

Waxing Matilda

By Cat Pedini

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Dedicated to celestial glories everywhere.

Waxing Crescent—Josie

First Quarter—Valerian

Waxing Gibbous—Sarah

Full—Belinda

Waning Gibbous—Gabrielle

Last Quarter—Alice

Waning Crescent--Dolly Rose

New—Matilda

Waxing Crescent—Josie (Josie is one of those girls who would be pretty if she lost some weight and felt better about herself. She has pictures of other people all over her-- buttons, t-shirt. Movie stars, rock stars. She is energetic and enthusiastic, charismatic in a geeky sort of way, exuberant and friendly. She spends the first few moments of our time listening to a walkman in a rather rapturous fashion. She talks fast, at breakneck speed.) (Noticing us) Have you heard this? Have you? It's AMAZING. It's better, it's the best thing he's ever done, I swear to God. It's like he took every other fabulous thing he ever did and mashed them all together into this one experience that is, I swear, like two hours of solid masturbation. I mean, the first time I heard this, I was like, Oh My God. I was in the bathtub listening, right, and I almost DROWNED. I have to play this for you at some point, really. (A breath) Sorry, I know I get a little excited where he's concerned. I'm his biggest fan in the whole world. I love him more than anyone else, and I have the stuff to prove it. Books, shirts, buttons, records, you name it, I have it. I've seen him in concert nine times. I've seen every movie he ever did, even the bad ones, even that one that was so bad, I'm telling you, it was so bad that when I die I want those three hours back. But I had to be able to say I saw it, you know? Even though I know logically he doesn't even know I exist, I still have to see everything or buy everything having to do with him, because it makes me feel like I have this special cosmic connection. And people notice--like they sort of shake their heads and get this look on their faces and look all impressed and go, wow, you must really be nuts about him. I am! I never do anything by halves. Like when it was the year of the Thriller album, I was in seventh grade, and I was in love with Michael Jackson, I think every thirteen-year-old in the world was. But I was the most, the absolute craziest. I had posters of him plastered all over the walls of my bedroom. I had like fifty pins with his picture on them, and I bought any teen magazine that had his picture. I even had that jacket, you know, that red and black leather jacket he wore in the Thriller video, and a glove, and these little rhinestone earrings shaped like white gloves. My best friend Debbie and I memorized all the steps to Thriller, and Beat It, and we used to do them at everyone's bat mitzvahs. Remember? (does a few steps of the Thriller dance) I cried all afternoon when he caught

his hair on fire doing that Pepsi commercial, remember? I prayed for him. I told God that if it looked like Michael wasn't going to pull through, to take my life instead. And when I decided I didn't like him anymore I took down all the posters and used them as wrapping paper for Christmas, and I sold my button collection and t-shirts and stuff and used the money to buy Paul McCartney records. I'm sure the main reason God made Michael get only second-degree burns on his head was because he was saving my life for Paul. Then I realised Paul and I weren't meant for each other either, and I discovered Sean Connery. I have this book, it's called the Random Book of Interesting Shit. It's not a diary, it's just this happy book I keep of lists and stuff. Like did you ever wonder how many times Dennis Hopper says the word "fuck" in the movie "Blue Velvet"? Fifty-seven times. And of course, that includes all the variations on "fuck"--"fucker", "fucking", "motherfucker", et cetera. And then there is the list of One Hundred And Ninety-Nine Things To Do When You're Bored. The Bored List, me and my friends called it. And later on we added to the book A Hundred And Ninety-Nine More Things To Do When You're Bored, Son of Bored List, Bride of Bored List, and Return of Bored List. In this book also is the version of Phantom Of The Opera that my friend and I wrote as a rap, and Hamlet, The American Tribal Rock Musical. We were going to change "Manchester England England" to "Elsinore Denmark Denmark". And we wrote a two-minute version of Sweeney Todd. You know how to make "Oliver" five seconds long? "Please, sir, I want some more." "Well, okay". I once sent "Weird Al" Yankovic a list entitled, "The Top Ten Reasons Why "Weird Al" Yankovic Should Marry Me, By Josie". I write fan letters and parodies and send them off and run shrieking through the halls of my house when something gets sent back. I know the location of every stage door to every Broadway theatre. The trick is to go meet people at the stage door before the show, not after. This one singer was doing this show once, and I saw it thirteen times and waited at the stage door before and after every show, and it was December. It was worth it, though, because I have his autograph on the playbill, and I got him to sign my breast once. Right there. My friend was with me, and we almost died. And the whole way home in the car we made up these fantasies at each other in which we got to star in an episode of Xena Warrior Princess or Remington Steele and make whoever fall madly in love with us, on screen and off. It's so great when you and your friends have stuff like this in common. I remember one time, this was so funny, we were in this cab going from Brooklyn to Queens for this Oscars party. And the cab driver was like, the world's stupidest human, I swear. He kept talking about growing up in Brooklyn and the places he went to in his youth. I didn't know people really talked like that outside of My Cousin Vinny. And finally, we got so bored and disgusted that we just started lying to him. Well, not lying lying. But we told him that we worked in this Broadway theatre, and were dating members of the cast of Star Trek, and then she told him that Pete Townsend was my father. And he goes, really? A breath of fresh air like you? And I said, uh-huh, and he totally bought it and was so impressed. And when we got out of the cab it took us like twenty minutes to stop laughing. I think we almost believed it ourselves for a minute there. My friends and I have so much fun together when we do things like that. And he believed it, so it's not like we were hurting anybody, right? And you know, I think people like that, famous people, I mean, not cab drivers, I think they owe us a little something. The fans, I mean. I hate people who won't sign autographs after a show, or are mean to their fans and treat them like they're dirt. I wrote a letter once to this author I

liked, really liked, I mean I have everything she ever wrote, and she sent me back a form letter that began, "Dear Reader". That really hurt. I wrote a really nice letter to tell this woman how much I like her work and appreciate what she does, and I think I deserve a little better than "Dear Reader". If people like me didn't buy her books, she wouldn't have a career, right? I mean, it's not like I wanted her to invite me to dinner. So I thought, bitch, and I stopped reading her books and paid more attention to the X-Files and the D and D campaign I'm working on. I called my girlfriend and we imagined what "Hello Dolly" would be like if we cast it with the people from Buffy the Vampire Slayer. And I added to the list of Song Lyrics Relevant To My Life, and the Josie Loves List, and the list of things I would wish for if I rubbed a lamp and a genie came out. God, all this work. All the time I put into my stories, my lists, my parodies that no one will ever see. People say that one day I'll grow out of my teenybopper bullshit. How can I explain that it's just so much more than that? What I feel for him, or Michael, or Paul or Sean is love. It's real, really. And so what if they're all somewhere else and married or whatever? I can dream about them, can't I? TV is way better than real life. I remember once a boy asked me out, he asked me for a date on a Saturday night. I said, "I can't, are you nuts, it's a Borg episode that night". I didn't like him all that much anyway. He told me to get a life. That's a joke, right? I have plenty of life. So what if most of it is other people's? I have to go now. It's premiere week, and I have to set the VCR and go to the store for ice cream. Come by if you want, and watch with me. (pause) Either way, I have a bunch of new lists I'm working on. Bored List Revisited, Bored List Live, Bored List Outtakes, the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy/March of the Falsettos crossover, Song Lyrics That Don't Have Any Particular Meaning But Are Just Way cool, Things That FNORD Could Possibly Stand For, Hercules The Legendary Journeys Meets Twin Peaks, Who Would Play Who In The Dragonlance Movie According To Me...(she keeps talking as the lights fade and the music comes up)

First Quarter—Valerian (Valerian is dark and serpentine. She wears a gothic-looking black shawl, and moves as if she has studied her cat. She speaks slowly and carefully, and her voice is low. She has a direct stare, and is almost as intimidating and spooky as she would like to be. She is a display of dark bravado, and is terribly insecure. We must see deep within her the desire for Disneyland. She is defensive about everything.)

Neveah ni si ti sa htrae no

Enod eb lliw yht

Emoc modgnik yht

Eman yht eb dewollah

Nevaeh ni tra ohw rehtaf ruo

(A low chuckle) Are you impressed? You ought to be. I'm not bilingual. That was the Lord's Prayer--backwards. I say it every night before I go to sleep. It feeds my dreams. People tell me I shouldn't say it, that who knows what dark forces you could be opening yourself up to. I say let the dark forces come. They can't do anything to me that hasn't already been done. I am an evil creature. Sometimes I sleep all day, and only come out at night, with the rest of the howlers. Nighttime is when I feel strong. Potent. Don't laugh at me. Don't you dare laugh. I live in the basement. Alone, misunderstood, in my hole in the ground. I like it there. I feel at home under the earth with the other creepy crawlies. Nobody bothers me. The cleaning lady tells all her friends about that child in

the house where she works, that child be practising that voodoo down in the basement. I heard her on the phone. She doesn't know me, and she is afraid. The ones upstairs don't know me either. How could they possibly understand what goes on in my head? Sometimes I leave my body and become something else, depending on the phases of the moon. That makes me a lunatic, right? That is the actual definition of the word. The sun burns my skin. Last summer I thought I was turning into a vampire, since no cooked food I ate would stay down. It turned out I was just bulimic. I wore sunglasses all the time, cut my own skin for the blood, and stayed inside where it was dark and cool. Have you ever tasted blood? I have. I drink it all the time. I'm not a vampire, though, more's the pity. Some people think I am. That's good. It keeps people at a distance when they can't figure out what you are. I am a witch. Does that shock you? Are you curious? Are you a good witch or a bad witch? Here is your answer. I am a grey witch. I practise mostly white magic, for the sake of good. But I carry within me the capability for great evil and the black arts, make no mistake. Shall I tell you your future? No, don't give me your hand. The hand is nothing, do you know that? A palm, crystal ball, deck of cards, all these are merely a point on which the witch can focus while she casts her mind into the Great Beyond. Shall we see what the future has for you? (She closes her eyes and appears to go into a very agitated trance, and then her eyes open. She smiles serenely). It is clear. There is a happy life in store for you. A thorough, green life filled with people and great books. Do you have a dog? You will, and you will have a fine home near to the place of your birth. Steer clear of novelty postage stamps, and when a man comes to your home to install a new ceiling fan, do not let him in. He is up to no good. Call the company and tell them you want someone else to come install your fan instead. You will have two great loves, and a train will somehow be involved with your death. That is all I see. Don't laugh at me. Remember, once I have spoken it, it may not happen. That is the trouble with trying to tell the future. The future is always in motion, always changing. Don't ask what you don't really want to know. And you have to be very careful about how you word your wishes when you make them. A person who goes to bed wishing to lose twenty pounds could easily wake up in the morning missing their right leg. A dear friend of mine came to me some time ago. She had been terribly depressed for a long time. She said to me, Valerian, if I asked you to, would you use your magic to kill me? I want to die, she said, but I don't have the courage to do it myself. If I asked you to, would you do it for me? I told her that I would. Does that shock you? I don't think Karma would have faulted me for it, had it worked out that way. As it turned out, though, my friend was put on Prozac and lost her will to die. It's just as well. Karma can be tricky, and I wouldn't want to pay with my immortal soul for the time I did somebody a favour. I have enough nightmares. I dream sometimes about killing her, and what it would have been like. I have dreams that would make Stephen King cringe and Anne Rice blush. I read once that real...that witches cry sand. My tears are plain old human saltwater, and they taste like my heart. I'm going to get a tattoo of a big black X somewhere on my body. I have Xed myself. X-me. I don't feel alive anymore. I'm just here, putting in time until I get to go to sleep forever. (She pulls up her sleeve with her arm turned in so we cannot see it) I made these. With a matte knife. You get better control with that than with a razor blade. They're not for suicide. I mutilate my outside to match the mutilation of my inside. Hurting yourself feels different than letting others hurt you. It feels powerful. I know the people upstairs are my family, and they want me

to come out and join them in the sunlight. I wish I could. But to venture from the world of your own understanding into a world without understanding is to hand the razor to someone else. I do the hurting myself so they don't get the satisfaction of doing it when they try. And they do try. I know. I'm a witch. I'm wise. I'm scary. I love the darkness and the solitude. Don't laugh at me. Don't you dare.

Waxing Gibbous—Sarah (Sarah is a plain girl in her late teens or early twenties. She is perhaps three months pregnant. She ignores the audience and addresses the foetus.) Well, it's just you and me, kid. God, that's trite. Sorry about that. Something my father used to say to me. He'd say it to me when he couldn't think of anything else to say. That's kind of how I feel now. The doctor said you're what, an inch or so long. But you're enormous. You're everything. You scare the hell out of me. I don't know how you happened. I mean, duh, of course I know how you happened, but what I mean is...why? Why did you happen to me? You're amazing. You're the greatest gift in the world, even if you do make me throw up all the time. I wonder what you look like. I mean, right now you look like an amoeba, right? I'm sorry if you got my lips. I've always hated my lips. And I hope you didn't get stuck with my family bubble butt. God, this does stupid things to a person. I wonder if my mother felt this psychotic while she was carrying me. What am I saying, my mother is psychotic now. I haven't even told her about you. Good-intentioned maternal concern is the last thing we need, right kid? I don't know how people do it. Intentionally put themselves through this, I mean. I mean, since I found out, I don't think I've slept more than a few hours any night. All I did was worry. What would I say the first time I walked in and caught you playing you show me yours I'll show you mine with the kid from next door? Or what if I found pot in your room? What would I do about that? Would I act like it's no big deal and just ask you to please smoke responsibly and don't drive stoned? Or would I freak and yell at you just because it's the proper parent thing to do? If I made you wash your hands before and after every meal, it could teach you good hygiene habits. Or it could make you a compulsive clean freak. Or you could decide to rebel against me and stop bathing altogether. A parent has no way of knowing what the right thing to do is, and no matter what I did, when you grew up you'd resent me like I resent my own mother, saying how I messed you up and was a lousy parent. Now I feel bad for my mother. She must have been scared too. See, you're the only one I can talk to about this. You're the only one who can see inside me and knows what I'm feeling. And you need me. You need me like no one's ever needed me before. And you don't judge me, or ask me to be any different. But you might wind up wanting me to be different. Because you live in me. And I don't know if I can live up to that. You might be wondering why I haven't mentioned your father up til now, or why you haven't heard any warm, supportive male voice talking to you the way I do. Well, kid, that's what I meant when I said it was just you and me. I'm sorry to be the one to tell you, but you have no father. I mean, someone helped me make you and all. But that person isn't your father. A father is someone who takes care of you and loves you. A father is someone who you can depend on. Not someone who hits you and steals money from out of your pockets. Not someone who makes you go to the clinic alone because he can't smoke in the building. That man is not your father. He's an accident. He's a misplaced chromosome. And I want you to understand this. I want you to understand that whatever happens between you and me has nothing to do with him.

You want to know what I feel about him? Nothing. And that's the truth. I don't love him. I never did. When I first found out about you, I thought to myself, well, I'll have to have an abortion. I can't have his baby. I don't love him, and even if I did, he's, you know, scum. I called him up and told him what I planned to do about it. He went nuts. He called me a bitch and a whore and a murderer, and said he hoped I would never be able to have children. I walked around that day, for hours, just staring at things, and feeling nothing. Nothing. I window shopped, staring in the windows of toy stores and baby shops, hoping to feel something. A flicker. And I didn't. And that was the worst part. I thought to myself, I'm going to end a life here, I ought to be feeling something, and I don't. What kind of monster am I, I thought, that I could go to the clinic, have an abortion, and then go home and watch television? That was what hurt the most--the fact that it didn't hurt at all. I guess that's why I'm talking to you now. I waited, see, and I got to know you. Now the thought of killing you is so painful I can hardly stand it. And now I have to do it. You're part of me now. But you can't be. We can't be. I'm too young for you. If I let you happen, I'd destroy us both. Maybe it was cruel of me, cruel to both of us, for me to have waited like this. But if you have to die because it is the right thing, I feel like you deserve to be mourned by someone who loved you, not forgotten by someone who wouldn't even miss you. I want to believe in the soul right now. I want to believe that you are the baby I am meant to have one day, and even if you can't be born in this body you're growing in now, I want to believe that one day you'll come back. Because I want you to. I want you to come back when I'm a grownup, when I can give you the life you deserve, and a father to love us both. I'm so scared I might be punished for what I'm doing. To be chosen to bear life is a precious gift. I know that. And I'm not refusing the gift. I would just like to put it into the closet til we fit each other. I don't want this to make me a bad person. I love you. Please believe that. But if I had you now, just because I loved you, that love would ruin both our lives. We can wait for each other, right? I know it doesn't help to hear it now, but maybe this will make it even better later, when the time is right. I guess that's really all I can say to you. Please forgive me for this. My appointment's in half an hour. I'm glad we got to talk. I feel a little better, don't you? (Pause) Well, don't worry--I'll be right there with you til it's all over. Come on, let's go.

Full—Belinda (Belinda is an exotic dancer. She hasn't been in the business long enough to have gone totally hard core, but she adapts quickly. She speaks with an affected Southern drawl. She is casual with herself and her body, which is seen in the way she moves, or the way she sits with her legs open. She chain-smokes throughout, and the cigarette is armour. This is a woman who could harden herself to anything.) Showtime in five? Shit. Give me a few minutes so I can talk to this guy in peace, okay? Look, Phil, German Playboy wants to promote your goddam club, not mine. Lap dancing will be there when I get finished. I just got my period, all right, would you mind giving me a second to deal with myself? Sorry about that, but that's about the only excuse that works around here. And that only works about half of the time. The last time I went out to do a set in that condition, I didn't make a cent. There I am, buck nekked, sticking my crotch in this guy's face for all I'm worth, and he's just a-sittin there. It wasn't til later, when I got back into the dressing room, did I realise that my tampon string had slipped out and was hanging out for all the world to see. I was so mortified I had to blow off the rest of my

shift. Now I cut the strings instead of tucking them in. You risk getting nicked, but it's worth it in the end. If you're even working. I mean, let's face it. The real drag of this kind of work is having to go out there and be cute and sexy to some asshole when all you really want is your bed and a box of cookies. Guys--clients, really--say to me all the time, "what's a nice girl like you doing working in a place like this?" Precious, I'm bringing home five hundred dollars a shift on an off night. And working here beats the shit out of working at Burger King. I know a lot of girls who are working their way through college, or have kids to support. And yeah, some of the girls also have drug habits to support. But so did my oral surgeon, and nobody disrespected his line of work. I don't mind the dancing, really. That part's fun. Though our DJ and I tend to disagree about what makes money and what doesn't. I mean, I'm up there, trying to be alluring, and he starts playing the theme to "Hawaii Five-O". (Sings) "Ba ba ba ba ba ba..." Shitty music notwithstanding, it's fun to dance, naked or otherwise, and if you're doing it while an adoring audience throws money at you, so much the better. What I can't stand is the attitude of some of the guys that come in here. Guys that hold that dollar just out of your reach like it's the Holy Grail or something, making you sweat for it. Like, there you'll be, bent over in front of him, your entire reproductive system spread out over God's earth and he'll be holding back his goddamn dollar and saying, "nope, I gotta see more". More? Well, just a second, lover, while I go get my speculum from the back room. Shit, I didn't know y'all were interested in seeing my cervix, for Chrissakes. I usually try to sit close enough to guys like that so they go home smelling like my perfume. They never notice it before their wives do. We dancers have our little ways of getting our revenge on lousy customers. One girl I knew taught herself to pass gas at will. So if a guy didn't tip to her well, she would bend over and fart two inches from his nose. The first time I saw her do that, I tipped her five bucks myself. Sorry, is this the kind of stuff you want? I don't mean to sound preachy on y'all. Is German Playboy really interested in the behind-the-scenes of an American stripper's life? I'm gonna have to find someone who speaks German so they can read this thing to me when it comes out. By the way, my accent isn't even real. I was born in Brooklyn, and the closest I came to living in Louisiana was visiting my girl friend down there once for Mardi Gras. But the guys seem to like it if the girls come from somewhere else--I don't know, I guess it makes us seem more exotic. And nobody ever uses their real name. I wish I had a nickel for every dancer in New York alone who uses the name Angel. We had Peaches, and China, and Bootsie. And it's amazing what some of these girls can do. I know a girl named Enterprise--no joke--who can smoke cigarettes with her vagina. Two at a time, Newport 100s. Whatever sells. Don't even try to be yourself. Besides, these men? They don't want yourself. They want a fantasy woman. That's what they're paying for. So we invent alternate selves to be at work. (Beat. She pours on the accent and becomes the obvious working girl) Hi, my name's Belinda--stolen from a romance novel, thank you very much--and I'm from Metairie, Louisiana. (Spoken normally) If you want someone to believe you're from somewhere else, pick a small town, or a suburb, instead of a major city. Don't say you're from New Orleans. Say you're from a suburb about twenty minutes outside of New Orleans. It'll sound more believable. I live with my mother in Westchester. This is a good deterrent if the client wants to see you outside the club. Some girls are into that, but I'm not. Besides, it's grounds to get fired from anywhere respectable. So you want to keep this guy out of your private life, but you don't want to act uninterested because you

want to keep him coming back. Then I tell him I have two kids. That always works. The thought that you're a mama makes the guy want even more to keep you out of real life and only see you in the club. When the client asks if you have a boyfriend, which they always do--not like it should matter, but they need to see you as available so it doesn't break the fantasy--what I tell them is that I have a fiance, but he's back in Louisiana. That presents the image of taken, but not really. And remember, when you talk to them, you gotta lean in real close, and speak low and sexy. You gotta breathe heavy, act like you're entranced by every little old thing he's saying, like you think it's fascinating that he's an accountant, and most important--make sure he's got a good view of your tits while you do it. Isn't it stupid? See what I mean when I say it's a regular job? All the bullshit that goes into it? I do have a boyfriend, actually. He knows what I do. A lot of dancers with boyfriends or husbands, in fact most of the ones I know, have to lie to their men about what they do at night and where their money comes from. Not my boyfriend. He's proud of what I do. He gets a kick out of the thought that strangers are staring at me all night long. He's always horny when I get home--though between you and me, really what I want at three in the morning after working all night is a hot shower, a foot massage, and a pair of big, baggy sweatpants. But he wouldn't want me all the time if he didn't appreciate me, right? He comes down to the club all the time to see me and he buys all the girls drinks--including me, and I always keep the money that I make off him. He even goes to other clubs and buys the girls drinks, which has always confused me--you live with a stripper, how many others do you need? Maybe he thinks they like him the way I do. Maybe he doesn't want to know the truth. Do you want to know the truth about men like him who go out to clubs to see women like me? Do you? The truth is that all they want from us is T & A, and all we want from them is cash. The truth is that we hate them, present company excepted. Them, their friends, and everything they stand for. And it doesn't matter if they're nice guys, any more than it would matter if I had a degree in computer science. Because the second we walk into that club, we all cease to be people. We become things. Things don't feel. Things don't cry. I tried to explain this to my boyfriend, when I was thinking of quitting my job. He said, but baby, you're my favourite thing. Shoot, he loves me. He's different from the guys at work. He wouldn't say that if he didn't mean it. (pause) I mean, you're a man. What do you think?

Waning Gibbous—Gabrielle (Gabrielle is pretty, charming, vivacious and witty. She is never at a loss to command a room, never unable to find the spotlight, never not the centre of attention. She has an adorable English accent. Men want to sleep with her and women either are threatened by her or envy her. She is the picture of charisma, the consummate diva, a master manipulator and neurotic enough to be interesting. She means well. Don't you just hate her?) (Phone rings. She answers.) Hello? (Pause) No, sorry, she's not in right now. Can I take a message? Right. Her gentleman friend, Joseph. Well, you are her friend, right? And you're speaking very politely to me, so I can only assume you're a gentleman. Well, of course, she's like me, she only has the finest taste in friends. (Pause) No, I don't know when she'll be back, she didn't say. (Pause) Do I? It's odd, a lot of people say that, that we sound alike on the phone. I don't hear it. The other day one of her boyfriends rang and I answered and he made the same mistake you did, he thought that I was her. I thought, if you can't tell the difference, someone's in trouble. (Pause. Laughs) Oh, God, sorry, I thought you knew. No, I'm her

friend Gabrielle--please don't call me Gabby, I hate that. I'm stopping with her for a while. (Pause) Sorry. Visiting. I would have thought she had told everyone. No, I know her for ages. I met her a few years ago when she was on holiday in London with her family, and now I'm in the States touring about and I'm staying with them. They've all been lovely to me. No, just mucking about, exploring the world. I want to go out to the coast later and see Los Angeles, and then it's back home via the Continent. (Pause) No, I'm not from London proper, I'm from Ealing, it's this sort of suburb in the west of the city. You can still get there on the tube. Sorry, subway. (Pause) Well thank you Joseph. I love your accent too. My mates back home tease me, they say I travel so much I'm going to lose my accent and not sound like a West London girl anymore. I'm working on my American accent, actually. How does this sound--Yo, bitch! That's proper American, isn't it? So tell me the truth, darling, while I have you on the phone--what were you calling for? Come on, I won't tell. Did you want to ask her out on a date or something? Oh, you're not saying. I bet you did. So tell me, what's the attraction? No, seriously, I want to know. Is it her charm, wit, and good looks? I'm sorry, am I embarrassing you? Oh, I don't mean to be. It's just that I don't have a...well, my boyfriend is back home, so I have to get my thrills from other people's love lives. We've been together almost a year, but between you and me, I don't think it's meant to be. No, that's all right, don't be sorry. He's a lovely person, really, but the distance...he was supposed to come with me on this trip, but knackered out on me at the last minute. I rang him once or twice, but it was very awkward. So, I suppose it's for the best. So actually I consider myself available. (Pause) Sorry, was that forward? Now I'm embarrassed. I didn't mean anything by it. No, what kind of a friend do you think I am? I would never flirt with my friend's boyfriend, or whatever you are. I hope you didn't think I was flirting. No, that's just how I am. Honestly, that gets me into trouble all the time. I was just being friendly. No, I'm not getting defensive. Why should I get defensive? If you ask me, you're the one sending mixed messages. I mean, what are you doing still on the phone with me if you're not interested? Why didn't you just leave your message and hang up? I haven't been talking to you for my health, you know. Somehow I don't think I would appreciate it much if a gentleman friend of mine called to ask me out or whatever you called and instead wound up talking to my girlfriend for half a bloody hour. I'm going to hang up now. Goodbye. (Starts to hang up, is stopped by the voice on the phone) What? (Pause. Then, mollified,) Oh. All right. Sorry. I didn't mean to have off on you there, you just...yeah. That's happened to me, too. I know, friend of a friend, it's awkward. I'm a bit on edge. Must be jet lag. So honestly, why did you call, really? What do you mean, it doesn't matter? Oh. That's very sweet. Well, I like talking to you, too. No, I'm not. Really, stop, that's too much. You'll turn my head. Well, if you insist. I'm about five nine, blond hair, greenish eyes, about a hundred and eight pounds? No, I'm not a model. I have done modelling, though, at home. No, nothing you would have seen, just some low-key, special-interest stuff. In French magazines, mostly. I don't think you can get them over here, but maybe. It's great fun, actually. I did that stuff, and I sing in clubs, and I go dancing...anything that lets me be the centre of attention. Well, no, it's not like I'm trying to be or anything. Why do you say that? I'm not like that. I don't go looking for the spotlight. It finds me. You can understand that, can't you? I mean, some people look at me and they say, oh, it's the Gabrielle show again. But is it my fault I have more charisma than anyone I know? Yes, of course I could just sit there and let a party or whatever be terrible. But it's awful,

sitting there, keeping my mouth shut, knowing that if I opened my mouth, everyone, including me, could be having a good time? It's torture. (Pause) You have no sympathy for any of this, do you. I'm what? Superficial? You would say that. Why am I even explaining myself...the real me? You think I should stop trying to be charming and be the real me? There is no real me, you nit! I don't exist. And even if I did, I doubt that if I didn't start out this conversation all charming and witty and perky and all that rot, I sincerely doubt that you would still be on this phone with me. What if I had simply said to you, sorry, she's not in, call back later, and hung up? Would you have found me so fascinating then that you would have called right back for an extended chat? Your average male doesn't want to talk to some stranger on the phone for an hour unless he thinks he's talking to one of the Spice Girls. And listen, in all seriousness, if that's the way things are, why not just go with it? Why not accept the fact that some of us are meant to perform, and some of us are meant to be the audience? There's no shame in being the audience. And being good at being the audience is just as hard as the other thing. I'm not one to be envied, really I'm not. It's not all fun being a diva, you know. It's more than just a talent, it's a skill. It takes practise. Not everyone's good at it. And why should you resent me just because I can do it and you can't? And people like me who keep the party going, who keep everyone from standing about scratching their bums and saying "er..uh", we never get appreciated. You call us divas and queens and other things that make us sound like egocentric jerks, and that's all right, but what if we were to call you all sidekicks, or doormats? Okay, I won't call you a doormat. Stop lying down on your face at the top of my porch. And whatever you might say, you were enjoying the Gabrielle Show pretty bloody well before I started being honest about the fact that it was a show. That, by the way, was the real me you wanted. You had her and you didn't even notice her. No, Joseph, don't say anything. I'll leave word that you called. I just don't feel like talking to you anymore. You think I'm performing at you and I'm playing a part. Fine. There's clearly nothing I can do to make you change your mind. But I don't think I want to play this gig. I just want to point out that the person you were calling for tonight is my friend who loves me and doesn't think I'm superficial. Remember I said earlier, she has the finest taste in friends. And you know something, for all I know this self-righteous Judge Dredd high horse fellow I have been justifying myself to all this time might be an act as well. Everybody does it. Everybody feeds everybody else's monsters. I won't talk to you later, Joseph. What on earth would a pure and real man like you want with a superficial diva like me? (Hangs up the phone as lights fade)

Last Quarter—Alice (Alice is , well, in wonderland. She speaks in multi-coloured word balloons, and thinks everything she says makes sense. She has something she wants to share, but no one can be sure if that is something beautiful or something terrible.) Shh...it's a secret. You mustn't tell, or it'll escape. This is what I know, this is what I knew in the blizzard. This is what I wanted to say, so I'm going to. Are we ready? Once upon a time. Once upon a time there was a witch, the Baba Yaga. And one day on a Thursday the youngest son of the king--it is ALWAYS the youngest son--came to the Baba Yaga and asked her for a quest--he was just out of school and a quest is a good place to start grad work. So the Baba Yaga said to him, "go ye and get unto me"--of course they talk that way, it's a fairy tale--"the liver of a monkey, because if you don't I will eat you up, I will". And the youngest son, his name was Prince Ivan, it is always

Prince Ivan, he said, "yes, fair maid", he said this to the Baba Yaga, "for the love of you I will travel the world to find you a monkey's liver, and rather than go somewhere like the jungle or some place that has monkeys which would of course be the sensible thing to do, what I will do instead is search high and low until I find the magic house of Blackheart the sorcerer, and I will entreat with him to transform me into a monkey so that I can come back and give up my own liver to save my lady fair that is the Baba Yaga, because I am a hero and we do things like that. Then she will be cured from her evil curse which makes her be and have always been the Baba Yaga"--she was under a curse, I forgot to tell you, that made her be the Baba Yaga, and make it so that was all she had ever been, except somehow the prince knew that. Don't ask me how, he's a hero, a bluebird of happiness probably told him. "So", said the prince, "I will save her with my liver, and even though I will be dead because a person or a monkey really does need a liver, I have faith that because this is a fairy tale and I am the hero, everything will work out all right and we will live happily ever after". So Prince Ivan kissed his lady fair who was the Baba Yaga, and she bit him, having no memory of their love, and then he got a band-aid and THEN he saddled his magic steed and rode off into the world looking for the wizard who would hopefully help end the prince's life and thereby let him save another. The Baba Yaga, after sending her former love off on a fool's errand, sat in her izba day by day and devoured the bones of little children whose mothers didn't keep watch over them when they got up in the night to get a drink of water. She could not remember ever having been anything else, and it was a steady, solid existence. The Baba Yaga served her purpose, rattling bones into the night, and gave the world something to be afraid of. But when she dreamed, she dreamed of another time, a time of princes, when she was beautiful and innocent, and was surrounded by daisies and mermaids and a man who loved her, now gone to meet a man at Marwar Junction. Then she would waken in her izba, surrounded by ashes and charred bones. Prince Ivan followed the sun to the home of Blackheart the sorcerer, who was a tall, hideous man with pine cones growing from his forehead and an oaken staff across his lap. The voice of the wizard floats on the wind, and asked, "prince, what do you do here?" The prince slid off his mount and made his salaam. "Lord Blackheart", he said, "I am not here in my own name, but in the name of my father and my mother, and heroes all before me, but most of all, in the name of my lady fair who is the Baba Yaga. I entreat you, my lord, to use your magic and transform me into a monkey that I might rip out my own liver and give it to my lady that she might be rescued from being the Baba Yaga. This I do for love, gladly and freely". But the prince's eyes shifted as he spoke, and Blackheart the sorcerer could see that while the prince was willing to sacrifice his own life for love, he also still had faith in the fact that he was the hero in a fairy tale, so he believed everything would somehow turn out all right, and this faith in the impossible diminished the purity of his sacrifice. The wizard looked down sadly at the handsome prince. "O prince", he said in a heavy voice, "you have travelled far to see me, all for the sake of a love you believe in. But I cannot help you. Your lady, whoever she once was, is now the Baba Yaga. That is what she is now, and all she has ever been. Yes, I know she dreams another story. I, too, was not always Blackheart the sorcerer, and yet it is all I have ever been. Belief in a fairy tale only goes so far, and once you know you are in a fairy tale, which you do, prince, then the fairy tale is shattered because then reality is brought into it by your awareness. The fairy tale you believed in was destroyed and made impossible by your very faith in it. Under the laws

of reality, which like it or not you must abide by, if I were to change you into a monkey to give up your liver, that would undo yards and yards of reality that the fates worked hard to spin, and I cannot allow that." Prince Ivan burst into tears. "Then what good are stories, or heroes, or fairy tales," he cried, "if love cannot triumph over anything, even this strange god you call Reality. Why should not love be an end to the struggle, not the beginning? I thought having love made everything fine. What is anything for, if not for love?" "Because", said Blackheart the sorcerer, with his teeth sounding grey, "sometimes love isn't enough". And he summoned his dogs, who tore the prince and his magic steed apart. Blackheart the sorcerer lived on, as did the Baba Yaga. They had to, you see, because the world needs wizards and witches and creatures from fairy tales and things to be afraid of. It is their job to keep the dark god Reality in check. And though they were miserable in their miserable lives, they were contented to be doing their jobs as designed by fate. But every once in a while, as the Baba Yaga spat out the knee-bone of a little boy wept over by his mother, or as Blackheart the sorcerer set the dogs on yet another prince with misguided faith begging some self-sacrificing favour in the name of love, that other self, the once real self in each of them would sing out to the other. And then for a moment, just a moment, each would be the other's prince, in that world of long ago with the bells and the mermaids and the princes and the love. Because in that world, for them the way they never were, love is enough. Then, in a twinkling of a twinkling, the moment passes. And they live without love, doing their jobs, serving their purposes, and for their parts, would almost rather not remember that other life, or love. It hurts them, you see, to be reminded. Fairy tales are like that. The prince thought he was doing this great thing for which he would be rewarded with his true love. What never occurred to him was the balance of the universe. Of life. If he had managed to do what he wanted and saved his lady fair, who would have been the Baba Yaga? The world needs a Baba Yaga. Anyway, imagine a world with nothing but princes. What would they do, who would they conquer, and would they still even be princes? Why do they do it? Is love the answer to everything? Or is life the answer to everything? It isn't, and it certainly isn't the answer to love. It goes away before you're ready, and you're left wanting it back, wanting another chance, thinking, THIS time, I'll know what to say to the wizard, this time, I'll kill the dogs, this time I'll go straight to the frigging jungle where the monkeys live in the first place and not bother with the hero thing. But you don't get that chance and you miss the life or the love and you feel numb and dead. And you feel stuck in the middle for a while, like the Baba Yaga did, half there half not, am I dreaming am I awake, which is more horrible than anything. And I think I would rather be the wizard than the prince, but maybe not, because after getting torn apart by the dogs, the prince would be dead, and he wouldn't know anything anymore. The wizard gets to live, but he has to live with the memory of what he isn't. This is the thing that I learned in the blizzard, the thing that I wanted you to know. The best thing to do is to find out what reality thinks your job ought to be, and do that, and don't expect anything else. Don't want anything else. That way, you can't be disappointed. Fairy tales are real, and that is what makes them not be. It is a secret. Don't tell. Shh.

Waning Gibbous--Dolly Rose (Dolly Rose is introduced from a blackout, screaming, cursing, and throwing things. She isn't insane. She has just been pushed too far. There is something helpless about her rage, knowing she would stop it if she could.) I don't even

feel better. Primal scream therapy is a load of shit. All I got out of that is a sore throat and problems that are still here. I mean, I can't take it anymore, I can't. Why won't it ever stop? Why won't the world just stop fucking with me? I mean, I want to walk in beauty. I want to have love in my heart, and joy in my soul, and peace in my being. But how can I do that when the rest of the world is so annoying? I've been in therapy for six years. I've worked really hard, and I've done really well. I've dealt with my issues, I've confronted my demons. I can face up to anything like a mature, reasonable person. I can be an adult. But what good does it do? I mean, really! Right now I regret it all. Every dollar I gave to my shrink, every second I spent on that couch. All therapy does is make you a martyr for the masses. Those braindead, stupid masses. If you're the only one who knows how to cope, then you're the one who always has to cope. You have to spend your life compromising because nobody else can. I know this girl who is an absolute mental case. She's a loon, right, and everyone knows it. And every single friend she has would rush, in a second, to take a bullet for her. Nobody I know would offer to take a bullet for me, they're all like, we don't have to worry about Dolly Rose, she has the sense to duck a bullet, she can take care of herself. And they're right, I do have the sense to duck a bullet. But doesn't it suck that nobody even bothers to make the offer? It's horrible to be sane. Being sane means you never get to tell yourself all the bullshit the whackos believe that helps them get through their day. Being sane means you not only have to take responsibility for your own shit, but the shit of a zillion other people as well. Being sane means you can never express your feelings honestly, and that you can only deal with another person on the other person's terms because they couldn't handle your terms and you are the only one who knows how to be flexible. I read in this comic strip about how when this kid was asked to shovel the snow from the walk in front of his house, he did it around in a circle so that nobody could get out. He said sometimes if you do a job badly enough the first time, you don't get asked to do it again. Now, he was being a jerk on purpose. He knew what he should have done to shovel the walk the right way, he just chose to do it wrong. Do you have any idea how many people there are in the world who think that around in a circle is the right way to shovel a walk? And of course you know that it's wrong, and you want your walk shovelled the right way, so guess who always winds up doing it? All I want out of the people in my life is honesty, courtesy, and respect. Guess what? I have a real short phone book. I don't think it's a lot. And yet to some people it's easier to get them to give you their kidney. Well, who said honesty was a virtue? Who said growth was such a good idea? Who said being in touch with your feelings was something you should strive for? Psychoanalysts? Wise men? Your mother? Your mother! Look, Freud was a junkie, Hamlet did not want to screw his mother, and Shakespeare was gay! Sorry, I don't know where that last one came from. It's just something I've always thought, and wait a minute, why am I apologising? It's what I honestly think. Put that in your pipe and smoke it. Don't get me wrong, self-respect is a good thing. I'm proud of myself for what I have accomplished. I'm proud that I know how to duck a bullet and shovel a walk. But I hate always having to be the one to give in because I'm the only one who can be a grownup. Hey world--get on the goddamn couch. Take responsibility for something. Get a life! (She takes off a shoe and addresses it) You. You are the friend who lied to me, and then got mad at me because you heard that I was mad at you. I couldn't even spend the time I needed to be mad, and get that out of my system and feel better, because I had to deal with you and the fact that

you were mad at me. And when we finally talked about it, I had to make the first move, and I had to go out of my way to kiss your ass and be all non-threatening and supportive and helpful just so we could get the issue dealt with. You got to yell at me, and vent your true emotions, and feel better, but I never got to show you how I really felt. And why? Because I had a choice. Either deal with the issue and talk to you, or stop being friends with you over the thing we were fighting about. And I love you and want to be friends with you, even though you're a fucking idiot. And if the issue was going to be dealt with, which it had to be, than someone had to be the grownup and it obviously wasn't going to be you. Still, you are my friend, and I will love you til the day I die, but right now I'm being honest whether you like it or not and I HATE YOU. (She flings the shoe to the ground, and takes off the other shoe.) You. You are the actor I admired when I was fifteen years old and a geeky, dorky kid. I was madly in love with you, and only wanted an autograph from you and a kind word. Then one day the guy at the stage door said you were sick and I got worried about you. So I looked your phone number up in information and called your house to see if you were okay. All right, so I shouldn't have done it. But what you said to me was, don't call me here, Dolly Rose, I resent this intrusion in my personal life. For christ's sake, I was fifteen years old! And really, if you were so into your privacy, that's why God invented the unlisted phone number. I went home and cried all weekend, and I don't think the hurt from you will ever go away. You didn't have to be so cruel to me. You could have blown me off in a nice way or something. And it's not like you were Lawrence Olivier, for crying out loud, you were a mediocre actor who to this day has a mediocre career. Hardly important enough to be a jerk to anyone, least of all a loving fan. You know what I hope? I hope that one day you meet someone you admire and worship as much as I admired and worshipped you then. And I hope he or she does or says something to you that makes you feel as shitty as you made me feel. (She throws the other shoe and looks around helplessly for something else to throw. There is nothing, so she retrieves one of the thrown shoes and addresses it again) And you. You are the family I was responsible for keeping together, the boss I placated, the boyfriend I humoured and the teacher I manipulated. You are everyone and everything I ever had to put first and bend over backwards for and do all the work for. And I did it because it was worth it to me to do it, it really was. But I'm not a saint or one of those truly unselfish turn the other cheek types, I'm a human being, and doing it wasn't easy, and it wasn't done without resentment. Maybe I should have walked away, but I didn't. Well, it's my turn. Now you have to deal with me on my terms if you think it's worth it to you. I don't care anymore how you're going to react, or if your feathers get ruffled, or if your feelings get hurt. I've done it for you for years, because you couldn't do it for me. Well now you're going to have to, and if you can't I suggest you learn how real frigging quick. It's my turn. (Blackout)

New—Matilda (Matilda is the present and the future. Unlike the others, she knows exactly where she is and what she is doing. She is open and friendly and sensible. She is the only character to be presented without some sort of prop or costume.) (Speaking directly to the audience) Hi, everybody, how are you doing? We're almost at the end now. My name's Matilda, and I came to say hi and go over some stuff. Can we bring up the lights in the house please? I hate it when I can't see who I'm talking to. Thanks. (The lights come up) That's much better. Hi. I know all of you have been sitting there

for a while and I know the way those seats make your butt go numb, so everybody please take a minute and stretch, okay? Great. All right, you can put the lights back down again. So. First off, the ladies want me to thank you for listening to them. It's not often they get to speak their minds. And they're all good people, I mean, a little crazy, but who isn't, right? And crazy or not, they deserve to be taken seriously as much as anybody else. People see them, and they see me, as characters, not real people. It's like, people like you, but they don't understand you and don't try to, so you wind up being put into the category of the wacky friend. Everybody has a wacky friend in the movies. Remember that movie where the guy had this friend who knew how to give you the finger in forty different languages? What movie was that? Anybody know? Well, that's my point. If you're one of those slightly different people, first of all God bless you, but you know what I'm talking about. Just because you are slightly funky or different or smarter, people assume all this stuff about you, and are always after you to do tricks, like a dog. Do you know how horrible it is to tell someone about something you're doing or something that's important to you, and have the response be, you're a nut? Mary Poppins said it best-- sometimes people, no matter how much we love them, can't see past the end of their noses. It's like others can't look beyond their own limitations and see the real you. Richard Bach says, argue for your limitations and sure enough, they're yours. It's scary how many people are running around on this planet truly miserable. And they try to be happy, some of them, they try so hard, it breaks the heart. And for so many of them, it's like, hey, do you know you're wearing the ruby slippers? You don't have to tromp all over Oz trying to find someone who will give you what you want. You can get back to Kansas yourself whenever you want to, if you just believe you can. And it's so sad, because nobody does. Believe, I mean. I didn't for years and years. And wanting to believe in something and truly believing in it are two totally different things. I went to a planetarium recently and saw this really creepy thing. It was this film called the life and death of the sun, or something like that. And it was about how our sun is basically just a star like any other, and stars have a finite lifespan, just like people. Do not ask how they figure that out, it involves a lot of math. So our sun was born a long time ago, and now it's about halfway through its life, and one day about four billion years from now, it is going to die. Now, before anyone starts worrying about their descendants, which was my first reaction, it went on to say that at that point in evolution, humans might not even exist anymore, and if they did, they could have migrated to some other planet, or evolved into smart amoebas or cyber thingies or whatever. But this is the point. When the sun finally begins to die, what will happen is that it will expand slowly, over probably millions of years, until it is many times bigger than it is, and many times hotter. What this means is that even if there were life on the earth or anywhere else, that much heat would destroy it. All vegetation, all everything, the earth would turn into a dead rock. Then the sun will contract again back to its regular size and then struggle for a while longer before it finally dies. And I sat there in the dark and thought my God, that's horrible! It's like the sun, or anything dying saying, well, if I go, I'm taking all of you with me. Never mind that you need my light and warmth and nurturing, never mind that you're all dependent on me, I'm out of here, so you have to leave too. Gonna take my ball and go home. And I got angry at the sun. The thought that we, humans I mean, are part of something so...limited, made me feel like, why are we here in the first place? Are we just part of some big test pattern before the feature presentation comes on? So I tried

to think about it another way. That maybe the sun, knowing it was going to die, wanted to make sure that we, the lifeforms, the planets, everything in its care, would be taken care of first. Like kissing us goodbye. Thinking about it that way made me feel better. Whoa. Insight into life and the universe in the same place I saw Laser Zeppelin. Someone asked me recently what I want to be when I grow up. I thought about it for a while and said, I want to be happy. Whatever I do, I want it to be something that makes me happy. And I want to love and be loved by someone wonderful who will get out of bed in the middle of the night to get me a burrito if I want one, and have babies and listen to music and nap on a beach under a sun that is just the right size. I want to be taken seriously, but not take myself too seriously. And when death comes, I want to say goodbye to my loved ones and then release them to carry on without me, and in my next life I want to come back as a black Labrador retriever on a farm in Montana. I don't want to be afraid. Of death, of life, of spiders, of anything. I would like to be able to love mean people and to remember to smile when I pick up the phone so the caller will hear it in my voice. I would like to inherit Dolly Rose's honesty, Josie's enthusiasm, Sarah's conscience, Valerian's inner beauty, Alice's gift for words, Gabrielle's sense of humour, and Belinda's smarts. I'm a starting point. I don't have any advice to give on how to make those things happen. I'm the new moon, remember? I've just been born.