(MARTIN looks at KATE.)

MARTIN. You okay?

KATE. What do you think, Martin? Am I okay? AM I OKAY?

MARTIN. Sorry.

KATE. What an asshole. What a jerk.

MARTIN. Yeah.

KATE. People think he's a genius what is so fucking genius about that?

MARTIN. That is what I've been saying! "Let me give you a ride home." The guy's a moron.

KATE. Not Douglas, Martin! I'm talking about Leonard. Leonard is an idiot!

MARTIN. Oh, I thought you were talking about Douglas.

KATE. Did you think that was smart? Did you think him standing there and telling us all that we're fucking losers if we don't go to Egypt and smoke water pipes, we're we're completely irrelevant as human beings if we read The New York Times, does that seem SMART to you?

MARTIN. That's not really what he said.

KATE. It is absolutely what he said! I'm irrelevant because I live in a nice apartment I love that. How about I'm irrelevant because I'm an overeducated girl —

MARTIN. That's not what he said.

KATE. He said I was sexually inadequate!

MARTIN. He said the story was sexually inadequate.

KATE. How would he know, he didn't read more than six words!

MARTIN. He's not talking about you, he's talking about the story.

KATE. A story he hasn't read.

MARTIN. He read the first page. I mean, we all sat here right, and watched him read the first page.

KATE. Big fucking deal! What is your point, Martin?

MARTIN. I don't have a point! I just mean that's all we get right? Everybody says it. If you don't get them on the first page, that's all you get.

KATE. So it's my fault?! That I stood here and got completely humiliated by that asshole?

(She disappears into the apartment, yelling back.

MARTIN waits.)

(off) Everybody acted like, they all said he's ROUGH but he's A GREAT TEACHER BUT I DON'T SEE WHAT'S SO GREAT ABOUT JUST BEING ABUSED. THAT'S NOT TEACHING THAT'S JUST BEING A SHITHEAD. IF I WANT SOMEONE TO TELL ME I'M WASTING MY TIME I CAN JUST TALK TO MY MOTHER. EVERYONE THINKS IT'S SO COOL AND FUN TO BE MEAN TO ARTISTS BUT IF WE WEREN'T HERE THERE WOULD BE NOTHING BUT ANARCHY AND IMMORALITY AND CHAOS. WE ARE THE SOUL OF THE CULTURE AND PEOPLE CAN JUST FUCKING BE NICE TO US ONCE IN A WHILE.

(She reappears, carrying bags of chips and diet soda and ice cream. She sits down and starts to eat.)

MARTIN. What are you doing?

KATE. I'm depressed and I'm trying to make myself feel better is that all right with you?

MARTIN. Don't be depressed.

KATE. My story got creamed. I'm depressed. I'm a depressed feral cat.

MARTIN. If you think he's stupid what do you care if he didn't like your story?

KATE. I didn't think he was stupid until he was stupid to me today.

MARTIN. So if he liked your story that would make him not stupid?

KATE. Yes! If he liked my story that would make him smart. Okay? Okay? Okay?

MARTIN. Just wanted to be sure.
KATE. Why are you still here? Douglas is out there having drinks with the love of your life, why are you hanging out with the loser?

MARTIN. She’s not the love of my life are you kidding?

KATE. Give me a break.

MARTIN. She’s a twit!

KATE. Yeah, guys hate that. It sucks that she’s gorgeous, too.

MARTIN. Look. She’s all right. No, I mean, okay, she’s attractive, no one is going to say she’s not attractive.

(He starts to eat, obsessively, everything in sight.)

KATE. Oh my god you should hear yourself. ‘Attractive.’ Why don’t you just put a gun to your own head, you’re so completely in love with her. Do you think it’s not utterly obvious to absolutely everyone who sees you in the same room with her?

MARTIN. I am not ‘in love’ with her. She’s clearly got something going with Douglas. How she can even stand to talk to him for more than fifteen seconds at a go, is a mystery. The guy is an unmitigated embarrassment to the human race. Seriously, ‘Can I give you a ride?’ Give her a ride! It’s so Darien. Maybe he could ‘give her a ride’ to Yaddo, where the interiority and the exteriority of the landscape is so stunningly in sync with the diasporic essentiality of the mimetic dialogue between self and culture. Maybe that’s what he should do.

KATE. Don’t kid yourself she would love a ride to Yaddo. Don’t eat all the chips I want those.

MARTIN. Fuck me. Fuck her. Fuck him.

KATE. No fuck me! I’m the one who got creamed. This sucks. That story is fantastic. I have been working on that fucking story for six years, people love that story! You love that story.

MARTIN. Well.

KATE. What? What?

MARTIN. Nothing.

KATE. You don’t love that story.

MARTIN. It’s okay. You’ve been working on it for six years.

KATE. That’s right I’ve been working on it for six years because people like it, people – Frank Conroy read it, before he died, he was the writer in residence up at Bennington for one month and he read that story and you know what he said to me? He said it was ‘much better than most.’ Not better than most. “Much” better than most.

MARTIN. ‘Much better than most,’ that is so lame, Kate.

KATE. Yes, it would be lame, coming from you but it didn’t come from you, it came from Frank Conroy. You know who else likes that story? Tobias Wolf. He read it when I took that summer writing class and he said it had some nice things in it.

MARTIN. Kate do you even hear yourself? You know how long you’ve been working on that story? Six years –

KATE. That’s right, SIX YEARS.

MARTIN. Why have you been writing the same story for six years?

KATE. Because it’s a good story! It’s a really good story. When I was at Bennington –

MARTIN. Jesus, was there ever a time when you weren’t at Bennington? You exist in an alternate universe called ‘Bennington.’

KATE. I learned a lot there, Martin.

MARTIN. What you learned was how to write one lousy story in six years.

(a silence)

MARTIN. That’s not, I didn’t mean the story was lousy.

KATE. Fuck you you did too.

MARTIN. Well why are you writing the same story for six years?

KATE. Because people kept telling me it was good but that it needed more work!

MARTIN. Well then Leonard just did you a big favor, didn’t he?
(a beat)

KATE. Meaning?

MARTIN. Now you can write something else.

(a beat)

KATE. You know, this is my apartment, so I can’t walk out. Could you walk out please?

MARTIN. No no, don’t do that. Come on, don’t do that.


MARTIN. No no no

KATE. I mean it, Martin – Martin –

MARTIN. Come on, listen to me. Listen. (He takes her hands. She looks away.)

I have to tell you something.

(She looks up at him. He holds her hand.)

KATE. What?

MARTIN. I’m getting kicked out of my apartment because I’m a little late on the rent. Can I stay here? I mean, you got like nine extra bedrooms. And it’s free! Who knew it was free? I can stay, right?

(She looks at him. Blackout.)

Scene Three

(LEONARD is taking off his jacket and scarf, looking at the others, who are sitting dutifully around him.)

LEONARD. So who’s got something, who are we starting with today?

(There is silence. No one moves. LEONARD laughs.)

Come on children we don’t have all night. What are we here for? Am I a fucking writer, or am I a fucking piece of shit coward? Am I trying to construct a living breathing cosmos with language or am I just scratching on the wall of a cave? Am I feral cat or am I a useless goldfish in a bowl that would be better off someone flushed it down the toilet? Which is what’s going to happen to it anyway.

(IZZY twitches, nervous.)

IZZY. (blurting) I have something. I have a story. I didn’t know if Douglas and Martin had something, I was thinking maybe they would want to go, or maybe Kate has something else –

KATE. No.

IZZY. Okay, well, I do have something.

(handing it over)

I haven’t been working on it very long. I just started it. About a week a few days ago.

LEONARD. Yeah I can tell.

(He holds it up; it’s only two pages.)

IZZY. Oh. Well but. Okay.

(He starts to read as he talks.)

LEONARD. No it’s good, if you have something on the page you should let people see it for Christ’s sake. All this rewriting people do, it squeezes the guts out of everything. I read this story last week, couple weeks ago, it was so fucking lifeless, this person had clearly been