

Split

Sample Pages from Split

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SPLIT

A SERIOCOMEDY IN ONE ACT BY
Bradley Hayward



Split

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Characters

2M+3W+4 Either, Expandable to 28

Priss: Female, 13.

Hype: Male or Female, 12.

Strange: Male or Female, 14.

Flex: Male, 15.

Hands: Male or Female, 17.

Flair: Female, 17.

Snark: Male, 16.

Chill: Male or Female, 16.

Brood: Female, 17.

As the play progresses, other secondary characters begin to appear. They were written to be played by members of the main ensemble, but could easily be shared with other actors in order to accommodate a larger cast.

Setting

A nondescript setting made up of blocks, ramps and risers for interesting tableaux. It could also be performed on a completely bare stage.

The “structure” at the end is written as an assemblage of wooden two-by-fours. It could also be made out of pieces of foam or plastic tubing. Other creative devices, such as string or lighting projections, would be just as wonderful. It is also possible to forgo any structure at all and simply have it suggested by the actors.

Costumes

The characters in the main ensemble may wear clothing appropriate to their types or something as simple as T-shirts and jeans.

They each acquire one defining accessory during the play. If the ensemble plays the secondary characters, no costume changes are necessary; they simply remove these accessories.

Staging Notes

The scenes should flow gracefully together without any blackouts. Lighting and music can help tremendously to create seamless transitions.

As few props as possible should be used in order to facilitate swift scene changes.

It is important that the tone of the play be spirited and full of energy. There are certainly dramatic moments, but be careful they are not played too solemnly. It is the levity of each situation that brings these characters closer together.

Creativity in all of these matters is highly encouraged!

SCENE I: WHO

The lights rise.

The ensemble is situated all around the stage, frozen. They each have an arm outstretched with one accessory dangling from their fingertips. As the characters speak, they put on their accessory.

PRISS puts on a tiara.

PRISS: Split ends? I don't think so. I have thirteen trophies and forty four medals that prove my ends are anything but split. It's silky, smooth and shiny. When I run my fingers through it, I cry.

She runs her fingers through her hair and cries.

Every time. So the judge who said I have "split ends" can go ahead and suck it.

HYPE puts on elbow and knee pads.

HYPE: I live in a split level house, so every time I come home I have to make a decision. I always have to stand there and think about it for a minute. My bedroom is downstairs. There's lots of things I can do in my bedroom. Believe me. But upstairs is where we keep the food!

STRANGE puts on a lab coat.

STRANGE: Nuclear fission is a reaction in which the nucleus of an atom splits into smaller parts, often producing free neutrons and photons in the form of gamma rays. It is usually induced by a neutron, but is occasionally seen as a form of spontaneous radioactive decay, especially in very high mass-number isotopes. It is very exciting.

FLEX puts on a basketball jersey.

FLEX: Dude, it was so funny! I did the splits in the middle of the gym and farted! It was so loud that it echoed off the walls a million times. It sounded like a chorus of whoopee cushions. Man, if only I had my phone. That would have been an awesome video!

HANDS puts on a tool belt.

HANDS: I'm not too good with words, but I think that Dickens guy had a split personality or something. Was it the best of times? Or the worst of times? He wrote the book, so shouldn't he know? And what's the deal with semicolons? I don't know about you, but I don't like my books winking at me.

FLAIR puts on a colorful scarf.

FLAIR: He had the nerve to ask if we could split the check. I mean, I didn't even bring my purse because he asked me out. Besides, purses are just about the most awful thing ever. Bulky purses make you look like a soccer mom. Purses with skinny shoulder straps make you look a hooker. And little clutch purses make you look like the Jolly Green Giant. So I made him pay. In more ways than one.

SNARK puts on an oversized necktie that has a loud print.

SNARK: Now I know why she pukes up split pea soup in that movie. It's gross. Dad gave me a bowl and shoved a spoon in my mouth. My head almost spun around. He likes to cook all sorts of disgusting things. Deep fried ham hocks. Mustard meat melts. Tuna stew. But split pea soup? That's the devil.

CHILL puts on a set of noise canceling headphones.

CHILL: Mom said my music was giving her a splitting headache. "But old people love Frank Sinatra," I said. "I don't care," she yelled. "Put on your headphones." When nobody is home, I turn my speakers up real loud and blast "I Get a Kick Out of You" all through the house. I get a kick out of watching her porcelain angels vibrate across the mantle and fall off the edge.

BROOD puts on a black hat.

BROOD: Does it even matter who I was before it happened? The fact is, it happened. So I don't see the point of dredging up the past. Wah, wah, wah. All I know is that a dark cloud rolled in the day they split up. It's been there ever since.

SCENE 2: WHAT

The ensemble scatters around the stage in various directions. They move briskly and seem to know exactly where they are going. All of a sudden, they snap their fingers and stop dead in their tracks.

SNARK and PRISS are out front.

SNARK: I don't know what I was doing when I found out. I never really got what the big deal was. It was just another day in my house. Dad had been sleeping on the couch for two years anyway. They kept calling it a "big deal," but nothing really changed except that his crap in the garage was no longer there.

PRISS: Why are they called banana splits? You have ice cream. You have bananas. Ice cream. Bananas. Where's the split?

SNARK: You split the banana in half.

PRISS: Oh! That makes sense. My mom cuts them into little chunks. Then she mixes them with chocolate soft serve. Then she scoops it onto plates with paper doilies. Then she tops it with strawberries, pineapple and mint.

SNARK: (*stares blankly*) That is not a banana split.

PRISS: What is it, then?

SNARK: Stupid.

PRISS: Dad thought so, too. Same with wearing slippers to bed, making vacuum tracks in the carpet and sitting down when he peed. When he slammed the door for the last time, he left a fingerprint on the glass. I asked what I could do and she told me to get some Windex.

The ensemble snaps their fingers and scatters. They snap again and freeze.

FLEX and HANDS are out front.

FLEX: They totally ruined my celebration. I just found a hair coming out of my armpit. It was awesome! I got my camera and took a picture. Then I thought about having some cake or something, but no. I came downstairs and saw her at one end of the table

and him at the other. They didn't make it to a single game all year. And my slam dunks were beauts, too.

He imitates a slam dunk.

Big, thick bushes of hair!

HANDS: I like to make things, I guess. The table in the laundry room is a little crooked, but Mom said I did a good job. She propped it up with a beer can and put a bottle of Cheer on it. So for Christmas they got me a band saw. It was the only present under the tree, so Dad took it out of the box right away. But he was kinda out of it already. When they started yelling at each other, she told me to try it out. Maybe that's why they bought it. It was really loud.

FLAIR: (*loudly, from the back*) Sing out, Louise!

FLAIR snaps her fingers and the ensemble scatters. She veers directly to center stage and snaps again. They all freeze.

Friday. 8 o'clock. Opening night. Gypsy. The curtain rose. The footlights illuminated. There I was. Center stage. Mama Rose!

The ensemble applauds.

But there was an empty seat in the front row. For two hours I kept peeking at it out of the corner of my eye. I tried to sing, but my voice cracked. It just wasn't there. She wasn't there. It was still empty when the lights came down. I knew then and there she was never coming back. But I still had to take a bow.

She bows. The ensemble snaps their fingers and scatters. They snap again and freeze.

STRANGE, CHILL and BROOD are out front.

STRANGE: They kept calling it the D word, but I did not know what the D word was. We were at McDonald's and Dad asked me if I wanted an ass burger. "Would you like an ass burger," he said. "With ketchup and pickles? Or an ass burger with cheese?" I did not know what he meant, but I knew it was not nice. Mom knew it was not nice, too, and she told him. Then he said, "We should just send him to the moon." I do not know why I would

go there, but I do not want to go to the moon. It is very far away.

CHILL: He was making fun of you.

STRANGE: Really? I wish I had known that because it did not seem like fun.

BROOD: No, he was calling you retarded.

STRANGE: I am not retarded.

CHILL: I know you're not.

STRANGE panics, jumping up and down with his hand over his ears.

STRANGE: I am not retarded! I am not retarded! I am not retarded!

CHILL: *(calmly)* Relax. We never said that.

STRANGE: *(whispers)* I am not —

CHILL: I know. I know.

STRANGE breathes in and out as he calms down.

STRANGE: I am... what is the word?

BROOD: Smart? Bright? Clever?

STRANGE: Sorry. I am sorry.

CHILL: That's okay.

STRANGE: Of course it is okay.

CHILL: Now my dad, on the other hand. He's retarded.

BROOD: Mine too.

CHILL: He made an appointment for us to see his therapist. It was just like in the movies, too. He had a long couch and a box of tissues on the coffee table. My brother got them all snotty, so I tucked them under the cushions. Dad repeated over and over that it was "for the best." The doctor didn't even say anything. What a waste of money.

BROOD: We had no money when the cops came. Mom didn't want to do anything, but they told her a restraining order was probably a good idea. So that's where I was. In a police station. Isn't it funny how they call it a restraining "order?" It just seems like chaos to me.

The ensemble snaps their fingers and scatters. HYPE zig-zags through the chaotic crowd as he shouts. They gradually begin to move faster and faster. Nobody pays any attention to him.

HYPE: Mom, where are you?! Don't leave me all by myself! Dad, where are you?! Have you seen my mom? She's wearing Mickey Mouse ears! My dad has a Goofy shirt on! Or was it Pluto?! I can't remember where I was supposed to go! Was it the castle?! Or the Tiki Room?! I don't know! I'm sorry, Mom! Really, really sorry! Don't be mad!

The ensemble closes in on him.

There's so many people! Please don't be mad! I'm sorry, Dad! It's just a toy! Don't fight over it! Where are you?! Come back!

The ensemble snaps their fingers.

SCENE 3: WHEN

The ensemble sticks out their arms in various directions, as if they were the hands of a clock. Whenever there is a "time change," they rotate their arms into a new position as characters in the following scene take their places.

FLEX: Two weeks here.

SNARK: Two weeks there.

CHILL: Monday, Wednesday, Friday.

PRISS: Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday.

STRANGE: Sunday.

FLAIR: Summer.

HANDS: Whenever.

HYPE: Don't know.

BROOD: Don't care.

EVERYONE: Christmas.

Time change. FLEX runs on the spot. COACH circles around him.

COACH: Your skills are slipping, boy.

FLEX: Sorry, coach. There's been a lot on my plate.

COACH: Girls?

FLEX: Not exactly.

COACH: Nothing wrong with a plate full of girls.

FLEX: If you say so.

COACH: If you have a plate, girls are the way to fill it.

FLEX: Got it, coach. I just haven't had much time to practice.

COACH: My plate used to be full...

FLEX: Dad's apartment is across town.

COACH: ...before my hair fell out...

FLEX: And there's a lot more to do at Mom's.

COACH: ...and my butt caved in.

FLEX: Wait. What about your butt?

COACH: Never mind. Just run.

FLEX: That's all I've been doing lately.

Time change. CHILL lays on a couch as his THERAPIST questions him.

THERAPIST: So what do you think of the new custody arrangement?

CHILL: Through the ripples how they shine.

THERAPIST: Interesting. And how does that make you feel?

CHILL: Just one wish will be granted.

THERAPIST: Interesting. And what wish is that?

CHILL: One heart will wear a valentine.

THERAPIST: Interesting. You know, I think we're getting somewhere.

CHILL: Ha! Those were lyrics to "Three Coins in the Fountain."

He sits up and grins.

Interesting.

Time change. PRISS has her hair done by a STYLIST.

STYLIST: Your roots are showing.

PRISS: Don't remind me. I haven't had my highlights done in, like, a whole month. Dad just doesn't get it.

STYLIST: I'll use a number two peroxide on these.

PRISS: Are you new? Two is for sissies. I use number five.

STYLIST: That will burn your scalp.

PRISS: I can't even feel my scalp anymore.

She yanks on her hair.

See. Nothing. Go ahead and pull it.

STYLIST: I don't think so.

PRISS: Don't make me call my mother!

STYLIST: Fine.

She gently tugs on PRISS' hair.

PRISS: Harder!

The STYLIST yanks as hard as she can.

Ow! Ow! Ow! Ow! Ow!

STYLIST: I'm sorry.

PRISS: This is ridiculous. One month away and everything goes straight to hell.

Time change. FLAIR overacts as a DIRECTOR watches.

FLAIR: "Ay me! For aught that I could ever read, could ever hear by tale or history. The course of true love never did run smooth."

DIRECTOR: Very good.

FLAIR: I know.

DIRECTOR: Confidence. I like that in an actress.

FLAIR: Then you'll like me. A lot.

DIRECTOR: (*shakes her hand*) Good work, young lady. Rehearsals start July first.

FLAIR: Ay, there's the rub.

DIRECTOR: Excuse me?

FLAIR: I'm with Mom till August.

DIRECTOR: You'll have to change that.

FLAIR: Thou art not possible.

DIRECTOR: Oh.

FLAIR: Oh, what?

DIRECTOR: Thou art screwed. Next!

Time change. STRANGE is approached by a WAITRESS who smacks her gum as she writes on a little pad.

WAITRESS: What can I get ya, honey?

STRANGE: No.

WAITRESS: Pardon, sugar?

STRANGE: No.

WAITRESS: No, what?

STRANGE: No, I do not want any honey or sugar.

WAITRESS: Um, sure. So what would ya like?

STRANGE: I would like for my mom to pick me up. Dad left me here and told me to wait. I do not think he likes me very much. He was supposed to take me to the movies, but I think I made him mad because he said, "I cannot take this anymore." So he dropped me off early.

WAITRESS: That's awful. Can I get ya a piece of pie or something?

STRANGE: I do not know. Can you?

WAITRESS: On the house.

STRANGE: I can tell you are being nice, but I do not think Mom would like it if I ate pie on top of the house. So I will wait for her and you can go away now.

Time change. A DOCTOR examines HYPE by listening to his chest with a stethoscope.

DOCTOR: That's quite a fast heartbeat you have there.

HYPE: Everything about me is fast. Sometimes I think everyone else is moving in slow motion.

DOCTOR: (*holds up the stethoscope*) Would you like to hear it?

HYPE: I already can. Ba boom! Ba boom! Ba boom! It goes like that all day long.

DOCTOR: There's a pill I can give you —

HYPE: No, don't! I want to hear it.

DOCTOR: It shouldn't beat that fast.

HYPE: But I like it. Ba boom! Ba boom! Ba boom! I can count down to the next time I get to see Dad. Ba boom! Ba boom! Ba boom!

Time change. BROOD is being frisked by an OFFICER.

OFFICER: If any of the inmates look at you, even for a second, you holler. If any of them put out their hand, you holler. If you see anything suspicious at all, you holler.

BROOD: When I see my dad, should I holler?

OFFICER: Are you sure you want to do this?

BROOD: He's going to be in here for fifteen years. I should at least say goodbye.

OFFICER: I think he said goodbye the night he did what got him locked up in this place.

BROOD: Yeah. But I didn't.

Time change. HANDS speaks with his SPONSOR.

HANDS: How long before you can call someone "sober?"

SPONSOR: A person is sober whenever they don't have a drink in their hand. It just depends how long they can go without one that counts.

HANDS: How long have you been sober?

SPONSOR: Seven years.

HANDS: Does it get easier?

SPONSOR: No. That's the dirty little secret they never tell you.

HANDS: Is there anything I can do to help?

SPONSOR: Just learning about the disease lets him know you care.

HANDS: I wish I knew that sooner.

Time change. SNARK has a sly grin on his face as he meets with the PRINCIPAL.

PRINCIPAL: I never expected to see you in detention.

SNARK: There's a first time for everything.

PRINCIPAL: Anything you would like to talk about?

SNARK: Yep. How come the boys' bathroom doesn't have a tampon dispenser?

PRINCIPAL: Excuse me?

SNARK: You always make such a big deal about "equal rights," so why don't we get any tampons?

PRINCIPAL: Are you serious?

SNARK: I am very serious when it comes to feminine hygiene.

PRINCIPAL: What would you do with them?

SNARK: I dunno. Turn them into nunchuks. Put on a puppet show. Collect nine and stick them in a menorah.

PRINCIPAL: You've given this a lot of thought.

SNARK: Regardless, that is not the point. The point is, I would like to exercise my equal right to tampons.

PRINCIPAL: If I do that, then shouldn't I also put urinals in the girls' bathroom?

SNARK: Sure! Why not?

PRINCIPAL: For starters, they couldn't use them.

SNARK: Yes they could.

PRINCIPAL: How?

SNARK: Very carefully.

PRINCIPAL: Is there a point to all this?

SNARK: Not really. I'm just sick of splitting my time. Going back and forth between houses gets to be so bloody tedious. Detention seemed like a refreshing detour.

PRINCIPAL: I'm a very busy person. I don't have time for this nonsense.

SNARK: Exactly. Me neither.

SCENE 4: WHERE

HANDS waves two glowing batons. He directs the ensemble around a bunch of little orange cones, like an air traffic controller.

HANDS: Those with Mom, this way. Dad, that way. Upstairs and to the right. Second door on the left. Wait for clearance. Those moving, veer right. Those sharing, veer left. Stop for Grandma. Slow down. Turn for Grandpa. Speed up. Wait here. Wait there. This way. That way. Speed up. Straight ahead. Speed up. Straight ahead. Speed up. Straight ahead. Speed up. Speed up. Speed up. Lift off!

The ensemble crashes together and collapses to the floor. They freeze.

NOTE: The ensemble plays all of the secondary roles in this scene. They remain frozen and speak from their positions on the floor. They should not be performed by others.

HANDS sticks the batons into his tool belt.

I told you it wouldn't work.

MOTHER: Give it time.

HANDS: When I'm at his place, it's like I'm watching a split screen TV. He says one thing, but does another.

MOTHER: Like what?

HANDS: Like he says he won't drink anything except coffee when I'm there. But instead of filling the coffee maker from a tap, he fills it from a bottle.

MOTHER: He told me that he hasn't had a drink in seven days.

HANDS: True. But they weren't consecutive.

He picks up one of the orange cones and stacks it onto another. He exits.

FLEX springs to life and mimes dribbling a basketball.

FLEX: This “one on one” thing is kinda all right.

FATHER: Damn straight. Chillin’ with my peep. Shootin’ hoops. Dunkin’ b-balls. Swishin’ rocks. Hang ten.

FLEX: Totally. But you might wanna... oh, I dunno... maybe stop talking like that.

FATHER: Oh. Sorry.

FLEX: I get it. You’re trying to... you know... be all, like... hey, son... wassup?... we’re just a couple of bros... hangin’ out... but, um... it’s kinda... well... no.

FATHER: Won’t happen again.

FLEX: Are you coming to the game on Friday?

FATHER: I wouldn’t miss it for anything.

FLEX: Awesome! Coach has me in the starting lineup and the cheerleaders are super hot. It’s gonna be the game of the season!

FATHER: Is your mother going?

FLEX: Yeah, I think so. Why?

FATHER: Oh, wait. You know, come to think of it, I’m pretty sure I have to work that night.

FLEX: Really?

FATHER: But you’ll record it, right?

FLEX: (*quietly*) Yeah.

FATHER: Sorry, son. I just forgot. Next time, though.

FLEX: Sure. Next time.

He picks up a cone and adds it to the stack. He exits.

CHILL leaps up.

CHILL: That's it, I'm moving out! First he messed up my music and last night he left a pair of stinky underwear on my pillow!

MOM: You've barely given it a chance.

CHILL: All night long I had to smell his butt. I can't share a room with him. He's gross.

MOM: Don't take this out on me. It's not my fault we had to move into a smaller house.

CHILL: Can't I go live with Dad?

MOM: I will not separate the two of you.

CHILL: Why not? You separated everything else.

He picks up one of the cones and stacks it onto another. He exits.

FLAIR stands up.

FLAIR: You try living with Grandma and see how you like it.

MA: It's just for the summer.

FLAIR: No sixteen-year-old should live in an old folk's home. Do you know what goes on in that place?

MA: It can't be that bad.

FLAIR: Oh yeah? I have to bathe in a community tub. It has handles on it and a little chair over the drain. God only knows who else has been in there. Believe me, if that tub could talk, it would say, "ew."

MA: Grandma loves you.

FLAIR: She also loves falling asleep on the toilet. I tell you, she's losing her mind. Today she spread Preparation H on my toast. And I ate it. Now my tongue is all shriveled up!

She grabs a cone and adds it to the stack. She exits.

BROOD stands up.

BROOD: How long will I stay here?

FOSTER: That all depends.

BROOD: On what?

FOSTER: Sometimes it takes a while to process the paperwork. The last girl we had lived with us for over a year.

BROOD: A year?

FOSTER: But it doesn't always take that long. You just make yourself at home and don't worry about a thing.

BROOD: Yeah, right.

She picks up a cone and puts it with the others. She exits.

SNARK stands up.

SNARK: Where should I put my stuff?

NEW MOM: Wherever you want! This is your house, too, now.

SNARK: I already have a house.

NEW MOM: I just want you to know that I love your father every bit as much as you do.

SNARK: *(chuckles)* Don't tell him that.

NEW MOM: So put your things anywhere you like! Socks on the coffee table. Dishes on counter. Whatever. I'll take care of it all!

SNARK: That's right you will.

He takes a cone and stacks it on the others. He exits.

PRISS stands up and delicately dusts herself off.

PRISS: Did you touch my hair brush?

STEP: No.

PRISS: I said... did you touch my hair brush?

STEP: No.

PRISS: Liar! I was cleaning out the bristles and found a crunchy strand of your gnarly hair.

STEP: So?

PRISS: I am not your sister, so don't get any big ideas that I'm going to be all nicey-nice. And don't come into my room ever, ever, ever again. Got it?

She picks up a cone and slams it on the stack. She exits.

HYPE jumps up.

HYPE: What about my dog?

DAD: What about it?

HYPE: Where is he going to live?

DAD: I have enough to worry about.

HYPE: But he's my best friend. My only friend.

DAD: Fine. But if he poops on the carpet, even once, he's going to the big farm in the sky. You hear me?

HYPE: Thanks, Dad.

He picks up a cone and stacks it. He exits.

STRANGE stands up and looks around. He discovers he is all alone.

STRANGE: (*confused*) Where is everybody?

He shrugs, then picks up the stack of cones and carries them off.

SCENE 5: WHY

The ensemble is staggered around the stage. They stretch their arms into the shape of a Y.

They gradually begin to bounce up and down. It's barely noticeable at first, but rapidly grows into a very pronounced vibration as they speak.

FLAIR: It's all Mom's fault.

PRISS: It's all Dad's fault.

SNARK: It's all her fault.

CHILL: It's all his fault.

FLEX: It's all their fault.

HANDS: It's all our fault.

BROOD: It's all your fault.

HYPE: It's all my fault.

STRANGE: Earthquake!

An earthquake hits and the ensemble is hurled together. Every time there is an "aftershock," the ensemble is tossed about the stage and key characters spill out.

STRANGE spills out with his COUNSELLOR.

You told me it was not my fault.

COUNSELLOR: That's right. It's not.

STRANGE: Then why does my dad say to me, "this is all your fault?"

COUNSELLOR: Don't listen to him when he says that.

STRANGE: Should I cover my ears? Because when someone talks, it is very difficult not to hear it. Sound goes into the ear and it is processed by the brain.

COUNSELLOR: What I meant is, don't let what he says bother you. You can also try what we have been practicing.

STRANGE: I am not very good at that.

COUNSELLOR: You just have to practice.

She reaches out and touches his hand.

See. It shows that I care about you.

STRANGE: I do not understand.

COUNSELLOR: Just try it with him.

STRANGE: Okay.

COUNSELLOR: Very good work today. And I will see you here again next week.

STRANGE: Later, gator.

He laughs, a little.

That was a joke. I heard someone say it at school the other day and people laughed.

COUNSELLOR: That was very funny, indeed.

STRANGE: Then why are you not laughing?

COUNSELLOR: *(laughs)* Later, gator.

STRANGE: In a while, crocodile.

Aftershock. HYPE is having a sugar rush and repeatedly pokes his SITTER, who is beached on a sofa.

HYPE: You wanna play checkers? You wanna play Jenga? You wanna play Twister?

SITTER: Listen up. I don't want to play a game with you!

HYPE: Why not? You're supposed to be babysitting me.

SITTER: Yeah. And I'm sitting.

HYPE: You're no fun!

SITTER: Fun is fifteen an hour. Your mom is paying ten. Sit down.

HYPE: Fine.

He sits on her lap.

SITTER: What are you doing?

HYPE: You told me to sit down. So I'm sitting down!

SITTER: (*pushes him off*) You are so annoying.

HYPE: I know you are, but what am I?

SITTER: Listen, you little twerp. Did you ever think that you're the reason your parents broke up? They didn't graduate high school because of you.

HYPE: Who told you that?

SITTER: Doesn't matter. Just get out of my face and stop being such a little pest.

HYPE: (*plops on the sofa*) You're no fun.

Aftershock. BROOD stares blankly at a spiritual GURU. He speaks in a low, soothing tone.

GURU: Take a deep, cleansing breath and allow the aroma of this eucalyptus candle to open your soul to the spiritual world.

BROOD: (*rolls her eyes*) You have got to be kidding me.

GURU: Close your eyes and when the spirit moves you, fall backwards into my arms. You can trust me.

BROOD: That's not exactly my thing.

GURU: Commit to it and you shall succeed.

BROOD: Again, not my thing.

GURU: When you're ready, then.

BROOD: I can't believe quacks like you are appointed by the court.

GURU: Many people have had success with spiritual therapy.

BROOD: I could tell you stories about my life that would make your eyes roll into the back of your head.

GURU: Go ahead. I have a candle for that, too.

BROOD: Oh, Jesus.

Aftershock. CHILL watches his BROTHER, who stares vacantly ahead as he rocks back and forth.

CHILL: You just had to split your head open, didn't you? All that money on operations. And double in rehab. Way to go, bro. Why did you get on that horse, anyway? You hate horses. And now I hate them, too.

BROTHER laughs.

That's right. Laugh. You're lucky, you know that? You don't have to know what's going on around here. So go ahead. Go ahead and laugh.

Aftershock. HANDS is offered a bottle of beer from a DRUNK.

DRUNK: Just one drink. Party hardy!

HANDS: I don't see how it will make anything better.

DRUNK: It will relax you!

HANDS: It can do more than that. Trust me.

DRUNK: Mom drank when she was pregnant with me and I came out partying!

HANDS: Let me drive you home.

DRUNK: No way! This party's just gettin' started!

HANDS: You have no idea.

Aftershock. PRISS stands on point and does ballet stretches while her RIVAL twirls a baton.

PRISS: What's your talent?

RIVAL: The baton. Duh!

PRISS: That's so cliché.

RIVAL: And ballet isn't?

PRISS: But I'm really, really good at it. I've been dancing since, like, forever!

RIVAL: Is that so?

PRISS: I was practically wearing a tutu when I came out of Mom's uterus.

RIVAL: What are you trying to prove?

PRISS: I'm just letting you know that I'm going to win. And if I don't, someone is going to pay.

RIVAL: Is that so?

PRISS: And it won't be my mom. She's already paid enough to get me where I am.

Aftershock. FLAIR speaks with a trendy MINISTER.

MINISTER: Tell me. What can the lord do for you?

FLAIR: I'm just trying to wrap my head around why she might have stayed with him for so long.

MINISTER: Sometimes we all do things we can't explain.

FLAIR: You think she would have figured it out when he insisted on designing her wedding gown.

MINISTER: Yes.

FLAIR: Or when he picked out their window treatments.

MINISTER: Yes.

FLAIR: Or when he went backpacking across northern California.

MINISTER: Perhaps she truly loved him.

FLAIR: She did! And he still loves her. Oh well. At least one good thing came out of their marriage.

MINISTER: And what's that?

FLAIR: Moi!

Aftershock. SNARK and a FRIEND sit in a car, looking through binoculars.

SNARK: That's Dad all right.

FRIEND: Are you sure?

SNARK: I'd recognize that wide load anywhere.

FRIEND: I can't believe it.

SNARK: What could she possibly see in him?

FRIEND: Hell if I know.

SNARK: That moustache is ninety percent nose hair.

FRIEND: His or hers?

SNARK: Should I tell Mom?

FRIEND: No, stupid. Tell him. Your allowance will double.

SNARK: Maybe she already knows.

FRIEND: You think?

SNARK: That would explain why he sleeps on the couch.

*Aftershock. FLEX and his outgoing GIRLFRIEND
have a tug-of-war over his cellphone.*

GIRLFRIEND: Come on! Just one picture.

FLEX: I'm not in the mood.

GIRLFRIEND: Pleeeeeeeease?

FLEX: Maybe later.

GIRLFRIEND: *(bats her eyelashes)* You won't be sorry.

FLEX: Fine. But just one.

*They press their heads together as he holds out his
phone to take a picture. She puckers her lips.*

The camera adds ten pounds, you know.

GIRLFRIEND: In that case, point it at my boobs.

*They laugh as he points the phone at her chest and
takes a picture. Then his expression falls.*

FLEX: Oh.

GIRLFRIEND: What? They're not lopsided, are they?

FLEX: He just sent me a text.

GIRLFRIEND: (*snatches the phone and reads*) "Sometimes these things just happen."

FLEX: I wish he would stop trying to explain it. That only makes it worse.

GIRLFRIEND: Don't worry about him, k? I can help you forget.

She snaps the phone shut.

Aftershock.

SCENE 6: HOW

The ensemble comes together for the first time as a group of friends. They bring on stacks of wooden two-by-fours.

HANDS: Okay. How are we gonna do this?

FLAIR: I've directed lots of musicals with my dad, so I'll be in charge!
You take these boards and start on that side. You take the other side. And the rest of you can start on the front.

PRISS: What about me?

FLAIR: Get me a tall, non-fat, decaf macchiato.

PRISS: As if.

FLAIR: (*claps her hands*) Come on, you guys. We haven't got all day. Let's get this thing started!

They follow her orders and move the lumber around. Throughout the following, each group converses as they erect a structure from the wood.

FLEX and PRISS tip up one of the boards.

PRISS: (*flirty*) Impressive. You're so strong.

FLEX: Thanks.



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