

Men & Boxes

a play about a big, messy basement and the siblings in it

by Jennie Webb

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Men & Boxes

CHARACTERS:

THE OLDEST SISTER is a brisk woman who doesn't look or reveal her age (45) and is proud of both feats. She rises above physicality, and at the same time has honed her body so that she is able to use it as a weapon, and as a shield. Success, for her, is measured by outcome and she will do almost anything to achieve it—she feels she has to. She confronts most challenges with a “don't look back” attitude, yet may also feel she's been cheated, in all sorts of ways. She wants to think the universe is ordered, or can be. For her, the act of creation is a competitive one.

THE MIDDLE SISTER, at 43, is comfortable being neither fat nor thin, short nor tall, beautiful nor homely, and if you were to guess how old she is you might say, “43?” But she's just now starting to realize that given human life-expectancy, she is “middle-aged,” and wonders where the first half went. Painfully aware of the world around her, she doesn't quite get the relationship between herself and her body. She does what she needs to do, what needs to be done, because she can do it and do it well. She tends to deal with situations from the inside out, sometimes losing herself in them. Why create when there is already so much here to take care of?

THE MUCH YOUNGER SISTER is a quirky duckling who is very, very conscious of the fact that she was born when the youngest of her siblings was 9. So at 30 she is still eagerly scrambling to catch up, and figure out where she fits in... within her family and in the universe in general. She's a good and enthusiastic observer, but doesn't much like to take up room, or cast shadows. Which makes it very hard to sit still, to let go, or to take action. Or to look at and commit to her actions. So creating is pretty much out of the question.

THE BROTHER spent a lot of his contented childhood as the youngest. Because of that, because he is the only boy, and because his sisters are who they are, he is 39—probably a somewhat youthful 39—and still waiting. But he's okay with waiting. He's also okay with being told what to do. He's particularly good at waiting for instructions. He likes women. He's around women a lot. But who knows whether they've figured him out. And none of them has ever asked him, yet, to create anything on his own. Just to move what they've created.

SETTING:

A large room or rooms with an expansive, never-ending or maze-like feeling. Dominant is a staircase leading down into the space.

The space contains no furniture, but there are many, many boxes, packing materials and items representing the life of a family, as well as the various individuals who make it up.

NOTE: Objects can and should be stylized, to whatever degree suits the particular production and escalating absurdism within the play.

—THE PLAY IS PERFORMED WITHOUT AN INTERMISSION—

Men & Boxes

Lights up to reveal three women sitting on the floor in a big basement room with a never-ending, maze-like feeling. They are surrounded by many, many boxes, boxes of all shapes and sizes. Some boxes are empty, and some have things in them. Some look like they have been around quite awhile; there is a neat stack of recently packed boxes. There's also lots of cardboard—unbuilt boxes. And rolls of tape. And lots of things which could be put into boxes.

Each at their own pace, with varying degrees of discrimination, the three women rummage through the items around them, packing some away, laying some aside, putting some into distinct piles and organizing the contents of the boxes.

One woman gets distracted by her own body.

MIDDLE SISTER:

My breasts are huge. When did they get this huge?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

They're not huge.

MIDDLE SISTER:

They are. They're incredibly huge.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

And you're complaining?

MIDDLE SISTER:

Because it's like they appeared overnight.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

That's not true.

MIDDLE SISTER:

It is. I went to bed a thirty-something waif and woke up like this.

OLDEST SISTER:

You were never a thirty-something waif, even when you were thirty-something.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Thank you for reminding me.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Why would you want to be a waif?

MIDDLE SISTER:

Waifs are willowy. Willowy or wiry. Light. Lithe. Free.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
Abandoned. Orphaned. Outcast.

MIDDLE SISTER:
Yeah, well.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
You are certainly not that. And I am certainly jealous.

MIDDLE SISTER:
Of me?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
Yeah!

Very short pause.

MIDDLE SISTER:
(indicating her breasts) Of these. No. You aren't.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
I am.

MIDDLE SISTER:
No. They're like— heavy. It's like I'm hauling around massive bags of groceries everywhere I go.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
Hah!

The sisters resume sorting.

OLDEST SISTER:
(to her middle sister) So why don't you lose weight?

Short pause.

MIDDLE SISTER:
What?

OLDEST SISTER:
It's because of your weight.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
What is?

MIDDLE SISTER:

My incredible increasing cup size. It's because I've gained weight. I know that.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

You haven't gained weight.

MIDDLE SISTER:

I have.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

You look great.

MIDDLE SISTER:

You look great.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

You look healthy.

MIDDLE SISTER:

I look like a cow.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Stop it.

MIDDLE SISTER:

I blame Mom. For the boobs, anyway.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Mom does have great boobs.

OLDEST SISTER:

Doesn't she?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

I never noticed that, growing up. But who thinks of moms as having bodies, right?

MIDDLE SISTER:

If you bypass the whole giving birth deal.

OLDEST SISTER:

Mom's always kept her figure. Even now.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Because she doesn't eat. She forgets to eat.

OLDEST SISTER:

She watches what she eats.

MIDDLE SISTER:

This observation is from all the time you've spent around her lately?

OLDEST SISTER:

It's been a very full week.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Yes, it has. What time is it; I need a drink.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Not even noon yet.

MIDDLE SISTER:

What? Seems like we've been down here all day.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Look.

She displays her cellphone.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Huh.

They go back to work, sorting and packing.

OLDEST SISTER:

(to the middle sister) And you got the hips from Dad.

Short pause.

MIDDLE SISTER:

What?

OLDEST SISTER:

You got Dad's hips. I mean, we all did.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Dad had big hips?

OLDEST SISTER:

Dad's family. Wide hips. We all have them.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Child bearing hips and huge, pendulous breasts. I've truly got it all.

OLDEST SISTER:

You can still lose weight.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Can I? How empowering.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

But Dad was always thin, right?

OLDEST SISTER:

The hips aren't about weight. Look at me. I've got them.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

You don't have—

OLDEST SISTER:

(interrupting) Oh, I do. Our dear brother does, as well.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Who hasn't gained an ounce and eats like a horse. I hate him.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

You do not.

OLDEST SISTER:

I don't have the boobs, though.

MIDDLE SISTER:

You did after the baby.

OLDEST SISTER

No, I didn't.

MIDDLE SISTER:

I remember—

OLDEST SISTER:

(interrupting) I didn't. I couldn't nurse.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

You didn't nurse?

OLDEST SISTER:

No. I couldn't.

MIDDLE SISTER:

She didn't.

Pause.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

I was away at school, I guess.

The oldest sister has opened a large dilapidated box.

OLDEST SISTER:

This one's all old clothes. Do we even want to bother going through them?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Definitely!

OLDEST SISTER:

Suit yourself.

She moves to another box.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Ha ha ha.

OLDEST SISTER:

What?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

I thought you were— "Suit" yourself.

Very short pause.

Never mind.

She starts to sort through the clothing.

OLDEST SISTER:

None of it's in particularly good shape.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Still, there might be some cool vintage pieces.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Vintage. *(to her oldest sister)* She's calling our clothes vintage.

OLDEST SISTER:

I'll pretend I didn't hear that.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Wow! Who wore this?

She pulls out a very skimpy dress.

MIDDLE SISTER:

No human being, obviously.

OLDEST SISTER:

Oh. That was mine.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Hah.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Really? When did you wear it?

OLDEST SISTER:

A lifetime ago.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Longer. Now I remember. I was surprised Dad let you out of the house in that!

OLDEST SISTER:

Like he would even notice.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

I so cannot picture that in a million years.

MIDDLE SISTER:

And I actually wore it, too. God, we were young.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

You're still young.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Parts of my body are touching that shouldn't. I'm no longer young.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Stop. *(to her oldest sister)* Try it on! You think you could still wear it?

OLDEST SISTER:

You think I'd still want to?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

I bet it would fit.

OLDEST SISTER:

Probably.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

'Cause you don't have the hips!

OLDEST SISTER:

I do! I do! I just work hard.

MIDDLE SISTER:

And who needs youth when you have a good work ethic?

OLDEST SISTER:

Don't knock it 'til you've tried it.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Ha ha.

MIDDLE SISTER:

(to her much younger sister) See, she does have a sense of humor!

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Man. I miss this. I miss you! *(to her oldest sister)* Both!

MIDDLE SISTER:

So move closer. Didn't you say you guys were thinking of moving in together?

OLDEST SISTER:

You are?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Oh. No. I mean, yeah, we're talking about it.

OLDEST SISTER:

But your job's going well.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Yeah.

OLDEST SISTER:

It's a great job. Hang onto it.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Okay.

OLDEST SISTER:

And your apartment's in an ideal location. It's big enough.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Yeah.

OLDEST SISTER:

So why would you want to move back here? Especially after the house is sold.

MIDDLE SISTER:

I didn't say back here. I said closer.

OLDEST SISTER:

Which makes no sense at all.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Of course it doesn't. Why would she want to be close to her boring old sister and mother?

OLDEST SISTER:

I meant that she has a career to think of.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Yes. She does.

OLDEST SISTER:

She can't be running back to entertain you and your husband once Mom's moved in.

Very short pause.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Ed. His name is Ed.

OLDEST SISTER:

I know. What did I say?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Hah! Look. Hats! Where did all these hats come from?

She's found a bunch of hat boxes.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Oh, god. Mom always made us wear hats.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

When?

MIDDLE SISTER:

When we were younger. I always hated it.

OLDEST SISTER:

She didn't make us wear them.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

I would have loved it. Whose was this?

She holds up a jaunty cap.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Ah! Now, that hat I loved.

OLDEST SISTER:

It wasn't yours.

MIDDLE SISTER:

No, Dad got it for him but he never wore it, so I did.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Dad bought it?

MIDDLE SISTER:

Mom said he picked it out.

She puts the hat on as a man comes down the stairs.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Cute!

MIDDLE SISTER:

(to her brother) Hey, Look!

BROTHER:

Yeah?

MIDDLE SISTER:
Remember this?

BROTHER:
What?

MIDDLE SISTER:
The hat. It's your hat.

BROTHER:
That was mine?

MIDDLE SISTER:
Yeah! But I mostly wore it.

BROTHER:
I don't remember that.

MIDDLE SISTER:
No?

BROTHER:
But it's a nice hat.

MIDDLE SISTER:
From Dad. You don't remember?

BROTHER:
Not really.

MIDDLE SISTER:
Huh.

BROTHER:
So what's ready?

OLDEST SISTER:
Over there.

BROTHER:
Okay.

He moves towards the stack of newly packed boxes as the much younger sister goes through the hats.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
I gotta' say, these are terrific.

MIDDLE SISTER:
Glad you think so. *(to her brother)* Hey. Would your kids want them?

BROTHER:
Want what?

MIDDLE SISTER:
The hats.

BROTHER:
Would they?

MIDDLE SISTER:
(to her much younger sister) I mean, you don't want them, do you? Would you really wear them?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
Not if the kids want them.

OLDEST SISTER:
No one wants them. They should go in the dumpster.

MIDDLE SISTER:
(to her brother) The kids will love them. To play with, they're at that age, they can dress up. *(to her oldest sister)* And maybe...?

OLDEST SISTER:
What?

MIDDLE SISTER:
Wouldn't Jess want a couple? She might think hats were—

OLDEST SISTER:
(interrupting) No. No, no, no. She wouldn't. No.

Short pause.

MIDDLE SISTER
(to her brother) Take them.

BROTHER:
Okay.

He adds hat boxes to his load and goes up the stairs and out of sight. The sisters return to sorting.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
What are these?

She holds up some odd metal objects.

MIDDLE SISTER:
Oh. Those are from a telescope we used to use. When we went camping.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
We went camping?

MIDDLE SISTER:
You weren't born yet. Dad would spend hours with that thing. He'd take it out in the backyard, too, later on. I used to go out there with him, try to look through it, but I never knew what I was looking at.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
Is it still here?

MIDDLE SISTER:
Somewhere. It doesn't work anymore.

OLDEST SISTER:
Then why is it down here?

MIDDLE SISTER:
You really need to ask that?

The metal objects go into a large pile.

OLDEST SISTER:
All right. Here's what I'm thinking: there's no real reason they shouldn't come earlier.

MIDDLE SISTER:
Who's they?

OLDEST SISTER:
Who do you think?

MIDDLE SISTER:
I haven't the vaguest idea.

OLDEST SISTER:

The men. For the boxes.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

These boxes?

OLDEST SISTER:

And the ones upstairs. All the boxes.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

But we've barely started down here. It's going to take awhile, right?

OLDEST SISTER:

It doesn't have to. There's no use dragging this on and on. We can get it all done over the weekend; not that much needs to go into storage.

YOUNGEST SISTER:

But I thought we were all staying until—

OLDEST SISTER:

(interrupting) We just need to finish. We need to move forward and focus and finish and not make this about anything but clearing out, cleaning house. For Mom's sake.

MIDDLE SISTER:

For Mom's sake?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

There are a ton of boxes in this basement.

OLDEST SISTER:

It's mostly junk that no one has looked at for decades. So whatever we don't get to, no one's going to miss.

YOUNGEST SISTER:

There's some great stuff, though. I didn't know any of this stuff even existed!

OLDEST SISTER:

Which proves my point.

YOUNGEST SISTER:

That's not fair.

OLDEST SISTER:

It's called a deadline.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

But I don't see what's wrong with taking our time. I think this is fantastic.

OLDEST SISTER:

What is?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Finding out what's really here. Seeing things. For the first time.

She pulls out a pair of rather scary old dolls.

Like these. How sweet are these? I never saw these!

OLDEST SISTER:

They have been around for years. You saw them.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

I didn't! I never saw them. I was probably too young or not born yet.

OLDEST SISTER:

Maybe you don't remember them, but I'm sure you saw them.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Not if I wasn't born. If I wasn't born I couldn't have seen them.

OLDEST SISTER:

Most of these things were from after you were born.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

The hats? Those clothes? The telescope?

MIDDLE SISTER:

Which I'm sure is down here.

OLDEST SISTER:

You were young but you were alive.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

What about this? (*pointing out another artifact*) A croquet set. That was before I was born. I never saw that.

MIDDLE SISTER:

That was definitely from before you were born.

OLDEST SISTER:

We must have played after.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

No! I've never seen this in my life, Not this croquet set or, I don't think, any croquet set. I have never seen a croquet set. I was not born yet.

She starts to go through the contents of another box.

OLDEST SISTER:

Then how do you know?

MIDDLE SISTER:

What?

OLDEST SISTER:

How does she know that's a croquet set if she's never seen one.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

I've seen pictures.

OLDEST SISTER:

We took pictures of the croquet set?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

With the croquet set. And movies.

OLDEST SISTER:

We took croquet movies?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

No, there are croquet sets in other movies, real movies, and in other pictures, historical photographs.

OLDEST SISTER:

Really.

MIDDLE SISTER:

"The Great Gatsby"— there's a croquet set in "The Great Gatsby."

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

(starting up the stairs, taking out her phone) Is that the phone? I think that's the phone. *(looking at her phone)* Ahhh. Why is there no cell reception down here?

MIDDLE SISTER:

(calling after her much younger sister) See if Mom's hungry! See if she wants something to eat, will you?

She didn't eat any breakfast. Half an English muffin, maybe.

The much younger sister is out of sight upstairs.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Well, I'm hungry. It must be twelve.

The oldest sister efficiently wraps another item deemed worthy of saving.

Are you hungry?

OLDEST SISTER:

I'm not hungry.

Short pause.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Why do you always have to do that?

OLDEST SISTER:

Do what?

MIDDLE SISTER:

You know what.

OLDEST SISTER:

I don't.

MIDDLE SISTER:

The croquet set.

OLDEST SISTER:

What do you mean?

MIDDLE SISTER:

Why do you always have to be right?

OLDEST SISTER:

I am right!

MIDDLE SISTER:

What does it matter?

OLDEST SISTER:

Because it— I guess it doesn't. But if I was wrong, I would certainly want to know.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Even if it doesn't affect anyone? It doesn't change anything? No one else cares?

OLDEST SISTER:

If it was me that was wrong, yes!

Very short pause.

MIDDLE SISTER:

It's a good thing that'll never happen, then.

OLDEST SISTER:

What?

MIDDLE SISTER:

Never mind.

She starts up the stairs.

I'm hungry. I'm going up to see if Mom wants lunch. You're not hungry? No.

OLDEST SISTER:

No.

MIDDLE SISTER:

(calling out upstairs) Mom? Where's Mom?

OLDEST SISTER:

We just ate. We just had breakfast.

MIDDLE SISTER:

(to her oldest sister) What?

OLDEST SISTER:

We just... Never mind.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Okay.

The middle sister out of sight, the oldest sister finishes packing her box. She tapes it shut, then reaches for something which isn't there. She looks around the room, growing more and more frustrated as she searches.

OLDEST SISTER:

Damn it!

She looks again.

OLDEST SISTER:

God damn it!!!!

There is laughter from above.

I can't stand it. I just can't stand it. *(shouting up the stairs)* Excuse me?!

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

(out of sight upstairs) What?

OLDEST SISTER:

Will you please come here!!

The two other sisters appear at the top of the stairs. The middle sister is eating a sandwich. Perhaps it's because she's put on an unflattering sweater, but she appears much heavier than last we saw her.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

What?

OLDEST SISTER:

Where are my Sharpies?

MIDDLE SISTER:

Hmmm?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Your what?

OLDEST SISTER:

My Sharpies! The thick pens for labelling boxes. The black Sharpies!

MIDDLE SISTER:

(pointing towards the floor) There's a pen.

OLDEST SISTER:

That's a ball point pen. You can't label a box with a ball point pen!

MIDDLE SISTER:

(starting down the stairs) Sure you can, you—

OLDEST SISTER:

(interrupting) No, it's too—!

She notices her sister's changed appearance.

OLDEST SISTER:

It's too thin. You stick holes in the boxes, every time you write you make holes in the boxes. I can't use a ball point, I need Sharpies, Where are my Sharpies?

MIDDLE SISTER:

And why are they your Sharpies?

OLDEST SISTER:

I brought them.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

There were Sharpies here before you came. I saw some.

OLDEST SISTER:

But I brought mine from work. A whole box of them. A whole box and now they're missing.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

You think someone stole your Sharpies?

MIDDLE SISTER:

You stole pens from work?

OLDEST SISTER:

I didn't steal them, they're supplies.

MIDDLE SISTER:

For work.

OLDEST SISTER:

For— You don't understand. You don't work. You don't understand.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Not this again.

MIDDLE SISTER:

(to her oldest sister) Of course not. How could I?

She starts up the stairs.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Where are you going?

MIDDLE SISTER:

(searching her pockets, perhaps fighting tears that come out of nowhere) Do you have any money?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Why do you—?

MIDDLE SISTER:

(interrupting) I'm going out to buy Sharpies!

Short pause.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

My purse is on the table.

The middle sister moves out of sight and we hear a door slamming. The remaining sisters look at one another.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

We're eating lunch.

OLDEST SISTER:

I'm not hungry.

The much younger sister goes upstairs. Alone, the oldest sister sets the box she just packed aside. She starts on another box. Then she stops, and turns back to the packed box.

I'm going to forget what's in that! God damn it!

She takes stock of her surroundings.

I hate it down here! I've always hated it down here. It's hell! I am in a dark, endless burrow filled with abandoned belongings that have somehow multiplied like satanic rabbits, and they're going to find me here twenty years from now, on top of a pyramid of corrugated cardboard, my withered limbs still functioning because I have expertly fastened them to my body with packing tape, and they're not going to know what's in any of the god damn boxes because I've lost my god damn mind!

She picks up the ball point pen and begins to write on the box, punching holes.

Urrgghh!

She throws the pen across the room and doesn't notice her brother coming down the stairs.

BROTHER:
What's next?

OLDEST SISTER:
Jesus!

BROTHER:
What?

OLDEST SISTER:
I didn't see you.

BROTHER:
Sorry.

OLDEST SISTER:
Aren't you eating lunch?

BROTHER:
I ate.

OLDEST SISTER:
I didn't see you.

BROTHER:
Okay.

Short pause.

OLDEST SISTER:
What?

BROTHER:
What's next?

The oldest sister starts to indicate the unlabelled box she recently packed, then points to the stack of boxes.

OLDEST SISTER:
Over there. Those over there. I told you before!

BROTHER:
Okay.

OLDEST SISTER:
Jesus.

Her brother picks up boxes and starts up the stairs. He stops.

BROTHER:

Maybe you packed them.

OLDEST SISTER:

Excuse me?

BROTHER:

You could have put them in a box.

OLDEST SISTER:

Put...?

BROTHER:

The markers. *(indicating the boxes he's holding)* Maybe they're in one of these. Or maybe in—

OLDEST SISTER:

(interrupting) I did not pack the Sharpies.

Very short pause.

BROTHER:

Okay.

He goes upstairs and out of sight.

The oldest sister looks at the stack of boxes, then at the new box beside her. She rips off the tape and starts to go through it.

OLDEST SISTER:

It's a black hole. Like one of Dad's all-consuming projects. Everything down here gets sucked up into some merciless time-space continuum. That's what this basement really is.

The much younger sister comes down the stairs with a sandwich on a paper towel.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

(handing the sandwich to her oldest sister) Here.

OLDEST SISTER:

I'm not—

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

(interrupting) Mom insisted.

OLDEST SISTER:
Did she eat?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
Does she ever eat?

OLDEST SISTER:
I mean, did she eat anything at all?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
A bit. She mostly talked about eating. About not eating. You know, how she's got no appetite, never wants to eat? While she makes us put everything in the refrigerator out onto the table, so we can figure out what we don't want to eat?

OLDEST SISTER:
Right.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
Three kinds of equally white bread, wilted iceberg lettuce, cheese that's not supposed to be aged, unidentified leftovers in cool whip containers, and pickles and olives and mayonnaise that are from god knows when. Pre-war applesauce. That's today's featured item, ha ha ha.

OLDEST SISTER:
(looking at the sandwich) So what's this?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
Deviled ham.

OLDEST SISTER:
Oh, god.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
She said you liked it. She insisted.

OLDEST SISTER:
I did like it. Once.

She puts the sandwich down and returns to her box.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
It could be worse. You narrowly escaped head-cheese.

OLDEST SISTER:
Lord.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Or those casseroles.

OLDEST SISTER:

Ugh. From the bridge ladies.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

She hasn't played bridge in years, has she?

OLDEST SISTER:

I seriously doubt she has what it takes anymore.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

But you know, she doesn't seem that... She kind of seems okay to me.

OLDEST SISTER

To some degree. It's probably hard for you to measure, but she can't live alone anymore. It's difficult for her to make decisions. And the house is too much. It's time.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

I guess.

She watches her sister re-examining the contents of the recently packed box, finding more to discard.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Anyway. It's cute how they're still "the bridge ladies" even though they don't play bridge, huh?

OLDEST SISTER:

Very cute. The ladies and their inexhaustible casseroles.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

I think it's sweet, really.

OLDEST SISTER:

Everything's sweet here. They put corn syrup into everything.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

But that people brought food, you know? To say "goodbye," even though she'll only be half an hour away. It's like when Dad died, right? The whole house was crammed full of cakes, and cookies, and breads; honey-baked pot-roast and glazed hams.

OLDEST SISTER:

Jello salads.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Yeah!

OLDEST SISTER:

Vegetables and Jello. There should be a law against that.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

But there was this creamy green Jello I can still remember. You guys were all staying here but it was like a week before graduation so I still had to go to school, which pissed me off, but I'd come home and dive into this light green Jello salad with, like pears and cheese and nuts in it?

OLDEST SISTER:

When you were born, too.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

What?

OLDEST SISTER.

The neighbors brought food when you were born.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

They did? Why?

OLDEST SISTER:

Because it was just us taking care of Mom. Dad was away on a project.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Really? That's...

The oldest sister loudly begins to re-tape the box.

Huh.

The much younger sister looks around the room.

Ha ha ha. We haven't even made a dent yet!

OLDEST SISTER:

And you're laughing? I told you, we should just put it all straight into the dumpster. Not even look at it. A whole city block of dumpsters, that's what we need.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
Where'd it all come from?

OLDEST SISTER:
Fifty-one years of family.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
Wow. They would have been married that long? Can you imagine Mom and Dad as newlyweds?

OLDEST SISTER:
You've seen pictures.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
I guess, but still...

OLDEST SISTER:
He was older. They grew up in the same town. That was just you did back then if you were a woman.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
But she went to college.

OLDEST SISTER:
She was one of the fortunate ones. And then she got married.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
Hah! You make it sound so romantic.

OLDEST SISTER:
She was strangely devoted to him.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
Strangely devoted?

OLDEST SISTER:
He must have been very different once-upon-a time. He apparently won her over with his poetry.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
Dad wrote poems?

OLDEST SISTER:
Apparently. I'm sure there's a box of them somewhere to prove it.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

I love that! That's so old fashioned. So mushy!

OLDEST SISTER:

Old fashioned maybe. I doubt they were any mushier than the valentines he made for us.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

He made you valentines?

OLDEST SISTER:

When we were little. I expect someone told him he was supposed to.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Do you think they're still around?

OLDEST SISTER:

Of course. Nothing ever leaves this house. Anything that disappeared from up there, ended up down here—packed away in crates, or coffee cans, or cookie tins, or candy boxes, or preserve jars. It's our unspoken legacy of hidden refuse.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Man! Why didn't I ever come down here?

OLDEST SISTER:

Consider yourself lucky. It's actually worse now, she's got every cupboard full. Every closet. Every cabinet. Every space conceivable.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

It's amazing.

OLDEST SISTER:

It's insane.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

What's all this?

She's found a new pile of small containers.

OLDEST SISTER:

Rocks.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Rocks?

OLDEST SISTER:

Margarine tubs of rocks. And shells. And driftwood.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Dried plants. Leaves. Stems. Stalks. Seeds. Petals. Wow.

OLDEST SISTER:

"Wow."

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

And bones.

OLDEST SISTER:

What?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Look. Bones!

She holds up an open egg carton.

OLDEST SISTER:

My god, that's awful.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

It's creepy, but kind of cool. Where'd they come from?

OLDEST SISTER:

I can't stand it down here. Shut that, will you? It smells.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

It doesn't smell.

OLDEST SISTER:

The whole place smells! It's dirt and mold and mildew and god knows what else.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

These are adorable!

OLDEST SISTER:

Bones are adorable?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Look! Every little bit is perfectly clean and labelled and dry as a... Ha ha ha.
Really, though. Whose was this?

OLDEST SISTER:

Would you put that down!!

Short pause.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Why don't you eat your sandwich?

OLDEST SISTER:

I can't eat down here. I'm taking a break. Let someone else work. Where's Mom?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Probably still at the table. Putting stuff back.

OLDEST SISTER:

I'm sorry, nothing's going back into that fridge. I'm putting it all down the sink. Every last, rotten lettuce leaf...

She heads up the stairs and out of sight with her uneaten sandwich.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Good luck, big sis.

Alone, she examines the pieces of bone.

Eeeew. This is great.

Her brother comes down the stairs.

Hey! Look what I found!

BROTHER:

What?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Bones!

BROTHER:

Oh.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

A bone collection!

BROTHER:

Okay.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Look, look, look. They're all labelled. But I can't read the writing.

BROTHER:

Hmmm. It's pencil.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Was this yours? Was this your collection?

BROTHER:

I don't know. It might have been.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

What do you mean?

BROTHER:

It might have been mine.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

You don't know? Is this your writing?

BROTHER:

I don't know. Could be.

They both look closely at the bones.

They're dates.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Can you read them?

BROTHER:

Not really. Pencil fades.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

But you don't remember if this was yours? Wouldn't you remember if you had a bone collection?

BROTHER:

I collected lots of things. It seems like something I would have done. But I don't know. I doubt I would have used pencil.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Nooooo.

BROTHER:
No?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
Look. (*pointing at the writing*) You weren't born. This must have been Dad's.

BROTHER:
Hmmm.

Short pause.

Or Mom's.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
Mom's? Mom had a bone collection?

BROTHER:
I don't know. Ask her.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
I'm not going to ask her!

BROTHER:
Why not?

Very short pause.

Don't get too excited. It's probably chicken bones. That sounds like Mom. She grew up on a farm. She used to tell us about killing chickens for dinner. Wringing their necks. Or squirrels. They probably shot squirrels.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
Ooooooh. It's all so... grisly and macabre, don't you think?

BROTHER:
I don't know. I collected bugs. Maybe I got it from Mom.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
I never thought of her like... Mom. Who knew?

Her brother has picked up a large box.

What's in that?

BROTHER:
My shells.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Wow. Very impressive presentation!

BROTHER:

Nice, huh? Dad helped me build the case. I was very proud of it.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

You should take 'em.

BROTHER:

Nah. They're not all mine, anyway.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Whose else...? (*getting a look from her brother*) How funny! My Big Sis collected shells?

BROTHER:

Big Sis. Right. Labelled every one of them so they wouldn't get mixed up with mine. Look. (*reading*) "Santa Barbara. Purple Top Cowrie. 5th Grade Summer."

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

It just seems so out of character.

BROTHER:

These are her rocks, too. "Yosemite. Igneous. 10th Birthday."

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Right. I mean, I get the labels. That's her all over.

BROTHER:

Uh huh. Notice there's no years.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

What?

BROTHER:

Her labels. No years.

Very short pause.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

They're like events.

BROTHER:

Uh huh.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Ha ha. Her own events. In her own life.

BROTHER:

Uh huh.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

That's so funny.

BROTHER:

Hmmmm...

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

It is! But still: I don't see her... rummaging for them. Digging them out, excavating.

BROTHER:

It was before you were born.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Yeah.

BROTHER:

Later, she had a friend who went on a few trips with us.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

All of us?

BROTHER:

Yeah. A girlfriend from college. She was an outdoorsy type. The two of them... explored a lot. You don't remember her?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

I'm not sure. Describe her to me.

Pause.

BROTHER:

She had hair.

Very short pause.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Well... No. I don't think I do.

BROTHER:
Nice girl.

Very short pause.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
So! What is it we're supposed to do with all of this? The bones and the rocks and stuff?

BROTHER:
Throw them away, I guess. In the dumpster.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
You're allowed to put bones in a dumpster?

BROTHER:
Not that I believe anything will ever get past Mom to make it into one.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
There ought to be something else to do with them.

BROTHER:
Mom might suggest the Natural History Museum. She thinks the Smithsonian wants Dad's old papers.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
But it's like these are our natural history, right? They're part of us. Our roots. I can't see throwing them away.

BROTHER:
Then pack them up.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
Put it all in storage. Boxes of rocks? That's absurd.

BROTHER:
Uh huh.

He starts back up the stairs with a packed box and more hat boxes.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
Where are you going?

BROTHER:
Seeing if anything needs to be eaten.

He is out of sight above. The much younger sister unwraps more natural objects.

The middle sister heads down the stairs, flushed. She is substantially larger than when she left. She is breathing heavily. She sets down a package of pens.

MIDDLE SISTER:

I owe you five dollars.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Don't worry about it.

MIDDLE SISTER:

I won't worry. I'll just give it to you.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Are you okay?

MIDDLE SISTER:

Yeah. I'm just out of breath.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Cold outside?

MIDDLE SISTER:

Yeah.

She leans against a packed box

I'm wiped.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

What did you do, run to the store?

MIDDLE SISTER:

Are you going to start in, too?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

What do you mean?

MIDDLE SISTER:

I'm an old, overweight woman. My body has a mind of it's own—there's nothing I can do about it.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

That's not— Were you wearing that before?

MIDDLE SISTER:
What?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
Never mind.

Voices are heard from above.

So what's happening up there?

MIDDLE SISTER:
She's trying to clean out the fridge.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
Hah!

MIDDLE SISTER:
She and Mom are wrestling over the garbage disposal. Mom's much stronger than she looks.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
Really?

MIDDLE SISTER:
No. I mean, not the wrestling. But Mom...

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
Ha ha ha.

MIDDLE SISTER:
Who was that on the phone earlier?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
Hey, look at this. A bone collection.

MIDDLE SISTER:
Hmm?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
It's a bone collection. Squirrels or birds or— Consensus is it was Dad's. Or Mom's.

MIDDLE SISTER:
Probably Mom's. Anything organic, that's Mom's. Dad's is the circuits and hardware.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
Should I ask her?

MIDDLE SISTER:
Go ahead.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
Really?

MIDDLE SISTER:
Why not?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
I don't know.

MIDDLE SISTER:
So who called before?

Short pause.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
Who do you think?

Short pause.

MIDDLE SISTER:
Oh! Good! How is he?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
He's fine.

MIDDLE SISTER:
Good. And you guys are fine?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
We're fine.

MIDDLE SISTER:
Good!

The much younger sister starts to look through more containers.

How fine?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
Fine fine. We're fine.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Was I not supposed to say anything before? About you guys? Are you still planning on—

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

(interrupting) We're actually not planning. Not yet. We're talking about planning. Discussing the prospect of planning.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Ah. Weighing planning possibilities. That sounds like you.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Ha ha. Yeah.

Short pause.

MIDDLE SISTER:

I like him.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

I do, too.

MIDDLE SISTER:

But not enough?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Maybe enough. Maybe too much. I don't know. I don't—

MIDDLE SISTER:

(interrupting) No hurry. You're young.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

I'm not that young, you know. On my 30th birthday, I think I was officially, "not that young."

MIDDLE SISTER:

Thank god.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

I'm not sure about that. Someone called me "Mrs." at work the other day.

MIDDLE SISTER:

It's not like you even have to get married. I'm not pushing you.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Oh, I know! I don't have to do anything!

Short pause.

MIDDLE SISTER:
Right.

She takes a ratty stuffed animal from the much younger sister and adds it to a pile.

Not with me here.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
What?

MIDDLE SISTER:
Never mind.

She transfers more stuffed animals who've seen better days.

Have any attachments to any of these?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
Attachments?

MIDDLE SISTER:
Connections. Bonds. Fondness for.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
No, I've never met them. Ha ha.

MIDDLE SISTER:
I was young. Too young, when I think about it now.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
You were?

MIDDLE SISTER:
Yes.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
When? I mean, when are you talking—?

MIDDLE SISTER:
(interrupting) When Ed and I—!

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
(interrupting) Your wedding! Sure! That was a long time ago.

MIDDLE SISTER:

It was.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

And I was your flower girl! One of them, but I was your main one, right? Is my dress still here?

MIDDLE SISTER:

Where else would it be?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Funny, I don't remember you being young. I was a kid, you know. And you were all so...

MIDDLE SISTER:

Uh huh.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

I was insanely jealous. You were getting married and moving into a brand new house and everyone else was gone, and I mean—hey!—he already had kids. I thought that was so cool. How old were they? Then?

MIDDLE SISTER:

5 and 7.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

I guess. I mean, you always liked kids, but I didn't know you could marry them, just skip straight to family and not have to do it yourself. I didn't know that was allowed. I thought you were really getting away with something!

MIDDLE SISTER:

Yeah, that's me.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

What was I, going into 6th grade? I remember thinking how little those kids were. And now it's like we're the same age. But I still don't know what I want to be when I grow up. Ha ha.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Hah.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

It may be time to switch jobs again. Or switch something. My apartment lease is up in January. Maybe I'll downsize. Or upsize! Seriously, is this how a 30-year-old woman is supposed to be? I should to know the answers and all I have is questions, right?

MIDDLE SISTER:
23.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
What?

MIDDLE SISTER:
I was 23.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
When were you 23?

MIDDLE SISTER:
I was 23 when Ed and I got—

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
(interrupting) Right! Yeah. Whoa. You've been married, what, 20 years already?

MIDDLE SISTER:
Almost.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
23. That is young.

MIDDLE SISTER:
It didn't seem like it then. With the kids and all, it just seemed like... the thing to do.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
Huh.

Silence.

MIDDLE SISTER:
I thought it might have been Jess. Before. On the phone.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
Oh? No. It was the boyfriend. He tried my cell, but you can't get calls down here. Hey. Did you know our sister collected shells? Ah, of course you did. You were there. I don't know why, but I think that's wild. And rocks, too!

MIDDLE SISTER:
Has she even called her?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Called who?

MIDDLE SISTER:

Called Jess. Has she called her daughter once?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Oh, I don't know.

MIDDLE SISTER:

I don't think so. I don't think she's phoned her daughter one time since she's been here!

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

But you don't know that.

MIDDLE SISTER:

It's unbelievable to me.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Jessica is... what?

MIDDLE SISTER:

12.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

12? Already? So is she staying by herself?

MIDDLE SISTER:

No, I'm sure the "live-in" is there. The latest in the progression of third-world women who might as well be her mother.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Stop. Jessica probably has her own phone. They probably text or something.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Like that's the same.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

It's a lot better sometimes.

MIDDLE SISTER:

For what? Keeping people at a distance?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

No, just for communicating.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Communicating is not talking. She's been here a week and she hasn't even talked to her own daughter on the phone? Explain that to me!

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

I don't know. I don't have a daughter.

MIDDLE SISTER:

No. Me neither.

She starts in on another box.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

So do you remember a friend of hers? A girlfriend from college?

MIDDLE SISTER:

She actually had lots of friends. She was very popular in school. She didn't bring many of them home, though. Go figure.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

But this one went on a few vacations with us, maybe?

MIDDLE SISTER:

Oh. Right. That would be Beth. We liked her. Our brother had a huge crush on her.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Yeah?

MIDDLE SISTER:

But he was not her type, for so many reasons. And he hadn't a clue.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

He mentioned her.

MIDDLE SISTER:

I bet he did. He used to follow her around like a lost puppy.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

That's so cute!

MIDDLE SISTER:

You should have seen his face when I told him she liked girls. Our sister in particular, not that that was ever mentioned.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Oooh. Did he take it hard?

MIDDLE SISTER:

I his own way, I think. He didn't talk about it. He got that from Dad. You know.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

I— No. He and Dad were close, right? Didn't they have father-son time together? That's what I remember.

MIDDLE SISTER:

They did. They built stuff. I can't imagine they had long-and-involved man-to-man heart-to-hearts.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Right.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Honestly, I don't know if I ever heard Dad say more than three words all together. Ever. But that never mattered to Mom... They had... something.

She moves to another box and the much younger sister returns to the egg carton of bones.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

How is Mom?

MIDDLE SISTER:

What?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

I can never really tell with her. How is she about the move? About packing.

MIDDLE SISTER:

It's not like she's doing any of the packing, is it?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

You know what I mean.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Do you see Mom down here? Do you see her dealing with any of this?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

No, but—

MIDDLE SISTER:

(interrupting) Mom's fine.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

She seems fine. But I wasn't sure.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Mom's fine.

Heated voices are heard from above.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Big Sis is not giving up without a fight, huh?

MIDDLE SISTER:

Ha ha. If anyone's a match for "Big Sis," it's our mother.

The much younger sister closes the egg carton.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Okay. Here's the plan. While Mom's distracted, I'm going to sneak out the back door and bury these in the yard. In the corner by the fish pond, where the grandmother peonies are, I'll dig a hole, and cover them up with snow. No one will ever know until spring, and by that time it'll all be over!

She hurries up the stairs.

MIDDLE SISTER:

It'll all be over. Uh huh.

Alone, the middle sister looks around.

(conversing with herself) But really, how are you? I'm not fine, thanks for asking! I'm fucked. I'm fat, I feel like shit, I've got my older sister telling me what to do like when we were kids and my brother nodding on the sidelines, waiting for instructions and my younger sister getting away free and easy because she always has and always will and my seventy-five year-old mother moving in with me in ten days over the silent objections of my passive-aggressive husband but he can't very well speak up, can he, otherwise he wouldn't be the world's nicest guy, now would he, and what would his friends say—the ones who constantly tell him how lucky he is to have me, the woman who raised his two children for him and looked after his whack job of a mother for him and to this day takes care of his home and garden and housecat and can mix a mean martini on demand?

Short pause.

I can't believe I just said that.

She sits on a box and a wave of unexpected emotions hits her.

What is wrong with me?

She suddenly starts to cry. Her brother comes down the stairs carrying a large grocery bag.

BROTHER:
Hey.

MIDDLE SISTER:
Hey.

Her brother sits on a box next to her.

MIDDLE SISTER:
I don't know what's wrong with me. I'm a mess, I'm just a mess.

He takes a ceramic jar out of the bag and hands it to her.

BROTHER:
Here.

MIDDLE SISTER:
What's this?

BROTHER:
A cheese crock. I think it's got Port or something in it. It needs to be eaten.

MIDDLE SISTER:
It needs to be eaten?

BROTHER:
Mom wouldn't let her put the stuff down the disposal, and she wouldn't let this back in the fridge.

MIDDLE SISTER:
Ah.

She opens the cheese, and begins to eat it one finger-full at a time. Her brother pulls boxes from the bag.

BROTHER:
She's starting to clear out the cabinets, too. Bridge mix, candied fruit, Jordan Almonds.

MIDDLE SISTER:
Must be from your wedding.

BROTHER:
My wedding?

MIDDLE SISTER:
I tied them in little net bags. Remember?

BROTHER:
Hmmm. No. But I do remember... it was a nice wedding.

MIDDLE SISTER:
Glad you liked it.

He pulls out a box of cookies.

BROTHER:
Looks like these have been around awhile.

MIDDLE SISTER:
Probably since we were Girl Scouts.

She opens the box.

BROTHER:
Brandy?

He's got a questionable-looking bottle.

MIDDLE SISTER:
From some recipe, no doubt. Hand it over.

She finds some dixie cups, and pours. They eat and drink.

Do you remember having picnics down here when we were kids? Mom would make us lunch and we'd bring it down here, set up a picnic on the floor and eat it like we were outside?

BROTHER:
We did that?

MIDDLE SISTER:
Uh huh. Like leftover chicken. Or cheese sandwiches.

BROTHER:
I remember coming down here when Dad had his shop here.

MIDDLE SISTER:

No, before that. His shop was out in the garage then.

BROTHER:

And we'd come down here?

MIDDLE SISTER:

You and me. We'd have picnics. On weekends, and in summers, I think, because it was before you were in school but I was.

BROTHER:

Hmmm. I can't say that I ever remember eating down here.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Really? How funny.

The oldest sister appears at the top of the stairs and speaks for everyone's benefit, upstairs and down.

OLDEST SISTER:

I just want to make it clear: we need to present a united front. It's not going to do anyone any good if we each have our own, personal agendas here. This is about what's best for Mom. We can't have her trying to eke more artificial life out of perishables and clinging onto old war rations for christ's sake. I'm going to call the Health Department if she keeps this up and I'm telling her you're all behind me, we're all together on this, it's a collective decision for our family's future. Okay? Okay.

She disappears. The middle sister and the brother continue to eat and drink.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Any crackers in there?

BROTHER:

(pulling out a box) Melba toast?

MIDDLE SISTER:

Delightful.

She opens the box.

Ed says hi.

BROTHER:

And hi to Ed.

MIDDLE SISTER:
He really likes you.

BROTHER:
And I like him.

MIDDLE SISTER:
You and Carol should come visit some time.

BROTHER:
It's hard. We've got the kids.

MIDDLE SISTER:
Of course.

BROTHER:
But ask her.

Very short pause.

MIDDLE SISTER:
Okay.

Their much younger sister comes down the stairs with a large turkey and returns the bones to their originating box or pile.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
So much for my covert burial. I never made it out of the kitchen.

BROTHER:
Nice try, though.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
Thanks.

MIDDLE SISTER:
What's that under your arm?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
A once-frozen Butterball. I think it's older than I am.

MIDDLE SISTER:
And why did you bring it down here?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

I don't know. I felt like I had to get it out of harm's way. Poor Mom's holed-up in the pantry with the kitchen staples, like that's our only inheritance.

MIDDLE SISTER:

We should be so lucky.

The much younger sister sets down the turkey and sees the bottle.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

What's that?

MIDDLE SISTER:

Blackberry brandy.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Yeech.

She hesitates, then pours herself a cup anyway.

BROTHER:

Cheese?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Why is it that color?

BROTHER:

Port? Artificial port?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

No thanks.

MIDDLE SISTER:

(to her brother) You've talked to your kids, right?

BROTHER:

What do you mean?

MIDDLE SISTER:

Since we've been here, since you've been here, you've talked to the kids.

BROTHER:

Yeah, sure. Almost every day. Carol calls.

MIDDLE SISTER:

(to her much younger sister) See?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

What?

MIDDLE SISTER:

Their mom calls. They talk.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Oh. And they text, right? Do you text?

BROTHER:

I don't text.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Mom's call.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Carol calls her husband. That's not the same.

MIDDLE SISTER:

So her kids can talk to their father! It's different, but it's the same!

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

(to her brother) Okay. Has she called Jessica since you've been here?

BROTHER:

Who? Oh. I'm not sure. I don't know. I suppose so.

MIDDLE SISTER:

You suppose so because that's what parents do, but not her!

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

You don't know that! And Mom never calls me!

MIDDLE SISTER:

(fighting tears) Are you defending her? Are you all in league against me now?!

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

You are not even making sense! What is the matter with you?

MIDDLE SISTER:

I don't know!!!!

She again breaks down crying. Her brother and much younger sister look at one another.

BROTHER:

I'm going to see if there are any more bottles that need to be...

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Right.

He heads up the stairs.

The much younger sister watches her middle sister, who has collapsed into an uncomfortable-looking shape on a box.

Do you want me to get you a pillow or something?

She grabs a handful of clothes from the open box.

Here.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Thank you. I'm sorry.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

I would never be against you. I would never be in league with anyone.

MIDDLE SISTER:

I know, I know. I don't know...

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Maybe it's hormonal.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Hormonal?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Sometimes I get crazy, all emotional, just can't stop crying.

MIDDLE SISTER:

No, no, it's... I have not seen Jess for over seven years. Since she moved.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Weren't they here last Christmas?

MIDDLE SISTER:

With everyone else. I mean, see her. Me and her. Spend time with her like when—

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

(interrupting) Oh, that's what this is—!

Pause.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

You two were really close, huh?

MIDDLE SISTER:

We are close. I mean, I feel like we are.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

You practically raised her, right?

MIDDLE SISTER:

That depends on who you ask.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Do you guys still talk?

MIDDLE SISTER:

Yeah, well, she's almost a teenager.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

I tell you, you should text.

MIDDLE SISTER:

I should do a lot of things.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

You know, I don't think I ever told you this—I mean, that whole time I wasn't around much—but that was really wonderful of you! When Jess was little. You being there like that.

MIDDLE SISTER:

And here I am now, artfully poised for my next round of wonderfulness.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Stop. You were a lifesaver. She had such a hard time.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Huh?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

With the pregnancy. Getting pregnant.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Oh. *She* had a hard time.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Didn't she? All by herself? The testing, and embryos, and in vitro and—

MIDDLE SISTER:

(interrupting) She loved it.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

What?

MIDDLE SISTER:

A woman, alone, pushing the boundaries of medical science then forging ahead despite the odds and the men who got in her way and BOOM! A beautiful baby girl sliced like a specimen from her manicured womb, incubated for all the world to see, on schedule to optimize business ventures and holiday photos.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Wow.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Not that I'm bitter, or anything.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

No.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Is there anything else to drink? Look in that sack. *(holding the empty brandy bottle)* This was almost empty.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

(handing over her cup) You can have mine.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Thanks.

She drinks as her much younger sister looks in the grocery bag.

MIDDLE SISTER:

But leave it to our sister to have the ultimate planned pregnancy, huh?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Huh?

MIDDLE SISTER:

With me at home with two teenagers, she could drop Jessica into my lap and go back to work without missing a meeting.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
(holding up a tiny bottle) Airplane scotch?

MIDDLE SISTER:
I'll take it. Whose was this, I wonder?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
Not Dad's?

MIDDLE SISTER:
Dad didn't drink.

She drains the tiny bottle.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
You look awful.

MIDDLE SISTER:
I'm terrible. I need to go to the bathroom.

She gets up from the box.

I don't know what's happening to me, I really don't. I can't handle any more.
Everything's out of control. I feel like a luggage cart.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
A luggage cart?

MIDDLE SISTER:
Overloaded. Overburdened. About to crash and explode.

She starts up the stairs then turns.

Where is...?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
I think I heard her going up to work on the bedrooms. Mom must've won the kitchen battle.

MIDDLE SISTER:
What did I tell you?

She continues up and out of sight. The much younger sister looks around the room.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
(picking up the cookies) Oh Geez. Antique Thin Mints.

She moves to another box, and takes out a very odd piece of homemade “art.”

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

And look at this. This is fantastic!

Very short pause.

I have never seen this stuff!!

She discovers what looks to be an elaborate children’s science project.

Okay. I’m going to make an announcement now. There’s a whole world here that I, the much younger sister, the late-in-life “accident,” the “miracle baby”—ha ha—was not privy to. That’s all there is to it. Gosh! How would it be to have a childhood where your Mom acted like she had a choice about you being around, where she was maybe friends with your friends’ moms and cared about the things that you cared about and your Dad made valentines for you, did projects with you, built things for you and didn’t treat you like you were an energy drain from another planet put on earth to mess up his very important master genius project plan?

Short pause

That’s not fair of me. But they just got so much more of him.

Very short pause.

They do not get that.

Her brother comes down the stairs. He carries several more grocery bags.

Hey! I am loving this, I really am!

BROTHER:

Okay.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

What’s that?

BROTHER:

Liver.

Pause.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Liver?

BROTHER:

Liver. Mom gave it to me.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Why?

BROTHER:

She said to take it down here while you-know-who was emptying the bedrooms.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

What are we supposed to do with it? That's all liver?

BROTHER:

I have no idea. I've also got (*taking bottles out of one bag*) cognac. And sherry. It might be cooking sherry, but I don't see why cooking sherry wouldn't still do the job, here.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

She had all this?

BROTHER:

Cherry cordial, too.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

No, the liver! What's with the liver?

BROTHER:

Mom just handed it to me. Told me to take it down here before it got targeted for destruction.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

That's like a ton of liver! (*looking into one bag*) How many packages are in there?

BROTHER:

A lot. A lot of packages. (*indicating other bags*) There's more here.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Why did Mom buy bulk liver?

BROTHER:

Ask her.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

You're the one she gave it to. Why would she do that?

BROTHER:
Sanctuary?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
Maybe she eats liver when she's alone? What can you make with liver? Does Mom even like liver?

BROTHER:
She used to give liver to the cats, I remember.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
The cats have been dead for years. They died when I was a kid! Why would she have all that liver? Was it frozen?

BROTHER:
It may have been once, but it's not now. I'm not sure if you can freeze liver.

He pours himself some sherry.

Or I suppose you could if it was fresh, but re-freezing doesn't seem like a good idea. (*offering her the bottle*) Want some?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
No. And isn't that sort of disturbing? Bags full of liver? What kind of liver is it?

BROTHER:
It's raw.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
I mean, what is liver? Chickens? Is liver chickens?

BROTHER:
I'd imagine it's beef. Cows. You've never had fried liver before? Liver and onions?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
Turkeys have livers, on Thanksgiving.

BROTHER:
Chicken livers, goose livers. I believe pâté is commonly goose livers. Although there are different kinds of pâté.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
Maybe Mom was making some pâté for the bridge ladies or her book group or something? Is it goose livers?

BROTHER:

They'd have to be some pretty big geese. Of course, pigs have livers, but I've never heard of eating pork liver. I could be wrong.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

I could be horrified. This doesn't horrify you?

BROTHER:

No more than anything else. Where should I put them?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Over there by the turkey. But it make you wonder, doesn't it? Mom living here, alone, with all that liver, and who knows what else in the freezer...

BROTHER:

Not anymore.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

What?

BROTHER:

She's not going to be living here very much longer.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Right.

She clutches her cellphone.

I have to make a call.

She goes up the stairs and out of sight.

The brother looks around the room. He drains his dixie cup, then goes up the stairs as well. We hear footsteps from above.

After a moment the brother comes back down the stairs, carrying a box he recently carried upstairs, along with the hat boxes. He sets them down. He pauses, and we wait for him to say something. But then he proceeds to open the hat boxes, one by one. Inside of each is a large turkey.

He pours another drink and looks around the room. It appears as if he's ready comment on his surroundings, then he decides to stack the dozen or so turkeys next to the liver and first turkey. He sips his drink. He eats some cheese and crackers. He starts for the stairs, but then turns back as if struck with a thought he'd like to share. Instead, he grabs a blanket and covers the carcasses. He goes out of sight upstairs.

The oldest sister comes quickly down the stairs. She sees the food scattered about.

OLDEST SISTER:

Jesus!

She moves toward the mess but stops herself.

You know what? It is not my job to clean up after my brother and my sisters. I am not their mother. And I am not my mother's mother!

She lifts a dixie cup and sniffs inside.

Oh lord, they're drinking cough syrup.

She surveys the room again, then tosses the cup.

So be it. This is what I shall do: designate things into their proper piles and put things in boxes and label the contents and what happens after that is not my responsibility. What's mine is the piano and the sideboard and some of the good rugs and clocks and silver because I'm the oldest sister and that's my share, but as far as everything else in this godforsaken basement you can just leave it to rot, for all I care!

She begins to assemble a new cardboard box.

The middle sister lumbers down the stairs, having again grown in size. She carries more frozen turkeys, which she attempts to conceal behind her when she sees her oldest sister. The oldest sister, from her awkward build-a-box position, can't see who's on the stairs.

OLDEST SISTER:

Hello?

MIDDLE SISTER:

Hello.

OLDEST SISTER:

Oh.

The middle sister finds the under-cover turkeys and adds hers to their ranks, then watches as the oldest sister begins to put books into her freshly-assembled box.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Don't worry. You've got pens.

OLDEST SISTER:
(packing the box) Excuse me?

MIDDLE SISTER:
I got you a package of your pens!

OLDEST SISTER:
Thank—

The oldest sister turns and for the first time sees how large her middle sister has become.

MIDDLE SISTER:
You're welcome.

Pause.

OLDEST SISTER:
Can you pass me those books?

The middle sister does, unconsciously groaning as she moves.

Not feeling well?

MIDDLE SISTER:
Not really.

OLDEST SISTER:
So. You were having a little picnic down here?

MIDDLE SISTER:
We all were. *(picking up a bottle)* Cordial?

OLDEST SISTER:
What? Oh, no. Thank you.

MIDDLE SISTER:
(pouring herself a cup) You're welcome.

OLDEST SISTER:
How can you drink that?

MIDDLE SISTER:
There's some cognac.

OLDEST SISTER:

Not at this hour. But don't let me stop you, if you feel you need it.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Every little bit helps.

OLDEST SISTER:

You think you're coming down with something?

MIDDLE SISTER:

Yeah, that's it. I'm coming down with something.

Silence.

The oldest sister begins to pack the books, or organize them into piles.

So. Tell me the story of Jessica, why don't you?

OLDEST SISTER:

My Jessica?

MIDDLE SISTER:

Yes! Your very own Jessica!

OLDEST SISTER:

There's no story to tell.

MIDDLE SISTER:

There's always a story. How is she?

OLDEST SISTER:

She's fine.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Fabulous!

OLDEST SISTER:

Are you sure you're all right?

MIDDLE SISTER:

No, I said that, no, I am not all right! I feel like shit!

OLDEST SISTER:

(referring to the bottle) How much have you had of that?

MIDDLE SISTER:

I think the standard answer is, "not nearly enough."

OLDEST SISTER:

Listen. I am worried about you.

MIDDLE SISTER:

You are? Which means you've again found a use for me? I'm worthy of your attention, "Big Sis?"

OLDEST SISTER:

Uh, really?

MIDDLE SISTER:

Or perhaps I've done something to get in your way, to muss up your plans, is that it? Am I an impediment?

OLDEST SISTER:

I don't know what's gotten into you, but I'm going to tell you what I see. You, my sister, are reaching dangerous proportions. I'm telling you that because I care about you.

MIDDLE SISTER:

How touching!

OLDEST SISTER:

This is serious!

MIDDLE SISTER:

It is, huh? Thanks for telling me. I just flit around and never know seriousness when I see it.

OLDEST SISTER:

How can you just stand there like that!

MIDDLE SISTER:

It's getting harder all the time.

OLDEST SISTER:

Maybe I should call your husband.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Just to chat? I know how fond of him you are.

OLDEST SISTER:

He's fine.

MIDDLE SISTER:

He is fine. He's super. So nice to have a man around the house. Puts everything into perspective.

OLDEST SISTER:

What's that supposed to mean?

MIDDLE SISTER:

Oh, nothing. Nothing at all.

With great effort, she settles down on a box.

So I was thinking... at 12, is Jess starting to go through puberty? Getting breasts, and hair on her body, and worrying about her weight? Sweating and using deodorant? Has she started her period yet? The thought of her bleeding is strange and terrifying, isn't it? Exciting? Maybe.

OLDEST SISTER:

I don't—

MIDDLE SISTER:

(interrupting) Although I've been banned from seeing her, I can guess about these things because I remember when my stepdaughter was 12. Miraculously, I can even remember when I was 12!

OLDEST SISTER:

You have not been banned. You can come and visit any time you'd—!

MIDDLE SISTER:

(interrupting) Twelve is very difficult. It's a difficult time for all of us. A collective difficulty. Are you having a difficult time? No, I wouldn't expect so. Not when you can step back and hire the best people to handle it, handle her, handle everything!

Pause.

OLDEST SISTER:

I'm not going to respond to that. You have no idea of what I find difficult or have to handle as a working mother—on my own, thank you very much, because I did not settle or stay married out of obligation. But since you are family and I love you, I'm going to forget that this happened, go upstairs, help Mom sort through the dishes, and hope to god she never sees you like this.

The oldest sister goes up the stairs and out of sight.

MIDDLE SISTER:

You're welcome.

Pause.

"Hope to god she never sees me like this." Hah. And just what would happen if Mom did, would you make... other arrangements "on your own," perhaps? Let good old Mom come live with you and your daughter and your domestic staff in your white on white condo by the beach? Make room in your fridge for tomato aspic and chipped beef and bread and butter pickles? Clear out a closet for coats and hats and boots and shopping bags and umbrellas? I think that's a swell idea!

The much younger sister and the brother come quickly down the stairs; he is carrying a couple of the recently packed boxes.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

What did you say to her?

MIDDLE SISTER:

Ha ha ha.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

What?

MIDDLE SISTER:

That she doesn't deserve to be a mother because she doesn't know what it means to bond and was so threatened Jess was more mine than hers that she stole her away from me and never looked back?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Really?

MIDDLE SISTER:

No. *(to the brother)* What have you got there?

BROTHER:

Mom told me to bring these back down.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Where is she?

BROTHER:

Still in the kitchen.

MIDDLE SISTER:
Harboring canned goods?

BROTHER:
Loading the dishwasher.

MIDDLE SISTER:
We already loaded it!

BROTHER:
She's re-loading it. So everything fits.

MIDDLE SISTER:
It all fit before.

BROTHER:
Uh huh.

He indicates the boxes he's holding.

So?

MIDDLE SISTER:
Right there.

He sets down the boxes, then picks up the bottle to refill her cup.

BROTHER:
Here.

MIDDLE SISTER:
Thanks.

He heads back up the stairs as she tries to get up from the box with an over-full dixie cup.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
Hey. Have you been to the doctor lately? I'm worried about you.

MIDDLE SISTER:
I was never aware of what a caring family this is.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
I'm serious.

MIDDLE SISTER:
And a serious group, too!

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Stop. You should have your hormone levels checked.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Like any of this can be stopped at this point.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

It could be something glandular—

MIDDLE SISTER:

(interrupting) Will you shut up about hormones? That's bullshit, hormones.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

I—

MIDDLE SISTER:

(interrupting) "It's hormones!" Like a wave of evil is creeping from your body into your mind, leaving you at the mercy of some primal, blood force, and your entire glandular system becomes autonomous, a foreign enemy demanding recognition, secreting this dark unwanted substance that takes over your every living, breathing, waking, sleeping, crying—

She breaks into tears.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Uh huh.

The much younger sister sits beside her growing middle sister, and unsuccessfully tries to put her arms around her as she looks around the room.

Is it just me, or does there seem like there's more here now than when started?

The middle sister sobs.

I'm really enjoying this, did I tell you that?

More sobs from the middle sister. The much younger sister gets up and opens a box.

Oh, wow! What are these? Costumes?

She holds up some very odd masks.

How fantastic! How could I have missed these? Did you make them? They're costumes, right? They've got to be costumes! Tell me those are costumes!

MIDDLE SISTER:

(through her tears) Those are costumes.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

And look!

She finds other bizarre objects.

Little toys and balls and... a collar? A dog's? This looks like a dog collar!
Doesn't it? Is this a dog collar?

MIDDLE SISTER:

(her tears are lessening) It's a dog collar.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

I always wanted a dog. We had the cats when I was little, but my whole life I wanted a dog! I didn't know you had a dog!

MIDDLE SISTER

(recovering) We had a dog.

She returns to the grocery bags.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

That's so funny! I never knew that! Man. I feel like... It's like I'm finding buried treasure. I feel like I should have a map or something. Ha ha. Sorry, that sounds silly. It's more like buried...

MIDDLE SISTER:

Turtles.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Turtles?

MIDDLE SISTER:

Want some?

She holds up a box of candy.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

No. But turtles are good! I like that! I mean, real turtles. Buried turtles. It's like buried turtles, because turtles are already buried, or covered, or protected, or... hardened... I'm not making much sense, I know.

The middle sister has moved the blanket to reveal the bags by the turkeys.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
Hey. Guess what's in those.

MIDDLE SISTER:
Liver.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
You knew about the liver?

MIDDLE SISTER:
Mom told me.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
What did she tell you?

MIDDLE SISTER:
Hmmm?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
What did she tell you about the liver?

MIDDLE SISTER:
She said to thank you.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
What?

MIDDLE SISTER:
You gave her the idea. You brought the turkey down, and she thought it made sense. To add liver.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
Really?

MIDDLE SISTER:
No. Well, kind of. And look.

She reveals the growing turkey population.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
Oh my god. Where did those come from? What in the world was she planning to...?

Short pause.

MIDDLE SISTER:
What?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
(returning to the boxes) Never mind.

MIDDLE SISTER:
Have you thought about what we should do for dinner tonight? There's a lot of stuff here, but I was thinking maybe we could go out. You think? We could go and eat burgers. Or get some and bring them home. Or order pizza.

With more trepidation, the much younger sister continues to go through unexamined boxes, and the middle sister arranges the turkeys into a new formation, perhaps playing with them as puppets, or holding them as dolls.

But it might be nice to really go somewhere. Treat ourselves. Not like there are any decent restaurants here, but it would be nice to be waited on. And to get Mom out. I don't suppose anyone's hungry yet. What time is it? I know it's early—I'm not even hungry—but I was just thinking it would be good for a change. To get away, even for a little bit. I think Mom would like that. There's a steak house she goes to. And that buffet, but...

Or maybe Chinese. I wish that Chinese place was still there. The one from when we were kids? I mean, when we were kids. I loved that place. It was dark and had rust colored naugahyde booths. Round naugahyde booths, with soft hangings on the wall and aquariums so there was this noise of fluid buzzing it was like you were in a... Ming's or Chang's or Chung's or Ching's or...

Remember that chicken that they cooked in the foil wrappers? Was it called paper chicken? Shoulda' been foil; each piece was in its own piece of foil and you'd unwrap each one, and it wasn't exactly barbecue sauce on it, but it was dark red, a dark red glaze coating each small, bite-sized chunk... You wouldn't remember, though. It must have closed before you were—

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
(interrupting) Is this real?

The much younger sister has opened a small box, which looks as if it could contain a bracelet or necklace.

MIDDLE SISTER:
Real, how?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
Is it real? A real...

Pause.

MIDDLE SISTER:

It's real. But it's not what you're thinking.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

It's not?

MIDDLE SISTER:

No. It's too small. It wasn't old enough.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

It wasn't—

MIDDLE SISTER:

(interrupting) It's not big enough. It's not... developed enough.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

You've seen this before? You knew this was here?

MIDDLE SISTER:

Of course I did. You did, too. It's strange to see it after all this time, though. It's like it's preserved, somehow. Some things never change.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

But it's not... This is not... a baby.

MIDDLE SISTER:

That was not a baby.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Then what was it?

MIDDLE SISTER:

A... fetus. It's a fetus. That sounds awfully clinical, doesn't it? There's no good word. But a fetus is not a baby.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

It's not old enough to... to count?

MIDDLE SISTER:

To count? No, it counts. It always counts. It definitely counts. It did count. But not as a life. People—some people—may think it's inconsequential. That women think that. But we don't. It's important. The action counts. The outcome counts. My god. Our lives depend on it. Being able to make that decision.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
Whose was it?

MIDDLE SISTER:
What do you mean, whose was it?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
Whose was—

MIDDLE SISTER:
(interrupting) Why would you ask that?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
Why wouldn't I ask that?

Silence.

MIDDLE SISTER:
Will you help me? I need to pee.

With assistance, the middle sister manages to lumber up the stairs.

Voices are heard arguing from above and she passes the brother coming down the stairs, carrying more of the packed boxes he previously took upstairs. He looks to his much younger sister for guidance and she quickly closes the box she is holding.

BROTHER:
Where should I put these?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
I don't know. I have to make a call.

She takes out her cellphone but she doesn't move. Her brother sets down the boxes. The oldest sister comes downstairs.

BROTHER
(to his oldest sister) Oh. I wasn't sure— Where did you want me to—?

OLDEST SISTER:
(interrupting) It's fine. Whatever it is, it's all fine.

BROTHER:
Okay.

He heads up the stairs. The oldest sister takes stock of the new items out of their boxes and her much younger sister before she systematically begins building a new box.

OLDEST SISTER:

Have you seen the tape?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Hmmm?

OLDEST SISTER:

The tape. Have you seen the tape?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

The—?

OLDEST SISTER:

(interrupting) Never mind.

She's found the tape and finishes construction of her box then starts to fill it, a bit indiscriminately.

If you want any of the kitchen, you should go up now. All I'm taking is some of the silver, but there's china that was Grandma's that someone might like, although Mom thinks she wants to keep it—I don't know where she's going to put it, because she's still got the set she and Dad had. So that's up for grabs.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

How long were you married?

OLDEST SISTER:

What?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

How—

OLDEST SISTER:

(interrupting) Not even a year. Nine months, actually. There are lots of serving bowls and platters too, plus the everyday wear, but that's so raggy I don't imagine anyone would want it. I'll just put it in the pile for the dumpster but that's about all I can do, if you know what I mean.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

When you were married—or before you were married—was Jessica—?

OLDEST SISTER:

(interrupting) What about Jessica?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Were you ever pregnant before Jessica?

OLDEST SISTER:

Of course not. Jessica is my only child.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Yes. But I mean, did you ever had a pregnancy that you—

OLDEST SISTER:

(interrupting) Remember what I had to go through to get her? It took me two years and I'm not even going to tell you how much money!

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Because I know that sometimes women have troubles getting pregnant. After having an—

OLDEST SISTER:

(interrupting) Of course not.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Of course not?

OLDEST SISTER:

No. I never tried before Jessica.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Never tried.

OLDEST SISTER:

Which, for me, may have been part of the problem. I knew I wanted a child, but I didn't even start until after the divorce was final, after father's "contribution" was set aside as part of the deal. If I had known how difficult—

Short pause.

Which is not to say that I wouldn't have handled it the same way, gone though it anyway. And things have changed. I was in my early 30s and at that time it was considered old. Now women in their 40s are having babies every day.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Mom was almost 45 when she had me.

OLDEST SISTER:

Well, that was Mom.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Did she want me?

OLDEST SISTER:

Of course she did!

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

I mean, not me. Did she want to be pregnant? And if she didn't, what would she have done?

OLDEST SISTER:

What are you talking about?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

What if she didn't want another kid? She'd already had three and you guys were practically—

OLDEST SISTER:

(interrupting) Mom was just— She was almost 30 when I was born, and back then... I don't know why she waited so long.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Or after me! What if she got—?

OLDEST SISTER:

(interrupting) Of course she wanted you. Jessica is the best thing that ever happened to me. That I made happen!

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

No, no. I know. That's not what I'm—

OLDEST SISTER:

(interrupting) Are you thinking of it? You should! You won't be sorry.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

How can you be so certain?

OLDEST SISTER:

I have to be.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

You've always been. All of you. It's not fair.

OLDEST SISTER:

I don't know about that. We all make choices, if that's what you mean. Some of us get blamed for our choices if they move us forward and some of us choose to stay and... marry men named Ed.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
What?

OLDEST SISTER:
Never mind.

She seals her box and labels it. The much younger sister considers the cellphone she is holding, along with the small box.

Wait. Are you guys talking about marriage?

Short pause.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
Yes.

OLDEST SISTER:
You don't have a responsibility to anyone but yourself, you know. And as soon as this place is packed up you can leave it far, far behind. Start fresh.

She starts building a new box.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
What if I don't want to?

OLDEST SISTER:
What?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
What if I—?

OLDEST SISTER:
(Interrupting) That's up to you. But remember: there are no accidents in life. Everything that happens, happens for a reason.

Pause.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
Really?

OLDEST SISTER:
Really.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Okay. How about this. What if there was something that happened and, when it happened, you never thought about the reason, because there didn't seem to be a reason and so... Well, you never really thought about it at all. It just happened.

The oldest sister begins to rapidly toss objects into the box.

Which was funny, because this was something that was pretty big so the reason would have been significant, right? But since you never came up with a reason, it was like it never happened.

OLDEST SISTER:

Right. Listen. The nice crystal upstairs Mom will take, but there are odds and ends that you could look at and might want—I don't really know your tastes but a lot of it is expensive, or it was. Probably still is, even though it's not part of a set, per se.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

I mean, you certainly wanted it to have never happened. And almost nobody knew about it. So that was pretty convenient. A fresh start.

OLDEST SISTER:

The patterns are still around, most of them. Actually, if they're not they might be worth more. Collector's items.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

But now, after all this time, you find yourself wondering if it really did happen.

OLDEST SISTER:

Mom wants all the Fostoria, but she's got all sorts of depression glass mixed in with it and the pressed glass that's just junk, but you might think it's pretty.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Or maybe it happened to someone else.

OLDEST SISTER:

I mean, it is pretty and Mom can't possibly use or take it all, even though I'll never be able to convince her of that.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

You don't remember making any important decisions or feeling any significant feelings.

OLDEST SISTER:

I'm just going to put it all in boxes marked "glassware." "Glassware" and "China."

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

And if it had been you and if there was this major reason behind it all, you certainly would have.

OLDEST SISTER:

Or "Kitchen." "Dining." Every one of them will be the same and somebody else can just have fun with it later.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

I should have, right?

OLDEST SISTER:

Fun with glassware.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

If it was me. And my choice.

OLDEST SISTER:

My god!!!! What is all over this floor?

A dark sticky liquid is noticeable around the bases of the boxes.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Cherry cordial?

OLDEST SISTER:

Lord. Isn't that just like them. No. It's over here, too. Something must be leaking. Jesus. This whole basement's so rusted and rotted that I'm surprised we don't fall through this god damn floor!

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

It's cement.

OLDEST SISTER:

The whole foundation could be sinking for all we know! No one has taken care of things! The pipes, the wiring...

Avoiding getting her feet wet, the oldest sister sees the packed boxes her brother has re-deposited.

What are these doing down here? These are supposed to be upstairs! He already took these up, how did they get back down here?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

I don't know.

OLDEST SISTER:

I give up! I give up on this whole place, and you know what the funny thing is?
No one will care! It won't make any god damn difference because nobody even
wanted me here in the first place!

She sees the turkeys and the bags of liver.

And what in the hell is this?!

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Turkeys.

OLDEST SISTER:

I can see that they are turkeys!!! And...?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Liver. Bags of liver.

Short pause.

The oldest sister breaks down crying.

It's just liver.

OLDEST SISTER:

(through her tears) I hate liver!

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Oh.

OLDEST SISTER:

I thought I could do this. I thought I could just fly in and... pack up and...

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Yeah.

Their brother comes down the stairs, carrying the last of the just-packed boxes. The oldest sister quickly recovers and shoots a look at him.

BROTHER:

Oh. This one's not labelled.

OLDEST SISTER:

What do you mean, it's not labelled?

BROTHER:

The box. There's no label on it. Mom told me to bring it back down.

OLDEST SISTER:

That's not... *(searching in vain for a label)* And the others? The other boxes?

BROTHER:

I'm just following instructions.

He sets down the box. The oldest sister takes a Sharpie and labels it "Dumpster."

OLDEST SISTER:

There.

BROTHER:

Okay.

He picks up the box. It is very wet and sticky on the bottom.

Hmmm. I— I'll take this to Mom?

OLDEST SISTER:

You do that.

BROTHER:

Okay.

He carries the box out of sight above, tracking dark liquid up the stairs.

OLDEST SISTER:

I'm leaving.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Okay

OLDEST SISTER:

You?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

No.

OLDEST SISTER:

Okay.

She starts up the stairs and stops herself.

OLDEST SISTER:

It just occurred to me: I don't think Mom has ever been down here. I don't think she's ever, once been down here. Have you ever seen Mom down here? Even once?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

I...

OLDEST SISTER:

She would send us down here. She would send us down with boxes. Some of the larger ones, she hired men to bring down. Then we'd hide everything away, and that was that. So I wonder if she even knows what's here. Did you ever consider that? After all this time? Years and years of boxes deposited. Like buildings, like some sort of teeming city with sealed-up walls containing anything and everything no one wants to look at or talk about but can't bear to live without. Dad came down. He liked it, had his shop and worked down here. He practically lived down here...

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

I wasn't born yet.

OLDEST SISTER:

...died down here.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

What?

OLDEST SISTER:

Not literally, of course. What has gotten into me?

Liquid has entirely covered the floor. The oldest sister stands on the stairs.

You should decide what you want, you know. Get some of the good pieces.

The much younger sister is still holding the small box.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

I don't know what's mine.

OLDEST SISTER:

Just take what you want.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

I don't know—

MIDDLE SISTER:

(interrupting, to her oldest sister) Are you leaving?

The middle sister has appeared from upstairs. The reason for her physical transformation has now become apparent: she is very, very pregnant.

OLDEST SISTER:

I... yes.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Now? You're leaving now?

OLDEST SISTER:

Yes. Right now.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Be careful. Don't trip over Mom on your way out.

OLDEST SISTER:

What?

MIDDLE SISTER:

She's sitting on the front steps.

OLDEST SISTER:

On the steps?

MIDDLE SISTER:

On the front steps, to the front door.

OLDEST SISTER:

Mom?

MIDDLE SISTER:

Uh huh. She's outside. Just sitting there. With her small, blue suitcase. You know, the cosmetics case, with the mirror in the top? She has her coat on, and that dainty little miniature trunk on her lap, and I asked her what she was doing and she said, "I'm moving." I told her she didn't look like she was moving, she looked like she was sitting. She laughed.

OLDEST SISTER:

Is she all right?

MIDDLE SISTER:

She's fine!

OLDEST SISTER:

Sitting out in the cold?

MIDDLE SISTER:

She's got her coat on. She's fine.

OLDEST SISTER:

She's not fine.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Well, then, maybe she's waiting for you to make it all better! Maybe she's gonna hitch a ride!

OLDEST SISTER:

She's not waiting for me.

MIDDLE SISTER:

No. She's not.

Very short pause.

I asked her about the boxes.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Did you ask her about the liver?

MIDDLE SISTER:

I asked her about the boxes. She looks like she's ready to high tail it outta' here so I asked her about the boxes. And she said, "Oh, those. How am I supposed to move with all those boxes?"

OLDEST SISTER:

Excuse me?

MIDDLE SISTER:

"How'm I supposed to move with all those boxes?"

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

She said that?

MIDDLE SISTER:

Well, it makes sense.

OLDEST SISTER:

What does she expect will happen to them?

MIDDLE SISTER:

That's what I asked her. "They're yours now!" she said. "That's up to you!"

OLDEST SISTER:

She wouldn't even give up old food!

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Yours yours, or ours yours? All of ours yours? Or...

MIDDLE SISTER:

Good question. But I'd venture a guess as to who's the chosen one in this deal.

With effort, she squeezes past her oldest sister on the stairs, and steps into the liquid on the floor.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

But did she ask you? Did she ask you if you wanted them?

MIDDLE SISTER:

Hah. No. I was not asked. Look at me. Does it look like I had any choice in this matter? Any say at all? Hah.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

What are you going to do?

MIDDLE SISTER:

What else can I do? I'm going to set up shop down here! Finally work for a living! Maybe open a little café. Broasted turkey, liver and girl scout cookies...

OLDEST SISTER:

You're talking like this is only affecting you, for christ's sake.

MIDDLE SISTER:

I don't know why. Perhaps because I feel like I'm absolutely fucking alone? Made responsible for the indecision of others? Me, the good ol' middle sister, taking care of— Aaaaaahh!

She doubles over and her much younger sister rushes to her side.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Are you all right?

MIDDLE SISTER:

AAaaaahhh!!!!

OLDEST SISTER:

(standing on the stairs) She needs to lie down.

MIDDLE SISTER:

No, no... If I lie down I'll never get up. I need to sit. *(to her much younger sister)*
Can you...?

Her much younger sister helps her sit. The middle sister regards the small box still in the much younger sister's hand.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Some women have dreams. Did you know that? I guess it's fairly common.
Dreams of the unborn. Saying, "It's okay."

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

What?

MIDDLE SISTER:

Sort of... recognizing the loss. Sharing the loss? Helping. Easing. Taking some
of the weight.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Yeah.

MIDDLE SISTER:

And, although I can't imagine it, I've heard that other women will see a child in a
playground and say, "My child would have been that age." *(reacting to a look from
her much younger sister)* Ha ha ha. I know. I don't understand what that's about.
To me, that's...

*The middle sister surveys her surroundings. Throughout the following she might
examine the collected turkeys, taking out their innards, or empty the various bags of
liver.*

It's unnatural. A man might do that, but why would a woman calculate what is
not? Be proprietary about what never was? Unless it's a further extension of the
betrayal that happens. Our body betraying us. Our body saying, "I'm in charge
here. It's my time. I'll take over!"

And look at me, bearing the consequences! Making life-altering decisions which
will affect the whole future of human kind even though it apparently wasn't up to
me whether there was going to be another fucking human life! AAAhhh!

She partially crumples, holding a turkey.

OLDEST SISTER:

You need to lie down.

With all her strength, the middle sister throws the turkey at her oldest sister.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Don't you tell me what I need! I did not need this at this point in my life. I did not want this right now! This is not what I am supposed to do and I will not take this lying down— AAAHHHHH!

The middle sister falls to her knees. The much younger sister pockets the small box and runs to her as the oldest sister runs to the top of the stairs.

OLDEST SISTER:

I'm getting Mom.

MIDDLE SISTER:

No! No! I'm all right!

With help from her much younger sister, the middle sister rises. She is coated with the dark red liquid from the floor.

OLDEST SISTER:

Jesus! You can't— We need to call someone. *(shouting upstairs)* Will you please come down here?!

MIDDLE SISTER:

Our brother? Right! God love him, but just what do you think he can do? I can't even stand the thought of his goddamn face right now.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

What?

OLDEST SISTER:

(shouting upstairs) Hello? Get down here! And call Ed!

MIDDLE SISTER:

(to her much younger sister) It's not fair, I know. But honestly, there's no one I need less than a man at this point.

BROTHER:

(out of sight upstairs) Yeah! Okay. Hang on!

MIDDLE SISTER:

Hang on. Sure. Like everything's just gonna' stop on his say so. Like this really has anything to do with him. I mean, maybe technically...

OLDEST SISTER:

What?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

What?

MIDDLE SISTER:

Oh, I'm not talking about *him*, him. I'm talking about "him." In a larger sense. A larger even than Ed sense. The largest "him" possible, and at this moment I hate all of them.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

You don't mean that.

MIDDLE SISTER:

I do! (*holding her gigantic belly*) What do they really give us in this whole sordid exchange? They're just expelling a substance that needs to be gotten rid of, a by-product. That can be purchased! Packaged and purchased!

In her much younger sister's arms, the middle sister has fallen again; both are covered in the red liquid.

OLDEST SISTER:

She's completely delusional.

MIDDLE SISTER:

You know exactly what I'm talking about.

OLDEST SISTER:

(*shouting upstairs*) What are you waiting for? We need you!

BROTHER:

(*out of sight upstairs*) I don't— Okay!

MIDDLE SISTER:

And there you go. That's what we tell ourselves, isn't it? We need them. It's not even remotely about his life, but ultimately it's his decision! He's the one who tells us what we can or can't do once we've been... poisoned!

OLDEST SISTER:

(*shouting upstairs*) Hurry!

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

(*to her oldest sister*) Will you leave him alone and just come down here!!

MIDDLE SISTER:

She won't, don't you see? She'll just stay up there on her sanctimonious perch, blinded by the glory of her own immaculate conception.

OLDEST SISTER:

How dare you!

MIDDLE SISTER:

I have to dare! The whole reason I'm here is no one dared and now I'm paying the price for all of us. You cannot escape this, no matter how many women you fuck, and neither can Jessica!

The oldest sister starts down the stairs as the much younger sister pushes some boxes together and guides her middle sister towards them.

OLDEST SISTER:

You don't know! You may hate me but she isn't your daughter and she's not going to be like you and she's not going to be like Mom and she's not going to spend her life waiting for Dad and if you think I'm going to let us to be swallowed up by all of—

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

(interrupting, to her oldest sister) Stop it!

The oldest sister is perched on the bottom step.

MIDDLE SISTER:

Too messy? Too big and messy down here for you?

OLDEST SISTER:

Where's Mom?!

MIDDLE SISTER:

I told you she's on the fucking stoop!!!

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Forget about Mom!

MIDDLE SISTER:

No! That's the whole problem! Mom has forgotten about Mom. She's got me now, so—

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

(interrupting) I mean, don't worry about Mom. I'll take care of Mom.

MIDDLE SISTER:

What do you mean?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

I mean I'll take care of Mom. She'll come and live with me.

OLDEST SISTER:

Don't be ridiculous.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
I'll take care of Mom!

OLDEST SISTER:
You can't take care of—

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
(interrupting) I can! And I will!

MIDDLE SISTER:
You don't have to—

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
(interrupting) I know. I need to. I gotta figure stuff out.

MIDDLE SISTER:
What about the boyfriend?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
I gotta figure that out too. I think it's all in there together.

MIDDLE SISTER:
Oh, yeah. Oh, yeAAAAAHHHH!

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
(to her oldest sister) Will you help me? Help us! You're part of this. We need you!

The oldest sister steps down into the liquid, and moves directly to her middle sister who is lying on the boxes, her knees up and open.

OLDEST SISTER:
(to her much younger sister) Get that blanket! *(pointing to clothes)* And those. *(to her middle sister)* You're okay, you're okay. Breathe!

MIDDLE SISTER:
(breathing heavily) Oh! Yeah, yeah, yeah. Okay. *(to her much younger sister)* So. You got Mom. Congratulations. Does this mean you're taking the boxes, too?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
No.

MIDDLE SISTER:
I thought I was pushing my luck.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
(pointing to her oldest sister) She is.

OLDEST SISTER:
What?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
You're taking the boxes.

OLDEST SISTER:
I'm not—

MIDDLE SISTER:
(interrupting) AHH!

OLDEST SISTER:
Okay! I am! I'm taking the boxes!

The middle sister begins rhythmically panting.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
And you're not putting them in the dumpster, either.

OLDEST SISTER:
What do you expect me to do with them? We've already gone through—

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
(interrupting) Not all of them! I need more time!

OLDEST SISTER:
There's nothing in them that you—

MIDDLE SISTER:
(interrupting) AHHH!

OLDEST SISTER:
I won't! I won't put them in the dumpster.

The middle sister pants.

Not all of them, anyway.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
What?

OLDEST SISTER:
Never mind.

The middle sister's pants are louder and faster.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
(watching her middle sister) So is this what's supposed to be happening?

OLDEST SISTER:
It looks right to me.

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
Looks right?

OLDEST SISTER:
I don't know—I slept through the whole thing!

MIDDLE SISTER:
AHHHHH!!

The women move into the birthing position as their brother starts down the stairs.

BROTHER:
Hey. So Ed's on the phone, but I don't know what to do. Mom's got her bag and she's sitting on the—

MIDDLE SISTER:
(interrupting) **AHHHHH!!**

BROTHER:
Oh!

He stops and the much younger sister meets him on the staircase.

What's going on? Is she okay?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:
We're fine. We're going to be fine.

BROTHER:
You're—?

MIDDLE SISTER:
(interrupting) **AHHHHHHH!!!!**

BROTHER:

Okay. Is there anything I should be—

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

(interrupting) No. We've got it.

She takes the box from her pocket and gives it to him.

BROTHER:

What's this?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Ask Mom.

BROTHER:

Ask Mom?

MUCH YOUNGER SISTER:

Ask Mom.

MIDDLE SISTER:

AAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!

The brother goes up the stairs and out of sight as youngest sister rejoins her sisters. Lights dim on the now even messier basement and the possibilities the women in it are creating.

End of Play