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Dramatic

Tabby, thirties

Tabby has risen to the top of her deceased father's company. She tells Graham, her main rival and nemesis, that she is sacking him.

TABBY: Hi Graham. Welcome to my shiny new office. What do you think? You've been a loyal servant of this company for so many years, you must have seen a few changes. I bet, for example, that you never expected to see me here. In this office. In this Very. Nice. Chair. No. In fact I think you've had *your* beady eye on this office for some time. But there we are. That's the way the cookie arse-fucks you. Right? Please. Have a seat. I'm joking. Stand the fuck up. God. Now. Graham. Before we go any further allow me to make one thing clear I appreciate the way you looked out for me after Daddy died. Taught me the tricks of the trade as it were. You really took me under your wing. Well. Your desk. You did me quite a few favours. You taught me everything I needed to know: do this, do that, suck this, touch that. Yes I think I can still taste your 'favours'. But look at me now. And look at you. OK enough of that Graham, we can do this the hard way. Or we can do this the abject Excruciating Horrifying way. Oh come on you must have seen this coming. You must appreciate your position here has now become untenable. Don't Oh don't cry Graham for God's sake. I'm fucking you this time. Take it like a man.

tired. I'm so tired of waiting... and why- why do men just stand there and let a woman ramble on and on like this?

Comic

Penelope, sixteen

Penelope and her best friend Lucius have gone to Ithaca Falls on a hot summer night and run into their classmate Odysseus, who is skinny dipping and smoking weed. Penelope is instantly attracted to Odysseus, much to Lucius' dismay. In this monologue Penelope needs Lucius to leave so she can be alone with Odysseus and hopefully be kissed for the first time in her life.

PENELOPE: I'm sorry Lucius. You're right, I'm just - I'm kind of stoned now and Odysseus - ok, Odysseus is - I've never told you this but I have such a crush on Odysseus Johnson I cannot handle it. I think he's so hot. Do you think he's into me? I can't tell. He's very aloof. But so interesting. I've always thought he was interesting. Have you ever seen him running? He's a beautiful runner. He has such a beautiful body. Like a God. He runs everywhere, I think he's like a long distance runner or something. He's always running with his shirt off, except in the winter duh, then he has a shirt on, but he totally runs by my house all the time. I love watching him run. Even Aunt Peggy who's as dykey as they come, has to catch her breath when he runs by the house. I'm going to try to kiss him tonight. Or get him to kiss me I mean. No one has ever kissed me Lucius and tonight is the night! I can feel it! I think you should totally either come in the water right now or you should go so I can be alone with Odysseus. I mean, I don't want to be rude or anything but you're kind of being a buzzkill and that's - I'm being rude. We're still best friends, this is just- like - I don't know

just this little crying child inside me. . . . I'm seeing this psychiatrist. My mom set it up. Doesn't help. . . . And I understand what you feel. About me. About blaming me. I would feel the same. And I'm even grateful for it. If you were one of those women you see on talk shows who go around forgiving the serial child molester who raped and killed their second grader, I wouldn't know what to do. I really think I would probably lose respect for you. I think this way, we're better off. We're on the same page. I understand you. If I were your mom, I'd do the same.

Dramatic
Tracy, early twenties

Tracy is a literature major at UCI in her early 20s. She is in the dorm room of her friend Kelly. A few days ago Tracy had a panic attack while giving a presentation on Keats' poem La Belle Dame Sans Merci in a women's studies class. Kelly ran after her and talked her out of the panic, helping her calm down. Tracy is now telling her how grateful she feels and is working up the courage to kiss Kelly for the first time.

TRACY: I think you saved my life or something. I'm a sophomore here. And my whole first year, I spent cowering in a shower stall because my roommate was gang-banging entire frat houses in our room. And I spent most of that time crying. Not because of Lizette, because she probably has every disease known to man, and she'll totally get hers. And who really cares? But I just hate myself for not being able to say anything. I never even had it out with her, you know? I never even said stop it, this hurts me. Sometimes I'd be too scared to go sit in the shower stall, and I'd just lie there and listen. Listen to her and whoever she brought home. And, I've never . . . you know. I just never did, and this is the first time I'm hearing some of this stuff. And it's like she's . . . ruining something for me. Because I don't like it, and it's really loud, and it just makes me a little sick. And I just die a little inside, you know? Sometimes it's just disgusting, and sometimes I'm a little jealous. And I didn't even switch rooms over Christmas break, because I was worried about hurting her feelings. I was worried about hurting *her* feelings. Isn't that a joke? . . . I'm not strong like you. You take care of yourself so well, you have enough

left over to go and protect whole South American tribes from throwing themselves off cliffs. You're planning to stop a self-inflicted genocide with just a camcorder and a guy from UC Davis. And I can see you doing it. Putting your own body between those people and the cliffs and making them listen to you. I couldn't even tell my ex-roommate to go screw somewhere else. I don't have that kind of voice. I don't have a voice that can fight, that can plead, that can say something strongly if opposed, that can argue, or that can even disagree. It's like a note I just can't hit. I try and my voice breaks. . . .

(She starts to hyperventilate.)

Sorry. I'm sorry. I wasn't going to go back into class after my panic attack. I was going to leave my purse and everything and just go hide in the toilet. Pull my legs up onto the toilet bowl and hope nobody came looking for me. Because I'm not strong. I'm not strong at all. But you came after me, and we talked. And I just borrowed your strength. I just reached out and borrowed it. I think I pretended I was you. I went back in the room. And you smiled at me and winked. And I had the strength. It probably didn't mean much to you, because I bet you're kind to people and do nice things for them every day. But people haven't been kind to me like that. And I can live off kindness like that a long time. And I did Keats justice. For once I didn't disappoint him. I did his beautiful poem, that piece of poetry I love, some justice.

*I met a lady in the meads,
Full beautiful - a faery's child,
Her hair was long, her foot was light,
And her eyes were wild.
I made a garland for her head,
And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;
She looked at me as she did love,
And made sweet moan.*

SAY HI TO AGNES FOR ME

Daniel Guyton

Dramatic

Jess, fifties to sixties

Jess is an older woman in her 50's-60's in an all-female penitentiary, here instructing a younger woman on what to expect from prison.

JESS: Listen, hon. I been here a long time. And I mean a *long* time. I seen a lot of women come and go. A whole lot of women. Some of them friends of mine. Some of them ain't. Some of them left here in a body bag. Some of them walked out on their own recognizance. A few of them went upstate, and I even know six women who went to Federal. Back in the early 90's. But Agnes Ketterman, however? *She* went out through the sewage system, back in '78. About halfway through it, though, she... got stuck. Apparently her leg got jammed up in the filtration unit. Or... so they said. They found pieces of her six weeks later – floating in the Susquehanna River. If you try hard enough here, honey, you can get out. Although you may not look too pretty when you do. I tried escaping once. Back in '79. I didn't get that far though. I bribed one of the guards to look the other way during dinner. He did. But not before telling three other guards to look right at me. I was full of piss and vinegar back in those days, without a goddamn lick of sense in my brain. They waited for me in the freezer, behind the kitchen. Right where I told that son of a bitch I would be. They waited, all bundled up in their warmest winter coats, nicely hidden behind the mashed potatoes, and the baked beans, and the giant cans of sauerkraut. And they watched me yank up that drainage grate, which I had been periodically loosening for over 11 months. Hunh. 11 months. That actually felt like a long time back in those

days. But then, just as I removed the grate, they called out to me. One of the guards – Officer... Jettts, or... Betts or something. He said, “Hey Jessie! Say hi to Agnes for me!” Or... something to that effect. I panicked. I tried to squeeze in there as fast as I could, but... the other two grabbed me. It took all three of them to pull me out. They kicked me, tied me up, and then they gang-banged me on the cold freezer floor while everyone else was eatin’. It didn’t matter how hard I screamed. Those girls had heard it all before. Since then, I’ve... heard it many times myself. And that guard I bribed? Officer Hebbard? He just looked away. Just like I paid him to. He kept on looking away. That kind of thing don’t... don’t offer you much encouragement in the ways of trusting other people, if you know what I mean.

Comic

Priscilla, twenties to forties

Priscilla is visiting Joel's hotel room on the last night of a national dating convention for farmers. Joel's grief over his failing dairy farm is holding him back from romance. Priscilla wants to sleep with him before the convention is over and gives him a pep talk.

PRISCILLA: Jesus Christ could walk in this room right now and not follow what I'm talkin about, does that mean he's not intelligent? No, it means he's from Nazareth and he doesn't have a TV. Take some pride in yourself Joel, think you can tell your children you accomplished... I mean anybody who can keep a farm goin ten, twelve, fifteen years like you've done—and I'm not talkin about my kinda farm in South Carolina where we have TJ Maxx, I'm talkin about your kinda farm. Fourteen cows, that's more than I have anymore. And a hundred years from now when there's an apocalypse and everybody's dyin of cancer from hormones and Monsanto GMO bullshit your great-grandkids'll look up at your picture and say he did things right, that's what kinda people we come from—second of all Joel can I just say somethin, for once? I resent you actin like I'm this normal beauty queen and I've just coasted through life like a debutante. Like granted, you got hang-ups, but my childhood, speakin of cows. Did you see your cousin fuck a cow, Joel? Did you see your cousin fuck a cow? Cause I did. And that was traumatizing. At a formative time in my life. But am I up here bein all sensitive and squirrely and withholdin of sex because of a traumatizing barn incident? No. Never. I would never do that to someone. On her last night of Singles in Agriculture.

For information on this author, click on the WRITERS tab at www.smithandkraus.com.

Comic

Priscilla, twenties to forties

Priscilla is visiting Joel's hotel room on the last night of a national dating convention for farmers. Joel is a Christian fundamentalist with limited sexual experience. In a panic disguised as outrage, he demands to know more about Priscilla's past. She responds by rattling off a list of former lovers.

PRISCILLA: Okay—okay if it makes you feel better? Mike was my husband, you knew about him. Two, husband of the girl Mike was havin an affair with. And no I didn't love him. And that's when I learned never have sex for the sake of revenge cause I found out later that guy was tied to a straight-up prison gang. Three... okay third guy was Pastor Bill, once. After Mike died. One time. Gah, that man... bless his heart. Fourth guy was a banker I thought was gonna help me with my goats. Did I love him, no. Did I love the idea of that business loan? Probably more than my own mother... Fifth guy was, whatever. My cousin... And he did it with me way before he did it with the cow, those two incidents were unrelated. We were—I was a kid, it was one of those... I mean it was consensual, um. Ronny was just truly a fucked-up person, for him it's a blessing he was born on a farm cause anywhere else he'da been a serial killer. So. But yeah, when I caught him with the cow a couple years later I was like I can't believe I ever slept with that guy. Now he's... man, it's like every fucked-up person I know ends up movin to Florida. Hunh... I mean of course I made him stop, Aunt Rae knew what he was doin too, she was like, "Cilla go check back make sure Ronny's doin okay in the barn." Then sure enough. I was like, "Ronny take your dick outta

that cow.” I mean I felt bad for the cow, but. Ronny just looked so pathetic and stupid, it almost looked to me like the cow was like laughin at him.

For information on this author, click on the WRITERS tab at www.smithandkraus.com.

Dramatic

Dirdra, thirties

Dirdra is speaking to her estranged sister, Janice. Dirdra ran away in her teens, leaving Janice alone with their crazy mother. They've been reunited for the mother's funeral, happy that she's finally dead. Here, Dirdra explains why she can't participate in a memorial service and how she'd have maternal fantasies about a customer at the supermarket deli counter, taking care of her children. When she first learned of her mother's death, Dirdra got confused, the fantasy became reality and she wept for the woman at the deli counter.

DIRDRA: Hey! I'm here now, and I know what's what and who's dead, and I'm completely sane and happy. Happy and sane. So just drop it. *You* do this. Don't act like it's so.... You do it. You look for them! You look for them. You do... at the park, on the bus...where ever.... You know who I'm talking about. You don't wonder... if somebody took the time to roll up *your* turkey? Zip *your* zipper up to the neck? It's just us here. You can admit it to me. I'm not talking about deli meat. I didn't think THAT mother was MY... That *would* be crazy. I'm way too old to be her... I mean, she's obviously not my... but if she was... and if she died, I'd come up with a great memory about her. The way she rolled up the turkey...like she was performing surgery. I wouldn't get sick to my stomach thinking about her. I'd put together a beautiful memorial service. She'd deserve it. That's not why I cried. I cried because... as long as mom was alive...there was always that chance... you know... that hope you hold out even when you know there's no point... that maybe ... I'd wake up in the morning and she'd be – this is gonna sound

stupid – she’d be... someone else. This stranger in my house would be gone, and my real mother would be there. And my life would finally start. That’s how I fell asleep every night in this house... waiting for my real mother. But she’s really dead now. She’s never gonna turn into someone else at midnight like some fairytale. If I hid it from the world... it’s not cuz she wasn’t *that* bad... it’s cuz it was too awful to admit... even to myself. (*tears up*) I’m not crying. Don’t touch me. I’m not giving you a damn hug. I’m not giving you a memory either. Cuz there are none. And stop looking at me like I’ve got three heads. You’re no different than me.

For information on this author, click on the WRITERS tab at www.smithandkraus.com.

Dramatic

Faye, mid-fifties, African American

While playing cards in the break room of a stamping plant, Faye tells Dez, a co-worker, how she came to work there. Faye is a determined survivor.

FAYE: This ain't a democracy. You in my personal breakroom and in the noble effort of thankin' me for not kickin' yo' ass out, you grant me the simple pleasures of playin' a game of cards so that I can graciously and repetitiously take yo' money. You know, you ain't the only in tough shit. When I first come up in this plant, I was pregnant with my first and only. Kinda like Shanita. My son's father ran off and I was assed out. Had dropped outta school to be with him so I ain't have no family to fall back on. My mama didn't play them kinda games. She come from the real ol' school. Once you shame your mama and turn up with a fast tail, you got to be put out and ain't no lookin' back. I was scared shitless but somethin' in me knew I was gonna survive. Not cuz nothin' was promised to me or cuz I could see the light at the end of the tunnel or no shit like that. But somethin' in me knew what I was made of. I was gonna survive cuz I had to. So I walked up, hiding my pregnant belly so I could get me a job, and I got it. Same day. Been workin' the line ever since. Survivin' ever since. And it ain't been no easy work all the time. Even got the battle scars to prove that stamping doors ain't for sissys.

(She holds up her arm for Dez to see. A scar skates along her forearm.)

This beauty right here....From a press machine on 12-line. Years ago. Got backed up and tried to pull the sheet

metal that was stuck in the gears. Press came right down by my hand, sparks burned the shit outta me. Coulda been a lot worse if I ain't move my hand quick. That's fast thinkin' like you ain't never seen. But I still got all my limbs. Everything in tact. You know, you really stupid. I'm tellin' you about being pregnant and alone. I'm telling you about having a son and bein' clueless. I'm telling you about not having the answers. Ain't never had 'em and probably never will. But whatever I'm doin', it's keepin' me here. And that's how I can be patient when the plane is headed toward a tree, cuz even if it crash...I don't think I'd die. I think I'd get scarred maybe. But I wouldn't die. Take the train next time. Keep movin'.

For information on this author, click on the WRITERS tab at www.smithandkraus.com.

Dramatic

Shanita, mid-late twenties, African American

Shanita is talking with Faye in the break room of the stamping plant where they work. Everyone is worried that the plant might close. Shanita has an opportunity for another job but she wants to stick it out at the plant because she loves working there.

SHANITA: Cassie Logan down on my line got written up yesterday for leavin' 2 minutes before her break cuz she had to pee. Try to tell me I can't break when my baby pressin' down on my bladder. I don't think so. Some folk say it's just a scare tactic. Downsizin' and trying to weed out the people who slackin'. I decided I ain't gonna listen to all that hearsay. Cuz people gonna end up sabotaging themselves and get fired....and that ain't gonna be me. Plus, you our union rep. Everybody know you ain't gonna take no company shit. Got offered a job over at the Copy Center on 8 mile. My cousin used to be the manager, but she movin' offices. Said I could come take over. What I'm gonna do at a copy center? Day in and day out, runnin' paper through these simple machines—for what? Don't got the same kind of pride this work got. Here, I feel like I'm building somethin' important. Love the way the line needs me. Like if I step away for even a second and don't ask somebody to mind my post, the whole operation has to stop. My touch...my special care....it matter. I'm building something that you can see come to life at the end. Got a motor in it and it's gonna take somebody somewhere. Gonna maybe drive some important business man to work. Gonna get some single mama to her son's football practice. Gonna take a family on they first trip to Cedar Point. Gonna even maybe be somebody's first

time. Who knows? But I like knowing I had a hand in it, you know? That's why I'm gonna turn her down. Don't wanna work at no copy center. What's life at a copy center? Do somethin' I don't believe in? I figure ya'll is right. Time to stop worryin' about something that may not happen. Workin' in this industry is what I do. Uncertainty is always there. But it's the work I'm made of. In me from my daddy. Wanted a son, but got me instead. Always been good with my hands, and this somethin' that makes him proud of me. Not bein' pregnant before I'm married. Not being over twenty-five and building a family by myself. But this? Being a highly skilled job setter.... that's something I can stand on. Everybody can't say that. Everybody can't do what I do. I belong here. Ride it til' the wheels fall off. Right?

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Seriocomic
Sandy, twenty-eight

Sandy is a history teacher at a challenging urban high school thinks through her boyfriend's new idea for education software, and inspires him with her hopeful vision of what it could be.

SANDY: You know what I'd do in my classroom? What I'd do, is I'd have, like - let's say two thirds of the class is kind of getting something. I'd let them use the software, do the practice problems, have a challenge. And then, I'd work with the third of the class that wasn't getting it, and teach like a smaller group lesson. Try a couple different ways of explaining it, have plenty of time to answer their questions. You create a small class within a big class. You could do it for the smart kids too. Two thirds of the class has to practice, but the ones who've been doing well on the practice questions. You could teach them something new. Like, special challenge of the week. Or look at real world applications. Give them an independent project where they can really direct themselves. And the weaker students, they'd feel more competent, stay in school. And what if - what if all of them went out into the world ready to become primary care physicians! And medical researchers and environmental engineers and better teachers and non-stupid congressmen. What if we actually used all of the potential of every kid coming out of every public school classroom in America! We'd have kids ready to take on the environmental crisis! And the obesity epidemic! And they could *vote* smarter, because like they understood statistics and economics and America gets better which means the world gets better and we save the planet and we don't die in nuclear

war and we grow food in a sustainable manner and we
colonize Saturn and spread art and philosophy and hope
to the far corners of the universe!

Seriocomic

Photographer, twenties

The Photographer has just learned she'll never see Lydia again. Lydia's closing her office in the wake of a synchronized subway-bombing attack. The two women don't know each other, but the Photographer for months took daily candid snapshots of Lydia. She was drawn to the repetitive monotony of Lydia's life, having had very little stability in her own.

PHOTOGRAPHER: I'm fine. I've just got to get my bearings. I'm here... with my camera. It's noon, and it's this weird convergence of the office but not the office, of you but not you. I hate change. I said that already.

(Tries to collect herself, hits her chest, trying to get air.)

This never would happen with a watermelon or a kiwi or a pear or even an apple or a raspberry, a strawberry, blueberry, blackberry, honeydew, cantaloupe, papaya, mango, orange, plum, peach, cherry, pineapple, not even anything dried: apricots, raisins, raisins, dates, figs. You must know who I am. You haven't seen the limos? The celebrities? My studio? One block that way.

(She points.)

The big fruit portraits in the window. I sort of created a genre. I've been compared to Annie Leibowitz. The Annie Leibowitz of fruit portraiture. Fruit at its peak is very powerful. It speaks to people. A perfect moment in time before it all goes to shit. Fame's fleeting, but pictures don't change. Not pictures of fruit, anyway. You were my first human subject. I scoped you out. I nearly cried when I realized— You were a person. Not a cumquat. And you were perfect every time. Every time,

the same. In a rut, but in a good way. “Normal.” Like a movie: cue the noon bells, cue the lady on the phone, cue the feet on the desk. Even the conversation seemed the same! I had to mark the pictures by date just so I could tell them apart. You were better than fruit. You never changed. Never too green. Never rotten. Day after day. Dependable. I love dependable. It’s like... like nine hours of sleep. But today, you’re different. AND you’re leaving FOREVER!

For information on this author, click on the WRITERS tab at www.smithandkraus.com.

Dramatic

Natalie, twenty-one (if set in college) or seventeen (if set in high school)

Natalie didn't expect her evening to turn out like this at all. In preparation for a night of celebration, Natalie got good and drunk, only to find herself brought together with a bunch of other students and presented with a dilemma: one of them has found a video taken at a party that all of them were at, and towards the end of that video is what might be one of their mutual friends, Cal, sexually assaulting a girl not many of them know beyond her reputation: Laura. Natalie, who is still quite inebriated, hasn't said much since this information was revealed, and hasn't said much all night that anybody's taken seriously. But when somebody makes the erroneous assumption that if Laura had been raped, she would have had to have gone to the hospital, Natalie decides to speak up:

NATALIE: You don't have to go to the hospital. *(beat)* See, I knew a girl this one time who was coming home one night, she was coming home from a bar and, she'd never been to a bar before and, because she was younger than they were, her friends insisted she took a cab home, because they wanted her to be safe, you know, and, so she got to her door and the cab drove away, and at some point in between opening the door and closing the door and the cab driving away, while she was getting the key out for the, um. There was. *(beat)* Anyway, she had this thing happen, where, you know there's this wall on the inside that's a very important wall and when it gets hurt, there's. And there's blood everywhere, sometimes, you know. But. Um. *(beat)* But you know, you don't have to

go to the hospital right away if you don't want to. You just got the shit kicked out of you. You don't have to do anything if you don't want to. If you want, you can just sit there. Bleed for a bit, if you're bleeding. Or if you want you can go to the hospital and you can give a fake name or a fake insurance and then when they're not looking, you can leave, but, you don't have to go right away. Not if you don't want to. She hasn't even told her mom yet.
(beat) What was I saying?

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Maggie, nineteen-twenty (if set in college) or fifteen-sixteen (if set in high school)

Maggie, along with several other students, has been called together to deal with a problem: one of them has found a video taken at a party that all of them were at, and towards the end of that video is what might be one of their mutual friends, Cal, sexually assaulting a girl not many of them know beyond her reputation: Laura. Maggie does know Laura, better than anybody else in this room, and only moments ago, Maggie voted not to take it to the cops. When questioned by her older sister, Maggie reveals that not only was she present when this happened, but that she believes it was consensual. In this speech, Maggie tries to convince these upperclassmen - and herself - that nothing happened.

MAGGIE: They were leaning up against the island, at first, the table you have in the middle of your kitchen, Sarah? And it was strange, I wasn't used to seeing her like that. Happy. *(Beat.)* She looked so happy. She was so close to him. He had his hand on her arm. We had all split up. Two by two. And every time I looked over, it was a little different. At first, he's making jokes into her ear and she's smiling into her lap and then he's kissing her, you know. He's kissing her. He was holding her. Nobody holds Laura Heller like that. Not ever. Look, you don't know her, but I know her. And watching her like that, it just made me so... happy. We all were. We were together and we started watching and they didn't seem to care, so. It was strange, like, I knew it was strange, but it didn't feel strange, you know? People were smiling, laughing, cheering, even. You know, joke stuff. Egging them on. Telling them to do stuff. But they didn't even notice, so

... I mean, I didn't know that sorta stuff really happened, I mean, not in public, like, I'd never seen anything like that before except like, on the internet but after what happened with Sarah, it didn't seem so strange, you know? I mean, I was embarrassed at first, but that was only because I didn't get what it was yet. Look, I know what it must look like just to see it on a tape, but in reality it wasn't like what you guys think it is. It wasn't violent or scary it was this girl being kissed and loved who never gets kissed or loved and I think Rob was right, you know? I think it might just have been the best night of her life. I mean, it was the best night of mine.

For information on this author, click on the WRITERS tab at www.smithandkraus.com.

Dramatic
Leila, twenties

Doug, the guy Leila and her boyfriend have invited over for a threesome, has expressed his insecurity about the situation. She lays into him.

LEILA: Is that what therapy encourages these days? Letting you believe your personal mess is somehow exceptional? Worthy of all this time and attention? - It's astonishing the things we're encouraged to obsess over. Doug: I don't mean to sound harsh, but I don't care. If your therapist is giving you confidence, then I guess you're getting your money's worth. But I would get him to advise you to know when to stop talking, because that's what prevents you from closing the deal. And then, on top of all this, you want me to pander to your insecurities? You want me to what, tell you how manly you are? You want me to be a mommy for you and give you confidence? Oh, that's right, you told us mommy was a monster. Great, you're turning me into your mother. Why is it that men always want us to be nurses to their fragile egos? Isn't it enough what we do? Now we're responsible for making you feel like a man? Because God forbid you should feel anything less? No, Doug. I don't want to sleep with you. Even theoretically. I'm sorry if I'm adding to your insecurities, and I know I'm supposed to be nurturing, but I have to tell you, I'm all nurtured-out at the moment. I barely have enough for myself.

Dramatic

Clara, early thirties

Clara is pacing the living room, speaking on her cell phone.

CLARA: And she really did it. She fucking burnt them! ... Yeah, the apartment smells like hell, or the other way around... It doesn't matter now! She's my sister, my own fucking sister... I was adopted from Karvystan. I called mom and she confirmed. Then she made an appointment to her shrink... How can you ask that? Of course she's staying here. She's my SISTER!... I don't know about tomorrow, I can't think about that right now - I still have a grenade on my table... Ok, Ok, don't panic, I will get rid of that grenade... She's sleeping in the bedroom, she must be exhausted, poor thing, to burn all those, all my—Anyway, to hell with the past, we must live in the present... I asked her to be my bridesmaid!... She didn't say 'yes', but she didn't say 'no' either... Look, honey, I gotta go now, I must wake her up, she's invited to this dinner reception tonight, she's gonna talk about—... yes, of course I'm going with her, she's my rock star sister!... Oh, and guess what! The guy from Rutgers called. He wanted to make sure they're still on with my book... they heard I was interviewing her... This whole thing is—I'm totally psyched!... My life has turned upside down in one crazy day... Yeah, I'm OK, I'm fucking great! ... I'm not shouting! This is the Karvystanian way of talking when someone is excited!

(She jumps around.)

Yeah, I'm kinda dancing. Actually jumping from one red horse on my carpet to another... Of course they are red horses! Red WILD horses. Karvystanian horses, honey. Get used to that.

TRISH TINKLER GETS SAVED

Jacqueline Goldfinger

Comic

Trish, forty

Trish is talking to a new friend, Jan. Jan thinks that she is totally uncool and envies Trish. Trish explains that she was actually not cool at first and that Jan can be cool by being herself.

TRISH: I wore dolly lace shirts in college. Carried a designer purse. Drove Mommy and Daddy's BMW. Straightened my straight hair to make it extra 35 straight. I was the first sophomore to be elected SGA Vice President. No dates. Not. Cool. Yeah. Big time bummer. And all that time, all the SGA success, designer whatever, didn't bring me any happiness. I was on the longest, loneliest road of my life. But then I got invited to this party. In a big barn of the student council president. A sophomore at a senior class party. And this girl from school was there. I'd wanted to be her best friend forever. She was cool. Leather jacket cool, ya' know? Rizzo cool. Without the abortion stuff but, like, Sandy cool at the end of the movie. As cool as Rhonda. *(a quick beat)* And this girl, this Rizzo, she's always the life of the party. And I wanted to prove to her that I could be too. But I couldn't even get the nerve to go up and sit near her, you know, I couldn't even, I mean, I had been invited. Someone clearly thought that I was cool enough to be at this party. But the problem was I didn't think that I was cool enough. So I had a couple of shots. And then a couple of bottles of Goldschlager Peppermint Schnapps, and ended up... I fucked a chicken. I mean, I didn't really have sex with it. I mean, not having anything to stick into its'... but I masturbated on, pretended to masturbate on, because Rizzo, she was making jokes about this cow, this cow that the guys

were going up to, pulling their dicks out and pretending to fuck. And Rizzo was laughing her ass off, giving them high fives, so I just thought, you know, I could get in on that. This way, she'll think I'm cool. She'll high five me and ask me to sit next to her, you know, best friend stuff. So I grabbed a chicken and pulled my jeans and panties down to my knees and just sorta' rubbed it around. But then, everybody, just stopped laughing. Rizzo step towards me, and puked whiskey and rye all over me and the chicken. And I was just standing there, covered in vomit and feathers, holding this squawking... I ran away the next day. I couldn't go back to school, go back, anywhere. My mom and dad heard about it all. Disowned me. A couple days later I was hitchhiking and got picked up by a Whitesnake roadie and that was that. 20 years later, and here I be.

For information on this author, click on the WRITERS tab at www.smithandkraus.com.

THE TRIUMPHANT RETURN OF BLACKBIRD FLYNT

Peter Ullian

Dramatic

Lady Jane, early to mid-twenties

Lady Jane, the child of sixties radicals hiding out from the FBI, was a teen-age runaway and drug addict until she joined a commune and got herself clean. That's where she met Blackbird Flynt, who recruited her to join his band of would-be revolutionaries dedicated to overthrowing the government of mid-1980s America. After a failed bank robbery, however, the surviving members of the band reconnoiter back at their hide-out, not sure if their leader is alive or dead. Thompson, one of the younger members, decides he's going back to the bank to finish the job — alone. Lady Jane tries to convince him this would a suicide mission – and a very bad idea.

LADY JANE: Don't try to be a martyr, Thompson. Christ, if you have to kill yourself, don't go to all this trouble! Just pick up this gun and put a bullet through your thick skull! It's so much easier! Really, it's very, very easy. Just blast a hole through your head. In one side and out the other. Shoot your brains out all over the wall. We'll clean it up. Don't worry. Go ahead. If that's what you want, go ahead and do it! After the mess we've seen at the bank, why do you want to go back and make another one? I'll tell you what's going to happen, Thompson. I'll tell you exactly what's going to happen. You are going to walk in through the door and you are going to feel a bullet rip through your right arm. And it is going to feel like fire. And then you are going to feel the same thing in you left arm. And you will look at your arms, and you will see blood and bone and muscle and flesh hanging out of the holes in your sleeves. And then you are going to catch

one in the gut, and it is going to hurt like nothing you have ever felt before. And then you are going to feel your leg, your whole right leg get shot out from under you by a shotgun blast and go flying across the room. And you will go down. You will be on one knee and one stub. And all you will see is the floor, and the pool of blood, getting wider and wider. Your blood. Your own crimson, scarlet, all-American, ruby-red blood. And you won't be able to move, because every muscle in your body has a bullet lodged inside of it. You won't be able to breathe, because there will be bullets in both of your lungs. And then an F.B.I. man in a brown suit and dark glasses is going to walk up to you, put a pistol to the back of your neck, and blow your moronic brains out all over the floor.

For information on this author, click on the WRITERS tab at www.smithandkraus.com.

Dramatic

Ellie, twenties - forties

Ellie tells her good friend Diana that she is fearful that the dreams she once had will not come true.

ELLIE: Oh, gee! I should be more like you, right Diane? Is that what you're saying? I should go around asking guys out? And it shouldn't matter if I get shot down. Fuck the pain! As long as I feel! As long as I feel something! And I should go around and jump into the sack with anyone who wags their dick at me. So I can feel! So I can be like you! "Hi. I'm Diane. Everything is fine. My life is great. The world is a perfect place to live. And I'm destined to live happily ever after." Fuck happily ever after! Whoever coined that expression should be shot! Who lives happily ever after?! Who?! Only morons live happily ever after. I can't but into that. I just can't. It's a myth that's not going to happen to me! You get it, Diane?! It's not going to happen to me! *(pause)* I had dreams growing up. Big dreams. And my dreams were probably not all that different than yours. All I wanted was to live "happily ever after." And my "happily ever after" dreams always included a mate. A man. We'd fall in love. We'd be husband and wife. And that union would bring dividends, a child. Actually, in my "happily ever after dreams," children. We'd be a family. And we'd live in a house. And have a great backyard. And a swing set. And a gazebo. *(There was always a fuckin' gazebo in my dream.)* And this man and I would be parents. And we'd watch our children grow up. And we'd attend P.T.A. meetings. And we'd grow old together. And IT'S NOT HAPPENING!! Do you hear me, Diane?! IT'S NOT

HAPPENING!! What happens to dreams, Diane? Tell me! You seem to know everything. Do they change? Do we get to keep changing our dreams when we realize they're not happening.? Do they dry up and disappear? Are dreams matter? Can they be created and destroyed? Do dreams matter? Do we get a certain amount of dreams in our lifetime? Do I only get a certain amount, like my eggs? And every time I bleed I have less and less and less until I won't bleed anymore?! I won't have to bleed anymore because all my dreams will be gone?! Is that what happens to dreams? Do they bleed out of you until there are none left? Tell me, dammit! I want to go into a movie theater, sit down, and tell all the other people that come in, all the other people in the world, in the universe, that the seat next to me is saved! "Oh, here he is. Here's the guy I'm saving it for. The guy bringing me popcorn." I WANT POPCORN!! I WANT POPCORN!! I WANT POPCORN!!

(She breaks down and begins to cry. A beat.)

What will happen to me if I can't dream anymore? Will I die?

Seriocomic
Ellie, twenties - forties

Ellie is trying her best to get in shape.

ELLIE: I go to the gym to work out. I do. Really. But even I have to admit it. I go there to socialize too. I mean, it's not like I'm the Rapmaster trying to make it with every guy I see. I'm more discerning than that. I mean, guys are like Chinese restaurants, there are good ones and there are bad ones, and all the menus are pretty much the same. And they all think their Moo Shoo Pork is the best. I mean, there are some guys who go to the club for a good reason: it gets their heads out of their refrigerators for an hour. I personally think the club should have a rule prohibiting those guys from wearing Spandex. But, it's cool. I give those guys a lot of credit for trying to uncover the Adonis living inside them. Then there are the guys who are on the maintenance program keeping their perfect bodies perfect. Those are the guys who drive me crazy. They're all gay. Hey, what can I say? There's something about watching a guy work out that really turns me on. They sit in the seat and strap themselves in with this big leather belt. They're surrounded by metal and steel. And they pump! Hard! They sweat! They pump and they throb. They pump and they pulsate. They're dripping, dripping, dripping...man, if there's a better turn on than watching a guy work up a good sweat, I'd like to know about it. But I do go to the club to work out. I do. Hey, check it out...

(She displays her biceps.)

Arms like bombs! *(pause)* And if I guy gets turned on by watching me work out, watching me drip, so much the better. I mean, why not, right? It's there, so you look. What? You're not going to look? C'mon...you gotta look.

Dramatic

Mondo, early fifties

Embroided in a bitter divorce and suffering from a stress-induced eye disorder, Mondo has just been advised against a laser surgery that would resolve her eye condition in time for her next court appearance. She's worried about having to represent herself in court, especially with instability and discomfort associated with her compromised eye. She speaks to the audience.

MONDO: When you deal with the legal system it's scary, folks. Because you realize there is no justice there. You're right, but you cannot prove anything. We agreed before the court that I would keep the house. I offered to pay him \$6,000, he says it's worth more money, it's close to a historical district. Vinyl siding. You can hear it flapping. It's like living in a tree. They're not gonna put it in the historic book, our house. He wants 8,000. Oh gosh. So I wrote him a check \$8,000, so it's out of my way. Then he says in court, listen now, he's with someone else, he says he has the kind of wife who doesn't support him. Judge told me to say something, I told the Judge, horrible macho judge, Wilbur Smith. I told him, I don't confess to know the law, but I couldn't afford to have a lawyer, that's why I was myself. My husband's lawyer said my husband was victim. I start to talk, Judge made faces. With me he made face, he didn't listen. But he listened to my husband. If I argued the way he did, I'd be in prison. My husband said he asked for his wife to help him and I didn't. I said, yes I did, I gave a check for the house. He looked at me in the eyes and said he never saw the check. That dropped the cake. The Judge was about to call someone to find out if he ever got the

check, and my husband says, “I think I remember I received something.” He lied! In court! Because he lied, I kept my house, folks. But he had another house, besides the one we lived. On the top of everything, he’s a junk collector. He was possessed of the junk collecting. He had fines from the other house from codes. The house is like a garage, a three floor garage with stuff. Walls needed to be demolished, fence, it was a danger for kids. Judge ruled I have ten weeks to clean the house or go to jail. Me. Stuff was his stuff. Expected me to do all this when it was his stuff. I was responsible for his stuff. So chauvinistic pig. It was like I was on the 14th century. I was so surprised I didn’t see any guillotines to decapitate women if they said no.

For information on this author, click on the WRITERS tab at www.smithandkraus.com.

Dramatic

Mondo, early fifties

Over the course of her divorce proceedings, Mondo receives a court order to clear out a junk-filled storage facility maintained by her soon-to-be ex-husband. While attempting to dispose of a lifetime's accumulation of someone else's junk, she speaks to the audience.

MONDO: He didn't discriminate against junk. Driving around sees plastic, he picks it up. How much junk, you can't imagine, folks. Sees a plastic flower on the street, he picks it up. He wanted me to put a "Baby on Board" in my car because he picked it up somewhere! I don't have a baby! He had this mentality of people who are alcoholic. Driving, next block, there is trash there, he takes it. He saw something, he said, this is brand new. He picked up computers. Going here and there to find stuff, in case he needs. Everything and anything and everywhere! "I can use this to make business." He was gonna fix it and sell it. He never sold a thing. *(pause)* First time I realized how junky he was: I came to his house. Car was junky, he said how good car was. He has this junk car, big car full of painting. I said what are you gonna do with all this? He said, "We just got house, we can use painting." Right. "I bought all this for nothing, only \$100." We had to carry it to the house, 2 gallons, 1 gallon, all day carrying the painting. So much painting, we could paint the whole neighborhood, folks! We gave some to a couple friends, they brought it back, said it was no good. That's why the store was giving it away, it was no good! Where can you use this stuff? *(pause)* We had a friend in Philly who worked next to the river and a flood took his car. He was going to give away his car for free. We call the guy,

my husband starts asking questions, “What’s the problem with the car?” He goes on, problems, problems, the car didn’t work! “Does the door open?” “No.” “Does the window open?” “No.” “Can you turn it on?” “No.” He kept asking questions. Nothing you could say would make him not want this car! Can’t put on A/C cause the car stinks. He says, “Maybe I can take it to a place, and I can clean it.” He had to have that car. Like he had to have everything. (*pause*) Betrayal means shit. Betrayal means you were an idiot and you feel sorry for yourself. Forget the word betrayal. There was no betrayal, he was just doing what he always did, collecting. Of course he would pick up a girlfriend, he picked up everything. You can never have enough junk, folks.

For information on this author, click on the WRITERS tab at www.smithandkraus.com.

Dramatic

Mondo, early fifties

At her last visit with her eye doctor Mondo struggles to keep her composure as she learns her recovery has reached a plateau. If her eye doesn't significantly improve soon, she'll need to undergo a risky surgery. She speaks to the audience.

MONDO: Crap, folks. I didn't wanna cry in front of him, but lately I'm the crying baby. I'm crying, I never pretend I live to the fullest. I got something from my mom that's difficult to inherit. Not money. To be brave. Spirit. Never my parents say the most important thing is to be happy. Say, when I got married, say: you no longer exist. *(pause)* Most females embedded in society we invest so much in the relationship. Even the high-educated, high-intelligent women. I know people change, grow, not always the direction you like. And men fool around. They love you. But they love ten other women. *(pause)* My friend Melpomeni found Yianni Malakas on the computer and said, "OMIGOD" She moved to Oregon for his job. She wasn't doing anything of substance. That becomes baby and husband. I wouldn't wanna be an ant in her shoes. She's the only one I could stand from the Greek community. As the bell rings seven o'clock they're in church. Say all crap about God, I don't give a damn about God. I don't need any freak around me to make me feel edgy. Something happened to me, I called my husband. I used to come home, ask how was your day. Now come home and I am myself. Eat myself. Sleep myself. Be alone. Something happens to me, I don't call anybody. *(pause)* I didn't like who my husband changed into be, so I'm disappointed at him. But we had chemistry.

We are so differently intellectually and life orientation, but we had chemistry, and I could have tried. I rushed to the divorce and now all the good times are dead. It hits you. It might hit you the day, or tomorrow but when it comes, it's such a tear-jerking shit. (*pause*) My husband was part of my Greek identity. Now my Greek period is over. I need to lose some part of my character, what I carry culturally. It has to be, everything has been destroyed for me as far as Greek. I need to integrate, involve more. Embrace more America.

For information on this author, click on the WRITERS tab at www.smithandkraus.com.

Dramatic

D, thirties

D, who is in the middle of editing a film, gives a lecture after learning the stars (her boyfriend and the writer's wife) were having an affair during its filming.

D: The temptation... is to leave your mark. Initials under the seat. A flaw in the rug. Something, anything, that says, "I was here. I existed." We must resist that temptation. We are magicians, but our trick is to be invisible. Our calling card must be blank. No one can ever think of us. If they do, something is very, very wrong. They say a film is born three times: once when it's written, once again when it's shot, and once, finally, when it's edited. Sometimes, the first two births go well, and your birth... is a painless one. It's like a dream. Everything makes sense. The way forward is as simple and perfect as a straight, black line. All you have to do is follow it faithfully, to the end. But often, the first two births are *not* easy births. There are complications. Things go wrong. Moments are lost. Mistakes are made. What looked good on the page often is not. What felt great on the day often was not. *We* are left with the pieces. Both the ones we have and the ones we don't, the ones that are missing. All we have is what we are given. We can make nothing, we can create nothing. We can only interpret, suggest associations, by proximity, in the hope that... something might be understood. We are not weavers, we are quilt-makers. We are scavengers, searching through the rubble, sorting through the mess. To use that which appears unusable. To save that which appears unsalvageable. To make sense... of the senseless. Sometimes this can be difficult. Sometimes, almost impossible. And *sometimes...* it *is* impossible.

Sometimes the mess wins. And no one knows why. Everyone tried. Everyone did their best. But, in the end, it's still a mess. It's not your fault. You're just the one left sitting in it. *It is not your fault.* There'll be another one. Sometimes you won't *want* there to be another one... But there will be. And if you're lucky, it'll be better. And if you're *really* lucky... it'll be amazing. But you know what? Even if it is amazing. It's still a mess. That's what they don't tell you. It's all just a mess, the whole thing. Even on the good days, it's a sort of... nightmare that you have to live inside. That you have to learn. Every foot. Every frame. Until you know it by heart. Until you see it when you close your eyes at night. Until you really do dream it. And then waking up. Trying to make it better. Trying to make it perfect. And failing. Endlessly... endlessly failing. The whole thing's a nightmare.

Dramatic

Sabrina, thirty-eight

It's 1978 and Sabrina's brother, Kirk, died 10 years ago in the Vietnam War. She and her brother were adopted by a Mexican-American woman, Carmen. Sabrina addresses Carmen.

SABRINA: Kirk is your habit. Your compulsion. You need him like heroin needs a junkie. I'm a cute little extra that came along for the ride. It's hard to really love a person, isn't it? It requires all sorts of pesky feelings that creep up from the inside out. You think I block him out when I really rush him in. He is water. Omnipresent. The demigod of my life. You want me to bury him alongside your imaginary placenta? You want me to bury him in my imagination? Is that your plan? I've got to go, you know. I've got to work. In California. And it's a big job. Lots of hours. And cubicles. And phone systems. People need to be transferred and get their calls. It's really complicated to keep the whole work thing afloat. It takes all of my concentration. And all of my time. I have to keep my focus over there or things will fall apart. I have to keep myself from sinking. Below. Below. Got to stay up, Carmen. Got to stay away from the scary stuff, you know, because. And that's why. That's why it's hard to go there. Because. Because.

Seriocomic

Whitney, thirties

Whitney is participating in a clinical trial of a new medication for schizoid personality disorder. She is speaking to Max, another participant, who has asked her about her fantasy world.

WHITNEY: This is so hard. How do you describe a world? It isn't a story with a beginning, middle and end. It's a world. I'll start with the earliest world stories from when I was in junior high, and the world first coalesced into a coordinated whole. The torture and execution of Marvinna of Taurus Seven! Marvinna was a space pirate and a princess and a water-breathing amphibious archeologist. Okay, that's a little unrealistic, sure. But I was twelve when I first made her up. She went on a quest to find the ruins of an underwater alien city to retrieve an artifact that would save humanity from being enslaved by robots this one time. And she met and fell in love with the high priest of a dark cult of demon-worshipping opera singers. And they had three sons. Mikor, Sebastian and Dorrick. Marvinna found the artifact and saved humanity and settled down to raise the boys as a single mother. Only this other cult — a demon-worshipping rival cult of belly dancers — wanted to kill her sons. So she killed the belly dancing cult leader and got arrested by the planetary governing council headed by Vernonian the Curse giver. And it shouldn't have been a big deal because it was in self-defense. But Vernonian used the arrest as an excuse to put Marvinna into a trial of mortal combat with a special executioner android trained to torture and kill amphibious races in a water arena- Glibtrar Drathmek! And so Marvinna got thrown into this water arena to fight Glibtrar

to the death. And it was televised and her sons watched as she was tortured and murdered. And there was nothing they could do. So, from there, my fantasy world branched off into three different stories of personal vengeance. Because Mikor, Sebastian and Dorrick were sent in disguise to three different colony worlds out of fear that Vernonian, having killed their mother would come after them next. Do you want to hear about Mikor, Sebastian or Dorrick next?

Dramatic

Whitney, thirties

Whitney and Max are participants in a clinical trial for a new drug to cure schizoid personality disorder. Max has told Whitney about a dark hole in his fantasy world where they put women, which is a constant torment to him. Whitney has a solution to cure this torment. Mikor and Selestina are characters in Whitney's fantasy world.

WHITNEY: *Put me in the hole!* Make the woman in the hole me! I know you don't normally pick who goes in— but try really hard to make it me. It's perfect, Max! Think about it. You know I'm smart and manipulative and I would figure out how to get out, kill the serial killer and get to a police station eventually. And the me inside the hole won't have access to the pills. I won't have my world in the real world, but the me in the hole will still have my whole world! It will live on secretly inside of your world. And the me in the hole won't even mind living in a hole. She'll just curl up happily on the cot and think about her world. Maybe she'll even think out loud and you can tell me what Mikor and Selestina are doing. It's perfect. Please. *It's the best of both worlds!* Literally! We get to keep both our worlds. And I'll take really good care of you. I'll make you lie down and try to sleep every night. And drink and eat at least twice a day. And the me in the hole won't be scared and won't make you worried. I know that the me in the hole will eventually get that door open! And she'll find the police and then you'll have a whole team of police officers in the hole and your world will get bigger! You'll find out whether there is a ladder or stairs outside the door. And where the bunker

is— I think it is probably in a remote, isolated state park. In Montana or Wyoming maybe. Me in the hole will find out. You already let me into your world once. When we shared them. I know it feels invasive to have someone else in your world. But try to stay neutral even if you aren't accepting yet. And let me convince you. I'll survive. I'll get out.

Seriocomic

Mae, thirty-two

Mae is home taking care of her dad who has a rare, aggressive form of cancer. Horny and desperate for a little alone time, she sneaks out to Hank's Saloon – a local dive bar. There she meets Mac, with whom she supposedly went to high school. Mac confesses he's been secretly in love with Mae since the 4th grade. Mae is having a hard time remembering Mac. It's start-and-stop at first but then the conversation flows.

MAE: I used to have a fantasy where my high school boyfriend Dave Gallightly – who totally cheated on me and like destroyed all of my self-confidence – would come to my window and knock on my window and then I would let him in and then he would be high on cocaine (*even though I'm pretty sure he never did cocaine*) and he would like rape me? And the whole time I'm thinking: Maybe I should scream! If I scream, my parents will wake up and come down here and save me and this whole thing will stop. But then if my parents come down here, they'll see me naked with Dave on top of me. And I'm like a virgin. And super Christian. So I don't scream. Because I'm too embarrassed. And he rapes me. And then later I decide to report it. And the whole town vilifies me and I'm like this outcast woman? And then Dave dies in a drunk driving accident and everyone is like: If you had just not reported it he would have died anyway and you would've gotten justice without having to besmirch his name. (*Beat.*) I guess that's not really a fantasy. I guess I just used to think about it when I needed to cry.

Dramatic

Mae, 32

Mae is back in Minneapolis after a rough several months. She lost her job, ended her longterm relationship, and went home to help take care of her dad during his cancer treatments. She's been stressed out and down-in-the-dumps for so long that happiness sneaks up on her.

MAE: I'm out walking. Further than I've walked in months. And the whole world is cold and white but the cold feels kind of good on my face and I feel warm in my coat and I keep walking all the way from my apartment to downtown Minneapolis until my feet get cold and wet with sweat and I duck into a Trailblazer looking for some boots. All the snow boots in all the world are sold-out online. I'm not joking. This is not a joke. They are actually sold-out because people are freaking out about the Polar Vortex. So I'm not particularly hopeful when I duck into this Trailblazer but there's a man there holding a box of insoles and he says they have one pair left. Sorels. "What size are you?" "I'm a size seven." "Shoot. These are sixes." But I try them on anyway and they fit! "Sorels run big," I tell him. (*His name is Eric.*) "They're not making any more this season," Eric says. "That's crazy! They're all sold out!" "You better be careful walking home. People are going to try to steal those boots from you." And Eric calls me "the luckiest girl in all of Minneapolis." And I walk home hugging those boots to my chest. In the elevator of my building an old lady is talking to the doorman. He shouts at her, "Pea soup is better! I want pea soup!" "Sure thing, Bob. I've just gotta get some—"Hambone." She turns to me, explaining, "I've

known Bob for 25 years. We make things for each other. It's cool." It *is* cool. "That's what friends are for!" And I go into my apartment. And I put on my boots. And I think about what I want to eat for dinner. And I start to feel something that I haven't felt in a while. In a long while. What is this feeling Happiness. For no reason at all. Just happiness. Just standing in my living room wearing boots. Just full of happiness. For no reason. Just standing in my boots. All alone.

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