

KATIE (a monologue for *Little Sister*)



Theatre Direct Canada, Toronto. *Little Sister*

Actors (l to r): Tamara Gorski, Sanjay Talwar, Laurie Fraser



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KATIE

HE comes to pick me up around eight. We're going to a restaurant. No. A bar, downtown. It's hot. I'm wearing a very short skirt, pink, and this top that shows off my stomach which is suntanned and ripply, hard tight: perfect. Because I am beautiful I don't have to wear much make up. I have this long swan neck and hair that's big and bouncy and requires no work whatsoever. My breasts are also big but not too big and not at all bouncy. The guy I'm with laughs a lot and is rather shy because I'm so good looking. We are drinking beer. No. He is drinking beer and I am drinking diet coke. No. Perrier with a slice of lime. Forget the lime. When he drives me home he kisses me on my porch, on my mouth. His mouth tastes like salted peanuts. He puts his hands around my waist.

(Katie makes a circle with her hands; every time she says this phrase the circle becomes smaller.)

He puts his hands around my waist. He puts his hands around my waist. I am perfect.

The boy I speak of lives on a billboard. The girl I will become lives on the billboard too. They are in technicolour and thin as paper. I jog by them every morning, used to think about this guy quite often, practice kissing etc. with his face in my mind. Now I don't think of boys hardly at all. It is six-thirty. The air just getting light. I love this time of day — I am part of something, of the others up this early. We are all full of purpose: have miles to jog, dogs to walk, cars to start. Everything feels possible. The day ahead can be managed and arranged. I always jog

before breakfast. I used to get up at seven and run for thirty minutes. Now I get up at six and run at least an hour.

When I get in from running there is ten whole minutes when I'm making my lunch and lunch for my little brothers when it's just my dad and me in the kitchen, except for the *Globe and Mail*, he is all mine. "School okay?" I nod. I have, in fact, the highest grade point average in the tenth grade.

I take the bread out of the bag for lunches, spreading six slices on the counter. The bread is soft and big and brown. I cover the bread with butter then peanut butter on top of that. It's the kind of peanut butter that you get at the health food store, a slick of oil across the top.

Then I slice up bananas and pile them on. Then four Hey-Dey cookies each in little plastic bags and a box of apple juice with its own straw for each of my brothers, a big red apple for me. I put the lunches into bags made of recycled paper. I don't jog to school. I get a ride with my mum. I get out a block before school so that no one will see I am with my mother. I am half an hour early so I study right until the bell.

In art class we make fish out of balsa wood. Bend the wood into arcs of fin and spine then join them together with a pin and cover the frame in tissue paper. My pin doesn't hold and the wood goes catapulting across the room. Imagine your own bones springing out of your skin, your own self catapulting out of your body forever. I retrieve my wood across the room. Everyone finds my flying fish hysterically funny. My mouth tastes like it's made out of aluminium foil. I eat a tic-tac, carefully. I have always been frightened that if I chew anything hard my teeth will crumble.

My cousin Petie has rotten teeth. I should know. He taught me how to kiss. Because he is from a farm he also taught me how to drive when I was nine and how to blow up apple trees. Now he is sixteen and I am always two years younger. Last summer he put his hands around my waist. He put his hands around my waist and gave me a pinch. "Katie's still got baby fat. What else has Katie got?" He looked down the front

of my shirt and through some trick made his voice boom and echo. When we were ten and twelve we used to steal my uncle's car and drive across the fields and smoke a cigarette. This was heaven. Then Petie would look for something to kill — a groundhog, a partridge, a crow. Now Petie steals the car and drives across the border and into Quebec. French girls are better, thinner. French beer is better too. So long Petie.

I've always eaten my lunch in the girl's washroom. The cafeteria is a rather scary place and for many girls I think this is a good solution. I always sit under the tampax machine. I have never had a period and I think by sitting under the machine this will somehow help. I realize this is not very logical but as far as I know I am the only girl in my class who hasn't started.

I take the sandwich apart. I scrape all the peanut butter off the little slices of banana and eat them slowly. I then eat the crusts around my sandwich avoiding the peanut butter. I do not even look at the cookies. I leave them in the bag. I take four bites of the apple. Yesterday I took six so today is better. Then I throw everything into the trash can in the corner. Let's do lunch.

The last class of the day is modern history, which is hardly modern. We have been on World War II since October. On my way to class I feel clear as spring water, clear as glass and it's like that moving though the halls, floating, propelled from underneath, the air around me enclosed, I am moving in a glass box. Although I am used to feeling a little removed from things this feeling is different, physical, charged. I take my seat. When I leave there will be no impressions. I will be invisible, no trace of me. I take my seat. I put my arms around my waist. I put my arms around my waist because my stomach is crying.

Slides of the Holocaust on the overhead projector. There is no way of knowing whether the images I am seeing lived or died. Who are the survivors? I am feeling badly for the victims of Auschwitz as is the rest of the class. I am also thinking of four Hey-Dey cookies in my brown recycled lunch bag in the trash. I want to dive through to the bottom,

dive into the thrown out sandwiches, butts, damp paper towels, apple cores and surface with my lunch, a giant pearl that I can stuff inside and swallow and swallow. The lights click back on. The teacher calls out my name first to come get my essay back. I am afraid of the sound of my stomach. Afraid my bones make noise inside my skin as I go up the aisle. Afraid because I envy those people at Auschwitz. But I am most afraid because the inside of my mouth tastes like peanut butter and It Should Not. My desk is two away. My essay is in my hand. I see the "A" on the corner of the page under my name. I see the corner of my desk. Too close and then black.

"You fainted." The school nurse is trying to give me orange juice. I push it away. "Mr. Simms carried you in here like a stack of kindling." "I'm fine." She has pushed the orange juice under my nose again — has no idea that I can't eat again until I go home for dinner. "Have you been feeling ill?" "I'm fine." "Do you have your period?" "I'm fine." "You're very thin. Do you want to get on the scales?"

You can't make me, stupid old bitch. You can't make me eat. This is what I want to tell her but my mouth is drying everything up, swallowing all my words even and nothing is coming out. "Seventy-seven pounds," she says which is better than I thought. "You could die," she tells me. She puts her hands around my waist, puts her hands around my waist. I'm almost there.

