

Safe

Penny Jackson

Seriocomic

LIZ: 13

NINA: 13

LIZ and NINA are sitting in LIZ's kitchen. LIZ is skinny; NINA is chubby. They are both eyeing a plate of brownies.

LIZ: Why weren't you in school yesterday?

NINA: I didn't want to go.

LIZ: I don't want to go to school but I still go.

NINA: You know why. Someone left a tub of lard in my locker. And a brochure for Weight Watchers.

LIZ: Who cares what those witches do? Just one more year and we'll be in high school.

NINA: I don't know if I can make it.

LIZ: You were losing weight.

NINA: That diet my doctor made me go on. I hated it. I had to eat only soup that was made out of root vegetables.

LIZ: Ugh! [*She walks over to the plate of brownies.*] My mom said she would pay me twenty bucks for every brownie I ate.

NINA: Wow. How much?

LIZ: I think twenty bucks a brownie.

NINA: Wish someone would pay me every time I ate.

LIZ: But I'm never hungry.

NINA: If you don't start eating again, they'll send you back to the hospital. Please, Liz? Do it for me.

[LIZ touches the plate, and then withdraws her hand as if it's on fire.]

LIZ: Okay, Nina. I'm doing this for you. [*She closes her eyes and picks up a brownie. She slowly takes a bite.*]

NINA: Keep going, Liz.

LIZ: I can't do this alone. Please. [*NINA takes a brownie. She consumes it ravenously.*] You're always hungry. I wish I could be like you.

NINA: No, you don't. [*Suddenly, offstage, a baby cries.*] Who's that?

LIZ: That's my sister's baby. That's Sasha?

NINA: Hold on a minute. Where's Sasha?

LIZ: She's in my room.

NINA: What is she doing here? I thought your sister lived in L.A.

LIZ: My sister, who wants to be a movie star, is too busy auditioning—so she left Sasha with us.

[The baby continues crying.]

NINA: Aren't you going to do something?

LIZ: What can I do? My mom hired a babysitter who cancelled.

NINA: You got to stop her from crying.

LIZ: But she cries all the time. That's what babies do.

NINA: Liz!

LIZ: All right. *[Liz stands up and walks out of the room. When she leaves her room, NINA begins to eat another brownie. Liz returns with SASHA wrapped in a blanket.]* She's finally asleep. Just look at her.

NINA: Oh Liz, she's so beautiful.

LIZ: Haven't you ever held a baby before?

[NINA shakes her head. Liz tenderly places the baby in NINA's arms.]

NINA: She's so light. Just like a feather.

LIZ: Close your eyes.

NINA: What?

LIZ: Close your eyes and hold Sasha tight.

[NINA clutches the baby to her chest.]

NINA: I can feel her heartbeat!

LIZ: Breathe in and breathe out.

NINA: Yes . . .

LIZ: Are you floating?

NINA: I feel so light . . .

LIZ: This is what it's like when you love someone.

[For a few seconds, NINA looks as if she's in rapture. She turns to Liz.]

NINA: Thank you.