Paula.

MAURA: A mother-

CECELIA: A mother-

MAURA/CECELIA: - knows about these things.

CECELIA: How the fuck could you tell Paula? This is my news. This is my disease. This is my story. This one is mine.

MAURA: You think this is happening only to you.

(Cecelia pulls off the new clothes and puts her own on)

MAURA: -- What's that?

CECELIA: What?

MAURA: On your back.

CECELIA: What?

MAURA: There.

CECELIA: That's always been there.

MAURA: No.

CECELIA: Mom, it has always been there.

MAURA: It has not.

CECELIA: It has. It has! I know because I examine myself every day for changes and that has always been there.

(silence)

MAURA: I'm going to put these back onto the rack.

CECELIA: Mom.

MAURA: I used to know every inch of your body. You're so grown up. I'll just pay for this.

CECELIA: I won't wear it.

MAURA: I'll take you some place nice.

CECELIA: I still won't wear it.

MAURA: I need to buy you something.

CECELIA: I think it would be better for you if I just killed myself instead of waiting for it to show up whenever it damn well pleases. Faster. More efficient. Pow. Gone.

(silence)

MAURA: I wanted to buy you something pretty. It's always been our special time together. I take joy in that. You're so pretty. There must be a proper way to behave but I don't know what that is. I need some way to help you. That's what you could give me -- some way to help you.

(Cecelia finishes dressing. She looks at her mother and for the moment, gives in, touching her cheek.)

CECELIA: Do they have any formal dresses out there?

Rebecca and Franklin's Bathroom.

(They jostle for position in front of the mirror. He brushes his teeth. She puts on makeup.)

FRANKLIN: *(mouth full)* I, Franklin, take you, Rebecca, to be my lawfully wedded wife. I promise to love and cherish you, to protect and keep you through sickness and health, good days and bad until death do we part. I hold you in my heart.

REBECCA: I, Rebecca, take you, Franklin, to be my lawfully wedded husband. I --

FRANKLIN: Promise.

REBECCA: I promise--

FRANKLIN: To love.

REBECCA: I promise to love --

FRANKLIN: And?

REBECCA: And, I promise to love and, and....

FRANKLIN: I, Franklin, take you, Rebecca to be my lawfully wedded wife. I promise to love and cherish you to protect and keep you through memory lapses and premenstrual disaster, on days when you don't look so good and days where you're stunningly beautiful and days when you really are wondering why you married me and days when I just want to stay asleep until something moves me to believe in life again and that something, I know, will be you. Until death do us part. I hold you in my heart. Amen. Tada! Take it away, Rebecca.

REBECCA: My mind's a blank.

(Franklin takes her lipstick from her and puts it on her mouth.)

FRANKLIN: Perfect. You'll know it.

The Movie Theatre

(CECELIA slumps in her seat. MAURA walks down the aisle to sit next to her. She carries two supersized tubs of popcorn, two extra large sodas. NEAL sits in the audience.)

CECELIA: Jesus, Mom.

MAURA: Take, take.

CECELIA: I said I didn't want any.

MAURA: You're too thin.

CECELIA: I am not too thin. I have never been too thin. We could have shared.

(FRANKLIN enters the theatre and moves to a seat behind and away from them)

MAURA: You don't like butter flavored topping. You don't like salt. Diet soda for you. Boring!

CECELIA: This is terrible for you.

MAURA: I live in New York City. I walk it off. Why don't they have hot chocolate in movie theatres?

(HARVEY enters and moves to a seat a few rows behind them. He wears a hat that hides his face enough to be unrecognizable to Maura)

CECELIA: It's not hot chocolate weather.

(Maura nudges Cecelia and whispers)

MAURA: Look over your shoulder - don't look. Glance. Be nonchalant.

CECELIA: What?

MAURA: There are single men here.

CECELIA: Mom-

MAURA: More than one.

CECELIA: Go for it.

MAURA: You should seize the opportunity. I'll meet you after. The one in the hat, he seems a little familiar but I can't see well in this light.

(She peers back at him. He turns his head so she can't get a good look. Cecelia turns back and recognizes Harvey.)

CECELIA: Turn around. Face front. Now.

MAURA: Your best friend is getting married. Why not you?

CECELIA: She's not - We're not. You know why!

HARVEY: (*unheard except for Cecelia*) Don't speak to your mother that way.

CECELIA: (*Hisses to Harvey*) Creep!

HARVEY: (*the others can't hear him*) I told you - what I do best is arrange special moments for you. Just call me the Spirit of Divine Coincidence. Synchronicity is my middle name. Just ask your mom, she'll tell you. So, look around you. Be observant. I have something here you have to see.

CECELIA: Stalker.

(*Maura rummages in her bag and pulls out boxes of candy*)

MAURA: Juju bee?

HARVEY: (*unheard, except by Cecelia*) Hey! Pass that back here.

CECELIA: No!

(*silence from Maura, surprised at Cecelia's snap, which was aimed at Harvey.*)

Thank you.

(*Maura resumes her eating.*)

MAURA: I have a story for you.

CECELIA: I know all the stories.

MAURA: Not this one. This is a new story.
Twizzler?

CECELIA: No.

MAURA: You love licorice.

(*Cecelia takes one, lays it on top of her untouched popcorn.*)

MAURA: (*Loudly*) This story is about the first time I made love.

(*Cecelia looks around - Harvey leans forward.*)

CECELIA: Mom-

MAURA: The proper thing for me to say, to tell, is that your father, he was the only one, that he was the first one, at least. That would be the proper thing for me to tell you.

CECELIA: This is one of those things a daughter doesn't need to hear.

MAURA: That is something of my generation, not yours. I was astonished in the seventies - People counted the numbers out loud to each other, people lost count with a triumph. And we -

CECELIA: Generation gap. Gap. Some stories are not supposed to cross it.

MAURA: Your father was not my first.

CECELIA: People are listening.

HARVEY: *(unheard except by Cecelia)* Don't mind me.

MAURA: What do I care? Is it some surprise, a woman like me is a sexual human being? *(Turns behind her to say to the other men)* Is that a surprise?

CECELIA: Mom! Behave!

MAURA: I was 12.

CECELIA: 12. I'm not listening to this.

HARVEY: *(unheard except by Cecelia)* Go on.

CECELIA: *(To Harvey)* Pervert!

MAURA: Cecelia!

HARVEY: *(unheard except by Cecelia)* Shhhhhh.

MAURA: The war was over. I was alone. Somehow my new family, the one I made in the woods, we were separated. He was 14. And I thought, why not? I may never have this again. I am so desperately lucky to have this now. This love, this moment, this boy. I grabbed it. It hurt so much.

MAURA: *(overlapping)* We were all ribs and awkwardness.

HARVEY: *(overlapping)* They were all ribs and awkwardness

MAURA: So thin. We didn't do anything right, but it was all right. I have-

MAURA/HARVEY: this beautiful moment to live again whenever I want.

(Cecelia looks back and forth at the two of them.)

MAURA: Sex is a very life affirming act.

CECELIA: You are a crazy old woman telling me that sex is a life-affirming act.

MAURA: You should be out having sex, having love, having friends. You shouldn't be spending nights at old movies with your old mother.

CECELIA: Do you ever listen to yourself?

(The lights dim. Movie light plays over their faces.)

MAURA: Ahh, previews, I love previews.

CECELIA: You don't listen. You don't hear me. You don't acknowledge me. You ignore what's going on with me as if if you can't see it, it isn't there. You're in your own little world, Mom.

HARVEY: *(unheard, except by Cecelia)* Cecelia.

(REBECCA walks down the aisle, searching for Franklin. She slips in beside him.)

REBECCA: Did I miss anything?

FRANKLIN: Just started.

CECELIA: You act as if my circumstances count for nothing.

HARVEY: Look around you, Cecelia -

CECELIA: I get the feeling you think if we don't talk about it, it will go away.

MAURA: Nonsense. I read the papers, Cecelia. I am not an ignorant woman.

CECELIA: I didn't say that.

REBECCA: I hope this is good.

HARVEY: You don't listen to me. I go through all the trouble to arrange this -

CECELIA: And it's not nonsense.

MAURA: Shhhh.

HARVEY: And you, unfortunately, exercise your prerogative to screw that up. Coincidence is not as easy as you think, y'know.

CECELIA: Don't shhh me, Mom. Don't try to quiet me.

HARVEY: Lock eyes. See her... man, free will sucks.

CECELIA: Being quiet leads to attack. Being quiet means you think if you hide well enough the worst passes you by. You know that.

FRANKLIN: I hope it's bad.

REBECCA: Why?

FRANKLIN: I want to make out.

CECELIA: I will always have this, Mom. It won't go away. Ever.

MAURA: I know that.

(Rebecca peers at the rest of the audience)

HARVEY: *(unheard except for Cecelia)* Yoo hoo, over here! Over here.

FRANKLIN: What?

MAURA: You don't have to think about it all the time.

CECELIA: How can I-

MAURA: Shhh, the movie's starting. When I was a little girl someone's simple story would take me so far away. We escape for a while into the movie. And then when we come back in a few hours, I promise it will all still be there.

FRANKLIN: What?

REBECCA: I just have that feeling I'm going to run into someone I know.

HARVEY: Yes. Yes. Yes!

FRANKLIN: You know me.

(Neal turns around and glares at them, annoyed)

NEAL: Shhh.

(Harvey notices Neal for the first time)

I happen to like hearing the movie, not you.

(Rebecca and Franklin laugh and kiss.

Cecelia puts down her popcorn and her drink, climbs over Maura and walks past the kissing couple and out of the theatre.

Harvey has been foiled.

He stands and examines Neal contemplatively.)

The Bridal Store

(KATE is now wearing the bridesmaid dress)

KATE: I look fat.

REBECCA: I know.

KATE: From all angles.

REBECCA: I know.

KATE: Look at my butt.

REBECCA: I know.

KATE: It's perfect.

REBECCA: Shit.

KATE: My new show.

REBECCA: Shit.

KATE: I'll get you front row seats.

REBECCA: Shit. Don't do this to me. Be a friend.

KATE: I'll give you and Franklin a special thanks in the program.

REBECCA: No. Why do you do this to me? You always do this to me.
The people at my office get group rates to your shows.

KATE: They're just being nice.

REBECCA: Have you ever heard of invasion of privacy? I take down all
of your flyers but they still find out. Somehow.

KATE: I wouldn't know.

REBECCA: They dig for any tiny bit of information. Personal information. My personal information. They elaborate on the smallest phrases, blow them up into gossip stories that they don't understand are based on your fiction.

KATE: Fiction.

REBECCA: Exaggeration.

KATE: Dramatic license. They're trying to get to know you.

REBECCA: Great.

KATE: And you make it so easy. It's not about you - it's not even all that close to you. You know that. Most people would be flattered.

REBECCA: I just don't like people thinking they know me when they don't...

I'll never be able to explain it to his mother. She doesn't like irreverence. You have to promise you will not embarrass me. There is a delicate balance, a ceremony you cannot upset. This is my wedding. There is a certain amount of...just so.

KATE: I can't wait until the wedding is over and you turn back into a human being.

REBECCA: A married human being. Don't fuck this up. Please?

KATE: Hey, what dyke hasn't had to stand up at a heterosexual love-fest wearing tulle and control top pantyhose? I'm speaking to a universal theme. I will turn what's supposed to be the happiest day of your life into a socio-political commentary. You can tape my performance and add it to the wedding video.

(Rebecca groans loudly.)

Rebecca, Franklin is a good guy.

REBECCA: Really?

KATE: You want to get married. You want to marry Franklin. You want to do things in twos and have babies and grow old and swear off one night stands.

REBECCA: I do.

KATE: Don't you?

REBECCA: I know. I'm just not sure sometimes that I know. Is there some way to know if I know?

KATE: No. *(silence)* Since this entire ensemble has suddenly become a tax write off, I think I'll have a bag dyed to match.

REBECCA: Anything for art.

KATE: Anything for you.

Tiffany

(Three different areas of the store. Cross-dialogue. They all just happen to be there at the same time. Another one of those New York things. Then again, Harvey's around.)

MAURA stands alone, waiting for CECELIA.

FRANKLIN at the ring counter. HARVEY serves him.)

HARVEY: Can I show you anything?

FRANKLIN: Wedding rings.

HARVEY: You're sure about that?

(Franklin looks at him)

Just a little humor for nervous bridegrooms.

FRANKLIN: Oh, I'm not nervous.

HARVEY: You're not?

FRANKLIN: Not at all.

HARVEY: *(scoping the terrain)* Ah. Then she is.

(REBECCA and KATE)

REBECCA: It just seems...parasitic.

KATE: It's a bridal registry. It's presents.

REBECCA: I'm telling people exactly what to buy me as an entrance fee to celebrate my binding myself in love to someone for eternity-

KATE: You are a true romantic.

REBECCA: It's greedy. Let's go.

KATE: You are the worst shopper I've ever known.

REBECCA: I'm getting department store head.

KATE: We're in Tiffany's. You can't get department store head in Tiffany's.

REBECCA: I'm dizzy.

KATE: You take no joy in shopping. *(Rebecca groans)*

You wanted to do this wedding by the book, we're doing it by the book - oh my god, you don't want me to bring a date with a penis do you? *(Rebecca groans)*

Think about all the stuff you're going to get. Franklin. A big party. And tons of stuff, cool stuff, adult stuff. Silver. Settings of china. Pasta makers. Nut crackers. Platters. Vases. Vases. Vases.

REBECCA: I've got to sit down.

(MAURA and CECELIA)

CECELIA: Everything sparkles too much here. It's hell on my eyes.

MAURA: Your apartment is too dark. And that club. You're becoming a mole. Your eyes are getting beady. You blink too much. Your skin is pasty.

CECELIA: Years of therapy, Mom.

MAURA: If I don't tell you these things -

CECELIA/MAURA: No one would.

CECELIA: How about I buy you a cup of coffee. Somewhere...else.

MAURA: Not just yet.

CECELIA: There's a story.

MAURA: There's a story.

(REBECCA and KATE)

(Rebecca sits with her head between her knees)

KATE: Remember the time Cecelia and you and me-

REBECCA: No.

KATE: The three of us - we must have been six or so - and C.C dared you to -

REBECCA: I don't remember.

KATE: Will you stop that?

REBECCA: Will you?

(Kate walks away. Rebecca with her head between her legs, doesn't notice as she goes on -)

The thing is, I can't be angry right now. I can't afford to feel that. And that's what I would feel, if I let myself do that which I can't, so I'm not. I've got to keep my balance right now. You understand, Katie -

(She looks up)

You always understand.

(she notices Kate isn't there)

Katie.

(She stands woozily)

Kate?

(KATE and FRANKLIN)

FRANKLIN: There was someone helping me. I just don't know where he went.

I like running into you. It's like running into an in-law.

KATE: Your bride has just alienated her other best friend.

FRANKLIN: She's getting very good at that.

(He holds up a pair of rings)

These. These are the right ones.

(CECELIA and MAURA)

(Cecelia holds a strand of beautifully matched pearls)

CECELIA: Oh...Mom.

MAURA: Aren't they lovely?

(She puts them on Cecelia) They're meant to be worn against the skin.

They improve with age.

Now...the story. This one starts with your grandmother Sonya and a man who came to her on her twenty first birthday. I have a sneaking suspicion that he was the same man, my man, but who knows -

CECELIA: Why do you keep doing this to me?

MAURA: I thought you'd like them.

CECELIA: No. You didn't. Why do you give me things that are so...so permanent?

MAURA: They're pearls. *(silence)* It was her twenty first birthday, and all she wanted-

CECELIA: No, no - I'm not going to listen to your stories anymore.

This time you're going to listen to my story. My story. I fall in love. I dance. My feet are anchored in his solidness. When I dance, I pull my feet up out of the steady ground because I know it will take them back. I will always be able to stand. I will always have a resting place. But he leaves me. He leaves me. With a lovely parting gift. And he took my footing with him. I'm drifting, Mom, and all you do is remind me of what I can't keep.

MAURA: The way you look, the way their touch hangs around the back of your neck and rolls freely against your shoulders. You can't help but be happy. They are to bring you joy as each second you wear them occurs.

CECELIA: You didn't listen-

MAURA: Your grandmother Sonya said the man was most handsome. And later she said she married your grandfather because the shape of his eyes seemed to be the same as this man - Did I ever tell you I had a dream I was dancing with him at your wedding?

CECELIA: Shut up!

(silence)

MAURA: Little Miss Special. So you shouldn't have what everybody else gets. You're not good enough in that way, you don't deserve it, is that it?

CECELIA: I'm biding my time.

MAURA: How dare you? How dare you not enjoy every second you've got. I was saved for you -

CECELIA: To die. You were saved so I can die.

(silence)

MAURA: You could look at it like a blessing. You could take it as a sign to finish something. To start something. To accomplish something. You could run against the ticking clock instead of counting each and every second going by. You could use it to get you out of your apartment instead of waiting to get sick. You could do that.

CECELIA: No, I can't. Don't you understand that I -

MAURA: I'm the one, I'm the one who can't do anything right for you.

CECELIA: That's not true.

MAURA: You let me know that. Time after time. Again and again. There is nothing I can do right for you!

CECELIA: You want to do something? What could you do other than pray? Pray for your handsome man and your god to watch over your daughter. Guide her. Save her from herself. Pray Mom. Pray!

MAURA: I did! *(silence)* I did pray.

You were living with him and you weren't dancing seriously and you were waitressing and not using your college at all. So I prayed for something to spur you into action in your life. I prayed that my man would arrive to show you a way to go. That's what I prayed for...I thought the way it worked was that g-d would give you exactly what you needed.

(REBECCA, HARVEY)

(She wanders dizzily. He watches.)

REBECCA: Kate? Kate?

(MAURA, CECELIA)

MAURA: But my man, he hasn't arrived yet. So maybe g-d has only given the first part of what I prayed for. Maybe what you've gotten so far, maybe this was his way of giving just the first part.

(REBECCA, HARVEY)

(She bumps into him)

REBECCA: There you are, Kate. Don't be mad at me - *(sees Harvey)*
Oh, how embarrassing. I'm just a little light headed right now. I looked at you and could have sworn you were her.

(MAURA, CECELIA)

MAURA: Maybe there's more to come. There must be more to come.
Cecelia, I am sure, g-d is not finished with this yet.

(HARVEY, REBECCA)

HARVEY: I think the woman you're looking for is right over there.

(Harvey points her in the direction of Cecelia)

REBECCA: *(still woozy, unseeing)* Oh...

(CECELIA, MAURA)

CECELIA: You'll be the one then to say kaddish for me. You'll be the one. Every year, you'll light the candle for me. Why don't you just start now?

Yiska dal v'yiska dosh

MAURA: Stop it.

CECELIA:

Shme rabba -

B'olmo Divro Kirosa

V'yamlich malcasay Behaya chom-

...Behaya chom *(forgets)*

...shit.

MAURA:

That is the

prayer for the dead

That is not for the living

That is not for the living!

(Cecelia hands her the pearls)