

**THE FESTIAL QUARTET**

A play for Soprano, Alto, Tenor & Bass

By David Lee White

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## **CHARACTERS**

Danny – Eighteen years old, Has a kind face. Sings Tenor

Karyn – Eighteen years old, Danny’s best friend. Snarky as hell. Sings Alto.

Michael – Mid-30s. Leader of the local church youth group. Clean cut. Charming.

Gene – Also eighteen. Sings bass. Thinks about sex often.

Cynthia – Also eighteen. Soprano. Smiles a lot.

Meredith – Early 40s. Very put together. Also smiles a lot. Her daughter, Amy, has just died.

## **SETTING**

A public school in the small town of Festial, Missouri. The stage is divided into three areas. The largest area – center stage – is the gymnasium where Amy’s memorial will take place. The stage left and right areas consist of a storage closet on one side (filled with AV equipment) and a hallway leading to the outside on the other side.

The characters can be played by actors of any race or ethnicity.

The play takes place in 1987.

## Prologue

(In darkness, we hear the sound of a piano. There's no real music, just a pianist playing a few notes to give the singers the correct pitch. We hear Amy's voice.)

### AMY'S VOICE

Hello? Rehearsal was supposed to start five minutes ago. (GENE enters) First one here, huh Gene? (CYNTHIA enters) Good! Cynthia! We're halfway there. (DANNY and KARYN enter) And Danny and Karyn bring up the rear. Finally. We're never gonna make it to districts if we don't show up on time for practice. (Cynthia blows on a pitch pipe) Everyone got it? (Gene shakes his head no. We hear Amy sigh. Then we hear a note on the piano. Gene nods and gives the a-ok sign) Good. Let's go.

(The four of them begin singing *Lacrimosa, dies illa* by Mozart.)

### ALL

*Lacrimosa dies illa  
Qua resurget ex favilla  
Judicandus homo reus.  
Huic ergo parce, Deus:  
Pie Jesu Domine,  
Dona eis requiem. Amen.*

### Translation:

Mournfully be that day  
On which from ashes shall arise  
The guilty man to be judged;  
O God, have mercy on him.  
Gentle Lord Jesus,  
Jennings them eternal rest. Amen

## END OF PROLOGUE

## SCENE I

(Time passes. We hear the sound of a plane flying overhead. It is 1987 and we are in a high school gymnasium. There is a large, white wreath on an easel. It has a sign on it that reads "In Memory of Amy." Danny and Karyn sit in silence. They are best friends and typically have a nice camaraderie, but today they are grieving and unsure of what to say. Danny pulls out a tissue and wipes his nose.)

Digging for gold?  
KARYN

What?  
DANNY

Stop picking your nose.  
KARYN

I'm not picking it.  
DANNY

You're like a hungry lion trying to paw its way into a mouse cage.  
KARYN

(Laughing a little.)  
DANNY

Shut-up.

It's like watching the birdman tunnel out of Alcatraz.  
KARYN

I'm using a tissue.  
DANNY

So, blow the sucker out of there. Don't drape a Kleenex over your finger and pretend that's not picking your nose. You want a girlfriend so bad? At least pick your nose in private.  
KARYN

You're not my girlfriend?  
DANNY

No. (a beat) I can't believe everyone is just gonna get together and talk about Amy again.  
KARYN

It won't be the same as the funeral.  
DANNY

Thanks. I know the difference between a memorial and funeral.  
KARYN

I just mean maybe it will be a little more upbeat.  
DANNY

KARYN

This is just so messed up.

DANNY

I know. (a beat) She was supposed to speak at graduation.

KARYN

Now who's it gonna be?

DANNY

Chris Herdagan.

KARYN

Pfff. Two hundred graduates to choose from and they go with the Doobie King of Festial, Missouri.

DANNY

He has a 4.0. His dad works for Monsanto.

KARYN

Go Festial High.

DANNY

Go class of '87.

KARYN

(A beat.) They find out what happened to her?

DANNY

She had something called Reye's Syndrome.

KARYN

What is that?

DANNY

It's this thing where if you take an aspirin, it can kill you.

KARYN

Jesus.

DANNY

She had a headache, her mom gave her aspirin and she died.

KARYN

Where'd you hear this?

DANNY

Michael told us at the funeral.

Gotcha. KARYN

Michael asked about you. We thought you were gonna be there. DANNY

I couldn't make it. KARYN

How come? DANNY

I had a thing. KARYN

I'm glad you're here now. DANNY

Of course, I'm here. KARYN

(They are silent for a bit, until things get too quiet.)

I keep thinking about Districts – that thing Amy did with her hairspray. KARYN

Like she needed hairspray. Was her hair ever not perfect? DANNY

Whatever. I just remember Cynthia warming up and Amy sprays her hair and it goes behind her, right into Cynthia's face - KARYN

(Imitating Cynthia warming up.)  
"La, la, la, cough!" DANNY

I thought I was gonna piss my pants. KARYN

That was a fun weekend. DANNY

KARYN

The way Amy jumped up and down after the performance. Like it was the best music she'd ever heard in her life.

DANNY

Judges didn't think so.

KARYN

Screw the judges. (A beat.) So no more quartet I guess.

DANNY

Why not?

KARYN

Amy's dead, doofus. We can't perform without her.

(MICHAEL enters. He is wearing slacks, an oxford button-down and a tie. He is carrying a large box. He is a clean-cut, non-threatening man – both kind and authoritarian based on what the situation requires. At the moment, he is slightly stressed about the task that lays before him. Karyn is surprised to see him.)

MICHAEL

Just you two, huh?

DANNY

Hey, Michael.

MICHAEL

(to Karyn)

Hey, you.

KARYN

What?

MICHAEL

Just saying "Hey."

DANNY

Cynthia and Gene are on their way.

MICHAEL

Awesome. Can't wait to hear you guys sing.

KARYN

Uh...no.

This is Amy's memorial.

MICHAEL

We know, but –

DANNY

Amy's parents are gonna want you to sing.

MICHAEL

There's a lot going on here, Mike.

DANNY

“Mike?” Since when am I “Mike?”

MICHAEL

Michael. Sorry. We haven't been rehearsing. We wouldn't know -

DANNY

We'll talk about it when the others get here. Help me out. I've got a couple more boxes in my truck.

MICHAEL

No problem.

DANNY

(DANNY exits)

(to Karyn)  
Something wrong?

MICHAEL

No.

KARYN

You look surprised.

MICHAEL

Not your usual stomping ground.

KARYN

I go where the Lord sends me. What are you doing here?

MICHAEL

My friend died. You didn't hear?

KARYN

MICHAEL

You weren't at her funeral. And you haven't been to Converts in three months.

KARYN

You're counting the months?

MICHAEL

It's my job.

KARYN

I've got a lot going on.

MICHAEL

Something more important than Amy's funeral?

KARYN

My dad wouldn't let me come. We had to do a thing.

MICHAEL

How is your dad?

KARYN

Fine.

MICHAEL

Tell him I said hi.

(Danny re-enters, carrying boxes.)

MICHAEL

Okay. Here's the plan, you two. We're gonna have people write down a memory of Amy on paper, then we'll tie them to roses and put them on the wreath. (to Danny) I'm putting you in charge of that.

DANNY

Sure.

MICHAEL

Who's coming to this thing?

DANNY

The jazz band, I think. Some people from the forensics team might do a skit.

KARYN

A skit? Jesus H. -

MICHAEL

Language. No skits, please. And I don't want the jazz band to play. I want you guys to sing.

DANNY

Michael –

MICHAEL

Doggone it. I didn't bring pencils.

DANNY

Ms. Lefaire has some in the main office. Out the door, down the hall, turn left.

MICHAEL

Back in two shakes.

(Michael exits.)

KARYN

You knew he was gonna be here.

DANNY

Yeah.

KARYN

You didn't tell me.

DANNY

It was on the flier. The things were posted on every -

KARYN

I can't believe a youth pastor is even able to walk into a public school. Isn't it like throwing holy water on a vampire?

DANNY

Stop.

KARYN

Amy would roll over in her grave if she knew he was here.

DANNY

Amy loved Michael.

KARYN

If you say so.

DANNY  
You think she didn't?

KARYN  
I don't think anything.

DANNY  
Then what are you talking about?

KARYN  
Drop it.

DANNY  
You should come back to the Convert meetings. They're gonna be at my house now.

KARYN  
You're shitting me.

DANNY  
It's not like we can do it at Amy's anymore. I'm the best person to -

KARYN  
Jesus.

DANNY  
Something's wrong.

KARYN  
Nothing's wrong. If you want to study the Bible at your house... (a beat) You know what? Maybe I'll walk home.

(Karyn starts to leave, then stops. She looks at Danny.)

DANNY  
What?

KARYN  
Come with me. Let's get out of here. We can remember Amy some other way. We'll go to the woods, get smashed and bury a piece of sheet music.

DANNY  
I'm not leaving here. Michael put me in charge of this thing.

(Karyn comes back and sits down.)

Christ.

KARYN

Did I do something?

DANNY

No! Don't ask me shit like that.

KARYN

God. Sorry.

DANNY

(Gene enters. An insecure kid, but you'd never know it at the moment. He masks everything with jokes and always knows what to say to disarm everyone in the room.)

GENE

Hey, Barbie. Hey, Swaggart. I'm gonna miss these little get togethers when this is all over. Maybe someone will die next week.

Don't even.

KARYN

Just us so far?

GENE

Michael went to find pencils.

DANNY

Pencils! Ha! Fucking pencils! (Laughs.)

GENE

Why is that funny?

DANNY

It's like...someone is dead but we still need pencils!

GENE

And that's funny because...

KARYN

GENE

I don't know! It's like I can't stop laughing. I'm thinking about Amy and this whole thing and I'm like "Whatever you do, don't laugh." But then the more I think about that the more I keep laughing.

KARYN

You need therapy. Or solid smack upside the head.

GENE

Ha! I mean it's just so messed up. And the more messed up it gets the more I feel like laughing. I had this dream last night. We were at the funeral again. Prince was there because Amy loved him even though she felt guilty about it. And he was playing every song from *Purple Rain*. And Amy loved it! He was doing that "Darling Nicki" thing on the guitar and Amy was, like, on her knees.

DANNY

Okay, stop.

GENE

I'm not kidding. I totally dreamt that.

KARYN

Wishful thinking.

DANNY

(To Karyn.)

Stop.

GENE

(Laughs.) I can't help it! Give me something to do. I'm going nuts.

KARYN

(To Gene – handing him the roses and scissors.)

Here. My fingers are tired.

GENE

(Cutting paper.)

You know what else about me is weird?

KARYN

The list is so long?

GENE

I am so horny today.

DANNY

I'm not even gonna ask who you're horny for.

KARYN

Please don't say Amy.

GENE

Come on! I'm not a total perv. I'm horny for that woman in *Weird Science*.

DANNY

Kelly LeBrock.

GENE

I knew you would know her name. So listen... we're all, like, sad and grieving right now. But let me toss you a hypothetical.

KARYN

Please don't.

GENE

Let's say you were in here all by yourself. And Kelly LeBrock walks in and she looks at you and says "Danny. I want you to do me." Be honest. Would you do it?

DANNY

Well, no. Because Kelly LeBrock is a person, not a movie character, so –

GENE

You know what I mean. Kelly LeBrock as the robot woman in *Weird Science*. She walks in right now. She looks at you and she says "Danny. I can tell you're sad. I am too."

DANNY

I'd say "Why are you sad, Kelly LeBrock?"

GENE

"Because you won't do me." Then would you do her?

DANNY

Well, no! Because this is Amy's memorial!

GENE

You're hopeless. You can act like you don't get horny, Jesus Boy, but I know you do. I am not the abnormal one, here.

(Michael enters carrying pencils.)

MICHAEL

Let's watch the language.

GENE

Hey, Michael.

MICHAEL

What's up, Gene?

GENE

You know. Sad.

MICHAEL

Right (a beat) So, Danny. I don't want people wasting time looking for pencils or roses or whatever. Maybe you can come up with some kind of a system to -

DANNY

Sure.

(Sound of a plane flying overhead. They don't take notice of it, necessarily, but they wait for it to pass before speaking.)

MICHAEL

Anyone know how to get into the A/V closet?

DANNY

I have a key.

KARYN

(Smiling.)

Nerd.

DANNY

(Smiling.)

Shut-up.

MICHAEL

(Noticing their smiles.)

Danny, maybe you and Gene could get a podium and a microphone for me.

GENE

I just started cutting. Plus, I've got this bad foot. I don't think I can push -

KARYN

I'll go.

MICHAEL

I asked Gene to go.

GENE

My foot is really -

KARYN

I said, I'll go.

Fine.

MICHAEL

(Danny and Karyn exit.)

MICHAEL

(To Gene)  
Keep cutting and folding.

GENE

(Laughs.)  
Okay.

MICHAEL

Something funny?

GENE

Nope.

MICHAEL

We've missed you at Converts. We miss your humor.

GENE

Really? That's...wow. I want to come but it's like I have jazz band and then homework, usually. I'm trying to get my GPA up. College, you know?

MICHAEL

Oh, I know, I know. You'll be back over the summer and holidays. You better be, anyway.

GENE

Yeah, sure.

MICHAEL

You guys worried about Danny? I'm a little worried.

GENE

Why?

MICHAEL

Let me ask you something. Him and Karyn. Aren't they kind of –

GENE

What? No. Ha. They're friends.

MICHAEL

Ah. Okay. Friends. But not –

GENE

Ha! No.

MICHAEL

Okay. That’s probably good, yeah?

GENE

Yeah. That would be weird.

MICHAEL

So weird.

GENE

Ha.

SCENE 2

(Lights up on the storage closet. We see the door open and Karyn and Danny step inside. Karyn pulls out a small flask.)

KARYN

Hey, drink with me.

DANNY

No.

KARYN

Come on. It’s Mad Dog. I want to hear how you pray when you’re buzzed.

(She holds out a flask to him.)

DANNY

That’s the flask we used in “The Music Man.”

KARYN

Yep. Stole it.

DANNY

Uh-oh. We got trouble.

KARYN

With a capital T, baby. (Drinks and belches.) Jesus Christ. That one came from my soul.

Hey, maybe don't drink today.

DANNY

Seriously?

KARYN

I'm not gonna go up to Amy's parents and say "Sorry about your daughter" smelling like Mad Dog.

DANNY

Amy had a sense of humor, you know.

KARYN

Not that kind of sense of humor.

DANNY

Shows what you know.

KARYN

Fine. Then you drink. I don't care.

DANNY

(Karyn puts flask away.)

Jesus Christ. Okay.

KARYN

(Danny tries to push a cart toward the door.)

Help me carry this.

DANNY

Weakling.

KARYN

Shut-up.

DANNY

(They start to wheel the cart out of the closet. Karyn stops. She has a moment of barely controlled panic.)

Wait. Hold on. Let's stay here for a sec.

KARYN

You okay?

DANNY

I'm fine. I just want to sit here.

KARYN

Okay.

DANNY

I just don't want to go back in there yet.

KARYN

Something's going on with you.

DANNY

It's nothing.

KARYN

It's not nothing. I know you.

DANNY

Drop it.

KARYN

Okay.

DANNY

(Pause. Danny tries to figure out what to do while Karyn sits with her eyes closed.)

I keep thinking about that time that Amy got saved at Converts.

DANNY

Yeah. She came back to school on Thursday morning and couldn't stop smiling.

KARYN

You think that was for real?

DANNY

No.

KARYN

Why not?

DANNY

Because I just don't.

KARYN

DANNY

Why not?

KARYN

I don't feel like pouring my guts out to you, Danny. Stop trying to make me.

DANNY

Sorry.

KARYN

It's okay. Just...shut-up for a minute, okay?

DANNY

I can just leave.

KARYN

No, I want you to sit here with me. I just don't want you to say anything.

DANNY

Okay.

(They sit for a few moments in silence. Danny looks at Karyn, then tries to put his arm around her.)

KARYN

What are you doing? Why are you doing that?

DANNY

I didn't say anything.

KARYN

Don't just put your arm around me like it's okay to put your arm around me.

DANNY

I'm sorry. I wasn't trying to –

(Pause.)

KARYN

I know you weren't. (Pause.) I just... I've got this stupid rash on my back.

DANNY

Let me see.

KARYN

Fuck you, I'm not taking off my shirt off for you.

Because I'd be so turned on by your rash.

DANNY

I know you would.

KARYN

Maybe it's cancer.

DANNY

Shut the fuck up.

KARYN

Maybe it's psychological. You're stressed about something.

DANNY

I'm not stressed and if I was I wouldn't tell you.

KARYN

You tell me everything.

DANNY

I don't tell you everything.

KARYN

What don't you tell me?

DANNY

Uh, I don't know. Why didn't you tell me Michael was gonna be here?

KARYN

I figured you knew! What's the big deal?

DANNY

(Karyn steals herself, then gets up.)

Let's just go.

KARYN

Help me move this.

DANNY

(Karyn helps him roll the cart out of the closet.)

SCENE 3

(Lights out on the closet then back up on the gym as Cynthia enters the space.)

CYNTHIA

Hey, Gene.

GENE

What's up, Brainiac?

(Cynthia rolls her eyes. She hates it when he calls her that.)

MICHAEL

Good! You're all here.

CYNTHIA

I'm sorry I'm late. I didn't mean to be late. I should do something.

GENE

Ha! You could help me tie roses. (laughs)

CYNTHIA

What's so funny?

GENE

Nothing. Roses, man. Pencils and roses.

(Karyn and Danny enter with the AV equipment.)

CYNTHIA

Hi, guys. I'm totally late.

KARYN

Hey.

DANNY

Hi.

MICHAEL

So listen, guys. Look up here, please. You've got to sing something tonight.

DANNY

We don't really know anything acapella. Amy was the only one that played piano.

MICHAEL

Danny -

CYTHIA  
We've never performed without her before.

MICHAEL  
You guys, I have very little time to put this whole thing together and I need you to figure this out.

DANNY  
We'll do the Mozart.

GENE  
No. I need to hear the piano for that.

DANNY  
(To Cynthia.)  
Did you bring your pitch pipe?

CYNTHIA  
Yeah.

GENE  
The pitch pipe doesn't work for me.

DANNY  
We'll figure it out.

MICHAEL  
Thanks, Danny.

KARYN  
Yeah. Thanks, Danny.

MICHAEL  
We all good?

DANNY  
Yes.

CYNTHIA  
Okay.

GENE  
I guess.

MICHAEL  
Karyn?

KARYN

I have a choice?

MICHAEL

Danny, give me a hand with the projector. Amy's mom gave me these slides. (taking in the slides)  
Good Lord. We can't show all of these. We'll be here until midnight.

(Everyone is in a flurry of activity. Karyn and Cynthia are making roses and cutting paper, Gene and Danny are setting up the AV equipment and Michael is going through the slides. A plane flies overhead. Michael reacts.)

MICHAEL

If I was a teacher and had to talk over that noise every few minutes I'd go nuts.

DANNY

You get used to it.

GENE

Amy used to just start playing louder so we could ignore it.

CYNTHIA

Sometimes I ask the planes questions.

GENE

Sorry, what?

CYNTHIA

Like I'll be taking a test and I can't decide on an answer. I'll just say one of the answers in my mind and if a plane flies by right at that moment, I know I'm right.

GENE

Wow. Good technique.

CYNTHIA

I have a 4.0 GPA, Gene.

GENE

Because of the planes.

CYNTHIA

The planes are always right. It makes sense! Think about how important that airport is. If there was no airport, the town wouldn't have grown so fast. If the town hadn't grown, then they would have stopped building churches. But then they built my church and I went there and met all you

guys and if that hadn't happened I wouldn't be going to Ford Bible College. The planes are like God!

Ha!

GENE

What is so funny?

CYNTHIA

Nothing is funny.

DANNY

It's not funny, it's sad.

KARYN

It's not sad either.

DANNY

(To Danny.)  
Will you just pick a personality and roll with it?

KARYN

I can't believe the way you talk to him.

GENE

If he doesn't like it, he can say something.

KARYN

But you know he's not going to.

GENE

Because he's kind of afraid of you.

CYNTHIA

I'm not afraid of Karyn.

DANNY

No, you're fucking in love with Karyn.

GENE

(Plane flies overhead.)

MICHAEL  
All right. Cut it out. You're squabbling like a bunch of third graders. And by the way, God is God and planes are planes and they aren't the same.

MICHAEL

DANNY

I don't think she meant the planes are exactly the same as God. What she meant was -

MICHAEL

Maybe you didn't hear me. Maybe you weren't listening to what I was saying just now.

DANNY

I was listening. She didn't mean -

MICHAEL

Stop fighting me on everything!

DANNY

I'm not fighting you.

MICHAEL

Good. (a beat) No disrespect to any of you, but you need to start acting like adults.

KARYN

Wow.

MICHAEL

Sorry. I didn't mean... You're already adults, okay?

CYNTHIA

I don't feel like an adult. Don't think I'm ever gonna feel like an adult.

MICHAEL

Yeah, well... I remember the first time you all started coming to Converts. Bunch of lanky kids in braces. Now you're headed off to college. Unbelievable.

GENE

Weird.

MICHAEL

Where you headed, Gene?

GENE

Nowhere. Oh, you mean to college? I just got my letter from Northwestern.

MICHAEL

Congrats.

CYNTHIA

I'm going to Ford.

MICHAEL

Good school. I loved Ford. "Come to Ford and find the Lord," right? Kinda cheesy, I know.

KARYN

Kinda.

MICHAEL

That's where Danny's headed. Right, Dan?

KARYN

(To Danny.)

I thought you were going to school in St. Louis.

DANNY

My parents want me to go to Ford.

CYNTHIA

So, I'll at least know one person there.

KARYN

Danny's not going to Ford.

DANNY

There's nothing wrong with Ford.

KARYN

Please. You're not going to Ford Bible College.

DANNY

I might.

KARYN

It's a Bible College.

CYNTHIA

Nothing wrong with that.

DANNY

Michael is gonna put in a good word for me.

MICHAEL

The best years of my life were at Ford. I think it would be a good fit.

CYNTHIA

Amy wanted to go to Ford.

No, she didn't. KARYN

How do you know? CYNTHIA

She didn't. KARYN

We should all go to Ford! We could keep singing together. CYNTHIA

I'm not going to Ford. KARYN

Where are you going? CYNTHIA

Karyn's staying here. DANNY

No. I'm moving to Chicago. My mom is up there. Maybe I'll stay there for a year or so. KARYN

You're moving? DANNY

Yeah. KARYN

When? DANNY

Pretty much right after graduation. KARYN

You didn't tell me. DANNY

I don't have to tell you everything. KARYN

I didn't say you did. DANNY

MICHAEL

Okay, folks. It's almost time. I'm gonna go get gussied up. When Meredith gets here tell her I'll be right out.

DANNY

Okay.

(Michael starts to exit, then turns back to Danny.)

MICHAEL

Danny... we had kind of thing just now. I'm sorry.

DANNY

It's okay.

MICHAEL

We good?

DANNY

We're good.

(Michael exits.)

GENE

We need to talk about this whole singing thing. (To Danny.) You kind of threw us under the bus, Swaggart.

DANNY

I didn't throw you under the bus.

KARYN

We don't want to sing.

DANNY

Well, maybe we should anyway.

GENE

I will not be able to get my note from the pitch pipe. I'm used to Amy making eye contact with me and giving me the note.

KARYN

It was like you made the decision for us without really asking us.

DANNY

I'm sorry, okay? If you don't want to sing we won't sing.

GENE

Good.

CYNTHIA

Thank you.

DANNY

I'll tell Michael...I don't know...I'll make something up.

(Pause. They go back to the roses and the projector.)

CYNTHIA

(To Karyn.)

Chicago's supposed to be really cool.

KARYN

It is. (Pause. She notices Danny staring at her.) What?

DANNY

I didn't say anything.

KARYN

You're looking at me.

DANNY

I'm allowed to look at you.

KARYN

I'm sorry you're pissed.

DANNY

I'm not pissed.

GENE

(To Danny.)

You look pissed.

DANNY

(To Gene.)

I didn't know Karyn was moving.

KARYN

My mom wants to get to know me better.

DANNY

I'm sure your dad and stepmom just love that.

Pffff... They don't know.

KARYN

You can't just move to Chicago without telling them.

DANNY

Like they'd notice.

KARYN

You should tell them.

DANNY

You should not tell me what to do.

KARYN

Whatever. I'm going to Ford.

DANNY

I think you will love it there.

KARYN

(Pause. Karyn and Danny turn away from one another. Karyn snatches up the scissors and begins cutting paper furiously.)

(Privately, to Danny.)  
I'm gonna be really honest with you here.

GENE

Please don't.

DANNY

It's time to let that one go.

GENE

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

DANNY

Festial High Satanic Priestess. I know you want to get in her pants, but she's messed up and she's messing you up.

GENE

Drop it.

DANNY

GENE

Whatever. Suit yourself. (Changing the subject.) Let's do something after this. Let me come over. I'm all broken up about death and everything. I don't want to be alone.

DANNY

Shut-up. You want to come over to my house because you don't have cable and I have Cinemax.

GENE

(Louder, now.)

Excuse me, but the correct pronunciation is "Skinemax." They're showing that movie with Sting in it. It has titties and pussy in it. Both.

CYNTHIA

You are so foul.

GENE

Listen, if you guys want to walk around pretending like you think the naked body is some horrible, ugly thing and that sex isn't the most important thing in our lives, feel free. I don't feel like living a lie.

CYNTHIA

I'm sure sex is very important. I think about it, like, lots of times a day. Lots, Gene. But I don't make it my God.

GENE

I'll bet God has sex.

CYNTHIA

Stop it.

GENE

Hot sex. With angels.

CYNTHIA

No one has sex with angels.

GENE

Bullshit. Heaven's just a big orgy.

CYNTHIA

Come on.

GENE

Why wouldn't it be? If sex is the best feeling there is, why wouldn't heaven be wall-to-wall sex?

CYNTHIA

Because it just isn't.

GENE

God's not the only one who has sex with angels, you know.

CYNTHIA

I don't know and I don't want to know. (Pause.) Who?

GENE

Michael.

CYNTHIA

That's enough!

GENE

He makes them do this little dance for him.

DANNY

Gene.

GENE

And he eats their pussies while they play the harp.

CYNTHIA

(Laughing a little.)

Stop! Just Stop it!/Seriously! Stop!

DANNY

(Overlapping.)

Gene! Come on!/Cut it out!

GENE

(Overlapping.)

Come on! It's just a joke!

CYNTHIA

It's a stupid joke!

GENE

Well, you laughed!

CYNTHIA

No, I didn't!

GENE

You absolutely did! I saw it! Own up to it, Brainiac!

Stop calling me that, you fuck!

CYNTHIA

(Karyn cuts herself with the scissors)

Ow! Ow!

KARYN

What's wrong?

DANNY

Son of a bitch!

KARYN

What happened?

GENE

You okay?

CYNTHIA

I cut myself. Dammit!.

KARYN

I have band aids!

CYNTHIA

(Cynthia goes to her purse.)

Shouldn't she wash it out or something?

GENE

You should wash it out.

DANNY

Here! I have a wet-nap! I always have a wet-nap!

CYNTHIA

(They all crowd around and watch as Karyn puts the band aid on her finger. Danny puts his hand on her shoulder. Karyn looks at them like they're insane.)

I'm fine.

KARYN

Yeah. We know. You're fine.

DANNY

KARYN

(To Danny.)

Hand. Shoulder.

DANNY

(Pulling his hand back.)

Wow. How did that get there?

(MEREDITH enters the gym. She is frantic and smiles a lot – perhaps too much for someone who has just lost her daughter.)

MEREDITH

Oh, look! They look so pretty!

DANNY

Mrs. Jennings.

CYNTHIA

We're putting memories of Amy on these roses. For you and Mr. Jennings to have.

MEREDITH

Thank you, Cynthia. Wow. What a week, huh?

DANNY

How's Mr. Jennings?

MEREDITH

He's got some cold or flu thing. Can't kick it. Figures. Everything kind of happens at once. I told him just to sleep. He seems to think it will make him feel better. How are you kids? Roses, huh? Where's Michael?

DANNY

Getting changed.

MEREDITH

(Taking them in.)

You all looked so nice at the funeral.

DANNY

Thank you.

MEREDITH

Amy would have loved to have seen you all there. Of course, she could see you. You all know that the body in the coffin wasn't really Amy, right?

(Slightly alarmed.)  
What? CYNTHIA

MEREDITH  
The body is just a shell. It isn't who we really are.

CYNTHIA  
Oh. Yeah.

MEREDITH  
If you get sad, just remember that this is not Amy's end.

DANNY  
It's a new beginning.

MEREDITH  
Exactly. And yes, we're going to miss her. But we are going to see her again someday. (Taking them in.) She loves all of you so much.

(Michael enters. He is wearing a suit.)

MEREDITH  
Michael!

MICHAEL  
How are you, Meredith?

(Meredith rushes to Michael, hugs him and holds on very tightly.)

MEREDITH  
It is a day that the lord has made and I am alive and breathing.

MICHAEL  
Amen.

(Awkward pause while Meredith continues to hug Michael.)

DANNY  
We've got all these roses here. We're writing memories on them. And we're setting up the slide projector.

MEREDITH

Thank you, sweetheart.

MICHAEL

Meredith, I wonder if you might look through these slides. I'm worried if we show them all that we'll be here past curfew.

MEREDITH

Oh, of course. Let's take a look see.

MICHAEL

You guys just about done? (with the roses)

CYNTHIA

Yeah.

MEREDITH

(Lifting slides to the light.)

Oh, this is good. She looks pretty. Her hair is perfect. (Gives slide to Danny.) And this one. She got her braces off that day. (Hands slide to Danny.) Oh, my. Not this one. No, no, no. Dreadful. And it was taken by a professional, believe it or not. She had the flu that day. And this one looks like she just woke up. No, no, no. (Another slide.) Oh. Look. Here's a picture of her playing the piano with all of you. My goodness. Look at you all. Look at her. (She hands the slide to Danny.) You're all gonna keep singing together, right?

MICHAEL

They're gonna sing something tonight in Amy's honor.

MEREDITH

Good.

DANNY

Yeah...um... we talked about it a few minutes ago. They...we...really don't want to.

MICHAEL

I thought we had a deal.

DANNY

We did.

MEREDITH

I want you to sing the song you sang at districts.

KARYN

"We Are Not Ashamed to Own Our Lord."

MEREDITH

Amy loved that song.

KARYN

Amy tolerated that song. She preferred the Mozart.

DANNY

Will you stop?

MEREDITH

I prefer “We Are Not Ashamed to Own Our Lord.”

GENE

That one is really hard without the piano.

MEREDITH

I have Amy’s practice tape in my car. You could sing along.

MICHAEL

Great idea! Are you all okay with this?

(Pause.)

DANNY

Yeah.

GENE

Okay.

CYNTHIA

I guess.

KARYN

I guess, yeah.

MEREDITH

Ladies, I don’t mean to mean to be picky but do you have anything to wear besides jeans?

CYNTHIA

I’ve got my show choir skirt in my locker.

MEREDITH

Perfect.

CYNTHIA

There are extra skirts in the choir room but it’s locked.

I have a key.

DANNY

Do you, like, own the school?

KARYN

I'm in charge of unloading the risers! I have a key! It's just a key! It doesn't make me different! I just have a key!

DANNY

Relax, El Dorko.

KARYN

Here! Go find a skirt!

DANNY

(Danny tosses Karyn the key.  
Karyn and Cynthia exit.)

I'll grab the tape and be right back. Boys, if you could just keep going through the slides and pull out pictures if Amy looks horrible for some reason.

MEREDITH

Okay.

DANNY

(Meredith exits.)

#### SCENE 4

(Lights down on the gym. Lights up in the hallway where we see Karyn and Cynthia.)

Hold on. Wait.

CYNTHIA

(Cynthia closes her eyes. We hear a plane fly overhead.)

I knew it. It's true.

CYNTHIA

What's true?

KARYN

CYNTHIA

You don't like me.

KARYN

Huh?

CYNTHIA

I used to tell Amy all the time that you didn't like me and she assured me that you did but I knew she was just saying that.

KARYN

I have no problem with you Cynthia.

CYNTHIA

That's not the same as liking me.

KARYN

I don't really like anyone. You're not special.

CYNTHIA

I wonder if any of us really like each other. I mean would we even be friends anymore if Amy hadn't practically forced us to rehearse.

KARYN

I really don't know.

CYNTHIA

You and Danny really like each other.

KARYN

If you say so.

CYNTHIA

Don't you like Danny?

KARYN

Danny's okay.

CYNTHIA

But do you like him, like him? Like want to date him?

KARYN

No.

CYNTHIA

Has he tried to kiss you?

No. KARYN

Would you let him? CYNTHIA

No. KARYN

Because it would be weird. CYNTHIA

No. Maybe. KARYN

Gene tried to kiss me, once. CYNTHIA

I'm shocked. KARYN

It was that weekend we went to districts. That night at the hotel. Anyway, I didn't kiss him. Has Gene tried to kiss you? CYNTHIA

No. KARYN

Do you like Gene? CYNTHIA

He's a dick, but mainly he's fine. KARYN

Well don't tell anyone that I told you because I told him I wouldn't tell anyone. CYNTHIA

Okay. KARYN

Ever since then, I can't stop thinking about kissing. CYNTHIA

Uh-huh. KARYN

And other stuff. CYNTHIA

Oh, God. KARYN

I won't talk about it if you don't want me to. CYNTHIA

Good. KARYN

I wonder if Amy got to kiss anyone. CYNTHIA

I have no idea. KARYN

Danny definitely likes you. CYNTHIA

I know. KARYN

I mean he's really into you. He has been for years. CYNTHIA

Okay. KARYN

A couple of months ago, he was afraid you were gonna kill yourself. CYNTHIA

(A beat.)

What? KARYN

Yeah. A couple months ago when you were all sad. CYNTHIA

What did you hear? What did Amy tell you? KARYN

Nothing. Danny told me. CYNTHIA

KARYN

What did he say?

CYNTHIA

Nothing. He didn't know what was wrong with you, he was just really worried so he went to tell your guidance counselor and that's why she called you into her office that day.

KARYN

Huh. I thought she was trying to get me to join the yearbook staff.

CYNTHIA

Did it make you stop wanting to kill yourself?

KARYN

I'm pretty sure it made me want to kill myself more.

CYNTHIA

What was wrong with you?

KARYN

Nothing.

CYNTHIA

Did Amy know?

KARYN

I don't want to talk about it.

CYNTHIA

Danny was really worried. Don't tell him I told you because he made me promise not to tell.

KARYN

Cynthia, I'm gonna let you in on a secret.

CYNTHIA

What?

KARYN

Everyone knows you can't keep a secret.

CYNTHIA

Sure, I can.

KARYN

No, you can't. So, when someone tells you not to tell anyone, they're actually expecting you to tell someone.

CYNTHIA

That's not true.

KARYN

It is one-hundred percent true. We all have a thing. That's your thing.

CYNTHIA

Oh. Well, what's your thing?

KARYN

I never lie but everyone always thinks I'm lying.

CYNTHIA

Oh. Okay. (A beat>) You should let Danny kiss you. I really think so. (Sound of a plane flying overhead.) See? I knew it! I'm right!

KARYN

Jesus Christ.

SCENE 5

(Lights back up on gym as Meredith enters with the tape.)

MEREDITH

Can we play this through the speakers or something?

DANNY

Yeah. (To Gene.) Come help me.

(Danny and Gene exit to another part of the gym)

MEREDITH

You'll have to rewind it. It's all the way at the beginning of side A.

MICHAEL

Meredith –

MEREDITH

There are all these people waiting outside. I told them they could come in and be seated.

MICHAEL

Oh, okay. The kids haven't had a chance to go through the song.

MEREDITH

They don't have to rehearse the song. They've done it a thousand times for heaven's sake.

(Cynthia and Karyn enter. Meredith sees them in their skirts.)

MEREDITH

Better. Not perfect, but better.

(Suddenly the piano music comes on. It's way too loud.)

KARYN

Holy crap.

MICHAEL

Danny! Cut it, will you?

(The volume goes down and we hear a voice on the tape. It's Amy.)

AMY'S VOICE

Okay, you guys. Let's go. From section 12. I'll give you the bar before. Come in together. And...

(Piano music begins. Everyone stops. Long pause. They are taken aback by the sound of Amy's voice and the piano.)

CYNTHIA

Amy.

MEREDITH

Rewind it, Danny! All the way to the beginning of Side A!

(Music stops.)

MICHAEL

(To Cynthia.)

Cynthia, get the others help you pass out the roses, will you?

CYNTHIA

Uh...yeah.

(Cynthia and Karyn pick up the roses and exit out of sight to another area of the gym.)

MEREDITH

I'm worried about them.

MICHAEL

Me too.

MEREDITH

Amy was their anchor. She held them together. She was their example. Something to aspire to. They don't have that anymore. They're so fragile. You know I used to watch Amy get ready for school. She would stand in the mirror and put on lipstick and spend an hour on her hair... it was just a small thing but it frightened me. Because I knew she was thinking about what other people thought of her. So I would remind her about the sin of vanity. And that fear...just a little bit of fear...would help her remember who she was. It kept her grounded.

MICHAEL

Amy was a remarkable young lady. Quite frankly, she was more intelligent than most of the other kids I've met around here.

MEREDITH

She was asking a lot of questions, you know? She was starting to doubt things. I could tell.

MICHAEL

That's normal.

MEREDITH

Is it? Because I worried all the time. I still worry. I think about what was going through her head when she died. Did she have faith in that moment? Did she think.. I don't want to think about what she thought because what if she –

MICHAEL

Meredith. No, no, no. Don't do that to yourself. Our God is a merciful God. Remember that.

MEREDITH

I know, but –

(Michael takes Meredith's hands and begins praying.)

MICHAEL

God, help us in the hour of our grief. We commend the spirit of our beloved child to you. Have grace and mercy on her soul and usher her into your kingdom, in Jesus' name we pray.

MEREDITH

Amen.

MICHAEL

Amen.

MEREDITH

Thank you. You do so much good with these kids.

MICHAEL

I try. Sometimes I wonder.

MEREDITH

They love you, Michael. Danny especially. Even Karyn.

MICHAEL

You think so?

MEREDITH

Behind that scowl is just a little bit of fear. And with that fear comes respect and love. All that work that Amy did with them. She was more than just their pianist, you know? If they fall apart now it's like all that love she gave them goes to waste. (A beat.) Now let's talk about your tribute. What are you going to say?

MICHAEL

Well, I thought I'd talk about what I remembered about Amy, then –

MEREDITH

Because it was a lovely funeral, it really was, but if you don't mind my saying so, I felt you were a little soft.

MICHAEL

Soft?

MEREDITH

These kids need to know –

MICHAEL

Yes.

MEREDITH

I hate to say things like “fear of God” because I don't think we should be afraid of God but some of those kids could use a little bit of that. It's the thing that's going to carry them through in the future. Life gets so...complicated. They need to learn the difference between right and wrong now – when they're young. I hate to say it, it's a horrible thing to say, but in my worst moments sometimes I think... well...I can't say it.

MICHAEL

Say what? It's okay.

MEREDITH

In my very worst moments I think “Why Amy?” And I know God has a plan for us but I think “Why her and why not someone else?” It shouldn’t have been her, Michael. They need to know what could happen to them if they don’t stay grounded in the holy spirit. Don’t be soft.

MICHAEL

Okay.

MEREDITH

(Hugs him tightly.)

Thank you. Oh God, thank you. I get so angry sometimes and I have no idea why. Scared, I guess. Scared and hurt and.... Anyway, thank you.

(Karyn, Cynthia, Danny and Gene enter. Michael sees them and pulls away from Meredith.)

MICHAEL

You all set?

DANNY

Yeah. I’ll just have to run up and start the tape.

MICHAEL

Cool. Have a seat in the bleachers for a bit.

(Everyone but Michael exits to an unseen part of the gym. He walks to a microphone stand, pulls out the microphone and speaks.)

MICHAEL

Hi, everyone. Can you hear me? Am I on Danny? Okay. Thanks for coming out, everyone. I know Meredith – Amy’s mom – is very glad to see you and I am too. I know not everyone was able to make it to the funeral and it’s nice that we can get together tonight and celebrate Amy’s life. My most vivid memory of Amy was the night she accepted Jesus Christ into her heart. We had one of our Converts meetings at her house and during the prayer, I would slip downstairs so I could meet with anyone that wanted to dedicate their life in service to the Lord. Well imagine my surprise when I look up and walking down the stairs of her own house is Amy. I thought...this is crazy, right? I’ve known Amy since she was a little girl! There was never a question in my mind that this was a girl who loved the lord, loved Jesus and loved the Bible! But she sat down right in front of me and said “Mike, I want to be a better person.” Now I think we can all agree that Amy was a good person. But she knew something about herself that the rest of us did not. Just because you’re a good person in the eyes of the world, doesn’t mean you’re a good person in the eyes of the lord because the lord can see in here (taps heart) and in here (taps head). But she wanted to be a better

person. That want, that desire to be better is what set Amy apart. So I implore you all...be like Amy. Have Amy's faith. Have Amy's judgement. Have Amy's sense of right and wrong.

I know a lot of you are thinking "Why, Amy? If God loved her so much, then why her?" The Bible tells us that we can never truly know the mind of God but if I had to venture a guess it would be because Amy – more than any of us – was ready. And it chills me to the bone because I think to myself "I'm not ready." I'm not ready to meet God. Are any of you ready? What are you going to do to be ready when Jesus comes to take you home? Might be time to figure that out. Because the Bible tells us it could happen at any time. And if you're not ready, if you don't feel worthy...you better make yourself worthy. Amy was worthy. Are you worthy? Ask yourself. Right here, right now. Ask yourself because tomorrow might be too late. Are you worthy?

Now...I don't want to stay up here and talk about this all evening long. Some of Amy's friends are here tonight and they'd like to sing a song in her honor.

(The sound of piano playing begins. Karyn, Gene and Cynthia enter with Danny following behind. They form a line, with roses in hand, and place them in the white wreath. Then they line up on the edge of the stage and begin to sing "We're Not Ashamed to Own Our Lord.")

KARYN, DANNY, CYNTHIA, GENE

*"We're not ashamed to own our Lord  
And worship him on earth.  
We love to learn his holy word  
And know what souls are worth.*

(Gradually, the quartet begins to fall apart. Gene sits down first – he is unable to get his pitch. Danny suddenly sits down and buries his head in his hands. Karyn follows moments later, followed by Cynthia. The piano music continues but none of them are able to continue singing. Michael motions for Danny to turn off the music. Danny exits.)

MICHAEL

Lord forgive them and forgive us all our grief. Forgive us our worldliness. Forgive us our failures. Forgive us our sins. We know that you see us and hear us and we feel your presence here this evening. (He looks at the white wreath sporting the four red roses.) I see you up there, Jesus. Your white flesh pierced by the thorns and your blood is revealed to us. We know you are coming, lord. And we pray that we will be ready for that day. "He then will give us a new name, With robes of righteousness, And, in the New Jerusalem, Eternal happiness. Eternal happiness. Eternal happiness."