

The stage should be lit by one lamp. 100 watt bulb. Sandy is standing, staring past the audience as they enter. There is a bed behind her. Perhaps it is a mattress. Stubborn. There is a television. A multitude of VHS tapes. Upstage there are two dollies that hold clothes for lack of a closet. They have rollers on the feet. These never roll very far--if at all. They are stuffed with jeans, shirts, dresses, mittens, hats, etcetera. In Sandy's hand there is a casserole dish. Warm creamy tuna is slowly dripping onto the stage. Amby joins her on stage, she is wearing a silk slip. If stage right is Sandy's, stage left is Amby's. She does not leave her island.

Amby finishes preparing her speech.

Amby

“Amby's retelling of plastic televisions and election results”

(Clears throat) I am not dressed for the occasion. If there is any occasion I dress for, it would have to be leaving the house. This I have not done in quite some time. It is for this reason that you see me as I am—as who I am, here, in this moment. (sits) Sandy and I used to get so nervous around election time—when we would leave the house. I must admit, we haven't witnessed an election in quite some time. We stopped voting around the time that we moved up here. For a little while we would catch a glimpse of the candidates on CNN. Then they took our cable. They didn't ask, they just—took it. It no longer belonged to us. (stands) Sometimes I wonder what is going on out there, but Sandy says it's better this way. That it's all better left unsaid.

Amby goes behind the racks. Sandy takes this as her cue. She makes sure Amby has gone and begins to shout.

Sandy

I don't want steak for dinner! This isn't the fifties. God. Steak, steak, steak! Mom! Let me tell you, red meat is out. All that blood and gore. Jesus. Yes I know Jesus was bloody and there was plenty of gore. We've all seen the picture. And think about your cholesterol. Dad! Dad's on that medication and you're feeding that to him. And you know I won't eat it. I don't eat meat. I hate it! It makes me puke actually. It actually makes me puke and you're putting it on our plates and cutting it with our knives.

Sticks her finger down her throat.

Sandy

Hear that Mom? I'm puking right now.

She does not puke.

Sandy

I'm puking right now thinking about it. Next time I'll show you Mom. I will.

No response.

Sandy

Fine, fine. I don't care. You hear that? I don't care. You and Dad kill yourselves. See if I care. I'll eat rice. Is that what you eat when you're poor and sad? It is. Fine. I'll eat rice.

She tires and slumps to the ground. She begins to cry and gorge herself on tuna casserole. Pasta falls from her lips. There are bread crumbs in her eyebrows. She tries to compose herself. She brightens and crawls toward her television. It faces away from the audience. She turns it on. Paula Cole's, "I Don't Want to Wait," also known as the theme to Dawson's Creek begins to play. (Note: any mass-marketed American show/song will do.) She sniffs away her tears and begins to smile. Suddenly the song begins to waiver, as though the tape is growing old. Sandy begins to panic. Amby walks in. She is an Abercrombie model.

Hello Sandy. Amby

Sandy clicks off the television.

Back already? (pause, examines attire) It looks good. Sandy

What's wrong? Amby

Nothing. Sandy

Sandy starts to shake. Her strong face leaves her for tears (as a three-year old who still yearns for a nipple). She runs to Amby and buries her face.

Oh, Amby it's horrible. Just horrible. Sandy

What happened?
Amby

Sandy pulls her over to the television
griping hard to her hand.

Sandy
It went szzhh, eiihh, kkrush, something like that. Oh, Amby, oh, Amby. It's a sin to miss an episode. They'll never forgive me if I miss an episode. They won't tell me what happened and then everyone will laugh. Everyone will laugh Amby because they're in on the joke and I'm not. **This** is the worst thing that has ever happened.

Amby
No it's not. **This** can't be the worst thing that has ever happened.

Sandy
It can't?

Amby
No. Because it's happened before.

Sandy breaks away.

Sandy
Shhh. Shhh. Shhh! God! They'll hear you! God they know. They know that I missed it. Why is this happening to me?

Amby
Maybe it's time?

Sandy
Time for what? Time for what!

Amby
I hate **this**.

Sandy
Get away.

Amby
I hate **this** because I'm not catching.

Sandy
You don't see me sneezing.

Amby
Is there nothing left to do?

Sandy finds another tape.

Amby
Don't turn it on.

Sandy
Why?

Amby
Because it will happen again.

Sandy
A-ha! I knew it! You're making this happen.

Amby
That's the stupidest thing I've ever heard.

Sandy
You are! You are! You are making the tapes break so we can do what even--**this**? Is **this** it?

Amby
We're not doing anything.

Sandy
A-ha. You do know. *We're doing nothing.*

Amby
I can leave.

Sandy
But you'll miss dinner.

Amby
What's for dinner?

Sandy
Oh, well, my mother is making a casserole right now.

Amby
Where?

Sandy
Downstairs.

I can't do **this**.

Amby

She starts to take off her jacket.

Sandy

No, no, no! That is you today! I told you last Christmas that today of all days you had to be the jacket.

Amby

I don't want the jacket and I think the tuna's making me sick.

Sandy

What tuna?

Amby

Maybe it's the mayonnaise.

Sandy takes the jacket and starts to rip it apart.

Amby

It was already coming undone.

Sandy

You're awful. You're a terrible awful terrible terrible person.

Amby

Sandy?

Sandy

Go away.

Amby

I will.

Amby begins to pack a knitting bag.
Sandy puts a tape in the VCR. It begins to crackle.

Sandy

(Screams!)

Amby cries.

Amby

I can't stand the noise.

Sandy falls. Amby embraces the shadow of a future undone.

Sandy

Then stop ruining my show! I can't believe you destroyed this one. Of all of them. MY GOD IT CAN'T BE GONE! Do you know what happens? Do you? Do you know how we meet her. God--it's the first one--the first one ever. It's when we met. You remember how we met. Before our sophomore year. It was the summer on Cape Cod.

Amby

I've never been to the Cape. You've never even seen the ocean. The largest blue is your memory.

Sandy(cackling)

God! You can be so dense. Of course I've seen the blue.

Amby

"Amby's retelling of the outhouse"

I am not surprised when I wake up. This black-yellow woman of foreign decent once made a preemptive strike on CNN. She was refusing to eat her peas. But this is all inconsequential what she did do was tell me a very beautiful story about how she goes to sleep terrified. Well-- that's not so nice. But it's what happens after she wakes up. She checks to make sure all of her limbs are working and then she smiles. She actually smiles and is excited about things that may happen to her. I'm not saying this has never happened to me before. One Christmas, when the eighties were well under way, I went into the living room without having had my morning pee, I suppose you could say I was interested in something that may befall me. Enough so anyway that I did not relieve myself.

Sandy, who has been changing the fragments of linen for an upgrade, swoons. She now wears glasses.

Sandy

Oh, Amby. Who are you talking to?

Amby

No one.

Sandy

I hate that story. It reminds me of when we had cable. If we had cable **this** would not be happening.

Sandy is sorting the tapes.

Sandy

You're lucky because I am not so disorganized now--I found my glasses.

Sandy takes on the demeanor of a
very responsible power suit.

Sandy

I made two copies of each tape last Kwanzaa. I know it was Kwanzaa because I am very aware of the state of this country--even though CNN reminds me of cable--responsibility and news media go hand in hand.

Amby gives way.

Amby

I'll wear something looser if you think you can help yourself, Sandy.

Sandy

Help myself? I just told you that I had made two copies, ultimately that means that two plus one equals three. I will put it on a legal pad so you can see.

Amby

I don't know if **this** will help. Three may seem like two too extra, but we've been here an awful long time.

Sandy

You're not being looser at all. If anything, I think you're the same. I hate that. If we're going to do **this**, we have to do **this** together.

Amby

I knew **this** would...

Sandy

What?

Amby

Would that I could be... (pause) You're starting to yell. Maybe I can't do **this**.

Sandy

Fine. Fine. (pleading) I told you though--I'm wearing the glasses. I'm more responsible now. We'll find the tapes and everything will be okay.

Amby

They aren't here.

Look around you! They're everywhere.

Sandy

Sandy tries to curb her frantic anticipation.

Oh God, Amby.

Sandy

Amby moves toward her remembering memories of memories.

Sandy.

Amby

Sometimes you look like her.

Sandy

I know.

Amby

And sometimes you don't and sometimes I am reading aloud from the screen and you tell me to go to sleep but it doesn't matter because there are no windows in this attic and you still tell me to turn off the rhythm but without it I'd need one of those personal defibrillators and both you and I know that we can't afford electro-shocking QVC-centric paraphernalia and I won't get a job because I have one as a waitress at a fish---place--on--the--cape--by the ocean but I can't now. I lost my job because all I hear is shhzz when I try to go work.

Sandy

This is it!

Amby

This is how it is. Maybe *you* should get a job.

Sandy

You'd never have that Sandy. You know how **this** is.

Amby

Don't pretend you're looser. I think you should put on a skirt.

Sandy

I want you to put on a skirt!

Amby

Sandy

I will! I will do anything but first let's find the tape, let's find the tape because you like it too.

Amby

I don't think I do anymore.

Sandy

No, no, no. You do like it.

Amby

Let's bargain instead.

Sandy

I like bargaining, but will it be the same without the song?

Amby

It's broken!

Sandy

Fine. (quietly, stubbornly) We'll find it later anyway.

Amby gives the eye of a
disapproving aunt.

Sandy

If we're going to bargain, we have to do it right. Last time you tried to tell me all about Paris and we were obviously in Houston.

Amby

Fine, we're in New York and that's that.

Sandy

But aren't we in New York?

Amby

New York, New York.

The two disappear behind the racks.
They come out wearing hats.

Sandy

My, Amby. I am sure that the last time we were here there were children wearing Mexicans.

Amby
Don't you mean Mexicans wearing children?

Sandy
Isn't that what I said?

Amby
Oh, dear. If I were only a little younger and you were slightly lighter I would carry you on my back as well and we could laugh.

Sandy
But I am light. Shame! Are you saying I am beefy?

Amby
Don't be lower class. A bit bulky but never beefy.

Sandy
Oh dear, where is the beef?

Amby
I think we should buy a house today.

Sandy
A stone made of brown.

Amby
Three stories.

Sandy
With an attic.

Amby
One with windows.

Sandy
Or not.

Amby
Windows and pigeons.

Sandy
Windows and pigeons. Fine. No bums.

Amby
Never.

And a tree. Sandy

Growing right out of our nest. Amby

Our nested nest from the attic with an apple that falls on the people that pass. Sandy

And we'll laugh. Amby

Loud! Sandy

Both laugh hysterically.

But Amby! We have no money! Sandy

Jimminy Cricket! What will we do? Amby

I have an idea! Sandy

Let's have it. Amby

We'll bargain! Sandy

Why yes that is it! Amby

We'll give them our skin, Sandy

Not our skin--our eyes. Amby

They won't take them, they say there not worth a dime's dollar. Sandy

Amby

I'll cut my hair.

Sandy

But that would give away the moral because I bought you scissors for Christmas.

Amby

Don't make me laugh--that is another girl's tale.

Sandy

I lost mine at birth.

Amby

Your tale?

Sandy

My rump was too large.

They both yelp and cry and tear at
each other's eyes.

Sandy

I'm scared, Amby, that we have nothing to give to the men with the stone of brown that is three stories tall. They won't bargain on good will alone.

Amby

We'll give them ourselves and we'll get our house.

Sandy

Ourselves --of all.

Amby

Of all.

Sandy and Amby come close to
embrace.

Sandy

I'm scared you'll be a shadow when the men take you away.

Amby

But don't you want (falters) plumbing--

Sandy jumps.

Sandy

Don't I want--plumbing? Plumbing! Amby--plumbing?

Amby

Oh, Sandy! I'm sorry. I'm really into it. I swear. It just slipped.

Sandy

Whatever. You don't really care.

Sandy goes to the television.

Amby

Don't do this. I promise--I just slipped.

Sandy

I don't care. I'll just go over here.

Amby

(whining) Don't put it in.

Amby tries to grab the tape away.

Sandy

Amby give it back! You can't just say "plumbing" and expect me to care if you don't care.

Amby

Don't do **this**.

Sandy

This is what we do.

Amby

Not me, Sandy. Not anymore.

Sandy pumps Amby's face with her fist. No blows. Nothing touches. This is not violence and represents nothing of the sort. Something less static and more rhythmic.

Sandy

You do **this**. I do **this**. You can't take my tapes. You can't take my show. My program comes on twenty-four hours a day when I need it to.

Amby

I didn't take anything, Sandy. Now, time has taken you.

Sandy

(eyes crush) I can't have that happen. Not to **this**. Amby the sun is gone and the moon never rises. I haven't told you enough of the story. What are you doing?

Amby begins layering on clothes so the racks thin.

Sandy

Stop it! One at a time! One at a time! You know the rule.

Amby stops her lungs swell with tears.

Amby

If I tell you a story...

Sandy

No more stories. Here we go, this will help.

Sandy pulls Amby over in front of the television and seats her. Amby gives in "just 'cause." Sandy puts in a tape...song, crackle...another tape...song, crackle..another. Sandy becomes more and more frantic.

Sandy

While I was asleep! I knew you would do it. The tapes. My job. My frien—my people. Who I knew. I want the. Give me. Well fine. I guess. Pfut. We'll be okay Amby, we'll be okay...

Sandy holds onto Amby and begins to rock. It is here that the people know how it will end. That it *has ended* but where did this begin? You ask the questions Amby also feels must be answered.

Amby

When we came here, Sandy--

Sandy

Came where?

Amby

When we came here I told you how this would end. They all knew a long time ago. They did know. They have known. They've seen this before.

Sandy

I've never seen.

Amby

You've made this with all the men with their stones of brown.

Sandy

But I don't have anything.

Amby tosses her away.

Amby

You selfish girl.

Sandy

Don't call me a girl.

Amby

“Amby's retelling of clay”

Clay is formed by hands that are not greasy. Unfortunately, men with greasy hands shaped a life. They hoisted masts and piled African men and women in and set sail. It is said that there are medications that can help, but every night we could not sleep. Every time that we stood, there were cracks down our mothers' backs. Sometimes the news is good and we are not afraid. We can divinely sleep, stretching every limb, snuggling deeper into our body's heat. But then, then we are exposed. Chilled and frightened and clutching no weapon. For we shun the tax. I'm not saying that I did not know. That we did know. That sometimes the only response to “help!” is to hide.

Amby

(as Amby of love)

You make me cry and then we do **this**. And then we can't stop and **this** is all we do. And you aren't even allowing for the story to finish.

Sandy

I have the end here.

She searches for the tape.

Sandy

It was the saddest thing when she dies. I cried and cried and cried and still haven't recovered so I watch it again and again and it still feels as though she is here with me. Don't you feel as though she could be right next to you. And then she dies. Oh, God, it's really awful isn't it when the young die so young and she had a baby,---Amby. Are you listening.

Amby

Sandy, somewhere there's a night and a day.

Sandy

Well, it's here. Yes it is, it's right here.

Amby

I bet if we try real hard we can find the bread crumbs we lay.

Sandy

There's food.

Amby

The mayo is seven years out of date.

Sandy

I'm sorry you had to see that.

Amby

I knew it was old five years ago. I just had no idea that five years ago was yesterday. When you can't see the sun it is impossible to know all the expiration dates...off the top of your head...or at all...or all at once.

Sandy finds a pile of papers.

Sandy

Stop! If you have to tell the story it has to be told by the one who shopped for the groceries.

Amby

What are you saying?

Sandy

I am going to narrate for I am a narrator.

Amby

Sandy—you just can't. It just isn't...real.

Sandy

I guess it would have to have been that summer: January 1998. I had all but given up my dreams of being a filmmaker when my two best friends insisted I get behind the camera. "All right" I said. What could I lose. But only fate knew that it would be during this time that I would step from boy to man. That I would soon learn I may be attracted to my female best friend who I had always thought of as sexless. I mean we were all sexless—

Amby

Quiet, Sandy, there are children listening...

Sandy

The only child in this attic is you Amby.

Amby

If you're going to be so blatant, you may as well be sarcastic.

Sandy

No, no, no, if you're going to be so honest you may as well be earnest.

Amby

You're not being honest!

Sandy

I'm being more honest than you! Why *are* we here Amby?

Amby

I am a narrator now and the only way your getting out of **this** is if you stop me.

Sandy

Stop you from what? Tell them why we're here.

Amby

You don't want to know. If I tell them--**this** is over. **This. This. This!**

Sandy

I'm not Anne Frank and you are far from Annie Bancroft.

Amby

You mean Anne Sullivan?

Sandy

I could say whatever suits you. Your skirt is showing.

Amby begins to cry.

Amby

It wasn't the summer at all.

Amby is not crying.

Amby

It was that one week period in between fall and winter when its neither cold or warm and everyone comments on how "nice" it is. Some "weather" we are having. Or, "I didn't need a jacket today—can you believe it." Sometimes its so overwhelming they get a cold, that turns into pneumonia, and come Christmas, they're wrapped in box just like toys under the tree.

Sandy

You're sick.

Amby

That's when it happened. I remember what it was like to tend to my hair on a regular basis. But only barely. But I did...then...remember...no-no-I didn't remember, I did. I washed my hair and in the morning the sun came up and in the evening the sun went down and this time of year the sun went down earlier but it was only "chilly" in the evening. Do you like that word, Sandy, "chilly"?

Sandy

You make me puke.

Amby

Just like red meat?

Sandy

Not red meat. (pause) I'm putting in a tape.

Amby

It won't work, Sandy. They don't work anymore.

Amby waits for Sandy to cry/not cry/
become a register and ring up by the
pound.

Amby

This is what I am not going to say: That in that time of the year when everyone is surprised by how extremely mildly chilled they are we, discovered your mother in the kitchen. She was making Tuna Helper. It's produced my the makers of Hamburger Helper and it was on sale. It

takes a can of tuna and dairy—of some sort. As she stired the concoction in the oversized frying pan, the juices began to spill over and the sound of the gelatinous creation became overwhelming. Muspt. Muwespt. It was all too much. You looked at your mother's bun and realized she would never be Meredith Baxter from Family Ties or even Joanna Kern from Growing Pains, even though you identified much less with the later you knew Joanna Kern would be better than nothing!

Sandy is hysterical.

Sandy

No stop right now. Not the tuna!

She pulls the decaying tray of tuna out from under the bed and begins to gorge.

Amby

The mayonnaise has gone bad!

Sandy

There is no mayo in Tuna Helper only cream!

Amby

It's turned chunky.

Sandy

No, no, no...it's just the tuna.

As the play moves to a close, many ends must be carefully tied with organic ribbon. Throughout the last section, Amby should slowly start taking the clothes off the racks. Sandy should be on the floor mourning the loss of her tapes, trying to become deaf, and massaging the tuna.

Amby

You could not understand why your mother was more flesh than electric. If anything, you knew that you could not plug her in and change the settings.

Sandy

She was much too white, I would have preferred a darker color.

Amby

So you decided to do the next best thing.

Sandy

I decided that the best thing to do was to kill her.

Amby

That isn't true at all!

Sandy

It is! It is! I decided that the best thing to do was to put her out of her misery. It's so sad, Amby, in this world you learn one day that there is nothing left to bargain with.

Amby

You may have thought of killing her, but you didn't. You unplugged her.

Sandy cries. Amby cries. Sandy weeps blood.

Sandy

There is no reason to give it away now.

Amby

I have to--**this** is it.

Sandy

Not **this**, Amby. Not **THIS**.

At this point, Amby moves the empty racks apart and a window can be seen, she stares out. It is the most sickening sight. It is as though life has remembered death, and we can all be forgiven.

Sandy

Did you destroy the tapes?

Amby

I never could.

The music ends.

Amby--are we dead?
Sandy

I think so.
Amby

Long pause. It begins to snow (as in percipitate) outside the window.

Is **this** it?
Sandy

It's evening. It's beginning to snow.
Amby

Sandy puts in a tape. The song start, the tape warps, it crackles and then comes a new sound. The sound of snow. Sandy wants to cry because realizes it is all over. But this is only what she thinks, not what she knows.

She turns and sees Amby for the first time. She looks out the window. Slowly, she takes Amby's hand.

I've been waiting for you.
Amby

I was on my way. (pause) I just had to wait for **this** to end.
Sandy

The snow grows louder. The light goes out. And all is well.

The end.

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