

AIRLINE HIGHWAY

The lights rise at as close to the dawn's pace as we can swing in a theater. It is 6:40 am in the courtyard/parking lot of the The Hummingbird, a hotel on Airline Highway on the Northwestern edge of New Orleans, LA just before it turns into Metairie. It is one of those old school hotels from maybe the 40's, with an old neon sign portraying a big blue and yellow hummingbird holding a flower in its mouth and the words, "The Hummingbird" underneath it

We can see the hotel office downstage right, with floor to ceiling glass windows, and the "U" shaped hotel, with two floors of rooms, opening up on to a shared parking lot There is a black, rusted wrought iron rail along the second floor walk way. There is one abandoned car in the lot - maybe it is up on cinder blocks. A gutter pipe hangs down SL, near the office, with a green vine that has grown all the way up it

The hotel, as you might imagine, has seen better days, back when it was a modern hotel with a fresh coat of Hummingbird Pink paint on Airline Highway, the main thoroughfare in and out of New Orleans which took you straight to Baton Rouge.

Now, it is a dirty beige - remnants of a paint job about 15 years ago when it was painted an awkward shade of yellow. Some doors have numbers, some don't While the hotel has occasional out of town guests, most of the people in the rooms work in the service industry in the French Quarter - bartenders, bouncers, dishwashers, karaoke DJs, strippers and so on.

We see the light changing slowly from purple to pink to something approaching day.

In the middle of that light is Terry, who is nobody really, hanging out in his spot in the middle of the top walk way, watching the traffic go by on Airline Highway, smoking a cigarette.

In these opening moments, perhaps just prior to curtain or just after, several guests at the Hummingbird are seen emerging and doing their thing. Perhaps getting ice, or a Coke from the machine, or walking out of the parking lot to catch the bus. At least one of these guests emerges from the PROBLEM ROOM: a room filled with too many people, mostly young, but not necessarily all young. It's smoky in there and there's loud music and / or TV playing. There's trouble in there.

All these early morning figures walk by or near Terry, but do not faze him. He smokes and watches the world go by. For a moment, the stage is quiet A few birds. The sun emerging.

Then the whirr of cars driving by again, and the sound of a bus stopping; air brakes, the door opening, People getting off the bus.

Terry times it perfectly, so that he finishes his cigarette, crushes it under his heel and pushes it off the side of the balcony before Krista enters - she is maybe 30,32, dressed in sweatpants and an oversized hoodie sweatshirt She wears heavy makeup and carries a gym bag.

Wayne, the manager of the hotel, shuffles into the interior space of the lobby in his PJ's and slippers to put coffee on. He is barely awake, starts the coffee.

Upstairs, a door opens and a man, maybe 50, wearing sunglasses and dressed in pants and a shirt with a button-down collar, leaves a room - Tanya's Room. Krista says "Good morning" quietly, Terry kind of nods hello. The man just walks away. Another door opens, and Sissy Na-Na walks out in her bathrobe and platform boots; tall brown skinned, strikingly lean body, hair in a hair net or maybe tied up with a bandana, no makeup, but a scarf around her neck She says the following plainly.

SISSY NA NA: Morning, Ho's.

KRISTA (*Indicating the door Sissy came out of*): you've been in there all night?

SISSY: Since I got off work, round 3.

TERRY: How's Miss Ruby doing in there?

SISSY NA NA: Not good.

KRISTA: Oh. Well, it's dark in there. We should open the blinds today.

SISSY NA NA: The light hurts her eyes.

Sissy Na Na speaks to Terry.

You gotta cigarette?

TERRY: No.

SISSY NA NA: Really?

TERRY I'm clean.

Sissy gives Terry a big sniff, and kind of goes huh. And then goes back to her room.

KRISTA: Why are you here so early?

TERRY: Gonna go see if Mr. Wayne will pay me to fix those gutter pipes.

KRISTA: How you gonna fix that gutter pipe, Terry / if you start hammering on it, it's gonna bust into a billion pieces...

TERRY: I'm gonna tack it back up with some nice nails and some wire, I know how to fix a gutter pipe.

Francis rides up on a sturdy bike that he probably made himself. He is wearing a helmet that drops down over part of his face, like a helmet mask It is decorated with tinfoil, Mardi Gras beads, doubloons and glitter. He is a poet himself and he quotes from the poet John Sinclair...

FRANCIS

"Ashes to ashes Dirt to dirt
Love, work and suffer
Is our sentence here on earth
& ain't nobody getting out of here alive -

Happy Jazz Fest, people!

Krista snaps fake little poetry scene snaps and Francis laughs a delicious, high pitched "I'm still buzzed and life is beautiful" laugh.

FRANCIS: He make coffee yet?

KRISTA: Yeah.

FRANCIS: I gotta be over at work in like two hours and - hold on -

Francis moves to the door for the coffee.

You want some?

KRISTA: Sure.

Francis goes in. A moment of silence between Terry and Krista. It is like we hear the day dawning.

TERRY: Do you ever sleep?

KRISTA: Sure, I sleep. But I'm saving up money to take a trip home to Alabama to see my family, so I'm not sleeping right now.

Did Wayne rent my room yet?

TERRY: Not yet.

Francis comes back out with two paper cups of coffee. He hands Krista her coffee when he says "here".

FRANCIS: Man, last night, The Soul Rebels – Forget about it! It was like New Orleans in 1989- Here-

TERRY: Francis you think you got that five spot you owe me?

FRANCIS: Yeah sure I got it.

Francis makes no move to give it to Terry.

Jazz Fest is still Jazz Fest man, you gotta love it. I mean not the Fest itself. You should

come with me Krista. Beah's having a brunch in just a couple hours It's gonna be ablast...
KRISTA: I thought you had to work.

FRANCIS: Yeah but I was going to stop by on my WAY to work. I mean what's the rush? Come on -

KRISTA: No. Miss Ruby's funeral is today. It's gonna be nice.

FRANCIS (*To Krista*): You know Bait Boy's coming back for the party today.

Krista panics but tries her best to contain it

KRISTA: No.

FRANCIS: Yes.

KRISTA: No he's not, he lives in Atlanta.

Wayne comes out and lights a cigarette.

<p>WAYNE Good Morning, my Beauties</p>	<p>FRANCIS Yeah, he does, but he is coming down with his daughter.</p> <p>KRISTA (<i>Blanches</i>) Daughter?</p> <p>FRANCIS No, no step-daughter. That chick he wound up with, you know that rich cougar he met at Tropical Isle, she's got a daughter from another marriage.</p> <p>KRISTA Another marriage? They're married?</p> <p><i>Sissy Na Na enters from her room carrying a yogurt and a plastic spoon.</i></p> <p>SISSY NA NA Child, I shoul'da gone to nursing school, I woulda been the star.</p>
<p>TERRY Hey Mister Wayne you need me / to fix the gutters?</p>	<p>FRANCIS Yeah he's bringing her down- the stepdaughter — he's bringing her with her for some school thing or something</p>
<p>WAYNE Don't call me Mister Wayne, / Terry.</p>	
<p>TERRY I can't help it. You need me to fix the gutters?</p>	<p>KRISTA How do you know all this?</p>

WAYNE

(Looking up, examining)

Well....

(Non dominant line)

Let me think about it...

FRANCIS

Well he wrote me a letter to pay me back the five frikken hundred dollars he's been owing me for like 8 years, and he told me about his cougar wife and stepdaughter in the letter. And then he called Sissy / because Sissy left him a message about the party.

KRISTA

Sissy, he called you?

SISSY NA NA

Who?

KRISTA

BAIT BOY.

SISSY NA NA

Oh yeah I told you.

KRISTA

You didn't tell me.

SISSY NA NA

I didn't tell you?

I told you. / I called Bait Boy to tell him about the funeral.

FRANCIS

She called him to tell him about the funeral.

KRISTA

Well why didn't you...why didn't you ask me, I woulda called him.

SISSY NA NA

You ain't got his number. And Miss Ruby asked for him.

KRISTA

I just—

I wish...

I can't - oh nevermind it's fine. I just -I wish you would have warned me is all.

<p><i>Wayne smokes, joins the other</i></p> <p>WAYNE Bait Boy's hilarious. I wonder what the nut's up to...</p>	<p><i>Francis and Sissy Na Na feel just a little bit sad for Krista. Perhaps some look or gesture is exchanged between Francis and Sissy Na Na.</i></p> <p>SISSY NANA I mean I'm not HAPPY he's coming.</p> <p>FRANCIS I'm ambivalent.</p> <p>SISSY NA NA Come on now, don't / worry –</p> <p>FRANCIS Don't worry about friggen Bait Boy</p> <p>KRISTA Oh yeah real hilarious. Francis do I look fat?</p> <p>FRANCIS Baby, you're are the finest gal on Airline Highway.</p> <p>SISSY NA NA Hey, what about me?</p> <p><i>Francis is cracking up. Another shady character comes out of the problem room.</i></p> <p>SISSY NA NA Hey, hey are you the registered guest in that room? <i>walks away.</i></p> <p>SISSY (Cont'd)</p> <p>I SAID ARE YOU THE REGISTERED GUEST Wayne, WAYNE stop that girl I</p>
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WAYNE *(To Sissy)*

Forget it Sissy, they are paid up, Sissy they paid for the whole week, Sissy I got pressure on to keep these rooms filled it hasn't been a problem they've been no trouble Sissy forget about it, OK

TERRY

So can I fix it?

WAYNE

Can you Fix it today?

TERRY

Sure I can fix it today.

I could really use the help. My son over in Eunice he, he got hit by a car.

WAYNE

I heard about that Terry.

TERRY

He's doing OK but he's still in the hospital

WAYNE

Go ahead Terry.

TERRY

Thank you Mr. Wayne, thank you.

mean how many people are in that room, I don't care that they are paid up that is a PROBLEM ROOM that is a disaster / waiting to happen and it is your responsibility OK fine, you're in charge here, I got my own fish to fry, OK, OK.

FRANCIS

(Quoting John Sinclair)

"And the new poetry would burn itself down to one word, and the poets would say it and then everybody would be a poet. And the word would burn itself into everybody's body meat and men would hold hands and smile...."

A breath. The thick, morning air.

Krista gets up and shakes out her hair, sits down again. Sissy has gone into her room or maybe a storage closet? Finding the boxes of party supplies?

FRANCIS *(To Krista)*

You need some sleep.

Krista kind of waves him off.

Francis walks over behind Krista and rubs her shoulders.

KRISTA

Get off me Francis, you smell like beer.

Francis kind of Shrugs like, so?

<p>WAYNE Stop calling me that!</p> <p><i>Wayne goes inside, gets money out of the till, comes back</i></p> <p>WAYNE Here's \$50 for supplies. Bring me receipts and we'll settle up.</p> <p>TERRY I'm going now, it'll be done by noon I bet. / If not noon then 1 PM.</p> <p>WAYNE Fine good.....fantabulous.</p>	<p><i>Tanya comes out of her room in her bathrobe and begins to pick up and fold laundry that had been drying on the railing.</i></p>
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Terry walks towards the street, out of sight Wayne goes into the lobby and up the inside stairs.

SISSY NA NA: All us miserable rug rats gotta step up for Miss Ruby.

TANYA: Absolutely. She wanted a funeral before she was dead, and we are gonna give it to her.

FRANCIS: It should be in her club.

TANYA: Hush, Francis.

FRANCIS: Nothing is sacred anymore.

TANYA: Anyway, I've got a list for us.

FRANCIS: What time is it?

SISSY NA NA: It was 7am like 10 minutes ago.

FRANCIS: I gotta get going.

Francis makes absolutely no move to go. Sissy Na Na eats her yogurt and rants.

TANYA: Is there coffee?

KRISTA: Yeah.

Tanya goes to get some.

SISSY NA NA: I'm thinking about shaving my head.

KRISTA: I did that once.

SISSY NANA: I mean I'm always in a wig anyway

TANYA: Bye Frannie.

Francis says "Yep!" as he rides off. Tanya takes a sip of her coffee. It's getting hot outside.

TANYA: Whoo, hot.

KRISTA: Did you know Bait Boy was coming too?

TANYA: I did, sweetie.

KRISTA: Why do you all treat me like a child!?!

TANYA: Hey hey, come here.

Does KRISTA sit on TANYA's lap?

It's gonna be a real nice funeral. We'll all be there, like family.

KRISTA: He's not family!

TANYA: Hey, hey. He was a part of this place. And her club too, right down to it's last moments. And now Miss Ruby's moving on and we gotta celebrate!

KRISTA: I first saw Miss Ruby dance when I was 16. Climbed out my bedroom window and drove from Mobile to the Quarter with my friends. And we snuck into her club and there she was, standing on her hands in the middle of a giant champagne glass Then arching her back and reaching her toes back first to her head, Then to her hands and then standing back up.

TANYA (*Quiet, in her own world*): Who's going to remember us?

KRISTA: What?

TANYA: Nothing. Nothing, forget it.

A moment then, Krista sniffs under one of her arms

KRISTA: I stink

TANYA: Go take a shower, suga. Go on. It'll make you feel fresh and clean.

KRISTA (*Looking at the floor*): I don't have my room this week.

For a moment, Tanya looks concerned. She covers quickly.

TANYA: Then go on up to my room. I've got some Kiwi body wash, it'll make everything nice again.

As Krista goes up the stairs,

Sissy Na Na closes the door. Krista goes into Tanya's room. Tanya is alone. Maybe she takes a breath. Maybe she watches the traffic go by. As she does, the Problem Room Dude slips out of the problem room. He sees Tanya, and somehow, sort of sneaks up behind her.

PROBLEM ROOM DUDE (*Meaning, "Hey Baby"*) Hey, Bay.

TANYA: Oh

PROBLEM ROOM DUDE: You got everything you need?

TANYA: Thank you, I do.

PROBLEM ROOM DUDE: You sure

TANYA: Definitely.

A moment while he looks her over.)

PROBLEM ROOM GUY: Alright.

The problem room guy leaves. Tanya shakes it off. She reaches in her pocket, pulls out a tube of lipstick She puts it on.

TANYA Well, okay!

Tanya claps her hands. The lights black out, or do whatever lights do in a transition.

SCENE TWO

It is several hours later. Terry and Krista are in the exact same spots there were in at the top of the play. Except now, Krista has her hair pulled back, fresh from her shower, Terry is maybe wearing a work-day shirt and they are both smoking. Next to the car is a garbage can with a keg in it-iced down and all.

We hear a car drive by with Dr. John's "Right Place Wrong Time" playing super loud. It is a crowd of tourists or maybe locals going to Jazz Fest The car stops at a light. We see Krista kind of laugh and shake her head, then she puts her cigarette in her mouth and walks towards the front of the stage. Laughing she yells to the car:

Wayne comes out of the office, sifting through mail Krista and Terry stare across the street and smoke

WAYNE: Where's Tanya.

KRISTA: She's / at the store.

TERRY: At the store with Sissy Na Na.

WAYNE: She got a letter.

TERRY: Mr. Wayne did you notice?

Wayne looks up at the gutter.

WAYNE: Heeeeyyy. Nice job, Terry.

TERRY: Here's the receipts. Now I got the expensive nails. / So it would hold.

WAYNE: That's OK. Sure, sure. Let me get your money together for you.

TERRY: Thank you I appreciate it

Wayne goes back inside. A moment while they smoke.

From offstage we hear Tanya and Sissy Na Na.

TANYA: Thank you sweetie, no we got it, we got it.

SISSY NA NA: Bye now.

Tanya yelps like her ass has been pinched and she is cracking up laughing when she comes on stage, talking to the man who just dropped them off.

TANYA: Yeah those were good times, suga, but they ain't dere no more! I can't help that you married that Sacred Heart debutante! You coulda had this for breakfast, lunch and dinner!

We hear the car that dropped them off drive away. Tanya and Sissy Na Na carry big bags of groceries.

SISSY NA NA: He a customer?

TANYA: No, an old boyfriend. Believe it or not I went to Catholic School.

TERRY: Hey, Miss Tanya.

TANYA: Terry there's two more bags out there on the curb could you grab them honey?

TERRY: Sure.

KRISTA: Did you get Cheetos?

TANYA: I did but they're for the party.

KRISTA: Oh.

TANYA (*Sing-songy and excited*): We got a lot of good stuuuuu-uuuuff. Some nice ham and turkey and some Swiss cheese and we even stopped by Binder's for some fresh French bread. And Sissy's got a disco ball / and some streamers from The Bourbon Cowboy and I took apart one of Miss Ruby's old costumes...

SISSY NANA: I got a disco ball from The Cowboy and they gave me the leftover decorations from this gay wedding reception they had, these shiny streamers that are maybe just a little bit beer-soaked ha I hope its beer but they'll be fabulous.

TANYA: Terry did you get the keg, Terry?

TERRY: Yep.

TANYA: Thank you suga I knew I could count on you.

Miss Tanya gives Terry a kiss on the cheek. A nurse's aide in green scrubs comes out of Miss Ruby's room, with a purse on her shoulder, a stethoscope around her neck and a clipboard in her hand.

SISSY NA NA: Miss Ruby doing OK?

NURSE'S AIDE: Oh, um, yes she's resting. There's still a lot of fluid in her lungs, it's important

that she stay with her head up and her feet up. And she's...are you all giving her Gatorade?

SISSY NA NA: Ensure.

NURSE'S AIDE: Gatorade or Ensure, as much as she can keep down. Are you.. her...

KRISTA: Friends. We're like family.

NURSE'S AIDE: Oh.

KRISTA: What.

NURSE'S AIDE: Nothing.

TERRY: We're having a funeral for her today.

NURSE'S AIDE: What?

KRISTA: No, no...

TERRY: We are!

NURSE'S AIDE: She's, you all know she's alive in there right? She is very much alive and in need of constant care.

SISSY NA NA: We know that, thank you.

NURSE'S AIDE: Alright, well you have the hospice number?

KRISTA: It's taped to the door.

NURSE'S AIDE: *(Kind of resigned and judgmental)* Alright.

The nurse's aide leaves. Wayne comes out

WAYNE: Here you go, Tanya.

Tanya takes the letter. Krista is in the process of sneaking the bag of Cheetos out of the grocery bag.

TANYA: Thanks.

Tanya opens the letter Wayne hands her, reading it while talking.

SISSY NA NA: When's Bait Boy coming, anyway?

TANYA: He's coming for the funeral.

WAYNE: Wait Bait Boy's coming here?

KRISTA: He's coming for the funeral.

WAYNE: He owes me \$150 for the mini fridge he threw off the balcony that famous night.

Tanya moves to another part of the parking lot, reading the letter.

Why they call him Bait Boy anyway?

SISSY NA NA: Cause he was always baitin' the crowd when he worked the Karaoke Stage /

KRISTA: Cause he was always picking up jailbait - he likes 'em young.

SISSY NA NA

Funny he wound up with a Cougar then.

Krista is actually eating Cheetos but nobody really notices. Tanya eventually folds up the letter and rejoins the group.

WAYNE Hey Terry, come see. <i>Wayne counts cash for Terry.</i>	KRISTA I'm not gonna talk to him. I'm just going to stay on the other side of the lot and give him the evil eye. TANYA That's fine sugar, if that's what makes you feel strong.
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Terry goes back up stairs to his spot on the balcony. Wayne kind of settles in to a chair outside his office.

SISSY NA NA

Or you can talk A LOT, like it's no big deal that he's here.

Sissy says the next line like it was French.

Act Nonchalant.

Krista kind of rolls her eyes and keeps eating Cheetoes. Sissy walks down stairs.

SISSY NA NA

Look here. When Bait Boy waltzes up, YOU BE who YOU want to be.

Maybe Sissy brings down some bags of decorations, or organizes some grocery bags for a second

KRISTA

Like, like maybe I can tell him that I work at a law firm.

SISSY NA NA

There you go.

KRISTA

Like maybe a paralegal? A paralegal assistant, / that sounds more realistic.

SISSY NA NA

There you go -

SISSY NA NA

tell him you live with your sister -

KRISTA

My sister / hates me!

SISSY NA NA

You are living with your sister on the West Bank and you take the express bus over the

<p>WAYNE Everything OK, Tanya?</p>	<p>bridge to downtown.</p> <p><i>Tanya has finished letter and joined them. She nods to Wayne.</i></p> <p>KRISTA And I'm not dating anyone but there is this guy in the copy room who keeps flirting with me.</p> <p>TANYA Copy room! / You can do better than the copy room!</p> <p><i>Tanya makes a gesture like "fine, fine" and absentmindedly starts eating Cheetos.</i></p> <p>SISSY NA NA Now THAT'S a story.</p>
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KRISTA: I can't do this.

SISSY NA NA: Boo, you gotta man up. Come on!

Krista eats a Cheeto during a moment of silence, making a big crunch. Finally, Tanya notices Krista is eating the Cheetos.

TANYA: Krista! Those are for the party!

KRISTA: I know I couldn't help it. / I'm nervous.

TANYA: And you've got me eating them too!

WAYNE: It's OK baby, we can get more.

TANYA: The party is in 3 hours.

<p>SISSY NA NA We can get Cheetos anywhere</p>	<p>KRISTA I'm sorry.</p>
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TANYA: I know, I KNOW THAT'S NOT THE POINT.

Tanya is trying in vain to wipe the orange Cheeto dust off her hands.

<p>SISSY NA NA Baby, what's the matter?</p>	<p>WAYNE Geez.</p>
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Krista looks in the bag of Cheetos.

KRISTA: There's still a lot left.

TANYA: Nothing, it's just - One of my...one of my kids is trying to find me.

KRISTA: One of your kids?

TANYA: One of the kids I gave up. When things were really bad. She's turning 20. And she's trying to find her birth mom.

<p>SISSY NA NA Oh Baby-</p>	<p>TERRY That's deep.</p>	<p>WAYNE What are you going to do?</p>
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TANYA: I don't know what I'm going to do.

Right before Krista says the word hooker Wayne intentionally gets up and heads inside.

KRISTA: Yeah so you should find out, Tanya, find out if your kids adoptive parents are like, RICH, because if they are, then when your daughter finds out her birth mom is a hooker she'll feel you know, like she got a good deal.

Krista meant well but that comment did not land so great. A moment.

KRISTA: What?	SISSY NA NA: Krista.
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KRISTA: No, I mean she'll think you sacrificed to give her a better / life, a richer life.

SISSY NA NA : Krista -

Is there a moment where everyone looks at Tanya? Tanya takes a breath and looks at the grocery bags.

TANYA: Sandwiches, I've got to start the sandwiches.

Tanya starts taking bags of luncheon meat and bread out of the grocery bags as though readying herself to make the sandwiches?

WAYNE: Hey Krista can I see you?

KRISTA: I don't know, can you?

WAYNE: Just come here.

KRISTA: What?

WAYNE: Just come here.

Krista walks over.

SISSY NA NA: Alright we gotta get this party started...

Sissy starts taking decorations out of her bag.

WAYNE: Listen, Krista you cannot use the H word around me.

KRISTA: What?

WAYNE: When you are talking about Tanya.

KRISTA: The H word....

SISSY NA NA: How many ducks did you get?

KRISTA (To Wayne): Hot?	TANYA: A lot.
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WAYNE: No, no Krista, when you are talking about Tanya's profession You cannot use the H word / around me because I cannot know what Tanya does when her "friends" come to visit

KRISTA: Ohhhhhh. OK, alright. But I mean really, Wayne, you know what is going on.

WAYNE: Look I'm under a lot of pressure from the owners right now, you all have no idea-

KRISTA: Nobody cares about us -

WAYNE: You're right. And you will not use the H word about her. She's better than that. She's better.

KRISTA: Alright-

WAYNE: Everything changes today.

KRISTA: Whatever you say "King Wayne..."

Krista kind of shrugs and backs away as Sissy comes out of her room with a disco ball

SISSY NA NA Alright! Time to get all y'all in gear. We gonna TRANSFORM this place into the most beautiful living funeral you have ever seen. We'll hang the disco ball there, Everybody is going to feel beautiful at this party, you hear me? EVERYONE IS	<i>Terry heads in to get the table</i> <i>While Sissy speaks, she finds a glass jar of glitter. She sprinkles glitter on people either</i>
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GOING TO FEEL BEAUTIFUL. oh look at this if it isn't Bait Boy.	<i>when she says "transform" or "Miss Ruby will feel like she is young</i>
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Bait Boy has entered, with his step-daughter Zoe. They look totally at odds with the environment of The Hummingbird.

BAIT BOY: Hey, everybody.

*There is a moment, like, alright, are these people happy to see this guy or not? And then everyone launches into hellos, * almost * like all is forgiven, very animated and polite. Krista hangs back, half watching, half in her own head. Actors: try letting the words in "bold" be heard over the top of the mayhem. When Tanya asks Zoe her name, Zoe replies.*

<p>WAYNE Bait Boy it's good to see you look at you, all clean shaven I could mistake you for a frikken Adams and Reese lawyer a peach colored shirt? Really? What has Atlanta done to our boy? Hey Bait Boy here's a good one for you what's the difference between your mother and a washing machine? When I drop a load in my washing machine, it doesn't beg me for more. (Realizes Zoe's presence) Oh sorry, sorry how old are you? Sorry.</p>	<p>TANYA Hi there you sweet little fresh faced boy, oh my god you look 18, and your eyes are so clear! And this is Zoe well what an exotic name, sorry my hands are full of meat, here give me a hug no go on just reach around and give me a hug there you go. Miss Ruby's been asking for you, you know, I know that's why Sissy called you, that's why Sissy called you.</p>	<p>TERRY Hey there Bait Boy, looking good, looking good. I remember that time when we fixed up the stage at the Tropical Isle, we worked together, we got paid good for that job. Good to see you, good to see you. You happy to see me? Sure you're happy to see me. Bet you didn't think I'd still be around....</p>	<p>SISSY NA NA Bait Boy I like to slap you upside your head! Never call! Never write! Probably living in some mansion up in Hotlanta some "Real Housewives" shit I bet, come here I like to bend you over my knee and whip you come here I'm gonna whip you, come here I'm gonna yeah you like that don't you Bait Boy how do you always come out on top Hello Zoe you can call me Sissy Na Na, that's what everybody call me.</p>
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Things quiet down, focus shifts to Krista.

BAIT BOY: Hi Krista.

KRISTA: Hey.

A moment

TANYA: Doesn't Krista look beautiful, Bait Boy?

KRISTA: Tanya!

BAIT BOY: Actually, I wanted to mention, this may sound weird but, well, I go by Greg now.
A moment

SISSY NA NA : Greg?

BAIT BOY: Yes, Greg. For like three years now, Greg.

WAYNE: That's your given name?

BAIT BOY: Gregory actually, but Greg is fine.

TERRY (*Trying it out*): Greg.

A moment

SISSY NA NA (Maybe talking like a fake business man): Greg.

Sissy and a couple folks laugh.

BAIT BOY: Come on Sissy, please?

TANYA (Referring to the platter of sandwiches): Whatcha got there, GREG.

Sissy Na Na kind of snickers.

BAIT BOY: Oh it's a platter of finger sandwiches, I picked them up from Whole Foods they're really nice, the ham sandwiches have truffle oil on them, actually.

SISSY NA NA : "Actually"

KRISTA: Tanya bought luncheon meat and French Bread. We were going to make our own sandwiches.

BAIT BOY: Oh well put that stuff in the fridge, you can have it later, really, there's plenty.

KRISTA: Tanya makes good sandwiches.

TANYA: No, he's right I'll put this stuff away, I mean, his are already made.

Tanya packs the meat back in the bags. Sissy Na Na maybe hugs Krista from behind, very intimate, like a sister but also like a boyfriend.

BAIT BOY The place looks great.	
WAYNE Yeah, Terry just did some work on it. He fixed the...so what are you up to these days, Bait Boy –	
BAIT BOY Greg.	
WAYNE (<i>Continuing</i>) I hear you got a real job?	SISSY NA NA He looks pale / Waxy.
BAIT BOY Yeah, I mean I sell advertising for Hoyce's trade magazines.	KRISTA No, he doesn't.
WAYNE Joyce, That's her name?	SISSY NA NA Like he's blocked up. Like a nasty ole sink.

<p>BAIT BOY She owns a whole group of them –</p> <p>WAYNE Found yourself a sugar mama.</p> <p>BAIT BOY It's not like that, Wayne.</p> <p>WAYNE <i>(Kind of laughing)</i> Don't be embarrassed –</p> <p>BAIT BOY It's not like that Wayne, I work.</p> <p><i>Bait Boy's phone rings.</i></p> <p>WAYNE <i>(Still Laughing)</i> I work too...</p> <p>BAIT BOY I gotta take this...</p> <p><i>He walks away to take the call, calling back to Zoe.</i></p> <p>It's your mama.</p> <p><i>Tanya is heading upstairs with bags of luncheon meat Zoe roams around snapping pictures.</i></p> <p>WAYNE Hey Tanya I can put that in the fridge in the office.</p> <p>TANYA Oh, OK, thanks. <i>She hands it to him and keeps going.</i></p> <p>WAYNE Hey where are you going?</p>	<p><i>Sissy and Krista kind of giggle and go into Sissy Na Na's room.</i></p> <p><i>Zoe has wandered near Terry, who is still fixing the table.</i></p> <p>ZOE She's a little nervous.</p> <p>TERRY Who dat?</p> <p>ZOE My mom. She couldn't come, she's got a conference.</p> <p>TERRY Mmm-hmm.</p> <p>ZOE I'm here to make sure he comes back home.</p>
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<p>La la la la la....</p>	<p>BAIT BOY Joyce.</p> <p><i>Sissy Na Na can barely suppress her giggle.</i></p> <p>What?</p> <p><i>Krista and Sissy laugh together</i></p> <p>SISSY NA NA Nothing, nothing. It's a fine name.</p> <p>KRISTA Greg and Joyce.</p>
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<p>TANYA <i>(Forceful to herself)</i> Alright! We gotta get these decorations going!</p>	<p>BAIT BOY Zoe was hoping to talk To all of you actually, she has a project at school, for sociology, / /Where she has to interview – OK, OK.</p> <p>ZOE I got it, Greg. Greg I can explain it, let me explain it. It's for my Sociology class. I'm supposed to interview at least 3 people from the same subculture.</p> <p>SISSY NA NA Subculture</p> <p>ZOE Right.</p> <p>SISSY NA NA Meaning, you live in a "culture", and you are coming DOWN to us.</p> <p>ZOE <i>(Clear, direct, overconfident)</i> No, I'm not assuming that.</p>
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<p>TANYA Krista, figure out how to put these paper ducks together, here –</p>	<p>SISSY NA NA Hm.</p> <p>ZOE Greg has told me some amazing stories about the community here at the Hummingbird Hotel.</p> <p>SISSY NA NA Really.</p> <p>BAIT BOY Just about how we were like family, because most of us had no family.</p> <p>ZOE He showed me the article about Miss Ruby -</p> <p>BAIT BOY The one in the Gambit.-</p> <p>SISSYNA NA They spelled my name wrong.</p> <p>ZOE And he talked about her as a kind of mother figure, and it got me thinking about.... about tribes.</p> <p>SISSY NANA Like tribes in Africa? Like, we supposed <u>to</u> have bones through our noses?</p> <p>ZOE No, I mean –</p> <p>BAIT BOY It's just a school assignment. Just a little interview.</p> <p>SISSY NANA Uh Huh.</p> <p>ZOE I won't name names.</p>
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<p>TANYA <i>(Kind of under her breath)</i> Plates, Cooler, Music, Napkins...</p> <p>TANYA Bait Boy come help me with these streamers.</p> <p>TANYA Terry baby can you turn this car into a bar?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">TERRY Alright- <i>Terry goes in search of plywood.</i></p> <p>TANYA <i>(Under her breath)</i> Just use whatever you can find...</p>	<p>SISSY NA NA Or if you do, at least spell it right.</p> <p><i>Sissy NA NA's phone alarm goes off, she pulls it out of her pocket.</i></p> <p>SISSY NA NA I gotta go give Miss Ruby her meds. <i>Sissy Na Na starts to go.</i></p> <p>BAIT BOY <i>(About the interview)</i> Hey Sissy, help your boy out.</p> <p>SISSY NA NA My what?</p> <p>BAIT BOY Your boy. Help me out.</p> <p>SISSY NA NA Alright, Bait Boy but only if I can call you Bait Boy and only if you do a Jaeger Bomb with me -</p> <p>BAIT BOY Oh god -</p> <p>SISSY NANA Like old times. To preserve the ritual of our subculture</p> <p><i>Zoe looks at Bait Boy like yes, yes, please?</i></p> <p>BAIT BOY Alright, alright -</p> <p>SISSY NANA There ya go Bait Boy. Hook, line and sinker.</p> <p><i>Sissy goes into Miss Ruby's room.</i></p>
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<p>TANYA We're going to bring her out a little later, just a little while. She gets really tired, everything pverwhelms her.</p>	<p>BAIT BOY SO how is this going to work? Is Miss Ruby going to come down?</p>
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In this next section, the whole group is decorating, setting up the bar, etc. Lots of act.

<p><i>Terry continues turning the car into a bar, placing boards inside, then cups, maybe even half full liquor bottles Wayne has stashed in the office.</i></p> <p>ZOE (To Krista) Oh you don't live here anymore? Interesting.</p> <p><i>Zoe slips her ipad out of her purse. –</i></p> <p>WAYNE (Singing, overlapping Zoe.) And I won't stop trying till I create a disturbance in your mind....</p> <p><i>Zoe presses a button on her ipad and we hear a "bing"</i></p>	<p><i>Sissy comes out of Miss Ruby's room around here, and starts to help with decorating.</i></p> <p>BAIT BOY Hey Krista what's going on with you? Are you still dancing at -</p> <p>KRISTA No, no I'm working as a paralegal assistant.</p> <p>BAIT BOY Oh really where?</p> <p>KRISTA It's downtown. I take the bus over - over from the Westbank.</p> <p>BAIT BOY Oh wait - you don't live here?</p> <p>KRISTA No, I live with my sister. I'm saving money for a real place.</p> <p><i>(To Zoe.)</i> No. Really?</p> <p><i>Tanya begins to shift to helping Bait Boy with the streamers</i></p>
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<p>ZOE <i>(To Krista)</i> OK, can you name three reasons why Miss Ruby is important to you?</p>	<p>KRISTA Wait are you...are you recording this? You can't JUST RECORD PEOPLE BAIT BOY WHAT'S WRONG WITH HER.</p>
<p>ZOE Yes, I –</p>	<p>BAIT BOY Zoe turn it off—</p>
<p>ZOE I just—</p>	<p>KRISTA I mean, you're gonna make a terrible journalist you little /</p>
<p>WAYNE <i>(Sings then speaks)</i> Create a disturbance in you –</p>	<p>TANYA Krista-Zoe, go chat up Wayne. Wayne will you talk to this nice young lady?</p>
<p><i>(Responding to TANYA)</i> Sure, why not...</p>	<p>BAIT BOY <i>(Going close to Zoe)</i> You gotta ask, OK sweetie? Ask before you press record, and then get their approval on tape –</p>
<p>ZOE <i>(Really hard on herself, forceful, but half under her breath)</i> Oh, right, I knew that...</p>	<p>Zoe—</p>
<p>WAYNE <i>(To Zoe)</i> Hey hey sweetie, go easy – Life's too short. Now get Uncle Wayne a beer and let's have a chat don't worry Bait Boy I got this, Terry the keg is cold right?</p>	<p>BAIT BOY And how's the whole gang? Is Wolf still working the door at / The Goldmine?</p>
<p>TERRY Cold as my Ex-wife.</p>	<p>KRISTA Yea but just weekends, now. He actually bought a house in the upper 9—</p>
<p><i>Wayne and Terry laugh, Zoe goes to the key and gets Wayne a beer.</i></p>	<p>BAIT BOY Wolf? A / house?</p>

<p>TANYA (Throwing Bait Boy some more streamers.) Hey Bait Boy, catch -</p> <p>(And then a second color) - and this is the accent color.</p> <p>Just alternate them, or twist them or something. Oh look how nice it is already looking.</p> <p><i>Zoe brings the beer to Wayne.</i></p> <p>WAYNE Thank you sweetie. Now what is this, a school project?</p> <p>ZOE It's an honors paper, about subcultures.</p> <p>WAYNE Alrighty, and how can I help you?</p>	<p>KRISTA Well like a half house or something, with his cousin, it needs a lot of work.</p> <p>BAIT BOY That's crazy—</p> <p><i>Krista smiles. Bait Boy pulls Krista aside, or speaks this next part super low.</i></p> <p>BAIT BOY Hey, I didn't tell Zoe about us.</p> <p>KRISTA Oh...</p> <p>BAIT BOY I mean, she's just a kid. And you know, It's like I come back here, and I'm like, did I really live here? Did all those things really happen?</p> <p>KRISTA They happened</p> <p>BAIT BOY <i>(to Tanya)</i> You want both? <i>(then to Krista)</i></p> <p>Yeah but look at us. We're better now. We're both doing so good.</p> <p><i>Krista's face falls hard and fast because actually things are nowhere near alright for her. And Bait Boy sees this, but pretends he does not see it.</i></p>
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Zoe is getting her ipad ready.

ZOE

Well, do you mind if I record this?

WAYNE

Yes, I mind.

ZOE

Thanks I - oh.

WAYNE

I said I mind.

ZOE

It's just for a school project, I mean it won't /
go out of the school

WAYNE

I SAID I MIND. Listen. With your two ears.
Like they did in the old days.

*Maybe Zoe puts away her Ipad, digs around
in her purse, finds a notepad and a pen. Or
maybe Wayne has to get her a pen*

ZOE

So, how long have you been manager of The
Hummingbird?

WAYNE

15 years give or take.

ZOE

And so, how did you get this job?
A moment.

WAYNES

This job? Oh baby, that's a really long story,
I don't know...

Tanya notices the abandoned ducks.

TANYA: Krista! You didn't finish the ducks!

KRISTA: Oh, yeah, I didn't.

TANYA (Shaking her head): Krista....

ZOE: Why ducks?

TANYA: In the old days, Miss Ruby had a duck pond, around the edge of the stage –
SISSY NA NA: She would fill it with water - like a little river all the way around the stage. And she would put live baby ducks in there, and they would swim around -

ZOE: During the / show?

SISSY NA NA: During the show, yes -

BAIT BOY: Did anyone tape her lectures?

SISSY NA NA: Oh lord / the lectures!	ZOE: Like lectures at school?
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TANYA: They were once a month on Sundays, we would all gather in the club –

TERRY: A church for the churchless -

KRISTA : On life.

SISSY NA NA: And in the beginning there was -

ALL:Sex!

They all kind of laugh, as they do -

ZOE: And no one taped them?

SISSY NA NA: No, nobody taped them and so they are gone forever and nobody will ever know.

Krista moves to comfort Sissy.

TANYA: NO ONE TALKS about her getting shut down, you hear? She doesn't remember, and she doesn't NEED to remember. that woman has experienced enough pain, she does not need one drop of pain at her own funeral.

ZOE: What kind of pain did she experience in her life?

TANYA : A lot of it.

ZOE: Can you give me an example?

TANYA: An example isn't the whole picture.

ZOE: Well I know but, I mean, of course this project is from my perspective and I have to acknowledge that -

TANYA: How long are you here?

ZOE: For the afternoon.

Tanya and Sissy NA NA crack up laughing.

TANYA: The Afternoon.	SISSY NA NA: She gonna tell our story by handing out for THE AFTERNOON.
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ZOE: Guys. I live in Atlanta. I'm in high school.

Sissy Na Na gets real serious. At the asterisk, Bait Boy tries to interject, "Hey...Sissy".

SISSY NA NA: When I was in high school, when I was in JUNIOR high my stepdad kicked me out when I got caught wearing my sister's bra and panties. I got my clavicle broken HERE and then HERE. You wanna know how it got broke? No you don't want to know how it got broke. That was also the year my Uncle who was an alcoholic moved in with us, so I slept on the couch while he tried to detox in my room but decided to slit his wrists instead. And he didn't die, no he didn't die, he just roamed around our house with those nasty bandages around his wrists for a month. And then my sister, the smart one - takes a bad mix of pills at a house party and gets herself hit by a car trying to walk home and winds up in a wheelchair, and she basically knows who we are now, butthat's about all she knows. All that when I'm in Junior High. JUNIOR High. And Katrina didn't hit till I was grown

ZOE: Alright.

Bait Boy puts a hand on Zoe's shoulder.

SISSY NA NA: You can't get the whole picture. It's not yours to get.

TANYA: She's just trying to do her best, do good in school, right baby?

Everyone kind of looks at Zoe.

ZOE (Shaking it off): Well, why is this place called The Hummingbird?

SISSY NA NA (Almost like she forgot) : The Hummingbird?

Zoe points to the sign.

BAIT BOY: Oh, yeah well I guess...are there a lot of Hummingbirds in New Orleans?

WAYNE: I got a pamphlet, a pamphlet from the'40s, hold on.

Wayne gets up and goes into the office.

KRISTA: It sounds nice. A little bird breathing, pressing out into the sticks and mud and thread and old gum wrappers it used to make its nest. Keeping itself warm, maybe keeping an egg warm....

TANYA: Hummingbirds eat sugar water....they like it dyed red.

Wayne hands Zoe a crumbling pamphlet

WAYNE: "Luxury accommodations in the City that Care Forgot."

ZOE (Looking at the hotel): This whole thing used to be painted bright pink.

Does everybody look around for half a second? Meaning for a moment they see their lot in life.

<p>BAIT BOY <i>(Re: The streamers)</i> So what do you think, Tanya are we good?</p> <p>TANYA Gorgeous, now. I've got to get the tablecloths. And oh right the ducks, Krista, / come on now.</p> <p>KRISTA Yeah, yeah, yeah...</p> <p>TANYA She's gonna love it when she sees them, she's gonna light up.</p>	<p>WAYNE It's gonna be a real nice day for Miss Ruby.</p> <p>ZOE How Long have you known her?</p> <p>WAYNE Oh god, since the beginning of time.</p> <p>ZOE Has she lived here long?</p> <p>WAYNE She's lived here 25 years.</p>	<p><i>Sissy digs through the bags taking out brightly colored dollar store tablecloths. She sings and shakes booty as she works.</i></p> <p>SISSY NANA <i>(To Tanya)</i> I'll do the tablecloths they're in this bag right?</p>	
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<p>BAIT BOY What about Cokes?</p> <p>TANYA We could use some. Actually, could you pick some up?</p> <p>KRISTA And Cheetos. I ate all the Cheetos.</p> <p>TANYA Krista, I love you but you don't make it easy.</p> <p>TANYA <i>(Responding to Sissy)</i> Yes, Yes of course, I got it, I got everything...</p>	<p>ZOE No way.</p> <p>WAYNE <i>(To Sissy re: the song lyrics)</i> It's BLAME not BANG</p> <p><i>(Back to Zoe)</i> It was almost fashionable, The Hummingbird, When she moved in.</p> <p>WAYNE Your daddy let's you drink beer?</p>	<p>SISSY NA NA Tanya you picked up the Chanel? The Chanel No. 5 (She loves her Chanel.)</p>	
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<p>BAIT BOY You can have ONE because you are 16 and in New Orleans.</p>	<p>ZOE He's not my daddy.</p> <p>WAYNE Well Then.</p> <p>ZOE Because I am 16 and I am at the HUMMINGBIRD.</p> <p>WAYNE There ya go Dawlin. Have a beer, it's jazz fest.</p>		
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As Tanya does this next speech, the group goes their separate ways - Sissy Na Na and Krista go into Sissy Na Na's room, Terry wanders down the street, who knows why, Greg is trying to get Zoe to leave.

TANYA: That's right baby you are at the HUMMING BIRD and we may be a little rougharound the edges but if there is one thing we know how to do, it is throw down a party. That's right it's Jazz Fest and our dear friend is sunsetting and needs to be celebrated. Because people don't celebrate enough in this life - Celebrate, you hear me?

(She points to Krista and then Wayne)

'Cause we had to go down a long strange road to be who we are, a road filled with construction and roadkill and booby traps and scam artists and bad decisions masquerading as good decisions and bad luck masquerading as good luck and bad friends masquerading as good friends and treachery lurking around every corner, and you just stay on the road -Looking for an exit, and when you realize there is no exit you get out and start walking -You start walking and you keep walking, along the edge of the highway, with no idea of where you're going or where you belong, Until one morning the sun rises and you find yourself here. And there is no one else like us in the whole world.

A moment, Tanya is winded, this rant has taken her someplace she did not expect Everyone is looking at her.

TANYA : Yes we are.

Act Two

Several hours later, maybe 3:30 or 4pm. The party is in full swing.

There are 7-10 other new people, guests at the funeral, who might include hipster artists, burlesque dancers who used to work for Miss Ruby, Miss Ruby's old next door neighbors before she moved to the Hummingbird (now in their 60's), etc. If these people are present, it should be a mix of Caucasian, African American and Hispanic guests. Most of them sing with

the group, although at least one pocket of people is just smoking and having a conversation as the others sing. During the song some people come up to the keg and get a beer, singing the whole time.

	<p>SISSY NANA Alright everybody, everybody can I have your attention please can have your - IF YOU CAN HEAR ME SAY YEAH!</p> <p><i>Some people say yeah.</i></p> <p>IF YOU CAN HEAR ME SAY YEAH!</p> <p><i>More people say yeah</i></p> <p>IF YOU CAN HEAR ME SAY SISSY NA NA FOR PRESIDENT!</p> <p><i>Pretty much everyone says Sissy Na Na for President and she has everyone's attention.</i></p> <p>SISSY NANA Hello and welcome to the living funeral for the one and only Miss Ruby!</p> <p><i>There are hoots and hollers at different points throughout her next speech.</i></p> <p>We'd like to thank our host, Mr. Wayne Murphy -</p> <p><i>Cheers.</i></p> <p>For opening the doors of his kingdom for this celebration -</p> <p><i>Wayne bows a flamboyant bow, perhaps a shout or two of "All Hail!" or "King Wayne!"</i></p> <p>And to the esteemed Miss Tanya, for organizing private visits and the food...</p> <p><i>A couple of hoots and hollers, as Tanya waves.</i></p> <p>We are gathered here today to honor the angel</p>
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who looks upon you all with an utterly non judgmental eye -- the drunks, the addicts, the ex-addicts -

A few cheers and snaps.

the hos, the super hos, the ex cons, the soon to be cons, the bouncers, the strippers, the street musicians, the poets, the activists, - whoop whoop! Those who are forgotten and the general down and out. Miss Ruby welcomes you all.

Cheers.

If you need to repent, she will show you how. If you need a good spanking, well she can take care of that too.

And this day has ALSO brought back some of our most infamous scoundrels. Bait Boy, Bait Boy, Bait Boy...

Bait Boy kind of shakes his head as everyone chants and cheers.

SISSY NA NA
You promised!

BAIT BOY
Did you do the interview yet?

SISSY NANA
Not yet but I will, don't worry. Come on over here.

Sissy Na Na pours two glasses of Guinness and two shots of whiskey for her and Bait Boy.

Bait Boy, seems you're reformed now, and in the spirit of Miss Ruby we forgive you.

BAIT BOY
Come on now Sissy I wasn't -

SISSY NA NA
We forgive you for EVERYTHING, and we are happy to know that you have not

<p><i>Zoe goes off into a corner, or sits in a chair, to type notes into her Ipad.</i></p> <p><i>During this next page of dialogue, Tanya makes her way to a photo album that sits near a guest book sign in. So does Terry. Tanya looks through the photo album. So does Terry.</i></p> <p>TANYA <i>(Pointing to the album)</i> Terry is that you?</p> <p><i>We can't see it, but it is like a younger Terry in a glittery vest and hot pants.</i></p>	<p>abandoned us, and that now, we can reach out to YOU now, when we are in need.</p> <p><i>Is Bait Boy maybe a little startled by this prospect?</i></p> <p>BAIT BOY Of course, anytime, of course.</p> <p>SISSY NANA A Jaeger Bomb for our favorite Prodigal Son, Bait Boy!</p> <p><i>Sissy and Bait Boy do the Jaeger Bombs. Lots of cheering, then dispersing into different party convo groups. .</i></p> <p>BAIT BOY Oh Sissy. You looking real good, you know?</p> <p>SISSY NA NA I know.</p> <p>BAIT BOY It's all coming back to me. You taking my hand, sneaking me out the back door of the bar and into the / streets.</p> <p>SISSY NA NA Oh no, let's not / NO -</p> <p>BAIT BOY Down past Poland to that house on the batture. To the party in the house with all those closets.</p> <p>SISSY NA NA Yes well I do know my way around...</p> <p>BAIT BOY <i>(Looking into Sissy's eyes)</i> There it is. Right there. That's the Sissy I know.</p> <p><i>Maybe Bait Boy tries to look in Sissy's eyes,</i></p>
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<p>TERRY It is. Miss Ruby put me in one of her routines once.</p> <p>TANYA What on earth are you wearing!</p> <p>TERRY Anything for that woman, anything.</p> <p><i>They look at the photo album. Eventually Terry makes his way towards Wayne and Tanya makes her way to the sandwich table.</i></p> <p><i>Krista has joined Zoe, maybe looking over her shoulder for a second to see what she is typing?</i></p> <p>KRISTA So Bait Boy never mentioned me to you?</p> <p>ZOE Well, I mean, he talked about ALL of you.</p> <p>KRISTA Right</p> <p><i>Zoe types onto her iPad. A burst of laughter from Francis with another group of guests, and maybe we hear the following line sung, "What's her name/ Can't tell you - NOOOO."</i></p>	<p><i>or touch her face, and Sissy is trying to avoid it, even though somewhere, for some fucked up reason that drives her crazy, she does want to look into his eyes.</i></p> <p>BAIT BOY Hey, hey</p> <p><i>And maybe Bait Boy and Sissy are embracing, looking at each other.</i></p> <p>BAIT BOY Come on Sissy. Take me somewhere. Where can we go? Just for a little while...</p> <p><i>Sissy breaks whatever spell was starting to happen.</i></p> <p>SISSY NANA You a tourist. Always have been-</p> <p>BAITBOY Na, na you're special to me, / you know that Sissy.</p> <p>SISSY NA NA I'm TIRED of your kind. Step back. I said step back.</p> <p><i>Bait Boy steps back and Sissy shakes her head and goes about her business. Bait Boy is kind of left in the cold, and turns to talk to some party guests.</i></p> <p><i>Wayne is talking to party guests and eventually Terry.</i></p>
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<p>SISSY NA NA Tanya.</p> <p>SISSY NA NA TANYA!</p> <p>TANYA</p>	<p>WAYNE So look, the restraint was right in that room right there –see that boarded up window? There was food, cocktails, dancing...</p> <p>TERRY My grandma used to work there, she worked the bathroom.</p> <p>PARTY GUEST ONE You mean like cleaning the bathroom?</p> <p>PARTY GUEST TWO It was that fancy?</p> <p>WAYNE It was that fancy. And all it needs is a little TLC.</p> <p>TERRY Well –</p> <p>WAYNE I'm serious.</p> <p>TERRY What you need is some Capitol.</p> <p>WAYNE Ah come on, Whatever happened to elbow grease?</p> <p>TERRY Baby I think the Chinese bought it all up last year!</p> <p><i>Wayne and Terry crack up.</i></p> <p>WAYNE Maybe I should write the Chinese!</p> <p><i>They laugh.</i></p>
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What?

SISSY NA NA

She wants to taste a praline.

Zoe kind of squeals and yelps with laughter.

ZOE

No!

TANYA

Oh, sweet thing...

KRISTA

Yes.

Tanya goes to the table, wraps a piece of praline in a napkin.

Right around here the wobble line dance starts up. Tanya goes to the stairs and meets Sissy halfway or maybe hands it up.

TANYA

Just a little piece now OK? / That will dissolve in her mouth.

SISSY NA NA

I know, Tanya, I KNOW.

Sissy NA NA brings the praline into Miss Ruby's room.

Tanya walks back to the sandwich table and takes just a liiiiiittle bite of one of Bait Boy's sandwiches.

WAYNE

Really though, Terry come on, come see.

TERRY

Nah, last time you took me in there I got an asthma attack.

TANYA

Bait Boy these sandwiches taste like something crawled under a house and died.

BAIT BOY

All fancy things taste that way! That's how rich people like it!

FRANCIS

Hey Wayne, I bet it's Bait Boy's wife that's clearing the lot across the street.

- He and Tanya kind of dance away from the wobble line. Sound from the Wobbly line fades.

Bait Boy and Tanya couple dance.

Even Wayne joins the Wobble.

ZOE

(Kind of calling out; but no one really hears her)

They're not married!

(To Krista)

They're not married.

KRISTA

They're not?

ZOE

No, I don't know why everybody keeps thinking that.

KRISTA

He must really love her, huh?

ZOE

I think

ZOE

(Still half typing)

Greg and I are really close.

KRISTA

Yeah?

ZOE

Oh ya, I talk to him way more than I talk to my mom.

KRISTA

Does he tell you how pretty you are?

ZOE

What? No! Greg's just really supportive.

Krista's eye are like "right"

TANYA

So how are you Bait Boy, are you happy?

BAIT BOY

Ah, Happiness is overrated.

TANYA

But are you happy?

Bait Boy spins Tanya hard. She laughs.

Francis

Is messing up the wobble.

BAIT BOY

Frannie, a line dance is about staying IN
LINE.

TANYA

(Still with Bait Boy)

We must look like something somebody
pulled out of the trash.

BAIT BOY

Nah, Nah.

TANYA

A pile of rubbish.

BAIT BOY

Come on no,
Tanya laughs.

TANYA

You know when Miss Ruby dies, I'll be the
old one.

BAIT BOY

Ahh...come on-

TANYA

It's true!

I didn't like him at first, but now I really trust
Greg.

KRISTA

That's good, sweetie. You're a lucky girl.

They watch the wobble for a bit.

KRISTA

(To Zoe, watching the wobble.)

Look at those idiots.

BAIT BOY

You'll be the glamour queen, watching over us all!

Bait Boy dips Tanya

TANYA

Bait Boy you sure know how to play a girl...

Tanya and Bait Boy join the wobble. Terry wobbles towards Zoe.

The Wobble is entering it's final moments. People are cheering. The Wobble ends and people clap. Francis emerges from the crowd

Tanya has finished talking to a party guest and now she surveys the party, trying to see what needs to happen next

TANYA

Alright, let's see...

ZOE

How does this happen?

KRISTA

You mean this like - THIS?

She indicates the party.

ZOE

YES.

KRISTA

Oh god....

ZOE

Come on.

KRISTA

It's like...look...the first time I ever saw Tanya. She was sitting on the curb at the corner of Bourbon and Toulouse, sitting there in the middle of all the craziness.

People passing her by thinking she's just another drunk. Put my hand on the top of her head and said "what's wrong, sweetie". And she looks up and says "My mother died today, and I haven't spoken to her in 9 years." Takes my hand - I remember her hand was so cold. And that's how I started knowing Tanya. And I've been knowing her for...

Krista adds up on her fingers.

12 years now.

<p>TANYA Sissy you think we should –</p> <p>SISSY Yeah, I'll start gathering some chairs.</p>	<p><i>Zoe is taking notes on this, and consulting a list of questions on her iPhone.</i></p> <p>I don't know what else to say about it...</p> <p>ZOE <i>[Reading from her ipad)</i> So would you call it a reciprocal relationship of care that binds you together?</p> <p>KRISTA I'm sorry?</p> <p>ZOE What keeps you guys together?</p> <p>KRISTA Who knows. Bad luck. Bad Tempers. No Bullshit No Pretending.</p> <p>KRISTA Let me see that...</p> <p><i>Krista kind of looks over Zoe's shoulder at Zoe's typing</i></p> <p>KRISTA Ah, I don't even know how to type.</p> <p><i>Zoe keeps typing.</i></p> <p>Whoa, you're fast.</p> <p>ZOE OK so why did you move out of the Hummingbird.</p> <p>KRISTA Next question.</p> <p>ZOE Come on, I don't care...</p> <p>KRISTA Wayne kicked me out because I was FOUR WEEKS LATE ON RENT / and so I had to</p>
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<p>TANYA Hey you two come on, come on you two today is not the day for this, make nice MAKE NICE! <i>Tanya starts helping Sissy drag chairs into a half circle.</i></p> <p><i>Bait Boy is more focused on Krista now, maybe Tanya has gone to get a drink Terry and Francis are hanging out together somewhere.</i></p> <p>BAIT BOY Yeah, Krista if you need help -</p> <p>BAIT BOY Zoe-</p> <p>Zoe-</p>	<p>go, RIGHT WAYNE?</p> <p>WAYNE It was Eight Weeks, EIGHT WEEKS. You don't know the kind of pressure I'm under you don't KNOW what it takes to hold this place together —</p> <p><i>Wayne waves her off, getting a beer</i></p> <p>ZOE Oh but wait., wait are you....Oh god are you -</p> <p>KRISTA What?</p> <p>ZOE Are you homeless?</p> <p>KRISTA No. What? No. I live with my sister, I'm putting money away, I babysit her kids -</p> <p>ZOE Because if you need help –</p> <p>KRISTA I'm FINE.</p> <p>ZOE -and my mom, she worked with this life coach / when she was starting her business, and everything just took off!</p> <p>KRISTA Life Coach Alright, so listen OK - it's nice that you're here Zoe, but we don't need your help if there is one thing this group of people KNOWS how to DO it is HELP THEMSELVES</p>
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<p>BAIT BOY Krista-</p> <p>TERRY <i>(To Krista, trying to pull her away)</i> Babydoll, stop it, he's not worth it.</p> <p>TANYA <i>(To Zoe.)</i> Sweetness, come over here, / forget about them, come here.</p> <p>WAYNE Come on, come on, help Uncle Wayne get some ice from the machine. Come on.</p> <p>ZOE I didn't mean to upset her.</p> <p>WAYNE No, no... <i>Zoe and Wayne walk around the comer</i></p>	<p>ZOE No no no I was just-</p> <p><i>Bait Boy is trying to pull Krista away.</i></p> <p>Oh except for maybe ONE of us who gets some magic fairy dust — magic JOYCE dust sprinkled on them and POOF new life, new house, new HEART even a HEART OF GOLD which is NOT the heart I KNEW —</p> <p>NO TERRY NO-</p> <p>We were together for Six Years, Zoe, SIX YEARS, on and off, two years we spent right there in room 107. Did he tell you that? Did you tell her that Bait Boy?</p> <p>ZOE <i>(To Bait Boy.)</i> GREG.</p> <p>KRISTA See? Yes, I KNOW him, YOU don't . <i>Bait Boy is putting his arms around Krista.</i></p> <p>I KNOW YOU SHE DOESN'T KNOW YOU, <i>(Taking Krista in his arms)</i></p> <p>BAIT BOY She's a kid -</p> <p>KRISTA I know, it's me, it's me <i>Bait Boy is cradling Krista.</i></p>
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TANYA

OK here we go! I need everyone who considers themselves a lady come here to the center.

SISSY NA NA

(Aside to Tanya)

They were like poison.

TANYA

Come on let's go! Krista!

TANYA

Zoe, get over here, you got lady parts, don't you?

TANYA

KRISTA!

TANYA

Come over here and sing with us.

SISSY Na Na has found a trash can or something to beat on. The women settle into a half circle around Sissy. Wayne walks away from the party, looking towards the Trader Joe's. Francis joins Wayne.

FRANCIS

Ladies and Gentlemen, the of the world...

BAIT BOY

(To Krista)

Hey...hey, stupid girl, look at me.

KRISTA

(He used to call her that affectionately)

Don't call me that, /. It makes me sad.

BAIT BOY

Look at you. You're doing so good-/ and now you're working at a law firm.

KRISTA

I am not, I am not doing good, and neither are you.

(To Tanya)

What!

(Still looking at Bait Boy)

I know you Bait Boy. Me.

WAYNE

We gotta do something.

FRANCIS

I head they're building a spa INSIDE the store.

WAYNE

(Declares like king)

The day a spa opens on Airline Highway I will dance naked through the streets!

FRANCIS

(Laughing)

Pick up your almonds, your Lackawawa Kale, waltz over to your hot stone massage.

Bait Boy joins Wayne and Francis. Terry is nearby or joins them.

BAIT BOY

(Re: The thing with Krista)

So-intense...

WAYNE

(Handing Bait Boy a beer)

Here.

FRANCIS

(To Bait Boy)

Whaddaya think Bait Boy? Trader Ho's coming to town?

WAYNE kind of snorts

BAIT BOY

We got those in Atlanta. They're good. Healthy.

TERRY

They gonna let me walk up in there?

BAIT BOY

It's a free country, Terry.

TERRY

Hmm.

Does Terry kind of walk in a circle with his hands up?

WAYNE

Hey Bait Boy, I've got a business proposition for you.

BAIT BOY

Great.

FRANCIS

(To Bait Boy)

So does Joyce have a really big house or whatever?

WAYNE

Francis / Wait –

BAIT BOY

Yeah, it's nice. She works hard.

FRANCIS

Garage door openers. An alarm system with a code. A lawn.

Bait Boy kind of shrugs, like "yeah" Maybe Francis imitates Joyce.

FRANCIS

"Don't forget to mow the lawn"

TERRY

Always knew you were sniffing that out –

BAIT BOY

It's not bad man, I need structure –

FRANCIS

You sprung from this ground right here, we don't bury all our dirty stuff under / the pavement —

BAIT BOY

It's all good for me.

In the circle of women, Sissy begins drumming - a steady beat

FRANCIS

Can't do it, can't even try. The ground busts right up -

BAIT BOY

This is me. This is who I am.
- through the sidewalks, / through the parking lots, the streets.

BAIT BOY

Shut ~~the fuck~~ up Francis I mean where are you living now?

FRANCIS

I'm living.

BAIT BOY

But where are you living?

Francis reaches his arms out to the sides.

FRANCIS I'm free.

Zoe writes.

Tanya eventually drifts near her and watches the party. These next tiny lines are non-dominant.

SISSY NA NA *(To Krista)*

You listen here. He had nothing for you then, and he's got / nothing for you now.

KRISTA

We're older now, we can talk, we can be friends.

Krista tries to get away, Sissy holds her close.

SISSY NANA

Krista look at me, LOOK.

KRISTA

What

SISSY NA NA

There is a woman in there that you are afraid to look at. Bait Boy will not help you find that woman.

<p>ZOE Who's that?</p> <p><i>She points to a party guest</i></p> <p>TANYA Oh, hold on...</p> <p><i>Tanya goes to get the photo album she was looking at earlier. She brings it over to Zoe. She points to the person Zoe was asking about, and points to a picture of the person in the album, telling a little story about them as Zoe takes notes. Around here, Francis cajoles one woman, maybe even two, to slow dance with him.</i></p>	<p>KRISTA She's not there.</p> <p>SISSY NANA You've never looked.</p> <p>KRISTA My Daddy told me people don't change.</p> <p>SISSY NANA Yeah and what was your Daddy doing to you when he told you that?</p> <p><i>A moment</i> Well?</p> <p>KRISTA You suck, Sissy.</p> <p><i>Krista runs towards Bait Boy.</i></p> <p>SISSY NA NA Krista I am trying to give you a gift here KRISTA can't you just take it? Just TAKE IT, IT'S RIGHT HERE.</p> <p>KRISTA <i>(Boisterous, almost like a frat boy)</i> BAIT BOI! You WERE Legendary.</p> <p>BAIT BOY Thank you, baby!</p> <p>KRISTA You would work the crowd at Cat's straight through till morning! Doing handstands and shit, bringing girls up on stage to Monkey on a Stick.</p> <p>BAIT BOY I originated that, bringing girls up on stage to dance -</p> <p>FRANCIS Men have been bringing girls up on stage to dance since the beginning of time.</p>
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<p>TANYA <i>(Watching Zoe type)</i> So this is for some blog?</p> <p>ZOE No, it's a paper. More like a portrait, actually.</p> <p>TANYA A portrait of us?</p> <p>ZOE Yes.</p> <p>TANYA Well, what do you see when you look at me?</p> <p><i>Zoe reaches out and moves Tanya's hand. Maybe she keeps holding it?</i></p> <p>ZOE A woman who.... Has seen a lot of things, and come to terms with them. Maybe some sadness?</p> <p><i>Tanya is like "well"</i></p> <p>ZOE But a lot of caring, like here, I see that here</p> <p><i>Zoe indicates Tanya's cheekbones.</i></p>	<p>KRISTA And then you started asking me up there to dance. I was 18 years old.</p> <p>BAIT BOY You were. And you could dance.</p> <p>FRANCIS Everybody dance...</p> <p><i>Krista, Bait Boy, Francis and one party guest dance for a couple minutes. It is not wild - it is like silly couples dancing, switching partners that sort of thing. It is possible they get Wayne involved for a moment Around here, the dancing slips up into smaller party groups - Wayne takes someone into the office and stands at the door, showing them the pamphlet from the Hummingbird Hotel</i></p> <p><i>Maybe Sissy takes Terry and another guest up to the balcony near the open door of her room? To share some special treat she has in there - pot cookies? Some old photos of Miss Ruby?</i></p>
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And....smart. I think you're smart.

TANYA

Well you know I barely went to college.

ZOE

Did you dance for Miss Ruby?

TANYA

Oh no. Baby that was not my area of expertise.

ZOE

Well....where do you work?

Possible party burst here? Does Sissy come out of her room with a new fabulous headdress?

TANYA

Baby, all these questions! Ya gotta soak it in.

ZOE

But don't you think, if you just soak it in all the time, you wind up...

TANYA

Lost, like

ZOE

No, I didn't mean-

TANYA

Well, that's the gamble. You can repress everything and be miserable one way, or you can release yourself into the primal moment, and be miserable in another.

ZOE

But wait That's not a gamble. Because you're miserable both ways.

Tanya reaches out and puts her hand over Zoe's head as though she is sprinkling magic fairy dust on Zoe's head.

Maybe someone is having a little party meltdown because she just saw her ex-boyfriend and he had a hickey on his neck and so her friend takes her over to the ice machine to console her.

TANYA
So pretty.

ZOE
Are you OK?

TANYA
Yeah, sure. I'm just thinking about
somebody else.

*Right around here, Wayne changes the music
to something livelier - something in the world
of Rebirth Brass Band or maybe The Meters.
Or maybe the party guests sing along to the
call-and-response beginning of "Oom Poo Pa
Doo"? (If they do, the following lines should
come in the clear between sung lines.)*

ZOE
(Kind of retreating to junior high)
You know I hate it when you call me that!

ZOE
I think this is the realest place I've ever been.

*Problem Room Dude is filling multiple cups
with beer from the keg.*

SISSY NANA
Hey, hey, who are you? You know Miss
Ruby?

PROBLEM ROOM DUDE
Uhhhhh....

SISSY NANA
That's what I thought, you have no idea
what's going on can you please, Wayne -

PR Dude throws a beer at Sissy Na Na.

CAN'T ANYBODY SEE WE ARE TRYING
TO TAKE CARE OF A COMMUNITY HERE!

Maybe like, some cheers and dancing? Like

BAIT BOY
So, what do you think about all this, kid?

WAYNE
Hey, private party, private party come on...

people don't quite get what Sissy is saying.

Where's Tanya? We gotta do this now!

Sissy Na Na makes her way to Tanya's room.

Sissy and Tanya come out of Tanya's room.

SISSY NANA

Come on-

TANYA

Wayne!

We're going to bring her down are you ready?

ZOE

I wanna live at the Hummingbird Hotel!
Cheers and dancing.

WAYNE

Yeah you rite! I know every inch of this place, every duct taped pipe, every champagne stained wall...

BAIT BOY

Yeah, right, champagne..

FRANCIS

This is your domain!

WAYNE

This is my kingdom!

BAIT BOY

King Wayne!

Zoe grabs a party hat that someone is wearingm throws it to Wayne, who puts it on.

WAYNE

(Suddenly big and Shakespearian)

This is where we live! No one can take it from us! No one can drive us out!

Cheering from the crowd. Wayne looks out over his kingdom, as thought it is a vast estate that goes on for miles.)

PARTY GUESTS, FRANCIS, ZOE AND

BAIT BOY:

King Wayne,

King Wayne,

King Wayne,

WAYNE

We will come together! We will restore this place to it's former glory! I will lead you!

WAYNE

What? OK, Alright.

<p>Wayne-NOW.</p> <p><i>Francis is passing out the paper ducks.</i></p>	<p><i>Kind of a sigh. He takes off his crown. Ah, my kingdom...</i></p> <p><i>Wayne and Terry head upstairs.</i></p>
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TANYA (*Switching into announcement mode*): Alright, everyone, we're going to bring her down, let's settle down, OK are you all ready up there? OK Here we go!

The door to Miss RuBy's room opens, and Sissy and Wayne back out of the room carrying some kind of bed At the moment her eyes are closed, she might as well be a corpse. She is old, very old, but her long hair tied up, maybe with a flower in her hair, or maybe under a silky turban. She is wearing makeup - generous amounts of rouge and eyeshadow - and she has a sparkly pink flower tucked behind one ear. Sissy and Wayne struggle to get the cot down the walkway and then to the stairs. They begin to descend the stairs. Everyone is silent, and kind of tense because of the difficulty of this maneuver.

FRANCIS (*Softly, to Krista?*): Oh good, they put her makeup on.

TANYA: (*Softly*)*She looks wonderful, wonderful.*

*Sissy or Wayne stumbles, maybe descending a few stairs just a little quicker.
The crowd gasps.*

TANYA

Oh my/ ~~Lord~~

KRISTA

Is she OK?

FRANCIS

Watch it, watch it.

WAYNE: We got it, we got it.

Miss Ruby's eyes pop open. They continue, with the entire audience breathing a bit of a sigh of relief when they get to the ground level. They position Miss Ruby near the food. When she is set, Tanya, Krista, Bait Boy, Terry, Wayne and Sissy Na Na gather close, and the other party guests move in just a little.

TANYA: Hey Miss Ruby.

MISS RUBY: Hey, my beautiful girl.

KRISTA: Hi Ru Ru.

Miss Ruby turns her head and looks at Krista.

MISS RUBY: Oh my heavens Sharon is that you?

Everyone kind of looks at Krista.

KRISTA: No, no Miss Ruby that's my mama. She passed away remember? It's Krista, Sharon's daughter.

MISS RUBY: Oh of course, of course. I don't know what happened to my head I think I must have hung it on the costume rack back at the club.

SISSY NA NA It's OK Miss Ruby...

Miss Ruby looks around.

MISS RUBY: My goodness who are all these people?

TANYA: We gathered everyone together for your funeral.

MISS RUBY: For my what?

SISSY NANA: For your funeral remember?

MISS RUBY: Am I dead?

SISSY NA NA: No, NO Miss Ruby remember? You asked us to have your funeral before you died, so you could hear all the nice things that people had to say about you.

MISS RUBY: I said that?

SISSY NA NA: You did Miss Ruby.

MISS RUBY: But I'm not going to die.

FRANCIS (To no one and everyone): See? She's immortal, I'm / telling you -

TANYA: That's my girl -

MISS RUBY: You know what I always say - the show must go on! And if you don't have a job you might as well put on a show. Look at this, they keep up this place so nice don't they? I just love the pink walls.

WAYNE: Aren't they pretty Miss Ruby?

MISS RUBY: Wayne Patrick Murphy is that you?

WAYNE: It's me Miss Ruby.

MISS RUBY: But you got fat!

WAYNE: I drank a lot of beer Miss Ruby.

MISS RUBY: You see? You should have been putting on a show!

WAYNE: Nobody would want to see my show Miss Ruby.

MISS RUBY: I've always tried to imagine each of you as little yellow baby ducks.

Does everyone wave their paper ducks?

MISS RUBY: I think I read that when baby ducks are born, their sex is not yet determined, that THAT part comes later. And so I imagine you all as little tiny puffy bright yellow non-gendered baby ducks...that's what you are....

Miss Ruby falls asleep. For a moment we hear her light snore.

WAYNE: Did she just fall asleep?

As this next conversation starts, everyone relaxes a little, heads to the keg, talks among themselves, rests their paper ducks in their hats or on their shoulders for a few minutes.

TANYA

That's what happens, / She's in and out.

SISSY NA NA

It's too much for her, too much stimulus.

Terry moves to Miss Ruby's side and take her hand. He and Sissy stand together near Miss Ruby for a moment.

TANYA

(An Announcement)

So, when she comes to, we're going to jump right to the final song.

Everybody stay close so we can be ready to start and don't get too drunk.

FRANCIS

She didn't want a funeral...

TANYA

Francis, help me tidy this place up a bit. I want things to be in order when she wakes up.

Francis starts to help, maybe picking up a couple chips.

ZOE

Is it OK if I...

SISSY NA NA

Sure baby sure, you should see this.

TERRY

Miss Ruby, if it wasn't for you, I'd be dead. You're the one who took the gun out of my hand and locked it up in your drawer. You're the one who would buy me a new shirt / for every week I stayed off the horse

SISSY NA NA

They weren't new, they belonged to her son.

TERRY

I know, but they were new to me.

SISSY NA NA

(To Zoe)

She called them resurrection shirts.

TERRY

You told me the dirtiest jokes I have ever heard in all my days. The thing about you Miss Ruby, you never asked me to change. You just knew. You knew there was something decent under all this muck. And you helped me remember that too.

ZOE

I'm glad I got to meet you Miss Ruby.

KRISTA

(To Bait Boy)

Bait Boy, Come with me. For a old times sake.

KRISTA

Come on.

Krista and Bait Boy move to the edge of the parking lot.

KRISTA

How were we together for 6 years and

<p><i>Francis comes up to ZOE</i></p> <p>ZOE <i>(re: Miss Ruby)</i> She's the real deal.</p> <p>FRANCIS Poetry is everywhere. I'm just the editor. Hey, look instead of college, try this...</p> <p><i>Francis hands Zoe a handmade book.</i></p>	<p>never...</p> <p>BAIT BOY Never what?</p> <p>KRISTA I don't know. By a house. Make a baby.</p> <p>BAIT BOY Well, we almost did.</p> <p>KRISTA <i>(Referring to a miscarriage)</i> I know and then...that was a terrible day, When that happened.</p> <p>BAIT BOY It wasn't meant to be. I mean, you were 21 / when that happened.</p> <p>KRISTA That's old enough –</p> <p>BAIT BOY Yeah, yeah but, I mean, where were we living then?</p> <p>KRISTA It was before we moved here, we were...we were in Jackie's place.</p> <p><i>They both remember how shitty that flop house was.</i></p> <p>BAIT BOY It wasn't meant to be.</p>
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ZOE

This is your poetry?

Francis gestures yes.

FRANCIS

free of charge...

Francis backs away. Tanya has been picking up trash but at some point, she gets lost in thought and is just standing there, in the middle of the party, maybe holding some solo cups in one hand and dirty paper plates in another. Wayne sees her: he knows this distant look.

WAYNE

Hey. Hey.

TANYA

I just need *one*.

WAYNE

(Re: the plates)

Come on, give me that.

TANYA

I had a couple hidden away in my room. And I looked and they are GONE. You went in there. – You have a key.

Does Wayne hug Tanya?

=

WAYNE

Come on Tanya. Put your confidence on.

Tanya takes her lipstick out. Puts it on.

Dere ya go.

TANYA

You know I'm gonna get one somehows Wayne. They always find me when I need them.

MISS RUBY

Uhhh....Where am I going?

SISSY NA NA

It's OK sweetie, we gotcha.

SISSY NA NA

OK Tanya she's up, let's do this.

Bait Boy whispers in Krista's ear.

Krista cracks up laughing.

TANYA: OK, everybody - Sissy fix her pillow so she can see -- Everybody grab hold of a duck and get ready. Here we go.

Everybody gathers round, it is hard for Krista and Bait Boy to stop laughing and Zoe sees this and is pretty shocked but doesn't really know what to do about it, Sissy Na Na puts her arm around Zoe and stands by her. Everybody is getting in place with their ducks.

Sissy starts the song. Everyone is singing, and it is sweet, but TOTALLY off key and not entirely confident But everyone is giving it their best shot The core group of friends begin walking around Miss Ruby's bed with the paper ducks, so the ducks are swimming in a circle, perhaps held over everyone's heads? Up on the balcony, people make a train of ducks as well Miss Ruby's eyes are wide with delight. NOTE: I'll Fly Away will be in the public domain soon. If there are rights issues, use "Just a Closer Walk with Thee" as an alternate.

SISSY NA NA

Some glad morning when this world is over

I'll fly away

To my home on God's Celestial Shore

I'll fly away

I'll Fly Away

Sweet Jesus

I'll Fly away

When I die

Hallelulia Bye and Bye

I'll Fly Away

While

Just a few more weary days and then

I'll fly away

To a land where the joy never ends

I'll fly away.

TANYA

See Miss Ruby? Just like the
Old days.

FRANCIS

(To no one in particular,

Swimming his duck)

Look at us fools!

Remarkable!

KRISTA

I wonder what she hears?

The moment Krista says this, the lights shift to focus on Miss Ruby and her angelic face, and the singing shifts so that it sounds like a chorus of angels – gorgeous, ever shifting harmonies.

Perhaps the exterior walls of the Hummingbird now look bright pink. Perhaps the ducks now float magically through the dim light, glowing a little. Miss Ruby speaks. Perhaps we hear the slow bluesy music from one of Miss Ruby's early routines, faintly in the distance.

MISS RUBY

And in the beginning, there was SEX. I believe the sexual act was first imagined as energy, as energy creating energy.

In my club, I tried to embrace that energy and let it flow. To celebrate the mystery of the sexual self instead of explaining it away. There were nights when we came close - when there was no he paying for she who is working for him who is mad at her, when we were all in the

room WITH each other. Open and unafraid reveling in the present moment together.

This is the ecstatic experience! You've felt it, haven't you? For a moment? For a moment...

Sure, you've drawn the short end of the stick. But you hold the potential to teach the world something about itself. Something about the mess, the truth, the flow....Well.

Here I am, in the last 10 hours of my life. And it looks like YOU are going to have to change. My club is gone. You can romanticize what we had, or you can make something new. How do you revel in this moment while letting go of what once was? How do you own who you are without destroying who you are? How do you defend your right to be YOU? To be AUTHENTIC? To be HERE?

Oh my little duckies. How I wish I had the answers. Did I live my life right? Did I not realize what my life had become until I was in the middle of it? Did I regret that I did not have enough money to send my son to a good college, which led to him serving in the military and serving for 19 years before getting shot through the head by a sniper in Iraq?

We are who we are. You are the most gorgeous group of fuck ups I have ever seen. And you carry the ecstatic experience inside you.

Tanya approaches Miss Ruby's bed. This is an out of time moment, not exactly happening now.

TANYA: *Sweetie your hands are cold....*

Tanya puts Miss Ruby's hands underneath the blankets. Then, Tanya's hands emerge. Tanya holds a bottle of pain pills.

MISS RUBY: Those are mine.

Tanya opens the bottle of pills.

TANYA: DON'T.

Tanya shakes a pill out on to her hand.

Don't run from your ragged self. Be WITH it. Be WITH each other. Be WITH this moment that is slipping through our fingers as I speak....

Tanya takes the pill. It's like opening Pandora's box. The party shifts down, down, down to a particularly nasty gear.

CUT TO: *Three hours later.*

Krista and Bait Boy are dirty dancing - maybe not making out, but they might as well be. Tanya is wandering around the stage, dancing with a feather boa -fake strip tease. Miss Ruby is still downstairs - maybe there is a party guest with her, paying respects. Sissy Na Na enters with plastic bags filled with chips from the mini market down the street Wayne is hanging with Terry, he is totally pissed at Tanya for having gotten high, which probably means he's down a couple more beers out of spite. He's pretty drunk.

Zoe is chanting with Francis - a low chant She hasn't really seen yet what is going on with Bait Boy and Krista. She echoes/overlaps whatever Francis says.

TANYA Hey Krista – Hey Krista – Hey Krista –	(Krista and Bait Boy are dirty dancing) SISSY NA NA (Speaking to random drunk folk) Y'all eat! Don't act the fool on me, get some
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<p>Hey Krista – do you want to see my strip routine?</p>	<p>food in you, eat!</p> <p><i>Wayne is poking at Bait Boy while he dirty dances with Krista.</i></p>
<p>TANYA Hey Wayne-</p> <p>Hey Wayne-</p> <p>Hey Wayne-</p> <p>Hey Wayne- Do you want to see my routine?</p>	<p>WAYNE I gotta proposition, Bait Boy. It's a good one. Come on, listen.</p> <p>SISSY NA NA <i>(Re: Miss Ruby)</i> Wayne she's still down here? I asked you to take her up an hour ago!</p>
<p>Hey Sissy, do you want to see my routine?</p>	<p>WAYNE Ahhh....</p> <p>SISSY NA NA FORGET IT Wayne, I'll just do it myself. Tanya can you –</p> <p>Oh Fabulous</p> <p><i>Zoe and Francis see Bait Boy and Krista</i></p>
	<p>ZOE <i>(To Francis)</i> Hey, Hey –</p> <p>FRANCIS Oh Yeah, that's not good.</p> <p><i>Francis is trying to break up Krista and Bait Boy.</i></p>
	<p>FRANCIS Hey, hey come on you tow that's enough.</p> <p>ZOE Greg-</p> <p>BAIT BOY Don't worry about it Zoe, it's OK –</p>

SISSY NA NA
Classy Bait Boy, just like always.

(Sissy goes over to Zoe)
Come on, Come sit by Miss Ruby.

FRANCIS
This is not cool –

BAIT BOY
It's OK

FRANCIS
Come on, she's your kid.

BAIT BOY
She's not my KID!

Bait Boy pushes Zoe to the ground, hard.

FRANCIS
Dude-

ZOE
Ow.

BAIT BOY
Oh.

WAYNE
Come over here, Bait Boy, come on, let's just have a little chat. It's a business proposition, it's a winner.

BAIT BOY
Get off me Wayne!

KRISTA
Come on Bait Boy, let's get out of here.

Bait boy kicks the boom box which is the course of the music. It goes flying, and turns off. Everyone kind of stops except Tanya, who continues her dancing. Bait Boy turns to Krista.

BAIT BOY
YOU did this!

KRISTA
Me?

<p>TANYA <i>(To the party guest)</i> I tried out to dance for Miss Ruby but I couldn't do the splits or the backbends - which were the minimum requirement....</p> <p>MISS RUBY There was a minimum requirement...</p> <p>SISSY NANA Wayne, go catch her please?</p> <p><i>Tanya throws one of her shoes at Wayne</i></p>	<p>BAIT BOY Everytime I get it together YOU come along and fuck it all up.</p> <p>KRISTA No, / no no -</p> <p>You keep dragging me down. I WAS LEGENDARY!</p> <p>KRISTA You were not legendary. You were a guy whose job was to the keep the party going at a Karaoke Bar on Bourbon Street.</p> <p>BAIT BOY I was rolling with / what I got, baby</p> <p><i>To Zoe</i> This is what I am <i>talking about here</i>, Zoe. Do not <i>trust him</i>, little girl. / He <i>knows what he is doing</i>, you hear me?</p> <p>BAIT BOY Zoe, no, don't listen to her!</p> <p><i>There is a skirmish where Sissy Na Na tries to separate Krista, Zoe and Bait Boy.</i></p> <p>BAIT BOY What about you, Krista. What about your abuse history that you REFUSED TO FACE.</p> <p>KRISTA No, not this, / not now -</p> <p>when you were 9 -</p> <p>KRISTA Why are you doing this?</p>
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<p><i>WAYNE grabs Tanya</i></p> <p>WAYNE You are not going to do this!</p> <p>TANYA Come on Wayne, it's fun!</p> <p><i>Tanya goes into Miss Ruby's room and slams the door. Wayne is outside, occasionally banging.</i></p> <p>WAYNE Tanya! you are loved, Tanya. You are loved. You are loved.</p> <p><i>Wayne slides down the door and sits. Defeated.</i></p>	<p>BECAUSE YOU ARE DAMAGED BEYOND ALL HOPE KRISTA AND YOU KNOW IT, YOU KNOW IT!</p> <p><i>Terry has been watching, and somehow trips Bait Boy and gets him into some kind of headlock, maybe on the ground?</i></p> <p>TERRY You don't know nothing you sorry ass motherfucker. She's a prize. She's a prize.</p> <p><i>Terry throws Bait Boy to the ground. Krista grabs Terry's hand.</i></p> <p>KRISTA Come on, Terry,</p> <p><i>Krista pulls Terry to the side.</i></p> <p>TERRY Baby come on....</p> <p>BAIT BOY Y'all are pitiful.</p> <p>Y'all were born to be right here. Not me. and I know you will bad mouth me until the day die for getting out, and guess what –my head is held high in Atlanta. I got new eyes now,</p>
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	and I know how to succeed in my life no thanks to all you.
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BAIT BOY: Come on Zoe,

Bait Boy goes and pulls Zoe out of her chair.

MISS RUBY: Run.

Bait Boy walks towards Miss Ruby.

SISSY NANA: No. Go home. Oh right, you don't know where that is.

Bait Boy leaves.

ZOE: Wait-

Zoe scrambles out of her costume and starts to go. Francis hands her the book of poetry that Zoe has left on the ground. And she leaves.

FRANCIS: he always did know how to spoil a party.

WAYNE: ...I missed my chance.

Krista wriggles out of Terry's arms. They face each other.

TERRY: Hey, hey It's OK.

Terry tries to make a move towards Krista, she backs away defensively. Miss Ruby is quiet

TERRY (To Krista): *It's called tenderness. It's all that I own in the world.*

Krista runs away from Terry

SCENE TWO

The lights shift to dawn light as the characters drift offstage or into new positions. Terry, still in his wig and hula skirt, sleeps leaning up against the wall of the hotel near Wayne's office. A light features Zoe: she is in her class. She "swishes" open her Ipad.

ZOE: I don't know why I got to be born into this body, in a hospital, in relative comfort, in Atlanta. But I don't take that accident for granted.

Francis sits up from the back seat of the abandoned car. He is still a little drunk from the night that has barely just ended. He groans and tumbles out of the car. Looks towards the office.

ZOE: It's nearly impossible to track down the people I met that day - if you google any of their names, the best you could hope for is an arrest report, or a list of poets reading in the courtyard bar on a Sunday afternoon.

FRANCIS: He made coffee yet?

KRISTA: No.

FRANCIS: I gotta work today.

Francis does not answer. He walks around in a circle for a minute.

ZOE: But I can't get them out of my mind.

FRANCIS: Hey you think I could maybe use your shower?

KRISTA: I don't have a room here anymore.

FRANCIS : Oh, right.

ZOE: Their idiosyncracies, their remarkable contradictions... I ate it all up. And ran back to the comfort of my house in the suburbs of Atlanta.

He looks at the keg.

FRANCIS: Well. When in Rome...

Francis finds a cup on the ground, and pours himself a beer.

KRISTA: Francis, I don't live anywhere.

FRANCIS: Aw come on, baby. You live right here.

Francis taps his heart

ZOE: Bait Boy - Greg – Disappeared from our house 3 days after our trip. Completely

evaporated. My mom was crushed. I was Ambivalent.

Sissy Na Na comes out of Miss Ruby's room – She's carefully containing panic And emotion.

SISSY NA NA: Guys

Krista runs into the office, trying to find wayne. Sissy NA NA goes and Knocks on Tanya's door.

ZOE: Since then, I've been trying to embrace the incoherence of it all. Celebrate it, Actually. What if we all put our parts On proud display?

Francis goes to Terry.

ZOE: This is me. This is the way I do it,

Wayne walks up to the door of the Problem Room. Krista is helping Terry up.

ZOE: You can give me an F on this paper, it's fine. Everything looks different now.

KRISTA-(*Taking the wig off Terry's head.*):-Here, Take that off.

ZOE: Lucky me...

Tanya emerges from the Problem Room.

WAYNE: Come on, it's time.

TANYA: Oh-

WAYNE: I know, take a deep breath.

Everyone but Francis heads into Miss Ruby's room. Zoe disappears. As Wayne and Tanya ascend the stairs.

TANYA: I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Here we go. This is it.

SISSY NA NA: Francis, you coming?

Francis sits alone. Sissy goes in and close the door. He recites this poem.

FRANCIS (Insert Alternate Poem.)

Serpentine Echoes reverberate

In mind's eye

Steppingstones across a river

Of Minutes, hours, days , decades centuries

Memory Working out

Now's version of then.

Sissy NA NA walks back out on to the balcony

The lines on the palm

Of your hand

Tilt east then south

Then west

Mudstone and Sandstone

Fall

Under the gaze

Of the sun...

SISSY NA NA

Come on, baby. Last Call.

SISSY steps into the room. The others are gathered around Miss Ruby's bed, present for her final moments. Francis watches the sunrise.

END OF PLAY