

lick: love lost, sex sought

Sheila Bishop

A poem-play for four "female" voices. Spoken word meets a musical and gets intimate. lick can be performed as a play or done as a "radio" play, where the emphasis is solely on the aural. It was my attempt to "compose" a play.

The Character

The Character is a woman in her late twenties. She is intense, creative, intelligent, obsessive, sassy, lusty and heartbroken. The Character is revealed to us through The Voices.

The Voices

The four voices- Dust, Lucida, Crackle and Diva- that make up The Character each has its/her own flavor. The play shifts back and forth from dialogue between the voices to choral sections, in which the voices lose their distinct flavor.

Dust, Lucida, Crackle and Diva wear have intense make-up. Black kohl "Egyptian" eyes, bright eye shadow. Overdone lipstick and blush. The four voices each have their own color. Dust: Yellow. Lucida: Blue. Crackle: Green. Diva: Red. Most of their make-up and all their costuming should be in various shades of their specific color. The combined effect of their costuming and make-up should work together visually to create a rich, beautiful and luminous visual experience for the audience.

Crisp Fluidity

Spoken word meets musical. The movement and vocalization should be dance like. In the stage directions, I give some examples of the type of movement and vocalization used in my production, much of which was developed in rehearsal, but each production should be choreographed by the performers. Performers should develop movement and vocalization styles that work for their voices. The mood created is more important than adherence to the script's stage directions.

The goal is create a piece that switches back and forth between tight, crisp, stylized, rehearsed movement and vocalizations and looser, fluid, improvised movement and vocalizations.

The Mood/Tone

Sad, achy, horny, hysterical heartbreak. The performance should be beautiful and sad and a bit overwhelming. We are taking the audience into the "heart" of loss and exposing heartbreak's belly, a belly full of sadness and confusion. The overwhelming, overbearing, over the top grief and frustration is modulated by a wicked sense of humor and a self-consciousness of the ridiculousness of it all.

Stage

The space should be stark. Any backdrop should be very simple and allow for projection of slides/video for the scene titles. Center upstage are 4 matching chairs.

Act One

1. On the Tip of My Tongue
Interlude
2. Sex Lessons
Interlude
3. Rotting on Love's Shore

Act Two

4. Ms. Bishop's Finishing School for Young Men
Interlude
5. Follow Me
Interlude
6. Wouldn't It Be Lovely

First Staging

May 2002
Gainesville, FL

Starring

Friedel Fisher as Dust
Laurie Reisman as Diva
Lara Sfire as Crackle
Sheila Bishop as Lucida

Directed and produced by the author.

ACT ONE

1. ON THE TIP OF MY TONGUE

A slide or video with scene title flashes on the back wall and then disappears. This should be done for each scene.

When the lights/curtain come up, Dust, Lucida, Crackle and Diva are standing in a line all facing in the same direction, either stage left or stage right. They are posed like the beginning of a dance before the music starts. They should hold the pose for a slow count of twenty, for just enough time for the audience to begin to get worried. When the count is up, Dust begins.

DUST (*Sharp, sudden, loud. As she delivers this line, she turns to the audience, snaps her fingers, points to audience and then turns back to her pose. Lucida, Crackle and Diva remain frozen*): Lickity split, (*snaps*) and he was gone.

The next section of lines should build slowly to mimic the sound of a train exiting a station, the performers stay frozen until they add their voice-box-car to the train. As Lucida who should be at the front of the line, begins, she makes gestures with her arms like the circling of train wheels. When Dust and then Diva begin they mimic Lucida's gestures.

LUCIDA: love lost, sex sought
love lost, sex sought
love lost,

LUCIDA & DUST: sex sought

LUCIDA & DUST: love lost, sex sought
love lost, sex sought

LUCIDA, DUST & DIVA: love lost, sex sought
love lost, sex sought
love lost, sex sought
love lost, sex sought
love lost, sex sought
love lost, sex sought
love lost, sex sought

CRACKLE (*Sounds like train whistle, pulls arm down like she's pulling the cord that makes the whistle blow. Crackle is the caboose for this train and does not do the train circle motion with her arms*): Whoo, Whoo, Whoo.

LUCIDA, DUST & DIVA: love lost, sex sought
love lost, sex sought
love lost, sex sought

CRACKLE (*Makes it very high and very loud*): Whoowhooo!

ALL (*sudden, crisp switch, all clap hands together very loudly at the same time while turning to the audience. Defiant*): Gone

All four dust their hands off and then break out of the line. Moving to different sections of the stage. The movement should be more relaxed here.

CRACKLE (*fanning herself with her hand, sassy, Southern voice*): Whoo. Girl, you are too much. They'll either be creaming in their pants or feeling sorry for your pathetic self.

DIVA (*big carnival barker voice*): The Fantasy Ferris Wheel begins to spin

DUST (*gentle, whisper voice, she continues until the end of Lucida's next line*): And spin and spin and spin and spin. And spin and spin and spin and spin.

LUCIDA (*slow, lusty delivery*): Lick. Licking from his wrist up the inside of his arm to the pit, where the funky boy juice lives even on a boy this

LUCIDA & CRACKLE: Clean

CRACKLE: I am clean. Sitting on my porch. Guarded by the dogs. They are wet from playing in the rain. Wet dog hair is not my favorite smell. I am writing about lust.

DUST (*drawing out the word delicious*): Mister Delicious is

Diva moves next to Dust. As she delivers her line, Dust and Diva mime putting hand in a pocket. Dust mimes holding papers as if reading a piece.

DIVA: reading words he wrote, one hand jammed into his front pocket'

Lucida moves into Dust's space.

LUCIDA (*whispers in Dust's ear*): Lick. Licking. Tongue tastes salt on his skin. From his wrist up the inside of his arm to the pit.

DUST: Where the funky boy juice lives even on a boy this

LUCIDA & CRACKLE: Clean.

CRACKLE: I am clean.

The other performers shake their head in disbelief that Crackle is saying she's clean. Crackle narrows her eyes and continues loudly.

CRACKLE: I clean my head. Clear my lust befuddled head. I want

CRACKLE & DIVA (*Weird soft sound*): wanting

CRACKLE (*sassy*): some fairy tale prince to come thru the gate. Lift the latch.

DIVA: I lose track of his words.

Lucida moves closer into Dust's space

LUCIDA (*whispers in her ear*): Tongue goes from armpit to his left nipple. (*Hand mimes being a tongue rolling the nipple- action done above Dust's breast.*) Teeth gently nip at it. Tongue rolls over it as it hardens in my mouth.

DUST: The latch (*long pause*) is lifted.

LUCIDA: Tongue rolls over his nipple as it hardens in my mouth.

DIVA (*very normal sounding voice*): In this light his arm looks surprisingly tan.

During Dust and Crackle's lines, Dust goes and gets on of the chairs from the upstage, brings it downstage and turns it back facing front. She stands next to the chair.

CRACKLE: The latch is lifted. (*Mimes lifting a latch on a gate and stepping through.*) And this fairy tale prince comes (*bawdy emphasis, beat*) through the gate. His magic sword (*Unsheathes her "sword"- bawdy and big gesture*) unsheathed.

DUST (*sings to tune of "Row, row, row your boat." Makes rowing gestures*): Merrily, Merrily Merrily, Merrily.

CRACKLE: His magic sword unsheathed. Ready for my command.

DIVA (*Points to somebody in the audience, saucy*): Do you want to be my prince? Don't need happily ever after.

CRACKLE: Just some aid in my time of need.

DIVA: He sits down.

As Diva delivers her line, Dust sits down dramatically making a lot of noise.

LUCIDA (*Comically mournful*): Tongue caught in midair. Left flapping where his chest was.

DIVA: He has finished reading.

LUCIDA (*Still mournful but more over the top*): Tongue left flapping. Lapping at nothing.

DUST (*points to somebody in the audience*): Do you want to be my prince?

CRACKLE: (*wicked*): Unsheathe thy magic sword

LUCIDA (*big, comic storyteller style*): My tongue is left flapping. The man sits down, and my tongue still licks at the air where his chest was. I can't call it back to me. My tongue is possessed. It has been too long since it kissed sweet flesh, and it has lost its mind.

The next poet takes the floor and begins to read. She doesn't notice the tongue hanging in mid air licking at nothing. I plead with my tongue to control itself. But it can't hear me because it doesn't have any ears. And I can't say anything because my tongue hangs a good five feet away from my mouth. I must capture it and put it back in my mouth where it belongs. I creep to the edge of the stage. Crouch low. My tongue

DUST (*sings to tune of "Row, row, row your boat." Makes rowing gestures*): Merrily, Merrily Merrily, Merrily.

LUCIDA: Licks at nothing. I spring for it and grab it with my right hand. It's a slippery bastard. It squirms and slides, desperate to break my hold. But I press the tip between the thumb and forefinger of my left hand.

And if you've ever had a mean ass uncle grab your tongue this way as revenge for your sticking your tongue out at him then you know how effective this hold is for stopping a tongue dead in its tracks.

Diva and Crackle go and get chairs and set them back facing audience on the side opposite of Dust. They stand next to their chairs.

LUCIDA: It whimpers and slumps into a position of submission. I put it safely back into my mouth. Somehow the antics of my tongue have escaped the notice of the audience. But my tongue is not happy to let me have the last word. Oh, no! It wants to tell a story.

Diva and Crackle swing legs way up and then straddle their chairs

DIVA: Lick lick tongue tip lick (*As she delivers the line, Diva winds her torso in suggestive circles while holding on to the back of the chair.*)

DIVA & CRACKLE (*same torso movement*): Lick lick tongue tip lick

Dust swings leg way up and then straddle their chairs. The three seated voices continue winding their torsos rhythmically as they deliver the next set of lines. Stop on last line like they are frozen in position, with their heads tossed back.

DIVA & CRACKLE & DUST: Lick lick tongue tip lick

Lick lick tongue tip lick

Lick lick tongue tip lick

Lick lick tongue tip lick

LUCIDA: I am in this no man's land of "burning"

Heads of Diva, Crackle and Dust snap forward, and they look directly at the audience.

DIVA, CRACKLE & DUST (*sing to tune of "Hunk of burning love"*): a hunk, a hunk of burning

LUCIDA: desire because my lover of seven years dumped me. *Sianora. Hasta la Vista. See you later, alligator. Mr. Ex-Lover Man said,*

ALL: I don't love you that way anymore

Diva, Crackle & Dust unfreeze and slump dejected, arms and head hanging over the back of their chairs.

LUCIDA (*sing-songy*): Don't love you like that

Lucida begins to dance like she's the "con-man" in a musical about to convince the 'crowd' to go her way. The song raises the others' spirits and they dance in their chairs. Stomping feet, hands waving in praise.

ALL (*sing songy*): clackity clack

LUCIDA: Don't love you like that

ALL: clackity clack

LUCIDA: Don't love you like that

ALL: clackity clack

LUCIDA: Don't love you like that

ALL: clackity clack. clackity clackity clackity clack. clackity clackity clackity clack.

LUCIDA: Came back to Gainesville

ALL: yakity yak

LUCIDA: And what did I see

ALL: yakity yak

LUCIDA: Some fine ass young men

ALL: yakity yak

LUCIDA: Just waiting for me

ALL: yakity yak. yakity yakity yakity yak. yakity yakity yakity yak.

Song and dance gets even bigger, more comic.

LUCIDA: my pretty lips smack

ALL: lackity lack

LUCIDA: chin covered in drool

ALL: lackity lack

LUCIDA: I want me a snack

ALL: lackity lack

LUCIDA (*in earnest, loud, serious*) Without playing the fool.

Lucida turns her back on the audience.

DUST, DIVA & CRACKLE (*as if they don't notice Lucida's change of tone*): lackity lack. lackity lackity lackity lack. lackity lackity lackity lack.

LUCIDA (*frustration, loss*): Lack.

DUST (*trying to cheer Lucida up*): Lick.

DIVA: Lick. Tongue tastes salt from his wrist, up the inside of his arm, nestle my nose in the pit where the funky boy juice lives even on a boy this clean.

CRACKLE: There are more important things than my broken heart and my overdeveloped lust organ.

During Dust's next speech, Lucida gets the final chair from the back and brings it in line with the rest, back of chair facing audience. She stands next to the chair with back to audience).

DUST: I'd cut out my lust organ, if I could find it. It wanders. The Greeks thought the womb wandered through out the body. The anchorless uterus was the cause of women's hysteria. I think they confused the womb with the lust organ. My lust organ floats around my body. Disguising itself in the tightening of my nipples or the electric shiver in my neck or more predictably the aching emptiness of my cunt. My lust organ protects itself from being cut out.

LUCIDA (*faces forward, supermarket voice*): Attention shoppers, in the deli department today, we have samples of lust organ. Lust organ makes a delicious dip and is divine when spread on crackers.

At the end of her line, Lucida swings her leg up big and straddles the chair

DIVA: Swallow it.

All four performers lift both of their feet off the floor and slam them down at the end of Diva's line.

As Dust sings her line to tune of “Row, row, row your boat” the others making rowing gestures.

DUST: Marryme, marryme, marryme, marryme.

DIVA (*Diva metaphorically drops her oar. The others freeze*): No ultimatums. I told Mr. Ex Lover Man that I wanted to talk about marriage and kids.

As Dust sings her line to tune of “Row, row, row your boat” the others making rowing gestures.

DUST: Carryme, carryme, carryme, carryme

DIVA (*Diva metaphorically drops her oar. The others freeze*): I don't want to stand in front of bunch of people and say I want to spend the rest of my life with you. Because I am not sure I do.

As Dust sings her line to tune of “Row, row, row your boat” the others making rowing gestures.

DUST: Buryme, buryme, buryme, buryme

DIVA (*Diva metaphorically drops her oar. The others freeze*): That's when I began groveling

Diva sings to tune of “Row, row, row your boat,” but no one rows).

DUST: Life is but a dream.

All clap their hands and get up and spread around the stage.

CRACKLE: She's eighteen and drunk and provocatively sticking out her long, rather pointed tongue. I say,

LUCIDA: that thing could be a weapon.

CRACKLE: Mister Delicious says,

DIVA: If used right

DUST: Lick lick tongue tip lick

Lucida stands up on one of the chairs.

LUCIDA (*points to somebody in the audience*): In the name of the Mother, the Lover and the Other, I name you fair game.

Crackle gets up on one of the chairs.

CRACKLE (*sassy, Southern voice*): Going to be like Artemis. But I ain't no virgin. Going hunting, but I need an arrow for my bow. Do you have an arrow for my bow? Then together we can capture the prey.

Crackle and Lucida should make nasty gestures during this next bit.

LUCIDA: Put your arrow in my bow

CRACKLE: I pray

Diva and Dust mime praying.

LUCIDA: Put your arrow in my bow

CRACKLE (*notches "bow" to help clarify the pun*): I prey. Put your arrow in my bow

LUCIDA & CRACKLE: I pray. Put your arrow in my bow. I prey.

They both step down at the same time with loud foot fall.

DUST: This is what desire gets me- a cunt aching to be filled and a willingness to bare all, figuratively speaking, to a bunch of strangers.

DIVA (*sassy, Southern voice*): Strangers with dicks. Never know what planting a few seeds here and there might do. Might have a bumper crop from this seed sowing.

LUCIDA & CRACKLE: Love lost, sex sought

DUST (*Indignant*): This is art, not an invitation

DIVA (*sassy, Southern voice*): Art it might be. But there are some low, earth bound desires mixed in. Shakespeare's head wasn't just in the clouds of ethereal love when he wrote his beautiful sonnets. The man wanted to get laid.

LUCIDA: I lose track of his words

CRACKLE: Tongue goes from armpit to his left nipple. Teeth gently nip at it. Tongue rolls over it as it hardens in my mouth.

DUST: There is an absence. A hole to be filled. Well, two holes. But I'm not asking you to fill the hole in my heart. You couldn't. Not this year.

ALL (*look at the audience and point*): Fill the other hole, dear.

LUCIDA: The man sits down.

Lucida turns a chair face forward and sits down.

DUST & DIVA: The Fantasy Ferris Wheel begins to spin

LUCIDA (*gentle, whisper voice, continues until the end of Crackle next line*): And spin and spin and spin and spin. And spin and spin and spin and spin.

Diva takes her hand and places it on the edge of Lucida's left shoulder. Diva will use her hand/fingers like it is the tongue of the man described in Crackle's speech.

CRACKLE: He licks from the edge of my left shoulder. He slowly slides his tongue across to the base of my neck. He gently begins to suck at the point where neck meets shoulder.

DUST: The man sits down. Another poet's on the floor.

Diva continues to act out Crackle's speech. Diva uses one of her hands as if it is "his" mouth. Depending on the comfort level of the performers, Diva could stick a finger in Lucida's mouth (or not). Lucida should arch up in response to all this attention.

CRACKLE: He slowly slides his tongue across to the base of my neck. He gently begins to suck at the point where neck meets shoulder. My nipples harden. He tips my head back, puts his hand on my neck, spreading his fingers across my throat. He covers my mouth with his mouth, and his tongue slides in to touch mine.

LUCIDA (*Panting. Diva uncovers Lucida's mouth*): That thing could be a weapon

DIVA (*leans over, whispers nasty-like in Lucida's ear*): If used right

DUST: The man sits down.

Diva turns a chair face forward and sits down next to Lucida.

DUST: Another poet's on the floor. Another poet reads. And another. And another.

CRACKLE: No tongue touches. I don't touch him. He doesn't touch me.

DUST: I'd cut out my lust organ, if I could find it.

As Diva sings to tune of "Row, row, row your boat," Diva and Lucida row

DIVA: Merrily merrily merrily merrily

DUST: I groveled and whined. And in the end I moved to Gainesville. Left San Francisco on a cold, wet November day. Took a train

CRACKLE & DIVA (*Like a train speeding up*): love lost, sex sought
love lost, sex sought
love lost, sex sought
love lost, sex sought
love lost, sex sought

CRACKLE (*like train whistle*): whoo, whoo

DUST: across the country and arrived in Florida on a sunny, warm December day. It was a separation not a divorce. Not that we were married.

LUCIDA: We are mated.
Our skins thick with each other's smells
Marking our territory
Melding
Welding
Wedding

CRACKLE (*sings to tune of "Ring Around the Rosies"*): ashes, ashes

DUST: I asked Mr. Ex-Lover Man what he wanted. He wanted time. A separation not a divorce.

CRACKLE & DIVA: Not that we were married.

LUCIDA: Melding

DUST: A separation not a divorce.

CRACKLE & DIVA: Not that we were

LUCIDA: Welding

DUST: A separation

CRACKLE & DIVA: Not that

LUCIDA: Wedding

Crackle sings to tune of "Row, row, row your boat." Lucida and Diva row

CRACKLE: marryme, marryme, marryme, marryme

DUST: Mr. Ex-Lover Man broke up with me via phone and email

DIVA (*sassy, Southern voice*). No, he didn't!? He broke up by phone? By email?

DUST: He broke up by phone after seven years.

CRACKLE: by phone

Crackle turns the next available chair face forward.

DUST: after seven years.

Crackle sits down.

LUCIDA: He broke up by email after seven years.

CRACKLE: by email

DUST: after seven years

DIVA: You are a fireball. The chasm between us is too wide.

DUST (*pleading*): We can find a way to bridge the gap. We can figure it out. I love you.

LUCIDA: I don't love you that way anymore.

DIVA (*sings to tune of "Ring Around the Rosies"*): ashes, ashes

CRACKLE: Broken
Breaking
as your lips crack open
letting words spill out
from behind the dam of your teeth

LUCIDA: I don't love you that way anymore

CRACKLE: Brittle, Broken
Breaking

DUST: You are a fireball.

DIVA (*sings to tune of "Ring Around the Rosies"*): ashes, ashes

As Lucida sings to tune of "Row, row, row your boat," the seated voices row.

LUCIDA: carryme, carryme, carryme, carryme

DUST (*sings to tune of "Ring Around the Rosies"*): I all fall down

DIVA (*straight delivery*): a chasm opens in my heart.

CRACKLE (*joking, but serious*): fill the other hole, dear

DIVA: Shakespeare didn't write all those love sonnets just for the beautiful words.

DUST: I lose track of his words

LUCIDA: Lick lick tongue tip lick

CRACKLE: Teeth gently nip at it. Tongue rolls over it as it hardens in my mouth.

As Lucida sing-songy chants, seated performers do the happy, be praised dance from earlier.

LUCIDA: Don't love you like that (*Dust turns the last chair face forward.*)

lackity lack

Don't love you like that

lackity lack

I want me a snack

lackity lack

without playing the fool

Dust sits down. As Diva sings to tune of "Row, row, row your boat," the seated voices row.

DIVA: Buryme buryme buryme buryme

ALL (*sing tune of "Row, row, row your boat." Performers don't row, instead they lift hands to their hearts on the word "love" and then extend arms out and up in a large welcome, graceful "u"*): Love is but a dream.

All performers slump over, heads hanging, looking like rag dolls.

END OF SCENE 1.

INTERLUDE

Slide/video with word "Interlude" flashes and then is gone. Lucida lifts her head and looks directly at the audience. The other performers slowly sit up and stare off into space. Lucida gets up from the chair and takes center stage. She begins speaking.

LUCIDA: So what brought me back to Gainesville, Florida a sack of fat sliding off bones? It was not just the ending of my seven-year relationship. I understand that relationships change over time and that real love does not demand that someone fulfill my expectations of forever and ever. A break-up was not enough to break me.

Lucida switches to Academic voice.

The DSM-III-R establishes several criteria by which a major depression is clinically defined. First a condition must exhibit at least five of the following nine symptoms, and these symptoms must have been present for at least two weeks.

One. Depressed mood most of the day

Two. Diminished interest or pleasure in almost all activities of the day

Three. Significant weight gain or loss when not dieting, and decreased appetite.

Four. Insomnia or hypersomnia (sleeping too much.)

Five. Abnormal restlessness or a drop in physical activity.

Six. Fatigue or loss of energy.

Seven. Feelings of worthlessness or excessive or inappropriate guilt.

Eight. Diminished ability to think, concentrate or make decisions.

Nine. Recurrent thoughts of death or recurrent suicidal thoughts without a specific plan or a specific plan for committing suicide or a suicide attempt.

Back to "normal" voice.

I exhibited nine out of nine. A fine showing of the symptoms. But I hid it well from the intimates of my life. And it was all complicated by the fact that I perhaps have some obsessive-compulsive tendencies and maybe, just maybe a little tiny bit of hypomania.

My depression is complicated by just how capable I am of shielding the people in my life from it. My lover of seven years was grateful to be shielded. He preferred denial. It was easier for him when we both ignored my depression. And when finally I could no longer hide it or deny it. He turned away from me. He slowly withdrew. Until we hardly ever made dinner together. Until the only time we spent together was in bed. . .sleeping. It got to the point that I would go to give him a kiss, and he would stiffen. I still find that memory painful beyond words.

Lucida stands up and moves back to her chair.

In the email he wrote me after ending our relationship by phone after seven years. He said, "My sunshine had disappeared, and when she returned it was too late, because I resented the fact that she went away."

Lucida sits down.

I had been afraid that if I told him the truth about "Sunshine", about how bad it was, about how long I had wanted to die, that he would reject me, and he did. And he was cruel. And I still haven't forgiven him.

Long pause. Then all the performers slump.

END OF INTERLUDE.

2. SEX LESSONS

The slide/video flashes, "Sex Lessons." All the performers get up quickly. Stomp first the left foot and then the right foot. The pace of this first bit is fast, furious.

DUST (*wail of anger and grief, runs forward, falls to the ground*): Eat out my heart!

Crackle Steps in front but a little to one side of Dust.

CRACKLE (*defiant, angry*): and chisel sex into my pores.

Lucida steps behind Dust and puts her foot on Dust's back

LUCIDA: Take the hammer and the spike

Crackle turns to face either stage left or stage right

CRACKLE: the rusty rail road spike found on the side of the track

Diva steps behind Dust, puts a foot on Dust's back

DIVA: in a patch of full green grass that will brown when the winter bites hard on our asses.

Dust puts her hands on Crackle's knees

DUST: Take the spike found in that tall grass, put that against my skin where the knee meets the thigh

Lucida Takes foot off Dust's back

LUCIDA: on the soft spot on the back of the knee.

Dust "pounds" home the lesson on Crackle's knees

DUST: Take the hammer and pound home the sex lessons.

CRACKLE (*knees buckle a bit, wobbly voice*): Now I really know the meaning of weak in the knees.

Diva takes foot off of Dust's back, Dust "pounds" on Crackle's knees

DIVA: Now that the chisel has driven the sex lessons home.

Crackle falls and Dust stands up.

CRACKLE: I am hungry for the bone.

Pace slows in next bit.

DUST (*instructor's voice*): The key to get past this grief is found in a crinkled old brown grocery bag, not in the dead dinosaur petro bag- the key is in this old crinkled brown paper bag. This is where you will find the sex lessons.

LUCIDA (*sassy, Southern voice, pokes Dust on the shoulder, Crackle stands up*): Sex 101 and the state does have requirements.

DUST (*pokes Crackle on the shoulder*): Doesn't matter if you do all your homework, keep your nose clean and participate in class.

CRACKLE (*pokes Diva on the shoulder*): No, no it's the final exam.

DIVA (*pokes Lucida on the shoulder*): One time to get it right

ALL (*directly to the audience*): You have to pass the test!

LUCIDA (*Angry, sad wail*): Eat out my heart.

At end of her line, she turns her back to the audience and walks and places herself in front of first chair in the row.

DIVA: The Fantasy Ferris Wheel begins to spin

DUST: And spin and spin and spin and spin

CRACKLE: My nipples harden. He tips my head back. Puts his hand on my neck. Spreading his fingers across. He covers my mouth with his and his tongue slides in to touch mine.

DIVA (*rapid delivery*): He's got a girlfriend. It's monogamous, I'm afraid. He didn't return your call. He's a fish face. You kissed on him back in the day. That one must be gay. He's not even twenty. He's as old as your father. He's out of your league. You need him to be your friend and don't want to fuck it up with sex. He plays games. He loves you but not that way. He's getting over another relationship, and you confuse the hell out of him. And the one you most want today, well. . .

At the end of her lines she turns her back to audience and moves in front of chair next to Lucida.

CRACKLE: I go months between kisses

At end of line Crackle turns back to audience and moves in front of chair next to Diva.

DUST (*takes center stage*): A last night of sex with Mr. Ex-Lover Man

LUCIDA, DIVA & CRACKLE (*step up on chairs as they say their line*): Six months pass

Lucida, Diva and Crackle step down as Dust says her line).

DUST: Three nights of sex spread over a couple of weeks.

Lucida, Diva and Crackle will continue to step up on their lines and step down on Dust's lines through this section.

LUCIDA, DIVA & CRACKLE: Two months pass.

DUST: Two nights of sex.

LUCIDA, DIVA & CRACKLE: Five months pass.

DUST: One night of sex.

LUCIDA, DIVA & CRACKLE: One month passes.

DUST: Three nights of sex spread over a month and a half.

LUCIDA, DIVA & CRACKLE: Two months pass.

DUST: One night of sex.

LUCIDA, DIVA & CRACKLE: Four months pass

DUST: Three nights of cuddling in one week

LUCIDA, DIVA & CRACKLE: Two months pass.

DUST: Five nights of sex spread over two weeks.

LUCIDA, DIVA & CRACKLE: One month passes.

DUST: Three nights of sex spread over one week.

LUCIDA, DIVA & CRACKLE: One week passes.

Lucida, Diva and Crackle step down and turn around very slowly. Dust moves into line with them. They hold very still through Lucida's and Dust's lines.

LUCIDA: The god/dess of lust-love passes over me. If I don't get laid soon, I'm going to rip off my skin. I go dancing thinking I will sublimate this desire. But the god/dess of lust-love keeps my hunger at the forefront of my attention

DUST: I am inflamed

My tissue- the heart of it
red and raw

Longing

My skin smells like smoke

My eyes and nostrils burn

My hair is an ashtray

All the fine young things gotta, gotta smoke on the dance floor.

Dust moves forward, center stage. Movement and line delivery through this next section should be fast, but smooth, graceful but quick. Diva steps right in front of Dust, quick, skirts swaying

DIVA: Going to smoke on the dance floor

Diva steps right in front of Diva

DUST: I am buzzing around you. I long to suck the nectar out of your flower, little boy.

Lucida steps right in front of Dust.

LUCIDA: I want to send you yellow tulips.

Crackle steps right in front of Lucida.

CRACKLE: Pure lust!

Diva steps right in front of Crackle.

DIVA: I have notions of being a slut. Meeting people, taking them home, fucking them and putting them out on the doorstep. I lust that much.

Lucida Steps right in front of Diva

LUCIDA: Pure lust!

Diva steps right in front of Lucida

DIVA: I have some romantic notions about baldly stating my desire and getting good sex without complications. I state my desires and get complications.

Lucida steps right in front of Diva.

LUCIDA: The complications include my inability to handle casual sex. I try to explain to my friend, Anarchist Man, the tug of war that casual sex causes. I want to be able to fuck men and put them out on the doorstep. The problem is that I get attached; I almost always want more than sex; my heart confuses sex with love; I long for partnership.

Diva steps right in front of Lucida

DIVA (*childlike*): Never ever, forever and ever?

Dust steps right in front of Diva

DUST: But Anarchist Man blasts the

Crackle steps right in front of Dust

CRACKLE: Monogamous het paradigm!

Lucida Steps right in front of Crackle

LUCIDA: Somehow theory does not make praxis any easier.

Diva steps right in front of Lucida.

DIVA: I can't win for losing.

Dust steps right in front of Diva..

DIVA: I tell the story of Mr. Ex-Lover Man to women who are decidedly more mainstream than Anarchist Man. They comfort me with the idea that I will find my better half someday. They shake their heads and say,

Crackle steps right in front of Dust.

CRACKLE (*concerned, simpering*): He wasn't the right one.

All clap hands and Crackle, Diva, and Lucida fall. Dust remains standing.

DUST (*angry, loud, deep*): I don't want to want Mr. Right! I want to want Mr. Right Now! I don't want to want a better half. I don't want to want Mr. Right! I want to want Mr. Right Now!

Lucida, Crackle and Diva all sit up suddenly and act like a waitress taking an order though they are still sitting

LUCIDA: Can I take your order?

Lucida, Crackle and Diva stand up as Dust says her line.

DUST: Sweaty, nasty, scream inducing sex. And can I have all the ideology and morality, including my own, on the side?

All point fingers up in the air in that can do sort of way.

ALL: Coming right up!

Long pause. Hold positions. It's that dang train pulling out of the station once again. Crackle steps forward and begins the train motion moving around the stage

CRACKLE: Love lost, sex sought
love lost,

Diva joins the train.

CRACKLE & DIVA: sex sought
love lost, sex sought
love lost, sex sought
love lost

Dust joins the train.

DUST (emphasizes word, makes sure audience hears change): **love** sought

CRACKLE, DIVA & DUST: love lost, love sought

love lost, love sought
love lost, love sought

Dust grabs hold of a reluctant Lucida and drags her onto the train. Comic effect.

CRACKLE, DIVA & DUST: love lost, love sought
love lost, love sought
love lost, love sought

LUCIDA (*Like a train whistle. Holds note for long time*) Loooooooooove!

The train stops in a line right along the edge of the stage. Stay facing stage left or stage right.

DIVA (turns face forward: I want the next man who loves me- not just lusts after me- but loves me- to buy me a fine fountain pen. And I'll buy him something equally fine and meaningful.

ALL (*turn face forward*): Reciprocal chivalry

DIVA: I love the grand gestures. The door opened for me with a flourish.

Crackle and Dust open the doors with a flourish. Diva is all grand dame gestures.

DIVA: The ceremonial bearing with a touch of goofiness. But I don't always want to be the Grand Lady. (*Curtseys to Crackle and Dust.*) I am a Diva, (*Imperious. walks through the "doors," pause*) but I'm also the swain.

CRACKLE (to Diva): Do you want to be my prince?

Diva nods enthusiastically.

DUST (*to Diva, "unsheathe" s her sword*): Unsheathe thy magic sword

LUCIDA (*points to others, looks at audience*): Don't need happily ever after.

CRACKLE: Just some aid in my time of need.

All drop poses. Stand very still until Lucida begins circling Dust a couple of lines down.

ALL: Reciprocal chivalry.

LUDICA (*soft, haunting voice*): I want to be your prince. I want you to let down your fair hair.

CRACKLE (*sarcastic*): 'Cept your hair is short and dark.

LUCIDA (*soft haunting voice with a hint of a comical edge, circles around Dust*): I want to walk up a staircase that spirals around you. You are a tower. I want to climb you. To find the you inside you. I want to climb up and rescue you.

DUST (*angry, childlike pout, stamps foot*): I want to be the prince

Diva joins Lucida in circling around Dust. Movement gets progressively more over the top

DIVA : Will you be my princess, young man? Will you let me be a woman being a man wooing a man being a woman?

Crackle joins others in circling around Dust).

CRACKLE: I could dress you in pinks and blues. Soft, pastel feminine colors.

LUCIDA: I am a fairly femme heterosexual woman. But. . .

DUST (*angry, childlike pout, stamps foot*): I want to be the prince!

DIVA: It is presumptuous to want to rescue you.

LUCIDA: I want to climb you. I want to climb inside your window.

Lucida, Crackle and Diva stop circling but stay next to Dust. They touch Dust as everyone says the next line.

ALL (*campy*): To touch the you inside you!

Dust knocks their hands away in a big eeuuww kind of gesture. The circle breaks up

DUST (*whining*): I have no sword to cut away the vines wrapped around you.

DIVA: Your vines. Your magic spell

DUST (*serious*): I cannot rescue you. I will not rescue you.

DIVA (*funny but intense*): I want to overturn the movie conventions where a man aggressively pursuing a woman is romantic, but a woman aggressively pursuing a man is psychotic.

At the end of her line, she sits on a chair.

CRACKLE: May I woo you?

LUCIDA (*yearning*): I want to be the prince.

Crackle moves forward a bit.

CRACKLE (*grumpy five year old*): I don't want to wait in the tower. I don't want to wait in the glass coffin for the prince to kiss me. I want to be on the white horse. I want to have the sword. I want to be the initiator. (*More serious and wistful*) But when I pursue a prince- he runs away. My active search is emasculating.

DUST: I want one that will stay.

She goes and sits on a chair.

LUCIDA: I want a man who will let me woo him.

She goes and sits on a chair. Crackle stands through this.

Train pulling out of the station. They make train motions while seated

DIVA: love lost, love sought

love lost

DIVA & DUST: love sought

love lost, love sought

love lost

LUCIDA (*Makes sure audience hears the switch*): sex sought

DIVA, DUST & LUCIDA: love lost, sex sought

love lost, sex sought

love lost, sex sought

love lost, sex sought

love lost, sex sought

CRACKLE (*train whistle, very loud*): Whooo! Whooooooo!

Dust, Diva and Lucida all get up very quickly. Dust and Diva move forward in line with Crackle.

DIVA (*angry, loud*): I don't want to want Mr. Right. I want to want Mr. Right Now.

LUCIDA: I go months between kisses (*Turns back to audience*).

CRACKLE: Six months pass (*Steps forward and then back into place*).

DUST: Two months pass (*Steps forward and then back into place*).

DIVA: Five months pass (*Steps forward and then back into place*).

CRACKLE: One month passes (*Steps forward and then back into place*).

DUST: Two months pass (*Steps forward and then back into place*).

DIVA: Four months pass (*Steps forward and then back into place*).

CRACKLE: Two months pass (*Steps forward and then back into place*).

DUST: One month passes (*Steps forward and then back into place*).

DUST: One week passes (*Steps forward and then back into place*).

CRACKLE (*mournful*): 23 months with no kisses.

Lucida turns to face audience with big musical diva energy. Tune of "A fine romance." As she sings, she spins Diva, Dust and Crackle around so their backs are facing the audience. Then she goes off to one side

LUCIDA: A fine romance with no kisses

A fine romance, my friend, this is

Dust twists to face audience, "takes order" and then twists back

DUST: Can I take your order?

Diva twists to face the audience, delivers line, and then twists back.

DIVA: A regular supply of sweaty, nasty, scream inducing sex, **hold** the love.

Dust twists to face the audience, delivers line, and then twists back.

DUST: Coming right up.

LUCIDA: Mister Delicious says,

Diva and Crackle turn to face audience.

DIVA & CRACKLE: Temptation.

Diva twists back. Crackle keeps facing forward

CRACKLE: A slight twist of his words, and I am a temptation. A piece of chocolate cake. My vanity is flattered and offended. I'm a main fucking course, not some side dish.

LUCIDA: Twist those words, little girl.

CRACKLE (*rolling her eyes, well fine attitude*): He didn't say I was a temptation. It was the situation that was tempting. Heavy overtones of guilt.

Dust and Diva turn face forward. All put hands in prayer

ALL: Forgive me lover for I have sinned

DUST (*evil, temptress*): Temptation

DIVA (*evil temptress voice*): I am Lilith coming into your back windows, raising your slumbering penises and (*Mimes getting a ride*.) getting myself a ride. Impregnating myself, I give birth to demons on the page.

DUST (*comical, robot voice/motion*) Danger, Will Robinson! Danger! Danger!

Lucida and Diva kiss either side of Crackle's face who looks very pleased..

LUCIDA & DIVA: Kiss and Tell!

DUST: I will write about it because I am an evil woman. Because everything is source material.

All put their hands in prayer.

ALL: Forgive me lover for I have sinned.

Lucida gets a chair and sets it in the downstage far right corner, back of chair facing the audience.

LUCIDA: Mr. Ex-Lover man is a reserved man. He keeps in things he should say. I say things I should keep in. One of the reasons he gave for breaking up with me was this fundamental difference in our characters.

All (*hands in prayer*): Forgive me lover for I will sin

CRACKLE: Everything is source material. I feel guilty about that, yet I can't help myself. I am tempted. Compelled to suck in all the events of my life, spin them around in my brain, add a shiny coating of word play and spew them back on to the page.

DUST: Kiss and tell!

Lucida straddles chair, wraps legs around back of chair and humps it

LUCIDA: I write about the men I want to fuck. I write about the men I fuck.

DUST: I am tempted. It's all source material. Information is separated from the particular flesh it was imbedded in. My particular flesh. His particular flesh.

At end of her line, gets chair and sets it in opposite corner of Lucida.

CRACKLE: Mister Delicious asks,

DIVA: Do you call everyone honey?

CRACKLE: Honey- the salty, sweat of men's bodies

Diva gets chair and sets it center, center stage.

DIVA: Honey- a remnant of my Southernness

LUCIDA: Honey- sticky sweetness

Dust straddles chair.

DUST: It is all source material

CRACKLE: I go months between kisses (*Turns back to audience*).

LUCIDA: Seven months A.D., after the dumping, I meet Mr. Cryptic.

DUST: Two nights of sex lead to a two-month obsession.

DIVA: I want a bowl of thread unraveled, a cup of mint tea with a sludge of honey at the bottom and a certain goat man to carry me into bliss. (*Falls into chair*).

LUCIDA: Blisssssssssssssssss

Lucida, Dust and Diva roll in their chairs.

CRACKLE (*back still to audience, breaking in*): Do I really think this is bliss?

LUCIDA: Blisss

LUCIDA & DIVA: tereed

DUST: Blisterd, chapped and sore

CRACKLE (*turns to face audience*): My breasts were tender and sore for days afterwards. And I wanted more. He sustained injuries as well.

DUST (*hands in prayer*): Forgive me lover for I will sin

LUCIDA (*academic voice*): Frenulum Linguae.

Crackle wanders around the stage through this next bit

CRACKLE: Mister Cryptic made love to me with his tongue

DUST & DIVA: Made love to me with his tongue!

CRACKLE: And tore the flesh that anchors the tongue to the bottom of the mouth. One weekend of

DIVA, DUST & LUCIDA: Lick lick tongue tip lick (*Roll in their chairs*).

CRACKLE: leads to a two month obsession.

LUCIDA: When I just about have rid this obsession from my system, he asks me for the word for

Diva, Dust and Lucida all open their mouths wide, tilt heads back, fingers dramatically pointing to their mouths.

DIVA: This part of the tongue

CRACKLE: He opens his mouth wide and points to the stretchy bit of flesh that anchors the tongue to the bottom of his mouth. I tell him that I don't know. But I will search for the word. A word on the tip of his tongue. He asks me for words.

Others lift their heads.

DIVA: He asks me to help him find the word on the tip of his tongue

DUST: He won't let me give him anything but words.

CRACKLE: His head is tipped back. (*Others tip their heads back.*) His hair wild black curls. I am watching as he sticks his tongue out of his mouth and I press my right index finger into the slight indentation at the end of his tongue. It is perhaps the most erotic moment of my life so far.

LUCIDA: Blisssssssssssssssssss

Lucida, Dust and Diva roll in their chair.

CRACKLE (*breaking in, angry*) Do I really think this is bliss?

LUCIDA: Blisss

LUCIDA & DIVA: tered

DUST: Blisterd, chapped and sore

CRACKLE: I find words for him.

LUCIDA (*academic voice, stands up*): Sublingual fold.

CRACKLE: Sublingual fold. The closest word I could find. I told him I didn't think it was the right word.

DIVA (*academic voice, stands up*): In this instance the subject found the wrong word. The connective tissue anchoring the tongue to the bottom of the mouth is the frenulum linguae.

CRACKLE: I deliver my gift of words to him. A third person sits at the table. A conversation is started about that fleshy bit. Mister Cryptic tells the other person that he cut that bit of flesh after

DUST (*melodramatic/bragging, stands up*): Four hours of oral sex

CRACKLE: His tongue was pressed against his teeth for so long that the flesh was cut. This oh so slightly exaggerated story is told as if I was not the person who received the ministrations of his tongue. He mentions that the cut got infected. I wince and say “really.” He says,

DUST: I mean no disparagement to the woman.

CRACKLE: The woman. Me. Why is he telling this story in front of me? Why does he ask me specifically for the word for that part of his tongue? Later that same night, he falls to his knees in front of me.

Lucida walks toward Dust. Dust falls on her knees.

LUCIDA: I walk toward you. You fall to your knees. Your hands in buddhist greeting. Our interactions have been full of these gestures. I’m not sure how to respond to your prostration. But I must touch you.

Lucida ruffles her fingers through Dust's hair as she passes.

CRACKLE: I ruffle my fingers through his hair as I walk by. I am unnerved. I feel like a thirteen year old on her first major crush. That unnerved.

DUST (*still on knees*): I want to be stronger than this. I don’t want to be unnerved by the games of a man five years my junior.

LUCIDA: I must touch you.

Dust gets up.

DIVA (*melodramatic, rushes toward Dust*): To crack through the shield you hold over your heart. My horns of lust-love piercing you.

Dust leaps behind Crackle.

CRACKLE: But you leap behind a shelter of planks built by your hot and cold gestures.

LUCIDA: Two nights of sex lead to a two-month obsession

DUST: His kisses were fierce. He licked and sucked on my body. Left my breasts tender and sore. Remembering the strength of his tongue makes my cunt tighten with longing. A game developed where he moved to kiss me, and I would pull away. Stretch his arms out to their full length. Resist his embrace and watched as he used his strength to pull me into him, to capture the kiss he wanted. And I am about to moan. Trying to capture that moment on paper- even as stumbling and inadequate as my words are- I am about to moan.

LUCIDA: I write, (*Falls into the center chair, crosses right leg over the left. Bounces leg.*)

and my right leg is crossed over the left. The right leg bounces, which stimulates my crotch- the ache in my cunt tightens.

ALL: I want to fuck!

DIVA: I want to be able to fuck men and put them out on the doorstep.

CRACKLE: Out of sight. Out of mind.

DUST (*big, sings to tune of "Can't we be friends"*): Never again, through with love, through with men

LUCIDA: I want a bowl of thread unraveled, a cup of mint tea with a sludge of honey at the bottom and a certain goat man to carry me into bliss. (*Makes circling gestures with her feet*).

DIVA: Bliss

DIVA & DUST: tered

LUCIDA: Desire sneaks up my leg. (*Hands up both sides of her thighs.*) Bit on the clit by the fire ant of lust love.

CRACLE (*touches crotch*): Bit on the clit

DIVA: Let's be honest. I wanted more from this man than sex

DUST: Love lost, sex sought

CRACKLE: Love lost, love sought

DIVA: Though I knew he was not long-term lover man material. I may be obsessive, but I am not deluded.

DUST (*sings to tune of "Can't we be friends"*): they play their game without shame and who's to blame

LUCIDA: He told me,

DUST (*false, over the top*) I will remember this night for the rest of my life

LUCIDA (*nasty laugh*): Now I know he will!

CRACKLE (*nasty*): Kiss and tell!

DIVA (*sassy, Southern voice*): I want to hogtie his ass and throw him over the handle-bars of my bike!

Lucida stands up.

LUCIDA (*sassy, Southern voice*): Hogtie his ass!

Crackle moves center stage

CRACKLE: And throw him over the handle bars of my bike!

Dust steps onto a chair.

DUST (big voice): Going to be like Artemis. But I ain't no virgin. Going hunting.

Diva steps up onto another chair.

DIVA (*soft*): The tenacity of my desire frightens me.

Lucida steps onto center chair.

LUCIDA (*soft*): I want to be moon like in my austerity

CRACKLE (strong): Artemis does not need a man.

Diva raises hands in "stop" gesture.

DIVA (*intent*): Take back your image. Free me of this that has meant so much to me and so little to you. I do not want it. I want my brain back.

Lucida makes ballet arms moon.

LUCIDA (*sad*): To be moon like in my austerity

CRACKLE (strong): Artemis does not need a man.

DUST (*menacing, draws bow*): She hunts them.

END OF SCENE 2.

INTERLUDE

Slide/video flashes with "Interlude." All hold pose for a count of 5. As Crackle begins her monologue, Dust, Diva and Lucida step down and take chairs back to a line at back of stage. They sit down.

CRACKLE: 16 months after this particular "romantical" debacle, I run into this man walking down the street. We occasionally run into one another. I talk to him. It is the empty chit-chat of distant acquaintances. No substance. It is obviously a relief for both of us when the conversation ends as our paths separate. I want to slap my forehead in comical disbelief that I was distraught over *this* man. Of course, I realized soon after it was all over that the obsession served me well. It kept me distracted from some big fears of mine about non-romantical aspects of my life.

It was a nice distraction from my artwork. I could justify it because I got a lot of half way decent poetry out of it. But I'm not a poet. I'm a playwright and a director and a performer. I was nursing artistic wounds and not quite ready to make performance my central focus. I was scared. The infatuation's timing couldn't have been better for using it as a means to avoid getting serious about my work.

There was another major benefit to this particular mess. Ya see, if I'm *aching* over some dumb ass man, then there is a reason for my pain. My mind much prefers to have a specific cause for its distress. Weeping and wailing because someone has been mean to me feels a bit self-indulgent but not completely unreasonable.

Ah, but weeping and wailing because a deep blue funk has seized control of my brain and with it the urge to slam knitting needles through my eyeballs to stop the yammering of the depression monster. Well, that is a bit more difficult to justify to myself. Wouldn't you rather think that you feel shitty because of what that jerk did, then that maybe you have a mental illness that will never go away?

Sometimes I hate being this self-aware. I wish I could just blame him and say he was an asshole and it was all his fault that it was shitty. But I can't. Oh, he was an asshole, but I dealt with it because there were benefits to being the shit receptacle. I have watched this pattern play out two times since then.

I revolve my energies around some man who is only partially available to me. So I can weep and wail for "good" reasons. The pain is specific and makes at least some sense to my friends. I can avoid taking scary artistic risks, because I spend all my time thinking about him.

I like to project into the future when I am a famous artist. I imagine myself on a panel at some conference being sponsored by a university. Some fresh-faced young woman who wants to be an artist just like me asks, "What do you wish you had done differently?" My response, "I wish I had been like Artemis. I wish I had spent more time on my art and less time mooning over men."

A friend of mine says that she thinks that in order to be genius a woman has to be alone. Right now, I think she's right. I have gotten more art work finished since the end of my seven year love. While the talented men I've fucked can absorb themselves in their projects and forget about me, I multi-task my obsessions and so remember them too often. I wish I could forget about them. But honestly, my work is not enough.

Crackle moves in front of chair. Stands.

END OF INTERLUDE

3. ROTTING ON LOVE'S SHORE

Next title flashes, "Rotting on Love's Shore." All stamp feet. Diva, Dust and Lucida stand up and all swing hips in unison.

ALL: Lickity split (*all snap fingers*) and he was

DIVA: (*big, bouncing to emphasize the words, childlike*): Going, Going, Going

ALL (*quick, loud, serious*): Gone

DIVA (*big, bouncy, childlike*): Going, Going, Going

Dust moves forward sashaying as she sings then moves off to the side.

DUST (sings to tune of "Going to the Chapel"): Going to the chapel of love.

Crackle and Diva move two chairs center, center stage to create the gateposts for a fence. Lucida steps upstage from the chairs, centering herself between the "gateposts."

LUCIDA: I am full body stoned. It's been months since the last time I got high.

DUST: Smokehouse Poet Man says,

CRACKLE: That poem is for the women

DIVA: beached forever on love's shore.

LUCIDA: I am too stoned to play devil's advocate. I want to but instead I offer up an image.

DIVA (*annoyingly childlike*): Will you love me forever and ever?

In a big diva kind of a move Dust swings around with Crackle and Diva following her sweeping around the stage in a full circle until they end up on Lucida's left. Meant to be silly and comical.

LUCIDA: A woman stands on the front porch of a white cracker house. And there is a white picket fence round the yard. A man comes to the gate, lifts the latch

Dust walks to the "gate."

CRACKLE (*directly to someone in audience*): Unsheathe thy magic sword

Dust turns and looks at audience, place a pretend hat on head with a flourish as Crackle delivers her line.

LUCIDA: Walks down the path, climbs the stairs to the porch

Dust walks through the gate

DUST (*1950's TV dad*): Honey, I'm home!

LUCIDA: and kisses her on the cheek.

Dust kisses Lucida on the cheek. With only a tiny pause, Dust moves out of Lucida's space. Diva mimics the hat place, gate walk, cheek kiss sequence as Lucida delivers her next line.

LUCIDA: Time passes. We see the same woman on the same front porch and another man lifts the latch

CRACKLE (*directly to someone in audience*): Unsheathe thy magic sword

LUCIDA: on the gate, walks down the path, climbs the stairs to the porch

DIVA (*1950's TV dad*): Honey, I'm home!

LUCIDA: and kisses her on the cheek.

Crackle doesn't go mimic the whole sequence. She holds the pretend "hat" in her hand and holds it aloft when she delivers her line.

LUCIDA: We see this repeat

CRACKLE: (*1950's TV dad*): Honey, I'm home!

LUCIDA: with dozens

Diva repeats just the hat raising part of the sequence.

DIVA (*1950's TV dad*): Honey, I'm home!

LUCIDA: of different

Dust repeats just the hat raising part of the sequence.

DUST (*1950's TV dad*): Honey, I'm home!

LUCIDA: Men. The woman and her house are the constants.

CRACKLE (*change in tone*): Honey, this is **my** home.

LUCIDA: I offered up this fantasy from my childhood to contest the notion that women want forever. But I'd be a liar if I left you with the impression that I never, ever want forever and ever.

DIVA (*annoying childlike*): Never ever forever and ever?

CRACKLE: Going, Going, Going

DIVA: Gone

CRACKLE (*bouncy*): Going, Going, Going

DUST (*sings to tune of "We're going to the chapel"*): Going to the chapel of (*pause*) luv

LUCIDA: I am full body stoned. It's been months since I last got high. I have pot chills. My body is cold from the inside out. My nipples are tight buttons from the chill and from my longing. I want to be warm.

CRACKLE: Warm me.

DIVA: Earlier, at Common Grounds, a man walked by- moved closely into my space. Close but not touching. Moved into my space with a smile and a look. So close. Close but not touching. Moved into my space with a smile and a look. Close but not touching. My nipples tightened fiercely.

As Diva delivers her lines, Lucida and Crackle circle her moving closer and closer into her space.

DUST (*loud*): Pure lust!

DIVA: I have notions of being a slut. (*Puts her arms around Lucida and Crackle*). Meeting people, taking them home, fucking them and putting them out on the doorstep. I lust that much.

DUST (*loud*): Pure lust!

DIVA: But that voice is mainly bravado. (*Releases Lucida and Crackle and pushes them away from her*). It's the whole package I need to stoke my desire. I need an inkling of how a person's brain works.

DUST: Can't put a bag over his brain.

DIVA: I need that brain connection. My lust organ is a bit (*snorts*) nerdy.

CRACKLE: Brain fuck

CRACKLE, DUST & LUCIDA (*song and dance from scene one*): Yakity yak. yakity yakity yakity yak. yakity yakity yakity yak.

DIVA: And let's be honest. (*Crackle, Dust and Lucida surround Diva*). I can't pick up men I don't know well, because men are potentially dangerous. That thing could be a weapon.

CRACKLE: If used wrong.

DIVA: That thing could be a weapon

LUCIDA: If used wrong

DIVA: That thing could be a weapon

DUST: If used wrong

DIVA: That thing could be a weapon

LUCIDA, CRACKLE & DUST: If used wrong

ALL (to audience): That thing could be a weapon (*long pause*) if used wrong

Lucida, Crackle and Dust move away.

DIVA: And then there is the fact that well, only two people out of the thirteen folks I've had sex with have made me come. One of those people I was with for seven years. And only one person made me come the first time. One-night stands don't work for me. I need time to get to know another person's body. I need time to learn to trust that person's touch on my skin. Mr. Ex-Lover Man is the only person I have slept with more than three times.

CRACKLE (*bouncy*): Going, Going, Going

ALL: Gone

All stamp feet three times and swirl away from each other. Lucida picks up one of the "gate post" chairs and moves it forward, the front of the chair facing stage left.

LUCIDA (*lounges in chair*): Sitting in a room of browns. Browns with a warm red undertone. Out the wall of windows is a glory of green water loving plants swooping down the hill to the creek bed. I am full body stoned- every cell saturated with THC.

DUST: That one's for the women, he says.

Diva picks up the other "gate post" chair and moves it opposite of Lucida's chair, about three feet away, front of the chair facing stage right.

CRACKLE: Rotting forever on love's shore.

LUCIDA: Like a chick flick, I say with an edge of sarcasm

DIVA (*annoyingly childlike*): Will you love me forever and ever?

DUST: Forever and ever

DIVA: He goes on, (*Diva sits*) Women want forever. They buy into that true love-romance on the beach sort of thing.

LUCIDA: I am compelled to play devil's advocate whenever people make generalizations about gender. But I am too stoned. I offer up my image of the woman and her house and lovers that come and go. But that's not the whole story.

As Crackle sings, she walks between the chairs like she's going down the aisle then moves downstage of Diva.

CRACKLE (*sings to the tune of "We're going to the chapel"*): Going to the chapel and we're going to get married

DUST: I wanted and still want a ceremony with friends and family standing present.

CRACKLE (*singy-songy bit from earlier scene*): Don't love you like that
lackity, lack
Don't love you like that
lackity, lack

Dust moves upstage and centers herself between the chairs. She will begin a stately wedding march at the top of her lines.

DIVA: Forever beached and rotting on love's shore.

DUST: A ceremony

CRACKLE & DUST (*sings to the tune of "We're going to the chapel"*): Because we're, Going to the chapel, and we're going to get married.

Crackle continues to sing softly behind Dust's lines.

CRACKLE: Going to the chapel and we're going to get married.
Gee, I really love you, and we're going to get married.
Going to the chapel of love

DUST: A ceremony, where I tell someone that I commit to loving and caring for him, and he commits to loving and caring for me. Not necessarily a promise of sexual fidelity. True, deep love is too valuable to put it in the

DUST & CRACKLE (*big Southern preacher style*): Thou shall fuck only me

DUST: Strait-jacket.

Dust stops in between Lucida and Diva.

LUCIDA: I have pot chills, and I want to be warmed. I want to lay next to another body, naked under the covers. Not sexing it up. Laying there being warmed, warming another. I miss the tenderness. I will get laid sooner or later, but I don't know when the next tenderness is- that laying down of defenses- being naked in more than flesh.

DUST: Here I am. Aren't I beautiful? Here you are. You are so beautiful. (*Stretches arms out*).

LUCIDA: I lust after many men. But only a few star in my long-term lover man fantasies. I play out scenarios. I pretend maybe this one could be a long-term lover man. In it for the long haul.

DIVA (*begun simultaneously with Lucida, soft in background*): Love lost, sex sought

love lost, sex sought
love lost, love sought
love lost, love sought

Crackle kneels with hands in prayer.

CRACKLE (*childlike*): Will you love me forever and ever?

LUCIDA (*turns to audience, but still seated*): I have been in it for the long haul before. I want the daily intimacies of a live in lover. I need a little tenderness. A lover who will see all of me and hold me even closer.

DIVA (*turns to audience, but still seated*): When I was a little girl, I dreamed of having a house with a white picket fence. This house was my house. And I had lovers that came to visit me. They would come to visit me at my house, and then they would leave my house.

CRACKLE (*soft, childlike*): Never ever forever and ever?

DIVA: Then I “grew up,” and I fell in love with a man, and I wanted to marry him.

DUST: Mr. Ex-Lover Man told her that he didn’t want to marry her, and she’s free to remake her dreams. What does the little girl want now?

DIVA: I will get laid sooner or later, but I don’t know when the next tenderness is

CRACKLE: Lickity split and he was

LUCIDA (*bouncy*): Going, going, going

CRACKLE: Gone

DUST: I want it all.

ALL (*sing to tune of “We’re going to the chapel”*): Never be lonely any more.

Lights out. Performers hold position for a moment and then exit stage.

END OF SCENE 3.

END OF ACT ONE.

ACT TWO

4. MS. BISHOP'S FINISHING SCHOOL FOR YOUNG MEN

Performers come out on stage and stand in a line facing forward. Title slide/card with "Ms. Bishop's Finishing School for Young Men" flashes and disappears. Lights up.

DUST: I meet men who are

LUCIDA (*holds hand up showing count of five*): five

CRACKLE: (*holds hand up showing count of seven*): seven

DIVA: (*holds hand up showing count of ten*): ten

DUST: years younger than I am. Interesting, attractive men. Some sexy enough to eat.

LUCIDA (*slowly, shows count of five, seven then ten*): Five, seven, ten

DUST: years younger than I am.

Lucida puts back against Dust's, and they gyrate).

LUCIDA (*sings to tune of "fucking charming"*): I know you're too young

LUCIDA & DUST (*sing to tune of "fucking charming"*): I think you'd be fun

DIVA: I'm talking to Mr. Too Young for You. Maybe flirting a little bit, but not seriously because I realize how young he is. He knows I am older than him, but he's not exactly sure how much older. Somehow the conversation gets around to my age. He asks me how old I am. I tell him.

CRACKLE: Twenty-nine

DIVA: He says, completely shocked, mouth hanging open in disbelief,

CRACKLE (*exaggerated incredulous*): You don't look that old

DIVA: What does twenty-nine look like? Am I supposed to be decrepit? This has happened many times to me. The mind-fucker in me has started to introduce the subject of just how old I am early on in the conversation to see how Mr. Too Young for You reacts. I play out scenarios. Mr. Too Young For You says,

CRACKLE (*exaggerated incredulous*): You don't look that old.

DIVA: I say,

CRACKLE (*bends over, granny*): Come here, sonny. Granny wants to give you a little sugar.

LUCIDA (*sings to tune of "fucking charming"*): I know you're too young

LUCIDA & DUST (*sing to tune of "fucking charming"*): I think you'd be fun

LUCIDA: Most of my lovers since Mr. Ex-Lover Man have been at least five years younger than I am.

CRACKLE: Hell, recently I broke a major milestone. I fucked a man a full ten years my junior.

Lucida swings her arms in body in baby cradling motions and jumps onto on the chairs.

LUCIDA (*sings*): Rockabye baby in the tree top
When the wind blows the cradle will rock

DUST: A two-week fling with a traveling boy. Moderately enjoyable. It ended when he left town. Though if he had stayed on, I would have dumped his ass. He popped back into town the other day.

DIVA: He told me he was going to visit a girl down south. I was happy for him. I told him I was kissing on someone else. Someone I really like. He said

CRACKLE (*super snotty*): What, is he, fifteen?

ALL: Ouch.

LUCIDA (*sings, freaky, intense*): When the bough breaks the cradle will fall
And down will come baby, cradle and all

DUST: Did I deserve that meanness? Am I a leach because I had sex with an adult who happened to be ten years younger than I am? I know plenty of men whose lovers are significantly younger than they are.

Dust steps up onto chair on opposite end from Lucida.

CRACKLE: I've been crushed out on men many years my junior. Men I wanted a relationship with not just sex. Sweet men. But the gap between 24 and 29 is a gorge. And the gap between 20 and 29 is a chasm. I fall in.

Diva falls on chairs between Lucida and Dust.

LUCIDA & DUST (*sing to tune of "fucking charming"*): I don't really wanna,
but I already care.

DIVA: But it doesn't work out because we are in very different places. He, whoever he is at the time, isn't ready to settle down into a long-term relationship with me. He is still finding out who he is, or he's finishing up school and about to leave town. I understand. I can't fault him.

CRACKLE (*falls to her knees, campy*): I will not be another desperate almost thirty something woman moaning about how she can't find a good man her age. I will fuck whomever I want. Even if it makes other people uncomfortable. Even though I have to listen to jokes about me picking up middle schoolers.

Diva stands up and moves forward, placing hand under Crackle's chin.

DIVA: I make light of my own judgments. I joke that I'm going to start me an academy called Ms. Bishop's Finishing School For Young Men. Going to make some t-shirts for my school. The front will say, Ms. Bishop's Finishing School for Young Men. The back will say,

ALL: The entrance exam is oral.

Lucida steps from far chair to middle chair.

LUCIDA (*sings to tune of "fucking charming"*): I know you're too young

DustsSteps from her far chair to unoccupied middle chair.

LUCIDA & DUST (*sings to tune of "fucking charming"*): I think you'd be fun

DIVA: Sometimes I long for a man closer to my age. It would be nice to not have to grapple with a young man's inexperience talking about sex and love on top of all the communication issues bound to come up with any lover regardless of age.

CRACKLE (*stands up*): I have been sexually active for 15 years. He's been sexually active for five. He thinks sex should be (*sarcastic:*) spontaneous. I know that I need explicit communication and planning to be able to capture the wiley orgasm.

Crackle mimes lassoing Diva and pulling her to her straddle her leg. After this Crackle and Diva will mime some of the following dialogue.

DIVA: I ask one young lover what he likes as we are sexing it up in my bed.

CRACKLE: He shrugs his shoulder and says, (*Little boy voice*) I don't know, it all feels good.

DIVA: Which isn't true. He's too embarrassed. Too inexperience to know what he wants. And even if he knows what he wants, he isn't used to asking for it. He pulls my head down toward his crotch. I resist fulfilling his unspoken request. I ask him,

Diva pushes Crackle's head down toward her crotch.

Crackle looks at audience and holds hand underneath an imaginary cock).

CRACKLE: Do you want me to suck your dick?

DIVA: My question disarms him. The problem of the age difference smacks me in the face. I suddenly don't want him in my bed. (*Crackle pushes Diva away*). I don't want to train up little

boys. I don't want to watch them deal with their issues. And I don't want to be the one who pushes them to a more feminist consciousness.

Lucida steps down from chair.

LUCICA: My housemate says, "you can be friend with a man who doesn't have a feminist consciousness."

Dust steps down from chair.

DUST: But do you really want to fuck 'em?

CRACKLE (*angry*): I will not be another desperate almost thirty something woman moaning about how she can't find a good man her age. I will fuck whomever I want.

DUST (snarly, points to young man in audience): School's in session, boys.

END OF SCENE 4.

INTERLUDE

Slide/video of "Interlude" flashes. Crackle, Dust and Lucida go and sit down on chairs. Diva moves forward to deliver her monologue.

DIVA: Where are the women? Do I only think about men? No. Though I couldn't fault you for thinking that after countless minutes probing my romantic and sexual obsessions. I think about love and sex with men way more than I want. I am in the process of decentralizing romance. Widening my focus to including all the ways I can love and be loved. I still want partnership, but I don't want the search to consume me. I refuse to be bitter about how hard it is to find a good man. I am widening my focus. Learning to enjoy all my friendships. Honoring all the people who love me by not being bereft because I don't have that certain someone.

My women friends are a joy to me. They laugh hard with me. They understand my desire to be the pursuer. They know the difficulties of communicating with a lover. They tell me I am amazing. They let me call them late at night when my obsessive brain scares me. They hug me tight when I am broken hearted. They let me weep about my losses. They tell me their stories, and I feel less alone. They are committed, though each with her own vision, to creating a world where women are safe and have equal opportunities to become who they are meant to be. They love me. This is not the love of Hollywood movies, but I am grateful for their love. I want to honor them by showing my love for them.

I am decentralizing romance, looking for other ways to love and be loved. I am creating a heart that can hold the comings and goings of those I love- all the people I love. A heart that does not close down just because someone can't give me what I want. I am determined to practice loving people- women and men. And when a partnership slides into my life, it will be one piece of a very big love for my world. Not the only piece. I am decentralizing romance, but it takes time to shift the frames.

END OF INTERLUDE.

5. FOLLOW ME

Title sign "Follow me" flashes and disappears. Crackle, Lucida and Dust leap up.

CRACKLE (*wail*): Obsession!

In the next bit, Lucida, Crackle and Diva around the stage to physicalize obsession.

LUCIDA, CRACKLE & DIVA: think about him.

DUST (*rolls eyes*): Being in a long-term relationship was good for me. It gave me a place to focus my erotic energy. Energy I have in abundance. It gave me a place to focus my erotic energy. It grounded me.

LUCIDA (*arms raised in air*): Ground me. Tie me down. Stretch my arms above my head. I need to be grounded.

DIVA (*to audience*): I want to be one of those women who doesn't need a man to feel complete. I want to be the strong old artist in the desert who attracts young men but doesn't need them.

CRACKLE: I will find a way through my propensity to obsess about romantic interests

LUCIDA: The intensity of my gaze frightens me. I am predator.

CRACKLE: Artemis does not need a man

LUCIDA (*draws back bow*): She hunts them.

DUST (*whining*): A gangly, goofy predator. I don't know what to do with myself.

CRACKLE (*falls forward as if tripping*): I trip over my tongue.

LUCIDA (*falls forward as if tripping*): I trip over my tongue. All my diva energy disappears.

DUST: I remember that the object of my desire is a subject who is not on this planet to satisfy my desires. I don't know how to navigate through this. How to get laid and still treat people kindly.

CRACKLE: How to get laid and still treat myself kindly.

LUCIDA: I will get laid sooner or later, but I don't know when the next tenderness is.

DIVA: Let me know if I'm obsessing.

DUST: Mr. Ex-Lover Man and I had mismatched sexual needs. I am hungrier than he is. I want more, more often than he does.

DIVA: Long after my depression got so bad that I almost never initiated sex, the perception of my huge sexual hunger lingered. I enjoyed sex once it got started. And I didn't protest his amorous advances. But I didn't want it. The construct of my immense desire was so strong that it survived months of desirelessness on my part.

LUCIDA: About this time, I realized that there was so much more I wanted to do

DIVA (*funny, quirky*): Kink

Lucida stands up on chair.

LUCIDA: I hunger for intensity. I promptly stuffed down that realization. How can I explain that my sex life was both magical and boring. Sex was boiled down to a 45-minute routine. But every time we kissed- deep, tongue kisses- it felt new, magical.

Lucida cups Crackles chin in her hand.

CRACKLE: His mouth is on mine. My mouth touches his. Our mouths have touched like this hundreds- maybe thousands of times. And it feels new. Strangely like the first time. I am in awe. This much magic to be found putting my mouth against his.

LUCIDA: Magical and **boring**. Comforting. Safe. Hard to question magic comfort. Hard to take risks. To ask scary questions that disturb the status quo. Questions that scared me. That still scare me.

In front of Lucida, Crackle and Dust lift Diva's arms and hand them to Lucida to hold in place.

DIVA: I am electric. Ground me. Tie me down. Bite down into my ear. Whisper nastiness. Tell me exactly what you want to do to me.

CRACKLE: Tie me down. This honesty exposes my insides and makes my cunt tighten. If I tell these stories, I will be labeled. My desires limited to one small slice.

LUCIDA: Tie me down. Stretch my arms above my head. Bite down.

Lucida spins Diva around.

DIVA: The fantasy ferris wheel begins to spin

Lucida steps down from chair.

LUCIDA: and spin and spin and spin and spin and spin.

Diva sits in chair. Lucida ends up across her lap

CRACKLE: Bent over his knees. My blue dress pulled up over my ass. The whiteness against his knee clad in black and the blue of my dress. a thumb. His thumb plunges into my cunt and the other hand- his other hand smacks my soft, fat white ass checks.

DUST: Switch

Lucida and Diva end up on their knees. Dust and Crackle on either side standing over them.

CRACKLE: Down on your knees. There's where I like my men. I want you there so I can lean my cunt into your face.

LUCIDA: Can your neck take my weight?

DIVA: If you're good, I'll get on my knees for you.

CRACKLE: Reciprocal . . .chivalry

DUST: You lick me. I'll lick you

LUCIDA: Be my bitch, and I'll be yours.

CRACKLE: Reciprocal chivalry

LUCIDA (*Stands and takes stage with bit diva energy*): I wasn't joking about wanting to be the prince. I want a sword to strap on.

DIVA: Bend over boyfriend

LUCIDA: That's right I want to fuck men. Me the fucker. You the fuckee. Me with the magic sword. You waiting for my kiss.

DIVA: Bend over boyfriend

LUCIDA (*high camp, drag queen intonation, big gestures*): Me in a floor length blue sequin gown. A blue wig. My face painted in caricature of female beauty. False eyelashes. Red painted lips. thick foundation. Magenta eyeshadow. On my feet impossibly huge black heels. My dress has a slit up the front. A slit up to my belly button. Simply fabulous dahling. (She moves behind chair.)

CRACKLE (*nasty*): They'll either be creaming in their pants or feeling sorry for your pathetic self.

LUCIDA (*ignores Crackle*): And beneath the slit, a big, black store bought dick.

DIVA: I've got an arrow for your bow, boy.

DUST: Together we can capture the prey.

CRACKLE (*hands in prayer*): I pray.

LUCIDA (*mimes movements, grips back of chair firmly*): You bent over a table. Your black tux pants around your knees. You are still in your jacket. The contrast of my blue sequin dress against your black jacket is de-lovely. My left hand is tangled up in your hair, pulling your head back. My right hand grips your hip as I slide this big, black store bought dick in and out of your ass.

DUST: Will you let me be a woman being a man being a woman wooing a man?

LUCIDA (*rocks back and forth*): I slide this big, black store bought dick in and out of your ass. I rock back and forth on my black heels. I slide **my** dick in and out of your ass.

DIVA: I've got an arrow for your bow, boy.

CRACKLE: You'll never get laid now. How many men have the balls to date a woman who has declared to the whole wide world that she wants to fuck men in the ass?

As Lucida delivers her lines, she pushes Crackle, Diva and Dust so they are bent over. She stands behind Diva and on "beaux" bumps Diva in the ass.

LUCIDA: Au contraire. I had three men in one month tell me that bend over boyfriend was a fantasy they had entertained. I just have to find the right beaux for my arrow.

Performers recover and stand back up.

CRACKLE: Artemis does not need a man

DIVA (*draws back bow*): She hunts them.

As Lucida says her line, all "cross" themselves by touching mouth, breasts and then crotch.

LUCIDA: In the name of the Mother, the Lover and the Other, I name you fair game.

All point at people in the audience.

DIVA: I need a full moon tonight.

DUST: Put your ass on my alter.

DIVA: Switch

Movement through this next section is slow and simple and serious. Straining for beauty yet humor outlining the edges.

LUCIDA (serious, cold): The geisha in me wants cold lines of ceremony

CRACKLE (*angry*): Snap the fan

LUCIDA (*slow, cold*): The search for beauty.

DIVA: The geisha in me wants cold lines of ceremony.

CRACKLE (*angrier*): Snap the fan.

DIVA (*slow, remote*): The beautiful fan that is my love for you. Does the fan open after sad months and the sudden movement on your part into territories explored before?

CRACKLE: Mr. Ex-Lover Man told me,

LUCIDA (*slightly sarcastic*): You are a fireball.

ALL (*sing to tune of "Burning Love," loud, intense*): a hunk, a hunk of burning love

DUST (*cold, remote*): The fireball holds the fan. It ashes instantly.

ALL: Ashes to ashes

CRACKLE (*roars*): Snap the fan!

DUST (*wailing*): I want to snap you. To hold you like a fan and rip through the panes of floral paper that cover your wooden ribs.

LUCIDA: You are a fireball.

ALL (*sing to tune of "Burning Love"*): Burning love

DIVA (*remote*): My wrists snap. I imagine my wrists snapped- broken, hanging at an odd angle.

CRACKLE: To write you with

DIVE, DUST & LUCIDA (*sharp*): snapped wrists

CRACKLE: is impossible.

DUST: The fireball holds the fan. It ashes instantly.

ALL: Ashes to ashes.

CRACKLE (*cold*): Burning caught in icy words. The contrast is beautiful.

DUST (*wailing in anger*): I want to snap you. To hold you like a fan and rip through the panes of floral paper that cover your wooden ribs.

LUCIDA: Snap the fan

DIVA (*frustrated*): Which you am I talking to?

LUCIDA: I notice the quality of brown on the door to your bedroom, the smell of popcorn and straw. I'm half way propped up on a red pillow. I remember a whiskey Wednesday when we played musical beds.

DUST (*sings to tune of "Ring around the roses, slow, sad*): ashes, ashes

CRACKLE: Fan the flames.

LUCIDA (*comic*): The time has come to talk of many things of fools and slips and sexing wax, of bandages and rings

DIVA (*sings to tune of "Ring around the roses, slow, sad*): ashes, ashes

LUCIDA: **Everything** is source material

CRACKLE: Forgive me lover, for I will sin

DUST (*sing to tune of "Ring around the roses, slow, sad*): I all fall down

LUCIDA (*very frustrated*): Which you am I talking to?

CRACKLE: Fan the flames.

LUCIDA: Burning caught in icy words. The contrast is beautiful.

CRACKLE, DIVA & DUST (*sing to tune of "Burning" love*): A hunk, a hunk of burning

LUCIDA (*yells*): Desire.

DIVA: Ashes to ashes. Dust to dust.

DIVA & DUST: Ashes to ashes. Dust to dust.

CRACKLE: Fan the flames.

DUST: The geisha in me wants cold lines of ceremony

LUCIDA: The search for beauty

DIVA (*sing to tune of "Ring around the roses, very slow, sad, haunting*): Ashes, ashes,

ALL (*sing to tune of "Ring around the roses*): I all fall down

DIVA: Switch

Movement becomes much bigger and campier in this next section, especially during song and dance numbers.

CRACKLE: When I was with Mr. Ex-Lover Man, other women were jealous.

DIVA: He's such a **good** man.

LUCIDA & DUST (*sing to tune of "Whatta man"*): Whatta man, whatta man
whatta a mighty good man
yes he is

DIVA (*jealous*): You're so lucky.

CRACKLE: It made me mad.

DIVA (*angry*): He's lucky to have me god damn it.

CRACKLE: It wasn't it luck. It was two basically decent people who found each other and loved each other for a long while. And that love changed. It couldn't withstand the pressure of my depression. So it changed.

DUST: Mr. Ex Lover Man wrote in an email,

LUCIDA: My sunshine disappeared and when she came back it was too late.

DIVA (*supportive*): You don't need that guy.

CRACKLE (*wistful*): But who do I need? And is anyone up for the bizarre combination of qualities that makes me who I am?

DUST: Now Mr. Ex-Lover Man is someone else's man. Someone he followed to South America. Will someone follow me?

They line to become an all girl Motown group, but super campy and making fun of it as they do it. They make classic girl group hand and body gestures as they sing.

DUST (*sings to tune of "I will follow him"*): I will follow him

ALL (*sing to tune of "I will follow him"*): follow him
wherever he may go

DUST (*sings to tune of "I will follow him"*): There isn't an ocean too deep
A mountain so high
It can keep
keep me away

ALL (*sing high pitched, over the top*): I love him, I love him, I love him
and where he goes I'll follow

I'll follow, I'll follow.
He'll always be my true love
my true love, my true love
from now and until forever
forever, forever.

DIVA: Fuck this shit.

DUST (*sings to tune of "I will follow him"*): He will follow me

ALL (*sing to tune of "I will follow him"*): Follow me wherever I may go
There isn't a sinkful too deep,
a house he won't keep
neat ,
neat for me.

He loves me, he loves, he loves me
And where I go he'll follow
He'll follow, he'll follow
I'll always be his true love
His true love, his true love
From now and until forever
Forever, fore. . .

DIVA: Switch

CRACKLE (*firm*): I want to be strong

DIVA (*resigned*): Obsessing once again.

ALL (*bounce around stage*): think about him. think about him. think about him. think about
him. think about him. think about him. think about him. think about him. think about him. think
about him. think about him. think about him. think about him. think about him. think about him.
think about him. think about him. think about him. think about him. think about him.

CRACKLE (*frustrated, ironically whiney*): I want to be stronger than this

DUST: I take a risk

LUCIDA: embolden when

DUST & CRACKLE: Brown meets blue in the rearview.

DUST & DIVA (*sing to tune of "Can't we be friends?"*): I thought I had found the man of my
dreams

LUCIDA: embolden by

DIVA (*mimes driving*): I face forward, hands on the steering wheel. He is a voice, and the sounds of movement as he shifts on the bench seat behind me are my only clues that he has a body. I want to spend all night talking. I could drive all night with his voice behind me.

CRACKLE: I lose track of my lust for his body.

DUST: Our minds meet and dance.

CRACKLE: His voice drives me down the road. I could drive all night.

LUCIDA: I am hungry for . . . conversation.

DIVA: I glance in the rearview mirror,

LUCIDA: brown meets blue in the rearview.

DIVA: The intensity of his gaze amazes me. The hunger excites me. The hunger not for me but for the conversation with me.

LUCIDA: blue eyes

CRACKLE: I remember years before. Before Mr. Ex-Lover Man and I mingled spit. A group of us were crammed into a booth at Perkins. I was squooshed into the inside corner. Mr. Ex-Lover Man sat directly across from me. I had been crushed out on him for a while but had played it cool. But at that table I was caught. I glanced up from the menu and was mesmerized by his eyes. He caught me swimming in blue. Drowning in his blue eyes. I averted my gaze. Cast my eyes down to the table-top. It was too late. He caught me swimming.

DIVA: Mr. Ex-Lover Man teased me about this. He didn't remember many of the details of our courtship, but he remembered catching me swimming in his eyes.

DUST: Here again. I am lost. Swimming in the memory of another man's blue eyes.

LUCIDA: Brown meets blue in the rearview.

CRACKLE: Do I accept that I am lost in this? That I drown in blue eyes above wide smiles?

LUCIDA (*emphatic*): Hell no!

DUST: Well. . . I long to be able to shut off my desire.

DIVA (*snotty*): Isn't longing to shut off desire oxymoronic?

DUST (*gives Diva look*): I want to shut it off. To not think about sex. To not think about love. I am very aware of my patterns. I don't want to want particular people. But. . .

LUCIDA & CRACKLE: Everything is erotic.

DIVA (*sits in chair*): *Case in point: I lounge in bed. I imagine playing kickball. The kicker slams the red ball hard. (Kicks leg up while seated, then gets up and mimes diving for ball.) The ball pops up into the air- as it comes down- I realize it will fall short of me. I dive for the ball. Catch it as my chest and belly and legs hit the ground. I imagine diving to catch the ball and my nipples tighten. (disbelief) I am turned on by kickball.*

LUCIDA: Or more precisely by the thought of diving for the ball. Taking a risk. Falling. Slamming into the ground. But still catching the ball.

CRACKLE: Physical exertion.

DUST: Risk taking.

DIVA: Exhilaration.

LUCIDA: I tell someone about a musical I'm writing about Bertolt Brecht, one of the grand masters of alternative theater. I've been working on and off, well more off than on, on this play for years. He tells me,

CRACKLE: You have balls of brass

DIVA: Perhaps.

Through the end of this scene vocalizations and choreography should be precise. Tone is serious, sometimes wry. It would be very easy to slide into melodrama, which I did with my original staging). Movement is simple, elegant and gently reinforces images of the words, straining, failing, toward beauty.

DUST: Or perhaps I recognize where fear traps me. The places it threads through my life

CRACKLE: Sewing shut possibility

DIVA: Perhaps it's not courage. But an inability to remain sewn shut.

LUCIDA: I unravel the stitches. Rip out the seams fear has sewn into me.

ALL: Fear seams

DIVA: Seams of fear. Fear seams run down my torso. A seam of fear scars my heart. My stomach is sewn shut by fear.

LUCIDA: I rip out the seams

DUST: Not because I am brave

CRACKLE: But because I must

DIVA: I am compelled.

LUCIDA: It is a race.

CRACKLE: Fear sews itself into my body

DIVA: faster than I can rip out

DUST: it's ugly handiwork.

LUCIDA: Fear sews itself into my body faster than I can rip out its ugly handiwork.

CRACKLE: Brave.

DIVA; It is not courage.

LUCIDA: But a compulsion

CRACKLE: to live as honestly

DUST: as honestly as I can.

LUCIDA: I rip out the place fear sewed itself into my body. The heart scarred by fear. The stomach sown shut.

CRACKLE: Here is a thread of fear

DUST: That this dizzy romantic love of life- this commitment to put beauty in the world- to reflect beauty back to people- to love fiercely- to be loved fiercely- to cultivate a heart as wide of the world

CRACKLE: The fear is

DUST: that these are the ramblings

CRACKLE: these are the ramblings

DIVA: the ramblings

DUST: ramblings

LUCIDA: These are the ramblings

CRACKLE: these are the ramblings

DIVA: the ramblings

DUST: ramblings

ALL: the ramblings of an obsessive manic depressive in denial.

LUCIDA: I rip out the seams.

CRACKLE: The hairline thin seam that I am not enough that criss-crosses my face.

DUST: The triple stitched seam that I am too much.

DIVA: I undo the threads.

LUCIDA: I am impatient

CRACKLE: rip out the threads too forcefully. Make myself bleed unnecessarily.

LUCIDA: I am patient

DUST: I gently slide my needle under the thread; pull upward with a firm even stroke. And then take my time to pull the thread out.

LUCIDA: I give the place that has been sown into fear- sown into place by fear for so long a chance to slowly change shape.

CRACKLE: Sewn shut with fear.

DIVA: I swim in the memory of his blue eyes

LUCIDA: emboldened by

DUST & CRACKLE: a phone call with an email will do

LUCIDA: I take risks

DUST: Dive for that kickball. Falling and crashing are part of the fun.

DIVA: I am frightened. Fear sews shut my heart.

LUCIDA (*sings to tune of "Can't we be friends"*): Never again. Through with love, through with men

CRACKLE: Fear that because I am intense. Honest. Obsessive. I won't find love. I don't deserve it.

LUCIDA (*sings to tune of "Can't we be friends"*): They play their game, without shame and who's to blame?

DUST: Mr. Cryptic told a mutual friend,

DIVA (*snotty*): She would be total girlfriend material, but she's too intense.

DUST: I am intense.

LUCIDA: This message sent to me through the grapevine hurt bad.

CRACKLE: If I had been stronger, as strong as I am now, it might not have hurt as bad. But I was still floored by Mr. Ex-Lover Man's rejection of me.

LUCIDA: Mr. Ex-Lover Man wrote,

DIVA: You are a fireball.

DUST: Too intense,

LUCIDA: he said.

CRACKLE: And seven months later- a message is sent through the grapevine that I am

ALL: Too intense

LUCIDA: Too much

DIVA: Too big

DUST: Too honest

CRACKLE: Too this

DIVA: Too that

LUCIDA: Mr. Cryptic's rejection of me because of my "intensity" sent me spiraling down a rabbit hole of self-hate. I wanted to kill myself. I know that sounds ridiculous. It felt ridiculous at the time, but it also felt real.

CRACKLE: I am stronger now.

DIVA: Am I strong enough? To face that fact that people are not always kind or that even when they mean well they make mistakes or that my offer does not obligate anyone to reciprocate?

DUST: Am I strong enough?

ALL: Strong enough

DUST: I think so, but I am afraid. As I face a new wave of desire, a new infatuation. As I face the ways that this new love interest is different and the ways it just the same, old tired ass projections. As I face my obsessive brain in all its gory glory.

CRACKLE: I sew myself into a tight corner of obsessive thinking.

DIVA: Here is a place

LUCIDA: a seam of fear

CRACKLE: I don't deserve love because I'm obsessive.

LUCIDA: A double stitched seam of fear

DUST: I don't deserve love because I'm imperfect.

LUCIDA: A triple stitched fear seam

DIVA: I don't deserve love because I'm too intense.

CRACKLE: Here is a place.

LUCIDA: Here is a fear seam,

CRACKLE: straight out of the mind of an obsessive depressive,

DIVA: If you write this

DUST: If you write this,

LUCIDA: No one will ever love you.

CRACKLE: Because you prove you are too

DIVA: too much

DUST: too intense

CRACKLE: too honest

LUCIDA: too obsessive.

DUST: If you admit how scarred you are by fear seams

LUCIDA: You will lose.

CRACKLE: I must rip out this seam.

DUST: I will rip out this seam.

DIVA: Slide my needle under the thread and pull up with a firm even stroke.

CRACKLE: I must rip out this seam.

DUST: I will rip out this seam.

DIVA: This seam of fear that I am too much sewed up my stomach.

DUST: I lost fifty pounds in a little more than a year. And I wasn't trying. I just stopped eating.

CRACKLE: I will rip out this seam.

LUCIDA: Free myself to feast on this life of mine.

END OF SCENE 5.

INTERLUDE

Slide/video of "Interlude" flashes. Crackle, Diva and Lucida sit. Dust takes center stage.

DUST: I am told that I am better off alone by a woman who has been married for a couple of years. You know you're better off, she says to me. The little green tendrils that have sprung from my rotten log of a heart flinch and curl into themselves.

Tendrils growing out of the wet, dank wood rot heart of mine because two years after I all fall down, a man is being kind to me. I have found a little tenderness. You know you're better off, she says. The tendrils flinch and curl into themselves a bit.

Another friend- all tangled in the tendrils of a love less than a year old, asks if it is worth it- the difficulty, the miscommunication, the unscalable walls. The tendrils flinch and curl up a bit more. The kind man tells me he is confused and in his confusion ends up being a little bit unkind to me, and so the tendrils flinch and curl up even more.

Hell, there are plenty of days I'm not sure my life is worth the effort. Often the effort involved in trying to communicate with someone I am romantically and/or sexually attracted to seems an extravagance I can ill afford. But having loved once for the long haul. Having found joy and pain beyond description, I rejoice at the tendrils, even the tangles. One night when I was curled up with this gentle, kind, confused man, I realized that the god/dess of lust-love perhaps was teasing me again. That in the end, I might have another friend, but not a lover. But the end of story is always unknown, and I am able to be grateful for the moments of joy and comfort that slide into my life.

I am sad. Sad and angry and confused. I want to not want this so badly. I want to not be obsessive. I want to not need the comfort of another's body. I want to be the virgin huntress who is whole in herself. The tendrils are curled up tight.

But building a wall around my heart is not the solution.

END OF INTERLUDE

6. WOULDN'T IT BE LOVELY

Slide/video of scene title flashes. Everyone stands up. Movement is grand in the finale. Big and bold. Lots of circling movements to underscore the whole spiral idea.

LUCIDA: Lickity split and *(tone changes)* he's gone

Train pulls out of the station.

CRACKLE: Love lost, sex sought
Love lost

CRACKLE & DUST: sex sought
love lost, sex sought

CRACKLE, DUST & DIVA: love lost, sex sought
love lost, sex sought
love lost, sex sought
love lost, sex sought
love lost, sex sought
love lost, sex sought

LUCIDA *(Like a train whistle. Held for an incredible length of time. Ideally until performer gets a little light headed)*: Loooooooooove!

DUST *(matter of fact)*: There are more important things than my broken heart and my overdeveloped lust organ.

CRACKLE *(soft)*: Lust dust falling on my eyelids and eyebrows. *(Tone changes to funny)*. A magic wand sure would come in handy right about now.

DIVA *(sassy, Southern voice)*: Shakespeare's head wasn't just in the clouds of ethereal love when he wrote his beautiful sonnets. The man wanted to get laid.

DUST *(matter of fact)*: There are more important causes than my broken heart and my wandering lust organ. Sex and love are wonderful and horrible diversions from the pain and suffering in this world.

DIVA *(sad)*: The United States started bombing Afghanistan. My grief over lost love seems frivolous in the face of the world's pain.

DUST *(matter of fact)*: There are more important causes than my broken heart and my wandering lust organ.

CRACKLE *(campy)*: Sex and love are wonderful and horrible diversions from the pain and suffering in this world.

DUST (*very sad*): Sometimes this world is hard to bear. We are at war and the rest of life's aches and pains, joys and thrills keep on keepin' on. There have been countless lonely hours over the past six months when I longed to curl up next to someone and to be comforted by the warmth of another's body. Some comfort would be nice.

LUCIDA: (*sings to tune of "Wouldn't it be lovely"*): Wouldn't it be lovely?

DUST (*matter of fact*): There are more important causes than my broken heart and my wandering lust organ.

DIVA (*sassy, big*): Going to find a way to blend it all together. Use my overdeveloped lust organ to save the world.

LUCIDA (*sassy, Southern voice*): Going to strap on some pink twinklebell wings and grab me a bag full of my lust dust. Ride up the elevators of all the shiny glass and steel headquarters where the head honchos live. I'm going to give 'em a star to wish upon all right.

ALL: (*sing to tune of "Wouldn't it be lovely," big musical movements*): Lots of bankers for me to eat, Lots of businessmen under my feet, They beg, They cringe, They weep, Oh, wouldn't it be lovely.

LUCIDA (*sassy, Southern voice*): Going to sprinkle all those head honchos with my lust dust. Got more than I can handle, just want to share a little bit. They won't be able to work, driven to put their hands to a different sort of task. All the buildings would empty. And I would sprinkle lust dust on everything. My lust dust would seep into the seats. Cover the desks. Fill the water coolers.

And all those files, all those piles and piles of paper would glisten with lust dust. The shiny glass and steel headquarters would be soaked in my lust dust. Any time the honchos touched their desks, opened their briefcases, perused a file, sat in their chairs, surfed the net for stock quotes, they would be driven to put their hands to different sort of task.

ALL: (*sing to tune of "Wouldn't it be lovely"*): Wouldn't it be lovely?

LUCIDA (*sings to tune of "Wouldn't it be lovely"*): lovely. lovely. lovely. Wouldn't it be lovely?

DIVA: In a dream Mr. Ex-Lover Man dies, and I plan the funeral with his current partner. She and I and his mother sit in a circle. The minyan to say kaddaish will be on my front porch. She talks about him and uses some endearment. I turn to her and say, I know you are his lover now, but I can't hear you say that. Please wait until after the ceremony. I need a little more time.

CRACKLE: Time.

LUCIDA: I woke up from this dream shaken. I don't want to grieve anymore. I no longer want him to be my lover. But I still grieve sometimes.

DUST: Two months after I all fall down, people would tsk tsk and knowingly shake their heads and say, *(annoying know it all voice)* if you were with him seven years, it will take you at least three to fully get over it.

DIVA: Fuck that!

CRACKLE *(concedes the point)*: Now that I have watched myself grieve and heal for two and half years, I have to concede the point.

LUCIDA: There is no clean-cut resolution. No point where I am completely done with my sadness over losing my seven-year love. It is a spiral. A cycle.

Through end of play the voices echo, repeat vocalizations used in earlier sections of the play.

DUST: Lick lick tongue tip lick

DUST & LUCIDA: Lick lick tongue tip lick

DUST, LUCIDA & CRACKLE: Lick lick tongue tip lick

ALL: Lick lick tongue tip lick

DIVA: I am decentralizing romance, looking for other ways to love and be loved.

CRACKLE: Artemis does not need a man

DUST: She hunts them.

DIVA: I want to be moon like in my austerity.

CRACKLE: I will get laid sooner or later, but I don't know when the next tenderness is.

DIVA: I long for partnership.

CRACKLE: Do you want to be my prince?

DIVA: I don't want to want Mr. Right. I want to want Mr. Right Now.

LUCIDA: I want the daily intimacies of a live in lover. A lover who will see all of me and hold me even closer.

DUST: I will find a way through my propensity to obsess about things romantic.

LUCIDA: There are more important things than my broken heart and my overdeveloped lust organ.

DIVA: I am decentralizing romance, but it takes time to shift the frames.

DUST: Lickity split and he was gone.

CRACKLE: There is no clean-cut resolution. No point where I am completely done with my obsessions. It is a spiral. A cycle.

DIVA: I am strong.

DUST: I need an arrow for my bow.

LUCIDA (*sings to tune of "Can't we be friends"*): This is how the story ends

ALL: My tongue is a weapon, and I'm going to use it right.

END OF SCENE 6.

THE END