CRUSH

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CRUSH

a play in nine scenes
for five actors

Characters

RILEY — The protagonist. Male.

MOLLY — An antagonist. Female. Bitch-ass. Dresses all in black. Somewhere between 15 and 35.

GALE — Another antagonist. Also female. Wishes she were more like MOLLY.

LIZ — An obsessive antagonist. Of course, female.

ANDREW — The cello-boy. “Involved” with MOLLY.

Scene I

*[*RILEY *and* MOLLY *are in a diner. It is 2am.]*

RILEY: I've got a crush on you, you know.

MOLLY: A crush?

RILEY: Yeah, sure. It bother you?

MOLLY: Not really… I never figured you for the type, that's all.

RILEY: Oh, this isn't a giggly schoolgirl crush.

MOLLY: You sure? Because you really look like a giggly schoolgirl…

RILEY: Yeah, yeah. It's more a pleasant obsession. A 23-year-old grad student crush, if you will.

MOLLY: In other words you're saying you like me.

RILEY: Yes. Crush (noun): an irrational liking for many sufficient but no particular good reason.

MOLLY: Ah, one of those asexual crushes.

RILEY: Oh course. I had my gonads surgically removed years ago.

MOLLY: Uh-huh.

RILEY: Ok, so perhaps I need to amend my definition. Crush (noun): …

MOLLY: *Your* crush (noun):…

RILEY: Right. Ok. *My* crush (noun) on Molly (proper noun) has far too much of the face and eyes in it to be properly hormonally-neutral.

MOLLY: You like my eyes.

RILEY: You don't write long stories about someone's eye-color unless the limbic system's involved. At least somehow.

MOLLY: And you did?

RILEY: Write the story? Yes.

MOLLY: Do I get to read it?

RILEY: No. Not yet.

MOLLY: Why not?

RILEY: I'm afraid you'll think I've got a crush on you.

MOLLY: Ah.

RILEY: When you've got the notary public's Relationship Avowal in hand from cello-boy, whatever his name is...

MOLLY: Andrew.

RILEY: Cello-boy, *whatever* his name is, *then*...

MOLLY: Well, I guess it's kinda implied now...since we sort of hit the "hard-core monogamy" threshold last night.

RILEY: Just the threshold? No firm promises? Under moonlight, over dinner?

MOLLY: *[Grins.]* In bed. Maybe we'll get around to talking about it next time...and you know, I *did* have the most intense and drawn-out two-person orgasm of my *life* last night. *[Sighs happily.]* I think he's rather fond of me.

RILEY: Yeah, yeah, so this isn't the jealous-crush-thing. That I've got going, I mean. That's a schoolgirl thing.

MOLLY: No romantic mooning over me?

RILEY: Also schoolgirl.

MOLLY: No flowers from a secret admirer?

RILEY: Schoolgirl.

MOLLY: Not even a wet dream?

RILEY: *[Beat.]* Teenage boy.

MOLLY: I've got an freckle-archipelago under my navel...

RILEY: Which archipelago?

MOLLY: *[Pauses, thinking; sarcastically:]* The Gulag Archepelago. *[Sticks out tongue.]*

RILEY: You do not.

MOLLY: Wanna see? *[Lifts up her shirt; embarassed, he turns away, but sneaks a glance out of the corner of his eye.]*

[With mock annoyance:] I don't even rank as a sexual fantasy?

RILEY: 'Fraid not. Just your ordinary "nothing-can-make-a-man-rearrange-his-appointments-like-a-girl-with-enchanting-eyes"-type dealie. Along with just the hint of a desire to wear things you've publicly remarked you find sexy, which, so far, I've been able to resist.

MOLLY: So, just cheekbones and eyes?

RILEY: The face. Very nice.

MOLLY: *[Loaded question.]* You don't like my hips.

RILEY: It's not…

MOLLY: *[Defensive.]* You know, some people find curves attractive.

RILEY: …what *I* find attractive.

MOLLY: *[Sarcastic.]* And that is?

RILEY: The bit that I find irresistable?

MOLLY: The secret to your obsession.

RILEY: I don't think I'm going to say.

MOLLY: Oh c'mon, Riley!

RILEY: You won't want to hear it.

MOLLY: *[Impatient.]* Some kinky sexual thing?

RILEY: No. I'll tell you later.

MOLLY: No you won't.

RILEY: You're right. I probably won't.

[Black out.]

Scene II

*[*RILEY *is sitting on a park bench, reading some papers for work. He interrupts himself, looks at his watch. It's time for him to go: he has a meeting very soon. He gathers his papers and gets up; just at that moment* GALE *skates by, wearing headphones.* RILEY *watches her glide past.]*

RILEY: *[Knowing she can't hear him.]* I've got a crush on you, you know.

GALE: What? *[Taking headphones off.]*

RILEY: Gale. Hey. *[Beat.]* I haven't seen you for ages.

GALE: What are you doing?

RILEY: I've got a meeting…

GALE: You're sitting here with me.

RILEY: *[Sits back down.]* I am. Indeed.

[Long beat.]

It's been a long time.

GALE: So, Riley. What have you been up to?

RILEY: Well… *[Thinks of something:]* I ran into a good friend the other day. Who I hadn't seen in for*ever*. On Mem Drive, by the Charles.

GALE: So right around here.

RILEY: Right by here. I had my nose in some papers and almost didn't see her as she went blading past.

GALE: She was blading?

RILEY: Yes, she was. She asked me what I was doing, and I actually was about to leave for a meeting, but she told me I was sitting there with her for a while, so I did.

GALE: *[Catching on.]* She felt really lame for… I've been meaning to hang out with you for months but I've been busy being someone else.

RILEY: That's exactly what she said. Gale said. *[*GALE *gives him a look.]* Was it fun?

GALE: Being someone else? Yes, it was.

RILEY: Who exactly were you being? Did you like being…

GALE: In a play.

RILEY: Oh. *Oh.*

GALE: It's going well. The two directors are lovers, we think.

RILEY: That sounds fun. Is it a good show?

GALE: *[Slight pause.]* It's better than the last one you did with me.

RILEY: Ok. I'll have to come see it, then.

GALE: I'm writing a play about you.

RILEY: Really? The same one, from before?

GALE: I don't think it's going to be finished for a while.

RILEY: You should get a giant purple hippopotamus.

GALE: What?

RILEY: My muse. It's a giant hippopotamus—works wonders, really…

GALE: Anyway, my playwriting class likes it.

RILEY: That's cool. *[Grins.]* They didn't like the one *I* wrote about *you*, last year.

[Long pause. They look at each other.]

GALE: It's been a long time.

RILEY: Yes. It has.

GALE: I…I don't know why it's been so long.
[Sincerely.] I'm glad I ran into you today.

RILEY: I try not to pester you with invitations—there was this MFA show—I mean, I know you're busy.

[An awkward pause.]

GALE: *[Suddenly.]* You want to catch ducks on the Commons, herd them into the T, and then take them to Alewife?

RILEY: You've got to ask that today—*now*. I'm really supposed to be at a meeting. . . *[checking his watch]* five minutes ago. My advisor's going to kill me.

GALE: You suck.

RILEY: In a half-an-hour?

GALE: I've got rehearsal soon.

RILEY: Any other day. . .

GALE: You should come to the cast party.

RILEY: Your cast hates me.

GALE: I don't think that's true.

RILEY: I've been spending too much time doing theater for money.

GALE: And too little time doing our shows.

After spring break, then.

RILEY: That long?

GALE: *[Justifying. Very rational:]* We open this weekend and run for two weeks, and spring break's right after.

RILEY: Oh.

GALE: After spring break. We'll screw with reality. Shake on it?

RILEY: You know. . . *[Looks up. Beat. Very sincere:]*

You can say so whenever and I'll drop everything for you.

[A pause.]

GALE: That's the sweetest thing anyone's said. . .

RILEY: Hell, I'm doing so right now.

[Another feathered pause.]

GALE: I'm going to hug you. Just for that.

[They do so; an awkward embrace that lasts for much longer than a "casual" hug ought. After a moment, they resettle, her nestling her head on his shoulder and he burying his face in her long hair. GALE *sniffs loudly, twice, to control the tears in her eyes. Another long moment passes before they slowly untangle themselves and straighten their composure. This hug was not meant to leave them so bare.]*

[They stand looking at each other.]

So. *[Her voice is husky.]*

*[*GALE *has wet eyes, but she's controlling herself. She sniffles again.* RILEY *brushes her cheek, at the place where her tear-she-won't-let-fall would be. They smile.]*

So. After spring break. *[Her voice cracks a bit, but strengthens.]* After spring break, you and I. We'll screw with reality. Shake on it. *[Puts out her hand.]*

[They shake.]

RILEY: After spring break.

[He looks at his watch. Lights out.]

Scene III

*[*MOLLY *and* RILEY*. In a crowded IHOP. They talk loudly, and people overhear. Some leave. Some stare. These other people aren't actually on stage.]*

RILEY: I've got a crush on you, you know.

MOLLY: Do you have to start *every* conversation like that?

RILEY: You ever wake up in the morning just wanting to stick your dick into something?

MOLLY: I think I prefered the statement to the question. *[Rolls eyes, slurps her drink.]*

RILEY: I guess you wouldn't really know about the dick thing.

MOLLY: No, *I* wake up in the morning and reach for my vibrator.

RILEY: Did I really want to know?

MOLLY: *[Grins widely.]* It's a Hitatchi.

RILEY: Great.

MOLLY: Got you back. *[Grins.]*

RILEY: *[Pauses, thinking.]* Does Andrew know?

MOLLY: *[Cautiously.]* Does Andrew know what?

RILEY: *[Evil grin.]* That the wand's a better lover than he is?

MOLLY: Oh, come on, it's two totally different things.

RILEY: Really? Two objects, both pleasurable, neither of which can remember your number or the names of your cats? Neither of which knows of your secret passion for opera?

MOLLY: *[Trying to hide the hurt.]* Oh, you're so funny, Riley.

RILEY: I mean, it's been how long now? And he still hasn't figured out you *hate* being called "squeaky"?

MOLLY: *[Angry.]* It just never came up.

RILEY: You know, sex is better if you *talk.*

MOLLY: And how would you know?

RILEY: I've been told.

MOLLY: *[Eager to turn the tables.]* You don't ever really *fuck*, do you?

RILEY: *[Beat]* I'd be terrified.

MOLLY: But you're perfectly comfortable making snide comments about other people—what was the word last week? Schtupping.

RILEY: Not that again. Look, I *said* I was sorry.

MOLLY: It's just because you can't picture *us* ever making love.

RILEY: No.

MOLLY: Well, I can't, either. It would be way too weird.

RILEY: I'd be scared to death. It wouldn't be fun.

MOLLY: *[Semi-derisively:]* You don't seem like the whips-and-handcuffs type.

RILEY: Oh god.

MOLLY: Rope? Wax?

RILEY: *[desparately]* Fucking *cuddling*! I'm so fucking *lonely*. I just want someone to *love* me. To wake up in the morning and be glad it's *my* face they're looking at, *my* lips they can't wait to kiss. *[Beat.]* The stick-your-dick-in-things I can deal with. Cold showers and all that...

MOLLY: And other things.

RILEY: Hey, keep it safe for the kiddies. We're not going to talk about masturbation here.

MOLLY: Right. No mention at all.

RILEY: Nope. Not one.

MOLLY: But it's spring time and your most steady date is with your hand.

RILEY: That's mean. No, my most steady date is with *you*.

MOLLY: Who has an *[searches for a word]* involvement... and whom you couldn't even imagine fucking.

RILEY: What can I say? I'm fucked.

MOLLY: Not fucked.

RILEY: Right. That's my problem.

MOLLY: You need to get laid.

RILEY: No, it's not just that. Really. Sexual tension I can deal with.

MOLLY: This is not a mention of masturbation.

RILEY: I want to be *loved. [*MOLLY *smirks; too close to home.]* That sounds so god-damn trite.

MOLLY: And you're pinning all your hopes for adoration on the elusive Ms. Gale.

RILEY: Yes. But no. Liz called today.

MOLLY: *[Thinking evil thoughts of exploitative sex:]* Oh really?

RILEY: I'm thinking of telling her she can fly up here for spring break. From Trinidad.

MOLLY: Oh, *there's* a good idea. That won't encourage her in the least.

RILEY: Beggars can't be choosers.

MOLLY: Riley, you know you're not that dumb.

RILEY: She called, right? What do you think the first thing I said to her was?

MOLLY: I've got a crush on you, you know.

RILEY: No, actually – she said that to *me*.

[Cross-fade to next scene: flashback.]

Scene IV

[A phone conversation. LIZ *(SL) and* RILEY *(SR).* MOLLY *is behind* RILEY*, but the lighting is just on* LIZ *and* RILEY*.]*

LIZ: I've got a crush on you, you know.

RILEY: Yeah, I know, Liz.

LIZ: You do?

RILEY: Yeah.

LIZ: Really?

RILEY: Really.

LIZ: So you'll...

RILEY: No, I *won't* move to the Caribbean with you and raise ten kids.

LIZ: What if we only had eight?

RILEY: It's really not a possibility, Liz.

LIZ: But we were meant for each other, Riley, don't you remember?

RILEY: Um...

LIZ: It was the best night of my life.

RILEY: You mean—

LIZ: The night we slept together.

RILEY: *[This is new.]* You can't be serious.

LIZ: But I am! I—

RILEY: You were drunk, and we didn't finish.

LIZ: I came! I came so hard!

RILEY: You were faking it!

LIZ: It was so wonderful!

RILEY: You bruised my ribs when you sat on top of me.

LIZ: You were so good! So *big*!

RILEY: I couldn't tell the clitoris from the epiglottis.

LIZ: It was the best I ever had!

RILEY: You threw up all over me. *[Pause.]* And my room smelled for days.

LIZ: We should try again. You and me. We could make it work this time.

RILEY: What do you mean *this* time, there was never a *last* time.

LIZ: We went out all year!

RILEY: *[Losing his cool.]* You mean you showed up on my doorstep whenever you were drunk until you finally dropped out of school.

LIZ: We were just too busy to hang out a lot.

RILEY: Liz...

LIZ: We can make it work this time, I know we can. I *love* you, Rye. *[He winces. The nickname's no better than "squeaky."]* You're the only reason I get up in the morning. I dream every night of waking up next to you, of counting each of your eyelashes, of kissing the spaces between your toes one by one... of doing all that every morning, for the rest of my life...

RILEY: Liz?

LIZ: Yeah?

RILEY: I really have to get to bed.

LIZ: Alright... I wish I could lay beside you, Rye...

RILEY: Goodnight.

LIZ: I love you.... Goodnight...

[A beat. Riley hangs up.]

Scene V

*[*RILEY *and* GALE*. They are sitting in the middle of the Harvard bridge, late at night.]*

RILEY: I've got a crush on you, you know.

GALE: You're not serious.

RILEY: *[Beat.]* Why are we sitting in traffic, again?

GALE: We're fucking with reality.

RILEY: Reality's going to fuck *us* if this semi has its way.

GALE: It's going to change lanes.

RILEY: I don't think so.

GALE: Yes it will.

[They stare at the approaching semi. It changes lanes. A beat.]

I think I'm a lesbian.

RILEY: Um.

GALE: I think I've got a crush on Andrew.

RILEY: "Cello-boy"?

GALE: Um, yeah.

RILEY: Molly's. . . "new friend".

GALE: *[Sigh.]* Yeah.

RILEY: But he's not a woman!

GALE: Well then I guess I'm bi.

RILEY: What a relief.

GALE: But I'm really not very attracted to guys at the moment.

RILEY: But. . .

GALE: I actually feel like being alone. I like being alone.

RILEY: But—

GALE: Men are…

RILEY: *[Cutting her off:]* But I love you!

GALE: What?

RILEY: I love… ewes. Sheep.

GALE: That's really random.

RILEY: I thought you… um, should know.

GALE: This isn't one of those sick fetishes, is it?

RILEY: I…

GALE: That's not really *you*. Why can't you just be yourself?

RILEY: Identity is a mutable construct.

GALE: Whatever that means.

RILEY: This really isn't going well, is it.

GALE: No, it's not. You suck.

RILEY: I. Um.

GALE: I had a dream last night.

RILEY: I did, too.

GALE: Andrew was in it. Cello-boy.

RILEY: You were in mine.

GALE: He was standing in my doorway. And he said…

RILEY: *[Finishing her sentence, but meaning it himself:]* I love you.

GALE: No. He said, "You're the one for me. Only you. All those other girls…"

RILEY: Other girls?

GALE: He had a couple of random flings. Before he met me.

RILEY: What, you weren't his first?

*[*GALE *gives him a look.]*

So, in other words he's sort of a slut. And now he's doing Molly.

GALE: He said…

RILEY: …in the dream…

GALE: …all those other girls aren't for him, that it was me and only me.

RILEY: Ah. *[Down.]* And then wild sex.

GALE: *[Grins silently, inside herself.]*

RILEY: I…

GALE: It's late.

RILEY: It's late.

GALE: You should go.

RILEY: Um, Gale…

GALE: Yes?

RILEY: Um.

GALE: I've got class tomorrow.

RILEY: Do you ever feel…

GALE: Morning.

RILEY: …*lonely?*

GALE: Yes.

[She looks at him.]

Damn. How long do you think the Andrew and Molly thing will last?

RILEY: Dunno. I've never seen her so…

GALE: 'Cause if it wasn't *him*, I'd be going for *her*.

RILEY: *[Not terribly sympathetic:]* Yeah. That sucks, I guess.

GALE: Ok. I gotta go.

RILEY: Bye.

GALE: Bye.

[She leaves.]

RILEY: *[Calling after:]* Hey— *[Pathetic:]* I've got a double but my roommate is away for the weekend…

*[*RILEY *sighs. Exits. Black out.]*

Scene VI

*[*LIZ *and* RILEY*, in* RILEY*'s apartment. A mostly empty bottle of Cuervo sits on a table.]*

RILEY: I've got a crush on you, you know.

LIZ: Really?

RILEY: No.

LIZ: You sure?

RILEY: Yes.

LIZ: Because, you know, that's why I came up here…

RILEY: *[Regretting his delayed objections.]* Yes, I do. You really shouldn't have come.

LIZ: I flew all the way from Trinidad.

RILEY: I know.

LIZ: *[Removing her overalls, trying—and failing—to be subtle.]* It's really hot in here…

RILEY: Put your overalls back on.

LIZ: The shirt's long enough! *[It isn't. Riley shakes his head.]* How can I not be hot when you're around? *[Saunters over to him, plays with his fly; he moves away.]*

RILEY: You're always hot. I'll open a window. You should go. *[He tries to exit to his bedroom.]*

LIZ: I'm staying. *[She tries to follow him.]*

RILEY: If you're staying, you're staying on the *couch*. *[He points.]*

LIZ: I'm staying until I prove how right we are.

RILEY: Oh god.

LIZ: Then I'm heading home to Trinidad to get our new house ready.

RILEY: *We* will never have a house Liz.

LIZ: Sure we will—in the Caribbean, with the—

RILEY: Ten kids, which we will *also* never have!

LIZ: Come on, let's start one right now! *[Heads for his fly again.]*

RILEY: No! Liz, you don't get it, that's not what I *want*! I want someone to—

LIZ: Love you! *I* love you! You're my everything—

RILEY: And you're my *nothing*! Please Liz, just go, just leave, just…

LIZ: Don't you ever just want to stick your dick into something?

RILEY: *[Puzzled beat: how did she know? Sits.]* Well, yeah. But not you. It's not right, it's not…

LIZ: Sure it is, we'll make it right…*I'll* make it right. Just give me a chance. Just let me show you…*[By this time Liz is kneeling in front of him, has been kissing down the front of him, is now opening his fly as if to fellatiate…]*

RILEY: *[In such a way that makes apparent the conflict between his mind and his… "manhood."]* No…no. Good. Night. *[He exits to bed; she follows.] No. [He pushes her down onto the couch.] You* sleep *here*. *[Exits.]*

LIZ: *[Calling after him:]* I love you, Rye…

Scene VII

[Lights up on what is apparently MOLLY*'s bedroom. There is a large bed, US, with two sleeping bodies in it. They are (SL)* MOLLY *and (SR)* ANDREW*. There is a chair UR, and a cello laying down on the floor in front of it. The cello is half-covered with the clothing scattered around the room, both male and female, obviously strewn there in the heat of passion. The bow, however, hangs from a bed-post—we don't ask. The phone, on a nightstand SL of the bed, begins to ring;* MOLLY*, nearest, picks it up with a languid "Enh?"]*

GALE: I'm totally obsessed with you. In fact, I think you could even say…

MOLLY: You've got a crush on me?

GALE: How…

MOLLY: It's become quite the thing to say.

GALE: Oh.

MOLLY: It's all right.

GALE: So, I suppose I don't have much of a chance, then, huh. *[Beat.]* Not that I'm sure I want one.

MOLLY: Okaaay.

GALE: I mean. *[Beat.]* I think I'm a lesbian. But maybe I'm not. Maybe I'm bi. Maybe I just want to *be* you.

MOLLY: Well then masturbating would be like having sex with me. If you were me, I mean.

GALE: Huh?

MOLLY: Sorry, I just woke up.

GALE: God, I'm sorry.

MOLLY: No, don't worry about it.

GALE: All right, so… as long as it's weird… can I ask you a weird question?

MOLLY: Go for it.

GALE: Have you seen Riley recently?

MOLLY: Not since a few days ago. Why?

GALE: There's something going on. With him. It's strange, I don't know what it is. But I'm worried about him—it *is* showing.

MOLLY: What, Riley's neurosis?

GALE: No. It's worse than that. He's so sad and restless. He's been acting really strangely.

MOLLY: Well, you know what he says…

GALE and MOLLY: *[In unison:]* Identity is a mutable construct.

GALE: You think that's all it is?

MOLLY: That and spring. He'll be fine.

GALE: I worry about him—I really like him, you know. He just… wants too much. I'm not a ring kind of girl.

MOLLY: *[Vocal shrug.]* He's just intense.

GALE: And I was really a bitch to him yesterday. I was—thinking of someone else. I guess we all want what we can't have.

MOLLY: He'll be fine.

GALE: I'm not sure.

MOLLY: Trust me. *[Looking at* ANDREW*. Pleasantly, to* GALE*:]* Good night?

GALE: Good night. *[Beat. Quickly:]* Thanks. *[Beat.]* Good night.

*[*GALE *hangs up.* MOLLY *puts the phone down and gazes tenderly at* ANDREW *before snuggling back into bed. She inadvertently wakes* ANDREW*.]*

ANDREW: *[Starts to roll over, but finds himself still handcuffed to the bed;* MOLLY *notices and grabs the key off the nightstand to free him. It is apparent that he's "waking up beside her," so to speak; we guess from his shirtless chest that he's quite naked under the blankets. Sleepily:]* Who was that?

MOLLY: My friend Gale, from that play I was in that year.

ANDREW: Roller-Gale?

MOLLY: Yeah, that's her.

ANDREW: I know her.

MOLLY: Yeah?

ANDREW: We met at a club a few months ago. Had some fun. *[Smiles.]*

MOLLY: *[Undisturbed; doesn't get it.]* Yeah, she's a fun girl.

ANDREW: So... can I ask you a question?

MOLLY: Sure.

ANDREW: Well, I've really enjoyed getting to know you, but there's something that's been weirding me out a little.

MOLLY: *[Concern on her face though not in her voice:]* It's not that thing I do with my tongue, is it?

ANDREW: *[Quickly:]* No, no... I just think you might be my first younger woman. That's all.

MOLLY: *[Obviously relieved: this is not what she was expecting, is not even something she considers a problem.]* Well, when's your birthday?

ANDREW: June 1974.

MOLLY: And when do you think mine is?

ANDREW: I don't know! That's the thing... you've got a certain agelessness to you.

MOLLY: Ok.

ANDREW: *[Cautiously.]* I mean, you weren't born in the 80's or anything, were you?

MOLLY: *[With great mock indignance:]* I was born on the right side of the date line, thank you very much! *[They both laugh.]*

ANDREW: *[With great relief:]* Hey, just checking! I usually date women a lot older than I am, but I wanted to find someone closer to my own age this time.

MOLLY: Yeah, I usually date older people too. I know how that goes.

ANDREW: So when is your birthday?

MOLLY: Um. . . December 1979. *[In response to the look on his face:]* December 31, 1979.

ANDREW: *[Half joking, half squirming:]* "I was born on the right side of the date line"!

MOLLY: Hey, I got a few hours in, it counts! *[She begins to attack him, with pillows or tickling, director's choice; he semi-reluctantly, then quite enthusiastically, responds in kind.]*

ANDREW: What am I going to do about you?

MOLLY: I bet that's not nearly as interesting as what you could do *to* me. . .

ANDREW: Indeed. *[He rolls over towards her, and the two of them begin doing* something*, we're not sure what, under the covers; giggling and other assorted sounds of joy can be heard. . .]*

*[*RILEY *enters. His head is shaved. He's wearing radically different clothes. All black; lots of leather. Some steel.]*

RILEY: *[To no one in particular:]* I brought rocks. *[He is, indeed, carrying a shitload of rocks. One drops. Thunk. He doesn't pick it up.]*

MOLLY: *[*MOLLY *pops out from under the covers, apparently on top; looks over at* RILEY*.]* Riley. What are you doing here? *[*RILEY *gestures to rocks with head. Grunts.]* I see. *[Brightly:]* Well. I suppose I should do introductions, then! *[Looking down at him.]* Andrew, this is my friend Riley. Riley, this is Andrew. *[She flips the pair of them over, so that* ANDREW *is now on top and looking at* RILEY*.]*

ANDREW: *[Attention directed elsewhere.]* Ah. The crazy playwright. Nice to meet you.

RILEY: *[Completely nonplussed.]* Nice to meet you too. Oh, I've got nipple piercings just like that. But with a chain.

MOLLY: *[Rolling them over, so she is once again on top.]* I've told him all about you.

ANDREW: *[Rolls so that* he *is again on top. Finally looks at* RILEY*. Briefly. Then a second take.]* All good of course. *[Smiles and returns to what he was doing.]*

MOLLY: *[On top again.]* Of course! So, what brings you by again?

RILEY: *[Still not registering anything unusual.]* The rocks. They're for your fish.

MOLLY: Right. *[Squeal. "Ohhhh, right! Right there!"]*

RILEY: There's a lot of rocks. Fish need places to hide. *[He dumps the rocks on the ground. Thunk.]*

ANDREW: *[To* MOLLY*.]* Are the rocks supposed to mean something?

RILEY: No, they're just rocks.

*[*RILEY *builds an elaborate altar on the floor. Rapt attention from* MOLLY *and* ANDREW*, except when they are otherwise... distracted.]*

RILEY: I forgot the matches.

ANDREW: *[From below.]* Matches?

RILEY: Matches. *[*RILEY *leaves.]*

ANDREW: That's a weird kid.

MOLLY: He writes plays.

ANDREW: Riiiight. *[They giggle.]*

*[*RILEY *returns. With a candle and matches.]*

MOLLY: Hey, Tilden—a candle now, too?

RILEY: No particular reason.

MOLLY: *[Giggles at* ANDREW*.]* Oooh, do that again!

*[*RILEY *lights the candle. Sits back on his haunches. Enjoys his handiwork. At no point during any of this scene does he look at* MOLLY *and* ANDREW*. He scratches himself.]*

RILEY: I brought driftwood, too. *[Beat.]* For the plecos. They need the cellulose.

*[*MOLLY *starts "plec-ing" on* ANDREW*.*[1] *"Plec, Plec, Plec, Plec..."]*

ANDREW: Iguanas are fond of wood as well. They climb on it.

[1] A "pleco" is a pet name for the *plecostomas commonus*, a South American catfish which lives in rivers and has a flat bottom—not unlike a halibut—with the addition of a sucker-mouth, which it uses to both garner cellulose and attach itself to rocks to keep itself from drifting downstream. In short, "plec-ing" is much like little bits of sucking, with rapid lip movements. Come over to our places and we'll show you.

MOLLY: Oh, don't we all. Love to climb on it. *[A playful look. She mounts* ANDREW*.]*

RILEY: Driftwood.

*[*RILEY *leaves for the driftwood. Still not paying attention to the interesting noises from the bed.]*

[. . . just sex during this brief pause. . .]

RILEY: *[Re-entering.]* Driftwood.

[Upon not receiving a reply, RILEY *dances a tango with the driftwood.* MOLLY *and* ANDREW *hum a tango in unison. Then break into (sexual) giggles.]*

MOLLY: *[To* ANDREW*.]* Wanna take tango lessons sometime? The vertical kind?

ANDREW: That could be fun.

*[*RILEY *arranges two of the pieces of driftwood into a large cross, then turns it upside down, and leaves.]*

[Blackout.]

Scene VIII

[An outdoor cafe. Later. It's morning. GALE *and* ANDREW *are eating bagels. Cinnamon-raisin bagels.]*

GALE: I've got a crush on you.

ANDREW: Yeah, I know.

GALE: You don't think that makes things weird?

ANDREW: No. It was just sex, you know—

GALE: *[Quickly, cutting him off:]* Whatever.

ANDREW: *[Taking the hint, laughing:]* We had fun.

GALE: Yeah, so I had the oddest time with Riley the other day.

ANDREW: That playwright kid.

GALE: Yeah.

ANDREW: Me, too. He's a weird one. Kinda cute.

GALE: *[Strange look from* GALE.*]* The thing is. . . I really like him. . .

ANDREW: Think he likes guys?

GALE: *[Shocked.]* Do you?

ANDREW: Haven't tried. Yet.

GALE: But are you even into that?

ANDREW: I'm all about new experiences. Pushing the limits, you know.

GALE: *[Beat. Screws up courage.]* Is this what you'd call a new experience?

*[*GALE *moves quickly to kiss him; his bagel drops as he recoils. She is unsuccessful.]*

ANDREW: What are you *doing*?

GALE: I. . . I thought I'd. . . screw with reality. Have my own new experience.

ANDREW: Gale, at this point, there is nothing new about us and sex. Been there, done that, remember?

GALE: *[Accusatory.]* You want to try Riley, but not me.

ANDREW: Riley wouldn't try to tie me down.

GALE: I thought you liked that sort of thing. *[Glares. Beat.]* What about Molly then?

ANDREW: What about her.

GALE: She's a commitment.

ANDREW: That's different.

GALE: How.

ANDREW: Just is.

GALE: Then sleep with me.

ANDREW: We're not seeing other people.

GALE: You're *monogamous,* Andrew. When was the last time you were only sleeping with one woman?

ANDREW: I don't know. . . look, I don't like commitment. I'm not ready for it.

GALE: You're so goddamned immature.

ANDREW: The pot calls the kettle black!

GALE: Fuck you.

ANDREW: How long have you been lusting after that hot-ass playwright?

GALE: You're the one who wants to do him.

ANDREW: You won't even kiss him.

GALE: He wants too much.

ANDREW: Talk about fear of commitment!

GALE: Look, dammit: I've been good friends with Riley for way longer than you've even *known* Molly—I'm not about to throw that away for some meaningless sex.

ANDREW: Molly is much more than meaningless sex.

GALE: And much less than commitment.

ANDREW: Molly means a lot to me—she's like no one else I've ever known... why do I have to make elaborate promises in order to be good to her?

GALE: Well, *Riley* means a lot to *me*. I just don't know what to do about it. I'm not—

ANDREW: And why does love have to be official?

GALE: How can it be anything else? He's never loved anyone but me.

ANDREW: *[Taunt.]* And do you love him?

GALE: *[Beat. Indignant:]* Yeah. *[Beat.]* I think I do.

ANDREW: *[Challenge.]* So tell him that.

GALE: Fuck you.

[Black out.]

Scene IX

*[*RILEY *and* MOLLY *are at the same outdoor cafe. It's a beautiful spring day. There is a vase of flowers and many many water glasses and coffee cups on the table. They've been there a while.]*

MOLLY: *[Knowingly, expectingly, but growing tired of this game:]* So, let me guess: you've got a crush on me.

RILEY: No, that's not what I was going to say.

MOLLY: No?

RILEY: I *do* have a crush on you.

MOLLY: Yes, but it's not giggly, it's not flowers, it's not even a sexual fantasy. Is there something *else* you wanted to tell me?

RILEY: What I find really attractive about you.

MOLLY: I thought you weren't going to tell me.

RILEY: Maybe I won't.

MOLLY: You said I wouldn't like it.

RILEY: You won't.

MOLLY: Well, what is it?

RILEY: *[Beat.]* I'm really into that handcuff thing.

MOLLY: *[Exasperated:]* No you're not.

RILEY: That thing you were doing with Andrew last night. That looked like fun.

MOLLY: *You* play the cello now, too?

RILEY: No, no, the other thing.

MOLLY: *[With a raised eyebrow:]* I think you need to know the clitoris from the epiglottis before you can do that.

RILEY: I told you that story?

MOLLY: Yup.

[A long silence. Molly watches Riley squirm.]

RILEY: What I really like about you.

MOLLY: What you really like about me.

[Beat.]

RILEY: You're like the earth. And I'm like some weather satellite or something, mapping... always looking straight down. So I can see what I'm over but not what's ahead. And there's water, volcanos, and mountains, and... all kinds of shit.

MOLLY: *[Doubtfully:]* Okaaay.

RILEY: Maybe I should try this again. It's like I'm flying over America from west to east. Right? Calm water—pacific—then suddenly: Volcanos! Mountains! Then thousands of miles of plains...

MOLLY: *[Uncomfortable:]* Um, take three?

RILEY: I. I like your vulnerable side.

MOLLY: *[Off-guard, not noticing the irony:]* What vulnerable side?

RILEY: Told you you wouldn't like it. It's like carrion and flies with me—zip!

MOLLY: Right.

RILEY: *[Buying time:]* Isn't the flies analogy pretty?

MOLLY: *[Not letting him off the hook:]* If you say so.

RILEY: *[Takes a deep breath.]* When I first met you, I thought, "Über-cool chick. Not my type," and wrote you off. But we started hanging out, and you mentioned that you saved all your letters—even answering machine messages—like an archive for a biographer someday. Which was really honest—surprising—such a silly thing to do, so incredibly vain.

MOLLY: You do it, too.

RILEY: Yeah, yeah, but you didn't know that at the time. It's ridiculous what we do—

MOLLY: One of many ridiculous things we do...

RILEY: —but it's the only time—at least until you fell for Andrew—that I saw a glimpse of you that wasn't cool, that wasn't collected and calculated. A little foolish.

MOLLY: And you found it endearing.

RILEY: That sounds condescending. I... it was real. It was human. I liked it. A lot.

MOLLY: *[Blushing.]* Er. Okay.

RILEY: And that moment in the restaurant...

MOLLY: Here we go again...

RILEY: We were out to eat and I let slip some asshole comment about your recent ex-boyfriend and that chick he was schtupping. You said, "Fuck you," meant it as a brush-off, but it came out with a quiver at the end. Not one you could control. You beat a hasty retreat to the ladies room, collected yourself, came back eventually with a quip about the whole thing, all ready.

MOLLY: I dealt with it.

RILEY: You've got sensitive friends. We weren't fooled.

MOLLY: I wasn't pretending.

RILEY: You had a painted-on smile—I saw a little bird with its feathers all fluffed out, trying to convince the hawk that it really was a very large bird.

MOLLY: ...

RILEY: It took cojónes, but the fear was still there, way back in those bird's eyes. Your neck was ever-so-slightly trembling, like that little bird's.

MOLLY: *[Weakly:]* So I can add my neck to the bits of me you like?

RILEY: I... wanted to hug you. Or something. But it would have ruined your show.

MOLLY: It'd be a lot easier if you'd just say you wanted to get into my pants.

RILEY: But it's *not* your pants, it's your... your soul, your...

MOLLY: *[Sighs, dropping guard a bit:]* Riley, what's *with* you lately? You're acting like even more of a psycho than usual today. Sharp blow to the head?

RILEY: *[Beat.]* Worse.

MOLLY: Worse?

RILEY: I screwed Liz.

MOLLY: Wow. You're really dumb, aren't you? *[Semi-apologetically:]* And that's why you're acting all fucked up.

RILEY: Because I've been fucked.

MOLLY: *[Creeping away from the real subject:]* Well, technically you did the fucking…although, some feminists back in the 70's tried to change the term "penetration" to "engulfment"…

RILEY: Yeah. Whatever. It was oral sex.

MOLLY: I guess that does explain it. *[Studies the shaved head, then glancing at the nipples and chain through his shirt.]* It is quite the…personal renaissance you've gone through.

RILEY: It's a cleansing ritual. Besides, identity is a mutable construct.

MOLLY: I know, I know, you keep saying.

RILEY: So what about you?

MOLLY: What do you mean?

RILEY: I woke up this morning and realized I'd had a *conversation* with you while you were having *sex*.

MOLLY: And?

RILEY: *[Beat.]* I'm really sorry for walking in like that.

MOLLY: Hey, don't worry about it—didn't stop us. *[Grins.]* He's kind of an exhibitionist.

RILEY: Yeah, I know…look, I was really out of it. The whole Liz thing…

MOLLY: *[A joke:]* You just had to stick your dick into something, huh.

RILEY: *[Throwing a wet napkin off the table at her:]* Oh, shut up.

MOLLY: *[Crooning.]* Poor, poor, you.

RILEY: Oh, come on.

MOLLY: *[Innocently.]* What?

RILEY: Don't do that.

MOLLY: Do what?

RILEY: You know exactly what.

*[*GALE *walks by, upstage, unseen. Sees* MOLLY *and* RILEY *and stops.]*

MOLLY: Oh, this? *[She leans over the table and kisses him full on the lips.]*

[The kiss is (for RILEY*) unexpectedly passionate.* RILEY *goes through his initial shock and surprise quickly, to a well-feigned closed-mouth indifference.* LIZ*'s done this sort of thing too often for him to be un-versed in the lop-sided kiss. But then his mouth opens up—he'll never be sure how much of the action was conscious.* MOLLY *and* RILEY *go at it like a pleco on a mirror.* RILEY*'s hand drops to the table for support as they stand; the flower vase on the table crashes to the ground. This* really *turns* RILEY *on, and he gets even more into it,* MOLLY *goading him on.]*

*[*GALE *leaves at this point.]*

[A long standing kiss. . . then suddenly RILEY *double-takes and breaks off. His faces lingers inches from hers for a moment as a smile creases her face, then he steps back and she sits down casually, grinning evilly, as if to say with mock surprise, "Oh, you* weren't *enjoying that?" She licks her lips.]*

RILEY: *[Still standing.]* That didn't mean *anything*, did it.

*[*MOLLY *raises an eyebrow, and continues grinning.]*

*[*RILEY *sits.]*

RILEY: *[Verbal eye-roll:]* Bitch.

*[*MOLLY *laughs with obvious enjoyment.]*

[Black out.]

[End of play.]