

WILD HORSES

A play

by Allison Gregory

Representation:
Bruce Ostler
Brett Adams, Ltd.
(212) 765-5630
bostler@bretadamsltd.net

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Allison Gregory
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allisongregory101@gmail.com

CAST

A Woman, 45-60

SETTING

The location of this play is a room where people are gathered: a casual, communal place. It can be a coffee house, a bar, or a food court. It could be a community center or the very theatre we're in. It was once, a ways back, a Taste Freeze. Somehow we should know this; a visible trace of its earlier identity subtly catching our eye.

TIME

Tonight.

PLAYWRIGHT'S WORD TO THE WISE

Music is a life force in this play and it should be used aggressively to *drive the story forward*. The songs listed are indispensable. The music isn't incidental, it isn't transitional, it is *essential* and should be used avidly and generously.

“Against all this, Youth,
Flaming like the wild roses,
Flashing like a star out of the twilight
Its fierce necessity, it’s sharp desire,
Singing and singing.”

Prairie Spring by Willa Cather

“I have my freedom
but I don’t have much time.”

The Rolling Stones ‘Wild Horses’

*The ambient buzz of conversation,
communal eating and/or drinking, people
gathered for a good time.*

*The WOMAN enters -- or is already
there, watching, listening,
remembering. She talks to us,
continuing a story she's been telling
herself. All the characters have names,
but they are all voiced by the Woman.*

THE WOMAN

The worst part of The Belt was the waiting
You had to go into their bedroom
your own parent's bedroom
which was awkward
because it's a mysterious room that you really don't want
to think too much about
Get The Belt out of Dad's belt drawer
Lay it on the bed
Pull your pants down
And "think about what you did".
Only just then I couldn't get past thinking about
how much it was going to hurt.
What made it even worse
I kept thinking about Garff Garrett on the waterbed with his
pants around his ankles and his droopy checkered boxers and
Zabby holding a knife
But you don't know that part.

*The Woman has said too much. She makes
move to leave, then, a decision to
stay. She weighs her options.*

I would *never* tell my kids this. They think I'm at my book
club.
I'm not in a book club.

*She may need liquid reinforcements to
screw up her courage and continue.*

That summer there was a contest on the radio and I was going
to win it. Whoever could come up with the best name for the
Horse With No Name would win, no lie, a *horse*.
You had to send the name in on a postcard, one name per
postcard. I stamped and pre-addressed ninety postcards.
I was going to win that horse.

*She sings, defiantly, probably off-key,
the lyrics to 'Horse with No Name'*

*"On the first part of the journey
I was looking at all the life
There were plants and birds and rocks and things
There was sand and hills and rings"*

Nobody even knows what all that was supposed to mean
But still we sang the song
And every single day that summer I sent in a new name for the
horse with no name

*"I been through the desert on a
horse with no name
It felt good to be out of the rain"*

It was our anthem if we'd known what an anthem was
It's the thing we sang before doing it
It being the thing we wouldn't be doing if the three of us
weren't together.
Zabby and Skinny Lynny and me
Vying testing erupting
Egging each other on to greatness
To infamy
To getting our asses kicked.
Like sneaking into Zabby's parent's pub
They actually had a pub inside their house
Making drinks out of whatever's open
Didn't matter
Jack Daniels, Strawberry Hill, Peppermint Schnapps, Gin
Doesn't matter because we're thirteen
we hate the taste of all that shit
But we're thirteen
Yeah!

*Music: 'Living in the Past'
Jethro Tull*

So we pour it all together
The brown and the red and the clear stuff that makes my nose
sting and my eyes water -- plus some orange juice for body
We pour it all into an empty tennis ball can
And we drink
Holding our noses
it's awful, godawful
But taste is not the point
Taste is the *last* thing we care about.

I was a good girl
An outstanding student
the perfect child of miserable parents
Corruption fodder
What class do you have right now Zabby says

THE GIRL: Um French.

ZABBY: You're going to be late to your French class.

I'm never late, I say.

ZABBY: Today you're going to be late.

Everybody knew her
Abbey Zilker-- Zabby. She was newly notorious
A fist fight with Tonya Yonkers on the bus had gotten her
suspended for three days.
Even though she had a red bald patch where Tonya yanked a
bunch of her dirty blonde hair out it was pretty much agreed
that Zabby won.
Tonya crying
Nobody really concerned because she's a bossy cry baby.
Now Zabby is back at school
talking to me
I'm terrified and sort of honored.

ZABBY: You better hurry. You're going to be late to French.

THE GIRL: Can you, um, would you please give me back my
French book?

*The Woman makes the sound of the late
bell.*

ZABBY: Uh oh. Was that the *bell*?

THE GIRL: Oh my god give me my book!

ZABBY: I guess you're late, huh? What are you going to do?

THE GIRL: You're late too, idiot!

ZABBY: So what?

THE GIRL: So we're going to get in trouble! If you get
three tardies you get a detention and one more after that
you get suspended and after three suspensions you get
expelled.

ZABBY: How many tardies have you had Frenchy?

None, I say.

ZABBY: I've had *five*.

THE GIRL: Five?

ZABBY: *This week*.

THE GIRL: You could get *expelled*.

ZABBY(*sarcastic*): *Oh no really?*

THE GIRL: Just shut up and give me my French book please.

ZABBY: Oh look, it's the assistant principal.

THE GIRL: Don't let him see us!

ZABBY: How's it going Mr. Miser?

THE GIRL(*fierce whisper*): Oh my god shut up shut up shut up.

ZABBY: Hey sorry Mr. Miser I meant to bring you raisins today but my rabbit died so no more raisins!

We spent the rest of the afternoon sitting in the assistant principal's office.

Zabby was everything I was afraid to be
Irreverent outrageous attractive funny
She could even dance like she was black.
That sounds bad.

You have to remember this was a time when all the white people were doing disco and we all looked even whiter. Zabby was an influence.

*Music: 'Reelin' in the Years'
Steely Dan*

SKINNY LYNNY: Hey Zabby, what if your parents find out?

That's Skinny Lynny
We're in Zabby's parent's pub making a carafe of our disgusting magical elixir

ZABBY: They don't care they're at a party.

Skinny Lynny is pouring

THE GIRL: Whoa that's way too much of the brown stuff Lynny.

SKINNY LYNNY: I'll balance it with more of the clear.

She just kind of fell into my life, Skinny Lynny
She literally fell off her bike in front of my house.
The thing about Skinny Lynny
She was totally accident prone.
It's notable how many near death encounters she survived
Some kind of miracle she didn't die sooner
She was just funny that way.

SKINNY LYNNY: Yum, down the hatch!

*Skinny Lynny plugs her nose and
guzzles, gasps, chokes.*

THE GIRL: Is it bad?

SKINNY LYNNY: Really bad, have some.

Music: 'The Cisco Kid' War

Zabby wasn't nearly as bad as her brothers Dean and Don-o.
All things considered she was the responsible one of the
litter.

Dean, tall, great-looking
Square-jaw, brooding eyes
Twenty-two or nineteen
I don't know but too old to be a kid
And mean
Pain-seeking mean.

Music: 'I Gotcha' Joe Tex

One night we hide in the eucalyptus trees bent over the
street
Armed with rotten stolen eggs from the Peaker's chicken farm
Go!
Invisible to the unsuspecting car that had the bad fortune to
drive under us
Plop!
We expertly drop fetid bombs on windshields and hoods and
laugh til we wet our pants.

THE GIRL: Zabby look who's coming.

Uh oh
Dean's car
His manhood rumbling on the road below us
Mean Dean
We smell glory.

One-two-go go go I shout!
We pelt that macho station-wagon with heart-felt hatred and
joy and thirteen-year-old revenge
Bam Bam Bam!

Miscalculation.
It takes him no time to put two-and-two together

*She makes the sound of Dean slamming
on the brakes.*

Dean backing up like a maniac
that car has never moved so fast
Us screaming, laughing, skittering down the tree
Scattering in every direction.

Dean bolting from the passenger side of his car because the
driver door is busted
Dean chasing down his sister
Dean tackling her to the ground, smashing rotten eggs in her
face and hair
Dean grinding bits of shell hard into her head
Dean grunting
Zabby too tough to cry

ZABBY: Get off me you fat-ass fag!

Me and Skinny Lynny tearing out of there
Skinny Lynny of course tripping on a pot hole
Scraping up her chin her knees her elbows
I stoop to help her but Dean is coming
Big mean smile
I didn't do it Dean, Lynny lies
Stop it, don't Dean don't!
Dean not stopping
Crushing egg into Skinny Lynny's head, her face
Her hair a matted mess
Her mouth full of dirt
Dean getting up
Looking for me
But I am hell-bent, tearing through someone's backyard.
Dean yelling

DEAN: I'm watching you, you bitch, you little bitch.
I'll teach you to fuck with my car Squirt!

He never did catch me that night.
He never did forget.

Saffire
Shiloh
Dark Lady

"I been through the desert on a horse *with* a name?"
It doesn't sound right
But that's how you win the contest

SKINNY LYNNY: What if it's a boy?

Hitchcock
Elton John
Ringo
Bozo.

THE GIRL: Everyone will look for the hidden meaning in
the name.

Destiny
Roulette
Fickle Finger of Fate

We were standing in Garff Garrett's driveway
Me, Zabby, Skinny Lynny, Garff Garrett
And some little cousin of his.
No really the cousin wasn't very tall.
Cousin just stood there with his hands in his pockets
He wasn't show-offy like Garff Garret who was full of it.
The only reason we had walked there was because Garff Garrett
He said he'd gotten a bunch of weed
Hot-shot.
He told Zabby he'd give her some if she came over.

Garff Garrett was always making like his family was rich.
Whatever, but he lived in a dirty house at the top of a hill
at the end of a winding road.
So we're there and he's talking about nothing
It's obvious he has a hard-on for Zabby
Everybody does
Zabby can't stand Garff Garrett
Nobody can
But she's wily.
So we're standing in the driveway not really listening
or caring.

GARFF: Zabby are you going to Jeff Cranover's party?

ZABBY: I don't know, maybe, are you?

He invited me says Garff

Who cares, I thought.

GARFF: Did you go to his last one?

ZABBY: I don't remember.

GARFF: I was invited to that one too.

Sure you were, I thought.

GARFF: I was pretty high I can't remember if I saw you there.

And I'm thinking because you weren't there because
you weren't invited A-hole.

GARFF: I'm having a big party, like everyone can come
you know? I can do anything I want, my parents don't care.
I've just gotta wait til they get back.

Your parents are going to be at the party, asks Skinny Lynny.

GARFF: No pinhead, they have to buy the keg.

ZABBY: Where's the pot Garff?

GARFF: Yeah the pot, uh. In my room.

Go and get it Garff says Skinny Lynny.

GARFF: Hey Zabby, ever been on a waterbed?

I think Garff Garrett is a lonely guy.

ZABBY: You have a *waterbed*?

GARFF: Hell yes, California king with a heater. Hot and wet.

Creepy lonely.

GARFF: Come on, I'll show you. What? I'll give you the pot
after you look at my waterbed swear to god.

Despite every screaming impulse otherwise we follow Garff
Garrett and his "cousin" into his bedroom to look at his
waterbed

SKINNY LYNNY: It's oh-my-god huuuge.

GARFF: See told you, biggest one in the store.

That waterbed was big. At least he didn't lie about that.

GARFF: Come on get on it.

THE GIRL: What's that smell?

Garff Garrett pushes a pile of dirty magazines, french fries,
batteries, and a steak knife off the bed.

GARFF: You gotta lay down to get the full experience.

THE GIRL: Whoa. How do you stay on it.

SKINNY LYNNY: It's squishy.

ZABBY: Feels like warm waves.

GARFF: Feels even better with no clothes on.

I'm watching Garff's cousin in case he tries to lock the door
But he's just leaning against the wall, hands in his pockets
I'm pretty sure he can't actually do anything else
Why am I paranoid?

GARFF: The best is when you're loaded and naked and you
close your eyes. It's like being on a magic carpet
in the Bahamas. So what do you say, Zabby?

ZABBY: I say we smoke some.

SKINNY LYNNY: Totally smoke some.

GARFF: No way, my parents.

You said your parents are out of town, I say. You said your parents don't care.

ZABBY: We'll be cool-city. Come on Garff, where is it?

SKINNY LYNNY: Where is it Garff?

GARFF: Everyone gets naked first.

Gross no, I say. I'm not getting naked.

GARFF: Shirts off, then.

SKINNY LYNNY: Fuck off Garff.

GARFF: Forget it then, no skin no weed.

We have walked a long way for nothing.
That's when Zabby turns Garff Garret's stereo on.

Music: 'Rock On' David Essex

ZABBY: I like to dance before I strip.

Now

Zabby is a really good dancer
But what the hell is she talking about?
She starts to sway and
And something in Garff clicks
Some kind of switch in his pea brain
She is hypnotizing him!
He doesn't say anything, just takes off his shirt
Starts moving his pale chest and arms and hips
Rolling his lax belly
Like if one of those plastic troll-dolls danced underwater.
He is standing up on his waterbed gyrating and undulating
with the waves.

Garff Garrett gyrates and undulates.

ZABBY: Give us what we came here for. The pot, Garff.

Garff Garrett doesn't hear or doesn't care
He is undoing his belt
He is unzipping his pants
Pulling them down and leaving them around his ankles
Assaulting our eyes with his droopy checkered boxers.
Skinny Lynny looks away.

SKINNY LYNNY: Stop Garff.

Just tell us where the stuff is, I say.

GARFF: Don't tell them Dirk!

That's when Cousin Dirk with his hands in his pockets starts snickering.

ZABBY: You little *shit*. You don't have any!

SKINNY LYNNY: Fucking Garff.

GARFF: Yes I do, I have a whole stash.

ZABBY: You do not, you're a liar.

GARFF: Yes I do, but you're not getting any of it!

Zabby jumps on Garff Garret pinning him on the surging waterbed. I'm starting to wish I hadn't come.

ZABBY: Where is it nickle-dick?

GARFF: Forget it I don't have to give you any.

ZABBY: I came to your house fucker, now are you gonna give me what you said you'd give me, or am I gonna hit you?

GARFF: Hah, make me slut!

Wait

I don't think I remembered to tell you
Zabby was a competitive swimmer
National Junior Olympics champ in the butterfly and the
backstroke. All that strength in her shoulders and arms.
So when she punched Garff Garrett in the stomach
I felt sorry for him
Kind of.

GARFF(*gasping*): Crazy ugly whore, now you're really not getting any. Dirk don't tell them where it is.

It's in his asshole, said Cousin Dirk.

GARFF: Shut up Dirk!

ZABBY: Guess we'd better check.

GARFF: Hah, no way, you wouldn't you're too chicken.

Skinny Lynny sits on his legs, I sit on his arms.
Zabby starts pulling down his droopy checkered boxers

I close my eyes
I so don't want Garff Garrett's penis to be the first one
burned into my memory.
Instead of feeling unpopular at that moment Garff Garrett
seems pretty turned on
He's twisting and groaning
The bed is roiling and splashing, tossing us around

GARFF: What are you going to do to me. Huh? Huh? Come on.

That's when Zabby picks up the steak knife.

ZABBY: Turn over, Perv!

Weirdly he does.

GARFF: Oh yeah what are you gonna do now? Huh?

He closes his eyes *and smiles*.
Cousin Dirk says Wait man I think your parents just rolled
in.
Garff Garrett doesn't hear or doesn't care
Zabby grips the knife
She's freaking me out
Even Skinny Lynny is like

Skinny Lynny makes a freaked-out face.

Then
Zabby plunges the knife *into the waterbed*.

At first nothing happens
We're all in shock.
Then she pulls the knife *out* of the waterbed
And all hell breaks loose
Water spouting and spraying the room, Garff spazzing

GARRF: Get off, get off, get off my waterbed!

It's hard to move quickly on those things

THE GIRL: Let's get out of here!

We pile out the window above his bed and Skinny Lynny falls
onto the ground on her chin
She's bleeding from her mouth
Luckily she has braces so her teeth stay in.

Garff Garret is still spazzing.

GARFF: They're going to kill me, my fucking parents are
fucking going to fucking kill me.

We pick Skinny Lynny up and race out of his yard and gallop

half-way home
Finally, finally stopping to breathe

THE GIRL: Oh my god oh my god! Who knows what he would have

ZABBY: The perv

SKINNY LYNNY: Totally

THE GIRL: I gotta get home.

SKINNY LYNNY: What about tonight? Want to get drunk?

My house, says Zabby, my parents will be gone.

Totally.

Music: 'The Rapper' The Jaggerz

Something's in the air
I can feel it when I walk across the threshold into my house
The betrayal.

MOTHER: Did you take something out of my scarf drawer?

THE GIRL: Why are you asking me Mom?

MOTHER: Because your sister

My sister Carrie-Ann, The Favorite, comes in. All I can do is
give her the silent killing look.

MOTHER: Your sister said she didn't take it.

THE GIRL: Of course you believe her.

MOTHER: Did you take it?

Take what, I say.

CARRIE-ANN: Mom?

MOTHER: Not now Carrie-Ann.

(to The Girl)

Why were you digging through my scarf drawer in the first
place missy?

THE GIRL: I was looking for a scarf?

MOTHER: Liar. You've never worn a scarf in your entire life.

THE GIRL: Well I was going to *start* but now forget it.

CARRIE-ANN: *Um, Mom?*

MOTHER: Be quiet Carrie-Ann. *What did you do with it?*

THE GIRL: I didn't find one I liked.

MOTHER: *The letter.* Where did you put the letter?

CARRIE-ANN: Mom. Mom. Mom. Mom. Mom.

THE GIRL: What *letter?*

CARRIE-ANN: Can I first say something?

MOTHER: Shut up for once Carrie-Ann!

I didn't take any letter, I say. What's the big deal about it any way?

MOTHER: Look at me. *Listen to me.* You have no idea, missy. That is my personal property! *My property.*

FATHER: What's going on?

CARRIE-ANN: Dad's home.

Mom, silence.

FATHER: What's all the racket about?

MOTHER: Nothing, it's about nothing.

FATHER: Is she stealing again?

Meaning me.

MOTHER: We've already talked about it.

FATHER: What did you steal this time?

MOTHER: Oh for godssake leave her alone, it's not important.

FATHER: It goddamn is Frida, it is important if she's stealing.

MOTHER: I don't want to talk about this now.

FATHER: When should we talk about it? Next week? Next year? When she's in juvy or jail or we've been sued in court? Because that's where all this is headed.

MOTHER: Stop talking like some kind of jackass.

FATHER: Go to hell.

MOTHER: You go to hell.

THE GIRL: How about I just go?

There she goes
My mother silently melted into a heap on the floor
A cataplectic fit. "Limp man syndrome", not the first time,
or the last. It's okay, you get used to it.

*FATHER gestures to incapacitated
Mother.*

FATHER: Did you or didn't you steal from your mother?

This was a grey area.

*Music: "Me and Mrs. Jones"
Billy Paul version*

See
The Favorite started having an affair about three months
earlier with a guy across the street.
He'd moved back in with his parents
So now they were doing it.
He was twenty-six she was fourteen
Yeah just
Yeah.
She didn't even know he was married until it kind of slipped
out one day like 'oh yeah'.
No one knew what was up with the wife
Anyway it was disgusting and I told her to stop and she tried
but they were 'in love'.

THE FAVORITE: You can't tell anyone. Please don't tell
anyone.

THE GIRL: Are you at least using something, birth control?

Her, silence.

THE GIRL: Oh my god Carrie-Ann.

THE FAVORITE: I don't have money for that.

THE GIRL: What are you thinking? Make *him* pay.

THE FAVORITE: He's living with his parents, he's between
jobs.

THE GIRL: And he's a jerk, hello. You need to use birth
control so you don't make a little jerk.

THE FAVORITE: He's not a jerk. You can't tell anyone promise?
I'd kill myself if mom and dad found out!

I was pretty sure they'd kill her first.
So when I happened upon an envelope stuffed with cash in
mom's scarf drawer...
What? I was looking for a scarf. Anyway why was she hiding so
much money?
I instinctively took some cash for Carrie-Ann so she could
buy whatever she needed to not have the jerk's baby.
But, and I swear this, there was no letter in the drawer.

THE GIRL: I didn't steal the letter Dad.

FATHER: What letter?

THE GIRL: There wasn't one!

FATHER: So you're telling me you didn't steal?

THE GIRL: No.

FATHER: No you didn't steal or no you're not telling me that?

THE GIRL: I'm confused.

FATHER: Are you a thief or are you a liar?

Me: I don't know.

FATHER: Get The Belt.

THE GIRL: It's not even fair!

FATHER: Go get The Belt.

THE GIRL: Dad no wait I'm sorry.

FATHER: You should have thought of that before you decided
to be a lying thief.

*Music: 'Don't Let the Sun Go Down
on Me' Elton John*

Like I said
The worst part of The Belt was the waiting
The no pants was pretty humiliating too.
I don't know how I was supposed to learn anything except
how afraid of my father I was in that moment.
So I waited
I tried to not think about Garff Garrett with his pants
around his ankles and his droopy checkered boxers
But I couldn't help it
I didn't know anymore who's shame I was feeling.

After it was over -- it seemed like my father was trying to

whip more than just the lying and stealing out of me
Like his wife's secrets and his daughter's shape-shifting and
His lack of control over any of us --
I didn't cry.
I wasn't going to give him that payoff.

FATHER: You're grounded. Go to your room. Now.

Me, silence
No grimacing no whimpering
Nothing.
I cried hard into my pillow under the blanket so no one could
hear me
I fell asleep.
When I woke up it was quiet downstairs, dark out.
Mom would be watching repeats
All in the Family, Good Times, Happy Days.
Dad would be in his basement office avoiding Mom.
The Favorite would be having phone sex with her married
boyfriend
Shit.
I couldn't stand it
I was dying!
I had to get out!

*Music: 'Smoke on the Water'
Deep Purple*

The first year we moved into the unincorporated area called
Cerro Vista Acres there was a fire.
Santa Ana winds blew some idiot's campfire into the massive
parched oaks and eucalyptus trees
Fire tore across regional parks housing tracts
flew up into the hills where we lived
Dad waking me in the middle of the night
Me so sleepy he had to carry me through the dark house.
Mom throwing photo albums, birth certificates, ashtrays,
World Book Encyclopedias, whatever she could carry
into a cardboard box.
We got to the car and the street was a surreal movie
All our neighbors driving by in their packed cars
everyone in pj's like us.
Horses trotting in and out of the dark
They were so beautiful and afraid
Horse-crazy me wanting to catch and ride them bareback,
one by one in the dark.
All that freedom and fear
What will happen to them?
Where will they go?
They'll come back, my dad says. They know where home is.
Down the road pigs and goats wandering on people's porches
All of it made magical by the flakes of white ash falling
from the night
I'm telling you this for a reason.

After the fire scare we had regular drills at our house. Being on the upper floor of an old shake-roof home my Dad thought we should have an alternate escape route. Dad installed rope ladders in the gabled window seats in our bedroom.

Very handy for a quick getaway
Which is exactly what I needed.
He never did get around to showing us just how you escape using a rope ladder.

The Favorite sidled in as I was pulling the rope out of the window seat.

THE FAVORITE: We had Sloppy Joe's for dinner. I brought you some. You're welcome. You can't sneak out the window, dork.

THE GIRL: Why, are you going to rag on me?

THE FAVORITE: I'm sorry.

THE GIRL: That I got grounded? That I got whipped because of doing something *for you*?

THE FAVORITE: You've never gone down that rope, you don't know how.

THE GIRL: Maybe if you yell louder Dad will come up and show me.

THE FAVORITE: I'm not kidding I'll tell.

THE GIRL: *So will I.*

A brief intense sister-to-sister staredown.

THE FAVORITE: He hasn't called me. I don't know what's going on with him.

THE GIRL: Um, he's married?

THE FAVORITE: He can't stand his wife it's awful. She doesn't *understand* him. He's going to divorce her, he has to wait for the right time to tell her.

THE GIRL: Interesting.

THE FAVORITE: It's sad. I feel bad for him.

THE GIRL: Oh my god Carrie-Ann.

THE FAVORITE: You don't know everything.

THE GIRL: He's a jerk, you're an idiot that much I know.

THE FAVORITE: You don't know. It's just so messed up.
I wish you understood. How he makes me feel. How nice
he is. How I can tell him anything and he doesn't
criticize or make fun or judge me. He makes me feel smart.
Unlike *some* people.

THE GIRL: Well that's just stupid.

THE FAVORITE: Because you don't understand and you might
never understand and I feel sorry for you. I wish you knew
what it's like.

I wish I knew what it was like, I thought.

THE FAVORITE: I wish he would call.
(*a beat*)

THE GIRL: It's okay. He's probably just busy.

THE FAVORITE: You think?

The rope ladder was more rope than ladder.
I was pretty confident The Favorite was right
They'd find my broken corpse on the driveway in the morning.
The thing is there weren't a lot of options.

THE GIRL: Make yourself useful Carrie-Ann, hold the
window up. *Higher*, I'm not a *lizard*.

She holds it up
I feed the rope out the window.
Soon enough the end that's bolted to the window seat is good
and tight.

THE GIRL: Okay wish me luck.

THE FAVORITE: Good luck you're going to die.

I crawl out the window onto the roof terrified.

THE FAVORITE: Don't look down whatever you do.

THE GIRL: *Shut up*.

THE FAVORITE: I can't watch.

Bracing against the house with every body part
I inch my torso
Fraction by fraction towards the dangling "ladder"
Belly to rooftop lowering my feet then legs then hips
Okay
Little splinters of shake roof piercing my thigh flesh
Okay
(*Loud whisper*)

THE GIRL: Are you there? *Carrie-Ann?*

THE FAVORITE: Should I get Dad?

THE GIRL: No no! Just tell me if anyone is coming upstairs.

I'm stupid, I shouldn't, I'm going to break my neck
But I can't stop myself
I can't go back
That's a kind of death.
I slide off the roof holding onto the rope for life
I snake my searching legs through the dark
Around the rope
Clutching the knots like stolen gems
Okay.

THE FAVORITE: I mean it I can't watch!

THE GIRL: Sssh! Just tell me if they're coming.

The window shuts

THE GIRL: *Carrie-Anne?*

Shit!

I worm my way down the rope
A prayer for each knot
for every second I don't fall to a gory death. Would they
even care?
I see the glow of the t.v. as I shinny down past the living
room
My mother's head bobbing in silent silhouette
Trying to stay awake.
Okay
I pass the broken hall window
The kitchen where The Favorite pads with a bowl of Neapolitan
ice cream?!
The dark stairs down to my father's basement office
Where he hides from my mother.
Okay
I'm on the ground.
Alive.
Sweet freedom!

I have no idea how I'll get back into my house
But mom and dad are never going to know I'm gone
Right?

Music: 'Superstition' Stevie Wonder

Even at this time of night Zabby's house is a menagerie.
They have seven Bull Mastiffs, two Great Danes, a Doberman
Pincher, and a hand-full of little mutts
'Wall dogs' Dean calls them.

DEAN: On account of if they get in my way I kick them against the wall. Stupid yapping mutts.

Zabby's dad was a former Mr. Universe or something
Their garage was filled with Rube Goldberg-type contraptions
that Dean worked out on every day
It was like a shiny torture chamber.
Her dad was just a flabby fifty-year old guy by then
But Dean had plans to be a famous stunt-man. He was going to
change his name to *Dean James*.

DEAN: Get it? Get it?

SKINNY LYNNY: Get what?

DEAN: Are you girls on your period or just stupid? James
Dean was a rich good-looking movie star who died in a
high-speed car crash.

ZABBY: You're not rich or good-looking but you can
die in a high-speed car crash if you want.

DEAN: Get the fuck out of here. You're stinking the place
up with your girl smell.

Dean never makes it as a stunt-man
famous or otherwise.
He was an extra on a movie once.
I can't remember which one.
Anyway Dean was always working on his biceps or washboard
belly.
Don-o, the middle brother, on the other hand
He was more interested in cars than anything.
Half a dozen crappy vehicles littered their yard and he
usually had his head under one of them.
I'd walk past and he'd say hi and I'd think it was the car
talking
It was just surprising.
Anyway.
When I finally showed up at her house Zabby was sitting cross-
legged on the kitchen counter throwing slices of bologna to
which ever dog grabbed it the fastest.
I kind of thought she and Skinny Lynny would be dead drunk by
now.

THE GIRL: What's up? Where's the party?

ZABBY: My parents got suspicious. They said the Jack Daniels
tasted watery. They locked up the bar. We need
reinforcements.

What Zabby's parents hadn't yet discovered was that most of
their hard liquor had been replaced with water, Coca-cola,
Kool-aid, or rubbing alcohol.

SKINNY LYNNY: Do you think they know it was us?

I asked Zabby what she thought we should do.

ZABBY: We should do the responsible thing and rip-off some booze from the liquor store to replace what we drank.

THE GIRL: How are we supposed to do that? We can't walk to the liquor store.

ZABBY: If we had a car.

SKINNY LYNNY: If we had a *car*.

THE GIRL: *We can't drive.*

ZABBY: If we had a car we could.

SKINNY LYNNY: We could.

THE GIRL: That's crazy. You're both crazy.

This is a good time to tell you that I had a really bad crush on Don-o.

I never told *anyone* that so you can't say *anything*.

So okay Don-o.

He was a little insane

Not like deranged but nutty.

He had this secret glee, as if he had just put a potato in someone's tail pipe and was waiting for it to blow.

You know gleeful?

He was kinder than mean Dean

And more appealing in every way

Everything about him was better

Except he had a girlfriend

Tina White.

(she makes a sour face)

But he always said hi to me

And he would give me The Look.

Like "I can't say anything 'cause I'm in a stupid relationship but I think you're probably someone special"

That kind of look.

So I kept my feelings to myself

For the time being.

Music: 'Brand New Key' Melanie

THE GIRL: Here he comes.

DON-O: How am I supposed to work on cars without tools?
Have you seen Dean-the-dick? He hid my tool chest.

ZABBY: Hey Don-o.

DON-O: What are you girls up to?

ZABBY: Nothing.

SKINNY LYNNY: Nothing.

THE GIRL: Hi.

ZABBY: Don-o can you do us a solid?

DON-O: No more money Zabby, you already owe me twenty bucks.

ZABBY: Not money.

SKINNY LYNNY: Yeah, not money.

ZABBY: We need a car.

Don-o laughs.

DON-O: A car. Are you kidding?

Zabby laughs.

ZABBY: Yeah no I'm not kidding.

SKINNY LYNNY: Do any of your, like...

DON-O: Cars in the yard?

SKINNY LYNNY: Do they actually work?

DON-O: Do you know how to drive?

SKINNY LYNNY: No.

THE GIRL: I do.

I flat-out lied.

DON-O: Yeah? Stick?

THE GIRL: No not a stick no.

DON-O: Just automatic?

THE GIRL: Pretty much yeah just automatic.

DON-O: Too bad. Mine are all manual.

He's giving me The Look.

Time slows way down

I wish everyone was gone but me and Don-o in one of his

stick shifts

I wish Tina White would die peacefully in her sleep.

DON-O: But Dean's car.

ZABBY: What about Dean's car?

Dean's is an automatic says Don-o.

And Zabby says Yeah but.

He's not using it says Don-o.

SKINNY LYNNY: Wait Dean's car?

I know where he hides the key says Don-o

THE GIRL: Where's Dean?

DON-O: Fucker's out. Just be back before he is. You said
you could drive.

THE GIRL: *Dean's* car?

ZABBY: He would kill us.

SKINNY LYNNY: He would kill us til we were dead.

It's a scientific fact

The frontal lobes-- the part of the brain involved in
decision-making and insight

They aren't fully connected until you're in your twenties
So the adolescent brain isn't completely formed, particularly
in the regions that govern impulse control, risk assessment,
and moral reasoning.

This explains why I said what I said.

THE GIRL: *Let's drive.*

Music: 'Black Dog' Led Zepplin

I crawl in the passenger side because remember the driver's
door is busted

I scoot across the wide bench

Don-o climbs in after me

And just like that I'm sitting next to him

My hands on the wheel, nearer to him than I've ever been
Except in my teenage dreams.

Why do I feel like I'm naked?

I keep looking at my clothes to make sure they're on.

*Music: 'Midnight at the Oasis'
Maria Muldar*

DON-O: So.

THE GIRL: Um.

DON-O: What do you want to do?

He's giving me The Look.
I'm trying to hold in my sweat.

THE GIRL: I don't know. Just. Um.

DON-O: You know how to drive right?

THE GIRL: Oh. Yeah.

Stupid.

THE GIRL: Where's the place where you poke in the key?

DON-O: The ignition's on the other side.

THE GIRL: Oh. I'm left-handed so everything always seems
backwards.

DON-O: I'm left-handed.

THE GIRL: Hey twins.

So stupid.

DON-O: Do you want the seat forward?

THE GIRL: No.

DON-O: So your feet touch the pedals?

THE GIRL: I mean sure. Where's the

But Don-o is
He's leaning into me.
He's
Not talking
Reaching
No
Pressing
Against me.
Oh my god
This is happening
It's happening
I'm
Holding my breath
Do it do it do it
A boy has never touched me, you know, "there"
Or anywhere

Oh god.

Relax

I close my eyes

Breathe

I open my legs.

He reaches

Suddenly

Don-o releases a lever, the seat jerks forward, and I am thrust toward the windshield.

Oh.

I'm face to face with the wheel.

DON-O: You're set. Have fun. Be good.

The passenger door slams

Just like that he is gone.

And we are driving.

*Music: 'Dancing in the Moonlight'
King Harvest*

I am driving!

THE GIRL: Dear God holy shit. Okay shut up!

Zabby and Skinny Lynny shouting directions and encouragement

The car seems too big the seats too deep.

We drive down the street

Down the boulevard on our way to

THE GIRL: Where are we going?

SKINNY LYNNY: Tastee Freeze!

ZABBY: Not Tastee Freeze. First the liquor store.

THE GIRL: Just tell me where to turn.

SKINNY LYNNY: Here turn here

ZABBY: No keep going

THE GIRL: You guys

SKINNY LYNNY: You almost hit that policeman!

THE GIRL: What policeman?

ZABBY: She's kidding.

SKINNY LYNNY: Turn the radio on!

THE GIRL: Where are we going? Which way?

ZABBY: Turn here turn here.

Music: 'Shambala' 3-Dog Night

SKINNY LYNNY: I love this song!

We are powered by fear and guile and a contact high
and it feels amazing
The freedom, the power, the electric surge.
The world has cracked open for us this night
and we will never be thirteen again!

The Girl dances to the music.

Miraculously no one dies
Except the car.

ZABBY: Piece of shit car!

We've gone less than five miles and we are screwed.

ZABBY: Great now what do we do?

SKINNY LYNNY: Walk to Tastee Freeze?

ZABBY: We're not going to Tastee Freeze, Lynny! Dean's going
to kill me. He's going to kill me.

Maybe Don-o can fix it before Dean kills you I say.
Maybe Don-o will confess his love for me.

Anyway

We start walking
Off the beaten path in a rural suburb of the suburbs
Dead quiet and pitch black.

SKINNY LYNNY: You guys if we walk over the hills
it's shorter you guys.

THE GIRL: No way we'd have to cut across Morningstar.

SKINNY LYNNY: Who cares it's faster.

THE GIRL: It's *trespassing* Lynny.

ZABBY: I heard they have an electrified fence.

THE GIRL: I heard that too.

SKINNY LYNNY: Electrified? Like we would be fried?

Morningstar is Morningstar Ranch
a low-end horse boarding property notorious mainly because
we've never actually been there
We've only heard about it.
So there's stories

The kind you make up about the shuttered house at the end of the street?

Only Morningstar is at the end of nothing.

THE GIRL: What are you doing Lynny?

She's running straight at the barb-wire fence.

ZABBY: Lynny!

SKINNY LYNNY: You guys it's not electrified. Hey look
I'm bleeding.

This does not seem like a good plan to me.

THE GIRL: What if they catch us on their property?

They're not going to catch us, climb through says Zabby
She holds the wires up.
I climb through.

SKINNY LYNNY: Where are the horses?

ZABBY: We don't have time nut-head.

SKINNY LYNNY: Look look!

Skinny Lynny's jumping up and down.

THE GIRL: Sssh!

SKINNY LYNNY (*whisper*): They're pretty.

ZABBY (*whisper*): Ride one. I dare you.

No way I say. They're probably wild.

SKINNY LYNNY: They're looking at us. What can we give them?

ZABBY: We have to get the car fixed before Dean kills us.
Come on, let's go.

THE GIRL: Let's go Lynny.

But Skinny Lynny has pulled up a fistful of grass and is running across the pasture straight at a bunch of dark horses.

SKINNY LYNNY: Here horsies!

THE GIRL (*whisper*): Shut up!

ZABBY (*laughing*): Lynny you idiot!

THE GIRL: She's nuts.

I run after her light-footed
Laughing
a sprite, a unicorn
Cantering across the dirt and grass
But I can't see Skinny Lynny.

THE GIRL (*loud whisper*): Lynny?

No answer, bad sign.
Where is she?

THE GIRL: Lynny?

SKINNY LYNNY: I tripped.

Over what? I say.
Silence.

ZABBY: Lynny come on, cut it out.

THE GIRL: Are you okay?
Silence.

ZABBY: Quit messing around Lynny, we gotta go.

Then Skinny Lynny screams.
She screams so loud it sounds like a slasher movie.
She's gotta be faking it.

THE GIRL: Lynny what the hell?

ZABBY: Lynny you idiot they're gonna find us!

Next thing we're on the ground, fallen beside our cowering
friend. All of us tripped over it.

ZABBY: What is that?

SKINNY LYNNY: A horse. A dead horse.

THE GIRL: No no no.

Bloated stiff stinking
a few days gone
A cougar attack, an accident, it happens.
But this.
This is different.
The horse's front legs are bound at the fetlocks by wire.
You don't do that unless you're trying to keep it from moving
And you *never* use wire.
This was no accident.

THE GIRL: They killed it.

SKINNY LYNNY: Why? Why kill a horse? Who does that?

ZABBY: That's sick.

SKINNY LYNNY: Poor horsie.

ZABBY: Stop looking at it.

THE GIRL: He's looking at me.

SKINNY LYNNY: He's laying there staring at us like a dead horse. *A horse with no name.*

ZABBY: We should get out of here. We should run like hell.

We get up but now a strange thing is happening.
Some of the other horses are coming over
They form a circle around us, twenty pair of sullen brown eyes.
Beautiful breathing beasts calmly staring us down
Witnesses
They know we know.

ZABBY: Come on let's go.

THE GIRL: No. We can't leave them.

ZABBY: What are you even talking about?

THE GIRL: I don't know, I want to
catch them and get them out of here.

SKINNY LYNNY: What? Wait how?

THE GIRL: I don't know, just go up to them like

The Girl puts out an open palm and takes a few steps forward.

But they're smart horses
They don't trust us.
We're not going to bind their legs leave them to die but how do they know that?
They turn
The group of them trot off into the dark.

Music: 'Horse With No Name' America

We sing it the entire two hours it takes us to walk over the hills, through backyards and down our street, back to Zabby's house.

Don-o laughs.

DON-O: You walked all that way? It was probably just the fuel line.

Don-o agreed to retrieve the car
I like to think he did it because he didn't want us to get
tortured by Dean and because he secretly loved me.
He charged us twenty bucks that we didn't have.

I run home
Crawl through the broken hall window just before dawn
House is quiet
Still.
Good.
I drink Sparkletts from a Dixie cup.
Upstairs I throw my filthy self on my bed
I'm beat, my heart hurts
And crap we didn't replace the liquor!
But I can't stop thinking about that dead horse
Bloated and stiff, it's legs wired together
How it must have struggled before it died
Separated from the others
Helpless and bound
All it was trying to do was break away.

I have a new mission in life:
Save the Morningstar horses.
Then my bedroom door swings open.

MOTHER: Where in god's name have you been missy?

THE GIRL: *Mom! Hello, privacy?*

MOTHER: You could have been dead. You could be lying dead
in the road right now.

THE GIRL: I'm not, sorry.

THE MOTHER: You could have been killed or raped. Or
mutilated.

THE GIRL: I'm sorry Mom. Sorry. Does Dad know I snuck out?

THE MOTHER: No. Your father went out.

THE GIRL: What? Where?

THE MOTHER: For ice cream, what do you think? I want to talk
to you about your sister.

Oh no please no.

THE MOTHER: Does Carrie-Ann talk to you? Do you two talk?