

FISHBONE IN THE BLANCMANGE

A SOAP WITH ATTITUDE

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CHARACTERS:

Briar - female; young, beautiful and rich
Holly - female; young, beautiful and rich
Brook - male; need not be so young, but handsome and rich
Caitlan - female; young, beautiful and rich
Andrew - male; young, handsome and athletic
Andrew - male; young, handsome and athletic
Andrew - male; young, handsome and athletic
Logan - male; a vicar

Extras could be mannequins

*The actors playing the parts need not be young at all. The Director should strive, through music and lighting (perhaps pastels on a cyclorama), to give the impression of television soap. Characters understand only the cunning of their plans; they must not understand their irony. Not a word of the performance must indicate the slightest comprehension - even when in the script it sometimes appears as if they do. They **never** speak to the audience.*

ACT ONE

Scene i

Soap music. Lights rise to Briar and Holly on patio. There are theatre lights and video on display - as if it is a studio.

Briar: Don't be so prickly, Holly.

Holly: It's you that's sensitive, Briar. If you really love Brook then you wouldn't be doing this to me. I love Brook. And even though Brook is Caitlan's husband, she's such a mess. And Brook needs my support right now.

Briar: If Brook needs your support, then why did he come to me when Caitlan had her breakdown? It's you that's chasing him. I'm not. I don't need to chase him. He's chasing me.

Holly: So you think that when Brook's divorce comes through he'll...

Briar: I'm not saying that. It's simply that...

Holly: It's his money you're after, isn't it?

Briar: Money? I don't need Brook's money! When Zachary died he left me so much money that it makes Brook look like a pauper.

Holly: Then if you're so rich, how come you shop at K-Mart?

Briar: You can have Brook's money! It's his... his soul that I'm after. His mind. His caring. When Caitlan had her accident and was confined to a wheelchair - before her breakdown - who was it that Brook turned to for solace? I could see the pain in his eyes. Here he was, in the prime of his manhood, lumbered with a wife who dribbled on her bodice. I was there when he needed me. Where were you? In Tahiti chasing Andrew. Were you there for Brook? Oh no! When Brook...

Holly: But Andrew needed me then. Cambria had just had her third miscarriage and Andrew was devastated. I went with him to Tahiti to help him recover. It was no good Cambria going. How was I to know that Caitlan would have her accident then? How was I to know?

Briar: You're a bimbo, Holly. I knew that Caitlan was about to have her accid... I knew that Brook was tired of Caitlan. How he suffered terribly in his relationship. Caitlan should've died. But instead, Brook has had to wait two years for the divorce to come through. Caitlan is no better than a vegetable, and yet she refuses to consent to the divorce. She's very selfish. Doesn't she know how Brook feels? How would she like it if she was married to someone in a wheelchair, instead of the other way round? And who was there?

Holly: I was!

Briar: You were in Tahiti with Andrew. I was! I was there for Brook when he needed me. I was there for Brook even though my husband's mother had just died. I was the one who sacrificed going to my husband's mother's funeral to be there for Brook. I was the one who cared.

Holly: Care for all you want, Mother Theresa. But Brook is mine.

She slams down her wine glass on the table.

Holly: Brook is mine as soon as my divorce comes through with Andrew, and Caitlan dies or her divorce comes through - what ever is first.

Briar: *(slamming her wine glass down on the table)* It's war is it? When I had my affair with Andrew it wasn't to get at you! It was for your own good - to let you know who is attractive around here. You can't keep a husband. You married Andrew but it was me he loved. And now you have your claws into Brook. But I'll show you. When Caitlan dies...

Both: Brook is mine!

Music rises. Music fades as they exit. Brook enters with Caitlan in a wheelchair. She is totally non compos mentis.

Brook: I'm not sure if this daily drag-my-wife-out-in-public-for-a-wheelchair-excursion is paying off. Not enough see me. Still, it serves some purpose. It gets some sympathy vote.

He leaves the wheelchair.

Brook: *(to Caitlan)* Why has Providence lumbered my soul with a mill stone too heavy to bear? Why, in my finest hour, in my prime, did I swear for better or worse in the marriage vow? Better or worse? Worse? This is not worse. This is disaster. This is a curse. But this is not Caitlan! This thing here. This crumpled-up wheelchair-load of former womanhood. No! This is a carrot, a parsnip, a turnip, or at best a canary. The woman I married was not this. Caitlan was beautiful, strong: a shining pendant on my platinum chain. When I arranged the accident two years ago it was not for this. You were meant to die, darling. You were meant to die. I was not meant to suffer like this.

Caitlan: Whoh... oor... hoor... hoor...

Brook: Briar alone knows the truth of your accident. So Briar must go. But first I must use her to incite Holly's jealousy, so that I can marry Holly and get her divorce settlement money that she's expecting from Andrew. But first I must marry Briar so that when she dies I get the inheritance she got from Zachary when he died. Thank God Zachary's son that Briar had was really mine. But don't worry, darling. When our divorce comes through I'll still care for you. A man with a woman in a wheelchair is more attractive than one with a sports car. I have both.

Briar enters.

Briar: There you are darling!

Brook: Darling! Briar!

Briar: *(at first, from the audience's point of view, to Caitlan, but gradually it becomes clear she is speaking to Brook)* You poor darling! How you must suffer! Attached day after day to a wheelchair. Tied in the curse of a government that won't permit euthanasia. Haltered, like a horse to a carriage, going hither and thither to places you do not wish to go. Dictated to by the needs of this incontinent deformity. How you must suffer, Brook! Why don't you finish her off? Finish off what we started two years ago when first we fell in love.

Brook: I cannot do that, Briar. There is still a vestige of conservatism in me. It is my catholic upbringing.

Briar: It's catholic guilt. Send her to Australia for an injection. It's legal there. Or Holland.

- Brook:** I cannot, Briar. Divorce, yes. But I have not the courage to do more. I have not the courage to put her down, or even to have her put down by a merciful medic.
- Briar:** (*wooing him over the wheelchair*) You are a tender shining star in the heavens of this caring nation. Yes, we are a caring nation. And my knees palpitate at the thought of your tenderness. I love you, Brook! I love you like I have loved no one since I loved Ramon.
- Brook:** (*also over wheelchair*) I love you too, Holly.
- Briar:** Briar!
- Brook:** Briar! I love you as the sun and moon and stars. I want you. I need you.
- Briar:** Brook!
- Brook:** Marry me.
- Briar:** Brook!
- Brook:** When the divorce comes through. Tomorrow!
- Briar:** Tomorrow!
- Brook:** And tomorrow we will wed. But I cannot forsake Caitlan.
- Briar:** Of course not. She can be the bridesmaid. (*Going down to Caitlan*) You can be the bridesmaid, Caitlan. You'd like that wouldn't you. You'd like to be my bridesmaid, wouldn't you? Tomorrow? When your divorce comes through?
- Caitlan:** Whoh... oor... hoor... hoor...
- Briar:** See! She dribbles her delight. Till tonight then. Under the stars.
- Brook:** Could you take her for a walk? I need time. I need space just now.
- Briar:** You know I'm not Florence Nightingale. You know I was not born a nurse. You know I can't stand to see her suffer.
- Brook:** Briar, please! Just this once. I need to think.

Briar: Just this once, darling. But in our marriage, she's your responsibility. I am too sensitive to show tenderness. I am too caring to care. It hurts.

Brook: Just this once.

He kisses her on the cheek. She wheels off Caitlan.

Brook: *(to self)* See how suffering breaks the hearts of those who see it.

Holly enters.

Holly: There you are darling!

Brook: Darling! Holly!

Holly: *(in Brook's arms)* You poor darling! How you must suffer! Attached day after day to a wheelchair. Tied in the curse of a government that won't permit euthanasia. Haltered, like a horse to a carriage, going hither and thither to places you do not wish to go. Dictated to by the incontinent deformity which was Caitlan. Caitlan, who was once my half-sister but is now only half-Caitlan. And that half the half that was not my sister. Oh Brook! How you must suffer. Send her to Australia. Or Holland.

Brook: There's nothing more I wish than to hold you in my arms. I need you, Holly, like the hedgehog needs winter for hibernation. I want you. But there's something you must know. It is you I love, but it is Briar I must marry.

They break apart.

Holly: Briar?

Brook: I love you, Hazel.

Holly: Holly!

Brook: *(correcting self)* Holly!

Holly: Briar?

Brook: Tomorrow. After the divorce from Caitlan. It's you I love. But I'll tell you why I must...

Holly: Don't touch me!

Brook: It's for love of you that I marry Briar. You hate Briar. You hate her with a vengeance, and rightly so. It was she who stole the sperm from the bank that I'd left there for us. Us! It was she who had the child that should've been ours! But I have vengeance too. And it is to punish Briar that I spurn you. Together we can take her money. Together we can break her feet, her knees, her arms, her neck, and at last, her heart. It's for you, Holly, that I marry Briar. There are two in this threesome: you and her.

Holly: *(back in his arms)* I love you! I always have; ever since Andrew left me for Denis. But I never knew till now what a tender, caring heart lay beating in your hairy chest. I loved you for your body. But now I love you for your soul.

Brook: Holly!

Holly: Marry Briar! Tomorrow! It is our love pact.

They begin to go. Music.

Briar: See how bright red berries nestle in the green.
Briar is my crown of thorns; Holly's in my dreams.

Briar enters with Caitlan in wheelchair.

Briar: Where is he?

She look around. She exits - leaving wheelchair.

Briar: *(offstage)* Brook! Brook!

Holly: *(offstage, other side)* Brook!

Briar enters.

Briar: Brook!

Briar exits.

Briar: Brook! Yoo-hoo! Brook!

Holly: *(offstage)* Brook!

Briar: Brook!

Holly: Brook!

Briar: Brook!

Holly: Brook!

Caitlan stands and rearranges the cushion of her wheelchair. She stretches. She walks about. She returns to the wheelchair. She sits. She waits. Lights fade.

Scene ii

Patio furniture changes position to make a different patio. Three men - Andrew, Andrew and Andrew - are sitting. Music fades.

Andrew I: So that's what I do! And you? What do you do, Andrew?

Andrew II: This and that - mainly as a secretary - sales and marketing - you know - that sort of thing - for a publishing firm. And you? What do you do, Andrew?

Andrew III: I'm a sheet metal engineer. But do you enjoy being a librarian, Andrew?

Andrew I: Mainly, Andrew. I'd prefer to do what Andrew does - a secretary or something.

Andrew II: But I'd love to be a librarian, Andrew, like Andrew, wouldn't you Andrew?

Andrew III: Yes!

They pause, sitting uncomfortably, having just met and running out of conversation.

Andrew III: Isn't it funny how we're all called Andrew!

Andrew I & II: Yes!

Silence.

Andrew I: It's very hot, isn't it?

Andrew II & III: Yes!

Silence. Andrew I takes off his shirt. A silent routine follows, during which Andrew II & III are subtly attracted to Andrew I's torso.

Andrew II: Are you... Are you the Andrew that used to go out with Denis?

Andrew III: No, that was me! We broke up. I used to be married - twice.

Andrew I: To Denis?

Andrew III: No!

Silence.

Andrew III: *(to Andrew II)* Are you gay?

Andrew II: Me? Am I?

Andrew III: You haven't come out yet?

Andrew II: Out? Sometimes. Um. I'm not sure. Sometimes. Well, I'm not sure.

Silence.

Andrew I: Well?

Andrew II: Well, I could be. Look, let's be open about this.

Silence.

Andrew III: Are you?

Andrew I: *(trying to cover up for Andrew II's embarrassment)* I think sex is like religion. You believe what you like. We don't need psychologists or vicars to tell us what to believe. We're born with it - this way or that. It's like tennis.

Andrew III: Tennis?

Andrew I: Yes.

Andrew III: Oh!

Silence.

Andrew III: I think the whole world's gay. Michelangelo was gay. You've only to look at David's whatsits to know that. Imaging chiselling them out.

Andrew II: Out?

Andrew III: In fact, I think men fall in love with women only to try to convince themselves they're not gay. That's how it was with Holly. I forced myself to fall in love.

Andrew I & II: Holly?

Holly enters.

Holly: Andrew!

All Three: (*standing*) Darling!

Confusion.

All Three: You two know Holly?

Holly: Only too well! I see you've met, and no doubt my little secret's out.

All Three: Secret?

Holly: I date only gay men. It's very fashionable. Now I'm glad I've found you all together, so I can tell you all at once.

All Three: What?

Holly: Andrew.

All Three: Yes?

Holly: I'm leaving you!

All Three: Leaving me?

Holly: There, that wasn't so bad. And the one I was married to, we can still be friends. That's very fashionable too. Except for the settlement. There has to be a settlement. **Out** of court preferably, it doesn't matter, as long as we remain friends and I get the money.

All Three: Out?

Holly: I have to concentrate on Brook. He's heterosexual. I know that's not politically correct, but the thing is, I've fallen in love with him. This time it's for real.

All Three: In love?

Holly: I was trying so hard to be lesbian that I quite forgot what it was like to be normal.

All Three: Normal?

Holly: Normal.

Andrew I: But anything's normal.

Holly: Well, natural then.

Andrew III: But anything's natural. You do what comes natural. That's what makes it normal.

Andrew II: You know, you're right. You've convinced me to come out. It's natural and normal. I'm gay and I'm normal. There!

Andrew III: *(hugging Andrew II)* Andrew!

Andrew I: *(hugging Andrew II)* Andrew!

Andrew III: *(hugging Andrew I)* Andrew!

Andrew II: *(hugging Andrew III)* Andrew!

Andrew I: *(hugging Andrew III)* Andrew!

All Three: *(hugging Holly)* Holly!

Holly: Andrew! So brave! I haven't seen such bravery since my neighbour shot himself. Put the gun in his mouth and pulled the trigger. Such... courage.

Silence.

Holly: Must be off. Have an appointment with my aromatic herbalist. I knew this would be traumatic. All the best for your escort agency.

All Three: Thanks!

Andrew III: How did you know that?

Holly: In the paper. Ring something and ask for Andrew.

Holly goes. The Andrews sit. Silence.

Andrew II: I knew it wouldn't work.

Andrew III: What?

Andrew II: The escort agency. It's been four hours.

Andrew III: Since?

Andrew I: Four hours since the advertisement came out.

Andrew II: Out?

Andrew I: And no one's phoned.

Silence.

Andrew II: I still don't know what we're meant to do.

Andrew III: Anything. Just take it as it comes.

Andrew II: I mean, what do we say on the phone? (*Pretending to be on phone*) Do you want a librarian, a publishing company secretary or a sheet metal engineer?

Andrew I: Yeah.

Andrew II: What for?

Andrew I: I heard of this client who phoned up and wanted a man in tight leather shorts with studded choker attached to a chain.

Andrew II: God!

Andrew I: So she could lead her toy boy around all night on her fortieth. It was a birthday present from her husband.

Andrew II: I don't have the gear!

Andrew III: The food's free.

Andrew I: You've got to be versatile.

Andrew II: (*desperate*) But what if they want sex!

Silence. The phone goes offstage.

Andrew I & III: (*leaping up*) I'll get it!

Andrew II: (*desperate*) Denis! Where are you?

Lights out. Music.

Scene iii

Setting as for Scene i. Brook enters, pushing Caitlan in wheelchair. Music fades.

Brook: *(to Caitlan, waving paper)* So here is the divorce. Signed by me and your mark. A cross. One giant liberating X over your name. An X *(he makes an X in the air with his finger)* forced I agree by the hand that feeds you, but who will know that? I'm free! Not that that stopped me. Let me tell you something Caitlan: you not dying, when I pushed you over the cliff, was the luckiest thing that has ever happened to me. I get all that money from Welfare and I can hide behind your wheelchair: shafting the bank, shafting the government, shafting the relatives. You are a windfall to me, and an alibi. But the mystery is how resistant you seem to be to poison. Every time Briar poisons your tea it seems not to have the slightest effect. Stay here and wait for the wedding, pretty bridesmaid! I've just time to visit Holly. If the guests arrive, keep them entertained! *(Going)* I hope Briar wears white.

He goes. Caitlan produces a tape recorder and turns it off. She produces a cell phone which she dials. The music rises louder and we see her speak into the phone. She finishes and puts the tape and phone under a blanket on the wheelchair. Music fades. She stands and walks to the side of the stage.

Briar: *(offstage)* Brook!

Caitlan quickly lies on the floor as if fallen. Briar enters. She steps over Caitlan.

Briar: If you're going to fall, do it away from the door. Have you seen Brook? Pah! I feel like I've just talked to my plants. Brook! Brook!

She exits opposite. Caitlan gets up. The doorbell rings offstage. Caitlan sits in wheelchair. Briar enters with Logan, the Vicar.

Briar: Thank you for changing my way of thinking. So we thought we would have the wedding here *(gesturing to front stage)* with the guests mainly in there *(gesturing offstage)*.

Logan: Yes.

Briar: It's sort of like a church isn't it, Logan? With the altar part here and the people in the body of the church there. We could decorate it to make it look like a church. Bring in the garden gnomes or something.

Logan: But God is everywhere Briar. You don't have to be in a church for God to witness your vows. God is in your heart. It's only humankind that has built churches. They want control over God.

Briar: Exactly.

Logan: Rules, rules, rules made by humankind as shackles. Humankind is not saved by the law but by being liberated.

Briar: One of the things that Brook and I have in common is that we both believe in a God, which is why we wanted you to do it, Logan. Do you think the video camera should be here or over there near where the wheelchair is?

She goes over and nonchalantly shoves the wheelchair out of the way, framing her hands around her eyes as if videoing.

Logan: One of the things I feel, is that so many marriages are built on poor videos. I hope you're getting it done professionally.

Briar: Of course. I always have my weddings done professionally. It's a way of keeping the memory alive.

Logan: Now, the wheelchair's a problem. That's a bridesmaid isn't it?

Briar: I thought we could stick it over there somewhere. It's Brook that insists upon using it. But marriage is a two-way thing. Brook can have the wheelchair, but he'll have to compromise. I'm not having it in the video. I don't want to sit, you know. I don't want to sit. Are there readings?

Logan: Yes. But don't feel that they have to be from the Scriptures. God speaks to us in many ways.

Briar: Keep them short. If they're long I'll need to sit and it might crease the dress. Do you preach?

Logan: I'm sure it's not necessary. Just a few encouraging thoughts perhaps on the sanctity of marriage. I'm sure it's nothing to sit for.

Briar: Well it's not catholic. Brook's catholic you know, but he's trying frantically to give it up. All this bobbing up and down that they do. This is my third marriage. I've had to shop around for a flexible vicar.

Logan: Jesus came to free humankind Briar, not to enslave. It's what you feel.

Briar: Good, because I wouldn't wish to compromise your principles. I'm all for church weddings - they have such lovely traditions. The only thing I've got against Christian marriage is that it's not permanent. That's why we thought of you, Logan. You're so... refreshing.

Logan: Do you think so?

Briar: Refreshing! Open! So open to the feminine aspect of your masculinity. We're having blue as a theme, and I wondered what coloured stole you were wearing? This wedding is costing thousands. Tea or coffee? *(They begin to go)* We're spending thousands on flowers alone. Thousands on the dresses. And the photographer's not cheap I can tell you. None of them are. And the caterers! We thought we'd give you ten dollars. Is that alright?

Logan: That's lovely.

Briar: After all, it is a vocation rather than a job isn't it!

They exit. Music rises. Caitlan uses the phone again. Mannequin wedding guests arrive with wine glasses. Holly enters and plonks a hat on Caitlan - pushing the chair out of the way. Brook enters in wedding suit. Logan enters. Wedding music. Briar enters in white. Music stops. The wedding party have their backs to the audience with the vicar facing them.

Logan: We are gathered here in the sight of... one another to witness this union of Briar and Brook. Brook and Briar have written their own vows.

Logan beams like a vicar.

Brook: I, Brook, give you space to be yourself; give you freedom to develop as a person; give you room to move.
May our love blossom and fruit.
Should our love fail then we will share our possessions without bitterness: for marriage is sharing, and the sign of a happy marriage is divorce without acrimony.
We will live our own lives together but independently.

Applause.

Briar: Brook, you are the sun of my firmament.

We see Caitlan take her cell phone and dial.

Briar: You are a comet in my sky; a meteorite; the shooting star of my night.
You are the moon of my dusk and the sun of my dawn.
You are mine.

Caitlan: *(into phone)* Now!

Sudden loud sleaze music. Andrew, Andrew and Andrew enter dressed as cowboys or whatever and begin to do a strip routine. There is stunned confusion amongst wedding party. The Andrews strip down to leather shorts and studded chokers with chains. They each clip a studded band around Briar - one on each wrist and one around her neck. The Andrews are now chained to the bride.

Briar: What's going on?

Brook: Did you arrange this?

Briar: This is not a joke.

Brook: What did you arrange this for?

Briar: I didn't. Take them off.

Brook: I have never been so humiliated in my life.

Briar: Take them off!

Non-mannequin guests come forward, but Briar is firmly attached to the Andrews.

Brook: What did you do this for?

Briar: Get them off!

It develops into total chaos in which Briar is torn this way and that. Eventually non-mannequin guests control the three Andrews, but they are still attached to Briar.

Brook: The wedding's off as far as I'm concerned. I apologise to the guests for this inconvenience. Thank you however, for the efforts you have all made to be here, and for your gifts which are appreciated. I would like you all to know that this travesty is nothing to do with me. It is obviously intended as a total humiliation of me, and I intend to take Briar to court and sue her for everything she's got - including all that Zachary left her when he died. Briar, I hate you as I have never hated before. I cannot bear to be in the same room as you.

Briar: It's not my fault!

Brook: I hate you for what you have done, for who you were, for who you are, and for who you will be.

Briar: Brook, I despise you from the bottom of my heart. You organised this to humiliate me in front of my friends. I will hate and despise you all the days of my life. This is my third marriage, and the one that holds the least happy memories. Get out of my sight!

Brook: Get off my patio, Elizabeth Taylor!

Briar: Get out of my space!

Brook: Get out of my life!

Briar: Get out of my firmament!

They are now shouting.

Brook: I'll see you in court!

Briar: I hope so!

Logan: Hold it, hold it, hold it!

Brook: Go on! Go on!

Briar: I can't! You've chained me here!

Logan: Marriage is an institution given us by God.

Brook: Oh shut up, you old faggot.

He pushes the vicar.

Briar: Get these things off!

Brook: A faggot in drag.

Logan: (*pushing Brook*) Don't you go calling me a faggot!

Andrew I: (*pushing Brook and falling on top of the vicar*) There's no such thing as a faggot.

Brook: Get off your horse, you queen.

Andrew III: (*pushing Brook*) Don't you go calling him that.

Briar: Get these things off!

It develops into a fight between Brook and the three chained Andrews, with Briar pulled this way and that. The vicar and guests join in. Eventually some semblance of order is restored. The two parties stand glaring at each other. Holly stands with Brook.

Brook: I wish to announce that Holly and I intend to get married. I love Holly. I always have. Okay? So the truth's out.

They kiss.

Briar: I hate you.

Brook: *(to guests)* Since you're here. This is an engagement party. Eat, drink and be merry! Thank you for your presence and your presents. It honours Holly and me on our happy day of engagement. In you go! Come on! In you go! Let's forget this tragedy and celebrate the positive.

The guests begin to go inside.

Holly: *(to Briar)* Bad luck, bitch.

Briar: You organised this, didn't you?

Holly: Perhaps you could be a bridesmaid?

The guests and vicar have now gone. Briar spits.

Holly: A cat with three claws.

Briar: You organised this!

Holly: Come along, darling. We must mingle with our guests.

Holly and Brook exit, leaving Briar chained to the three Andrews and Caitlan in her wheelchair.

Briar: Get me out of this.

Caitlan: Whoh... oor... hoor... hoor...

Briar: Chuck that thing in the pool.

Caitlan suddenly stands.

Caitlan: It was I who organised this!

She produces a key to unlock the chains. Briar is stunned. Andrews exit.

Caitlan: You stole Brook from me. You are the one who organised Brook to push me over the cliff. You are the one who constantly put poison in my tea. This is my revenge. I will see you destroyed. Your hatred is music compared to mine. Your bitterness is eider down compared to my road of rocks over a ridge of righteousness.

Briar: You are a two-faced, two-timing, deceitful, two-uddered cow. You planned my destruction. Now I plan yours.

Caitlan: Just try. You don't stand a chance in revenge.

Briar: My milk curdles. Just watch me!

She calls out to the crowd in the adjoining room. Caitlan hastily returns to the wheelchair.

Briar: Everyone! Everyone! It's Caitlan! Caitlan organised this.

Crowd enters, along with Brook and Holly.

Briar: Caitlan is not an invalid. She stood up and told me she organised this... this mess. It's Caitlan! Everyone! Caitlan did it.

Caitlan: Whoh... oor... hoor... hoor...

All stare.

Holly: She's broken! Briar's hallucinating.

Logan: It's the shock.

Briar: Caitlan is not an invalid!

Brook: Call an ambulance.

Briar: I'm not sick! Caitlan got up! Out of the chair!

Brook: Hold her! She's lost her mind!

Briar: I'm normal.

A scuffle results, during which Caitlan is shoved from her wheelchair onto the floor, and Briar is held firmly in the wheelchair. Ambulance lights and siren offstage.

Briar: I'm innocent.

Holly: Inject her! Give her a sedative!

Holly takes a syringe from her handbag.

Holly: Here! Take this!

She injects Briar.

Briar: I'm not mad. I'm perfectly sane. Caitlan did it. She's not a para...
para... paraplegic!

They wheel her off. The crowd follows.

Briar: *(offstage)* Para... para... paraplegic!

Caitlan still lies on floor. Music. Caitlan gets up and straightens her dress.

Caitlan: One down.

Music rises. Ambulance lights and siren fade. Lights fade.

ACT TWO

Scene i

Soap music. Lights rise to Holly reading newspaper on patio. She has a pile of magazines. Some of the studio lights on stage have been removed.

Holly: *(reading)* Virgo. Change is beneficial if you can remain philosophical about the process you have to go through to achieve results. Lucky colour: mauve. Lucky number: seven.

She takes a magazine and finds the Stars.

Holly: Your bite is worse than your bark. Romance lurks, especially on Thursday. Lucky number: four.

Brook enters. She looks up.

Holly: I'm trying to find the best day for the wedding. Most of the horoscopes are quite unprofessional. I saw the tarot lady at the market and she said a spring wedding. The tarot lady on the floor below said a Christmas wedding, and the... *(Remembering)* Biorhythms! I haven't checked the biorhythms!

Brook: Why not a registry office?

Holly: What would my parents think!

Briar enters, pushing Caitlan in the wheelchair. Both are non compos.

Holly: They say that the ancient Gaelic rune readings are reliable. It's not popular enough to have untrained amateurs - yet. Virgo's Carnelian. That's Earth. Those Rose Bulgarian incense sticks have made me so indecisive. Angels are in - there's all sorts.

Brook picks up a magazine.

Holly: There's an article there on the Princess of Wales. I don't want a happy marriage, Brook. I want a tragic marriage. It's very fashionable to suffer. It's why she's so beautiful. Women all over the world are having their husbands leave them so they can be piteously beautiful. The other day I threw a coin into the hat of a child playing the accordion. I presume she was busking because she needed lessons. I felt like the Queen of Hearts. I simply don't have the time to be visiting AIDS hospitals. She resorted to infidelity for comfort. She's such a wonderful model. *(Remembering)* An astrology decoder - that's what I need! An astrology decoder. I must ask my psychic for names.

She takes the cell phone and begins to dial. Briar quickly pushes Caitlan off stage. The phone is heard to ring off stage.

Holly: Lake! It's Holly! I need an astrology decoder. Have you got names? A decoder! It's a book? I want a person! On Monday? Tomorrow? I am!

She puts the phone down. Briar wheels in Caitlan.

Holly: She can read my mind. She knew I was on the patio. Amazing. You should try her.

Music rises. Holly and Brook exit. Music fades as the Andrews enter.

Briar: Andrew! You are the one who made me see how false Brook's love for me was.

Caitlan: You are the one who helped me to help Briar see how false Brook's love for her was.

Briar: Caitlan is my friend.

Caitlan: Briar is my friend too. It's very human.

Briar: It's alright to be human, Caitlan.

Caitlan: I am, Briar.

Andrew I: How come I'm not as deep as you are?

Andrew II: I feel so shallow when I'm out of my depth.

Andrew III: I feel. I simply feel. I feel proud to be the one who helped Briar see how false Brook's love was.

Andrew I: I feel proud to be the one who helped Caitlan show Briar how false Brook's love was.

Andrew II: I feel proud to be part of the escort agency that did that - especially since Holly dropped us all.

Briar: Life is like a treadmill - the treadmill of life. The more it rains the more I feel truly relational. I feel so blessed.

Caitlan: I couldn't have put it better. It's like the sun still shining above the clouds - even though we think it's overcast.

Briar: It depends where you live. If you live above the clouds then it's permanent sunshine. I should imagine.

Caitlan: But it snows on mountain tops.

Briar: Oh would that I could get my claws into Brook.

Caitlan: I think you should.

Briar: For as long as he lives you are stuck in a wheelchair. In a wheelchair! Pretending! Pretending to be stuck in a wheelchair.

Caitlan: I cannot much longer pretend. My heart cries out for a still more honest life. I cannot bear to be two-faced.

Briar: But two faces are better than one. Like you, I cannot pretend. Pretend! Pretend to have had a breakdown.

Caitlan: Briar, Holly is my half sister. If only we shared the same father, instead of the same mother, then we would be full sisters.

Briar: If only we shared the same father, then we would be half sisters. But we do not share the same father, nor the same mother. All we shared was Brook, but he's not our father.

Caitlan: Nor our mother. Yet we are sisters because we share womanhood.

Andrew I: This has been a wonderful experience for me.

Andrew III: It is a cosmic experience.

Andrew II: A what?

Briar: *(to Andrew II)* There's no woman in your breast.

Caitlan: Here's what I want you to do.

Music rises. All do a whispering routine. All look pleased. Music fades.

Andrew I: Oh! Darling!

Lights out.

Scene ii

The rest of the studio lights on stage have been removed. A market with various fortune tellers' stalls for the three Andrews, Caitlan and Briar (all in disguise). The curtains of each stall opens and closes as each stall is used. Mannequins loll. Holly enters.

Holly: You are Lupine de Root?

Briar: Dutch. Take a seat. I see hurt. Give me your hand. I *feel* hurt. You carry anger.

Holly: Yes, Lupine. I have been angry ever since my child was kidnapped, and Randall refused to pay the ransom. He knew my child had AIDS. That was when my life became filled with bitterness.

Briar: You seem filled with bitterness.

Holly: I have too much self-respect to carry hatred. But bitterness, yes. I could kill Randall for what he did; but hate him, never.

Briar: I see a compassionate heart.

Holly: May I take a few moments to recover?

She dabs her eyes.

Holly: It's so comforting to have someone who understands.

Briar: It was Randall who organised the kidnap. He could never accept the fact that his son was fathered by William. Richardson was such a strong child, and getting the HIV infected blood transfusion really knocked it out of him. You can still see his disfigured body hanging from the tree. But that is not why you're here. You're here for something more important.

Holly: My marriage?

Briar: You know!

Holly: Lake said you were an extraordinary psychic! What is the best date to marry Brook?

Briar: Randall was one of the most moral people you ever knew. He lied to protect you. Now regarding your marriage... I see a terrible problem.

- Holly:** What?
- Briar:** Too terrible! Who am I to say it? Who am I to tell you of something that will completely ruin your life?
- Holly:** But you must!
- Briar:** I can't!
- Holly:** But if I know the terrible future, then surely I can do something to prevent it?
- Briar:** There is nothing! Nothing that can be done!
- Holly:** Tell me! I am brave.
- Briar:** I see a brave heart - one of the strongest people I have ever met. I wouldn't tell you if I knew you were weak.
- Holly:** Tell me! I am ready.
- Briar:** The marriage will never work. You are allergic to Brook's sperm.
- Holly:** But...
- Briar:** That's it in a nutshell. There's nothing you can do.
- Holly:** But...
- Briar:** Not even antibiotics.

Holly gets up and wanders out in shock.

- Holly:** When it comes to dying, we're all out of control. Never could I turn my back on Brook. And I am dying; dying for love, dying of a broken heart. I have married so often in search of the perfect man. And at last I find him only to find... Why is my life so miserable? It's all very well to say I'm lucky compared to the starving millions, but what African woman in a shanty town would have my problems? Better to have no food than to be starved of love. Better to have no house than to be devoid of Brook as a protecting shelter. Dear Lord, I would gladly do without my swimming pool to have Brook. I would rather be dead. Sheep do it. Dogs do it. Rats do it. Why can't Brook and I?

She enters the second stall where there is Andrew I.

- Andrew I:** I see a broken heart.

Holly: A broken life!

Andrew spreads tarot cards.

Holly: What's that death card?

Andrew I: That's nothing. Just a change in your life.

Holly: A change! A devastation! I have just discovered I am allergic to my fiance.

Andrew I: Not Brook?

Holly: Yes! Brook! Is there a way out?

Andrew I: It goes deeper than that. Far deeper. It is fortuitous that you and Brook are incompatible. He does not love you. He wants marriage for money.

Holly: What nonsense! His other marriages have been for that, but this one is genuine.

Andrew I: This one is the same as the others.

Holly: How do you know that?

Andrew I: It's in the cards. As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods, they kill us for their sport.

Holly: But surely we can determine some aspect of our lives? Surely it's not all fate?

Andrew I: Brook is beyond being able to change. He has always followed every whim, and now he's in the hands of the gods. He will never change. He loves your money.

Holly gets up and wanders out in shock.

Holly: I am allergic to the man who loves me for my money. Can things get worse? Is it possible to imagine a still worse scenario?

She enters the third stall, where Andrew II is. He has a crystal ball.

Holly: What does the future hold?

Andrew II: I see only blackness.

Holly: Blackness?

- Andrew II:** You are the reincarnation of an ancient Egyptian pharaoh's sacred cat.
- Holly:** I am?
- Andrew II:** You were buried alive in a pyramid. That's why there's darkness here.
- Holly:** A cat?
- Andrew II:** A sacred cat. Because you were buried live in the pyramid there's nothing in future lives that can be seen.
- Holly:** Buried alive. I am. Even today.
- Andrew II:** You must break this ancient curse.
- Holly:** But how?
- Andrew II:** By refusing to be buried alive again. You must overcome the blackness. But what is the blackness?
- Holly:** The man I am allergic to loves me for my money.
- Andrew II:** Then overcome it.
- Holly:** But how?
- Andrew II:** You must plan revenge.
- Holly:** Revenge?
- Andrew II:** Revenge.
- Holly:** How?
- Andrew II:** I see only blackness. I cannot tell you how to overcome the curse. You must discover it yourself.

Holly gets up and wanders out in shock.

- Holly:** If only the pharaoh hadn't buried me in the pyramid, then I would be alright. Why, three, four thousand years ago should some pharaoh determine the particulars of my life today? Why did Rameses the Fifth's death cause Brook to love me only for my money? Why did Queen Hatshepsut make me allergic to my fiance's sperm? How can I break this curse? Why did I used to be a cat?

She enters the fourth stall where there is Caitlan.

Caitlan: Get out! Get out! You are a cat!

Holly: Help me!

Caitlan: Get out! You are an evil cat!

Holly exits.

Holly: I feel unloved. A curse on Tutenkamen's tomb.

She enters the fifth stall where there is Andrew III. He looks into her eyes.

Holly: My life is in ruins. My husband doesn't love me; at least, my future husband. None of my husbands have. I am allergic. I am a cat. What should I do?

Andrew III: I see light at the end of the tunnel. There is hope even in darkness.

Holly: What hope?

Andrew III: What you want is a future that you think should be your future. But the future is not only one alternative. The future can be something else. You must break out of the future you have determined, and determine another future.

Holly: I'll remember that in...

Andrew III: I see roads in your future that go to different places.

Holly: What roads?

Andrew III: It involves Briar and Caitlan.

Holly: Them!

Andrew III: They are your greatest allies.

Holly: But they're away with the fairies.

Andrew III: Believe me. They are the key to breaking this blackness. Call off the marriage. Align yourself with Briar and Caitlan, and then you will be free.

Holly goes. Music.

Holly: I have reached a crossroads in my life's journey. How new I feel!
How full of hope! Of promise! The winter is gone; spring is here.
How liberating to be free! It gives me inner strength to have shed
my past, and to look forward to a future filled with possibility.

Brook enters. Holly slaps him in the face.

Holly: I hate you!

Brook: Holly!

Holly: The wedding's off! I am a cat!

Music rises. Lights fade.

Scene iii

Patio. Brook is seated. Logan enters.

Logan: I'm here to arrange the wedding.

Brook: Holly says it's off.

Logan: Off?

Brook: Off.

Logan: Off.

Pause.

Logan: Why?

Brook: She says I want marriage for her money.

Pause.

Logan: Do you?

Brook: Yes.

Logan: The Lord brings people together for many reasons, in many ways.

Brook: She says she was an ancient Egyptian cat. Has she gone mad?

Pause.

Logan: We must have our own philosophy; believe what our heart tells us.

Brook: But to say she was a cat!

Logan: If you believe something then it's true.

Brook: To believe the moon is made of cheese doesn't change the rock.

Logan: That's different. We're in the area of faith.

Brook: Same difference.

Logan: Look! You can't be Christian and catholic at the same time. It's a contradiction in terms.

Brook: But a cat!

Logan: We must try to be open to the way other people are: the way they feel, the way they think.

Pause.

Logan: This is charity.

Pause.

Logan: We are saved by faith.

Pause. Briar enters pushing Caitlan in wheelchair. Holly enters. Logan stands.

Logan: Holly! How nice to see you!

Holly: *(attacking Brook)* It's your fault! I never had Richardson christened because he was too old by the time I thought of a name. I was looking forward to having another child. Only this time I wasn't going to have him christened either - I was going to use a naming ceremony involving water, a stone and a feather that Sophia told me about. There's a pamphlet on how to have a naming ceremony at the Medical Centre. Chantelle was going to pick one up for me next time she goes for an abortion. It's your fault my dreams are shattered into fragments. But now I'm free. You deserted Caitlan for Briar. You deserted Briar for me. Now I desert you for Caitlan and Briar.

Briar: You deserted me for Holly.

Caitlan: You deserted me for Briar.

Holly: For Caitlan and Briar I desert you.

Brook: You can speak!

Logan: When the Lord spat the dumb man spake.

Briar: Shut up!

Caitlan: Briar tried to murder me because I loved you.

Holly: You tried to murder Caitlan because you loved Briar.

Briar: Caitlan destroyed me because of Brook.

Holly: Briar destroyed Caitlan because of Brook.

Caitlan: We three will destroy Brook because of Brook.

Holly: It's three times now I have bought a new dress for a wedding and never worn it. Three times! And each time it's Brook! Brook! Brook!

Briar: Brook's the one each has in common.

Caitlan: Brook that has no morals, vicar.

Logan: Call me Logan.

Caitlan: Brook that broke all hearts.

Briar: Brook that is callous.

Holly: Brook me no longer. This Holly has a prickle.

Briar: This Briar has a thorn.

Caitlan: This Caitlan is a rose.

Brook: Let no one say the rich don't suffer.

Holly: But because of you I have found true love.

Brook: True love?

Briar: Because of you I have found true love.

Brook: True love?

Caitlan: Because of you I have found true love.

Brook: True love?

Briar: Yes, Brook. We have found true love because of your faithlessness.

Holly: Your faithlessness has been our road to happiness.

Caitlan: You have been a true friend.

Briar: It is Andrew that I love!

Holly: It is Andrew!

Caitlan: Andrew!

The three Andrews enter and stand in a row.

Briar, Holly & Caitlan: Andrew!

It appears that each is to go to a different Andrew.

Briar, Holly & Caitlan: Andrew!

All three lunge together at Andrew II.

Briar, Holly & Caitlan: Andrew!

Andrew II: Denis! Where are you?

Lights out.

INTERVAL

ACT THREE

Scene i

The second patio. Music. Andrew I and Andrew III enter. The video camera has now been removed - there is now no semblance of the stage being a studio.

Andrew I: A leopard can't change its spots.

Andrew III: After all we did for Andrew. Convincing him he was really gay. And how does he thank us? He runs off with three women.

Andrew I: A zebra can't change its stripes.

Andrew III: He's as gay as a Santa Parade. He has betrayed himself. I don't mind what people are, one way or another, but you must be honest.

Andrew I: A fish can't live out of water.

Andrew III: He used to be married to Holly, and now she's after him again. Our escort agency is down the drain. How can we run it with just two?

Andrew I: It takes more than two to tango.

Andrew III: He owes us a lot more than this.

Andrew II enters.

Andrew II: Hi! Look, I've come to apologise. I'm a bit mixed up at present. I'm loved by three women and two men. And now I think Brook has his eyes on me. I simply don't know who to turn to. Who am I? What am I? Was I born this way or was it my parents? I know I was molested as a child. Do you think that has something to do with it? How can I live a normal life with the upbringing I've had? I was only four when my older brother told me about Father Christmas. I was deprived. For three years I had to pretend to my parents that Father Christmas was true. They never knew that I knew the truth. I had to live a lie. When I say "parents" I really mean my mother. My father died when I was two and my mother never remarried. I came from a dysfunctional home. I had no real male role-model. Only my auntie. And she divorced when I was eight. I called my mother's girlfriend "Dad" - which was another lie. Lies! Lies! Lies! My whole upbringing has been a mess. How can I have a normal relationship with three women, two men, and maybe Brook, when I had such a messy childhood?

Pause. No reaction.

Andrew II: When I married Mahogany I knew it wouldn't last. I was too unstable emotionally. How was I to know that getting an Ethiopian bride by mail-order would put undue strain on an already stressful relationship with Harold? How was I to know that when Harold arranged the adoption of a child he was already planning to leave me? Do you see what a mess I'm in?

Pause. No reaction.

Andrew II: I never had a pet as a child that didn't die on me.

Pause. No reaction.

Andrew II: No bird has ever nested in a tree I planted.

Andrew I: You're making a mountain out of a mole hill.

Andrew II: When I tried to take my life when I was fourteen, even that backfired. They said it was a cry for help. But it wasn't. I wanted to end it all. It wasn't a cry for help. I was beyond that. I wanted to stop the planet and get off. So would you if you had acne as bad as I did.

Pause. No reaction.

Andrew II: The only thing that stopped me trying suicide again was getting polio. I couldn't move for months. I wanted to die. But then one day, a nun visited the hospital and said "You are loved". I could've cried. I was so happy. It was the thing that kept me going. Learning to walk again with the calipers on my legs. Being shunted from one foster home to another because my mother had to work as a prostitute to pay for the medication.

Pause. No reaction.

Andrew II: So what do you think?

Briar enters, carrying a letter.

Briar: There you are Andrew! I've been looking for you everywhere. I've just had this letter. From a solicitor. Grandmother has died and left me all her money and property. We should go to the funeral - together.

Andrew II: But it's a day's drive.

Briar: We could make a holiday of it. Just you and me. I'll pay.

Andrew II: I don't know if I can afford the time.

Briar: I loved my grandmother. She was the one who brought me up. After my father died in the Vietnam war, leaving mother with sixteen small children on her own. She couldn't have managed without my grandmother. I owe it to her to go to the funeral.

Andrew II: Nothing's stopping you.

Briar: But I could not face it on my own. I need support right now. I'm vulnerable. Come on a holiday with me. You've no idea how I feel. When my grandfather died I was devastated. I was only eleven and had to organise the funeral on my own. Grandmother was in hospital at the time and couldn't be released. She was having a baby. My mother couldn't attend because two of my brothers had senile dementia. It was the loneliest time of my life - standing on my own at the crematorium singing "How Great Thou Art" - in Maori. It's given me a fear of funerals. I can't face it. And I feel I should be seen - considering all the money she's left me. Please, Andrew!

Holly enters. The word "Andrew" at the beginning and end of each speech is said by the two characters speaking together.

Holly: Andrew! Am I in need of a hug! I'm devastated. I'm not coping. I've had a bad day. I broke the teapot. It wasn't just any teapot. It was an heirloom. Great-aunt Esther gave it to me as a third engagement present. It's broken! I dropped it! Have I cerebral palsy? I'm not sure if I want to be me any more. Andrew!

Brook enters.

Brook: Andrew! I wondered if you wanted to go for a swim? Or the pictures? Or just out for a meal? I need to talk my problems out, Andrew!

Caitlan enters.

Caitlan: Andrew! I've something to say.

Andrew II: God!

Caitlan: I cannot carry on like this. I'm calling it off. We can still be friends.

Andrew II: You mean...

Caitlan: I'm not ready at present for the emotion of a relationship. It would be wrong for us to enter into more than friendship at this time. I don't want to hurt you, but...

Andrew II: You mean you want to call it off?

Caitlan: Can we? As friends? I'm not ready.

Andrew II: *(flying into Caitlan's arms)* Caitlan! Thank God! I love you!

Caitlan: Andrew!

Andrew II: Caitlan!

Briar: Bitch!

Andrew II: Of course we can just be friends.

Andrew I & III: Bitch!

Caitlan: Do you want to go on a picnic or something? No pressure. Just friends. Just a day off. A day away from it all.

Brook & Holly: Bitch!

Caitlan: How lovely to have a day without problems.

Andrew II: No agenda.

Caitlan: Just you and me sharing old times.

Andrew II: I'd love to.

Holly: I feel so lonely.

Caitlan and Andrew II begin to go.

Caitlan: I packed a picnic basket just in case you wanted to call it off. And you have.

Andrew II: Darling Caitlan. I love you.

Caitlan: Can we take your car? I never planned this.

Andrew II exits. Caitlan turns back to the others.

Caitlan: See how it's done?

Caitlan leaves. The five remaining stand glaring.

- Andrew I:** What gives her the right to do that?
- Briar:** She always was a snob.
- Brook:** Now you know why I dumped her.
- Holly:** Brook, we misjudged you. It's Caitlan; Caitlan all along. She has been the needle in the jelly.
- Briar:** The fishbone in the blancmange.
- Holly:** She, surely, has been behind everything - conniving, plotting, planning.
- Briar:** Why does she succeed where we don't?
- Andrew III:** She knows the stars better than us. She laces our drink with malevolent crystals.
- Briar:** I for an Andrew weep, and you for an Andrew.
- Brook:** Look, I've never admitted this before. But I like Andrew - as a friend. But that doesn't mean to say I'm that way.
- Holly:** Because Andrew's gay and I like him doesn't mean to say I'm homosexual myself.
- Andrew I:** We cannot blame Andrew for this. We must blame Caitlan.
- Andrew III:** I a Caitlan hate, and not an Andrew - Caitlan, who was once my half-sister, but not the half that was the half that Holly was the half-sister of.
- Holly:** We are not related.
- Andrew III:** Then we are free to marry.
- Holly:** Andrew, if I had a sex change, could you love me?
- Andrew III:** Love is to do with chemistry. It is not made in heaven. It is to do with excreted molecules in the air. Just as an idea is an electrical charge in the brain, so is an emotion a series of reactions. The future lies in electro-chemistry. Personal difficulties can be righted by an electro-chemist. The future lies not in hospitals but in beakers.

Briar: You know, you're right! I always suspected there wasn't a God. I not only renounce my religion, I condemn it. I don't believe in the Higher Self any more. But I still believe in angels.

Brook: They say once you cease believing in God you'll believe in any thing.

Andrew I: Religion has done nothing than cause war. But electro-chemistry! What an insight, Andrew!

Brook: But surely it is only electro-chemistry that has told us that it is electro-chemistry that tells us.

Holly: I don't know what to think. I have a chemical imbalance. (*Correcting self*) Shut up! There's something fishy here. I wonder what Logan thinks of this? He has such superior electro-chemistry. And he's a vicar.

Briar: Enough! We must plan the downfall of Caitlan! Together!

Music. Lights fade.

Scene ii

First patio - set up for a wedding. Mannequins. Wedding music. Andrew II enters as groom, with Briar and Holly as grooms men - dressed butch. Caitlan enters as bride, with Andrew I and Andrew III as bridesmaids - not in drag but informal and holding flowers. Logan enters. Brook enters among guests.

Logan: We gather before our Higher Being, to join Andrew and Caitlan in this holy union commitment ceremony. Welcome! I welcome you in the name of one another. Caitlan wants this to be as informal as possible, so let's not stay in these rigid lines.

Logan beams like a vicar.

Caitlan: Lounge! Relax!

The wedding party scatters into various places and positions of informality - including the bride and groom apart.

Logan: I feel an aura about people.

Holly: *(to self)* I wish I'd gone on a diet.

Logan: Caitlan wants everyone to feel at home, yet she wants a traditional wedding - even to the point of making Andrew say "obey"!

All laugh. Briar produces a pistol from her handbag.

Briar: *(pointing pistol at Caitlan)* My electro-chemistry has produced such overwhelming passion that I am no longer responsible for my actions. This is not murder, Caitlan, this is manslaughter. I do it for love. I do it out of insane jealousy.

Holly: *(not meaning it)* Briar! Stop it!

Andrew I: *(not meaning it)* Stop her! Someone!

Brook: *(not meaning it)* Stop her!

Andrew III: *(not meaning it)* Briar! Stop it!

Logan: As God's minister, I cannot dictate morals to anyone. What is right or wrong belongs to the conscience of the individual. My job is to forgive.

- Caitlan:** (to Andrew II) I cannot ask you, Andrew, to protect me; to save me. That would be terribly sexist.
- Andrew II:** I cannot save you from this gun, Caitlan. I refuse to be a male chauvinist pig. Yes, I have the strength to overpower Briar. But who am I to use my superior physical force against a woman?
- Brook:** This is correct. I too feel it is wrong - morally - for me to use my muscle.
- Andrew I:** I too have learnt to control myself.
- Andrew III:** I am against violence. I never knew how to be violent until I saw an advertisement on television. It showed me what I should be like and how to overcome it.
- Holly:** I have mace in my handbag, but it's intended to blind rapists and not brides.
- Briar:** I can't do it! I can't pull the trigger! My tiny finger is frozen.
- Holly:** Be brave, Briar! Pull it! Pull the trigger! Be a man!
- Brook:** Pull the trigger!
- Andrew III:** Don't let inferior electro-chemistry dictate cowardice.
- Andrew I:** Pull it!
- Andrew II:** It is not electro-chemistry, Briar. It is your own decision. You are a free woman. Your actions are not dictated either by molecules or by a God. It is your responsibility. Know that if you pull the trigger I will hate you, and not electro-chemistry, for the rest of your life.
- Logan:** We must learn not to hate but to forgive as members of one humankind.
- Caitlan:** Quick, vicar! Marry us before her finger unfreezes.
- Logan:** (flat out) Caitlan, do you take Andrew to be your husband?
- Caitlan:** Yes!
- Logan:** Andrew, have you had a blood test?
- Andrew II:** Yes!

Logan: I pronounce you woman and husband.

All begin to clap. Briar pulls the trigger and there is a loud gunshot. Caitlan drops dead on the floor. All stand there not knowing what to do.

Andrew II: I am a widow.

Brook: Is there a doctor in the house?

Briar: I am filled with remorse.

Holly: It is not remorse. It is the disgust a soldier feels on the battlefield after doing his duty.

Brook: Call an ambulance!

Holly: Have you no compassion? Let her bleed to death.

Andrew III: But the mess! Stop the blood!

Andrew I faints. All rush over to help him, leaving Caitlan.

Brook: Call an ambulance.

Andrew I: *(sitting up)* I'm alright. I'm alright.

Holly: Remove the body. He can't stand blood.

Andrew III: At least cover it.

Logan covers the body with a blanket.

Andrew III: *(hugging the body)* Caitlan, my half-sister! My half-sister!

Holly: *(hugging the body)* My half-sister! Caitlan, my half-sister!

Briar: *(hugging the body)* I've never told anyone, but she's my half-sister too.

Holly: But we have different parents - altogether.

Briar: That's why I loved my grandmother. It was she, who in her late sixties, gestated me. My grandmother was not my mother. Nor was my mother. I was an implant. The egg came from your mother, Holly. We are half sisters. *(To Andrew III)* My father was your father, Andrew. I too am Caitlan's half-sister, and your half-sister, and your half-sister. I am half Holly and half Andrew and half Caitlan. That is why I wanted to go so desperately to my grandmother's funeral. It was she who sacrificed nine months of

her life for me. To bring me into the world. At an age when most women should've retired. But not my giving grandmother. She was not content to spend her old age playing bowls.

Briar: Caitlan alone knew this. That is why I had to kill her. So that the secret would be safe forever. But now in her death the secret's out. That is why there's not a terribly large amount of money left for me in grandmother's will. She spent so much paying the parents to become a surrogate mother so that her daughter might become a mother. My mother! Who could not have babies! Not my biological mother but my mother in love! My mother in love who died at the beach while saving me. I, who was caught in the surf, dragged out to sea in an undercurrent. She drowned saving me. And did my biological mother save me? No! She wasn't even there for me. It was my mother in love who dragged me from the surf. My biological mother was your mother Holly. She was not even at the beach - and I hate her for it. I hate you too Holly for being the half-daughter of such a woman.

Briar shoots Holly. Holly drops dead. All stand there not knowing what to do.

Andrew II: My former wife! I am twice a widow.

Logan: She died knowing who she was: a sister of the sister who shot her - out of love.

Brook: How many bullets left in that gun?

Briar: *(counting the three Andrews and Brook)* Four!

Logan covers Holly's body with a blanket.

Briar: *(to Andrew III)* And nor was my biological half-father there to save me from the shark-infested waters, Andrew. I despise you because I despise him.

She pulls the trigger. Andrew III drops dead. Logan covers the body.

Briar: Brook, it was you who loved me for my money. But that is not why I kill you. I kill not out of electro-chemical revenge, but out of electro-chemical greed. I want your money.

She pulls the trigger. Brook drops dead. Logan covers the body.

Briar: *(to Andrew I)* Andrew! I do it for the child we never had.

She pulls the trigger. Andrew I drops dead. Logan covers the body.

Briar: *(to Andrew II)* Andrew!

Andrew II: Not me! I love you Briar.

Briar: I know.

She pulls the trigger and Logan drops dead.

Briar: I could've loved that man, but imagine being only a parson's wife. Andrew, I am American-born and deserve to be happy.

Andrew II: Happy Christmas, Briar!

Briar: But it's only March!

Andrew II: I'm getting ready.

Briar: What for?

Andrew II: A Christmas wedding.

Briar: But we can't! Through the wonders of modern science you are my paternal grandmother.

Music rises. Lights fade. Music fade.

ACT FOUR

Scene i

Soap music. Patio. Briar enters with Andrew II.

Briar: That's Caitlan's funeral done with. Five left. Funerals are so rewarding.

Andrew II: It's a great time to catch up on dead relatives.

Briar: Imagine Caitlan leaving all that money to extra-terrestrial research - provided they scatter her ashes in space. She was so giving. I couldn't do that. I hate heights.

Caitlan enters.

Briar & Andrew II: Caitlan!

Caitlan: I am not Caitlan. I am Caitlan's twin sister. Only I am called Caitlan because we were so identical our parents couldn't tell us apart.

Briar & Andrew II: Caitlan?

Caitlan: I came for the funeral. When is it?

Briar: *(aside, to Andrew II)* What's she doing here? She's been written out of the script.

Caitlan: I missed the funeral? I had to postpone my work at the film studio for several days. *(With particular emphasis)* They tried to write me out of the script but my lawyer REMINDED THEM THAT MY CONTRACT HAD NOT RUN OUT. Yes! I am Caitlan! Caitlan's sister! We are not only identical physically, but we have a similar background. Most of our husbands have been the same. She slept around a lot more so found it easier to get ahead in her career. Even Creative New Zealand gave her a grant. Apart from that, we're the same.

Briar: What on earth is going on?

Andrew I and III enter.

Andrew I & III: Hi!

Andrew II: You are meant to be dead.

- Andrew I:** We died like Romeo and Juliet.
- Andrew III:** Only point blank at the end of a gun and without passion.
- Andrew I:** It was our identical twin brothers you killed at the wedding, Briar.
- Briar:** But I am not the murderer. It was my identical twin sister. That's why I'm not in jail.
- Andrew II:** If only I had an identical twin brother - instead of being an identical triplet.

Brook and Holly enter.

- Caitlan:** Brook!
- Briar:** Holly!
- Brook & Holly:** We're back!
- Holly:** You seem surprised to see us.
- Briar:** We are!
- Holly:** Why?
- Andrew II:** You were shot at Caitlan's wedding.
- Holly:** Which of her weddings?
- Brook:** Caitlan's had so many weddings it's hard to remember what happened when.
- Holly:** She achieved so much in such a short life.
- Brook:** We have identical twins.
- Holly:** In fact, clones. Late, lamented clones.
- Briar:** That's covered that. Here we all are, back again. (*Frantically to Andrew II*) Their contracts have run out! Their contracts weren't renewed! What's happening? What's going on? (*Back to soap*) Now we can get on with our real lives. Although with the threat of a nuclear holocaust we could well become the only humans left on this planet.

Caitlan: I hope you're all going to be honest, because if you're not you're never going to be comfortable around me.

Andrew II: *(aside, to Briar)* They're not even following the script.

Andrew III: But what of Logan? The vicar?

Logan enters.

All: Logan!

Logan: Peace to this house!

Holly: You have been resurrected!

Logan: Yes! I am a Christian! In fact, more than Christian; I am now a bishop. When it comes to scrambling up the church's ladder, not even death can stand in the way.

All: A bishop!

Holly: My Lord!

Logan: Call me Logan. I want you all to come to my episcopal ordination.

Holly and Caitlan cling to Logan. Briar remains apart and confused.

Holly: A bishop's wife!

Briar: Better than a vicar!

Caitlan: Marry me!

Logan: Hold it! To prove myself right I'm having a sex change.

Andrew II: A bishop's husband!

Andrew III: Better than a vicar!

Andrew I: Marry me!

Logan: But it is not until I have had the operation that I will be able to tell to whom I am attracted.

Briar: When shall I know?

Logan: All'll be announced in due course. In the meantime, we must prepare for the ordination.

Holly: What is one to wear?

Logan: I must retreat.

Briar: Excuse me. Can we cut the cameras? CAN WE CUT THE CAMERAS?

Holly: It's a live show.

Andrew II: God!

Caitlan produces a letter.

Caitlan: On the subject of religion, this letter is from my dear departed sister, Caitlan:

My darling sister Caitlan. I know that this will come as a shock to you, but I write on the eve of my departure for the convent. Tomorrow I am meant to be at my wedding, but the Lord calls and so I am paying an actor to step in for me. Tomorrow instead, I become a Virgin Bride of Christ. Well - a virgin anyway. Over the last few days, through watching the soaps on tele and the talk backs, I have come to realize how my life can be permeated with even more meaning. I give what time remains to a life of give, give, give. Since I play the guitar I felt called to be either a nun or a Polynesian. Your loving sister, Caitlan.

All applaud.

Andrew III: There is something beautiful about a nun.

Andrew I: She had so much promise!

Brook: A nun? Let's destroy her by accusing her of paedophilia.

Holly: But think of the films she could be in.

Logan: I feel a hymn coming - or at least a musical. Let us pray.

Brook: Logan! Do you have to?

Andrew I: We feel uncomfortable.

Holly: You should be expostulating about social justice and not saying prayers.

Logan: For a moment I forgot I was a bishop.

Briar: (*snatching the letter*) This is *your* hand writing. You can't be the sister.

Caitlan: Yes! I lie! My plot has been uncovered. I am the nun. I am not Caitlan's sister Caitlan. I am Caitlan's sister Caitlan. In fact, I am Sister Caitlan. The convent didn't work out. (*Going to Logan*) I hope to break my vows.

Logan: Yes, vows are for breaking - just as fences are for mending. I hope to preach further on this.

Briar: (*angry*) Would someone tell me what's going on?

Holly: I'm going shopping.

Briar: (*recovering*) We're all going shopping.

Caitlan: And I'm coming shopping too. I'm out of the habit.

Caitlan, Briar and Holly exit.

Brook: They are the best of friends.

Andrew I: They are practising bonding.

Andrew III: We too can practise male bonding by going shopping.

Logan: I don't know much about bondage, but we can still shop.

Andrew II: Why are they back? They're not meant to be here. They're making the script up. It's subversive.

Andrew I: Men's wear.

Logan: Men don't have to swear.

Andrew I: No! MEN'S WEAR! We're going shopping. We'll help each other buy clothes for the ordination.

Logan: I doubt you'll find episcopal robes in a men's wear.

Andrew II: God! This is a mess!

Music as lights fade.

Briar: (*loudly, over music in dark*) What the hell's happening? You've been written out of the script! You've been sacked! You're making the script up!

Brook: As far as we're concerned, our contracts haven't finished.

Briar: The nuclear holocaust should finish you off.

Scene ii

Shop music. A very modern designer clothes shop, divided into a women's department and a men's department. The women enter the women's section and the men enter the men's section. Various mannequins.

Briar: *(to Caitlan)* I'm not having Holly give her opinion - she's so tasteless.

Andrew I: This is your chance, Logan, to set the fashion in bishop wear.

Holly: It's you that's tasteless, Briar. Does one wear a hat at these episcopal things?

Briar: See what I mean?

Caitlan: Well? Do we?

Logan: Something with punch. Something with impact.

Holly: *(calling out to men)* What colour are you wearing, Logan?

Logan: Colour?

Holly: That's what I said.

Logan: *(to men)* What colour? *(Calling out)* It's usually purple.

Andrew III: *(to men)* That's the colour of prostitution. Be daring.

Andrew II: Prostitutes wear black.

Logan: Some do.

Brook: How would you know?

Holly: *(calling out)* Well?

Andrew I: *(calling out)* Mauve.

Caitlan: *(calling out)* That's the colour of prostitution. Be daring, darling.

Holly: *(to women)* Prostitutes wear black.

Briar: How would you know?

Holly: An ancestor of mine was the prostitute on the first four ships.

Briar: *(calling out)* What colour are the bridesmaids wearing?

Holly: *(to women)* There are no bridesmaids, Briar. It's not a wedding.

Brook: *(to men)* I need a woman to shop for my clothes.

Andrew III: Women are so Jungian.

Caitlan: Men are so Freudian.

Holly: It's far more fashionable to be Jungian than Freudian.

Briar: I use whatever's handy.

Logan: I'm in the wrong department for a mitre.

Logan joins the women. There is the sound of a distant rumble.

Caitlan: What's that noise?

Andrew II: What's that noise?

Brook: China has declared war.

Briar: China has declared war.

Andrew I: Didn't you hear?

Andrew II: I heard the rumble.

Briar: They say we're in for a nuclear holocaust.

Holly: I hope the shop assistant hurries. The service is appalling.

Andrew III: They say we're in for a nuclear holocaust.

Logan: How terrible! I'll lose my bishopric.

Holly: They say a nuclear holocaust can be quite disfiguring.

Andrew II: How disheartening it would be to be left alone on the planet.

Holly: I shall have to get plastic surgery.

Caitlan: Where is the damn shop assistant?

Caitlan exits.

Andrew II: Where is the blasted shop assistant?

Andrew II exits. Another distant rumble - only closer.

Logan: I think blue.

Andrew I: *(to Andrew III)* I wonder if we can see anything.

Brook, Andrew I & III exit.

Briar: I wonder if I can see anything.

Briar exits.

Logan: *(calling out to men)* What do you think of blue?

Holly: There's no one there.

Logan: Where are they?

Holly: Gone to watch the nuclear holocaust.

Logan: Why didn't they tell me. This could provide a wonderful stimulation for my sermon on Armageddon.

Another rumble.

Holly: What does Armageddon look like?

Logan: No one's ever seen one.

Holly: I wish I'd brought my camera.

Logan and Holly exit. Empty stage. Lights flicker. Sound of huge explosion. Lights out. In the flickering light we see the characters bring in deck chairs and sit on the stage with their backs to the audience. They are holding wine glasses and coffee mugs. Pyro-technic display on cyclorama. All applaud as everything returns to normal.

Holly: I wish I'd brought my camera.

Andrew II: The whole world has been wiped out!

Brook: Spectacular!

Briar: We will no longer have to pay for our clothes.

Andrew III: How amazing that we are all saved!

Andrew I: I saw the shop assistant lazered into oblivion.

Logan: There's only you lot left to come to my ordination.

Holly: But think what you'll save on catering.

Caitlan: It is a miracle.

Briar: Thank God for thermal curtains.

Andrew II: God may well have perished in the blast.

Andrew I: They're very modern bombs. They're selective.

Holly: Superpowers these days are much more sensitive.

Logan: But what of fallout?

Brook: These bombs kill people. The environment is unharmed.

Holly: Are they French?

Andrew II: Everyone's wasted.

Andrew III: Microwaved.

Caitlan: How blessed we are!

Logan: We are all blessed.

Briar: The world is ours.

Holly: But why? Why are we so lucky? Why us? Why me? Why?

Logan: It is the meek that inherit the earth.

Briar: For God's sake! Why do you lot refuse to die? It's only a soap.

Music. Lights fade.

ACT FIVE

Scene i

Organ music. All are seated, except for Logan who, colourfully decked as a bishop, is preaching at a lectern.

Logan: And so, as the Bible says, in the Book of Psalms: “Bless the man who seizes your children and smashes their heads on the rocks.”

Briar: (*calling out*) That’s disgusting, Logan. How can you use that word “man”? Not “bless the **man**”!

Logan: Bless the **person** who seizes your children and smashes their heads on the rocks.

Briar: That’s better.

Holly: I really think the word “man” is *preferable* in the context.

Logan: Bless the **man** who seizes your children and smashes their heads on the rocks.

Holly: That’s better.

Brook: If it says that in the Bible they should burn it.

Logan: One can’t pick and choose the Word of God, Brook. It’s in the Bible - so it’s true.

Holly: Everything in the Bible is true.

Brook: Not if you’re Catholic it’s not.

Logan: (*annoyed*) I thought you’d given that up!

Briar: Once a Catholic...

Andrew III: They’re the only church worth criticising - them and the Anglicans.

Holly: Besides, it’s very fashionable to be anti-Catholic.

Andrew II: It’s not just anti-Catholic. It’s hard to criticize Protestants when they don’t know what they believe.

Caitlan: It’s much better to be anti-Jewish. They’re much more vindictive.

Andrew I: But why not be anti-Fundamentalist? They hate everyone - and so successfully.

Briar: They'll only be happy when they see everyone else in Hell. Then they'll know they were right.

Brook: Each one interprets the Bible infallibly; they're all popes.

Andrew III: It's much easier being your own pope, then you can determine your own beliefs.

Andrew II: *(to Logan who has been very patient)* Get on with it. There's only us left on the planet.

Logan: And so my dear sisters, I was a woman in a man's body. I have had a sex change. Well, I wanted to, but I couldn't find a doctor. So why am I dressed as a man, you might ask? It is because I am butch. I wish to announce that I am lesbian.

All applaud. Logan beams like a bishop.

Logan: Yes! I came to realize that I was a lesbian trapped in a man's body. Now I can be true to myself. When I was a man I was attracted to the opposite sex, but now that I've had a sex change I find I am attracted to persons of the same sex.

Briar pulls out a pistol.

Briar: I am attracted to persons of the opposite sex - yet it is Logan I wish to marry.

Holly pulls out a pistol.

Holly: I too am attracted to persons of the opposite sex - yet it is Logan I wish to marry.

Andrew I & III pull out pistols.

Andrew I & III: I too am attracted to persons.

Andrew II pulls out a pistol.

Andrew II: I have a messy obsession. I am attracted to sex.

Brook pulls out a pistol.

Brook: I am attractive.

Caitlan pulls out a pistol.

Caitlan: I am attracted to persons of the cloth. It is Logan I wish to marry. As a retired nun, surely I have the greater claim.

Logan pulls out a pistol.

Logan: My pistol is not a threat - it is simply a deterrence. Since the holocaust we have learnt the effectiveness of deterrence.

Briar: Bishop, I love your voice. But since we are the last eight humans left on the planet, may I ask why we need a bishop at all?

Logan: (*offended*) Any fool can ask a question. Are you questioning my authority as a bishop?

Logan shoots Briar, who slumps dramatically.

Briar: (*dying*) God! He used a real bloody bullet!

Briar shoots Andrew II and dies. Andrew II slumps dramatically near the exit.

Andrew II: (*dying*) Shit!

Andrew II shoots Holly as he exits and dies. Holly slumps dramatically.

Holly: (*dying*) This is meant to be pretend, for God's sake!

Holly shoots Andrew I and dies.

Andrew I: (*dying*) What did you do that for?

Andrew I shoots Andrew III and dies.

Andrew III: (*dying*) Is this a mirror up to life?

Andrew III shoots Logan and dies.

Logan: Holy shit!

Logan fires his pistol and dies.

Brook: Missed! He always was a dick.

Caitlan: Since the holocaust, are we the only two left in the world?

Brook: In 8,000 million years the sun will be too cold to support life on earth. There is no hope.

Caitlan shoots Brook who slumps dramatically.

Brook: *(dying)* They say once you cease believing in God you'll believe in anything.

Brook dies. Soap music rises.

Caitlan: I alone am left alone in this lonely world to repopulate - alone. I will not leave this planet to roaches and rats.

Andrew II enters with pistol.

Andrew II: No, I am not Andrew. I am Andrew's triplet - Andrew.

Caitlan: Why! I am not by myself in this post-nuclear holocaust age! With crest-fallen hearts we drop our smoking guns.

They drop their pistols.

Andrew II: It is Genesis again.

Caitlan: Then it was Adam and Eve.

Andrew II: Now it is Caitlan and Andrew.

Caitlan: This second time...

Andrew II: This second time ...

Caitlan: *(getting a bottle from her hand bag)* A gin and tonic?

Andrew II: Please.

Caitlan: *(raising bottle)* ...we will make a New Age!

Music. Lights fade.

THE END