

Above the Bitter Cafe



Greg Elsasser

Norman Maine Publishing

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Above the bitter cafe

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For Trevor.
And Jenny.

Above the bitter cafe

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Above the Bitter Cafe was first performed at Warren High School in Downey, CA on May 17, 2006: Greg Elsasser, director.

JENNY ANANIAS: Mojgan Sherkat

TJ: Jared Head

COREY: Ryan Gutierrez

BROOKE: Allison Palacios

GERRY: Blake Calvert

JESSE: Kelsey Cook

TOM: Steven Julien

NICK: Matt Griswold

DANETTE: Maddie Stanley

SENATOR WHITFIELD: Lauren Terrazas

POLICE OFFICER 1: Rob Fox

POLICE OFFICER 2: Jorge Rivera

ALFREDO: Gilbert Lozano

DR. JAMES SCHROEDER: Josh Perez

MRS. SCHROEDER: Alba Garcia

CHRIS: Nick Contreras

Above the Bitter Cafe

FARCE. Mrs. Ananias and her drama students have arrived in New York City on a much anticipated fieldtrip, but it doesn't take long before there's more drama than they can take! When the group encounters a struggling-actor-turned-tour-guide with no sense of direction, a Coca-Cola addicted assistant superintendent, an FBI agent masquerading as a home-schooler, a missing pig, a couple of dimwitted thieves, and some angry scalped Muppets, things get a little weird, to say the least. This farce will have your audience roaring with laughter!

Performance Time: Approximately 120 minutes.

Characters

(8 M, 5 F, 3 flexible)

JENNY ANANIAS: 30s, teacher and chaperone; feels guilty about leaving her sick kids at home with her husband.

TJ: Drama student; mother is a senator.

COREY: Drama student; TJ's friend.

BROOKE: Drama student, pretty; Corey's ex-girlfriend.

GERRY: Struggling actor and New York City tour guide; has no sense of direction and is allergic to nuts.

JESSE: 16, shy, awkward student.

TOM: 40s, New York City criminal.

NICK: 16, Tom's clueless and naïve son; thinks his dad is an astronaut and dreams of going to Space Camp.

DANETTE: Home-school girl; talks a mile-a-minute with the enthusiasm of a jackrabbit on caffeine.

SENATOR WHITFIELD: Strong personality, fearless; TJ's mother.

POLICE OFFICER 1, 2: Rookie New York cops; wear uniforms.

ALFREDO: 40s, Puerto Rican head chef; thick accent.

DR. JAMES SCHROEDER: Assistant superintendent; Coca-Cola addict.

MRS. SCHROEDER: Dr. Schroeder's wife.

CHRIS ANANIAS: 30s, Jenny's husband.

Setting

A stylish two-story suite on the top floor of a New York City hotel.

Set

French-style doors at SR open into the living area of a room whose square footage is rather small for accommodations on the upper floor of one of New York's pricier hotels, but it does have a fabulously large window UC with an unobstructed view of midtown Manhattan. Stairs to a hallway and bedroom are up right center. Up left center is a pair of double doors leading to an additional bedroom. A couch and a loveseat are arranged in an L-shape CS. A small table with a lamp and a hotel phone separate the couch and loveseat. Downstage left rests a wet bar, and a T.V. sitting on a short armoire is located far down right. Typical hotel artwork adorns the room.

NOTE: If there are budget issues, modifications can be made to the set in order to keep it as simple as possible. A simple hotel room can be designed and then the script can be adapted to fit the set. The only necessary set piece would be the large window up center with an unobstructed view of midtown Manhattan.

Synopsis of Scenes

ACT I

Scene 1: Suite on the 20th floor of a hotel in Manhattan, 4 p.m.

Scene 2: Two hours later.

Act II

Scene 1: The next evening, 5 p.m.

Scene 2: Fifteen minutes later.

Act III

Scene 1: Ten minutes later.

Scene 2: Twenty minutes later.

Props

Purse, for Mrs. Ananias
Throw pillows
Stack of forms
Folder
2 Cell phones
Towel
EpiPen
Itinerary
Hotel card key
Backpack
Menu
Paperback book
Roll of duct tape
Handgun
Pocketknife
Hunting knife
Hanging picture
2 Pieces of luggage
Coin
Baseball hat, for Brooke
Newspaper
Jacket, for TJ
Fashion magazine
Desk phone
Video camera
Band-Aids
"Broadway Tonight" magazine
Tour paperwork
Bottle of Excedrin PM
Can or bottle of Coke
Purse, for Brooke
2 Purple bed sheets
Wallet, for Gerry
Skimpy dress for Jesse
20-dollar bill
2 Pairs of handcuffs
Scripts
Stack of money
Six-pack of Coke
Bottle
CD player
Long blonde wig
Snickers bar
Wristwatch, for Tom
Rose
Pen
Tampon
Checkbook
32-ounce cup of Coke
64-ounce cup of Coke
Glass
High heels, for Jesse
Phonebook
White dress, for TJ
Whistle
Bandage
Large purse, for Mrs. Schroeder
IV bag filled with Coke and
needle
Purple jeans, blouse, hair bow,
and shoes, for Danette
Purple ski mask
Satchel
Letter "Z" cutouts
Handful of yarn
Small towel
Can or bottle of Sprite
Fruit cup
Doll, as Little Corey

Special Effects

Telephone ring

Cell phone ring

Fake blood

Gunshot

Fire alarm

TJ's "hanging from the rope" special effect. (2 options)

- 1.) Wrap bed sheets around a strong climber's rope, one end of the rope tied overhead to a beam out of the audiences' view. The actor, who in reality is only hanging one or two feet above ground, swings into view, hanging onto the rope, which is covered with the bed sheets. The scene can end in a blackout before the sheets become "unraveled."
- 2.) Install two pulleys on an overhead beam. The rope, again the part visible to the audience, is covered with bed sheets and is first attached through a harness worn by the actor playing TJ. (The harness should be worn under his clothes.) The rope is then fed through the two pulleys, and from the two pulleys the rope runs behind the New York skyline wall and attached to a harness worn by a stagehand. The stagehand stands high on an 8-foot ladder, waiting. Once "TJ" jumps, the stagehand jumps as well, hoisting the actor in the air, thus creating the impression that he is hanging several feet up. For the ending, the stagehand quickly steps up the ladder, causing the actor to "plummet" down the side of the building.

“The last big part I had
was playing a dead body,
and the producers
cut my part out of the film
because they said it wasn’t
believable enough.”

– Gerry

ACT I

Scene 1

(AT RISE: A stylish two-story suite on the 20th floor of a hotel in Manhattan, 4 p.m. All is momentarily quiet. Within seconds, the front door flies open and Mrs. Ananias, along with Corey, enter quickly. Corey is carrying an unconscious TJ over his shoulder and is struggling with the weight. Mrs. Ananias, a bag slung over her shoulder, guides them into the room, trying to be of help.)

COREY: I gotta put him down.

MRS. ANANIAS: *(Helping him.)* He doesn't even seem that heavy!

COREY: It's not that; he hasn't brushed his teeth since last night.

(Mrs. Ananias adjusts a throw pillow and catches her breath.)

MRS. ANANIAS: Watch his head! You got him? Here—

COREY: No, it's okay. Let me just— *(With a grunt, he lays him down, albeit roughly, onto the couch.)*

MRS. ANANIAS: *(Catching her breath.)* Wow...it's like his mother said...he really is a rare and unusual flower.

COREY: Yeah, and they call it a pansy.

MRS. ANANIAS: I knew something was wrong when I tested him and he said I was holding up three fingers.

COREY: How many fingers were up?

(Mrs. Ananias starts going through her bag.)

MRS. ANANIAS: None. They were in my pockets. Is he still breathing?

COREY: *(Checks.)* Yeah, all he did was pass out. I've seen him do this before. What are you looking for?

MRS. ANANIAS: His medical forms. Oh, here. *(She pulls out a stack of forms and grabs a slim folder out from among them.)*

COREY: For what? You're not going to call his mom, are you?

MRS. ANANIAS: Are you kidding me? Here we go... *(Reads form.)* "Diabetes, asthma...sleep disorder...IBS...watch him around razors, scissors, and gang members..." *(She looks up.)* Gang

members? *(Reads form.)* Blah, blah, blah... "to death in his sleep..."
blah, blah... "call me, Senator Whitfield, right away..."

COREY: Don't worry about it. I've known him since we were six years old. She just smothers him.

(Brooke enters through the front door.)

BROOKE: What did you do to him now, Corey?

COREY: Nothing. When you guys were inside the Empire State Building, someone threw a coin down from the top and it hit him right in the forehead.

BROOKE: A falling coin knocked him out?

MRS. ANANIAS: No, he was fine! Somewhere between the 34th and 35th floor, he felt his forehead and discovered a bump. He let out a half-scream and passed out.

BROOKE: Well, you should have at least told us what happened. It's a good thing we all knew the name of the hotel, or we'd be wandering the streets as we speak.

MRS. ANANIAS: I didn't have time to run around the inside of the Empire State Building looking for everyone. Brooke, go downstairs, tell them what happened, and get everyone to wait for me in the lobby.

(Brooke heads toward exit.)

BROOKE: You want me to call his mom?

MRS. ANANIAS/COREY: No!

(Brooke exits.)

MRS. ANANIAS: Is there a way to wake him up?

COREY: We could slap him around a little.

MRS. ANANIAS: Does that work?

COREY: No, but it always gives me a little thrill.

MRS. ANANIAS: You're not helping.

(Corey leans down into TJ's face.)

COREY: TJ! *(He shakes TJ, but there's nothing. He pushes on TJ's chest and the air in TJ's chest releases with a "hrumph.")* Oh, wow, that's

freaky. Let's do that again! *(He performs two quick thrusts. Two small "hrumphs" accompany them.)*

MRS. ANANIAS: Okay, stop playing.

COREY: Why? He would want to know he was actually entertaining, for once.

MRS. ANANIAS: Hey, look, he's smiling! I think he's coming around.

COREY: *(Looking closely.)* No, I'll tell you what it is... *(He reaches in and pulls out a vibrating cell phone from TJ's pocket.)* Little sicko usually puts this on "vibrate" and calls himself six times in a row.

MRS. ANANIAS: Wait, don't answer it. It's probably his... *(But it's too late.)*

COREY: Hello?

MRS. ANANIAS: ...mother.

(Corey hits himself in the head as he realizes his own mistake.)

COREY: Hello, Senator Whitfield.

MRS. ANANIAS: Unbelievable.

COREY: No, he's here, and he's fine. We're just eating dinner, and his...mouth is full of food...Well, okay. *(He moves the phone away from his mouth.)* TJ, your mom is on your phone and just wants to check to make sure we made it to the hotel all right...Oh really, yeah, um, okay. *(Into phone.)* Wow, he's really chewing, this could be a while. You know how it is with...taffy.

MRS. ANANIAS: No, don't say taffy!

COREY: *(Thrown off.)* Uh, no...I meant salad. He ate his dinner already...Because we all had to turn our phones off during the flight...Yeah, okay. *(He motions to Mrs. Ananias to lean in close. He puts the phone behind his back.)* Here, put the phone up to his mouth, but tell me what she's saying!

(Mrs. Ananias takes the phone and puts it next to TJ's mouth and puts her ear close to the earpiece.)

MRS. ANANIAS: *(Repeats Whitfield's questions to Corey in a stage whisper.)* Are you having a good time? *(Corey pushes on TJ's chest. "Hrumph!")* Did you take your afternoon pills? *(Repeat.)* Did you have to use your inhaler?

(Corey looks confused. He switches hand positions and chooses another part of TJ's chest and he shoves twice. It comes out similar to "huh-uh." Corey then grabs the phone back from Mrs. Ananias.)

COREY: *(Into phone.)* Okay, Senator, we have to go so we can get back before it gets dark... *(Menacingly.)* ...and the gangstas come out! Bye, bye! *(He slams the cover shut on the cell phone.)* Do not make me do that again!

(Mrs. Ananias sits on the chair.)

MRS. ANANIAS: Okay, I can't do this much longer.

COREY: I've done my part.

MRS. ANANIAS: What if he inhaled something that has a strong smell to it? Maybe the hotel has some smelling salts.

COREY: Smelling salts? What is he, a pregnant woman in 1802?

MRS. ANANIAS: *(Losing it.)* Do you want to help me, or fail my class right now?! Because I can get to a computer and make some quick changes!

(TJ starts to come to.)

COREY: All right, all right. Man, you're not very good in a crisis.

MRS. ANANIAS: Look! He's coming to.

TJ: What is with the yelling?

MRS. ANANIAS: TJ, are you okay?

(Brooke enters through the front entrance.)

TJ: I don't know. I probably have a bump.

MRS. ANANIAS: A penny dropped from 89 floors will do that.

BROOKE: *(Staring at TJ's forehead.)* Oh my gosh, look—you can see the outline of the penny. I think that's Abraham Lincoln forming right there. Huh, Lincoln really did have a big chin.

COREY: No, that's a zit.

BROOKE: Oh.

COREY: He doesn't wash his face, either.

TJ: Mrs. Ananias, you didn't call my mom, did you?

COREY: No, she called here.

(Mrs. Ananias puts the towel on TJ's forehead.)

TJ: You didn't tell her, did you?!? She'll make me go home! And she'll have you fired, Mrs. Ananias! She'll use her senatorial powers like a witch uses a hex!

MRS. ANANIAS: She can't fire me, TJ. She's in the senate—they have nothing to do with education.

COREY: We took care of it. Mrs. Ananias lied for you.

MRS. ANANIAS: Me? I had some help! *(Reassuring.)* TJ, why don't you go up to my room and lie down until the swelling goes away.

(TJ exits up the stairs as Gerry knocks at the front door and then pokes his head in.)

GERRY: Hello? Any nuts in the room?

MRS. ANANIAS: Excuse me?

GERRY: I'm sorry, are you Jenny Ananias? I'm Gerry Cooney, your tour guide for the week. You don't have any open cans of nuts or peanuts do you?

(Mrs. Ananias looks around.)

MRS. ANANIAS: Uh, I don't think so.

GERRY: Good, then I can come in.

(As Gerry walks in, they shake hands.)

MRS. ANANIAS: What a strange way to introduce yourself.

GERRY: That's fun, isn't it? It's a great conversation starter. I apologize, but I'm highly allergic to nuts. I can't even be in the same room as an open bag without taking the chance of swelling up, so I have to always check to be safe.

MRS. ANANIAS: Well, that's understandable.

GERRY: And that's why I carry my lifesaver here. *(He pulls out a strange looking pen.)*

MRS. ANANIAS: Is that an EpiPen?

GERRY: Sure is.

BROOKE: What does it do?

(Gerry gives a faux demonstration.)

GERRY: If I have a severe allergic reaction, someone just jams it into a fleshy part of my body and I'll be back to normal. *(He shows it to Brooke. To Mrs. Ananias.)* These aren't all the students, are they?

MRS. ANANIAS: Oh, no, just three. The rest are waiting downstairs in the lobby. I'm sorry. This is Brooke and Corey.

GERRY: My, they sure are making them big nowadays. *(To Corey.)* Linebacker?

COREY: Wrestling, actually.

BROOKE: You *were* on the wrestling team. Make sure you focus on the past tense, Corey.

COREY: Yeah, I used to be on the team. *(Glares at her.)* But it wasn't because I was tense! It's just that I didn't have the grades.

MRS. ANANIAS: But you're working on it, right?

BROOKE: He is, he really is. A 1.0 is just around the corner.

GERRY: It's "Corey"? That's interesting. That your first name?

COREY: Yes, sir.

GERRY: Aah, I remember the days when people named their kids "John" or "Michael" or "Robert." Now we have "Codys" and "Trevors" and "Dakotas." I wish parents would think about their children's future when they choose names.

MRS. ANANIAS: *(Embarrassed for him.)* We named our third child Corey.

GERRY: Oh. *(Pause. Changes subject.)* Well...I'm so sorry I couldn't meet you at two o'clock today. I had an audition.

BROOKE: You're an actor, too? What movies have you been in?

GERRY: Oh, a handful, a handful.

COREY: So why do you lead tours?

GERRY: I've been leading tours, between films, the year I started acting. You actually caught me at a good time. This is a very slow period for me.

BROOKE: Oh, Corey's familiar with that, but he calls it "high school."

COREY: When was the last time I told you to work on your comebacks?

BROOKE: Well, I think it was the night before I dumped you. Is it coming back to you?

(Mrs. Ananias separates Brooke and Corey.)

MRS. ANANIAS: You'll have to excuse them. They used to go together and have just recently ended things.

GERRY: Aah, to be a teenager again. *(Pause.)* Have you been able to see any of the city since you've arrived?

MRS. ANANIAS: We killed some time at the Empire State Building while we were waiting for you.

GERRY: I had planned on being here at three, but I got a bit lost coming from my movie audition with a major film and theatre director—whose name I'm not supposed to mention—who just happened to recently get his star on Hollywood's Walk of Fame.

MRS. ANANIAS: Where?

GERRY: On Hollywood Boulevard, between Cherokee and Hudson right between Pee Wee Herman and Elvira.

MRS. ANANIAS: No, I mean where did you get lost?

GERRY: Oh, somewhere around Broadway and 47th Street.

MRS. ANANIAS: *(Cautiously, slowly.)* Isn't that...Times Square?

GERRY: Um...well, yes it is, as a matter of fact... *(Uncomfortably.)* So, this is quite the room! They gave you the suites!

MRS. ANANIAS: Yeah, I thought that was strange, too. *(She takes it all in for the first time.)* Someone somewhere made a mistake, no doubt. Breakaway doesn't usually put the tour leaders in a suite, do they?

GERRY: Did you ask for one? Did you pay the tour company any upgrade fee?

MRS. ANANIAS: No, this is a free trip for me. *(Indicating the double doors up left.)* Is this a part of my room, too?

GERRY: It's an additional bedroom. Both rooms are a part of the suite. This is obviously their error, so I wouldn't say anything.

(Mrs. Ananias goes to the front doors and jiggles the handles.)

MRS. ANANIAS: I did notice the locks on the front doors aren't working. Earlier, we walked right in.

GERRY: Yes, I did the same. Well, you probably should say something...but then again, they may notice the room mistake and move you downstairs. There should be locks on your bedrooms upstairs.

MRS. ANANIAS: I guess I can worry about it later.

GERRY: Needless to say, it's a beautiful room in a fantastic hotel...a hotel that carries a rather seedy reputation.

BROOKE: Ooh, what's wrong with it?

GERRY: Some of the mid-town hotels still have to contend with...well, plenty of "riff-raff," I guess you could say.

MRS. ANANIAS: I thought Mayor Giuliani cleaned everything up.

GERRY: True, but patrons can still pick up a Yellow Pages and easily find a "date." And this hotel has proven to be popular for that sort of thing.

(Corey opens up the drawer under the table.)

BROOKE: What are you doing?

COREY: Looking for the Yellow Pages.

MRS. ANANIAS: *(To Gerry.)* Well, it's not like it's out in the open, right? People come and go out of here all the time.

GERRY: Well, the police are aware of the problem. In fact, several undercover stings have made the evening news over the last several years, and this hotel has seen quite a bit of coverage, I'm afraid.

MRS. ANANIAS: What are the chances that we'll run into that type of problem while we're here, right?

GERRY: You're going to have a fantastic time, I promise. But for now, we really should be off to dinner. We have reservations at Barrymore's at 5:30.

(Mrs. Ananias gets her bag and leafs through it. She pulls out an itinerary then puts the bag down on the couch.)

MRS. ANANIAS: Oh, I thought we were eating at Sardi's. The kids were so excited.

GERRY: Yes, I'm sorry about that, but they've recently added a peanut butter pie to their menu. Unacceptable.

MRS. ANANIAS: Okay. I'll need to stop in the lobby and get the others.

(They all start to exit but not before Mrs. Ananias grabs her cell phone out of her bag and takes it with her.)

GERRY: My roster says you have ten students total, correct?

MRS. ANANIAS: Yes, but only nine are here right now. We have a home-schooler in the community who joined us, but she signed up

late, so she had to take a different flight. We'll meet her downstairs tonight around seven.

GERRY: That's fantastic. *(He stops at the doorway and looks right down the hallway.)* Elevators...?

MRS. ANANIAS: *(Points down to the left.)* To the left.

(Gerry turns.)

GERRY: Oh, yes. I get turned around sometimes.

(They all exit, the door shutting behind them. A few quiet moments go by.)

TJ: *(As he walks down the stairs.)* Don't worry about me! I'll catch up with you downstairs...

(As he goes to open the front door, it swings inward on its own, and Tom and Nick walk in. Tom is holding onto a card key and Nick has a backpack on his shoulder. Both Tom and TJ raise their eyebrows at one another's presence. Nick looks on.)

TOM: I'm sorry. I thought the room was empty.

TJ: It is. I mean, they just left. I was just leaving, too.

TOM: *(Lies.)* Oh, well, I'm the...café manager from downstairs. I need to replace the room service menus. *(He goes to the bar and takes the menu.)*

TJ: It's not my room. It's my teacher's. She probably went downstairs to get everyone checked in.

TOM: Okay. This is one of our bellhops... *(Indicates Nick.)* ...Neil. Listen, I'd like to give her a...customer satisfaction survey.

TJ: You could just leave it on the bar. I'll make sure she sees it.

TOM: Great. I'll do just that. If you need anything, just dial "0" from your room phone and ask for the café. We're going to stay...and put mints on the pillows.

TJ: Okay, thank you.

(TJ exits. Tom and Nick move into the room. Nick sits on the couch and takes a paperback out from his back pocket. Tom immediately runs upstairs, presumably checking out the bedroom and bathroom.)

NICK: What was that all about? I thought we were just stopping by, Daddy.

TOM: *(As he comes back in.)* I don't get it. I reserved the room through Tuesday.

NICK: Daddy, can we go home?

(Tom checks the doors to the adjoining suite.)

TOM: Why you gotta always whine? Seeing it's your birthday, I let you pick wherever you wanna go, and yet you drag me to all the touristy places you've seen a hundred times.

NICK: I'm sorry, Daddy.

(Tom sees Mrs. Ananias's bag and starts to go through it. He finds the papers and scans them.)

TOM: They must be some tour group. Somebody screwed up the room assignments.

NICK: What are you looking for?

TOM: Nick, now that I don't have a lot of time, I'm gonna just spill it, okay? Tonight is your fifteenth birthday, and I do this with all you kids on your fifteenth birthday.

(Tom sits down next to Nick. Tom's mind is wandering elsewhere. Nick puts the book down.)

NICK: You're going to tell me how much you love me and explain why it's taken you so long to say it?

TOM: No. I only do that on eighteenth birthdays.

NICK: Or when you're drunk.

TOM: Exactly. Now, I'm just going to come out and say it. *(He takes a roll of tape from Nick's backpack.)* Nick, your daddy isn't really an astronaut. *(He takes out a gun.)*

NICK: You're not?

TOM: No.

(Nick thinks about this.)

NICK: You've never been to the space station?

TOM: No. I've never even been into space.

(Nick looks at his gun.)

NICK: Then where do you have the shootouts with the aliens?

(Tom unrolls the tape and uses a pocketknife to cut them into long pieces.)

TOM: Aah, Son, you have the looks of your mother and the brains of our ex-pool man.

NICK: Our pool man? Daddy, we've never had a pool.

TOM: That's what makes this so extra difficult. Nick, I don't have time for explanations tonight because this room was supposed to be empty until tomorrow night.

NICK: What are you then?

(Tom tapes the gun under the chair.)

TOM: You know those cop shows where some rich bad guy hires another bad guy to steal something valuable from another rich bad guy because the first guy is too much of a chicken to do it himself? And then the big, brave undercover policeman comes barging in, guns drawn, and arrests all the bad guys?

NICK: Yeah.

TOM: I'm the second bad guy.

NICK: You...you steal things? As a job?

TOM: It's called "booty hunting." I just simply take what doesn't belong to someone and I give it to someone else.

NICK: To whom it doesn't belong to.

TOM: Right.

NICK: So what are we doing here?

(Tom takes a hunting knife out of his boot and begins taping it to the back of the picture.)

TOM: I'm meeting the client here tomorrow night.

NICK: Then why are we here right now?

TOM: I set this meeting place up weeks ago. A good businessman gets the lay of the place ahead of time, just in case things don't go like expected. Like this didn't. We just need to get the rooms switched back, that's all.

NICK: So what did you steal?

TOM: You ever read in your history books about the duPont family?

NICK: The people who had their coin collection stolen way back when?

TOM: It was the late sixties, but so far, every piece has been recovered. Except one. Still missing up until three weeks ago was the 1866 no-motto silver dollar. It's worth more than 1.5 million bucks. And I found it.

NICK: What's it look like?

TOM: Like an old coin except this one has no motto like "In God We Trust" or anything like that. It has the year 1866 imprinted right on the front.

NICK: Oh, like the toy I got in my Fruit Loops.

TOM: Right. Like the— *(He stops.)* What toy? What coin? You found it?

NICK: Yeah, it fell out of the box of Fruit Loops this morning.

TOM: Not the Fruit Loops under my bed?

NICK: Well, it wasn't the Fruit Loops in the cereal cabinet.

TOM: We don't have Fruit Loops in the cereal cabinet!

NICK: I know. That's why I had to get the box under your bed! This wouldn't happen if you'd let me eat junk cereal...or have a soda once in awhile. Daddy, why can't I at least have a Sprite every—

TOM: Nick, I don't want— *(He takes a deep breath. Then, calmly.)* Son, what did you do with the coin?

NICK: I put it in my jeans pocket.

TOM: The ones you're wearing right now?

NICK: Yeah.

TOM: Give it to me.

(Nick takes a step back.)

NICK: Um, I can't.

TOM: Nick, I do not want to hit you right now, I swear I don't, so...just give me the coin. *(Pause.)* Why aren't you giving me the coin, Nick?

NICK: Because about an hour ago, I threw it off the Empire State Building.

TOM: You did *what*?

NICK: Don't worry, Daddy, it can't really kill someone!

TOM: Son of a—

NICK: No, don't blame Mommy for this, Daddy. It's all my fault.

TOM: Why didn't you throw it in a pond like normal kids your age!

NICK: Because if you throw it off a tall building, there's a better chance of your wish coming true.

TOM: You made...a wish...first?

NICK: Yes.

(Slowly and carefully, Tom approaches Nick.)

TOM: What did you wish for, Nick?

NICK: I can't tell you or the wish won't come true.

TOM: He'll kill me.

NICK: Who will?

TOM: Barney.

NICK: Who's Barney?

TOM: The client. The guy who has spent his life searching for and buying all the duPont coins the Feds haven't gotten to first. The guy who has already paid me a quarter of the money in advance. *(Approaches Nick again.)* The money I can't give back, well, because it's gone! Spent when I wrote one large check to the NASA program to send *you to space camp for the summer! Happy Birthday!*

NICK: You did? I can't believe this! That was the wish I made tonight when I threw the coin off the Empire State Building! I've been wanting to go to Space Camp for years. This is amazing. Wishes can come true! *(Tom takes one last look and lunges for Nick. Nick clumsily dodges and runs around the room. Tom leaps over the couch to chase after him.)* Now, Daddy, wait a minute! Maybe we can go back and find it!

(Nick keeps the couch between them during the next exchange.)

TOM: You think...we're going to find...a coin the size of a half dollar...on a street where a couple thousand people have just walked in the last hour?

NICK: Maybe you can just talk to Barney, and he can let you pay back the money in time. Or by payments!

TOM: Payments? *He's not MasterCard!* This is a very rich man. A man with connections. I'll be dead before I get the words out.

(Tom leaps at Nick once again but falls flat on the couch. Tom gives up. Tom sits up and composes himself.)

NICK: Maybe you can go into hiding like the people in the Witness Protection Program do.

TOM: I just told you, Nick, he's got enough money to where hiding you and the rest of our family won't help.

NICK: Oh, well, I won't be going anywhere. I have to go to Space Camp.

TOM: Nick—

NICK: But I imagine the security there is pretty tight, right? *(Pause.)* Wait, look who I'm asking...you've been with NASA for years, Daddy! Don't you think I'll be safe?

(Tom sits on the couch and stares off. Nick sits next to him.)

TOM: He probably knows already. Who am I kidding? He's been one step ahead of me the entire time. He probably already knows I've lost it.

(The front door begins to open.)

MRS. ANANIAS: *(Offstage.)* I'm sorry, I don't have any change. *(Tom grabs Nick and they run upstairs.)* I promise I'll get you before the week is over. Thank you, though! *(Tom and Nick exit just as the door opens and Mrs. Ananias enters, carrying two pieces of luggage. She's on her cell phone.)* This is a bad connection!...Okay, wait, that's better...No, don't put him on, Chris, no, don't—Hi, baby, how are you?...No, Mommy isn't hiding, honey, I went on an airplane, remember?...No, Corey, don't look under the bed, Mommy isn't there....Don't cry, Corey, Mommy will be— *(To herself.)* Oh great. *(Into phone.)* Chris, why did you put him on? Now he's all upset....He's stuck under the bed now? Chris, get him out...No, whatever you do, don't put him—Hi, Tristan, honey, are you having fun with Daddy?...She did? Okay, well, put Daddy back on...No, Buddy, I can't talk to Heather right now...No, don't put her on either—Heather, honey, hi....Are you taking care of your dad?...Yes, I remember—a giant Statue of Liberty—I won't forget...Heather, put your dad back on, okay?...All right, I'll see you in a few days, love you...It's right where I showed you on the second shelf. You can use the Children's Advil or Tylenol...Oh, it's for you? Well, then just triple the dose. I hope you feel better... *(Jesse pokes her head through the door as Mrs. Ananias continues to*

search for a better connection.) You're breaking up again!...Chris?...Okay, now I hear you...Well, listen, I have to go anyway, but I love you...Chris? This is frustrating...Okay, I'll talk to you later!...Bye. *(She hangs up.)* Sorry about that. What's up? Come in.

(Jesse enters.)

JESSE: Mrs. Ananias, do you have a Xanax?

MRS. ANANIAS: No, I don't. I mean, I don't think so. What's a Xanax?

JESSE: It's just a pill my mom gives me sometimes.

MRS. ANANIAS: Oh, you mean a Zantac?

JESSE: No. *(She brightens.)* Oh, but do you have one of those?

MRS. ANANIAS: No, I don't, but then again, I don't have stomach problems. What's the matter? Are you sick?

JESSE: No, not really. It's more of a nervous thing.

MRS. ANANIAS: Jesse, your parents made you come on this trip, didn't they?

JESSE: They didn't even ask if I wanted to go. They thought it would be good for me.

MRS. ANANIAS: Then why don't you enjoy yourself?

JESSE: I don't know, I mean, I don't really know anyone—

MRS. ANANIAS: Why don't you hang out with Brooke since you two are in the same room?

JESSE: She's not really my type.

MRS. ANANIAS: No one is saying you have to date her. But you've got to try, Jesse. Trust me, people get really close to each other on trips like this.

JESSE: So I can't even have a small Risperdal?

MRS. ANANIAS: Not yet. Give it a couple days. One at least.

JESSE: Okay. *(She turns to go.)* Oh, and though this probably isn't the best way to start up a friendship, I should let you know that Brooke and Corey are fighting in the hallway outside our room, and when I left, she had a fistful of his hair in her hands.

MRS. ANANIAS: He's young. It'll grow back.

JESSE: It was from his chest.

(TJ and Corey knock at the open door and then come in.)

COREY: Mrs. Ananias, look what TJ found.

MRS. ANANIAS: I thought you and Brooke were fighting.

COREY: Not anymore. I managed to pull out a little of her hair and showed her the color of her roots. She ran into the room screaming.

MRS. ANANIAS: This has got to stop now, Corey. I can't afford any drama right now.

(TJ holds up the 1866 duPont coin.)

TJ: Hey, Mrs. Ananias, look what I found! It's the coin that hit me in the head!

MRS. ANANIAS: How do you know? *(She looks at it.)* Oh my gosh, this says 1866.

(Tom's face appears from the hallway upstairs...for a moment or two.)

TJ: Do you think it's a fake?

MRS. ANANIAS: I have no idea. It doesn't feel or look like a reprint. But I don't know anything about coins. How's the bump?

TJ: *(Shows her.)* Look, an exact replica of the coin is forever imprinted on my head.

(Brooke enters. She's wearing a baseball hat.)

BROOKE: Mrs. Ananias, can I talk to you about my room... *(She sees Jesse.)* ...location? See, it's one floor above the café and the food smell is coming through the vents.

JESSE: That's true.

BROOKE: *(Indicates coin.)* What's that?

TJ: It's the coin that hit me on the head.

BROOKE: Did you go back and find it? *(She grabs it and begins to examine it.)*

TJ: No, I found it when I changed my clothes.

COREY: *(Big smile.)* It bounced off his head and went down the front of his pants.

BROOKE: *(Quietly.)* It did what?

(Corey leans over to her.)

COREY: *(Whispers.)* And he's not wearing any underwear.
(She freezes as TJ takes the coin and puts it in his pocket.)

BROOKE: Oh...gross...

TJ: I'll have my mom have someone look at it when we get back.

(Gerry enters.)

GERRY: I am so sorry, but I'm going to have to drop you off at the restaurant and then leave. I just got an audition call!

MRS. ANANIAS: That's all right.

BROOKE: What kind of an audition? A movie?

GERRY: No, it's an Off-Broadway piece: "Drink it Up: A Jonestown Musical Adventure." So I'll walk you over. I'll just need to grab a map in the lobby downstairs.

MRS. ANANIAS: Is your audition far? *(She grabs the bag she left on the bed.)*

GERRY: No, it's for the restaurant. I haven't been to Barrymore's in ages.

MRS. ANANIAS: Isn't it just on 46th?

GERRY: Oh good. You know. You can be in charge of the map then.

(They exit out the front entrance. A moment goes by before Tom and Nick carefully walk back downstairs.)

TOM: Okay, all is not lost, all is not lost.

NICK: Daddy, just go down there and grab it.

TOM: I need more than the coin. I need to get them out of the room by tomorrow night. This is going to take some planning.

NICK: Well, you could work on getting the coin back, and I could go find this Barney guy and stall him. You have a picture of him?

TOM: I've never seen him. No one has.

NICK: Then how did he hire you?

TOM: Over an untraceable phone, I imagine. None of his agents have ever seen Barney.

NICK: Then how will I know it's him?

TOM: They call him Barney because he wears all purple—complete with a purple ski mask. I'll let you know what I need when I need it. For now, we need to focus on getting the coin from that kid and

getting the room checked back out to me. For that, we're gonna need a distraction.

NICK: You can't let that one kid see us. He thinks you're the head chef and I'm a bellhop.

TOM: We'll keep out of sight until I can come up with a plan. Come on. We're going to Barrymore's.

NICK: Dinner in the city? Wow! *(As they walk out the front door.)*
Daddy, do you think—since we never eat out in the city—do you think tonight I could have a Coke?

(Blackout.)

Scene 2

(AT RISE: About two hours later. Mrs. Ananias enters through the front entrance. She's on her phone.)

MRS. ANANIAS: *(Into phone.)* Again, honey, I can barely hear you — you're cutting in and out again! Who? Corey?...Well, does he feel hot?...What did the temperature say?...What do you mean?...It's simple. It's digital. You just put it in his ear and click the button; the temperature will come right out...No, Chris, his ear! You didn't...Oh my gosh, you did! Chris, no one takes temperatures that way anymore!...Chris, don't put him on, Chris, don't—Hi, Corey, honey, how are you?...You're sick? I'm sorry, baby, but Daddy will take care of you...Tell Daddy to— *(There is a knock on the double doors up left. Mrs. Ananias goes to the doors and opens one. TJ and Corey saunter in.)* Chris, let me call you back, okay? Just get him started on the Advil, and I'll call you back...All right, bye. *(She hangs up her phone and puts it back in her bag. To Corey and TJ.)* I can't believe you guys talked them into giving you that bedroom.

TJ: You managed to talk them into letting you stay in here.

MRS. ANANIAS: The hotel is booked. They had to let me stay in here. *(Pause.)* So, what did you guys think of that casting director?

(Corey holds his hand to his head and squints in mild pain.)

COREY: What about him?

MRS. ANANIAS: I don't know — I don't think I trust him. It was like he went into that restaurant looking for someone to sign up.

TJ: Well, what exactly did he say to you?

MRS. ANANIAS: You didn't see him?

TJ: No, I was in the bathroom.

COREY: Hiding in the stalls talking to your mother?

TJ: For your information, I have ignored every one of my mother's calls since I've gotten here.

MRS. ANANIAS: What did you think, Corey?

(Corey immediately squints his eyes.)

COREY: I couldn't tell. When I get headaches this bad I get blind spots.

TJ: Brooke's all excited. She's been in the city less than 12 hours, and she already has a meeting with a casting director. What are the chances?

(Mrs. Ananias notices Corey.)

MRS. ANANIAS: Corey, what's wrong with you?

COREY: I told you—I have a headache; I might be getting the flu. I hope I don't have to stay behind tomorrow.

MRS. ANANIAS: How weird...my Corey is sick, too. Oh, what am I doing? I should be at home with him. I'm a terrible mother.

COREY: I think I have a fever and I feel all cold.

MRS. ANANIAS: *(She feels his forehead.)* You don't feel warm. *(Her room phone rings and she answers it.)* Hello?...Yes, this is she...Who?...Oh, yes, she's with us...Okay, I'll be right down, just tell her to wait in the lobby...Yes, thank you. *(She hangs up and begins to exit SR.)* That's Danette, the home-school girl I told you about. She's downstairs. I'll be right back. Why don't you two wait here, and I'll bring her here and introduce all of you. You should call Brooke and a few of the others and have them come up to meet her.

TJ: Okay. *(She exits. Corey stops wincing and holding his head. He flops down on the couch and pulls a newspaper out of his jacket. TJ sits on the arm of the couch.)* Nice performance. You're sure you're passing drama?

COREY: A "D-" is still passing. *(Brooke walks in, carrying a fashion magazine.)* Watch. *(He moans and acts the part.)* Brooke, will you check my forehead and see if I have a fever?

BROOKE: No, that would mean I'd have to touch you.

COREY: *(No longer faking it.)* Why don't you write down these "snappy" one-liners and try them out on a friend first? You're terrible. What are you doing up here anyway?

BROOKE: I needed to ditch Mrs. Munster for a few minutes.

TJ: *(To Corey.)* Speaking of ditching, why do you want to skip the tour tomorrow?

COREY: I'm going to a Yankee game. Why don't you go with me, TJ?

TJ: You know I don't like football. Besides, I'd get caught. I'm no good at lying.

COREY: Where have I heard that before? It has nothing to do with lying. You just refuse to take risks. *(He sits up.)* You know, if you weren't such a mama's boy, you might not be sick all the time and start getting a life. For crap's sake, you're 16 years old, and you haven't even had a girlfriend. And it's baseball, you Fauntleroy.

TJ: What does having a girlfriend have to do with taking risks? *(Pause.)* And I'm not a mama's boy. *(Pause.)* She'd kill me if I called her anything but "Mother."

COREY: You know, no matter what the statistics may say, girls really don't like the metro-sexual touchy-feely guy. When it all comes down to it, a girl wants a manly athlete who would scale a cliff just to retrieve her purse.

TJ: Okay, it's true. My feet have never run around the bases, and these hands have never held a football, but, hey, I've had girlfriends before, and in my opinion, girls would rather have a well-read, mature man.

BROOKE: Would you like a feminine perspective on this?

COREY: Didn't I just get one?

BROOKE: A guy doesn't have to be an athlete to prove he's a man, TJ. But Corey is right – girls like a guy with at least an adventurous spirit.

(The room phone rings. They stare at it.)

TJ: Should we answer it?

COREY: I'll do it. I wouldn't want you taking any unnecessary risks. *(He answers the phone.)* Hello...No, she's not here right now. Can I take a message?...This is Corey...I'm one of her students. Why?...Yeah, okay, Mr. Schroeder, I'll tell her you called. Bye. *(He hangs up.)*

TJ: Who's Schroeder?

COREY: Just said James Schroeder would call her back in ten minutes.

TJ: I wonder if it's assistant superintendent Mr. Schroeder.

COREY: Again, he didn't say.

BROOKE: That probably wasn't a good idea, answering the phone. I mean, if it really was *that* Mr. Schroeder.

COREY: So what?

BROOKE: There's a student in a teacher's hotel room. It doesn't look good.

COREY: And neither do you in that dress, but I keep my comments to myself.

TJ: But we all know she can't afford another scandal this year...

(Mrs. Ananias enters. Excited, Danette, with video camera in hand, follows. On Danette's left temple is a Band-Aid. From the get go, she talks a mile-a-minute with the enthusiasm of a jackrabbit on caffeine.)

MRS. ANANIAS: I just wanted you to meet some of the others first—

DANETTE: Oh, my gosh—look at this room! *(She goes to the window and starts filming.)* Wow, it's like your own personal observation deck!

MRS. ANANIAS: Isn't that something? The upstairs window over my bed actually gives a much broader view.

DANETTE: Seriously?

MRS. ANANIAS: *(Introduces.)* Everyone, this is Danette. This is Corey, Brooke and TJ.

(Danette puts the camera down and extends her hand.)

DANETTE: Hi! I'm so sorry I couldn't fly with all of you! *(She walks over to Brooke.)* Are you my roommate?

MRS. ANANIAS: No, but you are next door to her. *(Introduces.)* And Jesse.

DANETTE: Do you know what day we're seeing the Statue of Liberty?

MRS. ANANIAS: I think it's on the schedule for Wednesday.

DANETTE: Oh good. I've been doing a lot of reading on the subject, but I want to still make sure I take the official tour and maybe climb to the top. Will we have time to climb up?

MRS. ANANIAS: Actually, I think the top portion is closed to the public.

DANETTE: Oh, darn it. But still—just to be able to see it! Do you know that the Statue isn't really green, but that the whole thing is made of copper? See, the whole thing goes green if it isn't washed on a regular basis.

COREY: Well, after all it is French.

DANETTE: Oh my gosh, that's funny. That's really funny! *(To Mrs. Ananias.)* Do you mind if I go upstairs and check out the view from up there? I've got to get this all on film.

MRS. ANANIAS: Aah, sure, why not? I'll take you up.

(Danette goes up to the bedroom. Mrs. Ananias follows. There is silence for a moment.)

BROOKE: *(To Corey.)* You disgust me.

COREY: Me? What did I do?

BROOKE: If you're going to come on to someone else, could you at least do it when I'm not around? Pig! *(She throws herself down on the chair.)*

COREY: Are you kidding me right now?

TJ: Yeah, man, why do you do it?

COREY: Do what? I think I spoke a total of four words to her!

TJ: You can have basically any girl you want. Why do you have to try and take everyone who's interested in me?

BROOKE: Yeah, for once he's— You?

TJ: You didn't notice the way she responded to me just now?

COREY: Responded? What is she, your dog? *(Calls.)* "Here, Danette. Here, girl!"

(Danette, still videoing everything, enters with Mrs. Ananias.)

DANETTE: Yes?

MRS. ANANIAS: I have your key here, Danette. Brooke, why don't you go downstairs and show Danette her room and introduce her to Michelle so I can unpack.

BROOKE: She's rooming with Michelle?

MRS. ANANIAS: Yes.

BROOKE: Did you bring deodorant?

DANETTE: Yes, I did.

BROOKE: Good, you can give some to Michelle.

TJ: I'll take her to her room.

COREY: *(Looks directly at Brooke.)* Wait, TJ, I'll go, too.

BROOKE: Nice. Real nice.

(Jesse walks in.)

MRS. ANANIAS: Oh, Jesse. This is Danette.

JESSE: Hi. Uh, Brooke, a Mr. Simon just called.

BROOKE: The casting director?

JESSE: He wants to know if he can meet with you and Mrs. Ananias tomorrow at 8 p.m.

BROOKE: You're going to let me, aren't you, Mrs. Ananias?

MRS. ANANIAS: I'm going to need to call him first, Brooke. Let me just get through tonight, and tomorrow we'll deal with a possible meeting. Boys, take Danette and then get right back up here because I want to go over tomorrow's schedule so you guys can then spread the word to everyone else.

COREY: Yeah, about that, though...Mrs. Ananias, I'm really starting to feel worse.

MRS. ANANIAS: Corey, I have a whole bunch of different over-the-counter medications and some immune boosters you can try, but I need to unpack first. Let's meet up here for ten minutes, and then I'll gather everything together and make you up a special Ananias medicinal package, okay? I can't afford to have you sick. I need all your help dealing with the freshmen tomorrow.

COREY: Alrighty then.

(Corey, TJ, and Danette exit out the front door.)

MRS. ANANIAS: Okay, you two can just hang out, and I'll go get unpacked. Brooke, I promise we'll talk about the casting director.

(Mrs. Ananias exits upstairs and Brooke flounces on the couch.)

JESSE: Why did he go off with the new girl like that?

BROOKE: It just makes it easier. This time Tuesday I could have a job in New York, and I wouldn't have to see him again anyway.

JESSE: It's sad. You guys have been such good friends for so long.

BROOKE: Since second grade, actually. Don't you remember, he transferred in late during the year? He didn't have any friends for the longest time until I was nice to him. *(Pause.)* He didn't have a snack, and I gave him my fruit cup. Creep never even replaced it. *(Pause.)* Me, him, and TJ have been best friends ever since.

JESSE: Well, when did you...you know, start having feelings for him?

BROOKE: I'm not sure I ever did. About six months ago, he started "looking" at me with this weird...glazed over, hormonal look. You know the look, right?

JESSE: My brother gave some girl that look last year. Or at least we thought that until we found out he'd had a Vicodin and energy drink earlier that morning.

BROOKE: Well, the next thing I know, he was pawing all over me in Ms. Peters' cooking class. I totally let him make a pass at me while standing there cooking chipped beef on toast. I should never have let it go that far.

JESSE: I remember that day, actually.

BROOKE: You were in Ms. Peters' 5th period last semester?

JESSE: Yeah. I was at the table next to you.

BROOKE: Oh. *(Pause. Brooke thinks.)* Jesse, here's an idea. Why don't you come with us tomorrow night and ask if you could interview too? It couldn't hurt. Can you imagine what it would do to your self-esteem if you landed a job on Broadway your second day in New York?

JESSE: Oh, I don't think so.

BROOKE: No, you probably couldn't. I mean, not by yourself. I'll help you. Ooh, ooh—it'll be like that one movie where they take the nerd and fix her up, and she becomes the prom queen.

JESSE: Yeah, but then they dump pig's blood all over her.

BROOKE: That's true, but in your case, you could probably use the color. *(She goes to her and gives her a good "once over.")* This is going to be fun. Let's see...first, if you want to make a good impression, you've got to do something about your... *(Trying to focus on one thing.)* ...about your—

JESSE: About what?

BROOKE: Well, for starters, we can work on your makeup. First, we'll get all this black Wednesday Adams makeup from under your eyes. *(She takes a tissue and starts to vigorously wipe under her eyes.)* People won't take you seriously if you have these gothic black circles.

JESSE: I'm not wearing makeup.

BROOKE: Oh. *(Pause.)* You know what? Let's start with your hair.

JESSE: What's wrong with my hair?

BROOKE: Your hair... *(Thinks.)* ...your hair...Jesse, I'm an honest person. Sometimes brutally. Do you want me to be honest?

JESSE: Sure.

BROOKE: Okay, so don't get offended, but there's enough grease in your hair to fry my family a taco dinner.

JESSE: Oh. *(Pause as she examines her hair.)* I wash it regularly.

BROOKE: With Pennzoil or the generic? No, you know what, I didn't mean that. I tell you what... *(She walks over and picks up the magazine she had brought in. She looks at the back, but doesn't show it to Jesse.)* ...here's a picture of a girl about our age. Her makeup's light enough to look natural. Her hair is simple yet fun. Look at her clothes...she's proud of what she's wearing. *(Throwing the magazine on the couch.)* You just look through this kind of stuff and take some makeup and just copy it. That's basically what everyone else is doing. *(A thought.)* Here, let's do this...let's go to our room and see what extra makeup I've got. You can experiment tomorrow.

(They exit as Gerry enters, carrying a "Broadway Tonight" magazine.)

GERRY: Hello, girls. Is Mrs. Ananias around?

BROOKE: *(Yells off.)* Mrs. Ananias, Gerry's here. We'll be right back!

(They exit and Mrs. Ananias enters from the bedroom.)

GERRY: Before I left, I just wanted to I drop off an article about the show we're seeing Thursday night. It made the cover page of "Broadway Tonight."

MRS. ANANIAS: *(Looks at the magazine cover.)* Ooh, is this it? "City Dreamscape"?

GERRY: Yes.

MRS. ANANIAS: *(Reads.)* "[Kyra Sedgwick] discovers playing a heroin-addicted streetwalker is no Pretty Woman." I'm taking my students to see a musical about a prostitute? *[Or insert the name of another actress.]*

GERRY: No, no, no—just the first half. By act two she moves her way up to CEO of The Boys and Girls Club of America.

MRS. ANANIAS: *(Looking at magazine.)* Is that [Kyra Sedgwick]? I didn't even recognize her. Wow, she looks awful!

GERRY: Life on the streets tends to do that to a person. *(He points at the magazine.)* Wonderful makeup job they did on her, isn't it?

(Mrs. Ananias's cell phone rings, and she sets the magazine on top of the one Brooke left behind.)

MRS. ANANIAS: Oh, I need to get this.

GERRY: That's fine. Can we meet downstairs when you're done?

The night manager wants to go over the hotel rules with you so you can pass that information on to your students.

MRS. ANANIAS: Sure, no problem. I'll meet you down there in five minutes or so. *(He waves at her and exits as she answers her cell.)*

Hello?...Hi, honey...No, we just got back from dinner. I'm trying to unpack and do all this stuff. How is he by now? *(Her hotel phone rings.)* Chris, don't put him on. Chris, don't—Hi Corey, how are you feeling now? Corey, honey, hold on a second, okay? *(She picks up the hotel phone.)*

Hello, whoever this is, can you hang on a second? *(Into the cell phone.)* Corey, I tell you what, why don't you go get into my bed? You do that, and you'll probably feel a lot better tomorrow...Okay, I have to go. I'll talk to you in a while, sweetheart. *(She hangs up the cell and picks up the hotel phone.)* Hello, sorry about that...This is Jenny Ananias— *(Pause.)* Hello?...Hello? *(She hangs up. Jesse enters. To Jesse.)* Where'd Brooke go?

JESSE: To spy on Corey and Danette. I just came up to get Brooke's magazine. She thinks I should copy down some of the model's— *(She grabs the "Broadway Tonight" magazine and studies it carefully. She's confused.)* Is she serious?

(Mrs. Ananias goes through the tour paperwork.)

MRS. ANANIAS: You feeling better about things?

JESSE: Much better, thank you, but now I'm nervous about tomorrow. Do you have anything that will help me sleep?

(Mrs. Ananias' cell phone rings.)

MRS. ANANIAS: Oh, brother, not again. *(She answers the phone.)*

Hello?...Chris?...Hang on, I can barely hear you!

JESSE: An Ambien or a Lunesta maybe?

(Mrs. Ananias grabs her purse and pulls out a bottle of Excedrin PM.)

MRS. ANANIAS: *(Into phone.)* What? Chris, let me call you back from the hotel phone!

(Mrs. Ananias hangs up as her hotel phone rings. Corey enters. Mrs. Ananias picks up the phone.)

COREY: Mrs. Ananias—

MRS. ANANIAS: No, now Corey, I told you get into bed now! I'll bring you my special medicine in a few minutes. Jesse, here, take two of these. They'll knock you right out.

JESSE: *(Whispers.)* Thank you!

COREY: *(To Jesse.)* Did TJ and Danette come in here?

JESSE: Haven't seen them. I'll help you look if you want.

(Corey shrugs his shoulders and then they exit.)

MRS. ANANIAS: *(Into phone.)* This is Jenny Ananias...Hello...Hello? *(Frustrated she slams the phone down.)* When I find out who is screwing around— *(The hotel phone rings again. She quickly picks it up.)* What do you want?!?...Oh, Gerry, hi, did you just call?...Oh, you didn't? What's the problem?...Oh, okay, I'm coming right now. I'll be right there. *(She hangs up the phone and rushes out, bumping into TJ and Danette.)* TJ, I have to go meet the night manager and Gerry really fast. Corey was looking for you guys.

TJ: Are we still meeting here?

MRS. ANANIAS: Yes, except Corey. Make sure he stays in bed, but get the others up here and stay here! Don't keep going in and out. I'll be back in 15 minutes.

(Mrs. Ananias exits out the front doors. Long awkward pause.)

DANETTE: Did I thank you for carrying my luggage to my room?

TJ: You did. You're welcome.

DANETTE: I don't have a lot of money for tipping.

TJ: Oh, well, I don't need a tip.

DANETTE: No, I mean, I meant if the bellboy would have—

TJ: Oh! No, I was—well, I'm glad—it was no big...

(Uncomfortable moment.)

DANETTE: And I have never really traveled anywhere before. That explains the five suitcases. You didn't hurt your back, did you?

TJ: No.

DANETTE: I guess with all your football training and weightlifting, my suitcases aren't probably that much.

TJ: Yeah, that does help.

DANETTE: Although you're sort of tall and thin for a football player. What position do you play?

TJ: (*Lies.*) Uh...halfback...end. Sometimes I'm a tight, uh, linebacker. I quit the team at the end of the season, though.

DANETTE: Well, I can imagine your time is stretched with basketball and hockey.

TJ: And the rock-climbing.

DANETTE: You're so active—I'm jealous.

TJ: You probably don't get to do a lot of sports, huh?

DANETTE: Oh, no, I could play on city teams. If I wanted.

TJ: What's it like being home-schooled?

DANETTE: It's not like what everybody thinks, that's for sure. I have classes just like you do, deadlines, projects... (*Awkward pause.*) For my health class, my mom rented one of those computer babies that, you know, you get graded on for how well you take care of it.

TJ: Oh yeah, I did that in the 10th grade! Mine cried for five nights in a row. It was awful.

DANETTE: I know, it's the worst. Mine didn't cry in the night, but it cried for over an hour one day when I was taking a test.

TJ: I know it sounds bad, but it makes you want to just...hit it or shake it until it stops.

DANETTE: Yeah. (*Pause.*) But you lose points for that.

TJ: (*Regretfully.*) Yeah. (*Awkward pause.*) Don't you miss going to school with other people?

DANETTE: Not really. I am glad I don't have to deal with all the pressures that come with going to a regular high school, though.

TJ: I agree with you there. Our high school is huge. You wouldn't believe all the stress everyone puts on you to be like everyone else. It's hard to just be yourself, you know.

DANETTE: I tell you, I am kind of disappointed that I will never be asked to smoke. Not that I would or anything, but it would be nice to have the chance to say "no." (*Pause.*) Or to occasionally pass some gas in a classroom full of students so at least one of them

could go, "Ehweee." I'd like that. *(She sighs.)* Oh well, everyone has to make sacrifices.

(Mrs. Ananias enters.)

MRS. ANANIAS: Where's everyone else?

TJ: I thought you were going to meet with Gerry.

MRS. ANANIAS: We can't find him. We think he went to the wrong hotel. Did you call everyone?

TJ: No, not yet.

MRS. ANANIAS: Okay, forget about it. It's too late anyhow. You guys go to your rooms, and I'll come around and give you tomorrow's plans.

DANETTE: It was nice meeting you, Mrs. Ananias.

MRS. ANANIAS: You too, Danette. We're all really glad you joined us. TJ, walk her to her room, okay?

TJ: *(Excited.)* Whatever you say!

(TJ and Danette exit. Mrs. Ananias goes over to the bar and pours a Coke as her cell phone rings again. She answers it.)

MRS. ANANIAS: Hello...Who?...Mr. Schroeder?...From the district?...Yes, this is Jenny Ananias...I vaguely know who you are. How'd you get this number?...No, I don't mind that you have it. I was just— Oh, that was you who kept calling here earlier?...Well, why didn't you say anything?...Yes, you can certainly thank the Senator for passing on my number.

(Corey enters from his room.)

MRS. ANANIAS: Hold on, Mr. Schroeder. *(To Corey.)* Corey, how many times do I need to tell you to get into bed?

COREY: I completely forgot to tell you earlier, A Mr. —

MRS. ANANIAS: I'm on an important phone call, Corey. Now save your energy...I need you at your best! *(He exits into his room and she goes back to her phone conversation.)* Excuse me? Oh, that was a student...A student...What?...I'm sorry, sir, we're having a bad connection...You're coming where?...To the city?...Well, what for?...I can't understand you... *(She moves frantically around the room trying to get a better connection. Throughout, she tries moving by*

Above the bitter cafe

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the window, opening the door, etc. She finally stands up on the couch.)
Okay, I can hear you now, repeat what you said...You're coming to
New York...You're cutting out again... *(She goes white, and slaps her*
hand against her forehead.) Okay, no you're mistaken...I have a son
named Corey, too, and I— No, wait...wait!

(Blackout.)

ACT II

Scene 1

(AT RISE: The next evening, 5 p.m. Corey and TJ are reading the "New York Times." Corey is sitting on the chair and TJ is on the couch.)

TJ: Seriously, Corey, what are you going to do? You're partly responsible for this whole mess.

COREY: Just chill, will you? Have you ever met Mr. Schroeder?

TJ: No.

COREY: I had a meeting with him once at the district office when I needed a waiver to play baseball.

TJ: Is that the guy you bought off with soda or something?

COREY: All it took was two six-packs of Diet Coke, and I was starting pitcher three days later. See, those district people live in their little mansions in Orange County and have all the money they know what to do with, but you wave a little coffee or caffeinated soda in front of their face, and you have them in the palm of your hand.

TJ: So he's going to walk in here, and you're going to just hand him a couple six-packs? And you think that's going to work?

COREY: It's a little more complicated than that.

TJ: Well, you're on your own tonight. I have something else going on. Actually, I could use your advice. I... *(Mrs. Ananias enters from SR, cell phone in hand.)* ...I'll go into detail later. *(To Mrs. Ananias.)* Did you get a connection downstairs?

MRS. ANANIAS: No, I'm turning the whole thing off. I'll have to use my room phone and spend the dollar per minute.

MRS. ANANIAS: Hey, what are you guys doing in here?

COREY: We're reading the paper.

MRS. ANANIAS: No, I mean what are you doing in my room?

COREY: Everyone elected us to find out what we're doing tomorrow.

MRS. ANANIAS: I've got the assistant superintendent thinking we're having an affair, and you guys are in my room. No way. Everybody out.

COREY: Come on, it's not like I'm in your bed anymore.

MRS. ANANIAS: *(Shouts.)* You were never in my bed!

COREY: I was just joking! Relax.

MRS. ANANIAS: I can't believe this is happening. *(She sits down and puts her head in her hands.)* I imagine this is what I deserve—I should be at home being a good mother removing ear thermometers from my child's little bottom.

TJ: You couldn't get a hold of anyone?

MRS. ANANIAS: Everybody at the district is on vacation, and I have no idea how to get a hold of Mr. Schroeder. No, this is it—this is what the end must look like.

COREY: Really? Is there a thermometer dangling from it?

MRS. ANANIAS: I'm so glad you are getting laughs out of this whole situation.

COREY: Look, it's not the end, okay? All I have to do is explain it.

TJ: So Mr. Schroeder is traveling all the way to New York just to find out what's going on?

MRS. ANANIAS: No, he was on his way to Connecticut for a vacation with his family when he kept calling. Apparently your mother knew he was going and asked him to call and check up on us while we were gone.

TJ: She always manages to get involved.

MRS. ANANIAS: Look, it doesn't matter who explains what. You all know the ice is already thin.

TJ: Maybe you should cancel the appointment with the casting director.

MRS. ANANIAS: We have an appointment? For when?

TJ: Well, for tonight.

MRS. ANANIAS: Tonight? He made the appointment without calling me first?

TJ: No, Brooke made it. She tried calling you this morning before we left for SoHo, but Corey told everyone you were staying in today and Gerry was taking us on the tour. We weren't supposed to bug you about anything.

COREY: I told them you had a headache and you would be in bed all day. *(Pause.)* Without me.

MRS. ANANIAS: You'd better—

TJ: The guy kept calling Brooke's cell, so she set it up for tonight. Get this—they're auditioning for "Jurassic Park: The Stage Musical." You're meeting with him and the director here at eight o'clock.

MRS. ANANIAS: Here? In this room? With Schroeder showing up who knows when? *(Resigned.)* Oh, whatever...it doesn't matter anyway. *(Pause.)* Did everyone have a good time in SoHo?

TJ: We never made it.

MRS. ANANIAS: Gerry didn't show? He promised me he would take care of everything today!

TJ: No, he showed up, we just never made it to SoHo. He got us on the wrong train, and then we got off at the wrong stop.

MRS. ANANIAS: You don't take the train to SoHo, you take the subway! Where did you end up?

COREY: Yonkers.

MRS. ANANIAS: You are kidding me?! Oh, forget it, I don't want to hear it. It's just making my head worse.

(Corey leans over.)

COREY: You want some of my special medicine?

MRS. ANANIAS: Corey! You want to be caught saying that when he walks in here?

COREY: All right, everyone needs to calm down. I've already figured this whole thing out, and I know what we're going to do. *(He goes back to his paper.)*

MRS. ANANIAS: And?!

COREY: Well, how would he like it if he were falsely accused of something that had never happened in the first place? Remember how Gerry was saying this place is a hotbed for single men and a phone book? What if we arranged it so—?

MRS. ANANIAS: You want to blackmail him? You want me to commit a federal crime?

COREY: What? You're above all this, Mrs. Robinson?

TJ: I say you guys just sit down with him and explain the whole thing. In this case, honesty really is the best policy.

COREY: You can say that with a straight face? "Honesty is the best policy"?

(Brooke and Jesse enter from SR.)

TJ: *(To Brooke.)* Wow, look at you!

BROOKE: You like?

TJ: What are you all dressed up for?

BROOKE: This is where I am meeting with the famous casting director who said I would look fabulous on a New York stage. Mrs. Ananias, I'm getting a nervous headache. Do you have any aspirin?

MRS. ANANIAS: Upstairs in my overnight bag.

COREY: Hey, Brooke, you've had a whole afternoon to work on your comebacks. How are they coming? Try something...anything. You can even resort to a good "yo mama" joke if you need to.

BROOKE: No, Corey, I think I'm above the middle school your-mom's-a-man-and-your-dad-is-jealous type of jokes. I'll be right back.

(She and Jesse exit upstairs.)

TJ: Ooh, she said your mom's a man!

COREY: Oh, that was funny! Very sneaky to just throw that in as you exit! *(Leans into TJ.)* All right, who told her about my parents?

MRS. ANANIAS: You know, Corey, you two are only making it more difficult for the both of you to move on. You might kid around a lot, but it's pretty obvious her breaking up with you has made you bitter.

TJ: She does know how to get his goat, that's for sure.

(Corey stands up.)

COREY: You told her about the goat?!?

MRS. ANANIAS: Why don't the two of you try re-establishing your friendship again?

COREY: You're not bringing that up again, are you?

MRS. ANANIAS: Well, how many times did I warn you not to blow a good thing? Take my eyes off you guys one second, and you're "making out" over chipped beef on toast.

COREY: Hey, things were fine until she broke up with me. In fact, she was always threatening to break up with me!

MRS. ANANIAS: Did you ever think she was trying to end things because she thought you guys made a mistake?

COREY: Who can tell what she was thinking. She became a totally different person once we started dating.

MRS. ANANIAS: Aren't you hearing anything that I'm saying?

TJ: Maybe we should get our focus back. What about Mr. Schroeder?

COREY: I still think we should go with my idea.

MRS. ANANIAS: We're not blackmailing the guy, I'll tell you that much. Bribing him with Coke is at least legal.

COREY: You know that story?

MRS. ANANIAS: Everybody in the district knows that story. (*Yells upstairs.*) Brooke! (*To Corey.*) We'll worry about all this when he gets here. For now, everyone needs to get to their rooms, and I guess I should check on everyone else to make sure they're in for the night. (*Brooke and Jesse walk downstairs.*) Brooke, was there any aspirin left?

BROOKE: I took the two, and Jesse took the last three.

MRS. ANANIAS: Okay, before he gets here, will you run down to the corner and grab a bottle? Excedrin, Advil, whatever.

BROOKE: Sure. I also need to find a Radio Shack while I'm out.

TJ: What do you need at Radio Shack?

BROOKE: A small boom box. I'm sure he'll want to see if we can sing and dance. I got our CDs when we were in New Rochelle this morning.

MRS. ANANIAS: What are you auditioning with?

BROOKE: (*Getting excited again.*) I'm starting with a dance number from "A Chorus Line" and then following it up with a vocal piece from "Hairspray: Big, Blonde, and Beautiful." I bought a long blonde wig to go with it. Jesse, while I'm gone, you should get ready.

JESSE: (*As she begins to loosen up.*) I got some new clothes for the audition while we were out today.

BROOKE: You did? Is that what you were doing when we were at lunch in Scarsdale?

MRS. ANANIAS: You were in Scarsdale?

BROOKE: Only for lunch. We got on the wrong train in White Plains.

JESSE: I'm going to get ready, and I'll meet you back here. Thanks for letting us meet with him, Mrs. Ananias! (*She exits SR.*)

COREY: Hey, can we come in and watch?

MRS. ANANIAS/BROOKE: No!

BROOKE: Corey, don't do anything that will mess up our chances, all right? For once can you not be yourself?

COREY: Hey, I wouldn't do that! I'm on your side! You get the job, and you'll be 3,000 miles away from me, right? I even put a stop to

Gerry earlier when he told me he was going to bust in on your audition.

BROOKE: He did not!

COREY: That was his plan until I told him he'd have to deal with me if he showed up tonight.

BROOKE: The guy has been in tons of shows and movies. He needs to back off and let us have a chance.

COREY: Don't worry, that'll be my job. I'll guard the front door and make sure he doesn't get near the place. *(Pause.)* I'll even control your music...or whatever you need.

BROOKE: *(Faint smile.)* Oh...thank you...I appreciate that. I owe you one.

(Corey looks at Mrs. Ananias.)

COREY: Well...you know...what are friends for?

BROOKE: *(Awkwardly.)* Right...well, I'd better leave if I'm going to make it back by eight. A bottle of something for a headache, right?

(Brooke starts to go through her purse for money. Mrs. Ananias grabs her purse and follows.)

MRS. ANANIAS: Here, I'll ride down with you and give you some money. I need to try and use my cell again. Boys, clean up after yourselves, and then get out of the room, please.

BROOKE: *(In her purse.)* Uh, oh.

MRS. ANANIAS: Now what?

BROOKE: It's nothing, but I have Gerry's EpiPen.

(Brooke shows it to them.)

MRS. ANANIAS: How'd you get that?

BROOKE: When he's with a group someone besides himself is supposed to carry it in case he has an attack.

MRS. ANANIAS: Well, I'm sure he'll show up tonight. *(To Corey and TJ.)* Don't forget about cleaning up after yourselves.

(Mrs. Ananias and Brooke exit right. Corey goes back to his paper as TJ cleans up.)

TJ: Listen, I want to do something nice for Danette tonight. And I'm not sure whether or not—

COREY: Jeesh, now what? You've already spent the entire day glued to her, buying her lunch, her subway card—

TJ: This is what I was planning...tonight when everyone is at the audition, I was either going to take her to this Italian restaurant in the Village for dinner or order room service and then wheel it up to the roof and have a special rooftop dinner for her.

COREY: On the roof? That is so weenie! How many times do I have to tell you—girls do not want a guy who gives her a sandwich on a roof of some hotel. Here, you want to impress her? Have her wait on the street and then scale off the roof with a rose in your mouth.

TJ: With a rose? I'm supposed to put a flower in my mouth? That's what you'd want, isn't it? You'd love to see me all stuffed up and sneezing all over her when I land. Why don't you just wrap me in wool and jam pet dander in my nose before I jump?

COREY: You do whatever you want.

TJ: Jeesh, what's wrong with you today? You've been all over my case since we left Westchester this morning. Is this because I spent the whole day hanging out with Danette?

COREY: What am I? A woman? What do I care if you hung out with her all day?

TJ: Because usually you and I do everything together.

COREY: I don't care what you did today. I was too busy trying to get us on the right trains. I had no time to sit around and hear you bragging all day long about your being "a star athlete"!

TJ: You heard all that?

COREY: Man, it was nauseating having to hear how you have all this amazing athletic prowess.

TJ: Prowess? Did you just use "prowess" in a sentence? Correctly?

COREY: Yes, I did, geek boy, and, no, I don't need a dictionary!

TJ: You *are* jealous! You've been dumped by a girl you are obviously still in love with, and to make matters worse, there's a girl who actually likes me and not you. This is all about the fact that for once since the second grade, I have a girlfriend and you don't, jock itch!

COREY: Oh, here we go with the second grade again! With you it always comes back to the past tense, doesn't it? This is really all about your jealousy, not mine. Jealousy over the fact that some people can be popular, and athletic, and good-looking, and you're

batting 0 for 3. *(Pause.)* Wait, I'm sorry, is my "jock language" too confusing for you?

TJ: A little. Can you wait until I get a gorilla to interpret?

COREY: Let's leave your mother out of this.

(TJ puts his hand up.)

TJ: Wait, wait, wait, wait, *wait!* *(Pause.)* If anyone is going to call my mother a gorilla around here, it's going to be me!

COREY: Trust me, TJ, you have it all wrong. I've always had everything going for me, and you've been nothing but a shadow—my shadow—so if anyone around here is full of resentment, it's you!

TJ: Oh yeah? Spell "resentment" right now, and I'll leave you alone.

(Pause. Corey gets flustered.)

COREY: Man, you are just like her—always go for the Corey-is-stupid routine. The point is, I know enough to get by and still manage to have a life outside schoolwork and my mother! You got to get over the fact that you are not me, TJ. It's true that you can't help the fact that you're scrawny and unmanly, but you know what they say, "When life gives you lemons, make lemonade!"

TJ: Oh, yeah, nice thing to say to the *diabetic*, jerk! I don't even know how we became friends in the first place.

(Corey heads to his room.)

COREY: I don't know, either, but you think about it while you go and take your girl up to the roof and show her a great time. When you're done with your *crème brûlée*—and no, I'm not spelling "*crème brûlée*"—send her on down to me, and I'll show her what a *real man* is.

(Corey exits into his room and slams the door. TJ stands there, irritated. He finally throws himself down on the couch, throwing papers out of the way as he fumes. There is a knock at the door, and TJ goes to open it. There stands Tom, this time dressed in a suit. He looks surprised to see TJ there.)

TOM: Oh, excuse me, uh—

TJ: She's not here.

TOM: Oh. Aah... *(Pause.)* ...she ordered room service.

TJ: I can sign for it. *(He looks for the cart.)* Where's the food?

TOM: It's downstairs. I just wanted to see if she needed...ketchup.

TJ: Oh. You couldn't just call her and ask?

TOM: Our phones are all down in the kitchen. We haven't been able to make or receive calls for hours.

TJ: Okay, well, she isn't here, so I can't help you. But, listen, I need to order room service for two, and I need it ready at eight o'clock. I guess I'll order it with you since the kitchen phones are out. Is that okay?

TOM: Aah, sure.

TJ: The little insert in the menu said it was "Luau Monday." Is that right?

TOM: Yes, Luau Monday. And it's Monday.

TJ: Okay then, I want two glazed ham specials with fries, and, oh yeah, crème brûlée. Is crème brûlée really a Hawaiian desert?

TOM: Yeah, sure. What room?

TJ: It's right next door. Hey, listen, when you bring it up, can you leave that silver cart?

TOM: I'll see what I can do. Do you happen to know when Mrs. Ananias will be back?

TJ: She just went downstairs for a few minutes. Do you want to wait up here so you don't have to run back and forth?

TOM: I'll do that, thank you.

TJ: But don't forget...I need the dinner at eight.

TOM: I will personally make sure it is done. *(TJ exits SR. Tom breathes a sigh of relief and goes to the phone and dials. Into phone.)* Hey, where are you?...That close?...Good, listen, I need you to do me a favor—pick up a couple sandwiches next door at Smilers. When you get to the hotel, walk into the kitchen area and snake one of those food carts. Put the sandwiches on it and take it, the whole thing, to the room next door. I'll meet you in front of their room, and we'll walk here together...Never mind all that. I'll explain it later...No, you're going to take them to the studio I rented and just let them think they're doing a fantastic job. That'll give me plenty of time to go through their stuff until I find it. Just don't let that same kid who saw you earlier see you now, got it?...Okay, I'll see you in a few.

(Tom hangs up the phone. He checks to make sure his weapons are still hidden and then exits SR. Seconds go by when we hear Mrs. Ananias.)

MRS. ANANIAS: *(Offstage.)* Oh, Mr. Simon, what great timing. Listen, I wanted to get a chance to talk to you before the girls got here. I was wondering —

(Tom and Mrs. Ananias enter.)

TOM: Here's what I'd like to do. I'm meeting Mr. Howe in the lobby, and we'll all meet here, but after we all get to know one other, Mr. Howe would like to move the audition down to a small rehearsal hall we rented over on 56th.

MRS. ANANIAS: How late would that go? I mean, I have other students —

TOM: We'd like to bring them all. We thought it would be quite an experience for your group if everybody — and I mean your entire group — was in on the audition.

MRS. ANANIAS: I guess that would be all right. I'll have to call their rooms and have them meet in the lobby.

TOM: But before Mr. Howe gets here, I just wanted to give you a heads-up.

MRS. ANANIAS: About what?

TOM: Well, Mr. Howe is very...young. I mean, he looks very young. But I don't want that to throw you.

MRS. ANANIAS: Mr. Howe? What's his first name?

TOM: Richard. Richard Howe.

MRS. ANANIAS: That's weird. I mean, I usually keep up with the latest Broadway news. I haven't heard of him. What's he directed?

TOM: Well, he's new, actually. He's just gotten here from...France. He's a French musical director who's just beginning to make a name on Broadway.

MRS. ANANIAS: He's French...*Richard Howe?*

TOM: Yes...yes...his parents wanted him to have an American name...with hopes that he would someday be a famous director in the US. They didn't want him to sound foreign at all.

MRS. ANANIAS: Well, my biggest concern is that the girls will be disappointed. I have a feeling when something is too good to be true —

TOM: Then it tends to be too good to be true. I can understand your hesitation. But it can't hurt to try. And think of it this way...there

are not a lot of kids who get the chance to have an actual audition for a Broadway musical.

MRS. ANANIAS: They're actually making a musical out of the movie "Jurassic Park"?

TOM: Oh, yes, they are. Complete with a 20-foot T-Rex and a singing brontosaurus.

MRS. ANANIAS: Oh, wow, that ought to be— Really?

(The hotel phone rings.)

TOM: Well, then, I am going to go downstairs and meet up with Mr. Howe, and we'll see you back here in a few minutes.

MRS. ANANIAS: Thank you for everything. *(She answers the phone.)*
Hello?...Hi, honey, how is he feeling today?...She's got it now? Oh, I should be home!...No, no, I trust you. Honey, there have been a few problems here, and I really need to sit down when it's quiet and tell you what's going on. Can you call me back in a little while?...Okay, well, call me here, so I don't have to pay for it...I don't know, call me about nine your time...All right, I'll talk to you then. Bye.

(Danette knocks on the door and enters. She has her camera. Mrs. Ananias hangs up.)

DANETTE: Mrs. Ananias, wow, you missed such an awesome day!

MRS. ANANIAS: I heard.

DANETTE: Do you have time to watch my tape? I'd like to show you the video I took of our trip today.

MRS. ANANIAS: I can't right now. Everyone's on their way up here for the audition.

DANETTE: Oh, that's right! Can I stay and watch?

MRS. ANANIAS: Actually, we're all going to walk down to a studio they rented for the audition.

DANETTE: I get to go, too? Can I film it?

MRS. ANANIAS: Ah, probably. I don't see why not. But look, I need to go downstairs and tell all the kids what we're doing. Will you stay here in case Mr. Simon gets here before I do? Just tell him I'll be back in less than ten minutes.

DANETTE: Sure. I'm going to get some more shots of your room if you don't mind.

MRS. ANANIAS: That's fine.

(Mrs. Ananias exits. Danette starts to take a few pictures of parts of the room before Corey enters from his room.)

COREY: Have you seen TJ? He didn't go back to our room.

DANETTE: No, he called, though, and said he wanted me to meet him at 8:15 up on the roof.

COREY: Oh. *(Pause.)* You have a good time today?

(He walks over to her.)

DANETTE: Great! Didn't you?

COREY: Oh, yeah, it was...busy. *(Noting her picture-taking.)* I noticed today how much you like to take pictures. *(He leans in a little closely.)* It's actually a great hobby. Not like motocross or climbing Mt. Everest, but it's a legitimate hobby.

DANETTE: You climbed Mt. Everest?

COREY: Twice. *(He leans in closer. Real close.)* In one day.

DANETTE: But that's impossible... *(Getting uncomfortable now, she moves aside.)* Why would you climb it two times in one day?

COREY: Had to go back for my wallet.

DANETTE: You went back up for a wallet?

COREY: Well, it had my credit card in it... *(He puts a hand on the wall and leans into her again.)* ...and you know what they say, "Never leave home without it."

(Awkwardly, she moves away from the wall and walks toward the doors SR.)

DANETTE: I guess I have enough pictures so I'll—

COREY: *(Giving up the "routine.")* Wait, I need you to do something for me.

DANETTE: Really? Like what?

COREY: It isn't that much. While the others go to the audition, you and I are going to stay behind and hang out here. Or, rather, you're going to hang out in here while I hide upstairs. But I'll need to borrow your camera.

DANETTE: I'm confused. What am I going to do?

(Corey moves Danette toward his room.)

COREY: Look, it's a long story, and we need to get moving on it before he gets here.

DANETTE: He?

COREY: Let's go over to my room and I'll explain everything. I just need you to be here while I...take some pictures with your camera. Lots of pictures.

DANETTE: Oh, well, I can't. I only have room for about two more shots.

COREY: Serious? Okay, well maybe I'll just go and buy one of those disposables.

DANETTE: Oh, I have several of those. You could buy them off me.

COREY: Yeah, that's not a bad idea. I'll take a couple with each camera in case something was to happen with one. I'll have to go to the ATM machine, so while I do that, you grab the cameras.

DANETTE: So what am I doing exactly?

COREY: It isn't hard, trust me. Have you ever done any acting?

DANETTE: *(Getting very excited.)* My parents just started giving me drama lessons! That's part of the reason my mom sent me on this theatre trip!

COREY: Great. Come in. I'll explain it all.

(Corey places his hand on the small of her back and gently motions her forward. TJ walks in from his room as they are about to enter it.)

TJ: Danette, where you going?

DANETTE: Oh, TJ, hi. Corey has asked me to help him with something tonight.

TJ: Oh, really?

DANETTE: I know we were going to do some things together tonight—

COREY: *(Nasty little smile.)* It's not her fault, TJ, I really couldn't do these things without her help.

TJ: Ah, so she's going to read to you?

DANETTE: It's all so exciting. I get to do some acting! I'll have to postpone things, but I promise I'll get up there eventually.

TJ: Have fun. *(Corey grins at TJ, and then takes his arm and pulls Danette close to him as they exit together. TJ, hurt but more angry than anything, just stands there for a moment before he runs to the armoire and pulls out a stack of purple bed sheets. He grabs two sheets and begins to tie them*

together.) Better get out of the way! There's a new jockstrap in town!

(Blackout.)

Scene 2

(AT RISE: Fifteen minutes later. Mrs. Ananias is on the hotel phone.)

MRS. ANANIAS: *(Into phone.)* Heather, he has to be there somewhere—I bet he just went next door to Stephan’s house. How long did you take a nap for?...Look, take the other two and just go over there. If he’s not there, just wait at their house, okay?...Okay, listen, I’m going to try using my cell phone downstairs and see if I can get a hold of your grandma and some of the neighbors, all right? I’ll call you at Stephan and Erica’s. Go there right now!...Okay, bye.

(Mrs. Ananias hangs up. She grabs her cell phone out of her purse and begins to exit SR, but Gerry enters.)

GERRY: Jenny, hi. I was— What’s that smell? It smells like roast ham!

MRS. ANANIAS: I don’t know. I don’t have time to smell.

GERRY: Mrs. Ananias, may I ask you a favor? Do you think it would be all right if I tagged along tonight?

MRS. ANANIAS: Gerry, I don’t know, the girls sort of need this thing to, well, just belong to them. And to be honest, I have bigger problems right now.

(Gerry throws himself down at her feet.)

GERRY: Please, Jenny, I beg you!

MRS. ANANIAS: Gerry, please! What are you—?

GERRY: I’ve been lying, Jenny. Lying since you got here. I hardly ever get audition calls anymore, and when I do, they laugh in my face and send me away!

MRS. ANANIAS: I thought you’d been in a handful of movies...?

GERRY: Just extra work, really. The last big part I had was playing a dead body, and the producers cut my part out of the film because they said my performance wasn’t believable enough.

MRS. ANANIAS: Gerry, really, I’m sorry, but I can’t stop to help you right now. I am having serious problems at home—

GERRY: (*Bitterly.*) I'm sure I'm never cast in roles due to the anti-nudity clause I had written into my contract. I curse the day I insisted on that!

MRS. ANANIAS: Gerry, I really am sorry, but—

GERRY: No, no, it's me who has to apologize. I was wrong to even ask.

MRS. ANANIAS: It's not that, I'm just dealing with an emergency—one that takes precedence.

GERRY: Well, what's wrong?

MRS. ANANIAS: My children awoke from their naps to discover their father is missing!

GERRY: Oh, dear. Maybe he's at a neighbor's.

MRS. ANANIAS: That's what I'm trying to find out, but my cell phone hasn't been working well since I got here, so communication with my husband has not been easy.

GERRY: Would you like to borrow mine? You can use it as long as you'd like. My ex-wife pays the bills.

MRS. ANANIAS: Are you sure?

GERRY: Of course, of course, it's no problem. It's the least I can do after I just embarrassed myself.

MRS. ANANIAS: No, you didn't. You're fine. But thank you for your phone. I'll be right back.

(*Mrs. Ananias exits, leaving Gerry there. He walks to the hotel phone and dials out.*)

GERRY: (*Into phone.*) Jesse, hi, it's Gerry, your tour guide. Listen, I wanted to ask you a favor—you think it might be possible if I sat in on your audition tonight?...No, just to watch, and maybe...give you some pointers...Oh, she did?...Is she angry with me or something?...No, I understand it's her audition, too... (*He takes his wallet out.*) How about this? I'm sure you could use a little vacation money while you're here. How about you let me in the audition, and I'll help you out with...a little spending money?...Okay, that would be great. Why don't you meet me outside Mrs. Ananias' room, and I'll give you my...donation, and then you can tell everyone you invited me to stay. Is that all right?...Wonderful. Finish getting ready. I need to run down to Theatre Circle and get a few audition monologues. What's the production he's directing?...They're making a musical out of

that?...Okay, I'll see you in a few minutes. *(He hangs up.)* Well, I've been a vampire before. I can certainly be a dinosaur.

(Gerry exits SR as Tom enters from the boys' room. He is holding the coin. As he bends in the light to study its authenticity, he sniffs the air.)

TOM: What is that smell? *(Someone knocks harshly from off SR. He goes to the door, drawing his gun.)* Who is it?

NICK: Dad?

(Tom puts his gun away and answers the door. Nick rushes in, breathless and ruffled. He is in a shirt and tie.)

TOM: What's the matter with you? Did you drop the food off next door?

NICK: *(Catching his breath.)* Yes...I did. I dropped it off at the front of their room, knocked, and ran.

TOM: They're not in there. I just came from there. What happened?

NICK: I went down to the café like you told me...and looked for a silver cart. The only cart in there had this giant pig on it, but I threw the sandwiches on it anyway, and I figured I'd just dump the pig later...Daddy, why did they have a big fat pig on the tray?

TOM: It's "Luau Monday." Hurry up, Nick. What happened?

NICK: Well, the chef saw me, and he came after me, so I took off...with the cart.

TOM: With the cart?

NICK: But you told me! So he chased me through the back kitchen, through the laundry, screaming at me the whole time! I'll tell you, Daddy, he was very bitter that I took his pig—you'd have thought it was Babe or something!

TOM: Nick, where is Babe...the pig...now?

NICK: I was getting to that. I was running out of the laundry, and I turned a corner, but it was slippery and I, bang, hit a corner wall! The cart stopped, but the pig didn't. He flew across the room and crashed into this little tiny door in the wall. The next thing I knew, a fireball shot out of the door. Daddy, I think that pig was demon possessed!

TOM: *(Frustrated.)* That's what that smell is! Nick, the pig flew into the incinerator!

NICK: Oh, poor Babe.

TOM: Are you hurt?

NICK: No, I had fallen to the floor when the fireball burst out, so I just jumped up, grabbed the cart, and came up here. I think the sandwiches got a little more cooked than they should have. Did I do okay, Daddy?

(Pause.)

TOM: Yeah, Son, you did good.

NICK: After all that, I think acting like a famous director will be a cinch!

TOM: Well, there's been a slight change.

NICK: With what?

TOM: You're French.

NICK: What?!

TOM: Look, you have to be French.

NICK: But I don't speak French! I didn't study it in school.

TOM: Can you fake it?

NICK: My friend taught me a little Pig Latin. Is that the same?

TOM: What's the difference? I doubt any of them know how to speak it anyway. Come on, I'll explain what happened. Let's bring the food in next door, and then we'll walk around and wait for everybody to show up.

(They exit SL as Mrs. Ananias enters, with her phone in hand.)

MRS. ANANIAS: *(Into phone.)* Well, thank you, Stephan, I appreciate it. I'll keep trying him, but I'm sure he's not far. I'll call you back. Thanks again. *(She hangs up as her hotel phone rings. She answers it.)* Hello?...Yes, it is...I do?...A visitor...Sort of...You did?...How long ago did you send them up?...Okay, thank you...No, it's fine. *(She hangs up. There is a knock at the door. She takes a deep breath and opens the door.)* Mr. Schroeder — *(Senator Whitfield enters and walks right past her.)* Senator Whitfield!

WHITFIELD: Mrs. Ananias. I'd like to know where my son is.

MRS. ANANIAS: What are you doing in New York?

WHITFIELD: I have been unsuccessfully trying to get a hold of you and my son for a day now.

MRS. ANANIAS: I've been getting terrible reception since I got here. I turned it off. Why didn't you try calling the hotel?

WHITFIELD: I believe I have made a mistake sending my son on a trip across the country.

MRS. ANANIAS: I don't understand. TJ's fine, and he's been good—

WHITFIELD: I trust my son, Mrs. Ananias, it's you I regret sending him with.

MRS. ANANIAS: Me?

WHITFIELD: May I be candid?

MRS. ANANIAS: Yes, of course.

WHITFIELD: After all the trouble last year, why didn't you just quit?

Was the embarrassment not enough for you that you had to continue?

MRS. ANANIAS: Senator, I assure you, those things were not my fault. They were just terrible coincidences!

WHITFIELD: I can understand how one thing may not have been your fault, but when there are so many things, it can't just be a "coincidence." It's just so hard to keep the innocence within children nowadays, but you just made them grow up so fast.

MRS. ANANIAS: How many times and to how many people do I have to keep explaining this to? When I rented that video, it said "Stand and Deliver" right on the cover. I did not work at that video store! I was not the one who got the tapes mixed up!

WHITFIELD: And I suppose the "brownies" you passed around during the movie had gotten switched around as well?

MRS. ANANIAS: Please, ma'am, I'm sure you read all the papers. You know perfectly well that I bought those brownies that morning on my way to work at a bake sale.

WHITFIELD: A bake sale at 7 o'clock in the morning?

MRS. ANANIAS: I live right next to the university, and I thought it was an actual bake sale. It was advertised as a fundraiser for college students. It was posted right on the sign!

WHITFIELD: (*Sarcastic.*) I gather the [Woody Harrelson] leaflets they were passing out didn't tip you off? [*Or insert the name of another star like Willy Nelson, Snoop Dogg, etc.*]

MRS. ANANIAS: I was in a hurry that morning—

WHITFIELD: Imagine the shock on those students' faces as they watched your little nasty "film," eating those poisonous brownies.

MRS. ANANIAS: I don't need to imagine...I was there.

WHITFIELD: And did you know that over one-fourth of your students ditched class right after that and went out and stole more

than 30 Bob Marley CDs and cases of Cheetos and Corn Nuts from Tower Records?

MRS. ANANIAS: I think I remember hearing something about that at the hearing...

WHITFIELD: I assumed it was punishment enough when Nancy Reagan showed up and spit on your shoes, but then two months later, you go out and had your own elicited fundraiser!

MRS. ANANIAS: *(Completely frustrated.)* It was supposed to be a regular car wash. A car wash for the drama department.

WHITFIELD: "Regular"? Is that what we're calling it? Let's see, what did your flyer say again? Oh yes, "Ten dollars a car. If you come topless you get five dollars off!" That was my favorite explanation yet.

MRS. ANANIAS: I know these stories sound convenient, but they really happened like I testified to at the hearing!

WHITFIELD: Mrs. Ananias, I'd like to see my son, and I'd like to take him home with me.

MRS. ANANIAS: Senator, I really don't think that is such a good idea. TJ is doing really well away from home, and I think he is actually enjoying himself.

WHITFIELD: Mrs. Ananias, let me be as blunt as possible here. How much would it take for you to leave the educational field and try something else?

MRS. ANANIAS: What do you mean? Like, quit teaching?

WHITFIELD: I can get you \$5,000 cash from my constituents within three days and another \$10,000 when I start raising money for my campaign next month. That's \$15,000 to quit your contract now. You only have two months left anyway. I figure you're getting quite a deal.

MRS. ANANIAS: Senator, I don't think that's fair.

WHITFIELD: This is your last opportunity.

MRS. ANANIAS: I'm sorry, but I'm not going to quit. Through it all, I think I'm a good teacher.

WHITFIELD: My son, please, Mrs. Ananias.

MRS. ANANIAS: All right. They're in the adjoining suite. *(She knocks on the door. No response.)* TJ? Corey? *(Still no answer.)* I'm sure they'll be back. We're all supposed to meet at eight.

WHITFIELD: Do you have a key?

MRS. ANANIAS: It's an adjoining suite. There are no locks.

WHITFIELD: How convenient for you. I'll pack his things, so he'll be ready to go when he gets back. Then we'll go looking for him.

(Mrs. Ananias and Whitfield enter his room. Jesse enters SR. She is dressed exactly like a prostitute: big hair, lots of makeup, and a skimpy dress. She looks around.)

JESSE: Mrs. Ananias? Are you upstairs? I ran out of rouge. Do you have any? *(When she talks we see her teeth – they are all blacked out.)*
Mrs. Ananias?

(Jesse walks up the stairs as the front door opens. Policeman 1, 2 enter with Alfredo, the cook. Alfredo has a thick Puerto Rican accent and has two Band-Aids on his eyebrows. They look around.)

ALFREDO: I saw him taking the elevator up to this floor earlier, officer. This might be his room. There are only two rooms on this floor.

POLICEMAN 1: And he had a cart with him?

ALFREDO: A cart that used to have a pig on it. And now our Wilbur is in the incinerator.

POLICEMAN 1: And who are you exactly?

ALFREDO: Alfredo Gomez. I am the head chef of the café downstairs.

(Policeman 2 starts up the stairs.)

POLICEMAN 2: *(Calls.)* Anyone up there?

ALFREDO: Maybe they are in the suite next door.

(They enter the boys' suite. Corey enters from SR, a 20-dollar bill in his hand.)

COREY: I have the cash, Danette! *(He sniffs, and Policeman 1, 2 walk in.)* Man, I smell bacon!

POLICEMAN 2: What'd you say, kid?

POLICEMAN 1: A smart guy, huh?

COREY: Oh, hey. No, I really smell bacon, or ham. Some sort of...pig.

POLICEMAN 1: Uh, huh. What's this about cash?

COREY: Oh. I have some cash for a friend of mine I'm meeting here.

(Jesse walks down the stairs.)

JESSE: Corey?

ALFREDO: *(Indicating Jesse.)* Oh, my, what's that?

COREY: Jesse? What the—?

POLICEMAN 2: What kind of a place are you guys running? The Mustang Ranch? All right, son, you need to come with us.

COREY: *(In disbelief, to Jesse.)* What are you? What's going on?

(Corey sees Policeman 1, 2 advancing and exits running.)

POLICEMAN 2: Hey! *(Policeman 2 chases after him and exits.)*

POLICEMAN 1: Grab him!

JESSE: What are you all doing here?

POLICEMAN 1: You know the drill, sweetheart. Let's go.

(Policeman 1 handcuffs Jesse with her hands behind her back.)

JESSE: No, I can't! I have an audition!

POLICEMAN 1: I don't care what you girls are calling it nowadays.

Illegal is illegal. Sit down.

ALFREDO: This is disgusting.

JESSE: You mean, you think I'm a...that I'm a...that's sick!

(Policeman 1 sits Jesse on the couch and then takes a couple steps up the stairs.)

POLICEMAN 1: Are there more of you up there?

(Gerry walks in with scripts and money in hand. He sees Jesse, but Policeman 1 can't be seen.)

GERRY: Whew, the pork smell is the strongest up here! Oh good, Jesse, I have your money. My, what happened to you?

(As Policeman 1 walks into view, he sees the money and the scripts.)

POLICEMAN 1: This really is a sick audition!

GERRY: I beg your pardon! What's going on?

ALFREDO: *(In his face.)* You are a very preverted man!

POLICEMAN 1: Come on. You're coming, too!

GERRY: No, you don't understand. I— *(And he too exits SR, screaming all the way down the hallway.)*

POLICEMAN 1: Crap!

(Policeman 1 starts to give chase, but Alfredo stops him.)

ALFREDO: You take the girl. I'll grab the sick man! *(He takes off after Gerry.)*

POLICEMAN 1: Let's get going.

JESSE: *(As he is leading her out.)* I'm telling you, you're making an awful mistake!

POLICEMAN 1: Haven't you girls gotten the message yet?

(They exit as Corey pokes his head in from SL.)

COREY: Jesse? Danette? *(He slowly walks into the room.)* Jesse?

(No answer, so Corey goes back into his room and shuts the door. Danette walks in from SR, all dressed up and carrying a six-pack of Coke. She puts it on the bar and takes a can off the pack.)

DANETTE: Corey? You upstairs? I'm ready! I already have some money I can use.

(Tom pokes his head in from SR.)

TOM: Hello, there. Is Mrs. Ananias around?

(Their eyes meet, and Danette takes a deep breath. She walks over to him and takes on the role of the seductress. Her acting is terrible. She is wooden and stiff, as if she's just memorized the lines and is doing her best to remember them. Throughout her acting, she flirtatiously plays with the can of Coke.)

DANETTE: Why, hello there. I'm Sylvia. Or would you rather call me something else?

(Tom grimaces.)

TOM: Look, is your teacher around?

DANETTE: No, she is out with the students. We are all alone.

TOM: Aren't you one of the students?

DANETTE: No, I am not. What is your name? Mr. Schroeder?

TOM: Schroeder? Look, I'm expecting Mrs. Ananias.

DANETTE: But you have me instead. Are you thirsty?

(She walks around him, lightly tracing her arm across his shoulder.)

TOM: Maybe I'll wait outside. *(Nick walks in. Tom's mad.)* Where have you been? I turned my back—

NICK: I saw that— Oh! *(Nick sees Danette and changes into a horrendous French accent. It's all pig Latin with a bad French accent.)* Iway awsay athay oneway ofway ethay.

(Pause.)

TOM: What?

DANETTE: Well, now that there are two of you, I'll get some more Coke. Would you like that?

NICK: I'llway aketay away okecay!

DANETTE: *(She quietly yells up the stairs.)* Corey, come now! *(To them.)* But first I'd like to show you something...

(She takes out a stack of money and hands it to Tom. He takes one end of the bills and she holds on to the other.)

TOM: What's this for? Aah, a little bribery. So let me get this straight: you shooed everyone away so we can have the room to ourselves. Kind of unfair, isn't it?

NICK: Uh, I'm going to wait outside. Come get me, Dad—I mean, sir—when you're ready. *(Nick runs out the front door.)*

TOM: Look, I understand. I get it. You want a guarantee—personal audition with us. How much we got here?

DANETTE: No need to bother. I counted the whole 15 dollars myself!

(She wraps her arms around him.)

TOM: Fifteen bucks?

(Tom goes through the money as Policeman 2 enters.)

POLICEMAN 2: Hey, did he get the girl out of here? *(He sees Danette holding onto Tom with money over his shoulders.)* I can't believe it. Another one in the same room not ten minutes later!

TOM: What are you talking about?

POLICEMAN 2: This time I'm handcuffing both of you at the same time and bringing you in at the same time.

DANETTE: What did I do? Corey, come out!

TOM: You are making a mistake. This just seems—

POLICEMAN 2: I've heard it all tonight. You're going in.

(Policeman 2 starts to handcuff them both when Tom turns, grabs a bottle off the bar, and hits Policeman 2 over the head. He falls to the floor. Danette screams.)

DANETTE: I've got to get out of here! I can't be here!

(Tom grabs her and shakes her shoulders.)

TOM: Shut up, will you? Shut up! You gotta help me drag him outta here.

DANETTE: Are you going to finish him off?

TOM: No, we'll leave him in the stairwell. Help me. When we drop him off, take the stairs, and run down to your room. Get in there, lock the door, and don't leave, got it?

DANETTE: Okay.

TOM: Okay, come on.

(They drag Policeman 1 off SR. Corey comes back in through his door, out of breath.)

COREY: Danette, you here yet? Jesse, you in here? *(He runs halfway upstairs and yells up.)* Danette, are you hiding up there? You can come down! *(No answer, so he grabs the phone and dials out. Into phone.)* Can I have...um, what's her last name? I need the room number for a girl named Danette. I don't know her last name. Can

you look it up by first name?...How about a girl named Jesse?...Uh...crap! I don't know.

(Mrs. Ananias and Senator Whitfield enter from SR. Mrs. Ananias is just hanging up the phone. The tension is obvious. Corey slams his phone down.)

COREY: Senator Whitfield!

WHITFIELD: Corey, where is my son?

COREY: I haven't seen him in awhile. Mrs. Ananias, we have big problems.

MRS. ANANIAS: Corey, I can't right now. *(She starts to head upstairs.)* I have to get home.

COREY: Home? You can't leave now.

MRS. ANANIAS: I just got a call—my husband is in the hospital.

COREY: What happened?

MRS. ANANIAS: He fell getting out of the shower and sat on top of the digital thermometer.

COREY: *(Clenching.)* Oh...ouch...

MRS. ANANIAS: He's all right, but it took them an hour to extract it from his...his—

COREY: Is he home now?

MRS. ANANIAS: No, when they got the thermometer out, it was reading 105 degrees, so they won't release him.

WHITFIELD: *(Rolls her eyes.)* That is tragic. I'm going back into my son's room to see if he's returned.

MRS. ANANIAS: I'd better go in and explain.

(Whitfield and Mrs. Ananias exit SL. Brooke runs in from SR, carrying her purse and a CD player and wearing a long blonde wig.)

BROOKE: Corey, I think you'd better go help TJ! He took some Martha Stewart bed sheets and ran up to the roof! I think he's going to jump!

COREY: With Martha Stewart bed sheets?

(Corey runs SL. Brooke sets her stuff down and starts to follow as Tom and Nick enter. Tom is exhausted.)

TOM: Oh, thank goodness you're here. I think it's time we got going, don't you?

BROOKE: Yes, but wait, I'll be right back. *(She darts into the boys' room.)*

TOM: Wait! *(To Nick.)* Look, you gotta get them out of here now! Barney's going to be here any second, and now I have to get him out of here because the police will be barging through that door any minute!

NICK: I can't keep doing this, Daddy! They know I'm a phony!

TOM: Do very little talking. I'll tell them you don't speak much English.

NICK: I can't do it! I won't do it!

(Tom grabs a Snickers bar out of his pocket.)

TOM: Here—you want this?

NICK: Yes!

(Tom grabs his shoulders.)

TOM: Then ullpay itway ogethertay!

(Brooke runs back in.)

BROOKE: It's okay, everything's fine... *(Referring to bed sheets.)*
...they were only from the Martha Stewart Everyday Collection!

TOM: Brooke, this is Mr. Howe. He is the director of the new musical. He's French and doesn't speak very much English.

NICK: *(In his broken French accent.)* It is a pleesure to meet you.

TOM: And now we all have to go.

BROOKE: What about the audition?

TOM: Well, what we wanted to do was to go down to a little studio we rented for the audition. *(He looks at his watch.)* In fact, we're pushing it. We have to be out of here...to get to the studio on time.

BROOKE: Oh, well, no one is here yet, and I'm all set up. Can I just go ahead with my audition? I'd rather not do it in front of the others anyway.

TOM: *(Nervous for time but relents.)* Sure, go ahead.

(She runs to the player and starts her music. The music can be "One" from "A Chorus Line" or a similar song. [Note: Please make sure to secure rights for music.] With her back to the window, she starts singing and kicking to the music. From outside the window, TJ—hanging onto the bed sheets he has now tied to the roof—flies past the window. [See note under Special Effects.] A rose is clamped between his teeth. Corey enters the room and throws the window open.)

COREY: *(White trying to grab TJ.)* TJ! Wait—don't—

TJ: *(Yelling as he swings by.)* Danetteeeeeeeee!

COREY: Aah, crap!

(As Corey starts to run out to save TJ, Gerry comes barreling in, acting the part of a velociraptor (a dinosaur), screaming and clawing at the air. Brooke turns to Gerry, but still doesn't notice TJ.)

BROOKE: Corey!

(Corey sees this, grabs the Snickers bar, and chucks it at Gerry. Gerry screams and falls to the floor as Mrs. Ananias and Senator Whitfield walk in.)

MRS. ANANIAS: Gerry! He's having an attack!

BROOKE: He needs that pen thing! The pen! It's in my purse! *(From her purse, Corey grabs a tampon, the first "pen-like" thing he finds.)* You have to stab him in the leg! *(But she stops him before he does.)* That's my tampon! *(She grabs it from him as he goes for the EpiPen again. This time he grabs a regular pen. Brooke goes to assist him once more. Corey starts stabbing Gerry behind the couch.)* It's not going in! Again! *(He does it again.)* Oh my gosh—that's a regular pen!

WHITFIELD: *(Screams.)* Give me that pen right now! *(Corey takes it and throws it to her. It flies through the air and Whitfield catches it. In one sweeping motion she takes out her checkbook.)* Mrs. Ananias, this is your very last chance. Should we say \$20,000?

(Meanwhile, Brooke grabs the EpiPen and jams it in herself as TJ continues to fly back and forth past the window.)

MRS. ANANIAS: Senator Whitfield! I don't think—

(TJ flies by.)

WHITFIELD: I want to see my son.

COREY: I'm sure he's around here somewhere!

(Mrs. Ananias notices TJ in the window. She is horrified.)

MRS. ANANIAS: Um, why don't we go down to his room and see if we can—?

WHITFIELD: Can we turn off the music?

(TJ has stopped swinging and is hanging at the window.)

TJ: *(Loudly.)* Senator Whitfield?!

(Whitfield spins around.)

WHITFIELD: *(Yells.)* Trevor Jacob!

(The bed sheets loosen and TJ falls. Whitfield screams and runs to the window. Mr. Schroeder walks in from SR, carrying a 32-ounce Coke, and takes it all in.)

SCHROEDER: Mrs. Ananias? Senator?

(Mrs. Ananias shrugs her shoulders, walks to the bar, and grabs a drink as we go to a blackout.)

[END OF FREEVIEW]