

Track & Field
By Kevin Barry

The Characters

Q Male, middle age.

Z Female, middle age.

X Female, college-age.

Y Male, college age.

The actual first names of the actors playing these roles will be used for their characters. (The names in the script are generic). All are present on stage throughout the entire performance and are dressed in athletic-wear.

The Setting

The campus of a Midwestern university.

A sofa placed on a carpeted stage will represent all locations.

Act One

(Q stands with script in hand. Z is seated on the sofa. X and Y are sitting on the floor)

Q

Q stands with script in hand. Z is seated on the sofa. X and Y are sitting...

Z

What's with the letters?

Q

Well, rather than use actual *names*...

Z

Too confusing.

Q

More theatrical. I hoped.

Z

Use *our* names.

Q

Our names.

Z

(Gesturing towards the audience)

You're losing them already, dear. Don't be pretentious.
Stick to names.

Q

Alright. *(He clears his throat and reads)* Britt stands with
script in hand. Sherry is seated on the sofa...

SHERRY

There ya go! Now from the beginning.

BRITT

This *is* the beginning.

SHERRY

The title.

BRITT

You *know* the title.

SHERRY

The setting.

BRITT

A sofa.

SHERRY

That's it?

BRITT

That's it.

SHERRY

A sofa?

BRITT

Just...a sofa.

SHERRY

One sofa, four characters.

Yes.

BRITT

Well, it's cheap to produce!

SHERRY

Tell me, how did you know about...?

BRITT
(*Puzzled*)

About what?

SHERRY

That there were four...?

BRITT

Characters? I...*knew*.

SHERRY

You *knew*?

BRITT

Yes. I listen.

SHERRY

I see.

BRITT

I *glean*.

SHERRY

Uh huh.

BRITT

Tid bits.

SHERRY

Such as?

BRITT

Well, the play is about a professor.

SHERRY

And?

BRITT

SHERRY
He's frustrated.

BRITT
About?

SHERRY
He's frustrated about *teaching*, I guess.

BRITT
Tired of it?

SHERRY
He wants *more*.

BRITT
More what?

SHERRY
More *than*!

BRITT
I'm not following.

SHERRY
It's *your* play! Pay attention!

BRITT
I *am* paying attention.

SHERRY
He wants to *write*.

BRITT
Write?

SHERRY
He wants to write *plays*!

BRITT
And does he?

SHERRY
Yes, he does.

BRITT
What does he write a play about?

SHERRY
He writes a play about a professor...

BRITT
How original.

SHERRY
...who writes a play!

BRITT
Well, hey!

SHERRY
Then he reads this...*play*...

BRITT
I detect sarcasm.

SHERRY
He reads *his* play...

BRITT
Reads it?

SHERRY
Uh huh, to his wife.

BRITT
Can't she read?

SHERRY
She wants *him* to.

BRITT
Reading a play to someone...

SHERRY
Here we go!

BRITT
...is like inviting them to dinner...

SHERRY
And serving them pages from a *cookbook*! We know! We know!

BRITT
Go on.

SHERRY
So the *wife*...

BRITT
Yes?

SHERRY
She sits on this sofa...

BRITT
This sofa?

SHERRY
One very like it.

BRITT
Throughout?

SHERRY
Chattering away.

BRITT
Isn't she supposed to be *listening*?

SHERRY
She hears quite enough.

BRITT
Enough of what?

SHERRY
Enough to realize.

BRITT
Realize?

SHERRY
Yes, that *he*...

The professor? BRITT

Has become obsessed. SHERRY

With? BRITT

Her. SHERRY
(Pointing towards X)

Her? BRITT

Yep. SHERRY

A student? BRITT

Uh huh. SHERRY

Young? BRITT

Very uh huh. SHERRY

This is where the lights come up on X. BRITT
(Reading)

Sara! SARA
(To BRITT)

Her name is Sara. SHERRY
(To BRITT)

Sara is running in place. BRITT

SHERRY
(To us)

Aren't we all?

(SARA rises and runs in place)

BRITT
What's *that* supposed to mean?

SHERRY
Nothing.

BRITT
Okay! That's it! (To SARA) You can stop running.

(SARA stops running and appears frustrated)

SHERRY
(To BRITT)
What are you doing?

BRITT
What's with the attitude?

SHERRY
Attitude? I don't have an attitude.

BRITT
You give me the feeling..

SHERRY
What?

BRITT
That you'd rather be doing something else.

SHERRY
Read your play.

BRITT
I'm not in the mood anymore.

SHERRY
Aw, geez!

BRITT

I'm going to my office.

SHERRY

Could you act a little more wounded, maybe?

BRITT

(Dramatically)

The spell is broken.

SHERRY

Spell?

BRITT

The fourth wall...or...whatever. That contract with the audience.

SHERRY

Oh, for God's sakes!

(SHERRY rises and grabs the script from BRITT. She shuffles through the pages and speaks to us)

THE LIGHTS COME UP ON SARA! SHE IS RUNNING IN PLACE!

(As the lights come up on SARA, she is running in place)

BRITT

(To us)

The characters have a tendency to take control.

SHERRY

Somebody's gotta do it! Let's get this show on the road.
(To us) They meet cute.

(SHERRY returns to the sofa as BRITT approaches SARA)

BRITT

How are you on this lovely day?

SARA

Sweaty.

BRITT
You're very *good*!

SARA
I am?

BRITT
At running. I mean.

SARA
I've seen you.

BRITT
Around campus?

SARA
Always in a hurry.

BRITT
And always late, it seems...I can see *you* from my window. (He points) Up there. (To us) Academic life! Placid. Nourishing. Content. Distant sound of bells. Drone of jets echoing among the stone buildings. Young voices filling the air.

SARA
Do you run?

(SHERRY laughs and snorts)

BRITT
Uh, no.

SARA
Keeps you young.

BRITT
Oscar Wilde said, "I'll do anything to stay young except exercise and get up early."

SARA
(Stretching)
He's in for a shitload of problems.

You have no idea. BRITT

Professor? SARA

Doctor, actually. BRITT

What do you teach, Doctor Actually? SARA

Theatre. BRITT

Acting? SARA

The history of. BRITT

My boyfriend acts. SARA

Could I have seen him? BRITT

Well, he *wants* to, let's put it that way. He majors in sports medicine. (*She makes quotes in the air*) Something to fall back on. SARA

She was a symphony of muscles, tendons, joints and fibers. My emotions bloomed like an old painting that had the years of varnish and grit removed to expose the vibrant colors that had been hibernating underneath. "In the midst of winter, I found there was within me an invincible summer." BRITT
(*To us*)

Ah, Jesus! SHERRY
(*Rolling her eyes*)

He's sooo amazing! SARA

BRITT
(Flattered)

'Scuse me?

SARA

My boyfriend.

BRITT
(Disappointed)

Oh.

SARA

He has magic hands.

BRITT
(To us)

He gets to touch her.

SARA

I have this rotator cuff thing?

BRITT
(To us)

I had this fantasy! I wanted to throw her down and take her right there. I've never experienced such sudden, overwhelming, aching *lust*!

SARA

You're hot!

BRITT

You're lovely.

SARA

Got a place?

BRITT

No.

SARA

Take off your clothes.

BRITT

Here?

On the grass.

SARA

It's wet.

BRITT

I'll get on top.

SARA

We'll be seen.

BRITT

I don't care!

SARA

I have a bad back.

BRITT

I have this rotator cuff thing?

SARA

How very Humbert Humbert! (*SARA freezes in place*) Does this guy have any *idea* what people are going to think?

(SHERRY rises and comes forward)

BRITT

About what?

SHERRY

About this old *dude* and Maid Marathon here.

BRITT

Who cares what people think?!

SHERRY

I'll bet his wife cares what people think! Playwrights write about what they *know*.

BRITT

Shakespeare wrote about kings. He wasn't a king. He wrote about teen-age girls in love...

SHERRY

She's young enough to be his *daughter*, for God's sake!

BRITT

He has a daughter?

(SHERRY walks around SARA giving her the once-over)

SHERRY

What is it about *this* particular girl that makes him so stupid? Does he see his wife of years ago? Or is this the girl he *wanted* years ago, before he became all rumpled and comfortable?

BRITT

Rumpled and comfortable? You're so good for my ego.

SHERRY

That's what you *are*! Rumpled. And. Comfortable!

BRITT

I need a drink.

SHERRY

There's no *bar* in the scene description, dear, remember?
(She returns to the sofa) Just! A! Sofa!

Y

(To us)

A sofa sounds good to me. I've been sitting on this hard stage for fifteen pages.

SHERRY

(To Y)

Quit your bitchin', you got the part didn't you?

Y

(To us)

Some part! Ten minutes of nothing!

SHERRY

(To us)

They all want instant stardom. No one learns their *craft* anymore.

Y

Do you mind! I'm sweating my ass off up here.

(SARA unfreezes)

SARA

Did you ever taste your own sweat?

SHERRY

Taste what?!

SARA

He taught me to how to taste my own sweat.

BRITT

Who did?

Y

(To us)

People get so grossed out by that, but it works!

SARA

You taste your sweat once in the spring to see how salty it is, then you taste it again in the summer.

Y

You're impressing the hell outta me, babe!

SARA

It shows how your body adapts to heat...or something. Like a thermo...Whatever! It helps you determine a lot of, you know, stuff. (To Y) Right, hon?

Y

(Laughing)

Close enough.

BRITT

So what do you do when you aren't tasting sweat?

SARA

Studying. Running. Making love.

(Y spins around and makes eye-contact with SARA)

Y

Hey!

SARA

Hey!

BRITT

(To us)

I hate him. (To SARA) Do you like the theatre?

Y

Gotta be kidding!

SARA

Sitting watching other people pretending to be, I dunno, *other* people? While you pretend not to notice.

Y

Save your energy, Doc. She doesn't get it.

BRITT

May I intellectualize a bit?

SHERRY

(To us)

Here's where the playwright tries to justify his reasons for writing the play, establish some character motivation and prove how smart he is all at the same time. Smoke if you got 'em!

BRITT

(To SHERRY)

That's very unfair.

SHERRY

Every writer's first play has a page or two - usually a monologue - about some *tragedy* that happened to him as a kid...A car accident in high school or a...

BRITT

That's not the intention here.

SHERRY

It should be the first stuff to get the heave-ho!

BRITT

Freud said that "the purpose of drama is to reveal sources of pleasure and enjoyment in our own emotional life."

SHERRY

(To us)

Makes *me* want to rush out and buy a ticket!

BRITT

They already bought their tickets.

SHERRY

Most of 'em are comps!

SARA

(To BRITT)

Ever write a play, you know, *yourself*?

SHERRY

(To us)

Where was *she* nineteen pages ago?

BRITT

I don't know much about running, but like all good things, I'm sure it's about style, technique, economy, pace, power, exhilaration...Well, so is the theatre.

SHERRY

(To us)

A note on plays that call attention to themselves as being *plays*...I know I'm watching a play, for heaven's sake! You know you are watching a play! That's why you're in those uncomfortable seats wondering what the hell is going on.

BRITT

Stop badgering these fine people, dear. They could be at the movies. Or home watching a...a...VD! Or *surfing* the...whatever that is.

SHERRY

I hate pretentious, is all.

BRITT

You think this is pretentious?

SHERRY

You *do* have a fondness for Pinter and...and...that *Italian*.

BRITT

Pirandello?

The other one. SHERRY

Fo? BRITT

Eee-o somebody. SHERRY

Ionesco? BRITT

That's the dude. SHERRY

He's Hungarian. I think. BRITT

Same difference. SHERRY

Was Hungarian. BRITT

All phonies! SHERRY

How can you say that?! BRITT

All those *pauses*. SHERRY

(There is a long moment of silence)

Pauses?! BRITT

Mm. SHERRY

Pauses are...(He pauses) BRITT

What? SHERRY

BRITT

Pauses are like...(He pauses)

SHERRY

Like what?

BRITT

Pauses are like silence in...(He pauses)

SHERRY

Spit it out!

BRITT

Pauses are like silence in *music*.

SHERRY

Like I said, theatre of the ridiculous!

BRITT

Absurd.

SHERRY

Exactly!

BRITT

I think you're out of your depth here.

SHERRY

Then toss me in with the great *unwashed*, a play should have a beginning, a middle and an end.

BRITT

I agree, but not necessarily in that order.

SHERRY

Don't get all artsy on us! (She signals for them to continue) G'head.

(SARA and BRITT stretch)

SARA

(To BRITT)

You look married.

SHERRY

(To us)

'Bout time *someone* mentioned it!

BRITT

I hope I haven't misrepresented my motives. I'm not, uh...what is the term?

SARA

Hitting on me?

BRITT

I'm not suggesting a student/teacher thing!

SARA

Considering I'm not your student and, uh, you're not my teacher.

BRITT

Just to prove I'm on the up-and-up, I'd, uh...I'd like to meet your *actor* friend, give him a few pointers, help him out a bit.

SARA

You'd do that?

BRITT

Saturday tomorrow, you guys free?

SARA

I live across from the library. (*She turns and points*) Division Street. Apartment five. But we run until noon on Saturdays.

BRITT

I'll be there.

SARA

I'll be sweaty.

BRITT

Surprise your mind sometime, come see a play with me.

SARA

Surprise your body sometime, come run with me. (*She runs in place*)

SHERRY
(To us)

Time to meet "the guy".

BRITT

Him?

SHERRY
Hunky, huh? (Y flashes a sexy smile...) But unstable. (...then appears dejected)

BRITT

"Unstable," as in...?

SHERRY

Unstable as in "Whoa!"

BRITT

Okay. (He reads) Y rises.

SHERRY

Name?

BRITT
(To Y)

What's your name, bud?

DANIEL

Daniel.

BRITT

Daniel rises.

SHERRY

On your feet, golden boy.

(DANIEL rises and goes through a long, elaborate warm up)

DANIEL

Uh...line?

BRITT

Huh?

DANIEL

What's my first *line*?

BRITT

Oh, uh...(He shuffles through the script) "I whipped your sorry butt." (To us) Sara and Daniel have been running and they are out of breath.

(SARA and DANIEL have been running and they are out of breath)

DANIEL

I whipped your sorry *butt*!

SARA

It's *your* fault.

DANIEL

How is it *my* fault?

SARA

You broke my concentration!

DANIEL

What are we in, first grade?

SARA

You did!

DANIEL

You can't admit it!

SARA

Can't admit what?

DANIEL

You *bonked*. (He kicks off his shoes)

SARA

I didn't *bonk*!

DANIEL

You *sooo* bonked!

SARA

Did not!

DANIEL
You kept looking at the ground!

SARA
Stop telling me that!

DANIEL
Babe, it's proven that you run slower...

SARA
Puh-leeze!

DANIEL
...when your head is *down*. (He takes off his shirt)

SARA
He'll be here any minute.

DANIEL
Those elbows weren't flexed between eighty and one-thirty, either. (He peels off his socks)

SARA
Place look okay? I told this guy all about you.

DANIEL
Don't change the subject!

SARA
No lectures, *please*.

DANIEL
It's a scientific fact.

SARA
Blah, blah, blah...

DANIEL
You use more oxygen...

SARA
Yeah, yeah, yeah.

DANIEL
...when you tilt your head...

SARA
Anything you say.

DANIEL
...and the result is...

SARA
You better change.

DANIEL
...you *bonk!*

(BRITT approaches SARA and DANIEL)

SARA
Can't we...?

DANIEL
Can't we, what?

SARA
Can't we just go running like...?

DANIEL
Like?

SARA
Like other people.

DANIEL
What other people?

SARA
For recreation!

DANIEL
Oh, Jesus!

SARA
For pleasure!

DANIEL
I'll give you pleasure.

(DANIEL wiggles out of his shorts. He is wearing a jock)

SARA
Will you please...?

(DANIEL pulls SARA toward him)

DANIEL

How 'bout a little somethin' somethin'?

BRITT

(To us)

I did mention that I *hate* him, didn't I?

SHERRY

Yes, dear, you soooo hate him.

(DANIEL pushes his body against hers)

DANIEL

Feel that? Hm?

SARA

He'll be here any minute.

DANIEL

Since when can't I touch?

SARA

Since now. *(She pulls away)*

SHERRY

Hold it, hold it!

BRITT

What?

(SHERRY rises and comes forward)

SHERRY

Cut! Cease! Desist! Whatever!

DANIEL

Whazzup?

SHERRY

No one is going to be listening.

BRITT

What?

SHERRY

The jock!

BRITT
 What about it?

SHERRY
 It's a distraction!

DANIEL
 (To BRITT)
 Told ya, man!

BRITT
 Oh come on!

SHERRY
 It's gratuitous.

DANIEL
 He wouldn't listen.

BRITT
 People who go to the theatre are sophisticated. They're not going to get distracted by the sight of some *guy* in his jock-strap.

SHERRY
 I bet some of them will. (She scans the audience) And they know who they are.

BRITT
 This scene says, "Expect the unexpected from this guy".

SHERRY
 An excuse.

BRITT
 It's not an excuse! It shows his...

SARA
 Ego.

BRITT
 Yes! And it shows his...

DANIEL
 Nerve.

BRITT

Exactly! And it shows his...

SHERRY

It shows his ass, okay?

(There is a short pause while they all absorb this)

SARA

Hell, I think he should he be *totally* naked!

DANIEL

Ya think?

SHERRY

Oh my God!

SARA

Heck, yeah!

DANIEL

What the fuck! (He starts to take the jock off)

SHERRY

Wait! Stop! Better idea! (She goes to the sofa)

SARA

(To DANIEL)

She's right. As nice as your ass might be, the jock's gotta go.

SHERRY

Here ya go! (She brings him a pair of brightly decorated boxers)

SARA

Classic!

DANIEL

Do they have a fly in them?

BRITT

What difference does it make?

SARA

Most guys just pull down the elastic anyway, know what I mean?

BRITT

Trust us, it makes a difference.

DANIEL

See, he knows.

SHERRY

Oh puh-leeze!

DANIEL

If it doesn't have a fly...

BRITT and DANIEL

YOU ARE WEARING PANTIES!

(BRITT and DANIEL "high five" and DANIEL puts on the boxers)

SARA

Whaddaya think?

SHERRY

(Taking a bow)

Greek chorus and costume designer!

SARA

Hot!

(SHERRY takes a walk around DANIEL and gives his boxers a tug)

SHERRY

Nice fit.

SARA

He looks good in anything. Still, my favorite is *nothing*.

SHERRY

(To BRITT)

You should wear boxers, too, sweetie. (She whispers) More room. (She goes back and sits on the sofa)

DANIEL

Can we get moving here?

SARA

This is the *guy*, professor! Didn't I tell you he had potential?

BRITT

If he can overcome his painful shyness.

SARA

I told the professor all about you wanting to be an actor.

DANIEL

I *am* an actor. The only difference between me and somebody like Al is I haven't been discovered yet.

BRITT

Al?

SARA

(Making the sign of the cross)

Pacino.

DANIEL

Donnie Brasco, Sea of Love?...Okay, Scent of a Woman was pussy but, hey, a guy's gotta eat! And Devil's Advocate, come on! Putting Keanu up against Al was like watching Mike Tyson (He throws a punch) go fifteen rounds with Woody Allen!

BRITT

I've seen him on stage, you know.

DANIEL

Tyson?

BRITT

Pacino.

DANIEL

Aw, and my autograph book's at the cleaners!

SARA

Be nice.

BRITT

Have you had any training?

DANIEL

Potty training. (He squeezes his legs together) But, uh, sometimes I wait too long.

SARA

He's always on!

DANIEL

Acting lessons, Doc? That's like teaching somebody how to make love.

SARA

Trust me, he doesn't need lessons in *that* department.

BRITT

It's important to learn your craft. An actor needs to see plays, *read* plays, read about plays...

DANIEL

What? Shakespeare? (He mimes a sword fight) Moliere? (He opens an imaginary snuffbox and inserts a bit into each nostril. He sneezes) Ibsen? (He drops his head and snores) Crap-ola! I just want to act, man. Give me some lines, give me a stage. I don't need to read about the goddamn Greeks!

SARA

I told you to behave!

DANIEL

Acting is a footrace. (He demonstrates) Muscles limber, on your game, stay focused, shoot ahead of the pack. End of story. It's like great sex, Doc. I assume you remember great sex?

SARA

(To DANIEL)

Why don't you hit the showers and then we'll all go get some lunch.

(DANIEL pulls SARA close to him)

DANIEL

You told me my sweat smells like honey.

SHERRY

(To us)

Entirely too much focus on sweat for my taste.

DANIEL

Got a story for you, Doctor. High school, okay? There was this kid...Frank...Slow, funny-looking Frank. Hey, looks are nothing but luck, right? And I was lucky...Anyway, this guy idolized me 'cause I hung with the cool crowd. Hell, I was the cool crowd, you know what I'm saying? You want to talk *girls*?! Cheerleaders two at a time! (To SARA) Sorry, babe, facts is facts.

So, everyday after school, Frankie waits for me like it's a stage door or something. The other guys, they messed with him, you know? Threw his books around, wrote the back of his shirt, crap like that. Me, I just gave him a little wink as I went to my car. No big deal. Little wink...After a while he starts winking back...Imitating me. Wanting to be me.

One day I'm driving and I see old Frank by the side the road. Slow and dumb and all, he don't drive. So, what the hell. I'm a sweetheart, right? Maybe some brownie points comes time to get into heaven, right Catholic girl?...So Frank gets in starts talking crazy kinds of stuff. Didn't even know where he was going. Just out walking. Turns out his dad beat him up, hadda get out the house...I decide I'm gonna give this boy an awesome time. Hadda be a virgin, right? Didn't take a rocket scientist!

So we pay a visit to ol' Francine on the other side of the river. She'd do Barney the Dinosaur if he showed her a bone. Old Francine knows her way 'round a guy like a boy scout knows the woods. Man, she grabs onto Frankie-boy, does him up, down, back, front, head, toes, inside out! If he never did it again the rest of his life, *this* was the one for the scrapbook!...Didn't even charge us! I bring enough business her way and it must be customer appreciation week, you know what I'm saying?

The drive back, Frankie's kinda quiet, kinda mellow. This corny song comes the radio, old Frank starts blubbering his eyes out...Turns and gives me the little wink, you know. And I give him one right back. Hey, I know what he's thinkin'!..And there was me and slow, funny-looking, dumb old Frank, bonding like brothers. Hey! The day you bust your cherry, right?! (He starts to get emotional) Then, uh...I, uh...Wasn't watching the road, you know...This eighteen wheeler...Time I heard the horn...

Week later...Intensive care...Nurse...She tells me...She tells me my car...My car was cut in half!...Totaled!...Blowtorches to get us out...I get my bearings, I start thinking, "Man! What happened to Frank?"...Then she says it...He, uh...He lived about an hour...Conscious the whole time...And, uh...Just before he, you know...He asks about me...Nurse told him I was still alive and he...he smiled...And then just before he...he closes his eyes...(He is near hysteria now)...You know what the poor son of a bitch does?...He freakin' winks!

SARA

Oh my God!

BRITT

That's a terrible...terrible...

SARA

You never told...

DANIEL

Didn't want you to think...

SARA

What?

DANIEL

You know, that I was pimping for the dude.

SARA

I never would have thought...

DANIEL

Uh, there's another reason I never told you...(He abruptly stops crying) BECAUSE IT NEVER FUCKIN' HAPPENED! (He dances around sparring like a boxer)

SARA

(To BRITT)

Didn't I tell you he was good?!

DANIEL

Still think I need acting lessons, Doc? Huh?

SARA

You're awesome, baby!

DANIEL

I'm so sexy the crack o'dawn ain't safe!

SARA

Put your pants on, genius.

(BRITT steps away and speaks to us)

BRITT

Did I mention that I really, really, really hate this guy?

SHERRY

She's a battered woman.

BRITT

What?!

SHERRY

Can't you see that?

BRITT

Who says?

SHERRY

I know.

BRITT

That's right! You listen.

SHERRY

I glean.

BRITT

I forgot.

SHERRY

Keep watching.

DANIEL

(Dressing)

I thought he'd never leave...So you doin' intellectuals now?

SARA

Puh-leeze.

DANIEL

You into smart guys?

SARA
The only reason...

DANIEL
Smart *old* guys!

SARA
The reason I...

DANIEL
Stuffy books? The thea-tuh? Afternoon tea?

SARA
He's a nice...

DANIEL
Bet he never goes outside.

SARA
He's very interested in you.

DANIEL
He's interested in your *ass*!

SARA
He is not.

DANIEL
I think you and him got a "daddy-thing" goin'.

SARA
Disgusting.

DANIEL
He walks up to you out of the clear fuckin' *blue* and tells you he likes the way you *run*?!

SARA
What does that have to do...?

DANIEL
"Oh, I just love the way you run".

SARA
I'm going out.

DANIEL

Uh, I don't think so.

SARA

I'm hungry.

(DANIEL reaches out and pulls SARA towards him)

DANIEL

Whatcha hungry for, babe? Huh?

SARA

You're hurting me!

DANIEL

You can't outrun me. You know that, right? You can't outrun me.

(SARA and DANIEL freeze in place)

SHERRY

It gets ugly here. And we don't need to see it.

BRITT

He hits her?

SHERRY

Oh yeah.

BRITT

Does anyone try to help?

SHERRY

Sure.

BRITT

Who?

SHERRY

Il professore.

BRITT

(Proudly)

Of course he does.

SHERRY

Selfishly!

BRITT
(Deflated)

Why do you say...?

SHERRY
To get in her *pants*! (DANIEL and SARA turn toward BRITT with disgust)

BRITT
Isn't that unfair?

SHERRY
The clock is ticking.

BRITT
I see.

SHERRY
And not for just his *creative* juices.

BRITT
Ah ha.

SHERRY
Ah ha italicized, in bold print, and writ large!

BRITT
Maybe he can't control it.

SHERRY
What?

BRITT
Ask any playwright. The characters have a tendency to take over!

SHERRY
They do not!

BRITT
I'm serious.

SHERRY
They say that to justify...something. Make it seem more important. Mystical. (She takes the script and reads) Sara and Daniel unfreeze. Daniel goes to another part of the stage and sits on the floor. Sara kneels downstage.

(SARA and DANIEL unfreeze. DANIEL goes to another part of the stage and sits on the floor. SARA kneels downstage)

BRITT

Makeup!

SHERRY

Oops! My cue. (To us) Sara has bruises on her face.

(SHERRY rises and applies make-up to SARA's face to simulate bruises)

BRITT

(To us)

Each time I see her my heart is astonished as if it were the first time. Every woman I see I compare to her. That isn't her nose, those aren't her lips, not her eyes.

(BRITT walks over to SARA as SHERRY takes her place again on the sofa)

SARA

How did you know I was here?

BRITT

I was out walking. I saw you running.

SARA

You Catholic?

BRITT

No.

SARA

Protestant? Jewish? Buddist?

BRITT

None of the above.

SARA

You believe in anything?

BRITT

Murphy's Law.

SARA

Everyone needs to believe in something. I feel guilty because I only pray when I *want* something. Or I'm *afraid* of what might happen.

BRITT

What *did* happen?

SARA

What do you mean?

BRITT

Don't tell me you ran into a door.

(There is a long reflective pause)

SARA

He's so talented.

BRITT

He hurts you.

SARA

He gets...He gets frustrated.

BRITT

Is it worth it?

SARA

There are people who are different.

BRITT

Should I talk to him?

SARA

You can't ever talk to him about this.

BRITT

I want to help...

SARA

You know, with all your talk about art and stuff...

SHERRY
(To BRITT)

Let it go.

BRITT
(To SHERRY)

I want to help her.

SHERRY
Some people you can't help.

BRITT
And not for the reasons you think.

SARA
He'll come looking for me. I don't want him to find me here.

BRITT
I saw this...(He hands a small package to SARA)

SHERRY
You? Shopping?

SARA
Sweet!

(She opens it. It's a scarf)

BRITT
It'll protect you. When you run.

SARA
Sweet.

(SARA goes to give BRITT a kiss. He speaks to us)

BRITT
If we ever touched, I'm quite positive that the instability of my chemical components would cause me to vaporize. If only I could focus on one flaw. One tiny flaw. Some insignificant detail that would be significant enough. A freckle, a crooked finger, an errant toe, perhaps. Anything! If only she weren't so achingly, heartbreakingly...

SARA
Come run with me.

Run? I dunno... BRITT

You feel *clean* when you run. SARA

I haven't gone running in... BRITT

G'head! Go feel *clean* with her. And then, while you're at it, have a great big heart attack! SHERRY

(BRITT helps SARA to her feet. They run in place, breathing hard)

Trust me. SARA

What? BRITT

It gets easier. SARA

When? BRITT

After a while. SARA

Uh huh. BRITT

But... SARA

Yeah? BRITT

You gotta get out there *everyday*. SARA

Where? BRITT

Out there!

SARA

Okay.

BRITT

Build up your endurance.

SARA

Ow ow ow! (He grabs his ankle)

BRITT

You okay?

SARA

Call nine-one-one!

BRITT

(BRITT flops onto the sofa next to SHERRY.)

(DANIEL rises and joins BRITT and SARA)

What's this? The Senior Spring Frolic?

DANIEL

She's good at getting old bones up and moving.

BRITT

I'll bet.

DANIEL

He thinks he sprained his ankle.

SARA

Sprained or *strained*?

DANIEL

There's a difference?

BRITT

Heck, yeah.

DANIEL

(DANIEL examines BRITT's ankle)

What do you think?

BRITT

DANIEL
This hurt?

BRITT
Yeah.

DANIEL
How 'bout this?

BRITT
Geez!

DANIEL
You take your body for granted, Doc.

BRITT
I've never been one for exercise.

DANIEL
Hey, I read *Othello*. Well, part of it.

BRITT
And?

DANIEL
Dude was intense.

SARA
Yes, he goes from noble lover to raving killer.

DANIEL
And that Iago! Some bastard!

(DANIEL squeezes BRITT's ankle)

BRITT
Ouch!

DANIEL
He's cool!

BRITT
Do you get pleasure out of that?

DANIEL
It's just a twist. You'll live.

BRITT
Feels swollen.

DANIEL
Rice should do the trick.

BRITT
Rice?

SARA
Rest. Ice. Compression. Elevation.

DANIEL
(Giving SARA the "thumbs up")
Nice, babe!

SARA
I have an old pair of crutches.

BRITT
The final blow!

DANIEL
Nah, he won't need crutches.

BRITT
Years ago they would have wrapped it in an elastic bandage
and sent you on your way.

DANIEL
Ah, yes...Years ago!

BRITT
What? What's that?

SARA
(TO BRITT)
He's obnoxious, that's what.

DANIEL
You boomers, man!

BRITT

'Scuse me?

DANIEL

You guys aren't good with change, are you?

BRITT

Who?

DANIEL

Must be tough, living past your sell-date.

SARA

(Nervously)

Anybody want lunch?

BRITT

Sell-date?

DANIEL

As in, "You'll never play for the Yankees."

SHERRY

(To us)

There was a real strong chance of that happening!

DANIEL

You'll never become president, never invent the wheel...

BRITT

(To SARA)

Who is he this time?

DANIEL

You'll never write the great American *play*.

SHERRY

(To us)

The odds aren't in his favor there, either.

DANIEL

You hear the flapping wings of the angel of death and you are...

SHERRY
(To BRITT)

Hold it, hold it!

BRITT

What now?

SHERRY
The flapping wings of the angel of death?
BRITT

So?

SHERRY
Do you really think this...this...? (She gestures toward DANIEL)

DANIEL
Careful.

SHERRY
So out of character!

DANIEL
Exactly what I thought.

SARA
You did not.

DANIEL
Did!

SHERRY
I don't believe this whole scene.

BRITT
Why? What else?

SHERRY
First of all, she wouldn't take the old guy back to her place.

SARA
He's hurt.

SHERRY
It would only make *golden* boy more suspicious.

DANIEL

You know, I thought that, too.

SARA

You did not.

DANIEL

Did!

BRITT

She figures he can help with the ankle.

SHERRY

Like she'd want to hold a match to this boy's fuse!

DANIEL

Yeah, he beat the *crap* outta her eight pages ago! Come on!

BRITT

What do you suggest?

SHERRY

If you still want to keep this scene...?

BRITT

I need it.

SHERRY

Well, put it right after the scene where the professor meets the boyfriend.

DANIEL

That could work.

BRITT

Wait, wait, wait!

SARA

Sure! He meets the boyfriend, he hurts his ankle, *then* she gets beat up.

BRITT

I dunno.

SHERRY

Try it.

BRITT

It's not that easy.

SHERRY

You're acting like you gotta move a ton of bricks! You click on "edit", you move the text. We're not even talking carbon paper here.

(BRITT flips through the pages of the script)

BRITT

What's that last line?

DANIEL

I say, "I'm so sexy..."

SARA

Yeah, and I say, "Put your pants on, genius."

BRITT

Okay, okay! (He reads) They run in place.

(BRITT puts the script down and runs in place with SARA)

SARA

Trust me.

BRITT

What?

SARA

It gets easier.

BRITT

When?

SARA

After a while.

BRITT

Uh huh.

SARA

But...

BRITT
Yeah?

SARA
You gotta get out there everyday.

BRITT
Where?

SARA
Out there!

BRITT
Okay.

SARA
Build up your endurance.

BRITT
Ow ow ow! (He grabs his ankle)

SARA
You okay?

BRITT
Call nine-one-one!

(BRITT flops onto the sofa next to SHERRY)

DANIEL
Then I come in, fix the ankle, yadda yadda... "Tough one!
Living past your sell date"...blah, blah, blah...(To SARA) So
you doin' intellectuals now?

SARA
Puh-leeze.

DANIEL
Into smart guys?

SARA
The only reason...

DANIEL
Smart old guys!

SARA

The reason I...

DANIEL

Stuffy books? The thea-tuh? Afternoon tea?

SARA

(To SHERRY)

I think it works.

DANIEL

It cooks!

SHERRY

(Taking a bow)

Please hold your applause until the end.

(BRITT looks at his watch and picks up the script)

BRITT

Good! Alright, let's keep this moving guys.

SHERRY

(To us)

He's anxious to get to the next scene.

BRITT

What do you mean?

SHERRY

I know.

BRITT

Know what?

SHERRY

I listen.

BRITT

Yeah, yeah, you *glean*.

SARA

(To BRITT)

I dreamed about you last night.

SHERRY
(To us)

See?

BRITT
(To us)

She dreamed about *me*!

SARA
Wonder what that's about?!

BRITT
What was I doing?

SARA
We were running, but you weren't *you*, and I wasn't *me*.

BRITT
(To us)
How did I look, I wonder? Old? (To SARA) Did I look...?

SARA
You looked like...*you*. But it was weird.

BRITT
(To us)
Fat? (To SARA) Did I look *fat*?

SARA
I thought you were my father.

SHERRY
Hah!

SARA
But *he* was my *mother*. Not normal.

BRITT
(To us)
Oh my God, she sees me as old! And fat!

SARA
Then we stopped running and we were swimming. Way, way out in the ocean. High waves.

BRITT
(To us)
No one has seen me in swim trunks in, oh...at least...

(SARA moves closer to BRITT)

SARA
You weren't wearing any. In my dream.

BRITT
Great! She saw me naked.

(SARA puts her arms around BRITT)

SARA
And then we were in this *huge* bed...Big as a football field.
SHERRY
Okay! (She rises and comes forward) Intermission!

BRITT
There are still a few pages left of act one...

SHERRY
I'm ready for a break.

DANIEL
I could use a drink.

SARA
I'm in.

DANIEL
These lights!

SHERRY
I know, they make you sweat.

SARA
And I think the heat wave is going to continue for at least one more act.

BRITT
(To us)
Thank you for that weather report, Sara...Now here's Sherry with tonight's theatre review. (To SHERRY) Sherry?

SHERRY
(To us)
This guy can't just write his smarmy play, get it out of his system, and file it away in a dark drawer somewhere!

Noooo! He has to hang his dirty laundry out in public and try to elevate his material and get all *tony* and *intellectual* about the *mind* versus the *body* and get very deep-dish about *age* and *youth* and then dust it all with theatrical conceits, a sprinkling of clever tricks and flourishes, a dash of Beckett, a pinch of Mamet, a sprig of...(With a lot of "echt") Brecht!...The garage-sale school of playwriting!...Gobs of style appropriated from everyone from Albee to...to...What's a playwright begins with Z? (BRITT, SARA and DANIEL give this some thought and then dismiss it with a shrug) He uses a play-within-a-play structure as an excuse to bid the three unities *adieu* and he throws in this parody of Othello lest we forget he's a *pro-fess-ah*. And he ends it all with a double-bottomed *denouement* that, trust me, will have you scratching your head all the way down Sycamore.

BRITT

(To us)

That about wraps it up. From *our* house to *your* house...

SHERRY

(To us)

I glean.

BRITT

You listen.

SHERRY

I know.

BRITT

(To us)

If you are planning to leave, please be sure to pick up a copy of our season brochure on the way out.

SHERRY

Who are you kidding? The young ones paid for a sitter, the older ones are too damned tired and everybody fought like hell for a parking space. (To us) So go get a drink, have a cookie...

SARA

I'll have a cookie.

SHERRY

(To us)

The restrooms are located...

DANIEL

(To SHERRY)

Hold it a minute! (To SARA) How many calories?

SARA

Huh?

SHERRY

(To DANIEL)

We're going to break here, okay?

DANIEL

(To SHERRY)

Just a second. (To SARA) How many calories today?

BRITT

(To DANIEL)

Let's stick to the script, okay?

DANIEL

Shut the hell up, okay?! (To SARA) How many?

(SARA attempts to add some levity to the situation)

SARA

Not a single Krispy Kreme over twenty-nine hundred.

DANIEL

You did do your carbos, right?

SARA

'Course.

DANIEL

You taste your sweat?

SARA

(Laughing)

No.

DANIEL

I'm not laughing!

(SARA abruptly stops laughing)

SARA

I just...

DANIEL

You sleep with him?

SHERRY

(To BRITT)

Are you going to let this happen?

DANIEL

(He sees the scarf in her pocket)

What's that?

SARA

What's what?

DANIEL

(Pointing to the scarf)

This?

SARA

It's a scarf.

DANIEL

Never saw it before.

SARA

I just got...*bought* it.

DANIEL

Uh huh.

SARA

It helps, you know...

DANIEL

It *helps*?

SARA

Well, yeah...

DANIEL

Helps what?

SARA
They can see you, you know, at night. When you...When I...

DANIEL
He give it you?

SARA
No...Yes.

DANIEL
On your knees, babe.

SARA
What?

(DANIEL shoves SARA and then forces her down on her knees)

DANIEL
On your knees., come on. Now.

SARA
What are you doing?

DANIEL
"If I should die before I wake..."

SHERRY
(TO BRITT)
Stop him!

DANIEL
You know the rest. Say it.

SHERRY
(TO BRITT)
Do something!

DANIEL
Come on, Catholic girl! What's the rest, huh?

BRITT
I told you, the characters have a tendency to take over.

SHERRY
This is ridiculous!

(DANIEL takes the scarf and wraps it around SARA's neck. She struggles and after a few seconds her body goes limp. There is a moment of uncomfortable stillness)

Absurd.

DANIEL

Exactly.

BRITT

Track and Field. End of act one. The lights fade.

(The lights fade)

ACT TWO

(SHERRY stands with script in hand. BRITT, SARA and DANIEL are seated on the sofa)

SHERRY

Thank you for allowing me to hear my words for the very first time.

SARA

It was an honor having the playwright present.

DANIEL

Here, here!

SHERRY

Every writer asks herself, "Does the world really need another play?"

BRITT

There's always room for a good play.

SARA

Definitely.

BRITT

That hasn't changed since the Greeks.

SARA

The ability to *write* is one of God's greatest gifts.

DANIEL

I should have worn *boots*! (SARA elbows DANIEL in the ribs)
Damn!

SHERRY

And *kudos* to my wonderful cast!

DANIEL

What the hell's a *kudo*?

BRITT

It's like an accolade.

DANIEL

Well, a couple of *kudos* and a tall glass of accolade
to...whoever.

SHERRY

And allow me say that I love your outfits.

SARA

Just off the rack stuff.

DANIEL

Outta my drawer.

BRITT

I got this for Christmas, oh, I dunno how long ago!

SHERRY

I bought mine special.

(There is an uncomfortable silence)

DANIEL

Nice.

BRITT

(Tentative)

Yes, yes. Very...nice.

Uh, Mom?

SARA

Yes?

SHERRY

Lose the scarf.

SARA

Lose the scarf?

SHERRY

Uh huh.

SARA

Doesn't go?

SHERRY

With that outfit? No. (*To DANIEL*) Don't you agree?

SARA

What am I, the fashion police? (*SARA elbows him again*)

DANIEL

Well, I'll...take...it off.

SHERRY

Those elbows are lethal, man!

DANIEL

They're flexed between eighty and one hundred and thirty degrees.

(SHERRY removes the scarf and carefully places it in the sofa)

SHERRY

Better?

SARA

Much.

SARA

Well, let's get started.

SHERRY

SARA

Mom, wouldn't it be great if your script got produced?

SHERRY

I won't even dream that dream for awhile.

SARA

You never know!

SHERRY

I have some rewriting to do.

SARA

I love the character of the girl.

DANIEL

Because you played her.

SARA

No, because she's sweet, vulnerable. An actress can do a lot with her.

DANIEL

So why didn't you?

SARA

Such a funny man.

BRITT

Can we get this show on the road before we forget what we heard?

SHERRY

Okay! (She reads from the script) Act Two. A play in four short scenes.

DANIEL

Short! Yes!

SHERRY

Let me set the stage, okay?

DANIEL

Sorry.

SHERRY

Sherry stands with script in hand. Britt, Sara and Daniel are seated on the sofa. (To us) You're gonna love this. It gets a bit tricky.

BRITT

Not crazy about *tricky*.

SHERRY

Scene One: "Rising Action".

(They each go to a corner to stretch and warm-up. DANIEL comes forward and speaks to us)

DANIEL

Rising action is to *drama* what warming-up is to *running*. The benefits of proper stretching include reduced muscle soreness after running and better athletic performance. Before the race, don't forget to stretch your legs, hips, back and, uh...your, uh...groin.

SHERRY

Very good, Daniel.

DANIEL

I listen.

BRITT

He gleans.

SHERRY

I know.

DANIEL

(To SHERRY)

Can I see the script a sec? (SHERRY hands the script to DANIEL. He skips to the last page)

BRITT

How long we in for?

DANIEL

Looks like around twenty, thirty pages, give or take.

BRITT

How many was Act One?

(DANIEL shuffles through the script)

DANIEL

Fifty-seven.

SARA

Oh! (To us) Please turn off your cell phones.

BRITT

(To us)

Beepers.

DANIEL

(To us)

And candy wrappers.

SARA

(To us)

No talking.

BRITT

(To us)

Singing.

DANIEL

(To us)

Or farting.

SHERRY

(To us)

Your patience will be rewarded with stimulating theatre.

BRITT

(To us)

Thank you!

SHERRY

Okay! Comments? Suggestions?

SARA

Comments?

DANIEL

Suggestions?

SHERRY

Feedback? My play?

(There is a long uncomfortable silence)

BRITT

(To the point)

It doesn't start.

SHERRY

What doesn't?

BRITT

Your play.

SHERRY

Of course it starts. What do you mean it doesn't start?

BRITT

There's too much...*banter*.

SARA

He means in the beginning.

SHERRY

The professor and his wife?

BRITT

It's like you're setting yourself up for bad reviews or something.

DANIEL

Yeah, it was kinda fancy, you know? Too, uh...

BRITT

Elitist?

DANIEL

Whatever.

BRITT

Just trying to help you articulate.

DANIEL

I can ar-tic-u-late on my own, thanks!

SARA
(*To DANIEL*)

You didn't like the beginning because you didn't have anything to do.

DANIEL

No! Wrong!

SHERRY

Sometimes the characters take over. They start chatting...

BRITT

Playwright's say that, but...

SHERRY

Before you know it, the inmates are in charge of the asylum.

BRITT

At least you didn't deliver a sit-com script, dear. When they give you lined paper, write the *other* way.

DANIEL

What's wrong with sit-coms?

BRITT

At theatre prices?

DANIEL

If Shakespeare were around today, he'd be writing sit-coms.

BRITT

Oh, spare me!

DANIEL

Sure, stuff like *Everybody Loves Romeo, Ally MacBeth...*
(SHERRY, BRITT and SARA are horrified. They spin three times and spit)

Sorry! *Ally* "The Scottish Play"!

SHERRY

Next time, I'll recruit people I *don't* know for this! I should have written a play about writing a play about writing a play!

SARA

Mom, you always said that plays, movies and food need to be walked off.

BRITT

To aid the digestion.

DANIEL

Both physical *and* mental.

SARA

So let's all go for a walk.

DANIEL

(Stretching out on the sofa)

Wake me when it's over.

BRITT

I'm not up to going for a walk at this hour.

DANIEL

Then again, some of us could use the exercise.

BRITT

(To DANIEL)

Keep developing your body and just let your *mind* go to hell.

SHERRY

We're going to stay right here and talk about my play.

SARA

Then we should do something physical afterwards.

DANIEL

I have an idea.

SARA

Not *that* physical.

DANIEL

Not what I meant.

SARA

That's all men think about.

BRITT

How sexist!

SARA

Look at the old guy in Mom's play. Perfect example.

BRITT

Old guy?!

SHERRY

This is good! What's your take on him?

SARA

His middle-age hormones are sparking and he wants to...*boink*...

DANIEL

Boink?

SARA

...the young girl.

BRITT

He wants to *help* her!

SARA

Oh, puh-leeze!

BRITT

He does.

SARA

You are so naïve!

DANIEL

If he did want to help her he didn't do a very good job.

SHERRY

Does he love her, you think?

SARA

Nah! I think he loves his wife.

SHERRY

You do?

SARA

Corny as that sounds.

DANIEL

What purpose does she serve? The wife, I mean?

SARA

What purpose? In the play?

SHERRY

Uh huh.

DANIEL

Pain in the ass.

BRITT

Greek chorus. She says so herself.

SARA

She's a symbol.

SHERRY

Of what?

SARA

Something not achieved, I dunno. She keeps stopping the play.

DANIEL

She keeps stopping *him*.

SHERRY

Yeah, from making a fool of himself!

DANIEL

From realizing his fantasy.

SHERRY

I don't think I meant anything so deep-dish.

SARA

Maybe it was subconscious.

BRITT

He respects her opinion, give the, uh...*old* guy that much.

SHERRY
Ya think?

BRITT
Absolutely.

SHERRY
I wish I could believe that.

DANIEL
The boyfriend was cool.

SARA
Oh, I wonder why.

DANIEL
Like Othello And Iago combined!

BRITT
But, the bit with the scarf...

SHERRY
What about it?

BRITT
Too...Too *Othello*.

SARA
And by the way.

(SARA hits DANIEL across his chest with the back of her hand)

DANIEL
What's that for?

SARA
Could you have maybe choked me for *real*?

DANIEL
What are you talking about?

BRITT
Why, did he hurt you?

DANIEL
I did not *hurt* her!

SARA

Look at my neck!

(BRITT examines SARA's neck)

BRITT

Sherry, did you see her neck?

SHERRY

It wasn't on *purpose*.

DANIEL

I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I got caught up in the moment. The lights, the audience, the horror, the horror!

SARA

See how accidents happen?

BRITT

Who says it was an accident?

DANIEL

(Jumping to his feet)

I humbly apologize for everything I ever did, I apologize for everything I'm ever *going* to do, and I apologize for everything I *never* did. Is everybody happy?

SHERRY

That's quite a list.

DANIEL

(Kneeling down)

Forgive me and I promise to be a good boy, forever and ever and ever...

BRITT

How moving to witness this turning point in a young delinquents life.

SHERRY

(To us)

Scene Two: "The Turning Point."

(They each go to a corner to stretch and warm-up. SARA comes forward and speaks to us)

SARA

During this period of the race you want to establish a rhythm of pace and follow your plan to provide the shortest, most obstacle free route to the finish. Many runners use this time to socialize with others.

SHERRY

Thank you, Sara!

DANIEL

(Yawning, under his breath)

I hate this.

SHERRY

Any other suggestions?

BRITT

Wait, wait! What did he say?

DANIEL

Huh?

BRITT

Didn't you hear what he said?

SHERRY

What?

BRITT

He said he *hated* it. He said he hated your play?

SARA

He did not.

BRITT

(To us)

You heard him, right? (To SHERRY) They heard him.

SHERRY

You misunderstood.

BRITT

Here.

(BRITT takes the script out into the audience. He selects an audience member, opens the script and shows

him/her the line in question. The line, "I HATE THIS", is written in very large type on the page)

Audience member, will you read this, please?

(After the audience member reads the line, BRITT closes the script and walks smugly back on stage)

I rest my case.

SHERRY
(To DANIEL)

Do you really hate it?

DANIEL
What I said was...

BRITT
Ah! He's trying to twist his neck out of the noose!

DANIEL
Listen! What I said was, "I hate this whole..."

BRITT
Play! He said he hates your whole play?

DANIEL
No, no, no, I hate this...*feedback*...thing!...I hate this whole *feedback* thing!

BRITT
Not what it sounded like to me. (To SARA) Did it sound like that to you?

DANIEL
(To BRITT)
You know what I meant! (To the others) He knows what I meant!

SARA
You made your point, Dad.

BRITT
I'm trying to reason with a sophomore!

DANIEL
I'm a senior!

BRITT
Enough said.

DANIEL
You boomers, man!

SHERRY
(To DANIEL)
Careful, I'm closer to his age than I am to yours.

DANIEL
You guys had the track all to yourselves.

BRITT
I do love *sports* analogies!

DANIEL
And you hit the wall!

BRITT
Hit the wall? (To SHERRY) What is he talking about?

DANIEL
Yeah, your whole generation *bonked*!

BRITT
That makes sense.

DANIEL
You are so jealous of us, man, because we're getting all the goodies.

SARA
Guys?!

DANIEL
And we're guilt free about it!...And we're computer literate.

BRITT
That's a plus!

DANIEL
And we're built for speed and we love rock music...

BRITT
You're making me sooo envious!

DANIEL
And we love television!

BRITT
Now ya got me!

DANIEL
And we love *sex*!

SARA
Enough.

DANIEL
Sex, sex, sex, sex, sex, sex, sex!

SHERRY
Daniel!

DANIEL
We love it and we get *lots* of it!

BRITT
(To SHERRY, with a nod to SARA)
Where does he think *she* came from?

DANIEL
The corporate geeks want us so bad they're recruiting us on *beaches*, for crissake's!

BRITT
Bully for Corporate America.

(DANIEL cups his hand to his ear)

DANIEL
Listen. Shh...That is definitely the sound of your phone *not* ringing!

BRITT
You're not worth my time.

DANIEL
You wanna go outside right now?

BRITT

Sure, settle everything with force.

DANIEL

That's right! You only hit *women*!

BRITT

(To SARA)

Will you call off your dog, please!

DANIEL

He hates me because I'm young and beautiful.

BRITT

That's it! Some Roman Emperor takes it upon himself to invent a calendar...

DANIEL

And now for today's history lesson!

BRITT

...that ages everyone by one year each time the earth revolves around the sun...!

DANIEL

Poor baby!

BRITT

...and we all have to go along with it!

DANIEL

Poor baby *boomer*!

SHERRY

(To DANIEL)

I didn't think *age* mattered that much to you.

(DANIEL moves affectionately towards SHERRY)

DANIEL

Sorry, babe. I'm just tired of being the third wheel around here.

BRITT

The expression is "*fifth* wheel".

SARA

(To DANIEL)

Wait!...Did you just call my mother *babe*?!

SHERRY

(To us)

Scene Three: "The Climax".

(They each go to a corner to stretch and warm-up.
Britt comes forward and speaks to us)

BRITT

(To us)

This is by far the most demanding part of the race. If you have prepared adequately and followed your plan, you should have no difficulty. This is where you realize that you are going to finish. And finishing *is* winning.

SARA

(To DANIEL)

Now explain!

DANIEL

Explain what?

(SARA takes the script and reads)

SARA

Daniel: Sorry, *babe*. I'm just tired of being the third...

BRITT

Fifth.

SARA

...wheel around here.

SHERRY

All he meant was...

SARA

I'd like him to explain, okay?

DANIEL

This is getting a little too freaky here.

BRITT

I think the answer is in here, isn't it? (He takes the script)

SHERRY

We promised we'd stick to the script.

BRITT

Did we? (He shuffles through the pages of the script) Here we go...(He reads) Somewhere on campus...blah, blah, blah...Okay!...Sherry you are over here...and... (To DANIEL) You! Here. Now let's see how this plays.

(SHERRY and DANIEL are positioned uncomfortably nose-to-nose)

SHERRY

I don't want to.

DANIEL

This is totally bogus!

BRITT

You know you want to play it.

SHERRY
(To SARA)

Let's go for that run.

BRITT

Sherry to Daniel: "I hope I haven't misrepresented..."

SARA

What's...What...what are we doing?

SHERRY
(To BRITT)

I'll never forgive you.

BRITT

"I hope I haven't misrepresented..."

SHERRY
(To DANIEL)

I hope...

BRITT

"I hope I haven't..."

SHERRY
(*Angrily*)

I know the line! (*To DANIEL*) I hope I haven't misrepresented my motives. I'm not, uh...what is the term?

DANIEL

Uh...Line?

BRITT

"Hitting...?"

DANIEL

Hitting on me?

SHERRY

You're very sexy.

DANIEL

I, uh...I don't think I want to get involved in a student/teacher *thing*.

SHERRY

Give me a chance.

DANIEL

Why should I?

SHERRY

Experience.

DANIEL

Okay.

SHERRY

Mature.

DANIEL

Alright.

SHERRY

Better sex.

DANIEL

Look, I can get all the girls I want.

Better grade. SHERRY

I see. DANIEL

I didn't meant to sound... SHERRY

It's too risky, man. DANIEL

You're not the only one taking a chance here. SHERRY

What if?...You know. DANIEL

She won't find out. *I'm* not going to tell her. SHERRY

Will someone tell me! SARA

You have a place? SHERRY

No. You? DANIEL

How 'bout right here? SHERRY
(Looking around)

Here? DANIEL

Grass. SHERRY

It's wet. DANIEL

I'll get on top. SHERRY

DANIEL

We'll be seen.

SARA

WHAT IS HAPPENING HERE!

BRITT

You see, Act Two makes complete nonsense of Act One.

SHERRY

That's called *life*.

BRITT

We were led to believe that this play is about Britt reading *his* play to Sherry about Britt's love for Sara and Sara's relationship with Daniel, right? When, in fact, Act Two reveals the play to be about Sherry reading *her* play to Britt about her love for Daniel and his relationship with Sara. (To us) What do you make of that, playgoers?

DANIEL

So, this is, what? A big put on, is that what you're saying?

BRITT

(To us)

And you beautiful people out there in the dark, you sat there dutifully expecting a *real* play.

DANIEL

What? There's really no play here? Look, I have tons of stuff I'd rather be doing, okay?

BRITT

There's a play here, alright. A very clever one.

SARA

I think I'm going to be sick.

BRITT

(To us)

Your mother is sending us a message through her medium of choice.

SARA

(To SHERRY)

How could you?!

BRITT

And she can't just get this little "revenge play" out of her system and then shove it away in a dark place somewhere. Nooo, she has to hang her dirty laundry out in public...

SHERRY

I can't believe she could do this to me!

BRITT

And then try to elevate her material and get all...*pretentious!*

DANIEL

(*To SARA*)

This is no big deal, really. I can explain.

SARA

You can *explain!*

BRITT

Then she *perfumes* the whole mess with gobs of style from everyone from ...from... Aeschylus to...to...Zindel! (*To us*) Paul. Pulitzer Prize for *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds*. I lost some gray matter on that one!

SHERRY

Playwright's write about what they know.

BRITT

Then you shouldn't have written about your present life, dear. You don't know what it's about yet.

SARA

Anybody have a cigarette?

BRITT

You don't smoke.

SARA

I need...*something!*

DANIEL

You're in training.

SARA

I'm gonna be sick.

SHERRY

Please listen.

SARA

I'M GONNA BE SICK! (She withdraws to another part of the stage)

BRITT

What is it about *this* particular guy that made you so stupid?

DANIEL

Maybe she wanted a guy who wouldn't hit her.

BRITT

Mind your own business, frat-boy!

SHERRY

He's a symphony of muscles, tendons, joints and fibers.

DANIEL

It's too late. Too...late.

(SHERRY collapses to her knees. BRITT and DANIEL withdraw.)

SARA re-enters the scene. She picks up the scarf from the sofa. Now, however, the scarf has become one very long piece of fabric that SARA pulls from between the sofa cushions as if she were a magician pulling it out of her sleeve. This gesture should be presented with much theatrical bravado.

SARA approaches SHERRY and twists the fabric around her neck.

SHERRY struggles, but after a few seconds her body goes limp.

There is a moment of uneasy silence)

BRITT

(To us)

Scene Four.

DANIEL

(To us)

"Falling Action."

SARA

(To us)

Cooling down.

DANIEL

(To us)

Remember, do not stop abruptly. Jog or walk ten minutes or so to allow your blood pressure to return to normal.

(DANIEL massages SARA's shoulders and neck)

A massage feels great and helps relax your muscles.

BRITT

Writing a play is like running a marathon. You start out hoping for a fantastic experience...

(BRITT helps SHERRY to her feet)

SHERRY

And then you pray just to reach your destination.

DANIEL

Steve Prefontaine, possibly America's greatest long-distance runner, said, "A race is a work of art. I don't just go out there and run. I like to give people watching something exciting."

BRITT

Eugene O'Neill, possibly America's greatest playwright, said, "The difficult is properly our special task, or we have no good reason for existing."

SARA

Whether you are watching a play...

SHERRY

Or watching a footrace.

DANIEL

The audience shares a space in time...

BRITT

With living...

Breathing... SARA

Actors. SHERRY

Who take you somewhere... DANIEL

You've never been before. BRITT

People out there from... SARA

Different locations SHERRY

Pay good money... DANIEL

To gather in a room... BRITT

Watching other people... SARA

Stand in a lighted space... SHERRY

And pretend to be... DANIEL

Other people. BRITT

Look, they're getting anxious. SARA

They sense the end is near. SHERRY

Each one wants to be the first out the door. DANIEL

Another hurdle.

BRITT

Get into their cars.

SARA

Leave us behind.

SHERRY

Edith Wharton said..

DANIEL

Edith Wharton *wrote*.

BRITT

Americans want to get away from an amusement...

SARA

Even more quickly than they want to get *to* it.

SHERRY

How 'bout we go for that run.

DANIEL

We're dressed for it.

BRITT

Then we can come home and start rewriting.

SARA

We?

SHERRY

See, the characters *do* have a tendency to take over.

DANIEL

Okay, everybody. Get into starting position.

BRITT

Like this.

SARA

Right foot behind you. Bend your left knee.

SHERRY

(They are all in starting position)

Ready? DANIEL

On your mark. BRITT

Get set. SARA

Go! SHERRY

(They do not move. The lights fade)

End

Performance rights must be secured before production. For contact information, please see the *Track & Field* information page (click on your browser's "Back" button, or visit www.singlelane.com/proplay/track.html)