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Day Room Window

Teen-age Girls in an Adult Prison

Based on a True Story

by Bonnie Cohen

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CHARACTERS

12F / 2M

- JADE *African American girl. She is sweet, and wants better for herself. She tries every day to look beautiful.*
- MEEGAN *White girl. She is open to Naomi, warm. She wants connection.*
- CAROLE *White girl. She is hard, cold and honest.*
- ARIEL *White girl. (Must be able to sing). She is hyper-active. She wants to belong somewhere.*
- ANGEL *African American girl. She is energetic, bright, talented and demanding. She is an angular, angry kid.*
- JULIE *White girl. (Must be able to sing) She is sweet, but cool. Her behavior is polite and correct.*
- JACKIE *African American girl. She shouts when she talks. She has the tight petite body of a dancer.*
- DA CELL *(DAY CELL) African American girl. She is powerful, smart and a born leader.*
- ALLISON *White girl. (Must be able to sing,) She is depressed and wants to be left alone until late in the play.*
- NAOMI *She is a counselor who is down to earth, tenacious. She is direct and demanding. She calls it as she sees it.*
- CAROLINE *She is a prison administrator who lives by the book. She is detached, cold and represents the institution. She has a military persona.*
- LISA *She is a security officer who likes kids, but is fed up.*
- JAMES *He is a security officer who is kind, helpful and cares about the girls.*
- RAY *He is a security officer who does not have the kids' best interests at heart.*

SETTING

A Women's Prison.

NOTES FOR DIRECTORS

Notes on Text: In the first week, when indicated in stage directions with bold font, the characters are enraged and create chaos by yelling and moving around the room simultaneously. It is very loud and out of control. The playwright has supplied the actors with the dialogue, but it cannot be and is not meant to be clearly deciphered by the audience. The actors can supplement the dialogue with improvised text to augment the chaos. These outbursts occur 4 times in week 1 only and last from 10-20 seconds.

Notes on Sound: Prison sounds are important. They represent the iron clad cage in which these kids live, and the obstacles through which Naomi must pass every week to get to them.

Notes on Set: There are five locations within the prison: The day room, Caroline's office, two solitary confinement cells, outdoor area where security officers take refuge and Jade's cell. When the juveniles are not in the day room, they are in their cells either in shadow on stage or off stage.

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PROLOGUE

AT RISE: *Lights up on JADE. As each character joins the scene, a light comes up on that character.*

JADE

They told me he had a wife and two little kids....

MEEGAN

All I wanted was a ham sandwich....

CAROLE

The cops chased us into the woods. But we lost em. Stupid cops!

ARIEL

I'd been in the mental health cottage up at the Children's Center for maybe a year....

ANGEL

We was taggin and makin art on that wall by the cemetery....

JULIE

I was a really good person....

JACKIE

We did not like sleepin under that Fourth St Bridge....

DA CELL

I was standin in that MacDonal'd's at 7th and Pine....

ALLISON

I ain't got nothin to say.

JADE

We was just hangin around drinkin some forties, and I decided to steal me a car. We'd do that sometimes for fun. Anyway, I was hella drunk and I ran a red light... I killed the guy.

MEEGAN

I'd just snatched me a roll, and that old security guard came outa nowhere. He took me to his office and started touchin me on my back, tellin me I should be a good girl, and askin me if I lived on the street.... I just couldn't let no more old men touch me.

CAROLE

I knew them cops'd be comin back with them dogs. That old guy, fishin up river, wouldn't give up them keys to his truck. So I did what I needed to do. I figured he was almost dead anyway. He had to be sixty....

ARIEL

My voices started telling me to hurt someone and I would feel better. They kept telling me that over and over. I didn't want to hurt anybody, I didn't want to get in trouble....But I couldn't stand it anymore.

ANGEL

He came up the street wearin one of them turbans on his head. I ain't got no problem with that. But he fuckin looked at my girlfriend, my homey, my family all horny and shit. I told him to stop, but he started grabbin at her.....So, I grabbed me this big rock....

JULIE

I had a four point in school, I was in the National Honor Society, the choir, 4H.... Then I started drinking ... I wrecked everything.... You see, my father is a very fine person.... He said that I could be a model... He took lots of pictures.... My mom keeps to herself a lot.

JACKIE

It was *cold* under that bridge. I had me my puffy jacket, but she didn't have no coat at all. So, we spotted this girl on the street. She shoulda give it up! I don't know why that girl didn't give up that coat!

DA CELL

I saw him across the street sellin some of that bad shit. I been takin care of my mom since I could walk. I had told him to stay away from my mom with that shit! I had told him that! He got what was comin to him.

Lights fade on each character after she speaks the following lines.

JADE

I didn't have nothin against that guy! It was a accident!

MEEGAN

That old man at the Safeway shoulda kept his hands to hisself!

ARIEL

I hurt this one kid real bad.

ANGEL

I gotta defend my family!

DA CELL

I gotta take care of my family!

JACKIE

My girlfriend, my family was cold!

JULIE

I can't talk about this. My lawyer told me not to.

ALLISON

I wadn't even there.....Just leave me alone! My crime ain't nobody's business!

Lights are out on everyone but CAROLE.

CAROLE

When I was little, my dad always said if I didn't straighten out, I'd end up in prison.... for murder..... Guess he got that right!

Blackout.

WEEK 1

AT RISE:

Prison comes alive with prison sounds. Buzz, Slide, Slam. Metal on Metal. Kids are in the day room. Lights come up on CAROLINE'S office. CAROLINE is working at her computer. NAOMI knocks on the opened door. CAROLINE rises.

CAROLINE

Ms. Gordon welcome. *(Extends her hand as NAOMI enters and shakes CAROLINE'S hand)*
I'm Caroline White.

CAROLINE Indicates for NAOMI to take a seat.

NAOMI

Please, call me Naomi.

CAROLINE

We are so pleased you have come. We have no experience with juvenile offenders. It's like apples and oranges.

NAOMI

Yeah, it sure is.

CAROLINE locates the contract in a stack of papers on her desk.

CAROLINE

(Peruses the contract as she speaks)

Now, according to this contract, you will teach drug and alcohol classes for the next three weeks in the morning, and facilitate a female issues group in the afternoon for the full twenty weeks of the contract. As the subject of the morning classes change, the Children's Center will provide teachers to teach those classes. I believe *(Refers to the contract in front of her)* the next set of classes is on sex and reproduction.

NAOMI

That's as I understand it.

CAROLINE

Good. Laurie Charles at The Children's Center gave you a glowing recommendation. What do you hope will happen here?

NAOMI

Well my coming in here once a week will not give these kids what they really need...which is a kind and wise mother 24/7...But I can get to know them some....I can help them get in touch with the very best part of themselves. I can reflect back to them that they are loveable.

CAROLINE

Really? Well, that's interesting.... Let me introduce you to the juveniles.

CAROLINE rises. She is anxious to turn the juveniles over to NAOMI. She wants NAOMI to take them off her hands.

NAOMI

(Stands; surprised the initial meeting is ending)

Uh...I'm used to working at the Children's Center, which is a *kids'* prison. The rules must be different here. What about some orientation?

CAROLINE

Our corrections officers will keep you informed as you go.

NAOMI

Well, tell me something about these kids.

CAROLINE

We are an adult correctional facility. But the state has sent us these..... children, really.... *(Sighs)* They are.... a difficult group. But then, you'll know what to do! That's why you're here! You are the expert! Come.....

Lights fade as CAROLINE leads the way.

Lights up on the day room. Eight girls occupy two tables. At one table are DA CELL, ANGEL, JADE and CAROLE. At the other, JULIE, MEEGAN, ARIEL and, ALLISON.

The following dialogue, in bold font, is simultaneous. It begins in the blackout and continues as the lights come up. They are all yelling at once. The room is chaotic, loud, and out of control. CAROLINE introduces NAOMI to LISA, the security officer. This is all done so that the audience can not hear the introductions over the racket the girls are making. CAROLINE leaves the room. The girls are protesting against The Children's Center. It's like they are on strike.

The chaos lasts approximately 20 seconds before LISA gets it under control. As indicated in the director's notes, improvised text can be added as necessary.

DA CELL

How many times we got to tell you people? If you want us to do The Children's Center, we gotta be at The Children's Center. Cause you know what? Last time they came up in here, they didn't do nothin but make us soft. That just ain't right, up in here. You got your heads up your asses. For real! We ain't gonna pay no attention to nothin they gotta say! We gonna put the brakes on this!

ANGEL

I ain't gonna listen! What are these teachers gonna teach me. I need to be up at The Children's Center. My attorney says this juvenile program is against my civil rights. The state gotta give me my education, not some bad teachers that don't teach me nothin! I need my art! They took away my art! I got my attorney on that! Ya'll are gonna hear from my attorney!

CAROLE

I been with the adults for months and now I got to do kids classes? I don't get this. Just let me do my time. I gotta make a life in here. Just let me get started. I need a job and I need to make my way. I'm an adult. I ain't no kid no more! Lisa, I'm hungry. That oatmeal was water. When's lunch?

MEEGAN

Julie, do you think you can help me later? I ain't gettin that algebra no how. That teacher is so bad. She don't teach me nothin. Did you see her this morning? She was flappin her arms like a bird.

MEEGAN Flaps her arms and laughs.

JULIE

She was frustrated. She can't teach us all together. We're all at different levels. When she broke us up into smaller groups, it was way better. I don't know why she stopped doing that.

JADE

They didn't tell us nothin about this. It just ain't right. My meds are so messed up. I can't hardly hold my head up. I'll tell you, all this screamin is giving me a powerful head ache! I can't stand it in hear no more. This is really messed up!

ARIEL.

(Jumps around the room with excitement)

Why didn't anybody tell us, and spring it on us like this? All the time it's now today you'll do this, today you'll do that. We are not doing this! We won't talk to some stupid counselor.

JADE

They can't get my medication right.

ARIEL

Yeah my meds are all messed up. At night I hear voices.

JADE

Yeah, well I'm glad I ain't got that problem.

ALLISON

Leave us alone! Just leave us alone!

LISA

Alright settle down now!!

The simultaneous dialogue ends.

LISA

This lady has come to talk to you! Give it a rest!

NAOMI

Good Morning.

ALLISON

What's so good about it? Shit.

LISA

Language!

JADE

I don't see no Children's Center! I just see you!

The girls laugh and carry on. The following dialogue, in bold font is simultaneous. They are all yelling at once. There is chaos! This chaos lasts 10-20 seconds before LISA brings it to a halt.

JADE

The doctors here ain't got no idea how to take care of people my age. They can't even get my medication right. One day I can't sleep, and the next day I can't even keep my head up!

CAROLE

I don't need no Children's Center I got a long ass sentence. What are these classes gonna do for me?! I need to be in with the adults to serve my time. I need to work.

ARIEL

I been to The Children's Center. They got programs and all, like mental health. But that didn't help me much.

JULIE

My problem is that I do really well in school. I liked school and now I'm stuck doing work I learned in the eighth grade!

ANGEL

Yeah, what she said!

DA CELL

(Looks at ANGEL)

You liked school?

ANGEL

Yeah I liked school. I wasn't no good at math or nothin, but I like history and art.

MEEGAN

Nobody told us nothin. That's really messed up! We got a right to know what's goin on. I don't know what's gonna happen from one moment to the next.

LISA

(Yells above the racket)

Hey! Settle down!! What did I just say!!

The Simultaneous dialogue ends.

NAOMI

My God! You guys are bouncing off the wall here!

You got that right.

DA CELL

Go away.

ALLISON

Yeah, go back to The Children's Center

ARIEL

Shut up Ariel.

DA CELL

I didn't do anything. I was just sayin...

ARIEL

Shut up.

ANGEL

Get up! Stretch your legs.

NAOMI

We ain't doin that.

DA CELL

You can sit out, that's fine.

NAOMI

Ain't none of us doin it.

ANGEL

You want to tell me what's going on here?

NAOMI

CAROLE

What's goin on here is we got contact with just these eight girls and the security officers and that's it.

JULIE

We're not allowed to talk to the women prisoners. We can't even look at them. And we live with them on the same cell block!

MEEGAN

So we gotta always stay in this room 12 hours a day. We don't never get to go outside.

JADE

Yeah, and the guards got to escort us even to use the bathroom.

DA CELL

They put us in here and then they got no place to put us. It's like we're in prison in a prison. It ain't right!

NAOMI

Wow! I'm sorry... Maybe I can offer you some relief. I'm coming in to see you every Friday for twenty weeks. There will be classes in the morning, and in the afternoon, you'll get a chance to talk about what's going on for you. Right now I'd like to learn your names. There's this cool name game.....

DA CELL

We ain't doin that neither!

NAOMI

Ok...I'll start the class. We'll talk about addiction.

DA CELL

(Mocking)

We'll talk about addiction?! We ain't talkin about addiction!

The following dialogue, in bold font, is simultaneous. The room erupts into loud chaos. The chaos lasts for 10-20 seconds until LISA shuts it down.

ANGEL

Yeah, we ain't doin that!

JADE

Addiction? It's my life. I could probably teach you somethin about it.

MEEGAN

(Flips through a magazine)

I got more important things to talk about. Nobody listens. (Looks over at LISA in the corner) How much longer do we got to be here?

JULIE

(Raises her hand)

This is pointless. My lawyer told me that I am supposed to go to school. Please I need some classes!

ARIEL

This is stupid. This is stupid. This is stupid.

CAROLE

This is bullshit! I ain't no juvenile and I don't need no stupid classes!

ALLISON

Get the hell outa here. What do you care anyway? Go back to that kiddie camp.

LISA

That's enough! I'll have to lock you down!

The Simultaneous dialogue ends.

NAOMI

Ok! What do you want to talk about?

CAROLE

Me and Jade and Da Cell and Angel were in with the adults until they started this stupid juvenile program. We worked and we could go to the movies and the library. Now we can't even go to the bathroom by ourself.

As the dialogue continues ARIEL and ALLISON have the following exchange.

ALLISON

Ariel, get off a me.

ARIEL

I didn't do anything.

ALLISON

Get away!!

ARIEL moves, as she moves, she bangs her knee on the table. ALLISON laughs.

ARIEL

Ouch!

NAOMI

You must have school. What do you do in school?

JULIE

School is a joke.

ANGEL

I got my lawyer on that. They got to give me my education!

NAOMI

Do you get any exercise? Do you have PE?

JADE

WE DON'T GOT NOTHIN!!!

ANGEL

They got a gym and a art room with all kinds of stuff. We can't get in there.

As NAOMI hears more about the nature of their incarceration, she becomes more and more incredulous.

NAOMI

Why can't you use the gym or the art room?

CAROLE

Is she deaf?!! Cause we ain't allowed to look at or talk to the adults!!!

DA CELL

What part of what we're sayin do you not get???

ARIEL

Yeah. How many times do we got to say it?

ANGEL

Shut up Ariel.

ARIEL

I was just sayin...

DA CELL

Did she not tell you to shut up?

ANGEL

And they took our art supplies out of the day room!

NAOMI

Why is that?

DA CELL

Cause we was paintin our finger nails.

NAOMI

Well, that's age appropriate.

DA CELL

Tell me about it.

JAMES enters.

JAMES

Alright ladies, lunch is coming.

JADE, JULIE, CAROLE and ARIEL line up to go to their cells for a little break.

NAOMI

Lunch at 10:30 in the morning. I just got here!

LISA

That's how it goes. They can go to their cells for 15 minutes before or after lunch if they want to, but its lunch in the day room at 10:45.

Black out.

Lights come up on NAOMI outside catching her breath. She has anxiety and paces.

After a minute, where she pulls herself together, the lights come up on the day room. The lunch rack is present. MEEGAN sits alone at a table. Most of the kids have finished eating. CAROLE and JULIE and are playing cards. ALLISON gets up to put her tray on the rack. The rest of the kids are watching TV. NAOMI enters.

MEEGAN

Hey Naomi, come sit with me, I got your lunch for you.

NAOMI

Thanks, honey

NAOMI sits at the table and starts to eat her lunch.

MEEGAN

Where did you go? I thought maybe you left.

NAOMI

No, I took a walk and went to the ladies room.

The following dialogue ensues as NAOMI tastes her soup, grabs a napkin, turns herself away from the kids and spits the soup into the napkin.

JULIE

My crime took two hours and I got twenty five years.

CAROLE

Suck it up. My crime only took twenty minutes. And I got sixty two years. No parole. I'll be locked up in here til I'm 78 years old.

NAOMI

You know, I'm not all that hungry.

ARIEL

(Raises her hand so LISA will acknowledge her)

Officer Grogan I gotta go pee.

LISA

(Calls on her radio for an escort for ARIEL)

I need an escort from the dayroom.

NAOMI

(To MEEGAN)

So, how long have you been in here?

MEEGAN

Couple months. I don't got nothin in common with none of these girls.

NAOMI

How come?

MEEGAN Shrugs.

NAOMI, *Continued*

I mean what do you like to do?

MEEGAN

I'm into white magic.

NAOMI

What's white magic?

MEEGAN

It's the opposite of black magic. This man I know does black magic, and whatever he does, I'm doin the opposite.

NAOMI

Why is that?

MEEGAN

Cause when I was little, he raped me and raped me and raped me, and I hate him!

CAROLE

Gin.

LISA turns the TV off.

DA CELL

Hey! Why you turnin off that TV?

LISA

It's time to start the afternoon class.

DA CELL

No it ain't.

LISA

The schedule is different now on Fridays. Time to start!

ANGEL

(Jumps to her feet)

I don't get to see the rest of my Jerry Springer?

JADE

This is really messed up.

LISA

Ms. Gordon is here to teach you something.

DA CELL

We don't need no alcohol and drug classes.

ANGEL

I need my Jerry Springer!

JADE

We been through it a zillion times.

ARIEL

Yeah, The DARE program this and the DARE program that!

JADE

We know all about it! If you hold your liquor, you ain't a addict.

ANGEL

Naw, if you drink and don't get drunk then you is a addict!

CAROLE

And if you just drink on weekends, you don't got no problem.

DA CELL

What!

The following dialogue and blocking, in bold font, happens simultaneously. They all are yelling at once. The room erupts again into loud chaos. This chaos lasts from 10-20 seconds.

ANGEL

Yeah, didn't you take no classes? Every class I ever took said that if you can hold your alcohol then you is a addict.

MEEGAN

(To JULIE)

Will you help me with the math, now please?

JULIE

Yeah, I'll help you.

MEEGAN

I hate algebra. How's algebra gonna help me? I ain't never gonna need Algebra?

JULIE pulls out her math book. She and MEEGAN look at the book and JULIE starts to tell her what to do. They talk audibility as others have their conversations.

JADE

(Gets up to look for a pencil and paper)

I can't find me no pencil and paper. Anybody got a pencil? Hey, has anybody got a pencil? I can't take this noise no more.

ARIEL

We don't want to do it! And we're not gonna listen!

ARIEL sings the phrases she is singing above over and over, as she makes little balls of paper from a tablet and throws them over toward the trash can in the corner.

CAROLE

(Leafs through a magazine)

Hey Da Cell, check it out. Ariel will you stop that. You are drivin me crazy with that. Ariel Quit!

DA CELL and CAROLE look at the magazine.

DA CELL

That is nice! But I wouldn't be spendin my money on that.

ANGEL

(Hollers to LISA)

Officer Grogan. I need my soaps, and my Jerry Springer! I count on that every day. I think about it when I first wake up in the morning and it helps me! I need it every day!

ALLISON Leaves the table and finds a seat in the corner of the room; slumps listlessly.

ALLISON

I can't fuckin stand this fuckin place.

LISA

Hey! *(The Simultaneous dialogue ends)* **This is my last warning!** *(Kids become quiet)* If you don't stop yelling, I will lock you down in your cells for 48 hours.

Not wanting to be locked down, the girls stop yelling.

NAOMI

You guys don't know what you're talking about.

ALLISON

We don't care what you think! Get out!

NAOMI

What can I do for you?!

DA CELL

We got a lot a complaints!!

NAOMI

Alright. Let me have it.

NAOMI grabs her pad of paper to write down their complaints.

ARIEL

Officer Grogan, I really gotta pee!

LISA

You'll just have to wait for your escort!

DA CELL

We're juveniles just like the kids at The Children's Center! But they got all kinds of programs.

NAOMI

How do you know so much about the Children's Center?

DA CELL

My cousins up there, my girlfriend. You know. Lots of people. They got drug treatment up there, victim awareness, sex abuse. They got all kinds of teachers, too! They got a school!

JULIE

(Raises her hand)

I need college courses. I'm a good student. I was taking community college courses.

DA CELL

Yeah, whatever! *(Resuming her comparison)* They got art classes....

ANGEL

Yeah, I need to do my art! I want my art supplies!

NAOMI

I will get them for you!

CAROLE

I need to get outside sometimes. We can't go out there cause some adults is always in the yard.

DA CELL

If they want us to do this juvenile program, we got to get what they get at the kiddie camp. If they don't want us to have no contact with the adult inmates, they gotta put us in a separate building so we can move around some.

NAOMI

Anything else?

ANGEL

I wanna know what my meds are doin to me.

JULIE

(Raising her hand)

Me too.

JADE

I wanna know the side effects.

NAOMI

I have a book with that information. I'll bring that next week.

JADE

Yeah.

NAOMI

I'm going to buy you some journals and pens.

In the following dialogue the kids are so excited that they overlap.

Colored pens? ANGEL

Sure. What colors do you want? NAOMI

I want lavender. ANGEL

Get me pink. DA CELL

I want teal. JULIE

I want a blue pen. ARIEL

Blue? All pens are blue except when they're black. JADE

You so stupid Ariel. DA CELL

Officer Grogan I can't hold it anymore! I'm gonna pee my pants! ARIEL

(*Indicating ARIEL*) NAOMI

Lisa, isn't there something we can do here!

No, we have to wait for an escort! LISA

Can I get pink? CAROLE

I want pink. MEEGAN

What would you like? NAOMI

ALLISON

(Picks her head off her arm)

I don't care.

NAOMI

If you did care, what color would you want?

ALLISON

Green I guess.

NAOMI

And you?

JADE

I want jade.

ANGEL

No spirals in them journals!

DA CELL

Yeah, and no springs in them pens!

NAOMI

What?

CAROLE

They won't let you bring in notebooks with spiral wires and no pens with a spring.

Black out.

Light comes up on LISA smoking an E Cigarette. NAOMI enters. They are outside.

NAOMI

Oh my God!

LISA

These kids are rough.

NAOMI

Please! This is impossible! How do you do this every day?

LISA

Barely... I like kids. I requested this assignment. But after 6 months, I gotta get out of there. Cause I'm locked down just like them!

JAMES enters.

JAMES

Hello ladies. An E cigarette? That's no way to quit.

LISA

Yeah...I can't quit right now. Not working with these kids. But... at least I'm not killing my family with the smoke.

NAOMI

I've got to see Ms. White. Which way do I go?

JAMES

Go right back inside the building ma'am. Go past the day room. A security officer will escort you up to her office.

NAOMI

Thanks. I'll be coming in once a week. So, I'll see you next Friday.

NAOMI exits.

JAMES

Think she'll come back?

LISA

I don't know. But if I don't get transferred out of there soon, I won't come back.

JAMES

No word yet, huh?

LISA

No.

JAMES

It's nice out.....

LISA

I can't wait 'til summer. Take my kids to the lake. Spend the whole week end *outside*.

*Lights crossfade to CAROLINE'S office.
CAROLINE is working at her desk. NAOMI
appears in the doorway.*

CAROLINE

Ms. Gordon. Please come in.

NAOMI

Ms. White, these children are out of control.

CAROLINE

(Rises)

Are the juveniles here different from the inmates at The Children's Center?

NAOMI

No, they're the same. It's their situation that's untenable. There are no windows in that dayroom! Green cinderblocks is all they ever see!

CAROLINE

There are windows in the day room.

NAOMI

Where?

CAROLINE

In the doors.

NAOMI

The windows in the doors face an internal hallway!

CAROLINE

We are doing the best we can Ms. Gordon! We have to abide by the laws of the state. They are allowed no contact with the adult inmates. So, where do we put them? You tell me!

NAOMI

(After a pause)

I would like to see where they sleep. I need to get the full picture.

CAROLINE

I'll have one of our corrections officers give you the tour next week.

NAOMI

They asked me to give you a list of their grievances. Some should be *easy* to rectify. And we need to get their art supplies back.

CAROLINE

(Peruses the list)

What happened to their art supplies?

NAOMI

They took them away because the kids were painting their finger nails with the paint.

CAROLINE picks up the phone and punches four numbers.

CAROLINE

This is Ms. White. Please see to it that the art supplies are returned to the juveniles in the day room.

Black Out.

WEEK 2

AT RISE:

Sounds of the prison. Buzz, Slide Slam. Then, sound of keys and a metallic door. Lights come up on NAOMI and RAY MORGAN. RAY is standing inside JADE'S cell. NAOMI is just outside the door. They are in the cell block where the kids live.

RAY

The juveniles all have their own cells now. Soon, there'll be two to a cell.

RAY enters a very neat cell, kept just so. He picks up a photograph and shows it to NAOMI.

RAY, *Continued*

She's a beauty, that Jade, don't you think... She gets herself all pretty every day. (*Angry that he can't get any*) Who's she tryin to attract, putting on that makeup and fixing her hair all nice.

RAY starts tearing through JADE'S stuff looking for contraband, with no regard. He leaves it a mess. As he is doing that, the following dialogue ensues.

RAY, *Continued*

Now, why would a pretty lady like you want to come in here to be with these bad kids.

NAOMI

I look for the good. I usually find it.

RAY

They all killed somebody, you know.

NAOMI

Yeah... I know.... You've left her cell a mess!

RAY closes the cell door. Metallic sounds.

RAY

She'll live. Want me to open this one too?

NAOMI

(Not wanting him to do any further damage)

Ah...no.

Black out.

The lights come up on the kids in the day room. They are bored and it is obvious. ANGEL is drawing on a piece of cardboard with a pen and Julie is reading a book. LISA sits on a chair in the corner. NAOMI stands just inside the door.

NAOMI

Hi.

SEVERAL GIRLS

(Groan)

Hi.

NAOMI moves to the front of the room.

NAOMI

Did you get your art supplies back?

SEVERAL GIRLS

No

NAOMI

I've been thinking about you guys all week.

ARIEL

Like we care what you think.

NAOMI

I brought you journals and pens. If you're nice to me, at the end of the day, I'll give you one.

ANGEL

Oh we get it, behavior modification.

NAOMI

I don't think you do get it. I don't give presents to people who are mean to me.

JADE

Are they pretty?

NAOMI slides three journals out of her paper bag. The covers of the journals are colorful and different from one another. The kids point and reach toward the one they want. They have to restrain themselves from grabbing them.

Oooh, I want that one.

ARIEL

I want this.

JADE

Look how pretty this one is

CAROLE

Show us the pens.

ANGEL

NAOMI digs down into the bottom of the bag, and pulls the pens.

Ooooh. Got lots of colors.

ANGEL

Look at that pink one.

CAROLE

NAOMI slips the pens and the journals back into the bag.

So, let's begin our morning class.

NAOMI

NAOMI pulls the Physician's Desk Reference out of her back pack.

I brought the book I promised so you can look up your medications.

NAOMI

NAOMI hands the book to ANGEL.

I wanna see.

JADE

Me too.

ARIEL

The kids arrange themselves so that all can look into the book.

ANGEL

Ativan. I wanna look for Ativan. *(Finds it)* ...Memory loss, addictive, coma, damn!!

NAOMI

They have to put all the side effects in there. Most of them are rare.

ARIEL

Hey! Look up Haldol!

ARIEL bounces around, happy that they are looking up her drug.

ANGEL

Haldol. Side effects. Sudden and unexpected death.

ARIEL

(Shouts)

Oh No!!

DA CELL

(As she covers her ears)

You better shut up Ariel!

ARIEL

Read more! What else?

ANGEL

Impaired liver function. Increased li bido. *(Lifts head out of the book)* What's Libido?

NAOMI

Sex drive.

ARIEL

(Jumps around)

We don't need that!!

DA CELL

Ariel! Stop yellin in my ear!

Women's voices are heard as they walk by the door.

LISA

Eyes on the floor! Eyes on the floor! Eyes on the floor!

The kids freeze and look at the floor.

NAOMI

What the hell is going on?

LISA

Some adult inmates are walking by the door.....Alright the coast is clear.

JADE

Damn, I feel like a damn dog.

DA CELL

That's how they want you to feel.

The kids resume their activity. ANGEL continues to look at the book.

ANGEL

(Sits up straight in here chair.)

Hey! I ain't takin these drugs no more!

NAOMI

These drugs are safer than what you did on the outside.

DA CELL

You don't know nothing about what we did on the outs!

NAOMI

Ok, how many of you drank and took drugs on the outs?

All the kids raise their hands. DA CELL crosses her arms over her chest.

CAROLE

Do they got birth control in there?

NAOMI

Yeah, they do.

JADE takes the book from ANGEL, and looks through the book.

JADE

Here it is. They got the pill the patch the shot.

ARIEL

Do they have sponges in there?

JADE

Yeah they do.... *(Turns the pages)* Right here.

ARIEL

(Clowns around; pats the top of JADE'S head repeatedly)
Spongie, spongie, spongie, spongie.

JADE

Ariel quit!

LISA

Alright. Break time.

As the kids scatter, the following dialogue ensues.

NAOMI

A break? I just got started! Lunch isn't here yet.

LISA

Ariel is getting pretty wound up. Her soap opera will keep her quiet for a good half hour, give everybody a break.

LISA uses the remote to turn on TV. ARIEL dashes over to the TV. A soap opera is heard faintly. JADE and DA CELL start a game of cards. ANGEL sits with them and draws on her cardboard with her pen. ALLISON and CAROLE go to watch TV. MEEGAN sits at a table and NAOMI sits with her and looks over her notes for the afternoon. JULIE sits with a book. LISA sits with a magazine.

JADE

This hand sucks.

DA CELL

Well, now you know how it feels. I got real bad hands yesterday.

JADE

I'm gettin sick of this game.

DA CELL

That's cause you got a bad hand.

JADE

Naw. It's cause I'm gettin sick of this game.

MEEGAN

You know Naomi, I got some kids, somewhere.

NAOMI

(Looks up from her notes)

You do?

MEEGAN

My last one I kept for a week, then she got took away...

NAOMI

Was that hard for you?

DA CELL

Gin.

MEEGAN

No... not really.... I didn't like those babies.

JADE flips the cards so they explode into the room.

LISA

Jade, pick those up.

JADE picks up the cards. JAMES enters.

JAMES

Hello, charming ladies.

DA CELL

Charming ladies? Who you talkin to?

JAMES

You, sometimes. Officer Grogran. You want a break? I'll take them to their cells, you do lunch and I'll do the afternoon.

With a sense of relief. LISA gets up to leave.

LISA

Thank you.

JAMES takes her seat as the lights fade. A DVD about a family struggling with addiction can be heard.

Lights come up in the day room. NAOMI, JAMES and the kids are now in front of the TV. As the DVD ends, some of the kids stretch in their seats.

JADE

You know that mom was as bad as the dad. She didn't drink none, but she was all into his business. She didn't take no care of her kids.

MEEGAN

The older girl acted like the mom of everybody and the boy acted like the dad.

ANGLE

And the baby was sexually abused.

NAOMI

Why do you say that?

ANGLE

Cause when she did that little drawing and the teacher asked her about it, she said it was a secret.

NAOMI

(Passes out paper and pens with no springs to the girls)

Now, let's spend some time writing about your own experiences that may be similar to what you saw in the movie. You can write a poem or a story, or you can draw something if you like.

DA CELL

I don't know nobody that happened to.

NAOMI

Well then make it up. Like a story.

DA CELL

(Writes two words then slaps down her pencil)

I'm done.

ANGEL

(Slaps down her pencil)

Me too.

JADE

Me three.

CAROLE

(Slaps down her pencil too)

Yep.

MEEGAN puts her pen down softly, to avoid notice.

NAOMI

Let's wait for the others to finish.

DA CELL

Ain't you done yet Julie. Teacher's pet.

JULIE

(Lays down her pencil quietly)

I'll finish later.

DA CELL

All I know is weed keeps me from gettin cancer. And cancer will kill you.

NAOMI

(Incredulously)

How does that work?

DACELL

You know they say if you smoke weed, you won't get cancer. Which is fine with me cause I be takin my medication.

NAOMI

People use marijuana when they get chemo because it helps with the nausea. But if you smoke it enough, it may cause cancer.

DA CELL

Well, you believe that if it makes you feel better. But I know what I know.

ARIEL

Can we be done?

DA CELL

Yeah, we're done!

NAOMI

(Pulls the journals and pens out of the bag)

Here you go guys.

The kids surround NAOMI as she hands them their journals and pens.

ANGEL

I want that one!

CAROLE

I want that!

NAOMI

Here's your pen.

ARIEL

Can I have that one?

NAOMI

A light blue pen for you.

JADE

Can I have that?

NAOMI

Here you go. Julie, here's yours. And Da Cell, here's your pink pen. Meegan you've been patient.

MEEGAN

Thank you so much Naomi. This journal is beautiful!

NAOMI

You're welcome honey.

NAOMI observes the delight the kids take in her gifts.

NAOMI

Next Friday is Valentine's Day. Maybe I can bring in some snacks to celebrate.

JADE

You mean like chips and stuff?

NAOMI

Yep.

NAOMI writes down everything they request. DA CELL drifts to the corner of the room and observes. She doesn't participate in the requests.

JADE

I want me some Pringles Potato Chips. You know, like in a can!

ARIEL

Yeah, and fruit gushers!

CAROLE

Get me some corn chips and jalapeño, cheese dip!

ANGEL

I gotta have me some chocolate! And some Pepperidge Farm Cookies!

MEEGAN

Yeah! Pepperidge Farm chocolate chips!

ARIEL

(Jumps around)
Garditos! Get me some Garditos!

JULIE

(Raises her hand)
Can I have some Triscuits, please?

NAOMI

Ok, I got it all written down.

ANGEL

And some beef jerky! It's all gotta be prepackaged or they won't let you in.

Lights crossfade to up on CAROLINE. She is on the phone. She addresses her supervisor as if in the military.

CAROLINE

Yes sir! I will have that for you at 4 o'clock.....I don't have *that* information, sir. I understand. I will research that and you will have the *full* report..... May I have an extension, sir? I understand.....people are waiting and eager to move forward....I learned of this yesterday.... Yes...yes sir! I appreciate your position, sir.... . At 4 sharp!

CAROLINE hangs up the phone and goes immediately to work on her computer. NAOMI appears at the door.

NAOMI

Ms. White.

CAROLINE

(Speaks without looking up)
Yes, Ms. Gordon.

NAOMI

Where are their art supplies?

CAROLINE

(Still without looking up)
Weren't they in the dayroom?

NAOMI

No...This is important!

CAROLINE stops working and looks up.

CAROLINE

I know the value of art. I was an art major in college.

NAOMI

You got to be kidding! Really?

CAROLINE

You think art will fix this??!!

NAOMI

Fix it?? Nothing is going to fix this situation, short of fixing the situation! Look...this isn't just about magic markers and paints. I have to produce in order for them to trust me. I have to be able to say yes to them and mean it! Now, you can help that by responding to some of their grievances, like the need for exercise, fresh air...art!

CAROLINE

In a few years, if the legislature can find the funding, we should have a separate living facility for the juveniles, PE, and an arts program. After all, Rome wasn't built in a day.

NAOMI

What about these kids right now? Or the other 10 kids, yet to come this year, who will share a cell as big as my closet??!!!

CAROLINE

(Stands; crosses behind chair)

Laurie Charles called me today to tell me that the Children's Center is having trouble recruiting teachers for the morning classes.

NAOMI

It's a hard job. No one is volunteering.

CAROLINE

But the Children's Center specializes in this population.

NAOMI

Not under these conditions they don't.

CAROLINE

It is our expectation that the Children's Center will send teachers as stipulated in their contract. *(Crosses around and sits in her chair, puts on her glasses)* Now, if you'll excuse me Ms. Gordon, I have work to do.

Black Out.

WEEK 3

AT RISE:

There is the sound of metal on metal, buzz, slide and slam. Prison sounds. MEEGAN is moved to the Hole. Lights come up on the day room.

DA CELL

Shut up Julie. You don't got nothin to say that I wanna hear.

JULIE

I wasn't even talking to you.

DA CELL

You don't need to be talkin to me for me to hear what you said. And I'm tellin you that it ain't your business.

JACKIE

(Shouts much of the time)

Yeah, what ain't your business ain't your business.

ANGEL

Shut up Jackie!! What ain't *your* business ain't *your* business! *(To DE CELL)* Hey, De Cell. Can I use your pink pen?

JACKIE

I already got her pen. She gave it to me.

ANGEL turns to DA CELL for confirmation.

DA CELL

(Pitting JACKIE and ANGEL against each other for her attention)

Yeah, *Angel*, I gave her my pen.

As ANGEL is hurt and crosses her arms, NAOMI enters.

NAOMI

(To JACKIE)

Hi. You're new.

JACKIE

(Loudly)

My name is Jackie, if you want to know.

ANGEL

Jackie, you always yellin! Ain't she always yellin Da Cell? You can't even talk right!

JACKIE

(Taunting ANGEL)
But I *do* got Da Cell's pink pen!

*ANGEL folds up in her chair with jealousy.
JACKIE laughs.*

LISA

Settle down!

NAOMI

(To JACKIE)
I'm Naomi. I come on Fridays to work with you guys.

ALLISON

We don't like you. Go away. Leave us alone.

NAOMI

Where's Meegan?

*Lights come up on MEEGAN in the hole.
She is coming to the end of a good cry, as
dialogue continues.*

ARIEL

She's in the hole.

NAOMI

What did she do?

ARIEL

She almost hit me.

JADE

(Helpfully instructing ARIEL)
That's cause you annoy people Ariel. And then *they* get in trouble.

NAOMI

Well, I couldn't bring in the snacks.

*MEEGAN dries her face with her hands.
She sits dejected.*

JADE

We knew you wouldn't be able to. At least you tried.

NAOMI

For reasons that I don't understand, the institution wouldn't let me bring in any food, even if it was pre-packaged. I'm disappointed and frustrated.... Did they return your art supplies?

ANGEL

Yeah, but they didn't give us no paper and there ain't hardly any paint brushes.

Silence.

JADE

(Raises her hand)

My pen broke. You think you could bring me another one?

NAOMI

What happened to it?

JADE

I don't know, it just stopped writin.

MEEGAN pulls out her journal, hugs it to her, and rubs her hand across it affectionately.

NAOMI

(Writes on her tablet)

Sure, no problem.

JADE

Bring me a purple one.

ANGEL

Them pens ain't real good to draw with.

NAOMI attempts to raise their spirits, enticing them.

NAOMI

How many of you would like a soft, colored pencil?

All the kids shoot up their hands enthusiastically. Lights black out in the day room and fade on MEEGAN in the hole. The kids in the day room go to their cells. JULIE and ALLISON remain. Lights come up. JULIE, ALLISON NAOMI and LISA are in the day room.

NAOMI, *Continued*

Nice to have some peace and quiet.

JULIE

Yeah, I'm not used to being around people all the time. Not so many different kinds of people.

NAOMI

Did you grow up in a small town?

JULIE

Pretty small.

NAOMI

What do you like to do Julie? On the outs, what did you do for fun?

JULIE

Well, I like choir. I went to choir practice.

NAOMI

That's great! A school choir?

JULIE

I was in my school choir and my church choir.

NAOMI

I would love to hear you sing.

JULIE

I'll sing something if you like.

NAOMI

That would be wonderful!

JULIE sings a verse or two of Amazing Grace. Her voice is sweet and clear.

NAOMI

(Clapping lightly)

That was beautiful.

ALLISON

I like to sing too.

NAOMI

(Gets an idea)

Really? !!!!

You can hear the kids talking as they leave their cells and head for the day room. JADE and ANGEL start playing a board game. ARIEL pulls out her hackie sack bean bag

and she and JULIE start playing catch with it. DA CELL, CAROLE, JACKIE, and LISA go to watch TV. ALLISON watches TV from her chair. NAOMI looks over her notes for the afternoon. As they barge into the room the following dialogue commences.

Hey Julie catch.
ARIEL

Why is it always so cold in here?
CAROLE

You shoulda brought your jacket. That's what I do.
ANGEL

Me too.
JADE

I brought my jacket.
JACKIE

Yeah, *whatever*!!!!
ANGEL

JULIE throws the bean bag hard and fast to ARIEL, hitting ALLISON in the head. From her chair ALLISON swings at ARIEL.

You pig! Keep away from me!
ALLISON

Alright you two! Break it up!
LISA

It was Julie who threw it! Don't blame me! Why do I always get blamed for everything?
ARIEL

Just stay away from me Ariel!
ALLISON

(Raises her voice)
I'll stand where I want! You don't have any right to tell me where to stand!
ARIEL

Break it up! You two are always at it!
LISA

ARIEL goes to sit and watch TV. JULIE picks up her book and sits. JACKIE switches off the TV and turns on the radio to some music. She starts dancing.

JACKIE

(Tries to pull DA CELL out of her chair)

Let's dance.

DA CELL

You dance.

JACKIE dances for DA CELL'S entertainment. She looks beautiful when she dances. She is a natural born dancer. Seeing this, ANGEL lies down and covers her head with her Jacket.

Lights fade down on the scene and a spot comes up on NAOMI and ANGEL.

NAOMI

Angel, are you Ok?

ANGEL

(With her jacket still over her head)

No!

NAOMI

You know Angel, you seem like a person who has strong feelings about lots of things. You seem to be a very passionate person. Some people have trouble with passionate people. I like them. I think it's a gift to have strong feelings. It makes life rich. The trick is to channel those feelings into doing some good.

ANGEL

(Peeks her head out of her jacket)

What, so are you hot for me?

NAOMI

Ah!...No Angel. I recognize your passion and I appreciate it...I've been noticing that you like to draw...

ANGEL

(Pops up)

Yeah, I like to draw. When I was little we painted a mural on a wall at school. I could do that all day long, and the next day too.

NAOMI

Would you show me your drawings sometime?

ANGEL

Yeah, I could do that.

Lights come up on the room. JACKIE is still dancing. ANGEL then lies down and covers her head with her jacket. LISA turns off the radio.

LISA

OK. Time for group.

JULIE

Naomi, I have a question about something you said. When you said addiction progresses faster in teens, did you mean.....

DA CELL

Julie, don't be such a kiss ass.

LISA

Da Cell, Language!

DA CELL

Oh OK....Julie, don't be such a brown noser.

CAROLE

Brown noser?

Both DA CELL and CAROLE laugh. ANGEL, with pooched-out lips, makes kissing noises at JULIE. JACKIE points at JULIE.

JACKIE

Brown noser, brown noser, brown noser, brown noser.

JULIE starts to cry, silently.

LISA

That's enough!

JADE

That *is* enough.

*As ANGEL lies back down with her jacket,
JADE lies down and covers her head with
her jacket.*

NAOMI

How can you be so mean?

DA CELL

You be so nice to Julie. She got twenty five years. I only got ten. She did way worse than me. Why you be so nice to Julie? Cause she's *polite*?

NAOMI

I know the cruelty of teenage girls and I just can't stand it! Meanness... deliberate cruelty.... You guys need to make different choices. You do bad things! If you keep doing that, you'll be locked up forever.

DA CELL

I'm sick of this shit, and I'm sick of seein you every Friday.

LISA

Da Cell!

DA CELL

They can't get no teachers to come. Ain't that right?

NAOMI

Yeah, that's true.

DE CELL

What, are they afraid of us or somethin'?

NAOMI

They're not afraid of you. It's the situation that makes it hard.

DE CELL

The situation? It's hard for them to come in here once a week? This is really fucked up!

LISA

Da Cell!

DA CELL

They ain't comin in cause they don't like the situation? We locked up in here like animals 24/7 and people can't come in here for one day?

NAOMI

I am here! Work with me!

DA CELL

You ain't doin nothin for us. You can't bring the kiddie camp in here once a week and think you're doin somethin. We need a full plate or nothin at all. We need real services up in here. Not this lame ass shit. Why you still comin up in here anyhow.

JADE

(Comes out from under her jacket)

I like it when she comes. It seems like she cares about us.

DA CELL

Cares about us how? She comes here cause it makes her feel good. *(To NAOMI)* You're feedin yourself a load of bullshit.

LISA stands abruptly. The following dialogue is overlaps.

LISA

That's it! Da Cell you're going to the hole!

ANGEL pops out from under her jacket.

NAOMI

What?! Wait a minute!!! NO!!!!

DA CELL

You sendin me to the hole for speakin the truth?

LISA radios for RAY.

DA CELL, *Continued*

Well, you do that then, you mother fuckin, cock suckin bitch. Yeah, the truth about things ain't real popular around here. You call them guards.

RAY enters to escort DA CELL to the hole.

DA CELL

You send me to the hole, you bitch ass cunt.

RAY

Let's go Da Cell.

DA CELL

Just don't you put your hands on me!

RAY

Go Da Cell, now!

They leave.

Damn!

ANGEL

You got that right.

JADE

She was just sayin her mind.

JACKIE

Shut up Jackie! Just shut the “F” up!!

ANGEL

Long pause.... ANGEL lies down and covers her head with her jacket. ARIEL jiggles her leg and tosses a bean bag back and forth in her hands throughout the following scene.

What is the most important thing in life to you?

NAOMI

My freedom.

JADE

Yeah, well....If you’d made different choices and were free, what would you consider the most important thing in life?

NAOMI

Money.

CAROLE

Money huh? What about love?

NAOMI

Love? You can do without love. You can’t do nothin without money.

CAROLE

I don’t care about money.

JADE

Me neither.

ALLISON

Carole’s right. You can’t do nothin without money. You can’t walk around all raggedy, your kids lookin bad on the streets. You gotta have money.

JACKIE

NAOMI

Didn't money and material things cost you your freedom?

JACKIE

What?

NAOMI

Didn't you kill somebody for something they had that you wanted?

JACKIE.

You don't know nothin about my crime.!!

CAROLE

You sayin money don't matter?

NAOMI

No, it matters.... You need money to live. But it's not the most important thing in my life.

ARIEL

That's cause you got it.

NAOMI

Well, I do have enough money.

CAROLE

But you want more! Right?

NAOMI

If I wanted more, I'd work more.

CAROLE

What about fifty million dollars! Would you like fifty million dollars?

*JADE lies back down and covers her head
with her jacket. ARIEL stops moving.*

NAOMI

Fifty million dollars would be nice, if I won it in the lottery.

CAROLE

I bet for fifty million dollars, you'd kill your father.

NAOMI

(Incredulous!!!)

What?!!!!

CAROLE

(Leans in)

For fifty million dollars I would kill anybody. I'd kill my mother for that much money. And so would you! And you're lyin if you say different! Everybody would. Anybody would.

NAOMI

No Carole. Most people wouldn't! Most people aren't like you!

CAROLE

(Leans back and crosses her arms)

Yeah, they are. They just don't admit it.

NAOMI

Who would you spare, Carole?

CAROLE

....Maybe, my baby niece.... Naw, I'd do her too.

Black out.

Lights come up on MEEGAN and DA CELL in two separate cells. The Hole. MEEGAN is writing in her journal. DA CELL paces in the very small space.

DA CELL

This is fucked up. I'll go crazy in here. *(Shouts to someone who might hear)* I'll go crazy in here! How long I gotta be in here? *(Long pause as she waits as if someone might answer. She calls out again.)* I can't be in here no three weeks! *(Starts to cry and says softly to herself)* I can't be in here....

Lights crossfade up on CAROLINE and NAOMI in CAROLINE'S office. They are both seated.

NAOMI

I would like to meet with them one on one in the afternoon.

CAROLINE

But you were hired to run groups.

NAOMI

The atmosphere is toxic. They can't be nice to each other. A group is impossible. If I meet with them individually, I'll build trust. It *could* make forming a group easier.

CAROLINE

You can do that for one week. Now.... *(Gets up from her desk and closes the door to her office)* Do you touch the juveniles at The Children's Center?

NAOMI

Sometimes, if they've done a wonderful job in group, I might give them a hug. There's not a whole lot of touching, but some.

CAROLINE

(Coolly)

We don't touch inmates here.

NAOMI

What's the problem?

CAROLINE

Mind you, this may only be a perception. A perception on the part of the staff, and possibly the inmate.

NAOMI

OK, what happened?

CAROLINE

You were sitting too close to an inmate. It appeared inappropriate.

NAOMI

Can you be more specific?

CAROLINE

Remember it is a perception. But how actions are *perceived* here is important. So, keep your distance. Secondly, *(Sits and through the rest of this speech, tidies her desk by moving things around just so)* I understand that you told the juveniles this morning that the administration of this institution was preventing you from bringing them the food that they requested.

CAROLINE folds her hands on her desk.

NAOMI

Yes.

CAROLINE

You also told them that you are disappointed and frustrated with the institution and you don't understand our reasoning.

NAOMI

I said something to that effect. I am disappointed. I don't understand.

CAROLINE

It is inappropriate for you to say anything derogatory to the inmates about this institution. You are not to tell them that the institution is keeping something from them, or is not allowing something to occur. After all, we are the ones who bring you here to work with the juveniles. We are providing the services. Is that clear?

NAOMI

I hear you....The kids got most of their art supplies, but there's no paper and only two paint brushes.

CAROLINE

(Begins to do some work on the computer)

The juveniles have paper, and plenty of paint brushes. You must be mistaken.

NAOMI

Umm..... No.....But....OK. How about some magic markers!

CAROLINE

(Stops what she is doing)

No!!

NAOMI

Why not?

CAROLINE

Because I said so!!! *(Pause)* Now, is there anything else?

NAOMI

No! We're done!

Black Out.

INTERMISSION

WEEK 4

AT RISE:

There are prison sounds as CAROLE has moved to the Hole and MEEGAN has returned to the day room. Lights come up on the day room. The kids are bored and lack luster. JAMES is sitting in the corner. NAOMI enters. DA CELL and CAROLE are absent.

NAOMI

Hi Guys. I brought this really cool video for this afternoon. It's called The Miracle of life and it actually takes you inside, *for real*, a man's and woman's body to show how a baby is made. Where's Carole?

MEEGAN

In the hole

NAOMI

What'd she do?

JADE

You know she got a hella long sentence, Naomi. She gonna live her life in prison.

JADE finds CAROLE funny until the end of the story.

JADE, *Continued*

So, I don't know, yesterday or was it the day before, she ran up top of the cell block and started dancin and singin and strippin off her clothes. She was talkin to the adults and cussin. And we was laughin, cause it was real funny. (*Her smile fades*) But then they put her in the hole.

Lights fade. Lights come up on the two girls in the hole. Each in her own cell. DA CELL is seated on the floor. She sighs and stares. She looks around at her empty cell. She stands up.

DA CELL

(Shouts)

Hey! How much longer I gotta be in here.?!!

CAROLE is seated. She likes the solitude of the hole. DA CELL paces some and cries softly.

CAROLE

(To herself)

That officer gets in my face again, I'm gonna cut her fuckin toes off. (*Laughs*) I'm gonna just clip her toes clean off!

DA CELL

(Cries softly to herself)

I need somebody to talk to...I can't be by myself..... (*Discovers herself*) God Damn! What the fuck!..... How many days I been like this!..... (*Wipes the tears off her face*) I can't be doin this.... All cryin and shit?.... I gotta get ahold of myself.....I ain't gonna be nobody's bitch.

Lights fade and come up in the day room. The kids and NAOMI are watching the DVD The Miracle of Life, a documentary about reproduction.

JACKIE

How'd they get in there to see that woman pop her egg?

NAOMI

Wish I could tell you.

MEEGAN

Look at those tubes sorta reachin for it.

ANGEL

Yeah, look how they make them hormones all beautiful and shit.

ARIEL

(Encircles her womb with her arms)

Wow, that's cool! Does that happen? Does it do like that inside?

NAOMI

This is for real.

JACKIE

Wow!

MEEGAN

Now, you know that's gotta hurt.

NAOMI

I'm sure it didn't. I don't know how they did this. But I'm sure the people were not in pain.

JACKIE

Damn, he gotta be dead. I don't care what you say. Ain't no man alive gonna let nobody stick no camera up his penis.

JADE

Shoot look at all them sperm. They're workin hard!

ANGEL

(Like a light bulb goes on, sits straight up in her chair)

Hey, they're like these fish I saw in school when I was little! My teacher took us to watch these fish swimmin real hard to get home.

JACKIE

Got two tails. Well that ain't good! Look at that one! It don't got no head!

JADE

Where's your head mister?

Silence as they watch. Time passes.

JACKIE

I wanna know how they did that. How they got that camera in there.

ARIEL

Yeah, they coulda hurt that baby. Look how cute. It's suckin it's thumb.

ANGEL

It is suckin its thumb!

Silence as they watch. Time passes.

ANGEL

Damn! She's pushin hard.

JADE

She got a nice man helpin her.

ARIEL

Oh, look here comes the baby. It's all slimy. Is it like that?

NAOMI

Yeah, they clean it up though.

JADE

Look it's a girl!

MEEGAN

That dad is so sweet!

JULIE

That was really cool!

Lights fade. JACKIE, JULIE and ALLISON go to their cells. ANGEL, MEEGAN, ARIEL and JADE remain in the day room. During the individual scenes that follow, only NAOMI and the girl she is talking with are lit. The scene should be staged so that the girl has the focus.

Lights come up on NAOMI and ANGEL. JAMES is stationed at a chair just outside the day room.

ANGEL has a wad of grape bubble gum in her mouth. She tends to sit with her legs stretched out in front of her.

NAOMI

Got any drawings to show me?

ANGEL

Nope . Maybe next time.

ANGEL blows a bubble. She chews the gum with enjoyment throughout this scene.

NAOMI

OK. Whenever you're ready, I'd love to see your art..... So, Angel, I've been noticing that you have a lot of energy and that you're funny.

ANGEL

I can see where you would say that.

NAOMI

Tell me some of your other good qualities.

ANGEL

(Bragg a little)

I draw. I can color and paint. I can do any art projects. I am funny. I'm a really good friend to people if I like them. If they get all up in my face and act stupid, I try to just ignore them, cause I got a anger problem. I'm smart and I wanna learn everything, even if it's hard for me, cause I got ADHD. You know what that is?

NAOMI

Yep.

ANGEL

I'll keep tryin though til I get it. I can run really fast. This one lady at school, when I was real little, told me I could be a track star. You know what track is?

NAOMI

Yes I do.

ANGEL

I like them soft colored pencils you brought us. Think you could bring some more.

NAOMI

I'll bring a new colored pencil for each of you.

ANGEL

Yeah!

NAOMI

Who do you trust? Who loves you?

ANGEL

I don't trust nobody but my auntie. I love, love, love my auntie. She always wants me to do good.

NAOMI

Where's your mother?

During the next speech, ANGEL gets up and throws her gum in the trash.

ANGEL

I don't know, and I don't care. She always let her boyfriends do what they want with me.....I ain't talkin no more! I'm done!

*Black out.
Lights come up on NAOMI and MEEGAN.
MEEGAN sits up straight in her chair.*

NAOMI

How are you?

MEEGAN

I'm OK.

NAOMI

What happened?

MEEGAN

Them girls were gettin on my last nerve! That's why I almost hit Ariel. I cried in the hole the first few days. But then I started writin in my journal.

NAOMI

What did you write?

MEEGAN

White Magic.

NAOMI

Tell me about that.

MEEGAN is enthusiastic as she talks about white magic. She educates NAOMI.

MEEGAN

Well Naomi, all of us are on this spiritual journey. And the spirit is in all living things. Like it's all one thing, but it makes different forms and personalities. There are personalities that go with people and with animals. And everyone has at least one animal that will help them find their way. *(As she says the following sentence she opens her arms out and stretches as she celebrates herself)* I have the knowledge and magic to tell people what animals they are. *(Looks at NAOMI gleefully)*

NAOMI

Wow! How do you do that?

MEEGAN

I watch people for a while, and I write down the things they do or say, and how they act in different situations. After I write a lot and think about the person real hard, the animal comes to me in my mind. I matched everybody in this juvenile program, even you. I haven't told none of these girls their animals, cause I don't trust none of them.

NAOMI

What animal am I?

MEEGAN

(Opens her journal)

You Naomi are a weasel.

NAOMI

A weasel!!

MEEGAN

Oh no weasels are great! I love weasels!

NAOMI

I don't want to be a weasel!

MEEGAN

(Laughs; waves her hands)

Listen, listen, listen. Weasels are like you Naomi. They know how to get what they want, but they don't get it right away, cause they got to wiggle their way around things and not be seen doin it.

NAOMI

Oh my God! How do you know that?! I am a weasel!

MEEGAN laughs, Black out. Lights come up on NAOMI and ARIEL. ARIEL moves around the room, distractedly.

ARIEL

I keep telling them that I need to see the doctor to get my medications fixed, but they don't do anything! It's like they think I'm making things up or something.

NAOMI

What are your symptoms?

ARIEL

I hear voices. They tell me to do things, and I can't sleep.

NAOMI

How long have you been on medication?

ARIEL

Just since I went to The Children's Center. But I've been hearing voices for a long time.

NAOMI

We'll get you in to see the doctor. Where are you parents?

ARIEL

(Stops moving)

I don't have parents. I don't even have a foster mom.

NAOMI

What happened there?

ARIEL

I've been in so many foster homes, maybe 25 or 26. I lost count. *(Crosses to sit with NAOMI)* That's why I like it here so much! I know where I'm gonna be! And so far, I got my own room!

Black out. Lights come up on JADE and NAOMI.

NAOMI

Jade you look so beautiful. I bet on the outs, your sense of style is fantastic. I bet you're talented that way!

JADE

Yeah well....Them guards is messin with me. They keep tearin up my cell. I leave it all pretty and nice and then they just tear it up. I ain't got nothing incriminatin in there. They just wanna mess with me.

NAOMI

I know, I saw him do it.

JADE

You know, I really like you Naomi. I know you get paid to come here, but it seems you really care.

NAOMI

Thank you Jade! What's going on with you?

JADE

I'm feelin real jealous of my little sister, and I know that ain't right. But she is gettin all the things I never got. My mom is goin on field trips with her and her school. Givin her all kinds of time and attention. I wanna know why she didn't bother to get sober for me.

JADE cries.

NAOMI

Aw, honey.

JADE

Both my parents done alcohol and drugs my whole life. They even put alcohol in my bottle when I was little. And my father would beat on me for no reason. He would grab whatever was close and just wail on me. All my mom would do was leave or shoot up some more of whatever she had. And now my mom is sober and spendin all this time with my little sister. And she don't even care that I'm up in here.

JADE continues to cry. NAOMI lets her cry a while. JADE gets up to get a box of tissues. She blows her nose.

NAOMI

Jade, what are the best things about you?

As she says the following, JADE, pulls another tissue. She wipes the mascara off her face meticulously.

JADE

Well....I'm a very understanding and open minded person. I like people and try to get along with everybody no matter who.... I care about my appearance. And yeah, I *am* talented that way. And that's important cause it makes the world a better place when people dress all nice and do their hair up with some style....And I feel guilty of my crime.

NAOMI

Good. So when you get out of here, you can stay out.

JADE

I ain't comin back in here no how! I wanna do somethin with my life!

NAOMI

I wonder if you'd be willing to try something for the next week.

JADE

What?

NAOMI

You are a good person. I see that every Friday. For the next week, write down every night all the good things you did, said, or even thought during the day. And write about your talent for fashion and how you made yourself and other things beautiful. Just keep a record of the good you do.

Black out. Lights and come up on JAMES and LISA. They are outside taking in the fresh air.

LISA

Well, *(Does a little happy dance as she lights her E cigarette)* my transfer finally came through.

JAMES

That's great! When?

LISA

Not til July. But I can handle that... I'm a little worried about Ray Morgan taking my place. He messed up Jade's cell again, Julie's too... She doesn't have anything in there. That guy's twisted.

JAMES

Yup... I'll keep my eyes open. It will be ok.

LISA

I don't know how you stand working with these kids.

JAMES

One day at a time. Easy does it, you know.... I composted my roses last weekend.

LISA

Roses are hard. You've got to prune them, cover them for the winter....too much to do.

JAMES

They're susceptible. That's for sure. They're more prone to disease than other flowers. So you really have to keep an eye on them and when you see something bad, you gotta get in there immediately. But it's worth it, cause my roses are beautiful!

*Black out. Lights come up on
CAROLINE'S office. NAOMI is standing
near the door. CAROLINE is seated
putting her things away for the day.*

NAOMI

Ariel hears voices.

CAROLINE

Really. I'll have to look into that.

NAOMI

I want to continue seeing them one at a time for a while.

CAROLINE

(Continues to get ready to leave for the day)

You were hired to run groups.

NAOMI

Look “You were hired to run groups.” And “Because I said so” don’t deal with the problem! Do you want my help with these kids or not?

CAROLINE

(Standing at this point)

I can’t have this conversation right now. I have to get my daughter to her voice lesson.

NAOMI

Julie sang in two choirs. Angel is a visual artist. And Jade has the potential for fashion design!

CAROLINE

We are doing the best we can!

NAOMI

These kids matter as much as your daughter or any other kid!

CAROLINE

Watch yourself Ms. Gordon. You’re crossing a line here!

NAOMI

All I’m asking for on their behalf is half an hour a week with an adult who cares about them. I need to see them one on one.... until further notice.

CAROLINE

(Sighs)

Meet with them one on one next week. As far as “further notice” is concerned, I will let you know. Now, you’ll have to excuse me. *(Puts on her coat)* I don’t want my daughter to stand in the rain.

Black Out.

All the girls move to the day room.

WEEK 5

AT RISE:

Lights come up. The kids are finishing up a collage about themselves, using magazines. DA Cell and CAROLE are absent. As each girl presents, she holds up her collage and points to it as she goes. ARIEL is struggling to contain herself. She is doing a good job of that. Her struggle does not steal the audiences focus.

Do you got any more tape, over there?

JADE

Yeah, we're about to be out.

ANGEL

Here's some.

ARIEL

I'm done.

MEEGAN

I'm done too.

JULIE

Is everybody close to done?

NAOMI

Yeah, I got one more piece to tape.

JADE

Who wants to go first?

NAOMI

I'll go.

JULIE

Great.

NAOMI

Here is a picture of a bird, because I like to sing. I'm glad there was an article on horses. Cause I have a horse and I took very good care of him.

JULIE

You got a horse?

JACKIE

Yeah

JULIE

Damn!

JADE

Here is a picture of a musical instrument. I don't play the violin, but I do play the piano pretty well. And she looks like a ballerina to show that I took dance lessons. Jazz, tap, ballet and lyrical.

JULIE

JACKIE
You can tap dance?

JULIE
A little.

JACKIE
I wouldn't mind gettin me some of them classes. I wanna tap dance too.

NAOMI
I'm sure you'd be great.

JACKIE
I'm sure I would be too.

NAOMI
Julie, would you work with Jackie to teach her some tap.

JULIE
I'd love that!

JACKIE
I'm gonna tap dance?

JACKIE moves around and dances with happiness. NAOMI smiles and claps very softly.

ALLISON
(Referring to the presentation of her collage)
I'll go.

NAOMI
(Surprised)
Great Allison.!

ALLISON
I have a picture of a bird too, cause I like to sing and write songs. There's a squirrel over here, cause they got little tiny ears. Did you all ever notice my little, tiny ears?

ALLISON shows the kids her ears.

JACKIE
How do you hear out a them little holes? And you ain't hardly got room for earrings.

JADE
How come we never noticed?

ANGEL

Maybe cause she's been sittin in a corner for two months.

ALLISON

Here's a model, cause I dress good on the outs. And these two girls here shows I get along with people.

NAOMI

Thank you Allison! You girls are so talented. We should do a talent show.

JACKIE

Yeah!

ANGEL

Can I do my art?

NAOMI

Definitely! We'll turn the day room into an art gallery. We've got singers, we've got dancers!

ARIEL

I sing and I write poems.

NAOMI

This is fabulous!

Black out.

The girls who do not visit with NAOMI go to their cells. The others remain and are only lit when NAOMI speaks with them. Lights come up on CAROLE and DA CELL in the hole. They have their lunches. CAROLE is finishing her lunch. She wipes her mouth as if she enjoyed it. DA CELL has her food tray but pays no attention. She is writing in her journal. RAY enters. There is the sound of a metal slot opening.

RAY

Da Cell, where's your lunch tray.

DA CELL

(Keeps writing)

I ain't touched it. It's nasty.

RAY

Hand it out Da Cell or you won't get dinner.

DA CELL

Ok, Ok. (*Slips the tray through to RAY*) How about you gettin me a peanut butter and jelly sandwich.

There is a metallic sound of slot closing. DA CELL continues writing and slot opens in CAROLE'S cell.

RAY

Carole.

CAROLE

That wasn't half bad!

CAROLE slips the tray through to RAY.

RAY

You're just getting used to it.

Again, the metallic sound of slot closing. Black out on the girls in the hole. Lights come up on NAOMI and ARIEL. JAMES is seated outside the day room. ARIEL grips the seat of her chair to control herself. She is barely holding on. She rocks back and forth, talks very fast and verbalizes slightly when she isn't talking. She does this throughout this scene. This scene has urgency and goes very rapidly. It is an emergency. NAOMI is stressed. Only James has levity.

ARIEL

I can't sleep!

NAOMI

Haven't you seen a doctor?!!

ARIEL

That shrink didn't get my medication right. I hear voices all night long, and they tell me to do bad things. I try not to listen, but sometimes my voices tell me I do good when I cut on myself. But when I cut on myself, it doesn't feel good like it used to. So my voices tell me to cut up other people and I'll feel better.

NAOMI

Ariel, do you know the difference between right and wrong?

ARIEL
I think so.

NAOMI
Is cutting yourself right or wrong?

ARIEL
It doesn't feel good anymore when I do that.

NAOMI
Good. Then you won't do that.

ARIEL
I won't do that. It doesn't feel good.

NAOMI
Is cutting on somebody else right or wrong?

ARIEL
That's wrong. I know that's bad.

NAOMI
When your voices tell you that it's good to cut others, do you know that's really bad?

ARIEL
Cutting other people is bad.

NAOMI
Ariel, I'm going to talk to Officer Greene about the problems you're having.
Maybe you'll get help right away.

ARIEL
That would be good. Cause I can't stand this anymore.

NAOMI crosses to the door.

NAOMI
Officer Greene, Ariel needs to see a psychiatrist immediately.

JAMES gets up and enters the room.

NAOMI
She hears voices that tell her to cut on herself and other people.

JAMES
Well, the psychiatrist isn't here on Fridays. But there's a doctor on call.

NAOMI

I think you should call the doctor. She should be seen right away.

JAMES kneels in front of ARIEL.

JAMES

You need to see the doctor, Ariel?

ARIEL

(Squirms around in her chair)

I'm afraid I'm going to hurt somebody and I can't sleep!

JAMES

(Pats ARIEL on her arm)

Ok. Ok. I'll call another Officer to bring Jade up and I'll take you over to the doctor right away.

JAMES crosses into the hall and calls another Officer.

NAOMI

(Kneels in front of ARIEL)

You're doing great Ariel. Honey, you're doing real good!

NAOMI and ARIEL wait, ARIEL is shaking as she grips the seat of her chair.

JAMES

Ok Ariel I got someone to cover, and I called the doctor. So, we are all set.

JAMES helps ARIEL out of the chair.

JAMES, *Continued*

We're going to see if the doctor can get your prescription right. I'm sorry you are having such a hard time.

ARIEL

What are you sorry about? You didn't do anything. You're always nice to me.

JAMES

That's because I like you.

ARIEL

I like you too.

They exit. ARIEL leaves the stage we do not see her again until week 7. NAOMI sits down and begins to rock.

NAOMI

Oh God help me! I feel so bad! I don't know what to do. Please help me help these children!
Please God help me!

*Lights fade and come up on NAOMI and
JADE. RAY sits outside the door.*

JADE

You don't look so good Naomi. You feelin alright?

NAOMI

I'm ok honey.

JADE

(Not believing her)

Yeah? If you say so.

NAOMI

How are you doing?

JADE

Well, you know how you asked me to write the good things I do?

NAOMI nods.

JADE, Continued

I can't hardly do no good things, cause everybody's hateful. I try to be positive, but somebody's always messin with me when I do, so I get ugly too. (She cries) I can't help it, I gotta defend myself.

NAOMI

Sometimes defending yourself is the best you can do.

*As the conversation continues, NAOMI
reaches into her back pack and pulls out
a small box of tissues. She offers it to
JADE who takes one.*

JADE

I can't hardly wait til I turn eighteen, and move into the adults. I just hope I can last that long without gettin into trouble. I been infraction free for eight months now. And I'm real proud of that. And I earn good time toward gettin out sooner.

*As the conversation continues, NAOMI
offers JADE another tissue to fix her eye
makeup.*

NAOMI

When do you get out?

JADE

Seven months. If I can last in this juvenile program without hurtin nobody.

NAOMI

Well, keep your eye on the prize. And if you can't do good, don't do bad, for your own sake.

JADE

Yeah, keep your eye on the prize. That's good! I can really use that. Thank you! You know, I bet you would be real pretty without them ole lady glasses. *(Reaches over and takes off NAOMI'S glasses)* Yeah, you look hella pretty without glasses! Now why would you wear them ole lady glasses when you could look hella pretty with some contac lenses?

Black out. Lights comes up on NAOMI and MEEGAN. MEEGAN'S focus changes as indicated by stage directions. When MEEGAN looks away from NAOMI, her imagination takes her back to the details of the situation.

MEEGAN

(Not looking at NAOMI)

When I was little, a man started rapin me a lot. *(MEEGAN looks at NAOMI)* Remember like I told you?

NAOMI

I remember.

MEEGAN

He was the janitor at my school... *(Looks away)* After I had his first baby, and she got adopted, I ran away and lived on the street.

NAOMI

How old were you?

MEEGAN

(Looks at NAOMI)

I was thirteen. But I went back home, cause livin on the street was hard. *(Looks away)* And that man just kept rapin me.

NAOMI

Did you tell anybody?

MEEGAN

Him and my mom are close friends, and she wouldn't never let me say nothin bad about him. She told me I got to keep things in the family. So, after my second child got adopted, I ran away again. I don't think I woulda done my crime if I wasn't raped so much when I was little. *(Tears up)* Both my babies looked like him. When I looked at those babies, all I could see was him. And I hated those babies. It don't feel natural to hate your own baby. But every time I touched them I wanted to throw up. They was just little babies and I hated them.

MEEGAN cries deeply, and for a long time. NAOMI and the audience bear witness. Lights fade out. Lights come up on LISA outside smoking as NAOMI enters.

NAOMI

Damn, I'm tired.

LISA

They will definitely wear you out. Why do you come here?

NAOMI

What do you mean? The state asked me to.

LISA

No, I mean what makes you want to come here?

NAOMI

That's a good question... Cause it's not making me happy. You know... my mother beat the crap out of me. But there were some other adults who *saved me*. My piano teacher, my dance instructor, the director of the plays I was in. My parents could afford those things. And those people *showed up* for me... I guess I feel compelled to *show up* for these kids

Black Out. Girls in their cells move to the day room.

WEEK 6

AT RISE:

Lights come up on NAOMI, JADE, ANGEL, JACKIE, ALLISON, JULIE, MEEGAN and LISA in the day room. ARIEL, CAROLE and DA CELL are absent.

NAOMI

Let's make windows for this room.

ANGEL

How we gonna do that?

NAOMI

(NAOMI hands out drawing paper)

Well, we have some art supplies. And I brought some new magazines. *(Holds up some National Geographics)* You all have some colored pencils and pens. You fill the page like it's a window. You can put anything you want in your window.

ANGEL

Cool!

*The kids start to work enthusiastically.
Lights fade on everyone but ANGEL and JACKIE.*

ANGEL, *Continued*

What are you makin Jackie?

JACKIE

I'm gonna draw me my homeboys.

ANGEL

I ain't doin that gang shit no more.

JACKIE

My gang is my family.

ANGEL

Do you see them up here visiting you?

JACKIE

No.

ANGEL

If they was family, they would be up here every week to visit you like my auntie.

JACKIE

What you gonna see out your window?

ANGEL

My future. I'm gonna get me my education. I could go to college while I'm up in here.

JACKIE

I'm gonna get me my education too.

ANGEL

When I grow up, after I get outa here, I'm gonna be a artist.

Lights come up on entire room.

MEEGAN

(Crosses to NAOMI, and says privately)

Hey Naomi, you left your home address on the front of these magazines.

NAOMI

Yeah.

MEEGAN

You don't want none of these girls havin that information. I'd rip it off every magazine if I was you.

NAOMI reaches for the magazines and rips off the personal information as the kids continue to work. Lights fade. Lights come up on CAROLE and DA CELL in the hole. CAROLE is asleep while DA CELL does sit-ups.

DA CELL

Fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, twenty.....

Lights fade. JACKIE, and ANGEL move from the day room to their cells. JADE, MEEGAN, ALLISON, JULIE remain in the day room. Lights come up on NAOMI, ALLISON and JULIE. JAMES is stationed outside the door as always during the small group or individual sessions.

NAOMI

Let's work on some songs for the talent show. You two could sing some duets.

ALLISON

Really?

JULIE

That is so cool!

NAOMI

So, what do you both like?

JULIE

I like hymns.

ALLISON

Yeah, I like hymns too.

NAOMI

Alright, that was easy.

JULIE

Do you know Joyful Joyful We Adore Thee?

ALLISON

Yeah, I know that.

The two girls spend some time working it out. Then they sing it.

NAOMI

That is so beautiful!

ALLISON

You know, Ariel has a real good voice too.

NAOMI

Ariel? I thought you... *(About to say hated, but changes her mind and says)* ...really don't like Ariel.

ALLISON

She got something mental goin on. I guess she can't help it.

NAOMI

Allison! You've blossomed! What changed?

ALLISON

My mom wrote me and she's gonna come visit.

NAOMI

That's wonderful, honey! I'm so happy for you!

JULIE

Can we sing again next week when you come?

NAOMI

Definitely.

ALLISON

Can you bring in some sheet music? Like Motown.

NAOMI

Motown? That's my kind of music.

ALLISON

That's my kind of music too.

Sure will. NAOMI

Are you going to buy us sheet music? JULIE

What would you like? NAOMI

Could you bring the score from The Lion King or Aladdin? JULIE

No problem. NAOMI

Thank you so much. Can we sing some more, now? JULIE

Please do. NAOMI

Do you know How Great Thou Art? JULIE

Yeah I know how great I am. *(They all laugh.)* Yeah, I know that. ALLISON

JULIE and ALLISON work on it. Then they start to sing How Great Thou Art. It sounds beautiful. Lights fade and come up on JADE and NAOMI.

I need to talk to you about somethin I been thinkin on for a couple days now. I keep remindin myself of Jonathan, this crazy ole cat we had when I was a kid. JADE

You had a cat named Jonathan? NAOMI

Yeah, my father thought it was real funny callin a black cat a rich white boy name. JADE

It is sorta funny. NAOMI

JADE

It wasn't funny, cause my father would kick that cat every chance he got. There was somethin real wrong with that cat. The cat would hide for a while, then come back all lovin again and rub hisself up on my father's legs. I remember thinkin, that cat is crazy, an he don't learn nothin from one minute to the next. But on Wednesday night, I was writin in my journal... Oh, Naomi, I need a new journal, cause mine is filled.

NAOMI

I'll bring you one next week.

JADE

What was I sayin.... Oh yeah, I was writin about somethin that happened between me and Angel, and I stopped and thought, "I'm just like Jonathan!"

NAOMI

Tell me about that.

JADE

Well, I trust people, cause I like people and wanna be friends. And then they do me wrong, and I feel real bad and get mad and all. And then the next day I trust them all over again if they be nice to me for one second! I must be stupid or somethin. Now Angel will switch up on you in a matter of minutes and I still end up trustin her. I been doin like this as far back as I can remember. I just keep lookin for love, and no one loves me back. *(Tears up)*

NAOMI

Aw honey, you are such a loveable person. You're so sweet Don't trust people right away. Pay attention to who *they* are. People should *earn* your trust.

JADE

Earn my trust.... Yeah, I think I just trust everybody right away.

NAOMI

Slow way down. Keep yourself safe. Check out who you are talking to. *(Pause)* Writing is helping you.

JADE

Yeah. When I feel bad, which is about a thousand times a day, I write about it in my journal. I get things off my chest. It feels like when I throw up and then feel better afterwards. I just keep writin like I'm throwin up. I'm sorry Naomi. This is gross, huh?

NAOMI

I'm ok.

JADE

That's how it feels anyway. Can you bring me a journal with some color on it next week?

NAOMI

Sure can honey.

Black Out. Lights come up on NAOMI and MEEGAN.

MEEGAN

I got animals for every guard in our cell block. I filled my journal with all them girls and their animals.

NAOMI

That's cool! Are you going to tell people what animals they are? Knowing my animal has been so helpful.

MEEGAN

Yep, I'm doin that for the talent show.

NAOMI

What a great idea! You're a smart girl Meegan. I want you to try an experiment. I'd like to spend some time looking at your criminal thinking.

MEEGAN

Lookin at that won't do me no good.

NAOMI

Oh yes it will! If you think criminal thoughts, it will lead to crimes. If you think, "Get out of my face or I'm going to hurt you," You're about to hurt that person.

MEEGAN

Yeah Naomi, but that don't got nothin to do with me right now.

NAOMI

If you learn to do this, it will help you forever. All you have to do is make a mark in your journal, every time you have a criminal thought.

MEEGAN

How is that gonna help me?

NAOMI

Well, if you write the date on a page every day, then make a mark under that date every time you think something violent or criminal, you'll learn how often you think thoughts that will lead to trouble. All you have to do is pay attention to your thinking and make marks on a page...

MEEGAN

MEEGAN rolls her eyes begrudgingly.

I really don't want to do this.....I know you want me to do good... *(Sighs)* So, I'll try.

Black Out. All of the girls move to the day room.

WEEK 7

AT RISE:

*Lights come up. ARIEL is present.
CAROLE and DA CELL are still absent.
LISA participates in the game.*

ALLISON

I'm grateful for my Moms.

JADE

I'm grateful for gum

ARIEL

I'm grateful for them fixing my medication.

ANGLE

I'm grateful for them fixin Ariel's medication.

NAOMI

Great! Now, let it flow around the circle without the "I'm grateful" part. Like, I might just say "my job" Go fast.

JULIE

My horse

MEEGAN

Nice people

JACKIE

Bagels

LISA

Fried chicken

ALLISON

Tootsie pops

JADE

Pretty shoes

ARIEL

Singing

ANGEL

Colored pencils

NAOMI

Clean sheets

Barbeques	JULIE
Little kittens	MEEGAN
Rap music	JACKIE
Country Western	LISA
This is cool	ALLISON
Red barrettes	JADE
Mushroom soup	ARIEL
Swimming pools	ANGEL
Hot summers	NAOMI
Snowy days	JULIE
Pretty hair	MEEGAN
Potato chips	JACKIE
Monster trucks	LISA
Boys	ALLISON
Help from people.	JADE
KFC	ARIEL

All the colors	ANGEL
My husband	NAOMI
Blueberry pancakes	JULIE
All the animals	MEEGAN
My mom's dog	JACKIE
My kids	LISA
Peace and quiet	ALLISON
This what we're doin	JADE
Rubber bands	ARIEL
Rubber bands? My auntie	ANGEL
My sisters	NAOMI
Singing	JULIE
Cotton candy	MEEGAN
Bubble gum	JACKIE
The rain	LISA
The sun	ALLISON

Coffee

JADE

With ice cream in it.

ARIEL

Fresh baked brownies. We gotta stop. I'm cravin brownies.

ANGEL

The exercise makes the kids happy.

That was fun! I want to keep goin. That took me outa this place!

JACKIE

Me too!

ANGEL

Yeah, and we can do this any time we want!

JULIE

*Lights fade out. JACKIE moves to her cell.
Lights come up on NAOMI, ALLISON,
ARIEL and JULIE. ALLISON and JULIE
are looking through sheet music.*

(Sings and dances)

Baby, Baby, Baby, Where did our love go. No, wait wait wait! Allison, sing the song you made up.

ARIEL

No, it ain't good.

ALLISON

It is good. Come on, come on sing it.

ARIEL

It ain't good. I just made it up...

ALLISON

She sang it to me last night through the vent

ARIEL

Through the vent?

NAOMI

Yeah, there's a vent from my room to her room. And we talk and she sang me her song.

ARIEL

NAOMI

Allison, I'd love to hear it.

ALLISON

(Starts to close up in shyness)

Maybe some other time.

NAOMI

Come on, Allison!

ARIEL

Allison, sing it! Sing it!

ALLISON

OK, but it ain't finished.

ALLISON begins to sing her beautiful song. She gets through two verses and stops. The three others clap.

ALLISON

That's all I got.

NAOMI

That was incredible!

JULIE

You should finish that and sing it in the talent show.

ARIEL

Told you it was good!

NAOMI grabs her pen and tablet.

NAOMI

What's the title? I'm putting together a program.

ALLISON

Lovin You is Hard When Bein Me is Easy.

ARIEL

What does it mean? I don't get it.

ALLISON

(Rolls her eyes)

Ariel, let me finish writin the song then maybe you'll get it. Let's sing Where Did Our Love Go.

ALLISON looks through her song book with Ariel's help, for the song.

ALLISON, *Continued*

Here it is. I think we all could sing it like a (*Indicates that she is the lead singer and the other two are back up*) lead singer with back up. My cousins and I did it and it turned out real good.

Lights fade and come up on NAOMI and JADE. The conversation is heated. JADE has been triggered. She moves around the room. She is physically expressive.

NAOMI

All you have to do is make a mark on page every time you have a criminal thought!

JADE

I don't see why I gotta do this criminal thinking shit! I already done it last year! I can't look at that no more Naomi! I ain't doin it!

NAOMI

Why are you so worked up?! What did you do last year?!

JADE

We had to imagine bein our victims, and write "I'm sorry" letters to their family! We had to pretend we was them when they died! I feel so bad when I think about that stuff, I wanna kill myself! I can't think about that NO MORE!!

NAOMI

This is different. That was victim awareness. If it caused you a lot of pain, it worked.

JADE

Well I guess it worked then, cause I got nightmares.

NAOMI

Did it help you?

JADE

I don't wanna hurt nobody no more.

NAOMI

Well then, the pain was beneficial.

JADE'S movement has slowed.

JADE

Easy for you to say.....

NAOMI

Look, you're leaving here soon.

JADE

Yes I am, Thank God.

NAOMI

You are going to need all the help you can get.

JADE

You got that right.

NAOMI

Just keep track of your thoughts.

Lights fade as JADE reluctantly sits down and opens her journal to write down the assignment. Lights come up on NAOMI and ANGEL. ANGEL sits with her arms folded across her chest. Her legs are stretched out in front of her and crossed at the ankles. She is closed and angry.

NAOMI

What's going on?

ANGEL

Nothin.

NAOMI

You look angry.

ANGEL

Yeah, well...

NAOMI

I see that your anger derails you.

ANGEL

Derails me?

NAOMI

Yeah. Like you'll be doing something you like to do, and then something will make you angry, and you'll forget all about what you're doing, and go off.

ANGEL

So.

NAOMI
You abandon yourself.

ANGEL
We got new teachers comin.

NAOMI
I heard that.

ANGEL
I got my lawyer on that. I got a right to my education. We got three teachers.

NAOMI
Great.

ANGEL
Yeah.

NAOMI
Sometimes I see that your anger gets in the way of what you want.

ANGEL
I ain't gonna talk no more.

NAOMI
See, like right now. I'll say something and you go off. You let people push your buttons and you get derailed from your own purpose.

ANGEL
I been talkin to counselors about my anger my whole life. I got hatred in me, and I ain't got no control over it. I just gotta learn to live with it. I had anger management so many times and it don't do no good.

NAOMI
It takes work to change.

ANGEL
Whatever!!!

NAOMI
See? You just go off.

ANGEL
When I get mad, it goes all the way back.

NAOMI
What do you mean?

ANGEL

I go back to when my mom's boyfriends put stuff up in there. Like I said, I got hatred in me.

NAOMI

Does your hatred come out on a daily basis as criminal thoughts?

ANGEL

I see where you could say that.

NAOMI

We could try to channel the energy from your hatred into your art.

ANGEL

How we gonna do that?

NAOMI

First you'd have to track your thoughts. It's possible that when you feel pain, right away it turns to anger and criminal thinking. We could try to catch the thought and turn the anger into art rather than crimes.

ANGEL

(Uncrosses her arms and sits up)

Yeah? I could do that? For real?

NAOMI

It's possible. We could work toward that. Will you track your thoughts?

ANGEL

I will definitely do that!

ANGEL opens her journal.

NAOMI

Every day date a piece of paper and make a mark under the date.....

Lights fade as ANGEL writes down her assignment. Lights come up on NAOMI and MEEGAN. MEEGAN sits slouched in her chair, dejected.

MEEGAN

How is this gonna help me right now!?

NAOMI

Meegan! You have to change. And you have to start right now. You can't wait until you're close to getting out. It takes time and effort. You need to begin thinking good thoughts and doing what's right!

MEEGAN

Well, I have a bad thought every five seconds.

NAOMI

You must be exaggerating.

MEEGAN

Well, it seems that way. I had made so many marks by lunch time that I didn't do it no more. Not the next day neither.

NAOMI

So you did it for half the day?

MEEGAN

Yeah. I didn't want to do it no more. It's depressing.

NAOMI

It's good that you did it for half a day. I think it's time to start the next phase.

MEEGAN

(Rolling her eyes)

What is it?

NAOMI

Just do it for an hour...or two.

MEEGAN

(Exasperated)

What?

NAOMI

Every time you make a mark for a bad thought, write the thought down.

MEEGAN

Just write it down? Like "I'm gonna punch your fuckin face in." I just right that down.

NAOMI

Yep.

MEEGAN

What goods that gonna do?

NAOMI

Well, the next step, after you recognize the thought, is to change the thought.

MEEGAN

You mean I can think somethin different if I want to?!

NAOMI

Yes you can. It takes work....

MEEGAN

Wow, I can think something different if I decide to?!

NAOMI

Yep.

MEEGAN

That is really cool!

Black out.

JACKIE moves from her cell to the day room. CAROLE and DA CELL move from the hole to the day room.

WEEK 8

AT RISE:

Lights come up. All of the girls are present. LISA sits in the corner. NAOMI is handing out paper.

NAOMI

Finish one of these three sentences. And write until you run out of things to say. Just keep writing. Your choices are. "Love is..." or "When I am brave..." or "When fear takes over..." — Just choose one and begin.

JACKIE

You ever write this yourself?

NAOMI

Yes I have.

JACKIE

What'd you pick?

NAOMI

When fear takes over.

JACKIE

How come?

NAOMI

Because I feel fear a lot.

You do? JULIE

You don't show it. ANGEL

I see it in her, sometimes. JADE

Me too. She bites her nails. MEEGAN

I see it when we yell and act disrespectful. JADE

When you act nasty to me, I get anxious. NAOMI

Why's that? I'd get mad. DA CELL

I have an anxiety disorder. NAOMI

Damn! DA CELL

I take medication for it. NAOMI

And you're up here helpin us? You can't even help yourself. DA CELL

I help myself. I take my pills. I exercise and eat well. I sing and play the piano. And I love people who love me back. NAOMI

I ain't doin this exercise. It ain't nobody's business how I love or how I'm brave and I don't never feel afraid. I ain't doin it! DA CELL

I ain't doin it neither! JACKIE

What about the rest of you? NAOMI

Silence. Nobody says anything.

Ok, let's play walk your feelings.....

NAOMI

Say what?

DA CELL

Walk your feelings....

NAOMI

I ain't doin this one neither.

DA CELL

Yeah, it's stupid.

CAROLE

I ain't doin it.

JACKIE

Angel?

NAOMI

ANGEL
(Looks away from NAOMI)

I ain't gonna do it.

NAOMI

Do you see what's happening?

DA CELL

What?

NAOMI

You've come back and turned everything upside down.

DA CELL

What're you talkin about?

NAOMI

While you were in the hole, people opened up....They were creative and being sweet.

DA CELL

Looks like I got back just in the nick of time.

JACKIE

I can see you gettin scared right now, like you said. I can see it in your face.

NAOMI

Lisa, would it be ok if you took the kids to their cells and left me here with Da Cell.

LISA

Yeah, I could do that.

NAOMI

Da Cell, will you spend some time with me?

DA CELL

Yeah, we can have some conversation.

LISA

Let's go ladies.

*The kids get up and file out of the room.
And go to their cells.*

ANGEL

How do you burn eggs? That shit keeps comin up on me.

MEEGAN

We got hot dogs for lunch.

ALLISON

Hot dogs again...

ARIEL

Those hot dogs are like rubber.

JADE

And the other day they had green on them.

*After LISA leaves with the kids, JAMES
peeks his head into the room.*

JAMES

Naomi, I'll just be outside the door. And Ms. White wants to see you before lunch.

There is a pause.

NAOMI

You certainly are a powerful person.

DA CELL

Yes I am.

NAOMI

How old are you?

DA CELL

Sixteen.

NAOMI

How did you get so smart and persuasive?

DA CELL

Guess I was just born that way.

NAOMI

What's your problem? What do you want?

DA CELL

"Getting in touch with our feelings, Being sweet "ain't gonna do us no good.

NAOMI

Why?

DA CELL

Cause it's dangerous. You're completely ignorant. You ain't got a clue. You be like them white people in the movies who come in all chipper and ready to change things for the poor little white trash and the under privileged colored folk. You think you can save us or somethin.

NAOMI

Yeah..... I wanna save you! I think feeling your feelings is critical, your sadness, your fears.....Yeah, feel your feelings. And thru your laughing, your talents, your loving kindness ... you'll heal.

DA CELL

Heal yourself! We ain't got no need for you here. Yeah, we got pain and sadness and fear. That ain't gonna help us none. Not here and not on the street. You drive down here in your nice car, from your safe neighborhood with your talk of love and sadness and you be more dangerous to these girls than anybody behind these bars. You gotta be tough in here. I was in with the adults before they started this stupid juvenile program. There ain't no room for sadness, or fear. If you be weak, then you be somebody's bitch. Julie better toughin up, or they gonna get on her.

NAOMI

I'm on your side.

DA CELL

On my side? You ain't on my side. On my side. What side is that?

NAOMI

I want you free! I want you to make something of yourself!

DA CELL

Lady, I'm in here for ten more years. If you was really on my side, or on Meegan's side, you'd know what the fuck is goin on.

NAOMI

What are you talking about?

DA CELL

I'm talkin about Meegan. They are gonna beat her up!

NAOMI

Who?

DA CELL

Some of the adults been sneakin us cigarettes. And Meegan snitched to one of them officers. And she say she don't care. Well, them adults is waitin for her.

NAOMI

Oh, Christ.

DA CELL

You come in here makin noises about "feelings" with them DVDs and shit. And now you wanna change how we think and walk how we feel? How about lookin at your own self, at what you think? I know you got racial, cause everybody does. How many times you been walkin down the street and cross that street when you see some black kids comin up the other way? And don't you lock your car door at night when you see some black people on the street? What goes through your mind? What do you think then?

NAOMI

What does race have to do with this?

DA CELL

Race got to do with everything. Ain't color the very first thing you see? But that's a completely different conversation. This conversation here, I'm talkin about your thoughts, how you think. Why don't you make marks on a page? Heal your damn self. Leave us alone!

NAOMI

(After a pause)

How are you going to spend your time in here, so that when you get out, you have a life?

DA CELL

Hell, the adults get all kinds of things. Education, job training.

NAOMI

Will that keep you from crime?

DA CELL

I don't know.... Everybody I care about do crimes. Come back in 10 years. I'll let you know then.

Black out.

Kids move from their cells to the day room.

Lights come up slightly on the day room

where the kids are silently engaged. Lights come up on CAROLINE'S office.

CAROLINE is behind her desk working as NAOMI enters.

NAOMI

(Remains standing)

You asked to see me?

CAROLINE stops what she is doing.

CAROLINE

Yes. I'm surprised to see you here. The Children's Center should have notified you.

NAOMI

What do you mean?

CAROLINE

(Takes off her glasses.)

You are no longer working here. Your contract has been terminated.

NAOMI

What? Wait a minute!

CAROLINE

Did you bring your possessions with you from the classroom?

NAOMI

Whoa! Slow down! What happened?

CAROLINE

Well aside from the fact that you were hired to run groups, which is not happening, and the Children's Center was contracted to provide teachers, which is also not happening, you have endangered Meegan.

NAOMI

What are you talking about?! Has something actually happened?! And why is this my fault?!

CAROLINE

You encouraged Meegan to change her behavior while inside and to put it in her words "Naomi told me to think good thoughts and do what's right." So she stepped up, and snitched on some of the adults who were providing the juveniles with cigarettes. Snitching is

CAROLINE, *Continued*

dangerous here Ms. Gordon. We have provided extra security to protect Meegan. But inmates are cunning and in time will probably get her no matter what we do.

NAOMI

(Puts her head in her hands)

Oh my God!..... I'm so sorry! How can I fix this? What can I do?

CAROLINE

You can do nothing! You no longer work here! Your contract was terminated as of yesterday.

NAOMI

Wait a minute!..... I can't see them this afternoon?

CAROLINE

No you can't

NAOMI

I don't get to say goodbye?

CAROLINE

No you don't!

NAOMI

What will you tell them?

CAROLINE

That is not your concern.

NAOMI

Oh, I am very concerned about that! I don't want them to think that I just left them!

CAROLINE

We will explain to them that your contract was terminated.

NAOMI

I can't just leave! I have to say goodbye!

CAROLINE

I'm sorry, but you will not have that opportunity. Do you have all of your possessions with you, or do I need to send an officer to fetch them from the classroom?

NAOMI

I asked for an orientation the first day I came. I told you that I was used to working with juveniles, that I have no experience in the adult system! You blew me off, and told me that the corrections officers will keep me informed as I go. I've had, no guidance! You gave me nothing! You are responsible! You're the one that endangered Meegan, Ms. White!

CAROLINE

(Sits down)

Good bye Ms. Gordon. A corrections officer will see you out, *now*

Blackout.

EPILOGUE

AT RISE:

Lights come up to full on the day room. ALLISON and ARIEL are at one table, looking through a song book. DA CELL and CAROLE play cards and ANGEL is drawing on the floor center stage. Some of her art is displayed on the wall. JADE moves around and converses with them. MEEGAN looks through some National Geographics. JULIE is teaching JACKIE how to tap dance. Lisa sits in a chair in the corner reading a magazine.

JULIE

Shuffle ball change shuffle step, shuffle step. Shuffle ball change, shuffle turn shuffle turn. Gee, you're picking this up fast.

JACKIE

I know I am.

JACKIE and JULIE continue the lesson through the rest of the scene, with JULIE sometimes dancing with JACKIE in order to demonstrate the steps.

JADE

(Looking at the art ANGEL has on the down stage wall)

Who's that?

This is Not the End of the Play
Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes