

A Week at the NJ Shore

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A Play in One Act

by

Valerie Work

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by Valerie Work

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Characters

<u>ADAM CADY:</u>	Male, age 26. Husband to LUCY.
<u>CARTER:</u>	Male, age 28.
<u>SONJA:</u>	Female, age 26.
<u>LUCY CADY:</u>	Female, age 26. Wife to ADAM.
<u>NATSUMI (SUMI):</u>	Female, age 28. NATSUMI is Japanese but has been living in the US for ten years. Her English is good, but she has an accent and makes occasional mistakes. Wears a lot of poofy, lacy, feminine dresses, skirts and blouses.
<u>CRAB:</u>	Giant crab. Crab disguise. Can be played by any actor except the one playing NATSUMI.

Setting

The living room, kitchen and front porch of a beach house at the New Jersey shore. July or August. The present.

## Scene 1

The living room and kitchen of a furnished beach house at the New Jersey shore. It is overwhelmingly suburban. Not right on the ocean but you can see a sliver of it from the front porch and you can hear it when the windows are open, as they are throughout the play. The sound of the sea is soothing. Active. Restless. Monotonous. The kitchen is not a separate room of this house, but an area separated by, perhaps, a tiled instead of carpeted floor. There is a stovetop/oven, a refrigerator, and a countertop. Perhaps there are some of those breakfast stools on the other side of the counter, creating a casual dining area. Centerstage, facing the audience, is a monstrous sofa with huge puffy cushions. It gives the impression of open jaws that could snap shut at any moment. There is a coffee table in front of the sofa, and an armchair that is also conversationally arranged around the coffee table. The surface of the coffee table is covered with highly breakable, shore-themed knick-knacks. There are three entrances/exits from this living space. One leads to the hallway that connects the bathroom and bedrooms. One leads to the small, open patio where the grill is. The third is the front door, leading outside to the front porch.

The play takes place over the course of a week in July or August.

ADAM, LUCY, CARTER, SONJA and NATSUMI enter lugging duffel bags, backpacks and other assorted beach gear. SONJA has packed way too much and drops all of her bags the moment she gets through the door, as do the others.

ADAM

Well, we're here.

CARTER

We're here.

SONJA

Where's the grill? I don't see it. I want to see the grill. Adam, you said there was a grill.

ADAM

It's outside. There's a. A. What do you call it. Through that door? Small, concrete, place where you grill things.

(SONJA has dashed out to see the grill. SUMI follows close behind. CARTER pauses a moment, then follows. We hear their voices offstage.)

SONJA

Wow! Look at this! It's huge! You could grill pounds of chicken. And, there's a little shelf.

CARTER

Look at that propane tank. I bet we use the whole thing by the end of the week. Feel it.

NATSUMI

It smooth.

ADAM

Lucy. Lucy, what's the name. The word I'm looking for.

LUCY

Patio?

ADAM

Yes! Yes, that's it. The patio. (pause) You guys. It's just a grill. (pause) Come on, it's time to go crabbing.

(CARTER, NATSUMI and SONJA gradually return to the living room.)

CARTER

What? Whoa.

(CARTER, then the others stare at the flat-screen television mounted on the set's "fourth wall," facing the sofa.)

CARTER

Man. Check out the television.

NATSUMI

Oooh.

SONJA

It's a giant. It's a giant one. I didn't realize they put these things in houses. It's like, half the wall. And look at all the speakers. How many - how many are there? Come on. Let's find them.

CARTER

Three over here above the TV, on the sides.

(SONJA has stuck her head under the couch.)

NATSUMI

(on one side of the couch)

And here!

ADAM

The other side of the couch. Look, there's another just like it on the other side of the couch. Nice and little.

SONJA

Over here. The sub sub woofer woofer. Woofer. Look.

(Everone peers under the sofa.)

CARTER

I want the remote. Where's the remote? I don't see it. Where would you leave a TV remote. Come one, why would they hide the remote?

(CARTER looks for the remote amongst the knick-knacks on the coffee table. In the process, he knocks one off the surface.)

CARTER

Whoa!

SONJA

Careful!

LUCY

It is a miracle that that didn't break. We have got to move this stuff. Come on, let's move this stuff right now. The knick-knacks.

(ADAM comes over and everyone examines the knick-knacks, picking them up in turn.)

ADAM

Who puts this stuff in a house. In a house that you're going to rent to strangers. In a house that you're going to rent to strangers in their twenties who are obviously going to be having house parties there, and barbequeing, and have their own stuff to put on the coffee table, anyway.

LUCY

This was such a bad idea. Look. Look at this one.

SONJA

What do you do with any of this stuff. I mean, it's a conch shell. All these spikes you have to dust. (holds it up to her ear) And the ocean, I can't even hear the ocean in this one. Here. Can you hear the ocean?

(SONJA has handed the conch to NATSUMI, who puts it up to her ear.)

NATSUMI

No. No, I can't hear it.

SONJA

It's useless. Bad shell. And this. What is this one? It looks like a UFO.

CARTER

Maybe it's a conversation starter. You know, you're bored, you play, what is all this stuff on the table. It's like I Spy.

LUCY

Put them here. In this cupboard, there's just cleaning supplies in here, we can move them.

ADAM

We will so obviously not using those anyway.

(They put the knick-knacks away. The knick-knacks should still be visible to the audience, even in their cupboard. Then there is another pause.)

ADAM

All right. Now, come on. Let's go crabbing.

SONJA

Woo-hoo!

SUMI

Crabs! Crabs! Crabs!

LUCY

We got here early enough. There's still plenty of time.

ADAM

(to CARTER, who looks confused)

We always go crabbing on our first day at the New Jersey shore. It's a Cady extended family tradition.

CARTER

Oh. Okay. How do you catch crabs?

LUCY

It's really easy. Crabs are so dumb. They're just hanging out down there, sleeping, eating, mating, whatever it is crabs do - and you throw down a line with some bait on it and they're like, wow! Something to do! Let's grab it! So they grab hold of the line and you just pull them up and they never let go. No matter how many of their crab buddies disappear they never figure it out. Crabs are really dumb.

ADAM

Yeah we rent a boat. You forgot the boat part Lucy. We rent a little boat and buy some lines and bait, also a bucket for the crabs you catch. You cut up the bait - usually raw chicken and fish - and stick it on the little hooks.

LUCY

And whenever we get bored or hot, we jump in the water and swim around for a while, or motor up and down the coast. So it's this combination crab hunt, swimming trip and boat ride.

SONJA

Plus we get to have yummy crabs for dinner.

NATSUMI

Crabs! Crabs!

ADAM

You boil them. Melt butter, dip them in and sprinkle on some Old Bay seasoning. Pick up corn on the cob first from that farmer's stand.

NATSUMI

Crabs! Crabs!

LUCY

Sumi really likes it when we boil the crabs. She's in charge of dipping them in.

NATSUMI

Sometimes they scream like little children dying.

ADAM

Right. So. Change quickly - the beer run can wait. Ten minutes?

LUCY

(checking watch)

Ten minutes.

ADAM

Go!

(All run offstage towards the bedrooms to change. End of scene.)



## Scene 2

(On the boat, crabbing. The boat is in the middle of the living room, towards the front. CARTER has figured out how to work the motor and uses it to steer. ADAM navigates and looks out for crabs. The girls hang out in the back, looking at the mansions on the shore.)

SONJA

Check out that one.

LUCY

Yeah, it's the biggest one yet.

CARTER

Italianate roof. That's what that is. Wow. I've never seen one of that design before. Look at the tiles. The blue ones on the front, cerulean blue.

SONJA

There's a whole other wing! Look. Off to the side. It was hidden before, from the front view angle.

LUCY

Yeah. So it's actually twice as big.

CARTER

And that. See, that other little house beside it, to the back. Mother-in-law quarters.

SONJA

Funny name. For a little house.

CARTER

That's what they call it. Just far enough away.

LUCY

I wonder how much of that house he actually uses. They use.

SONJA

It's the house of his mistress. His mistress and their three small children, Charles, Angela, and Chris. Where he hides them from his wife, a society matron. Each has their own suite. And each time he visits - he is, an investment banker in New York, who couldn't afford the Hamptons - they have a picnic on the lawn. With champagne and violets.

NATSUMI

But who live in the little house.

SONYA

The butler. Of course they have to have a butler, and his wife. They are faithful and have just celebrated their twenty-fifth anniversary. He gave her white chocolate roses.

CARTER

Look! What is that bird? A snowy egret?

ADAM

That's just a seagull.

CARTER

An especially noble seagull. And especially white.

SONJA

There's that island again. Is that that island again? The one we passed before. I think we've already been here three times.

NATSUMI

Yes. Yes, it is the same.

LUCY

I'm getting hot. Can we stop and go swimming?

SONJA

We could have a picnic. On the island. It's small and there are no houses. Our own private island. (pause) We have to eat lunch.

CARTER

And walk along the sandbar. That one that sticks up out of the water, a curlique shape where all the seagulls are standing.

NATSUMI

Pull up the reeds and stick them in the water.

LUCY

Can we? Can we?

ADAM

No. We have to crab. Stop. Here.

(CARTER cuts out the motor. NATSUMI, who has been sitting next to the anchor, lets it down into the water. SUMI is the official Anchor Girl. ADAM, CARTER and SONJA cast out the existing crab lines. NATSUMI stands attentively with the net. LUCY takes a raw fish out of the bucket and hacks at it until she cuts off a piece, then stabs it onto a hook, baiting a new line. This goes on for several minutes. ADAM pulls up his line, thinking he has a crab. No. He casts it back. SONJA does the same, then CARTER. LUCY finishes her line and casts it. NATSUMI stares out at the sky. A minute passes in real time.)

(End of scene.)

## Scene 3

A lot of the luggage is still on the floor just inside the door, where it was dropped on the way in. Some of the luggage stays there throughout the entire play. In general, at least a part of everything that is brought onstage throughout the course of the play should remain there until the end. Similarly, the anchor and the raw fish bait bucket remain from the boat in the previous scene, possibly some other crabbing items too. NATSUMI has taken the first shower and has already changed into a puffy dress and apron. She hovers over a pot of water on the stove. SONJA is currently in the bathroom. ADAM, LUCY and CARTER wait their turns, exploring the apartment while they wait. Several new knick-knacks have appeared in new locations around the living room. ADAM kicks one without having noticed that it is there.

ADAM

Ow. I swear this wasn't here before. It's like an invading army.

CARTER

(discovering another)

Of porcelain figurines.

LUCY

Put those in the cabinet. In the cabinet, here, with the others.

(They put them in the cabinet. NATSUMI remains concentrated on her pot of water.)

NATSUMI

It's boiling.

(NATSUMI dips the first of the crabs into the pot of boiling water, intently. The others watch.)

LUCY

Sonja is really hogging the bathroom. I'm going to go check on her.

(LUCY exits towards the bathroom. NATSUMI continues dunking crabs in the water until the pot is full, then covers it with the lid. SONJA enters drying her hair in a towel.)

SONJA

Sorry guys.

ADAM

She's already got some crabs in the pot.

SONJA

Cool.

CARTER

Two of them actually screamed, you could hear it, and another one almost got away. They scratch and scratch until they die, clawing towards the top. You're brave Sumi.

ADAM

Sumi likes to dip the crabs.

CARTER

Is it painful for them?

SONJA

Tough to say. Analyze the psychological workings of the crab mind, response to pain. They flail around until they stop moving, then they turn red and float to the top. That's how we know they're done.

CARTER

Huh. You know why don't I go get the beer.

ADAM

You sure?

CARTER

Yeah. You can shower next and dinner will be a little while yet. What kind should I get?

ADAM

No preference.

SONJA

Yeah, whatever you like is fine. I'll go put the corn on the grill. Get that started.

(SONJA picks up the bag of corn and exits  
towards the grill.)

CARTER

Sumi?

NATSUMI

Oh, I don't like beer.

CARTER

Should I get something else too?

ADAM

Naw, Sumi doesn't like to drink period. It's that Asian  
blush thing.

NATSUMI

It makes my face bright red. Also I just don't like  
alcohol.

CARTER

Ok. Be back soon.

(End of scene)

## Scene 4

Outside on the front porch, represented towards the front of the stage, but in a slightly different location than the crabbing boat. LUCY and ADAM are hanging out, waiting while the others cook, and drinking gin and tonics. Behind LUCY and ADAM, the other three characters can be seen, moving in and out of the living room, waiting, cooking, fixing their own drinks.

LUCY

Great beach weather.

ADAM

Yeah, nice day.

(Each slaps a mosquito that is about to bite them.)

ADAM

Bad mosquitoes.

LUCY

Yeah.

(pause)

ADAM

Yeah. I itch all over from mosquito bites in spite of our citronella candles.

LUCY

Worse bugs than last year.

ADAM

Yeah. Unusually warm winter I guess.

LUCY

I never get bit in New York.

ADAM

Have to buy some bug spray tomorrow. Strong stuff.

LUCY

Yeah, something powerful. Zap these guys.

(slaps a mosquito)

Ew. Eww, look! I got this one while he was sucking my blood, and now there's bug dirt and blood all over my leg. Gross!

ADAM

Way gross.

LUCY

And look, you can see the bite swelling already.

ADAM

Gonna be a big one. Red and nasty.

LUCY

I wonder how the size of the bites is determined. Do big bugs bite big bites and small bugs bite small bites? Does it depend on the bug, on the person? The time of day or year? Or does it just depend.

ADAM

Depend on the gods. Fate. Mosquito bites. Could be. (contemplative pause) I feel stranded here without a car. I had forgotten what that feels like. Strange world with highways and no corner deli, not even an ATM nearby. Four miles to the nearest supermarket.

LUCY

And how big the houses are, and the yards, and how fat the people are -

ADAM

Fat, yes, and hairy, hairy people too. Glaring at us and blocking off their parking spaces.

LUCY

The sign next door, yes, I saw it too. Parking for Charlie's BMW only all others will be towed.

ADAM

Heh. Heh. What if we rented a BMW and parked it there, how would the town know it's not Charlie's?

LUCY

I saw his car yesterday night, in its parking space. Convertible in this strange blueberry color.



ADAM

Blueberry? More teal I'd say. Blue but with a hint of green. (pause) Charlie has a beard. I saw it too. And, his wife.

LUCY

No! No way.

ADAM

Way. Bushy.

LUCY

Bushy. Bushy. Wow.

ADAM

You want another drink? I'm getting another drink. See how long till dinner.

(ADAM exits carrying the two drink glasses. LUCY slaps two more bugs consecutively. Sighs, then follows ADAM inside. End of scene.)

END OF SCENE

## Scene 5

The crabs are finished cooking. LUCY arranges them artistically on a large platter while ADAM washes the pot. SONJA and NATSUMI are outside grilling the corn. CARTER returns with the beer.

CARTER

Back with the beer!

ADAM

Thanks man. Beer run buddy.

LUCY

Let's put that on ice.

(LUCY starts to take the beer out of the bag.)

LUCY

Oh. It's Yuengling.

CARTER

What's wrong with Yuengling?

(pause)

ADAM

It's not that there's anything wrong with Yuengling. It's just not what we normally drink. That's all.

CARTER

You didn't tell me what you wanted. Anything's fine you said. You didn't specify.

LUCY

It's fine.

CARTER

If you wanted something else, you should have specified it. I would have gotten what you wanted.

NATSUMI

(entering, sees the beer and picks up a bottle)  
Hey guys. Oh, what is this?

ADAM

It's Yuengling. Carter brought it. (pause) Beer.

NATSUMI

Oh I never see this kind before.

CARTER

Now we've got 24 bottles of this beer you guys don't like.

LUCY

It's okay. We're not that picky.

(SONJA reenters from the balcony carrying a plate of grilled corn on the cob.)

SONJA

Corn's done.

(puts down the corn, notices the beer)

Huh. What a weird beer.

(pause. CARTER sulks.)

SONJA

Are the crabs done too?

LUCY

Yeah. They're just about together.

NATSUMI

Crabs! Crabs! Crabs!

(NATSUMI quickly heaps the last of the crabs onto the platter and places it at the center of the dining island. ADAM grabs plates, butter knives, can openers and so forth. All sit down to eat.)

LUCY

(playing with her food)

This here is the momma. This is the papa. Papa crab. Look at him.

SONJA

Tasty lot this year.

CARTER

So - you know how the measurements were different for the hard and the soft shell crabs? The hard shell crabs had to be bigger? I still don't understand how to tell the difference. I think the two I caught were both hard shelled.

ADAM

Soft shell - we have one of those, no, two, look. Feel.

CARTER

How can you tell?

ADAM

Feel its shell - there is no mistaking it.

CARTER

Yeah. Yeah, it's soft.

ADAM

The soft shell crabs are the mating ones. Their shells turn soft for just a few days so they can mate.

CARTER

Huh, never knew that.

ADAM

Yes. The life of a crab.

CARTER

Do they taste the same, or different?

LUCY

Crack through this momma crab claw. Here.

CARTER

Yum. How do we get the other meat out, the body meat. How do you open it?

LUCY

Crack right in. Have a can opener, here. Crunch it down.

(CARTER crunches open the body of a crab, pulls out and eats a piece of meat.)

CARTER

Ew! What are these sour things, they taste terrible. It's not some kind of organ is it?

SONJA

The gills. You're eating the gills, Carter. Don't do that. You want the leg muscle meat underneath. Tear those off. See, here. Nice muscle meat. Much better.

CARTER

Yes.

SONJA

Can you see the difference?

CARTER

Yes. Yes, I can and taste it too.

SONJA

The legs, the claw legs, they taste the best but the leg meat in the body is tasty too. Have another, we've caught plenty.

CARTER

Yeah.

(They continue to eat. Loud sounds of cracking open crabs and sucking down the meat. End of scene.)

END OF SCENE

## Scene 6

The crew has just finished breakfast, which ADAM prepared. NATSUMI is washing the dishes. It is pouring rain.

ADAM

Man. Rain stinks.

LUCY

Yeah, and our whole house stinks like crab.

SONJA

We always forget that. Every year. We always forget how bad it smells and how long it takes the smell to go away.

(Pause. A minute passes. SONJA, who is sitting on the armchair, shifts position.)

SONJA

Ow!

(SONJA pulls a knick-knack out from under the chair cushion and stares at it.)

SONJA

Ok. You guys, this was under the chair cushion. Under the chair cushion. It's not just me, right? You all saw it too?

LUCY

Another one for the cabinet.

(SONJA puts the knick-knack the kitchen cabinet with the others. Returns. Pause.)

LUCY

I'm bored. I want to do Thai stretches. Who wants to be stretched.

(pause)

SONJA

I'll be stretched.

(SONJA lies on her back on the floor. LUCY positions her and stretches her.)

LUCY

I miss doing these. I used to do Thai massage all the time at my old place, but the new spa doesn't offer it. Move your legs like this. Here.

CARTER

What is there to do here when it rains.

ADAM

Well, it is a problem here when it rains, because there's not that much to do. If we had a car, we could drive to the movie theater, little place. Or, there's a strip mall. But both are far to get to if you're just riding bikes, and it's also raining, and not all that exciting.

LUCY

Try this one. You're very tense.

ADAM

Usually Moe's here. Sometimes Moe tells a whole bunch of jokes. He can be a pretty funny guy.

SONJA

Ow!

LUCY

Especially your hamstrings. I have tense hamstrings too. It's a real problem. Do you want to feel my hamstrings?

SONJA

Ow! Ow! Lucy! You're hurting me!

LUCY

Okay. We'll try a different one. Like this.

SONJA

Huh. I like this one.

LUCY

Good.

ADAM

Or, board games. Card games. Board games are always an option.

(A pause in the conversation. Rain sounds, ocean sounds. NATSUMI washes dishes and LUCY stretches SONJA.)

ADAM

I guess we could go to the Shell Musuem.

CARTER

What's the Shell Musuem?

SONJA

Yeah, Carter's never been to the Shell Musuem.

ADAM

It's basically this shell store. You know, sea shells. You can buy shells there. Cheesy postcards too, if you're into that. It's only fun for about an hour, at most. But we always go on the day that it rains. It's the only thing we can do close by.

CARTER

Huh. Yeah, we could go to the Shell Musuem. I can send a cheesy postcard to my mom. She loves that stuff.

SONJA

We have to do something to get out of this stinky house.

END OF SCENE



## Scene 7

There are now two playing areas on the stage: kitchen and living room. The conversation between SONJA and NATSUMI, represented on the left side of the column, takes place on Wednesday afternoon. The conversation between ADAM and CARTER, represented on the right side of the column, takes place Thursday morning. The dialogue alternates from scene to scene, rather than overlapping. While one duo is speaking, the other may continue to pantomime cooking or page turning actions.

It continues to rain.

(NATSUMI and SONJA are seated on opposite ends of the sofa, each looking at a fashion magazine, studying the pictures in search of cute guys. This is a very, very serious process and continues for at least thirty seconds before the scene's dialogue begins. Five or six other magazines, most of which have been paged through, sit on the coffee table or the floor near the sofa. The magazines remain onstage in these locations for the rest of the play.)

SONJA

This guy. This guy is cute.

(SONJA shows NATSUMI the picture.)

NATSUMI

Ew, no. I don't like black guys. I don't think he's cute.

(ADAM and CARTER enter the kitchen to make breakfast.)

ADAM

Rain again.

CARTER

At least the smell is better today.

ADAM

True, that. What are we thinking today. I'm thinking, scrambled eggs and grits. I think we finished the sausage yesterday. Do you want to start the coffee?

CARTER

Sure. You know, I think there's still some bacon left.

ADAM

Oh yeah. I forgot about that.

SONJA

That's kind of racist, Sumi.

NATSUMI

I'm not racist.

SONJA

That comment was kind of racist. You really don't like any black guys?

NATSUMI

No. No I don't think they're cute.

(The boys prepare to cook. CARTER finds another knick-knack inside the coffee pot, holds it up for inspection.)

CARTER

Coffee pot. In the coffee pot this time.

ADAM

It's like a cry for attention. Or help.

(CARTER puts it in the cabinet with the others.)

NATSUMI

Anyway, you can't call me racist.

SONJA

Huh?

NATSUMI

You're not a black person.  
You're not a black guy.

(pause. They flip through a few more pages.)

CARTER

Do you always do the cooking?

ADAM

Only during the summer. During the school year we pretty much do take out. Lucy really hates to cook, and she's bad at it too. (pause) It stresses her out. I enjoy it when I have the time. (pause) Pass the

NATSUMI  
This guy. This guy is cute.

(NATSUMI shows SONJA the  
picture)

SONJA  
No. He's too macho looking  
for my taste. I don't like  
big muscles.

NATSUMI  
You don't like muscles?

SONJA  
I don't like them too tall  
either. Not too short, but  
that is too tall.

(They flip through more  
pages.)

salt will you. And, the  
pepper.

(More cooking. Cooking  
continues through the  
scene.)

ADAM  
We kind of trade off. She  
does more of the housework  
during the school year, and  
I do more of it during the  
summer.

CARTER  
You guys seem to have that  
worked out well.

ADAM  
Yeah. Yeah, I guess we do.

SONJA

This guy. This guy is cute.

NATSUMI

Yeah. That guy is cute. He have nice hair.

SONJA

Nice eyes too. Average build. I like that in a guy.

CARTER

Does it ever bother you that you got married so young, right after college?

ADAM

No, not really.

CARTER

I think about getting married sometimes. Again. Not much though. I think you have to wait until you meet the right person. Otherwise, it can just be really bad.

ADAM

Yeah.

CARTER

Yeah. Yeah, man, I know.

NATSUMI

Do you think Carter's cute?

SONJA

No. No, not really cute. Do you think Carter's cute?

NATSUMI

No. No, I don't think Carter's cute.

SONJA

Why'd you bring it up then?  
You think Carter's cute.

NATSUMI

No! No not cute!

SONJA

(sings)

You think Carter's cute,  
you think Carter's cute!

NATSUMI

I think Carter nice.

SONJA

I think Carter's nice too.  
Not as cool as Moe. It's  
too bad Moe couldn't come  
this year.

CARTER

How many times have you  
guys been to the New Jersey  
shore?

ADAM

This is our third trip, the  
second time we're staying  
for a whole week. Sonja and  
Sumi and Moe have usually  
come too. We all really  
like the beach. (pause)  
Next summer, I want us to  
go to Europe. Rent a house,  
south of France, Italy,  
stay there for a whole  
month and keep having  
different people over.  
Going on trips. Museums.  
Wineries. Bike through the  
countryside. Learn a new  
language. Lucy would like  
it too. But, we have to get  
out of debt first.

NATSUMI

How does Adam know Carter?

SONJA

Through Moe. Carter is a college friend of Moe's roommate Steve. Adam hangs out with Moe at Moe and Steve's apartment. Carter would hang out with Steve. So Adam and Moe and Carter and Steve - they'd all hang out together sometimes. That's the connection.

NATSUMI

I see.

CARTER

Yeah. Europe's a big commitment. I went there once, during college. Semester in Spain. Would love to go back.

CARTER

Have you ever thought about going back to school? Changing jobs?

ADAM

Yeah. Yeah. But the thing about teaching is, if I did anything else, I'd have to work all summer. And that would suck.

CARTER

Huh. Yeah that is a pretty big perk. Coffee? Coffee's done.

ADAM

Sure.

SONJA  
Natsumi. Do you like  
Carter?

NATSUMI  
Oh! No.

SONJA  
You like Carter. You do  
think he's cute.

CARTER  
Coffee mate?

ADAM  
Yeah. I love that stuff.  
Thanks.

CARTER  
Bacon time.  
  
(more cooking)

ADAM  
How about you? You seem to  
like doing design.

CARTER  
Yeah. Yeah, but sometimes I  
think, a master's degree  
would really transform my  
life. Sometimes, I do think  
about going back to school.

ADAM  
A lot of people do.

CARTER  
Yeah. But then I think,  
school is a lot of work.

ADAM



Yeah. It's not too fun.  
Wait, can you hand me the  
grits?

CARTER

Here.

ADAM

Nice.

(More cooking.)

NATSUMI

Sonja, you are younger than  
I am. You are only 26. I am  
28. So maybe you won't  
understand. But I am 28.  
Carter, he is 28 too. You  
get to this certain point.  
If I am not married soon,  
if I am not even dating  
soon, it's not going to  
happen.

SONJA

That's not true.

NATSUMI

It is true. You get to a  
certain age and they don't  
even look at you any more.  
They go after younger  
women. Also you don't want  
to have babies. I, I want  
to have babies. That makes  
it different. And also, a  
green card.

SONJA

Mmmmm. Hmmmm. He's a nice  
guy Sumi.

(End of scene.)

ADAM

You know, you should ask  
Sumi out.

CARTER

Oh yeah?

ADAM

Yeah. You seem to get  
along.

CARTER

Huh. I don't know. Maybe.  
I'll think about that. Huh.

(End of scene.)

## Scene 8

Everyone is gathered in the living room. Bored. They have drunk all the coffee, eaten and cleaned up from breakfast. ADAM is drinking beer, and possibly some of the others are too.

LUCY

I guess today is board game day.

ADAM

Man, we don't have any decent board games. I wish we had some better board games. I wish Moe had been able to come this time. Last year, when we went skiing, he brought Cranium, remember? Cranium was the best. It even had clay. The clay rocked. I still remember the clay.

SONJA

The problem with Cranium is that Moe always got so competitive when we played Cranium, and then you got competitive too. You guys were at each others' throats. You were jumping up every single turn and yelling that the other person was cheating. And half the time you were cheating. You were cheating at the board games we were playing to give us something to do while we drank beer.

ADAM

It wasn't that bad -

LUCY

Adam, that game went on forever.

SONJA

I still have the picture I took of you actually tackling Moe and knocking over the floor lamp.

ADAM

It was a wobbly lamp! It wobbled, from the very first day!

CARTER

Well, I brought Uno. Who wants to play Uno?

LUCY

I'm sick of playing Uno. We play Uno all the time at home.

NATSUMI

Yeah, we really do.

CARTER

Or Scrabble.

ADAM

That requires too much thought.

(ADAM burps a great beer burp.)

CARTER

I could do magic tricks. Magic card tricks. They don't always work, but it's worth a shot. Pick a card, any card.

(NATSUMI picks a card. CARTER goes through the trick clumsily. It does not work properly.)

CARTER

Shoot. Sorry. I told you, they don't always work.

(pause)

SONJA

It's okay. You don't have to keep feeling bad about the fact that you're not Moe. We still like you.

LUCY

Yeah. Adam would really be going nuts if there weren't another guy around.

(pause)

CARTER

I'm sick of being your last-minute substitute! Your vacation alternate. So Moe would rather be going to this work conference training session thing. Screw him! Screw you! All you do is talk about how much you'd rather have Moe here than me. Moe with the great board games. Moe who already knows what kind of beer to buy. Moe who knows you always play Uno. You only asked me here because Moe cancelled. At the last minute. You think I don't know that? You think I don't care? (pause) All of you suck. I'm going to take my bike and bike back to the Shell Museum. I was happy there.

(CARTER stalks off through the front porch  
exit.)

NATSUMI

Carter, wait.

(ADAM belches again. End of scene.)

## Scene 9

NATSUMI sits on the sofa cradling a Miffy stuffed animal. NATSUMI and Miffy are reading together. This continues for a minute. CARTER enters, sits on the sofa or on the chair. SUMI does not notice.

CARTER

What's that?

NATSUMI

What?

CARTER

Your doll. Stuffed animal thing.

NATSUMI

Oh. This is Miffy.

CARTER

What's Miffy?

NATSUMI

Miffy is cartoon. Cartoon character. From the show, Miffy and Friends. She is very big in Japan. She is a kind of rabbit. There is also, Melanie. Her friend Melanie. I also have Melanie but Melanie is at home. And, Grunty the Pig. Poppy Pig. Boris and Barbara. But Boris and Barbara are bears.

CARTER

Do you always bring her on trips?

NATSUMI

Yes. I sleep with Miffy every night.

CARTER

Oh.

NATSUMI

Yes. And we read together. Miffy likes to read. She is very smart.

CARTER

Do you ever talk to Miffy?

NATSUMI

Yes. We also have conversations.

CARTER

What does Miffy talk about?

NATSUMI

She talk about her friends. And their adventures. Miffy and her friends go on adventures. They have a series of books.

CARTER

Aren't you a little old to be playing with stuffed animals?

NATSUMI

(extremely serious)

Miffy is not stuffed animal. Miffy is real.

CARTER

Oh. Sorry. That was a dumb thing to say.

(NATSUMI and CARTER look at each other for a moment.)

CARTER

I'm divorced. Shoot. That didn't come out right. Blunt. Too blunt. But, it's true.

NATSUMI

Oh. How long?

CARTER

A year. And almost, a half. Really bad. We - we got married too young and it didn't work out.

NATSUMI

I'm sorry.

CARTER

No, no, it's okay. It's okay I guess. Not important.

NATSUMI

No. No, not really.

CARTER

Okay.

NATSUMI

You hold Miffy if you want.

(NATSUMI offers the Miffy doll to CARTER and CARTER takes it, regards the bunny, then SUMI. End of scene. Miffy should remain onstage for the rest of the play.)

END OF SCENE



Scene 10

Everyone except ADAM is sitting on the couch.

ADAM

You guys. We should egg Charlie's car.

SONJA

He's not there Adam. It's not there. At work probably, or fishing.

ADAM

I mean tonight. We should egg Charlie's car tonight, when he's not looking. When he's asleep. Use the cover of darkness. Subterfuge. My specialty.

LUCY

But he'll know it's us.

ADAM

How? How will he know?

LUCY

It's too residential here. This is the only rental beach house on the block. He'll know, it would have to be us.

SONJA

He might keep a gun. He might keep a gun Adam, it's that kind of a place. I don't think it's a good idea. He seriously cares about his ugly blue car.

CARTER

I wouldn't call it ugly. Unusual, yes, but not ugly. He gets points for originality in my book. Blue car. Not red, or they go for black, or silver, or at least a dark shade of blue. Maybe a sandy gold. I can see the attraction of even white. Hot pink if you're a lady. But that blue - unusual. What would you call that color. That shade.

ADAM

Lucy thinks blueberry. Me, more teal.

CARTER

Yeah. What else is that color. Somewhat darker than the sky. Less green than the sea.

SONJA

Nothing in nature. That I can think of.

LUCY

Rocks maybe?

CARTER

Charlie blue. Original Charlie blue.

NATSUMI

Maybe it color he pees.

(pause)

LUCY

What? Did you just say that?

SONJA

I guess you never know.

ADAM

He is a weird guy. Seems anyway.

(Long pause. Everyone stares vacantly into space.)

SONJA

I keep having this sensation. This haunting sensation. That the couch is actually a monster that is seeking to devour us. Waiting for the right moment. That we're sitting here, and all these cushions are its gums, the soft, squishy tissue of the inside of its mouth, the tissue that's usually pink, or red, if it's suddenly stained with blood. That any minute now, when we're not looking, when we're not paying attention, just minding our own business, playing Uno or having some stupid conversation, and then suddenly, snap. The jaws are gonna close, and there will be no more Us. (pause) Has this been bothering anyone else?

LUCY

No. No, but now that you mention it.

NATSUMI

I see!

CARTER

Yeah. Yeah there is something vaguely suspicious about this couch. Something that is not quite right.

ADAM

Just a little off.

CARTER

Yeah.

(pause)

LUCY

Well, now I don't want to sit here any more. Not if it means we're going to get eaten.

(The jaws of the monster couch snap shut.)

LUCY

Ah! Ah! Ah!

CARTER

Oh no! It's true, it's true we're being eaten!

SONJA

Help, Adam, help!

NATSUMI

Help! Help! Ah!

(ADAM rescues his friends from the couch. They are only a little bit mangled by the experience. Suspicions about the couch confirmed, they now sit on the floor.)

LUCY

Hey, you were right.

(pause)

CARTER

I wonder what we should do tomorrow. Tomorrow, if it doesn't rain.

LUCY

Again.

ADAM

Yeah. Should we do more crabs, or another day at the beach.

NATSUMI

Crabs! Crabs!

SONJA

It's a tough one. You never know how many beach days you have left. Got to use them wisely. Good weather.

LUCY

We haven't gone out to dinner yet. That Italian place we like. By the water. I want to go there for dinner. When it's not raining, so we can sit on the deck. Like last year, remember? It was good. We can order some wine.

SONJA

Yeah. Yeah, I want to go to the Italian place too.

ADAM

We have basically got tomorrow, and Saturday, if the weather does clear up. It is supposed to. We can go to the beach again tomorrow, then the Italian place. Saturday we can crab.

LUCY

Yeah. Yeah, nice way to end the trip. Sunday, we just get an hour or two at the beach, if we get up early.

NATSUMI

Oh yeah that's right. What time we have to leave again?

ADAM

Two. We have to be out by two.

SONJA

Life. Life, it's so short man, so short.

ADAM

It's a plan. A plan, I like it.

LUCY

A plan.

(End of scene.)

## Scene 11

SONJA and NATSUMI are seated on the front porch as LUCY and ADAM were in Scene 4, except dressed to go out to dinner. SONJA is having a drink. NATSUMI just sits. As before, the other characters move in and out of the living room and kitchen in the background.

SONJA

Look at my stone collection. My rock collection. My beach rock collection. I made it at the end of the day today inspired by a five-year-old's collection. I always thought rock collections were for five-year-olds. Fascination with the natural world. There are seven stones and one shell. Colors: white, a perfect oval stone; orange, brown, clear, pink, and gray: two stones and the shell. I searched a quarter mile of the beach for the perfect gray stone, thought, that was the ideal color to complete, complete the collection. I couldn't find one. All were mottled or cracked, way too small or too large, the wrong shade of gray. That is why there are two. Plus the shell, a small gray shell. Gotta have a shell, I guess.

NATSUMI

Got to have a shell. (pause) Look at the water. At the light on the water, reflecting off the water. It rides each wave, clinging, cresting and falling and crashing into the shore. I want to become this light, the reflection of the moon.

SONJA

How eternal and infinite the beach is, how every component echoes these qualities of the whole. (pause) I had a dream last night that I killed you.

NATSUMI

How did you kill me?

SONJA

The same way you kill crabs. I was much larger than you, and I picked you up with the metal tongs and stuck you in a pot of boiling water.

(pause)

NATSUMI

I don't think I like that dream. (beat) Are you jealous of me liking Carter?

SONJA

No. I'm not jealous of you liking Carter. I don't like Carter. What makes you think that?

NATSUMI

You just had a dream about killing me.

SONJA

So?

NATSUMI

You don't have dreams about killing people for no reason.

SONJA

I have them all the time.

NATSUMI

You do?

SONJA

Sure. Especially my boss, and this annoying girl at my office. But also, I do dream about killing my friends.

NATSUMI

Huh.

SONJA

Like this one time, Lucy and Adam were involved in a fatal car crash. It was really gory, blood everywhere. And while it wasn't clearly laid out in the dream, I knew that I was responsible.

NATSUMI

Huh.

SONJA

Moe, I have strangling dreams about Moe.

NATSUMI

Huh. Have you ever had dreams about killing me before?

SONJA

Now that you mention it, I have not had dreams about killing you, at least that I remember. (pause, thinks) No. Really not. (pause) Welcome to the inner circle.

(LUCY pops her head out.)

LUCY

You guys showered? Okay.

(LUCY pops her head back inside.)

NATSUMI

What are the guys doing.

(End of scene.)

## Scene 12

Ten minutes after the previous scene.

SONJA is pouring herself a second drink.  
NATSUMI is just sitting. LUCY enters, having  
showered.

SONJA

Oh God. Lucy, you are not wearing that out of the house.

LUCY

But it's comfortable.

SONJA

I thought you threw that away. You told me you threw it  
away. Why didn't you throw it away? Why did you pack it up  
and bring it here?

LUCY

I just thought, I might want to have a light sweater here.  
A white sweater here, in case it gets a bit chilly at  
night, and it is a bit chilly at night tonight.

SONJA

Yes, that's reasonable. But why that one?

LUCY

It's the one that I have.

SONJA

But you shouldn't have it. We went through your wardrobe  
and that was the very first thing we tossed.

LUCY

I tossed it back when you were gone so I wouldn't have to  
go get another one. It's not as bad as you think.

SONJA

It looks like goat vomit.  
(pause)

LUCY

Sumi, does it look that bad?

NATSUMI

Um, I need to go get my purse.



(NATSUMI exits.)

SONJA

See?

LUCY

Sumi doesn't think it looks that bad.

SONJA

We're going to have to take you shopping again.

LUCY

(shrieking like a dying crab)

Nooooo!

SONJA

We'll do something basic. Painless. The Gap. Express, maybe. Get you a new white sweater, maybe a black one too.

LUCY

Nooo!

SONJA

And maybe some t-shirts.

LUCY

Nooo!

ADAM

(entering from the bedrooms)

What's going on out here?

SONJA

Lucy needs to go shopping.

ADAM

Oh, no. No Sonja, I don't want to take Lucy shopping. We're on vacation.

SONJA

Look at that sweater.

ADAM

Didn't you guys throw that out?

SONJA

I thought so.

LUCY

No! No! It's alright I'll take off the sweater.

(LUCY storms out of the living room back to her bedroom and returns a moment later, wearing only a sleeveless top.)

ADAM

Don't you think you'll be a bit cold in that?

(LUCY glares at SONJA and stomps outside. End of scene.)

## Scene 13

2 am.

Everyone is asleep except SONJA. SONJA enters quietly from the bedroom hall, crosses to the kitchen and retrieves the metal tongs. She goes back to LUCY's bedroom, sneaks in and picks up the sweater with the tongs. SONJA reenters the living room carrying the sweater with the tongs, not touching it, out to the balcony where the grill is. There is a sound of fire crackling, burning, maybe some smoke. SONJA turns off the grill and reenters carrying a black carbon mass with the tongs - the remains of the sweater. She dumps it in the trash, replaces the tongs in the kitchen and exits back towards the bedrooms. End of scene.

Scene 14

Back on the crab boat. Lines are in the water.  
They wait.

ADAM

(netting a crab off his line)

Oop. Hey.

(ADAM deposits the crab in the crab bucket.)

ADAM

Nasty little suckers. Much better boiled.

SONJA

How many do we have? How many should we get? How many will  
we eat?

ADAM

Not such good crabbing today. I don't know where these guys  
are hanging out.

LUCY

These look sickly, somehow. They just don't seem as healthy  
as the Monday crabs. Maybe it's the water. We are in a  
different place.

NATSUMI

Twenty-six. How many crabs should we get.

LUCY

I don't even like eating crab that much. They're just fun  
to catch. I just like eating the claws, the crabby claws.  
But that's not fair.

ADAM

I wonder if we dropped one of them in Charlie's car. Would  
he still be alive in the morning and snapping. Snap.

CARTER

There goes a Charlie toe. Heh heh.

ADAM

Heh heh heh. That'd be nice.

LUCY

This time, we should definitely cook the crabs on the grill, the corn on the stove. Cut down on the stink.

SONJA

Yeah. We don't want to live with that again.

NATSUMI

How long we going to crab here. This crabbing is bad.

LUCY

Yeah Adam. We're hardly catching anything. And all these crabs look sick. I don't know if I want to eat that. Sick crabs. All of them are kind of gray and scabby.

ADAM

Well. Okay. Let's pull anchor and try someplace else. Go on Sumi.

(All pull up their crab lines and NATSUMI also pulls in the anchor. CARTER turns on the motor.)

ADAM

There! Let's try under the bridge again. Pick 'em off the pillars.

(NATSUMI drops anchor. All put out their lines. They wait.)

SONJA

What if someone on our block gets murdered tonight.

NATSUMI

Someone could kill Charlie.

SONJA

Then, our vacation would turn into a murder mystery. We'd all be suspects. Wouldn't that be exciting.

CARTER

I say, it was the Bearded Lady.

ADAM

Heh-heh. Charlie's wife.

CARTER

First, she strangled him. She's strong enough to do it. Then, she picked out hunks of his flesh with his set of fishing hooks. Lots of little hunks of Charlie flesh, and hid all of it, all of him in the trunk of his car, but after putting a tarp down so it doesn't get too bloody. Don't want to mess up the leather.

SONJA

And then, she rents a boat, and puts all the hunks of Charlie flesh into a regular fishing bucket, just like ours, for the dead fish, the bait. She just puts old Charlie into the bait bucket and takes herself out. Fishing.

LUCY

Eeww. You guys are gross.

ADAM

It could happen. It could happen in New Jersey. It could happen at the New Jersey shore.

CARTER

It would be in the papers for months. Front page.

SONJA

But what if it turns out that he beat her. That he beat her, and that he had done exactly the same thing to her favorite cat the week before.

LUCY

This is only getting worse.

CARTER

And before that, the parakeet.

ADAM

Not much fish bait, off a parakeet. Wonder if he caught anything with that.

NATSUMI

Did she eat the fish? Did she eat the fish that he caught with her pets, without her knowing?

LUCY

Yes. Yes of course she did.

ADAM

It's like that play. Oh. Oh. You know the one I'm talking about. With the king and the queen, yes. Oh come on. I know you've all read it.

CARTER

No. No, I don't think I have.

ADAM

Or heard the story at least. What is it. It's like, the best of Shakespeare's plays. Masterwork of literature. My favorite at least. Oh.

SONJA

Titus Andronicus?

ADAM

Yes! Yes, that's it. He bakes her sons in a pie and she eats it. Them. All up.

CARTER

Wow.

SONJA

And then, the Girl Scout comes in.

ADAM

What?

SONJA

The Girl Scout. It's a rule. In any murder mystery there has to be a Girl Scout.

ADAM

I've never heard that rule.

SONJA

Then you don't read the right books. (pause) Hey. We could write that into a book. Play of our own, the murder, the murder mystery of Charlie, and his wife's cat and parakeet. We could all become famous.

ADAM

We could write off this whole trip as a tax deduction.

(There is a moment of silence as the group contemplates this idea.)

CARTER

Whoa.

SONJA

Creative inspiration.

CARTER

Yes. You guys, this is the best vacation I have ever taken in my whole life.

ADAM

I feel you, man. I feel you.

END OF SCENE



Scene 15

They have just finished the crabs.

ADAM

That was a feast.

LUCY

I'm still hungry. Let's order pizza.

NATSUMI

Let's eat ice cream.

SONJA

Let's watch a movie.

CARTER

Let's sit and contemplate the universe. The vastness of the sea. The state of New Jersey.

NATSUMI

Sonja has dreams about killing people.

LUCY

What?

SONJA

It's true. I do. I've killed all of you off at least once. Except Carter. I don't know you well enough yet.

CARTER

(uncertainly)

Oh. Thanks?

LUCY

I still want pizza. Adam can we order pizza?

ADAM

It's hard to know what to do, on our last night. I always get so depressed at the end of vacations.

LUCY

So, we should order pizza. (pause) Pizza?

(End of scene.)

## Scene 16

A Giant Crab is hanging out in the living room. It sits on the couch, leafing through a magazine or the photo album. Bored, it gets up and gets a beer from the fridge. It drinks the beer, listening to the sounds of the ocean, the call of its crabby home.

NATSUMI enters from outside, wearing her bathing suit and cover up. She forgot her sunglasses at the house and has come back for them. She encounters the giant crab.

NATSUMI

Oh, hello.

CRAB

Hello Natsumi.

(They stare at each other for a moment.)

NATSUMI

Are you a crab, or the ghost of a crab? Why are you so big?

(pause)

CRAB

Does it matter?

(pause, NATSUMI considers.)

NATSUMI

No. No, I guess not.

(pause)

CRAB

Want to dance?

(The CRAB clicks one of his claws. A baroque waltz plays. NATSUMI takes hold of the claws, carefully. They dance a waltz. At the end of the piece, the music stops. NATSUMI and the CRAB stop dancing. The CRAB bows. NATSUMI curtsies. They stare at each other for a moment.)

NATSUMI

I have to get back to the beach.

(pause)

CRAB

Okay.

(SUMI exits through the front door. Then she reenters.)

NATSUMI

Wait. I forgot my sunglasses.

(NATSUMI goes back to her bedroom, gets her sunglasses.)

NATSUMI

Bye crab.

CRAB

Bye Sumi.

(NATSUMI exits for real.

End of play.)