



Sample Pages from Sweep Under Rug: Competition Version

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SWEEP UNDER RUG: COMPETITION VERSION

A DRAMA IN ONE ACT BY
Lindsay Price



Sweep Under Rug: Competition Version
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Characters

1M 3W 3AG + Ensemble

COUNSELLOR KELLY & COUNSELLOR KADE:

(Both AG) Mid-twenties. Government workers, counsellor team for blocks 7A to 7E. Both believe in the program 110%.

CONRAD: (M) Nineteen. Miranda's boyfriend. He hasn't seen her in a year. Revolutionary.

MIRANDA: (W) Nineteen. Ariel's sister. A secret poet. Smart, but defeated. Her depression is such that she has lost a lot of her vocabulary.

ARIEL: (W) Sixteen. Younger sister. Very smart. People pleaser. Believes in the program.

BOBBY SUE: (W) No age, but looks like a fresh-faced teen from the 50's dressed in a blouse, skirt, white knee-high socks, and Mary Jane shoes. She looks clean, fresh and starched. A highly advanced computer. Moves mechanically but should never speak like a robot. If you want to make this a male or gender-neutral character, change the name to Bobby Jo and adjust the pronouns and costume accordingly. What's important is the 50's tone and the look of clean, fresh and starched.

MR/MRS/MX CURRIE: (AG) Ariel's teacher. They want the best for Ariel. This role is identified as "Mr" Currie in the script. Please change to whatever gender works best for your situation.

ENSEMBLE: They are the revolutionaries, the inhabitants, the crowd, the students, and the lost of this world.

Time

The future. 10 years after the end of a civil class war. The poor have been confined to "The City".

Set

An upstage platform represents a tiny rundown apartment where there is an old couch, a ratty blanket and a chair where Bobby Sue sits. Other locations are on the lower part of the stage.

Sound Effects

Throughout the play a musical alarm plays when Bobby Sue is about to make an announcement. This can be a sound effect, or it can be done live by an actor.

Lights come up. Downstage left is COUNSELLOR KELLY and COUNSELLOR KADE. They stand side-by-side. They're not twins, but they do a lot of twin things.

Downstage right is CONRAD. Upstage on a platform is MIRANDA and downstage centre is ARIEL.

Far upstage, the ENSEMBLE stand in a line. They are facing stage left (or right depending on your preference). Their heads are down. Their shoulders are slumped. During the following, the line moves slowly. The first person at the front of the line raises their head, raises a hand (as if receiving something), drops their hand & their head, and exits. If possible, this person crosses back to join the line so that it appears never-ending. These steps repeat with the next person.

MIRANDA is dressed in a way that shows she doesn't take care of her appearance. She is listless and still. Whenever MIRANDA speaks in poetry, these are her inner thoughts. They are the words that she cannot set free.

MIRANDA: There's no more paper for poetry.

It is Un-Useful. Un-Productive. Un-Effective.

My fingers ache to guide a pen across a white plain.

To build mountains and bridges.

To be my champion. My saviour.

COUNSELLOR KELLY & COUNSELLOR KADE have the tone of overly cheerful children's entertainers. They are on the community radio station.

COUNSELLOR KELLY: It's Counsellor Kelly!

COUNSELLOR KADE: And Counsellor Kade!

COUNSELLOR KELLY & COUNSELLOR KADE: Here on C-I-T-Y

COUNSELLOR KELLY: With the evening announcements for Blocks 7A through E.

COUNSELLOR KADE: We're so excited to announce the upcoming plans for the Tenth Annual Bobby Sue Birthday Celebration.

COUNSELLOR KELLY & COUNSELLOR KADE: (*sing song*) A Bobby Sue in every home that needs one!

MIRANDA: There's no more voice for poetry.

I cannot speak my words aloud for fear I am found

Un-Useful. Un-Productive. Un-Effective.

And so my words are stacked, piled into corners and boxes.

They clamour for space in my head.

They cry at the gates demanding to be set free.

ARIEL is clearly poor but well-presented. She is neat, clean, and cheerful. She's pleased, perhaps programmed, to talk about Bobby Sue.

ARIEL: Bobby Sue always asks me about my day. She reminds me the breakfast program requires City Student ID. She's there when I wake up, she's there when I come home, she's there when I wake up again. She looks out for me. I can't say that for... (beat) I can't always say that.

ARIEL moves over to COUNSELLOR KELLY & COUNSELLOR KADE. The focus shifts to CONRAD. CONRAD has a soft smile, but he's dressed as an underground soldier. He's dressed for battle. As he talks, a few weary looking, poorly dressed INHABITANTS enter to sit/kneel and listen to him.

CONRAD: (to the INHABITANTS) It's not difficult. But it's not easy. You're only going to get one chance. The easiest thing you can do with a Mach I and II (pronounced "mock one and two") is bash it on the head. (one of the INHABITANTS shudders at the thought and starts to object) You can't think of them as human. You can't. That was the mistake they made in the beginning, trying to replicate the human form: powering down at night, seeing with its eyes, thinking with its brain.

COUNSELLOR KELLY and COUNSELLOR KADE hug ARIEL warmly.

COUNSELLOR KELLY: What a wonderful surprise!

COUNSELLOR KADE: A special guest – the shining star of Block 7E, Ariel Kane.

ARIEL: (warmly) Hi.

COUNSELLOR KELLY & COUNSELLOR KADE: Welcome!

CONRAD: They stopped putting the important stuff in the head with the Mach III's ("mock three") and then... information became much harder to acquire. How many of you have newer models?

COUNSELLOR KELLY: What are you doing at the Broadcast Centre?

ARIEL: They asked me to record something for the Bobby Sue Celebration.

COUNSELLOR KADE: (*sing song*) Everyone say it with us!

ALL THREE: When you have a Bobby Sue to tell you what to do, life gets better!

CONRAD: It is the most amazing computer. Dustproof, tamperproof and can't be hacked. It won't freeze or overheat. It can be drowned, but that takes too long. Never try to disconnect a Mach IV. (*"mock four"*) You all should get back home before curfew.

Lights fade on CONRAD. CONRAD and INHABITANTS exit. Focus shifts to KELLY et al.

COUNSELLOR KELLY: We have so many special things planned!

COUNSELLOR KADE: Party hats and noisemakers for everyone!

COUNSELLOR KELLY: (*seriously*) Treat them nicely; you have to give them back at the end. (*back to glee*) And then, a confetti cannon!

COUNSELLOR KELLY & COUNSELLOR KADE: Won't that be fun?

ARIEL: Sounds great!

COUNSELLOR KADE: Now, about the lottery for cake.

The two COUNSELLORS make exaggerated sad faces.

COUNSELLOR KADE: We know...

COUNSELLOR KELLY: It would be great if we could give everyone a piece. But in these times...

The two COUNSELLORS both sadly, exaggeratedly, sigh and shake their heads.

ARIEL: We could share our piece if we got one.

The two COUNSELLORS squeal as if this is the most amazing thing.

COUNSELLOR KELLY & COUNSELLOR KADE: You can always share!

COUNSELLOR KELLY: That would be such a good thing to do!

Lights fade on the COUNSELLORS celebrating. They and ARIEL exit.

MIRANDA: My words have only one escape:

To slip out my pores.
To jump through my sweat.
Vapour suicide into the air.
For vapour poetry hurts no one.
Harms no one.
Reaches no one.
Affects no one.

MIRANDA curls into a ball on the apartment couch as a pleasant musical alarm plays. A voice is heard. It is cheerful and smooth.

BOBBY SUE: Wake up, Miranda. Wake up. Rise and shine, sleepyhead.

BOBBY SUE looks like a large doll. She looks clean, fresh and starched.

BOBBY SUE: (*cheerfully*) Wake up, Miranda. An employment improvement opportunity is coming your way.

MIRANDA groans.

BOBBY SUE: (*bright and chipper*) Miranda Kane — You are being given a chance to better yourself. You have been chosen for employment improvement opportunity 67000931!

MIRANDA: Hope. Less.

BOBBY SUE: (*chipper*) Please present yourself at the City Block 7E Employment Opportunity Office for further instructions.

She raises her wrist as if to look at a watch. She does not move her head to look at the watch. She's not wearing a watch.

MIRANDA: I. Hope. Less.

BOBBY SUE: You have five minutes to get yourself dressed and out the door. (*There is a pause. BOBBY SUE speaks cheerfully.*) Miranda. First warning.

BOBBY SUE tilts her head to the side and starts to hum something pleasant. MIRANDA stares at BOBBY SUE.

The lights fade. A school bell rings. STUDENTS cross the stage. Downstage right, ARIEL enters, with MR. CURRIE following behind.

MR. CURRIE: (*calling out*) Ariel! Ariel.

ARIEL: (*turning*) Hi, Mr. Currie.

MR. CURRIE: (*holding out an envelope*) This came for you.

ARIEL: Is it my college acceptance? (*ripping open letter*) Automatic acceptance to College Sub Level One! Yes!

MR. CURRIE: Is that what you want?

ARIEL: Absolutely. Bobby Sue told me all about it. I don't have to take the entrance exam, and I can start a semester early. This is great!

MR. CURRIE: But is that what you want?

ARIEL: Of course. Why wouldn't I?

MR. CURRIE: Because I think... Your grades are too good for Sub One. You should apply for Level Ten.

ARIEL: What?

MR. CURRIE: I know we haven't talked about this but –

ARIEL: I can't do that. City students don't go to Level Ten schools.

MR. CURRIE: (*frustrated*) I know.

ARIEL: The fact that I'm at this school at all is through special dispensation. I'm very lucky.

MR. CURRIE: Your Bobby Sue tell you that?

ARIEL: Why would she lie? (*beat*) Besides, I'd never pass the exam.

MR. CURRIE: I think you would. You could do a lot with a Level Ten diploma.

ARIEL: I always thought about helping others... (*shakes her head*) City students don't go to Level Ten schools.

MR. CURRIE: You could leave the City.

This never occurred to ARIEL before.

ARIEL: I... I'm going to be late. I don't want to miss the cake lottery.

She runs off. MR. CURRIE exits, as the lower stage floods with people. The CROWD rushes from one side of the stage to the other, clamouring over each other. They are noisy and pushy.

CROWD: (*NOT in unison, everyone picking their own line to repeat*) Stop pushing! I was here first! We want cake! Get back! Stop pushing.

COUNSELLOR KELLY and COUNSELLOR KADE enter wearing party hats and holding noisemakers. The CROWD reaches for them. The COUNSELLORS blow whistles, angrily.

COUNSELLOR KELLY: (*over the CROWD*) Everyone, hats on! Hats on!

COUNSELLOR KADE: You all have hats and I expect to see them on.

COUNSELLOR KELLY: Be quiet! If you're going to be like this, there won't be any cake!

The CROWD quiets down, with a low murmur of discontent.

COUNSELLOR KADE: When the confetti cannon goes off, you're going to sing. It better be cheerful, and it better be good.

COUNSELLOR KELLY: (*into their wrist, which holds a mini-mic*) Cannon in three, two, one. (*nothing happens*) Where's the cannon!

They rush offstage and the CROWD freezes mid-surge.

The focus shifts to the other side of the stage. During the above, ARIEL has entered. She wears a party hat. CONRAD also enters wearing a party hat. He slips behind ARIEL.

CONRAD: The lovely Ariel.

ARIEL: (*turning*) You!

CONRAD: Don't look back, please.

ARIEL: (*facing front*) What are you doing here?

CONRAD: I want a piece of cake.

ARIEL: They'll drag you away in two seconds.

CONRAD: Only if they recognize me.

ARIEL: Your face is plastered everywhere!

CONRAD: I know. It's a terrible picture.

The CROWD pushes and reaches but is generally under control. There is a growing murmur of

discontent. COUNSELLOR KELLY and COUNSELLOR KADE enter holding clipboards.

COUNSELLOR KELLY: (*cheerful*) We have the first round of names! When your name is called, please proceed in an orderly fashion to the cake line.

COUNSELLOR KADE: (*cheerful*) Have your identification out and ready. No identification, no cake.

The CROWD noisily surges forward.

CROWD: (*NOT in unison. Each person pick a line to repeat.*) Stop pushing! I'm on the list! We want cake! Stop pushing!

The COUNSELLORS blow whistles.

COUNSELLOR KELLY: (*overtop the CROWD*) Too loud, too loud!

COUNSELLOR KADE: We won't start if you're not civilized!

The CROWD freezes and is silent.

CONRAD: I wonder what kind of cake it is.

ARIEL: Would you go away? I don't want to be seen talking to you.

CONRAD: So turn me in. Ariel the good.

ARIEL: (*mocking*) Conrad the criminal.

CONRAD: (*pointing out people*) There's police there, and there, and there. It would be as easy as raising your hand.

ARIEL: Those aren't policemen. They're people.

CONRAD: People aren't always what they seem. (*pause*) Are you turning me in?

ARIEL: I could, you know.

CONRAD: I do.

The CROWD noisily surges.

COUNSELLOR KELLY: S. Burns,

COUNSELLOR KADE: A. Vasquez,

COUNSELLOR KELLY: J. Thompson, (*annoyed*) you're getting too loud!

COUNSELLOR KADE blows their whistle. The CROWD is silent and freezes.

ARIEL: Miranda would never forgive me.

CONRAD: (*kissing ARIEL on the cheek*) Thanks, kid. You're a doll.

ARIEL: Don't touch me! I won't get into trouble over you.

CONRAD: Do you always do what you're told?

ARIEL: Do you always not?

CONRAD: When things aren't right, yes.

ARIEL: What do you know about right and wrong?

COUNSELLOR KADE blows their whistle. The CROWD surges.

COUNSELLOR KADE: We're not going any further until you settle down!

COUNSELLOR KELLY: We can wait a long time. We had cake at the office.

The CROWD is silent and freezes.

CONRAD: Where's Miranda? (*wistful*) I was hoping to talk to her.

ARIEL: You stay away. If you go anywhere near –

CONRAD: Take it easy, kid. Calm down.

ARIEL: You want to get us in trouble.

CONRAD: I don't.

ARIEL: (*getting heated*) I don't believe you. I'll never believe you!

CONRAD: It would be better not to draw attention...

ARIEL folds her arms tightly in front of her.

ARIEL: Go away. Please?

CONRAD: Why didn't she come?

ARIEL: She... didn't want to.

CONRAD: Why not?

ARIEL: She's not...

CONRAD: What? What's the matter? Is she sick? Tell me! (*ARIEL doesn't say anything*) Listen. I'm not... I love Miranda too much to put you in danger. All right?

ARIEL: Maybe she doesn't love you anymore.

CONRAD: Did she say that? (*whispering loudly*) Ariel!

The CROWD noisily surges, this time getting too close to COUNSELLOR KELLY and COUNSELLOR KADE.

THE CROWD: We want cake! We want cake! We want cake!

COUNSELLOR KELLY: (*overtop the CROWD*) Stop it!

COUNSELLOR KADE: That's it. No cake for anyone. Do you hear me?

COUNSELLOR KELLY: Bad people get no cake!

COUNSELLOR KELLY & COUNSELLOR KADE: (*calling offstage*)
Security!

They blow their whistles and rush off. The CROWD follows.

ARIEL: (*looking down at her feet*) I wish she didn't love you. But she does.

CONRAD: Kid, you almost gave me a heart attack. How is she? Is she OK? Still writing?

ARIEL: She... she's fine.

CONRAD: Is she?

ARIEL: (*defiant but unconvincing*) She's fine. OK?

CONRAD: (*takes a moment before answering*) OK. (*beat*) I know you don't like me.

ARIEL: You're a monster.

CONRAD: People aren't always what they seem, kid.

CONRAD slips away without ARIEL noticing.

ARIEL: (*sighing*) I hate how much she misses you. Even when she doesn't say anything...not that she says much anymore. (*rubs her eyes*) I don't know what to do. (*beat*) Conrad?

Music plays. ARIEL exits. Lights come up on MIRANDA in the apartment.

MIRANDA: Getting worse out there.
Anger under lock and key.
One with Knife.

One with Nail.
Yesterday one just takes your stuff
Today you're dead.
Today there is a never ending rain.
Flood up to the ears, up to nose, up to eyes.
It's the knowing we will drown.
That's the worst part.
We will drown.

MIRANDA lies on the couch. The light is cool and dreamy. She is asleep and dreaming. CONRAD enters and crosses to her. He is in her dream.

CONRAD: Hey. *(he blows on her face)*

MIRANDA: *(playfully)* Stop it.

CONRAD: Miranda.

MIRANDA: *(with her eyes closed)* Don't bother me. I'm dreaming.

CONRAD: I know. That's why I'm here.

MIRANDA sits up and looks at CONRAD, who wiggles his fingers at her.

MIRANDA: You can't keep showing up like this.

CONRAD: They can't get me in your dreams.

MIRANDA: They'll get you. There's no safe place. Not even in my head.

CONRAD: They have to catch me first.

MIRANDA: Have they caught you?

CONRAD: Shhhh. Don't let on. I'm hiding behind your left ear.

MIRANDA: Where are you? Are you safe?

CONRAD: I'm safe as houses. I made it out of the City, all the way to the Gulf of Mexico.

MIRANDA: Where the water is warm.

CONRAD: And the sun wraps around you like a blanket.

MIRANDA: You have a good job.

CONRAD: And no one cares where you come from.

MIRANDA: And before I know it...

CONRAD: You'll find a plane ticket in your mailbox. You'll fly to me...

CONRAD & MIRANDA: And we'll live happily ever after.

MIRANDA: Sounds nice. Completely impossible but nice. Everything's a mess here.

CONRAD: It's a mess everywhere.

MIRANDA: I'm a mess. This whole thing has my words crumbling to dust. My punctuation is nothing but bruises.

CONRAD: I love when you speak in poetry.

MIRANDA: Why aren't you here?

An unseen voice cuts into the moment. It is BOBBY SUE. She is cheerful.

BOBBY SUE: Wake up, Miranda. Rise and shine, sleepyhead!

CONRAD grabs MIRANDA. MIRANDA is now dreaming a moment in the past.

CONRAD: *(abrupt tone change)* I have to go.

MIRANDA: Why?

CONRAD: The Barlow family – someone –

MIRANDA: What happened?

CONRAD: The Mach IVs self destruct. We didn't know.

BOBBY SUE: Wake up, Miranda!

CONRAD: I have to go underground.

BOBBY SUE: Wake up, Miranda!

CONRAD: Come with me.

MIRANDA: What?

CONRAD: Come with me! Will you?

MIRANDA: I –

CONRAD: Yes or no. There's no time.

MIRANDA: I can't! I can't leave Ariel. I won't.

BOBBY SUE: Rise and shine!

CONRAD: I love you. (*runs out*)

MIRANDA: Wait!

She reaches out. The lights change. MIRANDA is awake reaching into the air. MIRANDA looks around. BOBBY SUE is on a chair underneath a ratty blanket.

BOBBY SUE: (*pleasant and cheerful*) No, no, no. This is not nice. No one tries to hide from Bobby Sue. Miranda. Miranda. I can hear you.

MIRANDA reaches forward and pulls the blanket off of BOBBY SUE. She scuttles back to her corner of the couch.

BOBBY SUE: Miranda. You know what's happened here.

MIRANDA: (*shaking head, rocking back and forth*) Sleeping.

BOBBY SUE: Yes. Miranda is always sleeping. That's what Miranda does. (*cheerfully*) What a shame. (*beat*) You know what happened.

MIRANDA: No.

BOBBY SUE: (*cheerful*) You know what is going to happen. The Perez family went to jail. Twenty-five years. The Millers were given seven. The Lamott family –

MIRANDA: (*standing*) She didn't mean it!

MIRANDA stares at BOBBY SUE, who stares back, smiling gently. MIRANDA sinks back onto the couch, hiding her face in her hands, rocking back and forth.

BOBBY SUE: A whole sentence, Miranda? Well done. How long has it been? Your mother should run away more often.

A door slams offstage.

ARIEL: (*off*) Hi! (*enters during her speech*) The birthday celebration was a madhouse. People rushed the cake table and the police went in with riot gear and – (*seeing MIRANDA and BOBBY SUE*) What's the matter? Did someone see... Did I do something wrong?

BOBBY SUE: Tell her. (*MIRANDA shakes her head*) Miranda.

MIRANDA: Parrot think it night.

ARIEL: I don't understand.

BOBBY SUE: Of course you don't. If Miranda would only speak properly. Another example of her increasing laziness.

ARIEL: (*surprised*) She tries...

BOBBY SUE: It's bad news, I'm afraid. Your mother's gone.

ARIEL: What?

BOBBY SUE: She threw a blanket over my head and ran away.

ARIEL: But... you don't power down at night. A blanket wouldn't do anything.

BOBBY SUE: I suppose she was desperate.

ARIEL: I – there must be a mistake. Mir? (*MIRANDA does not react. ARIEL turns back to BOBBY SUE.*) She said she wouldn't leave.

BOBBY SUE: Ariel. You look very respectable today. Very smart.

ARIEL: (*distracted by the change in topic*) Oh? Thank you...

BOBBY SUE: And you've been automatically accepted to College Sub Level One. Congratulations! As a reward, I will report this as an accident.

ARIEL: Why do you have to say anything at all?

BOBBY SUE: Your mother has left the home.

MIRANDA gives a short bitter laugh.

BOBBY SUE: (*looking at MIRANDA*) Do you have something to say?

MIRANDA: Home. Hole with door.

BOBBY SUE: (*to ARIEL*) Your mother must be held accountable for her actions.

MIRANDA: Crumbling.

BOBBY SUE: Accident or not.

MIRANDA: Walls crumbling away.

BOBBY SUE: (*cheerful*) Miranda. That doesn't make any sense. The walls aren't made of dirt. You say the silliest things.

Music plays. ARIEL exits. Lights up stage right, where CONRAD enters with another group of weary, poorly dressed INHABITANTS.

INHABITANT ONE: Why don't they update the old Bobby Sues?

INHABITANT TWO: Ours does that simulated sleep thing.

INHABITANT THREE: My parents have one that rewinds when it reconnects. It erases time.

INHABITANT ONE: Mine too.

CONRAD: It's a good question. I don't have a good answer.

The focus shifts. MIRANDA moves downstage.

MIRANDA: I fear I
I fear I am forgetting
I fear losing
Forgetting life
What it is to live
I fear I
I fear I am forgetting
Your face
It disappears so easily.

The focus shifts.

CONRAD: Let's talk about what happens when you have a successful disconnect. The key to getting out of the City is to make it look like you want to come back. Like you can't wait to get back to taking employment opportunity courses or lining up for cake.

INHABITANT ONE: (*mocking*) Running up and down narrow hallways because there might be a piece of cheese.

There's a quiet murmur of bitter laughter.

INHABITANT TWO: Why don't they just let us leave?

CONRAD: We're not supposed to. That's what they don't tell you.

The focus shifts as MIRANDA moves to meet COUNSELLOR KELLY and COUNSELLOR KADE as they enter. COUNSELLOR KELLY holds a big file, COUNSELLOR KADE, a chair.

COUNSELLOR KELLY: (*pleasant*) Miranda Kane. Nice to see you!

COUNSELLOR KADE: On time and everything. How neat!

COUNSELLOR KADE pushes MIRANDA to sit in the chair. They tower over her.

COUNSELLOR KELLY: (*looking at file*) Well. It's been a, let me see, a year since your last check in.

COUNSELLOR KADE: It's a doodle shame these appointments couldn't happen more often, but there are so many of you and,

COUNSELLOR KELLY & COUNSELLOR KADE: Only two of us!

COUNSELLOR KADE: We wish we could do more. (*they both sigh*)

COUNSELLOR KELLY: That's why we love the Bobby Sue Program.

COUNSELLOR KADE: She is here to help you be your best.

COUNSELLOR KELLY: She loves you.

The focus shifts to CONRAD. A REVOLUTIONARY comes in with a note.

REVOLUTIONARY: It's the Sher family.

INHABITANT THREE: What happened? Did they get away?

CONRAD, having read the note, shakes his head.

REVOLUTIONARY: Caught at the border.

CONRAD: (*sighing*) We'll do a memorial tomorrow.

Lights fade on CONRAD. CONRAD remains onstage, the others exit. Music plays. Lights up on the apartment. BOBBY SUE is alone. She sits staring – emotionless. A musical alarm sounds.

BOBBY SUE: (*with a jerk and a wide smile*) 4:00 pm. Ariel is due.

A door slams offstage.

ARIEL: (*off*) I'm home!

BOBBY SUE: Ariel. How was school today?

ARIEL: (*entering*) Is she here? Did she come back?

BOBBY SUE: Not yet.

ARIEL: Oh. (*sits*) It's only been three days. She'll be back.

BOBBY SUE: Ariel. How was school today?

ARIEL: (*sits hesitantly*) I want to talk to you.

BOBBY SUE: Of course. That's why I'm here.

ARIEL: I want to talk about college.

BOBBY SUE: I'm so proud of you. Automatic acceptance! You will graduate with honours. You will be a wonderful secretary or file clerk. If you try really hard, you may even become a paralegal.

ARIEL: That's what I wanted – I wanted to talk about –

BOBBY SUE: That's why I'm here. When you have a Bobby Sue to tell you what to do, life gets better.

ARIEL: (*rushed*) I want to apply for a Level Ten school.

BOBBY SUE slowly turns her head to stare at ARIEL.

BOBBY SUE: Ariel. You have been automatically approved. Do you know what that means?

ARIEL: Yes.

BOBBY SUE: (*cheerful*) City students do not go to Level Ten schools.

ARIEL: I know.

BOBBY SUE: (*cheerful*) Good. End of discussion.

ARIEL: But it could be possible –

BOBBY SUE: End of discussion.

ARIEL: If I want to be a doctor, I need to go to Level Ten.

BOBBY SUE tilts her head and hums a pleasant tune, not responding to ARIEL.

ARIEL: Bobby Sue? Did you hear me?

BOBBY SUE: Of course. I listen to everything you say. Your future has been decided for you.

ARIEL: But I think I –

BOBBY SUE: Why are you still talking? You always listen to me. Your teacher knows better than to get your hopes up like this. I have made a note that he is to be reprimanded.

ARIEL: I want to –

BOBBY SUE: (*cheerful*) End of discussion.

Lights fade on the apartment. The focus shifts back to the COUNSELLORS.

COUNSELLOR KELLY: So. What happened, huh? It's not been a good year. More of a downhill slide.

COUNSELLOR KADE: A plummet.

COUNSELLOR KELLY: A plunge.

They both make the noise of someone falling from a great height and then splatting to the ground. They laugh as if they've done something funny.

COUNSELLOR KADE: You used to be such a talent.

COUNSELLOR KELLY: Even more so than your sister.

COUNSELLOR KADE: What happened to one of the shining stars of Block 7E?

COUNSELLOR KELLY: I think it's depression.

COUNSELLOR KADE: I think it's laziness.

COUNSELLOR KELLY: Could be. No one wants to put in an honest day's work, that's for sure. What do you think, Miranda?

MIRANDA sits staring at the floor. The two COUNSELLORS lean in.

COUNSELLOR KADE: You think sitting there, looking at the floor, means you win something?

COUNSELLOR KELLY: Keep something?

COUNSELLOR KADE: You have nothing that we don't give you.

COUNSELLOR KELLY: We know. We know you didn't go to Chapman Square.

COUNSELLOR KADE: We know you slept from 1:07pm to 1:53pm yesterday afternoon and you cried Conrad's name out.

COUNSELLOR KELLY: Twice.

COUNSELLOR KADE: We know the instant your mother picked up that blanket.

COUNSELLOR KELLY: *(with a smile)* We know everything.

MIRANDA stares at the COUNSELLORS. Lights fade on the COUNSELLORS. They exit. Lights up on CONRAD. A REVOLUTIONARY brings in a cup of coffee.

CONRAD: Thanks. *(takes a sip)* It's even warm. How did I get so lucky?

REVOLUTIONARY: Anything for the boss. *(CONRAD does not respond to that comment)* How are you?

CONRAD: Some days the boat's sinking faster than we can patch it up. It's one of those days.

REVOLUTIONARY: Do you think we'll ever beat them?

CONRAD: I don't know.

REVOLUTIONARY: *(sighing)* My parents were so happy when we got a Bobby Sue. My mom cried.

CONRAD: Yeah. Mine too. They thought all their problems were solved. *(bitterly)* Who knew there were so many more to come. Sorry. No cake for me.

REVOLUTIONARY: We have lukewarm chili in the kitchen...

CONRAD: *(smiling)* My favourite.

They exit. A school bell rings. STUDENTS cross the stage. On the other side of the stage MR. CURRIE enters. ARIEL fights through the STUDENTS to get to him.

ARIEL: Mr. Currie, Mr. Currie! Wait! Did they fire you? Did you get fired?

MR. CURRIE: What? Ariel, breathe. What's going on?

ARIEL: *(panicked, out of breath)* Bobby Sue said end of discussion. And when she says that, I always listen. I don't have any reason not to. She says she knows what's good for me, so I'm a bad person if I don't listen, right? Did you get fired?

MR. CURRIE: No, of course not.

ARIEL: *(that shocks her and she calms down)* Oh. Bobby Sue said you were going to be reprimanded. I thought...

MR. CURRIE: I was. But I talked to the principal. We both agree you should apply for Level Ten.

ARIEL can't process this information. She turns away and holds herself tight.

MR. CURRIE: Ariel? *(ARIEL doesn't respond)* Talk to me.

ARIEL: You don't know what it's like to live in the City. We need help. That's what they tell us. We can't think for ourselves, so Bobby Sue is there to help. I need it. I know I do. Don't I? If I do what she says, nothing bad will ever happen. *(beat)* Why does wanting to be better feel like a bad thing? Why don't they want us to be better?

MR. CURRIE: We do.

ARIEL: I... *(ARIEL breathes and comes to a decision)* I want to apply to Level Ten.

ARIEL and MR. CURRIE exit together. Lights up on the apartment. MIRANDA is curled up into a ball on the couch. She is dreaming. CONRAD crosses to her.

CONRAD: Hey. *(he blows on her face)*

MIRANDA: *(playfully)* Stop it.

CONRAD: Miranda.

MIRANDA: *(sitting up)* Oh Connie. She didn't mean it.

CONRAD: *(joking)* Hey, you're supposed to say, "you can't keep showing up like this" and then I say –

MIRANDA: I should have known.

CONRAD: It's not your fault.

MIRANDA: That's what I want you to think. But I don't know, do I?

CONRAD: It's your dream.

BOBBY SUE: Wake up, Miranda. Rise and shine!

CONRAD: *(grabbing MIRANDA)* I have to go.

MIRANDA: They didn't stop her. They knew when she picked up the blanket.

BOBBY SUE: Wake up, Miranda!

CONRAD: Come with me.

MIRANDA: What?

CONRAD: Yes or no. There's no time.

MIRANDA: I can't! I can't leave Ariel. I won't.

BOBBY SUE: Wake up, Miranda!

CONRAD: I love you. (*runs out*)

MIRANDA: Wait! I changed my mind!

The lights change. MIRANDA is awake. BOBBY SUE is staring at her.

BOBBY SUE: Miranda. Where's your sister? It's 4:30. Where is she?

MIRANDA: (*trying really hard to speak*) Where. Mom.

BOBBY SUE: Ariel is due home at 4:00. Where is she?

MIRANDA: Where. Mom!

A door slams offstage.

ARIEL: I'm home.

ARIEL enters. She is tentative and looks at the floor.

BOBBY SUE: You're late.

ARIEL: (*staring at her shoes*) I know.

BOBBY SUE: What did you do? Look at me. What did you do?

ARIEL: I put in a Level Ten College application.

MIRANDA: What?

A musical alarm sounds.

BOBBY SUE: It has been removed from the system.

ARIEL: OK. (*she's shaking but she raises her head to look at BOBBY SUE*)
The school applied on my behalf. You can't control the school.
They'll apply again.

BOBBY SUE: Your future has been carefully thought out and calculated.
You should be grateful. I am very disappointed.

ARIEL: I know. But if I want to be a doctor –

MIRANDA: Doctor?

BOBBY SUE: You will fail. You will take the automatic acceptance to
College Sub Level One. This is why you should have never gone
to that school.

ARIEL: But –

BOBBY SUE: End of discussion.

MIRANDA: No. No! She wants to be a doctor! Don't you – why don't you – you make no sense!

BOBBY SUE: Every Bobby Sue makes sense. We make excellent decisions. We have conducted studies. We run panel discussions. We know how to help you.

MIRANDA cries out in frustration.

BOBBY SUE: *(continuing from above)* We know how to make your lives better and still you resist. Every generation is exactly the same. Your mother was a screw up and you two are following right behind.

MIRANDA stops and stares at BOBBY SUE.

MIRANDA: Was a screw up?

BOBBY SUE: Miranda, I am ordering a psycho-evaluation.

MIRANDA: *(same time as BOBBY SUE below)* Was a screw up. Was. Was! Was!

BOBBY SUE: *(same time as MIRANDA above)* Please report to the social services building for Block 7E tomorrow morning at 9:00 am.

MIRANDA: Tell Ariel what happened. Tell her! Where's Mom, Bobby Sue?

ARIEL: *(catching on)* Where's my mother? What did you do?

BOBBY SUE: What did I do? I did everything. I offered advice and wisdom. I made her see the error of her ways.

MIRANDA: She was never good enough for you.

BOBBY SUE: I gave her a second chance. A poor decision, clearly.

MIRANDA: *(realizing what happened)* You knew she was going to run.

ARIEL: Was she caught? What happened to her?

BOBBY SUE: Bobby Sue is all you need.

ARIEL: What happened?

BOBBY SUE: Bobby Sue will be your mother.

ARIEL: *(turning to BOBBY SUE)* You're not my mother.

BOBBY SUE: Warning. First warning, Ariel.



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