

# **Cecilia's Waltz**

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## **SYNOPSIS**

CECILIA'S WALTZ is a search for perfect love, faith and family in an imperfect world.

Dr. Cecilia “Sissy” Woodruff Longfellow Sweet met Leonard Will online in the Dante chat room. When she impulsively comes to Philadelphia from Washington, D.C. in search of more than “brotherly love”, she encounters a series of surprises including Leonard’s grieving sister Margot who has just finished sitting shiva, his African-American step daughter Jackie Sojourner Truth who has just joined the army, her mother Kate who is a prosecuting attorney and hates the military, the mysteriously pregnant Neely Frank and one midnight intruder determined to risk everything for one last chance at love.

CECILIA'S WALTZ is a story of regret, remembrance and renewal by those who question but never lose faith in the power of love.

### **Cast**

5 w. 1 m.

Dr. Cecilia Woodruff Longfellow Sweet.....	Southern English Prof., 40s
Margot Will.....	Jewish history teacher, 50s
Jackie Sojourner Truth Will.....	African-American, early 20s
Kate McClinton Will.....	African-American lawyer, 40s
Neely Frank.....	Pregnant bi-sexual, 20s
Reverend Charles Longfellow Sweet.....	Southern, 50s

### **Setting**

The entire play takes place in the living room of Leonard Will's apartment in Philadelphia.

ACT I -- 2 scenes ACT II -- 1 scene

### **Time**

Summer 199

ACT 1

Scene 1

Living room of Leonard Will's townhouse in Philadelphia. A doorbell rings several times in the blackout.

LIGHTS UP as SISSY comes cautiously into the open doorway. She is overdressed for the heat in a matching summer outfit and she carries a small overnight bag that somehow seems to match her outfit.

There are stacks of books and packing boxes piled around the room. SISSY tries to negotiate without knocking them over.

SISSY

Yoo-hoo! Hello? Anybody home?

(SISSY sets her suitcase down and moves past the boxes to the computer on the desk.)

Oh, dear, dear Leonard, am I really here at last?

(In a bad Italian accent tinged with her southern roots, SISSY dramatically speaks to the computer. MARGOT, dressed casually in pants and an oversized shirt appears unseen at the front door carrying an empty box. She listens intently. )

Leonardo, "Salute in lor signor, cioe Amore."

MARGOT

(Bursting into applause.)

Bravo! Bravo! I'm very impressed. You're very good.

SISSY

I rang the doorbell several times but no one answered.

MARGOT

You can't hear a thing down in the basement.

SISSY

I am so sorry for walking in unannounced.

MARGOT

People have been walking in unannounced all week.

SISSY

... but the door was open.

(CONTINUED)

MARGOT

No problem - unless you were just laying on some ancient curse. You weren't, were you?

SISSY

Oh, no, that was just my very poor imitation of Italian.

MARGOT

Italian!

SISSY

Dante.

MARGOT

Dante. Wonderful.

(MARGOT drags SISSY over to a pile of books.)  
Start looking right over here. Dante, Virgil - you'll love it.

SISSY

This is amazing.

MARGOT

I'll tell you today's been a nightmare.

SISSY

Really?

MARGOT

One woman was selling make-up only a hooker could wear and then a very attractive young man came dragging a vacuum cleaner he claimed could run at the speed of light and clean without a human being and now - I'm so happy you're here.

SISSY

You are?

MARGOT

You're not selling anything are you?

SISSY

Oh, no, I was never even allowed to even sell girl scout cookies.

MARGOT

Really.

SISSY

Mama would brush my hair briskly and say, "No daughter of mine is going to sell door to door while I can still write a check."

MARGOT

Smart woman. It's dangerous out there.

(MARGOT is moving books when they fall over.)

Hell, it's dangerous in here. Would you mind?

(MARGOT hands Sissy a box and starts piling books into it while she continues talking.)

You know when I die I expect to be buried in a band-aid box and tossed into the ocean. One, two, three. Poof!

SISSY

Really?

MARGOT

(Phone rings.)

Would you get that?

SISSY

(Answering the phone)

Hello? I'm sorry -- (to MARGOT) are you Margot?

MARGOT

Yes.

SISSY

It's Jackie?

MARGOT

Jackie, where the hell are you! Yes, it always matters where you are, especially when you were supposed to be here.

Fortunately what's-her-name--

(hand over phone)

I guess we never got to proper introductions.

SISSY

--Sissy...Cecilia... but I can come back later.

MARGOT

(SISSY starts to leave but MARGOT grabs her.)

Look, Jackie, Sissy's dropped in and she's moving those books you were supposed to help me with...What?

(MARGOT hits the portable phone.)

Damn these things. Jackie? Jackie? I can barely hear you. Are you on one of those damn cell phones (to Sissy) Kids use them like they're real phones and it drives me crazy...Jackie, it really sounds like you're in the middle of hell. (Pause) Well, Market Street is the middle of hell. (Pause) Honey, can't you just skip all that "saving the world" period and just get old with the rest of us.

(Shakes the phone again out toward Sissy.)

Jackie, it sounded like you said you just joined the army which could be funny if I were in a different mood...It's true! You joined the army and then called me. Are you crazy! If you think I'm getting in the middle of this you're ---

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MARGOT (cont'd)

Jackie, no! Please, don't hang up on me. Yes, I promise to listen. No, I won't say a word until you're done. Yes, of course I have food here. Yes, I know I'm wonderful but you you forgot that I hate surprises. Jackie? (hangs up) Don't you just hate when you tell kids to grow up and be their own person and then they go out and do it!

SISSY

Maybe I should come back later.

MARGOT

Not so fast!

SISSY

You seem awfully busy here.

MARGOT

I can see that you are very good at home decorating.

SISSY

Why would you say that?

MARGOT

Your suitcase matches your scarf which compliment your shoes.

SISSY

They do.

MARGOT

So honestly

SISSY

Yes?

MARGOT

What do you think about this rug.

SISSY

Oh.

MARGOT

Don't hold back because I have no taste and Leonard is colorblind and probably bought it on one of his drunken island getaways.

SISSY

Leonard is colorblind?

MARGOT

All the Will men were colorblind from birth which was fine as long as you dressed them before they left the house.

(CONTINUED)

SISSY

Leonard goes away to the islands?

MARGOT

I'll tell you all about it over coffee before the shooting starts. Grab that end of the couch and we lift on three.

(MARGOT gets SISSY to grab the coffee table)

One, two, three, lift!

SISSY

Did you say something about shooting?

MARGOT

That was one of my little Margot jokes. Forgive me. I'm Margot Will and I'm told I have a very warped sense of humor.

SISSY

I'm Cecilia Longfellow Sweet and I'm told I have no sense of humor at all.

MARGOT

Well Cecilia --

SISSY

Everyone calls me Sissy but my dearly departed mother who said you should live and die with your fully given baptismal name.

MARGOT

I've got cheese cake, brownies and about twenty-five pounds of chocolate from Belgium so let's get started.

SISSY

Thank you, but I couldn't eat one more thing.

MARGOT

Everyone can eat one more thing if they put their minds to it. Look at me.

(MARGOT brings over a plate of food and sits.)

Sit down and relax. I've had it with moving boxes today.

SISSY

Just a moment might be nice.

MARGOT

I've had it with the moving boxes today.

SISSY

I don't think I've ever met anyone before who expected to be buried in a band-aid box.

MARGOT

If they can send a man to the moon, Cecilia, they can bury me in a band-aid box.

(stroking some of the books.)

It smells like the Philadelphia library. And Leonard. Dear Leonard. Everyone has their weakness. Coffee?

SISSY

I swear we were just friends!

MARGOT

I meant some of my famous freshly ground, brewed, chilled and loaded with sweet cream and shaved chocolate iced Frangelica coffee.

SISSY

Really?

MARGOT

And it's right in that kitchen calling to us. Can I tempt you?

SISSY

"Let me count the ways".

MARGOT

My kind of woman.

SISSY

I have this terrible habit of ending up in a verse.

MARGOT

"How do I love thee" is as far as this history teacher gets but if you recite the whole poem I'll bring that coffee and something to eat whether you want it or not.

SISSY

You'd really like to hear me recite poetry.

MARGOT

If these walls could speak - it would be in verse. Go on. "How do I love thee"....

SISSY

"I love thee to the depth and breadth and height  
My soul can reach when feeling out of sight..."

MARGOT

That's it. Just keep shouting and heaven is yours. (exits)

SISSY

"For the ends of Being and ideal Grace."  
"I love thee to the level of every day's  
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight."

MARGOT

I can't hear you?

SISSY

"I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;  
I love thee purely, as they turn from praise."

MARGOT (O.S.)

Louder!

SISSY

(SISSY is really loud and increasingly dramatic)

"I love thee with the passion put to use  
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.  
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose  
with my lost saints, - I love thee with the breadth,  
Smiles, tears, of all my life! - and, if God choose,  
I shall but love thee better after death."

MARGOT

(MARGOT returns. SISSY is prostrate. )

MARGOT (cont'd)

The poetry was great. Drink up.

SISSY

(SISSY gets up and sips the coffee.)

Heavenly.

MARGOT

To Leonard -- who loved them both.

SISSY

(SISSY immediately rises.)

You have been incredibly generous.

(SISSY starts to leave.)

Forgive me for taking your time.

MARGOT

You can't leave.

SISSY

Please.

MARGOT

We're just getting started.



SISSY

I meant a Baptist and a Jewish person sharing the same stories with their granddaughters. Like Jesus and Paul out there together in the world all over again.

MARGOT

I'm sorry, I just assumed you and Leonard were colleagues.

SISSY

Well, not really in the traditional sense of the word.

MARGOT

What sense of the word would that be?

SISSY

Actually -- we met online in one of those little chat rooms.

MARGOT

Really? Tell me more about this chat room.

SISSY

Our room was devoted to Dante Aligheri whose works have been a passion of mine for years.

MARGOT

And Leonard's.

SISSY

We communicated for some time about working together.

MARGOT

That's all?

SISSY

You didn't know about our web site?

MARGOT

We didn't talk that often.

SISSY

It was to be called "Vita Nuova" for his beloved Beatrice.

MARGOT

Ah, Beatrice, the woman he should have married.

SISSY

I have all the plans right here in my bag if you'd be interested.

MARGOT

I'm not really interested in the website but I would like to know more about you and Leonard.

(CONTINUED)

SISSY

I swear we never met in the flesh, just the telephone and I will admit that I thought your husband's voice was one of the most beautiful I have ever heard. It actually reminded me of Mr. William Buckley.

MARGOT

Whoa! I've got to sit down and think about that.

SISSY

I met Mr. Buckley when he spoke at our college but I can assure you I have never actually met your husband in the flesh - I mean -- face to face.

MARGOT

Why do you keep saying that?

SISSY

I feel the fool for not realizing that Leonard had remarried.

MARGOT

What makes you think I'm Leonard's wife?

SISSY

You introduced yourself as Margot Will. You're obviously familiar with this apartment which does have his name on the mailbox. The rug, the poetry, his voice..."Let me count the ways". I think I'll just show myself out now.

MARGOT

I'm his sister, Margot Will. Same name, no wife.  
(phone rings)

SISSY

Oh? His sister. (Phone rings.) I'm embarrassed to say I didn't know he had a sister.

MARGOT

(Phone rings again.)  
Well I didn't know he had a chat room so just sit there and tell me all about...  
(Machine clicks in. MARGOT freezes.)

MACHINE

Hello. This is Leonard Will.

SISSY

Leonard.

MACHINE

You've reached me but I can't reach you right now.

(CONTINUED)

MARGOT

Damn technology!

(MARGOT runs off while Sissy listens dreamily.)

MACHINE

Please leave your message at the tone and I will return your call as soon as humanly poss--

(MESSAGE VOICE is cut off as JACKIE runs into the run. She is a young African-American woman on a mission.)

JACKIE

I do know what I'm doing no matter what you say -- who are you and where is Margot?

Sissy

I am Cecilia Longfellow Sweet and Margot just took a phone call.

JACKIE

Oops! You didn't hear a name? A clue. A woman screaming?

Sissy

No, I didn't.

JACKIE

Merde! Is this Margot's iced coffee 'cause I need something strong and this woman makes great iced coffee.

(She drinks.)

Heavenly. Not even a first, last or someone really pissed off name?

Sissy

I'm afraid not --

JACKIE

This is too good.

Sissy

Splendid.

JACKIE

Have you ever been so tired you think you'll fall asleep standing up? Because that's the way I feel right now.

Sissy

I believe it's a condition called narcolepsy. My cousin Eugene was narcoleptic and it severely limited his occupational choices.

JACKIE

Exactly, did Margot tell you I just joined the Army?

(CONTINUED)



JACKIE (cont'd)

important decisions and not just leaving it all up to the same old men who've screwed it up, right? No, don't answer because it's too soon to think about anything but getting through these next hours. I will make a difference. She won't think so. Did you know they make you swear on a bible which is pretty funny when you think of it but with people like me in there we can really beat those swords into plough shares.

SISSY

My cousin was in the Navy, my Uncle was in the air force and my husband is a minister so we are very familiar with both swearing and bibles.

MARGOT

(Coming out)

Jackie! Where the hell have you been.

JACKIE

Margot, this woman has a brother and an Uncle in the military and they're both alive, aren't they?

MARGOT

You can't just leave the house without telling anyone where you're going or what you're planning to do.

JACKIE

I'm not a little kid anymore. I am a woman. W-O-M-A-N.

MARGOT

Women don't just walk out of the house and join the army without talking about it with their mother.

JACKIE

Would you try to talk to my mother about something she hates?

MARGOT

So you just went and signed up without talking to her.

JACKIE

I'm of age.

MARGOT

She's not happy.

JACKIE

My life is not a democracy.

MARGOT

She's your mother.

JACKIE

What do you think?

(CONTINUED)

SISSY

I really think I should be on my way.

JACKIE

I went to college, graduated with honors, taught in the inner city and now I want to help change the world my way. Why does it have to be her way.

SISSY

Our need to be right is not one of our most desirable traits as a parent.

JACKIE

Exactly! Why wasn't this woman my mother.

MARGOT

Sissy met Leonard online in a chat room.

JACKIE

(Still holding SISSY's hand.)

Really? In a Dante chat room?

SISSY

Leonard could describe Dante's great love for his beloved Beatrice until you just cried.

JACKIE

Were you at the service?

SISSY

Actually I didn't tell Leonard I was coming here today.

JACKIE

She didn't tell Leonard she was coming today.

SISSY

No, you see he told me he was going snorkeling...

JACKIE

...in the Galapagos...

SISSY

Exactly.

JACKIE

Margot?

SISSY

And since I found myself so close to where he lives. Geographically speaking of course, I thought it would be a fine time to take the train from Washington and surprise my online friend.

(CONTINUED)

MARGOT

Surprise him.

SISSY

He is back from his vacation?

JACKIE

She's waiting for an answer.

SISSY

I have his last E-mail right here? I know he said it would be this week. Or maybe I made a mistake. You look like I must have gotten something wrong.

JACKIE

Did you know she was expecting to see Leonard?

SISSY

You see, my husband was conducting one of his seminars --.

MARGOT

Oh, you have a husband!

SISSY

Charles is a minister.

JACKIE

That could be very good.

MARGOT

Where is your husband?

SISSY

Oh, he didn't come with me.

JACKIE

Or very bad.

SISSY

He stayed in Washington to conduct one of his "Communicating for a Successful Marriage" workshops for couples in conflict.

JACKIE

Or very, very bad.

SISSY

Leonard did go snorkeling in the Galapagos as he planned.

MARGOT

He told you about that trip?

SISSY

He even dared me to come along and discover the pleasures of the deep...

(SISSY looks longingly at the computer.)

JACKIE

Very, very, bad.

MARGOT

Shhhhhh.

SISSY

....but since I don't swim it was out of the question. Did everything go as planned?

JACKIE

Not exactly.

MARGOT

Jackie, go to the kitchen.

SISSY

Have I come at a bad time?

MARGOT

I think you should sit down.

SISSY

Excuse me but I feel something is terribly wrong here.

(SISSY runs to her bag and starts to pull out some bells which jingle)

Something is incredibly wrong here isn't it. I know it.

MARGOT

Sissy --

SISSY

Ommmmmm....

JACKIE

Is she going to be sick?

SISSY

I have been having a series of panic attacks ...Ommmmmm..... I must stop this one before it accelerates...(rings bells which tinkle) the sounds of these little bells and the breathing seems to help me keep calm. Ommmmmm.....I am beginning to feel that I will not be seeing Leonard Will today. Ommmmmm.....

MARGOT

Not today.

(CONTINUED)



JACKIE

(JACKIE returns with a huge plastic garbage bag)  
This was all I could find.

SISSY

A lovely picture.

MARGOT

A vacation 3 years. Ago.

SISSY

Even with that tree in front of his face.

JACKIE

He hated cameras. Stealing souls and everything. We had a beautiful service two days ago.

MARGOT

It was all so sudden I haven't gone thru his address book.

SISSY

Then he really is gone, forever.

JACKIE

(JACKIE holds up the urn on the table.)  
Not completely gone.

SISSY

Oh.

JACKIE

You want some water?

MARGOT

Something stronger?

SISSY

Just give me a moment.

MARGOT

He hated the idea of being buried.

JACKIE

It was a real Edgar Allen Poe thing with him.

SISSY

So, we meet at last. How ironic that one who struggled so much with the tragic loss of his own sweet wife should meet such a terrible end.

MARGOT

What wife?

(CONTINUED)

SISSY

His own dear dead Kate.

JACKIE

What "dear dead Kate" is she talking about?

SISSY

His grief was so heartfelt it almost made me forget my own.

JACKIE

Margot?

MARGOT

Jackie, go to the kitchen and get some wine. No, Vodka!

JACKIE

I want to know what dear dead wife she is talking about.

MARGOT

Now!

(JACKIE exits. SISSY holds the urn up.)

SISSY

Would you mind? I feel moved to recite a poem I have always loved.

MARGOT

Oh, no, please, recite whatever you need to as loud and as long as you like.

SISSY

- when Time is over -  
And I have ceased to wonder why -  
Christ will explain each separate anguish  
In the fair schoolroom of the sky-

KATE arrives while SISSY speaks. She is an African American woman with a sense of the dramatic. She applauds.

KATE

Amen girl.

MARGOT

This is Cecilia....

KATE

Let me hug this woman.

MARGOT

Sissy.

KATE

I cry Margot.

MARGOT

Sissy is her name.

KATE

Sissy?

SISSY

Cecilia Longfellow Sweet, but please call me Sissy.

MARGOT

Sissy was a colleague of Leonard's.

KATE

Don't you think Leonard would have loved the service?

SISSY

I just came up from Alabama.

KATE

I'm Kate and my father is from Alabama.

SISSY

You still have people in Alabama?

KATE

White or black if they are McClintons - they are my people.

SISSY

What a coincidence.

KATE

Believe me, it was no coincidence!

MARGOT

Sissy met Leonard on the internet in a Dante chat room.

KATE

Dante. I love those circles of hell, though my mother named me for Shakespeare's Kate which does not mean I am a shrew. Which reminds me -- has Jackie called back?

SISSY

Isn't that another coincidence.

KATE

You have a daughter named Jackie?

SISSY

Leonard's wife was named Kate too.

(CONTINUED)

KATE

Of course. That's me. Kate McClinton Will.

(SISSY starts ringing her bells again)

Honey, you don't look good. Margot, why is she ringing those bells and chanting?

SISSY

Ommmmmmmmmm. Ommmmmmmm. Om . Om. Om.....

MARGOT

Leonard told her you were dead.

KATE

Dead. I am divorced ten years but I am not dead no matter what my daughter may be thinking at this very moment, I am very much alive.

MARGOT

You know Jackie loves you.

SISSY

Oh Lord, Leonard had a daughter?

(SISSY takes off through the revolving kitchen door. JACKIE flies out the door. The bells are ringing wildly in the kitchen. JACKIE keeps the door open.)

JACKIE

I think that woman's going to be-- Ooops--

KATE

You stay right here.

JACKIE

Now that woman's stopped.

MARGOT

Thank God!

JACKIE

See what you do to people.

KATE

Jackie Sojourner Truth Will how long have you been in there?

JACKIE

(JACKIE stares through the open door) )

But she sure doesn't look right. Margot?

KATE

Thinking Leonard told that woman he met in a chat room I'm dead doesn't makes me look so right either.

(CONTINUED)

JACKIE

Mom!

MARGOT

Stay where you are Kate!

KATE

(KATE shouts through the door.)

It was a very respectable divorce. Tell her that Jackie.

JACKIE

It was a very respectable divorce.

KATE

We were friends. I loved him for years and he raised this girl like his own when her daddy died in Viet Nam leaving me all alone, pregnant and unmarried.

JACKIE

You told me you and daddy married before he left.

KATE

I was going to tell you the truth when you were old enough.

JACKIE

Well I guess that time is now, thank you.

(JACKIE disappears into the kitchen.)

KATE

What is happening here?

(KATE tries to push on the door.)

Jackie? Let me in there!

(We now here TWO loud "ommmmmms")

JACKIE

(JACKIE comes back through the revolving door)

I wouldn't go out there right now Mama. She's making fish noises.

KATE

She's not going to jump off that wall is she?

MARGOT

She's just OOHhm-ing.

KATE

Cause I can't take another death right now.

MARGOT

I think the OOHhm-ing helps her calm down.

(CONTINUED)

KATE

Tell her to come back in here and face this not-so-dead wife like a man - aw hell, I'll tell her myself.

MARGOT

(MARGOT blocks the door.)

Kate, you stay right where you are. Jackie? Jackie! What's going on?

JACKIE

(JACKIE pokes out of the door again.)

She's just standing there -- looking almost asleep.

KATE

Tell her it was a good marriage and --

JACKIE

(JACKIE appears and holds the door open as SISSY walks in slowly, mechanically, past the women and over to her suitcase.)

Now she's come in from the patio and she's walking past me and she's standing right here. Tell her yourself.

SISSY

I am so sorry Kate. I am so sorry Margot and ...Jackie, I am just sorry.

(SISSY picks up her suitcase and starts walking out as KATE now blocks the front door.)

KATE

Don't be sorry, honey, it's not your fault I'm alive. And don't you think about leaving now cause it must be a hundred degrees out there.

SISSY

I feel like such a fool.

MARGOT

Join the human race.

SISSY

(SISSY sets her bag down.)

I came here thinking I really knew him.

KATE

You don't really know men.

SISSY

I didn't know anything about Leonard Will.

MARGOT

We all knew and cared about him in our own way.

(CONTINUED)

KATE

Margot's right. I tried to be a good mother but when my best wasn't good enough I always had Leonard to turn to.

MARGOT

You're a great mother Kate. Jackie's joining the army has nothing to do with you.

KATE

Jackie's joining what?

JACKIE

Whoops.

KATE

I thought you said she called from Market Street.

JACKIE

I did.

KATE

Shopping district.

MARGOT

More like the Army recruiting office.

KATE

Now just a minute. No one is recruiting my baby without my permission.

MARGOT

She stopped being a baby decades ago, Kate.

JACKIE

It's not the front lines Mom. There's no war.

KATE

Today.

JACKIE

I'm old enough.

KATE

And you just stood there and let them take my baby.

MARGOT

She called me after she joined up.

JACKIE

I enlisted.

KATE

Well you can just un-enlist right now..

JACKIE

Don't be so dramatic mother. They were very impressed.

KATE

I'll bet they were.

JACKIE

I speak three languages.

KATE

War is one language and it's always blood red.

JACKIE

Don't you see, Mama. I want to help make peace, not just blow things up.

KATE

Listen to me, you are my daughter, my only child and there ain't going to be no peace with you on the other end of a gun.

JACKIE

I signed. It's settled.

KATE

Nothing is settled.

JACKIE

I've got the papers right here.

KATE

I'll go down and explain this whole misunderstanding so you can get on with your life.

JACKIE

My life? Or your life.

KATE

I'm a lawyer, I can fix anything.

JACKIE

You're the one who needs fixing Mama, not me. Tell her Margot. Tell her whose really bleeding.

KATE

Believe me, baby, we all do crazy things when we're grieving.

JACKIE

You think I joined the army because my daddy died in a rice paddy before I was even born and my step-daddy drown snorkeling in the Galapagos?

KATE

You're a college graduate. Brilliant. You could be anything.

JACKIE

As long as it's a lawyer.

KATE

I enforce laws. I exact justice. I make a difference.

JACKIE

And that's exactly what I expect to do.

KATE

There's no justice in war but a mother's tears.

JACKIE

It's 1994, not 1974. It's not just about killing.

KATE

Tell that to the next President who sends you wherever he wants because they will. Because they can.

JACKIE

There's the Geneva Convention, peace-keeping missions....

KATE

Look, that's all I have to say about it so let me talk to this woman -- Sissy? Right?

SISSY

Cecilia.

KATE

Good Cecilia, why don't we have a nice iced whatever Margot has in the refrigerator and get to know one another

JACKIE

Mother.

KATE

....and we'll take care of this **later** Jackie. Okay?  
(JACKIE picks up her backpack and heads out.)

JACKIE

Later, my ass.

KATE

Jackie Sojourner Truth Will. Where are you going?  
(KATE goes to follow JACKIE and stop her)

JACKIE

To take care of my own damn life now.  
(JACKIE slams the door right in KATE's face.)

KATE

Would somebody tell me what just happened?

MARGOT

I think "later" has just arrived.

End of Scene

-BLACKOUT-

Scene 2

A few hours later.

SISSY is sitting on the couch eating  
as MARGOT comes into the room with a  
tray full of desserts. KATE stares out  
the window with a full plate of food.

MARGOT (cont'd)

Fresh fruit and angel food cake for everyone who cleaned  
their plate.

SISSY

It was all wonderful. I couldn't eat another bite.

MARGOT

Kate?

KATE

Give Margot Will a couple of fishes and a loaf of stale bread  
and she'll feed all of North America.

MARGOT

You didn't clean your plate.

(KATE holds out her plate with a big napkin on  
top of the food. MARGOT moves the napkin to  
reveal the food uneaten.)

You can't fool me, Kate. How many years has it been and you  
still forget I will check under the napkin.

KATE

Sissy? Do I look like I'm starving.

(CONTINUED)

MARGOT

I'm sure Jackie isn't starving either.

SISSY

Your daughter seems like a wonderful young woman. You should be very proud of her.

MARGOT

Ask her tomorrow.

KATE

I am proud of raising the most pig-headed woman on the planet.

MARGOT

Make that second most pig-headed.

KATE

I have life experiences.

MARGOT

Okay you get first and second place.

SISSY

It's obvious you two love one another.

KATE

If it's so obvious why is she out there and I'm alone.

MARGOT

You're not alone.

KATE

She's not here.

MARGOT

Everybody doesn't run on Kate time.

KATE

What's that supposed to mean?

MARGOT

This was not a surprise.

KATE

It was to me.

MARGOT

There were signs.

KATE

What signs?

(CONTINUED)

MARGOT

Even if we didn't want to pay attention?

KATE

My brilliant daughter did just fine in college.

MARGOT

She joined the target shooting team and loved it.

KATE

Her granddaddy always took her hunting in Alabama.

MARGOT

She became a black belt in Karate.

KATE

Self-defense is a must for a young women today.

MARGOT

She saw Schindler's List three times and kept telling your father how proud she was he helped fight the "good" war.

KATE

That war wiped out most of your family.

MARGOT

Exactly my point. She saw war as good - not just evil.

KATE

She never sat me down and said "Mama, I'm going to join the army!"

MARGOT

Not even you have that much courage and you are one hell of a prosecutor.

SISSY

No one likes war.

KATE

It's dangerous.

MARGOT

Jackie grew up seeing her mother fight for what she believed in even when some of those people threatened her life? Own it Kate. She's your daughter. And she didn't fall far from the tree.

(KATE takes the plate and uncovers the food and eats a few bitefuls hungrily.)

That's the woman I know and love.

SISSY

I thought it would pass.

MARGOT

Eat. Then think. Then talk.

KATE

I thought it would pass.

MARGOT

Like a kidney stone.

KATE

I thought it was just another phase - like her juggling. You remember that? She was all set to leave middle school and go off to wherever jugglers go until she dropped the eggs all over the new floor and Leonard's computer.

MARGOT

She's not ten years old.

KATE

Don't be profound Margot Will because I'm in deep shit here. Who's going to clean up this mess when they send her home all broken and bloody because no one heard she was just trying to save the world. I can't take it if they send her away. It won't be just a mess of eggs on the kitchen floor. It will be her blood and bones and soul in the middle of some damn shooting match with no winners. No winners. I can't. I just can't let her go. Oh, Margot, she could die out there.

MARGOT

Kate.

SISSY

I hope you won't mind if I say something--

KATE

Your only child ran off and joined the army because this is a matter of life and death and anything less is not worth talking about.

MARGOT

Kate!

SISSY

My son was murdered five years ago.

KATE

Jesus.

SISSY

He was not in the army, but he was our only child.

KATE

Oh, Lord, forgive me.

MARGOT

(To Sissy)

Are you all right?

SISSY

You're never all right but you do go on. We all have to go on. What else can we do? One day your son goes away to college and you think it's the proudest day of his life. And the safest place in the world. I mean, it's a college with a big green lawn and even some ivy growing right up the walls of his dormitory. You say good-bye and you go home and dream of his wonderful life. You see those ivy covered walls as a shield against all the worlds problems and pain for a few blessed years. You forget it's just bricks and mortar. It can't stop bullets or the boy unpacking in the next room who would just go crazy one night in a rage no one will ever understand because the last bullet in the gun was saved for himself. Two young souls cold and dead before you've finished watching the evening news. And the world keeps turning just like nothing has changed at all. When nothing will ever be the same.

KATE

Then you must see what I am saying is true.

SISSY

No, I'm afraid I can't. There's no real safe spot on God's green earth and we can't just lock them up and throw away the key. People survive college. They survive the army. They survive losing a child -- even our blessed Mary knew that.

KATE

Well I'm a whole lot less woman than the Virgin Mary.

MARGOT

Martin would agree with that.

SISSY

Is Martin your husband?

KATE

Eight years.

MARGOT

The man's a saint.

SISSY

Was he the reason you and Leonard divorced?

KATE

Oh, no, honey, there was no reason.

SISSY

There has to be a reason.

MARGOT

Kate became a lawyer, then a prosecuting attorney who spent her days locking up drug dealers, rapists and murderers while Leonard spent his days dreaming about Dante.

KATE

It makes me feel like I'm making this world safer.

SISSY

Your daughter said almost the same thing when she told me why she wanted to serve in the army.

KATE

See, that's where she's wrong. I change the world with words and the law, not guns and war. There's a big difference.

MARGOT

To you Kate. Not to her.

SISSY

It's wonderful you found love twice when most people have trouble finding it once.

KATE

Finding love is easy, except for Margot who is way too picky. And keeping it real will kill you if you try too hard. But you're a married woman married to a ....

SISSY

Minister.

KATE

Men of God can be very sexy. So show me 'cause Alabama women never leave home without their family albums.

SISSY

Well I do have a a few.

(SISSY becomes very animated as she takes out a large booklet of pictures from her suitcase.)

Here they are.

KATE

Now isn't he one fine looking man. And that's your boy cause he is the image of his daddy.

SISSY

They were quite a pair.

KATE

Where's his church?

SISSY

He gave up his congregation after Michael died. Now he goes around the country with his little pot of glue fixing up couples in trouble.

KATE

So who counsels the one who counsels?

MARGOT

Forgive my friend. She has no home training

KATE

Well she didn't come to Philadelphia looking to repair that crack in the Liberty Bell.

MARGOT

Behave Kate.

SISSY

My husband is all any good woman should want.

KATE

I only wanted to be married once but it didn't turn out that way. So why don't you tell Miss Kate exactly what you came here looking for?

MARGOT

I've been thinking that both of you should stay here tonight!

KATE

Margot's always thinking, that's why I love her.

MARGOT

There's plenty of room, lots of beds, and I'd love the company.

KATE

She's right about the beds. I bought them.

SISSY

I guess I could call Charles and tell him I've changed my plans. He should be in his room by now.

(CONTINUED)

KATE

I promise no more questions.

MARGOT

Liar.

SISSY

I ordered Charles his favorite meal from room service complete with rice pudding for dessert.

(SISSY goes to the phone)

KATE

That's it! I've got it.

MARGOT

You've got what?

KATE

The reason Leonard lied to her about me dying.

SISSY

You know why he lied?

KATE

You never met him before, right?

SISSY

Never in person.

KATE

And maybe he didn't expect to meet you in this life.

SISSY

Not after I told him I could never go to the Galapagos.

KATE

Exactly. A woman of character. Principles. The perfect -- Beatrice.

SISSY

He had another wife?

MARGOT/KATE

Dante's Beatrice.

SISSY

What do you mean?

MARGOT

She means you were the perfect woman for Leonard.





SISSY

I did have impure thoughts about him.

KATE

And he knew it, didn't he?

MARGOT

No matter what she says, you don't have to tell us anything about you and Leonard.

KATE

Unless you want to. Need to. Can't stand keeping it in one more minute because I am sure that Leonard did care for you.

SISSY

How can you say that?

KATE

He told you that story to make you feel better.

MARGOT

Partners in grief.

KATE

He knew how to comfort you.

SISSY

In the beginning we only spoke about the work, the life on the page. Then one day, when I felt especially desperate, I wrote him about my son's murder. That's when his messages changed. They were so full of compassion and caring. I felt myself begin to live again, if only for a few minutes everyday, when his messages of comfort arrived.

MARGOT

That's when he told you about his wife dying.

SISSY

Exactly.

KATE

I hope I died tragically.

SISSY

Yes.

KATE

And I had a big funeral?

MARGOT

Kate!

SISSY

He said people came from all over to sing your praises.

KATE

Hallelujah!

SISSY

You were praised in words and song.

KATE

That's me.

MARGOT

You have no shame.

KATE

Shame? Didn't you hear her? I was loved and remembered by lots of noisy people jumping up and down and singing my praises. That is a life well lived. I am satisfied.

MARGOT

You are still alive.

SISSY

I have all the elegies right here along with all the other E-mail from Leonard which I will now burn.

KATE

Hey, not so fast. I want to read those.  
(SISSY hands a stack to KATE)  
Margot? Look, I was missed like hell.

SISSY

Maybe he still cared for you?

KATE

We were friends. That was our gift to Jackie.

SISSY

These are powerful words of grief.

KATE

When it was over, it was over. Those words were his gifts to you. Not me.

SISSY

I am a married woman. I took vows. My head is swimming with confusion.

MARGOT

And guilt?

KATE  
She didn't do anything.

SISSY  
I did.

KATE  
What did you do wrong?

SISSY  
I lusted in my heart for a man who is not my husband.

KATE  
That's not wrong or we'd all be in court.

SISSY  
In my world they are the same thing.

MARGOT  
And Leonard knew that.

KATE  
Oh honey, in a court of law they are not the same thing.  
(DOORBELL RINGS)  
Don't move. I knew that girl would come back here.

MARGOT  
(MARGOT stands in front of KATE.)  
Get the door Sissy before this woman does something she will regret.  
(doorbell rings)

KATE  
You have no faith in me Margot --  
(SISSY opens the door. NEELY stands there very pregnant.)

NEELY  
Hello, I'm Neely Frank and I'm here to talk to --

KATE  
If you're looking for Leonard Will he's dead.

MARGOT  
Ask the girl in, please, it's still hot out there.

NEELY  
Global warming.

SISSY  
What did she say?

NEELY

Though we still can't be absolutely sure, all the signs point to that probability. For me it's simply mother earth taking back her child. She will exact her revenge.

KATE

Great! Just what we need. A pregnant soothsayer.

MARGOT

Forgive my friend Kate, can I get you a glass of water? s

NEELY

Oh thank you, that would be wonderful.

KATE

So what was your name?

NEELY

Neely.

KATE

Neely, just how many babies are you carrying and when are you due?

NEELY

I'm not due for three more weeks and they say it's just one, thank you for asking.

MARGOT

At least she's polite.

NEELY

I have this small bag outside.

SISSY

Let me get that for you.

KATE

Whoops, I think she's planning on staying longer than a glass of water.

MARGOT

Shhhhhh. (exits)

SISSY

Is it a boy or a girl or don't you know?

NEELY

It's one girl and her name is Elizabeth Rose.

SISSY

Elizabeth is very Shakespearean.

(CONTINUED)

NEELY

She's named after Queen Elizabeth and Rosa Luxemburg too.

SISSY

Rosa who?

NEELY

Luxemburg.

KATE

The revolutionary shot by her friends?

NEELY

The exact same woman of courage.

MARGOT

I hope yours gets out more.

(MARGOT hands her water.)

Here.

NEELY

Thank you.

MARGOT

(whispering to KATE) At least she's polite.

KATE

The eternal optimist.

NEELY

You must be Margot.

KATE

How did you know that?

NEELY

Because Leonard described you as so caring.

MARGOT

Thank you.

NEELY

And you must be Kate.

KATE

Because I'm not?

NEELY

And yes, I know the dear man has passed on to another consciousness.

(CONTINUED)

KATE

Is that the same as dead?

SISSY

Oh my heavens, you didn't meet him on the inter-net too?

NEELY

Oh, no, I was one of his students a few years ago and, as you can see, we have remained extremely close.

KATE

Are you travelling alone or do you always go out walking with an overnight bag for the hell of it?

NEELY

I'm not sure I understand.

MARGOT

I think Kate means is the baby's father with you.

NEELY

Not exactly.

KATE

Why doesn't that surprise me.

NEELY

He's already passed on - but you already know that.

KATE

That does surprise me.

MARGOT

Why would we know that?

SISSY

I need to sit down. (bells ring and "ohms" when appropriate)

NEELY

Missing at first, but now, just ashes and memories.

KATE

I don't like where this is going.

MARGOT

Why would we know about the father of your child?

NEELY

I am not ashamed to say that I cried, for my baby and myself throughout the entire memorial service.

(CONTINUED)

KATE

Honey, the only memorial we have had is her brother,  
otherwise known as Leonard Will my ex-husband.

NEELY

Exactly.

SISSY

That baby is Leonard's?

MARGOT

Can't be.

SISSY

Ommmmmm....Ommmmmm

NEELY

Why not?

MARGOT

Because Leonard never had sex with his students -- none of  
his students.

KATE

Except me and that was a long time ago and I was straight A.

SISSY

Thank the Lord.

NEELY

I agree completely about the sex and Leonard and his  
students.

MARGOT

Good, because my brother believed teaching was a sacred gift  
and if you are suggesting any impropriety.....

KATE

She said she agreed.

MARGOT

-- what do you mean you agree?

NEELY

Leonard's paternity has nothing to do with the flesh.

KATE

Well that clears up everything.

SISSY

Sex with no flesh?

(CONTINUED)

NEELY

Exactly.

SISSY

Exactly what, I don't understand. (ring...ring) I met Leonard online in the Dante Chat room and we had no sex and no baby.

KATE

Praise the Lord.

NEELY

Your Sissy!

SISSY

How do you know my name?

NEELY

Leonard talked about you all the time.

SISSY

He did?

KATE

To you?

MARGOT

About what?

NEELY

You're designing a web page for La Vita Nuova.

SISSY

I have it right here in my bag -- how did you know that?

NEELY

"The New Life". Pretty appropriate.

KATE

Okay, this has gone on long enough.

NEELY

I feel that way most mornings myself.

KATE

Who are you exactly and why are you here?

MARGOT

Kate?

KATE

No, Margot. I'm the prosecutor, not you.

(CONTINUED)

NEELY

I'm Neely Frank and I can swear on a stack of bibles that Leonard Will did not have sex with me.

MARGOT

Then exactly who is the father?

NEELY

Leonard Maurice Will, of course.

MARGOT

Oh, God, she knows his middle name.

SISSY

Maurice?

MARGOT

It was our father's favorite uncle.

KATE

We were married two years before he told me.

NEELY

I guess I'm a little disappointed he didn't mention me or my condition but I can't blame him for waiting to tell anyone else. But I can assure you he was a full partner in all the discussions and I went with him when he donated his sperm.

KATE

And to think I just came by to pack up some books.

MARGOT

You are telling me that my brother donated sperm to you so you could have his child but you didn't have a relationship.

NEELY

We had a deeper connection.

SISSY

No marriage.

KATE

I'd say.

NEELY

Oh no, it wasn't like that. He knew I wanted a baby...

SISSY

I am feeling sick.

(CONTINUED)

NEELY

-- and he understood who I was --

KATE

Who are you?

NEELY

I mean he respected my need for independence...

SISSY

No marriage?

NEELY

I swear he seemed really excited to help bring his spirit into the world.

MARGOT

And I swear he's never mentioned your name.

KATE

Leonard can't speak for himself about this baby now, can he?

NEELY

He believed it might live in a better - more peaceful world.

KATE

A little too convenient.

MARGOT

Kate's legal brain is now in overdrive.

NEELY

Here.

MARGOT

What's this?

NEELY

He wrote it all down in this letter if I ever needed any help.

KATE

What help do you think you need?

MARGOT

(Reading from the letter)

In the event you need something and I am not here to help, contact my sister Margot Will, or my ex-wife Kate McClinton Will, my daughter or my colleague Professor Cecilia Longfellow Sweet.

SISSY

I can't believe he put my name in there too.

KATE

Why would you need us.

NEELY

I never expected to need anyone.

SISSY

Could I see that letter.

MARGOT

....and they will help you...

SISSY/NEELY

....because they are all good people who will love you as I do.

KATE

I think I'm speechless.

MARGOT

Now there's something new.

NEELY

But I am awfully glad...(clutches her abdomen) you're here.

SISSY

What's wrong?

NEELY

It's been getting worse all day.

(NEELY doubles up in pain and SISSY grabs her as she drops to the floor)

SISSY

You said you were due next month.

KATE

Don't look at me.

MARGOT

What did you eat today?

KATE

Sickness makes me faint.

MARGOT

Something with mayonnaise in this heat will kill you.

(CONTINUED)

NEELY

Ohhhhh....

SISSY

Now just lay there and we'll put your feet up....

MARGOT

Put her feet up Kate!

KATE

Oh, I hate this part. Makes my teeth hurt.

NEELY

Call 9-1-1.

SISSY

It's probably just false labor.

(NEELY moans. SISSY takes charge.)

Trust me.

KATE

Does she have a choice?

MARGOT

Go to the kitchen right now Kate and don't come out.

NEELY

Owwwww.

SISSY

My mother was a mid-wife. Just take a deep breath and relax.

NEELY

That's easy for you to say. Ohhhhhh.

KATE

And whatever you do, don't push!

MARGOT

Get the hell out of here!

(KATE exits)

SISSY

Just breath thru it and try to think of something pleasant.

NEELY

This really hurts.

SISSY

Margot, bring me those little bells in my purse.

(MARGOT runs to get the bells)

Just hold my hand and whatever happens don't let go.

(CONTINUED)

MARGOT

What do I do?

SISSY

Ring those bells damn it! Ring those bells till she stops screaming or I start.

(NEELY screams and MARGOT rings the bells into the blackout)

CURTAIN

END OF ACT I

ACT II

SETTING:

The stacks of books are now gone from the living room, but there are lots of reminders that there are women guests.

AT RISE:

Scene 1

SISSY wears a nightgown and matching robe. She is on the phone and working on her laptop computer.

SISSY

Yes, I realize no one is answering and no, I do not consider "unless he's dead" very amusing. I have been ringing room 601 for over an hour and I know the Reverend Sweet has always

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SISSY (cont'd)

gone to sleep by eleven and it's now almost midnight. Of course, I know his sleeping habits, I am his wife. His only wife, thank you, and believe me there have never been any exceptions to the sleeping rule! Have a good day yourself!

(The computer makes a little bell like sound to announce the arrival of mail. MARGOT has appeared at the doorway unseen. SISSY jumps up to look at the screen.)

MARGOT

Message from Leonard?

SISSY

I became addicted to these little electronic messages when my panic attacks made leaving the house impossible.

MARGOT

There's nothing like E-mail from the great beyond to lift the spirits.

SISSY

Was that a little Margot humor?

MARGOT

Maybe a little Margot longing?

SISSY

I wouldn't expect you to believe in email from heaven

MARGOT

There was no proper good-bye. Just a phone call. A death certificate. And the belief that those ashes are my brother's remains.

SISSY

Then you are not sure it is Leonard?

MARGOT

If you're asking if I actually saw the body, no, but they checked the DNA and I gave up conspiracy theories when I turned forty. After a few days on those reefs the officials told me I didn't want to see my brother and I believed them. Now I wonder if I made the right decision.

SISSY

The police told us one of us would have to identify our son. It is an image I will never forget. You made the right choice.

MARGOT

I'm sorry you had to go thru all that.

(CONTINUED)

SISSY

It's amazing what you can do when you must.(Pause) Did you really think there might be a message from Leonard?

MARGOT

I can't believe fell in love with the internet if he got to  
.....

SISSY

Heaven?

MARGOT

He was too good for hell.

SISSY

I do not believe that a knowledge of electronics is a prerequisite for entrance into God's heavenly kingdom.

MARGOT

Now that's encouraging news.

SISSY

Did Leonard believe in heaven?

MARGOT

He was in heaven reading Dante and hell teaching Freshman composition.

SISSY

And you?

MARGOT

I'm still optimistic.

SISSY

Do you think I'm just one more foolish Southern woman who praises God....while dreaming of a man she's never met?

MARGOT

I envy you.

SISSY

Why would you envy me?

MARGOT

Your faith comforts you.

SISSY

It does comfort anyone.

MARGOT

It just makes my head spin. I've taught world history too long.

SISSY

Faith isn't logic.

MARGOT

Exactly.

SISSY

It's actually more like love.

MARGOT

Well, that's two I missed.

SISSY

I think you love greatly. That girl felt your compassion and she'd just walked in the door a perfect stranger.

MARGOT

That pregnant stranger is about to deliver my first nephew.

SISSY

I prayed it was false labor.

MARGOT

I prayed it was food poisoning which was no joke in the Will family picnic when Aunt Bella left the potato salad out too long.

SISSY

Is that a joke?

MARGOT

You wouldn't think so if you'd eaten Bella's potato salad.

SISSY

You took me in without a second thought. Then you turned a few fish and some loaves of bread into a feast and gave that pregnant girl your own bed.

MARGOT

Technically it's Leonard's bed - which seems appropriate in some weird way.

SISSY

And you never asked Kate to do a thing all night.

(CONTINUED)

MARGOT

Until Jackie comes back thru that door I wouldn't trust Kate with a bath towel.

KATE

(KATE comes out dressed but carrying a towel. )  
These towels were wedding presents and the man was still using them. What's left of them.

(KATE throws the towel. MARGOT smiles as she bends down to pick it up.)

MARGOT

Couldn't sleep?

KATE

Sleep? One child wandering out there alone and another about to explode my ex-husband's inseminated non-girlfriend. How could you go off and die before we got all these children right?

(KATE picks up the funeral urn)

Leonard....

MARGOT

(Takes the urn and sets it back)

I think it's time for a glass of something alcoholic?

SISSY

Nothing for me.

KATE

I'll drink hers, thank you.

SISSY

Is this candle part of saying "sheeva"?

KATE

Listen to this girl say "Sheeva". I love Alabama women.

MARGOT

I can't bear to let the candle go out.

KATE

I can see Leonard standing naked in the doorway --

MARGOT

Too much information Kate.

KATE

...water dripping all over this floor and he's roaring -  
"Lord Lord an echo in the sky the wind through ragged  
leaves"..." help me out here.

(CONTINUED)

SISSY

(SISSY picks up the rhythm)

"...the roar of memory  
caw caw all years my birth a dream caw caw New York the  
bus the broken shoe the vast highschool caw caw all Visions  
of the Lord  
Lord Lord Lord caw caw caw Lord Lord Lord caw caw caw Lord"

KATE

The woman's channeling Leonard.

MARGOT

That deserves another drink.

KATE

Leonard loved Ginsburg. But you probably already knew that.

MARGOT

A toast to Dante and Ginsburg.

KATE

Bottoms up.

SISSY

It was my son who dragged me to a reading on campus.

(KATE rings SISSY's bells.)

The little bells were a suggestion from my "Meditations for  
those who are sleepless" web site.

KATE

Sleepless?

MARGOT

Don't start, Kate.

KATE

The signs are all there.

MARGOT

Leave the signs alone.

KATE

Sign says go. Circles under the eyes.

SISSY

I've had those since I was six. You can even see it in my  
elementary school pictures.

KATE

A little bloodshot.

(CONTINUED)

SISSY

I never drink alcohol.

MARGOT

She loves mystery books.

SISSY

It's just a harmless little escape.

KATE

Voila!

(MARGOT and KATE rifle through her briefcase and  
KATE triumphantly brings out two boxes of girl  
scout cookies!

MARGOT

Girl scout cookies!

SISSY

Between the change of life and the changes in my life I am  
afraid to admit I have become and

KATE &amp; MARGOT

An insomniac!

SISSY

How did you know?

MARGOT

It's's going to be a long night of eating.

KATE

And dancing. Now we can put on a little music and wake the  
dead cause we are not sleeping.

SISSY

You are insomniacs?

KATE

Charter members.

SISSY

Leonard?

KATE

He could sleep through the 1812 overture on the 4th of July  
complete with canons firing and fireworks shooting sky high.

MARGOT

He slept at the drop of a hat.

(CONTINUED)

KATE

Amen. And sometimes he slept in the middle of

MARGOT

--too much information.

(Holds up Leonard's picture, kisses it gently)

SISSY

Was he as funny as Margot?

KATE

No.

MARGOT

Kate?

KATE

He was actually funny. Sorry, Margot, but the only one who got your sense of humor was Jackie.

SISSY

Generous?

KATE

Give you the coat off his back - and off mine. But he was also cheap. Never left the right amount for a tip.

MARGOT

Because he hated eating in restaurants.

KATE

Loved take out.

MARGOT

You would, too, if you had our mother as your first cook.

KATE

And did she teach him how to dress?

MARGOT

The man hated shopping.

KATE

Amen, again. His closet is filled with clothes older than that girl carrying his baby.

SISSY

But you loved him?

MARGOT

Of course.

(CONTINUED)

KATE

Of course.

SISSY

I envy such closeness between siblings.

KATE

Honey, she said she loved him, she didn't say they were close.

MARGOT

We loved each other.

KATE

Nice. But they barely saw each other and he hated phones.

SISSY

I don't understand.

KATE

Like Superman and Clark Kent, you'd never get these two together in the same room at the same time and if it wasn't for answering machines, they never would have talked at all.

MARGOT

My friend is exaggerating.

KATE

Look, this woman thinks you and Leonard were sitting around sipping coffee, sharing feelings and howling at the moon together when it simply wasn't true.

SISSY

But you didn't fight?

MARGOT

No.

KATE

They should have.

MARGOT

No.

KATE

Yes. You should have mixed it up a little. Shouted, screamed and said, "Where the hell have you been?" Would have been good for both of you.

SISSY

But you live in the same city.

(CONTINUED)

KATE

It's a big city.

MARGOT

Kate! We were busy.

KATE

You two lived like you were always going to have time.

MARGOT

He was in the damn Galapagos islands.

KATE

You don't mind if I drink for two. I am not pregnant.

MARGOT

Our relationship was not simple.

KATE

It was messy.

SISSY

Honestly, you do not have to explain.

KATE

Honestly, she does.

MARGOT

I don't.

KATE

Won't.

MARGOT

I can't.

KATE

I know you must be mad as hell he's gone, but she won't scream or complain. Oh, no.

MARGOT

I stopped screaming in the 70s.

KATE

Calm old Margot. Right?

MARGOT

How did this suddenly get to be about me.

KATE

You've been carrying that stone since they called you.

(CONTINUED)

MARGOT

This isn't funny Kate.

KATE

Grief will kill you, right, Sissy? Lay it down, girl. Now. I say lay it down.

MARGOT

This isn't funny Kate.

KATE

I am your worst nightmare.

MARGOT

You are deflecting the discussion from Jackie.

KATE

I'm not leaving. Just ask my daughter.

MARGOT

What do you want me to say?

KATE

Whatever you need to say.

SISSY

I think she's just trying to help you ease your burden.

KATE

That's right.

MARGOT

I'm fine.

KATE

Not.

MARGOT

Leave it.

KATE

No.

MARGOT

Sissy?

KATE

She agrees with me, right?

SISSY

I think she just wants to help you.

MARGOT

I don't need help!

KATE

But you fall apart when the answering machine goes off.

MARGOT

He's dead Kate. He's gone Sissy. I'm fine.

KATE

(KATE puts the vase in front of her.)

Tell him, baby. Give him the last talk of his life. Just this one time let someone else be the strong one....two of us.

MARGOT

This is crazy.

SISSY

Sometimes it helps.

KATE

Talk to him. Like you always wanted to.

MARGOT

If I had could have you back, even for a morning cup of coffee, I would take it now.

KATE

That's right.

MARGOT

I wouldn't let you eat alone while I sat by myself five miles away.

KATE

Amen.

MARGOT

If you were here I'd ask how your life was really going...

SISSY

That is beautiful.

MARGOT

I'd want to know what answers you were still searching for and which dreams you still had unfulfilled.

KATE

That's right.

(CONTINUED)

MARGOT

If I could have you here right now for one hour, one minute, I wouldn't let you slip away without a word again. I'd laugh until we cried and cry until we said what we have never really said to one another since our parents died and we stopped remembering how much we liked just being friends. I miss you my dear brother. I miss my friend. I do.

(MARGOT runs out)

KATE

Some days living seems harder than dying.

SISSY

(Holding up the picture of Leonard.)

All these months we were writing to one another and I had this idea in my mind that Leonard Will was a tall man with a full head of dark wavy hair and he was as bald as winter.

KATE

He always told me he started losing his hair at birth.

SISSY

And a Jew. I never imagined that.

KATE

Which is the bigger surprise?

SISSY

Jesus was a Jew.

KATE

A connection that didn't help his descendants much. Or didn't you realize that baby in there is the last living Will on this earth. I'm a card-carrying Christian but there's a lot of blood on that cross. Too many dead named Will and too many McClinton's who forgot what their real name was when they came here.

SISSY

I think I'd like a small glass of that wine.

MARGOT

(MARGOT appears in the doorway, she is wearing a flowing kimono type robe. She strikes a very dramatic pose.)

Ta-daaaa!

KATE

Look at you!

MARGOT

A little lavender water on the face and a new outfit, and I am ready to go.

KATE

Sissy?

SISSY

Yes?

KATE

You're staring at Margot...and I don't think its love.

SISSY

I've never seen anything like that robe before.

MARGOT

Leonard brought it back for me from his last vacation.

(MARGOT holds out her arms and we see how big it is on her.)

KATE

He always thought Margot was his BIG sister.

SISSY

It's beautiful.

MARGOT

And magical.

SISSY

Magical?

MARGOT

Try it on.

SISSY

No, I couldn't.

KATE

It's the best kind of magic.

MARGOT

Absolutely. Here. It'll make you feel like dancing.

SISSY

I don't dance.

KATE

That robe transformed this woman and she really can't dance.

(CONTINUED)

MARGOT

I know he'd like you to wear it tonight?

SISSY

I couldn't. Really. No.

KATE

I can tell by the look in her eye you'll lose this fight.

MARGOT

Believe me, once you put this on you won't be able to stop.  
(MARGOT slips the robe on SISSY)

See?

SISSY

Oh.

KATE

See!

SISSY

It feels so...

MARGOT

Heavenly?

SISSY

Exactly!

(SISSY is whirling around)

It makes me want to ---

MARGOT

Dance!

SISSY

I couldn't.

KATE

Don't let us stop you.

SISSY

I shouldn't.

KATE

The dead don't judge.

SISSY

It seems so....

KATE

Pleasureable?

(CONTINUED)

MARGOT

Let me get some music on here.

KATE

God gave us pain and pleasure.

KATE (cont'd)

I love music.

MARGOT

Brahms? Beethoven?

KATE

Bob Marley? Glenn Campbell.

MARGOT

The Beatles?

SISSY

He loved all those?

KATE

No accounting for taste.

MARGOT

Here's a good old fashioned waltz.

KATE

(MARGOT puts on a song like The Tennessee Waltz  
and KATE winces as she takes SISSY in her arms.)  
Alabama women are the finest dancers on the planet -- .

SISSY

You're very good.

MARGOT

(Turning the music louder.)  
Kate loves to lead.

KATE

One, two, three....

SISSY

No! I can't. I haven't danced since our son died.

KATE

No dancing, no sleeping. Seems like a whole lot of punishment  
for one woman.

SISSY

Join us please.

(CONTINUED)

MARGOT

Is that a polite way of saying what's a nice girl like you doing dancing all alone?

SISSY

I didn't mean to be unkind.

KATE

That woman dragged Danny Simon down a hill during the summer of love and made the rest of us dance all the way down the mountain after them.

SISSY

How romantic.

KATE

That wedding almost killed me.

MARGOT

In a fit of insanity we decided to make it legal. Our first mistake.

KATE

Do you remember your parents trying to sing "Hey Jude". Oy!

MARGOT

Our second mistake!

SISSY

Did your husband pass away?

KATE

He passed all right.

SISSY

Your husband?

MARGOT

Eleven months and twenty-two days after our wedding, he said he needed to go off and find himself .

KATE

...in Katmandu.

SISSY

What did you do?

MARGOT

Nothing.

SISSY

You didn't go after him?

(CONTINUED)

MARGOT

I know when I've lost and when I've won. He was gone for good.

(SISSY runs to get her bells.)

KATE

What did you say?

SISSY

I need to call the hotel again.

KATE

What's wrong?

SISSY

I need to find out where my husband is right now.

KATE

Oh, honey, he's probably just gone out with the boys.

SISSY

Charles doesn't go out with the boys.

MARGOT

A drink with a friends.

SISSY

He doesn't drink, dance or sing anymore.

MARGOT

I'm sure he's fine.

KATE

He should seriously consider some vice God would understand.

MARGOT

He's probably just tired.

SISSY

I left him a note when I left this morning and now he's gone.  
(SISSY is now ringing her little bells  
furiously.)

KATE

What did you write?

SISSY

I told him I was coming to Philadelphia to consider the state  
of our marriage.

MARGOT

Oh, that kind of note.

(CONTINUED)

KATE

Bad.

SISSY

I needed to heal the hole in my heart.

KATE

That hole didn't include Leonard?

SISSY

I never mentioned Leonard's name.

MARGOT

But he knew you were friends?

SISSY

He's not answering his phone and if something has happened that will be our last correspondence! Oh, Lord, don't punish him for my sins.

MARGOT

So I guess you and Charles didn't meet on a commune?

SISSY

We met in the back of my daddy's 1967 Chevrolet when Daddy was going up to preach in Montgomery and our back tire blew out. The boy they sent to fix our car was Charles. He says that blown tire saved him from a life of eternal damnation. And now I am his damnation with my terrible thoughts....and Worse....Coming here. I've got to speak to him right now.  
(SISSY goes into the kitchen door as NEELY comes out from the bedroom in an oversized nightshirt)

NEELY

Is there anything more to eat? I've been craving egg salad with olives so much Billie says I'll probably end up hatching Horton.

KATE

Now just who the hell is Billie!

NEELY

Oh, Billie's...just my roommate.

MARGOT

Roommate?

KATE

Interesting.

NEELY

I guess I forgot to mention I had a roommate.

(CONTINUED)

KATE

Anything else you forgot.

NEELY

I can make the egg salad myself.

KATE

Now Margot can handle the sandwiches while we talk.

MARGOT

Convince me I don't hate this look in your eyes.

KATE

(whispering) Do not give it another thought. Kate has it under control.

MARGOT

That's exactly what I was afraid of.

NEELY

Don't go.

KATE

Margot?

NEELY

I was hoping you could give me the family medical history - Leonard wanted to tell me all those things but ....

MARGOT

In our immediate family....

KATE

(pushing MARGOT out the door)

Leonard had a strong heart and I'm sure your baby will too. Now you just sit down and put those little tootsies right up here on the couch while Margot makes us one of her famous egg salad sandwiches.

NEELY

I'd love some tomatoes on that sandwich too if it's not too much trouble. I like to get in as many food groups as possible. Oh, no.

(NEELY clutches her stomach)

Ow.....

KATE

Margot! Hold the egg salad!

NEELY

I'm fine. She's just dancing. Want a feel her?

(CONTINUED)

KATE

Oh, hell, there's a sucker born everyday.  
(KATE goes over and puts her hands around her  
stomach)

NEELY

Amazing?

KATE

Amazing.

NEELY

Complete strangers ask to touch my belly.

KATE

Don't get too trusting. Not with this baby. It won't last  
nearly long enough before she's gone.

MARGOT

(Coming out of the kitchen)

I forgot to ask whether you wanted that egg salad on a roll  
or --

KATE

Come over here Margot and feel this baby girl dance.  
(Motions to MARGOT who comes over and puts her  
hands on the stomach too)  
So what do you think?

MARGOT

Must be from your side of the family.

KATE

Leonard couldn't dance to save his soul.

SISSY

No one is answering....  
(PHONE RINGS)  
I'll get it. (exits)

KATE

What's wrong with her?

MARGOT

Don't ask, unless you're answering wheat bread or rye.

NEELY

Wheat bread.

KATE

The correct answer is rye bread. Leonard only had chicken  
salad on wheat. Egg salad was always rye.

(CONTINUED)

MARGOT

Well?

NEELY

Wheat.

MARGOT

Good choice. Don't let her intimidate you about bread or she'll move right in. (exits)

NEELY

She likes you doesn't she.

KATE

We have shared some fine moments in the history of the world.

NEELY

You know there have been several attempts at Utopian societies and I believe that this one could succeed.

KATE

Honey, I got one good husband at home, five other lawyers at work, a daughter somewhere out there who hates me and enough miscellaneous relatives for a small town. That is enough utopia for this woman. But since we're speaking about utopia here, just how do you feel about the institution of marriage.

NEELY

I guess philosophically speaking I'm basically a pretty monogamous person.

KATE

How 'bout practically speaking?

NEELY

I told you that Leonard and I were not --

KATE

I know you were soul mates, but I'm talking about the difference between raising this baby alone or maybe having some help. Do you have some help?

NEELY

My mother said marriage was a joke but she's stayed with my father thirty years.

KATE

Do you have some help honey?

NEELY

I still don't know if she's happy.

(CONTINUED)

KATE

Wasn't Leonard worried about you raising this baby alone?

NEELY

He wanted to be involved. He expected to be involved. I mean I know he didn't expect to be dead.

SISSY

No one expects to be dead.

NEELY

Leonard told me bringing a new life into the next century seemed about the best thing we could do together.

KATE

In a test tube.

NEELY

He also said you'd be kind to us.

KATE

Leonard lied.

SISSY

We are not being unkind Neely. We are just concerned.

NEELY

About what? I didn't come here asking for money.

KATE

What did you come here for?

NEELY

This is Leonard's baby, why won't you believe me? I just came here because I thought you would want to it was going to be his baby but obviously I was wrong!

MARGOT

What the hell is going on here! I leave the room for five minutes and it's Twelve Angry Women in here.

KATE

We're just giving Neely the gift of our expertise.

MARGOT

Did she ask for it?. (to NEELY) Kate hates a vacuum. Here.  
(MARGOT hands NEELY a sandwich)

NEELY

Thanks, but I guess I'm not as hungry as I thought.

(CONTINUED)

MARGOT

Don't let her intimidate you. Let me. Eat!

NEELY

Leonard told me you were all very understanding. Elizabeth Rose is his baby. I thought you might want to be her family. I guess I was wrong.

KATE

Now there's an understatement.

SISSY

You've had a little more time to get used to the idea of having a baby than we have.

KATE

And not just any baby, but my ex-husband's.

NEELY

I'm sorry if you're angry with me for having this baby. I'm sorry your daughter's gone. I'm sorry I came here.

KATE

I'm not angry with you. Where are you going. I'm just damned confused!

MARGOT

You were yelling Kate --

SISSY

...in her direction.

KATE

Where the hell did she go.

MARGOT

She's pregnant.

(KATE starts to follow her)

You will not follow that girl to the bathroom!

KATE

Okay I'm sorry I yelled. It obviously triggered something ...( Yelling into the other room) Look I'm sorry I yelled at you. I apologize. I'm a strong and forceful personality. That's what they write on all my job evaluations and if Leonard didn't tell you that he didn't tell you Kate.

MARGOT

Shhhh.

KATE

Why are you shhhhhhush-ing me when I'm trying to make it right with that girl.

MARGOT

Quiet! Someone's outside.

KATE

I think Leonard kept an old baseball bat around here somewhere.

(There is a commotion outside. The sound of someone falling over furniture and screaming "ouch" and "darn".)

SISSY

Should we call the police?

KATE

Sounds too dumb to be a burglar.

NEELY

(NEELY comes out with a baseball bat)

Somebody's stumbling around out there and he's mumbling something like -"I'll kill ya"..I'll kill ya"? But I can't make it out for sure.

KATE

I don't think he's announcing his intentions to murder us.  
(Sound of a dog barking viciously)

NEELY

Well that doesn't sound too friendly.

KATE

Get away from that window before you get hurt.

MARGOT

Shhhhhh. Listen?

CHARLES (O.S.)

Cecilia? Please. Cecilia.

NEELY

He's saying somebody's name...

CHARLES

Cecilia Longfellow Sweet are you there?.

ALL

(KATE, MARGOT AND NEELY )

...Cecilia Longfellow Sweet.

(CONTINUED)

SISSY

Oh my God it's Charles.

(SISSY goes to the window and opens it)  
Charles, is that you?

NEELY

Her husband's breaking into this apartment?

CHARLES

Cecilia? Are you really in there?

SISSY

Stop this right now and come in through the front door before you hurt yourself.

CHARLES

Oh, Cecilia just hearing your voice has revived my spirit. I shall be there momentarily.

NEELY

Does he always talk like that?

KATE

It's a southern thing, honey, don't even try to figure it out.

SISSY

Charles is here.

MARGOT

Guess he broke the sleeping rule tonight.

SISSY

But he doesn't even know who Leonard is?

KATE

Maybe he knows you better than you think.

CHARLES

(knocking) Cecilia! Please open this door.

MARGOT

I'm going to the kitchen.

CHARLES

Please let me in.

KATE

(MARGOT grabs KATE who drags NEELY out with them)  
And you are both coming with me.

(Charles knocks again furiously. SISSY opens the  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

KATE (cont'd)  
door and CHARLES comes running in looking quite  
disheveled and out of breath.)

CHARLES  
Oh, Cecilia, it's really you.

SISSY  
Who did you expect to find here Charles?  
(There is a crash in the kitchen)  
Please, don't go in there.

CHARLES  
Then I am too late. (CHARLES dropping to his knees) Oh, God,  
punish me not her for I have left her alone in the  
wilderness.

SISSY  
Charles! What has happened to you? Breaking into strange  
houses, praying for forgiveness....

CHARLES  
Lord, Lord, love this woman as she should be loved.

SISSY  
Have you been drinking?

CHARLES  
I did have one sherry on the train. But I am not drunk.

SISSY  
You were drinking sherry on the train by yourself?

CHARLES  
I am stone sober and ready to meet this man - mano et mano.

SISSY  
Charles! Your good suit is ruined.

CHARLES  
Who cares about a suit Cecilia. My life is ruined.

SISSY  
You're making me afraid.

CHARLES  
I am afraid that nothing is the same. Not since I found your  
note.

SISSY  
I should have spoken to you.

CHARLES

I cancelled my seminar...

SISSY

You cancelled your "marriage can be saved today" seminar?

CHARLES

How can I save anyone else if I can save our marriage.

SISSY

Your bleeding.

CHARLES

There was this rather unpleasant encounter with a small dog and some rose bushes.

SISSY

Let me get some band aids.

CHARLES

(pause) Is he in there? Listening?

SISSY

Who?

CHARLES

Leonard Will.

SISSY

He's not listening.

CHARLES

This is his apartment and your luggage is sitting there and --

NEELY

(Walking through) Don't mind me please but I really have to use the bathroom.

CHARLES

This is a picture of a man.

NEELY

Leonard Will is dead. (exits)

CHARLES

Oh, Lord forgive me I have actually killed someone with my evil thoughts.

SISSY

Leonard was already dead when I got here.

(CONTINUED)

CHARLES

Then I did not kill him?

SISSY

He died on his vacation.

CHARLES

Thank the Lord I did not cause it with my thoughts!

SISSY

Charles!

CHARLES

Was that a pregnant woman walking through here?

SISSY

Why would you wish a stranger harm?

CHARLES

He was no stranger to you, Cecilia.

SISSY

We were colleagues.

CHARLES

Yes.

SISSY

On the computer.

CHARLES

Yes.

SISSY

It was about Dante and literature, that was all.

CHARLES

No, that is not true. I have been blind to so many things about you but even a blind man can see when someone is happy. He made you happy.

SISSY

You saw that?

KATE

(to MARGOT in the kitchen) I told you!

MARGOT

Shhhhhh.

CHARLES

You'd disappear for hours composing correspondence to him and always returned with a flush in your cheek and a look that used to be just for me?

SISSY

I did?

CHARLES

I admit I have been jealous of Leonard Will a long time now.

SISSY

You are my husband. We took vows.

CHARLES

You had my name, Cecilia, but sooner or later he would win your heart and I would lose you forever.

SISSY

You have nothing more to fear. Here is your rival.  
(SISSY holds up the small vase)

JACKIE

(Bursting into the door which is still ajar)  
Okay Mom, we're going to settle this once and -- oh, you're still here. Who's this? Is everything okay?

CHARLES

(CHARLES introduces himself with a handshake)  
Charles Sweet.

SISSY

My husband.

JACKIE

Where is my Aunt Margot.

SISSY

In the kitchen with your Mother.

CHARLES

There are women in the kitchen?

SISSY

Leonard's ex-wife, Kate. His sister Margot and this is his daughter Jackie.

JACKIE

Mama, I'm ready. Come out here and fight like a woman.

CHARLES

Why is she fighting with her mother?

(CONTINUED)

JACKIE

Everyone fights with my mother.

KATE

(KATE comes out of the kitchen pushing NEELY in front of her and MARGOT stands behind)

That is not true, Jackie. Hello, I'm Kate Will and I'll get to you two in a moment.

CHARLES

Leonard was African-American?

SISSY

Actually no, he was bald and Jewish.

MARGOT

I'm Margot Will, Leonard's sister and I think I'll just go and get some more chairs.

JACKIE

Don't you dare leave Aunt Margot.

NEELY

(Coming out and going to shake hands with JACKIE)

Hi, you must be Jackie. I recognize you from your picture.

JACKIE

Well I can't say the same for you.

NEELY

I'm Neely Frank and --

KATE

She's soon to be the mother of your new sister.

JACKIE

Sister? Who's the father?

NEELY

Leonard agreed to be the father of my baby.

JACKIE

You're having Daddy's baby? Who are you?

NEELY

I was his ex-graduate student but --

CHARLES

She's having Leonard Will's child?

SISSY

There was nothing improper.

(CONTINUED)

JACKIE

What was your relationship with my father.

NEELY

He was my adviser. There was nothing physical, believe me. Nothing.

CHARLES

How does that happen?

JACKIE

This is a joke, right?

NEELY

This baby is no joke.

MARGOT

Leonard gave his sperm.

JACKIE

Did you have a gun to his head?

NEELY

He was completely happy about being a donor.

CHARLES

Did you know this Cecilia?

KATE

None of us knew he was having a baby.

JACKIE

You must be having some day, Mom. I know I am.

KATE

My night would go a lot better without thinking about that uniform in your future. You did come back to tell me that was all a bad dream.

SISSY

Jackie's enlisted in the army...

CHARLES

A noble thing to do.

KATE

Not from this end of the rifle.

CHARLES

War is a terribly responsibility for both sides.

(CONTINUED)

KATE

You must be Sissy's husband.

CHARLES

I am the Reverend Charles Sweet.

KATE

I'm Kate McClinton Will, Leonard's --

CHARLES

--- Dear dead wife!

KATE

Do I look dead?

JACKIE

Believe me, this woman is alive enough for two.

SISSY

Charles, how did you know she was supposed to be dead.

CHARLES

You must have mentioned it.

NEELY

Leonard said you were thinking of joining the army but I didn't know you actually did it.

JACKIE

I've done everything everybody in this room -- alive and dead wanted -- now I just want to do what I want.

KATE

You don't have to throw away your life trying to make some peace with a father you didn't know.

JACKIE

I'm not Mama. I didn't know my father and I didn't love him. You did.

KATE

You're too young to know what you want.

MARGOT

That's not fair Kate and you know it.

KATE

Fair is you telling Jackie how you feel so I'm not standing here alone.

JACKIE

I know how Margot feels.

(CONTINUED)

MARGOT

You do?

JACKIE

She loves me and she's scared for me but she's not going to stop me from doing what I want to do. Right?

MARGOT

I'm Margot the coward not King Solomon.

KATE

If this woman is quoting scripture I'm in deep shit here.

NEELY

I believe that family's should support their children. I am personally a pacifist but if that's what she wants who are you to say she's throwing her life away.

KATE

Great so when your little one grows up and wants to throw her life away you can just smile and say nothing, but I'm not ashamed to say I'm committed to tying my daughter up until she is at least thirty.

NEELY

I'm almost thirty.

KATE

Okay til she's forty, fifty or --

JACKIE

-- talk to me Mom. Now because later may be too late. If you have a good reason to stop me, let's put it out there and see what it really is but it can't be because you're afraid I'll get killed because I could get killed anywhere.

KATE

Who told you a stupid thing like that.

JACKIE

You did.

MARGOT

You really want me to tie her up?

KATE

I'm desperate here.

MARGOT

You're not desperate.

JACKIE

Talk to me Mama.

KATE

If she were yours you'd be a tiger keeping her alive.

NEELY

Look, I'm sorry your daughter is still functioning in a world where disputes are resolved through --

KATE

I am not talking theory here. I am talking about hard bullets going through soft tissue. I sent a boy away I loved and he came back a man -- dead. I miss him everyday.

NEELY

I assume the world will be a different place for my baby.

KATE

I assumed making a "love child" with a man of peace could help make it a different world but it didn't.

CHARLES

Forgive me for offering an opinion but your daughter does seem to know her own mind. You should be very proud of raising a child who can make her own decisions.

JACKIE

Tell him how proud you are of me Mom.

KATE

Margot? Help me?

MARGOT

You are proud of her Kate and so am I.

KATE

I mean help me change her mind.

MARGOT

I don't know how to do that.

KATE

I saw you talk Leonard into doing things he didn't want to do and he was as pig-headed as she is so help me now because I'm desperate.

MARGOT

Nobody could talk Leonard into doing something he didn't want to do and -- .

(CONTINUED)

NEELY

You think I made Leonard do this to me?

KATE

I'm not talking about that baby right now.

JACKIE

Everything is not about you Mom. This woman is going to have a baby with Daddy's sperm.

KATE

I know where babies come from.

JACKIE

Not this one.

NEELY

I didn't twist his anything. He wanted to be a sperm donor. He wanted to be my sperm donor.

CHARLES

Speaking as a man, I don't think you can force that sort of thing.

NEELY

Leonard and Billie both wanted me to tell you before but I couldn't. I thought we still had time plenty of time, then Leonard died and Billie said I have to come over and tell you about this baby now.

KATE

What the hell does Billie have to do with this baby!

NEELY

Billie and I have been together for seven years.

KATE

Thank the Lord.

NEELY

We wanted to have a baby and since Billie is Jewish we both thought that it would be nice to have a Jewish donor.

MARGOT

God knows we can use all the Jews we can get.

NEELY

Leonard knew both of us and said he would be honored was how he put it...honored to be the father.

SISSY

That is so sweet.

(CONTINUED)

MARGOT

You're boyfriend sounds like a very nice guy.

NEELY

Billie is not my boyfriend.

KATE

But you just said you've been together for seven years.

NEELY

Billie is really ...Beryl Anne Rosenwasser and she couldn't be the donor.

CHARLES

Who is her boyfriend then?

SISSY

Just wait a minute Charles.

KATE

Beryl Anne what?

JACKIE

Rosenwasser Mama. Beryl is her girlfriend. Right?

NEELY

Billie is my partner in life, my lover, my best friend. She will also be the mother of this baby.

CHARLES

What's she saying?

SISSY

She's saying she's gay.

NEELY

Bisexual but I am monogamously devoted to Beryl.

JACKIE

Wow. Cool. A new sister and two Aunts at once.

CHARLES

I'm not sure I understand.

KATE

A lot of people don't. Particularly in the army which is why some people don't choose to serve.

JACKIE

And a lot of people do. We'll be there for you, all of you, right?

(CONTINUED)

Right. KATE

Margot? JACKIE

Absolutely. MARGOT

And Charles and I will help if we can, too, right Charles? SISSY

Sissy, this is all very new to me. CHARLES

You've got gay people in your congregation Charles. SISSY

I thought you were all angry at me. NEELY

We are all very relieved. SISSY

We are? CHARLES

Hearing about Billie is a blessing. SISSY

Amen. MARGOT

I didn't want you raising a baby alone. KATE

A blessing? NEELY

An answer to my prayers . SISSY

You prayed for this? CHARLES

Now that I know there is someone she loves I can pray they will be a family. SISSY

You are a loving woman Cecilia. CHARLES

(CONTINUED)

NEELY

Leonard used to say he knew Billie and I were a couple before we did. He accepted us. Loved us. That's why he said he volunteered to be the father. He believed in us even when my own parents wanted me dead.

CHARLES

Oh, please child they couldn't want you dead.

NEELY

That's what they said when I told them about me and Billie. They won't see me or talk to us. They say they hate Billie and they don't even know her. They don't care that this baby is half me.

SISSY

They will regret missing so much.

CHARLES

More than they can imagine.

MARGOT

Is that why you didn't tell us everything?

NEELY

I couldn't be sure how you'd feel. My own sister won't talk to me and my brother has to sneak over to visit.

CHARLES

Believe me, your parents and siblings are already suffering.

NEELY

They said I was as good as dead to them. It's in the bible.

CHARLES

The Bible is God's greatest gift of love. Not a hammer.

SISSY

That is beautiful Charles.

NEELY

I think I should call Billie. She worries when I don't call.

KATE

Invite her over.

MARGOT

We've got the food.

JACKIE

I'll sleep on the floor.

(CONTINUED)

KATE

I should go home and tell Martin we found you.

JACKIE

You found me but you still haven't listened.

KATE

I just want you safe baby.

JACKIE

You can't keep me safe and you know that. You just don't want me in the Army.

KATE

You'll understand.

JACKIE

Damn it, Mama, I thought you'd see there are some fights worth fighting because you do that everyday. But you can't see past your grief. Well, it's time to deal with the living. It's time to look at me, your baby who's also a woman that's so stubborn it makes your teeth hurt and so smart it makes your proud. Look at the way my eyes turn up when I'm happy just like you say Daddy's did and the way I slump in a chair when I'm tired just like Aunt Charm did. I am all of you Mama, and both my daddies, too. The one who's raised me and the one I never knew. I am all of you, but I am more, Mama. I am me. Jackie Sojourner Truth Will. You gave me every one of those names for a reason. Talk to this tall proud African-American woman who's going out into the world and live it my way, even if that means dying because nobody gets out of this life alive. You taught me that every day you worked so hard to make the world out there a better place for the living. All those nights I waited up for you, afraid for you too, I never said anything because I knew it was your passion. Your demons made you make a difference you'd tell me when your feet were swelled and your temper sour. Make a difference. You made your choices. Now I've made mine.

(JACKIE starts for the door and CHARLES stops her.)

CHARLES

Please, don't go away angry like this.

JACKIE

I'm not the one who's angry. She is.

KATE

I'm concerned.

JACKIE

It sounds the same thing to me.

(CONTINUED)

KATE

Your father died alone.

CHARLES

Our son died alone.

SISSY

It wasn't all your fault.

CHARLES

You didn't raise your voice Cecilia. I did.

SISSY

I let him go without a kiss.

KATE

Your father went to keep the peace.

JACKIE

Can't this be about me and you just once.

KATE

I can't lose you, too.

JACKIE

Twelve other people died with Dad that day.

KATE

You know that?

JACKIE

I know whether you told me or not.

MARGOT

Let her go Kate. That's what she wants.

KATE

Not without a fight!

CHARLES

I let my son go in anger and we both died that day.

SISSY

It was just one fight in a wonderful life Charles.

CHARLES

His last memory of me, Cecilia. I was red, and yelling at him.

KATE

Violence is everywhere.

(CONTINUED)

CHARLES

No! He was running from my words. He wasn't supposed to be in that dormitory. I have to accept that responsibility. My pride killed him.

JACKIE

Nobody knows what's waiting out there, not even you Mama.

CHARLES

"No, son, you can't take any time off from your school now." "Why not now?" "Because I say so son and I am your father. I am the one paying your bills, so you do right by your family. Hear me. Get yourself back to school and do well and then we'll talk." And he was a good boy so he went but we never talked again - and it can never be right again. So I really can't blame my wife for finding someone else who would make her feel right.

SISSY

We never touched.

CHARLES

He touched your heart. I read his words. He cared.

SISSY

You read what Leonard wrote to me?

CHARLES

That's how I knew you were here. That's how I knew I was losing you.

SISSY

You're not losing me.

CHARLES

You left a note on our bed.

SISSY

I needed time.

CHARLES

You shared more with this stranger than you did with me and there is no sin in that. You stayed out of respect for our vows. I fear I have already lost you.

SISSY

You have nothing more to fear, Charles. Leonard is dead.

CHARLES

And if he had been alive?

(CONTINUED)

KATE

Speculation. Don't answer that question.

MARGOT

Kate is a prosecutor of all things human.

CHARLES

I came here to fight for the woman I love because I can not imagine life without you.

KATE

I object.

SISSY

No.

MARGOT

Shhhhhh.

CHARLES

Forgive me.

SISSY

I let him go, too, Charles.

CHARLES

We can't go on like this.

SISSY

No, we can't.

(CHARLES walks out slamming the door.)

MARGOT

Sissy?

KATE

Do you need your bells.

JACKIE

They're right here?

SISSY

(After a long pause)

I don't need any damn bells, I need to go after my husband.

JACKIE

You go girl!

KATE

(To JACKIE) Give her your jacket.

(CONTINUED)



JACKIE

I'm not changing my mind.

KATE

I may never change my mind but I'll always want you home.  
(Exits.)

JACKIE

How does she know I'll come home?

MARGOT

Just don't stop talking.

JACKIE

Some family you're coming into baby.

NEELY

Elizabeth Rose.

JACKIE

Nice.

NEELY

I'd like you to meet Billy. She's coming for breakfast.

MARGOT

Good.

JACKIE

See you for breakfast, Rosie. Good night.

MARGOT

I think the army should meet Billy, too?

JACKIE

What's going on in your head, Aunt Margot?

MARGOT

I think if the Army's so anxious to get you they should be willing to accept this whole family -- just the way it's going to be.

JACKIE

Watch her Neely. She's just like Mama. But cooks better.

NEELY

Maybe your mother will change her mind?

JACKIE

And maybe yours will too.

TOGETHER

Not a chance in hell.

JACKIE

See you soon, sister.

NEELY

Thank you.

JACKIE

I didn't do anything - except join the army.

MARGOT

Jackie, don't turn your back on her, she's still a lawyer.

(JACKIE exits. MARGOT collapses on the sofa and  
holds up the urn.)

Well Leonard, it sure has been one helluva day.

NEELY

Billy said I shouldn't expect you to be like your brother.

MARGOT

I like Billy already.

NEELY

She said you might even be better.

MARGOT

I am a much better cook. No egg salad but I have some great  
soup in the freezer.

NEELY

Soup at midnight?

MARGOT

Hot foods in hot weather make you feel cool - sing before  
breakfast, cry before dinner. Wear your clothes inside out  
and there's a big surprise on the way. Just some of the folk  
wisdom of the Will family I intend to pass on or bury.

NEELY

I'm tired and Billy's coming early so we should sleep.

MARGOT

Do you need something to sleep in?

NEELY

I brought my thesis with me. It looks at the effects of  
modern warfare on the concept of love in contemporary poetry.  
Leonard was very excited about it. Would you like to read it?

(CONTINUED)

MARGOT

There's a big nightgown in the closet. That should fit. The thesis probably won't. That was definitely Leonard.

NEELY

Kate said you might move in here permanently.

MARGOT

I might. But right now I better clean up for the lovebirds.

NEELY

You really think they can make it work?

MARGOT

They've got a better chance than most.

NEELY

Because he's a minister?

MARGOT

Because he followed here -- and she followed him out the door.

NEELY

Will you forgive me?

MARGOT

That seems to be going around tonight.

NEELY

Leonard said you hated surprises.

MARGOT

And we all know Leonard never lied.

NEELY

I can see why you're Jackie's favorite Aunt.

MARGOT

I'm her only aunt. It made the voting easy. You get as much sleep as you can now because you won't get much later.

NEELY

Good night.

MARGOT

Good night. I'll see you and Elizabeth Rose in the morning.

NEELY

Thank you.

MARGOT

I haven't done a damn thing yet.

NEELY

Then thank you for nothing.

MARGOT

Pretty good humor yourself.

NEELY

Billy likes it.

MARGOT

Good, you'll both need it if you're going to get thru this life without killing each other.

(MARGOT picks up the candle and the urn.)

Well, Leonard, time for you to get some rest and leave the rest of us to work out the world's problems.

(MARGOT blows out the candle. She picks up the urn and puts it on the table. She turns out the light in the hall and then turns it back on again and come back for the urn.)

Let's give them a little privacy.

(MARGOT exits and turns the lights out. )

(BEAT)

SISSY

(We hear the sound of a dog barking as SISSY opens the door. She stands there breathlessly calling into the darkness.)

Run Charles!

(Dog gets louder)

In here. Quickly.

CHARLES

(The dog barking continues as CHARLES comes running into the room.)

Oh, my Lord in heaven, bless you. I think we're saved.

SISSY

I think we are too.

(SISSY takes off her jacket.)

You must be soaked.

CHARLES

I can't feel a thing.

SISSY

I could fix us some hot tea. There is every kind you can imagine in that kitchen and some I have never even heard of -- Charles. You're staring at me.

(CONTINUED)

CHARLES

I don't believe I have ever seen you more lovely.

SISSY

Margot says it's magical. In a good way. And when I slipped it on I almost felt -- well, here, you try it.

(SISSY slips the robe off herself and brings it to CHARLES.)

CHARLES

Cecilia, what are you thinking?

SISSY

I want you to feel it's magic too.

CHARLES

I don't know about this.

SISSY

I know.

CHARLES

I've never.

SISSY

I said no as well but she was right. And it is magical.

CHARLES

I feel foolish.

SISSY

It isn't foolish.

CHARLES

Oh, my, it's really quite --

SISSY

Wonderful.

CHARLES

What must I look like?

SISSY

It's just the two of us, Charles. Trying to find our way. Why can't we just do something --- and dance.

CHARLES

Dance?

SISSY

You'll sing to me like you did when we met.

(CONTINUED)

CHARLES  
We'll wake everyone up.

SISSY  
It doesn't matter anymore.

CHARLES  
It doesn't?

SISSY  
Give me your hand.

CHARLES  
I'm afraid.

SISSY  
I'm terrified.

CHARLES  
Here is my hand.

SISSY  
Here is my hand.

CHARLES  
Your eyes are as clear as those little bells you ring.

SISSY  
Feel my heart. It's beating strong. No panic. Just the  
desire of me to be in your arms one more time.

CHARLES  
Would you still dance with an old sinner like me?

SISSY  
I fell in love with a choirboy and I want to hear that voice  
again.

CHARLES  
I don't deserve your love.

SISSY  
We're alive, Charles, that isn't a sin, and if we work real  
hard maybe we can even fall in love again.

CHARLES  
That would be a miracle.

SISSY  
So sing to me Charles, sing to me one more time.

CHARLES

(singing very tentatively )  
Let me call you sweet-heart. (stopping) I can't Cecilia...I  
just miss him so much.

SISSY

I miss him too. Everyday.

CHARLES

Everyday?

SISSY

Yes.

CHARLES

And you still want to dance with me?

SISSY

I want to try. Please try with me.

CHARLES

Where do we start?

SISSY

Close your eyes. Go ahead. Close them and imagine it's 1967  
and my Daddy has blown out his tire. I'm sitting in the  
backseat with my hair all flat and my face broken out in a  
hundred different way.

CHARLES

I thought you were the most beautiful girl I had ever seen.

SISSY

I thought you were so handsome.

CHARLES

I was all hands and feet.

SISSY

You opened the door for me.

CHARLES

And my hair wouldn't stay down.

SISSY

You took my hand and I shook all over as I never had before.

CHARLES

I said something stupid.

SISSY

You thought everything I said was clever.

(CONTINUED)

CHARLES

Smartest girl I ever met. Even now.

SISSY

I felt ready to take on the world in your arms.

CHARLES

I'm on my way to damnation if I ever let you go again.

SISSY

Then you can feel it, too. Right now? Right here. Again?

CHARLES

It's such a long way back Cecilia.

SISSY

Just one more waltz, Charles.

(CHARLES hesitates.)

Even if you don't believe it yet. Sing your heart out one more time for me.

CHARLES

"Let me call you Sweetheart....I'm in love with you....

(*LET ME CALL YOU SWEETHEART* starts to play in the background. Lights fade out.)

END OF PLAY/ CURTAIN

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