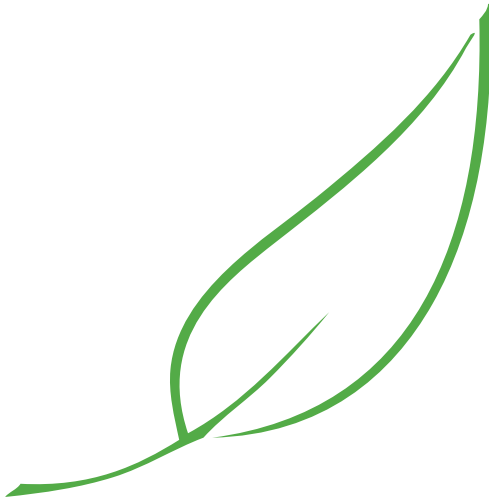


Every Day's A Holiday

by Philip Vassallo



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EVERY DAY'S A HOLIDAY

By Philip Vassallo

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EVERY DAY'S A HOLIDAY

A Play on Holiday Themes

By Philip Vassallo

SYNOPSIS: The lives of six teenagers, all close friends who call themselves the Scheme Team, unfold through ten scenes set on the core themes of ten US federal holidays.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 female, 3 male)

CARMEN WALKER (f) (nickname Cookie), HELEN's cousin and NICK's girlfriend, zany, great humored, athletic and artistic, editor of school literary journal. A different race from the rest of the group. *(158 lines)*

HELEN PETERS (f) (nickname Lulu), CARMEN's cousin and MIKE's girlfriend, serious, organized, aloof, the school's best actress and musician, has her heart set on the stage. *(232 lines)*

LIZ SIMON (f) (nickname Boop), NICK's twin sister and PHIL's girlfriend, frenetic, dependable, controlling, athletic, Student Council president. *(301 lines)*

MIKE BANKS (m) (nickname Herc), PHIL's stepbrother and HELEN's boyfriend, laid back, generous, lazy, best athlete in the school, talented musician, completely without ambition. *(201 lines)*

NICK SIMON (m) (nickname Doc), LIZ's twin brother and CARMEN's boyfriend, intense, loyal, tending toward the melodramatic, excellent writer, politically conscious, desires a literary life. *(235 lines)*

PHIL FARR (m) (nickname Flip), MIKE's stepbrother and LIZ's boyfriend, reckless, brave, argumentative, great with his hands. *(185 lines)*

(ALL LINE COUNTS ARE APPROXIMATE)

NOTE: CARMEN, LIZ, NICK, and PHIL refer to everyone by their nicknames. HELEN and MIKE do not.

TIME

2009, the last half of junior year and the first half of senior year at Idemtown High School

PLACE

In and around Idemtown, a blue-collar bedroom community in suburbia, population 50,000, twenty miles from a major American city

SCENES

ACT ONE

SCENE 1: "Resolution" (New Year's Day) – Sunday, January 4, Idemtown Mall

SCENE 2: "Tolerance" (Martin Luther King's Birthday) – Friday, January 16, Idemtown High School lunchroom

SCENE 3: "Leadership" (George Washington's Birthday) – Monday, February 16, Idemtown Medical Center

SCENE 4: "Remembrance" (Memorial Day) – Tuesday, May 26, Idemtown High School English class

SCENE 5: "Freedom" (Independence Day) – Saturday, July 4, Idemtown Park

*This perusal script is for reading purposes only.
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ACT TWO

SCENE 1: "Work" (Labor Day) – Wednesday, September 9, Class Chemists

SCENE 2: "Discovery" (Columbus Day) – Monday, October 12, City Museum

SCENE 3: "Honor" (Veterans Day) – Thursday, November 11, Idemtown High School auditorium

SCENE 4: "Gratitude" (Thanksgiving Day) – Wednesday, November 25, Idemtown High School soccer field

SCENE 5: "Birth" (Christmas Day) – Friday, December 25, den of Helen's house

PROPS**ACT ONE**

SCENE 1: "Resolution" – one bench

CARMEN: winter clothes, stuffed shopping bag

HELEN: winter clothes, shopping bag with pea coat

LIZ: winter clothes, shopping bag with assorted cosmetics, office supplies, underwear, and socks

MIKE: winter clothes, two stuffed shopping bags, one with a marker in it.

NICK: winter clothes, paperback book

PHIL: winter clothes, mobile phone

SCENE 2: "Tolerance" – one table, six folding chairs, intercom announcement

CARMEN: stacked backpack, brown paper bag with yogurt, fruit, bottled water

HELEN: stacked backpack

LIZ: stacked backpack, brown paper bag with sandwich, yogurt, bottled water

MIKE: brown paper bag with two sandwiches, can of soda, two candy bars

NICK: stacked backpack, brown paper bag with fresh fruit and vegetables, bottled water, one folded piece of paper.

PHIL: stacked backpack, brown paper bag with sandwich, cookies, soda

SCENE 3: “Leadership” – one bench, intercom announcement

CARMEN: two-pocket folder with a stack of papers enclosed

HELEN: magazine

LIZ: ankle cast, crutches

MIKE: cup of coffee

NICK: mobile phone

PHIL: magazine

SCENE 4: “Remembrance” – six desks, teacher’s voice

CARMEN: backpack, notebook, rubber band, paper-wrapped straw

HELEN: backpack, notebook, GI’s dog tag on a chain

LIZ: backpack, notebook, binder, textbook

MIKE: nothing

NICK: backpack, notebook, thick novel, mobile phone

PHIL: backpack, notebook

SCENE 5: “Freedom” – bare stage, loudspeaker announcements

CARMEN: water bottle

LIZ: water bottle

HELEN: water bottle

MIKE: soda bottle

NICK: water bottle

PHIL: water bottle

ACT TWO

SCENE 1: “Work” – point-of-purchase display, vitamin bottles

CARMEN: store apron, shelf duster

HELEN: store apron, carton packed with vitamin bottles, carton knife, inventory clipboard, pen

LIZ: shoulder bag

MIKE: hardbound book, mobile phone

NICK: notebook, pen, mobile phone

PHIL: store apron, one shopping cart

SCENE 2: “Discovery” – bench, sign reading “Explorers and Conquistadors of the New World, Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries” explanatory text secured on wall, projection of Ridolfo Ghirlandaio’s painting of Christopher Columbus.

CARMEN: shoulder bag

HELEN: shoulder bag

LIZ: shoulder bag

MIKE: none

NICK: backpack, notebook, pen.

PHIL: none

SCENE 3: "Honor" – six chairs

CARMEN: backpack, wearing a soccer uniform

HELEN: backpack, water bottle

LIZ: backpack, wearing a soccer uniform

MIKE: script

NICK: map, backpack, water bottle

PHIL: backpack

SCENE 4: "Gratitude" – bench, referee whistle

CARMEN: dirty soccer uniform, mobile phone

HELEN: clean soccer uniform, mobile phone

LIZ: dirty soccer uniform, mobile phone

MIKE: Idemtown High School hooded sweatshirt

NICK: Idemtown High School hooded sweatshirt, watch

PHIL: Idemtown High School hooded sweatshirt, soccer ball

SCENE 5: "Birth" – one bench, two end tables, two chairs

CARMEN: gift box with a poem inside

HELEN: acoustic guitar, gift box with a DVD inside

LIZ: gift box with a photograph inside

MIKE: acoustic guitar, gift box with a guitar pick inside

NICK: gift box with a stage play program inside, camera.

PHIL: gift box with an ink-on-paper caricature of him inside

DEDICATION

To Darrow Debs De Luca,
for whom every day's a holiday.

ACT ONE, SCENE 1
RESOLUTION

SCENE: Sunday, January 4, Idemtown Mall. A bench at CENTER and bright lights at LEFT and RIGHT to represent different shops.

AT RISE: HELEN, LIZ, and NICK sit on the bench from left to right. Both HELEN and LIZ have a shopping bag. They are dressed in heavy clothing and overcoats

LIZ: How slow can they be? They've already been in there for like an hour.

NICK: It's been five minutes.

LIZ: Longer.

NICK: No it hasn't.

LIZ: Way longer. At least ten.

NICK: Whatever.

LIZ: I know when we left them in the store.

NICK: I'm not arguing.

LIZ: I was looking at my watch.

HELEN: There you go: already breaking your new year's resolution. And it's what, only January fourth?

LIZ: (*Leaps to her feet.*) What are you talking about?

HELEN: You know.

NICK: You said you weren't going to freak out over everything.

LIZ: Freaking out! You call this freaking out!

HELEN and NICK: Yeah.

LIZ: You don't know what freaking out is!

HELEN: You are the embodiment of freaking out. You have redefined and refined freaking out.

NICK: Let it go.

LIZ: I knew we shouldn't have left Cookie and Flip together! They feed on each other like bees in honey! They could raise hell in heaven!

HELEN: They're fine. Mike's with them.

LIZ: Herc? For Joy! He'd fall asleep on babies walking off cliffs!

HELEN: Mike looks out for his brother.

LIZ: Like he looks out for his girlfriend!

HELEN: Keep out of my business.

NICK: Come on, Boop. They'll exchange their clothes and be out in a second. What did you get with your gift card?

HELEN: *(Removes a pea coat from her bag.)* Just an even exchange for this coat. I wanted a darker color.

LIZ: *(Removes an endless supply of cosmetics, office supplies, underwear, and socks from her bag. HELEN and NICK look hopelessly at her.)* Nothing really. These are socks for Flip. My underwear. Some lipstick. Not sure if the color will work. Eye shadow. Probably won't use it. More underwear. I needed these pens. These pens too. They had a great sale on journals, so I bought them all up. Post-its. Tape. A stapler. Scissors. Staple remover. Markers. More pens. *(The markers spill from the package. She gathers them from the floor, searches her bag for a missing one, and continues her inventory.)* Oops. How did that happen? They should be sealed. Where's the other one? They come four to a pack. Where did it go? Eyeliner. Blush. Perfume. Underwear. Hmm. Socks for me. Stockings. *(Catches their expressions.)* What?

HELEN: How much do they pay you at Food Zone?

LIZ: I didn't make any resolutions about shopping, did I? That's where I draw the line.

CARMEN enters carrying a shopping bag with MIKE, who carries two shopping bags. They both look in shock.

LIZ: What took you so long?

CARMEN: Phil got busted.

LIZ: What!

NICK: Shoplifting?

MIKE: *(He takes HELEN's hand.)* No, man. A thief he's not.

LIZ: What happened?

MIKE: Graffiti. He was writing on the walls in the changing room.

LIZ: OMG! That's where the fourth marker went!

HELEN: Phil's one crazy dude.

CARMEN: *(Laughs.)* For real.

LIZ: What's so funny? You probably put him up to it.

CARMEN: Did not.

LIZ: You always do. You're always trying to outcrazy each other.

CARMEN: I had nothing to with it.

MIKE: (*Imitating PHIL, a buffoon.*) Is that why he'd said, "Hey Cookie, check out my Picasso," just before the undercover security guard grabbed him?

LIZ: (*Sobs. HELEN hugs her.*) Why didn't you stay with him?

CARMEN: We wanted to, but they kicked us out of the store.

MIKE: The James Bond dude said he call us accomplices if we didn't leave. Not that I care.

NICK: For such a control freak, how can you go out with Fearless Fire-eating Foolish Flip the Freak?

MIKE: Leave her alone, will you?

LIZ: Your mother's going to kill him.

MIKE: Are you kidding? My mother lets him get away with murder. But my father—he would put him on a leash short enough to trip him at every step if he was a flea and tight enough to strangle him if it wasn't for my mother. My father sure knows how to pick them.

NICK: Your mother's cool.

MIKE: As far as stepmothers go.

NICK: You said it yourself a thousand times that she's a better mother to you than your own mother was before she skipped out on you.

MIKE: You taking notes for your next short story? That doesn't mean she doesn't play favorites. She worships the ground Phil walks on. Meanwhile, I've got to apologize for sneezing. (*Pounds his chest three times.*) Phil could firebomb the house, and she'd ask, (*Imitating his stepmother.*) "Honey, are you having a bad day?"

HELEN: Why doesn't your pops say something?

MIKE: Did you ever hear of the word henpecked?

HELEN: Should we call your folks?

MIKE: Not yet. Let's see what happens.

LIZ: I can't believe he did that! He promised me! He said he'd start acting normal.

NICK: Another new year's resolution bites the dust.

MIKE: He said that when we were making resolutions on New Year's Eve. He wasn't in his right mind.

HELEN: I knew that was a dumb idea.

NICK: December thirty-first is just as arbitrary as any other day of the year.

LIZ: Stop being such a philosopher.

HELEN: Get a hold of yourself.

NICK: Get over yourself, better yet.

CARMEN: Stop being such a jerk to your sister, Jerk.

MIKE: (*Egging NICK on.*) Ooooo. If my girl said that to me ...

HELEN: Would everybody stop, please? Aren't we friends? Aren't we supposed to stick together? Especially at times like this?

CARMEN, MIKE, and NICK say their next lines simultaneously.

CARMEN: (*To NICK.*) You are so self-centered, you know that? You can't think for a minute of someone else's pain. How can you call yourself a writer when you feel nothing for no one?

MIKE: (*To HELEN.*) Let's face it. Phil's had this coming to him for the longest time. He lives for the moment without once thinking about the consequences. He's really crazy.

NICK: (*To CARMEN*) You know what? I'm not letting you use me for target practice. You think you can get away with saying whatever you like, but I'm not going to take it anymore.

LIZ: (*Collects herself, pulls away from HELEN, and takes charge. They listen in silence.*) Enough. We're the Scheme Team. We're each other's blood. Each of us wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for the other. Alone we're one-sixth of what we are now; together we're whole. We're the end.

CARMEN: (*Apologetically.*) Well, right now we're five-sixths.

LIZ: Not your fault.

HELEN: Phil will find a way out.

MIKE: He always does.

CARMEN: I hope so.

LIZ: (*To NICK.*) Yeah. Resolutions are made to be broken, Doc. I'll give you that. I lost my cool. I spent too much. Flip screwed up again. But we made a resolution six years ago. To be one. And we have. Through school. Failing tests. Losing games. Getting fired from jobs. Bully threats. Detentions. Suspensions. Punishments. In the end, we're always there for each other. So no one can tell me that resolutions aren't real. They're more real than anything else I know.

Pause. PHIL enters, slowly approaching his friends. He extends his hand to MIKE, who hands him his shopping bag. All eyes on PHIL in silence. He pulls a marker out of the bag and hands it to LIZ.

PHIL: Thanks, babe.

ALL: *(To PHIL.)* You idiot! What's with this death wish of yours? How can you do a thing like that? Don't you have any respect for private property? Don't you know where to draw the line? You ought to be locked up for what you did! Why don't you go self-destruct on your own time?

PHIL: *(Holds his hands up to stop them.)* Don't you want to know what happened?

ALL: You fool! Why don't you just kill yourself before you kill us? You stand there so smugly! I should wring the neck that your parents won't! Go crazy somewhere else, why don't you!

PHIL: *(Nonchalantly walks away.)* Okay.

ALL: Don't walk away. Don't be like that. You can't blame me for being a little upset. Of course I want to know what happened. All right, speak up. Yes tell us.

They are rapt.

PHIL: I thought you'd never ask. Where did you guys leave off? Yeah, you walked out once the security guard shooed you away and walked me into the inner office. There's a whole operation behind the store with cubicles and computers and cameras, just like backstage on the Late Show. Except today's Sunday, so nobody's back there but me and the security guard. He tells me to sit down in one of the cubicles and begins to stare at me. After about a minute, I say, "I hope you have other security guards in the store because while you're messing with me, there could be real hardened criminals pilfering in every aisle. That didn't work, so I started moving my fingers in my pocket real obvious, like when Leonardo DiCaprio was texting the state troopers in the midst of the bad guys in *The Departed*. When he finally noticed, he said, "What're you doing?" I said, "Contacting my lawyer." He said, "No you ain't," but I could tell he wasn't sure. So then he said, "Gimme that phone." I said, "I'm sorry, I can't do that." He said, "I don't think you realize

something, kid. You're under arrest." I said, "No I'm not. And you can't touch my phone." He said, "Yes I can. And I've got a right to kick your behind." Then I took out my phone and said, "I got all that on tape, which I just e-mailed to my lawyer. Threaten to illegally confiscate personal possessions and to cause bodily harm. Send! Pfff!" Then he went on this minute-long tirade: "I'm the law, son! And you're just a punk that thinks you're above the law! But you ain't! I eat up pipsqueaks like you for lunch! How dare you act that way when I got you in custody? This is serious business, and you're too dumb to know it! Just give me twenty bucks to paint over the mess you made with that marker, and I'll let you slide!" Then I said, "Bribery. Just sent that message too." Now he gets really wired up. "You're lucky I'm not going to have you arrested, you spoiled momma's boy. You're blessed I'm not going to throw the book at you. You don't know the good fortune you ran into when I walked into your sorry life. If it was any of the other guards, they'd have sucked every last dime out of your spoiled brat pockets. They would have beaten your legs till you had to crawl home. They would have made you disappear just like another statistic on the milk carton. Is that how you show your appreciation to me? Now get out of this store, before I change my mind. And don't ever let me see that smug little baby face again."

HELEN: That's crazy.

CARMEN: (*Laughs.*) You're the only guy on earth that can outbust the buster!

MIKE: How did he know the part about you being a momma's boy?

LIZ: (*Hugs him in relief.*) You're so stupid. You worry me to death!

PHIL: I got to keep you on your toes.

NICK: So here we are: one big happy family again.

HELEN: Something you can write a story about.

NICK: You know what they say? The way you begin the year is symbolic of how you start the year.

MIKE: Then I feel sorry for Phil.

LIZ: (*Correcting.*) This is the fourth of the year.

NICK: But the first that we're together.

HELEN: And that makes all the difference.

LIZ: Resolved.

ALL: Resolved.

BLACKOUT**ACT ONE, SCENE 2**
TOLERANCE

SCENE: *Friday, January 16, Idemtown High School lunchroom. A table around which are six folding chairs, three on each side.*

AT RISE: *LIZ and PHIL sit opposite each other at the UP side of the table. LIZ opens her brown lunch bag for her sandwich, yogurt, and bottled water. PHIL opens his for a sandwich, cookies, and soda*

LOUDSPEAKER ANNOUNCEMENT: Congratulations to the Idemtown Girls Stingrays for defeating Madison and Jefferson in a triangular swim meet yesterday. It's not too late to audition for the spring play. Go to the auditorium at two forty-five on Monday if interested. Go Idemtown! Go Stingrays!

LIZ: Why don't you talk to Herc about it? He'll listen to you.

PHIL: You're making an issue out of nothing.

LIZ: Don't tell me that. Lulu's been my friend since kindergarten. She's always had this problem.

PHIL: That's crazy. You don't get anorexia when you're five years old.

LIZ: Shhh. Everybody can hear. She might not have been diagnosed, but she always showed tendencies. I know what I'm talking about.

PHIL: Always looking for things that aren't there, Boop.

LIZ: Ewww. This sandwich truly sucks.

PHIL: Let me see.

LIZ: *(She hands the sandwich to him.)* Don't take too much.

PHIL: *(Hands the sandwich back to her.)* Ugh. You can have it. That would make me anorexic.

LIZ: *(Continues eating the sandwich.)* Don't joke about that. Here comes Herc. Tell him.

PHIL: You tell him. It's your issue.

LIZ: It's Lulu's issue. He's your brother. Tell him.

MIKE enters, sits beside PHIL downstage from him. When MIKE is not watching, LIZ signals in vain for PHIL to speak to MIKE.

MIKE: Wassup?

PHIL: Martin Luther King Day, here we come!

MIKE: Got that right.

PHIL: TGIF. And a three-day weekend.

LIZ: Hi. Where's Lulu?

MIKE: On her way. She stopped in the bathroom.

LIZ: What's she doing there?

PHIL: Great question. Let's go through all the possibilities.

LIZ: I never use the bathroom.

MIKE: What do you got at home, an outhouse?

LIZ: I mean the bathroom here, stupid.

PHIL: What do you mean you don't use the bathroom? Like never?

LIZ: Never.

PHIL: You mean in the three years we're in high school you've never used the bathroom?

LIZ: Not once.

PHIL: What about middle school?

LIZ: No.

PHIL: Elementary?

LIZ: Never.

PHIL: And you say Lulu's got a problem?

LIZ stares threateningly at PHIL.

MIKE: You never needed to go?

LIZ: I didn't say that. I'm human, ain't I? I said I never used the bathroom.

MIKE: What do you do?

LIZ: Wait until I get home.

PHIL: What if you had to go at eight thirty? After school you got sports or Student Council, so you don't get home until like five, the earliest. You wait until then?

LIZ: Yeah.

PHIL: That's nuts! Is there something like the opposite of bulimia? That's what you got.

LIZ: Not funny.

MIKE: Yeah. You don't purge. You glom.

PHIL: Let it go, baby. Set it free. It'll be all right.

LIZ: Great help you are. *(To MIKE.)* I got news for you: Helen never goes to the bathroom here either.

MIKE: Well she's there now.

LIZ: And you don't find that strange.

MIKE: Do you?

LIZ: Think about it.

PHIL: Change the subject. Here's she comes.

HELEN enters, sits beside LIZ downstage from her. She is visibly shaken.

MIKE: What subject? Am I missing something?

LIZ: *(Sarcastically.)* What else is new?

MIKE: Hey! I'm trying to sit here and eat my lunch and you're like all over me, Liz.

PHIL: What else is new?

LIZ: *(Hands the sandwich back to PHIL.)* Since you don't want to be a part of this, butt out. *(Notices HELEN's demeanor.)* What's with you?

HELEN: Don't you know?

LIZ: Know what?

HELEN: Didn't they tell you?

LIZ: Who? What?

HELEN: Carmen and Nick broke up.

LIZ: What? Cookie and Doc?

PHIL: Really? I can't believe it!

HELEN: Nick just told me like five minutes ago when we were leaving Chemistry.

LIZ: He didn't tell me anything.

HELEN: Don't you talk to your brother?

LIZ: That's exactly why he doesn't tell me anything.

PHIL: What happened?

HELEN: You'll have to ask them. *(She cries. MIKE hugs her.)*

MIKE: It's okay.

HELEN and LIZ: (*Continued.*) No it's not.

PHIL: They're made for each other. They've been together longer than any of us. Since freshman year. They're both smart. They like writing. They got a social conscience. Got the same musical taste.

LIZ: Opposites attract.

MIKE: Yeah. Look at the two of you. Miss I-Got-It-Under-Control and Mr. Control This.

LIZ: (*Scoffs.*) Ha-ha.

HELEN: It's true, Liz. You're a lion tamer, and Phil's the lion.

PHIL: (*Jokingly.*) Hey! That makes me under her control.

LIZ: Shut up and eat.

PHIL takes a bite. To MIKE.

How can you eat two sandwiches?

MIKE: I'm hungry. Why? You want some?

LIZ: No. Do you, Lulu?

HELEN: I'm good.

LIZ: Don't you have anything to eat?

HELEN: I'm okay.

LIZ: You sure?

All eyes on HELEN.

HELEN: Really. I don't want to eat your lunch. I had my own.

LIZ: You did?

HELEN: Yeah.

LIZ: Lulu: Who are you fooling? You haven't eaten lunch since I-can't-remember-when.

HELEN: Are you keeping a scorecard?

LIZ: Enough to know when you're lying.

HELEN: I don't lie.

LIZ: You just said you had lunch.

HELEN: I did.

LIZ: And when, may I ask, did you eat it?

PHIL: Man, lay off her.

HELEN: I didn't eat it. I gave it to Jessica Williams.

LIZ: (*Incredulously.*) Jessica Williams? Why would you give her your lunch?

HELEN: Because she needs it.

LIZ: Come on. You haven't eaten lunch since we got back from Christmas break.

HELEN: That's because I've been giving her my lunch since we got back from Christmas break.

MIKE: That's wild.

LIZ: Hold it, hold it. You hate Jessica Williams.

HELEN: I did.

LIZ: She's the biggest bully in the school. You saw her yourself smashing Heidi's head against the locker. She literally tore Samantha's hair off her scalp.

HELEN: I know.

MIKE: Is she threatening you?

PHIL: She's messing with the wrong chick.

LIZ: Is she stalking you?

HELEN: Actually, I stalked her. I got tired of her taking everybody's lunch. So I decided to give her mine.

LIZ: You mean, you just walked up to her and said, "Hi Jessica. I'd like to reward you for being such a bully. I'd like to feed the beast."

HELEN: Something like that.

PHIL: (*Always said in an annoying shriek.*) Woop-woop!

HELEN: I mean it. She doesn't have a friend in this school. Everyone's so prejudice because of the way she looks.

LIZ: Prejudice about her race or her mammoth size.

HELEN: Both. So she acts out like everyone expects her to.

PHIL: Oh, little Miss Bleeding Heart. Trying to make a Muppet of a monster. Ain't gonna happen.

HELEN: I'm just trying to see her situation for what it is. She lives with her grandmother, who's on welfare. Her mom's in jail. She doesn't know her father. She's already had a baby of her own. She's going to flunk out of school if she doesn't get expelled or arrested for assault. We always talk about the golden rule in this school, but that's all it is: talk. Talk is cheap. I decided to act for once.

LIZ: Is she grateful?

HELEN: I didn't ask her for gratitude.

MIKE takes HELEN's hand.

LIZ: Okay. So you give Jessica your lunch. Why don't you make lunch for yourself too?

HELEN: What are you so worried about? I'm trying to lose weight.

LIZ: You're as skinny as a rail.

HELEN: I'm doing it for the Anne Frank part I got. I'm getting into character.

PHIL looks at LIZ.

LIZ: Whatever. (*Cries.*) I don't want us to break up. The six of us were perfect together.

HELEN: (*Hugs LIZ.*) We'll still be together.

CARMEN and NICK enter. They sit opposite each other at the DOWNSTAGE seats.

MIKE: Wassup?

PHIL: Dudes.

LIZ: Hi.

NICK: Hi.

CARMEN and NICK open their bags and begin eating. Silence.

NICK: Yeah. It's true.

HELEN cries.

LIZ: We love you guys.

CARMEN: I know. I ... we love you too.

LIZ: What happened?

NICK: Not now.

MIKE: I gotta bounce.

MIKE and PHIL rise to exit.

LIZ: (*To MIKE.*) How can you eat so much so fast? (*To PHIL.*) Where are you going?

PHIL: Spanish beckons.

LIZ: Since when do you get to class on time?

HELEN: Why don't we go with them, Liz?

LIZ: I want to stay here.

HELEN & MIKE: Liz!

PHIL: Boop!

LIZ: (*To CARMEN.*) Are you guys all right?

CARMEN: Yeah.

LIZ: (*To NICK.*) What did you do?

NICK: Lay off.

HELEN & MIKE: Liz!

PHIL: Boop!

LIZ: (*To CARMEN.*) If you need me ...

CARMEN: We're okay.

LIZ: Because I'll stay.

NICK: Later, Boop.

CARMEN: Yeah. Later.

LIZ: Okay.

HELEN, LIZ, MIKE, and PHIL exit. CARMEN and NICK take a bite and a sip in silence.

NICK: After dinner yesterday, I started writing a poem about us.

CARMEN: Please, Nick.

NICK: I want to tell you this. The first line was, "The worlds we still cross lose their borders when we touch each other's goodness." I couldn't get a second line going. So what did I do? I decide the line's too long. It's not poetic enough, either. It doesn't have the right meter or rhythm. I ripped up that draft and started a second draft. But I couldn't start a new first line. So I sat there. And sat there. "The worlds we still cross lose their borders when we touch each other's goodness." Then I looked at the time. It was midnight. I was sitting there for like five hours doing nothing, just staring at my notebook, wasting an entire night of my life. How could that be? What kind of

loser am I to do a thing like that? And then I realized I wasn't wasting my time at all. I was reliving every moment we spent together with the Scheme Team. And especially the times we spent alone. The first time we knew we had something together. Our last two summers. Every kiss. Every promise. I know I love you, Cookie. Then that line popped up in my mind again. That overlong, unpoetic line. And it struck me. It had seventeen syllables. I broke it up into three lines of five, seven, and five: *(He removes from his pocket a paper which he unfolds and reads, making a hand motion at each new line.)*

*The worlds we still cross
Lose their borders when we touch
Each other's goodness*

(Hands CARMEN the paper.) A haiku for you.

CARMEN: *(Accepts it.)* It's beautiful. I was up all night too. I didn't sleep a minute, and I'm not tired. Isn't that crazy? But I couldn't stop writing from the moment I got home. I wrote an article for the literary journal, a practice essay for the PSAT, a book report for social studies on *A Testament of Hope* by Martin Luther King. What else? Oh, and a bunch of emails to cousins and friends around the world. I couldn't stop. Maybe it's good we're breaking up. Maybe it's not. I don't know. But I do know that you're going to cross every world, Nick. And you're going to change them.

NICK: I haven't even changed yours.

CARMEN: *(Holding up the paper, she takes his hand.)* But you have. See?

BLACKOUT.

ACT ONE, SCENE 3
LEADERSHIP

SCENE: Monday, February 16, Idemtown Medical Center. A bench is DOWN RIGHT.

AT RISE: HELEN sits between MIKE and PHIL, with MIKE closer to DOWNSTAGE. HELEN and PHIL occasionally browse a magazine while MIKE holds a cup of coffee and sits. CARMEN stands, holding a two-pocket folder with a stack of papers.

LOUDSPEAKER ANNOUNCEMENT: Dr. Batra, ICU. Dr. Batra, ICU.

CARMEN: You're so lazy, you know that?

MIKE shrugs, sips coffee.

I did all the work. All you have to do is show up, read the paper, review the slides, and basically be a talking head. (*Kicks MIKE's boot.*) Hey, lazy!

HELEN: Leave him alone. We're in a hospital.

CARMEN: (*To MIKE, even louder.*) Just because you don't care whether you fail doesn't mean you've got to take everyone else down with you.

PHIL: Woop-woop!

HELEN: Shut up. You're embarrassing yourself.

CARMEN: You know what you should do? Just pretend that homework is like a football game.

Simultaneously mimes the roles of quarterback and announcer using the folder as the football. She removes some loose papers and throws them toward MIKE while on the run, the papers scattering across the floor.

"Three! Eighty-eight! Hut! Hut! Herc takes the snap. It looks like a bootleg as he cradles the American history project under his arm. No! It's an option pass—he rips a pass across the field."

HELEN: Are you crazy?

PHIL: *(Laughs.)* Woop-woop!

Even MIKE laughs at her antics. Only HELEN is not amused as she picks up the papers CARMEN throws around the floor. CARMEN now becomes a basketball player, miming a guard dribbling as she rushes across the floor with folder in hand, removing a few more pages and shooting them toward MIKE.

CARMEN: Actually, basketball's in season. Pretend that doing the assignment's a way of beating a full court press when you're down by one with ten seconds to play. "There goes Herc taking the inbound pass from Doc! He's rocketing across the court, there goes the layup! Score!"

HELEN: *(Scrambling to pick up the newly thrown papers.)* You're going to get us kicked out.

MIKE and PHIL are laughing harder at CARMEN's antics and HELEN's reaction to them.

CARMEN: *(Miming a base runner. She runs across the stage and slides at MIKE's feet, throwing the folder and the remaining papers in the air.)* And baseball's around the corner. "Herc takes a big lead off first base. There's not a soul in the park who doesn't know he's looking to steal. The Monroe pitcher throws from the stretch position. There goes Herc! Safe!"

Now even HELEN joins the laughter as she continues picking up the papers. CARMEN kicks MIKE's boot one last time for good measure.

CARMEN: L-A-Z-Y.

PHIL: Your cousin's nuts.

HELEN: Don't I know it? OK OK OK. Enough already. *(Neatly tucks all the papers into the folder pockets and hands it to CARMEN.)* Here.

CARMEN: Give it to your lazy boyfriend. Tell him he's got a job to do.

HELEN: I wonder how Liz is doing.

PHIL: Text Doc.

HELEN: I did.

CARMEN: I did too. And Liz. But no reply.

PHIL: I'm sure she's okay.

HELEN: What a freak accident.

PHIL: Man, the way her ankle hit the ground was nasty.

HELEN: Carmen, you get beaten up all over the softball and soccer fields and on the basketball court, but nothing happens to you. You too, Mike.

PHIL: Hey, and what about me? Am I chopped liver?

HELEN: Meanwhile, Liz walks along the pool, slips, and cracks her ankle. Go figure.

MIKE: Life's unpredictable.

HELEN: For sure. Why doesn't Nick come out?

PHIL: He's family.

HELEN: Yeah, but he knows we're out here waiting to find out how Liz is doing.

CARMEN: Maybe that's why he hasn't come out. Because I'm here.

PHIL: Nah. It ain't that. It's been a month since you broke up with him.

HELEN: And a month since Nick's been acting like a jerk.

PHIL: Why, because he hasn't been hanging out? He's done that before. He'll be back.

HELEN: He's being a jerk.

PHIL: Maybe a little distant. Like you don't get into dark moods? I looked up the word drama queen, and I found your picture there.

MIKE: Lay off.

CARMEN: He lives. The caffeine's finally kicking in, eh? Mister D Student will be a walking zombie in no time. How did I get suckered into letting you be my partner on this project?

HELEN: Cut it out.

MIKE: *(To HELEN.)* I can handle her. *(To CARMEN.)* I see you're not going to let up. *(Takes the folder from HELEN, places his cup on the floor, rises, crosses to CARMEN, and thumbs through the pages.)* Where do I come in? Yeah. Here. *(Finds a page and reads. During his presentation, he has everyone's attention. He faces the audience.)*

Our New Republic presentation is on George Washington, a founding father of our nation. In fact, he is known as the father of our nation, the first Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army

and first President of our republic. Washington's footprints were everywhere in the American British Colonies and the newly formed, independent United States during the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Born in Westmoreland County, Virginia, in 1732, a patriot of the French and Indian War, more commonly known as the Seven Years War...

(Puts down folder.) Geez! What is this, a Wikipedia ripoff? All you left out is that he could never tell a lie after chopping down a cherry tree.

CARMEN: Go to hell.

MIKE: Back to middle school again. And you're the editor of the literary journal!

CARMEN: You didn't lift a finger for this project.

MIKE: It looks you haven't either.

PHIL: Woop-woop!

HELEN: Can't you two just work this out?

CARMEN: You'd do way worse, Mister D.

MIKE hands her the folder and speaks extemporaneously to us. CARMEN's attitude transforms from frustration to admiration of MIKE's brilliance to resentment.

MIKE: If one word could exemplify the persona of George Washington, it would be "reluctance." Not long after a notable defeat at Fort Necessity, he resigned from his military post at the youthful age of thirty-six, during the height of the Seven Years War, to become a tobacco planter, occasional Virginia politician, husband to his wife Martha, and father to his stepchildren. He was reluctant to assert a leading position against the Stamp Act of 1765 until the Intolerable Acts of the British Parliament compelled him to take a moral stand. Although a willing soldier in returning to the military sixteen years later, he was reluctant to lead the Continental Army as Commander-in-Chief, but accepted the position in the name of duty. He was a reluctant participant of the Constitutional Convention of Philadelphia after the conclusion of the war in 1787. He was reluctant to accept the position of President because of his aversion to monarchy, but he accepted under the condition that he could

define the limits of the office. Because of his independent wealth, he was reluctant to accept a salary as President until he realized that such a generous gesture would create a precedent of allowing only the wealthy to hold the office. He was reluctant to preside over the new nation for what he considered to be an excessive length of time, citing again his fear of one man seizing too much power. He was reluctant to send state militias to quell the Whisky Rebellion, but he did it to send a message that the nation could defend itself against internal rebellion. He was reluctant to accede to a party system because of his belief that dissension and chaos would prevail over governance and order. Reluctance, never considered a virtue by politicians and historians, constantly preceded Washington's many accomplishments. Reluctance was the driving force behind the legacy of George Washington, the first leader of the most advanced, powerful democracy in history. May today's world leaders see reluctance not as a sign of weakness, but as a necessary condition before taking preemptive military action and sweeping social change.

NICK enters unnoticed by them. They remain in awestruck silence. MIKE crosses to CARMEN.

I hope you wrote all that down. Because I'm too lazy to. (*Walks back to bench, sits down.*) And you were worried that I would let you fail. Not on your life, sister.

PHIL: Woop-woop!

HELEN: That was awesome.

CARMEN: I hate you.

PHIL: Whoa! What more do you want? He's got you covered.

CARMEN: You are such a waste, you know that?

HELEN: You're just jealous.

CARMEN: Jealous? Of that? You know what, Lulu? I just figured out why he's your boyfriend: because he lies around all day listening to your crap and every now and then wakes up and puts you in line. (*To MIKE.*) So what! You can shoot a kick-butt speech off the top of your head, and I couldn't do it without writing one for ten hours and practicing it another twenty. But you're a test away from flunking out of school. You would have been expelled in ninth grade if you

weren't the athlete you are. But what you just did—without an ounce of effort—goes to show how you let yourself down.

MIKE: Honey, I'm sitting here enjoying my coffee.

CARMEN: You don't lift a finger ...

MIKE: Because I don't have to.

CARMEN: Let me finish.

PHIL: You said enough. You lose.

CARMEN: You don't lift a finger to help anyone except yourself. Not even yourself.

HELEN: Please, Carmen. Why are you guys fighting?

PHIL: Because Boop isn't here. She'd shut us all up in a heartbeat.

CARMEN: She argues just as much as anyone else.

NICK: Hi, guys.

CARMEN, HELEN, MIKE, and PHIL speak their next line simultaneously.

CARMEN: How is she?

HELEN: Is she all right?

MIKE: What're they doing to her?

PHIL: What's taking so long?

NICK: Compound fracture left ankle. She's in a cast. They're hooking her up with crutches. My dad's not back yet?

PHIL: He couldn't get through to your cell phone, so he called me to say he was bringing the car closer to the emergency entrance.

NICK: Had to have the phone off in there. He should have been back by now.

CARMEN: Can we see her?

NICK: Not in there. She'll be out in a minute.

HELEN: Is she in pain?

NICK: Not now with the medication they gave her.

PHIL: She's probably high as a kite and more embarrassed than anything else.

NICK: What were you two fighting about?

MIKE: You mean what attack from Carmen was I the target of?

CARMEN: Don't go there, Doc. Really.

NICK: *(Pulls out his mobile phone.)* It's my dad. Dad? She's almost done. ...OK. *(Hangs up.)* He's waiting in the car.

LIZ enters on crutches. NICK and PHIL go to her aid. HELEN and MIKE remain seated as CARMEN stares at MIKE.

PHIL: How are you doing?

LIZ: Never felt better. There goes the track season. Six weeks in a cast and rehab until Memorial Day, all because of mandatory swim practice on Washington's Birthday—a practice that should've never happened.

NICK: Luck of the draw. Let's get out of here.

PHIL: Be careful.

They slowly head toward the exit.

LIZ: Thanks for coming, guys. You're the greatest. The Scheme Team.
(*She turns to CARMEN, HELEN, and MIKE.*) You guys coming?

MIKE returns CARMEN's stare. CARMEN approaches them, and they rise. Pause. CARMEN embraces MIKE first and then HELEN.

CARMEN: I'm sorry.

MIKE: Don't be.

HELEN: Just be yourself. Let's go.

They all exit.

BLACKOUT.

ACT ONE, SCENE 4
REMEMBRANCE

SCENE: *Tuesday, May 26, Idemtown High School English class, represented by six school desks, three side by side at DOWN LEFT and three side by side at DOWN RIGHT*

AT RISE: *At RIGHT are, in order, PHIL, HELEN, and CARMEN, with CARMEN closest to CENTER. AT LEFT are NICK, MIKE, and LIZ, with LIZ closest to CENTER. Four of them are listening to their teacher's lecture as CARMEN acts foolishly and MIKE sleeps, snoring occasionally. LIZ and NICK take turns elbowing him to wake up, which he does for seconds before falling asleep again. HELEN, LIZ, and NICK take the lecture seriously while CARMEN engages in silly behavior and PHIL makes trenchant comments.*

TEACHER'S VOICE: The Memorial Day parade yesterday was spectacular. The sunlight was radiating on the antique cars, the maples were in full bloom, and the smell of barbecued burgers and hotdogs lingered in the warm spring air.

CARMEN shoots a rubber band at LIZ, who shakes her head, as in "how childish!"

PHIL: *(Whispers.)* What a frustrated Louisa May Alcott!

CARMEN: *(Loudly.)* Beatrix Potter!

MIKE wakes up and laughs, as do all but HELEN.

TEACHER'S VOICE: What about Beatrix Potter, Carmen?

CARMEN: Dunno. Must've had a flashback.

All but HELEN laugh. MIKE quickly falls asleep.

TEACHER'S VOICE: It looked like Idemtown's entire population of fifty thousand lined Main Street to watch the colorful floats representing every community and school group in town, the marching veterans of foreign wars, the Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Little League teams, and just anyone else who wanted to display Idemtown pride.

PHIL: (*Whispers.*) Can someone get me out of here?

HELEN: Shhhh!

CARMEN: (*Loudly.*) Pluto, the Dwarf Planet!

HELEN elbows CARMEN to stop. All laugh except HELEN.

TEACHER'S VOICE: That's the last time, Carmen Walker, Clown Princess of Idemtown.

CARMEN: So sorry. It was a junior moment.

TEACHER'S VOICE: Very funny. And Helen: Watch your elbows. Remember: Zero tolerance.

HELEN: You are such a teacher's pet.

MIKE falls asleep. CARMEN removes a straw from her backpack, removes the paper wrapping, makes a spitball, and loads it in the straw.

TEACHER'S VOICE: So all the attention was on the adorable babies in their strollers, the gleaming Corvette Sting Rays, the hooting of the volunteer fire company's truck and ambulance squad's vans, the police department sirens, and the endless lines at the Knights of Columbus chili stand.

CARMEN shoots the spitball at LIZ, who stares angrily at her.

Yet with all this Memorial Day activity on Main Street in Idemtown, one very special man went unnoticed by most people. Who was he, and why did they miss a sighting on a lifetime? Two minutes preparation, one minute presentation, five points on your report card.

All but MIKE whine: "Ah! Oh man! Geez! Two minutes! How should I know—I wasn't at the parade!" Lights down on CARMEN, HELEN, and PHIL; spotlight on LIZ, MIKE, and NICK.

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LIZ: (*Shoves MIKE really hard. He falls off his seat.*) Wake up.

NICK: Damn! She needed the whole class time to get to the punch line, and she gives us two minutes!

LIZ: Get up, Sleeping Beauty! What's with you, Herc? Can't you stay awake for two minutes?

NICK: Put a baseball in his hand. Or a guitar.

LIZ: Try in his mouth for the snoring. Were you at the Memorial Day parade?

MIKE: Say what?

NICK: You marched yesterday, didn't you?

MIKE: Yeah.

NICK: Who was the special guest?

MIKE: Huh?

LIZ: Grrreat!

NICK: Come on, Herc! Think!

MIKE: I can't remember.

LIZ: (*Puts her arm around MIKE, points skyward. During her pep talk, MIKE strains in reflection.*) Try hard. Dig deep. Go where you have never gone before, into the recesses of your distant memory, a whole twenty hours ago. You can do it, Herc.

MIKE: (*Proudly.*) I got it!

NICK: Who?

MIKE: Frank Belt.

NICK: Frank Belt?

MIKE: Yeah.

NICK: You sure?

MIKE: Sure I'm sure. How could I make up a name like that?

NICK: (*NICK thumbs his mobile phone under his desk.*) I'll Google him.

LIZ: Nick! Be cool! Don't let her see you doing that!

NICK: No Frank Belt.

LIZ: Herc! I'll kill you!

NICK: Think, Herc, think! Was he white? Black? Native American? Chinese? Young? Old? A veteran?

MIKE: An old veteran! That's it!

LIZ: Grrreat. Lot of good that does.

NICK: You're not helping, Liz.

MIKE: The oldest veteran!

NICK: Got it! I remember him on the news. World War I, right?

MIKE: That's it!

NICK: (*Thumbs his phone.*) Oldest American veteran: Frank Buckles.

Buckles, idiot, not Belt.

MIKE: I was close!

LIZ: Thanks for nothing. Now go back to sleep.

MIKE falls asleep.

You got this covered?

NICK: Yeah. Give me a second to read this.

Lights down on LIZ, MIKE, and NICK. Spotlight on CARMEN, HELEN, and PHIL.

PHIL: That was the first three-day weekend in like forever, and she throws us this curveball.

CARMEN: Every day's a holiday for you.

PHIL: Is this only the eleventh grade? Somebody kill me!

CARMEN: Stop wasting time! None of us were at the parade.

PHIL: How can she make us know this?

CARMEN: Don't you remember? We were assigned to go.

PHIL: Well, she covered every citizen of Idemtown in that endless droning. There's not a man, woman, or child left. I hate her riddles.

CARMEN: Did you read about the parade in the *Daily Ledger*?

PHIL: Who reads papers anymore?

CARMEN: I mean online.

PHIL: If it ain't a tweet, it ain't too sweet and it's got me beat. And you thought you were a poet.

CARMEN: It's got to be a veteran or someone on active duty.

HELEN: Or a reserve.

CARMEN and PHIL look at HELEN, at first surprised and then supportively. Pause. Lights up.

TEACHER'S VOICE: Time's up. During the Memorial Day parade on Main Street, one very special man went unnoticed by most people. Who was he and why did they miss a sighting on a lifetime?

LIZ and NICK raise their hand and MIKE's hands with their free hand.

Spokesperson?

NICK: *(Rises and picks up a thick novel.)* Frank Woodruff Buckles, age one hundred eight, born February first, nineteen-o-one, in Bethany, Missouri, and now residing in Charles Town, West Virginia. Mr. Buckles is the only surviving veteran of World War I. He successfully lied about his age to serve in the Army and was sent to Europe, where he was an ambulance driver. He has received awards from the highest level of the United States, French, and British governments. Yesterday, he visited Idemtown to serve as Grand Marshal of the Memorial Day parade. *(Waves the novel.)* We would need a hundred eight books as thick as this to capture all of Frank Buckles's life. He has lived through twenty American presidents and six major American wars. He has seen the world population quadruple. When he was born, the US had forty-states, the radio was just coming out of laboratories, and the airplane, the television, and the computer were not invented. When asked how he managed to live so long, he said, "When you start to die, don't." It was an honor to have Frank Buckles in Idemtown. Those who missed him definitely missed a chance of a lifetime.

All applaud. MIKE wakes up to applaud. NICK sits.

TEACHER'S VOICE: Great answer, team. Five points.

MIKE: YES!

All stare at him. He shrinks in his seat. HELEN raises her hand.

TEACHER'S VOICE: Yes, Helen?

HELEN: Our team has another answer.

TEACHER'S VOICE: That was the answer.

HELEN: If you stretch the challenge question to include a very special woman who *couldn't* make the parade, then she has gone unnoticed by most people in Idemtown for years. May I?

TEACHER'S VOICE: Is it relevant?

HELEN: Yes.

TEACHER'S VOICE: One minute. That's all.

HELEN: *(She rises. By the end of this presentation, tears stream down her face. All are aware of the subject of her speech. MIKE is moved more than anyone.)* The very special person who would have attended the parade if she could is Colonel Georgia Leonard-Peters, Environmental Services Detachment, United States Marine Reserves—my mother—who was called to active duty on Friday. Colonel Leonard-Peters, thirty-eight, is seventy years younger than Frank Buckles. She was born and raised in Idemtown, joined the Marines directly after high school, and served with distinction in Desert Storm before returning home to Idemtown to get married, give birth to three children, and has become the greatest wife and mother imaginable while getting a degree in architecture and rising to the level Chief Architect for Mountain Engineering and to Colonel in the Marine Reserves. Colonel Leonard-Peters will serve her country proudly as she helps Afghanistan rebuild its infrastructure. The last thing she said to me when saying goodbye will not make the newspapers. *(Pulls out her mother's dog tags from around her neck.)* She gave me these, and said to my brother and sister, "Helen's the oldest, so listen to her. She'll be your mother till I return." Colonel Georgia Leonard-Peters would have loved to meet Mr. Frank Buckles at the parade, but she would never pass up the chance of a lifetime to serve the country she says she owes her life to.

A five-second silence is followed by a standing ovation. CARMEN hugs HELEN, then MIKE rushes to hug her, and all lock in an embracing huddle.

TEACHER'S VOICE: Five points, and may Colonel Georgia Leonard-Peters live to be one hundred eight.

BLACKOUT.

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ACT ONE, SCENE 5
FREEDOM

SCENE: *Saturday, July 4, Idemtown Park. Evening, minutes away from the annual fireworks festivities.*

AT RISE: *CARMEN, HELEN, LIZ, MIKE, NICK, and PHIL are sitting on the grass facing each other. All sip occasionally from a water bottle except MIKE, who sips from a soda bottle. HELEN is tucked in MIKE's arms. The others are sitting apart. We hear background noise of people enjoying the evening. A rock band plays in the distance.*

LOUDSPEAKER: The winner of the fifty-fifty is ticket number one-seven-three-nine-five.

PHIL: You can't deny that Michael Crichton has a point.

CARMEN: Why can't I? People like him are part of the global warming problem.

PHIL: Woop-woop!

CARMEN: I'm serious, Flip. Look at the megabucks he made on those books and movies.

LIZ: Here we go again. Can we change the subject?

PHIL: You know he makes sense when he says after a couple days in the wilderness, you'd say, "Later for this log cabin. I miss my air conditioning and iPhone. Ozone layer? Screw that! Gimme my bug spray. And I don't mean the cream. I want that efficient aerosol can."

CARMEN: People want that stuff because it's there. But it doesn't have to be.

LIZ: When do the fireworks begin?

CARMEN: You know you agree with me on this, Boop.

LIZ: Yeah? And what does that change?

PHIL: She likes the environment, but she's a reasonable human being first.

CARMEN: Reasonable human beings don't stand a chance in the face of global warming.

PHIL: Listen, Al Gore, Miss Do-As-I-Say-But-Not-As-I-Do: You're part of the problem too. Look at you with that plastic bottle.

CARMEN: I recycle.

PHIL: Recycle? You mean you believe in recycling noxious chemicals into more noxious chemicals. Bless your naïve, hypocritical heart.

CARMEN: Be as cynical as you want.

PHIL tosses water from bottle toward CARMEN; everyone gets some.

ALL: Geez! Phil! Cut it out! Flip!

PHIL: Cynical? You call that cynical? Somewhere on Earth at this very moment, some poor person is dying of thirst. And I just wasted what could have kept him alive. Why? Because I paid for it. (*Crushes bottle and tosses it.*) Littering in front of a thousand people? Now that's cynical.

LIZ: That's embarrassing, Flip. Pick it up.

PHIL: (*He retrieves bottle.*) I'm wrong only because someone is looking. If nobody was looking, what would it matter? Behold Idemtown litter is all around you.

CARMEN: You know you don't mean that. You're just talking like a punk to rile me up.

NICK: I think he really means it.

PHIL: You're damn right, Miss Bleeding Heart.

CARMEN: I think I'll puke.

HELEN: The way you guys are arguing, I'm glad the whole trip is off.

LIZ: It's not off. Not yet. Come on, Herc!

NICK: (*To HELEN.*) Then maybe it's you and not Herc.

MIKE: Keep Helen out of this. It's all on me.

HELEN: What if it is me? What of it?

NICK: If it's you, then why are you blaming me?

HELEN: You could go to all the antiwar protests you like. I couldn't care less.

NICK: There you go. It is me. What you don't realize is that I'm protesting to bring your mom back home.

HELEN: Oh, is that why? Well don't do her any favors she doesn't want done. She's proud to serve her country, right or wrong. And I'm behind her—right or wrong. So you can just keep going into the city in solidarity with those who would destroy the principles that made America what it is.

NICK: Miss Liberty!

HELEN: When dictators take over, you know the first ones they're going to behead? The intellectuals: you!

PHIL: Woop-woop!

MIKE: Look, I'm the one who doesn't want to go, all right?

LIZ: We've been talking about this since eighth grade. Now that you and Lulu have driver's licenses, you're punking out.

MIKE: Some of us have to work for a living.

LIZ: In Food Zone? Puleeze. They won't miss us for a second. And if they fire us, they'll rehire us.

MIKE: Not in this economy. There's a line of fools willing to stock produce from here to Jefferson.

LIZ: Herc! It's not about the crummy job, and you know it. You're a year away from getting a full ride to State College because you can throw a football.

MIKE: That's not a given. Maybe if I were an Affirmative Action or Title IX student ...

CARMEN: Whoa! What are you implying?

LIZ: You don't mean that!

MIKE: Let's face it. The whole town comes to my games, and I get State College. A dozen friends and family show up to your soccer games, and half the country's ready to give you a free ticket.

CARMEN: Is it possible your C-minus average has anything to do with that?

MIKE: No. Merit went to the national dump.

CARMEN: Go. To. HELL!

LIZ: Can it! This is our last summer together for all we know. When we graduate next year, we're all going to be running around making other arrangements. This was our dream, the one thing we all wanted to do: go camping together. Forget your car. We don't need it. Let's take a bus.

PHIL: Woop-woop!

LIZ: I mean it. We can't let this chance slip by. We would give our blood for each other, Lulu—just like your mom feels about her country.

HELEN: Don't go there. Don't put my mom and us in the same breath. Not now.

LIZ: Guys, just last month we shared the same table at the junior prom. We go to the beach together. Study together. Get in trouble together. We've been there for each other since kindergarten. That's the way we feel, despite the complaining. We've got to do this, guys!

MIKE: I just don't quit on a job like that.

LIZ: But you're quitting on us: the Scheme Team.

HELEN: Get over that, Liz! There is no Scheme Team! There never was! There isn't now! There never will be! We're just six people doing time together until we get released. And my name's Helen, not Lulu. And don't call Mike Herc. Got that? *(Pause.)* Look at us. We can't agree on a thing.

LIZ: We're here. Together. Aren't we?

HELEN: We're here for the fireworks.

PHIL: In spite of the noise and air pollution it causes, right, Miss Bleeding Heart?

CARMEN: WHY ARE YOU ATTACKING ME!

MIKE: And then they cry.

PHIL: And then we say sorry.

LIZ: *(Hugs CARMEN.)* Shut up, Flip. She's got to sing in like two minutes. Don't make it worse. Your brother's doing fine all by himself.

ANNOUNCER: Let's give it up for the Idemtown Rollers!

Distant applause. CARMEN releases herself from LIZ's embrace.

LIZ: Nobody better regret a thing they said here tonight. I don't want to hear any sorrys.

MIKE: It's a free country.

HELEN: That it is.

NICK: Free to disagree.

LIZ: *(To HELEN.)* What got into you to say that?

HELEN: Mike said no. Leave it at that.

LIZ: Is *that* it? You didn't like the way I was talking to your guy?

HELEN: No. All right? Maybe he means more to me than the *Scream* Team.

CARMEN: Why did I come out tonight?

LIZ: Because of us, honey.

CARMEN: You're right, Boop. I was so looking forward to the trip.

PHIL: So was I. Doc?

NICK: Without Herc, and now Lulu... (*Correcting himself.*) Mike and Helen ... I don't know.

CARMEN: They're signaling for me.

She crosses to DOWN RIGHT.

ALL: Kill it, Carmen. Go for it. Reach the stars. Sing your heart out.
Go Cookie.

LIZ: (*Crosses to MIKE.*) Why?

MIKE: Free country. I have my reasons.

LIZ: Free country's not a reason.

MIKE: Try living somewhere else.

LIZ: Now you're thinking like every redneck in Idemtown.

MIKE: Then I'm a redneck.

LIZ: No you're not.

MIKE: Redneck. Idemtown. My people.

One rocket lights up the sky followed by an explosion. Spotlight on CARMEN.

ANNOUNCER: And now ladies and gentlemen, to kick off the annual Fourth of July Independence Day fireworks display and to honor America, singing our National Anthem, entering her senior year this fall at Idemtown High School, voted most talented by the Class of 2010, the multitalented honor student, Carmen Walker.

CARMEN: (*Sings a cappella soulfully.*)

OH, SAY, CAN YOU SEE,
BY THE DAWN'S EARLY LIGHT,
WHAT SO PROUDLY WE HAILED
AT THE TWILIGHT'S LAST GLEAMING?

ALL: (*Each brings a unique disposition to the singing: MIKE is fervent, HELEN desperate, LIZ dejected, NICK embarrassed, and PHIL cynical.*)

WHOSE BROAD STRIPES AND BRIGHT STARS,
THROUGH THE PERILOUS FIGHT,
O'ER THE RAMPARTS WE WATCHED,
WERE SO GALLANTLY STREAMING?

CARMEN:

AND THE ROCKETS' RED GLARE,
THE BOMBS BURSTING IN AIR,
GAVE PROOF THROUGH THE NIGHT
THAT OUR FLAG WAS STILL THERE.

ALL: (*They hold hands in this order: NICK, HELEN, PHIL, LIZ, and MIKE.*)

O SAY, DOES THAT STAR-SPANGLED BANNER YET WAVE
O'ER THE LAND OF THE FREE AND THE HOME OF THE BRAVE?

BLACKOUT.



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EVERY DAY'S A HOLIDAY

by Philip Vassallo.

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