Winter 1991

Playdance

Gary Ryan Brown

Old Dominion University

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ABSTRACT

PLAYDANCE

Gary Ryan Brown
Old Dominion University, 1991
Director: Dr. Erlene Hendrix

Playdance is a play in three acts which studies the relationships between parents and their children. The development of the script and the intended production was spurred by the pain that so many families experience as children grow away from their parents control. This look at the Denton household was an attempt to help understand the suffering and the feeling of solitude that so often accompanies this familial trauma. It was my intention to write a script that would be an exciting and insightful evening of theatre, but one that would remain accessible to a single and perhaps novice reader.

In Playdance, the Denton family is unusual and typical at the same time. SK and June have conflicting feelings about the coming of age of their daughter, Ariel. Ariel feels that she is an adult. The specifics of their lives are theirs alone. The process never changes.
DEDICATION

This script is dedicated to my parents, their parents, my wife and to the children that the future will see.
The development of this script would not have been possible without the patience and support of Tina Brown, David Dexter, Janet English, Marilyn Marloff, Philip McGrady, Chris Peters, Mike Turner, Angela Winters, and a score of actors and technicians. This group of selfless people, in concert with this thesis committee, have helped to make this effort rewarding and meaningful.
The story for Playdance developed over a period of about three years. It started with a conversation with an emotionally tortured and admittedly drunken father. The singularly human nature of this man's misery was so touching that it led me to write a monologue for what I believed to be a one character performance art piece. I felt there was something in this heartfelt kernel of pain that, if developed and presented, could be helpful to many people in similar, nearly standard situations. This kernel sprouted and grew into a three act play aching for production, a reflection of the ache of a father needing to touch his child's life.

I met him on a Saturday night at a little bar known for its privacy and its inexpensive prices. I had rushed there in time for last call. He had been there a while and only became noticeable when the waitress asked for his beer so the bar could close. It was at this point that he began a polite and evidently needed recounting of the week's events. His income level and his daughter had not grown at the same rate. These two elements of his life were at odds with each other. They were also inextricably linked. In an argument earlier that afternoon he had blamed his daughter. He was now at the end of a very long night of self inflicted misery.
The germ of that moment, or the muse who kept it, came back into my mind several days later. I then wrote the basic text for a monologue called Father's Lament. I felt that a superb actor could melt an audience with the inconsistencies of our macho-who-cares American male stereotype. I reworked the text six or seven times and finally realized that the contrasts were most evident when the reality of the family structure was clear and understood. I needed those characters to exist for the audience. I had initially failed to notice that it had always been a multi-charactered play.

I had only seen the iceberg from the waterline up. I needed to develop the sections that would add sufficient buoyancy to support the monologues. It needed the family structure of a husband and wife, a mother and a daughter. It would require a strong woman. A woman who had once kept SK spellbound as they dated. A woman who had been sufficiently aware of the organic nature of sexual attraction to court, mate, marry and then sacrifice for her family.

As parents, June and SK would need to gain strength from one another in order to overcome life's hurdles. They would need this strength to support their magic creation, Ariel. They would have to be a fine happy family. It was this family structure that would act as a canvas on which to paint one day and the effects of surprise and reaction.

The names that I chose for the characters were important. I felt that a lot can be suggested with the image that a name
may deliver. This consideration can become a problem in a similar manner. A Brechtian style name can be used, acting as a club, pounding the concept of the name into the audience's head each time it is uttered. The other extreme would be a randomly chosen set of names, picked for either their lyrical sound or the ease with which they could be remembered. The names that I gave the characters in Playdance were developed from a hybrid of these two concepts.

June was an easy selection as it embodied images that seemed to transcend the proper name itself. June is full summer. The name June is, in that sense, maturity and stable growth. June is also a sound which is easy to hear and remember.

Ariel was the name chosen for the daughter. The sound of the word and the mythical associations of the name fit the 'here today, gone tomorrow' profile of children in their parent's home. The name, Ariel, has for centuries been associated with the undines, the faeries and the leprechauns. The performance background of June and SK could be subtly alluded to by the use of the name Ariel. The similarities to the father and daughter struggle in Shakespeare's The Tempest would also be helpful to those who were familiar with that magnificent script.

The father proved to be more challenging. I did not want immediate recognition of his character or his place in the family structure. I wanted a name that would grow with the
script and slowly reveal itself as a name that took its very form and meaning from the development of the family. The Sun King analogy seemed a nice vehicle. It helped to fuse images of sunlight and summer, classical dance and contemporary performance environments. It helped to build the image of the light of dawn at the end of Act Three. The given name of Louis added to the likelihood that his nickname might have stuck after his dance debut.

The other names weren't as important as the principal's, but their derivations were similar. The name Butch has mixed connotations in our society and they helped to reinforce the confusion in his sexuality. Lorie was a vehicle for much information and as such, the name is a pleasant sounding play on the word for the wheeled cart. Steve was chosen primarily for its sound; harsh, abrupt and ending lower than it began. The faint similarity between the names for SK and Steve tends to link their less attractive, traditionally male mannerisms.

These attributes become wrapped around the names as they appear in the script. They help to provide a deeper base for the character's image in the audience's mind, whether the audience is an actor, theatre patron, or a lone reader.

In its first 'Final Form' Playdance existed as a two act play. It very closely resembled the iceberg of the analogy. It was a series of monologues that was supported by a mass of familial details. Much like the iceberg, it was riddled with cracks and covered by rough edges. It would surely have been vii
avoided in the heavily traveled sea lanes of the theatrical world. It still needed change. Its transformation at this point can be compared to the same iceberg that has drifted into warmer more friendly climates. The surface has been smoothed and the cracks have been filled. There is much more below the surface.

The figure studies that I was undertaking in the Art Department made me aware of an ideal catalyst for the communication breakdown in the family. The obvious maneuver of involving Ariel with sex or drugs seemed too pat. Contemporary society is awash with this material and either subject brings a great deal of emotional baggage with it. A nude dance as initiator could bring contemporary and classical arguments about nudity to bear while supporting the marvelous and organic nature of the naked human form. The dance could be likened to kinetic sculpture: a purity of form balancing the vulnerability of action and reaction. The nudity provided an excellent vehicle, not only to demonstrate the inconsistencies in many parental value systems, but also to illustrate a general lack of faith in innate parenting skills.

The three act version became more highly polished in one of the English Department's Creative Writing Workshops. The polishing process was so stimulating that I could finally see the play as producible. The positive feedback from the class made me realize that the selection of the nude dance, as catalyst, was successful. The few questions about the ability
to stage this scene were obscured by positive reactions to the beauty of the imagery and the social fairness of wholesome dual-gendered nudity.

The difference between live performance and literature had never been clearer in my mind than during this period of Playdance's development. I realized that producing this scene properly would require great care. I needed to insure a careful manipulation of the audience's senses. I had to create a beautiful and positive dance experience to contrast with SK's reaction. It was this contrast that became the center of the conflict.

I was concerned that my motives for including nudity might be questioned. I didn't want nudity to be the selling point of the script. It would, by itself, sell some tickets. This is, after all, America. The dance had to be lyrical. The set must be magical. The lighting had to integrate the whole production into a smooth flowing creation of awe and beauty. I needed the best design team since Genesis.

Aware of the differing perspectives of men and women, I attempted to soften specific input by selecting a dual-gendered design team. They were as follows: Marilyn Marloff - Choreographer, Angela Winters - Scenic design, Christopher Peters - Lighting design, Janet English - Production Artist, Tina Brown - Costume design and Mike Turner - Production photographer. I was flattered and thrilled when this team of remarkably skilled artists agreed to help produce this script.
The script, at this point, had been read mostly for literary content.

The production process must begin by evaluating the production possibilities that lie within a script. The first three production meetings were conducted with that task as an agenda. As director and playwright, I held the opinion that everything was possible. No ideas would be discarded out of hand, including changes to the script.

The first subject that we agreed on was that the dance needed to be performed in the nude. Anything less would undercut the entire conflict of the play.

Many ideas were considered. Some were quite alien to me as a playwright but worked to further the flavor or mood of a scene. At the suggestion of the choreographer the moonlit dance of June and SK in Act One would be performed live behind a scrim. It would mimic the description of the dance as June relates it to Ariel. Previously, this dance was to be a pre-produced video image projected overhead in a mist.

The dances both needed as much space as possible. The desire was to create a structure of a dance-within-a-play. Much like a play-within-a-play from more classical works the dances should be able to provide a different perspective to the work in which they are located.

The scenic design was superb (Plates 2-6, Appendix A). The physical needs of the production were supported but with a great deal of visual restraint. The settings were concise.
There were no excess trappings. There was a precision to the scenic design that resembled a more traditional modern dance concert environment.

The lighting required the same delicate attention to detail. The various locales provided the lighting designer ample opportunity for magical visual effects. The lighting design (Appendix B) would also be one of the controlling elements of the visual detail of the two dances. It would be the transitional element of the change of locales. The moonlight reflecting off the rippled surface of the lake was to be no small challenge. The stars and moonbeams stealing into the attic studio would build a large picture that would include the dancers, reducing their visual weight in the scene. The magic would have flooded out of every door.

Audition notices were posted. A rehearsal schedule was loosely set. I thought I knew what the limiting factors would be when trying to cast this show. I felt that it would be hard to cast actors of sufficient maturity to play the adults. I feared that the nudity would severely limit the options for Ariel, Butch and the young dancers, June and SK. Both of these fears proved to be false. The elimination of these two fears was timely, clearing mind space to deal with the other problems which arose during the audition and casting process. These new problems were twofold.

I had felt that the nudity could be presented less offensively in a proscenium environment. In order to use
University Theatre, August production dates were chosen. This would require a summer rehearsal schedule. This became a problem as everyone wanted at least a vestige of a vacation. This scheduling difficulty caused the loss of six out of nine of the performers who had to withdraw from the cast.

The other casting problem had to do with the roles of Ariel, Butch, and the dancers in Act One, young June and SK. Ariel and Butch both had to act and dance. Lorie and Steve were to be assigned the roles of the dancers in Act One. They then would also be required to act and dance. All the dances were to be performed in the nude. I feared that the nudity would be the limiting factor in casting these four roles. However, to my surprise, the primary casting problem was not caused by any potential performer's uneasiness with the nudity. Only one male out of the eleven people who were either cast or considered declined due to the nudity. The problem was instead due the wide range of talents required of the performers. In all, sixty percent of the cast had to be able to perform in both art forms well. It proved an impossibility to find four actor/dancers in the summer for volunteer work. I believe that if I had been able to pay them, Playdance would have opened on August Twenty-First.

There was, however, a great benefit to the constantly changing cast. The readings of the script had freed the text from the written page. This allowed the concepts and emotions to flow through the actors and into eyes and ears of the
production team. More importantly, it flowed into the eyes and ears of the director/playwright.

A live reading is necessary to break the bounds of the page and enter the performance space. This series of readings, with an accidental variety of actors tackling the same role was remarkably rewarding. The interplay and emotional content of any given scene changed slightly with every adjustment in the cast. Some scenes changed for the better and some for the worse. The process allowed the script to be an index and showed the strength or weakness of any specific scene. This was possible without the uncertainty that would have existed had only one group of actors given their interpretations.

There were major revisions to the script during this reading process. Words that seemed useful and clear when read from the page became, at times, hard for the ear to digest. Some sound repetitions which were either unnoticeable or even pleasant when read became cumbersome and confusing when spoken. There were three substantial script revisions during an equal number of cast adjustments.

The funding issue had been identified earlier. There were scenic costs, advertising costs, program costs and a thousand small expenditures that are frequently overlooked at the outset. I had opened a line of credit to underwrite the costs of the production. I believed in the script and that the box office receipts would repay the costs of production. However, the costs of a cast of six were far from my financial
abilities.

The inability to cast the production continued. I had spent eight weeks casting and had three cast members. With six weeks left until opening night, it was not possible to count on a high quality product, one that would not embarrass the production team or the performers. It was at this point that I cancelled the production.

In retrospect, several things are intriguing about this production process which has led me from my initial concept to near production. I have been called to task on at least two occasions for writing a play about women. I hope that I've written about their humanity, because it is true, I will never know what it is to be a woman. This process and the play that developed was never intended as a battle of the sexes. I wrote what I felt and thought to be true, for all people. It was my intention to write about a family, a group of people. I can't say that it is not a play about women. After all, over sixty per cent of the family are women.

I was also called to task for the 'sexist' artwork (Plate 1) that I hoped would be a cover for the playbill and perhaps a poster. Janet English developed this image in a near vacuum, using the script alone as a guide. She felt it to be a strong and positive female image. I find the debate interesting. I feel that the play and all the associated elements concern people. It is true these people are physically divided into two genders. In terms of personal orientation and attitude
they are divided into many other groups. However, all these groups are comprised, in the final analysis, of people.

The Denton family shares so much common experience that the specifics of their differences seem small. This is the essence I tried to glean from the incidents of that Saturday and Sunday morning. The intention of my writing seems to have missed a few readers.

I retain the hope that a live production would allow an audience to step into the living form that is theatre and let the play lead them for a while in the shoes of another family. Understanding a difference is best begun from an awareness of the other point of view.

I will continue to attempt to get this work produced. For the present, I can only compile the various pieces that represent what this production might have been. These pieces include the script, Janet English's artwork, Chris Peter's lighting plot, and pictures of Angela Winter's scenic model and the associated ground plans. As I assemble these remnants of an intended production, I find myself hoping that the muse who kept the inspiration of that bar room conversation for me, might visit me again in the future.
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Production Graphic.

Design by Janet P. English
Plate 1.
CHARACTERS
(In order of appearance)

JUNE DENTON. Ariel's Mother, 38.

S.K. DENTON. Ariel's Father, 38.

ARIEL DENTON. Their daughter, 18.
An aspiring dancer,
fit, bright, energetic.

BUTCH. Ariel's dance partner, 17.
Fit, polite.

LORIE. Ariel's neighbor, 18.
A little unaware.

STEVE. Ariel's boyfriend, 19.
Well groomed, handsome, and fit.
ACT ONE - Kitchen.

Scenic Design by Angela Winters

Photography by Michael A. Turner
Plate 2.
ACT ONE
SCENE ONE

(It is early Saturday morning in the Denton Home, late April. June Denton is sitting at the kitchen counter. She sips her coffee as she reads the paper. The sun streams in the window and glances across her. She looks up and gazes into the sun, closing her eyes as she feels its warmth on her face. SK Denton enters. He is carrying his jacket and dressed for work. He is a carpenter.)

SK: Morning, hon.

JUNE: Mornin' sweets. Your muffin's in the toaster.

SK: Thanks. Did you talk to Bob and Emily about the weekend?

JUNE: Yeah, they're going to pick me up about four. We'll get to the lake house in time for a sunset dinner.

SK: That'll be nice, sunset over the lake ... (Softly.) ... is there a moon out tonight?)
JUNE: (She smiles.) I don't know ... but we can hope, can't we?

SK: I can use the break, I mean really, this latest project ... (Suddenly irritated.) ... has been a real pain. All the damn blueprints are wrong ... the owner's screamin' about costs ...

(He pounds the counter with his fist. Then he sees June staring at him.)

JUNE: You can't be cranky, you're not at work yet. (Crossing to him with some coffee.) Are you alright, Hon? You get angry so easily when you've been working this hard.

SK: (Calming.) I'm sorry ... you know ... same old stuff ... but I can use the overtime ... I'm gonna knock off work about three, then I'll be home to finish off the lights in the attic and head on up. Is Ariel all straight on the weekend?

JUNE: (She nods.) She's got a rehearsal today at eleven, then she and Butch are going to try to get some rehearsal time over at the academy this evening. They went over there last night to see what the
schedule for the studio was like. She's really workin' hard on this latest concert piece, I think she really wants a dance career.

SK: That wouldn't disappoint you too much would it?

(June smiles and sips her coffee. Thoughtfully.)

JUNE: I really want her to be successful. But God, I don't want to see her leave.

SK: (He smiles.) I know, I was watching you at the last dance concert ... that Christmas thing ... during the modern piece where Jim and Sara nearly dropped their eyeballs ... (He smiles.) ... the size of that costume little Beverly was wearing ... I guess you'd call that 'wearing.' (He chuckles.) I'd like to see somebody try to put that wisp of a thing on a hanger.

JUNE: (She laughs.) ... It probably cost a hundred dollars ... (Impishly.) ... it did remind me of a certain Sun costume I saw once. (He winces.) Come to mention it, the Christmas concert was a little weird ... but interesting. It should have been ... they paid the choreographer quite a bit to come in
and build that piece ... (Pause.) ... I don't know ... (Reminiscing.) ... it seemed like there was a great deal more dancing in modern dance when I was on stage. (She turns.) SK, is this what getting old is? When things that you're supposed to recognize somehow no longer seem familiar? I mean, I liked that concert, in some ways. There was a wonderful freedom to the movements ... but it seemed so, I don't know, so alien, somehow.

SK: I see what you mean, the little dancers used to look like ducks and rabbits and elves. Now they always seem to look like Venusians ... too much space fantasy.

(She jokingly swats at him and laughs.)

JUNE: Cut it out ... you know what I mean. I just didn't feel a part of it any more.

SK: Well, you're not. Since you've gone back to work, you haven't spent the amount of time at the Academy that you used to. You've been working real hard to put money aside for the parts of Ariel's schooling that she can't get with a scholarship. We both have. It should seem a little distant ... that
night at the space concert, you were distant all right ... you were far, far away ... (Pause.) ... but you weren't far away from the stage, you were far away from the audience ... you were on the stage. I saw the look in your eyes and realized that it wasn't even that you were up there with Ariel ... you were Ariel ... But that's good honey, you really get a kick out of her and her craft. And you know she's doing this because she wants to ... she must ... when you got your job, she lost her best cheer leader ... and you started to lose your little girl. When I met you, you had the same performer's schedule that she's got now ... You never had a weekend free ... well, not 'til after the concert. If I hadn't been in the concert I never would have gotten to see you. Socially it was real hard for you ... and it's gotta be hard on Ariel ... but she still takes class every day ... even when she has to, heaven forbid, WALK to the academy. She's a good kid ... (Pause.) ... She reminds me a lot of a beautiful dancer I used to know before she was even a sparkle in your eye.

JUNE: You mean little ol' me?

SK: (Impishly.) No, the redhead.
(He starts to back away towards the door. He knows he has struck a nerve. He smiles.)

SK: You know, ol' what's her name? She used to up stage you in that wonderful semi-transparent costume in that French dance we did.

(She is amused, but not pleased. She slowly starts towards the door, and him, mocking great menace.)

JUNE: You still torment me with MIRIAM?!?! You ...

(She lunges for him as he goes for the door. He allows himself to get caught. They laugh and kiss.)

SK: (Mock seriousness.) I let you catch me just now. I let you catch me then.

JUNE: I guess I never learn, huh?

SK: Never! Please don't start taking lessons now.

JUNE: I love you.

SK: And I you ... a hell of a lot more than this damn job!
(They hug by the door. He sees the clock on the counter and jumps.)

SK: Damn, I gotta go. If I'm late they'll scream at me and the way I've been feelin' lately, I don't know I'd love to punch that fat son-of-a- ... (June swats him on the butt.) Sorry, Hon! (He kisses her.) I'll see you later this evening. I'm going to get all this stuff finished early so I can meet you at the lake.

JUNE: Do you think the attic will take a long time?

SK: Naw, just some switches and those weird mood lights.

JUNE: You are still such a hippie, except when you're angry. But try to finish it off ... Ariel will be off to college in the fall. After that it'll be kinda pointless.

SK: What do you mean, 'pointless'? You could use it ... it could be a ... a ... an exercise room ... or ... Ariel can use it when she comes home to visit or between installments of her stunning career ... (June glares at him.) ... OK, I'll try to get the
studio done AND get to the lake in time for a late dinner. Somewhere around eight? OK?

JUNE: OK! (They kiss.)

(Ariel comes into the kitchen. She sees June and sk kissing by the door.)

ARIEL: Can't you just tell it's spring?

JUNE: Good morning, sunshine.

SK: One day you'll be glad your parents still care about each other.

ARIEL: Promises, promises ... are you guys still going to the lake house?

SK: Yep. That is, if I ever get outta here. (He gets his tool belt from the cabinet by the door.) Bye, Ari ... I'll see you this afternoon before I leave.

ARIEL: Bye, Daddy. Have we got any O.J.?

(She opens the refrigerator and sticks her head in.)
SK: I love it when I get her undivided attention. Bye, Bye Hon, I'll see you tonight.

(He leaves.)

JUNE: I can't believe it.

ARIEL: What Mom?

JUNE: After seventeen, (Catching herself, to see if Ariel noticed her slip.) ... I mean eighteen years of marriage and I do still love that lunk.

ARIEL: I know, Mom, it shows ... and it's kinda neat ... in sort of a mushy kinda way. A lot of kids' parents don't even like each other any more. They try to pretend that they still do, but you can tell what's going on. It's really insulting to their kids.

JUNE: Insulting? I don't get what you mean.

ARIEL: Their kids see how they act together, kids aren't stupid. They know what's going on, and it insults their intelligence. It also makes their parents look foolish and I think it makes the kids lose
respect for them.

JUNE: (Impressed.) Well, just listen to my little girl, eighteen, going on forty. Look out world. It's not like she's just got a figure ... this little girl has a brain.

(They laugh.)

JUNE: So what did you find out at the academy last night?

(Ariel stiffens nervously.)

ARIEL: What did you hear? I mean what do you mean?

JUNE: You know ... about the rehearsal hall schedule. Remember? You do remember the rehearsal hall don't you? (Pause. Then as a knowing mother she begins to interrogate.) You did go to the Academy last night didn't you?

ARIEL: (Not convincing.) Oh ... Yeah ... Butch and I.

JUNE: What's my little sparrow up to?

ARIEL: I'm eighteen, Mom. I'm not your little sparrow

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anymore ... and I'm not up to anything, Mom.

JUNE: You talk about parents insulting the children. The shoe is on the other foot now. Come on, I know that tone in your voice, and I want to know what you're up to.

(Ariel fidgets nervously and avoids her mother's stare.)

JUNE: (Accusing.) God, tell me you're not having sex with that jerk, Steve. Ari baby ...

ARIEL: I'm not a baby!

JUNE: I know, I know, I'm sorry. It's just that you're so close to reaching your dreams that I worry that you'll throw it all away for someone who isn't worth it ... some guy like Steve and then ... I don't know. You see so much of each other and ... well ...

ARIEL: Yeah, yeah, ... you think he's a jerk. I know. You and dad keep telling me that. With my rehearsal schedule ... hell, oops! He's the only guy that will put up with it ... You know what it's like ...
anyone that tolerates that amount of absence can't be a jerk, and God, Mom ... he's gorgeous ... I think I've got your weakness for washboard tummies ... I get this funny feeling when I think of that stomach ...

JUNE: (Worried.) ... so when did you see his stomach muscles?

ARIEL: Come on Mom. I see lots of men's stomachs at the academy and at school. Unlike oppressed women, men can take their shirts off in public places, you know. At the car wash last weekend the whole school had their shirts off, the guys I mean.

JUNE: Just try not to confuse a washboard for love!

ARIEL: ... Mom, aren't you and dad in love? Don't you think I can see that? I can feel how happy you are ... don't insult me ... a minute ago I was forty, now you act like I'm eight. Steve and I are OK.

JUNE: I know, I know, he's a saint, he's good looking and he's on the football team ... and you two are OK. (Pause.) I just wonder if it's such a good idea to see so much of each other. You haven't seen Lorie...
in weeks.

ARIEL: I'd see more of Lorie if I got out of rehearsal before she fell asleep. Steve waits up for me. Before the concert rehearsals started, I spent more time with Lorie and that didn't bother you ... and Mom ... you and I both know that Lorie is much more of a flake than Steve. But you seem to like her ... What's the deal? I've seen so little of both of them lately, 'cause I really want to be good in this year's concert. It's my last chance to shine!

JUNE: I know ... and you're right, Lorie and a Christmas fruitcake are closely related ... but you should be able to chose your friends more ...

ARIEL: Exactly! I should be able to chose my friends, period.

JUNE: But Lorie's harmless and really very nice. Steve, ... I don't know he, ... he ... it's different ... he's ... he's ...

ARIEL: ... got a ... penis?

JUNE: Well, yes, I suppose that's the issue.
ARIEL: Mom, we're OK.

JUNE: You two are 'OK'... Together... 'OK'?... (Waiting
for more.)... OK?... Well?

ARIEL: Well what?

JUNE: You know what!... 'OK'... what does... 'OK'... mean? (Pause. This is difficult for June.)... are
you kids experimenting with sex?

ARIEL: Mom! That's none of your business. Really! And it's
something you don't really want to know.

JUNE: No, baby, (Ariel glares at the use of the word.) I
do want to know. I worry... that you'll... you
know... get pregnant and... well...

ARIEL: ... end up just like you?

JUNE: (Scared and shocked.) What do you mean.

ARIEL: Mom, I know that you and Dad were lovers before you
were married. I know you were preggers before the
wedding. I'm not stupid.
JUNE: (Very defensively.) And just how is it that you think you know so much?

ARIEL: Mom, come off it. You guys think you're so smooth. It's not that tough to figure. The date of your wedding is on the napkin in your wedding book. That was four months before I was born. I don't recall being born five months premature. I wasn't now, was I?

(June stares into her empty coffee cup. She is silent for some time.)

JUNE: I loved your father ... I still do ... very much.

ARIEL: I know mom ... He loves you ... very much.

JUNE: But there's a difference here that I don't want you to overlook. I chose your father because I loved him ... I wanted to dance and I wanted your father. I couldn't really have both and be pregnant. But I made a choice ... a conscious choice ... to marry SK and have our baby, you ... It wasn't like grandma's generation ... we didn't do it because it was the right thing ... we got married for the only good reason, we were very much in love with each
other. (Pause.) I guess I see what you mean about parents making themselves look stupid. You didn't really need Sherlock Holmes to figure this one out did you.

ARIEL: Nope. ... just fourth grade math! (She chuckles.) and a little forty year old intuition.

(They laugh.)

JUNE: I still want to know.

ARIEL: Know what ... oh ... You really don't ... wanna know why?

JUNE: Sure ... that'd at least be a start.

ARIEL: (Pause.) If you thought you knew that Steve and I had been having sex, and I said if, then you would worry me to death every time that we spent ... what is it, four and a half minutes, with each other.

JUNE: Four and a half minutes?

ARIEL: Yeah, the average length of the human sex act.
JUNE: Four and a half minutes! Everyone knows this? Four and a half minutes? Really?

ARIEL: Four and a half minutes. That's what they tell us in Family Life Class. (Puzzled.) What, did you think dad was the only man who sometimes played 'shortstop'?

JUNE: Ariel!

ARIEL: Sorry mom. Welcome to the human race. Anyway ... on the other hand, if you think that we're not having sex then you think you'll be relieved.

JUNE: I would be.

ARIEL: For ten minutes.

JUNE: What's that the average length of?

ARIEL: That's how long it would take for you to start to ask yourself ... 'Wait a minute, why not? Isn't my little girl normal? Don't they think she's pretty? Is she too shy? Is she in love with a dud? Is this guy gay? Is she?' The way I see it, what we have here is a no-win situation.
(June is in near shock, she doesn't quite know how to deal with this candor.)

ARIEL: Mom, ever since I was born, you and dad have been my role models. You have spent eighteen years training me for life. You're just afraid to let the bird fly ... Mom, you and dad have done a great job. I like myself, my friends like me. You and dad like me. I'm OK, OK?

JUNE: (Pause.) OK. (She laughs at the word.) So ... now you're forty again?

ARIEL: (Ignoring the last remark.) In six months I'll be off at college ... I hope ...

JUNE: Me too. But ... I will miss you.

ARIEL: I'll still be your daughter ... That's why I'll be OK. (Carefully.) I hope I will have sex, sometime. I hear life is a sorta dull if you don't?

JUNE: Well, no, not really, it's ... Well I suppose it would be, dull. You'll have to pardon me, though, it will take just a little time to get used to my forty year old daughter now that she's a social
genius, and that she's privy to things I thought were classified. So ... anyway ... uh ... what can I ask about? ... The rehearsal hall? ... How about that?

ARIEL: Sure ... I don't think we can use it.

JUNE: Why not?

ARIEL: There's some kind of rehearsal there tonight ...
(Pause.) ... Mom? You didn't by any chance get a call this morning from Mrs. Johnston?

JUNE: No. Why? Did you guys get in some kinda trouble last night?

ARIEL: Well ... sorta ... Butch and I. Maybe ... We went to the academy to check the rehearsal schedule on the door of the studio ... and it listed something called 'Playdance' from seven to twelve. Mr. and Mrs. Johnston's initials were by the listing. Well, this was at eight and the studio door was locked. It's usually open during rehearsals so students can watch, but not last night. We could hear the music for our concert piece playing inside and you could hear someone's bare feet squeaking on the floor.
Somebody was dancing in there. Butch said that he had seen the listing earlier but only Mrs. Johnston's initials were there. He said he'd seen it listed on the door before, but when he'd come by later the studio would be empty.

JUNE: That is kinda weird.

ARIEL: Well, we figured it was Mr. and Mrs. Johnston and they were like, having a dance date or something or working on some secret new piece. So we went into the dressing rooms and stacked up a bunch of chairs and climbed into the ceiling space to peek. It was them, all right. (As if omitting something.) We, ah, watched them for a while and then when we were trying to get down from the ceiling, the chairs fell over and crashed all around us making a lot of noise so we ran away. We didn't know if they came out and saw us or not. I thought if they had, they might have called and that was why you were asking about the rehearsal hall.

JUNE: So, this morning you are a wise and learned adult but last night you were twelve? (She smiles.) Nobody called. Why did you run? What was that all about? Why would they care?
Sometimes, you don't think you just do stuff. I don't know. I guess I was a little embarrassed. We had been peeking in on them.

What were they doing that embarrassed you?

Dancing.

I wonder why they would lock the doors just to dance?

Probably 'cause they were naked.

They were what?

Naked. Nude. You know ... tushes, tits and tender places, like when you're in the shower.

I know what nude is for crying out loud. But I wonder why?

Maybe it's a new piece they're working on?

Maybe they lost their costumes at the cleaners? Maybe they just felt like it? (She thinks for a minute and smiles.) Were they, you know? ... I
mean was he ... uh ... you know ... I mean, it ...
was it ...

ARIEL:  (Standing quickly and rigidly, hands at her side.)
... Erect? ... Hungry? ... Angry? ...

JUNE:  Ariel!

(They laugh.)

ARIEL:  No! Nobody was angry! They were just dancing ... it
was really neat, they were beautiful together. The
lines of their bodies were so beautiful. No
elastic, no neon, no shine of spandex, (Gesturing.)
no baggie crotch!

JUNE:  Not even him?

ARIEL:  Mom!

(They Laugh.)

JUNE:  (After a moment.) Your father and I danced naked in
the moonlight once. And it was, really, beautiful.

ARIEL:  You and SK? No shit, oops! Sorry.
JUNE: Watch it! We were camping during the full moon and we went down to this lake for a moonlit skinnydip. The wind was warm on our bodies and it felt so wonderful. We were madly in love, but we weren't lovers, yet. Not that we didn't want to, I had the naughtiest dreams about your father ... (Pause.) ... Anyway, we dried off and sat under the moon for a while then we just picked up our clothes and walked back to the tent, naked as we were born. It was so nice, to be naked and out in the open air.

(As June speaks the area lights on the kitchen fade. June and Ariel are left in a small pool of light as a naked couple, young versions of June and SK, appear upstage right, behind a scrim, in a wooded clearing. They bow and dance out the story that June relates to Ariel. Their dance is smooth and fluid.)

JUNE: As we walked back we passed through a little clearing, it was like a little dew covered fairyland, all of it shimmering under the moon. We had just been talking about how silly your father had been to chase this redhead who kept upstaging me in the end of the year concert just because she was in this transparent outfit. Your father had
been recruited to be in the piece because we needed someone who was in good shape to wear the skimpy little Sun King costume.

ARIEL: That's the show he got the nickname of SK?

JUNE: That's the show. That's the redhead. Anyway, the moon was full and there was that beautiful blue light, falling all over his body and those wonderful stomach muscles that your dad had in those days ... He was beautiful ... The night had been beautiful ... I was just about to tackle him and seduce him, when he stopped dead in his tracks, and spun me about. I thought maybe that we were thinking the same naughty thoughts, when suddenly, he bowed stark naked in the moonlight and asked me to dance. It was great, we started with bows and ended with the little piece we had done in the concert the month before. It was so magical ...

(The lights fade on the dancers. The scrim lifts and the lights come back up on the kitchen.)

ARIEL: Shit, that's beautiful. Oops, sorry Mom.

JUNE: It was, and I can still wash out your mouth even if
ACT ONE - Kitchen and Dance.

Scenic Design by Angela Winters

Photography by Michael A. Turner
you are forty! When we finished dancing, the sun was coming up, so we walked back to the tent and fell sound asleep. We never did make love that night. We had to wait for two more weeks. My parents were in town the next week and then he had to go on tour. When we finally got around to doin' it, we were in such a hurry that we didn't take precautions and well ... you were right about me being ... 'preggers', as you put it, when we were married. But we really did love each other.

ARIEL: That sounds so romantic. Wow, what a truly magical night. But you'd never even see that on PBS. They'd show us the moon and the dew in great detail ... But not the naked dance of people.

JUNE: It was a magical night. But it was different. I really felt close to the earth that night ... naked and vulnerable, at home among the grasses and in the open air.

ARIEL: So some of that hippie hocus-pocus was for real?

JUNE: The hippies were just plugging into the same emotional roots as cavemen, and early farmers. They danced in the light of the moon because they needed
rain or crops ... (June smiles.) ... or fertility. The hippies did the same things. They just had better press coverage. Forget the hippies, they've mostly forgotten it themselves!

ARIEL: So let's see ... the message of this story is ... hmmm ... It's OK for me to have sex before I'm married, as long as I dance naked in the moonlight with a cave man, or a farmer first?

JUNE: I think you're stretching the story line a little, don't you?

(They laugh.)

ARIEL: I won't promise that I won't have sex before I'm married. But when ... (June winces.) ... or if, I do, it will be with someone I love ... and we will take precautions.

(Butch knocks on the door, on his way in.)

BUTCH: Hi, Mrs. Denton.

JUNE: Hi, Butch. Is it that late already?
ARIEL: Yow! Look at the time. We've got a rehearsal at eleven.

BUTCH: (Pointing to his head.) She is quick isn't she, Mrs. Denton?

ARIEL: What time are you leaving, Mom?

BUTCH: Ariel, if you're riding with me, you're leaving now!

JUNE: They're picking me up about four, so I won't see you before I leave. You have a nice weekend, and behave! (Pause.) What'll you do about your rehearsal tonight?

ARIEL: I don't know. (She looks at Butch, smiling.) The rehearsal hall is out. (Butch tries to contain the laughter.) We want to lay low for a while. I'm probably gonna blush the next time I see Mr. Johnston. (Butch can hardly contain his need to laugh so he slips out the door. Ariel starts to collect her things.) I'll have to concentrate real hard so's not to look at him funny. (Starting to laugh herself, she bolts for the door.) Don't you leave me, Butch! (Turning to June, as she hits the
(Almost an after thought.) Did dad get the lights in the attic finished yet?

JUNE: No. But he said that he was going to work on them this afternoon. If he does then the studio would be finished. You could rehearse there?

ARIEL: Cool! I'll wait and see. He's been working real hard lately. I know he'll finish it, if he can. It's kind of a kick though.

JUNE: What is?

ARIEL: Oh, I don't know, all these years he's been working on the studio in the attic, now it's just about finished, just in time for me to leave. You don't think it's a bribe to stay, is it?

JUNE: Your dad's worked very hard for us, he's working overtime today to help with your college costs. Is this the children insulting the parents again?

ARIEL: Sorry mom. I'm being a jerk!
JUNE: No you're not. Your mouth just went off before your brain got warmed up. Now, go on, scram.

(Ariel leaves. June goes to the counter and looks out the window as if she is watching them, to herself.)

JUNE: Of course it's a bribe sweetie.

(Blackout.)
ACT ONE

SCENE TWO

(It's early afternoon, Ariel and Butch enter the kitchen with their dance bags, after rehearsal. Butch puts his bag down by the door and Ariel drops her bag by the other door that leads to the rest of the house. Ariel is carrying a wad of mail which she throws on the counter. She gets a box of crackers and a glass from the cupboard.)

ARIEL: You want some juice? or water? or something?

BUTCH: Yeah, that'd be great.

ARIEL: (As she struggles to get another glass from the cupboard. She laughs.) Which would be great?

BUTCH: (He pulls up a stool and sits at the counter and starts to go through the mail. He answers a little absently.) Juice ... thanks.

(Ariel goes to the refrigerator for a can of juice. Juggling the entire load, she goes back to the
counter. She pours two glasses of juice. Butch has stopped at one letter.)

BUTCH: Hey, look at this! Ari, open this one NOW.

(She stuffs a cracker in her mouth and takes the letter from Butch. He eats some crackers and moves to look over her shoulder.)

ARIEL: The Conservatory! ... Wow ... (Staring at it in awe, frozen.) ... Wow, I don't know ... It's sorta scary ... I've been waiting for this letter for so long ... 

BUTCH: Here, let me ... (He grabs the letter.) ... I'll just open this and then tell you what they said.

(Ariel is not about to let Butch have this much fun at her expense. Butch plays keepaway in a team of one until Ariel starts to tickle him. He falls on the floor and throws the letter toward the counter. She intercepts the letter and examines it very carefully. She holds it to the light and becomes suddenly solemn.)

BUTCH: Just open it! God, how can you stand the suspense?
ARIEL: (Thoughtfully.) ... This may be my future in here ... (Suddenly enthusiastic.) ... Hell ...

(She puts the letter in her teeth like a buccaneer's knife, breaks into a muffled but demonic laugh and rummages through a kitchen drawer for a knife.)

BUTCH: Now that's the Ariel that I know ... the one that's gonna take the dance world by storm!

(Quickly acting subdued and demure, she slices the letter open and reads.)

ARIEL: "Dear Ms. Denton ... blah ... blah ... blah ... we received ... your ... blah ... blah ... and ... HAVE DECIDED TO ACCEPT YOU TO THE CONSERVATORY, CONDITIONAL ONLY UPON THE SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF AN AUDITION ... blah ... blah ... blah ... Please contact this office ... blah ... blah." (She jumps into the air. The letter floats to the ground and Butch picks it up.) ... YAHOO!! I'm IN, IN, IN ...

BUTCH: (He reads and shakes his head.) No shit!

(She laughs, grabs him and swings him around. As
she lets him go, she snatches the letter from his hand as he spins by.)

ARIEL: Gimme that back ... (he laughs) ... I gotta tell somebody!

BUTCH: What am I? Nobody?

ARIEL: That's not what I mean and you know it, com'on you and Lorie are my best friends. Since my dance schedule has kept me from seeing Lor lately ... You're it, Mister! (Back on track.) What I meant was somebody ELSE ... hell, anybody ... I mean everyone ... I'll call Lorie!

(She picks up the phone and dials a number. She can hardly contain herself. Butch grabs some crackers and drinks some of his juice.)

ARIEL: Come on Lorie, answer the damn phone! ... Lorie! ... Girl! ... You had best be home! ... I will hurt you!

BUTCH: Ow! A little success and she becomes sooo bitchy.

(He winks at Ariel. She sticks her tongue out at
him and turns away, listening intently to the phone. Lorie peers in the window portion of the door. Butch sees her and gestures to be quiet. She enters and she and Butch tiptoe up behind Ariel. Ariel is becoming irritated that there is still no answer. As she lets out a sigh, Butch and Lorie grab her.)

BUTCH & LORIE: BOOO!

ARIEL: Ahh! ... You scared me! (Butch and Lorie shake hands for a job well done.) Where the hell have you been? I need you and then I can't find you. Then you sneak up on me when I least expect it.

LORIE: S-S-Sorry, I guess ... But gee whiz ... I haven't seen you in weeks and now you're hollerin' at me ...

ARIEL: I have been trying to call you.

LORIE: Hell, I'll go on home, call me again. (Starts to leave.)

ARIEL: Oh, no, you don't. Lor ... (Excited.) ... I'm in! (Lorie puzzles.) I'm in ... (Absently.) ...
I have to go there of course ... I'll do that piece ...

LORIE: What are you talking about?

BUTCH: (Enunciating very carefully.) Try to use the English language, Ariel. On this planet, it's what they use to (Very slow and deliberate.) com-mun-i-cate.

LORIE: (Matter of factly.) Really! That's what I speak. Wait a minute, wasn't that sorta like English a minute ago?

ARIEL: Just ignore him Lorie. (Butch laughs.) I was accepted to the Dance Conservatory! I just got the letter today. It's true! I thought I might be dreaming so I pinched myself hard but I didn't wake up and it didn't go away.

LORIE: I think you've got a virus.

ARIEL: No. Really, look (Hands her the letter.) It's right there in black and white. Me. They want ME. Isn't it great? (Lorie reads the letter.)
BUTCH: Sure. But what about the audition? Couldn't that be just an eensy-weensy obstacle? I mean what if you stink that day?

ARIEL: Butch! You are the biggest ... (Butch heads for the door grabbing his bag on the way.) ... You're really gonna get it.

BUTCH: This guy's outta here, before he gets killed. I'll see you tonight, Ari. Later Lor. (He leaves.)

ARIEL: O.K.

LORIE: (She is still reading, and becoming a little sad.) Oh, bye Butch ... Ariel ... this is serious ... I mean ... you're just an audition away from ... leaving us ...

ARIEL: It's worse than that Lor. They've already seen me dance. The audition is almost a formality.

LORIE: (Looking at Ariel with some new admiration.) You really did it ... God ... your dreams come true ... Shit, I'm not even sure I have any dreams ... and yours are already coming true.
ARIEL: Sure you do.

LORIE: I do what?

ARIEL: Have dreams.

LORIE: Oh, yeah? Exactly what are my dreams?

ARIEL: Weren't you planning a drive down through Central America to see the Mayan ruins and experience South American culture? You were going to the Pacific side of Mexico and surf ... (She stops herself.) ... Oh, sorry.

LORIE: Yeah, see? ... That's what happened to those dreams ... they were Bob's dreams ... (In a low male voice.) ... 'Let's go, let's go ... the surf is really bitch'n. com'on let's go' ... (Pause, sadly) ... I adopted Bob's dreams ... and then, he took 'em back.

ARIEL: Bob wanted to go see the ruins?

LORIE: No, I wanted to ... I figured if we were gonna drive all the way in MY car and use MY gas card, the one dad lets me use ... Well, then, I should be
able to add a side trip or two ... I think that might be why 'we're' not going ... But, I don't know ... It could be that he just thinks about surf more than he thinks about me ...

ARIEL: Some of these men! ... it seems they expect us to drop our dreams as soon as we drop our pants ... Steve has some problems in that area! For something so thrilling, dating sure sucks!

LORIE: Not dating sucks worse!

ARIEL: Dating ... what a stupid name. It's what you see that gets your interest and yet it's what you can't see, you know, who somebody is, that tells ya if you'll spend any time together. I guess we could call it 'testing.' You try to find some one who shares your dreams and feelings ... and only dreams of feeling your pants. I hope for it in that order!

LORIE: Some men can't think of anything but the pants part. (Instructionally.) We must educate them on the dreams ... I don't think Bob liked the education part ... But he was pretty honest about it ... in his own kinda way. When I told him where I wanted to go, he looked at me and said 'what's a
myin ruunz? Is it near any good surf?'

(They laugh.)

ARIEL: Steve's the only guy I've met that puts up with my dance schedule. That's sorta educated. Sometimes I think I go out with him just to go out. I only get maybe one night a week ... you know, rehearsals, and all that ...

LORIE: I know, geez, I haven't seen your butt in almost three weeks myself.

ARIEL: I've only seen Steve twice since you and I went to the movies.

LORIE: I understand ... (She smiles.) ... I don't have that 'THANG' ...

ARIEL: (Smiling.) Steve swears that he does ... but I'm not sure I want to meet 'his friend.' (Pause.) Mom's been hinting around ... she and dad think I've already slept with Steve. (She laughs.) They didn't have a clue, last summer ... (Very properly.) ... when I lost my virginity ... now I'm not sure that I want to sleep with Steve and
they've already got me in bed with him! ... It's a screwy world.

(Ari picks up the phone and starts to dial. She is facing away from the outside door. June comes to the door. Her arms are full of grocery bags. She thumps against the door to try to get someone's attention. Lorie opens the door.)

LORIE: Hi, Mrs. Denton. Want some help?

JUNE: Hi, Lorie. (Relieved at the prospect.) Yes, thanks.

LORIE: (Unaware of what she's doing, she walks away from the door.) Ariel, your mom's home and she needs some help.

(Ariel puts down the phone and turns to the door. She sees that Lorie is not with the program. By the time Ariel or Lorie can be helpful June has already made it to the counter. June is obviously not amused.)

ARIEL: Hi, Mom! Mom, Mom, Mom. I got it! I'm in, I'm In!!
JUNE: In what, more hot water?

ARIEL: No! Mom, look, the Conservatory, Look!

JUNE: Really? Oh, honey, that's great. Let me see. (Ariel is bouncing.) Let me ... see. Ari, hold still, I can't see (June fumbles for her glasses.) "... have decided to accept you to the Conservatory ..."
(She sits down, she reads it again.) Oh, Honey, that's just wonderful.

(She looks at Ariel and suddenly looks sad as if she might cry. Ariel gives her a big hug.)

ARIEL: Mom, I'm so happy. And all thanks to you. I couldn't have done it without you ... and Dad. When will he be home?

(They hug. June wipes away a tear.)

JUNE: He could be home any minute now. He wanted to finish the lights in the Studio ... 

(She stops and fights back some more tears.)

LORIE: You mean the Studio is finally going to be done? I
tell ya ... you don't see some people for a couple of weeks and everything changes. Will miracles never cease? Can I see it?

ARIEL: Sure, come on, I'll show you, besides I want to call Steve and Mrs. Johnston and ... Oh ...

Everybody ...

(Their voices fade off down the hall. June sits there and stares at the letter.)

JUNE: My little girl ... (She looks out the window.) ...

My little sparrow is on the edge of the nest ... she seems too young to fly ... (Pause.) ... My mother thought I was too young ... to go away ...

(Looking at the letter again.) ... and dance.

(June stares at the letter as the lights fade.)
(A little later. June slowly stirs a cup of coffee.
The letter is beside the cup.)

JUNE: (To the Audience.) I always viewed life as a series of choices ... yes, or no ... But it seemed a perspective that overlooked too much ... True, you can always decide to row on the left or on the right of a canoe, but it's easy to overlook the currents that your boat is in. (Pause.) Before I took my old job back, I was starting to get jealous of Ariel's success. I kept thinking that I should have gone to New York ... ME ... I should be the one to risk all this! ... and, for a while, I blamed SK ... that caused some problems. (Pause.) Life doesn't seem to ever be a simple yes or no answer ... It's more a series of pop quizzes, some more important than others ... But you see the results of every quiz, in the makeup of every day ... all the reminders of unchosen options ... (Pause.) ... everyday. I took my job back ... It's where I worked that summer that SK and I met.
'Outdoor Outfitters, The Double O'... The Store usually sponsored several camping trips during the summer. The Owner asked me to come along on one of these overnites and I asked SK. If I hadn't dragged him along on that camping trip... I might be Ariel today!... (Sadly.) but I wouldn't have Ariel today! That's what's funny... you make a choice in your life... a hard choice, one that closes doors... But that hard choice, in turn, opens up other doors... options... that may offer you things that you never thought possible... (Pause.) I never believed that I could find a man as wonderful as SK... or to love someone as much as I love that little dancer. But I did and I do! (Pause.) I chose, by myself and for myself. (Pause.) I really am happy here, now. I'm still a little jealous, of my little girl... and her new choices... and her youth. (Long pause.) I have been afraid of losing Ariel since she was three hours old. She'd just finished nursing and she was just lying there... the nurses came to take her for some tests or to change her diaper... I don't know... (Pause.)... I didn't want her to go... I felt so, funny... it was, funny, odd... because for the last six months of my pregnancy, I had wished, nearly every day, to have, a small break, to not be pregnant, just for
a minute or two. Now I had the chance, a break, and I didn't want it ... at that moment I wanted nothing more, than to be with her ... to touch her ... to look at her beautiful little body ... (Pause.) ... to experience the joy of using my breasts ... to nurture my baby ... three hours old ... Wow! ... when they brought her back I was thrilled to see her ... I studied her ... I checked every inch of her ... I don't know why ... just in case? ... (Pause.) ... a girl ... a baby woman ... all the parts ... (She smiles.) ... just smaller ... I was amazed at the perfection, the cycle ... a woman ... only three hours old ... (Pause.) ... three hours ... (She laughs.) When she's thirteen I'll pray that she ONLY spends three hours shopping ... I just stared at her ... a person ... capable of continuing the species ... (Her cheerful mood fades.) Once she's grown ... and moved ... and married ... and having sex ... (Pause.) ... Please, not Steve! ... I'll kill him! ... (She is quick to anger.).

(Steve comes to the door, opens it and disturbs her. He is a very fit and handsome young man. His bearing shows that he knows it. She's not pleased to see him. She stares back into her coffee.)
STEVE: Good afternoon Mrs. Denton. Is Ariel home?

(June just points. He goes to the hallway door, turns back to her)

STEVE: (Sensing her mood.) Are you alright?

JUNE: (Blankly.) I'm ... 'OK.' (He goes to the hallway door. She suddenly turns.) ... If you get Ariel pregnant I'll see that you'll sing too high to even consider playing in next year's football championship.

STEVE: (He is taken by complete surprise.) Mrs. Denton? ... what ... why do you ... I haven't ... (Pause.) We haven't ... Are you really OK? (Pause.) Is Ariel OK? ... (Pause.) ... What's going on? ... (Pause.) ... Is Ariel here?

JUNE: I'm sorry. ... Steve ... I ... I'm sorry ... She's upstairs. She may be in the Studio. I'm ... It's ... I ...

STEVE: Hey, It's OK ... (Pause.) ... We're O.K. ... (Pause.) ... Are you sure you're OK? ... (She nods. Steve goes to the door.) ... I'll just run up and
(June sits and cries. She hears someone outside and composes herself. The door opens and SK is home. He is tired. He sees her turn and wipe her tears. He crosses over to comfort her.)

SK: You O.K. baby? ... What's the matter? ... (June doesn't respond. This irritates SK) ... So suffer alone. O.K.? After the day I've had I don't need a damn mystery story at home. O.K.? (She cries harder. He softens.) I'm sorry baby. You can tell me, I'm real tired, but I love you ... Talk to me. O.K.? ... O.K.? What's the matter?

JUNE: (She looks up at him.) OK ... OK is the Goddam Matter. O.K.? O.K.?

(She cries hard and SK hugs her. She puts her head on his shoulder and they start to sway to unheard music.)

SK: (After a pause) ... So ... Not having a good day either?

JUNE: Yes ... I mean, no, oh, hell ... most of it was
great ... But then ... I don't know ... poof ...

PMS ... (Pause.) ... Poor Mom Syndrome! She's growing up, SK. Our little girl ... 

(She cries again.)

SK: Well, well, well, a dose of that age demon, eh? Hey ... Don't cry. It's too late ... She's already grown ... (Pause. June hugs him hard.) You know, it's strange ... there were days when we just hoped that she'd live past all the hurdles and risks and traffic accidents and jet crashes. Days we just hoped she'd live long enough to grow up. Now she's done it, she's already grown ... Success can sometimes be so sad ... The worst part isn't that she's not six, it's that we're not twenty. (June smiles.) But, hey, Bob and Emily will be here any time now. Is 'poor mom' ready to go? (She nods.) OK! (She winces.) Oops. (Looking in the grocery bags.) Does all this stuff go?

JUNE: She got accepted to the Conservatory.

SK: (Pause.) Really? When did she find out?

JUNE: Today, the letter's on the counter.
SK: (He pauses to reflect.) It was so quick, I guess, I better get those lights fixed. (Recovering.) It's bad enough that I didn't finish the studio until now, but hell if I don't finish it before she leaves for school, how will I rationalize working on it!

(They laugh. A car horn sounds briefly and SK helps June with the groceries and gets the door for her.)

JUNE: Bye honey, see you in a couple of hours. (They kiss.)

SK: Tell Bob to drive carefully.

(He waves out the door. June exits and SK starts to shut the door. He quickly reopens it and yells after her.)

SK: Wake up the moon for me!

(He closes the door. He sees the letter on the counter and reads it very slowly.)

SK: How time flies ...
(He goes to the refrigerator and gets a glass of water. He takes a long drink and then holds the half empty glass up to the light. He puzzles.)

SK: Half full? Half empty? ... (He glances back at the letter.) ... Just, mostly empty!

(The lights fade.)
ACT TWO - Attic Studio.

Scenic Design by Angela Winters

Photography by Michael A. Turner
ACT TWO

SCENE ONE

(Moments later. Ariel and Lorie are in the attic studio. Lorie is mindlessly pretending to be a ballerina. Ariel is sweeping up some sawdust and generally tidying up. Steve comes up the stairs.)

STEVE: Hey Ari ... what's with your mom? ... She just blew up and started talkin' about me getting you pregnant ... what have you been telling her?

ARIEL: Oh! Hi, Steve! I've nothing to tell her. I think she's just feeling old (Pause.) I got accepted to the Conservatory today ... (Ariel waits for a 'congratulations' that doesn't come.) ... Mom looked at me funny for a while, after I showed her the acceptance letter. I think it made her a little sad. I mean, I'll really be able to go away to school now ... so she's happy, and sad, all at once ... that kinda stuff makes her cranky.

STEVE: (He goes to the window and looks out.) I thought that your mom and dad were both going out of town
ARIEL: this weekend?

ARIEL: They are, why?

STEVE: Well, your mom left in somebody else's car and your dad went out into the garage. Do you think they had a fight? Is she feeling that 'funny'?

ARIEL: No, I don't think so. Mom's driving up to the lake with the Comptons to open up the house. Daddy's going to follow them up after he wires up some lights. (She points to the ceiling.) It's the last thing he has to do before the studio is christened and I can use it.

LORIE: Why can't you use it now?

STEVE: It's hard to dance in the dark, stupid. You'd bump into the wall.

LORIE: Don't call me stupid, stupid. Besides I can sure as hell see now. The wall isn't too tough to make out either!

ARIEL: Come on, you guys. I wasn't allowed to use it before because it wasn't safe. The rule just wasn't
ever changed after the place was mostly finished. But it'll get christened tonight.

STEVE: I was hoping you'd see it my way this weekend. Oooh, baby, kiss me. (He grabs Ariel giving her a big hug.) I've been waiting so long. (They giggle.)

ARIEL: (She pushes him away.) Don't get your hopes up. Butch and I are going to rehearse here tonight. That's how it gets christened. Dad can still do the ceremonial thing next week like he'd planned.

STEVE: Well, just be sure that limp wrist is outa here when I get off work at two, then we can rock the love boat til dawn.

ARIEL: Steve, what's gotten in to you. Maybe there's nothing wrong with Mom ... maybe you're the one who's screwy? ... Cut it out ... and get over this thing you've got about Butch ... He's a great guy and good dancer and my friend. It doesn't matter whether he is or isn't gay.

STEVE: Everybody knows he's gay. Besides he doesn't even deny it.
ARIEL: Whether or not he likes girls is none of your business. Just leave him alone!

LORIE: Butch? Really?

STEVE: Lorie, where have you been? And as for you, Miss be-a-cosmic-and-wonderful-human-being shit, if it wasn't for the fact that he was a homo I wouldn't be lettin' you dance with him. (Ariel is upset by this and takes a swing at him with the broom.) OK, OK, I'm going. I'll see you, gorgeous, at two. (Attempting to be cool.) Keep that motor running. Bye Lor.

(Steve leaves.)

ARIEL: Sometimes he is such an ass.

(The girls laugh.)

LORIE: For a while I was afraid you didn't notice.

ARIEL: When you see Steve you notice two things: He's gorgeous and he has an attitude.

LORIE: I don't notice a lot of stuff, but that ... that.
even I noticed ... I like the ass that you can look at, but I think that after a while the other ass would really get old ... Ari, what did he mean 'rock the love boat'? Are you guys doin' IT?

ARIEL: Well, IT is what he meant but IT is what we are not doing. He thinks that we should be and he's starting to get sorta pushy.

LORIE: Like date rape?

ARIEL: Absolutely not ... when I make love it's because I want to. Not even a macho football player would get away with that where I'm concerned. He knows I'd have his balls for breakfast, without him being attached to them ... and Mom would be thinking up a sausage dish. If you know what I mean ... he just has this timetable mentality. You know: on the first date he's gotta kiss you; on the second date he's gotta touch your boobs; you know. Well, we've been dating for two months now and he's upset that I don't let him 'rock the love boat.' Luckily my school and dance schedule don't give me that much time to get in trouble. If we followed his timetable we'd have been on the cruise for a month and a half by now.
LORIE: But it is a nice cruise. And he is built real well. Nobody is even asking me for an available berth.

ARIEL: I know but it just isn't time. It's not right yet. Maybe it's him, maybe it's me. I don't know, if I got pregnant, could I marry him? His two asses come to mind ... I could spend some time with one of them ... but not the other. ... I just think that sex should be special.

LORIE: It is, that's why they named it Sex!

ARIEL: It was special with Mike. But he lives in Cincinnati now.

LORIE: Yeah, what happened there? Ever see him after last summer? Does he write to you?

ARIEL: We wrote every day for a while. Then a couple of weeks went by. He didn't ... Then I didn't. I got a Christmas card. So I sent him one, late. It's a long way to Cincinnati. I don't know.

LORIE: That guy I met at camp last summer, I don't think he knows how to write. It's a real shame too 'cause he could sure rock the love boat. (They laugh.)
Well I gotta go. Will I see you tomorrow?

ARIEL: Maybe tomorrow night. Tomorrow afternoon, I've ...

LORIE & ARIEL: ... got rehearsal!

LORIE: Look out for those rough seas.

ARIEL: (They laugh.) ... I've gotta go too. I have to pick up Butch. I wonder if I should tell Dad about tonight?

LORIE: If he won't be here, why bother. That way the ceremony will still be special to him. Besides what if you slip up and you end up 'sailing.' How are you going to keep a straight face when he asks (Using a deep voice.) 'How was it the other night?'

ARIEL: You're right, but after his performance this afternoon, Steve doesn't make me feel very sexy. Mum's the word.

(SK enters as Lorie is leaving. He is carrying an assortment of electrical supplies to finish off the lighting.)
SK: What's to be mum about, ladies?

(Lorie giggles and runs out.)

ARIEL: Nothing Daddy. (Excited.) Did you hear? ... I was accepted to the Conservatory!

SK: Yes. Your mother told me as she was leaving. I'm very proud of you, sweetie. So is she. (He looks around.) Looks like my good intentions are a little late. The studio will be finished just in time for you to leave it. Maybe we'll rent it out.

ARIEL: Make it into an exercise room, so you can exercise in your spare time and get those stomach muscles back for Mom?

SK: What's your mother been telling you?

ARIEL: Oh, nothing. Except that she loves you.

SK: Yeah, how do you figure that, huh. But it's mighty convenient because I sure love her ... and you too kiddo.

ARIEL: I know. I love you, too.
SK: My women don't have good sense but it sure feels good. (They hug.) Go on now and let me get to work or I'll never get done and I'll never get to the lake.

ARIEL: What time are you leaving?

SK: Oh, when I'm done, probably in an hour or so.

ARIEL: Well, I probably won't see you before you leave, so here's a hug for the highway. I'll see you Monday. What time are you and Mom coming home?

SK: Oh, probably late. She doesn't get a three day weekend often, and she does love the lake ... (Pause.) The lights up here will work before I leave. It'll be 'finished' today. You could use the studio if you want. My gift seems a little late.

ARIEL: Every board and every nail was right on time, whenever they arrived.

SK: Thanks for being a great daughter, Daughter.

ARIEL: Thanks, for being the best dad, Dad. I love you. Bye, bye.
(SK starts to work on the switch wall plate for the lights. He stops and looks around the studio. He looks at some of the dance photos on the wall. He picks up a picture of Ariel and stares at it intently. He gestures to the picture and speaks to the audience.)

SK: There are days when you feel like the world is happening all around you and you're just sorta standing there ... wondering how it works? ... How you got there? (Pause.) I remember once ... I was looking in at her sleeping in her bed ... You can beam on them at night without them seeing you ... It helps sometimes to keep this pride just a little subdued ... like when you have to hold those emotions hostage at the toy store the next day. (He pulls out his wallet and fumbles for a small snap shot of Ariel as a six year old.) But I was looking at her and ... oh hell, she was, maybe, six ... But, while I was looking at her ... (He puts his wallet down on the shelf.) I was seeing a whole life laying there ... from infant to adult ... (He smiles.) ... magic thoughts ... (Pause.) ... I knew, that if I watched ... very carefully ... I could see it all, as it happened ... a whole life ... MY DAUGHTER (Glowing.) ... pretty heady stuff,
huh? ... You can imagine her at all her ages ... but ... you see her through your filter ... you don't see a ten year old in a mud pie fight, you see a little angel in a Brownie uniform who just got her 'Daddy, I grew an Avocado' badge ... You don't imagine a twelve year old playing 'Doctor' in the back of the garage with the little shit from next door, You see an Honor Roll student winning first prize at the science fair ... and of course, you see your seventeen year old princess dancing at her debutante ball, not the masked terrorist robbing a bank on the six o'clock news, whose mug shot looks a lot like you. (He chuckles.) ... My knuckles got white as I thought of the five billion bad options for her life ... I made an oath to her as she slept that night ... an oath: to be better to her than my parents had been to me ... 'I will never make you eat all your peas or force you to do anything that you don't want to do' ... (Pause.) Why do parents lie to their kids? Hell, to themselves? ... I was destined to break that oath in less that twenty four hours ... (Shaking his head.) The next day I came home late from a job site. I was depressed and pretty cranky, too much work, too little pay ... Nothing new ... then, or now ... Ariel and June were discussing the
spinach ... Ariel didn't think it was. June turned to me and I offered the first thing that popped into my head ... 'If you don't eat your spinach now, you can have it for breakfast, or in a sandwich for lunch!' ... At that moment the real truth hit me. I hadn't taught my daughter anything ... not taught, in the real sense ... everything she had learned was from my example, from the real me. (Pause.) She would learn everything from the real world. All I was going to be able to do, ever, was to help her interpret it. But not like a translator, with an explanation ... No, I would interpret everything, through my example. (He saddens.) Like most kids, she'll get most of her training from the street, that is, after all, where all our different 'civilized' worlds collide and intermingle. In the street, the mall, the movies, school, the evening news. When you realize where she's going to learn, you want to try to control the classroom, you try to paint over every dirty word and image ... so she'll only get the proper stuff ... the approved stuff. (He smiles.) Just like my parents ... just like your parents! ... (He gestures around the studio.) ... Even if you try to build a separate classroom for her ... a place to insulate her from reality. The classroom isn't that
important! It's the processing that's the key. Our example is the teacher of our children. By trying to mask reality we teach our kids to be just like us ... to hide feelings, for fear ... fear that our desires or beliefs aren't normal ... fear that they are. Trying to make our kids normal. Luckily, in spite of our best efforts, many of our children turn out just fine. The best parts of our kids are the good parts of ourselves. (Forcefully.) Censorship doesn't work ... you can't hide someone from the world ... for Christ's sake, it's where we live ... it's all around us ... Everyone is aware of it ... and we survive ... We wouldn't be aware of the things that are beautiful if it wasn't for their contrast with ugliness ... (Pause.)

(SK starts to work on the lights as the Lights fade.)
ACT TWO
SCENE TWO

(Evening. It is dark outside. Ariel and Butch enter the Attic. Ariel has a flashlight. They stumble around looking for the light switch.)

ARIEL: Daddy said it would be done ... maybe something happened?

BUTCH: Yeah, the sun went down. How can he work up here in the dark?

ARIEL: Don't be silly. He doesn't work up here in the dark. He works up here in the daylight or he uses a drop light. The electricity has always been up here, it's the lights that are new. Here it is. (She turns on the lights.) Yeah ... (Officially.) Butch, I present to you, My Dance Studio.

BUTCH: Nice, real nice. How are you gonna take this with you to the Conservatory? Is there a handle that I don't see that makes this place a portable studio?
ARIEL: Real funny! (A southern belle, she mimes fanning herself.) My Daddy, started to build this for me nearly five years ago when I won my first scholarship at the Academy. He's worked real hard on this for me. He's worked overtime at work to pay for the materials and worked on the few days he's had off so his little girl, that's Me, could have a nice little studio to work out in. (In her normal voice with a little sadness.) It's just accidentally worked out that it's getting finished just in time for me to go away to the Conservatory.

BUTCH: Looks like a bribe to keep you home.

ARIEL: It might be. But, hey, it's still real nice, huh.

(They start to warm up.)

BUTCH: Yep. So now we don't have to interrupt the Johnston's 'Playdance.'

ARIEL: How about that? They were beautiful together. (Pause.) Mom told me today that she and SK danced naked once, in the moonlight, one summer, when they were camping. I can't imagine them, I mean, I can, but it sure doesn't seem as magical as Mom said.
But they were a little thinner then. So it might not have seemed so funny.

BUTCH: Fat people usually look a little better with their clothes off.

ARIEL: Really?

BUTCH: It may be hard to imagine, but it's true. They're just rounder.

ARIEL: Where do you come by this information?

BUTCH: Look around any locker room. (With a TV Announcer's voice.) Compare ... the before ... to ... the after.

ARIEL: (Pause.) ... Maybe my imagination doesn't work because they're my parents. I mean, I have a hard time imagining them having sex, but I'm sure that they do. Anybody else, I can believe. Mom and SK, I don't know. (Pause.) I take that back. When I see them look into each other's eyes and give each other that far away and stupid kind of look, I can believe it then.
BUTCH: Your parents are still in love?

ARIEL: Oh, yeah. It's real cute. They were made for each other.

BUTCH: That's neat.

ARIEL: After they met, they didn't have a chance. They were real good looking too. I've seen some of the pictures of them when they were dating. Mom was thin and fit. She had a killer figure, nice boobs.

BUTCH: If it was during the sixties it was probably from the pill.

ARIEL: Nope! I am living proof that Mom was not on the pill. That's how I got here. Mom was kinda stupid about birth control. Everything had to be natural. she forgot that until the sixties five to six kids was very natural.

BUTCH: The pictures of hippies in the mags seem to prove that more was better.

ARIEL: You've got the right era ... You can tell by the clothes they wore, ahhhhh! No wonder they danced in
their skins. The clothes would have scared the animals.

BUTCH: Animals? Now, this is getting interesting!

ARIEL: It's not what you think. They went skinnydipping one night and, get this, they walked back to their tent stark naked ... on the way they stopped and danced in a little moonlit clearing. I bet it was something, just their bodies and the moonlight and the dew on the grass. Aoowh! What a planet!

BUTCH: Sounds nice. Besides if you get eaten by a bear when you're naked it doesn't spoil your new jeans.

ARIEL: Get real. Get changed.

BUT (Looking around.) Where?

ARIEL: Bathroom? My room? Hell, right here ... I don't care, unsuit yourself, man. Here. (She turns off the overhead lights and leaves the 'mood' lights on.) Get 'moody.'

BUTCH: I'll change here! It'll be like that theatre we were in during last summer's tour. Where was that,
Durville, or somewhere? The dressing rooms were just either side of the same hallway with that sheet between us that was riddled with holes. What a joke. All anyone had to do was look at the sheet behind them and see pieces of everybody else's bodies through the holes, using the silhouettes to connect the dots. Even though we'd all pretty much seen each other before, peeking made it seem 'forbidden.'

ARIEL: Tell me not to do something and the first thing I want to do is whatever I'm not supposed to! ... I'm gonna run downstairs and get the tapes. I'll be right back, you want anything, water or something?

BUTCH: Sure water'd be great, thanks.

ARIEL: If I miss seeing your manhood, tell me how it was. (She vanishes down the stairs as he slips off his sweat pants.)

BUTCH: (Looking down into his jockey shorts, he calls after her.) It's great.

(He folds his 'sweats' and looks at the ceiling, and the 'mood' lighting. Ariel reappears with two
large plastic cups of water.)

ARIEL: I couldn't get the tapes and the water ... 'right back.

BUTCH: These lights? (She stops at the top of the stairs.) Are a direct import from the sixties!

ARIEL: Yeah, well, those hippies you see when you thumb through those old Time magazines, you know, the ones that you're trying not to read for a paper you have to write? Those hippies metamorphosed into our parents.

BUTCH: Really, Ha. It's true. It's true.

ARIEL: And after they changed, they forgot all the bad stuff that they did, so that they could give us shit for doing the same stuff ten or twenty years later. Weird! Anyway the answer is yes, Dad towed these lights here through the currents of time that started in the sixties.

BUTCH: Faaarr outtt man! (They laugh.) I bet they were stoned when they first bought 'em. They were probably stoned when they were dancing in that
field. I bet they were really a sight. 'Right on'!

ARIEL: If they looked anything like the Johnstons, they were beautiful ... strong, fluid, perfect body lines. Just like their marriage, moving together but differently. Bodies, the same, but subtly, magically, different. (Nearly soap box quality.) We are the products of those differences. We're different from each other and yet identical ...

(Shouting) Life is fucking wonderful ... Oops ...
the tapes ...

(She charges down the stairs laughing, Butch laughs. Butch is facing away from the audience he takes off his jockey shorts and puts his dance belt on. As he prepares to put on his tights, Ariel enters. The scene design should allow her to be facing upstage as she enters. She is naked and carries a box of about twenty cassette tapes, held behind her, comfortably and casually, it hides her buttocks from the audience. Butch hears Ariel enter and turns his head to see her. He is curiously surprised but not shocked by her attire. He turns and smiles.)

BUTCH: (After a moment.) Why, Mrs. Johnston, I hardly
recognized you! What a fetching 'body' suit!

ARIEL: May I have the next Playdance?

(She curtseys slightly, still holding the box of cassettes behind her. He answers with mock seriousness.)

BUTCH: Certainly, but I've never danced in the altogether before ... (He puts his tights down and removes his dance belt.) ... and I hate the way that this damn thing creeps up my butt!

(He is naked now and turns to Ariel to deliver a big classical ballet bow, upstage leg pointed and stiff and a grand sweep of his upstage arm. Ariel trills and bounds over to the boom box.)

BUTCH: But what about your Dad? Are you sure he's gone?

ARIEL: Not to worry. I don't think Dad would care. Mom and Dad fell in love swimming naked in the moonlight. He wouldn't miss a chance to be there.

BUTCH: ... and Steve?
ARIEL: I take showers naked and he doesn't care ... it may change his dream patterns, a little ... We're not doing anything wrong. (She smiles.) After all, we're still wearing manmade materials!

(She 'models' her skin as though it was part of a new Paris collection, mimicking a fashion show's mindless and emotionless verbal accompaniment. She uses the flashlight to emphasize her face for the speech.)

ARIEL: 'These costumes were divinely tailored and ... if we may be so bold? ... we here at Chez Epiderme, well, WE ... think they're stunning.' ... (She snaps off the light. Her voice is back to normal and there is obvious pride in her physique.) ... Mine fits just right ... How's yours? ... (She giggles.) Besides 'great'?

(She selects the concert tape, puts it in.)

BUTCH: Oh ... (looking down at himself) ... mine's a little big in the crotch.

ARIEL: Right ... sure.
ACT TWO - Attic Studio Dance.

Scenic Design by Angela Winters
Photography by Michael A. Turner
(They laugh. She pushes the 'play' button and turns as the music starts. They are now 'on stage' and perform a modern dance piece. The dance must be performed in the nude. Any other option undermines the philosophy and the conflict of the play. The lighting should be subtle enough that the visual beauty of the dance comes from the slight silhouettes of the body lines, not from the visible detail of body parts. The lighting could perhaps create a moonlit dance in the out of doors. The dance should be fluid and gentle. An image like moving statuary would be appropriate. The content of the dance should mirror the plot of the story. It is a five to eight minute piece, long enough for the audience to become acclimated to the attire. They dance to a nice lift. At the peak of the lift, Ariel and Butch are down stage right. She reaches this position at the same time that SK comes to the head of the stairs and turns on the bright overhead lights. These lights should allow the audience to focus on SK and not upstage him with well lit naked bodies.)

SK: What the hell is going on here?

(The lighting change is sudden. So is their awareness of
SK's presence. It makes a harsh transition from the magic of the dance to the reality of normal bright room light. Butch lowers Ariel to the floor. SK just stands there.)

ARIEL: Daddy! ... what are you doing here? ... I thought ... I mean ... the lake?

(He is very upset. As the tension mounts, Ariel slowly covers herself, one of her arms moves to cover her breasts and her other hand moves over her crotch. Butch sees her movements and with military precision, quickly snaps his hands in front of his crotch. SK barks back at Ariel.)

SK: I forgot my wallet, OK? ... (Turning his attention to Butch. In a low growl.) ... Get away from my daughter ... you son of a ...

ARIEL: Daddy it's OK ...

SK: Don't 'OK' me ... little girl. After all I ...

(Butch starts to pick up his clothes. Ariel grabs a towel as she crosses to SK, holding it in front of her.)

ARIEL: Daddy really ... we were just dancing ... like you
and Mom ... at the lake ...

SK: (Fiercely.) Leave your mother out of this ... you go to your room and get some clothes on ... I'll deal with you in a just a damn minute ...

ARIEL: Daddy! ...

SK: (Uncontrolled.) I SAID GO TO YOUR ROOM, GODDAMMIT!

(Ariel starts to cry and runs down the stairs.)

BUTCH: Mr. Denton ... I ... It's OK ... really we were just ...

SK: (Very slowly.) You shut your damn mouth ... I don't know what the hell you think you're doin' ... Here ... in my own house ... You little son of a ...

(SK has been slowly moving towards Butch as he speaks. Butch has been backing up trying to grab all his clothes which he holds in front of his crotch. He backs into the wall and SK gets right in his face.)

SK: Being naked makes you feel pretty vulnerable ... when you're not in control ... (SK punches the wall
right next to Butch's head.) and you're not in control any more ... are you ...

BUTCH: (With difficulty.) No ... No sir ...

SK: That's right ... you can't control me the way you can control Ariel, can you?

BUTCH: Mr. Denton ... really ... there's no need to be ... I mean NOTHING happened ... really ... We were just dancin' ... We were just ...

SK: SHUT UP!

(Butch gasps quietly. He is scared.)

SK: ... that was my little girl you were messin' with you little shit. (SK slowly grabs Butch's throat.) I could just squeeze ... and you'd never ...

(Ariel appears at the top of the stairs, she has thrown on only a large sweat shirt. It has a large peace sign on it.)

ARIEL: NO! ... DADDY! ... NO! ... Stop it please ... It was all my idea. Let him go.
(She runs and grabs SK's hand and pulls it from Butch's throat.)

SK: (Violently) ... I said go to your room! Do you like the studio so much that you can't leave it? I can fix that!

(SK shakes her off his arm and grabs the shutters by the window, tearing them off the wall. Ariel watches in amazement. He then grabs the electrical wires that he stapled up earlier and rips them down.)

SK: You won't be dancing under these lights for a while. The Garden of Eden is closed!

ARIEL: Daddy!

(She tries to stop him by grabbing his arm. He pulls it away from her and she holds on. This throws her into the wall. Butch grabs SK's arm.)

BUTCH: Mr. Denton, don't you hurt her again or I'll call the cops ... I ... (SK swings and punches him real hard in the face.)
ARIEL: DADDY, NO! PLEASE NO!

(Ariel and Butch are on the floor between the door and SK. They start to get up and edge towards the door. SK flies into a rage.)

SK: YOU GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE, BOTH OF YOU. AND STAY OUT ... OUT OF MY HOUSE ... YOU WANT TO GO SCREW? FINE BUT DO IT OUT OF MY HOUSE ... I DON'T EVER WANT TO SEE EITHER OF YOU IN THIS HOUSE AGAIN!

(Ariel cries and runs down the stairs. Butch follows. SK glares after them, then sits and cries as the lights fade.)
ACT TWO

SCENE THREE

(Minutes later. SK is sitting in the same spot.)

SK: Damn it ... (Pause.) ... I hate it when I lose control ... It just let's me hide ... it keeps me from having to feel ... (He grimaces and chokes back tears, very 'manly.') ... I've always felt a great deal more than I let on. It wasn't ever hip ... feeling ... there was a lot of talk about love and peace ... but we never really learned to feel ... we learned just like every other generation ... trial and, mostly, error. (Retrospectively.) Damn ... (Pause.) Weird ... (Pause.) ... Tonight was kinda weird ... (Agitated.) Nobody ever sits you down, and says, 'Hey bub, it's weird ... you're gonna feel real weird ... most of the time!' ... (Pause. He looks at the doorway.) ... I didn't ever want Ariel to leave, I've been dreading it for years ... and I'm the one who just kicked her out! ... That's weird ... (Long pause.) ... It's all weird ... (Counting on his fingers.) Dating ... mating ... love ... marriage ... birth ... bills
... getting 'older.' (Pause.) There are times like tonight when you want to hide from the things that steal your attention, things like murder, rape, greed, theft, emotional abuse, uninspired sex... you can't avoid them, neither can your children. They stare you down. But, if you open your eyes... you'll find, next to the horrors, sitting quietly, politely, love, generosity, empathy, caring sexual bliss... To clearly see the good things, you have to notice them all... (Pause.)... You have to help your children develop a rational decision making process... That's the most important gift you can give... Because if you get carried away with, what not to say, what not to do, what videos are forbidden and where not to go... You can forget that it's all normal, all of it... If you remember that... it may keep you aware, one day... or one spring evening, an evening, feeling much like tonight. (He looks around the studio.) Aware that you're not looking at your daughter, innocently dancing nude in the attic... instead you see your six year old girl, with breasts, scaring you to death with a very adult game of dress up... That's when you will probably make a fool of yourself (He gestures to where Ariel was standing earlier.) by telling...
her to get out of the house ... that's when you'll risk losing her respect ... and you'll risk it all, for nothing more than making your fear of being mortal, go away ... (Pause.) ... We are our parents ... our children will look at us the way we looked at our parents ... Time always stands still ... tonight, right now, this moment ... It is the only time that has a ring of truth.

(SK looks around the studio. He walks to the door, pauses, looks back and sadly reaches for the light switch as the lights snap out.)
ACT THREE - Kitchen and Park Bench.

Scenic Design by Angela Winters
Photography by Michael A. Turner
(Ariel and Butch sit on a park bench. Butch is nursing his swollen eye. He has his socks over his shoulder but he is wearing his shoes. He obviously hasn't re-dressed himself well. Ariel has on the same sweatshirt but has added some leggings and sneakers. She has a suitcase and her boom box. She is sitting with her knees to her chest, lost in thoughts. Butch moans as he dabs his eye with the top of one of his socks.)

BUTCH: Ouch! Damn ... 

ARIEL: (Awakened from her daze.) You OK?

BUTCH: (He nods.) ... Yeah. I guess so. This thing hurts.

ARIEL: Butch, I'm sorry ... I'm really sorry ... SK never loses it like that ... (Solemnly.) Forty, huh? I sure feel eight right now!

BUTCH: You don't have to put up with this. You could call
ARIEL: Right, SK may believe, eventually, that you and I were just dancing. The cops? I don't think so.

BUTCH: They'd listen to the story, and get that 'sure you were!' look on their faces. They'd end up looking at us as if we were standing there naked right in front of them.

ARIEL: I don't think it's being naked that makes people feel funny, it's people's dumb reactions, that make you feel weird.

BUTCH: I would like to see the look on the cop's face when you explained it all to him. (He laughs and it makes his face hurt.) Ow!

ARIEL: What about you, wiseguy? You're the one with the damage. (She pretends to poke at his wound. He pulls away.) You could have him arrested for assault and battery! You call the police? I'll watch the look on his face as you explain that to the police.

BUTCH: (He shakes his head.) OK, no cops! You've got
enough trouble, without dragging old SK downtown.  
(Affected.) Book'um Danno. Your dad isn't big on any of those Charles Bronson movies is he? You know 'Dancer Death Wish.'

ARIEL: No, he's not! (Pause.) Where will I go? I could call the Johnston's. They might at least understand the story.

BUTCH: They'd be a little easier to talk to than the police.

ARIEL: Hell, I thought I knew how SK would react to seeing me naked at home ... (She hugs her knees hard and cries.) ... I don't know why ... (She is in pain.) ... I don't have anybody else ... Where'll I go? ... What'll I do?

(She cries and Butch comfort's her.)

BUTCH: You've got me! I'm sorry it happened ... but I think SK's probably feeling stranger about this than you or I right now ...

ARIEL: I hope so! (She softens.) I don't mean that.
BUTCH: He's probably trying to figure it all out too. (He giggles.) Your mom is probably helping him ... (He smiles.) She's probably helping a whole lot!

(Pause.)

ARIEL: I guess he thought we were doin' it ... We weren't skinnydipping at the lake ... SK's in control there ... But tonight ... I don't know ... (She wipes her eyes with the tops of Butch's socks.)

BUTCH: Yeah, yeah, but you'd better watch out for the other end of those socks. One good rub with the demon end may do more harm than good. (Ariel looks at the socks in mock horror, holds her nose and drops them behind the bench.)

ARIEL: (Looking over the back of the bench at them.) That disposal method may not pass EPA standards. They could kill all the pigeons from here to Albuquerque. (They laugh, and Ariel tries to touch his cheek with her hand.) Thanks, Butch.

BUTCH: (He quickly pulls away and nervously changes the subject.) Well, he's either pissed because we were naked ...
ARIEL: I don't know. It really wasn't ever a big deal.

BUTCH: I don't think ol' SK is prepared to be old yet!

ARIEL: I guess. Most of our friends join us for 'nekkid swimmin' at the lake.

BUTCH: I never could understand the fuss some people make over being naked. The few spots that they don't want anyone to see are really so small. A woman's ankle used to be able to fire up a man like nobody's business. Today it takes a pair of thirty-eights and a bump and grind to even get called risque ... for most of us. There are still a few people who wish we would cover up those immoral ankles.

ARIEL: (She smiles.) I'm sure that Mom is straightening him out as we speak. I bet they're having a most excellent conversation. Poor SK!

BUTCH: Poor SK? (He dabs his wound.)

ARIEL: I'm sorry, poor you, too! But Dad's wounds may not heal as fast as yours will. He might not even know why he got so mad. I will bet he's pissed now. He's
pissed at himself for getting brain dead and kicking his daughter out of the house. (Pause.) Parents sure like to torture themselves. It is funny though ... SK always told me that you never get mad at someone else. He said that, if you think about it, you'll always find that you're really mad at yourself. Always.

BUTCH: Right! Sure! (He is in disbelief.) How do ya figure that? (He dabs at his eye.)

ARIEL: You're mad at yourself for being in a situation or whatever ... When you told Mrs. Belker, on the corner, that you'd mow her yard that Saturday. Then we all went to the beach and you couldn't go. You were really pissed off. But you weren't all pissed off at Mrs. Belker, were you? No, you were pissed at yourself because you were stuck and you did the sticking. So SK was right. You're always mad at yourself, and that's enough to really piss you off ... (Pause.) I think SK is probably being very hard on himself right now, and you're right. Mom's probably helping to see that he doesn't miss anything.

(They laugh.)
BUTCH: So what are you gonna do now?

ARIEL: I don't know. Thanks to 'my friends,' I feel much better.

BUTCH: I do all the work and 'your friends' get all the credit.

ARIEL: A little while ago I tried to thank you and you got all weird. So quit yer bitchin'.

BUTCH: Sorry, I just ... I dunno. The last time I got close to someone ... I got my heart diced up pretty bad ... I got gun shy.

ARIEL: It must be hard, being gay ...

BUTCH: (He looks at her hard, deciding.) Dammit, Ariel, open your eyes.


BUTCH: Have you ever seen me out with a guy? Ever heard me coo at a man's butt? ... (Waiting for her to get it.) ... I'm not gay!
ARIEL: I ... but ... when I met you ... everybody ... told me that ...

BUTCH: 'Everybody told me.' That's the story of my life!

ARIEL: Wow, Butch ... you mean Dad could've been right to worry?

BUTCH: Real funny! I like women, but I don't trust anyone. I was attracted to you when we first met, but you have really shitty taste in men. Besides, once 'everybody' thinks something about you, there's almost no way to prove that it's not true. I could scratch my balls more or smoke cigars. I could talk about women as though they were hunks of meat. I could just be me. Happy with my friends, happy with you. (Sadly.) Happy avoiding the confrontations.

ARIEL: But why do you take all that shit off of Steve and those other jerks?

BUTCH: Com'on, Ari. I've left that front undefended for so long, I could get caught screwing Miss Mifflin in the biology lab and they'd still call me a fag as long as I continued to dance. To 'prove' anything to those jerks I'd have to change so much I
wouldn't be able to recognize myself ... So now you know my secret, I'm basically normal ... What a scandal!

ARIEL: So then why didn't you get ... excited ... when we were dancing?

BUTCH: Do you get aroused when you all go skinny dipping at the lake?

ARIEL: Of course not! It's your mind that tells you what's humma humma and what isn't.

BUTCH: That is the issue with being gay isn't it. You don't choose who will stimulate you. Someone either does or they don't. Did you choose to like 'washboard tummies' and tight buns?

ARIEL: No. Mom may have steered me that way a little.

BUTCH: So, we're all wierd and that must be normal. (A long pause.) What next?

ARIEL: Maybe breakfast? ... that pancake place?

BUTCH: (Butch rolls up his upper lip.) AHHHH!!
ARIEL: OK ... you're right. You pick. (Butch scratches his chin and thinks.) Then, later, I guess I'll go home and confront the beast.

BUTCH: You better be careful. (Mocking Mr. Rogers.) Can you spell LOW PROFILE? (They laugh.)

ARIEL: (Mock man's voice.) ... I gotta do what I gotta do. (With conviction.) ... I'm gonna be a dancer. Mom and Dad and I wanted the same thing once. I don't remember when that changed ... It has more to do with who is in control. They'd prefer me to be in the eighth grade all my life.

BUTCH: I don't think they're ready for you to go to college.

ARIEL: Eventually the student driver has to drive the car. ... You know, you have to stop talking about 'the process' and just do it. I'm the one who has to want success for me to get it!

(Ariel jumps up and grabs her suitcase.)

ARIEL: I'm going home to talk to SK.
BUTCH: I'd avoid it if I were you.

ARIEL: I'll be there when he and Mom get back from the lake.

BUTCH: It'll take them a while, you'll fall asleep and lose the advantage.

ARIEL: Oh, I bet they will make record time. Come on Butch, let's go tell them what really shakes around here.

BUTCH: No way! (Covering his wound.) I don't wanna die.

ARIEL: You really are afraid of confrontation, aren't you?

BUTCH: I've put up with people thinking that I was gay for years now. Your dad can think whatever he wants for a couple of days. I will not kick a sleeping bear and I most certainly will not go to his house to see if he is asleep!

ARIEL: It really took a lot for you to try to protect me in the attic, didn't it.

(Pause. Butch just looks at her a little sheepishly. She smiles and he lets her touch his
cheek with her hand.)

ARIEL: You're right. Now is not the time for Dad and me to talk. (Pause.) Besides, SK can't feel miserable and ask me to come back home, if he thinks I never left.

(The lights fade.)
ACT THREE
SCENE TWO

(Car lights flash across the kitchen windows. SK comes in the door. June follows. SK and June have obviously been 'discussing' the evening's events. June is angry. SK is defensive, but aware of the fact that he made a big mistake. He is in emotional pain, but trying to hide it.)

SK: ... OK ... If she's really gone ... I'll find her ... I'll apologize ... I'll tell her I didn't mean it ... For Christs sake, June, I love her too!

JUNE: (Sarcastically.) Well, I'm sure she's aware of that ... especially now! ... I can't believe you acted like such an ass ... If he's hurt ... Oh, God ... Louis Denton if you've hurt that boy any deeper than his ego I'll ... Butch's parents could sue us ... (She picks up the telephone and starts to dial.) ... I don't know why you're in such a hurry ... She'll be gone in a few months anyway.

SK: I know that ... I'm sorry for Christ's sake ... But
damn it ... I'd like to see what you'd've done, if
you found her and a boy in the attic ...

(June hangs up the phone and scowls at SK. She
looks up another number and dials.)

JUNE: I don't think that I would've kicked our only
daughter out of her own house. There's nothing
wrong with being naked. WE told her that. (Someone
answers the phone, June's tone of voice changes
immediately.) ... Hello ... This is June Denton ...
I'm sorry to be calling so late but ... No nothing
terrible, I hope ... I was trying to locate Ariel ...
She was a little ... upset when she left a
while ago and I, well ... Yes I know they usually
... Right I know they are ... Right ... But ...
Can you just tell me if you've seen her? ... Please ...
... have you seen her? ... No? ... Well thank you ...
... I will ... Yes, thanks ... Good night. (She
hangs up.) ... Some people choose the wrong time to
give advice.

SK: While you're making your calls, I'll drive around
and try to find her. Why don't you call Butch's
house?
JUNE: (Very irritated.) That was Butch's house.

(SK looks sheepishly across the room at June.)

JUNE: Wait a minute ... did you hear something?

SK: I didn't hear anything.

(June gets hopeful and excitedly runs to the door to the house.)

JUNE: You don't think she's ... I'll kiss her if she disobeyed you tonight. Ariel? Ariel, honey? ... Are you here?

(June leaves the room calling for Ariel.)

SK: I always thought that there would be a time when every thing would be clear ... I would be there ... an adult, clever, accomplished ... There was supposed to be a time when I'd be happy, a time when I'd ... make too much money. It's what made me feel that I was young, I mean, not having arrived yet ... You're still on the way, still on the train ... of life.
ARIEL:  (From the bench, across the stage.) I can see my future when I look at the stars. (Reading a marquee.) 'Starring Ariel Denton,' I'll know everything. I'll do everything. I'll be adult. Rich would be nice! Everyone will be waiting, just waiting for Ariel's train to come in.

SK:  There was supposed to be a time when I could spend time with my daughter. (He cries.) ... A time when trauma and bullshit wouldn't stop the world ... I could cope ... I spent my life planning for tomorrow and for that day ... when it would all be clear.

ARIEL:  I'll turn down important companies and Hollywood directors, to come home to be with my children. I'll be better than Mom and SK. (Pause.) I'll see my life, distortion free.

SK:  Maybe my Dad wasn't an asshole ... he was, just waiting ... waiting ... a little impatiently, just like me. (Pause.) I worked so hard to pay all those bills ... I missed a lot of what I was working for ... birthdays, cheerleading, her first recital. The only performance I make it to on time ... is the 'pas de nude.' (He laughs sadly.)
ARIEL: It's the wait that really gets ya! I just can't wait!

SK: It's hard ... their success ... is our success. (Pause.) Their failures are our failures. (He chokes back a tear.)

(He leaves. June comes back in.)

JUNE: She's not here ... SK, do you think? ... (She looks around and discovers that he is gone.) ... Good ... I hope you find her.

(June pours a cup of coffee and sits down in her standard seat at the counter. Ariel turns to the audience.)

ARIEL: This stuff! It's been going on now for thousands of years. The teen years. They're so famous that that had to name them! (Pause.) What's the problem?

JUNE: Some people are just afraid of living ... They won't educate our children, about certain matters.

ARIEL: Young people embrace most ideas, most politics, ... We want to know about the world and our own
bodies and how they work.

JUNE: They teach them ... by example ... and it works

ARIEL: My friends swear they aren't having sex, 'Mom might find my pills' ... Then ... they don't take precautions ... They get pregnant, not the men.

JUNE: Some shrivelled adult tells a sixteen year old that she has to have her baby ... at sixteen years old. HELL, SHE'S still a baby, herself.

(She sips her coffee and looks at her watch.)

ARIEL: So women wait ... for the double standard to go away.

JUNE: So pregnant women wait ... to give birth.

ARIEL: Mothers wait ... (Ariel lays back and looks at the stars.)

JUNE: ... and wait ... for the duties of motherhood to be overshadowed by the joys of motherhood ... Older women wait ... for their children to understand ... why ... Women of all ages wait ... for men to
realize how big the responsibility for childbirth is. (Pause. The lights collapse leaving only June in a spot.) To the hard eye of a parent, children's choices start so early. Children never think they have enough options to choose. Maybe that's the deciding line between childhood and being an adult? ... (Pause.) ... I knew that SK and I would have children. We loved each other so much ... that is the proper formula for children ... Nature just changed our timetable a little ... We made a great family ... until tonight.

(She chokes back a tear as she picks up the phone and starts to dial a number. The lights fade.)
ACT THREE
SCENE THREE

(It is just before dawn. Ariel and Butch are sitting on the same bench.)

ARIEL: You sure moved pretty fast when you thought Daddy was comin' down those stairs.

BUTCH: Do you blame me?

(He gestures to his swollen eye and in pointing accidentally touches it.)

ARIEL: (Chuckles.) No, not at all

BUTCH: Ouch!

(They laugh. They are laughing when Steve walks up.)

BUTCH: I'd wait to go home til afternoon if I were you. It takes a while for a pot to stop boilin' even after the fire's been put out ... (Pause.) ... What are
you gonna do while it cools?

STEVE: (Angry.) What the hell have you been doin' that's makin' your pot boil? And why the hell aren't you doin' it with me?

ARIEL: (Startled.) Steve, you scared me. Where'd you come from?

STEVE: Well, I started at your house, but your mom seems a little rattled. She wanted to know if I had seen you. Your dad had some problem with you and Mr. Limpwrist? Bitch! It didn't take me to long to realize that I had been stood up.

ARIEL: Damn it, Steve! You don't have to be a jerk! You could chose to be a member of the human race!

BUTCH: I don't know Ari. That's a tall order. It's hard to make a Ferrari out of a Volkswagon.

STEVE: (Threatening.) Look, LIMPO, fuck with me and I'll break your face.

(Butch turns to Steve so he can see his swollen face.)
BUTCH: You're a little late today. Why don't you try me tomorrow?

ARIEL: Look Steve, I have put up with your attitude for about as long as I want to. You apologize to Butch. In case you hadn't figured it, he's had a rough night.

STEVE: If you had been makin' love to me then old fagface here wouldn't have gotten beaten up. It would've been a better night all around. (To Butch.) Get used to it, fag.

ARIEL: I am amazed at you. You are such an ass! ... But you are right, it would've been a better night your way ... I would've gotten laid and you would've gotten your ass kicked. I'm sure that at least one of those options would've been satisfying.

(Butch tries not to but he can't help himself, he lets a chuckle slip out.)

STEVE: OK, fine, bitch, you'll be sorry. I'll go screw Sandy Stilton. I'll make her real happy, then you'll see what you're missin'. You'll see and you'll have lost your chance.

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ARIEL:  This morning, when I wake up, I'll try real hard to remember what it was I ever saw in you.

STEVE:  Ditto, Bimbo.

ARIEL:  Go away! Leave us alone!

STEVE:  Right, bitch! Fuck you! You too faggot!

ARIEL:  What eloquence!

(Steve storms off. She and Butch make eye contact and burst out laughing. They fall silent and notice the sunrise.)

BUTCH:  The sun's comin' up. You still going home to talk to SK? You think he'll forgive you?

ARIEL:  Yeah, I've got to go home. SK will calm down. It's hard to think anything bad about him. He's really a great dad. (She saddens.) At least he was til last night, uh, tonight.

BUTCH:  I know what you mean.

ARIEL:  Just 'cause you burn an omelette once, doesn't make
you a bad cook! Does it?

BUTCH: No, but I'm not gonna eat the dead omelette. (They smile.)

(Pause. She gestures toward sunrise.)

ARIEL: There he is, that's my Daddy, getting out of bed over there. Louis the Fourteenth, (With pride.) The Sun King.

BUTCH: What?

ARIEL: SK, the Sun King. He played the king in this French ballet. That's when he and Mom fell in love. He had been lusting after the moon, a redhead named Miriam. The moon kept moving around during Mom's solo ... It was bad enough when Miriam stood still like she was supposed to, but whenever Mom wasn't looking Miriam would undulate her body to make the moon 'shimmer' ... Mom wasn't about to let her have both the spotlight and the Sun King ... Dad never had a chance. Mom asked him to go camping. That's the weekend that I told you about when they went dancing in the moonlight. (Pause.) ... SK (She shakes her head.) ... you know it's hard to train
your parents properly ... I'll have to start all over again tomorrow!

BUTCH: What if he won't talk? What if ... he won't let you come home? What'll you do?

ARIEL: I can't imagine that. (There is a pause as she considers this.) ... I don't know what I'll do. (Pause.) I guess I'll just keep doin' what I'm meant to do. (Pause.) I'm gonna dance. If SK won't let me come home, I'll find a place to stay and I'll finish the concert at the Academy. I'll do my audition and I'll be off to the Conservatory. I'll wash dishes if I have to and pay the difference of my scholarship. (Realizing that she's getting a little wound up.) I'll do it somehow ... other people can do it, so can I ... If you can tolerate living, having been tossed in the wrong sexual basket ... I can't whine about this little setback. I mean, I'm the one who wants to dance. (A fake aside to Butch.) The convenience of having someone else pay for it would be nice, but life's not always nice. (Pause.) I still have to live, I do, me, myself, not their image of what I am or should be.
BUTCH: U B U! (He chuckles.)

ARIEL: I am who I should be. I am me ... (Melodramatically.) and I will live, to dance.

BUTCH: I admire your balls, Ariel Denton.

(She looks down between her legs and they both laugh.)

ARIEL: The funny part is, I think I've inherited SK's balls.

BUTCH: I feel lucky to have kept mine tonight.

(Butch takes off his shoes and tries to get comfortable on the bench.)

ARIEL: You know, in spite of all that happened, I feel pretty good. I'm sorry about your eye though. I do wish it had been Steve. I'm not sure it would have been worth making love to him. He really is a creep.

BUTCH: Like I said, 'Shitty taste in men.'
ARIEL: (A little defensively.) I've known all along that we weren't right for each other, I guess. I probably would've dumped him weeks ago ... except Mom and Dad would've thought it was their idea.

BUTCH: Parents really are a pain when they find out that they were right.

ARIEL: They're worse when they find out you know it too. (Pause.) But hey, don't admire my balls, Butch. You've got a lot of courage yourself. It's hard to be a homosexual ... It's gotta be even harder when you're not! That's funny. So we could've been an item. All those rehearsals, (Purring.) all that spandex. (They laugh.) You're really all right, mister. U R U!

BUTCH: That's me! Me R Me.

ARIEL: Putting up with all that crap from the geeks? That takes a lot more courage than me going home tomorrow ... I know my parents love me ... You may never know if Steve loves you.

BUTCH: (Lifting his head. Effeminately.) Oh! I know. Sister, I know.
ARIEL: Mom and Dad want me to be happy.

BUTCH: That was yesterday, look to tomorrow!

ARIEL: No matter what happens ... eventually Dad will start to see me for myself, an individual ... an individual that he can be proud of ... (She smiles.) ... A famous dancer? ... He just thinks that he wants me to stay eight ... It would destroy him if he saw me miserable ... A little sparrow locked up in a little cage.

BUTCH: With a dance studio in the attic!

ARIEL: I did. Jeez, I did. I just called myself a little sparrow. Yuck!

BUTCH: You're just remembering your roots.

ARIEL: (Pause.) SK knows way down deep ... inside, he knows that a parent's job is to raise their children to be independent ... Only he found out last night just how hard that can be. (Pause.) But he and Mom have done a good job (She looks at butch, he nods in agreement.) ... Hell I didn't realize, until last night ... I have the self-
confidence that they gave me ... I must ... I am pretty la-de-da about going to school without any
money (Pause.) Shit, that'll be hard ... (Getting
new wind.) I can do anything I set my mind to.
Anything ... And when I'm successful they will be
happy and proud ... (She smiles.) They're just at
a funny age ... They are ... really! ... caught
... in between.

BUTCH: (Realizing he will get no sleep.) You must explain?

ARIEL: They used to be proud of me because they owned me.

BUTCH: Of course you must!

ARIEL: (Nearly oblivious to Butch's remarks.) 'That's MY
daughter!' ... and now and for most of any parent's
life, they have to be proud of me because they made
me.

(She waits for some imput from Butch. It doesn't
come.)

ARIEL: It's a lot harder to make the transition than they
ever imagined ... assuming they were aware of it at
all. It's what has driven some of our friends away
from home. But if parents are aware of the change and grow up with their kids (Still no response from Butch. Ariel supplies a response.) 'It occurs naturally, in some families' ... Why, you're right Butch.

(She smiles at Butch. Then to the audience.)

ARIEL: I love my home so much, so very much. Mom and SK are my home. The house just contains us. Our stuff comforts us, makes us feel home when we're alone, ... at home. (Pause.) ... They gave me everything that they had and everything that they could get ... everything. (Pause.) The one thing, the only thing, that they had a hard time giving me, was the space to grow away ... For fear that I'll see them as just people. It's scary, all parents are destined to be treated like old rock and roll records. They make you feel good and safe, but you don't listen to them anymore. (Pause.) It is hard for some to see, hard to realize ... that the people who are close to you ... those people know who you are ... you can't really hide things from each other ... oh, you can mask small stuff ... but it always bubbles back to the surface. We are all doing a sort of social playdance ... If we just
look we can all see each other's emotional privates
. . . (To sleeping Butch.) Is that what scares you?
Seeing your body was fun, but seeing your soul was
magical. Thanks, bub.

(She touches his face. He wakes with a start.)

BUTCH: What? What?

ARIEL: Oh, just thanks for caring!

BUTCH: (Groggily.) Sure. No problem. Fix the world yet?

ARIEL: Nah, I just figured out a little piece of it.

BUTCH: What do you figure?

ARIEL: (Sheepishly.) Be yourself?

(Pause.)

BUTCH: That's it? (Sitting up.) That's what kept me up all
night?

ARIEL: I guess.
(Butch shakes his head.)

ARIEL: Well ... I could buy you breakfast. Eh? Mr. Limpo?
(She points to his swollen face.) Or is that Mr. Lumpo?

BUTCH: (He smiles and it hurts his face.) Ouch! Breakfast sounds good, but I'm buyin' ... You may have to pay for school, remember? ... (Pause.) You really gonna go talk to your dad later?

ARIEL: Yeah, in a couple of hours ... I can't wait too long ... I could use some sleep. Besides, I've gotta get home before my Mom has a really bad picture of me pasted on one of those milk cartons.

BUTCH: Runaway dancer.

(They laugh. The lights fade to black.)

THE END.
Appendix A. Floor Plan - Act One.

Design By Angela Winters.

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Appendix A. Floor Plan - Act Two.

Design by Anxela Winters
Appendix A. Floor Plan - Act Three.

Design by Angela Winters.
Appendix B. Lighting Plot.

Design by C. David Peters.