

The Sweet Abyss

a play by
Jon Tuttle

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The house and I are all he remembers.
Next month how will he guess that it is winter
And not just entropy, the universe
Plunging at last into its cold decline?
I cannot think of him without a pang.

“The Happy Cat”
Randall Jarrell

THE SWEET ABYSS

The Sweet Abyss premiered at the Trustus Theatre in Columbia, South Carolina, on August 14, 2009. It was directed by Dewey Scott-Wiley. Cast and crew were as follows:

Cass:	Elena Martinez-Vidal
Dori/Caroline:	Elisabeth Gray Heard
Roger/David/Priest/Elias:	Joe Morales
Izzy:	Holly

Artistic Director:	Jim Thigpen
Managing Director:	Kay Thigpen
Technical Director:	Larry McMullen
Assistant Technical Director:	Brandon McIver
Graphic Artist/Prod. Manager:	Chad Henderson
Set and Light Design:	Chet Longley
Costumes/Makeup:	Robin Gottlieb
Props Master:	Nate Herring
Stage Manager:	Jane Hearn
Assistant Stage Manager:	Liz Brownlee
Sound Board Operator:	Tyler Jones
Videographer/Photographer:	Jason Stelman

Acknowledgments:

Whatever one might make of it, the work of Rita Reynolds, Temple Grandin and Elizabeth Severino was important to the writing of this play. Thanks also to my brother Jeff, who gets it, to my wife Cheryl, who gets me, and to the cast and crew of the Trustus production (especially E.G.) for not clubbing me to death.

An earlier version of *The Sweet Abyss* was published in *Regional Best, 2011* (Level 4 Press, 2010.) Productions of *The Sweet Abyss* should be of the version contained herein.

Characters:

CASS	40's. Desperately pretty, maybe. Fading, probably. Clingy, a bit.
DORI	Her daughter, 20ish. Fragile, sort of goth, a little heavy.
ROGER	Middle-aged.
IZZY	A cat. Yes. A live cat, preferably very mellow. The script refers to him as white with blue eyes, but he can be any color.

The following can be doubled by the actors playing Dori and Roger:

DAVID	Middle-aged, quirky, opaque, uncomfortable.
a PRIEST	Catholic, any age.
CAROLINE	Middle-aged, earthy, flowy, genteel.
ELIAS	Older, blind, scary, maybe wheelchair-bound.

Setting:

The present, in the American south, primarily a lower-middle-class home suggested by a couch and a table, with one exit to the kitchen, another to the bedrooms. Other venues—a hospital room, a veterinarian's office, a farmhouse porch—are minimally suggested.

The passing of time—hours, days or weeks—is indicated in the script by quick shifts or changes in lighting. These may also be accompanied by tableaux—the actors freezing for just a moment—and/or a sound cue, for instance a single note on the piano.

THE SWEET ABYSS

SCENE ONE

At rise: area lighting up on Cass, lying on a hospital gurney, covered by a sheet. She's in her 40's and reasonably attractive--but too made-up for a colon-oscopy. She lies on her side, facing us, groggy. Long pause as she looks out blankly—and somewhat scared. Finally a doctor, Roger, enters wearing a white lab coat and snapping on latex gloves. He passes in front, stops, then bends to look at her.

ROGER. ... Well. You're still awake.

CASS. *(She has a slight southern accent)* ... Hello.

ROGER. Helllooo. Hasn't she started the drip?

CASS. ... I think so.

ROGER. You're not fighting it, are you?

CASS. Umm.

ROGER. You can't win, and you'll only give your-self a hangover.

CASS. I—

ROGER. I'm Doctor Roger Bush. I'll be your spelun-ker. I do about a thousand of these a day, so I don't want you to worry. And you are... *(He consults a clipboard.)* Cassandra.... Cassandra.... Hey! I know you! You work at uh, at at at, uh, Fujiyama! The uh, yeah! With the, with the, and the— *(He means a kimono and a wig.)* You're a, you're a, a, a Geisha girl! Yeah!

CASS. *(Pleasantly)* Hostess.

ROGER. Hostess, sure! I've seen you there! My wife and I go there all the time! Well: my ex-wife. My *future* ex-wife. Actually we haven't been there in a quite a while. We finalize in fifty-three days. But, back in the saddle, right?

CASS. *(Weakly)* Uh-huh.

ROGER. I think Japanese gals are sexy as hell.

CASS. *(Flattered, but)* Uh-huh-huh.

ROGER. *(Back to the clipboard)* Severe cramping, constipation and bloody diarrhea: that's no fun. We get this a lot in women your age. Usually it's something obvious, like a dead gerbil or a bag of heroin, but in your case, it might just be a pearl. *(He has lifted the sheet to look at her.)*

CASS. I—a—!

ROGER. Colonoscopy jokes. Got a buttload. “Lou-isisiana tag-looks like this one swam up from the gulf.” A gastroenterologist has got to have a sense of humor. What does *your* husband do?

CASS. My husb...?

ROGER. Probably a big shot senator or something, right? I was going to run for office but nobody would shake my hand. Will he be taking you home? Cass-andra. Hello? Cassandra? *(Pause: he looks at her—admiringly. Then the lights abruptly change: time has passed. He removes his gloves.)*

ROGER. Cassandra? Wake up. Wake up, Cassandra.

CASS. *(Groggy)* Hmm?

ROGER. We’re all done.

CASS. What?

ROGER. We’re all done. You had two polyps—and your colon’s a big bloody tube sock. Laxatives are the very worst way to burn the fat young lady.

CASS. Um, pol...poly...?

ROGER. Polyps. Fleshy outgrowths that attach themselves to the epithelium—like barnacles on a sperm whale. You’ll want to stay off your feet for the rest of the day, get plenty of fluids, and for God’s sake lay off the Ex-Lax. You’ll wind up with osteomalacia. *(Roger has removed her sheet; Cass wears clothes underneath—a sexy outfit, in fact, or something too young for her. He presses a foil pill sampler into her hand and escorts her from the table.)*

ROGER. And here. If the pain gets too bad, take one of these. Who’s taking you home?

CASS. Oste...?

ROGER. Osteomalacia. Your bones get spongy, gotta ride around in a scooter. But I don’t want you to worry. Is your husband taking you home?

CASS. Umm. Dori.

ROGER. Dori. Is that your friend or—?

CASS. How can I be done?

ROGER. Will she be taking care of you?

CASS. DORI.

ROGER. Soooo...you don’t have a husband?

CASS. My husband?

ROGER. Yes.

CASS. Michael.

ROGER. Michael? That’s his name?

CASS. *(Trying to recall)* No, no, he...he’s...gone now.

ROGER. You're husband is....

CASS. Yes.

ROGER. Okay then! Lovely meeting you! I'll call in a few days with that lab report. Maybe I'll come see you at work! How about that? Ho-ho-hokay! And now: "once more into the breach, dear friends." *(With that, Roger waves/salutes and is gone. The lights narrow around Cass, who stands dazed, in a void. Pause)*

CASS. He's gone. *(Pause. Then, in the darkness, we hear Dori's voice.)*

DORI. *(Off)* ...Mama? ...Mama? *(The lights return and Dori enters. She's 20ish, kind of Goth, a little heavy and wears a garish crucifix. She'll collect Cass and steady her.)* Mama? ...Are you coming?

CASS. Oh. Dori. Hi.

DORI. Come on. You're almost there.

CASS. How did I...how long was I in there? ...Dori?

DORI. Hm?

CASS. I asked you a question.

DORI. No you didn't.

CASS. I asked you how long I was in there.

DORI. Over an hour. And no you didn't.

CASS. What a strange feeling. Like...like when a...a record skips, and you think..."I missed that song," but...you didn't. Or, or there was no song. It was just a, like a...a hole. Do you know what I mean? Dori? DORI?

DORI. What? *(The lights change: they are now in their home—a couch with a table in front of it. On the table is a plate covered with foil. It will remain on the table and yield a variety of delicious dessert items.)*

CASS. Would you listen please?

DORI. To what?

CASS. I was trying to tell you. It's as if everything was... was just gone. But then it was the same again, except for that...that *hole*. How did we get home?

DORI. How do you think we got home?

CASS. I feel like I'm drunk. *(Dori places Cass on the couch.)*

DORI. You want a Mountain Dew?

CASS. Where's Izzy? *(Dori sees the pill sampler, takes it.)*

DORI. What's this?

CASS. I don't know.

DORI. Vicodin?

CASS. I can't drink Mountain Dew.

DORI. He gave you Vicodin?

CASS. I'm gonna be sick.

DORI. Just sit down.

CASS. --Izzy?

DORI. I made you some brownies.

CASS. Where is he? *(Dori pockets the Vicodin and exits to the kitchen. Pause.)*

Dori? Where are you? (Cass takes a brownie, eats it and tries to get her bearings.) I can't eat these. Get these away from me. (She puts it down and looks around, mostly on the couch.) Dori? Izzy? Hello? (Then, still dazed and somewhat troubled, she rediscovers the brownie, picks it up and finishes it. Dori returns—but from the bedrooms—with a cat—Izzy—and hands him to Cass.)

DORI. He was in your closet.

CASS. Izzy! There you are! Why are you hiding? Why is he hiding? *(Cass cuddles up with Izzy and a bra.)*

DORI. He bit a hole in your Water Bra so now one boob is flat.

CASS. Where's my Mountain Dew?

DORI. You didn't want any.

CASS. Yes I do.

DORI. You said you—

CASS. May I please just this one time have one Mountain Dew please! *(Dori huffs off to the kitchen.)* And some ice, please.

DORI. *(Off)* We're out of ice.

CASS. Can't you buy some?

DORI. *(Off)* I don't have any money.

CASS. Look in my kimono.

DORI. *(Off)* I did. You're broke.

CASS. God. We can't even afford ice. What are we gonna do? *(To Izzy)* What are we gonna do, punkin'? Hmm? I need you right here. I need you right here on the couch. With me. That's right. Right here. *(Pause. Dori returns with a glass of Mountain Dew.)*

DORI. Here.

CASS. What's this?

DORI. It's Mountain Dew.

CASS. I can't drink this.

DORI. You just asked for it.

CASS. Dori, it's fattening.

DORI. It's caffeine. You're supposed to. Doctor said.

CASS. He did?

DORI. Yes. Room temperature. With brownies.

CASS. Oh. Well all right. *(Dori exits to the bedrooms. Cass discovers Izzy there in her arms.)* Well hello, Izzy. Hello. Hello, punkin'. *(And who knows what will happen in this moment? It's live theatre—with a cat. Perhaps Cass will sing a few lilting bars of "You Are My Sun-shine." Probably she'll produce a pipe cleaner from between the cushions and tantalize Izzy with it.)* Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Look what I've got. Uh-huh. Oh! Oh! You want it? You want that, don't you. Hmm? Can't have it. Can't have it. I'm so glad you're here. Uh-huh. You stay here with me. You stay here with me. *(And so on. The moment continues blissfully, the actor improvising as necessary, the lights settling in around Cass and her cat to create a portrait of timeless happiness. Finally, offstage, a phone starts ringing. The lights change: time has passed. Dori returns—this time from the kitchen—with a phone.)*

DORI. Mama?

CASS. ...Hmm?

DORI. ...It's him.

CASS. Who.

DORI. The doctor.

CASS. What doctor?

DORI. The butt doctor.

CASS. Dori! Jesus! *(Cass takes the phone. Elsewhere, special comes up on Roger, on his phone.)* Hello?

ROGER. Cassandra? Roger Bush. Good news: you've got Irritable Bowel Syndrome.

CASS. Now what now?

ROGER. Both polyps were benign.

CASS. Polyps?

ROGER. IBS is a common reaction to bacterial infection and irregular levels of serotonin in the gastro-intestinal tract and can lead to complications like Crohn's disease. But I don't want you to worry. I'm going to prescribe some Lotronex, you'll want to minimize your glutens, and I'd like to see you again, if that's okay.

CASS. Um. Okay.

ROGER. Great! How's Thursday? Around sixish.

CASS. Sixish?

ROGER. I have your address. You wouldn't happen to own a Hibachi, would you?

CASS. A—?

ROGER. That's all right—I've got a wok. I make a mean vegetable mushu.

CASS. Wait...are you....?

ROGER. I can't go out in public, until my divorce is final.

CASS. But.

ROGER. I hope that's okay.

CASS. Umm...uh...okay.

ROGER. Terrific! Terrific! Okay! See you then! Thanks! This is terrific! (*Special out on Roger as he hangs up. Cass thinks...sorting it out.*)

DORI. Polyps?

CASS. Oh. Umm. Yes. They're...benign, though.

DORI. And that's...good, right?

CASS. He's...coming here.

DORI. (*Alarmed*) Here? What for?

CASS. (*Smiles*) ...For dinner.

DORI. What?

CASS. On Thursday.

DORI. What, like a, like a date?

CASS. (*Almost beaming*) At sixish!

DORI. But...I mean...can he do that? I mean, he's a doctor, aren't there like rules or, or—

CASS. I don't know, Dori! How would I know! I don't even know what a mushu is!

DORI. Well.... (*Can't figure that one out*) What about Richard?

CASS. Richard?

DORI. Richard! Richard! Won't he get mad?

CASS. Oh. Pfff. He went back to his thing.

DORI. Just like Bruce.

CASS. Just like Bruce.

DORI. I liked Bruce.

CASS. I didn't.

DORI. Bruce was the one with the tattoos.

CASS. That was Donald. Bruce was fat one that smelled like ham.

DORI. So what happened to Donald?

CASS. (*Sarcastically*) Gosh, Dori, who knows.

DORI. (*Hearing her tone*) ...What's that supposed to mean?

CASS. Don't get defensive.

DORI. What's THAT supposed—

CASS. You know what I'm talking about! ...Dori, look. I don't know how much longer I can do this. I'm not...I'm not so young anymore. You're going to have to...be good.

DORI. I try to be good.

CASS. Try harder. Please. Swear to God, Dori, please, just this once, promise me you'll help me.

DORI. I don't swear to God.

CASS. Oh for Christ's--

DORI. Maybe God would help you if you stopped—

CASS. Knock it off! Just stop it! *(Pause. She composes herself.)* I need you to cut my hair. Nothing drastic, just the ends. Can you do that for me? And I need to borrow some eyeliner. I can't have him see me like this.

DORI. Like *this*?

CASS. And look at this place.

DORI. He stuck a telescope up—

CASS. This is all your stuff. Where's the vacuum? We need to vacuum. There's hair everywhere. Why is there hair everywhere?

DORI. You're pulling it out of him!

CASS. Look at it! It's just coming right out.

DORI. Here. *(Dori takes Izzy, and the lights change: it's another evening. Cass starts primping, maybe pulling perfume and lipstick from her pockets. Dori tries to help.)*

CASS. Oh! And one of your desserts! No. Yes. Something yummy, but low-cal, like, like--

DORI. Truffles.

CASS. No, no, that, that mousse thing, with the layers, or no! I know: those, those--

DORI. Truffles.

CASS. Yes! Good! But small. And, oh: that coffee, that hazelnut stuff that Michael brought—

DORI. Daddy?

CASS. No, I mean, what's his name. The, the—

DORI. Richard.

CASS. No.

DORI. Reggie. Javier. Jean-Claude.

CASS. *(Un-amused)* Just make the coffee and go to your room.

DORI. What?

CASS. Go—do your internet thing. But please don't burn that incense.

DORI. Why?

CASS. Because it smells bad.

DORI. You don't want him to see me. *(Cass heaves an epic sigh.)* You don't want him to even know I exist. You want to hide me from the world like Emily Dickins?

CASS. Dammit, Dori, please! Just this once! Just this once! Please—! *(Cass is seized by a stomach pain. Pause.)*

DORI. Bad one? Maybe you should cancel.

CASS. *(Meaning 'no')* Mm-mmm!

DORI. Want your Ex-Lax?

CASS. Yes. No! What else have we got?

DORI. Vicodin.

CASS. We have Vicodin?

DORI. He gave you some. *(A doorbell rings. Cass holds out her palm; Dori gives her a pill. Cass pops it, washes it down with the Mountain Dew, huffs a few times and pulls herself together.)*

CASS. ...Too much perfume?

DORI. Way.

CASS. Damn right. Okay. Here we go. *(Cass smoothes her outfit and glides somewhat painfully offstage—in the direction of the bedrooms. Dori holds Izzy. The lights change; time passes. From offstage, we hear the sounds of lovemaking: a squeaking bed, groans—especially Roger's. Dori listens, at first disgusted. She looks at the pills in her hand—and pops one, washing it down with some Mountain Dew. She continues to listen, by turns intrigued, then frustrated, so she pops another, sits and cuddles with Izzy. Pause. The lights change: it's the next morning. Roger marches in from the bedrooms wearing a crisp white undershirt and shorts and a prominent wristwatch, drinking coffee. He stops when he sees Dori, who immediately stands and backs away. This is a different Dori; she's woozy—and nervous.)*

ROGER. Oh. Hey. Sorry.

DORI. ...Hi. Um.

ROGER. You all right?

DORI. Uh-huh.

ROGER. I'm uh, I'm Doctor Roger Bush. *(He extends a hand—which she doesn't take.)*

DORI. Hello.

ROGER. And you are...?

DORI. ...I'm what.

ROGER. Your name. *(Longish pause.)*...Is what. *(Now, oddly, Dori effects an English accent. She becomes juve-nile, dramatic, pouty, inappropriate—and is still woozy.)*

DORI. I was named after a small boat.

ROGER. Really.

DORI. A type of flat-bottomed fishing vessel.

ROGER. This is a riddle.

DORI. With high sides and a sharp prow.

ROGER. ...Then you must beeee...Dori! *(She smiles, delightedly)* I figured it was either that or Dinghy.

DORI. *(Doesn't get it)* Would you like a truffle, Richard?

ROGER. No thanks. And it's Roger.

DORI. What's Roger?

ROGER. I'm Roger. You called me Richard.

DORI. Oh. Um. Sorry. Would you like a truffle, Richard? *(Cass enters from the bedroom in a kimono and cock-eyed Geisha wig. It's been a long night. Her southern accent is a bit more pronounced, somehow—more charming, really.)*

CASS. *(To Dori, sweetly but not)* Well. Sweetie. You're up early.

DORI. *(No accent)* Izzy wanted out. Then he wanted in.

CASS. Why don't you take him to your room?

DORI. What are you going to do?

CASS. *(For Roger)* I thought I might poach us some eggs.

ROGER. Actually....

DORI. I love poached eggs.

ROGER. I'm just having coffee, thanks.

DORI. I need some coffee.

CASS. *(Meaningfully)* Dori, dear? ...Hmm? *(Pause. Then Dori exits dejectedly to the bedrooms, carrying Izzy. Cass gives Roger a peck.)* ...I'm sorry. I should have told you about her.

ROGER. Well at least that explains the smell.

CASS. I know. She's going through some...phase, I think. I'm letting her stay here, just for a while, until she—

ROGER. I meant the cat. The whole house reeks of urine.

CASS. ...Oh, no, that's...incense.

ROGER. I think I know what urine smells like.

CASS. May I tempt you with a truffle?

ROGER. Way too rich. Woman your age, you'll get a diverticulum.

CASS. I'm sorry.

ROGER. A diverticulum is a pouch or a sac bulging out from your intestinal wall, like a bubble on a garden hose. Cooked vegetables, whole grain rice, lots of fiber. And somebody's drinking way too much Mountain Dew.

CASS. Dori.

ROGER. She'll regret it when her urethra kinks up and she's peeing in three directions.

CASS. I—

ROGER. Come here. *(She approaches on command, and he nuzzles/fondles her.)*
...You were fantastic.

CASS. ...Was I?

ROGER. You've got a terrific body. For a woman your age.

CASS. I don't usually...DO that, on the--

ROGER. And what an appetite!

CASS. *(Silly)* Rowrr! *(They "mmm" and giggle as they make out. Finally, Cass sneaks a peek at his wristwatch.)*...Oh no, look how late.

ROGER. Hup! Better get my clothes.

CASS. I'll get them! I can get them!

ROGER. Thanks, babe. *(Cass exits to the bedroom. Roger sips his coffee, steps forward and looks out a downstage 'window,' filled with a sense of triumph. Lights change: it's another morning. Dori enters from the kitchen, woozy again.)*

DORI. Oh. I'm sorry. I didn't know you—

ROGER. Dori! Good morning! I haven't seen you for a few weeks.

DORI. Oh. No. I.... *(Again with the English accent)* ...Mummy hides me in the attic.

ROGER. Ha! Right. Are you not feeling well?

DORI. ...It's my medication.

ROGER. Oh? Which?

DORI. All of them. So you and Mummy are an item now.

ROGER. Well, let's just say I saw something in her I admired.

DORI. Care for an éclair?

ROGER. Colonoscopy joke.

DORI. What?

ROGER. "I saw something in her I admired."

DORI. *(No clue)* ...Care for an éclair?

ROGER. No thanks. And you shouldn't eat so much crap.

DORI. Oh, I'm supposed to. It's comfort food. For all the... discomfort.

ROGER. Which discomfort.

DORI. All of it. ...Go ahead. Try one. You'll see. *(She offers the plate. Roger hesitates—but then takes one and eats. Dori takes a bite. It's a very sensuous bite. She luxuriates in it. He watches her.)* ...See? Delicious, aren't they.

ROGER. *(His mouth full)* ...Mmmm!

DORI. Don't you feel better?

ROGER. ...Mm-hmm. *(Dori finishes hers, popping the last bit in her mouth and licking her fingers.)*

DORI. Mmmm! ...Well. Um. Goodbye then, Donald. *(Dori finger-waves and wanders off to the kitchen as Cass returns from the bedroom, still in her kimono, with Roger's neatly-folded clothes and a lint brush.)*

CASS. *(Accent intact)* Izzy slept on them. I'm so sorry.

ROGER. They're covered in hair.

CASS. It'll come right off. I'm so sorry. I can have it dry-cleaned. *(He begins dressing while she lint-brushes his clothes.)*

ROGER. No time for that.

CASS. He's not used to sharing our bed.

ROGER. Yes uh...may I um...I have a question about that.

CASS. Okay.

ROGER. Do you consider me to be a complete moron?

CASS. ...No. Why?

ROGER. Do I look like someone who's easily taken advantage of? Who enjoys being used? For my money? Or my body? Or whatever?

CASS. I don't understand what you're saying.

ROGER. How many men are you seeing?

CASS. What? ...You! One! What do you mean, how—?

ROGER. Because if you're seeing other men I have—

CASS. No, no! Where did you get such a—

ROGER. So who is Richard?

CASS. ...Richard.

ROGER. Or Donald.

CASS. *(She realizes—and loses the accent:)* ...Alright. ...Alright. ...I need to tell you something. There's something I need to tell you. *[Pause.]* ...Dori has...she has... some...severe—

ROGER. You're changing the subject.

CASS. No, no: something happened to her! Those men, there are no other men, they're gone, she gets them all mixed up or...I don't know, I don't know what's wrong with her, she's—

ROGER. She's stoned out of her gourd.

CASS. She is?

ROGER. You mean can't smell it? (*Cass sighs: she gets it now.*) I'm...sorry if I—

CASS. She was such a sweet little girl, Roger. So gentle and...trusting and.... She would smile in her sleep, I used to sit beside her and watch her sleep and...imagine her whole life for her. It was nothing like this.

ROGER. Hey.

CASS. I keep waiting for her to show up, my REAL daughter, the one with a...a ponytail and a tan and boyfriends and...tennis bracelets or a job at the mall or—

ROGER. We'll take her to a shrink. I know a few. Serious gastroenterologists always know a—

CASS. I *did* that. After Michael...her father...ran off. It...

ROGER. ...What.

CASS. ...He was this tall Englishman, and she fell in love with him. I mean she THREW herself at him, she was nine years old, it was the most bizarre—

ROGER. Sure. It's what they call transference. He was taking the place of her father. She was trying to win back his affection.

CASS. But she fawned over him. Shamelessly! We had to stop going. After that it was one guy after another: the cable guy, the carpet cleaner, and some...fantasy person named Mr. Little. She'd talk to him, all the time, she'd carry on long conversations like he was right here with us. I used to have to set a place for Mr. Little.

ROGER. An invisible friend. A coping mechanism for poor social skills.

CASS. Yeah well, one day Mr. Little got decapitated by the mailman. What do they call that? When a child chops the head off her invisible friend? ...She cried so hard I couldn't send her to school. And last year, she had a—an incident, which started this...whole...stupid...religious...thing. (*She has a twinge in her gut. He comes to her.*)

ROGER. ...You okay?

CASS. She says she wants to be a nun! She goes on the internet and confesses all her sins about three times a day!

ROGER. Cass?

CASS. And mine too!

ROGER. Cass. It's all right.

CASS. I can't do this, Roger. I can't...!

ROGER. It's okay. It's okay. ...Does it hurt? *(He gently probes her abdomen.)*

CASS. Ooooh!

ROGER. ...C'mere. C'mere. *(He hugs her, consoles her.)* Do you know what you need?

CASS. What.

ROGER. I know what you need.

CASS. What.

ROGER. ... You need a good esophago-gastro-duo-endoscopy.

CASS. A—?

ROGER. I snake a hose down your throat, take a gander at your duodenum. Ten bucks says peptic ulcer.

CASS. A—?

ROGER. A hole in your gut. Not uncommon in women your age. Usually they're benign, so I don't want you to worry. Call my office. They'll set it up. *(Now dressed, he gives her a peck and a pat and starts off, but then)* Oh, um. Here. *(He pulls some cash out of his wallet and hands it to her.)*

CASS. What's this for?

ROGER. You said you were, you know.

CASS. ...Oh. Thank you.

ROGER. That's all right, babe. You tell me if you need any more. *(He exits to the kitchen. Cass straightens...and smiles. Lights change: time passes. Dori comes storming in from the bedroom holding a broken rosary.)*

DORI. You smashed my rosary!

CASS. Hmm?

DORI. You did this on purpose!

CASS. Did what.

DORI. You *smashed* my rosary!

CASS. It was on your floor.

DORI. It wasn't on my floor, it was on my alter! These are sacred beads!

CASS. So we'll go to Hobby Lobby.

DORI. You can't get these at...Hobby Lobby! These are religious artifacts! You can't get religious artifacts at Hobby Lobby!

CASS. You're not even Catholic, Dori, you're a Methodist!

DORI. I am no Methodist! Methodists are concubines!

CASS. Excuse me?

DORI. I have a soul! I'm a deeply spiritual person! I need my life to mean something! I need love and compassion in my life! *(Dori runs off to the bedroom, hyperventilating.)*

CASS. Well so do I! How about that! Did you ever think of that? So do I! *(Lights change: it's another evening. Roger enters from the kitchen, carrying a small gift box. He removes his tie and starts stripping down.)*

ROGER. Technically, she makes a valid point. Being a Catholic requires much more commitment than being a Protestant. The Catechism provides a better sense of structure than they sell at vacation bible school. And you never hear the term Baptist Intellectual.

CASS. But she's not Catholic! She's a...fanatic!

ROGER. Want me to talk to her?

CASS. Huh!

ROGER. I have a natural rapport with kids. They see me as an authority figure.

CASS. No, I don't want her talking to YOU. God knows what she'll say. *(From behind, he presents her with a small gift box.)* ...What's this?

ROGER. Open it. *(She does—and withdraws a pearl necklace.)*

CASS. *(Accent on)* Oh my God! Oh my—it's gorgeous! Roger!

ROGER. You like it?

CASS. I love it! I don't know what to—! *(Cass will rub them against her teeth.)*

ROGER. They're real.

CASS. This must have cost a fortune.

ROGER. Three polyps and a peri-anal cyst.

CASS. What?

ROGER. Our little secret.

CASS. What is?

ROGER. A little game we play with the insurance companies. Lab gets a kickback, nobody's the wiser.

CASS. I don't know what you mean.

ROGER. That's okay. Come on. *(Down to his underwear or thereabouts, he begins towing her back to the bedroom.)*

CASS. *(The accent fades)* You mean you...lie to your patients?

ROGER. It's not lying. It's a dividend I pay myself for sticking my head up people's butts. Come on.

CASS. Where are we going?

ROGER. Where do you think?

CASS. Shouldn't we have dinner first, or, or—

ROGER. Don't you like the necklace?

CASS. I...well yes, but—

ROGER. So okay. *(And they're gone. The small box remains on the couch. The lights change: time passes. From offstage, we hear the sounds of love making again. Dori enters tentatively from the kitchen, and listens. She seems fascinated—and then lonely, and maybe sits on the couch. Eventually—but suddenly—we hear Roger yell—)...Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ! Get that—! (--and he sweeps back in from the bedroom and starts getting dressed. Cass follows in her kimono, holding Izzy.)*

CASS. Roger, wait, please, I'm sorry.

ROGER. I told you I don't approve of that cat. I've told you that many times.

CASS. He wasn't hurting anything.

ROGER. He was watching me. I can't do it with him watching me. It's like he's judging me.

CASS. I put him on the floor.

ROGER. Where he sat...GLOPPING himself with his—! *(Cass is trying not to smile.)* You know what? Just forget it. Forget it.

CASS. Oh, come on! You're being ridiculous. Come back to bed!

ROGER. Do you see what he's done to your drapes? Or your couch? You let him destroy everything and then you ask ME for MONEY.

DORI. What's going on?

CASS. Dori, go to your room.

ROGER. Your whole house smells like ammonia.

DORI. That's the cat.

CASS. Would you please—!

DORI. I think he's sick. He's walking funny. Like his legs give out.

ROGER. I don't like animals, Cass, I'm sorry. They're filthy, they spread diseases, and it's unhealthy when people form attachments to them.

CASS. You're not leaving.

ROGER. The evening is ruined. Thank you very much. *(Pause. Cass gets misty. Her accent comes back.)*

CASS. ...All right. I understand.

ROGER. ...Well don't cry.

CASS. *(Pathetically submissive:)* No, you're right. You're always right about these things. I'll take him to the vet in the morning. And from now on, I'll lock him in the bathroom. And I'll...I'll mop and vacuum and polish everything. So that it will be clean. For you. When you come back.

ROGER. ... Well all right.

CASS. So you'll... come back?

ROGER. ... We'll see. *(Cass exits somberly to the bedroom with Izzy. Roger finishes getting dressed. Dori suddenly grabs her gut.)*

DORI. ... Oooooo!

ROGER. What is it?

DORI. ... Nothing.

ROGER. Your stomach? *(Dori nods.)* It's all that crap you eat.

DORI. No. It always does this... when I'm upset.

ROGER. Are you upset? *(Dori shakes her head no.)* ... Come here.

DORI. ... I can't.

ROGER. I'm a doctor. Come here. *(He probes her gut gently through the following.)* ... Just relax. ... Can you feel this?

DORI. Oooo. Mmm.

ROGER. ... What are you upset about. Hm?

DORI. ... I can't say.

ROGER. You can trust me.

DORI. Ow. ... I'm fine. ... Ow.

ROGER. ... I don't think your stomach hurts, Dori. I think you're just pretending. I think you're just looking for a reason to tell me something. And that's all right. I understand. ... You're worried that your mother and I are fighting, aren't you. ... You're worried that I might leave.

DORI. ... Ow!

ROGER. Ah. See...? It reminds you of something. Doesn't it. Of someone in your life, long ago.

DORI. *(Flinching:)* Oooo!

ROGER. ... You okay? *(Dori nods. He probes a bit more deeply.)* ... Who? ... Who does it remind you of, Dori? ... Hmmm? Your father maybe? *(Dori pulls away, and then changes to her chipper British persona and chirps.)*

DORI. Why are you getting divorced?

ROGER. Hey.

DORI. Catholics can't get divorced. Once we're married we're married forever. Mormons too, but.

ROGER. ... All right. I'll tell you mine if you tell me yours. Okay?

DORI. ... Okay.

ROGER. ... I don't know why. She.... I don't really understand.

DORI. *(Accent off)* ... I'm sorry.

ROGER. Your turn.

DORI. ...All right. (*Accent on*) ...He...he...he made a big pile of wood. And then he...covered it with leaves and pinecones and old newspapers. And...and he put a lawn chair on top and poured gasoline all over himself and...sat down and...lit a cigar.

ROGER. ...Very funny.

DORI. Actually, he drank one bottle of antifreeze and six bottles of beer, taped himself to a lawn chair and sat there foaming at the mouth until his liver collapsed.

ROGER. Your mother says he left. She says he abandoned you.

DORI. ...Well she would, wouldn't she. That's how she copes. She's a very fragile person. She needs me to take care of her.

ROGER. I think you're very sad inside, Dori. You're trying to fill up a very big empty space. You should try to make some friends, maybe join the Rotary or something.

DORI. ...I can't have friends.

ROGER. Everyone needs friends.

DORI. I can't.

ROGER. Why not? ...Tell me.

DORI. ...I don't get it.

ROGER. ...What.

DORI. (*Accent off*) ...Any of it. All of it. I don't know how...to be.

ROGER. Be what.

DORI. Just...(be). (*Pause.*)

ROGER. ...You could go to school. You could try that. There's a good little community college right up the—

DORI. I know. I went there last year. I had to quit.

ROGER. What for?

DORI. (*Accent on*) ...I got knocked up.

ROGER. Right.

DORI. So I had to come home.

ROGER. So where's the kid.

DORI. She made me...give him away.

ROGER. Adoption.

DORI. Whatever.

ROGER. Best thing, probably.

DORI. (*Accent off*) I don't think so. Not a day goes by I don't think about him. And he doesn't even know I'm here. That's the worst thing. He doesn't know I'm

thinking about him, all the time. *(She moves to the downstage window. She is far away.)* ...Or maybe he does. Maybe there's this thing, like with mothers and children, this magnetic field or something, he can sense I'm here, just like I know he's...somewhere. *(A long, uncomfortable pause. Then she snaps back, accent on)* ...Just kidding! *(Dori runs off to the kitchen. Roger, dressed by now, puts on thick glasses and a blue lab coat and as the lights change crosses to a metal table where Cass—now dressed, of course—awaits with Izzy. He is now David, a rather quirky veterinarian, and this is his office.)*

DAVID. ...Yes. Well. Diabetes. I'll have to run a curve. But...diabetes, probably.

CASS. That's like...too much sugar.

DAVID. Too little. He's starving.

CASS. I feed him. Everyday.

DAVID. His body can't metabolize it.

CASS. Oh. So...a curve. What's that?

DAVID. Blood tests. To monitor his glucose. He'll have to stay overnight.

CASS. ...Diabetes is like...you...you take the shots.

DAVID. Insulin.

CASS. So...can't you just—

DAVID. The wrong dose could kill him. I have to run a curve.

CASS. ...I don't know how to ask this.

DAVID. One hundred and sixty dollars.

CASS. ...God. ...And...and then you, you, you give him a shot.

ROGER. Four to six units, twice a day. Depending.

CASS. Twice a day?

DAVID. Depending. You'll need syringes, a box of 31-gauge needles and a glucometer. *(Pause. She tries to calculate that.)* For everything...maybe eighty dollars a month.

CASS. What happens if we...? What if...?

DAVID. Liver disease, ketoacidosis, any number of secondary infections.

CASS. How long?

DAVID. Not very.

CASS. Isn't there something else? Some other...*(She looks at him. He considers, then sighs.)*

DAVID. Wait here. *(David exits, leaving Cass with Izzy.)*

CASS. ...Oh Izzy. ...Izzy. ...What are we going to do? *(The moment lingers. Then she crosses back to her home, carrying Izzy, and the lights change. Dori enters from the kitchen. She'll take a cookie from the plate.)*

DORI. Hey. What's that bag in the kitchen?

CASS. ...Hm?

DORI. That big bag of catfood.

CASS. It's for Izzy.

DORI. Duh.

CASS. He's diabetic. The vet gave it to me. It's some special low-carb or something. Get that away from me. *(She means a cookie Dori has offered. Dori notices the gift box on the couch.)*

DORI. What's this?

CASS. ...A gift.

DORI. From the vet?

CASS. No. He was weird. From Rrrroger.

DORI. What is it? Was it good? *(CASS removes the necklace—or takes it from a pocket—and hands it to Dori.)* ...Whoa.

CASS. I know.

DORI. *(Admiring the necklace:)* ...I like Roger.

CASS. He tries.

DORI. When's his divorce?

CASS. *(In his voice)* "Two weeks, six days."

DORI. ...And then what?

CASS. God knows.

DORI. Are you going to marry him?

CASS. ...I'm trying. *(Pause. Dori watches Cass nuzzling Izzy.)*

DORI. ...And then what, after that? *(Cass isn't listening.)* ...I mean, when you get married, what am I going—

CASS. Dori.

DORI. --to do? I mean, what's going to happen to—

CASS. You know what'll happen. I keep telling you.

DORI. ...Nobody's going to want me, Mama.

CASS. *(Cass hands Izzy to Dori and puts the necklace around Dori's neck:)* ...Yes they will. I promise. Someday. Someday, you're going to meet a...really... really...screwed up guy. And you'll...get married, maybe. Or maybe you'll just shack up for awhile. And go into debt. And start fighting. A lot. And he won't have to be handsome or anything. He'll probably get fat. Or he'll drink too much.

And you'll turn into a bitch. And your butt will get huge. And you'll both get neurotic and sleep in separate rooms, until he fools around with a stripper and you beat him in his sleep with a crowbar. *(Now Cass takes Izzy back and directs some of the following to him:)* ...But you'll love each other, most of the time. That's the important thing. You'll have someone to grow old with. And someone who'll sit next to you on the couch. ...There's somebody out there Dori. You just have to...be what they want you to be.

DORI. I'm trying.

CASS. I know you are.

DORI. I'm trying hard. ...I'll...go back to school. Or get a job, even. I'll...I'll be a Methodist again. I'll be whatever you want me to be. And I won't leave a mess. ...I promise. *(Dori exits—pouting and pathetic—to the bedrooms. Pause. Cass sighs.)*

CASS. *(To Izzy)* ...What are we going to do? Hmm...? *(Pause. She thinks—and strokes Izzy. Then she notices a pipe cleaner, picks it up, looks at it—and begins teasing Izzy with it, ad libbing as necessary.)* ...Look at that. Look what I've got. You want it? You want it, hmm? You want it, don'tcha. ...Can't have it. ...Can't have it. Hmm? Why is your hair falling out? Hmm? Why is your hair falling out? ...Okay. There you go. There you go. ...I'm so glad you're here. I'm so glad. I'm so glad. Yes I am. *(And so on, the lights narrowing around them, as before. A short refrain plays on the piano—perhaps “You Are My Sunshine,” or whatever song Cass sang to Izzy. Then: lights to black. End scene.)*

SCENE TWO

In darkness: we hear Roger's voice.

ROGER. ...Cass? ...Cassandra? ...Cassaaandra? *(At rise: Cass is on the gurney, lying on her back and covered by a sheet. Roger stands beside her, smiling. Obviously, she's just awakening from anesthesia.)* Wake uuu-uup. Cassaaaaan-draaaa. ...Helloooo.

CASS. ...Ooooooh.

ROGER. Welcome back. How's your throat?

CASS. Uughh.

ROGER. I got down in there pretty deep. *(A manly voice)* “But enough about me.” There's going to be some swelling, so I sprayed your oropharynx with lignocaine. I had a punchline for that one but I had to stop using it. You shouldn't eat anything

too tough for the rest of the day. Stick to yogurt or applesauce, don't take any more laxatives, and try not to talk much.

CASS. We're done?

ROGER. Up we go. *(He helps her to her feet.)*

CASS. ...It's so weird.

ROGER. I was right about the ulcer. You owe me ten bucks.

CASS. It's so weird. How long was I--

ROGER. I'm going to start you on some Amoxicillin and some sucralfate to coat the lesion. Do you like oysters? *(He jots down a quick prescription while she teeters.)*

CASS. Oysters?

ROGER. Smooth as snot. Aaand they're an aphrodisiac. So is foie gras, but I don't know how to make foie gras. How's tonight, say sixish?

CASS. Sixish?

ROGER. Terrific! Take two of these twice a day, get plenty of fluids, and try to rest up. I'll see you at six!

CASS. But...but wait! I...I.... *(But he's gone, perhaps rolling the gurney off as he goes. Pause. Cass stands in a daze, holding the prescription. The lights narrow around her as before.)* ...Where did you go? ...Hello? ...Where did...where did I go? *(From the darkness, Dori calls)*

DORI. *(Off)* ...Mama.

CASS. Are you—hello?

DORI. *(Off)* Mama? *(Dori enters, holding the kimono, and the lights shift back.)* Well? Are you going to put it on or not?

CASS. Hm?

DORI. Your kimono. You wanted your kimono.

CASS. I did?

DORI. You just told me to bring it to you. *(We're back at home. Dori helps Cass into the kimono.)*

CASS. ...Oh. Ooooh. Yes, he uh...he likes it. He—

DORI. Hold your arm up.

CASS. Where is he?

DORI. In the kitchen. Steaming oysters.

CASS. What?

DORI. Oysters. He's got a big pot and he's steaming them.

CASS. ...Wait.

DORI. I've never had oysters.

CASS. ...No. Please, no, not, not—

DORI. But I've--

CASS. No. Not tonight. I can't do this tonight. Can you...here: here: find my keys and...get this filled for me. *(She hands the prescription to Dori.)*

DORI. I don't have any money.

CASS. Ask your father.

DORI. My father?

CASS. I mean...Richard.

DORI. Roger.

CASS. Roger. Roger. Jesus.

DORI. You don't look so good.

CASS. ...I'm just...a little foggy. Everything's just...going so fast. *(Dori exits to bedrooms.)* ...I keep finding...holes. ...Where are you? ...Oh. Oh. *(She remembers where she is, shakes the cobwebs out, smoothes her kimono, puts on a smile and prepares to exit to the kitchen. But Dori returns, holding Izzy. He is limp and perhaps wrapped in a towel.)*

DORI. ...Mama? ...There's something wrong. ...He's really weak.

CASS. ...Oh no. Oh God. Give him to me. *(Cass removes her kimono and takes Izzy.)* ...Oh no. Oh Izzy. No no no. —Roger?

DORI. He can't stand up. His legs are—

CASS. Roger!

DORI. I'll go with you.

CASS. No. You—stay here. Try to...I don't know, keep him occupied. But don't...DO anything. *(Dori gets defensive:)* Don't let him leave. Please, just—Roger! *(Roger enters from kitchen—maybe in a stupid chef's apron.)*

ROGER. What's up, babe?

CASS. *(Of Izzy)* There's something wrong with him.

ROGER. They're almost ready.

CASS. I have to go.

ROGER. They'll get rubbery and smell like mildew.

CASS. I'll hurry. I'll be right back. I promise. I'm sorry! Stay here! I'm sorry! *(Cass exits through the kitchen with Izzy. Pause.)*

DORI. ...He's sick.

ROGER. I know. Diabetes, probably.

DORI. You knew?

ROGER. Polyuria and polydipsia. Laps up water and pisses it out. The smell is ketones in his urine. The weakness in his legs is neuropathy. That's diabetes.

DORI. ...Oh. Is he...?

ROGER. Probably. This is why it's unhealthy to form attachments with animals. This is precisely why. When I was a kid, my mom made us have cats, and it was a disaster.

DORI. Why?

ROGER. All kinds of reasons. Our first cat, Matilda, she had four kittens. My mom gave three of them away and said I could keep the runt. I named him Runt. He had sleepy eyes and was really skinny, but I loved him. I was five years old but I still remember this. I'd pick him up and hold him up to my face so he could suck on my nose. I used to carry him around in my coat pocket. So one night I'm watching TV, and I hear this...this crying and crunching sound, and I look over at the box, and Runt's not there. Matilda has carried him into the closet. So I open the door, and there's blood all over her face. She killed him. Then she licked his body clean and hid him in my galoshes.

DORI. ...But...but WHY?

ROGER. That's what mother cats do. If one of her kittens is sick or hurt or whatever, she'll kill it. Or just take it out to the woods and leave it.

DORI. (*Horried:*) ...God.

ROGER. A few years later, Matilda got hit by the garbage truck. Right in front of me. Her brains squirt right of out her mouth, right in front of my shoe. The driver gets outa the truck, comes around and looks down at her. Then he looks up at me—I'm standing there like ("*holy crap*"). He shrugs, picks her up, throws her over the side, gets back in the truck and drives away.

DORI. ...That's so awful!

ROGER. I know! (*Pause. From the plate on the table DORI takes a piece of fudge and begins to eat it.*)

DORI. ...One summer, when I was at Girl Scouts, there was this mama cat, I mean she was like, pregnant? And she crawled up under this car, and when they started the engine, we heard this, this like, like SHRIEK and when they opened it up the fan thing had practically ripped her head off. So they took her out, and her like...her BELLY was moving, her kittens, it was like they were trying to ESCAPE.

ROGER. Whoa.

DORI. I know. And nobody knew what to do. So one of the counselors said we should kill them, so he raised up this shovel, but we all started screaming, so instead we all just stood around and...and like watched her until...you know...one by one...they all...stopped.

ROGER. ...Wow. That's REALLY awful.

DORI. I KNOW. *(Pause. Roger takes a piece of fudge and begins to eat.)*

ROGER. ...When I was about thirteen, there was this yellow tomcat that lived behind our house. We called him Bob. Real nice guy. One day my mom brought home this younger cat, and she worried they'd fight, but actually they got along really well. Like they were brothers who hadn't seen each other. They would sleep together and eat together and chase each other around. Stuff like that. So one day—this is the bad part—one day, Bob gets killed by a stray dog and the younger one, he—he DRAGS Bob's body to the back porch and keeps YELLING through the screen until my mom finally comes.

DORI. Tsk—God! *(She closes her eyes and tries to shake the image from her head—and takes another bite of fudge.)*

ROGER. And when we buried him, listen to this: when we *buried* him, the younger one watched us. And he slept on his grave. Every. Day. *(Pause. Dori chews fudge and tries to absorb that. She thinks. She begins this next tale with no accent, but as it goes on, she regresses into her giddy British persona.)*

DORI. One night, it was really late, just before my ninth birthday...my father came into my room and woke me up. He brought me some chocolate milk and one of those lemon cookie-cake things and when I finished eating he said that, when I woke up, he'd be gone forever. He was going away. And that I had to tell my mother because he couldn't do it.... And I said, "why Daddy?" And I asked if he was mad at us, or if he didn't love us anymore, and he...thought about it, and he said, "no, not really." And I said "but why?" And he said...that someday I'd understand. *(She takes a bit of fudge.)* ...And I DO.

ROGER. ...Huh. *(Long pause. Roger takes a bite of fudge. Finally.)*

DORI. *(No accent)* ...Just kidding! *(She skips off to the bedrooms. Roger ponders—and then exits to kitchen. Lights change: it is now night. Long pause. Then Cass enters—with Izzy in her arms. He is limp. She looks stricken, weak. She sits on the couch, places him on her lap, and strokes his back for a long time. Finally Dori enters in a robe or night shirt.)*

DORI. ...Mama? ...Hey. *(Cass smiles weakly at her.)* What are you doing?

CASS. Is Roger here?

DORI. What happened?

CASS. Is he here.

DORI. ...No. He ate all his oysters and fell asleep and woke back up and got all pissed off because you wouldn't answer your phone.... Where were you?

CASS. ...I wrecked the car.

DORI. What?

CASS. I hit something. I don't know.

DORI. Are you hurt? ...Mama? ...Mama, answer me, are you—?

CASS. I need some...some. Um—.

DORI. ...Mountain Dew. Ex-Lax. Vicodin. Fudge.

CASS. No, just some...just some water. *(Dori hurries off to the kitchen. Cass places Izzy on the couch next to her, curled up as if he's asleep, pets him a few times, and then...the dam bursts: her grief floods forth in gasps and hacking moans:)*

CASS. No no no no no no! No no no no! *(Dori returns quickly with some water.)*

DORI. Mama? Mama!

CASS. No! No. No. Noooo. *(Cass is almost wheezing. She catches her breath eventually, then turns to Dori, says simply—) ...He's gone. (--and exits to the bedrooms. Pause. Dori goes to Izzy, looks at him and mutters to herself.)*

DORI. ...Oh, Mama. *(Dori crosses herself rather clumsily, perhaps clasps her rosary and takes a shot at earnest prayer. Lights change: it's the next day. Dori stands, and Roger enters from the bedrooms, carrying a small pill bottle.)*

ROGER. She'll be pretty sore for a few days. But I don't see anything permanent. Apparently she jumped a curb and took out a street sign. She didn't even have her lights on. They cited her for careless operation. You know how much money that is?

DORI. It doesn't matter.

ROGER. Yeah well, I'm the one who's got—

DORI. She was upset. Obviously.

ROGER. She was in the next county. Headed in the wrong direction. Why was she on some back road, at night, headed in the—

DORI. I don't know! ...Can she hear you?

ROGER. I gave her some Xanax. She'll be out for a while. *(He puts the pill bottle on the table.)* Her car is pretty shot. Radiator, steering column—guess who's gotta pay the deductible.

DORI. ...Thank you, Roger.

ROGER. Yeah well. They're fixing her up with a rental. I'll pick it up tomorrow. *(The lights change: time passes. Cass enters from the kitchen with an opaque Tupperware bowl. She will move to Izzy, cradle him, place him in it and seal it.)*

DORI. ...Mama?

CASS. Oh. David. I didn't know you were here.

ROGER. ...How are you this morning?

CASS. I'm okay. My legs are stiff. I'm a little tired.

DORI. She's still not sleeping.

ROGER. Looks like you've lost some weight.

CASS. Thank you.

DORI. She's starving herself.

CASS. Did you see the car they gave me? It's bright yellow. It looks like a, I don't know what. *(Cass exits with the bowl back to the kitchen.)*

ROGER. ...Who is David.

CASS. I don't know. Last night she put on her blue sweater and then wandered around looking for it. This morning she stood by the toaster like a zombie holding a piece of bread, like she didn't know how to make toast.

ROGER. Probably just the trauma.

DORI. She can't stop crying.

ROGER. She'll snap out of it. I mean, you know, life goes on. It's just a cat.

DORI. This is how she is. She can't cope. This is what she does. *(She has moved to the downstage window, and now waves him over.)* See what she's doing? Look. ...That's his grave. She buried him in a Tupperware bowl and visits him about three times a day, like she's having his funeral over and over again. *(They look out the window.)*

ROGER. ...What's that thing?

DORI. A pipe cleaner. She makes shapes with them and puts them on his grave. ...Last week she went to church. *(Pause. They watch out the window. The lights change again, and behind them, from the bedroom, Cass enters with a laptop. She will sit on the couch and begin to work on the laptop. Dori and Roger won't register her presence.)*

ROGER. Well I think she's making real progress.

DORI. She's been Googling him. On my computer. I check. She types in "Izzy" or "Izzy plus cat" and tries to find his picture. Or she visits these websites, the "Pet Loss Network," the "Animal Bereavement Society." And this woman, some sort of hippie guru lady, she runs this—Sadie's Farm--refuge thing. They've been e-mailing almost daily.

ROGER. Nothing wrong with that.

DORI. You have to help her.

ROGER. I'm getting her car fixed.

DORI. Roger! You have to help ME! I don't know what to do! ...She was up all night again. I could hear her walking around, calling to him. I came in and found her sitting here. Like a child.

ROGER. I'm really no good at this sort of—

DORI. Please. Go out there. Talk to her. Try.

ROGER. ...I can't. *(He produces an envelope with a card inside.)* ...I think she's seeing someone else.

DORI. What?

ROGER. ...This was on her dresser. It's from this...David person. He's a moron.

DORI. You read her mail?

ROGER. You read her e-mail.

DORI. *(Reads the card)* "Just this side of heaven is a place called Rainbow Bridge. When an animal dies that has been especially close to someone here, he goes to Rainbow Bridge."

ROGER. See? Moron.

DORI. "There are meadows and hills for all our special friends to run and play together. They are all happy and content, except they miss someone special, someone they had to leave behind. Finally the day comes when one of them stops and looks into the distance. His bright eyes are intent, his eager body quivers. Suddenly he runs from the group, flying over the green grass, his legs carrying--"

ROGER. It's not something you send to a grown woman.

DORI. "—him faster and faster. You have been spotted, and when you and your special friend finally meet, you cling together in joyous reunion, never to be parted again."

ROGER. It's giving ME diabetes.

DORI. "The happy kisses rain upon your face, and you look once more into the trusting eyes of your pet, and then you cross the Rainbow Bridge together." *(Cass sighs, puts the laptop aside and leans back into the couch.)*

ROGER. You know who this guy is?

DORI. Did you look on the back? *(She has done just that, and now hands it to Roger.)* ...It's the veterinarian.

ROGER. You've got to be kidding.

DORI. He sent her a CARD.

ROGER. This is so unprofessional.

DORI. It's the sweetest thing I ever heard.

ROGER. ...Geez. All right. I'll TRY. *(Roger exits to the kitchen. Dori turns back to the window and looks out. The lights change—narrowing around Cass: it is night.)*

CASS. *(Softly, to herself)* ...Izzy? ...Izzy? ...Why are you hiding? ...I need you here. Izzy...where are you? *(The lights change back again: Dori turns to Cass...and tentatively approaches her.)*

DORI. ...Hey.

CASS. ...Hey.

DORI. What are you doing?

CASS. I don't know what's wrong with me. *(Dori sits with her, but Cass moves away to the window.)*

DORI. Do you want to pray with me?

CASS. No.

DORI. It helps me. *(Pause. No answer.)* ...He was my cat too, you know.

CASS. No. He wasn't. *(Pause.)*

DORI. Well maybe we could...pretend he went away. He used to do that sometimes. He'd be gone overnight, or a few days even—

CASS. *(Softly)* Dori.

DORI. --and he wouldn't come in when you called him. He would do that. We could pretend he's just gone away, and in a few days—

CASS. *(Almost weeping)* Dori. ...No.

DORI. ...You can get another one, then. Or, or, we could go to Hobby Lobby and learn how to macramé. We used to do lots of stuff like that, remember? Like, like, flower arrangements, or origami, or scrap-booking, we used to do that, remember when we made my scrapbook? Or, or we could learn a foreign language, or we could go somewhere, to like, Canada, or.... *(Dori's voice fades, as do the lights on her, as Cass crosses the stage, returning in her mind to the vet's office. David is there with Izzy, lying still on the table. He wears a surgical mask around his neck and holds an electric razor.)*

CASS. ...Can I hold him? *(David nods. She takes Izzy in her arms.)* ...His eyes are open.

DAVID. I don't think he can see very much.

CASS. ...What will happen?

DAVID. ...I'm going to shave his leg. He won't feel anything.

CASS. Izzy?

DAVID. And then I'll give him the injection. He'll just...go to sleep.

CASS. ...He won't know.

DAVID. No. *(Cass nods. David starts to shave Izzy's leg, but stops when:)*

CASS. ...What happens then?

DAVID. ...What do you mean.

CASS. ...I mean...I don't know.

DAVID. ...I can dispose of him for you. If that's what--

CASS. No. I--

DAVID. There's cremation. A lot of people do that. I can have the ashes delivered to you.

CASS. ...No, I'm. ...I'll take him home with me.

DAVID. ...Do you want some more time? *(Cass can't think of what to say, shakes her head no.)* ...He won't feel this. *(David pulls the mask up so it covers his mouth and nose. Then he shaves the inside of Izzy's leg.)* ...You see his veins here. They're collapsed. He's in a...pretty advanced state. *(David picks up the syringe.)*

CASS. I'm doing the right thing. Aren't I? I'm doing the right thing. *(He waits for her to decide again.)* ...I don't want him to suffer. *(He sniffs, and will sniff more throughout the following.)*

DAVID. ...If there's anything you want to say.... *(Cass huffs mightily against the tears, and thinks.)*

CASS. ...I found him when...when he was a kitten, you know. I was driving home, it was pouring rain, and I saw him, I saw this...kitten sitting there, right in the road. He was soaked and he was all alone. ...And I don't know why, I don't know why, I didn't even like cats, but I got out and I chased him, he ran across the street to this playground, and I kept calling to him, and then suddenly he stopped and he...he was frightened, but he...he...stood up, into my hands...he stood up so I could hold him. And he lay in my lap all the way home. *(Pause.)* ...He held onto me. He held onto me. *(Long pause. David sniffs.)*

DAVID. ...You tell me when you're ready. *(Pause. She nods her assent. He bends to the task.)*

CASS. Look at me, Izzy. You look at me. ...You look at me. *(Pause. David presses the syringe. Cass whispers softly:)* ...Look at me, Izzy. ...Look at me. *(Long pause. The cat dies. David sniffs. The moment settles. Then he checks the cat with his stethoscope.)*

DAVID. ...That's all. *(Cass nods. David sniffs. Then she cradles Izzy closely and wanders away from the vet's office, back to Dori. David removes his mask and watches her—until the lights come down on him.)*

DORI. ...Mama? Mama? Are you even listening to me?

CASS. Hm?

DORI. You didn't hear one word.

CASS. ...I'm sorry. ...I don't know what's wrong with me.

DORI. Why don't you go to bed. ...Mama, why don't you go to bed.

CASS. ...I don't know where he is.

DORI. ...He's dead.

CASS. ...But I don't know where he is.

DORI. ...Go to sleep, Mama.

CASS. I can't.

DORI. Look. You have some Xanax. *(Dori shakes a pill out of the bottle.)*

CASS. I had a dream. ...I was putting him in his grave... and he was talking to me, he was telling me he was sorry, he thought I was angry at him, that I was punishing him. ...He doesn't understand. *(Pause.)* ...And I put him in his grave, and I'm crying. And I can hear him, in the ground, calling to me. He doesn't know he's dead and I...I.... I don't want to go to sleep. *(Cass wanders away to the bedrooms, with Izzy in her arms. Dori sighs, considers the pill—and swallows it. Pause. She blinks hard, and puts her face in her hands. The lights change: time passes. We hear Roger's voice approaching.)*

ROGER. *(Off)* ...Dori. Dori? *(Dori looks up. Roger enters from the kitchen.)*
...Dori! ...Where is she?

DORI. Who.

ROGER. Your mother. I can't find her.

DORI. ...What?

ROGER. The rental car's gone. I think she left. And I think she took the cat.

DORI. *(Dazed)* ...What are you talking about?

ROGER. She dug him up. Look! *(Dori rushes to the window, places her palms against it and looks out, horrified.)* ...She's gone. *(Pause. Tableau. A short refrain on the piano, then: lights to black. End Act I.)*

INTERMISSION

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