

HANNAH: Whose fault is it?
LAURA: It's not anybody's fault. It was an accident.
HANNAH: There's faults! There's always faults! Underneath us! Cracks in the earth that open up and shake and swallow things.
(Beat.)
LAURA: Shhh, no. She closed her eyes and died.
HANNAH: How do they make asphalt?
LAURA: I don't know.
HANNAH: Cement is one thing, and asphalt is a lot of things mixed, right? Gravel and cement and tar. How do they mix things that are so hard?
LAURA: They have to heat them up, I guess.
HANNAH: When they're hot they're soft and when they get cold they're hard!
LAURA: That's right.
HANNAH: Our mom got crushed in the road!
LAURA: No! shhh. Come here. It's OK. Come here.
(Hannah falls heavily into her arms. Laura rocks her, strokes her hair. She tries to sing the tune their mother used to sing to them. Hannah begins to calm.)
LAURA: Shhh. I'm here. I'm here.
(Lights shift.)

BEGIN

Scene Six

Cheer practice has just ended. It's just Laura and Leslie.

LESLIE: I'm so glad you're allowed to come back to practice now.
LAURA: Thanks.
LESLIE: We missed you. (Beat. Serious.) I missed you.
LAURA: I wasn't sure you knew me.
LESLIE: We're squadmates!
LAURA: Well, yeah, but. I just didn't think you could really tell me and Laura Lesterson apart sometimes.
LESLIE: Well, now I can. 'K?
LAURA: 'K.
LESLIE: I'm pregnant.
LAURA: Oh.
LESLIE: Sean Ashton, that needle dick prick wank. He said he'd pull out right away. Well so did Nixon in 'Nam!

LAURA: Who?
LESLIE: You know, Sean. He drives the magenta Jetta! We hooked up at Kira Kartanian's Labor Day Weekend pool party on Friday night and then we cruised to TJ on the school day off. His mom LIVES in the Seabluff Bungalow Suites! I dumped him the day after. And Stacie said he bragged to the whole long-boarding team that I swallow. (Beat.) And then I skipped my P and now I have to get the dustbuster!
LAURA: What a jerk. Are you telling your mom?
LESLIE: She'll just be SO "unconditionally supportive." She'll just hold my hand and be all, "I remember my first abortion." And then she'll "treat me" to that stinky Iraqi facialist on coast highway that I HATE. And then she'll buy me a "cozy" brown sweater.
LAURA: OK.
LESLIE: That's all?
LAURA: Yeah. (Beat.) OK.
(Pause.)
LESLIE: I'm just kidding. Wanted to see how you'd react. Bravo. You were totally mellow. I knew you could be my best friend.
LAURA: I can?
LESLIE: Yes. I mean I did get pregnant last year and I got an abortion. But not by Sean Ashton. He asked for my number and I was like "1-800-AS IF!!" (Pause.) I knew you were my best friend.
(Long pause. They slump down. The sound of the ocean.)
LESLIE: There is absolutely fucking nothing to do in this stupid boring town.
(Beat.)
LAURA: Do you want to go shopping?
LESLIE: I was just joking about joking. I am pregnant. But you are my best friend.
LAURA: 'K. Do you want to go to the beach?
LESLIE: I'm too white.
LAURA: Me too.
LESLIE: I'm chalk.
LAURA: I'm butt.
LESLIE: Let's get smoothies.
LAURA: Had one at work today.
LESLIE: Let's get wraps.
LAURA: 'K. Have you tried the sprouted cajun?
LESLIE: I get the cumin-scented barbeque tofu. No cheese no sour cream.

LAURA: They have the new ocean size sodas. We can get sixty-four ounce diet cokes.

LESLIE: 'K. You work?

LAURA: Yeah. At Smooth Talk.

LESLIE: Oh. Are they hiring?

LAURA: You need to work?

LESLIE: If I want department store cosmetics! If my mom had her way I'd be the Maybelline monster that she is. I used to work at Krissie's Muffins, but they're on the path of the Surfswell Plaza Freeway Project. Everything's changing you know. We can't even park our own cars at our own beach anymore! They're putting in a PAY LOT with SEVERE TIRE DAMAGE and everything! We're all getting paved right under. *(Beat.)* At RJRJ — R.J. Reynolds Junior High School where I went in Winston-Salem — cheerleading was WAY more important than it is here. At RJRJ we had a weight limit and if you exceeded it, you were dismissed in a very solemn ceremony. With paddles and everything.

LAURA: Wow.

LESLIE: But these bitches are dedicated to nothing but fear and mediocrity. Won't practice basket-tossing on the quad just because it's kind of cementy? Have they ever heard of TRUSTING their spotters?

LAURA: I couldn't more totally agree.

LESLIE: We're never gonna convince these guys to care about cheer as much as we do. They just don't have our commitment to the sport. *(Beat.)* We should go to a professional cheer-training program. Like the Spirit Institute of the South.

LAURA: What's that?

LESLIE: It's actual professional cheerleading. The Competitive Sport of Cheer. Cheer for cheer's sake. We're talking Bible Belt intensity not this perky coastal shit. *(Beat.)* I have a brochure. It's very compelling. They have a standing back tuck. Pre-req. It's hard core.

LAURA: Do you have a standing?

LESLIE: Not yet. Do you?

LAURA: Not yet. *(Beat.)* Wait, standing back tuck? Isn't that where you like fling your body upside down?

LESLIE: Backwards! *(Beat. Leslie approaches Laura.)* There is a stirring passage in the brochure from the founder of the institute. She went from doing a dozen doughnuts and a fistful of quaaludes a day to being the first person to execute a flying heel stretch on an all-girl competitive squad. Today,

she offers the skills and experience garnered on her journey to girls like us. *(Beat.)* It's two weeks. A thousand bucks. We should go.

LAURA: To S.I.S.

LESLIE: To their winter training intensive. We'd have to nail our standings. And get the cash. We could do it. It's a leadership seminar as well as a professional cheer training program. This year's spirit slogan is "Believe to Achieve." And they televise the final session. Let's pick weights. I say ninety-five 'cuz the camera adds ten so that's really one hundred and five.

LAURA: So we should just say one hundred and five then.

LESLIE: But the camera adds ten.

LAURA: OK so let's say eighty-five, 'cuz that's like ninety-five, then.

LESLIE: Eighty-five pounds. Done.

LAURA: Um, why don't they have cheerleader anchors like they have sports anchors? People who are experts on who the cheerleaders are and what they're doing. Everyone likes to look at girls more than guys, so looking at the cheerleaders at professional sports events could become like the most popular spectator sport! *(Beat.)* God, I don't usually talk so much!

LESLIE: It's called spirit! We should go.

LAURA: But we'd have to train. We'd have to get good. Maybe we should get private coaching!

LESLIE: Yeah!

LAURA: Like the little gymnasts do.

LESLIE: Yeah! But they start when they're like, three. And the good ones are all from countries with harsh dictators. But no, we have to live in America, land of the "rugged individual"! What a fucking joke!

LAURA: We'll just have to do it ourselves!

LESLIE: My mom is part of the coalition fighting the Surfswell Plaza Freeway Project. They raised money by selling this promotional cellulite cream called "Firm Up Against the Freeway."

(Beat.)

LAURA: Um, I heard we need the freeway. 'Cuz otherwise fat people are gonna clog up our charming downtown shopping district.

LESLIE: The freeway blows! It's gonna destroy natural resources! *(Beat.)* I know. I'm gonna make my mom get me fake boobs. Only instead, I'll use the money for S.I.S.!

LAURA: But won't she know when you don't get the boobs?

LESLIE: I'll just tell her they're subtle. Like yours.

LAURA: I don't have fake boobs!

LESLIE: We're squadmates. You can say you had your tits done. Gillian did.

LAURA: She did? I didn't know that.

LESLIE: You can just say!

LAURA: But I didn't! *(Beat.)* They feel fake sometimes. I swear. They're kinda hard. Kind of high up. They're like aggressive. *(Beat.)* But I swear to God they just came out of my own skin. My body must have made them. Fast! *(Beat.)*

LESLIE: My mom is totally flat. That's one of the reasons I hate her.

LAURA: Yeah.

(Long pause. The sound of the ocean. Laura stares out. She closes her eyes and throws her head back. Feels it.)

LAURA: Standing back tuck.

LESLIE: Pre-req.

LAURA: Hard core!

(Leslie and Laura do one loud simultaneous clap, their hands in prayer pose. They turn and stare at each other, thrilled.)

LAURA AND LESLIE: OH MY GOD!

END

Scene Seven

Laura's house. Dinner. From the outside, the chorus continues:

CHORUS: BIG N! LITTLE O! The Surfswell Freeway's got to go! I'm huh! Got to go! Say what? Got to go! *(Etc.)*
(Phil slams the window shut. Sits.)

HANNAH: Who are they?

PHIL: They're wealthy women with nothing better to do.

HANNAH: How come?

PHIL: Because they have teenagers who . . . drive themselves.

HANNAH: How come?

PHIL: Because time passes! I don't know. They are bored women . . . They have nothing to do, so they've decided to take a swing at the freeway development.

LAURA: They're sponsored by the Earth Watch coalition. It's national.

PHIL: Is that right?

LAURA: They're a fully accredited environmental group.

PHIL: They're a bag of hammers. They've already cost taxpayers three hundred

thousand dollars with this sham of a lawsuit. They're suing on behalf some special breed of gopher which they claim Surfswell will make more. Well I'll tell you something, this woman, the "leader" of the "co-
sion" — I'll tell you where her sympathy for the gopher comes from. He you seen the woman's overbite? This girl could eat an apple through picket fence! *(He chuckles. They don't. Beat.)* They are suing on behalf some pellet-craping pests.

(Pause.)

HANNAH: I thought . . . Remember, Yosemite? When she took us there. A we stayed in a cabin. And we had that nature guide who was her old friend from her Berkeley days? Who had the longest hair ever and the guy with stickers on it? And remember how she talked different with her friend from her Berkeley days? She called things "far out." Remember Well didn't she say something like, how gophers do something super important, really? Remember?

LAURA: Pockets of air in the soil. They give the ground its very life.

HANNAH: Remember?

(Laura and Hannah share a moment.)

HANNAH: I like gophers.

PHIL: What's in this rice?

LAURA: I need some money. Our cheer team, we're raising money to go to a special cheer-training camp. We want to get really good.

PHIL: So?

LAURA: So, I want to go.

PHIL: How long?

LAURA: Two weeks. They have a land-a-standing-re-req. *(Beat.)* That means something.

PHIL: What about school?

LAURA: It's two weeks.

HANNAH: Where's North Carolina?

PHIL: What?

HANNAH: That's where it is, right?

PHIL: It's WHERE?

LAURA: I know you think it's nothing but it's not. We really want to go.

PHIL: Who's we?

LAURA: *(Beat.)* Our squad.

HANNAH: No, it's just her. And her one friend. They're the only ones that

LAURA: It's our squad!

(Pause. Phil takes a bite of his food.)