

PERUSAL SCRIPT

SANDY AND THE WEIRD SISTERS

An Intergenerational Play

by J. D. Newman



Newport, Maine

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Sandy and the Weird Sisters:
An Intergenerational Play

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ORDER #3253

Sandy and the Weird Sisters

An Intergenerational Play

CAST: (minimum 2 girls, 4 women, 1 man with doubling, more if desired)

SANDY	Girl, 12 years old
ROXIE HUNTER	Girl, 14 years old
REX HUNTER	Man, at least in his 30s, may be older
AUNT MARY	Woman, 50s to 70s
AUNT CLAIR	Woman, 50s to 70s
AUNT LILY	Woman, 50s to 70s
STORE CLERK	Male or Female, any age
MEGAN LAMB	Girl, 12-14 years old
SISTER LIBBY	Woman, at least in her 20s, may be older
MRS. CAVENDISH	Woman, 50s to 70s
ATTENDANT (OF DRIVE-IN)	Male or Female, any age
DIRECTOR (OF <i>THE MUSIC MAN</i>)	Male or Female, at least 20s, may be older
FATHER JOSEPH	Male, at least 30s
SOCCER COACH	Male or Female, at least 20s, may be older

SUGGESTIONS FOR DOUBLING

Roxie Hunter and Megan Lamb could be played by the same female actor.

Store Clerk, Sister Libby, Mrs. Cavendish, & Soccer Coach could be played by same female actor.

Rex Hunter, Attendant, Director, and Father Joseph could be played by the male same actor.

SETTINGS:

In Sandy's bedroom in her own home that transforms into various locations including the parlor, kitchen, and fourth bedroom at the Weird Sisters' house; a classroom, an office, and a dance studio at Memorial School; a soccer field; a drive-in movie theater; a rehearsal and a performance space for a musical; and a table at a shake shop.

TIME:

Three weeks during the summer of 1978

SANDY AND THE WEIRD SISTERS by J.D. Newman. (2 girls, 4 women, 1 man, 1 either M or F with doubling — without doubling 3 teengirls, 6w, 4m) A play about finding out who you are and who you want to become. J. D. Newman, a playwright-in-residence at The Open Eye Theater in Margaretville, New York, has adapted his novel “Sandy and the Weird Sisters” for the stage. In the story, twelve-year-old Sandy suddenly finds herself in a new environment. While her father and older sister travel to London for an international Rugby event, Sandy spends three weeks with three great aunts she has never met. The three great aunts live together harmoniously, but have different tastes, think differently, and lead three very different lives. They ask Sandy, and soon she is asking herself the big question: “Who am I?” The weird sisters find themselves in a new environment, as well, since none of them ever had children, and are ill prepared to deal with a bright and inquisitive young lady. By the end of the play they have also begun to ask themselves the big question--and so has her father. **ORDER #3253**

J.D. Newman — Dr. Newman is a professor of theatre at Utah Valley University and the Director of the Theatre for Youth and Education (TYE) Center, and currently serves as Chair of the Theatre Department. He lives with his family in Sandy City, Utah. Dr. Newman became the first recipient of the Reba R. Robertson Award from the Children’s Theatre Foundation of America. At UVU, Dr. Newman has directed such plays as *The Secret Garden*, *Princess Academy*, and *Androcles and the Lion* in the Bastian Theatre. He has also served as the director of the Noorda Theatre Summer Camp and has produced or co-produced touring productions including *A Village Fable*, *The Princess and the Goblin*, *Honk!*, and *Pedro’s Magic Shoes*. As a playwright, he has adapted scripts for Newbery medalists including Avi, Paul Fleischman, and Richard Peck. Newman taught and directed at Highland High School for eighteen years, from 1991 to 2010 with a sabbatical to Texas in 1998-99. He served as Artistic Director of the Salt Lake School for the Performing Arts during the 2009-2010 school year. Newman earned his B.F.A. and M.Ed. from the University of Utah, his M.A. from the University of Texas, and his Ph.D. from New York University. With Judy Matetzschk-Campbell, he co-authored *Tell Your Story: The Plays and Playwriting of Sandra Fenichel Asher*, and his book *Playwriting in Schools: Dramatic Navigation* received the 2020 Distinguished Book Award from the American Alliance for theatre and Education. Dr. Newman chairs the Playwrights In Our Schools Project and served three years on the board of the AATE. *Sandy and the Weird Sisters*, his first novel, has been followed by 2 sequels, *Sandy and the Dance of Faith* and *Clara and the Mermaids*. His stand alone young reader’s story, *Make-Believe Twins* is also published by Leicester Bay Books.

Sandy and the Weird Sisters

SCENE A:

AT RISE — *The stage space represents the bedroom of a twelve-year-old girl in 1978. The room is entered through a free-standing doorframe with a mirror on the back. Furnishings include a desk with a chair and telephone, two other chairs, a dresser with a home stereo, and a single bed with a nice bedspread or quilt. There is a bike outside the door and a laundry hamper inside the room. The bedroom may include relics from the era, such as magazines, posters, and a 1978 calendar. There is a Frisbee or two and a rolled-up poster on or near the bed. There is also a watercolor painting of a European scene and a poster for a community production of The Music Man. There is a closet, or a costume rack suggesting a closet. A line of shoes, ranging from baby size to girl size, are arranged in increasing order along one edge of the room. All of the settings and props described and imagined during the play should be suggested by elements of the bedroom setting. SANDY enters her room, followed by her sister ROXIE who is two years older. SANDY wears a skirt while ROXIE wears jeans, a baseball cap, and has a baseball glove. SANDY wears a dance leotard and tights under her clothes, as well as a soccer uniform, which may not be immediately apparent.*

ROXIE: Of course you're coming, Sandy! Hurry up and change! You can't wear a skirt to a baseball game.

SANDY: Roxie, I need to write my admissions essay!

ROXIE: No one writes an essay in the summer, especially not on a Saturday!

SANDY: I need to write it if I want to attend Memorial this fall. It was due two weeks ago, but Aunt Mary said that if I can get it to her tonight —

ROXIE: Why do you want to go to Memorial anyway? Are you too smart for my junior high?

SANDY: That's just it. It's your junior high. I want to go somewhere different, be someone different —

ROXIE: Different from me?

SANDY: I've always been your little sister, but while you and Dad were in London, I figured out who I am, and I'm a not Xerox copy of you.

ROXIE: What have you done to your room? Where's your soccer team photo?

SANDY: I took it down to make room for Aunt Lily's painting.

ROXIE: Where did you get that bedspread?!

SANDY: Aunt Mary sent it home with me.

ROXIE: Whose shoes are those?!

SANDY: Aunt Clair gave them to me, as a going away present.

ROXIE: That's weird, Sandy. Where's your poster from the baseball opener?! We got every player's signature.

SANDY: (*pointing to the poster on the bed*) I rolled it up to make room for my *Music Man* poster.

ROXIE: Come on, Sandy. Can't you write your essay at the game? You usually bring a book —

SANDY: No, Roxie. I have to think this through and answer these two questions.

ROXIE: Only two questions? That's a cinch.

(*SANDY hands her the application.*)

“Who are you and what do you want to do with your life?”

(after a beat)

Those are big questions. I don't know what to tell you, Sis.

SANDY: You don't? That's a first.

ROXIE: When you ask me questions, I give you answers!

(She looks at SANDY.)

Are you wearing your dance clothes and your soccer uniform under your —?

SANDY: I'm stuck on this essay. Aunt Mary says I should speak it out, Aunt Clair says I should dance it out, and Aunt Lily says I should act it out.

ROXIE: And your sister Roxie says you should cut it out and go to the baseball game!

SANDY: I've made my decision, Roxie. I'm staying home.

ROXIE: Fine. I'll tell Dad that you've outgrown baseball... and your *real* family!

SANDY: Roxie...

SCENE B:

(ROXIE exits. SANDY pulls out a stack of loose-leaf paper and begins to write. Nothing comes to her, so she puts away her notebook and takes out a cassette tape recorder into which she will dictate her essay. As she dictates, she removes her skirt and blouse to reveal her soccer team uniform underneath.)

SANDY: "Who Am I" by Sandy Hunter, age 12. Until this July, I didn't know who I was or what I believed. I just did what my father and sister told me to do and I believed I was just like them. My mother died when I was born, so I've tried to be like my father. My sister's better at that than I am. She joined the boys' rugby team that my father coaches. If I had played rugby like Roxie, instead of playing soccer, Dad would have taken me to London with them. Instead he left me with my three great aunts, who we've always called "The Weird Sisters."

(ROXIE and REX [ROXIE and SANDY's father] appear in the room or behind the door.)

ROXIE: Dad, our plane leaves at twelve-thirteen!

REX: Two-thirteen!

ROXIE: *(Crossing to REX)* Look at the tickets!

(He does so and his eyes grow big.)

REX: Sandy! Jeep! Now!

SANDY: I haven't packed yet. I haven't even showered after my game!

ROXIE: No time! The plane leaves in an hour!

(REX pulls out a suitcase from under the bed. ROXIE tosses clothes to SANDY from the laundry hamper.)

REX: Suitcase! Pack!

SANDY: Those are from the hamper! They're dirty!

ROXIE: Do your laundry at the Weird Sister's house! Come on!

SANDY: Dad, you haven't even told me their real names.

REX: Mary, Claire, and Airy Fairy.

(REX exits to grab his own suitcase.)

ROXIE: He's putting you on.

SANDY: He used to say their names were "Flora, Fauna, and Merriweather."

ROXIE: Pack!

(ROXIE exits to grab Sandy's toiletries.)

SANDY: I'm packing!

REX: Got everything?

SANDY: I don't know!

(ROXIE returns with her own suitcase and the listed items for SANDY, or she tosses them to SANDY through the door.)

ROXIE: Toothbrush, deodorant, hairbrush! She's ready! Go!

SANDY: I need my library card and bus pass!

ROXIE: Dad, make Sandy take the bus!

REX: I don't know their address. It's on the way!

ROXIE: We'll miss our plane!

SANDY: I could just stay here.

REX AND ROXIE: Jeep!

(REX, ROXIE, and SANDY use the bed as the Jeep, with SANDY sitting on her suitcase in the middle of the bed and REX and ROXIE sitting at the front of the bed. REX uses a Frisbee, perhaps with a Jeep logo, as a steering wheel and the rolled-up poster as the gearshift.)

SANDY: So we "jeeped!" Dad likes to watch stock-car racing, but this was the first time I'd seen him participate.

REX: Buckle up!

SANDY: Twenty, thirty, forty, fifty?!

ROXIE: If we get stopped, I'll say I have appendicitis.

SANDY: X-wing fighters don't go this fast!

ROXIE: Use the force, Dad!

REX: Target sighted.

SANDY: Target?

REX: Weird Sisters' to starboard! Grab your suitcase!

SANDY: He's going to stop, isn't he?

ROXIE: He'll probably slow down.

REX: Bail to the right!

SANDY: Wait!

REX & ROXIE: Jump!

(SANDY bails. Lights fade on REX and ROXIE, or perhaps we see them run for the terminal.)

SCENE C:

SANDY: My new life started when I was dropped on the Weird Sisters' doorstep, by a Jeep instead of a stork. I could only hope Dad had found the right house.

(AUNT MARY enters through the doorframe.)

AUNT MARY: You startled me, child. You have to be Sandy.

SANDY: I guess I have to be.

AUNT MARY: I'm your Aunt Mary. I should have met you before. I'm your godmother.

SANDY: Like Cinderella's?

AUNT MARY: *(with a sigh)* A godmother guides her godchild as she finds her beliefs. Your father said you'd be here at noon.

SANDY: He misread the tickets. They're headed to the airport at light speed.

AUNT MARY: Well... Clair is sleeping. Lily was supposed to meet you, but she's finishing a grant for her theatre company. She'll be home for lunch. You could come with me... if you could change into something different.

SANDY: You mean like a butterfly?

AUNT MARY: I mean like a skirt and blouse. Did you bring something nicer?

SANDY: Just jeans and shorts... dirty jeans and shorts. Do you have a washing machine?

AUNT MARY: In the cellar, under the kitchen. You have a dress for Sunday, don't you?

SANDY: Roxie never wanted a dress, and Dad thinks I'm like her.

AUNT MARY: Are you?

SANDY: No! She plays sports because she wants to. I play because I have to.

AUNT MARY: And what do you want to do with your life?

SANDY: No one ever asked me that before.

AUNT MARY: *(She walks the bicycle through the door.)* Well, perhaps you'll find out while you're here.

SANDY: I hate to disappoint you...

AUNT MARY: I'm off to school.

SANDY: In July?

AUNT MARY: Summer term. British Literature. Students at private schools always want to get ahead. We have books on the shelves, but we don't own a television. You'll be sleeping on the sofa in the parlor. We each have a bedroom and we're all light sleepers.

SANDY: I don't snore.

AUNT MARY: It's cooler downstairs. There's a fourth bedroom upstairs, but it's locked.

SANDY: Got it! The locked bedroom is forbidden.

AUNT MARY: Not forbidden. We use it for... storage. I'd take you with me—they don't require uniforms in the summer—but...

SANDY: I could take the bus to my house and get some better clothes...

(She reaches into her pocket and pulls out two cards.)

...if I'd remembered to bring my house-key. I brought my library card and bus pass.

AUNT MARY: Well, I'm running late.

(She mounts the bike.)

SANDY: Why do you ride a bicycle to school?

AUNT MARY: Because I can't ride a unicycle. Ask a stupid question...

SANDY: My sixth-grade teacher doesn't believe in stupid questions.

AUNT MARY: She must be young; I believe!

(AUNT MARY hums or whistles Miss Gulch's theme from the 1939 MGM movie The Wizard of Oz.)

That's what my students hum when they think I can't hear them. Make yourself at home.

(AUNT MARY exits or disappears with the bicycle.)

SCENE D:

(SANDY pulls out an old-fashioned girl's dress from a hook on or behind the door unit and puts in on over her soccer uniform.)

SANDY: It was no place like home. Nothing in that house belonged in the 70s. I wasn't sure why, but I really wanted to go to Aunt Mary's class. I might not have been so eager if I'd known how tough she is as a teacher. I had to find something to wear while I washed all my clothes, so I looked in the attic, and I found an old wardrobe. I peeked inside and hoped to find Narnia, but all I found was my aunts' old dresses stretching all the way back to their childhoods. I put on an old-fashioned girl's dress and looked at myself in the mirror.

(She sees AUNT CLAIR approaching her in the mirror and screams.)

AUNT CLAIR: I'm sorry, Sandy. I thought you heard me come up. I'm your Aunt Clair. I heard someone above my bedroom...

SANDY: And you found a stranger in your attic.

AUNT CLAIR: You're not a stranger, Sandy. In that dress, you look just like your Aunt Mary when she was your age.

SANDY: That sounds kind of spooky. Did you and Mary look alike when you were young?

AUNT CLAIR: Not if I could help it. I tried to be as different from her as possible.

SANDY: Because you didn't like her?

AUNT CLAIR: I just didn't want to look like her.

SANDY: I know what you mean.

AUNT CLAIR: I didn't want to be "Mary's little sister" or "Lily's big sister."

SANDY: Now that my big sister's gone, I don't know who I should be.

AUNT CLAIR: Well, what do you know about yourself?

SANDY: I like school. I don't like sports. I like wearing dresses, though I've never worn one before. I'd rather watch ballet than baseball, and I like exploring new places.

AUNT CLAIR: This is actually an old place. We've lived here since we were girls.

SANDY: None of you ever got married or moved away?

AUNT CLAIR: Our father, your great grandfather, gave us the house and our brother, your grandfather, never thought that was fair. It divided the family.

SANDY: So I'm from the wrong side of the family?

AUNT CLAIR: From your father's perspective, we're the wrong side. We're not so strange, are we?

SANDY: Less than I expected.

AUNT CLAIR: I've got some shoes that should be just your size.

SANDY: You do?

AUNT CLAIR: They were... supposed to be a gift for a friend's daughter. I'll go get them.

SCENE E:

(As with other music cues, SANDY may turn on a tape or record on the stereo or the sound cue may be played without any visual prompting. We hear 1970's rock music, as if from outside the room.)

SANDY: When Aunt Clair went down the ladder, I heard a noise outside, and I had to come downstairs to see what it was.

(She runs into AUNT CLAIR near the shoes.)

What were you doing in the forbidden bedroom?

AUNT CLAIR: We store things in there. Here, put on these shoes.

(SANDY does so as they talk.)

SANDY: There's something going on out there. Do you have teenagers on your street?

AUNT CLAIR: That's your Aunt Lily, blasting the eight-track player in that truck of hers. She's.... trying to find herself.

SANDY: That's okay. So am I.

AUNT LILY: Is that you, Sandy?

(She embraces SANDY.)

Let me get a picture of you.

(She pulls out a Polaroid camera and shoots.)

Here. Your image will appear like magic. I'm so glad you're spending the summer with us!

SANDY: Only three weeks of it.

AUNT LILY: It's a start.

(The stereo fades.)

I offered to stay with you at your house, for some reason but your dad turned me down.

(She stares at SANDY's outfit.)

Does your father make you dress that way?

AUNT CLAIR: *(joining SANDY and LILY)* That's one of Mary's old dresses. The girl had nothing to wear when she arrived.

AUNT LILY: Aren't those shoes from the...

AUNT CLAIR: I gave them to her. I didn't let her see... I was planning on taking her shopping tonight.

SANDY: You were?

AUNT CLAIR: Well, I am now.

AUNT LILY: Oh, I'll be glad to take her shopping after lunch.

AUNT CLAIR: We can't send her back to her father looking like you. He'll never let her visit us again.

AUNT LILY: If Mary takes her, she'll look more old-fashioned than she does now.

SANDY: I need something appropriate to wear if I'm going to Aunt Mary's class.

AUNT CLAIR: Mary would have to approve it, and she may not be able to register you. They have a waiting list.

AUNT LILY: She could just sit in on the class and everyone will get used to her. That's how I got into graduate school.

AUNT CLAIR: Mary insists on being impartial.

SANDY: Would she make an exception for her... what am I to you?

AUNT CLAIR: Our grand-niece. Mary doesn't believe in playing favorites.

SANDY: She could ride her bike, I'll take the bus, and she can act like she doesn't know me.

AUNT LILY: Here.

(She takes off one of her own accessories, perhaps a set of beads or a necklace, and places it on SANDY.)

Wear this and no one will think you're with Mary.

SCENE F:

(AUNT LILY, AUNT CLAIR, AUNT MARY, and SANDY arrange the bed into a pickup truck, with LILY driving and MARY in the passenger seat at the far end of the bed and CLAIR and SANDY seated in the middle of the bed in "jump-seats" with their legs outstretched, facing toward the audience.)

SANDY: When the Weird Sisters took me shopping that afternoon. I was wearing something from each of them. Was I becoming my own person or just wearing a different costume? Mary didn't drive but she always told Lily how to do it. Clair and I sat in the jump-seats in the truck-bed.

AUNT MARY: I told you to turn left.

AUNT LILY: I'm taking her to my second-hand store.

AUNT MARY: We're not taking her to that Hippie dive!

AUNT LILY: I refuse to take her to your snooty ladies' boutique!

SANDY: Where are we going?

AUNT CLAIR: That has yet to be determined.

SANDY: They seem to disagree.

AUNT CLAIR: On every issue.

SANDY: Do you drive?

AUNT CLAIR: I have a Honda Civic in the garage, but Lily wanted to show off the Brat.

SANDY: *(thinking she is being referred to as the "brat")* Oh. Perhaps the "brat" should wave.
(She parade-waves.)

AUNT CLAIR: No, not you, Sandy. This vehicle is called a Subaru Brat. It's a cross between a truck and a jeep.

AUNT MARY: Turn right!

AUNT LILY: I'm getting there my own way.

SANDY: Who's winning?

AUNT CLAIR: They're compromising. We're going where neither of them wants to go.

SANDY: *(spotting the store)* J.C. Penney's?

AUNT LILY: I hope you're buckled.

AUNT MARY: I always am when you drive.

AUNT LILY: Good, because if we crash, and I live and you die, Clair won't believe it was an accident.

SCENE G:

(SANDY and her aunts get out of the car and go into the department store.)

SANDY: In the shoe department, I must have tried on every shoe my size because each of my aunts was sure they knew what Sandy wanted.

(The STORE CLERK appears and brings out several pairs of SANDY's shoes from the bedroom, which the AUNTS grab or point at.)

AUNT LILY: Sandy wants color, something that says “look at me, I’m unique.”

AUNT CLAIR: That sounds more like Lily than Sandy.

AUNT LILY: She wants color, doesn’t she?

AUNT MARY: Sandy wants something sensible, so she doesn’t stand out.

AUNT CLAIR: How do you know what Sandy wants?

SANDY: Sandy just wants a matching pair!

AUNT CLAIR: Here. Try on these. They’re a good compromise.

SANDY: They agreed that Sandy wanted a nicer casual dress shoe and we moved onto the Junior Miss department.

(CLERK pulls out at least two skirts, two blouses, and a dress from SANDY's dresser.)

STORE CLERK: So, young lady, what will it be?

SANDY: You’re asking me?

AUNT CLAIR: Your clothes, your choice, right?

SANDY: When we shop as a family, Roxie picks and Dad pays.

AUNT LILY: Why don’t they let you choose?

SANDY: In the shoe department, you all decided for me.

AUNT MARY: Speak up, girl, or people will speak for you.

SANDY: Okay then... these two blouses to go with these two skirts and that dress for Sunday.

(Beat.)

Wow. I never knew I had preferences.

AUNT CLAIR: I thought you liked this other blouse...

SANDY: I did, but Roxie would like it too, and I want to be different!

AUNT LILY: And the gold knee-highs for color?

SANDY: Actually, I’d prefer the white tights.

STORE CLERK: Here’s your total. How would like to pay for these today?

AUNT MARY: I don’t know, Sandy. What did you have in mind?

SANDY: Are you joking? I don’t have any way to...

AUNT CLAIR: If I had a Penney’s card, I could pay.

AUNT MARY: Do you have any cash with you, Sandy?

SANDY: I’ve never had my own money. Dad just sort of pays for everything.

AUNT LILY: I have some cash at home under my mattress –

AUNT MARY: Well, Sandy, would you like to open a charge account?

SANDY: I don’t think I’m allowed. My dad will pay you back when he returns.

AUNT CLAIR: Here, put it on my Master Charge.

STORE CLERK: I’m afraid we only accept the Penney’s card.

AUNT MARY: I'll put it on my card, and she can pay me back. She needs to learn to be independent.

SANDY: I don't have a job.

AUNT MARY: You're in luck. The house needs painting and the yard needs weeding, or should we put all of this on layaway?

SANDY: I'll do whatever you want me to do!

AUNT MARY: *(to the STORE CLERK)* Put it on my card.

(to SANDY)

I pay off the balance every month and I expect you to pay me back when the bill comes. Clair, you drive us home.

AUNT LILY: Not in my set of wheels!

AUNT MARY: I'll risk my own neck, but now we have a girl on board...

AUNT LILY: Clair! Don't touch that wheel!

(LILY takes the wheel, MARY rides shotgun. CLAIR and SANDY ride in the back.)

SANDY: I was encouraged to see the younger sister holding her own with Aunt Mary. I'd have to do the same or I was in for three very long weeks.

SCENE H:

(As they arrive at the house, the phone is ringing and MARY runs to grab it, bringing it out to SANDY.)

AUNT MARY: Sandy, it's your father calling from London!

SANDY: That must be expensive! Is it an emergency?

(taking the receiver)

Dad, what's wrong? Is everything all right?

(REX appears in another area.)

REX: Fine. Made our plane. Got to London. Fighting jetlag. Found a phone booth.

SANDY: Good. Dad, I'm going to take a literature course from Aunt Mary...

REX: Out of coins. Call you later. Get to soccer. Over and out.

AUNT CLAIR: Everything okay?

SANDY: He just wanted me to know that they got there.

AUNT LILY: He wanted to know you're all right.

SANDY: He didn't even come to the door! His phone call was more like a telegram.

AUNT MARY: Time is money with an overseas call.

SANDY: He talks to me like that when we're in the same room. He never even said he loved me.

AUNT MARY: *(shrugging)* Long distance calls from Europe are expensive—

SANDY: Would it cost him so much to say it?

(Beat.)

AUNT MARY: Do you know what time it is in London?

SANDY: What does that matter?

AUNT MARY: Five in the morning. He probably got up early, found one of those red phone booths, and dropped in every British coin he had. Shouldn't that count for something?

SANDY: I guess it should. Thank you —

(She starts to hug her aunt, who hands her a book.)

AUNT MARY: Page 147 by tomorrow.

SANDY: But it's my first day of class!

AUNT MARY: Come prepared for an in-class essay.

SCENE I:

(SANDY takes off her dress to reveal her soccer uniform as she dictates.)

SANDY: I survived Aunt Mary's reading assignments and essays and Aunt Clair took me to her Sunday School that weekend. Each of my aunts went to a different church and they helped each other get there. Sunday afternoon, Clair drove me to my soccer practice, though I don't think she approved of playing sports on Sunday.

(A whistle blows and SANDY approaches CLAIR.)

AUNT CLAIR: You're a good goalie, Sandy. Do you enjoy playing soccer?

SANDY: It's safer than playing rugby. Dad says helmets keep the players' ears from getting ripped off.

AUNT CLAIR: But do you enjoy it?

SANDY: I'm supposed to... I try to...

(Beat.)

It's my duty.

AUNT CLAIR: *(She begins to dance or move.)* I took dance when I was a girl, long into my teenage years, but I never really loved it.

SANDY: Why didn't you quit? Did your parents force you to dance?

AUNT CLAIR: No, but my teachers kept saying I had talent. However, doing something well isn't the same as loving it.

SANDY: So, did you quit dancing?

AUNT CLAIR: Eventually, and I focused on something I loved.

SANDY: What?

AUNT CLAIR: *(She mimes shooting a basket.)* Basketball! I took my church team all the way to the area championship.

SANDY: *(sighing)* I thought you were like me, not like Roxie.

AUNT CLAIR: Are you sure I'm not? You were doing some interesting moves out there as you were playing goalie.

(SANDY starts to demonstrate, shifting from side to side in an almost dance-like way.)

SANDY: I have to be ready to leap at the ball in any corner of the goal,

AUNT CLAIR: But you were doing it even when the ball was at the other end of the field.

SANDY: Coach used to tell me I was wasting my energy, but I told her I'm staying alert, so she doesn't bug me about it anymore.

AUNT CLAIR: You were even taking a spin and a leap or two.

(She starts moving with SANDY, imitating a few moves that she did on the field.)

SANDY: I didn't think anyone would notice. Everyone's usually watching the ball.

AUNT CLAIR: But I was watching you.

(SANDY stops moving and CLAIR does too.)

SANDY: It's strange, but I enjoy the game more when the ball is at the other end of the field because I can move as I want to.

AUNT CLAIR: Maybe your body wants to do something different.

SANDY: I'm a soccer player! I shouldn't get distracted.

AUNT CLAIR: Let's go home.

(They get into CLAIR's "car", i.e., the front of the bed, and CLAIR might use a different Frisbee, perhaps one with a Honda logo, to steer.)

SANDY: My grandpa said you and your sisters got the house because you chose churches and he didn't.

AUNT CLAIR: That's a different way to tell the story.

SANDY: Is that true?

AUNT CLAIR: Our father believed he had to provide for his daughters and his son should provide for himself.

SANDY: With a free house and all three of you working, you should be rich!

AUNT CLAIR: Mary teaches at a private school and gets paid less than public school teachers. Lily works for groups she believes in, even if they don't believe in paying her.

SANDY: You're a nurse, aren't you? Don't nurses make good money?

AUNT CLAIR: As long as they don't work in a charity hospital.

SANDY: Then why don't you work in a real hospital?

AUNT CLAIR: *(She smiles.)* We have enough for our needs. We all want to do good in the world, even if we disagree on what's good.

SCENE J:

(AUNT CLAIR and SANDY get out of the car. SANDY changes into one of her school outfits as MEGAN and MARY move into, and perhaps arrange, the area representing the dance studio.)

SANDY: At least my aunts had agreed to take care of me. That made me feel useful. In my new school clothes, I was able to attend Aunt Mary's literature class. Aunt Mary seemed to question me more than the other students. I was the youngest member of the class and yet she seemed to expect more from me.

(AUNT MARY [a.k.a. MS. HUNTER] takes her place at the head of the class. MEGAN, a girl about SANDY's age or a little older, also takes her place in the class.)

AUNT MARY: Today we'll discuss the ending of the play *Saint Joan*. As I call on you, remember to stand, take a deep breath, and respond clearly in complete sentences. Who is the author of the play *Saint Joan*?

(She draws a card.)

Megan Lamb.

MEGAN: Yes ma'am.

(She stands, breathes, and responds.)

Saint Joan was written by George Bernard Shaw.

AUNT MARY: Well done, Megan.

(MEGAN sits, relieved.)

At the end of his play, George Bernard Shaw shows Joan of Arc making a difficult decision. Sandy!

SANDY: *(rising)* Yes, Ms. Hunter.

AUNT MARY: What was the choice that Joan was forced to make?

SANDY: *(taking a deep breath and responding)* Joan had to choose between insisting she'd heard heavenly voices and being killed as a heretic, or denying her voices and being allowed to live.

AUNT MARY: That is correct.

(SANDY starts to sit.)

And which did Joan choose, Sandy?

SANDY: Joan chose to deny her beliefs because she wanted to live.

AUNT MARY: Excellent. Now then —

SANDY: And even though she signed her denial, the men told her she'd have to live in prison for the rest of her life, so she tore it up and declared that her voices were true.

AUNT MARY: I was going to ask the next student about that. Now, may I call on someone else?

SANDY: Excuse me, Ms. Hunter, but why didn't the others speak up? I mean, they believed that Joan was innocent and didn't want her to die, but they kept their silence.

AUNT MARY: I am the teacher here, Sandy. I will ask the questions. Be seated if you wish to continue in the course.

SANDY: *(sitting reluctantly)* Yes, Miss Hunter.

(SANDY steps away from the classroom. MARY exits and MEGAN exits to make a costume change.)

SCENE K:

(SANDY may move set pieces to create an open area in the middle of the space.)

SANDY: I had asked a fair question, but like Joan, I had compromised my belief in order to keep learning, and the other students refused to defend me! I paced around the school until I ended up in the shop hallway where I called out: "Living in silence is worse than dying for truth!" And I was heard. One of the shops in that hallway had just been changed into a dance studio.

(SANDY may start a tape or record, or music is simply played. SISTER LIBBY, a nun in full habit, appears in the space as well as one or more girls in leotards and tights, including MEGAN. SISTER LIBBY guides the girls with movements and gestures from her upper body.)

Behind the open door, a flock of girls of every shape and size turned toward me. Then turned back to their dancing. It surprised me to see that the instructor was a nun in full habit. She looked like a penguin directing a flight of swallows.

(MEGAN, in a dance leotard, comes out of the doorway and stops SANDY.)

MEGAN: Would you like to join us?

SANDY: Oh, no, it looks like a lot of fun, but I don't belong here...

MEGAN: Aren't you Ms. Hunter's niece?

SANDY: Grand-niece. No one was supposed to know.

MEGAN: She wouldn't be that tough on a student unless they were family. She always asks me easy questions because she knows how shy I am and how generous my father is.

SANDY: You mean rich?

MEGAN: He makes donations to the school. Memorial can't afford to lose donors.

SANDY: But I guess they can afford to lose me.

MEGAN: Why don't you join us this afternoon?

SANDY: I don't have any dance clothes...

MEGAN: Sister Libby keeps some leotards for charity cases.

SANDY: I'm not a...

(She sees MEGAN smiling and shrugs.)

Sister Libby?

MEGAN: We're supposed to call her Sister Elizabeth, but we only do that when other teachers are listening.

Sister Libby danced professionally but she had an injury that ended her career.

SISTER LIBBY: *(approaching SANDY with a leotard.)* Here's a leotard you can borrow. You can change behind the screens.

SANDY: Thank you, Sister... Libby.

SISTER LIBBY: *(reciting)* There's always room in God's house.

(confidentially)

No one should be kept from the arts.

(She smiles. SISTER LIBBY and MEGAN continue the dance exercises while SANDY removes her school outfit and the soccer uniform under it, revealing the dance leotard and tights that she has worn throughout the show.)

SANDY: I took to dancing like a duckling to water, or was I really a swan? It was as if I were remembering dancing instead of learning it. I might convince Dad that dancing could make me a better soccer player, but what if I wanted to dance instead of playing soccer?

(SANDY joins the dance class.)

Time passed and the hands on the clock were spinning.

(MEGAN exits and SANDY continues to dance.)

I stayed for the next class, and the one after that, but I wasn't tired, I was energized!

(SANDY turns off the music or the music ends.)

(To SISTER LIBBY) What do I do with my dance clothes after class?

SISTER LIBBY: Take them home and bring them back tomorrow. You do want to dance again, don't you?

SANDY: More than anything! More than breathing! I'm like Cinderella at the ball!

SISTER LIBBY: I'm glad it brings you joy.

SANDY: Megan said you used to be professional dancer until you were injured.

SISTER LIBBY: That's the story they tell.

SANDY: Is it true?

SISTER LIBBY: I became a nun and I found my way here. I was teaching physical education, just when they decided to start a dance program. Sometimes our lives are guided.

(AUNT LILY appears, carrying a manila envelope. She spots SANDY and screams.)

AUNT LILY: Sandy! Where have you been?!

SANDY: Right here. I was invited to stay for a dance class... I guess I lost track of time...

(She rushes to change or at least fetch her school clothes.)

AUNT LILY: Mary has been searching for you everywhere! Clair wanted to call the police. You should have called! And you've made me late for my deadline!

(SANDY grabs her school clothes and puts them on over her leotard as she prepares to leave.)

SANDY: What deadline? I didn't realize...

SISTER LIBBY: I'm so sorry. I invited Sandy to stay and I didn't realize she was expected...

AUNT LILY: It was her responsibility!

SCENE L:

(LILY and SANDY take their places in the pickup cab, i.e. the front of the bed. SANDY might continue to put on her school clothes over her dance clothes.)

SANDY: Aunt Lily broke Dad's land speed record. Rather than going home, we drove downtown, and I didn't ask why. Wherever we were going, we were getting there quickly, and not very safely.

(LILY jumps out of the car with a large envelope and approaches the door. She slips the envelope under the door and returns to the vehicle.)

AUNT LILY: Fifteen minutes late!

SANDY: What was in the—

AUNT LILY: Our theatre company's annual grant application to the City Arts Council.

SANDY: Did you try—

AUNT LILY: The door was locked. I stuck the envelope under the door. We can hope for mercy, but I've heard stories about the lady in charge. Juliana Cavendish! She's stricter than your Aunt Mary.

SANDY: Is there anything I can—

AUNT LILY: Just don't talk to me right now, okay Sandy?

SCENE M:

(SANDY and AUNT LILY get out of the car. CLAIR and MARY appear in a space representing the kitchen.)

SANDY: When we got home, I was relieved that there weren't any police cars or search parties, but around the yard were a dozen men and boys, some on ladders, some at ground level, finishing painting the house.

AUNT LILY: Found her!

AUNT CLAIR: *(embracing SANDY)* Thank heavens!

AUNT MARY: *(breaking up CLAIR and SANDY)* Young lady, I expect to know where you are at all times.

SANDY: Yes, ma'am, I should have called you to tell you I went to dance classes this afternoon.

AUNT MARY: Did you pay for dance classes?

SANDY: No...

AUNT MARY: Well neither did I!

SANDY: Sister Libby says no one should be kept from the arts.

AUNT MARY: Sister Libby?

SANDY: Sister Elizabeth. She says there's always room in God's house.

AUNT MARY: God's house is not an art house. Had you squeezed into a Bible class, that might be forgivable, but you've stolen an afternoon of dance.

SANDY: I didn't realize I was stealing. I'll pay it back.

AUNT MARY: How? You weren't here painting when the men from Clair's church showed up, so I couldn't say you were doing it yourself.

SANDY: Perhaps I could make them some lemonade?

AUNT CLAIR: Sandy can't be condemned for what they're doing, and maybe it's even commendable.

AUNT MARY: For thirty years, we have maintained our independence and I don't want to lose that now. What did you dance in?

SANDY: Sister... Elizabeth lent me a leotard. I wore it home, under my clothes.

AUNT MARY: Well, with your new wardrobe, you're becoming a regular Barbie doll!

SANDY: *(She looks at herself.)* Barbie doll?!

AUNT CLAIR: Lily, were you able to turn in your grant application?

AUNT LILY: I slipped it under the door and I'm praying for mercy.

AUNT MARY: Rules are rules, even if you don't obey them.

SANDY: Yes, ma'am.

AUNT MARY: Fix them some lemonade. Make sure they don't come in through the living room until you clean up the parlor. You left your laundry out when you left this morning, including your unmentionables.

SANDY: If they're unmentionable, why are you mentioning them?

AUNT CLAIR: Sandy, don't be sassy.

SANDY: If I'd been given a proper bed, I wouldn't have left my things in the parlor! If I had called—

AUNT MARY: I would have said no!

SANDY: Then I'm glad I disobeyed you!

(As AUNT MARY trained her, SANDY takes a breath and presents her argument.)

Would you show mercy to a starving child who stole food from a grocery store? If so, then should you not show mercy to a girl who was hungry to dance?

(She starts to exit.)

AUNT LILY: Where are you going?

SANDY: I'm taking my things and moving to the attic! I'll sleep on the floor and tame the mice!

AUNT MARY: Don't be melodramatic!

SANDY: I'm telling you where I'll be: above the locked bedroom where I'm not allowed to sleep!

SCENE N:

(SANDY leaves the area representing the kitchen and plops herself down on the floor or a chair in an area representing the attic. The AUNTS exit.)

SANDY: I threw myself down in the attic and stayed there 'til I heard someone coming up the ladder.

AUNT LILY: Hey.

SANDY: Hey.

(Beat.)

I'm sorry I killed your theatre company.

AUNT LILY: You didn't kill it. It may not have any money next year, but money isn't everything.

SANDY: Does the rest of your company feel that way?

AUNT LILY: The real artists do.

SANDY: Will they fire you?

AUNT LILY: They can't. They don't pay me. That's the advantage of being a volunteer.

SANDY: I was so happy, but I hurt all three of you. Now I can't go back to dancing.

AUNT LILY: Is that what hurts the most?

SANDY: Yes! I'm selfish!

AUNT LILY: You're human.

(LILY puts her hand on SANDY's shoulder and the touch releases SANDY's tears. LILY holds and rocks her. When SANDY regains her composure, LILY places a large key next to SANDY.)

AUNT LILY: It's a key. It opens the fourth bedroom. We talked it over and decided to let you use it.

SANDY: Was that Aunt Mary's idea?

AUNT LILY: No, but she agreed. Clair and I outnumbered her.

SANDY: You shouldn't reward me for bad behavior.

AUNT LILY: You mean your tirade? From one little sister to another, you did well. You held your own when you were outnumbered three to one. You shouldn't be shamed for losing yourself in your art.

SANDY: I'm not an artist; I'm an athlete! I danced for one afternoon.

AUNT LILY: And everything else went away?

SANDY: Yes. You understand.

AUNT LILY: You lost yourself and found yourself. Want me to help you move in?

SANDY: Thanks, but I'd like to do it myself.

AUNT LILY: *(She nods.)* Once you've settled in, I'll visit you.

SANDY: I'd like that.

(LILY exits.)

SCENE O:

(SANDY acts out what she dictates. If the bedspread was moved or re-arranged as the bed became the car, SANDY should re-arrange it in this scene.)

SANDY: I came down from the attic and turned the brass key to the fourth bedroom. There was a beautiful bed, with a fine bedspread all made up for a guest. Why didn't they let me sleep in it? On the wall, there were watercolor paintings of far-away places. Along the baseboard were a dozen pairs of shoes, growing in size from baby to adult, including the shoes that Clair had lent me. I stared silently 'til Aunt Clair came in.

(to AUNT CLAIR)

Who lived here?

AUNT CLAIR: No one.

SANDY: Did one of you have a child, or lose a child?

AUNT CLAIR: No, but my sisters and I always longed for one. This room is a memorial to things that never were.

SANDY: If you wanted a child, you should have been thrilled when I arrived.

AUNT CLAIR: We didn't know what to do with a real girl, let alone one who's becoming a woman.

AUNT LILY: *(peering in cautiously)* Can I come in?

SANDY: Sure, but you don't need my permission.

AUNT LILY: (*entering the room*) This is your room now.

SANDY: What's with the shoes?

AUNT CLAIR: It's a long story. I tried to adopt a daughter...

SANDY: All by yourself?

AUNT LILY: Mary and I would have helped, but Clair would have been the momma.

SANDY: What happened?

AUNT CLAIR: Three days before I was supposed to receive the baby, they reassigned her to a husband and wife. On her first birthday, I sent the couple a pair of shoes, this pair here, but they sent them back. I buy her a pair every year on her birthday, but I don't send them anymore.

SANDY: Who did the paintings?

AUNT LILY: I did.

SANDY: Are these the places you've traveled to?

AUNT LILY: Places I wanted to travel to. You can't hitch-hike to Europe. I painted them from calendars and magazines. I've never really traveled much, even though I'm not tied down.

SANDY: What about the bedspread?

AUNT CLAIR: Mary made it for her hope-chest.

SANDY: Did she hope to get married?

AUNT LILY: She wanted to become a nun, but she stayed poor and single, even though she never took her vows.

AUNT CLAIR: Lily!

AUNT LILY: Admit it, Clair. None of our lives turned out as we wanted.

AUNT CLAIR: Whose lives do? Here we imagine the things that might have been.

SANDY: Does imagining fill the holes?

AUNT LILY: No, but it's better than pretending that the holes aren't there.

(LILY and CLAIR exit. Sentimental music from the 1970's might be heard in the background.)

SANDY: The sisters weren't weird; they were sad. They'd remained in their childhood home; together but alone. If I didn't figure out who I was that summer, I'd probably end up like them, and as much as I was beginning to love them, I wanted to become something different.

(If intermission is used, it should happen at this point.)

15 MORE PAGES IN “ACT TWO”