

# **NAPOLEON'S CHINA**

a play with songs by Ann Haskell & Sherry Kramer  
songs by Rebecca Newton

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**SCENE ONE****PINKY**

(In darkness, the sound of a radio being switched on. Lights up on WPNK. Spot on Pinky, sitting on or near the piano, which is covered with cotton clouds. She is sipping tea from a fine bone china teacup.)

WAY BACK IN NOAH'S DAY  
I BELIEVE HE TOOK TWO PIECES OF CLAY  
AND CREATED WARE THAT COULDN'T BE FINER  
WE USE IT STILL BUT WE CALL IT CHINA

**PINKY**

You're listening to WPNK, all Pinky, all the way.

(There is a loud crashing noise from on stage. Lights come up on Shep, sitting at his desk, trying to work and listen to his radio.)

**PINKY**

THE ENGLISH THEY HAND PAINT THEIR WEDGWOOD  
THE FRENCH DON'T CARE, AS LONG AS THEIR FOOD'S GOOD  
AMERICANS MAKE IT MICROWAVEABLE  
BUT IT STILL LOOKS GOOD ON ANY TABLE

**SHEPARD**

(Shep keeps trying to work. But he's not succeeding, because of the incredible crashing noises coming from the next apartment.)

Shit.

(He stands. He sits. He turns the radio up louder. The crashing noises increase.)

**PINKY**

THEN SOME FOLKS, THEY LIKE TO STUDY DISHES  
TO TELL WHAT'S KOSHER FROM FICTITIOUS  
SOME JUST LIKE TO EAT DELICIOUS

SHEPARD

(He turns the radio up some more. The crashing noises increase. He puts his head in his hands and moans.)

CLAIRE!!

(Lights up on Claire, in the apartment next door. She is wearing an old Lanz nightgown, and socks.)

CLAIRE

The French have a name for this. It's--it's...

(She can't remember.)

It means, breaking china.

(Claire is dropping plates into a "well" in her low work table. After the plate is dropped, she places a thick cloth into the well. She then takes a blunt instrument and smashes the fragments further--the point being to break the china into mosaic pieces, not pulverize the china.)

SHEPARD

CLAIRE...

(Shepard switches off the radio in despair. Lights down on WPNK, in the middle of a word.)

Claire...

(He lays his head on his desk, giving up.)

CLAIRE

(To the Audience.)

You can learn to do this. You can be a mosaiste. Mo--mosaic--mosai--east.

(She makes a face.)

It all started with this one plate from the Hudson, New York insane asylum. You know, the Victorians had trash. We have trash. This is a culture of trash. There's an abandoned dump near Troy, and at low tide, you can find unbelievable things.

(She holds up a plate, chipped a little but intact.)

A plate with a picture of an insane asylum. How appropriate can you get? It was chipped, but when you rubbed the mud off it, you could see that it was something. Here you can see the front port of the building, here are the bars on the windows, and all around the building, there's a lovely garden for long, confused strolls. All that was really missing was the patient.

(She smiles, and looks a bit guilty.)

I decided it was my *raison d'être*, my job, to rescue plates like this. And then I read about a man who made a house out of string, another who made one out of bottle caps, and I thought--yeah--that's what I'll do. I'll build a house out of plates.

It started small, as all addictions will. Picture frames. Hand mirrors. A clay flower pot. Except, people picked up the pots and cut themselves. And the coffee pot was too heavy. So I moved into furniture. You expect furniture to be heavy.

(She drags out a large mirror, and starts to drag it downstage. It's very difficult. She calls out to Shep.)

Shep--would you mind helping me carry this...?...

SHEPARD

(Lights up on Shep, at his desk, trying to work. He sighs, takes off his glasses, looks at the audience.)

The first time I saw her, I didn't like her, but I had the sudden thought that I played a musical instrument.

CLAIRE

SHEP!!

SHEPARD

( He yells back.)

What is it Claire! I'm working...

CLAIRE

Never mind.

SHEPARD

I didn't actually hear any music, you understand. I don't want you to think I heard music when I saw Claire. It wasn't like that. I didn't hear music. I want to make that clear. This--

(He turns on the radio. It doesn't turn on. He hits the radio, it turns on. A song is playing softly.)

PINKY

--ECIAL KINDA NIGHT

SHEPARD

--is music. What I heard did not sound like this. Because what I heard was not music.

PINKY

(Under Shep)

THAT HOLDS A SPECIAL  
KIND OF LIGHT THE SKY IS  
GIVING OFF A GLOW THAT

(He listens to the song for a moment.)

WARMS OUR HEARTS AND  
DON'T YOU KNOW THERE IS  
NO DOUBT DOWN IN MY  
SOUL THIS NIGHT SITS RIGHT  
INSIDE OF PERFECT

(Instrument break continues beneath Claire.)

CLAIRE

(Still struggling with the mirror. To Audience)

You can't ask anyone to help you carry anything heavy anymore. Everybody's got a ruptured disk or carpal tunnel syndrome or has the fatigue thing. The energy challenged, you know. Shep says he has a muscle disease. Undiagnosible. Incurable. I'd say it was a disease of convenience. It's very convenient to have when somebody has something heavy to move around.

SHEPARD

(Turns off the radio by hitting it.)

Forget I mentioned playing a musical instrument, okay? Thanks.

(And gets back to work.)

CLAIRE

(The mirror is in place, Claire's a little winded.)

Look at it. Can you see how fabulous it is? It's my piece de resistance. My Sistine Chapel. See the girl at the top? She's wearing a very, very pretty dress. And I found these things with little glass birds on the end? Now, who wouldn't want to be wearing a very, very pretty dress and have birds flying around them? I would.

Look at the butterflies. My mother would be spinning in her grave if she knew. They came off of a seventeenth century Spode piece handed down from my great great great great grandmother. They were so valuable that they were stolen during the revolutionary war, taken to England, where they were recognized--somebody wearing a wig said, those belong to the Randolphs--it was a much smaller world back then--and had them returned to us. So they were taken gently across the ocean twice, to be smashed by me at the end of the twentieth century.

In this day and age--why have something pretentious, like a Hester Bateman silver tureen displayed on the sideboard, that someone can drive by, see through the window, break into your house, and steal? Why not turn the valuable into

something else. The Not valuable. Nobody's gonna steal this mirror. Nobody wants it. Nobody knows what it is but me. There's secrets inside the tile.

(Beat)

My secrets.

(Beat)

Now, as for Shep's secrets--well I, for one, don't really believe he has a muscle disease.

SHEPARD

I guess I should mention that I have a muscle disease.

CLAIRE

You wouldn't either.

SHEPARD

I do.

CLAIRE

I mean there isn't even a name for his disease--he said so himself.

SHEPARD

It's true, there isn't a name for it--

CLAIRE

I called his doctor, and he said he couldn't divulge any information about his patients.

SHEPARD

No--

(He raises his hand.)

--don't feel sorry for me.

CLAIRE

But then I hammered away at him, and he said, "I can tell you, however, that there are, abnormalities in the muscle tissue." Abnormalities in the tissue-- what's that MEAN, I wanted to say. I asked him if Shep could have WILLED these abnormalities--he's the kind who would--and the doctor hung up.

(Beat)

Even his own mother doesn't believe it's real. We've talked.

SHEPARD

My muscle disease is not something I want to discuss.

(He very decisively goes back to work. But then he can't help talking about it.)

For along time, I fought the pain. I decided--if you can have a psychosomatic illness, why couldn't you have a psychosomatic wellness.

(Pause)

New age thinking. It's infected even me.

CLAIRE

You know, the real deep down honest to god reason I don't believe in the muscle disease is because he's happy. And it's not bravery--it's deep. He's just happy. Happy the way over-intelligent children with bug collections are. I myself am a big fan of hysteria, and I once bought a wheelchair in preparation for hysterical paralysis, when it turned out all I needed was a divorce.

SHEPARD

Claire doesn't believe I have a muscle disease. But that's okay. She, you must understand, comes from a genetic cesspool.

CLAIRE

I, myself, am a victim of bravery. I come from a long, courageous line of the very brave, and their damaged, victimized offspring.

SHEPARD

But I am not a victim of my muscle disease. I have my work. I have my friends. I have the radio on all the time.

(He turns on the radio. Pinky is singing, under dialogue.)

PINKY

MAYBE WHEN THE MOON IS BRIGHT  
AND THE NIGHT IS STILL  
WITH THE SLIGHTEST CHILL

CLAIRE

There he goes, with that radio again.  
It's a station he gets, but I don't.

SHEPARD

I have the single largest collection of historically significant cocktail napkins in the world. And starting this week, I am the host of a new series

PINKY

AND THE AIR IS CRISP  
WITH THE SCENT OF  
MELANCHOLY  
HE WILL GAZE AT ME  
WITH HIS EYES SO PURE  
AND I'LL KNOW FOR  
SURE AND OUR LIVES

on the History Channel. It airs Fridays at 9pm, eastern standard time.

CLAIRE

Why can't I get it? It's ridiculous, right? We're next door neighbors

WILL PLUNGE INTO  
THE DEEPEST FOLLY  
WE'LL COME ALIVE  
ONCE AGAIN I WON'T  
HAVE TO PRETEND  
HE WILL BE MY  
DEAREST FRIEND  
THEN

SHEPARD

It's called DOOMED IF YOU DO,  
DOOMED IF YOU DON'T.

It's about doom.

(Claire gives up and turns her radio off.)

CLAIRE

If he'd just turn it up a little louder, then--

(Claire gets an idea.)

There's always more than one way to get your way, I always say.

(Claire breaks some plates. Shep turns the radio up. Pinky sings a little louder, and the band turns up the volume too.)

PINKY

LOVE WILL BE MINE  
AND EVERYWHERE I LOOK

CLAIRE

No, still not loud enough.

(Claire breaks some more plates. Shep turns up the radio. Pinky sings louder.)

PINKY

I KNOW THAT I'LL SEE A SIGN  
AND I WILL KNOW IT CAME AT ITS BEST TIME

CLAIRE

Better. But--

(She breaks three more plates, as loud as she can. Shep turns up the radio as far as he can.)

PINKY

(Pinky stands up, and really belts the song out. The band is cooking too.)

LOVE WILL BE MINE

LOVE WILL BE MINE

CLAIRE

Perfect.

PINKY

LOVE WILL BE MINE

(BLACKOUT)

**SCENE TWO****CLAIRE**

(Lights up on Claire, knocking on Shep's door, fluffing her hair. She has tied a dog leash around her waist, to hike up her nightgown. She is holding two plates.)

Shep?

(Shep is at his desk, working. His radio is on.)

**SHEPARD**

Coming--coming--

**CLAIRE**

(As he opens the door.)

What should I do next? Should I start on the shower walls, or finish up the end table?

**SHEPARD**

What?

**CLAIRE**

Finish the end table, right?

**SHEPARD**

Right.

**CLAIRE**

Which one?

**SHEPARD**

What?

CLAIRE

Which ones should I use--these, or these?  
(Showing him the plates.)

SHEPARD

(Pointing to one of them.)  
Those.

CLAIRE

These?

SHEPARD

(Pointing to the other one.)  
Those?

CLAIRE

Thank you.

(She turns to go, then turns back around.)

I wasn't always a Mosaist, you know. For awhile, I was one of a pair of balls dancing inside giant men's underwear for a touring trade show. But my partner broke up the act. Then I sold cemetery plots for pets. Then I was cast as distant thunder in a children's ballet. I didn't start breaking plates until my mother died.

(Shep turns off the radio.)

She drowned.

SHEPARD

I thought you said she died of emphysema.

CLAIRE

I did. Emphysema is the personal and private way to drown. Breath by breath. Day after day. Down into the darkness. And nothing can hold your head up out of that water. Not even the notorious Boule de Flanders, a special dog bred during World War II with amazingly buoyant hair. They rescued downed airmen off the Normandy coast during D Day.

(She takes his hand, drags him into her apartment.)

Anyway, what I wanted to tell you about was grout. This...

(She holds up a trowel full.)

...is grout.

SHEPARD

And?

CLAIRE

Well, with grout you cover the broken pieces, and make them into something whole again, unlike with history, where you clean the fragments up--

(She picks up some broken pieces of china, puts them on a table, and uses them for soldiers.)

Say, like with Waterloo.

(She groups the fragments into the French, English, and Prussian forces.)

You put the French--here. You put the English--who had good shoes, by the way--here. And here--you put the Prussian reinforcements--commanded by the General who overslept and missed the battle. One tired general. And all those dead boys.

(She sweeps Napoleon's armies, and the Prussians, back into the "well". She holds up the triumphant English fragments.)

With history, there's only winners, and losers. But with grout, every broken piece has a chance.

SHEPARD

You learn from the battles. The lessons are hard.

CLAIRE

So's grout.

(She grabs a picture, covered with tiles, and shows it to him.)

This used to be a 17th century Persian pastoral scene, but it had two bullet holes from a 20th century domestic Christmas scene--we Randolphs believed it was vulgar to shoot a gun outside the house. This--

(She drags a half finished end table over.)

--for instance-is no longer an eighteenth century walnut side table.

SHEPARD

No. As I recall from dragging it up the steps--

(He holds up his hand, there is a large band-aid.)

--it is now a jagged weapon.

CLAIRE

(To Audience)

Okay. So he did help me move in, muscle disease and all. I appreciated it. I did.

(To Shep)

So. What do you like the best about my mirror?

SHEPARD

(Considers it.)

The shoes.

CLAIRE

(Disappointed)

That's what everybody says. They also say that I should stop putting broken plates together, and start putting together my life. But I know I need to stop.

SHEPARD

Why?

CLAIRE

I'm running out of things to break.

SHEPARD

The thing hasn't been made that you can't break.

CLAIRE

Thank you.

(She curtsies.)

I'll take that as a compliment. But it's true. Sometimes, I think I'll break Napoleon's china. It will be my final work of art.

SHEPARD

What do you mean, Napoleon's china?

CLAIRE

(Showing him the large soup tureen with a dog figurine on top for the handle, that is sitting on a tall mosaic covered pedestal.)

Napoleon's China, as in Napoleon's. China. The china he took to Elba. The china of *exile, humiliation, and disgrace!*

SHEPARD

This is really Napoleon's china?

CLAIRE

Yep. He ate hundreds of dinners off these plates. Mostly chicken, as I understand it. No Beef Wellington.

SHEPARD

What are you doing with these plates?

CLAIRE

Josephine was originally married to the Vicomte de Beauharnais, who was my great great great great great grandfather. Now Josephine was frivolous, unfaithful, and an unregenerate liar, as well as the inventor of the suntan, but she had great taste in china, and it was this china that Napoleon took with him when he was exiled to Elba. After his death, it got passed back to Josephine's family, and eventually on to Grandma. But then the Head of the Metropolitan Museum came to lunch, was horrified, and made her loan it to them for a year or two, until she decided she wanted it back. She needed it for her Altar Guild Teas.

SHEPARD

She used them for tea parties? But they should be in a museum.

CLAIRE

They still might end up in one.

SHEPARD

What--back to the Metropolitan? Or the Smithsonian?

CLAIRE

The Claire Randolph Museum of History. Where every broken fragment has a chance.

SHEPARD

But couldn't you break less valuable china? Copies and reproductions? Why does it have to be the real thing?

CLAIRE

I guess its a perverse form of sibling rivalry.

(Slightly insanely:)

My brothers and I were treated like Fiesta wear, while the Lowenstoft and Limoges got all the love and care.

SHEPARD

But it's Napoleon's china--it's a part of history--it belongs someplace safe--

CLAIRE

Oh, please, Shep. There's no place safe.

(Pause)

Shep, do you think a person knows what they want from another person?

SHEPARD

Claire, you're not really going to break them, are you?

CLAIRE

Just answer this one question. Do you think a person knows what they want from another person?

SHEPARD

You're just kidding, right?

CLAIRE

Do you think people know what they--

SHEPARD

But--

CLAIRE

It's my china, Shepard. I can do what I want with it. It's mine.

SHEPARD

(Exasperated)

Everybody wants everything from everybody. They don't get it. Good-bye.

(Shep starts to go back to his apartment.)

CLAIRE

But that's way too sad. I'd rather believe there is some instinct involved-- something that's very early--you see something, in another person, and it clicks, and you don't know why. It's not premeditated. Maybe it's primordial memory-- like salmon swimming upstream, or marsupials, or eels--

(In her excitement, she hits the radio, turning it on.)

SHEPARD

Or eels?

CLAIRE

Eels.

SHEPARD

Do you know what you call a baby eel?

(He hits the radio, turning it off.)

I didn't think so. You bring eels up, but what do you really know about them? You bring in Napoleon's china, but do you know what kind of monster he was, and Josephine too? He was a madman. The Ronald Reagan of his time, a charismatic manipulator who somehow managed to escape a true confrontation with historical fact. You don't know about eels, and you don't know about this china. All you know is that it's yours, and that you can break it.

(Pause)

A baby eel is called an elver.

CLAIRE

A baby eel is called an elver.

(Courteously)

Thank you, Shep. With that piece of information, my life is complete.

SHEPARD

And the only way you can see an elver is to go to the Sargasso Sea, because that's where every eel on the face of the earth goes to mate. Right after hatching, the elvers start swimming back to the river their parents came from, but it takes them so long, they're full grown when they get there. Millions of them cross the oceans, and they all find their way to the exact river or creek or stream that their parents came from. A European eel has never been found in America, and an American eel has never been found abroad.

CLAIRE

Is that true?

SHEPARD

I saw it on Jaques Cousteau.

CLAIRE

It seems impossible to me that every eel in the Hudson River is a world traveler.

I don't like them going home. That's what bothers me on a personal level about the eels.

SHEPARD

Why?

CLAIRE

I don't believe in home.

(BLACKOUT)

### SCENE THREE

#### SHEPARD ON TV

(Lights up on Claire, grouting. She clicks on her TV with a mosaic covered remote, and watches Shep's program.)

In closing, I might suggest that much of what we consider history is a side effect of courage. But recent behavioral tests have shown that simple physical courage --the ability to enter situations of known danger--is actually just a kind of learning disorder.

#### CLAIRE

Well, at least that explains where you got the courage to wear that shirt with that tie. Oww!

(She cuts herself on a broken plate.

The theme music for DOOMED IF YOU DO, DOOMED IF YOU DON'T comes up under Shep. It does not sound live, or lively--it's over-educated music.)

And that theme music--is a dirge. It's got to go.

#### SHEPARD ON TV

Thank you for joining us, see you next week for part two of Doomed If You Do, Doomed If You Don't.

(Faint sound of marching drums.)

I'm Shepard Levy. Goodnight.

(Claire salutes the screen.

BLACKOUT)

**SCENE FOUR****CLAIRE**

(Lights up. Shepard is working. It is morning. Claire, carrying a covered casserole, at his door. On WPNK, instrumental to "CIRCUS".)

She--ep. It's me.

(She knocks, and immediately tries to open the door. It's locked.)

Shep, why is your door locked all the time?

**SHEPARD**

(Starts to jump up to answer the door, then doesn't. To himself.)

No. I am not getting the door.

**CLAIRE**

Shep this is so inconsiderate of you.

**SHEPARD**

I am busy working.

**CLAIRE**

What do you think you've got in there worth stealing, anyway? Shep? I made you breakfast.

**SHEPARD**

She'll give up. She'll go away. She'll assume I'm not home. She'll--  
(Pinky, suddenly sings at a deafening volume.)

**PINKY**

I NEVER HEARD YOU, I NEVER THOUGHT OF YOU  
THE WAY I DO, I TRULY DO, YOU KNOW I DO

I NEVER THOUGHT I'D SAY "I DO" ESPECIALLY, TO YOU  
(Shep jumps up to turn the radio down.)

CLAIRE

Shep I know you're in there, I can hear the radio.

SHEPARD

(He hits the radio hard, turning it off, and unlocks the many  
locks on the door.)

Look, Claire--I'm sorry--

CLAIRE

You should be sorry.

(She sweeps past him into his apartment.)

While you were unlocking the vault to Fort Knox, your breakfast got cold. I don't  
know why you bother locking your door. I don't lock mine.

SHEPARD

I know, and I meant to talk to you about that again.

CLAIRE

Why?

SHEPARD

Because this is a dangerous city.

(Points out the window)

Look--there's a crack deal going on as we speak on the southwest corner. There's  
a couple of prostitutes peeing between those two parked cars--

CLAIRE

Oh, they can't be so bad--one of them has a little Chihuahua.

SHEPARD

That's a rat, Claire.

CLAIRE

Oh.

(She hands him the casserole, he doesn't take it.)

Here.

SHEPARD

What is it?

CLAIRE

Breakfast. Get it while it's cold.

SHEPARD

(Takes a breath and plunges in.)

I'm sorry, Claire but I've got a lot of work to do--

CLAIRE

What?

SHEPARD

I'm sorry Claire but I've got a lot of work to do. We're taping tomorrow--

CLAIRE

Yes?

SHEPARD

So--I can't eat breakfast with you.

CLAIRE

But I made you breakfast.

SHEPARD

It was very sweet of you, but--

CLAIRE

Where do you want me to put it?

SHEPARD

No.

CLAIRE

But I made it!

SHEPARD

I never eat breakfast.

CLAIRE

Well it's a little late to tell me that now.

(She clears off a space on his desk, puts down the casserole.)

It's a family recipe. Well, actually, it's more of an anti-family recipe. It's the dinner my mother made on the cook's day off.

(She spoons out a heaping spoonful for him.)

Go on. Taste it.

(He tastes it, forces himself to swallow.)

SHEPARD

What is it...?

CLAIRE

It's just spaghetti, hamburger and three kinds of cheese. With a little splash of bourbon on top. Which turned out to be a fortuitous accident.

SHEPARD

What's fortuitous about it?

CLAIRE

The cook made the casserole, mother would heat it up, and carry it into the dining room, splashing some bourbon from her drink into it along the way. We acquired a taste for it. You know how those warm family stories begin? The evolution of Whiskey Casserole is one of our warmest. Well. Go on. Eat.

SHEPARD

For breakfast?

CLAIRE

You know what your problem is? Lack of imagination.

SHEPARD

Well, it's not yours.

CLAIRE

Thank you. If my whiskey casserole and I are not appreciated, we'll just find our way home.

SHEPARD

Claire, I appreciate this--

CLAIRE

I know you have work to do--

SHEPARD

Yes. I'm afraid I do. I have plans to go out tonight, and--

CLAIRE

With who?

SHEPARD

With Rachael, my fiancée.

CLAIRE

You have a date...you have a fiancée...

(She picks up her casserole.)

It's just I had something I wanted to ask you--just a little question--something small, I wrote it down--

(She sits down, checks the bottom of her shoe.)

Yes. Here it is. Thing to ask Shep today.

SHEPARD

(Patience at an end)

Yes?

CLAIRE

Do you think people know what they want from another person?

SHEPARD

Claire?

CLAIRE

What?

SHEPARD

You already asked me that.

CLAIRE

I know.

SHEPARD

You know you did?

CLAIRE

I didn't like your answer.

SHEPARD

So you're just going to keep asking me until I give you an answer you do?

(Silence)

It's not a very workable strategy.

CLAIRE

It's always worked for me. Do people know--

SHEPARD

The answer hasn't changed.

CLAIRE

Why not?

SHEPARD

Why would it?

CLAIRE

Why wouldn't it? People used to know--

SHEPARD

--because they knew the rules about who they could want things from. Now we're thrown out all the rules, so nobody knows what they really want and who they're allowed to want it from.

CLAIRE

I do.

SHEPARD

Then why do you keep asking me!

CLAIRE

That's okay. I know you're busy. I'll ask you some other time.

SHEPARD

Thank you. And I'll answer you in the same way.

CLAIRE

(Indicating the casserole)

You sure you don't want--

SHEPARD

I'm sure. Thank you, anyway.

CLAIRE

Good-bye.

(She leaves. Shep sits back down at his desk. Claire goes into her apartment, eats a bite of Whiskey Casserole. Then she scoops out the rest of the food, throws it away, and drops the casserole in the well, breaking it. Claire inspects the broken pieces.)

Perfect.

(She gets to work, grouting, using the pieces. To Audience)

It used to seem strange to me that something that didn't work at all when it was in one piece worked just fine when it was in a hundred. But that's the thing about life. Just because something looks complete, whole, fully functional--even if its function is to hold Whiskey Casserole, for instance, even so--just because it appears to be in one piece--doesn't mean it is. My mother, for instance, would often appear fully functional. But it was all a lie.

We lived in a big old house. High ceilings. Frayed Oriental rugs. I remember the light--these huge magnolias and dogwoods shaded the house, so everything looked golden. But upstairs, locked in her room, my mother was lying on her bed, drinking vodka and Fresca. Bourbon was when she was being social. Once or twice a week, though, she had a stellar appearance to make--The Woman's Club, The Garden Club, The Colonial Dames. And my father and I would make a bet. Every time. He bet against her making it. I bet for her.

Now my father was a scientist--he knew on some chemical, molecular level that she could not get up. "X amount of vodka and Fresca" he would say, "consumed between 7 am and noon plus a hundred and six pounds of her equals stupor." That's what he knew. But I knew something else.

She would make it. She would get up from her bed, crashing about. And then we'd hear her on the stairs. She'd come into the living room, very pulled together. Nancy Reagan almost, nice St. John knit, good pearls, Ferragamo shoes. She'd shoot us a dirty look and walk right out the door.

(On WPNK, instrumental intro to CLAIRE'S THEME plays.)

She always looked whole to the outside world. She looked complete. But I knew. She was nothing but pieces. Glued together. Hundreds of little pieces. About to come unglued.

PINKY

SHE NEVER GAVE YOU WHAT SHE COULD.  
SHE NEVER GAVE YOU WHAT SHE SHOULD.  
IT'S NOT ABOUT WHAT'S BAD OR GOOD  
NO ONE HAS KNOWN THE LIFE YOU'VE KNOWN

(Claire begins grouting again. Lights fade to half in both apartments.)

AND WHEN YOU THINK YOU KNOW HIM WELL  
WHEN IS IT RIGHT, HOW CAN YOU TELL  
WHEN LOVE IS WHAT YOU WANT, YOU NEED  
AND LOVE IS ONLY JUST A SEED

LOVE AND YOU WILL BE LOVED  
HOPE AND YOU WILL BELIEVE  
GIVE IN YOUR TIME OF NEED  
THESE WORDS ARE TRUE, A GIFT TO YOU

(The radio fades out, the lights go to black.)

**SCENE FIVE****SHEPARD**

(Lights up on Shep, on the phone, and Claire, standing at the wall with a tea cup, listening to him. WPNK is on, low.)

Rachael, I was trying.

**CLAIRE**

I've had problems with the other woman before.

**SHEPARD**

Well, I'm sorry you couldn't tell, but--

**CLAIRE**

Frances Mason and I were the shortest and smartest and cutest girls in the 4th grade. I wanted Mrs. Tyler, our teacher, to like me more than her--so I prayed Frances would have to wear glasses. Plastic pink glasses. And--mirabile dictu--she did!

But she looked cute in them. So I decided to kill her. But I couldn't pray to God for that--it wasn't seemly. So I decided--I'll have to kill her myself. But how? God saw everything. So then I knew. I'd kill her in my closet. It's dark in there.

**SHEPARD**

Tie you--up? Rachael, don't be ridiculous. I don't know how to tie you up. No, I DON'T WANT TO LEARN. I'm sorry, honey. Honey, don't cry, I know you were just trying to be nice.

**CLAIRE**

Fortunately for Frances, her family moved to Utah. But it was still a workable plan.

SHEPARD

Rachael, please honey, don't cry--no-- honey--

PINKY

I'LL TAKE SOME ICED TEA BOYS  
THIS ROUND GOES ON ME, BOYS  
(ICE TEA continues under dialogue.)

CLAIRE

I love Shep's station. Even the commercials are great.

SHEPARD(o.s.)

Don't hang up--honey don't hang--

(She hangs up. ICE TEA ends, instrumental intro to WHO  
NEEDS A MAN plays under him.)

Sex has always been manual labor. And like manual labor, it has never been properly valued. Oh, it's always been considered necessary. But the laws of supply and demand that govern its exchange on the open market have always favored the demander. Which historically...has always resulted in problems for the supplier.

But then, if Rachael weren't such a demanding woman, she wouldn't be so perfect. Organized, disciplined. Her checkbook is a piece of anal retentive art. Even her temper tantrums run like clockwork. 5, 4, 3, 2,--

(The phone rings, he answers it.)

Rachael, sweetheart.

(He "talks" to her, with his back to the audience, inaudibly.)

PINKY

(Pinky decides to venture out from WPNK, and steps directly into Shep's apartment. She sings to Claire through the wall. Pinky can cross any boundary, violate any convention of space, move as she wishes.)

WHO NEEDS A MAN WHEN THE ONLY LOVE  
HE GIVES IS FOR THE MOMENT?  
YOU'LL BE THE FOOL GIRL  
AND YOUR HEART WILL SINK SO LOW  
YOU'LL SEARCH HIGH AND LOW  
BUT HE NEVER WILL EXPLAIN

WHY EVEN HIS SWEET FACE  
CAUSES YOU SUCH PAIN

CLAIRE

I'm definitely getting a new radio. I've got to be able to listen to WPNK.

PINKY

WHY DO I HOLD MY HEART FOR HIM?  
WHY IS IT ALWAYS SINK OR SWIM?  
I DO NOT NEED THIS MAN'S HEART!  
I NEED A TRUE LOVE, FROM AN HONEST MAN,  
FROM A GROWN MAN, FROM A GOOD MAN  
FROM A STRONG MAN  
I WILL WAIT FOR A GOOD MAN'S HEART

(BLACKOUT)

**SCENE SIX****SHEPARD ON TV**

(Lights up on Claire and Shep, watching Shep's TV show in his apartment.)

The Egyptian culture was built on remembering. The burning of the library in Alexandria could have been a great opportunity for them to move forward, to evolve. Except, the Egyptians were the Egyptians. And one of the things they remembered about themselves was that they didn't want to change.

**CLAIRE**

Isn't that the way with men? None of them want to change.

**SHEPARD ON TV**

(DOOMED IF YOU DO DOOMED IF YOU DON'T theme music starts up.)

Thank you for joining us for part two of DOOMED IF YOU DO, DOOMED IF YOU DON'T.

(They both salute the screen. Shep claps twice, the TV goes off, the lights come on.)

**CLAIRE**

You know what I've been thinking, Shep? Maybe I should be your consultant.

**SHEPARD**

About Southern history? That's kind of you, Claire, but--

**CLAIRE**

No. On things like--the theme music. Something less funereal would do.

**SHEPARD**

Well—

CLAIRE

And new clothes for you. And you definitely need some dancers--they could wear period costumes to introduce each segment--we'd call them the Dancers of Doom.

SHEPARD

The Dancers of Doom.

(Getting up.)

Thank you very much, I appreciate your help.

CLAIRE

Where were you today?

SHEPARD

The hospital.

CLAIRE

Your muscle disease again?

SHEPARD

You know, at first I found your smirking disbelief in my disease charming. Once or twice I actually misinterpreted your ridicule as concern. But I didn't say I was at my doctor's, Claire. I took Rachael to New York Hospital, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology. Okay?

CLAIRE

That's a matter of opinion. My cousin says that at the end of medical school they put all the interns who haven't chosen their specialty yet in one room...and pith them.

SHEPARD

Pith them?

CLAIRE

You know, take an ice pick and disconnect their brain stems. The ones that jump go into orthopedics and the ones that stand still become gynecologists. So. Did Rachael's gynecologist say anything interesting?

SHEPARD

Interesting? Like what?

CLAIRE

Like--that she was too organized to have healthy children?

SHEPARD

(Beat)

Claire. Rachael IS a gynecologist. I was just dropping her off at work.

CLAIRE

I don't think it's very genteel to tell people your girlfriend's a gynecologist. The next time someone asks, tell them she's an analyst.

SHEPARD

But she's not.

CLAIRE

So? It's just being polite. The first thing I want to say when I hear someone's girlfriend is a gynecologist is ooooh.

(Taking down his china bowl from the shelf, turning it over.)

Oh, Shep, this is Chinese export. Where did you get this?

SHEPARD

(Firmly)

Put that down.

CLAIRE

Why?

SHEPARD

(Emphatically)

PUT IT DOWN PLEASE.

CLAIRE

(Putting it down.)

Why?

SHEPARD

Why? WHY? WHY? WHY ARE YOU ASKING ME THAT!

(He moves it away from her, out of reach.)

It was my grandfather's. He used to keep his keys and loose change in it.

CLAIRE

Shep, I never break anything by accident.

SHEPARD

Oh, sure.

CLAIRE

Never. It's a matter of some professional pride, too, I might add. When I break something, I mean it.

SHEPARD

Well, all the same, it's staying up there. Where it's safe.

CLAIRE

Sure. I understand. You don't believe me.

SHEPARD

It's not that I don't believe you--

CLAIRE

Yes it is.

SHEPARD

Claire, at some point in their life, everybody has accidentally broken a plate or a cup or a--

CLAIRE

I haven't.

SHEPARD

What do you call what you're planning to do with Napoleon's china?

CLAIRE

That's on purpose.

SHEPARD

No. That is accidentally on purpose. Not the same thing at all.  
(Shepard gets up.)

CLAIRE

Where are you going?

SHEPARD

Out.

CLAIRE

Why?

SHEPARD

Claire, may I have permission to go to the grocery store?  
(He's headed for the door.)

CLAIRE

Yes. But first I have a favor to ask you--

SHEPARD

What?

CLAIRE

Can I borrow your radio?

SHEPARD

You have a radio.

CLAIRE

It doesn't get your station.

SHEPARD

My station?

CLAIRE

WPNK.

SHEPARD

That's ridiculous.

CLAIRE

Come and see.

SHEPARD

No, I believe you, just take it--

(He starts to unplug the radio, to give it to her.)

CLAIRE

No, I have to listen to it here, in your apartment.

SHEPARD

Why?

CLAIRE

I don't get it in my apartment. It's some sort of WPNK radio free zone.

SHEPARD

But that doesn't make any sense, you're right across the hall.

CLAIRE

I know, but all the same. It's true.

SHEPARD

Well. All right. Lock the door behind you when you leave.

CLAIRE

I will.

SHEPARD

Don't touch anything.

(He points at the bowl.)

CLAIRE

All right! I trust you. Why don't you trust me?

(He leaves. Claire turns on the radio, the instrumental to LOVE WILL BE MINE is playing. Claire looks through his desk, and then goes over and purposefully "touches" his china bowl, so it makes a loud "chink" sound. She goes over to his bed, and takes in a huge, audible breath.)

I like to be in a room where a man has been sleeping. There is always this faint smell that is so erotic. The way his body makes an impression in the sheets, and the smell. It makes me swoon with love. Honestly, it's hard to recover. I feel like throwing myself on the bed and whispering my thanks to God.

(She throws herself on his bed.)

Thank you Lord.

(CHINA BREAKER begins on the radio.)

PINKY

HOW COULD YOU TAKE COSTLY CHINA  
FROM FRANCE TO CAROLINA

AND SMASH--IT ALL FROM HERE TO SMITHEREENS?

(Claire rushes to the radio. Pinky, still drinking tea from a teacup, has entered Shep's apartment, and she follows Claire around the room throughout the song.)

THEN TAKE THE MANY BROKEN PARTS

CONVERT THEM TO THE **FINER** ARTS

I BELIEVE YOU MUST BE SHY JUST A COUPLE 'A FEW BEANS

IT MUST BE SOMETHING IN YOUR HEAD

OR PERHAPS THE WONDER BREAD

THAT CAUSES THIS DYSFUNCTION OF YOUR WAYS.

I THINK YOU'VE FALLEN OFF A ROCK

OR STROLLED OFF SOMEONE'S DOCK

AND NOW YOU'RE JUST PECULIAR; YOU'RE "OUTRÉ"

CLAIRE

(She hits the radio, turning it off.)

Don't schizophrenics always think the radio is talking to them?

(She hits it on again.)

PINKY

THOUGH EVERY CUP, SAUCER OR PLATE

(Claire hits the radio to turn it off. Then she hits it back on again.)

COULD BE A TABLE THAT LOOKS REALLY GREAT

(Throughout this chorus, Claire turns the radio on and off, trying to "catch" it in mid-phrase. But the "radio" always comes right in on the next beat, no matter how long or short the time it's been turned off.)

IT'S JUST NOT RIGHT TO BREAK 'EM

WHEN SOMEONE TOOK TIME TO MAKE 'EM

AND BREAKIN' FANCY CHINA--

(She starts to turn it off again--then doesn't.)

(Sort of spoken:)

well, it just don't make sense

DID SOMEONE SHATTER YOUR HEART

IN SEVERAL TEENY TINY PARTS

AND LEAVE THE PIECES SCATTERED UNDER SALT

CHINABREAKER, YOU'RE A BRAIN CELL WAKER AND  
THE TRUTH IS IT'S JUST NOT YOUR FAULT

WHAT WOULD NAPOLEON THINK  
OF A WATERLOO SINK?

WELL, THE ONE THING THAT YOU REALLY WANT TO KNOW  
IS SHOULD YOU OR SHOULDN'T YOU  
SHATTER YOUR TROUSSEAU?

WELL, THE TRUTH IS, GIRL

WHEN THE MOMENT COMES, YOU'LL KNOW

(Claire turns off the radio, terrified at the direct reference.)

CLAIRE

That's it. I've had enough of WPNK. I--

(Pinky, who is standing right next to Claire and the radio, hits the  
radio, turning herself back on.

Claire is horrified to find herself singing along.)

PINKY and CLAIRE

THOUGH EVERY CUP, SAUCER OR PLATE

(Claire backs away, she is at the door. Pinky hands her the cup and saucer.)

COULD BE A TABLE THAT LOOKS REALLY GREAT

(Claire walks backwards into her apartment, still singing. Pinky is right next to  
her.)

IT'S JUST NOT RIGHT TO BREAK 'EM

WHEN SOMEONE TOOK TIME TO MAKE 'EM

(Claire slams the door in Pinky's face.)

PINKY

AND BREAKIN' FANCY CHINA--

(Sort of spoken)well, it's a sin

(Claire locks her door. Pinky hits the radio. BLACKOUT)

**SCENE SEVEN****SHEPARD**

(Claire is sitting on the stairs, smoking, as Shep comes home.)  
Hi, Claire. I didn't know you smoked.

**CLAIRE**

I always smoke when I'm locked out of my apartment.

**SHEPARD**

But I thought you never locked your door--

**CLAIRE**

Bingo! For the first time in my life I am locked out of my apartment! I can't get to my things, my things can't get to me. And it's your fault.

(She makes an expansive gesture. Pinky takes the cigarette, without Claire being aware of it, and takes a drag. She then passes the cigarette to the rest of the band.)

**SHEPARD**

Why is it my fault--

**CLAIRE**

"Lock your door, Claire." "New York is dangerous, Claire." Well, you're right. It's filled with people full of dangerously good advice like yours.

**SHEPARD**

Look, I'll go down to the super--

**CLAIRE**

You can't. He's in Reno, getting divorced.

SHEPARD

Well--let's call a locksmith--

CLAIRE

At two A.M.?

SHEPARD

Then what are we going to do?

CLAIRE

Well, the fire escape that goes to my bathroom is only five or six feet from yours, so I thought--

SHEPARD

That's crazy, Claire. You can stay on the couch tonight we'll call the locksmith first thing. Okay?

(No response.)

Okay. I'll stay on the couch, and you can have my bed.

CLAIRE

Thank you.

(They go into his apartment.)

What about Rachael?

SHEPARD

What about her?

CLAIRE

Won't she mind?

SHEPARD

Of course not.

(He goes to get sheets and blankets, she heads into his bathroom.)

CLAIRE (o.s.)

Too bad. HELP!!! SHEP!!

(He throws down the sheets and runs into the bathroom)

SHEPARD

What are you doing Claire--Claire--CLAIRE--I TOLD YOU NOT TO JUMP--

CLAIRE (o.s.)

HURRY!!

(Lots of groaning noises from Shep and some from Claire. Shep enters from the bathroom, carrying Claire, stooped over. He lays Claire on the sofa, then staggers about, clutching his back.)

I'm so sorry. I'm really sorry.

SHEPARD

I told you--

CLAIRE

I know, you were right.

(She throws her arms around him.)

Thanks for saving me.

SHEPARD

(Pointing to the sheets.)

Here--you make up the sofa.

(He sits down, in obvious pain, and starts to turn on the radio.)

CLAIRE

I'm not sure I want to listen to WPNK.

SHEPARD

I thought you loved it--

CLAIRE

I thought so too.

Well, go on, turn it on, if it gets too scary, I can turn it off.

SHEPARD

O-kay.

(He turns on WPNK. The musical introduction to FIREFLY NIGHT begins to play.)

Well. Sound too scary?

CLAIRE

No.

SHEPARD

Good.

(He sits down on the couch.)

CLAIRE

You want to dance?

SHEPARD

Claire, I have just pulled my back dragging you off the fire escape.

CLAIRE

So?

(His back is killing him. Claire dances by herself, circling him, hitching up her nightgown a little as she does.)

PINKY

THIS IS A SPECIAL KINDA NIGHT  
THAT HOLDS A SPECIAL KINDA LIGHT  
THE SKY IS GIVING OFF A GLOW  
THAT WARMS OUR HEARTS AND DON'T YOU KNOW  
THERE IS NO DOUBT DOWN IN MY SOUL  
THIS NIGHT SITS RIGHT INSIDE OF PERFECT

CLAIRE

Wouldn't it be nice to be dancing in a forest with big trees, lit by lightning bugs?

SHEPARD

(Holding his back.)

Uhhuh.

CLAIRE

But which do you like the best, the big trees or the lightning bugs?

SHEPARD

(Distracted)

I like them both.

CLAIRE

You really like lightning bugs?

SHEPARD

Claire, everybody likes them.

(She tries to pull him to his feet. He screams in pain. She helps him to the floor, and performs various back exercises upon him until the end of the song.)

PINKY

BEFORE THIS NIGHT I WOULDN'T CONFESS  
 YOU BRING MY LIFE SUCH HAPPINESS  
 I ASK THE SKY AND STARS TO KNOW  
 AND IF THEY LIE, LET IT BE SO  
 BECAUSE YOU TOUCH ME TO MY SOUL  
 AND THIS NIGHT SITS RIGHT INSIDE OF PERFECT

CLAIRE

Professor Levy, I want you to be the first to know. I'm going to raise lightning bugs for productions of A MIDSUMMER NIGHTS DREAM all over Europe.

SHEPARD

Don't they have fireflies there?

CLAIRE

Yes. But I'm raising Jamaican ones, which have more dramatic lights. I'll raise them in my bathroom. I'll keep it warm, so they'll never suspect they're not in Montego Bay.

(Claire pushes his legs over his head and rubs his back to the music.)

PINKY

THIS IS A SPECIAL KINDA NIGHT  
 THAT HOLDS A SPECIAL KINDA LIGHT  
 THE SKY IS GIVING OFF A GLOW  
 THAT WARMS OUR HEARTS AND DON'T YOU KNOW  
 THERE IS NO DOUBT DOWN IN MY SOUL  
 THIS NIGHT SITS RIGHT INSIDE OF PERFECT

SHEPARD

Well, I suppose insects are quiet. I imagine that a lightning bug farm is a very peaceful place.

CLAIRE

I imagine ten thousand tiny alarm clocks, next to ten thousand tiny, tiny, white cots, with ten thousand tiny, tiny, tiny fluffy quilts, each one covering a tiny, tiny, tiny, tiny baby lightning bug.

(She helps him up, they are all but embracing.)

PINKY

THERE IS NO DOUBT DOWN IN MY SOUL  
THIS NIGHT SITS RIGHT INSIDE OF PERFECT

Nighttime is the right time on WPNK. Balmy weather blankets the PNK listening area, with starry skies and a full moon rising. It's a perfect night for...

(They are just about to kiss--Shep turns off the radio. Pinky is crestfallen.)

SHEPARD

Well--goodnight.

CLAIRE

Goodnight.

(He turns off the lights, lies down on the couch, and immediately falls asleep. Claire gets into bed. Moonlight streams in through the window. Claire squirms. Tosses and turns. She whispers to the Audience.)

I can't sleep.

(She tries some more. She gets up, and trailing the blanket wrapped around her, goes over to the couch. She looks at him for a moment.)

First I'll just look at him. His hair is great. His face is beautiful. He looks like someone from another century. He doesn't look like people are supposed to look. And he's got such a big generous heart.

I know about him. I know how his romantic heart is locked deep inside, covered with layers of disappointment, and I also know he lives in mortal terror that someone could find out that he's covered with cement, and find a way to rescue him, to dig deep enough, and kidnap him, and bring him someplace safe.

That's why I have to tell him things about myself. He has to trust his kidnapper. I'll start out with the first really bad thing I ever did.

Every Spring at the beginning of Lent, our Sunday School classes were given a mite box. You filled up this cardboard box for the poor. I decided to sell cakes. So the maid would make cakes, put on the icing, and I'd lick the pans and roam the neighborhood looking for Episcopalians. The night before

Easter, I had thirteen dollars in my box. I couldn't get to sleep. I kept waking up and going over to the bureau to check out the box. That thirteen dollars was haunting me. I wanted it so much, I finally emptied out the money and went outside and filled the box with dirt.

Easter Sunday came. I placed this bulging dirt-filled box on the altar, all the while thinking about the poor starving family who would get a box of dirt from Richmond, Virginia. I couldn't stand it. I ran outside, sobbing that my mite box was filled with dirt. And Rev. Churchill Gibson followed me, and gave me absolution. But that didn't make me feel any better. I was still ambivalent--I wanted the money and I wanted starving children everywhere to have HALF of it.

I'm telling Shep these things because it's very important that he know all about me. Even the bad things.

(She lies down on the couch, wedged in behind him.)

And in the morning, when I see him again, he'll know everything. And he won't turn away.

(Pinky tiptoes into Shep's apartment, singing softly.)

PINKY

ABRA-CADABRA, PLEASE AND THANK YOU  
WHEN I WAVE MY HAND THE MAGIC WILL COME TRUE  
I SAW IT, I FELT IT, I KNOW IT WAS THERE  
BUT LOVE'S ALWAYS THE MAGICIAN  
VANISHING INTO AIR

SO THERE'S NO PLACE TO HIDE  
CAUSE WE KNOW ALL THE TRICKS  
AND WE CAN'T ESCAPE THE TRUTH  
CAUSE THERE'S NO GAG THAT SLICK

(Pinky tries to work a little magic on Shep, to get him to turn on the couch so that he is embracing Claire.)

I THINK I NEED YOUR LOVE,  
I THINK I WANT YOUR LOVE  
DON'T YOU WANT MINE TOO, WON'T MY HEART DO?  
I SPEND SO MANY HOURS JUST DREAMING YOU DO  
I HAVE SPENT SO MANY HOURS  
JUST DREAMING OF YOU

(Pinky's magic doesn't work--Shep falls onto the floor. Pinky shrugs, and goes back to WPNK. Instrumental music continues under him.)

## SHEPARD

Rachael is so intense. Demanding, disciplined, and tiring. Claire, on the other hand, is like a long day sleeping in a tree.

(Claire snores.)

She says she admires sloths because the only work they actually do, fertilizing the rain forest floor, they do unintentionally.

(Claire snores again.)

But at the end of the day--Claire's made something--or some part of something--different than it was that morning. Some corner of the world has been changed into music. Yes. Atonal, maybe, but music just the same.

(He starts to touch her cheek, pulls back his hand.)

Everything I know about love tells me this is wrong. So why don't I listen.

(He takes one of Claire's cigarettes, and smokes it.)

I can't work, I can't sleep, I'm smoking...I can't do anything but think of her. I've been invaded. Robbed of my sanity. My peace of mind. But there's still time to save myself. There's still time to run and not look back.

It's an over-educated world that believes you empower yourself when you face your problems. Look at what happened to Lot's wife when she faced hers.

(He stubs it out the cigarette.)

I've got to get away from her.

(He picks up phone, calls.)

Rachael. I'm sorry I woke you. Listen. Your sister can sublet my place, I'll stay at a hotel until we find a bigger place, we'll push up the wedding to May. Great. I love you too.

(Hang up the phone.)

I'm leaving.

## PINKY

I THINK I NEED YOUR LOVE,  
 I THINK I WANT YOUR LOVE  
 DON'T YOU WANT MINE TOO  
 WON'T MY HEART DO  
 I SPEND SO MANY HOURS JUST DREAMING IT'S TRUE  
 I HAVE SPENT SO MANY HOURS JUST DREAMING OF YOU

I HAVE SPENT SO MANY HOURS  
 JUST BELIEVING IT'S TRUE

(FADE TO BLACKOUT END ACT ONE.)

