

THIS IS JUST TO SAY

By Julia C. Bond

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CHARACTERS
(10 Male, 14 Female)

ANTHONY	Big brother to BaoVang – typical big brother / jokester
MARIA	A smart girl – isn't ready / interested in boys
MARIA'S MOM	Understanding – adores her daughter
MRS. MERZ	The teacher – wise, caring and able to identify her own flaws
CARRIE	Big sister to Alyssa – unforgiving and frustrated
DARON	Younger brother of Lamar – looks up to him, feels ignored by him
MRS. GARCIA	Teacher who discovers Thomas' shenanigans and enjoys his humor
ALYSSA	Carrie's little sister – feels powerless next to her bossy older sister
MEGAN and JEWEL'S DAD	An alcoholic struggling with anger issues – he's a little scary at times, trying to be a better father
THOMAS	A goofball / rascal
MEGAN	Older sister to Jewel – morose, grieving her parents faults
THE PRINCIPAL	An authority figure
BAO VANG	Earnest – a dancer
RANEESHA	Self-actualized, heated but smart, athletic and frustrated at her vulnerability around Tenzin
JAZZANIQUE	Conflicted and ashamed of her disloyalty but unable to resist her crush
KYLE	Energetic boy with an affinity for sports

BOBBY	Pining for Maria
JEWEL	Broken-hearted, very vulnerable, played best by a smaller actress
REUBEN	Energetic boy with an affinity for sports
ANONYMOUS/BONIFACIO	Should be able to carry off the Spanish text – initially eager and open – loud even – and then quieted, shy, hurt / made invisible by bullying
MAI LEE	Outgoing, a good friend and a dancer
CARMEN	Betrayed by Jazzanique
TENZIN	Oblivious of Raneesha’s crush – friendly and easy going but grieving the loss of his dog
LAMAR	Older brother of DaRon – tough exterior but ultimately loving to DaRon

The Principal could be played by a male or female actress.

All adult parts could be played by child actors.

Because the cast is so large, each child might be specifically (and even stereotypically) dressed (i.e. dancewear for BaoVang and Mai Lee, sportswear for Raneesha, Kyle and Rueben, pink for Jewel, bright colors for Thomas etc.) so that the audience can recognize them from scene to scene.

PRODUCTION NOTES

“This is Just to Say,” can easily be staged without much more than a desk and chairs for the set. Sound effects can be performed offstage by actors, and adult characters can be played by child actors. The only necessary props are a ball for Rueben and Kyle, and an empty brownie pan for Maria’s mother.

What is most important about the play is to utilize the poetry to create a moving story. Because there are so many actors, it’s essential to use unique costumes to give the audience the opportunity to remember each character as they enter and exit scenes. For example, Rueben

and Kyle might be dressed in baseball hats, baggy jeans and matching colored t-shirts to indicate their sameness. "Matching" costumes can also be utilized for BaoVang and Mai Ling who are best friends and dancers. Mrs. Merz must be dressed in drab or mismatched clothing for the first half of the play and transformed into either very stylish clothing later or, if the director wishes, something more elaborate and poetic like a gown with literal images of sky. It would also help the audience to keep track of characters if the older siblings and or adult characters were larger in stature than the younger siblings or children.

One of the most successful scenes in the play, in terms of humor, is when Reuben and Kyle recite their poems. The use of lights, rock or rap music and choreography have the potential to really get the audience engaged in their exchange. That's also true of the "River of Forgiveness" dance by Mai Lee and BaoVang.

Though this is certainly an ensemble piece, there are two essential characters that, when performed with the right emotions, can make or break the story. The first is Mrs. Merz who must be likeable to the audience without becoming overly saccharine in her interactions with the kids. The audience needs to believe she is a real and fallible teacher. This can be best balanced if Mrs. Merz is perceived as gentle and understanding but open to the suggestion that she might be imperfect. And it's especially important to have her energy and countenance be elevated and altered in the flashback scene. Where she is patient in the presence, she must be intolerant in the past.

The other essential character is Anonymous / Bonifacio. As with Mrs. Merz, the audience must have access to levels of this character's personality and alterations throughout the play. He should be naïvely confident when he first appears and completely despondent and dark during scenes that take place in the present. He should also be wearing a dark hoodie in scenes that take place in the present to disguise his identity from the audience. Their only clue should be his accent.

This is an excellent work for both theater groups and schools to use for writing exercises. Having cast members write their own "apology poems," is a wonderful way to emphasize the importance of the content of the play and enhance cast members understanding of various forms of poetry. In addition, the play unearths some of the more difficult issues children grapple with and presents an opportunity to discuss bullying, friendship, divorce, alcoholism and sibling rivalry in a safe environment. Pairing the play with the opportunity for discussion is a wonderful and important way to acknowledge the difficult truths presented in the material.

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Stage left is a makeshift classroom with books, desks and / or tables and an area for the TEACHER to direct the class from. A rolling blackboard with the William Carlos Williams poem written on it can be the focal point behind the TEACHER's area. Stage right can be used for any recitations that are not classroom related and for respondents to stand or act when not speaking.

SCENE 1

Music plays and fades as the KIDS settle in. Lights come up on a busy classroom. LAMAR, MEGAN and CARRIE are meant to be older students and would not be in the classroom. Because the cast is so large, each child might be specifically (and even stereotypically i.e. dancewear for BAO VANG and MAI LEE, sportswear for RANEESHA etc.) dressed so that the audience can recognize them from scene to scene. The KIDS are chatting, goofing around etc. MRS. MERZ comes in to calm the room.

MRS. MERZ: Good morning everyone. Let's settle into our seats.

(REUBEN throws a paper airplane to KYLE. MRS. MERZ catches it and swiftly pockets it.)

Did you all read the poem for homework last night? Excellent, can I get a volunteer to read it?

(ALYSSA raises her hand. The CLASS groans and teases as if SHE is the class pet who always asks to read aloud.)

ALYSSA: "This is Just to Say," by William Carlos Williams

This is just to say
I have eaten
the plums
that were in
the ice box
And which
you were probably
saving

for breakfast
Forgive me
They were delicious,
So sweet
and so cold

ANTHONY: Uhm... William Carlos Williams? That's his real name?
Who would name their kid that? Weird.

JAZZANIQUE: So weird!

(CLASS laughs.)

MRS.MERZ: Ok, ok everybody. That was wonderful, Alyssa. Class,
what do you think this poem is about?

BOBBY: Breakfast.

(KIDS laugh.)

MRS.MERZ: Ok, what else?

CARMEN: He's saying he's sorry.

MRS.MERZ: That's right Carmen. The poet is apologizing but do we
think he's really sorry?

DARON: *(Raises her hand.)* No, he doesn't seem sorry.

MRS.MERZ: Why?

MARIA: *(Raises her hand.)* Because he talks about how good the
plums tasted. How much he liked eating them.

KYLE: *(Raises his hand.)* Yeah, and he knew she was saving them for
breakfast but he ate them anyway and now he wants her
forgiveness? Dude, not gonna happen.

(KIDS laugh, someone slaps him a high five.)

MRS.MERZ: OK, ok, so that raises a great question. What's the point
of an apology?

RANEESHA: There's no point. Apologies are just words.

MRS. MERZ: But words can be very powerful. What can words do?
Why would you use words to make an apology?

KYLE: So people don't get mad at you?

MAI LEE: *(Raises her hand.)* To make someone feel better?

MRS.MERZ: Good Kyle, Mai Lee. So who do we want to feel better
when we apologize? Is it always the person we are apologizing to?

ANTHONY: *(Raises his hand.)* I don't get it.

MRS.MERZ: Well, who do you think the poet in "This is Just to Say"
hoped would feel better?

REUBEN: Uh, himself? I mean... it didn't really seem like he cared about the dude whose plums he ate.

RANEESHA: Yeah, like I said, the guy was just using a bunch of words and he didn't even mean them.

MRS.MERZ: So Reuben and Carmen bring up some good questions. Do apologies count when we don't mean them?

THOMAS: *(Raises his hand.)* Yeah, cause someone feels better about something that went wrong.

RANEESHA: *(Raises her hand.)* Yeah, but *WHO?* What if it's only the person apologizing who feels better? Then it's just selfish to say sorry, right?

ANONYMOUS: *(Mumbles.)* Does it matter?

MRS.MERZ: Sorry?

ANONYMOUS: *(Looks around, uncomfortable to be in the spotlight.)* I said, does it matter? I mean, as long as *someone* feels better, does it matter?

(The KIDS are quiet for a pause as THEY digest the question.)

MRS. MERZ: Now we're getting somewhere.

ALYSSA: My mom says sometimes an apology can be like a gift.

KYLE: Yeah, well, I've never asked for one for Christmas.

THOMAS: Maybe you should have.

REUBEN: Oh snap!

(CLASS laughs.)

MRS. MERZ: Haven't you ever felt better when someone said sorry to you? The right words can have the power to heal, forgive, or make someone who is hurting feel whole again.

RANEESHA: That sounds kinda sappy.

MRS. MERZ: Yeah well, *(SHE shrugs)* I think sappy is underrated.

Anyway, we're going to try this out in our poetry unit. I'm going to assign you to write a poem that's an apology.

KYLE: Wait, but who am I apologizing *to*?

MRS. MERZ: Well, who do you owe an apology to?

KYLE: *(Thinks.)* Some butterflies?

(CLASS laughs.)

Seriously, last year, in Miss. Garcia's class, I karate chopped a butterfly habitat.

(HE leans over to REUBEN. CLASS laughs again.)

Remember Reubes? I killed two of them.

RANEESHA: Jeez Kyle!

KYLE: I know! *That's* why I owe the butterflies an apology!

MARIA: (*Without raising her hand.*) I once cut up a whole string of my mother's pearls!

CARMEN: I wrote a fake love note and put it in this girl's locker... she thought it was real.

BOBBY: I backed my mom's car out of the driveway and almost ran over my baby brother.

RUBEN: Dude!

RANEESHA: How did you get to drive a car? You're twelve!

ALYSSA: Oh my Gosh!

(*CLASS quiets in shock, looking at him.*)

BOBBY: What? He was fine.

MRS. MERZ: OK, ok, those are all great subjects for apology! Listen, you'll need to choose a form for your poem from those we've already studied in class – It's up to you – free verse, haiku, cinquain, acrostic, ballad – whatever you like. Let's get started.

(*Lights fade. ALL exit with blocks.*)

SCENE 2

Spotlight on THOMAS. Behind him, a teacher, MRS. GARCIA stands with an empty donut box. SHE looks inside confused, and then carries the box offstage. THOMAS has red jelly on his face and powdered sugar on his clothes. HE is grinning and full of energy and joy. KYLE, MEGAN, SHANNON, JEWEL, and CARRIE run on and sit at the edge of the stage facing THOMAS who is standing center stage.

THOMAS: My poem is also called "This is Just to Say" (*clears throat.*)

This is just to say
I have stolen the jelly doughnuts
that were in the teachers' lounge
and which you were probably saving
for... teachers.
Forgive me
They were delicious

so sweet and so gloppy. (*stares into space with pleasure remembering the donuts*)
Too bad the powdered sugar spilled all over my shirt
and gave me away

(*Spotlight out.*)

SCENE 3

Lights come up on CARRIE.

CARRIE: Awhile back, something happened.

(*MRS. GARCIA enters. KYLE, MEGAN, SHANNON, JEWEL, and CARRIE come to life and begin to interact.*)

MRS. GARCIA: All right, OK. Does everyone have their mentor and mentee? Sixth graders? You should all have a third grader to mentor, everyone?

(*The KIDS sit. KYLE and MEGAN sit downstage center. SHANNON and JEWEL sit downstage left. CARRIE sits downstage right.*)

CARRIE: (*Raises her hand.*) I don't have a kid yet.

MRS. GARCIA: Oh that's right, Carrie. I'm assigning you to the new boy.

(*SHE turns and addresses the BOY who is staring at the chalkboard trying to read the words.*)

Everyone? This is uh, Boni-fa-sss is it?

BONIFACIO: (*Cheerfully, loudly and with a halting Spanish accent*)
Mee name es Bonifacio!

(*KIDS laugh.*)

MRS. GARCIA: All right everyone, settle down now. Bonifa-chi-o

(*HE nods with approval at her pronunciation.*)

Bonifacio is from Spain. His first language is Spanish. He doesn't speak a lot of English yet, so I expect you all to be patient and welcoming to him. Now pair off, pair off, and get to know each

other. See if you can't find out at least five things you didn't already know about your partner.

(KIDS stay onstage and provide background noise while CARRIE and BONIFACIO get to know one another.)

BONIFACIO: *(Cheerfully approaches CARRIE.)* Encantado, Carrie! Eeet means, "nice to meet you!"

CARRIE: *(Rolls her eyes and crosses her arms. Walks back over to the teacher.)* Mrs. Garcia? Why do I have to be paired with a boy? *(Under her breath.)* A totally weird boy.

MRS. GARCIA: Carrie, rise to the occasion you ha-

(A crash is heard offstage.)

MRS. GARCIA: Just a minute Carrie. *(SHE rushes offstage.)*

BONIFACIO: Cinema... you like?

CARRIE: Huh?

BONIFACIO: Uh cinema... movie... "How to teach my dragon?" *(Note: A recent movie title should be used here.)*

CARRIE: What? *(SHE shakes her head in confusion.)* Cinnamon?

BONIFACIO: Dragone... I like.

CARRIE: What are you saying?

BONIFACIO: You like de cinema?

CARRIE: You are a freak.

(Pause – The TWO sit staring at each other – BOTH uncomfortable.)

BONIFACIO: *(Suddenly.)* Hello Carrie! I am Bonifacio!

CARRIE: Jeez, I know already. *(SHE gets up, turns her back to him and walks to a friend.)* Why me, Megan? How am I supposed to mentor *that*?

MEGAN: What did he say his name was?

CARRIE: *(Offhandedly.)* I'm pretty sure he said butt face-io.

ANTHONY: Butt Face!!

(KIDS cracking up and saying the new nickname, passing it around the CROWD.)

CARRIE: *(Laughing, getting taken in by the humor.)* Buttface!

BOY: His name is Buttface!

BONIFACIO: *(Tracks CARRIE down again.)* Encantado Carrie! I am Bonifacio!

(More laughter.)

CARRIE: Oh. My. Gosh.

ALL KIDS: Butt face! Butt Face! Butt Face!

(THEY back him off stage. HE looks confused. CARRIE is left standing onstage laughing.)

CARRIE: *(SHE stops laughing and turns to the audience with a sober expression.)*

My poem is called "Anonymous."
Because the thing is, no one wanted to talk to you after that.
You were just "Butt face" and they ignored you
Like you weren't even there
It's been three years, Bonifacio.
And you're still "Butt Face"
My sister is in your class
She tells me

(BONIFACIO / ANONYMOUS re-enters behind CARRIE – Listening.)

You haven't made any friends
No one talks to you
And it's sort of like,
I stole your identity
I bullied you,
And took who you could have been.

Made you...
anonymous

(BONIFACIO / ANONYMOUS raises his hoodie, slumps his shoulders and exits. CARRIE exits.)

SCENE 4

TENZIN enters on stage with his dog, Einstein. HE's bouncing a tennis ball. HE tosses it out towards the audience and prompts Einstein to go get it. RANEESHA enters.

TENZIN: Hey Einstein, catch!

RANEESHA: Hi, Tenzin.

TENZIN: Hey.

RANEESHA: Nice dog. (*Leans down to pet him.*)

TENZIN: Thanks

RANEESHA: Um, can I interview you? It's for this project.

TENZIN: Sure.

(*HE keeps trying to get the dog to fetch but something is wrong.*)

RANEESHA: Okay... so... what's your dog's name?

TENZIN: Einstein. Hey boy, what's wrong? Fetch the ball buddy.

RANEESHA: He seems kind of... tired. (*SHE reaches down to pet the dog again*) So, what are you doing this weekend?

TENZIN: I don't have any real plans. (*TENZIN tries unsuccessfully to get his dog interested in fetch. HE is visibly concerned.*) Here boy!

RANEESHA: You're not gonna go to the track meet?

TENZIN: Nope. Track isn't really my thing.

RANEESHA: Oh, well, what is your thing?

TENZIN: What class is this for anyway?

RANEESHA: (*Defensively.*) – Math. (*Pause.*) Well, I'm running this weekend. It's a big win if I get it and it means we'll have a chance at running in the regionals and –

TENZIN: That's nice.

RANEESHA: Yeah, well...

TENZIN: I gotta get Einstein home. I'll see you later.

RANEESHA: Sure, right. See you later...

SCENE 5

As TENZIN leaves, HE brushes shoulders with MARIA who is trying to get away from BOBBY.

MARIA: Bobby, go hang out with your own friends and stop being a twelve-year-old stalker.

BOBBY: I know you are but what am I?

MARIA: Bobby! You're being such a jerk!

BOBBY: I know you are but what am I?

MARIA: Stop following me.

BOBBY: I know you are bu-

MARIA: Bobby, seriously. Why do you have to be so annoying?

BOBBY: (*Mimics her.*) Why do you have to be so annoying?

MARIA: Ahhhh! Just leave me alone!

(As HE tries to cut in front of her, HE accidentally bumps her arms, causing her books to fall. SHE scoops them up angrily and walks offstage. Lights change. BOBBY says the first line of his poem to MARIA's retreating back.)

BOBBY: (*Angrily at first.*) Hey Maria. I'm sorry I bumped your books that day and scattered them all over the floor (but not really.)

I'm sorry your locker mirror disappeared and mysteriously ended up in my desk (but not really.)

I'm sorry I pulled that clip out of your hair and you had to chase me down the hall (but not really.)

I'm sorry I made you yell at me till your face got red and your eyes sparkled (but not really.)

(Bell rings and BOBBY's shoulders droop.)

I'm sorry you keep saying you won't go out with me. (Really.)

(Lights out.)

SCENE 6

Lights come up on the classroom and ANONYMOUS slips in. HE is wearing a hoodie which covers his head to hide his identity. HE creeps over to an aquarium and scoops out the class lizard. (This can all be mimed.) ANONYMOUS shoves the lizard in his pocket. Voices waft in as BAO VANG and MAI LEE enter the room chatting. ANONYMOUS walks quickly past them, exiting the room.

MAI LEE: Yeah but I was thinking about cutting my hair really short.

BAO VANG: Yeah but doesn't your mom have some rule about short hair?

(OTHER STUDENTS file in, also chatting.)

JEWEL: (*Peers into the lizard habitat.*) Where's Slow-Hand Lizard?

KYLE: He hides during the day. Check behind the green rock.

JEWEL: (*Checks.*) He's not there. He's not in here.

KYLE: (*Sarcastic.*) Seriously Jewel?

JEWEL: Seriously!

(KIDS begin to notice, cause a commotion, as JEWEL grows worried. ANONYMOUS walks back in and sits down.)

Someone took Slow-Hand! Who took the lizard?

REUBEN: No one is allowed to take the lizard home during the week!

(KIDS rush to the aquarium looking, getting panicked.)

MRS. MERZ: *(Enters.)* What's going on? Settle down.

ALYSSA: Mrs. Merz, oh my gosh! Slow-Hand Lizard is missing!

MRS. MERZ: Are you sure? *(SHE looks through the habitat and turns to the CLASS)* OK everyone, if someone took Slow-Hand as a joke or something fess up please. *(Pause.)* Come on, did someone take him home and forget to bring him back?

JEWEL: This is a really stupid prank.

ALYSSA: What if it's not a prank? What if someone stole him for keeps?

MRS. MERZ: OK guys don't panic. Whoever took the lizard will bring him back. They can just slip him back into his cage and we won't ever need to know who did it.

(The CLASS is silent while THEY size each other up. ANONYMOUS has his hood up and his hands in his pocket. No one notices him. The KIDS burst into various accusations.)

JEWEL: What if he's hurt?

ALYSSA: Don't say that!

MRS. MERZ: Come on now. Everyone in this class is a good kid. No one would hurt our lizard. I'm sure that whoever took Slow-Hand Lizard will return him tomorrow. Let's take out our readers.

(KIDS grumble. Lights fade.)

SCENE 7

Red lights flash across the stage and the song "Eye of the Tiger" begins to play. Then we see KIDS run onstage in a melee of dodgeball. REUBEN and KYLE run downstage playing ball wildly. The OTHER KIDS melt offstage as the TWO BOYS become more aggressive in their play. REUBEN hits KYLE with ball, KYLE becomes somewhat angry and hits REUBEN back. The scene should be choreographed to coordinate the punctuated moments

in the poems with the movements of the ball. When REUBEN hits KYLE hard, KYLE should cry out and the music stops abruptly.

REUBEN: Hey Kyle, Here's my apology poem!
I'm sorry for hitting you so hard in dodge ball.
I just really get carried away in situations like that.
Kids screaming and ducking. Coach bellowing,
All those red rubber balls thumping like heartbeats
against the walls and ceiling,
blinking back and forth like stoplights (that really mean go, Go,
GO!)
(Pause.) See, I even got carried away in this poem.

(REUBEN reaches out and helps KYLE, who was laid out from his dodge ball injury, up off the floor. KYLE grabs the ball and pelts him with it. Now REUBEN is on the floor. During his recitation, KYLE is punctuating the lines with angry dribbles of his ball.)

KYLE: Sorry, Reubs,
For belting you as hard as I could in dodge ball.
I'd like to say I wouldn't do it again
But I'd be lying.

(Music plays again and THOMAS rushes out from behind the curtains.)

THOMAS: *(In slow motion)* You're mine!
KYLE and REUBEN: No!!!

(THEY chase THOMAS offstage.)

SCENE 8

Lights up in the classroom where we see MRS. MERZ busily teaching a bored looking CLASS. MRS. MERZ is dressed in a rather ugly green dress. Out of the classroom, CARMEN steps forward looking sad and embarrassed.

CARMEN: This is just to say, I am so sorry for my rude words.
The classroom was so dead.
MRS. MERZ: Anyone? Does anyone have anything to say about *Old Yeller*?

(KIDS are bored and unresponsive.)

CARMEN: No one had anything more to say about *Old Yeller* and we were all crazy to get outside. The silence seemed like a hundred crushing elephants. (*Silence.*)

KYLE: Reubs, wake up. You're drooling!

RUEBEN: I'm awake! I'm awake!

MRS. MERZ: Come on, who read the assigned reading?

CARMEN: So I raised my hand (*SHE raises her hand.*) and made that comment about your dress. "Mrs. Merz, did a rainbow like attack you on the way to school or what?"

(*The ENTIRE CLASS laughs.*)

And everyone burst out laughing.
You smiled.

(*MRS. MERZ smiles, glancing down at her dress.*)

But your smile looked like a frozen pond.
People were high fiving me on the way down to lunch,

(*A STUDENT jumps up and high fives her*)

but I felt like a traitor.
You know how the words slip out and you can't believe it?
And they echo in your head forever and ever?
All through lunch, all through recess, all the next day, I wished I could take those words back.

(*Lights dim on the classroom.*)

I kept thinking of what you always say to us:
"Words can help or hurt, the choice is ours."
I want to rewind to that moment and say instead,
"Mrs. Merz, that dress makes you look like a princess."

(*Offstage sound of a "ding!" spotlight on MRS. MERZ smiling and wearing a gold crown.*)

You are really a queen, not a princess.
Our queen, "Reina de la clase."
I hope you will overlook the transgressions of your loyal
but loud-mouthed subject, and forgive me.

(P.S. I notice you're not wearing that dress so much anymore.
Green is not good on you anyway. I like the new one, with blue
in it, which makes you look happy.)

(CARMEN exits.)

SCENE 9

Stage right, MARIA's MOM enters wearing a kitchen apron. Throughout MARIA's poem her MOTHER mimes making brownies and the audience sees the time and effort the MOTHER puts into making them. MARIA enters smelling the brownies and begins to speak.

MARIA: I smelled them from my room: a wafting wave of chocolate-
ness.
I listened for movement, ears pricked like a bat.
I crept down, stepped over the sleeping dog.
I felt the cold linoleum on my bare toes.
I saw the warm thick brick of brownies.
I slashed a huge chunk, right out of the middle.
The gooey hunks of chocolate winked at me as I gobbled them.
Afterward, the pan gaped like an accusing eye.
My head said, Oops! But my stomach said, Heavenly.

(MARIA exits, eating brownies.)

SCENE 10

CARRIE and ALYSSA are home alone. CARRIE is babysitting. CARRIE is talking on the phone not giving ALYSSA any attention.

ALYSSA: I can't believe Mom left you in charge. You're only like 10
months older than me.

CARRIE: Yeah, well... she did... so you have to do what I say.

ALYSSA: No I don't! Stop talking on the phone! Joey doesn't even like
you anyway!

CARRIE: I'm not even talking to him!

ALYSSA: Yes you are! You were all like "ooh Joey, I looove you!"

CARRIE: You better stop right now!

(ALYSSA continues to tease and mock her.)

If you don't stop up, I'm gonna lock you in the closet!!!

ALYSSA: *(gasps)* Awww... I'm telling mom you said that! I'm writing it down word for word.

(SHE grabs a pencil and paper and begins to write. Struggle ensues. CARRIE gets stabbed.)

CARRIE: OWWWWW! You stabbed me! Alyssa, you stabbed me? I'm bleeding!

(The TWO GIRLS stare each other. THEY can't believe what just happened. Shock. ALYSSA moves to the center stage and CARRIE exits.)

ALYSSA: The Black Spot
That black spot on your palm
It hasn't gone away
So long ago I can hardly remember
I stabbed you with a pencil
Part of the lead, there,
still inside you.
And inside me, too,
something small and black.
Hidden away.
I don't know what to call it,
the nugget of darkness,
that made me stab you.
It never goes away.
Both marks, still there.
Small black
reminders.

SCENE 11

LAMAR and CARMEN walk in hand in hand. HE nudges her, runs a hand over her cheek, kisses her and leaves.

ALYSSA: Oh my gosh, you kissed him?

CARMEN: He kissed *me*.

JAZZANIQUE: He's soooooo cute!

ALYSSA: So are you guys officially going out?

CARMEN: I think so, yeah.

JAZZANIQUE: Did he ask you?

CARMEN: Not in words but he kissed me so...

ALYSSA: Can I tell Mai Lee, and BaoVang?

JAZZANIQUE: and everyone else...

ALYSSA: Hey!

CARMEN: It's true. Someone isn't very good at keeping secrets.

JAZZANIQUE: She's looking at *you*, Alyssa.

CARMEN: Anyway, what am I supposed to do? Christmas break is coming and my parents are taking Alyssa and I on vacation to California for three weeks! He's totally going to forget me!

ALYSSA: There's always email, and texting. True love can last through anything.

JAZZANIQUE: Yeah (*nervously*) a long distance relationship. Do you think he'll wait?

CARMEN: Totally! I think he will wait for me if he really loves me, don't you?

JAZZANIQUE: Sure, of course.

CARMEN: Jazz! You guys are the best friends! I'm going to miss you so much! BFFL's!

ALYSSA: Hugs!

(THEY hug. Bell rings and KIDS fill the hallway. We see DARON downstage at his locker. His brother LAMAR walks by with a group of guys. THEY are laughing and pushing each other.)

DARON: Hey bro!

(LAMAR doesn't hear him.)

Hey Lamar?

(LAMAR and his FRIENDS exit. DARON stares after them with a pained expression.)

SCENE 12

ANTHONY and BAO VANG sit on a couch. THEY are watching TV and we hear the sound of a kid's show playing. ANTHONY is cutting his toenails. A bowl sits nearby ANTHONY and HE is tossing his toenails in as HE goes. HE finishes and gets up to move to the center of the stage and recite his poem.

ANTHONY: Every day after school,
We hang out at my house to watch TV.

For that hour, it's like time is suspended
The laugh track, bright colors, slapstick world of sitcoms
Are our reality.
Not this beat up old couch. Not homework or the kids at school,
who can be a lot meaner than the ones on TV.
And everything is clever. And the characters fall but don't get hurt
and have plenty of friends and live in hotels or on cruise ships!
TV time
Is like a perfect bubble of happiness.

(BAO VANG now grabs the bowl and walks over to an imaginary kitchen where SHE refills the bowl with new cereal.)

So neither of us really noticed when you refilled your cereal bowl.
And began to eat from it.

(BAO VANG begins spooning the cereal and toenail clippings into her mouth.)

And you didn't figure it out.

BAO VANG: *(Pulls something from her teeth, examines it.)* What is that?

(ANTHONY looks horrified at first and then shrugs and quickly goes back to watching TV.)

ANTHONY: So I never mentioned.
That you'd eaten my toenails.
Sorry.

(Lights out.)

SCENE 13

DARON enters, begins sneaking around his brother's room looking for a place to hide his poem.

DARON: Where would you hide a secret message?
Under a pillow? In a pocket?

(Finds an old sandwich, smells it and recoils)

Between two slices of bread?
Where would you hide a message
That *wants* to be found? (*Stops searching.*)
Maybe it shouldn't be found.
Maybe writing it is most important.
What happens after doesn't matter.
Well big brother,
here's my secret message.
I'm sorry I'm such a "weird kid."
I'm sorry I embarrass you.
I'm hiding it here, under some papers on your desk.
I wonder if you will ever find it.

SCENE 14

Texting while talking, JAZZANIQUE enters an empty stage.

JAZZANIQUE: (*Texting while talking*) Hey what's up, Carmen?

(*SHE waits, staring at the phone's screen.*)

Oh, yeah, I forgot, you're not talking to me.
Okay, so don't talk to me. Because it will be your loss.

(*SHE texts again, waits.*)

But seriously, I'm so sorry. You are my best friend, my BFFL
Even though I acted like a jerk. And I didn't have the guts to tell
you
I liked him too.
And when you said he'd kissed you.
It was like a thousand knives through my heart.
So I kissed him too.
But it didn't matter, you should know.
You should know that you mean more to me than some guy.
You and I are more than friends. We're practically sisters
So, this is just to say.
Hey sis, I'm sorry.

SCENE 15

Lights up on JEWEL and MEGAN at home. JEWEL is working on her poem. MEGAN is playing guitar and working on writing a song.

MEGAN: What are you concentrating so hard on over there?

JEWEL: Ms. Merz assigned us this poem thing. Did you have to write an apology poem when you were in her class?

MEGAN: No. What do you mean "apology poem"?

JEWEL: It's like, we all have to choose a poem form and then write a real apology to someone.

MEGAN: That sounds kinda cool. It's like writing a song...

JEWEL: Kind of.

MEGAN: So who is your poem to? Like who do you owe an apology to?

JEWEL: I don't know...

MEGAN: Seems like a weird assignment. But Mrs. Merz was a weird teacher.

JEWEL: You didn't like her?

MEGAN: *(Pauses as if remembering something uncomfortable.)* She had a lot of rules. And she wore some crazy outfits.

JEWEL: Did she wear that rainbow scarf when you had her?

MEGAN: Uh huh, and the purple beret with the big bow on it?

JEWEL: And the mismatched socks?

MEGAN: I could never tell if that was on purpose or if she was just color blind.

JEWEL: *(Laughs)* You're so crazy.

MEGAN: No, you're so crazy.

(The GIRLS laugh and begin to wrestle around. A door slams. THEY look at each other and freeze.)

JEWEL: Dad's home.

(Blackout.)

SCENE 16

Lights change. We see MRS. MERZ in the classroom again. The KIDS are frozen. SHE's writing on the chalkboard. SHE turns around and addresses the audience.

MRS. MERZ: It was my first year of teaching. I was young and inexperienced and I thought that disciplining a classroom meant punishing kids who made mistakes.

(The KIDS come to life. THEY are rowdy.)

Sit down, everyone. Let's take out our math workbooks and go over some of the answers from Chapter 3.

(KIDS begin taking out books. A CHILD slips in trying to go unnoticed.)

Megan, I see you. This is the third time this week you have come late to class. I'm afraid you'll have to stay for detention.

MEGAN: But it wasn't my fault--

MRS. MERZ: No buts, Megan. Please sit down and open your books.

(The GIRL sits. The KIDS in the class get disruptive again, tease her for being late. SHE shrinks in her seat.)

Ok, ok, let's get to those math books.

(The noise dies down. Lights dim on classroom and KIDS freeze. MRS. MERZ addresses the audience.)

The thing I didn't realize, the thing I learned after years of being a teacher, is to ask a kid why. Why they are struggling to turn their homework in, why they fall asleep during social studies, why a child who used to raise her hand in response to every one of my questions, has suddenly become as silent as snow.

Had I asked you, I would have found out that your parents were in the midst of a messy divorce. Your dad had some... problems. The people you counted on in your life were struggling with big losses and you and your little sister were getting shuffled from one house to another, people barely keeping track. The thing I would have known is that your being late to class was out of your control. It wasn't your fault, but I treated you as if it were. Not only that but I embarrassed you in front of all of your friends. I was another adult

making things worse for you when I could have been an adult who made things better.

(Blackout.)

SCENE 17

Lights up as TENZIN enters and sits at the edge of the stage. HE is fingering a weathered dog collar as HE speaks. A distant sound effect / dog barking.

TENZIN: It was quiet. No machines beeped.
You looked like you were sleeping. Your nose was still wet.
Your ears were still silky.
But inside, something was crumbling.
"It's not sleep, It's a coma," Baba said.
Harsh voice in the quiet room.
"We have a decision to make."
I did not want to decide anything.
I wanted to stay quiet with the feel of your fur.
But inside, all my cells and nerves were screaming.
Heads nodded.
The decision was made.
You did not move.
You did not shudder.
Yet life left you.
I'm so sorry we had to do this.
We wanted to save you some pain.
I hope we did the right thing.
Is death ever right?
I don't know but I hated having to choose it.
And I hate the quiet in our house without you.

(Lights dim. TENZIN gets up and walks off stage.)

SCENE 18

RANEESHA and MARIA enter upstage left.

MARIA: Hey Ronnie, you run in the match last week?

RANEESHA: Yeah. I took first but I didn't beat my best time.

MARIA: You're crazy. You're the fastest runner in the whole school.
Even the boys can't beat you!

RANEESHA: That doesn't mean I can't get faster.

MARIA: You finish your apology poem yet?

RANEESHA: Nah.

MARIA: Girl, you better finish. I just turned mine in.

RANEESHA: What was yours about?

MARIA: I apologized to my mom for stealing some freshly made brownies. But I wasn't *that* sorry. They were so good! What are you writing yours about?

RANEESHA: I don't know. Well, I sort of know but I don't want the person I'm writing to, to know it was from me. I guess if I knew what his reaction would be, it wouldn't be so hard to write it.

MARIA: But aren't you supposed to let them know it's you? I mean, how is it an apology if the person you give it to doesn't know who it came from?

RANEESHA: I guess that's true. *(Pause.)* It doesn't matter. He hardly knows I exist.

(Bell rings.)

MARIA: I gotta go, girl. You coming to my gymnastics meet after school?

RANEESHA: I'll be there.

(MARIA leaves. TENZIN and THOMAS walk by talking.)

RANEESHA: Hey Tenzin!

TENZIN: Huh? Oh, hey, Raneesha.

RANEESHA: Did you hear about the match this weekend?

TENZIN: Uh, sure.

(HE nods, confused and exits with THOMAS.)

RANEESHA: I won.

(RANEESHA takes a read heart-shaped note out of her back pocket. SHE recites her poem to the audience.)

(Angrily.) My poem is called "A Waste of Heart"
I'm sorry for loving you because you never notice me.
I'm sorry I stare at you so much in class
trying to figure out what's on your mind.
I'm sorry for taking the time in the morning with my hair,

Sorry for trying on six shirts to find the one that makes you say,
“Hey girl, you look fine,” because you never say it.
I’m sorry because I know I’m wasting my heart on you.
Yeah, I’m sorry for loving you.
So sorry that I think I’m going to stop.

(RANEESHA tears the paper in half and throws it into the garbage. Then SHE stomps offstage. We think SHE’s gone but suddenly SHE returns and rescues her note from the garbage before running off stage again.)

SCENE 19

From stage left BAO VANG and MAI LEE run on laughing. THEY goof around.

MAI LEE: I think Tenzin did it. You know his dog just died. Maybe he took the lizard to replace his dog.

BAO VANG: Really? I thought for sure it had to be Kyle and Reuben. They’re always in trouble.

MAI LEE: Yeah but they seemed really surprised when Slow-Hand went missing. Jewel maybe?

BAO VANG: She *is* the one who pointed out that he was missing.

(THEY shake their heads.)

MAI LEE: Man, it’s always the quiet ones, right? Hey, did you study for the math test?

BAO VANG: Like all night but I don’t get it. I’m totally going to fail this thing.

MAI LEE: Me, too.

BAO VANG: If I get one more failing grade on a test in there, I think I’ll have a “D.” Then my mom will make me drop out of after school ballet so I can “focus on my studies.”

MAI LEE: Your mom says that too?

BAO VANG: All. The. Time.

MAI LEE: We should pull the fire alarm and then everyone would get sent outside and it would take so long for them to figure out that there was no fire, that math class would be over.

BAO VANG: *(Laughing.)* Yeah! *(Pause.)* Wait, yeah!

MAI LEE: Wait! I was just kidding.

(SHE bumps the alarm – SHE doesn't mean to pull it but it goes off. Her face falls. From stage right the PRINCIPAL appears and sits at the desk. MAI LEE enters the office area and sits in a chair across from the PRINCIPAL. BAO VANG takes a seat nearby, waiting her turn to speak to the PRINCIPAL. The PRINCIPAL gives MAI LEE a stern stare and MAI LEE turns to the audience.)

Wow, am I really in the principal's office?
She is bigger than I thought
Is that grey hair on her neck?
Her dress is the color of ripe plums.
She is asking so many questions!
I have such a bad feeling in my stomach
BaoVang is my best friend.
She is always laughing.
She was laughing when she hit the fire alarm.
It was an accident! She was just fooling around!
The principal's eyes are like hot sparks.

PRINCIPAL: Exactly *what* happened Mai Lee?

MAI LEE: My parents will be so angry. They will yell and yell.
My mouth is opening!
I'm blabbing about BaoVang and the fire alarm!
I can't believe this is happening!

PRINCIPAL: You are excused. Thank you, Mai Lee.

BAO VANG: *(Whispering to MAI LEE.)* What happened?

MAI LEE: Nothing. Nothing happened.

BAO VANG: She didn't ask you? Did you tell her I did it?

MAI LEE: No

BAO VANG: Thanks! You are such a good friend. *(Gives her a hug.)*

(BAO VANG leaves to sit with the PRINCIPAL. While MAI LEE speaks, the PRINCIPAL admonishes BAO VANG in mime. BAO VANG turns to stare at MAI LEE in shock, realizing that MAI LEE lied to her.)

MAI LEE: *(Turns to audience.)* BaoVang: My best friend
I told on her, then pretended I hadn't.
Will she ever forgive me?

(MAI LEE exits stage right. BAO VANG stands with her head hanging.)

PRINCIPAL: You are excused BaoVang.

(BAO VANG leaves. The PRINCIPAL stays onstage for the next poem.)

SCENE 20

JEWEL enters stage left. SHE is spinning in a circle until SHE stops. The sound of a car engine gunning and then driving off -

JEWEL: To my dad, by Jewel.
You went away and left us.
It's not the first time.
The first time you left because I cried too much (*sound of baby crying*)
The second time it was because I messed up at school.

PRINCIPAL: (*Looks up from her desk.*) Your daughter is "acting out."

JEWEL: The third time, I came home early and saw...

(*Here we see JEWEL mime opening a door and her finding her FATHER with his back to the audience. HE's drinking – HE spins around angrily.*)

JEWEL and MEGAN's DAD: What are you looking at! Get out of here!

JEWEL: Well you said to forget it, so I did.
You see, I'm keeping track.
What did I do this time?
Is it the way I'm dressing these days, or the way I laugh too loud?
Whatever it is, I can fix it.
Please, please come back. Don't leave me spinning alone like a slow, sad tornado. I'm sorry, Daddy. Next time I'll be perfect.

(*A CHILD ACTOR enters stage left as JEWEL leaves.*)

SCENE 21

ANONYMOUS is dressed in a hoodie with his face covered by dark glasses and the hood. The CHILD has his hands shoved deep in his pockets.

ANONYMOUS: How Slow-Hand Lizard Died, by Anonymous;
I stole him.
Took him home in my pocket.

Felt the pulse beating in his soft green neck.
Had no place good to put him. A shoebox.
He got cold, I think.
Watched his life wink out. His bright eye turn to mud.
Brought him back, stiff as an old glove.
Hid him in the bottom of the cage.
Left the money on Mrs. Merz's desk (stole that too).
Won't touch the new lizard.
Don't like to touch money now, either.

(ANONYMOUS sits and the class fills again.)

SCENE 22

There is an argument building among a FEW GIRLS in the class and MRS. MERZ tries to get control.

ALYSSA: You are so fake!

JAZZANIQUE: I didn't mean anything! I didn't want to hurt her feelings!

ALYSSA: Well Carmen doesn't want anything to do with you now.

She's MY BFFL and you got no one! *(Puts her arm around CARMEN.)*

CARMEN: I can't believe you would do this to me! You were supposed to be like a sister!

(More arguing, a little pushing. MRS. MERZ comes over to break up the argument.)

MRS. MERZ: What's going on?

(The GIRLS cross their arms and refuse to speak.)

Tell me what's going on or you will all be hanging out helping me clean graffiti from the desks after school.

(The GIRLS begin shouting their side of the story.)

Hold on, hold on one at a time.

ALYSSA: Jazzanique backstabbed Carmen and stole her boyfriend.

She's a total liar!

RANEESHA: This whole class is full of liars and thieves! I wanna know who stole Slow-Hand lizard and why he hasn't brought him back!

JAZZANIQUE: I want Carmen to write me back. I wrote my apology poem to her but she won't write back to me...

(The CLASS erupts into accusations and anger. MRS. MERZ pauses, thinking. SHE turns to the CLASS.)

MRS.MERZ: OK everyone sit down, sit down. Let's figure this out. It seems all of this apologizing has brought up some pretty important things. I'm not sure what to do...

MAI LEE: *(Raises her hand, glances at BAO VANG.)* Mrs. Merz, maybe we need to take one more step. Maybe we need to give the people we apologized to, the chance to, you know, tell us what they think of our apology. *(Looks at BAO VANG again.)*

JAZZANIQUE: *(To MAI LEE.)* You mean, Carmen *has* to write me back a poem? Like, for class?

(MAI LEE shrugs.)

MRS. MERZ: To complete the assignment?

RANEESHA: Yeah! Maybe someone will admit to stealing the lizard.

MRS.MERZ: *(Nods.)* Yes, that's an amazing idea, Raneesha, Mai Lee.

I mean all of you could tell the people you apologized to that, in order to complete your class assignment, you need a response from them.

JEWEL: But what if they don't forgive you?

MRS. MERZ: They might not.

MARIA: And what if they are even more mad, now that they know what you did?

MAI LEE: But, doesn't anyone want to see if their apology made a difference?

(Mass mumbling – “totally!” “I guess” “yeah” etc.)

MRS.MERZ: Then let's do it!

THOMAS: This could be a really bad idea.

MRS. MERZ: I think we all might have some surprises in store...

(Music and scene change.)

SCENE 23

MRS. GARCIA enters with the empty donut box from scene 2.

MRS. GARCIA: Thomas?

(HE hides beneath a table. SHE sees him but pretends SHE doesn't. SHE sets the box down and sits at the edge of the table.)

I sure wish Thomas were here right now. If he were here I'd thank him for that poem he wrote. If he were here I'd say,

Thank you for your poem, Thomas.
Now here's one for you...
You do have a way about you, Thomas.
Smiling, asking me how I'm doing today, talking a mile a minute.
Slipping in and out (yes, I see you!)
Stealing our hearts and our donuts, too.
A nice boy like you can really get on in the world,
If he doesn't let his fingers run away with him.
Of course I forgive you!

THOMAS: *(From under the table.)* Yes!

MRS. GARCIA: But I still have to call your mother.

THOMAS: *(From under the table.)* No!

(SHE exits.)

SCENE 24

MARIA enters stage left with BOBBY trailing after her. SHE turns around.

MARIA: Bobby, do *not* pull my hair!

BOBBY: OK, can I walk with you?

(MARIA pauses.)

Maria, will you go out with me?

(MARIA shakes her head "no.")

BOBBY: Fine, it's not like I Liiiiike you– (*HE turns to confide to the audience.*) not really.

(*MARIA walks offstage but just before SHE is out of view, BOBBY runs up behind her and pulls her hair.*)

MARIA: Ouch! Jeez Bobby, what's wrong with you? Do you really think I'll go out with you if you pull my hair?

BOBBY: I don't know Maria. Why don't you like me? What do girls want?

MARIA: Well they don't want to be pushed or grabbed!

BOBBY: Fine, then what?

(*Bell rings.*)

MARIA: Then nothing, Bobby. Then nothing.

(*Exits.*)

SCENE 25

RUEBEN and KYLE are back bouncing their red ball and laughing. THOMAS and TENZIN are with them.

KYLE: (*To THOMAS and TENZIN*) Check it out, check it out!

(*THEY jump on blocks and rap the response.*)

KYLE: We're
Dodge Ball Kings!

We like to zing

Dodge Ball Kings!
Each ball we fling

As though it is our last.
A catapult,

a setting sun,

we fire

REUBEN:
Dodge Ball Kings!
We rule the gym!

Each other!
Dodge Ball Kings!

With all our might
As though it is our last.

a cherry bomb,

a blazing ring

through air.

We mark each other out!
Zing, bam, sting!
It hurts

We're
Dodge Ball Kings!

(The BOYS bounce off stage.)

We mark each other out!
Zing, bam, sting!

But we don't care.

Dodge Ball Kings!

SCENE 26

Lights up on classroom. KIDS are milling about, talking.

RANEESHA: Mrs. Merz says we're going to write a response poem to Slow Hand Lizard from the whole class.

MARIA: Apologizing? Like to the lizard?

RANEESHA: Yeah, but I don't owe that lizard an apology. Whoever took it does.

MARIA: I know. And whoever took it never brought it back! How could somebody be that much of a jerk?

(REUBEN and KYLE are nearby making fart noises with their arms. The GIRLS stare at them and roll their eyes.)

Speaking of jerks.

(The KIDS continue to talk as soft music begins (An excerpt from Mark Isham's "All These Mothers"?) MRS. MERZ enters in a gorgeous outfit - transformed. SHE is wearing the crown from scene 8. A spotlight comes up on CARMEN who is seated at a desk gawking in awe at the dress.)

MRS. MERZ: I have a response poem to give. *(SHE spins.)*

A Haiku for Carmen.

Just these few warm words,

and spring sunlight fills the room;

My dress turns to sky!

(CARMEN laughs, claps her hands and covers her mouth with glee.)

SCENE 27

MARIA's MOM is sitting on a block reading the note that BOBBY wrote MARIA.

MARIA'S MOM: (*Mumbling as SHE reads.*) To Maria from Bobby. "I'm sorry I bumped your books that day and scattered them all over the floor (but not really)" (*As SHE skims the letter mumbling to herself, SHE begins to smile. When SHE's finished the note, SHE clutches it to her chest and looks at the audience then SHE sits down to write her own response.*)

(*MARIA enters.*)

MARIA: Mom, what are you doing in here?

MARIA'S MOM: I was looking for the brownie pan but instead I found a note. (*SHE holds the note out to MARIA.*)

MARIA: (*MARIA takes it.*) Oh mom, you didn't read this? It's so embarrassing!

MARIA'S MOM: It's not. It's –

MARIA: Mom, you totally don't –

MARIA'S MOM: Wait, just wait a second. You need your response poem from me for school, right?

MARIA: Yeah... about when I ate the brownies but –

MARIA'S MOM: Right, but I want to do it about something else.

MARIA: Mom, that's not the assignment. You're supposed to –

MARIA'S MOM: Just listen, sweetie. Just listen. (*SHE reads from the paper SHE wrote.*)

The house was quiet,
so empty and still.

Your door was open, so I peeked in.

Piles of paper, stacked any which way.

Dust thick as velvet.

My fingers itched to straighten, clean, organize.

I didn't mean to read anything.

The note from Bobby was an accident.

Afterward, that corner of the room looked
so different from the rest:

an island of neatness in an ocean of mess.

My conscience said, "Oops," but my eyes said, "Heavenly."

MARIA: (*Smiling*) I don't even know if I like him...

MARIA'S MOM: You don't have to know that right now. (*Embraces her daughter*) Sifting through those kinds of feelings is hard for everyone – boys and girls. (*Laughs gently.*) Hey, Bobby is definitely struggling with his feelings about you! But I certainly understand what he sees in you, Maria. You are so beautiful.

MARIA: Mo-om, you have to say that I'm beautiful. You're my mom.

MARIA'S MOM: Maybe... but Maria, (*SHE points to the note in MARIA's hand*) I'm clearly not the only one who thinks so.

(*MARIA smiles and her MOM squeezes her as the lights fade.*)

MARIA'S MOM: You stay away from my brownies, though!

SCENE 28

ALYSSA enters stage right and her older sister CARRIE enters stage left. THEY meet in the middle and CARRIE scratches at her hand in frustration. SHE then shoves her hand in ALYSSA's face to show her the scar.

CARRIE: It never comes off, Alyssa! I've tried digging the pencil lead out with a pin, squeezing it, tweezers...

ALYSSA: *I know.* That's why I wrote you the poem!

CARRIE: Fine, well here's a poem for you, little sister.

Roses are red violets are blue,
I'm still really pissed off at you.

(*CARRIE walks offstage while ALYSSA looks dejected.*)

ALYSSA: (*Quietly*) I'm really sorry.

SCENE 29

BOBBY runs through with OTHER BOYS, laughing.

KYLE: Dude, that was so nasty!

REUBEN: Seriously, you stank up the whole room!

BOBBY: Man, I always have gas after those cafeteria burritos.

KYLE: Then don't eat the burritos!

REUBEN: Yeah, you could've had pizza.

(MARIA enters downstage left. SHE is loading items into an imaginary locker with a real backpack.)

KYLE: You stank up the whole room. *(Noticing MARIA.)* How are you going to impress the ladies if you smell like fart?

REUBEN: Seriously.

KYLE: You wanna borrow some deodorant? I have some in my gym locker.

REUBEN: You have deodorant? Why?

KYLE: Wait, you didn't get "the talk" from Nurse Mendez?

REUBEN: What talk?

BOBBY: I got "the talk."

KYLE: The B.O. talk! Man, she pulls you in there to tell you all about puberty and how now your pits and your feet are starting to stink. She gives out these little deodorant cologne things. And she's like, use 'em! But I guess Bobby wasn't listening to "the talk" cause he stinks!

(RUEBEN laughs but KYLE notices that BOBBY is staring at MARIA.)

KYLE: My brother told me that if you like a girl, you gotta smell like a real man.

RUEBEN: Your brother is a moron. He's never had a girlfriend in his life.

KYLE: He's working on it! *(HE puts his arm around BOBBY.)* Well, friends help each other out right? *(To MARIA.)* Hey, yo, Maria! Did you smell that big one Bobby just laid?

(BOBBY pushes KYLE and REUBEN cracks up.)

BOBBY: *(To MARIA.)* Tell Kyle, it's not like *his* farts don't stink.

KYLE: Wait, maybe they don't. Hey Maria, why don't you come over here and find out?

(SHE rolls her eyes. KYLE farts. BOYS crack up.)

BOBBY and KYLE: Dude!

KYLE: Not cool!

(THEY wave their hands in front of their faces. HE farts again. MARIA is shaking her head. The bell rings and the BOYS scatter. MARIA grabs BOBBY as HE's running out.)

MARIA: Wait! (*SHE takes a piece of paper out of her back pocket to read to him.*)

You asked me what girls want. Well here's my response.
Girls want a lion with a great shaggy mane.

BOBBY: OK

MARIA: I'm not finished.

Girls want a horse fast and sure.
Girls want a coyote that sings with its heart.
Girls want an eagle, soaring through the mountains.
Girls want a breeze that whispers its name.
Girls want a snowfall that makes the world new.
Girls want a dog that wags all over.
Girls want a cat that purrs to the moon.

(*Slows down here.*)

Girls want a hedgehog that carries its own armor
but doesn't
always
use it.
Just to let you know.

(*SHE shoves the poem in his hand and leaves.*)

BOBBY: (*Stares bewildered at the poem.*) How am I supposed to do that?

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