

The Cindy Variations
by
Patterson Dempsey Valdez
starring
Cindy Peshek
as herself
a comedy by

Evan Guilford-Blake

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The Cindy Variations

Cast (3w, 3m)

Cindy (See casting note below) - 26, but she looks much younger. She is short (no taller than 5') and flat-chested; what she lacks in size, however, she *more* than makes up in energy. The actress must sing at least a little, and do some basic tap and jazz.

Cindy's Mom (See casting note below)/Tap Dance Teacher/Singing Teacher/Softball Coach/Director 1/Offstage Voice 2/Maryanne

Cindy's Dad (See casting note below)/Bobby's Voice/Jazz Dance Teacher/Reviewer/Waiter/Carlo's Father's Voice/Buzzard Voiceover/Director 3/Hank/Chase

Jeana (JEAN-uh) - Cindy's best friend (Hispanic-American)/Jessica's voice/Umpire/Elva/Director 4/ Leanne/Offstage Voice 4

Andy (Euro-American)/Larry/Jeffrey/Gareth/Demetrius/Carlo**/Kevin/Blaise/Timothy/Cory**/Peter/Offstage Voice 1/Bradley/Lucas. The actor should be at least six inches taller than Cindy.

Desmond (African-American)/Kaz/Antonio*/Reynaldo/Director 2/Street Vendor/Offstage Voice 3/Patterson. The actor should be at least six inches taller than Cindy.

The setting: Here and now and then and there

*Antonio can play a portable instrument, such as the accordion, concertina, violin or guitar; or he may mime playing the instrument to recorded music.

**The actor playing Carlo and Cory must play one or more instruments at least moderately well, and sing and dance at least a little.

A note on the casting: Cindy and her family, as written, are Euro-American. There is no reason, however, she can't be half- (or entirely) Asian, Hispanic, Native American or Middle Eastern. Simply change her last name (and the play's subtitle), if necessary, to any appropriate ethnic surname, and cast one or both of her parents from the same ethnic background.

If an African-American actress is cast as Cindy, again, simply cast both her parents as African-American *and* reverse the races of the actors who play Andy et al. and Desmond et al.: i.e., Andy et al. should be African-American, and Desmond et al. should be Euro-American. *Also:* The two lines (on pages 10 and 11) that refer to Desmond being black should be changed to indicate Desmond is white.

A note on the text: When the words "Gasp" and "Sigh" appear in the text as part of the dialogue, they are to be *spoken*. When they appear as part of the stage directions (always in parentheses) they are to be verbalized as the sounds.

And: The play is nominally set in Atlanta. It, can however, be reset in any moderately large to large city (except New York, Chicago or Los Angeles). Please see the notes at the end of the script regarding line changes to accommodate setting the play elsewhere.

The Cindy Variations
synopsis

The Cindy Variations is a 95-minute, two-act comedy about a young woman's coming of age and her search for love, happiness, professional recognition and, well -- love. The play uses a multi-ethnic cast of six (3w, 3m) to play about 45 roles, requires virtually no set and utilizes generally contemporary costumes. There are no unusual technical specifications; simple projections are suggested but lobby cards or the like may be substituted. Its language is very mild and suitable for any community, although the piece is recommended for mature audiences.

The play is narrated by CINDY PESHEK (f: 26) whose story we follow from age eight to the present day. Cindy wants two things out of life: to be taken seriously as an actress and a person, and to be loved. Her problems are two-fold: She is tiny -- five feet tall or shorter -- with a childlike face -- and body: She is "underdeveloped," about which she is extremely self-conscious. That leads to her second problem: a lack of self-confidence where her relationships with boys (as a girl) and men (as she matures) are concerned. How she learns to overcome that lack, to accept herself and to acknowledge she *can* be loved, is the play's throughline.

Each member of the balance of the cast plays multiple roles. They include Cindy's parents, her best friends, the boys/men with whom she seeks to have (and, in a few cases, has) romances; and various others who figure in her pursuits: teachers, stage directors, friends and acquaintances.

Development/Award history

READINGS: Sundog Theatre (Staten Island, NY) (2015)
John Tyler Community College (Richmond, VA)
SART (Mars Hill, NC) ScriptFest (2013)
Rose of Athens Theatre (Athens, GA) (2012)
Chicago Dramatists (2011)

HONORS: Selected for SART ScriptFest (2013)
Third Place, Ohio State University-Newark Competition (2013)
Semi-finalist, 2013 Centre Stage (Greenville, SC) New Play competition

ACT I: AT RISE: CINDY is discovered.

CINDY

Hi! ... It's okay, folks, you can say "Hi" back. This is what they call "interactive theatre." So, one more time: Hi!

(Get response)

Good! Well, now. I'm Cindy Peshek and you're here to see a play about me. I mean, Patterson *did* call this "*The Cindy Variations*," and sometimes?, it's really hard to just - tell *everybody* *everything* about me, but it's about some other stuff too, like love, and growing up, and being unhappy. And becoming happy. Oh -- it's about sex, too.

BALANCE OF ENSEMBLE (OFFSTAGE)

Gasp!

CINDY

Hey! Work with me here, okay?

BALANCE OF ENSEMBLE (OFFSTAGE)

Okay.

CINDY

Thanks. Anyway, the first thing you should know about me is I'm twenty-six and three-quarters years old. That means, every day, I'm edging closer to --

(With a cringe)

thirty! I know I know I know: I look like I'm twelve, or fourteen maybe, on a good day when I'm wearing makeup and something that shows off my boobs and if you dare say *What boobs?* I might have to kill you. I may *look* childlike and innocent, but I'm not. We'll get to that.

MOM (OFFSTAGE)

Cynthia!

CINDY

Sorry Mom. And I hate being called Cynthia.

MOM (OFFSTAGE)

It is your name.

CINDY

(Sighs)

I know. -- Anyway. The second thing? That's: I want to be loved. Duh: Who doesn't. I mean, ninety-nine percent of the world's songs and books and movies and plays, they're *about* people who want to be loved. What the world needs now and all that jazz? I mean, I've always wanted to make someone happy and someone to make me happy. "Him." Someone who'll love me just the way I am. Button-size boobs and all.

So I'm not unique. In that respect, anyway. But -- and this sounds ironic as heck -- like every one of you... I *am* unique. In my own way. And I'm lovable. Honest.

CINDY (cont.)

(PROJECTION: HOW I LEARNED
ABOUT "LOVE")

So, okay: This first part is called "How I Learned About 'Love.'"

My Mom used to adore soap operas. It's her deepest, darkest secret. Sorry, Mom, I know you wish I hadn't made that public knowledge, but I'm trying to be perfectly truthful. Think of this as a live-before-your-eyes blog complete with audio. A Facebook wall without the privacy concerns. YouTube without cats.

But, soap operas: For those of you who have never watched one (yeah, right!), they're mostly love stories -- convoluted love stories in which, like, Jessica loves Ralph but Ralph was in an accident -- three years ago -- and says he can't remember anything except his first name, not even that he's married to Ernestine who wants a divorce because it's been three years and she's fallen in love with Herb but neither of them know *he* is really her twin brother from whom she was separated when Herb was stolen from the hospital where they were born and besides, Herb is in love with Jane but Jane can't even talk to him because *she* was kidnapped by aliens and the experience left her in a Zombie-like trance and Bobby, her handsome and sexy lawyer boyfriend, was *so* worried about her that he drove his motorcycle off a cliff and spent a month in the hospital which is when he met Jessica who was there visiting Ralph, and *now* Bobby's trying to convince Jessica to forget Ralph and become his partner in bed and in his law practice.

You've seen that episode, right?

(MOM enters.)

Anyway, when I was eight or nine, I used to sit in front of the TV with Mom, after school -- that's her by the way. Say "Hi" to the audience, Mom.

MOM

(Waves. Embarrassedly)

Hi.

CINDY

We sat in front of the television and, together, we'd watch, each of us gripped by the passions in our own way...

BOBBY (VOICEOVER)

... I'm telling you, Jessica: Ralph is married.

JESSICA (VOICEOVER)

Oh? And just how do you know that, Bobby?

(A chord of melodramatic MUSIC.)

BOBBY (VOICEOVER)

A woman came to see me today. About getting a divorce from a man who "deserted" her -- three years ago. And he fits Ralph's description to a "T," all the way down to the clover-shaped birthmark on the back of his left hand.

(A chord of melodramatic MUSIC.)

JESSICA (VOICEOVER)

The

MOM

Leave him alone, Jessica! Leave him alone. He's no good for you!

CINDY

Mom?

MOM

Yes, Cindy?

CINDY

Doesn't Bobby love her?

MOM

No. He's just pretending like he does.

CINDY

(Puzzled)

Oh.

BOBBY (VOICEOVER)

I love you, Jessica. Let me ...

CINDY

Why?

MOM

Because men - don't always mean wh---
(SHE gasps as:)

JESSICA (VOICEOVER)

No, Bobby, don't!

(A chord of melodramatic MUSIC.)

MOM

Jessica!

CINDY

What's he doing now?

MOM

(Horrified)
Nothing!

CINDY

Oh. Jeana Rodriguez told me, when you do “nothing?,”
(SHE points to the TV)

(A chord of melodramatic MUSIC.)

it means you love the other person and he loves you. She says *her* Mom and Dad do “nothing”
all the time.

JESSICA (VOICEOVER)

(A breathy sigh)
Oh, Bobby ...

(MOM looks at CINDY. Then SHE turns off
the TV.)

MOM

Cynthia.

CINDY

I hate being called Cynthia, Mom.

MOM

It is your name. Now: Sit.

CINDY

I *am* sitting. What is it?

MOM

We have to have a talk.

(LIGHTS change.)

CINDY

And so: I learned about love.

(PROJECTION: THE FIRST TIME I FELL
IN LOVE)

This is called “The First Time I Fell in Love.”

Y’ know, I don’t care if it’s boy meets boy or girl meets girl or girl meets boy or girl meets
gorilla, people -- like me -- want to fall in love, and they want to be fallen in love with. The first
one’s easy: I’m twenty-six and three-quarters years old --

(With the cringe)

thirty is just around the corner! -- and I’ve fallen in love, oh, I don’t know, ten, twelve, forty-six
times. The *second* one’s the pain in the butt. I can count on one hand -- okay, two fingers -- the

number of times someone's fallen in love with me.

CINDY (cont.)

Look at me

(Makes "cutesy")

-- how can you *not* fall in love with that: I'm pretty, I'm confident (but not *overconfident*), I'm smart -- okay, maybe a little smart-alecky; I'm independent, a great cook, good company. And I'm sexy. Especially when I'm wearing makeup and something that shows off my boobs and if you dare say *What boobs?* I might have to kill you. Oh, just FYI? I haven't always been this way: For a long time, I was, well, scared. And insecure. About everything, but especially about saying what I felt. Especially around guys. *About* guys. *To* guys. Y' know, just ... insecure.

Anyway ...

I live here now, but I grew up in Toledo -- that's in Ohio -- and I was in seventh grade at Robert Taft Junior High School -- twelve and a half years old -- the first time I fell in love. My darling was named Andy Gillickson.

(LIGHTS rise on ANDY. HE is 14.)

He was tall -- well, everybody's tall, compared to me; everybody always *has* been -- but Andy was tall for someone in junior high, and handsome and clean cut, and I never heard him swear; and he was older -- more than a whole year -- *and* the captain of the eighth grade basketball team. And he was

(Sighs)

dreamy. The strong, silent type. I admired him from afar but I never spoke to him, until one day ...

(SHE and ANDY cross in opposite directions, and bump into each other.)

CINDY
Oh -- I'm sorry, I didn't ---
I mean, I ---

(TOGETHER)

ANDY
Hey! Watch where you're goin'.
(*Sotto voce*)
Dwarf.

Oh. Andy. Hi.

CINDY

Oh. Hi.

ANDY

I'm Cindy. Peshek.

CINDY

Oh. Right. I'm Andy Gillickson.

ANDY

I know. I've, um, seen you. Play. Basketball.

CINDY

Oh. Yeah. ANDY

And I, um, I saw you. Today. In gym class. CINDY

Oh. ANDY

Actually, it was in the hall, right before gym class. My gym class, I mean. You were coming out. Of the boys' locker room. CINDY

Oh. Yeah. ANDY

And I was going *into* the *girls'* locker room. CINDY

Oh. ANDY

I have gym fourth period. Yours is third. So we sort of - pass each other. Nearly every day. CINDY

Oh. Right. ANDY

(With a laugh)
Like ships in the night. CINDY

Yeah. Ships. ANDY

(A BELL RINGS.)

Well: I guess I have to get going. From break of dawn till setting sun, a schoolgirl's work is never done! I'm headed to English. We're studying poetry. I 'specially love the Cavaliers. CINDY

Yeah, they're really cool. ANDY

You like them too? Oh, that's --- CINDY

ANDY

Like them? You *know* it! Man, I saw them *wipe* the Bulls last year. Terrell scored 46. Like ...
(HE demonstrates a jump shot.)

CINDY

Oh. Yeah. Go, Terrell.

ANDY

He's really cool.

CINDY

Uh -- uh-huh. So, um, where are *you* going?

ANDY

(With distaste)

Math.

(With enthusiasm)

But then I got basketball practice.

(HE takes a jump shot.)

CINDY

Oh. I'm going to the library after English. Got a history paper due Friday.

ANDY

Right. History.

CINDY

Well, have fun. Say hello to Terrell.

ANDY

Huh?

(LIGHTS down on ANDY.)

CINDY

I have to admit: To this day? I have no idea who Terrell was. Is. Might have been. And when I asked Andy: Where are you going?, I was kind of hoping he'd treat it as a sort of metaphysical question. I mean:

(LIGHTS up on ANDY.)

So, um, where are *you* going?

ANDY

I'm *going* to become a doctor and find a cure for some rare disease and thereby make the world a better place for future generations, and then I'm going to move to the Amazon rain forest and build a house out of wood and stone and live there and grow my own food and write immortal poetry. Would you care to join me on my journey?

CINDY

Sigh.

(LIGHTS down on ANDY.)

And we'd go off, hand in hand, to explore the wonders of the world. Still, he *had* talked to me: At least he knew who I was. But, the next day? Jeana Rodriguez -- my best friend -- who was a month younger than me and already *had* boobs, like this

CINDY (cont.)

(SHE indicates: a sizable chest.)

-- told me she heard him tell another boy:

(LIGHTS up on ANDY.)

ANDY

This weird girl, I dunno, she's like *ten* -- I mean, boobs like this

(HE displays the flat of his hand. CINDY winces.)

-- she came up to me and like, she starts *talkin'* to me. Like I knew who she was.

(Shrugs)

I mean, she's gotta be in like fourth grade. *Weird*. Even if she likes the Cavaliers.

(LIGHTS down on ANDY.)

CINDY

But, for those twenty-four hours between what I dreamed of happening and what I found out *had* happened, I was in love. Oh, sure: It was "just" a crush but to an adolescent girl, a crush is love that's every bit as real as Scarlett's feelings for Rhett.

(LIGHTS up on ANDY.)

ANDY

Frankly, my dear, I don't give a darn.

(LIGHTS down on ANDY.)

CINDY

And so, my first time in love was my first disappointment in love. *But*: I did not give up! I mean, faint heart ne'er won fair swain.

However... We'll get back to my love life in a minute, but lest *you* think boys were all *I* thought about...

This was about the time I discovered theatre. I was very mature for my age, so Mom took me to see a play called *Some Unfinished Chaos*, about this writer and this girl named Jessamyn who wants to *be* a writer who falls in love with him? And, even though I was thirteen, I wanted to play Jessamyn *so* badly I went out and bought the script and learned one of her monologues -- all five minutes of it!

Mom also took me to see *42nd Street*, where I discovered tap dancing. And, six months later...

(LIGHTS change.)

TAP DANCE TEACHER

Thank you for coming to our recital. Our first performance this afternoon will be *Swanee River*, danced by Cindy Peshek, who just turned fourteen and is in the eighth grade at Robert Taft Junior High School. Cindy?

(CINDY does a simplified tap routine to an abbreviated recorded version of *Swanee River*. When SHE finishes, there is the SOUND of applause. SHE bows.)

CINDY

When everybody clapped?, I felt ten feet tall! Eat your heart out, Ann Miller!

(LIGHTS change.)

So... I took tap lessons, and I read and reread *Some Unfinished Chaos* and recited “my” monologue for anyone who’d listen. And I went to school and studied and daydreamed. And then I met Desmond Horne.

There were plenty of boys who’d made my heart skip a beat in between, but the next time I fell in honest-to-goodness love I was fifteen. That boy was Desmond Horne. He was wow-gorgeous, and he was spending a year in Toledo with an aunt and uncle so he could learn something about America; he’d spent the year before with another aunt and uncle in England, so he could learn something about Europe. His parents were still in South Africa: His father was some high muckety-muck in the foreign minister’s office and Des was being groomed to follow in his footsteps. He seemed kind of shy at first, but he was funny, and he was intellectual, and he was tall (there’s a pattern here). Actually, Desmond came up to me -- and said, in this wonderful accent

DESMOND

I noticed you were reading a book of Alan Paton’s stories.

CINDY

Yeah.

DESMOND

I read them a couple of years ago, almost all of his work, actually. He’s rather a hero among my mates at home.

CINDY

Yeah? I really like them.

DESMOND

I know this will seem a bit, well, abrupt, but would you like to have a cup of tea after school -- or,

(With a laugh)

I guess, coffee or Coca Cola is what Americans drink, actually -- and talk about them?

CINDY

Yeah!

So we did, and that led to Des asking me on a date -- my first real one.

DESMOND

I'm sixteen.

CINDY

Another older man. Sigh.

DESMOND

And I have my driver's license. My father arranged a car for me to use while I'm in America.

CINDY

Freedom! Oh, wow!

DESMOND

Actually, it felt strange, having to take a test to get one here. At home?, most boys learn to drive when they're tall enough to see over the wheel. I was eleven.

CINDY

I got my license when I was sixteen. If I'd had to wait until I was tall enough to see over the wheel I still wouldn't have it. Anyway, Des was from Johannesburg. And, as you probably noticed, he was black.

(LIGHTS rise on MOM and DAD.)

MOM and DAD

He's what?

CINDY

Um -- black?

MOM and DAD

And you've got a *date* with him?!

CINDY

Um, yeah.

MOM and DAD

(THEY look at each other.)

... That's nice.

CINDY

My parents were, *are*, open-minded, unprejudiced people. Which, as it turns out, is *really* fortunate.

MOM

Have a good time, sweetheart,

DAD

and don't stay out too late.

MOM and DAD

And be careful!

(LIGHTS down on MOM and DAD.)

CINDY

And so -- of course -- I was thrilled to be dating the mystique-laden Desmond Horne. We had study dates, coffee dates. Once in a while we went to a movie -- a drive-in when it got warm enough -- where we held hands,

(SOUND: The dialogue track to a teen movie of a dozen years ago. CINDY and DESMOND hold hands.)

he put his arm around me,

(HE puts his arm around her.)

and, finally, very carefully...

(Slowly and tentatively, HE leans into her which ends in a soft, gentle kiss.)

(To him)

Oh, wow...

(MUSIC from the soundtrack swells. SHE leans in and kisses him again, still gently. THEY break and smile.)

DESMOND

That was so nice. And *you're* so nice.

CINDY

It was my first kiss. I was, absolutely, head-spinningly, in love.

(MUSIC climaxes and ends. LIGHTS change.)

This went on for almost three months until the glorious Saturday night of Memorial Day weekend, when Jeana's parents were out of town and I had arranged a sleepover at her house. Des and I met at our usual rendezvous, The Hatch, a little out of the way coffee bar. There was music, and dim lights and a booth way in the back where we could sit in the dark and talk and hug and hug and talk and hug...

(LIGHTS dim. Soft rock MUSIC up. DESMOND and CINDY hold hands.)

(Quietly romantic)

This is so - nice. Being with you like this.

DESMOND

(With teenage boy angst)

Cindy, I ...

(HE strokes her cheek.)

CINDY

(SHE holds his hand
against her cheek)

Oh, Des. I... too.

DESMOND

Too?

CINDY

I know we haven't known each other very long, and I know we're young, and I know we're from different worlds, and I know there are so many obstacles we'll have to overcome, but you're so ... special to me.

(SHE strokes his cheek.)

DESMOND

Cindy, I...

(HE holds her hand
against his cheek)

CINDY

I know it's hard to say, especially since it's only been three months, but this is the longest I've ever been with anyone, and I, um, - *do*. I mean, I feel so - different about you than ---

DESMOND

Cindy, I...

CINDY

Yeah.

DESMOND

No, I ...

CINDY

Yeah. Des, really, I do l...ike you.

DESMOND

(HE releases her hand
and pulls his away)

I can't see you anymore. My father won't permit it. He doesn't want me getting involved with a - an American girl.

CINDY

(Miserably)

Yeah.

So I did exactly what a fifteen year-old girl who's been dumped does: I cried all night on my best friend's shoulder.

(LIGHTS rise on JEANA.)

(Weeping copiously)
He doesn't love me, Jeana.

JEANA

I'm so sorry, sweetie.

CINDY

I'll never, *ever*, meet anyone like him again.

JEANA

Yes you will. You're only fifteen.

CINDY

No. My whole life is over!

JEANA

You really think so?

CINDY

Uh-huh. I might as well jump in the river and drown.

JEANA

We live in Toledo, Cindy. We don't *have* a river.

CINDY

Whatever.
(SHE bursts into sobs again)

JEANA

Cindy?

CINDY

Yeah?

JEANA

I know I'm not Desmond, but *I* love you.

CINDY

I know.

JEANA

And so do your Mom and Dad.

CINDY
I know.

JEANA
And a whole lot of other people.
(CINDY nods amid sniffles)

CINDY
(Looking down and crying)
But they're not Desmond!

JEANA
Hey!
(SHE lifts CINDY's head)
He's just a guy. You *will* meet somebody else. I always do. True?

CINDY
I guess.

JEANA
Come on, sweetie. You need some chocolate. Here.
(SHE hands CINDY candy)
Now: Eat every bite. There's a lot more where that came from.

CINDY
Yeah ... Jeana?

JEANA
Mmh?

CINDY
I'm really gonna be all right?

JEANA
Indeed you are.

CINDY
'Deed?

JEANA
'Deed! And I'm gonna take care of you every minute *till* you are.

CINDY
Thanks.

JEANA
Now put on your pjs. We've got some serious chocolate-ing to do before we go to bed.

CINDY

We do? But you don't eat chocolate unless ... Ohmygosh!

JEANA

Yeah. Derek dumped *me* today.

CINDY

He did! And you've been --- What a ---

JEANA

Yeah. So don't hog the whole box, okay?

(LIGHTS change.)

CINDY

I must've gained five pounds in the next week, but I *did* get over - him. Sort of. I mean, I don't think anybody ever gets completely over their first truly madly deeply.

(DESMOND crosses the stage and waves, unhappily, to CINDY.)

At least it was the end of the school year, and Des went back to South Africa. But I kept a picture of him next to my bed the whole summer. Hoping he'd write and say he'd made this huge mistake, he was coming back to Toledo, never mind *what* his father wanted. ... But he didn't.

(SHE wipes away a tear)

(PROJECTION: HEARTACHES BY THE NUMBER. The song plays in the background.)

Anyway... There was this song Mom used to listen to: *Heartaches by the Number*. That's what I had, all through high school. Desmond was number one. Heartache number two was Larry. I fell in love with him because he wrote me *volumes* of poems that were terribly heartfelt and terribly gothic and terribly romantic...

(LIGHTS change. LARRY is discovered.)

LARRY

My heart is like a red, red rose
Whose petals flutter down, down to my toes
And lie there dead, waiting, waiting at my feet
For you to bring them back to life, my sweet.

CINDY

... and terribly terrible. But writing poetry was as far it went, and he had a little problem expressing himself otherwise.

LARRY

Gee, y' know, I really, like, *like* you, Cindy, but I, y' know, I don't think I... y' know?

(LIGHTS change. JEFFREY is discovered.)

CINDY

Jeffrey was number three. He *recited* classic poetry to me.

JEFFREY

“Stone walls do not a prison make/Nor iron bars a cage” ... But I have to tell you: I feel like that’s what you’re trying to put *me* in. I know why the caged bird sings, Cindy: It needs space. *Space*. And so do I!

CINDY

Uh-huh. The final frontier.

(LIGHTS change. GARETH is discovered.)

The song only lists three. My list, however, stretched from here to infinity. Number four was Gareth, the goalie on the soccer team, and the absolute personification of Atlas shrugging.

GARETH

Like, you’re pretty and all that, but I gotta be honest. I like girls who look like, well, girls. With boobs.

CINDY

I may have to kill you.

(LIGHTS change. DEMETRIUS is discovered.)

There was Demetrius, who communed with his music and wanted to be in a rock band.

DEMETRIUS

You’re cool, Cindy, way too cool for me. I mean you can do all these different things and all I can do is play the guitar.

(SOUND: An electric guitar riff. KAZ is discovered.)

CINDY

And Kaz, gentle Kaz, sweet Kaz, sensitive Kaz, who not only wanted to be in the same rock band as Demetrius, but

KAZ

(Blatantly gay)
Hi, Demmi.

DEMETRIUS

(Responsively)
Hey, Kaz.

(THEY kiss quickly and, holding hands, exit.)

CINDY

By this time I was about to turn eighteen and I’d come to the conclusion I was never going to fall in love with a guy who was going to fall in love with me. Then one day, during my senior year, when Jeana and I were talking, it occurred to me: What about...

(LIGHTS change. JEANA is discovered.)

JEANA

... so I said I wasn't ready for *that* with him, I mean, it's only our second date and, the truth is?, I told him, I like you, but I'm not sure I like you *that* way! So he got all bent out of shape and said, "Well, if that's how you feel, then, like, *okay*" ... and he just dropped me off in front of my house and drove away. Boys are so frustrating!

CINDY

I hear you.

JEANA

I'm about ready to chuck the whole thing. I mean, I ate two whole Hershey bars!

CINDY

Yuck!

JEANA

It was the only thing in the house. Honestly? I might not go out with another boy the rest of the year!

CINDY

I hear you.

JEANA

(Sighs)
They all only want one thing.

CINDY

I guess.

JEANA

(Giggles)
The thing is? I *like* that one thing.

CINDY

You - do?

JEANA

Yeah! Don't you?

CINDY

Well...

JEANA

(Giggles)
'Specially the foreplay part.

(Confidentially)
I love having my
(SHE indicates: her breasts)
touched. It makes me, well ... you know...

CINDY

Oh.

JEANA

Don't you think they're sexy?

CINDY

I guess so.

JEANA

I think yours are, too.

CINDY

Mine?

JEANA

Yeah! They're teeny but they're cute. Like little buttons.

CINDY

(Sourly)
Thanks.

JEANA

A lot of girls, they sneak peeks at mine. In the locker room.

(A giggle; then, confidentially)
I peek at yours.

CINDY

You do?

JEANA

Uh-huh. I bet they're really sensitive.

CINDY

Well, I ---

JEANA

Boys don't realize that about small-breasted girls. But girls do. ... I bet girls would know how to do it, make them feel better than any boy could, I mean. Never mind the rest.

CINDY

The - rest?

(Knowledgably)
You know. The *rest. All* the rest. JEANA

You mean - it? CINDY

Well what else do you think I mean. JEANA

You've - done it? CINDY

Sure. JEANA

It? CINDY

It. JEANA

You never told me! CINDY

I don't tell you everything. Besides, you never told me. JEANA

I've never done it! CINDY

Never? JEANA

Never. CINDY

You're gonna be eighteen and you're a *virgin*? JEANA

Uh -- yeah. CINDY

Ohmygosh! JEANA

CINDY
What.

JEANA
Why?

CINDY
(Mumbles)
I don't know. I, I guess the boys I loved?, they didn't love me, so... And the ones who wanted to, y' know, do it, I didn't love them.

JEANA
It doesn't have to be about love, sweetie.

CINDY
It - doesn't?
(An aside)
Mom, you lied!

JEANA
Boys may only want one thing, but there's no reason why girls can't enjoy it. Along with everything else. Love'll happen someday. Maybe. But in the meantime, if you want the flow to go, you gotta go with the flow, if you know what I mean...

CINDY
Sort of...
(Small laugh)
Jeffrey told me *girls* only want one thing.

JEANA
Yeah?

CINDY
To be
(Broadly)
adored.

JEANA
(Smiles and shrugs)
What's wrong with that?

CINDY
Nothing! Except boys aren't capable of it.

JEANA

Yeah. I wouldn't mind a little adoration.

CINDY

Or, at least, a little love.

JEANA

Mm. I don't think boys are capable of *that*, either.

CINDY

I am.

JEANA

Last time *I* looked? you weren't a boy. Button boobs notwithstanding.

CINDY

Gee, thanks, Jeana.

JEANA

(Sighs)

Let's face it: Boys lust, girls love.

CINDY

Yeah. We take the time to really get to know each other.

JEANA

And we *value* each other.

CINDY

And we care about each other.

JEANA

Provide comfort, and support, and intimacy, and, well -- love.

(THEY exchange a long look.)

(Quietly)

I think love is what girls do best.

CINDY

Uhhh.... Jeana?

JEANA

Uh-huh?

CINDY

I, um ... I've always, I mean...

(Awkwardly, SHE tries to hug JEANA who pulls back and stares at her.)

JEANA

Cindy, you're my best friend and I *like* you, a lot, I even *love* you. Just not *that* way.

CINDY

Oh.

JEANA

-- I don't think.

CINDY

You don't *think*?

JEANA

Well, y' know, I've never done - anything with a girl.
(Shrugs. Brightly)
It might be - fun.

CINDY

But, but what about *love*?

JEANA

Like I said: Maybe someday. But while you're waiting...
(SHE embraces CINDY and kisses her passionately. CINDY breaks away.)

CINDY

I can't do this. I *do* love you. But it's like I'm kissing my sister.

JEANA

You don't *have* a sister.
(CINDY shrugs. With a sigh)
Okay. But if you ever change your mind ...

(SHE kisses CINDY'S forehead and exits.)

CINDY

Oooh...

I spent weeks agonizing over Jeana. I mean, I really did love her.

(MUSIC up: *Heartaches by the Number*)

But... Heartache number whatever. I got over it, though. And we stayed best friends. Which, as it turned out, is maybe the best thing that ever happened to me. We'll get to that.

(MUSIC out. PROJECTION: IT WASN'T ONLY ABOUT LOVE)

Anyway... The good news is falling in love *wasn't* my whole life. Fortunately. I loved to sing, so I took singing lessons. And I was pretty good.

SINGING TEACHER

Now open your throat and let *all* the sound come out...

(CINDY sings a bar or two of an up-tempo standard.)

Very good!

(LIGHTS change.)

CINDY

I was getting good at tap and I loved it, too, so I took a jazz class. And I was pretty good at *that*.

JAZZ DANCE TEACHER

Five, six, seven, *eight!*

(CINDY does the beginning of a jazz routine.)

Very good!

(LIGHTS change.)

CINDY

And I loved baseball, so I joined a girls softball league.

(A ball bounces toward CINDY and goes betweenher legs.)

SOFTBALL COACH

No, no, *no!* You have to get in front of the ball and block it with your chest...

(SHE looks at CINDY's chest.)

Well, block it with something, anyway.

CINDY

I may have to kill her.

But bad as my fielding skills were?, my hitting was worse -- but I was so short opposing pitchers couldn't throw me a strike if their lives depended on it, so I became the designated walker.

(LIGHTS change. CINDY picks up a bat and stands there, facing the "pitcher." SHE watches a "pitch" go by outside.)

UMPIRE

Ball one.

(CINDY wiggles the bat, then watches a pitch go by low.)

Ball two.

(CINDY wiggles the bat, then watches a pitch go by high.)

Ball three.

(CINDY wiggles the bat, then scrambles out of the way as a pitch almost hits her.)

Ball four.

CINDY

But I wanted to *hit*, like everybody else, and so one day...

(CINDY swings awkwardly and misses a “pitch” that’s too high.)

UMPIRE

Stee-rike one.

(CINDY sets herself, then lunges at a pitch that’s outside.)

Stee-rike two.

(CINDY “spits” into her hands, rubs them together and sets herself, then swings and misses a pitch that’s over the plate.)

Stee-rike three. Yer out!

CINDY

The coach told me

SOFTBALL COACH

If the bat ever leaves your shoulder again? You’re off the team.

(LIGHTS change.)

CINDY

By this time, however, I’d decided I wanted to be an actress. I did some stuff at my high school -- Dinah Lord, the 11-year-old little sister, in *The Philadelphia Story*. I wanted to play Tracy. But. I played Theo, the 10-year-old *boy* in *Pippin* -- none of the boys would play “a little kid.” I wanted to play Catherine. But. Then I played Tiny Tim in *A Christmas Carol*. To this day I want to throw up every time I hear “God bless us, every one.” I wanted to play Mrs. Cratchit.

(Sighs)

But. -- And last but not least, Grumpy in *Snow White*.

(LIGHTS up on JEANA.)

JEANA

Type casting, sweetie.

CINDY

The “It” girl

(SHE indicates JEANA)

-- and her 36-double D chest --

(JEANA thrusts her chest.)

-- played Snow White. Of course, she *had* written the version we used. I liked it a lot, and the drama teacher liked it so much she decided to use it instead of a published one.

Yay, me!

JEANA

(LIGHTS down on JEANA.)

CINDY

Annie was my big role. I got to do it twice, at school, and, the summer between my junior and senior years, at a community theatre. The reviewer for the neighborhood paper said

REVIEWER

I can't believe they found a ten year old who can perform so well!

CINDY

I restrained myself.

(PROJECTION: I GO TO COLLEGE)

Anyway, high school finally ended and off I went to college to get an education and ...

MOM

You'll meet some really nice boys there

DAD

Just be careful.

CINDY

I'm always careful, Daddy.

MOM

What your father means, Cynthia...

CINDY

I hate being called "Cynthia!"

MOM

It is your name.

CINDY

O-kay.

MOM

What your father means - Cindy, is we won't be there to look after you.

DAD

Or look out for you.

MOM

You're a young woman now. Independent. Just use your independence wisely.

DAD

What your mother means is: Don't get pregnant!

CINDY

Daddy!

MOM and DAD

'Bye, honey!

CINDY

And so I was set afloat upon the rickety raft of late adolescence, looking for wisdom, worldliness, and whatever.

(MUSIC: *Academic Festival Overture*.)

It was a small, very progressive school, *way* away from home, but it had a really good theatre program and I liked it a lot. There were no sororities or fraternities, so I lived in a -- co-ed -- dorm with fifty or sixty other girls. I had a roommate:

ELVA

(With the accent)

Hola. I'm Elva Cortes and I'm from

(Exaggerating the accent)

"N'-awlins." I'm real happy to know you, *chica*.

CINDY

who was smart and beautiful and had boobs to die for. And there were fifty or sixty boys. It was distracting, at first. Until I met Carlo.

(LIGHTS rise on CARLO.)

Carlo was a sophomore.

CARLO

From New York.

CINDY

He'd been modeling and acting since he was eight. Professionally.

CARLO

(Shrugs)

I did a few commercials, some print stuff, a little work on stage; a couple movies.

CINDY

He sang.

(CARLO sings a few bars from an Italian opera aria.)

Really well. He danced.

(CARLO dances a few measures, of either jazz or ballet.)

Really well. He played the [INSTRUMENT] and the piano.

(CARLO plays a few bars on the named instrument.)

Really *really* well. He was from a wealthy family. And he'd *turned down* a scholarship from Stella Adler because

CARLO

I really wanted to get away from New York while I was learning my craft. I mean, it's great there, but there's all that pressure. Especially from my agent. I really don't want to have to do commercials and photo shoots and auditions every other day when I'm supposed to be studying.

CINDY

And the thing is? He really meant it.

(SHE sighs)

(PROJECTION: I GET BOWLED OVER.

SOUND: a bowling ball rolling down the alley and hitting a single pin.)

CARLO

I mean, that's all great, but I want to be a great actor, not just another pretty face.

CINDY

And he was *so* mature.

(SHE sighs)

CARLO

Of course, if my face was as pretty as *yours*...

CINDY

Now, by this time *I* was mature enough to recognize that attraction, no matter how great, no matter how intense, was not the same thing as love. But, I swear to you, I felt like the scrawny one pin watching a sixteen pound bowling ball storming down the alley toward it: I just knew I was gonna get knocked over the second it touched me.

(CARLO touches her. SHE collapses.

SOUND: pins crashing. A strike! SHE gets up slowly.)

Still, I was cautious. Once burned -- heck, countless-nce burned -- twice wary. I struggled to get back on my feet, stay upright and maintain my cool. But I did call my folks and told them I'd met a nice boy.

(LIGHTS up on MOM and DAD.)

MOM

Just be careful, sweetheart.

CINDY

I'm being *very* careful, Mom.

DAD

Don't get pregnant!

CINDY

Daddy!

(LIGHTS down on MOM and DAD.)

But, really: Four months passed -- a new record! -- Carlo was kind of - reticent, about his life away from school -- his family, his professional connections; what he'd done on his summer vacations, stuff like that. But I figured that was because he didn't like talking about himself: He wasn't being mysterious, just - modest. But everything was going really well. I mean, after all

CINDY (cont.)

the toads here, finally, was a prince. I felt like love was coming around the corner, and I was ready for it. *And* I was -- almost -- ready for - *it*.

(SOUND: knocking.)

Just a second.

(SHE "opens a door.")

CARLO

(His hands behind his back)

Hi.

CINDY

Hi, Carlo. I --- this is a surprise.

CARLO

Good! What're you doing?

CINDY

What I *said* I was going to do. Study. What are *you* doing? Here?

CARLO

Still? At seven o'clock on Saturday? You are the most diligent pretty girl I have ever known. Or else the prettiest diligent girl.

CINDY

I've got a lot to learn.

ELVA

Truer words were never spoken!

CINDY

Ha ha ha! Elva's studying too.

ELVA

Hola, Carlo!

CARLO

Ciao, Elva! How's Kevin?

ELVA

¡*Muy caliente!*

(CARLO laughs)

We're going out later.

CARLO

Tell him I said hello.

ELVA

Okay.

CINDY

So, what's up?

CARLO

I just wondered if you'd maybe like to take a break and celebrate a little. Someplace really special.

CINDY

I'm not dressed or anything.

CARLO

What you're wearing is fine!

CINDY

Mm. -- Celebrate what?

CARLO

(Produces a bouquet)

The four-month anniversary of our first date! *Felice anniversario!* as my *nonno* says to my *nonna*.

CINDY

(Aside)

See what I mean? Resistance was futile.

Anyway... he took me to *Mangiare*, this intimate little Italian restaurant -- checked gingham tablecloths, Chianti-bottle candleholders with wax dripping down the raffia, a strolling musician (Italian MUSIC up.)

and a waiter with slicked-back hair and a handlebar mustache... It was straight out of *Lady and the Tramp*. Except I felt like Tramp.

WAITER

(A thick Italian accent)

An', leetle lady, what-a you gonna have?

CINDY

Uh, I don't know. It all looks so good.

CARLO

If I can offer a suggestion?, they grow their own tomatoes, the kitchen makes the mozzarella and the olive oil is ...

(HE makes the classic Italian "kiss" gesture, bringing the fingertips of one hand to his

CARLO (cont.)

lips and "flinging" the opening hand from his mouth.)

so the caprese salad is sensational. And they make all of their own pasta, too, so any of the pasta dishes will be good. What's the special tonight, Guido?

WAITER

La speciale è stasera is the *manicotti*, *Signore* Giannini.

(To CINDY)

The ricotta, we make-a eet fresh, she just drips from the shells like leetle hot *perlacei*.

(To CARLO)

And the shreemp we stuff in-a them?, they was-a flown in thees morning from-a da Gulf.

CINDY

Manicotti with shrimp? That sounds wonderful.

WAITER

It ees wonderful!

CINDY

Could I have that?

(SHE looks to CARLO. HE nods.)

And a caprese salad?

CARLO

Sure. Make that two please, Guido.

WAITER

Due caprese e due manicotti con gamberetti. Yes-a, sir!, Yes-a, mees. Uh...

(A bit querously, with
a look to CINDY)

You want-a some wine, *Signore* Giannini?

CARLO

(HE looks at CINDY, then smiles.)

I don't think so, Guido. I'm driving.

WAITER

(To CINDY)
You, uh, want-a a glass of milk to drink?

CINDY

(With gritted teeth)
Just water, please.

WAITER

That's-a good, then.

CARLO

Oh; would you ask Antonio to come by when he has a minute?
(HE indicates the musician.)

WAITER

Yes-a, sir! Right away.

CARLO

Thank you.

(WAITER exits.)

CINDY

I guess you come here a lot.

CARLO

(Laughs)
Not really. I save it for special occasions. Like four-month anniversaries.

CINDY

You have a lot of those?

CARLO

This is the first.
(Lifts his water glass)
Salute!

CINDY

(Lifts hers and clinks)
Salute!

CARLO

So ... You like *Mangiare*?

CINDY

I love it. How'd you find it?

CARLO

(Shrugs)
My family owns it.

CINDY

Really?! You never told me!

CARLO

We, um, we own a lot of restaurants. All over the country.

CINDY

Wow. Are they all as nice as this?

CARLO

Oh, some of them are a lot nicer.

CINDY

Wow again.

CARLO

... And, um, we're involved in some other businesses, too.

CINDY

What kind?

CARLO

Well, um... we have a company that imports things -- olive oil, vinegars, stuff like that. And we have - interests in, oh, a couple of trucking companies and construction firms and some, I guess you'd call them, "entertainment emporiums." That's how I got to meet a lot of the people I know in show business.

CINDY

... Emporiums?

CARLO

Clubs, places like that.

CINDY

In New York?

CARLO

In the New York area, anyway. And a few other places.

CINDY

Oh.

CARLO

(Sighs)

I really like you, Cindy. I'll have to tell you eventually anyway, if we're going to keep ... They're - resorts. Gambling resorts.

CINDY

Oh.

CARLO

And - strip clubs.

CINDY

...Oh.

CARLO

But I don't have anything to do with them. Dad doesn't want me to. In fact, I've never even been in one. My *padre* and my brothers, *they* run them. Everything. I'm the white sheep of the family. Or at least the right-brained sheep.

CINDY

You're not part of... like -...

CARLO

Oh, no. -- Well ... I guess *they* - sort of are. I'm not.

CINDY

Oh.

CARLO

Really, I just want to be an actor. A good actor. My *padre*, he's perfectly happy with that. He wants to help me. He's got lots of contacts, in New York *and* Hollywood. People listen to him.

CINDY

Oh. -- *Oh*.

ANTONIO

(Appears with his instrument)

Ah, *Signore* Giannini. I play your favorite, okay?

(Without waiting, HE launches into the theme from *The Godfather*. CARLO buries his face in his hands. LIGHTS change.)

CINDY

Carlo tried to convince me he was not his *padre*, as he called him, and that his father was, in fact, really a nice man. He even invited me to New York to meet his whole family, over Spring break. I thought about it, hard; I sort of imagined his parents might be like Mom and Dad, with a few little - differences.

(LIGHTS change. MOM and DAD appear, minimally disguised but dressed, very

stereotypically, in black, as Carlo's parents. THEY each kiss CINDY on both cheeks. SHE smiles. THEY wave benignly, then DAD pulls out a machine gun and fires a magazine into the audience. SOUND: groans and bodies falling. DAD

smiles,

waves to CINDY, and puts the machine gun aside. MOM smiles and kisses his cheek.)

MOM

That's not-a nice, Vito.

DAD

'Ey, some-a-times ya gotta be "not-a nice," Mama.

(To CINDY)

Don't forget the cannoli.

(LIGHTS change.)

CINDY

Much as I wanted to -- I'd never been to New York and, like every aspiring actress, it was my reverie; and even though Carlo offered me everything but diamonds and pearls to try to persuade me to come -- I admit it: I was scared to death. I just couldn't get over my imaginings...

(LIGHTS to black.)

CARLO'S FATHER (VOICEOVER)

'Ey, Cindy: I'm-a gonna make you an offer you can't refuse.

CINDY (RECORDED VOICEOVER)

No, I --- ohmygosh!

(LIGHTS rise, discovering CINDY in bed, tossing and turning in a dream. SHE raises the cover and holds up a horse's head. The RECORDED VOICEOVER screams.)

ELVA

Cindy! Cindy, for heaven's sake!

CINDY

(Clutching the horse's head)

Elva...

ELVA

Yeah, *chica*?

CINDY

What'm I gonna do?

ELVA
About what?

CINDY
About *this*.
(The head)

ELVA
Huh?

CINDY
This, El.

ELVA
I don't know what you're talking about.

CINDY
You can't see ...
(SHE waves the head.)

ELVA
Chica, I can't see anything except Dr. Whitaker's face when I fall asleep in class tomorrow morning. You're dreaming.

CINDY
Oh.

(LIGHTS change.)
I *was* dreaming. I think... Anyway, I told Carlo "no" and went home for break, where everyone was glad to see me and nobody said or cooked anything Italian for a whole week. Jeana was there -- on break from Ohio State, where she was studying theatre in general and playwriting in particular -- and I cried on her shoulder like I had over Desmond! Still, when I got back to school? Carlo and I sort of went our separate ways. I missed him; a lot. But I wasn't fifteen anymore, and -- I knew, intellectually, anyway -- I had to suck it up and keep going. I tried. Really. I lived on chocolate for a month.

I'd like to say I didn't regret breaking up with him, but the truth is: I did. I felt so - empty, for so long. I mean, I think he was the first man who ever really loved me.

(MUSIC up: An instrumental of *Georgia on My Mind*.)

Late that spring, Mom and Dad moved to Atlanta; they finally got worn out by Ohio winters -- and I went to my new home for the summer. I thought about Carlo but I dated here and there, and thought about Carlo and worked at not falling in love with *anybody*. I did more community theatre -- Little Sally in *Urinetown*; I wanted to play Hope, but ... I went back to school feeling really lonely and spent my entire sophomore year thinking about Carlo.

ELVA
You mean mooning over Carlo.

CINDY

Whatever.

He'd transferred to some school in California because he'd gotten a continuing role in sitcom.
(SOUND: a laugh track.)

(Sighs)

I watched it every week.

ELVA

¡Chica! Turn that off. You have got to get on with your life. Right, Kevin?

KEVIN

Right!

(Suggestively)

Especially your love life.

(ELVA giggles)

CINDY

(Sighs)

I know.

It was just - hard, this business of getting over people, even if it was part of growing up. I mean, I was nineteen and I still felt like a child.

MOM

You are a child, Cynthia. You will always be *my* child.

CINDY

But I want to be an adult, Mom.

DAD

What your mother means, Cindy, is no matter how old you are, you'll always be our little girl.

CINDY

I'm *not* a "little girl." I just don't want to be afraid that every guy I meet is gonna break my heart. There's gotta be a way to get over that.

ELVA

Hey! We all go through it. It's a girl thing. But you *can* have fun.

CINDY

(Shrugs)

I'm trying to.

MOM

You'll grow up soon enough, sweetheart. Enjoy being young while you can.

CINDY

I'd be fine if I were enjoying it. But it's like I'm just waiting for someone, *something*, everything, to happen.

DAD

Things *are* gonna happen. And you'll be shocked by how quickly they do. Remember, ten years ago? You never imagined all the things you'd be doing now. And learning.

CINDY

I never imagined I'd fall in love with someone I'd have to watch on television every week.

ELVA

You don't have to watch him, *chica*. You don't even have to think about him. Here.
(SHE hands CINDY chocolate.)

CINDY

Thanks.

I immersed myself in theatre, schoolwork and chocolate and, somehow, I made it through the year. I went to Atlanta again for the summer, did more roles I was "right" for instead of the ones I really wanted to do, but they kept me occupied. And I dated -- more guys who were nice but... They kept me occupied too and, slowly, finally, I made the "adjustment" to life without Carlo. By the time I got back to school I realized: Carlo or no Carlo, my life *was* going to go on. But it was missing something, and that something was someone to snuggle up to on warm summer evenings and cold winter mornings. So, I decided: the heck with love! I would grit my teeth and sink them into the first guy who came on to me! I mean, I was twenty -- and I was *still* a virgin!, and, well: It was getting - frustrating.

(MUSIC up: a brief up-tempo swatch of medieval court music. PROJECTION:
REYNALDO AND JULIET)

The only problem? The first guy who came on to me was someone who scared me to death, because I'd had a secret crush on him since my freshman year -- since, in fact, the first day, when he stood up in front of the class and said

REYNALDO

Good morning everyone. Welcome to Theatre 101.

ELVA and MOM (OFFSTAGE)

(CINDY sighs)

Sigh.

CINDY

Reynaldo Whitaker, Ph.D. -- Dr. Stud Muffin, as he was known among the theatre major girls -- barely thirty and already the assistant head of the Theatre Department -- and the man who was going to direct me in my first really serious role: Juliet.

REYNALDO

Being Juliet, Cindy, isn't just a matter of getting to know her here

(HE touches CINDY's head.)

You have to know her - *here*.

(HE lays his hand across CINDY's heart and leaves it there just a lingering moment.)

And that's hard because not only do you have to be a girl who's absolutely head over heels in love, you have to recognize that it's a *thirteen year old* girl, and that girls of that age tend to have crushes they *call* love, not the deeply rooted feelings that *are* love.

CINDY

(An aside)

Tell me about it.

REYNALDO

Older girls, ones your age, for example -- you're, what, nineteen?

CINDY

Twenty.

REYNALDO

Well, congratulations. But: A girl of twenty is mature enough to distinguish between what makes her heart throb and what makes her body tingle.

So: As a twenty year old, you need to recall your "thirteen-hood" *and* -- as both the adult you are and the little girl you were -- explore, in every way, every aspect of Juliet's feelings, the romantic ones, the philosophic ones, the sexual ones -- after all, sexual desire is an inherent part of every young girl's psyche --

CINDY

(An aside)

Tell me about it.

REYNALDO

and the intellectual ones and the sociological ones.

CINDY

I know, Dr. Whitaker.

REYNALDO

(Smiles)

Call me Reynaldo. I like to keep things a little less formal between me and my actors.

CINDY

Sure. Reynaldo.

It wasn't *what* he said, or what he *did*: He behaved pretty much like a perfect gentleman. It was more like the *way* he said and did things: little, subtle messages. It felt like.

My Romeo -- in the cast -- was another junior who I sort of knew but hadn't worked with. His name was Blaise Moskowitz and he was, shall we say, an *unlikely*? Romeo ...
(LIGHTS up on BLAISE.)

BLAISE

(Clearly, but not
flagrantly, gay)

"But soft! What light through yonder window breaks?
It is the East, and Juliet is the sun!"

Oh, my!

(LIGHTS to black, except for a special
on CINDY.)

CINDY

He got cast because he was in the directing program and directing students had to act: one "significant" role. But! Blaise's - difficulties with romancing Juliet necessitated a little more exploration with Dr. Whitaker -- Reynaldo -- outside rehearsal than most Juliets have probably needed.

REYNALDO

Now, take this part, where Romeo says:

"Her vestal livery is but sick and green
And none but fools do wear it. Cast it off."

What's Romeo really saying here?

CINDY

That, um, that Juliet's a virgin and he thinks she should, you know...

REYNALDO

Yes...?

CINDY

Um, find somebody who'll make love to her.

REYNALDO

Good. But he's also insinuating *he* wants to make love to her. That *he* wants to dispense with her "vestal livery." In modern day parlance, he's hot for her. Clear?

CINDY

Yes...

REYNALDO

So, imagine for a moment that Juliet heard Romeo make that speech -- which she doesn't, of course. How would she feel?

CINDY

(Shrugs)
Anxious, I guess.

REYNALDO

About...?

CINDY

Um, to "cast off" her "vestal livery?" With him?

REYNALDO

Of course! Which tells us a lot about her state a few moments later when she calls "O Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo?"

CINDY

Oh. I see!

REYNALDO

(Lightly)
It's probably pretty much the same state you were in just before you "cast off" *your* "vestal livery."

CINDY

Um...

(Pause)

REYNALDO

... I, um, don't mean to get personal, Cindy, but it's relevant to how you approach the role: You *have* ... cast it off. ... Haven't you?

CINDY

Well... not really.

REYNALDO

Oh.

(LIGHTS change.)

CINDY

I'd tried. Really! I thought - it - would help me get over Carlo, so over the summer I'd gone out -- made out -- with three or four guys in Atlanta, all of whom were sweet, and virile, and who I'd *liked* ... but, as Jeana was wont to say, "not *that* way." None of them was Carlo, and none of them was a candidate for "him"-hood, either.

And, anyway, my resolution notwithstanding?, I *still* wanted to be in love the first time. I didn't want to just, well, have a little ... "pop" when - *it* happened. I wanted a *big* one. I wanted an *explosion*.

Now, okay: I admit, I was a "teensy bit" naive. It's not that I was sheltered or anything, just ---. Well, some girls -- like Jeana and Elva -- were stud magnets. I, on the other hand, felt like a stud repellent. Yeah, I dated and made out and, if truth be told, I even got so far as the occasional mutual fondle. Twice.

MOM and DAD (OFFSTAGE)

Gasp!

CINDY

Sorry, Mom. And Dad.

But the guys I usually attracted? maybe they weren't exactly late-adolescent Woody Allens, but except for Carlo, they were mostly a lot closer to that type than, say, Benedict Cumberbatch.

MOM and ELVA (OFFSTAGE)

Sigh.

CINDY

You got that right!

But! -- I just couldn't bring myself to cast off my vestal livery unless it was with someone I was in love with *and* who was in love with me.

Or who I thought was in love with me, anyway.

(LIGHTS change.)

REYNALDO

Now, Blaise: When Romeo kisses her, you need to ---

BLAISE

I know.

(Sighs)

I really have to, don't I.

REYNALDO

No. But Romeo does.

BLAISE

(Resignedly)
All right.
(Sighs)

REYNALDO
Come on, Blaise. It's the character. You can get into that.

BLAISE
Well...
(HE embraces CINDY and kisses her
perfunctorily.)

Well?

REYNALDO
Let's let Juliet be the judge. Cindy?

CINDY
Well, I didn't feel much - passion.

REYNALDO
Do you think there should *be* "much passion?" After all, it's the first time either of them has
kissed anyone.

BLAISE
I think he's only doing it because she expects him to.

REYNALDO
That may be true. But once he starts, doesn't he get into it? Don't both of them? I mean the first
time *you* kissed someone you loved, didn't your heart start to beat a little faster, didn't your
temperature rise a little?

CINDY
Mine did.

BLAISE
I guess so.

REYNALDO
Let's try it again, okay?

BLAISE
(Reluctantly)
Okay, Reynaldo.
(HE kisses CINDY again, holding it
longer but still perfunctorily.)

REYNALDO

Better, but ... Cindy, would you mind?

CINDY

Uh ... no.

REYNALDO

Maybe something a little more like this, Blaise.

(HE embraces her and, slowly, starts the kiss. It gradually becomes deep and intense, growing into a passionate involvement on his part which CINDY becomes equally involved in. Then, all at

REYNALDO (cont.)

once, HE pulls away, leaving her dazed and breathless.)

(To BLAISE)

What do you think?

CINDY

(Dizzied)

I think... yeah.

That was the moment I knew: One: I loved Reynaldo. And two: Reynaldo loved me.

Of course, he remained the perfect gentleman. After all, we were student and teacher, so we had to be discreet.

(LIGHTS change.)

(Yells)

He loves me!

ELVA

Who does, *chica*?

CINDY

Oh, just - someone.

(LIGHTS change.)

We stayed discreet. We only saw each other in class, at rehearsal and for coffee together in the student union, where we talked about the play and *only* about the play; and the nights he walked me home after rehearsal, where we talked about everything. Except what was really on our minds.

(Yawns)

'Scuse me. I'm *so* tired.

REYNALDO

You work too hard.

