

HUNGER

By Serena Norr

HUNGER

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HUNGER

CHARACTERS 2M 4W

CYBIL: 17-year-old; obsessed with perfection

DENA: early-40s; Cybil and Ryan's mother and hairdresser; fills her life with men, booze and dissociating from reality.

RYAN: 11-year-old, Cybil's brother.

LULU: early-20s; model from the Me Gone Ad

BRECKEN: 17-year-old; Cybil's classmate

TALLY/FELDSTEIN: mid-40s; Dena's hook-up (Tally) and Science teacher (Feldstein) (double-role).

JAYA: 17-year-old, Cybil's best friend; dad is President of Protein Power United. Hunger for love, men, power, connection to others and the self, and being.

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SCENE 1

CYBIL and RYAN are seated around their circular kitchen table. There are bowls of off-brand mac and cheese and juice in front of them as well as stacks of papers, unopened bills, etc. The kitchen design is dated, messy, and unkempt. CYBIL is eating very small bites and shuffling her food around as RYAN is eating quickly, inhaling his food. When they aren't looking, CYBIL places food in a napkin to make it appear as if she is eating. DENA comes into the kitchen, wearing a tight mini skirt and sits.

CYBIL. Where the hell are you going?

DENA. Excuse me?

CYBIL. Where are you going, *Mother*?

DENA. I told you. I have a meeting.

CYBIL. A meeting. At 7:00 o'clock?

RYAN. You never told us about any meetings.

DENA. Well, I meant to and that's almost the same thing.

CYBIL. Actually, it's not.

DENA. *(to CYBIL)* Well, now you know. *(as if remembering; to CYBIL)* Be a love and put Ryan to bed. Don't forget to brush your teeth. And do your homework.

RYAN. We did our homework already.

CYBIL. Hours ago. When we got home from school.

DENA. Look at you two! So on top of it. I could just eat you up. *(tickles RYAN; pretends to eat his arm)* I'm going to eat you. You're so delicious. I just need some salt!

RYAN. *(wiggles around; laughing)* Mom, stop it! I'm so ticklish!

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CYBIL. *(annoyed)* Isn't he a little too old for that?

DENA. How will I ever fill my hunger if I don't eat my children? And you're next. Come here, I want a bite! I'm so hungry. *(Cybil gets up and steps away from Dena. They run around the table. Ryan is laughing.)*

CYBIL. Stop it!

DENA. Come on, Cybil. Just give me one bite. I'm so hungry.

RYAN. Get her, Mom! Bite her butt.

DENA. *(laughing)* You're such a funny little guy.

CYBIL. No, he's not. This is weird and comments like that are actually inappropriate!

DENA. Awh, Cybil. Take a pill. We're just having fun!

CYBIL. This *isn't* fun. *(Dena and Cybil sit again.)*

DENA. When are you going to see that life isn't so serious?

CYBIL. When are you going to see that is? *(Beat; shuffling food around)* So...what time are you coming home?

DENA. Don't know yet, *Mom.*

RYAN. Mom! That's a good one.

DENA. You know how these meetings can go. Could take hours. Could take a few minutes. *(pointing to the messy table)* And clean this up. I hate coming home to a mess.

RYAN. *(points to the papers)* Where should we put this stuff?

CYBIL. Yea, where should we put the unpaid bills, *Mom?*

DENA. Just leave that...I'm talking about the bowls. Don't want to attract more roaches. And make sure to tuck him in. Snuggly and tight.

RYAN. Mom! I don't need to be tucked in. I'm 11!

DENA. That makes me so sad. My whittle man is all grown-up.

CYBIL. He's ONLY 11. He's not grown-up! He's still a kid. Like an actual kid who needs his Mother...his real Mother.

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DENA. And here I am, baby. He has me. You both do!

CYBIL. Mom, you shouldn't go. You have that interview tomorrow...and we really need that job!

RYAN. Oh, yea! Mom, you're gonna get it, right?

DENA. (*brushes it off*) Piece of cake, love. A strawberry one with raspberries on top. Damn, that shit is good. That place is run by a bunch of kids who think they know the business; think they know what people want. I know what people want; how to transform them into something imaginable; into something spectacular! Hell, I could do hair in my sleep and run circles around those kids. It'll be fine.

CYBIL. Mom, we can't live like this—

DENA. You don't get to be my age and not know your damn worth—

CYBIL. It's not about worth! It's about bills and our rent—

RYAN. We can't pay rent?

DENA. Of course we can pay rent! Why are you getting him all riled up?

CYBIL. (*low*) Because I'm scared. I know we're late—

DENA. And when I get this new job, it will all fall into place. Who knows, we might even get off the government cheese one day!

RYAN. (*joking*) But I like that cheese.

DENA. You gotta stop worrying, love. It's only gonna cause you a life of wrinkles and regret. You're only 17, Cybil! Don't dry up before your time. (*Beat; pointing to CYBIL's plate*) Not hungry?

CYBIL. (*playing with her food*) I am...I'm eating.

DENA. (*shifts body*) Right. Well, make sure you have some fruit snacks or something. You guys need your nutrients and shit.

RYAN. Sure, Mom! We'll have lots and lots of fruit snacks.

CYBIL. (*low; to RYAN*) Laying it on a little, thick?

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DENA. And don't go to bed too late.

RYAN. We know, Mom! It's a school night.

DENA. *(blows a kiss)* Love you lots.

RYAN. Love you. *(Cybil doesn't look up as Dena leaves and slams the door.)*

CYBIL. So...it's just us.

RYAN. C'mon, Cybil. It's always just us. *(Ryan gets up and puts his bowl in the sink. He opens the fridge and takes out a carton of ice cream and some chocolate syrup. He walks to the cabinet and gets some sprinkles. He starts to scoop ice cream into the bowl.)*

CYBIL.

What the hell? I didn't say you could have that.

RYAN. Good thing you're *not* my Mom.

CYBIL. Who just said we should have fruit.

RYAN. Fruit snacks and shit. I'm following the shit part.

CYBIL. Ry, don't talk like that.

RYAN. Again, not my Mom. *(Ryan adds some sprinkles and chocolate syrup to the ice cream; starts to walk away.)*

CYBIL.

Where are you going? You have to help me clean up—

RYAN. *(eating; messy)* Yea, I will. After I tackle the Dark Lord in "Deathscape."

CYBIL. You're not playing that game! It's a school night! And it's so violent—

RYAN. *(walking away)* Not my Mom! *(Ryan walks out. Cybil looks at her bowl of barely eaten mac and cheese and throws it out. She looks at the carton of ice cream. There is a lust there, a longing. She wants it but refrains. She is so hungry. She goes to sit down again and after a few moments stands in front of the ice cream. She grabs a spoon and digs into the carton. She eats spoonful after spoonful. It*

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is carnal as she shoves the ice cream in her mouth. It is less about the taste and more about the action. Eventually, she stops herself.)

CYBIL. Stop it! Just stop. Why can't you stop? *(Cybil looks at the dish soap by the kitchen counter. She grabs the bottle and pours it all over the ice cream. She shoves it in the garbage.)* Enough! I don't need you. I'm stronger than this...I have to be. *(Cybil takes a deep breath, regaining control of herself and continues to clean.)*

SCENE 2

Cybil is hovering over Ryan who is laying down in his bed. She is wrestling with his blankets and trying to tuck him in.

RYAN. I really don't need this whole "production" anymore. I can put myself to bed.

CYBIL. Maybe I like this whole production.

RYAN. This has to end by next year. I'll be 12. Way past the age when kids get tucked in.

CYBIL. It wasn't supposed to be like this.

RYAN. What was it supposed to be like?

CYBIL. I don't know. Bedtime stories and snuggles. Having a Mom and a Dad—

RYAN. I have all of that. In you—

CYBIL. Me. Right. Then, who do I have?

RYAN. You have me. We have each other.

CYBIL. I guess you're right. It's just...I wish we had more—

RYAN. Maybe one day we will...when Mom gets that new job!

CYBIL. Yea, the new job.

RYAN. Cybil?

CYBIL. Yea.

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RYAN. Can we pay the rent?

CYBIL. She said we can—

RYAN. Don't bullshit me!

CYBIL. Don't talk like that! Ry, you know we don't have a lot of money, right? Like we're poor.

RYAN. Sort of. But we're not poor, poor. Like we have an apartment and there's food.

CYBIL. We have those things...it's just...we don't have more than that. Like money for clothes or trips or whatever...things other people have.

RYAN. I have video games.

CYBIL. You do...cause Mom used to have credit cards. But she doesn't have them anymore...I mean she used them all. What I'm trying to say is, like, Mom seems to want to be free, or something, so—

RYAN. Free?

CYBIL. But she loves us.

RYAN. I know that.

CYBIL. Shit. I'm not sure how to put this.

RYAN. Don't curse!

CYBIL. Right...it's just, I think she wants to do things without us sometimes...and she forgets that she has responsibilities. Like real responsibilities.

RYAN. So, we can't pay rent?

CYBIL. (*getting teary*) No. I don't think we can.

RYAN. Are we getting kicked out? I don't want to be homeless and beg for change on the streets—

CYBIL. Slow down, Ry! That's not happening! I *won't* let that happen. I just...she needs a job. A steady, real job with a paycheck and regular hours. If she just got that...if she just stuck with that.

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We can make it...doesn't have to be a lot...we know how to survive on very little, you know. On practically nothing. But we still need something...we need a place to live and food and that's it. And I'm going to get a job, too.

RYAN. But you have school...and you'll be off to college soon.

CYBIL. School is a fuc— It's a joke. I can do both in my sleep. And college...it's not. Look, don't worry about any of that.

RYAN. You're going to college.

CYBIL. Not everyone goes to college.

RYAN. But you don't have to do anything. She's getting that job and she's going to pay off everything. She just said it.

CYBIL. Yea, right. She did say that. *(Beat)* Hey, do you remember...when Dad used to sing the "Memory Song"?

(singing) "Did you have a great day?"

Did you have a great day?

What is your memory of your great day?

Your one special memory—

RYAN. *(sitting up; annoyed)* Cybil, stop it! You know I don't remember shit about Dad.

CYBIL. I just...it was a nice song. Used to make me feel...like someone cared. Asking about my day—

RYAN. It doesn't matter what Dad did before...or what he used to sing. He's not here anymore. Why are you trying to keep someone alive who's never coming back?

CYBIL. People change; people can come back. He could—

RYAN. It's been 8 years, Cybil! This is just what it is. This is our life. Me, you, and Mom and slices of government cheese.

CYBIL. Well, we deserve more. You deserve more from him...from Mom.

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RYAN. Well...I'm properly tucked in and it's getting late. School and all tomorrow.

CYBIL. Sometimes I wonder who's really the older sibling.

RYAN. Well, I am wiser.

CYBIL. Shut up. *(Cybil hugs Ryan as he closes his eyes. She turns off the light and walks out of his bedroom. Back in the living room, she tidies up and cleans. Sits down after a few minutes and looks at the clock (it's 11:15 pm and Dena isn't home). She goes to the fridge, searching for food. She finds some cookies and eats them in a visceral manner, similar to how she ate the ice cream earlier. Eventually she stops, out of breath.)* Stop! Why can't you stop? You're pathetic and weak. Disgusting! So disgusting! *(Cybil crumbles the cookies and throws the rest of them out.)*

SCENE 3

Cybil is sitting on her couch. She slouches as she looks at the door, waiting for her mom to come home. She looks at the clock. It is almost 11pm. There is a glass of water and a large stack of cookies (or some other sweet) in front of her. She stares at it; longing for it. There is a teen magazine near her and she picks it up, attempting to read it but still thinking about the cookies.

CYBIL. If you eat, you will feel. *(She picks up the cookie and looks at it.)* If you eat, you will feel. If you eat, you will feel. If you eat, you will feel. *(She eventually takes a bite and then another, eating them in a visceral manner. Eventually she stops, out of breath.)* You're so pathetic. Fucking weak. Why did you do that? The day was almost over and you would have won. You're disgusting! So fucking disgusting! *(Cybil places the cookies down and takes a deep*

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breath as she regains control.) That was the last time. You're never doing that again. *(Cybil looks at the clock again and stares at the door.)* Mom, where are you? You should have been home hours ago. Why won't you call? I'm worried. But why should I be? You're off, fucking another random. Some guy you think is going to fill you. But what about me? What about your job interview tomorrow, huh? Do you even think about these things? Do you even care? Care that we can barely pay our bills and we might get evicted. Care that we live off the government with no hope in sight? Do you? You don't. You don't see who I am. How I'm becoming... nothing. I'm going to get so small one day that you're never going to find me. Shriveled up skin and bones with bulging eyes, staring at you. Leering at you; maybe then you'll see me. Maybe then you'll care that I exist. *(She eventually picks up one of the nearby magazines.)* Don't let her get to you. One day you'll be gone; away. And none of this will be real. *(Reading out loud to herself)* How to Know If a Guy Likes You. "When a guy's sitting down, if he's physically attracted to you, his leg or knee will be pointing directly toward you." *(Turns the page)* Date expectations: how to look. "Makeup should highlight your features with soft, neutral tones and give you a boost of confidence." Neutral tones. Love that. *(Turns the page; sees a quiz)* Are you a slut or a prude? So interesting. *(A projection of a 'Me Gone' ad appears on the stage. The ad shows a picture of LULU, a skinny model in a bikini standing on the beach with three guys, one has his arm around her. The other two models are leering at her with the slogan, "Me Gone: For When You're Ready to Live The Good Life" below it. She writes "goals" on the ad and rips it out. She looks at the magazine ad)* Me Gone. Me Gone. *(Stands and looks at her body; she is a normal weight but pokes at her body in disgust)* Look at you, the American Dream.

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Toned, firm, boney. So perfect; so complete; no care in the world. Just standing on the beach in complete peace. If I could have that life, have your body. It would all change, I would have a chance, a real chance to be more. Be more than this. Be more than this pathetic fat disgusting loser who has to take care of her brother and Mom and wait for her Dad to come back ... Or worry about the bills and the rent or fucking getting evicted. I'm just 17...why do I have to care about this. Why can't I be a kid? Was I ever a kid? Did I ever play and have fun and feel free? Was I ever happy? You don't have to worry about any of that. If I could just be you. I would be...something. I would be special. *(Stares at the ad; reads)* I am ready to live the good life. *(Suddenly, LULU, the model from the magazine, emerges from the ad into Cybil's living room. She Jumps off the couch; backs away from LULU)* Ahhhhhh!!!!!!

LULU. Ahhhhhh!!!!!! Why are we screaming?

CYBIL. What the fuck!?

LULU. Where am I? *(looking around)* Where's the beach? Where's Cody? Cody? Cody? Where are you?

CYBIL. Who the fuck is Cody and who are you?

LULU. *(extends her hand; Cybil does not return)* I'm Lulu. And who might you be?

CYBIL. I must be exhausted. Those cookies. Shit, they were laced. Or was it the ice cream? That sugar went to my head.

LULU. Ice cream? What's ice cream?

CYBIL. Maybe, I'm sleeping. *(Sees a cup of water and splashes it on herself)* Wake up, wake up!

LULU. I was by the water. At the beach with Cody and Ricco and Marco. It was such a beautiful day. The sun, the sand, the waves. A perfect day, really. Like every day. Perfect and warm. *(looking around)* Cody? Cody, where are you?

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CYBIL. *(lightly slaps her face)* It's not working. This isn't real. You're not real!

LULU. Are you that girl from the Math ad?

CYBIL. I'm not an ad! I'm a person.

LULU. I'm a person, too. But an ad person.

CYBIL. Are you, like, the model...from the magazine?

LULU. What magazine?

CYBIL. *(points to the magazine)* This magazine! I was just looking at you...and here you are.

LULU. *(looks down at the ad; sees CODY, MARCO, RICCO)* It's Cody and Marco and Ricco! Look at that. And that's where I usually am. But now I'm here. How spectacular. Hello, Cody? Can you hear me? I left...I left the beach. And I'm here! Where am I again?

CYBIL. *(to self)* This can't be happening. It was just a picture...and you were in it. And now you're here—

LULU. Goals? Am I a goal?

CYBIL. *(snatches the ad from Lulu)* No. That's nothing. *(Lulu looks around, touches the couch.)*

LULU. This all feels so...amazing. This place; this world. I feel so alive! Am I...free? *(The wrestling of a key is heard on the other side of the door. Dena walks in with TALLY.)*

CYBIL. *(pointing to her bedroom door)* Shit! Go in there!

LULU. Where? *(Dena and Tally walk into the living room. They are both clearly tipsy.)*

DENA. Cybil! What the hell? You should be a good girl and be sleeping.

TALLY. Yea, kid. You should be sleeping with your teddy bear.

DENA. *(laughing)* You're too much, Tally. You're just too much.

CYBIL. How was your "meeting?"

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TALLY. (*laughing*) Educational. And we have some more things to discuss with a PowerPoint presentation and shit. So, why don't ya and your friend get out of here.

DENA. Friend? Cybil, you have a friend?

CYBIL. I have friends, Mom!

DENA. (*to Lulu*) Who the hell are you? Why are you in a teeny-weeny bikini?

TALLY. (*singing*) It was an itsy, bitsy, teeny weeny.

TALLY. and DENA. (*joins in*) Yellow polka dot bikini.

CYBIL. Oh, my god!

LULU. (*extends her hand*) I'm Lulu. This is my outfit of choice for my warm days on the beach. Cody says it makes me look toned, youthful, and sexy.

TALLY. (*laughing*) He's not wrong, kid. Not wrong indeed!

DENA. Lulu, huh. (*they shake hands*) I'm Dena, Cybil's Mom, and this is my friend, Tally.

TALLY. Best friend, baby!

DENA. (*laughs*) Oh, Tally. You're too much.

CYBIL. Tally, huh? I'll make sure not to remember that.

DENA. You be nice, Cybil. Tally's a good guy.

CYBIL. (*low*) Aren't they all?

TALLY. Yea, I'm a stand-up guy and very, very good. (*Extends his hand to Cybil*) You're a big girl, aren't you?

CYBIL. (*moves away from Tally*) Gross.

DENA. So, how do you two know each other? I've never heard of any Lulu's.

LULU. Oh. We just met. From the magazine.

CYBIL. Lulu, you're so funny...we're actually in the...fashion club together...and we were designing bikinis for our project...on swimwear.

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LULU. Fashion club?

TALLY. You get an A+ for that getup. Real nice, kid. Real nice.

CYBIL. I'm going to be sick.

LULU. *(looking at herself)* Thank you! I like it myself. Though it is a little chilly here. I'm used to spending my days in the sun.

CYBIL. *(takes a blanket from the couch and places it over Lulu.)*
We're done with the...modeling. Let's put some clothes on.

LULU. Oh! But I don't have any clothes. This is all I've ever worn.

DENA. Since when did *you* join the fashion club? Didn't think that was your thing, Cybil.

CYBIL. Well, it is! And I'm really, really into fashion...and all sorts of other things but how would you know? With your "meetings"—You never notice anything about me.

DENA. I notice everything, Cybil. I see things you don't even realize.

TALLY. My baby's got a superpower.

DENA. I'm a super mother, darling. Comes with the territory.

CYBIL. Well..."supermom", I joined this club a few days ago and I love it. Just love it! I'm learning, you know...how to sew...and create...and make really small bikinis.

LULU. You didn't make this—

CYBIL. Anyway, we're done so we'll just get out of your way and go to bed.

DENA. You're not having a sleepover during the school week. That's not ok.

TALLY. No, that's not ok. *(to Dena)* Why isn't that ok?

LULU. I don't think I know how to sleep.

CYBIL. *(nervous laughter)* You're hilarious, Lulu. Isn't she so funny? Lulu lives really far away...like on the other side of town.

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And her dad...he works really late...so I thought it would be ok if she just slept over.

LULU. I don't have a Dad.

TALLY. You poor thing. No Daddy?

LULU. It's just me and Ricco and Marco and Cody. We like to stand at the beach and soak in the sun...it's a nice life as long as I stay still. But here...it's all so real. It's like I can think and finally see—

CYBIL. Her brothers. Her younger brothers. That she has to take care of. Like I do...with Ryan.

DENA. Oh.

CYBIL. Yea...oh!

DENA. Well, I guess it's ok. But go right to bed. No more fashion clubbing or whatever.

TALLY. That's telling 'em.

CYBIL. Sure thing, Mother. *(low; to Dena)* Remember, you have that interview tomorrow. You have to be out of the apartment by 8.

DENA. Of course, love. It's already in the can. And I'm proud of you.

CYBIL. You are? For what?

DENA. Making friends and doing things...like fashion. Who knew my Cybil had it in her?

CYBIL. This is what you're proud of me for?

DENA. *(to Lulu)* Nice to meet you, Lulu. You seem like a very nice girl for our Cybil.

LULU. Oh, thank you! I am nice. And you're nice, too, Dena, and you, too, Tally.

TALLY. It's really nice in here. Very nice indeed. *(Cybil and Lulu walk away to Cybil's bedroom. Laughs from Tally and Dena are heard in the background. Cybil slams her bedroom door.)*

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SCENE 4

Cybil and Lulu are standing in Cybil's bedroom.

LULU. You seem to speak of things that aren't true.

CYBIL. What?

LULU. You didn't say the right thing before...about where I came from. And Cody is *not* my brother. (*thinking*) He's my—I don't really know what he is. He looks at me and I smile—

CYBIL. I didn't speak of untruths...they're called lies...but it's not because I wanted to. I lied because...I had to. It's a big difference. Or maybe I should have said: hey, Mom and random number 6, meet Lulu, a girl who just appeared from my magazine.

LULU. Well, that *is* what happened. That is what is true.

CYBIL. That's insane. You're not real. This isn't happening!

LULU. Of course it is. I'm here, aren't I? And you brought me here.

CYBIL. I didn't bring you here!

LULU. Sure you did. Well, your wants did. You wants for the good life.

CYBIL. What? You heard me?

LULU. I'm not sure. But there must have been a good reason.

CYBIL. (*Going through her drawer*) I don't understand what's going on but I guess you can sleep here tonight...And then...I don't know we'll figure this out tomorrow. (*Hands her some PJs*)

LULU. (*Puts it on*) Figure what out?

CYBIL. How to get you back! To the ad.

LULU. Oh. (*Beat*) What if I don't want to go back? (*touching things; takes out a Me Gone from her bra and swallows*) This place is so...dynamic...so dimensional. I feel like I should be here; like I should have always been here.

CYBIL. Are those Me Gone's?

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LULU. Yes, they are. They make me take them everyday.

CYBIL. Who makes you take them?

LULU. (*thinks*) It's a voice or a presence...they say I have to take them to be who I'm supposed to be. To help control the urges within.

CYBIL. Urges? Like with food?

LULU. Yes, I think so. But the deeper ones, too. Urges so intense I would burst if they weren't contained. What would happen to me if I burst? I would be nothing; I would be less than nothing. Gosh, that would be awful. So, so awful.

CYBIL. And a voice tells you this? Like a photographer?

LULU. What's a photographer?

CYBIL. Whoever took your picture for the ad. Did they tell you those things? About the urges.

LULU. They might have, or maybe it was the presence.

CYBIL. You're nothing making any sense, Lulu.

LULU. (*extends her hand to CYBIL with the pills*) Do you want to try one? It's tropical flavored.

CYBIL. Oh. I don't think—

LULU. You don't have to think; just swallow. (*Commercial-voice*) Take two Me Gone's a day to enjoy its unique blend of fat-burning properties. Melt away years of regret with our coated capsule.

CYBIL. That was weird, you sound like a TV ad.

LULU. What's a TV?

CYBIL. Umm...it's like this box where people pretend to be other people.

LULU. Like me? In the Me Gone ad? I'm at the beach...but I don't if I like it there—

CYBIL. I don't know what you are...if you're a person or—

LULU. I am a person. I'm a girl, like you.

CYBIL. You don't look anything like me. You're perfect.

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LULU. Is perfect the way to live here?

CYBIL. If you don't want to be stuck eating government cheese and taking care of your drunk Mom your whole life it is.

LULU. What's cheese?

CYBIL. Something I don't eat...and you don't either.

LULU. But how do I know if I don't try it?

CYBIL. Cause you don't. You're barely there; there's no way you eat anything...and that's—

LULU. Goals?

CYBIL. It's getting late and I'm so tired...drained from all this. Let's just go to bed and figure this all out tomorrow.

LULU. But you need to take your Me Gone's. For a better tomorrow.

CYBIL. And they work? Like, they really work? Cause your body...is very convincing. If I could look like that...I think everything would change.

LULU. Everything? Like what?

CYBIL. My life. Possibility. Access...it's sorta hard to describe. I just...I want things to feel...better.

LULU. I'm as happy as can be and I am very proud of my achievements. I only have Me Gone to thank for that – and its unique blend of fat-burning properties.

CYBIL. You are so beautiful...and skinny. You have everything.

LULU. Why thank you and you can be that, too...beautiful. It's all so easy.

CYBIL. Easy...And they're safe? Like no one died from taking them—

LULU. (*Commercial-voice*) Me Gone's have gone through rigorous trials to secure its utmost safety trials. Do not use Me Gone's if you're prone to rashes, diarrhea, motion sickness, or if you're pregnant. Just two Me Gone's a day and you'll lose 10 pounds in one week – or your money back. Me Gone, for when you want the fat to be gone.

HUNGER

CYBIL. *(looks at it)* 10 pounds in one week...Maybe I'll just try it for one week. What's the harm in that?

LULU. What do you have to lose? Except everything.

CYBIL. Right. Everything. *(Cybil looks at the Me Gone's. She takes a deep breath and swallows them.)*

LULU. Wonderful! Do you feel the fat-burning properties working?

CYBIL. Yea...I totally feel it. *(Lulu goes to stand against a wall.)*

What are you doing?

LULU. Going to sleep.

CYBIL. *(points to her bed and demonstrates laying down)* We sleep in here..in beds. Like this. See?

LULU. *(walks over to the bed and lays down)* Look at me, I'm in a real bed! I can't even believe it? Thank you for bringing me here; helping me see what life could be. If only Cody could see me now! *(Lulu closes her eyes and smiles. Cybil hears Dena and Tally laughing on the other side of the door. Cybil closes her eyes.)*

CYBIL. *(low; to self)* Good life. Here we go.

SCENE 5

The next day. Cybil is looking through her closet, trying to find something to wear for school. She looks down at her hands; they are shaking.

CYBIL. I'm so jittery. *(continues to look through her closet and pull out clothes)* Fuck. there's nothing to wear!

LULU. It looks like you have a lot of things to wear. *(Pulls out a formal gown)* This one is pretty.

CYBIL. *(Takes it from Lulu)* That's not for school. It's for fancy occasions.

LULU. Fancy occasions?

CYBIL. Like parties or weddings.

HUNGER

LULU. I want to wear things like this, Cybil. Can someone like me be fancy?

CYBIL. A dress won't actually make you fancy, Lulu. It's just a look...like you're playing a part. To appear a certain way.

LULU. It's fake.

CYBIL. Yea, sort of. But everyone does it; trying to appear better than who they are.

LULU. They lie?

CYBIL. It's more like they pretend.

LULU. Like me?

CYBIL. Exactly like you! A fake.

LULU. But I feel...real. I feel—

CYBIL. (*Looking through her clothing*) I don't like how anything fits. This doesn't even fit me. I'm so gross!

LULU. You just started your Me Gone's. This will all change.

CYBIL. 10 pounds in one week.

LULU. Or your money back. (*Pulls out a different dress*) This would look nice on you.

CYBIL. Ummm...yea, I guess that's ok. At least it will cover my thighs. (*Gets dressed; looks at her hands*) Are these Me Gone's supposed to make me so jittery? I barely slept last night. And my hands. They're so...shaky.

LULU. Me Gone's have no effect on your sleep. And the shaking is part of the fat-melting process. It's a good sign, Cybil. It's working.

CYBIL. Fat-melting...cool. Ok, I guess I just have to be patient.

Let it do its magic. (*Beat*) I gotta get to school. I guess you can just hang around here...and I don't know, read or something.

LULU. Alone? By myself? I've never, never been by myself. That sounds quite scary.

HUNGER

CYBIL. You have nothing to be scared about. It'll be quiet; no one will look at you or fawn over you. You can just be.

LULU. Be.

CYBIL. Yea. And I'll come back...right after school.

LULU. Do you promise? That's not another lie?

CYBIL. No, it's not a lie. And then we'll figure out how to get you back...to the beach.

LULU. Back. Right. *(hands her a box of Me Gone's)* Don't forget your Me Gone's.

CYBIL. Yea, my hands, though—

LULU. That's how the formula works. Think of how different you'll look in a few days; just stick with it. I did and look at me.

CYBIL. 10 pounds, right? *(looks at the pill in her hand and swallows)*

LULU. Good job! I'm proud of you.

CYBIL. Yea, gold stars all around.

LULU. Gold stars?

CYBIL. For a job well-done.

LULU. Oh, yes. It's wonderful to swallow and release.

CYBIL. Whatever. Just stay put and don't go anywhere. *(Cybil turns her body and leaves.)*

SCENE 6

Dena is sitting with a cigarette and a cup of coffee. She is wearing an oversized PJ with a mug that says ““Cat-finatte Me.” Ryan is eating a large bowl of fruit loops.

CYBIL. Mom!?! What the hell are you doing here?

HUNGER

DENA. Question for the ages, love. What are we *all* doing?

RYAN. (*slurps his cereal*) The Dali Lama says that the purpose of life is to be happy.

CYBIL. Dali Lama? Please, Ryan. When are you reading stuff like that?

RYAN. There's a lot of things I read, Cybil. More than you know.

DENA. (*blows her cigarette*) Oh, I believe that. Nothing matters if you're not happy. Come on: be happy, Cybil.

RYAN. Like that will ever happen.

CYBIL. Yea, happy, sure thing, Mom...Happy, happy days. Seriously, though, why are you still home? You have the interview—

DENA. (*takes a long drag*) Oh, that. I called out.

CYBIL. What? What do mean?

DENA. Eh, my poor little stomach isn't doing well. Cramps or something of the womanly nature.

RYAN. Ewww—

CYBIL. Bullshit! This was import—

DENA. Cybil, how dare you talk to me like that! I'm your goddamn mother!

RYAN. She didn't mean it. We love you, Mom (*to Dena*)

Do you want me to get you Tums?

DENA. (*pets Ryan*) That's ok, love. Coffee and cigs are doing the trick right now. Now that's real happiness. (*Beat: puts out the cigarette*) Where's that little half-naked friend of yours?

RYAN. What friend?

DENA. Some girl...what's her name again? Lula.

CYBIL. (*looking at her bedroom door*) Lulu. She's...um...getting ready for school.

RYAN. I never heard you mention any Lulu's before.

DENA. That's what I said! See, I pay attention!

HUNGER

CYBIL. Good thing I don't tell you guys everything about my social life!

RYAN. Eh...you don't have one of those.

CYBIL. Jerk.

RYAN. Weirdo.

DENA. Enough! My god, now my head is pounding. *(Dena pulls out a cigarette and looks for her lighter.)* Where is my lighter? *(Dena gets up, looking around the kitchen. Ryan follows.)*

RYAN. I'll help you find it, Mom.

DENA. How lucky I am to have a love like you!

CYBIL. Mom...you promised us. That job was really...steady.

DENA. Steady, smeady. Where's my fucking lighter?!

RYAN. *(looking)* It couldn't have gone that far. Was it the sparkly one?

DENA. Of course! I sparkle don't, I?

CYBIL. Good hours and benefits. We haven't had benefits in years. Ryan really needs to go to the dentist, and the rent—

RYAN. *(smiling)* Nah, I don't. I like this shade of yellow. It suits me.

CYBIL. That's not normal. You see that, right? He shouldn't be saying things like that. Thinking this is enough.

DENA. It's only when I learned I was enough that I stopped caring about normal. Normal. Who the fuck wants that? *(Dena finds the lighter under the cereal box and lights her cigarette. She takes a long, slow pull.)* Eureka! Come to Mama.

CYBIL. Are you listening? Do you even care?

DENA. Oh, baby. You gotta relax. It's all coming. The job, the benefits, the hours. The wealth. It's going to be my time soon. Can't you feel it?

HUNGER

CYBIL. Your time? What about us? When is it going to be our time?

RYAN. I can feel it, Mom. It's all happening.

CYBIL. And I felt it today! Today was your chance to show us that you care. But you blew it because of some fucking meeting. With that slimy man.

RYAN. (*mocking*) Don't curse. Wait...what man?

DENA. You have no goddamn idea what it's like to be a woman my age, Cybil. I'm not dried up. I'm still alive. I'm still vibrating and...sometimes I just need to feel alive; to feel vibrant; to feel wanted. You get what you can get and you move on. That's what being a real adult is about.

CYBIL. Thanks for that cool life lesson.

DENA. I was a woman first and I'm gonna die a woman.

CYBIL. What about being a mom, huh? What about us? Do we mean anything to you?

RYAN. Of course we do. Right, Mom? You love us?

DENA. (*goes to grab Cybil's hand; she backs away*) Yes, my loves. You're my world. And I just want to eat you up! Yum, yum. Yum.

RYAN. Mom! That tickles—

CYBIL. How long are you going to make up stories? Don't you care that we could end up on the street?

RYAN. We're going to be homeless?

DENA. (*to Ryan*) No, my sweet boy. We're A OK...like a warm slice of apple pie, and you know I would never let that happen to us.

RYAN. See Cybil! Mom has it figured out.

DENA. (*to Cybil; low*) Stop filling his little head with garbage. I'm your goddamn Mother and I deserve some respect! I deserve people who believe in me...My Mother...she never believed in me. *Never.* If only she cared...shit, I would have been bigger than Vidal

HUNGER

Sassoon. That's all you need, huh. It's love. Is one person. One person who gives a shit; and makes you feel like you matter. If I had that I'd be invisible.

RYAN. I believe in you, Mom.

DENA. Oh, my sweet love. Your belief in me will keep me going. What a little man you are.

CYBIL. Vidal Sassoon? Are you kidding me, Mom?

DENA. I'm special, Cybil. I'm goddamn prodigy—

CYBIL. A prodigy is a kid, Mom. And you're clearly *not* a kid. You think you're better than them. Think you're better than those "kids" who might have offered you a job. A real job. Mom, can't you see what you did? What you always do!

DENA. *(slams her hand on counter and puts out the cigarette)*
Goddamn it Cybil! I did what I felt was right and that's enough. End of story.

RYAN. It is enough, Mom. We love you—

CYBIL. Until then I'll just eat crap from the government and lie so we make next month's rent.

DENA. As if you actually ate.

CYBIL. What does that mean?

RYAN. Cybil eats, right? *(Lulu walks into the kitchen. She is wearing a short dress; something that was Cybil's years ago.)*

CYBIL. *(to Lulu; angry)* What the hell are you doing?

LULU. Well, hello Cybil! Look at me! I'm ready for school!

RYAN. This is your friend? *(to Lulu)* Why, hello, there. I'm Ryan, man of the house and resident video game aficionado.

LULU. He's so cute. I could eat you up!

DENA. See, Cybil! Doesn't have to be so serious. Let's take a bite, Lulu!

CYBIL. Stop it! You psycho—

HUNGER

DENA. They're in the fashion club together.

LULU. Right, the fashion club! Where we club and—

RYAN. What? Cybil's *not* in the fashion club.

DENA. I knew it!

CYBIL. I wasn't but then I joined...extracurriculars and what not. Beef up that resume and...then Lulu and I were partnered.. And you know how that goes; we became quick friends. Right, Lulu?

LULU. Yea, quick, quick friends.*(to Ryan)* What's your name?

RYAN. Hey, I'm Ryan. The cooler sibling.

LULU. He's so funny and so cute!

CYBIL. Ewww!!

RYAN. *(to Cybil)* Didn't you wear that in, like, 8th grade?

CYBIL. *(gets up)* Yea, that's a little small on you, Lulu. Let's find you something else to wear—

DENA. That dress. He bought it for you. He was obsessed with that color. Said it matched your eyes.

CYBIL. Yep. Brown eyes, brown dress. He nailed it.*(guiding Lulu to her room)* Let's go back to my room. I think I have a sweater that—

DENA. *(hands Lulu a Pop-Tart)* Why don't you girls have some breakfast? Cybil seems a little more crabby than usual.

LULU. *(looking at the Pop-Tart in awe)* What's this?

RYAN. Are you from Mars or something? It's a freakin' Pop-Tart.

LULU. It's so bright and shiny! Look at all of these pretty colors.

CYBIL. It's chemicals! You don't want that.

DENA. *(looking at the box)* Nah, they're really good for you. Vitamin C and E and Z and shit. Everything you growing girls need. Fortified and whatnot—

CYBIL. No, Mom! It's junk that's made in a lab and it's loaded with garbage and sugar and we don't eat that.

HUNGER

LULU. (*staring at the Pop Tart*) They don't have these where I'm from. They're so...colorful—

CYBIL. And cheap. Dirt cheap. Right, Ma!

DENA. Cheap and good. Fills ya' up in an instant, right?

RYAN. (*to Lulu*) How is this even possible? They're a national treasure.

DENA. In food dye we trust!

CYBIL. Yea, well, Lulu's family kinda lives far away...in this remote area. And they eat healthy, wholesome food; like *real* fruits and vegetables. Not crap from a box or the government.

RYAN. No government cheese! How could you live?

DENA. Sounds freakin' terrible...on the other side of town, huh? What part?

CYBIL. You remembered what I said?

DENA. Of course, Cybil. I hear everything.

CYBIL. Yea, well...she lives with her Mom—

LULU. My Mom? I don't have—

CYBIL. Yea, by the beach.

RYAN. Cool! We haven't been in years. Mom, can we go one day?

DENA. One day, love. (*beat*) I always wanted to live by the beach. There's less sadness by the water.

RYAN. Really? Then we should go there. So you can be happy.

DENA. Oh, love, never lose that charm. You're one of the good ones, my sweet boy.

CYBIL. (*to Lulu*) You *don't* have to eat that.

LULU. But I want to try it. I need it. (*looks at the Pop Tart, takes a bite*) This is amazing. It's so gooey and sweet and...I need more! I want more! (*shoves the whole pop tart in her mouth; eats in an animal-like way.*)

DENA. It's good to see a girl who listens to what her body needs.

HUNGER

CYBIL. No one needs that junk! It's filled with chemicals—

LULU. What's chemicals?

RYAN. Shit. I guess you really never had one before.

CYBIL. Don't curse! *(to Lulu)* Lulu, calm down. It doesn't look right...if you eat like that.

DENA. *(hands Lulu another Pop-Tart)* Poor thing! You've been deprived of America's great delicacies. Have another one. You are growing. *(hands a Pop-Tart to Cybil)* You need to eat, too. Help calm those "moods" of yours.

CYBIL. Sure thing, Mom. Blue goo #40 is really gonna calm me down.

DENA. It couldn't hurt. You're body needs—

CYBIL. I'm good! I'll get something at school. Less goo-like!

DENA. Oh, yea? What will you get at "school"?

CYBIL. Gee, I don't know. The vast culinary options change on the daily.

LULU. So good, so sweet—

CYBIL. *(to Lulu)* Yea, sweet...Lulu, you should change so we're not late to school.

RYAN. I gotta get to the bus. Bye, Mom. I hope you feel better.

DENA. Time and rest, love. That's all I need. And maybe a cig or two. *(Ryan kisses Dena before he leaves.)*

CYBIL. Yea, well, we better go, too.

LULU. *(to Dena)* Thank you again! I'll never forget my first Pop-Tart.

DENA. Kids today! What a trip. *(Cybil pulls Lulu out of the kitchen and into her room. Dena looks over at the closed door and lights another cigarette.)*

HUNGER

SCENE 7

Cybil and Lulu are sitting in the cafeteria. There is a stack of teen magazines in front of them. Lulu is looking at them. Cybil has some rice cakes by her side.

LULU. *(reads)* “What Makes A Girl A “Slut” Or A “Prude”? “A slutty girl would sleep with you on the first date. Remember if you’re looking to score a boyfriend, you don’t want to sleep around until he is ready.” Cybil, what’s a slut?

CYBIL. Something you don’t want to get labeled as.

LULU. But if you like someone and they like you, why would anyone call a girl a slut.

CYBIL. Girls are supposed to hold out on doing stuff like that; to appear to be respectable or whatever.

LULU. We’re supposed to pretend.

CYBIL. Yea, sort of. But if you...do anything...like...well, don’t tell anyone. Cause people...they will talk and say mean things—

LULU. Mean is?

CYBIL. It’s like people who aren’t nice.

LULU. Oh, that’s terrible! Are people mean to you, Cybil?

CYBIL. This is High School, Lulu. Everyone is fake mean.

LULU. Fake mean?

CYBIL. Fake and mean! *(takes the magazine; turns the page)* Let’s find another article. Here, check this out! “*Suss Him Out in 5 Minutes Flat.*”

LULU. *(reads)* “You’ll learn most about your dream boy in the first five seconds, so this is the most critical stage.” Dream boy?

CYBIL. Like your Cody. I guess.

HUNGER

LULU. Right, Cody. Is he a dream? I don't know anymore. What about you? Do you have a dream boy?

CYBIL. I don't know. Guys around here are kinda tired.

LULU. Tired. Do they not get enough sleep?

CYBIL. I mean...immature...and lame. Well, most of them are.

LULU. Lame?

CYBIL. They're dull.

LULU. And you're...not dull?

CYBIL. I don't know what I am. *(Beat)*Lulu, I was thinking...If anyone asks who you are, say you're my cousin.

LULU. Cousin?

CYBIL. Like in the same family.

LULU. But we're *not* in the same family, so we're not cousins.

CYBIL. If you only did what I told you and just stayed in my room, I wouldn't have to lie. So, this lie is just as much your fault as it is mine.

LULU. This is my fault?

CYBIL. I don't want to lie but sometimes the truth is worse. You being here is worse.

LULU. It's not that bad. This place...this place is so vibrant. All these people. You're lucky to be around so many people. And all this food and the smells. It's amazing!

CYBIL. Everyone here sucks. *(Pointing)*Look at all of them. Awkward and confused and following everyone else. Fucking sheep and no one wants to be here. I'm only here for one more year and counting down the days until I get out.

LULU. Then where will you go?

CYBIL. Away. Far, far, away.

LULU. Oh. With your Mom and Ryan?

CYBIL. No. I'm done taking care of them!*(Leans in)*

HUNGER

Promise you won't say anything.

LULU. Like a secret?

CYBIL. Something like that.

LULU. Yea, ok. I can do that.

CYBIL. I'm going to find my Dad. He left a few years ago but he didn't mean to—

LULU. Where did he go?

CYBIL. I don't really know.

LULU. Do people leave families here?

CYBIL. They're not supposed to but some people do. *(looks off; beat)* Anyway, I never gave up and I've been looking for years. And I found him...a few weeks ago on Facebook...it's this computer thing.

LULU. Well, that's good, right? To find him—

CYBIL. Yea, totally. So, I reached out and we've been messaging each other. He told me he's sorry about everything but can't be around my Mom, which have you met her?! He said he wants to see me, so I think I'm going to do that for a little bit, cause fuck knows what the hell I'm doing...and college...we can't afford that.

LULU. What's college?

CYBIL. It's this stupid place where you pay a lot of money and learn more...to supposedly get a good job. My Mom thinks it's a scam. *(as Dena's voice)* "You're paying all that for a piece of paper! Take it from me, Cybil, find a passion; find your purpose."

LULU. Learn?

CYBIL. Like the world and stuff. Subjects and more about people and...a more intense version of this.

LULU. That all sounds...so impossible. Is that real?

CYBIL. Oh, it's real but it's not for everyone. I'm probably gonna be stuck here for the rest of my life so why even pretend.

HUNGER

LULU. But why can't you tell your Mom that you're going to see him? Won't she be worried if she doesn't know where you are? And Ryan...doesn't he want to see his Dad?

CYBIL. He left when Ryan was really little so he doesn't really know him. But I'm going to introduce them...eventually. I just need some time...alone with my Dad before I do all of that. We used to sing these songs together...they were kind of corny but they used to make me so happy. He asked me about my day—

LULU. This doesn't sound like a very nice plan. Your Mom will not be happy; she will be mad—

CYBIL. Good thing she won't find out! The truth is he...did something really bad and then he left us...so now she hates him. That's why she acts the way she does. Like she thinks she's getting revenge by sleeping with all these men or something. If I told her, it would totally kill her.

LULU. Kill her?

CYBIL. It would hurt her, like really bad. In her heart. So bad that she'd feel like she was dying.

LULU. Dying?

CYBIL. Yea, like she wouldn't exist. Like emotional. Sometimes you have to say what people want you to say to make them feel better.

LULU. This is more lying.

CYBIL. No, it's like twisting...so I don't hurt her. Anyway, I'm working on what I'm going to say...probably that I got a job in another state or that I'm traveling or something. She won't care where I go...she hates me.

LULU. Hate? That doesn't seem right. She gave you Pop-Tarts! I don't think this a nice plan.

HUNGER

CYBIL. Nice! What the hell do you know about nice? You're just a pill-popping magazine ad.

LULU. Me Gone's are not just pills; they're a lifestyle. To help the modern woman become who she should have always been.

CYBIL. Yea, the good life.

LULU. Goals. (*Beat*) I guess If I had a real Dad and a real Mom that I didn't know, I'd do the same. I'd look for them.

CYBIL. You'll never have a Dad or a Mom.

LULU. I know. I mean *if*. If they existed. I would be brave and look for them, too.

CYBIL. Brave. Yea, I guess it is brave.

LULU. But I would also tell my Mom the truth. Cause all these lies...they don't seem very nice. We never lie to each other on the beach. We always tell each—

CYBIL. You hawk diet pills all day and stand around half-naked. You don't talk about anything.

LULU. We're still nice to each other; like when Ricco breaths down my neck, he makes sure to put on the perfume I like, or when—

CYBIL. How can you care when you're just an image, Lulu? You're nothing!

LULU. I'm not just an image. I'm real. I can feel it. Coming here; being with you; eating this food. It's giving me life. My urges...they're stopping. I didn't know this was possible.

CYBIL. In a few days this food will do the opposite. Give you jiggly thighs and a flabby stomach and heartburn and regrets. Just stay away from the junk, Lulu. It's not worth it.

LULU. But I'm so, so hungry. I can feel it, gnawing at my stomach. I need more. I need to be filled.

HUNGER

CYBIL. (*pointing at the magazine*) See these magazines! They are filled with girls like you. Girls who fit a specific mold. And girls who stay in that mold and don't overeat get rewarded.

LULU. I've never gotten a reward.

CYBIL. Your whole life is a reward. On the beach in your bikini with Cody. You won, Lulu. Don't you see that?

LULU. What did I win?

CYBIL. The ability to wake up and look at the world without hating yourself.

LULU. Hate?

CYBIL. Without saying 'in 10 more pounds' or—Winning is becoming less and less and less. I want that.

LULU. (*sniffing*) Hmmmm....What's that smell? I need that!

CYBIL. A mix of regret and dead cows. (*hands her a rice cake*) Just have one of these. They'll help you get through the day.

LULU. There's no food on the beach. None. All I do is look and smile and get breathed on. But now that I'm here...I realize how much I want; how hungry I am. I'm so, so hungry!

CYBIL. (*whispers*) You already went way over your calories with those stupid Pop Tarts. And I told you, girls like you don't eat this much.

LULU. I don't care! I'm still hungry. I need more.

CYBIL. So have more of those Me Gone's. Goals, remember?

LULU. I'm goals but I need more. I don't feel filled!

CYBIL. So fight the urges, Lulu! We all do! After a while, you'll forget you need it anymore. You believe the lie—

LULU. Except I'm not real. And if I'm not real I can eat whatever I want. I can do whatever I want. Because I'm not really here.

HUNGER

CYBIL. Except you are here, so stop eating. (*Jaya walks to their lunch table and slinks into a seat. She has a tray with a giant piece of steak on it. She picks up one of the magazines.*)

CYBIL. Shit, there's Jaya. Remember we're cousins.

LULU. That's not real—

CYBIL. Whatever. Just don't talk!

JAYA. Stay clear of Feldstein. He's on the warpath today!

CYBIL. Again? Damn, he won't let up.

JAYA. So pathetic. You'd think he'd take a hint. Like, no one wants to sign up for your stupid science club.

CYBIL. Even with the extra credits.

LULU. What's a science club?

JAYA. (*looks at Lulu*) Hey, I'm Jaya. Are you a new student or—

LULU. (*extends her hand; winks at Cybil*) Hi, I'm Lulu, Cybil's cousin. Right, Cybil?

LULU. Yep, that's my cuz!

JAYA. (*shakes Lulu's hand*) Cool. Cool. I didn't know you had a cousin.

LULU. Oh, yes. I'm a cousin on Cybil's Dads' side. Right?

CYBIL. Ah, right.... She's just in town for a few...days—

JAYA. On your dads' side? Shit, I didn't think you were in touch with any of them.

CYBIL. I mean, I'm not. I wasn't.

LULU. We found each other.

CYBIL. Right! On Facebook.

JAYA. Okay, there boomer. But that's cool. That you found each other. Are you also 17?

LULU. Am I?

CYBIL. They don't really keep good records where she's from.

JAYA. Okayy...and where's that?

HUNGER

LULU. It's this remote beach. There's only 4 people where I live. Cody and Ricco and Marco—

JAYA. Remote beach? Damn, that sounds amazing! So, why are you here...at our school. If you're only visiting?

CYBIL. Cause her Mom only agreed to have her stay if she was able to go to school; like blend in with us, or whatever.

LULU. My Mom? Who's my Mom again?

JAYA. And they let you do that? God, this school is so effin' whack.

LULU. Whack?

CYBIL. Like stupid.

LULU. It doesn't seem whack at all. It seems like a nice place with nice people and so much food.*(points at Jaya's tray)* What's that? It looks so...red and juicy.

JAYA. Oh? It's just steak. It's pretty much all they serve here for lunch.

CYBIL. Jaya's Dad is the President of Protein Power Society.

JAYA. *(pretends to be her Dad)* It is my utmost demand that children of Willowbrook High only eat protein for lunch to control their hunger for productivity, purpose, and focus.

LULU. The smell...it's so amazing. I need that. I want it!

CYBIL. They don't eat meat by the beach.

LULU. *(talking over her)* I need it now.

JAYA. *(points to the lunch line)* Go grab one...it's over there. There's a whole line of processed cow options for your convenience.

LULU. To fill me. It has to fill me. *(Lulu gets up and walks towards the food.)*

JAYA. Damn, girl was possessed.

HUNGER

CYBIL. Yea, I guess she's tired of all that fresh seafood, or something.

JAYA. Right. She's really tall. Was your Dad tall?

CYBIL. Oh, I don't know. I think so...from what I remember. But it's cool cause I'm learning about that side of the family—

JAYA. Wow, that's awesome! I'm so happy for you...that you found her. Does she...I mean is she in touch with your Dad?

CYBIL. I didn't get into all of that with her...we're taking it slow. Getting to know each other and all. It's actually kind of awkward, trying to talk to her; figure out who she is. It's like she's from another planet.

JAYA. Yea, that must be really hard to go from living with 4 people to this. But at least you're close! I'm sure this will make it easier to connect with him one day.

CYBIL. Yea, totally! Just like a fairy tale. *(Brecken walks by and stops by their table. He picks up one of the magazines.)*

BRECKEN. *(reading)* "The Sorta Boyfriend, Do you have one?" Why are you reading this garbage?

CYBIL. It's not all garbage. There's some really solid advice in there.

BRECKEN. *(turning the magazine)* "Meow! Why Acting Just Like a Cat Will Get People to Come To You. "Really great advice.

JAYA. *(Takes a magazine to cover her face)* Could you tell it's me?

BRECKEN. Not the best Feldstein decoy. And really, it's not that bad. Dare I say, I'm liking it.

CYBIL. Oh, shit, you gave in, didn't you? You're one of them!

BRECKEN. Some things aren't worth fighting. And I need extra community service hours. It was really a win-win.

JAYA. You're gone, man. Way gone.

HUNGER

BRECKEN. Yea, well, not all of us are riding the wave to college on our merits and good looks.

JAYA. Some of us are. Thank you very much.

CYBIL. As the rest of us bust our asses every day, knowing we'll never get there.

JAYA. What is that supposed to mean exactly?

CYBIL. It's just that some of us don't have chances; chances others don't have to think about.

JAYA. I bust my ass, too, you know. It's not like my A's magically appear, ok. And there's other options, Cybil. Like scholarships and grants—

CYBIL. Financial aid. Thanks, I got the list of practicalities.

JAYA. So, do something about it!

CYBIL. I'm doing things. I'm doing it all.

BRECKEN. Who cares about college?

CYBIL. You do! She does! They all do.

JAYA. And you're going to go! You know that, right.

CYBIL. Sure, I know that.

BRECKEN. Cybil, are you thinking about going to the game? Or spending your Friday night with these insightful magazines.

CYBIL. Friday. Like this Friday?

BRECKEN. Yep, the day of the big game. There's flyers everywhere, Cybil.

CYBIL. Oh, right. Well, I probably have to watch my brother. My mom has these meetings—

JAYA. So just bring him with you.

CYBIL. Wowie! Wouldn't that be fun!

BRECKEN. Yea, totally. We'll get popcorn and cotton candy until we can't see.

JAYA. Sounds like a blast.

HUNGER

CYBIL. Yea, well, maybe.

BRECKEN. Cool, I can do maybe.

JAYA. So cool! *(Lulu comes back. She has a tray piled high with meat.)*

BRECKEN. Um...hey.

LULU. *(Tries to extend hand to shake Brecken's; it is awkward with the tray)* Oh, hello, I'm Lulu.

JAYA. She's Cybil's cousin. They found each other on Facebook.

BRECKEN. Oh, cool. I'm Brecken. Breck. Cybil's friend.

JAYA. Excuse me?

BRECKEN. And Jaya's, of course! *(Looking at the tray)* You must be really hungry, Lulu.

LULU. *(Smells the food)* I am. I was never allowed to eat before—

BRECKEN. Not allowed to eat?

CYBIL. She's hilarious. She just means that...she lives on this remote beach and they don't have meat like this.

LULU. This will help control the urges?

JAYA. What urges?

CYBIL. Lulu, you're hilarious!

LULU. Am I? What's funny about this?

BRECKEN. Remote beach? That sounds nice. Where is it?

LULU. I don't know, actually. Cybil, do you know where I'm from?

CYBIL. Oh, I don't know the exact name but I think it's on the other side of the country.

BRECKEN. Okayyy...sounds real suss.

LULU. *(starts to eat; it's carnal)* This is so good! I need this. I need more!

BRECKEN. Protein power!

BRECKEN. and JAYA. To fill the hunger within.

HUNGER

BRECKEN. Wow, you're really hungry, huh?

LULU. *(in between bites)* It's filling me. My bones, my gut, my mind. I feel so alive!

CYBIL. Slow down, Lulu. You're going to choke.

BRECKEN. Alrightly. Well, this has been real and all but I better bounce.

JAYA. Later, B.

BRECKEN. Maybe I'll see you at the game, Cybil and in Science Club, Jaya.

JAYA. Hell to the motherfucking no.

CYBIL. *(awkward wave)* Yea. Maybe. *(Brecken walks away from the table.)*

JAYA. *(Pats Cybil's shirt)* Did you hear that shit?

LULU. *(Her mouth is full of food)* What?

JAYA. He wants to go to the game with you!

LULU. And that's a good thing?

JAYA. So good. Cybil has been crushin' on Brecken since middle school. I think he's finally waking up.

CYBIL. It doesn't mean anything. He probably says that to everyone.

JAYA. Sure thing, Cyb. He's going on a tour inviting the whole student body to the game. Shit, what are you going to wear?

CYBIL. I can't go if my Mom needs me. We have no one to watch, Ry.

JAYA. Like I said, just bring him. It will be cute; show him what a good sister you are.

CYBIL. I *am* a good sister. *(Looks over; sees FELDSTEIN.)*

JAYA. Feldstein at 12 o'clock. Shit. Gotta run. Later! *(Lulu continues to eat. Jaya walks away.)*

CYBIL. Slow down...you look disgusting—

HUNGER

LULU. (*Eating*) I'm hungry, Cybil. This is filling me. Making me vibrate.

CYBIL. Food can't do all that...can it? (*beat*) Why did you say that to her?

LULU. Say what?

CYBIL. About us being cousins...on my Dad's side.

LULU. You told me we were cousins.

CYBIL. I know but I didn't like that you mentioned my Dad...he's gone.

LULU. Gone?

CYBIL. Yes, gone. Like how you left the ad.

LULU. I didn't leave. I was forced out. I'm going to get some more food. I need more chicken and burgers and liver. I'm still so hungry.

CYBIL. Enough! No more food, Lulu! We change periods in a few minutes. And you're eating too much. Your stomach...if you have a stomach it's going to hurt...and you're going to feel gross and get sick.

LULU. Sick?

CYBIL. Yes, sick from eating too much food. And you're going to get fat if you keep this up.

LULU. And that's a bad thing?

CYBIL. Yes, it's really, really bad. That's what you tell us in your ad...that's what they all tell us. (*pointing to the magazine*) That we're supposed to look like you. And people like you don't eat.

LULU. But I do eat. (*eating*) See.

CYBIL. You make us want to take Me Gone's so we can look like you. So we can be you but you're not supposed to eat. None of us are. So, stop it!

LULU. Oh. So that's goals?

CYBIL. Yea. Goals.

HUNGER

LULU. But don't people...have to eat? To stay alive?

CYBIL. That's why you have to be smarter than everyone else and pretend.

LULU. Like you lied to Jaya. And said you ate.

CYBIL. It doesn't matter, Lulu. No one cares if I'm actually eating.

LULU. I think they do care. Your Mom tried to get you to eat and Jaya—

CYBIL. They don't give a shit! And I can make it seem like I'm eating. Take small bites, move things around, eat when they see you but never any more...and eventually you get smaller. You finally become who you're supposed to be. Like you. With your perfect stomach and your thighs that don't touch and your toned arms. You're everything.

LULU. I am? I don't feel like everything. Ever since I got here I've been so, so hungry... and I don't want to be hungry anymore. I want to be filled up. I want to eat. I have to eat.

CYBIL. You'll lose your power and become everyone else. No one wants that. None of the girls in the magazines want a life like that.

LULU. My power? I don't feel very powerful.

CYBIL. (*Pushes the food away*) Just stay away from this crap and keep inspiring us. Keep becoming less.

LULU. Less. (*The bell rings.*)

CYBIL. Shit, we have to go. What class do you have next?

LULU. (*looks at her schedule*)

Biology.

CYBIL. Sit in the back. And don't talk to anyone. And I hope you don't puke.

LULU. What's puking?

CYBIL. You'll know it when it happens. Meet me by the bus line after school. Then we'll figure out how to get you back.

HUNGER

LULU. To the beach?

CYBIL. Yes, where you belong. That's where your power lies.

LULU. Power. *(Lulu and Cybil get up. Lulu takes another big bite from her tray of food and wraps up the rest in a napkin. They leave the lunchroom.)*

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