

GREAT AWAKENINGS
a play in two acts
by David Ewald

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Great Awakenings was given a professional staged reading on August 10, 2009, at the Crossroads Theater in Denver, Colorado under the title "Mormania" as part of Paragon Theatre's The Trench. Director: Cathy Reinking. Producer: Wendy Franz.

The cast was as follows:

JILL	MICHAELA CULLEN
ALYSSA	HANNAH MARIE HINES
ELI	CURTISS JOHNS
PAUL	STEVE BURGE

GREAT AWAKENINGS

ACT I - Friday Night

ACT II - The Morning After

PLACE: The campus of a large religious university

SET: A typical two-person dorm room. Two twin beds are positioned on opposite sides of the room, and at center two desks with credenzas have been placed back-to-back so that they partition the two sides. On each desk is a computer, and underneath has been slid a plastic chair. Behind the partition but still visible are a sink and a mirror, to the right of which is a door leading to an adjacent bathroom. On either side, at back, is an identically-sized closet with sliding mirror doors. Stage-left, just visible, is a large bay window that overlooks a mountain range. Stage-right is a door leading to the hallway. Throughout the room are assorted odds and ends associated with female college life.

CAST: Jill, 18

Eli, 21

Alyssa, 18

Paul, 19

ACT I

Darkness.

Ocean sounds. The cries of whales.
Waves crashing against the shore. The
faint hiss of receding foam.

The door opens abruptly, throwing light
from the hallway into the room. JILL
and ELI stand swaying and laughing in
the doorway, close. They are drunk.

As they stumble into the room the ocean
sounds continue. A figure bundled under
the farthest bed begins to move....

ELI

I still don't get why there's blood on the wall. Did somebody
have their period?

JILL

You'll say anything. Aaaaanything!

ELI

You saw it. You pointed it out to me!

JILL

Sssshhh...

ELI

Like you were proud of it.

JILL

Sssh! I told you, don't you remember?

ELI

Are we at the aquarium? Where's the otters? Where's the
sharks? Where's that big ugly fin floating around?

JILL

Sssh! I told you about....

ELI

Are we in a movie? I feel like we're in a movie.

(pause)

Action...camera...lights!

He flips on the lightswitch. The room
goes bright, garish.

JILL

Stop it. No lights!

ELI
You want 'em on, don't lie to me.

JILL
You're such a big lughead. Just a big, big lughead.

ELI
You like me that way. You want me to carry you.

JILL
Huh?

ELI
Don't you? Like in the olden days.

JILL
(sobering up)
What are you talking about?

The figure under the covers is sitting
up now.

FIGURE
Unnnnhh! Unnnnhhh!

ELI
Ah! It's alive!

JILL
Sssh! It's my roommate. I told you.

ELI
You told me everything. Everything but what I wanted.

FIGURE
That's rich.

The bedding falls away to reveal ALYSSA
in her pyjamas. She squints and blinks
her eyes.

JILL
Alyssa! I thought you were...

Long pause

ALYSSA
Yeah.

JILL
I'm sorry.

ALYSSA
No you're not.

I'm...not? JILL

Sure she is. I am too!
 (to Jill, whispering)
 What are we sorry about?

In a huff Alyssa gets out of bed, turns off the ocean sounds on her CD player, goes into the bathroom and slams the door behind her.

So that's-- ELI (cont'd)

You don't say anything! JILL

But-- ELI

We're friends! JILL

Sure you are, sure. ELI
 (sobering up)

Alyssa comes out of the bathroom, gets back into bed, wraps herself up in covers.

Go away. ALYSSA

Alyssa, is everything okay? I thought you were with... JILL

Everything *was* okay! Until now. ALYSSA
 (throwing off covers)

Wow. Oh man. ELI

Why are you still here? ALYSSA
 (to Eli)
 Why is he still here?
 (to Jill)

Why am *I* still here? JILL

ALYSSA
 (pause)
 What do you mean?

JILL
 Nothing.

ALYSSA
 It's your room too.

JILL
 I know.

ALYSSA
 I'm not telling you to spend the night on the street, Jill.

ELI
 You can come over to my room...

Both women stare at Eli. Alyssa is visibly shocked.

ELI (cont'd)
 (continued)
 ...for a bit.

ALYSSA
 (to Eli)
 Who are you?

JILL
 He's a friend.

ALYSSA
 Some guy you met.

JILL
 A friend!

ALYSSA
 Some guy you met *tonight*.
 (pause)
 Oh God, Jill. Are you drunk?

JILL
 No.

ALYSSA
 You are!

JILL
 Of course not!

Come here....

ALYSSA

Alyssa leaps out of bed and grabs at Jill, attempting to pull her close. Jill resists, beats off Alyssa's hands and turns her head away from Alyssa's encroaching face.

JILL

Stop it!

ALYSSA

Let me smell!

ELI

Let her go!

ALYSSA

Let me smell, Jill!

ELI

Let go her!

JILL

Don't touch me!

ALYSSA

Breathe on me! I have to smell your breath!

ELI

What are you, the first female breathalyzer?

ALYSSA

As opposed to the male? Get out of here, imbecile.

JILL

Aaaah! Aaah!

ALYSSA

There! I smelled it. I smell it...

JILL

(under her breath)

Fucking freak.

Alyssa pauses slightly on her way back to bed. She does not turn around but instead sits on her bed and stares.

ALYSSA

God, Jill.

JILL
It's nothing.

ALYSSA
So this is it.

JILL
I didn't even have that much.
(pause)

Alyssa! What are you going to do, tell Brother Torgenson? Get me *excommunicated*?

ELI
I think I should go.

ALYSSA
You should've gone a long time ago. What's your name anyway?

ELI
Eli. Not really nice to meet you.

ALYSSA
Not really nice to meet you either. I wish it was under better circumstances.

JILL
Jesus! Why do you have to sound like you're in a fucking novel!

Even Eli is taken aback by this outburst. He turns to leave.

ELI
Like I said.

JILL
Stay. Please.

Eli sees her look. He stays.

ALYSSA
I knew this was coming. I knew.

JILL
Then why--

The phone rings. All three look at it. Jill looks at Alyssa, who is closest.

ALYSSA
Don't answer it.

After four rings the machine picks up and Alyssa and Jill's voices come on.

A standard greeting--but a cheerful one. Whoever is calling does not leave a message.

ALYSSA (cont'd)
Remember when we recorded that?

JILL
I remember.
(pause)
Why didn't you answer it? Isn't it...

ALYSSA
Of course. He's been calling all night. I won't talk to him.

Alyssa rolls over in bed and hugs herself. Jill goes toward her roommate.

ELI
You know, somewhere in Africa right now, there's a kid crying over the body of his mother.
(pause)
I'm just saying.

JILL
Eli. I want you to stay. But please. Don't say anything stupid. Especially now that you're sober.

ELI
I'm going.

He opens door.

JILL
You're staying.

ELI
(almost out)
Now why would I do that?

JILL
Because when I'm done talking with Alyssa I'm going back to your place with you. Like we talked about.

Eli enters the room fully and closes the door behind him.

ELI
Okay.

ALYSSA
How could you do it, Jill?

JILL

How could *he* do it, whatever he did to you. Did he dump you?

ALYSSA

No. Not yet. He got his calling.

JILL

(attempting to connect)

Oh that's great.

ALYSSA

And we got into a fight.

JILL

But. You both knew.

ALYSSA

I know. And...I was ready. Ready for two years without him. Of him living in Lithuania. And me writing him letters every day. Isn't that the way it is with us?

JILL

Oh Alyssa....

ALYSSA

But then I got this idea into my head. Why don't *I* go on *my* mission? I know it's not as long but I thought maybe, maybe if I make my intention known then by the time I get the calling he'll be six months in, and I may get placed in his city, or in a city nearby, or a country nearby, or I don't know. But I thought. I thought he'd still have eighteen months left and I'd have my full eighteen months to go and wherever we were, no matter where we were, we would finish together, and we could be on the same plane coming back together, and his family would be at the airport, all his brothers, and all my family would be there too, everyone together, and he and I would come out into the arrival hall, and when they took pictures of us we would take pictures of them, and then we'd get married, and have children and...and everything. Isn't that crazy?

JILL

Oh Alyssa.

ALYSSA

But then when I told him my idea, my dream, he got really mad. Said I shouldn't be a sister missionary, didn't I know, sister missionaries are losers and all the guy missionaries make fun of them. He didn't say--but I know he wanted to say--that he couldn't go out with me if I became a sister missionary.

ELI

That's messed up.

JILL
I'm sorry.

ALYSSA
I'm a fool.

JILL
No you're not.

ALYSSA
I'm a fool for thinking he was the one I was meant to be with. We weren't destined for each other after all. I prayed to Heavenly Father and...

ELI
You should get drunk with us.

JILL
Eli!

ELI
It's a joke! Just a joke, jeez...

JILL
He loves you. I know he does. He said so.
(pause)
Didn't he?

ALYSSA
Why did you do what you did tonight.

JILL
Alyssa...

ALYSSA
No. I want to know. Because I've seen this coming. I just didn't know when or the reasons for why you'd want to stray. Why you'd willingly choose a life of sin, away from your family. Away from Heavenly Father.

ELI
Oh here we go with the moralizing to sink a thousand ships. What we haven't already heard before.

JILL
Eli! Cut it out.

ELI
(to Alyssa)
Don't tell me you've never fudged on the Word of Wisdom. Never took a sip from a beer...

ALYSSA
Never.

...hard cider... ELI

No. ALYSSA

...a little wine... ELI

No way. ALYSSA

...a wine cooler. Champagne. O'Douls... ELI

No, no and....What's O'Douls? ALYSSA

What about coffee, tea, *Pepsi*... ELI

Never, never, never. ALYSSA

Not even once. ELI

Believe her. JILL

You're telling me you haven't even once touched yourself. ELI

What? ALYSSA What? JILL

You know. ELI (cont'd)

That's it. Get out of here! Now! ALYSSA

I bet you've got a vibrator under your pillow. Jill, take that pillow away and you'll see. I swear! ELI

Out! Who are you? ALYSSA
(pause)
Are you LDS?

ELI

Was. Am.

(pause)

Does it matter?

ALYSSA

(to Jill)

How did you--how did you get drunk? You weren't in Salt Lake, were you? You can't get into any of those private places-- you're not old enough!

ELI

But I am. The clubs aren't my thing, but I have a drivers license, and a truck. A big fat pickup truck that gets about twenty-five to the gallon. Drives like mad. It'll drive you from Salt Lake all the way to the western edge of Utah in just over an hour, no joke. Your eyes won't have time to tear up from looking at the salt flats on either side. Just the open road, the black-on-blue horizon, teeth of the land rising up, a little classic rock on the tape deck to calm the nerves, that what you're doing may be the last thing you do.

ALYSSA

(to Jill)

And you say I talk like a novel.

ELI

Why the western edge? The first town across the Nevada state line is West Wendover. It's on Mountain Time, but it's as Nevada as they come. Just casinos, fast food joints and auto repair places. But if you look hard enough where the actual people of West Wendover live, you'll find it. On a little side street before the main exit takes you to the Rainbow, the Peppermill, the Red Garter, there's a little liquor store where the owner's real nice. Sell me anything I want. Not just another sad soul, you see. I got plans. I earn my money, and I like to spend it. "Work hard, play hard," that's my motto. Like to let loose a little bit, you know. I'm doing this for the love of my country! I'm not spending it on women. I'm not spending it on machines. I'm putting money into *his* register. I'm giving him a livelihood, a reason for being there! He and I talk for a bit and it turns out we come from the same place....So many sad souls escaping the desert for another. Our second great migration. I swear over half this guy's customers are LDS. All escaping. To West Wendover, Nevada! God's Country!

ALYSSA (cont'd)

How dare you.

ELI

I'm willing to part with some of my stash for the likes of you.

ALYSSA

(aghast)
You're a *student* here?

ELI

Oh yeah. Majoring in World Ambitions and Gluttony.

JILL

He's a returned missionary.

ALYSSA

No.

ELI

Just got back. Well, a few months ago. The southern Spanish seaside town of Tarifa, free-based and raised.

ALYSSA

Congratulations?

ELI

I was hoping my calling would be for a place by the ocean. I wanted to dunk as many heads under as I could.

ALYSSA

No, really. Congratulations.

ELI

You don't believe me.

(to Jill)

She doesn't believe me.

JILL

She believes you.

ELI

It's amazing how many converts we had. Sometimes it seemed we were the only two at work in the entire city, but I know that can't be true. Still, there we were, cornering as many tourists as we could on the beach before the sun went down. And even when it did go down we still went on the beach, the sand soft and cold between our toes. I have some back at my place--sand, I mean, not the toes. It's in a Ziploc bag, if you want to see it.

ALYSSA

I'm not seeing any sand.

ELI

Why not? Let's go.

ALYSSA

You're going to your apartment or whatever. I'm not. Now get. Out.

ELI

Get? Out? I was asked to stay here, so I'm staying.

ALYSSA

As long as you're on my side of the room I can tell you to get out. Now.

Eli deftly steps across to Jill's side of the room.

ELI

Sanctuary!

ALYSSA

Fine. I'm going then.

Alyssa gathers up her blankets and pillows.

JILL

Alyssa!

ELI

Good. And take your Symphony of the Sea while you're at it.

ALYSSA

I will!

ELI

A regular Ishmael we got here. Half expecting a hook like a snowhill to be spouting off the starboard bow.

JILL

Eli, shut up! Alyssa, where are you going?

ALYSSA

Down. I'll sleep down in the study lounge.

JILL

That's ridiculous.

ALYSSA

Until he leaves.

JILL

You're not doing that, okay?

ELI

All hands! All hands on deck! Will Master Starbuck be so kind as to hand the captain his looking glass so he may espy the great white--

JILL

Eli, for the last time stay out of it!

ELI

If you want me out of it then why do you want me here, huh?

JILL

Because I want to fuck you!

Silence.

Alyssa stands near the doorway, holding her blankets and pillows. She stares at Jill, as does Eli. The phone rings.

ELI

Do I have to get that?

He makes a move for the phone.

ALYSSA

No--

But Jill beats them both to it.

JILL

Hello?

(pause)

Who is this?....No, it's not.

Jill looks at Alyssa, confused. Alyssa shakes her head adamantly.

JILL (cont'd)

(continued)

No, she's not...Who? Oh my God. Paul?

ALYSSA

Paul?

JILL

(covering phone)

It's Paul.

ALYSSA

Not *the* Paul.

JILL

Yes, the Paul.

ALYSSA

Paul from Anomar Paul.

JILL

Yes!

I didn't think--
ALYSSA

--Who?--
ELI

--I know.
JILL

Who's Paul?
ELI

What does he want?
ALYSSA

JILL
(into receiver)
Didn't you get my e-mail? Oh. Well I thought. *Where?* Wait.
But that didn't mean....No no, no. It's okay, I think. She'll
be back, I just don't know when.

ALYSSA
(more to herself)
Me? When will I be back?

JILL
(continued)
It's just. Wait. I don't know. I have to call you back.

ALYSSA
He wants to talk to me?

JILL
(continued)
It's--okay.
(gets pen and paper)
I'm ready. Okay. Uh-huh. Okay. And that's. Oh. Okay. I'll
call you back. I will.

Jill hangs up.

JILL (cont'd)
That was Paul.

ALYSSA
I know. What's happening? He wants to speak to me?

JILL
Yeah. Kind of. He wants to speak with me too.

ALYSSA
But he obviously asked for me first.

JILL
Let's not get into this again, okay?

ALYSSA
I think we're going to have to if he's here.
(pause)
He is here, right?

JILL
He's here.

ALYSSA
Here-here. In Provo.

JILL
In some cheap motel near campus.

ALYSSA
What?

ELI
Hold on. So this guy who called--been calling--isn't your
boyfriend? Not the guy who's going to Lithuania.

ALYSSA
I guess not.
(pause)
I can't believe he actually called. And he's here.

JILL
Here-here. He...He wants to see you when you, uh, get back
in.

ALYSSA
And he asked for me first.

JILL
Alyssa, don't you remember what we swore? What you made me do
to him?

ALYSSA
I didn't make you do that. That was your decision!

JILL
Your decision as much as mine.

ELI
(to Jill)
What did you swear? I gotta say this is really starting to
creep me out here.

JILL
(to Alyssa)
He wants to say something.

ALYSSA
To me.

JILL
(pause)
Yes.

ALYSSA
What?
(pause)
We shouldn't call him back.

JILL
I know, but don't you feel at least a little guilty for what we did to him, in the end? I thought of the summer.

ALYSSA
Don't you think I thought of it too? We both did.

JILL
I know.

ELI
I sure as heck wish I knew. What's going on with you and this guy?

JILL
I have to call him back. He's at this motel and he doesn't have a long time, he said.

ALYSSA
He's not...you know, *suicidal* or anything....like that...right?

JILL
I don't think so.

ALYSSA
How did he get here?

JILL
He just said he drove here.

ALYSSA
He drove here all the way from *California*?

JILL
He's determined. As always.

ALYSSA
What are we going to do?

JILL
I have to call him back.

ALYSSA

Let me call him back. He wanted to talk to me first anyway.

JILL

I would but.

ALYSSA

I'm not in the room, am I?

Jill picks up the phone.

ALYSSA (cont'd)

Don't, Jill.

ELI

Whoa. Is this guy a threat? Is there gonna be more blood on the wall out there? Is he like some knife-wielding maniac?

JILL

(laughs)

Hardly.

ELI

(loud, losing it)

Who is he then? What's this about what you swore and the summer?

He gets it.

ELI (cont'd)

Oh brother. He's your ex, isn't he?

JILL

Not really.

ELI

Not really?

JILL

He's just a friend.

ALYSSA

A good friend. A-a childhood friend. A non-Mormon...

JILL

Norman Non-Mormon.

ALYSSA

...but a friend.

ELI

(to Jill)

And you shut him out.

Jill stares at Alyssa, who looks away.

ELI (cont'd)

He probably thinks you turned on him. Both of you.

ALYSSA

I suppose it could hurt him....

JILL

We grew up together.

ALYSSA

All three of us, yes. In Anomar.

ELI

That's....

ALYSSA

It's almost near the ocean. Almost a fast-growing town. Almost incorporated in the county. It's almost everything you can think of, if you care to think about it.

JILL

He was there for me.

ALYSSA

He was....

ELI

And now he's here. For you, obviously. Wanting exactly what I want, I bet. I can't blame him.

JILL

Eli, that's not it.

ELI

Then what is it then, huh. You want me here, you don't want me here, you want to have sex with me, what? Do you like me enough to care about me?

Silence

ELI (cont'd)

Okay. Maybe I'm still a little drunk. Maybe it's the beer talking for me now, so I apologize if it is. But when I saw you over there on the sofa in the student center I just knew. I knew you weren't like every other girl I was expecting to find here. I didn't know why you were here.

JILL

I don't know why I'm here either.

ELI

So then I come over and say hi, real friendly like. And I mean it. Mean what I say. It's good for a guy to mean what he says every so often, right? Ask what you're reading. I like to read too. We get to talking, and I get to thinking this is a woman I could spend my nights with. Maybe not the entire night, because she could be...but she seems, yeah, she seems right. Just right. For me. And so we get into my truck, pop the clutch and head on over to my place. No way I'm staying in a dorm when I'm twenty-one and a returned missionary who wants to leave all that behind.

ALYSSA

You said 'woman.' Why?

ELI

(continued)

You didn't mind the place, right? I mean I admit it wasn't much to look at, still needed some shaping up. Well, some sweeping would have helped. But you at least didn't seem to mind. Sat back on the couch, said hello to my heathen roommate who, I swear, honest, is really never around, usually. Made yourself at home. Wonderful. Didn't say anything snide about the artwork--my artwork--I'd hung up, the attempt. And then when I offered you something to drink you got up and went right to the fridge yourself. Like you knew what I had, and you knew what you wanted. I liked seeing that. I liked seeing you walk. Is there anything more beautiful than a woman walking into a man's kitchen? If there is, tell me.

Jill has since placed the phone back in its cradle.

ELI (cont'd)

(continued)

And I thought with you I could get out. Just cut away clean, you know. Not live this bullshit any longer. Like you wouldn't care that I had a case of beer in my fridge, and I hadn't spoken to my family since I left for Spain, and when I was in Spain I hated having to pound the pavement for Him, street to street, door to door, sometimes stall to stall. I hated converting the non-believers, pushing them into the waves and holding them under. I hated Heavenly Father. I wanted to go to Morocco, I could see it just across the Strait. To Tangier, if only for a day--and I did. And I wanted to tell you about that escape--that brief escape, because I felt you were good and noble and lovely, I knew all this and felt it too as I watched you bend down and pick a bottle out of the fridge.

JILL

I am good and noble and lovely. Thank you.

ELI

Don't thank me. Thank the place you're from. Thank the church that brought you up right.

JILL

I'm sorry.

ELI

Now I am leaving. I won't spring this sucker trap set. That childhood shit goes deep, I know. This is really too familiar to me. If you need this guy here now...then what am I? Where do I stand? Right here, I know, but....

JILL

It wasn't supposed to be this serious.

ELI

Yeah, well, somehow I didn't see that smoke signal.

He leaves. Silence.

ALYSSA

Are you still going to call him?

Jill hesitates before picking up the phone.

ALYSSA (cont'd)

Jill, let me call him.

(pause)

He asked for me. He wanted to speak with me first.

JILL

I knew this was a bad idea.

ALYSSA

It is a bad idea. Either let me call so I can deal with him or let's not call him at all.

Jill begins to dial.

ALYSSA (cont'd)

Jill! Please.

(pause)

Just how badly do you want to see him?

JILL

I feel we owe him an explanation--for how we've behaved.

ALYSSA

How have we behaved?

JILL

You can't admit it, can you? We've acted awful toward him, since the summer, that decision. Just awful. Like we're not his friends, but we are his friends. He just doesn't know--

ALYSSA

It was for *our* friendship. To save it.

JILL

That's what you said.

ALYSSA

You agreed--

JILL

It obviously didn't work, because now he's here and he's not going away. He won't ever go away unless we tell him why we've been so cold, so different than before. If we don't tell him he'll keep coming. You know how he can hold on. Do you really want to see him ten years from now, twenty years, still waiting for an answer? Do you really want to get another call in the middle of the night? I mean, do you? I'd rather not. He needs an answer, and I can give it to him. I should be the one to tell him the truth of what we've done.

ALYSSA

He's not LDS.

JILL

That's what it's always been, hasn't it?

(pause)

He may not be Mormon, but he's a friend, and you didn't share with him what I shared.

ALYSSA

What *did* you share with him? Because I always thought...

JILL

I knew this was a mistake.

ALYSSA

Then put down the phone. Don't make it.

JILL

I already did.

(off Alyssa's expression)

This was the mistake, Alyssa. Us living together. Me coming here. All this...mess. I knew it wasn't right, knew I should've gone to another school, or not gone to school at all--

ALYSSA

--Don't say that.--

JILL

--but I couldn't disappoint you. Jesus, I can't disappoint anyone. Maybe that's why I'm calling him now.

ALYSSA

(in a more demanding tone)

So what did you share with him.

Silence.

ALYSSA (cont'd)

(continued)

You had it with him, didn't you? That thing...

JILL

It's called sex.

ALYSSA

That thing we can't do before marriage if we ever hope to reach the celestial kingdom. Jill, it's--

JILL

It's a sin, I know. I'll take my chances.

ALYSSA

You know the consequences, yet you *did it* with him.

JILL

Not with him.

ALYSSA

(pause)

But you did do it.

JILL

Yes.

ALYSSA

With who?

(pause)

With *whom*, Jill?

JILL

Someone you don't know. He's gone now, so it doesn't matter.

ALYSSA

(visibly hurt)

Tell me his name.

JILL

I said it doesn't matter. He's gone. I don't even know where he went or his last name even.

ALYSSA

That's how you like it. Not knowing them.

JILL

I've only done it once. Jesus, you make it sound--

ALYSSA

Were you drunk? I bet you were drunk. I bet you were throwing up all over him as he...while...while it happened. I bet you were so blind you never saw his face. Puking on his body, your body--

JILL

Oh shut up.

ALYSSA

On your parents...

JILL

Shut up!

ALYSSA

All over your grandmother in the corner and your brothers and sisters and nieces and nephews and your Testimony that you gave you knew to be true!

JILL

My Testimony that last day was bullshit, Alyssa.

ALYSSA

(in tears)

He changed you. If we'd never known him...

JILL

But we do. And you can't let him go just as much as I can't.

ALYSSA

Not true.

(beat)

It's because of your fathers, that's what it is. I wasn't there when he came over to comfort you. I wasn't there when you did the same for him. And what did you say? What else did you do?

JILL

(beat)

Oh God. You think....Alyssa, I was thirteen years old! He was fourteen! How could you even think that?

ALYSSA

Of course I can think that! You just told me you had it with some stranger. Why wouldn't you practice with Paul? Touch him, let him feel you up. Get your head-start.

JILL

My father had just *died*. He came over and we talked. We hugged, for a long time. It seemed so long...I didn't want him to let go. There was nothing else...no hands, no touching, no kissing, nothing that you think. And when his father...when his father fell...I had to do the same. The hug. We didn't want to let go. We didn't want to stop talking then or finish what we had.

ALYSSA

What I could never be a part of.

JILL

Be glad your father's still alive.

ALYSSA

You don't think. Jill. You don't think....You don't think Paul killed--

JILL

No. I do not. Now drop it.

Jill dials the number.

JILL (cont'd)

(into receiver)

Hello? Paul. Yeah, sorry. Sorry it took so long...Yeah, that's true. I know. Um, yeah, she is...

Jill looks at Alyssa as if to offer the phone. Alyssa shakes her head and continues to hug and console herself.

JILL (cont'd)

(continued)

...but she can't come to the phone. Yeah, she's...well, not available. But she will be tomorrow. Yeah, that's better for us. It's late and...okay, good. Um, what would you say to...maybe ten o'clock? Is that okay? Yeah, exactly. Okay so it's...Oh, you do? But not...okay. So we're in room 1001. Exactly. Top floor, you can't go wrong.

(long pause)

What's that? Oh...yeah, don't worry. She will...All right. See you tomorrow. Bye.

Jill hangs up. Alyssa has since composed herself.

ALYSSA

He really wants to see me.

JILL

He may really want you, too, for all I know.

A beat and Alyssa gets it. She is upset.

ALYSSA

I never thought you'd become like this, Jill.

JILL

Well I have, and I'm dropping out.

ALYSSA

What? You're WHAT? You can't...

JILL

I've got all the papers ready. I haven't formally declared but I will soon. Monday--why not?

ALYSSA

But.

JILL

It's more than the Church. Of course it's that, but it's also my future. I want a career. I want to explore my talents, and I can't do that here. The program I'm in is an approximation of what I dream of doing, and it's never going to get me there. So I'm looking at other schools. I think first I'm going to take some time off, maybe a year. It was the wrong idea to throw myself into college along with every, everyone else. Maybe I'll go live in another country, I don't know. I certainly won't have Mom's support. But I will have my brother's. There was a time when I thought I'd have yours too.

ALYSSA

Our plans...

JILL

That you created, and I went along with. I didn't want to deny you. You were too happy.

ALYSSA

(sullen)

Thanks.

JILL

You're going to have a great life, Alyssa. You might not see it now but you are. You're going to be fine with Joseph, and you're going to marry him, and you'll have however many children it takes--

ALYSSA

--I resent that.--

JILL

--to fulfill your obligations. But that's not me. Never was. I thought maybe when I was twelve, thirteen, but no, not even then. Not even at baptism. Paul made me see that. I didn't have to have sex to see that, but I did. Try to understand.

(pause)

I think you think we're sisters.

ALYSSA

We are sisters!

JILL

In title maybe, but not in spirit. Not anymore.

ALYSSA

How did this happen? How could I have possibly hurt you to the point where you're saying these awful, ungodly things to me? We made a promise even before Paul. We made so many promises...apparently worth nothing.

JILL

No. Far from it. They were worth everything. We both know that and--

ALYSSA

--Then--

JILL

--still you ask.

ALYSSA

Then why?

JILL

Because you listened but you refused to reason, refused to see that people, even your best friend, could change. That there were other opinions that might go against your beliefs. That there might be another way in, or no way in at all--and if that's the case then guess what? *That's okay*. It's okay, it really is. It's okay. I'm telling you this now. There might be no way in at all, and it is okay.

Jill collects her toothbrush from the sink. She heads for the door.

ALYSSA

Where are you going?

JILL

I'm going to spend the night with him.

ALYSSA

PAUL?

JILL

(laughs)

No, of course not. I told you Paul and I never...I'm going to spend the night with Eli.

ALYSSA

Oh.

JILL

Yeah. *Him*.

ALYSSA

So you're going to "sleep with him."

JILL

That's what a woman usually does when she meets a guy she likes.

ALYSSA

There's that word again. That funny word.

JILL

What?

ALYSSA

Woman.

(pause)

We're not women. We're too young to be called that. Or to call ourselves that.

JILL

What do you think we should call ourselves?

ALYSSA

(pause)

I think it sounds funny. That's all.

JILL

(opening door)

I'll be back by ten tomorrow.

ALYSSA

(a threat)

I'll tell Paul.

JILL

I can't stop you, so go ahead. I'm ready for him. He *should* be ready for me. He knows me well enough.

ALYSSA

He'll be so angry.

JILL

(smiling)

He asked for you first, remember?

ALYSSA

Whore.

JILL

(almost out the door)

I'm ready for that, too.

(pause)

Please don't touch my things tonight while I'm gone.

ALYSSA

What would Sister Donaldson say to you if she found out your brother is a homosexual and you hadn't told her? What will your father say when you see him finally? Think about it. How will you explain Walter's absence? When he calls for his son, and his son doesn't come, how will you explain that to your father? How will you? Will your mother even be there? How will they feel toward you then? Will they wonder what other secrets the two of you were keeping from them? And in this world, the here and now, your mother, alone. Think of her. Will she feel at all comfortable with you, let alone him? Will she maybe not return your calls, your hugs, let you know you're not welcome in her house, disown you just as Heavenly Father will disown you both?

JILL

That's not the way it works.

ALYSSA

It *is* the way it works! And you know it. You always have. That seal's already been broken; you can't fix it or get rid of it by hiding the truth. Someone has to tell her.

JILL

You wouldn't.

ALYSSA

I wouldn't. But I know others who would. A call can always be made.

Silence. Jill tries to contain herself at the door. Finally she closes it and walks toward Alyssa, who rises to confront her.

JILL

You are the most innocuous, despicable--

ALYSSA

I *am* going to save you, Jill.

JILL

By blackmailing me.

ALYSSA

It's not blackmail. It's the truth.

Jill SLAPS Alyssa across the face.

JILL

Save that, bitch. You're so good at remembering things.

ALYSSA

(clutching face)

Oh my God. Oh my God!

JILL

Yeah. It won't be the last time.

ALYSSA

I hate you! I was only trying to help!

JILL

I never wanted it! I never wanted the calls, the lessons, the gifts, the readings, the sleepovers, the secrets, the photos! I never wanted *any* of it!

(pause)

I never wanted our friendship.

ALYSSA

You don't mean that. That's not true.

JILL

No. You're right. It's not.

(pause)

Why am I listening to you, anyway? You can't hurt me.

ALYSSA

I can.

JILL (CONT'D)

You're not even a real human being.

Alyssa stares at Jill
uncomprehendingly.

JILL (cont'd)

I mean, *you know*....

ALYSSA

Oh, screw you. Don't.

JILL

Quid pro quo. We're finally talking.

ALYSSA

Sh-shit on you.

JILL

That's it. That's more like what I expect to hear from someone who's not really a Saint. At least not the way she should be. Someone whose parents couldn't have children--God knows why they weren't blessed with the ability--so she had to be born in a science lab, unnaturally. She and all her brothers.

ALYSSA

God...damn you. F-fuck you.

JILL

Not even a real--

Alyssa PUNCHES Jill in the face. Jill holds her nose; blood trickles from between her fingers.

JILL (cont'd)

Ah, God...

Alyssa pushes Jill hard in the chest.

ALYSSA

You're not coming back after you leave tonight!

JILL

Oh I am. I just need to get everything I own and then I'm moving.

ALYSSA

Good!

JILL

You just be out of the room when I'm in.

ALYSSA

I will!

JILL

I'll be gone, I'll be gone by tomorrow night. That's a promise.

ALYSSA

Why don't you just leave now? Oh, but then you wouldn't get to *fuck your fellow whore*.

JILL

(backing toward door)

I need some space...some breathing room. And then we'll see.

ALYSSA

Get the fuck out!

JILL

You see sex as a scary thing, as work...

ALYSSA

You don't know what I see.

JILL

(continued)

...but it's not. It's the most beautiful thing. So terribly beautiful.

Alyssa throws a book at Jill, who allows it to peg her before she exits the room, closing the door behind her. Alyssa falls onto her bed and sobs for several moments. Gradually she gets control of herself. She gets up and goes over to the phone. Composed now, she takes a sharp breath and picks up.

ALYSSA

But you do remember. I know you do. The night you walked from town all the way to my house without fear, without fear of retribution or the headlights from cars or the helicopters overhead. And you woke me with a tap on the glass, the secret sound. I remember; I hope you do too. The way we pretended to have horses, riding until dawn when our backyards weren't big enough. The way you scolded me for turning the wheel too soon and staying in the car when you thought it was going to crash. You and him watching me like our parents, and all I wanted that night was the safety of bodies and the inability to see. The smell of the parking lot underfoot. The way you put your fingers to your lips as I leaned out the window, your hands on my stomach as I slid out and onto the path circling the house. Slid out the way I should have at the very beginning. And then we were off and racing, and who would ever think to follow the two invincible sisters, invisible through the trees as we jumped and ducked and dived to blaze a new path to the creek bed, our hideout, our lair, so high now in early summer, swollen and mischievous, like a smile with the moon's teeth easing up from it. I remember. We could just see it ahead, along the right bank and hanging from the strongest branch. Just a swing, they would say, just an old wooden swing hanging from a tree--but not to us. To us it was our stallion, that debonair steed. Only room for one of us on it, and you chose me that night--why? Why would you do that. I could not have pretended any more than the next rider, the next girl. The next sister. And yet it was my moment to escape, to flee, to strike out and thunder on until sunrise in hopes of warning the others before it was too late. And so I slid into the saddle, and I rode.

(MORE)

ALYSSA (cont'd)

Your hands on either side of me holding the reins, making sure I didn't fall. Your shoves and pulls, shoves and pulls coming so fast I felt brave enough to sing, to laugh, to cry out, to let you cut my hair. And I could not have known that the stars were watching, I could not have known that the whispers in the hall and the voice in the trunk were my own, beyond the creek bed and the forest and the countryside, beyond town and church and men and men. I could not have known beyond that night that the day would be so harsh; that, exposed, we would be forced to kneel even when we had nothing to say. And are you dancing on stage with me now? I'm afraid even that is a memory. I'm afraid I could not have avoided this, or any of this. That pride was the problem inherent in our past, one remembers the other forgets, the place and time, people and pleasures. It makes no sense to write any of it down; it'll only be burned, won't it? I am afraid. And I want those moments again.

She holds up a small piece of scratch paper. Her eyes on this paper, she dials the number.

ALYSSA (cont'd)

(into receiver)

Hello? Hi, Paul. It's me. It's Alyssa.

Blackout.

END OF ACT I

ACT II

The same. Sound of someone taking a shower from behind the closed bathroom door.

A knock on the door leading into the dorm room. Some moments pass before the knock sounds again.

Nothing. The shower continues. The door to the dorm room opens and in walks PAUL reading a post-it note. He is dressed sharply: a dark sport coat over a button-up dress shirt; dark slacks and dress shoes complete the outfit. He sets the post-it note down on Alyssa's desk then goes over to the bathroom door and listens. The shower runs with little to no variation in the sound of the falling water. Paul makes like he's going to say something into the bathroom door then thinks better of it. He goes back toward Alyssa's desk and sits on her bed. Looks all around. Eventually looks under her bed and brings out what looks like a photo album. He flips through it. The shower shuts off. Paul quickly dumps the album back under the bed and crosses his legs, his hands clasped and resting on one knee. He averts his gaze as Alyssa steps out of the bathroom wearing a towel tight around her body and another towel wrapped around her head. She smiles at Paul, who still has not really looked at her.

PAUL

Should I close my eyes?

ALYSSA

No need.

Casually Alyssa goes over to the joint dresser she shares with Jill and, with one hand (the other still holding the towel), she selects the necessary undergarments. Then she goes to her closet, opens it and picks out a black dress that Paul seems to recognize. He watches. With clothes in hand Alyssa disappears back into the bathroom.

She shuts the door behind her, though not entirely. Paul remains seated. The bathroom door opens all the way and out steps Alyssa wearing the tight, form-fitting black dress.

PAUL

I didn't think I'd see that on you again.

ALYSSA

It's only been a year.

PAUL

I'm surprised you kept it. I didn't think....

Alyssa observes him, a wry smile spreading.

ALYSSA

No. You didn't think.

Silence

ALYSSA (CONT'D) (cont'd)

So.

PAUL

So.

ALYSSA

How are you?

PAUL

I'm good. Is it all right to say I'm good? Is that allowed? Because I wasn't so good the last time we talked.

(beat)

When was that?

ALYSSA

Oh, months, I think.

PAUL

September. I'm pretty sure it was September. You'd come back from only a month here to trumpet your triumph.

ALYSSA

What triumph?

PAUL

Your boyfriend, remember?

ALYSSA

You seem to remember perfectly.

PAUL

We were at your house, and you'd just shown me his photo, the head shot.

(beat)

Is he still your boyfriend?

Alyssa approaches Paul. She dries her hair as she speaks.

ALYSSA

Now, Paul.

PAUL

I suppose what I should've said was "How's that working out for you?"

(beat)

Sorry.

ALYSSA

It's working out fine. Why are you curious?

PAUL

I'm always curious about those things. I-I care about you, Alyssa. I still do. That's why I drove out here, really. You should know that.

ALYSSA

Do you care about Jill? Are you curious about her too?

PAUL

She sounded awfully distracted on the phone last night.

ALYSSA

That's because she was with someone. He was standing in the room when you called. Standing over there by the door, actually. Then they left together, for his place.

PAUL

Oh.

ALYSSA

To...you know, spend the night together.

Paul nods, taking this information in.

ALYSSA (cont'd)

Do you still care about her? Are you still *in love* with her the way we figured you were last year, last summer....

PAUL

And you both were so scared....

ALYSSA

We were scared?

PAUL

Scared of what would or might happen, that's all. Even she was scared. I felt the fear in her body, but I didn't back down or turn away. Didn't seek out someone else, though I could have, I know that now. I know now I'm ready. I'm ready for someone else.

ALYSSA

Is that why you came here, to tell us you were ready for a girlfriend? Jeez, Paul, why didn't you save yourself the trip and just tell us over the phone?

PAUL

No, it's not that. I had a girlfriend. She was great but...it didn't work out. We broke up.

ALYSSA

I'm sorry. Did--

PAUL

She ended it.

ALYSSA

Oh.

PAUL

Just recently. Like, a couple weeks ago.

ALYSSA

I'm sorry, Paul. I'm sure it hurts. In fact, I know it does.

PAUL

It used to hurt. I'd say up until a few days ago it did, acutely.

ALYSSA

How long were you together?

PAUL

Since November. Thanksgiving. You could call it the Turkey Pick-up, I guess. She was having a party at her place. Her parents and sisters were out of town so--

ALYSSA

Paul. You know I don't want to hear *that*.

PAUL

She'd just turned seventeen so--

ALYSSA

Paul, I do not want to hear this!

Silence.

ALYSSA (cont'd)

I don't want to hear about your night with her, or any of your nights with her.

PAUL

Because you're--

ALYSSA

Don't say it. If you say it I'm going to throw you out of here.

(beat)

I'm not.

PAUL

That's right. You have a boyfriend. It didn't sound like you did last night when you called, so late.

(pause)

Why the dress now?

ALYSSA

Why the suit? Are we going to do Prom all over again? Oh but that's right. You really wanted to take Jill, your true love. So you asked me. What a great night that was.

PAUL

Certainly memorable.

ALYSSA

You remember I let you dance with her. I never asked: How was it?

PAUL

It was like dancing with a piece of furniture you want moved from one end of the room to another.

ALYSSA

(beat)

Why are you here?

(beat)

Because if it's to belittle me or hurt me with the past or go out and *score* with some *chick* who I'm sure you can find on campus somewhere here--there are always some who stray--then I don't want any of it and I want you out of here. Seriously, Paul. Tell me what's up or go.

PAUL

How long before Jill gets here?

ALYSSA

Do you need...

PAUL

I'd like her to be here too, if possible.

ALYSSA
'If' is the operative word, really. Who knows when she'll be back. We...we had a fight last night.

PAUL
Oh.

ALYSSA
We really got into it.

PAUL
How much into it?

ALYSSA
Like...

PAUL
Like tearing hair and clothes? Gnashing teeth?

ALYSSA
She slapped me and I hit her.

PAUL
Alyssa!

ALYSSA
Maybe it was the other way around.

PAUL
Jeez. How--

ALYSSA
It was a fight, okay. I don't want to go into it. Things were said.

PAUL
Yeah but--

ALYSSA
Hurtful things. Secrets.
(beat)
Very hurtful things...were said.
(pause)
There was some gnashing teeth, if that helps.

PAUL
So...she's not coming back?

ALYSSA
She'll come back. Her stuff's still here.

PAUL
But you don't know when.

ALYSSA

Paul. Does she have to be here? Whatever you have to say, why not say it to me? Is it such a big deal?

Paul's look says it is.

ALYSSA (cont'd)

I was kind of hoping...?

PAUL

What.

ALYSSA

I was kind of hoping it would just be you and me.

PAUL

It is just you and me.

ALYSSA

You know that's not what I meant.

PAUL

But it's what you said.

ALYSSA

Now you're being mean.

PAUL

I can be mean.

ALYSSA

I didn't know.

PAUL

I can be spiteful.

ALYSSA

In all the time we dated...

PAUL

I can be vindictive. I can be jealous. I can be petty. I can be sinister. I can be lustful.

ALYSSA

You can also be obsessive. I know that much.

PAUL

So we'll wait. Waiting for Todog.

ALYSSA

What?

PAUL

Nothing.

ALYSSA

I thought it was over. I really did. But obviously you're upset and there's nothing I can do about it, even though it's me you're upset with. Are you upset with her?

PAUL

I'm not upset.

ALYSSA

You just said you are.

PAUL

I didn't say that.

ALYSSA

You agreed you're being mean.

PAUL

I said I *can* be mean.

Pause

ALYSSA

(lowering her voice)

Paul, is it--is this...Are you gay? Is that what this is?

Paul waits a beat before bursting into laughter. Palms slapping knees, body doubled-over, the works.

PAUL

No...

ALYSSA

I just thought...

Paul continues laughing.

ALYSSA (cont'd)

(exasperated)

I just thought since you were so serious, you couldn't tell me over the phone, had to be in person, and you dressed up nice....

At the utterance of "you dressed up nice" Paul bursts even wider. He doesn't seem to want to stop.

ALYSSA (cont'd)

Paul! Stop! Stop it! You're scaring me!

Paul's laughter begins to subside.

ALYSSA (cont'd)

(calmly)

I just thought from what I know about you, and hearing that your relationship ended. Your girlfriend ended it....

Paul is once more serious.

PAUL

So just because a relationship ends does that mean the guy is gay? Or if he ends it does that mean his girlfriend, the dumped, is a lesbian?

ALYSSA

No. No. Of course not, but...

(beat)

Paul, you can tell me if you're gay. I--Jill's brother's gay. Walter.

PAUL

I know.

ALYSSA

You do?

PAUL

She told me. Months ago. I said I was okay with it, and that's the truth.

ALYSSA

(beat)

I'm okay with it, too.

PAUL

"Love the sinner, hate the sin," right?

ALYSSA

That's right.

PAUL

Choose the Right.

(pause)

I'm not gay, Lyssa. This isn't a coming out--not in that sense.

ALYSSA

Then what sense is it? In about a minute I'm going to lose all patience I have l[eft]--

Sound of a key in the lock. A knock on the door. Alyssa looks panicked. She checks her watch, mouths, "Jill" to Paul and then hurries over to hide in her closet.

She closes the sliding mirror door behind her. Through all of this Paul appears dumbfounded.

The door opens; Jill enters.

Oh. JILL

God your face. PAUL

She didn't tell you. JILL

That she punched you? Uh, yes. She did. PAUL

Is she...in there? JILL
(indicates bathroom)

No. PAUL

She's gone then. JILL

Yyyes. PAUL

Good. I can leave in peace. JILL

Jill goes over to her closet, opens the door, pulls out clothes. Item after item lands on her bed.

Where are you going? PAUL

I'm sorry you have to see this. JILL

Yes but I-- PAUL

How long ago did she leave? JILL

Well... PAUL

JILL

I know you won't understand, but the sooner I get out of here before she gets back...

PAUL

You didn't answer my question though.

JILL

Do you want to see the other side of my face look like this? I don't know what she's liable to do if she sees me again.

PAUL

She says you slapped her.

JILL

Tell me which is worse.

PAUL

I think they're both terrible.

JILL

But not equal.

Silence. Jill resumes her task.

PAUL

How about if I, uh, help out? Help speed things up a little...

Jill looks at Paul, nods. He comes over to her side of the room. Close now, they pull and fold.

PAUL (cont'd)

I never thought I'd be in your dorm room helping you pack up and go.

JILL

Thank you, by the way.

PAUL

It's really happening. I thought you'd stay friends forever.

JILL

Yeah, well. I got sick of being a child.

PAUL

I understand.

JILL

Do you? Do you really?

Silence

PAUL

Does it hurt?

JILL

Like a bastard. But the swelling's gone down, believe it or not. I soaked in a tub most of last night.

PAUL

Whose tub?

JILL

I gotta go, Paul. Thanks again for the help.

PAUL

So...

JILL

You haven't changed your number, right?

PAUL

I came here to see you, you know.

JILL

No. You came to see her.

Silence

JILL (CONT'D) (cont'd)

Why else would you ask for her when you heard my voice on the other end? I was there. You could've told me then.

(pause)

Tell me now.

PAUL

What.

JILL

You know. Your big announcement.

PAUL

How do you know I have something to say.

JILL

Paul. You always have something to say. You just don't say it.

(pause)

So. Say it.

Silence

JILL (cont'd)

Well you didn't dress up and drive all the way out here to fuck me...

Fair enough. PAUL

Like you wanted to. JILL

(pause) PAUL

I['m]--

Eli pushes the door open and pokes his head in.

You done? ELI

(to Paul)

Oh hey. You must be...

Paul reluctantly shakes Eli's outstretched hand.

The guy who called last night. PAUL

Paul. ELI

Right. PAUL

Well I'm Eli, and I'm here to help Jill make a clean break. ELI

All right. PAUL

You okay with that? ELI

Sure. PAUL

Positive? ELI

Eli... JILL

It's just I don't want to get clocked too. The male version and all. ELI

Eli, stop it. JILL

PAUL

I'm really not like that. I'm not very...um, physical. Physically aggressive, I mean.

ELI

(smiling)

Well I am. Physical and physically aggressive. So don't be messing around with me!

Eli assumes a faux-fighter's stance and takes harmless joke-jabs at Paul, who goes along half-heartedly.

ELI (cont'd)

Right?

PAUL

Okay. I won't.

ELI

So let's get out of here. You got everything?

JILL

Everything that matters, I think...

ELI

Looks like it'll take a couple trips. That is unless Paul here wants to help out.

PAUL

(pause)

Sure.

ELI

Truck's parked around the building. Only place I could find a spot.

JILL

Oh Jesus. My scarf.

ELI

But it's May, honey. What do you need a scarf for?

JILL

It's *my scarf*. It was my grandmother's and she gave it to me, and her grandmother gave it to her.

ELI

So...

PAUL

(more to himself)

Do scarves last that long?

JILL
It was a *gift*, it traveled overland from Illinois to Utah in--

ELI
1847.

JILL
Yes.

ELI
And that still matters to you?

JILL
Yes.

ELI
Then let's find it.

JILL
She has it. I let her borrow it and I never got it back.

ELI
Well it's gotta be here. Unless she mailed it to Siberia.

JILL
It's in her closet, I bet.

PAUL
Um...

Jill goes to Alyssa's closet and opens it.

JILL
Oh God!

ALYSSA
Ah!

ELI
Oh God!

JILL
Jesus!

ALYSSA
Sorry!

(pause)
He didn't tell you?

PAUL
I was supposed to tell her you were in there?

ELI

You'd think twice using it if you knew.

ALYSSA

Okay Mister High and Mighty.

(to Jill)

Here. Take it.

ELI

How many pacts do you think the Utes made that they later reneged on?

PAUL

Are you sure it was *they* who reneged?

ALYSSA

Who?

ELI

The Ute. The people who, you know, were first here in this state. Before it was a state.

JILL

Before the White Man came in his many wives.

ALYSSA

Oh. Them.

PAUL

"They ain't whites. They're Mormons."

ALYSSA

What?

JILL

I'm sorry. Did I say 'in'? I meant 'with'.

PAUL

I know exactly what you meant.

JILL

Did you really.

ALYSSA

I have this feeling that an elaborate joke is being played on me.

JILL

Hurts, doesn't it?

ELI

Not just on you. On all of us.

PAUL

Guys.

ELI

Now why would you think that--about the joke, I mean. I'm just talking about the Ute.

JILL

And the Navajo. They were from around here, close to here.

ELI

How about the Arapaho.

JILL

Arapaho. Sure. And there's the Chumash.

ELI

Kickapoo...

JILL

Pawnee. Cheyenne. Crow.

ELI

Now we're talkin'.

JILL

Zuni. Hopi. Pottawatomie.

ELI

Sing it to me, baby.

JILL

Commanche. Seneca. Shawnee.

ELI

Great things come in threes.

JILL

Sioux...

ELI

Kickapoo. Kickapoo.

ALYSSA

(pause)

All right, I get it. You had that prepared.

ELI

Actually, no, we didn't. But it came off pretty well, considering.

(to Jill)

That's what I love about you.

ALYSSA

You don't love her.

ELI

I didn't say I did. It's *something about her* I love.

PAUL

Oh.

ELI

That surprises you.

(pause)

Why?

Silence

PAUL

I should tell you why I'm here.

ALYSSA

Finally!

PAUL

Now that you're both in the room.

(pause)

There's no chance getting you to leave, is there?

Eli shakes his head.

PAUL (cont'd)

Didn't think so. Okay.

(pause)

Okay. I'm here to tell you about the change that's happened in my life recently. It's a big change and I'm hoping you'll approve. I'm pretty positive one of you will at least. It would be great if you both would because you both had so much to do with it. Influenced it, really.

JILL

Oh God.

ALYSSA

What?

JILL

Paul, you can't.

ALYSSA

(to Paul)

What can't you do?

PAUL

I'm converting, Lyssa. Everyone: I'm converting.

JILL
Paul, please.

PAUL
What?

JILL
I'm saying don't.

PAUL
You actually care.

JILL
Of course I care. It's not right.

PAUL
Then tell me why it isn't.

Long pause

JILL
There are things you should've asked about. Remember when I gave you that chance, last year, on our way back from the Ward? I asked you if you wanted to know anything, and you--

PAUL
And I said what?

JILL
You said nothing, pretty much. No wonder you can't remember. I got nothing from you that day. That was the time to ask about serious things, deeper things....

PAUL
It wasn't my time for that.

JILL
And now is? What happened? It's not you.

ALYSSA
His girlfriend.

JILL
(to Paul)
Ex-girlfriend?

Paul's silence answers for him.

JILL (cont'd)
Did you hear me that day? You must have heard what I said last: If you go back a second time they'll try to convert you. You were interested...

PAUL

I was, and I did. Hear, I mean. I heard.
 (pause)
 I went back.

JILL

You mean right after...and before we...

PAUL

Not that one. I went to another Ward, near campus.

JILL

I see.

PAUL

What do you think of this, Alyssa? Haven't heard from you yet.

ALYSSA

(pause)
 It's uh, it's interesting.

ELI

'Interesting'?

ALYSSA

(sharply)
 Yes.

ELI

You've known this guy for, what, a *lifetime*, from what I remember hearing. Dated him. Dropped him to move on, but you didn't move on, did you? You clocked my girlfriend in the face, and the next morning you invite him in to deliver the biggest news of his life so far and all you can say is 'interesting'? Interesting--

PAUL

Hey man.

ELI

Interesting is for coffee table books.

PAUL

Man.

ELI

Interesting is for those nature documentaries you watch while flipping channels at five in the morn[ing]--

PAUL

Hey! Man!

ELI

The name's Eli. Remember?

PAUL

Eli. You like to hear yourself talk?

ELI

Not you too. All right, put up your little dukes big boy....

PAUL

I'm not fighting with you. Just answer the question: Do you like to hear yourself talk?

ELI

(pause)

You could say that, yeah.

PAUL

Good. I do too.

ELI

Who doesn't, right? Talking is one of the last best things we have.

(pause)

You gotta admit the word 'interesting' is--

PAUL

It's not her fault.

(to Alyssa)

It's not your fault. I just thought you'd be happy for me. I figured if anyone you...

ALYSSA

Then is this because of...?

PAUL

Jill I figured. I suspected...

JILL

I didn't murder anyone, Paul.

PAUL

I didn't murder anyone either.

(beat)

I hope you know what I mean.

Jill nods.

ALYSSA

But. If that's why you're doing it....If that's the real reason why you're converting...

PAUL

Why do you think I'm converting.

Silence. All eyes on Alyssa.

ALYSSA

Because of your....Because of your father. Because you feel guilty, and you want to save him. I don't think you killed him, I'm not saying you killed him, but I do think what you're doing it's not right, because *it's not genuine*.

(pause)

Is that the reason?

PAUL

That's not the reason.

(to Jill)

I thought once you were in you were always in. I thought that especially after Pioneer Day last year, when you denied me.

ALYSSA

Denied?

PAUL

When she refused to have sex with me.

ELI

Oh shit.

JILL

I didn't...really...deny you. You knew.

PAUL

I didn't really know. That's the thing. But I know now. I know that you didn't care about me, you don't care about me now--

JILL

That's not true!

PAUL

And that you can't care about *any* guy. *Any* guy.

Paul stares at Eli, who doesn't look away.

PAUL (cont'd)

What did you do last night?

ELI

None of your fucked-up business what we did.

PAUL

You didn't get what you wanted. You're not going to get what you want.

Eli launches himself at Paul, his fists pummeling the taller, younger man.

Alyssa and Jill struggle to pull the two guys apart.

JILL
Stop it! Stop!

ALYSSA
Stop! Cut it out!

After further shouting and pushing and pulling, Jill and Alyssa manage to force Eli off of Paul, who appears relatively unscathed.

ELI
(to Paul)
You have no *idea* what I want!

PAUL
You've got a massive temper, man.

ELI
This isn't a *temper*. This is about sticking up for what you know is right and *who* you know is right. She's my girlfriend, you wenis, how can I not defend her? She needs me--and it's totally okay if she doesn't, but she does, I feel she does. Would you if she were your girlfriend? Oh, but that's right, you don't *have* a girlfriend, so you're gonna go join a religion just so you can *get* one!

JILL
(near tears)
Stop it! Stop it! Stop it!

ELI
Honey!

PAUL
I...didn't say anything, Jill.

JILL
(to Eli)
I'm not your girlfriend.

ELI
(long pause)
Huh.

JILL
I'm sorry, but I'm not.

ELI
I thought...well, huh. I thought since, you know....

JILL
I'm sorry I led you to believe--

ELI

You didn't lead me to believe. You led me to hope. And that's worse than believing.

ALYSSA

(to Paul)

I think you should leave.

PAUL

I will.

(pause)

I will.

He does not move. No one does.

ELI

I figured since you're, you know, *moving in and all...*

JILL

That's just a temporary thing until I--

ELI

So I'm temporary.

JILL

Not temporary, no. You're great--

ELI

I don't want to be great. I want to be *your boyfriend!*

Silence

ELI (cont'd)

There was no future. Since I met you there was never going to be a future. There was just going to be your messed up asinine past.

JILL

Maybe, eventually, it would work out...

ELI

How could you not say we're together, have a future together, after you said all those things to me, after we said all those wonderful things to each other...After we *did* those things last night...

JILL

We do have a future together.

ELI

This is the future, right now. And you've denied it.

(pause)

I can't do it, you know. I tried...I really, honestly did the best I could...

JILL

I know.

ELI

To *respect* you. I specifically did not use the word 'love' because I didn't want to freak you out. I had no idea it was the 'G' word that got to you.

JILL

I did the best I could too.

ELI

Uh-huh. I see why you didn't leave anything at my place.... You probably didn't leave anything in the truck either.

Jill's silence confirms this.

ELI (cont'd)

What should I do? Where should I go?

(beat)

I'm not asking you--any of you.

Eli turns and leaves the room quickly. He shuts the door softly behind him.

Silence.

ALYSSA

Okay, Paul. That's your cue.

PAUL

I've accomplished nothing, really.

ALYSSA

I meant for you to go. Now.

PAUL

I'm going to be amongst you, Lyssa. I'm about to be baptized. I went through the conversion talks with the missionaries. I went to church. I read the scriptures, and I prayed to Heavenly Father. I'm going to be as you are. I'm going to have a chance. Now aren't you relieved? Aren't you glad for me?

ALYSSA

I...I am.

Jill, seated on her bed now, scoffs as Paul looks at her hard.

PAUL

I couldn't have stopped that car from hitting your father's.

JILL

I didn't expect you to.

(beat)

I wish I could have stopped your father from falling. On that hiking trip.

PAUL

End of summer--

kicking up dust on the way to your house.

ALYSSA

Paul, I'm not--

PAUL

It wasn't the end of summer, actually. That came later, of course. That last walk down the long road. No, what I'm talking about came a little earlier, another walk, at the height of summer, with the heat pushing through the windows of every building and basement in our little town.

(pause)

It wasn't as bad, that walk, not nearly as bad as what they went through to get here. You know, *them*...

JILL

Tell her. Go ahead.

ALYSSA

Tell me what?

JILL

You want to know what we did? I don't care what we did.

ALYSSA

Paul?

PAUL

It was Pioneer Day, and I was again walking to her house. And she was there waiting on the porch, ready to tell me off but instead she let me in. She cut my hair, even though I didn't need a haircut. I liked the feel of her fingers on my scalp, the light scrape of her nails against my skin. It was... arousing. I was aroused. I'm not ashamed to say that. I'm not official yet, and so I won't be ashamed.

JILL

How convenient--

PAUL

Listen! We went into her room, where I'd once held her baby nephew on my chest and waited for the phone to ring. She didn't want to go in there, but I was pushy, and I was prodding, and I'm sorry but.

On the bed we kissed.

(MORE)

PAUL (cont'd)

Lost in kisses, as if they would be enough.

(beat)

Isn't it true that you never know what is enough unless you know what is more than enough? I know who said that now. I said it.

Wait. Don't take it off. But I did. Everything. Everything except my skivvies--and she was still fully clothed, hidden from me. And what were we to expect? What then? So silent, when what I wanted most from her were words.

JILL

God you are so hateful.

PAUL

You said I could, and so I did. You allowed me. And there I was: naked by your side, on your just-big-enough bed, naked like my father was on his first time with.

(beat)

Now. Now for you. And when I pressed, she relented by giving me a choice: the shirt or the jeans. Shirt or jeans--which is it gonna be? Fifty-fifty chance, a winner in every try....

ALYSSA

She was probably....

PAUL

It surprised her what I chose. She even said it did after I'd taken to standing on the other side of the room, in front of the exit, incredulous at her refusal to follow through. How should I have felt? How would you feel? I'd made the wrong choice apparently: it was the shirt--and possibly the bra?--that was okay to come off, not the jeans. Not them. How was I supposed to know? How was I supposed to know that my fifty-fifty chance was not two sides to an all-winning coin but rather a win-or-lose situation, and I lost.

JILL

You had to lose. How could you....

PAUL

But here's what I really want to know: if I *had* chosen the shirt (and possibly the bra?), if you had taken that off would the jeans have followed? Or was it never going to happen?

(pause)

I know you can't answer. I know you don't want to answer. I asked too much of you. I'm sorry. You should've known I would pick the pants. You know me well enough to know what my choice would be. But how insulted I felt--offended, bare before you, shrunken, withered but ready, while you lay *protected* next to me in passive judgment. Safe behind your *clothes*.

JILL
 (near tears)
 I wasn't passive. I was raging.

PAUL
 Good.

JILL
 And the rage threatened me just like it threatened you.

PAUL
 Good. That's what I was hoping to hear. That's what I was thinking about as I went through the talks. That you felt for me. That you felt *something* for me.

JILL
 I did. I did.

PAUL
 And I: embarrassed, insulted, offended. All washed away as of soon.

(to Alyssa)
 We were never lovers but I can still tell you a dream: In it you and I are bouncing on a trampoline, only the trampoline is a circus net and below us is the whole world, with everyone looking up at you in your dress, and you flashing everyone and laughing about it wildly and joyously....and a song from some sad musical is playing above, and I thought of you on stage, singing, your cheeks flushed and puffing, I thought of you both tap-dancing with the black armbands and no one in attendance. It's not enough to recount a dream; you have to believe it as well.

ALYSSA
 I was going to say--Paul--I was going to say: I'm not your friend. I'm sorry, but I'm serious. I don't think I can be your friend.

PAUL
 I'm going to be one of you.

ALYSSA
 That doesn't mean--that wasn't your reason. You're not converting because you want to be my friend. You don't want to be closer to me. You don't care about me.

PAUL
 (beat)
 That's right.

(pause)
 I'll tell you my reason. One night when I was fifteen my family and I went to see a musical in the city. It was a Sunday and we had dinner afterwards, in one of those fancy restaurants on the water.

(MORE)

PAUL (cont'd)

Our car was parked at the opposite end of the wharf, so we had to walk this great distance to get there and go home and that walk seemed to take forever, it was dark and the path was not well lit. My father and I were in this pretty amazingly good mood, so we stuck close together. We even laughed now and again. But afterwards...afterwards my mother let us have it. How could we have walked *ahead* of her and my sister, so far ahead of them that night. Didn't we understand our duty as *men*? Hadn't we seen what was around us?

Men--unsavory, unpleasant men--had caught up to my mother and sister and were closing in, encroaching on their space, while my father and I chortled on ahead unaware. And how would we have felt had we gotten to the car turned around only to find our wife and mother and sister and daughter missing, absconded? Would we have felt less like men and more like monsters? Would we have felt free?

After I heard the truth of that night I took stock. I stayed in my room. I thought of everyone I knew and went over what I'd said to them and how they acted toward me. I decided that I didn't care about any of them--not even my mother and my sister did I truly care about. I realized I had always been walking ahead, walking ahead of everyone, trying to catch up to my father, who walked ahead of even me. Could I stop? Did I want to stop, turn around and at least look back? Did I have that ability in me to change?

I decided I did not. I was not capable of stopping; I would always walk ahead. And if I was always going to walk ahead why shouldn't I walk with those who are right and good and true. The one true. The best. Why not? The caring would come later, if at all.

Silence

JILL

I have to say, Paul...I-I can't be your friend anymore either. It's just...too much, everything. I hope you find happiness.

PAUL

I know you will.

ALYSSA

I can't be there for you. I know I promised once but...

PAUL

You will be there for me, eventually.

(pause)

I should go.

ALYSSA

Yes, you should.

Well, goodbye. PAUL

Goodbye. ALYSSA

Paul lurches forward, arms outstretched, searching. Alyssa backs away.

Don't. ALYSSA (cont'd)

It would mean so much to me. PAUL

You need help. ALYSSA

I've found it. PAUL
(pause)

Jill?

Jill, not looking at him, shakes her head slowly. Paul addresses both women.

Despite what you think, I have found it. PAUL (cont'd)

He turns and leaves the room, neglecting to shut the door behind him.

Alyssa goes to the door and shuts it. She turns to Jill, who has not moved.

Jill? ALYSSA

My choice. JILL

Alyssa waits.

It was my choice. JILL (cont'd)

I know. ALYSSA

And if he didn't like it he could've just gone and tried to fuck someone else. JILL

ALYSSA
 'Tried'.

JILL
 Are they all like this? I mean, God, are they even *out there*?

Alyssa approaches her.

ALYSSA
 But he didn't try....there was only us.
 (pause)
 It's strange to think he was that obsessed. Scary really.
 Because, you know, he's not that bad-looking, and he was
 smart and in all those clubs and classes....He kinda could've
 had anyone--just about anyone. Instead he chose us.
 (pause)
 What does that say about us?
 (long pause)
 Is it the religion or the people?

Jill suddenly breaks down and begins to
 cry. Alyssa observes her coolly.

ALYSSA (cont'd)
 You were strong.

JILL
 I had the right.

ALYSSA
 You had every right. You still do.

JILL
 But you're wrong. I'm sorry: you are. He couldn't have had
 anyone. It wasn't in him. His confidence--his lack of
 confidence....

ALYSSA
 What does that say about us?

JILL
 (gaining composure)
 You understand.

ALYSSA
 I'm sorry about your face.

JILL
 I'm sorry about the slap. I'll never--

Alyssa shakes her head. Then: a knock
 at the door. Jill jumps a little. The
 women look at each other. The knocking
 continues.

Alyssa slowly goes to the door and peeks through the spy hole. Although surprised, she does not open the door. She quietly makes her way back to where Jill is seated. Together the women wait it out.

VOICE BEHIND DOOR (O.S.)

Alyssa? Are you in there?

Another sharp series of knocks. At last, they end. Sound of footsteps receding.

Silence

JILL

(low voice)

How are we going to get rid of him?

ALYSSA

It was, um. It was Joseph.

JILL

Oh, Alyssa. You shouldn't....

ALYSSA

(pause)

Good. You stopped. Maybe he will too.

JILL

I thought...

ALYSSA

(pause)

Remember when it was just us, and we were driving around the back roads, the uninhabited unexplored roads, and nothing mattered much, we didn't have to buy books, we didn't have to read, we could just *talk*.

Jill waits.

ALYSSA (CONT'D) (cont'd)

And we were talking about where we would go--not where we could go but where we *would* go. And we were listening to that song...

JILL

That song...

ALYSSA

What was that song called?

JILL
"Going to California".

ALYSSA
With the wailing in the background.

JILL
Was it wailing?

ALYSSA
It wasn't?

JILL
I don't think it was. It was more like a, a moaning. I think.

ALYSSA
You must not have heard the wailing.
(pause)
Do you remember where we wanted to go?

JILL
The places...

ALYSSA
All the places, like--

JILL
Spain.

ALYSSA
And Morocco. We could travel light in Morocco.

JILL
Heavy in Spain. Because of all the food.

ALYSSA
And the clothes. Don't forget all the clothes we'd need in
Iceland...

JILL
Land of the Midnight Sun. Or was that--

ALYSSA
Denmark? Greenland? Does it matter?

JILL
It did matter.

ALYSSA
It *does* matter.

The phone rings. Jill goes to answer
it.

ALYSSA (cont'd)
Don't. Not this time.

Jill stops. The phone rings a few more times before the answering machine picks up. The greeting comes on followed by the beep and then...

JOSEPH (O.S.)
Alyss, hi, it's me. I tried your room but I guess you weren't around. I thought you'd be back now because I checked all our places and I couldn't find you. Did you leave for the weekend or something? Your parents said you didn't say anything to them about that....Anyway, I really want to talk to you. It's important. I'm sorry. I want to see you again.

Sound of a beep.

JILL
What are you doing?

ALYSSA
I'm doing something new.

JILL
This is important, Alyssa. He's important to you. Isn't he?

Alyssa waits.

ALYSSA
It *will* matter. But that's not the 'it' I mean.

JILL
Okay...

ALYSSA
Let's go.

JILL
Where?

ALYSSA
To Spain.

JILL
You want to go to Spain, as in now?

Alyssa nods.

JILL (cont'd)
Oh, God.

ALYSSA
You don't want to?

JILL

No, it's just....I'm going to have some trouble seeing myself as a sister missionary.

ALYSSA

We're not going as sister missionaries.

JILL

How much money do you have?

ALYSSA

Enough to get there. How about you?

JILL

(nodding)

Enough.

The phone rings. Alyssa gets up and goes over to it. She unplugs the answering machine. The phone continues to ring as Alyssa comes back to Jill and sits beside her, close. After several more rings the phone stops.

ALYSSA

Let's go.

JILL

You'll have to tell them, you know.

Alyssa waits.

JILL

Aren't you scared?

ALYSSA

Are you?

JILL

I don't know what's out there.

ALYSSA

I don't either. But. At least it'll be up to us to find it out.

The phone rings. Neither young woman moves to answer it. They remain close, staring out the window toward the mountains. The phone rings. And rings.

Silence.

END OF PLAY