

KIDS PLAY

By

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CHARACTERS

DANIEL	Seven. Amber's twin brother.
AMBER	Seven. Daniel's twin sister.
ROBERT	Seven. Cassie's big brother.
CASSIE	Five. Robert's little sister.

SETTING: A HOUSE.

(CASSIE is laying on the floor, coloring, as AMBER plays with a toy car.)

DANIEL (Off stage)

LEFT.

LEFT.

LEFT RIGHT LEFT.

LEFT.

LEFT.

LEFT RIGHT LEFT.

(DANIEL and ROBERT enter.)

DANIEL

ATTEN-TION, SOLDIER!

ROBERT

SIR, YES, SIR!

DANIEL

LISTEN UP, MAGGOT. WE DID NOT CRAWL THROUGH ONE THOUSAND MILES OF JUNGLE TO DIE UP HERE ON HAMBURGER HILL.

ROBERT

PERMISSION TO SPEAK, SIR?

DANIEL

PERMISSION GRANTED.

ROBERT

DO YOU MIND IF WE MOVE TO CHEESEBURGER HILL? I THINK HAMBURGERS ARE A LITTLE BORING, SIR.

DANIEL

NO, I THINK NOT, SOLDIER. MY MOMMY SAYS I AM LACTOSE INTOLERANT AND CANNOT HAVE CHEESEBURGERS.

ROBERT

SIR, YES, SIR.

DANIEL

Keep your voice down, soldier. I think I see Charlie. He's here and he sure is angry. Oh no...

ROBERT

What is it Sarge?

DANIEL

A minefield. Son, you're gonna have to lead the way.

ROBERT

Into a minefield?

DANIEL

You'll be fine, soldier. A minefield is not an easy thing to navigate, especially with no mine detector.

ROBERT

What!?

DANIEL

Don't worry. I'm sure you'll do fine. And, since you're leading the way, if you make it out of there alive there's a nice promotion in it for you. We'll give you a raise and a shiny, new star on your uniform. Sound good?

ROBERT

I... I don't want to go.

DANIEL

Son, I am your superior officer. Are you saying "no" to your superior officer?

ROBERT

I... I—

DANIEL

PEW, PEW PEW!

Get down!

ROBERT

What?

DANIEL

They're shooting at us, Private!

ROBERT
Oh!

PEW, PEW PEW.

I can't see them through the trees, Sarge!

DANIEL
Don't be an idiot, son. They ARE the trees!

ROBERT
Jesus.

AMBER
VROOM VROOM!

ROBERT
What was that, sir?

DANIEL
Uh... It was nothing, son. Just ignore it.

CHU CHUG, POUGH!

There. I think that was the last of them. Now, I figure their basecamp must be over that ridge. Makes sense to send a scouting party at us. They probably want us to storm that hill.

ROBERT
Maybe we should? I think we could take them.

AMBER
VRRRR VRRR VRRR VROOM!

ROBERT
Sir, that sound is back. Are you sure we shouldn't investigate?

DANIEL
Son, I am your commanding officer. When I tell you to ignore something, I expect it to be ignored. Especially when it's being done by SOME BUTTHEAD WHO DOESN'T RESPECT THE RULES OF MY GAME...

(Silence.)

Alright then... We should watch our six, just in case the enemy tries to flank us. They could be anywhere--

SCREEEAA!
AMBER

-- Oh, will you SHUT UP, Amber!
DANIEL

AMBER
What? I can't play my own game? I think I should be able to play cars all as loud as I want.
Unless you can use my help against the Vietcong...

DANIEL
It doesn't make sense with what we're doing. We're ground infantry, Amber. You can't just be a
random car.

AMBER
So... I'll be a soldier then!

DANIEL
Women weren't allowed to be soldiers back then.

AMBER
Well... Well, fine then. I'll try to keep it down.

DANIEL
Thank you.

ROBERT
Sir, I just got off the radio with the 101st. They say the enemy is two clicks North.

DANIEL
Good. Get ready, soldier. I hope you've made peace with your god.

ROBERT
Every night before bed.

AMBER
CHU CHUCK. PRR PRR PRR PURRR.

DANIEL
Amber.

AMBER
I'm just idling!

DANIEL

You better stay that way.

AMBER

I will, I promise. I'll just wait here for you to finish before I - Oh no! It's another car! He's challenging me to a race.

DANIEL

You better not!

AMBER

I'm sorry, Daniel. I can't wuss out on this race. My street cred is on the line.

ROBERT

Come on, Amber. You're making him mad.

AMBER

Sorry boys. He wants to race for pink slips, and I can't get another one. I've already been in enough trouble this year—BRRRRR—I can't hear you over the sound of the engine—BEWWWW—Can you hear how many horsepower this has!?!—VRRRRR—I can take this guy!

DANIEL

STOP IT!

(Amber runs the car at Daniel and Robert. When she gets close to them, she centers her aim at Robert and tackles him to the ground.)

ROBERT

Hey!!

CASSIE

Get off of my brother!

ROBERT

Amber, what the heck?

AMBER

The brave soldier fell at the hands of an American made car. How ironic.

CASSIE

Are you okay, Robert?

ROBERT

Yes, Cassie. Go back to coloring.

(Cassie huffs a bit, but quickly settles down and starts coloring again.)

DANIEL
What did you do that for, Amber?

AMBER
I just wanted to play.

DANIEL
No. You wanted to play your stupid game. You can't just do anything you want, ya know? There weren't even any cars in Vietnam. The jungle was too dense.

AMBER
Really? There weren't any cars? What about in the cities?

DANIEL
Okay, there were a few cars. But, there weren't any cars like that.

ROBERT
Yep. It's true. Only jeeps and vans... And motorcycles.

DANIEL
Ooo let's play that! I call driver!

ROBERT
But—

DANIEL
--But what?

ROBERT
... Nothing. Nevermind.

AMBER
Let him be the driver, Daniel. You always do this.

DANIEL
Do what?

AMBER
Take whatever role you want. What if he wants to be the driver?

DANIEL
Robert, do you want to be the driver?

ROBERT

Umm. I dunno. Maybe.

DANIEL

Ugh, okay. There must be a fair way of settling who has to be the motorcycle.

(Beat.)

ROBERT/DANIEL

One, two, three, not it! One, two, three, not it! Damn it. One, two, three, not it! Jynx, you owe me a coke! Damn it!

AMBER

Why don't you rock, paper, scissors for it?

DANIEL

Perfect.

ROBERT/DANIEL

Rock, paper, scissors, shoot!

DANIEL

Ah ha! Scissors cuts paper - I win!

ROBERT

No fair! I always lose at rock, paper, scissors.

DANIEL

Because you always pick paper.

ROBERT

Best two-out-of-three?

DANIEL

Sure.

ROBERT/DANIEL

Rock, paper, scissors, shoot!

DANIEL

Yes! Scissors cuts paper! Why did you pick paper again?

ROBERT

I thought it would be too obvious that I would pick paper and I could trick you.

DANIEL

You thought wrong, my friend. Now, I believe you have a motorcycle to be.

ROBERT

Ugh. Fine.

(Robert gets on all fours. Daniel rides Robert as if he was a motorcycle.)

AMBER

I want to play this time!

DANIEL

Do you see a sidecar on this thing?

AMBER

...No...

DANIEL

Exactly. Step aside, pedestrian.

ROBERT

Are you ready to go?

DANIEL

I haven't turned on the motorcycle yet.

ROBERT

Ugh!

(Daniel twists Robert's ear.)

Ow! I mean... VRRRM VRRRR VRRRRR VRRRR.

(Daniel squeezes Robert's shoulder as if it were an accelerator and Robert takes off. They run around for a bit before running over Cassie's crayons and pictures.)

CASSIE

Hey! My pictures!

DANIEL

Get out of the road!

CASSIE

I'm not in the road! This is the coloring zone.

DANIEL

Bull. I don't see a sign anywhere saying that.

CASSIE

It's common knowledge!

DANIEL

Whatever, kid... This is my insurance info. I hope we can get this settled fairly and to both of our satisfactions.

CASSIE

Both of our satisfactions!?! You hit me! The law is on my side.

DANIEL

Oh really? If you're so smart about the rules of the road, then tell me—who designated this a coloring zone in the first place?

CASSIE

The city planner! Besides, I can color anywhere I want. It's a free country.

DANIEL

Not where the roads are concerned... What is that smell?

CASSIE

What? What is it?

DANIEL

I smell alcohol on your breath.

CASSIE

Liar!!!

AMBER

WEOOO WEOOO WEOOO.

What seems to be the problem here?

DANIEL

Thank God you're here, Officer. I was just driving home from delivering puppies to poor children at the orphanage when this maniac came out of nowhere and ran into the road!

CASSIE
He's lying!

DANIEL
I would never lie about puppies or orphans.

CASSIE
You're full of it, mister!

AMBER
Hold on. Everyone just relax. Let's keep things civil, okay?

CASSIE
Okay.

DANIEL
Whatever you say, Officer.

AMBER
Now, miss, let's hear your side of the story.

CASSIE
I was just minding my own business, coloring a beautiful princess, when he ran over my stuff!

AMBER
Were you in the road?

CASSIE
I... Well... Apparently, there has been some confusion as to where the road starts and where the coloring zone is.

DANIEL
Hot damn!

AMBER
I see.

(Amber starts writing.)

AMBER
Have you been drinking tonight, ma'am?

CASSIE
I may have had one or... Two Capri Suns.

(Everyone but Cassie gasps.)

They were sugar free! I swear!

AMBER

Uh huh. I'm sure they were... May I see your coloring book?

CASSIE

... Why would you need to see that?

AMBER

Just let me see the book, ma'am.

(Cassie hands Amber the book.)

Yep. Just what I thought. You seem to be having a lot of trouble coloring inside the lines for a sober person.

CASSIE

No, I... I'm just not good at that yet!

AMBER

Quiet! Another word out of you and I'm taking you downtown. Now, what's your side of the story, MoPed?

ROBERT

BRRMM DMMM DMMM IRK! THUD! GLUG GLUG GLUG, VRRRM.

AMBER

Uh huh. Yeah. I think I've heard enough.

DANIEL

What's the verdict, Officer?

AMBER

I find you, Cassie, guilty of drinking and coloring.

(Everyone gasps.)

That's a third-degree misdemeanor. I'm afraid I'm going to have to take you to jail.

CASSIE

What!? Why do I have to go to jail? Why can't I just get a slap on the wrist.

(Cassie holds out her wrist.)

ROBERT

Ow, that sounds painful.

CASSIE

It's not. Mommy says celebrities and rich people get one all the time.

AMBER

I'm sorry, Cassie, but you're not a celebrity or a rich person. If you break the law then you go to jail. It's simple as that. Now, you can pay bail, but I don't think you have enough candy.

CASSIE

All I have is a kit kat.

AMBER

King sized?

(Silence.)

You're going away for a long time.

CASSIE

No!!!

DANIEL

Stop it, Amber. This is stupid. You can't just change the game like that.

AMBER

Can too.

CASSIE

No, he's right. They agreed to play motorcycle and then you came in and made it cops and robbers.

ROBERT

Technically, cops and jay walkers.

DANIEL/AMBER

Shut up, Robert.

(Robert zips his mouth shut.)

AMBER

The game is still in the realm of motorcycle. I just expanded the world!

DANIEL

Face it, Amber. You ruined the game.

AMBER

Well, I'm sorry for wanting to change things up. We never play cops and robbers-slash-jaywalkers anymore.

DANIEL

Because you always get to be the cop! Why do you always want to be the cop, huh?

AMBER

Because somebody has to do it. We can't just let bad things go unpunished.

DANIEL

Yeah, well I say you only want to be the cop so you can abuse your authority!

AMBER

Say that to my face!

(Daniel and Amber continue bickering with each other until they get into an all-out fight. They eventually start pummeling each other on the ground. They roll off into the wing.)

(Cassie pulls Robert aside.)

CASSIE

What are we going to do? They always get like this when we play. They both think they know what's best.

ROBERT

I know. We play, they fight, then you and I are caught in the middle of it all.

CASSIE

Well, the problem is Amber always changing the game.

ROBERT

The problem is Daniel doesn't trust her to make those types of calls.

CASSIE

Maybe that's because we always do what Daniel wants? I mean, have we ever given anyone besides Daniel the chance to make up an entire game that we had to follow to the letter?

ROBERT

Well, I'm not too good with letters yet.

CASSIE

That's okay. You're good at other things.

ROBERT

I really appreciate that. But, I also think you're on to something.

CASSIE

Me too... What if there was a way to give everyone a chance to control the game we play? Maybe that way, we'll all start to see our differences and learn how to appreciate each other's play styles?

ROBERT

I don't know, Cassie. I'm not sure they'll go for something like that. Maybe we shouldn't rock the boat?

CASSIE

Just trust me, Robert. Follow my lead. It'll be more appealing if you have my back.

(Amber and Daniel roll back onstage, still fighting. They eventually tire themselves out and exhaustedly lay on their backs.)

DANIEL

Face it, sis—Your ideas are stupid.

AMBER

They're not stupid! Forgive the heck out of me for trying to spice things up a little bit by throwing a curveball into your boring game. We should be exploring ways to make games fresh and new. What fun, new games have you had us play recently?

DANIEL

I... Uh... I don't need to try new games because my games work, damnit. They are tested and proven to be enjoyable for everyone.

AMBER

If they are so enjoyable, how come you and Robert were both fighting NOT to be the motorcycle?

DANIEL

Whatever. This is dumb.

AMBER
You're dumb!

DANIEL
Oh yeah?!?

(Daniel and Amber square up to each other again.)

CASSIE
Whoa! Easy there. Let's not do anything we're going to regret. You two are brother and sister. Are there any bonds in this world more sacred? We can't let this petty squabbling destroy our ability to play with each other.

AMBER
What are you proposing?

CASSIE
I would like to call an emergency meeting of the Playdate Committee.

DANIEL
That's dumb. Is anyone in favor of opening up an emergency meeting?

CASSIE
Robert?

ROBERT
I, uh...

DANIEL
You what?

(Daniel looks intimidatingly at Robert.)

ROBERT
I... Nothing.

CASSIE
Robert, come on! You're supposed to have my back on this!

DANIEL
Look, if nobody wants to have this meeting, I'm afraid we'll just have to table that discussion until next quarter.

AMBER
I second Cassie's motion.

DANIEL
Amber, what the heck?

AMBER
She's right, Daniel. We can't bite each other's heads off every time we disagree on how to play. We need a solution.

CASSIE
Then it's settled. Let the meeting begin.

ROBERT
Well, Cassie? What do you think we should do?

CASSIE
I propose a contest: Who can make the best game. The only condition is, no matter what, we have to play the game as the creator intends.

AMBER
That sounds easy enough. What order will we play the games in?

DANIEL
I call first!

AMBER
No fair!

DANIEL
I called it. Right, Robert?

ROBERT
Uh...

DANIEL
I said... Right, Robert?

ROBERT
Right.

AMBER
Whatever. You can go first, as long as I can go last.

DANIEL

Why would you want to go last?

AMBER

Someone has to save the day once all your games prove to be garbage.

ROBERT

Oh snap.

DANIEL

Very funny. Cassie? Robert? Which one of you will go first?

CASSIE

Robert can go.

ROBERT

You sure, sis?

AMBER

Fine. Daniel then Robert then Cassie then me.

DANIEL

What are the criteria for winning?

CASSIE

The game has to be enjoyable, comprehensive, and has to at least try to start each player on equal ground. Oh! And it has to be a game that we've never played before.

ROBERT

Will there be any goldfish crackers provided, or will we have to supply our own?

AMBER

I'll field this one, Cassie. Our mom just went to the store and bought two boxes of goldfish crackers. One regular cheddar and the other... Pizza flavored.

ROBERT

Yes!!!

DANIEL

Alright! Pizza flavored.

CASSIE

Do these terms satisfy everyone? Say "aye".

DANIEL

Wait! What do we get if we win?

CASSIE

Hmmm... I say the winner... Gets to decide what games we play for a whole month!

AMBER

High stakes.

DANIEL

I like my odds.

CASSIE

So? Are we doing this or not?

EVERYONE

Aye.

CASSIE

The aye's have it. Good luck gentleman. And Godspeed.

(Robert and Cassie exit.)

AMBER

You better play by the rules.

DANIEL

The way I see it--The games are brand new. Every game needs to be tested and refined. Whose to say what the rules will be at the end of the day?

AMBER

Daniel.

DANIEL

(Beat.)

I don't know why you're fighting me on this. You know I'm the one in charge.

AMBER

And just who put you in charge?

(Beat.)

Oh... But that's not forever--

DANIEL

--Until he gets back.

AMBER

(Beat.)

Okay...

(Amber exits. The lights fade down until Daniel is in an isolated spot.)

DANIEL

I don't know why it's so hard for Amber to accept that I know better than her. That's why dad put me in charge. He's in the military. All my life he's been stationed in different parts of the world. Mom didn't want us all living on base with him because she didn't want to keep us from our grandparents. My grandma is sick and didn't want us to be away from her. If not for that, we would be with my dad more often. Last time he was stationed in Germany. I would have loved to be there with him. We could have ate schnitzel on the ruins of the Berlin wall. I don't even know what schnitzel is, but dad said it was good. Schnitzel and a heaping spoon of horse radish. I've never had horse either, but if dad likes it, I'm sure I will too. I like most of the things he likes. Sometimes we go driving in his truck and we listen to his favorite music. He listens to this band called "Boston" a lot. He gave me his old tapes when he got a CD player installed. I don't have a Walkman or anything, but when mom and Amber are in the garden, I play it on the stereo. I like it. It's a bond we share. That's why dad put me in charge. It's another bond we share. He got called away on another mission recently. He looked me square in the eyes and said, "you're in charge while I'm gone." He gave me a mission of my own, and I do not take these types of assignments lightly. It's my job to hold down the fort and by God that's what I'll do.

(Daniel puts a captain's hat on. Amber, Robert, and Cassie enter in sailor uniforms.)

Good morning, sailors!

AMBER

Daniel, what the heck is this? You're supposed to be trying new games out.

DANIEL

This is a new game.

AMBER

No it's not. It's a war game. You always make us play war games.

DANIEL

This is no war game, ensign. I assure you that the threat is real.

AMBER

That's not what I meant--

DANIEL

--These waters are full of Japanese subs. We're going to need all hands on deck, and a good captain to command them. Since I have the hat--I guess that's me. These are dangerous times, gentlemen. We have to be ruthless if we're going to survive this war. The Axis powers have a stranglehold on Europe, and now they want the Pacific.

ROBERT

Oh my god. We have to do something.

DANIEL

That's the spirit! I like your style, Ensign Robert.

AMBER

What style is that?

DANIEL

Obedient. I'm making him my first mate. You all can learn a thing or two from him.

CASSIE

Hey! The rules were that we all had to start on equal ground.

DANIEL

We did. I just assumed the role of the captain after we started. It only makes sense that the captain gets to promote those he finds valuable.

CASSIE

But that's not--

AMBER

It's okay, Cassie. Let him have this one.

DANIEL

That's more like it, Ensign Amber. You'll be scrubbing the poop deck tonight, but keep following orders and, who knows? Tomorrow we can promote you to barnacle scraper. Then potato peeler. Then maybe even Master of Latrines. The world is truly your oyster.

AMBER

Aye aye, Captain.

BEEP BEEP

DANIEL

BEEP BEEP.

There's something on the radar! What do you see, First Mate Robert?

ROBERT

I, uh... I see two Japanese subs closing in!

DANIEL

Dear God! Battle stations!

CASSIE

Uh...

DANIEL

Yes, Ensign Cassie? Is there a problem?

CASSIE

I just... Do we really have to fight the Japanese?

DANIEL

It's historically accurate. They were the major enemy in the Pacific during World War II.

CASSIE

Okay, but... I LOVE Japanese stuff. They've been our friends for so long now. It just feels weird to resurrect this long-dead animosity between our two nations... Ya know?

ROBERT

She's right, Captain. I love ramen. I eat it all the time.

AMBER

I love anime. I just... Freakin' love it.

CASSIE

I can't sleep without my Totoro pillow!

DANIEL

OKAY! Jeez. Who would you rather we fight - and keep it within the context of World War II.

CASSIE

Can't we just fight the Nazis?

DANIEL

Nazis? Did they even have a navy?

ROBERT

I have no idea. You never hear about it on history shows.

DANIEL

What about Argentina?

CASSIE

I'm sorry, Captain, but I believe the Spanish language pronounces it with a soft "g", as in "Ar-hen-tina".

DANIEL

Oh. I didn't realize. What about Arhentina?

AMBER

As an enemy?

DANIEL

They were sympathetic toward the Nazis. What if they decided to attack our Pacific Fleet?

AMBER

Hmmm. Okay. I like it. But, what do the people of Argentina sound like?

DANIEL

They are called, "Argentinians".

CASSIE

Arhentinians.

DANIEL

Oh, right, sorry. Arhentinians. And, I have no idea what they sound like. I think they're South American.

AMBER

Hmmm. Okay... Okay.

DANIEL

Enough chatter! The enemy subs have disappeared from our radar, but they might come back soon. We have to prepare for attack!

AMBER

Yeah... You know, I think it might be a good idea for Ensign Cassie and I to double check the torpedo room. Make sure we don't have any misfires.

DANIEL

Good idea. Hop to it, men. We don't know when those ruthless Arhentinians will return.

AMBER

No... You don't... Come on, Cassie.

CASSIE

We won't blow up, will we?

AMBER

Maybe it'd be better if you don't touch anything. How about you supervise?

CASSIE

Yes ma'am!

(Amber and Cassie exit.)

DANIEL

That should be plenty of busy work to keep them occupied while we do the REAL work.

ROBERT

What do you mean, Captain?

DANIEL

I mean that we're two of a kind, First Mate Robert. We were born to be leaders. Myself, a slightly more important leader, but you just one or two titles below mine. Amber and Cassie, well, they were born for a less glorious status in life.

ROBERT

Aye sir.

(Silence.)

DANIEL

I sure do love nights like these. Do you agree, First Mate?

ROBERT

Aye. Red skies at morning, sir.

DANIEL

That's an interesting saying. What does it mean?

ROBERT

I think it means, "smooth sailing from here on out."

DANIEL

Your whimsical language keeps me young. That's part of the reason why I promoted you.

ROBERT

I've come a long way from peeling potatoes, sir.

DANIEL

That you have. That you have. You should write your girl about the promotion. Do you have a girl back home, First Mate Robert?

ROBERT

I haven't been so lucky just yet.

DANIEL

All in good time, matey. All in good time. The ladies love a military man.

ROBERT

Do you have a gal back home, Captain?

DANIEL

The ocean is my only, real love. Not this one -- the Pacific.

ROBERT

Which ocean are we in now?

DANIEL

The Atlantic. We would be in the Pacific, but this new, "don't hurt the Japanese" policy brought us here.

ROBERT

I'm sorry, sir.

DANIEL

Of course, I also have a wife. I don't love her as much as I love the sea, though... I have a picture of her. Would you like to see?

ROBERT

Very much, sir.

(Daniel unfolds a large map. He points to the Pacific Ocean.)

She's beautiful, sir.

(Robert moves to touch the map, but Daniel slaps his hand away.)

DANIEL

Don't touch it, ya slimy sea dog.

ROBERT

Sorry, Captain.

DANIEL

I believe you owe me some push-ups, sea dog.

ROBERT

Sir, I--

DANIEL

No excuses. You must pay for your insubordination. Ten push-ups.

ROBERT

Aye aye, Captain.

DANIEL

I think I will write my wife. She does worry when we are on long missions like this.

(Robert starts doing push-ups.)

ROBERT

Of course, sir.

(Daniel starts penning a letter.)

DANIEL

My dearest Rebecca,

It has been a fortnight since we last spoke. These many months on the Atlantic have begun to take a toll on me. The rations are running low, but we keep a brave face on for the men. They have become agitated with nothing but beans and peaches night after night. Some of the men, especially my new first mate, have become openly insubordinate. I fear lashing might be in his future to keep him in line. The men's morale continues to drop. We tell them that we will pick up more, better supplies at the next harbor, but the next harbor alludes us. The Admiral keeps us in

suspense as we await orders to attack the Arhentinian forces. Still, I'm afraid if we don't see some action soon, the men's morale will be too diminished to fight. They have taken to bare knuckle boxing and tickle fights in order to maintain some semblance of society from back home...

I must go now. Give my love to the children. One day soon, I will be there to hold you again.

Yours in love,

Captain Daniel.

ROBERT

That was beautiful, Captain.

DANIEL

Red skies at morning.

(BAM! An explosion rocks the boat, sending Robert and Daniel stumbling around the deck.)

ROBERT

What was that!?

DANIEL

War, my dear boy. That was the sound of war.

ROBERT

Decks two and three have taken major damage, but we don't seem to be taking on water.

DANIEL

A warning shot... That must mean--

(Amber and Cassie run onstage in pirate costumes and eye patches. They are each carrying two wrapping paper tubes.)

It's a boarding party. They're trying to take the ship!

AMBER

Argh! Surrender your ship ya ol' barnacle slags! This vessel now be under Arrrhentinian control!

DANIEL

You're Arhentinians?

AMBER
No, we be Arrrhentinians.

DANIEL
Arhentinians.

AMBER
No, Arrrhentinians. With three "r's".

ROBERT
(Rolling his "r's")
Arrrhentinians?

AMBER
No, that's Spanish. Don't roll the "r".

ROBERT
I thought you were Spanish.

CASSIE
No, we're Arhentinians.

AMBER
No, we're Arrrhentinians. We broke away from the Arhentinian navy to form a pirate collective that obeys no army. And no man.

CASSIE
VIVA LA ARRRHENTINA!

AMBER
That's the spirit, Pirate Queen Cassie. What say you, Captain Daniel? Do you surrender yer vessel to us?

DANIEL
Over my dead body.

AMBER
That can be arranged. But, not without a fair fight.

(Amber and Cassie throw their spare swords over to Robert and Daniel.)

Prepare to die, boys!

DANIEL

Quiet, you pirate scum! The only ones who will be dying this day are you two.

AMBER

Enough talk. Let's fight!

(Daniel and Robert charge Amber and Cassie. A spectacular sword fight ensues.)

(Eventually, Cassie is stabbed by Robert.)

(Amber pushes Daniel away and he stumbles.)

(Amber stabs Robert in the stomach, and he falls toward Daniel. Daniel takes Robert in his arms.)

ROBERT

I'm dying, Captain.

DANIEL

Shhh. Don't say that.

ROBERT

It's funny. We have been at sea for years, but I never thought to look up at the stars. They are so beautiful.

DANIEL

Go to them, First Mate Robert. Go live amongst the stars.

ROBERT

Red sky at morning, Captain. Red sky at...

(Robert dies.)

DANIEL

Fare thee well, my friend.

(Daniel gently lays him down.)

He had one week until retirement.

AMBER

Oh boo hoo. Every man must die. Now, are we going to fight or what?

DANIEL

Fine. But, no more of our men's blood shall be spilled. You and I fight for total control of the ship.

AMBER

To the death?

DANIEL

To the death.

(Daniel and Amber charge each other. They have an intense sword fight. Amber hits Daniel in the chest.)

AMBER

Ah ha! A fatal wound to any man!

DANIEL

Uh... No. You just scratched me.

AMBER

Nonsense! I hit you square in the chest.

DANIEL

Every US Navy captain wears body armor. Impenetrable to small arms fire and pirate sabers!

AMBER

Lies!

CASSIE

Yeah! You're dead, Daniel.

DANIEL

Not ah! It's true. Right, Robert?

ROBERT

Um... Yeah. He's telling the truth. All captains wear it.

AMBER

Shut up, Robert. You're dead. And your opinion doesn't matter anyway. He would say anything to stay in Daniel's good graces.

DANIEL

That's not true. He has a mind of his own. Don't you, Robert?

ROBERT

Umm--

DANIEL

--See? He's a regular, free thinker. He just seems like he agrees with me all the time because he knows his place in the game.

AMBER

Whatever, Daniel. I hit you. That means the game is over.

DANIEL

Fine. We'll call it a draw then. Well done. Peace between nations has commenced. I survive and go on to become Admiral and you go on being a stinky, disgusting and poor pirate. Good luck with the scurvy.

CASSIE

Hey! It's over, okay? It's Robert's turn to make a game.

AMBER

Oh great. What are we going to play? Daniel is President while Robert does his laundry?

CASSIE

Stop it, Amber. I'm sure whatever it is will be fun and equitable.

AMBER

Yeah. Sure it will. I need a snack.

DANIEL

That's a good idea. Let's just take a minute and cool down. Some of you really need it.

(Amber, Cassie, and Daniel exit. The lights fade down on Robert, until he is in an isolated spotlight.)

(Robert puts on an oversized suit and fumbles with a tie before tying it completely wrong.)

ROBERT

Oh my god. I have no idea what to do. I--I--I've never been in this position before. Usually, I can just rely on somebody to create a game for everyone to play. That way, I happily take the role that's assigned to me and not have to worry about making too many decisions. I'm not too good at decisions. I wish I was... I wish I was more like my dad. He would know what to do in this situation. He knows what to do in every situation! He works in finance. Actually, the bank trusts him to decide what loans to give to which people. He says, "everyone deserves a fair shake, if they have the credit." I think that's a good motto to live by. So, I try to treat everyone fairly and give them credit for the things they do. He says he has aspirations to go higher. One morning he told us that his dream was to move to New York City and become a big shot. He wants to be one of those guys that stand on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange screaming "buy!" and "sell!". I told him he could do it, but mom had other plans. She said that kind of job would cost him his soul. Can you believe that? He joked that he would never sell his soul, but didn't mind using it as collateral if it'd make him partner one day. Cassie and I laughed. Mom didn't. He still thinks he'll get there some day. Sometimes, when mom goes to yoga, we all sit in the living room and watch movies about the stock market. My favorite is *Wall Street*, even though dad tells us to cover our eyes and ears a lot. From what I can tell, it's just a movie about people making money and being super happy. Who can lose their soul doing that?

(A window now sits on the stage along with a table and four chairs.)

(Cassie enters. She is wearing an oversized business suit.)

ROBERT

Well, we did it, Cassie. We completed the big merger. I have never deserved a scotch more.

CASSIE

Pour me one, partner. No reason you should celebrate alone. Then, when the new partners get here, we can celebrate again.

ROBERT

With more scotch!

CASSIE

With more money!

ROBERT

That's for damn sure. You want that scotch, "on the rocks"?

CASSIE

No thanks. I'm not wearing shoes. I'll just have it over here.

ROBERT

Perfect.

CASSIE
Mmmm. That's tasty.

ROBERT
You like it? Seven-year-old scotch.

CASSIE
Is it?

ROBERT
Yes. I can't wait until my next birthday. We can try eight-year-old scotch.

CASSIE
Oh, Robert. Always thinking of the future.

ROBERT
That's true. It's my curse. But, let's turn our attention to the present.

(He raises his glass.)

To the merger.

CASSIE
To new business partners.

ROBERT
To more time playing golf.

(They both laugh.)

CASSIE
Say, when are those new partners getting here?

ROBERT
That's a good question. I sure hope THEY GET HERE SOON.

(After a beat, Amber timidly enters wearing her oversized suit.)

AMBER
Uh... Hi.

ROBERT
Amber! Good to see you. I hope that your partner will be joining us as well?

AMBER

He said he'll be here soon. I'm supposed to come out and... Well... I'm not calling your game dumb, Robert. I really hope that you don't think I'm calling it dumb.

CASSIE

Uh oh.

AMBER

It's just that Daniel and I have no idea what you're talking about. I mean, what's a stocks market?

ROBERT

Stock market. It's where people buy pieces of companies that sell products and services. Our company invests money in other businesses, and if those businesses sell more stuff, we get more money.

AMBER

Oh! That's easy enough.

ROBERT

That's right! I knew you'd get it. You know, Daniel told me the other day that you can be really stubborn and have a hard time understanding things, but I disagree. You really are smart. I mean - for a girl. I'm glad you're going to be a part of this company.

AMBER

Yes... Well, I'm just happy to be a part of the team. Hey! Why don't I go back out and we can rewind the tape and try this again?

ROBERT

Sounds good.

(Amber exits.)

CASSIE

I can't believe you said that.

ROBERT

Said what?

CASSIE

What do you mean, what? You really don't know what that sounded like? You basically said you thought she was dumb until about a minute ago. Then you said she wasn't as smart as a man, which I took personal offense to.

ROBERT

That's ridiculous. I was just exchanging pleasantries with our new partner. That's why I was smiling the entire time. A smile says way more than words ever could. You should try it sometime.

CASSIE

...

ROBERT

No, like this.

CASSIE

...

ROBERT

Like this. See? Oh no. Don't wear your face like that. You know, it takes more muscles to smile than to frown, right?

CASSIE

Drop it, Robert.

ROBERT

Jeesh. I don't see what you're so worked up about. This is a day for celebrating!

(Amber enters in a hurry.)

Ah! The prodigal son returns.

AMBER

What?

ROBERT

I have no idea. Heard it in a movie once. Congratulation on the merger, Amber. Can I get you a scotch?

AMBER

No. Thank you. I wish I could find cause for celebration, but I'm afraid we have business to talk about first.

ROBERT

What business?

AMBER

Your business. We've brought to the table a well-managed and profitable portfolio. I've been going over your numbers and it seems you haven't lived up to your side of the deal.

Uh oh. CASSIE

What are you going on about? ROBERT

We have concerns about your Apple stock. AMBER

(Robert and Cassie look at each other then laugh.)

Don't worry us like that, Amber. Apples are solid. Do you really expect me to believe that there is something wrong with our most reliable stock? ROBERT

That's exactly what I'm telling you. AMBER

Impossible! CASSIE

Calm down, Cassie. Your blood pressure. ROBERT

My blood pressure? CASSIE

Yes. It's through the roof! Probably your lifestyle choices. You keep living as hard as you do and you'll die just as hard. ROBERT

(Cassie looks at her scotch and puts it down in disgust.)

Die Hard! We should have played Die Hard. That would have been much less lame. AMBER

My game would be fine if you just play it correctly. ROBERT

Oh, what's the matter, Robert. Can't handle a little conflict in your game? Especially when it's presented by a woman? AMBER

ROBERT

Whoa! I love all women. And I respect their input.

AMBER

Then let me introduce a little conflict, okay?

ROBERT

Ugh. Fine.

AMBER

Thank you. Now, as I was saying. We have noticed a massive problem with your Apple stock.

ROBERT

I don't believe you. Apples are bulletproof. The phrase, "an apple a day keeps the doctor away" made sure of that. Are you telling me that people have stopped eating apples.

AMBER

I'm afraid so.

CASSIE

And just how did the entire world manage to change their minds about apples?

AMBER

It was easy. Once the doctors changed *their* minds about apples.

CASSIE

Which doctors?

AMBER

THE doctors. The one's that said, "an apple a day keeps the doctor away."

ROBERT

Well... What the hell do they say now?

AMBER

They say... "An orange a day keeps the doctor away."

ROBERT

Son of a bitch!

(Robert CRUSHES the scotch glass in his bare hand.)

CASSIE

I can't believe it.

(Cassie falls down, flabbergasted.)

AMBER

You fools. None of this would have happened if you just kept your eyes open.

ROBERT

Our eyes were open. They always are. We read the Times.

AMBER

The New York Times?

ROBERT

What else?

AMBER

It's a big country, Robert. You have to have eyes everywhere. Do you read the Florida Times?

ROBERT

Why on Earth would I read the Florida Times? Did they do an interesting profile on my nana?

AMBER

No, you oaf! Six months ago. Front cover. Orange groves. As far as the eye could see. Headline: "The Future Is Oranges".

CASSIE

But... But apples were a sure thing.

AMBER

Apples were a fools game! Any stock broker worth their salt could see that doctors were getting bored. I mean, it's been apples keeping the doctors away for forty years, people! You didn't think they would find a new hustle at some point? You didn't think they would back a new pony when this one got too old and decrepit to run the race anymore!? But no... You backed this horse and the American people just took it out back and shot it in the head.

CASSIE

Jeeze leweeze.

(Cassie holds her stomach as if she is going to be sick.)

ROBERT

How do we get out of this mess? Think, Cassie, think!

(Cassie thinks frantically, then pulls out a small tube, rips the top off, and pours a powder onto the back of her hand. She moves like she is going to snort it, but licks it off instead - shaking off the sour taste.)

Damnit, Cassie. I thought you were clean? Now, you're back riding the pixie?

CASSIE

Live fast and leave a beautiful corpse.

AMBER

Wow, you're really rolling with this.

CASSIE

We play hard, Amber!!

(Cassie rubs pixie dust into her gums.)

ROBERT

I know what to do. We'll just buy stock in oranges.

AMBER

The price is too high. We'll never be able to afford it.

ROBERT

Well then... We'll have to do something drastic.

CASSIE

Robert... Let's discuss this...

ROBERT

We're through talking. I will not be made a fool of. Now is the time for action.

(Robert picks up a phone and dials.)

Hello? Wall Street?... Good. Listen up. This is trading firm ROBERT, CASSIE, AMBER AND DANIEL... Yes, we used to specialize in apples... We're making a change. Take our stock out of whole apples and put it all into... Sauce.

AMBER

Interesting.

ROBERT

Yeah... I know we'll take a hit, but sauce is still a healthy and nutritious snack for both young and old people alike... What's that?... Our stock has normalized?... Well, that's amazing! I may have just saved this company after all!

(Cassie lights up.)

You have a wonderful day... I love you too. Bye bye.

CASSIE

You did it!

AMBER

Why did you tell the trader you loved them?

ROBERT

Common courtesy.

AMBER

It's weird.

ROBERT

Well, you know what, Amber? The only people I ever talk to on the phone are my mom and grandma and I *always* tell them I love them. It's called being a gentleman. Now, I think the bigger question is... Will our new stock in apple sauce be enough in the long run?

(CLAPPING is heard offstage.)

(Daniel enters wearing an oversized suit.)

DANIEL

Robert, you old so-and-so, I heard you made a big splash in apple sauce?

ROBERT

I just did what I had to. Looks like you merged with this company at just the right time.

DANIEL

I couldn't be happier. And, Cassie. You look radiant. I have a surprise for you.

(Daniel takes folded up pieces of paper out of his pocket and gives them to Cassie.)

CASSIE

What are they?

DANIEL

Well those, my dear, just happen to be all of the orange stocks in Florida.

ROBERT

Impossible!

CASSIE

We're saved!

DANIEL

Consider us a million dollars richer.

AMBER

You're welcome.

ROBERT

I... I don't know what to say. Thank you.

DANIEL

Oh, it was nothing. Just a little foresight that the old administration never had. Amber and I saw your apple stock rotting from a mile away.

CASSIE

Well, thank you.

DANIEL

I only wish I was on this board last week when I could have said something. It's clear that, for this company to succeed, we'll have to make some changes around here.

ROBERT

Changes? What changes?

DANIEL

Nothing you'll have to concern yourself with, Robert. Not for much longer.

CASSIE

Wow, there is a lot of tension in this room. Can I get anyone some coffee?

DANIEL

I'll have some coffee.

CASSIE

Milk? Sugar?

I'll have a milk.

AMBER

None for me, thanks. I'm fine with scotch.

ROBERT

(Robert pours himself another scotch.)

(Cassie exits.)

Can I get you a scotch, Daniel?

DANIEL

Please.

(Robert pours Daniel a scotch.)

You know, they say a fine scotch is a lot like making love.

ROBERT

What's "making love"?

DANIEL

I have no idea.

AMBER

You're a little shaky, Robert. Are you feeling alright?

ROBERT

Just realizing I'm surrounded by wolves, Amber.

DANIEL

You are, my friend. You are. That's the funny thing about partnerships. If we all want you out - you're out.

ROBERT

You wouldn't dare.

AMBER

Daniel.

DANIEL

Amber.

AMBER

Can I talk to you for a moment?

(Amber and Daniel move away from Robert.)

I think we're taking this too far. Let's just play the game normal.

DANIEL

The game has evolved, partner. You know it. I know it. If we work together we can take him out.

AMBER

I don't think that's how intended the game to go. He wants us all to be equal partners.

DANIEL

Bull. He's the one on the phones to the trading floor; making moves without our consent. Besides, you sent him on this downward spiral. It only makes sense we put him out of his misery.

AMBER

I was just introducing conflict.

DANIEL

Sure you were. And there was no part of you that wanted to be the one calling the shots?

AMBER

I...

DANIEL

That's what I thought. Games have to have a winner. It's the law of nature.

(Daniel and Amber rejoin Robert.)

You know, Robert. I never did properly congratulate you on this merger.

(Cassie enters with milk and coffee.)

Ah, thank you, Cassie.

(He raises his glass.)

Has anyone made a toast?

ROBERT

Yes. Way too many times.

DANIEL

Well then, one more can't hurt. To Robert and his wonderful foresight. He really is a financial genius, wouldn't you say, Amber?

AMBER

Uh... Here here.

CASSIE

Here here.

ROBERT

What are you getting at?

DANIEL

I'm just saying... Apple sauce is a quality stock. Not as good as our oranges, but still solid. Dependable. I'm just wondering if you would care to switch to something much more stable. Eternal, even.

ROBERT

More stable than apple sauce? I find that hard to believe.

CASSIE

What did you have in mind?

ROBERT

Cassie, don't believe them. They're crazy.

DANIEL

I'm glad you asked, Cassie. I'm talking about the stars themselves.

(Cassie's eyes light up.)

CASSIE

I LOVE STARS! They're so pretty.

DANIEL

It's a shame we don't have the money... Wait a moment. If apple sauce is so stable, then why don't we just dump apple sauce and purchase stars instead?

AMBER

The math works out.

ROBERT

But... Apples are my baby. I've been into apples my entire career. Besides, what can owning stars give us anyway?

DANIEL

Two words. Real estate.

ROBERT

Real estate? In this economic climate. The housing market is on a bubble and we can not afford to be involved in that right now.

AMBER

Who said anything about housing? We're talking about stars.

ROBERT

I don't get the difference.

AMBER

People buy stars all the time as gifts. My nana bought me one for my birthday last year. Stars have no legal claim by any government agency, so it's free land. And, there are literally tens of trillions of them.

DANIEL

Four words. Unlimited. Growth. Potential.

AMBER

Bingo was his name-o.

(Amber and Daniel fist bump.)

CASSIE

Wait... That's only three words.

DANIEL

Wait...

(Daniel counts on his fingers as he mouths, "unlimited growth potential.")

Alright, so what? I don't know numbers that well yet, but I do know stocks, my friends, and stars are where the money is.

ROBERT

I refuse to sell.

DANIEL

That's not up to you, Robert. We're a partnership now. Let's put it to a vote. All those in favor of selling our shares in apple sauce and buying stars? Say "aye".

AMBER

Aye.

CASSIE

... Aye...

ROBERT

Cassie?

CASSIE

I'm sorry! They're so pretty, big bro. I want them.

DANIEL

Aye. The "aye's" have it.

ROBERT

You have no idea what you're doing. You didn't even know how to play this game until I told you.

DANIEL

Looks like we picked it up pretty fast. Looks like we're going to be the proud owners of Alpha Centauri, boys.

ROBERT

No! I refuse. I know what's best. I'll show you!

(Robert picks up the phone. Amber motions to take the phone away, but Daniel puts his hand up to stop her.)

Hello?... That's right, Robert from the trading firm of ROBERT, AMBER, CASSIE AND DANIEL... I need you to initiate OPERATION GREEN THUMB... That's right. All of them.

(Robert hangs up with a smug look on his face.)

CASSIE

Brother... What did you just do?

ROBERT

I bought a million shares.

A million! That could bankrupt us!

CASSIE

What did you buy?

AMBER

.... Plants! Beautiful, life-giving plants! I bought all of them!

ROBERT

Plants?

AMBER

Of course! You wanted a solid stock that people will always be interested in. Well, screw stars - they're too far away. But, plants! They are here, they are plentiful, and they're just as pretty as stupid stars!

ROBERT

(Daniel picks up the phone.)

Curious.

DANIEL

What?

AMBER

Robert, how are we supposed to make money on plants, when you bought all of the stocks with a futures trader?

DANIEL

What?

ROBERT

Look at the the caller ID. This is a futures firm. You bought seeds, Robert. Boring, non-pretty, useless seeds.

DANIEL

No... No, I... That can't be.

ROBERT

Face it, Robert. You've ruined us.

DANIEL

Are they telling the truth?

CASSIE

(Robert looks at the phone and decides to go along with things.)

ROBERT

I guess you've beaten me. Yes, Cassie. They're telling the truth. I messed up.

DANIEL

I don't think we can keep you as a partner, Robert. I vote we kick him out of the firm. All those in favor, say --

ROBERT

-- No, no. I've seen enough movies to know how this goes.

(Robert moves to the window.)

CASSIE

What are you doing?

ROBERT

Playing the game. Congratulations Daniel. Amber. You win.

CASSIE

No!

(Cassie runs to the window, but it's too late. Robert has jumped.)

DANIEL

Someone call 911. Tell them... Tell them, "heaven just gained another angel."

CASSIE

You killed him.

DANIEL

He killed himself. Another example of his poor decision making.

AMBER

You know, maybe he didn't have such poor decision making skills after all?

DANIEL

What do you mean?

AMBER

Well. He may have bought seeds in future bonds, but one day, those bonds will mature and become --

DANIEL

--Plants. And somebody has to be there when they bloom.

(Cassie is stunned.)

CASSIE

You... You planned this, didn't you?

DANIEL

Not all of it. We just knew we needed Robert out. We didn't plan on him jumping out of the window.

CASSIE

But he *did* jump out of the window. You're sick. I should vote you out of the firm!

AMBER

With what votes, Cassie? It'll be two-to-one every time. The numbers are in our favor, and if this game is all about numbers. Face it. We win.

DANIEL

Now, if you'll excuse us, we have some decisions to make regarding your new role in this company's future.

(Amber and Daniel chat mischievously as they exit.)

(The lights fade down until Cassie is in an isolated spot.)

CASSIE

My brother tried to make a game where there were no winners... It ended with him jumping out of a window... I don't get it. Why does there have to be a winner? Why do things always seem to get violent with Daniel and Amber? Sure, Daniel's war game was inherently violent. You can't have war without violence, but Robert's game had good intentions. Why did they have to mess that up? Why couldn't we do ONE thing as a team? Or... Was it simply Robert's naivety that got him splattered on the sidewalk? Maybe, the problem lies not with Daniel and Amber's propensity toward violence, but with the psychological failing of man in general and his natural inclination to embrace greed? Those two had no idea how to play the stock market, yet they still took to back-stabbing like an old habit. Is it too much to hope for peace in times of play? Or are we destined to live out this cycle of violent behavior over and over again? I don't... I don't want to do this.

(Robert peeks his head out from behind the window, unbeknownst to Cassie.)

CASSIE

I like nice things. I wish Daniel and Amber liked playing nice things. I wish my brother liked playing nice things. Is that too much to ask for!? I can play violent games every now and then, but can't we just play something nice once-in-a-while. What I wouldn't give to be a beautiful pony, just galloping through a meadow and drinking out of a stream or whatever ponies do. Or -- or we can just play House! Yeah! A house with a gorgeous garden out back -- oooo, yeah. Gardens are full of possibilities! In gardens, you can plant anything you want! Say, I want to cook some rosemary chicken. Amber could just go plant some damn rosemary in the damn garden and we can harvest it and cook it that night! How amazing is that!? And - and, it's not like the boys won't have anything to do. They can chop wood or build additions to our house or join us in the garden if they want. It doesn't always have to be fast cars or gun fights or things like that. It can just be friends planting a garden together. Why can't they see the beauty in that? Well... It's my turn to make a game. I bet if I'm inventive enough, I can find a way to get what I want.

(Cassie takes off her oversized suit and leaves it on the ground and exits.)

(Robert steps out from behind the window. He picks up Cassie's suit and his window, then exits in the opposite direction from Cassie.)

(Lights out.)

(Lights up. There is a table and four chairs on the stage.)

(Robert, Cassie, and Daniel enter. They are all wearing variations of sparkly, bedazzled clothes.)

DANIEL

This is stupid.

ROBERT

Shhh. Cassie will hear you. We agreed to play all of our games, no matter what.

AMBER

Okay, so what is this game? Magical Unicorn Fairytale Land?

CASSIE

(Offstage.)

It's Princess Buttercup's Café and Restaurant!

AMBER

Cause that's better.

ROBERT

Just play the damn game.

DANIEL

Whoa. Where was this Robert in the board room an hour ago?

ROBERT

I just think we should give this game a shot. Play it the way she intends it to be played.

DANIEL

Sure, buddy. I'll play it the way she intends. I'll start by making my character. Sir Daniel. Bravest knight in the kingdom! And you shall be my trusty squire, Rob.

ROBERT

What?

DANIEL

You have a problem with that?

ROBERT

... No...

DANIEL

That's what I thought.

AMBER

Quit it, Daniel. We have no idea what this game will entail. Let's figure out how to play before we do anything else.

(Calling.)

Cassie. We're not quite sure what to do here.

CASSIE

(Offstage.)

First, I would like to thank you for choosing Princess Buttercup's Café and Restaurant. Please seat yourself. Your princess will be with you shortly.

DANIEL

Well, that explains it.

AMBER

Let's just sit down.

ROBERT
How about a booth?

AMBER
They're bad for your posture.

ROBERT
The doctor says my scoliosis is getting worse.

AMBER
So get a chair and put it on the end of our booth.

ROBERT
Ugh. Fine...

(They look at the only table.)

AMBER
This'll do.

(They sit.)

DANIEL
What do we do!?

CASSIE
(Offstage.)
Just talk! I'll be out in a minute.

(Daniel picks up a cute, hand-colored menu.)

DANIEL
So... You guys never told me how much you liked my game.

AMBER
It was alright.

DANIEL
... Just alright?

AMBER
Honestly, Daniel, it was a little unimaginative.

DANIEL

Unimaginative! It had a whole, epic battle scene!

AMBER

Yeah, because of me. I know how you operate. You put yourself in a position of power and make your subordinates swab the deck and do push-ups for hours. Face it -- my Arrrhentinian pirates rescued your boring game.

DANIEL

Whatever. You just don't like realism. I'm sorry, but that grunt work is a big part of military life.

AMBER

And how would you know that?

DANIEL

Dad told me.

(Beat.)

AMBER

When?

DANIEL

Just before he left. He said he doesn't have much time for anything else except for cleaning duty, and operations training, and military exercises. He says they keep him working from dawn til dusk. That's why he can't write or call as much anymore. He said a man is only as good as the amount of work he puts in. That's why he put me in charge. He wants me to put in the work. He wants *me* to lead while he's away.

AMBER

And how long do you think that'll be?

DANIEL

It's only been a year, so... I dunno... He didn't say.

AMBER

Yeah. That sounds about right.

(There is an awkward silence.)

CASSIE

(Offstage.)

I don't hear playing out there!

ROBERT
Come on, guys. Let's just play.

AMBER
Ugh... Okay. Let's give it a chance.

(Daniel reluctantly looks at the menu again.)

DANIEL
What's good here?

AMBER
I've never been.

ROBERT
Me either. I think they're famous for their buttercups.

DANIEL
Really? Hmm. Well, that covers dessert, but what about dinner?

ROBERT
Let me see.

(Daniel hands Robert the menu.)

DANIEL
See if you can make sense of that. There's no words - just illegible pictures.

ROBERT
She can't spell yet.

DANIEL
And I'm supposed to believe she can properly run a restaurant when she can't even spell?

ROBERT
You are supposed to suspend your disbelief.

DANIEL
Whatever.

(Silence.)

AMBER
Weather's nice today.

Oh my god.

DANIEL

What?

AMBER

Small talk? This game involves small talk? That's nonsense! We might as well be trapped in an elevator.

DANIEL

I like small talk. No muss, no fuss.

ROBERT

I'm sorry, but if this is the entire game then I'm going to lose my freaking mind.

DANIEL

Be quiet.

AMBER

There's no forward motion here. What am I supposed to be doing!?

DANIEL

The game JUST started. Let's give it a chance.

AMBER

Fine...

DANIEL

(Cassie enters, dressed in an absurdly large and ornate princess gown.)

Oh no.

CASSIE

Hello, my fantastical friends. I am Princess Buttercup and welcome to my café and restaurant. We are the highest rated restaurant in all the kingdom, according to Yelp. We frequently serve the most brave and noble knights in the land, as well as princes and princesses from far off lands.

ROBERT

Wow! That's impressive. I bet the food is just as impressive!

CASSIE

Absolutely! Not to brag, but there are rumors in the food community that we may get our first Michelin Tire soon.

Oh... That's exciting!

AMBER

Fingers crossed. So, what can I get you to drink?

CASSIE

Black coffee, please.

AMBER

Just water for me.

ROBERT

And for you?

CASSIE

Do you have a favorite drink, Princess Buttercup?

DANIEL

Why, yes. I prefer the tea.

CASSIE

What kind of tea?

DANIEL

It's, uh... Black tea.

CASSIE

You have a magical restaurant and just serve black tea?

DANIEL

I mean green tea. With sparkles.

CASSIE

Okay, is it green tea or black tea? Because there is a huge leap in caffeine levels between green tea and black tea, and I don't want to be up all night.

DANIEL

Um... We also have chamomile. No caffeine.

CASSIE

Okay. I'll take the chamomile. Was that so hard?

DANIEL

(Cassie is taken aback. Robert glares at Daniel.)

CASSIE

I'll... I'll be right back with your drinks and to take your dinner order.

(Cassie exits.)

ROBERT

What the hell was that?

DANIEL

I'm particular about my tea.

ROBERT

You didn't have to argue with her. You're going to make her feel dumb. Creating a new game is a very vulnerable thing.

DANIEL

Is that why you fell apart during yours?

ROBERT

Hey! I played that game to its natural conclusion based around the choices I made.

DANIEL

Then you made some dumb choices.

AMBER

Daniel. Cut it out.

DANIEL

What? I don't recall you thinking I was too harsh on him when we were taking over his business. We can do the same thing here. Sure, Cassie's game is boring now, but just imagine what it can be with our... *Creativity.*

AMBER

...

(Cassie enters with a tray of drinks. She places them down at the table. She takes out a notepad and a small pencil.)

CASSIE

Now, what would you like to eat? Ladies first.

AMBER

Oh... Uh, I haven't really had a chance to look at the menu. Come back to me.

DANIEL

Well, *I* will have the Dragon Burger. Is that spicy?

CASSIE

Very.

DANIEL

Perfect. Can I get buttered noodles instead of fries? I'm on a buttered noodles kick.

CASSIE

I'm sure the chef can arrange that. And for you, sir?

ROBERT

What's the special?

CASSIE

The special is goblin stew with fairy dust.

ROBERT

Yum. I will have that with extra fairy dust.

CASSIE

Extra... Fairy... Dust...

DANIEL

Hey, can I see your notebook there.

CASSIE

Why -- why do you want to see it.

DANIEL

I just want to make sure you're getting the order right. I'm very particular about my order.

CASSIE

I... Uh...

AMBER

He's just messing around. I'm sure you're writing the order down correctly. You're a professional, after all.

CASSIE

Thank you. And, um, what can I get you, ma'am?

AMBER

I'll just take the BLT. Stick with a classic.

CASSIE

Well, it's a good thing we're famous for our BLT! Let me go put in this order and the food will be out in no time.

(Cassie exits.)

AMBER

You need to stop screwing around, Daniel. She was really offended by that.

DANIEL

I'm just testing the waters, pal. If she can't spell enough to make a simple menu, how the hell is she going to write my order down right?

(Daniel takes out a crayon and a notepad.)

ROBERT

What are you doing?

DANIEL

I'm afraid I haven't been entirely honest with you pertaining to the true nature of our visit. I am not just the bravest knight in the kingdom... For, I am also the most well-respected foodie in this and any realm, and I have been selected by Mr. Michelin himself to see if this restaurant is deserving of a Michelin Tire.

ROBERT

What? That's ridiculous.

DANIEL

Why is that ridiculous? Times are tough. Adventuring doesn't pay as much as it used to. So, I took a side gig with Michelin.

ROBERT

No, no, no. No side gigs. Let's just be adventurers who are taking a quick break from slaying goblins and catching a bite to eat.

DANIEL

That's far too simple, Squire Rob.

(Daniel starts writing.)

"Wait staff, does not provide warm and welcoming environment."

ROBERT

You're being mean, Daniel.

DANIEL

The Michelin approval process is ruthless. We expect only the best.

(Cassie enters with food.)

CASSIE

Who's hungry?

AMBER

That was quick.

DANIEL

Suspiciously quick.

AMBER

Stop.

(Cassie puts the food down.)

(Daniel slices into his hamburger.)

DANIEL

Just what I thought.

CASSIE

Is there a problem?

DANIEL

I'll say there's a problem. This burger is raw. The menu says it comes medium.

CASSIE

I am so sorry. I can have the chef make you another one.

DANIEL

He better. I didn't want to pull this card, but.

(Daniel produces a crumpled piece of paper and hands it to Cassie.)

Sir Daniel. I work for Michelin.

No!

CASSIE

Oh yes.

DANIEL

You're being a jerk, Daniel.

AMBER

Let's be real, Princess Buttercup. We all know you're struggling. I mean, the Witch's Cauldron across the street just shut down, and they were an institution in this realm. Times are tough all over for small businesses and the restaurant industry is not immune -- especially a restaurant as new as yours.

DANIEL

Shut up! You can't just make up given circumstances about the world!

CASSIE

Well, somebody has too! Face it, Cassie. This restaurant will fail without my recommendation. Now, you can have it... For a price.

DANIEL

You're taking control again, Daniel.

AMBER

I'm in charge.

DANIEL

You're not in charge of them!

AMBER

Oh yeah? Cassie?

DANIEL

I just wanted to play something nice.

CASSIE

DANIEL

And it can still be nice. All you have to do is give me control of the restaurant. I promise, I won't make any huge changes. Hell -- you can even keep the name! You give me control and Michelin will be very happy. Just imagine what that accolade will do for your business.

(Cassie looks to Robert.)

I'm sorry. Does my lowly squire have a stake in this negotiation?

(Robert bows his head in shame.)

That's what I thought.

CASSIE

... Okay... You win, Daniel. You can have the restaurant.

DANIEL

That's right.

AMBER

No. It's not right. Daniel, you've taken things way too far.

DANIEL

Be quiet and eat your food.

AMBER

The food... That's it! Princess Buttercup, what did you say the goblin stew was garnished with again?

CASSIE

Uh, fairy dust. Why?

(Amber dips her finger into the stew.)

ROBERT

Hey! I was gonna eat that!

(Amber puts the stew on the tip of her tongue.)

AMBER

Probably best that you didn't. This isn't fairy dust at all. It's powdered unicorn horn!

(Everyone gasps but Amber.)

I'm a magic detective -- Narcotics, Potions, and Magic Wands Division. Powdered unicorn horn is illegal in the fairytale kingdom. I'm afraid I'll have to hold the owner personally responsible for this indiscretion. Daniel, you are under arrest for the trafficking and selling of powdered unicorn horn.

DANIEL

Au Con Air, monsoeur. I'm not the owner of this restaurant.

AMBER

Cut the crap, Daniel. We just saw you take control.

DANIEL

And did you see me sign anything?

(Silence.)

Nothing? Well, I'll answer that for you, then. I didn't. The restaurant still belongs to Princess Buttercup. Frankly, I'm glad that the transaction was never finalized. It is truly appalling that Princess Buttercup would stoop so low as to sell illegal unicorn horn. Oh well. I guess you'll be taking her off to jail now.

CASSIE

Amber?

AMBER

I... I'm sorry, Cassie. I thought I was helping.

CASSIE

You ruined everything. I tried to be equitable. I tried to rein in your stupid, controlling tendencies, but you people can't just go with the flow. Why? Would it be so hard to just play *together* instead of against each other? Do whatever you want. I'm done playing.

(Cassie exits.)

DANIEL

Good riddance. Come on. Let's go find another adventure, Squire Rob.

ROBERT

No way. You're being a real jerk today.

(Daniel stands menacingly in front of Robert.)

DANIEL

What did you say?

AMBER

Stop it, Daniel. What, are you going to hit your best friend now? Is that who you've become?

(Daniel backs down. He exits angrily.)

Robert, I --

ROBERT

-- Save it, Amber. I don't want to hear what you have to say.

(Robert shakes his head in complete frustration, then exits.)

(The lights fade down until Amber is in a spot.)

AMBER

Everyone is gone... I don't want to be left alone... I guess I deserve it. Stupid, Amber. I was just trying to help. I don't... I don't know what to do. On one hand, I want my friends to be happy. On the other hand, I want my brother to be happy. On the other hand, I mean, I don't have another hand. On the other foot, *I* want to be happy. We're all so different. And Daniel, well... Daniel thinks he's better than everyone. He thinks he's better than me. He's not. Dad put him in charge, hmpf. Yeah right. He doesn't have the authority to put Daniel in charge. He doesn't have any say over this family any more. Not after...

(Amber takes a deep breath to try and calm herself.)

AMBER

About a month ago I saw him. He was supposed to be thousands of miles away, but there he was. In the flesh. We were visiting friends downtown. Mom decided to take us into a grocery store real quick to pick up some snacks for our play date. Mom and Daniel were ahead of me. Something in me sensed... something... and I turned down the aisle with all the house cleaning stuff and -- and there was my dad. He was buying soap just a few miles from our house. I thought he might have been on leave or something and coming down to surprise us. I thought I would just let it be and wait until he popped up out of some giant, gift-wrapped box, just ready to give Daniel and I the biggest hug in the world. I thought I could wait... But I couldn't. I hadn't seen him in so long. So, I called out to him... He took one look at me, then started walking in the other direction. I called for him again and again, but he just walked faster each time. And, and, I didn't know what to think. Maybe it wasn't him, but just some doppelganger that happened to wear the same goofy, Tommy Bahama shirts. And the same cologne that always used to make me feel warm inside... When mom and I were alone that night, I asked her if it could have been him. She fought with herself for a bit, then told me the truth... Dad left us... He found love somewhere new and didn't want anything to do with us anymore. She told me this without shedding a tear. She had been dealing with it for eleven months after all. Still, I found it curious as to why she wasn't crying. In that moment, I realized that I couldn't cry either. I wasn't sad, but... Angry. Angry that Daniel had been treating us like he owned us for almost a year. And why? All because some low life jerk told him so? How could he worship this failure of a man without acknowledging my mom's sacrifice? She works so hard... I dunno. Maybe that's why I try to outshine Daniel at everything he does? I think, in doing so, I've been a real jerk to my friends. Guess I'll be playing solo for a while.

(The lights come up. There is a log on stage in front of a campfire.)

(Amber takes off her sparkly outfit to reveal a cowboy vest, jeans and gun holster.)

(She sits down on the log. She pulls a cowboy hat from behind the log and puts it on. She takes a can of beans from out of the fire and starts eating them.)

Long night on the trail. These old hands ain't what they used to be. Figure I'll just sit here an' warm myself up by the fire.

(Amber gets sick of the beans. She looks at the can with disdain.)

Figures the only thing here would be beans. Beans are what us folk on the trail live by. There was never a campfire I ever came across that didn't have no beans. Seems like that's all I've eaten for days, in fact. Beans for breakfast. Beans for lunch. Beans for supper. Beans in any way you can see 'em. Pinto. Black. Garbanzo. Baked beans in a sauce with little pieces of bacon in it. I've seen a great many things, and a great many beans.

(Daniel enters dressed like a Wild West outlaw.)

DANIEL

Oh my god will you shut up about the bean talk?

(Amber draws her gun.)

AMBER

Don't you come any closer there pardner.

DANIEL

Easy there. I come in peace.

AMBER

How did you know what game I would be playin'?

DANIEL

You love the Wild West. You're not that hard to figure out, sis.

AMBER

Well, either way, I ain't lookin' to play with others. This here is a solo adventure. This here is my fire. My camp.

DANIEL

Yer beans?

AMBER

Ugh. You can have 'em. I'm sick of beans.

(Amber holsters her gun.)

DANIEL

Thank you kindly.

(Daniel moves over to the log and starts eating beans.)

Ya see, I'm out here havin' my own little, solo-cowboy-adventure. I don't see no harm in them games interminglin' for a few minutes, do you?

AMBER

S'pose not.

(Amber reluctantly sits down next to Daniel.)

DANIEL

Mmm. Good beans.

AMBER

I'd rather not talk on beans, if ya don't mind?

DANIEL

Sure thang.

AMBER

So... Where ya'll from?

DANIEL

Amarillo. 'Fore that, Dallas. And 'fore that, the Alamo.

AMBER

Oh. I'm sorry. Were you there when it fell?

DANIEL

I remember it like it were yesterday.

AMBER

So, you were there?

DANIEL

No, I remember hearing about it like it were yesterday. Tragic, what happened to those folks. I was on patrol in Fort Worth when we received word of the attack.

AMBER

You were in the army?

DANIEL

Yep. Got wind of the battle right when it was happening. I wanted to go fight, but my orders were in Fort Worth. Ya can't disobey orders, ya see. No matter how much it hurts.

AMBER

You don't... Always have to obey people, pardner.

DANIEL

I don't anymore. I quit the army. Took to life as an outlaw. Ain't nobody tell me what to do now. Nobody tells me when to sleep, or what to eat, or how to play... Nobody tells me when I can see my family...

(Daniel chokes up.)

AMBER

Daniel. I have something to tell you... Dad isn't stationed overseas. He left us.

DANIEL

What?

AMBER

He left us, Daniel. He lives downtown with some woman. He told mom he didn't want to see us again... I'm sorry, Daniel.

DANIEL

...

AMBER

Say something.

DANIEL

You're a liar.

AMBER

I'm not a liar. I *saw* him. I tried to talk to him and he just ignored me. I asked mom why he did it and she told me the truth.

(Daniel holds his gun on her.)

DANIEL

You spread lies like that ag'in and yer gonna end up with a belly full a lead, ya hear me?

(Amber can't bring herself to look at him.)

(Robert enters, guiding a horse.)

ROBERT

Whoa, there, horsey.

(Robert sees the hold up.)

You two are still playing?

DANIEL

Ain't none of your concern, Robert.

ROBERT

You really upset Cassie.

DANIEL

Not like you helped the situation.

ROBERT

No. I screwed up too. I let you two bully her around. That's why I'm taking this pony to her.

AMBER

We have our own thing going on here, Robert. Mosey on along.

ROBERT

Yeah, that's what I figured. Come on, Countess Seabiscuit.

(Robert exits with his horse.)

AMBER

I'm not lying to you.

(Daniel thinks deeply to himself.)

DANIEL

How much you think a countess would be worth to her people?

AMBER

What?

DANIEL

I figure that pony'd fetch a mighty fine price, especially since she's a countess. I heard she's a three time Kentucky Derby winner too. All I'm saying is, you and me team up and there ain't no stoppin' us from ransoming that prized pony.

AMBER

I'm not playing.

DANIEL

He's just a simple man. Ain't no trouble in ambushin' him. 'Specially with two guns.

AMBER

I said no.

(Amber moves her hand to her hip.)

DANIEL

Easy now. I can take a hint. Look, I can do this job without ya, but I figured I'd cut you in, on account of the beans and such.

(Amber is silent. She remains steadfast on her gun.)

Fine.

(Daniel begins pacing around.)

I can take a hint.

(Amber takes her hand off her hip.)

I suppose I'll just do the job myself.

(Daniel begins to walk offstage.)

Oh, but there is one thing.

AMBER

You finally ready to talk?

DANIEL

I prefer my gun speak for me.

(Daniel spins around with lightning fast speed. He draws his gun and SHOOTS Amber. She falls over.)

(Daniel blows the barrel of the gun, spins it around on his finger, and holsters it.)

Adios.

(Daniel exits.)

(Amber gets up, holding her shoulder. She inspects the wound.)

AMBER

Just a through-and-through. I'll be fine.

(She takes a bottle of whiskey from her bag. She uncorks the bottle with her teeth and takes a big swig - reeling from the taste. She takes a few quick, deep breaths, then pours whiskey on her wound.)

AMBER

AHHH!

(She falls over from the pain. She pants heavily, then takes out her gun. She examines the chambers.)

Full clip. I won't let you get away with this, brother. If it's the last thing I do.

(Lights down.)

(The lights come up on Cassie as she is drawing in the middle of the floor.)

(Robert enters with his pony.)

CASSIE

What's that?

ROBERT

A pony. I got her for you.

(Cassie tries to repress her excitement.)

CASSIE

Oh... She's stunning.

(She continues coloring nonchalantly.)

ROBERT

Do you want to know her name?

CASSIE

Why - why - why would I want to know that?

ROBERT

It's cute.

CASSIE

Pfft. Like I care... what is it?

ROBERT

Countess Seabiscuit.

(Cassie immediately drops her crayons - unable to contain herself. She runs up to Robert and hugs him tight.)

CASSIE

Oh my god oh my god oh my god oh my god I love her so much!

ROBERT

I thought you might. She's all yours. Housebroken and everything. The only thing I think we might need to stock up on is hay.

CASSIE

Hay is for horses. She's a pony.

ROBERT

Oh yeah. What do ponies eat?

CASSIE

Baby carrots, duh!

ROBERT

Oh! You learn something new every day.

(Robert hands her the reins.)

Umm. Daniel and Amber are playing Wild West. Wanna play? We don't have to play with them. Just me and you can play.

(Cassie is silent.)

It'll be fuuuuuun.

CASSIE

I'm kind of sick of playing today. I just want to draw.

ROBERT

There's drawing in the Wild West. That's what you call it when you pull your gun on someone.

CASSIE

I'm sick of guns. I don't want to kill any more people today.

ROBERT

That could be your character! You're a retired gunslinger whose days of killing are in the past. You use the money from your last robbery to open up your own business and make an honest living for yourself.

CASSIE

Keep talking...

ROBERT

It can be just like Princess Buttercup's Café and Restaurant only in Wild West times! It can be Cowgirl Buttercup's Saloon and, uh, what's the word? Oh! Brothel! Cowgirl Buttercup's Saloon and Brothel!

CASSIE

What's a brothel?

ROBERT

I asked dad once when we were watching a Western and he said, "it's a place where lonely cowboys could get a good drink and a good woman."

CASSIE

Aw. I hope they found a woman like mom. She's the best.

ROBERT

That's why we'll only hire the best.

CASSIE

We?

ROBERT

Sure. We can run this place together! You can be the front of house manager. Tell jokes to the regulars, ya know? Maybe play a little pianee if the mood strikes you.

CASSIE

Do I have to kill anyone?

ROBERT

Only if you want to.

(Cassie lights up. She hugs Robert again.)

CASSIE

I'm in! You're the best brother ever. Three cheers for the opening of Cowgirl Buttercup's Saloon and Brothel! Hip Hip--

DANIEL

(Offstage.)

Hurray.

(Daniel enters.)

What? Did I ruin the party? Sorry about that.

CASSIE

What do you want, Daniel?

DANIEL

Oh, you've heard of me? Well, I guess the reputation of Daniel "Mad Man" McGraw has traveled to this lil' Podunk town after all.

(Robert moves his hand to his hip, but Daniel beats him to it. He draws and aims at Robert's heart.)

Too slow, ya yellow bellied son-of-a-gun.

ROBERT

What do you want?

DANIEL

Why, the pony of course? Figure she's worth a pretty penny.

CASSIE

She's not for sale.

DANIEL

I ain't lookin' to buy.

(Cassie rushes Daniel, but he points his gun at her. She stops in her tracks.)

ROBERT

Hey!

(Robert steps in front of Cassie.)

You don't point a gun at my sister.

DANIEL

Stand down, boy.

ROBERT

And if I don't?

DANIEL

Then I'll take ya out back, let ya make peace with yer god, then kill ya.

ROBERT

You're a mad man.

DANIEL

Ya got that right!

(Daniel pulls the hammer back on his gun. He fires five rounds at Robert's feet, causing Robert to dance.)

CASSIE

Stop it! Please!

(Daniel stops.)

DANIEL

Well... What's it gon' be, pardner? Ya gon' give up that pony?

ROBERT

Never.

DANIEL

So be it.

(Daniel steadies his aim.)

AMBER

(Offstage.)

Put the gun down, Mad Man.

(Amber walks in holding her gun on Daniel.)

DANIEL

Well! I'll be a monkey's uncle. I could've sworn I sent you to hell.

AMBER

You just knicked my shoulder. Next time, make sure you finished the job.

DANIEL

There's not gonna be a next time. I'm gon' kill you right now.

(Daniel aims his gun at Amber.)

AMBER

You sure about that?

DANIEL

What do you mean?

AMBER

I counted five shots just now. Being that you have a six shooter, I reckon you only have one bullet left. Meanwhile, I got a full six bullets in my gun. Fella over there has a gun on his hip. I'd say the odds aren't in yer favor.

DANIEL

Why you... You snake! I...

(Daniel looks around frantically for a way out. He takes Cassie hostage and puts his gun to her head.)

Seems to me like I only need one bullet after all. Now, you and the fella are gon' leave or I'll shoot her. Once yer far enough away, I'll simply take the pony and leave her safe as the day she was born.

AMBER

Daniel, stop it. This is taking it too far.

ROBERT

She doesn't want to play your game.

DANIEL

Shut up! We'll play whatever I want us to play.

CASSIE

Your game didn't win, Daniel.

DANIEL

Who cares!?! Sometimes, life isn't fair.

ROBERT

Come on, Daniel. Put the gun down.

DANIEL

No! I am in charge of this situation.

AMBER

No, Daniel. You're not. And that's okay. Sometimes we can't control the narrative. Sometimes, we just have to go with what life throws at us. What happened wasn't your fault. There's nothing you can do except be there for the people that love you.

ROBERT

I feel like we're missing part of the story here.

AMBER

Our dad left us. He told us he was going away for his job, but he really just tossed us out of his life.

ROBERT

Oh my god.

CASSIE

Daniel. Amber. We had no idea.

AMBER

No one did except me and my mom.

(Daniel lowers his gun.)

DANIEL

No... I knew... I saw you chasing after him that day at the grocery store. I didn't want to believe that it was him. I even tried convincing myself that it wasn't; that is was just some look-alike, but there was no mistaking his smell. I put that cologne on myself dozens of times, just to pretend I was him... I tried convincing myself that he was on some secret mission for the army and that's why he couldn't talk with me. I mean, what was I supposed to think? He's my dad... There had to be a reason why--

(Daniel maintains his grip on Cassie, but his eyes start tearing up.)

I... I'm sorry, guys. I think I've been a bad friend. I've been a bad brother. I've been a bad son.

AMBER

Daniel --

DANIEL

--Not to him. I mean, to mom. I've treated her so badly this past year. Maybe I blamed her for dad not coming back... I should apologize to her.

ROBERT

Maybe you should apologize later. After we've played Wild West.

DANIEL

Really?

ROBERT

Yeah, we still need to finish Amber's game.

AMBER

Why don't we forget about my game? Let's just forget about this stupid contest.

CASSIE

I agree.

DANIEL

Thanks guys. I really am sorry.

(Daniel holsters his gun.)

And I'm sorry for bringing violence into yer fine saloon.

ROBERT

And brothel.

DANIEL

If I let you go, you're not going to shoot me, are you?

CASSIE

No. I think I'm going to go the pacifist route.

DANIEL

What's a pacifist?

CASSIE

Oh, it's where I pass my fist through your face!

(With cat-like reflexes, Cassie elbows Daniel in the stomach, punches him in the face, then flips him over her shoulder.)

(Daniel quickly stands up, trying to pretend he isn't seriously hurt or really wants to cry.)

I'm sorry Daniel, I just felt like you hadn't suffered enough. I mean, emotionally, sure, you've been through the ringer, but something physical had to happen to you too.

AMBER

Oh my gosh! That was amazing!

ROBERT

That looked like a freaking action movie!

(Daniel stifles tears as he holds his nose with his fingers.)

DANIEL

Yeah, no, I know, that was totally cool, right? I actually have some stunt training so I just went with it. I could see every move coming from like, a mile away, but that's cool cause we were totally in sync with what just happened. Didn't it look awesome? Totally real. Anyway, I'm just going to go to the other room for a totally unrelated reason okay bye.

(Daniel runs offstage.)

AMBER

He was actually, very hurt, right?

ROBERT

Totally.

CASSIE

Ya know. Just don't hold a gun to a girl's head. I'm probably going to have some trauma about it now and get anxiety every time someone puts a gun to my head.

ROBERT

I'm pretty sure that would have happened anyway, but I'm glad you stuck up for yourself.

CASSIE

I'm glad you stuck up for me, big bro.

AMBER

Hey guys. I'm sorry about ruining your games. I should have respected what you were trying to do. Plus, I'm really bummed I didn't get to try that BLT, Cassie. What do the initials stand for anyway?

CASSIE

Bacon, lettuce, and toads.

AMBER

Oh... Ew...

CASSIE

They are a delicacy in the gum drop forest.

AMBER

I bet.

ROBERT

What do you say we get this place cleaned up? I'll get the mop.

CASSIE

And I'll play a little song on the piano.

ROBERT

In the Wild West, it's called a pian-ee.

CASSIE

I can play that too.

(Robert gets a mop bucket and starts mopping.)

(Cassie plays a tune on the pianee.)

AMBER

Mind if I pour myself a whiskey?

ROBERT

If you're asking if we're hirin' a bartender, then damn straight you can!

(Amber pours herself a whiskey and takes a sip.)

(Daniel stumbles in with a bloody tissue in his nose.)

DANIEL

Hey all! I'm just a lowly cattle rustler lookin' to make a career change. You got any openings?

ROBERT

I'm sure we can find you something.

DANIEL

Say, you haven't seen my evil, twin brother around, have you?

CASSIE

You just missed him!

DANIEL

Right. Well, I might as well pull up a chair and have a drink. Also, guys, I've been a jerk today. Can you forgive me? I promise, I'll be a better friend.

(Cassie stops playing pianee and smiles.)

CASSIE

Pour him a drink, Amber. Maybe Daniel here can tell us some tales of his days as a cattle rustler.

(Daniel smiles as Amber slides him a drink.)

DANIEL

There I was - tasked with getting' one thousand head of cattle across the mighty Rio Grande River. I knew I had to get all the energy I could for the mornin' drive. Trouble was - all I had was a few cans of beans.

AMBER

Oh god. Not beans again.

DANIEL

All sorts 'a beans! Black beans. Kidney - both light and dark. Jelly - now those were essential - for the sugar, of course.

(The friends listen intently as Daniel continues his tale until the lights fade out.)