

GIRLS ON THE BRINK

Seven female-forward short plays for young adults by
Rex McGregor

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LIST OF PLAYS

The Girl Who Would Rather Not Grow Up Just Yet

Refloat Our Whale

Grow Up, Juliet

Twilight of the Grizzly

Aleema the Boy Girl

Sugar Horror

Almost Immortal

PRODUCTION NOTES

Girls on the Brink may be performed with 23 actors (15-16 female and 7-8 male or 23 female) or fewer, with doubling (e.g. 4 actors, as shown below).

Actor 1: WENDY, MANDY, JULIET, GRIZZLY, ALEEMA, RETTA.

Actor 2: ERIN, LAURENCE, etc., JOAN, MURSAL, KLOË.

Actor 3: NANA, MISS JACOBS, TYBALT, AZAD, DONNA, ZEN.

Actor 4: FATHER, ROMEO, SAM, TABESH, ANSEL, RAY.

The plays can be performed as individual pieces or grouped together in any combination to create a show of the desired length and performed under the title *Girls on the Brink*.

THE GIRL WHO WOULD RATHER NOT GROW UP JUST YET

CAST OF CHARACTERS

NANA, woman in a dog suit.

WENDY, 16-year-old girl.

FATHER, Wendy's father.

(A living room. The present.)

(Dim lighting. The actress playing NANA tiptoes in, wearing a full-body Newfoundland dog costume. She is carrying a bag over one shoulder and pulling a suitcase with squeaky wheels. Terrified that the noise will give her away, she takes extra care with every step. Suddenly, lights flash on. WENDY, a 16-year-old girl, is at the switch.)

WENDY: Going somewhere?

(Nana stops and hangs her head in shame.)

Are you expecting a litter and keen to give birth without human intervention? Or have you got rabies and you're leaving us to avoid infecting the household? Help me out here. I'm trying to think of any reasonable justification for you sneaking away in the middle of the night. Do you need to go and nurse a dying relative in Newfoundland? If you can put a charitable spin on this exhibition of canine disloyalty, I'd love to hear it. You must admit it looks suspiciously as if you're deserting your post. But surely not. That would mean you're an ungrateful... I believe the correct word is bitch.

(Nana expresses shock.)

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By the way, aren't you supposed to be on all fours?

(Nana expresses resentment.)

It's in the contract.

(Nana reluctantly gets down on her hands and knees. Wendy pats a thigh, indicating, "Come." Nana doesn't budge.)

Not very well trained, are you?

(Nana reluctantly approaches. Wendy pats her affectionately.)

Bad dog. You know I've got exams at the moment. You're meant to be protecting me from distractions, not causing them. Do I have to contact the agency?

(Nana expresses anxiety.)

All right, Nana. I'll let you off this once.

(Nana nuzzles Wendy, expressing gratitude.)

Now get back to work and we'll say no more about it.

(Nana gives an exasperated huff.)

Excuse me. Was that the obligatory cheerful bark?

NANA: *(Grudgingly:)* Woof.

WENDY: Come on. I'll help you unpack.

(As Wendy approaches the suitcase, Nana reacts with terror. She stands up and frantically points offstage.)

NANA: Woof woof woof!

(While Wendy is looking offstage, Nana grabs her bag and suitcase and tries to make a quick getaway.)

WENDY: I can't see any —

(Realizing she has been tricked, Wendy intercepts Nana and tackles her to the ground.)

Not so fast. What do you think you are? A greyhound?

(Wendy sits astride Nana, holding her down.)

Mother! Father! Rogue governess gone wild!

(Nana struggles to get free.)

Stop behaving like a puppy!—Mother! Father!—Do I have to fetch a leash?

(FATHER comes in, wearing pajamas.)

FATHER: Wendy! What are you doing?

WENDY: Call the agency. This mongrel's totally unsatisfactory.

FATHER: For heaven's sake, don't hurt her! I should have known this would happen.

WENDY: What?

FATHER: Er, just the leave the poor thing alone, sweetheart.

WENDY: Omigod! I'm being abandoned and you're concerned about her.

FATHER: We don't want the ASPCA turning up.

(Nana groans in pain. Father rushes to help her to her feet.)

Poor darling.

WENDY: What did you say?

FATHER: Animals deserve to be treated with respect.

WENDY: Father. It's a woman in a costume.

FATHER: I'm glad you're finally acknowledging the fact. Now maybe we can put a stop to this nonsense.

WENDY: You called her darling.

FATHER: Er, isn't that the name of the family in the story? I was merely playing along with your fantasy.

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WENDY: Omigod! You've been sleeping with the help!

FATHER: (*Amused:*) Don't be ridiculous.

WENDY: Pseudo-bestiality. That is so sick!

FATHER: (*To Nana, discreetly:*) Shall we come clean?

(Nana vigorously shakes her head.)

WENDY: No wonder she was skulking away. Obviously, she can't stay now.

FATHER: True. — Scram, girl.

(Nana picks up her bag. Wendy quickly snatches it from her.)

WENDY: Hang on. You can't leave right this minute.

FATHER: Why not?

WENDY: Don't be callous, Father. First, you cheat on Mother. Now you're kicking your bit of fluff out.

FATHER: You said yourself she has to go.

WENDY: As soon as the agency sends a replacement.

FATHER: Oh, for heaven's sake —

WENDY: Let's arrange it first thing in the morning.

(Nana nudges Father.)

FATHER: Enough's enough.

WENDY: Don't worry. We'll specify an ugly nanny. With warts. So you won't be tempted again.

FATHER: Wendy. You don't need a nanny.

WENDY: Someone has to take care of me.

FATHER: You're sixteen. Old enough to take care of y —

WENDY: To get up to all sorts of mischief. Being your daughter, I can't be trusted an inch.

FATHER: *(To Nana:)* I give up.

WENDY: Presumably, you two can keep your hands off each other for a few hours. *(To Nana:)* As a precaution, you'd better sleep in my room tonight. *(To Father:)* Will you update Mother?

(She picks up the suitcase.)

FATHER: Er, let's not wake her. If she's heard any of this, I'll land in the doghouse. Literally.

WENDY: You wish. — Hey, how come this is so light?

(Father and Nana share a guilty look. Wendy starts unzipping the suitcase.)

FATHER: Wendy! You can't breach an employee's privacy. We'll get sued by the Servants Union.

(Wendy shows the suitcase is completely empty.)

WENDY: *(To Nana:)* What's going on?

FATHER: Dogs don't own much.

WENDY: Nana. Please explain.

(Nana runs behind Father in a ludicrous attempt to hide.)

FATHER: Look, Wendy. I hate to shatter your illusion. But this particular Nana is one of several. She just does the night shift. None of them actually live here.

WENDY: I'm perfectly aware of the roster system. I wouldn't have it any other way. How else could I be guaranteed twenty-four/seven care?

FATHER: I thought you had a sentimental attachment to the mutt.

WENDY: Not when the incumbent's incompetent. I expect state-of-the-art surveillance. The Nana suit is simply to

provide constancy and familiarity. I don't want to be bothered with new faces while I'm studying.

FATHER: I'm happy to get rid of the whole pack of 'em.

WENDY: She still hasn't accounted for the empty suitcase.

(Wendy stalks Nana, who clings to Father and forces him to back away.)

FATHER: I'm getting to that. Fact is, all these nannies have squeezed me dry. I can't cope anymore.

WENDY: Are you sleeping with all of them?

FATHER: No, of course not.

WENDY: But enough to stress you out.

FATHER: I'm under financial stress.

WENDY: Pardon?

FATHER: Facing ruin. Big time.

WENDY: I see.

FATHER: We'll have to tighten our belts.

WENDY: Fair enough.

FATHER: No more luxuries, I'm afraid.

WENDY: A Spartan lifestyle never hurt anyone.

FATHER: You're taking this very well.

WENDY: We'll get through it together. You, and Mother and I. And the Nanas.

FATHER: We can't afford a retinue of servants.

WENDY: Don't tease, Father. As if you'd compromise on your daughter's safety.

FATHER: The contract ended this afternoon. Couldn't keep up the payments.

WENDY: Omigod.

FATHER: I wanted to tell you sooner. But your mother had this crazy idea to soften the blow.

(Nana thumps Father.)

WENDY: What?

FATHER: The last governess walked off the job at five o'clock. Ditched the suit and up and left. Your mother wanted you to at least have some CCTV footage of Nana sadly walking out of your life forever.

(Wendy gapes at Nana.)

WENDY: Mother?

(Nana removes the dog's head, revealing MOTHER, who glares fiercely at Father.)

MOTHER: Actually, dear, your father and I made the decision together. I just happen to be the one who fits the blasted costume.

FATHER: Plus, you make a more convincing dog.

(He unzips the costume and helps Mother out of it.)

WENDY: Stuff the pooch. What I want to know is—if the contract's been cancelled— who's looking after me?

MOTHER: We are, dear.

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REFLOAT OUR WHALE

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MISS JACOBS, sensitive principal.

MANDY, impressionable student.

ERIN, conceited head girl.

(A beach. The present.)

(Darkness. The sound of waves breaking on a shoreline. Gulls cawing. Lights up on MISS JACOBS on a bare stage. Through a combination of lighting and mime the audience sees she is thigh deep in water, tending to a stranded whale, keeping it moist and calm. Miss Jacobs wears shorts and a high-visibility vest. During the course of the play, lighting will convey the tide gradually rising until it is up to the actors' chests at the end. MANDY approaches, wading through water. She wears a swimsuit. Both her forearms are wrapped in bandages.)

MANDY: Hello, Miss Jacobs...How are you getting on?

(Miss Jacobs hesitates, unsure what to say.)

MISS JACOBS: Coping.

MANDY: Sorry. I didn't mean...I just meant...with the whale.

MISS JACOBS: So did I.

(Pause. Mandy starts splashing the whale.)

MANDY: Know what Erin said? "Why do we call them pilot whales when they're so hopeless at navigation?"

MISS JACOBS: At times we all lose our way.

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MANDY: Another one just died further up the beach...We started to bury it in the sand. Erin said, "Leave it. For the necropsy." I asked her, "What's a necropsy?" She said, "An autopsy where they slice an animal open from the neck." (*Giggle.*) She was just joshing. Erin always joshes me.

MISS JACOBS: Shouldn't you be keeping your bandages dry?

MANDY: Already soaked through. I'm like numb from the elbows down. I can waggle my fingers, but I can't feel – Whoa!

(Mandy and Miss Jacobs react to a flailing movement from the whale.)

MISS JACOBS: Steady.

MANDY: Poor thing... Wonder why he landed so far from the rest. Maybe he's an outcast. Rejected by the "in" pod.

MISS JACOBS: (*Soothing the whale:*) That's better.

MANDY: You're real good at massaging, Miss. Where'd you learn that?

MISS JACOBS: Mandy!

MANDY: Back to normal, Miss. I shoot my mouth off. You growl at me. Yay!

MISS JACOBS: I'm pleased you're recovering so well.

MANDY: No big deal. Hardly the first time I cut myself.

MISS JACOBS: We were all very worried.

MANDY: It was my forearms. Not my wrists. Duh!

MISS JACOBS: I take full responsibility.

MANDY: Don't be whack, Miss! I had like mega issues way before you bawled me out.

MISS JACOBS: Even so –

MANDY: We're good now, aren't we? Chatting away. It's all blowing over. Soon the whole thing'll just be an incident in the past.

MISS JACOBS: I doubt if any of us will ever get over it.

MANDY: 'Course we will. I'll have some decent scars. Whenever I look at 'em, I'll remember, "That was the year I helped Miss Jacobs refloat our whale."

MISS JACOBS: Shouldn't be long now. Tide's rising fast.

MANDY: He'll have scars too. From all that thrashing around on the rocks. Big, beautiful scars.

MISS JACOBS: Now, now.

MANDY: Don't you just love the healing power of skin?

MISS JACOBS: What we're doing is actually illegal. Only authorized people are allowed to touch a marine mammal.

MANDY: What do they think we're gonna do? Give him a disease?

MISS JACOBS: Or catch one.

MANDY: Sometimes you have to take a risk... Like, they say "teachers shouldn't touch students." But sometimes... Sometimes a student needs you to reach out... Or else... Oh well. Still have my pen knife.

(Miss Jacobs opens her arms. Mandy moves towards her. They hug tightly for a while.)

MISS JACOBS: Mandy. I'm so sorry!

MANDY: I stuffed up, Miss. I was just showing off. Trying to impress someone. Got carried away. Please say you don't think I'm a bad person.

MISS JACOBS: I never thought you were a bad person.

MANDY: Not even when I was a bad person?

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MISS JACOBS: *(Teasingly:)* Not even then.

MANDY: Cool!

MISS JACOBS: We're neglecting our baby.

MANDY: He'll forgive us. We've set a good example.

(Mandy and Miss Jacobs resume soothing the whale. They continue in silence, sharing smiles without any need to talk. ERIN appears – optionally, on a rock. She wears a lifejacket over a wetsuit.)

ERIN: Mandy! What the hell are you up to?

(Mandy immediately stands rigid, terrified.)

MANDY: Nothing.

ERIN: Don't lie.

MISS JACOBS: It's all right, Erin.

ERIN: You needn't protect her, Miss. I had a clear view of the little suck-up wheedling her way into your good books.

MISS JACOBS: It wasn't like that.

ERIN: Let's ask her, shall we? – Well, Mandy? What was your motive for coming over here? Your plan. Don't tell me you were only thinking of the whale. *(Pause, as Mandy hangs her head.)* You're a case. First, you cyberbully Gwyneth. Then, you play the attempted suicide card, putting Miss Jacobs through hell. And now you seek her out and hassle her when she can't very well slip away. Unbelievable! Go and help where you can't do any damage. Gwyneth's off seeing her therapist again. I assume you don't have any other victims. Or, do you?

MANDY: *(Quietly:)* No.

ERIN: Then scram!

(Mandy leaves.)

MISS JACOBS: That was harsh, Erin.

ERIN: Can you honestly say she wasn't making you feel guilty?

MISS JACOBS: I don't need her for that.

ERIN: You did what any self-respecting principal would do.

MISS JACOBS: I named and shamed her.

ERIN: You put a stop to her bullying. You should be proud.

MISS JACOBS: Of driving a student to—?

ERIN: —take a good hard look at herself. Your zero tolerance policy works.

MISS JACOBS: I deserve a zero for tolerance.

ERIN: You show strong leadership, Miss Jacobs. That's why I chose you to support my college applications.

MISS JACOBS: Oh, that's right. You asked for a recommendation letter.

ERIN: I realize you've been preoccupied lately.

MISS JACOBS: I'll get straight onto it.

ERIN: No rush. Finish what you're doing.

MISS JACOBS: We need to turn him. Face him out to sea. Can you lend a hand?

ERIN: What's the point? They'll just head for shore again.

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GROW UP, JULIET

CAST OF CHARACTERS

JULIET, teenage girl.

FRIAR LAURENCE, etc., played by a teenage girl.

TYBALT, teenage boy or adult man.

ROMEO, teenage boy.

(Capulet family vault. Medieval or Elizabethan period, chosen by the costume designer.)

(Tybalt's coffin has a sword on the lid. ROMEO lies "dead" at the foot of Juliet's bier. JULIET is weeping over Romeo's body. She finds his empty poison bottle, holds it above her mouth, shakes it and casts it aside in frustration. Then she kisses Romeo to get some poison and licks her lips. There is a huge racket backstage, as if a pile of stuff has fallen over. Juliet is so startled she drops out of character.)

JULIET: What the—! *(Resuming her character:)* "Yea, noise? Then I'll be brief. O happy dagger!" *(Snatching Romeo's dagger:)* "This is thy sheath..."

(She stabs herself in the chest, but is surprised when the blade slides back into the handle.)

"This is thy sheath..."

(She tries again, with the same result. She repeatedly tests the spring against the palm of her hand.)

Intractable retractability!

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(FRIAR LAURENCE appears. The actress playing him speaks in a deep voice. Optionally, she wears a beard.)

LAURENCE: Ingenious device. From Sicily.
They like to have their little jests down there,
Where villainy is done with comic flair.
Verona could learn much from these our betters.
Sicilians have such fun with their vendettas.

JULIET: Thou'rt not surprised this dagger doth not hit?

LAURENCE: Forsooth, my dear, 'twas I that planted it.

JULIET: What, holy father? Hast thou lost thy mind?
To trick a poor girl thus is most unkind.

LAURENCE: Be these the thanks I get? Were't not for me,
Thou'dst done thyself a nasty injury.

(Juliet puts the dagger down and assumes a declamatory tragic manner.)

JULIET: I wish to die. Hence, leave me on my own.

LAURENCE: Youth suicide the Church cannot condone.

JULIET: I am already old in widowhood,
And weep more tears than any widow could.
In this wide world I'll offer any stakes
No softer heart in fonder widow breaks.

LAURENCE: A pretty pride, this boasting of thy grief.

JULIET: I'll mourn in silence then.

LAURENCE: That's a relief.

JULIET: No funeral mask or sad, pathetic mute
With moistened eye and quiv'ring lip to boot
Did e'er express such quiet sorrow yet
As dumbstruck Juliet's wordless woe.

LAURENCE: I'll bet.

JULIET: No buttoned lip of taciturn mortician,
No tongueless victim of the Inquisition,
No laryngitic mummer's dumb charade
Can match my unvoiced —

LAURENCE: Enough! Thy point thou hast conveyed.

JULIET: No —

LAURENCE: Sweetheart, let me get a word in please.

JULIET: How now? Thou "sweetheartst" me?

LAURENCE: I do but tease.

JULIET: Familiarity from Friar Laurence?
Such brazenness decorum never warrants.
Did I not know thee better, I might doubt
Thou art a friar.

LAURENCE: Well, half the secret's out.
Best hear the rest. Thy precious Friar Laurence
Hath blood in's veins. Hot blood that flows in torrents!
Yea, though I fear 'twill fill thee with abhorrence,
He is a man, thy wretched Friar Laurence.

JULIET: (*Backing away:*) Don't touch me!

LAURENCE: Come, thou hast no need to fear.

(Juliet grabs the dagger and threatens Laurence with it.)

JULIET: Nay, that must thou, vile lech'rous fiend!

LAURENCE: Oh dear.

JULIET: In my defense I am prepared to kill.

LAURENCE: Hast thou forgot? That blade's retractable.

*(Juliet throws the dagger away and scampers behind the coffin.
She grabs the sword.)*

JULIET: O even happier sword! This is thy sheath.

(She makes various attempts to stab herself in the chest, but the sword is too long.)

LAURENCE: List, would'st not like to see what lies beneath
This heavy, rough and rather itchy habit?

(Juliet threatens Laurence with the sword.)

JULIET: Nay, strip not naked, fornicating rabbit!

(Laurence removes his habit, revealing a colorful costume with tights, prominent codpiece and sword. The actress switches character, becoming MERCUTIO – optionally, removing her beard, leaving a moustache.)

MERCUTIO: Hey, nonny nunny nanny ninny nee.
Lo, I'm Mercutio!

(He performs a series of extravagant bows. Juliet gapes in disbelief. Mercutio is disappointed with her reaction.)

Hast not heard of me?

JULIET: I've only ever heard of one Mercutio.
He wouldn't show the liveliness that you show,
For he is dead.

MERCUTIO: As thou canst see, I live.
What's more, I am thy distant relative.
My aunt's a Capulet. And, strange to tell,
I'm kinsman to the Montagues as well.
Despite the awkwardness your feud arouses,
I'm friend to all. A cuz of both your houses.

JULIET: Mercutio died. By noble Tybalt slain.

MERCUTIO: In troth, we lied. Permit me to explain.
I drank this potion, which made me appear
To be a pallid corpse as cold as –

JULIET: Look here,
I know about the potion.

MERCUTIO: O, that's right.
I gave thee some to drink the other night.

JULIET: 'Twas Friar Laurence gave it me.

MERCUTIO: 'Twas I.
He lent me the disguise. Ay, he'll comply
With aught I ask. I said his blood be hot.
But, Juliet, *thy* delights do tempt him not.

JULIET: What care I for the friar's private life?
'Twas that kind man who made me Romeo's wife.

MERCUTIO: Alack-a-day, thy claim is far from true.

JULIET: You mean the man who wed us twain was you?

MERCUTIO: Well, I performed the ceremony, but I'm
No clergyman. Nor now, nor at the time.

JULIET: O monstrous! Thou hast plotted all of this
To steal poor Romeo's bride and Juliet's kiss!

(She clumsily attacks him with the sword. Mercutio draws his sword and casually parries each thrust.)

MERCUTIO: Tush, let me finish.

JULIET: Thou shalt not begin!

MERCUTIO: Be gentle.

JULIET: Never!

MERCUTIO: Fie, thou canst not win.

JULIET: If only noble Tybalt held this blade,
He would avenge the honour thou'st betrayed.

MERCUTIO: Dost call for Tybalt? – Tybalt! There's thy cue.

(Mercutio knocks on the coffin. The lid slides open. TYBALT sits up and steps out.)

JULIET: Alive?

TYBALT: I drank this potion—

JULIET: Not thou, too!
Dost recognize this villain?

TYBALT: One I hate.

MERCUTIO: Good morrow, cuz.

JULIET: (*Offering Tybalt the sword:*) Here, crack the prattler's pate!

TYBALT: I scorn to lay a finger on a jade.

JULIET: Though he's effeminate, the man's no maid.

MERCUTIO: Not in the sense of virgin, no.

JULIET: (*To Tybalt:*) Dost hear?

TYBALT: (*Grumpily:*) I'm in the wench's power.

JULIET: Ah. 'Tis clear.

Like Friar Laurence, Tybalt too is smitten.
(*To Mercutio:*) And doth thy bidding, docile as a kitten.

TYBALT: I'd tear her limb from limb if I were free.

MERCUTIO: I thank thee for thy honest courtesy.
But, Juliet, we have toyed with thee too long.

JULIET: (*To Tybalt:*) Defend me!

TYBALT: Nay.

JULIET: Thou coward!

MERCUTIO: Tush, thou'rt wrong
To slander Tybalt. He but joined my game
To shield thy mother from a public shame.

TYBALT: Be silent, gossip!

MERCUTIO: (*To Juliet:*) Think how she did weep

And wail when Tybalt "died." Quite failed to keep
Her passion for her nephew under cover.

JULIET: (*To Tybalt:*) Doth he speak true? Art thou my mother's
lover?

TYBALT: (*To Mercutio:*) I've played my part. Am I now free to
go?

MERCUTIO: Nay, thou must stay to soothe poor Juliet's woe.
For she's about to suffer sore distress.

JULIET: My Romeo's dead. Thy violence hurts me less.

MERCUTIO: I push thee not. I pull thee from the cliff...
(*Nudging Romeo with his foot:*) Thy cue.

(Romeo comes to life and stretches.)

ROMEO: What joy to move! My neck's so stiff.

(Juliet drops the sword on the ground.)

JULIET: Alive? But, how? I tried thy pulse. No motion.
Thy lips expelled no breath.

ROMEO: I drank this potion.

JULIET: What care I how the miracle occurred?
My husband lives! My love! My world!

MERCUTIO: My word.

JULIET: My universe!

ROMEO: Nay, none of me is thine.
My faithful heart belongs to Rosaline.

*(Romeo gently lets down Mercutio's hair – and/or removes the
moustache. The actress smiles and removes the codpiece,
becoming ROSALINE. Romeo and Rosaline kiss.)*

JULIET: Foul treachery! My love doth love another?

ROMEO: Zounds, chide me not. I'm no worse than thy mother.

(Tybalt furiously grabs his sword and threatens Romeo.)

TYBALT: Base Montague! I'll send thy soul to hell!

ROSALINE: Peace, Tybalt! Sheathe thy weapon. Or I'll tell.

(Tybalt struggles to control himself, then grudgingly puts up his sword and turns away with a frustrated huff.)

JULIET: Is this the famous beauty Rosaline?
The one a hundred swains declare divine?
I see thou'rt but a cheap seducing Circe.

ROSALINE: Nay, thou'rt the hussy who deserves no mercy.
Last week I saw thee flirting at the ball.
Thou almost hadst my Romeo in thrall.

ROMEO: Until that evening thou wert cold and cruel.

ROSALINE: I fired up. Jealousy's a potent fuel.

ROMEO: Thanks, Juliet, for deliv'ring me my bride.

JULIET: Was I thy plaything, quickly cast aside?

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TWILIGHT OF THE GRIZZLY

CAST OF CHARACTERS

CALIFORNIA GRIZZLY, bear played by a girl or a boy.

TRAPPER JOAN, rugged teenage mountain girl.

SAM BOYANT, young man of many dubious talents: quack, hustler, entrepreneur.

(Mount Pinos, Santa Barbara National Forest [now Los Padres National Forest], California. 1924.)

(Gunshot.)

(A terrified CALIFORNIA GRIZZLY scampers in on all fours.)

(Another gunshot. The bear falls to the ground, wounded. It howls in pain. After several failed attempts to get up, it lies at rest, snarling.)

(JOAN, a rugged mountain girl, strolls in, aiming her rifle. The bear roars ferociously. Joan calmly pulls the trigger. But only a click is heard.)

JOAN: Don't you worry none, varmint. I got plenty o' bullets.

(Joan whistles Chopin's funeral march as she casually reloads. When she finally takes aim again she is startled by loud repeated honks from a vintage car horn.)

SAM: *(Out of sight:)* Hold your fire! Hold your fire!

JOAN: What in tarnation...?

(Joan looks offstage and waits, puzzled.)

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(SAM, a chirpy young man, comes in. He wears flashy clothes and carries a carpet bag.)

SAM: Salutations on this glorious afternoon, ma'am.

JOAN: Howdy, stranger. How the blazes did you get that Tin Lizzy up here?

SAM: It was a bumpy drive. But a traveling man don't need roads.

JOAN: What you sellin', peddler?

SAM: What do you need?

JOAN: Got any liquor?

SAM: Sure. Legal too when I write you a prescription. Let me introduce myself. *(Presenting a card:)* Sam Boyant. Purveyor of Fine Medicinal Remedies.

JOAN: Homebrewed hooch?

SAM: Nope. The genuine hard stuff. Certified by the crowned heads of Europe. Come see.

JOAN: Be right with you. I'll jes finish my chore.

(She aims her rifle at the bear. Sam interposes himself.)

SAM: Wait, wait wait!

JOAN: Outa my way!

SAM: You haven't thought this through. Do you realize what we have here?

JOAN: A lowdown ornery b'ar.

SAM: An opportunity! *(Presenting a card:)* Sam Boyant. Trusty Financial Advisor.

JOAN: *(Lowering the rifle:)* Financial?

SAM: I always play the right card.

JOAN: The tradin' post pays 20 bucks for a pelt this size.

SAM: You can earn far more than that, ma'am.

JOAN: This ain't no quality black b'ar fur. Jes plain ol' grizzly.

SAM: If you let the animal live I guarantee you a fortune in ongoing revenue.

JOAN: You fulla moonshine.

(The bear growls.)

SAM: Let's discuss this without interruption.

(Sam ties a handkerchief over his nose and mouth like a bandit. He rummages in his bag and takes out a dead fish and a small bottle. He pours some liquid over the fish. Then he cautiously dangles the fish over the grizzly's head. The bear tries to reach up and grab the fish in its mouth.)

JOAN: You givin' the critter its last meal?

(The bear slumps down, fast asleep. Sam throws the fish away and takes off his handkerchief.)

SAM: Laced with chloroform.

JOAN: Well, I'll be hornswoggled! What's this all about?

SAM: Use your noggin. Before today when was the last time you laid eyes on a grizzly?

JOAN: Cain't rightly recall... A fair while.

SAM: Last reported sighting was two years ago. 1922. And that one was shot dead. Experts say the California grizzly's extinct now. What we have ourselves here, ma'am, is a genuine gold-plated meal ticket.

JOAN: How d'you figure that?

SAM: *(Presenting a card:)* Sam Boyant. Theatrical Impresario. Official Agent for the Ringling Brothers and Barnum and

Bailey Circus.

JOAN: You fixin' to put it on show? A plain ol' b'ar?

SAM: A unique specimen. Punters will pay good money to view the exhibit.

JOAN: You reckon?

SAM: What's pictured on our state flag?

JOAN: A grizzly.

SAM: And would any patriotic citizen admit to never having seen one in the flesh?

JOAN: Guess not.

SAM: Split the proceeds 50-50, ma'am? Deal?

(He holds out his hand for a handshake.)

JOAN: Shouldn't we git legal counsel?

SAM: *(Presenting a card:)* Sam Boyant. Attorney at Law. Contracts a Specialty. And you are?

JOAN: *(Shaking hands:)* Folks call me Trapper Joan.

SAM: Not for much longer. A lady of means don't need to work.

JOAN: Gee whillikers! I won't know meself.

(The grizzly writhes and groans in its sleep.)

SAM: Oops. We're neglecting our investment.

(Sam rummages in his bag and takes out a large pair of pliers. He approaches the bear and locates the wound.)

JOAN: Don't tell me. Sam Boyant. Tooth Puller.

(Sam forces the pliers into the bear's hide, twists them and pulls out a bullet.)

SAM: Quick Efficient Service.

(The sleeping grizzly still groans.)

JOAN: The customer don't seem too satisfied.

SAM: I heard two shots. Is there another wound?

JOAN: Cain't be. I only hit it once.

SAM: How can you be sure you missed?

JOAN: I never miss.

SAM: Well then—

JOAN: First time I was aimin' at a rattlesnake.

(Joan takes a dead snake out of her pocket. The grizzly still moans in its sleep.)

SAM: Then what's its problem?

(He rummages in his bag, takes out a stethoscope and examines the grizzly.)

JOAN: Sam Boyant. M.D.

(Sam gasps when he listens to the bear's belly.)

SAM: Dang me! It's a female!

JOAN: Ain't you lookin' in the wrong locality?

SAM: Nope. It's pregnant.

JOAN: Land sakes!

SAM: Must be a male out there.

JOAN: Leastways there *was*. Mebbe months ago. Dependin' on how far gone she is.

SAM: I'd say it's pretty much full term... In fact...

(Still asleep, the grizzly roars in pain.)

JOAN: Got a clean towel in that bag o' yours?

SAM: Sure.

(Sam takes out a towel and hands it to Joan. She holds it between the bear's hind legs.)

JOAN: Your drug musta induced labor. B'ars give birth while hibernatin'... Here it comes.

(The unconscious grizzly gives a loud birthing roar. Joan wraps the towel and holds it as if she is cradling a newborn cub. She takes a peek.)

The cub's a filly. Cute l'il thing. Gotta keep her warm. Empty your bag... Do as I say!

SAM: All right, all right.

(Sam tips the contents of his bag on the ground. A leather muzzle and an iron chain fall out. Joan gently places the towel in the bag. Meanwhile, the mother grizzly has drifted off into a peaceful deep sleep.)

JOAN: You need feedin', sweetheart.

(Joan puts the bag on the grizzly's chest and drapes one of its forelegs over it to hold it in place.)

There you go. Suckle away.

SAM: Our prize may not be a one-off now. But this maternity show's bound to be a hit.

JOAN: Listen –

SAM: *(Approaching the grizzly with the muzzle and chain:)* Better get these on while it's quiet.

JOAN: *(Interposing herself:)* Don't you touch her!

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ALEEMA THE BOY GIRL

CAST OF CHARACTERS

ALEEMA, preteen girl, sporty, accepted as a boy.

TABESH, preteen boy, nerdy.

AZAD, street barber, young woman disguised as a man.

MURSAL, Aleema's sister, teenage, confident.

(A street in Kabul, Afghanistan. The present.)

(ALEEMA, a preteen girl, and TABESH, a preteen boy, are playing soccer in the street. Both have similar shirts, trousers and short haircuts. Tabesh is in possession of the ball. But Aleema soon intercepts it and keeps it away from him with fancy footwork.)

ALEEMA: You play like a girl!

TABESH: Take that back!

(Aleema races away and kicks the ball out of sight.)

ALEEMA: "Ali scores the World Cup winning goal!"

TABESH: In your dreams.

ALEEMA: "The crowd goes wild! Qatar 2022's the best tournament ever!"

TABESH: Like Afghanistan could even qualify.

ALEEMA: I'm playing for Brazil. They paid 50 billion for my transfer.

TABESH: *(Retrieving the ball:)* You got ripped off. In 2022 50 billion Afghani won't buy a Coke.

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ALEEMA: Fifty billion American dollars. Neymar says I'm worth every cent.

TABESH: You aren't even eligible. You have to be Brazilian to play for Brazil.

ALEEMA: Neymar plays for Barcelona. And he's not Spanish.

TABESH: Barcelona isn't a national team.

ALEEMA: Yeah well... What if Neymar adopts me?

TABESH: You've already got parents.

ALEEMA: This is discrimination. FIFA's rules suck.

TABESH: There's one way you could play for Brazil. Go to school there.

ALEEMA: OK, I will.

TABESH: Your father doesn't even let you go to school *here*.

ALEEMA: Only 'cause I have to work... But Baba will change his mind... Soon as he realizes I can't be a world champion without an overseas education.

TABESH: Sure, sure.

ALEEMA: Just has to ask himself. Does he want me to buy him a swimming pool or not?

TABESH: (*Laughing:*) You're away with the fairies.

ALEEMA: (*Grabbing Tabesh in a headlock:*) Who you calling a fairy?

TABESH: (*Struggling:*) No one! No one!

ALEEMA: (*Applying pressure:*) Would you like me to buy *you* a swimming pool?

TABESH: Yeah, course!

ALEEMA: Indoor or outdoor?

TABESH: Indoor!

ALEEMA: Heated?

TABESH: Yes, please!

ALEEMA: (*Releasing Tabesh:*) Right. Expect delivery in seven to ten years.

TABESH: Will you be having a pool of your own?

ALEEMA: At least three. In each of my mansions.

TABESH: Guess you'll have to be a bit careful.

ALEEMA: What?

TABESH: About being seen...in a bathing suit.

ALEEMA: You –!

TABESH: (*Backing away:*) Don't worry. I won't say anything.

ALEEMA: Shut your face!

TABESH: I'm on your side. I want my pool.

ALEEMA: Back to the game. Your kickoff!

TABESH: Calm down. You'll be fine. The World Cup's not like the Olympics. They don't have any...you know, testing.

ALEEMA: Shut up and play!

TABESH: And in the changing room you can always shower in private.

(Aleema lunges at Tabesh, but he scampers away. There is a playful chase. Aleema catches Tabesh and tickles him. He can't help laughing. AZAD, a young woman disguised as a man, comes in, pushing a handcart with barber's equipment. She is wearing men's clothes.)

AZAD: Tabesh. Tabesh! Time for a trim?

TABESH: Yes, please!

ALEEMA: (*Releasing Tabesh:*) I'll beat you to it.

AZAD: No, no. Tabesh. You come sit down.

ALEEMA: Hey!

TABESH: Do him first. You know Ali. Always has to win at everything.

AZAD: Not today. Not anymore.

ALEEMA: What are you talking about?

AZAD: I don't want trouble. I just do what the customer says.

ALEEMA: That's more like it. Short back and sides, please.

(Aleema approaches. But Azad blocks her way.)

AZAD: No, no. Not possible.

ALEEMA: You said you have to do what I say.

AZAD: What my *customer* says. You don't pay me. Your father does. Or did.

ALEEMA: Have you had an argument with him?

AZAD: No. He just said I'm not to cut your hair.

TABESH: Woohoo! What have you done, Azad?

AZAD: I never do anything. Except go about my business. And not even that sometimes.

ALEEMA: Baba can be so unfair.

TABESH: I sure wouldn't want to be on his bad side.

ALEEMA: He shouldn't stop a man from earning his living. I'll pay. Out of my own pocket.

(Aleema offers Azad a few coins.)

AZAD: Keep your money.

TABESH: He can afford it. Says he's got megabucks. May's well get your slice.

AZAD: No. Not worth the flak.

ALEEMA: Baba won't find out. If he asks, I'll say it was someone else.

AZAD: He wouldn't believe you. He's spoken to all the local barbers. None of us is allowed to cut your hair.

ALEEMA: Why not?

AZAD: Why do you think? You're growing up, Aleema.

ALEEMA: My name's Ali.

AZAD: If you say so.

ALEEMA: Baba calls me Ali.

TABESH: Yeah, I thought he liked having a son.

ALEEMA: He does! He's proud of me. Always showing me off. To everyone.

AZAD: As if most of us don't know the truth.

ALEEMA: I don't care who knows. Long as they play along.

TABESH: Sounds like the game's nearly up. You'll be wearing a headscarf soon.

ALEEMA: No way! Baba hasn't thought this through. If I have long hair, I won't be able to help out at the garage!

AZAD: He's aware of that. – Tabesh, do you know any boy looking for work?

TABESH: Um...

ALEEMA: (*Raising a fist:*) No one's taking my job!

TABESH: Actually, we're all fully employed.

AZAD: Except for our friend here.

ALEEMA: Baba can't just fire me!

TABESH: You could take him to court.

ALEEMA: (*Distressed, looking offstage:*) Mursal!

TABESH: For wrongful discharge.

AZAD: Careful.

ALEEMA: Mursal!

TABESH: Just don't tell him I said so. I'm not qualified to give legal advice.

MURSAL: (*Off, calling to her classmates:*) See you tomorrow.

TABESH: Better leave me right out of it.

(MURSAL, Aleema's teenage sister, comes in, wearing a black school uniform and white headscarf.)

MURSAL: No, I'm good. My brother's here. He'll walk me home.

ALEEMA: See? Only a boy can do that!

MURSAL: What's up?

TABESH: He has to grow her hair. I mean, she has to grow his... You get the picture.

MURSAL: Is that all?

ALEEMA: It's not funny.

MURSAL: Yes it is. You'll experience what it's like. Not being free to walk down the street by yourself.

ALEEMA: Without me to escort you, you'll have to stay home more!

MURSAL: Tough. At least I'll have a little sister to amuse me there.

ALEEMA: No you won't! I'll run away!

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SUGAR HORROR

CAST OF CHARACTERS

RETTA, preteen girl, cautious.

ANSEL, Retta's younger brother, adventurous.

DONNA ROCKWELL, 1950s housewife type, friendly.

(A street in your neighborhood. The near future.)

(RETTA, a preteen girl, comes in, wearing a skeleton costume. She carries a bag full of treats.)

RETTA: Come on, Ansel. My bag's full. Let's go home.

(ANSEL, Retta's younger brother, comes in, wearing a business suit many sizes too big for him. He has an optical head-mounted display pushed up on his forehead. He is scoffing candy from a bag.)

ANSEL: Still room in mine. How come you got more treats than me?

RETTA: I didn't. I'm just saving them for later.

ANSEL: I want some for later too. Can we do one more house? Please, Retta!

RETTA: We've already done the whole street.

ANSEL: We missed this place.

RETTA: That's out of bounds.

ANSEL: Whata you mean?

RETTA: The lady who lives here's a witch.

ANSEL: Bull! No such thing as witches.

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RETTA: That's what grown-ups want us to think. But I overheard Mom talking to Dad. She said, "That woman who moved in on the corner, you stay away from her. I know her type. She'll bewitch every man in the neighborhood."

ANSEL: Cool! If she's got magic powers, she can download candy.

(Ansel approaches a door.)

RETTA: Ansel! Stop! It's too risky.

ANSEL: So? Why can't I take a risk for once in my life?

RETTA: We have to play safe.

ANSEL: That's all we ever do. Virtual reality lessons at school. Virtual reality games at home. Boring! I want real reality. A real life adventure! Don't you, Retta?

RETTA: Well... As long as you're ready to run at the first sign of danger —

ANSEL: Thanks, sis.

(Ansel knocks on the door.)

RETTA: Don't you dare step inside.

ANSEL: I'm not crazy. Most accidents happen in the home. Slippery floors. Loose mats. I'm after adventure. Not a broken neck.

RETTA: The biggest hazard you have to watch out for is grown-ups.

ANSEL: Yeah. If one of them trips over and lands on you, you could be squashed to death.

(The door opens. DONNA appears, looking like a cheerful 1950s housewife.)

DONNA: Hello, children.

ANSEL: Trick or treat!

DONNA: My, what gorgeous costumes. *(To Retta:)* I can see you're a stick-thin supermodel. *(To Ansel:)* But what are you? A lawyer?

ANSEL: Scarier.

DONNA: Politician?

ANSEL: Scarier.

DONNA: I give up.

ANSEL: Bank manager.

DONNA: Ooh!

ANSEL: Give us a treat or I'll fiveclose you.

DONNA: Pardon?

RETTA: He means "foreclose."

ANSEL: Only worse.

DONNA: Well, I'd better fetch something extra special. Don't go away.

(Donna goes back inside.)

ANSEL: See? Nice lady.

RETTA: I don't trust her. I took her photo. Let's run a background check.

(Retta starts poking the air in front of her. Ansel lowers his optical head-mounted display over his eyes.)

ANSEL: I hate wearing these googles.

RETTA: You'll get eye implants when your retinas are fully developed.

ANSEL: Yeah, yeah. And in the meantime I have to go around looking like a baby.

RETTA: This facial recognition app is awesome... Here we are. Donna Rockwell. Human resources manager, Advanced Food Technology Project, NASA.

ANSEL: NASA? That's where they do rocketship stuff. Cool.

RETTA: Shh! She's coming.

(Donna reappears, carrying a basket.)

DONNA: Now, which one of you deserves first taste?

ANSEL: Me! Me!

(Donna reveals a cabbage.)

DONNA: Enjoy.

ANSEL: Yuck!

DONNA: Have a nibble. I guarantee you'll love it.

ANSEL: I don't eat greens.

RETTA: OMG! It's pure sugar!

ANSEL: What?

RETTA: Look at your nutrition analysis app.

ANSEL: Jeepers!

(Ansel can't resist taking a piece of leaf.)

RETTA: Ansel!

DONNA: It's perfectly safe. Check the health certification on your screen.

(Ansel tentatively tries a lick.)

ANSEL: Yum!

DONNA: It may look like a cabbage. But it's actually an edible 3D printout.

ANSEL: Sweet!

(Ansel grabs the cabbage and scoffs it.)

RETTA: If that's supposed to get kids to eat their veggies, it's an epic fail. They'll just rot their teeth!

DONNA: Teeth are disposable. We can regrow them.

ANSEL: I'm already on my second set.

RETTA: But you won't get any more.

DONNA: Yes you will. As many as you need.

ANSEL: Like sharks?

RETTA: That laser technology costs the earth.

DONNA: Not any more. We use high-speed printers for dentistry now.

ANSEL: I've got a gap up here. Can you fill it?

DONNA: Of course.

(Donna reaches into her basket and takes out a portable printer.)

ANSEL: I want my chewing power back to full strength.

DONNA: "Upper right second molar. Scan for personalized fit" ... Done.

(Donna produces a tooth and inserts it into Ansel's gum.)

RETTA: OMG! The tooth's made of pure sugar too!

DONNA: Highly compacted. Can last for weeks if you suck at it slowly.

ANSEL: Wow!

(Ansel starts sucking his fingers.)

RETTA: That's enough, Ansel. Let's go home.

DONNA: You can make all sorts of interesting things out of sugar.

ANSEL: Yeah?

DONNA: Would you like one of these printers?

ANSEL: Sure!

DONNA: "Replicate."

(Donna produces another printer. She offers it to Ansel, who sticks the cabbage between his legs and takes the printer.)

ANSEL: Gee, thanks.

RETTA: Don't eat it!

ANSEL: I'm not stupid. This is an investment... But so tempting. You hold it for me, sis. You've got willpower.

(Retta reluctantly accepts the printer.)

RETTA: I guess it could come in handy. If used sensibly.

(Ansel can't help chewing his fingers.)

DONNA: Absolutely. For example, if you ever need a prosthetic limb...

RETTA: I don't have a lot of call for that.

DONNA: You never know.

ANSEL: Hey! Where are my fingertips?

(Terrified, Ansel holds up his knuckles.)

RETTA: OMG! You've chewed them off!

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ALMOST IMMORTAL

CAST OF CHARACTERS

ZEN, intense teenage girl with a morbid outlook.

RAY, Zen's lively great-great-great-great-great-grandfather, 197 years old.

KLOË, hip teenage girl, a Coast Guard trainee.

(The shore of Bunker Hill Island in the former Boston Archipelago. The distant future.)

(Various items of trash litter the stage, as if washed up on a shoreline. Amongst them, a battered wire bird cage.)

(ZEN, a teenage girl in retro 21st-century Goth gear, sulkily paces up and down, kicking the trash with her boot. RAY, a very old man in a Hawaiian shirt and shorts, relaxes in a deck chair. Zen nibbles her hair. She examines a strand.)

ZEN: Flood! I'm turning gray already!

(Zen plucks out the offending hair and flicks it away.)

RAY: The first gray hair is a tragedy. The thousandth gray hair isn't so bad. The millionth gray hair is a blessing.

ZEN: Spare me your wisdom. My life's over.

RAY: You look healthy enough to me, Zen. Perhaps a trifle dehydrated.

ZEN: My heart's broken.

RAY: The heart is an amazingly resilient organ. Take mine. Still going strong after 197 years.

ZEN: I do know how old you are, Great-Great-Great-Great-Great-Grandpa Ray. You mention it every five minutes.

RAY: I'm proud of my longevity. Three more years and I'll break the double century barrier. No one's ever done that. The closest is Miyuki Kanagawa in Japan. She has a nine-month head start on me. But if I outlast her, I'll gain the world record.

ZEN: (*Simultaneously mocking him:*) World record. Big deal.

RAY: I realize my triumph won't stand for long. Life expectancy keeps extending. By the time you're my age, 200 could be normal.

ZEN: Heaven forbid. Mercifully, supergeriatricness doesn't run in our family.

RAY: Genetics has nothing to do with it.

ZEN: You had hundreds of descendants, didn't you? I'm the only one left. The rest died young.

RAY: In accidents.

ZEN: Nearly all climate change-related. Typhoons, flash floods—

RAY: Yes, yes. But nowadays we have sophisticated early warning systems. So you're perfectly safe. You might even hit 300.

ZEN: Just my luck! Condemned to live for ages...without Kloë. I have to wake up every morning without Kloë. And go to bed every night without Kloë.

RAY: Zen. It's weeks since she broke up with you. Time to move on.

ZEN: I'm ready to move away. I can't wait to get off this trash heap.

RAY: (*Looking at the sky in the distance:*) Well, here come our

rescuers.

ZEN: Finally!

RAY: Nowhere for them to land. They'll have to let down a line and winch us up.

ZEN: How primitive! I can remember when Boston was a civilized village.

RAY: I can remember when it was a small town.

ZEN: We're not even an island now. Just a reef.

RAY: With plenty to explore. Help me up, Zen. Take me for my walk. Have to keep active.

(Zen helps Ray to his feet. He is very dodderly, but with Zen's support he manages to hobble around.)

ZEN: Don't overexert yourself.

RAY: I'm in perfect shape. Only disease I suffer from is *clockstrophobia*. The fear of being trapped in a confined period of time.

ZEN: You mean mortality?

RAY: Watch your language, girl. Now, what's the sea washed up today?

ZEN: A sad-looking birdcage.

RAY: Ah. A symbol of hope.

ZEN: How do you figure that?

RAY: No bird inside.

ZEN: It probably died of starvation. Rotted away. And its bones fell out through the wires.

RAY: Aren't you a cheerful soul.

ZEN: I'm just being realistic. The whole planet's a disaster area.

RAY: And has been since before I was born. What else is new?

ZEN: I'd tell you. But I don't want to upset you.

RAY: Has there been a weather update?

(He checks his watch.)

No. Still on schedule.

ZEN: Miyuki Kanagawa has died.

RAY: So she didn't even hit 199. *(Chuckle.)* Well well well.

ZEN: I thought you hated hearing about death.

RAY: Not in this case. I've got no rivals now. All I have to do is hold on.

ZEN: You said you have a heart, Great-Great-Great-Great-Great-Grandpa Ray. I can't see any sign of it.

RAY: Er...how did she die?

ZEN: "Assisted."

RAY: The stupid idiot! What is it with these people? They get so close. Then they give up.

ZEN: We don't know what her circumstances were.

RAY: There's no excuse for packing it all in! Life's too precious... Though doctors don't seem to think so.

ZEN: What do you mean?

(Ray holds up a pill attached to a chain hanging around his neck.)

RAY: They kindly provide every supergeriatric with this pill. If life becomes too much for us we can simply swallow and drift off into eternal sleep.

ZEN: I wondered what that was.

RAY: My first instinct was to flush it down the toilet. But I decided to wear it. As an act of defiance. I'm no coward like Miyuki Kanagawa.

ZEN: Don't judge her. People usually do things for a reason... Even if other people never know.

RAY: What are you on about?

ZEN: Nothing.

RAY: Listen. A change of scene will perk you up. This time tomorrow we'll be lazing at Rocky Mountain Beach. (*Looking offstage:*) Oh, a raft.

ZEN: (*Looking offstage and gasping under her breath:*) Oh no!

RAY: I was looking forward to a winching.

ZEN: We need to get outa here! Fast!

RAY: What?

ZEN: (*Frantically taking off her boots:*) A tsunami's coming!

RAY: I know. But not for another two-and-a-half hours. We'll be long gone by then.

ZEN: Let's swim for it.

RAY: Are you serious?

ZEN: (*Stripping down to a wetsuit:*) This is an emergency!

RAY: No it isn't. If our lives were in danger, we'd start beeping. Early warning system, remember?

ZEN: We can reach the mainland in about 90 minutes.

RAY: But our ride's already here.

ZEN: We needn't bother them. Nice morning for a dip. You said you like to keep active.

RAY: Not in the sea when a tsunami's on the way!

ZEN: You said yourself we've got plenty of time. Let's get your shirt off.

(Zen frantically struggles to undo Ray's buttons.)

RAY: This is insane.

ZEN: I'll tow you across. Or float you across. But we have to leave now!

(KLOË, a teenage girl, strolls in, wearing Search and Rescue gear and carrying two water bottles.)

KLOË: Morning, sir.

(Zen stops and turns away guiltily. Ray is pleasantly surprised to see Kloë.)

RAY: Kloë! I didn't know you were with the Coast Guard.

KLOË: *(Offering a bottle to Ray:)* I engulfed a fortnight ago.

RAY: Many thanks.

KLOË: Had to drown something with my life.

(Ray takes a long drink. Pause. Zen and Kloë ignore each other.)

RAY: Ah! Fresh water. Nothing like it.

KLOË: You can drench that again.

RAY: Still using that nautical slang, Kloë? It was old-fashioned last century.

KLOË: It's tiding a comeback.

ZEN: Are you stalking me?

KLOË: *(Offering a bottle to Zen:)* Only deluging my job.

ZEN: Really? Out of all the people who could come to my rescue it just happens to be you.

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