

TOTALLY OKAY, RIGHT NOW

A full-length comedy by
Madelyn Sergel

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

LIZZIE

KATH

MEGAN

ALISHA

GUY

MOM

DAD

OTHER MOM

PLACE

Lizzie's home, school, bus stop, and a few other places.

TIME

The present.

ACT I

SCENE 1

(The last sung line of the "Happy Birthday" song can be heard, and then the blowing out of candles. Lights up on LIZZIE.)

LIZZIE: *(To audience, as a friend:)* Wow. WOW! I am like, old! Well, older. Do I feel older? Do I feel different? Like a teenager? I think I should. Should I? Whatever. Guess what? I finally, FINALLY got a phone!

(She thrusts a cell phone over her head in a jubilant sign of victory. She then dials. Lights up on KATH, answering her cell phone.)

It's Lizzie. I got one!

(They both scream simultaneously.)

I'm calling Alisha.

(She hangs up and redials. Lights up on ALISHA, answering a regular house phone.)

It's Lizzie. I got one!

(They both scream simultaneously.)

I'm calling Megan.

(She hangs up and redials. Lights up on MEGAN, answering her cell phone.)

I got one!

(She opens her mouth to scream but Megan cuts her off.)

MEGAN: I know, Lizzie. Kath called me. It is so cool!

LIZZIE: Kath called you already!? But—

MEGAN: —I know but she's...Kath, you know? Anyway...

(Megan begins screaming. Lizzie joins in. Lights out on Megan.)

LIZZIE: This weekend, my dad said –

(Lights up on DAD.)

DAD: The world is your oyster, Lizard.

(Lights out on Dad.)

LIZZIE: *(To audience:)* Yeah, I know. I had no idea either. My mom explained it –

(Lights up on MOM.)

MOM: –Sort of like you're the next Jane Goodall, Georgia O'Keefe, Ruth Bader Ginsberg.

LIZZIE: *(To audience:)* Yeah, still no clue, right? Me either. Which made my mom none too happy.

MOM: I'm calling the school.

(Lights out on Mom.)

LIZZIE: She gets like that. Don't panic. She never does call. She doesn't want to alienate the teachers. And my grades are awesome...mostly...except...well, we'll get to that. But the grades, growing up thing that people are really beginning to bug me about is –

(Lights up on Dad.)

DAD: So? What are you going to do when you grow up? You're thinking about the law, right? Like your old dad here. You have the mind. The way you analyze –

(Lights up on Mom.)

MOM: –or whatever you want. You could be whatever you want. Or a graphic designer. I know everyone in the industry –

(OTHER MOM enters, wearing a T-shirt which says, "Kath's Mom.")

OTHER MOM: You just need to be successful. And focused. Discipline. Slackers make nothing.

(Other Mom takes off her T-shirt, revealing a second T-shirt which says, "Alisha's Mom.")

Or you could be a teacher. Give back to your community.

(Other Mom takes off her T-shirt, revealing a third T-shirt which says, "Teacher.")

Your test scores are excellent in the language arts and social sciences. You could do AP classes next year. Good for college placement. It's not too early to be thinking about that—

(Other Mom takes off her T-shirt, revealing a fourth T-shirt which says, "Megan's Mom.")

What are you going to be? Geez, I still haven't figured that one out. Want another Pop Tart?

LIZZIE: I really like hanging at Megan's place. Anyway...I'm thinking I should come up with some sort of answer. Decide, you know? My science teacher says—

(Other Mom takes off her T-shirt, revealing a fifth T-shirt which says, "Teacher.")

OTHER MOM AS SCIENCE TEACHER: How you act now, what you enjoy and excel at now, can easily determine what you will succeed at in the future.

LIZZIE: It sounded really good in class so I'm going to do that. This year, I am going to decide what Lizzie is going to be so everyone will get off my back. This year? The Lizzie Decides Year! But first, I have to really decide!!!

(Mom, Dad and Other Mom exit. Megan rolls out a bureau which has clothes spewing out of all the drawers.)

Don't look at me like that. I have a system!

(She digs and pulls out a few T-shirts. She holds up the first one. It has "TWEEN" printed on it. She tosses it aside.)

Clearly, so "Last Year."

(Holds up the next one, which says "TEENAGER.")

It's weird. I don't think...I mean, I am but...I don't think I'm quite...feeling it. Yet.

(She shoves that T-shirt deeply into a drawer. Next one: "BROODING, REBELLIOUS TEENAGER.")

This would SO freak Mom and Dad out! But I'll be kind *(With a wink/evil smile:)* today.

(She dives back in the drawer.)

Got it!

(With a flourish, she pulls out a T-shirt with the printing "GIRL WITH HER OWN CELL PHONE.")

Kind of says it all!

(She quickly pulls it on, adds a vest and decorative, glittery scarf, grabs a backpack and heads to exit.)

MOM: *(Off:)* Coat!

LIZZIE: Mom, it's warm.

(Lizzie points to the upstage window. Megan and Alisha hold up a poster of palm trees on a beach behind it.)

MOM: *(Still Off:)* It's freezing. Look outside.

(Kath brings out another poster, of the frozen Alaskan tundra, and the three girls switch the poster.)

LIZZIE: I don't have time. I'll be late for the bus. *(As a threat:)* You'll have to drive me.

(Mom staggers onstage with a huge snowsuit, snow pants, boots, muffler, and gloves.)

MOM: Not if you put everything on right now.

LIZZIE: You are clearly trying to ruin my life.

MOM: Everyone needs a hobby.

(She tries to shove and wrestle Lizzie into the coat. In the meantime, the three girls switch the poster to a fall day with turning leaves.)

LIZZIE: MOM!

(Mom has succeeded in cramming a hat and mittens on Lizzie. Lizzie then does a battle crawl to the door and runs for her life, coat not on, hat and mittens on but askew)

(To audience:) This is one of the reasons mild mannered girls become crazed. Did you see what that woman just tried to do to me? Embarrassment, heat exhaustion, and lack of trust. All in 30 seconds. Do they offer a class in parental smothering? Or is it just developmental, like gray hair and totally obsessing about gas prices?

(Lizzie pulls off the hat and mittens and joins the crowd in a school hallway.)

You met my friends but let me introduce you again. This is Kath.

(Kath steps forward.)

I've know Kath the longest. She is completely awesome at sports, especially soccer and volleyball. She's bossy. It's okay. She knows it. Grades just passing but it doesn't seem to bother her. One brother. Parents together. Her mom is...kind of

intense but her dad is nice and always brings McDonald's if he knows we're coming over. She's going to be a world class athlete and then a sportscaster for ESPN.

(Alisha steps forward.)

Alisha, really funny but in a quiet way, and super sweet. Always tells the truth, except when it will hurt your feelings and then she tries to lie but she's really bad at it, so you know anyway. Good singer and rocks at crafts. An older sister and a younger brother, Toby, he has Down's Syndrome. Parents together, nice, really religious. You can't swear at her house but they always have really good snacks. She's going to have her own crafting, sewing TV show on cable and be a professional singer.

(Megan appears.)

Megan is super-super smart and good at science. She's what everyone calls a problem solver and she likes it even though she says she doesn't. She also loves to sing but really stinks at it. Watching her ask Alisha how she sounds when we do karaoke is the funniest, most painful thing ever. Parents divorced. Her mom has HBO and Showtime at their place. She has to go to therapy but we all think it is really for her folks. She doesn't have any brothers or sisters but her cousin Drew is in an actual rock band in California. Doctor and maybe research scientist.

MEGAN: Innocent Slime. That's their name. Drew's band. What about you?

LIZZIE: What?

MEGAN: Tell them about you. What you are, what you're going to do.

LIZZIE: That's hard. *(Pause. Then points to her T-shirt:)* I'm a girl with a cell phone!

MEGAN: *(To audience:)* Lizzie has an extensive vocabulary, is really good at Language Arts and Social Studies. She is always nice to new kids and other kids who are, you know, different or something, but not in a fakey way but in a cool way. Parents together. She has the biggest room out of all of us. Her mom only buys whole wheat, healthy snack stuff, doesn't believe in soda, but they have four scooters so we can all go out at the same time, even though one of the scooters is a little busted. I think she should be an editor, like for the *New York Times* or *Pop Stars* magazine.

KATH: Supreme Court lawyer or business.

ALISHA: You can be my manager. Or maybe my agent?

LIZZIE: STOP! Class. Let's just go to class! *(To audience:)* Here we go. The beginning of the "Lizzie Decides" year.

ALISHA: Don't worry. We'll help.

MEGAN: Empirical data will be collected. I can make a graph.

KATH: I can just decide for you.

LIZZIE: Oh boy. It's going to be a long year.

(End Scene 1.)

SCENE 2

(Lizzie, Megan, Alisha and Guy sit. Kath exits.)

LIZZIE: Homeroom. Team teaching. Keeps things interesting, I'll say that.

(Dad, OTHER MOM and Mom enter, all wearing "TEACHER" T-shirts. The following is recited in round-robin, "Miss Mary Mack" style.)

DAD TEACHER: It's challenge math, math, math—

OTHER MOM TEACHER: Historical facts, facts, facts—

MOM TEACHER: With syntax lax, lax, lax—

DAD TEACHER: All on a Mac, Mac, Mac.

OTHER MOM TEACHER: Ancient times, times, times—

MOM TEACHER: Big words and rhymes, rhymes, rhymes—

DAD TEACHER: Shapes and lines, lines, lines—

OTHER MOM TEACHER: Projects are fine, fine, fine.

MOM TEACHER: Construction tricks, tricks, tricks—

DAD TEACHER: Essays to fix, fix, fix—

OTHER MOM TEACHER: Exciting finds, finds, finds—

MOM TEACHER: Homework on time, time, time.

DAD TEACHER: Exams are here, here, here—

OTHER MOM TEACHER: Ignore your peers, peers, peers

MOM TEACHER: Please keep in mind, mind, mind—

DAD TEACHER: Your scores are mine, mine, mine.

(They conclude in an excited flurry of cheers and high-fives.)

MEGAN: Oh my god.

ALISHA: Wow.

LIZZIE: They are really, really into the "team" part of team teaching.

GUY: I'm officially scared.

LIZZIE: *(To audience:)* That's Guy. He's my neighbor. I've know him since he moved across the street years and years ago. A little ADD, gets pulled out for reading help, only eats tan, brown, and white food, and loves the Packers. Decent grades but does awesome in computer lab. Parents divorced but don't fight. Baby sister and they have two cats. He's going to be a video game designer specializing in sports games like Madden Football. *(Scans the audience for a moment.)* I sense some of you haven't been in school for awhile. Let me bring you up to date. Have you ever seen *Transformers* or those movies with big action, military stuff? That's what school is like. You're sitting like an everyday person, minding your own business and then you have to become an action hero.

OTHER MOM TEACHER: *(Gently:)* So, Ancient Greece was a culture rich in —

(Tone sounds.)

(Drill sergeant style barking as she runs along the desks, slapping down an assignment:) GREEN FOLDER! MOVE PEOPLE, MOVE!!!

(Students spring into action. In organized chaos, green folders are tossed in the air, caught, the paper is stuffed into the folder, and lanyards are straightened.)

ALISHA: NO!

LIZZIE: What?

ALISHA: I can't find my ID!

(Everyone stops, looks to the heavens and, in unison, screams a long, drawn out "NOOOO!" Megan throws herself down on the floor and battle crawls under the desks. She jumps up, lanyard in hand.)

MEGAN: I got it, Alisha!

(Alisha grabs it, puts it on, and embraces Megan. The students exit.)

LIZZIE: *(To audience:)* See? This is not pretty. Eight times a **day** we go through this. And the week before state aptitude testing week? OMG. You can cut the tension with a knife. Advil? On every teacher's desk, I swear.

(She points to Other Mom Teacher, who is now splayed on the ground, spent.)

It's not their fault. I wouldn't want their job. *(She pauses, thinking.)* Wow! Okay! This is good. One thing I don't want to be! A teacher. This is good information.

MEGAN: *(Calling from offstage:)* I'm inputting it on my graph.

LIZZIE: *(Calling:)* Thanks. *(To audience:)* Okay, class, learning, blah, blah, blah. With the seven million different students in our school, our hall, Magenta Hall, I kid you not, Magenta Hall...with so many students, they actually ran out of colors...well, Magenta has lunch period at 11:15. Yes, in the morning.

(Tone sounds. Alisha, Megan and Lizzie sit. Everyone else except Kath also sits and eats.)

ALISHA: I don't see Kath.

LIZZIE: Lavender's got the field trip today.

ALISHA: Okay, did you see the *The Choice* last night?

MEGAN: Tanya should not have been booted!

LIZZIE: Ya think?

ALISHA: She was fabulous! Okay, her hair is really, really bad—

LIZZIE: —sort of looked like blond popcorn—

MEGAN: —with glitter in it! They put glitter in it! Ew!

LIZZIE: And the glitter jean-shorts with the pockets hanging out!

MEGAN: A styling disaster. She should just have worn—

ALISHA: GUYS! I was thinking about trying out.

(Megan and Lizzie's mouths drop open.)

LIZZIE: WHAT?

MEGAN: Double WHAT?

ALISHA: Auditions. They announced on TV last night. They're going across the country this summer. I could be a superstar!!! With a recording contract! And concerts! Just like—

LIZZIE AND MEGAN: YES!

(Dad and Mom run out with a poster of Taylor Swift or another uber-popular teenage singer. The three scream in unison. Dad and Mom exit. Other Mom walks by them and shushes them.)

OTHER MOM/LUNCH MONITOR: Girls, eat. Don't scream. You have one minute, eleven seconds.

LIZZIE: Sorry.

ALISHA: We're sorry.

(Other Mom walks off.)

LIZZIE: *(Mouth full:)* Woe were arents let you.

ALISHA: *(Mouth also full:)* What?

MEGAN: Will your parents let you?

(Alisha pauses.)

ALISHA: Lots of great superstars have had great obstacles.

(The three pause.)

LIZZIE: Well, the good news is that you have 10 months to convince them.

(Tone sounds. All exit except Lizzie. She turns to the audience.)

You know how sometimes, at first you hear an idea and you think it's awesome and then you think about it for a second? Well this is sort of like that. Alisha has a really awesome voice. But she never tries out for anything. She hates even having to read out loud in class. She was nauseous for three days before her Civilizations presentation. I mean she just isn't bossy or pushy or...ambitious at all. She sings for us, with a CD and stuff. But maybe...even if you have one part of being able to do a really cool thing...maybe you don't have all the parts to make it a career. She would never wear glitter shorts with the pockets hanging out. She won't even wear glitter nail polish when we're doing manicures at Megan's. And she can take it off before she goes home. If they had TV shows about superstar crafters, that is what Alisha should do. But...that's not the way stuff is. And another thing. Superstar. That is so weird! I mean, Kath loves, I mean LOVES this singer. You...older people won't know him...well...

(Guy comes strutting out, microphone in hand. His hair is styled slightly differently from the previous scene. Screams are heard.)

Okay. Look at him. Doesn't he look almost exactly like Guy?

(Guy shoves the mike in his back pocket, rearranges his hair, and pulls out a small gaming system.)

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See? See what I mean? But Kath totally ignores him. Guy's not a celebrity but...well...he is **nice**. For a guy. (She giggles at her own pun.) Probably just as nice as —

(Guy flips his hair back and whips out the mike. Screams again.)

LIZZIE: I don't get it. But I do think...I don't want to be an agent. A superstar manager. Or a singer.

MEGAN: *(Off:)* I got it! Inputting it now.

LIZZIE: Thanks. And thanks, Guy.

(Guy begins to exit.)

Wait!

(He does. To the audience:)

As my dad says, let's sidebar.

(She walks to a slightly different position on stage.)

Guys. Boys. All that...stuff. Okay, maybe it is all just a little confusing but, can I say, all you adults are way too focused on it. Anyway. I've know Guy since like, forever.

(They both lie on their stomachs and look at a spot on the floor. They are now four years old.)

GUY: It looks like a rock but it's a FROG!

(They flip to their backs. They are now six years old.)

LIZZIE: If we lie here long enough, do you think a bird will poop on us?

(Back on their stomachs. They are now eight.)

GUY: If we lie here long enough, maybe my mom will think we're dead and bring us ice cream.

(They sit up. They are now 10.)

LIZZIE: (*Shaking her hand:*) My turn.

(She rolls imaginary dice. They stand, back in the present. Dad runs out, gives them both their backpacks, and exits. Lizzie and Guy look "down the street," watching for the bus.)

GUY: (*Trying to sound excited but failing:*) My dad got an apartment right next to the amusement park. He says he's gonna get us season passes.

(Pause.)

LIZZIE: Way cool.

(They both nod. She then burrows in her backpack and pulls out a candy bar.)

Mom gave this to me for snack but my class is peanut-free. Want it?

GUY: (*Taking it:*) Thanks.

LIZZIE: (*To audience:*) So, Guy is okay. Then just this year, this.

(Lizzie returns to the bus stop position.)

Hey, Guy.

(He looks the other way, picks up some pebbles and begins throwing them in the other direction.)

LIZZIE: HEY! GUY!

GUY: (*Head down:*) Oh. Hey.

(He resumes throwing pebbles in the other direction.)

LIZZIE: My mom says —

(Mom enters.)

MOM: —I think...he's having a rough time. The divorce and all.

LIZZIE: Mom! That was like two years ago!

MOM: Well, Lizzie, I think he may have...discovered girls.

LIZZIE: What?

MOM: You know...

LIZZIE: Discovered girls?! I've been here the whole time! Like he's just figuring out I'm a girl? He's...a boy but he's not stupid.

MOM: No, honey. He may like you. And now he doesn't know how to be with you.

LIZZIE: *(To audience:)* See? Just a little confusing. I have to admit, it bothered me a little. 'Cuz...I don't know why. *(She shrugs.)* He stopped talking to me. He just would grunt, "Hey." So, this is what I came up with.

(Lizzie returns to the bus stop and whacks Guy really hard with her backpack.)

GUY: HEY!

LIZZIE: STOP ACTING WEIRD WITH ME!

(Rubbing his shoulder, Guy stares at Lizzie for a moment.)

GUY: Okay. Sorry.

LIZZIE: *(To audience:)* Things got better after that. Not great but better. My mom said—

MOM: Wow. Well, that's one solution, I guess.

LIZZIE: *(To audience:)* That's an idea. Maybe I should be a counselor or diplomat?

MEGAN: *(Off:)* I'll create another table for that.

LIZZIE: Thanks. Okay, as our Team Teachers say, "Let's proceed."

(End Scene 2.)

SCENE 3

(Lizzie comes home from school.)

MOM: Hey Lizard. How was school—

LIZZIE: —Did I learn anything? Yes. Homework? No. Hungry? A little. Will I give you a hug? Absolutely not.

MOM: I am nothing if not reliable.

LIZZIE: True.

MOM: And you are a little bit of a smarty-pants.

LIZZIE: True.

MOM: *(Hugging Lizzie:)* Isn't it nice to have someone know you so well?

LIZZIE: True...I mean, I guess. Mom, stop. *(To audience:)* She is so needy.

MOM: You think I'm needy. I know that look. I'm just a MOM! We never stop hugging our babies.

(After Mom gives her one more kiss on the head, Lizzie escapes to the fridge.)

LIZZIE: *(Getting a snack:)* I would ask her for her opinion on my "Lizzie Decides Year" but she would get way too into it. There would be books. Discussion. Possibly weekend trips to random career days at NASA or museums or to China or something. Too painful to even think about.

(Dad appears.)

Nope. Not asking him either. He would just worry that I was worried about stuff. And I'm not worried. I'm thinking. When you're thinking about stuff, parents get so freaked out, thinking that you're depressed or unhappy or have been traumatized when you're really just **thinking about stuff!**

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DAD: Hey Lizard. Whatchya thinking about?

LIZZIE: I'm fine! Nothing! I'm fine! I'm not thinking about anything!

(Dad and Mom look at each other.)

You guys.

(Lizzie flops down, snack in hand.)

MOM: *(To Dad:)* We are so high maintenance.

DAD: You are.

MOM: You are.

DAD: No, you!

MOM: No, you!

LIZZIE: You guys! Stop!

(They smile and exit as Lizzie pulls out her cell phone. She dials. Megan appears.)

Still at After School Hut?

MEGAN: Five more minutes, then Dad picks me up for...you know.

LIZZIE: *(Hand over phone, whispering to audience:)* Family therapy. *(To Megan:)* My parents are traumatizing me with their bizarre behavior. Can you come over after?

MEGAN: Totally.

LIZZIE: Try to cry, okay? We have nothing good to eat here.

MEGAN: Will do.

(They hang up and Megan exits.)

LIZZIE: *(Yelling:)* Megan's coming over tonight after therapy.

MOM: *(Off:)* Okay.

LIZZIE: I was beginning to figure out I needed some additional help.

(Megan enters with her backpack. The girls sit.)

MEGAN: You need more sources. More data. A wider sampling.

LIZZIE: How do I get a wider sampling of me? Go through a black hole to a parallel universe?

MEGAN: No such thing. Parallel universe, I mean. Lots of black holes.

LIZZIE: I know. Have you seen our fridge?

(They giggle.)

Hello? How did she find whole wheat, gluten-free organic Oreos?

MEGAN: Oh! That reminds me!

(She opens her backpack and pulls out handfuls of "fun-size" candy bars.)

LIZZIE: Score! Wow!

MEGAN: Gotta love Dr. Dryer. I wonder if she gives adults pizza and hamburgers for crying...I mean sharing their feelings?

(They both munch on a candy bar.)

LIZZIE: Wow. This is a lot of...have you been saving up or something?

(Pause.)

MEGAN: My dad and his new wife are moving. To Washington.

LIZZIE: Oh. I'm sorry.

MEGAN: It's okay. He told me last week. It's okay. I'll probably have to spend summers out there, which completely stinks. With their new baby, whatever it is. She won't even get an ultrasound to find out the sex. Why would anyone not want to know something? So you could be prepared and not be surprised and...surprised like that?

LIZZIE: Well, Washington. I mean, that's cool. The capital. Maybe you'll even get to see the president or something.

MEGAN: Not that Washington. Washington State! Not D.C. He can't even move to a fun, cool place like that, or New York, or Hollywood or something. He has to pick a place nobody knows anything about, way far away. Like they don't need chemical engineers other places? Better places?

LIZZIE: What's your mom say?

(Megan rolls her eyes.)

Well, it might mean less therapy.

(Megan begins packing all the candy away.)

MEGAN: Let's just focus on the problem. Okay, so we need more data. Perhaps conduct interviews? See what others want to do, interview those who have fulfilling careers. Definitely talk to your parents...don't give me that look...you could easily have a genetic predisposition for a certain job, like Kath and sports, with her mom, or Alisha.

LIZZIE: Alisha? Her mom is an eye surgeon and her dad an accountant. She wants to be a singer.

MEGAN: Have you not seen the eight million craft projects in her house? Hello? Fine motor skills! Scalpel. Glue gun. Same diff.

LIZZIE: Oh. Yeah!

MEGAN: And Kath and—

LIZZIE: —Miss Olympic trials. Okay.

MEGAN: Not everybody is gifted with fast twitch musculature. Okay, we also should expand the parameters. Let's examine what you excel at in school and, more importantly, WHY you excel at it. Is it interest or your particular skill set? Lots of variables. How do we get a control group? That's the question.

(Lizzie is now digging in Megan's backpack for more chocolate.)

Hey! Let's get working. Your life calling isn't going to find itself.

(End Scene 3.)

SCENE 4

(Lizzie, Alisha, Megan, Kath and Guy sit facing Mom upstage. Mom is wearing a T-shirt which says "Science Teacher.")

MOM/SCIENCE TEACHER: So fusion occurs when blah, blah, blah encounters yadda, yadda, yadda—

(Alisha jumps up and spins to face the audience. She is wearing a T-shirt which says, "I STINK at this!!!" She screams. Mom/Teacher pulls off her T-shirt to reveal a second, "Language Arts Teacher." Alisha peels off the "I STINK at this!!!" T-shirt and gives it to Megan to put on. All the students change seats.)

MOM/LANGUAGE ARTS TEACHER: So an exposition serves the blah, blah, blah by yadda, yadda, yadda—

(Megan jumps up and screams. Mom/Teacher pulls off her T-shirt to reveal a third T-shirt, "Math Teacher." Megan peels off "I STINK at this!!!" T-shirt and gives it to Kath to put on. All the students change seats.)

MOM/MATH TEACHER: So complex fractions blah, blah, blah when you yadda, yadda, yadda—

(Kath jumps up and screams. Mom/Teacher pulls off her T-shirt to reveal a third T-shirt, "Computer Teacher." Kath peels off "I STINK at this!!!" T-shirt and gives it to Lizzie to put on. All the students change seats.)

MOM/COMPUTER SCIENCE TEACHER: So if you download blah, blah, blah, the site will yadda, yadda, yadda—

(Lizzie jumps up and takes a deep breath to scream. Looks at the audience.)

LIZZIE: Well, you get it, right?

(She peels off the "I STINK at this!!!" T-shirt.)

This whole part of the experiment is not really helping. I mean, everyone is good at different stuff. How does that help me decide? I like Language Arts because the reading is fun but how do you make reading fiction a career? And science can be cool with chemical reactions and stuff but structuring experiments—

(Megan appears, rapidly writing.)

MEGAN: Oh, that part is so easy—

LIZZIE: For you—

MEGAN: For anybody! Oh geez, I could do it in my sleep. It's so obvious.

LIZZIE: Like forming a clear introductory paragraph for a book report?

(Megan pauses.)

MEGAN: Excellent observation. Thank you. Fizzy.

LIZZIE: You're welcome. Mutant.

MEGAN: Anyway, this is all really good information we're collecting. I'm not really sure how to...how applicable it all is to our particular research topic...

(Lizzie, Kath and Alisha set up the lunchroom table and sit as Megan is talking. Others also sit and lunchroom chatter is heard around them.)

Okay, Lizzie, my initial findings seem to indicate that with your analytical and strong language skills, you should be good at debate.

LIZZIE: But I don't like debate.

MEGAN: You sure?

LIZZIE: Yes.

MEGAN: Really?

LIZZIE: Absolutely.

MEGAN: That's a problem.

ALISHA: I hate debate too.

KATH: How can you not like debate?

LIZZIE: I don't like it.

KATH: Debate is great. You get to actually talk without getting detention!

ALISHA: If the debaters manage not to swear.

(Everyone looks at Kath for a moment and then break into giggles.)

KATH: You all are so obnoxious. I was making a point.

MEGAN: About what? Pooping?

(All four are now laughing.)

KATH: Well, her argument was ridiculous and her name was Kitty. I'm only human!

(Now they are all really laughing. Other Mom/Teacher comes up.)

OTHER MOM/TEACHER: Settle down, girls. Three more minutes.

KATH: Three minutes to stuff mystery meat in my face and then P. E. The worst part of my day followed by the best.

LIZZIE: Oh, the irony! And we all agreed. It's not mystery meat. It's horse with a touch of squirrel.

ALISHA: Stop! That always grosses me out!

KATH: She's kidding. Don't be such a baby.

ALISHA: I just don't like—

MEGAN: —Okay, no debate, which takes being a lawyer off the table.

LIZZIE: But didn't you say—

KATH: —she might have a genetical, predisposed thing for being a lawyer.

ALISHA: But if she doesn't LIKE it—

MEGAN: —Genetical isn't a word, Kath.

KATH: Oh please. This research project of yours, with Lizzie as test subject, could easily extend into summer if you don't get to some deciding action, Lizzie. But you would love that, right, Megs? A summer-long science thing. Nerd heaven.

(At the mention of summer, Lizzie glances at Megan.)

LIZZIE: Put lawyer in the "Maybe" column.

MEGAN: *(Snapping:)* The "Maybe" column? There is no "Maybe" column. This is science. Research. Save "maybe" for your soft sciences.

KATH: Oh! Someone's getting touchy!

MEGAN: I'm not touchy. I'm being accurate.

KATH: Well, accurate kinda looks like touchy to me.

LIZZIE: Guys, stop.

ALISHA: I think she was using "Maybe" as just an expression, right, Lizzie?

LIZZIE: —course.

KATH: Just an expression isn't scientific, right, Megan?

MEGAN: Like "bite me" isn't just an expression, right, Kath?

ALISHA: Let's not fight.

KATH: I'm not fighting.

MEGAN: I'm not fighting.

KATH: And she started it anyway.

MEGAN: No, you did.

KATH: Please! I so did not start it.

(Tone sounds. They all jump and exit except Lizzie, who turns to the audience.)

LIZZIE: Megan and Kath have always...well, they both have rather strong, you know, opinions about stuff. So this isn't the first time things have...they have....well...anyway....I was hoping things between friends get easier as you get older. Like people learn to get along just like we learn stuff in school....but I'm beginning to have my doubts.

(End Scene 4.)

SCENE 5

(Lizzie, Megan, and Alisha are sitting scrapbooking.)

ALISHA: So Kath got detention.

MEGAN: Again.

ALISHA: Are they going to let her go to the meet?

MEGAN: Don't know.

(Lizzie is texting while Megan talks.)

What is her problem?! I mean, I like her. She's fun with us, well most of the time...but then...this...picking on...well, you know. What if I got fat? Would she pick on me? Why can't she just—

LIZZIE: Wait. She says, "Going to meet. Gotta go to conning." What is that?

(Megan and Alisha peer over her shoulder.)

Wait. She got auto-corrected. Counseling.

MEGAN: About time somebody who needs it has to go.

ALISHA: Wonder what her mom will say about that!? My folks would, I mean, if I acted like...it isn't the way we...well, it's not a good thing. Lizzie, what do you think? You've known her longest.

LIZZIE: I don't know. Honestly, her mom *(Lowering her voice:)* sorta scares me.

ALISHA: Her dad is really nice.

(They all nod.)

MEGAN: But I know what you mean about her mom. I mean, I love the McDonald's her dad brings us but having to always eat it at the park or in his car is just plain weird.

ALISHA: She doesn't approve of it.

MEGAN: It's like everybody is scared of her.

LIZZIE: I am!

ALISHA: Me too.

(They all giggle.)

But she is still a good person. I mean, she's a mom. She wouldn't do anything really, really mean. I'm sure she wouldn't. Right? Right, Lizzie?

(Flashback to the past. Lights dim on girls and Lizzie looks upstage. In a pool of intense light, Kath and Guy [now her brother], each holding a candy bar, and Other Mom stand next to a shopping cart. The sounds of a busy market can be heard. Lizzie rises and grabs a supermarket basket and walks to the corner of the light.)

OTHER MOM: Candy? You want more candy? I am not going to be one of those mothers with obese, out of shape kids. Not gonna happen. If you want a candy bar, or any of this crap, you have to earn it. Drop down, give me twenty pushups and then we can talk. *(Pause.)* Yeah. I didn't think so.

(Other Mom grabs the candy bars out of their hands and tosses them aside.)

Come on.

(Other Mom, Kath and Guy exit. Lizzie returns to the scene.)

LIZZIE: No idea —

MEGAN: So she has to hide McDonald's from her star athlete, fancy business tycoon mom? It's still not okay to be a bully like that. It just isn't!

LIZZIE: I know. Yes. I know. But she might need us to be there for her anyway. Do we just cut her out?

ALISHA: I told my mom about Kath. She told me to pray for her.

(Spot up on Kath.)

MEGAN: Social exclusion, the shunning of another, can be an effective method of influencing someone in a group.

(Megan cuts a photograph in half and the spot goes out on Kath.)

That's how I feel. I don't like bullies.

ALISHA: But it feels wrong. To do that to her.

MEGAN: But she is wrong sometimes.

ALISHA: But do two wrongs make a right? Do we push Kath away because she pushed somebody else? At least, she was mean, do we then just turn around and be mean to her? Is that right? Lizzie?

LIZZIE: I don't know.

(End Scene 5.)

SCENE 6

(The four girls are in Alisha's room. Kath is doing push-ups. Alisha is working on an elaborate, detailed craft project.)

KATH: Nineteen, twenty.

(She jumps up.)

See?! Not that hard! And she was just whining about it and I told her to shut up. "I can't do it." Yeah, because you're a weak jerk and don't even try so your muscles are like marshmallows. And I get detention. She doesn't do anything and I get in trouble. Whine, whine, whine. She makes my skin crawl.

LIZZIE: Why do you pick on Maria?

KATH: I wasn't being mean! Geez, everybody is so sensitive. Life is hard. So, I just told her to shut up and try. So? That's all.

MEGAN: *(Muttering:)* Anything else?

KATH: What?

LIZZIE: *(Loudly:)* Did you call her "fat"? *(Pause.)* Again?

KATH: Well, she is. Not like it's a secret.

ALISHA: Did your folks have to come in?

KATH: She didn't even try one push-up! Stop. The bleeding heart stuff is killing me. Maria's lazy, that's all. She needs to toughen up. I'm actually doing her a favor. She needs a trainer. A coach. I could get her into shape.

MEGAN: You? As Maria's coach? Are you kidding me? Alisha. Lizzie, help me out here. Am I right? I mean, do you think –

(Alisha is at a particularly difficult piece placement.)

ALISHA: SHHH! Wait!

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(They do, frozen. She very, very gently places the piece.)

Got it.

(All exhale. Alisha begins very gently blowing on the spot to help set the glue.)

What?

KATH: Never mind. *(To Alisha:)* Did you talk to your folks?

MEGAN: Wait, we were still talking about —

ALISHA: Yes.

MEGAN: *(To Alisha:)* What?!

LIZZIE: About auditioning?!

ALISHA: Yes. I asked my dad.

KATH: And???? What did they say? Are they letting you go to the audition?

ALISHA: No.

MEGAN: Why not? I mean, what was his reason?

LIZZIE: Oh, Alisha! I'm sorry! That stinks!

MEGAN: Did you give him your reasons? Did he just say "no" with no explanation?

LIZZIE: What did he say?

(Dad appears in a spot.)

DAD: Lisha, no. Why? A number of reasons. Don't cry. First, you're too young. Second, the lifestyle is not one we support or believe in. You know that. We have talked about this before. The behavior and lyrics are inappropriate for everyone, much less a young girl. Let me finish. LET ME FINISH. You do get to sing. We are not stopping you from singing. You sing in choir, at home, no one on this earth can stop your beautiful

voice. But it is our job to protect you. To judge and weigh the benefits and risks of experience. The risks in this case far outweigh the benefits.

(Spot on Dad goes out.)

KATH: That's all he said!?

(Alisha nods.)

That's awful! My parents would never stop me from going after something, being ambitious. That so stinks!

(Light change. Dad crosses to Alisha but no one can see him but her. He squats in front of her and takes her hand.)

DAD: And, one more thing, most important of all, I believe. The life of a professional singer is not right for you. For Alisha. I know you. I see joy when you sing in choir or at home. But solos? Being in the spotlight? You hate that. I want you to be happy. When you're twenty-one, you can do what you want. But right now, there is a reason you need parental permission. You can trust me, sweetie. I'm not stopping your voice. I'm protecting it. Okay?

ALISHA: *(Still upset but smiling:)* Okay, Daddy.

(Dad exits.)

KATH: The risks outweigh the benefits. Parent-speak. Ugh.

(Alisha, smiling, continues on her craft.)

And why are you smiling? I would be so angry! You look relieved!

ALISHA: *(Frowning:)* I'm not relieved! See!

LIZZIE: *(To audience:)* She is so relieved. See, I was right! This friendship, career, life-calling stuff? It's trickier than it looks.

(End Scene 6.)

SCENE 7

(Other Mom as Teacher hands out test packets.)

OTHER MOM/TEACHER: The verbal section includes blah, blah, blah and yadda, yadda, yadda –

DAD/TEACHER: The math portion has blah, blah, blah and algebraic yadda, yadda, yadda –

MOM/TEACHER: When you are finished blah, blah, blah and then yadda, yadda, yadda –

LIZZIE: *(To audience:)* Between MAP, ISATs, advanced placement eligibility testing, presidential fitness P.E. evals, regular tests, quizzes, you would think I would be getting some answers. Like what I am good at. Like what to do with a friend who has her heart set on being something which would probably make her miserable, another friend who wants everything explained and organized and has parents who really are not helping her with that, another friend who seems highly motivated in becoming the national poster child for How to Recognize that Bully Everyone is Always Talking About, and another friend who ignores you, then talks to you, then hangs out with you like the old days, and then ignores you again. I so need a break.

(She raises her hand.)

MOM/TEACHER: Lizzie?

LIZZIE: Before we get started, can I go to the girl's room?

(Teacher hands her a hall pass. Lizzie takes it and turns to the audience.)

Give me a minute to go, then you can have 10 minutes and then we'll all meet back here, okay?

(Waving the hall pass as she runs through the lobby to the bathroom.)

Don't worry. You don't need one of these!

(End Act I.)

ACT II

SCENE 1

(The bureau with clothes spilling out is back on stage.)

LIZZIE: Ah, I feel better. Okay, what should I wear?

(She pulls on a baggy sweatshirt which says, "Thinking Hard. Please Leave Me Alone.")

Good. Comfortable. And it has a hood so Mom can't complain.

(She grabs her backpack, puts on a winter coat and gets ready to leave.)

MOM: Why are you wearing that? Are you sad? Are you depressed? Do you need to talk? I'm here for you, you know.

DAD: We both are. Lizard, you need to talk your dad? I'll call work; tell them I'm going to be late.

LIZZIE: You guys! I'm FINE!

MOM: But, sweetie —

LIZZIE: Sometimes I want to look nice, sometimes I just want to blend in so I can think, okay?

DAD: And today is a thinking, blending day?

LIZZIE: Yes.

DAD: *(To Mom:)* Leave her alone. She wants to think.

MOM: I'm just letting you know you can talk to me —

LIZZIE: —about anything! I know! *(She has an idea.)* I know. *(To her parents:)* Yes, actually, I do have something I want to share.

(Mom and Dad very eagerly sit.)

I want to share that I don't want to share anything right now! I want to think. Not talk. Think. Okay?

MOM: Okay. Just—

(Lizzie stops her with her hand up.)

Just—

(Lizzie stops her with her hand up again.)

LIZZIE: Think. No talk. Think.

(Lizzie stops her with her hand up again.)

MOM: Okay. But remember—

DAD: Honey, let her alone. She wants to think. But, Lizard, you know, we are here to hear anything you think, when you think what you're thinking...um...is ready to be...talked about.

(Lizzie looks to the audience.)

LIZZIE: Let's sidebar.

(Mom and Dad freeze.)

Did you see what my mom is wearing? A T-shirt and jeans. Dad? A suit. Did I ask them if they were sad, depressed, or in need of emotional counseling? NO! Do I ask Mom why she isn't wearing her red party dress with the velvet striped stuff on it to do the dishes or go to Jewel? No. When they want to blend in, they do, no questions. When I do, well, you saw what happened. This is why teenage sarcasm occurs, okay? Just so you know. Because reason appears to have very little impact.

(Mom and Dad exit and Guy appears, backpack on, also in a winter coat.)

GUY: Hey.

LIZZIE: Oh. Hey.

(Lizzie begins texting.)

GUY: You okay?

(She continues texting.)

Hey. Look. A rainbow.

(Lizzie briefly glances up to the sky.)

No. On the snow. From the icicles.

LIZZIE: Oh. Yeah.

(She continues texting.)

GUY: Hey. Look at that.

(He crosses offstage. She continues texting. Off:)

I've never seen anything like this. Think we should call the police?

(Lizzie looks up and slides her phone into her pocket.)

LIZZIE: What?

(She is hit by a snowball.)

GUY: *(Running on stage with another snowball:)* 'Cuz a crime has just been committed.

LIZZIE: Guy, I can't believe you!

(Laughing, she begins chasing him.)

(End Scene 1.)

SCENE 2

LIZZIE: *(To audience:)* So the year keeps going. Progress was being made. Kath only got two more detentions. Alisha managed to make it through a solo at church and only threw up twice before and once after. Megan's dad found a good summer science camp right close to the new place he was moving, and her career chart for me was getting really detailed. Nice to be able to take park ranger, orthodontist, and hazardous materials specialist off the table. And then...and it always feels like it comes out of nowhere...report cards come out.

(Megan, Kath and Alisha enter, backpacks on. Megan has a piece of paper in her hand, Lizzie is slowly circling around the driveway on a scooter, Kath is playing with a soccer ball, and Alisha is drawing a design on the driveway with chalk.)

MEGAN: It is so unfair! And, just, WRONG!

LIZZIE: What?

MEGAN: Look at this. Look! After all my hard work!

(Alisha gets up and peers over Megan's shoulder.)

ALISHA: It looks good. You got a ton of As!

MEGAN: And what else?

(Lizzie rolls over and looks.)

LIZZIE: Are you talking about the B minus in Language Arts.?

MEGAN: What else would I be talking about? A B minus!

KATH: Geez, Megan, chillax. I got one B minus and four Cs. I'll trade.

MEGAN: You don't exactly get it.

ALISHA: What?

MEGAN: It's almost a C!

ALISHA: So?

MEGAN: A C is average! I am not average. I am...well, not average.

LIZZIE: Well...

MEGAN: What?

ALISHA: Lizzie! Megan, she isn't saying you are average.

KATH: Yeah, but what exactly are you saying, Lizzie?

LIZZIE: Well, no, you, Megan, aren't an average person but maybe –

MEGAN: What?

LIZZIE: Maybe you are sort of...average at Language Arts.

(Megan is stunned.)

It's okay. Really. Average is not bad. It's just normal. Like in science? The norm.

MEGAN: I work my butt off in every class. Give me an example. I want proof. Give me an example.

LIZZIE: Okay, your Animal Farm essay.

MEGAN: Well, she graded hard on that. I think she is just an unfair, hard grader.

LIZZIE: You said the book was about farming.

MEGAN: It was set in a BARN!

LIZZIE: The barn was a metaphor.

MEGAN: I hate metaphors. Why can't they just say what something is?

LIZZIE: Exactly. You have trouble seeing why, the point, of a metaphor. It's a literary device. Literary. Language Arts. See? Sometimes you don't get it.

MEGAN: I get it. I just don't understand the reason for it.

KATH: So you don't get it. Who cares? I think they'll still accept you in Club Nerd with a B minus. I mean, I got a C minus in L.A. I don't get it either.

MEGAN: Well, you of all people should get it. All that extra time to study while you're sitting around IN DETENTION.

KATH: Hey! Bite me, brainiac. At least I have more than three friends.

MEGAN: At least my friends are because I'm nice, not because I'm a sports showoff who gangs up on other people for fun.

KATH: Well at least my parents are still together and my dad isn't moving all the way across the country just to get away from me.

(They all go silent.)

ALISHA: Kath!

MEGAN: Wow. Okay. Um. I think...I have to go.

(Megan exits, running.)

KATH: *(Defiantly:)* She started it.

LIZZIE: And you ended it.

(End Scene 2.)

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