

Shirley Dreaming
This is not a musical

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The action takes place in downtown Seattle, primarily on the forty-fourth floor of a tall office building, on a rainy day in June.

Characters:

Shirley Childs -- 22, sunny, a daydreamer

Boss Bass -- 50, big, dark and commanding. Easily pushed over the edge. Can be played by a man or a woman (referred to, for simplicity's sake, as a him).

Ivy the Intern -- 18, a bit of a thing, but quite frightening to listen to

Steve -- he says he's 27 and that's probably true, scrawny but remarkably self-confident

Wanda -- 60, a cat lady who appears to be...unstable, in an elderly way

Songs:

Act 1:

Entry-Level
You Are What You Do
Surely Shirley
Scary Story
Human Food

Act 2:

Holy Story
Let It Out
Epic Book Battle on the High Seas: Part I
I Love You
Epic Book Battle on the High Seas: Part II
Recycle

* The roles are all to be played by actors in their early twenties.

** The story calls for numerous locations, many of which are never returned to in the action. This circumstance allows for a creative solution to be contrasted with the naturalistic office location. As in any production, the set should help to illuminate the themes. This contrast between the creative/surreal and the bland/realistic helps to define the disparate worlds in which these characters operate.

ACT I

SCENE 1

INT. AN OFFICE, FLOOR 44 - NIGHT

Two cubicles downstage. We can see into each through their partial downstage walls. The stage right cubicle is the essence of teenage boy, complete with swimsuit calendar. The stage left cubicle is the essence of grandma's house, complete with kitty calendar.

An elevator is upstage center, flanked with large windows that reveal the city outside, freckled with other fluorescent worlds in tall glass buildings. A receptionist's desk is downstage left, piled very high with papers. A door to a closed office is downstage right. A light flickers within.

A black ceiling, fluorescent fixtures and all, hangs over the office.

The sounds of many highly reduced, iconic pop and rock songs mix and mingle and waft out from within the closed office.

The voice of BOSS BASS attempting to overtake the hullabaloo:

BOSS BASS (O.S.)
WILL YOU BE QUIET!

The hullabaloo plays on.

BOSS BASS (O.S.) (cont'd)
QUIET!!

Smashing and banging and:

BOSS BASS (O.S.) (cont'd)
NO MUSIC!!!

Silence.

The office door is thrown open and Boss Bass jumps out, clutching a collection of greeting cards. Even more greeting cards are poking out of his suit pockets.

"Celebration" by Kool and the Gang can be heard coming from one of the pockets. Boss Bass punches the pocket.

Electric silence.

BOSS BASS (cont'd)

I know you're watching me right now. Somewhere. You want me to act like you're not there. You want me to think that this is it. But I heard you. Tapping. Typing. Telephone ringing. Conversing. I heard you cackle by the water cooler. The stories start somewhere. Up there. You have to send your new story soon. What did you write? The next Goodnight Moon? Hop On Pop? I'd bet you every dollar I've got that I'm cooking up something better, because now that you've let me go, I'm choosing the words. I'm telling the story.

Another greeting card plays in one of Boss Bass's pockets. He slaps the pocket.

Electric silence.

BOSS BASS (cont'd)

Are you listening to me? I'm still here and I'm not going anywhere! I'm still the boss! And if you want to fire me then you've got to do it--

The electric silence grows into a buzz.

BOSS BASS (cont'd)

So you hear me now. Good. Well hear this: I won't let you replace me--not with some punk, twenty-something with his ear-pals turned up; some child living life to the newest song and dance and tuning out the world. Read'm some books and call'm an expert. What did he *do*?

The ceiling slowly opens up, unnoticed.

BOSS BASS (cont'd)

It's not like it used to be, uphill both ways,
in the snow, with only one shoe, whiskey in one
pocket, abacus made out of frozen sheep's poop
in the other, eating the bark off of sticks,
trying to fight off gangrene, the gout...

The buzz continues to grow.

Pee from on high rains down
through the open ceiling, landing
directly on Boss Bass.

BOSS BASS (cont'd)

What are you doing? You can't do that. Stop!
I'm not leaving. Are you listening to me?

Boss Bass steps out from under the
pee stream. The stream moves with
him.

BOSS BASS (cont'd)

I will survive! I'm hitting my prime! I'm
Doctor freakin' Seuss!

Boss Bass is on all fours.

BOSS BASS (cont'd)

You don't want to do this. I'll show you
everything! My invention. Don't kill me! You'll
want to promote me. To the writer's floor. Up!
Stop! Stop! I swear, this story will sell
better than anything you've ever written.

Boss Bass is laying on the floor
face-down, terrified.

The buzz is deafening.

The pee is flowing.

A never-ending telephone ring,
like an alarm clock, announces
certain death.

BOSS BASS (cont'd)

(shouting over the noise)

It will make more money than this company has
ever seen!

The pee stops; the ceiling closes.

The buzz and telephone ring cease.

Boss Bass stands, looking around cautiously.

An office, fluorescently lit.

Another greeting card sounds in his pocket ("Girl's Night Out" by Miley Cyrus). He grabs the card and tears it to pieces with a roar:

BOSS BASS (cont'd)
NO MORE MISS MONTANA!

Silence.

Boss Bass gets a cup of water from a water cooler by the elevator.

He drinks it.

He throws the tiny paper cup at a trash can by the cooler.

BOSS BASS (cont'd)
Just a bad dream.
(slaps himself awake)
I'm up. And this is it.

Boss Bass walks briskly back into the closed office, slamming the door.

After a moment, the never-ending telephone, like an alarm clock, rings...

SCENE 2

INT. BEDROOM

...An alarm clock, like a never-ending telephone, rings.

It's early in the morning in a small, littered bedroom. The blankets are lumped on the bed.

SHIRLEY CHILDS pops out from under the blankets and silences the alarm clock.

SHIRLEY

"ENTRY-LEVEL"

TIME
TO
SHINE!

Shirley jumps out of bed, getting dressed as she sings:

THE BIGGEST BEGINNING
AND I CANNOT BE LATE
FOR CHILDREN'S BOOK TRAINING
AT "SMILES AND FATE"

OH I LOVE TELLING STORIES
EVER SINCE I WAS SMALL
I'VE NEVER WRITTEN A STORY
BUT I'VE DREAMT THEM ALL--

She freezes - lost in her mind

EXT. HOLLYWOOD THEATER

DAYDREAM...
THE CARPET UNROLLING
IT MATCHES MY DRESS
MY AGENT IS CALLING
AND I COULD NOT CARE LESS
MY DREAM-BOAT LEO WALKS TOWARD ME
HE GIVES ME A KISS
HE GIVES ME A MICROPHONE
AND MY FIRST NOTE IS--

She's back.

INT. BEDROOM

PUT MY CAP AND GOWN AWAY
I START REAL WORK TODAY
I DON'T CARE WHAT IT PAYS
IT'S THE FIRST DAY OF MY LIFE!

ENTRY-LEVEL
BE BE BE BE BE BE BE BE
ENTRY-LEVEL
ZIP TIE SLIP SIGH LIPS EYES
START AT THE BEGINNING
HERE I COME, SINGING

Shirley, now dressed, grabs an umbrella and pretends that it's a microphone as she heads into...

INT. KITCHEN

TWENTY-TWO YEARS AGO
MOM POPPED OUT AN UMBRELLA
SHE HELD IT ABOVE ME
AND SAID "BABY DON'T CRY"

NOW HOP-SKIP-JUMP TO TODAY
I THROW OUT THAT UMBRELLA

She throws the umbrella out the window.

I LOOK UP AT THE CLOUDS
AND SAY "BRING ON THE RAIN!
I'VE GOT BOOBS AND A BRAIN
AND IT'S TIME FOR ME TO SHINE!"

It starts to rain. Shirley sits at the kitchen table and slurps down some cereal.

ENTRY-LEVEL
BE DO DO DO BE BE BE DO DO
ENTRY-LEVEL
MUNCH MUNCH MUNCH MUNCH MUNCH MUNCH
START AT THE BEGINNING
HERE I COME, SINGING

(Instrumental interlude as:)

She checks her watch, freaks out, and sprints out the door and into...

EXT. RAINY CITY STREET

The bus pulls away from her stop. She sprints after it, trying desperately to get the driver's attention.

The bus finally stops and she boards.

INT. CITY PUBLIC TRANSIT

(PASSENGERS and DRIVER on the bus form a vocal backdrop as Shirley continues:)

SHIRLEY
I'LL RIDE INTO THE SUNRISE
ON THE BACK OF MY STEED
I'LL KISS ALL THE GOBLINS
AND I'LL CLEAN UP THE STREETS

The Driver stops the bus and stares at Shirley.

DRIVER
(as Shirley continues to sing)
I'm not takin' no shows on the road!

SHIRLEY
(blissfully ignorant)
THEN AT THE END OF MY STORY
WITH MY MAN STANDING BY
I'LL TELL HOW I DID IT
AND I'LL SAY IT WAS--

The Driver throws her off the bus.

EXT. CITY STREET

SHIRLEY
DAYDREAM...

A BOOMBOX WO-MON passes her on the street.

SHIRLEY (cont'd)
IS THAT FOXXXY?
OH I LOVE HER
HER BEATS GET ME GROOVIN'
HER WORDS KEEP ME MOVIN'
SHE'S THE VOICE OF OUR TIME

INT. DANCE CLUB

Shirley and Boombox Wo-Mon enjoy a little dance break as they sing along to the Foxxxy song:

"WHEN I
DANCE TO MY POP ROCK
I WEAR MY THICK SOCKS
WITH MY GLITZ ROCKS
AND ALL THE BRITISH MOTHERS SAY "POPPYCOCK"
"POPPYCOCK!"

SUCK ON MY TOOTSIE POP
POP LOCK AND NEVER STOP

A rolling bass drum and the dance
club dissolves into:

EXT. CITY STREET

Shirley and Boombox Guy keep on
dancing in the street until
Shirley accidentally trips a
passing SKATEBOARDER, sending him
flying.

She checks her watch and yelps!
She grabs the skateboard, looks
down the steep street and jumps
on.

DON'T BLOW A SINGLE BREATH
FROM NOW ON IT'S LIFE OR DEATH
AND I'M READY
BUT IS THIS WORLD READY FOR ME?!

She loses control of the
skateboard. It goes flying into a
downtown crowd of BUSINESS PEOPLE.
The sounds of cars screeching and
a cat screaming can be heard.

Shirley leans against a building,
trying to play it cool. The
building moves...

SHIRLEY
I LEANED AGAINST A BUILDING AND IT MOVED

BUSINESS PEOPLE
AND IT MOVED!

SHIRLEY
STANDING ON THE STREET CRUISING DUDES

BUSINESS PEOPLE
CRUISING DUDES!

Shirley runs into a building with
a sign that reads "Smiles and Fate
Children's Books" over the
doorway.

SHIRLEY

YO GOD! HE PLACED ME IN THIS WORLD
AND I, I DISPLACED THE WORLD
YO GOD, I'M GONNA TAKE THIS PLACE BY STORM!

INT. *SMILES AND FATE CHILDREN'S BOOKS* BUILDING

ALL

ENTRY-LEVEL
DO DO DO DO DO DO DODODO
ENTRY-LEVEL

Everyone squeezes into an
elevator.

UP UP UP UP UP UP UP UP

ENTRY-LEVEL!!

BUSINESS PEOPLE

WORK WORK WORK WORK WORK WORK

As the Business People chant "up"
Shirley fades into one more
daydream...

SHIRLEY

A MIGHTY MAN
A SON AND DAUGHTER
A LITTLE HOUSE
WITH BRIGHT GREEN SHUTTERS
IS ALL YOU NEED
BUT CAN'T I DREAM?

ALL

START AT THE BEGINNING
HERE I COME SING--

Shirley steps off the elevator
into...

INT. AN OFFICE, FLOOR 44

She is immediately cut off by Boss
Bass who is standing directly in
her path.

Shirley freezes. The office is
bland and silent, save for the
rustling of papers and perhaps a
ringing phone. A siren passes by
outside.

The real world.

A particularly young receptionist named IVY THE INTERN is focused intently on her work at a desk downstage left.

Finally:

BOSS BASS
Shirley Childs?

SHIRLEY
Yes.

BOSS BASS
Thought so. Wow...You're fired.

SHIRLEY
What?

BOSS BASS
Fired. Collect your affects.

SHIRLEY
I don't have affects - I just got here!

IVY THE INTERN
Shh!

BOSS BASS
(to the heavens)
This? Is this the best you can do?

SHIRLEY
Who are you?

BOSS BASS
I'm Boss Bass. The best boss you never had.

SHIRLEY
Why are you firing me? I thought I made it just in time.

BOSS BASS
Mouthiness, tardiness, sniffing sharpies...

"We Wish You A Merry Christmas" by Alvin and the Chipmunks plays from Boss Bass's pocket. He silences it.

SHIRLEY
Sniffing sharpies?

IVY THE INTERN
Shh!

BOSS BASS

What seems to be the problem? It's absurdly simple: exit up-center.

The Chipmunks start playing again. Boss Bass punches himself in the pocket. The Chipmunks continue to play in slow-motion.

SHIRLEY

But I got an e-mail. I got a phone call. They sent me papers.

BOSS BASS

Our mistake. Sorry for the inconvenience.

SHIRLEY

What about food? How will I eat?

Boss Bass finally silences the card.

BOSS BASS

There's no opening for you here.

SHIRLEY

Are you sure?

BOSS BASS

Yes! I'm sure. Freakin' youth, you think you can just slip on your Chuck Taylors and go out and conquer the world. But I won't let you. I'll squash you. I'll squeeze the conquer out of you. And you'll be better off. You'll be happier somewhere else.

SHIRLEY

But I think I can do this!

BOSS BASS

It's a dead end.

SHIRLEY

I'm a great fit for this company.

BOSS BASS

You don't want to be me, ending. Dead, all your dreams.

SHIRLEY

I see myself in ten years, writing and selling world famous children's books!

BOSS BASS

Have you ever sold a book before?

SHIRLEY

Last month, I sold my textbooks to make rent.

BOSS BASS

You can't be something that you've never done.

SHIRLEY

I can't do something if you don't give me a chance!

IVY THE INTERN

Shh!

BOSS BASS

And there stands the catch-twenty-two, named for the trap that twenty-two-year-olds always seem to find themselves in. I was in that trap once, then I did something about it. And look where I am today.

Another greeting card sings from Boss Bass's pocket, "...it was a graveyard smash..." from "Monster Mash" by Bobby Pickett. Boss Bass silences the card.

BOSS BASS (cont'd)

(to himself)

I'm one floor away.

"YOU ARE WHAT YOU DO"

STEVE

BOSS

WANDA

BASS

BOSS BASS

YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT
YOU ARE WHO YOU SCREW
YOU ARE WHAT YOU SAY (IF ANYONE LISTENS)
BUT MOST OF ALL
YOU ARE WHAT YOU DO

SHIRLEY

Why are you rhyming?

BOSS BASS

It's a new thing I'm trying.

SHIRLEY

Why?

BOSS BASS

Why why why. Because studies show that when I do, the chance of you listening is much improved.

SHIRLEY

What?

BOSS BASS

IT GETS YOU TO LISTEN (IF THAT CAN HAPPEN)
IT MAKES THE WORDS STICK
IN YOUR THICK LITTLE NOGGIN
NOW TELL ME, PLEASE,
IF YOU ARE WHAT YOU DO
THEN WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?

SHIRLEY

I...

IVY THE INTERN

SHH!

BOSS BASS

Is there something wrong?

SHIRLEY

This is not how I expected the beginning to be.

BOSS BASS

YOUR RESUME, S'IL VOUS PLAIT?
IF NOT YOU CAN KINDLY GET OUT OF MY WAY
'CAUSE HOW ELSE CAN I TELL
IF YOU ARE WHAT YOU SELL
INSTEAD OF SOME CRAZY
SENT STRAIGHT FROM HELL?

SHIRLEY

(to Ivy)

Am I really fired?

Ivy the Intern stands, unable to comprehend Shirley's incessant chatter.

BOSS BASS

ONE PIECE OF PAPER
WITH THE CRAP YOU'VE COMPLETED
A SINGLE-PULP PAPER
IS ALL THAT YOU ARE

SHIRLEY

I'm more than--

BOSS BASS
(commanding)

Your resume.

Ivy stands by Boss Bass's right
hand.

SHIRLEY
I was already hired.

BOSS BASS
And you've already been fired. Meet Ivy, the
unpaid intern. Show her your resume Ivy.

Ivy produces a resume from a
resume-sized pocket labeled resume
on the inside of her suit jacket.

SHIRLEY
Well what--

BOSS BASS
(producing a resume from a resume-sized
pocket labeled "Resume" on the inside of
his suit jacket and handing it to
Shirley)

WHAT ABOUT ME?
JUST ASK, I'LL AGREE
ALL THAT I WILL EVER BE
IS WORDS ON A SHEET
I AM WHAT YOU SEE
THERE'S NOTHING DOWN DEEP
NOW I'LL GENTLY REPEAT:
IF YOU ARE WHAT YOU DO
THEN WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?

SHIRLEY
I'm me!

BOSS BASS AND IVY THE INTERN
Who?

SHIRLEY
I'M...
I'M...
I'M SHIRLEY CHILDS

BOSS BASS
That's a start.
MIDDLE NAME?

SHIRLEY
MARY-JANE

BOSS BASS
I need a piece of paper!

A hand holding a blank piece of paper shoots into the air from within the stage right cubicle. Boss Bass takes it and takes a pen from his suit jacket.

SHIRLEY
What are you doing?

Boss Bass bends Shirley over and uses her back as a desk as he writes furiously.

BOSS BASS
WHAT SCHOOL?

SHIRLEY
BE YOU!

BOSS BASS
MAJOR?

SHIRLEY
MUSIC

BOSS BASS
FIVE FOOT--

SHIRLEY
FOUR INCH

BOSS BASS
BROWN HAIR

SHIRLEY
BROWN EYES

BOSS BASS
TWENTY-TWO

SHIRLEY
YEARS OLD

BOSS BASS
THIRTY-TWO

SHIRLEY
WHITE TEETH?

BOSS BASS
CUP-SIZE

SHIRLEY
WHAT?

BOSS BASS
DAILY DRUGS

SHIRLEY
I DON'T THINK SO

BOSS BASS
ETHNICITY

SHIRLEY
WHAT ARE YOU--

BOSS BASS
AND YOU WEIGH...

SHIRLEY
STOP, PLEASE!

BOSS BASS
OTHER WORK?

SHIRLEY
THERE'S MORE TO ME!

BOSS BASS
IT'S WHAT I THOUGHT
NO FACTS, NO FIGURES
IT'S WHAT I GUESSED
NO TIME, NO TESTS

THE KIDS ARE GONNA ASK "WHY?"
AND MOM WILL TELL THEM "JUST LISTEN"
UNTIL THEY STOP ASKING "WHY?"
AND JUST WAIT FOR THE END
THEY JUST WAIT FOR THE END

BUT WHAT DO YOU SAY IF NOT WHY?
WHEN THE CLAPPING COMES TO AN END
AS THEY STAND UP AND MOVE ON
CAN THEY STILL PRETEND?
CAN WE STILL PRETEND?

PEOPLE IN STORIES KNOW WHY
THEY KNOW PURPOSE AND PRIDE
THEY LOVE AND THEY STRIVE AND DREAM
WE WANT A STORY
WE WANT TO BE IN OUR STORY

I MAY NOT HAVE CREDITS
BUT I CREATE STORIES CONSTANTLY
I'VE GOT DESIRE
AND I CAN DREAM

I NEED THIS MORE THAN ANYTHING
ARE YOU LISTENING?
MORE THAN ANYTHING

BOSS BASS (cont'd)

YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT
YOU ARE WHO YOU SCREW
YOU ARE WHAT YOU SAY (IF ANYONE LISTENS)
YOU ARE WHAT YOU DO
AND WHAT YOU'VE DONE IS SQUAT
EXCEPT STEP INTO MY WORLD
AND CONVINCE ME YOU'RE NOT
THE GIRL FOR THE JOB

Boss Bass wads up the paper and
throws it at Shirley.

SHIRLEY

What is that?

BOSS BASS

Garbage.

IVY THE INTERN

N/A.

SHIRLEY

What?

IVY THE INTERN

Not applicable.

BOSS BASS

Not available.

Boss Bass hands Shirley a greeting
card.

SHIRLEY

What is that?

Boss Bass stares at her.

SHIRLEY (cont'd)

(reading the card)

"You took our tips. You made us work late. You
cracked the whip and ..."

Shirley opens the card. The na-na chorus from "Hey Jude" by the Beatles plays.

SHIRLEY (cont'd)
"We still think you're great."

BOSS BASS
It's from the Hallmark Greatest Hits Collection.

The ceiling opens up.

The buzz returns.

IVY THE INTERN
(to Shirley, in a bad Chinese accent)
Thank you come again.

Boss Bass sees the ceiling and covers his head. He looks around-- no one else seems to see or hear anything.

Boss Bass picks up the crumpled paper and goes into his office.

The ceiling closes and the buzz subsides.

Shirley pushes the down button for the elevator. It arrives. She boards. The doors close.

Suddenly, there's a terrible, gear-grinding crunch.

STEVE peaks out of the stage right cubicle. He goes to the elevator and knocks.

SHIRLEY (O.S.)
There's no one here.

STEVE
I think the elevator is broken.

SHIRLEY (O.S.)
(crying)
Leave me alone.

STEVE
You should probably take the stairs.

SHIRLEY (O.S.)
How many flights up are we?

STEVE
Fourty-four.

Shirley wails.

STEVE (cont'd)
Miss, I'm going to get you out of there.

More sobbing.

Steve goes back into his cubicle and emerges with a crowbar. He removes his shirt and cracks his fingers. He sticks the crowbar between the elevator doors and leans with all his might.

Nothing.

He pulls a small canister of spray deodorant from his pocket and applies it. He tries again.

Nothing.

Frustrated, he kicks the elevator doors. They fly open.

Light emanates from the elevator. He holds out his hand--the prince rescuing his princess. Shirley steps out of the elevator.

Steve takes her in for the first time. He's smitten.

SHIRLEY
(wiping away tears)
Thanks. Where are the stairs?

STEVE
"LOVE THEME"

I LOVE YOU
I KNOW FROM FIRST SIGHT THAT...
I LOVE YOU
OOO...

SHIRLEY
What?

STEVE
I'm Steve.

SHIRLEY
Shirley.

STEVE
What's your name?

SHIRLEY
Shirley. I don't see the stairs.

STEVE
Oh. They're over there, just past the kid at
the desk.

Shirley exits past the
Receptionist (who doesn't even
look up).

STEVE (cont'd)
(as she walks away)

I LOVE YOU
I KNOW FROM FIRST SIGHT THAT--

Shirley enters again, wet up to
her knees.

SHIRLEY
The stairs are flooded.

STEVE
Hey, never thought I'd see you again.

SHIRLEY
The man said that it would be hours before I
can use them.

STEVE
Well, there's no arguing with the Man. It looks
like the water is kind of deep.

SHIRLEY
And rough. The plumber was going up the stairs
on all fours.

STEVE
How do you know he was the plumber?

SHIRLEY
His swim trunks were--

STEVE
Swim trunks?

SHIRLEY
(gesturing)

Were--

STEVE
(putting it together)

Ohh...

SHIRLEY
When will the elevator be fixed?

STEVE
Depends on whether or not the repairman brought
a snorkel.

SHIRLEY
What do I do now?

STEVE
I guess you'll have to stay here with me.

SHIRLEY
I can't. I can't stay here.

STEVE
Hey, there's no rush. There are plenty of jobs
out there. I know a girl who can get you a job
waiting tables, if you want. And then at night
she takes off the apron and--

SHIRLEY
I don't want a job. And I don't want your help.

STEVE
Well nobody wants a job.

SHIRLEY
What do I do now?

STEVE
That is the question...Can I get you anything?
A roly-chair? We have water...

As Steve speaks he goes about the
space: into his cubicle for a
roly-chair, and to the water
cooler by the elevator for a cup
of water. He sits Shirley down and
hands her the water, but she
hasn't heard nor seen him do any
of this. She's lost again...

Giant paper dream bubbles turn in
on Shirley from above, creating
screens to catch her dreams.

SHIRLEY

"SURELY SHIRLEY"

DAYDREAM...
THE CARPET UNRAVELING
A STAIN ON MY DRESS
MY THROAT IN STITCHES
AND I CAN'T--

INT. ENDLESS CAFETERIA

Shirley sees a cafeteria full of Shirleys--all wearing the same uniforms, each with a different colored number on the front.

NIGHTMARES...
NO NAME ON MY NAME-TAG
IN AN ENDLESS CAFETERIA
MY MOM MADE ME BROWN-BAG
ALL THE GIRLS IN THE CAFETERIA
WEAR THEIR HAIR ALL THE SAME
I GRAB MY HEAD
I DROP MY LUNCH
I PULL MY HAIR
IT COMES OUT IN CLUMPS
FLAT GRAY HAIR
GRAY HAIR
COLOR
NUMBER
COLOR
NUMBER

The Shirleys are taken by the music and tossed into a synchronized dance.

Shirley breaks from the dance defiantly.

THERE'S MORE TO ME!
THAN A CLUMPED UP RESUME
THERE'S MORE TO ME!
I THOUGHT TODAY WOULD BE THE DAY
I GOT TO SING ME OFF THE PAGE

The lights and the bubbles fade back up. She's a part of the office again.

INT. OFFICE

STEVE

(To Shirley as she continues singing to herself)

Hey, you zoned for a minute...Wow. You're a singer. An extraordinary singer. But, Shirley, there's a thing about singing...

SHIRLEY

(to herself)

I'M SURELY SHIRLEY

ZANY, SPACEY

I'M SHIRLEY SURELY

LOST AND CRAZY...

OH YOU DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE!

A DAYDREAMER SEEING STARS

Ivy the Intern is standing over Shirley exactly as Boss Bass did when Shirley first arrived.

IVY THE INTERN

Is there anything I can do for you?

SHIRLEY

What? Oh, thank you, but--

STEVE

(to Shirley)

This is Ivy, the intern.

IVY THE INTERN

We've met.

STEVE

She's Boss Bass's muscle.

Ivy the Intern grabs Steve by the arm and tae-kwon-twists him to the ground.

IVY THE INTERN

I'm on the leadership track.

STEVE

She's a freshman.

IVY THE INTERN

Steve is on the unemployment track.

SHIRLEY

You're a freshman? Where do you go to school? I just graduated.

STEVE

She's been to prison three times.

Steve tries to stand up but Ivy
stands on him, keeping him down.

SHIRLEY

(to Ivy)

Are you allowed to do that?

STEVE

No.

IVY THE INTERN

Steve would never say anything. I know all of
my employees as well as they know the back of
my hand. That's the key to firm management.

SHIRLEY

Abuse?

STEVE

Your employees?

IVY THE INTERN

Yes. *My* employees.

(to Shirley)

I antagonize in Boss Bass's absence. When the
boss ain't here, you answer to me.

STEVE

She's eighteen.

IVY THE INTERN

I'm the founder and CEO of my own online retail
corporation.

STEVE

She sells Chinese children.

IVY THE INTERN

I sell *books* to Chinese children.

STEVE

I tried to kiss her once and she tased me.

IVY THE INTERN

Steve has never known a woman.

"Unbelievable" by EMF plays in
Boss Bass's office.

BOSS BASS (O.S.)

RAWRRYAAAGRRRAAAHHH!!!

Silence.

SHIRLEY

You've been to prison?

IVY THE INTERN

Shirley Childs. Graduated with a BA in Music and a three-point-three GPA. Was heavily involved in musical theatre productions though they yielded neither credit nor a foreseeable future. Was forced to apply outside her "expertise" and thought she had acquired a job here at Smiles and Fate Children's Books until precisely 9:04 this morning when she was promptly fired.

SHIRLEY

I tried to leave. I can't.

IVY THE INTERN

And yet she's still singing!

SHIRLEY

I don't sing on purpose, that's just how it comes out.

IVY THE INTERN

Listen.

A moment of silence.

IVY THE INTERN (cont'd)

The sound of silence. This is not a musical. This is a place of business. There's no music of any kind. No iPods, no ear-buds, no ringtones, not even any Muzak, and definitely no Foxxxy. We sell children's books. We use our telephone voice, a pen, and lots and lots of paper.

SHIRLEY

It's like I'm being fired all over again.

IVY THE INTERN

Consider yourself fired twice.

STEVE

You're an intern. You can't fire people.

Steve, who has since stood up, is quickly floored once more.

IVY THE INTERN
(to Shirley)

But, since you can't leave, you might as well do something.

SHIRLEY
(in disbelief)

What?

IVY THE INTERN

That's what's difficult. What. I can't trust you to make sales calls, you're not trained in any relevant software...I know!

(she walks back to her desk)

You can read, write?

(she laughs at her clever joke as she picks up a giant stack of paper. A stapler is balanced on top. She walks back to Shirley)

Our creative department just finished the new children's book. I've printed enough copies for everyone in the building to have ten. You will staple and collate each copy and then distribute them personally to each staff member along with a reader's report analyzing their responses to the text, the through-line, and the reading level in addition to a test report analyzing the response of employees' children to the events within the text to be completed prior to receipt of this month's compensation and in association with the June Smiles and Fate Standard, also found in this stack, which is required reading, tested--thanks to yours truly--by a brief reading quiz on the back page which is due strictly by the twenty-first of June at nine a.m. Sit down.

Shirley sits in the roolly-chair.
Ivy the Intern drops the giant stack in her lap.

STEVE

Stapling is for interns.

IVY THE INTERN

Stapling is for the lowest person on the totem pole, and today it's her.

Ivy the Intern starts to leave.

SHIRLEY
(from behind the stack of paper)

But I don't work here. I won't do this!

IVY THE INTERN

I know you. You might not know you, but I know you. And you'll do it.

She looks at Steve who looks back at her with his sexy eyes and his shirtless bod.

IVY THE INTERN (cont'd)

Shouldn't you be doing...something?

Ivy the Intern returns to her desk.

STEVE

I'll help you.

Steve runs into his cubicle and glides in a roolly-chair out of his cubicle. He takes half of Shirley's stack, revealing her face.

STEVE (cont'd)

Welcome to the real world, where everything is on wheels and stapling is a way of life.

(he waits for a response)

Silence. Some real world. MTV's got it all wrong. Am I right?

(again, no response)

Great show though.

(he examines a rug burn)

Ivy's rough, huh? I think she likes me so I let her knock me down sometimes. I don't like her though. Not anymore.

Shirley takes the stapler and a few pages off of the top of the stack. She studies the pages and gives in, slowly, mechanically stapling copy after copy.

STEVE (cont'd)

This is the new kids' story. We'll be trying to sell this baby for all of next month.

Shirley continues stapling copies. She stares, dreamless.

STEVE (cont'd)

I tried to warn you about the singing thing. Ivy takes the no music rule to new levels. Hey, but they can never really take away our music, am I right?

Shirley staples.

STEVE (cont'd)

Like, even now I'm singing. Boss Bass and Ivy would never know, but I've got 99.7 KXYZ The Modern Mix goin' off in my head as we speak.

(he touches his ear as though the song is changing)

Listen listen. It's my girl!

(rapping)

"When I dance to my pop rock, I wear my thick socks--" Do you like Foxxxy? I love her. She's the voice of our time.

Shirley seems to hear Steve.

Ivy is ferociously riveted.

STEVE (cont'd)

"Poppycock!"

"I Say A Little Prayer" by Dionne Warwick sings from the back office.

BOSS BASS (O.S.)

DOWN WITH ROM-COMS!

Silence. Shirley staples again.

STEVE

(rapping)

"...My man meat, short and sweet, Tootsie Pop treat, who's your mom now? Foxxxy's in town."

Shirley has retreated far within herself.

IVY THE INTERN

That's it.

STEVE

Mamma Wanda!

IVY THE INTERN

Be quiet!

STEVE

Mamma!

IVY THE INTERN

You know the rule--

STEVE

Your breast is blue.

Ivy checks her breast pocket--a pen has exploded.

STEVE (cont'd)
It's like your heart is bleeding.

IVY THE INTERN
My pen exploded.

STEVE
I wonder why. Are you jealous? I'm paying Shirley a lot of attention.

IVY THE INTERN
Yeah right.

STEVE
Are you sad? Your heart's bleeding blue.

IVY THE INTERN
I'll rip your heart out with my staple-crimper.

STEVE
I'm surprised it didn't bleed black.

Ivy sits at her desk, dabbing at her large ink wound with a tissue.

STEVE (cont'd)
"They call me mother nature, I'm !@#%^& father time."

WANDA pops up from inside the stage left cubicle. She has a phone pressed firmly to her ear.

Steve waves a copy of the new story at her. Her eyes dilate as her mouth cruises on autopilot:

WANDA
(into the phone)
That's right, Mrs. Idleman, we can't have those little tykes fighting over a book. Four copies for the classroom then. And what about home? A keepsake for you and Richard? Oh, and tell me about Tina...dodecatuplets! You must have your hands full! Mmm, but I do love kittens...

Wanda slides back into her cubicle.

STEVE

That's Wanda, my mom away from mom. She's got the longest Employee of the Month streak in the world: thirty-five straight years. Four hundred and twenty months.

Wanda rolls her roolly-chair into the entrance to her cubicle, she's staring intently at the new paper stack like a lion at an antelope, while her voice is loud and fast like an auctioneer:

WANDA

...Pete, you've gotta strike now. I've been on the phone with eight other buyers in the last ten minutes!

(she sweeps a row of books off her desk)
Books are flying off the shelves!...

She rolls back into her cubicle.

Shirley staples...

STEVE

Hey, are you alright? I don't have any feelings for Ivy anymore, seriously. I'm too old for her anyway. I need a girl who's out of college.

...copy after copy.

STEVE (cont'd)

(to Wanda)

Mamma! The new story's here!

IVY THE INTERN

She's on the phone!

Wanda paces in her cubicle, as though she's trapped inside, like an animal in a cage.

WANDA

...The last book made the children cry? Well this book, Mrs. Travers...I'm crying right now. It's the most moving children's story of the millennium...

STEVE

When she's in that cubicle, she's the boss.

Wanda puts down the phone and steps out of her cubicle.

She ages twenty, tough years in an instant.

STEVE (cont'd)

When she's out of that cubicle, she's...old. She's like a transformer, but instead of turning into a truck or a robot or something she turns into a silent, old cat lady.

Shirley staples.

STEVE (cont'd)

(to Shirley)

See, she's the only one who can sell these stupid stories. A regular Willy Loman, or whatever. She has a gift.

Wanda hangs up quietly. Slowly, she steps out of her cubicle and suddenly seems...old. Her energy has fallen to the floor. Her confidence is gone. She's a different person. A mute.

STEVE (cont'd)

(to Shirley)

Every month, the so-called "creative team" upstairs publishes a new book and then we have to sell the book to unsuspecting teachers and librarians. It's evil.

Wanda takes a copy of the story from the stack and turns through it slowly and carefully.

STEVE (cont'd)

No one knows what's up on floor forty-six. Not even Boss Bass, I don't think. They must be really weird though. The books that they write are really bad kid stories.

The ceiling slowly opens up.

The buzz starts to grow.

Wanda looks up at Steve like a cat at a treat.

STEVE (cont'd)

Alright, Mamma.

(to Shirley)

Every month we read it out loud. A new works reading. So that we know just how bad the story that we're selling is.

Wanda puts the story in Steve's hands.

STEVE (cont'd)

Just listen.

"You Ain't Seen Nothing Yet" by Bachman Turner Overdrive peeps out from Boss Bass's office.

BOSS BASS (O.S.)

DOWN WITH THE UNSEEN!

Crashing, banging, then silence.

The ceiling has closed again and the buzz is gone.

Time slows for a moment as Shirley's trance turns into another daydream:

"SCARY STORY"

Shirley listens intently and begins to hear things: ringing telephones, pens scribbling, and the shuffling, organizing, and copying of paper. Lots and lots of paper. Gradually, a rhythm emerges out of the noise.

Steve and Wanda, distracted by Boss Bass, have turned back to Shirley as her moment concludes, but the rhythm continues.

STEVE

Anyway...here we go. "Little Lady and the Cul-de-sac Cannibals." See, already. Cannibalism. A perfect topic for a kid's story.

Shirley listens, alert, as the rhythm continues and the story begins...

STEVE (cont'd)

"One day, little Lady was playing with mommy's fine jewelry all by herself in the yard when a big newspaper bonked her on the head. She looked out at the gate and saw the newspaper man. 'Come with me, little girl,' he said, and Lady, without asking her mom, said 'Okay,' and followed him out of the yard and down the street."

As Steve continues telling the story, Shirley falls into a daydream.

She stands, turns upstage where her dream bubbles have again appeared, and walks in place, becoming a part of the story.

The rhythm also joins the story, telling it, and growing.

STEVE (cont'd)

"Outside of her yard, the world was big and green. Lady watched happily as the newspaper man threw paper after paper into the finely mowed yards. As the sun began to set, Lady's feet grew tired. 'I want to go home now,' she whined. 'There's just one more street,' said the newspaper man. Lady looked. It was a dark and frightening street. At the end stood a strange, dark house made of sticks and leaves. A bolt of lightening crashed in the sky above the house. 'Follow me, little girl,' said the newspaper man"--I'm sure this'll help kids sleep at night--"And little Lady listened. When they reached the house at the end, the newspaper man threw his paper against the dark door. Lady's hair tingled as the door slowly opened and a cannibal came out, dressed in a decorative loin cloth and a mask made of bones."

Boss Bass, dressed as the cannibal, emerges from his office and climbs a stepping stool, invading the dream bubbles.

STEVE (cont'd)

"'Hello, Mr. Cannibal,' said the newspaper man, 'I've brought you your supper. It's a little girl.' Just then the newspaper man picked up Lady and handed her to the cannibal. Lady hated being picked up. The cannibal took her inside and closed the door. The inside of the stick house was very dark and the floor was made of dirt. In the middle of the room was a big, black pot sitting over a fire. Mr. Cannibal put Lady down and fed the fire with old newspapers. 'Sing me a song,' he said, 'Or I will eat you for my supper.' 'I don't know any songs,' said Lady. Mr. Cannibal gasped with surprise. '

(MORE)

STEVE (cont'd)

Then hurry into my cooking pot,' he said, 'For I am very hungry.' Lady didn't know what else to do"--The writers didn't know what else to do--"She was a very bad girl to have wandered away from home all alone. Perhaps she deserved to die this terrible death."

(pointing to the floor above)

They think they're the Brothers Grimm up there. "She stepped closer and closer and closer and closer and closer to the pot, her lips sealed without any song to sing"--Given the circumstances, you think she might have at least remembered 'Hot Cross Buns,' am I right?--"Slowly, she placed one leg in the pot."

Shirley lifts one leg. The leg appears in the dream bubbles! She lowers it into the boiling water.

BOSS BASS

(maniacally)

HAHAHAHA! HAHAHAHA!

SHIRLEY

NOOOOO!

Shirley tears her leg from the pot.

Boss Bass and the dream disappear.

Everything is silent as Shirley rejoins the real world. Wanda and Steve stare at her, confused and a little frightened.

"Easter Parade" by Irving Berlin sounds from the office.

BOSS BASS (O.S.)

DOWN WITH BERLIN!!

SHIRLEY

"HUMAN FOOD"

I WAS SALTED SIMM'RING
SLOWLY BURNING UP
WHEN I FIN'LLY FIGURED
OUT WHO I WAS

I AM TENDER, JUICY
I AM BRAINS AND BOOBS
I AM WHO I AM NOW
I AM HUMAN FOOD

NOT FOOD LIKE FROM A CAN
NOT CHILLED TOFU OR POWDERED CHEESE
NOT GREEN EGGS OR SPAM
BUT AC-TU-AL HUMAN FOOD

(uncomfortably)
NA NA NA...

STEVE
I LOVE YOU--

Ivy the Intern takes Steve out.

IVY THE INTERN
No. More. Singing.

SHIRLEY
Steve can sing if he wants to.

IVY THE INTERN
Eat me.

SHIRLEY
Maybe I will.

Shirley and Ivy the Intern circle
each other as:

SHIRLEY (cont'd)
FIRE!

IVY THE INTERN
I'LL BURN YOU DOWN...

SHIRLEY
IT BURNS ME UP.

IVY THE INTERN
...TO THE GROUND.

SHIRLEY
I AM WHAT I FOUND.

STEVE
(to Ivy)
Were you just...singing?

IVY THE INTERN
I was seething.

STEVE
Your seething was awfully sing-songy.

IVY THE INTERN

I wasn't singing.

STEVE

You're good. You're a singer!

IVY THE INTERN

Are you looking for a world of pain?

STEVE

The next Foxxxy!

IVY THE INTERN

Dumb.

Ivy the Intern lunges at Steve,
but is nonchalantly tripped by
Wanda. Ivy lands in a roly-chair.

Wanda hands a large roll of toilet
paper to Shirley. Together they
tie Ivy the Intern to the chair.

IVY THE INTERN (cont'd)

Don't you dare, you mother--!!

Steve stuffs a large wad of toilet
paper in Ivy's mouth.

STEVE

Look, now your other breast is blue.

Sure enough, a pen has exploded in
Ivy's other breast pocket.

"Whoomp! There It Is" by Tag Team
chimes in from the back office,
but ends swiftly with a tear and:

BOSS BASS (O.S.)

NOT ANYMORE!

SHIRLEY

(to Wanda)

Where did you get the toilet paper?

STEVE

Mamma brings it in. The standard issue stuff is
criminal. This stuff is like wiping with a dead
baby. Cool and quiet. Quadruple quilted. Strong
as rope--

SHIRLEY
(cutting Steve off)

CUT THAT BABY CRAP
THROW OUT THE PUPPY CHOW
MY BARK CAN LEAVE A BITE 'CUZ
I'M A BIG KID NOW

Ivy has since rolled herself to
Shirley and is kicking her in the
legs.

SHIRLEY (cont'd)
(taking Ivy by the arm-rests)

I AM TEETHING, HUNGRY
I AM TOUGH TO CHEW
I AM WHO I AM AND
I CAN EAT HUMAN TOO

THIS TOWN IS LIKE A JUNGLE
IT'S RAINING CATS AND DOG-EAT-DOGS
I'M FIGHTING FOR SURVIVAL SO
WHAT CAN I DO BUT EAT MAN FOOD?

STEVE
(aroused and rapping)

"My man meat! Short and sweet, Tootsie Pop--"

Ivy the Intern growls at Steve
through her toilet paper.

The low-fi iconic pop waft starts
to rise.

SHIRLEY
YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT...

BOSS BASS (O.S.)
(Dr. Frankenstein)
APPLY! I'LL APPLY!!!

SHIRLEY
YOU ARE WHAT YOU DO...

The waft is deafening!

SHIRLEY (cont'd)
YOU CAN CHANGE THE WORLD...

Boss Bass explodes out of his
office, holding a prototype of
poorly bound pages above his head.

The ceiling opens.

Boss Bass falls to his knees holding the prototype as an offering.

The waft drops out suddenly.

BOSS BASS

(shouting above)

This is it! My invention. Children's books will never be the same! But it's just a first draft-- I don't know what words to choose. But let's not pretend, nobody does. That's why these freakin' greeting cards are so popular. With the words written for you. Sung for you. Now I've taken that to the next level. There's no more need for parents to read to their snug little bugs with their attention deficits and their pea-sized listen-ears. Now, I present to you: a children's book...reading.

Boss Bass carefully places the book on the ground. He turns the first page:

CHILDREN'S BOOK

(Boss Bass turns a page on every '-')

"Whoomp! There - I see clouds of white, I see - your Easter bonnet with all the frills upon it. - Baby you just ain't seen nothin'. - All my sisters - celebrate good times - they wanna - shake, rattle and - G.N.O. let's go it's a - graveyard smash - so unbelievable. - We are family - and I will love you - a merry little Christmas - winter spring summer or fall."

He closes the book.

Pee on the book from on high.

BOSS BASS

No! Stop! Stop! Take me up! This isn't it! I'll get an illustrator! I'll choose other words! I didn't want to use those songs! Any songs! I just want to tell a story!!!

Boss Bass collapses, sobbing, to the floor.

The pee subsides. The ceiling closes.

BOSS BASS (cont'd)

I'm not leaving. You'll have to drag me. Don't let me go. What do you want me to do? What do I do now?

SHIRLEY
FATE HAS FOUND ME FRANKLY
FACING THE WRONG WAY AND
PLACED ME IN THIS PLACE
WHERE I CAN FINALLY SAY THAT

I AM WHO I AM
I'LL BE WHAT I'LL BE
I DO DARE TO DREAM
I DO LIVE TO SING

THOSE GUYS UPSTAIRS ARE GEEZERS
I AM STUCK HERE FOR A REASON
I'M GONNA MAKE LIKE CAESAR:
I CAME
I SEE
WHAT I CAN BE

FIRE!

NA NA NA...

STEVE

NA NA NA...

They look to Wanda to continue the na-nas. She smiles silently.

SHIRLEY
I CAN CHANGE THE WORLD
HERE I AM, BACK AT THE BEGINNING
I CAN TELL A STORY
AND I CAN DO IT--

BOSS BASS

What the--
(now seeing Shirley)
What are you still doing here?

SHIRLEY

I had a dream.

BOSS BASS

You too?

SHIRLEY

I'm going to save Smiles and Fate Children's Books.

Ivy the Intern tries to shout for Boss Bass's attention. Boss Bass ignores her.

BOSS BASS

I fired you.

SHIRLEY

Whoop-dee-do.

BOSS BASS

Shall I cater you to the elevator?

SHIRLEY

Maybe later, alligator.

BOSS BASS

If you cared you would have found the stairs.

SHIRLEY

If I cared? You take the stairs, if you dare, there's five feet of water flowing through there!

BOSS BASS

(stunned)

Using my rhyming against me.

SHIRLEY

Here, you hear me, is where I'm meant to be.

BOSS BASS

You can't be here. Not today.

SHIRLEY

There's no way out, so I think I'll stay.

BOSS BASS

There's always a way.

SHIRLEY

I don't want to go.

BOSS BASS

(running to the windows upstage)

How about the window?

STEVE

We're forty-five stories up!

SHIRLEY

I'm going to write your next children's book. Those guys upstairs have forgotten how the world can look. Little girls getting boiled alive? With a pen this little girl can thrive.

BOSS BASS

(lost and staring)

It's not that bad. Like flying. Until you hit. Then splat. Your blood all over the black tarmac. Black and red. Profit and debt.

STEVE

You're not rhyming.

SHIRLEY

I still remember how it was to see the world through a child's eyes. Exploring. Giving myself over to every picture I saw, every book I touched. Launching myself fearlessly into a whole new world.

BOSS BASS

Do you understand why you were fired? Why you weren't given a chance? Because you don't understand this world. You don't understand money. Sing and chat and dream and dance 'til you pass out, but you don't eat without money. You don't sleep without money.

Ivy the Intern is still shouting.

BOSS BASS (cont'd)

(to Ivy the Intern)

SHUT UP AND ACT YOUR AGE!

(to Shirley)

I don't need your story. The stories we sell might be corrupting children everywhere, but we make money, thanks to Wanda. We're in the black.

Wanda tries to hide her pride.

STEVE

I guess I'm just the fat girl at the frat party.

BOSS BASS

Smiles and Fate is a success. It has been ever since I took over twenty years ago. It doesn't need to change. There's nowhere for it to go.

SHIRLEY

You could make more money! You could tell better stories! Don't you want to be more than just the boss of a bad children's book company?

BOSS BASS

This is what I do.

SHIRLEY

It doesn't have to be.

BOSS BASS

This is what I chose.

SHIRLEY

There's a whole world out there.

BOSS BASS

THIS IS MY WORLD!

Boss Bass's briefcase pops open.
Wads of crisp and clean cash spill
onto the floor.

STEVE

Whoa.

SHIRLEY

That's what the sound coming from your office
was. You've been printing counterfeit money.

Wanda picks up a stack of money
and carefully examines it.

BOSS BASS

You get a job title and a paycheck and you work
your way up to the top and you know what you
find? Nothing. Not a special congratulations,
not the meaning of life.

STEVE

So you printed fake dough?

BOSS BASS

Life was only half over but I beat all the
levels.

SHIRLEY

There are always more levels. You're not at the
top yet. You can go higher.

BOSS BASS

This is it, trust me. I'm older and wiser.

SHIRLEY

You're seeing it the wrong way.

STEVE

What are you going to do with it?

BOSS BASS

I don't know.

SHIRLEY

We can change children's lives.

BOSS BASS

And now you know about the money.

SHIRLEY

I just need...

BOSS BASS

None of you like me. You'll turn me in.

STEVE

I would buy a Mustang.

BOSS BASS

There's no way out.

SHIRLEY

I just need you to help me.

IVY THE INTERN

You don't need anyone! All of this is your fault!

BOSS BASS

The window.

Boss Bass slides a big window open, then unlatches the screen and lets it fall away.

STEVE

(to Ivy the Intern)

How did you get the t.p. out of your mouth?

IVY THE INTERN

I tour it apart with my teeth and ate it.

SHIRLEY

That's disgusting.

STEVE

You must have a dexterous tongue.

BOSS BASS

I'm leaving.

IVY THE INTERN

(to Steve)

Untie me!

SHIRLEY

Don't, Steve.

STEVE

No way, not this tiger.

BOSS BASS

Is anybody listening?

Wanda approaches Boss Bass.

IVY THE INTERN
Stephen, I feel for you.

SHIRLEY
(to Ivy, disbelieving)
I feel for you?

STEVE
(to Shirley, misunderstanding)
You do?

IVY THE INTERN
(to Steve)
Please untie me.

BOSS BASS
Wanda, you're the boss now...

SHIRLEY AND IVY THE INTERN
(overhearing)
WHAT?

BOSS BASS
...Teach these two to do as you do.

There's a wonderful, gear-
separating un-crunch as the
elevator hums back to life. The
doors open. Light emanates from
within.

SHIRLEY
The elevator!

IVY THE INTERN
Looks like you can finally leave.

BOSS BASS
Goodnight...Moon.

Boss Bass falls out the window.

The elevator doors close.

Silence. Everyone turns towards
the empty window.

Wanda is standing on the
elevation, in front of the back
office, shocked.

Everyone turns and looks at Wanda.

STEVE
Shit just got dark.

END OF ACT 1

ACT 2

SCENE 1

OFFICE

Not a moment has passed.

SHIRLEY

What?

STEVE

Holy mother of God.

SHIRLEY

What do I do now?

IVY THE INTERN

(somber)

Will someone untie me please?

Wanda unties Ivy the Intern.

STEVE

This wasn't our fault. He was caught printing counterfeit money. He went crazy.

SHIRLEY

Day One in the real world.

IVY THE INTERN

You better get used to it.

SHIRLEY

What do you mean?

IVY THE INTERN

It's always someone.

Steve closes the window.

IVY THE INTERN (cont'd)

You've got to get tough...

SHIRLEY

We should call someone. The police.

IVY THE INTERN

...Or you'll be the next one caught looking down.

SHIRLEY

I'm going to go.

STEVE

I'll go with you.

IVY THE INTERN

It's every man and woman for him and herself.

Shirley pushes the down button.

IVY THE INTERN (cont'd)

TTFN, kids. Don't bother coming back.

SHIRLEY

How can you say that?

IVY THE INTERN

Ask yourself: What would Boss Bass do?

SHIRLEY

Boss Bass just died!

IVY THE INTERN

Profit. Boss Bass would make money.

STEVE

Literally. By printing thousands of illegal dollars.

IVY THE INTERN

By selling books, which is more than you can do, Steve.

SHIRLEY

There's a reason I ended up here.

STEVE

You're darn right.

IVY THE INTERN

I'm sure there is, but Boss Wanda and I have plenty to keep us busy, don't we Wanda?

Wanda is silent.

SHIRLEY

I'm not leaving. I'm going to write a children's book. And another children's book. And another children's book.

IVY THE INTERN

Good for you. All you need is a pen and some paper. I think you'll be able to find both of those things in Boss Bass's suit jacket. The paper might be a little wrinkled.

SHIRLEY

And Smiles and Fate is going to share them with the world. Wanda loves the idea.

The elevator arrives. The doors open.

IVY THE INTERN

Do you love it, Wanda?

Wanda is silent.

IVY THE INTERN (cont'd)

(to Shirley)

Thank you for visiting.

SHIRLEY

I'm not going to leave and let you take over this company. Boss Bass didn't make you the boss.

IVY THE INTERN

The police have surely found Boss Bass by now, and if you won't go down to them, I suppose they'll have to come up here.

SHIRLEY

Wanda is the boss now.

IVY THE INTERN

And as they leave they can take you with them. Need I remind you that you don't work here?

SHIRLEY

That's not your call. It's Wanda's.

IVY THE INTERN

Oh, that's good. We'll let the mute decide.

STEVE

Mamma's no mute.

IVY THE INTERN

What's that? Mamma's no mute? I like that. Why don't you prove it to us, Mamma Wanda? Say 'Mamma's no mute' for us.

Wanda is silent.

IVY THE INTERN (cont'd)

Would you like me to call the phone in your cubicle and you can say it in there?

SHIRLEY

Leave her alone.

IVY THE INTERN

Mamma's no mute, mamma's no mute, mamma mamma
mamma.

STEVE

Come on, Mamma.

IVY THE INTERN

You can't run a company if you can't run your
mouth.

SHIRLEY

Why won't she say anything?

STEVE

She hasn't said anything for thirty-five years.

SHIRLEY

But I heard her on the phone this morning.

STEVE

That's it. She talks to customers on the phone
in her cubicle.

IVY THE INTERN

No flack. All business. That's why she's the
boss.

Wanda is in front of Boss Bass's
closed office.

STEVE

The story, as its been passed down, is that
thirty-five years ago Wanda was married to a
guy named Don Taylor.

Wanda opens the door, cautiously.
A sound oozes from the black
within:

"HOLY STORY"

STEVE

Don was a fashion designer who had risen to
local fame for his feline-inspired frocks. I
guess he had a thing for cats. They were
everywhere, all over his shop, and he knew them
all by name. Crazy cat names.

SHIRLEY

Like Mungojerrie!

IVY THE INTERN

Or Mister Fleas.

STEVE

Mistoffolees...So for his entire career, he only used one model. A real cat if ever there was one.

SHIRLEY

Wanda.

STEVE

Mamma Wanda worked the walk like nobody's business. And they were in love.

Wanda reaches out for the ooze.
She enters the office.

STEVE (cont'd)

But one night after a show, Wanda was changing in her dressing room when she heard Don's voice in the alley outside. She ran to the stage door but by the time she got there it was too late. Don was all alone, left for dead in a pool of moonlight. He was stabbed three times.

The black oozes out of the office,
along the walls, down the stairs.
Wanda tries to turn away.

STEVE (cont'd)

Mamma held him close and rocked him back and forth. Suddenly, Don took a giant gasp of air. Mamma watched as a ball of light formed in his chest, then moved through his body and into his mouth.

A light grows within the office.
Wanda stares, terrified.

STEVE (cont'd)

Don turned his face to the moonlight, and the light left him. Mamma watched, tears falling, as the light floated upward. But before the light got too high, a curious alley cat poked its head out of a dumpster. As the light floated by, the cat swatted at it and, just as it was about to float too high for it to reach, it ate it.

The light goes out. The black surrounds her.

IVY THE INTERN

Stupid cat.

SHIRLEY

The memory...

STEVE

The soul of Don Taylor entered the cat. So Mamma adopted it. She named it a crazy cat name, just like he would have done, Chiffonya de la Rayon sewn Singer.

IVY THE INTERN

All alone in the moonlight.

A wind starts to blow counterfeit money out from within the office. Wanda struggles up and out of the black.

SHIRLEY

Chiffonya de la Rayon sewn Singer.

STEVE

And ever since that day, Mamma has lived for that cat. She's spent thousands of dollars on medical treatment, fighting to keep it alive.

The wind is blowing hard. Money engulfs Wanda.

IVY THE INTERN

It's still alive?

STEVE

Yeah, older than thirty-five. Talk about nine lives, am I right? Jellicle whatever. She won't let it die because it's got her husband inside it. Since that day Mamma has done nothing but her work. She never modeled again. She gave it all up. That's why she won't say anything. She doesn't care. She lives for Chiffonya. For Don Taylor.

The money overtakes Wanda and she falls down the stairs to the cubicle floor.

STEVE (cont'd)

Mamma!

The black flies away. The wind stops. The music fades.

Steve and Shirley rush to help Wanda up.

SHIRLEY

(to Wanda)

What happened?

IVY THE INTERN

She. Doesn't. Talk. God you're a slow learner.

Wanda is crying.

STEVE

She just hasn't sold enough books today, that's all, right Mamma? I'm gonna get her some water.

SHIRLEY

I've got her.

Ivy presses in.

IVY THE INTERN

Being boss is not for you, is it Wanda? You looked at the ball and didn't like what you saw. You decided not to play. You know, you had a good thing going with your old job. Why don't you keep doing that?

SHIRLEY

You can't just take her job away.

IVY THE INTERN

Look at her. She doesn't want it. And if she doesn't want it, I believe I'm the next most eligible bachelor.

Suddenly, Wanda grabs fist-full after fist-full of counterfeit money off the floor, tearing it to pieces like a wild animal.

IVY THE INTERN (cont'd)

Stop it!

STEVE

Mamma!

IVY THE INTERN

Stop! Stop!

Wanda keeps tearing.

SHIRLEY

It's all fake anyway.

IVY THE INTERN

We don't know if all of it is fake!

Wanda tears.

IVY THE INTERN (cont'd)

I said stop!

Ivy the Intern grabs Wanda.

STEVE
(rushing to stop her)

NO!

Ivy throws her into a roolly-chair.

The chair rolls to a stop. Wanda
is motionless.

IVY THE INTERN
I'm the boss now.

SHIRLEY
You're crazy. You're insane.

IVY THE INTERN
She's crazy. The position falls to me.

Wanda slowly raises herself up.

STEVE
Mamma!

SHIRLEY
She's still here. You didn't throw her out the
window.

Wanda stands. Taller, somehow. She
turns to Ivy.

IVY THE INTERN
She can't do it. She's injured. She's too nice.
She's too old!

WANDA
I'm--

SHIRLEY
(stunned)
Did she just...

STEVE
Mamma?

WANDA
I'm--

SHIRLEY
She's trying to say something!

STEVE
Mamma!

WANDA

I'm--

SHIRLEY

Oh, say it Mamma Wanda. Let it out.

IVY THE INTERN

Ooo, she made a sound.

SHIRLEY

"LET IT OUT"

LET IT OUT, MAMMA WANDA, LET IT OUT
LET IT OUT, MAMMA WANDA, LET IT OUT

STEVE

YOU CAN SING A SONG, MAMMA

SHIRLEY

(louder)

LET IT OUT, MAMMA WANDA, LET IT OUT

STEVE

BOSS BASS IS GONE, MAMMA

SHIRLEY

(louder)

LET IT OUT, MAMMA WANDA, LET IT OUT, MAMMA WANDA,
LET IT OUT

STEVE

ANY SONG YOU WANT, MAMMA

IVY THE INTERN

I'm still here, Wanda, don't you dare.

SHIRLEY

REMEMBER, MAMMA WANDA, WHO YOU WERE
A LEGGY SEXY MAMMA WEARIN' FUR
WHEN DONNY DIED, YOU CRASHED, YOU CRIED
YOUR DREAMS, THEY DISSIPATED IN A BLUR

STEVE

DO YOU WANNA MAMMA WANDA?
WANNA WANNA MAMMA WANDA?

IVY THE INTERN

She doesn't hear you.

STEVE

REMEMBER

SHIRLEY

THE FUTURE IS Y'URS

Wanda turns to Shirley, reaching out to her.

STEVE
THEY CAN'T TAKE OUR SONG, MAMMA

IVY THE INTERN
This job that took your life away
Where would your cat be today?

Wanda turns to Ivy the Intern.

WANDA
Chiffonya--

SHIRLEY
THERE'S A STORY WE CAN TELL TOGETHER
CHILDREN'S STORIES WE CAN SELL FOREVER
FOR THIRTY-FIVE YEARS YOU LIVED IN FEAR
NOW LET IT OUT AND LIVE YOUR LIFE FOR OTHERS

Wanda turns to Shirley again.

IVY THE INTERN
Don't listen to her!

Wanda takes Shirley's hands.

STEVE
DO YOU FEEL OUR SONG, MAMMA?

IVY THE INTERN
Wanda, the choice is in your hands. Shirley has
done nothing but bring trouble.

Wanda feels the sound within her.

SHIRLEY
LET IT OUT, MAMMA WANDA, LET IT OUT

STEVE
WHEN I
DANCE TO MY POP ROCK
I WEAR MY THICK SOCKS
WITH MY GLITZ ROCKS

IVY THE INTERN
This is your first decision as boss, Wanda. One
wrong move and the company could fall.

The sound rises from her stomach,
to her chest...

SHIRLEY
LET IT OUT, MAMMA WANDA, LET IT OUT

IVY THE INTERN
But you don't have to make this decision. I can
do it, Wanda. I am management material.

STEVE
CUZ I DON'T CARE SEE?
WHAT Y'ALL THINK O' ME--

SHIRLEY
LET IT OUT, OH MAMMA WANDA, LET IT OUT, OH MAMMA WANDA
LET IT--

The sound is in her throat, in her
mouth...Her arms are spread wide.

IVY THE INTERN
NOW YOU'VE GONE AND PUT ME IN A CORNER

Ivy is singing? Wanda's arms fall
as the sound sinks down inside
her.

IVY THE INTERN (cont'd)
(singing)
IF THIS IS WHAT YOU WANT I'VE GOT IT MORE
WHEN BOSS BASS FELL SHE UNLEASHED HELL
BUT NOW I'M GONNA TAKE THE TOP BY FORCE

SHIRLEY
Wanda, you're not alone. I'm here.

IVY THE INTERN
CROSS ME WANDA AND THAT WINDOW'S YOURS

STEVE
REMEMBER FOXXXY, MAMMA

IVY THE INTERN
Foxxxy is my mother.

A collective gasp.

IVY THE INTERN (cont'd)
HER REAL NAME IS LIKE MINE
IVANAVIVE BROWN
WE DON'T TALK ANYMORE
SHE'S NEVER AROUND

AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED IT IS A CURSE
BUT WHEN I WANT I CAN SOUND JUST LIKE HER
I'VE GOT THE CHOPS

IVY THE INTERN (cont'd)
(looking out the window)
HERE COME THE COPS
THE TIME HAS COME TO GET WHAT I DESERVE

STEVE
FOXY'S IVY'S MOM, HOLLA

IVY THE INTERN
(pointing at Shirley)
I CAN DO EVERYTHING BETTER THAN HER

SHIRLEY
HERE COME THE COPS?

IVY THE INTERN
ONE TIME WHEN I WAS
INCARCERATED
THE PO-PO GRABBED MY SKIRT
AND WHISPERED

HE SAID I'D NEVER BE AS GOOD AS HER
SO I TOLD HIM TO HIS FACE "LIKE, WHATEVER"
BUT HE FED MY DOUBT, WHEN I GOT OUT
I NEVER SANG ANOTHER NOTE AGAIN

YOU HEAR ME WANDA?
NOW YOU LEAVE ME
WITH NO CHOICE
I HAD TO FIND A WAY
TO RAISE MY VOICE

SHIRLEY
THE VOICE OF OUR TIME

IVY THE INTERN
NO MORE MISS NICE INTERN
WHEN THE COPS COME
WE'LL KISS THE NEWB GOODBYE

SHIRLEY
I WON'T LET THEM TAKE ME
WHEN THE COPS COME
THEY'LL CATCH YOU IN A LIE

IVY THE INTERN
IS IT COINCIDENCE
THAT THE DAY YOU CAME
THE BOSS HAPPENED TO DIE?

STEVE
I WON'T LET YOU SAY THAT

SHIRLEY
NEITHER WILL WANDA
I'M SURE SHE'S ON MY SIDE

IVY THE INTERN
I DON'T THINK THAT'S TOO WISE
UNLESS WANDA'S
READY FOR HER CAT'S DEMISE

Wanda freezes, horrified.

IVY THE INTERN (cont'd)
I'LL TAKE CHIFFONYA'S LIFE

Wanda goes to Ivy, pleading.

SHIRLEY
DON'T LISTEN!

STEVE
WE'LL PROTECT YOU, MAMMA

Wanda goes to Steve, hurting.

IVY THE INTERN
I'LL DO IT!
DON'T TRY ME, WANDA

Wanda turns to Ivy.

SHIRLEY
THE LITTLE BRAT!

STEVE
WE'LL SHOW HER, MAMMA

Wanda turns to Steve and Shirley.

IVY THE INTERN
STOP
THE TIME HAS COME TO CHOOSE, WANDA
WHICH ONE WILL IT BE, WANDA

SHIRLEY
YOU KNOW YOU'RE SAFE WITH ME, WANDA

Wanda doesn't know where to turn.

STEVE
DO YOU WANNA MAMMA WANDA?
WANNA WANNA MAMMA WANDA?

SHIRLEY
MAMMA MAMMA WANNA WANDA?
WANNA MAMMA MAMMA WANNA?

IVY THE INTERN
MAMMA MAMMA MAMMA MAMMA
WANNA WANNA WANNA WANDA?

All three of them overlap,
pleading in rapid-fire.

The sound inside Wanda explodes.

WANDA
OOO-AHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!

Silence.

Wanda smiles.

SHIRLEY AND STEVE
LET IT OUT, MAMMA WANDA, LET IT OUT LET IT OUT
LET IT OUT, MAMMA WANDA, LET IT OUT LET IT OUT

STEVE
LET IT OUT MAMMA WANDA

SHIRLEY
LET IT OUT MAMMA WANDA

SHIRLEY AND STEVE
LET IT OUT MAMMA WANDA!

WANDA
I FELT THE BUZZIN' DEEP DOWN IN MY GUT
AND LIKE MY DONNY'S SOUL IT FLOATED UP

SHIRLEY AND STEVE
UP UP UP!

WANDA
I CAN FEEL THE WEIGHT LIFT OFF MY SOUL
I'M FIN'LLY READY TO LOSE CONTROL--

IVY THE INTERN
(on her cellphone)
Hello?...Hi boyfriend...Yeah, there was a
little 'show' going on here...I'm not
interrupting...I know I shouldn't be on my
cellphone during a show, it's not that kind of
show, it's office anarchy...this crazy old
woman...It's not a real--LISTEN TO ME!
Boyfriend, I need you to do me an itsy-bitsy
favor.

(MORE)

IVY THE INTERN (cont'd)

Do you have a pen and paper?...In front of my mirror there's a little pink book...no the pink one, an address book...Now, I need you to look under 'Batt' Her name is Wanda Batt...Right, now what I need you to do is hop yourself on down to that little address and break down the door and MURDER THE CAT!

Ivy silences her cellphone.

WANDA

Chiffonya!

IVY THE INTERN

The way I see it, Wanda, there are two possible solutions to your current situation. One: your new friend leaves and saves your cat from certain death. But she better hurry. Boyfriend is a track star.

WANDA

She'll never make it in time.

STEVE

Mamma, I'll go!

IVY THE INTERN

Two: I call it off.

WANDA

What do you want? What do I have to do?

IVY THE INTERN

Join forces with me. Make me the new boss.

SHIRLEY

She's lying!

(to Ivy)

You don't have time for a boyfriend.

IVY THE INTERN

That's exactly what he says.

SHIRLEY

Don't do it, Wanda. None of this is true.

IVY THE INTERN

When the cops come, Wanda, I'll expect you to join me in accusing Shirley of murder.

WANDA

I...

IVY THE INTERN

Or we can at least fire her. Again.

WANDA

I--

STEVE

No, Mamma! I can save Chiffonya!

IVY THE INTERN

It' for her own good, really. She needs to give up and go get a job.

STEVE

I'm going!

SHIRLEY

Steve, no! None of this is real!

Steve runs to the elevator and pushes the down button. The doors open and Steve boards.

Shirley grabs the stapler and runs to the elevator.

The doors start to close.

Shirley jams the stapler in the elevator door-groove, preventing it from closing.

STEVE

What are you doing?

SHIRLEY

I'm not letting it end this way.

WANDA

Chiffonya! My cat, my husband--

IVY THE INTERN

Now who's the bad guy?

Shirley grabs the toilet paper off the table and throws it at Ivy.

Wanda grabs a stack of papers off of Ivy's desk and hurls them at Shirley.

WANDA

What did you do?!

SHIRLEY

Wanda--

WANDA

What did you do?!

SHIRLEY

Nothing, I--

IVY THE INTERN

Nothing. She did nothing. She let Chiffonya die.

WANDA

Call your boyfriend. I'm on your side. Call him off.

STEVE

Why would you?

SHIRLEY

This is all a lie.

IVY THE INTERN

All talk and no walk.

SHIRLEY

I've walked--

IVY THE INTERN

Baby steps.

SHIRLEY

I'm going to write a children's book.

IVY THE INTERN

So do it! Nobody's stopping you. Go!

SHIRLEY

I can't leave.

IVY THE INTERN

Are you afraid to do it alone?

SHIRLEY

No! I don't need anybody.

IVY THE INTERN

Are you afraid that it will suck?

SHIRLEY

I'm not afraid of anything!

IVY THE INTERN

Then just. Do. It.

SHIRLEY

I can't. I need--

IVY THE INTERN

What? To eat? To sleep? Say it!

SHIRLEY

I won't--

IVY THE INTERN

Why won't you leave?

SHIRLEY

Wanda--

IVY THE INTERN

Say it! SAY IT!

SHIRLEY

"EPIC BOOK BATTLE ON THE HIGH SEAS: PART I"

Once upon a time, little Lady had a dream.

IVY THE INTERN

Let me have it.

SHIRLEY

She kept it in a bottle on a little ornate shelf in a little lofted room by the sea. Until a chilly summer's night at 8:15. A shadow came and took away her dream.

IVY THE INTERN

I suppose that shadow's me?

SHIRLEY

The shadow's name was Cutthroat. The captain of a small boat that sailed the black and bloody Profit Sea.

IVY THE INTERN

Captain Cutthroat--that's hardly G-rated.

SHIRLEY

That's why she must be defeated.

The dream begins.

LITTLE LADY WOKE UP IN THE SUN
TO SEE HER DREAM WAS GONE
THE CLOUDS FLEW IN, THE SUN WENT OUT
HOW COULD SHE EVER MOVE ON?
COULD SHE EVER MOVE ON?

IVY THE INTERN
(taking Wanda's hand)
WHILE CAPTAIN CUTTHROAT AND HIS FIRST MATE MOM
CAST THEIR SHIP AWAY
THEY Poured THE DREAM INTO A BOOK
AND LOCKED IT FROM THE DAY
THEY LOCKED IT FROM THE DAY

THEY SAILED THE SHIP DOWN TO THE EARTH
TO MEET A MONEY MAN
WHO BUYS AND BURIES BOOKS BENEATH
THE HOT AND HELLISH SAND

SHIRLEY
BUT AS THE EARTH CAME INTO VIEW
A BOAT STOOD IN THEIR PATH
A RADIO FLYER WITH WHEELS TOOK OFF
COMPLETE WITH SAIL AND MAST
COMPLETE WITH SAIL AND MAST

LITTLE LADY HAD LEFT HOME
TO CUT THEM OFF AT SEA
THE GREATEST GIRL TO EVER SAIL
SHE'LL SAVE THIS COMPANY
SHE'LL SAVE THIS COMPANY!!

Shirley runs into Steve's cubicle.
She stands on something, rising
high above the cubicle walls.

Steve chases her into his cubicle.

STEVE
Hey--

SHIRLEY
Dead ahead!

The cubicle begins to move, like a
pirate ship, towards Wanda's
cubicle.

Ivy and Wanda run into Wanda's
cubicle. Ivy stands on something,
but doesn't manage to appear much
above the cubicle walls.

IVY THE INTERN
Attack!!

The ships circle each other.

The dream bubbles fade in.

The office world slowly blinks
away until we are...

EXT. AT SEA - EVENING

Clouds are threatening violence.

The wind from within Boss Bass's
office picks up again, blowing
money all around.

Shirley and Ivy and are locked in
epic song.

FIRE!
IVY THE INTERN

FIRE!
SHIRLEY

Large stacks of paper are hurled
into the air like explosions.

Toilet paper is thrown like
cannonballs.

Stacks of counterfeit money
complete the flying hysteria.

I'LL BURN YOU DOWN...
IVY THE INTERN

IT BURNS ME UP
SHIRLEY

...TO THE GROUND
IVY THE INTERN

I AM WHAT I FOUND
SHIRLEY

THE BOOK OF DREAMS
IVY THE INTERN
(holding high a copy of "Little Lady and
the Cul-de-sac Cannibals")

EVERYTHING I'LL EVER DO
SHIRLEY

IS IN MY HANDS
IVY THE INTERN

A CUTTHROAT RESUME
SHIRLEY
(holding high a resume)

IVY THE INTERN
EVERYTHING I'VE EVER DONE

SHIRLEY
WILL GO AWAY

Shirley takes out a lighter and
holds it beneath the resume.

IVY THE INTERN
YOU WON'T DO IT

Shirley lights the resume on fire.

IVY THE INTERN (cont'd)
NOOO!!

Ivy takes out a lighter and lights
the book of dreams on fire.

SHIRLEY
NOOO!!

Ivy holds the book of dreams high
and too close to the sprinkler
system. The bulb breaks.

The clouds open.

Lightening strikes.

The partial downstage walls in
each cubicle collapse, revealing
Steve and Wanda within.

Shirley and Ivy retreat within
their respective cubicles.

WANDA
CAPTAIN, IN THE RAIN
OUR PAPER IS HARMLESS

IVY THE INTERN
SPIT-WADS, YOU FOOL

In the other cubicle...

STEVE
CAPTAIN, IN THE RAIN
I CAN SEE THROUGH YOUR T-SHIRT

SHIRLEY
DON'T LOOK, YOU PERV

STEVE
BUT CAPTAIN
(taking off his shirt)
Here, take mine.

Shirley's takes his shirt and puts
it on.

STEVE (cont'd)
OH CAPTAIN, MY CAPTAIN
I LOVE YOU

SHIRLEY
(focused intently on the enemy)
What?

STEVE
"I LOVE YOU"
LISTEN
FORGET THE WAR OUT THERE
JUST LISTEN
STOP LOOKING OVER THERE
AND LISTEN
SHIRLEY
I CAN NEVER BE WITHOUT YOU
I LOVE--

Enemy spit-wads knock Shirley into
Steve's lap.

STEVE
ARE YOU AL--
(like a child with an unexpected gift)
YOUR HAND ON
MY PANT LEG
(missing the note)
I WA--
WA--

Shirley jumps back to action.

STEVE (cont'd)
YOU DON'T HAVE
TO BE ON
YOUR OWN

YOU SAID THAT IVY'S LYING
I'M WITH YOU
I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU KNOW BUT
I'M WITH YOU

SHIRLEY
I CAN NEVER BE WITHOUT YOU
I LOVE--

HEY SHIRLEY

Shirley finally turns to Steve.

STEVE (cont'd)
YOU DON'T HAVE
TO DO IT
ALONE
(missing a note)
000

SHIRLEY
STEVE I REALLY THINK YOU'RE SWEET
AND I'M GLAD YOU DIDN'T TURN ON ME
I THINK IT'S NICE YOU TRY TO SING
BUT IS THIS REALLY HAPPENING?

I CAN MAKE IT ON MY OWN
THE LAST THING THAT I WANT'S A HOME
THIS IS NOT A LOVE STORY
SO SORRY STEVE BUT IN YOUR DREAMS

STEVE
(grand)
I LOVE YOU!
I LOVE YOU!
I LOVE YOU!
I LOVE YOU!
(missing a note)
000

SHIRLEY
STEVE PLEASE
ARE YOU LIS'NING?

STEVE
SHIRLEY
I DON'T THINK THAT YOU'RE REALLY
LIS'NING

SHIRLEY
IF THIS
WERE A DREAM

STEVE
IT'S FUNNY WHEN YOU LISTEN
CLOSELY

SHIRLEY
STE-EVE
I HEAR YOU
MAYBE MY DREAMS ARE YOURS TOO

STEVE
SHIRLEY
WITHOUT YOU
I CAN NEVER SING IN TUNE
THAT I LOVE--

SHIRLEY
(giving Steve the correct note)
LOVE

STEVE
(searching for the note)
LOVE

SHIRLEY
(singing the high note for Steve)
YOU

STEVE
(butchering the high note)
YOU

A lightning crash.

Papers pelted by the rain.

STEVE (cont'd)
Maybe I can get your number?

SHIRLEY
Yeah, definitely.

IVY THE INTERN

"EPIC BOOK BATTLE ON THE HIGH SEAS: PART II"

FIRE!

Ivy fires spit-wads as Wanda
pushes the cubicle at Steve and
Shirley.

SHIRLEY
FIRE!

Shirley and Steve push their
cubicle at Wanda and Ivy.

The cubicles collide!

Ivy steps on Wanda's desk and leaps over the cubicle walls, grabbing a dream bubble and tearing it down.

She brings the paper dream bubble down on Shirley who deflects the aerial attack. They both roll downstage.

The fog of war hangs over the stage, allowing us to still see, faintly, the dreams.

They stand quickly and engage in epic combat.

Shirley pins Ivy in a roly-chair.

SHIRLEY (cont'd)
LITTLE LADY HAD THE CAPTAIN PINNED

IVY THE INTERN
CAPTAIN CUTTHROAT NEVER GIVES IN

Ivy rolls out of the pin, but the chair tips and she falls to the floor.

The sprinkler turns off.

SHIRLEY
(closing in)
WHY BE THE BOSS?
WHY DO YOU HAVE TO WIN?
TO PROVE TO THAT COP
THAT YOU'RE BETTER THAN HIM?
OR MAYBE TO EARN
SOME OF MOM'S ATTENTION?

Ivy trips Shirley. Shirley tries to roll away.

STEVE
DO YOU SEE YOUR PHONE, MAMMA?

Mamma grabs her phone from the floor.

STEVE (cont'd)
CALL CHIFFONYA, MAMMA!

Mamma dials.

Ivy has Shirley wrapped in the paper dream bubble. Shirley is trapped.

IVY THE INTERN
LITTLE LADY GOT CORNERED
CAPTAIN CUTTHROAT HAD WARNED HER
TO NEVER GO OUT ALONE
OR JUST TO STAY AT HOME
BUT LITTLE LADY DIDN'T LISTEN

SO CUTTHROAT GRABBED LADY'S SKIRT
PULLED HER CLOSE AND WHISPERED

As Ivy sings, the fog lifts, the music fades out, and the sea blinks away until we're back in the office, fluorescently lit.

IVY THE INTERN (cont'd)
WHY WON'T YOU ACCEPT
THAT YOUR DREAMS ARE ALL DEAD?
THAT THE FITTEST SURVIVE
AND THE HOPE IS IN YOUR HEAD
THAT CHILDREN DON'T GET WHAT THEY WANT
THEY GET FOOD AND A BED
THAT THIS IS NO STORY
UNLESS IT'S GOT LIFE AND DEA--

Wanda hits Ivy over the head with her phone.

Ivy falls to the floor, unconscious.

Silence.

Then a long "meow" coming from Wanda's receiver.

STEVE
Chiffonya!

WANDA
No....Donny.

Wanda unrolls Shirley. They embrace.

SHIRLEY
I'm sorry.

WANDA
I'm sorry too.

Steve goes in for the group hug.

STEVE
A big happy family!

SHIRLEY
NOW I'VE GOT JUST WHAT I WANT
AND I'VE GOT JUST WHAT I NEED
HI-HO! SOME FRIENDS, HI-HO A JOB!
ALL THAT AND A FAIRYTALE DREAM
ALL THAT AND A FAIRYTALE DREAM

STEVE
WE CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

Someone in a full scuba suit has entered, unnoticed, from the stairwell stage left. They watch.

WANDA
AND WE CAN DO IT

STEVE
WE CAN DO IT

The chap in the scuba suit removes the mask. It's Boss Bass!

SHIRLEY
WE CAN DO IT SING--

BOSS BASS
SINGING!

Stares of disbelief.

BOSS BASS (cont'd)
That couldn't be the ending, now could it?

Stares.

SHIRLEY
You're alive...

BOSS BASS
Yeah. The building juts out a bit only a floor below. Got the wind knocked out but nothing more.

STEVE
A scuba suit...

BOSS BASS
Plumber had a spare. Stairs are still flooded.

WANDA

You came back...

BOSS BASS

Elevator is broken. Had to make sure everything hadn't come to a complete halt in my absence.

Stares.

BOSS BASS (cont'd)

(to Shirley)

And you're still here.

(to Wanda)

I'm taking my job back. I think we'll both be better off.

Wanda collects her phone and things and starts to put her cubicle back together.

SHIRLEY

We fought so hard, Wanda. Are you going to just go back to work for a felon?

WANDA

I'm afraid so, Shirley. Chiffonya de la Rayon sewn Singer is alive, and as long as that's true, she's my life.

SHIRLEY

What about your modeling? You spoke outside your cubicle for the first time in thirty-five years today.

WANDA

You reminded me of what it's like to be your age, uncertain and idealistic.

SHIRLEY

You don't have to be my age. Everyone dreams.

WANDA

The trapped soul of my dead husband is more important. I'm not a model anymore, Shirley. People change, and that's okay. I have different dreams now.

BOSS BASS

You can't feed the admiral's cat on a shoe-shine and a dream, as they say.

STEVE

But Mamma, Shirley's right. Boss Bass is a criminal.

BOSS BASS

Was a criminal.

STEVE

There's a lot of Benjamins floating around this room that say otherwise.

BOSS BASS

Steve, outside these windows, forty stories up, you realize there's a whole wide world down there. I had an epiphany. So I bought theatre tickets.

SHIRLEY

What?

STEVE

Why?

BOSS BASS

I'm interested in acting.

STEVE

Why?

BOSS BASS

That's just it. Why? Why in the world would someone be an actor? There's no money, no steady work.

WANDA

They all used to be prostitutes, too.

STEVE

Really?

BOSS BASS

I did not know that. It makes it all the more weird. The thing is that they're doing it for a reason, that's for sure, or they wouldn't be doing it at all.

SHIRLEY

Why are you selling children's books?

BOSS BASS

Eventual corporate domination and monetary gain. But people change.

SHIRLEY

I think that actors are trying to spread a message.

STEVE

I don't think that they know why. They do it for love.

BOSS BASS

The point is that they do it. And I have tickets. Now, I need to get changed and call my mother. You can all take the rest of the day off.

STEVE

Yes!

Steve and Wanda collect their things.

Boss Bass prods Ivy with a toe.

SHIRLEY

Boss Bass, I need a job.

BOSS BASS

You're not writing children's books here.

SHIRLEY

No, not writing. Just...anything.

BOSS BASS

Anything? We wore you down, huh? Well it looks like we've got an opening.

SHIRLEY

Really?

BOSS BASS

There's still no singing.

SHIRLEY

I understand.

BOSS BASS

When can you start?

SHIRLEY

Immediately.

Boss Bass goes behind the receptionist's desk and gets a broom.

BOSS BASS

I'd like the office to look the way it did before you got here.

SHIRLEY

I thought everybody had the rest of the day off.

BOSS BASS

Everybody but you.

Steve is trying to pull the stapler out of the door-groove in the elevator.

SHIRLEY

Boss Bass, how much does it pay?

BOSS BASS

It doesn't. You're the new intern.

SHIRLEY

But with what I know about the counterfeit operation...

BOSS BASS

You'll get a modest bi-weekly stipend.

Boss Bass pushes Steve aside and pulls the stapler out of the door-groove.

BOSS BASS (cont'd)

And we offer free housing with Steve.

STEVE

What?

Boss Bass throws the stapler to Shirley.

BOSS BASS

Put this somewhere safe. You'll be needing it.

(to Wanda)

Lobby, please.

STEVE

What about Shirley?

The elevator doors close.

Shirley starts to sweep. Paper upon paper upon paper.

SHIRLEY

"RECYCLE"

PAPER DREAMS
OFTEN WASTED
HAVE I GIVEN UP?

TWENTY-TWO YOU
MUST PAY YOUR DUES
THIS IS TRUE ENOUGH

BUT THERE ARE SONGS
NO ONE'S SINGING
THAT I WON'T ALLOW

LIVING DREAMS
NO ONE'S TASTED
BUZZING IN MY MOUTH

THE MORAL IS: RECYCLE

IVY THE INTERN
(like a ghost)

SHIRLEY DREAMING

Ivy is unconscious on the floor.

Shirley freezes...Where did that
come from? After a moment, she
sweeps again.

SHIRLEY

PAPER WORLD
FILED FITTED
THROW IT ALL AWAY

NOTES AND TWIRLS
DON'T PAY A GIRL
NEED A PLACE TO STAY

BUT IF YOU WANT IT
AND BELIEVE IT
IT CAN SURELY BE

ALL YOU'VE GOT TO
DO IS DO IT
BUT FIRST YOU DREAM

THE MORAL IS: RECYCLE

SHIRLEY DREAMING IVY THE INTERN

Ivy is still unconscious on the floor.

SHIRLEY
Ivy?

The elevator doors open.

Steve is on one knee, looking up at Shirley.

STEVE
Shirley...it's not what you think. I was tying my shoe.

He's wearing penny loafers.

STEVE (cont'd)
I realized I left my shirt.

SHIRLEY
Nice try. I'm not dry.

STEVE
I never got your number.

SHIRLEY
I'll see you tomorrow.

STEVE
Tomorrow.

The elevator doors close.

Black oozes, unnoticed, from the ceiling.

Shirley brings a trash can over to her giant pile of paper.

SHIRLEY
SOMEDAY I'LL SING
A SONG TO CHANGE
THE WORLD

THAT DREAM WILL LIVE
ALWAYS ABOVE
THIS GIRL

'TIL THAT DAY WITH
CHILD'S EYES
I'LL WRITE

She puts a piece of paper that says "recycle" on the side of the trash can.

SHIRLEY (cont'd)

TODAY WAS JUST
THE FIRST DAY OF
MY LIFE

RECYCLED PAPER DREAMS

The black closes in.

SHIRLEY DREAMING IVY THE INTERN

Ivy... SHIRLEY

WAKE UP IVY THE INTERN

Ivy, wake up. SHIRLEY

WAKE UP! IVY THE INTERN

Wake up! SHIRLEY

The large window upstage slides open.

The black seizes Shirley and sucks her toward the open window.

WAKE UP! IVY THE INTERN

Shirley is sucked out the window.

SCENE 2

INT. BEDROOM

An alarm clock is ringing. 7:45am.

Shirley pops out from under the blankets.

Finally, she silences the alarm clock.

SHIRLEY

It was a...Nooo...I'm not sure about that. I'm not sure about that at all...

The ceiling slowly opens up.

Shirley gets speed on.

The stream peters out.

SHIRLEY (cont'd)

Well, I'm up. And this is it.

THE END