“Penny Goldfish” by Juliette Snyder
2nd Place, Short Play 16-18
(Lights up on MARISSA, who sits DSC. The stage is bare save for a pitcher of water, an empty tank, a plastic baggie filled with water and a penny goldfish. FRASIER enters USL with a canister of fish food. He sits beside MARISSA)

FRASIER: I know what his name should be.

MARISSA: Mmm, tell me.

FRASIER: Frasier.

MARISSA: I am not naming my fish after you.

FRASIER: (reaching for the pitcher of water) I think it's only fair. I spent my good, hardearned carnival tickets on the little thing.

MARISSA: (stopping his hand) The water isn't ready yet.

FRASIER: The water isn't ready yet?

MARISSA: Yes.

FRASIER: It's water.

MARISSA: Yeah, from the sink. Do you want Frasier Junior to die of chlorine poisoning?

FRASIER: It's a fish.

MARISSA: And he's mine. That's not his name anyway. We can put him in the tank when the water's had time to sit. I put dechlorinator in it.

(FRASIER laughs.)

MARISSA: What?

FRASIER: The water it's in right now is probably worse than the sink. I don't think they have dechlorinator at the carnival.
MARISSA: Then I’m rescuing him.

FRASIER: And what happens if you don’t rescue it, Miss Irwin?

MARISSA: His gills’ll turn black and he’ll die.

FRASIER: All because of the water.

MARISSA: All because of the toxic water. He can’t live like that.

(FRASIER picks up the baggie with the fish. He examines it. MARISSA reaches to stop him, but restrains herself.)

FRASIER: I think it’s fine. Just lonely.

MARISSA: He’s a fish.

FRASIER: Yeah, it’s a fish! Look at that cute little thing.

(He tickles the bottom of the baggie like a dog’s chin. MARISSA bristles.)

FRASIER: See? Little thing just needs some affection.

MARISSA: It stresses them out when you do that.

FRASIER: Do what? (He pokes the baggie) This?

MARISSA: Stop that.

FRASIER: Stop what? (He jostles the baggie.)

MARISSA: Frasier!

FRASIER: (mockingly) Marissa! (He swings the baggie) You spin me right round baby, right round--

(MARISSA snatches the baggie from FRASIER and sets it down gently.)

MARISSA: That’s not funny.

FRASIER: Sheesh. Why are you so mad?
MARISSA: He’s a living thing!

FRASIER: Marissa. The reason you have it is because I threw a ball into a clown’s mouth.

MARISSA: And?

FRASIER: The person who handed it to you makes seven dollars an hour to wear suspenders and operate a ferris wheel.

MARISSA: And??

FRASIER: Why didn’t you just choose one of those giant stuffy-bears like other girls do?

MARISSA: I felt bad for him.

FRASIER: It costs a penny.

MARISSA: He’s still a living thing.

(FRASIER picks up the empty tank.)

FRASIER: How’d you afford this tank?

MARISSA: I skipped school to work an extra shift.

FRASIER: Marissa! How do you know what’s best for it anyway?

MARISSA: I researched it.

FRASIER: Jesus, Marissa.

MARISSA: I had to.

FRASIER: No, you felt obligated to.

MARISSA: That’s what I just said.

(FRASIER stands up, empty tank still in hand. MARISSA is still seated.)

FRASIER: This was supposed to be fun.
MARISSA: You seem to be having the time of your life.

FRASIER: Oh, I’m just elated.

MARISSA: Well, go be elated somewhere else. I’m being responsible.

FRASIER: Jesus, Marissa. Why do you always do this?

MARISSA: Do what?

FRASIER: You’re just. . .

MARISSA: *(Standing up)* Just what?

FRASIER: . . . Everything is just . . . like, *this*, lately.

MARISSA: Like what?

FRASIER: This was supposed to be fun, Marissa. You’re turning it into a chore. I feel like we can’t have fun anymore. You’re acting like there’s a consequence to everything. This fish isn’t that big of a deal. The past few weeks you just act like everything is life or death. Frankly, it’s making *this* really difficult.

*(MARISSA stays silent and unmoving. She breathes, closes her eyes, and starts to cry softly.)*

FRASIER: Marissa, I—

MARISSA: Frasier, I—

FRASIER: I’m sorry!

MARISSA: Frasier, no—

FRASIER: That was too harsh—

MARISSA: Frasier, I’m—

FRASIER: I’m sorry.

MARISSA. I’m pregnant.
(Blackout.)